



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
& PETERBOROUGH**  
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Agenda Item: 2.4

## Bus Strategy

To:	Transport and Infrastructure Committee
Meeting Date:	16 November 2022
Public report:	Yes
Lead Member:	Mayor Dr Nik Johnson
From:	Tim Bellamy, Interim Head of Transport
Key decision:	No
Forward Plan ref:	N/A
Recommendations:	<p>The Transport and Infrastructure Committee is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Provide feedback on the draft Bus Strategy;</li><li>b) Recommend that the Combined Authority Board approves the Bus Strategy to allow for a 6-week public consultation; and</li><li>c) Delegate the responsibility to the Interim Head of Transport and the chair of the Transport and Infrastructure Committee in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer to submit the final Bus Service Improvement Plan to central government in a timely manner.</li></ul>
Voting arrangements:	A vote in favour by at least two thirds of all Members (or their Substitute Members) appointed by the Constituent Councils, to include the Members appointed by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, or their Substitute Members

# 1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to outline the programme undertaken to enable the development of an appropriate Bus Strategy for the region. This Strategy is strongly aligned to the vision, aims and objectives of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and feedback is sought from Members on the overarching vision and the draft document that will be presented to the Transport and Infrastructure Committee (TIC) in November.
- 1.2 In addition, the paper outlines the progress to date around some of the delivery mechanisms for the Bus Strategy, including work on the relative business cases for an Enhanced Partnership and Franchising; the Greater Cambridge Partnership's City Access work; and the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

# 2 Background

- 2.1 Public transport is key to so many of the agendas that matter for the Combined Authority and its constituent Councils. Getting more people onto buses and public transport will reduce carbon emissions, enhance social inclusion, and improve air quality. It is important that new communities are well served and have the option of a good and reliable service. Despite the importance of bus use in so many of these areas it has been in decline across the country for a number of years/decades. It is therefore vital that this decline of the bus industry is addressed if we are to achieve our ambitions for climate change, air quality, social equity, accessibility, and public health. As a consequence, it is key for the Combined Authority to develop and implement its Bus Strategy as part of the LTCP suite of documents.

## High Level Principles

- 2.2 A key component of the LTCP's suite of documents is the development of an appropriate Bus Strategy. This document articulates what the Combined Authority (CPCA) wants the bus network to look and feel like. Clear alignment with the emerging CPCA strategy will be required alongside a golden thread with the LTCP; the Sustainable Growth Ambition Statement; the Climate Change Commission recommendations; and the Devolution Deal.
- 2.3 Over the last 50 years the need to travel has become greater and more complex. Society has become organised around the car and average distances to work, learning, hospitals and shops increased. People experiencing, or at risk of, social exclusion typically face five types of barriers to getting to key services:
  - The availability and physical accessibility of transport: For some people there is no public transport, or it doesn't go to the right places or at the right times, or it does not go often enough or reliably enough, or vehicles are not accessible to disabled people. People living in rural areas without access to a car can face particularly acute problems.
  - Cost of transport: Some people find the costs of personal or public transport are high or unaffordable.
  - Services and activities located in inaccessible places: Developments including housing, hospitals, business, and retail are often located in areas not easily accessible to people without a car.
  - Safety and security: Some people are unwilling to use public transport or walk to key services because of fear of crime or antisocial behaviour, or fear of road accidents.

- Travel horizons: Some people are unwilling to travel long journey times or distances or may not know about or trust transport services.
- 2.4 Those living in rural areas without a car can face acute problems. Distances to key services are often greater and public transport may be infrequent or inadequate. Whilst in urban areas, despite a dense public transport network, buses tend to be focused on radial routes to centres rather than peripheral locations, and early morning, evening and weekend journeys are poorly served. Some groups in the population face particular disadvantage in their travel, including children and young people, older people, and disabled people.
- 2.5 The CPCA wants to address these significant transport related concerns around social exclusion and become a leader in public transport provision. Buses carry more people with less demand on road space. To ensure buses are not caught in congestion we need to provide new infrastructure. It is essential that we ensure that people can travel around the network safely, efficiently, and sustainably.
- 2.6 It is important that a bus network is created and maintained that responds to what people want, and are able to use, so that, as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, we see growth in passenger journeys. It is proposed that this is done by improving the quality and reliability of bus services, so that people can get to more destinations quickly, comfortably, safely, and affordably.
- 2.7 Implementing the Strategy will require some difficult choices to be made, both in terms of where investment is made and how the infrastructure is used. It will also require additional funding, from both central government and local partners to make the vision a reality. We also need to work closely with operators to make this happen.

### **Bus Strategy Initial Draft**

- 2.8 The initial draft of the Bus Strategy will be presented to the November TIC and subsequent CPCA Board. It is proposed that once approved and adopted, the Strategy would be reviewed every 18 months, to reflect changing circumstances and ensure that objectives and targets remain appropriate and ambitious.
- 2.9 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is an economically successful, innovative, and desirable region to live and work in. However, our success and recent growth brings challenges, including pressure on our transport network, a need to tackle emissions locally, and contribute to the wider climate challenge response. And, in some parts of our area, people feel disconnected from the opportunities that exist in the wider region. Therefore, an appropriate, ambitious, and deliverable Bus Strategy is essential to ensure that opportunities are available for all within the region.

### **Bus Strategy: Alignment to National and Local Policy**

- 2.10 The draft Bus Strategy fully reflects wider national and local policy aspirations.
- 2.11 Government published its *National Bus Strategy: Bus Back Better* in March 2021, setting out an ambitious vision for significant improvements to bus services to return usage to pre-COVID levels and then to build patronage further. It wants to see services that are:
- **More frequent**, with turn-up-and-go services on major routes and feeder or demand-responsive services to lower-density places.

- **Faster and more reliable**, with bus priority wherever necessary and where there is room.
- **Cheaper**, with more low, flat fares in towns and cities, lower point-to-point fares elsewhere, and more daily price capping everywhere.
- **More comprehensive**, with overprovision on a few corridors reduced to boost provision elsewhere and better services in the evenings and weekends, not necessarily with conventional buses.
- **Easier to understand**, with simpler routes, common numbering, co-ordinated timetable change dates, good publicity, and comprehensive information online.
- **Easier to use**, with common tickets, passes and daily capping across all operators, simpler fares, contactless payment, and protection of bus stations.
- **Better integrated** with other modes and each other, including more bus-rail interchange and integration and inter-bus transfers.

2.12 Locally, the CPCA are continuing to finalise the LTCP that aims for a transport system which:

- Is accessible and efficient for everyone;
- Increases the ability to access good jobs, travel to health appointments and access opportunities to improve life chances;
- Is affordable to use; and
- Addresses pollution that adversely impacts on people's quality of life and health.

## Bus Strategy: Contents

2.13 The draft vision is: *A comprehensive network of bus services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that people find convenient, easy to use, reliable and good value for money, that is inclusive and offers a viable alternative to the car.*

2.14 The CPCA want to create a more connected region, which will encourage active and sustainable travel, improve health and wellbeing, and reduce private vehicle journeys. The five key goals of the draft Bus Strategy are:



## Bus Strategy: Measurement of Success

2.15 Success in achieving the vision will mean more travel by bus and less reliance on car travel. This in turn will help us maintain economic growth, care for the environment, and improve quality of life.

2.16 To realise the vision, this Strategy seeks to achieve the following:

- A comprehensive bus network, better connecting people to places across all parts of the region and beyond.
- Buses are part of a fully integrated and planned transport system.

- A more affordable network, with simplified fares and capping across the network
- Transitioning to new, low emission vehicles, providing all the benefits of modern bus travel
- A more understandable bus network, services and fares, with clear information and easy ticketing.
- Faster and more reliable journeys by bus, delivered with more, effective bus priority measures.
- High quality passenger waiting facilities.
- Good quality services with high levels of satisfaction amongst customers.
- A doubling of bus passengers (based on 2019/20 levels) by 2030.
- Less traffic and congestion by attracting car users to buses.
- Better bus infrastructure, including bus shelters and wider real time information coverage.

### **Bus Strategy: Consultation**

2.17 Following approval of the draft Bus Strategy at the TIC and subsequently at the CPCA Board, the document will need to be subjected to a public consultation period. Further work is required to ensure alignment and consistency with the LTCP and the work of constituent Councils and the Greater Cambridge Partnership to ensure full engagement with the public and stakeholders from across the region.

### **Bus Franchising Update**

2.18 Since May 2019, the CPCA has been committed to assessing whether the concept of Bus Franchising would be the best way to deliver a customer-focused public transport network. However, the uncertainties created by the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in respect of the recovery in bus patronage and revenue, made it difficult to assess the case for franchising. The situation is now becoming clearer, albeit that the new baseline of use remains lower on most services, compared with 2019. Given the large-scale challenges and complex spatial and economic geography of the area, the CPCA still considers that Franchising could deliver the best bus service for customers, rather than the current model of provision based on services determined by the commercial decisions of bus operators.

2.19 As the case for Franchising is developed further, the views of Members, stakeholders and the public will be widely sought and fed into the programme and a draft business case brought to Committee in early 2023.

### **Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Update**

2.20 In response to the National Bus Strategy: Bus Back Better (March 2021), the CPCA produced a BSIP, which was submitted to DfT in October 2021 and sought funding for bus service improvements. The CPCA was unsuccessful in securing BSIP funding and lessons are being learned through dialogue with central government officials around areas for improvement. The DfT requires all LTAs to review progress against their BSIP ambitions in October each year.

2.21 Given the changing landscape of bus service provision and development of the draft Bus Strategy, the opportunity is being taken to revise the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough BSIP, which will be socialised with constituent council officers and Members. The revised BSIP will reflect the work undertaken on developing the draft Bus Strategy, the work of the GCP and our

position regarding Franchising.

- 2.22 The CPCA continues to liaise with central government to outline the programme of work and how the BSIP is integral to the attainment of the Bus Strategy's key aims and objectives. An extension to the BSIP review submission deadline has been provided by the DfT to allow for the various workstreams to align and be delivered in a timely manner whilst allowing for due governance to occur.
- 2.23 Further work is required to align the BSIP with the emerging Bus Strategy and the work for the LTCP on the 15% reduction in car mileage. An update will be provided to TIC and CPCA Board Members ahead of a submission to government. This submission will reflect on the experiences over the last year and in particular the instability of the network provided by our largest service provider.

## Significant Implications

### 3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 None.

### 4 Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Transport Committee shall exercise the Combined Authority's functions to, '*Oversee the development and maintenance of the Local Transport Plan and Bus Strategy and any other key strategies reserved to the Combined Authority Board, including overseeing consultation and engagement processes, and making recommendations to the Board*', (Chapter 8, clause 3.2.1 of the Constitution for the Combined Authority).

### 5 Public Health Implications

- 5.1 As part of the LTCP suite of documents, the Bus Strategy will need to consider the objectives of the Plan. Fundamental to this is the consideration of health and safety and therefore it is imperative that the Bus Strategy demonstrates the golden thread with these objectives. The Bus Strategy will demonstrate how the deliverables will ensure better outcomes for the Combined Authority and partners in relation to public health at the local and more region-wide levels.

### 6 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 As part of the LTCP suite of documents, the Bus Strategy will need to consider the environmental and climate objectives – how it will provide a positive benefit for the area. The Bus Strategy will aim to improve the local and regional improvements in relation to the environment and climate. The Bus Strategy will demonstrate how the deliverables will ensure better outcomes for the Combined Authority and partners in relation to these implications at the local and more region-wide levels.

## 7 Other Significant Implications

7.1 None.

## 8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – Draft Bus Strategy.

## 9 Background Papers

9.1 None.