

North East Joint Transport Committee

Tuesday, 17th October, 2023 at 2.30 pm

Meeting to be held in the Bridges Room, Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, NE8 1HH

AGENDA

	Page No
1. Apologies for Absence	
2. Declaration of Interests	
Please remember to declare any personal interest where appropriate both verbally and by recording it on the relevant form (to be given to the Democratic Services Officer). Please also remember to leave the meeting where any personal interest requires this.	
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2023	3 - 10
4. Bus Service Improvement Plan - 2023 Refresh	11 - 118
5. Transport Plan Progress Report	119 - 130
6. Exclusion of the Press and Public	
The Joint Transport Committee may wish to exclude the press and public during consideration of item 7 by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.	
7. Minutes of the confidential meeting held on 19 September 2023	131 - 132
8. Date of Next Meeting	
The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 21 November at 2.30pm in the Bridges Room at Gateshead Civic Centre.	

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NORTH EAST JOINT TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

DATE: 19 SEPTEMBER 2023

Meeting held: Bridges Room, Gateshead Civic Centre

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillor: M Gannon (Chair)

Councillors: E Scott, Kemp, M Meling, G Miller and G Sanderson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Statutory Officers: M Barker (Monitoring Officer – Transport)
E Goodman (NECA Finance Manager)
T Hughes (Managing Director, Transport North East)
S Ramsey (Lead Chief Executive – Transport)

Officers: J Bailes, M Dodds, J Fenwick, R Forsyth-Ward, P Holmes,
H Jones, C Knight, L Keating, C Massarella, T Male, P Meikle,
E Reynard and P Watson,

25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Carl Johnson.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 JULY 2023

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

28. TRANSPORT BUDGET 2024/25

The Committee received a report which summarised the proposed process and timetable for the approval of the levies and other budgets relating to the Joint Transport Committee (JTC) for 2024/25. The report set out the context and initial strategy for the development of the budget proposals for 2024/25 and into future years.

The budget proposals will be further developed and consulted upon in the coming months, and decisions on the levies and other aspects of the transport budget will be taken by the JTC on 16 January 2024. 2024/25 will be the first year of the proposed North East Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) covering the whole of the North East, and the budgets agreed by the JTC will be adopted by the MCA on its creation.

Proposals for the Durham and Northumberland levies will be driven by the Transport budgets for those authorities which are being prepared in tandem. The Tyne and Wear levy is largely determined by the grant required by Nexus to maintain current operations, with £2.1m currently retained to fund costs relating to the former Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority and contributions to the work of Transport North East (TNE). It is recommended that this retained levy amount is kept at the same level for 2024/25 and that this amount is held constant over the MTFs planning period.

The current recommendation is for the top slice of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) Integrated Transport Block grant funding towards the TNE team to be maintained at the current level of £0.500m (equal shares equating to £0.063m per authority). It is testament to the considerable success of the TNE team in successfully attracting external funding that this has been maintained at the same level since the creation of the team, despite a considerable increase in activity and responsibility over recent years.

Based on initial estimates, it is anticipated that it will be necessary to seek an increase in the Tyne and Wear levy in both 2024/25 and 2025/26, as reported during the 2023/24 budget setting process, in line with the medium term financial strategy (MTFS) previously noted. Initial forecasts suggest an increase to the levy of 3.7% (£2.5m) will be required in 2024/25 and a further 3% (£2.1m) increase in the levy applied in 2025/26. A further increase of 3% (£2.17m) is also now anticipated for 2026/27. These increases are necessary to ensure the unavoidable base budget pressures can be funded and is in addition to savings and efficiencies being achieved and Nexus using significant reserves to balance its budget over the next three years: £4.8m in 2024/25, £5.5m in 2025/26 and £3.8m in 2026/27. Should the proposed increases not be supported then there will be a need to impact front line service delivery.

In order to set a break-even budget on the Tyne Tunnels, an increase will be required to the tolls for Class 2 and Class 3 vehicles in 2024/25, which will become applicable from May 2024. Under the constitution of the JTC, this is a decision for the Tyne and Wear Sub-Committee (TWSC) and a decision will be made by that Committee in January 2024.

The Committee was reminded that increases in the shadow toll, which is used to determine the contract payments to the concessionaire (TT2), are calculated with reference to the Retail Prices Index (RPI) measure of inflation.

Unless the actual tolls keep pace with this increase, the Tyne Tunnels account will not be balanced, and income generated will fall short of the expenditure incurred in servicing the debt charges and meeting the contractual obligations to TT2.

This report underpins the development of the detailed Transport Budget proposals for 2024/25 and the refreshed MTFS which will be brought to the JTC for consideration in November.

RESOLVED: The North East Joint Transport Committee noted the report.

29. TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report which provided an update on progress made across a number of Delivery Plan categories in implementing the objectives of the North East Transport Plan and achieving the vision of 'Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East.'

Following an extension to the original deadline, the train operators' consultation into plans to close hundreds of ticket offices in England ended on 1 September 2023. Under the proposals, all ticket offices in this region, other than that at Newcastle Central station, would be closed. More than 680,000 responses were sent which shows a great strength of feeling about this issue. Transport Focus will analyse the responses and make recommendations to the Secretary of State. A copy of the JTC response to the consultation was included with the agenda.

Councillor Gannon advised the Committee that he had advised a recent Rail North Committee meeting that the JTC would consider supporting a potential legal challenge to the proposals which the Metro Mayors were studying. This would be subject to formal agreement by the JTC, should it go ahead.

The Committee was advised that from 1 December 2023, TransPennine Express will be reducing the frequency of TPE services from Newcastle to Leeds/Manchester to one train per hour (compared to 1.5 per hour at present). The reason for the change is enable TransPennine to tackle its backlog of training for crews. A commitment is being sought from TPE to restore the service back to two trains an hour when staffing levels permit. More positively, the change means that the service to Chester-le-Street will improve to a slightly more frequent service.

The Committee noted the that a decision on the proposed dualling on the A1 between Morpeth and Ellingham has been delayed for a fourth time until 5 June 2024.

The Committee was advised that negotiations were ongoing between Go North East and Unite in an attempt to avoid industrial action that had been announced

by drivers from 30 September to 6 October and 14 October to 20 October which would cause significant disruption for passengers across the region.

Councillor Gannon hoped that the strike could be averted and encouraged both sides to continue to negotiate.

The Chair asked Cathy Massarella, Interim Director of Nexus to provide an update following the Great North Run.

The Committee was advised that this year's Great North Run was the biggest ever event in terms of the number of runners taking part, and the number of passengers using Metro – which was more than 100,000 people.

Until mid-afternoon on the day of the run, all of the plans that were in place were working well. There was then a severe change in the weather conditions which resulted in flash flooding occurring in the South Shields Metro Interchange and on the track in Tyne Dock Tunnel. This resulted in the Interchange being closed and the suspension of Metro service for 90 minutes. The very challenging situation was tackled by Nexus customer service staff and volunteers from around the business (including from Stadler), and partners which included the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and St John's Ambulance and resulted in the last people leaving the station only 60 minutes later than last year when there were no disruptions to the service. The benefits of Metro Flow were also crucial in speeding up the response on the day.

Members of the public who were affected on the day were very patient and understanding and the majority of feedback since has been very positive. Nexus will continue to work with South Tyneside Council and Northumbrian Water to find a solution for the flooding issues at Tyne Dock.

Councillor Kemp thanked everyone involved and added that there has been extraordinarily positive feedback since the event.

Councillor Gannon advised that he had written to Cathy to thank her and everyone involved for a phenomenal response to an extremely challenging situation.

RESOLVED: The North East Joint Transport Committee noted the report.

30. DISCHARGE OF TRANSPORT FUNCTIONS BY DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL 2022-2023

The Committee received a report which provided an overview of the transport functions discharged by Durham County Council from April 2022 to March 2023.

The report covered the following areas:

- Organisational arrangements
- Bus Service Network

- Concessionary Fares
- Multi-Operator Ticketing Scheme
- Community Transport (CT)
- Home to School/Social Care Transport
- In House Bus Fleet
- Travel Response Centre
- Public Transport Information
- Real Time Passenger Information
- Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership
- Wheels to Work County Durham

It was noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has continued to have a very substantial impact on activity in 2022/23 and continues to have major repercussions on transport arrangements in County Durham.

RESOLVED: The North East Joint Transport Committee noted the report.

31. NORTH EAST ZERO EMISSION VEHICLE (ZEV) STRATEGY

The Committee considered a report which outlined an initial draft of the North East Zero Emissions Strategy.

Development of the strategy fulfils a commitment made in the 2021-2035 North East Transport Plan and will help deliver the five objectives of the Plan:

- Carbon Neutral North East;
- Overcome Inequality and Grow Our Economy;
- Healthier North East;
- Appealing sustainable transport choices;
- Safe, secure network

The draft strategy aims to help people make the right travel choices and recognising that some journeys will continue to be made by car or van, encourages increased use of Zero Emissions Vehicles. It sets out an initial five-year delivery plan covering the period up to 2030, to reflect the UK Government's 2030 step 1 commitment to phase out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans. The document will be refreshed when appropriate.

In order to achieve the aim of reliable public zero emission vehicle charging infrastructure across the North East, the strategy proposes targeted investment in EV infrastructure at locations which are not commercially viable, such as remote rural areas and deprived urban areas with a high proportion of housing with no off street parking.

Research has informed the strategy development and has highlighted concerns around access to charging infrastructure and range anxiety as key factors affecting the switch from petrol or diesel vehicles. This strategy sets out how

partnership working between the public and private sector can help overcome some of these challenges.

An enabling study is currently being carried out by an independent supplier, in consultation with local authorities, to identify around 200 potential sites for the installation of EV charging infrastructure. As the study is not yet complete these sites have not been included in the initial draft of the strategy. They will however be included in the consultation draft strategy.

The strategy will include a delivery plan setting out proposals for introducing more publicly available charge points, including within rural communities. The sites from the enabling study will be included in the delivery plan. The document will help the North East to underpin funding bids and puts the region in a strong position to proceed with pace in the provision of further public charge points.

An early draft of the strategy has been shared with the seven North East local authorities and a number of key stakeholders including Transport for the North, Nexus and Investment North East England. Their comments and feedback have been appropriately reflected in the initial draft of the strategy, appended to this report.

The public consultation process will ensure that people who live or work across the region will have the opportunity to influence and comment on the draft strategy. It is proposed that there will be a five week consultation in Autumn 2023, which will operate in line with the TNE consultation guidelines agreed with JTC.

Councillor Scott asked for more details on how the consultation would be carried out?

Officers advised that there would be opportunities for people to take part in person, online and via telephone. Information about how to take part will be circulated in newspapers and via social media.

Councillor Sanderson asked how this issue was being co-ordinated with work being carried out by the seven local authorities? Officers advised that the proposed locations for all public charge points will be agreed with each local authority.

Councillor Sanderson also asked whether costs to the user for charging their vehicle would be investigated? Officers advised commercial models were being investigated and options will be explored. It is hoped that a consistent offer can be made across the region.

Councillor Sanderson requested that the issue be discussed by the local authority Leaders and Elected Mayor.

RESOLVED: The North East Joint Transport Committee:

- (i) Approved the Strategy in principle as a consultation document subject to the inclusion of recommended sites once the Enabling Study discussed in paragraph 2.9 has reached a conclusion.
- (ii) Delegated authority to the Managing Director Transport North East, following consultation with the Chair of the Joint Transport Committee, NECA Finance Director and NECA Monitoring Officer, to progress the report through public consultation once the sites recommended by the Enabling Study have been included.

32. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: The North East Joint Transport Committee agreed to exclude the press and public during consideration of item 12 by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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North East Joint Transport Committee

Date: 17 October 2023
Subject: Bus Service Improvement Plan – 2023 refresh
Report of: Managing Director, Transport North East

Executive Summary

The regions Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) sets out ambitious targets for bus throughout the region, including simpler and cheaper fares, an enhanced network and infrastructure improvements to speed up buses.

This refreshed version of the BSIP does not change any of the ambitions set out in the first version published in October 2021. The refreshed Plan highlights achievements to date and details where our BSIP funding award of £163.5m is being spent.

Recommendations

The North East Joint Transport Committee is recommended to approve for publication the updated version of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

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1. Background Information

1.1 Following the publication of the National Bus Strategy in March 2021 the North East Joint Transport Committee (JTC) approved the publication of the region's first Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in October 2021.

1.2 The North East's BSIP set out an ambitious plan, valued at £804 million, to make buses more attractive by making them an affordable and practical alternative to using private cars for more people and helping existing bus users to travel more frequently. The ambitious plan aimed to return bus ridership – which was then 25% lower than before the pandemic – to pre-Covid levels in its first year and to grow by 10% each year thereafter. This would provide a major economic boost to the region, reduce road congestion, and contribute towards climate change targets.

The numerous measures proposed included improvements to timetables and fares, extensive priority measures on roads and at junctions to speed buses up – including two new Park & Ride sites, new and attractive waiting facilities, a set of affordable fare “caps” that work across all buses and Metro services, lower fares for many young people and simplified and improved information.

The document was developed in close partnership with local bus operators and involved extensive public and stakeholder engagement and detailed research.

1.3 The government awarded £163.5m of BSIP funding to the JTC in order for it to start investing in some of the projects set out in the document over the period April 2022 to March 2025. Although the sum awarded is clearly some way short of the total funding requested, it nevertheless represents a significant amount of additional funding for the improvement of bus services in the North East and was one of the highest settlements in the country. It has allowed the JTC to award funding for the following initiatives to be commissioned:

- A new region-wide £1 bus fare for young people aged 22 and under, across the entire region
- A £3 unlimited travel day ticket for young people aged 22 and under, across the entire region valid on all bus, Metro and Ferry services
- A new range of affordable multi-modal adult day tickets across the region, which will be implemented shortly;
- Free travel for people aged 18-25 who have recently left local authority care;
- Work to develop a new journey planning and public transport information website;

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- The introduction of new bus and improved bus services, and the preservation of other services that would otherwise have been cut; and
- New bus priority measures to speed up buses at congested points across the region, and an upgrade to traffic signal equipment to give priority to buses that are running late.

1.4 We are required to refresh our BSIP annually. The 2023 BSIP refresh will provide the opportunity to:

- Review and reaffirm the JTC's ambitions for bus;
- Continue our engagement with bus users, stakeholders and the wider public;
- Update the background data which informs the BSIP; and
- Review delivery plans.

We have achieved this through a series of workshops with partners, commissioning of new market research and an extensive public engagement campaign called the Big Bus Conversation.

1.5 Key changes proposed as a result of the refresh are as follows:

Customer Experience

- No major changes have been made to the overall vision to improve the customer experience
- The programme of digital information screens envisaged in the BSIP is not affordable within the available funding
- Our regionwide bus customer charter has been redesigned following feedback to be a public facing document
- The roll-out of a regional public transport brand is not considered appropriate at present, although this will remain under review

Fares and Ticketing

- Feedback has reaffirmed support for our overall aim to make bus fares cheaper and simpler
- We have been able to introduce many planned fares initiatives including the £1 21 and under single fare which is cheaper than the original BSIP plan which was for a fare of £1.20 for people aged 19 and under
- A ticketing project led by Nexus called 'Pop 2.0' will build on our original BSIP ambition to allow automatic fare capping, with contactless bank card fare capping introduced in the longer term

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- An aspiration has been suggested to introduce a £2 single fare, if central government discontinue the scheme

Network

- Unfortunately bus ridership has failed to recover to pre-covid levels and government Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) funding has come to an end. As a result the BSIP funding needs to be partly re-purposed so that it can both deliver service enhancements and protecting the current bus network where appropriate. This means that fewer service enhancements can be delivered than were originally envisaged.
- Transport North East, local authorities and Nexus will work together to protect services which may be at risk and identify the most appropriate locations for service enhancements
- We have also updated the plan to make specific reference to SME's in relation to zero-emission buses and roadmap to be created in the next year.

Highways and Infrastructure

- The partnership remains committed to investing in infrastructure measures to make bus use more attractive, quicker and more reliable
- Following the publication of the BSIP the Department for Transport (DfT) has updated guidance to specify that funding for bus infrastructure (including bus stations) must be limited to safety and accessibility upgrades

2. Proposals

- 2.1 It is proposed that the JTC approves the refreshed BSIP document for publication, attached at Appendix A. If adopted this will supersede our existing BSIP document.

3. Reasons for the Proposals

- 3.1 It is vital that the JTC's ambitions for bus in the North East are continually reviewed and shaped by public engagement, as well as ongoing developments in the bus sector.

Furthermore, national guidance states that the BSIP should be reviewed and updated annually and an annual review of our BSIP document is a condition of government BSIP funding.

4. Alternative Options Available

- 4.1 Option 1 - The JTC approve the recommendations as set out in this report.

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- 4.2 Option 2 – The JTC determine that the proposed changes are not required and the current BSIP remains unchanged.
- 4.3 Option 1 is the recommended option
- 5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation**
- 5.1 Subject to approval by this committee the refreshed version of the BSIP will be published on the Transport North East website no later than the 31 October 2023.
- 6. Potential Impact on Objectives**
- 6.1 The BSIP aligns with the objectives of the North East Transport Plan and the Making the Right Travel Choice Strategy. In particular, the BSIP supports a green recovery through the provision of an attractive form of sustainable transport
- 7. Financial and Other Resources Implications**
- 7.1 There are no financial or resource implications to updating the BSIP. Any interventions not currently funded via the BSIP funding will need secured funding from other sources.
- 8. Legal Implications**
- 8.1 There are no legal implications from updating the BSIP.
- 9. Key Risks**
- 9.1 Failure to comply with the guidance on carrying out a review and updating the BSIP may put a risk on receiving future payments of BSIP funding from the DfT.
- 10. Equality and Diversity**
- 10.1 While everyone will benefit from the increased availability of cheaper, reliable and more attractive bus services we know that this will have a larger impact on certain groups. From our stakeholder groups we have heard directly about the impact bus services have on users who are less likely to have access to private vehicles, such as those with certain disabilities, those with lower incomes and young people. In our own independent research older residents, those not in education, employment or training and black and minority ethnic residents were

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all more than twice as likely to be frequent bus users, when compared to the North East population as a whole. BSIP initiatives such as cheaper fares with more reliable and frequent services will give greater freedom to many people to access jobs, education healthcare and social support.

11. Crime and Disorder

11.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

12. Consultation/Engagement

12.1 The publication of the BSIP does not require formal public consultation however a public engagement campaign (The Big Bus Conversation) was run from 31 August 2023 to 10 September 2023. The campaign included an online survey as well as drop in events in each of local authority area, with locations selected by the local authority communications teams.

12.2 Workshops were also held with officers from the local authorities and Nexus as well as bus operator partners.

13. Other Impact of the Proposals

13.1 No known specific impacts.

14. Appendices

14.1 Appendix 1 – Bus Service Improvement Plan

15. Background Papers

15.1 North East Bus Service Improvement Plan: [TNE-BSIP_FINAL.pdf](#)
(transportnortheast.gov.uk)

Bus Back Better – The National Bus Strategy: [Bus Back Better](#)
(publishing.service.gov.uk)

The Bus Services Act 2017 – Enhanced Partnerships Guidance: [The bus services act 2017: enhanced partnerships](#) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

JTC Report – Vision for Buses (item 9): [\(Public Pack\) Agenda Document for North East Joint Transport Committee, 13/07/2021 14:30](#) (northeastca.gov.uk)

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JTC Report – Establishment of the Enhanced Partnership (item 5) ([Public Pack](#))[Agenda Document for North East Joint Transport Committee, 21/03/2023 14:30 \(northeastca.gov.uk\)](#)

16. Contact Officers

16.1 Heather Jones, Head of Enhanced Partnerships E-mail
Heather.Jones@transportnortheast.gov.uk Tel: 07962867407

17. Sign off

- The Proper Officer for Transport:
- Head of Paid Service:
- Monitoring Officer:
- Chief Finance Officer:

18. Glossary

BSIP – Bus Service Improvement Plan

BSOG – Bus Service Operators Grant

DfT – Department for Transport

EP – Enhanced Partnership

JTC – Joint Transport Committee

LA – Local Authority

LTA – Local Transport Authority

NBS – National Bus Strategy

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North East Transport Strategy 2040 Sub-Strategy:

North East Bus Service Improvement Plan 2023

Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East

Contents

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3. BSIP Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

4. Delivery

5. Governance and Reporting

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Glossary of Terms

Appendix A – Bus Passenger Charter

Appendix B – Letters of Support



Foreword

I am delighted to present the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), setting out how – with the right amount of government funding behind us – we plan to make it easy for more people to use buses more often.

Bus services in the North East are vitally important and I am delighted to present our refreshed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). Our bold plan sets out how we will continue to make bus travel faster, more affordable and more attractive for passengers.

The bus network remains in a fragile state following the pandemic that damaged peoples' confidence in public transport and shattered the economic environment underpinning bus operations. We need to do much more to stabilise services, attract new passengers, and put buses at the heart of our sustainable transport network. Increasing the use of buses will help us to achieve many of our objectives: lowering carbon emissions, improving air quality and public health, and connecting our people to education, jobs and other opportunities.

The North East Joint Transport Committee set out a bold and ambitious vision in our first BSIP, which we developed jointly with the bus operators. I was pleased that the government recognised the quality of the first BSIP by awarding £163.5 million in funding, one of the largest settlements in the country. Although this was significantly less than the amount we said we needed to deliver full benefits, nevertheless it represents a significant and long overdue investment in buses in the North East. We are now using this funding to deliver some of the improvements we set out in the BSIP, working with bus companies through a formal "EP" structure.

We have launched a new £1 single fare for people aged 21 and under - which is already being used by vast numbers of young people each day - and this was quickly followed by a £3 day ticket giving young people unlimited travel on buses, Metro and Ferry across the whole region.

This gives young people in education and training, and those who are starting their careers, an affordable way to travel sustainably. We are also investing significantly in bus priority measures throughout the region to speed up bus journeys, we are improving passenger information, and we have used funding both to launch new bus services and to sustain many parts of the bus network in the face of the industry's financial troubles.

We have now refreshed our BSIP to reflect where we are in the funding programme, taking on board feedback on initiatives so far. Our BSIP deliver so far shows that with the right level of investment and a shared ambition, we really can deliver a better bus network for our region. I am looking forward to seeing more game-changing initiatives come to life in the next few years.



Cllr Martin Gannon, Chair, North East Joint Transport Committee

Foreword

Across the region there have been over 154 million bus journeys each year. Most journeys are someone travelling to work, to education or for leisure, so it is clear to see that our bus network is a huge part of everyday life for many people in the North East.

Buses have an important role in our region, connecting people to jobs, education, friends and family. We have seen bus patronage start to recover following the pandemic, bus operators are working hard to continue to improve passenger numbers and providing a safe, reliable and sustainable way for the public to travel. We are working together with local authorities to deliver improvements and we were delighted earlier this year to help introduce the £1 single fare and £3 day fare for young people aged 21 and under.

We're proud to be working in partnership to deliver the region's first Bus Service Improvement Plan. Greater alignment between bus operators and local authorities will help provide even better journeys for more passengers. The government award of £163.5 million reflects the ambition for buses in the North East. This investment, through the BSIP, provides an opportunity to deliver the true potential of the North East's bus network, helping us to shift travel habits and be more focused on sustainable public transport in our region.



Ben Maxfield, Chair, NEbus
– bus operators association

1. Executive Summary

Our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) set out a wide range of significant proposed improvements to every aspect of bus services, to be delivered through a formal partnership of bus operators, the North East Joint Transport Committee (NEJTC), local authorities and Nexus.

This refreshed version of our BSIP highlights the progress that has been made since the publication of the initial plan in 2021, but also the challenges the sector has faced during that time. Overall, this refresh sets out the heightened need to deliver on our BSIP objectives, driving real change for sustainable transport in the region.

We were pleased that our level of ambition for buses in the North East was recognised by the Department for Transport (DfT) in our allocation of £163.5 million in April 2022 to improve our bus services.

In making our BSIP, we responded to the Government's National Bus Strategy and the North East Joint Transport Committees' (NEJTC's) Transport Plan, both of which require that improvements to bus services are planned and delivered in order to achieve national and local objectives. These objectives include the reduction of carbon emissions, improvements in air quality, the growth of our economy and the advancement of the health and wellbeing of local people through the increased use of sustainable forms of transport.

Since the publication of the BSIP in October 2021, we have formally made our Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan and Scheme that makes delivery commitments binding.

Given the amount of funding that has since been indicatively awarded is less than our £804 million BSIP ask, we have conducted a prioritisation process with members of the partnership to establish which of the proposals in the BSIP are the most cost effective and impactful to drive our KPIs.

The content of our BSIP proposals remain unchanged, and serve as a statement of ambition if further funding were to become available.

While the partnership has made substantial progress over the last year, this has taken place against a challenging backdrop for the bus industry.

Patronage levels have increased compared to 2022, however are still below pre-pandemic levels. While the bus driver shortage is no longer having as significant an impact, staffing levels do still cause on the day cancellations leading to the network not being seen as reliable for passengers. Further network changes have occurred following the end of central government support (the Bus Recovery Grant), with network cuts and far more routes operating as secured services by local authorities than had previously been the case. However, this is not a long-term solution, meaning the future of many bus services in the region cannot be guaranteed until improvements are brought forward through much needed BSIP investment.

Inflation and the cost of living crisis have also added to the urgency to deliver our initiatives for bus. With increasing pressure on household budgets, it is now more important than ever that communities can take advantage of reliable and affordable bus services. We were able to quickly launch some of our fares schemes shortly after funding was released.

To reflect the interval without funding, our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) timeline has been slightly delayed, they do however, remain highly ambitious. The partnership's focus is to go beyond securing our current network, something which unfortunately has been reoccupied the sector since BSIP publication, and to permanently transform bus services going forward.

Key Performance Indicators

The more people choose to use the bus network in the North East, the more successful we will be in delivering our strategic objectives, such as reducing carbon emissions and responding to climate change, helping our economy to grow, and making sure that everyone in our region can access employment, education, and other opportunities.

Furthermore, the more people that use the bus network, the more financially successful and sustainable it will become, opening the door to future growth and investment and reducing reliance on public funding. We have updated our KPIs to reflect the delay to receiving funding, these are still stretching targets however and set the context for the improvements we need to make:

- Grow bus patronage: Once we have achieved pre-pandemic levels, we will significantly grow bus patronage, targeting 10% growth on the 2019 baseline by March 2025 and a further 10% growth on 2019 figures by March 2026. We want to make sure this growth comes from all parts of the region and so the same target will apply for boardings at rural bus stops and for patronage among young people.
- Grow bus modal share: We will increase the modal share of bus by 1 percentage point by March 2024 and by another 1 percentage point by March 2025. This target will apply both overall and for journeys to work and education.

- Grow bus passenger satisfaction: In order to attract new bus users we need improved customer satisfaction, which is already relatively high at 91%. Our target is for this to grow to 92% by March 2024 and 93% by March 2025.
- Make buses faster, punctual and reliable: Our investments in bus priority will speed buses up relative to general traffic. We want buses to be punctual both at their point of origin (95% in 2022/23, 96% in 2023/24 and 97% in 2024/25) and along their entire route (90% in 2023/24, 95% in 2024/25 and 95% in 2025/26). We also need buses to be reliable with a fixed target of 99.5% throughout the period of the BSIP.
- Make buses greener: We need to improve the environmental performance of our bus fleet and so we will target higher levels of investment each year so that all buses are Euro 6 or better by March 2025.

Delivery

The following improvements have been identified by the partnership as necessary to deliver our strategic objectives and to achieve our ambitions for bus in the region. We are progressing many of these with our £163.5m funding award although some remain long term objectives dependent on future funding availability.

Customer Experience

Network wide ticketing and journey planning will be made available to passengers through a single dedicated website and accompanying app. We will also continue to provide printed information.

We will develop a new and consistent brand for the partnership that will be applied across the network so that it becomes a recognisable symbol of public transport in the North East.

On journey passenger information:

The 400 bus stops with existing real time information will be updated to a next generation system which shows up-to-date Real Time Passenger Information. A further 100 stops will be updated with digital displays. We will provide clear printed information at stops and stations, including in rural areas, and maintain it. We will provide seamless service information to customers, offering a single source of truth, feeding to any connected systems for passenger information. All interchanges and rail stations will be supported with multi-modal passenger information, showing real time information about connecting journeys.

We will improve CCTV provision throughout the entire network, ensuring coverage of every major station and stop across the region.

We will develop a consistent training module to be delivered to all our colleagues who fulfil a direct customer experience role.

Ride experience:

Offer a Bus Passenger Charter that applies on all bus services in our region to build customer confidence, to improve consistency and transparency.

A taxi guarantee will give disabled passengers the peace of mind that if there isn't room for their wheelchair on board, a taxi replacement will be provided for them at no extra cost.

Turnaround cleaners will be employed at bus stations throughout our network. They will be available to quickly clean any operators' bus to ensure a clean and pleasant journey on any bus.

All vehicles will be fitted with enhanced nextstop audio-visual equipment, charging points and Wi-Fi as standard.

Customer Experience continued

Transport ambassadors will be available at key interchanges throughout the network to guide passengers and help them make the right travel choices.

Empower communities and businesses to facilitate the move to augmented modal share and bus patronage through community bus and business partnerships.

Fares and ticketing

Multi-operator and multi-modal tickets will be introduced to allow customers greater flexibility to travel around the network. These fares will simplify the existing fares structure as well as making travel more affordable for many customers travelling across the network. The following new fares will be launched: By introducing these fares, more people will be encouraged to use the bus network travelling on a cheaper, simpler to understand ticket across various modes and operators.

To further improve the fares offer, additional low cost, multi-modal, multi-operator fares will be developed to make pricing more affordable in areas that are a short distance from a zone boundary.

Our multi-modal fares will be available in two forms:

- A ticket purchased before travel begins (from a bus driver, at a Metro ticket machine, online, or through a new app);
- A price “cap” that is automatically calculated and applied when a customer uses a contactless bank card, mobile phone payment app, or Pay As You Go smart card to pay for travel.

Through the BSIP we intend to put in place the back-office system and upgrade existing ticketing equipment to allow this to happen.

To extend the current Metro ‘Take the Kids for Free’ offer to all bus services, following a successful trial in summer 2022.

We will conduct a study to examine whether local additions to the ENCTS can be standardised throughout the region.

To introduce a care experienced travel pass across the region.

Network

We will work with operators, local authorities and Nexus to ensure there is sufficient funding to maintain their current networks.

Enhanced bus corridors to create more and better connections between local places and other modes, through the introduction of new and expanded routes where there is potential for sustainable growth, for example the opening of the new Northumberland rail line.

We will look to enhance service frequencies in mornings and evenings in line with our Superbus categories.

We will also look to improve rural connectivity, in particular through a new service to Kielder in the Northumberland National Park and ensure that buses run all year round to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Hadrian's Wall.

We will launch pilots for Demand Responsive Services, which could include home-to-school services.

We will support the introduction of cleaner and greener vehicles through accelerating operators' bus replacement programmes and reviewing ways in which hydrogen vehicles can be utilised.

To review the North East parking policies in relation to public transport.

We will introduce a refreshed code of conduct to introduce a consistent standard for network changes.

Connect will be the network of socially and economically necessary links between the local, sub-regional and regional centres in our region, complementing the Tyne and Wear Metro, National Rail and interurban express services. Buses will run at least every 30 minutes on Monday to Saturday daytimes, hourly in the evening and on Sundays.

Rural routes will be tailored to the specific requirements of the communities they serve, with buses running at least every two hours on Monday to Saturday daytimes.

Highways and infrastructure

Our region is committed to investment in highways infrastructure, which could include road space reallocation, junction redesign, traffic signal re-prioritisation, bus gates and other measures designed to improve bus services.

Ensuring stops and shelters have appropriate modern facilities, including lighting, CCTV, real time information, and high-quality pedestrian access to increase safety. A strategic plan will be developed to select 'hub' shelters that can serve as a community focus for interchange opportunities between bus routes, with cycling and walking, with rail, ferry, Metro, and park and ride sites.

We will replace all our bus stop 'flags' to ensure consistent standards throughout the region.

New bus stations will be delivered in Durham, Alnwick, Bishop Auckland and an additional Newcastle City Centre bus station.

There are further plans to improve bus access to North Shields Fish Quay, especially given the new ferry landing, and the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP).

We will contribute to already planned investment in the region's highways in the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) project to ensure the potential for bus priority is maximised.

We will introduce 5 new major Park and Ride sites in the region, served by high-specification vehicles running a dedicated service for customers.

We will establish formal 'Pocket Park and Ride' locations around the network. 'Pocket Park and Ride' sites have a small number of car parking spaces and will be located along existing bus routes, supported by high-quality information and waiting facilities.

1. Overview

Area covered

This BSIP covers seven local authority areas in the North East, consisting of two combined authorities.

The North East Combined Authority (NECA) (comprising of the local authority areas of Durham County Council, Gateshead Council, South Tyneside Council and Sunderland City Council).

The North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) (comprising of the local authority areas of Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council and Northumberland County Council).

Although these Combined Authorities are Local Transport Authorities in their own right, they discharge their transport functions jointly through the North East Joint Transport Committee ('NEJTC'), which is a statutory body responsible for transport policy and delivery across the region.

Transport North East is the name of the officer group that supports the NEJTC in developing and delivering transport and strategy across the region.

Nexus is the trading name of the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive, responsible for delivering passenger transport in Tyne and Wear, which is a largely urban sub-section of our area covering the local authority areas of Gateshead Council, Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council, South Tyneside Council and Sunderland City Council.

NEbus is the name of the local bus operators' association encompassing the providers of services across the North East. NEbus and the NEJTC work together collaboratively through an informal partnership ('the partnership').

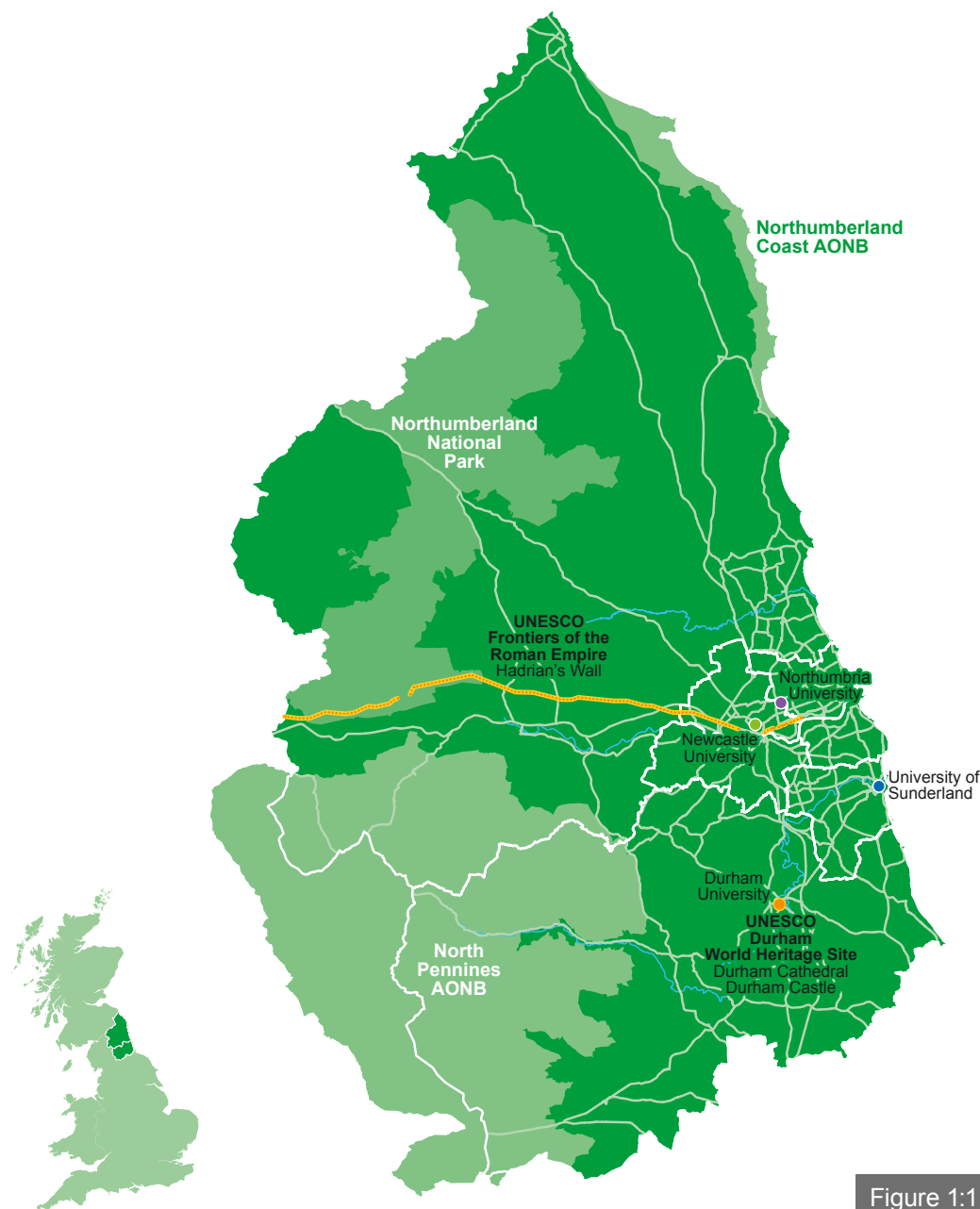


Figure 1:1

EP Plan and Scheme(s)

For many years the NEJTC has been working informally with local bus operators, individually and through their local association, NEbus.

At the NEJTC meeting on 21 March 2023 the NEJTC agreed to the making of the North East's EP Plan and Scheme; the full documents can be found on the Transport North East website, including the formal notice of making the EP Plan and Scheme.

The Scheme covers the local government administrative areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

Our region is distinct and diverse. Our three vibrant city centres of Durham, Newcastle and Sunderland are surrounded by lively towns and villages set in some of the most beautiful and least populated countryside in the UK, with miles of unspoilt coastline and the Northumberland National Park Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Our wide range of leisure, cultural, sporting, and historical attractions includes UNESCO World Heritage sites Hadrian's Wall and Durham Cathedral and Castle.

Our manufacturing base includes five national catapult centres, three national innovation centres, and growing tech and fintech industries. These industries attract significant inward investment, helping address the unequal life outcomes of our 2 million population.

Duration

The BSIP covers a three-year period starting 1 April 2022 and ending in March 2025, although it does refer to investment plans in the years that follow.

BSIP annual review

In line with requirements, the BSIP will be reviewed every year.

Alignment

The Transport Plan, adopted by the NEJTC in March 2021, provides the strategic framework to support delivery of an improved, more seamless, coordinated and integrated transport system across the region. It sets out how transport can help support the wider goals of creating a green, healthy, dynamic, and thriving North East economy.

The Transport Plan builds on 'Connected North East: Our Blueprint' (Blueprint), published in October 2020 as a collaborative project brought together by a number of North East partners. The Blueprint sets out how a connected North East can increase the prosperity, quality of life and health of the region by uniting the potential of digital and transport.

This BSIP is closely aligned with the North East Transport Plan and the Blueprint, as well as all relevant policies and plans of the NEJTC, the region's two Combined Authorities, seven local authorities and Nexus.

In the remainder of this section, we explain the overarching links between this BSIP and our region's Transport Plan, including:

- An introduction to the Transport Plan's vision and objectives.
- Our 'Making the Right Travel Choice' strategy target which encourages car users to switch one journey a week to public transport, walking or cycling.
- Our region's document 'Your Vision for Buses' which sets out the high-level interventions or solutions required from our bus network to deliver our Transport Plan's vision and objectives.

Introduction to the North East Transport Plan's vision and objectives

The vision statement for our Transport Plan is: **“Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East”**.

This vision is supported by five strategic objectives for transport in our region. They are reflective of the critical strategic issues, such as the Climate Emergency declared by each of our local authorities and Combined Authorities, our ambition for a clean and green recovery from the pandemic and the need to address the health of our region. Within the Transport Plan we explain why these objectives have been selected.

Our Transport Plan contains a live programme of planned interventions and is reviewed and updated regularly. The NEJTC receives a report updating on the actions we are taking to deliver the Transport Plan at each of their meetings.

The delivery of the BSIP and the development of the Enhanced Partnership (EP) is a crucial step in the delivery of our Transport Plan. Every investment we make within the BSIP and EP will support progress towards these objectives.



Carbon-neutral North East

We will initiate actions to make travel in the North East net carbon zero, addressing our air quality challenges and helping to tackle the climate emergency.



Overcome inequality and grow our economy

We will return the region to pre COVID-19 levels of employment and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), then move forward in pursuit of the ambitions set out in the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).



Healthier North East

We will encourage active and sustainable travel to help our region attain health levels that are at least equal to other parts of the UK.



Appealing, sustainable transport choices

We will introduce measures that make sustainable modes of transport more attractive and an easy alternative for getting around the North East.



Safe, secure network

We will ensure that people are confident about their safety and security when travelling around the North East.

Figure 1:2

Making the Right Travel Choice – the strategy at the heart of our Transport Plan

Central to our Transport Plan is our “Making the Right Travel Choice” strategy. This strategy encourages people to travel more sustainably where they are able to do so and asks car users to switch one car journey a week to active travel or public transport.

We understand in North East England that we should do more than just provide a sustainable transport network – we should make it attractive, so people want to use it.

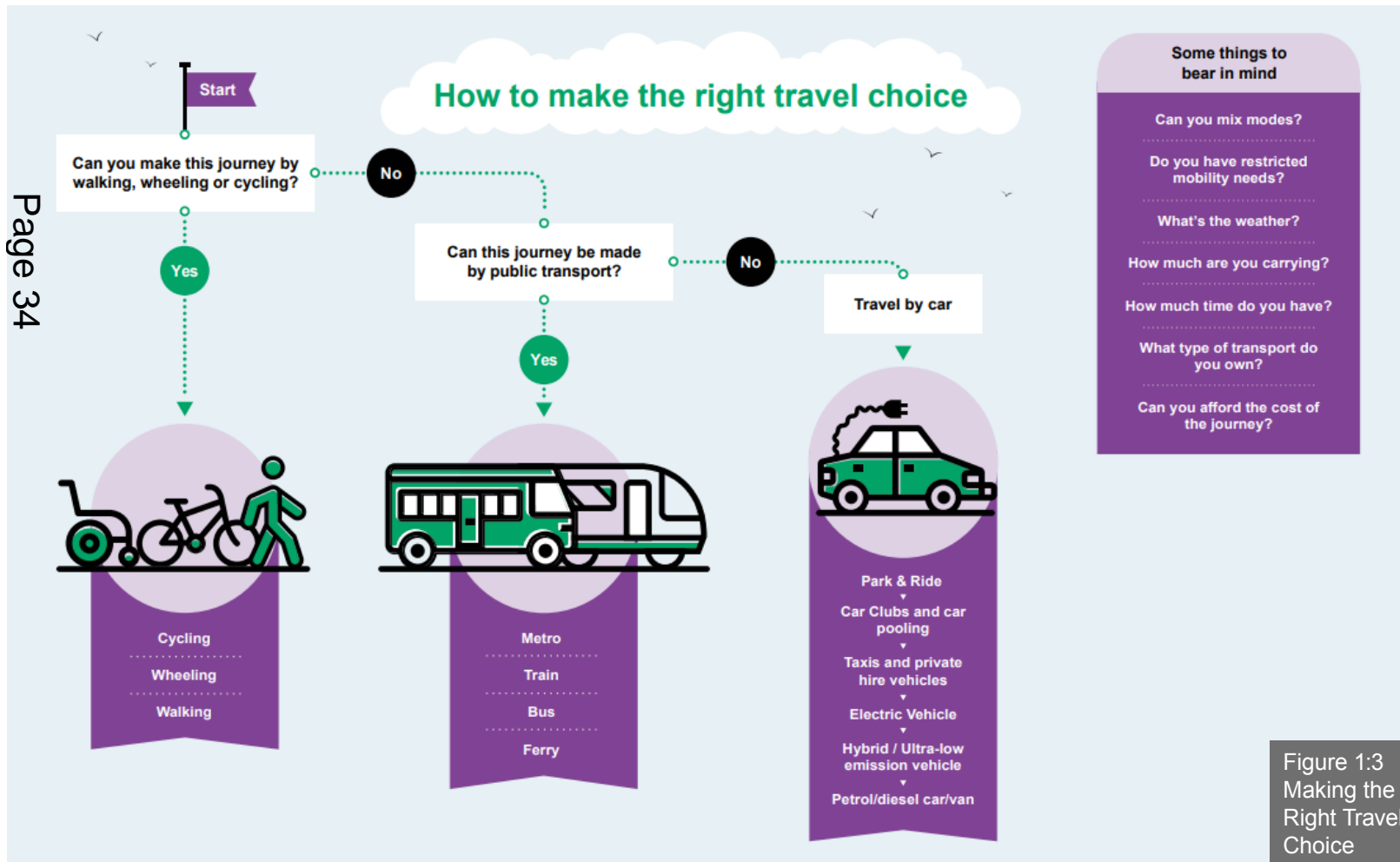


Figure 1:3
Making the
Right Travel
Choice

‘Your Vision for Buses’: How we have aligned our BSIP with the North East Transport Plan

Our strategy of ‘Making the Right Travel Choices’, leaves no doubt: our region is committed to positioning buses as an appealing and sustainable transport choice, which people should choose ahead of a car whenever possible.



In June 2021, the NEJTC published a high-level strategic vision document called ‘Your Vision for Buses’. This document was developed in partnership with our region’s bus operators and considers the role that buses can play in delivering our Transport Plan. In doing so, it sets out Ten Solutions for the bus network – and asks the region to consider and test these solutions. These Ten Solutions are aligned with the Government’s ‘National Bus Strategy’.

In summer 2021, we talked to the people and businesses in the North East through an informal engagement campaign called ‘the Big Bus Conversation’. We wanted to understand what people think we need to do to encourage bus use in circumstances where it is “the right travel choice”. In summer 2023, we re-ran this informal engagement campaign to see if attitudes towards bus had changed at all. Participants were asked to say how likely, or unlikely, a solution was to help them use the bus more.

Through ‘the Big Bus Conversation’ 2023, around 2,200 people confirmed that they thought the Ten Solutions we had already set out were the right ones to make buses an appealing and sustainable transport alternative and attract more people towards using the bus. Our BSIP therefore proposes initiatives covering all ten of these solutions.

We established a Stakeholder Forum for businesses, services such as health and education, advocates for equalities groups and passenger and community representatives. Stakeholders contributed by email and through attendance at four multi-media events, which were well attended, both online and in person. The most rural parish councillors welcomed the ability to participate virtually, since ‘more buses to more places’ is their primary need.

The DfT presented to the Stakeholders and took part in discussion, as did NEbus. The events confirmed the Ten Solutions as the right priorities and gave insights into the planning and delivery of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT), customer service for people with extra needs and ways to support businesses and services to increase the use of bus by their staff and customers.











-  **An enhanced network that is simple and easy to understand**
-  **Faster and more reliable journey times**
-  **A simple and flexible fares structure**
-  **Better integration between modes**
-  **More early morning and evening services**
-  **Clear and consistent information that is easy to access**
-  **Improved safety and security**
-  **Cleaner and greener vehicles**
-  **Improved connectivity beyond our boundaries**
-  **A first-class customer experience**

Figure 1:4 ‘Your Vision for Buses’ was an enabler to our region’s ‘Big Bus Conversation’, which gathered the region’s views on bus travel and our proposed Ten Solutions.



The Big Bus Conversation toured our seven local authority areas in August 2023.

The Transport Plan, Blueprint, and Your Vision for Buses are available on the Transport North East website:

www.transportnortheast.gov.uk

The following logic map confirms the alignment between our region's Transport Plan and this BSIP.

Our region's Transport Plan has five objectives.

To achieve these objectives, we need people "to make the right travel choice" - including where possible, choosing the bus before the car.

'Your Vision for Buses' sets out ten solutions, which our region confirms are needed to persuade people to choose buses.

This BSIP proposes initiatives which deliver against all of these ten solutions.

2. Current bus offer to passengers

This section sets out the current North East bus offer, examining the factors that combine to influence bus provision in the North East.

Services are inevitably tailored to geography, demographics, and markets, with frequent services in the metropolitan and urban areas, and more targeted services connecting our many other key locations. “Secured services”, which are bus services that are tendered and contracted by the local authorities and Nexus, respond to social need where commercially operated services are not viable, often in rural or remote areas, places that are hard to serve as part of an existing bus route, or at the extremities of the day.

Analysis of existing local bus services compared to BSIP outcomes

In this section we provide analysis and data to show how the current network measures up against our BSIP targets as set out in Section 3 (‘BSIP Key Performance Indicators’). We also explain the factors that affect the use of local bus services. Examples of our sources are outlined in figure 2:1.

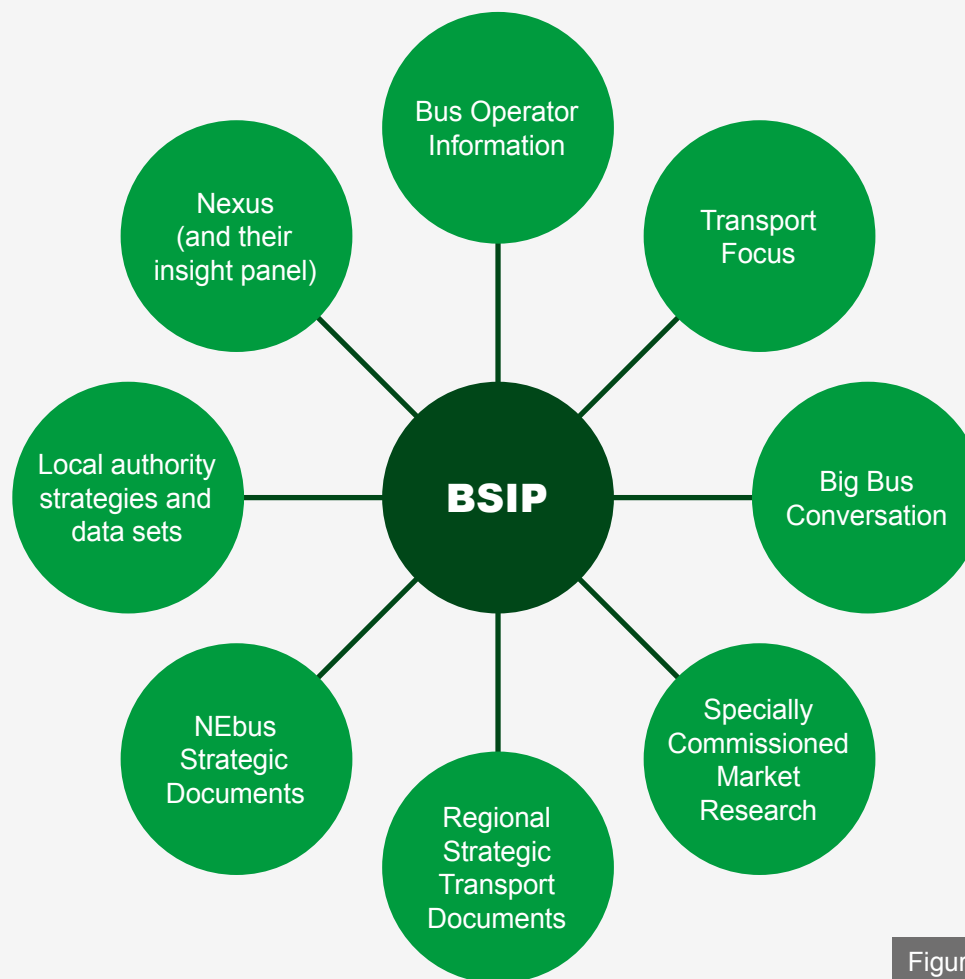


Figure 2:1 Data and information sources informing our BSIP

2. Current bus offer to passengers

Data and information in this section is presented at a strategic level. In Section 4 ('Delivery'), we deploy data and information at a more granular level to inform the case around each of the interventions we propose making to our network.

We have set a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the success of this BSIP. Firstly, we want to be in a position where a higher proportion of people choose the bus to travel, leading to a **significantly increased modal share for bus** – especially for **journeys to work and education, and in rural areas**. This will lead to growth in bus patronage. We know that this will only happen when people see tangible improvements made to bus services, which we will measure through **improved customer satisfaction**. If we want passengers to be satisfied, buses must be **punctual and reliable**, and **buses need to be faster** and not caught in congestion.

Although getting more people on the bus and growing its modal share will of itself improve our environmental performance, we want to target a continuous improvement in the emission standards of our bus fleet.

“Buses are my preferred transport but their reliability, and the believability of information about them is key to improving confidence.”
(Big Bus Conversation 2023)

Bus punctuality and reliability

We found that bus punctuality and reliability were concerns for many during the Big Bus Conversation. The sentiments expressed demonstrate just how crucial it is that buses can be relied upon and the impact on passengers when they are let down.

Bus punctuality is the percentage of buses which are early or late, normally defined as more than five minutes late or one minute early. Bus reliability is the percentage of scheduled bus miles which are operated, with service cancellations or early terminations negatively impacting reliability.

Our buses tend to be better than average for England, however they still fall short of Traffic Commissioner targets which aim for buses to be 'on time' at least 95% of the time at all timing points and for a minimum of 99.5% of scheduled mileage to be operated.

“Better reliability. I use my car when I have to be somewhere by a particular time because I can never be sure that the bus will come on time, or at all.”
(Big Bus Conversation 2023)

“I find that after COVID, the reliability of buses has decreased. Over the past year there have been numerous occasions where I've been stuck at Newcastle Haymarket or Cramlington waiting up to an hour for a bus (they run every couple of minutes).”
(Big Bus Conversation 2023)

“Not frequent enough. Need to be more reliable.”
(Big Bus Conversation 2023)

“I used to use the bus but swapped to car as the bus wasn't reliable enough.”
(Big Bus Conversation 2023)

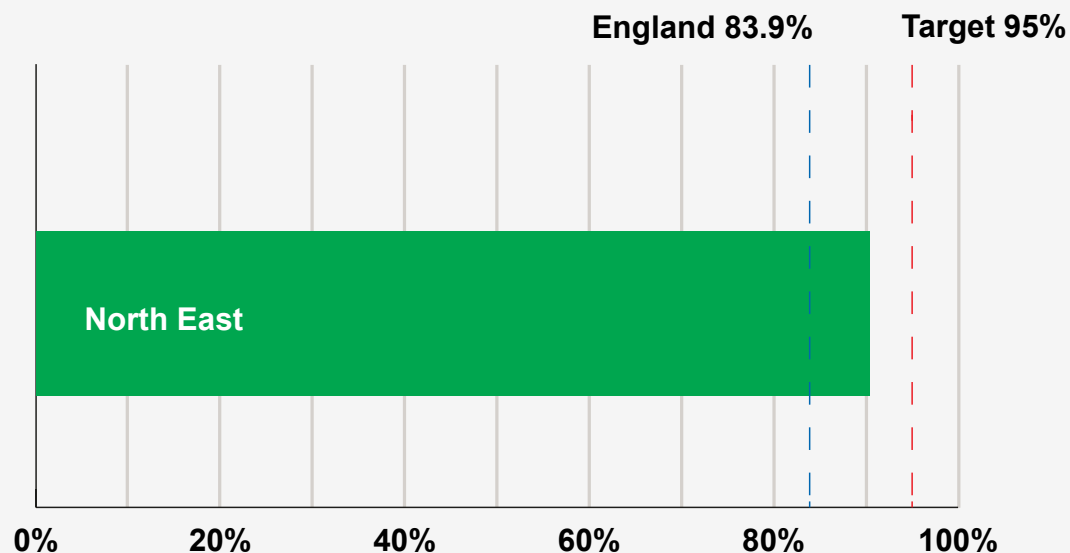


Figure 2:2 DfT data - North East bus punctuality (excluding County Durham due to data availability) against targets in 2021/2

We know that poor performance impacts those who rely on the bus service, especially those from low-income households without cars. A bus being late can have social and economic repercussions for travellers such as being late for work or missing connections to other forms of transport. When buses are cancelled, this can also lead to passengers becoming stranded in some of the worst cases.

As we heard in the Big Bus Conversation one of the biggest impacts of poor bus performance is a decline of trust and confidence in the bus service which can influence transport choices.

Delays and cancellations can be caused by a variety of factors, including operational issues such as bus driver shortages. Congestion is a leading cause however with bus performance reaching 96% on the least reliable routes during lockdown. This shows what can be achieved if buses have a clear run.

Average bus speeds

As well as punctuality and reliability, the speed of a bus journey can be an important factor when making a travel choice. We therefore need bus services to be as quick and efficient as possible. During the Big Bus Conversation, 160 respondents listed 'slow' as a top three word that springs to mind when they think about buses. Feedback regarding bus speed included: "Conductors on buses needed to speed up journeys"; "An Oyster card system would speed up bus boarding"; "More BUS ONLY lanes and traffic light priority for buses, and an end to speed humps or chicanes on bus routes" and the need for "shorter journey times with better links between Durham, Washington, Sunderland and Newcastle".

As well as separating buses from congestion, maintaining and enhancing bus services can also make bus travel quicker. This is because more journeys can be made without the need to interchange, there are more direct routes and higher bus frequencies reduce wait times.

“It takes me two hours door to door [to travel] from Castleside to Newcastle for my work (including walking at either end – it is about one hour 25 minutes on buses and 10- to 15- minutes waiting)... make the bus to Newcastle direct so that it gets there before you’ve fallen asleep (that journey alone is more than an hour because all bus choices go round everywhere en route). Castleside even has a direct bus to Durham, but it is actually quicker to change in Consett because it is so slow to do that journey! There are basically too few bus routes, so every bus goes to every possible town and village en route, dragging the journey out.”
(Big Bus Conversation, 2021)

Bus modal share

“I would like to use car less given the current climate but bus services need investment and improvements.”
(Big Bus Conversation, 2023)

Car and van use, either as a driver or passenger, accounts for 59% of journeys made in the North East, in comparison to local buses which account for 6.8%.

In our independent market research 93% of people told us they live within a 5 or 10 minute walk of a bus stop and 51% indicated that they would be open to using buses more often.

There is clearly strong potential for significant growth in bus modal share from the current position. By delivering our ambitions for bus we hope to encourage more people to try their local services and enable current passengers to rely on buses for more trips.

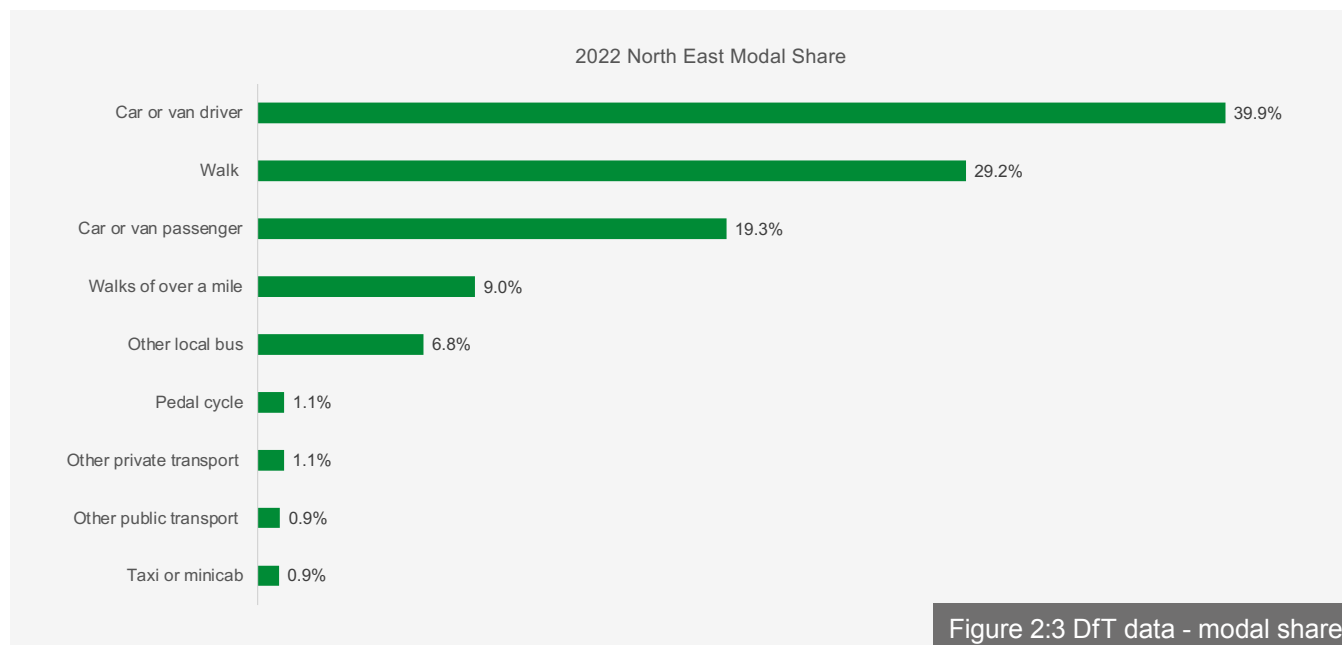


Figure 2:3 DfT data - modal share

Patronage

As is indicated in Figure 2:4 bus ridership has not yet recovered to 2018/19 levels with many reporting that their travel habits have changed in recent years.

In the longer term, patronage has been declining for many decades, although there were some promising signs of growth before 2019. There are many varied reasons for this including increased car ownership. This challenging background is reflected in the 54% of residents who responded to our market research told us they don't see the bus as practical to use in their daily routines.

Despite this, our market research also showed that North East residents recognise the advantages of bus travel with 49% and 69% respectively agreeing or strongly agreeing that increased bus use helps to save money and helps the environment.

We have also collected hundreds of positive testimonials regarding local services, with many reporting increased use to the national £2 fare cap and £1 21 and under single. This is backed up by increases in patronage which shows positive investments can have a real impact on bus patronage.

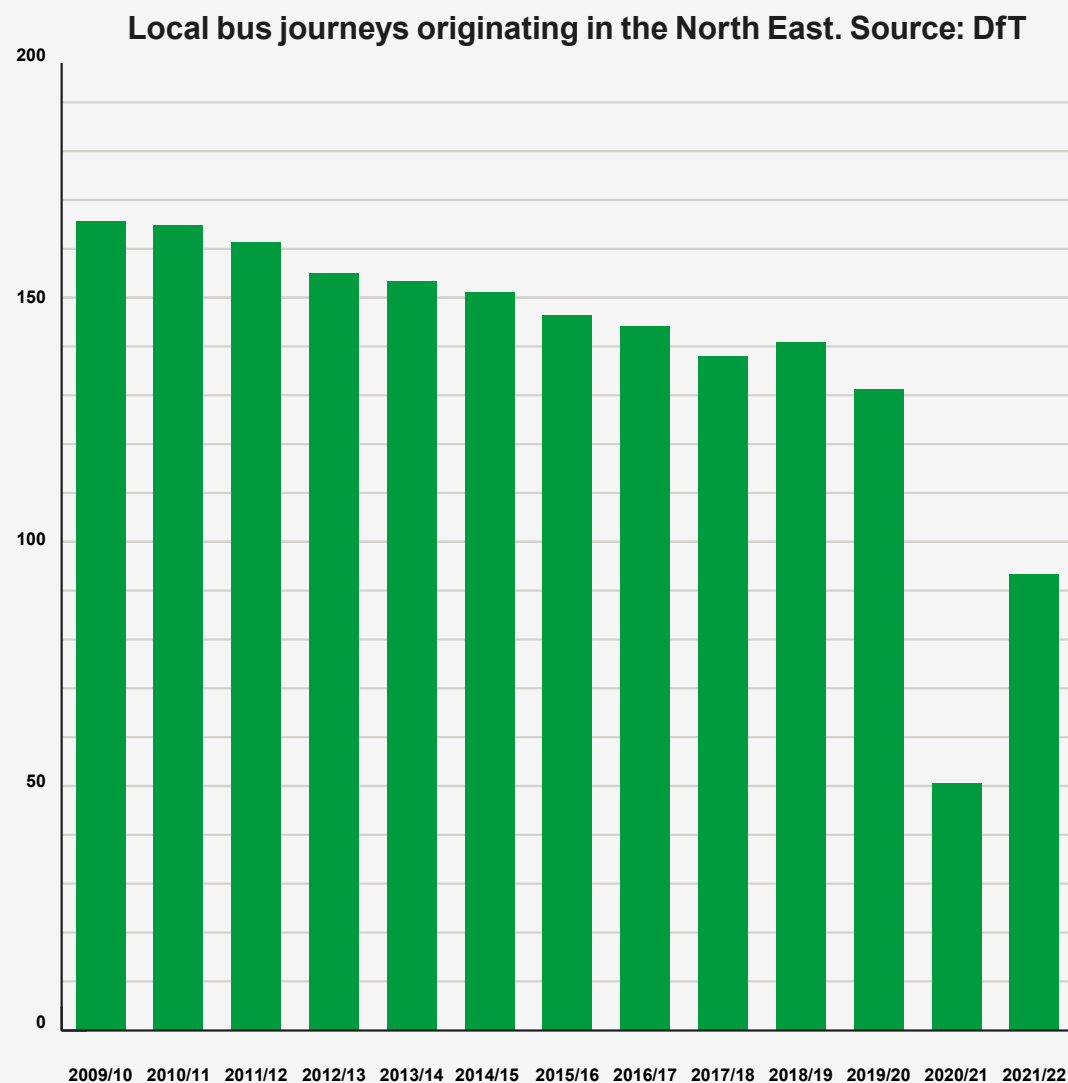


Figure 2:4 Dft data showing number of bus journeys originating in the North East

Customer satisfaction

This graph, based on data from Transport Focus, shows that 81% of people using bus in the North East were satisfied with their journey in 2022. Unfortunately, this is a substantial reduction from satisfaction levels in 2019, although slightly different methodologies have been used. This disappointing decrease may be explained by recent service issues such as reliability and punctuality challenges associated with the national bus driver shortage. 49% of respondents to our market research rated local bus services as excellent or good.

Improving customer satisfaction will be key to maintaining existing customer and encouraging more people to switch to bus.

While everyone will benefit from more attractive bus services, we know that this will have a larger impact on certain groups. Census data tells us that ethnic minorities in the North East are more than twice as likely to travel to work by bus than white respondents. During the Big Bus Conversation, we also heard directly from residents who are more likely to rely on bus services such as those with certain disabilities, those with lower incomes and young people.

“I like the electric buses. The reduced noise and cleaner buses makes it much more pleasant.”
(Big Bus Conversation, 2023)

Environmental performance

Many residents expressed concern about bus emissions during the Big Bus Conversation, many others also celebrated the introduction of new zero emission vehicles in the region. In 2021 54% of the region's bus fleet was not at the engine emissions standard of Euro 6 or higher.

Recently, 9 new high specification electric buses have entered the fleet and the region has been successfully awarded funding for 52 new zero emission vehicles through the Levelling Up Fund. There are still changes to be made however, otherwise we will continue to trail behind other regions in bringing about positive environmental change.

Customer satisfaction – overall

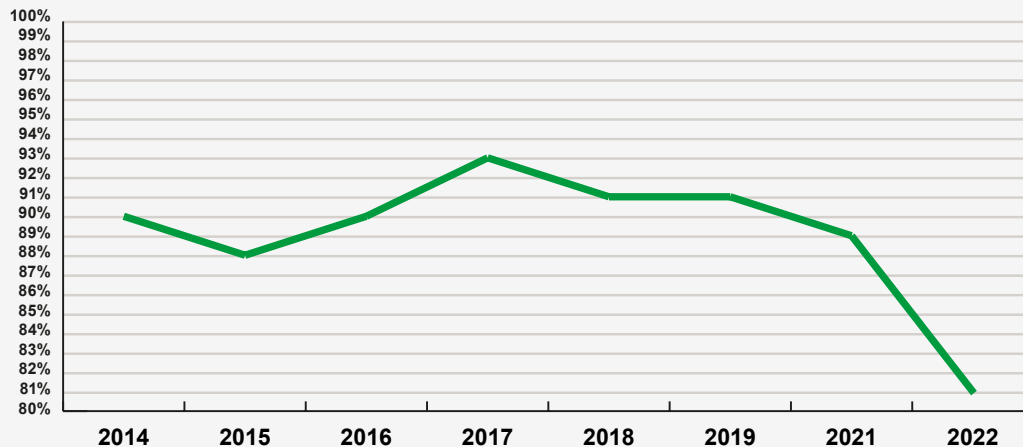


Figure 2:5

Financial support for bus services

Due to the importance of bus travel for our communities, millions of pounds of public funding are used to support the bus network. The below graph shows a snapshot of funding in the financial year (2021/22). Due to continued fluctuation in the bus market since this point it is not possible to present more up to date accurately. Local authority spending on bus services is also undergoing reprofiling following the end of Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) Funding and Local Transport Fund (LTF). As BSIP investments are delivered it is hoped reliance on supported services will be reduced.

	Durham £000	Northumberland £000	Tyne and Wear £000	Total £000
Subsidised Bus Services	3,375	1,380	11,206	15,961
ENCTS	10,993	4,650	33,222	48,865
Bus Stations/ Infrastructure	196	26	1,955	2,177
Public Transport Information	88	25	982	1,095
				68,098

Figure 2:6 Public funding of the bus network in 2021/22
(Source: Durham County Council, Northumberland County Council, Nexus)

In terms of subsidy of routes and mileage, the breakdown is as follows:

	Durham	Northumberland	Tyne and Wear	Total
Routes fully secured by public subsidy	44	45	69	159
Routes partly secured by public subsidy (e.g. evening and weekend services)	57	7	95	159
Other operations funded publicly (e.g. home to school)	219	774	247	1,240
Number of route miles supported	2,429,500	3,826,003	129,783.28	6,385,286.28
% of bus network supported (Note: subject to refinement)				10.31%

Figure 2:7 Subsidy of routes by LTA/PTE area
(Source: Durham County Council, Northumberland County Council, Nexus)

2. Current bus offer to passengers

Other factors that affect the use of local bus services

In this section we set out information and data about factors which affect the use of bus services in our region including:

- Identified barriers to bus use.
- Perceptions and attitudes toward buses.
- Car parking: the extent and pricing of parking provisions in towns and cities and the split between local authority and private sector provision. Also, the amount spent by each local authority in our region on parking enforcement.
- Other competing and complimentary factors to the bus network in the North East.

Some of these factors can be seen in Figure 2:8 which sets out why North East bus users choose the bus.

As part of the 2023 review, we commissioned new independent market research, which amongst other outputs, is designed to offer insight into the perceptions and attitudes toward buses in our region.

The project methodology was quantitative, with a survey conducted online and in person with panels of respondents who were resident in the North East as well as a number of tourists.

The work was undertaken between August and September 2023, with a survey of 1220 interviews, spanning the whole region, and an online research panel used to source independent and reliable samples. Quotas and weighting were used to deliver a representative sample of the North East region in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and geography.

The key findings of the research follow:



Reason for choosing the bus

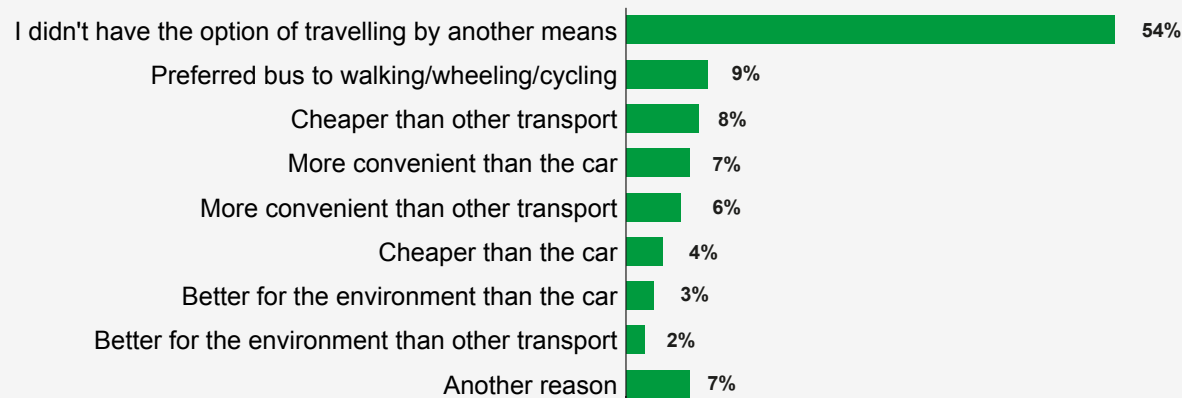
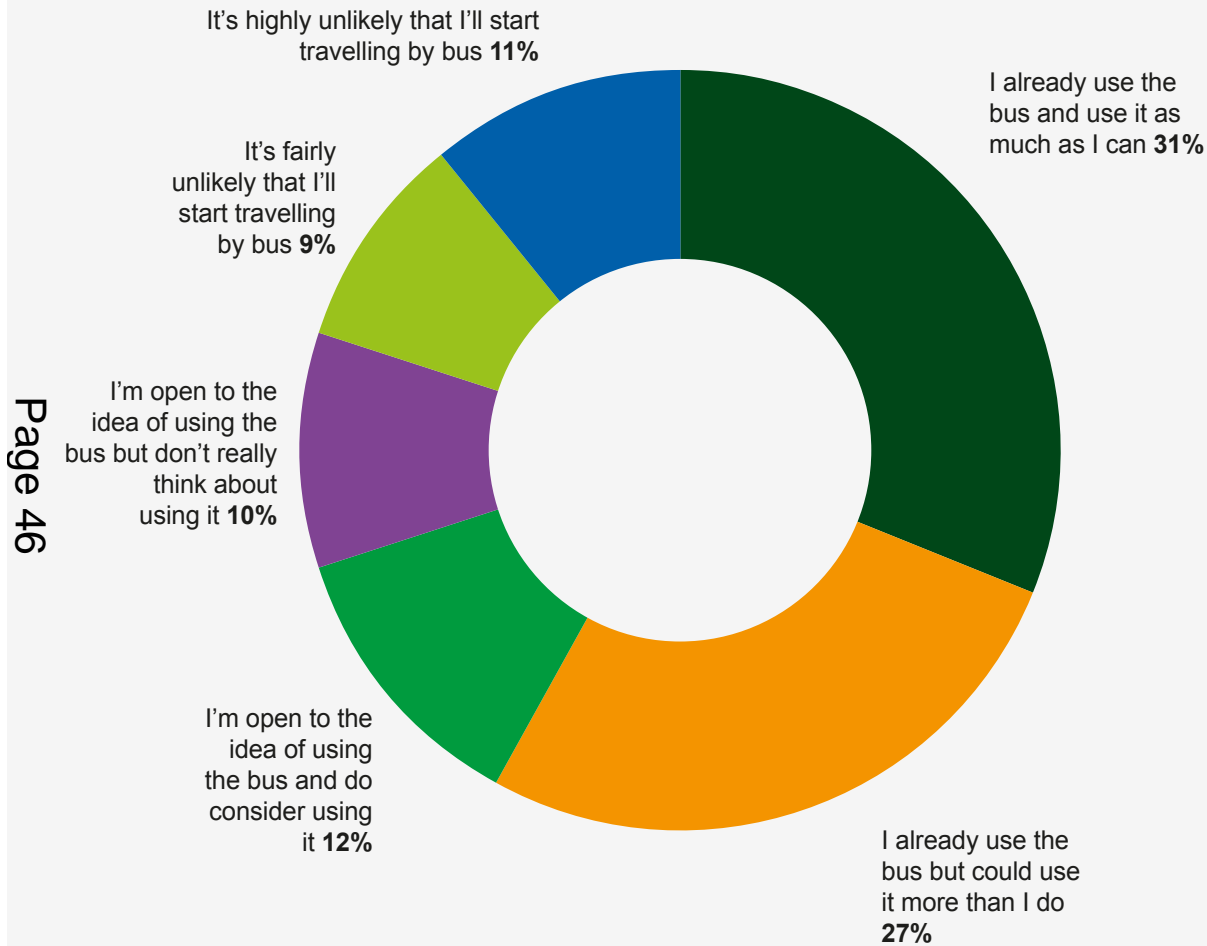


Figure 2:8 Reason for choosing the bus (Source: Transport Focus, Your Bus Journey 2023)

Current behaviour – attitudes towards using the bus



58% say they already use the bus with around 1 in 4 open to using them. Only 1 in 5 respondents feel it is unlikely that they will start travelling by bus using bus. A further quarter feel it's unlikely they will start travelling by bus.

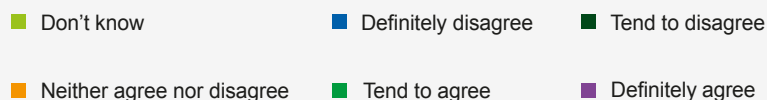
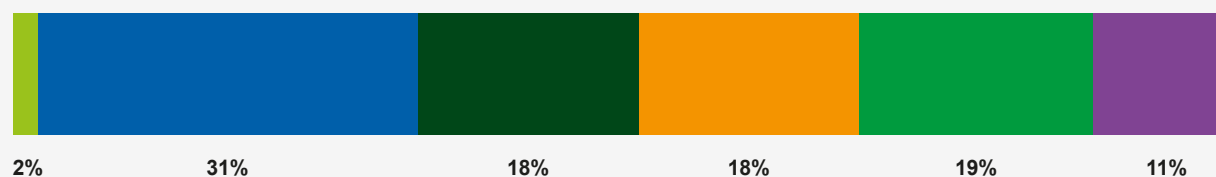
Figure 2:10 Findings from market research (Source: Bluegrass research 2023)



2. Current bus offer to passengers

The market research also asked residents to say whether they agreed with the statement:

“I’m not the kind of person who gets the bus” – Agree or disagree



Overall 3 in 10 feel they are not the kind of person who gets the bus. Residents aged 16-24, women and those who live in rural areas are least likely to agree with the statement.

Over 1 in 5 frequent bus users feel they are not the kind of people to get the bus, rising to over 2 in 5 amongst infrequent bus users.

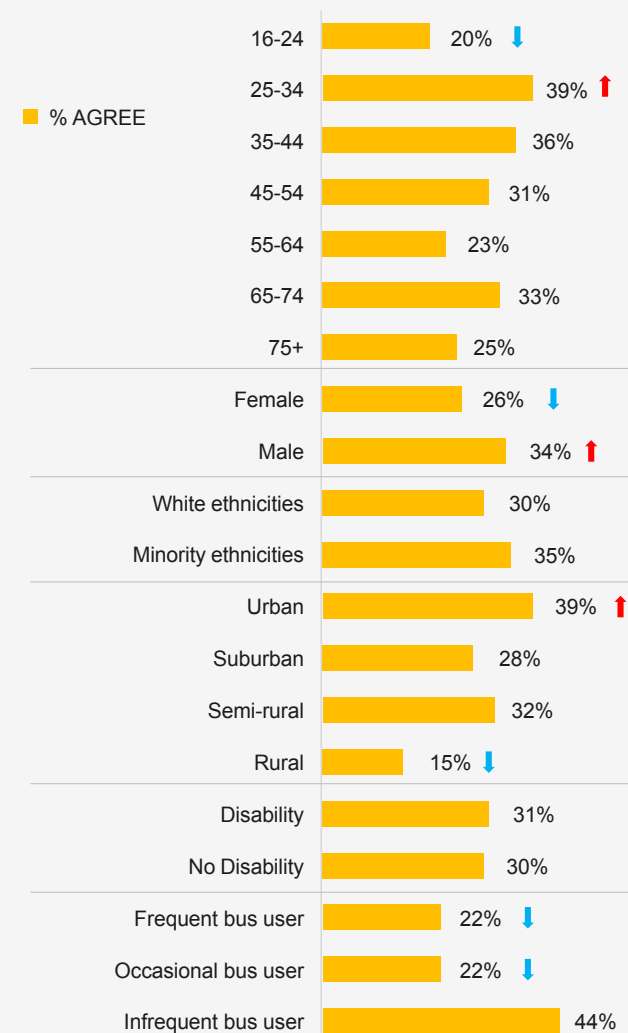


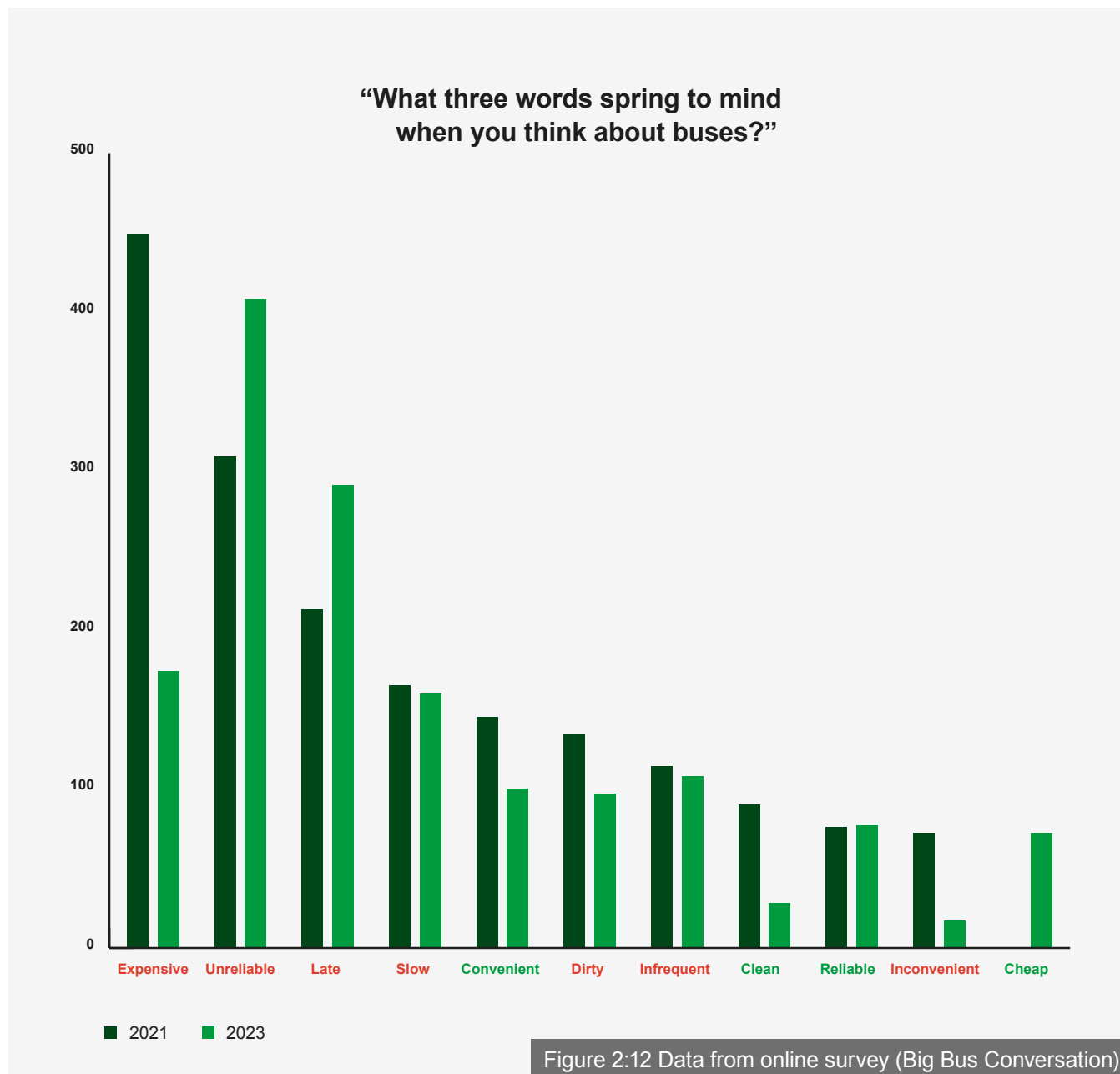
Figure 2:11 Findings from market research (Source: Bluegrass research 2023)

2. Current bus offer to passengers

We ran our Big Bus Conversation campaign in 2021 and 2023 with the aim of involving local people in discussions about buses. In Both years we asked residents to tell us, **“What three words spring to mind when you think about buses?”** Results can be seen in Figure 2:12, ‘unreliable’, ‘late’ and ‘slow’ remain common words used by respondents to the survey. The impact of fare offer instructions can clearly be seen in the reduction of respondents who used the word ‘Expensive.’

Positive feedback about the £2 fare cap and £1 21 and under single fare was also repeatedly brought up at our stakeholder events.

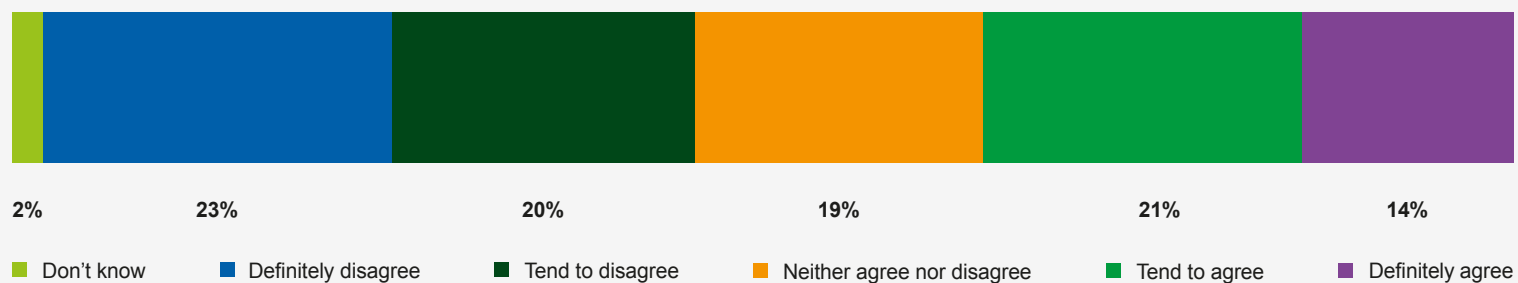
Respondents to the Big Bus Conversation in 2023 were asked to rank, from very unlikely to very likely, how our 10 solutions would “help them use the bus more”. The highest scoring solutions with 92% positive scoring was “Faster and more reliable journey times”. Another high scoring solution was “Simple and flexible fares structures” with 81% positive scoring.



2. Current bus offer to passengers

Additionally, the independent market research report provides further insight into barriers to bus use. One of the barriers identified was a lack of knowledge about service provision and fares: 35% of people who responded agreed with this, rising to 51% of those who class themselves as infrequent users.

“I’m not all that familiar with the local bus service like how much a journey would cost or which bus stop to use”.



“The places I travel to aren't easily reachable by bus”.

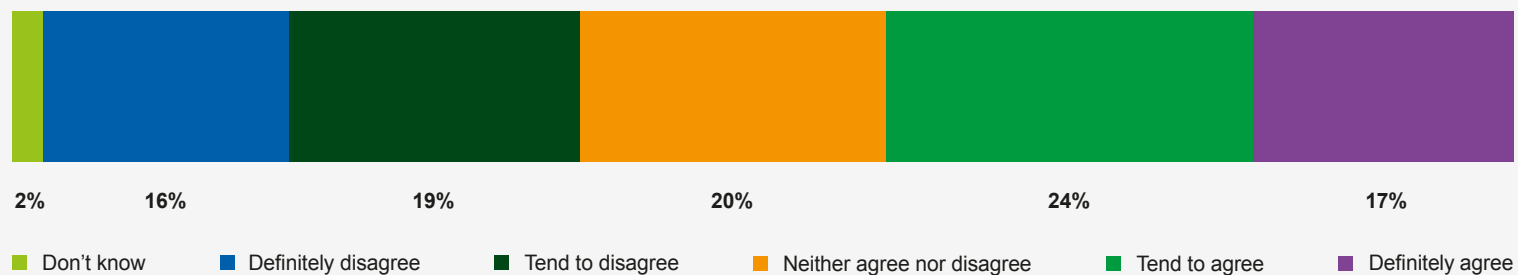


Figure 2:13
Independent
market research
results 2023

Non-users of public transport

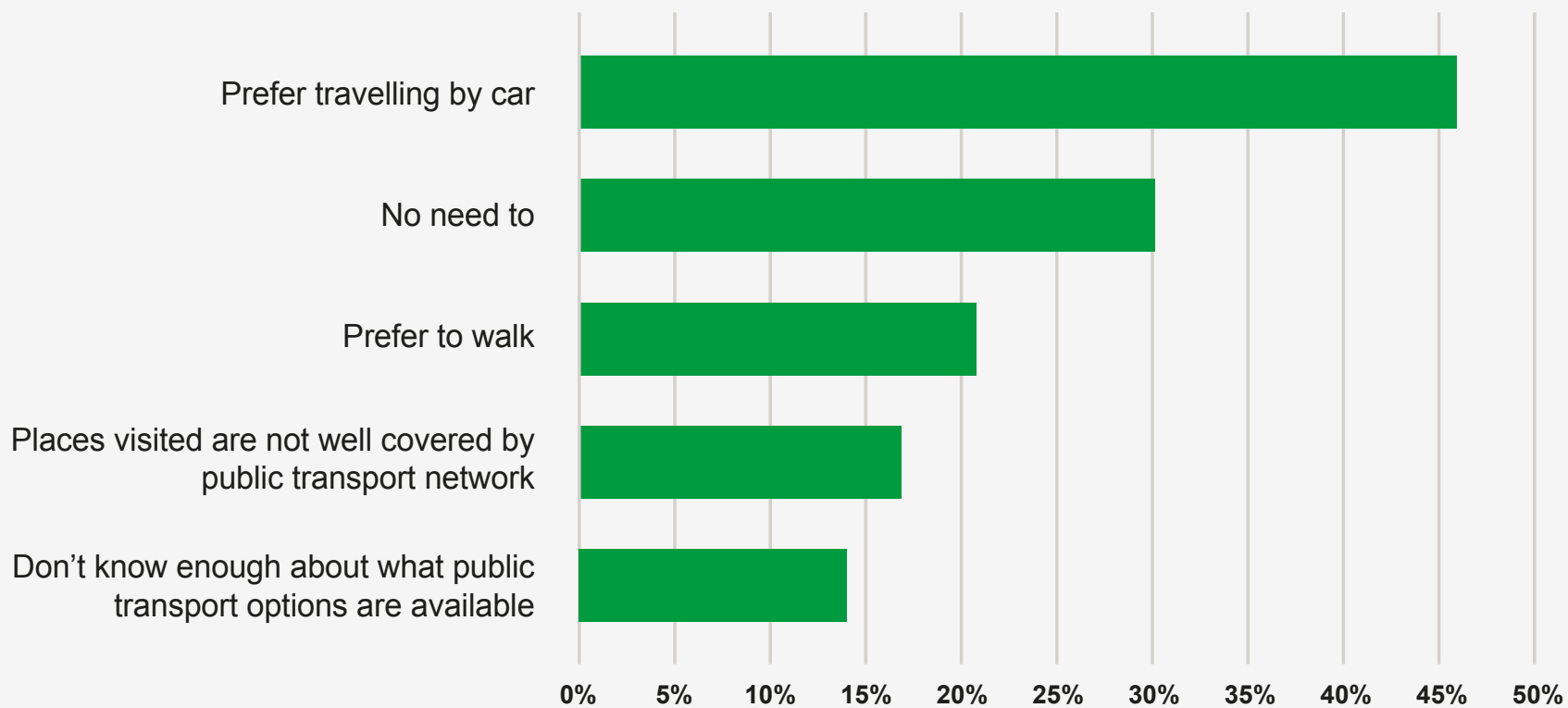


Figure 2:14 Independent market research results 2021

Car parking

The cost of car parking, especially in relation to getting the bus, often influences travel choices. The following table offers a summary of parking provision in each of the seven local authority areas which make up the North East.

	Estimated number of LA operated spaces	Average hourly rate to park	Estimated number of private sector operated spaces*	Average hourly rate
Durham	3,500	43p	2000	69p
Gateshead	2,123	£1.04	756	92p
Newcastle	6,004	£1.44	3743	£3.20
North Tyneside	2,544	95p	Unknown	N/A
Northumberland	11,821	0	0	N/A
South Tyneside	2,477	75p	270	Varies
Sunderland	2,958	£1.15	941	£1.47

*Defined by operators of car parks, excluding parking sites operated by employers, entertainment venues etc.

Figure 2:15

Local authorities in the North East, spend the following amounts on parking enforcement annually:

Local authority	Budget allocated to parking enforcement
Durham	£650,000
Gateshead	£799,000
Newcastle	£2.2m
North Tyneside	Part of a contract
Northumberland	£2m
South Tyneside	£1.1m
Sunderland	£950,000

Figure 2:16 Parking enforcement spending (annual)

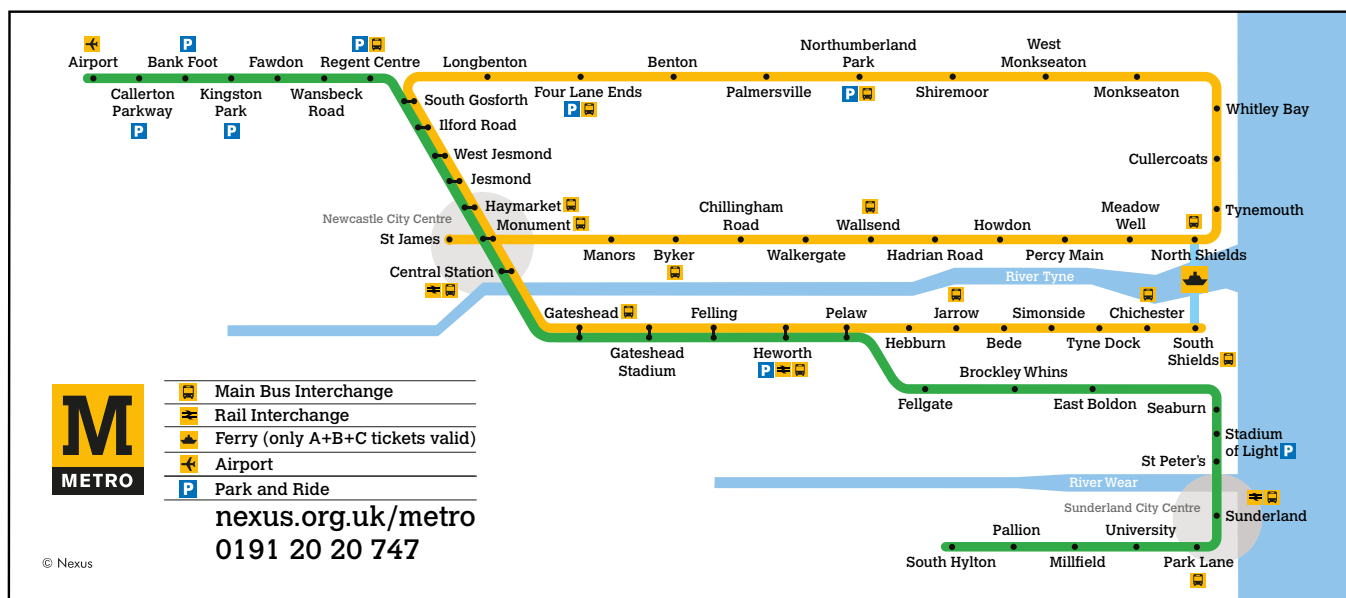
Northumberland's charges are targeted towards reducing tourist traffic pressures and discouraging long stay parking. For most residents and regular visitors, a disc can be bought which allows regular parking.

Other factors which may influence competition between car and bus

Here we consider the overall transport market in which the bus operates in the North East. As our region's Transport Plan promotes "appealing sustainable transport choices", we must also consider sustainable transport modes such as rail, our Metro system and active travel, and how these can be complementary to our bus network.

The Tyne and Wear Metro system

The Tyne and Wear Metro system, which opened in 1980, was designed and constructed as the central feature of a fully integrated public transport system. A number of major interchange locations were built at the core of its infrastructure to make transition from bus to Metro simple. These three interchanges are highlighted on the Metro network map and during 2019, a new interchange was opened at South Shields.



Metro Gold Cards

In addition to Network One tickets, Tyne and Wear residents with an entitlement to English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) 'bus passes' can upgrade their ENCTS card by loading a Metro Gold Card product on to it for a payment of £12 each year, and residents of Northumberland and County Durham can do this for £24. 164,000 Tyne and Wear residents have taken this opportunity, affording them access to bus and Metro.

Integration between Metro and bus

The Metro and bus networks complement each other, and interchange is generally accessible and well signposted. Many people transfer from bus to Metro, whilst those who perceive interchange as a high penalty take through journeys on the bus. The Metro appears a competitor to bus for some journeys, but it also brings people to the bus for the first leg of a journey they might otherwise make by car.

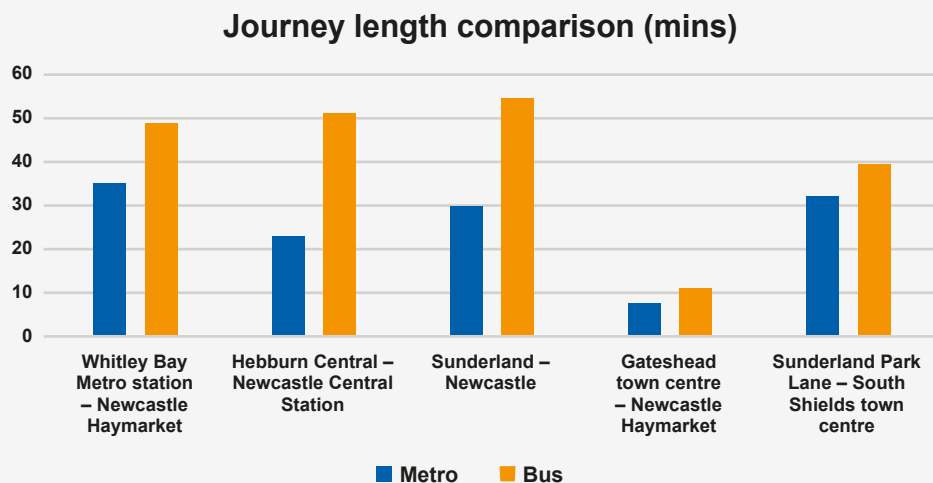


Figure 2:17 Metro/Bus comparisons

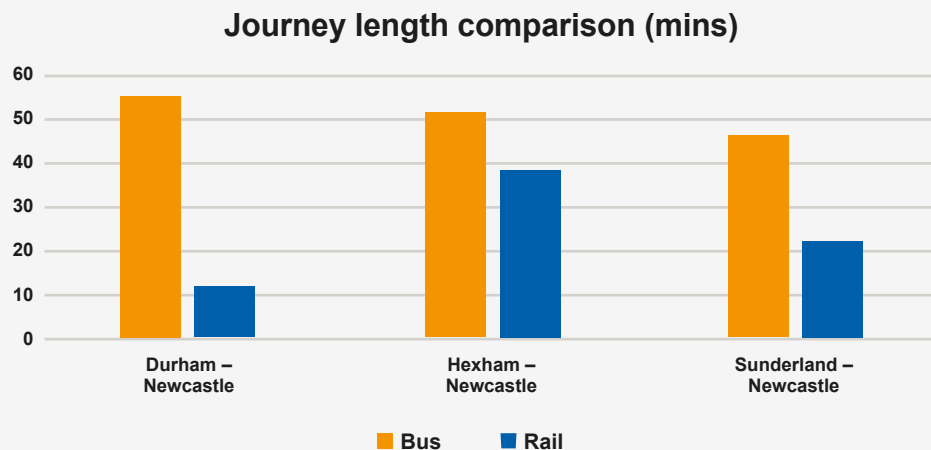


Figure 2:18 Bus/Rail comparisons

Figure 2:17 shows that for a sample of journeys that can be completed by either bus or Metro, the bus takes longer for every journey. Bus fares tend to be lower however and, due to the number of bus routes, there are many ‘door to door’ journeys which are quicker by bus than Metro.

Through the BSIP we propose to grow the levels of public transport integration significantly to enhance connectivity across the region offering an attractive journey time at an affordable price, encouraging more people to choose public transport over private car journeys.

Integration between bus and the national rail network

The geographic size of our region means that key centres are linked by rail, including ‘Intercity’ long distance trains. These services co-exist alongside well used bus services because buses serve more local places along the way and more ‘first and last mile’ origins and destinations.

For all of the journeys we are aware of, it is slower to travel by bus, however it is almost always cheaper, even more so with the national £2 fare in place at the time of writing.

2. Current bus offer to passengers

There will therefore be a significant number of people who travel by bus instead of rail even though it takes longer. This is a key driver behind some of the initiatives we have outlined within the Fares and ticketing section of this BSIP.

Integration between bus and active travel

We set out the modal share of active travel alongside other modes early in this section; and in Section 1 we have provided our travel hierarchy called “Making the Right Travel Choice”, which states that active travel should be the transport mode of choice wherever possible.

Active travel is wholly complementary to the bus network, especially as every bus journey starts and ends with an element of active travel.

Already, early measures are in place to promote the opportunity for multi-modal trips, including bike and bus. For example, 6 Go North East routes have capacity to carry two unfolded bikes, and interchanges and stations across the Tyne and Wear Metro system are fitted out with approximately 750 places for cycles, much of which takes the form of digitally operated cycle lockers.

3. BSIP Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

This section shows our ambition to improve the North East bus offer and explains the Key Performance Indicators ('KPIs') by which we will measure progress.

The KPIs have been developed jointly through the partnership and link to our Transport Plan objectives. Please see Section 5 for information on how we will report on a six monthly basis.

Modal share

KPI 1: Modal share of buses to grow by 1 percentage point in 2023/24 and a further 1 percentage point in 2024/25.

Through the interventions that we plan in this BSIP we intend not only to make buses faster, cheaper, more widely available and more reliable, but also, to make them seen to be easier to use and access.

As we described in Section 1, our Transport Plan's key strategy is for people to make the right travel choice. Where people can travel by bus, they should do so rather than driving. We are therefore targeting a switch in mode share from private car use to buses.

The increase in traffic on our road network during peak hours causes congestion, leading to slower journey times and traffic queues where there is restricted road space and on the approach to busy junctions.

This road traffic itself impacts on bus services, creating slow and unpredictable journey times and bunching. We therefore want to specifically target an increase in modal share of buses for journeys to work and education, to tackle these problems.

All members of the partnership have an important role to play in delivering modal share targets. Highway authorities and bus operators are equally accountable for delivering it and for revising the Plan and Scheme to have greater effect if the target is not being met.

KPI 2: Modal share of bus use for journeys to work and education to grow by 1 percentage point in 2023/24, and a further 1 percentage point in 2024/25.

Methodology for modal share: We will use the annually reported figure from DfT National Travel Survey – North East region ([dft.gov.uk](https://www.dft.gov.uk)), supplemented by local validation on our main corridors where counters are available.

3. Headline targets

Patronage

KPI 3: Bus patronage to grow by 10% in 2024/25, and then by a further 10% in 2025/26.

In 2022/23, bus patronage in our region was 103.8 million trips. This is a 17% increase on 2021/22 where the Covid-19 pandemic was still heavily affecting patronage levels. We will use the 2022/23 figure as our baseline.

Clearly, we need bus patronage to start to grow strongly and on a sustained basis in order to have a financially sustainable bus network that meets the objectives of our Transport Plan.

We want the major investments that are outlined in this BSIP to grow bus ridership significantly. This goes hand-in-hand with the shift in modal share from private car use that is set out in previous paragraphs.

KPI 4: Bus patronage from people under the age of 22 to grow by 10% in 2023/24 and then by a further 10% in 2024/25.

Although we want to target growth in the use of buses from all travellers – and of course many new trips will arise from the modal shift of people travelling to work and education – we want to specifically target growth in two sections of the North East community: young people and people who live in rural areas.

Young people need to travel frequently – they travel to school, college, apprenticeships and jobs, and for social, sporting and retail purposes. They also tend to have relatively low incomes, whether being supported by their families, educational loans or by having low-paid jobs.

In this BSIP, we are looking to improve outcomes for young people, for example through the introduction of an affordable fare for those 21 and under across the region, better information provision embracing new technology, better integration between buses and the Metro and later evening services on many routes.

KPI 5: Bus boarding at rural bus stops to grow by 10% in 2023/24, and then by a further 10% in 2024/25.

In this BSIP we are planning a number of improvements for rural communities in order to grow bus use. There are improvements to some bus routes, an increased use of DRT, cheaper fares in many cases and seasonal tourist bus pilots. We will also be working with town and village councils to help instil a sense of community ownership of rural bus services.

Methodology for patronage:

Patronage is measured by the bus operators and reported to us confidentially. Our systems provide a blended figure to avoid risk of breaching commercial confidentiality. We will publish the blended figure in our six monthly Monitoring report.

Customer satisfaction

KPI 6: Overall bus passenger satisfaction to grow from a baseline of 91% to 92% in 2023/24 and to 93% in 2024/25.

Where people do not already use buses often, we want them to see buses as a viable choice for travel. We also want people who already use buses, to use them more often. This is the only way that we can meet our targets for modal share and patronage growth.

Customer satisfaction scores are the responsibility of the partnership, not the bus operators alone. Accountability for the component parts of 'satisfaction' will be discussed at The Partnership Board – for example, if walking and waiting scores bring down the overall score, the responsibility lies with the highway authority; if on-bus journey experience, the responsibility lies with the operator.

Methodology for customer

satisfaction: The Customer Satisfaction score will be that measured by Transport Focus. This gives an objective measure of overall Customer Satisfaction, and also a degree of granularity into the elements of the whole journey experience about which customers feel most and least satisfied. This leads into our action plan for annual revision of the BSIP.

Bus performance

KPI 7: Average speed of buses to grow, relative to the average speed of general traffic, each year starting in 2024/25.

This BSIP contains extensive proposals to give buses priority at key points on the road network, particularly on the approaches to town and city centres, which are set out in Chapter 4.

By putting these measures in place we want bus journey times to become faster and more consistent, no matter what is happening to overall traffic levels. Whilst we would like to see the modal share of buses grow as well as the number of people using them, external economic factors may lead to road traffic ebbing and flowing out of our control.

Whatever happens to road traffic levels, we want buses to be getting faster.

Methodology for bus average speed relative to general traffic speed:

Before and after scheme measurements of point-to-point journey times for buses and cars on the same corridor/stretch of route. Highway authorities to provide Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) or other measurement of point-to-point run times for car and bus.

3. Headline targets

KPI 8: Bus reliability to be 99.5% throughout the period of the BSIP.

Punctuality and reliability play a critical role in attracting passengers to the bus network. If a service is perceived as unreliable it will deter people from using it. Although private cars also have unreliable journey times because they too get caught in congestion, people are generally more forgiving.

Bus operators themselves have an important role to play in how buses are perceived by travellers. Buses need to be reliable, in that when people are waiting at a bus stop at the appointed time, they need to have confidence that the bus will arrive in the first place.

Methodology for bus reliability:

This is a standard report, which operators produce for the Traffic Commissioner based on the percentage of scheduled mileage that is actually operated.

KPI 9: Bus punctuality at point of origin to be 95% in 2023/24, 96% in 2024/25 and 97% in 2025/26.

Punctuality is a key challenge because of road traffic. However, bus operators have far more control over the punctuality of the bus as it leaves its origin point. As the bus progresses through its route the responsibility is shared between highways authorities and the bus operator.

The major scale of interventions and investments proposed by the BSIP will contribute to far more reliable bus journey times, and far better punctuality. We are therefore proposing to target an improvement that goes beyond the statutory requirement set out in the Traffic Commissioners' targets for the origin point of buses.

As the partnership develops, we will implement geographic specific monitoring to identify where on the network improvements are most needed.

KPI 10: Bus punctuality at all timing points to be 90% in 2023/24, 95% in 2024/25 and 95% in 2025/26.

Although the Traffic Commissioners' targets require buses to be on time at least 95% of the time at all timing points, in practice road traffic congestion prevents this from being the case. We also expect a degree of disruption to our highways in the early years of this BSIP because of the installation of new highways infrastructure along a significant number of key bus routes.

We therefore propose to start by getting punctuality across all timing points up to the statutory target and then to maintain it.

Methodology for bus punctuality:

This is a standard report, which operators produce for the Traffic Commissioner based on the percentage of scheduled mileage that is actually operated. This uses the standard definition of 'Not more than 5 minutes late, not more than 1 minute early'.

Environmental performance

KPI 11: Bus fleet emission standard to Euro 6 or better to be 63.2% in 2022/23, 80.8% in 2023/24 and 91.1% in 2024/25 and to be 100% at the start of 2025/26.

The Transport Plan commits to a Carbon Neutral North East. All seven North East local authorities have declared a climate emergency and the city of Newcastle has introduced a Clean Air Zone. We therefore need buses to play their part by having the lowest possible emissions, both for climate change and air quality purposes.

Our region already has a fleet of 18 fully electric buses in Gateshead and Newcastle, a fleet of natural gas-powered buses in Sunderland and numerous hybrid buses. The region was successful in securing funding for an additional 52 zero-emission buses through the Levelling Up Fund bid.

Methodology for bus environmental performance:

The age and type of every vehicle in the North East bus fleet of the three main operators and most of the independent smaller operators has been recorded and analysed. A transition plan will be agreed for retrofitting some Euro 5 vehicles to become Euro 6, and for the retirement of older vehicles and replacement with Euro 6 or Zero-Emission vehicles.

4. Delivery

This section sets out the steps we are taking to meet the objectives of our Transport Plan, the National Bus Strategy and to advance performance against the targets set out in our BSIP. Most importantly, it is these measures which will enhance the experience of current bus users and make bus use a more attractive proposition to those who don't currently use the bus.

Within this section are four main subsections:

- **Customer Experience**
- **Fares and Ticketing**
- **The Network**
- **Highways and Infrastructure**

Each of these subsections is set out as follows, after introductory text boxes setting out what we will achieve and how it aligns with BSIP guidance:

- **Our Ambition** – here we give details of what we believe can be achieved.
- **Where we are** – here we set out the progress made since the original BSIP.
- **Our next steps** – here we detail the next steps we are taking to deliver our ambitions.
- **Timescale** – here we give details of the timescale for delivery.



4. Delivery

Customer experience

This subsection details our progress against our ambitions, and our next steps to:

- Increase bus patronage through improvements to the overall customer experience.
- Make the bus network easier to understand through enhanced and simplified information provision both on and off bus.
- Present bus services as one united North East brand, which is committed to delivering a first-class customer experience.
- Make every customer feel valued by a consistent customer-focused approach with a special focus on people who have extra needs.
- Introduce a Bus Passenger Charter, which makes clear what every customer should expect and what to do if they feel let down.

Our Ambition

Network wide ticketing and journey planning will be made available to passengers through a single dedicated website and accompanying app. We will also continue to provide printed information.

Where we are

Operators, local authorities and third parties continue to provide apps and websites which are vital for travel information and well used by passengers. Advances such as real time passenger information on operators' apps have vastly improved the customer experience for many. There is currently no single source of public transport information and customers may still have to use multiple sources to assess all their journey options, view and purchase tickets and access real time information. The North East lags behind comparable regions in this, as elsewhere users can enjoy and integrated journey planning.

Our next steps

Our BSIP planned to address these issues by introducing a single dedicated website and accompanying app. Following user feedback collected during and since the publication of the BSIP, the partnership has identified key features required from a website which will improve customer information. This problem is reflected in our market research with approximately 1 in 3 residents reporting they are unfamiliar with the logistics of the local bus service (Bluegrass Research, 2023).

Although there are various technological challenges in developing a sophisticated website and app, we are confident we can deliver the following features which would represent a step change in public transport information:

- A public transport journey planning tool, including active travel options, highlighting time, cost and convenience advantages.
- Real time public transport information, including planned and unplanned disruption.
- Retailing for bus and multi-modal products.

4. Delivery – Customer experience

To simplify the user offer it has also been agreed that the regionwide website and app project will be led by Nexus and will replace Nexus' current website.

We also recognise that a significant number of residents cannot access journey information digitally. Due to this, we remain committed to maintaining and improving printed information across our network, ensuring we are providing accessible and convenient information for everyone. Further details of this can be found within our 'On journey passenger information' section to the right.

Timescale

The website will be delivered by December 2024.

Our Ambition

We will develop a new and consistent brand for the partnership that will be applied across the network so that it becomes a recognisable symbol of public transport in the North East.

Where we are

The North East bus service continues to be branded according to individual operators, along with that of Nexus, the seven local authorities, Traveline and Network One. Although these brands are strong with good customer recognition, the lack of a unified bus network brand adds complexity from a bus passenger perspective.

Our next steps

In 2022 the partnership initiated a project to develop a coordinated network-wide identity. A logo (Figure 4.1) was produced to signal the new partnership between local authorities and bus operators and to become a recognisable symbol of public transport in the region. The logo has been designed to be simple and adaptable, so it can easily be included alongside other public transport brands. Following the announcement of the North East devolution deal, the rollout of the logo has been postponed and will be reviewed once the new Mayor is in office.



Figure 4:1

Our Ambition

On journey passenger information:

The 400 bus stops with existing real time information will be updated to a next generation system which shows up-to-date Real Time Passenger Information. A further 100 stops will be updated with digital displays. We will provide clear printed information at stops and stations, including in rural areas, and maintain it.

We will provide seamless service information to customers, offering a single source of truth, feeding to any connected systems for passenger information. All interchanges and rail stations will be supported with multi-modal passenger information, showing real time information about connecting journeys.

Where we are

All stops in our cities, towns and villages have printed information provided by Nexus and the local authorities, these are updated when timetables change, 400 stops have digital information screens, stops with minimal use or in very rural areas do not have any information available as the resource required to update that information is not currently viable. Where there are digital screens, real time information can be unreliable, and the digital display technology will need to be upgraded in the coming years.

Our next steps

As we did not receive our full funding request, we will not be able to deliver our entire ambition for passenger information in the lifespan of the BSIP. Given the importance of at-stop information however, this remains a partnership priority and BSIP funding will provide the opportunity to upgrade real time information screens as the infrastructure expires. We will also identify locations where real time information can be installed and investment in Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) (see p72) will ensure the accuracy of information feeds for passengers. We will also upgrade printed information at key locations, such as interchanges and bus and rail stations.

Timescale

This work will be ongoing to March 2025.



Our Ambition

We will improve CCTV provision throughout the entire network, ensuring coverage of every major station and stop across the region.

Where we are

Nearly all North East bus operators provide extensive CCTV coverage with fleets fitted with CCTV cameras inside and out. This plays a key role in preventing and reporting crime and anti-social behaviour in the region.

The Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has prioritised public transport passenger safety. In 2022, the “It’s the End of the Line” campaign was launched, alongside a reporting app and phone line for transport users across Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. The aim of the campaign is to help make our transport links the safest in the country and to help victims of gender-based violence and harassment on the network report incidents in a sensitive manner. A youth provision fund has also been established where transport operators, community volunteers and youth diversion officers coordinate to share intelligence to prevent anti-social behaviour and crime on the network

Our next steps

Due to limited funding, the partnership will not be able to implement a full programme of CCTV installation. There are also deliverability concerns regarding server capacity and maintenance of CCTV at stops. The partnership will instead use intelligence to identify high risk locations for CCTV installation. Planned upgrades to stops and stations (see p71) will also focus on safety and accessibility, using well established design principles to enhance safety and the perception of safety.

Timescale

This work will be ongoing to March 2025.

Our Ambition

We will develop a consistent training module to be delivered to all our colleagues who fulfil a direct customer experience role.

Where we are

A Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) staff training is carried out on an annual basis by operators; however, this is designed to maintain professional skills and is not coordinated between organisations.

Our next steps

A consistent training module will be developed by the partnership and delivered as CPC training. This will take advantage of existing structures and ensure a coordinated high standard of staff training throughout the region.

Timescale

The training module will be rolled out by April 2024.

Our Ambition

Customer experience:

Offer a Bus Passenger Charter that applies to all bus services in our region to build customer confidence, to improve consistency and transparency.

A taxi guarantee will give disabled passengers the peace of mind that if there isn't room for their wheelchair on board, a taxi replacement will be provided for them at no extra cost.

Turnaround cleaners will be employed at bus stations throughout our network. They will be available to quickly clean any operators' bus to ensure a clean and pleasant journey on any bus.

All vehicles will be fitted with enhanced next-stop audio-visual equipment, charging points and Wi-Fi as standard.

Where we are

A regional Bus Passenger Charter has been drafted and agreed to by the partnership, which sets a consistent standard for customer experience across the region. This includes a taxi guarantee provision and a commitment that all new vehicles will be fitted with audio visual equipment by 2025. Following feedback from user groups the Charter has been simplified and is appendix A..

Our next steps

The Charter will be rolled out by the partnership, it will be published on the regionwide website and advertised at key stations and interchanges. This will make clear what passengers can expect when travelling by bus in the region and set out the process of what to do when an experience falls short of the committed standard. We will also roll out a turnaround cleaning staff programme alongside bus operators' existing provisions. This will consider operational issues, such as not compromising bus punctuality.

Timescale

The Charter will be published in November 2023.

Our Ambition

Transport ambassadors will be available at key interchanges throughout the network to guide passengers and help them make the right travel choices.

Where we are

Many, although not all, major interchanges and stations are manned by skilled members of staff who help thousands of passengers complete journeys in the region.

Our next steps

The partnership plans to increase the staff presence at major stops and stations. The business plan for this programme is under development and plans for the long-term sustainability of the roles beyond the period of BSIP funding.

Timescale

Bus Ambassadors will be recruited and in place by April 2024.



Our Ambition

Empower communities and businesses to facilitate the move to augmented modal share and bus patronage through community bus and business partnerships.

Where we are

Partnerships with businesses and our wider stakeholders have been invaluable in the creation of the partnership. Across the region, the bus is recognised as vital for sustainable economic growth and for connecting our communities.

Our next steps

Newly created 'bus champions' will sit within local authorities and Nexus and will capitalise on the energy around bus amongst our stakeholder community. By working with large employers and community groups it is hoped that more people can be encouraged to try the bus. The creation of Community Bus Partnerships will be a key element of the bus champion roles. Success criteria are currently being refined by the Bus Partnership Board; these focus on the objectives to tackle negative perceptions of bus amongst non-users and building a sense of community ownership of the bus network. Community Bus Partnerships will directly engage with schools, faith groups and employers.

Timescale

Community Bus Partnerships will be developed with Champions in place by April 2024.

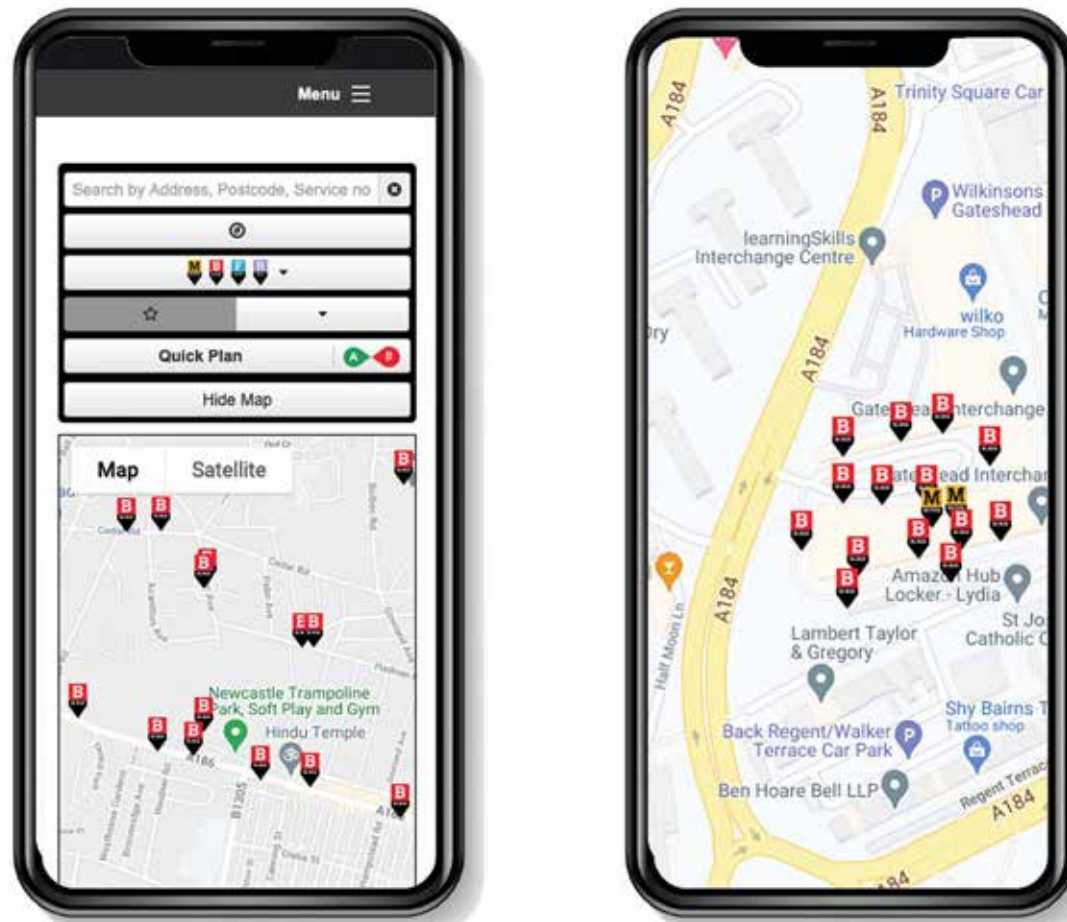


Figure 4:2
Mockup
of journey
planning app

4. Delivery

Fares and ticketing

This subsection details our progress against our ambitions, and our next steps to:

- Simplify the structure of the multi-modal ticketing offer with a clear and consistent zone structure.
- Grow bus patronage through more affordable multi-modal and multi-operator daily caps.
- Intensify our focus on patronage growth amongst young people and families with a ‘Kids go Free’ trial, £1 single, and a £3 multi-modal day fare cap for 21 and under.
- Further enhance the multi-modal offer through the inclusion of more rail routes.

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Which three improvements would you prioritise?

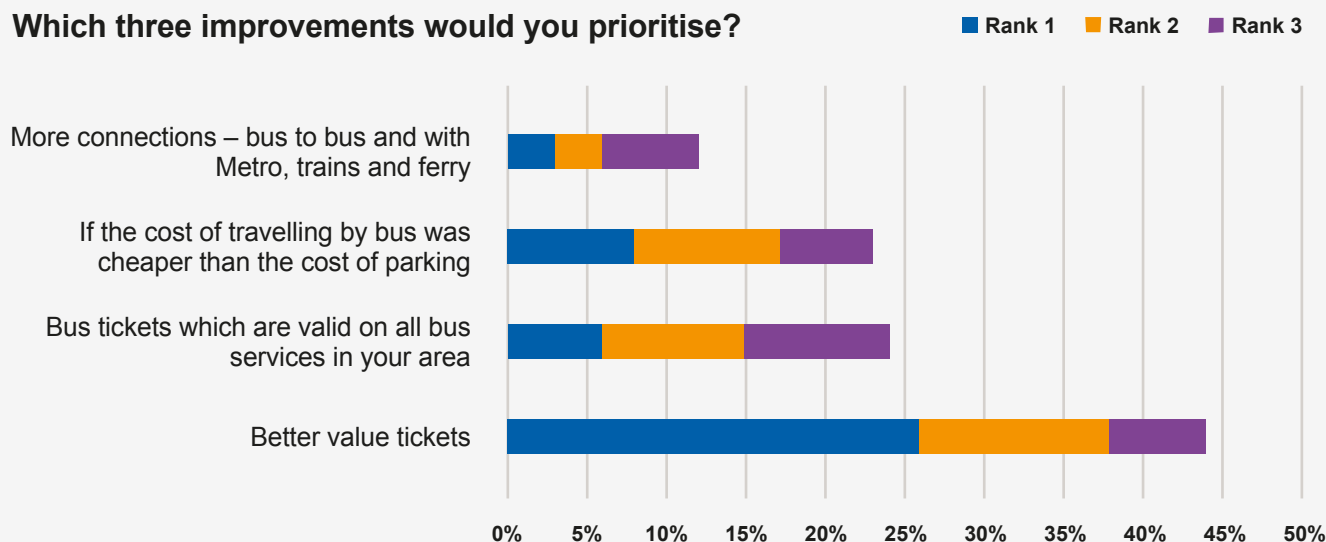


Figure 4:3 What 3 improvements would make people use the bus more

Our Ambition

Multi-operator and multi-modal tickets will be introduced to allow customers greater flexibility to travel around the network. These fares will simplify the existing fares structure as well as making travel more affordable for many customers travelling across the network. The following new fares will be launched:

By introducing these fares, more people will be encouraged to use the bus network travelling on a cheaper, simpler to understand ticket across various modes and operators.

Where we are

81% of respondents to our Big Bus Conversation (2023) said that a simple and flexible fare system would make them use the bus more. The existing fare structure across the bus network is complex and restrictive on customers' ability to change operator or mode. Network One offers a regionwide, multi-modal fare that is priced at £9.10 a day for unlimited Tyne and Wear travel, and £12.70 a day for travel anywhere in the North East, but our fares initiatives would make regionwide travel significantly cheaper than this.

The first of the BSIP fares initiatives was launched in early May 2023 which permits anyone aged 21 and under to travel on a single fare for just £1, which is lower than the price point we set out in our initial BSIP of £1.20. The 'Get Round for a Pound' scheme was implemented to encourage some groups who may traditionally not have considered bus travel to try it. The initiative also provides significant savings, particularly for the 16-21 age group, who often transition to a more expensive adult ticket at the age of 16. For some young people, the £1 fare represents a saving of £6.70, and feedback from sixth form students has demonstrated this fare is transformational for many people who typically do not have much disposable income. The initial uptake of the fare has been encouraging with the number of journeys increasing 28% from month 1 to month 2 of the scheme. Following this success, a new £3 capped day fare has been introduced for young people, offering the opportunity for unlimited regionwide travel on a variety of transport including bus, Metro and the Shields Ferry.

Prior to the BSIP there were no daily capped fares for unlimited multi-operator travel within Durham and Northumberland. This can discourage some people from using the bus, particularly where they are having to use multiple services to get to their destination.

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Product Name	Product scope	Product price
21 and Under Single	Single ticket anywhere in the region for those aged 21 and under	£1
21 and Under Day	21 and under region-wide day ticket (multi-modal)	£3
Tyne & Wear Day Rover	Tyne & Wear adult day ticket (multi-modal)	£6
Durham Day Rover	County Durham adult day ticket (multi-operator)	£4
Northumberland Day Rover	Northumberland County adult day ticket (multi-operator)	£5
TNE Day Saver	Region-wide adult (multi-modal)	£6.80

Figure 4:4

Our next steps

The EP is working together to deliver the remaining proposed capped fares outlined in the table above by December 2023. These initiatives are forecast to save bus users up to £2.40 (37.5%) for day tickets in Durham, £1.40 (35%) in Northumberland, £3.10 (34%) in Tyne and Wear and £5.90 (46%) for regionwide travel.

Data modelling of these initiatives has forecast over a million additional trips will be taken each year. Operators will continue to offer their own product range; some operators' existing weekly and monthly products may represent better value for money for some passengers. This approach will ensure customers have the option of the best fare type to suit them.

Timescale

The full costs of the fares initiatives will be paid for with BSIP funding until March 2025. The products will be reviewed and may be revoked unless an alternative source of funding can be identified.

In our initial BSIP, we set out aims to introduce further fares schemes beyond a daily cap, including weekly and monthly tickets. This will be reviewed following the launch of the capped day tickets and further discounts remains an aspiration of the EP.

Our Ambition

To further improve the fares offer, additional low cost, multi-modal, multi-operator fares will be developed to make pricing more affordable in areas that are a short distance from a zone boundary.

Where we are

The initial BSIP fares schemes outlined above will significantly improve the affordability and simplicity of bus travel. The issue of current regional zones creates challenges for cross boundary journeys. A key example of this is daily commuting into urban centres involving crossing a boundary, such as trips from south Northumberland into Newcastle City Centre, or from south Gateshead to Durham City. Operators have, at times, implemented point to point set prices to combat this situation, however there is no integration within the day fare structure, resulting in some passengers having to pay for a more expensive regionwide ticket.

Our next steps

The effectiveness of the capped daily fares initiatives will be intensely monitored, including cross boundary travel. The aspiration of the EP is to ensure these types of journeys are not discouraged or priced too high; we will continue to review with the aspiration to implement boundary zones allowing connectivity across boundaries without having to pay for regionwide travel. An example of this would be Chester-le-Street, which is in Durham, but many residents cross the town border into Tyne and Wear, so we will ensure there is flexibility in the boundary zones to purchase either a Durham or Tyne and Wear product depending on the journey being taken.

Timescale

We will continue to monitor following the introduction of capped day tickets with the aspiration to create boundary zones in the next 12 months.

Our Ambition

Our multi-modal fares will be available in two forms:

- A ticket purchased before travel begins (from a bus driver, at a Metro ticket machine, online, or through a new app);
- A price “cap” that is automatically calculated and applied when a customer uses a contactless bank card, mobile phone payment app, or Pay As You Go smart card to pay for travel.

Through the BSIP we intend to put in place the back-office system and upgrade existing ticketing equipment to allow this to happen.

Where we are

In recent years significant improvements have been made in optimising the number of ways bus users can pay for their ticket beyond a traditional cash transaction.

Contactless payment is available on most buses in the region and tap-on-and-tap-off payment is becoming more widely available. Arriva offer tap-on tap-off technology across their fleet with Go North East also offering this on selected services, and there is scope for this extending to other operators through upgraded technology.

Nexus currently offer Pop Cards – a smart card system, which allows customers to pre-load a balance onto the card and pay for their journeys through tapping-on and off on the Metro or pay for their fare on the bus. For travel only on Metro and Shields Ferry, the current Pop cards also cap fares at a cheaper day price than if they had purchased a paper day ticket.

A 2019 Nexus Insight Panel indicated 69% of non-bus users find it difficult to understand the best value ticket to purchase. Further integration of smart ticketing and advances in technology to calculate best value tickets would increase customer confidence that they can secure the best price for their journey.

Our next steps

When introduced, new capped fares will be available to purchase in person from the driver, from ticket machines (TVM's), online and through the new BSIP app. As much as possible, QR codes will be used on tickets to allow for interoperability between operators and accurate monitoring of use.

From Autumn 2024, Pop 2.0 will launch which will introduce an Account Based Ticketing (ABT) model allowing users to travel through tapping their Pop card on and off each mode of transport.

The back-office system will calculate the best fare for the number of journeys made each day allowing customers to utilise the new BSIP capped fares initiatives.

Longer term system upgrades will take place allowing multi-operator, multi-modal smart capping through contactless bank card payments. These developments will provide customers with greater flexibility in how they pay for the bus to break down barriers for non-bus users, as 73% surveyed had indicated fares simplification would be required for them to consider bus travel.

Timescale

Upgrades to Pop will be launched in autumn 2024.

Development of smart technologies and required upgrades to Metro ticket barriers to enable contactless bank card travel will continue throughout the course of the BSIP.

Our Ambition

To extend the current Metro 'Take the Kids for Free' offer to all bus services, following a successful trial in summer 2022.

Where we are

In 2020 Nexus introduced a 'Take the Kids for Free' offer which permitted up to three children aged 11 and under to travel for free with a fare paying adult. The offer was deemed a success, generating an additional 74,000 passenger journeys in the summer of 2021. The scheme did not require any changes to existing ticket ranges or BSIP funding, as the impact was broadly revenue neutral.

A trial was conducted in summer 2022 involving the large bus operators in the region and feedback was in line with Nexus' findings that the scheme resulted in a small uplift in journeys whilst remaining more or less revenue neutral. An additional benefit was an increase in ENCTS pass holder use.

Our next steps

The offer was available throughout the 2022/23 school holiday periods, with all large operators participating. The offer also ran in the summer 2023 school holiday for most operators, with one operator withdrawing from the scheme due to commercial impact.

The impact of the scheme continues to be monitored with an EP aspiration to extend the offer throughout other periods of the year.

Timescale

This is a repeated seasonal offer which continues to be closely monitored, to assess whether it can be extended further.

B
BUSES

Take the kids for free this summer

Up to three children aged 11 and under can travel for free on Bus, Metro and the Shields Ferry when accompanied by an adult.*

North East | Arriva | Stagecoach

*Terms and conditions apply. For full offer details go to www.nexus.org.uk/take-the-kids-for-free for more details.

Our Ambition

We will conduct a study to examine whether local additions to the ENCTS can be standardised throughout the region.

Where we are

There are three varying versions of ENCTS across the region (Durham, Northumberland and Nexus) which permit free off-peak bus travel within local authorities for English residents of state pension age. Each of the offers is slightly distinctive regarding arrangements for travel, particularly for travel before 09:30am.

Our next steps

ENCTS passenger numbers are yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. In 2021/2022, 555 million concessionary bus journeys were taken in England, up from 272 million concessionary bus journeys in 2020/21. Despite the increase, concessionary journeys were still down 36% compared with pre-pandemic levels (2018/2019). We will work with local authority partners to better understand how to encourage this passenger group back on to the bus.

A study has yet to be commissioned into ways in which Concessionary Travel areas can be standardised. Research and analysis is needed to understand the cost implications for reimbursement to standardise the ENCTS offer across the region.

Timescale

Ongoing aspiration of the EP.

Concessionary Travel area	Free travel times	Other travel times	Other benefits
Durham County Council	After 09:30am Monday – Friday, all day on weekends and bank holidays.	50p for trips within boundary of Durham before 09:30am Monday to Friday.	Free travel on Durham City Park and Ride. Half price travel on some local train services.
Northumberland County Council	After 09:00am Monday – Friday, all day on weekends and bank holidays.	Free before 09:00am Monday to Friday for a hospital appointment.	Free travel on some cross border routes from Northumberland to Scotland.
Nexus (Tyne & Wear)	After 09:30am Monday – Friday, all day on weekends and bank holidays.	Free before 09:30am Monday to Friday for a hospital appointment.	60p for Shields Ferry off peak, 50p for Northern services between Newcastle and Metrocentre/Blaydon off peak, unlimited off-peak travel on Metro for £12 per year

Figure 4:5

Our Ambition

To introduce a care experienced travel pass across the region.

Where we are

Following a successful trial in Newcastle and Gateshead, the provision of free travel on bus, Metro and Ferry for care experienced young people aged between 18 and 25 is being rolled out across the entire region. The benefits of this scheme are clear to see, with 75% of trial users responding to a Nexus survey indicating they use their pass 6-7 days a week. The aim of the scheme is to help tackle transport poverty, offering the potential for a better start to adult life, by enabling better access to opportunities to start their careers, have a social life and get around the region.

Our next steps

Work is in progress to enable this initiative to be delivered across the North East imminently. The introduction of passes is being staggered to ensure adequate resources for the annual renewal process however, once the scheme is fully rolled out, 1500 people will have received a pass.

Timescale

All passes to be available by December 2023, with annual renewal until March 2025.

4. Delivery

The network

This subsection details our progress against our ambitions, and our next steps to:

- Grow bus patronage above its 2019 baseline, by providing an enhanced network that is simple and easy to understand and offers a safe, reliable and cost-efficient transport alternative to the car.
- Protect the bus network in the North East by providing support to services where this is required to assist recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Optimise alignment of ‘capacity and demand’ by standing ready to consolidate services on parts of the network, if the market indicates duplication.
- Grow bus patronage by 6.7% by increasing network coverage and enhancing routes where there is potential for sustainable growth.
- Increase accessibility to the integrated transport system for people in rural areas through new on-demand services focused on connections with main bus routes and railway stations.
- Build customer confidence by creating ‘standard pattern timetables’ with no variations of frequency or length of operating day.
- Support the green recovery and improve the health of our communities by investing in new vehicles and modifications to existing ones.
- Modally shift an estimated 2% of home to school journeys each year in traffic congested parts of our region by introducing a pilot technologically enabled scholars bus offer.

Our Ambition

We will work with operators, local authorities and Nexus to ensure there is sufficient funding to maintain their current networks.

Where we are

During the pandemic central government were providing financial support to bus operators, through the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG), this was to ensure vital services could continue running, this funding ended in June 2023. Following our indicative BSIP award of £163.5m it was stated that the funding could not be used to support the existing network only service enhancements, The NEJTC therefore allocated £35m to enhancing services, see the next page for more information on enhancements. Central government made a second round of BSIP funding available in the form of BSIP+, this was for supporting services following the end of BRG only. Given the North East's large original BSIP award the region was not awarded any BSIP+ funding, however the terms of the original BSIP funding were changed to allow this to be spent on supporting the existing network.

In May 2023, the government announced an extension to its national £2 single fare cap until November 2023, when it increases to £2.50 until November 2024, with the aim of easing the burden of the cost of living crisis. Operators in the area have largely reported this scheme has had a limited impact on bus passenger volumes and patronage remains 20% lower than pre-pandemic levels. Flexible working patterns mean the region is not experiencing the usual volume of commuting, combined with changes to how people shop and travel for leisure results in persisting stress on bus services. Financial pressures have resulted in cuts to service frequencies and some services withdrawn altogether.

Our next steps

Due to changes in support to bus operators as mentioned above a proportion of the £35m allocated for service enhancements is now being utilised to support those commercial services that are at risk of being cut. Where possible, this money will be used to increase connectivity to large employers and improve services by adapting times of operation to cater for increased demand, for example, Nexus implementing a new early morning service to Newcastle Airport.

The EP is working together to implement service enhancements and support services at risk over the coming months. BSIP funding will support the network until March 2025 but subsequently, without a significant uplift in patronage or additional funding, more services may be at risk of being withdrawn. The variety of initiatives we are delivering with our funding including fares, services and infrastructure improvements aim to attract more people to travel via bus, which in turn will improve long term financial viability, allowing operators to increase rather than reduce service provision.

One of the key challenges is incentivising public transport use from a young age to prevent dependence on car journeys once young people start learning to drive.

Accounting for 135 million regionwide car journeys each year, journeys from home to school contribute significantly to congestion as well as decreased road safety. We will continue to work with partners to find the best approach for promoting public transport as the option of choice for home to school journeys.

Timescale

Services being supported by BSIP funding until March 2025.

BSIP initiatives delivery ongoing to encourage more passengers to use bus services in the region.

Our Ambition

Enhanced bus corridors to create more and better connections between local places and other modes, through the introduction of new and expanded routes where there is potential for sustainable growth, for example the opening of the new Northumberland rail line. We will look to enhance service frequencies in mornings and evenings in line with our Superbus categories.

We will also look to improve rural connectivity, in particular through a new service to Kielder in the Northumberland National Park and ensure that buses run all year round to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Hadrian's Wall.

Where we are

Changes to the way we live post pandemic, such as flexible working arrangements, have resulted in bus patronage levels not yet returning to pre Covid-19 levels. Against the backdrop of declining bus patronage over several years and due to the reduction of national support, funding previously allocated for service enhancements is instead largely being used to support the existing network.

There are aspirations from the partnership to improve services and there remains some parts of the network where there is overprovision of services so there is still an opportunity to consolidate the network. Many services do not have a late evening, overnight or early morning offering, which limits the options of many shift workers from using public transport.

There are many corridors with high frequency services, and we have an excellent and well-used network of interurban express corridors running into our cities. However, these connections are often on corridors to and from the largest urban areas, leaving many parts of the region poorly connected. Across the region, only 3 routes have services that run 24 hours, meaning those travelling outside core conventional operating hours do not have the option of travelling via public transport.

In some of the most rural parts of the region, car remains the only option. With 97% of Northumberland and 90% of County Durham identified as rural, these areas are challenging to service by standard bus services. Furthermore, cheap or free car parking means the car a viable option when in competition with a bus fare. Since our initial BSIP, some enhancements have already been delivered, such as a new service to Hadrian's Wall. Where overprovision of services existed on the Coast Road, a Qualifying Agreement was implemented in February 2023, which allows customers greater flexibility in their ability to travel with multiple operators on this corridor.

Additionally our research has indicated 1 in 2 rural residents believe bus times in their area do not work for them which further highlights a perception that rural services need to be enhanced to encourage more people to use buses in these areas.

The NEJTC's bus service delivery bodies, Northumberland County Council, Nexus and Durham County Council, are reviewing original BSIP proposals to determine which service enhancements can be taken forward, however concerns over the long-term funding position means these enhancements could be short lived.

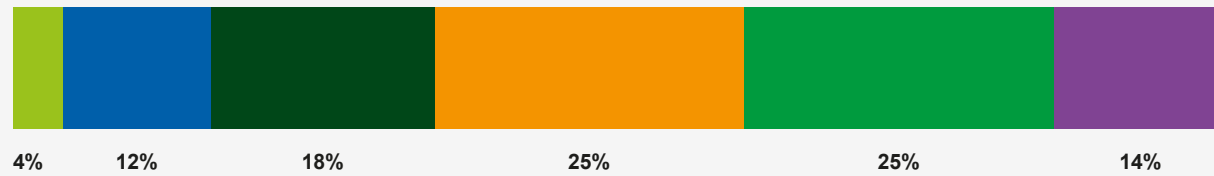
As mentioned in our fares and ticketing delivery section, there are aspirations to create boundary zones which will create frictionless travel for those that live close to the edge of a boundary. This will mean passengers will not have to pay for a regionwide ticket for travelling a short geographical distance.

More research needs to be undertaken to better understand the volume of customers restricted from travelling due to regional boundaries or travelling outside of core operational hours to help better formulate a long-term plan.

Bus patronage remains in long-term decline, with industry-wide challenges for operators, such as bus driver shortages, which continue to restrict opportunities for increasing the number of routes and services



“Bus times don’t fit with my needs.”



■ Don't know ■ Definitely disagree ■ Tend to disagree
■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Tend to agree ■ Definitely agree

Approximately 2 in 5 North East residents feel bus timetables do not currently fit with their personal needs; 3 in 10 feel bus times meet their needs well.

Perceptions are consistent across most profiles, however 1 in 2 rural residents would agree their requirements are not met by bus times. This concern is also felt by 1 in 2 infrequent bus users.

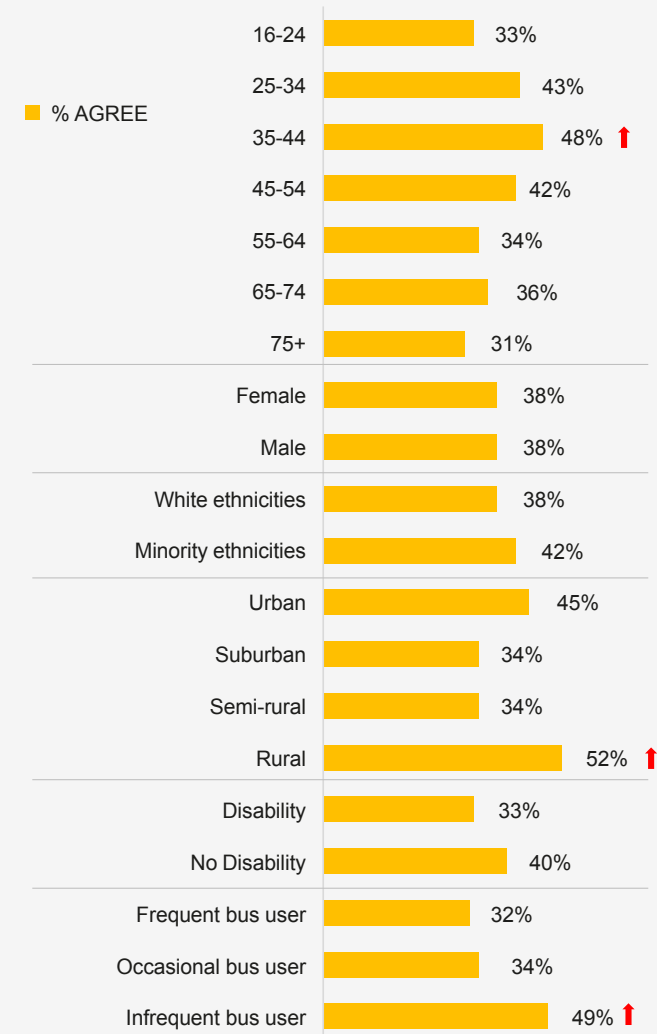


Figure 4:6

Our next steps

In our initial BSIP, we set out aspirations for an integrated transport system with an enhanced operating model and improved connectivity across the region. There were several distinctive categories of connection, as set out in the table below.

Integration allowing customers to interchange at key hubs through improved connections remains an aspiration across the region. The partnership will work together to ensure bus routes are adapted or introduced to cater for the forthcoming opening of the Northumberland rail line. We will endeavour to apply a holistic approach to ensure provision of onward services align, for example if a rail service ends at 23:00 bus services should not be ending at 20:00.

As we were not awarded the full £804 million we bid for in our initial BSIP, the outlined vision of a truly connected network cannot be funded. However, it remains an ambition of the region to enhance services where there is increased demand, as well as implementing bus routes in areas where private vehicles are the only option. Our BSIP will deliver £12.2 million of service support or enhancements until the end of March 2025, after which, without further funding, these services may be at risk of being withdrawn.

Category	Description	Frequency					
		Core hours			Early mornings/ Evenings	Nights	
		Monday – Friday (07:30-18:30)	Saturday (07:30-18:30)	Sunday (08:30-18:30)			
Superbus (Red Routes)	High frequency services in urban areas providing customers with ‘turn up and go’ style service	7 minutes		7-8 minutes	15 minutes	✓	
Superbus (Green Routes)		10 minutes		15 minutes	30 minutes	✓	
Interurban Express	Services connecting cities and major towns from surrounding towns and villages on a limited stop basis	15 minutes		30 minutes			
Connect	Facilitating interchanges with Metro, National Rail and Interurban Express	30 minutes		1 hour			
Rural communities	Tailored to specific requirements of each community	Up to every 2 hours					

Figure 4:7

Consultation with partners will be undertaken to understand implications of car park pricing on bus transport usage. Significant investment in bus priority infrastructure on key corridors (see Highways and Infrastructure section) will enable faster journey times for bus services, including during times of disruption, meaning services will be more reliable. The partnership is also looking to establish closer collaboration across the seven local authorities on planned roadworks to ensure performance is not significantly hindered by works. This is particularly important considering the long-term works beginning on the Tyne Bridge.

Timescale

Service enhancements, where possible, are currently going through procurement and are expected to launch over the coming months. Collaboration to establish ways in which the network can be enhanced beyond supporting and maintaining the existing system is ongoing.

Review of highways initiatives that enable improved journey times will continue.

Review of additional measures, such as parking schemes to further encourage use of bus services.

Our Ambition

We will launch pilots for Demand Responsive Services, which could include home-to-school services.

Where we are

Demand Responsive Transport allows groups previously unable to travel by public transport a means of doing so. The only existing scheme in the region is in County Durham called Link2, which provides a dial-a-ride public transport alternative to those without regular service provision, as well as accessible transit for people with mobility issues. The thresholds for being able to utilise the service are:

- Your journey starts or ends in County Durham.
- You do not have a bus stop within 600 metres or 10 minutes' walk.
- You do not have a bus service available within one hour of when you want to travel.
- The journey would require a change of bus.

There are no other DRT schemes in the region however those with mobility issues can make use of a taxi card system that allows travel at a discounted rate.

21% of the population in the North East live in rural towns or villages. These markets are often unattractive to bus operators; low passenger loadings make them commercially unviable, so there are clear challenges in ensuring rural communities remain connected to the public transport network.

The EP has undertaken discussions with local authorities and DRT suppliers to understand scheme feasibility, we have been following the schemes that have been funded through the Rural Mobility Fund to be able to take account of any lessons learnt.

Our next steps

Over the course of the BSIP we will launch pilot schemes providing additional vehicles to operate in rural parts of Northumberland and in County Durham to enhance Link2's operation. The schemes will enable connectivity with other bus routes and deliver onwards interchange with the rail network.

Nationally, several DRT schemes have failed in year 1 of operation, however nearby there are DRT operations that continue to be funded in Tees Valley and Leeds. We are keen to learn lessons from other schemes that have been delivered to ensure any DRT schemes launched in the North East are economically viable by providing a lower cost option than driving, or the bus ticket equivalent, meaning they provide best value for the public.

We have incentivised bus as an option over car for young people by introducing our £1 single and £3 day tickets for those aged 21 and under, but aspire to further encourage bus to young people by working closer with schools and procuring route planning technology to allow us to plan efficient bus routes to school. It remains an aspiration of the partnership to devise ways in which home to school transport can be developed, however this is not in our current BSIP spending allocation so we would need alternative funding to deliver this.

Timescale

We will work with partners across the industry to understand lessons from other DRT schemes ahead of launching trials within the course of our BSIP.

We continue to develop ways to incentivise public transport for young people and evaluate ways home to school transport can be improved.

Our Ambition

We will support the introduction of cleaner and greener vehicles through accelerating operators' bus replacement programmes and reviewing ways in which hydrogen vehicles can be utilised.

Where we are

The average age of the bus fleet in the North East is approximately 8.9 years in comparison to the UK average of 8 years. Over 40% of the fleet meets the Euro 6 standard, while 38% are Euro 5 and 17% are Euro 4 or lower. Operators in the region have invested in upgrading their fleets, for example Go North East have invested £3.7million in new fully electric zero emission buses operating in Newcastle and Gateshead (Voltra), which are powered by renewable energy sources.

The North East Transport Plan aims for all buses to meet Euro 6 emission standards by 2025 and all buses to be zero emission by 2035. This will require considerable investment at an increased rate to what has been experienced so far. We need to ensure there is provision for smaller operators for vehicle upgrades, as focus up to now has predominately been on large operators. A Clean Air Zone (CAZ) was implemented in Newcastle city centre at the beginning of 2023, meaning vehicles that are non-compliant against standards will be charged to enter the zone. Vehicle upgrade grants are obtainable through the scheme, however at the time of writing, funding has not been released to operators. The desire remains to upgrade the fleet to meet Euro 6 standards, but the 2025 target may prove too ambitious unless significant increases to funding are forthcoming quickly.

There remains a desire in the region to trial hydrogen fuelled buses as they can travel longer distances than electric buses, which is essential due to the geographical nature of our region which influences the length of some bus routes. We will continue to explore this option, however technical advances, and reductions in running costs will need to be seen for this to be a viable option.

Our next steps

The North East successfully secured £19.5m of investment in new electric vehicles through the Levelling Up Fund for Decarbonisation, which will deliver an additional 52 new electric vehicles.

We remain committed to delivering cleaner and greener vehicles and will continue working with central government to obtain further funding to assist with upgrading the fleet to become zero emission by 2035. We continue to work with partners across the country to understand best practice and will develop a roadmap for implementation.

Timescale

Entire fleet to be zero emissions by 2035.

Our Ambition

To review the North East parking policies in relation to public transport.

Where we are

Parking policy across the region is explained earlier in this document in Section 2. Decisions on car parking policy sit with each local authority and are dependent on a range of factors, such as economic policy, rurality and the range of public transport options available, some authorities are already considering changing parking charges to support modal shift to public transport.

Our next steps

In line with the principals set out in the Making the Right Travel Choice strategy we will work with local authorities to undertake in a wider review on current parking policies, these will take into account the differing geographies of our authorities and the wider socio-economic aims of each council.

We will review how different parking strategies and congestion charges have been implemented in similar regions across England to determine if any could be deployed in the North East.

Our Ambition

We will introduce a refreshed code of conduct to introduce a consistent standard for network changes.

Where we are

As highlighted in our initial BSIP, through consultation with stakeholders, we have identified there are some very good practices adopted in our region for communicating network changes but due to a lack of standardisation often the first-time a bus user hears of an upcoming change is when their bus driver tells them. The lack of opportunity for input from the public can be a source of frustration so we sought to create a standardised approach that could be adopted by operators and local authorities. This approach also introduces enhanced timelines for stakeholder notification of a proposed change to enable more time for collaboration on how to deliver network changes and mitigate the impact of any withdrawals.

The creation of local bus boards in each local authority provides opportunity for input from all relevant partners and discussion regarding local network changes whilst identifying ways of moderating changes to reduce disruption.

Our next steps

We will continue to work together to ensure this approach becomes adopted and consistent throughout the region which will enable greater collaboration and co-ordination of network changes.

In collaboration with partners, we will build on the success of the initial local bus boards to ensure they are implemented by all local authorities across the region.

Timescales

is ongoing throughout the BSIP.

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4. Delivery

Highways and infrastructure

This subsection details our progress against our ambitions, and our next steps to:

- Accelerate bus journey times and improve reliability and punctuality for over 115 million current and future bus users each year with a programme of highways interventions.
- Improve the ‘walking and waiting’ experience at and around bus stations with a package of investment in new and updated facilities.
- Address congestion in City Centres through new Park & Ride facilities.
- Transform the experience of bus travel in our region by coordinating infrastructure role out with the enhanced frequencies and customer offer set out throughout this BSIP.

Our Ambition

Our region is committed to investment in highways infrastructure, which could include road space reallocation, junction redesign, traffic signal re-prioritisation, bus gates and other measures designed to improve bus services.

Where we are

Since the publication of the BSIP, traffic levels have continued to rise in the region, which has impacted bus performance. Ahead of the release of funding, the partnership has progressed plans to bring forward a suite of bus priority infrastructure works to speed up buses and make them more punctual and reliable. This has largely followed plans set out in the original BSIP, although deliverability concerns, a shortfall in funding and the shortened BSIP timeframe has resulted in some plans being reprofiled or removed from the programme. Inflationary pressures have also impacted plans with estimated costs rising.

In July 2023 the NEJTC approved the release of funds for the programme level Full Business Case associated with tranche 1 bus priority infrastructure programme. We are now developing business cases to deliver tranche 1 schemes once rigorous public consultation has taken place and design work is complete. These will be on 17 of our busiest corridors: West of Newcastle (BRT), Wallsend, Coast Road (BRT), A188/A189 North Tyneside, Dunston, Bensham Road, Leam Lane, Old Durham Road, Chester Road, Sunderland, A690 Sunderland, South Shields to Sunderland, South Shields to Newcastle, Blyth Cowpen Road, Cramlington, Morpeth, Seaton Burn and Durham A167. The vast majority of bus routes in our network use these 17 corridors for all or part of their journey.

The second tranche of schemes are deliverable in the BSIP time frame, but not yet at the Business Case stage so require further development and consultation.

Our local authorities are also willing to consider changes to on-street parking and moving traffic enforcement on these and other corridors, to the extent that red routes could be introduced, subject to public consultation.

Our next steps

Work is underway to confirm the final programme of works for tranche 1 with the respective local authorities. Final designs and costs for these schemes will be developed and assured prior to works commencing. For those schemes which are unable to be delivered through the BSIP timeframe, alternative funding sources will be investigated including whether they align and are able to form part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) pipeline.

The second tranche of schemes are currently in the initial stages of development and, subject to identified projects aligning to the overarching objectives of the BSIP, the programme will be finalised by December 2023. Both tranches must be either delivered or contractually bound by March 2025.

For all schemes which will be delivered through the BSIP, we will work with key partners including network managers and the Urban Traffic Management Centre (UTMC), to mitigate disruption on the existing network whilst schemes are under construction.

Timescale

Ongoing with delivery complete by March 2025.

Our Ambition

Ensuring stops and shelters have appropriate modern facilities, including lighting, CCTV, real time information, and high-quality pedestrian access to increase safety.

A strategic plan will be developed to select 'hub' shelters that can serve as a community focus for interchange opportunities between bus routes, with cycling and walking, with rail, ferry, Metro, and park and ride sites.

We will replace all our bus stop 'flags' to ensure consistent standards throughout the region.

New bus stations will be delivered in Durham, Alnwick, Bishop Auckland and an additional Newcastle City Centre bus station.

There are further plans to improve bus access to North Shields Fish Quay, especially given the new ferry landing, and the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP).

Where we are

Following guidance from the DfT, BSIP plans for stops and station improvements have been limited to focusing on safety and accessibility upgrades. Many enhancements to bus infrastructure have progressed independently of BSIP funding, such as Durham bus station and the North Shields transport hub. As identified in the BSIP however, there are many locations in the North East where outdated bus infrastructure may be holding back bus patronage, meaning upgrading this infrastructure remains a partnership priority.

Our next steps

Durham County Council, Nexus, and Northumberland County Council, who are responsible for the bus stations and stops in the region, have been invited to submit proposals to upgrade assets which require accessibility and safety improvements. Subject to review, projects which successfully meet the criteria will be progressed.

Timescale

Ongoing with delivery complete by March 2025.

Our Ambition

We will contribute to already planned investment in the region's highways in the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) project to ensure the potential for bus priority is maximised.

Where we are

Since the publication of the BSIP, the North East's signal technology has been successfully upgraded by investments in ITS from the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) on 17 core bus corridors. This technology upgrades signals at junctions and pedestrian crossings, in order that traffic control interventions can be enabled remotely. This represents a step change in traffic management for the region as some of our busiest bus corridors were previously equipped with the oldest traffic signal equipment, often not connected to the UTMC.

BSIP funding provides the opportunity to complete the programme of signal upgrades on a further 7 bus corridors, bringing maximum benefits to more bus routes throughout the region. The June 2023 meeting of the NEJTC released funding for this work, which has been subject to a full business case and exhibits strong value for money.

Next Steps

Work is progressing on the signal upgrades. The second phase of this project will bring further benefits to buses by enabling vehicles to be accurately located in real time and providing hurry calls (a green light as quickly as possible) at signalised junctions where they are needed. This upgrade to real time information system will benefit passengers across the North East with more accurate, up-to-date information. This technology has undergone successful trials in the region and is scheduled to be fully rolled out by April 2024.

We plan to build on this foundation (subject to funding) by rolling out signal upgrades to more junctions across the region.

Timescale

Ongoing with delivery complete by March 2025.

Our Ambition

We will introduce 5 new major Park and Ride sites in the region, served by high-specification vehicles running a dedicated service for customers.

Where we are

To progress this ambition ahead of funding confirmation, an Options Assessment Report (OAR) was commissioned by Transport North East. The report investigated how and where Park and Ride could positively enhance public transport provision and support growth across the region. A three-stage sifting approach was carried out for all proposed sites covering planning, propensity for cars to easily exit the highway and access the Park and Ride site, and environmental considerations. The study identified the 5 potential sites that could be delivered within the BSIP timeframe. These locations had clear merits, although potential limitations were flagged regarding land ownership and deliverability.

Despite deliverability challenges, the region has prioritised improving Park and Ride provision. This is important considering the upcoming Tyne Bridge maintenance work, which will cut off a key arterial route, potentially causing severe disruption for buses.

TCF funding will also deliver an extension to Durham's Park and Ride site in Sniperley, which is due to be completed in Spring 2024.

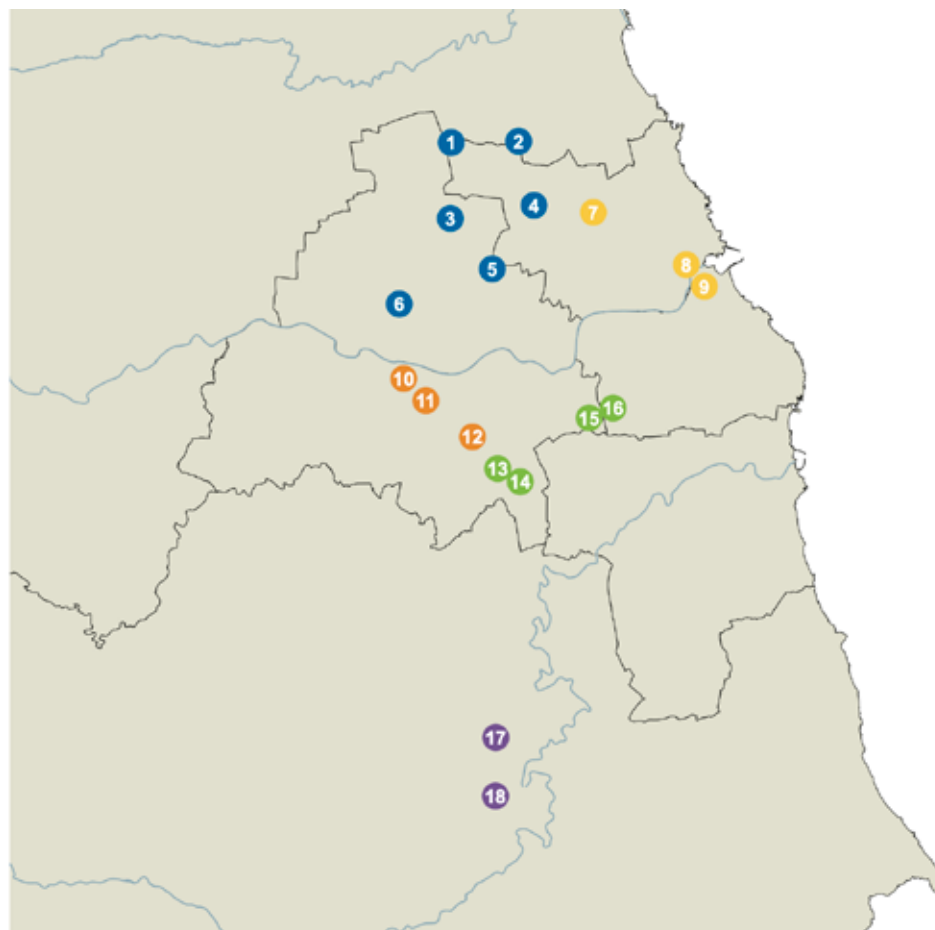
Our next steps

Work is continuing with partners to progress the opportunities for Park and Ride and to investigate alternative funding sources for those sites which are not deliverable in the BSIP timeframe.

Timescale

Ongoing with delivery complete by March 2025.

Our long list of possible Park and Ride locations



Our Ambition

We will establish formal 'Pocket Park and Ride' locations around the network. 'Pocket Park and Ride' sites have a small number of car parking spaces and will be located along existing bus routes, supported by high-quality information and waiting facilities.

Where we are

The partnership has begun work to identify locations which show strategic potential as Pocket Park and Ride sites. These are intended to reduce congestion and boost bus ridership without abstracting from the existing bus network. Successful delivery of these sites will help to make more services viable in settings where a commercial route is difficult to sustain.

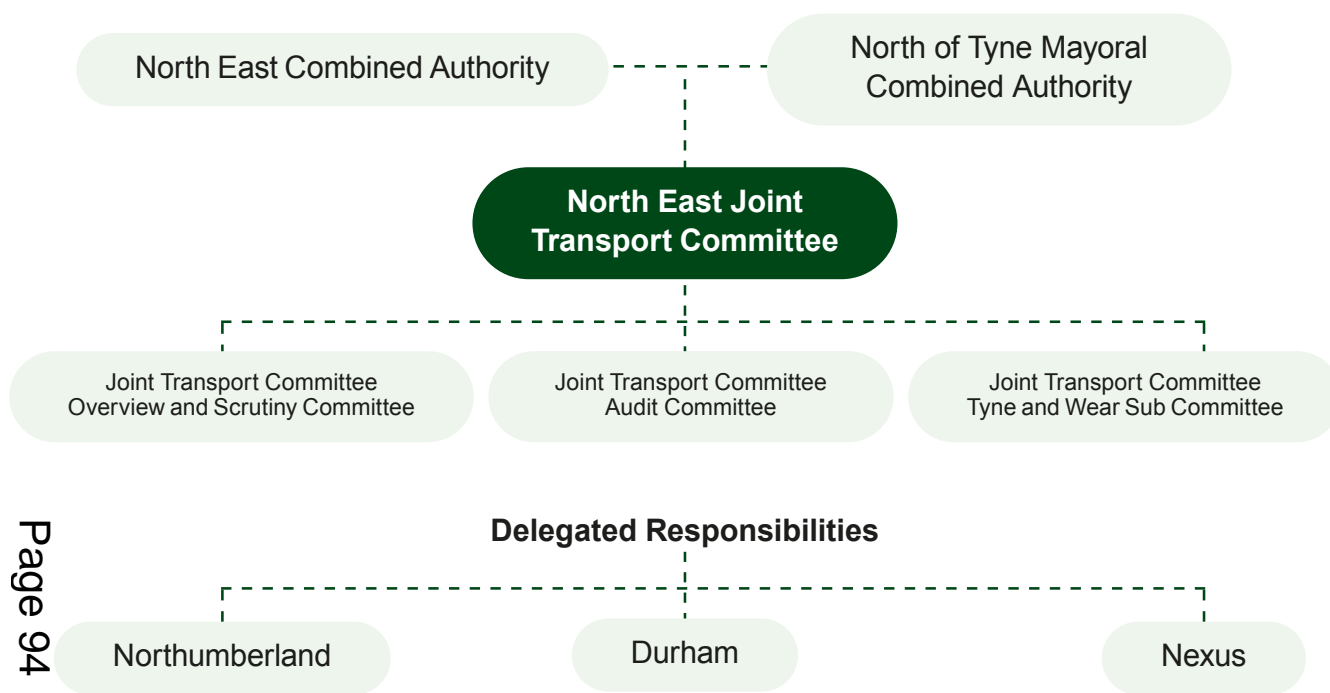
Our next steps

Local authorities are developing plans for where Pocket Park and Rides sites could be established for review.

Timescale

Ongoing with delivery complete by March 2025.

5. Governance and Reporting



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This chapter sets out the governance of the BSIP and how we will report on our delivery and progress towards our KPIs.

Our Governance

The NEJTC is ultimately responsible for the delivery of the BSIP. The committee holds monthly meetings, which provides the opportunity for any updates and reports to be reviewed in a timely manner. The committee is responsible for approving any BSIP funding spend.

The political and bus operating geography of the North East make it particularly complex to coordinate strategic actions across the bus network given the large number of operators, seven local authorities, two combined authorities and Nexus. To address this, we have formed a North East Bus Partnership Board (the partnership) which provides effective and strategic governance to drive sound performance against our KPIs set out in Section 3 of this BSIP. Programme delivery updates are provided to the quarterly meetings, with risks and issues reported by exception.

A North East Bus Partnerships team, housed within Transport North East, has been created, including programme management capacity. This team is in place to deliver the plan, monitor performance of the management of the partnership agreement, and oversee marketing and stakeholder activities designed to drive growth in bus patronage.

We have set up a Bus Advisory Board, which is attended by representatives from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and North East Chamber of Commerce. Our assessment is that we can put these strategic relationships to greater use by using them to pave the way to collaboration with businesses to drive buses modal share

The diagram to the left outlines the decision-making hierarchy for the BSIP.

Reporting

In line with reporting requirements, we report against our KPIs on a six-monthly basis to our Bus Partnership Board, and onward to the Department for Transport (DfT) and other key stakeholders. We also publish the information on our website, and it is available in a non-digital format.

We will build on our reporting capability by investing in data software that will enable us to analyse bus data more efficiently and provide bespoke reports. This will allow us to interrogate the data to determine the impact of our interventions, enabling us to adapt our approach to ensure the best outcomes for the region.

6. Overview table

6. Overview table

Name of authority or authorities:	North East Joint Transport Committee
Franchising or EP (or both):	EP
Date of Publication:	26th October, 2021
Date of next annual update:	October 2022
URL of published report:	www.transportnortheast.gov.uk

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Journey time	13.86 miles per hour in 2018	13.86 miles per hour in 2019	Target to be agreed through the partnership, will be a differential between journey speeds with growth in speeds for bus compared to general traffic.	Existing bus journey times are measured and supplied by operators with little difficulty. Targets are set by modelling the impacts of each plan and scheme during the design phase.
Reliability: existing				This is a standard report which operators produce today for the Traffic Commissioner.
% scheduled mileage	TBD	TBD	99.5	
% on time at origin			97	
% on time at timing points			95	
Passenger numbers	154m	TBD	196.5m	DfT patronage data reported as standard by bus operators.
Average passenger satisfaction	91%	91%	93%	Transport Focus surveys, increased to 6-monthly reporting.

Delivery – Does the BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/ No	Explanation (max 50 words)
Make improvements to bus services and planning		
More frequent and reliable services		
Review service frequency	Y	Review twice each year on a rolling programme around the region, with a blended corridors and centres approach. Consultation approach on route changes in the Charter promise.
Increase bus priority measures	Y	Bus gates, lanes, red routes, signal priorities, turning priorities, dedicated bus only roads. £250m capital programme to build upon the high level of bus priority already in the region.
Increase demand responsive services	Y	DRT local routes and feeder routes to Express services in Durham and Northumberland; Schools 'DRT' home-to-school pilot scheme.
Consideration of bus rapid transport networks	Y	Bus Rapid Transit network aspiration for the whole region. 5 routes identified, with 2 in Tranche 1 of the BSIP, building on existing priorities which facilitate frequent, high demand bus services.
Improvements to planning / integration with other modes		
Integrate services with other transport modes	Y	Integration with Metro, rail, also other buses and coaches. Local access focus with 'hubs' for bike-to-bus; walking and waiting programme of works to increase customer confidence and complement Active Travel. Park and Ride for 5 major corridors, plus 'pocket park and ride' particularly for Express bus services.
Simplify services	Y	The first action in the delivery programme is rationalisation of services to create an easy to understand turn-up-and-go network, and a review of route numbering to remove confusion where similarly numbered routes operate different services.

6. Overview table

Review socially necessary services	Y	The revised network encompasses socially necessary services and enhances them significantly.
Invest in Superbus networks	Y	The Guidance ‘Superbus’ concept is here, ‘Connect’, through upgrading and bolstering our already strong small towns & villages networks. Superbus here has been used to describe the turn-up-and-go network.
Improvements to fares and ticketing		
Lower fares	Y	Lower all day ticket prices in all areas, with a £4 to £5 day cap for bus travel, and discounts for young people.
Simplify fares	Y	A simple 3 zone system replacing the current complexity of many offers; standardisation of operators’ tickets periods (e.g. start the week on the same day); clear marketing and a single source App.
Integrate ticketing between operators and transport	Y	£6.80 all day, all zone, all modes, all operators ticket, covering bus, ferry, metro and some rail; reduced from £10.90. The £4 and £5 cap day tickets are also all-operator.
Make improvements to bus passenger experience		
Higher spec buses		
Invest in improved bus specifications	Y	Fleet replacement plan. Also, AV and WiFi to be fitted to all buses in the region.
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services	Y	Walking and waiting plan; fleet replacement plan (all low floor, easy access, high comfort); engagement with community groups and advocacy bodies to identify initiatives to promote bus travel for people with protected characteristics and extra needs.
Protect personal safety of bus passengers	Y	Increase CCTV coverage in-vehicle, with a radical uplift at stops. Walking and waiting plan to improve confidence. Joint work with the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner’s programme to enhance the Safety of Women and Girls on Public Transport.

6. Overview table

Higher spec buses continued		
Improve buses for tourists	Y	Active liaison with tourism stakeholders. Substantial funding for pilots to encourage sustainable tourism.
Invest in decarbonisation	Y	Car mode shift of 2% will make the biggest impact on the carbon footprint and the health of the region. Fleet renewal to Euro 6 and Zero Emission vehicles will transform the image and impact of bus.
Improvements to passenger engagement		
Passenger Charter	Y	Promises to customers across the region on reliability, delivery, and the means to give feedback on great service and to complain and see action taken on complaints.
Strengthen network identity	Y	Simplify the network; enhance it; single source of truth for real time information; unified branding of vehicles, bus stops and information; marketing campaigns and regionwide behaviour change programme.
Improve bus information	Y	Rural stop information significant upgrade; next generation Real Time Passenger Information at stops; single source of truth for RTPi and Apps; single App for customers with all information; printed information both at stop and off-system.
Other		
Increase mode share of bus	Y	Annually: DfT data, supplemented by ANPR and cordon counts as necessary.

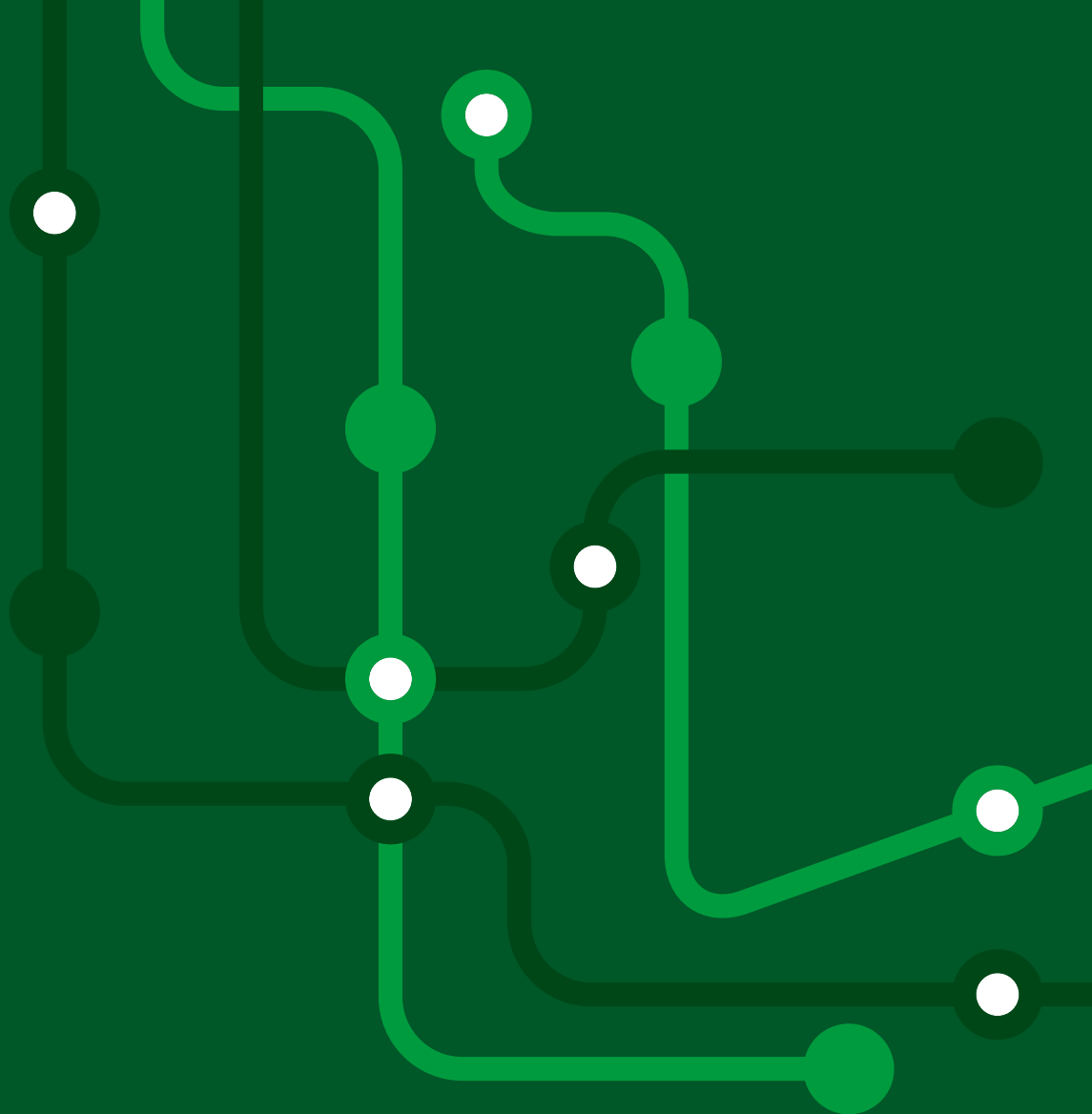
Glossary of Terms

- **ANPR** = Automatic Number Plate Recognition, technology that uses optical character recognition on images to read vehicle registration plates to create vehicle location data.
- **AONB** = Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a designated exceptional landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are precious enough to be protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act).
- **ATF** = Active Travel Fund, grant funding that supports local transport authorities with producing cycling and walking facilities.
- **AV technology** = Audio/Visual Technology, the 'next stop' announcements on buses.
- **AVL** = Automatic Vehicle Location, is a means for automatically determining and transmitting the geographic location of a vehicle.
- **BPC** = Bus Passenger Charter, a document designed to advise you of the standard of service you can expect when using bus services within the North East. It also sets out methods of redress should the standard fall below what is promised.
- **BRT** = Bus Rapid Transit, also called a busway or transitway, is a bus-based public transport system designed to have better capacity and reliability than a conventional bus system.
- **BSIP** = Bus Service Improvement Plan, a document in which the LTA, working closely with local bus operators and local communities, sets out a vision for delivering a step-change in bus services that is required by the Government's National Bus Strategy.
- **CAZ** = Clear Air Zone, a defined area where targeted action is taken to improve air quality, in particular by discouraging the most polluting vehicles from entering a particular zone.
- **CBI** = Confederation of British Industry, an influential business organisation that speaks on behalf of 190,000 businesses and its members.
- **CPC** = Certificate of Professional Competence, a qualification required by professional bus, coach and lorry drivers.
- **CPI** = Consumer Price Index, a measure that examines the weighted average of prices of a range of consumer goods and services, including transport.
- **DfT** = Department for Transport, a ministerial department, supported by 24 agencies and public bodies that is responsible for planning and investing in transport infrastructure.
- **DRT** = Demand Responsive Transport, refers to flexible transportation solutions that are based on particular transport demand without using a fixed route or timetabled journeys.
- **ENCTS** = English National Concessionary Travel Scheme.
- **EP** = Enhanced Partnership. An EP is a statutory arrangement under the 2017 Bus Services Act which can specify, for example, timetables and multi-operator ticketing, and allows LTAs to take over the role of registering bus services from the Traffic Commissioners.
- **EURO 6 Standard** = Emissions standards for buses.
- **IAMP** = International Advanced Manufacturing Park.
- **ITS** = Intelligent Transport Systems, a combination of Information Technology and telecommunications, enabling many innovations in traffic control and in the provision of on-line information.
- **ITSO** = Integrated Transport Smartcard Organisation.

- **JTC/ NEJTC** = Joint Transport Committee/ North East Joint Transport Committee.
- **KPI** = Key Performance Indicator.
- **LA7** = 7 North East local authorities, comprising Durham County Council, Gateshead Council, Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council, Northumberland County Council, Sunderland City Council and South Tyneside Council.
- **LEP** = Local Enterprise Partnership, a public, private and education sector partnership, responsible for promoting and developing economic growth in the local authority areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland.
- **LTA** = Local Transport Authority.
- **NEbus** = the North East Bus Operators' Association, encompassing the providers of bus services across the North East.
- **NECA/ North East Combined Authority** = Comprising Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside, Sunderland.
- **NETP** = North East Transport Plan, 'the Transport Plan', a document setting out our region's transport aspirations up to 2035.
- **Nexus** = the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive that administers funds on behalf of the Joint Transport Committee of the North East Combined Authority and the North of Tyne Combined Authority.
- **NTCA/ North of Tyne Combined Authority** = Comprising Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland.
- **NTL/ Network One Ticketing Limited** = A partnership of bus, metro, train and ferry companies in the North East, which provides a range of tickets.
- **OSC** = Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- **RPI** = Retail Price Index, a measure of inflation published monthly by the Office for National Statistics. It measures the change in the cost of a representative sample of retail goods and services.
- **RTPI** = Real Time Passenger Information, a means of providing electronic travel information to the users of public transport in "real time" via a range of sources, such as at bus stops, stations, on vehicles and via phone or internet.
- **The Strategy** = The UK National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better'.
- **TCA** = Travel Concession Authorities. TCAs are responsible for administering concessionary travel schemes.
- **TCF** = Transforming Cities Fund, a £2.45 billion capital grant transport fund aimed at driving up productivity through investments in public and sustainable transport infrastructure in some of England's largest city regions.
- **TfN** = Transport for the North, England's first Sub-national Transport Body responsible for bringing the North's local transport authorities and business leaders together with Network Rail, Highways England, and HS2 Ltd, while working closely with Central Government to bring strategic value to decisions about transport in the North.

- **ULEBS** = Ultra-Low Emission Bus Scheme is the latest round of Government funding to local authorities and bus operators to support the purchase of new buses from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) and the Department for Transport (DfT).
- **UTMC** = Urban Traffic Management Control, the main initiative in the UK for the development of a more open approach to Intelligent Transport Systems in urban areas.
- **ZEBRA** = Zero Emission Bus Regional Area. The ZEBRA scheme will provide up to £120 million for local transport authorities (LTAs), outside London, to support the introduction of zero-emission buses and the infrastructure needed to support them.

Appendix A – Bus Passenger Charter



Bus Passenger Charter

(of new unified network bus brand)

Our Customer Charter

Date of publication: XX 2023

Date of next review: XX 2025

This Bus Passenger Charter sets out what you can expect when travelling on any of the region's buses and what can be done if the experience falls short of our commitment to you.

We commit to making every journey as easy and reliable as possible

Passengers can expect:

- Buses to be on time; normally arriving no more than 5 minutes late or 1 minute early
- A network of bus routes running along all major roads connecting people to towns, cities and large employers
- A range of value for money tickets that can be used on any bus regardless of operator, with a range of payment methods including cash and contactless
- Each bus to have space for at least one wheelchair or two pushchairs

Our Commitments

We commit to operating a safe, secure and comfortable service

Our passengers can expect:

- A clean bus with comfortable facilities
- A professional and friendly driver
- A secure, well maintained, place to wait for the bus
- CCTV cameras on buses
- Us to work continually with the police to maintain a safe network
- A zero-tolerance policy towards hate crime, anti-social behaviour of any kind or harassment towards passengers and bus staff.

We commit to always keep you informed

Passengers can expect:

- Accurate, accessible and timely sources of information regarding timetables, fares and disruption.
- Investment in on board 'Next Stop' audio-visual information on new buses
- That bus users and effected communities will be consulted with prior to a major route or timetable change to ensure impacts are fully considered.
- Bus drivers to be knowledgeable on routes, passenger entitlements, and the best fare options for a passenger's day of travel.

We commit to help, particularly when things go wrong

Despite our best efforts, things can go wrong. In the event this happens, we will take the appropriate action to put things right and get your journey back on track. We commit to:

- Providing a considered and appropriate response to all queries, complaints and comments- treating each on a case-by-case basis
- A service guarantee (free bus ticket or voucher to compensate for service issues)
- An easy access guarantee: a taxi will be provided or cost covered where a bus is unable to accommodate a customer with a disability, who would usually be accommodated
- An Emergency Protocol to ensure other operators tickets are accepted on board buses in the event of severe disruption to the network

How to get in touch:





We have a unified ambition to grow bus patronage across our region

Email: buses@transportnortheast.gov.uk

Visit: www.transportnortheast.gov.uk

Appendix B – Letters of support



Tobyn Hughes
Transport North East
c/o Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

31 August 2023

Dear Tobyn,

I am writing on behalf of CPT (Confederation of Passenger Transport) and NE Bus (The North East Bus operators association) to express our continued support for the updated North East Bus Service Improvement Plan on behalf of our members.

The ambitious Bus Service Improvement Plan and partnership approach will maximise the contribution and effectiveness of the bus network to the regional economy and to the people who live, work and study in North East England.

We support the work to develop the BSIP offer and has been able to demonstrate a partnership approach that maximises the capabilities, skills and experience of all parties.

We believe the BSIP will be truly transformative for the region.

I look forward to continue working in partnership with you to deliver the BSIP through the Enhanced Partnership.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew McGuinness
Regional Manager (North of England)

Transport North East
C/O Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace Gateshead
NE8 1HH

Go North East
117 Queen Street
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE8 2UA

Tel: 0191 420 50 50
Web: gonortheast.co.uk
Email: hello@gonortheast.co.uk

Thursday 14th September 2023

Re: Bus Service Improvement Plan

Dear whom it may concern,

I write to you as Business Director for Go North East to confirm my support of Transport North East and the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Transport North East have been in discussion with us regarding the BSIP and we are happy to continue with constructive and meaningful dialogue as it develops.

We hope to continue building a strong relationship between our organisations and look forward to advancing that through the BSIP.

Yours sincerely,



Ben Maxfield
Business Director

Transport North East
C/O Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

15/08/2023



TONY LEWIN
EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL

Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

I write in my role as Executive Principal for Newcastle College, NCG, and confirm ongoing discussions with Transport North East regarding their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Transport North East have consulted us on their BSIP and we continue to have constructive and meaningful dialogue as this develops and wish to continue to work together in the future.

We hope to continue to build a strong partnership between our organisations and look forward to doing so through the BSIP.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tony Lewin'.

Tony Lewin
Executive Principal (Curriculum)
NCG

Transport North East
C/O Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

Professor Jane Robinson
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Engagement
and Place

Newcastle University
King's Gate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU
United Kingdom

1 September 2023

To whom it may concern,

Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

I write in my role as Pro-Vice Chancellor, Engagement & Place at Newcastle University, and confirm ongoing discussions with Transport North East regarding the review of their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). Transport North East have consulted the University on the BSIP and we continue to have constructive and meaningful dialogue as this develops, and wish to work together in the future.

A modern, accessible and efficient regional bus network is of great importance for our 6,600 colleagues and 30,000 students, and for the commitment the University has made to net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2030. We also recognise the positive impact of public transport towards economic, social and cultural wellbeing in the region, and our hope that our world-leading research can continue to support innovation in sustainable transport. In particular, we are leading work nationally on electrification and battery technology, which we believe could make a step-change in the future of public transport.

We believe establishing a strong partnership between our organisations through proactive engagement will bring a positive impact to the North East and we look forward to doing so through the BSIP.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Jane Robinson
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Engagement and Place



26 September 2023

To Whom it May Concern

Nexus, The Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive, is fully committed to the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan. We support the revisions the North East Joint Transport Committee has made to the original plan, and we have led the way in delivering measures reflected in it.

As operator of the Tyne and Wear Metro and Shields Ferry we have introduced lower fares for these modes which match the ambitions set out in the plan – including a £1 flat for those aged under £22 – without receiving reimbursement. We have been active in delivering wider initiatives including the free travel provision for car experienced young people, marketing campaigns, and integrated leisure travel to major events throughout this summer. We are already providing funding to bus operators to sustain and develop local services and this will grow through the autumn and next year.

The Enhanced Partnership which the BSIP underpins has got off to a good start and we look forward to continuing to work with our partners in the bus industry and local and regional authorities to build on this.

Yours faithfully

Huw Lewis
Customer Services Director
Nexus

16 August 2023

Mr T Hughes
Transport North East
C/O Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

Dear Toba

Letter of Support ref BSIP and EP

Busways Travel Limited, trading as Stagecoach North East (“Stagecoach”) is pleased to formally record its continued support for TNE’s BSIP and the ensuing EP.

We are excited to be part of the partnership to show what huge benefits can be gained by working together to deliver the transport strategy for the North East.

We believe that the combined investment from all partners coupled with the allocated funding from UK Government will lead to transformational changes for bus passengers across the North East Combined Authority area whilst also encouraging modal shift to further improve the air quality in the area. We are already starting to see some of these benefits with the introduction of the U22 fares.

We look forward to continuing the work done to date with the Partnership.

Yours sincerely



**STEVE WALKER
MANAGING DIRECTOR
STAGECOACH NORTH EAST**

We have a unified ambition to grow bus patronage across our region

Email: buses@transportnortheast.gov.uk

Visit: www.transportnortheast.gov.uk

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North East Joint Transport Committee

Date: 17th October 2023
Subject: Transport Plan Progress Report
Report of: Managing Director, Transport North East

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on progress made across a number of Delivery Plan categories in implementing the objectives of the North East Transport Plan and achieving the vision of ‘moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East.’

During his speech at the Conservative Party Conference, the Prime Minister announced ‘Network North’, a package of transport investment across the North using funding reallocated as a result of the cancellation of the HS2 leg from Birmingham to Manchester.

Projects of direct interest to the North East include confirmation of A1 dualling between Morpeth and Ellingham, the Blyth Relief Road, reopening Ferryhill station and a number of other pledges. These include a commitment to extend the national adult £2 bus fare until November 2024, and to create a road resurfacing fund to tackle potholes.

Significantly the government confirmed that our region’s City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS2) allocation for the period April 2027 - March 2033 will be £1.85bn (£700m of which is funding reallocated from HS2). The North East’s CRSTS1 funding is £563m for transport improvements between now and March 2027 - so the next allocation is over three times the size.

Re-opening the Leamside Line was referenced in the government’s initial communications however less than 24 hours after that announcement, reference to re-opening the line was removed from official documentation. A letter has been sent by the Chair of the JTC to the Secretary of State for Transport, Mark Harper, requesting urgent clarification on how the Leamside Line and all other projects named in government communications will be funded. This issue led to widespread local and national coverage of the campaign to reopen the Leamside Line.

The Government also published a document entitled “Plan for Drivers” that contains a range of measures intended to support motorists, including planned new guidance on the use of bus lanes and 20 mph speed limits.

Despite the challenges posed by extreme weather, this year's Great North Run saw the highest ever footfall that Nexus have carried on their network in the 39 years they have supported the event. 11,200 passengers used the Shields Ferry, 17,000 used the local bus network and over 100,000 used the Metro.

Consultation on Transport for the North's (TfN) second Strategic Transport Plan closed on 17th August and TfN have now outlined proposals to address the 649 responses received.

Following review of the draft Zero Emission Vehicle Strategy at last month's JTC meeting, a 5-week public consultation on the strategy commenced on 3rd October.

Following the submission of an expression of interest to the government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Capital Fund (EOI) in May 2023, the JTC has now been invited to proceed to stage 2 of the bidding process under this fund and to submit an application form setting out how our provisional allocation of £15.8m would be used to deliver more EV charge points by September 2024. The deadline for submitting the form is 30th November 2023.

The Government has announced that the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars, originally meant to come into force in 2030, has been delayed by five years till 2035. Despite this, Nissan has announced that all its vehicles sold in Europe will be electric by 2030.

Recommendations

The Joint Transport Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

1. Background Information

- 1.1 The North East Transport Plan sets out a vision of ‘moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East’ through the delivery of transport improvements under seven policy areas. Recent developments in the transport field are discussed below, organised by policy area.

2. North East Transport Plan

- 2.1 The Transport Plan Refresh is being progressed and the first Steering Group is meeting on 19th October. A super feedback week will take place in December to gather views about the Refreshed Plan from our wider stakeholders. Comments will be fed into the final Consultation Plan which will be presented to the Mayor and Cabinet in May 2024.

3. The cancellation of HS2 and announcement of ‘Network North’

- 3.1 During his keynote speech at the Conservative Party Conference, the Prime Minister announced the cancellation of the extension of HS2 and a new approach to transport investment. This has been called ‘Network North’ and below is set out what they expect to deliver in this region with the redirected funding from HS2:

- £1.85bn for the North East from the City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement 2 and HS2 funding.
- Dualling the A1 between Morpeth and Ellingham.
- £460 million for smaller road schemes, including the Blyth Relief Road.
- Reopening stations including a new station at Ferryhill in County Durham.
- A share of £100 million of funding for contactless and smart ticketing.
- The £2 bus fare will be extended to run till the end of December 2024 instead of rising to £2.50 as planned. More buses to industrial estates and business parks.
- Funding to combat potholes.

A letter has been sent by the Chair of the JTC to the Secretary of State for Transport, Mark Harper, requesting urgent clarification on how the projects named in government communications will be funded. This letter is attached as **Appendix A**.

The Leamside Line

Re-opening the Leamside Line was referenced in the government’s initial announcement communications on 4 October; however this has since been removed from the Network North webpage – less than 24 hours after it was first confirmed.

In media interviews following the announcement that the line would be re-opened, Ministers have said the scheme is one that the region’s new mayor and Combined

Authority may wish to fund through CRSTS2. We await further clarification on this matter from Government and the Department for Transport.

Supporters of the campaign to re-open the Leamside Line have also written to the Prime Minister expressing their concern over the removal of plans to fund the re-opening of the Leamside Line.

This issue led to widespread local and national coverage of the campaign to reopen the Leamside Line.

City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS2)

A significant uplift in the region's CRSTS2 allocation for the period April 2027 - March 2033 to £1.85bn is very positive news and will allow the new combined authority and LA7 councils to plan ahead for transport infrastructure projects over the long-term. CRSTS1 provides the region with £563m in funding for transport improvements between now and March 2027 - so the next allocation is well over 3 times the size.

As the region works to refresh our Transport Plan and place it in context of our wider plans for inclusive growth, decarbonisation and improved public health, the region can have increasing confidence that the pipeline of transport schemes can be delivered.

This is all the information available at the time this report was written, further updates will be provided as more detail emerges.

4. Public transport, travelling by bus, Metro, ferry and on demand public transport

4.1 Bus Travel

The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) has been updated to reflect our ongoing ambitions for bus in the region, and a separate paper seeks the JTC's approval for the refreshed BSIP. Progress on delivery of the Enhanced Partnership scheme is ongoing. Sales of the 21 and Under £1 ticket have hit over 1 million sales a month for the first time in September which is excellent news in terms of achieving our patronage growth targets.

Industrial action

Go North East drivers under the Unite union are currently taking industrial action over the proposed 2 year pay deal, a first week of strikes took place between 30th September and 6th October, the second week of strikes is planned between 14th October and 20th October.

4.2 Metro

Metro Flow and the Great North Run – This year's Great North Run saw the highest ever footfall that Nexus have carried on their network in the 39 years they have supported the event. 11,200 passengers used the Shields Ferry, 17,000 used the local bus network and over 100,000 used the Metro. This year was especially challenging due to extreme weather causing flooding at South Shields Interchange and on the Metro Line at Tyne Dock. Metro Flow, which was recently awarded 'Major Project of the Year' at the National Rail Awards, played a significant role in allowing for a fast recovery from the extreme weather of the weekend.

4.3 City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement

As part of the developing City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme for the region, draft programme assembly work is being progressed ahead of the development of a programme business case and development of schemes. Further project specific development funding will be provided through CRSTS revenue funds following the independent assessment of the programme with an update and recommendation being presented to members in November.

5. **Connectivity beyond our boundaries**

5.1 Rail

Ticket office closures

The public consultation on ticket office closures which closed on 1st September received around three quarters of a million responses, one of the highest ever levels of response to a consultation. The government's reaction to this is currently awaited, and the Chair of the Joint Transport Committee has written to the Secretary of State for Transport to highlight the region's response.

TransPennine timetable

As part of its 'stabilisation plan' for recovery, TransPennine Express (TPE) plans to reduce services from and to the North East. The timetable will change on 11th December, and all 14 Newcastle to Manchester Piccadilly services that also stopped at Durham and, less frequently, at Chester-le-Street, will be withdrawn.

North East residents can still reach Manchester on TPE services to Liverpool Lime Street, which will stop at Newcastle, Durham and Chester-le-Street, though with some gaps in the timetable at the latter. Due to these additional stops and others outside of the North East, this service will now take around 11 minutes longer to get to Manchester Victoria than previously, and 18 minutes longer to get to Liverpool Lime Street than it did previously.

The new timetable therefore reduces TransPennine Express services from Newcastle and Durham to Manchester to one train per hour, down from the 3 trains every two hours (or 1.5 trains per hour) currently timetabled for, and the two trains per hour we had pre-COVID.

One benefit of the new timetable that should be welcomed is that Chester-le-Street's service will improve. Additional TPE trains will stop there giving it an almost hourly connection.

East Coast Main Line (ECML) timetable

Work on a new ECML timetable has been ongoing for some time and we continue to await further information on whether the rail industry intends to change the timetable during 2024 and, if so, how that change will affect this region.

Operational Update

Rail operators are still being impacted by elevated levels of sickness, training backlogs and industrial relations issues, including recent Northern Rail strike action on 30th September and 4th October. More positively, parts of the north (including this region) are seeing strong growth in rail usage, particularly in the leisure markets. Northern rail performance has improved in recent periods, but cancellation levels remain poor in the North East, particularly in relation to cancellations on the Durham Coast Line.

New biomass contract

The Port of Tyne has signed a new contract with Drax, the UK's largest renewable power generator by output, to supply sustainably sourced biomass pellets to Drax Power Station in Selby, North Yorkshire.

The new four-year agreement with Drax, will see up to one million tonnes of biomass pellets hauled annually from the port by rail to Drax Power Station in Selby, Yorkshire. The contract includes a £1.5 million upgrade to site facilities and rail infrastructure, leading to a more efficient distribution operation.

5.2 Transport for the North

Transport for the North Strategic Transport Plan 2 – Consultation on Transport for the North's (TfN) second Strategic Transport Plan closed on 17th August. Following a review of the 649 responses submitted (including those who attended an in-person workshop in Newcastle), TfN have now set out how they propose to address the various comments received.

Whilst the Plan's Vision and Strategic Ambitions will remain unchanged, there will be a stronger emphasis on freight in the final draft and more detail about which schemes/interventions will be prioritised at a pan-regional level to help the North make the strongest possible Spring budget submission. This reflects the key message of TNE's response which highlighted the need for delivery of the key transport infrastructure priorities needed to level up this region.

6. Making the right travel choice

6.1 Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs)

ZEV Strategy

Following review of this strategy at last month's JTC, a 5-week public consultation commenced on 3rd October. This will operate in line with the TNE consultation guidelines agreed with JTC.

LGF Electric Vehicle Infrastructure project

Work continues to conclude the ongoing LGF-funded project to install 7 new EV charge points across the region, one in each local authority. In Northumberland, due to land ownership issues affecting the previous proposed site in Otterburn, it has been agreed to re-locate the planned charge point to a new location in Castle Square, Morpeth.

Net Zero Policy Announcement

The Government have announced that the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars, originally meant to come into force in 2030, has been delayed by five years till 2035. The Prime Minister has framed the changes as 'pragmatic and proportionate' and said the government could not impose 'unacceptable costs' linked to reducing emissions on British families.

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Capital Fund

Following the submission of an expression of interest (EOI) in May 2023, the JTC has been invited to proceed to stage 2 of the bidding process under this fund and to submit an application form setting out how our provisional allocation of £15.8m would be used to deliver electric vehicle charge points by September 2024. The deadline for submitting the form is 30th November 2023.

Transport North East is leading on the completion of the application with input from all seven local authorities and Northern Powergrid (NPG). Details of the proposal will be brought to JTC in November.

7. Private transport: travelling by car and using road infrastructure

7.1 Secretary of State for Transport Speech

During his speech at the Conservative Party Conference this month, the Rt Hon Mark Harper outlined the government position on localised traffic measures, these include:

- The Government is reviewing its powers to prevent 'overzealous use of traffic management' and the 'misuse of so-called 15-minute cities'. Measures could include cutting councils off from the DVLA database if they don't follow the rules.
- It was also pledged that 'no government money' would be used to fund low traffic neighbourhoods.

- Changing DfT guidance, requiring councils to only use 20mph zones where there is good reason to, and underlining that 30mph is the default speed limit on urban roads.
- Ensuring that bus lanes only operate “when they are needed” and allowing motorcycles to use bus lanes.
- Further details can be found in the new 30 point ‘Plan for Drivers’ at this link [Government launches plan to put drivers back in the driving seat - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-plan-to-put-drivers-back-in-the-driving-seat)

8. Transport Usage Trends

8.1 Across the region, public transport passenger numbers were relatively high throughout the month of August, with bus usage at 103% of 2022 levels and Metro usage at 112%. The number of cyclists passing sensors at selected sites across the region is up by around 17% overall in 2023 compared to 2022. Overall traffic levels across Tyne and Wear are similar to August 2022 levels.

9. Reasons for the Proposals

9.1 This report is for information purposes.

10. Alternative Options Available

10.1 Not applicable to this report.

11. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation

11.1 Next steps are set out under the respective items, where applicable.

12. Potential Impact on Objectives

12.1 Successful delivery of the various transport schemes and investment proposals outlined in this document will assist the JTC in delivering its objective to maximise the region’s opportunities and economic potential.

13. Financial and Other Resources Implications

13.1 The report provides an update and overview of progress against the seven Delivery Plan categories in implementing the objectives of the North East Transport Plan and achieving the vision of ‘moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving north-east.’

13.2 The North East Transport Plan includes proposed / required investment totalling £7 billion to achieve the aims and ambitions of the JTC, the majority of which is dependent on future funding decisions by central government. The financial and other resource implications aligned to the plan were agreed as part of the Transport Budget and Levies 2021/22 report to the JTC on 19 January 2021 and in subsequent reports to augment and amend the budget as appropriate.

14. Legal Implications

14.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

15. Key Risks

15.1 Appropriate risk management arrangements are in place for each programme of work overseen by the delivery agencies responsible.

16. Equality and Diversity

16.1 Successful delivery of schemes to improve public transport, walking and cycling will help to address transport-related social exclusion and create a fairer society.

17. Crime and Disorder

17.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications associated with this report.

18. Consultation/Engagement

18.1 Many of the schemes and proposals outlined in this report have been, or will be, the subject of engagement with appropriate stakeholders or the wider public.

19. Other Impact of the Proposals

19.1 No specific impacts.

20. Appendices

20. Appendix A: Letter to Secretary of State regarding funding for Network North project announcements.

21. Background Papers

21.1 None.

22. Contact Officers

22.1 Tobyn Hughes, Managing Director, Transport North East
Tobyn.hughes@transportnortheast.org.uk

23. Sign off

- 23.1
- The Proper Officer for Transport:
 - Head of Paid Service:
 - Monitoring Officer:
 - Chief Finance Officer:

24. Glossary

24.1 All abbreviations or acronyms are spelled out in the report.

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North East Combined Authority

DURHAM • GATESHEAD • SOUTH TYNESIDE • SUNDERLAND



NORTH EAST JOINT TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

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6 October 2023

Dear Secretary of State

On behalf of the North East Joint Transport Committee, I am writing to you following the Prime Minister's speech on 4 October in which he announced investment in a wide range of transport schemes, associated with the cancellation of the HS2 link between Birmingham and Manchester.

The Prime Minister's speech and associated documentation released by the government pledged investment in a large number of transport schemes in the North East, many of which are long-standing priorities. It is very welcome news that the Prime Minister – and presumably therefore the rest of government – is prepared to support these schemes.

We also welcome the earlier than expected announcement of our City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) for the period April 2027-March 2033 which will allow our new Combined Authority to plan for infrastructure projects over the long-term.

However there seems to be some confusion over the status and funding source of some of the projects referenced in the communications materials. In particular, the reopening of the Leamside Line - an agreed regional priority with significant local and national cross-party support - was specifically referred to in one document in such a way that it appeared to represent a government commitment. This accords with both our view and that of Transport for the North that the Leamside Line is a critical piece of national infrastructure that adds capacity and resilience to the East Coast Main Line and needs to be funded as such.

That document has now been removed from the government website but the confusion over the status of this, and other schemes, remains.

I would therefore be grateful if you could provide clarity over the status of, and government's intended funding source for, the following transport schemes affecting the North East:

- The reopening of the Leamside Line
- Ferryhill station
- Dualling of the A1 from Morpeth to Ellingham
- Blyth Relief Road
- Tyne Bridge and Central Motorway A167(M)
- Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor Phase 4
- A £3.3 billion long-term road resurfacing fund for the North
- a £700 million bus funding package in the North
- £100 million to be shared across the North and Midlands to support the development and rollout of London-style contactless and smart ticketing

I look forward to receiving your response at your earliest convenience, so that we can set these pledges in context as we develop our own long-term plans for transport investment.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Martin Gannon
Chair of the North East Joint Transport Committee

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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