



## **Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Thursday, 1st October, 2020 at 10.00 am

Meeting to be held virtually via Microsoft Teams

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## **AGENDA**

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### **Page No**

- |    |   |                |
|----|---|----------------|
| 1. | <b>Apologies for Absence</b>  |                |
| 2. | <b>Declarations of Interest</b>   |                |
| 3. | <b>Minutes of the last meeting held on 25 June 2020</b>                   | <b>3 - 8</b>   |
| 4. | <b>Our Region's Bus Network</b>   | <b>9 - 22</b>  |
| 5. | <b>North East Transport Plan - Next Steps</b>                             | <b>23 - 28</b> |
| 6. | <b>Joint Transport Committee Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme</b> | <b>29 - 36</b> |
| 7. | <b>Date of next meeting: 26 October 2020 at 1.30pm</b>                    |                |

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## **JOINT TRANSPORT COMMITTEE, OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **DRAFT MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

Thursday 25 June 2020, 10am

Meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

#### **Present:**

- D Taylor-Gooby – Chair
- A Clark – Vice Chair
- R Patterson – Gateshead Council (Minutes)

#### **Councillors:**

- Cllr Avery – Newcastle
- Cllr Kelly - Sunderland
- Cllr MacKnight – Sunderland
- Cllr Manchester – Durham
- Cllr Patterson - Gateshead
- Cllr Graham – North Tyneside Council
- Cllr Sanderson – Northumberland
- Cllr Glindon – North Tyneside
- Cllr Stone – Newcastle
- Cllr Ellison – South Tyneside
- Cllr Clarke – Durham

#### **Statutory Officers:**

- T Hughes – Managing Director, Transport North East
- M Barker – Deputy Monitoring Officer, Gateshead Council
- E Goodman – Finance Manager, NECA
- G Armstrong – Scrutiny Officer (Transport) NECA
- P Meikle – Transport North East

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from the following:

- Cllr Batey – Durham
- Cllr Crute – Durham
- Cllr Graham – North Tyneside

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

RESOLVED:

- (i) There were no declarations of interest.

## **3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 19 DECEMBER 2019**

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record.

## **4. SUPPORT FOR THE BUS NETWORK DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Tobyn Hughes presented a report giving an overview of the difficulties affecting the bus network during the pandemic.

It was reported that the impact of lockdown was felt immediately, with those people reliant on buses ceasing to travel with immediate effect. Therefore the revenue relied on disappeared, however bus services were still required for those with an essential need to travel. Work took place with bus operators to ensure a basic level of provision and an agreement was reached that all routes would continue to receive a basic level of service but that funding was required.

Funding was provided as follows;

- Government continued to pay the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) at the budgeted levels.
- Nexus, Northumberland and Durham County Council's continued to pay for concessionary travel, this was after informal consultation where it was agreed that payment would be maintained otherwise the service would stop
- Government provided an emergency Covid-19 Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) to cover the financial gap between operating a route network and the funding already available.
- Local Transport Authorities also received a version of CBSSG to fund the shortfall in fares revenue.

This level of funding sustained bus companies during the lockdown period, and a condition of the government emergency funding was that bus operators were not permitted to make profit. It was noted that this funding changes the position of how

bus companies receive funding so that now almost all funding comes from the public sector.

The sector is now in the restart phase with work ongoing to look ahead to 4 July when more of the economy opens. It was acknowledged that social distancing will have an impact on public transport, with demand suppressed and equally confidence diminished due to social distancing and requirement to wear face coverings. Social distancing also massively reduces overall capacity, government guidance is also being awaited with regards to the reduction of social distancing to 1 metre. However it was noted that whilst there is any capacity restraint and suppressed demand the bus industry will be financially challenged and will require support. The emergency CBSSG will continue but government has asked that concessionary payments continue to be paid locally at budgeted levels. This is being done by Nexus, Northumberland County Council and Durham County Council, although the JTC is considering whether potential conditions should be attached to future payments to ensure value for money where possible.

During the recovery phase local authorities will continue to review and it is expected that fare box recovery should continue to be seen, this has already increased from 5-10% during lockdown to 20% at present.

The Chair questioned whether any response had been received following the letters sent to central government in relation to transport funding to assist with economic recovery. It was confirmed that the response received explained that there was no appetite to change the funding flow in the short term but that government would be bringing forward a new bus strategy which will be discussed with local authorities and devolved bus companies.

Cllr Glendon questioned whether there would be any capital in the repairs and maintenance account. It was noted that it would be difficult to put aside for capital expenditure and that the lack of profitability is likely to have longer term ramifications.

Cllr Sanderson requested further information on passenger numbers and usage within the region. It was confirmed that pre-Covid ridership in Tyne and Wear, Durham and Northumberland bus usage is at its highest outside of London. It was also agreed that a more detailed report on bus usage would be brought to a future meeting.

Cllr Avery requested information around network development and changes of routes. It was reported that informal discussions have taken place with bus companies around partner working but it is too early to say what this will look like, a report will be brought back to the Committee once there is further information. It was also noted that the JTC reaffirmed to pursue green economic growth so there has been no change to the overall objectives.

Cllr Clarke queried whether any modelling had been carried out around what 'normal service' may look like in the future. It was confirmed that in terms of timetabling 80% of normal service has been resumed, the buses are there but the demand is not. It was acknowledged that there is a need to take stock of what the economy will look

like in the medium to longer term, as it is expected that there will be fewer people travelling to work however there still remains a lot of uncertainty.

Cllr Stone made the point that if passenger numbers fall the burden shifts to government and this needs to be noted in terms of future funding models. It was acknowledged that there are difficult decisions to be made in the future as there will be additional pressure on local authorities however buses will remain vital to communities and will need to be paid for.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Committee noted the financial assistance provided to the local bus market to sustain it during the crisis brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- (ii) That Committee noted the wider work being undertaken on the development of potential conditions that could be applied to concessionary fare and tendered bus service payments, that are being made to bus operators at pre-pandemic levels at the request of the government, and that further details will be reported to a future meeting.
- (iii) That Committee noted that the development of longer-term options to align development of the bus network with the JTC's objectives in the post-Covid-19 environment are being considered.

## **5. NORTH EAST RESPONSE TO THE TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO CORONAVIRUS: IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSPORT**

Committee received a report on the evidence submission the Transport Select Committee's inquiry into Coronavirus: implications for transport.

The response provided on behalf of the JTC to the Transport Select Committee was provided. The response outlined the challenges faced and reaffirmed the importance of public transport in the region. The response also included key asks of the government and legislative changes which may be required.

There has been no specific outcome on this yet and it was noted that this Committee would be kept apprised of any progress.

Reassurances were given to Members that all the region is represented equally and that the budget numbers provided in the response were regional.

Cllr Avery suggested that more links should be made between health and transport. It was acknowledged that this has been recognised and that the next report on the agenda shows that health is at the forefront of thinking, however the aim of the response was to get the message across in the briefest way possible.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Committee noted the contents of the report and the response sent to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee inquiry.

## 6. NORTH EAST TRANSPORT PLAN UPDATE

Committee received a report on the development of the North East Transport Plan and an update on the KPI's.

It was noted that work on this started pre-Covid and was paused at the start of the outbreak when it was established with JTC how to proceed. The objectives remain as aiming to achieve;

- Carbon-neutral transport
- Overcome inequality and grow our economy
- Healthier North East
- Appealing sustainable transport choices
- Safe, secure network

The JTC in March agreed a range of technical KPI's, as a result of the pandemic three of these indicators are performing well; reduced emissions, increased cycling and walking and less congestion.

Cllr Manchester questioned whether there were any plans for early engagement with local authorities while the plan is being developed. It was confirmed that transport officers are involved at every level and that the objectives are all made up by the JTC which demonstrates the collaborative working that is underway.

Cllr Avery acknowledged the importance of being ready with asks of government post-Covid to ensure the JTC gains the best possible proportion available to it.

Cllr Patterson queried the use of defunct rail lines for walking and cycling. It was confirmed that government had announced a "Beeching reversal fund" to renew old railways and MP's from the region were invited to give ideas on which ones could be reopened. The first tranche has been announced without any local schemes being taken forward, however there will be other opportunities later.

It was acknowledged that there are a lot of short term notice funding opportunities becoming available which illustrates how quickly things are moving. It was noted that local authorities and the North East LEP are working together on preparing a plan for economic recovery post-Covid.

RESOLVED;

- (i) That Committee noted the contents of the report
- (ii) That Committee noted that the current vision, objectives and principles which are driving the development of the Transport Plan remain unchanged
- (iii) That Committee noted the list of KPI's and JTC's agreement to preserve the benefits currently being delivered through the pandemic whilst addressing the problems which have arisen.

## **7. JTC OSC FORWARD PLAN AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received an overview of the Joint Transport Committee Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2020/21.

It was requested that the following be added to the Work Programme:

- Regional transport funding
- Air quality management across the region
- Climate related issues in regional transport
- Review of how Brexit might impact on transport and how the JTC is considering this when carrying out its role (updates to be provided as necessary to ensure Committee is kept duly informed)

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the work programme be agreed and that Committee's suggestions for further items be noted.

## **8. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place on 1 October 2020 at 10am.



## North East Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020

**Subject:** Our Region's Bus Network

**Report of:** Managing Director, Transport North East

### Executive Summary

The bus network is important to our region's economy. The impact of the lockdown was an immediate fall in patronage not only on buses but on all forms of public transport. Following dialogue with Local Authorities, bus operators responded by reducing service frequency and removing some services. Analysis of timetable data indicates that service provision is returning to pre-Covid levels, predominantly to reflect passenger demand. Similarly, although monthly patronage figures from the main bus operators have been rising, they are still well below pre-Covid levels and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Therefore, very significant levels of on-going funding from Central Government are needed if the public transport industry, including the bus network, is to continue playing its vital role in the life of our region.

### Recommendations

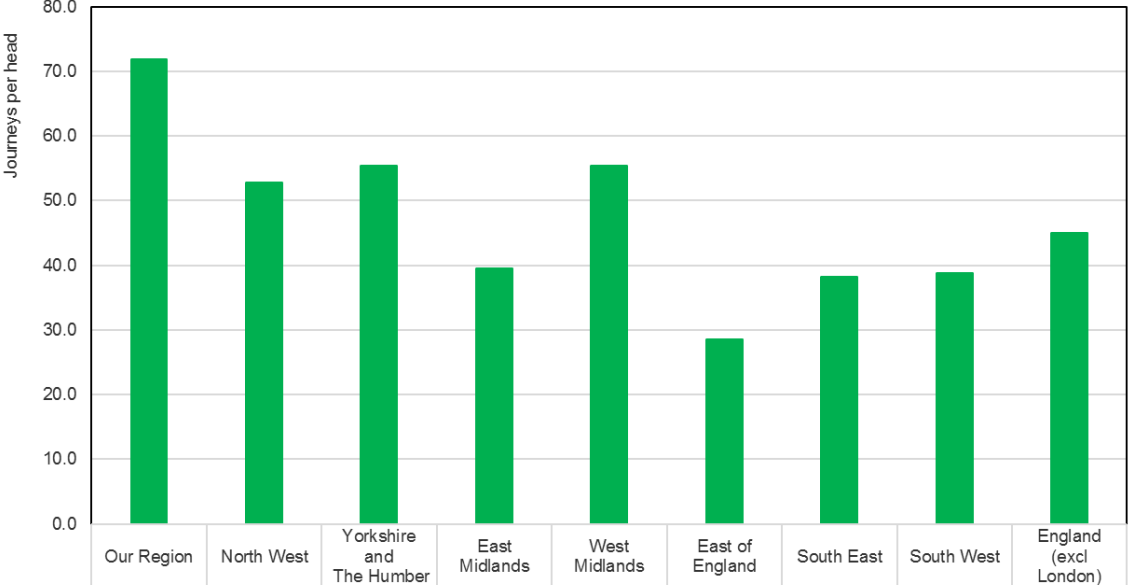
The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

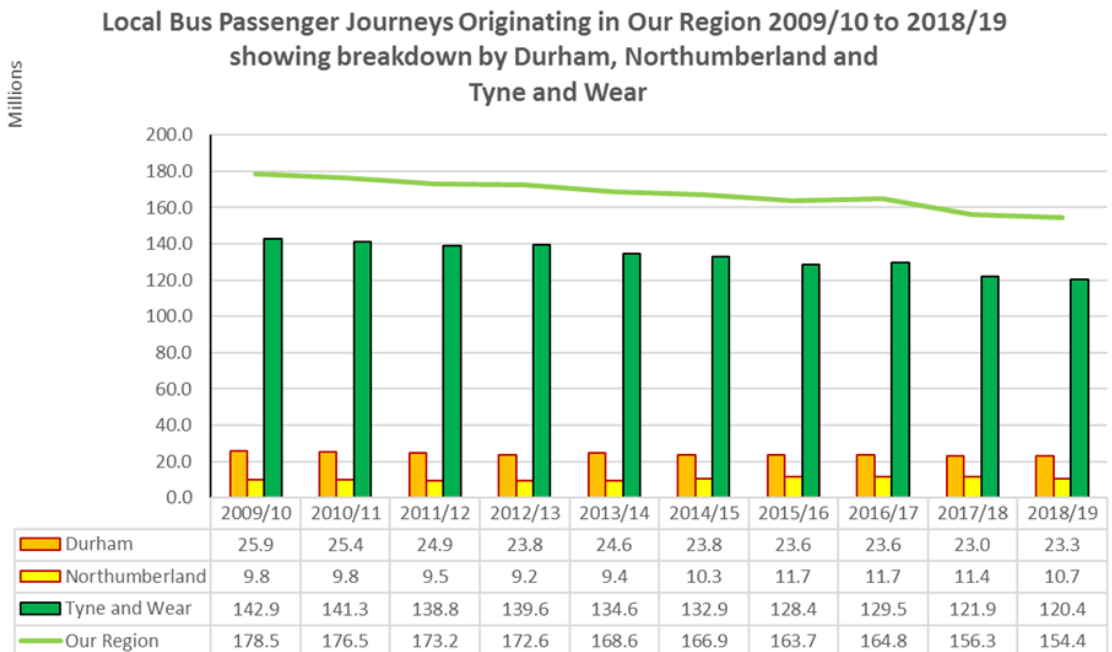
### Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members:

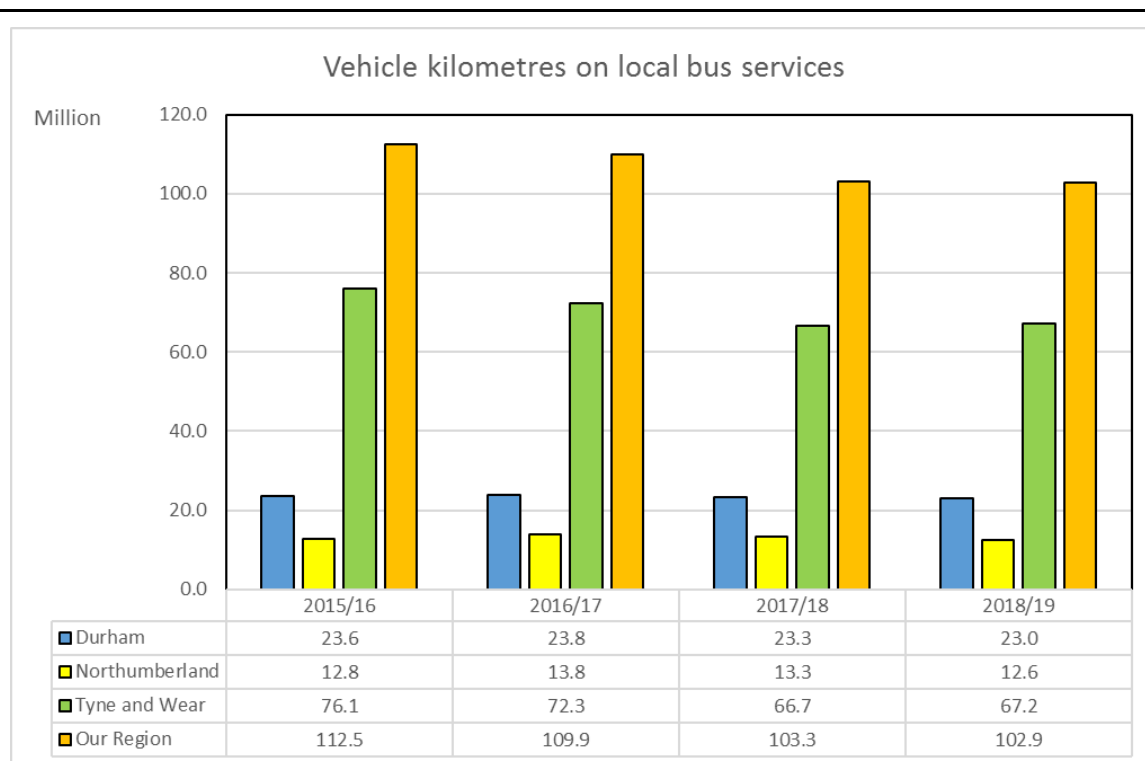
The below are the key guiding principles to support the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in reading the report in advance of the meeting to:

- consider any added value that Scrutiny can bring;
- promote effective discussion and consider the information in the report.

1. The impact the matter has on individuals in the community and across the JTC area.
2. Focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of the proposals, next steps and any potential changes
3. Consideration of any risks that may occur.
4. Scrutiny focusing on any performance management or quality assurance.

<b>1.</b>	<b>Background Information</b>																				
1.1	<p>As reported to the June meeting of this Committee, our region's bus network is a vital element of our transport system. It fuels our economy by providing access to jobs, workforces and customers. It allows socially important connections to be maintained for visiting relatives and friends and accessing leisure and shopping destinations. It helps to tackle the environmental and congestion problems caused by the private car. For most of our region, which is not served by heavy rail or Metro links, it is the only alternative for people whose journeys cannot be made by walking or cycling and who cannot, or choose not to, use a car.</p>																				
1.2	<p>Public sector payments to the bus network in our region prior to Covid-19 totalled around £90m annually, comprising</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Payments made by Nexus, Northumberland County Council and Durham County Council for secured bus services and concessionary travel, which were predicted to be around £70m in 2020/21.</li> <li>2. Bus Service Operator's Grant, a DfT grant for operating public bus services, paid mainly to bus operators and totalling nearly £20m per year in recent years.</li> </ol>																				
1.3	<p>Before Covid-19, our region traditionally had a higher level of bus use per head of population than other parts of England, excluding London as shown in this table:</p> <div> <p style="text-align: center;">Passenger Journeys on Local Bus Services per Head, 2018/19</p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Region</th> <th>2018/19 Journeys per head</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Our Region</td> <td>71.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North West</td> <td>52.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Yorkshire and The Humber</td> <td>55.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>East Midlands</td> <td>39.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>West Midlands</td> <td>55.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>East of England</td> <td>28.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South East</td> <td>38.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South West</td> <td>38.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>England (excl London)</td> <td>45.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <p>Source: Department for Transport, Table BUS0110a.  Figures for our region (County Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear) and England (excluding London) are calculated using the Office for National Statistics 2018 mid-year population estimate. 2019/20 figures are expected from DfT later</p>	Region	2018/19 Journeys per head	Our Region	71.9	North West	52.8	Yorkshire and The Humber	55.4	East Midlands	39.6	West Midlands	55.4	East of England	28.5	South East	38.2	South West	38.9	England (excl London)	45.1
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	this year.																																																							
1.4	<p>However, although buses are the most used form of public transport in our region, the overall long-term trend in passenger numbers is downwards, not only in our region but also nationally. While the latest pre-Covid statistics showed some passenger growth in parts of our region, this may have been only a temporary reversal of the long-term downward trend and in any case has been completely overtaken by recent events. Pre-Covid surveys of bus users in the region showed a high degree of satisfaction with services. In 2019, 90% of passengers were satisfied with bus services in the North East, 91% were satisfied with punctuality and 99% were satisfied with reliability. The figures do not include people who did not or could not use buses.</p>																																																							
	<div><p><b>Local Bus Passenger Journeys Originating in Our Region 2009/10 to 2018/19</b> showing breakdown by Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear</p><table><tr><th></th><th>2009/10</th><th>2010/11</th><th>2011/12</th><th>2012/13</th><th>2013/14</th><th>2014/15</th><th>2015/16</th><th>2016/17</th><th>2017/18</th><th>2018/19</th></tr><tr><td>Durham</td><td>25.9</td><td>25.4</td><td>24.9</td><td>23.8</td><td>24.6</td><td>23.8</td><td>23.6</td><td>23.6</td><td>23.0</td><td>23.3</td></tr><tr><td>Northumberland</td><td>9.8</td><td>9.8</td><td>9.5</td><td>9.2</td><td>9.4</td><td>10.3</td><td>11.7</td><td>11.7</td><td>11.4</td><td>10.7</td></tr><tr><td>Tyne and Wear</td><td>142.9</td><td>141.3</td><td>138.8</td><td>139.6</td><td>134.6</td><td>132.9</td><td>128.4</td><td>129.5</td><td>121.9</td><td>120.4</td></tr><tr><td>Our Region</td><td>178.5</td><td>176.5</td><td>173.2</td><td>172.6</td><td>168.6</td><td>166.9</td><td>163.7</td><td>164.8</td><td>156.3</td><td>154.4</td></tr></table></div> <p>Source: Department for Transport, BUS0109b Durham's 2010/11 figure is estimated. Tyne and Wear figure for 2018/19 is provisional. 2019/20 figures are expected from DfT later this year.</p>		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Durham	25.9	25.4	24.9	23.8	24.6	23.8	23.6	23.6	23.0	23.3	Northumberland	9.8	9.8	9.5	9.2	9.4	10.3	11.7	11.7	11.4	10.7	Tyne and Wear	142.9	141.3	138.8	139.6	134.6	132.9	128.4	129.5	121.9	120.4	Our Region	178.5	176.5	173.2	172.6	168.6	166.9	163.7	164.8	156.3	154.4
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19																																														
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Northumberland	9.8	9.8	9.5	9.2	9.4	10.3	11.7	11.7	11.4	10.7																																														
Tyne and Wear	142.9	141.3	138.8	139.6	134.6	132.9	128.4	129.5	121.9	120.4																																														
Our Region	178.5	176.5	173.2	172.6	168.6	166.9	163.7	164.8	156.3	154.4																																														
1.5	<p>Over the period 2015/16 to 2018/19, the total number of vehicle kilometres on local bus services in our region fell by 9.7 million km (a reduction of 9%).</p>																																																							



Source: DfT Public Service Vehicle Survey, Table BUS0208b

1.6 Bus services are important both regionally and nationally. In the UK, bus commuters generate £64bn worth of goods and services and bus users make 1.4bn shopping trips spending an estimated £27bn on retail goods. Bus operators in our region employ over 6,000 people.

1.7 With some variation between different parts of our region, approximately 80% of bus services across the North East prior to lockdown were operated commercially, while the remainder were secured by LTAs with subsidy on the grounds of being socially necessary.

1.8 Tyne and Wear surveys, using 2018/19 to 2019/20 data, highlight the importance of bus services:

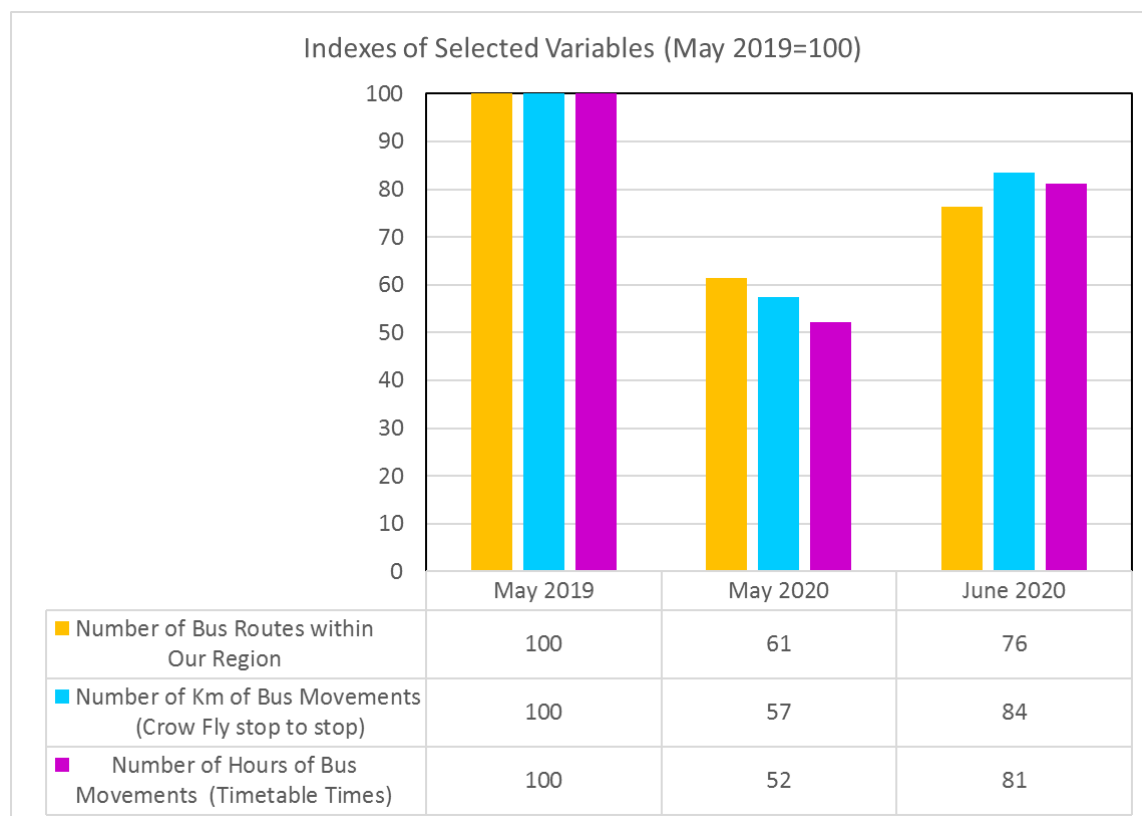
- Over half of journeys were for shopping or work purposes, while leisure and socialising accounted for over a quarter and education another tenth
- The majority of passengers (87%) do not have access to a car and would therefore have little or no alternative means of travel.
- Conversely, this means that, other factors being equal, a rise in car ownership would result in a likely reduction in bus passenger numbers
- It also implies that many people with access to a car see it as their transport of choice, so any measures aimed at growing the bus market will need to give priority to encouraging car users to switch their travel preferences.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People aged 60 or over account for over a third of bus journeys, but only a quarter of Tyne and Wear's population. The relatively high use made of buses by this age group is undoubtedly heavily influenced by the fact that most of them qualify for free travel.</li></ul>																																			
2.	<b>Impact of Covid-19 and the Lockdown</b>																																			
2.1	As also reported to the June meeting of this Committee, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a crisis in the bus industry. The message during lockdown for all but essential workers to stay at home led to an immediate and profound reduction in ridership, up to around 90%, and along with it an almost total loss of commercial income. Nevertheless, the bus network has continued to play an important role throughout the lockdown period in getting key workers to their places of employment and facilitating essential shopping trips albeit on networks with much reduced frequencies. The bus industry has responded to the evolving situation very rapidly and responsibly in terms of the relaxation of the usual regulations on how the industry functions. While passenger numbers have recovered gradually, they are nowhere near pre-Covid levels.																																			
2.2	<p>The most recent available monthly passenger numbers from our region's main bus operators highlight this:</p> <table><tr><th colspan="5"><b>Total number of bus passenger boardings in Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear Combined (Thousands)</b></th></tr><tr><th></th><th>March</th><th>April</th><th>May</th><th>June</th></tr><tr><td>2019</td><td>11,835</td><td>10,818</td><td>11,403</td><td>10,922</td></tr><tr><td>2020</td><td>7,528</td><td>1,331</td><td>1,562</td><td>2,689</td></tr><tr><td>2020 as a percentage of 2019</td><td>64%</td><td>12%</td><td>14%</td><td>25%</td></tr><tr><td>Percentage fall</td><td>-36%</td><td>-88%</td><td>-86%</td><td>-75%</td></tr><tr><td colspan="5">Source: Bus Operators.</td></tr></table>	<b>Total number of bus passenger boardings in Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear Combined (Thousands)</b>						March	April	May	June	2019	11,835	10,818	11,403	10,922	2020	7,528	1,331	1,562	2,689	2020 as a percentage of 2019	64%	12%	14%	25%	Percentage fall	-36%	-88%	-86%	-75%	Source: Bus Operators.				
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2.3	The easing of lockdown restrictions improved the situation. However, as the table shows, passenger numbers in June 2020 were still down by three-quarters compared with June 2019. More recent figures suggest usage had risen to around half the pre-Covid total but the introduction of more restrictions from 18 <sup>th</sup> September may well reduce numbers once again.																																			
2.4	<p>The Department for Transport provides bus timetable data. Comparison of timetable data between May 2019 and May 2020 for our region shows that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The number of bus routes was down by 39% (-285).</li><li>• The distance travelled by buses fell by 43% (-804,000km).</li><li>• Total bus operating hours fell by 48% (-41,600).</li></ul>																																			

2.5

There were some improvements in June, so that a comparison of May 2019 with June 2020 shows that:

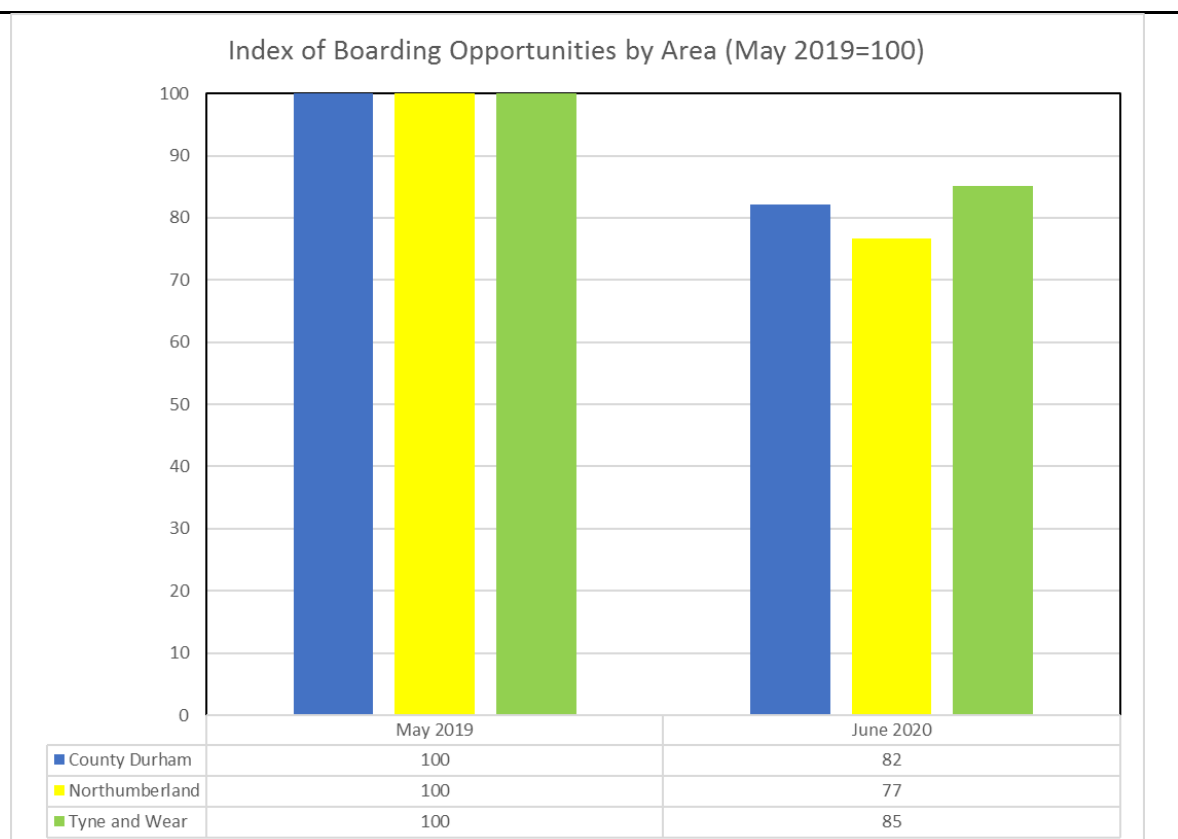
- The number of bus routes was down by 24% (-175).
- The distance travelled by buses was down by 16% (-310,000km).
- Total bus operating hours were down by 19% (-16,300).



Source: Department for Transport, Newcastle City Council.

2.6

A further comparison across parts of our region is provided by looking at “boarding opportunities”. If it is assumed that every bus that is timetabled to run actually does so and visits every stop on its route, all of these potential boarding opportunities can be added together to give an indication of service provision. Any withdrawal of routes, shortening of route length and reduction in service frequency and operating hours will each reduce boarding opportunities. Conversely, adding new routes, extending route length (and stopping points) and improving frequency and operating hours will each increase boarding opportunities. Using this measure and comparing June 2020 (the latest available figure) with May 2019, service provision fell by 15% in Tyne and Wear, by 18% in County Durham and by 23% in Northumberland.



Source: Department for Transport, Newcastle City Council.

2.7 It should also be noted that the bus industry has been very agile and flexible in its response to the Covid-19 crisis, providing duplicate buses where increased demand has exceeded the limited capacity imposed by social distancing and also additional buses required for the new academic year.

### 3. Funding the bus network

3.1 It was recognised at an early stage that in order to prevent the long-term collapse of the bus industry, urgent financial assistance to operators was required in order for them to be able to keep bus services operating.

3.2 This financial assistance has taken the following forms:

- Continued payment by the government of the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) to bus operators for commercial services and to local authorities for tendered services at the rate operating prior to the pandemic.
- The government has also asked local government to maintain concessionary fare and tendered bus service payments to bus operators at the value that was being paid immediately before the emergency. Nexus, Northumberland County Council and Durham County Council have all complied with this request. These payments amount to around £1.35m per week in total.
- An emergency Covid-19 Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) from the government which provides bus operators with supplementary funding which has enabled them to cover the financial gap between the costs of operating the network (now nearly 100% of pre-Covid mileage), and the funding already

	<p>available to them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Transport Authorities have also received a version of CBSSG aimed at funding the shortfall in fares revenue on bus contracts where they take the revenue risk; and</li> <li>Local Transport Authorities awarded additional funds for bus services through the government's recent 'Better Deal For Bus Users' fund are able to utilise this funding to support bus services during the emergency and the ensuing recovery period.</li> </ul>
3.3	<p>The effect of the emergency financial assistance so far has been to skew the sources of bus industry funding in the UK (outside London) such that almost all funding now comes from the public sector in one form or another. This will not continue to be the case unless government changes its long-term policy.</p>
3.4	<p>Although the picture is constantly changing, as indicated in paragraph 2.1 above, the recovery in passenger numbers has not so far been anywhere near pre-Covid levels and there is a general and understandable consensus within the industry that in the absence of widespread and effective vaccination, this will remain the case for many months to come. Even the current level of recovery would be wiped out by a further national, regional or local lockdown. In addition, even when the current crisis and all its restrictions finally come to an end, long-term societal changes particularly in terms of more home-working and home-shopping may permanently affect the demand for travel.</p>
3.5	<p>However, there will always be people who have to or choose to rely on the bus for their travel needs. If the reduction in patronage, and therefore income, is allowed to bring about a shrinkage in the size of the bus network in terms of fewer routes, reduced frequencies, shorter hours of operation and some places no longer being served then</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more people will feel obliged to own and use cars so that traffic increases with attendant effects on the environment and accident rates</li> <li>social exclusion will be worse for those for whom car use is not an option</li> <li>our region's economy will be adversely affected</li> </ul>
3.6	<p>It seems highly probable, therefore, that all forms of public transport, including the bus network, will continue to need additional public funding support for many months to come, if not years. The long-term future of exceptional government support is also currently very uncertain.</p>
3.7	<p>The JTC and its constituent authorities will therefore continue to make the case for financial support to the bus industry from central government for as long as the effects of Covid-19 and its ongoing repercussions continue to have a negative impact. This may be directly through existing contacts with government and through Members of Parliament; through membership groups such as the Urban Transport Group and the Local Government Association; and jointly with the bus companies.</p>



3.8	<p>The continuation of concessionary fare reimbursements and secured service payments from local authority budgets as described in paragraph 3.2 above has been despite previously agreed outputs not being provided in terms of service provision and much reduced passenger numbers. It is the view of politicians across our region, and indeed in other parts of the country, that the key to the future of the bus network lies in greater partnership working in order to demonstrate that the very significant sums of money being pumped into the industry are delivering local benefits and accountability across the North East. The Department for Transport (DfT) has also made it clear to bus operators that, in return for the additional grants paid to them during the Covid-19 crisis, they must demonstrate evidence of working closely with Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to agree on service levels. It is very encouraging to see how the bus industry in our region has responded to the crisis by maintaining services for essential users and also reaching agreement to accept each other's tickets.</p>
4.	<b>Partnership working</b>
4.1	<p>A longstanding concern from bus users and their elected representatives has been the lack of true consultation and involvement in the commercial decisions made by private-sector bus companies. These decisions often have adverse effects on local communities and also place additional burdens on local authorities through increased subsidy costs.</p>
4.2	<p>There are therefore two very cogent arguments emerging from the Covid-19 crisis:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If LTAs and bus operators can co-operate with each other during the Covid-19 crisis, they should do so in the long-term in order to build public confidence in buses and thereby grow our economy, help create a more equal society and ensure attractive travel choices.</li> <li>2. The current industry model whereby the main initiative for the shape of the network lies with commercial bus operators is no longer fit for purpose. Instead there should be some return for LTAs and Government for the very significant additional funding for the bus industry set out in Section 3 above</li> </ol>

4.3	<p>Progress has therefore been made with NEBus, the association of all major and many minor local bus companies in this region, to put in place better consultative arrangements to foster greater understanding of the long-term issues facing the bus industry and also to give better indications of forthcoming service changes. A starting point for this is the new JTC/NE Bus group, which will meet on a regular basis starting 15<sup>th</sup> September to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set the scene for healthy and constructive longer term dialogue between the JTC and North East bus operators, with a view to longer term partnership to designed to benefit future and current North East bus users;</li> <li>2. Provide a channel so that the JTC can communicate expectations, and agree conditions associated with payments in circumstances where Local Authority funds are used to support bus operators and in particular the payment of Concessionary Travel Reimbursement to commercial bus operators during recovery from the Covid crisis;</li> <li>3. Allow for joint development of bus services in the North East and the part that bus services should play in North East life including services and products which bus operators may offer to support North East communities;</li> <li>4. Offer a platform for joint working on shared messages to the government and other stakeholders in respect of the economic and social value of bus services, and the funding needed to secure the best possible outcomes;</li> <li>5. Provide an opportunity for NE Bus to brief JTC on the operational plans and strategies of its members and seek feedback and steer from the JTC on the development of these plans and strategies;</li> <li>6. Provide an opportunity for NE Bus to provide an overview of business performance and key business insights to inform JTC on current bus issues in the region;</li> <li>7. Provide an opportunity for NE Bus to notify JTC members in person of any changes it considers necessary to bus services or products in the North East with sufficient time for JTC guidance to be considered and implemented ahead of changes being made.</li> </ol>
4.4	<p>Membership of the Group will comprise senior representatives of NE Bus and elected members of councils in the North East. Group meetings will be Chaired by the Chair of the JTC and will be considered to be Commercial in Confidence, although a public domain summary of discussions will be agreed by all parties and presented to the JTC on a regular basis.</p>
4.5	<p>The meeting is intended to cover areas of shared interest including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measures for growing bus ridership;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackling congestion and speeding up bus journeys;</li> <li>• Punctuality and performance;</li> <li>• Developing and promoting park and ride to improve town and city centres;</li> <li>• The contribution of buses to improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions;</li> <li>• Making bus travel more attractive for young people;</li> <li>• Improving integration between bus, rail and Metro services through fares, ticketing, information and network planning</li> <li>• Innovation and better use of technology;</li> <li>• Customer feedback and community engagement;</li> <li>• Improving bus waiting environments for passengers;</li> <li>• Evolving the bus network so that it aligns to strategies to achieve economic growth, better and more equal outcomes for communities, and healthy and vibrant places to live and work;</li> <li>• Learning from successful models elsewhere in the UK and overseas;</li> <li>• Future-proofing bus services to reflect changing passenger needs and expectations;</li> <li>• Achieving best value for diminishing public sector funding and resources; and</li> <li>• Any other relevant matters.</li> </ul>
4.6	Although it is expected that bus operators will notify this Forum in a timely manner of any significant forthcoming changes to the bus network in the North East, detailed discussion should take place at local bus Boards. A detailed process for engagement in each Board area will be set out in the terms of reference for local bus Boards.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Proposals</b>
5.1	Members of the OSC are asked to consider the information presented in this report and whether they have any comments or proposals for improvement to put to the JTC.
<b>6.</b>	<b>Reasons for the Proposals</b>
6.1	So that the OSC has the opportunity to add value to the JTC's arrangements for engagement with bus service providers across the region.
<b>7.</b>	<b>Alternative Options Available</b>
7.1	Not applicable to this report.
<b>8.</b>	<b>Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation</b>

8.1	A further update on our region's bus network will be taken to a future JTC meeting.
<b>9.</b>	<b>Potential Impact on Objectives</b>
9.1	A comprehensive, integrated, accessible and affordable bus network in our region will assist the JTC in delivering its Vision of 'Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East.'
<b>10.</b>	<b>Financial and Other Resources Implications</b>
10.1	None.
<b>11.</b>	<b>Legal Implications</b>
11.1	The Joint Transport Committee and the constituent Councils have a range of duties and powers regarding transport provision.
<b>12.</b>	<b>Key Risks</b>
12.1	Any reduction in service provision will make bus use less attractive by limiting opportunities for people to get to their destination on time or at all. This will reduce the JTC's ability to deliver its vision of 'Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East.'
<b>13.</b>	<b>Equality and Diversity</b>
13.1	While the specific needs of people with mobility problems is enshrined within regulations regarding, for example, the design of buses, any reduction in service provision will make bus use less attractive by limiting opportunities for people to get to their destination on time or at all. It will also reduce the availability of a public transport option. This will particularly affect people with protected characteristics.
<b>14.</b>	<b>Crime and Disorder</b>
14.1	There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this report.
<b>15.</b>	<b>Consultation/Engagement</b>
15.1	Not applicable.
<b>16.</b>	<b>Other Impact of the Proposals</b>
16.1	No specific impacts.
<b>17.</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
17.1	None.

<b>18.</b>	<b>Background Papers</b>
18.1	None
<b>19.</b>	<b>Contact Officers</b>
19.1	Rachelle Forsyth-Ward, Strategic Transport Advisor, <a href="mailto:Rachelle.forsyth-ward@northeastca.gov.uk">Rachelle.forsyth-ward@northeastca.gov.uk</a>
<b>20.</b>	<b>Sign off</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Paid Service:</li> <li>• Monitoring Officer:</li> <li>• Chief Finance Officer:</li> </ul>
<b>21.</b>	<b>Glossary</b>
21.1	All acronyms or technical terms used are explained in the body of the report.

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## **North East Joint Transport Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date:** 1 October 2020

**Subject:** North East Transport Plan- Next Steps

**Report of:** Managing Director, Transport North East

### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to update Joint Transport Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on the recast timescales for the North East Transport Plan.

The revised timescales will enable the Transport Plan and accompanying Implementation Plan to be published March 2021.

The vision, principles and objectives were agreed by Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in November 2019, reaffirmed by JTC in June 2020 and will remain unchanged.

### **Recommendations**

The OSC is recommended to note the timescales as set out in the report.

## 1. Background Information

- 1.1 Development of the North East Transport Plan was recently paused to enable resource to be allocated to the development of 'Connected North East: Our Blueprint' document; a document designed to make the case to Government for investment in the North East infrastructure as a suite of measures to aid our regions recovery from Covid 19. After this pause, intensive development of the Transport Plan has now recommenced, with timescales and milestones being recast with a view to publishing the plan this financial year.
- 1.2 As part of the Transport Plan development an informal engagement exercise, termed 'The Big Transport Conversation', will take place in October. The results of the exercise will inform the Transport Plan.
- 1.3 At Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in November 2019, the Transport Plan vision of 'Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East' was agreed alongside some accompanying Principals and Objectives. Development of the Transport Plan progressed from this point with activities including the development of performance indicators. Work continued through the first stages of lockdown, with evidence being gathered of the impact of the pandemic on the transport network it became evident that the region would need to adapt to a new normal, which previously had been not been planned for.
- On 9 June 2020 JTC confirmed that the Vision, Principals and Objectives of the Transport Plan still stand in the light of the Covid-19 crisis; and that interventions included in the Transport Plan should seek to preserve positive outcomes and contribute to the region's economic recovery.
- 1.4 The approved vision and objectives are set out below:

Vision	"Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East"
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One total network</li><li>• Look to the future</li><li>• A great experience</li><li>• North East pride and passion; and</li><li>• Sound evidence and commitment to deliver for the region</li></ul>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carbon- neutral North East</li><li>• Overcome inequality and grow our economy</li><li>• Healthier North East</li><li>• Appealing sustainable transport choices; and</li><li>• Safe, secure network</li></ul>

- 1.5 Timescales for the development of the Transport Plan have been recast and the approximate timescales are:



<b>Approximate time period</b>	<b>Activity/Deadline</b>
October 2020	Targeted Market Research with businesses and the “Big Transport Conversation” with the public which will run for 2 weeks.
19 <sup>th</sup> November 2020-14 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	8-week consultation
17 <sup>th</sup> December 2020	The consultation version of the Transport Plan document will be taken to OSC for comment.
January – early February 2021	Revise Plan to reflect comments from consultation
March 2021	JTC endorse final Plan for publication
25 <sup>th</sup> March	The final version of the Transport Plan will be taken to OSC.
March 2021	Transport Plan is published

## **2. Proposals**

- 2.1 It is proposed that OSC note the revised timescales for the development of the Transport Plan.

## **3. Reasons for the Proposals**

- 3.1 OSC have requested that they are updated on the ongoing development of the region’s Transport Plan.

## **4. Alternative Options Available**

- 4.1 Option 1 – The OSC may accept the recommendation set out in paragraph 2.1 above.

Option 2 – The OSC may not accept the recommendations set out in paragraph 2.1 above.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

## **5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation**

- 5.1 Development of the Transport Plan and accompanying Implementation Plan will continue and the consultation draft of the Plans will be brought to JTC in November where approval to go out to statutory consultation will be requested.

## **6. Potential Impact on Objectives**

- 6.1 The objectives for transport in our region are set out within the Transport Plan; steps towards the publication of the plan, are therefore a positive move towards the achievement of those objectives.

## **7. Financial and Other Resources Implications**

- 7.1 There are no financial or other resource implications arising from the report.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1 The Joint Transport Committee is legally responsible for preparing a single Transport Plan for the area of the two Combined Authorities, NECA and NoTCA. There are no other legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

## **9. Key Risks**

- 9.1 It is vital that the region has a strategic transport plan which sets out our aspirations and interventions relating to transport needs for all sectors of the region; delays to the development of the Plan could have negative consequences.

## **10. Equality and Diversity**

- 10.1 Reduction of social inequality is a key goal of the plan and improved alternatives to car use will benefit all members of the community, as well as helping to address poor air quality, the effects of which are most acute for those with existing health conditions. Protected groups will be encouraged to participate in the consultation on the Transport Plan. Opportunities to meet virtually with protected groups to discuss the Transport Plan are currently being sought.

## **11. Crime and Disorder**

- 11.1 One objective of the Plan is to improve confidence in safety and security for those using all modes of transport in the region.

## **12. Consultation/Engagement**

- 12.1 Transport Strategy Board have been consulted on the proposals in this paper. The timescales for the Transport Plan will be discussed by JTC at their meeting on 20 October.

## **13. Other Impact of the Proposals**

- 13.1 No specific impacts.

## **14. Appendices**

- 14.1 None

## **15. Background Papers**

- 15.1 Agenda Item 7 – North East Transport Plan, NEJTC, 19th November 2019

Agenda Item 7- North East Transport Plan Update, NEJTC, 17th March 2020

Agenda item 8- North East Transport Plan Update, NEJTC, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**16. Contact Officers**

- 16.1 Tobyn Hughes, Managing Director, Transport North East,  
[tobyn.hughes@nexus.org.uk](mailto:tobyn.hughes@nexus.org.uk)

**17. Sign off**

- 17.1
- The Proper Officer for Transport:
  - Head of Paid Service:
  - Monitoring Officer:
  - Chief Finance Officer:

**18. Glossary**

- 17.1 All abbreviations have been explained in the body of the report.

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## **North East Joint Transport Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date:** 1 October 2020

**Subject:** Joint Transport Committee Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme

**Report of:** Policy and Scrutiny Officer

### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the suggested work programme for 2020/21 for the Joint Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **Recommendations**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- i. Comment on and agree the suggested work programme.

## **1. Background Information**

- 1.1 The Joint Transport Committee (JTC) Forward Plan is a document which the Joint Transport Committee is required to maintain under the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017. The Forward Plan for the Joint Transport Committee, and its Subcommittees is published on both the North East Combined Authority's website and on the North of Tyne Combined Authority's website. It lists the decisions that the Joint Transport Committee and its Officers intend to take in the coming months and must include all decisions to be made in the next 28 days. The JTC Forward Plan template contains specific information relating to each decision, including the date the decision will be made, a brief explanation of the topic, the consultation to be undertaken, and contact details of the author. The JTC Forward Plan template has recently been updated and includes further information including if the decision is a 'Key Decision' and if an item will be discussed in private.
- 1.2 Details of each decision are included on the JTC Forward Plan 28 days before the report is considered and any decision is taken. This supports the transparency of decision making across the Joint Transport Committee and allows members of the public to see the items that will be discussed. There are special procedures for circumstances where publication for the full 28 clear day period is impractical or where there is special urgency. Both of these procedures involve the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and would be reported to the committee at the next meeting.

### **Role of Overview and Scrutiny**

- 1.3 The Joint Transport Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been established in accordance with Schedule 2 (4) of The Newcastle Upon Tyne, North Tyneside and Northumberland Combined Authority (Establishment and Functions) Order 2018.
- 1.4 The Joint Transport Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee can examine any decisions of the Committee – be that by the JTC itself or a subcommittee, constituent authority, or officer holding delegated authority. This Scrutiny occurs in public and ensures democratic and public accountability.
- 1.5 One of the main functions of this Committee is the review and scrutiny of 'Key Decisions' made by the Joint Transport Committee and its Officers. The relevant regulations set out a test for what should be considered a Key Decision – being those which are most significant in financial or other terms. This is explained in the Decision-Making Protocol of the North East Combined Authority that was adopted by the Joint Transport Committee for its use at its inaugural meeting in November 2018.

### **Requests for Special Urgency/General Exception**

- 1.6 In accordance with the Decision Making Protocol, it was agreed by Members that the request of any Short Notice Procedure that involved the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be reported at the next Committee. The table below

shows the number of requests made since the last meeting was held:

Type of Short Notice Procedure	Number of Requests since previous Committee
Requests for Special Urgency	0
Request for General Exception	0

Details of requests for Special Urgency and General Exception can be found at this website <https://northeastca.gov.uk/decision-making/forward-plan/special-notice-and-urgency-provisions/>.

### **Annual Work Programme – Update**

- 1.7 The most recent version of the work programme (appendix 1) has been compiled to allow the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to consider items that will be of regional importance to the Joint Transport Committee, the JTC forward plan and items previously raised by Members. A link to the current forward plan can be found [here](#).

1. It should be noted that the work programme covers items that will be discussed at the meetings. It does not preclude ‘deeper dives’ providing more focused scrutiny of particular topics by a sub-group of the committee outside of these meeting dates. These topics can be raised with the Chair and Scrutiny Officer at any time.

### **2. Annual Work Programme – Update**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to review and agree the suggested work programme.

### **3. Reasons for the Proposals**

- 3.1 To provide an opportunity for Committee members to input on any additional items as part of continued planning for the Work Programme for 2020/21.

- 3.2 The work programme will be refreshed and updated at each meeting of the Committee throughout the year.

### **4. Alternative Options Available**

- 4.1 There are no alternative options available.

### **5. Potential Impact on Objectives**

- 5.1 Development of a work programme and review and scrutiny of decisions in the JTC Forward Plan will contribute towards the development and implementation of the policy framework of NECA, NTCA, Nexus and the North East LEP as well as providing appropriate challenge to decisions taken.

## **6. Financial and Other Resources Implications**

6.1 No financial or other resource implications are identified at this stage.

## **7. Legal Implications**

7.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from these recommendations.

## **8. Key Risks**

8.1 There are no key risks associated with the recommendations made in this report.

## **9. Equality and Diversity**

9.1 There are no specific equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

## **10. Crime and Disorder**

10.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

## **11. Consultation/Engagement**

11.1 On-going consultation takes place with Officers and Scrutiny Members across the local authorities that make up the Joint Transport Committee, in regard to the items for the Annual Work Programme as Appendix 2.

## **12. Other Impact of the Proposals**

12.1 The proposals consider the wider impact and take into account the Principles of Decision Making. They allow Members consideration of the items on the JTC Forward Plan and allow them the opportunity to have an overview of all performance, decision making and developments across the Joint Transport Committee structure.

## **13. Appendices**

13.1 Appendix 1 – Annual Work Programme

## **14. Background Papers**

14.1 None.

## **15. Contact Officers**

15.1 Gavin Armstrong, Policy and Scrutiny Officer  
Email: [gavin.armstrong@northeastca.gov.uk](mailto:gavin.armstrong@northeastca.gov.uk)  
Telephone Number: Tel No: (0191) 4247537

Mike Barker



15.2 email: [mikebarker@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:mikebarker@gateshead.gov.uk)  
Telephone: (0191) 433 2100

## **16. Sign off**

- 16.1
- The Proper Officer for Transport: ✓
  - Head of Paid Service: ✓
  - Monitoring Officer: ✓
  - Chief Finance Officer: ✓

## **17. Glossary**

- 17.1 NECA - North East Combined Authority  
North East LEP - North East Local Enterprise Partnership  
NTCA – North of Tyne Combined Authority

### Joint Transport Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme October 2020

#### Standing Items for each Committee Meeting:

- Declaration of Interest
- Minutes of Previous Meeting
- JTC Forward Plan and Work Programme Report

#### Source of work programme and items of importance:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee obtains work programme items from the following sources:

- a) Items submitted by Members of the Committee (and including items referred by other members of the Combined Authorities);
- b) Suggestions from Officers
- c) The Budget and Policy Framework; Transport Plan
- d) The JTC Forward Plan;
- e) The Proper Officer for Transport
- f) Evidence for any policy review work regarding Transport

#### Suggested Work Programme 2020-2021

Meeting Date	Subject
26 October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine initial budget and consultation proposals and make any recommendations to the JTC</li> </ul>
17 December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional transport funding</li> <li>• Review of how Brexit might impact on transport and how the JTC is considering this when carrying out its role (updates to be provided as necessary to ensure Committee is kept duly informed)</li> <li>• Transport Plan update (incl. specific aspects of the plan TBC)</li> <li>• Consider (updated) budget proposals as part of consultation process (if necessary)</li> <li>• Budget update report</li> <li>• COVID 19 response &amp; recovery update</li> </ul>
25 March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air quality management across the region</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate related issues in regional transport</li> <li>• Transport plan update (incl. specific aspects of the plan TBC)</li> <li>• COVID 19 response and recovery update</li> <li>• Budget update report</li> </ul>
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It should be noted that the work programme covers items that will be discussed at the meetings. It does not preclude 'deeper dives' providing more focused scrutiny of particular topics by a sub-group of the committee outside of these meeting dates. These topics can be raised with the Chair and Scrutiny Officer at any time.

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