

Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal Joint Committee

10am, Friday 1 March 2024

Bus Partnership Fund – Progress Update

Item number 6.7

Executive Summary

This report updates Committee on the progress on the Edinburgh and South East Scotland corridors Bus Partnership Fund programme.

Funded through the Scottish Government's £500m Bus Partnership Fund (BPF) to support bus priority interventions, a Strategic Business Case (SBC) was approved by Transport Scotland in November 2023 allocating £1.06m funding to support the next stages of the programme up to end March 2024.

Following the publication of the Scottish Budget on 19 December 2023, Transport Scotland (on 16 January 2024) wrote to The City of Edinburgh Council to confirm that the £500m Bus Partnership Fund will be paused for Financial Year 2024/25 due to budgetary constraints.

No announcement has been made yet that the programme will recommence in financial year 2025/26.

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Bus Partnership Fund – Progress Update

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Note that a Strategic Business Case for Bus Partnership Fund intervention measures was approved by Transport Scotland November 2023.
- 1.2 Note that a grant award of £1.06m was secured to deliver the next stages of the project to end March 2024 to cover the develop an Outline Business Case, scoping of Accelerated Schemes (including bus priority at traffic signals), replacement of A90 Queue Management System and project management costs.
- 1.3 Note that the Scottish Government has announced that as part of draft Scottish budget for 2024/25 funding allocated to the BPF fund will be paused.
- 1.4 Recommends the Convener of the Joint Committee writes to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport seeking assurance that the BPF will return in FY25/26 and commits Scottish Government and Transport Scotland resources for FY24/25 to work with officers to advise on development of future bids and to ensure all opportunities are being explored to ensure workstreams are remobilised soon after the anticipated relaunch of the fund in April 25.

2. Background

- 2.1 To address the issue of increasing bus journey times and patronage decline, in 2021, the Scottish Government committed to providing a long-term investment totalling over £500m in the form of a [Bus Partnership Fund](#) (BPF). The desired outcomes of the BPF include:
 - 2.1.1 To improve bus journey times and provide greater reliability, by prioritising bus over other types of traffic;
 - 2.1.2 To provide high-quality bus services which contribute to four priorities; to reduce inequality, take climate action, help deliver inclusive growth and improve health and well-being;
 - 2.1.3 To reduce congestion, through improved bus services;
 - 2.1.4 To fit with the partnership area's overall strategy for integrated transport, to encourage a modal shift from cars to more sustainable transport and reduce emissions; and

- 2.1.5 To demonstrate partnership strength and commitment, including through ‘match in kind’ action and investment to further improve bus services, and working towards a [Bus Service Improvement Partnership](#).
- 2.2 In March 2021, [Joint Committee authorised](#) the Transport Appraisal Board to prepare a collective South East of Scotland regional bid for submission to Transport Scotland for funding from its Bus Partnership Fund, subject to agreement by the six individual Councils. This was approved, and a bid into the fund was made in April 2021. In September 2021.
- 2.3 In September 2021, [Joint Committee received an update](#) that £3.03m was received from the fund as a result of the bid and approved the recruitment of a full time project manager to take forward the development and implementation required.
- 2.4 In June 2023, the Strategic Business Case (SBC) for the bus interventions to be taken forward [was reported to Joint Committee](#), as part of the Transport theme annual update. The SBC was also subsequently approved by Transport Scotland.
- 2.5 Regional Local Authorities and Bus Operators have successfully collaborated on delivery of BPF commitments to date including the introduction of temporary bus interventions during the Covid 19 Pandemic and the delivery of a SBC. Transport Scotland has recognised the success of this collaboration (which continues to help inform the development of Outline Business Cases and Feasibility Studies).
- 2.6 On 2 November 2023, Transport Scotland provided notification of the funding award for the next stages of the programme. £1.06m grant funding was secured for the following:
- Outline Business Cases covering the following three schemes:
 - A7 / A772 - Implement a bus gate at Gilmerton (AM/ PM peaks on Drum Street)
 - A71 - Implement a citybound bus lane from Curriehill Rd to Hermiston Park and Ride
 - A90 - Burnshot citybound off-slip bus only time restriction (07:30-09:00)
 - A feasibility study assessing next steps for schemes on A702, Kirkliston and M90/A90;
 - Installation of a new Queue Management System on the A90;
 - Installation of a bus lane enforcement camera on the A70;
 - A feasibility study assessing next steps for bus priority at specific junctions and bus lanes at selected sites; and
 - Project Management costs.

3. Main report

- 3.1 On 16 January 2024, following the publication of the Scottish Budget, Transport Scotland (on 16 January 2024) confirmed that the £500m Bus Partnership Fund will be paused for Financial Year 2024/25 due to budgetary constraints.
- 3.2 Funding for existing workstreams (£1.06m) is committed to end Financial Year 2023/24 and work continues to develop and implement the measures detailed in section 2.6.
- 3.3 Transport Scotland recognise that the City of Edinburgh Council and regional partners have successfully delivered on the ground measures and robust business cases during earlier rounds of the Bus Partnership Fund and consequently provided assurance that these works will continue to inform future funding decisions.
- 3.4 No announcement has been made relating to BPF funding returning financial year 2025/26. Officers will continue to work with Transport Scotland to keep dialogue open during 2024/25 and will undertake advance works where possible (such as the preparation of procurement tasks to secure the required multidisciplinary consultancy support) to ensure that projects are in a strong position to commence at the earliest opportunity should the region be successful in securing future grant funding.
- 3.5 Officers will continue to work together during FY24/25 to coordinate the individual BPF bids with any future ESESCRD bid. Additionally, the City of Edinburgh Council remain committed to all the BPF workstreams already underway, and officers will continue to work with bus operators and partners to keep as much momentum behind the individual projects during the interim funding pause period.

4. Financial impact

- 4.1 Funding for existing workstreams (£1.06m) is committed to end Financial Year 2023/24 and work continues to develop and implement the measures detailed in section 2.6.
- 4.2 As a priority, officers are working closing with Transport Scotland to explore other funding opportunities with the aim of progressing as much of the previously planned 2024/25 workstreams as possible. As progress is made on any new funding agreements, further updates will be provided to Committee members.

5. Alignment with Sustainable, Inclusive Growth Ambitions

- 5.1 The Transport projects that are being taken forward through the City Region Deal programme are aligned closely with the national and regional environmental objectives of maximising public transport and active travel; and thereby reducing the amount of travel undertaken by private car.
- 5.2 An efficient regional public and active transport system is also an essential requirement if the regional economy is to experience strong and rapid across a range of sectors, through helping people access employment, education and training.

- 5.3 Removing physical barriers to growth was identified one of five key interventions in the Deal Document's Inclusive Growth Framework. As a consequence, there are three specific positive impact on equalities which are to be achieved:
- 5.3.1 Upgrades and additions to existing infrastructure, with the resultant reduced journey times and increased modal choice, can readily support residents of more disadvantaged communities to more easily access job opportunities and education/training centres.
 - 5.3.2 Transport infrastructure upgrades to unlock housing development sites enable the increase in the supply and availability of housing, particularly in the affordable sector, to assist directly those households which cannot access the private housing market.
 - 5.3.3 Infrastructure improvements which assist in the delivery of data-driven innovation projects and other business development areas will enable accelerated overall economic growth, as well as providing good accessibility to the increased job opportunities arising from those implemented projects.

6. Background reading/external references

- 6.1 [Bus Partnership Fund](#): Transport Scotland website
- 6.2 [ESESCR Deal Transport Appraisal Board bid into the Bus Partnership Fund](#): report to City Region Deal Joint Committee (5 March 2021)
- 6.3 [ESESCR Deal Bus Partnership Fund Award: Funding Announcement and Next Steps](#): report to City Region Deal Joint Committee (3 September 2021)
- 6.4 [Transport Programme Annual update](#): report to City Region Deal Joint Committee (2 June 2023)

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Bus Partnership Fund Update: Letter from Transport Scotland – 16 January 2024