

Notes of West Berkshire Enhanced Partnership Forum

Monday 29 September 2025 - Forum No. 11

Present were representatives of:

- Bus operators (Reading Buses, Thames Travel, and West Berkshire Council)
- West Berkshire Council (Network Management, Transport Services)
- Neighbouring Local Authorities (Reading Borough, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire)
- Community Transport Operators (VCWB)

Apologies were received from representatives of:

- Bus operators (Stagecoach)
- Community Transport Operators (Carebus)
- West Berkshire Council (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways)

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

Notes from Forum No.10 in May 2025 agreed.

Matters arising from previous Forum, which are not covered in the agenda: Nothing to report.

Documentation & Funding:

- **BSIP Refresh** – BSIP 2025 updated to reflect current position and results of 2025 survey, to be published on [council's website](#). **ACTION: WBC**
- **Bus Indicator Pilot** – WBC reviewing process from Q1 and awaiting update from DfT on Q2 process. **ACTION: WBC**
- **Government Spending Review** – announced June 2025, future funding expected to be confirmed in Autumn 2025.

BSIP Targets:

- **April 2025 Targets Report** – April report published, next report due in October 2025, to include breakdown on survey results. **ACTION: WBC**

2025 Summer Survey

Summer survey concluded in August 2025. Preliminary results showing improvement over last year, only section showing lower satisfaction being Value for money. Findings to be published on the council's website.

BSIP Capital Scheme Progress:

- **BF2. Upgrade vehicle for zero emissions** – Procuring two new electric vehicles for in house services. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BF3. Carbon Neutral Facilities** – Electric charging points planned at Council depot and at site in Thatcham.
- **BP3. Robin Hood & BP4. Bath Road Calcot** – Report received about existing conditions of junctions, proposed to implement bus priority measures in three phases before end of 2025. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BP5. Congestion Hotspots** – Phase 5 bus stop clearways underway, phase 6 planned, 158 bus stops have been benefited from clearway improvements. Proposal to reduce bus journey times at Carters Rise, Calcot proposed. **ACTION: WBC**
- **FS6. Multi-Operator Ticket Scheme** – TOTO introduced by N&D and Community Connect services.
- **OI1. Passenger Waiting Facilities** – 11 new bus shelters installed, 5 have green roofs. 8 shelters in production. Publicity to be released. Parishes/Town Councils can request further bus shelters improvements **ACTION: WBC**
- **OI2. RTPI Screens** – Shortlist of sites compiled, additional suggestions welcome, investigating procurement options. **ACTION: WBC**

- **OI4. Works on Bus Station** – looking at maintenance contract of the site. **ACTION: WBC**
- **OI5. Bus Gate Review** – Tender complete for Braemore Close, Thatcham, expected to be live by end of 2025. **ACTION: WBC**
- **OI6. Bus Stop Requests** – Looking at relocating Welford Village stop, gathering patronage information and assessing value for money. **ACTION: WBC**

BSIP Revenue Schemes Progress:

- **BS1. Downlands Transport** – South Newbury zone introduced from September 2025.
- **BS2 Thatcham Connect** – now serves West Berks Community Hospital.
- **BS6. Council Supported Services** – Changes supported services network to be agreed. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BS11. Evening and Sunday Services, Newbury & Thatcham** – Extension of 1e service to be agreed, proposed reduction to 2 services a night. Voted on, outcome below.
- **BS12. Introduction of Evening/Weekend services** – X34 proposal for Sunday service serving additional villages north of Newbury. Voted on, outcome below.
- **BS14. Expanded DRT service** – dependent on outcome of Government Spending Review, to looking at long-term feasibility and funding for any expansion of service areas. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BS17. 1a/1c** – Tender complete, going through corporate process. (Update 27/10/2025: the tender exercise is now due to be repeated) **ACTION: WBC**
- **SS2. Independent Travel Training** – Looking at staff training programme. **ACTION: WBC**
- **FS1. Free/Reduced Travel** – Free travel days proposed for three Saturdays before Christmas in December 2025. Clarification on Early-Bird ticket prices, voted on, outcome below. Revised multi-operator ticket scheme agreement to be distributed to Operators after forum. **ACTION: WBC**
- **II1. Improved marketing of bus services** – Improvements to N&D website, and promotion of 43 service.
- **CT1. Community Transport** – Revenue Grant for Community Transport Groups issued, joint project with CT and Council to issue publicity for volunteer recruitment. **ACTION: WBC**

Operators Updates:

- **Reading Buses** – Patronage in West Berkshire higher, decrease in short journeys, longer journey staying on similar levels, likely due to increase of the fare cap. Improvements to punctuality and 99.97% reliability of services. Upgrading the Yellow 26 to 100% electric vehicles.
- **Thames Travel** – Good performance compared to last year, main issues for X34 is punctuality and reliability along A34, expect service changes in Oxford in February 2026.
- **West Berkshire Council** – Overload on 47 on Mondays/Tuesdays, now providing a larger bus on Mondays. 47 now a limited stop service in Swindon. Community Connect Downlands service frequently busy all day.

Other Issues:

- **North Hampshire Villages** – Council liaising with VCWB about potential solutions for North Hampshire following withdrawal of 7/7a service. **ACTION: WBC & VCWB**
- **Young Carers and Care Leavers** – Request for suggestions to help young carers and care leavers, VCWB transport group of young carers in the evening once a week.
- **Poverty Forum** – New initiative for West Berkshire, request for public transport suggestions that may be of benefit. Reading Buses have scheme for Job seekers.
- **Request for BSIP capital/revenue Expenditure** – Operators to send suggestions, WBC to provide a list of suggestions to members of Forum. **ACTION: WBC & Ops**

Proposed changes to EP Scheme: Annex A and B:

- Add Carters Rise, Calcot to list of Congestion hotspots in EP Annex A. Covered under Bus Gate section so wasn't previously considered, move so other improvements can be considered. Voted on, outcome below.
- Remove reference to Parking Strategy within EP Annex A, following withdrawal by Council Members. Voted on, outcome below.

Operator Voting

- **1e Service extension** – Agreed.
- **X34 Sunday extension** – Decision deferred as further detail about proposal to be shared, written decision prior to next forum, update provided in next Forum notes.
ACTION: Operators & WBC
- **Any other matters arising from forum:**
 - **(Early Bird Concessionary Fare Price)** – Agreed to look to harmonise prices with annual inflation.
- **Variations to the EP Scheme Annex A & B–**
 - **Carters Rise added to Congestion Hotspots** – Agreed.
 - **Remove reference to Parking Strategy** - Decision deferred, alternate wording to be drafted and agreed away from forum, update to provide in next Forum notes.

Any Other Business: Nothing to report.

Future forum dates:

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