

North Somerset Council

Report to the Executive

Date of Meeting: 02 February 2022

Subject of Report: To update on the Development of a Joint Statutory Public Bus Enhanced Partnership, with the West of England Combined Authority and Applicable Bus Operators.

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Councillor Donald Davies, The Leader of the Council, with Executive Member responsibility for Strategic Transport

Key Decision: Yes

Reason: The adoption of the Enhanced Partnership is expected to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the Local Authority.

Recommendations

- 1 To update the Executive on the development of an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Schemes as required by the National Bus Strategy
- 2 That the Leader of the Council, as the responsible Executive Member for Strategic Transport; Transport Policy, Public Transport, Home to School Transport, Bus and Rail Strategy, be delegated authority to approve the final Enhanced Partnership and initial schemes in partnership with The West of England Combined Authority.
- 3 That the decision to approve the final Enhanced Partnership and initial schemes be referred back to the executive should the Plan and process significantly change from the proposed Draft.

1. Summary of Report

- 1.1 On the 20/10/2021 The Council Executive Approved the Adoption of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in formal Partnership with The West of England combined authority.
- 1.2 North Somerset Officers have been working with colleagues in The West of England Combined Authority to prepare a joint Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan, and associated schemes, in compliance with the Transport act 2000 (as amended), and the Bus Services Act 2017. On the 23/12/2021 A final draft EP plan and initial scheme was issued for the legally required 28-day consultation with the Bus operators. A second scheme enabling the transfer of the existing Metrobus services is expected to be issued by mid-January 22.

- 1.3 Following the 28-day consultation period with operators, we will be consulting on the draft EP with the statutory and other stakeholders in January and February 2022. Subject to no formal objections from Bus Operators and Stakeholders, the EP can be adopted and commence on the 1st April 2022. Given the nature and timescales of the process minor adjustments may need to be made to the current draft to satisfy emerging advice from the DFT, in what is a largely new process for most Local transport Authorities in the UK. The draft EP plan and scheme can be seen in Appendix 1
- 1.4 The council received an Update from the DFT 'ref 'BSIP funding and EP timescales' on the 11/01/2022, it advised Local Transport Authorities (LTA's) to pause the final statutory consultation processes and await a provisional funding allocation in February 2022, The Ep plan and schemes are then to be submitted to DFT in Draft before the end of April 2022 reflecting the indicative funding allocations. This changes the timescales of the EP plan, moving the adoption date towards April-June 2022. The Letter is included in Appendix 3 for reference.

2. Policy

- 2.1 The national Government's *Bus Back Better – a National Bus Strategy for England* is consistent with the following NSC and West of England policies & plans:
 - The West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan
 - The North Somerset Council (NSC) Corporate Plan 2020-24
 - The West of England Bus Strategy [\(2020\)](#);
 - The West of England Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (JLTP4) [\(2020\)](#);
 - The emerging NSC Local Plan 2038.

3. Details

Enhanced Partnership

- 3.1 Details of the features of EPs are in Appendix 2.
- 3.2 The delivery model for the adopted West of England BSIP will be an Enhanced Partnership (EP). An EP is a statutory agreement between LTAs, bus operators and highway authorities under which each party makes legally binding commitments to improve bus services and the facilities associated with them. It has the potential to bring about improvements quickly and it puts in place a framework under which future improvements can be delivered as and when funding becomes available. It comprises an overarching EP Plan and one or more EP Schemes.
- 3.3 An EP Scheme sets out all the 'asks' of the partners - Local Transport Authorities, Highways Authorities and bus operators - to meet BSIP objectives within a defined geographical area. The asks for operators include the development of multi-operator ticketing, a recognisable brand across the region and provision of an integrated service.
- 3.4 Appendix 1 (The EP Scheme 1) details the governance structure (see section 4) it broadly consists of an EP board, supported by EP advisory panel, there is also an annual Bus User Forum. North Somerset Council are represented at the Board, Panel, and Forum levels.

- 3.5 Government expects all LTAs to have an initial EP in place by April 2022, apart from those that have published an intention to develop franchising of bus services, and it has made continued payment of discretionary funding to bus operators and LTAs absolutely conditional on development of a BSIP and EP.
- 3.6 The funding arrangements for the BSIP as submitted to the DFT in October 2021 are still not yet clear as of 05/01/2022 This funding will define the schemes enshrined on the EP, resulting in the need to create a “shell” EP at this stage. Once funding is clear, schemes can be subsequently updated or added to the EP and this is expected to happen from April 2022
- 3.7 Government strongly recommends that the initial EP should “memorialise” all existing agreements such as quality partnership schemes (Metrobus being a prime example of this), voluntary partnership agreements, traffic regulation conditions, current expenditure on bus service support, traffic regulation orders for bus priorities, bus shelter maintenance expenditure etc. EP Scheme 1 seeks to formalise this across the respective constituent authorities.
- 3.8 By December 2021, bus patronage in the West of England was at roughly 70% of its pre-Covid level. Recovery has been slow; passenger numbers are like those of other Local transport Authority areas in England. Continued access to recovery funding is essential to preserve our valued bus network.
- 3.9 Engagement has taken place with officers of Somerset County (and Wiltshire and Gloucestershire County Councils in the context of the joint BSIP) on cross-boundary issues and officers continue to liaise closely with them. North Somerset Council is a statutory consultee to neighbouring Enhanced Partnerships.
- 3.10 Ongoing Uncertainty due to a lack of defined funding from the DFT (as of 4th January 2022) with regards the BSIP and EP Schemes funding makes it difficult to set out precise deliverables. However, the following is a summary of some of the key aspects in the EP Scheme 1 and where appropriate how it relates to North Somerset:
- We have developed a proposed network of services with frequency standards matched to the population densities. The ambition is that all communities above 1,000 population will have the opportunity to access an hourly bus service on Mondays to Fridays between 0700 and 1900.
 - We want higher bus frequencies in our towns and urban areas, offering a good range of destinations and connections. We therefore aim to increase the frequency of several routes across the West of England over the next 5 years.
 - We want bus services to support the 24/7 economy, so we will develop standards for early morning, evening, night, and weekend services.
 - We want fares to be simple, and affordable with multi-operator ticketing as standard and envisage reduced fares being delivered for local travel in Portishead, Nailsea and Clevedon.
 - We want family travel to be affordable, so we will work with bus operators to explore ways of achieving that.
 - We will present our bus network as a single system with every vehicle and bus stop identifiable as part of the network.
 - We will commit to excellent standards of information and customer care in a Bus Passenger Charter.

- We want bus journeys to be reliable and consistent and therefore propose significant investment in infrastructure over the next 5 years to help speed up services and improve punctuality. We have identified the A370 and A369 corridors as high priorities for investment with further improvements delivered in our other main towns and villages.
- We want every bus stop to act as a shop window for our bus services, with all 5000+ stops in the West of England being improved over the next 5 years and new stops created promptly to serve areas of growth and development.
- To match the local, regional, and national aspirations of the Climate Emergency We want every bus to meet Euro VI emission standards and be zero emission by 2033, with the first electric buses entering service within 2 to 3 years.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The EP and first schemes reflect what is already in place in LTA's and provided by bus operators. There has been a continuous informal dialogue process with all the operators in the build up to the creation of the EP and first schemes. North Somerset Council along with The West of England Combined Authority WECA formally launched a pre-EP consultation with local operators on the 9th December 2021 to seek input /ideas and suggestions to help shape the final EP.
- 4.2 The EP notice that proceeds the EP Plan and technical consultation has been issued to Local Bus Operators for the statutory 28-day notice period as of the 23/12/2021.
- 4.3 Once the notice period concludes and subject to no effective objections the EP will progress to a short technical consultation on the content of the EP Plan and the first EP Scheme which must be carried out with bus operators, organisations that represent passengers, neighbouring local authorities, the Traffic Commissioner, the Police, Transport Focus and the Competition and Markets Authority. One of the purposes of this exercise is to give bus operators an opportunity to object formally to any proposed features of the EP.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The funding arrangements, despite guidance issued in August, remain unclear and therefore it is difficult to estimate how much funding the NSC/WECA BSIP might secure and consequently what might be available for either revenue support of bus services or capital investment in infrastructure.
- 5.2 The west of England Combined Authority has received a £540m capital allocation through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) and a proportion of this is to deliver the BSIP along with other transport projects. There is a risk that the NSC funding from DFT for the BSIP will not match the ambitions or level of funding received by the WECA
- 5.3 The estimated cost for developing a joint BSIP and EP is £880k. The Department for Transport has already paid £100k Capability Funding to both the West of England CA and North Somerset Council (NSC) with a further £63k being paid to NSC. The West of England CA has utilised funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) for the balance.

- 5.2 From April 2022 there will be a requirement for additional staff resources at both WECA and NSC to service the joint EP after it has been made and to carry out the ongoing reporting and review work arising from the joint BSIP. The extent of this requirement and the associated cost will become clearer as current work progresses. The council is still working on the assumption that these costs will be funded by the BSIP funding allocation, or existing revenue budgets.
- 5.3 In the context of significant change to the system, the overall aim is to manage public transport costs within existing budgets, recognising that there may need to be changes to individual items from its adoption in April 2022 to its renewal in April 2027. The BSIP includes a hierarchy of delivery methods, where acceptable levels of commerciality cannot be achieved with a cost effective and sustained use of resources, alternatives will be implemented.
- 5.4 The EP requires LTAs to memorialise its current revenue expenditure for supported buses, and the associated infrastructure, enforcement, and publicity. This figure currently stands at £115,880 of revenue funding for the 2022/2023 financial year, these are supplemented by income from ticket sales, and specific S106 funds to support 7 bus services and a long-term contract for Real time information services jointly with WECA.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

- 6.1 North Somerset Council are both the highway and transport authority and so have the legal powers to amend the highway and transport network, under the Council's powers as Local Highway Authority (Highways Act 1980).
- 6.2 Enhanced Partnerships are enshrined in the Transport Act 2000 (as amended by the Bus Services Act 2017). Government has published detailed guidance on the statutory process to develop an EP and on its expectations for Bus Service Improvement Plans. The guidance is being followed and reflects the Attached Enhanced Partnership Plan attached.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 7.1 If adopted the proposed Enhanced Partnership and schemes will provide a system to formally improve the existing bus network. If the aims are achieved then there will be a significant increase in the proportion of trips by bus, replacing trips otherwise undertaken by the more polluting (and less space-efficient) single occupancy petrol/diesel cars. The EP and BSIP contain legally binding environmental standards starting with EU6 minimum emissions standards across the entire region's bus fleet by the end of 2023, and a road map to introduce zero emissions buses starting as early as 2025, with full zero emissions by 2035. All specific infrastructure projects will undertake a more detailed environmental assessment.

8. Risk Management

- 8.1 The risks associated with implementation of the recommendations *and appropriate* mitigations are:

- (i) Potential loss of discretionary funding from Government to support commercial bus operators and our bus service contractors during recovery from the pandemic.
 - *Adopt EP and proposed Schemes to meet the ambitions of the national bus strategy.*
- (ii) Insufficient revenue budget in longer-term to maintain enhanced bus network after the initial Transformation Funding ends in 2027.
 - *Maintain regular dialogue with bus operators through the EP Governance mechanisms. Use our regional joint evaluation tool to help prioritise bus revenue support if necessary.*
 - *Promote the network to build patronage and reduce the need for public subsidy*
 - *The EP contain mechanisms to formally postpone, vary or cancel elements of the Partnership.*
- (iii) Insufficient revenue budget to maintain enhanced bus network if demand recovers more slowly than anticipated.
 - *Maintain regular dialogue with bus operators through the EP. Use our evaluation tool to help prioritise bus revenue support if necessary.*
 - *Invoke Adjustment mechanisms to re-align resources.*
- (iv) Award of Transformation Funding at much lower level than bid based on BSIP, leading to insufficient funding to deliver full BSIP.
 - *Adjust delivery programme to match award and seek funding from other sources.*

9. Equality Implications

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? **Yes**

- 9.1 One of the key drivers of the national bus strategy 'Bus Back Better' is to improve accessibility for all. This includes the need to improve the access to bus information for residents with sight or hearing impairments, physical accessibility improvements in getting to bus stops, the waiting and boarding facilities at stops and interchanges and also the vehicles themselves, such as consistent local branding of stops and services, up to date accessible timetable and route information at bus stops, same evening and weekend frequencies as day time, universal ticketing and easy smart payment options, and more marketing campaigns to promote existing and new routes. Furthermore, one of the actions for national government as part of the strategy is to review eligibility for free bus travel for disabled people to ensure that the strategy helps to improve the equality of opportunity and help disabled people participate fully in public life.
- 9.2 The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), once prepared, will include several key objectives, including but not limited to:
 - high quality bus service.
 - high quality waiting environment.
 - high vehicle standards.
- 9.3 More specific attributes are contained under each objective, including:
 - Bus stops, bus stations and interchanges to be accessible, safe, and inclusive by design with good facilities.
 - Good pedestrian accessibility to adjacent residential areas and passenger destinations.

- Full accessibility with ample areas for pushchairs and luggage in addition to the wheelchair space and audio/ visual next bus stop announcements
- Setting a basic minimum standard of accessibility to network from rural areas.
- Easy access to information via Travelwest website and app, including times, accessibility information, fares, and live running.

9.4 These are just some of the objectives and attributes set to be included within our BSIP and future EP schemes, that show the level of commitment to improving equality and accessibility to a vastly improved bus network, all through the direction of the national bus strategy.

10. Corporate Implications

10.1 The adoption of the proposed EP provides a flexible mechanism to deliver the ambitions of the adopted BSIP from April 2022. This also means the council is jointly responsible for the delivery of the services, meaning there will be 'no return' to a situation where services are planned on a purely commercial basis with little or no engagement with, or support from, LTAs.

10.2 More focused to NSC Corporate policies, the national bus strategy (via our more specific BSIP for North Somerset and the West of England) set out a new long-term vision and action plan to achieve a cohesive network of attractive, high quality bus services to kickstart a new era for bus travel as an option for all. The adoption of the Enhanced Partnership provides the flexible mechanism to deliver the ambitions of the BSIP aligned with our Corporate Plan priorities of being:

- Open (with the open sharing of bus data helping to improve bus services further including accessibility and journey planning);
- Fair (by significantly improving equality and accessibility to and on the bus network).
- Green (with the more people using the bus instead of private car, this has a huge potential to save significant carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions).

10.3 More specifically, the NSC Corporate Plan 2020-24 sets out to achieve 'A transport network that promotes active, accessible and low carbon travel' and by 2023, to see 'More people using the bus network, and improvements in reliability and passenger satisfaction'. Through delivering showcase bus corridors, as well as other measures that are detailed in the BSIP and proposed EP schemes, the Corporate Plan aims to see:

- An increase in bus patronage.
- The delivery of at least one new showcase corridor by 2023, and.
- Measures to enable the unhampered movement of buses.

10.4 Adopting the proposed Enhanced Partnership provides the necessary legal mechanism to delivering a joint Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) with WECA and bus operators and preparing a joint Enhanced Partnership (EP) would be consistent with and add further weight to our Corporate Plan aims for bus service improvements shown above.

11. Options Considered

11.1 Franchise; The option of a Franchise is the only alternative; While theoretically possible, it would require the approval from the secretary of state, a franchise would take years to develop and formalise, and potentially expose the council to significant

capital and revenue risk should the network fail to recover from the effects of the global pandemic, which has seen demand remain suppressed at circa 70% of pre covid demands. The collaborative approach taken with the Enhanced Partnership has resulted in genuine innovation and improvements outweighing the need to consider this approach at this time.

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Appendices list

Appendix 1 - Final Draft of Enhanced Partnership Plan.

Appendix 2 - Features of Enhanced Partnership

Appendix 3 - Letter from the DFT 11/01/2022 'Bus Service Improvement Plan Funding and Enhanced Partnership Timescales'

Background Papers:

- Executive Report of 23rd June 2021
- Executive Report EXE 54 20th October 2021
- The West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan
- The national bus strategy: Bus Back Better (March 2021)
- National Bus Strategy: Bus Service Improvement Plans (May 2021)
- Guidance to all local authorities and bus operators (Department for Transport, May 2021)
- The West of England Bus Strategy (June 2020)
- The West of England Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4) (March 2020)
- Bus Services Act 2017 – New powers and opportunities
- Guidance on Enhanced Partnerships
- Guidance on Franchising Schemes

West of England

Enhanced Partnership Plan

April 2022 - DRAFT

Definitions

In this Enhanced Partnership Plan and any Schemes made pursuant to it, the terms listed in the left-hand column of the table below shall have the terms shall have the meanings ascribed to them in the right-hand column.

1985 Act	Transport Act 1985 (as amended)
2000 Act	Transport Act 2000 (as amended)
2017 Act	Bus Services Act 2017
AVL	Automatic Vehicle Location
B&NES	Bath and North East Somerset Council
BCC	Bristol City Council
Bespoke Variation Arrangements	Arrangements made under Section 138E of the 2000 Act, as detailed in an EP Scheme
BSIP	The West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan, as published jointly by the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council on 29 October 2021 and subsequent updates
BTF	Bus Transformation Fund
Bus Operator	Operator of one or more Local Services in the EP Area
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
CMA	Competition & Markets Authority
Competition Test	An assessment of the impact of a proposed scheme on competition, in accordance with Schedule 10 of the 2000 Act
CRSTS	City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement
EBSR	Electronic Bus Service Registration
EP	Enhanced Partnership as defined in section 138A of the 2000 Act
EP Advisory Panel	A representative group of partners and stakeholders, as described in an EP Scheme, who provide advice to the EP Board
EP Area	The geographical area defined in paragraph 1.1 below
EP Board	A representative group of partners, as described in an EP Scheme, who make decisions on the EP
ETM	Electronic Ticket Machine
Exempted Services	Those Local Services described in paragraph 1.4 below
Facilities	Those facilities referred to in an EP Scheme which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of Section 138D(1) of the 2000 Act
Fixed Change Date	One of two nominated dates in each calendar year decided by the EP Board - before the end of the previous calendar year - on which changes to Local Services in the EP Area can be made
HOV Lane	High-Occupancy Vehicle Lane
Improvement Notice	A notice issued to a Bus Operator by the LTAs after assumption of Relevant Registration Functions in the event that a Bus Operator should fail to comply with any of the Requirements or should fail consistently to meet the agreed standards for punctuality and reliability
iPoint	Installation at bus stop on metrobus routes to provide information and sell tickets
JLTP4	Joint Local Transport Plan 4, adopted in March 2020
KRN	Key Route Network
Local Highway Authorities or LHAs	Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council
Local Planning Authorities or LPAs	Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council
Local Service	A bus service as defined in Section 2 of the 1985 Act
Local Transport Authorities or LTAs	The West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council in respect of the roles defined in Section 108(4) of the 2000 Act

Measures	Those measures referred to an EP Scheme which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of Section 138D(2) of the 2000 Act
NSC	North Somerset Council
Operation Requirement	A requirement referred to in an EP Scheme, imposed under Section 138A(5)(b) of the 2000 Act, other than a Route Requirement
QA	Qualifying Agreement as defined in paragraph 17(4)(a) of Schedule 10 to the 2000 Act
QPS	Quality Partnership Scheme made under Section 114 of the 2000 Act
Requirement	A requirement imposed under Section 138A(5)(b) of the 2000 Act
Relevant Registration Functions	The functions of the Traffic Commissioner to the extent that they relate to a Relevant Service, both within the meanings given to them under Section 6G(10) of the 1985 Act
Route Requirement	A requirement referred to in an EP Scheme, imposed under Section 138A(5)(b) of the 2000 Act that falls within Section 138C(1) of the 2000 Act
RTI	Real-Time Information
SGC	South Gloucestershire Council
SMO	Small or medium-sized bus operator
TC	The Traffic Commissioner, as defined in Section 4 of the 1985 Act, for the West of England Traffic Area
TRC	Traffic Regulation Condition made under Section 7 of the 1985 Act
TRO	Traffic Regulation Order made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement as defined in Section 153(2) of the 2000 Act
WEBOA	West of England Bus Operators' Association
WECA	The West of England Combined Authority

Introduction

This Enhanced Partnership Plan & Schemes are based on the West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) published jointly by the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council on 29 October 2021.

The EP Plan and Schemes will replace existing quality partnership schemes, voluntary partnership agreements, traffic regulation conditions and the voluntary Code of Conduct on Bus Service Stability.

Competition Test

Schedule 10 to the 2000 Act contains a “competition test” which applies where LTAs develop EP schemes.

There are three distinct stages to the competition test:

- (i) an assessment of whether the proposed scheme has, or is likely to have, a significantly adverse effect on competition. If it does not have such an effect, then the competition test will be satisfied. If, however, it does have a significantly adverse effect on competition, or is likely to have such an effect, the second and third stages below must be considered;
- (ii) an assessment of whether a scheme which has a significantly adverse affect on competition may be justified. A scheme may be justified if it is set up with a view to achieving one or more of three specific purposes, as defined in Schedule 10 to the 2000 Act;
- (iii) an assessment of whether the significantly adverse effect is, or is likely to be, ‘proportionate’ to the achievement of the purpose or purposes of the scheme. Proportionality in this respect is explained in Schedule 10 to the 2000 Act.

In respect of the West of England EP Plan and Schemes, the LTAs have carried out a competition test and are satisfied that the EP Schemes do not have a significantly adverse effect on competition.

Enhanced Partnership Plan

THE WEST OF ENGLAND ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN FOR BUSES IS MADE JOINTLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 138G(1) OF THE TRANSPORT ACT 2000 BY THE WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY AND NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL.

A map of the geographical area covered by the EP Plan is in Appendix 1.

The EP Plan is made on xx xxxx 2022.

The EP Plan will have no end date but will be reviewed jointly by the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council every year during that period in conjunction with annual reviews of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Analysis of local bus services as at November 2021

Patronage trend

Bus use in the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council grew consistently over fifteen years prior to the pandemic - reaching 72.3 million in 2018-19 albeit from a relatively low base. Some of this growth is related to changes in population and economic performance, but a significant part is due to investment in infrastructure, vehicles, fares and services. Whilst bus use has been increasing, it is still some way behind bus use in some parts of the country and lags behind the average bus journeys per head for England's metropolitan areas and the average for England as a whole.

With the introduction of lockdown measures in March 2020, passenger numbers fell dramatically, recovering gradually in response to the easing of social distancing and the re-opening of the economy. By mid-November 2021, bus patronage had recovered to 70% of its pre-COVID level, whereas bus mileage operated was over 90% of its pre-COVID level.

Bus operators

The principal bus operator in the region is First West of England Ltd (trading as First Bus), which carries roughly 90% of total passenger journeys. There are 16 other bus operators locally and 3 long-distance coach operators, some of whose services are partly registered as local bus services. In 2019-20, 26 million vehicle miles were operated on bus services in the region.

The West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council have 86 contractual arrangements for non-commercial bus services between them and contribute to the cost of 3 cross-boundary bus services. Of the total vehicle miles, the LTAs currently provide revenue support for 1.6 million miles (around 6.3%). Together they spend £5.6m per year in financial support for local bus services, excluding payments for concessionary travel.

Bus service network

Bus services in the region are focussed on radial corridors in the urban areas of Bristol, Bath and Weston- super-Mare.

- Only 7% of all local bus services have six buses per hour or more over most of the working day and are thus defined as "frequent services" by the TC

- About a quarter of bus services have between two and four buses per hour
- One or two buses per hour operate on the main inter-urban corridors

Not all commercial bus services operate all day, seven days a week. Much of the financial support provided by the West of England Combined Authority is directed at evening and Sunday services. In the case of North Somerset Council, this support is mostly focused on the provision of rural bus services.

In Bath and Bristol, there are few cross-centre services - mainly to avoid spreading the impact of unpredictable delays from one side of the city to the other. This reduces connectivity and efficiency of operation. There are also very few orbital services around the cities and those that exist operate to low frequencies. Bus operators do not regard them as viable and are not willing to cross-subsidise them, so they rely on revenue support.

Also, there are few inter-urban limited-stop services to provide fast services giving comparable journey times to cars.

Rural areas have a comparatively sparse bus network and, generally, it is reliant on revenue support. Some villages have only one or two buses per week and are used predominately by shoppers. Journey times by bus from outer terminals in rural areas to cities centres are generally much longer than by car because the bus services take circuitous routes to serve as many communities as possible on the way. Also, there is very little provision of evening or weekend services to rural areas away from the main inter-urban corridors.

Fleet

The total fleet available to operate registered local services in the West of England comprises 1,159 buses, of which 695 are garaged within the region. The average age of the bus fleet operating in the region is 9.5 years.

Relevant factors

The partners consider that the factors which will affect, or have the potential to affect, the local bus market over the life of the EP Plan are:

- Congestion
- Management of roadworks
- Availability of a suitably skilled workforce, particularly drivers and maintenance staff
- Impact of significant housing and employment growth
- The regulatory framework for bus services in England
- Policies set out in the Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4 and any successor plan), including those relating to parking or other charges affecting travel demand.
- Changes in demand and travel behaviour as the economy recovers or adjusts to the impact of COVID-19
- New mobility services
- Changes in technology, including vehicles, ticketing and information

- Air Quality Management Areas and/or Clean Air Zones
- Funding arrangements associated with concessionary travel, Bus Service Operators' Grant, Bus Transformation Fund, bus revenue support, developer contributions and any new or alternative funding arrangements that either Government or local authorities put in place
- The response to the Climate Emergency

Our BSIP sets out further details on these factors but engagement with operators and stakeholders shows the significant impact that congestion has on bus services, affecting both punctuality (whether a bus arrives on time) and reliability (whether a particular bus services runs at all). For example, in 2018-19, 77% of non-frequent bus services ran on time across the BSIP area, with non-frequent services in Bristol being the fourth worst in England. This is significantly below the best performing area and below the average across all areas in England.

Lack of consistency of bus journey times is also problem caused by traffic delays. Peak scheduled times can be up to 40% longer than those in the off-peak hours on some of the core routes in the region. Furthermore, services can run 15 to 20 minutes behind schedule on the least reliable sections of network and 'bunching' is not uncommon. The Bus Passenger Survey carried out by Transport Focus shows that service punctuality and journey time concerns are two of the biggest areas for improvement amongst passengers.

Recently, a national shortage of drivers within the bus industry has shown that a suitably skilled workforce cannot be taken for granted. It is vital for bus operators and local authorities to have sufficient qualified staff to deliver their EP commitments in a timely and consistent manner.

Management of roadworks can also impact on the reliability and punctuality of bus services. Significant efforts are made to ensure that disruption is kept to a minimum but this is not always possible as there can be emergencies that require a quick response or limited alternative routes for bus services to take. Night working is promoted but this can be expensive and noisy for residents.

Housing and employment growth can increase traffic volumes on key points of the highway network. However, there are also opportunities with such growth to develop new markets and services or improve the financial performance of existing routes by attracting new passengers to bus services.

Managing travel demand is important in influencing the travel choices people make and the demand for bus services. JLTP4 and other policies on parking controls, active travel, enforcement, residents' parking and Clean Air Zones etc can all affect the relative price or convenience of other modes and the likelihood that people are likely to choose public transport. The introduction of the Clean Air Zone in Bristol in summer 2022 represents a significant opportunity to influence behaviour, particularly as we will still be recovering from the impacts of COVID-19 on passenger demand.

The pandemic is likely to have profound and long-term impacts on travel behaviour. In mid-November 2021, bus patronage had recovered to only 70% of pre-pandemic levels, with travel by concessionary pass holders at an even lower level. Weekend and leisure travel has recovered most strongly, with peak-period and commuting travel the most depressed as changes to working patterns and working from home seem to have become embedded. New COVID-19 variants and the re-introduction of some restrictions also threaten the level and pace of recovery. The need to stimulate and promote new markets to achieve modal shift is imperative if bus operators are to become financially stable again. In some situations, support from the public sector, either on an ongoing basis or through kickstart funding will be required.

Responding to the Climate Emergency is a key driver for promoting modal shift to public transport. The transport sector overall is a key contributor to carbon emission levels but buses

can support the changes in behaviour that are required. Therefore, encouraging people to move to public transport, decarbonising the bus fleet and using new technologies will be important factors in bus travel demand.

Passengers' experiences

Considerable information has been gathered on the experiences of bus passengers in the EP area and their priorities for improvement. These are set out in detail in the West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

In summary, user satisfaction with bus services is positive with 86% of respondents in 2019 stating they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied". However, this is only around the average performance of local authorities in England and is significantly less than the highest performing areas - which achieve around 95% satisfaction. This indicates there is scope to improve satisfaction and, to inform our course of action, we have looked at users' priorities.

Extensive public consultation was carried out in the development of the West of England Bus Strategy (adopted 2020) and more recently with stakeholders in the development of the BSIP. We have also considered the research undertaken by Transport Focus on Bus Passengers' Priorities for Improvement (September 2020).

The most important characteristics that affect passengers' experiences of bus services and the priorities for improvement are:

- (i) A well-designed bus route network that is simple, coherent, and efficient across the region. This is our fundamental aspiration for the network, and it supports users' priorities around punctuality and higher frequencies - which make services easier to use. Also, it suggests a network that is extensive in geographic scope and facilitates a broad range of journey opportunities, without having to change bus or where interchange is simple, clear, and reliable. Our engagement has revealed a clear aspiration for more engagement when changes to the network are proposed - featuring in the top five priorities of our stakeholders.
- (ii) Unreliable services and unpredictable journey times are a source of considerable frustration for passengers. The most recent information for the West of England shows that nearly one in four buses do not run to time - below the average for comparable areas, so tackling this is a high priority for our residents.
- (iii) Fares will always be an important factor in users' experiences. However, whilst the level of fares is important, the perception of value for money reflects users' views on the complete "offer" - including reliability, punctuality, frequency of service, and infrastructure. All these factors have been identified as important by bus users in the West of England.
- (iv) Improvements to waiting facilities have been identified by users as a priority. Feedback has also indicated the importance of clean and presentable infrastructure, real-time information, raised kerbs to aid boarding and alighting, and general timetable information.
- (v) More frequent services are a priority for improvement for users. Currently, only 7% of services in the West of England operate at six or more buses per hour. Higher frequencies help reduce waiting time at bus stops and increase confidence in the network. Passengers have an inherent concern about the reliability of less frequent services because a missed journey can cause considerable inconvenience.

Overall, passengers' experiences of using bus services are clear and well-articulated. They align with the data we have on bus service performance and the feedback from operators and stakeholders too. These experiences give us a clear indication of priorities for improving local bus services.

Bus journey speeds

The limitations of the transport network in the West of England have acted as a constraint on growth and productivity. High car ownership and limited bus services have resulted in fewer bus journeys per head being made here than in other city regions. In a vicious circle, low public transport demand and high private car use have combined to increase local road congestion, bringing poor environmental conditions and unpredictable bus journey times. It is estimated that the region experiences a £300m annual loss because of congestion, and in 2019, Bristol was ranked as the third most congested city in the UK.

The characteristics of the local geography combined with the features of the existing road network, create a challenging environment for the bus network. The River Avon, the Great Western main line and the M4, M5 and M32 motorways create natural barriers between one side of the region to others, limiting access across the region. When combined with the hilly nature of topography and the lack of dual-carriageways this creates pinch-points and a limited number of roads into our key urban areas, forcing traffic onto certain roads and increasing congestion. Incidents on the motorways can lead to major disruption in Bristol city centre and on its radial routes, as well as in overall connectivity across the West of England, having a disproportionate impact on bus services.

Lack of consistency of bus journey times is referred to above. In 2017, less than 80% of bus services ran on time, with delays of up to 15-20 minutes, representing the worst performing Integrated Transport Authority in England. Prior to the pandemic, the average bus speed in the BSIP area during peak periods was reported to be 8 mph, despite the delivery of substantial bus priority measures in recent years.

In 2018/19, 77% of non-frequent bus services ran on time across the BSIP area, with non-frequent services in Bristol being the fourth worst in England. This is significantly below the best performing area and below the average across all areas in England.

Objectives

The EP Plan is intended to improve the quality and effectiveness of local bus services in the West of England by providing a framework within which all partners can invest confidently. Seven high-level long-term objectives were adopted for the BSIP and they apply equally to the EP. Each objective has several attributes, describing an ideal network, and they represent the outcomes we are aiming for, as follows:

Objective 1 - High mode share for buses of overall travel market

- Good access to bus services from all parts of the area
- Good access from bus network to passenger destinations
- Positive contribution to decarbonisation plans and air quality improvements
- Positive contribution to sustainable housing and employment growth
- Declining need for subsidy as market grows organically
- Ambitious targets and trajectory for modal share and bus patronage
- Robust civil enforcement of moving traffic offences, parking, and traffic restrictions
- Extensive bus priorities, particularly on main urban routes, as continuous as possible and part of a whole-corridor approach
- Good co-ordination of roadworks

Objective 2 - High quality bus service

- Cohesive, comprehensive, and simple route network including co-ordinated radial and orbital services in the Bristol, Bath and Weston-super-Mare urban areas with easy interchange between them

Standard all-day routes with evening and weekend services on urban and inter-urban routes
Turn-up-and-go daytime frequencies and evening frequencies of at least 4 buses per hour on core urban routes (including orbital routes)
Good frequencies on principal inter-urban corridors and in smaller urban areas
24/7 services, where appropriate, on core urban and principal inter-urban corridors
Feeder services to interchange hubs to boost the frequency of connections from places away from main roads, connecting to the core bus routes with integrated ticketing
Demand-responsive services to low-density areas where appropriate, possibly operated by community transport providers
Basic minimum standard of accessibility to network from rural areas
High standard of punctuality
As far as possible, journey times comparable to or better than car travel
Sufficient capacity to meet demand
Provision of service to new developments at early stage, funded by developer contributions
Regular service reviews but no more than two major change dates per year
Good links to rail services, with buses connecting with first and last trains where appropriate
Consistent, clear, and distinctive branding for the whole public transport network, incorporating any strong local or route-specific brands
Unique service numbers within the network (apart from urban services in Bristol, Bath and Weston-super-Mare) with no suffixes

Objective 3 - High quality waiting environment

Bus stops, bus stations and interchanges to be accessible, safe, and inclusive by design with good facilities
High quality, branded interchanges at key locations, including rail stations
Branded, distinctive shelters at all stops wherever practical (except alighting points) with high standard of cleanliness and maintenance
Defined, paved waiting areas at urban stops and hardstandings at rural stops with cycle parking where possible
Good pedestrian accessibility to adjacent residential areas and passenger destinations
Bus stations protected from closure and redevelopment

Objective 4 - High vehicle standards

Progression to zero emissions through bids for Government funding when available, and Euro VI emission standard in the meantime
High levels of cleanliness, comfort, and security for passengers
Full accessibility with ample areas for pushchairs and luggage in addition to the wheelchair space
Dual-door vehicles on core urban corridors where practical
High level of mechanical reliability
Audible and visible "Next stop" information
Charging as standard
All vehicles equipped with tap on / tap off readers

Objective 5 - High level of passenger satisfaction

Bus Passenger Charter to set out what standards passengers can expect, including punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, accessibility, proportion of services operated and redress
Public consultation on route and network changes
One customer service contact point for whole network
Measurement of passenger satisfaction to include value for money and provision of information
Targets for punctuality and journey times

Objective 6 - High quality information

Bus Information Strategy adopted and implemented
Consistent, distinctive and readily identifiable branding for the whole public transport network on all media
Easy access to information via Travelwest website and new app to be developed alongside BSIP partners, including times, accessibility information, fares, and live running
Roadside timetable posters at all stops except alighting points

Roadside displays in rural areas to show return bus times and basic fares information
Timetable leaflets and comprehensive area booklets for whole network
Printed and interactive maps for whole network and town/city plans for urban areas
Maps at interchange stops and local centres, showing pedestrian routes and road crossing points to destinations
Fares information - including multi-operator tickets - on Traveline
Real-time information system to cover all operators' services
Targeted information on route and network changes
Consistent naming of bus stops and interchanges
Bus stops in urban areas to carry route number tiles
Easy access to comprehensive information via website and app, covering all operators, including times, accessibility information, fares, and live running
Full information on local bus services in railway stations
Heavy promotion and marketing, including bus links to rail services and scenic routes
Introductory offers to promote the network to non-users
Continuous marketing and promotion of network and multi-operator tickets

Objective 7 - Low fares, simple ticketing, and easy means of payment

Low flat fares in Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare, and other urban areas
Lower point-to-point graduated fares outside urban areas
Multi-operator ticketing as the norm - branded as part of the network branding
Daily and weekly capping using tap on /tap off readers
All operators equipped to take contactless payment, EMV ticketing and m-ticketing
Contactless payment to be the norm but cash retained for the time being
Integration of multi-operator bus ticket and multi-modal ticket into one family of tickets
Simplified range of tickets but more flexible ticketing for part-time commuters
Harmonisation of ticket zones, ticket types and conditions
Reduction in fares for young people and standard discounts for children and students

Interventions

To deliver the outcomes and achieve our objectives, various initiatives are listed in the Bus Service Improvement Plan. Collectively, these form the interventions needed to bring the bus network up our long-term objectives. Funding for these initiatives will be sought from various sources, including CRSTS, BTF and new developments, and implementation will depend largely on the success of these and other bids. When full details of each funding award are published, we will assess them and review the priorities we set out in our funding bid to arrive at a list of specific interventions that will form part of an EP Scheme. The full list of initiatives is as follows:

Initiative A1 - A high frequency, accessible bus network

Initiative B1 - High priority corridors where significant separation/priority can be delivered

Initiative B2 - High priority investment corridors

Initiative B3 - Medium priority investment corridors

Initiative B4 - Rural and suburban route investment

Initiative B5 - Bus lane and parking enforcement

Initiative C1 - Operator fare reduction & fares simplification package

Initiative C2 - Youth fare discounts/ reductions

Initiative C3 - Jobseekers' discounts/ reductions

Initiative D1 - Supporting the transition to digital ticketing

Initiative D2 - Supporting multi-operator ticketing as the norm

Initiative D3 - Supporting multi-modal ticketing integration

Initiative E1 - Transport Hubs and Wider Environment

Initiative E2 - Enhancement of bus stops
Initiative E3 - Roadworks co-ordination
Initiative E4 - Interaction between bus services and other modes

Initiative F1 - Brand identity
Initiative F2 - Marketing, promotion, and communications
Initiative F3 - Travel guides and journey planning
Initiative F4 - Within journey information
Initiative F5 - Providing network stability

Initiative G1 - Investment in Zero Emission Vehicles
Initiative G2 - Retrofitting vehicles to a minimum level
Initiative G3 - Enhanced passenger environment

Initiative H1 - Bus Passenger Charter
Initiative H2 - Improving bus passenger safety

Initiative I1 - Community and Demand Responsive Transport Strategy
Initiative I2 - Dynamic Demand Responsive Transport trial
Initiative I3 - Supported services and COVID recovery

Initiative J1 - Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4)
Initiative J2 - West of England Bus Strategy
Initiative J3 - Planning policy
Initiative J4 - Future Transport Zone
Initiative J5 - Key Route Network

Policies

Transport policies

The current Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4) provides the overarching framework of transport policies. By 2036, the region will have a well-connected sustainable transport network that works for residents, businesses, and visitors; a network that offers greater, realistic travel choices and makes walking, cycling and public transport the natural ways to travel.

JLTP4 incorporates five core objectives:

- Take action against climate change and address poor air quality;
- Support sustainable and inclusive economic growth;
- Enable equality and improve accessibility;
- Contribute to better health, wellbeing, safety and security; and
- Create better places.

A sustained reduction in car dependency and a substantial shift towards the use of sustainable transport modes will be pivotal to the achievement of these objectives. The bus plays centre-stage in this process, particularly against the backdrop of the climate emergency statements of the West of England authorities including their pledge to reach net zero carbon by 2030.

The West of England Bus Strategy (adopted 2020) established the objectives and direction for our bus network. It set a target of doubling bus passenger journeys in the region by 2036, to be achieved by restructuring the local bus network around a system of hubs and interchanges, accompanied by a simplified route network to open up new journey opportunities.

The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) proposals, and related Bus Transformation Fund for North Somerset, will significantly enhance the region's bus infrastructure, enabling the improvements to bus frequency, speed and availability set out in our

BSIP. The proposals will strengthen our network of strategic corridors with bus lanes and priority, Transport Hubs, and standardised bus stops, help to build Liveable Neighbourhoods and a network of walking and cycling routes for local journeys, provide access to bus routes, and enable innovation to trial new transport approaches.

The regional Transport Decarbonisation Study (TDS) is currently in progress. It will assess the carbon impact of current plans, clarify the scale of the challenge, and identify further actions that will be needed to achieve our shared ambition to deliver a carbon-neutral network. Interventions set out in the BSIP will help progress towards the realisation of our net zero carbon ambition by enabling and incentivising modal shift to buses, transitioning towards a fully zero-emission fleet and growing the number of bus passenger journeys.

Our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) sets out a package of infrastructure measures to deliver improvements to walking routes serving 30 local high streets and 55 continuous cycle routes, creating a West of England wide network. These plans are integral to our strategic corridor approach, providing strong links between the bus network and the places where people live, work, and play. Infrastructure rollout on key corridors will complement bus infrastructure proposals.

Complementary policies

Through the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) for the Combined Authority area and the North Somerset Local Plan, both due for consultation in Spring 2022, sustainable locations for strategic housing and employment development will be set out, including an emphasis on maximising accessibility to sustainable transport modes. Through the local councils' consultations, better design principles for new developments will build on these themes to reduce car dependency and encourage the use of alternative modes.

Designation of the Key Route Network (KRN) provides further potential to reallocate certain duties at a strategic level, potentially accelerating delivery of challenging decisions around reallocating road space to sustainable transport modes.

Parking management and pricing - current parking policy continues to progress a reduction in longer stay parking provision in central areas, through reallocating land use in Bath, Bristol and Weston-super-Mare for regeneration and public realm improvements, as well as a transfer to short-stay spaces by the rollout of Residents' Parking Zones around Bath and Bristol city centres. Residents' Parking Zones are also being introduced in North Somerset. The authorities will review existing parking standards in their local plans to look for opportunities to further reduce car dependency. Further interventions in the provision and pricing of parking will also be brought forward dependent on the conclusions of the TDS referred to above.

Enforcement - More robust enforcement of on-street parking infringements including in bus lanes, facilitated by the existing decriminalisation of stationary and moving traffic violations by our constituent councils.

Road-space reallocation - as noted above, the CRSTS infrastructure programme will prioritise the transfer of road-space on key corridors to bus, cycling and walking schemes. This investment will be complemented by more robust enforcement of on-street parking infringements including in bus lanes, facilitated by the existing decriminalisation of stationary and moving traffic violations by our highway authorities.

Effect on neighbouring areas

Engagement has taken place with neighbouring LTAs in the development of the BSIP and EP. Cross-boundary bus services that do not play a role in the local bus network in the EP Area are included in the definition of Exempted Services in EP Scheme 1. All neighbouring LTAs have published BSIPs and are developing EPs. Dialogue will continue with neighbouring LTAs to ensure that a proportionate approach is taken towards the imposition of Operation Requirements on cross-boundary bus services.

We will engage with the relevant public bodies in Wales but the sole Welsh operator running into the EP Area has already been involved in engagement with the LTAs.

Review of EP Plan and EP Scheme

The EP Plan will be reviewed every year after it has been made, in conjunction with the annual review of the BSIP. The EP Schemes will be reviewed twice a year by the EP Advisory Panel - once after completion of the annual review of the BSIP and once after reporting of progress towards the BSIP targets. The outcome of reviews and any recommendations arising therefrom will be reported to the EP Board.

Reviews will consider how well the EP Plan and EP Schemes are working, progress towards targets and general factors affecting the local bus market.

In addition to formal reviews, the EP Advisory Panel will give bus users and stakeholders an avenue to bring issues to the attention of the EP Board.

Impact on small or medium-sized bus operators

An assessment has been carried out of the impact of the EP Plan on small and medium-sized bus operators (SMOs). Several Bus Operators fall into this category and their needs have been considered in the light of the feedback they have given during engagement. The LTAs recognise that SMOs may not be well-placed to implement the requirements of the EP quickly, and adjustments have been made to reflect that.

Engagement with operators on the BSIP started in June 2021, with all operators and trade body WEBOA being invited to an online meeting, followed by engagement with operators individually to address issue of concern, then further meetings from September 2021 onwards.

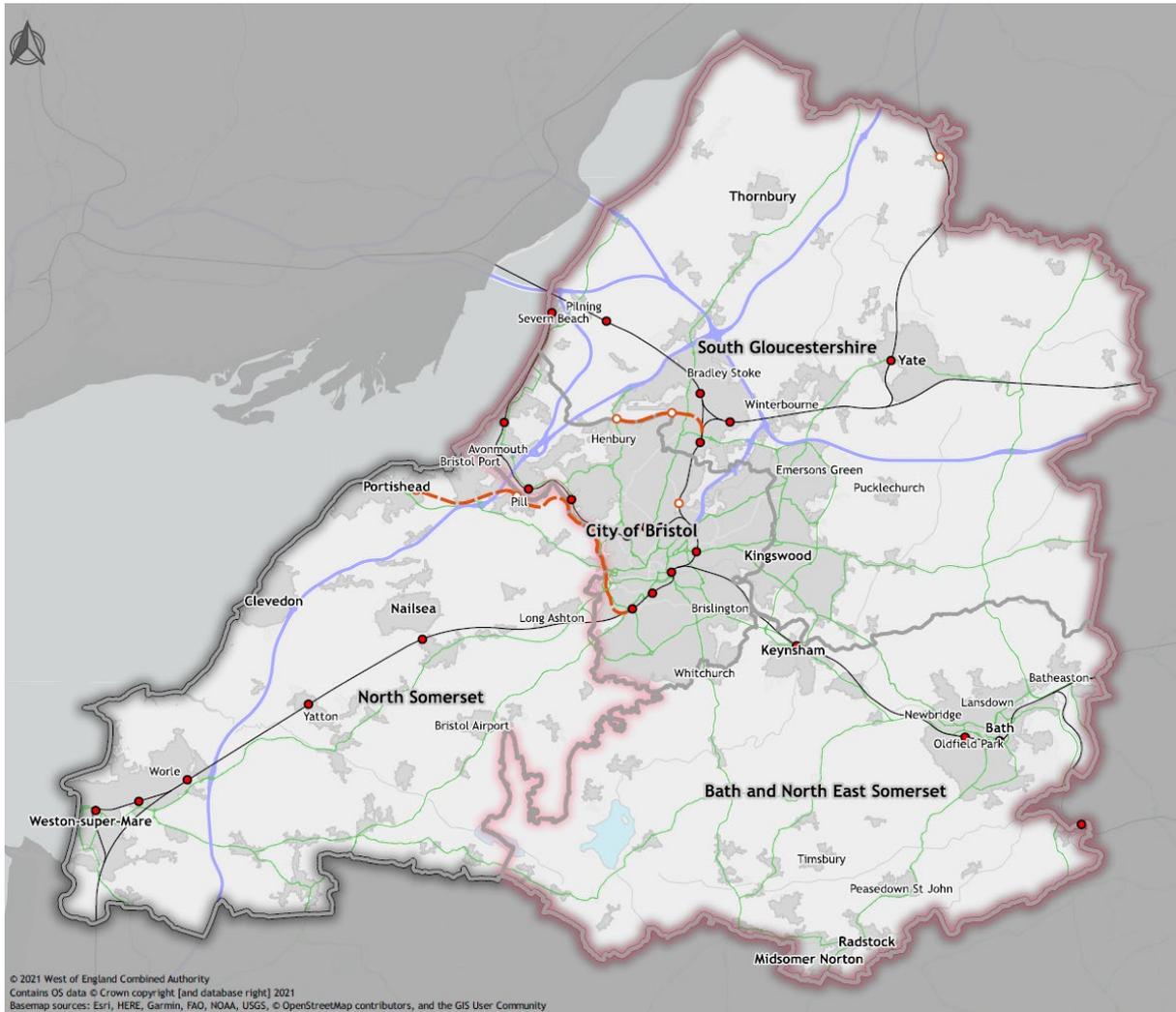
Following publication of the BSIP, a series of meetings on the content of the EP with operators collectively started in November 2021 and some individual meetings were held additionally.

The concerns raised and feedback received have been put in a table in Appendix 2 and evaluated to contain only those which are pertinent to SMOs. This table has been assessed to fully consider the impact on SMOs when introducing the EP. Mitigation measures have been included in the table which will now form the main discussion points with operators during engagement meetings.

The principal issues raised were around costs and timescales. It is generally acknowledged that smaller operators will take longer to implement changes because they do not have access to the same level of resources as larger operators. To mitigate this, a proportionate approach will be taken to the implementation of Operation Requirements, noting that much of the planned capital investment by the LTAs will take place over a long time period. Exemptions and derogations will be considered in appropriate circumstances too.

Appendix 1 to EP Plan - Geographical area covered by West of England EP Plan

Geographical area covered by West of England Enhanced Partnership Plan



Appendix 2 to EP Plan - Assessment of the impact on small and medium-sized operators (SMOs)

Issue	Feedback from SMOs	Mitigation	Comments & Next Steps
Electronic Bus Service Registration	Lack of technical / financial support (for operators not under extensive contracts to scheduling software providers)	EBSR will help avoid some of the glitches in timetable data supplied. Support will be provided by LTAs to SMOs	LTA commitment added to EPS 1.
Public facing s19 and s22 operations (as part of the wider network)	Not referred to in the BSIP or draft EP document, but needs to be covered. LTAs should agree not to use s22 operations as a cheap option.	Vehicles operated under s19 permits cannot be used for services open to the general public. Bus services operated by vehicles with s22 permits are excluded from EPs.	LTAs will follow guidance by entering into voluntary agreements with s22 service providers where they form part of the local bus network.
Procurement processes for contracted bus services	Not referred to in the BSIP or draft EP document. LTAs need to commit to fair procurement processes. Allegations of practices favouring large providers and changes being made to contract specification after award.	All public bodies have policies which should ensure a fair and transparent procurement system that provides value for money is in place. There is an established process to challenge procurement decisions. Contracts have flexibility for changes to be negotiated after award	Procurement of contracts is not an issue for the EP but LTAs will review their processes to ensure fairness to all potential bidders. A competition test will be carried out on the EP Schemes
Meaningful consultation with service users and providers over revisions to supported services.	No commitment to do this by LTAs	Consultation forms part of the established procurement process but there are circumstances when it is not possible owing to the need to respond to events at short notice.	Consultation will take place on all planned route and network changes, and this will be carried out by LTAs and operators within the framework of the EP.
Upgrade vehicles to Euro VI emission standard.	The target to get all vehicles to Euro V1 emission by 2023 is unachievable for small operators. Lack of financial support available support to retrofit. Retrofit supplier previously caused serious issues.	Funding will be available to support retrofitting or replacement. Use of existing funding options such as CAZ and Govt funding bids will be supported. LTAs will consider exemptions until 31 December 2025 in circumstances such as: (i) A longstanding contract with linked assets (exempt to the	The wording of EPS1 will include the flexibility described. It is recognised that contract prices may rise to reflect the higher standard being required on bus service contracts.

	Euro V vehicles are only 4 or 5 years old.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) end of the initial contract term); (iii) Short term emergency contracts of no more than 13 months duration; (iv) Where the value of the required modification exceeds the value of the asset; (v) Operators of 5 or less vehicles under a full national/international Operator's Licence held within the EP area; (vi) Historic vehicles used for special events. 	
Cost of installing new ticketing systems to facilitate multi-operator ticketing	Operators have different systems, to align them will be costly	<p>This is going to be a gradual process and financial support will be available</p> <p>Subject to Committee decision the West of England CA will fund the purchase and installation of tap off readers</p> <p>Tap off readers could make reimbursement for concessionary travel fairer for operators by linking it directly to the actual fares' revenue forgone.</p>	A national delivery platform (Coral) is being developed for post-pay capped ticketing. Coral will provide a solution that will encompass all operators where it is applied to a local product
Low fares in urban areas	Expectation on operators to fund upgrading vehicles and reduce fares from an increase in revenue that materialises from new bus priority measures. LTAs likely to receive funding for additional staff but BBB payments to transport authorities will pay for additional employees but operators will bear the brunt of the costs	<p>The aspiration for low fares in urban areas is in the National Bus Strategy.</p> <p>In the EP, operators will be asked to review their fares in urban areas and satisfy themselves that fares for travel within those areas are not a barrier to potential bus users.</p>	Local fares have been applied in Yate and Thornbury and have been successful in encouraging local travel.
Concessionary travel	<p>Reimbursement rate for has gone down since free travel was introduced.</p> <p>Concessionary travel has only returned to</p>	<p>Operators have access to Bus Recovery Grant funding from Government to cover the shortfall in revenue.</p> <p>Reimbursement for concessionary travel has been</p>	The Government guidance for 2022-23 acknowledges that the underlying assumptions behind reimbursement calculations are outdated.

	<p>55% of pre-COVID levels this will create a huge shortfall in operators' revenue.</p> <p>Whilst patronage is still recovering, operators need financial support to enable services to be maintained.</p>	<p>maintained at pre-Covid levels except where mileage operated is lower than 100% of pre-Covid.</p> <p>A significant part of the payment is currently a subsidy because actual travel is much lower.</p> <p>Government has published guidance on a progressive reduction to actual levels during 2022-23.</p> <p>The rate will be recalculated in accordance with prevailing Government guidance in time to publish a new rate for 2023-24.</p>	
Governance arrangements	Concern about board membership and the numbers of SMO operator votes not being sufficient.	Include operators with total employees in the UK of more than 250 people involved in bus operations but that have less than 50% of total mileage on Local Services in the EP Area	The proposed EP governance structure has been amended to reflect the points raised.
Exempted Services	Services for football are noted as exempt but this should include all sporting and special events		The proposed EP governance structure has been amended to reflect the point raised.

West of England

Enhanced Partnership Scheme 1

April 2022 - DRAFT

Enhanced Partnership Scheme 1

THE WEST OF ENGLAND ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP SCHEME 1 FOR BUSES IS MADE JOINTLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 138G(1) OF THE TRANSPORT ACT 2000 BY THE WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY AND NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL

Definitions

In this Enhanced Partnership Scheme, the terms listed in the left-hand column of the table below shall have the terms shall have the meanings ascribed to them in the right-hand column.

1985 Act	Transport Act 1985 (as amended)
2000 Act	Transport Act 2000 (as amended)
2017 Act	Bus Services Act 2017
AVL	Automatic Vehicle Location
B&NES	Bath and North East Somerset Council
BCC	Bristol City Council
Bespoke Variation Arrangements	Arrangements made under Section 138E of the 2000 Act and detailed in paragraphs 4.13 to 4.21 (inclusive)
BSIP	The West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan, as published jointly by the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council on 29 October 2021 and subsequent updates
BTF	Bus Transformation Fund
Bus Operator	Operator of one or more Local Services in the EP Area
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
CMA	Competition & Markets Authority
Competition Test	An assessment of the impact of a proposed scheme on competition, in accordance with Schedule 10 of the 2000 Act
CRSTS	City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement
EBSR	Electronic Bus Service Registration
EP	Enhanced Partnership as defined in section 138A of the 2000 Act
EP Advisory Panel	A representative group of partners and stakeholders, as described in paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9, who provide advice to the EP Board
EP Area	The geographical area defined in paragraph 1.1 below
EP Board	A representative group of partners, as described in paragraphs 4.4 to 4.7 (inclusive), who make decisions on the EP
ETM	Electronic Ticket Machine
Exempted Services	Those Local Services described in paragraph 1.4 below
Facilities	Those facilities referred to in paragraphs 2.2 to 2.11 (inclusive) below which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of Section 138D(1) of the 2000 Act
Fixed Change Date	One of two nominated dates in each calendar year decided by the EP Board - before the end of the previous calendar year - on which changes to Local Services in the EP Area can be made
HOV Lane	High-Occupancy Vehicle Lane
Improvement Notice	A notice issued to a Bus Operator by the LTAs after assumption of Relevant Registration Functions in the event that a Bus Operator should fail to comply with any of the Requirements or should fail consistently to meet the agreed standards for punctuality and reliability
iPoint	Installation at bus stop on metrobus routes to provide information and sell tickets
JLTP4	Joint Local Transport Plan 4, adopted in March 2020

KRN	Key Route Network
Local Highway Authorities or LHAs	Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council
Local Planning Authorities or LPAs	Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council
Local Service	A bus service as defined in Section 2 of the 1985 Act
Local Transport Authorities or LTAs	The West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council in respect of the roles defined in Section 108(4) of the 2000 Act
Measures	Those measures referred to in paragraphs 2.12 to 2.25 (inclusive) below which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of Section 138D(2) of the 2000 Act
NSC	North Somerset Council
Operation Requirement	A requirement referred to in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.31 (inclusive) below, imposed under Section 138A(5)(b) of the 2000 Act, other than a Route Requirement
QPS	Quality Partnership Scheme made under Section 114 of the 2000 Act
Qualifying Agreement or QA	Qualifying Agreement as defined in paragraph 17(4)(a) of Schedule 10 to the 2000 Act
Requirement	A requirement imposed under Section 138A(5)(b) of the 2000 Act
Relevant Registration Functions	The functions of the Traffic Commissioner to the extent that they relate to a Relevant Service, both within the meanings given to them under Section 6G(10) of the 1985 Act
Route Requirement	A requirement referred to in paragraphs 3.32 to 3.36 (inclusive) below, imposed under Section 138A(5)(b) of the 2000 Act that falls within Section 138C(1) of the 2000 Act
RTI	Real-Time Information
SGC	South Gloucestershire Council
SMO	Small or medium-sized bus operator
TC	The Traffic Commissioner, as defined in Section 4 of the 1985 Act, for the West of England Traffic Area
TRC	Traffic Regulation Condition made under Section 7 of the 1985 Act
TRO	Traffic Regulation Order made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement as defined in Section 153(2) of the 2000 Act
WEBOA	West of England Bus Operators' Association
WECA	The West of England Combined Authority

1 Scope and commencement date

Description of Geographical Coverage

- 1.1 EP Scheme 1 will support the improvement of all Local Services operating in the areas covered by the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council. A map of the area is in Appendix 1.

Commencement Date

- 1.2 EP Scheme 1 is made on xx xxxx 2022. It will have effect until 31 March 2027 and will be reviewed twice a year by the EP Advisory Panel.
- 1.3 Not all the requirements of EP Scheme 1 will come into force at the commencement date. Certain Facilities, Measures and Requirements will be introduced subsequently at the relevant dates listed or when specified conditions have been met or when funding becomes available.

Exempted Services

- 1.4 The following types of Local Service are exempt from the requirements of EP Scheme 1:
 - A Local Service that is covered by EP Scheme 2 (the metrobus network);
 - A Local Service that starts or finishes outside the EP Area and which is available for the general public to board at five or fewer bus stops in the EP Area on journeys into the EP Area and which is available for the general public to alight at five or fewer bus stops on journeys out of the EP Area;
 - A Local Service that operates to an academic institution outside the EP Area for the principal benefit of students of that institution;
 - A Local Service that operates in conjunction with sporting and other events for the specific purpose of carrying attendees to and from such events;
 - A Local Service that is not available for use by the general public;
 - A Local Service operated under a Community Bus Permit

2 Obligations on the local authorities

- 2.1 The West of England Combined Authority, its constituent local highway authorities and North Somerset Council commit to the various interventions listed in this section.

Facilities

- 2.2 The West of England Combined Authority, its constituent local highway authorities and North Somerset Council will provide the Facilities listed below for Local Services except Exempted Services.
- 2.3 Subject to funding, the West of England Combined Authority, its constituent local highway authorities and North Somerset Council will provide additional Facilities for Local Services during the lifetime of the EP and will use the Bespoke Variation Arrangements to include them in EP Scheme 1 if appropriate.

Bus lanes and bus gates

- 2.4 The West of England Combined Authority, its constituent local highway authorities and North Somerset Council will provide the bus lanes listed in Appendix 3.

Bus stops

- 2.5 The West of England Combined Authority, its constituent local highway authorities and North Somerset Council will provide the bus stop clearways listed in Appendix 3.

HOV lanes

- 2.6 The West of England Combined Authority, its constituent local highway authorities and North Somerset Council will provide the HOV Lanes listed in Appendix 3.

Real-time information (RTI) displays

- 2.7 The West of England Combined Authority, its constituent local highway authorities and North Somerset Council will maintain RTI display screens at bus stops and bus stations in a fit-for-purpose condition and replace screens as soon as possible that are beyond repair.

Timetable display cases

- 2.8 The West of England Combined Authority, its constituent local highway authorities and North Somerset Council will maintain timetable display cases at bus stops in a fit-for-purpose condition and replace cases as soon as possible that are beyond repair.
- 2.9 Subject to funding, the LTAs will buy and install roadside displays at all bus stops in the EP Area except alighting points.

Website

- 2.10 The West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council will maintain a website as the principal repository of information on public transport and sustainable travel in the EP Area. For the time being, the brand Travelwest will be used but this will be reviewed as part of the rollout of a comprehensive brand for the local public transport network.

Ticketing equipment

- 2.11 Subject to decision in January 2022, the LTAs will fund the provision and installation of tap off readers on bus operators' vehicles operating in the EP Scheme area.
- 2.12 The LTAs will provide funding to assist bus operators running registered local services in the EP Scheme area to offer contactless payment facilities to passengers.

Measures

- 2.13 The West of England Combined Authority, its constituent local highway authorities and North Somerset Council will provide the Measures listed below for Local Services except Exempted Services.

Enforcement

- 2.14 The LHAs will use their discretionary powers to enforce the bus lanes listed in Appendix 3 and will not reduce their budget for enforcement below the level in 2020-21.
- 2.15 The LHAs will use their discretionary powers to enforce parking regulations on bus routes and will not reduce their budget for enforcement below the level in 2020-21.
- 2.16 Subject to funding, LHAs will increase enforcement of bus lanes and parking regulations on principal bus corridors.
- 2.17 When powers to enforce moving traffic offences are made available by Government, the LHAs will apply for them and, if successful, implement an enforcement regime at the earliest practical opportunity.
- 2.18 By October 2022, the LTAs will set up a process with LHAs and bus operators to monitor bus punctuality on principal corridors and consider interventions to improve punctuality through the process outlined in Appendix 4.

Management of road works and street works

- 2.19 By October 2022, each LHA will establish with local bus operators a consistent process to minimise disruption to local bus services from both planned and emergency road works and street works. This will include liaison with bus operators to ensure that the co-ordination of road works and street works across the EP Area minimises disruption to bus services. It will also set out their processes and procedures for the provision and management of street works permits in the EP Area.

Bus revenue support

- 2.20 The West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council will not reduce their budget for revenue support for non-commercial bus services below the level in 2020-21.
- 2.21 The West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council will award bus service contracts in sufficient time to allow Bus Operators to meet the 70-day pre-notification deadline and an additional two-week period for changes to highway infrastructure if relevant (see paragraph 3.24 below) except in cases where emergency arrangements have to be made at short notice.

Concessionary travel

- 2.22 The West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council will review the reimbursement rate for concessionary travel by November 2022 in accordance with Government guidance at that time and will publish a new interim rate for 2023-24 calculated accordingly.

Planning

- 2.23 The Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) will consult relevant bus operators at an early stage in the planning process for large development sites, to consider how best to provide accessibility for bus services.
- 2.24 The LPAs will seek proportionate developer contributions for bus revenue support and bus infrastructure from large and medium-sized developments.

Bus infrastructure maintenance

- 2.25 The LHAs will not reduce their budget for cleaning and maintenance of bus stop infrastructure - including shelters, poles, flags and RTI units - below the level in 2020-21.
- 2.26 The LTAs and LHAs will work together to establish a consistent standard of cleaning and maintenance of bus stop infrastructure across the EP Area. Implementation will be subject to funding.

General

- 2.27 In addition to the commitments made above, the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council will provide assistance to operators to meet various Operation Requirements as follows:
- Transition to Electronic Bus Service Registration
 - Retrofitting or replacing vehicles to meet Euro VI emission standard
 - Review of multi-operator ticketing

3 Obligations on bus operators

Operation Requirements

3.1 All Local Services in the EP Area except for Exempted Services will be subject to the Operation Requirements outlined in this section.

Vehicle standards

- 3.2 By 31 December 2023, all buses must meet Euro VI emission standard or better, by retrofitting if necessary. Exceptions will be considered by the LTAs at their discretion for limited periods for special events or in cases where emergency arrangements have to be made to provide a Local Service at short notice or for any other exceptional circumstances. Some examples of exceptional circumstances are given in the Assessment of the Impact on SMOs in Appendix 2.
- 3.3 By 31 December 2035, all buses must be zero-emission.
- 3.4 Bus Operators will work with the LTAs to accelerate the transition to a fully zero-emission fleet at an earlier date if possible, by submitting bids to Government funding opportunities.
- 3.5 In respect of all new vehicles registered on or after the commencement date of EP Scheme 1 and operating in the EP Area, consideration must be given to the following features:
- CCTV fitted to provide images inside the vehicle for safety and security and also facing outwards from the vehicle to help identify traffic issues
 - Internet connectivity
 - AVL equipment installed to feed into the RTI system
 - Heating and cooling for customer comfort
 - USB charging available, including at every wheelchair space and priority seat
 - Audio announcements on both decks, including through an induction hearing loop at every wheelchair space and priority seat, of next stops and alerts of route diversions - but note paragraph 3.6 in respect of open-top vehicles
 - Visual displays on both decks of next stops and alerts of route diversions
 - Display of onward connection details by bus, train and air, where applicable, from open data sources
 - Ability to take contactless payment
- 3.6 Open-top vehicles operating on Local Services must not have loudspeaker or PA system commentary.

Branding

- 3.7 Bus Operators will co-operate with the LTAs in the development of a single brand for public transport in the West of England area. The aspiration is for the brand to be applied to buses, bus stops, bus stations, trains, railway stations, publicity, posters, websites, ticketing and customer service.
- 3.8 By April 2023, all vehicles operating on Local Services in the EP Area - except those operating on hop on/hop off tour services - must carry the local brand for public transport. The nature and extent of branding (including its bearing on vehicle livery) will be determined in the course of development, but all vehicles operating on Local Services - except for those on Exempted Services - must be readily identifiable as part of the branded local public transport network.

Fares and ticketing

3.9 By April 2023, Bus Operators will have reviewed fares on their Local Services in the urban areas outside Bath, Bristol and Weston-super-Mare to assess the potential to offer local fares for travel within those areas and will have implemented any such offers.

3.10 The following multi-operator ticket types must be sold and accepted on all Local Services in their relevant zones - except hop on/hop off tour services:

- AvonRider - covering the whole EP Scheme Area
- BathRider - covering the Bath urban area
- BristolRider - covering the Bristol urban area
- WestonRider - covering the Weston-super-Mare urban area

The overall scheme for these tickets will be managed by the West of England Bus Operators' Association (WEBOA) or any successor organisation whose membership is open to local operators.

3.11 By 31 March 2023, subject to implementation of the LTAs' commitment to funding in paragraph 2.11 above, all operators will have fitted tap off readers to their buses and will implement daily and weekly capping of fares within the prices of their daily and weekly tickets no later than 3 months after completion of installation.

3.12 Operators will work with the LTAs to review and develop the range of multi-operator tickets, including making them available as m-tickets, with the aim of making multi-operator ticketing the norm when multi-operator fare capping becomes possible. By 29 April 2022, a refreshed agreement for the multi-operator ticketing scheme will be signed off and a rollout plan agreed.

3.13 Software to enable multi-operator fare capping is under development. Operators will be required to enable their ETMs to use it from a date in the future to be set by means of the EP Scheme Bespoke Variation Arrangements.

3.14 Prices for the current multi-operator ticket range at the start of EP Scheme 1 will be as follows:

	Adult	Student / child
AvonRider Day	£7.50	£5.50
AvonRider Week	£32.50	£24.50
BathRider Day	£5.00	£3.50
BathRider Week	£21.00	£16.50
BristolRider Day	£5.30	£3.70
BristolRider Week	£21.50	£16.50
WestonRider Day	£2.70	£2.50
WestonRider Week	-	-

3.15 Prices of all multi-operator tickets will be reviewed every year at a date to be agreed and will be set at little or no premium to equivalent single-operator tickets. Price changes will be implemented by means of the EP Scheme Bespoke Variation Arrangements.

3.16 By April 2023, operators of Local Services that stop at or near railway stations in the EP Area will participate in the PlusBus multi-modal ticket scheme or any successors, including m-ticket functionality for those tickets.

3.17 Operators will co-operate with development of the Freedom Travelpass multi-modal ticket scheme or any successor scheme, including m-ticket functionality for those tickets.

Contactless payment

- 3.18 Operators will make contactless payment available to passengers on all buses in the EP Area.

M-ticketing

- 3.19 Bus Operators will co-operate with the LTAs to move to a single mobile platform such as the Mobility-as-a-Service platform under development.

Standard ticket conditions

- 3.20 Bus Operators will work with the LTAs to review ticket types, ticket zones, ticket conditions and discounts for children, students and jobseekers with a view to harmonising and simplifying the offer to passengers, to reflect changes in lifestyles. This review will be completed by 31 March 2023.

Changes to Local Services

- 3.21 By April 2023, operators will use the Electronic Bus Service Registration (ESBR) process for all registrations, cancellations and variations to Local Services in the EP Area.
- 3.22 Bus Operators will collaborate with the LTAs in a review of their Local Services in the EP Area with the objective of establishing a simplified route network based on radial and orbital corridors in the principal urban areas. Implementation will be subject to funding and delivery of infrastructure schemes to create interchange facilities.
- 3.23 Bus Operators will work with the LTAs to consult bus users and local communities on proposals to change the routes of Local Services in the EP Area.
- 3.24 Bus Operators will notify the LTAs of any proposed changes to Local Services in the EP Area that involve operation along previously-unserved roads, change from single to double decker operation or installation of new bus stops two weeks before the start of the 70-day pre-notification / registration period except where emergency arrangements have to be made at short notice.
- 3.25 All substantial changes to Local Services in the EP Area except Exempted Services and hop on/hop off tours will take place on one of two Fixed Change Dates each year. The LTAs will, in consultation with Bus Operators, set the dates before the end of the preceding calendar year and they will fall on a Sunday in April and a Sunday in August or September, taking account of the occurrence of public holidays and academic terms.
- 3.26 Timetables for seasonal variations, academic terms and connections with rail services will be registered with appropriate dates ranges on the preceding Fixed Change Date, except in unforeseen circumstances.
- 3.27 Minor changes to Local Services in the EP Area and changes to tackle urgent punctuality problems may be made on other dates with agreement of the LTAs.
- 3.28 Bus Operators will supply full and final timetable data to the LTAs 28 days prior to implementation. Data must be complete, fully accurate, conforming with the registered particulars and in a format suitable for use in information systems.
- 3.29 Bus Operators will co-operate with the LTAs to eliminate duplication of bus service numbers in the EP Area on the Fixed Change Date in April 2023, except for low-number series in the Bath, Bristol and Weston-super-Mare urban areas.

Bus Passenger Charter

- 3.30 Bus Operators commit to working collaboratively with the LTAs to develop by 31 October 2022 a Bus Passenger Charter that will set out standards of customer service by all partners and will provide redress to customers in the event that those standards are not met.

General

- 3.31 Bus Operators will co-operate with the West of England Combined Authority in the development and delivery of its Future Transport Zone projects, including Mobility-as-a-Service, Transport Data Hub and Dynamic Demand-Responsive Transport.”

Route Requirements

- 3.32 To mitigate the environmental impact of buses on certain sensitive roads and to ensure co-ordination between Local Services, Route Requirements will be imposed.
- 3.33 Any additions or variations to Route Requirements will be subject to the statutory consultation process with Bus Operators as set out in section 138L of the 2000 Act and detailed in the Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018.

Frequency limits

- 3.34 On the roads listed in the table below, no more than the maximum number of buses per hour shown may be operated on Local Services, except that up to two additional buses may be operated per hour to duplicate timetabled journeys if needed to meet exceptionally high passenger demand.

Road	Section	Maximum buses per hour (bph) on Local Services
Bennett Street, Bath	Whole length	Between 0001 and 0929 daily: 0 bph Between 0930 and 1959 daily: 6 bph westbound and 0 bph eastbound Between 2000 and 2400 daily: 0 bph
Brock Street, Bath	Whole length	Between 0001 and 0929 daily: 0 bph Between 0930 and 1959 daily: 6 bph westbound and 0 bph eastbound Between 2000 and 2400 daily: 0 bph
Marlborough Lane, Bath	Whole length	Between 0001 and 0929 daily: 0 bph Between 0930 and 1959 daily: 6 bph northbound and 0 bph southbound Between 2000 and 2400 daily: 0 bph
North Road, Bathwick	Between Cleveland Walk and Oakley	Between 0001 and 1029 daily: 1 bph south-eastbound and 1 bph north-westbound Between 1030 and 1829 daily: 5 bph south-eastbound and 1 bph north-westbound Between 1830 and 2400 daily: 0 bph

Queen's Parade Place, Bath	Whole length	Between 0001 and 0929 daily: 0 bph Between 0930 and 1959 daily: 6 bph westbound and 0 bph eastbound Between 2000 and 2400 daily: 0 bph
Royal Avenue, Bath	Whole length	Between 0001 and 0929 daily: 0 bph Between 0930 and 1959 daily: 6 bph westbound and 0 bph eastbound Between 2000 and 2400 daily: 0 bph
The Circus, Bath	Northern arc between Brock Street and Bennett Street	At all times: 0 bph
The Circus, Bath	Southern arc between Bennett Street and Brock Street	Between 0001 and 0929 daily: 0 bph Between 0930 and 1959 daily: 6 bph westbound and 0 bph eastbound Between 2000 and 2400 daily: 0 bph
Upper Church Street, Bath	Whole length	Between 0001 and 0929 daily: 0 bph Between 0930 and 1959 daily: 6 bph northbound and 0 bph southbound Between 2000 and 2400 daily: 0 bph

Timetable co-ordination

- 3.35 Bus Operators will work with the LTAs to co-ordinate timetables of separate Local Services operating on common sections of route as far as possible, by means of a Qualifying Agreement if appropriate.
- 3.36 Bus Operators will work with the LTAs to offer good connections to and from rail services wherever possible.

4 Governance arrangements

- 4.1 EP Scheme 1 has been developed jointly by the West of England Combined Authority, North Somerset Council, those bus operators that provide Local Services in the EP Scheme area, and Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council in their roles as local highway authorities and local planning authorities.
- 4.2 It sets out obligations and requirements on the local transport authorities, local highway authorities, local planning authorities and operators of Local Services to achieve the intended improvements, with the aim of delivering the objectives of the BSIP and associated EP Plan.

EP Board

- 4.3 The future content and arrangements for the variation and revocation of the EP Plan and EP Scheme shall be decided by the EP Board, whose members shall comprise one person to represent each of the following groupings:
- The West of England Combined Authority
 - North Somerset Council
 - A Bus Operator that operates more than 50% of the total vehicle mileage operated on Local Services in the EP Area
 - Bus Operators that are subsidiaries of a group of UK bus operations with more than 250 employees that operate less than 50% of the total vehicle mileage operated on Local Services in the EP Area
 - All other Bus Operators collectively
- 4.4 The representative of a Bus Operator that operates more than 50% of the total vehicle mileage operated on Local Services in the EP Area shall have two votes and all other EP Board members shall have one vote. The West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council shall each have a power of veto over any decision of the EP Board, except for any decision that has no direct bearing on their individual geographical area.
- 4.5 All decisions that require the exercise of powers held by Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council in their roles as Local Highway Authorities or Local Planning Authorities will be subject to agreement of those authorities. It is recognised that, should such agreement not be forthcoming, any conditional commitments on Bus Operators in the decision would not be valid.
- 4.6 The EP Board shall normally meet at least once every three months and shall consider the reviews carried out by the EP Advisory Panel.

EP Advisory Panel

- 4.7 The future content and arrangements for the variation and revocation of the EP Plan and EP Scheme will be considered by an EP Advisory Panel, the composition of which shall be determined by the LTAs to represent the following groups of stakeholders:
- The LTAs
 - The LHAs
 - Bus Operators
 - Bus user groups
 - Town and parish councils
 - Large employers
 - Retailers

- The NHS
- Local universities
- Other appropriate stakeholders

- 4.8 The EP Advisory Panel shall normally meet at least once every three months to consider issues related to the operation of the EP Plan and Schemes, to monitor progress towards targets, and to advise the EP Board on key decisions.
- 4.9 At least once a year, a Bus User Forum meeting will be convened as an open meeting for bus users to engage with the LTAs and Bus Operators. This will not form part of the EP governance but any relevant issues arising from it will be reported to the EP Advisory Panel for their consideration.

Review of EP Scheme 1

- 4.10 Once EP Scheme 1 has been made, it will be reviewed by the EP Advisory Panel every six months following publication of data on progress towards targets, as required by the BSIP - and this will ensure any necessary action is taken to deliver the targets set out in the BSIP. The West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council will initiate each review jointly.
- 4.11 The EP Advisory Panel can also decide to review specific elements of the scheme on an ad-hoc basis. EP Advisory Panel members should contact the LTAs by email to transport.operations@westofengland-ca.gov.uk or public.transport@n-somerset.gov.uk explaining what the issue is and its urgency. The LTAs will then decide jointly whether to table it at the next scheduled meeting or to make arrangements for the EP Advisory Panel to meet sooner.

Bespoke Arrangements for Varying or Revoking EP Scheme 1

- 4.12 In accordance with Section 138E of the 2000 Act, a variation to EP Scheme 1 except for an addition or variation to Route Requirements will be subject to the Bespoke Variation Arrangements set out in this section.
- 4.13 Consideration will be given to potential EP Scheme variations requested by a member of the EP Advisory Panel or one of the organisations represented on it. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the BSIP, EP Plan and current local transport policies. Such requests should be in writing and submitted to transport.operations@westofengland-ca.gov.uk or public.transport@n-somerset.gov.uk. The receiving LTA will forward all requests on to the other LTA and all EP Advisory Panel members within five working days.

Decision-making process and bespoke objection mechanism

- 4.14 On receipt of a request for a variation under the Bespoke Variation Arrangements, the LTAs will convene the EP Advisory Panel, giving at least 14 days' notice for the meeting, to consider the proposed variation. If the proposed variation is agreed by all bus operator representatives present, and if the LTAs also agree, a recommendation shall be made to the EP Board. Members of the EP Advisory Panel who are absent or not expressing a view at the meeting (either in person, in proxy or in writing) will be deemed to be abstaining from the decision.
- 4.15 If the EP Board accepts the recommendation made by the EP Advisory Panel, the LTAs will make the EP Scheme variation within seven working days and publish the revised EP Scheme on their websites.
- 4.16 An LTA, LHA or Bus Operator may put forward specific proposals for introducing bus priority measures on an individual section of defined highway or bus corridor.

- 4.17 Bus Operators may also put forward a package of improvements to Local Services on specific corridors or more generally that they agree to introduce if the bus priority measures are delivered.
- 4.18 If the LTAs agree and Bus Operators on the relevant corridor confirm in writing to the LTAs their acceptance of the proposal, the LTAs will vary the scheme using the Bespoke Variation Arrangements, and the obligations on Bus Operators will come into force at a mutually agreed date after the agreed package of bus priority measures has been implemented.

Revocation of EP Scheme 1

- 4.19 If an LTA, LHA or member of the EP Advisory Panel believes it is necessary to revoke EP Scheme 1, a meeting of the EP Advisory Panel will be convened and a recommendation made to the EP Board. If the EP Board decides to revoke the EP Scheme it will follow the legislative procedures for revocation or use the Bespoke Variation Arrangements.
- 4.20 If at any point in the future, any area covered by EP Scheme 1 is included in a bus franchising scheme, the relevant requirements set out in this EP Scheme document will cease to apply to areas covered by the franchising scheme, in line with the arrangements set out in the franchising scheme.

Data sharing

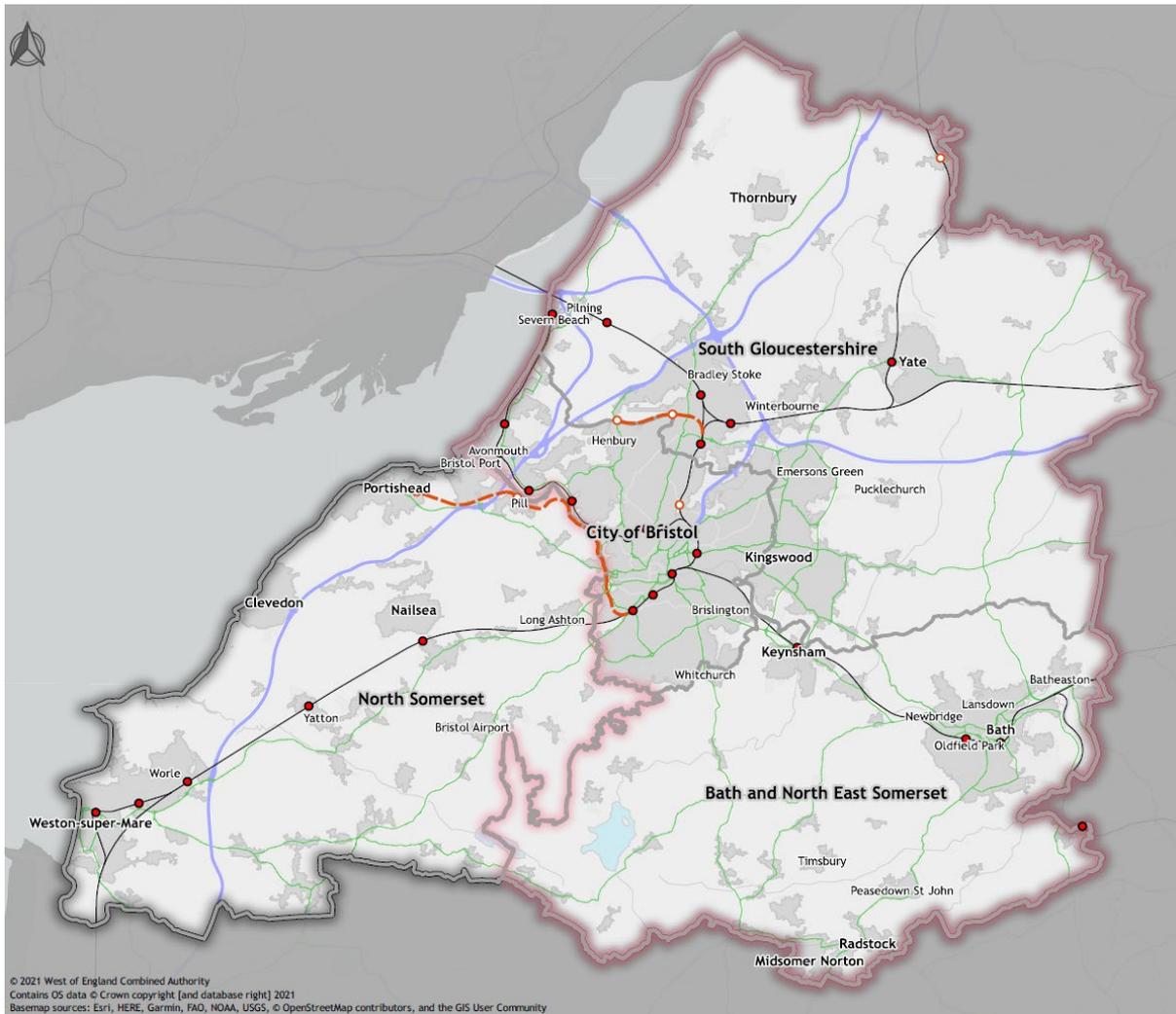
- 4.21 All parties to EP Scheme 1 shall handle personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. Commercially sensitive data shall be subject to Confidentiality Agreements.
- 4.22 Freedom of Information requests shall be handled in accordance with the established procedures of the relevant LTA or LHA.

Assumption of Relevant Registration Functions from the Traffic Commissioner

- 4.23 The 2000 Act requires LTAs that impose Route Requirements to take on Relevant Registration Functions otherwise carried out by the Traffic Commissioner.
- 4.24 The LTAs will work with the Traffic Commissioner and other bodies to assume Relevant Registration Functions at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.25 Assumption of Relevant Registration Functions by the LTAs will provide a focus for joint work by the LTAs, LHAs and Bus Operators to tackle punctuality problems as outlined in Appendix 4.
- 4.26 Enforcement action will be taken only in exceptional circumstances or when there has been a clear and persistent failure by a Bus Operator to take action to meet the Requirements. Appendix 4 sets out the process that will be followed.

Appendix 1 to EPS 1 - Geographical area covered by EP Scheme 1

Geographical area covered by Enhanced Partnership Scheme 1



Appendix 2 to EPS 1 - Assessment of the impact on small and medium-sized operators (SMOs)

Issue	Feedback from SMOs	Mitigation	Comments & Next Steps
Electronic Bus Service Registration	Lack of technical / financial support (for operators not under extensive contracts to scheduling software providers)	EBSR will help avoid some of the glitches in timetable data supplied. Support will be provided by LTAs to SMOs	LTA commitment added to EPS 1.
Public facing s19 and s22 operations (as part of the wider network)	Not referred to in the BSIP or draft EP document, but needs to be covered. LTAs should agree not to use s22 operations as a cheap option.	Vehicles operated under s19 permits cannot be used for services open to the general public. Bus services operated by vehicles with s22 permits are excluded from EPs.	LTAs will follow guidance by entering into voluntary agreements with s22 service providers where they form part of the local bus network.
Procurement processes for contracted bus services	Not referred to in the BSIP or draft EP document. LTAs need to commit to fair procurement processes. Allegations of practices favouring large providers and changes being made to contract specification after award.	All public bodies have policies which should ensure a fair and transparent procurement system that provides value for money is in place. There is an established process to challenge procurement decisions. Contracts have flexibility for changes to be negotiated after award	Procurement of contracts is not an issue for the EP but LTAs will review their processes to ensure fairness to all potential bidders. A competition test will be carried out on the EP Schemes
Meaningful consultation with service users and providers over revisions to supported services.	No commitment to do this by LTAs	Consultation forms part of the established procurement process but there are circumstances when it is not possible owing to the need to respond to events at short notice.	Consultation will take place on all planned route and network changes, and this will be carried out by LTAs and operators within the framework of the EP.
Upgrade vehicles to Euro VI emission standard.	The target to get all vehicles to Euro V1 emission by 2023 is unachievable for small operators. Lack of financial support available support to retrofit. Retrofit supplier previously caused serious issues.	Funding will be available to support retrofitting or replacement. Use of existing funding options such as CAZ and Govt funding bids will be supported. LTAs will consider exemptions until 31 December 2025 in circumstances such as: (i) A longstanding contract with linked assets (exempt to the	The wording of EPS1 will include the flexibility described. It is recognised that contract prices may rise to reflect the higher standard being required on bus service contracts.

	Euro V vehicles are only 4 or 5 years old.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) end of the initial contract term); (iii) Short term emergency contracts of no more than 13 months duration; (iv) Where the value of the required modification exceeds the value of the asset; (v) Operators of 5 or less vehicles under a full national/international Operator's Licence held within the EP area; (vi) Historic vehicles used for special events. 	
Cost of installing new ticketing systems to facilitate multi-operator ticketing	Operators have different systems, to align them will be costly	<p>This is going to be a gradual process and financial support will be available</p> <p>Subject to Committee decision the West of England CA will fund the purchase and installation of tap off readers</p> <p>Tap off readers could make reimbursement for concessionary travel fairer for operators by linking it directly to the actual fares' revenue forgone.</p>	A national delivery platform (Coral) is being developed for post-pay capped ticketing. Coral will provide a solution that will encompass all operators where it is applied to a local product
Low fares in urban areas	Expectation on operators to fund upgrading vehicles and reduce fares from an increase in revenue that materialises from new bus priority measures. LTAs likely to receive funding for additional staff but BBB payments to transport authorities will pay for additional employees but operators will bear the brunt of the costs	<p>The aspiration for low fares in urban areas is in the National Bus Strategy.</p> <p>In the EP, operators will be asked to review their fares in urban areas and satisfy themselves that fares for travel within those areas are not a barrier to potential bus users.</p>	Local fares have been applied in Yate and Thornbury and have been successful in encouraging local travel.
Concessionary travel	<p>Reimbursement rate for has gone down since free travel was introduced.</p> <p>Concessionary travel has only returned to</p>	<p>Operators have access to Bus Recovery Grant funding from Government to cover the shortfall in revenue.</p> <p>Reimbursement for concessionary travel has been</p>	The Government guidance for 2022-23 acknowledges that the underlying assumptions behind reimbursement calculations are outdated.

	<p>55% of pre-COVID levels this will create a huge shortfall in operators' revenue.</p> <p>Whilst patronage is still recovering, operators need financial support to enable services to be maintained.</p>	<p>maintained at pre-Covid levels except where mileage operated is lower than 100% of pre-Covid.</p> <p>A significant part of the payment is currently a subsidy because actual travel is much lower.</p> <p>Government has published guidance on a progressive reduction to actual levels during 2022-23.</p> <p>The rate will be recalculated in accordance with prevailing Government guidance in time to publish a new rate for 2023-24.</p>	
Governance arrangements	Concern about board membership and the numbers of SMO operator votes not being sufficient.	Include operators with total employees in the UK of more than 250 people involved in bus operations but that have less than 50% of total mileage on Local Services in the EP Area	The proposed EP governance structure has been amended to reflect the points raised.
Exempted Services	Services for football are noted as exempt but this should include all sporting and special events		The proposed EP governance structure has been amended to reflect the point raised.

Appendix 3 to EPS 1 - Facilities

Bus lanes and bus gates

LIST(S) OF ALL EXISTING BUS LANES AND BUS GATES TO BE INSERTED WITH LOCATION, DIRECTION, HOURS OF OPERATION AND RESPONSIBLE LHA TO FOLLOW

Bus stop clearways

LIST(S) OF ALL EXISTING BUS STOP CLEARWAY TROs TO BE INSERTED WITH RELEVANT CONDITIONS AND RESPONSIBLE LHA TO FOLLOW

HOV lanes

LIST(S) OF ALL EXISTING HOV LANES TO BE INSERTED WITH LOCATION, DIRECTION, HOURS OF OPERATION AND RESPONSIBLE LHA TO FOLLOW

Appendix 4 to EPS 1 - Delegation of Traffic Commissioner Registration Functions

Reliability and punctuality

It is envisaged that the LTAs will have devolved to them the Relevant Registration Functions of the Traffic Commissioner during the term of the Enhanced Partnership. In the event of such delegation, the LTAs will take a three-stranded approach to use of the powers in respect of punctuality and reliability:

1. Minimum acceptable levels of reliability (Table A)
2. Area-wide targets for punctuality in the BSIP (Table B)
3. Focus on services that are significantly below the area-wide targets

1. Minimum acceptable levels of reliability (Table A)

The EP aims to deliver a significant improvement in service reliability, by working with and potentially enforcing standards of reliability within the control of Bus Operators. The LTAs' investment in Facilities will also support Bus Operators to reduce lost mileage related to traffic congestion. Bus Operators will take action to reduce lost mileage owing to causes within their control, as follows:

Table A: Reliability Standards

Financial Year	% of total registered mileage lost owing to factors within the control of Bus Operators
2022-23	4
2023-24	3.5
2024-25	3
2025-26	2.5
2026-27	2

To inform monitoring, Bus Operators will provide the LTAs with a monthly statement of the following reliability information for each route, comprising:

- Total scheduled mileage operated per route
- Lost mileage within control of Bus Operator: Total scheduled mileage not operated per day, classified into causes owing to: staff shortage (establishment); staff absence and sickness; vehicle shortage; mechanical failure; accident damage; other causes
- Lost mileage related to traffic delays: Total service mileage not operated per day, owing to traffic congestion.

The LTAs will review their approach to monitoring, including greater use of RTI as the system is extended. Where reliability owing to reasons within the control of a Bus Operator falls below acceptable standards, the Bus Operator in question will prepare, in reply to a written request from the LTAs, an Action Plan setting out the steps to be taken to improve and maintain reliability standards. Where appropriate, customer feedback should also be used to inform the Action Plan. The LTAs and LHAs will assist and support the development of the Action Plan and provide feedback on the issues and actions identified.

Where appropriate, a Joint Action Plan will be prepared addressing both reliability and punctuality of a particular service where all parties agree it would be beneficial to do so (see Section 3).

The enforcement approach to be taken is set out below.

2. Area-wide targets for punctuality in the BSIP (Table B)

The LTAs have set a long-term target in the joint BSIP to achieve 95% punctuality by 2030. To demonstrate progress toward the target, the partners will adopt the following targets for punctuality in intermediate years:

Table B: Punctuality targets

Financial Year	% of all buses on time* in the EP Area
2022-23	81
2023-24	82
2024-25	83
2025-26	85
2026-27	87

* Using the TC's definition of "on time"

It has been assumed that greater progress towards the long-term target will be possible when the infrastructure programme has been delivered and its benefits on bus services become evident.

On an area-wide basis, Bus Operators will be monitored against the targets in Table B, subject to a review of performance each year, and changes made using the Bespoke Variation Arrangements. Bus Operators, the LTAs and the LHAs will work together to develop proposals to improve and maintain progress towards these targets.

The LTAs, in co-operation with Bus Operators, will monitor punctuality every month using the RTI system. The approach to monitoring will be kept under review.

The overall approach will be to focus on areas of worst performance in the first instance. The principle will be to work collaboratively and consider the potential of new Facilities, Measures and timetable changes prior to any enforcement of minimum acceptable standards in such areas. This does not preclude the use of other interventions across the network where such interventions have delivered demonstrable improvements in punctuality. The approach to enforcement is set out below.

3. Focus on services that are significantly below the target levels

The LTAs and Bus Operators will work collaboratively to identify those services that are consistently measured as more than 5% below the target for two consecutive months. In some instances, the LTAs may agree with a Bus Operator that a higher threshold would be appropriate for their Local Services.

In respect of Local Services for which punctuality has fallen below the current or agreed threshold, a Joint Action Plan will be prepared, identifying the potential actions and timescales that each party can take to improve punctuality. Each party will meet regularly to consider the actions taken and review further punctuality data as it becomes available. The aim will be to develop a collaborative approach which addresses problems and avoids the need for enforcement. The approach to enforcement is set out below.

Enforcement

The underlying principle of the Enhanced Partnership is that Bus Operators and the LTAs work collaboratively to deliver improvements, address problems as they arise, and jointly agree actions that each partner can take to achieve the long-term objectives. It is expected, therefore, that enforcement action would only be taken in exceptional circumstances or when there is clear and persistent failure by an operator to take the appropriate actions to meet the requirements of the EP Scheme.

Where the LTAs have Relevant Registration Functions delegated to them, the arrangements outlined below shall apply to registrations for relevant Local Services.

The partners will agree minimum acceptable standards of punctuality and reliability for the EP Area, or the various parts of it, in accordance with the standards set out in the Senior Traffic Commissioner's Statutory Document no. 14 (Local Bus Services in England (outside London) and Wales). The LTAs will monitor compliance with the agreed standards.

If a Bus Operator should fail to comply with any of the Requirements in Section 3 of Appendix 4 to the reasonable satisfaction of the LTAs or if a Bus Operator should fail consistently to meet the agreed standards for punctuality and reliability, then the LTAs shall be entitled to serve a written Improvement Notice on the Bus Operator.

The Improvement Notice will detail the failure to comply with the Requirements or meet the agreed punctuality and reliability standards with sufficient detail as the Bus Operator may require to enable the Bus Operator to understand and identify the alleged failure(s).

The LTAs may also, at their discretion, invite the Bus Operator to participate in discussions about any specified failures before an Improvement Notice is issued. Given the collaborative approach envisaged in the Enhanced Partnership, this is the most likely initial course of action.

If an Improvement Notice is served on a Bus Operator which, in the opinion of the Bus Operator (acting reasonably) is factually inaccurate, is unfair or unreasonable, or has been issued in error, the Bus Operator shall be entitled to provide evidence to support their claims. The Bus Operator may also request a face-to-face meeting with the LTAs to discuss the evidence and make representations in person. The parties shall meet as soon as reasonably practicable and discuss the Improvement Notice and the Bus Operator's concerns in good faith. If the LTAs are of the view that the Bus Operator's concerns are valid, they shall withdraw and cancel the Improvement Notice with immediate effect.

The Improvement Notice shall state on its face that it is an Improvement Notice and shall set out the actions which the LTAs require the Bus Operator to take (acting reasonably) to ensure that the Requirements or agreed punctuality and reliability standards are met, do not occur again, and the reasonable timescales within which the Bus Operator is to effect such actions. The Bus Operator shall use all reasonable endeavours to comply with the terms of the Improvement Notice.

In the event that the Bus Operator fails to remedy an Improvement Notice within the specified timescales without reasonable excuse, the LTAs shall endeavour to engage further with the Bus Operator but, as a last resort, reserve the option to cancel the local bus service registration. In some instances, where the LTAs believe that wider enforcement action should be taken against a Bus Operator - for example because there has been widespread failures to operate Local Services in accordance with their registered particulars - they can pass the case on to the Traffic Commissioner, who can consider using his wider powers to put conditions on the Operator's Licence or use the powers in Section 155 of the 1985 Act. This means that the overall enforcement powers in the EP Area are the same as elsewhere.

In arriving at a decision regarding the issuing of an Improvement Notice or cancelling a Local Service registration or referring a Bus Operator to the Traffic Commissioner, the LTAs will take into account the effects of any agreed scheme or improvement which was anticipated to have a beneficial effect on the Bus Operator's operations, but which has not been delivered or materialised, to the extent that the delivery of such scheme or improvement was outside the Bus Operator's control.

Appendix 2 - Features of Enhanced Partnership

- 1 The Bus Services Act 2017 updated previous legislation on partnerships between local transport authorities (LTAs) and bus operators, and it created a new model called an Enhanced Partnership (EP).
- 2 An EP is an agreement between the LTA and local bus operators to work together to improve local bus services. It includes a clear vision of the improvements that the EP is aiming for (an EP Plan) and accompanying actions to achieve them (set out in one or more EP Schemes). It must have the support of a majority market share of local bus operators - and any relevant highway authorities if it includes measures related to traffic regulation orders, parking enforcement etc.
- 3 An EP Plan must include an analysis of the current market, the impact of congestion and local passengers' experiences. It must set out what interventions are needed to improve local bus services, but it is basically a framework within which EP Schemes can be delivered as and when funding becomes available. Much of this content is also required for the Bus Service Improvement Plan.
- 4 An individual EP Scheme can set requirements that all bus services operating in the area, whether new or existing, must meet. Those requirements may include vehicle age and standards, livery and local branding, common ticketing zones and fares conditions, standard discounts for groups such as children, students, jobseekers etc, prices of multi-operator tickets and co-ordination of timetables.
- 5 An EP Scheme cannot regulate fares set by individual operators nor can it require an operator to operate loss-making services.
- 6 An individual EP Scheme does not have to contain commitments by the LTA, but it is highly unlikely that it would receive support from bus operators if it did not. The requirements on an LTA may include provision of new bus stop infrastructure, new bus priority measures, marketing campaigns to promote bus services, changes to parking provision and enhanced enforcement, commitments to restrict roadworks on key bus corridors and application to Government for powers to enforce moving traffic offences. Many of these features are within the gift of the highway authorities so their involvement in an EP is essential.
- 7 There is no prescribed model for governance of an EP but there is a statutory process to follow for amendments and additional EP Schemes. Government recommends that an advisory stakeholder forum be set up – possibly with an independent chair – to facilitate open discussion about current deficiencies in the market.
- 8 The only active EPs have been made by Hertfordshire County Council and the West Midlands Combined Authority. They both took two years to bring to fruition, but Government has challenged other LTAs to develop theirs in nine months, to be completed by April 2022.
- 9 Government published updated guidance on EPs in July 2021. It strongly recommends that the initial EP should “memorialise” all existing agreements such as quality partnership schemes, voluntary partnership agreements, traffic regulation conditions, current expenditure on bus service support, traffic regulation orders for bus priorities, bus shelter maintenance expenditure etc.



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To:
Local Transport Authority Transport Directors (in
England, outside London)

By email

Tuesday 11th January 2022

Dear colleague,

**Bus Service Improvement Plan Funding and Enhanced Partnership
Timescales**

I am writing to you with an update on the timescales for future funding and their link to the development of Enhanced Partnerships or the pursuit of franchising.

The Government is committed to seeing the bus sector return to financial sustainability. However, we recognise the ongoing challenges faced by operators and LTAs to maintain services, including the ongoing bus driver shortage and the impact of the new Omicron COVID-19 variant. The Department is working with the sector to understand how these might impact services after Covid recovery funding ends and what further action might be needed.

Long-term Funding

Thank you for submitting your Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and for committing to the development of an Enhanced Partnership (EP) and/or beginning the statutory process of implementing bus franchising. We are pleased to see that all Local Transport Authorities are engaging with the Bus Back Better strategy, and we look forward to working with you to support the delivery of these plans.

We continue to review and assess the BSIPs covering all 79 LTAs and expect to provide details of indicative funding by February 2022. This will recognise that the budget available for transformation, including for Zero Emission Buses, is around £1.4bn for the next three years and that prioritisation is inevitable, given the scale of the ambition across the country greatly exceeds this amount.

Enhanced Partnership timescale

We acknowledge there is a level of complexity involved in developing an Enhanced Partnership, alongside the fast-changing patterns of travel demand associated with the Omicron COVID-19 variant. We are therefore amending the EP timescale to now ask you to submit **draft** Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes to us by the end of April 2022. Please continue to develop EPs with appropriate variation mechanisms, but there is no need to start the operator objection mechanism process or the statutory consultation stage if you have not already done so. Following the announcement of indicative funding, we will advise on the new date for full EPs to be made and submitted to us. As EPs or franchising remain the only mechanisms through which future bus investment streams will be applied, one or the other will be required in order for LTAs to be eligible for future funding.

Next steps

Once Government has confirmed final funding allocations, all LTAs will then be able to complete the operator objection process and statutory consultation stage and proceed to making the formal EP. Regardless of the level of funding awarded, we want all EPs to:

- Commit the relevant authority or authorities to continue providing existing bus priority measures
- Implement low or no cost improvements including Bus Passenger Charters (as referenced in para 99 of the BSIP guidance) and high-quality information for all passengers (as referenced in para one of the BSIP guidance).
- Be flexible to incorporate further enhancements through variation if funding becomes available.

I would like to thank you once again for your continued cooperation at this key time for the industry.

Yours sincerely



Sharon Maddix
Deputy Director, Bus Recovery and Reform, Local Transport