

Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee

11 March 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Local Transport Delivery Plan
Purpose of the report	To seek approval for submission of the Council's initial Local Transport Delivery Plan to Government
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee, Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
Report author	Chris Maddocks, Strategic Transport Manager
Lead Councillor	Councillor John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
Council priority	Deliver a sustainable & healthy environment & reduce Reading's carbon footprint
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the Committee notes the allocation of local transport grant funding from Government for the period 2026/27-29/30.2. That the Committee approves the submission of the Council's initial Local Transport Delivery Plan to Government, as provided at Appendix A.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the submission of the Council's initial Local Transport Delivery Plan to Government. This Plan sets out a high-level programme for the investment of both capital and revenue grant funding which has been allocated to the Council by the Department for Transport (DfT). The Plan period covers 2026/27-29/30 for capital, and 2026/27-28/29 for revenue grant funding.
- 1.2. The Council is required to submit its initial version of the Local Transport Delivery Plan to the DfT by 20 March, with the final version having to be submitted to Government by 18 September 2026.
- 1.3. In addition, the report provides context to the delivery of transport schemes and initiatives in Reading over recent years, and the outcomes that have been achieved by the Council working with key partners. This has resulted in Reading achieving amongst the highest levels of sustainable travel in the country, outside of London, as demonstrated by the latest Government bus and rail usage statistics as set out within the report.
- 1.4. There is the opportunity to build on this past success utilising the funding which has been allocated by Government for future years.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Council adopted its new Local Transport Plan (LTP), the Reading Transport Strategy 2040, at the meeting of full Council on 15 October 2024. The Strategy sets out a vision to create healthier, greener and more equal communities through the future provision of travel choices in Reading. The Strategy is focused on promoting sustainable transport options as a realistic alternative to the private car, setting out how

transport facilities and services will be developed to 2040 to help achieve the Council's wider objectives for the town as set out in the Council Plan.

- 2.2. The LTP sets the overarching vision for future transport provision in Reading, with sub-strategies providing more detailed implementation plans for specific topics. These include the Bus Service Improvement Plan, Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan, Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Plan and the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- 2.3. Government is currently preparing a new Integrated National Transport Strategy. This will focus on creating a transport network that works well for people; and is safe, reliable and accessible, so everyone can make the journeys they need to easily. Priorities will include aligning transport with development, simplifying payments and information, improving accessibility and inclusion, and providing safe and dependable journeys. It is anticipated that the DfT will also publish updated LTP guidance for local authorities in line with the new national strategy.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. In December 2025, Government announced a new consolidated approach to funding for local transport for the next Spending Review period, starting in April 2026. This approach moves away from providing opportunities for local authorities to bid for funding for transport schemes and initiatives through competitive processes, to a system whereby the majority of funding is allocated via needs-based formula to local authorities.
- 3.2. As part of this new approach, the DfT requires local authorities to produce a Local Transport Delivery Plan. This should set out details of how the new Integrated Transport Fund (ITF) grant will be prioritised, with details of schemes and interventions or programmes and packages of spend. The initial versions of these Delivery Plans are required to be submitted to the DfT by 20 March 2026, with final versions submitted by 18 September 2026.
- 3.3. The grant funding allocations to local authorities from Government remain based on different modes, such as highways maintenance, bus services and active travel; however, they will be consolidated into the ITF grant payments with greater flexibility provided to authorities on how they can be spent.
- 3.4. The grant allocations for Reading are set out below:

Capital Grant	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Local Transport Grant	1,741,400	2,285,300	3,131,700	3,978,100
Bus Grant	1,498,600	1,528,700	1,558,900	1,589,000
Active Travel Grant	575,600	575,600	575,600	575,600
Highways Maintenance	2,873,000	3,377,000	3,641,000	4,162,000
Total	6,688,600	7,766,600	8,907,200	10,304,700

Revenue Grant	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Local Transport Grant	234,500	234,500	234,500	N/A
Bus Grant	1,074,000	1,074,000	1,074,000	N/A
Active Travel Grant	180,600	180,600	180,600	N/A
Electric Vehicle Charging	138,600	138,600	138,600	N/A
Total	1,627,700	1,627,700	1,627,700	N/A

- 3.5. The new funding arrangements provide longer-term certainty and more flexibility for the Council to take decisions on how best to utilise this funding, with fewer grant specific conditions than has been the case in recent years. In addition, the Council has recently received confirmation that it will continue to receive a separate grant for the provision of Bikeability cycle training in schools for the period 26/27 - 28/29.
- 3.6. Whilst authorities have been provided with this greater flexibility, Government has made clear that this funding should be used to achieve national priorities which will be set

through the Local Transport Outcome Framework. This will outline measurable priority outcomes Government wants local authorities to achieve, reflecting shared national and local priorities for transport which will be aligned with the upcoming Integrated National Transport Strategy.

Progress to Date

- 3.7. The Council has made considerable progress in delivering local transport schemes and initiatives in recent years, in a large part due to successfully securing significant amounts of external grant funding through competitive bidding processes. This has enabled the Council to improve travel options for residents, with a focus on sustainable transport choices, in line with our overall transport vision and objectives.
- 3.8. Examples of schemes the Council has successfully delivered in recent years include the redevelopment of Reading Railway Station interchanges; Reading Green Park Station; Reading West Station redevelopment; South Reading Bus Rapid Transit (BRT); three new park and ride sites; Reading All-Bus multi-operator ticket discount scheme; a programme of bus service enhancements and bus priority measures; National Cycle Network (NCN) route 422; Christchurch Bridge; School Street schemes; and a programme of initiatives, training and incentivisation particularly focused on active travel choices.
- 3.9. Alongside the delivery of major transport schemes and initiatives, the Council has successfully delivered an on-going programme of road safety, traffic management, parking, highway resurfacing and streetlighting maintenance schemes, to improve travel facilities for all users.
- 3.10. In addition to grant funding from the DfT, the Council has worked successfully in recent years to secure further external funding for transport schemes. This has included securing considerable funding directly from Network Rail, Great Western Railway, Innovate UK, and historically from EU funded programmes. The Council has also worked proactively with private developers through the statutory planning process to secure funding and/or deliver improvements to the transport network as part of new residential and commercial developments in the town.

Outcomes

- 3.11. The outcomes achieved from this work to promote sustainable travel has resulted in Reading achieving amongst the highest levels of sustainable travel in the country, outside of London, as set out below; with a considerable shift to the use of sustainable transport modes in recent years.
- 3.12. The latest statistics for rail usage show that passenger numbers grew at all four stations in the borough during 2024/25, with usage at Reading West Station increasing by 43% following the station redevelopment works. Passengers at Reading Station increased by almost 1 million to 14.3 million compared to the previous year, making it one of the UK's busiest railway stations outside of London.
- 3.13. Bus usage also continued to grow in 2024/25 following the significant programme of enhancements delivered by the Council in partnership with local operators. This has resulted in usage heading back to pre-Covid levels, with 20 million passenger journeys on local bus services in the borough during 2024/25, compared with 19.5 million the previous year. This means Reading continues to have the third highest bus use, outside of London, per head of population in the UK; however we are aware of falling fare-paying passenger numbers on some services in the Reading area during the current year.
- 3.14. Levels of active travel are also increasing, with approximately 55,000 walking trips and 11,000 cycle trips undertaken every day to/from Reading town centre. The trend for levels of cycling to/from the town centre has considerably increased, from a mode share of 2-3% between 2008-17 to a mode share of 5-6% in recent years, peaking in 2020 during the pandemic at over 6% of trips to/from the town centre.

Local Transport Delivery Plan

- 3.15. The Initial Local Transport Delivery Plan (attached at Appendix A) sets out how the Council proposes to build on this past success and allocate the ITF grant from Government for the period 2026/27-29/30 for capital funding, and 2026/27-28/29 for revenue funding.
- 3.16. The Delivery Plan includes a number of schemes and initiatives which are currently underway, including the Council's annual highways resurfacing programme; introduction of new electric buses; delivery of further bus priority measures; improved passenger facilities at Mere oak Park and Ride site; provision of enhanced bus services including Buzz 9 and 18 routes; delivery of the Bath Road / Castle Hill active travel scheme and the provision of a comprehensive programme of active travel initiatives, training and incentivisation to encourage higher levels of walking, cycling and wheeling.
- 3.17. Further schemes and initiatives have been included in the Delivery Plan to build upon the success of the Council's previous Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and Active Travel Fund (AFT) programmes in recent years. Examples of new items include: updating the Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and improvements for all users in Sidmouth Street through a redesign of the existing road layout. However, it should be noted that approval for progressing individual schemes such as this one will be sought from the relevant Council Committee or Sub-Committee in the usual way.
- 3.18. In addition, funding has also been allocated to the Council's on-going programmes relating to road safety, traffic management, parking and highway maintenance schemes.
- 3.19. The proposed initial Local Transport Delivery Plan is provided at Appendix A of this report. The Council is required to submit an Initial Plan to the DfT by 20 March. There is opportunity thereafter to fully develop the Council's final Delivery Plan before the deadline for it to be submitted to Government by 18 September.

Next Steps

- 3.20. In conclusion, the allocation of ITF grant funding from Government provides the Council with future year funding certainty and provides an opportunity to build on our past success. It will enable the Council to continue to deliver travel enhancements to help achieve its transport vision and wider objectives relating to sustainable economic growth, housing delivery, air quality and the climate emergency.
- 3.21. In order to maximise the effectiveness of the grant funding, it will be important for the Council to continue to work positively and proactively with key delivery partners and stakeholders, alongside working with others to learn from best practice as each element of the Delivery Plan is further developed and implemented.
- 3.22. There are a wide range of key partners who will be critical to the successful implementation of the Delivery Plan. These include: Government, Active Travel England, Transport for the South East, organisations such as APSE to ensure we can learn from best practice and share our experiences, neighbouring local authorities to develop joined-up networks and deliver cross-boundary schemes, rail industry partners including Network Rail, Great Western Railway and South Western Railway; continue our close working with local bus operators through the Enhanced Partnership arrangements, as well as a broad range of local interest groups and forums.
- 3.23. Government recognises that priorities may change in the future and therefore there will be flexibility for authorities to make amendments to the Delivery Plan, particularly for the later years. However, the initial Local Transport Delivery Plan as provided at Appendix A sets out the Council's proposed priorities for the grant funding to enable us to continue delivery of enhanced travel choices, particularly by sustainable means, for local residents and visitors to Reading.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The proposed Local Transport Delivery Plan as set out within this report will help to deliver the five priorities in the Council Plan to promote more equal communities in Reading; secure Reading's economic and cultural success; deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint; safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children; ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future
- 4.2. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website. These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

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 one quarter of total carbon emissions, therefore significant investment in sustainable transport solutions is vital in order to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by the Council.
- 5.2. The Climate Impact Assessment tool has been used to assess the programme of works 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 proposed Programme will enhance facilities to encourage more use of sustainable transport and active travel options, therefore reducing 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 some schemes; although the Council is working to reduce these short-term impacts in order to achieve the longer-term modal switch benefits.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. The local transport schemes and initiatives included within this report 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 areas.

7. Equality Implications

- 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, will undertake an equality impact assessment scoping exercise for the projects included within the current programme of transport schemes.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. There are none.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. There are no Traffic Regulation Orders required directly resulting from this report. However, where schemes are being developed and there is a need to create new

and/or change existing Traffic Regulation Orders, this will be done in accordance with the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and 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. A report will be presented to the relevant committee for approval pursuant to our constitutional arrangements where any new or changes to existing Traffic Regulation Orders are proposed.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. The capital programmes in the Delivery Plan are included in the Council's Capital Programme, which includes the funding profile for each scheme. This programme of works is funded by external grants and funding contributions which have been secured from various external sources as set out within the report. Both the capital and revenue schemes and initiatives within this programme are monitored regularly as part of the Council's internal budget monitoring processes.
- 10.2. Whilst the new funding arrangements do provide greater flexibility for local authorities, there are still grant conditions attached and the need to align spend with the Local Transport Outcome Framework. These conditions can relate to both the type of works that the grants can be used to fund and the timescales within which the funding needs to be spent. Failure to meet these conditions may result in the Council being required to repay the grant funding, either in part or in full.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. The Delivery Plan will be developed in more detail as individual schemes are brought forward to seek scheme approval from Council Committees, for instance the programme of roads as part of the annual resurfacing programme. The final plan will be brought back to Committee for approval prior to submission to the DfT in September.
- 11.2. The timetable for implementation of the programmes is set out in Appendix A.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices

Appendix A: Local Transport Delivery Plan (March 2026)