

From: David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Phil Lightowler, Interim Director – Highways and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 8th September 2022

Subject: **Fastrack Electrification and ZEBRA Commision: Status Update**

Key decision: **22/00086**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: Dartford, Dover, Gravesham

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to update on the development of Kents Fastrack bus networks.

Kent Fastrack is seeking to enhance its services with electric buses supporting charging infrastructure and new 'environmentally focused bus stop infrastructure, including new Real Time Information, whilst reprocurring expiring network agreements.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport on the following proposed decisions in connection to Kent Fastrack services:

(a) grant permission to procure contracts required to implement the electrification of Fastrack Bus Services in Kent, including the roll-out of environmentally friendly infrastructure across the Fastrack bus networks; and

(b) grant permission for contract award decisions (including the award of any future contract extension(s)) relating to these contracts to be taken by the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member insofar as:

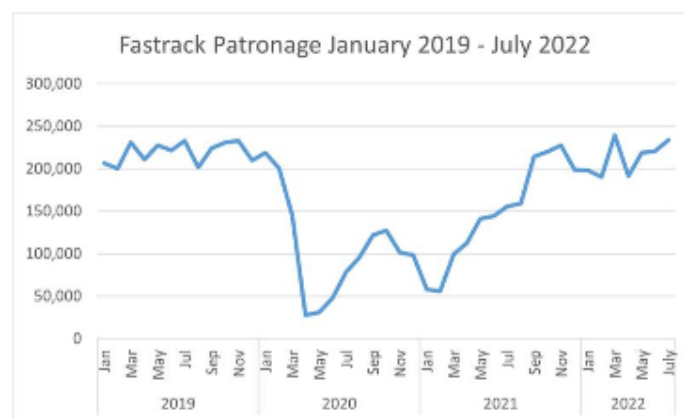
1. Electric Fastrack Bus Services to operate the future electric Fastrack bus networks:
 - a. Fastrack Kent Thameside network effective from 2024.
 - b. Dover Fastrack network (pending completion of infrastructure works).
2. Electric Bus Charging Solutions to power the new zero emission electric bus fleet(s) including:

- a. Electric Vehicle Charging Systems.
 - b. Electricity Supply.
3. Environmentally focused Bus Shelter Services for the repair and maintenance of bus shelters including the phased replacement of existing bus shelters with pollinator-friendly living roof bus shelters.
 4. Real Time Information (RTI) Display Services providing real time passenger information and media advertising at bus shelters.

The Proposed Record of Decision is appended at Appendix A.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Fastrack is Kent County Council’s Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) brand. The service provides fast, reliable, and affordable transport across Kent Thameside for over 3 million annual passenger journeys. The service model will be emulated in Dover from 2023.
- 1.2 Launched in 2006, Kent Thameside comprises of several new and existing housing developments and business units around Dartford, Ebbsfleet and Gravesend. From 2022, the Fastrack service in Kent Thameside will run at least every 12 minutes, 24/7, 365 days a year. The current Fastrack Kent Thameside contract with Arriva expires in 2023.



- 1.3 A new service contract is proposed to commence in January 2024.
- 1.4 The new Fastrack network in Dover will connect the town centre, with its High Speed 1 rail link, the Port of Dover (via interchange), and new housing developments around the suburb of Whitfield. Fastrack Dover is expected to Launch in Autumn 2023.
- 1.5 In 2021, Kent County Council submitted a successful bid to Department for Transport (DfT) funding towards electrifying our Fastrack networks. Comprising of 33 buses and the supporting infrastructure, ZEBRA (Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas) cover 75% of the cost difference between an

electric bus and the equivalent diesel bus. The fund also covers 75% of the capital infrastructure costs.

- 1.6 As part of the next generation of Electric Fastrack and zero emission operation, our ambition is to procure a preferred supplier for future bus shelters. Seeking a 'living roof design'.

2. Electric Bus Solutions (ZEBRA Vehicles)

- 2.1 The £9.5m DfT ZEBRA funding KCC received in August 2021 covers 75 per cent of the difference between a conventional equivalent diesel bus and the electric alternative. KCC are obligated to commit this funding by August 2023.
- 2.2 It is proposed for Dover that this funding contribute to the 5 buses required for Dover Fastrack, with the operator(s) finding the remaining monies.
- 2.3 It is proposed that the successful tenderer for Kent Thameside Fastrack purchase KCC specified vehicles, with the ZEBRA funding being made available to them.
- 2.4 The current fleet of Fastrack vehicles are nearing the end of their useful life and even without ZEBRA funding to electrify, new vehicles would have been sought for the new contract.

3. Electric Charging Solutions (ZEBRA Infrastructure)

- 3.1 The DfT ZEBRA funding KCC received in 2021 covers 75 per cent of the cost of the supporting infrastructure required to support the electrification of the two Fastrack networks. This is in the form of roadside pantograph charging infrastructure and overnight depot chargers as well as the required sub stations and civil works.
- 3.2 Fastrack are currently working with Strategic Commissioning to understand the best route to market. The options are to use the existing KCS framework to procure this equipment on a commercial let basis or an outright capital purchase by KCC using ZEBRA and existing Fastrack monies. The charging infrastructure will be for the 15 year life expectancy of the vehicles.
- 3.3 There is potential additional benefits to the installation of the required sub stations. The energy suppliers or KCC would be able to roll out further infrastructure nearby, such as taxi and private car charging points.
- 3.4 The planned locations are:
 - Dartford - Acacia Hall Car Park (to be 'The Fastrack Hub')
 - Dover – Priory Station
 - Gravesend – Gravesham Bus Hub
- 3.5 Note, the Dartford site will require land acquisition from Dartford Borough Council.

4. Fastrack Environmental Bus Shelters & RTI

- 4.1 As part of the next generation of Electric Fastrack and zero emission operation, there will be a need to procure a preferred supplier for future bus shelters. The plan is to provide a 'living roof design', which the preferred supplier would design and build within new development areas where there is a requirement for new bus shelters.
- 4.2 The supplier will undertake a replacement programme of existing sites and will be required to clean and maintain both the new and the existing shelters across the network.
- 4.3 The new generation of shelters will seek to be more vandal resistant, yet more attractive within its urban fabric.
- 4.4 This programme will seek to dovetail with the work Fastrack is currently doing to support Kent's 'Plan Bee' by planting our busway verges with wildflowers.
- 4.5 The current shelter maintenance programme currently costs c.£50,000 per annum.
- 4.6 Fastrack is currently piloting a new generation of Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) at Gravesham bus Hub which was funded by the KCC Lane Rental Scheme. These new screens combine live bus and rail information with (appropriate) commercial advertising. If successful, this RTPI would be rolled out more widely across Fastrack, using the advertising revenue to offset the maintenance cost.

5. Legal, Equality and Data Protection Implications

- 5.1 KCC will utilise legal support to ensure all necessary consents relating to new bus infrastructure (including, but not limited to, planning permissions, and District Network Operator (DNO) connections) are in obtained as appropriate, and the required service contracts are procured in compliance with public and utilities contracts regulations as appropriate.
- 5.2 A "live" Equalities Impact Assessment exists for the new fleet specifications and electrification elements of Fastrack as part of the DfT ZEBRA scheme. (Appendix b).
- 5.4 The EqIA did not identify any impacts on Protected Characteristics.
- 5.5 A separate assessment will be carried out for the proposed provision of the new shelters.
- 5.6 There are no data protection implications arising from this decision.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 For electrifying Dover Fastrack, there are no direct financial implications for KCC as the project relies solely on external funding. Maintenance and operation costs will form part of the commission provided by the selected Fastrack service provider or supplier.

7. Recommendation

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The Proposed Record of Decision is appended at Appendix A.

8. Appendices

- Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix B - KCC Fastrack Electrification programme EQIA v2.8:
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s113387/ElectrificationoftheFastrackBusServices.docx.pdf>

9. Contact details

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