

**NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY  
TRANSPORT ACT 2000  
ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN**

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL (RBC)**

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## **PART 1 - EP PLAN**

**THE READING ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN FOR BUSES IS MADE IN  
ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 138G(1) OF THE TRANSPORT ACT 2000 BY:**

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL (RBC)

# 1 OVERVIEW

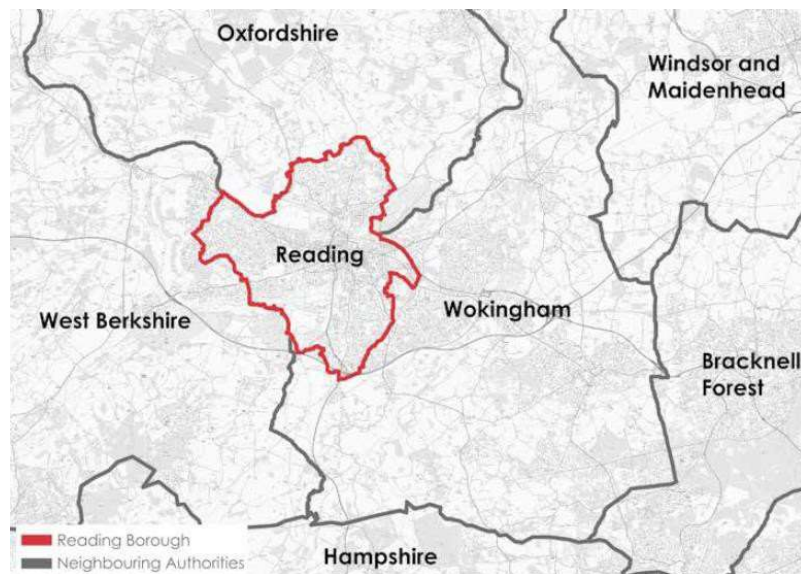
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This EP Plan will support the improvement of all local bus services operating in the Reading Borough Council (RBC) Local Transport Authority (LTA) area and neighbouring LTA areas where services are cross-boundary. A map of the geographical area it covers is provided in Figure 1-1. This EP Plan aligns with the Reading Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and covers the period 2021-2026.

It has been developed in partnership with local bus operators and neighbouring local authorities, taking account of feedback from residents and key stakeholders.

Our strategy has been aligned with the ambitions of the National Bus Strategy (NBS) – Bus Back Better, and it has been prepared in accordance with the guidance produced by the Department for Transport (DfT). The NBS sets an ambitious vision to dramatically improve bus services in England, aiming to reverse the recent shift away from public transport and encouraging passengers back.

**Figure 1-1: Reading Borough EP Coverage**



The objectives of the NBS align strongly with our local policies, with levels of bus usage and growth in Reading amongst the highest in the country prior to the Covid pandemic. Section 2 of this document outlines the current offer to bus passengers in Reading, including details of the extensive bus network in the town. These services provide the everyday access for millions of journeys each year within, to and from the town, demonstrating the importance of high-quality bus services to the overall success of Reading as a place.

However, as in the rest of the country, this strategy is set in the context of the impact of the Covid pandemic on public transport usage, including buses. This has changed the landscape in the short-term and we have identified a range of challenges to overcome and opportunities to improve services and encourage passengers back on

to buses. A key objective of this strategy is to initially restore the very high passenger levels seen before the pandemic, and subsequently to grow usage and mode share further to exceed the previous levels over time. This vision for future bus travel in Reading, developed to be ambitious and at the same time achievable, is outlined in Annex A of this document, alongside key headline targets to enable us to measure our progress and ensure we remain on-track to successfully deliver the strategy.

**Figure 1-2: National, Regional & Local Policy Context**



## 1.1 ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL, REGIONAL & LOCAL OBJECTIVES

This EP Plan / BSIP strategy has been developed to align with the objectives of key national, regional and local policies as set out in Figure 1-2. In particular, the objectives highlighted in the NBS including to provide faster bus services with better and more frequent timetables in Reading.

In order to achieve the NBS objectives, funding will be required to deliver the range of proposals outlined in this strategy including bus priority measures and service level enhancements throughout the town. Our package of proposals will deliver a range of outputs including to speed up journey times and make them more reliable, provide more frequent services, provide cheaper and simpler fares, and enhance the passenger experience through zero emission buses, better facilities and information. The full range of proposals required to deliver this step-change in bus travel in Reading are set out in Section 3 of this document.

This strategy is fully aligned with our emerging Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP), the Reading Transport Strategy 2036, which promotes a vision for ‘a sustainable transport system in Reading that creates an attractive, green and vibrant town’. The EP Plan / BSIP will form a sub-strategy to the emerging LTP, it will be a critical element to achieving its overall vision and has been aligned to our other LTP sub-strategies.

The strategic objectives of the LTP4, as shown in Figure 1-3, provide the guiding principles for all transport development in Reading. This includes prioritising sustainable travel modes to offer an attractive and realistic alternative to the private car, as well as by increasing the capacity of the sustainable transport network by reallocating road space to sustainable travel, including buses.

The EP Plan / BSIP builds on this through proposals to improve the operation of buses through investing in bus priority measures, providing more capacity, higher frequency, higher quality and faster journeys. We will achieve this by working with bus operators to re-invest efficiency savings in improved services for passengers.

**Figure 1-3: Reading Transport Strategy 2036 Objectives**



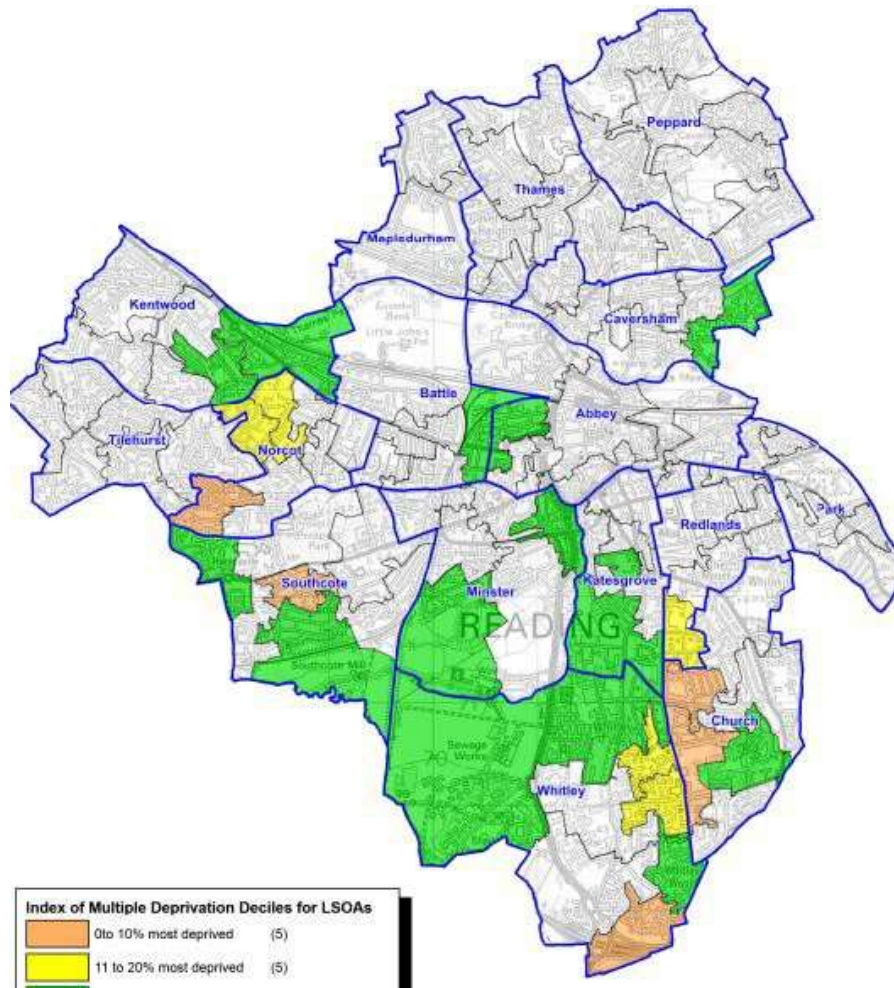
## 1.2 REDUCING INEQUALITIES WITHIN READING

A particular focus of our local strategies, as highlighted in our Corporate Plan4, is reducing inequalities within Reading to help the town realise its potential and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share in the benefits of its success. Despite the overall economic success, there are pockets of deprivation in the borough as highlighted in Figure 1-4. Reading has seen an increase in the number of Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are within the UK's most deprived 10%, from none in 2010, to two in 2015 and up to five in 2019.

The proposals contained within this EP Plan / BSIP are a vital part of levelling-up by providing high-quality, affordable and socially necessary bus services to give residents with the ability to access education, training and leisure opportunities

throughout the borough and beyond. This is especially important to support the economic recovery following the impact of the Covid pandemic.

**Figure 1-4: Reading Borough Index of Multiple Deprivation**



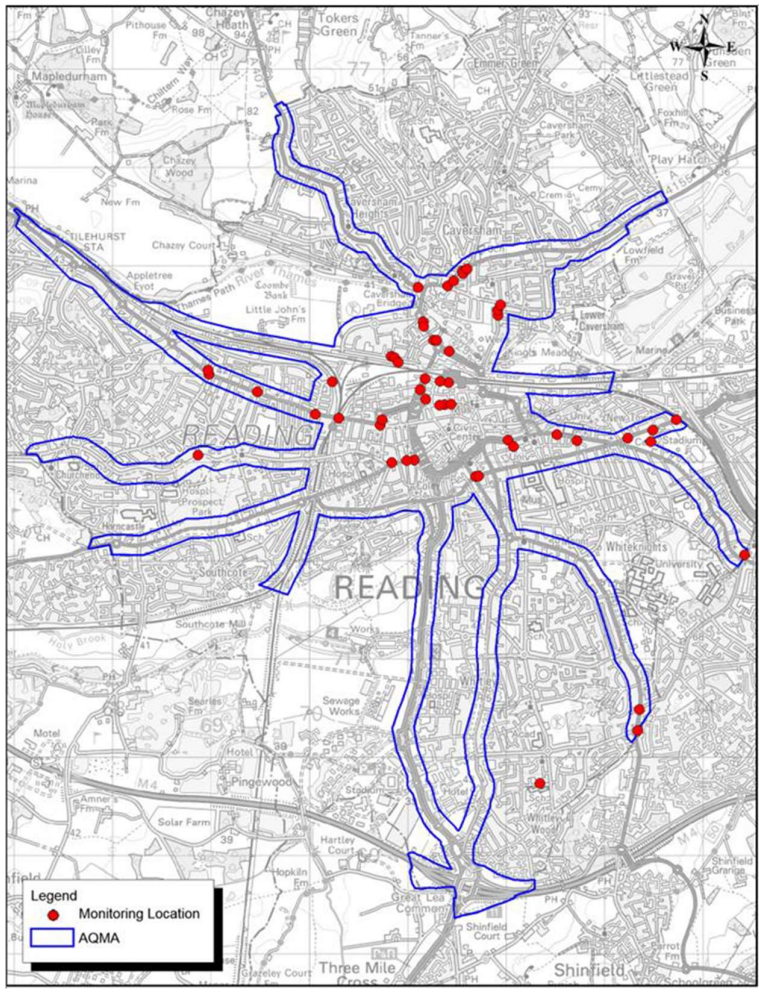
### 1.3 DECARBONISATION & IMPROVED AIR QUALITY

Further vitally important elements of both national and local policy which aligns strongly with the EP Plan / BSIP are decarbonisation and air quality. This strategy contains important proposals which are aligned with the national Transport Decarbonisation Plan<sup>5</sup>, alongside the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, and our ambition to become a net zero carbon town by 2030.

Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts and is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. It particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions. There is also often a strong correlation with equalities issues, because areas with poor air quality are also often the less affluent areas, which is the case in parts of Reading.

The importance of our EP Plan / BSIP policies to improve air quality are highlighted by our Air Quality Action Plan and declared Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) as shown in Figure 1-5. This covers all the major arterial roads in and out of the town as well as the central area. There are hotspot locations of poor air quality along each route, particularly levels of NO2 which can exceed national objectives, but also PM10

**Figure 1-5: Reading Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)**



## 1.4 CROSS-BOUNDARY SERVICES & PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Throughout the development of this strategy we have worked with all local bus operators, including Reading Buses who operate the majority of services in the area (around 95%), as well as other major operators Arriva and Thames Travel/The Oxford Bus Company and smaller operators with services that come to Reading from well outside of the urban area.

We have also worked closely with our neighbouring local authorities, particularly Wokingham and West Berkshire, and we will continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure a true sense of collaboration and partnership with the objective of



providing passengers with a coherent and joined-up network across the region. Cross-boundary services form a vital element of the overall offer for bus passengers in Reading, particularly within Berkshire which consists of six unitary authorities. These services provide opportunities for our residents to access a wider range of employment, education and leisure facilities, alongside attracting commuters and visitors into the borough from the wider county and beyond.

We will continue to work closely with our partner local authorities in Berkshire, both through the development of the proposals set out within this document and the subsequent establishment of Enhanced Partnership arrangements with local operators. This collaborative working will build on existing arrangements such as the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB) and Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum (BSTF), which have co-ordinated and overseen the delivery of significant bus enhancements in recent years, including new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors and park & ride facilities.

The ongoing coordination of plans for enhanced services will focus on ensuring key destinations throughout the county are well served by high-quality bus services, both through the delivery of key new cross-boundary bus priority measures and associated service level enhancements. In addition, we are committed to achieving a more integrated sustainable transport network in Berkshire through enhanced connectivity with rail services and facilities for walking and cycling, including through the policies and actions outlined in our Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which has been aligned to this strategy.

We are collectively focused on initially building back levels of bus patronage following the reduction during the pandemic, alongside attracting new passengers to subsequently further grow levels of bus usage. This is a vital part of achieving our wider objectives relating to the economic recovery, decarbonisation and the delivery of housing through the creation of sustainable communities. It also forms part of the current discussions with Government on the potential for a county devolution deal.

## 2 CURRENT BUS OFFER TO PASSENGERS

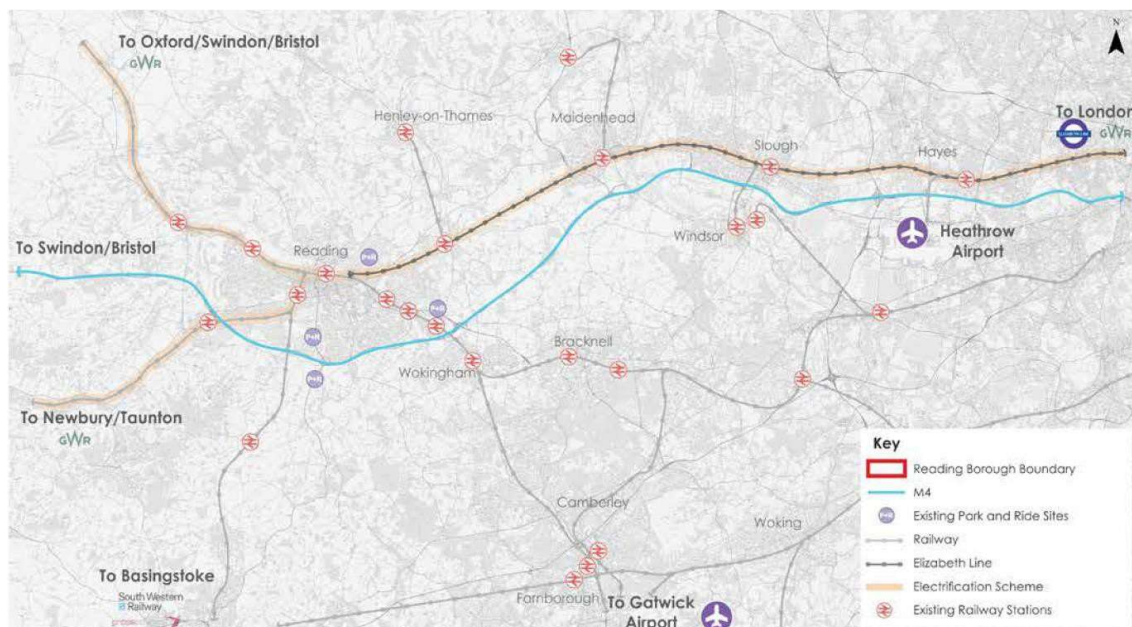
Reading is a unitary authority in the ceremonial county of Berkshire, and an important strategic location in the wider Thames Valley region. The borough had a population of 161,780 in mid-2020 and an area of 40.4 sq.km, giving Reading a population density of 3,969 people per sq.km which is similar to many outer London boroughs. The local authority area has a tight boundary, however the wider urban area has an additional population of around 60,000 including the eastern suburbs of Earley and Woodley which extend into Wokingham borough, and the western suburbs of Calcot and Tilehurst which extend into West Berkshire.

### 2.1 CONTEXT OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY & HOUSING GROWTH

Reading is a major centre of employment, with around 120,000 people working in the borough. There are more jobs in Reading than workers meaning people travel in from other areas to work, although the longer-term impacts of the Covid pandemic on travel behaviours are still emerging. The centre of Reading is a major retail and leisure destination, with The Oracle ranked in the top 50 shopping centres in the UK. As shown in Figure 2-1, the town's location on both the Great Western Main Line and the M4 motorway makes it a major hub for transport movement. Reading Station is one of the busiest railway stations in the country and marks the western terminus of the Elizabeth Line. The town also has excellent connections to the international hubs at Heathrow and Gatwick Airports.

Substantial residential growth is planned both within the borough and also in neighbouring authority areas, particularly in Wokingham. Our Local Plan forecasts an additional 689 homes will be delivered within the borough each year to 2036, and accounting for emerging Local Plans for our neighbouring authorities this increases to approximately 2,600 new homes every year across the wider area.

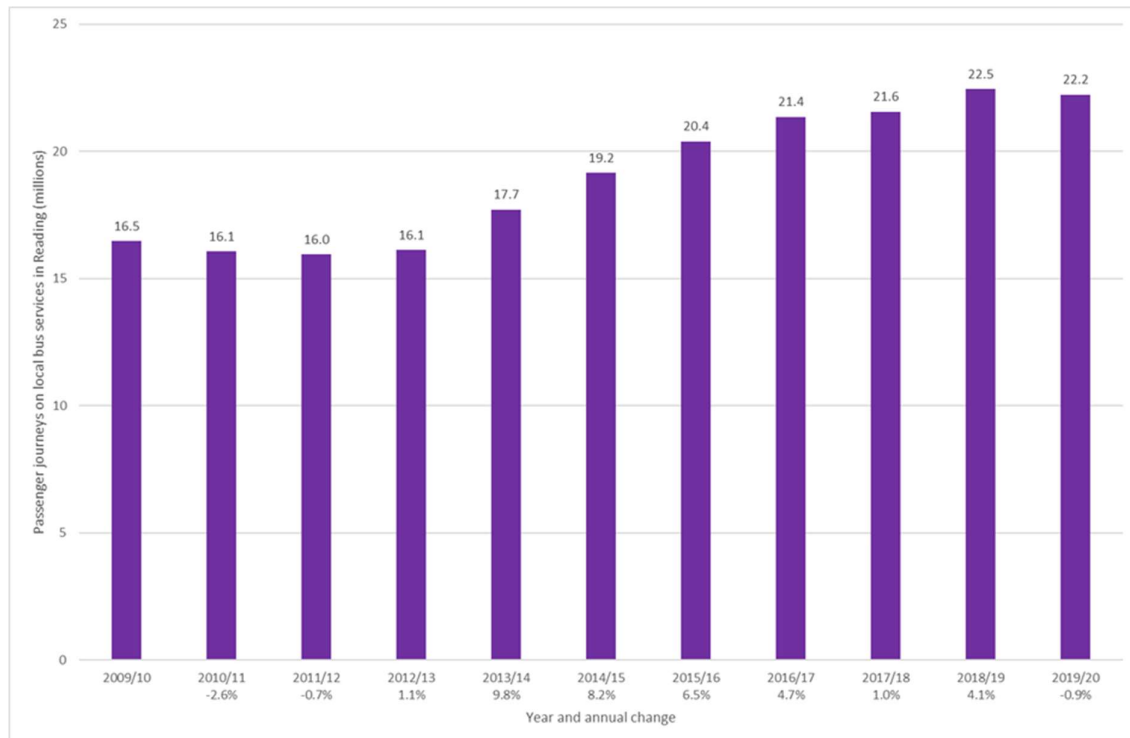
**Figure 2-1: Strategic Transport Connections**



## 2.2 BUS PASSENGER USAGE & GROWTH

Reading has a comprehensive local bus network which serves each of the main residential areas and key destinations in the borough, with many routes extending into neighbouring authorities. This network consists of over 30 local bus routes which are split into eight main corridors; park and ride services running from two facilities located in Wokingham borough (with a third due to open shortly) including fast-track BRT services on the A33 corridor to the south; school bus services which are open to the public and football routes serving the Madejski Stadium on match days

**Figure 2-2: Passenger Journeys on Local Bus Services**



In addition to the local bus network, Reading has a substantial community transport dial-a-ride service which provides a vital lifeline for many residents; and long-distance coach services including a frequent service from Reading Station to Heathrow Airport.

Bus usage is very high in the borough, with 22.2 million passenger journeys made in 2019/20 as shown in Figure 2-2, demonstrating the importance of bus travel to residents and visitors.

Unlike many other areas in England, bus patronage had grown steadily in Reading in each of the seven years up to the pandemic, increasing by over 6 million trips from a total of 16.0 million in 2011/12. It is anticipated that this trend was set to continue until the impact of the Covid pandemic and associated national lockdowns resulted in significantly reduced travel nationwide, particularly for public transport.

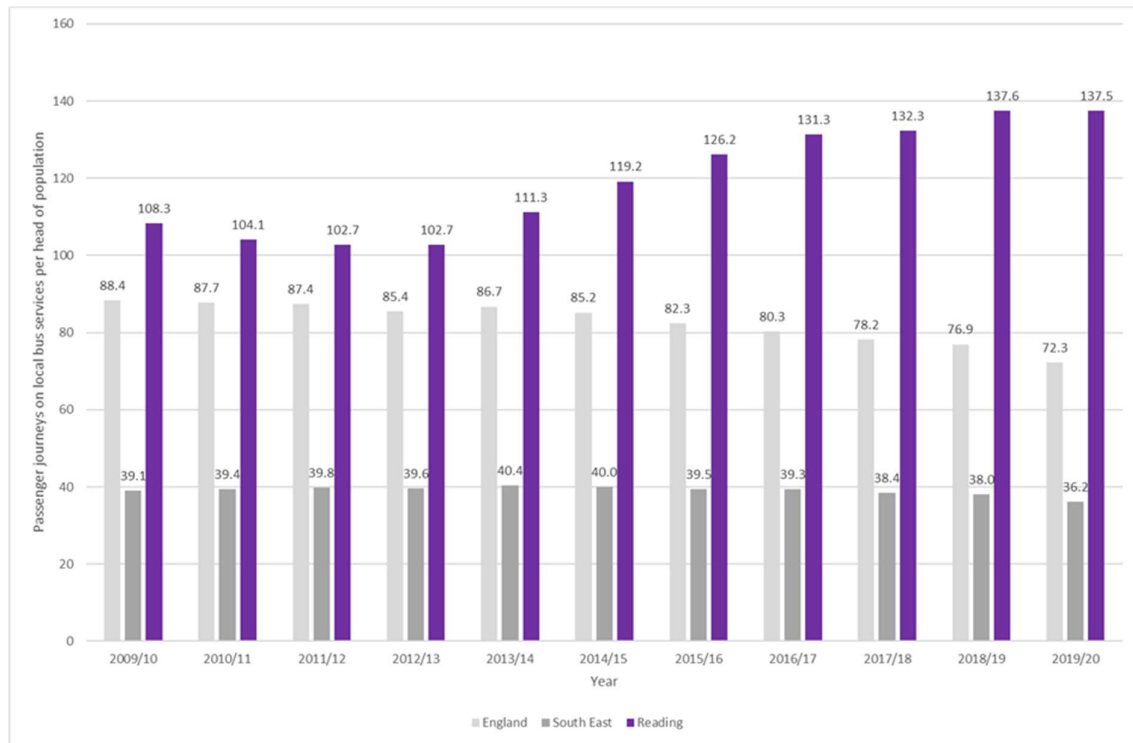
The magnitude of this level of bus patronage is further demonstrated by the fact that it equates to 137.5 annual passenger journeys per head of population in 2019/20, as shown in Figure 2-3. This was the second highest level of bus patronage per head of population in England, outside of London. It is almost twice the average for England and almost three times the average for the South East region.

This amount of usage (pre- pandemic) demonstrates the huge potential for the continuation of a highly successful bus network in the town, including growth through high-frequency services such as BRT style services.

In terms of bus operational statistics, there were 6.5 million vehicle kms operated in the borough during 2019/2020, which was a slight reduction on the previous year.

This reduction in vehicle km, combined with the increases in bus patronage as outline above, indicate a healthy increase in average vehicle loadings in the borough and therefore demonstrate that overall an efficient operation was being undertaken by local operators.

**Figure 2-3: Annual Passenger Journeys on Local Bus Services (per head of population)**



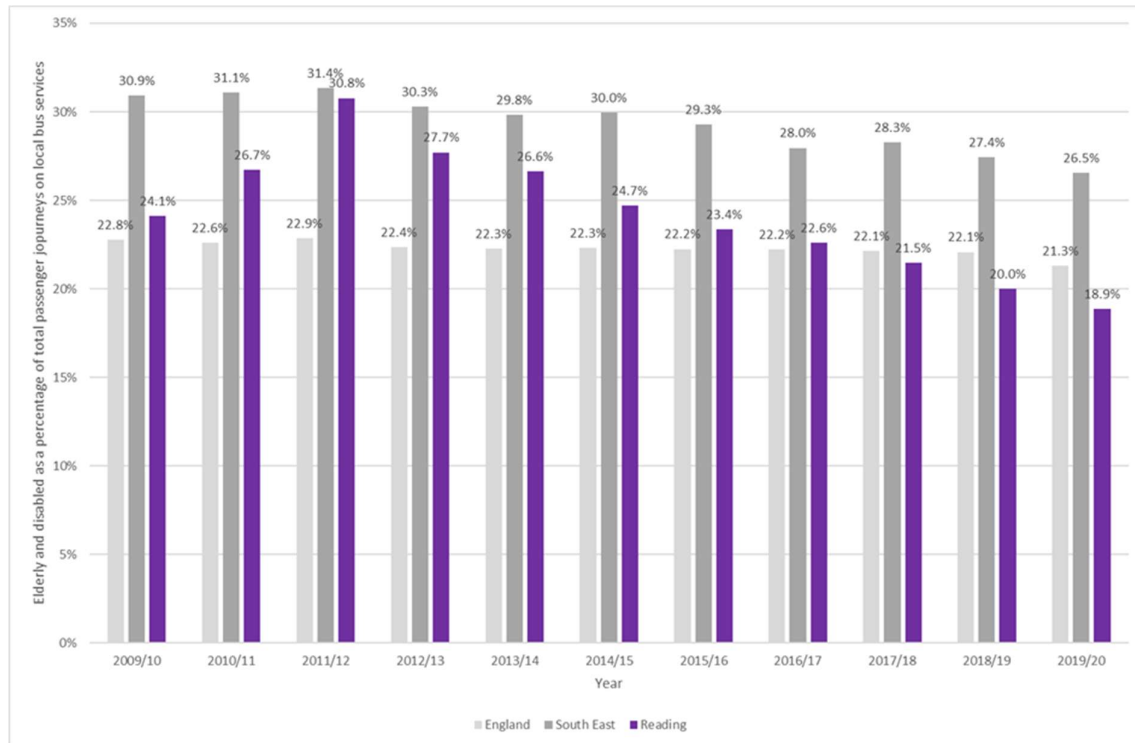
In addition, less than 15% of vehicle kilometres in Reading were supported financially by local authorities in 2019/20, demonstrating that there was strong environment for commercial bus network operations in the borough prior to the pandemic.

The Council, alongside neighbouring local authorities, are responsible for managing the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) which provides free bus travel for elderly and disabled residents. In addition to the provisions provided for

as part of the national scheme, residents in Reading benefit from further discretionary elements including free travel 24/7 for disabled residents, companion passes and free travel on dial-a-ride services for eligible residents.

Around 18.9% of passenger journeys on local bus services were made by elderly and disabled people in 2019/20, as shown in Figure 2-4. This is slightly lower than the averages for England and the South East region.

**Figure 2-4: Elderly and Disabled Trips as a percentage of total passenger journeys**



However, this should be viewed in the context of the extremely high levels of overall passenger numbers in Reading in comparison to other authority areas, both in England and the South East region. Therefore, the total number of trips taken by elderly and disabled residents is still at a considerable level.

Overall, whilst this analysis demonstrates the substantial level of bus usage in Reading up to 2020, the pandemic has had a significant impact on bus use across the country in the short-term, including in Reading, with passenger levels having recovered to around 70% of pre-pandemic levels by October 2021.

The longer-term implications of the pandemic for travel behaviour, including on bus usage, are not yet fully known and this is an evolving situation which is being closely monitored by the Council and bus operators. However, it is clear that bus travel remains an essential element of the transport offer in Reading and services will need to adapt to meet changing patterns of demand in the future.

The nature of the recovery of bus use in Reading will be particularly sensitive to future levels of office work, interchange with rail services and economic growth in the town centre. This is demonstrated by the high proportion of journeys made to and

from Reading town centre by bus, again pre-pandemic. Bus mode share rose from 20.4% in 2008 to 26.6% in 2019, however this reduced to 21.6 % in 2021 largely due to the pandemic travel restrictions.

Mode share to and from the town centre over the past 5 years is shown in Figure 2-5, which highlights the dominance of sustainable travel choices, which accounted for almost 80% of all trips in 2019. This has reduced recently, to almost 70% in 2021, due to the short- term impact of the pandemic on travel behaviours.

**Figure 2-5: Mode Share of Trips to/from Reading Town Centre**

| <b>Mode</b> | <b>2017</b> | <b>2018</b> | <b>2019</b> | <b>2020</b> | <b>2021</b> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Walk        | 25.4%       | 30.1%       | 29.4%       | 31.0%       | 31.3%       |
| Cycle       | 2.2%        | 4.6%        | 4.3%        | 6.7%        | 6.3%        |
| Bus         | 25.7%       | 24.3%       | 26.6%       | 21.0%       | 21.6%       |
| Train       | 19.8%       | 17.8%       | 19.3%       | 12.3%       | 10.3%       |
| Car & Taxi  | 26.8%       | 23.3%       | 20.4%       | 29.0%       | 30.5%       |

## **2.3 BUS FREQUENCY ANALYSIS**

An analysis of current bus frequencies throughout the borough has been undertaken to inform development of this strategy.

Figure 2-6 shows bus frequencies on a Wednesday AM Peak (07:00- 09:00) and is one of a set of 12 bus frequency maps which are provided in Appendix A of the BSIP.

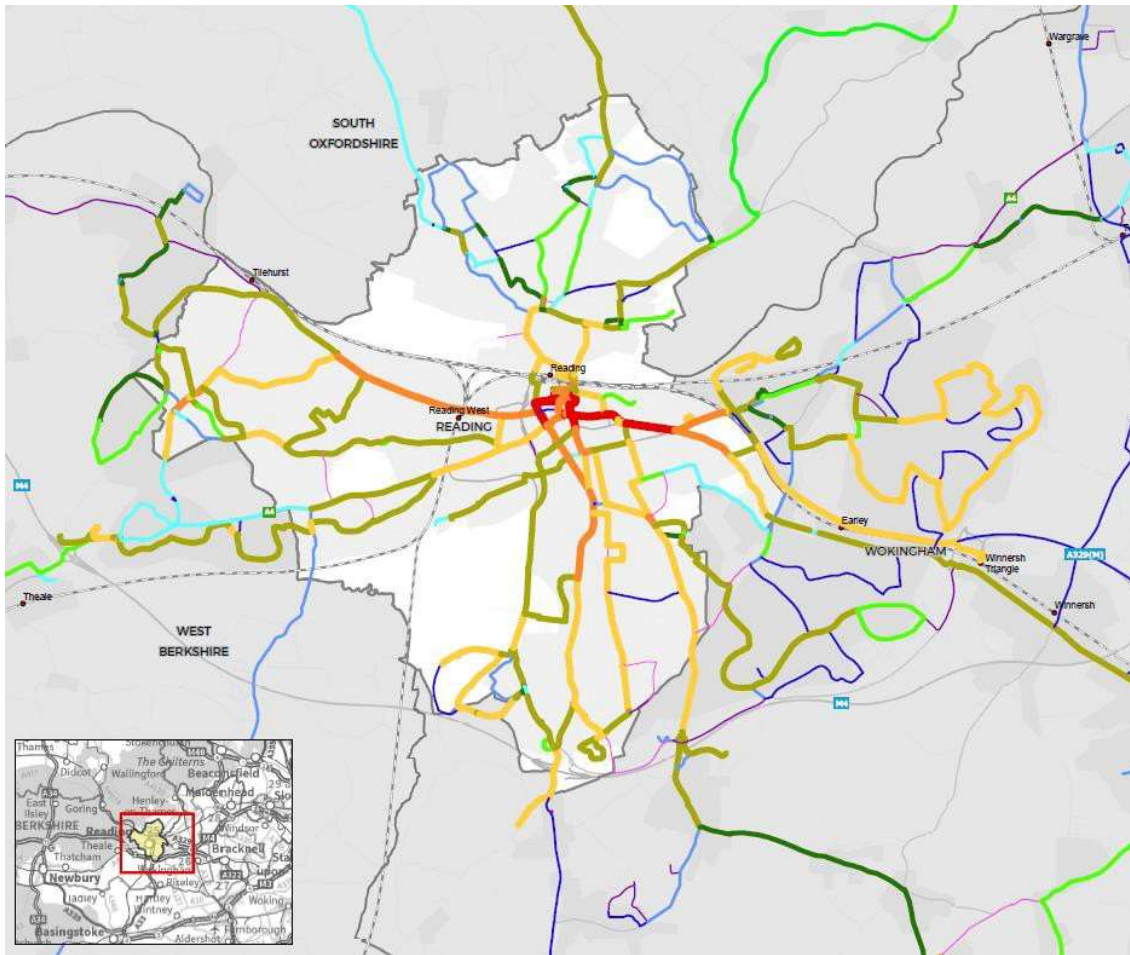
These bus frequency maps cover three days:

- Wednesday (example weekday)
- Saturday
- Sunday

Covering four time periods:

- AM Peak (07:00-09:00)
- Interpeak (09:00-16:00)
- PM Peak (16:00-18:00)
- Late PM (18:00-00:00)

**Figure 2-6: Bus Frequency Map - Wednesday AM Peak (07:00-09:00)**



The frequency maps reflect the bus network pre-pandemic (Q4 2019), as bus networks are changing quickly at the current time to adapt to the latest situation, typically with frequencies returning to pre-pandemic levels on the majority of services. The analysis demonstrates that whilst overall service levels are generally good, the current bus network is largely focused on connecting areas of the borough and access points from outside the borough to the town centre as quickly and directly as possible. This focus is due to the importance of the town centre as a hub for employment, retail and leisure opportunities, alongside interchange with widely available rail services from Reading Station.

This network arrangement is also a function of the geography of the road layout in the borough, which favours a 'hub and spoke' pattern of bus services, including the limited crossings over the River Thames. The result is for cross-town journeys, it is often necessary to change buses in the town centre. The exception is the main historic west to east transport route from Oxford Road to Kings Road / Wokingham Road, which was established to connect dense Victorian housing with factories like Huntley and Palmers.

The comprehensive coverage of bus stops in the town centre is shown in Figure 2-7, with most bus routes also using the centre for scheduled or unscheduled bus layover as the natural terminal point. Reading is a thriving commercial, cultural and leisure environment and therefore there is pressure on the limited kerb space for a variety of uses including bus stops, delivery loading bays, taxi ranks and on-street disabled parking bays.

**Figure 2-7: Reading Town Centre Bus Stop Map**



## 2.4 BUS ACCESSIBILITY TO KEY DESTINATIONS

In addition to current levels of bus frequency, an analysis of accessibility by bus and/or train to key destinations has also been undertaken to inform development of this strategy.

The maps, provided at Figure 2-8 and in Appendix B of the BSIP, show accessibility to four key destinations in Reading:

- Reading Town Centre
- Royal Berkshire Hospital
- The University of Reading
- Tesco Distribution Centre (as an example out-of-town employment destination)

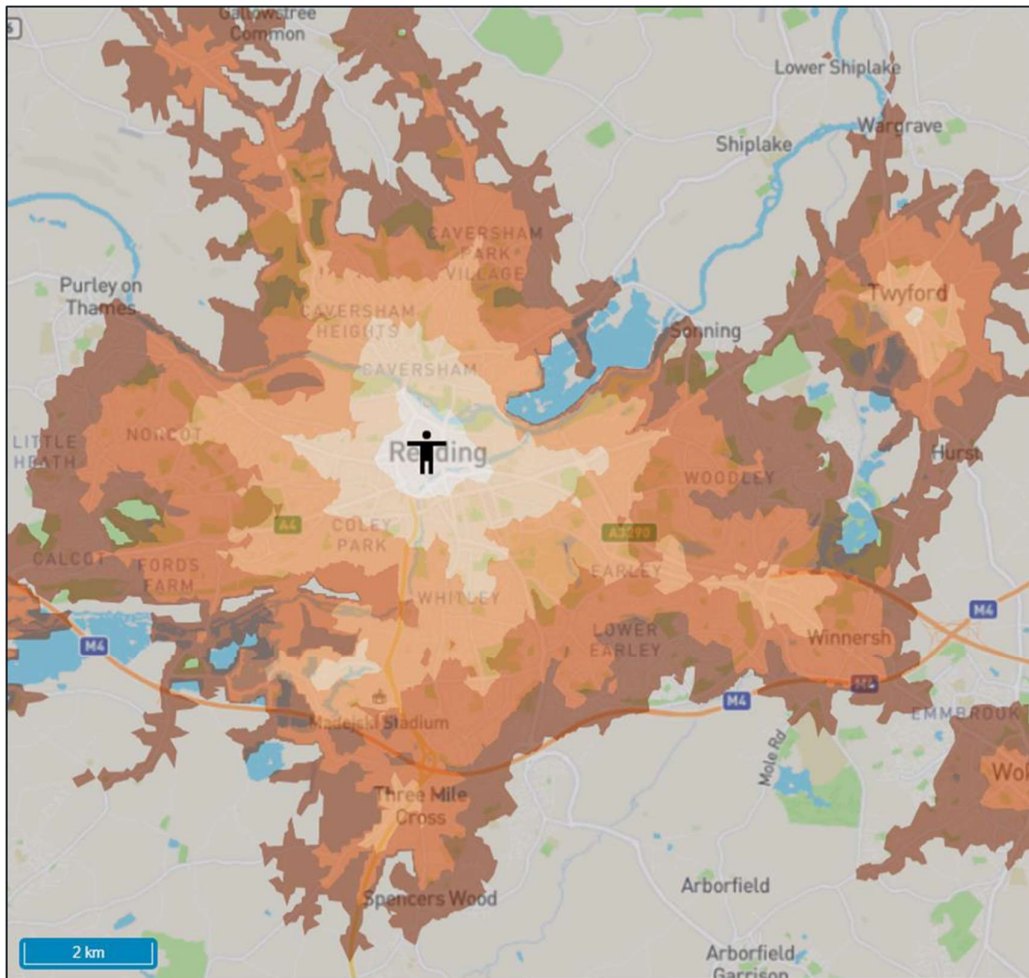


For each destination there are two maps:

- Arrive on a Wednesday by 09:00
- Depart on a Wednesday at 22:00

The maps reflect the bus network pre-pandemic (Q4 2019). Similar to the frequency analysis, comparing accessibility for the town centre maps against the maps for out-of-town locations, demonstrates the focus of the existing network on the town centre. A far greater area can be accessed from the town centre within 50 minutes than from locations outside the town centre, and it is much easier to commute to the town centre than to out-of-town workplaces such as the Tesco Distribution Centre. Although direct buses do run to/from Tesco at shift times these do not extend to areas beyond Reading town centre due to the diverse range of locations where people live. In addition, comparing the arrival by 09:00 against the departure at 22:00 maps demonstrate that Reading's bus services are most frequent during office hours. A far greater area can be accessed by 09:00 than at 22:00. Shift workers are obliged to commute on less frequent bus services, with some tailored to the times that shifts finish.

**Figure 2-8: Reading Town Centre Public Transport Accessibility Map (Wed 09:00)**



Overall, the bus accessibility and frequency analysis demonstrates that whilst key destinations outside of the town centre are generally well served by the current network, particularly by services to/from the town centre, there are residential areas that do not always benefit from direct links to key destinations which are not located within the town centre. This includes some major employment sites (for instance the Tesco distribution centre), the Royal Berkshire Hospital and the University of Reading. It also includes some of the residential areas of social disadvantage within Reading.

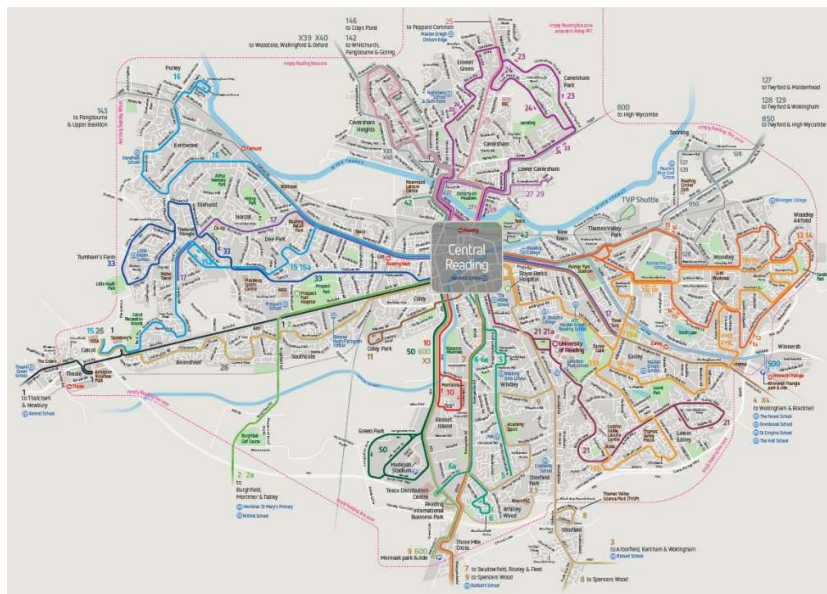
A further trend highlighted by the analysis is that major new housing developments do not always benefit from high levels of service, particularly those located outside of the borough but within the wider Reading urban area. There are extensive new housing developments in Wokingham, particularly located in Lower Earley, Woodley, Winnersh and the south of the M4 strategic development locations, which would benefit from a better quality of service to attract more passengers to travel by bus between them and Reading.

## 2.5 CURRENT BUS NETWORK & KEY CORRIDORS

The existing bus network for the urban area is shown at Figure 2-9 (overview), which is logically split into eight main bus corridors:

- East Reading Bus Corridor
- South East Reading Bus Corridor
- South Reading Bus Corridor
- South Reading BRT Corridor
- South West Reading Bus Corridor
- West Reading (Meadway) Bus Corridor
- West Reading (Oxford Road) Bus Corridor
- North Reading Bus Corridor

**Figure 2-9: Existing Reading Urban Area Bus Network Map**



An overview of each of the bus corridors is provided on the following pages, including current service frequencies and opportunities to improve existing connections.

#### East Reading Bus Corridor

The East corridor, via Kings Road, connects Reading town centre with the main access into Reading from the east, the A3290, through areas of older urban housing.

Several schools and colleges are located on this corridor and it is close to the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

This corridor is also the access to development areas of housing south and east of Reading, presenting an opportunity to work with Wokingham to develop improvements to cross boundary services on the corridor.

#### South East Reading Bus Corridor

The South East corridor connects the Royal Berkshire Hospital and the University of Reading with Reading town centre, and both older and newer suburban housing areas such as Lower Earley in Wokingham Borough.

The corridor provides access to development areas of housing south of Reading in Wokingham borough and the developing Thames Valley Science Park. There are also a number of public and private schools along the corridor.

There are opportunities to enhance levels of services between Reading and areas of housing and commercial development within Wokingham borough on this corridor, including Thames Valley Science Park as an expanding employment site.

#### South Reading Bus Corridor

The South corridor, via Whitley Street, connects Reading town centre with both older and newer suburban housing areas across Whitley, with high-frequency services.

It provides an access to development areas of housing south of Reading in Wokingham, but has limited connections to adjacent areas of Reading and important employment centres.

#### South Reading BRT Corridor

The South BRT corridor connects the town centre with newer housing and business development areas in South Reading and Mere oak P&R facility; with a limited stop, fast and direct service.

Opportunities exist to enhance services to the major residential development at Green Park Village, and to establish a connection to the new railway station at Green Park which is due to open in 2022.

#### South West Reading Bus Corridor

The South West corridor connects the town centre with both older and newer suburban housing areas from Bath Road to Southcote, and areas of housing south west of Reading in West Berkshire Council at Fords Farm and Calcot.

It has reasonably frequent services, however it lacks direct connections to adjacent areas of Reading or to employment areas in the south.

#### West Reading (Meadway) Bus Corridor

This corridor connects the town centre through older lower density housing to suburban areas of Tilehurst, and areas of low-density housing in West Berkshire at Little Heath and Calcot.

Frequency of service is greater further out as the services through Dee Park join those from Tilehurst Road. It has direct connections to Oxford Road but not to employment areas in the south.

#### West Reading (Oxford Road) Bus Corridor

The West (Oxford Road) corridor connects Reading town centre through older high-density housing to suburban areas of Tilehurst.

Frequency of service is high along Oxford Road, but then reduces after Norcot as services branch off.

It provides an access to areas of low- density housing west of Reading in West Berkshire, including Calcot and Purley. It has direct connections to the Meadway corridor but not to the adjacent Portman Road industrial estate, south west Reading nor employment areas in the south.

There is an opportunity on this corridor to improve connections between Reading West Station (which is currently undergoing a major upgrade) and housing areas in the borough and in West Berkshire at Purley, which would support the subsidised 143 route.

#### North Reading Bus Corridor

The North corridor connects Reading town centre over the two River Thames bridges to the relatively low-density residential area of Caversham beyond.

Frequency of service is low along individual routes, but higher over Caversham Bridge to Reading town centre where the route suffers from traffic congestion. The corridor provides an access to areas of rural housing north of Reading in South Oxfordshire, including Sonning Common, Woodcote and Henley. There are no direct connections beyond the centre of Reading, but out of town services run to Oxford and High Wycombe.

This corridor is served by three main operators, therefore opportunities exist to work with these operators, alongside South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council, to provide better co-ordinated services and simpler fares for passengers.

## 2.6 BUS OPERATORS

An overview of operators of local bus routes in Reading and the routes they operate is shown at Figure 2-10.

One operator has significantly the largest presence:

- Reading Buses an arms-length municipal company (Reading Transport Limited) which is owned by the Council, operates around 95% of services in the borough including most local bus routes, and Park and Ride services into Reading from sites in Wokingham borough at Mere oak and Winnersh Triangle.

Three operators have a medium-sized presence, operating bus routes seven days per week:

- Arriva the Shires Limited is a subsidiary of a larger organisation, Arriva plc, and operates two bus routes from High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire.
- First Beeline Buses Limited is a subsidiary of a larger organisation, FirstGroup plc.
- Thames Travel (Wallingford Limited) is a subsidiary of a larger organisation, Go-Ahead Group plc, along with The Oxford Bus Company, and operates two bus routes from Oxford and one bus route from Goring in Oxfordshire.

Five operators have a small presence, operating bus routes fewer than seven days per week:

- Thames Valley Buses, which is owned by Reading Buses, is the largest of these five operators and operates a combination of bus routes via Twyford from Wokingham or Maidenhead.
- Going Forward Buses CIC is a small, community operator and operates a one day a week 'shopper' bus route that offers four return trips from Goring (two via Whitchurch Hill) and Cray's Pond in Oxfordshire.
- Horseman Coaches is a small organisation and operates three school bus routes and three 'weekly shopper' bus routes that each offer one return trip on one day each week from outlying villages in Berkshire.
- Whites Coaches Limited is a small organisation and operates one school bus route from Woodcote in Oxfordshire
- Stewarts Coaches Limited is a subsidiary of a larger organisation, National Express Group plc, and operates the express shuttle bus route to Thames Valley Park business park however it is not registered as a local bus service because it does not charge fares.

In addition, 'closed door' school bus routes also exist that are not available to the general public, serving independent schools in the area at Abbey School, Leighton Park School, St Joseph's College, Reading Blue Coat School and Reading School.

There is a considerable community transport 'Dial-a-Ride' (DaR) service offer in Reading which is predominantly operated by Readibus. They have been a pioneer in the operation of community transport in the UK, and it has been operating a DaR and other forms of community transport services for over 40 years. The DaR network is

well established within the borough and the surrounding urban area. In 2018/19, Readibus supported 146,000 bus journeys from 3,000 users. Of this, about 100,000 journeys were made by Reading borough residents, including 77,000 on the DaR service. These were delivered using a fleet of over 20 minibuses which operated around 300,000 miles.

Express coach routes also serve Reading but do not form part of the local transport network, including First RailAir to Heathrow Airport serves Reading Station and Cemetery Junction, Megabus serves Reading Station, and National Express serves Mere oak P&R site.

**Figure 2-10: Local Public Bus Service Operators**

| <b>Bus Operator</b>  | <b>Depot Address</b>   | <b>Bus Routes Operated</b>  |
|--|--|---|
| Arriva the Shires Limited  | Lincoln Road, Cressex Business Park, High Wycombe, HP12 3RH      | 800, 850  |
| First Beeline Buses Limited                                      | Empress Road, Southampton, SO14 0JW                              | RailAir RA1   |
| Going Forward Buses CIC  | 17 Elvendon Road, Goring, Reading, RG8 0EA                       | 146/148   |
| Horseman Coaches   | 2 Acre Road, Reading, RG2 0SU                                    | 153, 154<br>244, W983 'open door' school bus routes   |
| Reading Transport Limited (trading as Reading Buses)             | Great Knollys Street, Reading, RG1 7H                            | Approximately 37 local bus routes<br>Park and Ride routes: 500, 600<br>12 'open door' school bus routes |
| Stewarts Coaches Limited (a subsidiary of National Express)      | Headley Park Eight, Headley Road East, Woodley, Reading, RG5 4SA | Thames Valley Park shuttle  |
| Thames Travel (Wallingford) Limited                              | Cowley House, Watlington Road, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 6GA           | 143<br>X39, X40   |
| The Oxford Bus Company (both subsidiaries of the Go-Ahead Group) |  |   |

|   |  |                                   |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Thames Valley Buses Limited (a subsidiary of Reading Transport Ltd) | 22 Ivanhoe Road, Hogwood Industrial Estate, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4QQ | 127, 128, 129                     |
| Whites Coaches Limited  | Unit 148, Culham No 1 Site, Station Road, Culham, Abingdon, OX14 3DA           | 145C 'open door' school bus route |

## 2.7 OPERATOR VEHICLES

Reading Buses has invested in low carbon double deck buses, with 66 compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles and 4 diesel-electric vehicles currently part of the overall fleet. They have also taken the first step to zero carbon, again with double deck buses in the form of a converted battery electric vehicle and the company has trialled a new battery electric vehicle. This has provided the experience and confidence needed to continue the transition to full electric in the future.

Other local bus operators do not yet use low or zero carbon buses in Reading, however Arriva and Thames Travel/The Oxford Bus Company (part of Go-Ahead Group) have both made corporate commitments to transition to zero carbon vehicles.

## 2.8 FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Council provides financial support for the provision of bus services through a variety of mechanisms, including:

- Significant financial support historically to pump-prime comprehensive bus services on the south Reading A33 growth corridor, both through Council revenue and securing private investment from business parks. This has supported the delivery of commercial and residential developments on the corridor in line with the Local Plan allocations. This model of initially pump-priming services to build up demand to enable them to become operated commercially is one we would like to replicate through this strategy.
- Provision of the statutory English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) through reimbursements to all registered local bus operators. This includes enhanced discretionary free travel to enable 24/7 pass use by disabled person pass holders as well as Companion Passes. The total cost of the scheme is approximately £4,300,000 per annum.
- Pump-priming the establishment of the Buzz 42 local bus service running from the Kenavon Drive major housing development location to the town centre and Rivermead Leisure Centre. This financial support of approximately £80,000 per annum is helping to enable the delivery of housing, leisure and educational developments in and around the town centre.
- Financial support for the provisions of 'dial-a-ride' community transport services for residents with reduced mobility throughout the borough, alongside adult social care transport provision, of approximately £450,000 per annum.
- Led delivery of the Mere oak and Winnersh Triangle park and ride facilities, which are managed jointly with Wokingham Borough Council. Mere oak is

maintained and operated by Reading, at a cost of approximately £70,000 per annum.

- Led implementation of a programme of Quality Bus Corridors (QBCs) throughout the urban area in partnership with operators and neighbouring local authorities. This included investment in bus priority measures, infrastructure, high-spec vehicles and a comprehensive re-branding of the network, leading to substantial increases in patronage. Again, this model is one we would like to replicate through bringing local services up to ‘Superbus’ standards through the delivery of this strategy.
- Currently leading the implementation of the South Reading BRT scheme and a programme of bus priority measures. This supports bus services by achieving journey time savings and reliability improvements, thereby improving operational efficiencies and reducing the need for ongoing financial support for individual services.

## 2.9 FARES AND TICKETING

The typical adult fares on buses that operate from Reading are shown in Figure 2-11, including prices for an adult single, return and weekly ticket. This demonstrates that bus travel in Reading is generally very good value in comparison to the national average.

**Figure 2-11: Bus Fares in Reading**

| <b>Ticket Type</b>  | <b>Reading Borough<br/>(on Reading<br/>based services)</b> | <b>National Average<br/>(2019)</b> | <b>% Difference from<br/>National Average</b> |
|---------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Adult single        | £2   | £2.48                              | -24%  |
| Adult day ticket    | £4   | £5.21                              | -30%  |
| Adult weekly ticket | £16  | £18.03                             | -13%  |

The fare offers available in Reading are shown at Figure 2-12, they differ between operators which can lead to confusion for passengers.

There are a variety of different payment systems currently available on services on Reading, as shown at Figure 2-13. The following bus operators accept contactless payment with the passenger ‘touching in’ and ‘touching out’ so they do not need to specify what ticket they wish to purchase e.g. how far they are travelling or whether they are making a return journey:

- Thames Travel//The Oxford Bus Company – only a day ticket is offered by automatic capping of the amount paid.

The following bus operators accept contactless payment and the passenger must tell the driver what ticket they wish to purchase, e.g. a return or day ticket:

- Arriva



- Reading Buses – including the 60- minute bus-to-bus transfer ticket, requested when boarding the first bus
- Thames Travel/The Oxford Bus Company
- Thames Valley Buses

**Figure 2-12: Fare Offers by Operator**

| <b>Fare Offer</b>                    | <b>Under 16s</b> | <b>Under 18</b> | <b>Job Seeker</b> | <b>Group Fares</b> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Arriva                               | ✓                |                 |                   | ✓                  |
| Reading Buses                        | ✓                | ✓               | ✓                 | ✓                  |
| Thames Travel/The Oxford Bus Company | ✓                |                 |                   | ✓                  |
| Thames Valley Buses                  | ✓                | ✓               |                   | ✓                  |

**Figure 2-13: Payment Options by Operator**

| <b>Payment Option</b>                | <b>Cash Fares</b> | <b>Contactless Payment</b> | <b>Mobile Payment</b> | <b>Smart Card</b> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Arriva                               | ✓                 | ✓                          | ✓                     |                   |
| Reading Buses                        | ✓                 | ✓                          | ✓                     | ✓                 |
| Thames Travel/The Oxford Bus Company | ✓                 | ✓                          | ✓                     | ✓                 |
| Thames Valley Buses                  | ✓                 | ✓                          | ✓                     | ✓                 |

- Going Forward Buses accept cash, credit card and mobile payments on most of their services

The following do not accept card payment:

- Horseman Coaches
- Whites Coaches

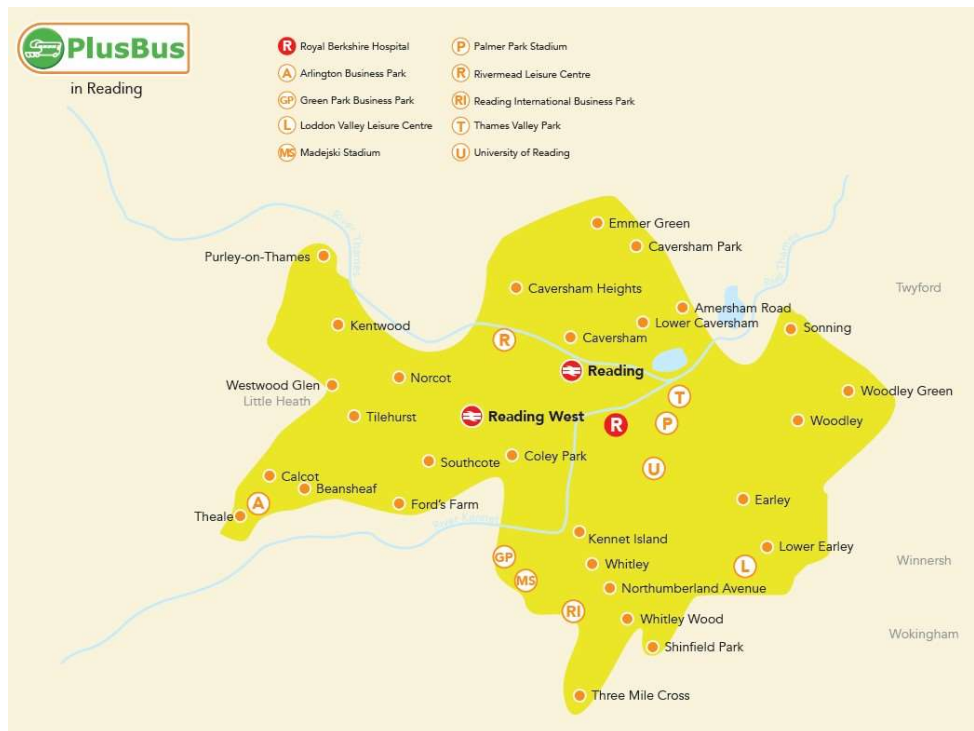
Note that although Reading Buses and Thames Valley Buses are both owned by Reading Buses, the validity of some of their tickets is currently separate. Work on aligning the fares and zones was suspended due to restrictions on fares changes as part of the bus recovery grant funding made available to operators by Government. It is anticipated that this work will be completed shortly.

With regards to multi-modal ticketing, the Reading PlusBus train and bus integrated ticket covers a wide area as shown at Figure 2-14, including railway stations at:

- Reading Station
- Reading West Station and Theale Station on the line towards Newbury
- Tilehurst Station on the line towards Didcot
- Earley Station on the line towards Wokingham

Use of this multi-modal ticket was (pre the pandemic) amongst the highest in the country. We would like to build on this by working with the rail industry to enable purchase of PlusBus tickets without the need to visit a rail station.

**Figure 2-14: PlusBus Validity Area in Reading**



## 2.10 BUS STOPS

There are 605 bus stops in Reading borough, which equates to 15 bus stops per sq.km. With a population of approximately 161,780, there is a bus stop for every 267 residents. Also, 100 of the most heavily used bus stops are equipped with Real-Time Passenger Information (RTPI) displays.

## 2.11 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION & CONSULTATION

A thorough understanding of the views and feedback from both existing, and potential new, bus passengers is vital to ensure the service enhancements delivered through this strategy meet customer's requirements and expectations; and ultimately result in more people choosing to use the bus as a regular way to travel around the borough.

The results of consultations and engagement exercises with residents, visitors, local businesses and other key stakeholders (including the University of Reading and the Department for Work and Pensions, who have a significant local job centre in Reading) have informed development of this strategy, alongside an extensive amount of local information relating to passenger satisfaction levels. A summary of the key findings from this work is summarised in the following paragraphs.

### Sustainable Travel Public Opinion Engagement Exercise

We have undertaken extensive engagement exercises and consultations over the past couple of years to understand public attitudes towards sustainable travel choices in Reading. This has been used to inform development of our emerging LTP

and its sub-strategies, including directly influencing the proposals contained within this strategy.

This engagement has provided valuable feedback regarding public attitudes in Reading towards the provision of local bus services. We received nearly 3,000 responses which overall demonstrated a strong support for public transport services. There was strong support for enhancing the bus network by providing better, easier to use and more frequent services that connect to key places. There was also support for using smart technology to integrate ticketing systems, making routes faster and more reliable and providing access for all.

The following initiatives were considered to be the most effective to improve bus services, from the results of the public opinion engagement exercise:

- 94% support to extend the network with more frequent services to workplaces, schools and isolated areas.
- 93% support to make public transport easier to use with transferable tickets and joined up timetables.
- 93% support to make journeys faster and more reliable.
- 89% support to make public transport more accessible to everyone.
- 83% supported delivery of a comprehensive park and ride network to reduce cars on the road.
- 82% support for dedicated space and priority for sustainable transport.
- 75% supported the reallocation of road space for sustainable modes of transport, including buses.

Overall, these extremely encouraging results demonstrate the potential to achieve substantial increases in bus usage and to secure public support, which therefore enhances the deliverability, of proposals to improve bus services in Reading. A key objective of this strategy is to attract new bus users, therefore the responses from car drivers when asked what they thought could be done to encourage people to make more journeys on public transport were especially valuable to help achieve this mode shift. The majority of drivers who answered believe improved public transport options would encourage them to change how they travel, with specific requests including more frequent, faster and more reliable services; a wider catchment area of bus routes and cheaper bus fares.

#### National Highways & Transport Network Public Satisfaction Survey

The Council participates in the annual National Highways & Transport Network (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey which is undertaken by Ipsos MORI. The latest available results are from the survey undertaken in June 2020, which was sent to 3,600 households across the borough. In total, 777 members of the public responded to this survey, including 179 on-line, which represents an overall response rate of 21.6% in the borough.

Overall the results from this survey are very positive, as shown at Figure 2-15. They demonstrate a high level of satisfaction in the majority of areas applicable to local bus services, with Reading scoring above the national average for every indicator. Areas where we score particularly well include overall level of satisfaction with local

bus services, frequency of bus services, overall level of satisfaction with public transport information, information about accessible buses, the number of bus stops and the state of bus stops.

Whilst these results are encouraging, the survey also provides valuable information on key areas that could be improved by interventions through this strategy, with the objective being to both retain existing but also attract new passengers onto buses.

Areas that scored lowest, and therefore offer potential for improvement, include improving bus services to arrive on time, the quality and cleanliness of buses, the reliability of electronic display information and personal safety on buses and at bus stops. These are key areas to be considered further as part of this strategy.

**Figure 2-15: NHT Public Satisfaction Survey – Summary Results 2020**

| Indicator                                     | Reading Score | NHT Average | Variance    | NHT Rank |
|---|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| <b>Local bus services (overall)</b>           | <b>74%</b>    | <b>60%</b>  | <b>+14%</b> | <b>4</b> |
| Frequency of bus services                     | 73%           | 60%         | +13%        | 4        |
| Whether buses arrive on time                  | 64%           | 56%         | +8%         | 11       |
| Bus fares                                     | 59%           | 50%         | +9%         | 5        |
| Quality and cleanliness of buses              | 68%           | 63%         | +5%         | 17       |
| Helpfulness of drivers                        | 75%           | 68%         | +7%         | 5        |
| Personal safety on buses                      | 72%           | 68%         | +4%         | 12       |
| <b>Public transport information (overall)</b> | <b>62%</b>    | <b>44%</b>  | <b>+18%</b> | <b>4</b> |
| The amount of information                     | 65%           | 56%         | +9%         | 4        |
| The clarity of information                    | 65%           | 58%         | +7%         | 3        |
| The accuracy of information                   | 65%           | 58%         | +7%         | 4        |
| Ease of finding the right information         | 62%           | 55%         | +7%         | 5        |
| Information about accessible buses            | 61%           | 53%         | +8%         | 2        |
| Information to help people plan journeys      | 67%           | 59%         | +8%         | 3        |
| Reliability of electronic display info        | 59%           | 52%         | +7%         | 12       |
| <b>The number of bus stops</b>                | <b>80%</b>    | <b>70%</b>  | <b>+10%</b> | <b>3</b> |
| The state of bus stops                        | 68%           | 60%         | +8%         | 4        |
| How easy buses are to get on and off          | 80%           | 73%         | +7%         | 3        |
| Personal safety at bus stops                  | 66%           | 63%         | +3%         | 30       |
| Raised kerbs at bus stops                     | 70%           | 66%         | +4%         | 16       |

## Transport Focus Passenger Survey

Reading Buses participate in the annual bus passenger satisfaction survey which is undertaken by Transport Focus. This is a comprehensive survey which provides a substantial amount of valuable information, both for bus operators but also to help shape the development of this strategy.

The survey focuses on a number of key areas including overall journey satisfaction, journey time and punctuality, a range of factors regarding the quality of the passenger's experience on the bus, and satisfaction with the bus driver from the perspective of passengers.

The latest survey was undertaken in autumn 2019 and a summary of the results is provided at Figure 2-16 (on this page and continued overleaf). The results provide a valuable insight into the views of different groups of the population, including whether the passenger was paying a fare or using a free pass, age ranges, whether the passenger was commuting or not, and passengers with a disability.

In terms of overall journey satisfaction, the views of passengers in each individual group are very positive and overall 92% are either very or fairly satisfied. The lowest level was people aged 16-34, however this is still at 88% overall satisfaction with the journey.

**Figure 2-16: Transport Focus Passenger Survey - Reading Buses Results 2019**

| <b>Transport Focus Bus Passenger Survey (Autumn 2019)</b> | <b>All Satisfied</b> | <b>Very Satisfied</b> | <b>Fairly Satisfied</b> | <b>Neither / Nor</b> | <b>All Dissatisfied</b> |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Overall journey satisfaction</b>                       |                      |                       |                         |                      |                         |
| All passengers  | 92                   | 53                    | 38                      | 7                    | 2                       |
| Fare-paying passengers                                    | 91                   | 50                    | 41                      | 8                    | 1                       |
| Free pass holders   | 94                   | 62                    | 31                      | 4                    | 2                       |
| Aged 16 to 34   | 88                   | 46                    | 42                      | 10                   | 2                       |
| Aged 35 to 59   | 93                   | 50                    | 43                      | 5                    | 1                       |
| Passengers commuting                                      | 93                   | 52                    | 41                      | 5                    | 2                       |
| Passengers not commuting                                  | 91                   | 54                    | 37                      | 8                    | 1                       |
| Passengers with a disability                              | 90                   | 56                    | 34                      | 7                    | 2                       |
| <b>Value for money</b>                                    |                      |                       |                         |                      |                         |
| All fare-paying passengers                                | 67                   | 34                    | 33                      | 18                   | 15                      |
| Aged 16 to 34   | 61                   | 33                    | 28                      | 19                   | 20                      |

|                          |    |    |    |    |    |
|--------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| Aged 35 to 59            | 74 | 33 | 41 | 17 | 9  |
| Passengers commuting     | 65 | 34 | 31 | 18 | 17 |
| Passengers not commuting | 71 | 34 | 37 | 16 | 12 |

Levels of passenger satisfaction in relation to value for money are significantly lower than overall satisfaction levels, indicating an area to be explored within the proposals for improvement in this EP Plan / BSIP. Again, people aged 16-34 had the lowest satisfaction level at 61%, with people aged 35-59 the highest at 74%.

Levels of satisfaction with punctuality and time waiting for the bus again scored highly, with 78% and 75% respectively. However, they did also receive a degree of dissatisfaction at 12% and 11% and therefore again are areas to explore for improvement. When considering the time of the journey on the bus, this received a higher level of passenger satisfaction at 86% from all responses.

Other results that received a high level of passenger satisfaction included information and the cleanliness and condition of the outside of the bus; however, the level of information provided inside the bus was a lower score of 76%. Overall, this survey provides an extremely valuable set of information to inform the development of this strategy.

**Figure 2-16: Transport Focus Passenger Survey - Reading Buses Results 2019 (cont)**

| <b>Transport Focus Bus Passenger Survey (Autumn 2019)</b> | <b>All Satisfied</b> | <b>Very Satisfied</b> | <b>Fairly Satisfied</b> | <b>Neither / Nor</b> | <b>All Dissatisfied</b> |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Punctuality and time waiting for the bus</b>           |                      |                       |                         |                      |                         |
| Punctuality of the bus                                    | 78                   | 51                    | 27                      | 11                   | 12                      |
| The length of time waited                                 | 75                   | 47                    | 28                      | 13                   | 11                      |
| <b>On-bus journey time</b>                                |                      |                       |                         |                      |                         |
| Time journey on the bus took                              | 86                   | 53                    | 33                      | 11                   | 4                       |
| <b>On the bus</b>   |                      |                       |                         |                      |                         |
| Route/destination information on the outside of the bus   | 88                   | 58                    | 29                      | 11                   | 1                       |
| The cleanliness and condition of the outside of the bus   | 86                   | 47                    | 38                      | 12                   | 3                       |
| The ease of getting onto the bus                          | 94                   | 65                    | 29                      | 5                    | 1                       |



|  |    |    |    |    |   |
|--|----|----|----|----|---|
| The length of time it took to board                    | 91 | 64 | 27 | 6  | 3 |
| The cleanliness and condition of the inside of the bus | 84 | 38 | 46 | 10 | 6 |
| The information provided inside the bus                | 76 | 43 | 34 | 20 | 3 |
| Your personal security whilst on the bus               | 89 | 54 | 35 | 10 | 0 |
| Ease of getting off the bus                            | 92 | 57 | 35 | 5  | 2 |

## 2.12 JOURNEY TIME RELIABILITY & EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

We have provided substantial investment in infrastructure schemes to support bus services in recent years. Various infrastructure measures have either recently been implemented or are currently in the pipeline to be delivered, including:

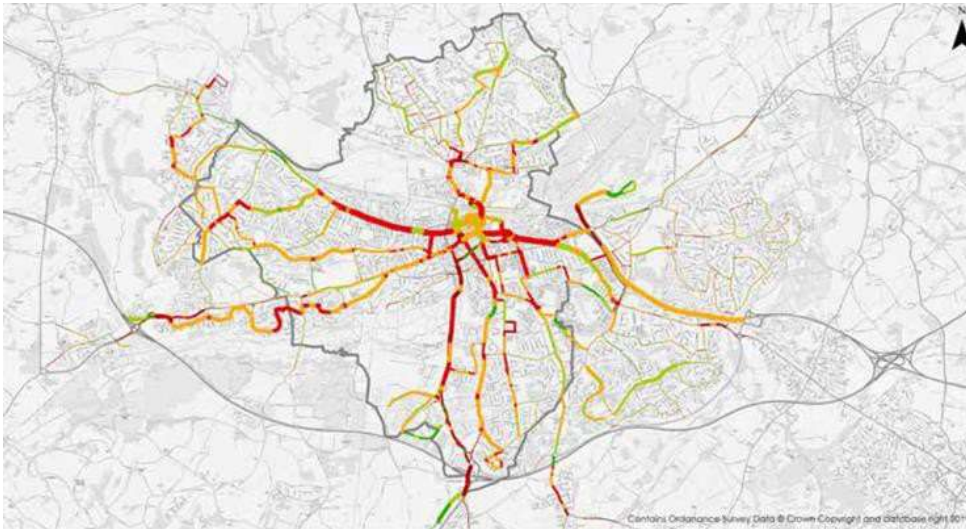
- Bus Priority Measures: A rolling delivery programme of bus priority measures including bus lanes (over 11,000m), bus gates (currently seven within the borough) and bus priority at signalled junctions.
- Bus Stop Infrastructure: Provision of improved bus stop infrastructure including new shelters, accessibility improvements including raised kerbs, and Real-Time Passenger Information (RTPI) displays at the busiest bus stops, delivered as part of the wider set of improvement to bus services through the QBC approach.
- Mere oak Park and Ride: The facility, just south of Reading and the M4 Junction 11 in Wokingham Borough, opened in 2015 and is served by regular bus routes, also benefitting from the South Reading BRT corridor improvements.
- Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride: This facility to the east of Reading in Wokingham Borough, opened in 2015 and is currently being expanded from 400 spaces to around 500 spaces.
- South Reading Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor: South Reading BRT involves a series of bus priorities measures on the A33 between Reading town centre and the Mere oak P&R facility to the south of the M4. There still remain significant sections along the A33, particularly northbound towards the town centre, where future phases of the BRT route would deliver further bus priority.
- Red Route: The 'no stopping' restrictions were introduced in 2017 to reduce delays to Route 17 and other bus routes on this corridor. This was the first Red Route to be delivered outside of London.
- In addition, Thames Valley Park Park and Ride facility to the northeast of Reading in Wokingham Borough was built in 2020 but is not yet served by buses.

## 2.13 TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Despite the investment in bus priority infrastructure to date, Reading suffers from traffic congestion (particularly during the AM and PM peak periods) and this has an

adverse impact on the operation of bus services where no priority measures currently exist. Figure 2-17 and Figure 2-18 demonstrate how congestion can significantly add to bus journey times on most of the bus corridors at peak times compared with evenings when traffic is lower. The most adversely affected are generally those corridors with little bus priority available and increases of 100% (i.e. doubling of journey time) are noticeable. Also significantly affected are corridors with 'out of town' commuter traffic flows leading to/from motorway junctions. This effect can be seen on the East corridor despite some lengths of bus priority (due to the pinch point effect of London Road east of Cemetery Junction) and the South West corridor which has significantly less bus priority infrastructure.

**Figure 2-17: Bus Frequency and Highway Congestion (PM Peak)**



However, on the A33 BRT corridor which should be badly affected as it leads directly to Junction 11, the impact of the dedicated bus lanes already provided can clearly be seen with only small increase in peak journey times. In comparison, the lack of bus priority on the north corridor can be seen in the greatly extended bus journey times at peak times compared with evening journey times.

**Figure 2-18: Variation in Journey Times by Bus Corridor**

| Bus Corridor        | Route(s) | Direction       | Destination                   | Eve Journey Time (Mins) | Peak Journey Time (Mins) | Variation (Mins) | Extended Journey (%) |
|---------------------|----------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| East Corridor       | 13/14    | Eastbound       | To Woodley (The Drive)        | 07:00                   | 11:00                    | 04:00            | 57%                  |
| East Corridor       | 13/14    | Westbound       | The Drive to Reading Station  | 08:00                   | 13:00                    | 05:00            | 63%                  |
| South East Corridor | 21       | South-Eastbound | To Lower Earley (Harcourt Dr) | 13:00                   | 21:00                    | 08:00            | 62%                  |

|                             |     |                 |                                   |       |       |       |      |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| South East Corridor         | 21  | North-Westbound | Harcourt Dr to Central Reading    | 15:00 | 22:00 | 07:00 | 47%  |
| South Corridor              | 6   | Southbound      | To Whitley Wood                   | 19:00 | 23:00 | 04:00 | 21%  |
| South Corridor              | 6   | Northbound      | Whitley Wood to Central Reading   | 15:00 | 21:00 | 05:00 | 33%  |
| South BRT Corridor          | 600 | Southbound      | To Mere oak P&R                   | 15:00 | 18:00 | 03:00 | 20%  |
| South BRT Corridor          | 600 | Northbound      | Mere oak P&R to Central Reading   | 16:00 | 17:00 | 01:00 | 6%   |
| South West Corridor         | 1   | South Westbound | To Greenwood Road                 | 15:00 | 27:00 | 12:00 | 80%  |
| South West Corridor         | 1   | North Eastbound | Greenwood Road to Reading Station | 12:00 | 25:00 | 13:00 | 108% |
| West (Meadway) Corridor     | 33  | Westbound       | To Tilehurst Triangle             | 19:00 | 28:00 | 9:00  | 47%  |
| West (Meadway) Corridor     | 33  | Eastbound       | Triangle to Reading Station       | 17:00 | 28:00 | 11:00 | 65%  |
| West (Oxford Road) Corridor | 17  | Westbound       | To Tilehurst (Water Tower)        | 17:00 | 24:00 | 7:00  | 41%  |
| West (Oxford Road) Corridor | 17  | Eastbound       | Tilehurst to Central Reading      | 16:00 | 25:00 | 9:00  | 56%  |
| North Corridor              | 25  | Northbound      | To Emmer Green Pond               | 09:00 | 17:00 | 08:00 | 89%  |
| North Corridor              | 25  | Southbound      | Emmer Green to Central Reading    | 10:00 | 20:00 | 10:00 | 100% |

In conclusion, if the beneficial effects of bus lane provision seen on the South BRT corridor were extended to other corridors to the same degree, significant savings in journey times at peak periods would occur. This would provide quicker journeys for passengers making bus travel more attractive and would make the bus route operation more efficient allowing greater frequency of service to be provided with the current level of resource. An increase in frequency would also make the bus service more attractive.

## **2.14 PARKING**

In common with most other towns, the growth of car ownership has created a demand for parking both at or adjacent to people's homes or at destinations such as retail, employment and entertainment. For Reading town centre, the vast majority of parking is off- street either in public car parks provided around the edges of the central area or in private office car parking provision. As the centre of the town is primarily a retail destination there is less office parking provision. Almost no individual retail stores have their own parking in the town centre, however there are major car parks at The Oracle and Broad Street Mall primarily to serve these shopping centres. In addition, multi-story car parks at Queens Road and Q Park Chatham Street serve the central area generally. Reading Station has a large car park intended to provide car access to the extensive rail services available rather than for the town centre itself.

A comparison of size and charges is shown at Figure 2-19, revealing that Reading has a reasonable level of parking charge which makes operation of competitive bus and park and ride services easier. By comparison, an off-peak group ticket for up to 5 people from Mere oak P&R is £7 including parking, a day return with parking for a solo car driver is £4.50. P&R buses give better access to the whole of the town centre compared to any one car park. It has long been recognised that the provision of reasonable parking charges in the central area is a pre-requisite to enabling effective pricing and development of bus and P&R services.

Out of the central area, extensive free on street parking exists on many roads although dense areas of residential housing are subject to resident's parking schemes. Many main roads are double yellow lined to prevent parking from obstructing bus services along main routes and corridors. Development of out of town retail parks and out of town business parks around the Reading area means that there is great provision of parking for drivers at the destination end of their journeys. However, recent and planned works on the South Reading BRT route on the A33 has included providing bus stops that are adjacent or close to the out of town retail parks to provide a choice and encourage bus usages to these destinations. Overall, future parking provision and charging regimes does remain a key consideration in relation to encouraging greater uses of buses in Reading.

## **2.15 PENDING FUNDING BIDS**

The Council and its partners have recently submitted the following bids, which if funded would further support bus services in Reading:

- South Reading BRT Phase 5 & 6: Bid submitted to TVB LEP for the next phases of BRT works on the A33 corridor including further bus lanes and traffic signal priority. The scheme was ranked the 2nd highest priority strategic transport scheme in Berkshire by the Berkshire Local Transport Body, however at this stage funding for future Local Growth Fund (LGF) rounds has not been confirmed.

**Figure 2-19: Reading Town Centre Car Park Charges**

| <b>Car Park</b>   | <b>Spaces</b> | <b>Charge for 1 Hour</b> | <b>Charge for 4 Hours</b> | <b>Charge for 8 Hours</b> |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| The Oracle        | 1,611         | £1.70                    | £8.00                     | £15.00                    |
| Broad Street Mall | 720           | £1.60                    | £8.10                     | £12.20                    |
| Queens Road       | 700           | £2.30                    | £8.90                     | £16.70                    |
| Q Park Chatham St | 586           | £1.70                    | £6.80                     | £13.60                    |
| Reading Station   | 1,600         | £4.00                    | £12.00                    | £21.00                    |

- Enhancing the Connection: Bid submitted by Reading Buses in partnership with the Council to TVB LEP to further improve the RTP1 system, including bus stop infrastructure. This scheme has been recognised by TVB LEP as a fully scalable project for when future funding becomes available, however at this stage funding for future LGF rounds has not been confirmed.
- Tilehurst Station Upgrade: Bid submitted to TVB LEP in partnership with Great Western Railway (GWR), to improve interchange and access arrangements including for buses, cyclists and pedestrians. These works would complement Network Rail accessibility enhancements, however at this stage funding for future LGF rounds has not been confirmed.
- In addition, the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) bid submitted by the Council in partnership with Wokingham Borough Council, West Berkshire Council and Reading Buses was recently not selected by the Government for funding. The proposal was for a four-year rolling programme to introduce zero-emission battery electric buses on key routes in the wider urban area, alongside the charging infrastructure needed both for this initial programme and to support further vehicle replacements over time. This programme would have acted as a catalyst to transform the bus fleet in all three local authority areas and we remain keen to secure funding in the future for this important initiative to support our wider decarbonisation objectives.

## **2.16 PROPOSED INFRASTRUCTURE**

As set out in our emerging LTP4, we have ambitious plans to continue investing in infrastructure schemes to enhance public transport services in Reading, including:

- A network of Quality Bus Corridors (QBCs) on each of the main bus corridors in Reading, taking a holistic approach to enhancements including service levels, vehicles, bus stop infrastructure and information provision.
- A cordon of park & ride facilities in key locations around the urban area, intercepting car journeys before they enter the heavily populated and congested urban road network.
- A series of BRT corridors providing fast, direct services between key destinations including Reading town centre, new residential and commercial developments, and P&R facilities.

- Measures to support and promote the use of enhanced community transport and demand responsive transport services, including the development of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) platforms.

In addition, we recognise the importance of managing demand alongside implementing high-quality alternatives to achieve a step change in sustainable travel, therefore the Council is investigating the feasibility of demand management measures, such as a Clean Air Zone, as part of the emerging LTP4 strategy.

## **2.17 SUMMARY OF KEY BARRIERS, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES**

This section has provided a detailed analysis of the current bus offer to passengers in Reading. Patronage levels were amongst the highest in the country (pre-pandemic) and the town benefits from a comprehensive network which is split into eight main corridors. Current service frequencies and accessibility to key destinations is generally good, particularly to and from Reading town centre. The level of customer satisfaction with existing services is also generally high.

However, the analysis has highlighted a number of key challenges and opportunities for the future of bus travel in Reading, which are summarised below:

- **Impact of the Covid Pandemic & Economic Recovery:** The immediate challenge is to build back passenger numbers following the impact of the pandemic. The bus network in Reading was previously very successful at attracting fare paying passengers commuting to offices around Reading, particularly in the town centre and business parks within the wider urban area. It is possible that travel behaviours may change which presents an opportunity to recast the bus network accordingly, for instance through providing more direct bus services between residential areas and key employment areas. This will ensure that the local bus network meets the changing needs and travel patterns of the borough's residents and workforce.
- **Impact of Traffic Congestion on Bus Services:** Traffic levels are returning to the previous levels prior to the pandemic which had resulting in peak period congestion in line with commuting patterns, however it is possible that travel behaviours may change with a greater emphasis on school run car commuting delaying bus services. This presents an opportunity to free up bus services from the delay and impacts of traffic congestion through the implementation of new bus priority measures and infrastructure to speed up bus journey times and provide a more attractive travel choice.
- **Reducing Inequalities:** There are levels of social inequality within the borough and travel inequalities in the connectivity between some suburban residential areas and key destinations not located in the town centre. This provides an opportunity to provide more direct bus services from residential areas, particularly those with higher levels of social inequality, to provide affordable transport choices and access to employment and services.
- **Decarbonisation and Air Quality:** There are pockets of poor air quality as a result of traffic congestion and we have an ambition for Reading to become net carbon zero by 2030. This provides an opportunity through enhancing bus services to attract more passengers, alongside investing in electric buses.

- Future Growth: There are major new residential developments planned, particularly outside of the borough, therefore enhanced services will be crucial to enable sustainable development to take place both within the borough and wider area.

### 3 DELIVERY ACTION PLAN

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This section sets out the proposals and actions which will collectively deliver the overall vision to transform bus services in Reading. For each proposal, individual actions have been identified to contribute towards the objective, alongside an analysis of the existing situation which the proposal seeks to enhance. The proposals have been established as key elements of the overall strategy, which collectively will deliver a step-change in the provision of bus services.

The proposals have been aligned with the key objectives of the National Bus Strategy, including:

- Intensive service and investment on key corridors and routes that are easier to understand.
- More demand-responsive services and 'socially necessary' transport.
- Significant increases in bus priority.
- Longer term transformation of networks through Bus Rapid Transit and other measures.
- Service patterns integrated with other modes.
- Seamless, integrated local ticketing between operators and across all types of transport.
- Lower and simpler fares.
- The local bus network presented as a single system that works together with clear passenger information.
- Modern buses and decarbonisation.
- Bus services that are safe and perceived to be safe by all.
- Giving bus passengers more of a voice and a say.

In addition, a further local objective has been identified to enhance bus access and facilities within Reading town centre. This is particularly important locally to support a sustainable economic recovery as part of our wider objectives to rejuvenate the town centre, alongside supporting the delivery of major housing, leisure and educational developments in and around the town centre.

The delivery of the action plan set out below is subject to the availability of funding. Each of the individual elements of the action plan have been developed with the view to being financially sustainable in the medium-term, however in some instances this will require capital funding for the delivery of actions such as bus priority measures which will deliver operational efficiencies, alongside revenue funding to pump-prime service enhancements to enable a passenger base to be established and embed bus travel choices in the short-term. This approach will provide time for the priority measures to be implemented and passenger numbers to grow, with the view to enabling services to be run commercially after this initial period. The proposals and actions have been developed by the Council working in partnership with local operators and taking account of feedback from passengers and other key stakeholders.



**Figure 3-1: Delivery Action Plan**

| Proposal   | Existing Situation   | Action   | Timeframe                           | Key Partners   |
|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| NBS Theme: Make improvements to bus services and planning  |  |  |                                     |  |
| <i>NBS Objective: More frequent and reliable services</i>  |  |  |                                     |  |
| <p>Proposal (A):<br/>Review service frequency</p> <p>Review service frequency to provide a 'turn up and go' frequency bus service on Reading's eight main bus corridors from the early morning through to late evening. To serve both daytime bus users, shift workers and those accessing the night-time economy.</p> | <p>Reading has the second highest level of local bus travel in England per head of population outside of London, providing the passenger volumes needed to sustain a strong scheduled local bus network.</p> <p>There is already a high frequency 'turn up and go' service on some corridors during the day, however journey times and reliability can be adversely affected by traffic congestion. There is also a good level of service at weekends, on both Saturdays and Sundays. There is less service during the evenings and we want to bring evening services to the standard specified in the National Bus Strategy.</p> <p>Reading's bus services are most frequent during office hours. Shift workers, for example at out-of-town warehousing or industrial workplaces or Royal Berkshire Hospital, must commute on less frequent bus services.</p> <p>Improving the speed and frequency of bus services on each corridor at all times will be enabled by</p> | (A1) Work with operators on each key corridor to develop detailed proposals to improve service frequency through the Enhanced Partnership arrangements.  | From Apr 2022                       | <p>Reading Borough Council</p> <p>Local Bus Operators</p> <p>Wokingham Borough Council</p> <p>West Berkshire Borough Council</p> |
|  |  | (A2) Adapting the network to embed future passenger growth by supporting socially and economically necessary services to enable longer-term bus travel behaviours to become a natural choice in Reading. | From Apr 22<br>*Subject to funding  | <p>Royal Berkshire Hospital</p> <p>The University of Reading</p>   |
|  |  | (A3) Improved frequency to every 7-8 minutes on key route between Reading Town Centre and Tilehurst.   | From Sept 22<br>*Subject to funding |  |
|  |  | (A4) Improved frequency to every 8 minutes on key route between Reading Town Centre and Whitley.   | From Sept 22<br>*Subject to funding |  |

| Proposal  | Existing Situation  | Action   | Timeframe                          | Key Partners   |
|---|---|--|------------------------------------|--|
|   | installing further bus priority measures. This will allow bus schedules to take less time enabling buses journey times to be quicker, more frequent and more reliable.  | (A5) Improved frequency to every 10 minutes on key route between Reading Town Centre and Southcote and Calcot.             | From Apr 23<br>*Subject to funding |  |
|   |   | (A6) Introduction of Sunday service for Green Park.  | From Apr 23<br>*Subject to funding |  |
|   |   | (A7) Improved frequency of services to redeveloped Rivermead Leisure Centre and new secondary school to residential areas. | From Apr 23<br>*Subject to funding |  |
|   |   | (A8) Introduce new Park and Ride service for Royal Berkshire Hospital and University of Reading.                           | From Apr 24<br>*Subject to funding |  |
| Proposal (B):<br>Increase bus priority measures<br><br>Develop detailed plans for a programme of new bus priority measures at key pinch points on the | Reading has a strong track record of delivering bus priority measures, supported by bus lane enforcement. We are developing detailed plans to continue investing in bus priority on our eight main bus corridors to improve bus speed, reliability and punctuality and to enable increases in frequency of service. | (B1) Develop detailed delivery programme of bus priority measures for all corridors based on level of funding available.   | From Apr 2022                      | Reading Borough Council<br><br>Wokingham Borough Council<br><br>West Berkshire Borough Council |
|   |   | (B2) Implement outbound bus lane on A329 Oxford Road between Eaton Place and George Street                                 | From Apr 23<br>*Subject to funding |  |

| <b>Proposal</b>   | <b>Existing Situation</b>   | <b>Action</b>   | <b>Timeframe</b>                    | <b>Key Partners</b>  |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| <p>network, including new bus lanes and traffic signal priority to complement measures already delivered.</p> <p>These will provide faster and more reliable journey times, alongside greater enforcement of red routes and yellow box junctions.</p> | <p>We delivered the first Red Route outside of London for the key east-west corridor covering the entirety of Reading busiest bus route. This has enabled provision of regulated loading and parking facilities to reduce delays to bus services. We are keen to explore options for further Red Routes on key bus corridors, alongside implementing the most effective enforcement regime on the existing route.</p> | benefitting 16 buses per hour.  |                                     | <p>Bracknell Forest Borough Council</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council</p> <p>Local Operators</p> <p>Thames Valley Police</p> |
|   |   | (B3) Implement outbound bus lane on A329 Oxford Road between Pangbourne Street and Norcot Junction benefitting 12 buses per hour. | From Apr 23<br>*Subject to funding  |  |
|   |   | (B4) Implement inbound bus lane on A327 Southampton Street benefitting 16 buses per hour.   | From Sept 23<br>*Subject to funding |  |
|   |   | (B5) Implement inbound bus lane on A4 London Road between borough boundary and Cemetery Junction benefitting 15 buses per hour.   | From Sept 23<br>*Subject to funding |  |
|   |   | (B6) Implement inbound bus lane on A4 London Road between Sidmouth Street and London Street benefitting 17 buses per hour.        | From Apr 24<br>*Subject to funding  |  |
|   |   | (B7) Implement outbound bus lane on A4 Bath Road benefitting 4 buses per hour to avoid traffic congestion                         | From Apr 24<br>*Subject to funding  |  |

| Proposal   | Existing Situation  | Action   | Timeframe                           | Key Partners   |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|
|  |   | towards Burghfield Road.   |                                     |  |
|  |   | (B8) Introduce package of bus signal priority measures at key junctions to complement new bus priority lanes.  | From Apr 24<br>*Subject to funding  |  |
|  |   | (B9) Introduce more effective enforcement of existing Red Route and new enforcement of moving traffic offences at key 'yellow box' junctions, following the transfer of powers from the police to local authorities.                                     | From Sept 23<br>*Subject to funding |  |
| Proposals (C):<br>Increase demand responsive services<br><br>Work with operators to support and improve demand-responsive services to better integrate and fill existing gaps within the mainstream network including directly | The local bus network is currently largely based on fixed routes, timetable services radiating from the town centre to suburban areas of the borough and beyond.<br><br>These services could be improved to better serve vital community facilities and to offer a more demand responsive service, for instance people finishing a shift late in the evening in locations where the schedule bus services are limited.<br><br>Locations that could be better served include the | (C1) We will work with operators to develop increased Demand Responsive Services as flexible extensions of existing routes including to enable more direct journeys from residential areas to workplaces and other destinations outside the town centre. | From Apr 24<br>*Subject to funding  | Reading Borough Council<br><br>Local Operators<br><br>Local Community Transport Providers<br><br>Major Employers<br><br>Royal Berkshire Hospital |

| Proposal   | Existing Situation   | Action  | Timeframe   | Key Partners   |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| connecting residential areas with key destinations through more local and inter-suburban journeys to respond to demand.  | Royal Berkshire Hospital, logistics and distribution centres such as Tesco on the A33 and other areas of major employment outside of the town centre.  |   |   |  |
| <p>Proposal (D): Consideration of bus rapid transport networks</p> <p>Continue to implement the existing South Reading Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme on the A33 corridor between Reading town centre and Mere oak Park and Ride. We will also investigate opportunities to introduce further BRT routes in the Reading urban area working with neighbouring Local Authorities</p> | <p>Our emerging LTP4 sets out a vision of a series of BRT routes in Reading, linking the town centre with key destinations and park &amp; ride facilities.</p> <p>We have commenced implementation of the South Reading BRT scheme in phases through the provision of LGF funding. This BRT route serves key destinations including Kennet Island housing development, Green Park business park, Green Park Village, Madejski Stadium, Campus Reading International and Mere oak P&amp;R facility.</p> <p>To date, we have implemented over 4,500m of BRT route and traffic signal priority at key junctions on the A33. This has enabled reductions in journey time of up to 16% during peak periods through the avoidance of traffic congestion leading to faster and more reliable timetables. Passenger numbers on the BRT</p> | <p>(D1) Deliver phases 5 and 6 of Reading's South Reading BRT scheme to build on the phases introduced to date.</p> | <p>From Apr 23</p> <p>*Subject to funding</p>                                 | <p>Reading Borough Council</p> <p>Local Operators</p> <p>Wokingham Borough Council</p> |
|  | <p>(D2) Develop detailed proposals for the delivery of the full South Reading BRT scheme through future phases.</p>  | <p>From Apr 23</p> <p>*Subject to funding</p>   | <p>West Berkshire Borough Council</p> <p>Bracknell Forest Borough Council</p> |  |
|  | <p>(D3) Work in partnership with neighbouring local authorities to develop plans for further BRT cross-boundary routes linking key destinations in each authority area, including the A3290/A329M to North Wokingham and Bracknell.</p>  | <p>From Apr 24</p> <p>*Subject to funding</p>   |   |  |

| Proposal  | Existing Situation  | Action  | Timeframe                                     | Key Partners  |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|   | services increased from 316,000 in 2010 to 1,187,401 in the year 2019.  |   |   |   |
| <i>NBS Objective: Improvements to planning / integration with other modes</i>   |   |   |   |   |
| <p>Proposal (E): Integrate services with other transport modes</p> <p>Improve bus-rail integration, including the availability of space allocated to buses in the Reading Station area, to improve interchange with National Rail and the Elizabeth Line</p> <p>Expand Park &amp; Ride facilities serving Reading from all directions, including enhanced services to key destinations.</p> | <p>Reading's bus network offers good integration with train services at Reading Station, connecting to many parts of England and Wales, including Elizabeth Line services to central London.</p>  | <p>(E1) Work with Wokingham Borough Council to provide a service between Reading and the new Thames Valley Park P&amp;R site.</p>   | <p>From Apr 22</p>                            | <p>Reading Borough Council</p> <p>Wokingham Borough Council</p> <p>West Berkshire Council</p> |
|   | <p>Connections from Reading Station go to Heathrow Airport by express coach and Gatwick Airport by train. Existing bus priority measures improve bus access to the station, however limited road space around the station is in high demand resulting in congestion.</p>  | <p>(E2) Improve access arrangements and passenger facilities at Mere oak Park and Ride.</p>   | <p>From Apr 23</p> <p>*Subject to funding</p> | <p>Oxfordshire County Council</p> <p>South Oxfordshire District Council</p>                   |
|   | <p>Our Local Plan identifies opportunities to enhance bus-rail integration as sites in close proximity to the station become available for development. Buses offer good integration with trains at Reading West Station and pass close to Tilehurst Station in west Reading. We are currently working with Great Western Railway (GWR) to deliver enhanced</p> | <p>(E3) Work with operators to introduce services serving the new railway station at Reading Green Park.</p>  | <p>From Apr 23</p> <p>*Subject to funding</p> | <p>Local Operators Network Rail</p> <p>Great Western Railway</p>                              |
|   |   | <p>(E4) Work with Network Rail and GWR to improve connectivity between bus and rail services, interchange and access arrangements at Reading West and Tilehurst Stations.</p> | <p>From Apr 23</p> <p>*Subject to funding</p> |   |

| <b>Proposal</b>   | <b>Existing Situation</b>  | <b>Action</b>   | <b>Timeframe</b>   | <b>Key Partners</b>  |
|---|--|---|--|--|
|   | <p>passenger and interchange facilities at Reading West, and we want to explore options to improve integration at Tilehurst Station.</p> <p>Reading is served by existing Park and Ride sites at MereOak and Winnersh Triangle, with a third Park and Ride site, northeast of Reading at Thames Valley Park, which was built in 2020 but which has not yet opened.</p>   | <p>(E5) Work with neighbouring authorities to develop plans for P&amp;R services and associated bus priority infrastructure to Reading from other directions, including the west and the north of Reading.</p> <p>(E6) We will continue to review parking charges in Reading to ensure bus ticket pricing offers a competitive advantage.</p> | <p>From Apr 23</p> <p>*Subject to funding</p> <p>Ongoing</p>     |  |
| <p>Proposal (F): Simplify services</p> <p>Simplify bus routes in Reading, particularly those that extend beyond the boundary to the north and the south. In the south this includes serving Whitley and growing residential developments in Wokingham</p> | <p>The majority of the existing bus network in Reading is well established with consistent routes on each of the key corridors.</p> <p>However, areas to the south of Reading in Wokingham have significant planned residential and commercial developments, including the Thames Valley Science Park and Film Studios, with limited existing bus routes serving these key destinations. New residents are likely to become dependent on car travel, if the bus does not</p> | <p>(F1) Work with operators to simplify and develop services through the Enhanced Partnership arrangements.</p> <p>(F2) Simplification of services in south Reading with areas of employment and serving 'out of town' residential and commercial developments via fast BRT routes in partnership with Wokingham.</p>                         | <p>From Apr 22</p> <p>From Apr 23</p> <p>*Subject to funding</p> | <p>Reading Borough Council</p> <p>Local Operators</p> <p>Wokingham Borough Council</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council</p> <p>South Oxfordshire District Council</p> <p>Thames Valley Science Park</p> |

| <b>Proposal</b>  | <b>Existing Situation</b>  | <b>Action</b>  | <b>Timeframe</b>                              | <b>Key Partners</b>  |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Borough. In the north this includes routes serving Caversham and beyond into south Oxfordshire beyond into south Oxfordshire.</p> | <p>offer an attractive alternative. The existing Leopard-branded group of bus routes serve this area, but they are a complicated group of four bus routes. There are options for simplification, including to take advantage of the bus lanes implemented on the A33 as part of the South Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme.</p> <p>Services to the north of Reading serving Caversham and south Oxfordshire are less comprehensive than other areas of the borough, with multiple operators.</p> <p>Therefore, higher levels of co-ordination and simplification could result in greater patronage leading to potential for increased frequency of services in the future.</p> | <p>(F3) Co-ordination and simplification of north Reading services in partnership with Oxfordshire and existing operators serving this area.</p> | <p>From Apr 23</p> <p>*Subject to funding</p> |  |
| <p>Proposal (G): Review socially necessary services</p> <p>Develop enhanced provision of socially necessary services to ensure</p>   | <p>Reading's bus network serves the town centre well, which has direct routes to most parts of Reading. However, there are gaps for journeys between two locations outside the town centre, for example from residential areas to work places which will require a change of bus in the town centre. More</p>  | <p>(G1) Work with operators to develop plans for socially necessary services through the Enhanced Partnership process.</p>                       | <p>From Apr 22</p>                            | <p>Reading Borough Council</p> <p>Local Operators</p> <p>Wokingham Borough Council</p> |



| <b>Proposal</b>   | <b>Existing Situation</b>   | <b>Action</b>  | <b>Timeframe</b>                           | <b>Key Partners</b>  |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>services are provided to all areas of the borough to improve access to employment, education and leisure opportunities. This includes enabling more direct journeys to workplaces and other destinations outside the town centre, particularly from less socially advantaged areas</p> | <p>direct journeys could be enabled by new bus routes connecting residential areas, particularly those of less social advantage with centres of employment outside the town centre.</p>   | <p>(G2) Introduce more attractive services for areas of social housing, including Coley Park and Lower Caversham.</p>                              | <p>From Apr 23<br/>*Subject to funding</p> | <p>West Berkshire Borough Council</p>  |
|   | <p>Introduction of these new routes will be undertaken in the context of changing travel behaviour as a result of the pandemic. Travel demand from office workers fell sharply and is recovering relatively slowly as more flexible working patterns emerge. Travel demand from areas of higher density residential with lower car ownership and frontline key workers and shift workers in manual or customer facing roles did not fall as sharply and</p> | <p>(G3) Provide more co-ordinated school bus services to connect residential areas directly to schools in other parts of the urban area.</p>       | <p>From Apr 23<br/>*Subject to funding</p> |  |
|   | <p>has recovered faster therefore there is higher demand for these services.</p>  | <p>(G4) Extend route 42 from Rivermead to Tilehurst connecting residential areas to employment, education and leisure facilities.</p>              | <p>From Apr 23<br/>*Subject to funding</p> |  |
| <p>Proposal (H):<br/>Invest in Superbus networks<br/><br/>Invest in local routes within each bus corridor to achieve a Superbus</p>   | <p>We have invested significant levels of funding and resource in the roll-out of Reading's Quality Bus Corridors (QBC) network for routes serving suburban areas of the borough. We want to build on this previous investment to bring the entire bus</p>  | <p>(H1) Develop a comprehensive 'Superbus' programme for improving the bus network in partnership with operators and neighbouring authorities.</p> | <p>By Sept 22<br/>*Subject to funding</p>  | <p>Reading Borough Council<br/><br/>Local Operators<br/><br/>Wokingham Borough Council</p> |

| <b>Proposal</b>  | <b>Existing Situation</b>  | <b>Action</b>  | <b>Timeframe</b>                        | <b>Key Partners</b>  |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| network across the whole of Reading. Building on previous Quality Bus Corridor investment by introducing more bus priority, higher frequencies, reduced  | network within Reading up to the standards of the Government's Superbus concept as set out in the National Bus Strategy.<br><br>One aspect of this includes building on the Council's work in partnership with key local operators and Thames Valley Police to establish a traffic control facility with   | (H2) Deliver 'Superbus' improved infrastructure including the installation of green roof bus shelters across the borough.            | From Sept 22<br><br>*Subject to funding | West Berkshire Council<br><br>Bracknell Forest Borough Council<br><br>Thames Valley Police |
|  |  | (H3) Establish joint traffic control centre with local operators.  | From Apr 23<br><br>*Subject to funding  |  |
| <i>NBS Objective: Improvements to fares and ticketing</i>  |  |  |   |  |
| Proposals (I):<br>Lower fares<br><br>Lower and maintain affordable fares to encourage greater bus use including expanding the provision of discounted bus tickets for teenagers and introduce a flat fare between Reading town centre and University of Reading. | Ticket prices in Reading are in general very reasonable. However, some residential areas, whilst far enough from Reading town centre for bus to be a sensible travel option, are quite short in distance by the standards of a typical bus journey in Reading and this makes some ticket pricing unattractive.<br><br>Lower fares for teenagers up to age 18 are already available commercially without ID or other restrictions on services operated by Reading Buses. We want to ensure that all local buses in Reading offer this facility. | (I1) Work with operators to develop proposals for a consistent, lower fares structure through the Enhanced Partnership arrangements. | From Apr 22<br><br>*Subject to funding  | Reading Borough Council<br><br>Local Operators<br>Reading College<br>University of Reading |
|  |  | (I2) Introducing a flat fare regardless of age between Reading town centre and The University of Reading.                            | From Apr 22<br><br>*Subject to funding  |  |
|  |  | (I3) We will work with all operators to ensure low fares are offered to all teenagers under the age of 18 on all services.           | From Apr 22<br><br>*Subject to funding  |  |

| <b>Proposal</b>  | <b>Existing Situation</b>  | <b>Action</b>   | <b>Timeframe</b>                   | <b>Key Partners</b>  |
|--|--|---|------------------------------------|--|
|  | <p>Most Reading Buses services use a standard flat fare with a short hop option.</p> <p>Day return fares act as all-day rover tickets and carnet, weekly and longer smart cards are available to significantly reduce the cost of journeys for frequent users</p>  | (I4) We will work with local operators on the introduction of 'touch in' and 'touch out' technology to provide a daily capped fare. | From Apr 23<br>*Subject to funding |  |
| Proposals (J):<br>Simplify fares<br><br>Simplify fares and introduce 'touch in' and 'touch out' contactless payment on all local buses in Reading, to enable simpler ticketing such as 'short hop' tickets and daily multi-operator fare capping, without the need for passengers to request these tickets in advance from the driver. | <p>The majority of services in Reading offer a relatively simple fares structure with good availability of choice depending on the nature of ticket required. There are some short hop fares in Reading that are competitively priced but at different levels for different operators and we want to simplify these fares to be consistent across all bus services</p> <p>There are areas in Reading where services operated on different routes or by different operators have a different fare structure for the same journey, causing confusion for passengers.</p> | (J1) Work with operators to develop proposals for a simpler fares structure through the Enhanced Partnership arrangements.          | From Apr 22                        | Reading Borough Council<br><br>Local Operators<br><br>Oxfordshire County Council |
|  |  | (J2) Simplify fares where multi-operators service exist, including in Caversham and on the Oxford Road corridor.                    | From Apr 23<br>*Subject to funding |  |
| Proposal (K):<br>Integrate ticketing between operators and other sustainable   | Reading Buses has significantly the largest presence in Reading, hence passengers waiting at bus stops in most parts of Reading can choose any bus, without concerns   | (K1) Work with operators to agree principles for multi-operator ticketing to be where more than one operator's services are         | From Apr 22                        | Reading Borough Council<br><br>Local Network Rail                                |

| Proposal  | Existing Situation  | Action   | Timeframe  | Key Partners   |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| transport modes.<br>Introduce multi- operator ticketing throughout the borough including in the Caversham, Purley-on-Thames and Twyford areas, so passengers can board the first bus that arrives. Integrate ticketing with other sustainable modes and introduce Mobility as a Service platforms to further encourage travel by sustainable modes. | about ticket validity between operators.<br>However, bus stops in the following areas are served by other operators such as Arriva, Thames Travel/The Oxford Bus Company and Thames Valley Buses, and passengers may have their travel choices restricted by ticket validity between operators:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caversham, north of Reading town centre</li> <li>• Purley-on-Thames, northwest of Reading town centre</li> <li>• Twyford, northeast of Reading in Wokingham Borough</li> </ul> Passengers should not be restricted by operator specific tickets for instance by being able to buy day return tickets on one operator's service and return on another which would enhance the services on these corridors. | available through the Enhanced Partnership arrangements.<br><br>(K2) Develop a 'Smartzone' Scheme (potentially using DfT back-office functionality) to allow weekly and longer-term multi-operator ticketing to be made available.<br><br>(K3) Integrate bus tickets with rail and other transport services such as car share and bike hire. Support the development of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) both within Reading and across the wider Thames Valley area | <br><br>From Apr 23<br>*Subject to funding<br><br>From Apr 24<br>*Subject to funding | Great Western Railway South Western Rail<br><br>Co-Wheels<br><br>Thames Valley Berkshire LEP Operators |
| NBS Theme: Make improvements to bus passenger experience  |   |  |  |  |
| <i>NBS Objective: Higher spec buses</i>   |   |  |  |  |
| Proposal (L):<br>Invest in improved bus specifications.<br><br>Work with all bus operators  | The majority of buses in Reading are generally of a high specification with most having branding and include audio and visual next stop announcements, wifi and usb plug-in   | (L1) We will develop a high specification for buses in Reading with operators through the Enhanced   | From Apr 22  | Reading Borough Council<br><br>Local Operators   |

| <b>Proposal</b>   | <b>Existing Situation</b>   | <b>Action</b>  | <b>Timeframe</b>                       | <b>Key Partners</b>  |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| to agree a high-quality, consistent bus specification standard for passengers on all local buses in Reading including low emissions, full accessibility, passenger facilities and comfort levels, and maintenance and cleaning regime.  | charging facilities. Newer buses operated by Reading Buses also have space for two wheelchair spaces in addition to a buggy space to minimise competing demands from wheelchair users with parents or carers with pushchairs.<br><br>Most buses are cleaned and maintained to a high standard including more recently enhanced internal cleaning, including at times during the day as well as at the depot overnight.  | Partnership arrangements.  |  | Access and Disability Working Group                        |
|   |   | (L2) We will work with operators to implement accessibility improvements to further cater for wheelchair users and for parents and carers with pushchairs. | Ongoing                                |  |
| Proposal (M): Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services<br><br>Support and improve demand-responsive services for people who can't access the scheduled bus network. We want operators to continue to expand and improve services, including investing in new vehicles to reduce emissions and offering a | Reading currently has a good level of dial- a-ride community transport provision which is a vital lifeline for people who are unable to access the scheduled bus network.<br><br>These services have been operating in Reading for 40 years including dial-a-ride services, transport of Adult Social Care and SEN students and a limited football service for Reading FC supporters for home matches, excursions and day trips. These are all accessible for people with restricted mobility who cannot use the widely available mainstream bus services operated in Reading and its surroundings. | (M1) We will continue to fund the provision of community transport dial-a-ride services.   | Ongoing*<br><br>Subject to funding     | Reading Borough Council<br><br>Local operators<br>Readibus |
|   |   | (M2) Invest in zero emission mini buses for dial-a-ride accessible assisted bus services.  | From Apr 23<br><br>*Subject to funding |  |

| Proposal  | Existing Situation  | Action  | Timeframe                           | Key Partners  |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| service to a wider range of passengers.   |   |   |                                     |   |
| <p>Proposal (N):<br/>Protect personal safety of bus passengers</p> <p>Ensure buses and bus stops are provided throughout Reading to a high standard with an environment that feels welcoming, accessible, clean and secure for waiting passengers. Make it easier for passengers to report issues that make bus stops feel less safe, such as faulty lighting, vandalism and littering.</p> | <p>Reading's bus network generally has low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, and we want people using our bus network to feel welcome and safe.</p> <p>Bus stops have been upgraded on many routes with new bus shelters, proper access, real-time information and a clean and welcoming environment. However, there are still some bus stops with inadequate facilities or old bus shelters which need upgrading or replacing. In addition new bus stops need to be provided close to new development including new retail parks and new housing to improve access and make using buses easier and more convenient.</p> <p>Reading Buses drivers are trained to a high standard with a strong ethos on customer service and safety and most Reading buses vehicles are fitted with cctv and radio control system.</p> | (N1) Develop a service specification for bus stop infrastructure throughout Reading.  | By Sept 22                          | <p>Reading Borough Council</p> <p>Local Operators</p> <p>Thames Valley Police</p> <p>Reading UK CIC</p> |
|   |   | (N2) Deliver a running programme of enhancements to bus stops in line with the recommendations from the service specification.        | From Apr 22<br>*Subject to funding  |   |
|   |   | (N3) Establish an online portal for the central reporting of faults or issues with bus shelters or bus infrastructure across Reading. | From Sept 22<br>*Subject to funding |   |

| <b>Proposal</b>   | <b>Existing Situation</b>   | <b>Action</b>  | <b>Timeframe</b>                               | <b>Key Partners</b>  |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Proposal (O):<br/>Improve buses for tourists</p> <p>Support the promotion and expansion of the opportunities offered to travel by bus to events in Reading and to tourists visiting including offering a day bus ticket to tourists and visitors staying overnight at hotels in Reading.</p> | <p>Reading is a growing tourist destination and is also used as a base for visits to other destinations in the Thames Valley such as Henley and Oxford. Recent improvement to Reading's own historical connections have been revealed in the Abbey Quarter as well as other locations across the town.</p>  | <p>(O1) Work with event organisers to expand the provision of bus services serving events to persuade even more visitors to travel sustainably to these events.</p>                      | <p>Ongoing</p>                                 | <p>Reading Borough Council</p> <p>Reading UK CiC</p> <p>Local Operators</p> <p>Local Businesses and Hotels</p> |
|   | <p>We want to promote information provision for bus services with leisure potential such as Thames Travel River- Rapids to Oxford, Arriva services to Henley and Reading Buses services to Newbury. Within Reading tourists and visitors are able to use hop on hop off day tickets for Reading Buses services to all parts of the town. We would want to extend this ticketing to include all operators.</p> | <p>(O2) Work with Reading Football Club to support expansion of the football match day bus provision to encourage even more fans to travel sustainably to and from football matches.</p> | <p>From Sept 22</p> <p>*Subject to funding</p> | <p>Reading Football Club</p> <p>Reading Half Marathon</p> <p>Festival Republic and other event organisers</p>  |
|   | <p>Reading already has extensive bespoke football fan buses running directly from surrounding towns and Reading suburbs as well as park and ride sites and Reading Station. Other events held in Reading each year such as Reading Half Marathon and Reading Festival are also supported with bespoke bus services and park and ride services helping to</p>  | <p>(O3) We will work with the local hotels and operators to introduce a day ticket for tourists and visitors staying overnight in hotels in Reading.</p>                                 | <p>From Apr 23</p> <p>*Subject to funding</p>  |  |

| Proposal   | Existing Situation   | Action   | Timeframe  | Key Partners  |
|--|--|--|--|---|
|  | reduce the numbers of cars accessing these events.   |  |  |   |
| Proposal (P):<br>Invest in decarbonisation<br><br>Introduce zero emission electric vehicles through a rolling programme of vehicle replacements in partnership with operators alongside implementing required vehicle charging infrastructure. | Reading Buses has been a pioneer in making progress towards lowering emissions by introducing bio-certified Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) vehicles (buying bio-gas made from farm waste) and diesel-electric hybrid vehicles.<br><br>The majority of diesel buses operating in Reading are either rated Euro 6 emission standard or have recently been upgraded to Euro 6. However, some vehicles do not meet these standards and there is currently only one experimental fully electric vehicle operating in Reading. | (P1) Rolling programme to introduce zero-emission electric vehicles and the infrastructure needed to support them in partnership with operators.<br><br>(P2) All buses operating in Reading to be zero emission in line with Reading's Climate Emergency objectives. | From Apr 22<br><br>*Subject to funding<br><br>By Apr 2030<br><br>*Subject to funding | Reading Borough Council<br><br>Reading Buses Local Operators<br><br>Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Distribution |
| <i>NBS Objective: Improvements to passenger engagement</i>   |  |  |  |   |
| Proposal (Q):<br>Passenger charter<br><br>Develop and introduce a bus  | All bus operators have customer service teams and customers are able to provide feedback and complaints through a  | (Q1) Develop and introduce a Passenger Charter alongside establishing the Enhanced   | From Apr 22  | Reading Borough Council   |



| <b>Proposal</b>   | <b>Existing Situation</b>  | <b>Action</b>  | <b>Timeframe</b>                    | <b>Key Partners</b>   |
|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| passenger charter to give passengers more of a voice and a say in the future of bus services in Reading, working with operators to put passenger at the centre of bus service improvements.                     | variety of means through a range of channels.<br><br>The Council regularly engages with bus passengers through a range of public forums including the Cleaner Air and Safer Transport Forum, Access and Disability Working Group and the Older Persons working Group. Through the Council's relationship with Reading Buses as a municipal operator feedback received through these channels is used to improve services and address any issues. | Partnership arrangements.  |                                     | Local Operators<br><br>Wokingham Borough Council                                |
|   |  | (Q2) We will work with neighbouring authorities to ensure alignment of our Passenger Charters.   | From Apr 22                         | West Berkshire Borough Council<br>Bracknell Forest Borough Council              |
|   |  | (Q3) Establish a bus user group and bus operator forum.  | By Sept 22<br>*Subject to funding   | Oxfordshire County Council  |
|   |  | (Q4) We will regularly review progress and publication of targets as set out in our EP Plan / BSIP   | Ongoing                             |   |
| Proposal (R):<br>Strengthen network identity<br><br>Work with all operators to co-ordinate branding of all services to strengthen the network identity and promote multi-operator travel within the borough and | Reading Buses has strong branding for each corridor, such as the Purple 17, Yellow 26, Emerald 5/6, Sky Blue 15/16, Leopard and Lion. The route branding has a common house style that passengers recognise as part of a network of high-quality services operated by high specification vehicles by Reading Buses.<br><br>On three corridors, services run from other Thames Valley towns, either using buses branded                           | (R1) Continue to promote a strong network identity for services running in the borough including providing a network map showing all operators services. | Ongoing                             | Reading Borough Council<br><br>Local Operators<br><br>Wokingham Borough Council |
|   |  | (R2) Work with operators and neighbouring authorities to strengthen and co-ordinate identity of wider Thames   | From Sept 22<br>*Subject to funding | West Berkshire Borough Council<br>Bracknell Forest Borough Council              |

| Proposal  | Existing Situation   | Action  | Timeframe   | Key Partners  |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| wider urban area.   | for that national operator (Arriva or Thames Travel) or for the specific route (eg Oxford Bus Company “River Rapids”). Some of these longer out of town routes would be better promoted for Thames Valley travel, for example to Henley, Wallingford or Oxford rather than as part of Reading’s local network. There are also other less frequent routes that do not fit any network identity, such as Oxford Bus Company 143, which could be developed and branded as part of the Reading local network serving that corridor. This may make it easier to promote a multi-operator ticket and improve passenger numbers on marginal routes. | Valley Travel services.   |   | Oxfordshire County Council  |
| Proposal (S):<br>Improve bus information<br><br>Provide up-to-date and accurate bus timetable and fares<br>information to passengers through a variety of channels, including online, apps, information screens, leaflets, at-stop timetables and | There is currently a good level of information provided for bus passengers in Reading, both at stops and through services such as the Reading Buses website and app.<br><br>Real-Time Passenger Information (RTPI) displays are provided at around 100 bus stops and key interchanges for passengers throughout Reading displaying information for most services. However, some of these are legacy displays in need of  | (S1) Review the location of on-street RTPI displays to ensure that information is supplied at the most useful locations such as busy town centre stops and existing and new park and ride and railway stations.<br><br>(S2) Update on-street RTPI displays in order to offer fully accessible information for | By From 22<br><br>*Subject to funding<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>From Apr 23<br><br>*Subject to funding | Reading Borough Council<br><br>Reading Buses<br><br>Other Local Operators<br><br>R2P (RTPI system provider) |

| Proposal  | Existing Situation   | Action   | Timeframe                          | Key Partners   |
|---|--|--|------------------------------------|--|
| real-time information displays.   | replacement and not all operators' services are currently included in the RTI system such as Thames Travel/The Oxford Bus Company and Arriva services.   | people with a disability.  |                                    |  |
|   |  | (S3) We will improve information available online and through apps such as adding the Amazon Alexa and other providers functionality.  | From Apr 23<br>*Subject to funding |  |
| <i>Other - Reading town centre package of bus enhancements</i>  |  |  |                                    |  |
| Other - Proposal (T): Reading town centre package of bus enhancements<br><br>Deliver improved interchange, bus priority and access to Reading Town Centre as part of wider ambitions for rejuvenating and enhancing the town centre urban environment and delivering economic growth, | We have provided bus gates to manage timed access of other vehicles to the town centre bus priority loop and we have introduced red route restrictions to regulate parking in the town centre.<br><br>Effective management of the use of bus stops and bus stands is an ongoing partnership between the Council and operators to ensure that bus services and other highway users with privileged access to the town centre such as taxis, deliveries and disabled parking can also be accommodated.<br><br>As the focus of Reading's bus network is the town centre and station it is | (T1) Work with operators to ensure best use of town centre bus stops and bus stands balancing provision of facilities for buses alongside other demands for kerb-space.                                | Ongoing                            | Reading Borough Council<br><br>Reading UK CiC<br><br>Local Operators<br><br>Town Centre Businesses |
|   |  | (T2) We will work with operators and other stakeholders to ensure there is provision for expansion of existing bus services and frequencies and for new services to be developed such as BRT services. | Ongoing                            | Network Rail<br><br>Great Western Railway<br><br>Thames Valley Police                              |

| Proposal  | Existing Situation  | Action   | Timeframe                      | Key Partners |
|---|---|--|--------------------------------|--------------|
| including high quality bus infrastructure to raise the profile of the bus services as a high-quality travel choice. | essential that the streets in this area continue to provide full access to bus services for passengers. | (T3) Invest in the public transport infrastructure in the town centre to ensure this is integrated and reflects the high quality of public realm and sense of place we want to achieve in the town centre. | Ongoing<br>*Subject to funding |              |

Whilst this delivery action plan constitutes a substantive programme in its own right, this strategy will be complemented by wider measures being implemented as part of our annual LTP delivery programme, including our ambitious plans to provide a step-change in sustainable travel choices as set out in our emerging Reading Transport Strategy 2036.

### 3.1 CASE STUDIES

The case studies set out below provide more details on two of the key proposals which are included within the delivery action plan for this strategy:

#### Case Study A: Adapting the Network to Embed Future Passenger Growth (Proposal A2)

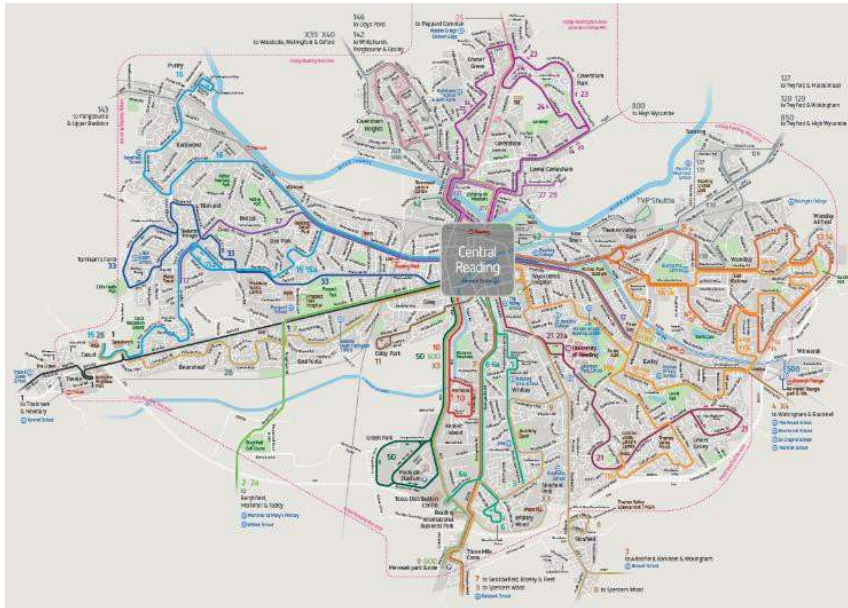
Reading had the second highest level of bus usage in the country (per head of population) before the pandemic and we have ambitious plans to rebuild usage and expand bus mode share even further, in line with the transformational vision of the National Bus Strategy.

In the short-term, a unique opportunity exists to encourage behavioural change by embedding bus travel into longer-term travel patterns. For instance, a recent survey of local businesses highlighted that only around half of staff have returned to the office, and of those the majority are only travelling in 1-2 days a week. However, this is set to change as 70% anticipate they will be commuting as part of the hybrid model of future work, and therefore the bus network needs to adapt accordingly.

In order to maximise on this opportunity, it is essential to retain a comprehensive local bus network, including socially and economically necessary services, to provide the basis for future enhancements and passenger growth. This proposal will enable the revised network to be delivered, whilst providing sufficient time for passenger usage to grow and services to be adapted accordingly. We will achieve this by working with passengers, key local destinations and businesses to understand their

future plans, forming the foundation to promote bus travel locally alongside the national bus back campaign.

**Figure 3-2: Existing Reading Urban Area Bus Network Map**



### Case Study B: South Reading BRT (Proposals D1 & D2)

The overall vision for the South Reading Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme is a dedicated fast-track public transport priority route on the A33 growth corridor, between Merooak Park & Ride facility and Reading town centre, serving major business parks and offices, distribution centres and new residential developments in south Reading.

We have successfully delivered the first four phases of the scheme between 2016-2021 with funding secured from the Local Growth Fund. This consists of a series of bus priority measures including bus lanes and traffic signal priority at junctions, which in the future have the potential to become a guided-bus, tram or autonomous shared vehicle system subject to the availability of funding.

The £20m scheme to date has improved bus travel, reduced emissions, improved air quality and sped up journey times by up to 16% during peak periods. Further phases are planned, which will help Reading continue to buck the national trend for bus use, with passenger growth on this corridor increasing by 20% to over 1m trips a year (pre-pandemic).

This scheme also enables the potential for future BRT style services to out of town residential and commercial developments located within Wokingham borough.

Figure 3-3: South Reading BRT bus lane



## **4 ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

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### **4.1 OVERVIEW**

The Reading BC Enhanced Partnership will be governed by two primary bodies:

- An Enhanced Partnership Forum (“EP Forum”) – in which all bus operators and other key local stakeholders will be entitled to participate and be invited, although attendance by individual Operators is voluntary.
- An Enhanced Partnership Board (“EP Board”) – established by the Enhanced Partnership with terms of reference that engage the Council and Operators in the development and operation of the Enhanced Partnership.

### **4.2 ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP FORUM**

The EP Forum will be an informal group, providing opportunities for discussing issues of all kinds affecting the Reading BC bus network, consulting with and building consensus across the various stakeholders and making recommendations for consideration to the EP Board. The forum will represent a platform for the Council’s to monitor the effectiveness of its transport plans and policies and, in particular the effectiveness of the EP Plan through consultations that it will undertake from time to time in conjunction with the EP Board with both the forum and wider constituent groups within the Reading BC area.

Membership of the Forum will comprise the following:

- Reading Borough Council;
- All operators providing local services within or for which part of any route is travelled within the Reading BC area;
- A representative(s) of community transport operators;
- Representatives of any local authority administrative area adjoining Reading BC;
- All train operating companies serving stations in the Reading BC area;
- The Local Enterprise Partnership;
- any other organisations that should be considered for inclusion;
- A Reading bus user group (to be formed).

In addition, any other external organisations with an interest in bus services in Reading BC not listed above will be invited to join or may request to join the EP Forum. At least once per financial year, the Forum will be invited to review and discuss the progress of, and future opportunities for, the Partnership.

#### Enhanced Partnership Forum Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The final Forum meeting of each financial year will be the designated EP Forum AGM. All Operators will be invited to self-nominate or nominate other willing Operators for EP Board membership, to represent themselves and all other Operators in their category, ahead of the EP Forum AGM. A ballot will be organised

by the Council at the Annual General Meeting to select Operators' EP Board representatives.

#### Meeting arrangements

EP Forum meetings will take place not less than twice per year, normally six calendar weeks before each EP Board meeting. EP Forum meetings will be arranged, chaired and minutes taken by the Council in year one of the EP Plan; the Chair may be appointed annually thereafter from among EP Forum members under a procedure for the nomination and appointment of such person as Reading BC considers appropriate following consultation with EP Forum members. Any appointment of a Chair whether being a representative of the Council or some other person will be confirmed at the EP Forum AGM with the elected Chair taking office immediately following the conclusion of the AGM.

Meetings will normally be held at Reading Borough Council, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU or such other suitable venue as may be agreed at the previously held meeting of the Forum. Forum members may offer to host provided the venue is accessible by bus. Meeting length will vary according to agenda content but ordinarily expected to be one to two hours.

Agendas and meeting papers (including a copy of minutes and decisions resulting from previous recommendations put to the Council by the EP Board) will be circulated by the Council no less than one week in advance of each meeting; draft minutes will be circulated no more than two weeks after each meeting. Draft minutes will be approved at the next EP Forum meeting.

### **4.3 ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP BOARD**

The EP Board will be the key oversight body of the Enhanced Partnership. The Board will make recommendations for consideration by the Council on all matters relevant to the operation and continuing development of the Enhanced Partnership including proposals for variations to existing EP Schemes and proposals for new EP Schemes.

Meetings of the EP Board shall be chaired by the chair for the time being of the EP Forum. The Chair will not have voting rights unless separately available to that person under the Voting Scheme.

The EP Board will be the key oversight body of the Enhanced Partnership. The EP Board will have the following initial terms of reference being to:

- Monitor the progress of the in delivering the BSIP and the EP Plan;
- Monitor the effectiveness of implemented Schemes in achieving the BSIP and EP Plan objectives.
- Work with the Council to respond to Government or other funding opportunities that may arise for delivery of bus service improvement interventions;
- Review, discuss and agree priorities for delivery of interventions to achieve the objectives of the BSIP and the EP Plan;



- Review, discuss and agree programmes of preparatory work (feasibility studies, business case preparation, design, public consultations, impact assessments etc) for interventions that may be taken forward as EP Scheme variations or new EP Schemes;
- Oversee the process of preparing and developing detailed requirements leading to a variation to an existing EP Scheme where this will be subject to the bespoke scheme voting procedure incorporated in any EP Scheme where that is applicable;
- Consider fully detailed proposals for EP Scheme variations or new EP Schemes that are the responsibility of the Council having regard to s.138L of the 2000 Act, once all relevant preparatory work has been completed, and make recommendations to the Council for their adoption (or otherwise).

The EP Board shall be entitled to keep under review these terms of reference and further develop them being responsible for all decisions relating to administration of the affairs of the EP Board including frequency of meeting, requests for the attendance at meetings of the EP Board by individuals and representatives of organisations that are capable of contributing to the work of the EP Board and the manner in which and methods by which reporting of the affairs of the EP Board are made to all Operators.

This EP Plan this will be reviewed by the EP Board in conjunction with the Council on an annual basis with the review to be completed in each year within three months following the anniversary date of the making of the EP Plan. Reviews will take account of the outcome of the Council's annual review of the BSIP. The EP Board will in its review take account of the outcome of comments provided by the EP Forum.

The Chair shall Chair meetings of the EP Board. Should the Chair be unavailable for any meeting those present shall agree amongst themselves an individual to act as chair and the meeting may proceed provided that it is quorate.

EP Board meetings will require a quorum of four parties entitled to vote being:

- At least one Reading BC representative;
- A representative of any Bus Operator operating Local Services that fall to be classified as Qualifying Bus Services under any Scheme then in operation where the aggregate mileage operated is 20% or greater of the overall mileage operated by Qualifying Bus Services under any EP Scheme that has been made and is current at the time of voting.
- Two representatives of other Bus Operators who hold appointments to the Board with voting rights under the Voting Scheme applicable under any EP Scheme that has been made and is current at the time of voting.

In order to determine the operated mileage referred to above and any voting entitlement available to a representative based on operated mileage, the Council will conduct an assessment of the operating mileages of each Bus Operator that as at 1

April in the year in which the assessment is conducted is operated within the EP Plan area under then existing EP Schemes.

Any Board member (with the exception of the Chair) may, if necessary, arrange for an alternate or deputy from the same category to participate using available voting rights. All representatives should have the authority to vote on behalf of their organisation at EP Board meetings.

The EP Plan will interface, so far as practicable, with the EP Plans of other neighbouring local authorities, particularly with regard to cross-boundary travel. The EP Board will work with the neighbouring EP Boards (respecting competition law considerations in doing so) to ensure that EP Schemes with cross boundary implications are implemented in a complementary and collaborative manner.

The EP Board may establish from time to time committees comprised of members of the EP Board and other appropriate persons to undertake specific project assessment work on behalf of the EP Board such as to bring forward ticketing projects, zero emission bus opportunities, support for the Council in pursuing funding bids and approaches to addressing congestion.

#### Board representatives

Board representatives will ensure that they have

- fully reviewed and understood all meeting papers in advance of attendance; and
- the required mandate from any organisation that they represent.

#### Conduct of business by the Enhanced Partnership Board

The EP Board will observe the need for confidentiality; any information provided by local bus service operators relating to patronage and/or fare income on individual bus routes will be considered commercially confidential and will only be discussed by the EP Board on this basis.

Where any other matter should remain confidential and not for discussion outside the EP Board, the member raising the matter has the responsibility to make this clear in advance or at the time of discussion. It is the responsibility of the EP Board members to ensure appropriate steps are taken to maintain the confidentiality of the matter.

#### All meeting of the EP Board shall be held in private.

At the commencement of each meeting the Chair shall remind all participating in the meeting that in conducting the affairs of the EP Board and in taking any actions arising from the meeting of the EP Board each participant has responsibilities under competition law and must observe these.

#### Enhanced Partnership Board resolution-making

Recommendations of the EP Board will normally be made by way of a vote through a show of hands of those present. However, if any voting parties request the vote is conducted by email after the meeting to allow further consideration, this may be agreed by the EP Board members present if a simple majority support such a

proposal. Unless stated otherwise in this document, recommendations will be passed by way of a majority of all members of the EP Board entitled to vote as follows:

The number of votes available to the Council and to each Bus Operator are:

- For the Council, two votes (if only one representative attends that representative shall be entitled to two votes);
- For any Bus Operator that on the Mileage Determination Date operates 20% or greater of the aggregate mileage operated by all Bus Operators in respect of Qualifying Bus Services within the Scheme area two votes; and
- For any Bus Operator that on the Mileage Determination Date operates less than 20% of the aggregate mileage operated by all Bus Operators in respect of Qualifying Bus Services within the Scheme area one vote.

For avoidance of doubt an elected Chair who is not otherwise entitled to voting rights under the above voting scheme shall not have a vote nor a casting vote should any vote be tied. Nor shall any Chair who is entitled to voting rights have a casting vote.

#### Council approval

The Council will consider any resolutions of the Board containing recommendations made by the Board for the attention of the Council. Recommendations will be referred to the Council's Executive Director for Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services for consideration as to the steps that ought to be taken by the Council in order to consider the recommendation and establish the further steps to be taken with that recommendation.

The Council reserves the right to reject recommendations made by the EP Board. The Council will take forward recommendations that it is willing and able to support through such procedures of the Council and in compliance with the statutory requirements as necessary in the circumstances.

Operators will be entitled to make known their concerns in writing to the Council's Executive Director for Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services if they object to a particular vote of the EP Board. The Director will review the circumstances and consider whether these are such that a recommendation should be rejected

#### Board meeting observers

Any other Bus Operator, Council and district and any immediately neighbouring council representatives will be able to attend the EP Board meetings as observers but will not have the right to vote. Observers may be invited to make comments or ask questions of the EP Board at the Chair's discretion or invited to defer these until the next Enhanced Partnership Forum meeting.

#### Meeting arrangements

EP Board meetings will take place not less than twice per year at regular intervals between each EP Forum meeting, with provision for additional meetings as required

to make recommendations which in the opinion of the Chair cannot be deferred to a scheduled meeting, provided that a quorum can be achieved, with not less than one week's notice being given. Meetings will be arranged and minutes taken by the Council and will normally be held at Reading Borough Council, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU. Meeting length will vary according to agenda content but ordinarily be one to two hours.

Agendas and meeting papers will be circulated to all EP Board members no less than one week in advance of each meeting date, and draft minutes circulated no more than two weeks after each meeting. Copies will also be distributed to all EP Forum members so any issues or concerns can be discussed with the relevant Operator representative, to be raised at the EP Board meeting. Draft minutes will be approved at the next EP Board meeting.

#### Variations to Enhanced Partnership Plan and any Scheme

In addition to matters falling within the terms of reference set out above the EP Board will:

- receive and consider proposals from the Council for variations to the EP Plan, proposed variations to any existing EP Scheme and proposals for further EP Schemes; and
- receive and consider proposals from its membership to be put to the Council for variations to EP Plan, proposed variations to any existing EP Scheme and proposals for further EP Schemes.

Consideration will be given by the EP Board to potential EP Plan and EP Scheme variations put forward by Board members, including Council officers, or by any Operator of Qualifying Bus Services or by any participant within the EP Forum. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the EP Plan and current local transport policies. Such requests should be set out in writing and submitted to the Chair of the Board with a copy to the following Council email address [transport@reading.gov.uk].

On receipt of a valid request for a variation, the Chair of the Board will include discussion of the proposed variation on the agenda at the next scheduled EP Board meeting or, at the Chair's discretion, convene an extra Board meeting, giving at least 14 days' notice for the meeting, to consider the proposed variation.

In order to limit any circumstances in which the Council may oppose the progression of a proposed variation or a proposal for a further EP Scheme or the requirements arising from the proposal could result in any other material commitment required of the Council that it may not be able to meet the Council shall prepare and deliver to the EP Board a brief summary document setting out the Council's opinion concerning the feasibility of the proposal should it be implemented. The summary document may refer to matters such as:

- The availability or non-availability of funding to support implementation of the proposal including the Council's ability to provide for any future expenditure that the Council would be required to incur;

- Any considerations under competition law that will require to be taken into account;
- The compatibility of the proposal with policies that the Council has committed to follow including in particular policies supporting the Council's equalities duties;
- Should the proposal be implemented the Council would in consequence be in breach of any contracts or other legally binding obligations that it is subject to;
- The proposal requires the co-operation of third parties such as a District Council
- Any governance related considerations that the Council requires to take into account.

For avoidance of doubt the existence of matters raised by the Council need not be taken as reason for the EP Board to decline to deal with the proposal and the Council shall indicate in the summary document or in any other manner at a subsequent date the extent to which it supports the proposal and is willing and able to work with the EP Board in order to progress the proposal on a basis that is not anticipated to lead to the Council being unable to implement the variation proposed.

If the proposed variation is a proposed variation to the EP Plan and is agreed by the EP Board for recommendation to the Council (in line with the majority decision-making process outlined in this document), the Council will give due consideration to taking forward the proposal by initiating the procedures that the Council are required to follow under s.138L and s.138M of the TA2000 and where the procedure followed then so permits make the EP Plan variation.

The Council shall be entitled on its own initiative to progress variations to the EP Plan in accordance with the provisions of s.138L and s.138M of the TA 2000 but shall first consult with the EP Board as to the circumstances and the detail of the proposed variation.

If the proposed variation is a proposed variation to an EP Scheme then, in the event that the conditions set out to permit a bespoke voting mechanism to apply as set out in the relevant EP Scheme are met, the variation shall be taken forward by the EP Board having regard to the provisions of s.138E of the TA 2000 applying the voting procedure provided for in the relevant EP Scheme.

If the proposed variation is a proposed variation to an EP Scheme and the above provision does not apply the variation once resolved upon by the EP Board shall be taken forward by the Council under the procedures provided for at s.138L and s138M.

The Council shall be entitled on its own initiative to progress variations to the EP Scheme in accordance with the provisions of s.138L and s.138M of the TA 2000 but shall first consult with the EP Board as to the circumstances and the detail of the proposed variation.

## ANNEX A – VISION & HEADLINE TARGETS

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**[We will review these targets when we know more about the availability of Government funding and hence the facilities and measures that can be delivered.]**

We have an ambitious vision for the future of bus travel in Reading. This is aligned to the bold national vision and objectives as set out in the National Bus Strategy, alongside our local vision for sustainable transport as set out in the Reading Transport Strategy 2036, and the wider Reading 2050 Vision.

The Reading 2050 Vision is for an internationally recognised and economically successful city region. It envisages that low carbon living is the norm and the built environment, technology and innovation are combined to create a dynamic, smart and sustainable city with a high quality of life and equal opportunities for all.

This vision was formed by the Council coming together with local businesses, community groups and the University of Reading. The result is an ambitious description of what Reading can be, with three themes central to Reading's long-term success as a smart and sustainable city:

- A green tech city
- A city of culture and diversity
- A city of rivers and parks

Our emerging Reading Transport Strategy 2036 Vision sets the focus for an ambitious programme of measures to enable and encourage sustainable travel choices in the town by 2036, by providing attractive alternatives to the private car. Our vision is to deliver a sustainable transport system in Reading that creates an attractive, green and vibrant town with neighbourhoods that promote healthy choices and wellbeing. Future mobility options will enable everyone in Reading to thrive, enjoy an exceptional quality of life and adapt to meet future challenges and opportunities.

Bus services are a critical element of achieving the LTP4 objectives, as summarised in our vision statement for the EP Plan / BSIP as set out at Figure A-1. Our EP Plan / BSIP vision is to deliver a comprehensive bus network in Reading which means travel by bus is the natural choice for both residents and visitors, contributing towards the creation of a vibrant, green and more equal town with net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

**Figure A-1: EP Plan / BSIP Vision Statement**

|   |
|---|
| <p>Our vision is to deliver a comprehensive bus network in Reading which means travel by bus is the natural choice for both residents and visitors, contributing towards the creation of a vibrant, green and more equal town with net zero carbon emissions by 2030.</p> |
|---|

It will be important to monitor progress with delivering this strategy in order to successfully achieve this vision, both in terms of individual proposals but also the wider outcomes achieved through the collective delivery of the individual elements. The headline targets set out below have been established based on the analysis of the current bus offer to passengers, feedback and levels of passenger satisfaction, alongside the future challenges and opportunities we have identified in the strategy. These targets will ensure that we remain focused on achieving our vision and delivering the aims and objectives of this strategy, working in partnership with local bus operators.

We have selected targets that cover bus operations across the whole of Reading borough, due to the area not having multiple centres. These targets are set out in the tables below, including the baseline figures, the change we are targeting to achieve by 2024/25 and the proposals (described in EP Plan Section 3) that will help to deliver that level of change.

The targets have been based on information made available by local operators, alongside data held by the Council, and the ongoing provision of data will be formalised through the Enhanced Partnership arrangements.

## TARGETS FOR JOURNEY TIME AND RELIABILITY IMPROVEMENTS

We have identified the following targets for journey time:

**Figure A-2: Journey Time Targets**

| Target  | 2018/19                       | 2019/20                       | Target for 2024/25          | Proposals that contribute to change | Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)  |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Average Bus Journey Time within Reading Borough – Daytime (7am-6pm) | 17 mins 44 secs<br>(15.1 kph) | 17 mins 44 secs<br>(15.1 kph) | 17 mins 1 sec<br>(15.7 kph) | Proposals (b)1-9                    | Based on an analysis of timetable data from a sample of services from each bus corridor across the borough |

We are seeking to achieve a 4% improvement in average bus journey time within Reading borough from 2019/20 to 2024/25. This would equate to an average saving of 43 seconds on every journey. However, the journey time savings on individual

routes would vary as a result of bus priority measures implemented through the delivery of this strategy.

Therefore, this target would be kept under review and as the target is based on analysis from a sample of routes from each bus corridor this more detailed information would be used to inform future updates of the strategy.

We have identified the following targets for reliability and punctuality:

**Figure A-3: Reliability & Punctuality Targets**

| <b>Target</b>  | <b>2018/19</b> | <b>2019/20</b> | <b>Target for 2024/25</b> | <b>Proposals that contribute to change</b> | <b>Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)</b>   |
|--|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| Percentage of bus miles operated by Reading based services | 99.49%         | 99.46%         | 99.5%                     | Proposals (b)1-9                           | Based on total lost mileage data for Reading based services as reported by the operator  |
| Average excess waiting time for frequent services          | 1 min 11 secs  | 1 min 11 secs  | 1 min 8 secs              | Proposals (b)1-9                           | Based on an analysis of real-time passenger information data from a sample of services from each bus corridor across the borough |
| Non-frequent services running on time                      | 88%            | 88%            | 92%                       | Proposals (b)1-9                           |  |

We are aiming to maintain and slightly improve upon the very high standard of bus reliability across the borough, which is currently at 99.46%. Given the level of activity undertaken across the transport network which requires traffic management measures to be in place, such as roadworks, construction activities and highway improvement schemes; this is considered to be a very high standard to achieve.



In addition to reliability we are also aiming to improve bus punctuality, both in terms of average excess waiting time for frequent services and the proportion of non-frequent services running on time. For both of these measures we are aiming to achieve improvements by 4% to 2024/25, providing benefits for bus passengers.

## TARGETS FOR PASSENGER GROWTH AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

We have identified the following targets for passenger growth:

**Figure A-4: Passenger Growth Targets**

| Target  | 2018/19        | 2019/20        | Target for 2024/25 | Proposals that contribute to change           | Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)                                    |
|---|----------------|----------------|--------------------|---|--|
| Annual passenger journeys within Reading borough                        | 22.5 million   | 22.2 million   | 24.0 million       | All proposals would contribute to this change | Based on data provided by operators as reported to the DfT in bus statistics table BUS0109 |
| Annual passenger journeys per head of population within Reading borough | 137.6 journeys | 137.5 journeys | 148.5 journeys     | All proposals would contribute to this change | Based on data provided by operators as reported to the DfT in bus statistics table BUS0110 |

We are aiming to initially achieve passenger growth back to pre-pandemic levels, and subsequently to increase further to 24 million journeys every year by 2024/25. This would represent an 8% increase from 2019/20. In terms of journeys per head of population, which were amongst the highest in the county pre-pandemic, this would increase to 148.5 journeys annually by 2024/25.

We have identified the following targets for passenger satisfaction:

**Figure A-5: Passenger Satisfaction Targets**

| Target | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | Target for 2024/25 | Proposals that contribute to change | Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words) |
|--------|---------|---------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
|--------|---------|---------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---|

|                                    |     |     |     |   |  |
|------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|---|--|
| Overall Bus Passenger Satisfaction | 94% | 92% | 95% | All proposals would contribute to this change | Based on data from the Transport Focus Bus Passenger Survey relating to overall level of bus passenger satisfaction in Reading |
|------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|---|--|

Again, we are starting from a very high baseline in Reading with regards to overall bus passenger satisfaction levels. We are aiming to achieve a real increase in satisfaction due to improvement in journey times and reliability as a result of further bus priority measures being introduced, from 92% in 2019/20 up to 95% by 2024/25.

Overall, these targets represent an ambitious set of objectives which can only be achieved through partnership working with local operators and neighbouring authorities due to the cross-boundary nature of many routes serving Reading. It should also be noted that the achievement of these targets will be subject to the level of funding being made available to deliver the proposals as set out within this strategy. Therefore, we intend to review these targets once the level of funding is known to ensure they remain both ambitious yet achievable.

## ANNEX B – REGISTERED DISTANCE BY BUS OPERATOR

*This Annex does not form part of the EP Plan. RBC has provided it for information, to inform the allocation of votes, and can vary it without notice.*

Table B1 shows RBC’s estimate of each bus operator’s registered distance operated in the RBC LTA area based on timetable information for November 2021.

Registered distance is as defined in the Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018, except that the requirements of the EP Scheme do apply to a service or any part of a service provided under arrangements made under sections 89 to 91 of the Transport Act 1985 in any case where the authority retains all the revenue from that service. For this type of service, EP Plan Section 5 sets out that the relevant authority will be allocated the votes of the bus operator.

RBC anticipates that it will produce a new estimate each quarter and will review the estimate if queried by any bus operator.

**Figure B-1: Bus operator registered distance operated in the RBC LTA area**

| <b>Bus operator</b>  | <b>Registered distance operated in the RBC LTA area (mileage per week)</b> | <b>Percentage of the registered distance operated in the RBC LTA area</b> |
|--|--|---|
| Arriva The Shires Limited                                  | 1224.83  | 1.79%   |
| First Beeline Buses Limited                                | 590.15   | 0.86%   |
| Horseman Coaches   | 14.21  | 0.02%   |
| Reading Borough Council (RBC)                              | 611.39   | 0.89%   |
| Reading Buses (including Thames Valley Buses)              | 64667.29   | 94.32%  |
| Thames Travel (Wallingford) Limited/The Oxford Bus Company | 1396.10  | 2.04%   |
| Whites Coaches Limited                                     | 57.20  | 0.08%   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>68590.39</b>  | <b>100.00%</b>  |

The bus operator sizes in Figure B-1 reflect the percentage of the registered distance operated in Reading, but do not necessarily reflect the overall size of each organisation:

- Reading Buses and Thames Valley Buses are both arms-length subsidiaries of RBC
- Arriva the Shires Limited is a subsidiary of a larger organisation, Arriva plc
- First Beeline Buses Limited is a subsidiary of a larger organisation, FirstGroup plc
- Thames Travel (Wallingford) Limited and The Oxford Bus Company are subsidiaries of a larger organisation, Go-Ahead Group plc

The full picture in Reading includes small organisations that do not have the same level of resource behind them as larger organisations:

- Horseman Coaches
- Whites Coaches Limited

RBC believes that the following bus operators are exempt from the requirements of the EP Scheme:

- Stewarts Coaches Limited is a subsidiary of a larger organisation, National Express Group plc, and operates the express shuttle bus route to Thames Valley Park business park however it is not registered as a local bus service because it does not charge fares
- Going Forward Buses CIC is a Section 22 bus operator and therefore exempt.