

Notes and Actions of Bus Enhanced Partnership Board Meeting

13:00 on Tuesday 6th October in Shire Hall,
Gloucester.

1. EP Review

The Board received an update from WSP on the EP Review and the work required to ensure compliance with the new DfT Enhanced Partnership guidance by 31 March 2027. The discussion covered stakeholder engagement findings, governance arrangements, Socially Necessary Local Services (SNLS) and the Bus Network Accessibility Plan (BusNAP).

1.1 New DfT Guidance and EP Update

Discussion summary

- Overview of new DfT requirements.
- EP Plan and BSIP to remain separate documents for now.
- Importance of completing mandatory requirements by March 2027.
- Operator workshops planned to support development of revised EP documents.

Actions

- GCC/WSP to issue formal notice of EP variation and circulate details of operator workshops.
 - WSP/GCC to continue development of revised EP Plan and EP Scheme documentation.
 - Operators to provide feedback through forthcoming workshops and engagement activity.
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1.2 Stakeholder Engagement Review

Discussion summary

- Survey received 49 responses.
- Key priorities identified as network coverage, reliability, accessibility and protection of services.
- Stakeholders requested greater transparency, collaboration and visibility of how feedback influences decision-making within the existing structure

Actions

- EP Review team to reflect survey findings within the revised EP governance and engagement arrangements.
 - Board members to consider opportunities for improved stakeholder engagement and transparency.
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1.3 Governance Review

Discussion summary

- Existing arrangements were generally considered effective.
- Discussion covered board frequency, independent chair arrangements, community transport involvement and trade union representation.
- Preference was expressed for formalising existing arrangements rather than introducing significant structural change.

Actions

- Board members and operators to provide any further governance feedback to GCC/WSP.
 - GCC/WSP to review requirements relating to trade union representation.
 - Governance proposals to be refined as part of the EP Review process.
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1.4 Socially Necessary Local Services (SNLS)

Discussion summary

- The Board discussed methodology options for identifying SNLS.
- Consideration was given to the role of The Robin, route frequency, local circumstances and definitions of "substantial variation".
- Members emphasised the importance of ensuring the framework supports decision-making without becoming overly restrictive.

Actions

- WSP/GCC to continue development of the SNLS methodology.
 - Operators to provide feedback through planned workshops.
 - GCC/WSP to explore options for defining substantial variation and local weighting criteria.
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1.5 Bus Network Accessibility Plan (BusNAP)

Discussion summary

- WSP outlined requirements for the new statutory BusNAP.
- The Board supported a proportionate first BusNAP and use of existing accessibility forums and networks.
- Discussion included co-design arrangements and proposals for an Accessibility and Inclusion Working Group.

Actions

- GCC/WSP to introduce BusNAP proposals through Building Better Transport Links.
 - GCC/WSP to establish a BusNAP co-design group.
 - GCC/WSP to confirm consultation and governance arrangements for BusNAP development.
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2. Multi-Operator Ticketing

Discussion summary

- The Board discussed the implications of recent fare policy changes and emerging DfT requirements for multi-operator ticketing. Members noted that previous work had been developed in the context of the £3 fare cap and that the move to a £2 fare cap may require the original assumptions and pricing approach to be reconsidered.
- There was support for developing a product that would provide genuine passenger benefit and encourage network use, rather than implementing a minimum-compliance solution solely to satisfy EP requirements.
- Discussion focused on opportunities to support journeys involving multiple operators, particularly where passengers are required to interchange to complete a trip. Consideration was given to whether student and young person travel may provide a useful starting point for future product development.
- A range of options were discussed, including student products, zonal ticketing arrangements, transfer tickets for journeys involving more than one operator, and how future products could align with emerging national initiatives such as Project Coral and account-based ticketing.
- It was recognised that the current multi-operator ticketing agreement work should continue, while longer-term concepts could be explored separately with operators.

Actions

- ITU to continue progression of the existing multi-operator ticketing agreement.
 - ITU to arrange a follow-up meeting with operators to consider future multi-operator ticketing concepts, including potential student, zonal and transfer ticket products.
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3. Express Bus and BRT Update

Discussion summary

- Update received on BRT development, Imperial Circus and signal priority schemes.
- Discussion focused on delivering benefits ahead of the full BRT programme and exploring opportunities for increased service frequencies and improved connectivity.

Actions

- GCC/WSP to continue development of Imperial Circus and wider BRT interventions.
 - GCC and operators to explore opportunities for more immediate service improvements aligned to BRT objectives.
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4. Passenger Group and Future Engagement

Discussion summary

- The Board reviewed lessons learned from the current Passenger Group model and reflected on the strengths and limitations of the annual event format. Members agreed that the Passenger Group continues to provide value and should be retained as an important part of stakeholder engagement.
- It was recognised that the existing presentation-led format can make it difficult to manage questions effectively, encourage wider participation and facilitate meaningful discussion between passengers, operators and GCC. There was support for exploring a more interactive approach that encourages two-way conversations rather than a series of presentations.
- Broad support was expressed for developing an accessible marketplace-style event, allowing attendees to engage directly with operators, GCC officers and project teams on topics of specific interest, rather than requiring all attendees to participate in a single discussion.
- Members also discussed the importance of moving away from a model where engagement is concentrated into one annual event. There was support for establishing more regular opportunities for passengers to provide feedback and receive updates throughout the year, while recognising the need to balance this with available resources and ensure engagement remains focused on strategic issues rather than individual operational complaints.
- It was noted that future engagement activity could take a variety of forms, including targeted sessions, roadshow-style events, promotional activities and other opportunities to reach people outside of the existing passenger groups. The importance of involving operators, including smaller operators, in any future model was also recognised.
- Overall, the Board was supportive of the proposed direction and agreed that further work should be undertaken to develop the detailed approach, including event format, year-round engagement activity, responsibilities and resourcing requirement

Actions

- ITU to develop a detailed proposal for a marketplace-style Passenger Group event.
 - ITU to explore options for year-round passenger engagement and operator involvement.
 - ITU to prepare a costed delivery plan and proposed governance arrangements for the future engagement model
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5. AOB

Cheltenham Schemes

Discussion summary

- Operators requested updates on J10 and 20mph schemes due to potential operational impacts.

Actions

- ITU to follow up with the relevant project teams and arrange for appropriate engagement with operators regarding scheme progress and associated impacts on bus services

Next Meeting

Discussion summary

Next meeting arranged for 13th April 2027