

Committee: Economy and Infrastructure - Bulletin

Date: 4 February 2021

Report Title: Bus Service Improvement Partnerships and Bus Partnership Fund

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Scottish Government has launched its Bus Partnership Fund of £500 million for investment in infrastructure to support bus services, with the aims of reducing congestion and improving bus journey times and reliability. The deadline for a call for proposals is 16 April. This bulletin item describes the fund and outlines possible projects for including in an application. It is intended that further discussion will take place with Members prior to the consultation deadline.

2. Bus Service Improvement Partnerships

- 2.1. In December 2019 the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 became law. One of its provisions was the establishment of a framework for Bus Service Improvement Partnerships (BSIPs), replacing the previous, and less flexible, Statutory Quality Partnerships. The Council Programme already included the target of setting up a BSIP by December 2020. However, regulations regarding the procedures, form and content of BSIPs were delayed by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and have not yet been published. A guidance note is available at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/48594/bus-service-improvement-partnerships-note.pdf>
- 2.2. In preparing a BSIP, previous work between Highland Council, HiTrans and Stagecoach to develop a Statutory Quality Partnership will be drawn upon and adapted to match the BSIP regulations.
- 2.3. To support BSIP initiatives, the Scottish Government has introduced a Bus Partnership Fund.

3. Bus Partnership Fund

- 3.1. The Bus Partnership Fund (BPF) is intended to support and provide infrastructure funding for BSIP proposals, and in particular for long-term investment in bus priorities, to reduce the effects of congestion and address the decline in bus patronage. This fund makes £500 million available (Scotland-wide) over several years. It is for capital investment, not revenue costs. A call for proposals was launched on 13 November 2020 and is open until 16 April 2021. The call for proposals, which describes intended outcomes and details how the fund will work, design principles and the evaluation

process, is available at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/48591/bpf-call-for-proposals.pdf>

- 3.2. The BPF does not require match funding from local authorities, but does require a strong linkage with Council policies, including intentions for a BSIP. As the name suggests, it also requires partnership working.
- 3.3. The key intended outcomes of the Fund are to improve bus journey times and provide greater reliability, by prioritising bus over other types of traffic. The fund supports the four priorities of the National Transport Strategy (NTS2):
 - to reduce inequality;
 - take climate action;
 - help deliver inclusive growth; and
 - improve health and well-being.

It also addresses seven of the Government's seventeen Sustainable Development Goals:

- affordable and clean energy;
 - sustainable cities and communities;
 - decent work and economic growth;
 - industry, innovation and infrastructure;
 - climate action;
 - good health and well-being; and
 - partnerships for the goals.
- 3.4. Transport Scotland has stated that the initial tranche of funding is expected to be used to resource the development of appraisals and business cases. Various conditions apply:
 - applications must be from partnerships working towards Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) status, as defined by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019;
 - there must be a lead local authority, as Accountable Officer for the funding;
 - the infrastructure projects will be owned by local roads authorities, in recognition of their statutory role in maintaining the local road infrastructure. Transport Scotland will therefore not mandate design requirements but will expect local authorities to follow good practice guidance, such as the National Roads Development Guide; and
 - in accordance with the Place Principle, which was adopted by the Scottish Government in 2019, bidding partnerships are asked to take a collaborative, place-based approach to the proposed developments.
 - 3.5. The Government has stated that officers wish to receive ambitious proposals, although quick wins for smaller projects which are aligned to the longer-term vision may be considered for the initial tranche. It is expected that funding will be awarded for development and delivery after June 2021. A copy of the application form is attached as **Appendix 2**.
 - 3.6. Partnership with bus operators is essential, and HiTrans is already involved in discussion. Other potential partners could include:
 - NHS Highland
 - HIE
 - Bus user representative groups

- Access Panels
- Community Planning Partnerships
- Chambers of Commerce
- BIDs
- Other transport infrastructure owners (e.g. port authorities)

- 3.7. The Council, along with HiTrans and Stagecoach, has been successful in gaining Bus Priority Rapid Development Fund monies for two projects in Inverness: the Bus Station to Rose Street link and the Raigmore Hospital / Raigmore Estate bus gate. It is hoped that this partnership working can be built upon to develop further schemes across Highland, also involving other partners as appropriate.
- 3.8. Officers of Highland Council and HiTrans have begun to develop BPF proposals. It is proposed that several BPF applications should be made, covering diverse parts of Highland. **Appendix 1** lists some potential proposals with an outline of the congestion issues to be addressed in each area, and some anticipated measures for doing so.
- 3.9. Integration with active travel should be considered within these proposals, so that bus provision and active travel complement each other and do not conflict. This should include allocation of road space in a way that supports both modes, as well as encouraging walking and cycling to access bus routes or to complete the last mile of the journey.
- 3.10. Working towards the 16 April deadline, it is intended that officers continue to develop proposals along with partners. To enable Members to consider applications before submission, it is proposed that a seminar is held prior to the submission date and that the application be the subject of a further report to this Committee in May 2021.

4. Smarter Choices Smarter Places

- 4.1. Separately from the BPF, Smarter Choices Smarter Places funding applications for 2021/22 may include public transport initiatives. Such projects require 50% match funding and must be deliverable within the financial year (i.e. by 31 March 2022). This presents a further funding option for smaller projects which may not fit within the BPF criteria. Publicity and promotion of public transport would be a suitable topic for including in a SCSP application, as would bike/bus interchange facilities which do not form part of a larger congestion-reducing project.
- 4.2. As the deadline for applications is 31 January, Members are asked to note that officers are preparing an application and an update will be provided to the Committee.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 8 January 2021

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Appendix 1

POTENTIAL CONTENT OF BUS PARTNERSHIP FUND BIDS

Note: This is an initial draft, to illustrate the range of possible applications, and will be subject to further details being worked up, partnership agreements being secured and feasibility assessed.

Area	Congestion issues to be addressed	Possible measures
Inverness and environs	Congestion in city centre and at pinch points on key radial routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus lanes on key routes (e.g. Millburn Road, B9006, A82) • Park & Ride sites at or ahead of entry points to built-up area (including North Kessock) • City Centre traffic light priorities • Tidal flow lanes • Improvement of bus stops in residential areas, and relocation from bus bays to carriageway
Invergordon	Congestion around harbour when cruise ships are in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus stances at harbour
Fort William	Delays on A82 at peak tourist times Access to new hospital site at Blar Mor Measures that might tie-in to generating longer term benefits arising from the traffic management relating to the holding of the Cycle World Cup in Fort William in 2023.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus lanes • Traffic light priorities • Park and Ride sites
Skye	Congestion on single track roads leading to popular tourist sites, and limited parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus stances and turning areas at popular destinations • Improved bus shelters and stop infrastructure to make the bus network more visible to potential users (aim would be to generate traffic for new routes, as an alternative to car use)
All areas (where relevant)	Reduction in car use / modal shift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in car parking space • Integration with active travel e.g. provision of bike parking at bus shelters • Mini Park & Ride sites at suitable points along main bus routes (for rural dwellers to access inter-urban buses) • Charging facilities for electric buses

Bus Partnership Fund Application Form



Phase 1 – Capacity Funding

1. Applicant Details

Lead local authority	
Partners to the proposal	
Contact name and job title	
Contact email	
Contact telephone number	

2. Geography and Demographics

Max 1000 words, excluding maps

Describe the geography of the partnership and specifically that which will be impacted by the proposal, using maps to specify the area. Provide basic population information, to indicate the likely travel habits and therefore how people will be affected by the proposed development.

3. Analysis of Problems and Opportunities

Max 3000 words, excluding diagrams and chartsⁱ

Outline the problems (to the extent you are able at this stage), evidencing areas where road congestion is particularly problematic for bus. The opportunities should relate to bus priority developments, which are the focus of the Bus Partnership Fundⁱⁱ, as part of a multi-modal approach to sustainable future mobility provision.

4. Desired Outcomes

Max 1000 words

Describe the desired outcomes from the proposed bus priority developments. How do you plan to evaluate the achievement of these outcomes?

5. Potential Options

Max 3000 words

Outline the ideas the partnership has for developing bus priority measures and an outline timescale for their delivery. Describe any quick wins i.e. developments which could be implemented within the financial year 2021/22ⁱⁱⁱ. Outline how you plan to work in partnership, if that has been established. Describe what consultation has taken place to arrive at these high-level options^{iv}.

6. Resources Required

What resources is the partnership requesting from Transport Scotland to develop the proposals ^v ?	
What is the estimated total cost of the proposed infrastructure developments?	
What – if any - is the nature and extent of investment to be made by partners ^{vi} ?	
What – if any – other sources of investment will be available for the proposed developments ^{vii} ?	

7. Commitment of Partners

The proposal should be signed by the Chair and CEO of the local authority leading the proposal. Partners (including RTPs and bus operators, as appropriate) may indicate their support to the proposal through appended letters of intent or additional signatures below.

Organisation	Name	Job title	Signature
[Lead local authority]		Lead Councillor	
[Lead local authority]		CEO	

8. Submission of Proposals

Proposals should be submitted to buspartnershipfund@transport.gov.scot by 12 noon on Friday 16th April 2021.

9. Guidance Notes

ⁱ Relevant appendices or links to documents may be added, in addition to the word limits. For example, the partnership may wish to include links to community plans, transport strategies, STAG reports etc.

ⁱⁱ Partnerships should look to the STAG pre-appraisal phase, as a guide on the level of information required. It is recognised that you may not have all of the data at this stage but you should outline how you are going to produce the more detailed data – including forecast data - through the Outline Business Case (OBC) stage. If you require resources to carry out even a pre-appraisal level of analysis, please state that here and estimate the requirements in section 6.

ⁱⁱⁱ Quick wins should be sustainable and fit with the longer-term, transformational developments proposed.

^{iv} Full details of the long-listing process are not required at this stage, as successful partnerships will have the opportunity to develop, evaluate and refine the options through the OBC stage. Where appraisals have already been carried out (for example, through city deals) partnerships should consider how these fit the future and the changes they will need to make to transport.

^v Support from Transport Scotland will be to fund the specialist resources required to develop an appraisal, as defined by the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide (STAG). This will be required to access further infrastructure funding from the Bus Partnership Fund.

We recognise that some partnerships may have already conducted an appraisal and may be at Outline Business Case stage or even further with proposals. We also uphold the STAG principle that the level of appraisal required should be proportionate. Capacity funding will therefore take into account the stage the partnership is at and will be based on a proportionate view of what further appraisals and business cases are required to justify the infrastructure funding.

We also recognise that some options may have been appraised and are ready to implement as quick wins: if so, that should be stated here and relevant evidence attached.

Partnerships are reminded that staff costs may be capitalised in considering the request for funding. All justifiable bids will be considered, including funding for early quick wins, which may already have been appraised.

^{vi} This may include investment in other measures, which will contribute to the holistic transformation of the bus service e.g. ultra-low or zero emission buses.

^{vii} Include sources and amounts of investment already secured or expected to be secured before the development projects commence. This may include in-kind investment, as well as finance, and should take account of contributions from bus operators and other partners, as well as local authorities.