



Oxfordshire Enhanced Partnership Plan & Scheme

May 2022



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PART A: ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP (EP) PLAN

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Oxfordshire Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan is made in accordance with Section 138G(1) of the Transport Act 2000 by Oxfordshire County Council ('the Council').
- 1.2. The EP Plan has been prepared to cover the county of Oxfordshire and all non-exempt bus services operating within it, including cross-boundary services. Oxfordshire is a discrete area with a relatively self-contained network, and as such the Council do not consider it necessary to enter joint EP arrangements with any neighbouring authorities.
- 1.3. The purpose of the EP Plan is to set out the relevant context under which the Council and local bus operators will seek to achieve the overarching outcomes of the National Bus Strategy, which are to build back bus use to pre-pandemic levels and to increase mode share still further in the future. The detailed commitments made by each party are contained in the EP Scheme which forms Part B of this document.
- 1.4. The Council determined that an EP was the preferred mechanism for securing improvements to local bus services in the county as a result of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The Oxfordshire area will therefore be covered by a single EP Plan and Scheme from [Date of commencement to be included] until further notice.
- 1.5. The objective of the EP Plan and Scheme is to facilitate a significant increase in local bus patronage over its life. The measures contained in the EP Scheme will enable this by:
 - keeping buses at the heart of decision-making;
 - making buses faster and more reliable;
 - upgrading bus infrastructure;
 - improving the image of buses; and
 - making buses easier to access and understand.
- 1.6. The current Oxfordshire bus map (correct at October 2021) is shown overleaf and indicates the geographical coverage of the EP.
- 1.7. All of the Council's neighbouring authorities are progressing similar proposals for EP Plans and Schemes on the same timescale as Oxfordshire. The effect of the EP Plan and Scheme on other areas will be to enhance those bus services which operate on a cross-boundary basis and ensure that standards are raised throughout the sub-region.

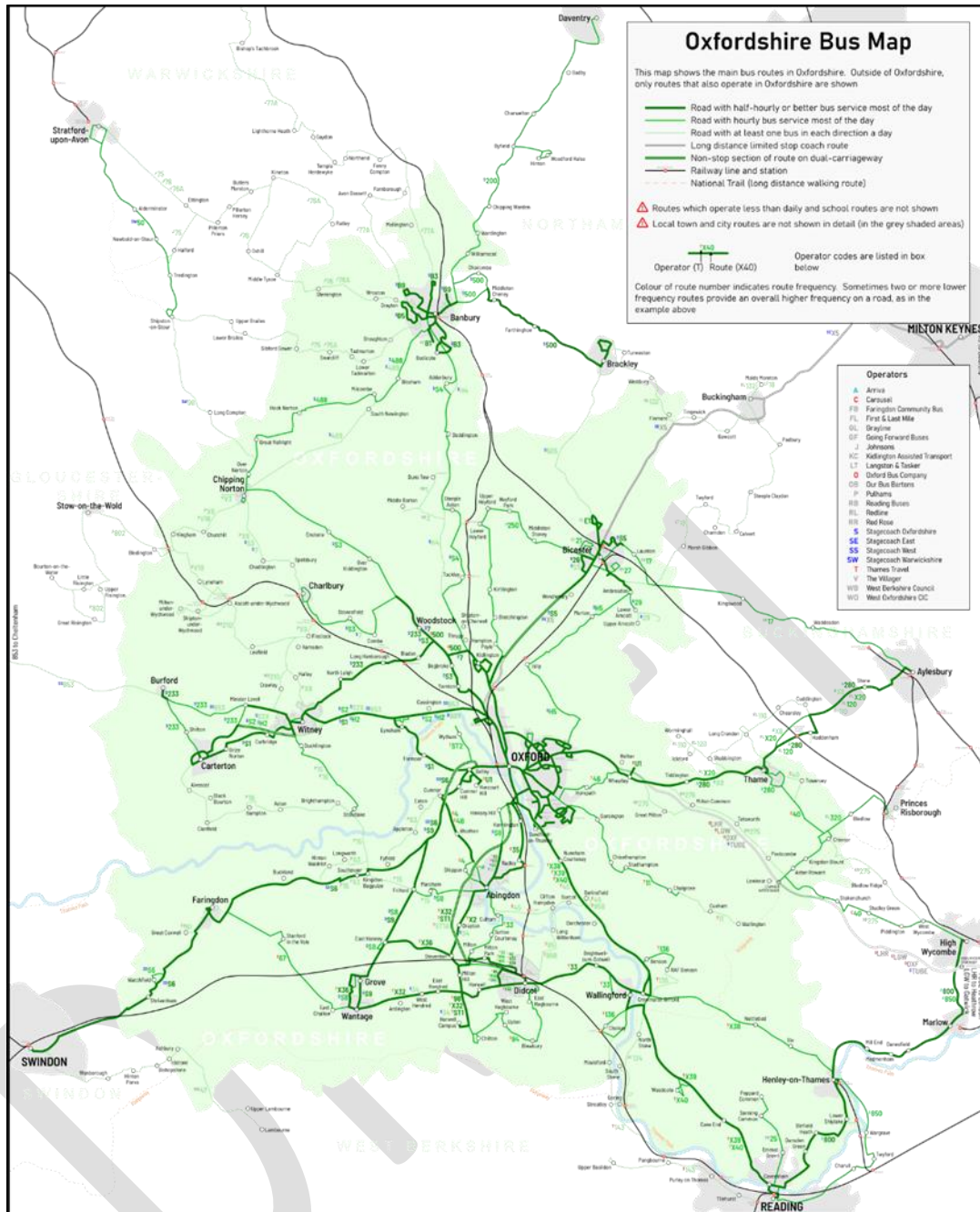


Figure 1: Oxfordshire bus map

- 1.8. The BSIP contains a significant programme of planned works that seek to improve bus services in Oxfordshire. In March 2022, indicative BSIP funding was allocated by the Department for Transport that will fund many of the schemes of the BSIP. These schemes are contained within the EP Scheme. For the schemes for which BSIP funding is not confirmed, the Partnership will explore alternative sources of funding with the view to delivering these schemes as soon as is reasonably practicable.

- 1.9 How the Council is embedding the BSIP in the operation of this partnership is summarised in Table 1. It should be emphasised that to enable a number of the approaches and achieve the necessary objectives, the indicative funding allocated by the Department for Transport through the BSIP process needs to

be confirmed by the Department. Particular proposals which are dependent on further funding have been highlighted.

BSIP objective	EP approach
1. Keeping buses at the heart of decision-making	<p>Embed Council commitment and the corporate priority to <i>'invest in public transport to significantly reduce reliance on car journeys'</i></p> <p>Governance of EP via the Partnership Board informs decision making, e.g. via the County/City Council Joint Member Group</p> <p>The Local Transport & Connectivity Plan Mode Hierarchy is applied to reflect the priority given to bus and ensure that positive decisions are made to promote and support bus travel and improve integration with other modes</p>
2. Making buses faster and more reliable	<p>Implement bus priority measures at key locations including Oxford city centre*</p> <p>Improved management of roadworks, including appointment of a bus champion</p> <p>Implement signal detection technology improvements*</p>
3 Upgrading bus infrastructure	<p>Identification and improvement of the bus stop estate, with defined standards</p> <p>Development of the mobility hub concept in rural areas and areas associated with growth</p> <p>Improvement to Real Time Information provision</p> <p>Greater emphasis on the quick and timely deployment of funds already held by the Council for improvement of the bus stop estate</p>
4.Improving the image of buses	<p>Developing a consistent/single brand for the Smartzone area services, including livery*</p> <p>Consideration of measures to assist boarding/alighting on certain busy routes</p> <p>Roll out of audio-visual systems, Wi-Fi and device charging on new vehicles*</p> <p>Ensuring buses are promoted by the County Council and partners through existing and new channels</p>
5.Making buses easier to access and understand	<p>Development of an improved bus network, with greater hours of operation and coverage*</p> <p>Improvement of cross-boundary bus links*</p> <p>Modernisation and improvement of multi-operator ticketing systems*</p> <p>Simplification of bus ticket range, including extension of youth fares*</p> <p>Roll out of tap-on tap-off technology on new vehicles to non-participating operators*</p> <p>Behavioural change initiatives with employers*</p>

	Enhanced publicity and customer information Development of a customer charter
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*Table 1: BSIP objectives and EP approach * subject to confirmation of funding*

- 1.9. The EP replaces the existing voluntary Quality Partnership arrangements which exist in Oxfordshire.

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2. Current Situation

Network Characteristics

- 2.1. Historically, Oxfordshire has had a successful commercial bus network. This is largely due to very significant use of the bus for journeys to, from and within Oxford, the county's main centre.
- 2.2. Oxfordshire's bus use per capita is the highest for any shire county in England. This is a significant achievement given that Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South East and is due to historical partnership working between the LTA and local bus operators.
- 2.3. The Oxfordshire bus network is made up of several elements:
 - Frequent urban routes in Oxford city;
 - Premium inter-urban routes;
 - Second tier inter-urban routes;
 - Local routes within the county towns; and
 - Routes linking local villages to the county towns.
- 2.4. Frequent urban routes in Oxford have a high level of demand arising from the city's high-density urban form and demographics. There are current frequencies of more than 20 buses per hour on some radial routes in Oxford – these bus services have historically operated on a fully commercial basis from 0500 to 0000 daily with night bus services until 0300 on many of the main corridors.
- 2.5. Competition between the two major operators on the key corridors matured into a Qualifying Agreement in 2011. Since then, services on some key corridors have been coordinated with a joint ticketing arrangement in place (branded as SmartZone, which is available on most buses in the city).
- 2.6. Premium inter-urban routes link Oxford with the County's main towns using fast main 'A' roads. These are designated as 'Premium Routes' and there has been some investment in improved infrastructure over the last two decades. The stated aim for the concept is a frequency of at least 4 buses per hour during weekday daytimes, with at least an hourly evening and Sunday service. Growth in frequencies and passenger numbers has been driven by development in Oxfordshire's main towns.
- 2.7. These corridors link Oxford with areas such as Aylesbury, Thame, Abingdon, Wallingford, Reading, Wantage, Swindon, Witney, Carterton, Kidlington and Bicester, and are provided by four of the county's main operators.
- 2.8. Second-tier inter-urban routes generally provide links between Oxfordshire's towns, and there are some less-frequent routes connecting with Oxford. Typically, these bus services operate at least hourly during weekday daytimes. There is a mixture of fully commercial but also on some financially supported bus services. Some are currently partly funded by developer contributions, either on a pump-priming or lifeline basis. Most of these routes have evening

and Sunday services, although last journeys of the day are generally earlier than for the 'Premium' inter-urban routes.

- 2.9. Banbury, Witney and Didcot benefit from local urban services which offer more comprehensive coverage of the towns. The most developed network is in Banbury, with some services operating up to 4 buses per hour with support from developer contributions. Great Western Park in Didcot benefits from a similar level of frequency, together with frequent links to major local employment centres at Harwell and Milton Park. In both Banbury and Witney, some urban services are provided by community transport operators.
- 2.10. Some lower frequency inter-urban and connector services provide links from rural areas into Oxford and the county towns. Generally daytime only services, several are provided by community transport operators who have taken over routes from commercial providers following withdrawal of public sector financial support.
- 2.11. Away from the main inter-urban bus routes along main roads, there are many Oxfordshire villages which have no local bus service. The lack of access to the public transport network for people living in these settlements is a significant issue, intended to be addressed by some of the measures set out in this Plan..
- 2.12. Whilst the Oxfordshire bus network is largely self-contained, there are several important bus routes operating into neighbouring LTA areas, including Buckinghamshire, West Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, Swindon, West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham.
- 2.13. In the 2021/22 financial year the Council is expected to provide £4.2 million of financial support to the bus network (excluding concessionary fares and income from entitled student travel). This can be broken down broadly as shown in Figure 2 below. It is the intention of the Council to maintain financial support for the bus network subject to funding availability.

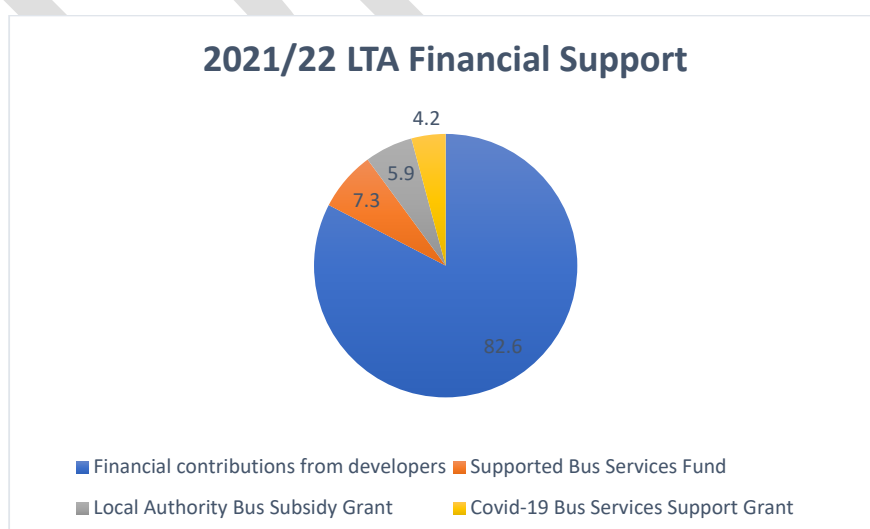


Figure 2: Sources of financial support (%)

- 2.14. The LTA has been extremely successful at leveraging Section 106 contributions from the promoters of development schemes, and it is expected that this will be an increasing source of income in the future as further growth takes place.
- 2.15. Such contributions have always been considered as an investment in the future Oxfordshire bus network, and as such are intended to cover the cost of an agreed level of bus service serving a new development for an initial period.

Recent Trends

- 2.16. Due to its considerable success, the current Oxfordshire bus network is provided on a largely commercial basis. The network has remained relatively stable since 2016 when supported bus services were removed due to financial constraints.
- 2.17. Figure 3 below indicates the strong growth in bus patronage between 2010 and 2014, followed by a period of relative decline through to 2019/20.

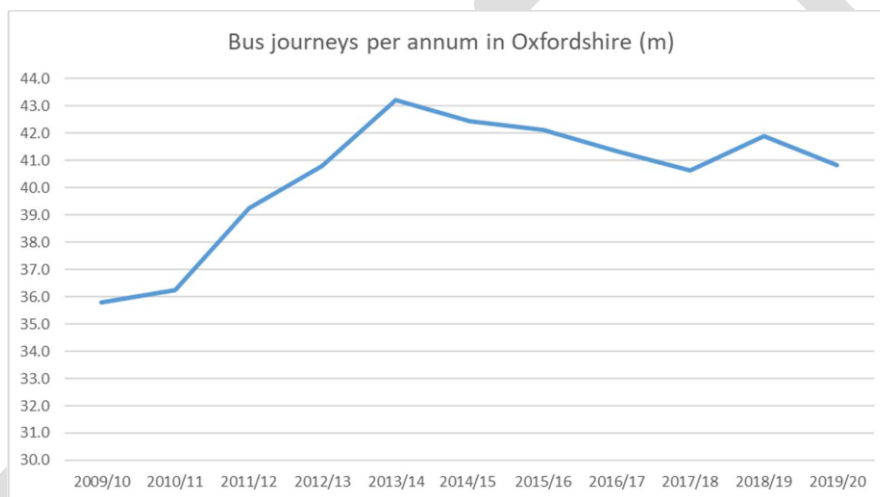


Figure 3: Bus journeys per annum in Oxfordshire

- 2.18. Several factors are responsible for the reduction in passengers, including increasing levels of general traffic leading to delays (especially in Oxford and the larger towns), with a corresponding increase in journey times and decline in reliability. This is compounded by increasing levels of roadworks, particularly associated with growth.
- 2.19. As a result, increased operating costs and declining patronage caused a deterioration in commercial viability to bus operators. Lower commercial rates of return have declined below the level required to replace the fleet on a systematic basis, resulting in an increase in the average age of the Oxfordshire fleet and the withdrawal of some of the weaker commercial routes.
- 2.20. During the COVID-19 pandemic, bus patronage fell significantly, and the Government provided welcome financial support for the continued operation of an almost complete bus service around the county. Passenger numbers are increasing but are still below the levels necessary to sustain full commercial operation of the pre-pandemic bus network.

- 2.21. Currently, overall bus patronage is running between 75% and 80% of pre-Covid levels. Pressures relating to the reduction in Government financial support and ongoing problems with staff retention and recruitment means that it is likely some changes to the network will be necessary in the period up to October 2022. This may reset the pre-EP baseline to a lower level than at present and represents a risk to the network.

Factors affecting bus use in Oxfordshire

- 2.22. There are several factors likely to affect bus use during the Plan period. These are outlined below.

Geography and demography

- 2.22. Oxfordshire is one of the most rural counties in south east England. Provision of bus services in the rural areas is considerably sparser than in the towns, in Oxford city or on main radial corridors.
- 2.23. Oxfordshire covers just over 1,000 square miles and has an estimated current population of 697,000, approximately 161,000 of whom live in Oxford. ONS data suggests that 21.7% of the population are aged over 60.
- 2.24. There are high levels of personal wealth, coupled with high levels of vehicle ownership (17.5% of households overall have no available car or van, although this is significantly higher in Oxford). The county is the 10th least deprived of 151 upper-tier authorities, but there are significant pockets of deprivation. One area in Oxford is in the 10% most deprived nationally, with a further 16 amongst the top 20% – six of these are in Banbury and one in Abingdon.
- 2.25. In Oxfordshire's deeper rural areas, the operation of commercially sustainable conventional bus services is extremely challenging. Consideration is therefore being given to adoption of alternative means of provision in these areas.

Growth and development

- 2.26. Oxfordshire is an attractive location to live and work, and as such very significant growth of the population and housing stock over the next 12 years is expected. The most recent wave of Local Plans in the county (ending in 2031/2034) allocated sites for 100,000 new dwellings for this period. Some have already been delivered and some may be delivered late, but at a conservative estimate some 50,000 new dwellings will be delivered in the decade from 2022 onwards.
- 2.27. Oxfordshire's internal estimate of population growth is for an increase of 13,600 new residents per annum over this period, or an almost 20% increase in population from the 2019 estimate of 697,000 people over the next decade.
- 2.28. The LTA is already planning for new bus services for most of these new residents, which will be funded by Section 106 payments negotiated from developers to establish the services as viable commercial operations. The effect

of population growth from planned new developments is predicted to increase the number of County bus passengers by 10%, or by 4 million passengers per annum, by the tenth year (2031).

- 2.29. A summary of some of the current and forthcoming major housing development proposals expected through adopted Local Plans is included in Table 2 below.

District	Development (and quantum)
Oxford City	Barton Park (885)
West Oxfordshire	Eynsham (3,200) Witney (2,850) Chipping Norton (1,200) Carterton (900)
Cherwell	Bicester (7,900) Banbury (4,900) Begbroke and Yarnton (1,950) Kidlington (1,790) Heyford Park (1,600)
Vale of White Horse	Didcot (3,350) Grove (2,500) Wantage (1,500) Shippon (1,200) Abingdon (1,150) Faringdon (900)
South Oxfordshire	Oxford (5,380) Chalgrove (2,100) Culham (2,100) Didcot (1,880) Berinsfield (1,700)

Table 2: Recent and future development pipeline

Congestion

- 2.30. The Council and local bus operators work proactively together to identify local congestion locations. Congestion on the network can lead to a vicious cycle of delays, increased journey times and increased resource requirements leading to higher fares or service reductions, a decline in patronage and further increased congestion.
- 2.31. In order to tackle these issues, the Council and bus operators entered a Punctuality Improvement Partnership (PIP) in 2020. The current target for services measured at origin points is 90% of all journeys operating within a window of no more than one minute early or five minutes late.

- 2.32. Whilst current performance is 87%, this metric may be less important than average bus speed in the context of the Oxfordshire frequent bus network. In Oxford city, bus speeds declined on most corridors over the period 2015 to 2018 as indicated in Table 3 below.

Corridor	2015	2018	% change
Banbury Road (service 2)	16.01	15.02	-6.18
Iffley Road (service 3)	12.72	13.34	4.87
Botley Road/Old Road (service 4)	17.47	16.97	-2.86
Cowley Road (services 1/5)	11.92	11.41	-4.27
Woodstock Road (service 6)	18.42	15.85	-13.95
London Road (service 8)	11.90	11.45	-3.78
Abingdon Road (service X13)	16.89	14.97	-11.36

Table 3: Bus speeds in Oxford city (sample) (mph)

- 2.33. Measures undertaken through the EP Scheme will intend to reverse this downward trend and improve bus journey times for passengers, leading to a virtuous circle of increased productivity and patronage growth.

Transport policy, climate change and air quality

- 2.34. The Council declared a 'climate emergency' in April 2019 and adopted a Climate Action Framework. The Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance, which assumed control of the authority in May 2021, has identified several policy objectives in relation to transport, which include:

- tackling the 'climate emergency' through rapid decarbonisation, proper accounting of carbon emissions and ambitious targets, as well as supporting climate resilience; and
- increased investment in an inclusive, integrated, county-wide active and sustainable travel network fit for the 21st century to improve choice and reduce car journeys across the county.

- 2.35. The Council's emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP), which is anticipated to be adopted in 2022, contains several ambitious targets for which public transport is key, including:

- replacing or removing 1 in 4 current private car trips by 2030;
- delivery of a zero-carbon transport network by 2040, alongside replacement or reduction of 1 in 3 current private car trips; and
- delivery of a transport network which contributes to a climate positive future by 2050.

- 2.36. There is a total of 13 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Oxfordshire, including the whole of Oxford city. These are all areas with good bus connectivity and patronage growth through improved services and vehicle restraint will assist with improving air quality in these locations. The Council is

working with bus operator partners to secure investment in zero-emission buses through Government competitive funding processes to assist with decarbonisation of the county's bus fleet, and an allocation of £32.8m of funding from the Department for Transport's ZEBRA scheme was confirmed by the Department in March 2022. This funding is dependent on the implementation of a package of core transport schemes for Oxford City, as described in 2.37 below.

- 2.37. The County and City Councils are also progressing a Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ) pilot in Oxford city centre, the first phase of which came into place in April 2022, (with further phases planned) together with developing plans for a package of core transport schemes for Oxford City scheme which includes traffic filters and a Workplace Parking Levy to discourage car trips and significantly improve bus journey times and reliability, whilst also directly supporting the roll-out of zero-emission buses through the ZEBRA project.

Car parking availability and pricing

- 2.38. Within Oxfordshire, parking charges and availability vary between Oxford city centre, its suburban district centres and county town centres.
- 2.39. Parking is generally administered by the district councils, which have their own policies and practices regarding provision and charging in their off-road car parks. The County Council is only responsible for on-street parking and, since November 2021, for parking enforcement throughout the LTA area.
- 2.40. Oxford city centre is the most expensive location for parking, with longer-term stays discouraged in favour of the comprehensive Park & Ride system – which has five sites located on or close to the ring road, with new sites and 'transport hubs' under development aimed at encouraging switch from car to bus earlier in the journey.
- 2.41. The extent and cost of public car parking at the Oxford University Hospitals Trust sites in Headington is a difficult and emotive subject, but the Trust have staff parking policies which are pro-bus and encourage use of the extensive (and expanding) network of direct bus links. The Trust subsidises bus travel through additional discounting to bus passes through an employee ticketing arrangement.
- 2.42. In the rural districts, discounted or free parking is perceived as a means of encouraging footfall to town centres. Consequently, Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire councils offer free parking for up to two hours in their car parks, whilst West Oxfordshire has a free parking policy. Parking is also free of charge in the privately-operated Bicester Village and the Banbury Gateway Shopping Park, which reduces the scope for more realistic parking charges elsewhere in the area.
- 2.43. This Partnership needs to work to encourage provision and the use of other modes of transport to serve employment areas and retail areas. This should be carried out alongside a comprehensive parking management policy that seeks

to effectively manage parking demand, and encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport to these locations.

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3. Engagement

Existing consultations

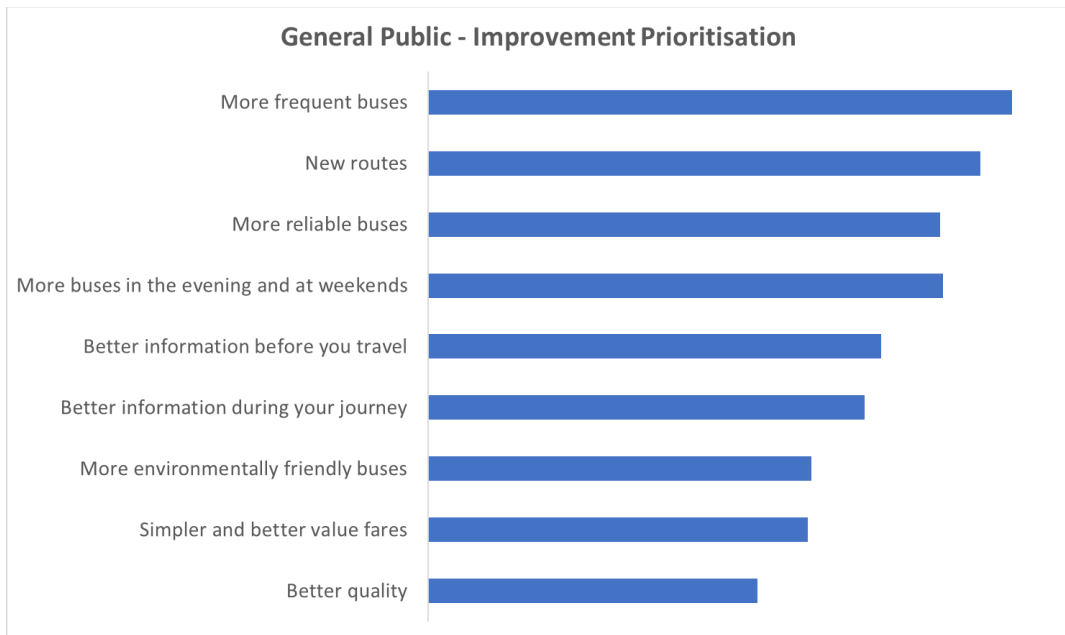
- 3.1. Two sources of information are available regarding passenger experiences of using the bus services in Oxfordshire, and what both users and non-users might want to see through the BSIP and EP processes:
- a survey undertaken by Transport Focus (2019); and
 - an engagement exercise undertaken by the Council in preparation of its BSIP (2021).
- 3.2. The Transport Focus work was undertaken as part of an annual national project to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of the bus network in each local authority area, and amongst the larger transport groups. Table 4 below highlights some of the key outcomes from the survey and compares it to a similar exercise undertaken in 2016.

	2016 (%)	2019 (%)	% points change
Overall satisfaction	91	93	+2
Value for money	60	61	+1
Punctuality	72	71	-1
Journey time	85	82	-3
Bus stop	82	85	+3

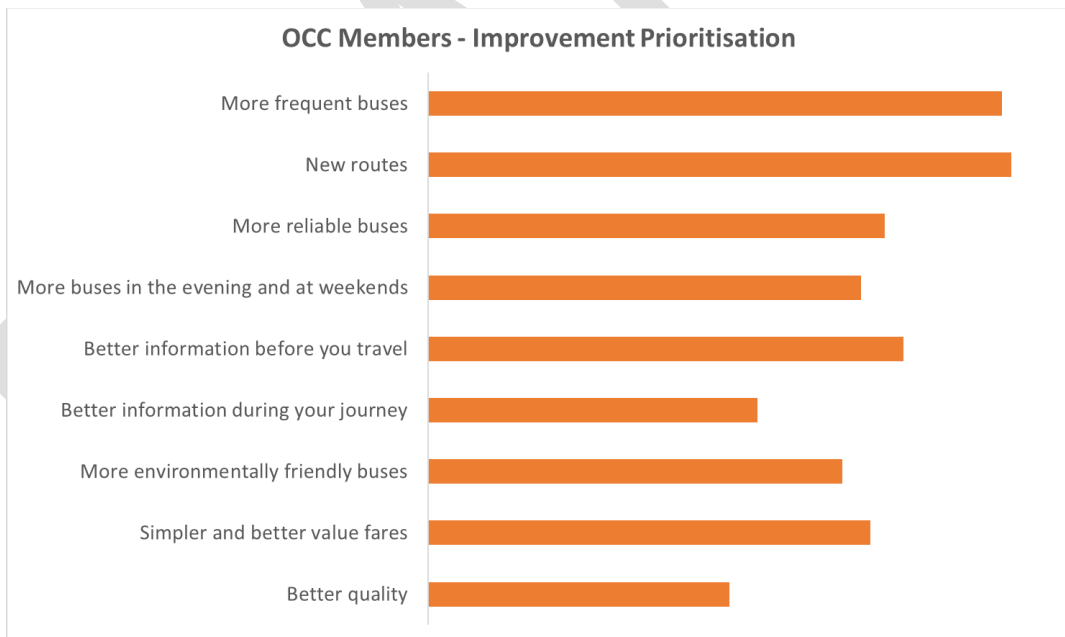
Table 4: Bus satisfaction in Oxfordshire (Transport Focus, 2019)

- 3.3. The exercise revealed generally high levels of customer satisfaction, although value for money was the lowest ranked of all the major categories. Overall satisfaction with bus services actually improved slightly, although scores for punctuality and journey times declined – commensurate with the congestion issues previously described.
- 3.4. In summer 2021, the Council undertook an engagement exercise related to the preparation of the BSIP. Four groups were particularly targeted:
- General public;
 - Oxfordshire County Council members;
 - Town and parish councils; and
 - Wider stakeholders.
- 3.5. All four surveys gave a clear preference for more frequent buses, new bus routes and more reliable buses, the themes of which underpin the proposals set out in the BSIP and subsequently the EP Plan and Scheme.
- 3.6. The responses endorse and strengthen the Premium Route policy of frequent services, the Rural Flexible Bus strategy and the Eastern Arc rapid transit proposal, and the emphasis on Bus Priority measures to secure reliable and faster journeys.

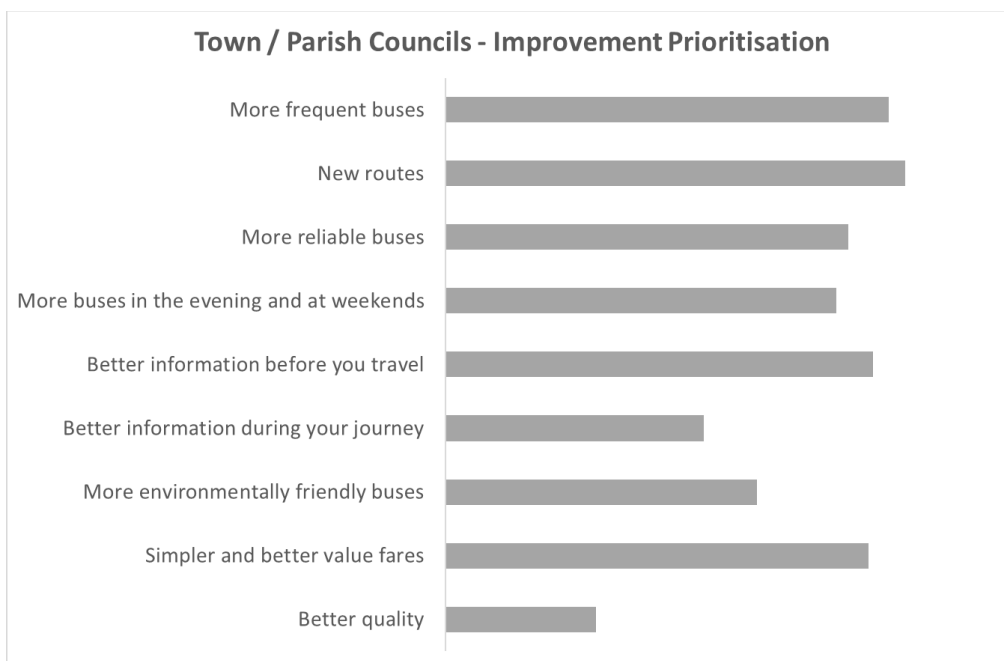
3.7. Figure 4 below summarises the preferences of each group.



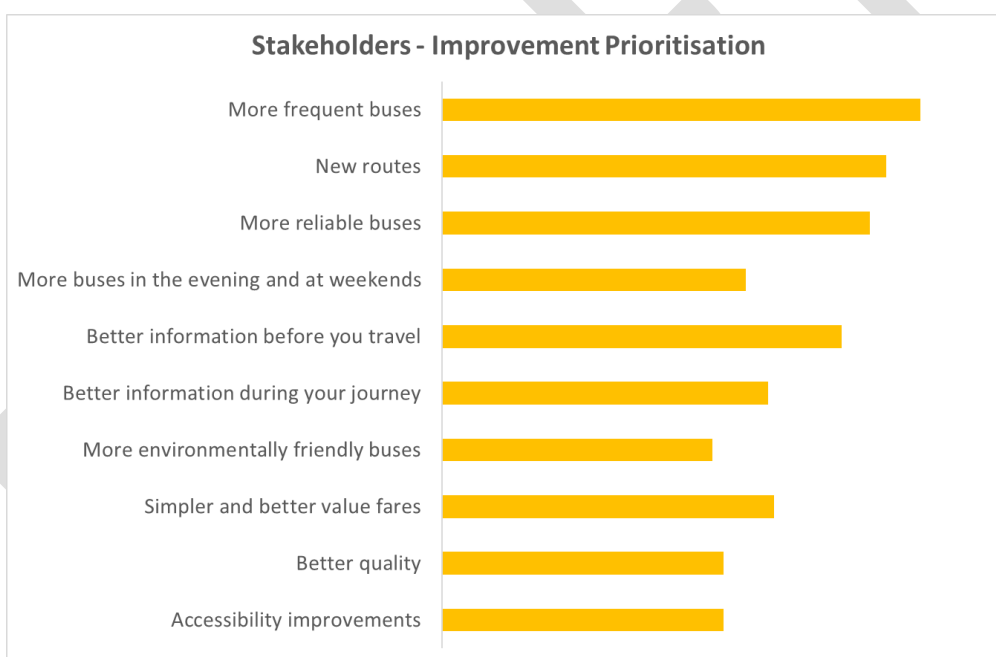
Responses: 261 (207 bus users)



Responses: 20



Responses: 39



Responses: 14

Figure 4: Results of bus improvement prioritisation surveys

3.8 The County Council also received some additional comments on buses as part of its public consultation on its Draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. Overall, the policies in 'public transport' chapter of the LTCP were well supported with policies in this chapter averaging 75% 'strongly support' or 'partially support'. The 'bus strategy' policy was particularly well supported with 86% of respondents 'strongly' or 'partially' supporting the policy. The importance of buses and the need to improve the public transport system to meet the LTCPs goals was a recurring comment throughout the questionnaire.

- 3.9 Respondents identified a very wide range of additional considerations in free text responses. In total 11 different topics were identified, with a range of specific suggestions within each of these. The 2 most common topics were 'general public transport comments' and 'cost'.
- 3.10 General comments about public transport were wide ranging and included a range of suggested ways to improve the bus system in Oxfordshire or complaints about the current system. The most comments were around the need for more bus services, the need to stop cuts to bus services and the need for reliable bus services.
- 3.11 Comments about 'cost' were all related to the need to make bus services cheaper in Oxfordshire. This included suggestions to make bus services free for young people, free park and ride and subsidised bus fares.

Future consultation plans

- 3.12 In line with published guidance, the Council will be reviewing its BSIP on an annual basis. As part of this process, the Council will engage with stakeholders, and seek feedback on performance and priorities for the Partnership to consider.
- 3.13 In doing so, the Council needs to fulfil its statutory duties to engage with hard-to-reach groups, including those with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act. The Council will always seek to go above and beyond the statutory minimum in engaging with communities and stakeholders as part of plans to improve bus services across Oxfordshire.
- 3.14 The EP Board will develop a detailed consultation plan for ratification. The Council and bus operators have a number of established communication channels such as online portals, on-bus notices, social media and libraries through which such an exercise would be undertaken.

4. Governance and Review

EP Plan and Scheme length and review

- 4.1 The EP Plan and Scheme will take effect on [Date TBC] until further notice.
- 4.2 The EP Plan and Scheme will be initially reviewed no later than 31 March 2025, to align with the end of the anticipated BSIP funding period. Further reviews will take place at no greater than three-yearly intervals from the date of the previous review but may take place more frequently where required.
- 4.3 The EP Scheme is only applicable if the EP Plan is in place. Therefore, should the EP Plan be revoked, the EP Scheme will automatically cease to take effect. Equally, the EP Plan would be revoked should no EP Scheme(s) be in force.

Governance arrangements

- 4.4 A new Enhanced Partnership Board will be created with 10 voting members – 5 officers from the public sector and 5 from the private sector, as detailed in Table 5 below.

Member organisation	Votes
Oxfordshire County Council officers	3
Oxfordshire City & District Councils officers	2
Operator with >25% market share: Go Ahead Group (Oxford)	2
Operator with >25% market share: Stagecoach West	2
Other Bus Operators	1

Table 5: Proposed Oxfordshire EP Board members

- 4.5 In this way, neither the public nor private sectors have an absolute veto on measures to be enacted through the EP Plan and Scheme. A simple majority is required for decisions to be made. The Board will meet at least four times per year, in person or virtually. The position of Chair will be held on a rotational basis with public and private sector partners each holding it twice per year. By exception, the position of Chair may also be held by a mutually-agreed independent person for a maximum of 6 months. Similarly, District/City representatives would be agreed annually.
- 4.6 For a proposal to be accepted, a majority of those in attendance is required. Board members are required to propose deputies should they be unable to attend meetings. Should other bus operators achieve >25% market share, the Board will be reconstituted as appropriate.
- 4.7 Beneath the EP Board, a separate Partnership Forum will be created which will meet twice annually and comprise Board members plus six other stakeholders who have a financial interest in the bus network. These are:

- Oxford Brookes University;
- University of Oxford;
- MEPC plc (owners of Milton Park);
- Harwell Campus / Science and Technology Funding Council;
- UKAEA Culham Science Centre; and
- Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust (subject to continued funding being made available).

- 4.8. Other stakeholders such as bus user and transport interest groups may be invited to join and/or present at individual meetings as appropriate. Recognised bus user groups (Transport Focus and Bus Users UK) will be invited to attend Board meetings in a non-voting capacity. They may contribute to the matters on the agenda at the discretion of the chair.
- 4.9. The EP Board will be supported by Working Groups aligned to the BSIP and EP objectives outlined in Section 1. The Working Groups will be the main delivery mechanism for measures approved by the EP Board.
- 4.10. The Working Groups and the areas of interest are shown in Table 6 below. Membership of the working groups will be decided by the EP Board. These are the interventions the partnership believes are necessary to deliver the objectives of the EP.

Group Name	Areas covered
Keeping buses at the heart of decision-making	Interaction of enhanced partnership outputs with other council / Stakeholder workstreams Bus strategy
Making buses faster and more reliable	Bus priority schemes Roadworks management Pinch points and congestion hotspots Punctuality improvement
Upgrading bus infrastructure	Bus stops Mobility hubs Real Time Information (estate / systems) Bus Interchanges New developments – bus access Decarbonisation infrastructure
Improving the image of buses	Branding and marketing Quality standards Vehicle features
Making buses easier to access and understand	Smart ticketing Behavioural change initiatives Real Time Information (customer facing tools) Publicity and customer information

Table 6: EP Board Working Groups

Bespoke arrangements for varying or revoking the EP Plan and Scheme

- 4.11. The EP Plan cannot be varied without recourse to the full formal variation procedure laid down by Section 138K of the Transport Act 2000.
- 4.12. Under powers at Section 138E of the Transport Act 2000, EP Scheme variations where this section is quoted will be subject to the bespoke voting mechanism set out below.
- 4.13. Consideration will be given to potential EP Scheme variations proposed by a member of the EP Board. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the BSIP, EP Plan and current local transport policies. Such requests should be in writing and submitted to the LTA by email at bsip@oxfordshire.gov.uk.
- 4.14. On receipt of a request for a variation under this section, the Council will convene the EP Board with at least 14 days' notice to consider the proposal. If the proposed variation receives the required number of votes, the variation can be made subject to any Council approval processes that may be necessary.
- 4.15. Once the EP Scheme variation has received sufficient approval, the Council will publish the revised EP Scheme on its website. EP Board members who are absent or not expressing a view at the meeting (either in person or in writing) will be deemed to be abstaining from the decision.
- 4.16. Any variation proposal rejected may be resubmitted no sooner than 6 months from the date of initial rejection.
- 4.17. If any member of the EP Board considers it is necessary to revoke the EP Scheme, the EP Board will be convened. If the decision is taken to revoke the EP Scheme it will follow the legislative procedures for revocation. Timescales and voting requirements are as per for paragraph 4.14 above.
- 4.18. If at any point in the future, any area covered by this EP Scheme is included in a bus franchising scheme, the relevant requirements set out in this EP Plan and Scheme will cease to apply to areas covered by the franchising scheme, in line with the arrangements set out in the scheme and as per the terms of Section 123H(6)-(8) of the Transport Act 2000.

Implications for Small and Medium Sized Operators (SMOs)

- 4.19. The vast majority of commercial services in Oxfordshire are provided by large operators. However, a small proportion are provided by small and medium sized operators (SMOs). It is important to ensure that the effects of the partnership do not unduly impact upon smaller operators' ability to engage or to comply with requirements.

- 4.20. The EP Board structure affords operator voting rights to both large and small operators. In addition, some operator requirements may not be placed upon certain categories of service which represent many smaller operators' main commercial interests. In other cases, funding will be made available to support SMOs to meet the requirements.

Competition Test

- 4.21. Oxfordshire County Council has undertaken an assessment of the impacts of the EP Plan and Scheme, made on [Date TBC], on competition and believes it will not or is unlikely to have a significantly adverse effect for the purposes of Part 1 of Schedule 10 of the Transport Act 2000.
- 4.22. The implementation of an EP Plan and Scheme is intended to deliver improvements to bus services for passengers in a deregulated environment. The EP is not expected to have significant adverse effects on competition as operators remain free to amend and introduce new services in the area provided that the necessary standards contained in the EP Scheme are met.
- 4.23. In any event, the LTA considers that the EP Plan and Scheme would be justified because:
- (a) it is with a view to achieving one or more of the following purposes:
- securing improvements in the quality of vehicles or facilities used for or in connection with the provision of local services;
 - securing other improvements in local services of benefit to users of local services; and
 - reducing or limiting traffic congestion, noise or air pollution
- (b) its effect on competition is or is likely to be proportionate to the achievement of that purpose or any of those purposes.
- 4.24. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) have been consulted on the EP Plan and Scheme as required by Section 138F of the Transport Act 2000.

PART B: ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP (EP) SCHEME

5. Introduction

- 5.1. This document fulfils the statutory requirements for an EP Scheme, in accordance with Section 138 of the Transport Act 2000.
- 5.2. The EP Scheme sets out the legal obligations on Oxfordshire County Council and local bus operators and is the mechanism by which the commitments made in the BSIP and EP Plan are delivered. It places obligations:
 - (a) on local authorities to deliver their requirements; and
 - (b) on all bus operators to abide by the standards of service it imposes.
- 5.3. Enforcement action can be taken by the registration authority if any bus operator fails to abide by such standards.
- 5.4. The EP Scheme has been jointly developed by Oxfordshire County Council and bus operators that provide local bus services in the county, with the intention of achieving the intended improvements and delivering the objectives of the associated EP Plan.

Commencement date and review

- 5.5. The EP Scheme will take effect on [Date TBC] until further notice.
- 5.6. The EP Scheme will be initially reviewed no later than 31 March 2025, to align with the end of the anticipated BSIP funding period. Further reviews will take place at no greater than three-yearly intervals from the date of the previous review but may take place more frequently where required.
- 5.7. The EP Scheme is only applicable if the EP Plan is in place. Therefore, should the EP Plan be revoked, the EP Scheme will automatically cease to take effect. Equally, the EP Plan would be revoked should no EP Scheme(s) be in force.

6. Scope

Geographical scope

- 6.1. This EP Scheme and Plan covers the area of the county of Oxfordshire. This is shown by the substantive area shaded in green in the current Oxfordshire bus map (correct at October 2021) in Figure 5.

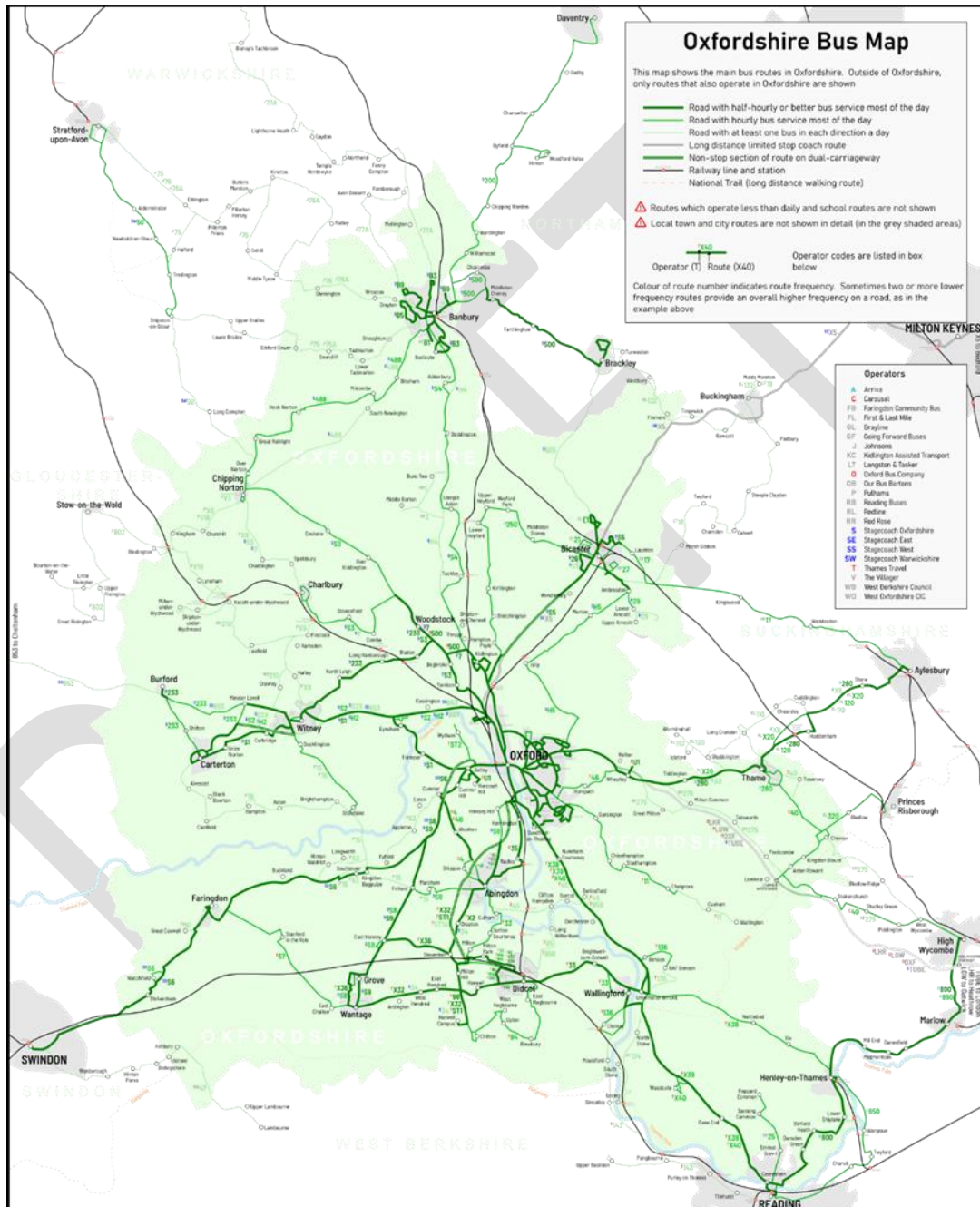


Figure 5: Geographical scope of the EP Scheme

Exempted services

- 6.2. The EP Scheme covers all local registered bus services operating in the county of Oxfordshire, with the following exemptions:

- Long distance coach services where less than 50% of the route length is registered within Oxfordshire and where the service is operated by a vehicle registered as a coach;
- Local bus services which are operated under contract to other local authorities;
- Local bus services which operate during school term time only and are primarily intended to convey schoolchildren;
- Local bus services operated under Section 22 of the Transport Act 1985 (“community bus services”);
- Publicly-registered bus services whose primary role is to serve tourism and the leisure market, for example city sight seeing buses in Oxford;
- A service which is registered as a local service under section 6 of the Transport Act 1985, but which would otherwise be an excursion or tour within the meaning in section 137(1) of that Act; and
- Services operated because of the historical interest of the vehicle.

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7. Facilities, Measures and Requirements

- 7.1. Facilities, measures and requirements to be provided under the EP Scheme are detailed in annexes as follows:
- Annex A: Facilities to be provided by Oxfordshire County Council;
 - Annex B: Measures to be undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council; and
 - Annex C: Requirements to be met by local bus operators.
- 7.2. **Facilities** are defined as physical assets that are provided at specific locations along particular routes (or parts of routes) within the EP scheme area or new and improved bus priority measures. This is deemed for such purposes of section 138D(1) of the Transport Act 2000.
- 7.3. **Measures** are defined as improvements with the aim of:
- increasing the use of local bus service serving the routes to which the measures relate or ending or reducing a decline in their use; or
 - improving the quality of local bus services.
- 7.4. All obligations on the local authority with respect to facilities and measures apply to Oxfordshire County Council. The Council will liaise with Oxford City Council/District Councils, town and parish councils with regards to bus shelters as they can be responsible for ownership and maintenance of these.
- 7.5. All obligations on local bus operators are detailed in Annex C and apply to any registered local bus service provided that it is not exempted from obligations under the EP Plan or Scheme, unless otherwise stated in the list of requirements.

Connecting Oxford and ZEBRA – Delivery of associated improvements

- 7.6. The County Council will install 6 bus gates that are the key infrastructure components of the Council's Zero Emissions Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA). These will be operational, subject to detailed design and statutory consultation, by 30 April 2023. These will be maintained in a fit-for purpose state throughout their operational life, with the County Council using its best endeavours to fix any issues with this infrastructure in an efficient and timely manner. The delivery of these traffic filters will enable bus journey time improvements to be delivered, with a target of a 10% improvement in bus journey times against pre-COVID levels to be achieved.
- 7.7. Oxford Bus Company and Stagecoach will deliver the necessary new buses and changes to depots and associated infrastructure to enable all routes operating wholly within the Oxford Smartzone area to be operated by all-zero emission vehicles. These new buses will meet the latest accessibility standards, and will also have audio and visual passenger information in operation at all times.
- 7.8. The first zero emission bus will be operational in Oxford by 31 July 2023. All of the routes operating wholly within the Oxford Smartzone area will be fully operated by Zero Emission Buses by 31 March 2024. Operators should also

use reasonable efforts to ensure that any vehicles surplus to requirements as a result of ZEBRA funding which are of at least Euro 5 emissions standards should be redeployed on other routes within Oxfordshire, where such redeployment will lead to improved vehicle quality and improved air quality standards on the routes in question.

Cherwell Street, Banbury

- 7.8 The County Council will delivery bus priority improvements that will enable buses operating along Cherwell Street, Banbury, to gain priority over general traffic. This will be operational, subject to technical feasibility, detailed design, and statutory consultation, by [INSERT DATE]. These improvements will be maintained in a fit-for-purpose state throughout their operational life, with the County Council using its best endeavours to fix any issues with this infrastructure in an efficient and timely manner.
- 7.9 In delivering these improvements, the County Council will seek to connect this scheme with existing priority measures and planned schemes in Banbury. This includes the existing bus lane on George Street in Banbury, and planned improvements on Tramway Road in Banbury.

Other bus priority infrastructure improvements

- 7.10 The County Council will seek to deliver other bus priority infrastructure improvements identified in the BSIP, which have not been funded through BSIP funding, as soon as practicable. This is subject to available funding, technical feasibility, detailed design, and any statutory consultation.

Real time information improvements

- 7.11 The County Council will install new or upgrade existing 50 real time information screens across the Enhanced Partnership area per annum. The County Council will maintain these additional screens and existing screens in a fit-for-purpose state, and will replace screens subject to funding availability. How these improvements will be targeted will be agreed with operators, and may be subject to local consultation where substantial infrastructure works are required,
- 7.12 The County Council will also seek to deliver additional functionality to the real time system, and seek to integrate with new solutions and technologies. This is subject to funding being available, and agreement with operators.
- 7.13 Operators will arrange the delivery of vehicle location data and real time predictions to the County Council or its nominated data systems supplier using generally accepted data standards, either as currently or as they develop. The operator must provide to the County Council free access to this data with no additional or ongoing cost to the County Council. Both operators and the County Council or its nominated data systems supplier must maintain appropriate cyber security protections to enable this without significantly compromising data security.

Bus priority traffic signals

- 7.14 The County Council will deliver improvements that prioritise buses at [x] traffic signals across Oxfordshire by 2025. The County Council will maintain this infrastructure and supporting software in a fit-for-purpose state.
- 7.15 Operators will arrange the delivery of vehicle location data and real time predictions to the County Council or its nominated data systems supplier using generally accepted data standards, either as currently or as they develop. The operator must provide to the County Council free access to this data with no additional or ongoing cost to the County Council. Both operators and the County Council or its nominated data systems supplier must maintain appropriate cyber security protections to enable this without significantly compromising data security.

Ticketing arrangements

- 7.16 Operators will work in partnership and deliver a discounted ticket for persons aged from 16 to 18 years old (inclusive), subject to funding being confirmed by the Department for Transport and being practical to deliver within competition rules. This will ultimately achieve a £1 flat fare for all young people travelling within the existing Oxford Smartzone, and will enable young people aged up to 19 years old to travel for a child fare on participating bus services throughout Oxfordshire.
- 7.17 All operators subject to this partnership will be required to continue to accept current joint ticketing arrangements that are in place in Oxfordshire on any services that are subject to those arrangements. Any new services and operators seeking to operate in areas covered by these joint ticketing arrangements must use their best endeavours to accept these ticketing arrangements on their services.
- 7.17 All operators and the County Council commit to investigating, trialling, and implementing where feasible simplified fares, multi-operator tickets, and other types of ticketing innovation to serve passenger in Oxfordshire. Any such ticketing schemes will be considered by the Enhanced Partnership Board, and where required be included within the scope of this Enhanced Partnership. The terms and conditions of any such schemes will be negotiated between the County Council, operators, and other partners in those schemes.
- 7.18 All operators commit to accepting contactless payment for all ticket products offered in Oxfordshire by 2025. Additionally, on bus contactless payment must be offered on all local bus services covered by this partnership by 2024.

Improvements to bus services

- 7.17 The County Council and bus operators will, subject to funding being identified, identify opportunities to improve and enhance local bus services, based upon the service priorities established in the Bus Service Improvement Plan. These being frequent urban routes, primary interurban routes, and secondary services.

7.18 The County Council will work with bus operators to explore opportunities to expand the local bus network, subject to available and future funding. The Council will also use reasonable endeavours to manage and maintain the existing local bus network in close cooperation with bus operators, subject to available and future funding.

7.19 The County Council will work with bus operators, and neighbouring local authorities and developers where applicable, to introduce and maintain the following services specifically. These are to be wholly or partly funded through the Department for Transport's Bus Service Improvement Plan funding, and the successful delivery of these projects is contingent on this funding being secured. The details of specific routes and areas served will be subject to further feasibility and liaison with bus operators.

Service	Summary
Newbury – Harwell – Didcot / Oxford	This scheme will initially seek to operate a new service between Newbury and Harwell. Subject to further funding and the commercial success of the route, options to extend the service to Didcot or Oxford will be explored.
Bicester – Brackley	New bus service 505 started around 2 years ago, funded by section 106 contributions in Brackley. The BSIP process offers an opportunity to restart this essential bus link and to tie it in with plans for a refreshed hourly bus service from Brackley to Northampton and with the existing s5 Bicester to Oxford bus service.
New rural bus projects	<p>New semi-flexible routes:</p> <p>New North Downs service – linking to Didcot and Harwell Campus. This could link the rural villages of North Moreton, South Moreton, Aston Tirrold, East Hagbourne, West Hagbourne, Blewbury, Upton and Chilton. There will be integration with Premium interurban bus services in Didcot and Harwell, as well as train services at Didcot Parkway.</p> <p>New Cherwell Valley service - linking to Bicester. This could link the rural villages of Bucknell, Ardley, Fritwell, Somerton, Souldern, Clifton, Stratton Audley, Fringford, Hethe, and Hardwick. There would be intergration with Premium interurban bus services in Bicester, and potentially integration with rail service at Bicester Village station.</p>
SBSF Projects	<p>Maintain the following services:</p> <p>46: Cowley Templar's Square to Wheatley ASDA via Horspath, Littleworth, Wheatley Village. Third party funding has been obtained to extend this service to</p>

	<p>Great Milton and Oxford city centre and to improve the days and hours of operation.</p> <p>63: Southmoor to Oxford via Longworth, Appleton, and Cumnor</p>
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Improvements to bus stops and interchanges

- 7.21 The County Council will, subject to funding being identified, seek to establish a network of mobility hubs across Oxfordshire. This is with the intention to provide an enhanced passenger experience waiting at interchanges and interchanging between services, and to improve the overall quality of the built environment. Operators are expected to contribute positively and proactively to this work, and this will require contributions from local stakeholders.
- 7.22 The County Council will seek to maintain current bus stops and interchanges to their current standards. The County Council will use reasonable endeavours to seek opportunities and funding to improve the quality of local bus stops, park and ride facilities, and interchange facilities.
- 7.21 The County Council and bus operators will work with train operating companies to better develop and deliver coordinated services between bus and rail services across the Scheme area. This will require positive input from all parties, and the need to balance the need to interchange between bus and rail and other markets served by both bus and rail services.

ANNEX A: FACILITIES TO BE PROVIDED BY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Objective	Facility provided	Location	Timescale
Making buses faster and more reliable	Bus gates	Oxford (High Street)	Existing facilities to be retained at least at current hours of operation
		Oxford (Abingdon Road/St Aldates)	
		Oxford (George Street)	
		Oxford (Magdalen Street East)	
		Oxford (Castle Street/Norfolk Street)	
		Oxford (Barton Park/Foxwell Drive)	
		Banbury (Usher Drive/Rother Road)	
		Didcot (Station Road)	
		Wantage (Elder Way)	
	Didcot (Diamond Drive/Larch Drive)	To be provided by a third party in 2022	
	Bus lanes	Botley (West Way) – eastbound from Eynsham Road to Seacourt	Existing facilities to be retained at least at current hours of operation
		Oxford (Botley Road) – eastbound from Seacourt to Binsey Lane	
		Oxford (Botley Road) – westbound from Osney Bridge to west of Bridge Street	
Oxford (Abingdon Road) – northbound from Redbridge P&R to Canning Crescent			

		Oxford (Abingdon Road) – southbound from Old Abingdon Road to Redbridge P&R	
		Oxford (Old Abingdon Road/Bertie Place) – eastbound from Go Outdoors to Abingdon Road	
		Oxford (London Road) – eastbound from Gipsy Lane to Osler Road	
		Oxford (London Road) – westbound from Gladstone Road to Stile Road	
		Oxford (London Road) - eastbound from Gladstone Road to Lyndworth Close	
		Oxford (London Road) – westbound from Thornhill P&R to Headington Roundabout	
		Oxford (A4185 Oxford Road/Banbury Road) – southbound from Kidlington Roundabout to Harefields	
		Oxford (A4185 Banbury Road) – southbound from Carlton Road to Grove Street	
		Oxford (A4185 Banbury Road) – southbound to Cunliffe Close to St Margaret's Road	
		Oxford (A4185 Banbury Road) – northbound from Bevington Road to Cunliffe Close	

		Oxford (A44 Woodstock Road) – southbound from Pear Tree P&R to BP Garage	
		Oxford (Woodstock Road) – northbound from Leckford Road to outside 229 Woodstock Road	
		Oxford (Woodstock Road) – southbound from roundabout with A40 to Beech Croft Road	
		Kidlington (A4260 Oxford Road) – southbound from The Broadway to Kidlington Roundabout	
		Banbury (George Street) – eastbound from Christchurch Court to Cherwell Street	
	Pre-signal detection/advance	Oxford (Botley Road) – eastbound	Existing facilities to be retained
		Oxford (A44 Woodstock Road) – southbound	
		Oxford (Abingdon Road) – northbound	
		Abingdon (Wootton Road) – northbound	
	Upgrading bus infrastructure	Park & Ride	Thornhill Park & Ride – terminal building
Water Eaton Park & Ride – terminal building			
Bus stops		All County	Existing facilities to be maintained at an acceptable level

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ANNEX B: MEASURES TO BE PROVIDED BY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Measures that are to be funded through the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA)

Scheme Name	Details	Location	Timescale for delivery
ZEBRA improvements to buses	<p>Provision of £38.8 million in funding, of which £32.8m is to be provided by the Department for Transport and £6 by Oxfordshire County Council, for procurement of 159 battery-electric buses, consisting of a mix of single and double-decker buses. To be operated by the Oxford Bus Company and Stagecoach Oxford. Operators have committed to provide £xxm of funding to support this project</p> <p><i>Note: achieving this measure is dependant upon the delivery of the equivalent measure by bus operators, as outlined in Appendix C.</i></p>	Buses to operate around Oxford, and all services operating wholly within the Oxford Smartzone to be converted to operation by Zero-Emission vehicles as a result of this scheme.	TBC

Scheme Name	Details	Location	Timescale for delivery

Other general measures

Objective	Area	Measures	Timescale
Keeping buses at the heart of decision-making	Enhanced Partnership Board	Make suitable officers available for all meetings of the Enhanced Partnership Board	Ongoing
Making buses faster and more reliable	Roadworks management	Provision of Route Monitor (via Elgin) to identify works on bus routes and ensure data sharing with bus companies	February 2022
		Permanent provision of an Active and Bus Travel Champion within the Network Management Team to support works promoters with active and bus travel mitigations	Temporary provision in place. Permanent position 2023 (subject to funding)
		Review existing Conjoined Routes to ensure suitability to bus operators	April 2022
		Deliver further improvements to Street Manager (working jointly with DfT)	Ongoing
		Promote active and bus travel mitigations via the HAUC local and regional groups.	Ongoing

		Ensure that filming and public events on and adjacent to the highway have suitable mitigations for active and bus travel	Ongoing
		Advise operators of planned works adhering to nationally set notice periods as follows: Minor works – 3 days Standard – 10 days Major – 3 months	Ongoing
	Parking and Moving Vehicle enforcement	Use intelligence driven data to identify parking and enforcement hot spots across the County and enforce appropriately with particular emphasis on bus routes	Ongoing
		Implement new restrictions (including Controlled Parking Zones) across the County to better manage the flow of traffic with particular emphasis on bus routes.	Ongoing
		Introduce physical measures (e.g. ANPR, mobile cameras) to enable enforcement of moving traffic offences including bus stop clearways	March 2023
	Highway Asset Management & Maintenance	Give enhanced priority to bus critical infrastructure when identifying maintenance schemes for investment. Commensurate with other needs / demands.	Ongoing
		Acknowledge the potentially heightened adverse effect that a safety / serviceability defect can have on the network and its	Ongoing

		users where bus infrastructure is concerned and to ensure this consideration is reflected in the categorisation of those defects for repair, in line with the County Council's adopted policies and risk-based approach.	
		Ensure that the importance of bus infrastructure is reflected in the Council's updated Strategy and Plan for Highway Asset Management	July 2022
		Ensure that the presence of high frequency, premium and otherwise essential bus services is considered in the designation of sub-sets of the highway maintenance network; such as the Winter Service Network and the Resilient Network	Ongoing
Upgrading bus infrastructure	Bus stop accessibility and improvement	Define corridor-based programmes of bus stop improvement measures – shelters, improved signage kerbing, buildouts, lay-by repairs etc	August 2022
	Real Time Passenger Information	Continued roll-out and replacement of new RTPI screens at key locations	Ongoing
	Traffic signal priority	Development of AVL-UTC interface specifically to facilitate Bus Priority. Traffic Signal hardware and configuration support	March 2023
Making buses easier to access and understand	Bus network support	Continue to secure S106 funds from development and utilise on bus network support	Ongoing

ANNEX C: REQUIREMENTS TO BE MET BY LOCAL BUS OPERATORS

Objective	Requirement	Timescale
Keeping buses at the heart of decision-making	Make suitable company officers available for all meetings of the Enhanced Partnership Board, where relevant	Ongoing
Upgrading bus infrastructure	Ensure that Premium Route number grids are updated where a service change involves alterations to route numbers [timescale to be determined]	Ongoing
	Ensure that updated timetables are provided at bus stops where a service change involves alterations to timetables [timescale to be determined]	Ongoing
Improving the image of buses	All buses operating into Oxford City Centre to meet Euro V emission standards in line with the Low Emission Zone	Completed
	All buses operating into Oxford City Centre to meet Euro VI emission standards in line with the Bus Ultra Low Emission Zone	To be determined following outcome of ZEBRA bid
Making buses easier to access and understand	Proactive marketing and promotion of bus services through appropriate printed and online publicity and local campaigns to raise awareness	Ongoing