

**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**PROVISIONAL  
BUS STRATEGY**

**JUNE 2005**



## Executive Summary

Buses are at the heart of the County Council's 2<sup>nd</sup> Local Transport Plan. The Bus Strategy builds upon the past success of Oxfordshire in enabling and encouraging a growth in bus use. It describes how the Council creates the conditions in which commercial bus services can thrive, whilst ensuring that subsidized services are provided where necessary to supplement the commercial network, which best meet local needs and provide best value for money. It identifies a hierarchy of services:

- Premium Routes, running without subsidy at "Turn up and go" frequencies with high quality infrastructure;
- Hourly services, some running commercially and some with subsidy, with selected infrastructure enhancements to improve attractiveness and viability;
- Feeder services, provided in a variety of ways to serve the lightly populated areas off main routes.

Through this strategy, the County Council aims to achieve an overall 2% growth per annum in bus use.

### Premium Routes

A programme to develop these high frequency core services - including longer distance expressway services from Carterton/ Witney, Didcot/ Abingdon, and Bicester to Oxford - has been developed. Measures to be taken to support this network include:

- Ensuring buses have excellent access to main centres
- Ensuring major new development is located where it can be served by these routes
- Bus lanes and bus gates to protect buses from traffic delay
- Bus priority at traffic signals
- Management of parking and road works to minimize delays to buses
- Effective enforcement of traffic laws on bus routes
- Careful design of traffic calming to minimize impact on buses
- High quality bus stop infrastructure
- Further improvement of Park and Ride sites and investigation of remote Park and Ride
- Quality Partnerships with bus operators
- Real Time Information (Subject to a successful pilot)

### Hourly services

These routes will run at least hourly at standard times between 0700 and 1900 on Mondays to Saturdays. All settlements of over 1000 population will be on the network. Whilst some will no doubt require subsidy, the viability of

the network will be improved through good access and facilities in town centres and high quality facilities at other principal stops.

### Feeder Services

It is recognized that most of these services will require subsidies. Subsidized services will be reviewed on an area-by-area basis, with two areas programmed for review each year and contracts normally lasting four years. Characteristics of subsidy review will be:

- Home to School and public transport contracts reviewed together
- On bus surveys of usage by Council staff, supplemented by information from Parish Transport Representatives.
- A computer study of public transport accessibility in the area
- Consultation with bus operators
- Full consultation on all proposals with Parish Councils - including assistance with parish surveys, liaison with appointed parish transport representatives, and a joint meeting
- In most cases, tenders invited for services
- Achievable standards set for service quality
- Preference given to tenderers proposing higher quality vehicles
- Specific policies set for some (but not all) categories of service
- Subsidy decisions by Council Committee, on the basis of best value for money
- Alternatives to conventional bus services encouraged where appropriate
  - community transport (with the assistance of officers employed to support and assist CT operators)
  - Spare time in social and health care vehicles' schedules to provide public services.
  - Flexibly routed demand responsive services
  - Connecting feeder services

Other supporting policies: further policies are in place to support services at all levels in the hierarchy:

- Provision of high quality interchange facilities where services meet one another (or trains)
- Development of through, joint and network tickets (subject to further consultation)
- Ensuring high quality information as laid down in the Transport Information Strategy for Bus Services.
- A proactive approach to ensuring provision for people with disabilities, including vehicles, stop infrastructure and driver training on conventional services, provision (in partnership with District Councils) of extra Dial A Ride services specially for people with disabilities and support and advice for voluntary groups in providing transport.

- Working in partnership with health trusts and others to improve and develop viable bus links to major traffic generators outside traditional town and city centres
- Active steps to further improve air quality on bus routes, including a drivers code of conduct, standards set in Quality Partnerships and subsidy contracts, ticketing and other measures to reduce bus stopping times and traffic management to ensure smooth bus movement.
- Continuing to provide facilities for express coaches in Oxford City centre and exploring additional stopping points elsewhere
- Continuing to encourage development of commercial services by bus operators, seeking a Quality Contract to give the Council overall network control only in the event that operators are unwilling to cooperate in commercial service development.

The Council is confident that all of these measures, taken together, provide a firm framework for increasing the contribution that bus services make to tackling congestion and delivering accessibility.

# BUS STRATEGY

## 1 Introduction

Public transport, and in particular buses, will be at the heart of the County Council's second Local Transport Plan (LTP). Buses will play a crucial part in delivering the national shared priorities – tackling congestion, delivering accessibility, safer roads and better air quality – as well as contributing to the local priority of quality of public spaces and better streetscapes. In particular, the proposals for development of high frequency core bus services form a major part of the Council's plans to tackle congestion, and policies for provision of other services are crucial in delivering accessibility. Various measures are also proposed by which buses will contribute to better air quality.

The County Council's bus strategy and second Local Transport Plan share the same vision and objectives and will act together to achieve the County Council's desired outcomes.

As outlined in Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 2006 – 2011, providing high quality bus services has formed a central element of the County Council's strategy over the past five years and will continue to form the key strategy for the Council over the next five years and into the future. This document sets out ways in which that will be achieved. It sets out the policies and practices for maintenance and development of bus services and infrastructure. It is complementary to the Local Transport Plan, and forms a part of it. Reference should therefore be made to the main Local Transport Plan document for wider transportation policies, also details of specific transportation proposals including those affecting bus services in individual local areas.

The Council is required, as part of the Transport Act 2000, to have a Bus Strategy as part of the Local Transport Plan. As well as the broad proposals for the development of bus services, the Bus Strategy is specifically required to include:

- The policies for the payment of subsidy for bus services (replacing the previous statement on this required under the Transport Act 1985)
- Any proposals by the Council to establish Quality Partnerships with bus operators, under which improved bus facilities, and improved standards for quality of services, are agreed and enforced.
- Any proposals to introduce Quality Contracts, giving the Council power to set the level of bus services and exclude other operators from the route(s), where this is 'the only practicable way of implementing the Council's policies'.
- Any proposal to require joint or through ticketing arrangements between bus operators

It must have regard to the policies and practices employed in providing transport in delivery of the authority's education and social services functions,

but is not in itself the means by which these policies and practices are established and made public.

In addition, this document takes account of County, regional and national planning and transportation policies as summarised in the, second chapter of the Local Transport Plan – “Setting Transport in the Wider Context”.

These plans and policies already aim to encourage development in locations and ways which enable them to be effectively served by bus. However, it is recognised that the detail of these policies, and their implementation and practice, require further development before they can truly be said to fully encourage bus use, and during the life of this strategy these aspects will be further refined and improved. In particular, detailed policies on ticketing and implementation of the accessibility strategy, also detailed plans for capital expenditure in the light of capital funding levels yet to be announced will be included in the Final Bus Strategy 2006 – 2011, to be completed in early 2006. This will also include the outcome of further consultation and policy refinement. It should be noted that this strategy covers the period 2006 – 2011 and is the short term vision of a longer term strategy. The County Council’s longer term strategy (to 2026 and beyond) places heavy emphasis on bus provision and priority and the County Council is committed to the promotion of alternative modes to deliver its shared priorities.

This Strategy aims to take forward the goal of Oxfordshire Community Partnership, ‘to promote joined-up people-friendly travel throughout the County’ and to implement the individual priorities of the Partnership. It has been produced in conjunction and consultation with numerous consultees. This included in particular a stakeholder consultation with questionnaire, in parallel with that undertaken for the Local Transport Plan, plus meetings specifically about the Bus Strategy with bus operators, Parish Transport Representatives and the Committee on Inclusive Transport. The results of this consultation are mentioned in this document where there was a particular “message” from consultees; overall the consultation showed strong agreement with the policies in this strategy.

During the five year life of the Local Transport Plan with which it is associated, the County Council aims to further develop and refine policies and practices outlined in this Bus Strategy, in consultation with stakeholders. During this period revised versions of this Bus Strategy may be produced.

### **Structure of this Document**

This Bus Strategy has two main chapters. Following this brief introductory section, the first main chapter describes in detail the policies for development of bus services as a whole, mainly focusing on the measures planned to help commercial bus services to thrive. Following this is a chapter focusing specifically on bus services funded by the County Council, describing how value for money is secured from revenue subsidy. The document concludes with a brief section describing the Council’s vision for the future of local bus services.

## 1.1 History

There has been a long history of successful development of bus services in Oxfordshire. In 1972, a Balanced Transport Policy was instituted in Oxford, which gave buses exclusive access to the main city centre shopping streets of Cornmarket and Queen Street, commenced introduction of bus priority measures on other main bus routes, commenced the introduction of a bus-based park and ride system and discouraged use of private cars for travel to the city centre. From this date, an informal Quality Partnership existed with the main bus operator, under which initially unremunerative park and ride services, also other high quality bus services, were provided without subsidy in exchange for these priority measures for buses.

When bus services were deregulated in 1986, the park and ride services, together with a network of high frequency city services, were largely declared commercial. The large flows of bus passengers quickly attracted competition, and for a period in the late 1980s and early 1990s two independent companies provided frequent double-deck services in direct competition with even more frequent mini-bus services. Unlike most areas of Britain, this competition was sustained; whilst the level of competition on individual routes changes from time to time, and both companies now run similar vehicles, the Oxford bus market has sustained the same two companies (albeit each now owned by separate national bus groups) in direct commercial competition to the present day. Unlike many other parts of the country, too, competition has increasingly been waged on the basis of offering customers the best quality, rather than the cheapest service. Sustained quality competition of this sort is virtually unique in the country and reflects the success of highway and planning policies.

This combination of local authority policies and bus company initiative resulted in a gratifying growth in use of bus services. It is estimated that bus patronage in Oxfordshire virtually doubled during the first ten years following deregulation. Through the period the park and ride car parks on the edge of the city were regularly expanded to cope with growing demand, and to ensure that Oxford's remained the largest bus-based park and ride system in the country. This growth was, however, not achieved at the expense of other bus services. Not only the very high frequency services (up to 20 per hour) within the city, but also principal services into the city from further afield (which might have been expected to be more susceptible to competition from park and ride), grew at an equally rapid rate. A 'bus culture' had been successfully established, under which people from virtually all social groups recognised that, for many trips, taking the bus was both an attractive and a 'respectable' alternative to using their own car.

In 1991 Oxfordshire County Council undertook a study to address the issues of access into Oxford. In 1993 a strategy was adopted which built on the previous 'Balanced Transport Policy'. The key aims were:

- improved pedestrian space in the shopping streets

- provision of additional cycle facilities, including alternative routes
- increased parking capacity at Park & Ride sites
- improved bus priority and reliability
- no increase in parking in the central area of the city
- high charge for long-stay parking in the city centre

Implementation of the strategy started in 1993 and concluded with the major central area changes in 1999, when pedestrianisation and introduction of the bus priority route were enabled by restricted access for general traffic.

Bus patronage in Oxford has been growing over the period. Regular monitoring demonstrates that in 1991 27% of the total number of people travelling into the centre of Oxford came by bus; by 2001 this had steadily increased to 44%.

Park and Ride contributes to the Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS) by transferring trips into the city to bus for what would be the most congested part of the journey. Capacity at peripheral car parks was steadily expanded, culminating in the opening of a new fifth site in 2003. Park and Ride accounts for about 3,500 trips into the city centre per day. Bus services cater for approximately 27,000 every day.

The growth is due to a series of measures introduced by the City and County Councils over that time, matched by a competitive climate between the two major operators. Bus priority on the radial routes from the ring road has improved the journey time and reliability for bus services. Bus penetration into the core of the City has been retained, which is considered key to making the bus a viable and attractive alternative to the private car.

For Oxford the main bus priority measures are:

- bus lanes on radial routes into the city
- priority signals at junctions
- queue relocation signals on radial routes
- city centre bus priority route – removal of general through traffic

In association with OTS, a written quality partnership was established with operators. This provided for more accessible buses, bus capacity matching demand, and many other features. Particular emphasis was placed on air quality; although experiments with electric buses were unsuccessful, all major services in the city use buses meeting “Euro 2” emission standards or better and the Oxford Bus Company has been particularly active in fitting extra emission-reduction devices to its fleet. Furthermore, switching off engines whenever stopped for a minute or more is now established behaviour by drivers.

Oxfordshire’s success in encouraging bus use was recognised through the County being designated as a Centre of Excellence for Integrated Transport Planning, and also receiving the National Transport Award 2001 (Bus Category).

During the initial years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the bus industry in Oxfordshire encountered severe driver recruitment difficulties. Such difficulties were reported throughout Britain, but were particularly severe in Oxfordshire because of a particularly low unemployment rate locally. During 2001 and 2002, especially, this led to some reduction in the frequency of services scheduled, in order to ensure that the timetable expectations did not exceed the number of drivers available. To a large extent, the bus companies were able to maintain the number of passenger seats offered per hour through use of larger vehicles, but this nevertheless inevitably reduced the attractiveness of the services somewhat.

By 2003, driver wages had been greatly increased and the work force was at, or close to establishment, but this inevitably led to a large increase in operating costs. This has resulted in higher fares, many formerly commercial services now requiring subsidy, and an increase in the subsidies required for many of those services already operated with County funds. This frustrated County Council aspirations to improve services on the main high frequency corridors, since the increased funding intended for this purpose had instead to be used to meet the increased cost for existing levels of service.

These unhappy trends inevitably impacted upon passenger growth; it was only 1.42% from 2002/03 to 2003/04. Nevertheless, given the circumstances and the continuing fall in passenger numbers in most of the rest of Britain, it is considered a significant achievement. Perhaps unfortunately, the County Council entered into a Public Service Agreement with government to achieve a 10% growth in bus patronage from 2002/3 until 2005/6. This looks unlikely to be achieved, but the total of almost 35 million passenger journeys (equivalent to 56.4 bus journeys per year by each person in Oxfordshire) is well above the level achieved in most other comparable counties. With driver wage pressures having apparently at last stabilised, it provides a strong basis for future development of bus services. Current services in Oxfordshire are shown in Annex 1; with 'turn up and go' services, and hourly services, highlighted.

## **1.2 The Challenges and Target for the Future**

The challenges for transportation in Oxfordshire are set out in the Local Transport Plan. Those particularly affecting bus services are:

- Meeting public expectations for increased quality and increased mobility
- Increasing traffic congestion impacting on service reliability and efficiency
- New population located away from traditional bus routes
- Services and jobs located away from traditional centres
- Reducing the air pollution and other environmental impacts of buses whilst maintaining accessibility
- Ensuring essential access in low density rural areas

- Rising cost pressures for bus operation, especially relative to the cost of car travel
- Meeting the aspiration for a modal shift from private cars to buses, especially in congested locations
- Enabling continued economic growth without unacceptable traffic congestion
- Meeting the public wish for better ticketing systems, including dealing with any changes to concessionary fare arrangements

As outlined in the LTP, the County Council's aim is to tackle congestion where it hinders accessibility and makes it difficult for people to access key facilities by any mode or causes significant delay to buses. The County Council's vision is therefore for a network of bus services which provides an attractive alternative to the car, especially in high traffic corridors where the congestion potential is greatest, whilst ensuring adequate access of essential jobs and services for those in other areas, with the lowest possible impact on the environment.

The County Council believes that the measures proposed in its transport plans will result in an overall growth of 2% per year in use of bus services within the County. Inevitably this growth will vary from route to route. Routes targeted for particular improvement during the Plan period will be expected to achieve higher growth. Depending upon the extent of the improvements proposed, individual targets will be set for each. These will recognise that some routes within Oxford City especially already have a very high share of movements within the corridor they serve, and their potential for growth is accordingly limited. Those services not targeted for particular improvement will be expected to achieve a growth of 1% per year, recognising the general quality improvements proposed for all bus services.

## 2 Overall Strategy

Although Oxfordshire is largely a rural County, around 80% of its population lives in towns or large villages, a land-use pattern which does generate sufficient demand for a viable network of frequent bus services.

The Council's policy is to create the preconditions for effective and successful commercial bus operation, with the result that any available subsidy can then be focused on areas of low population density where commercial operation is much more unlikely.

The County Council will facilitate this precondition for commercial viability by developing a programme which is specifically related to buses, such as:

- A programme which tackles congestion and delay points along the major bus routes, ensuring that buses can operate reliably and at a commercially attractive speed.
- Effective penetration of bus services into the heart of journey attractors such as town centres, employment areas and hospitals, with bus stops located to minimise walking distances.
- Good facilities at stops, incorporating effective information a safe waiting area for bus passengers

Delivery of the Bus Strategy will also be helped by a joined-up approach with other County Council strategies such as:

- Land-use planning policies which ensure that new development is appropriately located and provided with road layouts designed to encourage bus use
- Integrated transport strategies in the larger towns which encourage bus use through good access, facilities and priorities for buses, appropriate parking policies, and other measures.
- Travel Plans for schools and workplaces that encourage bus use.

This chapter describes in detail the policies for development of bus services as a whole. It first describes the overall hierarchy of services. It then describes the programme to develop the top-tier, the most frequent services, and specific kinds of action which, although applicable to all buses, mainly apply to this top tier. Sections follow on bus priority on the highway; bus stops; interchanges; Park & Ride; Quality Partnership between the Council and operators (also covering Quality Contracts); Ticketing; and Information. A brief section on the second tier of services is followed by sections on Express coaches, partnership working, and helping people with disabilities.

### 2.1 A Hierarchy of Services

The Oxfordshire local transport plan 2001-2006 established a 3-tier hierarchy of bus services. This has provided a firm basis for development of an appropriate network of services, and stakeholders have generally expressed

support for its continuation. Therefore it will be continued and developed during the period of this Plan and Bus Strategy. The tiers in this hierarchy are described below.

1. At the top of the hierarchy are the **Premium Routes**. These will be services running at “turn up and go” frequencies throughout the daytime on Mondays to Saturdays, and at least hourly in the evenings and on Sundays. They will link the major existing and proposed areas of housing and employment across the county. They will have a high level of bus priority, including in some cases, segregated routes for buses, to ensure that they are protected from those places where traffic congestion and delay occur regularly. They will have a high standard of passenger facilities at bus stops and interchanges, often including real time information. In consequence of these benefits, the County Council expects that such services will (after any necessary “pump-priming”) be able to run without subsidy and be run using high quality, easy access, low emission vehicles with high levels of driver training and modern ticketing systems. These services will cover the main corridors, where the greatest number of passenger trips is made and they can make the greatest potential contribution to the reduction in private car use and traffic congestion. The Central Oxfordshire Transport Area chapter of the Local Transport Plan identifies the key corridors to Oxford, in terms of Journey to Work areas. The Premium Route network will provide the key tool to address the pressure on the transport network, whilst also improving access to key jobs and services and tackling congestion.
2. The second level in the hierarchy are the hourly services. These will serve lower density corridors which nevertheless have significant potential flows of passengers; it is anticipated that all settlements of over 1000 population will be reached by these services. They will run at least hourly during the daytime on Mondays to Saturdays. They will have easily memorable timetables, at the same time past every hour (except where variable traffic conditions force differential running times). Principal bus stops will have a good standard of facilities and good quality interchanges will be provided with other services. It will not normally be possible to justify bus priority facilities for one hourly service alone, but priority will be considered in and around main centres and interchanges where several services come together, and they will where possible take advantage of facilities provided for Premium Route services.
3. The third tier in the hierarchy will be feeder services. These will ensure essential links from more remote areas. They will be provided in a variety of ways, as appropriate for local circumstances. This element of the strategy will provide the key tool to delivering the emerging accessibility strategy. These feeder services could also help deliver against the quality of life issues such as sustainable and prosperous communities. These services will in most cases require subsidy, and accordingly are dealt with in the next chapter of this document.

## 2.2 Development of High Frequency Core Services

The policies in this section are directed in particular to tackling congestion, but also make a significant contribution to delivering accessibility and better air quality.

As described in detail in the relevant section, the County Council can legally pay bus subsidy only if the service would not be provided without subsidy and has no direct control over services provided without subsidy. In developing the top tier of high frequency services, the County Council will aim to create conditions in which commercial bus services can thrive, paying subsidy from public funds only when necessary for a temporary period as services are developing. The County Council, largely in its capacity as Highway Authority, has various other measures which it can take to influence the provision of bus services:

- Bus lanes, bus gates and other bus priority measures can be provided where traffic congestion would otherwise delay buses (but at present cannot be regularly enforced)
- Highway network design to ensure preferential access for buses to places to and from which the greatest number of people wish to travel
- Investment in high quality waiting and information facilities at bus stops and interchanges
- Careful attention to bus stop location and pedestrian routes to and from bus stops
- Arranging traffic signals to give priority to buses and to minimise variations in journey time
- Design and maintenance of the highway to give bus passengers a smooth and comfortable ride
- Management of roadworks, using powers under the Traffic Management Act 2004, to minimise delays to buses
- Using powers to restrict and enforce parking and waiting, to ensure that bus routes and bus stops are not obstructed by stationary vehicles
- Working in partnership with District Councils to ensure that new developments are located and designed to facilitate and encourage bus use, and that finances are available from developers for any necessary bus facilities and services

All of the above measures can contribute to ensuring that highway design and regulation benefits buses. However, experience in Oxfordshire demonstrates that regulations on their own are insufficient to provide an adequate level of protection from traffic delays and obstruction. Without adequate enforcement, the drivers of other vehicles will often seek to grab for themselves the benefits intended for buses. Oxfordshire County Council has already established a Special Parking Area within Oxford City, using powers under the Road Traffic

Act 1991 to enforce parking and waiting restrictions. Policies on the use of these powers are designed to minimise the impact of stationary traffic on bus movements. The County Council is developing proposals for a countywide Special Parking Area, to achieve equivalent benefits elsewhere.

These powers only cover parking and waiting offences. Offences committed by moving vehicles can at present only be enforced by the police. Police priorities for limited resources often lie elsewhere. In consequence, many bus priority measures in Oxfordshire are of limited value to buses because of a high level of transgression of the regulations. The County Council therefore calls upon Central Government to extend the County's enforcement powers to cover some moving traffic offences at the earliest opportunity.

In addition to its powers as highway authority, the County Council can also:

- Establish Quality Partnerships, under which improved facilities are provided for buses on the highway and use of these facilities is restricted to services which meet specified quality standards
- Where it is the only practical way of implementing its policies, establish a Quality Contract under which service levels are specified by the County Council
- Set standards for provision of bus service information to the general public which must be met by all operators
- Establish joint and through ticketing schemes

Whilst the County Council has no control over the commercial services which bus operators may choose to run without subsidy, there are thus a number of levers which can be used to encourage development of our services. How these will be used is described in detail below.

### 2.2.1 Development of Expressway Services

The current strategy is to create an even higher tier 'expressway' level of bus service, which would provide high-quality fast inter-urban services along the following corridors:

Carterton/Witney – A40 – Oxford  
Didcot/Abingdon – A34 – Oxford  
Bicester – A34 – Oxford.

The 'expressway' concept envisages the provision of remote Park and Ride sites near to Witney, Abingdon and Bicester. It is currently not clear whether there would be bespoke Park and Ride bus services, or whether the facility would be provided using the basic inter-urban bus service.

The speed of delivery of the 'expressway' tier of bus service is linked to the availability of capital funding for effective priority measures for buses, especially at the congested intersections of Wolvercote, Hinksey Hill, Pear Tree and Wendlebury, but also more generally along these key inter-urban corridors. It is currently envisaged that improvements will occur at Wolvercote

before 2011, but the other intersections and links would be programmed for the 2011-2016 period.

More effective bus priority is also planned on the Woodstock Rd and Abingdon Rd corridors towards Oxford City Centre.

### 2.2.2 Development of Premium Routes

The Council adopted a Premium Routes strategy in 2002, resolving to develop a programme of implementing bus priority measures and investing in much better bus stop infrastructure along routes which were identified as having the potential for a four-buses-per-hour commercial bus service.

The identified routes have been provisionally grouped into three categories for implementation purposes:

<u>Short Term (to 2011)</u>	<u>Medium Term (2011 – 2016)</u>	<u>Longer Term (from 2016)</u>
Kidlington	Marston Rd, Oxford	*Thame
Bretch Hill, Banbury	Botley Rd, Oxford	<i>Woodstock Rd, Oxford</i>
Kennington	Iffley Rd, Oxford	<i>(see above)</i>
<i>Abingdon via A34</i>	<i>Carterton-Witney</i>	<i>Abingdon Rd, Oxford</i>
<i>(see above)</i>	<i>(see above)</i>	<i>(see above)</i>
<i>Bicester via A34</i>	<i>*Witney via A40</i>	<i>*Abingdon-Wantage</i>
<i>(see above)</i>	<i>(see above)</i>	<i>*Bankside, Banbury</i>
London Rd, Oxford	*Hardwick, Banbury	*Oxford outer orbital
Eynsham-Farmoor	Morrell Avenue, Oxford	Woodstock
Cowley Road, Oxford	*Wallingford	<i>*Abingdon-Didcot</i>
Banbury Road, Oxford <i>(see above)</i>		

This prioritisation has been influenced by:

- Discussions with bus operators
- Requirement to deal with certain issues urgently
- Scheduling to coincide with other programmes and initiatives
- Delivering the Local Transport Plan shared priorities – tackling congestion, delivering accessibility, safer roads, better air quality and improving the quality of public spaces and better streetscapes.

The sections of route \* asterisked \* above currently enjoy a bus service that does not meet the four-buses-per-hour commercial standard. The Premium Route approach envisages pump-priming funding being made available to enhance these services to the four-buses-per hour standard, subject to agreeing a contract with a declining subsidy profile, and to the implementation of other measures, including higher quality vehicles (where appropriate) and bus infrastructure measures.

The list is at present provisional. It will be reviewed in the light of the financial settlement and consequent programmes for other related highway schemes. A revised programme will be included in the Final Bus Strategy.

### 2.3 Ensuring the free movement of buses

Ensuring free movement of buses offers many benefits:

- Shorter journey times for users improve the relative attractiveness of buses
- More predictable journey times allow users to plan journeys with confidence
- Predictable arrivals at intermediate stops reduce average waiting times for passengers
- Reliable arrivals at interchange points are essential for any journey involving transfer to another bus or train
- Fast and consistent end-to-end journeys allow a more frequent service to be offered for any given number of buses and drivers
- Predictable arrivals at termini reduce the need for layover time to ensure punctual return departures, and thus reduce the need for layover space in congested city and town centres
- Smoother progress for buses reduces exhaust emissions

The effective operation of a successful commercial bus network can thus only be achieved if a 'track' for the bus can be provided at all times of day. Congested road conditions result in unreliable, slow bus services, which are unattractive for users and cost more to operate. Traffic Commissioners require bus operators to provide services that operate within a very narrow window of punctuality. Punctual buses ensure that bus users can reach work and other appointments on time, and can make connections with other buses and trains.

The following sections describe the main measures on the highway which will be taken where appropriate to ensure free movement of buses. These measures will be particularly focussed on Premium Routes, and will be implemented progressively as part of that programme. The significant capital expenditure involved is difficult to justify for lower frequency services. However, there are places – especially in the centre of country towns – where several lower frequency services come together. Measures will therefore also be implemented where appropriate in these locations, where they can make a particular contribution to improving the viability of services in more rural areas, largely through Integrated Transport Strategies.

#### 2.3.1 Prioritising buses

The smooth progress of buses along their routes can be impeded by various problems, and the role of the Local Authority, using its powers under the Traffic Management Act 2004, is to develop programmes to tackle these in a systematic manner:

- Parking in bus stops
- Illegal use of bus lanes

- Inconsiderate parking along bus routes
- Management of temporary road works, skips etc.
- Incident management plans

To deliver an effective and efficient bus service, with the aim of delivering a modal switch from car to bus, the degree of priority that can be accorded to buses will be agreed through negotiations between Bus Operators and the County Council. It is anticipated that for each main corridor, the existing situation will be analysed, the potential for improvement be identified, from which Action Plans for implementation will be negotiated and agreed.

The provision of separate traffic lanes for buses will be considered where general traffic congestion impedes the smooth flow of public transport vehicles. The engineering designs of such lanes will depend on the physical characteristics of the road to be treated, including carriageway width, available highway land, type of development frontage etc.

Fully segregated bus lanes will be promoted where these provide demonstrable benefit to bus users, for example on the 'expressway' tier of Premium Routes services where there is a compelling need for an attractive and reliable end-to-end journey time as a means of achieving modal shift. To ensure that such a facility is only used by buses, segregation could take the form of sections of guided busway.

Bus lanes along urban roads usually also accommodate cyclists and taxis, which does lead to compromises for efficient bus operation. On urban roads it is rarely possible to provide a lane of sufficient width (4.3 metres) for buses to overtake cyclists, the compromise being that buses can sometimes proceed at the speed of bicycles. It is recognised that within Oxford however, it will generally be appropriate to allow cycles and taxis to share bus lanes. Allowing additional classes of vehicles into bus lanes however, would lessen the benefits for buses as well as raising concerns about road safety and enforcement. In specific circumstances, consideration could be given to allowing HGVs access to inter-urban bus lanes, but particular attention would need to be given to safety issues

Bus gates will also be used to provide access for buses into areas that are otherwise restricted to general traffic. A bus gate could take the form of a narrowed entrance, suitably signed, it could take the form of traffic signals that are actuated by an approaching bus, or it could take the form of a retractable bollard.

The flow of buses around the main road network is heavily influenced by the design of traffic signals. As a general principle, it is highly desirable that buses are given some priority through signalised junctions through some form of detection. Signalised junctions, whether linked by Urban Travel Control or not, generally operate to pre-determined cycle times, and any additional time allocated to an approaching bus in one cycle (whether through a 'hurry call' or an 'extended green') is normally deducted from that approach in the next cycle. Where significant flows of buses exist, or where buses take different

routes through junctions, thought needs to be given to the appropriate form of bus priority at that junction, for example whether one approach should be prioritised over other approaches, or whether priority should only be accorded to buses that are behind schedule.

Signalised pedestrian crossings can cause delays to buses (a point emphasised by several stakeholders when consulted), although it is recognised that the integration of such a crossing into a pair of bus stops can assist passengers in accessing buses. It is desirable that signalised crossings on main bus corridors are equipped to detect approaching buses, as in these cases, the suppression of a pedestrian phase for a few seconds could avoid sharp braking, increased vehicle emissions and disproportionate delays to bus passengers.

### 2.3.2 Parking

Inconsiderate parking is a major issue for bus operation. Roadside parking can restrict the available road width for general traffic (and buses), and this can lead to congestion/queuing on main roads, and to locations with insufficient width for buses to pass in some residential areas. General parking at stops can prevent buses from accessing the kerb, resulting in problems such as a blockage of the main traffic lane and extreme difficulties encountered by people with reduced mobility.

Enforcement of the existing Oxford Parking Area gives special attention to keeping bus stops clear of parked cars. To spread the benefits more widely, the County Council now proposes to pursue decriminalised parking enforcement across the County and to pursue a proactive programme of addressing problem locations.

Bus stop clearways will be promoted where there is a history of parking at bus stops which prevents public service vehicles accessing the kerb. The County Council accordingly has in place a protocol whereby officers initiate informal consultations with Local Councils, Local Councillors, the relevant bus companies and frontagers affected. If no objections were received, officers would be given delegated authority to implement the proposed clearway, and if objections were received, then officers would refer the matter to the Committee for determination.

Traffic Regulation Orders will be pursued where parking is obstructing bus flow away from bus stop locations. For local parking problems, this would normally be pursued through the appropriate Area Office and Traffic Advisory Committee. Town centre issues would normally be addressed through Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) processes. Where corridor-wide problems exist (such as along Iffley Road) then it will be necessary to commission a corridor study.

### 2.3.3 Congestion at stops

In some locations (usually city and town centres) there are too many buses for the safe and efficient operation of a stop or series of stops. Where changes to services occur (which in the Council's view will exacerbate such problems at an already busy stop) the Council will call a site meeting with operators to explore the potential for a local solution to the problem. If agreement between the Council and all affected operators cannot be reached informally, then the matter will be referred to the Traffic Manager for arbitration. In the event of gross over-supply of buses in a particular location, the Council reserves the right to apply to the Traffic Commissioner for a Traffic Regulation Condition.

#### 2.3.4 Enforcement

It is important that sensitive city centre streets designated for bus use are protected from general traffic incursion. Camera technology will be used to assist in enforcing Traffic Regulation Orders at the city centre Bus Gates, and will also be considered to enforce the correct use of bus lanes and to discourage illegal general parking at bus stops. The County Council calls on Government to quickly make available powers for static camera enforcement of bus gate/lane regulations to the County Council.

The enforcement of on-street parking regulations within the Oxford City Special Parking Area is the remit of the County's contractor, Control Plus. Parking problems reported by bus operators will be addressed by Control Plus as a matter of urgency.

The County Council intends to pursue the extension of the Oxford Special Parking Area to the remainder of the County, and a feasibility study has been commissioned. In the County area, parking enforcement is the responsibility of Traffic Wardens and Community Support Officers. Efforts will be made to convey problems caused to buses through inconsiderate parking to these officials.

#### 2.3.5 Management of road works

The role of the newly-appointed Traffic Manager in maximising free movement on the highway, especially for buses, is described in the LTP. As part of that role, the Traffic Manager will ensure that full consideration is given to the needs of bus passengers when works on the highway are planned. Main roads require major reconstruction every 20 years or so, and it is inevitable that critical sections of highway will be taken out of use from time to time. In planning a programme of such works, the Council will give adequate notice, to permit planning and advertising service alterations.

Local bus services differ significantly from car journeys in the reasonableness of a planned diversion. Local bus services serve a series of points from which passengers make a series of overlapping journeys. It is important that any diversion for buses is minimised, for example by providing special routeing arrangements for buses, to ensure that the service can continue to serve all points on route

### 2.3.6 Traffic calming

There has been a significant programme of implementation of physical alterations to the highway to reduce vehicle speeds (and hence reduce the severity of accidents) over the last 20 years or so across Oxfordshire. The techniques used vary widely, from quite severe vertical deflection to much more subtle psychological measures.

Vertical deflection has a disproportionate effect on buses and their passengers, compared to cars. The suspension characteristics of a bus tend to accentuate the physical impact of a road hump, transmitting this with some force to the driver and passengers. There is a particular problem for low floor buses, where a physical collision between the hump and the bus body does cause physical damage, from fractured fuel sumps to cracked axles. This has led to a reluctance or refusal by operators to use low floor buses on certain routes, in contravention of Council's duty to move towards a more accessible public transport system.

Vertical deflection measures should generally not be used on routes with large numbers of passengers, especially Premium Routes where in partnership the Council and operators are seeking to provide the highest possible standard of service. On quieter routes accessing residential areas, it should be possible to specify a compromise design, such as speed 'cushions', which have far less impact on buses and their passengers. Some bus routes have 'first generation' speed humps, which are inappropriate for modern low-floor bus operation. Revised arrangements will be promoted in these cases, to improve bus operation whilst maintaining road safety benefits.

### 2.4 Bus stop infrastructure

The provision of good bus stop infrastructure is a vital part of the public transport network, being the first point of contact for the bus user. It is important that bus stops are properly located, with good pedestrian links, that they are designed in a way that facilitates near-level boarding for passengers (especially for the mobility impaired) and that they have adequate facilities, such as shelter and information.

A design guide has been developed which outlines in some detail the preferred approach to bus stop location, the physical layout of stops and the facilities that should be provided.

It is important that safe walking routes to the stop are available (including lighting and crossing places where appropriate) and that the potential for associated cycle parking is considered.

There is currently a rather poor standard of bus stops and shelters across Oxfordshire, and there is an ambition to make some significant improvements. The Premium Routes programme includes the provision of better stop infrastructure at stops along those corridors, including an enhanced pole, flag and information case. Attention will be given to raising kerb heights to an

appropriate level and improvements will be made to the paved waiting area or hard standing. A Premium Routes standard pole and flag is currently being procured. Similar high standard facilities will be provided in the core of country towns, where several less frequent bus services come together, and at principal stops on hourly routes.

In some other circumstances, such as new sections of route, the County Council may itself initiate new bus stop infrastructure. Where the new route is to serve new development, developers will normally be expected to provide for and fund bus stops. Local Councils will be told of all such proposals.

Bus stops elsewhere are normally requested by local Councils. For a new location, poles and flags can be supplied, on receipt of a local £10 contribution, the completion of a site meeting with the Police, the Council's Area Office, bus operators(s) and local Councillors, and then successful liaison with any affected frontager. Replacement bus stop poles and flags can be supplied free of charge to replace damaged or lost signs. Other agencies, such as bus operators, can also provide infrastructure on a partnership basis, subject to site meetings and frontager liaison.

Policy on provision of timetable cases at non-Premium Route bus stops is under review, as described in the section on Transport Information.

There are around 400 bus shelters across the County, and these are currently provided by Oxford City Council and a large number of Parish Councils. A very wide range of styles exist, but there is also a perception that the overall quality is not high. The Council has therefore been exploring the possibility of negotiating a countywide contract for the supply of advertising shelters which would provide a consistent range (including non-advertising shelters) appropriate for the Premium Route concept. This contract would include arrangements for maintenance and cleaning.

A shelter grant scheme currently exists to encourage local Councils to invest in new bus shelters. The Council provides a financial contribution ranging from 50% to 100% of the capital cost.

The effectiveness of bus stop infrastructure in encouraging bus use is enhanced if the structures and the area of the stop are kept clean and free from litter, and any minor damage is quickly made good. The Council will seek to reach agreement with local Councils to give particular attention to bus stop areas in their cleaning programmes.

## **2.5 Interchanges**

Facilitating interchange between bus services and other modes is an important factor in encouraging the use of public transport. The three tier hierarchy of Premium, Hourly and Feeder Routes implies that these services connect at points across the County, these being typically in the centre of the country towns, Park and Ride sites and other points with a confluence of

services. In addition, there are many rail stations where rail and bus can connect.

A number of potential Interchange points around the Premium Routes network were audited in 2000 during the Buchanan Premium Route study. Scores were assigned according to various attributes, and this could form the basis of an implementation programme.

In practice, the pace of interchange development has been driven by other factors, including town centre regeneration/urban design (Abingdon, Faringdon), desire for integration with rail (Banbury, Didcot), developer interest (Bicester) and the Park and Ride programme (Water Eaton, Thornhill). Some of the proposed Oxford interchange points (Headington, Summertown) are being addressed in corridor studies.

The potential for improving the quality of interchange facilities elsewhere will be developed in parallel with the Premium Routes implementation programme.

## 2.6 Park and Ride

Park and Ride has played a major role in the development of transport policy within Oxfordshire; its growth to date is described in the “History” section.

There was a significant addition to Oxford’s Park and Ride capacity in December 2003 with the opening of the 800-space Water Eaton site, linked to the city centre with a new bus service.

The other four Park and Ride sites are now up to 30 years old, and a programme of bringing these up to a modern standard has commenced. A new bus interchange and terminal have been designed for Thornhill and it is anticipated that this will be built during 2006. The interchange building will provide high quality facilities for inter-urban coaches and local bus services, in addition to the Park and Ride service to the City Centre. Construction of a new terminal is about to commence at Redbridge, and the County Council is also working in partnership with Oxford City Council on terminal buildings for Pear Tree and Seacourt.

There is an ambition that these Park and Ride terminals will also provide interchange points for the local bus network. Careful design will be necessary to minimise any diversion off these routes.

The Transport Network Review has identified potential for “remote” park and ride to cater for journeys to Oxford from Witney, Abingdon and Bicester; consideration of “parking pockets” close to existing bus routes; and park and ride for Banbury. A study is in progress into the possibility of Park & Ride sites further from Oxford. This is looking at the feasibility of the concept and at how such sites would work and services be provided to them rather than at specific sites. The outcome of this work is expected to be incorporated in the final Bus Strategy and Local Transport Plan.

## 2.7 Quality Partnerships

Partnerships with bus operators will have an essential role to play in delivering the County Council's Transport Policies and Bus Strategy. Operators and the Council share a common goal of increasing the number of passengers. Although cooperation between operators is prohibited under competition legislation, a framework exists under the Transport Act 2000 under which partnership agreements can be arranged between the County Council and operators. Such partnership agreements will ensure that the County's role as provider of high quality infrastructure, and the bus operator's role of providing high quality services, is combined in the most effective way possible to achieve this goal, without the need for public subsidy for the bus services.

When investing in infrastructure to benefit buses, the County Council needs to be assured that the infrastructure will be used to the maximum extent to benefit passengers. When investing in new vehicles, improved training and enhanced services, the bus operator needs to be assured that they will be able to use them in an efficient and cost effective way to produce a return on the investment. Partnership agreements will be introduced which give all parties confidence to develop services in an efficient and coordinated way.

Many of the measures to be introduced in Quality Partnership will contribute to improving punctuality. The measures of success to be included within each Action Plan are likely to include measures of improved punctuality. Quality Partnerships are thus likely also to form the basis for Punctuality Improvement Partnerships.

As described in the early part of this document, informal partnership agreements have played a major role in past successes in encouraging bus use in Oxfordshire. Unwritten, but clearly understood, agreements which have existed since the early 1970s, led to a written (albeit not legally binding) agreement covering services to, from and within, central Oxford being introduced in 1998.

Over the last two years, detailed discussion and consultation has been held with bus operators on development beyond the existing limited agreements, to a formal structure of legally binding agreements covering all Premium Routes, and potentially certain other services. Agreement has been reached in principle that these partnerships will cover, not only matching programmes of investment, but also joint action to improve punctuality, reduce the environmental impact of bus services and otherwise improve service quality.

It should be noted that these Quality Partnerships will apply to unsubsidised bus services, in accordance with the Council's policy of creating the conditions within which commercial bus services can thrive. Quality standards for subsidised services will be maintained through the terms of subsidy contracts; these are summarised in a later section.

### 2.7.1 Structure and Content of Partnerships

Every Premium Route will be covered by a Quality Partnership. This will include a detailed action plan, listing the specific improvements to infrastructure, vehicles and service provision which are proposed for that individual route and the dates by which these will be achieved. These Route-Specific Partnerships will be agreed and introduced progressively, on a route by route basis, over the period between 2006 and 2011.

All Premium Route Partnerships will be arranged to be legally binding. The initial signatories to the Partnership will decide, on a case by case basis, whether that Partnership will also be subject to the provision of sections 114-123 of the Transport Act 2000, which provide for enforcement by the Traffic Commissioner of Partnership provisions. This decision will be based on whether the Partners consider, on that particular route, that services which do not meet Partnership standards need to be formally excluded from operation on the route either to avoid low quality competition, or to minimise congestion. Where a Partnership enforceable by the Traffic Commissioner is proposed, exclusions and exceptions will be considered by the Partners. In particular, positive consideration will be given to means by which services running from more rural areas, where potential passenger demand will not support a commercial service at Premium Route frequencies and quality, are able nevertheless to take advantage of improved infrastructure where some part of their route lies over the sections of road covered by the Partnership. Consideration will be given to permitting such services to use some, but not necessarily all, of the facilities provided under the Partnership, without necessarily being required to meet all Partnership conditions.

In addition to route-based agreements, consideration will be given to introducing Quality Partnerships and Action Plans for specific areas such as town and city centres, where improvements are to be made to infrastructure under integrated transport strategies. These location-based agreements will follow the same principles as outlined above for route-based agreements. Overlying the route and location-based agreements will be a broader Partnerships agreement, introduced during 2005 and preceding the specific Action Plans. This agreement will lay down the broad terms under which punctuality, environmental standards and service quality are to be maintained and improved.

All subsequent route and location-based Partnerships will remain subject to the terms of this Core Partnership.

Discussions continue on the precise detail of the clauses in Quality Partnerships, but it has been agreed in principle that the Core Partnership will cover the following:

- 1.1 The County Council will undertake to establish a comprehensive strategy that provides a holistic framework for how it intends to tackle transport issues, both within and on the approaches to, Oxford city
- 1.2 The County Council will undertake to develop for each corridor a programmed Action Plan which contains a clear statement about what measures to benefit buses will either be implemented or investigated and in which locations (while having due regard to other road users and policy objectives, including objectives to increase walking, cycling and improve road safety and air quality); the measures to include:
  - 1.2.1 Traffic Management measures to improve journey times along the agreed routes, including revised parking and loading restrictions and appropriate bus priority measures
  - 1.2.2 The introduction of camera enforcement for bus lanes (and gates) as soon as reasonably practicable after the powers become available, with Oxford city centre being the first priority; and proposals for other enforcement to be undertaken.
  - 1.2.3 Upgrading bus stop and shelter infrastructure and layouts, and the introduction of Bus Stop Clearways
  - 1.2.4 Offer pump-priming revenue support to operators, where frequencies are not already at 'turn-up-and-go' levels.
  - 1.2.5 Action to increase the attractiveness of Park and Ride, including a strategy for its expansion.
- 1.3 Having regard to its new responsibilities under the Traffic Management Act, (and remembering that traffic includes cyclists and pedestrians) and its policy objective of encouraging greater use of buses, the County Council will undertake to:
  - 1.3.1 Review its internal procedures and organisation to ensure effective liaison and consultation with bus operators and to act in accordance with the aims of this Bus Strategy with regard to
    - a) the undertaking of any of its works on the highway, including maintenance and resurfacing
    - b) the undertaking of any works by utilities
    - c) the issuing of any skip and scaffold licences
    - d) any events on the highway
    - e) representing the bus operator's interests in the event of civil emergencies
  - 1.3.2 Review the operation of an agreed list of critical junctions, pedestrian crossings etc. and introduce effective bus priority
  - 1.3.3 Review its policies and priorities for deployment of on-street enforcement personnel with a view to reducing delays to buses and improving bus priority

- 1.3.4 To ensure that all highway schemes take account of the aims of this Bus Strategy and the needs of buses at design stage, and that there is full consultation with bus operators as proposals develop.
- 2.1 Operators will undertake to comply with a Drivers' Code of Conduct, covering matters such as switching off engines when stopped, driving with consideration for passengers and other road users, maintaining appropriate speeds and minimising noise and emissions.
- 2.2 Operators will undertake to ensure that all drivers have received training in disability awareness and customer care to an agreed standard.
- 2.3 Bus operators will agree measures for Raising Vehicle Standards, including
- a) a timetable for achieving lower emission standards
  - b) Low-floor DiPTAC compliant vehicles on 'urban' routes (it is suggested that different vehicle standards would apply for longer distance Inter-Urban routes)
- 2.4 Bus operators will undertake to meet Information standards including
- a) providing up-to-date displays at stops and on buses
  - b) accepting the harmonisation of information at common stops
- 2.5 Operators will undertake to provide adequate passenger capacity, including increasing capacity in advance of rising demand
- 2.6 Operators will undertake to limitation of dates on which timetable changes occur, on a basis agreed jointly.
- 2.7 Operators will agree measures to minimise dwell times at specified sensitive stops, which is likely to involve a combination of careful scheduling, identification of appropriate lay-over locations and greater off-bus ticketing
- 2.8 Operators will undertake to monitor punctuality to ensure services run to timetable and act on anything within their control, measure and provide information to the County Council on journey times, journey time reliability and the causes of any delays beyond their control.
- 2.9 Operators will undertake to provide the County Council with regular information on patronage on services covered by the agreement
- 2.10 Operators will undertake to co-operate - so far as legislation allows – on corridors where no single service provides a 10 minute or better interval on its own
- a) to enable additional services to be provided or timetables adjusted
  - b) to ensure co-ordinated marketing

- 2.11 Where appropriate, bus operators will cooperate with one another, and with rail operators, to facilitate interchange between services.
- 3.1 Operators and the County Council will introduce measures to improve the attractiveness of ticketing arrangements and to speed up bus boarding, acting independently or in partnership as appropriate.
- 3.2 Subject to the success of the pilot scheme, operators and the County Council will co-operate on the operation and expansion of real-time information, including the provision of timetable information in the appropriate form
- 3.3 Operators and the County Council will agree a protocol for the allocation of services to stops, designed to reduce congestion and air pollution and ensure road safety whilst maintaining accessibility to main destinations, and where relevant abide by resulting decisions
- 3.4 Operators and the County Council will cooperate to achieve mutually beneficial media coverage

Ways are also being explored as to how operators can, within the Law, commit to operation of a minimum frequency of service sufficient to justify County Council investment in infrastructure.

#### 2.7.2 Quality Contracts

As described elsewhere, land use and transportation policies pursued over many years, have generally created conditions in which commercial bus services can thrive on the main corridors. Bus companies in Oxfordshire have responded to this opportunity by providing attractive, well marketed and high quality services which have been successful in attracting significant numbers of passengers and achieving a high modal split in favour of buses. Formal and informal partnership arrangements have contributed to these successes and to minimising the impact of the high levels of bus service on other road users and the environment. Oxfordshire County Council plans to build upon this success through further developing Quality Partnerships, within the commercial bus operating environment. The measures proposed to be taken are described in other sections. So long as satisfactory relationships, such as those enjoyed with existing operators, continue the County Council does not anticipate a need to seek powers to establish a Quality Contract under sections 124-134 of The Transport Act 2000.

The County Council's transport policies rely heavily upon expansion and development of commercial bus services. This development could occur either through operators themselves, independently making major improvements to their commercial services, or through cooperative action, as described in this Bus Strategy, between operators and the County Council. The County Council greatly values the willingness which existing operators have shown in developing services, but recognises that such attitudes could

change. An operator of commercial services, who is unwilling either to develop the services himself or cooperate with the County Council in the development of services, could frustrate and prevent satisfactory development of the Premium Routes network or the network of hourly services.

Whilst the County Council views Quality Contracts as a last resort, the Council may therefore seek powers to introduce a Quality Contract on any corridor, or throughout any area of the County, where commercial services exist, and the operator has neither significantly increased the frequency of the services on their own initiative within the last 5 years, nor been willing to enter into a Quality Partnership and/or to cooperate with the County Council in enhancing the services at reasonable extra subsidy cost.

## **2.8 Ticketing**

### **2.8.1 Background and Context**

Oxfordshire fares have increased on average by 36.5% over the past 10 years. In real terms, the increase is 7.7%. This increase is less than the Great Britain average over the same period (45.7%) and substantially less than the average for English shire counties (57%).

Oxfordshire fares have only started to rise in the past five years (since 2000). Prior to that they remained fairly static and in real terms were falling. The recent rise no doubt reflects the cost pressures described in the History section. Shorter distance fares (up to 3 miles) have risen faster than mid and longer distance fares.

The fact that bus fares have risen faster than both inflation and the cost of motoring is regrettable. However, the level of bus fares is perhaps of less concern in Oxfordshire than is the range of tickets available - and it is only the latter which the County Council can directly influence on commercial services.

The forms of ticketing used on bus services can have two different kinds of effect:

- The ease of purchase and of use, and perceived value for money, of tickets affects passengers' willingness to use services;
- The ways in which fares are collected has a significant effect on the length of time buses spend picking up passengers; whilst the established Oxfordshire practice of switching off engines at stops minimises its impact on air quality, fare collection nevertheless does influence overall journey speed, and the extent of congestion at bus stops due to stationary buses, and on frequent services, acts to increase journey time differences between individual buses and hence service unreliability.

As described elsewhere in this document, Oxfordshire's transportation policies rely heavily upon a growing network of attractive bus services. Most

of these factors are therefore significant in developing the County's strategy. Attractiveness to passengers is recognised as important throughout the County. Speeding up boarding is a particular issue on the more frequent and heavily used services, especially serving more congested locations. Bus priorities and management of the highway to improve the speed and predictability of journey times, needs to be complemented by ticketing systems which contribute to the same objectives. There is also a particular issue of dwell times at stops in Oxford City centre and other town centres and focal points, which improved ticketing systems can do much to help.

Ticketing systems within the County have been considerably expanded within the last 15 years. The major operators now offer a range of return, network and multi-journey tickets. These offer significant discounts over single ticket purchase for many types of journey, as well as the convenience of a single financial transaction covering more than one journey. On core services within Oxford in particular, this has resulted in an estimated 51% of journeys being made on a ticket purchased before boarding the bus. This has significant benefits for boarding time and journey time. Oxfordshire County Council will continue through Quality Partnerships, contract conditions for subsidised services, and in other ways, to encourage operators to further increase the proportion of tickets purchased in advance of travel.

However, the tickets described above can generally be used only on one operator's services. Throughout Oxfordshire, a variety of different operators provide services. On the busiest corridors within Oxford, in particular, two operators provide core services and others run less frequently. This fact reduces the attractiveness for many users, of single operator tickets. There are accordingly a number of arrangements in place for ticketing schemes covering multiple operators:

- The Plus Pass scheme in Oxford offers a network ticket valid on all services of the three main operators throughout Oxford City and some adjacent suburbs. This scheme was introduced on a voluntary basis by operators, being open to all operators on the same terms. Around 3,500 PlusPass tickets are sold per month, most valid for 7, 14 or 28 days' travel.
- Various through ticketing arrangements, either for specific journeys or for travel throughout an area such as the area of Oxford City, for onward travel by bus following a train journey
- It is a condition of contract of many subsidised services that multi-journey tickets on other operators' parallel services, or occasionally through tickets from connecting services, should be accepted for travel at no extra charge.

Oxfordshire Districts each operate, separately, a concessionary fare scheme for elderly and disabled people. Three rural districts offer the qualifying person the choice of a half fare pass or travel token. Oxford City Council offers a flat fare pass only. Vale of White Horse District Council offers a half-fare pass only. Most schemes offer reduced rate travel to selected places outside the district boundary, but there are variations in provision and no general county

wide scheme. Concessions for other groups of users are at the discretion of operators, and vary from company to company. As this document was published the Government announced a proposal for free concessionary travel. The details of how this would operate, and its impact upon existing fares and on bus services more generally, are unknown. Its impact will be taken into account in future work.

Most Oxfordshire bus services have a relatively complex fare scale, with a large number of different fares for different origin-destination pairs. Fares are not closely related to distance and vary from service to service and between operators. In recent years, some moves have been made to reduce the number of separate fares payable, and to ensure that fare values are set to minimise the number of coins required for payment. These trends speed up boarding and are to be encouraged. On county subsidised services, operators can themselves decide what fares to charge, subject to a maximum for any given mileage, which is set to ensure that only 10% of commercial fares for that distance are higher.

### 2.8.2 Issues to be addressed

Considerable progress has been made in improving ticketing systems in recent years, but there remain a significant number of shortcomings.

- The existence of multiple operators on many major routes deters many users from pre-purchasing single operator multi-journey tickets, either because they desire flexibility to board the first bus to arrive irrespective of operator, or because their through journey involves the services of two different operators.
- The existing Plus Pass multi-operator ticket is significantly more expensive than equivalent single operator tickets, and is particularly unattractive for the many shorter journeys of up to 2 miles; it is also of no use to travellers from places beyond the Oxford suburbs.
- On-bus initial purchase of virtually all multi-journey tickets, plus the relatively slow action of the magnetic card readers employed, result in relatively slow boarding times for existing multi-journey tickets.
- There are many specific point to point movements around the county, outside Oxford, where two or more operators contribute towards the overall service headway, but full ticket inter-availability does not exist.
- There are many existing journeys which require a change between a feeder and a trunk service to make the link between, say, an outlying village and a major shopping centre, and the strategy of developing a hierarchy of services will increase the number of such journeys; arrangements for through ticketing are needed to make use of the bus attractive in these cases.
- Journeys to destinations on the periphery of Oxford (and sometimes other towns), in particular to hospitals, often require a journey into the city/town centre then another short journey with another operator to the final destination, for which no existing through ticketing arrangement is suitable.

- Through rail-bus ticketing, although widespread, is inconsistent, relatively poorly advertised and little used and (with some welcome exceptions) tickets can only be bought at railway stations and thus are not usable for journeys where the first leg is by bus.
- The existing policy on fares on subsidised services is complex to administer, poorly understood, can lead to complaints when a subsidy contract changes hands and fare levels change, and does very little to speed up boarding or increase the attractiveness of bus travel.
- Some holders of concessionary passes for elderly and disabled people say that they wish to be able to make journeys at a concessionary rate throughout the county.
- Some Park and Ride users dislike the existing arrangement of separate payment for parking, and for the (commercial) bus fare.

### 2.8.3 Proposed strategy

The County Council will, in Quality Partnerships and in other ways, continue to encourage development of simplified fare scales, off bus ticketing and other means to speed up bus boarding. In addition, the County Council will use the powers available to it under The Transport Act 2000 to develop other ticketing schemes. Whilst the County Council has no control over fare levels for any ticketing schemes, the Council is actively developing a ticketing strategy to address the issues listed. This includes investigating potential ticketing targets; for example, increasing the journeys made on pre-purchased tickets. There will be a separate consultation on this, and a full strategy and targets will be included in the final Bus Strategy.

## 2.9 Transport Information

The Council formally adopted a Transport Information Strategy for Bus Services in March 2002, and this has formed one of the Standard Conditions of Contract for all services tendered since October of that year. The Strategy lays down what the Council feels are acceptable standards for the presentation and production of information, not only for tendered services but also for commercial operations in the county. In general, operators are expected to meet the costs of providing information on their services, although the Council can and does assist where operators do not have either the confidence or the expertise to do so themselves.

Following the first two years of the Strategy, some aspects such as provision of timetable cases on routes with a less-than-hourly frequency, require review. Consultation on this is proposed in autumn 2005 for publication of a revised Information Strategy in March 2006.

The Council also produces a map of all bus services in the county, but this, too, is under review following comments from operators and users that they feel more localised area guides would be of more relevance. As part of this process an area guide is being produced for Witney, and market research is being commissioned to establish public opinion on the usefulness and the best format for this kind of information.

Through Parish Councils and the Parish Transport Representative network Council officers distribute timetables and other updates whenever services change, with a request that they be displayed prominently in the local community. This is intended to augment the timetables provided by operators at stops, at the time when passengers are often most uncertain, and in a further initiative the Council has been working closely with local operators to agree a limited number of dates on which bus services will change.

As well as “paper” information, the Strategy also makes clear that operators are expected to contribute towards the day-to-day running costs of the regional telephone and web-based travel enquiry service through involvement in the PTI (SE) operator grouping; the Council supplies timetable and bus stop location data through SELTA, the South East Local Transport Authorities consortium.

The Information Strategy is being revised in the light of experience of the first three years of operation. This will be the subject of a separate consultation with both users and providers. The March 2002 Information Strategy forms an Annex to this Provisional Bus Strategy; revisions will be completed for inclusion as part of the final Bus Strategy for submission in March 2006.

#### 2.9.1 Real Time Information (RTI)

Technological advance now provides a means of delivering up-to-date information to passengers waiting at bus stops and to those with access to the internet. The first phase of a possible county-wide system is currently being commissioned in the Kidlington and Banbury Road (Oxford) areas. On-street signs provide a list of predicted arrival times of buses at stops. A website provides ‘virtual displays’ of anticipated arrival times at stops across a wider network. The provision of information that has taken into account any delays caused by traffic congestion or other disruption is intended to give bus passengers greater confidence about the time their bus will arrive, which will allow them to manage their time more effectively.

The Oxfordshire Real Time Information system is being developed on a partnership basis with bus operators. Given the quality of management and control information that the system delivers to operators, it is accepted that they will meet all the costs of the on-bus and in-depot equipment, whilst the Council meets the cost of the central server, radio infrastructure and on-street signs.

Depending on successful implementation of the Banbury Road/Kidlington pilot Real Time Information project, it is anticipated that the system would gradually be extended across Oxfordshire. The Council will invest in on-street signs at the busier stops, to reflect the geographic spread of equipped buses. In addition, information screens listing expected departures from nearby stops will be provided in rail stations, shopping centres, and other appropriate locations served by equipped buses, in partnership with site operators. The Council will also develop the functionality and legibility of the RTI website, and

will investigate the feasibility of delivering a Text Messaging facility. It will also investigate the feasibility of linking with other Local Authority RTI systems, so that the arrival of buses from surrounding areas can be predicted on Oxfordshire signs and the website.

The RTI system also interfaces with traffic signals through the satellite automatic vehicle location technology, enabling buses to be given selective priority depending on their earliness or lateness. This capability is being trialled in the Kidlington area, and if proved successful, will be used elsewhere across the County.

## **2.10 Hourly Services**

In the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2001-2006, a second tier of services, running at regular hourly intervals, was identified as an aspiration. In the council's view, 'turn up and go' services such as the Premium Routes, are necessary to ensure a substantial modal shift from private car to bus. Less frequent services, for which passengers need to refer to a timetable and organise their personal life to ensure that their journeys coincide with the times at which buses are available, cannot provide a level of service comparable with the 'leave when you like' ability offered by the private car.

Nevertheless, there is some evidence that buses running at an easily memorable time that is the same every hour, and where there is one available every hour, can provide a satisfactory alternative to the private car for some people who would not consider less frequent and less easily memorised services. This is especially the case if they run relatively directly between larger centres of population.

In addition to their contribution towards tackling congestion, hourly services have a major role in delivering accessibility. They serve the larger settlements which between them account for a substantial proportion of the population, providing that population with a good quality service potentially meeting most travel needs. They are of course key to meeting the Government indicator of improving the percentage of the population within walking distance of an hourly service. Perhaps most crucially, they have the best chance of all rural services of running without subsidy.

In accordance with the Council's policy of creating the condition in which commercially services can thrive, the Council's aim is to improve the viability of these hourly services, increasing the proportion of the population whose accessibility can be assured without subsidy, and enabling subsidy expenditure to be redirected towards other less frequent services.

Notwithstanding the earlier policy, development of a network of Hourly services has, since 2001, been largely frustrated by rapidly rising operating costs for bus services due to pressure on driver's wages. This has led to some commercial hourly services being reduced in frequency. Where subsidy for such services is considered, the County Council has often found that respondents to consultation consider it more important to maintain lower

frequency services to lower density areas, than to ensure that the majority of the population have available at least an hourly service. There does thus appear some conflict between perceptions of what is needed to ensure accessibility, and that which is most likely to encourage people to use buses rather than the private car. In consequence, the network of hourly bus services has slightly reduced between 2001 and 2005, contrary to the County Council's original aspirations.

Nevertheless, the concept of retaining Hourly services in the hierarchy has been generally supported by stakeholders, and the Council believes that the potential contribution to its overall transport policies of the availability of a network of hourly services justifies its retention within the hierarchy. As described in Section 2.3, the viability of these services can be improved if they can be given good facilities within the centre of country towns – the majority of their passengers travel to or from town centres and the greatest impact on the reliability of these services is the effect of traffic delays in town centres. Good facilities at, and pedestrian access to, principal stops on these routes can also improve their attractiveness, as can improved information and ticketing as described in sections 2.8 and 2.9.

The Council will therefore pursue a policy of encouraging development of hourly services, both through the subsidy policy described in 3.5.10 and commercially through improved facilities in country towns and selected locations elsewhere, through general improvements in quality, and by considering ways in which real-time information and other enhancements proposed for Premium Routes might also be extended to hourly services at acceptable cost.

## **2.11 Express Coaches**

Express coaches make a significant contribution to travel on some longer distance corridors within the County. Particularly noteworthy are the services provided by two competing operators between Oxford and London. Both services use state of the art modern coaches, run 24 hours a day on 7 days a week, and at busier times operate at frequencies of up to 6 journeys per hour. These provide lower cost, higher frequency alternatives to rail services between Oxford and London, including providing direct links from some places on the edge of Oxford and the edge of London, not directly accessible by train. They are clearly attractive to many users and make a significant contribution to discouraging use of the private car for some longer distance journeys. In addition, the following coach services have developed and improved significantly, to run at frequencies of up to half hourly;

Oxford to Heathrow/Gatwick  
Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge

In addition, less frequent coach services provide links to certain other destinations.

The County Council recognises that these services make a valuable contribution to accessibility and modal shift in the corridors within which they operate. It is considered that a commercial market is best able to identify and develop opportunities for services such as this, but the County Council will assist wherever possible in encouraging their use and development.

Most of these services call at selected suburban stops on their route in and out of Oxford. The County Council will seek to ensure that adequate facilities are available for the coaches and their passengers at these locations.

Stakeholders have emphasised the importance of a good central Oxford terminus for coach services. All currently use the Gloucester Green coach station in the city centre. This site provides good access to the commercial area of the city, but is recognised as having shortcomings in the space available both for vehicles and for their passengers. An additional problem giving rise to periodic complaint is the lack of access by car for those wishing to pick up or set down coach travellers. Within the existing congested city centre, there is no existing opportunity to increase the space available for coaches, passengers and cars. These issues will therefore be addressed in the following ways:

- Through encouraging operators and their passengers to use sites outside the city centre for interchange with cars and taxis; a major improvement in this respect has already been achieved through routing of some services into Thornhill Park and Ride, and proposed work will improve these facilities with the introduction of a major new interchange with terminal building as part of further proposed improvements to the site.
- In association with development proposals in the city centre, work is being undertaken to identify possible alternative terminal points, accessible to the City Centre, for express coach services. This might be in conjunction with relocation of the railway station. However, the County Council recognises that few passengers interchange between express coaches (other than the Cambridge service, which already serves the station forecourt) and rail services. Priority for space for picking up and setting down adjacent to the rail station will therefore be given to local bus services which can act as feeders to rail services. Express coach services will thus generally not be expected to serve the existing rail station and alternative sites will be sought for their operation.

## 2.12 Consultation

Consultation has long been at the heart of development of bus services in Oxfordshire. The routine consultation processes in place include:

- Area reviews of subsidised bus services include extensive consultation with Parish and Town Councils and Transport Representatives, schools, local bus operators and other stakeholders.

- Periodic (usually every three years) reviews of funding for Dial-a-Ride services, Community Transport Adviser posts etc include comprehensive consultation with all affected local Councils, community and voluntary groups, and others.
- Development of Premium Route programmes start with a stakeholder consultation, followed by a public exhibition and face-to-face meetings with affected individuals.
- Bus stop proposals are considered at a meeting including operators and Parish Council representatives, before consultation with affected property owners.
- Groups representing people with specific categories of disability are consulted on specific issues (such as design of timetables for legibility)
- Research is undertaken with users on design of timetable guides, real-time information, and so on.
- All parish and Town Councils are encouraged to appoint a Transport Representative, and there are 3 or 4 meetings a year to which all Representatives are invited, which is used as a “sounding board” for development of all aspects of public transport policy and practice.
- The County Council established, supports and funds the independent Oxfordshire Committee on Inclusive Transport, which includes representatives of disability groups and acts as a “sounding board” for development of policy on transport for people with disabilities.
- There are quarterly Director-level meetings with the County’s two main bus operators to guide general policy development, plus ad hoc consultation meetings with all operators on specific initiatives such as information, quality partnership etc.

## **2.13 Partnership working on Access to Healthcare, Education and Employment.**

### 2.13.1 Strategy Context

The County Council recognises that it is important to work with bus operators and other stakeholders in partnership, where this is appropriate, in developing better bus access to healthcare, education and employment. An example of this is the partnership work being carried out in the Headington area of Oxford.

Two key issues have led to partnership work on development of transport measures in the Headington area. Firstly, there were major plans for further development within the Headington area, which would lead to approximately

3000 extra staff being located in the area. This was especially the case for the hospitals, with the NHS having a 'Headington Strategy' under which they wished to consolidate their hospital sites within this area, including re-location of services from the city centre located Radcliffe Infirmary site. Oxford Brookes University also had plans for further growth at their development sites. Secondly, it was recognised that measures within the Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS), including the key city centre measures introduced in 1999, focused on transport access to the City Centre. Hence, it was considered that transport issues needed to be addressed in other areas of the city, including ensuring that potential effects of the OTS measures were mitigated. This was particularly the case in the Headington and Marston area with its development pressures.

The NHS 'Headington Strategy' was agreed in principle within the 1991 to 2001 Oxford Local Plan, adopted in 1998. This recognised that healthcare improvements could result from this approach, but that transport improvements would be needed at these sites, including restraint of on and off-street parking and improvements to bus services to allow for these developments. The policies outlined in the Local Plan led to further discussions between City Council officers and hospital representatives regarding potential planning applications for hospital expansion. The need for further work on transport policy development for Headington was also indicated within the 2001 – 2006 County Council Local Transport Plan.

Following on from these concerns and outlined plans, the City and County Council jointly commissioned a transport study for Headington and Marston in 2000. This study was managed through a steering group including representatives from the main employment sites, and included consultation with bus operators. It resulted in a number of recommendations for transport measures to be introduced in association with the planned development at the employment sites. In line with transport policy priorities outlined by the County and City Councils there was a particular emphasis on improving bus access to the area, including from the main Oxford Park and Ride sites to the existing and expanding employment sites. The main recommendations of this study formed the basis of the Headington and Marston Area Transport Strategy (HAMATS), endorsed by the County Council Executive in late 2002. This strategy focused on transport issues in the area, but also took account of wider strategy within the County Local Transport Plan, 2001 to 2006, including the public transport Premium Route development

### [2.13.2 Strategy progress](#)

The emphasis on development of better bus services as part of the strategy meant that there was a need to work in partnership with the bus companies within a deregulated environment. It was recognised that this partnership work should also involve the major employment sites in the area as patronage associated with these sites is needed in order to secure the long-term viability of potential services. Several of these sites, especially the major hospital sites at the John Radcliffe and Churchill, were also tied into planning agreements associated with their development. These agreements required

these sites to develop travel plans, and pay over significant monies in the form of S106 monies for enhanced bus services.

In order to further develop this partnership working, a HAMATS bus working group was set up, with officers from the County and City Councils, representatives from the bus companies, and representatives from the main hospital and university sites in the Headington and Marston area. This now meets at least every 6 months and is a forum for liaison between these organisations, and a means to co-ordinate the development of bus services to and from the Headington area. The bus working group has presided over a number of bus service enhancements in the area. These include a new bus service from Thornhill Park and Ride to two of the major hospital sites, and enhancements to the bus service from the northern area of Oxford to/from the main hospital sites.

### 2.13.3 Future development

It is recognised that further partnership work is required in both enhancing and supporting new bus services in the Headington area for the future. Further work is therefore being carried out reviewing options for service enhancements, including the potential for a service to the area from a Park and Ride site to the north of Oxford. This work will also need to review the potential impact of such changes on the overall bus network for the Headington area.

However, the work so far has shown that new bus services would need heavy subsidy indefinitely if introduced without other changes. Measures for support of these service enhancements will also need to continue to be developed. These include the better management and further development of parking controls on the main employment sites, and the introduction of controlled parking areas on surrounding residential areas. Improving information about services, both for patients and staff, improved access and bus stop facilities at the hospital sites, and improved bus priorities in the surrounding area, are all prerequisite for sustainable improvements to bus services.

In the longer-term there may also need to be a review of operational issues at the hospital, including the times at which staff are employed, and the arrangements for appointments. This relates to ensuring support for bus services throughout the day, and to encouraging a greater spread of general traffic travelling to and from the hospitals throughout the day and hence helping to mitigate congestion issues. A review of appointment times may also be useful to help improve accessibility to healthcare. An example of this may be scheduling appointments at times when there is good public transport access for those persons that do not have access to a private car.

The partnership working undertaken so far with the Health sector has focussed on the Headington area because of the high concentration of health facilities in that area. The County Council, acting as transport authority and social services authority, hopes to build on the principles of joint working being established in this area to look more widely at access to health

throughout the county, and to develop joint policies on location of, transport to, and information about social and healthcare facilities.

#### 2.14 Air Quality Management Areas.

As described in the History section, Oxfordshire has had considerable success in encouraging bus operators to reduce the impact of bus operations on air quality; in particular through encouraging drivers to switch off engines and operators to introduce (or retrofit) vehicles with improved emission standards. The measures to encourage subsidised service operators to provide lower emission vehicles and otherwise minimise emissions are described in the section on subsidised services, and proposals to include emission standards in Quality Partnerships are also described in the relevant section. Stakeholders have emphasised the importance of maintaining and enhancing all of these measures, which make a significant contribution to delivering the shared priority of better air quality.

The National Air Quality Strategy for the UK sets out the objective levels for 7 key pollutants. Partly due to the measures already taken by bus operators, for Oxford the objective levels will be met for 6 of these. This includes PM10 which the Oxford Bus Company has particularly targeted through their fleet emission reduction programme. For Nitrogen Dioxide the level is predicted to be above the government objectives on a small number of streets in the city centre. The City Council have therefore declared an Air Quality Management Area for these streets. The County and City Councils are working to produce an air quality action plan which addresses pollution levels where necessary. This will form part of the Local Transport Plan submission. The measures identified in the action plan are still subject to analysis of cost and benefit in both air quality terms but also the impact on the other 3 shared priorities that the government have set in the LTP.

Measures to be considered, in the city centre:

- bus gate enforcement
- engine switch off while stationary
- higher emission standards all vehicles – Low Emission Zone
- bus quality partnership – emission standards
- taxi quality partnership – emission standards
- bus boarding time improvements – Smart card ticketing

#### road reconfiguration

Westgate redevelopment

Station relocation

Gloucester Green – removal of some services from bus station

Air Quality Management areas have also been declared for Henley on Thames, Chipping Norton and Witney. The measures within these areas are not yet outlined.

## 2.15 Helping People with Disabilities

It is estimated that one in four people in the UK either has a disability or is close to someone with one. It is a fact that services which are accessible to disabled people benefit everyone. Although less than 5% of disabled people use a wheelchair, over 15 million people in the UK have 'hidden' disabilities such as sensory difficulties, cognitive impairments or mental health challenges (to name a few).

Oxfordshire County Council gives a high priority to ensuring that bus services, interchanges and networks cater for people with disabilities. The County Council established, supports and funds the operation of the independent Oxfordshire Committee on Inclusive Transport, comprised of both representatives of people with different kinds of disability and relevant officers, to guide the development of policy on the service provision for people with disabilities. This Committee also acts as a main consultee when services and policies are under review, but in such cases an extensive consultation involving other stakeholders and local councils is normally carried out.

### 2.15.1 Buses used on Commercial Services

Oxfordshire County Council's policies, in creating the conditions in which commercial bus services can thrive, and through officers' direct contact with operators, manufacturers and others, have encouraged bus operators to provide a relatively high proportion of modern, low floor, wheelchair-accessible buses on existing commercial services. These policies will be continued and developed. In addition Quality Partnerships will be developed which include a commitment by operators to use only vehicles which make the best possible provision for people with disabilities – not only wheelchair users but people with hearing, ambulant mobility and sensory difficulties.

### 2.15.2 Buses used on Subsidised Services

At some future date, it is hoped that provision of fully accessible vehicles will be a requirement of County subsidy contracts. However, for the present it is recognised that insistence upon such vehicles might result in no tenders (or no tenders at acceptable cost) being received for operation of some key services.

At present tenderers are offered a price preference if they undertake to use vehicles with features which assist people with disabilities. These features can include easy use steps, easy grip handrails, easy to use bell pushes, bus stopping signs and other features, as well as fully wheelchair accessible low-floor buses. Under this system, for each such feature their tender price is treated, for the purpose of comparison with other tenders, as if it were lower by a percentage appropriate to the importance of the feature concerned.

Between 2001 and 2005 tenderers were in addition offered a capital grant equivalent to the difference in cost between a fully accessible low-floor bus and an alternative older less accessible vehicle. This grant has resulted in an extra 17 accessible buses per year being introduced on subsidised services. Every review area having now had the opportunity of such grants, this scheme has now ceased. There remains the possibility of County purchase of a fleet of low floor vehicles to operate the remaining main services; this will be considered in the event of a significant capital fund becoming available.

#### 2.15.3 Disability Awareness Training for Bus Drivers

It is recognised that the attitude of the bus driver is also very important in helping and encouraging travel by all bus users, especially those with disabilities. Understanding by the driver of the difficulties which passengers may face in identifying the correct bus, boarding, paying the correct fare, gaining a seat, identifying their alighting stop and alighting, can make travel for many much easier. It is also important for drivers to know how best to use facilities with which buses are equipped, such as lowering steps and ramps, to benefit users.

The County Council's Access Officer has over many years sought to encourage operators to give all drivers disability awareness and customer care training. Between 1999 and 2004 staff shortages inhibited the development of such training courses but Oxfordshire's main operators now include disability awareness and customer care training as part of the standard driver training package; from 1 July 2005 it is a condition of subsidy contracts that drivers on all services other than those running for fewer than 20 hours per week must have attended an accredited disability awareness training course, and disability awareness and customer care training will be a condition of future Quality Partnerships.

Whilst Oxfordshire County Council is proud of what has been achieved, we have encountered difficulties over common standards between operators, especially those who run in more than one county, and in identifying whether the drivers actually employed on the service on any given day have received the training. We therefore feel that disability awareness and customer care training should be a national requirement as part of PCV driver licensing.

#### 2.15.4 Bus Stop Infrastructure and Disabilities

The Premium Routes programme described earlier includes upgrading existing bus stops to a standard influenced by the Department of Transport's 'Inclusive Mobility' (2004) document. This programme includes increasing the height of kerbs and, where appropriate, repaving the passenger waiting area and immediate pedestrian links. This work should be completed by 2015 to reflect the 10 year Premium Routes programme and the final date for operation of high-floor buses. Better quality bus stop poles and flags will be provided concurrently.

Where interchanges are provided or upgraded, particular attention will be paid to the needs of people with disabilities, not only at bus boarding points, but also in enabling easy transfer between different bus stopping points and using any passenger facilities provided.

For the remainder of bus stops (around 75% of the total), the Council will ensure that routine pavement works include a specification for higher kerbs at stops. Some stops are currently located in grass verges, and similar non-paved areas. The Council will endeavour to provide areas of hardstanding and linked footpath, as appropriate, when other maintenance work is scheduled in a particular area. New poles and flags may be provided where these currently do not exist, or where these are manifestly inadequate.

#### 2.15.5 Transport Information for people with disabilities

The County Council is aware that traditional forms of transport information can often present particular difficulties for people with disabilities, and has consulted widely to try to identify the most appropriate format, including large-print, Braille or even tape timetables. All printed information produced in the county is required to meet the standards laid down by the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DiPTAC), and similar standards are currently under discussion for roadside publicity.

Specific consultation has already been undertaken with representatives of people with learning difficulties over the presentation of basic timetable information, and with the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind during production of "Where to catch your bus" maps for Oxford city centre. The responses to these discussions will be used to guide all future production of timetable and other information.

#### 2.15.6 Dedicated Dial-a-Ride Services for People Who Cannot use Standard Public Transport Services

For many people with disabilities, a bus service, even if in itself fully accessible, is of little use because of their inability to make the journey on foot or by wheelchair between the bus stop and their ultimate origin and destination. Accordingly, Oxfordshire County Council has since 1987 funded provision of a limited network of Dial-a-Ride services, using fully accessible vehicles with specially trained drivers to provide a door-to-door service for registered customers. Four separate Dial-a-Ride operations serve different parts of the county.

More recently, four of the five Oxfordshire Districts have acted to increase the level of service available through funding enhancements to the initial County funded service. From 2005, a Dial-a-Ride partnership of both County and Districts has been formed, to take forward and develop further provision of Dial-a-Ride services in the county.

South Oxfordshire District remains outside these funding arrangements. A limited service covering part of the District only has been funded for many years by the County Council alone. From late 2004 this has been supplemented by a service using spare resources in the off-peak period from an experimental Rural Bus Challenge funded feeder taxi bus service. Funding for this service is agreed for an initial period of one year only; it is hoped that, following this, South Oxfordshire District Council will join the funding partnership with a view to ensuring continuation of this service if successful.

#### 2.15.7 Community Transport for People with Disabilities

There are many community groups who provide assistance in transporting people with disabilities. These range from organisations mainly concerned with other aspects of care, who provide transport as an adjunct to these other services, to groups focusing on transport for people of all abilities but who are especially concerned to ensure that people with disabilities are catered for. It is important both to encourage and to assist these groups, and to make sure that the transport which they provide caters in the most effective and safe way for their users. To help achieve this, Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action employs, with County Council funding, a Transport Co-ordinator whose role is to advise and assist such groups. As well as advising on legal, practical and financial issues surrounding such transport, the Co-ordinator also encourages co-operation between groups in the use of vehicles and other mutual aid and arranges training for voluntary drivers and other volunteers in caring for and ensuring the safety of people with disabilities whilst travelling (e.g. manual handling). The role also covers strategic management and development of Dial-a-Ride and other services.

### **3 Bus Services Funded by the County Council : Securing Value for Money**

The earlier parts of this Strategy have described measures to be taken, and policies to be pursued, in respect of bus services as a whole. For the most part, these earlier sections apply equally to commercial bus services and those subsidised by the County Council.

This chapter focuses specifically on public transport which would not exist but for County Council revenue funding. It is worth remembering that only around 8% of passenger journeys made on public bus services are on services subsidised by the County Council. In terms of encouraging increased bus use, the policies in the earlier sections of this strategy are the more important ones. However, there are large areas of the County in which commercial bus services are limited or non-existent, and the Council's role in subsidising bus services is thus very important in ensuring adequate access in these areas. The policies in this chapter are thus mainly directed to meeting transport need and improving access to jobs and services, whilst also taking account of targets for increased bus use. This section thus focuses mainly on delivering accessibility, whilst contributing to tackling congestion and better air quality.

A Best Value review is currently considering linkages between public, education and social services transport. Comments received on the policies outlined in this chapter will be considered as part of that review.

The County Council is currently carrying out an accessibility audit of the county to determine which areas of Oxfordshire have the lowest levels of accessibility, by public transport, to key services. Combining this information with that on the levels of social exclusion across the county (from census and other information sources), will enable priorities for action to be identified.

This chapter describes in detail the process by which subsidy decisions are made. First, legal constraints are outlined, and funding sources identified and described. Then follows a description of the circumstances in which the Council will arrange subsidised services, including the overall timetable for regular area reviews of services. A description of the factors taken into account in subsidy decisions (including a description of special treatment for certain categories of service) is followed by an outline of the standards which services must meet and the process by which services are designed and quotes obtained from service operators. Ongoing contract management is then discussed. Finally, alternatives to conventional bus services are discussed.

These policies deal largely with circumstances when local buses form the main means of motorised transport for those without access to private cars. There are certain places in Oxfordshire where local rail services instead perform this role. In the event of significant reduction of rail services, the policies and practices described in this section will apply equally; in such

cases the County Council will consider, not only whether subsidy for a replacement rail service is justified, but also whether it can be provided at lower cost by provision of a bus service.

This section mainly describes the policies and practices in securing public transport services for the general public.

However, the Council's Learning and Culture and Social and Health Care directorates also secure transport services, specifically for the use of their clients. A brief summary of the policies pursued by each of these directorates on transport matters is given below – fuller details are available from the relevant directorate. There are also a number of arrangements for liaison between the transport activities of different directorates. These are described later in the relevant section.

### **3.1 Transport Policies of Learning and Culture Directorate**

This Directorate's transport policy is concerned with access to full time education, whether the young people concerned attend a mainstream school, a special school or a college. The policy is more extensive than that required by statute and represents a major financial commitment to the welfare of young people.

When assessing whether to provide free transport the following factors are taken into account:

- Availability of school places
- Distance
- Safety

Bus services for home to school transport are arranged by competitive tender, in conjunction with local bus services. Arrangements for doing this are described in the following pages.

The Local Transport Plan describes steps being taken to encourage use of alternatives to the private car. As part of this, and in order to respond to the Government's School Travel Action Plan, a wide-ranging Best Value review which will include consideration of arrangements for travel to school by bus, is being undertaken during 2005. This may lead to changes in policy and practice in this area, and have wider impacts on procurement of subsidised bus services, which would be consulted upon and included in the final Bus Strategy in 2006.

### **3.2 Transport Policies of the Social and Health Care Directorate**

This Directorate has arrangements in place to assist service users and carers with transport in order that most effective use is made of its resources, service users needs are met and Care Plans are fulfilled, as far as is possible. To this end the Directorate has partnership arrangements with the Learning and Culture Directorate regarding the needs of Children and Health Care Trusts,

voluntary and other agencies regarding the needs of Adults with a Disability and Older people. Transport is generally only provided where users have no suitable alternative means of accessing care. Direct payments, allowing users to manage their own arrangements are encouraged where appropriate.

### **3.3 Requirements of the Law**

National legislation lays down what the County Council may and may not do in relation to subsidy for bus services. This is mainly set out in the Transport Act 1985, with some minor amendments introduced by the Transport Act 2000. The main legal requirements affecting the County Council's public transport role in bus subsidy are summarised below.

- Bus operators are free themselves to decide what commercial (unsubsidised) services to provide. Some ways in which the County Council can influence the provision of these services are described in the preceding sections of this strategy. However, the County Council has no direct control over these services.
- Time tables for all bus services must be registered with the Traffic Commissioner – a Government appointee – who can ensure that services run to their registered timetable, but cannot influence the timetable in the first place. Operators must give the Traffic Commissioner and the County Council at least 8 weeks notice of service introductions, withdrawals and timetable changes.
- The County Council has a duty to arrange “such services as they consider it appropriate to secure” to meet public transport needs which are not met by services arranged in other ways. Recent Government guidance has emphasised the importance of accessibility modelling in identifying transport needs.
- The County Council can subsidise these extra public transport services, but for at least three quarters of all subsidised bus services must invite competitive tenders and decide which tender to accept solely on the basis of securing “best value” for Council funds.
- A bus service can be arranged without tendering to meet an unexpected and urgent requirement (such as a commercial service withdrawn at 8 weeks notice), but tenders must subsequently be invited.

### **3.4 Funding Sources**

#### **3.4.1 The Council's Revenue Budget**

The main source of funding for subsidised bus services comes from the Council's general revenue budget. This must take account of the total revenue funding available to the County Council, and expenditure pressures arising from other Council services. The pressures for increasing bus subsidy, described in the introduction, have led to subsidy funding from this

source having increased by 157% over the 5 years from 1999/2000 until 2004/05. Subject to the availability of finance, and to competing expenditure pressures, the Council will aim to make funds available to maintain existing levels of bus service where continuing demand justifies. Over and above this, extra funding, to pump prime Premium Routes as described in the relevant section and to expand the network of hourly services will be provided wherever possible, but in most cases will be considered of lower priority. In terms of revenue funding, this document largely assumes that, extra funding will no more than equal any rise in subsidy costs, and that any enhancement of services will come largely through physical measures which improve the attractiveness and therefore viability of bus services, together with careful review of services to get maximum benefit from existing levels of revenue funding.

#### 3.4.2 Rural Bus Subsidy Grant

Funding for new rural bus services was boosted from 1998 by Rural Bus Subsidy Grant from central government. This was used in 1998 and 1999 to introduce 34 new or substantially improved bus services (including 13 boosted to an hourly frequency). These services have been reviewed and amended during the intervening period, and are, for the most part, now acknowledged as part of the core network of existing services. Their future will thus be treated in the same way as other existing services. The 54% increase in Rural Bus Subsidy Grant between 1999/2000 and 2004/05 is less than the increase in costs for these services and well below the increase in funding from the Council's own funds. Unless there is a further large boost in this fund, it is likely to be required solely to maintain services newly introduced in 1998/9, and it will be difficult to introduce any further new services.

#### 3.4.3 Developer Funding

When new housing, commercial or other developments require new or improved bus services, the Council expects developers either themselves to secure such services or to provide revenue funding sufficient to fully cover the subsidy cost of such services throughout at least 5 years from first occupation of the development. Many stakeholders have emphasised the importance of developer funding to ensure public transport provision in new developments. However, in order both to avoid longer term pressure on public funds to maintain services after the initial five years, and to secure the maximum use of bus services by occupants of new developments, the Council will aim to steer significant new development to the commercial Premium Routes network as far as possible. The Council's objective is thus to minimise the amount of revenue funding required from developers, focussing instead on capital contributions towards development of the Premium Routes network.

#### 3.4.4 Funding From Other Outside Sources Locally

Where appropriate, the Council will seek partnership funding towards bus services from existing commercial and other developments. Particular circumstances where this will apply are described under "special categories of

service”, but opportunities may also be sought in other circumstances. All such partnership funding will be sought only on the basis that

- All activities of a comparable type will be given equal opportunity to obtain, through funding, improved services organised by the County Council.
- Funding secured will exceed any extra cost incurred in meeting the needs of that partner, and the service concerned will be withdrawn should this subsequently cease to be the case.
- There is no disbenefit to other users of the services concerned arising from changes to suit the needs of the partner.

#### 3.4.5 Time Limited Funding

There are various sources of funding available, largely from central government, for new initiatives. These have included Rural Transport Partnership, Rural Bus Challenge and Urban Bus Challenge funds. The Council has made quite significant use of these funds in the past. However, such funds are generally available for only a limited time. Experience has shown that they create an expectation, which frequently cannot be met, of continued funding after the end of the initial period. The Council's view is that such short term funding is therefore not always helpful. The Council will accordingly only seek such funding in the future if:

- There is strong reason to believe that the service will be able to continue without further County Council subsidy after the end of the initial funding period (such as 'kick start' funding for development of Premium Routes); or
- The funding is for a genuine experiment into a new type of service, not previously tried elsewhere, and there is a clear understanding that it will not continue indefinitely unless strict success criteria are met.

### 3.5 How do Subsidy Contracts Start?

#### 3.5.1 Scheduled Reviews of Existing Subsidy Contracts

The law currently limits bus subsidy contracts to a maximum of 5 years. “Long term” County Council subsidy contracts will therefore be arranged normally to last 4 years, to allow some flexibility for contract extension should circumstances require. Should the legal situation change, the Council will consider longer contracts, of up to 8 years, where it appears that, in this way, extra commitments can be secured from operators to provide improved service quality.

The Council has divided the County into 8 areas for subsidy contract purposes. Within each of these areas, all bus subsidy agreements and all Home to School mainstream transport contracts will be arranged to terminate on the same date. There will be 2 such area reviews per year when the

Council will carry out accessibility modelling, then review, consultation and re-tendering of subsidy contracts, as described in more detail below. The scheduled reviews between 2005 and 2011 are as follows:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Implementation Date</b>
Banbury	June 2005
Bicester & Kidlington	December 2005
Abingdon & Oxford	June 2006
Eynsham & Witney	December 2006
Thame & Wheatley	June 2007
Faringdon & Wantage	December 2007
Didcot, Henley, & Wallingford	June 2008
Charlbury & Chipping Norton	December 2008
Banbury	June 2009
Bicester & Kidlington	December 2009
Abingdon & Oxford	June 2010
Eynsham & Witney	December 2010
Thame & Wheatley	June 2011
Faringdon & Wantage	December 2011

### 3.5.2 Replacement of Commercial Services

Upon receipt of an application to the Traffic Commissioner to withdraw, or significantly reduce a commercial bus service, the Council will first consider how long the service has been provided at that level. If it has run for under 4 years (and was not itself a replacement for some earlier service since withdrawn) it will normally be viewed as an experimental improvement which has regrettably been unsuccessful, and will not be considered for replacement by a subsidised service. Similarly, if a withdrawn service is nowhere more than 400 metres from a remaining service or if it is still possible to travel between all points on the route by interchange between two other services, it will not normally be replaced.

If the service has run for more than 4 years, and the Council judges that withdrawal will have an adverse effect on the network of services available, the Council's first step will be to try to maintain service temporarily to allow time for a full review. The Council will therefore normally arrange a temporary subsidised service generally comparable to the withdrawn one. Exceptions may occur if finance is not available, if the subsidised services would seriously compete with remaining commercial services, or if the resulting service would be unreasonably frequent or expensive in relation to the number of users. This temporary subsidy contract will run for 4 to 11 months. In arranging these temporary contracts, the Council will normally first investigate in discussion with the incumbent commercial service operator continuation of the existing service, but will seek prices also from other operators in the event

that the incumbent operator is unwilling to continue at a cost which appears to the Council to represent good value for money.

For tendered contracts which replace temporary contracts of this sort the Transport Act 1985 requires a maximum of three months between return of tenders and service implementation. This timescale is not easily achievable for full-scale area reviews, so (for as long as this legislative quirk persists) review of contracts arising from recent withdrawal of commercial services will be carried out at a different time of year from area reviews. Accessibility modelling for a single service is also not considered practicable. In all other respects, for replacement of these temporary contracts, review, consultation and tendering will be carried out in the same way as for longer term contracts. Any replacement contract following this review will be arranged to end on the same date as other existing subsidy contracts in the same area.

### 3.5.3 Early Termination of Subsidy Contracts

Subsidy contracts can be ended prematurely by operators on either of the 2 contract change dates per year subject to giving 16 weeks notice. The Council is keen to discourage this from happening, but when it does it leaves inadequate time for a full scale review. The Council will accordingly invite tenders for the existing service plus any relevant variant of it for which tenders were invited at its last full review. A decision on continued subsidy will be made in the light of consultees' comments and other information collected as part of that last review, together with any other information which may be easily secured. In view of the lack of a full review, there will be a stronger than usual presumption in favour of continued subsidy.

Occasionally a contract may be terminated at shorter notice, for example due to company failure or severe shortcomings in service delivery. Such cases will be dealt with in broadly the same way as withdrawal of a commercial service.

### 3.5.4 Cross Boundary Services

Some bus services cross county boundaries. In Oxfordshire these are relatively few, accounting for less than 2 % of all passenger journeys. Where such services are very largely for the benefit of the residents of only one of the counties (for example into Banbury from adjacent areas of Northamptonshire, or into Reading from adjacent areas of Oxfordshire) it is expected that any necessary subsidy will be wholly provided by one authority and that authority's normal practices and policies will apply in respect of such funding. However, ensuring good public transport links with neighbouring areas can contribute to reducing congestion in particular in Oxfordshire, as well as contributing to other shared priorities. The Council will therefore assist and encourage the development of such services especially through good bus stop infrastructure, prioritising buses on the highway and good information, and will also take particular account of these services in partnership work with Health Trusts.

Where residents of both counties benefit, the Council will aim to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities to secure a mutually beneficial service, with funding shared according to the benefit enjoyed by each authority. Review and retendering of such services will normally be led by the authority contributing the highest share of funding; this will inevitably result in such reviews sometimes occurring on dates and timescales which are not wholly consistent with normal Oxfordshire County Council policy.

### 3.5.5 New Services

New services can arise in 2 main ways; through local requests or as a result of gaps identified in accessibility modelling. Individuals requesting new services will normally be referred to their Parish Councils. Requests from Parish Councils, or requests made separately by at least 10 individuals, will be considered for immediate implementation if there is a strong case for urgency. In other cases – the great majority – active consideration will be deferred until the next scheduled review of subsidy contracts in that area.

As described below, accessibility modelling will be carried out at an early stage in area reviews of subsidy contracts. Requested new services will be included in these assessments, whilst the modelling may itself produce other proposals for new services. Consultation and tendering on the proposals will then be carried out. Such new services will generally be considered to be of lower priority for Council funds, and subsidy contracts will normally be for a one and a half year trial period initially. A service will not generally be considered for introduction within eight years of withdrawal of a similar service, unless there has been a substantial change in other circumstances.

### **Basis on which the Council decides which services, and levels of service to subsidise**

#### 3.5.6 Monitoring the use of the service

During the life of any subsidy contract, Council officers will travel on buses, counting passengers and recording where they board and alight and noting any other factors relevant to the future specification and operation of the service. Such surveys will be carried out at least twice on every subsidised journey (including those running outside office hours and at weekends), the second such survey being in the final year of the contract. The day of the week upon which any given journey is surveyed will be chosen at random, whilst aiming to ensure that any given service shall have had surveys undertaken on as many different days as possible. The time of year of the survey will also be random (avoiding Christmas and Easter periods).

Parish Councils will also be encouraged to do periodic checks on local bus use, and to report the results to the Council. Surveys carried out only when the surveyor is making a journey for other purposes tend to overstate average usage, since the factors making that particular bus on that particular day attractive to the surveyor are likely equally to apply to other users. However,

where Parish surveys produce representative information the results will be taken into account in subsidy decisions.

Where there is a particular reason, information will also be sought from operator records. However, operators' recording systems are focussed upon revenue monitoring rather than upon passenger numbers, can be subject to error when used for the latter purpose and in particular give very imprecise information on where passengers alight. Analysis of raw data from operators, to make it useful for County Council purposes, would require considerable staff resources. Pending availability of such resources, this information will not be sought on a routine basis. Similarly, questionnaire surveys of passengers, although potentially yielding useful additional information, would require extra staff resources not currently available, and will thus be used only in exceptional circumstances.

### 3.5.7 Accessibility Strategy

The accessibility strategy sets out the Council's approach to identifying and addressing accessibility problems. A review of the principal problems throughout the area covered by each area review on bus services, will form a preliminary stage of every such review. It is envisaged that this will identify gaps where enhancements in service are desirable, also any existing services which make only a limited contribution to accessibility. If possible, each service being considered for subsidy will be accorded an accessibility score, reflecting the extent to which that service, if provided, will contribute to improving overall accessibility.

However, at the stage of publication of the Provisional Bus Strategy, the Council has no experience of how implementation of this strategy will work in practice. The Council intends initially to conduct a hypothetical exercise in accessibility modelling, in an area in which services were recently reviewed, to seek to identify the extent to which the outcome would have been different had accessibility modelling been undertaken. This will be used to guide the ways in which accessibility modelling is applied in future, and the policies and practices outlined in this document may be subject to amendment in the light of that experience. Such amendments will be incorporated in the final Bus Strategy, to be published in March 2006.

Notwithstanding the outcome of any such accessibility modelling, it is the Council's view, supported by many stakeholders in response to consultation, that such theoretical exercises can be only one element in selecting services for subsidy. The views of stakeholders and local representatives, the numbers of passengers actually using bus services, and the subsidy cost in relation to such use will continue to have a strong influence.

### 3.5.8 Consultation with Users

Following consultation with operators, accessibility modelling and initial formulation of ideas by Council officers, the Council will consult Parish, Town and District Councils and any other local bodies with a known interest in bus

services in the area. Consultees will be told the results of the work so far and the implications for their local services. They will be invited to comment on these implications, and the need for the services in question. They will also have the opportunity to present any information which they have themselves collected on the use made of local services and to put forward their own ideas and justifications for them. They will be explicitly consulted on the desirability of any proposals to carry schoolchildren and the general public on the same bus. The effectiveness of this consultation will be enhanced, especially in the case of full scale area reviews, by

- Encouraging all Parish and Town Councils to appoint a local Transport Representative whose role will be to keep in touch with the views and needs of local bus users and potential users and keep records of the usage and performance of local bus services and advise his or her Council accordingly.
- All Councils being contacted, 3 to 4 months in advance of the formal consultation, to highlight the impending review and to offer assistance with arranging a survey of local needs and usage of local subsidised services in anticipation of it. This role is normally performed by the rural community transport adviser of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, who can also advise on alternative solutions.
- Arranging by the County Council of at least 1 joint meeting of local Councils and Transport Representatives, and encouraging formulation of a common view amongst Parishes on the same service
- A parallel consultation of local schools by officers from the Learning and Culture directorate
- Whilst the County Council will not normally consult members of the public directly, notices will be displayed at bus stops and on buses early in the consultation period encouraging individuals to make any views known to their local Council or Transport Representative
- Encouraging local media to publicise the review and invite people, through their local Council, to make their views known.

This consultation will be completed before invitations to tender are dispatched, and the specifications of services will take account of consultees' views. Some consultees express a wish for a second consultation between receipt of tender prices and final decision. Timescales plus the necessary confidentiality of the tender process render this impracticable, but the Council as a whole will ensure that the views of affected local Councillors are taken into account.

### 3.5.9 Making the subsidy decision

At the end of the review of services, a decision will be made upon whether to continue a subsidised service, and if so which service option to select, primarily on the basis of the social need for the service and the contribution which it makes to accessibility, but taking into account the target of increasing bus use. Subsidy will only be provided where the Council is satisfied that the need to be met by that service is not met by an existing service and can not

be catered for in some other way at lower cost. When considering subsidy, the Council will take into account

- i) the overall budget for service subsidy;
- ii) the cost of subsidising this service;
- iii) the results of passenger surveys on any comparable service;
- iv) the views of consultees;
- v) the alternatives available within 400 metres of the service; and
- vi) the contribution which the service will make to meeting the Council's accessibility targets.

Particular account will be taken of the subsidy cost per passenger journey, (a combination of (ii) and (iii)). In making this calculation, any passengers who could instead have used an alternative public transport service between the same places at around the same time on the same day will be excluded. There will be no fixed upper limit on subsidy per passenger.

Decisions on bus subsidy, whether for tendered or de minimis contracts, will normally be made by a Committee of the Council. However, because of the limited time available, where a commercial service is proposed for withdrawal the decision on whether to arrange a temporary subsidised service (as described under 'Replacement of Commercial Services') will be made by officers under delegated authority.

#### 3.5.10 Special categories of service

Most types of subsidised bus service will be considered on their merits, on the basis of the criteria above but without distinction as to type of service. However, there are some particular kinds of service to which particular policies apply. These are described below. These policies may be subject to amendment once experience has been gained in accessibility modelling.

#### Hourly services

As described elsewhere, the Council considers that services running at a regular hourly interval can attract some car users, whilst providing people with no alternative means of transport with a service able to meet most needs. Subject to the outcome of accessibility modelling, priority will therefore be given to paying subsidy to ensure that settlements of 1,000 population or over have an hourly public transport service to at least one centre offering a wider range of services. Priority will also be given to ensuring hourly links between settlements of 25,000 population or over, including such settlements outside the county where this accords with the subsidy policy of neighbouring councils. However, in the Council's experience providing links between smaller towns of similar size to one another is of limited value, since each is likely to have comparable facilities and people thus gain little from travelling between them. Links between such smaller towns will thus be treated as lower priority save where such services will also ensure services for significant intermediate places.

Hourly bus services will generally be subsidised to operate between 07.00 and 19.00 on Mondays to Saturdays. Because of the advantages to users of an easily memorable timetable, the Council will normally expect such services to run on exactly the same route and at exactly the same times past each hour throughout this period, without variations or deviations for the benefit of individual user groups and without gaps for driver rostering purposes. An exception to this may however be made where variable traffic conditions require longer journey times during the peaks.

### Services greater than hourly

The Council's policy is to encourage commercial services at frequencies above hourly, and the many ways in which this will be done are described elsewhere. The Council does not consider that subsidy is normally appropriate for such services. Therefore, subsidy will not generally be paid for services running at above an hourly frequency save:

- Where subsidy is required to minimise a reduction from a previous higher frequency; or
- Where the additional cost of a higher frequency is negligible; or
- Where needed to pump prime frequency as part of a premium route package including new infrastructure and improved marketing, driver training and vehicles, and if no alternative funds are available.

### Evening Services

The Council (supported by many stakeholders) recognises that, where there is a frequent daytime service, the existence of an evening service is important in encouraging use. Many users are deterred from committing themselves to use of the bus for a daytime journey, unless they have an assurance that, should they choose or need to delay their return journey, a service will still be available. Whilst they may exercise this option of a later return only rarely, its existence is important in encouraging bus use and it is recognised that evening services are thus of greater value to users than the actual numbers using them on any given evening might suggest. On Premium Routes, the Council will seek wherever possible to achieve provision of evening services commercially through partnerships with operators; where this is impracticable, priority will be given for subsidy funds to providing evening services at an hourly interval until midnight on routes which meet Premium Route standards of frequency during the day. Subsidy will also be considered to provide evening services on other routes where justified by demand.

### Sunday Services

Stakeholder support for Sunday services, as for evening services is strong. The availability of a Sunday service can also play a role in encouraging people to commit themselves to bus use throughout the week, albeit that the case is less strong than for evening services. On Premium Routes, the Council will seek wherever possible to achieve provision of Sunday services commercially through partnerships with operators; where this is impracticable, consideration will be given to paying subsidy to provide evening services at an

hourly interval on routes which meet Premium Route standards of frequency during the day, and on other routes where justified by usage.

### Rail feeder services

Subsidised bus services will normally be arranged to serve any railway station in their local area, and timed to connect with trains, except where this would create serious inconvenience for other users. Services intended wholly or mainly as rail feeders will also be provided where justified under normal subsidy criteria, and will be given priority for subsidy funds where there is also a financial contribution from the rail industry and effective marketing of the service, and though rail tickets available, to passengers from throughout the rail network. Consideration will also be given to provision of coach feeder services on the same basis where appropriate.

### Town services

These cater for short distance trips, rarely over two miles, linking urban residential areas with the Town (or in the case of Oxford main suburban) shopping centre. Subsidy will be paid for shoppers' services of this sort, usually running hourly during the daytime off peak period (but with some gaps in service permitted), on a number of days appropriate to demand. Subsidy will not generally be paid for peak services, unless the extra cost is very low.

### Leisure services

These are services provided exclusively for leisure purposes, for example to serve major recreational attractions. The contribution to which services of this sort can make to protect the environment of locations which are often particularly sensitive is recognised. However, the social need for such services is considered generally to be lower and they will be considered of lower priority for subsidy funds except where partnership funding, and effective marketing, is available from leisure interests.

### Medical services

Because of low demand, subsidy will not generally be paid for services for patients and visitors direct from out lying towns and villages to main Hospitals. Subsidy will be paid to ensure a frequent service between Hospitals and the nearest town or city centre where connections can be made from further afield.

Because of low demand, subsidy will not generally be paid for bus services to Doctors' surgeries unless they can conveniently be combined with journeys for other purposes. Community transport alternatives will be encouraged.

The County Council will expect health providers to give a high priority to accessibility by public transport in making location decisions on health

facilities. The Council will expect providers themselves to make financial contributions towards any services necessitated by location decisions of this sort, and will work with providers to assist them with ensuring the best value for any funding which they make available for this purpose. As described elsewhere, the County Council plans to build on existing partnership arrangements with the health sector to develop jointly access to health facilities.

#### Out of town or edge of town shops

The County Council expects the providers of retail facilities located away from traditional town centres themselves to ensure that they are accessible by public transport. Bus services subsidised by the County Council will not normally serve such sites unless there is a) a congestion free route for buses to and from the site and b) either the site is very close to the route which the service would otherwise follow or a substantial funding contribution is received from the site operator.

#### Services to employment sites outside traditional centres

The County Council expects operators of remoter employment sites themselves to ensure good access to their sites by public transport. Subsidised bus services will therefore not be provided to such sites unless there is a) a congestion free route to and from the site and b) either the site lies very close to the route which the service would otherwise follow or a substantial funding contribution is received from the site operator. However, where a site of this sort has benefited from a commercial service which is being withdrawn, the Council will pay subsidy for a replacement service on the basis that this will be provided only for so long as necessary for employers or employees themselves to make alternative arrangements or to agree a funding contribution.

#### Services for Students Travelling to Educational Establishments Who Pay Their Own Fares

This section describes current policies. It may be subject to change in the light of the review of public and school transport services now in progress. Policies for provision by the Learning & Culture directorate of bus services for Home to School transport are described earlier. Where the students do not qualify for transport under these policies, they may wish nevertheless to travel to school by bus paying their own fares. To ensure consistency of policy, subsidy will not be paid for services wholly or mainly for passengers in this category (except on a temporary basis where a commercial service has previously been provided, in which event subsidy will be paid only for so long as necessary for parents or schools to make alternative arrangements of their own).

However, the Council will seek to identify any significant flows of students using, or potentially using, bus services and shall invite bus operators to

consider catering for them commercially. Where a bus service, justified on the basis of catering for other users, can also cater for school students at no additional cost, every effort will be made to ensure that this is achieved. However, where there is a conflict between the time tabling or routing needs of these school students and the equivalent needs of other users, the school students will be considered of lower priority. Educational establishments will be given the opportunity to make funding contributions towards services, and a priority commensurate with the amount of contribution will be afforded to meeting the needs of their students in such cases.

### **3.6 Standards which subsidised services must meet**

#### 3.6.1 Essential Features

Subsidised services should be as attractive as possible to users. To encourage attractive services, and minimise the need for financial monitoring, operators will normally receive a fixed subsidy price per day, and keep any passenger revenue which they attract (exceptions may be made where passenger revenue is particularly uncertain, such as for an experimental service). The other main conditions which subsidised services will be expected to meet, and which it is expected will be taken into account in the tender price, are (in summary):

- Buses will never run early
- 98% of scheduled services must run throughout their route not more than 30 minutes late, and 94% not more than 5 minutes late.
- Standards in the information strategy and fares strategy are met.
- Clear destination display and number at the front, lit during the hours of darkness.
- Adequate seating and luggage capacity for the number of users identified in Council surveys.
- Adequate heating.
- Adequate standard of cleanliness, including strict prohibition of smoking by either passengers or staff
- Engine turned off whenever stationary for more than a minute
- Seats marked for the priority use of elderly and disabled people
- Drivers trained in disability awareness

#### 3.6.2 Other desirable features

There are other features which the Council would like to see on all subsidised services. However, it is recognised that, for the time being, insistence on these features might lead to no tenders being received for some key services. We hope that circumstances will permit these to become mandatory in due course. In the meantime, these features will be encouraged by a price preference system under which, for the purposes of comparison of competing tenders, the tender price will be treated as if it were reduced by a given % for each feature which is present (the “shadow price”). These features can be summarised as follows:

- Features to assist people with mobility and sensory disabilities in using buses (up to 5%)
  - Features to assist wheelchair users and people with buggies, shopping trolleys etc to access and use buses (up to 10%)
  - Newer buses (up to 12%)
  - Buses fitted with an extra device to reduce emissions (2.5%)
  - Electronic ticket machines and card reader equipment (up to 5%)
- (Note: Newer buses will, by virtue of national design standards for new vehicles, invariably offer lower emissions and easier access for people with disabilities).

### **3.7 How Services are Designed and Subsidy Costs Determined**

#### 3.7.1 Consultation with Operators

At a preliminary stage in any bus subsidy review, Council officers will consult operators of services in the review area, telling them the results of Council on-bus surveys and accessibility modelling, and seeking from operators:

- Overall information which they hold on service usage
- Ideas for potential developments of services in the review area
- Any known operational problems or public requests for improvements
- An indication of any parts of subsidised services which will be continued commercially
- An indication of any significant changes which would occur to other services in the event of loss of any subsidy contract

All other operators on the tender list will at the same time be advised of the forthcoming invitation of tenders and invited to give early advice of commercial proposals.

The Council considers such information from operators to be of great value and will take it fully into account in subsequently carrying out the subsidy review. However, it is considered essential to have such information fully available at a very early stage, since later ideas can not be made the subject of user consultation or taken into account in the formulation of services for tender. Subsequent new ideas or changes of plan from operators will thus not be welcome and, if disruptive of the review process, may lead to preference being given to other operators for future subsidy contracts.

#### 3.7.2 Initial consideration of options for securing services

At the start of the review, accessibility modelling will be undertaken throughout the area concerned. The Council will discuss with partners ways in which accessibility may be improved other than through extra bus services. In addition, new or amended bus services which might improve accessibility will be identified, also any existing services which make only a small contribution to accessibility.

Following consultation with operators, and in the light of information from accessibility modelling and on the numbers of passengers, Council officers will consider ways in which, in their initial judgement, the existing subsidised services might be enhanced, reduced or combined; they will consider in particular which services might in future be provided in less conventional ways (see section 3.9), any which might be the subject of a *de minimis* contract (see below) and any cases where school students and the general public might potentially travel on the same bus. They will also consider potential new services. Consultation with users, as described the section headed 'Consultation', will be carried out on these ideas.

### 3.7.3 De minimis services

These are services in respect of which advantage is taken of the exemption in law, allowing up to one quarter of subsidy expenditure to be arranged without formal tender. Negotiated contracts are considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

1. the total value of the contract is less than £2,500 per year; or
2. the service is arranged or provided by a community group who are themselves making a significant input, whether financially, through voluntary labour or in some other way, towards the service; or
3. the contract is for enhancement, extension or diversion of an existing bus service (or a group of services between which passengers will regularly interchange) and where such enhancement, extension or diversion amounts to not more than a doubling of the total operating mileage of the service or group of services; or
4. the contract is for a new or substantially enhanced service and where the ideas for such expansion or enhancement have been substantially contributed to by one single operator.
5. where it is desirable for administrative reasons to continue the same service, with the same operator, for up to a year beyond the original contract end date.

### 3.7.4 Exploring non tendered options

Unconventional and *de minimis* contracts will be explored well in advance of formal tendering. This will allow tenders to be invited for the services in question should no price have been negotiated, by the date when tendering starts, which appears to offer good value for money and not to be significantly higher than that which could be secured through a tender process.

### 3.7.5 Invitation of tenders

Where a *de minimis* or unconventional service has not been arranged, tenders will be invited for the existing service (unless changes to commercial services have made this inappropriate). In addition, tenders will be invited for alternative services (including higher and/or lower levels of service), also for new services, which appear, in the light of the outcome of consultation, to be

appropriate. As far as possible, invitations to tender will specify only broad levels of service and not precise timetables, and be designed to permit alternative ways of combining services together. A minimum seating capacity will be specified but tenderers will be free to propose larger vehicles, or smaller vehicles with a more frequent service. The onus is thus on the operator to produce an achievable and attractive timetable. Tenderers will be encouraged to submit tenders which combine services together, including combining school and public transport services. In conjunction with the specifications for subsidised services, operators will also be sent information on any known significant flows of school students who are not entitled to free school transport but might nevertheless be expected to pay fares on a bus service were one available; catering for those flows will not be treated as essential but operators will be invited to do so where this could be achieved at no extra cost to the County Council.

### 3.7.6 Selection of tenders

As described in the section on 'making the subsidy decision', the Council will not necessarily accept any tender for a service. Where a contract is awarded, it will normally be to the lowest priced tender which complies with the specification and other rules of tendering (taking full account of any shadow reductions in price under the price preference system, and any savings from combined tenders), unless the lowest tenderer has, within the last 2 years, had a contract withdrawn for failures in operation or there is other substantial evidence that the operator does not have the capability effectively to supply the service in question. An exception may be made where the lowest compliant tender represents a cost increase over the previous equivalent service which is well above the prevailing rate of tender price inflation. In this case, or in the case of no compliant tender having been received at all for that level of service, the Council will seek to negotiate a price for a similar service (but not necessarily meeting the full specification) with any operator who appears to them to be likely to supply the necessary service, including all who have submitted a compliant tender.

### 3.8 Management of Bus Subsidy Contracts

Stability is an important factor in enabling and encouraging people to use bus services. Because of this, and to minimise pressure on staff time, changes to subsidised services will not normally be initiated during the four year contract period. Operators may choose to change timetables, but such changes will normally be permitted only if they are within the overall specification for the service, and may occur only on the two contract change dates each year. Exceptions may occur for experimental services, where there is a major change to the highway network or local development pattern during the period, or otherwise where there is an urgent need for change which could not have been anticipated when the service was previously reviewed.

There have been examples in the past of “commercial” services introduced to parallel subsidised services, which proved very short-lived. Because of this, and of the importance of service stability, once a subsidy contract has been agreed, the Council will not normally terminate that contract earlier than its due date, even if another service is introduced which parallels it in whole or part.

It is important to ensure that subsidised bus services run reliably, and provide the standard of service laid down in the contract. The County Council will accordingly carry out checks on the operation of all contract services. These checks will normally be performed without the knowledge of bus operators and their staff and will thus be independent of surveys undertaken to determine usage of services. To supplement proactive checks by County Council staff, parish transport representatives and other local people are also encouraged to monitor the operation of subsidised local services and report any problems both to the bus operator and to the Council.

The main focus of this work is on identifying problems and rectifying them as quickly as possible to ensure a high quality of service. The first step, when a shortcoming has been recorded, is therefore to contact the operator concerned and offer help and advice on swiftly rectifying it. County staff will then recheck the problem location several times and subsidy will be withheld if these checks reveal that the problem has not been swiftly rectified. If a serious shortcoming persists, or if, having been rectified it continues to recur on a regular basis, or if there is a large number of separate problems in operation of any particular contract, formal warnings will be issued leading ultimately to contract termination if not acted upon. In the event that an operator has lost a contract in this way through serious failures of operation, that operator will not be considered for award of any new subsidy contracts for a period of at least two years.

Council observations on subsidised services are thus focused on problem areas which have been identified by local people or through previous observations. This will include numerous revisits to the same problem location at the same time. This represents the most effective use of limited resources to maintain the quality of service for the travelling public. However, it does not produce a random and balanced picture of the overall performance of an operator. Unless and until extra staff resources are available to carry out a separate programme of randomised observations, the results of this monitoring work cannot reliably be used as an aid to operator selection as part of the tender process, save in the extreme case (as described above) of loss of subsidy contracts for persistent failures in operation.

### **3.9 Alternatives to Conventional Bus Services**

Relatively large buses running on fixed routes still represent, in most cases, the most efficient form of road based public transport. Bringing relatively large numbers of travellers together in one vehicle reduces the impact of the journeys on the environment and on traffic congestion. Bringing together passengers in this way is best achieved through a known, fixed route and

timetable. Stakeholders generally express strong support for maintaining conventional bus services in preference to alternatives, for which they expressed little enthusiasm.

Even on routes where total demand is low, users often prefer to travel together at a fixed time of the week. For example, people travelling to the local market town from a group of small villages may prefer always to travel on a particular day (usually market day), going in for around 10 o'clock and out around 12 o'clock. For some users, the comfort of routine and the ability to meet the same fellow travellers each week are viewed as positive benefits. In some such cases, experience has shown that even if a wider range of services is offered, the majority of users remain concentrated on one or two journeys during the week. The Council will seek, through consultation with local transport representatives and other local bodies, also through any on-bus and parish surveys, to identify cases where an infrequent 'big bus' represents the most efficient solution to local needs and will pay subsidy for such services where appropriate.

Nevertheless, there remain many cases where the number of people wishing to travel on any one route at any one time is insufficient to justify a conventional bus service. Such journeys may nevertheless be very important in ensuring access to essential facilities for the small number of people concerned. The County Council therefore has many arrangements in place to encourage and assist the use of alternatives to conventional services. As described in the section titled 'Initial consideration of options for securing services', considering such alternatives represents an important part of the review of local bus services on an area by area basis. By their nature, innovation of unconventional services will often occur independently of a comprehensive review process, and arrangements are in place to assist this too.

### 3.9.1 Community Transport

The community transport sector plays a large part in the delivery of transport for people who are unable to access conventional public transport services. Community transport schemes have come about through a desire to overcome problems of infrequent and inaccessible transport which are a major barrier to social inclusion. They are designed to enable wider participation in social, recreational and community activities. Particular beneficiaries of such schemes are elderly and young people who have no access to alternative means of transport. (Also forming an important part of the community transport movement are transport schemes which offer door-to-door services for people with disabilities including the carriage of wheelchairs – these are discussed in the relevant section).

Oxfordshire has a large number of community transport schemes in operation throughout the county. Oxfordshire Rural Community Council publishes a Directory of Community Transport Schemes in Oxfordshire. The 2005 issue lists over 60 community led transport schemes as well as the numerous Dial-a-Ride services in the county and local Shopmobility schemes. The

community led transport schemes embody both community minibuses projects and voluntary car schemes and in total serve over 160 parishes in Oxfordshire. In addition there are discrete organisations (schools/school associations, churches and uniformed organisations) that operate minibuses for their own community purposes.

These schemes are many and varied. Some operate just once per week (or even less) whereas others operate regular services during the day (e.g. Faringdon Community Bus, Stanford-in-the-Vale Community Bus). Certain operations (e.g. Buckland, Uffington) own their own vehicles; others (e.g. Grove) hire vehicles for their journeys, usually from other community transport operators.

In terms of financing, many of the Oxfordshire schemes are largely self-sufficient, but increasing insurance and other costs are a concern. However, some require continuing direct financial support to meet running costs. Funding for this is available, both directly from the County Council and through the Rural Transport Partnership.

If finance is available, the County Council will fund such services, where they meet a need not met in other ways and appear to represent value for money, using equivalent criteria to those employed for local bus services. A delegated 'starter' fund is available, enabling access at short notice to funds to get schemes started. Such support is reviewed, generally after one year's operation. Some schemes find that they are self-sufficient at this stage and are able to continue without further financial support. Where financial support is required, it will be reviewed on the same basis as for local bus services, with funding arranged to end at the same time as local bus subsidy contracts, thus allowing the community transport scheme to be considered in conjunction with the area review of bus services. However, funding for the community transport scheme will normally be considered independently of bus subsidies but within the context of the overall area review.

Some may also require capital funding, especially for vehicles. In the past this has been available from funding sources such as Rural Transport Development Fund and, more recently, Rural Transport Partnership Fund. There is concern about possible cessation of this funding; the County Council will consider use of transport capital funding for this purpose if necessary.

The Oxfordshire Rural Transport Partnership (ORTP) was formed following a Countryside Agency initiative based on funds made available by Defra. It is led by Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, who employs the Rural Transport Partnership Officer.

Principal partners are

- Countryside Agency (to 31 March 2005)
- SEEDA (from 1 April 2005)
- Oxfordshire County Council
- All rural District Councils in the county
- NHS Primary Care Trusts

Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action  
Age Concern  
Parish Councils representative  
Vale Housing Association

Other smaller bodies are admitted as members.

The ORTP has funded projects up to £250,000 with at least 25% being provided by parties other than the Countryside Agency.

Funds have been used to assist with the establishment of community transport schemes (e.g. Faringdon Community Bus), extending the operating area of schemes (e.g. Buckland), issuing guides and advice publications (e.g. Directory of Community Transport and Guide to Best Practice in Oxfordshire Community Transport) and carrying out needs assessments (e.g. on Abingdon - Witney route to establish demand for service subsequently launched with RBC funding).

Importantly the ORTP has become an important forum for the exchange of information, ideas and problems between its members.

Consideration is being given to extending the partnership to include urban areas of the county.

Support and advice are at least as important as the availability of finance in providing community transport services. Oxfordshire has, since 1980, had a Rural Community Transport Adviser (RCTA), employed by Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. This post now works closely alongside the Rural Transport Partnerships Officer. This post is funded by Oxfordshire County Council in partnership with West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse and Cherwell District Councils. The RCTA works with rural communities throughout Oxfordshire to identify transport needs, promote community transport and directly help local people to organise, establish and run community transport schemes. A very large number of community transport schemes have been enabled to start and to continue with the advice and support of this post.

Nevertheless, no matter how strong the advisory or financial support, no scheme can ever come into being without the main initiative coming from the local community. The local community has to supply both the organisation and the volunteers to operate the scheme. Furthermore, there may be great initial enthusiasm on the part of volunteers but scheme organisers are often put under great strain to find sufficient volunteers for schemes to continue in the longer term.

It cannot be assumed that all communities are receptive to the concept of community transport. In some cases there can even be hostility to it – during 2004 alone there were three specific examples where the County Council and others sought to encourage local communities to provide voluntary transport services, without success. The availability of volunteers, both to provide the

transport services and, perhaps especially, to act as organiser and co-ordinator, is thus the main constraint on providing such schemes. The County Council will continue to work proactively with ORCC, ORTP, local communities and stakeholders in finding ways of resolving such problems and extending the availability of such schemes.

To assist in effective implementation of Community Transport, a Community Transport Strategy has been developed jointly with relevant partners. This describes in detail steps to be taken to improve provision of Community Transport. It will be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect changing needs and circumstances.

### 3.9.2 Use of Social & Health Care Vehicles for Public Transport

The County Council directly operates a fleet of vehicles whose main role is to transport clients of the Social & Health Care Directorate to day centres and other care facilities. During 2003/4 a detailed study was carried out into the potential for extending the use of these vehicles to provide transport for other users. This study identified that, while they were in use for Social & Health Care purposes, the vehicles did not have spare capacity for other users. It was concluded that this, and other behavioural issues associated with the client group in question, ruled out wider use of these vehicles during these times. However, there are some times of day and of the week during which these vehicles are unemployed. In many cases no driver is available at these times, thus limiting the potential use, but on occasions a driver would also be available.

Nevertheless, there remain significant constraints due to the limited hours of availability (generally only between around 11.00 and 14.00), the legal restrictions which would require services to be available only to members of the local community on a pre-booked basis, and in some case the small size of the vehicles.

The County Council, as part of each area review of subsidised bus services, will explore the possibilities of provision of services for the wider public using Social & Health Care vehicles. However, all specific examples which have so far been explored have proved not worthy of implementation.

### 3.9.3 Post Buses

Post buses are mail vans equipped with passenger seats, with a view to providing a passenger service at marginal extra cost in the course of mail deliveries and collections. During 2003/04 discussions were held at both senior and junior level with Royal Mail staff, with a view to exploiting the potential of post buses in Oxfordshire. However, it is apparent that a number of recent developments have reduced the potential of post buses even in the deep rural areas to which they might appear to be suited. In particular, the move to a single daily postal delivery means that out and back services could not readily be provided on the same day and changing conditions of employment of staff and more severe financial and service delivery targets

imposed upon the Royal Mail mean that deliveries can no longer be operated on a fixed schedule. Post buses have therefore been ruled out as an option for the immediate future, but will be revisited in the event that the circumstances of postal delivery change.

#### 3.9.4 Flexibly Routed or Demand Responsive Services

During 2003/04 Oxfordshire County Council carried out an intensive study into potential flexibly routed or fully demand-responsive bus services, which would enable people to telephone for a bus to, or near, their door. Such services:

- Are significantly more expensive than conventional bus services because of the need for a continuously staffed call centre, the need to build extra time into schedules to allow for all reasonable deviations (resulting in less efficient use of the vehicle) and the restricted vehicle size to allow access to all local roads, preventing use for busy services at peak time.
- Generally offer a relatively small increase in the population served compared to a fixed route service, because in Oxfordshire rural settlement is largely concentrated in discrete villages rather than dispersed.
- Work best for return journeys from a common boarding point, where passengers can request a deviation upon boarding the bus without need for a call centre.
- For services where peak demand heavily outweighs off-peak, one vehicle available flexibly on demand can provide a useful off-peak complement to a network of peak routes, albeit that such operations are more akin to a taxi or private hire vehicle than a bus.

Flexibly routed buses thus represent a useful tool in certain limited circumstances, rather than having wide applicability. Opportunities for employing this solution where appropriate will be considered as part of area reviews of bus services.

#### 3.9.5 Connecting Feeder Services

Often bus services from peripheral areas run considerable distances in parallel with higher frequency core bus services to reach the centre of the local town or, in particular, Oxford city. In such circumstances it may be that the peripheral area could be served more frequently, or a wider range of places served using the same vehicle, if the service from the peripheral area instead connected into the core bus or train service. Oxfordshire County Council has experimental services in operation, connecting train, trunk bus and express coach services. Preliminary conclusions are:

- A suitable interchange point is critical; space is needed for two or often more vehicles to stand where interchange can be affected between

them without risky crossing of busy roads, and users expect interchanges to be in frequented locations where there is access to a range of services in the event of delays.

- Establishing an interchange location is difficult and there is often strong local opposition to interchange between buses taking place in their community.
- A high level of reliability is essential to minimise missed connections; this strengthens the case for good bus priority on the core route.
- High quality exchange of information in real time is essential, both to ensure that vehicles connect with one another and for passenger reassurance. This presents particular difficulties where the connecting services are operated by different companies.
- Through ticketing arrangements are essential, but generally lead to low revenues on the feeder service.
- Results so far suggest that feeder services need a significant catchment population to render them cost effective; they thus do not appear to represent an effective panacea for deep rural areas but may provide cost effective transport links for intermediate areas.

Oxfordshire County Council will continue to trial feeder services and introduce them in circumstances where they offer benefits.

### 3.9.6 Taxi-Buses

Small vehicles of less than nine seats have advantages in low cost and not requiring PCV licensing may make driver recruitment easier. They can sometimes also be perceived as offering a higher quality or more personalised service. Limited capacity for peak loads (including for random peak events when, say, two large families happen to select the same bus for travel) can be a disadvantage.

The County Council has over many years sought to encourage taxi operators to provide regular bus services; interest has generally been very limited and some taxi operators have proved unreliable in providing regular services. Those few taxi operators who have successfully made the switch have generally gone on to concentrate almost exclusively on local bus work rather than continuing to combine taxi and local bus operations. The County Council will continue, as part of area reviews, to consider the possibility of taxi bus operation, will continue to offer tenderers the opportunity to tender on the basis of two small vehicles in place of, say, one 16 seater vehicle if they choose, and to encourage taxi operators to diversify into bus operation. However, it must be recognised that in many cases the taxi and private hire trade provide a more appropriate local service by simply operating in their normal way, and the County Council – through the Rural Community

Transport Adviser and directly – will encourage local communities to consider shared taxi/hire car arrangements to meet some local transport needs.

#### **4 Conclusion: A Vision for the Future**

The County Council's long-term vision is of a core network of very frequent, simple, well-marketed, and reliable bus services covering all heavily trafficked corridors - largely focusing on central Oxford but also linking into some other places of high transport demand. These will run on segregated sections of route wherever free traffic flow cannot be assured and have preferential treatment in traffic elsewhere, have high quality facilities at all stops, and major new developments will focus around these routes and be laid out to encourage bus use. Vehicles used will be 'state of the art' both in their passenger access and facilities and in their environmental impact; drivers will be trained in customer care, tickets largely sold off-bus and passengers and staff informed of where all services are in real-time through a variety of media. They will run without Council subsidy (but may receive funding from developers or local employers).

They will be complemented by a network of interlink services, running at regular hourly intervals on direct routes serving every settlement with over 1,000 residents, and between every pair of settlements of over 25,000 population. Major stops will have high quality facilities, vehicles will generally be of high quality too, many have off-bus ticketing and be equipped for selective real-time information. Many will run without subsidy, but others will be funded by developers, employers and/or the Council. Partnerships will ensure that employment, healthcare, education, and food shops are located where they can be accessed by the interlink network.

Wherever high frequency and/or hourly services meet, high quality interchanges will be provided with good waiting, information (including real-time), and facilities for transfer between vehicles. They will also link with rail services wherever appropriate.

These higher frequency services will offer a bus option for most journeys made by 80% of the population. For others, a range of different kinds of lower frequency services will ensure basic accessibility. These will include community transport services as well as more conventional bus services. Whilst core bus services and interchanges will provide good facilities for people with disabilities, a network of bespoke services will also be available through partnership with District Councils and local communities.

A range of through and joint tickets will be available on all three categories of services -and on trains- catering for wanted journeys from any location requiring more than one vehicle- not necessarily a single, countywide ticket but tickets for specific applications at appropriate prices. Many will be purchased off the bus.

Clear, comprehensive information on all services will be available where, and in the form in which, it is useful and encourages all to travel.; this is likely to

include at all boarding stops, in local information distributed periodically door-to-door and available at other places locally, by telephone, on the internet and in other ways. It will focus on informing about and on encouraging use of those high frequency services which form the main alternatives to private car use, whilst ensuring that information on achieving necessary access by other services is also readily available.

This is the vision. The Strategy set out in this document represents a major step along the road towards it.

## Annex 1 - List of Bus Services in Oxfordshire as at June 2005

### Premium Route Standard

Service	Destination	Days of Operation	Weekday Daytime Frequency
<b>Oxford Bus Company</b>			
2/A/B/C	Kidlington - Summertown - Oxford City Centre - Barton Estate/Risinghurst	Daily	6-10 mins
4/A/B/C	Oxford City Centre - Rose Hill	Mon-Sat	10 mins
5	Blackbird Leys - Templars Square - Oxford City Centre - Rail Station	Daily	5-8 mins
6/6A	Oxford City Centre - Woodstock Road - Wolvercote	Daily	15 mins
13/A/B	Oxford City Centre - Marston - Northway/John Radcliffe Hospital	Daily	10 mins
15	Oxford City Centre - Morrell Avenue - Churchill Hospital - Wood Farm	Daily	10 mins
35	Oxford City Centre - Kennington - Radley - Abingdon	Daily	15 mins
300	Redbridge P&R - Oxford City Centre - Pear Tree P&R	Daily	6-7 mins
400	Seacourt P&R - Oxford City Centre - Headington - Thornhill P&R	Daily	10 mins
500	Oxford City Centre - Water Eaton P&R	Mon-Sat	15 mins
X3/X13	Oxford Rail Station/JR Hospital - Oxford City Centre - Abingdon	Daily	10-20 mins
X90	Oxford - Headington - London Victoria "Espress"	Daily	15-20 mins

### Stagecoach in Oxfordshire

1	Blackbird Leys - Templars Square - Oxford City Centre	Daily	6-10 mins
3	Rose Hill - Iffley Road - Oxford City Centre	Daily	10 mins
7/7A/7C	Kidlington - Summertown - Oxford City Centre - Barton Estate	Daily	7-8 mins
7B	Oxford City Centre - Kidlington	Daily	15 mins
10	Oxford City Centre - JR Hospital - Wood Farm circular	Mon-Sat	15 mins
100	Oxford - Farmoor - Eynsham - Witney	Daily	15 mins
B5	Banbury town circular via Bretch Hill	Daily	12 mins
X4	Oxford - Abingdon	Daily	10 mins
U1	Brookes Wheatley Campus - Headington - Harcourt Hill	Daily	15 mins
Tube	Oxford - Lewknor - London Victoria	Daily	12-15 mins

### Hourly or Better Services

Service	Destination	Days of Operation	Frequency
<b>Abingdon Taxis</b>			
94/95	West Hagbourne - North Moreton - Aston Tirrold - Blewbury - Didcot	Mon-Sat	60 mins
<b>Geoff Amos Coaches</b>			
GA01	Banbury - Eydon - Daventry - Rugby	Mon-Sat	60 mins
<b>Arriva The Shires</b>			
231/232	Thame - Towersey/Kinston Blount - Chinnor	Mon-Sat	60 Mins
280	Oxford - Wheatley - Thame - Haddenham - Aylesbury	Daily	30 mins
328/9	High Wycombe - Marlow - Henley - Twyford/Shiplake - Reading	Daily	30 mins
<b>Grayline Coaches</b>			
3	Kidlington - Gosford circular	Mon-Sat	7 jouneys
21	Bicester Town circular	Mon-Sat	30 mins
22/3	Bicester Town circular via Fields Farm and Langford	Mon-Sat	30 mins
22/3	Bicester Town circular via Southwold, Caversfield and Bure Park	Mon-Sat	30 mins
<b>Mcleans Coaches</b>			
212	Witney circular via Cogges Estate	Mon-Sat	60 mins

213	Witney circular via Farmers Close and Madley Park	Mon-Sat	60 mins
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**Mcleans Coaches and Stagecoach in Oxfordshire Joint Services**

117	Carterton town south circular	Mon-Sat	60 mins
118	Carterton town circular	Mon-Sat	60 mins
119	Carterton town north circular	Mon-Sat	60 mins

**Newbury Buses**

6/9	Newbury - Harwell - Rowstock Corner - Didcot	Mon-Fri	8 journeys
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**Oxford Bus Company**

4	Rose Hill - Oxford City Centre - Cumnor - Abingdon	Mon-Sat	60 mins
4A	Rose Hill - Oxford City Centre - Elms Rise	Daily	20 mins
4B	Rose Hill - Oxford City Centre - Cumnor	Daily	60 mins
4C	Rose Hill - Oxford City Centre - Dean Court	Daily	60 mins
10C/D	Oxford City Centre - JR Hospital - Headington - Cowley Circular	Eves & Sun	60 mins
13C	Oxford City Centre - Marston Village	Mon-Sat	60 mins
14	Oxford Rail Station - John Radcliffe Hospital - Churchill Hospital	Mon-Sat	30 mins
16/A/B	Oxford City Centre - Abingdon Road - Templars Square - Minchery Farm	Daily	30 mins
35A/B	Oxford City Centre - Kennington - Radley - Abingdon - Didcot	Daily	30 mins
X70	Oxford - Headington - Heathrow Airport "Airline"	Daily	20 mins
X80	Oxford - Headington - Gatwick Airport "Airline"	Daily	60 mins

**Reading Buses**

137	Reading - Sonning Common - Peppard Common	Mon-Sat	60 mins
138	Reading - Emmer Green - Sonning Common	Mon-Sat	60 mins

**RH Transport**

242	Woodstock - Bladon	Mon-Sat	10 journeys
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**Stagecoach in Oxfordshire**

5A/B/C	Oxford City Centre - Templars Square - Greater Leys	Daily	30 mins
7D	Kidlington Airport - Summertown - Oxford City Centre	Daily	60 mins
11	Oxford - Eynsham - Long Hanborough - Freeland - North Leigh - Witney	Mon-Sat	60 mins
18	Clanfield/Bampton - Standlake - Bablockhythe - Stanton Harcourt - Oxford	Mon-Sat	60 mins
19	Witney - Bampton - Clanfield - Carterton	Mon-Sat	60 mins
20	Oxford - Woodstock/Wootton - Glympton/Enstone - Chipping Norton	Daily	60 mins
20A	Oxford - Woodstock - Stonesfield - Fawler - Charlbury	Mon-Sat	60 mins
25/25A	Oxford - Gosford - Blethingdon - Kirtlington - Heyford/Weston - Bicester	Mon-Sat	60 mins
27/27A	Oxford - Gosford - Bicester - Glory Farm	Daily	60 mins
28/28A	Oxford - Gosford - Bicester - Launton	Mon-Sat	60 mins
29/29A	Oxford - Gosford - Bicester - Arcott - St Georges Barracks	Daily	60 mins
31	Oxford - Abingdon - Marcham - Wantage	Mon-Sat	60 mins
32	Oxford - Abingdon - Culham/Drayton - Didcot - Wantage - Grove	Mon-Sat	60 mins
42	Witney - New Yatt - North Leigh - Bladon - Woodstock	Mon-Sat	60 mins
101/X2	Carterton - Curbridge - Witney	Mon-Sat	30 mins
102/3	Carterton - Minster Lovell - Witney	Mon-Sat	30 mins
103	Carterton - Minster Lovell - Deer Park Estate - Witney	Mon-Sat	60 mins
215	Witney town circular	Mon-Sat	10 journeys
488	Banbury - Bloxham - Milcombe - Hook Norton - Chipping Norton	Mon-Sat	60 mins
500	Banbury - Middleton Cheney - Brackley	Daily	30 mins
600	Thornhill P&R - Churchill Hospital circular	Mon-Fri	30 mins
B1	Banbury - Bodicote	Mon-Sat	30 mins

B2	Banbury - Easington	Mon-Sat	30 mins
B4	Banbury - Easington - Bodicote - Banbury	Sunday	120 mins
B10	Banbury - Hanwell Fields Estate	Mon-Sat	60 mins
B7	Banbury town circular	Mon-Sat	60 mins
B8	Banbury town circular via Hardwick	Daily	20 mins
X1/2	Oxford - Carterton direct	Daily	30 mins
X2/3	Oxford - Witney	Daily	30 mins
X31	Oxford - Marcham - Grove - Wantage Express	Mon-Sat	60 mins

#### Stagecoach in Swindon

66	Swindon - Shrivenham - Faringdon - Southmoor - Besselsleigh - Oxford	Daily	60 mins
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#### Stagecoach in Bedford

X5	Oxford - Bicester - Milton Keynes - Cambridge	Daily	30 mins
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#### Thamesdown Transport

47/47A	Swindon - Ashbury - Lambourn	Mon-Sat	7-10 jnys
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#### Thames Travel

17	Oxford City Centre - Jericho - South Parade - Cutteslowe circular	Mon-Sat	60 mins
101/2	Oxford - Garsington - Chalgrove - Watlington	Mon-Sat	60 mins
103	Oxford City Centre - Horspath - Littleworth - Wheatley	Mon-Sat	60 mins
106	Oxford - Littlemore - Sandford - Oxford Science Park - Berinsfield	Mon-Sat	60 mins
107	Didcot - Long Wittenham - Clifton Hampden - Berinsfield - Oxford	Mon-Sat	60 mins
130	Wallingford - Brightwell - Didcot	Mon-Sat	60 mins
138	Wallingford - Shillingford - Dorchester - Berinsfield	Mon-Sat	60 mins
139	Wallingford - Nettlebed - Henley	Mon-Sat	60 mins
X15	Berinsfield - Abingdon - Marcham - Southmoor - Standlake - Witney	Mon-Sat	60 mins
X39	Oxford - Wallingford - (Henley - Sun)	Daily	60 mins
X40	RAF Benson (120 Mins) - Wallingford - Woodcote - Reading	Daily	60 mins

#### Worths Motors Services

69	Enstone/Chipping Norton - Charlbury - Finstock - Hailey - Witney	Mon-Sat	11-9 journeys
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#### Whites Coaches

38	Wantage Town Service via Grove and/or Childrey - Letcombe Regis	Mon-Sat	60 mins
91	Dorchester/Didcot - Ladygrove Town Service	Mon-Sat	60 mins
92	Didcot - Newlands Avenue Town Service	Mon-Sat	60 mins
93	Didcot - Freeman Road Town Service	Mon-Sat	60 mins
151	Henley - Greys Road circular	Mon-Sat	60 mins
152	Henley - Watermans Road - South Avenue circular	Mon-Sat	60 mins
153	Henley - Abrahams Estate circular	Mon-Sat	60 mins
154	Henley - Greys Road circular	Mon-Sat	60 mins
A1	Abingdon town circular via Peachcroft	Mon-Fri	9 journeys
A2	Abingdon town circular via South/North Avenue	Mon-Fri	9 journeys
A3	Abingdon town circular via Preston Road	Mon-Fri	9 journeys

## Feeder Services

#### Geoff Amos Coaches

5	Banbury - Eydon - Upper Boddington	Fri	1 journey
480	Shipston-on-Stour - Tadmarton - Banbury	Mon-Sat	120 mins
510	Banbury - Cropredy - Farnborough - Bourton - Banbury circular	Mon-Sat	4 journeys

**Arriva The Shires**

16	Bicester - Launton - Steeple Claydon - Aylesbury	Mon-Sat	5-6 journeys
18	Bicester - Launton - Steeple Claydon - Buckingham	Mon-Sat	3-4 journeys
260	Aylesbury - Long Crendon - Thame - Worminghall	Mon-Fri	1 journey
261	Thame - Long Crendon - Shabbington - Wheatley - Oxford	Mon-Sat	2 journeys
320	Chinnor - Princes Risborough Rail Link	Mon-Fri	6 journeys
331	Chinnor - Bledlow Ridge - High Wycombe	Mon-Fri	4 journeys
X32	Thame - Chinnor - Kingston Blount - Lewknor - High Wycombe	Sat	1 journey

**Bakers Commercial Services**

5	Chadlington - Charlbury - Leaffield - Kingham - Moreton-in-Marsh	Tue	1 journey
6	Banbury - Bloxham - Chipping Norton - Salford - Moreton-in-Marsh	Tue	1 journey
7	Hensington - Woodstock - Chipping Norton - Moreton-in-Marsh	Tue	1 journey
23	Middle Barton - Gret Tew - Chipping Norton	Wed	1 journey
34	Idbury - Shipton-under-Wychwood - Kingham - Chipping Norton	Wed	1 journey

**Barnes Coaches**

82	Great Shefford - Lambourn - Wantage	Wed	1 journey
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**Catterall's Coach & Travel Ltd**

503	Long Itchington - Hanwell - Banbury	Thu/Fri/Sat	1 journey
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**Coachman Travel**

67A	Swindon - Faringdon - Wantage	Mon-Fri	2 journeys
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**Charlton-on-Otmoor Services**

30	Oakley - Brill - Piddington - Blackthorn - Bicester	Fri	1 journey
93	Noke - Woodeaton - Islip - Oxford	Fri	1 journey
94	Bicester - Arncott - Merton - Charlton - Oddington - Islip - Oxford	Mon-Sat	7 journeys
95	Murcott - Fencott - Charlton - Oxford	Mon/Fri	2 journeys

**Courtney Coaches**

239	Henley - Hurley - Maidenhead	Mon-Sat	4 journeys
T5	Wokingham - Twyford - Henley	Tue/Thr	3 Journeys

**Cherwell Villager (BCTA)**

1	Kidlington circular via Hanboroughs and Woodstock	Mon	1 journey
2	Kidlington circular via Weston-on-the-Green and Hampton Poyle	Mon	1 journey
3	Kidlington - Middle Barton - Steeple Aston - Heyfords - Bicester	Tue	1 journey
4	Kidlington - Hampton Poyle - Weston-on-the-Green - Bicester	Thu	1 journey
51	Banbury - North Aston - Banbury circular	Mon	2 journeys
53	Banbury - Hornton - Banbury circular	Tue	2 journeys
54	Mollington - Cropredy - Banbury	Tue	1 journey
55	Banbury - Hook Norton - Banbury circular	Wed	2 journeys
57	Banbury - Barfords - Banbury circular	Sat	2 journeys

**Cheney Coaches**

6	Middleton Cheney - Banbury - Leamington Moreton Morrell College	Mon-Fri	1 journey
112	Brackley - Middleton Cheney - Banbury	Mon-Fri	1 journey

**Faringdon Community Bus**

61	Faringdon circular	Mon-Fri	5 journeys
63	Faringdon - Coleshill - Lechlade - Buscot - Eaton Hastings - Faringdon	Tue	2 journeys

**Grayline Coaches**

3A	Kidlington - Begbroke - Yarnton circular	Mon-Sat	3 journeys
37	Bicester - Stratton Audley - Fringford - Hethe - Mixbury - Brackley	Mon-Fri	4 journeys

**Heyfordian Travel**

14	Thame - Brill - Beckley - Oxford	Mon-Sat	1 journey
17A	Iffley Village - Cowley Templars Square	Wed/Fri	1 journey
17B	Lye Valley - Wood Farm - Cowley Templars Square	Wed/Fri	1 journey
17C	Rose Hill - Cowley Templars Square	Wed/Fri	1 journey
49	Berinsfield - Baldons - Oxford	Wed/Fri	1 journey
67	Faringdon - Stanford - Uffington - Childrey - Letcombes - Wantage	Mon-Fri	6 journeys
67A	Faringdon - Stanford - Challow - Wantage	Mon-Fri	3 journeys
81	Bicester - Ardley - Fritwell - Somerton - Aynho - Banbury	Mon-Sat	2 journeys
82	Duns Tew - Middle Barton - Steeple Aston - Lower Heyford - Bicester	Fri	1 journey
90	Middle Barton - Deddington - Barfords - Banbury	Thu/Sat	2/1 journeys
115	Abingdon - Frilford - Eaton	Mon/Fri	2 journeys

**Jeffs Coaches**

4	Banbury - Brackley - Milton Keynes	Tue	1 journey
6	Eynsham - Witney - Crawley - Burford - Moreton-in-Marsh	Tue	1 journey
32	Bicester - Buckingham - Milton Keynes	Mon-Fri	3 journeys
45	Maids Moreton - Brackley - Banbury	Thu	1 journey
511	Hornton - Horley - Banbury	Thu	1 journey

**Johnson's Coaches**

270	Stratford-upon-Avon - Banbury	Mon-Sat	6 journeys
502	Kineton - Epwell - Shutford - North Newington - Banbury	Thu/Sat	1 journey

**Kimlan Coaches**

577	Moreton-in-Marsh - Cherington - Banbury	Sat	1 journey
F	Banbury - Brailes - Shipston-on-Stour - Stretton - Tredington	Thu	1 journey

**Motts Coaches**

11	Oakley - Brill - Chilton - Long Crendon - Thame - Aylesbury	Mon-Fri	1-3 journeys
12	Oakley - Brill - Thame - Princes Risborough	Tue/Thu	1 journey
13	Thame - Princes Risborough	Tue/Thu	1 journey
15	Chinnor - Bledlow - Princes Risborough - Aylesbury	Wed/Fri	1 journey
M1	Stokenchurch - Watlington - Nettlebed - Highmoor - Reading	Mon-Sat	2 journeys

**McLeans Coaches & Taxis**

113	Fulbrook - Burford - Cotswold Wildlife Park - Carterton	Mon-Sat	3 journeys
215	Witney circular via Fettiplace Road	Mon-Sat	1 journey

**National Express**

757	Stansted Airport - Hemel Hempstead - High Wycombe - Oxford	Daily	8 journeys
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**Pulhams & Sons Coaches**

806	Milton-under-Wychwood - Chipping Norton - Bloxham - Banbury	Thu	1 journey
811	Stow - Chipping Norton - Kingham - Cheltenham	Thu/Sat	1 journey

**RH Transport**

8	Bladon - Cassington - Wytham - Oxford	Mon-Sat	1 journey
8A	Oxford City Centre - Bainton Road - Waterways	Mon-Fri	2 journeys
45	Witney - South Leigh - Stanton Harcourt - Standlake - Brighthampton	Thu	1 journey

201	Woodstock - Tackley	Mon-Sat	2 journeys
203	Woodstock - Shipton-on-Cherwell - Kidlington	Mon-Sat	4 journeys
208	Leaffield - Witney	Sat	2 journeys
C1	Charlbury Taxibus	Mon-Fri	10 Journeys
X8	Chipping Norton - Churchill - Kingham Station	Mon-Sat	12 journeys

#### Red Rose Travel

111	Chalgrove - Stadhampton - Miltons - Haseleys - Thame	Tue	1 journey
122	Watlington - Pyrton - Stoke Talmage - Tetsworth - Thame	Tue	1 journey
124	Thame - Watlington - Stonor - Henley	Te/Th/Sa	2 journeys
275	Oxford - Stokenchurch - High Wycombe	Mon-Sat	4 journeys

#### Stagecoach in Northants

X6	Oxford - Bicester - Brackley - Northampton	Mon-Sat	4-5 journeys
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#### Stagecoach in Oxfordshire

18A	Oxford - Botley - Stanton Harcourt - Standlake - Ducklington - Witney	Mon-Sat	1 journey
19	Witney - Bampton - Clanfield - Carterton - Cotswold Wildlife Park	Mon-Sat	2 journeys
44	Oxford - Boars Hill - Abingdon	Mon-Sat	90 mins
64	Witney/Carterton - Lechlade - Coleshill (1 journey) - Swindon	Mon-Sat	5 journeys
233	Witney - Burford - Wychwoods	Mon-Sat	8 journeys
59/A/B	Banbury - Middle Barton (59A) - Steeple Aston - Tackley - Oxford	Mon-Sat	90 mins
X3	Oxford - Witney - Burford - Wychwoods	Mon-Fri	2 journeys

#### Stagecoach in Swindon

65	Swindon - Bourton - Longcot - Faringdon/Stanford (Sat only)	Mon-Sat	7 journeys
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#### Stagecoach in Warwickshire

50	Chipping Norton - Long Compton - Stratford	Mon-Sat	5 journeys
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#### Shipston Link Community Minibus

3	Shipston-on-Stour - Long Compton - Chipping Norton	Wed	2 journeys
5	Barton-on-the-Heath - Brailes - Banbury	Thu	1 journey
F	Stretton-on-Fosse - Shipston-on-Stour - Brailes - Banbury	Thu	1 journey

#### Stanford-in-the-Vale Community Minibus

83/4	Stanford - Faringdon/Wantage via local villages	Tu/W/F/Sat	4 journeys
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#### SMS Executive Travel

499	Brackley - Aynho - Kings Sutton - Banbury	Mon-Sat	120 mins
508	Brackley - Helmdon - Banbury	Mon-Sat	6 journeys

#### Swanbrook Coaches

53	Gloucester - Cheltenham - Burford - Witney - Oxford	Daily	5 journeys
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#### Thames Travel

102	Oxford - Horspath - Garsington - Chalgrove - Watlington	Fri Eve	1 journey
104	Wheatley - Great Milton - Cuddesdon - Oxford	Mon-Sat	4 Jnys
105	Oxford - Sandford - Berinsfield - Dorchester - Wallingford - Cholsey	Mon-Sat	3 jnys
125	Wallingford - Benson - Ewelme - Watlington	Mon-Sat	2 journeys
126	Wallingford - Stadhampton - Chalgrove - Cuxham - Benson - Wallingford	Fri	2 journeys
131	West Hagbourne - Blewbury - Moretons - Wallingford	Fri	1 journey
132	RAF Benson - Crowmarsh - Wallingford - Goring - Reading	Mon-Sat	120 mins
133	Ipsden - Crowmarsh - Wallingford	Fri	1 journey

135	Wallingford - Cholsey - Moulsoford - Goring	Mon-Sat	5 journeys
142	Goring Heath/Checkendon - Woodcote - Pangbourne - Reading	Mon-Sat	5-6 journeys
Tb103	Wheatley - Miltons - Stadhampton	Mon-Sat	4 Jnys

#### Union Cars

Tb	Launton/Chesterton/Ambrosden/Bicester Purslane Drive - Bicester North Station	Mon-Fri am/pm peak	6-8 journeys
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#### Villager Community Bus

2	Longborough - Stow - Oddington - Chipping Norton	Wed	1 journey
3	Chipping Norton - Salford	Wed	4 journeys
4	Longborough - Swell - Stow - Cornwell - Chipping Norton	Wed	4 journeys
5	Chipping Norton - Salford - Todenham - Moreton - Chipping Norton circular	Wed	1 journey
6	Oddington - Kingham - Bledington - Stow	Thu	1 journey
6A	Oddington - Maugesbury - Stow	Sat	1 journey
8	Oddington - Daylesford - Chastleton - Salford - Chipping Norton	Fri	1 journey
9	Oddington - Fifield - Kingham - Churchill - Chipping Norton	Fri	1 journey
12	Oddington - Burford - Wychwoods - Chipping Norton	Fri	1 journey
14	Oddington - Stow - Shipton - Swinbrook - Asthall - Witney	Tue	1 journey
14A	Oddington - Shipton - Leafield - Asthall Leigh - Minster Lovell - Witney	Tue	1 journey
20	Oddington - Swinbrook - Asthall - Minster Lovell- Witney	Thu	1 journey
20A	Oddington - Kingham - Shipton - Leafield - Crawley- Witney	Thu	1 journey
20B	Oddington - Chipping Norton - Shipton - Witney	Thu	1 journey
21	Oddington - Stow - Taynton - Burford - Swinbrook - Witney	Wed	1 journey

#### Walters Limousines

159	Deddington - Duns Tew	Mon-Sat	1-2 journeys
259	Deddington - Middle Barton - Steeple Aston	Mon-Sat	6-7 journeys
357	Henley - Hambleton - (Hambleton Rider on call)	Mon-Fri	3 journeys
Tb1	Chalgrove - Cuxham - Watlington - Lewknor (on request)	Mon-Fri	5 journeys
Tb2	Thame - Chinnor - Kingston Blount - Aston Rowant - Lewknor (on request)	Mon-Fri	5 journeys

#### Worths Motor Services

69	Enstone/Chipping Norton - Charlbury - Finstock - Hailey - Witney	Mon-Sat	11-9 journeys
71	Witney/Oxford - Charlbury - Chipping Norton - Bloxham - Banbury	Thu/Sat	1 journey

#### Whites Coaches

99	Drayton St Leonard - Berinsfield - Clifton Hampden - Abingdon	Mon/Fri	1 journey
145	Woodcote - Checkendon - Sonning Common - Rotherfield Greys - Henley	Mon-Sat	2-5 journeys

#### Windrush Transport

63	Oxford - Appleton - Longworth - Southmoor	Mon-Sat	6 journeys
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#### Weavaway Travel

X47	Swindon - Uffington - Childrey - Letcombes - Wantage	Sat	3 journeys
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