

Title: Bus Service Improvement Plan – Bus-Based Pocket Park and Ride Business Case Approval
Report of: Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport
Portfolio: Transport

Report Summary:

The purpose of this report is to approve the Bus-Based Pocket Park and Ride programme business case, which is funded through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and has a total value of £589,000. This decision will allocate funding to the programme enabling schemes to come forward for individual approval, following the resolution of outstanding assurance requirements in line with the Single Assurance Framework.

This decision is taken in accordance with the delegation to the Chief Executive provided by Cabinet in July 2024, to enter into the relevant agreements for up to £40.468 million (capital) of BSIP capital funding to deliver a range of schemes through Grant Funding Agreements.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive is recommended to:

- i. Approve the BSIP Bus-Based Pocket Park and Ride Business Case which has a total programme value of £589,000.

1. Background

- 1.1** The North East's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is the region's response to the Government's National Bus Strategy for England which was initially published in March 2021 and has subsequently been refreshed on an annual basis. The BSIP set out a clear ambition to improve bus patronage throughout the region to improve levels of bus reliability and punctuality for passengers.
- 1.2** At Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in March 2023, Members approved a funding award of £163.5m of BSIP funding, of which £73.75m was allocated for capital delivery. At the same meeting the JTC made the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme which set out through a statutory partnership, how Local Transport Authorities and local bus operators will work together to deliver BSIP outcomes which included encouraging a shift from private vehicles to public transport.
- 1.3** In July 2023, JTC Members approved £33.29m of BSIP capital funding for investment in a first tranche of Bus Priority Infrastructure and Intelligent Transport Systems. In March 2024, JTC Members approved and allocated the remaining unallocated BSIP capital funding totalling £40.46m to several sub-programmes which align to the refreshed BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme. This included an indicative allocation for the Bus-Based Park and Ride programme.
- 1.4** At the 30 July 2024 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet, Members re-confirmed the decisions previously made by JTC and delegated authority to the Chief Executive, to enter into the relevant agreements for up to £40.46m of BSIP capital funding.

2. The Investment Proposal

- 2.1** The BSIP Bus-Based Pocket Park and Ride business case sets out a package of schemes aimed at reducing congestion and enhancing bus journey time reliability through offering additional transport opportunities and encouraging the public to shift from private vehicles to public transport.
- 2.2** Throughout the development of the business case, all seven local authorities were invited to submit proposals; Durham County Council and Gateshead Council were the only scheme promoters to submit schemes which met the funding conditions of the BSIP programme. The MetroCentre pocket park and ride scheme which was submitted by Gateshead Council was formally approved by Joint Transport Committee in December 2023 following the submission of an assurance statement and the successful resolution of independent assurance. This scheme was expedited to support the alleviation of congestion as part of the Tyne Bridge Restoration project and was delivered in April 2024.
- 2.3** The three sites located within Durham which make up the Bus-Based Pocket Park and Ride programme are as follows:

Scheme Name	2025/26	Total
Bowburn Pocket Park and Ride facility	£178,123.81	£178,123.81
Meadowfield Pocket Park and Ride facility	£279,627.92	£279,627.92
Ushaw Moor Pocket Park and Ride facility	£131,575.04	£131,575.04
	£589,326.77	£589,326.77

- 2.4** These sites were selected along major corridors into Durham City to address congestion from heavy commuting flows identified through traffic modelling, and are intended to support communities with limited public transport options. Sites will provide 96 car parking spaces in total, enabling drivers to park and then finish their journey on bus.
- 2.5** A programme level five-part business case has been produced outlining the above package of interventions, which confirms proposals can be in contract by March 2026 and delivered by March 2027, in addition to providing value for money, and demonstrating proposals meet the overarching objectives of the BSIP.

3. Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs	26/27	Total
Opening of new pocket park and ride facilities	3	3
New car parking spaces	96	96
Enhanced wayfinding information boards	3	3

Description of Outcomes	Timeframe for achievement	Totals
Reduction of congestion on corridors	5 years post scheme delivery	Increase in baseline (identified in scheme level Monitoring & Evaluation plans included in assurance statements)
Improved journey time reliability	5 years post scheme delivery	Increase in baseline (identified in scheme level Monitoring & Evaluation plans included in assurance statements)

Improved air quality on corridors	5 years post scheme delivery	Increase in baseline (identified in scheme level Monitoring & Evaluation plans included in assurance statements)
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4. Timetable for Implementation

Milestone	Forecast Date
Individual Scheme Assurance Statements	February 2026
Grant funding Agreements	March 2026
Delivery Commences	March 2026 onwards
Delivery Completion	March 2027

5. Evaluation

Evaluation will be undertaken by the scheme promoter; a monitoring and evaluation plan will be produced within forthcoming assurance statements and will be verified and assured by the Combined Authority's independent appraisal consultants.

6. Appraisal

Independent appraisal of the programme business case identified no fundamental issues to delivery or viability. This provides comfort that proposals are sufficiently developed to progress and pose limited delivery risk.

The interventions that sit within the programme will be required to go through individual scheme level assurance and appraisal inclusive of detailed consultation, local authority Cabinet approval and S151 sign off from the promoting Local Authority prior to sign off.

7. RAG Assessment

The business case has been assured by specialist independent appraisers who have provided the following summary:

Overall RAG assessment		
Risk Rating	Strategic case	Green
	Commercial case	Amber
	Economic case	Green
	Financial case	Amber
	Management case	Amber
	Overall rating	Amber

Areas which have been rated as Amber are those which cannot be finalised until the individual scheme promoter Assurance Statements have been produced. These statements will resolve outstanding requirements will be independently assessed in line with the Single Assurance Framework prior to approval and the issue of Grant Fund Agreements (GFAs).

8. Recommended Conditions of Funding

The award of funding would be **subject to the following proposed funding conditions:**

No.	Condition
1.	All funding must be defrayed by March 2027
2.	All funding can only be spent on scheme deliverables set out in the project business case.

A. Potential Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives

The LTP and its associated Delivery Plan are centred on delivering a fully integrated public transport system, better travel planning to ensure smoother journeys, with a key focus on safety and security for women and girls. The proposal included within this report directly contributes towards achieving these aims, and in turn, supports the North East Combined Authority corporate objectives, of delivering a Home of real opportunity and a North East we are proud to call home. The benefits that will be realised through the delivery of the proposal will improve the attractiveness, accessibility, safety and security of public transport, leading to more people choosing to travel sustainably and a reduction in harmful emissions owing to reduced congestion. Delivery of investment through BSIP as a whole will lay the foundations for an integrated and inclusive transport network.

B. Key risks

The key risk associated with this report is the ability of scheme promoters to defray BSIP capital expenditure within the overall BSIP programme timescales required by the Department for Transport (March 2027). Approval and agreement of the proposals outlined within this report aid in the delivery of interventions within the required timescales.

C. Financial and other resources implications

The financial profile for the programme is outlined below, with all amounts funded from BSIP Capital and Durham County Council the grant recipient and scheme promoter in all cases:

Scheme Name	2025/26	Total
Bowburn Pocket Park and Ride facility	£178,123.81	£178,123.81
Meadowfield Pocket Park and Ride facility	£279,627.92	£279,627.92
Ushaw Moor Pocket Park and Ride facility	£131,575.04	£131,575.04
Total (£)	£589,326.77	£589,326.77

Status of match funding:

No match funding is required for BSIP.

Funding availability:

The funding which has been identified in this report is fully allocated and has previously been committed to this programme by the Joint Transport Committee, a decision re-confirmed by North East CA Cabinet in July 2024.

D. Legal implications

The comments of the Monitoring officer have been included in this report.

E. Equalities implications

The North East CA follows the Public Sector Equality duty and this report has due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010. In June 2024 the North East CA adopted equality objectives to reflect the different roles of the Combined Authority as an employer, a commissioner and deliverer of services, and a civic leader. Scheme specific action plans will be prepared to ensure that all identified benefits can be achieved whilst any potential dis-benefits are mitigated.

F. Consultation and engagement

Both the wider BSIP programme and the Bus-Based Pocket Park and Ride programme have been consulted on and considered through Heads of Transport of the North East CA's seven constituent authorities and at the March 2024 meeting of the Joint Transport Committee. BSIP capital funding was approved and allocated at the July 2024 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet. Schemes included within the Bus-Based Pocket Park and Ride programme will be subject to local approval, consultation and onwards approval. Scheme promoters are responsible for undertaking consultation pertaining to each individual scheme over the course of scheme development.

G. Appendices

N/A

H. Background papers

[North East Combined Authority Cabinet Meeting July 2024](#)

I. Contact officers.

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J. Glossary

North East CA: North East Combined Authority

BSIP: Bus Service Improvement Plan

JTC: Joint Transport Committee

DfT: Department for Transport

CDM: Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

K. Consultee

Cabinet Member:	Director/Head of Service:	Director of Finance and Investment:	Monitoring Officer:
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes