



## **Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Thursday, 16th March, 2023 at 10.00 am

Meeting to be held in a Durham County Hall (*Committee Room 1A*)

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## **AGENDA**

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	<b>Page No</b>
1. <b>Apologies for absence</b>	
2. <b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
3. <b>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15.12.2022</b>	<b>3 - 8</b>
4. <b>Draft North East Active Travel Strategy - consultation feedback update</b>	<b>9 - 14</b>
5. <b>Enhanced Partnership fares proposal</b>	<b>15 - 26</b>
6. <b>Forward Plan and Work Programme Update</b>	<b>27 - 34</b>

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**JOINT TRANSPORT COMMITTEE, OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DRAFT MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

DATE 15 December 2022

Meeting held at Sunderland City Hall

**Present:** (Chair) – David Taylor-Gooby

Councillors:	B Coult	–	Durham County Council
	P Dean	–	South Tyneside Council
	D Snowdon	–	Sunderland City Council
	L Bowman	–	Northumberland Council
	S Deinali	–	Durham County Council
	T Campion	–	Newcastle City Council

Officers:	Eleanor Goodman	–	Transport North East
	Gavin Armstrong	–	NECA
	Heather Jones	–	Transport North East
	Julienne Collinson	–	Sunderland City Council
	Luke Robertshaw	–	Transport North East
	Rachelle Forsyth-Ward	–	Transport North East
	Stephen Gwilym	–	Durham County Council

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Andrew Clark – Vice Chair  
B Clelland – Gateshead Council  
B Gallacher – Northumberland County Council  
J Eagle – Gateshead Council  
R Higgins – Newcastle City Council

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2022**

RESOLVED:

- (i) The meeting was not quorate therefore the minutes of the previous meeting could not be approved as a correct record.

### **4. TRANSPORT BUDGET 2023/24**

The Committee received a copy of the full report presented to the JTC providing an update on the Forecast of Outturn for 2022/23. The report also set out draft proposals for 2023/24 and indicative estimates for future years.

From the report, attention was drawn to the following:

- It is proposed to increase the Tyne and Wear transport levy by 4.0% in 2023/24 to enable Nexus' services to be maintained. Due to the significant inflationary pressures (most notably HV power), Nexus is forecasting a deficit of £9.4m and it is critical that further support from the DfT is forthcoming.
- The budget for the Tyne Tunnels takes account of the decision of the Tyne and Wear Sub Committee (TWSC) for an increase in the tolls to be applied from May 2023. This is a delay from the earliest applicable date of February 2023, keeping the toll at the current level for both Class 2 and Class 3 vehicles throughout the winter to provide relief for tunnels users during this period taking into account winter fuel bills and the current cost-of-living crisis. The income lost by holding the Class 2 tolls at the current levels for that period will be funded by Tyne Tunnels reserves.
- It is proposed to continue the contribution of £10,000 per authority towards Transport North East which is retained from the Durham and Northumberland levies. The contribution from the Tyne and Wear levy to fund central activity next year will be £2.100m which is used to meet costs relating to the former Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority.
- It is proposed that as a minimum, funding for Transport North East from the Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport Block is continued at £500,000.
- Durham and Northumberland County Councils are currently working on budget proposals which will inform the levy requirements for 2023/24.

The Committee expressed concern relating to the sustainability of the Metro as it runs at a deficit. Officers advised that whilst reserves are being used in the short term, the medium-term picture does look more positive. The Committee also acknowledged that since the pandemic many more people are working from home which would impact on passenger numbers across the Metro network.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the report.

## **5. NORTH EAST ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Committee received a report providing an update on the North East Active Strategy.

It was reported that this strategy aims to make it easier for people to walk, wheel and cycle for journeys across the region. It was also highlighted that the strategy sets out a £500 million package of interventions which if delivered will help achieve the strategy target and enable the key benefits to be realised.

A summary of potential benefits for the region was reported, the Committee noted that approximately 1,000 premature deaths could be prevented as a result of increased physical activity. It was also noted that there would be a reduction in carbon emissions and a boost to the regions economy of around £350 million per year. It was also stated that the strategy has been strengthened by research with underrepresented groups and work to calculate the regional economic benefits to be gained from active travel.

An overview of consultation plans was provided, it was noted that consultation would commence on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2023 following approval from the JTC.

The Committee welcomed the report and the proposals. Concern was noted that existing infrastructure would need to be improved to reach the aims of the strategy in addition to improvements to pavements and cycle routes across the region.

The Committee commented that face to face consultation was important during the consultation process; it was acknowledged that many residents across the borough would not use an online tool, particularly the elderly. The Committee also agreed that consultation and collaboration with local schools was important to promote the aims of the strategy amongst younger people.

A question was asked about the proposals for rural areas; officers advised that proposals to meet the needs of rural communities were being developed.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) The Committee noted the report.

## **6. ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

The Committee received a report providing an update on the progress of work on the BSIP interventions and points to note from the Regional Bus Partnership Board.

It was reported that a partnership name and logo has been developed in collaboration with all partners and will sit alongside existing brands to become a symbol of public transport in the North East. The Committee were also advised that a partnership website/app is being considered to provide real-time information and journey planning tools.

It was highlighted that a specific task and finish group has also been established to take advantage of BSIP investment to progress an app and website specification

that will respond to demand from passengers in the region, driving commercial outcomes for bus services.

The Committee were also provided with detail regarding the bus passenger charter, code of conduct and resource and software requirements. Further details were appended to the report for information.

The Committee noted concern about driver shortages in bus services and that this was having a negative impact on commuters and journey times, particularly in rural communities. A question was also asked regarding the availability of 'physical' media/information for commuters who would not be able to access a website or app; officers confirmed that paper copies of information would be made available at stations.

The Committee questioned why rail cards cannot be used on the Metro but can be used on the London Underground; officers advised that this would be a question for Nexus.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the report.

## **7. PUBLIC HEALTH SPECIALITY TRAINEE PLACEMENT WITH TNE**

The Committee received a report providing information about a new public health trainee placement within Transport North East (TNE).

From the report the Committee noted that there would be benefits of the placement for transport and public health sectors. It was further noted that the public health trainee will support consideration of health and wellbeing in JTC's policies, strategies and schemes and help strengthen links between transport and health.

The Committee welcomed Luke Robertshaw to his new role and supported the plans outlined in the report.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the report.

## **8. FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Committee received the report for the Forward Plan and Work Programme for the Committee for 2022/23.

The Committee requested that further information be brought to a future meeting relating to the rising cost of energy and the impact that this may have on Metro services. The Committee also requested an update on the impact of travel costs on the unemployed or those facing benefit sanctions; a Councillor stated that the cost of travel is having a negative impact on those seeking work when they have no income.

A Councillor also raised the issue of transport services between hospitals, particularly in South Tyneside where many services are being pulled out of South Shields and moved to Sunderland.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Work Programme be noted.
- (ii) That the suggestions from the Committee be noted.

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## North East Joint Transport Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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**Date:** 16 March 2023

**Subject:** North East Active Travel Strategy - Consultation update

**Report of:** Managing Director, Transport North East

### Executive Summary

The North East Active Travel Strategy aims for active travel to become the natural first choice for short everyday travel and combine it with public transport for longer journeys. We want to achieve a 45% uplift of short journeys that are travelled actively from 2018/19 levels, meaning over half of all shorter journeys would be made by active travel in the North East by 2035.

Achieving this increase could see the following benefits for the region:

- Prevention of approximately 1,000 premature deaths, primarily due to increased physical activity;
- Reduction in carbon emissions, potentially saving around 80,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year;
- Growing the region's economy by around £350 million a year.

The strategy sets out an ambitious £500million package of interventions which, if funded and delivered, will help achieve the strategy target and enable these key benefits to be realised. The North East Joint Transport Committee approved the draft strategy to progress to consultation in December 2022. The consultation period commenced on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2023 and ended on 5<sup>th</sup> March.

A presentation on the consultation feedback and actions we will take to improve the final strategy will be given at the meeting.

### Recommendations

The North East Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to consider this report and the accompanying presentation.

## **Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members**

The below are the key guiding principles to support the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in reading the report in advance of the meeting to:

- Consider any added value that Scrutiny can bring; and
  - Promote effective discussion and consider the information in the report.
1. The impact the matter has on individuals in the community and across the JTC area.
  2. Focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of the proposals, next steps and any potential changes.
  3. Consideration of any risks that may occur.
  4. Scrutiny focusing on any performance management or quality assurance.

## **1. Background Information**

- 1.1 The North East Transport Plan (NETP), published March 2021, set out the North East's transport ambitions up to 2035. Within the Plan, a commitment was made to develop and publish a North East Active Travel Strategy.
- 1.2 Delivery of an Active Travel Strategy will help achieve the Transport Plan's vision of 'Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East' and the Plan's five objectives. It also builds on the recently published "Making The Right Travel Choice" strategy.

## **2. Key Points**

- 2.1 The consultation draft of the North East Active Travel Strategy sets out an ambition for growing active travel in the North East. It also sets out the opportunities and benefits of active travel, considers what it would take to encourage more walking, wheeling, and cycling, and sets out an ambitious programme of investment that if funded would help to achieve a major increase in active travel rates of 45% by 2035.
- 2.2 By achieving this increase in the number of active travel journeys, the region could see the following benefits:
- Preventing approximately 1,000 premature deaths, primarily due to increased physical activity levels;
  - Reduction in carbon emissions, potentially saving around 80,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year;
  - Benefiting the region's economy by around £350 million a year.
- 2.3 The consultation draft of the Active Travel Strategy covers the period up until 2035 and sets a £500 million package of regional interventions that would help get more people in the North East to cycle, walk and wheel more often. The strategy also identifies schemes which connect active travel to public transport stations and interchanges, enabling people to make part of their journey by active travel and part by public transport.
- 2.4 The strategy has been strengthened by research with underrepresented groups and work to calculate the regional economic benefits of active travel.

### Consultation

- 2.5 Following endorsement at December's JTC, consultation began on 4 January 2023 and closed on 5 March 2023.
- 2.6 Various engagement methods have been undertaken including an online survey, face to face events, online events, and a focused online campaign to encourage as many people as possible to respond.

- 2.7 In total, over 2900 responses to the online survey, 380 comment cards following the face-to-face events and over 30 pieces of detailed feedback received throughout the consultation period.
- 2.8 As part of the consultation feedback evaluation, a consultation feedback report will be drafted. Further details on the feedback will be presented at the meeting.
- 3. Reasons for the Proposals**
- 3.1 This report and the presentation are intended to update Members on the North East Active Travel Strategy and the recently ended consultation.
- 4. Alternative Options Available**
- 4.1 The report and presentation are for information only and therefore no alternative options are presented.
- 5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation**
- 5.1 Next steps will be to seek approval from JTC Members in June 2023 to publish the final version of the North East Active Travel Strategy.
- 6. Potential Impact on Objectives**
- 6.1 The North East Active Travel Strategy has been specifically developed to set out how the region's five transport objectives can be achieved.
- 7. Financial and Other Resources Implications**
- 7.1 All costs associated with the development of the strategy including the consultation process are being met from Transport North East's in-year budget.
- 8. Legal Implications**
- 8.1 This report is for information only and there are no direct legal implications.
- 9. Key Risks**
- 9.1 No key risks have been identified at this stage.
- 10. Equality and Diversity**
- 10.1 The North East Active Travel Strategy is intended to positively address equality and diversity issues within the region by enhancing active travel provision for all users. The strategy has been strengthened by research with underrepresented groups
- 11. Crime and Disorder**
- 11.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

## **12. Consultation/Engagement**

- 12.1 All local authorities across the NECA and NTCA areas have been engaged in the development of the strategy to date. Furthermore, the public and stakeholders have also been given the opportunity to provide feedback.

## **13. Other Impact of the Proposals**

- 13.1 No specific impacts.

## **14. Appendices**

- 14.1 N/A

## **15. Background Papers**

- 15.1 Agenda item 6, North East Active Travel Strategy- agreement to consult. **North East Joint Transport Committee, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

## **16. Contact Officers**

- 16.1 Rachelle Forsyth-Ward  
Head of Transport Policy and Strategy Development  
[Rachelle.forsythward@transportnortheast.gov.uk](mailto:Rachelle.forsythward@transportnortheast.gov.uk)

## **17. Sign off**

- Head of Paid Service:
- Monitoring Officer:
- Chief Finance Officer:

## **18. Glossary**

NECA- North East Combined Authority  
NTCA- North of Tyne Combined Authority  
TNE- Transport North East  
NETP- North East Transport Plan

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## North East Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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**Date:** 16 March 2023  
**Subject:** Bus Enhanced Partnership (EP) Update  
**Report of:** Managing Director, Transport North East

### Executive Summary

This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny committee with an update on the progress made towards making the North East's Enhanced Partnership (EP) which has now been through the statutory consultation and progress on Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) interventions such as the fares products and development work for a number of capital schemes. This report also provides an update on national bus funding which has been extended until the end of June 2023.

### Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to consider the contents of the report.

### Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members

The below are the key guiding principles to support the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in reading the report in advance of the meeting to:

- Consider any added value that Scrutiny can bring; and
  - Promote effective discussion and consider the information in the report.
1. The impact the matter has on individuals in the community and across the JTC area.
  2. Focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of the proposals, next steps and any potential changes.
  3. Consideration of any risks that may occur.
  4. Scrutiny focusing on any performance management or quality assurance.

## **1. Background Information**

### **National bus funding**

- 1.1 On the 17 February 2023 the government announced that the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) funding and the national £2 bus fare would be extended for a further 3 months, until the 30 June 2023.
- 1.2 BRG funding, which is funding that is paid direct to bus operators from central government to support them throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with patronage falling significantly, both BRG and the £2 fare were due to end on the 31 March 2023. Bus operators in the region has stated that services would be lost if this funding ended as patronage has still not recovered to pre-covid levels and operational costs have increased significantly.
- 1.3 This funding extension is welcome news however as it for a short period of time it is likely that the expected service cuts have only been delayed, a long-term funding settlement will be required to ensure services are maintained beyond June 2023.

### **Enhanced Partnership**

- 1.4 The National Bus Strategy was published by the Department for Transport (DfT) on 15 March 2021 and set out central government's vision and the opportunity to deliver better bus services for passengers, through ambitious and far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered. The National Bus Strategy aligns with our region's published Transport Plan aspiration of 'Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East' by ensuring our bus network can be strengthened by building on successful partnership working between bus operators and local authorities.
- 1.5 Our BSIP responded to the National Bus Strategy and our regional objectives; it was published in October 2021. Following approval by the Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in June 2021 the development of an EP has been progressed. An EP is a statutory partnership between Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and their local bus operators and sets out how they will work together to deliver BSIP outcomes. An EP consists of two parts:
  - an EP plan - a high-level vision and objectives for bus services in the local area and closely follows or replicates relevant sections of the BSIP, setting out a clear vision of the improvements to bus services that the EP is aiming to deliver; and
  - one or more EP schemes – an accompanying document which sets out the requirements that need to be met by local services that stop in the EP area and precise detail of how the BSIP vision and objectives will be achieved, including any commitments made by the local authority(ies) or standards to be met by bus operators.
- 1.6 An EP plan (EP Plan) and an EP scheme (EP Scheme) have been drafted by Transport North East and the content of these documents has been agreed with the DfT. As the partnership involves continuous engagement, with all parties working



together to deliver the ambitions set out in the BSIP and EP Plan, and the EP Scheme sets out obligations on local authorities (including highway authorities) and local bus operators, a North East Regional Bus Partnership Board (Partnership Board) has been established to oversee the North East EP.

- 1.7 As part of the statutory process of establishing an EP, drafts of the EP Plan and the EP Scheme have been presented to bus operators who were notified so that they had an opportunity to object if they did not agree with what is proposed. Following this objection period, as no objections were received, a period of statutory consultation commenced.
- 1.8 Responses received included comments on initiatives found in the EP Plan but not drafted into the EP Scheme where respondents were asked to rank them, at stop information ranked slightly higher than the other options. Other comments included the governance of the EP Scheme and the need for additional funding. Appendix 1 outlines these insights in greater detail as well as our responses to them.
- 1.9 The BSIP, and therefore the EP Plan and EP Scheme, set out an intention to formalise a governance structure to oversee the operations of the EP. The Partnership Board and Local Bus Boards have since been established with the Partnership Board meeting in shadow form. However, it is important to note that changes to the EP Plan and EP Scheme, along with the allocation and expenditure of BSIP funding, will be decisions which can only be made by JTC meaning the role of the Partnership Board and Local Bus Boards will be advisory.

### **BSIP interventions**

- 1.10 One of the first interventions that will be launched following the EP being made and funding being received are the new ticketing products, set out in the table, which will enable cheaper, simpler, multi-modal and multi-operator fares, something we know is a top priority for users and will attract more passengers to the network;

<b>Product</b>	<b>Price</b>
Under 22 single	£1
Under 22 regionwide day ticket (multi-modal)	£3
County Durham (multi-operator)	£4
Northumberland (multi-operator)	£5
Tyne & Wear (multi-modal)	£6
Two-Zone (multi-modal)	£6.50
Regionwide (multi-modal)	£6.80

TNE officers have been working closely with bus operators and specialist consultants to finalise these proposals and work towards a start date.

- 1.11 The fares will be delivered by using a Capped Fare Scheme which is a voluntary scheme that Local Transport Authorities can introduce to set maximum fares for different ticket products. In the EP Scheme we state that all efforts must be made by bus operators to agree to a reimbursement agreement that will allow them to participate in the Capped Fare Scheme.

1.12 TNE is at an advanced stage of these reimbursement conversations with bus operators, once the process has been finalised specialist lawyers will draft the Capped Fare Scheme for agreement.

## **2. Proposals**

2.1 There are no proposals being put forward as this report is for information and discussion.

## **3. Reasons for the Proposals**

3.1 Not Applicable.

## **4. Alternative Options Available**

4.1 Not Applicable.

## **5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation**

5.1 The EP Plan and Scheme are being presented to the JTC for formal approval on 21 March 2023. Following this the partnership will be able to progress BSIP schemes once funding has been received.

5.2 Once finalised the Capped Fare Scheme will be presented to the JTC for formal approval and the products will be launched.

## **6. Potential Impact on Objectives**

6.1 A successful EP will help us to deliver the objectives of the North East Transport Plan. In particular, the EP will support a green recovery through the provision of an attractive form of sustainable transport.

## **7. Financial and Other Resources Implications**

7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising for NECA as a result of this report.

## **8. Legal Implications**

8.1 There are no direct legal implications arising for NECA as a result of this report.

## **9. Key Risks**

9.1 There are no key risks associated with the recommendations made in this report.

## **10. Equality and Diversity**

10.1 There are no specific equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

## **11. Crime and Disorder**

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

## **12. Consultation/Engagement**

12.1 The statutory consultation on the EP Plan and Scheme sought the views of a number of groups identified as statutory consultees. These consultees have been contacted directly and include bus operators, neighbouring authorities, police forces, the traffic commissioner for the North East of England, the Competition and Markets Authority and organisations representing transport users, such as Bus Users UK and Transport Focus. The responses received have been considered, further details of key insights and our response to these can be found in Appendix 1.

12.2 In the production of the BSIP, detailed consultation was undertaken with partners, stakeholders and the public, as reported to JTC on 21 September 2021. Close collaboration has also been ongoing with partners in the development of the EP Plan and EP Scheme. In addition, LA7 officers have been briefed on the content of this report and LA7 and Nexus lawyers have reviewed and commented on draft versions of the EP Plan and EP Scheme.

## **13. Other Impact of the Proposals**

13.1 None

## **14. Appendices**

14.1 Statutory Consultation responses – Appendix 1

## **15. Background Papers**

15.1 North East Bus Service Improvement Plan: [TNE-BSIP\\_FINAL.pdf](https://transportnortheast.gov.uk/TNE-BSIP_FINAL.pdf)  
([transportnortheast.gov.uk](https://transportnortheast.gov.uk))

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

North East Enhanced Partnership Plan: [DRAFT-TNE-EP-Plan-7-December-2022123057726.1-002.pdf](https://transportnortheast.gov.uk/DRAFT-TNE-EP-Plan-7-December-2022123057726.1-002.pdf) ([transportnortheast.gov.uk](https://transportnortheast.gov.uk))

North East Enhanced Partnership Scheme: [Draft-TNE-EP-Scheme-7-December-2022123031535.1-002.pdf](https://transportnortheast.gov.uk/Draft-TNE-EP-Scheme-7-December-2022123031535.1-002.pdf) ([transportnortheast.gov.uk](https://transportnortheast.gov.uk))

The National Bus Strategy Delivering Bus Service Improvement Plans using an Enhanced Partnership Guidance: [The bus services act 2017: enhanced partnerships](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/The-bus-services-act-2017-enhanced-partnerships) ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://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](https://northeastca.gov.uk/Public-Pack-Agenda-Document-for-North-East-Joint-Transport-Committee-13-07-2021-14-30) ([northeastca.gov.uk](https://northeastca.gov.uk))

JTC Report – Bus Partnerships (items 9 and 10): [\(Public Pack\) Agenda Document for North East Joint Transport Committee, 15/06/2021 14:30 \(northeastca.gov.uk\)](#)

Bus Service Improvement Plan outline resourcing form (the content of this document is exempt from publication pursuant to paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

## **16. Contact Officers**

- 16.1 Heather Jones, Head of Enhanced Partnerships  
E-mail: [heather.jones@transportnortheast.gov.uk](mailto:heather.jones@transportnortheast.gov.uk)  
Tel: 07962 867 407

## **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

LTA – Local Transport Authority

## Appendix 1- Statutory Consultation Responses

Our statutory consultation ran from 11 January to 8 February 2023 and sought the views of those groups which we had identified as statutory consultees, on our EP Plan and Scheme. The consultation materials were sent directly to consultees and an online survey was provided to complete their responses. Representatives from bus operators, neighbouring authorities, disability groups and transport user groups responded to the consultation; key insights are detailed below.

### Key insights from the consultation

Overall the responses from the consultation supported the EP Plan and Scheme and its aims to increase bus ridership by boosting bus performance, customer satisfaction and environmental performance. Some negative comments were received, the detail and response to which are detailed below. On the basis of our assessment of these comments none merited any change to be made to the EP Plan or Scheme at this stage.

Consultees were asked to rank each of the North East Transport Plan objectives based on how well they believed the EP Plan and Scheme would help the region in achieving them. Results of this can be seen in Figure 1 which shows that consultees most often ranked 'appealing sustainable transport choices' in first place.

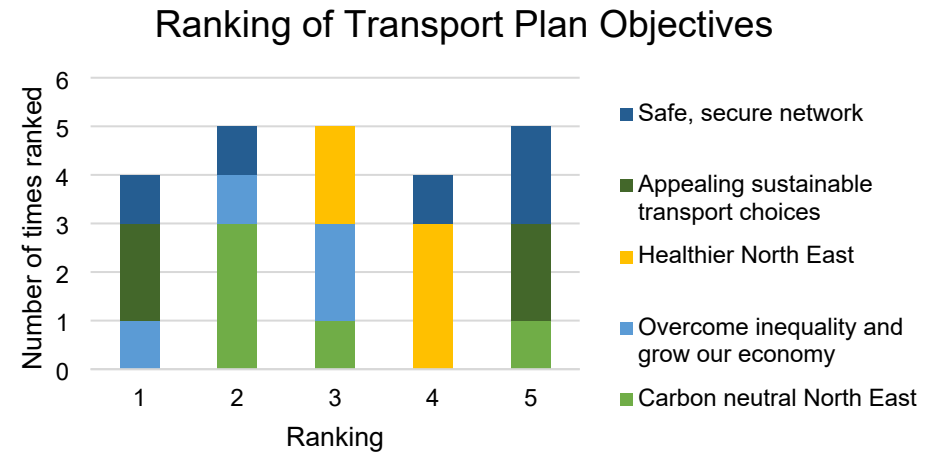


Figure 1 'With 1 being the highest score, please order each of the North East Transport Plan objectives based on how well you believe the EP Plan and EP Scheme help the region in achieving them'

In order to identify the most significant interventions, included in our EP Plan, which have not yet been carried through into the EP Scheme we then asked consultees to rank interventions according to their likely impact on bus use. As seen in Figure 2, results of this suggest that accelerating the replacement of buses to higher environmental standards and improving information at bus stops, including real time information, was judged as more impactful than bringing a consistent standard throughout the region's bus shelters and stops.

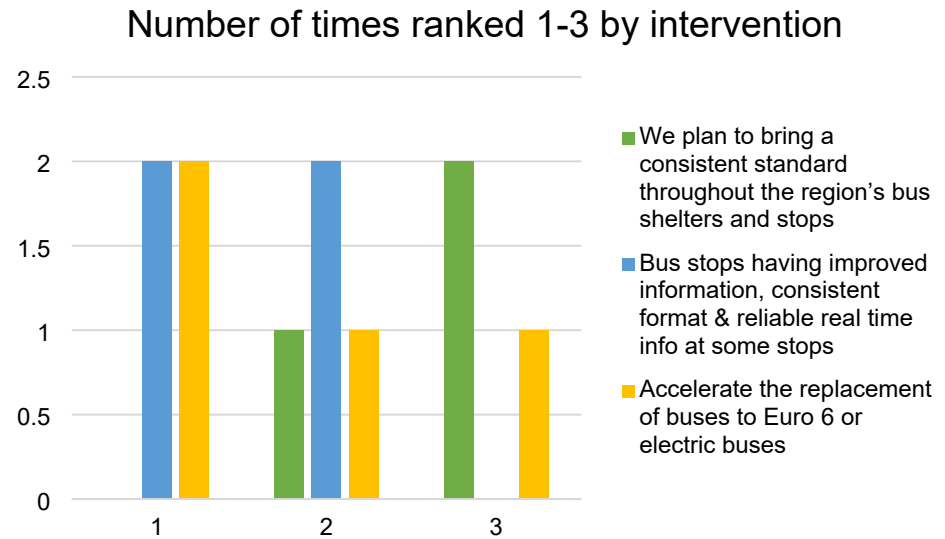


Figure 2: 'With 1 being the highest score, please order the following high-level interventions, which are not included in the EP Scheme, from high to low in their impact towards increasing bus use'

As well as multiple choice questions consultees were also asked to complete the following questions answered in a free text format:

- Do you think there are any objectives missing from the EP Plan?
- Do you think that the EP Plan & EP Scheme will impact your organisation/business?
- Do you have any additional comments on the Enhanced Partnership Plan?

This approach elicited the insights from consultees which are shown below, alongside our responses to comments:

Topic	Insight	Our Response
The need for more funding	Consultees highlighted the need for more funding if standards such as environmental performance of vehicles are to be met.	Since the drafting of the EP Plan and Scheme Transport North East have welcomed the announcement that the North East has successfully secured £19.5m of investment through the Levelling Up Fund for a Transport Decarbonisation package. This investment will deliver up to 52 new high-quality electric buses alongside 92 new Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers. This investment represents significant progress towards meeting our environmental performance targets set out in the EP Plan.
Service change dates	Consultees highlighted that the EP Plan did not include details of limitations to the number of network changes each year, or communication and consultation with passengers on significant changes. It was suggested these could be included in the Bus Passenger Charter.	The indicative 'Code of Conduct' which is included in Annex 1 to the EP Scheme and is to be developed under the EP Scheme, sets out a service change timetable for any network changes as well as communication and consultation requirements. This Code of Conduct sets out the 'Change Management Process' referenced in the EP Plan and this separate document will be referenced in the Bus Passenger Charter which is to be developed from the indicative document in Appendix A of the BSIP under the EP Scheme.
Passenger information: disruption and journey planning	Consultees wanted to see commitments in the Bus Passenger Charter to provide a single source of passenger information of journey options as well as delays and disruptions.	A commitment to keeping passengers informed of disruption is included in our Bus Passenger Charter. Enhanced information will also be included in our region wide public transport app and website.
Rural bus routes	Consultees raised that direct, express buses between key rural locations should be considered. The importance of rural links was also highlighted, especially for disabled residents who may rely on public transport.	Public and stakeholder engagement during the development of the BSIP highlighted the need for enhanced bus services in rural areas. BSIP funded service enhancements will improve access for rural residents and express routes between key rural towns and villages could grow bus markets and will be considered during network reviews.
At stop passenger information	Consultees raised that accessible route and network connection maps and fare	There is currently significant flux in the bus network. We are planning that after our BSIP funding enhancements are introduced and the network stabilises branded connection maps will be created. In the

	information should be considered at major stops.	development of this information, we will consult with disability groups and relevant stakeholders to achieve accessibility standards.
Anti-social Behaviour	Consultees highlighted antisocial behaviour as a barrier to bus travel and feedback that a commitment to the regular removal of graffiti be considered.	Our Bus Passenger Charter includes firm commitments to tackle anti-social behaviour on the bus network, including a commitment of CCTV provision on buses and joint working with the region's police forces. A specific standard of graffiti removal is not currently committed to in the Bus Passenger Charter. This is something which could be introduced in the future. This, and other proposals, will be raised at the next Bus Partnership Board.
Reporting towards our BSIP KPIs	Consultees raised the need to clearly show the link between planned interventions and our BSIP KPIs, as well as details on how these will be reported.	As mentioned in the EP Plan interventions have been identified to target our BSIP KPIs. In development, each of our initiatives will have to demonstrate a strong alignment toward these objectives, with the Bus Partnership Board providing a forum to assure this. Overall progress towards our BSIP KPIs will be reported in 6 monthly intervals to the Bus Partnership Board and Joint Transport Committee and will also be published on the partnership website once developed. The DfT has also launched a separate monitoring and evaluation plan for BSIPs which will complement our plans.
Governance and variation mechanism	Consultees raised concerns that due to the inclusion of a bespoke variation mechanism, changes to the EP Scheme could be made through variation mechanism rather than go through the full statutory process for each variation, which could impact on the obligation to consult.	DfT guidance recommends that partnerships should consider using the flexibility of bespoke variation arrangements, giving a number of reasons why this is appropriate, including allowing additional changes or additions to the scheme to be made more quickly than is possible through the variation procedure, amendments to be made to reflect funding being secured or operator confidence building, and to deal with short notice changes. The variation mechanism included in the scheme allows for precisely this kind of change and is intended to ensure the efficient delivery of objectives by limiting the statutory process and timescales required to make changes to the EP, whilst still allowing for operator objections, whilst ensuring a process with democratic and user accountability. The mechanism included in the EP Scheme ensures detail and delivery plans can be added to the Scheme as initiatives are developed. The forum for discussion of



		any variation of the EP Scheme will be the Bus Partnership Board and Local Bus Boards, as set out in sections 8.1 and 8.3 of the EP Scheme, these boards include representation from bus user groups, operators and LTAs and therefore ensure that the loss of a statutory consultation for every variation does not lead to the loss of input from relevant stakeholders and statutory consultees.
Small Operators	Consultees raised the concern that larger operators have been prioritised in the EP Plan and Scheme.	Engagement with small operators is currently done through CPT representation at the Bus Partnership Board and any other relevant meetings. Local Bus Boards and meetings of 'NE Bus' also provide a great opportunity for TNE to engage with small operators. Despite this it can be challenging to engage with small operators with the same frequency as larger operators. Following this response, we will review our engagement strategy with small operators.
Cross Boundary Impacts	Consultees welcomed the positive impacts the EP Plan and Scheme will have on neighbouring authorities with regards to cross boundary services and fleet improvements.	We also welcome the positive impacts of cross boundary improvements and look forward to working with colleagues in neighbouring authorities to ensure maximum mutual benefits and integration.

Accessibility provisions	<p>Consultees raised the importance of interventions which can improve accessibility of the bus network. These include: real time information, Audio Visual Announcements, accessible information as well as staff availability and specialist staff training. A concern was raised that the short timeframe of the BSIP would not be long enough to deliver significant improvements.</p>	<p>Feedback such as this is extremely valuable in the development of our BSIP and EP and it is a priority that accessibility improvements are made throughout the region. While developing initiatives, for example, our plan for an integrated public transport app and website, we will ensure advice is sought from accessibility groups to ensure necessary standards. Our plan to introduce transport ambassadors throughout the region will also improve accessibility within the network as ambassadors will be on hand to help users make their journeys. For certain investments, such as in Audio Visual Announcements on board buses we are unable to directly invest in this improvement as the introduction of this technology is an operator led investment. Operators have made significant progress towards adopting this in recent years and investments such as Levelling-Up-funded electric buses will boost this progress. Throughout the development of all the previously mentioned initiatives we will continue to draw upon our relationships with disability groups and relevant stakeholders.</p>
Competence	<p>Various negative responses were received on the capability of various parties to deliver bus improvements.</p>	<p>This highlights the importance of ensuring that all industry parties have the opportunity to be involved in the continued development of the EP, which is enabled by the governance structures set out in the EP Scheme which enables participation by regional government, bus operators, user groups and other stakeholders in determining how to progress and further develop the EP</p>



## North East Joint Transport Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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**Date:** 16 March 2023

**Subject:** Joint Transport Committee Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme

**Report of:** Policy and Scrutiny Officer

### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the suggested work programme for 2022/23 for the Joint Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- i. Review and comment on the suggested work programme.

## **1. Background Information**

- 1.1 The Joint Transport Committee (JTC) Forward Plan is a document which the Joint Transport Committee is required to maintain under the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017. The Forward Plan for the Joint Transport Committee, and its Subcommittees is published on both the North East Combined Authority's website and on the North of Tyne Combined Authority's website. It lists the decisions that the Joint Transport Committee and its Officers intend to take in the coming months and must include all decisions to be made in the next 28 days. The JTC Forward Plan template contains specific information relating to each decision, including the date the decision will be made, a brief explanation of the topic, the consultation to be undertaken, and contact details of the author. The JTC Forward Plan template has recently been updated and includes further information including if the decision is a 'Key Decision' and if an item will be discussed in private.
- 1.2 Details of each decision are included on the JTC Forward Plan 28 days before the report is considered and any decision is taken. This supports the transparency of decision making across the Joint Transport Committee and allows members of the public to see the items that will be discussed. There are special procedures for circumstances where publication for the full 28 clear day period is impractical or where there is special urgency. Both of these procedures involve the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and would be reported to the committee at the next meeting.

### **Role of Overview and Scrutiny**

- 1.3 The Joint Transport Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been established in accordance with Schedule 2 (4) of The Newcastle Upon Tyne, North Tyneside and Northumberland Combined Authority (Establishment and Functions) Order 2018.
- 1.4 The Joint Transport Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee can examine any decisions of the Committee – be that by the JTC itself or a subcommittee, constituent authority, or officer holding delegated authority. This Scrutiny occurs in public and ensures democratic and public accountability.
- 1.5 One of the main functions of this Committee is the review and scrutiny of 'Key Decisions' made by the Joint Transport Committee and its Officers. The relevant regulations set out a test for what should be considered a Key Decision – being those which are most significant in financial or other terms. This is explained in the Decision-Making Protocol of the North East Combined Authority that was adopted by the Joint Transport Committee for its use at its inaugural meeting in November 2018.

### **Requests for Special Urgency/General Exception**

- 1.6 In accordance with the Decision Making Protocol, it was agreed by Members that the request of any Short Notice Procedure that involved the Chair of the Overview

and Scrutiny Committee would be reported at the next Committee. The table below shows the number of requests made since the last meeting was held:

Type of Short Notice Procedure	Number of Requests since previous Committee
Requests for Special Urgency	0
Request for General Exception	0

Details of requests for Special Urgency and General Exception can be found at this website <https://northeastca.gov.uk/decision-making/forward-plan/special-notice-and-urgency-provisions/>.

### **Annual Work Programme – Approach for ongoing overview and scrutiny of Transport Plan**

- 1.7 A JTC OSC working group was set up in March 2021 to discuss an approach for ongoing oversight and scrutiny of the Transport Plan when it comes into effect and recognised that that the Transport Plan gives the OSC clarity of the policy framework it is operating within and focus for the future.
- 1.8 At the 25 March 2021 OSC meeting members discussed and agreed that the Transport Plans objectives and policy statements can provide structure to the OSC's Work Programme over the next few years, by enabling it to focus on a particular area in each meeting. The committee also discussed an approach to structuring future meetings which involved receiving and debating an overview on progress being made on the Transport Plan and its objectives, planned future actions, and then providing the opportunity to scrutinise particular areas of the plan in more detail.
- 1.9 The scheduling of these areas of would be informed by whichever is the most advanced in the development of its delivery plan. This would provide the OSC the opportunity to have an effective and productive input into the delivery of the Plan. By the end of each meeting, the OSC should understand the Objective and its delivery plan so it is then able to monitor it and assist in providing ideas/proposals to support delivery or overcome obstacles (e.g. by identifying alternative actions for consideration by the JTC).
- 1.10 There is the opportunity to use, where appropriate, external input into the OSC meetings when considering the objectives and specific issues that may be on interest to certain groups.
- 1.11 The most recent version of the work programme (appendix two) has been compiled to allow the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to consider items that will be of regional importance to the Joint Transport Committee, the JTC forward plan and items previously raised by Members. A link to the current forward plan can be found [here](#).

- 1.12 It should be noted that the work programme covers items that will be discussed at the meetings. It does not preclude ‘deeper dives’ providing more focused scrutiny of particular topics by a sub-group of the committee outside of these meeting dates. These topics can be raised with the Chair and Scrutiny Officer at any time.
- 1.13 The Committee is asked to review and discuss the suggested work programme.
- 2. Annual Work Programme – Update and responses to questions raised at the 15 December 2022 meeting**
- 2.1 At the December 2022 meeting the Committee raised some questions on a range of topics, some of which fell under the responsibility of Nexus. The following paragraphs outline brief responses to these topics.
- 2.2 Poor transport to South Tyneside Hospital**  
When the Trust relocated some services from South Tyneside to Sunderland Royal Hospital the limited direct public transport there is between communities in South Tyneside and the Royal Hospital was highlighted.
- 2.3 Nexus recognises how important direct bus routes to hospitals can be both for people receiving regular treatment and for family members visiting patients on wards. These journeys, however, would only ever make up a fraction of the demand needed for a bus route to be sustainable in money terms. In the absence of a commercial bus service offered by a private company it is not practical for Nexus to provide a taxpayer-funded alternative.
- 2.4 Such a route would be bound to compete with commercial buses for much of its route, both between South Shields and Sunderland City Centre then out to the hospital. This competition would reduce potential passenger numbers and so raise the cost to a level Nexus could not support within the overall network of services it funds, and be at risk of legal challenge.
- 2.5 There are frequent commercial bus services from most of South Shields and Jarrow to Park Lane Interchange in Sunderland and from there it is possible to change for frequent onward connections to the Royal Hospital. There is a direct bus through Boldon (route 35) to the hospital which Nexus funds in part, because it is the only bus for large sections of its route.
- 2.6 Tyne Ferry/Water taxis – additional services at multiple sites**  
The Shields Ferry is a subsidised service that provides the only river crossing for pedestrians and cyclists below the Tyne Tunnels.
- 2.7 Previous studies into the viability of a river service up and down the Tyne have suggested it is unlikely to be well used and would require significant additional subsidy.
- 2.8 This is principally because: the speed limit on the river is six knots; there is a large semi-circular bend at Walker significantly increasing the distance a vessel would need to cover, and there are fast and frequent Metro services on either bank with which a river taxi would be in competition. In addition to this the capital cost of

constructing fully accessible and tide-adapted boarding ramps at multiple stops would have significant cost.

- 2.9 Nexus's current priority is to achieve funding for a new ferry landing at North Shields Fish Quay to replace the existing structure at Smith's Dock which engineers have forecast may be unsafe beyond 2025. Without investment of just over £10m the Ferry service will be unable to operate if a new landing is not soon built. North Tyneside Council included a new ferry landing in a bid to the Government's 2023 Levelling Up Fund awards but this was unsuccessful. Nexus is now exploring other options without which the ferry service is at serious risk

2.10 **Difficulty in travel from rural areas (using public transport) and access to job support**

TNE can provide a regional response on efforts to win investment to improve bus services in rural areas and can work with Northumberland and Durham County Councils to mitigate any lost connections that are no longer viable as a commercial service.

Nexus provides funding to Jobcentres in Tyne and Wear to enable advisors to buy travel for their clients to attend job interviews and when starting a new job, before the first pay cheque comes through. This scheme is available at Jobcentres throughout Tyne and Wear and so benefits rural areas in west Gateshead and south Sunderland

2.11 **Digital connectivity, how that impacts employment and wellbeing, particularly where there is also limited transport links**

Digital connectivity is an area that the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) has been looking into and recent reports can be found here <https://evidencehub.northeastlep.co.uk/report/digital-exclusion-in-the-north-east-lep-area>

- 2.12 The issue is also an area of ongoing interest for the NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the NELEP presenting to the committee their findings and desired actions. The NECA OSC will continue to monitor progress and share relevant information with this committee.

- 2.13 In terms of physical rather than digital connectivity, within Tyne and Wear Nexus has been able to maintain a position where 97% of the population is within 400 metres walking distance of a bus service, despite commercial bus companies making cuts of around 15% to the services they provide. We will rely on funding through the Government's Bus Service Improvement Plan to maintain this in the next two years. We work with partners in the public sector to ensure that transport links to schools, employment sites and health facilities are as good as they can be, but our scope does not extend to considering levels of digital connectivity against transport provision.

**3. Reasons for the Proposals**

- 3.1 To provide an opportunity for Committee members to input on any additional items as part of continued planning for the Work Programme for 2022/23.

3.2 The work programme will be refreshed and updated at each meeting of the Committee throughout the year.

#### **4. Alternative Options Available**

4.1 There are no alternative options available.

#### **5. Potential Impact on Objectives**

5.1 Development of a work programme and review and scrutiny of decisions in the JTC Forward Plan will contribute towards the development and implementation of the policy framework of NECA, NTCA, Nexus and the North East LEP as well as providing appropriate challenge to decisions taken.

#### **6. Financial and Other Resources Implications**

6.1 No financial or other resource implications are identified at this stage.

#### **7. Legal Implications**

7.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from these recommendations.

#### **8. Key Risks**

8.1 There are no key risks associated with the recommendations made in this report.

#### **9. Equality and Diversity**

9.1 There are no specific equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

#### **10. Crime and Disorder**

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

#### **11. Consultation/Engagement**

11.1 On-going consultation takes place with Officers and Scrutiny Members across the local authorities that make up the Joint Transport Committee, in regard to the items for the Annual Work Programme as Appendix One.

#### **12. Other Impact of the Proposals**

12.1 The proposals consider the wider impact and take into account the Principles of Decision Making. They allow Members' consideration of the items on the JTC Forward Plan and allow them the opportunity to have an overview of all performance, decision making and developments across the Joint Transport Committee structure.

#### **13. Appendices**

13.1 Appendix One – Annual Work Programme



**14. Background Papers**

14.1 None.

**15. Contact Officers**

15.1 Gavin Armstrong, Policy and Scrutiny Officer  
Email: [gavin.armstrong@northeastca.gov.uk](mailto:gavin.armstrong@northeastca.gov.uk)  
Telephone Number: Tel No: (0191) 4247537

15.2 Mike Barker  
email: [mikebarker@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:mikebarker@gateshead.gov.uk)  
Telephone: (0191) 433 2100

**16. Sign off**

- 16.1
- The Proper Officer for Transport: ✓
  - Head of Paid Service: ✓
  - Monitoring Officer: ✓
  - Chief Finance Officer: ✓

**17. Glossary**

17.1 NECA - North East Combined Authority  
North East LEP - North East Local Enterprise Partnership  
NTCA – North of Tyne Combined Authority

**Joint Transport Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme  
March 2023**

**Standing Items for each Committee Meeting:**

- Declaration of Interest
- Minutes of Previous Meeting
- JTC Forward Plan and Work Programme Report

**Source of work programme and items of importance:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee obtains work programme items from the following sources:

- a) Items submitted by Members of the Committee (and including items referred by other members of the Combined Authorities)
- b) Suggestions from Officers
- c) The Budget and Policy Framework; Transport Plan
- d) The JTC Forward Plan
- e) The Proper Officer for Transport
- f) Evidence for any policy review work regarding Transport

**Suggested Work Programme 2022-2023**

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Subject</b>
July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rail partnerships</li> <li>• TCF Programme Update</li> <li>• ZEV strategy</li> </ul>
Oct 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline Transport Budget 2024/25</li> <li>• Road Infrastructure Strategy</li> </ul>
Dec 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport Budget Proposals 2024/25</li> </ul>

It should be noted that the work programme covers items that will be discussed at the meetings. It does not preclude 'deeper dives' providing more focused scrutiny of particular topics by a sub-group of the committee outside of these meeting dates. These topics can be raised with the Chair and Scrutiny Officer at any time.