

NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY 2021 BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP) WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL

Document Control

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Newbury Wharf Bus Station



Papercast RTPI screen at Parkway



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1. **Executive Summary**

- 1.1 In March 2021, the Government published a new strategy to improve bus services in England, outside of London – [Bus Back Better](#). The strategy sets out the Government’s vision and opportunity to deliver better bus services for passengers. Essentially this would be more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better coordinated and cheaper bus services. Local transport authorities will be given more powers to improve bus networks in their area.
- 1.2 The Council is required to establish an Enhanced Partnership with bus operators to deliver these goals by March 2022. Failure to do so will result in withdrawal of discretionary streams of government funding for bus services to the Council and local bus operators, and also impact on government funding other local transport schemes.
- 1.3 The bus is seen in the strategy as a key tool in ‘Levelling Up.’ In the West Berkshire context this would include enhanced frequencies on many services, new bus links introduced including the use of demand-responsive transport, simplified fares and the extension of inter-operator ticketing, more environmentally-friendly buses, and improved marketing of bus services to wider audiences.
- 1.4 This Bus Service Improvement Plan will be refreshed each year, and progress against the targets it contains will be reported on at least every six months. It should be noted that most of the ambitions included within this document will require additional funding, either as one-off investments, start-up costs, or an ongoing commitment. The national bus strategy is backed by £3bn of new funding.

2. **Overview**

2.1 ***Extent of Bus Service Improvement Plan***

- 2.1.1 This Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) covers the whole of the West Berkshire District Council area, which will be covered by a single Enhanced Partnership (EP). There was no appetite amongst the bus operators or the Council to progress franchising as very few services operate without subsidy.
- 2.1.2 An Enhanced Partnership is an agreement between a local transport authority and the bus operators to work together to improve local bus services. It includes a clear vision of the improvements that the EP is aiming for (the BSIP), and accompanying actions to achieve them (set out in one or more EP schemes).
- 2.1.3 Franchising is a model for providing bus services used in London and elsewhere in Europe. In a franchising scheme, the local authority will determine the details of the services to be provided – where they run, when they run, and the standards of the services. Bus operators would then provide their services under contract to the local authority. No other services can operate in the franchised area without the agreement of the franchising authority.



Figure 2.1 – Map of West Berkshire

- 2.1.4 The BSIP covers all registered local bus services that operate in West Berkshire, including those operated under Section 22 permits that provide vital bus services within the district.
- 2.1.5 We considered that a joint BSIP with any of our neighbouring local authorities would not be beneficial for improving public transport within West Berkshire as the focus would inevitably fall on the more populous area of any Partnership. However, it has been developed taking into consideration our neighbouring local authority views as far as possible, which we have sought to complement, especially regarding cross boundary services.

Services	Hp	Ox	Rd	Sn	Wt	Wk
Jet Black 1, Lime 2, 15, 16, 26, 33			✓			
2 (Baughurst), 7/7a, 44, 103, The Link	✓					
20, 22					✓	
46, 46a				✓	✓	
47		✓		✓		
133		✓				
142, 143		✓	✓			
154	✓		✓			✓

Key: Hp = Hampshire, Ox = Oxfordshire, Rd = Reading, Sn = Swindon, Wt = Wiltshire, Wk = Wokingham.

Table 2.1 – Bus services operating to / from neighbouring local authority areas

2.2 **Duration and review of BSIP**

- 2.2.1 The document will be reviewed on an annual basis; published on the Council's [website](#); and sent to the Department for Transport before the end of each October. In addition, the targets set in the BSIP will be reviewed every six months, and also published on the Council's [website](#).
- 2.2.2 To establish a BSIP, a working group was set up consisting of representatives of the bus companies operating services within West Berkshire at the time, together with officers from the Council, including those involved with transport operations, policy, and highway schemes. Whilst this group has a specific focus to establish the BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership, it will continue to meet, albeit less frequently, to review future BSIP requirements.
- 2.2.3 A survey was carried out to seek the views of both users and non-users in preparing this document. This will be repeated each year to determine the success of the Plan, and to focus its future direction.
- 2.2.4 The BSIP seeks to build upon the work of existing strategies and plans within West Berkshire (section 3), and in turn inform revisions to them as they are updated.
- 2.2.5 The Enhanced Partnership will detail the full governance of the BSIP.

3. **Strategic Context**

- 3.1 The [Council Strategy](#) contributes towards the [West Berkshire Vision 2036](#), setting out the Council's priorities for improvement. It contains six priorities, all of which benefit from effective public transport. Supporting this Strategy are the [Local Transport Plan](#) (LTP), which covers the period 2011 to 2026; and the [Environment Strategy](#), introduced in 2020, and which runs until 2030.
- 3.1.1 In 2014, a [Passenger Transport Strategy](#) was produced as part of the LTP, with three aims:
- To increase the market share for public transport services by making those services a more attractive choice for existing and potential customers;
 - To build upon prior initiatives and tally with future development proposals, so as to better integrate the provision of passenger transport services, and;
 - To help achieve an accessible and safe public transport network.
- 3.2 The Environment Strategy builds on the [UK's 2050 net zero target for greenhouse gas emissions](#), and the Council's decision to declare a Climate emergency in July 2019. It commits the Council to deliver carbon neutrality by 2030. It also supports the national [Transport Decarbonisation](#) plan.
- 3.3 This BSIP supports all of these documents, and follows from the [National Bus Strategy](#), which was launched in March 2021. It is also complementary to other Council strategies, including the [Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan](#), the [Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Strategy](#), and the Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA).

4. Current bus offer to passengers

4.1 West Berkshire – the area

4.1.1 West Berkshire is very much characterised by beautiful countryside and villages, with 74% of the district falling within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding natural Beauty (AONB). This is reflected in the dispersed and low density population pattern in West Berkshire.

4.1.2 The LTP defined four geographical areas in the district, each with differing characteristics, with most of the population being located within the first two:

- Newbury and Thatcham
- The Eastern Area (Purley on Thames, Tilehurst, Calcot and Theale)
- The North Wessex Downs AONB
- The East Kennet Valley (rural south-east including Burghfield and Mortimer)

4.1.3 According to [nomis](#), the West Berkshire population was estimated at 158,500 in 2020. ONS figures suggest that almost 31% of the population is over 55, including 17% at pensionable age, with this number rising. 43% live in Newbury and Thatcham; 18% in the Eastern Area; and 7.5% in Burghfield and Mortimer. The population density is approximately two people per hectare.

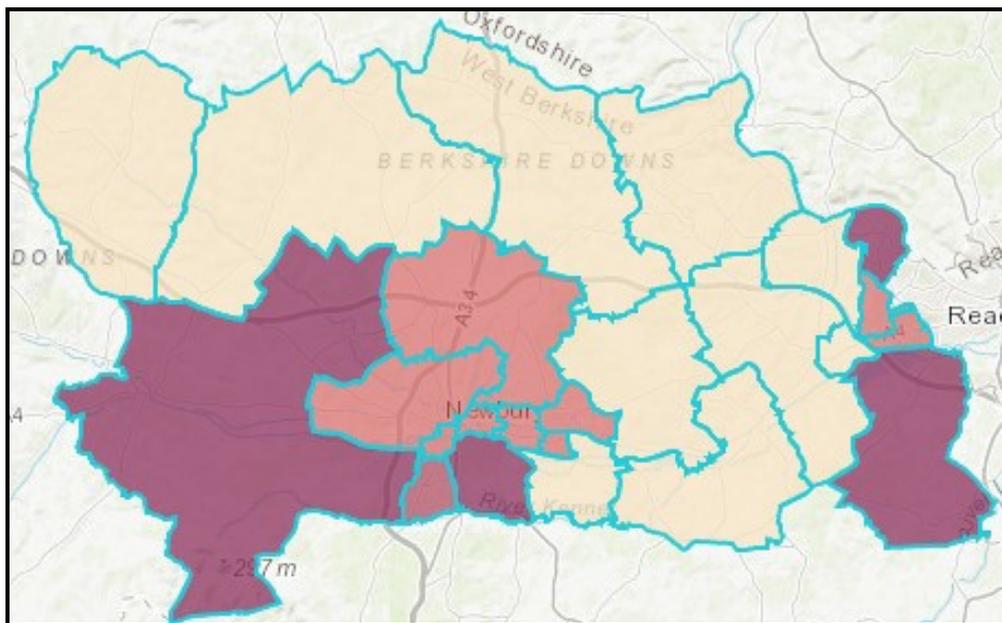


Figure 4.1 – Map showing population by ward (darker colours show more residents)

	West Berkshire (numbers)	West Berkshire (%)	South East (%)	Great Britain (%)
Economically active	86,300	84.8	81.1	78.7
In employment	84,000	82.5	77.7	74.8
Working in Information and Communication	14,000	14.3	5.7	4.3
Unemployed	2,800	3.2	4.1	4.9

Table 4.1 – Employment (April 2020 to March 2021), [nomis](#)

- 4.1.4 The high percentage working in Information and Communication are perhaps better placed to work from home, with Vodafone’s UK headquarters based in Newbury. Therefore, together with a rising population age, and homes spread widely across the district, commercial bus operation is difficult.
- 4.1.5 With retail, employment and education focussed predominantly in the urban areas, and larger rural settlements, bus services tend to radiate from either Newbury or Reading.
- 4.1.6 High levels of personal wealth, coupled with high levels of car ownership and car use overall exacerbate the difficulties in sustaining local bus services, particularly in rural areas. Notwithstanding the District’s general prosperity, there are a number of small pockets of deprivation. [Census](#) data highlights that whilst only 12% of households in West Berkshire have no access to a car, compared to the national average of 26%, this rises in some parts of Newbury / Thatcham to more than 30%.

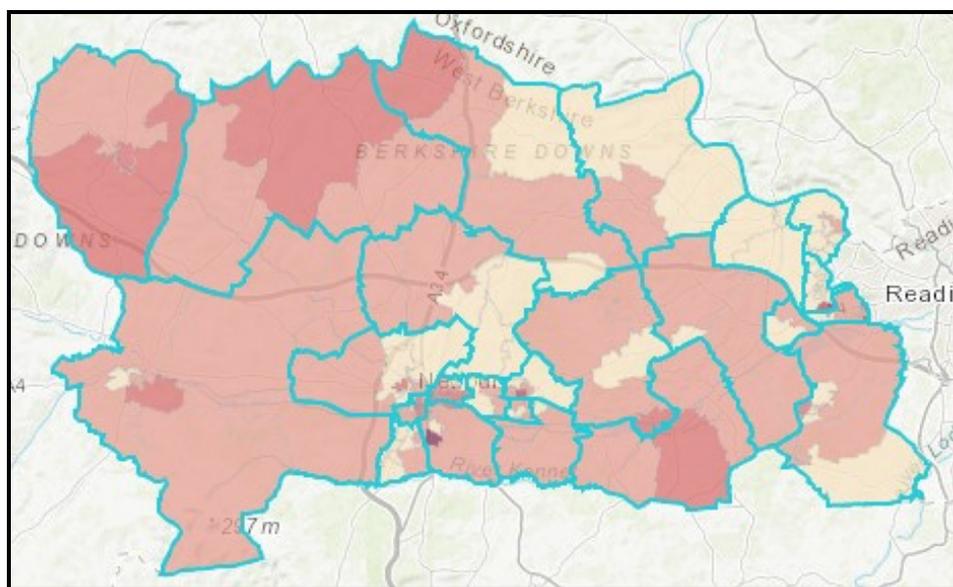


Figure 4.2 – Map showing deprivation (darker colours show more deprivation)

- 4.1.7 Positive retail and residential planning have contributed towards Newbury, the administrative and main retail town in the district, remaining relatively robust in recent years. The Park Way retail and residential development opened towards the end of 2011 in the town centre, although anchor stores John Lewis and Debenhams have recently closed. Similarly the Market Street ‘urban village’ development to the south of the Town Centre is well under way. When completed, it will add 232 residential homes, and 10,200 square feet of new commercial space. [Newbury Vision](#) highlight recent and proposed developments in Newbury, and a [Newbury Town Centre Masterplan](#) has also been commissioned and consulted on.

4.2 **Air Quality and Climate Change**

- 4.2.1 There are two AQMAs in West Berkshire. Both are due to road traffic and exceed the Annual Mean NO₂ objective. Newbury AQMA also exceeds the one-hour NO₂ objective:

- A339/A343 (“Burger King”) Roundabout and the adjoining Greenham Road in Newbury
- A4 (Chapel Street) in Thatcham

4.2.2 West Berkshire's 2020 [Air Quality Annual Status Report](#) recognises key elements in the LTP that can contribute towards improving air quality in the district by making the bus more attractive and reducing car usage. These are more frequent and reliable bus services with modern low or zero emission buses. In July 2019, the Council unanimously declared a climate emergency and sought to reach a net carbon position by 2030. In particular, the Council acknowledged the importance of sustainable transport.

4.3 **Bus services**

4.3.1 Bus services in West Berkshire are currently operated by a number of companies:

- Go-Ahead (Swindon's Bus Company, Thames Travel, Tourist Coaches)
- Horseman Coaches
- Reading Buses (Newbury & District, Reading Buses)
- Stagecoach (Hampshire, Swindon)

In addition to those services run under an Operator's Licence, another group of services are provided using Section 22 Community Bus Permits. As these provide vital links in the district's transport network, they are also included within the BSIP:

- Carebus
- Going Forward
- Ramsbury Community Transport
- West Berkshire Council

4.3.2 National Express also had a short section of one of their long-distance routes registered through West Berkshire. This is not included as it has not operated since the pandemic began, and there are no current plans to reinstate this as a result of a lack of available drivers, and low passenger numbers.

4.3.3 An overview of each of these services is included in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 below. Frequency of services is shown in Figure 4.3. Journeys (per week) are current (October 2021), whilst patronage (per month) is at June 2019 (pre-pandemic). All data relates to travel within West Berkshire only.

Operator	Service		Journeys	Patronage
Reading Buses	Jet Black 1	Newbury-Reading	412	Individual data not shown at request of major operator
Newbury & District	1a	Newbury-Thatcham	132	
Newbury & District	1c	Newbury-Thatcham	135	
Stagecoach in Hampshire	2	Baughurst-Basingstoke	n/a	
Reading Buses	Lime 2/a	Reading-Mortimer	402	
Newbury & District	3c	Thatcham-Hungerford	10	
Reading Buses	15	Reading-Calcot	281	
Reading Buses	16	Reading-Purley	592	
Reading Buses	26	Reading-Calcot	965	
Reading Buses	33	Reading-Tilehurst	771	
Newbury & District	103	Newbury-Greenham BP	130	
Stagecoach in Hampshire	The Link	Newbury-Basingstoke	144	
Totals	12		3,974	

Key: SH 2 - only one stop within West Berkshire. 1a, 1c - likely to be supported by West Berkshire Council in near future. 103 - journeys to Bishop's Green supported by Basingstoke & Deane BC. € = Estimate

Table 4.2 – Bus services operated without any direct subsidy

Operator	Service		Funded by	Journeys	Patronage
N&D	2	Newbury-Pigeons Farm	WBC	162	5,508
N&D	3	Newbury-Hungerford	WBC	72	2,499
N&D	4	Newbury-Lambourn	WBC	106	4,092
WBC*	5,5a	Newbury-Brightwalton	WBC	20	308
WBC*	5c	Newbury-Beedon	WBC	10	216
N&D	6,6a	Newbury-The Ilsleys	WBC	84	2,767
SH	7,7a	Newbury-Andover/Burghclere	HCC	68	1,150 €
N&D	8	Newbury-Greenham	WBC	123	2,726
N&D	9	Newbury-Racecourse	DWH, WBC	148	1,031
SBC / TC	20,X20, X22	Marlborough-Hungerford/Newbury	WCC	86	250 €
WBC*	41	Newbury-Theale	WBC	29	716
WBC*	44	Thatcham-Calcot	WBC	26	542
SS	46,X46	Hungerford-Swindon	SC, WCC	50	250 €
WBC*	47	Lambourn-Swindon	OCC,SC, WBC	54	444
CB*	75	Theale-Newbury	S22	2	43 €
GF*	133	Goring-Wallingford	S22	8	35 €
GF*	142	Goring-Reading	S22	4	20 €
TT	143	Goring-Reading	PC, WBC	61	1,747
HC	154	Stratfield Saye-Reading	BD, PC, WOK	2	4
WBC*	H1	Hungerford Circular	PC	9	145
RCT*	Flyer	Aldbourne/Ramsbury-Hungerford	S22	4	72 €
Totals	21		9	1,128	24,565 €

Key: Operator. CB* = Carebus Volunteer Group, GF* = Going Forward CIC, HC = Horseman Coaches, N&D = Newbury & District, RCT* = Ramsbury Community Transport, SBC = Swindon's Bus Company, SH = Stagecoach in Hampshire, SS = Stagecoach in Swindon, TC = Tourist Coaches, TT = Thames Travel, WBC* = West Berkshire Council, * = section 22 operation.

Funded by. BD = Basingstoke & Deane BC; DWH = David Wilson Homes; HCC = Hampshire County Council; PC = various Town and Parish Councils; S22 = Not-for-profit, funded by grants and donations; SC = Swindon Borough Council; WBC = West Berkshire Council, WCC = Wiltshire County Council, WOK = Wokingham Borough Council.

€ = Estimate. 46 was operated by SBC in June 2019.

Table 4.3 – Bus services funded to operate

- 4.3.4 Services operated without any direct subsidy (with the exception of temporary grants to offset the effects of the pandemic) make up around 36% of the bus routes, 78% on the bus journeys, over 85% of the passenger trips, and over 80% of the bus mileage.
- 4.3.5 In addition to the services shown in Tables 4.2 and 4.3, there are a few registered commercial local school services. The main services are Reading Buses 85 to 87 to Little Heath School, and 88 to 90 to Theale Green School; and Thames Travel BB3 between Reading and Langtree School.
- 4.3.6 Vodafone also has buses for the use of its employees, provided by Reading Buses, but which are not open to the general public.
- 4.3.7 All Reading Buses services operate from early morning to late evening, and seven days each week, with service 26 operating 24-hours. These, together with Stagecoach's The Link from Newbury to Basingstoke, form the commercial backbone in West Berkshire thanks to the more densely populated areas which they serve. The Jet Black 1 operates later than other (non-Reading Buses)

services, but only throughout the evening between Theale and Reading. Patronage on Reading Buses' services had increased by almost 40% prior to the pandemic.

4.3.8 Consideration was being given to the additional local services between Newbury and Thatcham becoming supported services prior to the pandemic, despite the best efforts of Reading Buses and Newbury & District to develop the 1a and 1c as commercial operations to supplement the core Jet Black 1 service. The reasons for this are believed to be manifold - the relatively short distances involved (Thatcham is only 3 miles from Newbury), the lack of bus priority and heavy car dominance between the towns, the cost of using the bus and the relatively low frequencies of the 1a and 1c.

4.3.9 With the exception of Reading Buses, all services operate, at best, Mondays to Saturdays between 7am and 7pm. Services in the Newbury / Thatcham area tend to operate hourly, with those extending into the North Wessex Downs being two-hourly at best, and largely timed around school movements. This can be seen on the Council's [online map](#), shown below.

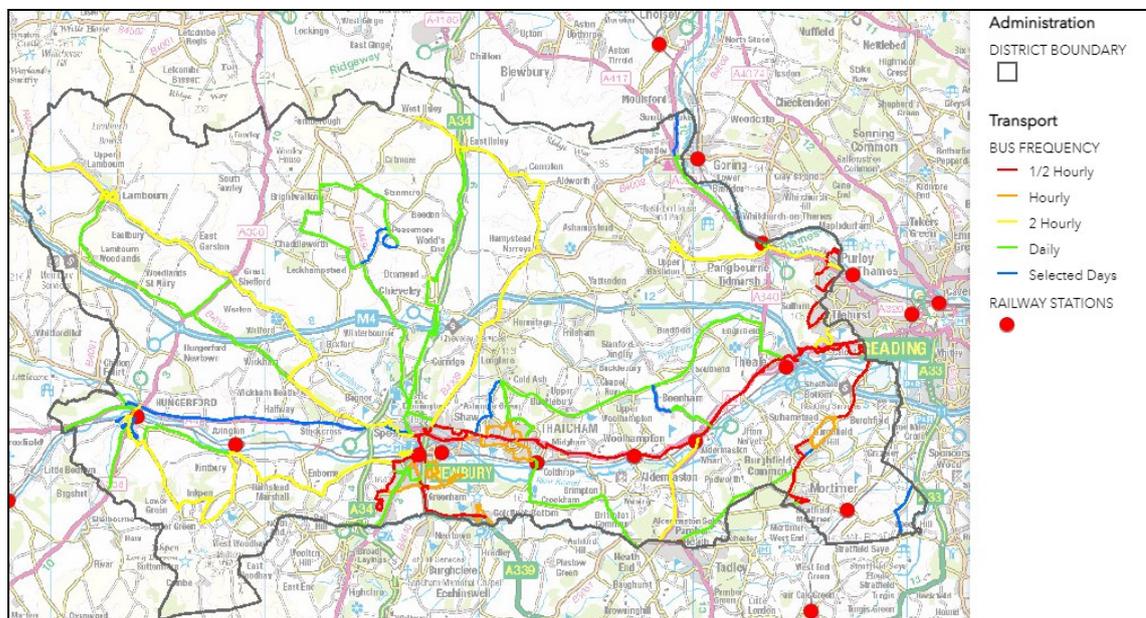


Figure 4.3 – Bus Frequency Map

4.3.10 Some West Berkshire villages no longer have any bus or rail service, following gradual decline over the last few decades. These villages include Aldworth, Ashampstead, Englefield, Fawley, Frilsham, Stanford Dingley, Tidmarsh, Winterbourne and Yattendon, all within the AONB; and Padworth, Sulhamstead and Ufton Nervet in the East Kennet Valley. There is no bus service to Mortimer Station.

4.3.11 The 75 is the only demand responsive service in the district, operating on Fridays. West Berkshire Council have previously subsidised demand-responsive transport (DRT), being an early-adopter in 2000. However ambitions have outweighed results, and the services have ceased in the intervening years. We are keen to explore this type of solution further with advances in technology and higher expectations of instant solutions in recent years. We have appointed consultants to advise us on this, to inform future plans. Bids for the DfT's Rural Mobility Fund, for DRT serving the lost links mentioned in the previous paragraph, were unsuccessful in 2020.

- 4.3.12 With limited resources, many bus services are inter-worked with the same vehicles, thus potentially building delays throughout the day. Services based in Newbury have been retimed from September 2021 to try and address this.
- 4.3.13 On schooldays most morning peak buses continue through Newbury to serve St Bartholomew’s and Park House secondary schools, and Newbury College two miles south of the centre. This does require a number of codes and footnotes in timetables which we strive to present as clearly as possible. This is difficult because each service operates a slightly different route to reduce congestion outside each of the educational establishments.
- 4.3.14 In recent years, and in particular since 2016, the Council has found that it has had to start operating a number of services itself using accessible minibuses, as the cost of provision from bus operators would have meant that these services were unaffordable. Whilst these (and the other section 22 operated services) are usually operated on limited timetables, the Council has recently restarted Saturday operation of service 47, and is awaiting delivery of a new 31-seat low-floor vehicle, due in January 2022, to improve accessibility further.

4.4 **Funding for bus services**

4.4.1 As can be seen from Table 4.3, services are financially supported from a variety of sources. Table 4.4 shows how much is required on top of bus fare revenue for services to operate in the district. The devolved Local Transport Authority Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG) of £137,099 helps to fund existing contracted bus services. In addition to the almost £2m invested in local bus services each year, section 22 operations are being operated on a not-for-profit basis, and much of their costs are covered by grants and other donations. A further £145,000 per annum will be required to maintain operation of the Newbury to Thatcham 1a/1c services shown in Table 4.2.

Funding Source		Estimated amount each year (£000s)
West Berkshire Council	Contracted bus services	£720
	In-house section 22 operations	£350
	Concessionary Fares reimbursement	£460
Total West Berkshire Council		£1,530
West Berkshire Town & Parish Councils		£10
Developer contributions inc. Greenham Common Trust		£210
Neighbouring local authorities		£50
Total all subsidy		£1,800

Table 4.4 – Financial contributions to bus services

4.4.2 As part of the Government’s [Better Deal for Bus Users](#), launched in September 2019, the Council were awarded £108,507 to improve current bus services, restore lost links, and support new bus services. The timing of this support coincided with the start of the pandemic, and it was not appropriate to start additional services when existing routes were struggling. Our proposed improvements are included within the BSIP, but focussed around marketing, recovery of services, additional weekend and evening services, and new links, although it was recognised at the time that the funding would be insufficient for most of these improvements.

4.5 **Roads and reliability**

4.5.1 The Council keeps a log of congestion hotspots in the district which have a disproportionate effect on bus services. It regularly holds internal Network Management meetings, and external Highways and Utility Co-ordination meetings to minimise disruption on the network, and resolve ongoing issues.

4.5.2 Some of these hotspots can be predictable, and particularly affect the peaks. Others can be intermittent, for example caused by inconsiderate parking or issues on the M4 motorway. The nature of the road network in West Berkshire can make it difficult to introduce solutions that promote reliable bus services without causing worse problems elsewhere.

4.5.3 The current hotspots have been identified as:

- Andover Road, Newbury
- Arlington Business Park, Theale
- Atherton Road, Hungerford
- Bartholomew Street, Newbury (between Pound Street and Market Street)
- Bath Road, Calcot (M4 roundabout to Reading Borough boundary)
- Bulpit Lane, Hungerford
- Carters Rise, Calcot (between Kennet Valley School and Albury Gardens)
- Glendale Avenue, Wash Common
- High Street, Kintbury (approx. 50m approach to Kintbury Square)
- Holt Road, Kintbury (between Harold Road and Newbury Street)
- Inkpen Road, Kintbury (approach to High Street)
- Kiln Road, Newbury
- London Road, Newbury (whole stretch of road)
- Newbury Street, Kintbury (west of the surgery)
- Priory Avenue, Hungerford (between Bulpit Lane and Priory Road)
- Shaw Road, Newbury
- Valley Road, Newbury

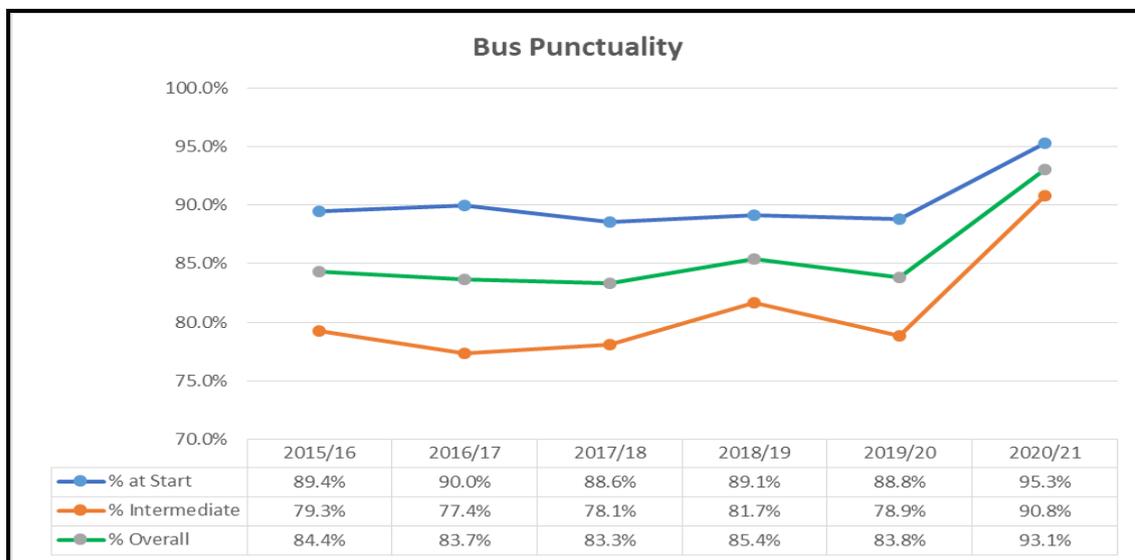


Figure 4.4 – Bus gate at Park Way bridge, Newbury © Google

4.5.4 Bus priority measures are limited in West Berkshire, and have historically been managed with bus gates, enabling more direct routes for bus services, and preventing through car traffic. The current bus gates are:

- Park Way bridge, Newbury, enforced by camera
- Two sump-busters in Calcot – Underwood Road to Carters Rise, and Pollards Way / The Chase
- Sainsbury’s Calcot, allowing buses to exit stop to gain access to Pincents Lane for IKEA
- Rising bollards between Urquhart Road and Braemore Close, Thatcham.

4.5.5 A key area of Transport Focus’s recent [‘getting passengers back on buses’](#) research was improving punctuality. The graph below shows punctuality in West Berkshire since 2015, which has been better than average when compared to other non-metropolitan areas in England over recent years. It has remained fairly consistent at around 83% to 84% until rising during the pandemic as a result of less traffic and fewer passengers.



Key: % shown are classed as ‘On time’, defined as between 1 minute early and 5 minutes 59 seconds late).

Figure 4.5 – Bus punctuality

4.6 **Bus infrastructure**

4.6.1 There are 1,043 bus stops in West Berkshire, shown on the Council’s [online map](#), below. We record the facilities at each stop (including whether they have a shelter, display case, Kassel kerb). Roadside information is maintained by the Council, or operators where they run commercial services. This includes providing information and temporary stops when affected by road works.

4.6.2 Bus shelters are owned and maintained by Parish and Town Councils, with limited scope for advertising due to the rural nature of the area. There can be a reluctance of some Parish Councils to take on ownership and liability of shelters. There is a notable lack of shelters in some parts of the district, for example in Burghfield and Mortimer, even at the most well used stops.

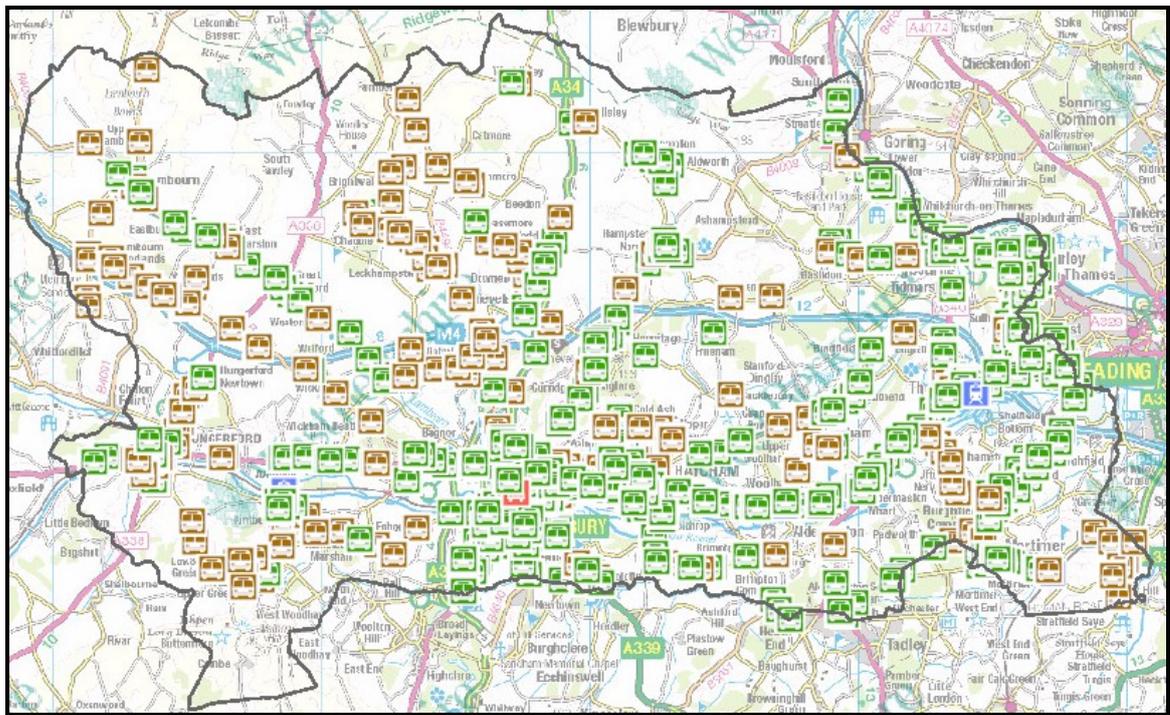


Figure 4.6 – Bus stop locations

- 4.6.3 The Council owns and maintains the Wharf Bus Station in Newbury, which opened in December 2018. This replaced the former facility in Market Street, to allow for redevelopment (see 4.1.7), and provides a more modern feel to the waiting environment.
- 4.7 **Car parking provision**
- 4.7.1 The Council is responsible for 2,737 spaces in 24 off-street car parks (in Newbury, Thatcham, Hungerford, Lambourn, Theale and Pangbourne), and 307 spaces in 11 on-street parking areas (in Newbury, Thatcham and Hungerford). It also manages 16 resident parking zones covering 98 roads. There is limited other paid-for parking with the main exception being the 550 space Parkway Shopping Centre car park in Newbury. Free parking is available at supermarkets in Newbury, Thatcham, Hungerford and Calcot, and other out-of-town retail areas including Newbury Retail Park and IKEA in Calcot. Parking charges vary to suit the purpose at each car park.
- 4.7.2 Charges in car parks in Newbury town centre are generally £1.50 an hour with incremental increases for longer periods. On-street parking is generally free for 30 minutes, then starts at £1 for an hour. Season tickets are offered at £350 per quarter. In Hungerford the hourly rate begins at 80p, while Thatcham residents are offered more free parking in certain places for shorter periods of one to two hours.
- 4.7.3 The Council's current net budget for parking and blue badges £1.7m, although with the change in behaviour since the pandemic commenced, it is currently forecast to be £1m more due to lost income for 2021/22. Parking charges, similar to bus fares, have remained at the same rates for a few years. Some short-term parking is available and cheaper than the bus, however generally it is priced more expensively than a single person's return bus fare.

4.7.4 The Council is about to commence a thorough review of parking, and develop a Parking Strategy over the next few months. This review will consider the balance between the need for parking and the implications for developing bus travel in the district.

4.8 **Other transport**

4.8.1 There is no current evidence to identify how well bus services are used in comparison to other modes of transport in West Berkshire, however the 2011 [Census](#) does provide some information on travel to work. With the bus being used by only 4% of those working, there is scope to increase use.

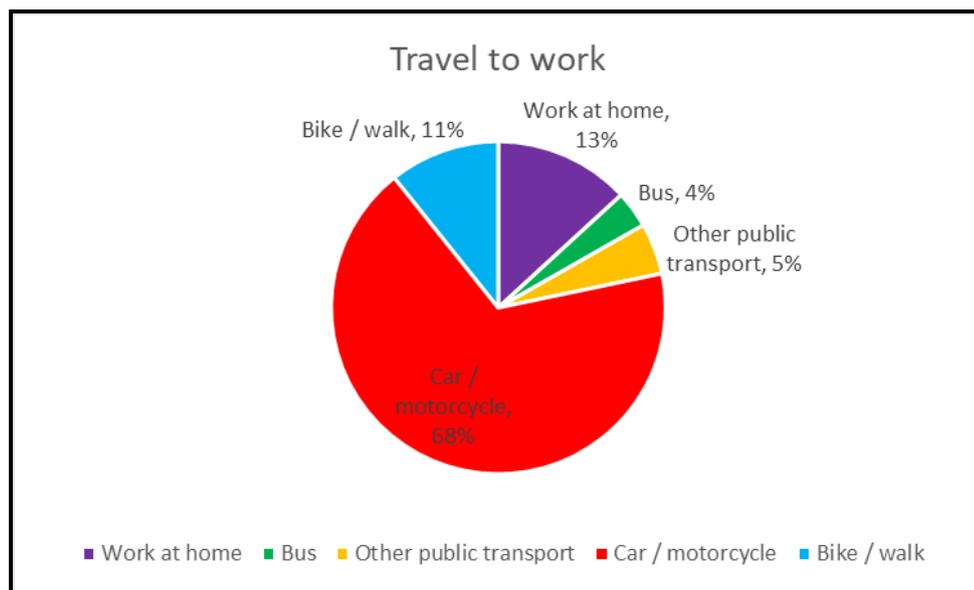


Figure 4.7 – Modal share

4.8.2 West Berkshire has 10 railway stations (shown in Figure 4.3), on three lines into Reading, all served by Great Western Railway. Most stations are on the Reading – Newbury – West Country line, with Pangbourne also linked to Oxford, and Mortimer to Basingstoke. Bus services operate near, but not directly to, most stations. Newbury Station is served directly by routes 4 and 6, but additional vehicles would be required to extend further services to the station.

4.8.3 Due to the difficulties in providing cost-effective transport within the rurality of West Berkshire, the Council has encouraged and supported community transport. The Council has been supporting fourteen groups, including the Handybus network, providing grant funding to them since its inception in 1988. All groups, with the exception of Readibus, are volunteer based and all operate a range of car schemes and/or minibus group travel. Transport has to be booked in advance. Every part of the district is covered by at least one scheme.

4.8.4 Taxis and private hire vehicles fulfil an important role as part of an integrated passenger transport network in West Berkshire, since they are able to provide services in situations where other transport services are not available, including a 24-hour door-to-door service.

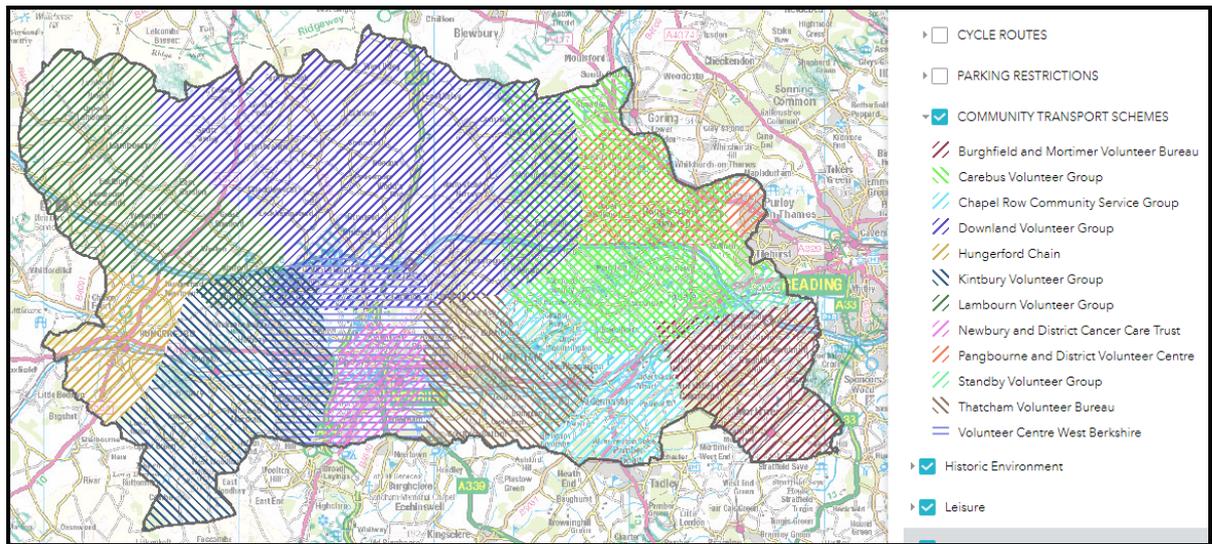


Figure 4.8 – Community transport provision

4.9 Fares

- 4.9.1 Most bus fares within West Berkshire are based on the traditional idea of fare stages at regular intervals along the route, with fares increasing dependent upon the number of fare stages passed through. Adult and child tickets are available, as well as singles, returns, day and period tickets. In the Eastern Area, Reading Buses use a zonal fare system, with a low-priced day ticket taking the place of return fares. The maximum age for child tickets can also vary between operators and is not easy to determine for the occasional user.
- 4.9.2 Within Newbury / Thatcham, fares are similar to those in the Eastern Area, although the maximum travel distance is lower. There is also a slight difference between the fares on commercial services and the supported network. Whilst day and period tickets are available, the multi-operator Connect ticket is expensive for travel in Newbury / Thatcham, as it covers most of West Berkshire. The multi-operator tickets are not valid on Stagecoach services.

Area		Maximum Distance	Adult Single	Adult Return	Child Single	Child Return
Newbury / Thatcham	Supported	2½ miles	£2.00	£3.50	£1.40	£2.00
	Commercial	3 miles	£2.50	£4.00*	£1.50	£2.50*
Eastern Area		4 miles	£2.00	£4.00*	£1.50	£2.70*
Rural West Berkshire		12 miles	£4.00	£5.60^	£2.80	£3.90^

Key: * -Day ticket price, no return available. ^ -Day tickets are £6.00 Adult, £4.00 Child.

Table 4.5 – Bus fares

- 4.9.3 Whilst rural fares do offer good value for the distance travelled, there is inconsistency in fares for similar distances on different supported services.
- 4.9.4 The Council operates the statutory English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS), and no longer offers any discretionary extras such as companions, extended hours, or other modes. It has almost 20,000 passes in circulation, of which approximately 5-6% are disabled cards. For those pass holders wishing to use services 1a/1c, 103, or Jet Black 1 between Newbury and Colthrop Turn before 9.30am, the bus companies offer a discounted ticket. This discount is not available elsewhere within West Berkshire.

4.9.5 For those wishing to use both bus and train, PlusBus tickets are available for onward bus travel from Newbury and Reading stations, covering the two urban areas of West Berkshire. Where travel is possible by bus between two places with rail stations, the bus is always the cheapest option. On average a single fare is 61% more expensive by rail, reducing to only 19% more for a return ticket at peak times. Off-peak, whilst a single bus fare is slightly cheaper than rail, a return trip is better value by rail.

4.9.6 Information on the methods of payment available for bus fares is not always clear on operators' websites, even though most now have the ability to pay with cash, contactless bank card, smartcard, app ticket, or pre-purchased period or multi-journey tickets.

4.10 **Vehicles**

4.10.1 Around 70 buses are required to deliver all the bus services in West Berkshire, including the cross boundary services each day, as well as an additional eight section 22 vehicles. The average age of the fleet, from information supplied by the Reading Buses, who account for 60 of the vehicles, is 7.9 years. [DfT Bus Statistics Table 0605](#) records a national average of 8.8 years for non-metropolitan areas of England.

4.10.2 Based on information from the Reading Buses fleet list (September 2021), 97% of the buses in use in West Berkshire are at least Euro V emission standards, with 84% being Euro VI or zero-emission (ZE). Reading Buses have been upgrading engines and in April 2021, only 88% were at least Euro V. Nine bio-methane (ultra-low carbon) and one ZE electric bus operate in Reading. Although we do not have specific information on all buses operated, it is believed to be a similar position with other operators.

Emission Standard	Number	Percentage
Zero Emission	1	2%
Euro VI bio-methane	6	10%
Euro VI	43	72%
Euro V bio-methane	3	5%
Euro V	5	8%
Euro IV	2	3%
Euro III or below	0	0%
Total	60	100%

Table 4.6 – Reading Buses vehicle emissions

4.11 **Passengers**

4.11.1 The following graph shows the number of passengers boarding local bus services in West Berkshire between 2009/10 and 2019/20. The trend has been relatively positive, albeit with a drop in 2016/17 and 2017/18. This was largely due to a reduction in Council spending on supported bus services which considerably reduced the supported bus network between July and September 2016, together with removing all discretionary add-ons to ENCTS. Even with this drop the number of trips in 2019/20 was still almost 10% higher than in 2010/11, compared to a national drop of [12% \(or 16% outside London\)](#).

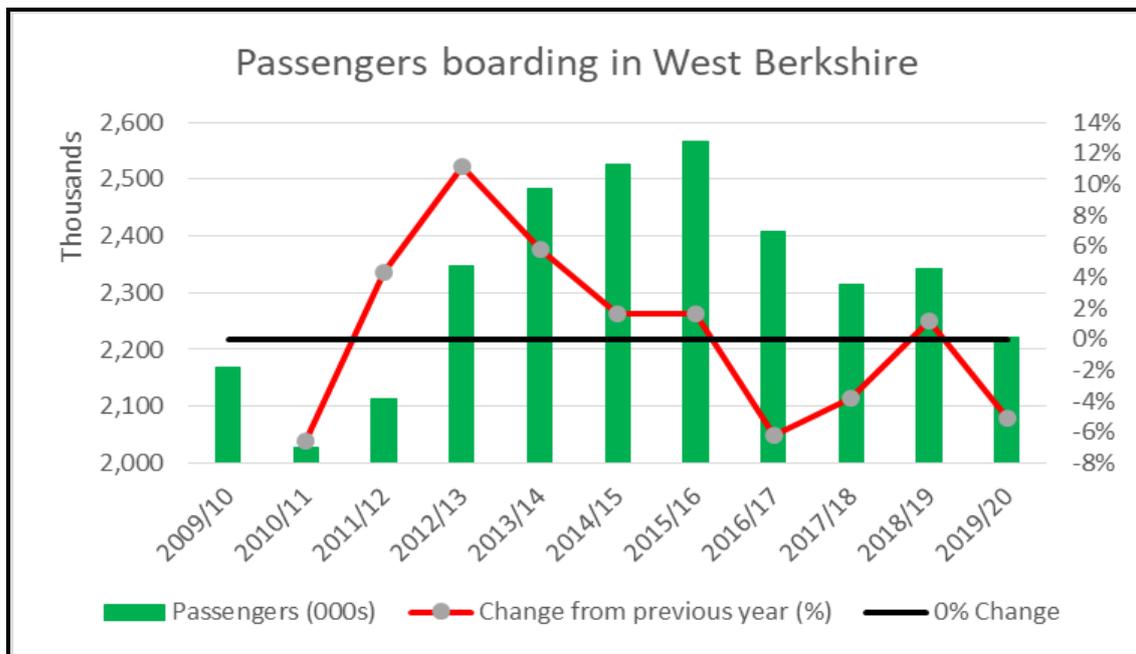


Figure 4.9 –Passengers boarding buses (compiled from Operator data)

4.11.2 2019/20 was affected by the start of the pandemic, however this is more prominent in 2020/21 when patronage dropped to 827,782, some 60% below the previous year (not shown in the graph).

4.11.3 Other reasons for changes in passenger numbers can be attributed positively to the Reading Buses services in the Eastern Area (strong customer focus, daily operation, higher frequencies, longer operating hours, reasonable fares, excellent publicity, fleet investment), or negatively to:

- Withdrawal of duplicated Newbury/Thatcham services when Reading Buses acquired Newbury & District.
- Congestion, causing unreliability to bus times. New developments around the town centre have particularly affected Newbury in recent years.
- The growth of on-line shopping and loss of some popular shops, rendering visits to town centres less necessary / appealing.
- The perceived low cost of driving a car, coupled with readily available parking in our town centres.
- Increases in the numbers of people working from home.

4.12 **Information**

4.12.1 The Council has a long history of producing quality information regarding public transport, and its [Travel Guide](#) is considered to be Outstanding by the renowned timetable expert [Barry Doe](#). Prior to the pandemic, printed copies were very popular. The current version (September 2021) is online only, but it is expected that printed versions will be available again from 2022. The Public Transport map, has not been printed for a number of years, but is also available [online](#). Travel Guides are usually made available in Council offices, libraries, West Berkshire Hospital (Patient Information Point), some Town and Parish Councils, and on board some buses.

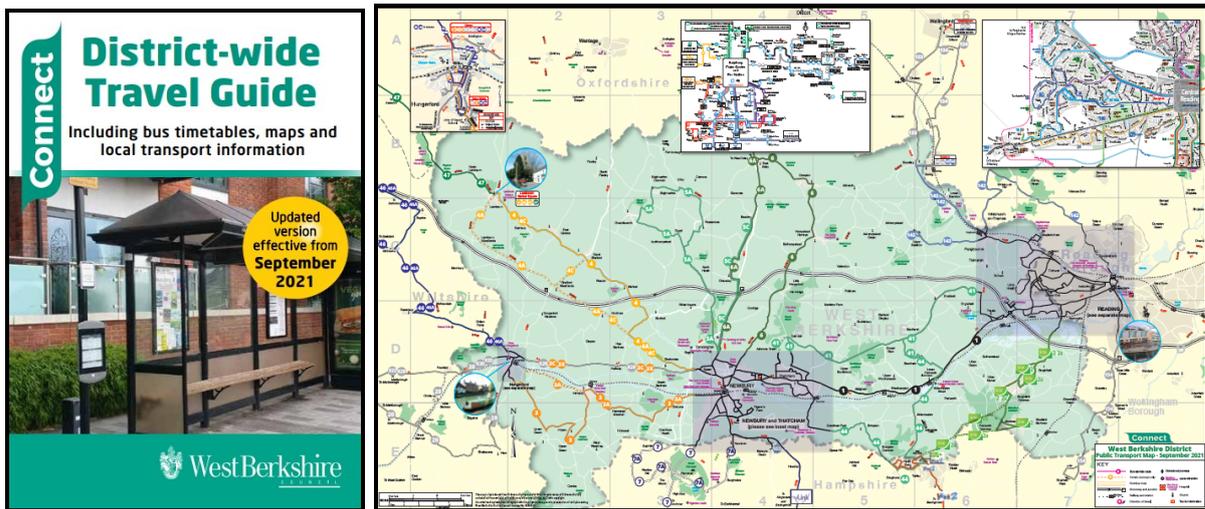


Figure 4.10 – District Wide Travel Guide / Public Transport Map – Both September 2021

4.12.2 All services are shown on National Traveline, and operators submit their data to the Bus Operator Data Service (BODS). It is not clear if section 22 operations, other than the Council, are currently included as there is no legal requirement for these. Next stop announcement systems are on all Newbury & District, Reading Buses, and Stagecoach buses. All bus companies use either Facebook or Twitter for live updates, the latter also used by the Council. Most also have a user-friendly app for passengers.

4.12.3 There are eleven Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) screens in the district, ten of which were installed by the Council, but managed by Reading Buses. The eleventh, provided by Papercast in Park Way, is a long-standing trial installation, and still managed by the Council. They are at the following locations:

- Calcot: Beansheaf Stores, Charrington Road (x1), Swanholm Gardens (x1), Sainsbury's (x1)
- Newbury: Park Way (x2), The Wharf Bus Station (x1)
- Thatcham: Broadway (x2)
- Theale: The Crown (x1)
- Tilehurst: Overdown Road / Tring Road (x1)
- West Berkshire Hospital (x1)

4.13 **Barriers to improvement**

4.13.1 The pandemic continues to have an adverse impact on passenger numbers. By mid-September 2021, patronage and revenue on the Newbury contracted network were around 30% below the same period two years previously. Some of the factors preventing use include:

- Initial government messages to avoid public transport and continuing anxiety amongst some ENCTS passholders
- A wide acceptance amongst employers that employees can continue to work from home
- The rise in internet shopping
- Closure of shops and restaurants – in Newbury anchor stores Debenhams and John Lewis have both closed for good

- Frequency of existing services
- No bus services in many rural villages
- Bus fares perceived to be high

4.14 **Bus use survey**

4.14.1 In August 2021, the Council conducted a [survey](#) to identify current satisfaction with a range of issues, as well as gain insight into what people would like in order to use bus services, or use them more often. 764 submissions were received, of which 712 were validated as full responses. This was an excellent response, far exceeding those from previous consultations on cuts to bus services in 2015 (414) and 2016 (399). All data shown is based on the responses, but more work is required to analyse some of this in detail, for example how removing those with free travel affects the data.

4.14.2 A third of respondents use the bus at least weekly, although 24% never use them, with 45% of users travelling at least as often as, or more so than, before the pandemic, although this is not borne out by operator data. Two thirds of users catch the bus in the morning, dropping to 40% in the afternoons. A further 36% travel at differing times. The bus is most used for shopping (71%), appointments (54%), seeing friends (49%) and days out (39%). The relatively low figures for work (21%) and education (9%) are likely caused by changing working habits during the pandemic, and the very low response rate amongst under 18s (1.5%).

4.14.3 One question asked why people do not use the bus, or do not use it more regularly, the highest results were:

- 68% - buses are not frequent enough / do not run when I need them
- 60% - easier / more convenient by car
- 48% - buses do not go (directly) where they want to go
- 43% - quicker by car
- 25% - journeys take too long by bus

4.14.4 Two questions asked what would encourage more use, and any suggestions for improvements. Unsurprisingly, the same issues were common to both. The most popular call for a new route was between Lambourn and Hungerford, which stopped in 2016.

Issue identified	Encourage More Use	Suggested Improvements
More frequent services	47%	-
More regular service	-	32%
Being on a bus route	18%	-
More destinations	16%	22%
Cheaper services	11%	5%
Later / evening buses	8%	8%
Know the times of buses	7%	4%
Better bus / rail connections	-	4%
Weekend services	4%	4%
Pandemic over	4%	-
More direct routes	4%	4%

Table 4.7 – What would encourage more use or be a useful improvement?

- 4.14.5 A surprising number of current users wanted buses to rail stations for onward travel (61%), with favoured stations being Newbury (56%), Hungerford (22%), Thatcham (21%), Theale (16%), and Mortimer (11%).
- 4.14.6 On the subject of a day ticket valid on all buses, 62% thought this would be a good idea. Although most did not give an opinion on the cost of such a ticket, 17% did not want to pay more than £4, with a further 14% willing to pay up to £7, and 3% believing it should cost even more.
- 4.14.7 A further question, aimed specifically at current bus users, asked about satisfaction with a range of factors. The net satisfaction ranged from 72% positive for drivers' customer care skills, to 18% negative for current bus timetables, although this was the only factor that had a negative net satisfaction.

Attribute of Current Bus Services	Net Satisfaction
Drivers' customer care skills	72.2
Cleanliness of the buses	65.9
Comfort on the buses	60.1
Time keeping / reliability of the buses	58.3
Time on bus to complete journey	53.0
In journey information (e.g. next stop announcements)	44.2
Choice of ways to buy ticket	43.7
Facilities at your usual bus stops	34.1
Provision of bus information (printed / online / at stop / apps)	32.9
Choice of ticket types available	32.8
Environmental friendliness of the buses (fuel type)	31.3
Cost of bus fare	24.7
Current bus routes	21.8
Response to road closures / works	20.6
Current bus timetables (times / days of operation / frequency)	-18.0

Note: Net satisfaction is the difference between those that were satisfied or very satisfied, and those that were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Table 4.8 – Net satisfaction of bus users

- 4.14.8 From this, it is clear that the current times of buses, including how often they run, is the biggest issue. This is not unexpected due to the rural nature of the district and its low population densities, especially outside of the towns.
- 4.14.9 One of the misgivings we have with the survey results, is that we had a poor response rate from younger people. Those aged up to 24 only accounted for 4.1% of the responses, and those aged 25 to 34, a further 5.4%. In contrast, those aged 66 and over made up over 43% of the responses. A couple of positives though, is that two-thirds of respondents would recommend bus use, and 20% would like to join a user group focussing on bus travel.

5. **Headline targets**

5.1 ***How and why?***

5.1.1 Between the Council and the bus operators, a lot of information is available regarding bus services. This can be from a variety of sources, including:

- Ticket machines – record how many people use the services, what they pay, where they get on
- Apps / websites – can record how many visits to specific pages
- Surveys – can obtain information on satisfaction, changes people would like to see

5.1.2 The BSIP must set targets for journey times, service reliability, passenger levels, and customer satisfaction. Targets will be set for 2025 and 2030, and progress against these targets will be reported every six months. Some of these targets will be for the whole of West Berkshire, whilst others will relate to more specific localities or times. As this is the first year of identifying many of the targets, those set for 2030 are provisional, and may be amended in future years as initiatives are implemented. All targets are shown in section 8.

5.2 ***Journey time and reliability***

5.2.1 Whilst data is available to measure journey times and the reliability of specific services, this is not something that has been regularly monitored within West Berkshire. The exception is the supported bus network emanating from Newbury which recorded punctuality by service since the contract started in 2016. It is not therefore possible for us to determine journey time targets at this stage, but these will be developed during the next year. Targets will be based on deviation from scheduled journey times and an increase in the journey miles per hour.

5.2.2 Figure 4.5 shows current bus punctuality, based on the average of buses departing on time and being on time at intermediate stops, and is already reported to the Department for Transport (DfT) each year. This has been fairly consistent for a number of years (excluding the increased reliability during the pandemic), but we will strive to improve this in the longer term. This reliability has also been consistently above the [national average](#), and that for non-metropolitan areas for more than a decade. We have set an overall target for reliability (bus punctuality), and by next year we will break this down to provide a separate target for the Eastern Area.

5.2.3 Over the next year, we will identify those services that perform below average and seek to address the problems that are causing this. It may be that resolving issues on specific journeys, such as at peak times, or possibly those just after 9.30am when ENCTS pass holders begin travelling, could improve overall reliability of services. Next year's BSIP will therefore identify more specific targets in this area than we are currently able to provide.

5.2.4 We are already aware that it is often factors outside the control of the bus operator or the Council that impact on reliability and journey times, such as emergency roadworks, or accidents, particularly events on the M4, which can rapidly lead to gridlock on West Berkshire roads. As part of ongoing monitoring, we will seek information on the most likely reasons for any abnormal delays.

5.2.5 Although our recent survey showed a net satisfaction of 58% with reliability, and 53% with time on the bus, improvements can be made. These include:

- Additional buses / drivers to allow for congestion
- Increase off-bus ticket sales
- Increased use of non-cash purchasing on board (e.g. tap and go, contactless bank cards, smartcards, apps, multi-journey tickets)
- Bus priority at congestion hotspots
- Improved safety at accident black spots
- Better management of road works
- More direct services

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30
Journey time	Not recorded	Not recorded	To be developed over next 12 months	To be developed over next 24 months
Reliability				
Start	89.1%	88.8%	90%	92%
Overall	85.4%	83.8%	85%	87%

Table 5.1 – Journey time and reliability targets

5.3 ***Passenger growth and customer satisfaction***

5.3.1 Due to the impact of the pandemic, it is considered pragmatic to respond to the challenge of recovering passenger numbers in the early years, before seeking to deliver growth over the longer term. The first two years (2022 to 2024) will therefore focus on delivering interventions that are likely to stabilise and recover patronage, especially with central government pandemic support expected to end in March 2022. This will not prevent us looking at improvements to the bus network during this time.

5.3.2 From 2025, patronage projections will account for further growth beyond the 2019/20 level. Separate targets will be set for the Eastern Area as this is where most growth has been in recent years. We will seek to balance new services and improved frequencies with changing consumer habits, such as online shopping and working from home.

5.3.3 The Council takes part in the National Highways & Transport Network (NHT) survey every two years (in the odd years). A questionnaire is sent out to approximately 3,500 households within the district, from which around 20-30% are returned. There is no distinction between bus, and non-bus, users. It is not clear how the Council scored for all measures in recent surveys. Data for the 2021 survey is still being analysed. Our target for satisfaction with local bus services for 2025 is 62% and 64% for 2030. This continues the slow build achieved since 2015, whilst being ambitious in an area where many do not consider using buses due to where they live or work.

Satisfaction	2015	2017	2019
Public Transport (overall)	56% (60%)	57% (unknown)	60% (61%)
Local Bus Services	59% (61%)	Unknown	60% (60%)

Key: Shows West Berkshire score (with the National Average in brackets)

Table 5.2 – NHT satisfaction score

- 5.3.4 Over the next 12 months, we will establish a measure of satisfaction that can be obtained through our own Council consultations. This will allow better subdivision of a number of factors, and help us increase the net satisfaction of those attributes highlighted in Table 4.8. We will also look at the measures identified in the [Transport Focus bus survey](#) to see if they are relevant questions for West Berkshire.

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30
Passenger numbers				
Eastern Area (est.)	1,020,320	968,025	1,000,000	1,050,000
Whole of WBC	2,342,715	2,222,530	2,300,000	2,500,000
Average passenger satisfaction				
NHT survey	60%	n/a	62%	64%
Council survey	No survey	No survey	Tbc	Tbc

Table 5.3 – Passenger growth and customer satisfaction targets

5.4 **Other targets**

- 5.4.1 Environmental improvements are important in West Berkshire, and we have therefore set targets for engine emissions for buses used in the district. Whilst we recognise that zero emissions is the ideal, we have to consider the economics too, and therefore our targets are designed around improving engine emissions in the interim.
- 5.4.2 The common theme from the recent survey was that buses should be more frequent. We will set targets relating to the percentage of the population being within 300 metres of a bus stop (or 500m in the rural areas) for different frequency bus services.

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30
Other measures				
Vehicle Emissions	Not recorded	Not recorded	All vehicles to be at least Euro V	All vehicles to be at least Euro VI
Access to frequent bus service	Not recorded	Not recorded	Tbc	Tbc

Table 5.4 – Other targets

6. Delivery

6.1 *What we are hoping to achieve*

- 6.1.1 If we are serious in our attempts to make bus travel a more attractive option in West Berkshire, in particular for those that do not currently use it, there are a number of initiatives that we would strive to implement. This section includes our aspirations, although we recognise that some will need to be given more priority than others, and that will be highlighted in our funding bid. Most of these will require external funding to make them a reality, and to allow them to become embedded, however they have been included in the hope that this funding will be forthcoming. Where aspirations refer to bus operations, this excludes those run under section 22 permits unless otherwise stated. Delivery priorities and scheme costs are shown in the associated funding document.
- 6.1.2 Cross-boundary services form a vital element of the overall offer for bus passengers in our area, particularly within Berkshire which consists of six unitary authorities. These services provide opportunities for our residents to access a wider range of employment, education and leisure facilities, alongside attracting commuters and visitors into the borough from the wider county and beyond.
- 6.1.3 We will continue to work closely with our partner local authorities, both through the development of the proposals set out within this document and the subsequent establishment and delivery of Enhanced Partnership arrangements with local operators. This collaborative working will build on existing arrangements such as the Berkshire Local Transport Body and Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum, which have co-ordinated and overseen the delivery of significant bus enhancements in recent years, including new mass rapid transit corridors and park & ride facilities, and the Thames Valley and North Hants study.
- 6.1.4 The on-going coordination of plans for enhanced services will focus on ensuring key destinations throughout the county are well served by high-quality bus services, both through the delivery of key new cross-boundary bus priority measures and associated service level enhancements. In addition, we are committed to achieving a more integrated sustainable transport network in Berkshire through enhanced connectivity with rail services and facilities for walking and cycling.
- 6.1.5 We are collectively focused on initially building back levels of bus patronage following the reduction during the pandemic, alongside attracting new passengers to subsequently further grow levels of bus usage. This is vital part of achieving our wider objectives relating to the economic recovery, decarbonisation and the delivery of housing through the creation of sustainable communities. It also forms part of the current discussions on the potential for a county devolution deal with the government.

6.2 *Service frequency*

- 6.2.1 Tables 4.7 and 4.8 clearly highlight that this is the most important factor we need to address to improve satisfaction amongst existing users, as the only area identified with a negative net satisfaction in the recent survey. Figure 4.3 shows the current bus frequencies. The Eastern Area already benefits from services operating to higher frequencies, with early morning, evening and Sunday services, so many of the proposed changes are based elsewhere in West Berkshire.

6.2.2 Our plans in this area are to increase frequencies on the services in the table below by 2025. We would also introduce journeys later than 7pm, and introduce Sunday services outside of the Reading Buses commercial network.

Current frequency	Proposed frequency	Services
Every 12 minutes	Every 10 minutes	26 (peak)
Every 15 minutes	Every 10/12 minutes	26 (off-peak)
Every 20 minutes	Every 15 minutes	16
Every 30 minutes	Every 20 minutes	Jet Black 1, Lime 2/a
Every hour	Every 30 minutes	1a, 1c, 2, 8, 9, 15 (off-peak), 103, The Link
Every 2 hours	Every hour	3, 4, 6, 143 (Pangbourne to Reading)
Daily / Less frequent	Every 2 hours	5c, 6a, 41, 44
Daily / Less frequent	Demand-responsive	5, 5a

Table 6.1 – Ideal frequencies

6.2.3 Specific changes we would introduce include:

- **The Link:** An increased frequency is supported by both the operator, and championed by the Transport for South East Inner Orbital Study. As well as a half-hourly frequency, we would like to see later evening journeys and a Sunday service.
- **Lime 2:** Increased frequency, especially during the evening peak period, with a possible Sunday service for Mortimer.
- **Jet Black 1:** Increased late evening journeys (particularly between Newbury and Thatcham) are supported by the operator, and would benefit the night time economy. Initial enhancements would be to Friday and Saturday evenings.
- **Pangbourne-Reading:** An improved frequency between Reading and Pangbourne, but this would be dependent upon a bus turning circle being provided in Pangbourne. This could either be an enhancement of service 143, or an extension of service 16 from Purley.
- **Newbury contracted network (2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9):** Because of limited resource availability, these services are inter-worked by five buses, restricting frequencies and making departure times less convenient for passengers on some services. We would also seek to run later journeys, at least on Fridays and Saturdays.
- **Reading services:** Restoration of recently reduced frequencies.
- **103:** This is currently a Monday to Friday service, financially supported by Greenham Common Trust. A Saturday service would be useful, and would also allow for a review of this route and others in south Newbury. There are several attractors at Greenham Park, including the Base café and Arts Centre, the Peace Garden (established by the Greenham Peace Women), and access to Greenham Common, now a designated public parkland.
- **Sunday services:** We would like to introduce a Sunday service, at least within the Newbury / Thatcham area.

6.3 New services

6.3.1 Whilst improving frequencies and times / days of operation will be of benefit where bus services exist, it will do nothing for the areas where they do not. The rural nature of much of West Berkshire, and the relatively small rural settlements have

led to many areas losing their bus links over time. In addition, there are definite benefits in linking key areas with fast, direct buses, especially along the north-south corridor where no direct rail links exist.

6.3.2 Areas where we see the need for new services include:

- **Newbury to Harwell / Didcot:** A feasibility study has been commissioned jointly by West Berkshire and Oxfordshire County Councils. The proposed service has the support of Laura Farris, MP for Newbury; Harwell Campus; the Thames Valley LEP; Newbury College; local bus operators; and both Councils. The current public transport option from Newbury to Harwell (14 miles and 20 minutes by car) involves two trains (Newbury to Reading, Reading to Didcot), and then a bus to Harwell, a journey of at least 90 minutes. Harwell is a 'nearby' innovation centre of science and technology of national importance. Harwell is well connected to Oxford, Wantage and Didcot, and the link to Newbury could be achieved by extending one of these services, thus improving accessibility to a number of work bases in south Oxfordshire for West Berkshire residents.
- **Vodafone staff buses:** There has been a long-standing desire from the public for these services to be included within the local bus network. With the pandemic changing working patterns, and Vodafone looking to maximise the value of its services, this is an ideal time to pursue this. The only service currently running is between Newbury and their headquarters. A new housing development adjacent to this would benefit from these buses being available filling reverse flows in the business movements, and discussions are ongoing.
- **Mortimer Station:** The station is a little way from the village, and only has a small car park, leading people to park on the rural approach roads. A peak-time shuttle from Mortimer, Beech Hill and other nearby settlements would improve this situation. The station is also included in our DRT plans.
- **Thatcham Station:** This station is similarly remote from most Thatcham residents. A minibus service linking the station to north Thatcham is seen as a high priority.
- **Rural areas:** Within the more rural areas of the district, where no services have operated for a number of years, we are investigating DRT options. This includes a Lambourn to Hungerford option, which was popular in our survey.

6.4 *Demand responsive services*

6.4.1 We have commissioned a study into demand responsive transport (DRT) within West Berkshire. This will give us a more accurate understanding of the resources required, including the technology available, and the level of service that we should be providing. The first two areas listed below were the subject of unsuccessful recent bids to the Rural Mobility Fund.

6.4.2 The areas we are looking at include:

- **A. North East:** This includes the villages of Aldworth, Ashampstead, Bradfield, Bucklebury, Englefield, Frilsham, Hampstead Norreys, Stanford Dingley, Tidmarsh, Woolhampton and Yattendon. Many of these villages have no bus service.

- **B. South East:** This includes the villages of Aldermaston, Beech Hill, Padworth, Stratfield Mortimer and Sulhampstead. Current bus services in this area (where they exist) are not suitable for many journey purposes.
- **C. North West:** Conversion of existing services 5 and 5a to villages including Brightwalton, Chaddleworth, Leckhampstead and Peasemore would allow for wider coverage, to include Farnborough, Fawley, and Winterbourne which currently have no bus service, as well as provide more journey options than currently exist. Ideally, a Saturday service can also be added.
- **D. North East / Oxfordshire border:** serving those North East villages north of the M4 motorway (Aldworth, Ashampstead, Hampstead Norreys, Lower Basildon, Streatley, Tidmarsh, Upper Basildon and Yattendon), this service would be most beneficial if a turning circle is provided in Pangbourne. The existing 143 could then focus its resource on the main Pangbourne to Reading corridor, with DRT used to link in with this, and increase the journey opportunities.
- **E. East:** Operating between Lambourn and Hungerford, this includes the villages of Eastbury, East Garston, Great Shefford, Hungerford Newtown, Lambourn Woodlands, Shefford Woodlands, Wickham, Weston and Woodlands St Mary, replacing a service that last operated in 2016.

6.5 **Bus priority**

- 6.5.1 The road network in West Berkshire does not lend itself easily to the installation of bus lanes, and therefore the focus to date has been on bus gates in different forms to give clear advantages to buses over car use. In Newbury, for example, there are limited north-south routes for local traffic. Northbrook Street through the shopping centre is pedestrianised for most of the day; Park Way has a bridge over the Kennet & Avon Canal which is restricted to local buses, taxis and bicycles; leaving only the A339 for general traffic. Any delays along this route can quickly spread to nearby roads, and block the A4 in both directions towards Thatcham and Speen.
- 6.5.2 Paragraph 4.5.3 shows the currently identified congestion hotspots throughout the district, and some of these have been on the list for a long time, with no obvious solution. Additional funding would allow us to examine solutions in more detail at these points, as well as their implementation. Most solutions are likely to be small scale highways works rather than specific bus priority.
- 6.5.3 Areas of bus priority that we wish to pursue include:
- **Pangbourne:** There has been a long-held ambition to increase bus services between Pangbourne and Reading, as for many the station is too far away for them to give up their car. Unfortunately, there is no obvious place to turn a bus within Pangbourne, as the buildings are close to the road; the residential roads have limited off-street parking; and the low railway bridge on Station Road prevents double deck vehicles accessing the station. One possible solution is to create a bus turning circle through Station Road car park, although a feasibility study will need to be undertaken, including the impacts of any lost parking spaces. This would allow for an increased frequency on service 143, or an extension of service 16 from Purley, and give a greater business case to DRT solution D in paragraph 6.4.2.

- **A4 Bath Road:** The commercial Jet Black 1 can experience delays along the A4 from the Reading boundary to the M4 junction 12 roundabout. There is not considered to be the physical road space for bus lanes throughout, however we require a feasibility study to examine this in more detail, as well as other measures such as traffic light priority.
- **Robin Hood Roundabout:** Similarly, towards the other end of the Jet Black 1 route in Newbury, traffic can become blocked on the A4 London Road and the B4009 Shaw Road, also affecting services 1a and 1c between Newbury and Thatcham. Again a feasibility study is required to examine options which can promote the bus further but don't have an adverse effect on the A339, as that would just lead to more congestion in the centre of Newbury.
- **Atherton Road, Hungerford:** This road is used as part of a one-way loop for buses to access the terminal point in Church Street. The roads here are typically narrow and residential, with an overgrowth of hedges. Although double yellow lines have been installed, the road needs reshaping, with an alteration to the carriageway edge / hedgerow for buses to continue to use this road without difficulty.

6.6 ***Bus rapid transit***

- 6.6.1 Any such network would be more relevant to the Eastern Area, characterised already by high frequency commercial bus services, dense population levels, and the proximity to Reading. This will be considered along the A4 in Calcot, together with an alternative of using the existing service 26 route (which already includes bus gates). This would be considered essential if any plans are developed for a Park and Ride site in the vicinity of the M4, junction 12.

6.7 ***Integration with other modes***

- 6.7.1 Paragraph 6.3.2 mentions the need for dedicated new services to Mortimer and Thatcham stations. Theale Station is also a short distance from the main population centre and may benefit from a shuttle service, linking the population centres and Arlington Business Park to the station.
- 6.7.2 Paragraph 4.8.2 highlights that additional vehicles added to the network (which will also improve bus frequencies) will enable more services to call directly at the station. Operators will review existing services, but there is agreement to highlight more clearly the nearest bus stops, and the walking link between them and the station. A new RTPI screen is at Newbury Station, and it will also give information on services stopping nearby, as well as those directly outside.
- 6.7.3 We have commenced discussions with Great Western Railway (GWR) about better signposting and the possibility of adding some bus services to the rail network as "bus branch lines", in line with their internal Integrated Transport Strategy document.
- 6.7.4 Given the frequency of bus services in much of West Berkshire, linking bus journeys to train timetables is difficult, especially taking account of occasional disruption on the rail network. The majority of bus services emanating from Newbury are focussed on school movements, which need to be catered for, as these students represent a very high proportion of all passenger journeys in the area.

- 6.7.5 There are currently no long-distance coach services stopping in West Berkshire, however two of the six departure bays in the Wharf Bus Station are dedicated for coach use, allowing integration with bus services. We will encourage National Express to resume services that provide links to London, Heathrow Airport, the South Coast, Oxford and Birmingham when they are able to, but this will not be before 2022.
- 6.7.6 Bicycle racks are available adjacent to the Wharf Bus Station for those wishing to travel further afield. We have no current plans to allow bicycles to be carried on buses, however we will keep this option under review.
- 6.7.7 As mentioned in paragraph 4.8.3, community transport is an important part of the passenger transport network in West Berkshire, and we will continue to support the groups and highlight their services to those who may struggle to use local buses.

6.8 ***Simplify services***

- 6.8.1 Many urban areas of Newbury are only served by the infrequent rural routes that pass through them. The buses interwork between these services to get maximum operating efficiency with minimum resources. This is not ideal as frequencies are lower than where dedicated urban services exist. Examples of this include service 3 in West Fields, service 4 in Speen, and service 6 in Donnington. Ideally, additional resource will allow us to have more dedicated urban services, as well as slightly improving journey times on the longer-distance routes.
- 6.8.2 Route numbers throughout the district are mostly distinct, with the exception of route number 2. There are three services with this number in West Berkshire: Newbury & District 2 Newbury to Wash Common and Pigeons Farm; Stagecoach 2 Baughurst to Basingstoke; and Reading Buses Lime 2/2a Reading to Burghfield and Mortimer. The different areas these serve, together with the names and branding of the latter, ensure that there is no confusion to the public.
- 6.8.3 Service numbers within Newbury were reviewed 20 years ago to give them a higher prominence in the town, with numbers from 1 upwards, rather than 104, 113, 146 etc. From 2016, a number of route variations were given separate letters (e.g. 4, 4a, 4b, 4c), to make it easier for users to identify that particular roads or villages are not served by all journeys. Additional resource should enable us to remove some of these variations.

6.9 ***Socially necessary services***

- 6.9.1 Despite most local bus services only operating due to subsidy, the Council now only has one tendered contract (Newbury services), and financially supports a second route (143), although it does operate a number of other services using section 22 permits.
- 6.9.2 The Newbury contract began in 2016 following a reduction in funds available for bus services, and required four vehicles to be interworked to cover five distinct services. Developer funding has allowed a further bus (and service) to be added to this, allowing more recovery time on longer-distance journeys. This contract has recently been extended to run until the end of August 2024. The contract allows for additional buses to be added at an agreed price, and therefore we are able to implement improvements quickly with additional funding in place.

- 6.9.3 Quarterly meetings take place between the Council and the operator, Newbury & District, which are also attended by Reading Buses staff, although these have been less frequent during the pandemic. This gives us the opportunity to discuss issues relating to most bus services in the district, contracted and commercial, to ensure that they are still effective.
- 6.9.4 In the first month or so of the pandemic, we were aware that commercial services 1a and 1c were starting to suffer, and that it would be unlikely that they could recover quickly to a commercial level without severely reducing the frequency. As the pandemic has continued, it is now clear that commercial operation is unlikely for at least two to three years, and therefore ongoing funding is required to maintain operation in the interim.
- 6.9.5 The contract for the 143 is due to end in 2022, so this would be the ideal time to review operations.
- 6.9.6 By their nature, these services are not commercial. Table 4.4 highlights that almost £2m of non-direct bus fare revenue is invested each year to keep these services going. Whilst improvements that increase passenger levels may reduce the ongoing cost required, it is not expected that many of these services could ever become truly commercial. It is vital, therefore, that ongoing funding is provided, and any improvements made as part of the National Bus Strategy are funded for long enough to allow for commercial operation, or for the business case to be fully established for continued funding.
- 6.10 ***Superbus network***
- 6.10.1 A Superbus network provides higher frequency, lower fare services. Similar to bus rapid transit, we have no current plans for this as we need to improve services overall first. Any scheme would be most likely to work best in the Eastern Area where services already operate at higher frequencies and for most of the day. We would therefore support any bid made by Reading Borough Council subject to funding.
- 6.11 ***Lower and simplified fares***
- 6.11.1 Operators of commercial services feel that their fares already offer good value for money, and so they are reluctant to look at reducing them. Fare reductions may also impact on the services' commercial viability. However, the Council will look at reducing fares on its supported bus services in a way that could attract new, and more frequent use.
- 6.11.2 Operators are, however, keen to introduce fare capping, most likely by introducing tap-on, tap-off technology once all operators have compatible ticketing technology, which we would like to see introduced within the next two years. This will also include the Council's own section 22 operations. It is important that the software behind tap-on, tap-off is able to apportion revenue fairly between operators, which we understand is being looked into by the DfT as it will impact cross-boundary services.
- 6.11.3 We have commissioned a review of fares outside of the Eastern Area, to examine moving towards a simple, easily understood zonal fare structure rather than the current tapering fare charts.

- 6.11.4 We will standardise reduced price tickets between commercial and contracted operations, including the age limits such tickets relate to (i.e. young people). We support calls for regional and national uniformity of such tickets. Subject to further discussions with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), we will also seek to introduce a job seekers ticket for those looking for work.
- 6.11.5 We also commit to allowing people to continue to pay for bus fares by cash, whilst supporting alternative payment methods. We recognise that for some people, removing this option will be a barrier to using the bus.
- 6.12 ***Integrated ticketing between operators and different transport modes***
- 6.12.1 Operators are in agreement that day and period passes and multi-journey tickets should be available for all bus travel. As such, the Council will expand use of its Connect tickets (for Newbury-centred services), and also work with operators to implement joint ticketing in the Eastern Area, for example between Reading Buses service 16 and Thames Travel service 143.
- 6.12.2 Within Newbury / Thatcham, there is currently no all-operator day ticket other than the Connect Day which covers most of West Berkshire. The Council will therefore introduce a Connect Day Urban ticket which is more compatible with fares in the area. We will also investigate the introduction of family tickets for one day's bus travel.
- 6.12.3 We will continue to support the PlusBus scheme. We will support developments that allow the purchase of tickets on buses that can then be used on the rail network, rather than the necessity to purchase a through ticket in advance so that it has time to be delivered to the user, or the need to purchase a separate bus ticket for the outward journey.
- 6.13 ***Vehicles and infrastructure***
- 6.13.1 We will expect that all buses have working next stop audio-visual announcements, Wi-Fi and USB charging facilities, with the latter facilities expected as standard by younger people. Reading Buses's successful Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) '[Completing the Connection](#)' bid has helped, and we would wish to support similar bids for other operators.
- 6.13.2 Vehicles will all provide level boarding. We have asked operators to provide information on where it can be difficult for buses to access stops, so that we can implement measures to assist (e.g. bus stop clearways, parking restrictions). Busier stops have Kassel Kerbs, and more rural stops will have hard standing to provide a safe place to board or alight from the bus.
- 6.13.3 We will support the introduction of additional bus shelters. The recent customer survey responses included requests for shelters in Burghfield, Lambourn and Mortimer, and one nearer the shops in Pangbourne. Ownership and maintenance of shelters resides with the respective Town or Parish Councils, and all of these Parish Councils have been supportive. It can be difficult to persuade some areas to take on this responsibility, however we will work with these to encourage investment. We are aware of some bus shelters available offering green roofs (roof gardens) which may prove more popular with both residents and Town and Parish Councils.



Figure 6.1 – Level boarding and new bus shelters

6.13.4 An increase in bus frequencies will require replanning of services using The Wharf Bus Station in Newbury. We will also consider whether enhancements can be made to improve passenger facilities, and how to accommodate any additional stops required in the vicinity, particularly for non-terminating services, perhaps by realigning existing roads.

6.14 **Passenger safety**

6.14.1 We will expect that all buses have working CCTV to record images in the event of an incident on board. CCTV also covers the Wharf Bus Station in Newbury.

6.14.2 We have received requests for improved lighting at some bus stops where early morning and evening services stop, and we will look at what can be done at these locations. We will investigate solar panels / battery storage that can be installed in more remote areas as a cost-effective solution.

6.15 **Buses for tourists**

6.15.1 West Berkshire is notable for its large Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and many of its towns and villages are tourist attractions in their own right. Hungerford is known for its antiques; Lambourn as a centre for racehorse training and home to several famous jockeys; and Pangbourne as a picturesque village on the River Thames, and home to author Kenneth Grahame. There are a number of other attractions too, including:

- Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel at Pangbourne College
- Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails along the northern boundary of West Berkshire
- Kennet and Avon Canal and River Kennet running the length of the district just south of the A4
- Basildon House (National Trust) and Beale Park Wildlife Centre in Lower Basildon

6.15.2 In addition there are numerous footpaths, Newbury Racecourse, and many fairs and festivals. We will produce information to promote bus access where possible, and work with attractors to seek discounted travel for visitors, including places both outside West Berkshire but accessible by a bus originating in the district.

6.16 ***Decarbonisation and zero emissions***

- 6.16.1 The major bus groups Stagecoach and Go Ahead have their own plans to decarbonise their buses, with both aiming to have zero emission UK bus fleets by 2035. In addition, the Council's [Environment Strategy](#) seeks to make the district carbon neutral by 2030.
- 6.16.2 We will support bus companies to replace their older and most polluting vehicles with zero emissions ones, and support any further bids to the DfT's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA), or alternative, schemes. We will also support non-ZE upgrades, and have set targets for this. We are particularly keen to support buses that pass through either of the district's AQMAs, although the benefits here are only likely to ensue if car drivers then switch to these buses. A key part of vehicle upgrades is likely to involve retrofitting improved engines to existing buses.
- 6.16.3 We are particularly keen to work with our neighbouring Berkshire authorities in relation to the introduction of ZE buses and associated infrastructure, which may take the form of a County Deal.
- 6.16.4 We are also keen to explore whether the Council can fund or facilitate carbon-neutral refuelling stations, whether that is electricity, hydrogen, or other alternatives, although this is likely to be a longer-term initiative.
- 6.16.5 When we next tender for our Newbury-based bus contract in 2024, we will include options for zero emission and less polluting vehicles than the current fleet.

6.17 ***Passenger charter***

- 6.17.1 We are committed to working with our operators to produce a passenger charter. Whilst they each have their own charters, we are looking to produce a short, simple, and easily understood Charter that simplifies the message to West Berkshire bus users. This is likely to consist of a list of service standards that could reasonably be expected, and the redress a passenger can expect when these standards are not met. This will be developed over the next year.
- 6.17.2 We are aware that the DfT and Transport Focus are seeking the development of a national passenger charter, and will encourage our operators to adopt this when it comes to fruition for consistency across the country.
- 6.17.3 We will promote the passenger charter in our publicity, including on the Council and operator websites.

6.18 ***Network identity***

- 6.18.1 Bus services within West Berkshire tend to operate in clusters – the west of the district into Swindon and Wiltshire, centrally from Newbury, and in the Eastern Area. Rather than seek to introduce a “West Berkshire” branded network, we will give the local identity through the Council's publicity, ticketing, and passenger charter. The Council has been using *Connect* branding for a number of years. It is included on all of our publicity including the Travel Guide and roadside timetable displays; it is the name of our multi-operator tickets; and it is displayed prominently on the Council's section 22-operated vehicles. We will consider whether it is time to refresh the Connect branding.

6.18.2 Network identities are different in each part of the district:

- **West:** These services are tendered by Wiltshire and Swindon Councils (other than service 47, operated under the Connect name) and are in the operator's livery. As these services have very little mileage in West Berkshire, we would not seek to impose any conditions on their operations.
- **Central / Newbury:** Other than the two Stagecoach services from the south, buses here have had a variety of liveries over the years dependent upon the operator at the time. Within the last couple of years, this position has stabilised with the purchase of Newbury & District by Reading Buses, and all vehicles are now in the distinctive, and smart, Newbury & District livery, which also helps vehicles to appear new – a definite bonus for bus travel.
- **Eastern Area / Reading:** For many years now, Reading Buses have been using a standard livery layout, but in different colours for different services. This approach obviously works as passenger numbers have been growing in recent years against the national trend.

6.19 *Information*

6.19.1 Information in West Berkshire is reasonably good with the District-wide Travel Guide, at stop information, operators own information, apps and some RTPI. This is OK if you know where to find it, and we would like to improve this.

- **Travel Guide:** We will resume printing and distribution of this in 2022 following a hiatus since 2018 for a variety of factors, since which it has been online only. There has not been a total void, as a separate leaflet was produced for some of this period covering Newbury services as these were the only ones that changed in any significant way.
- **Public Transport Map:** This has not been printed for a number of years, but we will consider whether a printed version is valuable for existing and potential users.
- **Bus stop displays:** Although many stops already have timetable cases displaying current departure times, we will increase this to cover all stops where passengers are likely to board. We will also add QR codes to each display to allow users to link directly to real time information on their bus.
- **RTPI:** We will install more RTPI screens at key stops so that those without access to a smartphone can still see when the next bus will arrive. This will include additional stops in Newbury and Thatcham, as well as Burghfield, Compton, Hungerford, Lambourn, Mortimer and Pangbourne.
- **BODS:** All of our operators are now providing data to BODS, which is used to populate journey planners including Traveline. The Council will ensure this information is provided for all section 22 operations. In future, this information will include not only timetables, but fare information, vehicle locations, and details of punctuality
- **Websites / Apps / Social Media:** All major operators have their own websites and apps and make use of social media. The Council will review its own website to include links to these where this will add more information than is available directly from the Council.
- **On bus:** All vehicles will have working audio-visual next stop announcements.

- **Individual service timetables:** Although these are not often produced on their own, within the Travel Guide we will add more information to each bus service to highlight the relevant community transport options for those unable to use conventional buses.
- **Information of interest:** As noted in section 6.15, buses could be used to reach many leisure facilities, and we will provide information that will help boost this type of travel.
- **Passenger charter:** We will publish a passenger charter within our Travel Guide and on our website explaining what customers can expect, and what redress they have when these standards are not met.

6.19.2 One thing that has not happened in any consistent way in West Berkshire is marketing of bus services and their benefits. We commit to changing this philosophy so that we actually make people aware of what is available and encourage use. We will seek to be ambitious with this marketing using a variety of different initiatives and techniques. This will range from press releases to reduced price (or even free) travel for specific events or to target different users.

6.20 **Community transport**

6.20.1 We have highlighted that community transport provides an important link in the transport provision in West Berkshire (4.8.3) and we will continue to support and promote this for those unable to use conventional buses.

6.20.2 We are working with Volunteer Centre West Berkshire to establish additional Dial-a-Ride facilities in the Newbury / Hospital / Thatcham area within the next few months.

6.21 **Car clubs**

6.21.1 Once we receive the results of the DRT study, it will be clearer which schemes are most likely to be viable. If this will result in areas of West Berkshire remaining without public transport, we will seek to expand the current [car club](#) to provide additional options. The car club currently provides 24-hour access to hire cars in Newbury.

6.22 **Parking**

6.22.1 For a rural area, there must be a trade-off between affordable, accessible parking and the cost of bus services. This is especially important when town centres are seeing reduced footfall from more home working and shops closing down as internet shopping becomes more the norm. Over the next year, we will develop and publish a Parking Strategy that will consider these factors, including proposals in the Newbury Town Centre Masterplan to reduce the number of central Newbury parking spaces.

7. **Reporting**

7.1 We will report on the targets set within the BSIP at least every six months, and this information will be published, on the Council's dedicated webpage: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/enhancedpartnership>.

8. Overview Table

8.1 The following table summarises the key outputs of the BSIP, and how these meet the requirements set out in the [National Bus Strategy](#). This gives an overview of the commitments which the Council and bus operators will work towards to improve local bus services.

Name of authority or authorities:	West Berkshire Council
Franchising or Enhanced Partnership (or both):	Enhanced Partnership
Date of publication:	October 2021
Date of next annual update:	October 2022
URL of published report:	https://info.westberks.gov.uk/enhancedpartnership

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Journey time	Not recorded	Not recorded	To be developed over next 12 months	To be developed over next 24 months	We will examine services where reliability is lower, and then look at variance on individual journey times. The measure used is likely to be variance from scheduled journey but be targeted at specific services rather than the network as a whole. We will also develop mph targets.
Reliability					This measures journeys departing from their first stop, and across the whole route using standard methodology (on time is 1 minute early to 5 minutes 59 seconds late). Information will be obtained directly from operators or from BODS.
Start	89.1%	88.8%	90%	92%	
Overall	85.4%	83.8%	85%	87%	
Passenger numbers					From Passenger counts submitted by the operators from information drawn from their ticket machines.
Eastern Area (est.)	1,020,320	968,025	1,000,000	1,050,000	
Whole of WBC	2,342,715	2,222,530	2,300,000	2,500,000	

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Average passenger satisfaction					This will be measured using NHT KBI06 Local Bus Services satisfaction. We will also develop our own measure which can be obtained annually, and separate bus users from non-users.
NHT survey	60%	n/a	62%	64%	
Council survey	No survey	No survey	Tbc	Tbc	
Other measures					
Vehicle Emissions	Not recorded	Not recorded	All vehicles to be at least Euro V	All vehicles to be at least Euro VI	Information on vehicles used will be provided by operators.
Access to frequent bus service	Not recorded	Not recorded	Tbc	Tbc	This will be measured using the Council's online mapping system.

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/No	Explanation (max 50 words)
Make improvements to bus services and planning		
<i>More frequent and reliable services</i>		
Review service frequency	Yes	Working with bus operators, we have identified routes that would attract more passengers if frequencies were enhanced. This includes the addition of evening, and Sunday services and some new and reinstated links in the network. These would all require additional funding to implement.
Increase bus priority measures	Yes	Working with bus operators, we have identified sites where bus priority would reduce delays to bus services. We have also identified that a bus turning circle in Pangbourne would allow for improved frequency to be one service, however further feasibility is required to identify a suitable location for this.
Increase demand responsive services	Yes	Many rural parts of the district currently have no, or a very minimal bus service. We believe these areas would be best served by DRT. We have commissioned a feasibility study to provide further information, but additional funding will be required to implement any of these schemes.
Consideration of bus rapid transport networks	Yes	Such networks may be applicable in the Eastern Area of the district. If so, we would work with Reading Buses and Reading Borough Council to achieve such ambitions for the commercial bus services here.

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/No	Explanation (max 50 words)
<i>Improvements to planning / integration with other modes</i>		
Integrate services with other transport modes	Yes	We have identified areas where bus services could be provided to rail stations. If additional resources are put in, it will also be possible for more services to serve Newbury rail station. We are discussing options with GWR to add some services to the rail network as “bus branch lines”.
Simplify services	Yes	With additional resource, we would be able to improve the urban bus network around Newbury, so that longer-distance rural services could operate more directly to their ultimate destinations.
Review socially necessary services	Yes	The Council-contracted Newbury services are reviewed regularly with monthly information provided on patronage and reliability, allowing for minor adjustments to timetables. The Newbury to Thatcham services are no longer commercially-viable which, with available funding, will provide an opportunity to review integration with other services.
Invest in Superbus networks	Yes	Such networks may be applicable in the Eastern Area of the district. If so, we would work with Reading Buses and Reading Borough Council to achieve such ambitions for the commercial bus services here.
<i>Improvements to fares and ticketing</i>		
Lower fares	Yes	Whilst operators believe their fares to already be good value, the Council has commissioned a review into whether lower fares and a simplified fare structure would be beneficial on the supported network covering most of the district.
Simplify fares	Yes	Operators are keen on fare-capping, which should be multi-operator. The Council is also looking at standardising age-based reduced fares between the supported network and commercial operations. We are also committed to retaining cash as a payment method for those who rely on this.
Integrate ticketing between operators and different transport modes	Yes	We are committed to expanding the multi-operator Connect tickets to all Newbury-based operations, and seeking similar arrangements in the Eastern Area. As part of this we will introduce a Newbury/Thatcham day ticket, and also investigate family tickets. We support PlusBus and work with GWR to make this more accessible.

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/No	Explanation (max 50 words)
Make improvements to bus passenger experience		
<i>Higher spec buses</i>		
Invest in improved bus specifications	Yes	All buses will offer level boarding in urban areas, and more rural stops will benefit from hard standing. Vehicles will have working audio-visual announcements, Wi-Fi, and USB charging facilities as standard.
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services	Yes	Additional bus shelters will be installed in rural locations. Further RTP1 screens will also be added at key stops, together with QR codes on all roadside displays to identify how far away the next bus is.
Protect personal safety of bus passengers	Yes	Available funding would be used to ensure all bus services have working CCTV. Lighting will be improved at bus stops, and we will investigate solar panels, in particular for more remote rural areas.
Improve buses for tourists	Yes	We will promote access to the countryside and towns and villages in West Berkshire by bus. This includes access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footpaths including the National Trails (a major strength of West Berkshire – its vast area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) • Tourist attractions • Special events • Days out in general
Invest in decarbonisation	Yes	We will support any bids for ZEBRA (or similar) funding, and the use of zero-emission, zero-carbon buses, although funding will be required for both infrastructure and the additional costs of the vehicles themselves. We will assess future bus tenders taking account of using these vehicles.
<i>Improvements to passenger engagement</i>		
Passenger charter	Yes	We are committed to producing a simple, readily understood and short passenger charter that encompasses all bus services. This will consist of service standards that could reasonably be expected, and the redress available when these standards are not met.
Strengthen network identity	Yes	The brands used to identify bus services and networks are considered strong in West Berkshire, and there are no plans to change these. The West Berkshire brand is <i>Connect</i> which is used in the names of multi-operator tickets, on Council section 22 vehicles and in publicity / information.

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/No	Explanation (max 50 words)
Improve bus information	Yes	The Council's Travel Guide is already 'Outstanding', and we will recommence printing of this. We will also improve many other aspects of our information, including QR codes and RTPI for those waiting for buses. More importantly, with additional funding, we will market and promote what is available.
Other		
Other		
Community Transport	Yes	We will continue to support and promote community transport as an alternative for those who are unable to use conventional bus services.
Parking	Yes	We will develop and publish a Parking Strategy for West Berkshire that will take account of changing consumer habits, the environment, and the desire to encourage more use of public transport.

Glossary

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area
BODS	Bus Operator Data Service
BSIP	Bus Service Improvement Plan
BSOG	Bus Services Operators Grant
DfT	Department for Transport
DRT	Demand Responsive Transport
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ENCTS	English National Concessionary Travel Scheme
EP	Enhanced Partnership
GWR	Great Western Railway
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LTP	West Berkshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026
NHT	National Highways & Transport Network
NO ₂	Nitrogen dioxide
nomis	Official Labour Market statistics
ONS	Office for National Statistics
QR	Quick Response matrix barcode
RTPi	Real Time Passenger Information
Section 22	The Transport Act 1985 allows not-for-profit organisations to operate without the need for a full public service vehicle operator's licence. They are not subject to many of the normal licensing or legislative requirements.
ZE	Zero emission
ZEBRA	Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas

Appendices

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Other relevant documentation

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