

# Notes of West Berkshire Enhanced Partnership Forum

Thursday 22 May 2025 - Forum No. 10

Present were representatives of:

- Bus operators (Reading Buses, Thames Travel, and West Berkshire Council)
- West Berkshire Council (Network Management, Transport Services, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways)
- Community Transport Operators (VCWB)

Apologies were received from representatives of:

- Bus operators (Stagecoach)
- Other Local Authorities: (Oxfordshire County Council)
- Community Transport Operators (Carebus)

The Service Lead for Highways and Transport Innovation from West Berkshire Council chaired the meeting.

Notes from Forum No. 9 in February 2025 were agreed.

## Matters arising from previous Forum, which are not covered in the agenda:

- [Bus services for days out](#) – information on the Council website highlighting using buses to explore the district operators to promote. **ACTION: Ops**
- [Report a problem](#) – request for operators to use website to ensure issue is dealt with by the appropriate team. **ACTION: Ops**

## Documentation & Funding:

- **BSIP 2025/26 allocation** – Delivery plan submitted to DfT by 31 March 2025, plan published on [council's website](#), funding due to be received in June 2025. Previous BSIP funding can be used up until March 2026. New PAR process allows moving monies between projects without DT approval; new projects would require DfT approval.
- **BSIP Refresh** – BSIP 2025 updated to reflect current position and results of 2024 survey, to be published on [council's website](#). **ACTION: WBC**

## BSIP Targets:

- **April 2025 Targets Report** – targets drafted to be published shortly. Patronage/passenger growth targets met for district; Eastern area not met. Vehicle emissions at least Euro V. Punctuality/reliability targets not met. Satisfaction targets - short version of annual survey focusing on satisfaction to be available over summer. **ACTION: WBC**

## BSIP Scheme Progress:

- **BP3. Robin Hood & BP4. Bath Road Calcot** – procurement approved; Legal team to draft contract; works to be completed without closing any lanes; and scheme important in improving reliability. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BP5. Congestion Hotspots** – Phase 4 of bus stop clearways nearly complete. Phase 5 for clearways being planned, includes Holybrook. Identifying more locations to be improved – consider repainting sites in Burghfield/Mortimer. Have seen a positive impact from completed phases. Longer term solutions to sites being assessed. **ACTION: WBC**
- **OI1. Passenger Waiting Facilities** – funding given to 6 parishes to install shelters; publicity to be issued imminently. Half to be green roofs. Discussion ongoing about Calcot Sainsbury's shelter – RB assisting. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BP7. Mortimer Station Bus Turning Facility** – initial feasibility study complete; options north/south of station shortlisted. Due to significant deliverability challenges and cost implications unlikely to proceed. Recommendation to look at DRT solutions. **ACTION: WBC**
- **FT1. Fares/Ticketing** - Free bus travel days proposed but not agreed. Operators to provide data on 2024 events and costs for 2025 events by end June 2025. WBC to speak to other LTAs, before confirming dates. Council to publicise [Clean Air Day](#). **ACTION: Ops/WBC**

- **FS6. Multi-operator scheme** – operators to provide final comments on draft agreement; comments to be sent to solicitors for incorporation. **ACTION: Ops**
- **BS12. Introduction of Evening/Weekend services - rural areas** – Thames Travel request to provide BSIP monies for X34 Sunday service, with possibility of serving villages and/or other areas of Newbury. Decision deferred due to looking at costs/benefits of all requests including for service 2. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BS16. Bus Services to Tourists Hotspots** – Newbury Show request to fund bus service. WBC unable to fund unless bus were to be registered as a public bus. VCWB mentioned voluntary sector may be able to provide support though S19 permit conditions to be investigated. **ACTION: VCWB**
- **BS11. Evening and Sunday Services, Newbury & Thatcham** – 1e service extended until September 2025.
- **OI5. Bus Gate Review** – Kennet Heath, Thatcham, looking to install ANPR camera and remove bollards. **ACTION: WBC**
- **SS2. Independent Travel Training** – program to assist students (especially SEN) to travel independently by bus. RB offered the potential of vehicle to assist. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BF3. Carbon Neutral Facilities** – look at introducing charging points for EVs in district; sites to be confirmed. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BS17. 1a/1c** – Work to ensure long-term provision; tender to be issued shortly. **ACTION: WBC**

#### Operators Comments/Feedback:

- **Reading Buses** – Passenger numbers increase by 7% for supported network; slight fall in numbers since fare cap raise. Punctuality and congestion concerns continue. ZEBRA funding to upgrade Yellow 26 to electric vehicles next June. Changes to 43 in September 2025 to improve punctuality. Fares review starting from 2 June TOTO starting June 2025; and land next to Mill Lane, Newbury depot acquired to redevelop.

#### Items for approval BSIP funding

- Repaint and preparation of early redeployment of Euro VI double decker,
- Inclusion of Alfratronics USB A and USB C sockets on the buses,
- Enhance Newbury specific website including live vehicle tracking, electronic timetables and journey planning,
- Enhanced branded roadside publicity and leaflet for azure 43.
- Other ideas also discussed (including pool of money for other small projects) – to be assessed in terms of how meet BSIP aspirations, benefits for passengers, value for money and budget availability. **ACTION: WBC**
- **Thames Travel** – X34 performing well; local demand growing; punctuality issues around Didcot areas but performing well in West Berkshire.
- **West Berkshire Council (as operator)** – Passenger levels dropped following shuttle service from Aldermaston to AWE; issues with buses passing Thatcham level crossing; issues with punctuality on 47 service – looking in future to connect better with service 4; minimal impact following fare cap rise. Attending Thatcham Fun Day 30 June to raise publicity.
- **VCWB** – changes in demand and trip destinations post-pandemic; off-loading one Handybuses; higher requests for use of Chairman vehicle.

#### Proposed changes to EP Scheme: Annex A and B -

- Proposed changes to Annex A and B of the EP scheme, all changes approved changes to be made. **ACTION: WBC**

#### Other Issues:

- **Tendered Network Review** – Network review drafted being reviewed internally, looking at changes to be made in 2025. **ACTION: WBC**
- **Local Government Re-Organisation** – Initial plans for WBC to form unitary Authority with South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District Councils in 2027/28; public consultation to begin June 2025; final plans to be submitted by 28 November 2025; details to be forwarded once confirmed.

- **Punctuality** – issues discussed; details of scheduled works can be found on the Council's website [Highways Improvement Programme](#) along with known [roadworks/road closures](#); operators in future to attend Streetworks coordination meetings.

**Any Other Business:** None

## Decisions Outcome

- **X34 service enhancements:** decision deferred due to looking at costs/benefits of all requests
- **Free Bus Travel days 2025:** final dates not agreed. Operators to provide data on 2024 events and costs for 2025 events by end June 2025. WBC to speak to other LTAs, before confirming dates.
- **Reading Buses:** Repaint and preparation of early redeployment of Euro VI double decker – agreed subject to funding availability.
- **Reading Buses:** Alfratronics USB A and USB C sockets on the buses, – agreed subject to funding availability.
- **Reading Buses:** Enhance Newbury specific website including live vehicle tracking, electronic timetables and journey planning, – agreed subject to funding availability.
- **Reading Buses:** Enhance branded roadside publicity and leaflet for azure 43 – agreed subject to funding availability.
- **Changes to EP Scheme: Annex A and B:** all approved.

## Future forum dates

- 13:30 on **Thursday 25th September 2025** at Shaw House, Church Road, Newbury, RG14 2DR.
- 13.30 on **Thursday 26 February 2026** at Shaw House, Church Road, Newbury, RG14 2DR.
- 13.30 on **Thursday 21 May 2026** at Shaw House, Church Road, Newbury, RG14 2DR.

## Abbreviations:

BCA	Bus Connectivity Assessment	RB	Reading Buses
BSIP	Bus Service Improvement Plan	RTPI	Real-Time Passenger Information
BSOG	Bus Services Operators Grant	S106	Section 106
CT	Community Transport	SLA	Service Level Agreement
DfT	Department for Transport	TOTO	Tap-on/Tap-off
DRT	Demand Responsive Transport	VCWB	Volunteer Centre West Berkshire
EP	Enhanced Partnership	WBC	West Berkshire Council
GWR	Great Western Railway	WBCC	West Berkshire Community Connect
Ops	All Operators		
PAR	Project Adjustment Request		
PSVAR	Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations		