

Go Ahead statement on their commercial considerations if the free park and ride offer is not approved

April 2026

1. When the congestion charge was implemented, bus operators re-timed their services to reflect the expected improvement in running speeds that would result. Go-Ahead implemented timetable changes from 9 November 2025, and Stagecoach from 30 November 2025. These changes benefitted services across the city, with faster scheduled running times and improved frequencies at peak times, where pre-congestion charge running times had been worst.
2. Both bus operators committed to the council to re-invest all vehicle and driver resources saved from these timetables changes into additional services for the city. Go-Ahead implemented improvements in the following areas:
 - Improved bus services for Littlemore - this included the enhancement of service 5A from every 30 minutes to every 20 minutes on Mondays to Fridays and from every 60 minutes to every 30 minutes on Monday to Friday evenings and the extension of service 3A to the rail station up to every 15 minutes.
 - Improved bus services to East Oxford hospitals - this included the enhancement of service 700 from every 30 minutes to every 20 minutes on Mondays to Fridays, and from every 60 minutes to every 30 minutes on weekends; the improvement of service 100 to operate up to every 20 minutes, with the route enhanced to serve Wood Farm, Cowley Road and the city centre, and the introduction of an every 30 minute weekend service; and the introduction of new service 20, providing regular links from Rose Hill and Iffley Road to Brookes University and the hospitals on Mondays to Fridays, which had previously been highlighted by the council as a gap in the network.
 - Restoration of links previously lost to congestion - this included the restoration of the link from Rose Hill and Iffley Road to the rail station via service 3; and the re-introduction of night bus services on the Iffley Road on Monday to Saturday nights.
 - In total, 7 vehicles were re-invested into the network by Go-Ahead to deliver these improvements.
3. Stagecoach also made improvements to their commercial network, focused on improved cross-city links from North Oxford and improvements to Park & Ride connectivity.

4. Following the introduction of these timetable improvements, it quickly became clear that, while in some areas of the city traffic conditions improved broadly in line with modelling, and others supported by the free P&R offer (such as Abingdon Road and London Road) performed slightly better; in other areas such as Iffley Road, Marston Ferry Road and roads around Temple Cowley, improvements in bus running times were not observed at the levels anticipated.
5. As a result, punctuality on Go-Ahead's network during November and December 2025 worsened materially and reached unsustainable levels, with punctuality on service 700 (which had received 2 of the re-invested vehicles) being 60.81% on time in November 2025, service 100 (which received 1 re-invested vehicle) being 68.47% on time in November 2025, and service 3A (which received 1 re-invested vehicle) being 55.20% on time in the same month. This punctuality level was not sustainable for Go-Ahead, as it risked regulatory action against its operator's licence, and therefore the operator sought to engage with the county council's public transport team to make changes to the implemented timetables as a matter of urgency.
6. Go-Ahead also suffered significant customer complaints during this period related to late running and slower than timetabled journeys in some parts of the city, including from a key "business to business" customer in the form of Oxford Science Park. As a result of this particular complaint, Go-Ahead invested an additional vehicle which had not been saved from the productivity improvements, and which did not attract any subsidy from the county council or any other party to re-instate service 3X to the Science Park from 7th December 2025.
7. From 22nd February 2026, Go-Ahead made a number of further timetable changes to address the punctuality challenges being experienced. This included the addition of a further vehicle to service 700, to address the punctuality challenges seen on that route; with this vehicle being sourced from the withdrawal of the route 3A between Cowley Lidl and Kassam stadium. It was felt that this link was no longer essential, due to improvements made by Stagecoach to service 600 as part of their response to the congestion charge, though this change has generated further complaints from residents of Greater Leys which have been taken up by the local MP. Following this change, punctuality on service 700 has improved but remains below Go-Ahead's target level.
8. In addition, as part of the 22nd February changes, Go-Ahead re-timed its longer-distance services, which had not been adjusted in the 9th November amendments. This took into account real-world experience of operating the bus network with the congestion charge and free P&R promotion in place, and saw substantial journey time improvements being provided on services using

the Abingdon Road, benefitting bus users in Abingdon, Wallingford, Didcot and other area in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse served by these routes.

9. Since the 22nd February changes, punctuality of Go-Ahead's city services has improved to an overall acceptable level of approximately 81% on time.
10. Go-Ahead operate the majority of services to Park & Ride sites in Oxford and have observed an increase of approximately 11,000 return journeys per week using these services since the introduction of the congestion charge and free Park & Ride bus travel. The operator believes this to be contributing approximately a 1% improvement in overall running time across its Oxford city network, though the benefits of this vary between different corridors. Go-Ahead's network includes 23 buses per hour on Abingdon Road, which has been the corridor benefitting the most from free P&R and this is the reason why this particular operator has identified this to be the case for its services.
11. In total, since the introduction of the congestion charge and free Park & Ride promotion, Go-Ahead has seen approximately 2% improvement in overall running time across its Oxford city network, compared to the equivalent period last year. Go Ahead therefore believes that on average across its network, the free P&R promotion is contributing around half of the overall improvement in running time it is seeing, with the remainder coming from the congestion charge scheme.
12. Currently, Go-Ahead is observing approximately 5% improvement in running time on its city network against a 2019 baseline. This is significantly less than the 10% improvement which was committed to by the County Council in the Oxfordshire Enhanced Bus Partnership, and which formed a key part of the business case for bus operators to invest over £45m in zero emission vehicles and charging infrastructure as part of the ZEBRA project. At present, bus operators have not sought to take any action against the council due to the non-achievement of this target. However, there is a legal risk to the council that operators may seek to enforce their rights under the Enhanced Partnership Agreement, should the council seek to pursue policies which materially worsen bus productivity from current levels.
13. Should the cabinet decide not to continue with the free P&R bus travel promotion, Go-Ahead believes that bus speeds on its network will worsen by approximately 1% in the Oxford city area. If this were to occur, it would be necessary for Go-Ahead to once again re-time services across the city, plus longer-distance services that were improved from 22nd February to reflect the expected slower journey times that would result, to take account of the expected reduction in bus patronage that would result from less attractive journey times (in particular on Abingdon Road), and the additional operating

costs of each journey which would be caused by the less productive vehicle resource.

14. In addition to extending journey times across most bus services in the city, additional targeted changes would be required to free up the vehicle resource and associated operating costs, to invest in delivering these longer journey times. These targeted changes would be likely to result in the following:

1. Withdrawal of service 20, which while building well, is not likely to be capable in its own right of supporting its full operational costs.
2. Withdrawal of service 3 and 3A from Oxford rail station.
3. Withdrawal of N3 night bus service
4. Reduction of service 5A evenings from every 30 minutes to every 60 minutes
5. Reduction in current number of timetabled journeys on N400 night bus service to Thame.