

Title: Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) - Sunderland A183 Chester Road and A690 Durham Road Scheme Approvals

Report of: Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport

Portfolio: Transport

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the following Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) capital funded schemes:

- Sunderland A183 Chester Road: total project value of £2.4 million
- Sunderland A690 Durham Road: total project value of £2.5 million

Both schemes are fully funded through the BSIP capital programme allocation of £40.468m, approved by the North East CA Cabinet on 30 July 2024, which delegated authority to the Chief Executive to approve investments within the allocation and enter into associated grant funding agreements.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive is recommended to approve the Sunderland A183 Chester Road Scheme (total project value of £2,393,600) and Sunderland A690 Durham Road (total project value of £2,508,600) and the completion of the necessary grant funding agreements with Sunderland City Council.

A. Summary of Investment Proposals

Project Outline	
Funding Source	Bus Service Improvement Plan Capital Programme
Delivery Areas	Sunderland
Start Date	January 2026
Financial End Date	March 2027
Practical completion date (date by which all outputs will be achieved)	December 2026
Total Project(s) Value	£4,902,200
Grant Amount Requested	£4,902,200
Budget Implications	The requested grant can be met within the overall BSIP capital budget.

1. Background

- 1.1 The North East's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is the region's response to the Government's National Bus Strategy for England which was initially published in March 2021 and has subsequently been refreshed on an annual basis. The BSIP set out a clear ambition to make bus travel faster, more affordable, and a more attractive offer to customers.

- 1.2 At Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in March 2023, Members accepted a funding award of £163.5m of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding, of which £73.75m was allocated for capital delivery. At the same meeting, the JTC made the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EP) and Scheme which set out through a statutory partnership, how Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and local bus operators will work together to deliver BSIP outcomes which included a commitment to improve bus waiting facilities and access to these facilities. This approval confirmed funding allocations to enable BSIP Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be delivered.
- 1.3 In July 2023, JTC Members approved £33.29m of BSIP capital funding for investment in Bus Priority Infrastructure and Intelligent Transport Systems. In March 2024, JTC Members approved and allocated the remaining unallocated BSIP capital funding totalling £40.468m to several sub-programmes which align to the refreshed BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme.
- 1.4 At the 30 July 2024 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet, Members re-confirmed the decisions previously made by JTC and delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and the Director of Finance and Investment and in consultation with the Mayor and the relevant Cabinet Member to enter into the relevant agreements for up to £40.468m of BSIP capital funding (Cabinet Decision C24/7/24 (9)).
- 1.5 In line with the Single Assurance Framework and in line with the delegation agreed at July 2024 Cabinet, the Sunderland A183 Chester Road and the Sunderland A690 Durham Road schemes, have come forward for approval following successful assurance.

2. The Investment Proposals

- **Sunderland A183 Chester Road: £2.4million**

The scheme will deliver a series of targeted measures designed to improve accessibility for passengers, ensure more reliable bus movements and enhance customer experience along one of the principal bus corridors in Sunderland. These include:

- New and improved bus shelters
- Upgraded pedestrian crossings between stops
- Signalisation of key roundabout
- Removal of existing underpass to improve public safety when accessing the bus network
- Improved carriageway surface and markings to facilitate journeys
- Kerb upstand improvements to facilitate level boarding

- **Sunderland A690 Durham Road: £2.5million**

The scheme will deliver a range of measures along the A60 Durham Road corridor, which will include:

- Extension of junctions to facilitate traffic movement
- Improvements to traffic signal infrastructure to improve timings for buses
- New and improved bus shelters
- Upgraded pedestrian crossings between stops
- Improved carriageway surface and markings to facilitate journeys
- Kerb upstand improvements to facilitate level boarding

The interventions which are to be delivered through these two schemes will assist in meeting Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 6 within the BSIP which focuses on customer satisfaction for bus passengers.

2.1 Outputs and Outcomes

The following outputs and outcomes apply for the two schemes seeking approval:

Sunderland A183 Chester Road

Outputs	26/27	Total
New signals at key junctions along corridor	4	4
Removal of underpass to enhance public safety and accessibility whilst travelling to bus stops	1	1
New signalised crossing	1	1
Upgrades to bus lay-bys and shelters along corridor	9	9

Description of Outcomes	Timeframe for achievement	Totals
Improved bus service reliability on corridor	5 years post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)
Improved journey times on corridor	5 years post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)
Increased bus patronage on corridor	5 years post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)

A690 Durham Road scheme

Outputs	26/27	Total
Upgraded signals at Grindon Lane/A690 junction with bus hurry calls	4	4
Change to road allocation to increase right-turn stacking capacity	1	1
New signalised crossings to improve safety and accessibility for passengers	2	2
Upgrades to bus lay-bys and shelters along corridor	29	29

Description of Outcomes	Timeframe for achievement	Totals
Improved bus service reliability on corridor	5 years post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E))
Improved journey times on corridor	5 years post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)
Increased bus patronage on corridor	5 years post completion	Increase from baseline (identified in M&E)

2.2 Timetable for Implementation

The anticipated milestones, for the two schemes seeking approval are as follows:

Milestone	Forecast Date
Grant funding Agreements	December 2025
Delivery Commences	March 2026
Delivery Completion	December 2026

2.3 Evaluation

Evaluation will be undertaken by the scheme promoter for each scheme, in partnership with the Enhanced Partnership Team; a monitoring and evaluation plan has been produced and will be embedded into the forthcoming Grant Funding Agreement.

2.4 Appraisal

Both schemes have been independently appraised, with no fundamental issues to programme delivery or viability and recommended that the scheme advance to approval. This provides comfort that proposals are sufficiently developed and pose limited delivery risk.

2.6 RAG Assessment

The projects full business case has been assured by specialist independent assurance consultants who have provided the following summary:

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

2.7 Recommended Conditions of Funding

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

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

B. Potential Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives

The Mayor's Local Transport Plan (LTP) and its associated Delivery Plan are centred on delivering a fully integrated public transport system, inclusive of better travel planning to ensure smoother journeys and a key focus on safety and security for women and girls. The proposals included within this report directly contribute towards achieving the objectives of the LTP, and in turn, support the North East Combined Authority corporate objectives of delivering a Home of real opportunity and a North East we are proud to call home. The benefits that will be realised through the delivery of the BSIP funded schemes included in this report will improve the attractiveness, accessibility, safety and security of public transport, leading to more people choosing to travel sustainably.

C. Key risks

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

D. Financial and other resources implications

The financial profile for the two schemes seeking approval are outlined below:

Scheme name	2026/7	Total
Sunderland A183 Chester Road Scheme	£2,393,600	£2,393,600
Sunderland A690 Durham Road Scheme	£2,508,600	£2,508,600
Total (£)	£4,902,200	£4,902,200

All amounts are fully funded from the BSIP capital programme, and the grant recipient is Sunderland City Council.

Status of match funding:

No match funding is required for BSIP.

Funding availability:

The funding which has been identified in this report is allocated to the schemes seeking approval through the Cabinet decision provided in July 2024 (C24/7/24).

E. Legal implications

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

F. Equalities implications

The North East CA follows the Public Sector Equality duty, and this report has due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010. In June 2024, the North East CA adopted equality objectives to reflect the distinct roles of the Combined Authority as an employer, a commissioner and deliverer of services, and a civic leader. Both schemes will improve bus passengers journey experience through accessibility and safety enhancements to bus stop waiting facilities.

G. Consultation and engagement

Both the wider BSIP capital programme and the proposals outlined in this report have been consulted on and considered through Heads of Transport of the LA7 constituent authorities. BSIP capital funding was allocated at the July 2024 meeting of the North East CA Cabinet.

Sunderland City Council has undertaken vigorous consultation for both schemes outlined in this report. This includes engagement with local ward members, the public and businesses.

H. Appendices

None.

I. Background papers

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

J. Contact officers

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K. Glossary

North East CA: North East Combined Authority
BSIP: Bus Service Improvement Plan
JTC: Joint Transport Committee
F&IB: Finance and Investment Board
DfT: Department for Transport
LTP: Local Transport Plan
GFA: Grant Funding Agreement
CDM: The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations
M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

L. Consultee

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