



MyBus Review – Stage 1 Actions

Committee Operations

Date of meeting 28 April 2023

Date of report 18 April 2023

Report by Chief Executive

1. Object of report

To advise the Committee of actions to be taken forward following the completion of Stage 1 of the MyBus review.

2. Background

Further to the update to the Committee in January¹, Stage 1 of the review of SPT's MyBus service has now been completed².

3. Outline of Proposals

3.1. This section highlights:

- Key conclusions of the MyBus Review;
- New service objectives for MyBus;
- Engagement undertaken for the review;
- Actions to be taken forward following completion of Stage 1 of the review, and their benefits for users; and
- Information on Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).

3.2. Key conclusions of the MyBus Review

From the outset, it is important to emphasise some key conclusions reached following the completion of the review. Firstly, SPT remains committed to investing in MyBus, and will continue to provide a service which helps many of the most vulnerable members of society live more fulfilling lives, benefiting their health and wellbeing. Secondly, engagement undertaken as part of the review has shown that MyBus is highly regarded and valued by its users, but that there are opportunities to develop the service to better serve some current users and attract current non-users.

Thirdly, best practice benchmarking with equivalent operations elsewhere formed a key part of the review. This proved a useful exercise and confirmed that many other Demand Responsive Transport providers are currently facing similar challenges to those facing MyBus. The benchmarking also highlighted some positives for MyBus; for example, unlike many other schemes, no booking fee is payable by users for use of the service and SPT remains committed to continuing this approach.

¹ https://www.spt.co.uk/media/y4bmkcsv/ops270123_agenda7.pdf

² The full MyBus review final report and associated documentation (including report on engagement) are available for members' review on request.

Lastly, from a practical perspective, and recognising the changed context in which MyBus now operates post-Covid and the financial situation facing the public sector, SPT must ensure that the provision of the service is undertaken in the most effective and efficient manner possible, recognising the drop in registered MyBus users from pre to post-Covid of 7,500 to 5,000 and the consequent adjustment of operations to meet this adjusted demand, resulting in an annual budgetary reduction from circa £3.5m pre-Covid to £2m post-Covid.

Opportunities to benefit users and grow the service must therefore be seized, whilst remaining firmly focused on budgetary availability, efficient operation to meet demand and value for money. The following parts of this section highlight a positive way forward in light of the above, and should be considered in that context.

3.3. New service objectives for MyBus

In undertaking actions identified from the review to ensure MyBus develops along a consistent path and in line with current national, regional and local policy context (including the new Regional Transport Strategy), new service objectives have been developed for MyBus. These are:

- Objective 1: To improve transport access for older and disabled people to shops, key services, social activities and public transport hubs;
- Objective 2: To improve transport access specifically for people living in rural and remote areas, including islands, to shops, key services, social activities and public transport hubs;
- Objective 3: To maximise and broaden use of the MyBus service, ensure eligible persons are aware of and are able to use the service, thereby supporting its long-term viability; and
- Objective 4: To operate a net zero carbon and climate resilient MyBus service by 2030, including transitioning MyBus vehicles to zero emission vehicles and promoting passenger welfare.

3.4. Engagement undertaken for the review

Significant and extensive engagement was undertaken as part of the review, including a user survey and direct engagement with users, non-users and former users of MyBus. The user survey generated a 30% response rate from those contacted which is considered a high response rate for this type of survey, with questions focusing on: reasons for using the service; the difference the service made to their daily lives; views on vehicles and drivers; service reliability; and booking arrangements.

The engagement exercise proved hugely valuable in informing and shaping the review, and key insights gained included:

- The most common purpose for using MyBus was shopping, with 48% of respondents stating this was their main trip purpose. Healthcare, leisure, and visiting friends and family were also common responses.
- A majority (57%) of respondents stated that they would not be able to travel to their everyday activities if MyBus was not available, reflecting the importance and 'lifeline' nature of the service.
- Customers expressed high satisfaction with MyBus drivers - nearly all responses (99%) considered drivers to be courteous and friendly. Similar numbers felt vehicles were being driven safely.
- Mobility issues were reported by 73% of the survey respondents, the most common health condition. Other common conditions included fatigue (31%), hearing (24%), vision (20%), dexterity (12%) and memory (9%) issues.

- The most common response from those who did not use MyBus Web was that they prefer to speak on the phone (34%). Others stated they had no internet access (22%) or no smartphone or laptop (18%).
- Many non-user respondents felt it was not clear whether or not they would be eligible for the service or how to find out if they were.
- Some potential users noted they would use the service if it was available to visit hospitals, but are aware this is not part of the current service scope.
- There appeared confusion about the different criteria for MyBus and MyBus Rural with some users living in rural areas thinking the service is solely for elderly people or people with a mobility impairment.
- Many people considered there was a lack of awareness of the service.
- Some people found experiences with the booking system frustrating, as their understanding of the system was that journeys could only be booked (or would only be confirmed) a day in advance, meaning they had some anxiety about whether the trip would actually happen and a consequent inability to plan ahead.

3.5. Actions

The following actions will be taken forward as a result of the completion of the MyBus review. Below each action, the reason for it and user benefits/wider impacts are noted. The timescales for completion of the actions ranges from 3-12 months, except where otherwise noted. It is worth noting that a period of reflection will be necessary following implementation of Actions 1-4 and elements of Action 5 below in order for their impact to be assessed. Following this, work will begin on moving fully forward with Actions 5 and 6 looking at more fundamental change to the service, which will form Stage 2 of the MyBus Review.

- **Action 1: Revise MyBus user eligibility criteria and simplify the registration process.**

Reason: Current criteria unclear, process deemed overly complicated and confusing for user and administratively burdensome.

User benefits/wider impacts: A simpler, clearer and more attractive process for new users to register for MyBus. Less administration of process required.

- **Action 2: Revise bookings and trip scheduling process.**

Reason: Current system can be confusing, creating anxiety for user and is administratively burdensome.

User benefits/wider impacts: A simpler process for booking trips, more effective scheduling of services and less administration.

- **Action 3: Revise journey purpose restrictions.**

Reason: Under current system, journeys to hospital are not allowed.

User benefits/wider impacts: Ability for users to use service for hospital trips. Important to emphasise that any revision of journey purpose must consider budgetary availability and will involve dialogue with relevant stakeholders including NHS and the Scottish Ambulance Service.

- **Action 4: Improve marketing of MyBus.**

Reason: Lack of awareness of service and confusion over who it is for and who is allowed to use it (this includes the general MyBus service and also MyBus Rural).

User benefits/wider impacts: Heightened awareness of service, benefits for users in being able to access the service, increased patronage leading to greater revenue and therefore improved sustainability of service.

- **Action 5: Improve current service provision.**

Reason: Various opportunities to improve current service provision were identified as part of the review, including new training (including for drivers) and taking account user issues (e.g. dementia awareness); data, reporting and use of performance indicators to identify opportunities for service improvement; improved co-ordination of management of service; and updating of scheduling software.

User benefits/wider impacts: More effective service provision for users within available budgets.

Timescale: Delivery of this action could be up to 24 months.

- **Action 6: Undertake wider Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service redesign.**

Reason: Long-term sustainability of service to ensure it continues to meet user needs and demands in effective and efficient way within available budgets. This will include aspects of current supported service provision, Community Transport provision and use of taxis (including for immediate 'call-off' provision should service be cancelled/delayed), partnerships with voluntary sector transport providers, Digital DRT (although maintaining of telephone booking), Mobility as a Service (MaaS), rural accessibility, multi-occupancy of vehicles and semi-scheduling of services (e.g. fixed day/time trips to supermarkets). This action will also consider transition to net-zero vehicles.

User benefits/wider impacts: Future provision of service in a way which better meets user/community needs, efficient operation of service to make most effective use of available budgets, reduced impact on environment.

Timescale: Delivery of this action could be up to 24 months.

3.6. Information on Equality Impact Assessment

As a listed public authority, SPT must comply with The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. This statutory instrument sets out specific obligations that demonstrate commitment to the "Equality Duty", which states that public authorities must:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Public Sector Equality duty has been built into the MyBus review process to ensure the actions are helping SPT to better perform against the duty and ensure that no

individual group or protected characteristic is negatively impacted by the identified actions and furthermore seeks to promote the needs of different groups.

The new service objectives for MyBus provide the basis for ensuring future decisions promote equality of opportunity across protected characteristics. Detailed EqlAs will be undertaken as required in delivering the actions as they are being taken forward.

4. Committee action

The Committee is recommended to note the actions in section 3 which will now be taken forward following the completion of Stage 1 of the MyBus review.

5. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>In line with the new RTS.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>Appropriate statutory assessments, including Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as required.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Climate Change, Adaptation & Carbon consequences	<i>None at present.</i>

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