
Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Review 2024

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1. Summary

- 1.1.** The Department for Transport (DfT) required all Local Transport Authorities (LTA) to review their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and re-submit to the DfT by 12th June 2024. Submission of the revised BSIP by the June deadline, was a pre-requisite for releasing the 2024/25 tranche of BSIP funding. This is not new or additional funding; it is the final tranche of the three-year funding award confirmed by the DfT in 2022 and is already committed to delivering the existing BSIP schemes.
- 1.2.** The revised BSIP document is not a funding bid at this stage, as there is no additional grant available. The purpose of the BSIP 2024, is to showcase the work and achievements to date, confirm plans for delivery of the remaining funded schemes up until March 2025 and set out Somerset’s ambition for public transport from 2025 and beyond, subject to securing additional funding.
- 1.3.** There was a requirement to provide approximate costs where possible, in a separate spreadsheet, of future proposals contained within the ambition section of the BSIP. This information will be used to inform government’s future budget setting for transport. It is anticipated that there will be a further requirement for another BSIP review in 2025.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1.** This report is being presented to Scrutiny for information only.
- 2.2.** Scrutiny are asked to note the revised BSIP (Appendix A) and the BSIP Overview Table (Appendix B)

3. Background

- 3.1.** In March 2021, the government announced the new National Bus Strategy – ‘Bus Back Better’. The overarching aim of the strategy was to increase bus patronage. Initially to increase patronage during the Covid recovery period and then longer

term to increase patronage level beyond pre-covid levels.

- 3.2. Under the strategy LTAs were required to commit to an Enhanced Partnership (EP) by the end of June 2021 and then needed to publish a BSIP by the end of October 2021 before entering into an EP by the end of March 2022.
- 3.3. The BSIP was published in October 2021 and underwent a high-level review in October 2022. The 2023 review was put on hold by the DfT whilst they reviewed their guidance which was published at the beginning of 2024, setting out the requirements for the 2024 review.
- 3.4. Following submission of the original BSIP in 2021, Somerset was awarded approx.£11.9m of BSIP funding split between capital (£8.2m) and revenue (£3.7m). Section 3 of appendix A details the schemes funded by the BSIP award.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1. As part of the 2024 review process key stakeholders including bus passenger representatives and operators were consulted through individual meetings, the Bus User and Stakeholder Group and the Bus Advisory Board. The ambition within the existing BSIP was reviewed and updated/developed to reflect this feedback, build on best practice/lessons learnt from the first BSIP and to align with the emerging Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the emerging Local Plan.
- 4.2. The revised BSIP was considered and approved by the Transport and Planning Sub Committee on 23rd May 2024. The Climate and Place Scrutiny Chair was consulted as part of the governance process for the decision report.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Submission of a revised BSIP is required to release the final tranche of BSIP funding for 2024/25. This funding has already been confirmed as part of the original BSIP allocation and is ring-fenced to specific BSIP schemes already launched or in development.
- 5.2. The BSIP is likely to be used by government to determine the future allocation of funding for public transport, at this stage there is no indication of the formula that will be used for this purpose nor the potential level of funding.
- 5.3. The BSIP is an aspirational plan, and the BSIP Overview table (Appendix B) includes indicative costs of schemes, where possible. However, there are no additional financial commitments other than the BSIP funding already dedicated to public transport activities. Delivery of the future ambition set out in the plan will be reliant on the government providing significant additional funds for bus services and infrastructure.
- 5.4. There is a risk that in the future Somerset is not allocated the level of funding required to deliver the ambitions set out within the BSIP. However, the action set out in the document does not commit Somerset Council to this spend. Whilst the BSIP is aspirational, it is also explicit that any improvement actions can only happen if government funding is subsequently forthcoming.

6. Legal and Procurement Implications

- 6.1.** The BSIP is not a statutory document, nor does it deliver anything on the ground – that is the purpose of the EP.
- 6.2.** At this stage there are no procurement implications nor contract award as this will be dependent on future funding allocation from government, which may lead to some procurement activity. At that point we would consult the Commercial and Procurement team.

7. HR Implications

- 7.1.** There are capacity constraints within the Council to be able to deliver the future ambition within the BSIP and additional resource would be required to facilitate this. The cost associated with this additional resource has been factored into the indicative costs set out in Appendix B and would be refined further in any future BSIP funding bids. At the point of any funding award, the correct HR/Recruitment procedures would be followed.

8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1.** The BSIP aims to address inequalities in transport provision across the county. In creating the initial BSIP an assessment was undertaken on the transport offer within the county to understand the impact this has on the protected groups and to identify actions required to address these negative impacts and inform the content of the BSIP. This EIA has been reviewed and updated to reflect the assessment against the current transport offer in the county (Equalities Impact Assessment attached at Appendix C).

9. Background papers

- 9.1.** DfT Guidance – National Bus Strategy: 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plans [bus-service-improvement-plans-guidance-to-local-authorities-and-bus-operators-2024.pdf](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/125442/bus-service-improvement-plans-guidance-to-local-authorities-and-bus-operators-2024.pdf) ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk))

Cabinet Decision – 20th October 2021 approving Somerset’s Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

Somerset’s Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) 2022
[The National Bus Strategy – Bus Back Better](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/the-national-bus-strategy-bus-back-better) ([somerset.gov.uk](https://www.somerset.gov.uk))

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author