

Bus Partnership Fund Call for Proposals



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1. Introduction to the Bus Partnership Fund

1.1 Having formally declared a global climate emergency, the Scottish Government committed to an ambitious target of net-zero emissions by 2045. This was encapsulated in law in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2019.

1.2 As part of an embryonic Scottish Green Deal to respond to this, the First Minister placed bus at the heart of the 2019 Programme for Government, announcing a landmark new investment. The commitment was to invest over £500 million in improved bus priority infrastructure, to tackle the negative impacts of congestion on bus services and raise bus usage.

1.3 The investment will take the form of a Bus Partnership Fund for local authorities and the roll-out of infrastructure for the trunk road network, to prioritise high-occupancy vehicles, such as buses. This document focuses on the Bus Partnership Fund (BPF or 'the Fund').

1.4 The BPF will target one of the major contributors to bus patronage decline: congestion. More than this, the purpose of the BPF is to leverage further improvements through partnership working. It is linked to the Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP), which is the new statutory model in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 ('the Act'). We expect not only action on congestion, but further action and investment from both local transport authorities and bus operators, given that the economic viability of their operations will be enhanced by improved journey times and greater reliability. This whole-system approach will ensure that bus

services improve as part of a rounded, sustainable travel offer. Through partnership it is possible to deliver better, greener, more accessible bus services, which provide a viable alternative to car use.

1.5 According to a report by KPMG¹, Scottish cities are some of the most congested in the UK, with drivers spending up to 12% of the average journey in congested conditions, substantially increasing travel times. As one bus can take up to 75 private cars off our roads, there is a strong case for investment in bus priority, to reduce journey times and improve reliability. KPMG estimated that every £1 invested in local bus services generates up to £8 in wider social, economic and environmental benefits.

1.6 Eligible bidders to the BPF will be partnerships formed of a lead local authority with partners potentially including neighbouring local authorities, regional transport partnerships, Transport Scotland (where appropriate, as trunk road managers) and bus operators, with the involvement of other stakeholders, such as passenger representative groups. Eligible partnerships must be able to evidence that congestion is adversely impacting bus patronage and put forward ideas to address this. Bidders to the Fund should read the summary of how BSIPs will work and the role they will play in transforming bus services.

1.7 Projects funded by the BPF will be comprehensive and ambitious packages of bus priority measures; including for example bus lanes, bus gates, guided busways and traffic light priority. Partnerships are encouraged to propose other, innovative measures to contribute to the targeted outcomes.

1.8 To maximise the utility of bus services, partnerships are encouraged to develop proposals which integrate bus with active travel and other forms of transport, to provide an end-to-end solution, which will reduce private car use.

2. Intended Outcomes

2.1 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.

2.2 The BPF is a key part of this Government's delivery against the National Transport Strategy (NTS2²), which advocates a transport vision for the next 20 years. NTS2 highlights that two thirds of car trips are single-occupancy, which increases congestion and leads to longer bus journey times, which in turn discourage bus patronage. The four priorities of the NTS2 vision – to reduce inequality, take climate action, help deliver inclusive growth and improve health and well-being – are all supported by high-quality bus services.

2.3 The outcomes of the Fund are closely aligned to the National Outcomes, which are based on UN Sustainable Development Goals³. The Fund supports four National Outcomes in particular: Communities, Economy, Environment and Health.

2.4 Seven of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals are addressed by improving bus services, as viable alternatives to car use. These goals are: affordable and clean energy; sustainable cities and communities; decent work and

¹ Trends in Scottish Bus Patronage, KPMG, November 2017

² Scotland's National Transport Strategy, protecting our climate and improving lives: National Transport Strategy 2, Transport Scotland, February 2020

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructure; climate action; good health and well-being; and partnerships for the goals.

2.5 These outcomes will be supported by infrastructure developments to facilitate bus service improvements.

3. How the Fund will work

3.1 The Fund will operate via a competitive, light-touch process, designed as a proportionate ask of local authorities and their partners.

3.2 A first round of applications closed on 16th April 2021 but this call for proposals is a second opportunity for partnerships to come forward with outline proposals. We will assess the proposals against the criteria set out within this document and the evidence provided in the application form.

3.3 In their proposals, we expect partnerships to give an indication of the level of funding they would need to deliver their long-term ambitions.

3.4 We expect to decide in December 2021 which proposals will receive funding to move forward to development, through the proportionate application of the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG), and ultimately move into project delivery.

3.5 Whilst we are seeking ambitious, long-term proposals, we recognise that some partnerships may have already carried out appraisals and have sufficient evidence to support investment in quick wins. These may be funded in 2022/23, where the criteria are met and the capital budget allows. Quick wins projects which already have allocated funding will not be eligible for BPF funding. Quick wins must be future-proofed, to align with the longer-term proposals.

3.6 The exact amounts available each year will depend upon the annual budget process, which will also take into account demand for the Fund. We will undertake gateway assurance reviews of funded proposals, to determine which will be taken forward to implementation. Partnerships will be informed in advance of the process and timing of these reviews.

3.7 Grant offer letters will include full terms and conditions, including requirements for grant recipients to provide project plans and report against these on a monthly basis.

4. Design Principles

4.1 The design principles for funded bus priority infrastructure projects will relate to all phases of the development so should be borne in mind for the initial proposal, although it is recognised that ideas will not be fully-formed at this stage.

4.2 The core design principles are:

- Proposals must be holistic; demonstrating how mobility will work in the area, the active and sustainable travel aspects, and how bus fits into that model
- Proposals must target a reduction in congestion
- Proposals will outline bus priority measures, to improve bus journey times and make services more reliable

- There must be consideration of active travel, integration with other public transport and place-making
- There should be alignment with local and regional transport plans
- Proposals should be deliverable and have local political support
- There should be a genuine partnership approach, based on the BSIP model
- The proposals should represent value for money.

4.3 Funding from the BPF may only be used by local authorities, to carry out infrastructure projects designed to encourage bus use. However, the design of those projects should be agreed and supported by the bidding partnership.

4.4 Given that this is 100% funding, partnerships are expected to demonstrate their commitment to providing match in kind investment to improve the bus offer. This could include making services:

- More frequent, with turn-up-and-go services on major routes and feeder or demand-responsive services to lower-density places.
- More comprehensive, with overprovision on a few corridors reduced to boost provision elsewhere and better services in the evenings and weekends; not necessarily with conventional buses.
- Easier to understand, with simpler routes, common numbering, co-ordinated timetable change dates, good publicity, and comprehensive information online.
- Easier to use, with common tickets, passes and daily capping across operators, simpler (and cheaper) fares, including more flat fares in towns and cities, and contactless payment options.
- Better integrated with other modes and each other, including more bus-rail interchange and integration and inter-bus transfers.
- Greener, with more investment in zero-emission buses.

5. Evaluation of Proposals

5.1 Proposals will be evaluated against the quality of ideas presented and the strength of evidence to support the ideas. For example, proposals targeting higher reductions in congestion will receive higher scores.

5.2 To support the objectives of the Fund, the minimum data we would expect to see includes:

- Information on bus patronage levels
- Information on the trend in bus speeds and general traffic speeds
- Information on the number of bus services and distance travelled by bus services
- Detailed information on the current travel patterns and composition (e.g. age, employment status etc.) of the population who travel within the intervention area, including consideration of the potential for mode shift towards bus.

5.3 Where a local authority has already secured investment in active travel infrastructure or has a live application with Sustrans for active travel developments, this should be highlighted on the application form. This will enable us to put the bus priority proposals in context and will demonstrate a holistic approach.

5.4 Partnerships should also cross-reference to any relevant evidence/proposals emerging from the Strategic Transport Project Review (STPR2) process.

5.5 We expect partnerships to have formed or be working towards a BSIP, so the strength of the partnership element will be a key factor in the evaluation. Essentially, the proposal should be to fund the development of business cases to implement one or more bus service improvement partnership schemes, as defined by section 35 of the Act.

5.6 Proposals will be evaluated by an expert panel, who will make recommendations to Transport Scotland's relevant decision-makers, who will make the decisions on all awards from the BPF.

5.7 Proposals will be scored on a scale of 0 to 4, defined as follows:

0	No evidence the criterion has been addressed
1	Some evidence but significant issues with the proposals
2	Some good ideas but limited supporting evidence and some issues
3	Good ideas, with good evidence, but some work still to be done to develop these
4	Well-developed proposals, with strong evidence and no major issues

5.8 Proposals will be scored against the following criteria:

- Evidence of congestion and ideas to reduce congestion, through improved bus services (40%)
- How the proposal fits with the partnership area's overall strategy for integrated transport, to encourage a modal shift from cars to more sustainable transport and reduce emissions (25%)
- Partnership strength and demonstrated commitment, which will include match in kind (20%)
- Deliverability: the ability of the lead local authority and its partners to deliver the proposed developments, including local political buy-in (15%)

6. Application Process

6.1 Applications to the BPF should be submitted on the Bus Partnership Fund Application Form, which includes guidance notes. Bids should be submitted electronically, to buspartnershipfund@transport.gov.scot.

6.2 For further guidance, please refer to the associated Q&A document, BSIP guidance and best practice examples. Any other questions on the BPF or application process should be directed to buspartnershipfund@transport.gov.scot.

6.3 Applications must be submitted by the closing date, which is 12 noon on 15 October 2021, and signed by the relevant local authority personnel and partners, as detailed on the application form.

7. Consultation

7.1 Transport Scotland has consulted with a range of stakeholders in the bus sector and other interested parties in developing these initial processes to administer the BPF. This engagement will continue and expand throughout the life of the Fund.

7.2 As well as going through formal consultation with CoSLA, we have engaged with the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO), the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT), the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS), the Regional Transport Partnerships, the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) and a number of bus partnerships.

7.3 Partnerships benefiting from the Fund will be expected to carry out appropriate public consultation as their business cases progress. Transport Scotland will monitor levels of consultation as part of its monitoring and evaluation of the Fund.

8. Data Protection

8.1 Any personal data provided through the application to the BPF will be processed in line with data protection legislation. Transport Scotland is the Data Controller. The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dpa@transport.gov.scot.

8.2 The Data Protection Act 2018 sets out when we are lawfully allowed to process your data. The lawful basis that applies to this processing is 6(1)(e) of the GDPR: the processing of personal data is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority.

8.3 We are processing your data as part of the application process for the Bus Partnership Fund. We may share the information with external assessors as we assess the applications. Your personal data will only be shared with the assessor for that purpose and will only be retained by them for the duration of the assessment process. Your personal data will be held for the duration of the Fund, including monitoring and evaluation. It will be held on a secure Scottish Government system.

8.4 Some of the data we are collecting is your personal data, and you have rights as to how that is processed. These rights are detailed in Transport Scotland's privacy policy, which you are asked to read before submitting your application. The privacy policy can be found at <https://identity.trafficscotland.org/privacy>.