

Bus, Accessibility & Active Travel

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Angela Scott
Chief Executive
Aberdeen City Council
Marischal College
Broad Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1AB

Your ref:
N/A

Our ref:
004 BPF

Date:
June 2021

Dear Ms Scott,

Re: North East of Scotland Bus Alliance application to the Bus Partnership Fund

I would like to thank you and your partners for the work put into your application to the Bus Partnership Fund (BPF). I wanted to follow up in writing, subsequent to the meeting you had with my colleagues, to provide feedback on your application.

Bus services are vital to a just transition to net-zero, as a large number of people rely upon bus services for all manner of journeys and, crucially, a full double decker can remove 75 single-occupancy cars from the road. Cars account for almost 40% of transport emissions. In line with the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) recommendation, we need to continue to promote active travel and a shift to more sustainable modes like bus, while deprioritising single-occupancy car use. The BPF is intended to tackle the negative effects of congestion on bus, so that bus journeys are quicker and more reliable, which will in turn encourage more people to use the bus. As you develop your appraisals and business cases, you will need to further clarify the strategic fit of what is being proposed in terms of how bus priority interventions complement other public transport and active travel plans and investments in your area, which will all need to make sense as a coherent whole.

However the Fund is not just about delivering bus priority infrastructure. As made clear from the outset, partnerships which are awarded funding will also be required to bring forward and deliver other action and investment to further improve bus services in your area (i.e. match in kind). Whilst the bids did make reference to this, in order for us to release any further funding we will require evidence of commitment from partners. This will form a key criterion in the gateway reviews and failure to provide sufficient evidence could result in discontinuation of funding. Match in kind should cover positive action to improve the bus offer and/or measures to dissuade car use; for example parking restriction.

In terms of improving the bus offer, passengers are clear on what they want and, in firming up plans around match in kind, we would expect partnerships to consider how to make 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.

We were impressed by the overall strength of your bid and have just a couple more specific points of feedback. As the appraisals and business cases develop, as explained above, it is important that you provide strong evidence that the partnership will maximise the benefits of the bus priority infrastructure, through match in kind.

On South College Street, you will be required to evidence clearly that this project enables bus priority measures on other roads in the city centre, given that the plans do not currently include bus priority measures on the street itself. Through the business case process, we will also want to see more details of the scale of impact the ART will have in terms of congestion and bus journey times.

The last point is that, in common with most of the nascent partnerships, we look forward to seeing details of roles and responsibilities within the partnership as you develop.

All of these points will be covered in the gateway reviews in due course but, in the meantime, my colleagues in the BPF team are available to provide advice or guidance to support you. I wish you the very best in your endeavours.

Yours sincerely,



Laura Murdoch

Director of Bus, Accessibility and Active Travel