

Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

Board Meeting

Paper B

Date **2nd October 2024**

Title of report: **Rural Mobility Pilots update and decision**

Purpose of report: **Information on recent progress on Western Gateway's Strategic Cycling Strategy. Decision requested on the award of funding for Rural Mobility Pilots**

Recommendations:

The members of the Board are recommended to:

- I. Note progress on the Rural Mobility Pilot project, including imminent launch of the Call for Pilots
- II. Delegate authority to Western Gateway Officers to award a total of £50,000 in funding to one or more external organisations for the development of rural pilot project proposals, in accordance with the project assessment criteria.
- III. Delegate approval to produce and distribute a final Pilot Prospectus
- IV. Allocate additional budget of £5k (to be re-profiled from elsewhere in the WG programme) to cover increased costs and project extension.

1. Background

- 1.1 The South West Rural Mobility Strategy was developed in partnership with Peninsula Transport in 2022. One recommendation from this strategy was the development of a series of rural mobility pilot projects to test novel approaches to improving sustainable access to services in rural areas.
- 1.2 The Board approved funding of £37,000 in FY 2023/24 and a further £50,000 in 2024/25 to deliver this project. This is matched by contributions from Peninsula Transport.
- 1.3 A stakeholder launch event was held in January 2024, but work subsequently slowed due to the prioritisation of the STP and SIP.

2. Current progress

- 2.1 A Prospectus for the rural mobility pilots has now been developed and is expected to be launched before Christmas (exact timeframes tbc depending on WECA's grant offer and due diligence requirements). External

organisations will have the opportunity to bid for up to £50,000 to develop proposal for a rural mobility pilot project, from idea to full business case/funding application. Western Gateway will then support those successful applicants to submit funding bids with the intention of securing full delivery funding.

2.2 An outline of the Prospectus approach can be seen in Appendix 1

3. Request for approval

3.1 Western Gateway officers request delegated authority from the Board to assess applications received through the Call for Pilots and award funding of up to £50k (as approved in the current business plan) to successful bidders.

4. Next Steps

4.1 We aim to distribute the Call for Pilots to interested parties before Christmas. An application form and engagement strategy is currently being developed.

5. Equalities Implications

5.1 No adverse impact on any protected groups is expected.

6. Legal Considerations

6.1 Western Gateway will be awarding funding to external organisations, which may include charitable organisations, community groups and/or private enterprises as well as Local Authorities. We therefore have an obligation to exercise due diligence in the selection of a suitable recipient and to ensure good value for money is secured.

6.2 We will look to West of England Combined Authority, as our accountable body, to provide oversight on this matter, and we will comply with all necessary processes and requirements to ensure this is achieved.

7. Financial considerations

7.1 Budget for this work element has already been approved as part of the 2024/25 business plan. However, due to project overruns and some additional documentation, the cost of this work has increased slightly, by up to £5k. We therefore request the additional allocation of £5k (to be re-allocated from elsewhere in the annual programme) to cover this uplift.

7.2 It is an ambition of this work that additional external funding will be secured for the delivery of pilot mobility projects in rural areas.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Board members are asked to note this update agreed the recommendations.

Contact Officer

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Appendix 1: Outline Prospectus Content (summarised by Peninsula Transport)

The prospectus sets out a vision to make our rural areas more 'liveable' and adopts the concept of 'liveable rural communities' as the central focus. Essentially this aims to enable residents and visitors in a rural area can access their daily needs locally, affordably and reliably, whilst striving to achieve Net Zero.

The document identifies six 'grand challenges' that are seen as the major barriers to achieving liveable rural communities. These challenges are shown below in Figure 1.



Figure 1 – Rural Mobility 'Grand Challenges'

The expectation for the prospectus and associated pilot projects is that they should aim to address at least one of these challenges as part of their scope and solution.

A preliminary call for pilots was undertaken in early 2024 in order to understand the scale of interest in this type of programme and the likely types of solution to be proposed. In total, eight pilot proposals were submitted from various stakeholders across the South West. These initial applicants will be invited to submit to the funding process set out within the prospectus.

The prospectus process identified ten pilot concepts to provide applicants with practical examples of projects. These are detailed within the prospectus, and include projects related to tourism, accessibility, safety, decarbonisation and freight. The concepts vary significantly in their focus and their ambition. With the funding currently available, it is likely that only one or two of the ten concepts, with match funding and resources, will be practical to deliver.