

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Update: December 2022



Contents

Executive summary	9
Our plan	9
Our current offer to passengers	11
Bus use in the BSIP area	11
Bus services in the BSIP area	11
Our targets	11
Our delivery plans	12
Delivery Plan A: Intensive Services.....	12
Delivery Plan B: Bus priority.....	12
Delivery Plan C: Fares.....	13
Delivery Plan D: Integrated Ticketing.....	13
Delivery Plan E: Integrated Services.....	13
Delivery Plan F: Single Integrated System.....	13
Delivery Plan G: Modern Buses.....	14
Delivery Plan H: Passenger Voice	14
Delivery Plan I: Non-intensive services	14
Delivery Plan J: Longer-term	14
How we will deliver	15
1 Overview	17
1.1 This document.....	17
1.2 Structure of the document.....	17
1.3 Our plans for an Enhanced Partnership	17
1.4 Geographical area covered	17
1.5 Duration of the plan	18
1.6 Ongoing monitoring regime	18
1.7 Policy context.....	18
1.7.1 Implementing the National Bus Strategy	19
1.7.2 Buses form a central part of our ambitious transport plans.....	19
1.7.3 Transport is critical to delivering clean and inclusive growth	20
2 Current bus offer to passengers	22
2.1 Introduction	22
2.2 Evidence used in analysis	22
2.3 Bus use in the BSIP area	22
2.3.1 Trends in bus use.....	22

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

2.3.2	Customer satisfaction and priorities	23
2.3.3	Drivers of patronage growth	24
2.3.4	Services	26
2.3.5	Fares.....	29
2.3.6	Ticketing.....	30
2.3.7	Vehicles	32
2.3.8	Infrastructure	33
2.3.9	Customer information systems.....	33
2.3.10	Branding.....	35
2.4	Other factors that affect the use of local bus services	35
2.4.1	Parking	35
2.4.2	Clean Air Zones.....	36
2.5	Challenges and priorities for growth	36
2.5.1	Meeting the challenges of the National Bus Strategy	36
2.5.2	Stakeholder priorities for improvement	37
2.5.3	Future demand survey	39
2.5.4	Market recovery.....	39
3	Headline targets	40
3.1	Introduction	40
3.2	Our target setting process.....	40
3.3	Bus journey time targets	40
3.4	Punctuality targets	41
3.5	Single passenger journeys targets.....	42
3.6	Passenger satisfaction targets.....	42
3.7	Bus fleet decarbonisation targets	43
4	Delivery.....	45
4.1	Introduction	45
4.2	Delivery Plan A – Intensive Services	51
4.2.1	Our vision	51
4.2.2	Challenges and opportunities.....	51
4.2.3	Options considered	53
4.2.4	Outline of initiatives	55
4.2.5	Expected outcomes of initiatives and alignment to targets.....	61
4.3	Delivery Plan B – Bus priority	65
4.3.1	Our vision	65
4.3.2	Challenges and opportunities.....	65
4.3.3	Options considered	66

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

4.3.4	Outline of initiatives	67
4.3.5	Expected outcomes of initiatives	69
4.3.6	Alignment of plan to targets	70
4.4	Delivery Plan C – Fares	71
4.4.1	Our vision	71
4.4.2	Challenges and opportunities.....	71
4.4.3	Options considered	73
4.4.4	Outline of initiatives	74
4.4.5	Expected outcomes of initiatives	75
4.4.6	Alignment of plan to targets	75
4.5	Delivery Plan D – Integrated ticketing.....	77
4.5.1	Our vision	77
4.5.2	Challenges and opportunities.....	77
4.5.3	Options considered	78
4.5.4	Outline of initiatives	79
4.5.5	Outcome of initiative.....	81
4.5.6	Alignment of plan to targets	81
4.6	Delivery Plan E – Integrated services	83
4.6.1	Our vision	83
4.6.2	Challenges and opportunities.....	83
4.6.3	Options considered	84
4.6.4	Outline of initiatives	84
4.6.5	Expected outcomes of initiatives	87
4.6.6	Alignment of plan to targets	87
4.7	Delivery Plan F – Single integrated system.....	89
4.7.1	Our vision	89
4.7.2	Challenges and opportunities.....	89
4.7.3	Options considered	89
4.7.4	Outline of initiatives	89
4.7.5	Expected outcomes of initiatives	94
4.7.6	Alignment of plan to targets	94
4.8	Delivery Plan G – Modern buses	95
4.8.1	Our vision	95
4.8.2	Challenges and opportunities.....	95
4.8.3	Options considered and alignment to targets.....	97
4.8.4	Outline of initiatives	97
4.8.5	Expected outcomes of initiatives	98
4.8.6	Alignment of plan to targets	99

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

4.9	Delivery Plan H – Passenger voice	100
4.9.1	Our vision	100
4.9.2	Challenges and opportunities	100
4.9.3	Options considered and alignment to targets	101
4.9.4	Outline of initiatives	101
4.9.5	Expected outcomes of initiatives	103
4.9.6	Alignment of plan to targets	103
4.10	Delivery Plan I – Non-intensive services	104
4.10.1	Our vision	104
4.10.2	Challenges and opportunities	104
4.10.3	Options considered	105
4.10.4	Outline of initiatives	106
4.10.5	Expected outcomes of initiatives and alignment to targets	107
4.11	Delivery Plan J – Longer-term	108
4.11.1	Our vision	108
4.11.2	Challenges and opportunities	108
4.11.3	Outline of long-term plans and initiatives	109
4.11.4	Expected outcomes of initiatives and alignment to targets	111
4.12	How we will deliver	112
4.12.1	The Delivery Framework	112
4.12.2	The Role of the Enhanced Partnership	114
4.13	Delivery Schedule	114
4.14	Costs and funding	104
5	Reporting	105
5.1.1	BSIP reporting	105
5.1.2	Reporting against targets	105
5.1.3	Monitoring and evaluation	105
6	Overview table	106
6.1	Progress against BSIP targets	106
6.2	Improvements summary tables	107
	APPENDICES	110
Appendix 1	Foreword - Original BSIP - October 2021	110
Appendix 2	First letter of support for original BSIP	111
Appendix 3	Stagecoach letter of support for original BSIP	113
Appendix 4	Geographical area covered by BSIP	114

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Appendix 5 – List of supported services..... 115

Appendix 6 – Responses to stakeholder engagement 119

Appendix 7 – West of England Corridor Schemes 125

Appendix 8 – Our high-level objectives (the ideal bus network)..... 129

Executive summary

Our plan

The West of England is a strong and ambitious economy founded on highly skilled workers, dynamic clusters of businesses, and research centres that drive innovation. To realise the region's full potential there are challenges to overcome. We have areas of deprivation where people are not able to access the education and job opportunities that would allow them to prosper. Productivity growth has slowed considerably in recent years, yet our population is forecast to grow faster than the national average. At the same time, the climate emergency calls for a radical shift in how people travel around the region.

Our transport network has historically acted as a constraint on growth and productivity. High car ownership and limited bus services have led to fewer bus journeys per head than 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.

Our strategic vision is to ensure that public transport instead acts as an enabler to economic growth and prosperity by enhancing our key economic clusters, widening labour markets, and supporting access to goods and services for all; generating sustainable growth which benefits everyone. By making it easier to access and use public transport, we will get people out of cars and tackle highway congestion. This will improve local air quality, support transport decarbonisation, and improve the health and wellbeing of people in our communities.

Delivering high quality bus services is a crucial part of achieving that vision and buses are the key focus of the public transport network in the area. This Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) sets out our ambitious targets to: reduce bus journey times by 10%, ensure 95% of services run on time, return to pre-pandemic patronage by 2025 and continuing to grow beyond that, increase passenger satisfaction and aim for all buses to be zero emission by 2030.

Ensuring we achieve these targets requires a co-ordinated set of delivery plans across service provision, infrastructure, fares, and integration. Our delivery plans work together in aiming to:

- Make the bus **convenient** - taking our residents where they want to go at the times, they need to travel by extending the current network, enhancing frequencies, and optimising services.
- Make our public transport network **co-ordinated** – by providing a recognisable and consistent brand across the area, easy access to information, integrated ticketing across operators and enabling simple connections across modes and services.
- Deliver a positive **customer experience** – by bringing our bus stops up to a high quality and consistent standard, delivering new accessible and environmentally friendly buses, offering a value for money and affordable service for all, including some targeted fares reductions; also ensuring that people are provided with the right information as and when they need it, all so that buses are an easy-to-use and a natural choice.

Delivering the initiatives outlined in this BSIP is best achieved by collaboration between local transport authorities and operators. That is why the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council are working in partnership with local bus operators and highway authorities to develop an Enhanced Partnership (EP) by January 2023. The EP will be the delivery model for the BSIP – forming a framework for investment into the local bus network. This builds on our strong track record of success in working with bus operators to deliver public transport initiatives – such as the Greater Bristol Bus Network, BathRider and AvonRider ticket schemes, Bath Transport Package, Weston-super-Mare public transport interchange and metrobus.

Update to the BSIP

This document provides an update to the West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) published in October 2021 by the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

The original Bus Service Improvement Plan built on the West of England Bus Strategy (2020) and formed part of a bid to government for funding that would support a programme of work totalling more than £1bn that would deliver long-term benefits to our citizens and businesses. A foreword from the leaders of the authorities at the time of the bid and letters of support from two major bus operators can be found in Appendices 1-3.

In November 2022, the Department for Transport confirmed it would provide £105m for the delivery of the West of England BSIP. This is broken down into £57.5m of revenue for both transport authorities and £48m capital funding to North Somerset Council to deliver some of the initiatives proposed in the plan.

The revenue funding awarded amounts to 38% of what was bid for, although the £105m total BSIP investment was still the second highest in the country. Together with the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) in bus infrastructure, there is an opportunity to make significant improvements that will lead to getting more people on the buses.

Progress against the targets set out in the BSIP are reported on in this update, as are the increasingly challenging circumstances in which we and bus operators are striving to deliver improvements. This includes driver shortages and rising costs.

In this updated Bus Service Improvement Plan, initiatives have been revisited to reflect what can be delivered as a priority through the BSIP funding until March 2025 and up to March 2027 through the CRSTS funding, as well as maintaining a vision for the longer term.

Our current offer to passengers

Bus use in the BSIP area

Bus use in the BSIP area has grown consistently over the fifteen years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, albeit from a relatively low base. It is, however, still some way behind usage in some parts of the country; bus journeys per head in the BSIP area are much lower than the best performing Local Transport Authorities (LTAs). That means there is significant opportunity for bus patronage to grow in response to investment and reach the heights of the best performing LTAs.

Changing habits and evolving markets – in part due to COVID-19 – has led to higher than usual uncertainty. Bus patronage dipped further to 69% of pre-COVID-19 levels (from 70% in 2021) and, while the expectation is that growth will carry on rising as people return to offices and increasingly use the bus to access services, the long-term patterns are uncertain.

Despite this uncertainty, there is significant opportunity to increase bus use in the BSIP area by improving the customer offer to help reach usage levels achieved by other LTAs and exploit our growing population and employment. This BSIP aims to capitalise on that opportunity by improving bus services to drive passenger growth.

Bus services in the BSIP area

The area has made significant progress in developing our bus passenger offer over the past few years, most notably our investment in metrobus which provides a high-quality Bus Rapid Transit network of four limited-stop routes and continued investment in bus priority schemes. Whilst progress has been made, there are significant gaps between the service offer and the ambitions of the area and expectations outlined in the National Bus Strategy.

We need to offer **more frequent** services because only 7% of local bus services run to a high frequency. **Punctuality** of services remains an issue, with some peak scheduled times being up to 40% longer than those in the off-peak hours. While **bus fares** have risen at a lower rate than national levels, they have still risen faster than inflation and are perceived to be high by the travelling public. We need to offer a more **comprehensive** network. Rural areas have a comparatively sparse bus offer which is, generally, reliant on revenue support. Making the network **easier to understand and use** is a priority. There is very low take-up of multi-operator and multi-modal tickets due to premium pricing and poor promotion. The bus network should be **better integrated**. Many of our bus stops are of low quality and lack consistency and the ease of transferring between buses and other forms of transport needs to improve. We are committed to delivering **Net Zero**, but we have only 99 ultra-low emission buses and no zero-emission buses.

Since the pandemic, a key factor affecting the ability of bus operators to deliver reliable services that encourage higher passenger numbers has been a chronic shortage of bus drivers, with First West of England Ltd (trading as First Bus) alone reporting in October 2022 that it was short of over 200 drivers and temporarily cancelling 1450 bus journeys in Bristol in November 2022 in response to the crisis. Total driver shortage in the region is estimated at around 250 drivers. Even where recruitment drives have been successful, retention is an ongoing challenge. Addressing this issue will be paramount to meeting the BSIP's objectives.

Our targets

In recognition of the changes which can be made to our bus network to improve performance and address the issues identified with our current offer, we have developed a set of targets that will be used to measure progress towards the desired outputs, outcomes, and impacts from investment in local bus services. They include:

- **Bus journey time:** Reduce average bus journey times on designated corridors by 2% by 2025 and by 10% by 2030.
- **Punctuality:** Achieve 95% of services running on time, defined as being no more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late, by 2030.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

- **Single Passenger Journeys:** Return to pre-pandemic patronage levels by 2025 and grow patronage by at least 24% from that level by 2030.
- **Passenger Satisfaction:** Increase passenger satisfaction to 89% for 2025 and 95% for 2030.
- **Bus decarbonisation:** By the end of 2023 all buses operating in BSIP area will meet the Euro VI emission standard. By 2030, at least 75% of the local fleet will be either zero-emission or ultra-low emission and by 2035 all buses will be zero-emission. However, our ambition is to bring this forward to 2030 by accessing additional funding through a future ZEBRA call and working with operators to accelerate their plans.

These targets have been informed by our assessment of the status of the bus network, its weaknesses, external comparators such as performance of other Local Transport Authorities and standards set by external bodies such as the Traffic Commissioner. They also reflect a view on what is considered achievable through the initiatives outlined in this BSIP as well as those funded through our City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS).

Our delivery plans

We have developed detailed delivery plans for ten areas where we are looking to make significant improvements to our bus offer. These are based on addressing current and future challenges and opportunities, meeting our targets, and prioritising investments where we can have the most significant impacts. These delivery plans draw on our success in delivering bus projects across the BSIP area as well as reflecting the views of stakeholders, including operators and passengers.

Delivery Plan A: Intensive Services

Our ambition is to provide turn-up-and-go services during the day and more intensive evening frequencies on core urban routes (including orbital routes), supported by good frequencies on key inter-urban corridors and in smaller urban areas.

A key element of this is to redevelop the network to feature more through services at higher frequencies focusing on cross-centre radial routes connecting with orbital services at key interchange points and Transport Hubs.

Our core initiative focuses on our ambitions to deliver a high frequency, accessible bus network. Within this we aim to provide major conurbations (more than 70,000 people) with a minimum provision of 6 buses per hour on radial routes, 4 buses per hour on orbital routes and 4 buses per hour on inter-conurbation routes. Our ambition is limited to our major urban areas. We aim to provide buses at least every hour to all our rural areas with a population over 500, as well as more frequent services to our smaller urban areas.

Delivery Plan B: Bus priority

Our vision is to enable bus priority measures across our key routes and connections to deliver journey times on the network which are reliable and comparable to or better than car travel.

We believe this will require an extensive network of bus priority – particularly on our main urban routes – which is as continuous as possible and reflects our whole corridor approach. Investment on each of the corridors will focus on interventions such as continuous bus lanes, bus priority gates and traffic signal priority. The precise nature of interventions will depend on the characteristics and requirements of the corridor, noting the geographic, ownership and congestion challenges.

The corridors have been prioritised into phases across the BSIP area, with initial priority provided to Sustainable Transport Corridors followed by Town Corridors and then rural and suburban routes. Our plan aims to deliver 100 miles of new dedicated/segregated bus infrastructure by 2027. We will use this bus priority as part of our plans to open four new Transport Hub sites and upgrade three existing locations to make it easier to interchange between car, public transport, community transport, e-scooters, walking and cycling.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Delivery Plan C: Fares

We want a simpler fares system that gives better value for money. To do this, we want to present passengers with a more consistent offer, improved pricing especially for young people and families, and enable fares which support future ticketing systems.

Our first initiative is our intention to offer an operator fare reduction and simplification package reflecting our work with operators to develop a future fares proposition. This seeks to meet our aim to introduce more flat fares and lower point-to-point fares combined with standardising ticket ranges/zones. In our initial package, introduced on 25 September 2022, we have delivered common fare ranges and zones, with new flat fares on all operators. We will work with operators to develop further incentives where appropriate, including discount offers for job seekers and emergency services workers as well as consider options for further discounts for young persons, children, and the wider traveling public. These offers will be reviewed, updated, and added to throughout the life of the BSIP.

Delivery Plan D: Integrated Ticketing

Our integrated ticketing plan aims to provide a single consistent offer to customers across the region. We will deliver wider application of digital ticketing across the network, the integration of multi-operator products onto digital ticketing systems and clearer integrated options for multi-modal products including harmonisation of fare zones, ticket types and conditions.

To achieve our objectives, we have identified three key initiatives. The first is to provide help to operators to upgrade existing equipment to accept bank card tap-on tap-off and introduce adult ticket capping as well as developing a single smartphone ticketing app for the area. Secondly, we plan to address existing gaps in our multi-operator ticketing offer by working with operators to support establishment of multi-operator contactless bank card PAYG systems. Finally, we plan to work with rail and bus operators to deliver multi-modal smartphone ticketing enabling better integration with other forms of travel.

Delivery Plan E: Integrated Services

We want a bus network which provides good access to services from all parts of the region and is integrated with key passenger destinations and other modes. Provision of Transport Hubs form an important aspect and hubs should be high-quality, accessible, and readily identifiable as part of the public transport network. This integration needs to be supported by a high-quality waiting environment, with clean, accessible, safe, and inclusive bus stops and stations.

We are currently reviewing our bus stop standards including information provision to ensure that we have a consistent standard of infrastructure across the region. We will expand the number of additional information displays and develop new enhancements offering more information. In particular, we will improve the design, content and layout for roadside timetable displays in rural areas. We will roll out new full-colour digital displays for all central and interchange locations cascading our older LED displays to other bus corridors. We will review our specification of bus stops to make sure it meets passengers' expectations in terms of accessibility, safety, comfort, cleanliness, and provision of information. We will work closely with bus station operators to ensure that adequate standards for these items are maintained.

Delivery Plan F: Single Integrated System

Our ambition is that local bus services will form an integral part of a single, comprehensive public transport network that will be easily identifiable. To help achieve this our initiatives focus on developing a common brand for the whole local public transport network with co-ordination of marketing activities with operators, the development and implementation of travel guides and journey planning tools and publishing a new Bus Information Strategy for the West of England. Our intention is to provide a stable service pattern which makes it easier for customers to get to know services to commit relevant parts of the timetable to memory and builds confidence.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Delivery Plan G: Modern Buses

We are committed to transitioning the bus fleet to zero emissions across the BSIP area as a contribution towards reaching net zero by 2030. We want to deliver higher vehicle standards, with improvements to the information provision and accessibility of the fleet to support the customer experience.

To achieve this, our key initiative is to invest in zero emission vehicles and by October 2023, we will collaborate with operators to produce a detailed plan that will form part of a future update of the BSIP to set out a 'road map' to deliver at least 75% zero and ultra-low emission buses by 2030, then a fully zero-emission fleet by 2035 with an ambition to bring this forward to 2030. We propose to install up to 20 Ultra-fast 500-amp EV charge points for buses at key interchanges, Park & Ride sites, and layover points. These will be targeted to major interchanges and high frequency corridors originally from 2023/24 to create our first Ultra Low Emission Bus (ULEB) corridors, and the introduction of up to 150 zero-emission buses by 2027.

Delivery Plan H: Passenger Voice

We want to empower bus passengers in the BSIP area, giving them a greater say in the services they use and ensuring that opportunities exist to engage regularly with the LTAs and bus operators. We also want to ensure there is a safe environment at all stages of the passenger journey, including at bus stops, on-board and walking to and from stops.

To achieve these aims we will establish a new Bus Passenger Charter by April 2023, which will set out commitments by the local authorities and local bus operators. The Charter will make it clear to bus passengers what they can expect, how they can get in touch with us and how they can play a more active role in the development of bus services – through our new approach to regular public consultation. Our approach to improving passenger safety considers a wide range of measures including planning and maintaining walking routes from residential areas and from destinations to bus stops with safety in mind. Through the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme, we will encourage bus operators to commit to having CCTV on their buses and ensure their drivers and staff are appropriately trained.

Delivery Plan I: Non-intensive services

Our ambition is to provide public transport services to all those who need it. This will require provision of demand-responsive services to low-density areas. We will also need a strong provision of supported services throughout the region which feed our interchange hubs and connect to bus routes on the core corridors.

We will develop a Community and Demand-Responsive Transport Strategy which aims to reflect passenger demands and develop a fit-for-purpose response. Work is already underway on a Future Transport Zone project to trial Dynamic Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) services in the West of England Combined Authority area, to offer alternative additional public transport, especially in areas where traditional modes do not currently offer a viable option or service.

Delivery Plan J: Longer-term

Looking to the future, we want to lead a greener recovery, which secures a long-term reduction in car dependency and an increase in the use of alternative, sustainable transport modes, including bus travel. This will support our aim of fulfilling our carbon-neutral pledge by 2030.

Our Joint Local Transport Plan 4¹ was adopted in March 2020 and covering the period to 2036, sets out an ambitious package of interventions – including a major scheme programme with a focus on the promotion of public transport, walking and cycling including bus route infrastructure, Park & Ride, and extensions to the metrobus network. It is supported by the West of England Bus Strategy² adopted in June 2020, which

¹ West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council (2020), *Joint Local Transport Plan 4* [\[link\]](#)

² West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council (2020), *West of England Bus Strategy* [\[link\]](#)

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

focuses on our long-term plans for the bus network, setting out an ambitious intention to restructure the local bus network around a system of hubs and interchanges.

Whilst a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) is no longer being progressed, our constituent councils' Local Plans are currently being prepared to consider how to accommodate forecast housing and employment numbers up within the region, with transport sustainability, in terms of accessibility to services by sustainable modes, will feature as a strong guiding principle. Similarly, North Somerset is developing a new local plan.

How we will deliver

We have a growing reputation for delivering successful transport projects and realising the benefits of these. This success has been underpinned by our successful delivery framework which we plan to use in implementing the initiatives outlined here. Effectively combining this with the Enhanced Partnership model is crucial in driving productive relationships with bus operators and other partners and ultimately delivery of our key initiatives.

We are committed to an Enhanced Partnership (EP) in which LTAs, highway authorities and bus operators work together to improve bus services. A critical element of this is establishing a clear vision of the improvements that the EP is aiming for and actions which allow us to achieve these improvements. We will prepare an EP Plan which draws heavily on the content and ambitions outlined in this BSIP.

We have developed an outline schedule for delivering the initiatives outlined within the Delivery Plans. In defining our schedule, we have prioritised those initiatives which secure the highest benefits as well as considering which initiatives can bring benefits quickly. When we created the BSIP in October 2021, we assessed the costs (both revenue and capital) for each of the initiatives outlined in the Delivery Plans. Our recent BSIP funding confirmation now gives us a clearer idea of what we have to deliver initiatives until March 2025, alongside £406m CRSTS capital funding until March 2027. The current allocation of funding is summarised in Table 0 below.

Flexibility over the allocation of funding will be key to adapting to the context and needs of the region as they evolve. On agreement from Government, funding may be moved from one initiative to another according to priority.

Table 0 – Allocation of BSIP and CRSTS funding towards BSIP Delivery Plans (December 2022)

Delivery Plan	Total BSIP Revenue to 2025 (joint)	Total BSIP Capital to 2025 (NSC)	Total CRSTS to 2025 (CA)
A: Intensive Services	£7,500,000	£0	£0
B - Bus priority	£0	£35,160,000	£88,897,520
C: Fares	£21,466,857	£0	£0
D: Integrated Ticketing	£110,000	£70,000	£800,000
E: Integrated Services	£0	£12,753,000**	£0
F: Single Integrated System	£5,700,000	£0	£0
G: Modern Buses	£0	£0	£0
H: Passenger Voice	£80,000	£0	£0
I: Non-intensive services	£19,848,641	£0	£0
J: Longer-term	£0	£0	£0
Delivery (including EP & consultancy)	£2,700,000	£0	£0
Skills training for drivers and engineers	£100,000*	£0	£0
TOTAL	£57,505,498	£47,983,000	£89,697,520***

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

* To be increased to £145,000 on formal agreement from DfT.

** Transport hubs and interchanges

** £406m CRSTS funding available for bus improvement until 2027, with £89.7m allocated towards priority corridors identified in Delivery Plan B below up to 2025.

Each delivery plan remains a priority for the region, with initiatives that have not yet been awarded funding either to be delivered in the longer-term, found funding for in the immediate years and in some cases partly addressed in the medium term through other initiatives.

Ensuring that we can deliver on the targets outlined within this BSIP is a process requiring ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that timely mitigations are put in place to reduce the risk of not meeting the proposed targets.

As set out in the original plan, we will report on progress towards our targets every six months, starting in with this update in December 2022. The BSIP will be updated annually.

1 Overview

1.1 This document

This West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is produced jointly by the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council in their role as local transport authorities to meet the objectives set out in the National Bus Strategy.

The document brings together evidence to set out our ambition to drive patronage growth, boost investment in buses and improve socio-economic and environmental outcomes across the local area.

The decision to produce a joint BSIP was a natural one, given the history of joint working in the sub-region and the operational features of bus services in the area.

Also, North Somerset Council has an aspiration to join the West of England Combined Authority and therefore, to be consistent with the BSIP guidance, wants to ensure that it meets its BSIP obligations by working in partnership.

The two partners adopted a Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4) in March 2020 and a joint Bus Strategy in June 2020.

1.2 Structure of the document

The structure of this document follows the Department for Transport's guidance on the development of Bus Service Improvement Plans:

- Section 1 - gives an overview of the BSIP and policy context
- Section 2 - describes the current provision of bus services in the region
- Section 3 - identifies and sets the headline targets for key outputs and outcomes
- Section 4 - gives more detail around the ten delivery plans introduced above and which will work together in a coherent way to meet the requirements of the National Bus Strategy
- Section 5 - sets out our arrangements for reporting on targets every six months
- Section 6 - summarises the key outputs and how they meet the requirements of the National Bus Strategy.

1.3 Our plans for an Enhanced Partnership

We are committed to developing an Enhanced Partnership (EP) with local bus operators and highway authorities by January 2023. The EP will be the delivery model for the BSIP, forming a framework for investment into the local bus network.

We have a strong track record of success in working with bus operators to deliver public transport initiatives – such as the Greater Bristol Bus Network, BathRider and AvonRider ticket schemes, Bath Transport Package, Weston-super-Mare public transport interchange and the £230m investment in metrobus rapid transit. The impact of this partnership working is illustrated in the consistent growth in pre-pandemic bus patronage locally – contrary to the national trend outside London.

1.4 Geographical area covered

The area to be covered by this BSIP and the first Enhanced Partnership Scheme is the combined areas of the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council. Over 1 million people live in the region, in Bath, Bristol, Chipping Sodbury, Clevedon, Keynsham, Midsomer Norton, Nailsea, Portishead, Radstock,

Thornbury, Weston-super-Mare and Yate, and the surrounding rural areas. A map of the geographical area is attached in Appendix 4.

Travel patterns in the region are based predominantly around the wider Bristol Travel-to-Work area and this aligns well with the two partner authorities' outer boundaries. The principal local bus operator – First West of England Ltd (trading as First Bus) – covers the whole of his area too, with some overlap into Somerset and Wiltshire. Apart from the Weston-super-Mare town network, most bus services from North Somerset run into the West of England Combined Authority area.

1.5 Duration of the plan

The West of England BSIP will cover the period up to 2030, with delivery in two phases:

- Phase 1: up to 2027.
- Phase 2: from 2027 onwards.

Delivery of the first phase relies on the release of BSIP funding on an annual basis up to March 2025, as well as the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) (for capital expenditure in the West of England Combined Authority area). CRSTS funding covers the period from 2022-23 to 2026-27. The BSIP funding covers the period from 2022-23 to 2024-25 only and requires the Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan and Scheme to be made for the first year of funding to be released. Given the delays to making the EP, originally envisaged for April 2022 and as a result of delayed funding confirmation from Government, the timescales for delivering our BSIP initiatives are significantly compressed.

Delivery of the second phase will depend on the availability of future streams of funding.

Delivery of both phases will also depend on organic growth as the local bus market recovers from the pandemic, adjusts to changes in lifestyles and takes advantage of the new funding opportunities to meet the aspirations of the National Bus Strategy.

1.6 Ongoing monitoring regime

The West of England BSIP will be reviewed jointly by officers of the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council in December every year, updated, and reported to the West of England Planning, Housing & Transport Board (comprising the Mayor of the West of England and relevant Members of Bath and North Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council) and North Somerset Council's Executive Member. Updated versions of the BSIP will be published, along with six-monthly reporting of progress towards targets, on the websites of the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council.

The West of England BSIP will be aligned with the Joint Local Transport Plan, Local Cycling & Walking Investment Programme, Bath Transport Delivery Action Plan and Bristol Transport Plan by specific cross-references in future revisions to those documents. It will serve as the 18-month review of the West of England Bus Strategy – to which the Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) were committed.

1.7 Policy context

This Bus Service Improvement Plan sets out our plans to improve bus services. It shows how we will meet the requirements of the National Bus Strategy and how buses contribute to our regional ambitions to develop a well-connected sustainable transport network that works for residents, delivering clean and inclusive growth and helping the transition to a net zero carbon economy by 2030 - in line with our Climate Emergency declarations.

1.7.1 Implementing the National Bus Strategy

The National Bus Strategy, published in March 2021, sets out the Government's vision and opportunity to deliver better bus services for passengers across England, through ambitious and far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered. In return for continued financial support for bus services, the Government expects local authorities and local bus operators to work together to drive up quality and efficiency. The Government wants to create a virtuous circle: increasing usage, but also reducing operating costs so better services can be sustained without permanently higher subsidy. In cities and other congested places, the key intervention will be significantly more ambitious bus priority schemes, making services faster, more reliable, more attractive to passengers and cheaper to run. We strongly support the Government's ambition and this BSIP sets out how we propose to achieve it in the West of England.

1.7.2 Buses form a central part of our ambitious transport plans

We have already set ambitious plans to enhance the region's transport network. Our current Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4), adopted in March 2020, provides the overarching framework within which our BSIP sits. By 2036 we will deliver a well-connected sustainable transport network that works for residents, businesses, and visitors across the region; a network that offers greater, realistic travel choices and makes walking, cycling and public transport the natural ways to travel.

Within the framework of JLTP4, the BSIP, and the preceding West of England Bus Strategy, sets out how we will improve bus services. The BSIP complements, and relies on, other legs of our transport plans, including:

- Our City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement proposals, and related BSIP capital funding for North Somerset. These proposals will significantly enhance the region's bus infrastructure, enabling the improvements to bus frequency, speed and availability set out in this BSIP. The proposals will strengthen our network of strategic corridors with bus lanes and priority, Transport Hubs, and standardised bus stops; build Liveable Neighbourhoods and a network of walking and cycling routes for local journeys and to provide access to bus routes; and enable innovation to trial new transport approaches.
- Our regional Transport Decarbonisation Study (TDS) is now complete. The TDS has assessed the carbon impact of core parts of our programme of major schemes including CRSTS interventions and has identified further strategic actions that will be needed to achieve our shared ambition. The TDS has demonstrated the need to complement infrastructure investment with Demand Management options in order to substantially cut car use and associated carbon emissions. The study findings will inform a forthcoming update to the JLTP4, dependent on guidance from the DfT (expected early 2023). The BSIP also sets out a range of interventions in the bus market that will take us a long way towards 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.
- The West of England Bus Strategy, adopted in June 2020, established the objectives and direction for our bus network. It set a target of doubling bus passenger journeys in the region by 2036, achieved by restructuring the local bus network around a system of hubs and interchanges. This principle would be accompanied by a simplified route network to improve passenger perceptions, open new journey opportunities and boost passenger numbers within the existing envelope of funding.
- Early in 2023, a new Bus Information Strategy for the West of England will be adopted and published. Aligned with our BSIP, this will be a joint strategy between the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council and will set out in detail our approach to delivering bus passenger information.
- Our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan³ sets out a package of infrastructure measures that are needed 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 people live, work, and play.
- A range of policies and plans at a regional and local authority level, including our Spatial Development Strategy and councils' Local Plans, Key Route Network, the Bath Transport Delivery Action Plan and Bristol

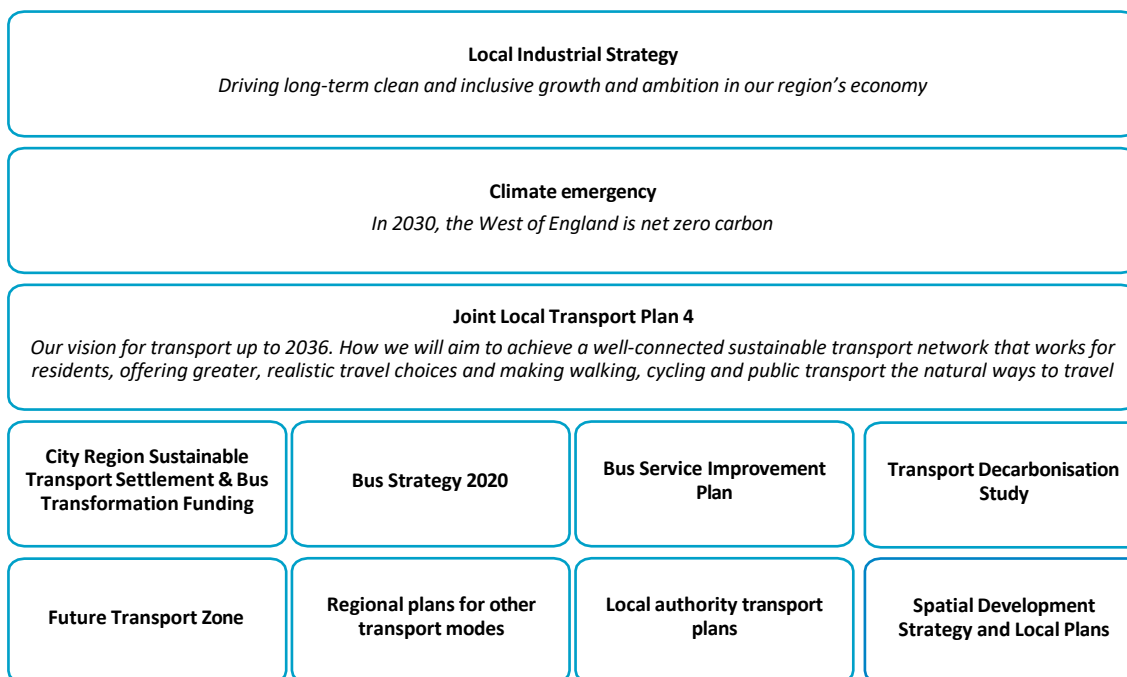
³ West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council (2021), *West of England Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan 2020-2036* [\[link\]](#)

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Transport Plan, and local parking policies. These plans will all affect the level and location of demand for public transport and will help to provide the infrastructure needed to provide enhanced services. A summary of relevant local policies and strategies is shown in Figure 1.

- The recent launch of a Clean Air Zone around Bristol city centre is expected to further boost bus passenger numbers by charging non-compliant car journeys.

Figure 1: BSIP in context of other relevant local policies and strategies



1.7.3 Transport is critical to delivering clean and inclusive growth

Improvement of our bus network is essential for tackling the congestion and blockages in our region that are holding back people's job opportunities and businesses' productivity and growth. It will enable our economy to adapt to a fast-growing population and deliver future prosperity for our residents.

The West of England has a strong economy, providing career opportunities and quality of life for many residents. Our economy is founded on highly skilled workers, dynamic clusters of businesses, and research centres that drive innovation. A higher proportion of our residents have degrees than any other city region outside London. The region is home to highly-productive businesses across a diverse range of sectors, with strengths in aerospace and advanced engineering, financial and professional services, and creative and digital industries.

Despite these strengths, there are significant challenges to be overcome if the region is to meet its full potential, provide opportunities to all residents, and maximise the value of its economic clusters to the UK economy. There are significant areas of deprivation across the region, where people are not able to access the education and job opportunities that would allow them to prosper. Productivity growth has slowed considerably in recent years, threatening our economy. The population of the region is forecast to grow considerably faster than the national average over the next 20 years, bringing more demand for travel and housing development in new locations. At the same time, the climate emergency calls for a radical shift in how people travel around the region.

Our transport network has historically acted as a constraint on growth and productivity. High car ownership and limited bus services have led to fewer bus journeys per head than 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.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

The proposals in this BSIP, complemented by infrastructure improvements under the CRSTS package, present a significant opportunity to enable economic growth, level up left-behind parts of the region, and decarbonise our bus network:

- **Enabling growth:** By targeting strategic transport corridors with investment in more frequent, simpler, and more reliable bus services, we will improve the connectivity between people and businesses in our centres of employment. We have selected priority corridors specifically to connect households with education and employment opportunities. Enabling better connections across the region will allow businesses to access a wider talent pool and collaborate and compete across a wider area, supporting economic agglomeration. Improving bus services will be critical to enabling the housing and employment space that the region will need in the future.
- **Levelling up:** Our strategic corridors, and the wide reach of the bus network, are designed to strengthen connectivity, particularly to deprived and rural communities. The West of England includes communities amongst the most deprived in England. Better services to these places, and to residents without access to cars, will bring wider access to job and education opportunities. Investment in buses will also lead to improved air quality by encouraging modal transfer and a reduction in private car use. Across the West of England, the impact of these issues is much greater on poorer communities.
- **Decarbonising:** Better bus provision is critical to decarbonising our transport system. By providing an attractive, high-capacity alternative, our bus network will enable modal shift from cars, reducing emissions for travel as well as enabling subsequent Demand Management options. Working with operators, our BSIP will directly reduce emissions from the bus fleet.

2 Current bus offer to passengers

2.1 Introduction

In this section of the Plan, we describe:

- Bus use in the BSIP area, including market trends and analysis of key market segments.
- Bus services in the BSIP area, including the quantity, quality, and cost of services.
- Challenges and opportunities for growth.

The section starts with a description of the evidence used in the analysis.

2.2 Evidence used in analysis

To support our review of the current network of local bus services our analysis draws on recent reviews of services included in our Bus Strategy, together with local and national data on bus service attributes and customer views. The sources for this information include:

- Data from local operators
- Customer surveys, including a public consultation in 2020 with 2,000 responses
- DfT bus statistics
- Transport Focus statistics
- National Travel Survey statistics
- Census data.

These datasets provide information on the performance of different aspects of the local bus market and are relevant to our monitoring and reporting regime. Please note that data from 2020-2021 has not been included in this report because of the effect of lockdowns on buses, making this data unrepresentative. There has also been a delay in the publication of Government data for 2021-22.

2.3 Bus use in the BSIP area

2.3.1 Trends in bus use

Bus use in the BSIP area has grown consistently over the fifteen years prior to the pandemic, albeit from a relatively low base. Some of this growth is related to changes in population and economic performance, and a significant part is due to investment in infrastructure, vehicles, fares, and services (see Table 1).

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-October 2021, bus patronage had recovered to 70% of its pre-COVID level (dipping to 69% in 2022), whereas bus mileage operated was over 90% of its pre-COVID level in 2021.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Table 1: Passenger journeys on local bus services by local authority area (million) ⁴

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22*
Bath and North East Somerset	12.9	12.4	11.9	14.7	12.0	9.5
Bristol	35.7	39.1	38.4	42.8	40.3	28.4
North Somerset	6.0	7.7	7.6	5.5	5.3	3.9**
South Gloucestershire	8.8	10.6	10.4	9.3	8.4	6
TOTAL	63.5	69.8	68.3	72.3	66.0	47.8

*LTA data collection from operators (Gov. statistics not published at the time of the December 2022 update of this document)

** Estimate based on average percentage drop across the other LHAs since 2019/20.

Whilst bus use had been increasing, it is still some way behind bus use in some parts of the country. Table 2 shows that bus journeys per head in the BSIP area are much lower than the best performing LTA and lag behind the average for England's metropolitan areas and the average for England as a whole. When benchmarked against other areas, there is certainly room for growth.

Table 2: Passenger journeys on local bus services per head by local authority ⁵

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
West of England + North Somerset	53.0	56.7	61.7	60.0	62.8	57.1
Best performing local authority in 2019/20 (Brighton and Hove) *	157.5	159.8	171.4	170.1	171.8	167.2
Metropolitan areas in England **	83.5	80.6	78.9	76.0	75.0	69.9
England	85.2	82.3	80.3	78.2	76.9	72.3

(*) Excluding London

(**) Metropolitan areas include integrated transport areas of West Midlands, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Merseyside and Tyne and Wear.

2.3.2 Customer satisfaction and priorities

The percentage of passengers in the BSIP area that are fully satisfied ('all satisfied' in the survey) has remained relatively stable since 2014, ranging between 84% and 89% (Table 3). Relative to other areas, customer satisfaction ratings remain closely in line with the average observed for the metropolitan areas in England, although lower than the best performing areas more generally. Customer satisfaction surveys have been run by Transport Focus, the consumer organisation for transport users in the UK, but were paused since 2019. These surveys will restart in 2023.

Table 3: Bus passenger satisfaction by local authority ⁶

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
West of England + North Somerset	84%	89%	85%	89%	85%	86%
First in West of England + North Somerset	85%	88%	85%	88%	84%	86%

⁴ Department for Transport statistics (2020), *Passenger journeys on local bus services by local authority: England (BUS 0109)*

⁵ Department for Transport statistics (2020), *Passenger journeys on local bus services per head of population by local authority: England (BUS 0110)*

⁶ Transport Focus (various years), *Transport Focus Autumn 2015, Autumn 2016, Autumn 2017, and Autumn 2019 Bus Passenger Surveys*

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Stagecoach in West of England + North Somerset	n/a	n/a	88%	n/a	93%	87%
Best performing local authority in 2019 (Nottingham City) *	n/a	n/a	91%	n/a	n/a	95%
Metropolitan areas in England **	87%	86%	85%	87%	87%	87%
England (defined as ranges)	83-93%	79-94%	82-95%	78-94%	75-95%	76-95%

(*) Excluding London

(**) Metropolitan areas include integrated transport areas of West Midlands, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Merseyside and Tyne and Wear.

2.3.3 Drivers of patronage growth

Changes in patronage can be explained by changes in passenger needs and choices. We have identified six themes below to help explain these.

- **Changes in socio demographic factors:** Bristol’s population has grown significantly by 13% over the past 15 years, most notably in the 18-24 age group. During the same period, car ownership has fallen by 2%, with a more significant decline from a peak in 2012/13. Also, North Somerset observed more than 9% growth in population during the same period, while Bath and North East Somerset experienced almost 13% growth for the 15-year period between 2005 and 2019.
- **Changes in the structure of the economy:** The employment rate in Bristol has risen by 6.2%, with 45,000 additional jobs in the local area over the last 15 years. The bus market experiences high demand from commuters at peak times. As part of this, the economic centre of Bristol has evolved and there have been increases in business park activity and out of town shopping – both of which are challenging for buses to service.
- **Alternatives to travel/ongoing digitalisation:** The share of employment in financial services, IT, and professional services is significantly higher than the national average – all industries with relatively high potential for homeworking. From a retail industry perspective, Bristol’s relatively young population are more likely to shop online than on the high street.
- **Changes in the price, quality, and availability of transport modes:** The West of England received a significant £80 million programme of investment as part of the Greater Bristol Bus Network between 2009 and 2012. This focussed on improving 10 bus corridors, benefitting up to 70 bus routes as well as helping to advance the technological offer. This has been supported by a further £30 million invested in the form of 142 new buses in Bristol and 179 buses across the wider West of England. The new buses meet Euro VI emission standards.

The reliability of bus services in Bristol can be impacted by the continued high levels of congestion in the city, particularly at peak times and this is seen as a key challenge. In 2019, Inrix rated Bristol the third most congested city in the UK.

The Fairer Fares scheme was introduced by First Bus in 2013 following a public consultation with local users and the wider public. This scheme overhauled fares and introduced a simpler, more consistent pricing system across the BSIP area. Roughly 70% of journeys witnessed a price reduction.

Further investment of £230 million was made by the Government in metrobus. This Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system was launched in 2018, with bus lanes and high-quality vehicles. Insights from the first year of operation show a largely positive outcomes with a significant number of users having transferred from commuting by car to metrobus.

There are 27 heavy rail stations in the BSIP area and the MetroWest project features a high level of investment in the rail network. In general, local rail services complement the bus network.

The total number of taxis has increased by 27% over the last 14 years but is not seen to detract from bus use significantly.

Cycling in the BSIP area has the highest modal share of any metropolitan area outside London. Despite its popularity, the network has limitations due to the availability of road space. Reflecting the currently network and routes for many journeys, it is not seen as a direct competitor with bus.

Other mobility choices such as electric scooters currently being tested, and other forms of sustainable, individual transport also need to be considered when thinking about how people will decide to travel in the future and how to integrate these in the wider public transport customer proposition.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

- **Integration between modes:** There are limited opportunities for integration between modes other than at interchange points between rail and bus.
- The process of integrating payments via a smart card for all modes started last year. By the end of the project in 2025 people will be able to use their bank card or mobile phone to pay for any journey on public transport
- **Policy and regulation:** The LTAs and operators have worked together constructively on a range of improvements, most recently on metrobus. The West of England Bus Strategy, adopted in 2020, shows a strong ambition to support travel by bus. Over the last decade there has also been a significant roll-out of parking restrictions, especially in Bristol with 15 new schemes introduced between 2011 and 2016. This has led to the removal of thousands of free on-street parking spaces previously used daily by car-borne commuters. Parking pricing in Bristol and Bath disincentivises all-day parking. The bus has become a natural alternative for regular travel into the city centre.

Changes in societal and economic factors are clearly important in explaining the trends. Population growth and changing demographic structure have contributed to increases in bus use. Changes to the structure of the economy and labour markets are likely to have had a relatively small negative impact on demand. There have also been increasing negative pressures on bus use arising from increased digitalisation, including increased digital retailing and remote working – trends that have accelerated through the pandemic. We believe that the biggest driver of change, however, has been the provision of better services and simpler fares. Given the relatively low base for demand, we believe that further investment would lead to further passenger growth.

Bus services in the BSIP area

Improvements in bus services have played a central role in driving the increase in bus use in the BSIP area but there is clearly scope for further enhancements and further growth. In this section of the BSIP we describe current service levels, fares, ticketing, vehicles infrastructure and customer information.

The principal bus operator in the BSIP area is First Bus, which carries 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.

2.3.4 Services

Service miles

In 2019-20, 26 million vehicle miles were operated on bus services in the BSIP area. The published statistics show some fluctuation from year to year. A fall in 2018 was attributable largely to retrenchment in the market when Wessex Bus withdrew their operations. Figures are provided in Table 4 but are not yet available for the year 2021/22.

Table 4: Vehicle miles on local bus services (millions) ⁷

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Bath and North East Somerset	6.6	6.9	7.0	5.6	5.4	4.3
Bristol	14.6	16.2	15.9	10.9	10.8	12.3
North Somerset	3.0	3.0	3.1	4.4	4.4	4.2
South Gloucestershire	3.9	3.3	3.4	4.8	4.9	5.3
Total	28.1	29.4	29.4	25.8	25.5	26.0

Of the total vehicle miles, the LTAs currently provide revenue support for 1.6 million miles (around 6.3%).

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. Together they spend £5.6m per year in financial support for local bus services, excluding payments for concessionary travel.

Table 5: LTA support for non-commercial bus services in the region in 2021/22 ⁸

	Core funding	Devolved BSOG	Developer contributions	Total
West of England Combined Authority	£3,157,472	£1,135,938	£613,952	£4,907,362
North Somerset Council	£613,847	£68,153	-	£682,000
Total	£3,771,319	£1,204,091	£613,952	£5,589,362

A full list of the supported services can be viewed in Appendix 5.

Bus service frequencies

Bus services in the BSIP area are focussed on radial corridors in the urban areas of Bristol, Bath, and Weston-super-Mare. Figure 2 provides a map of this with key features including:

- 7% of all local bus services have six buses per hour or more over most of the working day
- 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

⁷ Department for Transport, *Public Service Vehicle Survey*

⁸ West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council, *Internal analysis*

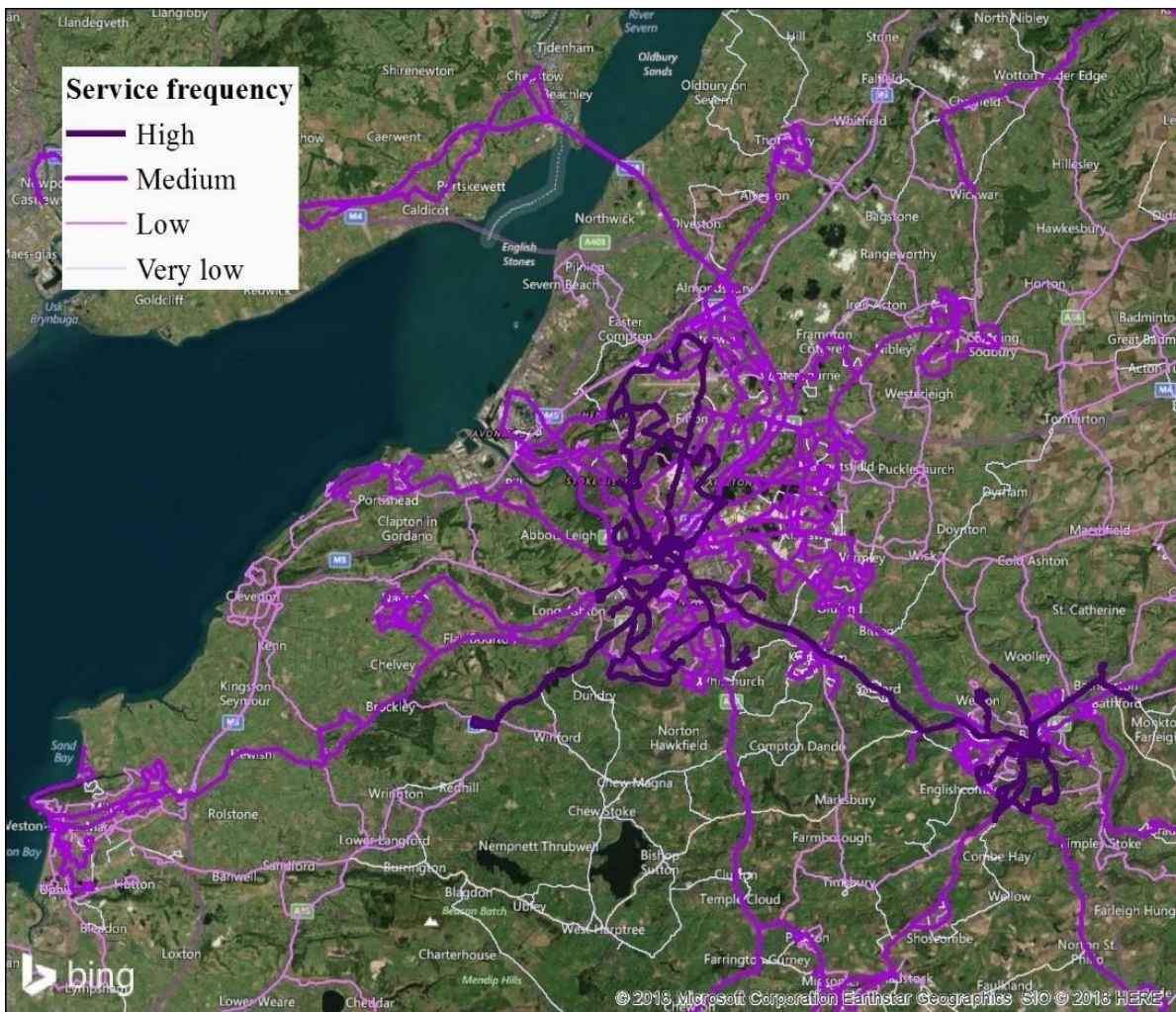
West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

- Not all commercial bus services operate all day, seven days a week. Much of the financial support provided by the LTAs forming 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. Finally, 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.

Figure 2: Bus service frequency by corridor 2019 ⁹



Journey times

Lack of consistency of bus journey times is a 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.

Punctuality

Punctuality can also be an issue. 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.

⁹ Arup (2020), *West of England Bus Strategy, Technical Note 1: Effectiveness of the current bus network*

Table 6: Non-frequent bus services running on time by local authority ¹⁰

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
West of England + North Somerset (unweighted)	76%	77%	78%	82%	77%
Best performing local authority in 2018/19 (Warwickshire)*	91%	92%	96%	97%	97%
Metropolitan areas in England**	84%	83%	85%	84%	83%
England	61%	83%	83%	83%	83%

(*) Excluding London

(**) Metropolitan areas include integrated transport areas of West Midlands, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Merseyside and Tyne and Wear.

Data for 2019/20 was incomplete. Data for 2021/22 is not yet available.

Evidence from the Bus Passenger Survey 2019¹¹, shows that 69% of respondents were very or fairly satisfied with the punctuality of buses in the area. Congestion/traffic jams were listed as the most frequently occurring factor affecting journey times as part of this survey.

2.3.5 Fares

Fares across the BSIP area have varied significantly depending on geographic area, product selection and applicability of discounts. Broadly, we consider the options as including:

- The ‘three-stop-hop’ for short journeys
- Singles and day products provide options for people making longer or multiple journeys over a given day
- Packs of singles for people making fewer regular journeys over a longer time horizon
- Weekly, monthly, and annual products providing options for more regular passengers.

These have been geographically based on Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare or covered the whole BSIP area. The exact offer varies by operator.

In 2019/20, the average cost per single journey in the region was £2.05¹² and the average single passenger journey length was

3.6 miles. This has increased from £1.93 in 2014/15, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Average bus fare in the BSIP area ¹³

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Average fare	£1.93	£1.95	£1.98	£2.00	£2.03	£2.05
Fare increase	n/a	1.0%	1.5%	1.0%	1.5%	1.0%

Bus costs in the region have risen at a lower rate than the national figure and similar to the rate of general inflation (Figure 3).

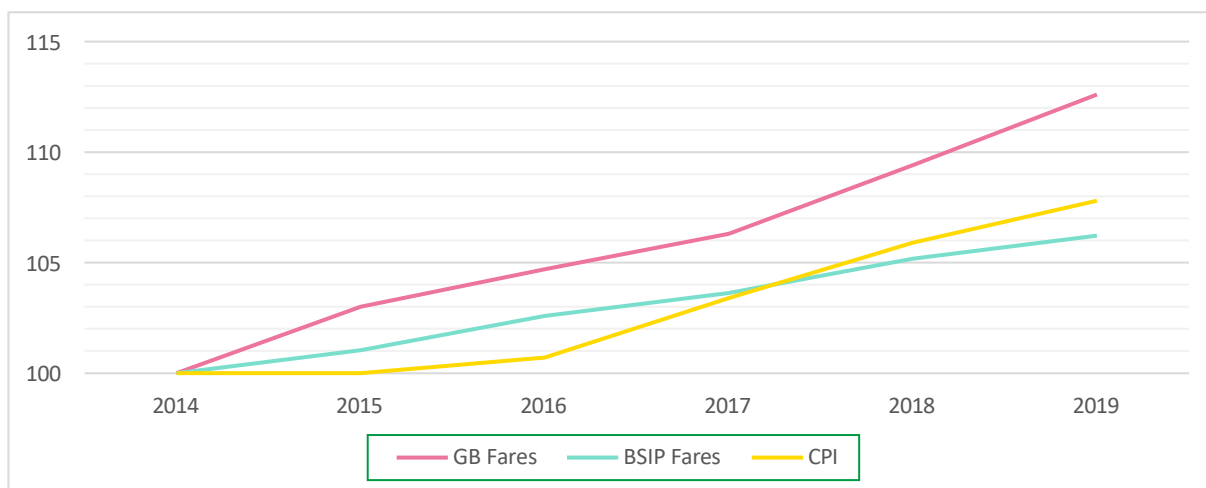
¹⁰ Department for Transport statistics (2020), *Non-frequent bus services running on time, by local authority: England (BUS 0902)*

¹¹ Transport Focus (2019), *Bus Passenger Survey Autumn 2019* [\[link\]](#)

¹² This excludes concessionary travel and child fares.

¹³ Department for Transport, *Public Service Vehicle Survey*

Figure 3: Trend of local bus fare prices as an index (2014=100) ^{14 15}

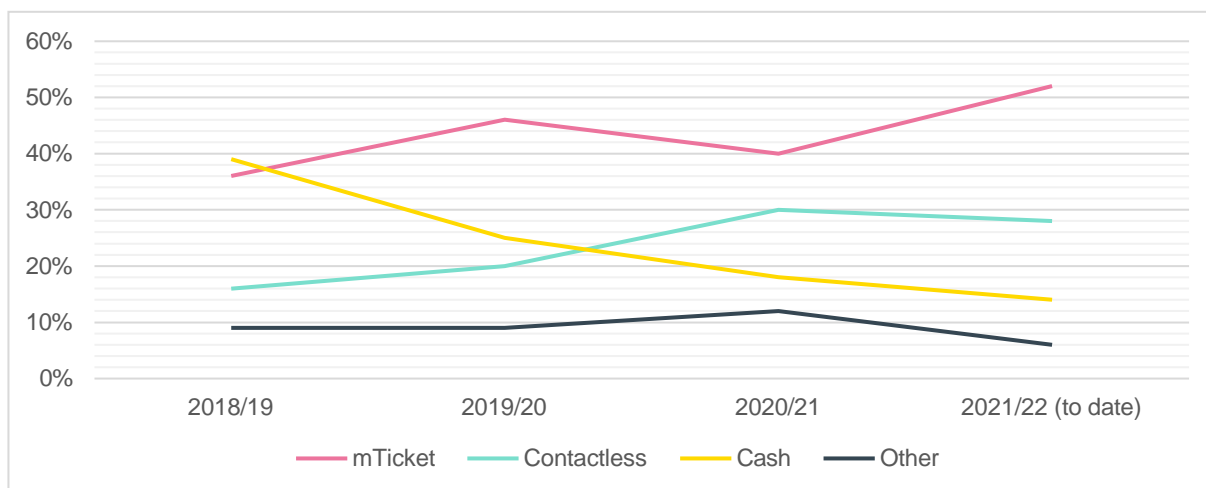


The national concessionary offer provides free travel for those over State Pension Age. Children under five also go free. Discounts for young people and students vary by operator as part of their commercial offer.

2.3.6 Ticketing

Mobile and contactless ticketing is increasing becoming popular in the BSIP area. Figure 4 shows that since 2018/19 the share of revenue for First Bus attributed to cash payments has declined from around 40% to less than 15% in 2021/22. Contactless payment methods have increased their share of revenue from 16% to 28%, with mTickets doubling from 26% to 52% in 2021/22. This is in line with the trend observed in wider society, where payment by cash has followed a continuous decline trend exacerbated since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. ¹⁶

Figure 4: Trend of share of revenue by channel ¹⁷



These trends are replicated by other operators, although in most cases cash remains a higher component reflecting the availability of other ticketing options.

¹⁴ Department for Transport (2021), *Costs, fares, and revenue (BUS04)* [\[link\]](#)

¹⁵ 'BSIP cost per journey' index has been calculated based on the average cost per single journey from [Table 7](#)

¹⁶ Bank of England statistics and UK Finance (2020), *UK Payment Statistics* [\[link\]](#)

¹⁷ First Bus, *Revenue figures*

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

There are currently four multi-operator bus products in the West of England area:

- AvonRider: Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire
- BathRider: Bath urban area
- BristolRider: Bristol urban area
- WestonRider: Weston-super-Mare urban area.

AvonRider, BathRider and BristolRider are available as day or week tickets at adult and child/student rates. WestonRider is available as an adult day ticket only.

These tickets give bus passengers greater flexibility to plan and make journeys than single-operator tickets, but they are sold at a premium of between 5% and 65% dependent on location, product, and passenger characteristics. This currently makes them unattractive for most passengers and sales only make up 1% of total ticket sales.

The current multi-modal offer across the region is limited to PlusBus and the Freedom Travelpass.

PlusBus is an add-on to single and return train tickets as well as season tickets, which offer unlimited bus and rail travel around the regions. There are Bristol, Bath, and Weston-super-Mare tickets.

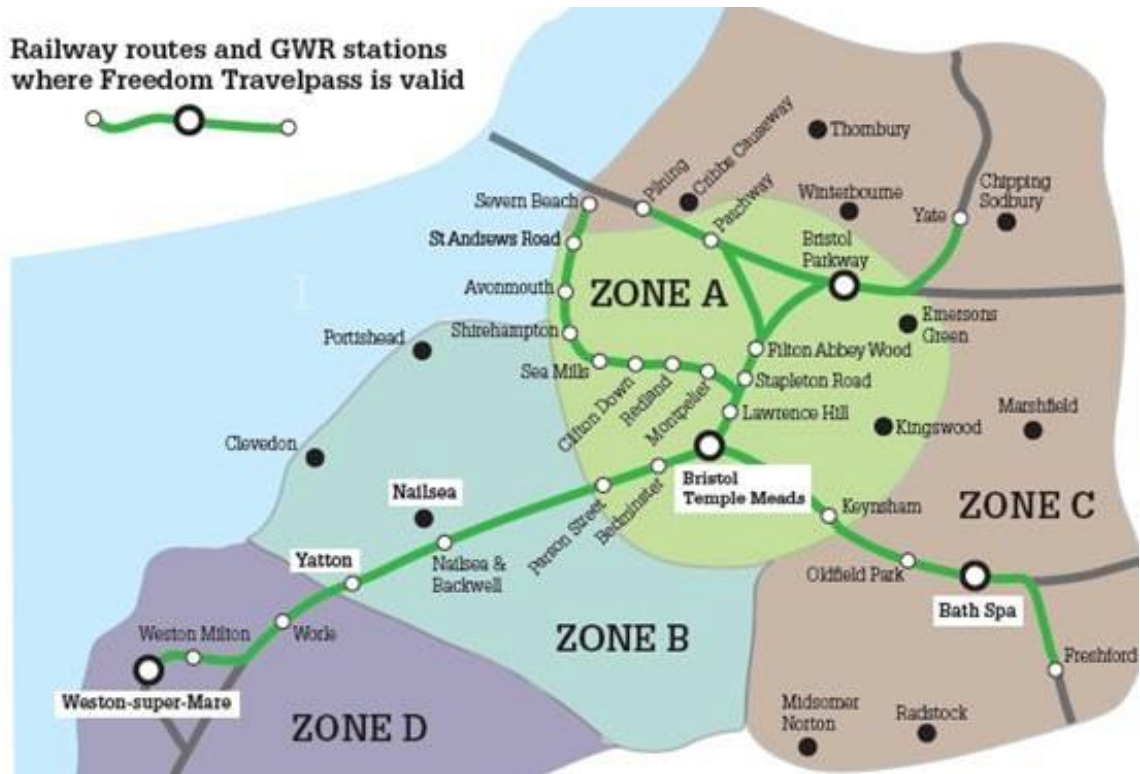
Figure 5: Map of PlusBus Bristol area ¹⁸



The Freedom Travelpass provides unlimited travel on all train and most bus services in the four zones covering the region as set out in the map below. However, the product is not well-publicised. Also, a photocard is required for the monthly Freedom Travelpass, and it can only be purchased from local railway and bus station booking offices.

¹⁸ PlusBus, Bristol zone diagram

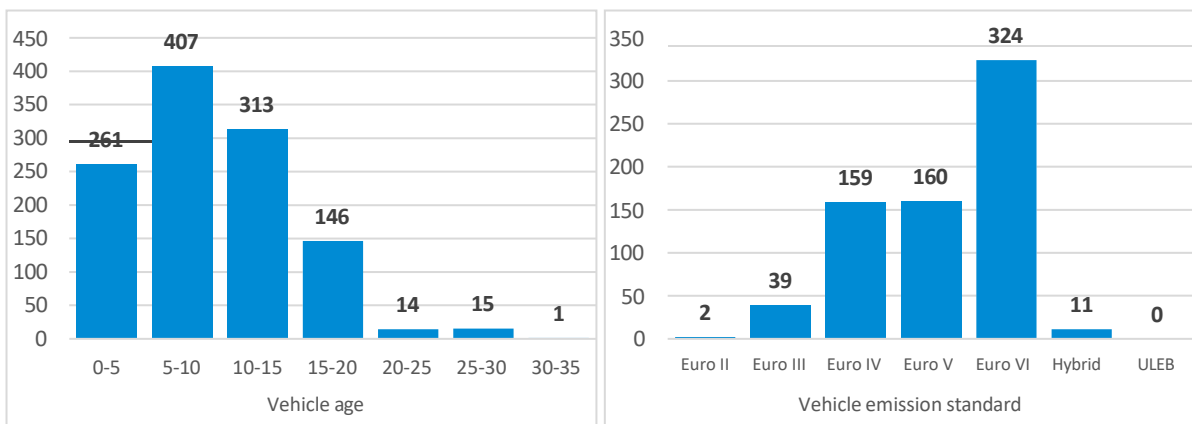
Figure 6: Map of Freedom Travelpass zones ¹⁹



2.3.7 Vehicles

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 age profile and the fleet split by vehicle standard emissions is shown in Figure 7. It can be seen from this figure that the number of hybrid and ultra-low emission buses, which are linked to lower levels of emissions, is negligible at the moment, and this will be one of the areas for improvement discussed in Section 4.

Figure 7: Number of vehicles by vehicle age and by vehicle emission standard ^{20 21}



¹⁹ Travelwest, *Freedom Travelpass travel zones map*

²⁰ West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council, *Internal analysis*

²¹ Number of vehicles by vehicle age (left hand side figure) is referred to all vehicles servicing registered bus routes in the BSIP area, while number of vehicles by emission standard (right hand side figure) is referred to vehicles based in depots within the BSIP area.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

In detail, the average age of the bus fleet operating in the West of England is 9.5 years. This compares to the average 6.7 years of the fleet operating services for Transport for London²², which is almost 8 times larger and funded by the contract prices.

2.3.8 Infrastructure

Bus lanes

All recent major public transport schemes in the BSIP area have included an increase in the number of bus lanes and other bus priority measures. The level of bus lane and other priority mileage excluding High Occupancy Vehicle lanes in 2021 is shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Bus lane mileage in the region ²³

Local authority	Bus Lane Mileage
Bath and North East Somerset	2.36
Bristol	21.19
North Somerset	2.43
South Gloucestershire	8.05
Total	34.03

There is a funded programme in place already to increase the total bus lane mileage substantially and our BSIP includes an ambitious programme to take that further including expansion of the bus rapid transit network.

Bus Rapid Transit network ('metrobus')

One of the most significant investments that we have made in our bus market over the last decade is metrobus. This is a high-quality Bus Rapid Transit network of four limited-stop routes focussed on Bristol city centre, covering over 30 miles of route. It features bus lanes and segregated busways, 90 bus stops with high-profile shelters and iPoints (to sell tickets and give real-time information) and low-emission biomethane buses. One year after its introduction in 2018, bus passenger journeys in the West of England area experienced a notably increase, reaching a record of over 70 million trips. A further route to Cribbs Causeway via Bristol Parkway station will commence in January 2023.

2.3.9 Customer information systems

Information at bus stops

There are more than 5,000 bus stops in the BSIP area, and around 4,000 of these have some form of information provided with roughly 55% having a printed timetable. Our BSIP ambitions include the roll out of more information at bus stops, including digital and real-time displays.

Real Time Information (RTI)

At the beginning of 2021, there were over a thousand RTI displays at local bus stops and interchanges in the BSIP area. Approximately 900 of those are equipped with an audio messaging function, which is particularly helpful for visually impaired passengers. The system uses key fobs to activate the audio announcements and relies on passengers being provided with a key fob to use the audio system.

²² Transport for London (2021), *Fleet Annual Audit Report* [\[link\]](#)

²³ West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council, *Internal analysis*

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Live messaging is used at bus stop RTI displays to inform passengers of disruptions and changes. Depending on the importance of the information, we have the option of using the whole RTI display screen to display messages, or for minor disruptions and general information we can show a scrolling message along the bottom line of the display.

Traveline

Traveline South West is the dedicated bus information site that covers our region. Key components of the Traveline website include:

- Plan your Trip: journey planner for trips across Great Britain as a whole
- Get Departure Times: for next departures from bus stops using real time information
- My Regular Trip: a personal journey plan for regular trips
- Stop Timetables: list of departures from favourite stops
- Route Timetables: for viewing, downloading, and printing individual timetables
- Route Maps: for viewing, downloading, and printing individual route maps
- Contact details for operators and authorities.

Traveline also provide a SMS text message service to customers, and this is promoted on our timetable displays at bus stops. Customers can use this service to access upcoming departure information from their bus stop, receiving the information via SMS text message.

The national Traveline service also provides an app, which replicates the services available from the website.

Travelwest

Travelwest was launched in 2012 to create a central information resource for all transport in the BSIP area. The website brings together information on all modes, as well as providing an information resource for our wider transport network and the work that we do. On average, there are 149,000 entrances to the website and 317,000-page views per month. These figures have grown steadily month on month.

Key components of the Travelwest website include:

- Multi-modal journey planner
- Live arrival times
- Routes and timetables
- Fares and Travelcards
- Travel updates / Disruptions to public transport
- Help centre.

Operators' websites

Large operators such as First Bus and Stagecoach West have a wide number of resources available in their websites. These include timetables, journey planning tools and ticket purchases, and they are built making advantage of their extensive commercial proposition in other areas. This level of resources is not present for smaller operators.

Operators' apps

Many local bus operators have developed their own apps, in addition to their own online websites and resources. Operator apps are popular amongst passengers who used them primarily as a platform for ticketing.

iPoints

Large totem displays, or 'iPoints', have been installed at various locations across the region to bring a range of

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

information and services to passengers. iPoints are a key feature of bus stops on the metrobus network and have also been installed at key interchange points in town centres and at Bristol Airport. These are a unique offer in the BSIP area and are popular with passengers. We plan to increase the number of iPoints as we extend the metrobus network.

On-board Information

Many bus services now have on-board RTI systems in the form of either LED or TFT displays. These displays can be used to provide useful information to passengers on the route, including letting passengers know where they are on the journey by informing them of the next bus stop. Many buses are also now equipped with audio notifications, providing information to passengers such as next stop announcements, as well as safety information. In addition to digital screens, most buses have static poster panels which can be used for information such as maps, service, and fares information as well as other messages.

Other websites and apps

Apart from the operator-led website and apps, there are also third-party alternatives, such as Google Maps and Citymapper, that offer real-time information about bus services and multi-modal travel options. In the case of Citymapper, it must be noted that travel search is combined for Bristol and Cardiff as a single transport area.

2.3.10 Branding

Roughly 90% of respondents to our West of England Bus Strategy consultation rated high quality, consistent and easy to understand information a medium priority or higher. Branding plays a key role in achieving this aim by establishing a common and easily-recognisable identity for all parts of the public transport network.

At present, there are a few examples in the BSIP area of duplication of route numbers between operators outside the principal urban areas. There are no examples of competitive services using different numbers, however. We will work with operators to ensure that route number duplication is eliminated – except that we recognise the value of low number series in each of our large urban areas (Bath, Bristol, and Weston-super-Mare). As explained in Section 4.7, an integrated system will be one of our delivery areas we will focus on in our BSIP.

2.4 Other factors that affect the use of local bus services

2.4.1 Parking

The introduction of Residents' Parking Schemes in Bath and Bristol in previous years has been one of the factors in the growth in bus passenger numbers.

Parking provision is split between public and private ownership, with most large, public car parks located in Bath and Bristol city centres and Weston-super-Mare town centre. Charges are set to deter long-stay parking whilst still providing short-stay parking for shoppers and visitors.

In 2021, in Bath city centre, there were 3,200 off-street public parking spaces – of which 2,200 are in local authority control – as well as 8,000 on-street spaces managed as Residents' Parking Zones (RPZs). In Bristol city centre, there were 9,000 off-street public parking spaces – of which 2,100 are in local authority control. In Weston-super-Mare, there were 4,500 off-street public parking spaces – of which around 3,000 are in local authority control.

All day parking in a public car park in Bath city centre was priced from £15, in Bristol city centre from £13.50 and in Weston-super-Mare town centre from £12.00 to deter all day parking by commuters.

Areas away from the major urban centres have greater private parking provision, which is less likely to feature charges to park. In particular, the Bristol North Fringe has 30,000 spaces provided by employers as well as significant retail parking provision including 7,000 spaces at The Mall regional shopping centre at Cribbs Causeway.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

In small towns such as Portishead, Nailsea and Yate, free parking is provided for supermarket and other shopping for two or three hours.

The first RPZ in North Somerset is being introduced in Leigh Woods to complement the Clifton RPZ that was introduced in Bristol. Various location across Weston-super-Mare have been explored and the first schemes should be bought forward in the coming years. South Gloucestershire accommodates around 2,000 RPZ spaces.

Table 9: Annual spend on parking enforcement 2019/20 ²⁴

Local Authority	Annual spend
Bath & North East Somerset	£3.1m
Bristol	£6.5
North Somerset	£0.6
South Gloucestershire	£1.4
TOTAL	£11.6m

Bristol City Council issues between 50,000 and 60,000 PCNs for bus lane infringements per year. South Gloucestershire Council issues around 23,000 PCNs for parking infringements per year, both by officer and via CCTV enforcement. Bath & North East Somerset Council issues 37,600 PCNs per year, of which 16,100 relate to bus lanes and bus gates.

2.4.2 Clean Air Zones

On 5 December 2022 a Clean Air Zone was introduced around Bristol city centre. Whilst initial results are not yet available, by charging non-compliant vehicles bus use is likely to grow as a result. The scheme is being closely monitored and further updates will be provided when available.

2.5 Challenges and priorities for growth

2.5.1 Meeting the challenges of the National Bus Strategy

The analysis presented above shows that whilst progress has been made, there are gaps between the current offer to passengers and the expectations as described in the National Bus Strategy and supporting guidance for the preparation of Bus Service Improvement Plans.

Table 10: DfT's ambition for bus services against assessment of current bus provision: Assessment of current position

DfT Ambition for services that are:	Assessment of Current Provision:
More frequent, with turn-up-and-go services on major routes and feeder or demand-responsive services to lower- density places.	Only 7% of local bus services run to a high frequency and about a quarter operating with medium frequency. Not all commercial bus services operate all day, seven days a week.

²⁴ Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council & South Gloucestershire Council *Internal analysis*

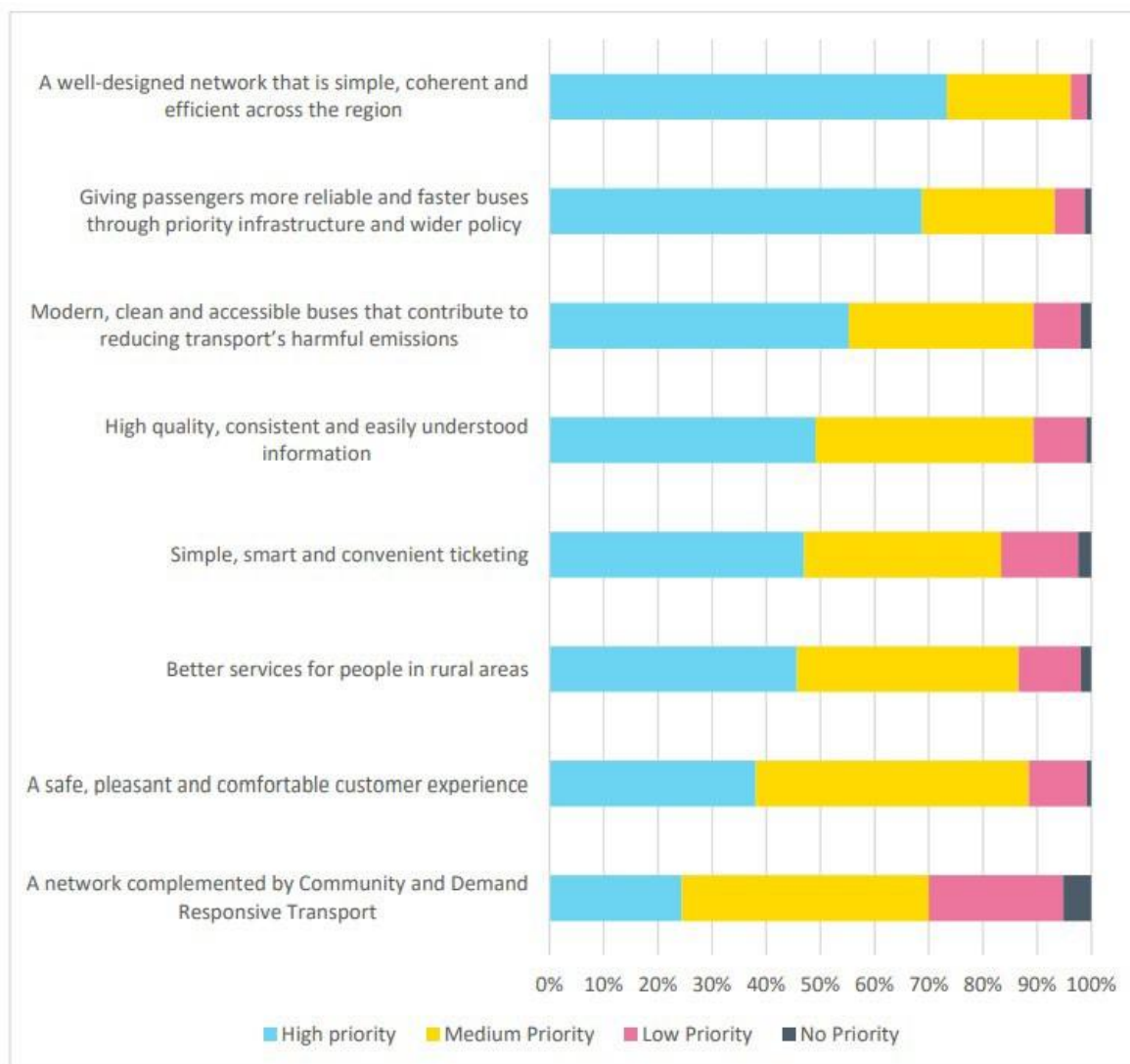
West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Faster and more reliable, with bus priority wherever necessary and where there is room.	Reliability of bus journey times remain a significant issue. Peak scheduled times can be up to 40% longer than those in the off-peak hours in some of the core routes in the region. Late running owing to unpredictable traffic delays is not uncommon.
Cheaper, with more low, flat fares in towns and cities, lower point-to-point fares elsewhere, and more daily price capping everywhere.	Bus fares in the region have risen at a lower rate than the national increase but at a faster rate than inflation. There is also a lack of consistency in the concessions offered to young people by different operators.
More comprehensive, with overprovision on a few corridors reduced to boost provision elsewhere and better services in the evenings and weekends, not necessarily with conventional buses.	There is evidence of overprovision on some corridors. Provision of evening and Sunday services is not consistent.
Easier to understand, with simpler routes, common numbering, co-ordinated timetable change dates, good publicity, and comprehensive information online.	The route network is not logical or straightforward and there are a few duplicated route numbers. Timetable change dates are co-ordinated by voluntary agreement. Publicity is mixed but comprehensive information is available online through Traveline and Travelwest.
Easier to use, with common tickets, passes and daily capping across all operators, simpler fares, contactless payment, and protection of bus stations.	There is very low take-up of multi-operator and multi-modal tickets due to premium pricing and poor promotion. Contactless payment and m-ticketing have become the norm on the larger operators' services.
Better integrated with other modes and each other, including more bus-rail interchange and integration and inter-bus transfers.	There are few interchange hubs, but the principal rail stations have reasonable bus-rail interchange. There are opportunities for improvements at some other stations. Bus stops are of low quality in many places.

2.5.2 Stakeholder priorities for improvement

Extensive public consultation was carried out on the West of England Bus Strategy in February and March 2020 and nearly 2,000 responses were received. The full consultation report is published on the West of England Combined Authority website and can be found [here](#). A summary of customer priorities is presented in Figure 8.

Figure 8: West of England customer prioritisation of Bus Strategy themes ²⁵



‘A well-designed network that is simple, coherent, and efficient across the region’ was identified as the top priority, followed closely by ‘more reliable and faster buses through priority infrastructure and wider policy’. This hints that respondents did not perceive the current bus network to be efficient and easy to use, and that bus services did not look reliable and competitive in terms of journey time against alternatives.

More recently, passenger groups, MPs and the business sector were invited to give their views on the merits and demerits of the local bus network as part of the development of the BSIP. This exercise was carried out between July and August 2021 and 55 responses were received. A full summary of the feedback is in Appendix 6 but five priorities for improvement were identified by more than two-thirds of respondents:

- Improved punctuality
- Cheaper fares
- Better waiting facilities
- More frequent services
- More public consultation on changes.

²⁵ West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council (2020), *West of England Bus Strategy* [\[link\]](#)

2.5.3 Future demand survey

In June / July 2021, the West of England Combined Authority commissioned independent research on two major sources of travel – to work and to shopping – to gather evidence on what businesses were expecting and planning. A representative range of employers across the region were asked about their intentions in bringing workers back to workplaces. Also, we sought to understand expectations among retail businesses – including the food and drink sector – for recovery in footfall. Responses were given by 129 retailers and 650 other businesses.

Employers reported that levels of attendance at the time of the survey were around 60% of pre-COVID levels. They expected this to rise to 85% within three months, but to remain 10-15% below pre-COVID levels after 12 months.

Many of the reasons cited for lower attendance were inherently temporary, including furlough and reduced capacity due to social distancing, which bolstered their confidence that a relatively swift recovery could be expected.

More home working will be a significant factor affecting long-term commuting levels. 11% of respondent employers were considering permanent, full time home working, and a further 24% were considering partial home working. This seems likely to weigh down on commuting levels over the next year. Currently, office lettings remain subdued, but vacancies are considerably lower than the last peak in 2012, indicating that confidence remains in the office market.

Evidence from the retail sector also points to a relatively fast recovery. Retail and food and drink respondents were optimistic – 65% expected that footfall would reach pre-COVID levels or higher by January 2022. Furthermore, 78% expected the same or higher footfall by July 2022. Retailers themselves projected a more optimistic view than representatives of shopping centres.

In summary, the research suggested that travel volumes might recover strongly in the autumn, stabilising at roughly 10% lower than before the pandemic, owing to shifts to home working and in retail patterns.

Over the next two or three years, however, the consequences are less clear, because freed-up offices may allow new or expanding businesses to occupy the same space, bringing workers back to city centres. These adjustments will take time to emerge, as businesses form plans and await tenancy breaks.

Caution should be used in interpreting these results, and the greater risk is that demand will be lower than that it is higher. Many factors influence the expectations of businesses that workers may be reluctant to return to commuting and may be able to exert influence in a tight labour market. Also, the optimism of retailers may not be reflected in the behaviour of consumers who are now used to shopping online.

2.5.4 Market recovery

By mid-October 2021, bus patronage in the BSIP area had recovered to 70% of its pre-COVID level. This is well below the forecast made by the Department for Transport some months ago and on which emergency Bus Recovery Funding was based. Bus operators are required to operate at least 90% of their pre-COVID vehicle mileage to qualify for emergency funding from Government. The disparity between the two percentages highlights a major problem for commercial bus operators. Added to that, there is a shortage of qualified bus drivers because many have been attracted by higher wages on offer in the haulage sector. It seems inevitable that bus drivers' wage rates will have to rise so that bus operators will be able to recruit and retain drivers.

3 Headline targets

3.1 Introduction

The Department for Transport provided guidance to be followed when preparing the Bus Service Improvement Plans. This guidance includes the requirement to specify headline targets, including how these are chosen and what level of improvement is expected for each of these. This section of the document describes the targets we have set for the BSIP area.

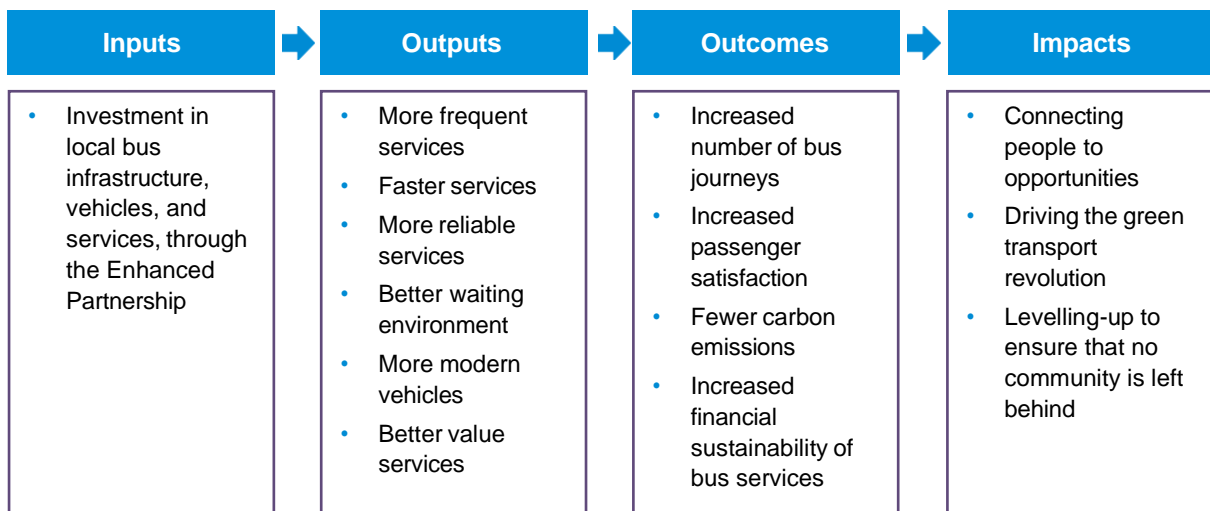
3.2 Our target setting process

In line with the guidance, we have developed a set of targets that will be used to measure progress towards the desired outputs, outcomes, and impacts from investment in local bus services (see Figure 9). The targets include performance indicators for:

- Bus journey times
- Bus service punctuality
- The number of passenger journeys
- Customer satisfaction
- Decarbonisation of bus fleet.

Each target is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely (SMART) and progress towards them will be reported every six months. We have well-established processes to manage performance.

Figure 9: Theory of change linking BSIP inputs to outputs, outcomes, and impacts



3.3 Bus journey time targets

Unpredictable journey times and low frequency services hinder the adoption of bus travel as a convincing alternative to private transport. Our BSIP addresses these issues through activities aimed to improve predictability of bus travel times. Therefore, bus journey times are an appropriate target to measure the impact of our initiatives.

Target 1: Reduce average bus journey times on designated corridors by 2% by 2025 and by 10% by 2030

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Why we chose this target

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.

How our BSIP makes a difference

The extension of bus priority measures will ensure that buses have an advantage over private cars in congested conditions, and our initiatives on fares and ticketing will also speed up boarding times.

The West of England is at a key point in England's Strategic Route Network. Incidents on the M4 and M5 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.

Our headline target is to reduce average, end to end bus journey times on our core, designated corridors by 10% by 2030. The designated corridors are the Phase 1 corridors listed in Delivery Plan B (Section 4.3).

How we will monitor it

Working with bus operators, we will create a representative sample of bus journey times for each area, taken from the registered timetables. The sample will be checked every six months to report on any changes to journey times.

We will work with National Highways to improve the monitoring of the motorway network across the area and their diversion arrangements.

3.4 Punctuality targets

Targets specified in relation to punctuality are related to the targets set by the Traffic Commissioners. There is a process in place already to measure punctuality and report it to Government as National Indicator 178.

Target 2: Achieve 95% of services running on time, defined as being no more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late, by 2030

Why we chose this target

This is the Traffic Commissioners' target for punctuality.

How our BSIP makes a difference

Improved bus lane infrastructure, closer engagement with operators and improved enforcement will help us achieve our punctuality targets by 2030.

A higher level of punctuality will reduce the need for recovery time in schedules and thus ease the pressure for space at terminals and city centre bus stops.

How we will monitor it

As now, punctuality will be measured by schedule adherence reports from our real-time information system, which covers roughly 90% of bus operating mileage in the area and which will be expanded to cover 100% of mileage. The West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council will continue to report separate figures for their own areas to the Department for Transport, for National Indicator 178.

Apart from metrobus routes, we do not measure punctuality at intermediate timing points currently, but we propose to do so using our RTI systems to monitor progress of the BSIP.

3.5 Single passenger journeys targets

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on public transport patronage, and the slow recovery reflects on lifestyle changes as well as reluctance on the part of some passengers to get back to buses. We have an ambitious set of measures to encourage passengers to return, making changes to improve the passenger experience and the reliability of the bus services. This makes passenger journeys a relevant target to measure the success of the initiatives to be implemented.

Target 3: Return to pre-pandemic patronage levels by 2025 and grow patronage by 24% by 2030.

Why we chose this target

The West of England Bus Strategy includes a target to double bus passenger numbers by 2036 from a 2011 baseline. This target was based on trip forecasts arising from the West of England Joint Transport Study (October 2017) and prior to the onset of coronavirus, we were on track to meet that target, amounting to 106 million single bus passenger journeys in 2036-37.

How our BSIP makes a difference

In line with the principles of the National Bus Strategy, our priority will be to restore passenger numbers to pre-COVID levels. The lockdown is likely to have had a lasting impact on travel behaviour. There is anecdotal evidence of a growth in car dependency during the lockdown period, embedding a homeworking trend and a sustained reluctance on the part of some passengers to return to using the bus.

We have prepared a core growth scenario for our single passenger journeys target, in recognition of the uncertainties faced by the bus market at present and before confirmed funding from Government to deliver the BSIP. This scenario envisages passenger numbers returning to pre-COVID levels (70 million per year) by 2025.

Further growth up to 2030 will be achieved by implementation of our BSIP, including an ambitious bus priority programme, enhanced bus service levels on a redesigned interchange-based network, fares reductions and simplified ticketing, more extensive information, and complementary policy-based interventions.

How we will monitor it

Data will continue to be supplied by bus operators as now, counting the number of passenger-boardings within the BSIP area, as recorded on electronic ticket machines. We will work with operators to create a representative sample for each of the reporting areas if possible.

3.6 Passenger satisfaction targets

As part of our BSIP, we are proposing initiatives such as information enhancement at bus stops, engagement with passengers and passenger experience that are aimed to improve overall satisfaction with bus services. This is also included in the guidance set out by the Department for Transport, hence serving as a useful indicator of how the proposed measures are affecting satisfaction and making the bus an appealing alternative to private transport modes.

Target 4: Increase passenger satisfaction to 89% for 2025 and 95% for 2030

Why we chose this target

The most recent Bus Passenger Survey (in 2019) confirmed that 86% of bus passengers in the West of England were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' overall, compared to an average of 89% across England (outside London).

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

How our BSIP makes a difference

Our BSIP contain a range of measures focused on bus service enhancements and better information and accessibility that we expect to increase passenger satisfaction. These measures also include a better integration across services and modes, as well as addressing a challenging customer environment which might deter potential passengers from using the bus network.

How we will monitor it

We will source data from the annual Bus Passenger Survey (BPS) carried out by Transport Focus, which will restart its annual surveys in 2023. Transport Focus will provide interim survey data between annual reports to enable us to report on progress every six months.

We will monitor the various elements of the BPS Passenger Satisfaction measure to ensure that our approach is all-embracing. These elements include:

- Perception of value for money
- Waiting time
- Driver satisfaction
- Vehicle quality and cleanliness
- Available seating
- Bus stop environment
- Passenger information.

In addition to the BPS, we will monitor other surveys of bus users and non-users, including the National Highways & Transport survey.

3.7 Bus fleet decarbonisation targets

While this is not required as a target area in the guidance provided by the Department for Transport, we are determined to meet our carbon-neutral pledge.

Target 5: By 2023 all buses operating in the BSIP area will meet the Euro VI emission standard and by 2035 all buses will be zero emission – with the ambition to bring this forward to 2030.

Why we chose these targets

All local authorities in the BSIP area have declared a climate emergency and have set out action plans to tackle the issue. The National Bus Strategy requires us to set out a path to a zero-emission fleet in the long run and Government is committed to offer funding to support the transition. Also, the Government has expressed that it will carry out a review of the impact of roadside infrastructure on factors affecting passengers' choice for buses, supporting LTAs to provide facilities which encourage greater adoption of these. Two of the largest national bus operators – First Bus and Stagecoach – are committed to have zero-emission fleets by 2035. We have discussed the course of transition with operators, and we believe that our targets are realistic.

How our BSIP makes a difference

We have included a series of initiatives to tackle the current car dependency in the BSIP area. The current environment provides us with a unique opportunity to shift passengers away from a car-led recovery towards a more sustainable way of travelling where cleaner and better bus services underpin this objective.

Our BSIP seeks investment in greener buses as well as for the infrastructure necessary to be able to operate them, such as charging points at key interchanges, Park & Ride sites, and layover points. In addition to this and while this is deployed, we plan to upgrade all local buses to Euro VI standard or equivalent by retrofitting.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

How we will monitor it

We will carry out a fleet survey of bus operators every six months to measure progress. Where appropriate, we will develop a direct relationship with manufacturers to fulfil our ambition.

4 Delivery

4.1 Introduction

In this section we set out our detailed delivery plans for ten areas where we are looking to make significant improvements to our bus service. These are based on addressing current and future challenges, meeting our targets, and prioritising investments where we can have the most significant impacts. These delivery plans have been developed to reflect the views of stakeholders and an agreed set of objectives described in Appendix 5.

Following the DfT's guidance on topics to be covered by BSIPs, our delivery plans cover the following areas:

- **A: Intensive services:** Intensive services and investment on key corridors, with routes that are easier to understand
- **B: Bus priority:** There must be significant increases in bus priority
- **C: Fares:** Fares must be lower and simpler
- **D: Integrated ticketing:** There must be seamless, integrated local ticketing between operators and this should be across all types of transport
- **E: Integrated services:** Service patterns must be integrated with other modes
- **F: Single integrated system:** The local bus network is presented as a single system that works together, with clear passenger information
- **G: Modern buses:** Modern buses and decarbonisation
- **H: Passenger voice:** Give bus passengers more of a voice and a say
- **I: Non-intensive services:** More demand-responsive services and 'socially necessary' transport
- **J: Longer term:** Longer term transformation of buses and networks through Bus Rapid Transit and other

measures. In each of the delivery plans we set out the following:

- Our vision
- Challenges and opportunities
- Options considered
- Outline of initiatives
- Expected outcomes of initiatives and alignment of plan to targets
- Case study evidence which demonstrates we can deliver successfully.

This is a living document, and these delivery plans will evolve over the coming months and years, reflecting further work and analysis. Our priorities now reflect the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement and BSIP funding awards. Some initiatives do not currently have funding but remain longer-term priorities. The effects of external factors on the local bus market at the time of writing— for example, the slow recovery of patronage, shortfall of revenue against operating costs and the shortage of drivers are also considered. If these problems persist, they will affect our delivery plans.

4.2 Delivery Plan A – Intensive Services

Intensive services and investment on key corridors, with a network that is easier to understand

Total funding allocated: £7,500,000 (BSIP joint revenue)

4.2.1 Our vision

Our ambition is to deliver a cohesive, comprehensive, and simple route network, including co-ordinated radial and orbital services in the Bristol, Bath, and Weston-super-Mare urban areas. We want to provide **turn-up-and-go services** during the day, and evening frequencies of at least 4 buses per hour on core urban routes (including orbital routes) with some services operating more frequently, supported by good frequencies on key inter-urban corridors and in smaller urban areas.

4.2.2 Challenges and opportunities

The BSIP area includes the large urban areas of Bristol - the most populous city in the South West of England, Bath – a World Heritage Site, and Weston-super-Mare – a leading seaside resort, as well as several market towns. The remaining three-quarters of the BSIP area is largely rural. The wide contrast between places in the BSIP area poses a challenge in balancing bus service provision to meet the needs of residents against the viability and sustainability of such provision.

Post-covid world

There are a number of additional challenges currently being experienced by the network and these include current staffing needs and rising transport costs. The increase in bus operating costs presents a challenge for buses. These increased costs can lead to some services being commercially unviable and potentially at risk of being terminated. Furthermore, patronage levels remain at 75% of pre-covid levels.

The changing labour markets and the shortage of bus drivers (approximately 250 at present) and engineers present challenging supply-side constraints. This in turn, regardless of the funding available, presents a huge risk to a successful bus network in the West of England.

There are two issues affecting the driver situation, first there are fewer suitable applicants, second there have been a significant number of drivers leaving the sector.

In terms of recruitment, a dip in the number of available central European bus drivers has been observed in recent years. Bus driving is viewed by many in society (particularly the youth) as being a non-aspirational job. Half of all school leavers today progress to universities and would not consider the bus industry as a worthwhile career.

The job involves shift working, weekend working and very unsocial hours with long shift lengths. It also involves working with the public. There are many logistics jobs in the West of England Combined Authority region that are similar with either more pay and/or less unsocial hours and no passengers to worry about.

For every person successfully trained to become a PCV (Passenger Carrying Vehicle) driver, there are approximately 100 initial applicants. It generally takes three months from application to pass the PCV test, often longer. Applicants ideally have to already hold a car license, be a minimum age, conviction free, pass a medical test, have no drugs and alcohol dependencies and be literate and numerate at least to a basic level. Not everyone has the aptitude to be able to drive a large passenger carrying vehicle or can be trained to do so within a reasonable timescale.

In terms of retention, pre-pandemic results of driver turnover in London was almost 100% within the first two years. An establishment of 5000 drivers needed to recruit or train 500 drivers a year just to stand still. All London operators experienced this level of turnover, and it was also common in many other regions of the UK.

During the pandemic, outside of London, many drivers were placed on furlough and got used to living on less money and working reduced hours and spending their valuable time differently. Along with thousands of other people from all walks of life, and across the UK, many people have subsequently decided to change their work/life balance. The bus driver demographic was already heavily skewed towards people (mainly men) in their

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

fifties and there have been many leavers among this group of staff, opting for early retirement or a switch to part time working.

It remains to be seen whether some of the leavers reverse their decision as the cost of living continues to rise seemingly inexorably, or that a sharp economic downturn and redundancies elsewhere will temporarily increase the attractiveness of bus driving.

Traffic congestion

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic Bristol was the third most congested city in the UK²⁶. It is unsurprising then that traffic levels within the region affect the variability and reliability of bus journey times. On some of the core routes in the region, the peak scheduled times can be as much as 40% longer than those in the off-peak hours. This is reflected in data from the Bus Passenger Survey undertaken by Transport Focus in which service punctuality and journey time are stated as two of the biggest areas for improvement.

This congestion has led to an inefficient network, in which most services in Bristol and Bath terminate in the city centres to mitigate the impact of traffic congestion on either side of the centres. This presents an opportunity to re-align routes and provide cross-city services to more destinations directly. The potential benefits of this approach are enhanced when integrated with other delivery plans providing greater bus priority (Delivery Plan B), more integrated services (Delivery Plan E) and enhancing the demand responsive and accessible travel offer (Delivery Plan I).

Existing service offering

The frequency of buses in the BSIP area is variable. Only 7% of all services in the area have 6 or more buses per hour during most of the day of an average weekday. Just over a quarter of all bus services are between 2 and 4 buses per hour during most of the day of an average weekday. The lowest frequency services of 1 bus per hour or less are numerous but generally meet specific needs. Reflecting commercial considerations, frequency falls significantly in evenings and on Saturday and Sunday, making them even less attractive to passengers.

The higher frequency services are typically radial routes operating to and from Bristol and Bath city centres along the most densely populated corridors linking key employment destinations, Park & Ride sites, major transport hubs (e.g., Bristol Airport and Bristol Temple Meads station), and local high streets. These services often operate on common corridors in urban areas before diverging into suburban neighbourhoods. Although together they offer high frequencies in the inner-city areas (12 bph or more), frequency to suburban areas are generally much less (3 bph).

The medium frequency services comprise several urban radial services that run roughly parallel to neighbouring corridors to provide a high frequency to Bristol and Bath city centres. When these services leave

the urban areas, they diverge into different outer suburbs, and district centres. Also, a high proportion of these services terminate near Southmead Hospital, Cribbs Causeway, Hengrove Park, and various university campuses that are on the periphery of Bath and Bristol.

The low frequency services typically comprise peripheral routes and routes serving towns and rural villages. Some of these services have less than 10 journeys a day and are often provided with financial support. They meet specific needs such as links to shopping centres or market towns.

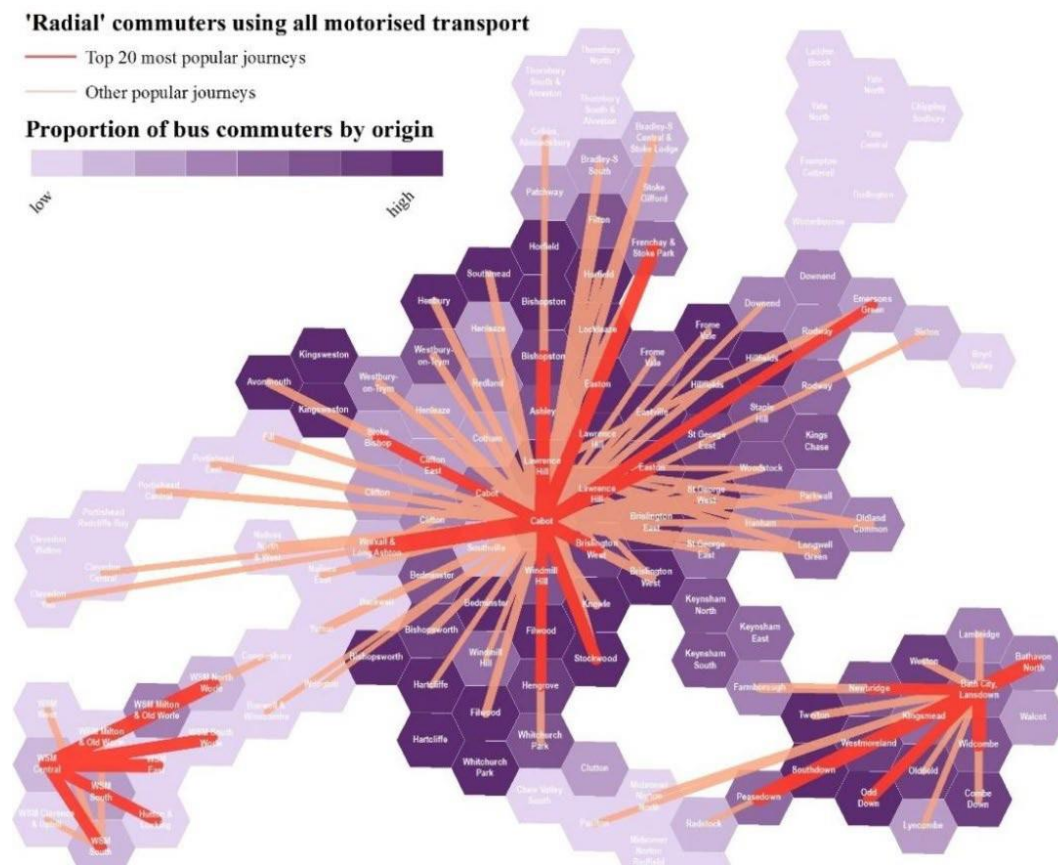
Service frequency is positively correlated with ridership. As can be seen below, those corridors with a high bus modal share, are those on radial routes to urban core areas in Bath, Bristol and Weston-super-Mare which are served by direct high-frequency bus services. Corridors with poor bus mode share (i.e., less than 10%) are in urban fringe areas, which are served at a lower frequency, require interchange and are not 'direct' because the network aims to serve a high number of bus stops.

This strong correlation between service frequency and ridership demonstrates the benefits of optimising service provision, providing higher frequency services to those areas with higher populations and ensuring

²⁶ INRIX (2020), *Global Traffic Scorecard 2019* [\[link\]](#)

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan
buses go where people want them to.

Figure 10: Radial Commuters within West of England region ²⁷



Engagement with the Department for Work and Pensions

Both LTAs have engaged with local representatives of the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) about the BSIP. A key issue raised by DWP was how the public transport network can support people who have shift work or working patterns beyond the more usual 9 to 5. Our proposals to redesign the route network and establish service patterns from early morning to late evening (with night services where appropriate) will address this issue.

4.2.3 Options considered

When considering how to improve service frequencies and provision across the region, the West of England Bus Strategy considered that two crucial features of the desired bus system were:

- An integrated network of services connected to areas of significant transport demand i.e., those of high population
- Short waiting times between departures.

These two features help bring about the ‘network’ effect whereby high frequency services combined with routes targeted at areas with high demand generate a turn-up-and-go offer which replicates the convenience of private car travel and allows users to travel along one corridor and change onto a different corridor to reach their destination.

Consideration was given to the most effective way of creating the network effect across the region while maintaining commercial considerations and value-for-money. An option to enhance frequencies on the existing network of radial services which largely terminate in city centres is considered ineffective because:

²⁷ West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council (2020), *West of England Bus Strategy* [\[link\]](#)

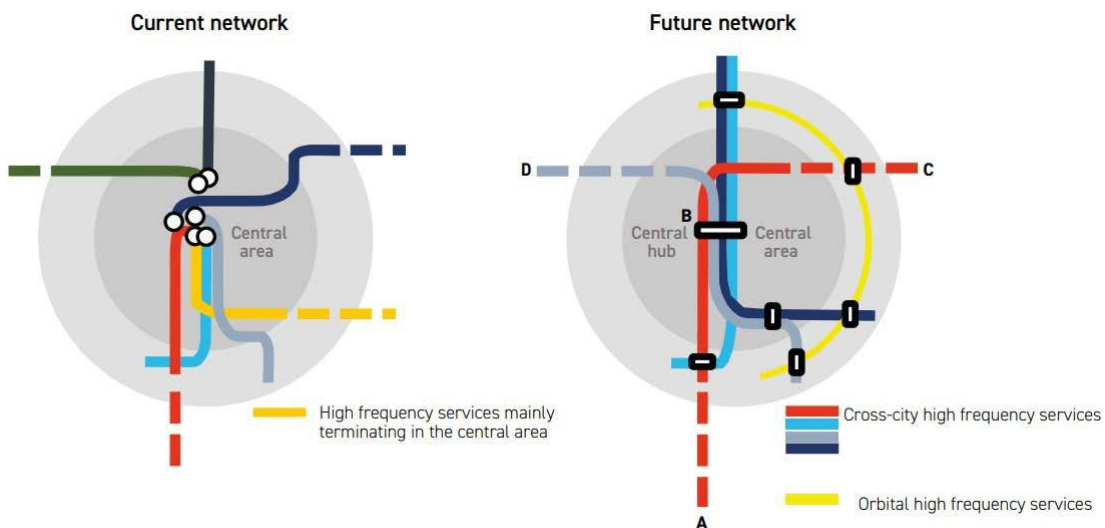
West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

- There are poor opportunities for transfer between services for cross-city journeys, hence making non-central destinations difficult to reach
- It is not easy to understand the spatial layout of services (and generally route maps are not available as the routes are too complex to be represented diagrammatically)
- Transfer generally relies on walking between stops in the centre
- Congestion between buses often occurs at city centre stops
- It requires layover or recovery time for buses in the city centre
- There is limited opportunity to rationalise services and therefore reduce operating costs.

The preferred option is to develop a network featuring fewer services overall but at higher frequencies. In the principal urban areas, cross-centre radial services would connect with orbital service at key interchange points and Transport Hubs. Outside the principal urban areas, interchange hubs would be located on the inter-urban corridors, and rural bus services or local demand-responsive transport services would feed into those hubs to connect onto the inter-urban routes. At the same time there is a need to continue to provide socially necessary services where required. There are also practical considerations concerning deliverability and providing customers with continuity and stability to support longer term transport and location choices. Important also to ensure BSIP service interventions reflect the funding situation post 2025 when the BSIP funds will expire without further support from Central Government.

A longer-term review of the network will be undertaken, reviewing previous work undertaken for the Combined Authority. This review will be data driven but will also build on the CRSTS and BSIP funded corridors.

Figure 11: Example of current and future bus route network principles in central areas ²⁸



A network designed in this way has the following advantages:

- High frequency services are arranged in such that they are routed close to other high frequency services along a portion of their route (generally in or near the central area), such that passengers can easily transfer between services with minimal walk and wait times
- Linking services across city centres maximises the opportunity for some passengers to travel all the way through the central areas to edge of the centre or suburban destinations
- Cross-city services also allow more opportunities for interchange with other services – at both sides of the city centre, and in the central area. Cross-city services also ensure that layover of buses in the city centre is minimised.

In large urban areas, high-frequency orbital services, by combining and rationalising existing medium frequency services which are often partially 'diagonals' and partially 'radial' allow for quick interchange into services to

²⁸ West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council (2020), *West of England Bus Strategy* [\[link\]](#)

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

the urban area for a wide range of passengers.

4.2.4 Outline of initiatives

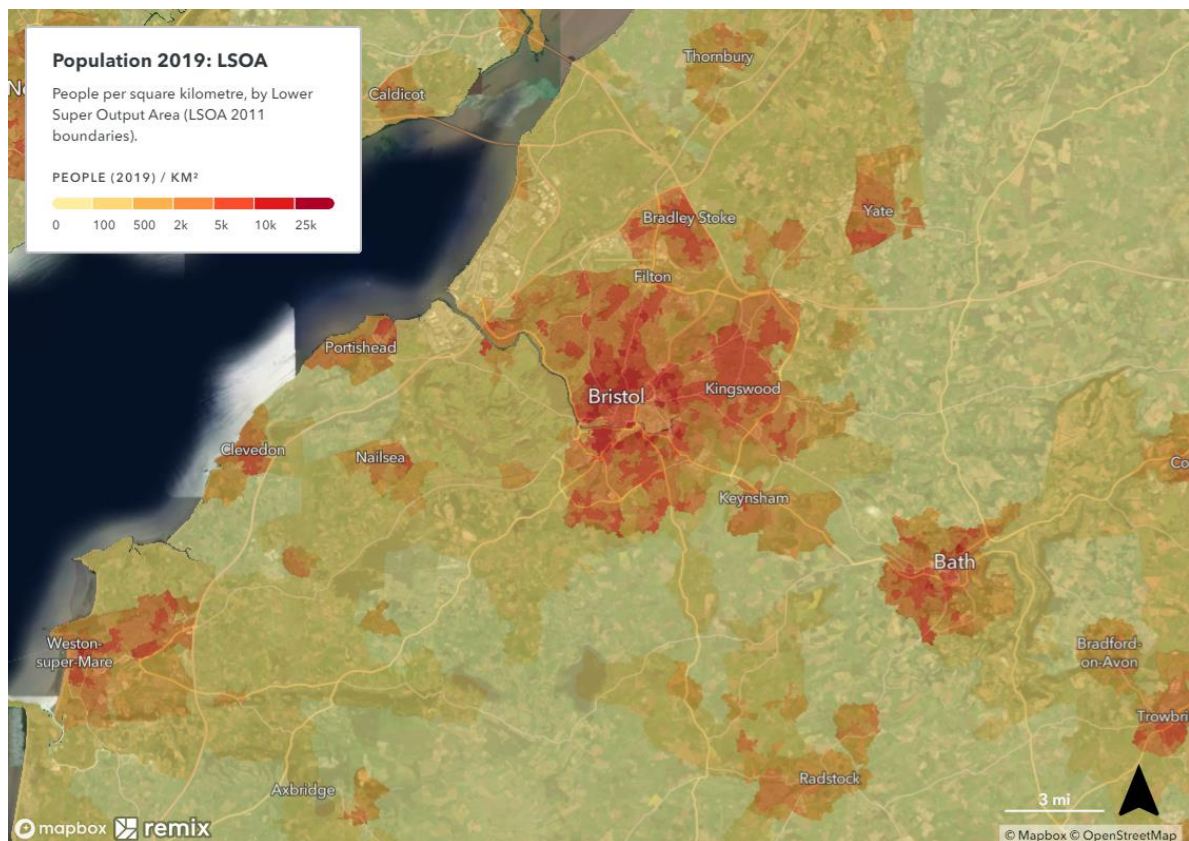
To deliver this network change, the LTAs are working with commercial bus operators to review the current network – both commercial and supported – and identify gaps and opportunities. In terms of network design, the approach is that most bus services will fall into one of these broad categories:

- Radial routes in urban areas and conurbations (including Park & Ride)
- Orbital routes in conurbations
- Inter-conurbation and inter-urban routes
- Community bus routes (operated under Section 22 permits)
- Rural routes and demand-responsive transport linking to Transport Hubs and other interchanges.

Current network and population densities

Figure 12 illustrates the population density of the West of England region. It is evident that the densely populated areas are around the cities along with key destinations within the West of England region.

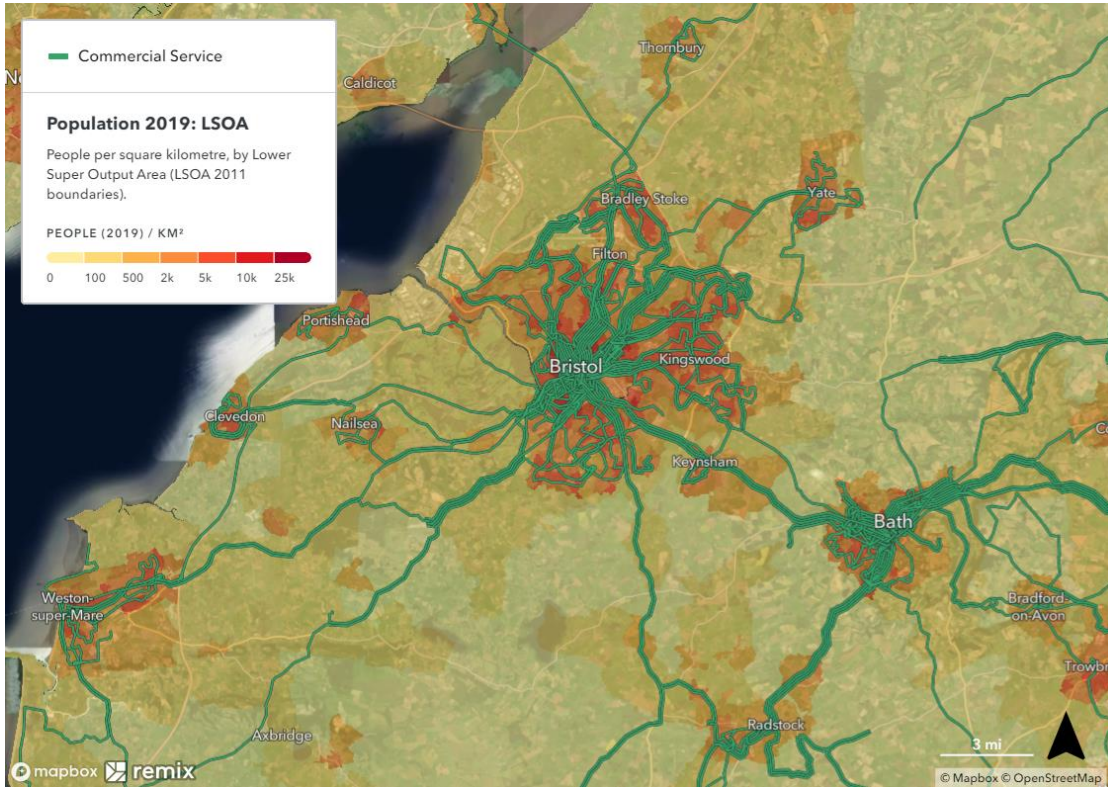
Figure 12: Population density in the West of England, 2019 LSOA



It is imperative to understand, as part of a network review, if the current bus services are serving the key destinations. However, a key deliverable of the network review is to ensure that buses are available to areas of low population densities. **Figure 13** and **Figure 14** illustrate the population density and the current commercial service and current supported services.

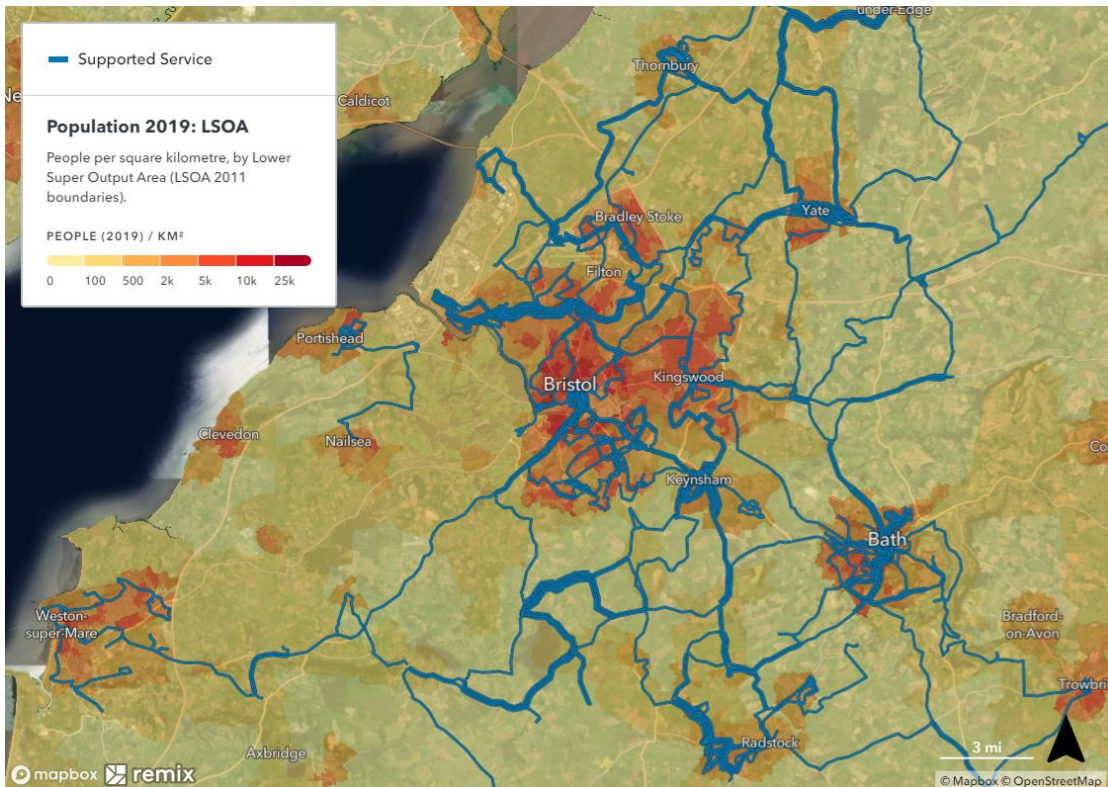
West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Figure 13: Population density and current commercial services



It is evident that both the commercial services and the supported services provides services not only to the areas of high population, but also to areas of lower population ranges.

Figure 14: Population density and current supported services



West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Transport accessibility

Our approach intends to ensure that the network provides links to the key services and destinations which people want to access. We will therefore ensure that all services link to key locations such as:

- Transport Hubs (including Park & Ride sites)
- Rail stations
- Major hospitals
- Other health facilities
- Schools, colleges, and universities
- Supermarkets and local shopping areas
- Leisure facilities
- Bristol Airport.

Public transport links between origin and destination will be provided by a combination of direct services and other services that connect at Transport Hubs and other interchanges. Our aim is to ensure that most journeys can be undertaken by public transport with no more than one change. Direct bus travel to key facilities like general hospitals will be possible from more places through the principle of linking urban radial routes to form cross-city routes. We will establish and adopt a standard of access to the bus network – such as walking distance to the nearest bus stop – and set targets to improve it in our BSIP when we review it in 2022.

We aim to maintain existing service provision in the interim period to those areas where DRT is identified as the longer-term solution.

The West of England have produced a Transport Accessibility Model which assesses the connectivity of the population to public transport in the West of England region. The connectivity mapping was previously provided for the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), using a 2019 (pre-pandemic) baseline. This connectivity mapping provides a generalised assessment of connectivity to education, employment, retail, and healthcare facilities across the region. The mapping is based on data such as bus timetables, coach timetables, rail timetables and other data sources, to create a weighted score on the accessibility of public transport in relation to the location of the population.

Given the significant level of changes in public transport services, an update to the timetable data to October 2022 has been undertaken to understand changes that have occurred in the past three years.

Figure 15 illustrates the connectivity to public transport in 2019, **Figure 16** illustrates the connectivity to public transport in 2022 and **Figure 17** provides the difference between the two datasets.

Figure 15: Transport Accessibility Model, 2019

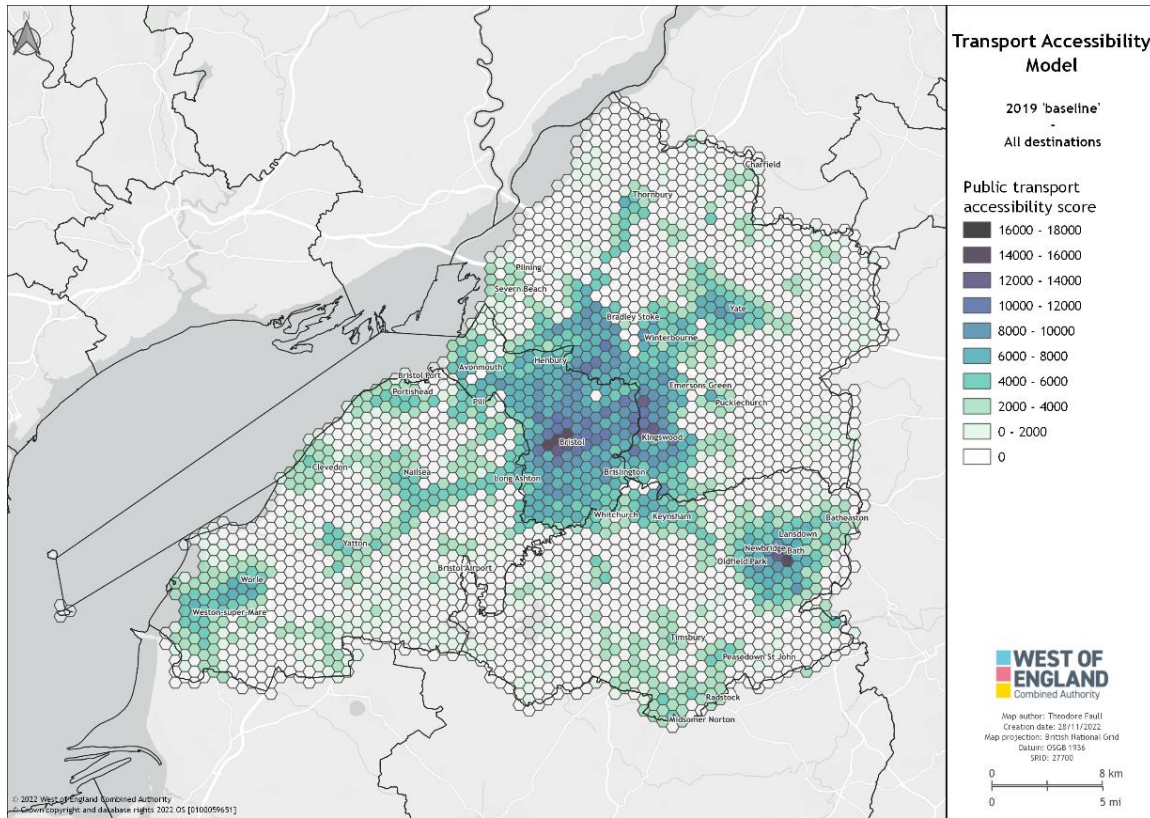


Figure 16: Transport Accessibility Model, 2022

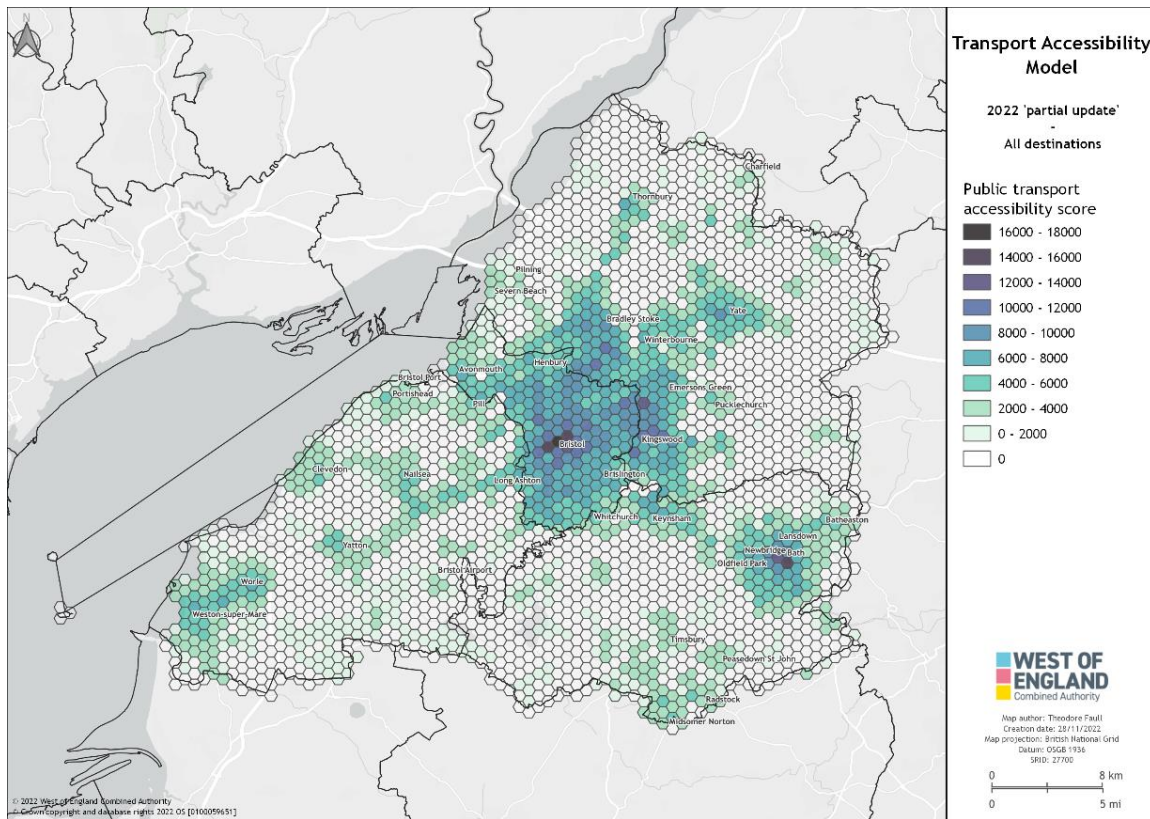


Figure 17: Transport Accessibility Model - difference between 2019 and 2022

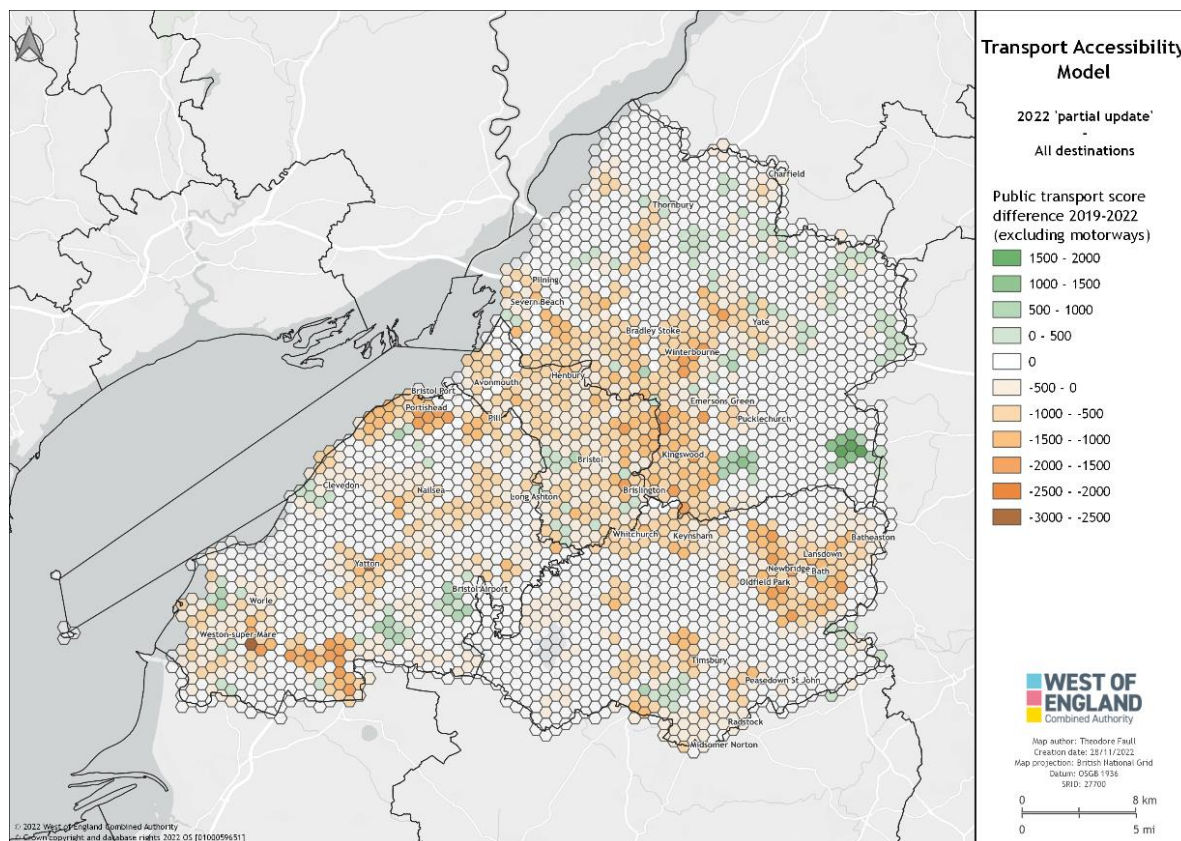


Figure indicates that there are changes in the accessibility to public transport options since 2019. There has been a general drop in public transport connectivity across the region. The main areas where scores have dropped are where significant bus service withdrawals have occurred. By local authority, these include:

- Bath and North East Somerset: The areas of Twerton and Weston in Bath
- Bristol City: more generally within East Bristol
- South Gloucestershire: Coalpit Heath, and more generally within East Bristol (Kingswood, and Staple Hill)
- North Somerset: Locking, Yatton, Portishead and Banwell / Sandford / Woodborough.

Most of these services can be linked to specific withdrawals of several main bus services in these specific areas e.g., the 126 service withdrawal impacting Banwell, Sandford and Woodborough.

There are some areas that have seen some minor improvements in scores, although the general trend has been a reduction in connectivity:

- Marshfield (South Gloucestershire)
- Wick (South Gloucestershire)
- Redhill (North Somerset)
- Clifton (Bristol)
- Paulton (Bath and North East Somerset)

Most of these changes in scores are likely down to changes in bus timings, and given how small the changes are, might be imperceptible to regular users of public transport.

Transport to school

As part of the network review, we want to ensure that we provide bus services which young people can use to get to schools, colleges, and universities. This will build their confidence in using the bus network to make it more likely that they will use bus services for leisure travel and more generally, so that they become habitual bus users.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Local education authorities have a duty to provide free home-to-school transport (HTST) for young people who live more than a specified distance from the 'nearest suitable school' or who live in a low-income household. This duty is met either by provision of specific transport or by buying places on public bus services.

Most school bus services for young people not entitled to HTST rely on financial support from the LTAs because the operating costs are not fully covered by the revenue from discounted fares for young people. Furthermore, parental choice of school has broadened the catchment areas of school and led to a dispersal of demand for travel.

Wherever possible, we will meet demand for travel to education establishments through the mainstream bus network – as re-designed using the principles outlined above.

North Somerset Council has a policy on provision of school bus services already, but the West of England Combined Authority has inherited different policies and there is a need to adopt a consistent approach.

The West of England Combined Authority is currently conducting a review of transport to school for young people who do not qualify for free home-to-school transport. The review will make recommendations on a consistent policy for funding school bus services and aims to be in place for the September 2023 academic year.

Initiative A1: Ambitions to deliver a high frequency, accessible bus network

We will review bus services to ensure that all residents have good access to the bus service network. We propose a minimum of 12 buses per hour (bph) on principal radial corridors and a minimum of 4 bph on principal inter-urban corridors. In part, this would be achieved by adopting a principle of service provision appropriate to the population of each area (based on the 2011 Census or more recent estimates), as outlined below. There will be exceptions to this principle and a common-sense approach will be taken in applying it.

Conurbations – population over 70,000

Radial routes (cross-centre) – minimum provision of 6 bph

Orbital routes – minimum provision of 4 bph

Inter-conurbation routes – minimum provision of 4 bph to the nearest adjacent conurbation

Large urban areas – population over 20,000 but under 70,000

Radial routes – minimum provision of 4 bph

Inter-large urban area routes: minimum provision of 4 bph to the nearest adjacent large urban area, except where potential demand clearly justifies a lower level of provision

Small urban areas – population over 10,000 but under 20,000

Minimum provision of 3 bph

Large rural areas – population over 3,000 but under 10,000

Minimum provision of 2 bph

Medium rural areas – population over 500 but under 3,000

Minimum provision of 1 bph

Small rural areas – population less than 500

Provision of demand-responsive transport to Transport Hubs

The minimum provision for each category will apply from 0700 to 1900 on Mondays to Saturdays. At least 33% of minimum provision will apply from 0600 to 0700 and from 1900 to 2400 on Mondays to Saturdays, and all day on Sundays and most Public Holidays. On many routes, a higher level of evening and Sunday provision will be needed to meet existing and potential demand.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

An evaluation framework is in development with Highways Authorities to assist in prioritising revenue support. A draft of this will be published in the Enhanced Partnership Scheme. The framework takes into account the following features of a bus service:

- Supports new or existing Enterprise Zones
- Seeks to maintain a core strategic public transport network linking residential areas with key employment sites and local services
- Give priority to supporting public transport services which enable disadvantaged groups and communities to access employment sites and key local services
- Impact on carbon emissions or air quality
- Reduction in traffic congestion
- Serves Transport Hub or interchange
- Accessibility – available alternative commercial transport
- Access for disabled persons or those with limited mobility
- Deprivation: serves an area in the bottom 10% of the Index of Multiple Deprivation
- Linking rural communities to urban centres
- Cost per passenger journey.

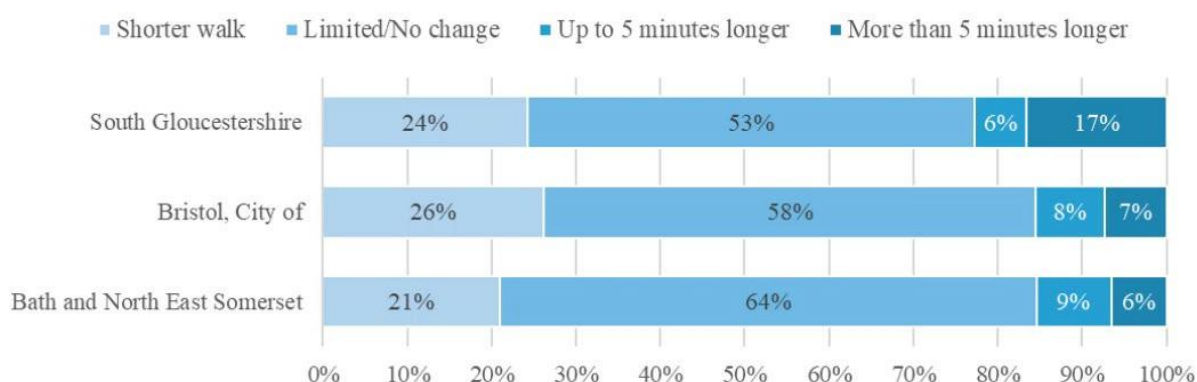
The BSIP funding which provides increased bus revenue support, runs to 2024-25. At the time of writing the original BSIP in 2021, we anticipated that the investment that we and the bus operators make in the intervening period will grow the market such that the need for revenue support from 2025 will be much less. Current market issues, in particular the driver shortage, present a significant risk as the inability to deliver frequent and reliable services while supported will affect commerciality of those services in the longer-term.

4.2.5 Expected outcomes of initiatives and alignment to targets

The frequency principles outlined above would lead to improvements in travel time across the region with accessibility to bus stops also improving significantly. Currently, 18% of bus services in the region meet the proposed frequencies – predominately in the urban areas. Full implementation of the frequency principles will increase the number of residents living within 400 metres walking distance of a bus stop from 560,000 to 721,340 (a 29% increase).

The benefits of an illustrative network following the future bus network principles outlined in Figure 11 have been assessed. The potential improvements in total walking distance (both to a bus stop and interchanging between buses) in the West of England CA area is illustrated in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Impact of network proposals on total walking distance in the West of England Combined Authority area



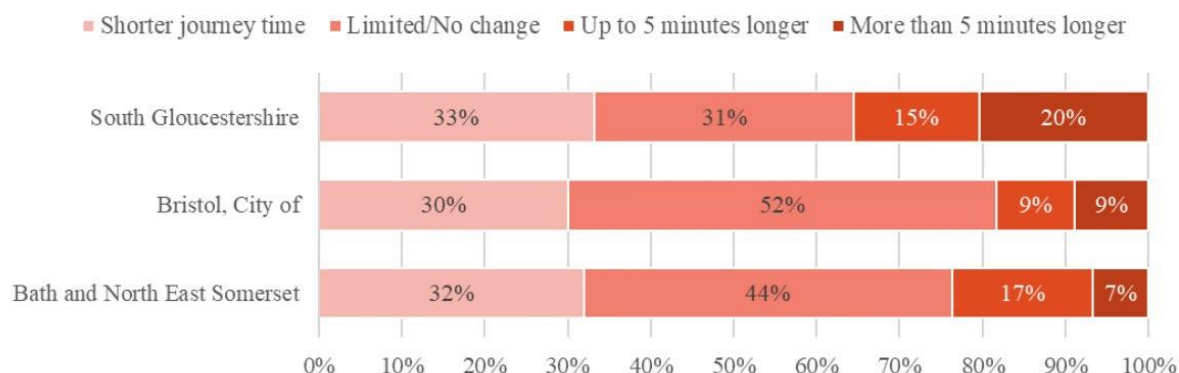
This analysis demonstrates that:

- 25% of travellers would benefit from shorter walking distances

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

- 59% of travellers would experience no/limited change
- Only 16% of travellers would experience longer walking distances.

Similarly, the benefits of an optimised network with higher frequency routes serving large populations can be seen in improvements to overall travel time in the West of England CA area, as shown in Figure 19.



Limited to no change is defined as a change in total travel time of no more than ± 90 seconds.

Figure 19: Impact of network proposals on total travel time in the West of England Combined Authority area

As demonstrated targeting better bus provision at our key population centres widens the accessibility of the bus network to more people, providing them with quicker and more direct services to more places.

The transport outcomes of this delivery plan are directly targeted at improving journey times which in turn should help increase passenger demand and passenger satisfaction. We provide a case study showing the success of investing in local bus services in the region below.

Case study on Greater Bristol Bus Network

The region has a strong recent record of success in delivering improvements to bus services which have led to increases in patronage. Over the last 15 years we have worked together to improve bus services over the region with the introduction of projects such as the Greater Bristol Bus Network, Bath Transport Package and metrobus. Following the introduction of these schemes the region saw an increase in patronage of 42% until 2017, and a further increase of 6% following the introduction of metrobus.

Taking the delivery of the Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN) in 2012/13 as an example, this represented an initial £80m investment comprised of £42.3m in grant funding from the Department for Transport, investment of £22.5m from FirstGroup and a local and developer contribution of £15.2m. The West of England councils working in partnership with bus operators, brought several key corridors up to showcase standards with:

- Over 120 new buses.
- Higher service frequencies.
- Nearly 1,000 improved bus stops including new shelters, new information panels, level access.
- More than 300 new real time information displays.
- Bus priority signal at junctions and bus priority lanes.
- Improvements to pedestrian and cycle access and safety.
- Road widening in key traffic hot spots.
- Introduction of new bus routes which did not exist previously.
- Tree planting and public realm/ environmental improvements in local areas.

Many service enhancements were not solely attributable to GBBN, but GBBN measures have helped enable them. Other initiatives such as the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, Better Bus Area Funding, Residents' Parking Zones, and commercial decisions by the bus operators have also influenced service enhancements which have taken place over the years. Key service enhancements over the following two years to 2014 are summarised in Table 11.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Table 11: Summary of bus service enhancements on the GBBN corridors by 2014 ²⁹

Corridor	Services	Service enhancements (frequencies quoted are from 2014 and Mon to Fri daytime unless otherwise noted)
M32	X027 / X46, X49	A new commercial service X46 operates between Bristol and Yate by First. This is in addition to the previously supported X27 which Wessex operates commercially, and which no longer requires local authority support. The 689 is now re-numbered X49 and operated on a commercial basis therefore no longer requiring local authority support.
Whiteladies Road	1, 54 / 2	Increased from every 15 mins to every 12 mins in 2011, and now every 10 mins. Service 54 (now service 2) in Sept 2011 was increased from every 15 mins to every 12 mins, then to every 10 mins in Sept 2013.
A4 Bristol - Bath	1, X39	Service 1 increased from every 15 mins to every 12 mins in 2011, and now every 10 mins. In June 2011 - service X39 increased from every 15 mins to every 12 mins. Co-ordinated timetables between Abus and First on service 349.
Filton Avenue	73	The 73 is the main GBBN bus route for corridor 4 and runs between Cribbs Causeway and Bristol City Centre. The service uses five separate bus priority measures that were installed as part of GBBN. In Sept 2011 Service 73 Increased from every 15 mins to every 12 mins and to every 10 mins in Sept 2013. Patronage figures in 2013 show a 30.5% increase compared to a 2009 baseline.
Fishponds Road	48 / 49, 13, X27, X46, X49, 47, X47	In Apr 2012 some running times reduced. Also, daytime frequency improved from every 20 mins to every 15 mins each, so creating a combined frequency of every 7/8 minutes. Wessex introduced this new service in September 2012 which uses a section of this corridor between Fishponds and Old Market. This has a current frequency of every 12 minutes. A new commercial service X46 operates between Bristol and Yate by First. This is in addition to the previously supported X27 which Wessex now runs commercially and so no longer needs local authority support. The 689 is now re-numbered X49 and operates on a commercial basis, and therefore no longer requires local authority support. These services (formerly the 342 & X42) also benefit from the measures installed in the Fishponds area and along the A4174 Ring Road
Bristol – Midsomer Norton	54 / 2, 376, 379	Service 54 (now service 2) increased from every 15 mins to every 12 mins, then to every 10 mins in Sept 2013. Commercial operation of Sunday & Public Holiday journeys on service 376 by First giving a saving in financial support. Developer contributions (Section 106) enabled expansion of First service 379 to an all-day hourly direct service linking Midsomer Norton with Bristol.
A4714	X18	New service X18 introduced in January 2013.
Bristol - WsM	X1	Various service enhancements as part of GBBN. In Apr 2012, service X1 increased from every 30 mins to every 20mins.
Bristol - Portishead	X2 / X3	These services were every 30 mins as services 357/358/359, but now every 15 mins along many parts of the route as services X2 and X3.
A367 Midsomer Norton - Bath	175, 178, 379	Introduction of Somerbus service 175 with 'kick-start' support from developers' contributions to link the Orchard Way area of Peasedown St John and 'CircleBath' Hospital with Bath. Commercial operation of Sunday & Public Holiday journeys on service 178 by First, and so no longer needs revenue support. Extension of First service 379 to Bath, thus increasing the combined frequency of First services between Midsomer Norton, Radstock and Bath from 3 to 4 buses per hour.

²⁹ West of England Combined Authority, *Internal analysis*

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

This set of service upgrades clearly demonstrates the capability of the region to work in partnership to deliver ambitious programmes which deliver tangible benefits for passengers. This, along with our other recent experience makes us well placed to deliver service improvements as part of a raft of other initiatives such as improved information provision and bus priority.

4.3 Delivery Plan B – Bus priority

There must be significant increases in bus priority.

Total funding allocated: £35,160,000 (BSIP capital NSC), £89.7m (CRSTS capital CA to 2025)

4.3.1 Our vision

Our vision is to install bus priority measures across our key routes and connections to deliver journey times on the network which are comparable to or better than car travel and to ensure our services operate punctually.

We believe this will require an extensive network of bus priority – particularly on our main urban routes – which is as continuous as possible and reflects our whole corridor approach.

4.3.2 Challenges and opportunities

Congestion and network provision

As has already been described, only 7% of bus services in the region operate at a frequency of more than 6 buses per hour, with almost a quarter being low frequency services (i.e., 1 bus or fewer per hour). 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, with some authorities having up to 90% of services on time. This is despite the substantial investment in bus priority made through metrobus and GBBN and the improvements these have delivered.

The gaps in the public transport provision are illustrated by low patronage compared to most other city regions. Many journeys are across or around urban areas instead of to town and city centres. There is a significant opportunity to improve with local communities only utilising buses for 1 in 11 commuter journeys, 2 of 3 commutes are by car despite 2 of 5 commutes being less than 1.25 miles. This focus on car journeys exacerbates the congestion and reliability issues faced by buses in the BSIP area.

Schemes which promote bus priority play an important role in breaking this vicious cycle in which poor public transport provision leads to increased car use, worsening congestion and thus further worsening the bus provision. By offering buses priority on the network the links between car use, congestion and bus reliability diminish.

Local geography and road layout

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 mainline and the M32, M5 and M4 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.

Segregated bus ways and road re-alignment offer the opportunity to mitigate these issues on the bus network. While the limited number of roads into city centres is a problem which causes congestion it also means that bus priority measures targeted on a limited number of corridors can create the widest benefits.

The measures implemented as part of the development of the metrobus network provide an example of where targeted interventions such as bus-only junctions and bridges helped solve the inherent problems with the transport network and local geography. The Ashton Avenue Swing Bridge project renovated a 110-year-old bridge, re-opening it for walking and cycling as well as a guided busway which helps to reduce congestion in Bristol city centre and improve bus journey times and reliability.

Changing travel patterns

While COVID-19 has led to a short-term fall in demand for public transport, it has also led to changing travel

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

patterns with travel on public transport being spread more evenly throughout the day. Many of our existing bus priority lanes operate only during the peak, which presents the opportunity to re-align the existing bus priority provision to changing customer demands, such as expanding bus priority lane operation to 12- or 24-hour operation.

Land ownership

Many of the BSIP area's major travel corridors consist of single carriageway roads. Creating bus priority lanes would require road widening. In many cases this is especially challenging given that much of the land adjacent to roads in the region is owned by third parties rather than by the public sector. This may limit the extent to which roads can be widened, creating the risk that bus priority lanes are interrupted by single carriageway sections.

4.3.3 Options considered

We recently completed the first phase of the metrobus programme. This has seen a step-change in bus provision in the BSIP area with a higher quality of infrastructure to give greater segregation and a better level of service.

To further develop the service provision, we have considered which transport corridors we should invest in to build on the success of metrobus, looking to enhance the existing services whilst adding other arms that will complete a more comprehensive network. Our corridor programme has been established to provide alternatives to the private car and significantly improve access to transport for the large number of our citizens who do not have access to a private vehicle. This has been developed in close partnership with operators and by identifying routes and corridors where journey reliability is poor.

The strategic public transport corridors complement our Key Route Network and are categorised as Sustainable Transport Corridors and Town Corridors. The corridors were selected and prioritised for investment according to:

- Existing levels of highway congestion
- Their ability to connect households with employment and education
- Current and future patronage
- Supporting areas of deprivation, and deliverability.

Our Sustainable Transport Corridors are where a high level of separation is possible and desired. They will provide the backbone for the bus network with high frequency services driven by connections from rural and suburban areas and great opportunities for interchange between modes. Town Corridors are the next tier, with bus services connecting the towns and suburbs into the high frequency Sustainable Transport Corridors. We will provide segregation where possible, especially at key congestion hotspots, but full separation will be more challenging. For rural and suburban corridors, we will focus on connections into these key routes and ensure that all users benefit from access to the main corridors.

Project delivery has been split into phases with Sustainable Transport Corridors prioritised – to maximise our ability to target the highest population areas and meet our service intensity goals. Options were considered according to the principles outlined above and work has started using local funding for scheme development.

Prioritisation of Sustainable Transport Corridors will bring benefits to the whole bus network – rural as well as urban – by bringing about journey time improvements and better punctuality for inter-urban bus services. That will lead to a reduction in operating costs and make some of the marginal bus services more viable, as well as making connections at Transport Hubs onto the rural network more reliable.

Transport Hubs and interchanges are an essential ingredient to make our planned bus route network of connecting radial and orbital services work.

4.3.4 Outline of initiatives

Investment on each of the corridors will focus on the following interventions, the precise nature of which will depend on the characteristics and requirements of the corridor, noting the geographic, ownership and congestion challenges noted above:

- Continuous bus lanes
- Bus gates to filter traffic and improve priority
- Traffic signal priority
- Segregated walking and cycling infrastructure
- Low traffic neighbourhoods adjacent to the corridors
- Transport Hubs
- High quality bus stops to a consistent standard
- Traffic and roadworks management
- Bus lane and parking enforcement.

The corridors have been prioritised in the following phases across the BSIP area, with initial priority provided to Sustainable Transport Corridors, consistent with the aims outlined above:

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

Sustainable Transport Corridors:

- Bristol city centre – changes to create priority access for the routes set out below
- A4 Portway – expansion of existing Park & Ride site to incorporate links to the new rail station and develop it as a Transport Hub
- A370 – improved connections to the existing Long Ashton Park & Ride site and along Cumberland Road
- M32 – new Transport Hub and changes to the corridor, subject to engagement with National Highways
- A4 Bristol to Bath – segregated route between our two main cities with a new Transport Hub at Hicks Gate
- Bath city centre – changes to create better access for all routes, especially the A4.

Initiative B2: High priority investment corridors

Town Corridors:

- A38N – connections from Thornbury to the Bristol North Fringe, Cribbs Causeway and M32
- A432 – connections from Yate to the M32 (Chipping Sodbury to Hambrook)
- A37 / A367 – improving access from the Somer Valley area into Bath and Bristol
- A37 / A4018 - ensuring good connections between central Bristol and key residential, employment and retail developments in the south and north of the city
- A370 – direct connections from Weston-super-Mare to Long Ashton P&R site extending the benefits from the main Corridor into North Somerset
- A385 – connections from Weston-super-Mare via Bristol Airport to a new Transport Hub in South West Bristol.
- A369 - connecting Portishead into Bristol
- Weston-super-Mare –improving flow of buses in the centre of the town
- Clevedon – improve bus flow in and around Clevedon through bus lanes, links, and traffic signal upgrades.

An effective bus priority system which delivers fast and direct bus services requires effective highway management. This is both in terms of managing stationary as well as moving traffic. Roadworks's co-ordination and highway parking enforcement are two key measures we can implement to maintain the efficacy of our bus priority routes.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

As noted in Delivery Plan E on roadworks co-ordination we will seek more timely information so we can plan for diversions, we will work with highway authorities to seek priority for buses and also co-ordinate roadworks with the works needed to deliver bus priority. Through the development of local parking strategies, we will continue to manage parking to control future traffic demand, through policies for on-street parking, off-street parking, and residential parking schemes where appropriate.

The CRSTS and BSIP funded capital programmes for the Combined Authority and North Somerset will deliver the step change infrastructure in a coordinated manner across the region. The corridor schemes have total funding in excess of £450m with work underway to deliver by 2025 for BSIP funding and 2027 for CRSTS funding.

Initiative B3: Medium to longer-term priority investment corridors

In North Somerset, it is considered that public transport corridors and public transport towns are the way forward and will provide connections to existing and future employment, education, retail, and housing areas in accordance with carbon net neutral. They will reduce single car occupancy and increase bus patronage. The Town Corridors selected for improvement and investment are to increase bus reliability, with less time lost by buses in congestion at junctions, providing better connections between villages, towns, and cities. The Town Corridors will provide high frequency services driven by connections from urban area to urban area with links through suburban and rural locations. The Town Corridors for investment include:

- A4174 – building on our metrobus scheme to provide improved orbital connections
- A420 – creating links to the east of Bristol
- A431 – connecting east Bristol to central Bath
- A4 – London Road (Bath) will provide improved connections between east of Bath and Wiltshire
- A36 – improved connections from west of Bath via the city centre into Wiltshire – subject to engagement with National Highways
- A38 – completing connections from central Bristol to the south and north

The town areas in North Somerset for investment include:

- Weston-super-Mare centre and links
- Portishead centre and links
- Clevedon and surroundings
- Yatton centre and links
- Nailsea and Backwell centre and links
- Other suburban and rural areas.

The objective within each of these corridors is not only to improve public transport journey times, service frequency and reliability, but also to improve the integration of public transport with other sustainable transport modes and the public realm. Further investments in Transport Hubs (predominately focussed on Park & Ride sites) will also help deal with 'first and last mile' options.

The overall aim is to provide as much full segregation or priority on inter-urban corridors as possible, whilst recognising that this is not always possible or necessary in smaller towns. The figure below outlines the programme of bus corridor improvements, noting their geographical spread across the region and focussing on delivering connections into and across our urban centres.

Initiative B4: Rural and suburban route investment

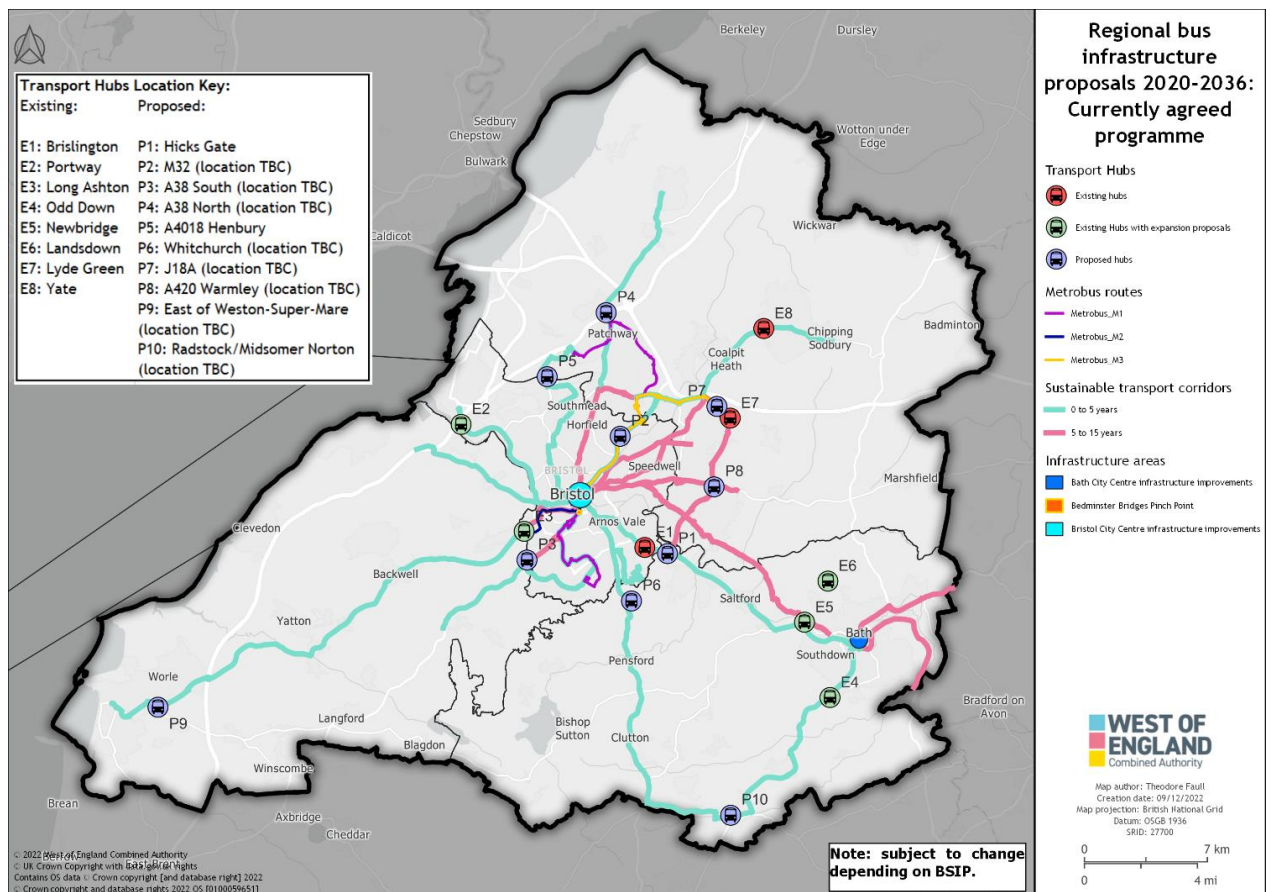
As noted in the Initiative A1, our approach should ensure that the bus network provides links to the key services and destinations which people want to access. Our aim is to ensure that most journeys can be undertaken by public transport with no more than one change. Direct bus travel to key facilities like general hospitals will be possible from more places through the principle of linking urban radial routes to form cross-

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan city routes.

To improve bus provision along rural and suburban corridors, we propose infrastructure improvements to link such communities to higher frequency routes. The investment will mainly be focussed on bus stop upgrades, junction connections, extending cycling links and the delivery of Transport Hubs. It will be delivered across the BSIP area covering the suburbs of Bristol and Bath, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire. These investments form Phase 3 of our programme of works, following on from our investment in Sustainable Transport and Town corridors covered by Initiatives B1, B2 and B3.

The figure below summarises the programme of bus corridor improvements across the region.

Figure 20: Programme of bus corridor improvements³⁰



Initiative B5: Bus lane and parking enforcement

Initiatives B1, B2, B3 and B4 include the rollout of more enforcement of bus lanes and parking restrictions. We will work with highway authorities and bus operators to identify hotspots and target our resources in those places. We welcome the news that highway authorities will be able to apply for powers to enforce moving traffic offences.

4.3.5 Expected outcomes of initiatives

Our plan aims to deliver 100 miles of new dedicated/segregated bus infrastructure along our Priority Corridors by 2027 relative to a 2021 baseline. We will use bus priority as part of our plans to open four new Transport Hub sites and upgrade three existing locations to make it easier to interchange between car, public transport, walking and cycling.

³⁰ West of England Combined Authority (2022)

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

By focussing on investing in bus priority on our key strategic corridors our proposals will bring 49,000 working-age people living in deprived parts of the BSIP area within close reach of improved services and will improve existing services serving a further 84,000 people living in deprived places. Surveys demonstrate that 16.6% of people in these areas are excluded from work; considerably higher than the average across the BSIP area of 8.4%. Our plans to improve connections from these places to centres of employment will level up access to job opportunities and prosperity.

The interventions detailed in this delivery plan will make bus a more attractive mode of transport, encourage modal shift from private vehicles and therefore help us achieve our target to reduce carbon emission in the region by 464 kilotons each year, aligned with the Government's ambitions for each carbon budget and for net zero by 2050.

4.3.6 Alignment of plan to targets

The high levels of ambition of our bus priority plan are designed to ensure it can make a significant and meaningful contribution to our BSIP targets. Bus priority measures act to move buses out of general traffic making them less susceptible to road congestion and thus leading to direct improvements in journey times and punctuality.

In improving reliability and the quality of service relative to other forms of transport, bus priority measures can make buses a more attractive mode thus increasing passenger demand as well as customer satisfaction. The scale of our plans ensures that the bus priority measures can improve the public transport network for a wide range of people.

Our ambition to increase frequencies and join up bus routes to run cross-city is also reliant on the successful deployment of bus priority measures.

Case study on metrobus

The new metrobus network was launched between May 2018 to January 2019, and it consists of a £235m investment covering three core corridors. It provides a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) limited-stop level of service. Key features of the programme were bus priority measures such as a kerb-guided busway, a bus lane and bus only junction onto the M32 motorway.

The success of metrobus demonstrates the capacity of the region to deliver bus priority measures as part of an integrated programme of work. It required complex joint working across a range of modes and stakeholders, including joint working with Network Rail and Highways England (now National Highways), complex procurement arrangements, and community and public consultation programmes.

4.4 Delivery Plan C – Fares

Fares must be lower and simpler

Total funding allocated: £21,466,857 (BSIP joint revenue)

4.4.1 Our vision

We want a fares system that gives better value for bus passengers across the BSIP area. To do this, we want to present passengers with a more consistent offer, improved pricing especially for young people and families, and enable fares which support future ticketing systems (linked to Delivery Plan D: Integrated ticketing). Our objectives for fares include:

- Low flat or zonal fares in Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare, and other urban areas
- Lower point-to-point graduated fares outside urban areas
- Daily and weekly capping using tap-on-tap-off readers
- Simplified range of fares but more flexible fares for part-time commuters
- Reduction in fares for young people and standard discounts for children and students
- Consistent and more accessible offer for job seekers across the BSIP area.

We will work collaboratively with operators over the coming months and years to take our fares plans forward and we expect this to make bus a more attractive alternative to the car.

4.4.2 Challenges and opportunities

Passenger views on value for money

Fares that are perceived as good value for money are important for supporting patronage growth as well as enabling a sustainable market. Fares in the BSIP area are often perceived as high despite initiatives in recent years.

The average cost per single journey across the West of England in 2019/20 was £2.05³¹. This has increased from £1.93 since 2014/15, an increase of 6.2%. Reflecting this, only 50% of passengers think the bus represents value for money in the BSIP area in the most recent Bus Passenger Survey. This was lowest for young people (16 to 34) and commuters and the lowest of all the areas.

There are specific challenges to address if we are to improve outcomes and support long term market sustainability. These are outlined below.

Our offer for young people is not optimal

The current offer for our young people is not affordable for families and is not consistent between operators. Specific issues include:

- Current free travel for children is only up to the age of five, with many other local authority areas subsidising this up to higher ages, reflecting an ambition to improve affordability of family travel.
- There is an inconsistent offer for the young, with the largest operator offering a 50% discount for children under 16 with 30% discount for students and those aged between 16 and 21. Other operators have different levels of discount.
- Multi operator products have a combined offer for students and children (under 16), with a discount of around 25% on AvonRider, 23% discount on BathRider, 30% discount on BristolRider, and no discount on WestonRider.³²

³¹ This excludes concessionary travel and child fares.

³² [Travelwest, Multi-operator Rider Tickets \[link\]](#)

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Our offer to job seekers is not widely known and applied consistently

We currently operate a Wheels to Work scheme covering the BSIP area that is available on Travelwest and from partner organisations. This provides the opportunity for job seekers to access bus travel for free for specific reasons either via mobile m-ticket for First or a paper multi-operator fare. The offer is currently only available as a day ticket to support people get to an interview for study, work, or a voluntary role. Monthly tickets are also available to those with a formal offer of employment for the first month of travel.

As outlined, the current offering does not provide a general discount for job seekers and instead is targeted for interviews and the first month of work. Stagecoach more widely offers a general 50% discount for jobseekers who have a Jobcentre Plus travel card, but other operators do not have similar schemes.

The structure of fares leads to pricing anomalies

The current network is structured towards provision of bus routes which terminate in the major urban areas. Flat fares in those areas mean that local trips are charged at the same fare as that charged for travel into the centres. This has led to a lack of perceived price advantage of taking the bus rather than taking the car for those local trips and in some cases specific anomalies. Specific examples include:

- In 2021, the three-stop-hop in Bristol cost £1.20 and the distance covered by that fare varies according to route. In Weston-super-Mare, the flat fare of £2.20 could take you up to 5 miles across the town.
- Other example is in Bristol, where you could travel from the Mall (Cribbs Causeway) to Hengrove Park on a metrobus for £2.25 flat fare (over 10 miles); but a journey of less than 2 miles in south Bristol (Bishopport Avenue to Hengrove Leisure Park) would cost the same £2.25.

So, the structure of fares did not support many local trips and can present an inconsistent pricing offer to passengers.

Multi-operator products carry a premium

The West of England Bus Strategy recognised that a key challenge to the attractiveness of bus travel is the current complex ticket offers which cannot be used on all buses. As a result, we have initiated work with bus operators to see how we can make improvements together.

There are four multi-operator bus tickets in the BSIP area:

- AvonRider: covering the whole BSIP area
- BathRider: covering the Bath urban area
- BristolRider: covering the Bristol urban area
- WestonRider: covering Weston-super-Mare.

These tickets give customers greater flexibility to plan and make journeys, but they are priced at a premium of between 5% and 65% over similar single-operator tickets. This makes them unattractive, and sales make up only 1% of overall ticket sales.

Changing journey patterns and technology

Changes to journey patterns and technological improvements present challenges and opportunities for fares, noting the linkage between fares and ticketing. These include:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant fall in passenger demand and fare promotions are an opportunity to encourage people back onto the bus
- More people are working from home for some of the week or part time, so the traditional weekly ticket is less relevant
- Digital ticketing, via mobile or contactless bank card, presents the opportunity to introduce new products

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

such as capping. Significant progress has been made in supporting the shift to digital already but there is still more to do.

4.4.3 Options considered

In developing options to improve fares across the region, we have considered the views of local people and undertaken much consultation with local bus operators.

Engagement with operators has focussed on meeting the requirements of the National Bus Strategy and BSIP guidance as well as achieving local objectives all of which relate in this context to achieving lower and simpler fares. We have considered the commercial implications of different options, reflecting market realities.

The following set of ambitions, which have discussed and agreed with the operators, have been identified as being vital to achieve our overall aims:

- Lower single fares, to attract new users and more occasional bus use
- The need for lower local fares in towns to drive modal shift from car to bus for short local journeys
- The need for a reduction in fares for young people, including standard discounts for children and students.
- The need for more flexible tickets to reflect changing travel patterns, for example:
 - Introduction of a ticket where customers can travel for any three days in a given week, and eventually where customers will have the flexibility to customise their own frequency and duration
 - Flexibles fares that will lower daily costs for the most daily journeys, such as a 2-trip ticket.

Reforms of this nature still need to support a network that delivers sustainable returns – and the extent of financial support needed should be an active consideration when determining the preferred options.

There is general support amongst the LTAs and operators for pressing forward with the following options at this stage:

- Lower local fares
- Tap-on-Tap-off systems with price capping (linked to ticketing)
- Widening the range of multi-operator products
- A consistent fare-offer for young people.

Areas we have considered but which would need further exploration to understand the feasibility and impact include:

- Multi-journey tickets – a European style Carnet ticket offer
- Flat fare across all single journeys irrespective of length.

Views of bus operators

In the development of the fare's delivery plan, local bus operators were consulted on the approach to delivering on the LTAs' ambitions – noting that they currently set fares. Specifically, they were asked about the requirements of the National Bus Strategy and BSIP guidance; and how best to deliver this as well as achieving the attributes set out by the LTAs.

Operators did not generally object to a fare reduction/standardisation package, based on the BSIP requirements, with smaller operators supportive of a simplified ticketing system and pricing structure delivered through a move to multi-operator as the norm. Operators with the largest fleets in the area have already stated an intention to introduce lower fares and local low fares – using both digital ticketing and proposed 'Tap-on-Tap-off' systems with capping to simplify the customer offer and ensure value for money.

In general operators were concerned that the network should continue to be sustainable – and that any low fares or youth discount proposals would only be viable with financial support.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

The principal operator was supportive of delivering this functionality and identified significant benefits in terms of achieving flexible and cheaper tickets. Smaller operators were also supportive of delivering a more standardised and universal offer to customers. The principal operator also identified the technical challenges in delivering PAYG discount/youth travellers. All operators were concerned with technological and financial barriers to delivering this – with the greatest benefit coming from the functionality being across all operators and a standard offer to support both single operator and multi operator capping.

Operators were generally supportive of developing the multi operator offer – with support from some larger operators to explore the potential to develop the existing scheme to a state where agreed tickets are only purchased in multi operator form with single operator tickets removed. Further details on this are set out in the ticketing delivery plan.

4.4.4 Outline of initiatives

Our preferred initiatives focus on a combination of engagement with an operator-led delivery approach to improve the fares offer and a simplification package supplemented with specific discounts on youth fares to encourage patronage. These three initiatives are set out below.

Initiative C1: Operator fare reduction & fares simplification package

We have been proactively working with operators to develop a future fares proposition. This reflects the ambitions set out in this document and introduces more flat fares and lower point to point fares combined with standardising ticket ranges/zones. The exact proposition is still being finalised but could include:

- Common fare ranges and zones
- New flat fares where appropriate
- Local low fare-zones; and lower point-to-point fares (looking to use contactless tap-on-tap-off technology, like that seen in London, to enable flexible ticket pricing that matches customer journeys and value for money fares)
- Discount offers for job seekers to be more widespread and consistent across operators
- Supporting multi-operator ticketing as the norm (linked to Delivery Plan D – Integrated ticketing).

For this initiative to be commercially funded, operators will need to see a reduction in operating costs from bus priority measures.

Work has progressed with operators with an initial fares package delivered across the majority of operators and routes in the BSIP area:

- Cap on adult single, two-journey and single-operator day fares from 25 September 2022 to 31 March 2025
- Cap on AvonRider Day multi-operator fare from 6 October 2022 to 31 March 2025
- Flat fare for persons aged 5 to 15 inclusive from 25 September 2022 to 31 March 2025.

The LTAs will review the impact of the first package with operators in early 2023 ahead of agreeing a second fares package.

Initiative C2: Youth fare discounts/ reductions

We will work with operators to introduce an improved offer for young people – options that have been considered are:

- Free travel for under-11s.
- A standard 50% discount for 11 to 18-year-olds across all operators.

We explored approaches and have learnt lessons learned from other youth initiatives, such as the 'My Ticket' scheme in Liverpool. This was based on underwriting the loss of revenue to operators rather than introducing a conventional concessionary scheme, and a similar approach will be applied to deliver value for money and the

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

potential for longer term viability.

We will work jointly with operators and LTAs to develop suitable initiatives which will be supported by an LTAs contribution in revenue support over the life of the BSIP.

Initiative C3: Jobseekers discounts/ reductions

We will work with operators and external stakeholders to devise a package of discounts or reductions for jobseekers and will seek funding to implement it.

4.4.5 Expected outcomes of initiatives

We hope to reduce overall level of fares across the West of England and introduce products that better match customer needs. This is a key part of our ongoing discussions with operators.

In terms of our initial areas of focus and quick wins, we expect:

- Operator led fare reforms including flexible tickets to reflect changing travel patterns; lower single fares; introduction of return fares to lower daily costs; and introduction of lower local fares (Portishead identified as likely initial focus), throughout 2022.
- Reduction in fares for young people through the introduction of a youth fares package, we could see the discount for 16 to 18-year-olds increase to as much as 50%, between 11 and 15 a consistent discount across all operators up to as much as 50%, and the potential for fares to be removed entirely for younger travellers (subject to funding).
- Reduction in fares for Job Seekers more consistently across the area. The exact nature of the discount needs to be finalised. Reduced barriers to employment for job seekers.
- Remove of multi-operator premium. Through the removal of premiums on the existing multi-operator scheme tickets we would see prices on these products reduced by between 6% and 10%. Timing of delivery is subject to discussions with operators.

Our approach to fares also links closely with our Delivery Plan D: Integrated Ticketing. Overall, the fares should support increased use of digital tickets and contactless Pay-As-You-Go, which removes the need for on bus ticket purchase and driver interaction, will not only deliver a more convenient offer for customers it will also result in reduced boarding times and help improve overall journey times in the area.

In addition, through delivery of fare reforms, to support value for money and lower fares where possible our outcome will be higher passenger numbers, reduced journey times, improved reliability, and passenger satisfaction.

4.4.6 Alignment of plan to targets

Our fares delivery plan supports the delivery of the targets in the following ways:

Table 12: Summary impact of fares on targets

Target areas	Summary of impact
Target 1: Journey times Target 2: Punctuality	Buses spend 25 – 30% of their time at bus stops. Simpler fares can help reduce dwell times, by reducing complexity for passengers and supporting the introduction of faster ticketing and payment methods (contactless bank Tap on Tap off and digital (smartphone)). This should support improved journey times and impact of slow boarding on punctuality.
Target 3: Single journey passengers	Through the implementation of improved fare offerings this will support and optimise the existing network and better enable it to meet the future growth demands, of increasing the modal share of public transport from 9% in 2011 to 17% by 2036, as outlined in JLTP4.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Target 4: Customer satisfaction	The current value for money responses that customers are exhibiting is likely to be influenced by the existing approach to fares. Our proposals and initiatives should address this and should raise the overall satisfaction that customers have with the bus service.
Target 5: Decarbonisation	Our fares proposition seeks to support modal shift whilst also encouraging a sustainable market where operators can make investments into new ZEBs.

The case study below shows how we have previously worked successfully with operators to deliver improvements to fares.

Case studies on fares

We have a collaborative working relationship with operators to deliver improvements in the fares offer such as flat fares and fare reductions, including:

- In 2018 First Bus introduced flat fares in the Bristol zone and have followed this with flat fares in Weston-super-Mare and Bath zones.
- First Bus introduced the Fairer Fares project in 2013 where the ticket range was refreshed to introduce lower point to point fares across the network.

We have also worked with operators to introduce the current multi-operator offering. This was originally developed in 2009, as BathRider, set up by Bath and North East Somerset Council using powers in the Transport Act 2000. Building on the experience, the four local councils helped local bus operators to launch their own voluntary scheme called AvonRider. This has expanded subsequently to include BristolRider and WestonRider. Our experience in delivery of these schemes has highlighted the need for clear objectives from fares changes, the need to test solutions and the power of working collaboratively with committed partners.

4.5 Delivery Plan D – Integrated ticketing

There must be seamless, integrated local ticketing between operators and this should be across all types of transport

Total funding allocated: £110,000 (BSIP joint revenue), £70,000 (BSIP capital NSC), £800,000 (CRSTS capital CA)

4.5.1 Our vision

Our integrated ticketing plan aims to provide a single consistent offer to customers across the region, and deliver in three areas:

- Wider application of digital ticketing across the network to enable customers the option of using m-tickets and contactless payment cards on all buses.
- Integration of multi-operator products onto digital ticketing systems to support use of m-tickets and contactless payment cards along with capping across the network.
- Clearer integrated options for multi-modal products including harmonisation of fare zones, ticket types and conditions.

We will retain traditional methods of ticket purchase to ensure the bus network is accessible for all. This delivery plan aligns closely with our Delivery Plan C – Fares to deliver an overall improvement in the fares and ticketing offer.

4.5.2 Challenges and opportunities

Supporting the shift to digital (i.e., mobile, bank card, smartcard)

Growth in the availability of smart phones and development of contactless payment has transformed the wider retail sector and is driving changes in fare payments.

Whilst this has already begun to move the sector away from on-bus cash payments there is no consistent cashless payment or mobile ticket offer across bus operators in the region, and the consequence is a continuing need for cash and different apps for different bus operators. These have different features, such a QR scanning capability. Certain products, including some operator specific, multi-operator and multi-modal tickets, are still paper only.

The increased use of tickets on smartphone and contactless pay-as-you-go is a core element in removing barriers, enabling more flexible better value tickets, and creating a simple travelling experience which is value for money.

An area of the market where this has been progressed the most is metrobus, where all ticket sales are off-bus through at-stop vending machines (iPoints), smartcard, and mobile/ smartphone. Despite that, we expect on-bus ticket purchases to remain an option, enabling access to travel for all customers.

The main area of opportunity is in creating a single offer to customers across the area with contactless Pay-As-You-Go and digital (smartphone) ticketing. This means there is greater flexibility for operators to create flexible ticketing and pricing that meets the needs of local people, and this is particularly the case in areas where shorter bus journeys are made. In addition, there are opportunities to create a more comprehensive and attractive offer for young travellers in the area.

In line with the BSIP Guidance, we have assumed that a technical solution is available that enables provision of a back-office for full multi-operator contactless ticketing.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Aligning the multi-operator ticketing proposition

In the West of England area, the principal bus operator is First Bus with a 90% share of passenger journeys. This position has enabled First Bus to invest in digital (smartphone) ticketing and contactless payment, with some capping in flat fare zones. Over 50% of ticket sales by First Bus are now through digital smartphone channels.

The remaining 10% of the local bus market in the area comprises several smaller operators with fleet sizes ranging from 2 to 45 vehicles. Due to their size, it is often not commercially viable for these operators to invest in the latest ticketing and payment technology, and this has created a barrier to introducing multi-operator tickets on smartphones.

This has led to a limited multi-operator ticket scheme with an incomplete range that is often priced at a premium and not always available in the best value formats such as tickets on a smartphone. Less than 1% of journeys are made using multi operator tickets compared to over 10% in other parts of the country. This presents an area of opportunity in improving our multi-operator ticketing offer to effectively reduce fares and transaction costs to the passenger and generate efficiency improvements for operators.

Creating greater opportunities for multi-modal tickets

Whilst buses are the predominant public transport mode in the BSIP area, we have an ambition to better align bus services and ticketing with other modes to support end-to-end journeys, notably rail services, as well future modes such as e-scooters, e-bikes, and DRT.

There are 27 rail stations in the BSIP area and, prior to the pandemic, 26.7 million journeys per year started or ended at them. Rail use grew consistently in the BSIP area since 1997.

4.5.3 Options considered

In developing options to improve ticketing across the region, we have considered the views of local people and undertaken much consultation with local bus operators.

Engagement with operators has focussed on meeting the requirements of the National Bus Strategy and BSIP guidance as well as achieving local objectives – all of which relate in this context to achieving seamless and integrated local ticketing across all modes of transport. We have considered the commercial implications of different options, reflecting market realities.

The following set of ambitions have been identified as being vital achieve our overall aims for ticketing:

Table 13: Ambitions for integrated ticketing

Area of ticketing	Key ambitions
Inclusive ticketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Ensuring that a non tech/cash-based offering is retained to ensure the bus network remains accessible for all.
Digital ticketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Standardise on bus technology to cover contactless Pay-As-You-Go and digital (smartphone) ticketing across the whole network.– Simplification of zones and ticket ranges.
Multi-operator ticketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Improved multi-operator ticket range – wider range of tickets with lower pricing (in line with National Bus Strategy aspiration for little or no premium).– Standardisation of on bus technology enabling the same customer offer – which would include individual operator contactless PAYG (followed by multi-operator through the national approach referenced in the NBS) and multi-operator/multi modal tickets on mobile phones.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Area of ticketing	Key ambitions
Multi-modal ticketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– To build on existing Future Transport Zones Mobility as a Service trials to deliver an ongoing platform for ticketing across all modes.– Creation of a single point of access/account through building on Mobility as a Service trial.

The following options have been considered but not progressed at this time.

- Discounted bank card PAYG with rail as no timescales for suitable infrastructure being in place at stations – instead the multi operator focus is to support the adoption of digital (smartphone) tickets and work with rail operators to link with the rail approach for ITSO based Pay-As-You-Go currently being developed.
- Statutory multi-operator ticket scheme.
- A full ITSO approach – as this does not align with operators’ or customers’ expectations. ITSO will be considered in those markets where contactless is challenging to deliver, such as concessionary, scholar, seasons, and non-transferrable carnets.

Views of bus operators

In the development of this chapter local bus operators were consulted on the approach to delivering on the LTAs’ ticketing objectives. Specifically, they were asked about the requirements of the National Bus Strategy and BSIP guidance, and how best to deliver this as well.

In general, all operators were keen to push ahead with a transition to digital ticketing recognising the current technology gaps and adjustments that would need to be made to make this deliverable, specifically around PAYG for discount/youth travellers.

Operators were also generally supportive of developing the multi operator offer – with support from some larger operators to explore the potential to develop the existing scheme to a state where agreed tickets are only purchased in multi operator form with single operator tickets removed.

Operators from the local ‘Rider’ multi operator scheme identified the need for all operators to have the same on bus technology functionality, including contactless bank and barcode readers, and the introduction of an updated reimbursement process. To deliver ‘multi operator as the norm’ operators have given their support to following timeline for refreshing the existing scheme:

- 1/11/2021 - Formation of a working group (with operator and LTA reps) and agreement on scope of activities and person to lead each item
- 17/01/2022 - Draft proposals produced and circulated
- 09/10/2022 - Proposals agreed/signed off
- 31/01/2023 - Refreshed scheme agreement signed off and rollout plan agreed
- 28/02/2023 - Actions to implement changes and go live/launch refreshed scheme.

Work has already progressed with on multi modal integration with trials of GWR digital PlusBus acceptance on First Bus vehicles currently underway. Following the completion of the trial we will work with GWR and other operators to extend this trial to all participating bus operators.

4.5.4 Outline of initiatives

The proposals for improvement have been developed with the ambitions outlined above as well as the core aim of working with operators to make services cheaper; easier to use; and better integrated with other modes and each other.

Below are three initiatives to deliver against the challenges and opportunities; meet our core aims; deliver on the reforms/changes identified and achieve the targets outlined above.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Initiative D1: Supporting the transition to digital ticketing

Name of initiative	Summary
<i>PAYG – individual operator adult tickets</i>	Support to all operators to upgrade existing equipment (to include new tap off readers and full ticket machine replacement where required to support both single operator capping and future multi operator delivery) to accept 'Tap on Tap Off' with a bank card and introduce capping for adult tickets in 2023.
<i>Single mobile platform</i>	Collaborate with operators to deliver a single contactless smartphone/ mobile ticketing app for the area. With agreement and participation of operators – build on the systems delivered through the West of England Future Transport Zones Programme Mobility as a Service project – 2023/24

Initiative D2: Supporting multi-operator ticketing as the norm

Name of initiative	Summary
New/Expanded range of multi-operator tickets & tickets on smartphone and smartcard	Work with operators through the existing 'Rider' ticket scheme to refresh the ticket range to cover all ticket types and discounts and to deliver multi-operator tickets on smartphone and smartcard, and ensure all operators have the ability to fulfil tickets on smartphone and scan tickets on bus – 2022/23
PAYG – multi operator and youth/discounted	Capital contribution to support the establishment of multi operator contactless bank PAYG systems in line with those being trialled in other areas of England (such as Leicester) – timescales dependent on DfT confirmation of approach. Development of approach to delivering PAYG for discounted fares including children; young people; and students and support towards establishing required processes and systems– between 2025 and 2027

Initiative D3: Supporting multi-modal ticketing integration

Name of initiative	Summary
<i>Multi-modal Pay-As-You-Go and mobile/smartphone</i>	Work with rail and bus operators to deliver multi-modal tickets (currently PlusBus & Freedom Travelpass) on rail and bus smartphone enabling better integration with rail and access to through journey ticketing. – 2024/25
<i>Support to integrate bus and rail platforms to deliver multi- modal contactless capping</i>	Collaborate with operators to deliver a single contactless smartphone/ mobile ticketing app for the area. With agreement and participation of operators – build on the systems delivered through the Mobility as a Service project – 2023/24

The estimated costs for these initiatives are based on market engagement with operators and suppliers, as well as reflecting costs of similar historic projects. The more future-focussed initiatives will need to be fully scoped and assessed to develop a more detailed understanding of the costs.

4.5.5 Outcome of initiative

The scheme is anticipated to increase patronage by around 1.6% based upon DfT’s 2009 business case for investment in smart ticketing nationally. The initiatives we have identified will support the transition to greater take up of digital ticketing as well as multi-operator and multi-modal products.

The benefits from this are:

- Improved customer experience through:
 - Ability to plan and buy tickets in advance on mobile
 - Greater flexibility to hop-on hop-off across the network
 - Confidence that the products customers by better match needs
- Support the operation of the network through reducing dwell times and improving data provision.

Studies have shown that the introduction of London-style ticketing and payments, including contactless Pay-As-You-Go, can improve bus journey times by up to 10% by halving dwell time at bus stops – and as such the widespread adoption of such systems are likely to have significant benefit.

In the short run we have or expect to deliver:

- Operator led fare reforms including flexible tickets, supporting the long-term changes in working patterns because of the pandemic, and new local ticketing in areas where customers are currently not getting a value for money offer – throughout 2022 and 2023.
- Network wide rollout of tap on tap off readers delivering Individual operator contactless bank PAYG with capping throughout 2022 and 2023.
- Review and refresh of existing scheme and new/expanded range of multi-operator tickets & Tickets on smartphone and smartcard by June 2023.

4.5.6 Alignment of plan to targets

Our ticketing delivery plan supports the delivery of the targets in the following ways:

Table 14: Summary impact of integrated ticketing on targets

Target areas	Summary of impact
Target 1+2 : Journey times/Punctuality	Buses spend 25 – 30% of their time at bus stops. Simpler fares can help reduce dwell times by reducing complexity for passengers and supporting the introduction of faster ticketing and payment methods (contactless bank Tap on Tap off and digital (smartphone). This should improve journey times and reduce the impact of slow boarding on punctuality.
Target 3: Single journey passengers	Through the implementation of improved ticket offerings this will support and optimise the existing network and enable it to meet the future growth demands, of increasing the modal share of public transport from 9% in 2011 to 17% by 2036, as outlined in JLTP4.
Target 4: Customer satisfaction	The current value for money responses that customers are exhibiting is likely to be influenced to some degree by the existing approach to fares. Our proposals and initiatives should address this and should raise the overall satisfaction that customers have with the bus network.
Target 5: Decarbonisation	Our ticketing proposition supports modal shift whilst also encouraging a sustainable market where operators can make investments in zero-emission vehicles.

The case study below shows where we have previously worked with operators to deliver improvements in bus ticketing.

Case studies on collaboration between bus operators

We have a collaborative working relationship with operators to deliver improvements in ticketing systems, including:

- In 2019, LTAs supported smaller operators (35 vehicles or less) to upgrade on bus infrastructure to accept contactless bank payments and read barcodes. This was provided to these smaller operators as it was not commercially viable for them to upgrade. To date we have supported the upgrade of over 70 small operator vehicles – resulting in 99% of registered vehicles in the West of England area now being upgraded and accepting bank payments and 94% enabled with barcode/QR code readers for digital (smartphone) tickets – this will include multi-operator digital tickets to be delivered as part of the ‘Rider’ scheme refresh in 2022.
- In 2018, there was the installation of 89 on street ticket vending machines (iPoints), to enable no driver interaction on the metrobus network, including contactless payment, barcode tickets, and multi day/journey tickets on smartcard.
- In 2015, there was an initiative to put the existing adult multi-operator tickets on smart card.

The main points we have learnt from these is the need to engage with all operators across the market to ensure a consistent proposition can be developed. We have also learnt the importance of developing solutions that work for customers such as the iPoints which have proven popular and reduced dwell times.

4.6 Delivery Plan E – Integrated services

Service patterns must be integrated with other modes

Total funding allocated: £12,753,000 (Initiative E1).

4.6.1 Our vision

We want a bus network which provides good access to services from all parts of the region and links to key passenger destinations and other modes. Provision of Transport Hubs and good bus stops form an integral aspect of that, by ensuring effective feeder services to interchange hubs to improve connections from places away from main roads as well as offering bus connections to our rail network with co-ordinated timetables. This integration needs to be supported by a high-quality waiting environment, with accessible, safe, and inclusive bus stops and stations. Interchanges should be high-quality, accessible, and readily identifiable as part of the public transport network.

4.6.2 Challenges and opportunities

Local geography

The characteristics of the local geography combined with the locations of train stations create challenges in integrating services. While our major city centre train stations are well integrated with other modes of transport, other urban stations such as Filton Abbey Wood and Oldfield Park have connectivity challenges given the topography of the land, narrow local roads, low bridges under railway lines as well as natural barriers.

Bus Stops and Transport Hubs

Bus stops are a key element of the passenger journey on our network yet are variable in quality and the level of passenger dissatisfaction is unacceptably high. As the primary access point to the network, bus stops should be a shop window but too many of them look dirty, neglected, and uninviting. There is an opportunity to build a consistent bus stop offer to ensure we are maximising patronage on our network.

To ensure that we meet our network principles we will create new Transport Hubs where people are able to interchange between bus/rail/DRT/Community Transport as well as providing good access by bike and potentially e-scooters, among other modes. These hubs will provide an enhanced waiting environment for passengers while they are changing transport modes, setting standards for cleanliness, access, and information provision.

Where appropriate, bus services will be re-routed to serve Transport Hubs when the relevant infrastructure is built.

As part of the Future Transport Zone project, we are in the process of creating a Transport Hub at Kingswood Shopping Centre, so that passengers can interchange between services to a variety of destinations from this point. In August 2021, supported bus service 35 was curtailed to operate between Marshfield and Kingswood only – instead of Bristol city centre. Through passengers to Bristol can change to frequent services and the time saving on service 35 enables more journeys to be operated over the remaining unique section of the route.

Rural connectivity

Roughly three-quarters of the BSIP area is rural in nature. Integrating rural transport provision with high frequency urban connections is a challenge because of the dispersal of population in small rural communities. Despite that, our rural communities are all within 10 miles of a city or town, so there are opportunities to improve connectivity and integration. Transport Focus survey data shows that many people in our villages and rural areas are disappointed with the frequency of bus service.

4.6.3 Options considered

Drawing on the challenges outlined the focus of our initiatives to better integrate services is:

- Improvements to the wider environment through Transport Hubs and connections
- Roadworks co-ordination to minimise disruption to bus services
- Improving the interaction between bus services and other modes including rail, walking, and cycling.

Options have been considered across all these areas. Integrated services require a breadth of bus provision across the region, to ensure we are linking people to the transport services they want to access. Bus stop facilities are a vital aspect of integrated services. Cycling to a poorly lit, uncomfortable bus stop with limited bicycle storage is not consistent with an integrated service.

Ensuring that our roads are properly maintained requires effective co-ordination and integration of roadworks to minimise disruption to bus services.

Finally, integration across modes requires investment and enhanced service provision in rail, walking and cycling as well as buses. As part of our consideration of policy options we have considered investments in access to these modes, ensuring that interchange between them is as seamless as possible.

These initiatives will draw on measures outlined in other delivery plans – most notably our plans to intensify services and deliver more bus priority on our roads – to provide a truly integrated network.

4.6.4 Outline of initiatives

For each of the areas of focus, we have defined an approach aimed at delivering our targets identified within this BSIP although not all initiatives have been allocated funding from BSIP or CRSTS and so will be delivered in the longer-term.

Initiative E1: Transport Hubs and Wider Environment

To ensure that we meet our network principles we will create new Transport Hubs where people are able to interchange between bus/rail/DRT/Community Transport. These hubs will provide an enhanced waiting environment for passengers while they are changing transport modes and they will vary in size depending on the location – from smaller rural hubs to major hubs at Park & Ride sites.

Where appropriate, bus services will be re-routed to serve Transport Hubs when the relevant infrastructure is built.

The key locations will be at existing and proposed Park & Ride sites, although we will also deliver Transport Hubs on different scales at key interchange locations.

Our Transport Hubs will provide opportunities for first and last mile transport connections through micro-mobility options as well as other facilities to encourage mode shift away from the private car and ensure that interchange is pleasant and attractive – allowing for cafés, waiting areas etc where space permits. More reliable, frequent services mean that interchanging also becomes a realistic option for rural and feeder services.

We are working with the Future Transport Zone project to set up a scalable model of how Transport Hubs can be delivered at key interchange locations to improve interchange between bus services, and between different modes. The scale of the hubs will range from traditional edge of urban area Park & Ride sites to urban areas where onward journey options can be improved.

Initiative E2: Enhancement of bus stops

Our bus stops are a shop window for the bus network, and they need to offer a safe and welcoming environment. We are reviewing our bus stop standards to ensure that we have a consistent high standard across the BSIP area. We will set standards for cleanliness, accessibility, safety, and information provision that

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

are world-class and comparable to the best performing transport authorities. Of particular emphasis will be a review of the current maintenance arrangements with our highway authorities with the aim of achieving a consistent standard of cleaning and maintenance across the BSIP area. We will also consider access to bus stops by sustainable modes, the provision of cycle parking, and wayfinding to aid pedestrians.

We will consider biodiversity in respect of any new infrastructure that we install. There are already good examples around the region where we have delivered such improvements as part of infrastructure schemes, for example enhanced biodiversity alongside sustainable urban drainage systems.

Roadside information

The information we currently provide at local bus stops largely comprises a mix of timetable displays, summary route information, contact details and real-time information through our regional RTI system.

Information is not currently provided at all stops and the feedback from passengers in our public consultation is that information is important, particularly real-time information. We will therefore seek to ensure that every single bus stop within the region has an information point so that passengers can access up-to-date information about their services.

We will commit to reviewing all our information provision at local bus stops, providing additional display cases wherever possible. We will introduce a new 'smart' information plate at every one of our local bus stops, providing a standard set of digital information links, using QR codes and website short links, to timetables and journey planning and other useful information for passengers. This will provide passengers with greater connectivity to digital information. This will also be particularly useful in rural areas, where we will be able to use the smaller displays to create bespoke information for rural services. This initiative will include 500 new display cases at bus stops across the region and more than 4,000 new smart information plates (one for every local bus stop).

As well as additional display cases, for some bus shelters we will introduce new information and branding material through graphics printed onto adhesive vinyl. This can be a low-cost way to achieve high impact for branding and promotion at bus shelters.

Bus stop flags are another area where we will make improvements. We will look to roll out a newly designed bus stop flag at all bus stops as part of the rollout of our new network brand. This will be a key tool that we will use to present the bus network as one single system. This process will also allow us to complete a refresh of the flags across the network, updating and then maintaining correct service numbers on our flags.

Enhanced information on our displays

We have developed a standard layout for our roadside timetable displays to provide a common approach across the region. Our current displays include:

- Stop name, branding, and contact information
- Traveline details, including SMS text service for next departures
- Departure times from the stop with route diagrams
- Links to Travelwest online services, including QR codes linking to RTI departures.

Many of our stops have more than one display case, which enables us to show more information, such as network maps, interchange information and walking maps. As part of our BSIP ambitions we will expand the number of additional displays and we will develop new enhancements to our displays and offer more information to passengers as standard, including:

- Route maps for the services using the stop
- Network and interchange map displays
- Walking maps to show nearby destinations and attractions
- Ticket and fares information
- Bespoke information to complement the surrounding local transport network

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

— Marketing material to promote bus travel.

Bespoke information would also be provided at key locations, in conjunction with our Future Transport Zone projects, providing information to complement the local transport network. Information provision will be key at our Mobility Hubs, and we will include multi-modal information, connected to our real-time system where possible, and with detailed mapping to show landmarks, tourist destinations and other wayfinding from local bus stops.

Digital timetable displays

We will trial the use of ‘e-paper’ displays in two of our interchange locations. These devices are digital displays that mimic the use of ink that are already implemented for shelf labels at supermarkets and timetables at bus stops, among other uses. They allow for information refresh as convenient, and offer the potential to show passengers timetable information, route maps, ticket, and fares information as well as a real-time information feed, all on one display panel, and kept up-to-date remotely and in real-time. The trials will test the technology and gain feedback from passengers ahead of potential further rollout.

Upgraded displays for rural areas

Passengers in rural areas have a greater need for information covering their whole journey. This is particularly true for passengers that rely on infrequent services. We will therefore improve the design and layout for roadside timetable displays in rural areas, providing more helpful information for passengers that are using infrequent services. One area of feedback from passengers in this regard is the need for return journey and fares information, so we will look to include this within the redesign for rural displays.

Real time information (RTI)

Our public consultation exercise for the West of England Bus Strategy highlighted that passengers are very keen to see more real-time information at bus stops and across the bus network. RTI is now a common sight within the bus network in the West of England and we have ambitions to do more with our network of RTI displays, providing live predictions for all our bus services and connecting more with passengers through more live network updates.

We will roll out new full-colour digital displays for all central and interchange locations, cascading our older LED displays to other bus corridors. We will also roll-out new digital interchange displays, creating digital ‘information hubs’ at key locations, working in partnership with local areas. These hub displays can also be used for additional local information such as mapping and other local travel information. The initiative will involve 250 new full-colour in-shelter RTI units and 30 new full-colour interchange displays, replacing our 12-line LED boards.

Solar power connections can be used in certain locations, replacing the need for intrusive or expensive electricity supply connections. By adopting this we can bring RTI to more locations, particularly in rural areas. The initiative will involve 30 new solar-powered digital displays for key locations in rural areas.

We will also develop digital poster displays for both indoor locations such as bus stations and interchanges, and outdoor locations including bus stops. These poster displays can be highly effective, providing a mix of RTI, route maps, live network information and a range of useful content for passengers. The initiative will involve 50 digital poster displays.

We will also look to upgrade our bus stations to enhance the RTI and digital information displays, to create a modern system within our key bus stations. Upgrade packages will be developed for our two key bus stations – in Bath and Bristol – with new RTI screens, digital posters, and interchange displays, including audio announcement capabilities.

Passenger safety

As part of the bus stop standard review, we will investigate our specification for bus stops to make sure it meets passengers’ expectation in terms of accessibility, comfort, and provision of information. We will work closely with bus station operators to ensure that adequate standards are maintained. Also, we will make sure

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

that environmental and safety concerns are reflected on the design and refurbishment of walking routes to bus stops. More detail on how we will bring all stakeholders together for these activities can be found in Initiative H1: Bus Passenger Charter in Section 4.9.4.

Initiative E3: Roadworks co-ordination

We will work with our highway authorities to improve co-ordination of roadworks, liaison with bus operators on works and dissemination of information about diversions and disruptions. We will seek:

- Better and more timely advance information to ensure that bus operators can plan for diversions and disruption
- Working with contractors, highway authorities and bus operators to seek priority for buses through roadworks wherever possible
- Co-ordination of on-site works as part of infrastructure scheme development to minimise the impact on buses and other road users.

Initiative E4: Interaction between bus services and other modes

Our plans for walking and cycling support the goal of the LTAs for these modes to become the preferred choice for short journeys, delivering cleaner air, healthier places, and lower carbon emissions to meet the ambitious decarbonisation target by 2030. They build on the significant and exciting first steps to realise this in our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. We will invest in walking and cycling facilities across the region, particularly at our transport hubs to improve the attractiveness of active travel, including new modes such as e-scooters. The facilities include increased provision of cycle parking spaces and off-road and segregated walking and cycling routes, which feed our key transport corridors. These walking and cycling investment plans are integral to facilitating integrated services, improving links between where people live, work and where they access the public transport network, especially in economically disadvantaged areas.

On rail we are working with Great Western Railway, Severnside Community Rail Partnership and Network Rail to make our stations safe, attractive, and accessible, and easy to access via buses, walking and cycling. We are focussing first on those stations in our most deprived communities: Lawrence Hill, Parsons Street, Bedminster, and Stapleton Road in Bristol; and Oldfield Park in Bath.

4.6.5 Expected outcomes of initiatives

In development of the West of England Bus Strategy, the effectiveness of the bus network was comprehensively reviewed. The strategy recommended the development of a network that featured a fewer number of services overall but creating radial routes that connect with frequent orbital services and Demand Responsive Transport, at key interchanges and transport hubs.

It is envisaged that through our development of a more integrated bus network, in terms of the alignment of bus services with other forms of transport and improving connections, there will be improvements in journey times, a better passenger experience and a more reliable service.

4.6.6 Alignment of plan to targets

Improved service integration by either aligning services and modes or improving the customer environment where changes between services are likely to take place is intended to deliver improvements to passenger satisfaction. Timetable optimisation can lead to improvements in journey times, particularly the extent to which it reduces interchange time. Journey time reductions and improvements to waiting facilities would be expected to lead to increases in transport demand.

The case study below shows where we have successfully delivered improved public transport connectivity through the integration of modes in Weston-super-Mare.

Case study on integration of transport modes in Weston-super-Mare

The measures being implemented as part of the £6.8 million redevelopment of Weston-super-Mare town centre provide an example of where targeted interventions in integrating transport modes such as bus-only streets will help solve the inherent problems with the transport network and local geography being biased to single occupancy vehicles.

The design of Regent Street bus interchange gives public transport a complete car and congestion free route to link into the centre of Weston-super-Mare. The redevelopment has created better cycling and walking routes to the interchange with section being segregated which helps to reduce congestion in the town centre and improves bus journey times and reliability. It will also help to attract visitors to the town centre, and aid economic development. When complete the project will include:

- Enhanced cycling and pedestrian links across the town centre.
- Centralised bus stops in one place on Regent Street, to make the use of public transport easier.
- Changes to the road layout of Alexandra Parade and Walliscote Road to reduce traffic volume.
- Simpler access for pedestrians to the town centre.
- More trees in the town centre.
- Future proofing with the addition of infrastructure to support zero emission buses and taxis (limited to the DNO and ducting, etc).
- Reduction in the impact of lorries in the daytime by:
 - Introducing loading access to a new pedestrian zone on Regent Street.
 - Loading times and dedicated loading bays on the outskirts of the pedestrian zone.

4.7 Delivery Plan F – Single integrated system

The local bus network is presented as a single system that works together, with clear passenger information

Total funding allocated: £5,700,000 (BSIP joint revenue)

4.7.1 Our vision

Our ambition is that local bus services will form an integral part of a single, comprehensive public transport network under a common brand that will be easily identifiable. Buses will be heavily promoted and marketed to residents and visitors. Users of the system can expect accurate and accessible information on fares and services when planning and making journeys, including real-time information at stops and in vehicles.

4.7.2 Challenges and opportunities

Although bus services in the region are largely provided by a single operator, there is no single brand that runs across all customer touch points from travel information, bus stops and interchanges, vehicles, and marketing. Creating a common brand for the region gives us an opportunity to build value and trust, driving up revenues and reducing costs. Marketing of services has historically been a commercial responsibility but there are opportunities to work in partnership with operators to strengthen the marketing and promotion of the whole network under the common brand. Information on fares, services and other queries is currently fragmented and customers are confused about who they should speak with on different issues. Presenting the network as a single system presents an opportunity to work with operators to provide a clearer and more co-ordinated approach. There is also an opportunity to improve real time information at bus stops and on-board vehicles as part of the new partnership agreement with operators.

4.7.3 Options considered

We have reviewed a full range of options for presenting the bus network as a single integrated system. This included:

- Consideration of the broad approach to branding ranging from maintaining operator branding including a relatively light touch regional brand identifier to rebranding all services as a new regional brand. Whilst details of the approach to branding are still being discussed, there are ambitions for a new, comprehensive brand for all public transport in the region.
- Consideration of whether the local transport authorities should have a role in the marketing of commercial services or whether they should limit their role to focussing on supported services, initiatives included in this BSIP, and information surrounding public health and societal benefits associated with bus travel.
- Consideration of the role of the LTAs in providing information on fares and services before and during travel. There are choices to be made in how far and how quickly customers information should be digitised and the extent that information should also be available on paper. At this stage a balanced digital and paper-based approach is needed, recognising that there are significant cost and service quality advantages to be gained from encouraging greater use of digital-media, but many bus users still rely on paper-based information.

4.7.4 Outline of initiatives

There are five integrated initiatives in this Delivery Plan which work together to support our aim of presenting the bus network as one, simple and easy to use system that is part of the whole local public transport network. They include:

- Developing a single brand identity covering all customer and operational touchpoints
- Marketing, promoting and communication of services
- Providing easy to access travel guides and journey planning tools that will evolve into a multi-modal system through the MaaS platform
- Presenting customer information during the journey

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

- Providing network stability.

Further details of each are described below.

Initiative F1: Brand identity

We have an ambition to develop a common brand for the whole local public transport network.

That means that all entry points onto the network (such as bus stops and railway stations) and all vehicles operating in the network are easily identifiable as part of a common network with co-ordinated services, integrated ticketing, and comprehensive information.

Our approach to branding will result in:

- A distinctive brand that serves the needs of the BSIP area and reflects its character
- An enduring, coherent, and consistent brand
- A non-corporate brand
- Brand values that are meaningful for transport operators, their staff, and our residents
- Recognition of the distinctive characteristics of specific elements of the bus network (such as metrobus and Park & Ride).

Initiative F2: Marketing, promotion, and communications

We have set ourselves ambitious targets for patronage growth and to achieve this we need to co-ordinate marketing activities with local bus operators to promote the service enhancements and travel by bus more generally to residents and visitors. Our marketing and promotion plans include:

- Direct marketing of services and initiatives to complement those of the operators
- An outreach programme to work with businesses and key destinations in the region to develop and implement initiatives to encourage bus use.

Direct marketing

As part of our ambition to grow bus patronage back to pre-pandemic levels and then beyond, we will develop a comprehensive and continuing marketing campaign, reaching out to new passengers as well as those that are yet to return to using the bus. Our approach to marketing would include:

- A comprehensive and continuing marketing campaign to encourage bus travel
- Delivered in partnership, across all available platforms
- Fare promotions, including free introductory promotions
- Engagement with local businesses to create low-cost ticket deals for employees
- Promotional information around the health benefits of 'active travel'.

Outreach programme

We have ambitions to develop a new 'outreach' programme, promoting bus travel as a safe and sustainable mode of choice to key destinations throughout the region. This will be targeted for early deployment.

Our programme would involve direct engagement with local businesses and key attractions to develop bespoke ways of encouraging bus travel. This will encompass new notice boards, the distribution of information and promotions material, as well as discounted ticket offers and a range of marketing activity.

Marketing events, including face to face sessions and meet-the-team style Q&As can be very effective in developing new passengers, providing a better understanding of bus travel, and helping both existing and new customers get the best from the network.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Our outreach programme will work across all sectors. In the final two years of BSIP funding we would target the development of new links with:

- Key retail centres
- Leisure centres
- Key tourist attractions
- Universities and colleges
- Primary and secondary schools (alongside our current Active Travel work)
- Hospitals, doctors' surgeries, and health centres
- Large employers
- New housing developments.

Social media and communication activity

Alongside our traditional media and the information services that we will continue to provide online and at local bus stop, we recognise the growing demand for passengers to engage with us through our social media channels.

We will enhance our social media activity, expanding on the activity currently undertaken through our Travelwest brand (see below), and with additional marketing and information content on other channels. We will also develop a newsletter style approach to regular communication with passengers, building upon the current newsletter communications that we have established and made available via email subscription.

We have developed the 'Travelwest Challenge', and this is one of our key areas of successful engagement with businesses, communities, and the public, raising the profile of sustainable travel. We will grow this further and use our combined marketing activity to reach new audiences with the challenge.

YouTube enables us to create some simple 'how to' videos. We will create these and develop some content that can be used as part of our marketing campaigns to debunk some of the negative myths around public transport, as well as helping to ease people back onto the bus network.

Initiative F3: Travel guides and journey planning

Promotion of local bus services will also include the development and implementation of travel guides and journey planning tools so that when customers are looking for travel options, they are able to find accurate and accessible data on the alternatives. We will work in tandem with the Mobility as a Service (MaaS) project on this.

Comprehensive travel guides

Within the West of England area there have been several travel maps and guides produced throughout the years by the various local authorities. We propose to deliver and maintain a new single, comprehensive Public Transport Guide, covering the whole region.

The new guide will be available in a series of paper fold-out guides, but it will also form the backbone for a new interactive digital guide online to support journey planning. Whilst it is certainly acknowledged that most existing passengers use digital information when needed, there is still a clear market for other existing passengers that want to have a paper-based guide and these guides are a useful tool in attracting new passengers. The interactive guide will allow people to plan their journey in full, with interactive elements including the ability for passengers to interrogate their local bus stop 'virtually' to gather and view live and up-to-date information.

The guide will be continuously updated, with the main updates coinciding with the two major network changes each year. The Guide will be available online and the printed version will be distributed widely, forming a key part of our outreach and marketing programmes.

Alongside our comprehensive Public Transport Guide, we will also produce local area guides to promote key

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

parts of the network. Recent examples of such guides include the Chew Valley Area Guide, which brought together information for all the rural services within the Chew Valley area into one place.

We will develop a range of local area guides and bespoke leaflets, both paper-based and digital, where this would present additional benefits to encouraging patronage.

Travelwest

Travelwest provides the region with a single source of transport information for a variety of travel modes. A key feature is the multi-modal journey planner, which sits alongside up-to-date information on walking, cycling, bus, ferry, taxis, and other city transport services. The website also provides links to our RTI services and has live messaging for the network.

We will look to develop the website further with an enhancement package that will include:

- Fares information for local buses
- Multi-modal cost comparisons
- Direct marketing and information for passengers, including tailored push
- Notifications
- Enhanced service information including statistics on journey times, space
- Available capacity on the bus, live location data and other real-time information
- Ticket sales with an enhancement package for our Travelwest Travelcard, which carries some multi-operator tickets
- Online chat function as part of enhanced customer service offer.

App development

A high proportion of our bus passengers currently use a mobile phone app to access service information and to buy tickets. Many operators have developed an app, with the highest use in our region being the First Bus App, featuring mTickets. Linked to the rollout of the Government's Bus Open Data project, we expect more commercially developed apps to be available in the future, including apps that provide multi-modal travel and mapping functions.

As a first phase, we will support improvement and development of current apps that serve our passengers, bringing forward technology improvements and functionality that will help to grow our passenger market by making bus travel easier. We will support the enhancement of existing apps, where they have been developed for the whole network, including information for all services, and where they offer a point of sale for our regional multi-operator Rider tickets, the multi-modal PlusBus and Freedom Travelpass tickets. We will consider all options for the second stage of development, including whether an existing commercially-developed app has the potential to deliver our ambition.

As part of our Future Transport Zone programme, we will work with BSIP partners to support the development of a Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) platform that will provide a regional journey planning, booking, ticketing, payment, and information solution. This will bring new functionality for the wider transport network beyond the bus network. This will be a key tool in bringing our bus network improvements with our Future Transport Zone and other regional transport improvements.

We will consider all options for this second stage development, including whether an existing commercial app has the potential to deliver our ambitions.

Initiative F4: Within journey information

Early in 2023, a new Bus Information Strategy for the West of England will be adopted and published. Aligned with our BSIP and our EP, this will be a joint strategy between the LTAs and will set out in detail our approach to delivering bus passenger information.

Specific details on how we will improve the information displayed at bus stops across our network can be

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

found in Initiative E2: Enhancement of bus stops in Section 4.6.4.

Enhanced RTI functionality

To complement the roll out of new RTI displays and infrastructure across the network, we will develop several areas of our RTI system to improve the system and functionality, enabling us to bring more information to passengers.

Regular meetings will take place between the LTAs, bus operators and the highway authorities to identify areas for improvement. Through the Bus User Forum and proposed Enhanced Partnership (EP) Advisory Panel, passenger and other stakeholders will also be able to put forward suggestions for how the system can be developed.

We will support all operators to get on to the system and make it a requirement of our EP, ensuring that all services are shown on our RTI displays.

Enhancements to our RTI system will include:

- Live departure board URL links, including for cluster stops, for key locations to show RTI and public transport information on screens (delivered through our outreach project)
- Bespoke URL links created for individual passengers to access on mobile phones and in key business locations
- New RTI configurations to show targeted information based on the corridor, for example calibrating the mix of high and low frequency services on displays
- Bus and rail departure times shown from appropriate stops, with rail departure times appropriately adjusted to allow for the walking distance to the rail station
- Upgrade to our colour display formats to show ‘vias’ and dynamic destinations
- Bus ‘busy’ status information added to the displays where available
- Live visual tracking of buses for the Travelwest website using our real time data
- Continued support for Bus Open Data Service delivery
- Electronic Bus Service Registrations rolled out as standard, improving the data processes, and paving the way for further enhanced RTI functionality
- Retrofit to the REACT boards with dual REACT/Bluetooth boards, ensuring that people that currently use our visually impaired service can also use Bluetooth connectivity.

Overall, our aim is that our network of RTI screens will be used far more as a tool to communicate ‘live’ with passengers at bus stops, informing them of any issues with local bus services and helping them in real time with their journey. We will review how the messaging function for the RTI screens is managed, to enable a 24/7 approach to be taken for posting messages to the screens.

Initiative F5: Providing network stability

A stable service pattern makes it easier for customers to get to know services to commit relevant parts of the timetable to memory and builds confidence. We propose to limit the number of changes to bus services.

Change dates

Prior to the pandemic, we had a voluntary agreement with bus operators to limit service changes to fixed dates every year. We propose to enshrine that agreement in our EP and focus on two dates per year – in April and in late August/early September – for major changes. Other changes will be minimal – to align bus services with schools, universities, and rail timetable changes, as necessary.

Local Bus Service Registrations

To bring a focus to our work with bus operators and highway authorities to improve punctuality, we will consider adopting the function of the Traffic Commissioner as registration authority for local bus services in the

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

BSIP area. There are many factors to consider in this and we will liaise with bus operators, highway authorities, the Traffic Commissioner and DVSA about them.

One specific issue to resolve is how the current traffic regulation conditions covering tour bus services in Bath can be replicated in the EP to protect the environment of the World Heritage Site.

We propose to require bus operators in the EP to use Electronic Bus Service Registration (EBSR) as the standard. Bringing forward EBSR for all our local bus services would improve the data handling processes surrounding registrations, speeding up the process but also improving the quality of data within our information services. It will also bring efficiencies and potential cost savings.

4.7.5 Expected outcomes of initiatives

The development and implementation of a new regional brand together with the coordinated marketing and promotion of services and improved customer information will help to advance customer knowledge and trust, which in turn will promote patronage growth.

4.7.6 Alignment of plan to targets

The key alignment here will be with the Passenger Journey and the Customer Satisfaction targets:

- Our marketing and promotion plans will be critical to the overall growth in patronage levels. Better information also makes it much easier for passengers to plan their journeys, and have awareness of their travel options, which will encourage greater use of the bus.
- Customer satisfaction levels should increase on information, engagement and other associated factors relating to information provision. The Bus Passenger Charter should also improve the satisfaction score, giving passengers a direct channel for engagement and redress.

4.8 Delivery Plan G – Modern buses

Modern buses and decarbonisation

Total allocated funding: £0

4.8.1 Our vision

We are committed to transitioning the bus fleet to zero emissions across the BSIP area addressing our pledge to be net zero by 2030. This has the dual aims of reducing overall emissions as well as improving air quality especially on key corridors.

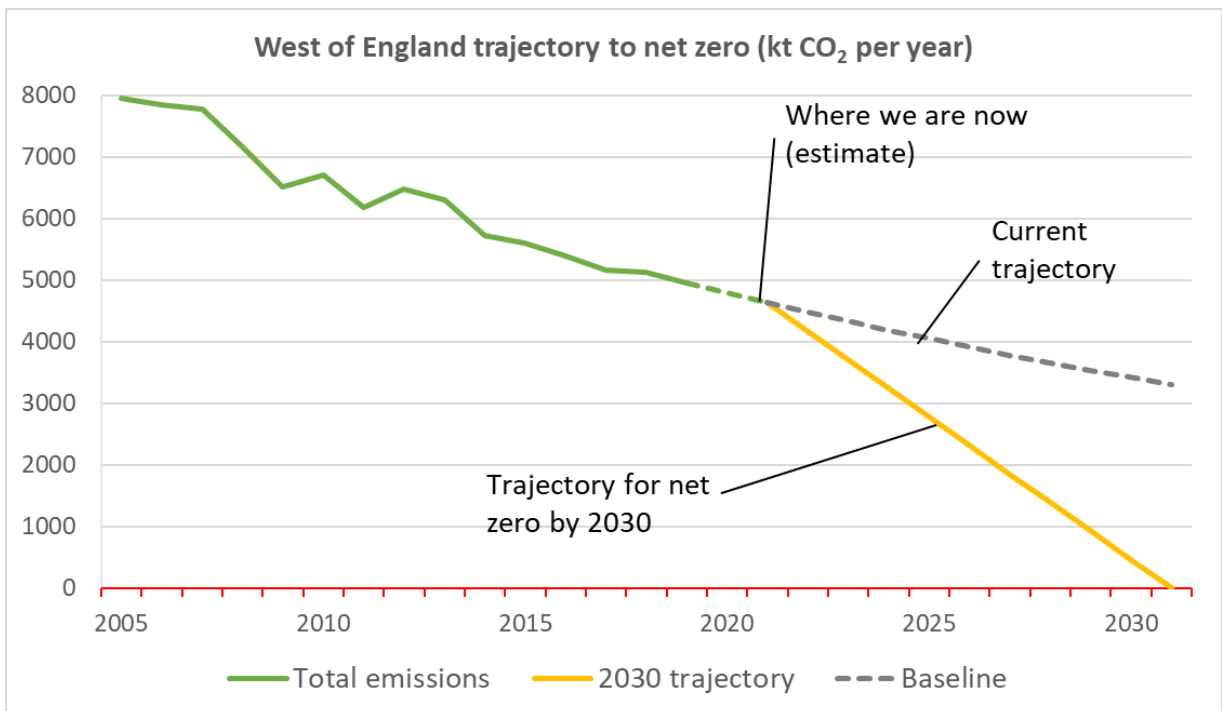
We want to also deliver higher vehicle standards, with improvements to the information provision and accessibility of the fleet to support the customer experience.

4.8.2 Challenges and opportunities

Transition to a zero-emission bus fleet

The West of England Combined Authority, its constituent councils, and North Somerset Council have all declared a climate emergency and pledged to reduce emissions to a net zero region by 2030. This is an ambitious target, and we need to work in partnership nationally, regionally, and locally to accelerate our journey towards a net zero carbon future. Clearly, decarbonisation of the local bus fleet has a significant role to play in that process., The delivery challenge is illustrated in Figure 21.

Figure 21: West of England trajectory to net zero (kt Co2 per year)



Transitioning to a zero-emission region requires a cut to total emissions of 464 kilotonnes each year - 10% of today's level. Emissions from transport represent the largest (44%) share of this.

Air quality is also an issue, and we know that in certain areas across the BSIP area the annual mean concentrations of certain pollutants, such as nitrogen dioxide, which is associated with traffic pollution, are

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

above legal limits. A Clean Air Zone (CAZ) has been in place in Bath since March 2021 and a new CAZ was implemented in Bristol in November 2022.

Transitioning to net zero requires both encouraging people onto buses, which has been addressed in many of the delivery plans, as well as transitioning the fleet to zero emission vehicles.

As the local bus fleet becomes due for replacement, the opportunity arises to introduce the first zero emission vehicles, complementing the ultra-low emission biomethane and hybrid vehicles already operating.

Two of the metrobus routes and most of the East Bristol fleet (totalling 99 vehicles) are fuelled by biomethane, significantly reducing the WtW³³ carbon emissions and harmful greenhouse gases. A good proportion of this fuel is produced locally at a waste anaerobic digestion plant in Avonmouth. However, we want the next fleet investment to be fully zero emission.

The two largest local operators – First Bus and Stagecoach – have already made commitments to convert their entire fleets (comprising 546 and 63 vehicles respectively in the BSIP area) to zero-emission vehicles by 2035. Our ambition is to accelerate that transition by supporting operators in whatever way we can. Two-thirds of local operators agree that progression to a green fleet is a high priority.

First Bus, as part of one of the largest bus operators in the UK, has a significant proportion of its vehicles operating in built-up environments. They have launched a project to investigate the road to zero in our region because of its potential for conversion with the current technology. They have confirmed that they will not buy any new diesel vehicles after 2023.

Our draft EP includes commitments by operators that:

- All buses in the local fleet will be a minimum of Euro VI emission standards by the end of 2023
- All buses in the local fleet will be zero-emission by 2035.

By 2030, 50% of buses in the local fleet will be zero-emission and a further 25% will be ultra-low emission. Much of the recent investment in the local bus fleet has been driven by the need to make rapid improvements to air quality – most notably the city centres of Bath and Bristol. Both Bath and Bristol CAZs set a minimum requirement of Euro VI emission standard for buses and provide financial support for bus operators to retrofit their vehicles to meet the standard.

We have a good track record of working with bus operators to support trials of emerging technologies (such as hybrids on Bath Park & Ride and geo-fenced EV hybrids in Bristol), but as noted there are currently no fully zero-emission vehicles operating in the area at present. The reasons given by operators are high initial capital outlay, the difficult operating terrain, limited range of alternative fuels, and restrictions on the depot space for the necessary infrastructure. Recent developments in these areas have opened the possibility of EV or hydrogen to power the fleet in the future.

Accessible and high-quality vehicles

Locally, our metrobus network has set a benchmark for vehicle quality that we aim to develop through our BSIP.

The metrobus vehicle specification includes dual doors to improve passenger flow and reduce bus stop dwell times, spacious entrances, low floors, wide corridors, more leg room, audio and visual information and USB charging ports. We recognise that the operation of dual-door vehicles is only suitable for high-intensity urban routes and may require changes to the layout of some bus stops.

³³ Well-to-wheel (WtW) emissions represent the total emissions from fuel extraction to the supply of service.

However, we know on the rest of the network the vehicle provision can sometimes be more varied. 15% of our fleet is over 15 years old and there still exists a small number of Euro II and Euro III vehicles.

We reflect from Transport Focus that only 62% of passengers were satisfied with on-bus information provision whilst 79% satisfied with the cleanliness of the vehicle. Transport Focus' survey also highlighted 21% of journeys we affected by passenger boarding times.

4.8.3 Options considered and alignment to targets

In developing our options for Modern Buses, we have considered the challenges of decarbonising the fleet and improving standards. For both we need to consider where the most significant impact can be delivered, reflecting commercial implications and stakeholder views. This will require further progressive development of our thinking and planning over the medium term, particularly considering BSIP funding was not allocated towards bus improvements.

In respect of decarbonising our fleet we have considered:

- The approach to funding between operators and LAs, noting the need to support the transition and the wider environmental benefits of this for passengers and the public
- The type of vehicles required to deliver zero emissions and the benefits and limitations of different technologies
- The allocation of resource for infrastructure required to support the operation of zero-emission buses
- We have also considered the need to target some of the specific vehicle types with retro-fit solutions to make cost efficient environmental 'quick-wins'
- Use of the ultra-low emission bio-gas fleet through to the end of its natural life cycle in 2035 to avoid the risk of stranded assets and infrastructure

For improving the standards of vehicles, we reviewed the different options available noting that the delivery of the zero emission buses (ZEBs) will introduce newer vehicles into the market. As such, the effort is on making the most impactful changes whilst also supporting accessibility. We have therefore been exploring the wider roll out of Audio / Visual information and have made it requirement on operators by 31 December 2023 within the Draft EP Scheme, expected to be adopted in January 2023.

4.8.4 Outline of initiatives

Initiative G1: Investment in Zero Emission Vehicles

By October 2023, we will collaborate with operators to produce a detailed plan that will form part of a future update of the BSIP to set out a road to 75% zero and ultra-low emission buses by 2030 and 100% zero-emission by 2035. It will set out the carbon impact of the current fleet and project future trends as holistically as possible to ensure there is a genuine reduction in carbon usage and tail pipe emissions. This work will include looking at depots and other infrastructure.

Our indicative costing include resource to develop proposals and engage industry expertise as needed.

As part of our road to a zero-emission bus fleet, we will seek commitments from operators on halving WtW carbon emissions. The estimated total cost of transition to a fully zero-emission fleet at current market prices for EV buses is an additional £210m over and above the cost of full replacement by diesel vehicles – which operators would bear anyway. This estimate includes costs of depot infrastructure and assumes a maximum bus operating life of twenty years. In collaboration with operators, in the shorter term we propose to pilot EV vehicles on two or more key corridors – originally envisaged for 2022/23, using a range of demonstration vehicles. While these plans will likely be delayed while we seek to secure funding, we aim to be in a position to work with operators to deploy an initial tranche of 150 zero-emission vehicles by 2027, offsetting the difference in cost to equivalent Euro VI diesel. Both hydrogen and electric would be explored as part of this proposal, and it would form part of the decarbonisation plan we propose to agree with operators. The

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

anticipated costs are up to £210k contribution towards each vehicle and the associated infrastructure to support them. Total funding required is £31.5m.

We propose to install up to 20 Ultra-fast 500-amp EV charge points for buses at key interchanges, Park & Ride sites, and layover points – subject to site surveys and funding. This will be an ambitious project – but necessary for our area because the local topography will place high demands on full EV buses. The ability to rapid charge during layovers will unlock the potential of the vehicles and reduce the overall fleet size required. The common standard to be installed is a minimum of 150-amp chargers up to dual 500-amp ultra-chargers. These will be targeted to major interchanges and high frequency corridors, originally intended from 2023/24 to create our first Ultra Low Emission Bus (ULEB) corridors, and the introduction of up to 250 zero-emission buses by 2027. Timelines will have to be revisited when funding is secured.

Initiative G2: Retrofitting vehicles to a minimum level

To achieve emissions reductions in the medium term, we want to get all local buses up to Euro VI or equivalent by retrofitting or retiring and replacing the most polluting vehicles. Retrofitting is mostly relevant for smaller and medium sized operators, noting there may be specific exemptions if appropriate. Our target date is December 2023. We will carry out a fleet review with all operators to any additional vehicles that require retrofitting. Broadly our assumptions are the retrofit of:

- 2 x Euro II
- 39 x Euro III
- 159 x Euro IV
- 160 x Euro V

Total estimated cost is £7.2m.

Initiative G3: Enhanced passenger environment

We see this as a potential quick win. Currently, 30% of the local bus fleet is equipped to give audio-visual (AV) information. We want to see all operators' vehicles with audio-visual Next Stop information. All buses will be fitted with AV equipment by 31 December 2023.

Through the EP process, we will seek commitment from operators for all permanent new or replacement vehicles operating on local bus services to be fitted with AV equipment and USB charging points prior to entering service.

We will work with operators to ensure that passengers have internet connectivity whilst travelling, through provision of Wi-Fi if appropriate.

We will agree minimum standards for cleaning of vehicles and include commitments by operators to those standards in our EP, to take effect from February 2023.

We will look for opportunities to trial the carriage of bicycles on suitably equipped buses in rural areas.

4.8.5 Expected outcomes of initiatives

The key outcome of our initiatives is a more developed plan to transition to a 75% zero-emission and ultra-low emission fleet by 2030 and a fully zero-emission fleet by 2035, with substantial progress by 2027. Through the implementation of this plan, we expect a significant reduction in the level of net WtW emissions by 2030. We will work with operators to find ways of accelerating the transition to a fully zero-emission fleet by 2030 if additional ZEBRA funding becomes available from Government. We estimate a funding gap of £120m to achieve that ambition plus any costs associated with early disposal of the ultra-low emission fleet.

The new vehicles are expected to improve the underlying quality of the fleet. These new vehicles we expect to provide:

- High levels of cleanliness, comfort, and security for passengers
- Full accessibility with ample areas for pushchairs and luggage in addition to wheelchair space

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

- More capacity to carry bikes where demand is identified.

It is considered that the additional investment in audible and visible information will improve facilities for passengers with visual and aural difficulties.

4.8.6 Alignment of plan to targets

We welcome the level of ambition for consistently high standards of passenger friendly ZEBs set out in the National Bus Strategy, and our consultation with users and operators reflects the importance of the bus itself with the environmental impact being the fourth highest priority issue. We expect the transition to ZEBs will play a major role in our achievement of Target 5, regarding the deployment of ZEBs and supporting infrastructure to reduce emissions.

We also expect the introduction of new ZEBs should have a positive impact on the perception of buses and customer satisfaction.

The case study below shows where we have worked with operators to deliver low-emission vehicles.

Case study on delivery of low-emission vehicles

The West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council have a proven ability to transform large vehicle fleets and deliver EV infrastructure at scale as demonstrated in the Go Ultra Low project delivered between 2016 and 2021. That involved the introduction of over 100 EV cars and vans and hundreds of EV charging sockets across the region. The project has strong synergies with our ambitions for the bus fleet with local expertise and industry partnerships that are already in place to help make this joint aspiration a reality. First Bus, Stagecoach and HCT Group as the principal operators have a proven ability to deliver large scale transformation with the introduction of the biogas fleet locally and large-scale EV conversions nationally.

4.9 Delivery Plan H – Passenger voice

Give bus passengers more of a voice and a say

Total allocated funding: £80,000 (BSIP joint revenue)

4.9.1 Our vision

We want to empower bus passengers in the BSIP area, giving them a greater voice in the services they use and ensuring that opportunities exist to engage regularly with the LTAs and bus operators.

Also, we want to ensure there is a safe environment at all stages of the passenger journey, including at bus stops, on-board and walking to and from stops. We recognise that passengers have different perceptions of safety and different concerns.

4.9.2 Challenges and opportunities

Ensuring the voice of passengers is heard

We need to engage with bus passengers. There used to be a series of open Public Transport Forum meetings across the BSIP area which ceased prior to the onset of coronavirus. Although well attended by local councillors, their relevance to bus users declined and they became dominated by a few transport activists. There are a few local bus user groups - such as Bath Bus User Group - but they are highly dependent on the input of volunteers. The Bath group last met in February 2019. In March and September 2022, the CA Metro Mayor Dan Norris led two Bus User Forums covering the BSIP Area.

First Bus holds regular 'Meet the Manager' sessions. These virtual sessions give passengers an excellent opportunity to engage directly with senior managers within the organisation, ask questions and make recommendations for improvements.

The Bristol One City Transport Board was formed in January 2019 on the recommendation of the Congestion Task Group in the city. The Board is co-chaired by the Mayor of Bristol and a representative from Transport Focus and is intended as an independent body to debate the local transport challenges and steer strategy.

Bristol Airport host an Airport Transport Forum twice yearly and is attended by local bus operators and the transport and highway authorities across the region. This forum focusses on transport and access to the airport but does not currently have a strong passenger representation.

First Bus currently has a Bus Passenger Charter, but this only covers their journeys and passengers, and there is no charter covering the whole BSIP area.

The annual Bus Passenger Survey provides an opportunity for customers and those with an interest to give feedback, but this is not targeted specifically at the BSIP area and can be affected by specific time-related factors.

While all these activities are helpful, we believe we need a stronger focus on hearing the passenger's voice.

Continuing to support a safe environment and making practical improvements

More can always be done to improve safety for bus users, staff, and the public. We will work with bus operators to review training of bus drivers and investment in safety infrastructure. Also, we will liaise with the police, highway authorities, wider public bodies, and stakeholders. We propose to establish a safety audit template for bus stops, which we will use during our review of bus stops.

The 2019 Transport Focus survey showed that customers are generally satisfied with safety levels across all areas of their journey, noting 82% satisfied with personal safety at bus stops, 84% on bus, 88% with the safety of driving. In terms of anti-social behaviour, 5% of respondents had experienced this.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, specific action was taken to support passengers to continue to travel where needed including enforcing the wearing of face coverings, improved ventilation, enhanced cleaning routines and social distancing.

4.9.3 Options considered and alignment to targets

We have reviewed the situation, reflecting the need for a more co-ordinated and consistent approach to supporting passengers and considering feedback on bus services. We have considered the following options:

- Our EP will include a new Advisory Panel, which will consider the outcomes of the Bus User Forum
- We will develop and implement a Bus Passenger Charter
- With bus operators, highway authorities and stakeholders, we will develop a programme to review:
 - Walking routes to bus stops
 - Waiting environment
 - Staffing and procedures
 - Customer relations (more focus on safety required in the Charter)
 - Information provision (linked to Delivery Plan F – Single integrated system).

4.9.4 Outline of initiatives

Our initiatives are based around delivering a Bus Passenger Charter and giving due regard to safety issues.

Initiative H1: Bus Passenger Charter

A new Bus Passenger Charter will set out commitments by the local authorities and local bus operators, and the obligations of bus users. We plan to launch this by April 2023 and incorporate it in the EP Scheme.

The Charter will make it clear to bus passengers what they can expect, how they can get in touch with us and how they can play a more active role in the development of bus services – through our new approach to regular public consultation.

The Charter will include the following commitments:

By the transport and highway authorities

- A welcoming bus stop environment, clean, tidy, safe, and well-maintained
- Infrastructure accessible for all, including step-free access onto the bus
- High quality, accessible information at all bus stops, online and on-bus
- Information to passengers about our Diamond Travelcard concession for older and disabled passengers
- Keeping our buses moving through continued bus-lane and parking offence enforcement
- Regular consultation with passengers
- A new approach to customer service, with one single point of contact
- A prompt response to passenger contact, including complaints.

By the bus operators

- Reliable, clean, accessible, and well-maintained vehicles on all routes
- Courteous, well-trained, and helpful drivers
- A safe environment, with CCTV on all buses
- Care for customers with special needs
- Clear fares information on-board, with the best fare offered to passengers
- 95% of journeys operated and on time
- Easy payment options including cash, contactless card payment (with tap-on / tap-off capping), Travelwest

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

smart card, mobile ticketing

- One simple range of fares and tickets for the network
- Visual and audio announcements on all services.

The Charter will set out the mechanism for redress on those occasions when these commitments are not met. It will be published on our Travelwest website and, where possible, on bus operators' websites too. It will also be available in leaflet format, and we will publicise it at key points on our transport network.

While we foresee minimal costs to create the Bus Passenger Charter, we understand there will be some annual costs for the 'redress' element in the form of free bus tickets from the operators. It must be noted that the take-up rate and other factors are uncertain at this stage.

Initiative H2: Improving bus passenger safety

We plan to make improvements to bus passenger safety across all areas of the journey.

Table 15: Our approach to improving passenger safety

Areas	Our approach
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — We will establish a template for a safety audit of bus stops, in consultation with the police and relevant stakeholders, to be used as part of our review of bus stops.
Walking routes to bus stops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — We will plan and maintain walking routes from residential areas and from destinations to bus stops with safety in mind, ensuring, where appropriate, that they are well-lit and support natural surveillance – especially bus stops served by evening and night buses. — We will work with planning authorities to incorporate these principles in local guidance to developers on providing suitable access for bus services to new developments. — As part of our bus corridor review work, we will consider walking routes to existing bus stops and make improvements where needed and where practical.
The waiting environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — We are currently reviewing our specification for bus stops to ensure that we have a consistent standard of infrastructure appropriate to different types of location. The review covers accessibility, comfort, and provision of information. — We will incorporate work to upgrade existing bus stops to our new standards into our bus corridor review programme wherever practical. — We will work with bus station owners (or concessionaires) to ensure that a good range and standard of facilities is available and that the sites are staffed and monitored appropriately. — The Transport Hubs that form part of our programme will offer seamless interchange in a safe, pleasant, and attractive environment – allowing for cafés and waiting areas where space permits. These will be designed on a scalable model of the Mobility Hubs that are being developed as part of the Future Transport Zone project. — We will look at the feasibility of providing Help Points at bus stops in places where waiting passengers may feel particularly vulnerable.
Staffing and procedures	<p>Our enhanced partnership plan will include commitments by bus operators that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — bus drivers will be trained (and given refresher training at appropriate intervals) in first aid, health and safety, customer care, vulnerable passenger protection and emergency procedures. — bus drivers will have a means of contact to depot staff at all operating times. — bus operators will have 'Code Red' procedures with the emergency services to summon assistance quickly in the event of a serious incident. — vehicles will have working CCTV.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Customer relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Our Bus Passenger Charter will include commitments on safety as well as clear and well- publicised procedures to deal with complaints or suggestions on how to improve passenger safety.— Bus operators will liaise with local police and other stakeholders – such as schools – to address safety concerns, as appropriate.
Information provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— We will improve the scope and quality of information for bus users to reassure them about safety issues such as when the bus will arrive at the stop and details of the route taken.— All local buses will be equipped with ‘next stop’ audio and visual information.

These measures are linked to elements in our other delivery plans.

4.9.5 Expected outcomes of initiatives

We expect the passenger voice delivery plan will support two areas:

- Improved customer trust and satisfaction
- Improved safety outcomes.

The Bus Passenger Charter and improved safety measures will support this, noting there are strong linkages with other delivery plans, including passenger information and investment in bus stops and modern buses. The initiatives in this section will need to influence the development of those plans.

4.9.6 Alignment of plan to targets

Our passenger voice delivery will support the customer satisfaction target by giving customers a clearer set of expectations and by maintaining a high level of safety across their journey where possible.

4.10 Delivery Plan I – Non-intensive services

More demand-responsive services and ‘socially necessary’ transport

Total allocated funding: £19,848,641

4.10.1 Our vision

Rural and hard-to-reach areas encompass over three-quarters of the BSIP area, and we have a significant rural population who face challenges in accessing the public transport network. Our ambition is to provide public transport services to all those who need it. This will require provision of demand-responsive services to low-density areas. Supported bus services have historically been a key aspect of public transport provision in some areas. These will continue where required, but ensuring provision is supplemented by Demand-Responsive Transport (DRT), community transport and commercial services is at the forefront of our plan. This will help target bus revenue support where it is most needed.

4.10.2 Challenges and opportunities

DRT and Community Transport

Accessibility for rural communities is critical, including the provision of bus services to enable access to jobs and education, as well as leisure and retail destinations. Rural areas will inevitably have a lower level of demand for services, and this is where Demand-Responsive Transport offers an opportunity to play an important role in ensuring access for all.

Community transport encompasses a range of transport services – such as ‘Dial-a-Ride’, community-owned buses, group minibus hire schemes and voluntary car schemes – that supplement commercial public transport services. Most community transport is demand-responsive and offers door-to-door transport for people who have signed up to be members of the schemes. It relies heavily on volunteers and is predominantly focussed on local communities. Many schemes were set up as local initiatives to meet local transport needs. The sector plays a vital role in helping people to live independently and play an active part in community life – particularly those who find it difficult to access mainstream public transport.

Community transport operations in rural areas are faced with the same dilemma that rural bus operators face, i.e., the sparsity of population and dispersed nature of settlements give rise to higher operating costs and lower revenue than urban operations.

Post-covid world

There are a number of additional challenges currently being experienced by the network and these include current staffing needs and rising transport costs. The increase in bus operating costs and the increased cost in monitoring presents a challenge for buses. These increased costs can lead to some services being commercially unviable and potentially at risk of being terminated. Furthermore, patronage levels remain at 75% of pre-covid levels.

The changing labour markets and the shortage of bus drivers (approximately 200 at present) and engineers present challenging supply-side constraints. This in turn, regardless of the funding available, presents a huge risk to a successful bus network in the West of England.

There are two issues affecting the situation, first there are fewer suitable applicants, second there have been a significant number of drivers leaving the sector. The details of these have been discussed in section 4.2.

Non-commercial services

Away from the commercial bus network – which is focussed mainly on urban corridors and principal inter-urban routes – buses are provided to meet social needs and they are reliant on revenue support from the LTAs. There are supported bus services in urban areas away from the main roads as well as in rural areas.

Both the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council have developed evaluation tools to

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

help assess the social and economic value of non-commercial bus services, and these tools are used to help prioritise spending from the limited bus revenue support budget. There are very few examples in the BSIP area of supported bus services that have grown patronage to a level that operators consider to be viable commercially, except for some add-ons to daytime commercial services.

Passenger views

The provision of DRT and community travel will only work if there is sufficient demand and passengers are willing to use and access the services provided. Survey data suggests that passengers are willing to using this form of transport with 66% of passengers are open to using a shared taxi/minibus to connect to the wider network (Bus Passenger Survey 2019). We need to ensure that community transport is viewed as part of the wider network and available for everyone to use.

Funding

It is a challenge to maintain levels of revenue support to fund socially necessary bus services in the face of rising costs and constant pressure on revenue budgets. We have had success in replacing conventional bus services by dial-a-ride operations, and by making efficient use of in-house school bus fleets to operate bus services in the midday period at a lower cost than offered by the market.

4.10.3 Options considered

The existing DRT and socially necessary service offer focuses on providing a diverse and accessible offer including community transport and socially necessary bus services. Continuing these services represents the do minimum option which has been disregarded in favour of enhanced provision.

Community transport

Virtually all the BSIP region is served by community transport schemes partly funded by the LTAs. The schemes vary considerably in size and in the scope of their services. The principal activity of the larger schemes is in the provision of dial-a-ride services for their members, using vehicles licensed under Section 19 of the Transport Act 1985. Many schemes also operate regular shopping trips for their members and some offer facilities for commuters and school children on demand. The smallest schemes are those offering transport by car – mainly to medical facilities.

We have encouraged community transport schemes to convert part of the Section 19 vehicle offer to full community bus services operated under Section 22 of the 1985 Act, but they have been reluctant to change their member-only services into full community bus services because of the extra commitments involved for groups that remain heavily reliant on volunteer support. We will continue to encourage this progression so that such services can become part of the overall public transport network and we will consider what support we can give to facilitate this.

Shared taxi schemes

FareCar is a subsidised shared taxi scheme which serves the rural areas north and south of Bath. Residents of designated areas who are members of the scheme can get a subsidised shared taxi journey at certain times on certain days to or from Bath city centre. We will consider rolling out more FareCar operations as part of reviewing rural bus services.

'Socially necessary' transport

The current network of socially necessary bus services has evolved over the years alongside, and in reaction to, changes to commercial bus services. Owing to constant pressure to contain revenue spending, initiatives to expand the bus network have been left to the bus operators except where funding has been earmarked from developer contributions, etc. One option is to continue this approach with limited intervention but that is unlikely to meet our intended service frequencies in hard-to-reach areas.

Both LTAs have established processes for responding to withdrawals of commercial services, procurement of replacements and award of contracts, including an assessment of the social need that the service provides.

4.10.4 Outline of initiatives

Initiative I1: Community and Demand Responsive Transport Strategy

Our West of England Bus Strategy included a commitment to develop a Community and Demand-Responsive Transport Strategy. This will explore innovation in delivery of Demand Responsive Transport and develop the role of this sector in complementing the bus network. The transport authorities will work with providers to develop and co-ordinate services and identify funding opportunities to develop access to transfer hubs and interchanges. This could include the use of existing vehicles in the control of local authorities or other public bodies.

Initiative I2: Dynamic Demand Responsive Transport trial

Work is underway on a Future Transport Zone project to trial Dynamic Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) services in the West of England Combined Authority area, to offer alternative additional public transport, especially in areas where traditional modes do not currently offer a viable option or service. It intends to:

- provide efficient public transport alternatives where conventional bus and rail services cannot offer viable solutions
- connect areas of low skill, high unemployment, and low car ownership with areas of high employment
- maximise the value of regional transport investments by increasing the catchment area of public transport through first/last mile connectivity
- improve congestion and air quality by reducing the reliance on single-occupancy car journeys and producing a modal shift
- improve access directly to places of employment and therefore accelerate economic growth and productivity, particularly in areas of deprivation.

Building on our previous experience of demand-responsive services, this project will use cutting-edge routing software to allocate trips and route vehicles efficiently with the aim of achieving commercial sustainability.

Whilst not part of the FTZ project, North Somerset Council is in the early stages of planning how flexibly-registered services could bridge the gap between conventional bus services and community transport, both in rural areas and in urban areas away from the principal corridors.

Initiative I3: Supported services and COVID recovery

We plan to increase our support for non-commercial services where needed to deliver our ambitions of making the bus more attractive across the BSIP area. Whilst DRT solutions are being developed for particular communities, we will maintain existing supported services wherever possible

This support will focus on providing more regular services to our rural communities and also widening the hours of operations on important routes across the network which would otherwise not be possible. This will build on the current services receiving support as outlined in Appendix 5.

Specifically, additional support is needed to:

- Provide a bridge as demand recovers from the COVID pandemic and services commercial again. The level of support they receive in the form of emergency funding may be uncertain to ensure long term continuation.
- Reflecting our ambitions set out in Delivery Plan A to widen service provision and boost demand, there will be a requirement to provide support on an ongoing basis on certain routes, most likely to be suburban or rural.
- Wider application of supported services more generally to support local priorities.

The aim is over time to support the shift of these services to a commercial basis whilst supporting improved economic and social outcomes. We will use our existing evaluation tools to assess them.

4.10.5 Expected outcomes of initiatives and alignment to targets

The outcome of the initiatives is to make public transport more accessible to those who need it in rural areas. This will widen their access to goods and services as well as employment opportunities. DRT initiatives, community transport and infrastructure work which improve links from rural and suburban areas to major corridors should help improve the commercial viability of providing services which are accessible to those in our more remote communities.

Improving journey times and opportunities to those in rural areas will help us meet our journey time targets. Similarly, it will have an indirect impact on improving passenger satisfaction and passenger demand. The infrastructure works insofar as they insulate buses from road congestion will lead to reliability improvements.

The case study below shows an example of where we have provided innovative solutions to improve accessibility in rural areas.

Case study on FareCar

FareCar is a subsidised shared taxi scheme established in 2004, which serves the rural area north and south of Bath. Residents of designated areas who are members of the scheme pay £1.50 single fare for a taxi to or from Bath city centre with a limited choice of days and times of travel. The scheme has proven to be more cost-effective than the conventional bus services that it replaced.

4.11 Delivery Plan J – Longer-term

Longer term transformation of networks

Total allocated funding: £0 BSIP & CRSTS (£28m pre-existing Future Transport Zone funding)

4.11.1 Our vision

We want to lead a greener recovery, which reflects a long-term reduction in car dependency and an increase in the use of alternative, sustainable transport modes, including bus travel. This will support our aim of fulfilling our carbon-neutral pledge by 2030.

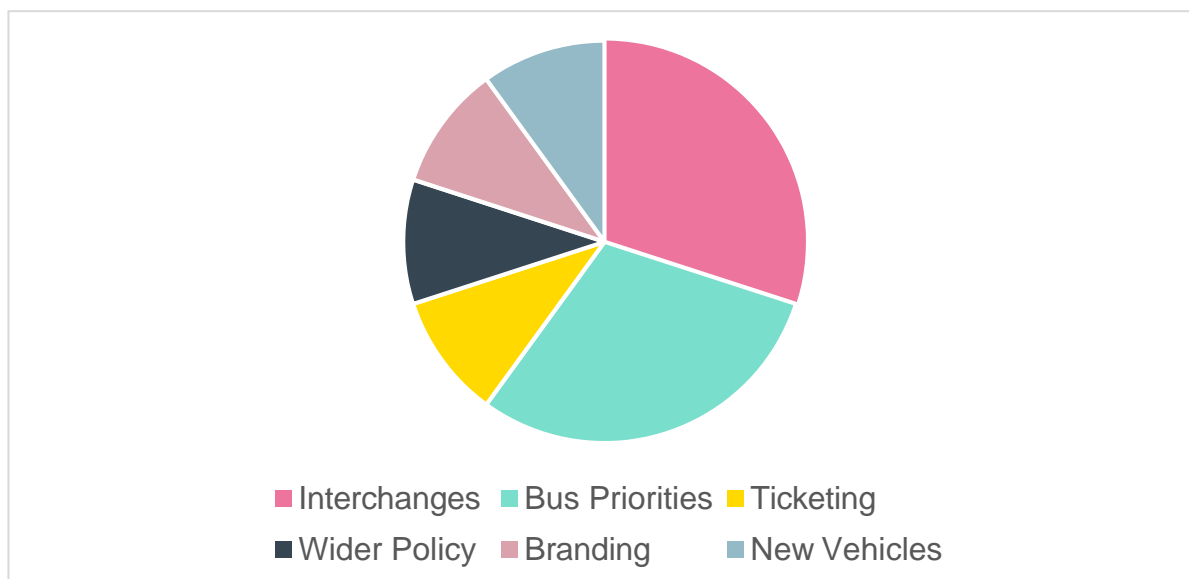
4.11.2 Challenges and opportunities

Two long-term strategic challenges underpin our consideration of long-term measures, particularly given the need to deliver Net Zero and move away from car dependency.

Bus passenger trends

The West of England has had historically lower levels of bus patronage than equivalent city regions, but from 2012 to the onset of the pandemic we bucked the national trend and saw rapid growth in passenger numbers. Our Bus Strategy aimed to maintain this momentum by exceeding 100 million passenger journeys by 2036, through the ambitious combination of an interchange-based network, investment in infrastructure and vehicles, coordinated branding and ticketing, and the wider impact of complementary policies such as management of parking and travel planning for new developments.

Figure 22: Sources of passenger growth



Car dependency

In terms of challenges, being a relatively prosperous city region has meant that car ownership and dependency has been relatively high, particularly for orbital trips. National policy could have a significant impact including how the transition away from fossil fuels to a largely electric fleet of private cars will be managed including its impact on the cost of driving.

4.11.3 Outline of long-term plans and initiatives

Initiative J1: Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4)

The Joint Local Transport Plan 4³⁴ adopted in March 2020 and covering the period from 2020 until 2036, is the core foundation of our long-term transport plans in the region. It sets out an ambitious package of interventions – including a major scheme programme with a focus on the promotion of public transport, walking and cycling including bus route infrastructure, Park & Ride, and extensions to the metrobus network.

JLTP4 highlights the importance of reducing carbon emissions from transport and explores the options available to manage travel demand to help achieve those reductions. This includes demand management measures on the road network, such as parking policy, to help encourage mode shift. It will be updated from 2022 to encompass the actions needed to meet our climate emergency declarations to deliver a carbon-neutral transport network by 2030. As noted above, buses will be centre stage in moving towards our longer-term ambitions including reducing car dependency and increasing use of alternative modes.

We plan to update or replace JLTP4 following the publication of DfT guidance in early 2023, to take account of the carbon emergency declarations made by all local councils to deliver a carbon neutral transport network by 2030. We have undertaken a Transport Decarbonisation Study to inform this update, and we expect to issue a revised JLTP as a draft in Autumn 2023 and a final version by the Spring 2024.

Initiative J2: West of England Bus Strategy

JLTP4 is supported by the West of England Bus Strategy³⁵ adopted in June 2020, focussing on our long-term plans for the bus network. It covers the whole region and sets out an ambitious intention to restructure the local bus network around a system of hubs and interchanges. This principle would be accompanied by a simplified network structure to improve passenger perception of bus services as a network and open up new journey opportunities, boosting passenger numbers, whilst the overall operating cost of the network would remain broadly the same.

A more reliable service would enable more through journeys across city centres to be made, opening more journey opportunities. A hierarchy of interchanges was identified which would be remodelled and branded accordingly. In more rural areas, promotion of Transport Hubs would enable a more efficient network to be provided and provide access to new destinations.

The BSIP serves as the 18-month review of the Bus Strategy, to which we were committed.

Initiative J3: Planning policy

The West of England is a growing economy. Our population is currently growing faster than the UK average, and this trend is forecast to continue with population projections showing a growth rate for the West of England that is 8% faster compared to England as a whole.

Development of a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) was paused during 2022. Our constituent councils' Local Plan updates are considering how to accommodate housing and employment growth over the next years across the region.

Details around issues such as interaction with Green Belt, areas of flood risk and a key emphasis on how locations will perform in terms of accessibility to services via sustainable transport modes will need to be considered in the Local Plans. We can highlight that sustainable transport principles will feature prominently to help guide where development should best be accommodated, based on accessibility to local facilities by sustainable transport modes, against the backdrop of housing need, Green Belt, and other statutory requirements. Investment packages for sustainable transport modes will have a clear role to play in helping to

³⁴ West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council (2020), *Joint Local Transport Plan 4* [\[link\]](#)

³⁵ West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council (2020), *West of England Bus Strategy* [\[link\]](#)

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

improve the feasibility of development locations from a transport perspective, and bus corridor investment as set out in the CRSTS will be at the forefront alongside investment in rail and active travel.

North Somerset Council is progressing a replacement Local Plan which will adopt similar principles.

Implementation of the BSIP will play a prominent role in helping to mitigate the transport impact of suggested development areas, by enabling bus access to potential development locations, as well as 'pump-priming' penetration of new housing and employment sites by bus services at an early stage.

Initiative J4: Future Transport Zone

As one of three Future Transport Zones (FTZs) in the UK, the West of England Combined Authority is delivering a £28m package of transport improvements that will put the region at the cutting edge of the world transport revolution, help to cut traffic congestion and improve our air quality.

The FTZ programme includes the following projects:

- Mobility Hubs – focal points for interchange between bus services, community transport, DRT services, with facilities for bicycle hire and electric vehicle charging points
- Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS)
- Dynamic Demand-Responsive Transport
- Transport Data Hub.

All the FTZ projects are relevant to implementation of the BSIP, and we will align the implementation programmes to ensure that we take a co-ordinated approach to delivery.

Initiative J5: Key Route Network

The West of England Combined Authority Committee confirmed our Key Route Network (KRN) in 2018. Except for the M32 Motorway, the KRN covers the major bus corridors with high frequencies. There are clear opportunities to improve the reliability and performance of the bus network through re-prioritising investment across the KRN and improving access to bus stops by sustainable modes.

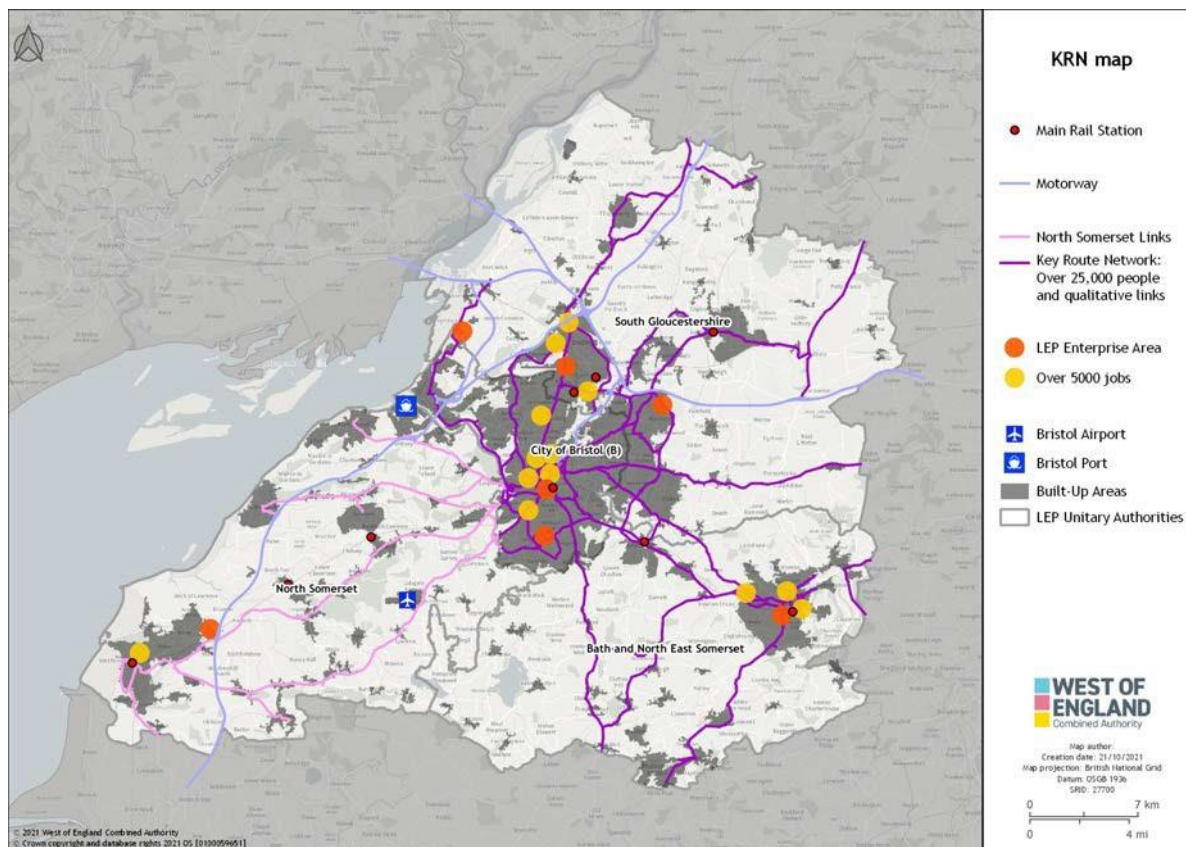
The purpose of specifying a KRN is to:

- Identify a network of routes that is prioritised for investment and maintenance
- Bring consistency to policies supporting the management of the network and contributing to safety and air quality
- Align policies and spending priorities between the SRN, MRN and KRN
- Support economic growth and planned development
- Support travel by all modes of transport, whilst encouraging modal shift, to improve management of congestion and demand across the network and protection of the natural and built environment.

The Secretary of State for Transport has recently confirmed that he intends to provide a power of direction by the Metro Mayor to the highway authorities around delivery of certain duties on the KRN. We will await further detail on which duties will be affected and the opportunities to accelerate delivery that this may provide.

The KRN is illustrated below. We will clarify and agree consistent performance standards and responsibilities on the network between the West of England Combined Authority and its constituent councils. Also, we will work with North Somerset Council to further its aim of adopting a similar approach to managing its main corridors.

Figure 23: Key Route Network ³⁶



4.11.4 Expected outcomes of initiatives and alignment to targets

Our outcome will be higher passenger numbers, reduced journey times, improved reliability, and passenger satisfaction, driven by a restructured network delivered through extensive road space reallocation and lower operating costs. Going further, complementary policy interventions to make bus travel more attractive compared to car use will reduce car dependency and help deliver our ambition for a carbon-neutral transport network by 2030.

Our long-term delivery plan supports the delivery of the targets in the following ways:

Table 16: Alignment of Delivery Plan to targets

Target areas	Summary of impact
Target 1: Journey times	Measures to reduce car dependency and promote public transport – including service enhancement – will reduce road congestion and deliver improved journey times.
Target 2: Punctuality	The main driver of poor punctuality is road congestion. Our long-term plans are focussed on reducing car dependency and improving environmental outcomes. They therefore reduce congestion and improve the punctuality of our bus services.
Target 3: Single journey passengers	Our long-term plans outline measures which increase the attractiveness of public transport and therefore would lead to increase demand for services.

³⁶ West of England Combined Authority, *Internal analysis*

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Target 4: Customer satisfaction	Improvements in service provision by focusing on transport hubs, optimisation of service frequency and reducing road congestion (and therefore delay) are likely to lead to improvements in customer satisfaction
Target 5: Decarbonisation	Measures to reduce car dependency (e.g., road demand management measures) and encourage mode shift to public transport will reduce private car emissions and contribute to our decarbonisation targets.

The case study below shows our strategic approach to the development of public transport networks across the region.

Case studies on long-term strategic public transport

We have a proven track record in the delivery of significant long-term strategic public transport infrastructure. Key milestones include: The rollout of Bristol's first two 'Showcase' bus corridors on the A38 and A420 in 2003 and 2007 respectively, including significant parking management and bus priority through district centres, real time passenger information, bus stop upgrades and fleet renewal by the operator

- The extension of the Showcase principle across ten further corridors in the West of England as part of the £80m Greater Bristol Bus Network, launched in 2012.
- The Bath and Weston Packages, delivering local bus service upgrades to the local networks in these areas as well as expansion of Park & Ride sites.
- metrobus – launched from May 2018 to January 2019, a £235m investment covering three core corridors, providing a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), limited stop level of service including substantial bus priority (including a kerb-guided busway, a bus lane and bus only junction onto the M32 motorway), bus stops and interchanges, major structures crossing live railway, iPoints to provide off-bus ticketing and passenger information, significant public domain improvements in Bristol city centre and provision of gas powered vehicles by operators. An extension is currently under construction to serve the Cribbs-Patchway New Neighbourhood, a major development area in the North Fringe of Bristol including a new 17,000 capacity Arena. Future extensions to Yate and Thornbury are planned.
- Significant, more recent road space reallocation in Bristol city centre including bus only restrictions at Bristol Bridge, Baldwin Street/St Augustine's Parade and Union Street.

metrobus required complex joint working across a range of modes and stakeholders, including joint working with Network Rail and Highways England (now National Highways), complex procurement arrangements, and community and public consultation programmes. The confirmation of bus operators for metrobus was undertaken through a formalised, staged engagement programme inviting expressions of interest and confirmation of operating proposals from operators, in line with the requirements set out in a Quality Partnership Scheme and supporting voluntary agreements, including maximum fares and a profit-sharing framework with the LTAs once an appropriate threshold had been met.

4.12 How we will deliver

Total allocated funding: £2,700,000

4.12.1 The Delivery Framework

We have a growing reputation for delivering successful transport projects and realising the benefits of these. This is demonstrated in the Delivery Case Studies presented throughout our Delivery Plans.

We consider that we have an effective delivery framework in place to realise the benefits of the initiatives presented here. We will bring together the best expertise and skills across the region to drive innovative and cost-effective delivery. We will use the Enhanced Partnership model to drive productive relationships with partners and operators and have a strong track record of success in working with bus operators to deliver public transport initiatives – such as the Greater Bristol Bus Network, BathRider and AvonRider ticket schemes, Bath Transport Package and metrobus.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

The impact of this partnership working is illustrated in the consistent growth in bus patronage locally – contrary to the national trend outside London.

To address the critical issue of the bus driver shortage in the BSIP area, a programme is underway between the LTAs and bus operators to help recruit and train drivers over a two-year period. The programme is expected to deliver at least 140 drivers to the region.

Collaboration across the region coupled with clear and well understood roles and responsibilities are integral to ensuring success. We have identified that the following organisations and positions are key to achieving our objectives and delivering successfully and their roles and responsibilities are outlined:

Table 17: Stakeholders critical for success

Organisation / position	Role
Department for Transport	Accountable for oversight of the BSIP programme across the country.
Enhanced Partnership	Enablers in delivering the initiatives outlined within the BSIP, role and governance are defined by the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme which act as the delivery mechanism.
West of England Planning Housing and Transport Board	Updated on progress against the targets outlined in the BSIP.
West of England Joint Committee	Responsible for interfaces with other delivery programmes, oversight of investment decisions and value for money.
West of England Councils	Leadership role as Highway and Planning Authorities and through their members and engagement with local communities.
Delivery Plan SROs	Accountable for delivery of the agreed programme outcomes.
Delivery Plan Managers	Accountable for ensuring each project in their programme is delivering against agreed outputs and is effectively resourced. Managing day to day delivery of the programme. Report weekly to the Delivery Plan SRO.
Infrastructure PMO	Accountable for ensuring a standard consistent framework for delivery is in place and monthly reporting and escalations are effective.
Communications	Will be accountable for ensuring consistent communications and branding are used as well as ensuring engagement with members of the public is carried out holistically and in a considered manner.
Bus operators	Partners in delivering the BSIP.
Passengers	Provide feedback on our proposals and the reality of travel in the West of England

We will organise delivery around the structure provided by the Delivery Plans contained within this BSIP. Each plan provides detail on the initiatives being proposed and delivered as well as how they come together in helping meet our ambitious targets as outlined in Section 4. In guiding our approach to successful delivery, we have established five key principles:

- Clear vision on what we want to achieve with this programme. Delivery plans which are clearly defined with bold yet deliverable targets, making sure that the expected outcomes are straightforward.=
- Defined roles and responsibilities. Everyone involved in the delivery plans must understand what will be expected from them and there is a pro-growth and delivery-focused mindset
- Budget to deliver change. Investment is required to deliver the benefits and ensuring this is identified and allocated accordingly is vital for success
- Active stakeholder engagement. The programme entails a great degree of change across various parts of the transport network and parties involved need to be consulted
- Identification of the dependencies. The programme has significant overlap with wider transport, housing, and industrial strategies. From the outset we are clear about these linkages.

4.12.2 The Role of the Enhanced Partnership

We are committed to an Enhanced Partnership (EP) in which LTAs, bus operators and highways authorities work together to improve bus services. A critical element of this is establishing a clear vision of the improvements that the EP is aiming for and actions which allow us to achieve these improvements. An EP Plan, which draws heavily on the content and ambitions outlined in this BSIP and an EP Schedule, laying out the specific commitments and timelines for delivery have been prepared and are expected to be adopted by the end of January 2023.

Operators and highways authorities were engaged in the preparation of these documents, which represent the first set of commitments between the parties. The EP Scheme will be reviewed every six months, taking into consideration the 6 monthly progress against BSIP targets. The EP Scheme can be varied at this stage or more frequently through a Bespoke Variation Arrangement involving consideration by the EP Advisory Panel and approval by the EP Board.

The Advisory Panel will be made up of key stakeholder group representatives. The EP Board will comprise of the LTAs, bus operator groups and highways authority representatives. Both will meet quarterly. The Bus User Forum, led by the Metro Mayor, sits outside of the official EP governance but will feed into the Advisory Panel to ensure the concerns of passengers are considered.

4.13 Delivery Schedule

We have developed an outline schedule for delivering the initiatives outlined within the Delivery Plans. In defining our schedule, we have prioritised those initiatives which deliver the highest benefits as well as considering which initiatives can deliver benefits quickly. There are strong interactions between many of the initiatives, for example, our ability to deliver the high frequency services outlined in Initiative A1 is dependent on the bus priority investment outlined in Delivery Plan B. Similarly, there is a strong interaction between the improvements planned to the Wider Environment in Initiative E1 and creating a single integrated system in Delivery Plan F.

It is important to note, that the successful delivery of many initiatives to the timescales outlined in the schedule require funding to be available. Given the delays to BSIP funding confirmation from Government, the timescales for delivering our BSIP initiatives are significantly compressed. The release of funding is also reliant on the formal adoption of the EP Plan and Scheme. .

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Timeline for delivery

Delivery plan	Initiative		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
Intensive services	A1	Ambitions to deliver a high frequency, accessible bus network										
Bus priority	B1	High priority corridors where significant segregation/priority can be delivered										
	B2	High priority investment corridors										
	B3	Low priority investment corridors										
	B4	Rural and suburban corridors										
	B5	Bus lane and parking enforcement										
Fares	C1	Operator fare reduction & fares simplification package										
	C2	Youth fare discounts/reductions										
	C3	Job seekers discounts/reductions										
Integrated ticketing	D1	Supporting the transition to digital ticketing										
	D2	Supporting multi operator ticketing as the norm										
	D3	Supporting multi modal ticketing integration										
Integrated services	E1	Transport Hubs and Wider Environment (including bus stops)										
	E2	Roadwork co-ordination										
	E3	Interaction between bus services and other modes										
Single integrated system	F1	Brand identity										
	F2	Marketing, promotion and communications										
	F3	Travel guides and journey planning										
	F4	Within journey information										
	F5	Providing network stability										
Modern buses	G1	Investment in Zero Emission Vehicles										
	G2	Retro-fitting vehicles to a minimum level										
	G3	Audio/Visual information										
Passenger voices	H1	Bus Passenger Charter										
	H2	Improving bus passenger safety										
Non-intensive services	I1	Community and Demand Responsive Transport Strategy										
	I2	Dynamic Demand Responsive Transport trial										
	I3	Supported services										
Longer term	J1	Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4)										
	J2	West of England Bus Strategy										
	J3	Planning policy										
	J4	Future Transport Zone										
	J5	Key Route Network										

4.14 Costs and funding

Accompanying the original BSIP bid to Government was an outline assessment of costs (both revenue and capital) for each of the initiatives outlined in the Delivery Plans. The robustness of the estimates varied across the different initiatives depending on the maturity of the project and its stage of development as well as the scale of the project. Some projects have Outline Business Cases already prepared whereas other projects are at pre-business case stage. Smaller initiatives – by their very nature – require less lead time and development and so typically their cost estimates are less robust.

Rising costs, not only for operators but more widely – energy, building materials etc. – mean that actual costs of capital scheme delivery are expected to exceed estimates. This may require a review of schemes further down the line to ensure impactful changes can still be delivered.

As is to be expected, the largest costs are incurred by the bus priority initiatives, noting the requirement for significant infrastructure to deliver them. The majority of funding for this particular delivery plan will be delivered via CRSTS funding for the West of England CA (£406m available until 2027 with £89.7m already allocated to priority corridors until 2025) and through BSIP for North Somerset Council initiatives (£48m).

Flexibility over the allocation of funding will be key to adapting to the context and needs of the region as they evolve. On agreement from Government, funding may be moved from one initiative to another according to priority.

Significant capital funding was sought via BSIP for the implementation of our modern buses delivery plan. This was not awarded by Government, with alternative funding sources such as ZEBRA targeted for decarbonisation of buses. The LTAs will need to work with operators to agree a way forward as neither sources of funding are in place.

Revenue costs are incurred for spending on fares – our intention to offer youth fare reductions and discounts – and delivery of a single integrated system with most of the revenue spending consisting of bus service support.

5 Reporting

5.1.1 BSIP reporting

The West of England BSIP will be reviewed jointly by officers of the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council in December every year, updated, and reported to DfT and the West of England Planning, Housing & Transport Board (comprising the Mayor of the West of England and relevant Members of Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council).

Updated versions of the BSIP will be published on the websites of the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council.

The West of England BSIP will be aligned with the Joint Local Transport Plan, Local Cycling & Walking Investment Programme, Bath Transport Delivery Action Plan and Bristol Transport Plan by specific cross-references in future revisions to those documents. It will serve as the 18-month review of the West of England Bus Strategy – to which the Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) were committed.

This joint Bus Service Improvement Plan will be published on the websites of the West of England Combined Authority at:

<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/transport/bus/>

and on the website of North Somerset Council at:

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/parking-travel-roads/transport-travel/busserviceimprovementplan>

5.1.2 Reporting against targets

Ensuring that we can deliver on the targets outlined within this BSIP is a process requiring ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that mitigations are put in place at the right times.

We will consider and develop trajectories to reaching the targets outlined in Section 3, accounting for the expected delivery schedules of the initiatives outlined within the BSIP and the availability of funding. We will then continuously monitor our progress against these trajectories, to help identify where intervention may be needed to improve outcomes. Section 3 outlines what data will be collected and who we will engage with in helping us monitor progress.

We will publish our performance every six months, starting in December 2022 on our websites (links above).

5.1.3 Monitoring and evaluation

Critical to the successful delivery of the initiatives, will be to learn from the delivery and benefits realised of projects and schemes as they are developed, delivered and operational, and to implement this learning throughout programme delivery.

We have developed a well-established framework for monitoring and evaluation, which is used for all capital spending. Where appropriate, its principles will be adapted for monitoring and evaluation of revenue spending too.

6 Overview table

Name of authority or authorities	West of England Combined Authority & North Somerset Council
Franchising or Enhanced Partnership (or both)	Enhanced Partnership
Date of first publication	29 October 2021
Date of first update	21 December 2022
Date of next annual update	21 December 2023
URL of published report	https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/transport/bus/ https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/parking-travel-roads/transport-travel/bus-travel/bus-service-improvement-plan

6.1 Progress against BSIP targets

Item	Actual 2018-19	Actual 2019-20	Actual 2021-22	Target for 2024-25	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Journey time (minutes)	61	63	55	62	We have created a representative sample of bus journey times for each area, sourced from the registered timetables, as stated in Section 3.3. The figures quoted here are averages of the times across our sample
Reliability (Punctuality)	77%	N/A	71%	82%	We will keep track of performance through the schedule adherence reports from our real-time information system. In addition, we will start measuring punctuality at intermediate timing points using the same systems, as explained in Section 3.4.
Passenger numbers	70 million	66 million	48 million	70 million	We will continue using data recorded by electronic ticket machines supplied by bus operators. As well, we will aim to create a representative sample for each of the reporting areas, if possible, as stated in Section 3.5.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Item	Actual 2018-19	Actual 2019-20	Actual 2021-22	Target for 2024-25	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Average passenger satisfaction	85% ³⁷	86% ³⁸	No comparable data	89%	We will check progress through the annual Bus Passenger Survey carried out by Transport Focus, aiming to work collaboratively with them to retrieve further survey data. Full details can be found in Section 3.6 .
Bus fleet decarbonisation (zero-emission buses)	0%	0%	0%	See Delivery Plan H	Guidance does not require this target, but we are committed to contribute to achieving net zero carbon. We will measure how we make progress around decarbonisation by tracking the fleet mix every six months, as explained in Section 3.7 .

6.2 Improvements summary tables

Make improvements to bus services and planning/More frequent and reliable services

Delivery – Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes / No	Explanation (max 50 words)
<i>Review service frequency</i>	Yes	We are committed to deliver a high frequency, accessible bus network, providing turn-up-and-go services during the day and evening frequencies of at least 4 buses per hour on core urban routes, supported by good frequencies on key inter-urban corridors and in smaller urban areas. Full details in Section 4.2.
<i>Increase bus priority measures</i>	Yes	We will enable bus priority measures in high priority corridors at cities and towns across all the BSIP area. We will also improve bus priority at rural and suburban corridors, as well as the infrastructure to link such communities to higher frequency routes. Full details in Section 4.3.
<i>Increase demand responsive services</i>	Yes	We will work with our community transport and shared taxi schemes to expand them where appropriate. We are progressing a trial of Dynamic Demand Responsive Transport and part of our Future Transport Zone project. Full details in Section 4.10.
<i>Consideration of bus rapid transit networks</i>	Yes	We have delivered an initial 31 miles bus rapid transit network in Bristol, branded as 'metrobus'. We want to build on the success achieved and are committed to expand this further, as explained in our Joint Local Transport Plan. Full details in Section 4.11.

³⁷ Transport Focus (2019), *Bus Passenger Survey Autumn 2018* [\[link\]](#)

³⁸ Transport Focus (2019), *Bus Passenger Survey Autumn 2019* [\[link\]](#)

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Improvements to planning / integration with other modes

Delivery – Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes / No	Explanation (max 50 words)
<i>Integrate services with other transport modes</i>	Yes	We will create new Transport Hubs at key interchange locations where people are able to switch between bus, rail, DRT and Community Transport. Full details in Section 4.6.
<i>Simplify services</i>	Yes	Our bus service network will be based on core corridors with as few variations as possible.
<i>Review socially necessary services</i>	Yes	We have a well-established process to review non-commercial bus services. We are already committed to developing a Community and Demand-Responsive Transport Strategy.
<i>Invest in Superbus networks</i>	Yes	Our redesigned network of high-frequency radial and orbital services in the major urban areas and our expanded metrobus network will offer Superbus-standard services.

Improvements to fares and ticketing

Delivery – Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes / No	Explanation (max 50 words)
<i>Lower fares</i>	Yes	We have already started working with bus operators to shape a new commercial proposition with lower point-to-point fares combined with standardising ticket ranges/zones. Full details in Section 4.4.
<i>Simplify fares</i>	Yes	We aim to introduce more flat fares where appropriate, implementing common fare ranges and zones. Full details for fares in Section 4.4.
<i>Integrate ticketing between operators and transport</i>	Yes	We will work with rail and bus operator to support multi-operator tickets as the norm and deliver a new range of multi-modal tickets. Full details in Section 4.5.

Make improvements to bus passenger experience Higher spec buses

Delivery – Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes / No	Explanation (max 50 words)
<i>Invest in improved bus specifications</i>	Yes	We will work with operators to equip the full fleet with audio-visual Next Stop information, upgrade cleaning standards and trial bicycle carriage in rural areas. Full details in Section 4.8.
<i>Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services</i>	Yes	We will deliver a high frequency, accessible bus network across the BSIP area, as detailed in Section 4.2. We will also promote an inclusive ticketing offer to ensure services remain accessible for everyone, as explained in Section 4.5.
<i>Protect personal safety of bus passengers</i>	Yes	We will make improvements to bus passenger safety across all stages of the journey. This will consider walking routes to bus stops, the waiting environment, staffing and procedures, customer relations and information provision. Full details in Section 4.9.
<i>Improve buses for tourists</i>	Yes	We will directly engage with local businesses and key attractions to develop bespoke initiatives of encouraging bus travel, alongside marketing and branding efforts. Full details in Section 4.7.4.

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Delivery – Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes / No	Explanation (max 50 words)
<i>Invest in decarbonisation</i>	Yes	We are committed to fulfil our carbon-neutral pledge, and a key element of our strategy to achieve this is becoming greener. We will upgrade existing fleet to a stricter emission standard while we deliver zero-emission vehicles. Full details in Section 4.8.

Improvements to passenger engagement

Delivery – Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes / No	Explanation (max 50 words)
<i>Passenger charter</i>	Yes	We will launch a new Bus Passenger Charter that will reflect commitments made by the local authorities and local bus operators in relation to bus services, including mechanisms to address those ones not being met. Full details in Section 4.9.
<i>Strengthen network identity</i>	Yes	We will deliver a comprehensive set of initiatives aimed to present the local bus network as a single public transport system that works together. Full details in Section 4.7.
<i>Improve bus information</i>	Yes	We will review our bus stop standards and upgrade the infrastructure to provide better information for passengers, as stated in Section 4.6. We will also enhance the real time information systems, as already presented in our West of England Bus Strategy, and explained in Section 4.7.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Foreword - Original BSIP - October 2021

Let's get many more people travelling by bus across our region.

The climate emergency is real and deadly serious. Moving people from cars to buses is essential to meet our rightly ambitious West of England 2030 net zero target. Our streets are clogged. Productivity will rise when we get many more people travelling by bus. The pandemic has hit everyone and has changed the way people live, work, travel and think. It is likely some of these changes will be permanent and it gives us exciting opportunities.

This is our joint Bus Service Improvement Plan. It builds on and follows our West of England Bus Strategy, which we enthusiastically adopted last year.

We can no longer leave the provision of bus services to largely commercial decisions by private operators. From now on, the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council will exercise a much greater say in how the bus network responds to the changing needs of all our residents, very welcome visitors, and our vital businesses.

Our Bus Service Improvement Plan proposes an important partnership with bus operators to make the very most from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement and Bus Transformation Fund investment. Our aim is for a step change to improve the quality of the whole local bus network. It is right it should be clear who is responsible for public transport and who to go to when things go wrong or need improvement. Now we need to deliver.

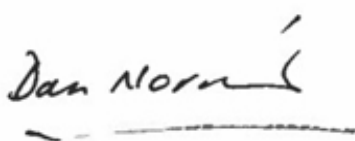
This Bus Service Improvement Plan sets out our ambitions:

- To get back to the strong, steady growth in the number of passengers travelling by bus that the West of England had before the pandemic first struck.
- To move forward on decarbonising our transport system as part of our commitment to really tackle the climate emergency.

We want to make travelling by bus the natural and automatic choice for passengers with:

- Convenient services taking residents where they want to go at times they need to travel
- Reliable bus journey times that get you to your destination as quickly or quicker than by car
- Good value for money with tap in, tap off ticketing and capped daily prices
- First class bus stops where you can wait in comfort and safety with all the information you need
- A co-ordinated public transport network with a recognisable local brand: West of England Sustainable Transport (WEST)

Our ambition is to make buses a viable option for many, many, more of our residents – both in urban and rural areas – to help us really tackle traffic congestion, air pollution, carbon emissions, and the significant social and economic demands of this decade. We are keen and energised to get on and rise to this vitally important challenge.



West of England Metro Mayor



Leader, North Somerset Council

Appendix 2

First letter of support for original BSIP



Enterprise House
Easton Road
Bristol
BS5 0DZ
27th October 2021

Dan Norris
Mayor
West of England Combined Authority

Cllr Don Davies
Leader
North Somerset Council

Dear Dan and Don,

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

I am very pleased to support the submission of the West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan.

The West of England market is a very important part of the wider First Bus operation. We have a history of close collaboration and working in a partnership approach with North Somerset and the West of England Combined Authority as well as the other Unitary Authorities and have a track record of successfully delivering required outcomes. This has been reflected in the delivery of bus priority schemes, the introduction of the metrobus network and our ability, prior to Covid, to grow bus patronage in the region, bucking national trends. Most recently, we have worked closely together to ensure services operated for key workers throughout the pandemic.

We have locally been working for some time on the delivery of many of the elements which were subsequently contained within the Government's National Bus Strategy. We have worked closely with the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council to develop this Plan, participating in workshops, reviewing content, and endorsing proposals. The Bus Service Improvement Plan is therefore a product of close collaboration with North Somerset and the West of England Combined Authority; furthermore, through this dialogue, we are continuing to deliver changes ahead of any Enhanced Partnership, based upon the principles of the National Bus Strategy through areas such as network design.

This progress notwithstanding, we recognise the need for investment and support to transform the bus offering in our region. This is a strong, customer focused plan and First West of England will play its part in delivering a transformation for bus passengers, acting as an enabler for sustainable economic growth.

The Plan represents a healthy level of ambition. In particular, we support the proposals in the plan for:

- Improving the speed and predictability of bus journey times across the region as a key

element of driving patronage growth

- Focussing infrastructure and service frequency along core corridors to develop truly 'turn up and go' services
- Improving information and facilities for bus users to retain and attract new users and achieve modal shift.
- Targeted fares reduction and the move to multi-operator capping to kick start the market
- Achieving ambitious targets for modern, zero-carbon emission buses

First Bus are nationally and locally implementing a range of successful schemes to enhance the bus offer for passengers:

- We have committed to achieve a 100% zero emission bus fleet by 2035, buying our last diesel buses in 2022.
- We have transformed over emissions performance, with over 90% of our local fleet now Euro VI or better
- We are embracing the rollout of multi-operator capped ticketing nationally and are playing a key role in delivering of England-leading schemes
- We will be leveraging our proven digital capabilities to partner our local authorities as they develop App, DRT and MaaS solutions

In the West of England there is shared ambition and a history of delivery; we work together to achieve results. We therefore commend this BSIP to the Department and look forward to continuing to work in partnership to ensure its delivery.

Yours sincerely,



Doug Claringbold
Managing Director,
First, West of England

Appendix 3 – Stagecoach letter of support for original BSIP



Stagecoach West
Third Floor
65 London Road
Gloucester
GL13HF

26th October 2021

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

Dear Andy

I am writing to confirm that Stagecoach West has been engaged in the preparation of West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and to say that we are fully supportive of the ambition shown in the BSIP.

Stagecoach has been consulted over various parts of the bid and as one of the smaller operators within the region we have been able to contribute towards all elements with particular reference to dealing with technological challenges for fares and ticketing and we welcome the phased approach being taken.

West of England Combined Authority has remained supportive of and receptive to bus operators throughout the BSIP process and we look forward to entering into a formal Enhanced Partnership in due course.

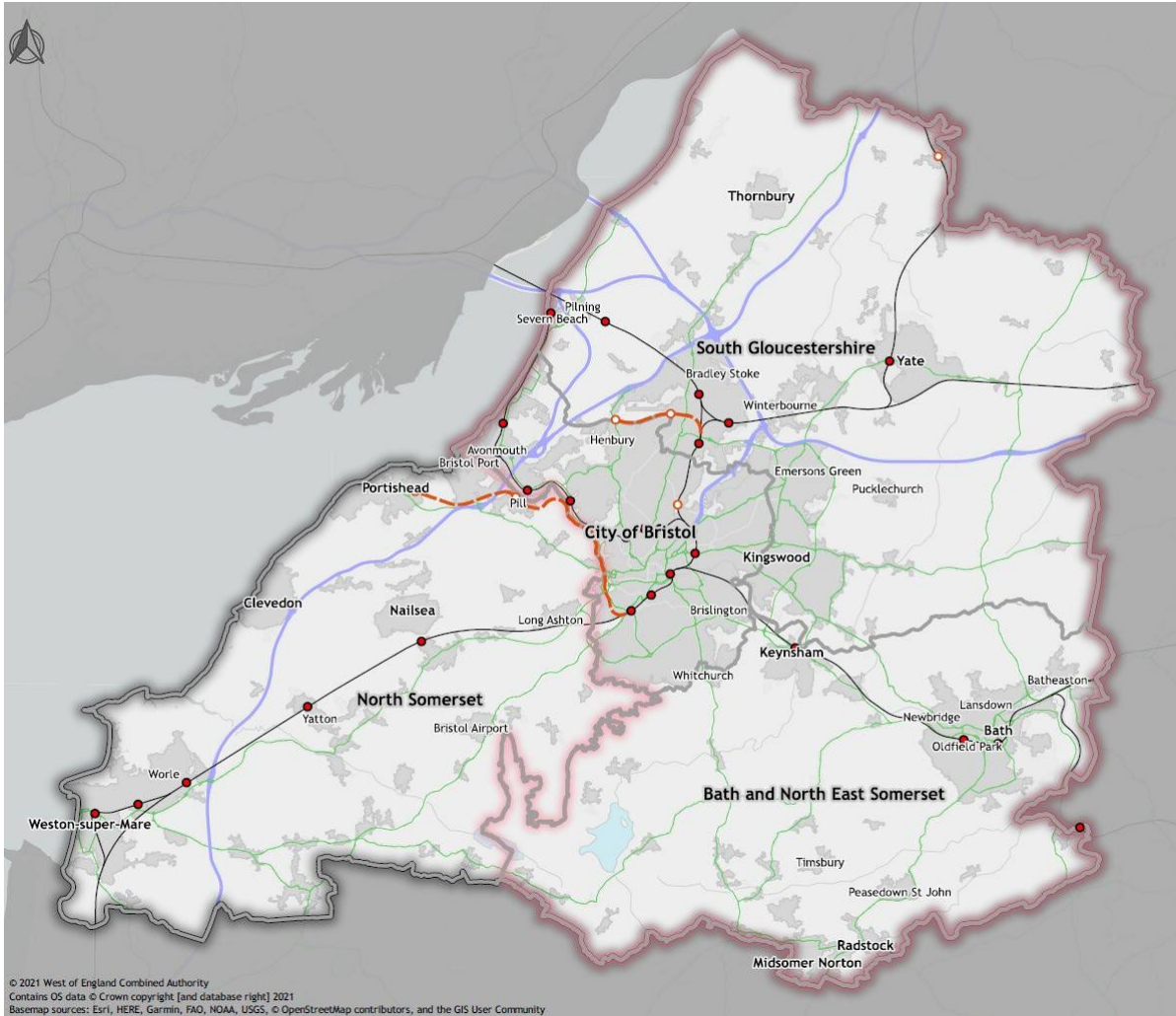
Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R G", enclosed within a simple circular outline.

Rachel Geliamassi
Managing Director
Stagecoach West

Appendix 4 – Geographical area covered by BSIP

Figure 24: Geographical area covered by this BSIP



Appendix 5 – List of supported services

Table 18: List of supported services in the BSIP area

Service	Route	Operating Days & Times	Operator	Annual Mileage
2	Bath City Centre – Mulberry Park	Mon-Sat Evening *	First Bus	4,429
6A	Bath City Centre – Larkhall – Bath City Centre	Mon-Sat Evening *	First Bus	7,285
8	Bath City Centre – Kingsway	Mon-Sat Evening *	First Bus	7,578
10, 11	Avonmouth – Southmead / Thornbury	Daily	Stagecoach West	116,596
11	Bath City Centre – Bathampton	Mon – Sat Daytime	The Big Lemon	18,602
12	Severn Beach – Bristol Parkway	Mon – Sat Daytime	Stagecoach West	98,211
12	Severn Beach – Cribbs Causeway	Sundays & Public Holiday Daytime	Eurotaxis	2,862
12	Bath City Centre – Haycombe Cemetery	Mon – Sat Daytime	The Big Lemon	17,424
13	Bristol City Centre – Shirehampton	Mon – Sat Daytime	Stagecoach West	105,392
17	Southmead Hospital – Kingswood – Keynsham	Daily *	First Bus	94,981
19	Bath – Cribbs Causeway via Bitton	Sundays & Public Holiday Daytime	First Bus	29,056
20	University of Bath – Twerton via City Centre	Mon – Sat Daytime	The Big Lemon	78,261
22	University of Bath – Twerton via Odd Down	Sat all year and Mon – Fri in University Holidays *	Abus	21,813
35	Marshfield – Bristol City Centre	Mon – Sat Daytime	First Bus	47,295
41	Malmesbury – Yate	Mon – Sat Daytime #	Coachstyle	#
51, 51s	Weston-super-Mare – Wrington	Mon – Fri daytime	Stagecoach West	35,299
52	Imperial Park – Hengrove	Mon – Fri Daytime *	Transpora	3,022
57	Portishead – Westlands Lane	Mon – Sat daytime	Stagecoach West	8,083

58	Portishead – Redcliffe Bay	Mon – Sat daytime	Stagecoach West	8,540
59	Portishead – Nailsea	Mon – Sat daytime	Stagecoach West	29,738
79	Marshfield – Bath Centre	Mon-Fri Peak	Faresaver	3,295
82	Paulton – Radstock	Mon – Fri daytime	Libra Travel	22,784
84	Yate – Wotton-under-Edge – Yate	Mon – Sat daytime	Stagecoach West	64,040
Service	Route	Operating Days & Times	Operator	Annual Mileage
85	Yate – Wotton-under-Edge - Yate	Mon – Sat daytime	Stagecoach West	51,504
86	Yate – Kingswood	Mon – Sat daytime	Stagecoach West	47,974
94	Trowbridge – Bath	Mon – Fri daytime #	Libra Travel	#
172	Bath – Paulton	Daily evenings *	First Bus	30,536
179	Midsomer Norton -Bath	Mon – Sat daytime	CT Coaches	46,404
185	Hallatrow – Trowbridge	Thursday	CT Coaches	2,336
202	Chipping Sodbury – Winterbourne	Mon – Fri daytime	Eurotaxis	11,993
228	Colerne – Ralph Allen School	School days *	Faresaver	1,520
505	Long Ashton P&R site – Southmead Hospital	Daily	The Big Lemon	143,295
506	Bristol City Centre – Southmead Hospital	Mon – Sat daytime	The Big Lemon	88,993
511	Bedminster – Hengrove	Mon – Sat daytime	Eurotaxis	16,751
512	Totterdown – Bristol City Centre	Mon – Sat daytime	Eurotaxis	11,923
513	Knowle – Brislington	Tue & Thu	Stagecoach West	6,460
514	Knowle – Brislington	Mon, Wed, Fri	Stagecoach West	9,508
515	Stockwood – Hartcliffe	Mon – Sat daytime	The Big Lemon	50,988
620	Old Sodbury – Bath	Mon – Sat daytime	Stagecoach West	57,086
622	Chipping Sodbury – Cribbs Causeway	Monday – Saturday	Stagecoach West	93,998
622	Thornbury – Cribbs Causeway	Sunday & Public Holidays	First Bus	3,587

		Daytime		
623	Severn Beach – Cribbs Causeway	Mon, Wed, Fri	Eurotaxis	6,547
626	Wotton-under-Edge – Bristol	Mon- Fri Peak	Eurotaxis	10,806
634	Tormarton – Kingswood	Mon, Wed & Fri	Eurotaxis	9,891
636	Hengrove – Keynsham	Mon, Wed & Fri	CT Coaches	2,320
640	Bishop Sutton – Keynsham	Friday	CT Coaches	1,659
663	Somerdale – Chandag Road	Mon – Sat daytime	Stagecoach West	10,806
664	Keynsham (Somerdale) – Saltford	Mon – Sat daytime	Stagecoach West	9,104
665	Somerdale – Longmeadow Road	Mon – Sat daytime	Stagecoach West	7,448
668	Peasedown St John – Bristol	Monday	CT Coaches	1,808
672	Blagdon – Bristol	Mon – Sat Daytime	Eurotaxis	30,340
680	North Yate – Filton College	College days	Stagecoach West	6,658
683	Keynsham – Wells	Tuesday	CT Coaches	3,401
684	Wick-Keynsham	Tue & Thu	Eurotaxis	1,573
700	Bath City Centre – Sion Hill	Mon – Sat daytime	CT Coaches	4,242
716	Bath City Centre – Newbridge	Mon – Sat daytime	CT Coaches	6,035
734	Bath City Centre – Bathwick	Mon – Sat daytime	CT Coaches	3,251
752	Hinton Blewett – Bath	Wednesday	Bath and North East Somerset Council	2,333
754	Hinton Blewett – Radstock	Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri	Bath and North East Somerset Council	5,549
757	Combe Hay – Midsomer Norton	Wednesday	CT Coaches	1,435
768	Midsomer Norton – Bath	Mon – Fri daytime	CT Coaches	32,286
779	Bath City Centre – Swainswick	Mon – Sat daytime	CT Coaches	4,137
948	Pucklechurch – Sir Bernard Lovell Academy	School days	Stagecoach West	3,434

963	Patchway – Winterbourne Academy	School days	Stagecoach West	3,141
967	Westerleigh – Chipping Sodbury School	School days	Stagecoach West	2,421
Bris	Brislington P&R site – Bristol City Centre	Mon – Sat	First Bus	144,799
Port	Portway P&R site – Bristol City Centre	Daily	First Bus	225,871
D1	Trowbridge – Bath	Mon-Sat evening #	First Bus	#
Y6	Yate – Southmead Hospital	Daily *	First Bus	122,502

* – Add-on to commercial service

– Cross-boundary service contracted by neighbouring LTA

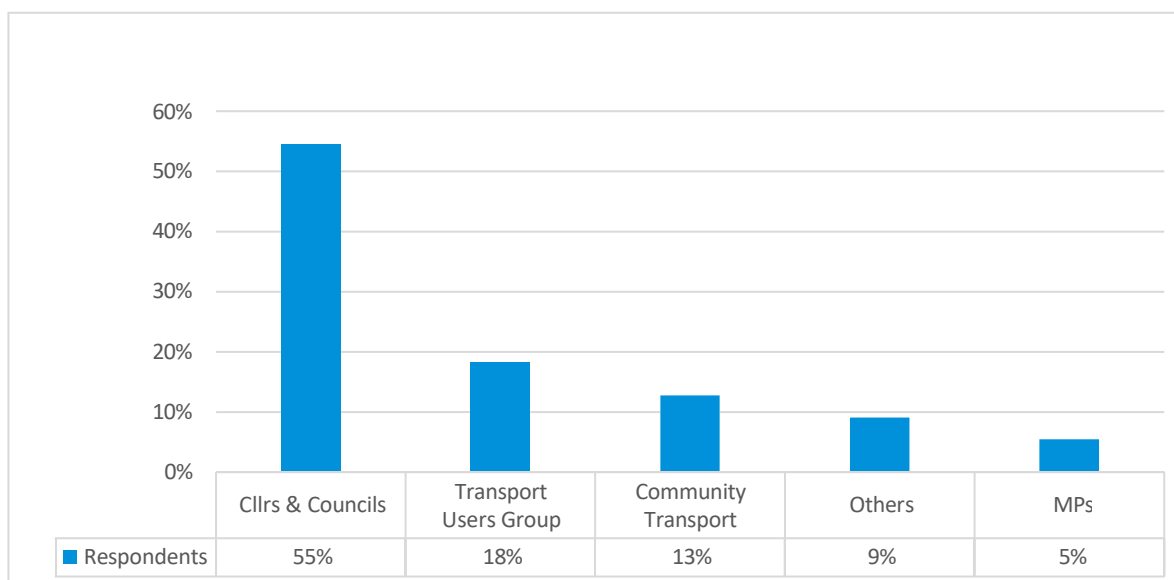
Appendix 6 – Responses to stakeholder engagement

Respondents

55 stakeholders responded to our invitation to give their views on the merits and demerits of bus services locally and the performance of the LTAs and local bus operators. These were made up of:

- 30 Parish Councils, Councillors, and political party groups
- 10 Transport Users Groups
- 7 Community Transport Operators
- 5 Others (Hospital, university, and shopping mall)
- 3 Members of Parliament.

Figure 25: Proportion of respondents to stakeholder engagement

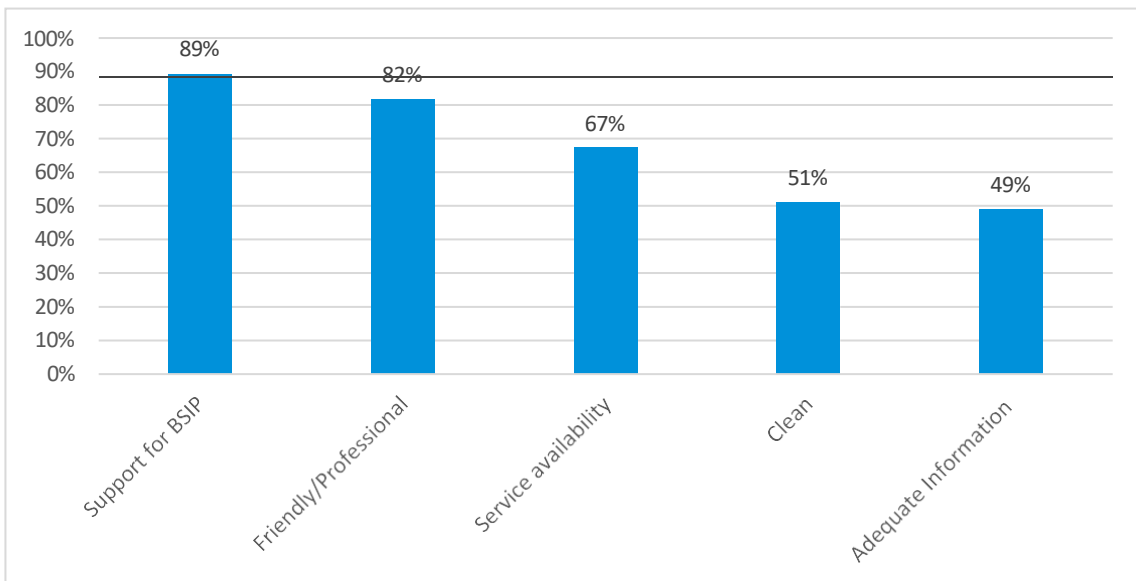


Positive aspects of current provision

Bus services

Respondents acknowledged the existence of positive provisions in their respective areas and commented on examples where such services are reliable, punctual, accessible, and frequent with friendly and professional drivers. 89% of respondents expressed overwhelming support for BSIP objectives. A consensus in both rural and urban regions suggesting that where services exist, which is a positive aspect, they were sufficient except for issues highlighted in the 'Negative aspects of current provision' section below. Those in rural regions also accept that the services provided, whilst not adequate, were often reliable and accessible to a section of the population. 51% of respondent felt that the buses were clean with 49% satisfied with the level of information provided.

Figure 26: Top five positive aspects of current bus provision

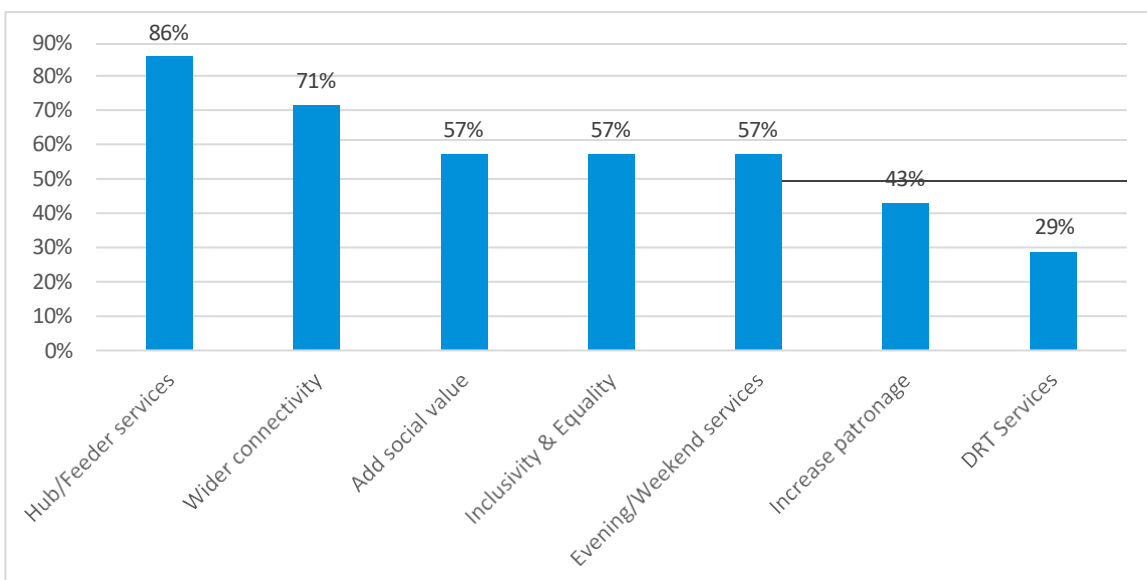


Role of community transport

The Community Transport stakeholders were clear on what works well in their sector. Their flexibility and the resulting positive impact on the NHS, local knowledge and strong community links, specialist nature of service, improved accessibility to an identified demographic, steady increase in patronage all of which, they felt, was contributing to health and wellbeing in a safe and secure environment. They could continue this trend, with support and funding, to filling the gaps in areas not currently served by traditional services.

The community transport sector expressed willingness to help with the BSIP objectives highlighting specific areas, as indicated in Figure below:

Figure 27: Areas in which community transport can help support BSIP objectives



To help with the BSIP objectives, 86% of respondents were of the view that community transport could act as a feeder service to Transport Hubs, but there were complications around their current Section 19 licence restrictions. With financial support, 71% would retrain their staff with a possible change to Section 22 permit

that would allow them to operate a community bus service. 57% also felt that, with appropriate funding, they would provide evening and weekend services.

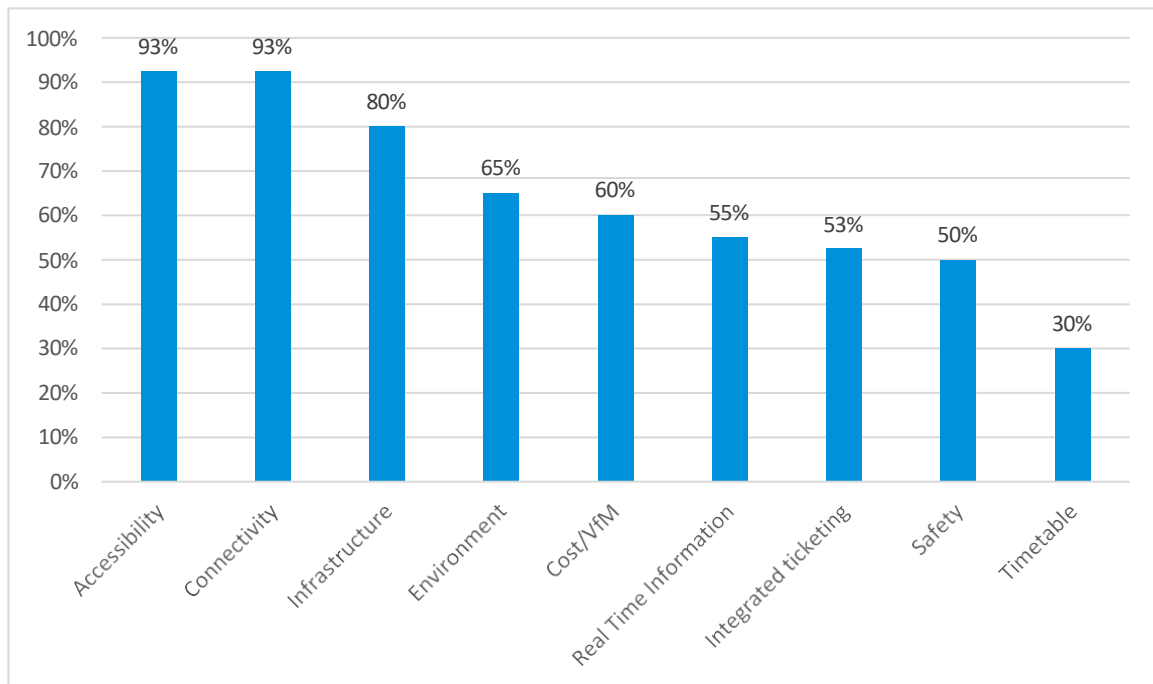
71% felt confident that their services are currently helping with connectivity especially in inaccessible regions/locations. 57% were of the view that their service, if sustained, can add social value in eradicating social isolation in addition to taking users directly to hospital and GP appointments. 57% of the respondent in this category felt that the demographic they served, in part because of their protected characteristics, are often excluded from services and decision making and their involvement is resulting in some levels of fair and inclusive access.

49% of Community Transport respondent report a raise in patronage and felt that this could be transferred over to traditional transport if they were to act as a hub/feeder service, provided some access issues in traditional buses and bus stops were resolved. 14% expressed the desire to provide DRT services.

Negative aspects of current provision

Respondents highlighted some negative aspects of current provision. The following themes emerged, as shown in Figure 28.

Figure 28: Emerging theme from the consultation



Accessibility

Accessibility here includes intervals between bus stops, inadequate services in some area where a section of the community is excluded from accessing services. Specific rural destinations were highlighted where there are limited services with no evening and weekend facilities.

Connectivity

This would include destinations where there are no direct services, no interchange, connecting and or linked-up services. Some rail stations were identified as having no connecting or direct services. Irregularity, infrequent and inadequate services affect connectivity (see breakdown in Figure 29 below).

Fares and ticketing

60% of respondents identified affordability as an access issue. Cost had meant that the transport services were less attractive than cars. Respondents want to see an integrated ticketing system across all transport services. They felt that this will have the potential to reduce costs, encourage use and increase patronage.

Infrastructure

Respondents identified various issues which includes the provision of more priority bus lanes, additional bus stops within short walking distance, construction of Transport Hubs, the installation and implementation of parking restrictions, higher parking charges, provision of more bike racks at stops, carriage of bikes on buses, better shelters, wheelchair user friendly bus stops, and installations of road restrictions in some areas to buses and residents only. The lack of wheelchair access at some bus stops gave rise to safety concerns.

Information

Some respondents were of the view that RTI should be provided at every bus stop. Where this is already the case, issues were raised that the information provided is often inaccurate and unreliable. Issues were also raised about the frequency of timetable changes. Respondents felt that timetables should be made accessible on apps as well as hard copies at bus stops so that those without smart phones – principally older persons – are not disadvantaged.

Environment

Respondents want to see sustainable cleaner and greener fleets. Making services more reliable, regular, and frequent will take cars off the road. Lower fares would also have the same effect as it would make services attractive.

Safety

Irregular, infrequent, and unreliable services present safety issues especially for school children and vulnerable persons having to wait longer than necessary and not knowing if services will turn up.

Other issues

There appears to be a lack of confidence in public transport. Some respondents felt that the LTAs and bus operators do not engage sufficiently with service users to understand their specific needs.

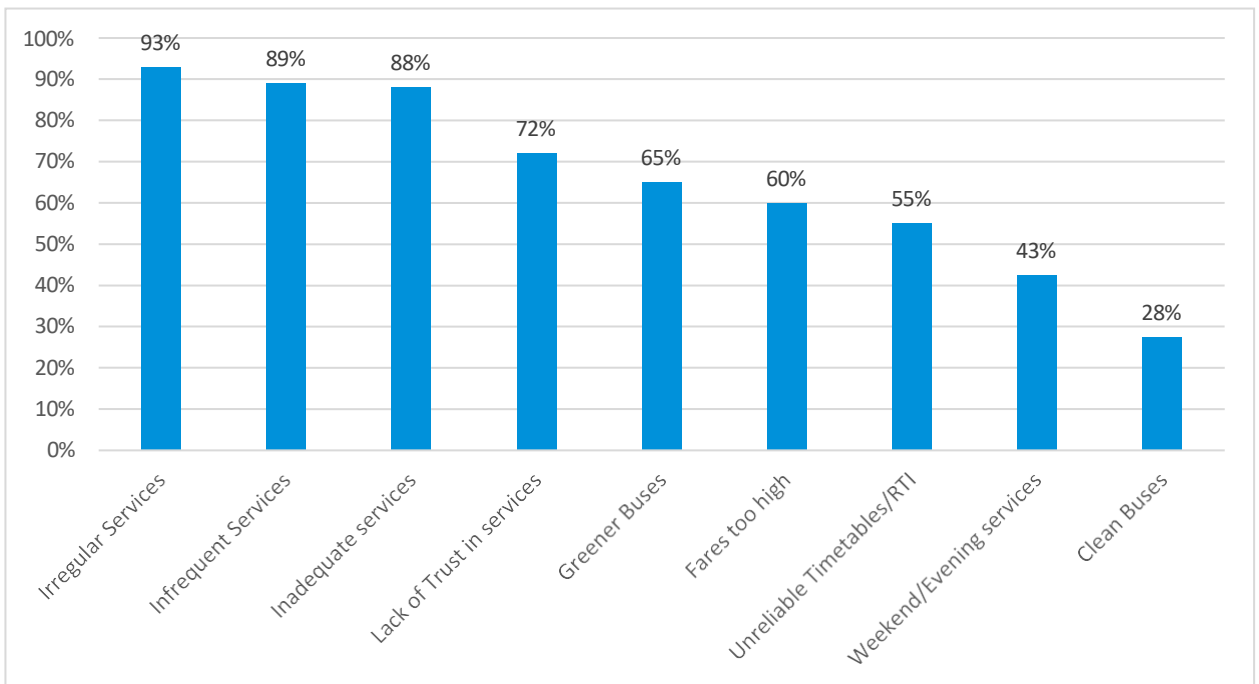
Performance

Bus operators

There was a consensus that sections of services in some areas are reliable, regular, frequent, and punctual but many instances of buses not showing up on time or not stopping at designated bus stops were reported. Bus cleanliness was also highlighted as an issue. Instances of RTI mysteriously disappearing from screen and no services turning up at scheduled times were also reported. Lack of evenings and weekend services, high fares, unreliable and inadequate services were highlighted too.

Respondents also expressed environmental concerns and wished to see an upgrade to more environmentally friendly fleet, as illustrated in Figure 31 below.

Figure 29: Issues identified as priorities for bus operators

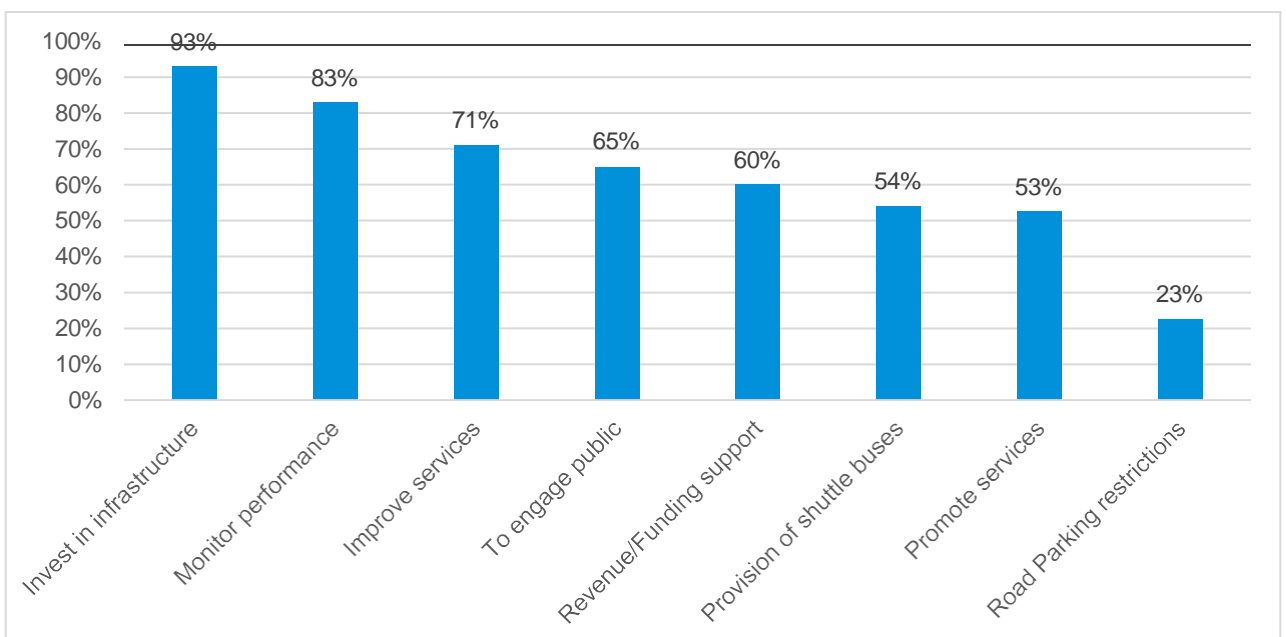


LTAs

All respondents urged LTAs to provide funding for more environmentally sustainable buses but not pass that cost on to passengers. Also, respondents called for more investment in infrastructure, such as more bus stops, Transport Hubs, secure bike racks, new and upgraded Park & Ride services, and the provision of shuttle services to linked rural areas to the bus network.

Respondent also want LTAs to introduce parking restrictions in some areas and the installation of more bus lanes. 53% wants LTAs promote services, 65% want to see LTAs facilitate more public engagement to understand passenger needs. 83% felt that LTAs should monitor performance of bus services.

Figure 30: Issues identified as priorities for LTAs



Priorities for improvement

Table 19: Priorities captured from stakeholder consultation

Area	Priority
Improve service reliability	91%
Fares reduction	85%
More/quality bus shelters	78%
Climate considerations	78%
Increase frequency of services	76%
More public engagement	73%
Direct services to hospitals and health facilities	69%
More RTI displays	64%
Promote services	62%
Safety for school children	55%
Timetable posters at bus stops	55%
More evening and weekend services	36%
More funding for community transport	18%
Improve accessibility for disabled people	15%
Provision of new & improved P&R services	11%
Remove time restrictions on concessionary passes	10%

Appendix 7 – West of England Corridor Schemes

Table 20: West of England Corridor Schemes

Phase	Corridor	Details	Current Stage	Timescale
1	Sustainable Transport Corridor (STC) – Bristol City Centre	<i>Upgrade 6 key junctions, including a new bus-only junction; Changes to smaller junctions; Completion of city centre loop bus lanes; Building on work to remove general traffic in the centre and provide improved walking and cycling infrastructure with links to key radial corridors.</i>	Outline Business Case (OBC)	2021-2026
1	STC – M32	<i>Bristol City Centre to M4. New Transport Hub / park & ride close to junction 1 of the M32 with new access arrangements, bus priority on the existing motorway and offline walking and cycling connections. Bus lanes on the 6km length of the M32 in both directions, re-classification to an A road.</i>	OBC	2021-2027
1	STC – A4 Bristol to Bath	<i>Bristol City Centre to Bath City Centre along the A4. Upgrade 9 junctions; Provision of bus lanes or bus priority on majority of the route; Move existing park & ride (P&R) to Hicks Gate to create mobility hub; connect Keynsham town centre onto the route; bi-directional bus lanes between The Globe and Twerton Fork; Cycling infrastructure with improved local community connections.</i>	OBC	2021-2026
1	STC – Bath City Centre	<i>Focussed on removing through traffic from the city centre and improving access to Bath Bus Station; Bus priority improvements to key radial links; Improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure with links to key radial corridors.</i>	OBC	2021-2026
1	STC – A4 Portway	<i>Avonmouth to Bristol city centre along the A4. Upgrade 4 junctions plus change Park & Ride access arrangements to enable buses to move both north and south; Extend bus priority along the length of the road; Link to existing city centre bus lanes through improved priority; Upgrade existing shared use cycle path to segregated and complete missing section in Shirehampton; Connect into A369 improvements.</i>	OBC	2021-2026
1	Town Corridor – Thornbury to Bradley Stoke (A38N)	<i>Following the A38. Upgrade 7 junctions; Additional bus lane provision at the approaches to each of these junctions; Separated cycling infrastructure from Thornbury to Bradley Stoke.</i>	Full Business Case (FBC)	2021-2025

Phase	Corridor	Details	Current Stage	Timescale
1	Town Corridor – Chipping Sodbury to Hambrook (A432/A4174)	Chipping Sodbury via Yate along the A432 to A4174 junction (ring road), onto Hambrook junction just before M32 J1. Upgrade 4 junctions; extended bus lane north of junction onto ring road (A4174). Separated cycling infrastructure from Yate to A4174. Upgrading existing cycle path on A4174.	FBC	2021-2025
1	Town Corridor – Stockwood to Cribbs Causeway (A37/A4018)	Stockwood to the A37, through Bristol city centre to the A4018 and to Cribbs Causeway via Henleaze and Southmead. Upgrade 12 junctions; bus lanes; bus priority; segregated cycle infrastructure; bus lane hour extensions; Re-design of Victoria Street, Bristol Bridge and Baldwin Street bus movements; Bus gate on Park Street.	OBC	2021-2026
1	Town Corridor – Somer Valley to Bristol & Bath (A37/A367)	Radstock to Bath via the A367 and Radstock to Bristol via the A362 and A37. Upgrade 6 junctions along the corridor. Additional bus lane provision on Wellsway and approaches into Bath and approaches to Bristol at Whitchurch. Provision of end-to-end cycling infrastructure.	OBC	2021-2026
1	Town Corridor – Churchill to Lime Kiln roundabout (A38)	Churchill signal junction, Barrow Gurney, and Lime Kiln roundabout. Upgrade 5 traffic signals; bus lanes and bus link; upgrade 7 key junctions to connect along South Bristol Link and into metrobus infrastructure to Bedminster and new infrastructure from Bedminster to central Bristol	Design	2022-2025
1	Town Corridor – Weston-super-Mare to Bristol (A370)	Queensway junction, Smallway / A370 Signals, Wood Hill / A370 / Wrington Road, Brockley Combe / A370, Backwell signals, Long Ashton Bypass. Upgrade 12 traffic signals; new and extended bus lanes; links into bus lanes and connection into a4 Portway project.	Design	2021-2024
1	Town Corridor - Clevedon	B3133 / Southern Way / Central Way roundabout, Ettlingen Way / J20 Roundabouts and Tickenham Road / Northern Way roundabout. Upgrade traffic signal; bus lanes; new bus links.	Design	2022-2025
1	Town Corridor – Portishead to Bristol (A369)	Portbury Hundred M5 J19, Martcombe Road M5 Junction 19, Beggar Bush Lane A369 and Rownham Hill / A369. Upgrade 4 traffic signals; bus lanes.	Design	2022-2024
1	Town Corridor - Weston-Super- Mare	Uphill roundabout and Worle Bus gate and High Street. Upgrading 4 traffic signals; bus lanes; two-way bus flow.	Design	2022-2027
1	Town Corridor – Hengrove to Bristol City Centre (A38S)	Linking to the North Somerset Council project to Limekiln transport hub, including links to residential developments at Hengrove Park. Improved bus priority to link with large scale developments in Bedminster, changes to the junction with West Street and at Parson Street Gyratory. Improved walking and cycling connections to the route. Transport hubs in Bedminster, Parson Street and connections to	FBC (Bedminster section) OBC (remainder)	2022-2027

		<i>Limekiln Roundabout and local rail stations.</i>		
--	--	---	--	--

Phase	Corridor	Details	Current Stage	Timescale
2	Town Corridor – A38N (BCC)	<i>Improving connections from central Bristol to the North Fringe key employment sites and large new residential developments. Improved bus priority along the whole length including considering traffic changes and changes to key junctions. Improved walking and cycling infrastructure to provide a direct, connected route. Transport hubs at key locations such as The Arches, Filton Avenue junctions and Filton, including improved links to rail and associated Liveable Neighbourhoods in Montpellier, St Andrews, Bishopston, Horfield and Filton.</i>	N/A	2024-2028
2	Town Corridor – A420	<i>Changes to the corridor from central Bristol to the eastern suburbs. Improved bus priority at key junctions such as Lawrence Hill Roundabout and the ring road junction, building on previous infrastructure delivered as part of the Greater Bristol Bus Network project. Delivering a significantly improved cycle route following the corridor. Transport hubs in Lawrence Hill, St George, Kingswood and Warmley.</i>	N/A	2023-2027
2	Town Corridor – A4174	<i>Considering bus priority along the length of the ring road to create substantial opportunities around orbital bus services. Bus lanes to be considered on the whole length, with priority to be provided at all key junctions, especially those connecting with other projects at the A4, A420, A432, M32 and A38. Build on and improve the existing ring road cycle path.</i>	N/A	2023-2027
2	Town Corridor – A4 London Road	<i>A key link to the east of the region between central Bath and the Wiltshire boundary. Working cross boundary with Wiltshire to look at improved bus priority along the whole corridor, including the key junction with the A46. Creating a coherent cycle route to the east of the city and consider transport hubs at key locations.</i>	N/A	2022-2026
2	Town Corridor – A431	<i>Creating improved links from east Bristol to Bath, looking at new or improved bus infrastructure, especially at key junctions with Marsham Way, Keynsham Road and the A4. Improved connections between the Bristol to Bath Railway Path from adjacent communities and the consideration of Liveable Neighbourhoods in St George, Hanham, Longwell Green and Weston</i>	N/A	2023-2027
2	Town Corridor – A36	<i>Improving bus priority from Twerton Fork and the junction with the A4, into central Bath and out again to the south of the city and connections into Wiltshire. Bus priority at key junctions of Twerton Fork, Windsor Road Bridge, Churchill Gyratory and Bathwick Street with bus lanes on key sections. Improved walking and cycling connections.</i>	N/A	2023-2027

Phase	Corridor	Details	Current Stage	Timescale
2	Town Corridor - Portishead	<i>Improvements have been considered at traffic hotspots in the town and area, such as the High Street / Stoke Road, Wyndham Way and the Marina and connection. It will link the existing good quality cycling infrastructure across the town centre and on to the A369 corridor, improve public realm and delivery of Transport hubs. Public realm improvements in the town centre by the Marina and Sainsburys, which is considered for new transport hubs. All these have been considered for new transport hubs. Liveable Neighbourhoods have also been explored in the area.</i>	N/A	2022-2027
2	Town Corridor - Yatton	<i>Improvements have been considered at key aspect and traffic hotspots in the village and area, such as High Street between Grassmere Road and The Ridge, North End and Smallway Signals. It will include footways at key locations, which is currently being reviewed as part of the wider village scheme. public realm improvements have been explored at in the village centre by Chescombe Road, with new transport hubs. Liveable Neighbourhoods have also been explored in the area.</i>	N/A	2022-2027
2	Town Corridor – Nailsea & Backwell	<i>Improvements have been considered at traffic hotspots in the town and village, such as High Street and Backwell Signals. Upgrades to bus stops in line with the new standards currently under development. It has been explored to improve cycle route in around the town with particular connection to the light bus interchange in Nailsea, in line with LTN 1/20. public realm improvements at in the town centre by Stock Way North and Clevedon Road in Nailsea has been explored with new transport hubs Liveable Neighbourhoods have also been explored in the area.</i>	N/A	2022-2027
3	Rural & Suburban Corridor – Bath and North East Somerset Rural Areas	<i>Linking the rural and suburban areas to the corridors, mainly focussed on bus stop upgrades, junction connections, extending cycling links and the delivery of transport hubs</i>	N/A	2025-2028
3	Rural & Suburban Corridor – Bath Suburban	<i>Linking the rural and suburban areas to the corridors, mainly focussed on bus stop upgrades, junction connections, extending cycling links and the delivery of transport hubs</i>	N/A	2025-2028
3	Rural & Suburban Corridor - North Somerset East, South East, North and South	<i>Linking the rural and suburban areas to the corridors, mainly focussed on bus stop upgrades, junction connections, extending cycling links and the delivery of transport hubs</i>	N/A	2025-2028

Appendix 8 – Our high-level objectives (the ideal bus network)

The LTAs and local bus operators agreed on seven high-level objectives for our BSIP – based on the aims and vision in the National Bus Strategy, the vision and objectives in the adopted West of England Bus Strategy, research by Transport Focus on passengers’ needs and expectations, and the guidance on Bus Service Improvement Plans. Those objectives and their attributes (the features that our ideal network would have) are listed below.

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 road works

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, journeys 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