



Transport & Infrastructure Committee		Agenda Item
17 January 2024		7
Title:	Bus Strategy Update	
Report of:	Neal Byers	
Lead Member:	Cllr Anna Smith, Chair of Transport and Infrastructure Committee	
Public Report:	Yes	
Key Decision:	Yes	
Voting Arrangements:	Recommendation (A): 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. Recommendation (B): No vote required	

Recommendations:	
A	To recommend to the CPCA board the proposals for the two remaining tendered bus services which were placed under review and the bus services which data was previously unavailable.
B	To note the submission of the Zebra round 2 bid to the Department for Transport and update on Bus Stop Infrastructure work.

Strategic Objective(s):	
The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):	
	Achieving ambitious skills and employment opportunities
	Achieving good growth
X	Increased connectivity
	Enabling resilient communities
The proposal sets out three important workstreams to improve the bus network in the Combined Authority area. Buses are an essential part of providing connectivity to our communities.	

1. Purpose	
1.1	The Combined Authority and its partners are seeking an approach to provide the 'best possible' tendered bus network within the funding available. The previous approach was limited as decision makers did not have a clear process and sufficient data. The Bus Network Review is required to enable the CPCA Board to make future decisions on a more structured and balanced basis.
1.2	This paper sets out the further findings of the Bus Network Review and sets out recommendations for the remaining services to complete the review.

2. Proposal

2.1 There is a medium-term vision to explore the best delivery model to recast the network and peoples experience of it through Bus Reform i.e. Enhanced Partnership or Franchising. An immediate decision was taken to secure the existing network and retender services during 22/23 and 23/24. Over the 23/24 financial year, the Bus Network Review workstream was established. The approach will enable Leaders to make decisions for the 24/25 financial year for tendered services on a more structured and balanced basis. The Bus Network Review focuses on the tendered bus services. Bus Reform will provide a more strategic and ambitious response to the challenges faced by the bus system.

2.2 All existing tendered bus services have been assessed against the framework. The outcome of the analysis provides a ranking of each service against the objectives set out in the Local Bus Service Assessment Framework. This assessment has considered the need and affordability of each service. It has also considered the distance travelled for each service to help establish the value for money of more rural services.

2.3 **Undertaking the Bus Network Review**
This report presents the findings of the remaining which sets out those services which needed to be improved and services where further data was required.

2.4 **Recommendations for services under review**
The following summarises the recommendations for each of the bus services which have been placed under review. The services which are retained would be contracted for a further 12 months. This contract period reflects the considerations on Bus Reform to enable the CPCA Board to transition to an Enhanced Partnership or Franchise without incurring costs associated to contract variations which may be determined in the 2024/25 financial year.

Service	Recommendation	Justification
29	End of Trial	This service was introduced as a trial to provide an alternative direct route to the existing interchange option which is available. Last year there were less than 2,000 passengers, largely due duplication of other services. The communities on the route are serviced by a range of well used buses, including the 1, 5A, 6, 23/24, 60 and 904. These services provide access to important destinations, including the hospital via interchange at Peterborough bus station. As a result of this recommendation, none of the communities on the route will be left without access to a bus services. Following a further review, this trial is recommended to be ended and the service withdrawn. Alongside this review, CPCA is working with members on new or improved bus services which will be considered to provide improvements in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
Ting	Retain with refocusing.	The Ting DRT service is proposed to be retained and refocused. The early trial of the service has shown that while it can meet an important need, that the coverage and purpose has been quite broad. The operating model has led to services focusing in St Neots, delivering shorter journeys within the local area which is serviced by other routes, rather than a focus on the more rural communities which are not serviced by other routes. The proposal is to better serve the communities to the West of Huntingdonshire and limit the potential for journeys to start and end within St Neots. The refocusing will remove duplication with scheduled bus services and provide more

		availability to the rural communities. The number of buses used to provide the service will be reduced to reduce the cost of the service and ensure efficient use of resources.
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The recommendation for the Ting service has been informed by external advice provided to CPCA, both on the potential future role of Demand Responsive Transport in the region and also a specific assessment of the Ting service. Both reports are appended to this report for information. The lessons learnt from the current Ting service will be used to inform future services which are designed to serve the most rural communities. This will consider demand responsive alongside semi-flexible services. Semi-flexible service include both scheduled services, typically during the peak, and a demand responsive element, typically during the off-peak.

If agreed, each of the proposed changes will be progressed through to contracting. This will require a new tender process.

2.5 Update on services requiring further information

The following summarises the status of the services for which data was not available for the September or November Board meetings.

Service	Recommendation	Justification
110	Retain service	Meeting a community need for the Ely - Cottenham - Impington communities and cost per passenger journey is below £12 (£9.64). This is in line with recommendations made for the services presented in September and November 2023.
203	Retain service	Meeting a community need for the Isleham community, providing connections to Newmarket and cost per passenger journey is below £12 (£11.02). This is in line with recommendations made for the services presented in September and November 2023.

2.6 ZEBRA 2

On 15 December 2023 the Combined Authority submitted to DfT a bid for ZEBRA 2 funding.

The initial ZEBRA funding has provided 30 zero emission all-electric buses running in Cambridge from May 2023. Based on that success we have placed a bid, in connection with Stagecoach, for 33 zero emission buses for Peterborough. If successful, the bid will deliver 15 single deck and 18 double deck buses, in order to convert Peterborough’s bus services Citi 1/Citi 2/ Citi 3 and Citi 4 to all-electric operation.

There are dependencies on locating sufficient suitable land with access to the power grid to create a suitable bus depot with electric charging capacity, but officers are working to secure suitable property. A decision on the ZEBRA 2 bid is expected by mid-March 2024.

2.7 Bus Stop Infrastructure

Members are asked to note that within the MTFP, officers plan to commence work on a programme for Bus Stop Maintenance project. The cost is shown within the MTFP and allows for a county-wide audit of our bus stops, and work to commence improving the bus stops, fitting them with flags and timetable cases. As the project rolls out across 2024-27, the project will seek to make bus stops safer, wheelchair accessible and more attractive.

3. Background

3.1	Bus Network Review The Bus Network Review is being undertaken to support decision on the future network. To inform the development of the approach, officers have reviewed the approach of other transport authorities, including Liverpool City Region, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, Hertfordshire, and Oxfordshire. All authorities consider the need for a service and the affordability of the service. Walking distance to a bus is the most common metric to establish need. Cost per passenger journey is also the most widely used metric for measuring the performance on contract.
3.2	All of these authorities shared the common challenges of managing the affordability of the network in the face of increasing pressures on local budgets. The approach undertaken for the Bus Network Review is largely consistent with the approach adopted by others.

4. Appendices

4.1	Appendix A: Bus Network Review – Service Summaries Appendix B: Future role of DRT in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Appendix C: Ting Assessment report
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5. Implications

Financial Implications

5.1	<p>The total budget available to support existing bus services in 2023/24 is £7,598,432. The current budget is funded through the Transport Levy, Mayoral Precept, Bus Operator Service Grant and Bus Recovery Grant. Subject to decisions yet to be taken on the 2024/25 budget, the budget to support bus services for the next financial year is anticipated to retain the current level of funding, with the potential for the budget to be increased to support further investment into bus services. The decision to fund bus services using the Mayoral Precept is part of the consultation on the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Any increase to the budget available for bus services will support delivery of the bus strategy and the outcome will be reported to the next TIC.</p> <p>The Bus Recovery Grant is not expected to be available in 2024/25. The Bus Recovery Grant funding represented £174,835 of the total budget.</p>
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Legal Implications

6.1	Following the evaluation of the bus service recommendations, there are legal implications to consider. For routes and services where performance and community needs align with current provision, the authority is positioned to extend contracts with existing operators where the terms can be extended. Where there is a need for enhanced services or the term of an existing contract has ended, it is required to initiate a transparent tendering process. The tender process will ensure that operators can competitively bid to provide the services, in compliance with procurement regulations. Contracts will be either extended or introduced for 12 months.
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Public Health Implications

7.1	<p>The proposed recommendations concerning bus services, which encompass both enhancements and a few reductions, have overall positive public health implications. Retaining and improving bus services ensures residents maintain reliable access to healthcare, fostering timely medical interventions and regular health check-ups. This not only promotes physical well-being through increased daily activity from walking to bus stops but also supports cardiovascular health and counters rising obesity rates.</p> <p>Reliable bus services reduce feelings of isolation, particularly among vulnerable populations like the elderly. This improved social connectivity, in turn, supports mental well-being. Furthermore,</p>
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	<p>encouraging the use of public transport over private vehicles can lead to a marked reduction in emissions, subsequently improving air quality and benefiting respiratory health among the community.</p> <p>The primary objective of these recommendations is to ensure both public health benefits and value for money are achieved. By striking a balance, the recommendations provide a bus network, while also acknowledging the indirect health benefits brought about by economic stability, job accessibility and access to essential services.</p>
Environmental & Climate Change Implications	
8.1	<p>Bus services play a pivotal role in mitigating environmental impacts and climate change. When effectively utilised, buses reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicles on the roads, leading to decreased traffic congestion and, consequently, reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Buses present a more sustainable mode of transportation, emitting fewer pollutants per passenger compared to cars. Encouraging the use of public buses can significantly contribute to our efforts to combat climate change, improve air quality, and reduce the carbon footprint of transport.</p>
Other Significant Implications	
9.1	<p>There are no other significant implications associate to the recommendations in this paper. Future implications of decisions on bus reform will be presented to the committee as required.</p>
Background Papers	
10.1	<p>13 September 2023 TIC meeting - Bus Network Review - Initial Recommendations</p> <p>15 November 2023 TIC meeting - Bus Strategy Update (including Bus Network Review)</p>