

# **Minutes of Bus Enhanced Partnership Forum Meeting (number 1), held at 1000 on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> in the Members Room, Shire Hall, Gloucester.**

## **Item1**

### **Welcome and introductions**

**Cllr Robinson** welcomed all attendees to the Meeting, which commenced at 1000.

In attendance:

EP Board: Karen Coventry (representing Stagecoach), Luke Marion (representing the smaller operators), Cllr Philip Robinson (representing Gloucestershire County Council, also Chair for this meeting).

Supporting staff: James Heaney Regalado (Stagecoach), Tom Main, Matthew Parker, Colin Chick, Philip Williams, Emily Walsh, Thea Rumer (Gloucestershire County Council)

Attendees:

- Amartya Deb (GCC Senior Planning Officer (Infrastructure))
- Chris Willmore (South Gloucestershire Liberal Democrat Councillor for Yate North ward, Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration, and Infrastructure)
- David Redgewell (Gloucestershire Catch the Bus campaign, the Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership, and the South West Transport Network Rail Future Severn side)
- Edward Hopkins (Transport Operations Manager, West of England Combined Authority)
- Marcus Perrin (Climate Emergency Officer, Forest of Dean District Council)
- Nick Murry (Climate Change Specialist, Publica Group Limited, Wiltshire Council)
- Wendy Jackson (Regeneration Manager, Forest of Dean District Council)

Apologies were received from Jason Humm and Simon Excell (Gloucestershire County Council), Alice Jennings (Transport Policy Manager, South Gloucestershire Council), Simon Newport (Head of Commercial, Transpora), Timothy Ashton (National Highways)

### **Brief 'why we're here'**

**Cllr Robinson** noted that this is the first Enhanced Partnership (EP) Forum meeting, following the first EP Board meeting January 26<sup>th</sup> 2024. A main focus of that board meeting was this Forum group, meetings of which will be ongoing. The EP Forum is a consultative body, with bus operators and stakeholders to progress the success of buses in Gloucestershire. This progress will be linked to GCC's existing policies and the Transport Act. The aim of the EP Board and Forum is to be a decision making body to make bus travel more attractive

## **Item 2 Setting the scene**

**Tom Main** explained that the National Bus Strategy launched in 2021, as part of "Bus Back Better". That strategy is to increase usage and investment, in the county including cross border connections.

The BSIP strategy document was completed in 2021 and now is being updated for a June 2024 DfT deadline. Part of the BSIP is to have an Enhanced Partnership in place, with the associated board and forum. The EP document was agreed in 2023, is now active and provides guidance for these meetings. The voting members are the Council, Stagecoach, and Pulhams (who represent all smaller operators in the county).

These forum meetings are to include teams across GCC, stakeholders, districts and across border bodies, to improve operations, improve investment, and increase bus use.

**David** noted that NHS co-fund some services, and that NHS, hospital and healthcare groups are to be included in these conversations.

**Luke** noted that he is also in frequent contact with these groups due to funded bus services.

**Philip** advised that there is Section 256 funding and an integrated care board that he works with.

**Tom** confirmed the NHS had been invited to this first forum meeting.

**Chris** noted her thanks for inviting South Gloucestershire, across a border. She mentioned her awareness of need for focus on travel for health, education and work. For health, there is a need to cover surgeries as well as hospitals.

**All** agreed that key destinations need to be represented around the table, including universities and colleges (for employees and students), including Hartpury College.

**Philip** noted that attention must be paid to how broad this forum gets. There is a “major employers for transport” group, who aim to increase use of sustainable transport (including universities, colleges, GCHQ, etc.)

**ACTION:** EP board to decide on Forum invite list/ number of “Forum members” to be manageable.

**Cllr Robinson** also noted that there may be channels through local school plan to inform about the Forum.

**ACTION: ITU** to let **Wendy** know who is represented on the Major Employers Forum from the Forest of Dean. (Q&A on Teams chat)

### **Item 3 BSIP review**

Emily Walsh presented on the following

- Intro and current progress of BSIP document – following DfT BSIP dates and guidance
- DfT guidance and happenings since 2021 is key to the BSIP.
- GCC have completed two rounds of engagement on the 2024 key points.
- The vision and objectives to facilitate clear long term vision.
- Each objective has a programme, (i) up to 2025 and (ii) beyond 2025.
- Delivery is collaborative, emerging from EP working groups. BSIP indicates where working groups can have a role.

**David** noted that there is communication to be done regarding Royal Well, including with National Express and locations they stop at. Also, does the BSIP acknowledge recruitment of bus drivers and passenger safety (over busing at certain stops, anti-social behaviour, lighting etc).

**Cllr Robinson** noted that some elements of detail will be covered in the high level BSIP narrative. The Cllr has recently noticed good examples of driver recruitment advertising from Stagecoach.

**ACTION: GCC** to email **Nick** regarding BSIP integration with County's transport decarbonisation strategy, including Climate Leadership Gloucestershire's theme and/or commitments.

**Chris** noted the importance of integration of BSIPs across county boundaries.

**Tom** clarified that all parties are aware that cross-boundary travel occurs frequently around the Gloucestershire border. GCC are investing in cross services and infrastructure, focusing on hubs and communication with neighbours. There is a partnership approach to build on cross investment and collaborate.

**Luke** reminded attendees that the Bus Connectivity Assessment, requested by DfT shows the national acknowledgement of detail needed in this area, and to prioritise new funding after election.

**Karen** noted that the Passenger Charter has a role to play, and that different counties have different charters, and that the DfT may need to provide more advise on interpretation of charters, to reduce any confusion.

**Philip** noted that the Local Transport Plan data shows high level of containment, i.e. 70% journeys are staying in county. The step change in quantity and quality of service needs focus on these 70%, core journeys, to then have halo effect. Gloucestershire's seven boundary counties have to be in discussions.

**David** noted that connectivity with WECA and tourist destinations is key.

**Cllr Robinson** agreed that focus on the core, and incorporate balance with cross-county.

**ACTION:** GCC to support conversations with Worcestershire County Council.

**Amartya** noted that the council is aiming to reduce car travel and encourage mode shift, and that many car journeys are those commuting, heading out of county for work.

**Chris** agreed on modal shift and commented on non-drivers, potentially rurally located, needing access to services.

**All** agreed that modal shift, working with rural areas and non-drivers are all within the BSIP.

**Cllr Robinson wanted it** noted that GCC were open to discussions with Worcestershire and had reached out in the past. It is Worcestershire's reluctance to engage that is the issue.

#### **Item 4 BSIP+ (BSIP round 2)**

**Matt** presented on the following, noting that DfT now call BSIP+, "BSIP round 2", referring to the funding GCC received after the councils who received BSIP ("round 1") funds.

- Funding arrived in Q2 of 23/24 (£2.2million to be spent), second amount for 24/25 (£2.2million to be spent).
- Used to address improvements, including addressing post-pandemic recovery.
- Cabinet meeting has ensured that the service enhancements are funded for 2 years on the road (past March 2025).
- Tranches of service improvements
  - Cheltenham services altered in January
  - Gloucester in March
  - Cotswold 801 at the end of March
  - Forest of Dean 72 end of April
  - Three new Robin areas in June
  - Stroud timeline is to be confirmed, considering driver recruitment.
  - Advertising is to be a focus, especially for night time economy

**David** noted the links with services to certain hubs, including where the Robin runs to, needs some attention. Also, the need for marketing, acknowledging the tourism industry in the county.

**Matt** noted there are conversations such that The Robin will link across boundary in the future. The Robin and the services network is designed with overlap.

**ACTION:** ITU to set up a meeting with **Cllr Robinson** and cross-boundary council officers, district representatives (including **Chris**) with political representatives.

**ACTION:** **Cllr Robinson** to get in touch with **Chris** regarding Forest of Dean transport.

### **Item 5 Working Groups**

**Luke** spoke on the Working Groups for the EP. The concept of a bus board needs a board and a forum, which work on decisions, who are supported by Working Groups to work on specific details with council officers.

The EP Board have decided there will be likely 4 for Gloucestershire

- 1) Improving infrastructure – bus hubs, bus stops, bus lanes and gates (journey time), safety < highways and district councils, DAVID: add police,
- 2) 2a) Making Buses more attractive (marketing and publicity)
- 2b) User and passenger charter
  - o Engagement from employers
  - o Ownership from different stakeholders
- 3) Multi-operator ticketing
  - a. DRT integration
  - b. Operator ticketing
- 4) Improving Bus service provision

This will be the spend of the BSIP+, focusing on routes, times, frequency, driver numbers (recruitment and training) *to achieve the needed network*. This will be led by operators and council officers.

The next step is the nomination of chairs for each group, and for no one person to be chair of more than two groups. Those groups will need to define terms of reference, and bring these terms to the next Forum meeting, with identified areas of the network where extra advice or guidance is needed.

**ACTION:** ITU to progress with Working Group members, including chairs. Assistance where needed to confirm meeting dates for the Working Groups.

**David** recommended that the Infrastructure group include coach operators and rail representatives, and that there needs to be a focus on interchange.

**Philip** thanked those assisting on Working Group administration, and recommended reducing officer and operator attendance, to keep frequency of meetings manageable and meaningful. He also recommended that public input will likely be on needed network improvements (on current “gaps”), and that the technological, engineering input (from officers) will be needed on the infrastructure groups.

Flows of information include (a) in and out of council, (b) officers and experts (including operators) on technical cases.

**David** noted the need for passenger engagement on design of interchanges and on RTPI.

**ACTION:** For Working Groups to integrate/compliment with Building Better Transport Links group and/or the Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment Transport meetings.

**Colin** mentioned that there will soon be a working “Traffic Team” in EE&I, to be able to take the granular improvements from ITU and allow traffic liaison meeting, with operators, police, emergency services, etc. It will allow for technical detail of schemes going in.

### **Item 6 Passenger Charter**

**Karen Coventry** spoke on GCC’s Passenger Charter, a draft of which will be circulated to Forum members mailing list soon. This will cover communication on

- Punctuality and reliability
- Which areas are served by which routes
- Quality of waiting facilities and bus infrastructure, including safety
- Dissemination of information
- How feedback will be sent to operators and GCC as appropriate
- How actions are discussed and completed if any transport has issues in this regard.

**ACTION:** Karen to look at best practice within existing charters. Karen to draft a “top line” as a starting point, and then detail to be added (charter will be regularly reviewed and updated).

The detail to be added will likely sit with the aforementioned working group.

**David** mentioned that ideally all operators would have similar/matching policy on when a wheelchair user is “stranded” due to only one service operating to their destination and the wheelchair space already being taken. Can there be an arrangement across operators, including cross-boundary services.

**Luke** noted the concerns raised but commented that sometimes the availability of taxis to collect wheelchair users in these situations is also a major issue.

**ACTION: Go Ahead** to look into these scenarios.

**Cllr Robinson** said a steer from DfT may well be needed, and information from passengers charters.

**ACTION:** When reviewing existing charters, **Karen** to look for reference to wheelchair users and agreement for actions by the operator in these situations. **Karen** to raise any discrepancies with DfT.

It may be that regional transport boards have prompter answers from DfT.

**Philip** noted that these agreements/policies on transport of wheelchair users is GCC’s equalities duty, and duty to the public sector. This is also true of personal safety, including young people, and those with disabilities that are not visible. Transport options that commit for transport operations/policy to be modified as needed. GCC must have a reassuring message “you will not be stranded in Gloucestershire”.

**David** asked if there is a possibility of more (emergency) help points in the county. For example at bus stations.

**Philip** noted that Fire department and vehicles are engines are part of safety directorate, and that perhaps police need to be more involved with safety on the transport network.

**ACTION: Tom** to look into funding for PCSOs available from DfT

**AOB**

**Karen** asked how the public and Forum members can feedback on the BSIP?

**Philip** answered that GCC use national and county wide surveys on satisfaction, and that metrics can be shared. **Emily** confirmed that is already proposed in BSIP text, to use statistics and note where feedback is lacking. Any public reported info can be brought to this Forum. **Cllr Robinson** said that AOB sections should be used for this.

**David** fed back some specific information from passengers and groups he represents, and mentioned that the tourism industry is valued at £4billion for Gloucestershire, so information is important.

**Tom** commented that Cheltenham publicity is under specific review. Information and maps are a priority as discussed.

**ACTION: ITU** to send timetable improvement information on the 72 service to Marcus.

**ACTION: ITU** to look into if Secretary of State would like to attend launch of new 72 timetable.

**David** invited officers to an event by a bus trust (an anniversary) in May.

**ACTION: GCC** to consider marketing and type of event for November opening of Arle Court Park and Ride.

**Future meetings**

This first meeting has been a starting point. There will be another forum in 6 months, date to be confirmed.

**Cllr Robinson** clarified there will be a different chairman at the next Forum meeting.

Meeting ended at 1200.