



29 June 2023

Title	Strategic Transport Schemes Update
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Chris Maddocks
Lead councillor	Cllr John Ennis
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the progress made on delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes as summarised in this report. 2. Note the decision of the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection to extend the BUZZ 42 bus service contract, which runs between Kenavon Drive and Richfield Avenue, until November 2025. 3. Note the decision of the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection to agree spend approval for the additional £1m capital grant funding which has been secured from the Department for Transport for the Bath Road active travel scheme. 4. To approve the progression of a procurement to establish a framework agreement for the provision of transport consultancy services, and the provision of delegated authority to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection, in consultation with the Lead Member for Climate Strategy & Transport, and Assistant Directors of Legal & Democratic Services and Procurement, to approve the award of the resulting contracts.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress with the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading. This includes major public transport enhancements for both bus and rail services, active travel improvements to enable more walking and cycling, and associated incentivisation and communications initiatives to encourage more healthy lifestyles.
- 1.2. Key milestones set out in this report include the launch of the Reading All-Bus ticket scheme which sets a daily cap for bus travel in Reading; securing an additional £1m funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) for the Bath Road active travel scheme; and the significant milestone of the opening of Reading Green Park Railway Station to the public on Saturday 27th May.

2. Policy context

- 2.1. The Council's current Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets the transport strategy for Reading up to 2026. Development of a new LTP, the Reading Transport Strategy 2040, is being progressed with the core principles of the strategy linked to wider objectives

including the Reading 2050 Vision, the Climate Emergency, health and wellbeing, and improved air quality. The strategic transport schemes included within this report are fully aligned with both the existing and new LTPs, and delivery of each of these individual schemes is a vital part of achieving the overall vision and objectives of each strategy.

- 2.2. Whilst the LTP sets the context and overarching vision for future transport provision in Reading, sub-strategies provide more detailed implementation plans for specific topics. These form the basis for preparing funding proposals to deliver key elements of each sub-strategy, including the Bus Service Improvement Plan, Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan and the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- 2.3. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
 - Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy
- 2.4. These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:
 - People first
 - Digital transformation
 - Building self-reliance
 - Getting the best value
 - Collaborating with others
- 2.5. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

3. The proposal

Bus Service Improvement Plan Programme

- 3.1. The Council published and adopted its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in October 2021, setting out our plans to enhance services and encourage more people to travel by bus in Reading. The BSIP was aligned with the objectives of the National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better' and in April 2022 Government announced an indicative funding award of £26.263m for Reading following a review of all BSIPs submitted by local authorities. This was one of the highest funding awards (per head of population) in the country.
- 3.2. Following the indicative funding award, discussions were undertaken with local bus operators to agree the key schemes and initiatives to be delivered through the BSIP programme. As required by Government, the Council has developed an Enhanced Partnership (EP) agreement with all local operators and convened an EP Board with the major operators to oversee the development and delivery of the BSIP programme.
- 3.3. Detailed discussions were undertaken with DfT officials resulting in the EP Board agreeing an EP Variation in December 2022, which includes more detail on the various scheme and initiatives to be delivered with the initial phase of Government funding. Subsequently, the DfT confirmed the full funding allocation of £26.263m to Reading in January 2023, consisting of £15.939m capital and £10.324m revenue funding.
- 3.4. The BSIP programme includes a range of capital and revenue measures to encourage greater passenger usage in Reading. The EP Scheme Variation sets out our commitment to deliver, in partnership with the operators, the schemes that the DfT have awarded grant funding for as set out below, although it should be noted that the package of capital schemes will be subject to public consultation:

Capital schemes:

- A package of six new bus lanes on key routes in the borough, including on Oxford Road (x2), Bath Road, Southampton Street and London Road (x2).
- Phases 5 of the South Reading BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) scheme.
- Improvements to passenger facilities at MereOak Park & Ride site.
- Package of bus signal priority measures at key junctions to complement new bus priority lanes.
- Package of town centre public transport infrastructure enhancements.

Revenue initiatives:

- Introduction of a multi-operator fares reduction ticketing scheme.
 - South Reading bus service enhancements, including the continuation of Route 9 services.
 - Enhancements to the Buzz 42 bus service between Kenavon Drive and Richfield Avenue, and enhancements to park and ride services, particularly to serve the Royal Berkshire Hospital and University of Reading.
 - Develop proposals for future bus priority measures in the borough.
 - Comms programme to publicise the capital and revenue enhancements.
 - Management of the EP arrangements and BSIP programme delivery support.
- 3.5. Good progress has been made with delivery of this programme to date, including the Reading All-Bus ticket scheme which was launched on 13 March. This sets a daily cap for travel within Reading to ensure no one pays more than a set cap regardless of the amount of travel undertaken in a day, and includes travel on Reading Buses, Thames Travel, Arriva and Thames Valley buses. The scheme has proved popular to date, with over 65k tickets sold in the first 3 weeks of operation and it complements the £2 national single fare scheme.
- 3.6. Development of plans to introduce enhanced services is being progressed, including for the BUZZ 42 service which operates between Kenavon Drive, the town centre and Richfield Avenue. The current contract for the operation of this service commenced in November 2020, following a competitive tender process and is operated by Reading Transport Limited. The initial period for the contract is due to expire on 3rd November 2023, however the contract includes the option to extend for a period of 24 months until 3rd November 2025. These bus services are proving popular to date with usage levels steadily increasing due to the significant residential developments at Kenavon Drive, and the facilities at Richfield Avenue including the new Rivermead leisure centre and the forthcoming secondary school. The services are fully funded by private sector section 106 contributions which have been secured through the planning process to provide the service until at least November 2025, with these contributions being specifically fettered for the provision of the bus service to give new residents a new sustainable travel choice. The Committee is therefore asked to note the decision of the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection to extend the BUZZ 42 bus service contract until November 2025.
- 3.7. Progress has also been made on the capital schemes, with design work being developed for the next phase of works for the South Reading BRT scheme and passenger enhancements for MereOak P&R site. In addition, an initial public consultation was launched on 19 May to seek feedback on the concept designs for the proposed bus lanes on Oxford Road (x2), Bath Road, Southampton Street and London Road (x2). The consultation closes on 16 June after which officers will review the results, both in respect of the levels of support and opposition for the proposals and the individual comments provided on each scheme concept.

- 3.8. The Committee will be kept updated on the development and delivery of the individual schemes and initiatives which make up the overall BSIP programme through regular update reports.

South Reading Bus Rapid Transit

- 3.9. The South Reading Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme is a series of bus priority measures on the A33 growth corridor, with the overall vision of creating a dedicated fast-track public transport priority route between MereOak Park & Ride and Reading town centre. The current scheme which is being delivered in phases as funding is secured, and in future has the potential to become a guided-bus, tram or autonomous shared vehicle system.
- 3.10. Funding of over £15m has been secured for the scheme from the Local Growth Fund (LGF) and fettered S106 developer contributions, with phases 1-4 of the scheme successfully delivered. Phase 4 was constructed last year, which includes an outbound bus lane between Rose Kiln Lane and Lindisfarne Way (Kennet Island), and the upgrade of the traffic signals to an intelligent Microprocessor Optimised Vehicle Actuation (MOVA) method of control at the Bennet Road gyratory to improve traffic flows.
- 3.11. Funding for phase 5 of the scheme has been secured as part of the overall BSIP grant funding award and design work is being progressed. This phase will link up existing outbound bus lanes delivered through previous phases through the construction of an additional lane over the River Kennet, between the junctions with Rose Kiln Lane (South) and Kennet Island. This work would complete the outbound section of the scheme in terms of the provision of bus lanes, which would enable future funding bids to focus on delivery of the remaining inbound sections which could logically be split into four distinct phases, depending on the level of funding available through individual funding opportunities. The future potential adaption of the scheme into a guided bus or tram system would require further investment in the necessary infrastructure and vehicles at that time.

Reading Green Park Station

- 3.12. Reading Green Park Station is a new railway station on the Reading to Basingstoke line. The station and multi-modal interchange will significantly improve accessibility and connectivity to this area of south Reading which has large-scale development proposed including the expansion of Green Park business park, Green Park Village residential development and the Royal Elm Park mixed use development.
- 3.13. Funding for the scheme was secured from the Local Growth Fund (LGF), fettered section 106 developer contributions, the DfT's New Stations Fund and directly from Great Western Railway and Network Rail. Construction of the station and multi-modal interchange was managed by the Council and was substantially complete in March, when the project entered a period of thorough testing and authorisation working with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), DfT and Network Rail.
- 3.14. The authorisation process was completed in May and the station was transferred to Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR), who own and operate the station respectively. An event was held to mark the formal opening of the station with all key partners and stakeholders on 25 May and the first public services calling at the station commenced on Saturday 27 May.

Reading West Station Upgrade

- 3.15. A Masterplan setting out a vision for significant enhancements to the station and wider interchange was prepared by the Council, in partnership with GWR and Network Rail, which includes enhanced passenger facilities, security improvements and enhancements to both the Oxford Road and Tilehurst Road station entrances.
- 3.16. Planning consent for the scheme was granted in January 2021 and the current phase of works includes a new station building on the Oxford Road with associated highway

alterations and interchange improvements, increased cycle parking and a new ticket gateline at the Tilehurst Road station entrance. The scheme will provide safety and security improvements at both entrances through enhanced CCTV coverage and lighting, which have been designed with input from the British Transport Police.

- 3.17. Construction of the enhanced interchange and highway arrangements commenced on-site last year and are now substantially complete, with the remaining work to be undertaken following construction of the new station building. GWR have taken possession of the southern footway of the Oxford Road entrance and construction works for the new passenger building on the Oxford Road and works to deliver a new entrance and gateline at the Tilehurst Road entrance are progressing well. The overall project is currently projected to be completed in the summer.
- 3.18. The current scheme being delivered by GWR will include passive provision for accessibility enhancements within the designs, however Network Rail's position is that a full platform rebuild would be required to deliver the necessary minimum platform widths to enable safe usage of the station for wheelchair users and passengers with buggies prior to lifts being installed. This is unaffordable within the current funding for the scheme. Therefore, the Council will continue to work with railway partners including Network Rail to seek opportunities to secure funding for these elements of the overall Masterplan vision for the station.

Tilehurst Station Upgrade

- 3.19. The Council has been working with Network Rail and GWR to develop a series of improvements to upgrade passenger facilities at Tilehurst Station and funding is being sought to develop an agreed Masterplan of enhancements, both within the station and for the wider interchange and access arrangements to/from the station.
- 3.20. Network Rail secured £4m funding from the DfT in March for the first phase of works to deliver accessibility improvements through the installation of lifts at the station. They will be added to the existing station footbridge which had been designed with passive provision for lifts, which when complete will provide step free access to all platforms at the station.
- 3.21. A prior notification application was submitted to the Council by Network Rail on 17 May and subject to securing the necessary consents, it is anticipated that construction works will commence on-site in the summer.

Shinfield Road Active Travel Scheme

- 3.22. The active travel scheme on Shinfield Road will provide a segregated cycle route and pedestrian improvements on a key route between South Reading and Royal Berkshire Hospital, the University of Reading, local centres and Reading town centre. External funding of £1.2m has been secured from Active Travel England (ATE) to deliver the scheme.
- 3.23. An initial consultation on a range of active travel proposals was undertaken in spring 2021, resulting in the scheme at Shinfield Road being selected as the initial scheme to take forward. A further consultation on the proposed scheme designs was undertaken between in autumn 2021, which included information, maps and a survey on the Council's website, a public drop-in event at the University of Reading and presentations and workshop sessions with local user groups. Feedback from this consultation was incorporated into the final detailed designs for the scheme and the statutory consultation on Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to implement double yellow line parking restrictions along the route was undertaken and proposals subsequently approved in spring 2022.
- 3.24. Construction of the scheme is being undertaken by the Council's in-house Highways delivery team, with a degree of sub-contracting being managed by the Highways team. The initial construction works commenced at the University / Christchurch Green end of the route and construction of the full scheme is due to be complete in the summer.

Bath Road Active Travel Scheme

- 3.25. The active travel scheme on Bath Road will provide a segregated cycle route and pedestrian improvements on this key route between the town centre and the junction with Berkeley Avenue. External funding of £1.3m has been secured from Active Travel England (ATE) to deliver the scheme, alongside £200k from the Integrated Transport Block (ITB) grant from the DfT. An additional £1m grant funding has recently been secured from the DfT for the scheme and this Committee is asked to note the decision of the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection to agree spend approval for this additional funding to be allocated to the scheme.
- 3.26. The initial consultation on the concept designs for the Bath Road scheme was undertaken alongside the other active travel schemes in spring 2021. This consultation resulted in strong support for the scheme, with 60% of respondents saying they supported or strongly supported the proposed segregated cycle lanes. A further consultation on the updated designs was undertaken in summer 2022, including a public drop-in event at Reading Association for the Blind, Walford Hall, Carey Street. Feedback received through these consultations has been used to prepare the detailed designs for the scheme, including elements of the scheme that require a TRO statutory consultation which was approved from the Council's Traffic Management Sub-Committee in March 2023.
- 3.27. Detailed design of the scheme is currently being finalised with procurement of a contractor to deliver the scheme to follow on completion of the design work. Delivery of the scheme on-site is currently due to commence in the autumn.

Active Travel Capability Fund

- 3.28. The Council has secured over £370k revenue grant funding from the DfT to provide a programme of schemes and initiatives to be delivered aimed at supporting a shift in travel behaviour to active travel. This will complement the segregated route facilities being delivered through the Active Travel Fund capital grant funding.
- 3.29. Delivery of the programme of initiatives is well underway, including the provision of adult cycle training and cycle maintenance training courses to complement the training being provided to children in schools through Bikeability cycle training. The Council is working in partnership with Sustrans to deliver a behavioural change programme through a dedicated officer as a joint Sustrans resource in partnership with Bracknell Forest Council. Activities undertaken to date include engagement through led rides and walks, supporting schools with the delivery of Modeshift STARS travel planning activities, developing a series of active travel communications and working with partners to support events including Reading Cycle Festival and the Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel. A research programme will also be undertaken to identify the key barriers to encouraging walking and cycling in Reading.
- 3.30. This programme of works includes the delivery of a 'pop-up' secure cycle parking hub in the town centre, following representations to the Council from local groups with a strong desire to be involved in the delivery and on-going management of such a facility. Following the award of funding from the DfT, the Council has worked to secure a prominent town centre location for this facility, secure planning permission which was approved in November 2022, and progress the legal process to finalise a lease agreement which is currently being undertaken. The Council has also sourced proposals for the fit-out of the facility and discussions are on-going with local groups regarding the on-going day to day management and operation of the facility.

School Streets Programme

- 3.31. The Council launched a School Street application process and guidance in spring 2020, after securing £175k from the DfT's Travel Demand Management Fund. To date, School Street schemes have been implemented at Park Lane Primary Junior School (Downing Road and Lambourne Close), Wilson Primary School (Wilson Road), Thameside Primary School (Harley Road) and most recently on Crescent Road in East Reading. The scheme on Crescent Road is a joint scheme for Maiden Erleigh School in Reading, UTC Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School.

- 3.32. All School Street schemes were initially established as trials under an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). The ETRO includes a 6-month statutory consultation period to provide the opportunity for comments and objections to the scheme to be submitted to the Council. The Council's Traffic Management Sub-Committee approved for the schemes at Park Lane Junior, Wilson and Thameside Primary schools to be made permanent in June 2022 and the Crescent Road scheme in June 2023.
- 3.33. Applications to establish new School Street schemes are being encouraged, alongside monitoring of the existing scheme to identify any improvements which can be made to help enable an increase in levels of walking and cycling for children, parents and carers.

Transport Consultancy Services Contract

- 3.34. The development and delivery of this programme of strategic transport schemes is lead and managed by Council officers, with external support from specialist transport planning and engineering consultants. This support is vital to supplement limited internal resources and to provide specialist knowledge and expertise in respect of transport and highways professional services.
- 3.35. Until August 2019, RBC had a term contract with a single supplier for the provision of these transport consultancy services, however since this time a number of different external procurement routes have been used to engage these services, such as frameworks established by the 100% public sector owned East Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO), Crown Commercial Services (CCS) and other frameworks established by local authorities.
- 3.36. Recent soft-market testing with a number of multi-disciplinary transport consultants has revealed interest in the establishment of a Reading focused transport consultancy framework, which would enable a more consistent approach to the delivery and development of transport schemes and associated funding proposals. The soft-market testing has provided feedback on a number of different approaches which officers are now reviewing to leverage best value from the market. It is likely that this would involve establishing a framework with two, high quality, multi-disciplinary suppliers with the ability to deliver a wide range of services, as required by the Council's Transport and Highways teams. The scope could also be tailored to ensure that the transport-related requirements of other areas of the Council, such as Planning and Parking, could also be met.
- 3.37. Approval is therefore sought from the Committee for the progression of a procurement to establish a framework agreement for the provision of transport consultancy services, and the provision of delegated authority to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection, in consultation with the Assistant Directors of Legal & Democratic Services and Procurement, to approve the award of the resulting contracts.

4. Contribution to strategic aims

- 4.1. The delivery of the programme of strategic transport schemes will help to deliver the three service priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan of Healthy Environment, Thriving Communities and Inclusive Economy as set out within this report.

5. Environmental and climate implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in our Climate Emergency Strategy this figure is lower in Reading with transport accounting for around 20% of carbon emissions, however significant investment in sustainable transport solutions is vital in order to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in February 2019 and to help achieve our target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.
- 5.2. The Climate Impact Assessment tool has been used to assess the proposal as set out within this report, resulting in an overall Net Medium Positive impact. This is due to the programme being focused on encouraging the use of sustainable transport, walking and

cycling as attractive alternatives to the private car. The programme will enhance facilities to encourage more use of sustainable transport and active travel options, and therefore reduce the use of the private car and resulting congestion, carbon emissions and other air quality issues. There are inevitably emissions associated with the construction of these major schemes, however we are working to reduce these short-term impacts in order to achieve the longer-term modal switch benefits.

- 5.3. In addition, the delivery of the major transport schemes as set out within this report form a vital part of our overall transport and climate emergency strategies, which has achieved considerable success in recent years including bus usage in Reading being the second highest in the country outside of London, having increased by 23% since 2010, and around 35% of trips into Reading town centre being made by pedestrians and cyclists.

6. Community engagement

- 6.1. The schemes included within the current major transport scheme programme have and will be communicated to the local community through public exhibitions, consultations and Council meetings.
- 6.2. Statutory consultation will be conducted in accordance with appropriate legislation, including Traffic Regulation Orders as appropriate. Notices will be advertised in the local printed newspaper and will be erected on lamp columns within the affected area.

7. Equality impact assessment

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. The Council, and where appropriate partner delivery organisations, have carried out an equality impact assessment scoping exercise on all of the projects included within the current major transport scheme programme.

8. Other relevant considerations

- 8.1. There are none.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. The creation of and changes to existing Traffic Regulation Orders will require advertisement and consultation, under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. These procedures have been and will continue to be completed at the relevant time.
- 9.2. The procurement of a new Transport Consultancy Services Framework Contract will be undertaken in accordance with all relevant legislation at that time, noting it is anticipated that new procurement legislation is likely to be brought forward by the Government in due course. It is envisaged that the procurement will be undertaken through a two-stage process, with an initial Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) stage followed by the main Invitation to Tender (ITT) stage. All documentation will be prepared in collaboration with and agreed by the Council's Procurement and Legal Services departments prior to the procurement being undertaken.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. The vast majority of the Council's current programme of strategic transport schemes is funded by external grants which have been secured from various sources, including the LEP and the DfT. All of the capital schemes as set out within the report are included within the Council's Capital Programme which includes the funding profile for each scheme. Both the capital and revenue schemes are monitored regularly as part of the internal budget monitoring processes.
- 10.2. The Council has secured private sector Section 106 funding contributions specifically fettered for the provision of the Buzz 42 bus service through the planning process, These contributions include £300k from the development at 42 Kenavon Drive, £188k from the Huntley Wharf site and £200k from the Gasholder site on Kenavon Drive.
- 10.3. In March 2023, the DfT confirmed to the Council that the bid for an additional £1m of capital grant funding for the Bath Road active travel scheme had been approved. This is in addition to the £1.3m grant funding which was secured from the DfT in March 2022 for the scheme.

11. Timetable for implementation

- 11.1. The latest timetable for implementation of individual schemes is set out within this report.

12. Background papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. **None**