

Scheme Approval Processes Report

Report of Head of Highways and Transportation

Introduction

This report outlines the process involved in the delivery of new and improved infrastructure, with a focus on cycling projects.

It will provide an overview of the process, although it should be recognised that where different funding origins are involved, then steps can be added and/or removed depending on the requirements of the funder.

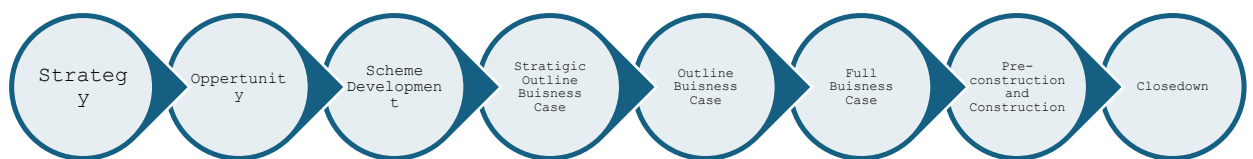
The council has utilised a wide range of funding pots in recent years. Including: Town Centre Access Plan, Mayoral Challenge Fund, Active Travel Funds 1,2, 3 ,4 and 4e. All of these have required the submission of a bid and follow up business cases.

The report gives an overview of the process as applied to two schemes progressed by the council.

Background

The development of transport improvements in the borough is guided by a range of regional and local documents including: Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040; and Stockport’s Walking and Cycling Plan.

The relevant guidance or policy, alongside the funding origin, guides scheme development. A basic flow chart of scheme development is shown below, with a larger version in appendix A.

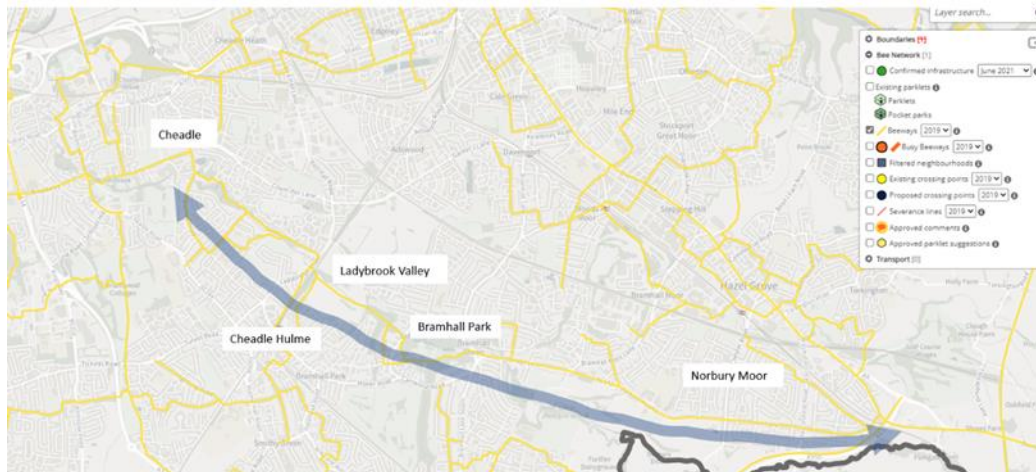


All schemes may have specific deviations from this process, dependent on funding requirements, and the results of consultation may mean iterations of certain elements of the steps in the flow chart as schemes are reworked or elements are paused due to funding limitations. It is because of this that it is important to have a long-term strategy in place which supports the delivery of schemes. The schemes below show how circumstances surrounding a scheme can impact on scheme delivery.

Example Schemes

Ladybrook Valley Footpath Scheme.

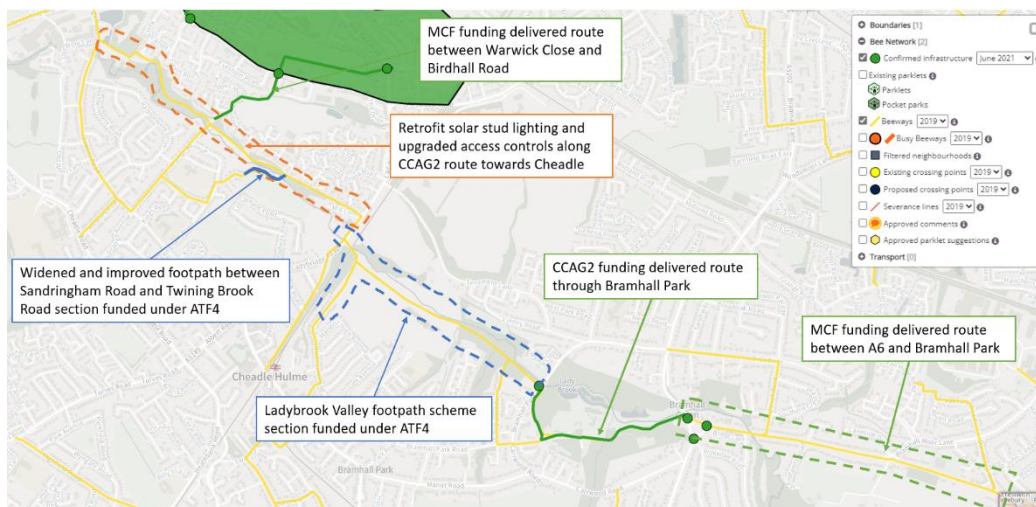
This scheme was identified to upgrade an existing footpath route through the Ladybrook Valley between Bramhall Park Road and Ladybridge Road to a bridleway and to then construct a route suitable for shared use so as to encourage the use of the route for cyclists, equestrians and pedestrians. The scheme is part of a wider programme of works designed to improve the orbital link Hazel Grove and Cheadle which has been identified as a gap in the boroughs cycling facilities. The overall scheme aim can be seen expressed in the plan below.



Plan showing aspiration for improved active travel link between Cheadle and Hazel Grove.

Initially the scheme was anticipated to be funded by the Cycle City Ambition Grant, but the timescales for the legal process for the Public Right of Way being upgraded to bridleway were extended after the consultation process led to the proposal being referred to the Secretary of State.

Other elements of the scheme have already been delivered with the sections from Cheadle to Ladybridge Road and the route through Bramhall Park having been delivered by funding from the Cycle City Ambition Grant and Mayoral Challenge Funding allowing for the improvements between Bramhall Green Roundabout and the junction with Macclesfield Road and Mill Lane.



Plan showing schemes making up the connection between Cheadle and Hazel Grove

The Ladybrook Valley scheme is funded by a successful bid to the Active Travel Fund Tranche 4. This successful bid for £2.3 million was aided by the large amount of pre-bid development work already being in place as well as the potential to complete an approximately 5 mile long active travel route. The scheme replaces an existing set of steps from Bramhall Park Road down to the Ladybrook Valley path with an accessible 3m wide ramp and delivers a 3m wide surfaced route with solar stud lighting. The proposed route is approximately 1.1km long.

By providing these enhancements to the existing route and completing the continuous route through the Ladybrook Valley the expectation is that more residents will feel empowered to walking and cycling for a range of journey purposes, including retail, commuting and leisure. This is expected to be a mix of new journeys, as well as some which transfer from journeys currently made locally by car.

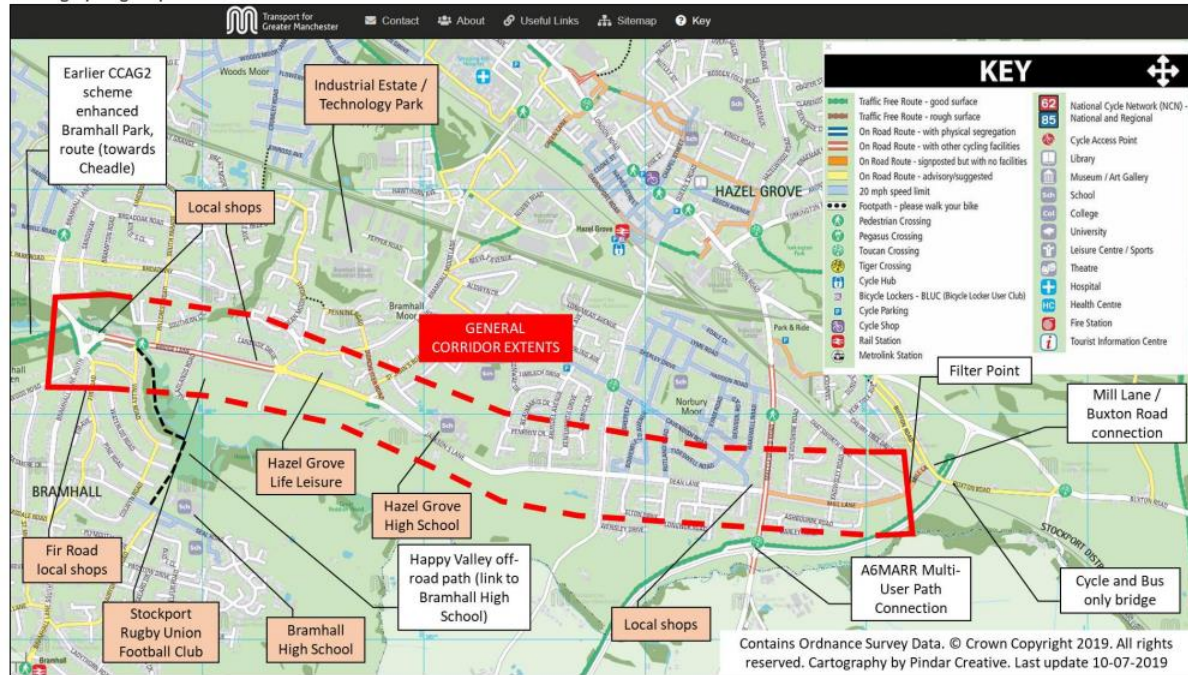
The timeline for the delivery of this scheme is summarised as follows:

- 2015 Consultation and Cycle City Ambition Grant bid.
- 2017 Planning permission granted.
- 2019 Bridleway creation order advertised. Objection received and referred to planning inspectorate.
- 2021 Bridleway creation order granted.
- 2022 Bid submitted for ATF4
- 2022 Planning Application Ramp
- 2023 Bid successful
- 2024 Full Business Case Submitted
- 2024 Environment Agency Approvals
- 2024 Construction commences
- 2025 Expected to be complete

A6 to Bramhall Park

This scheme was developed to provide a new high-quality segregated east-west 'spine' cycleway through the district of Stockport, connecting Bramhall Park and Mill Lane.

It links residential areas in Hazel Grove and Bramhall with Hazel Grove Leisure Centre and Hazel Grove High School. It also links to the shared use path on the A555. The scheme was delivered using Mayoral Challenge Plan Funding. The scheme was also part of a wider programme of works designed to improve the orbital link between Hazel Grove and Cheadle which had been identified as a gap in the boroughs cycling facilities.



Plan of area of scheme from full business case giving context for the scheme.

The progress made in delivering surrounding schemes improved the attractiveness of the scheme and as a result further to previous conversations with the TfGM MCF programme team, Stockport Council presented a Full Business Case (FBC), without the prior approval of an Outline Business Case (OBC). The MCF programme team at TfGM having completed a critical friend review in advance of submission to Portfolio Office, and have recommended its readiness to be viewed for Full Approval. It was recognised that this was a depart from the usual process and at the time of FBC submission Stockport welcomed the flexibility shown towards the scheme.

Timelines for the scheme are summarised below:

- 2019 Program Entry Proforma (Bid)
- 2019 Consultation
- 2019 Data Collection
- 2020 Cabinet Member Decision following Area Committee Agreement
- 2020 FBC Submission
- 2020 Contract awarded
- 2020 Construction Commencement
- 2022 Completion
- 2023 Closedown and Defect Correction
- 2023 Activation
- 2024 Monitoring and Evaluation report (Ongoing)

Current Scheme process

Schemes are currently being delivered through funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) . Greater Manchester (GM) submitted its CRSTS Prospectus in September 2021 for the financial years covering 2022-2027. Following discussion with government it was agreed that £1.07bn through CRSTS

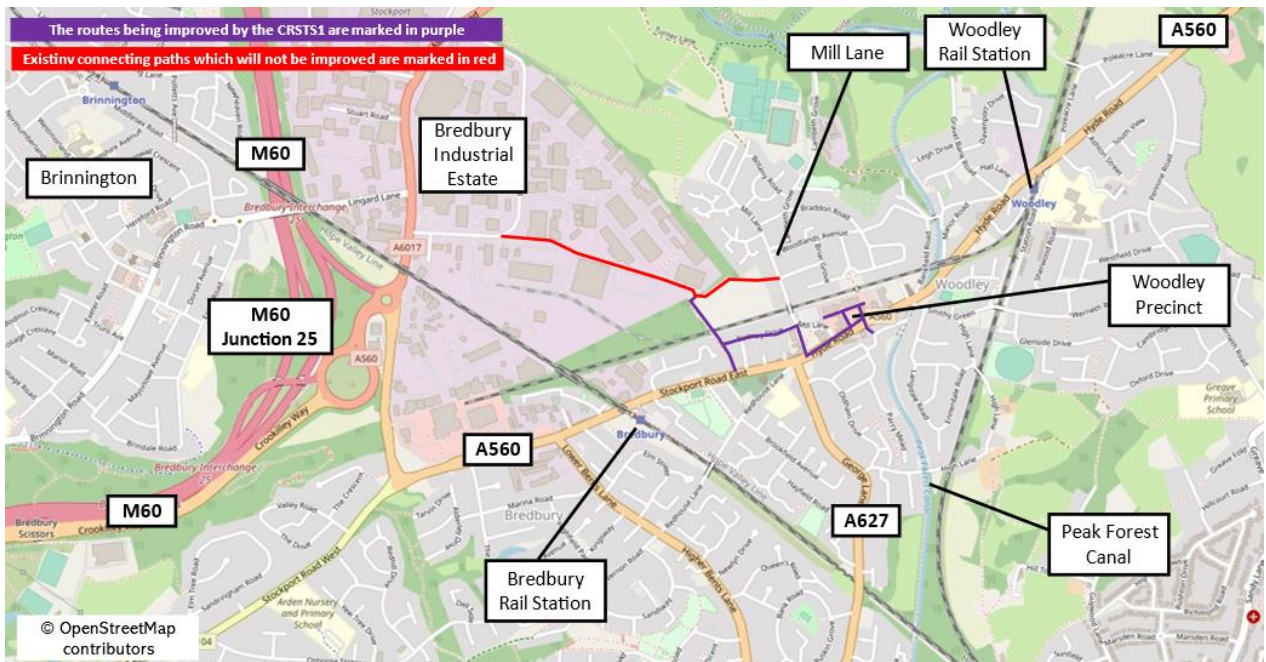
would be made available in 2022. Part of the funding was allocated to the Active Travel programme, which was in addition to the funding available in the MCF and ATF funding.

To manage the funding TfGM has a central programme team. A set of Governance and Assurance arrangements for the CRSTS programme, which are in line with the Single Pot Assurance Framework agreed with Government and broadly reflect the arrangements previously adopted for other major programmes of investment is in place to manage the schemes. Governance and Assurance arrangements include the following:

- Levels of business case development, appraisal and gateway assurance proportionate to a scheme's stage of development, as determined through an established assessment process of scheme complexity (CIFTER Framework);
- Business case development and assessment criteria in line with the requirements of the HM Treasury Green Book;
- CIFTER and Business Cases Gateway Approvals undertaken by suitably independent and experienced team members sourced from both Local Authority partners and TfGM;
- Business Case approvals at established Boards comprising senior officers from TfGM and, where appropriate, Local Authority partners; and
- Recommendations for schemes to draw-down funding submitted to GMCA for approval, subject to Business Case approvals.

The CRSTS programme comprises a large number of individual schemes and programmes which can vary greatly in terms of their scope, complexity and value. A proportionate assurance approach is therefore considered appropriate. The proposed assurance requirements for each type of scheme are summarised in Appendix 2.

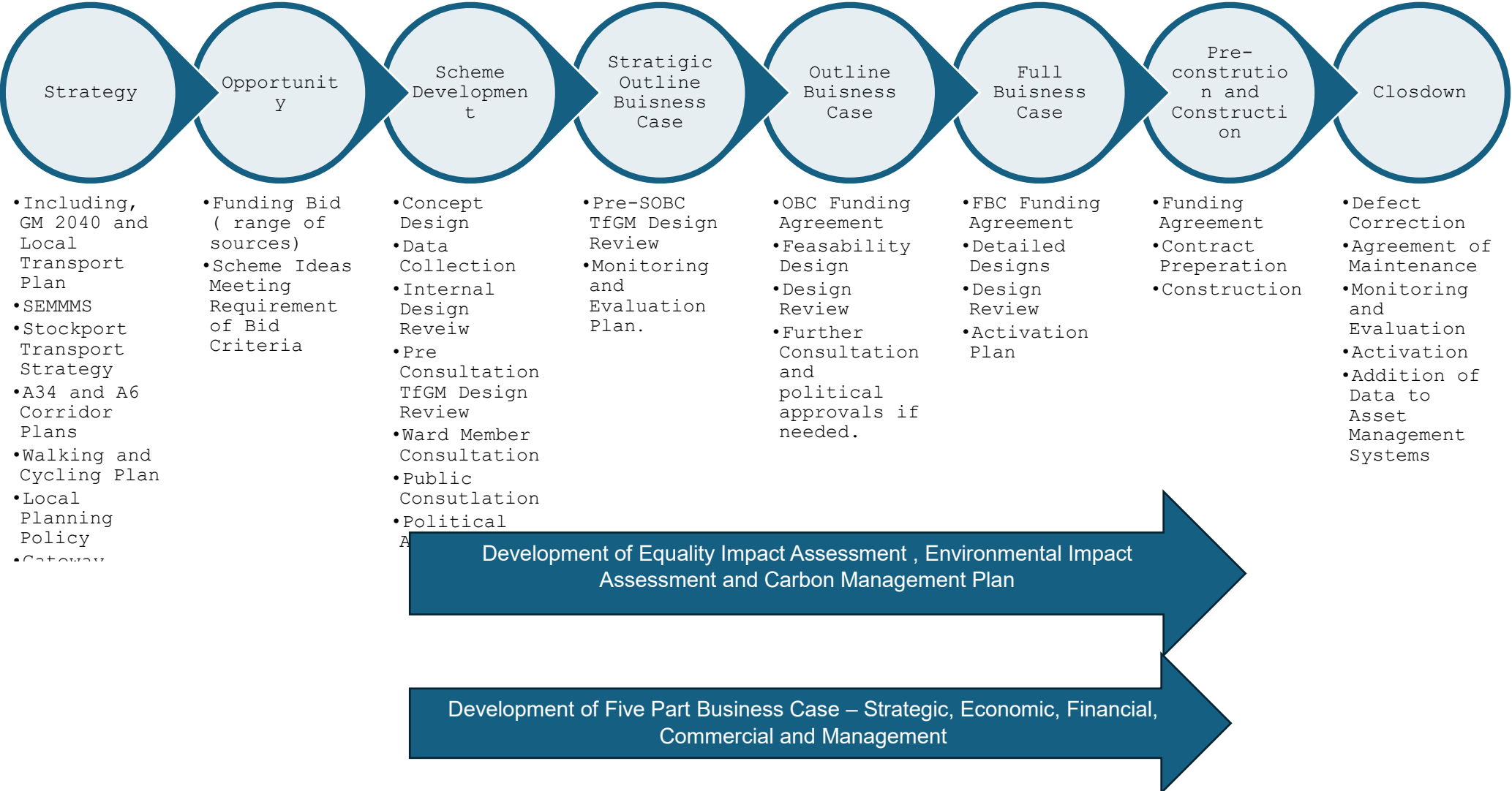
Schemes submitted by this process include the The Bredbury Park to Woodley Active Travel Improvement Scheme will deliver an enhancement of active travel infrastructure and connectivity, better joining together the Bredbury Industrial Estate and the residential area of Woodley.



Timescales for the scheme is:

- Consultation on the Woodley to Bredbury Park Way Sustainable Travel Scheme
- was undertaken between 30th September and 23rd October 2022.
- Strategic Outline Business Case approved by GMCA in February 2023,
- Cabinet Member Decision following Area Committee Agreement July 2023
- FBC submission April 2024
- Funding Draw Down Approved By The Bee Network Committee June 2024
- Construction in 2024
- Completion 2025
- Closedown and Defect Correction 2025/6
- Activation 2025/6
- Monitoring and Evaluation 2026

Appendix A



Appendix 2

Scheme/ Programme	Assurance Route	Business Case Requirements	Rationale
Allocation of CRSTS funding to existing projects or programmes e.g. Active Travel, Metrolink Renewals, Stockport Interchange	N/A	No requirement to submit a full business case, however scheme promoters should present a statement setting out the CRSTS funding required and the justification for this, for endorsement by the relevant Boards prior to approval being sought from the GMCA to draw down the CRSTS funding	These programmes already have their own assurance processes in place
Development only schemes, e.g. Development of new stations, Future Metrolink Stops, HS2, tram-train	N/A	Approvals will be required to draw down development funding supported by regular monitoring & reporting. Any SOBCs produced within the CRSTS funding settlement period will be subject to the CRSTS assurance process	These are all at feasibility stage, as such there may not yet be a preferred scheme on which to base a SOBC
Core Highways Maintenance & Integrated Transport Block (ITB)	N/A	No requirement to submit a business case, however annual reporting requirement to monitor & report spend	This continues the previous process, whereby core maintenance/ ITB funding was passed straight through to highway authorities from DfT
Strategic Maintenance (KRN & Structures)	Route 1	SOBC, followed by annual reporting requirement to monitor & report spend / confirmation of final scheme costs	Strategic maintenance schemes likely to be delivered through core highway maintenance programmes (as above)
Standalone schemes (non-complex), e.g. town centre schemes, corridor schemes, station improvements	Route 1	SOBC plus OBC and/or FBC	
Programmes (non-complex, relatively low value) e.g. Access for All, Bus Stop Enhancements, Bus Pinch Points & Maintenance	Route 1	SOBC plus OBCs and/or FBCs to bring forward individual schemes or delivery packages within the programme	

Schemes (new, complex), e.g. electric vehicles	Route 2	SOBC, OBC and FBC required	
Retained schemes, e.g. Bury Interchange, Golborne Station, HS2, tram-train	Route 2 + DfT Assurance	SOBC, OBC and FBC required, plus any additional requirements to comply with DfT assurance processes	High profile schemes which are subject to additional scrutiny by DfT