



Transport & Infrastructure Committee

18 September 2024

Title:	Bus Network Update
Report of:	Andrew Highfield, Assistant Director Public Transport
Lead Member:	Cllr Anna Smith, Chair of Transport and Infrastructure Committee
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	No
Voting Arrangements:	No vote required

Recommendations:

A	To note the progress on the improvements funded via the precept to the bus network, via increased and new bus services
B	To note the progress of the Tiger pass, £1 fares for Under 25s in the region

Strategic Objective(s):

The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):

x	Achieving ambitious skills and employment opportunities
X	Achieving good growth
X	Increased connectivity
X	Enabling resilient communities
	Achieving best value and high performance

1. Purpose

1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the work to date to improve the bus network, since the decision to approve an uplift in the Mayoral precept at the CPCA board in late January 2024.
1.2	The further purpose is to update Members on the progress of the Tiger pass, since the scheme launched in late May 2024.

2. Proposal

2.1	Over the spring of 2024, officers undertook a design process to identify from the initial list of proposals approved at CPCA board in January 2024, how services could be best designed to deliver the maximum benefit to residents and communities, within the agreed budget. The initial list of proposals was drawn from a public consultation, undertaken in late 2023.
2.2	The design process focused on using bus service planning logic to underpin the design of new services, connecting communities whilst focusing on the length of the route and the frequency (which drives the operational cost of the service). The process also focused on existing services, to ensure integration and prevent duplication as far as possible.
2.3	During this design process, engagement sessions were held with the Leaders of constituent councils to outline the designs and seek local feedback. Further sessions were held in conjunction with CAPALC (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils) over June 2024 to convey information related to the proposals to interested Councillors.
2.4	Following the design process, officers undertook an engagement session with the local bus market. This outlined the opportunities that would be advertised to the market, whilst seeking feedback on the proposals and the ability of the market to respond. The route details were also published on the Better Bus website Better Buses - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk) in May 2024.
2.5	Over the spring/summer 2024, officers undertook detailed work to move from the design process to a procurement exercise. A number of the bus services have gone through a tender exercise (with outcomes not known at the time of drafting this report) to seek operators. Those services are detailed in the table in the appendix (And denoted with a Tiger in the route number column).
2.6	Fourteen services have also been improved, through negotiation with the existing operators under existing contracts and commercial arrangements. These improvements are being implemented primarily in September and October 2024. Communications have been published to enable residents to be aware of these improvements, with bus operators also issuing communications and updating maps/timetables etc.
2.7	It is intended, that all the above service improvements will be in place by the end of November 2024 (subject to tender and procurement).
2.8	Officers are working on a range of communication and marketing campaigns to ensure the services are known by residents and to demystify the complexity of the network, to encourage use. This will include some on bus branding, digital campaigns and a potential trial of at bus stop/shelter information
2.9	<p>Officers will be working collaboratively with bus operators to capture a range of metrics to inform how successful the improvements are. This will include capturing patronage data, forecasting modal shift and reliability information as well as commissioning qualitative surveys. It is intended that an initial report will be produced for January 2025</p> <p>Officers have further commissioned work to map the existing bus network, to inform recommendations for future network planning. This work will identify further integration for services, where duplication may exist as well as enable officers to respond more effectively to service suggestions, service tweaks and discussions with commercial bus operators. Officers will update the committee through the rest of 2024 as this work develops.</p>
2.10	<p>The Tiger £1 Bus Pass campaign has made significant strides since its launch on May 28, 2024. We have exceeded our application target with 20,195 applications, achieving over 200% of our goal.</p> <p>Awareness efforts have reached over 40,000 social media impressions and click-throughs to the application page have more than doubled our target, demonstrating strong public interest. While we are still in the process of gathering user feedback and journey statistics, the campaign's impact is already evident, particularly through the high engagement levels seen in our content tied to the Euros and Olympics.</p>

	<p>In response to the lower application rates among the 21-25 age demographic, we collaborated with a local fitness influencer on the "20,000 challenge," successfully boosting our reach within this audience.</p> <p>Additionally, to address misinformation circulating on social media, we produced a light-hearted FAQ video that has been well received and is helping to clarify key details about the scheme.</p> <p>Looking ahead, we geared up for a "Back to School" campaign, partnering with local schools and colleges to promote the pass to new students, ensuring continued growth and engagement with the Tiger Pass.</p> <p>All bus operators, apart from two small operators continue to be signed up to the scheme. This covers approximately 97% of the mileage of services across the region. A 3-month review period with the bus operators is scheduled for the end of September 2024.</p>
2.11	<p>Officers have undertaken further work with colleagues in the Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) School Transport Team. This work has involved identifying a pilot bus route to utilise to integrate with 'entitled' students who were previously transported via a private contract. The bus route 7A was identified, as part of the previous Network Review work and due to it being an underutilised service by residents.</p> <p>Officers worked collaboratively to tweak the service to enable the movement of 61 students, primarily from Duxford to Sawston. This has enabled CCC to remove a private transport contract and enable efficiencies, whilst bringing in revenue and passengers to a public bus route, which still enables travel for wider residents who choose to use it.</p> <p>The new arrangement was launched on September 5th with the start of the academic year and officers are working closely with the bus operator to learn lessons and ensure students can safely and efficiently travel to and from education.</p> <p>This pilot will inform a further approach to scaling up the work across the bus network to identify further opportunities for integration. Officers will conduct an in-depth review at a meeting in early November 2024, after the first half term.</p>

3. Background

3.1	In January 2024, as part of the budget setting process for 2024/25, approval was given at the CPCA board to fund a series of bus service improvements. These were set out in the board paper as an appendix.
3.2	<p>Over the winter of 2023, the Combined Authority undertook survey work and asked respondents to the consultation to propose new routes for buses and where more frequent buses on existing routes would be beneficial.</p> <p>The significant amount of responses were used to form the list of proposals which were attached as an appendix to the January 2024 CPCA Board paper and approved. The routes covered all the areas administered by constituent councils across the Region.</p>
3.3	In January 2024, as part of the budget setting process for 2024/25. Funding was set out for the delivery of a fare discount scheme for Under 25s in the region. This proposal was moved through concept, design and negotiation with bus operators at a pace over the spring of 2024 for delivery in May 2024 for an initial period of 12 months, subject to a future board decision.

4. Appendices

4.1	Appendix 1 – Overview table of bus service improvements
4.2	Appendix 2 - Campaign Report – Mayor's Tiger £1 Bus Pass

5. Implications

Financial Implications

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| 5.1 | The approved 2024/25 budget provides the revenue for the investments into the bus network as outlined in the initial proposals approved. Officers are working to understand the final contract costs for the Tiger named routes via the ongoing procurement exercise.
A final spend can then be calculated once this process has concluded. |
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Legal Implications

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| 5.2 | There are no significant legal implications arising from this report. The ongoing procurement exercise undertaken by the Combined Authority is compliant with the requirements of the Transport Act as are the <i>de minimus</i> contract arrangements with operators |
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Public Health Implications

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| 5.3 | Increased bus use and options for residents to have a viable alternative to the private car and to encourage first/last mile active travel options are positive implications as part of the package of work to improve the bus network. Further evaluation and monitoring will be undertaken to calculate benefits once all the improvements are launched. |
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Environmental & Climate Change Implications

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| 5.4 | Increased bus use and options for residents to have a viable alternative to the private car are positive implications as part of the package of work to improve the bus network. Further evaluation and monitoring will be undertaken to calculate benefits once all the improvements are launched. |
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Other Significant Implications

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| 5.5 | N/A |
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Background Papers

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| 5.6 | CPCA Board, January 2024 - CA Board Agenda 31.01.24 |
| 5.7 | Transport and Infrastructure Committee, March 2024 - Transport & Infrastructure Committee Agenda - 13.03.24 |