

Annual Review



Wiltshire Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan

November 2022

Wiltshire Council

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Foreword

Good public transport links are vital for the success and prosperity of Wiltshire's communities, allowing access to our towns and city, our schools and colleges, our places of work and leisure. The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) supports our Business Plan goals for vibrant, well-connected communities and helps us in meeting our climate change objectives, by supporting both the decarbonisation of existing transport and increased use of public transport options.

The Government's National Bus Strategy, Bus Back Better, requires all Local Transport Authorities to develop a BSIP. Our first Plan was produced in October 2021 and we will review this annually to ensure it reflects both current and future service needs and any changes in Government policy.

This first Annual Review sets out the progress we have made over the past year, as well as explaining how we plan to revise the BSIP in light of the fact that we received no Government funding towards it earlier this year. This was very disappointing but nonetheless, we remain ambitious in our plans to grow bus usage and increase the modal share of the bus to meet the vast range of economic, environmental and societal benefits.

Our residents' top three asks are for more frequent buses, more evening buses and better Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI). We are serious about meeting these requests and this year we have invested in replacing and extending our RTPI system, with units being installed at bus stops as this Annual Review is published. We have recently commissioned a piece of work to enable us to begin establishing a Superbus network. Working in partnership with our bus operators, the Superbus network offers a real opportunity to make buses more frequent and reliable with more journeys throughout the day and in the evenings. But sadly, we can only move forward with this ambition with significant BSIP funding.

We are raising awareness of the bus through our digital offering, [Connecting Wiltshire](#), and through our participation in campaigns such as Catch the Bus Month and on-going social media presence. And we are developing a co-ordinated style and feel for bus information and signage across the county based on our successful Connecting Wiltshire brand.

Whilst we are already working on a number of schemes to improve our bus network, Wiltshire Council faces significant budgetary pressures going forward. Without a BSIP funding package, our interventions will unfortunately remain small-scale for now, and not allow us to reach the full potential that exists to encourage greater bus use and offer our residents and visitors the public transport network they want and need. Indeed, we are mindful that there is a risk that elements of our present bus network will be withdrawn in the current financial climate.

We were obviously very disheartened not to receive any BSIP funding from Government, but I believe that this Annual Review of the BSIP, which will inform a fully revised BSIP in 2023, remains both ambitious and realistic, as we and our Enhanced Partnership seek to make the bus a more attractive option for all.



Cllr Dr Mark McClelland, Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste, Street Scene and Flooding

Executive Summary

Our key achievements over the past year have been:

- Reviewed our bus network collectively with our operators and we are maintaining a good level of connectivity for a rural area
- Our Demand Responsive project funded by the Rural Mobility Fund (RMF) is progressing well and will be launched in Spring 2023 under the new brand of 'Wiltshire Connect'
- We have replaced our Real Time Information system which now allows us to expand into new areas of the county
- Worked with GWR on various projects to deliver better bus/rail integration across Wiltshire
- Began work on progressing our Superbus proposals
- Our Enhanced Partnership has been made
- Employed two new members of staff to deliver out BSIP and RMF project.

The Department for Transport provided the following feedback to us in response to our first Bus Service Improvement Plan in 2021.

- The BSIP provides an honest and comprehensive analysis of current bus services and sets strong foundations for objectives and targets
- The bus priority plans provide a clear set of measures to reduce congestion, improve bus journey times and encourage increased patronage, but could be strengthened with more concrete details on the interventions proposed
- Positive engagement has been demonstrated with members of the public, local businesses and bus operators but more information and evidence of engagement with DRT and community bus services would be welcomed
- More information to be provided on the improvement of services to tourist locations
- It could be strengthened with a clearer structuring of improvement measures, with timescales indicated.

In response to the feedback we have:

- Undertaken a review of all our bus priority schemes to better assess feasibility and deliverability and over the next few months we will develop a concrete programme for implementation
- Undertaken a survey to help shape our new DRT service that will be delivered in 2023 through our Rural Mobility Funding
- We now hold monthly meetings with Passenger Users Group, Option 24/7 to gather the latest feedback and ideas from the public. We plan to undertake further public engagement and surveys in 2023
- Included further measures in relation to tourist sites and have begun partnership work with GWR to market new bus/rail links to key sites
- Structured this Annual Review document so delivery of measures is now clearly outlined and we have provided timescales for delivery where possible
- Ensured that the quarterly meetings held with Community Transport representatives have BSIP and public transport on the agenda and that a Community Transport representative is part of the Enhanced Partnership

Each section now outlines what we plan to do under existing budget arrangements but also outlines what we would seek to achieve if more funding became available.

If significant new funding were to become available over the coming year we would:

- Invest heavily in delivering our Superbus Network to increase frequencies, reliability and patronage levels
- Lower fares and offer new ticketing products to encourage more people to use the bus
- Upgrade our bus infrastructure and interchange provision across the county to improve the bus passenger experience
- Deliver more bus priority measures where most needed.

1 Introduction

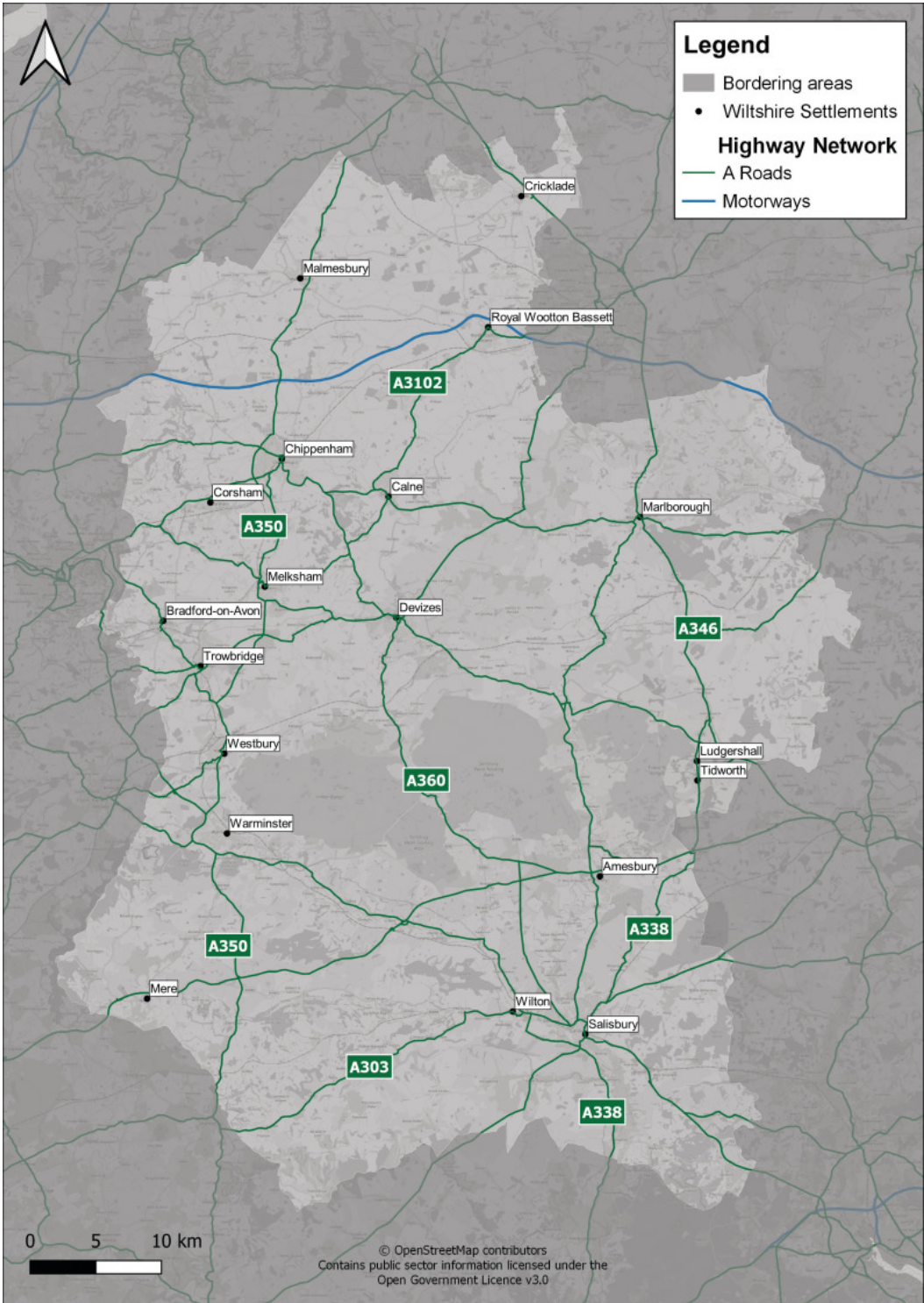
- 1.1** Our first Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) was published in October 2021 in response to the Government's National Bus Strategy: Bus Back Better. In that time, the bus market has continued to undergo a period of deep uncertainty and change in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic. In April 2022, we learnt that we had been unsuccessful in obtaining Department for Transport (DfT) funding for our BSIP, although only 40% of Local Transport Authorities that submitted a BSIP were successful. Feedback from DfT since then has helped us formulate this Annual Review of the BSIP.
- 1.2** It is intended that this is a document for further discussion and review with our stakeholders and Enhanced Partnership, to enable us to develop a fully revised BSIP in 2023. It is our plan to be fully aligned with Wiltshire's Local Plan Review and fourth Local Transport Plan. In light of the fact that we were unsuccessful in achieving funding, we will seek to set new and achievable targets alongside revised plans to grow bus patronage, increase bus modal share and meet the aims of the National Bus Strategy. This Annual Review sets the framework, developing the BSIP in line with current funding constraints, and providing a basis for developing a detailed delivery plan for the future.
- 1.3** The BSIP covers the entire administrative area of Wiltshire as illustrated in Figure 1 overleaf.
- 1.4** Despite the lack of BSIP funding, Wiltshire Council have been working towards a number of the aims set out in our BSIP over the past twelve months.

Achievements since 2021

- National Bus Strategy Manager appointed through Capacity Funding
- A new Demand Responsive Transport Manager appointed to deliver our Rural Mobility Fund project
- The Enhanced Partnership came into force on 1 April 2022
- Demand Responsive Transport project progresses with a view to launching our first new service in April 2023
- Reviewed the bus network with our operators and the coverage and frequency of the network remains good for a rural area
- Lifted the 9:30 time restriction on the use of the concessionary pass in order to increase usage
- Set up a South-West Officers group to discuss BSIP and EP matters across the region
- We ran a Catch the Bus Month social media campaign in September 2022, achieving a very high level of engagement
- We invested £600k in replacing and expanding our new Real Time Passenger Information using Wiltshire Council Capital Funding
- We submitted a bid to DEFRA for over £300,000 for bus marketing in our Air Quality Management Areas (outcome to be announced in January 2023)
- Bus capacity improvements are being incorporated into the design of other major highways schemes by our Traffic Engineering Team, e.g., Harnham Gyratory improvements in Salisbury
- Awarded funding from Great Western Railway to improve wayfinding between railway stations and nearest bus stops
- Redesigned the Malmesbury area bus network to ensure better frequencies, reliability and accessibility from residential areas of the town to neighbouring settlements; awarded a new contract in August 2022

- Introduced a new town bus service to a large strategic housing development of 600 houses at Birds Marsh, Chippenham
- Began developing a Bus Stop Strategy for the county
- Awarded GWR Community Funding for improvements to bus infrastructure at Bedwyn Railway Station
- Initial feasibility has begun on our Superbus Network with internal funding secured to undertake design in 2023/24
- Used council communication channels to assist operators with driver recruitment
- Encouraging passenger recovery figures with an absence of service reductions
- Joint work with Network Rail and other key stakeholders on developing the Business Case for a new Devizes Gateway Station
- Discussions with Swindon & Wiltshire LEP regarding introducing hydrogen into the local bus market
- Monthly meetings with our Wiltshire-wide Passenger Transport Group, Option 24/7
- Stagecoach 55 inter-urban service returned to its pre-covid frequency
- Local operator Faresaver has invested in two brand new single deck and several newer double deck buses as well as an extension of their school holiday “kids go free” offer to weekends in September and November
- Tap In, Tap Out facilities introduced by First and Salisbury Reds
- Continue to maintain the public transport supported budget at pre-covid levels.

Map 1.1 Administrative Area of Wiltshire and main highway network



2 Current Offer and Progress

Local context

- 2.1** Wiltshire is a predominantly rural area with many natural and historic features which make it distinctive. Salisbury is the largest city in Wiltshire, followed by the towns of Trowbridge and Chippenham. These settlements form the main business, commercial, educational, service and culture centres. These principal settlements are supported by a number of market towns throughout the county. The smaller settlements function as local employment hubs, provide leisure facilities and act as service centres for the surrounding rural areas.
- 2.2** A comprehensive review of the bus service offer in Wiltshire was undertaken for the BSIP in 2021 and is contained within the 'Wiltshire Bus Service Improvement Baseline Note.' Any significant changes over the past year are set out below.

Current trends in bus usage

- 2.3** Whilst we have seen passenger numbers increase over the past year, bus patronage is still 27% lower than pre-Covid levels in 2019. The change in travel patterns since Covid, particularly in terms of lower levels of commuters and smaller numbers of concessionary users returning to the bus, is seemingly having a long-lasting impact on bus use in Wiltshire. That said, our operators are reporting a significant increase in people using the bus for leisure purposes at the weekend.
- 2.4** DfT statistics show the bus passenger trip-rate in Wiltshire is 19 annual bus trips per head of population and this has been falling since 2009/10. This trip-rate is similar to comparative local authorities. New figures are due to be released on 30th November so we will update this accordingly in our next BSIP review.
- 2.5** According to the Census 2011, 2.7% of Wiltshire's population utilised buses to travel to work. This represents a low mode share by bus and is likely to represent a small proportion of total bus trips within the county. Once Census data for 2021 is published (the provisional release date is December 2022) we will update this figure.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Travel patterns have altered significantly since the pandemic, and it is now much more difficult to predict likely bus passenger usage in the future
- The bus trip-rate is marginally higher than would be predicted by the level of car ownership
- There is significant scope to increase mode share of buses, particularly for journeys to work, but the challenge with our existing tendered network is that virtually all vehicles are presently used for school movements.

Bus Operator Context

- 2.6** The bus network within Wiltshire continues to be provided by several different operators, with different primary operators across differing parts of the local authority. Wiltshire Council supports around 70% of bus services operating in its area, the main exceptions being urban services in Salisbury and a number of strategic interurban services.
- 2.7** Commercial bus services in Wiltshire are mainly provided by:
- Go South Coast (operating mainly as Salisbury Reds in South & East Wiltshire)

- Stagecoach West (North and East Wiltshire)
- Independent operator Faresaver (West/North Wiltshire).
- First who operate between Bath and west Wiltshire.

2.8 These operators also operate tendered services in the same areas, along with a number of other smaller bus operating companies and community transport providers in Wiltshire.

2.9 [Community First](#) run 21 local mini-bus groups and 42 link schemes across Wiltshire and Swindon and are supported by small grant provided by Wiltshire Council each year. These schemes are mainly aimed at the elderly and less-able.

Figure 2 shows the bus network map for Wiltshire as of October 2022.

Map 2.1 The Bus Network in Wiltshire



Bus service supply

- 2.10** As in 2021, outside Salisbury and with the exception of a few key interurban services, weekday service frequencies are still mostly hourly or less, which is not yet sufficient to attract any significant modal shift. Some services run less often at weekends, with few services operating in the county on Sundays.
- 2.11** In the Salisbury area, the majority of daytime bus services continue to be run on a commercial basis but the frequency of many services within the city has had to be reduced to 30-60 minutes due to the current driver shortage. Outside the Salisbury area, only 30% of the bus network is run commercially and in many cases the commerciality of the service remains heavily influenced by the carriage of school and college students. Tendered weekday services are heavily built around the carriage of students, enabling off-peak service to be provided in a very cost-effective manner.
- 2.12** The inter-urban bus network across Wiltshire remains good in terms of connectivity but services continue to be operated by several different companies and are not marketed as a single network. Few services operate more frequently than half-hourly, the highest frequencies being between Chippenham, Corsham and Bath, between Swindon and Royal Wootton Bassett and between Andover and Tidworth.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Outside of Salisbury, only 30% of the network is run commercially
- Few interurban services operate more frequently than half hourly and many are less frequent than that
- There are low frequency services in many of our market towns outside of Salisbury, with limited peak-period services
- The on-going bus driver shortage is leading to cancellations and reduced frequencies on some services and is hindering improvement and expansion of services as well as undermining passenger confidence
- The current cost of living crisis is impacting operators' costs which in turn affects contract prices
- The areas with the poorest accessibility to a frequent bus service in Wiltshire are located in the Pewsey area and around Mere in the south of the county
- Slow interurban services due to diversions to serve villages and housing developments, and low frequencies even to major attractors of demand such as Bath and Swindon
- Infrequent and slow bus services outside the core interurban and town networks
- Analysis shows there are a significant number of residents travelling between Wiltshire and Bath and North East Somerset. Of these commuters, only a small number currently utilise the bus service to travel to Bath. However, many of the settlements in west Wiltshire are served by a regular rail service, which is likely to be one of the main reasons that few use the bus. Our analysis has highlighted that there is additional scope for buses to capture modal shift within the Bath travel to work area within the west of Wiltshire i.e. Melksham
- Within the Swindon travel to work area, an opportunity also exists to strengthen services into Swindon to encourage modal shift. Under-provision between Salisbury and its travel to work area has also been highlighted, for example with the hourly bus service to Devizes which takes around 1 hour 40 minutes.

Progress

- 2.13** Earlier this year we held Bus Network Reviews with all of our major operators to assess any changes that would be necessary going forward, particularly when the Covid-19 Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) funding ran out. Relatively few changes to the bus service network were identified as necessary and the main changes have been in terms of alterations to service numbers, frequencies and the company running each route. The stability in bus network support provided by Wiltshire Council has assisted in retaining passengers.
- 2.14** We have seen some frequencies returning to pre-covid levels recently, for example, the 55 service between Chippenham and Swindon is now back to a 20-minute service.

Bus Fares and Ticketing

- 2.15** The fares charged for bus journeys across Wiltshire vary across the county, with those in the north of the county being generally lower than those in the south and east. Operators of commercial services do not generally accept tickets issued by other operators, although tickets issued by other operators are accepted on tendered services over common sections of route. Nonetheless we have run a Wiltshire Day Rover ticket for a number of years which is accepted by all operators in the county. The PlusBus ticket is also available to purchase with train tickets to enable travel to/from railway station by bus.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Bus fares are variable across Wiltshire, with passengers in the north of the county generally paying lower fares than those in the south/east
- Multi-operator ticketing is limited to a Wiltshire-wide Day Rover, and specific corridors and travel-to-work areas. There may be scope to encourage more travel by bus by extending the scope to travel to more destinations on one ticket, particularly to those who do not currently have access to a car
- Currently there is a complex and inconsistent range of discounts for young people
- Payment options for tickets vary between operators, but almost all our operators now offer contactless payment.

Progress

- Promotion of all tickets and passes via the Connecting Wiltshire website and as part of Catch the Bus Month (September 2022)
- The provision of concessionary travel to older and disabled people is mandated by the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS). Validity on weekends is at any time and on weekdays validity starts at 09:30 but with a number of timed exceptions on infrequent rural services. From September 1st 2022 until 31st March we have lifted the time restriction on ENCTS to help encourage concessionary users back to the bus
- All our operators should have contactless payment available to passenger by March 2023.

Bus Passenger Information

- 2.16** In terms of bus passenger information, roadside information is produced by Wiltshire Council where multiple operators use a route. Otherwise, roadside information is produced by the operator if they are the only bus operator on that route. Whilst this provides some cost savings for Wiltshire Council it can lead to issues such as inconsistent branding and differing types of information provided to passengers. At the roadside, a number of other passenger information sources are

advertised including Traveline, bus operator websites, apps and QR codes that link to mobile browsers or provide departure times via text message. Roadside Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) is limited to routes in and radiating out of Salisbury only.

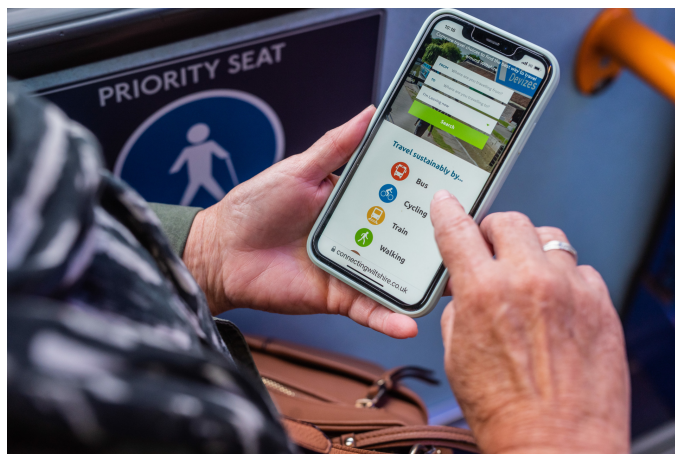
2.17 Prior to the pandemic, printed information was largely in the hands of the operators. However, this is now extremely limited and often difficult to obtain. This can be an issue, particularly for people who do not have access to digital technology.

Challenges and Opportunities

- The reliance on bus operators to publish their own timetables at bus stops can lead to inconsistencies in information provided, potentially making the bus experience confusing for existing and prospective passengers
- Roadside information is provided to a variable standard and specification across the county
- There is limited roadside RTPI outside of Salisbury but the award of the new contract to run this will make it easier to expand to other area
- Our own online bus information could be improved and expanded
- We can use social media more to communicate information to passengers.

Progress

2.18 Wiltshire Council has a website [Connecting Wiltshire](#), which has the potential to become the single source of information for all bus passengers. We have begun using this more intensively over the past year as well as the social media accounts associated with it.



Bus Fleet

2.19 In general terms, a mixed fleet of emissions standards operates in Wiltshire, albeit it is generally to a high emission standard. We currently have 286 vehicles which are able to operate within Wiltshire, with many vehicles possessing Euro 6 compliant engines.

Progress

2.20 The table below outlines the current emission standards of the bus fleet in Wiltshire, highlighting that 55% of the buses covering this are to Euro 6 standards, 1% are electric and 26% are older than Euro 4 standards. This is an improvement on the figures from last year but an opportunity still exists to improve the emission standards of the bus fleet within Wiltshire.

Table 2.1 Bus Fleet Emission Standards

Emission standard	Percentage of buses 2021 (%)	Percentage of buses 2022 (%)
Electric	1	1
Euro 6	38	55
Euro 5	26	18
Euro 4	23	21
Other	11	5

Bus Priority Measures

2.21 Wiltshire currently has a limited amount of bus priority measures in operation and most of the existing infrastructure is found in Salisbury. This is mainly due to the rural nature of the county, as well the nature of our historic market towns and villages where the constrained streetscape make traditional bus priority measures, such as bus lanes, difficult to accommodate.

2.22 Bus service monitoring by Wiltshire Council has highlighted that the percentage of buses running late (6 minutes or more) has fluctuated between 6 and 14 percent between 2018-2019 to 2021-2022. Schemes to improve reliability of the bus services will be pursued as part of the BSIP and we are currently working with the DfT BODS (Bus Open Data Service) to utilise their system to identify locations and services where reliability is a problem.

Challenges and Opportunities

- There are pinch points and congestion hot spots on the current highway network, and opportunities exist to reduce bus journey times and improve bus service reliability
- Despite current interventions in use within Wiltshire, bus services within the county still suffer from longer journey times during the peak periods as a result of congestion. This therefore highlights that there is additional scope to increase the use of bus priority to improve the reliability of bus journeys, providing opportunities for more consistent journey times and an improved service for passengers.

Progress

- We are increasing the enforcement of our existing bus priority measures with camera technology over the coming year to cut down on misuse and increase the effectiveness of our current bus lanes
- We have begun discussions regarding the use of traffic signal priority for buses at a number of locations throughout the county.

Wiltshire Council Staffing

2.23 Up until spring 2022, there was limited officer capacity available at Wiltshire Council to provide additional engagement with bus operators and to provide proactive policy and operational direction. However, to help deliver on our BSIP ambitions, additional staffing resources (funded by Capacity Funding and RMF funding) have allowed us to employ two new members of staff.

Progress

- Employed National Bus Strategy Manager to oversee delivery of the BSIP
- Employed Demand Responsive Transport Manager to deliver our Rural Mobility Fund Project.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

- 2.24** To inform the development of the BSIP, the Council sought engagement with a range of internal and external stakeholders in 2021. This included a public engagement survey, several meetings and email discussions with bus operators, meetings with local politicians including town and parish councils, and internal Wiltshire Council working groups. The purpose of this engagement was to ensure collaborative insight to inform the decision making within this BSIP.
- 2.25** Wiltshire Council ran a non-statutory public engagement survey in the summer of 2021. This survey was open to both individuals and businesses and received over 2000 responses from individuals and just over 20 responses from businesses. The main aim of the survey was to understand where the bus service offering fulfils needs for travel, where it could improve and what the network lacks.
- 2.26** In the summer of 2022, Wiltshire Council also ran an engagement survey to help inform the shape of the new on-demand bus service that will be delivered next year through the Rural Mobility Funding. We received over 500 responses to this.
- 2.27** This year we have also pursued better engagement with our Community Transport Groups by ensuring BSIP-related matters and public transport are on the agenda at our quarterly meetings and by ensuring a Community Transport representative is part of the EP.

Challenges and Opportunities

- 2.28** In the 2021 survey, when asked what would encourage respondents to use the bus, the most frequently cited answers were
- More frequent buses
 - Real time bus information at bus stops
 - Buses in the evenings
- 2.29** When ranking the bus service, the highest proportion of survey respondents disagreed that they felt safe when travelling on the bus and that the bus takes them where they want to go.
- 2.30** Overall, from the survey responses for individuals, it was clear that most users do intend to continue to use the bus network, however there are key challenges limiting the extent to which the network meets the needs of Wiltshire's residents. These challenges include the themes highlighted in the National Bus Strategy of improved bus stop infrastructure, including information, as well as more frequent and affordable buses.
- 2.31** When considering businesses, the responses to the survey suggest a high level of car dependency to access businesses for both workers and visitors due to poor physical connectivity to the bus network, or timetables which do not match with the needs of those engaging with the businesses. A significant opportunity exists here to improve the connectivity between bus services and local businesses, which could unlock economic and social benefits for employees and businesses alike.

- Businesses highlighted that more frequent buses (74%) and later buses (68%) would encourage employees to use the bus
- 68% of businesses said that more frequent and more direct buses to their site would encourage customers to use the bus.

2.32 Further engagement is required to reach 'hard to reach' groups to ensure their voices are heard in relation to bus service improvement in Wiltshire in the future. It is clear that significant social and economic opportunity exists to tailor the bus network to cater to the needs of businesses and employees.

2.33 The RMF survey (2022) showed that respondents in rural areas ranked improved connectivity and integration as the two most important factors in encouraging them to use public transport more often. Almost 60% of respondents said that they don't use their local bus services because it isn't available for the journey they required, and 72% believed public transport wasn't available at the times they required.

Progress

2.34 Due to the ongoing uncertainties in the bus market, which in Wiltshire has been most significantly affected by the driver shortage and the lack of BSIP Funding, we have not yet undertaken a follow-up survey as we felt it would be best to wait until the bus market has settled a little more, before going back out to the public and key stakeholders. However, we are now holding monthly meetings with Local Passenger Users Group - Option 24/7 who represent the views of bus passengers across the county. We are collaboratively working with them on a number of issues that are of importance to local bus users.



Bus Operators and The Enhanced Partnership

2.35 Wiltshire Council has a strong working relationship with the local bus operators and has worked to engage with them all since the BSIP was introduced in October 2021. Wiltshire Council will continue to engage with the bus operators to develop the BSIP ideas and the Enhanced Partnership (EP).

Progress

2.36 The EP was made in April 2022. The Forum has not yet formally met as the lack of funding from DfT has meant that some time has been taken to decide how the BSIP and EP may need to change to reflect this. In addition, we have had to ensure our resources have been directed towards maintaining a resilient bus network in these challenging times. As such, the intention is that this Annual Review of the BSIP will be the first major item for the EP to consider at their first meeting planned for early 2023. It will also be discussed how the EP Plan and Scheme may need to change going forward.

Engagement with neighbouring local authorities

2.37 We continue to engage with our bordering local authorities in relation to our BSIP proposals and where our neighbours have held EP meetings or BSIP meetings we have attended in order to provide input. The local authorities we have engaged with to date are:

- Swindon Borough Council
- West of England Combined Authority (WECA)
- Dorset
- Somerset
- West Berkshire
- Hampshire

Progress

- Attending neighbouring authorities BSIP/EP meetings
- Working on cross-boundary issues where these are raised.

LTA Financial Support for Buses

2.38 As outlined previously, due to the rural nature of Wiltshire, there are numerous services which cannot run on a commercial basis and therefore are supported by the local authority as socially necessary services. Wiltshire Council currently support 70% of routes across the local authority area outside Salisbury at differing times and on differing days. The following tables shows our annual financial commitments in supporting buses in Wiltshire.

Table 2.2 Financial Support for Buses in Wiltshire

Item	Description	Annual Value	Funding source
Tendered bus service	Socially necessary services	£5, 275,000	Revenue budget
ENCTS	Concessionary fares	£4,100,000	Revenue budget

Item	Description	Annual Value	Funding source
Park and Ride	Supporting parking strategy in Salisbury	£473,000	Revenue budget
RTPI	RTPI running costs	£70,000	Revenue budget

Challenges and Opportunities

2.39 Inflationary pressures such as the cost of fuel have seen costs to operators rise significantly over the past year. This has had a knock-on impact when services are re-tendered, and the cost of many contracts has increased hugely as a result. We have recently undertaken a review of services, specifically looking at where the subsidy per head is particularly high and if our overall budget is reduced for 2023/24, this may unfortunately result in the need to withdraw or revise some services.

3 Aims, Objectives and Targets

3.1 The Enhanced Partnership (EP) was made in March 2022 and sets out a number of objectives which, alongside this BSIP, will provide bus services that are:

- More frequent
- Faster and more reliable
- Cheaper
- More comprehensive
- Easier to understand
- Easier to use
- Better integrated with other modes and each other.

3.2 The full set of EP aims and objectives are set out in Appendix 1.

Targets

3.3 In light of the fact that we have received no funding from DfT, we propose to review our targets with our Enhanced Partnership over the coming months to establish a new set of targets that may be more realistic and achievable given the financial situation. In this interim period, the targets set out in our 2021 BSIP remain the same especially as we wish to remain ambitious, but it is envisaged these will change next year.

Bus Journey Times

3.4 The bus journey times metric is based on Bus Open Data Service (BODS) data. A number of interventions are proposed to improve bus journey times on key urban routes, and core interurban routes providing key linkages across the county. The five planks to this strategy are

- The provision of bus priority where this is feasible
- Route reviews to identify and action highways issues that can affect bus services such as obstructive parking and poor junction geometry
- 'Tap on tap out' account-based ticketing
- Area network reviews
- Service re-designs to remove, where in the interests of the majority of passengers, minor route diversions.

3.5 We will work to improve bus service provision in line with our priority route hierarchy of:

- Superbus routes, including routes in Salisbury
- Interurban routes
- Town networks
- Rural routes.

3.6 This hierarchy is based upon the frequency of services and level of demand. Focus will be on infrastructure, services and ticketing improvements.

3.7 **Bus Journey Time Reliability**

3.8 This metric is based on BODS data and uses the standard definition of 1 minute early or 5 minutes late. The measures put forward above will also deliver greater consistency of journey times, which will translate into improvements in reliability.

Passenger Numbers

3.9 Passenger numbers are supplied to us by our operators and are based on the number of people boarding in Wiltshire on both commercial and tendered bus services. We expect patronage to respond positively in response to

- Reduced journey times
- Improved reliability
- Improved passenger information, promotion and marketing
- Upgrades to bus stop and interchange infrastructure
- Reduced fares
- The ability to complete multi-leg bus journeys on one ticket; and
- Targeted marketing and bus network design for journeys serving specific employers and business parks, and for journeys to school for students not entitled to free transport.

Passenger Satisfaction

3.10 At present there is no source of independent, detailed information on bus passenger satisfaction in Wiltshire although the table below shows some of the latest data we have gathered. However, it is acknowledged that a reliable baseline needs to be set for this target. As we received no BSIP funding, and as patronage levels are still settling following the pandemic, we decided not to commission any surveys this year. However, in 2023/24 we will conduct independent surveys to establish a baseline for passenger satisfaction. If it is possible to maintain an adequate sample size, we will disaggregate the results by Salisbury urban services, the Superbus network and remaining services.

Table 3.1 BSIP Targets

Target	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Target for 2024/25 (to be revised)
Journey time (AM peak hour, weekday)	N/A	17 km/h	19 km/h	19 km/h	10% reduction (Salisbury urban services)
	N/A	34 km/h	35 km/h	34 km/h	10% reduction (Super Bus interurban services)
	N/A	15km/h	15km/h	15km/h	2% reduction (town services)
Reliability (average for a selection of services)	80%	90%	81%	75%	10% improvement (Salisbury urban services)

Target	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Target for 2024/25 (to be revised)
Reliability	80%	78%	79%	79%	10% improvement (Super Bus interurban services)
	80%	85%	83%	82%	2% improvement (local bus services)
Passenger numbers	9.8 million	9.4 million	5.1 million	6.9 million	10% patronage uplift (minus ongoing impact of Covid recovery)
Average passenger satisfaction	(2017, NHTN - local services) 12% very satisfied, 33% fairly satisfied, 20% neither/nor	(2019, Transport Focus - Salisbury services) 65% very satisfied, 96% satisfied	N/A	N/A	Independent survey to be undertaken to establish baseline and appropriate target

4 Vision

Vision for the BSIP

- 4.1 Wiltshire Council and bus operators recognise that the bus has great potential to cater for more of our journeys in Wiltshire, for work, leisure, education and social journeys. Over the next decade, with a sustained and co-ordinated programme of investment we will deliver improvements to the bus offer in Wiltshire and increase the number of people using the bus for their everyday journeys.

Vision Statement

With investment and a process of positive, sustained improvements in our bus services, infrastructure, information and ticketing offer, we aim to achieve a virtuous circle of investment and passenger growth. We recognise that increasing bus use for everyday journeys will contribute to achieving a wide range of our policy objectives, such as de-carbonising transport, reducing inequalities and using our transport network and road-space much more efficiently.

- 4.2 We have revised a number of the following sections which focus on delivery, to reflect how we might now achieve our objectives and ambitions without BSIP funding. However, we have also set out what we would ideally like to deliver if funding does become available in the future.



5 Bus Services and Planning

- 5.1** We will develop a more collaborative process as part of the Enhanced Partnership and via further engagement with stakeholders, to consider proposals to change the bus network. We will consider external influences, notably the planning of new development both in the context of opportunities to grow demand, but also to ensure that bus services are able to meet the connectivity, mobility and accessibility needs of the population in an efficient and cost-effective way.
- 5.2** Our revised proposal, without any additional funding, is to focus on developing infrastructure, marketing and services on two bus corridors a year. We will achieve this through a systematic programme of route reviews which will be conducted in the following priority order:
- Superbus routes, including routes in Salisbury
 - Interurban routes
 - Town networks
 - Rural networks.

Increase bus priority measures

- 5.3** To achieve an improvement in bus journey times and reliability, there are a range of measures we will implement; these will be developed where congestion, highway layouts, car parking or network constraints cause delays to buses and passengers. Research shows that a 10% increase in congestion can result in up to a 10% decrease in patronage so we recognise the important role bus priority must play in order to achieve our targets and objectives.
- 5.4** Our proposed measures include:
- Bus lanes
 - Enforcement of existing bus lanes
 - Signal priority for buses or reconfigured signal timings
 - Bus gates
 - Removing parking of other obstructions that prevent smooth running of buses
 - Junction re-designs
 - Introduction of bus borders
 - Bus stop consolidation (converting two bus stops into one).
- 5.5** Our proposed locations for such measures has been reviewed following feasibility work over the past year. The locations identified in BSIP 1 were initial locations identified for bus reliability improvements during engagement with our bus operators and highways officers. We will continue to work with our partners and undertake further investigation to establish further locations throughout the county where such measures will be advantageous. In Salisbury for instance, we are planning to implement cameras at key junctions to assess bus journey times and to gather more evidence on where bus journey times are an issue.

Table 5.1 Proposed Bus Priority Measures

Settlement/Corridor	Location and initial concept	Comments	Delivery timescale
Chippenham	Priority for buses on High Street and Market Place / Gladstone Road	More responsive traffic signals for buses. Gladstone Road to be linked to Bridge Centre signals	Short- term Long-term

Settlement/Corridor	Location and initial concept	Comments	Delivery timescale
		Wider aspiration of Urban Traffic Control system in Chippenham	
	Bridge Centre gyratory - westbound busway and bus only on Bath Road east (eastbound)	Funding dependent on the Chippenham Futures development and Eastern Spine Road and development proposals elsewhere	Medium term
	Bath Road (east of Rowden Hill) inbound bus lane	Over a limited length	Medium term
	London Road modal filter	Bus gate arrangement	Medium term
	Traffic signal priority for buses and town centre junctions, including Station Hill junction and New Road signals	Station Hill junction is now optimised (based on peak times), but alterations possibly needed as new development in the locality progresses	Short - medium term
Calne	Signals at Curzon Street and the Square - linked signals and traffic signal priority for buses	Link these two sets of signals here. Need to be refurbished as well.	Medium term
	Bus only right turn to the Square	Possibly feasible but may be difficult to deliver	Medium term
Devizes	Devizes Gateway proposals	Linking the proposed station to the bus network	Long term
	Roses roundabout, Brewery Corner	Installation of traffic signal priority for buses	Medium term
Royal Wootton Bassett	High Street - Amendments to existing arrangements and laybys at junction with Longleaze	Improved geometry for buses at this location	Medium term
	Inbound bus lane on approach to junction 16	Required in relation to proposed growth in the local area.	Medium term
Salisbury southern corridor	Amendments to Britford Park & Ride access junction	Amendments at this junction will improve access for buses using the site. The proposals are related to plans to develop Salisbury Hospital	Medium terms
	Harnham Gyratory Junction Improvements	Additional outbound lane being implemented which will improve situation for buses. One relocated and upgraded bus stop to be included and one new bus stop opposite the filling station.	Short Term
	Exeter Street roundabout junction amendment	Live project – small bus improvements that will benefit the bus in terms of journey times	Short term

Settlement/Corridor	Location and initial concept	Comments	Delivery timescale
	Britford P&R to Hospital link	This involves the upgrade of a Public Right of Way to provide better access for peds, cyclists and buses only. It is planned to be delivered as part of proposed development. Included in the LCWIP and Salisbury Hospital HEAT Master Plan	Medium term
Salisbury northern corridor	Maximising the existing A345 bus lane and junction amendments	Amendments to hours of operation and some additional sections of bus lane/junction re-arrangement. Replacement of double-mini with traffic signals	Medium term
	Extension of the existing inbound bus lane to the Beehive Park & Ride site	Requires third party land to achieve necessary widths	Long term
Salisbury city centre	Brown Street junction amendment	Refurbishment of signals at the junctions are programmed for next year, so upgrade to tech but no proposed changes to timings etc	Short term
Salisbury A36 Corridor	Petersfinger Park & Ride junction amendment	Part of National Highways Southampton Road proposals	Short term
	College roundabout junction amendment	Signals being looked at as part of Southampton Road proposals	Short term
	St Mark's Roundabout junction amendment	All in NH programme for total signal refurbishment for next few years	Medium term
	Castle roundabout junction amendment	All in NH programme for total signal refurbishment for next few years	Medium term
	St Pauls roundabout junction amendment	All in NH programme for total signal refurbishment for next few years	Medium term
	Park Corner junction amendment	A scheme is in the pipeline for changes/upgrade to the traffic signals and bus priority	Medium term
Trowbridge	Longfield Gyratory - capacity enhancements	Fully developed proposal to improve highway capacity at this roundabout which will bring about journey times improvements for the 8 bus services that cross the town at this location	Medium - Long term
	Bythesea Road/Stallard Street junction improvements for buses	As part of re-developing of the former Bowyers site in the town centre	Medium term

5.6 National Highways is responsible for the A36 trunk road through Salisbury and as such, a number of schemes in Salisbury, as set out above, are under their control. We have spoken with them about incorporating bus priority at signals on their routes and as their schemes progress to preliminary design stage we will be in liaison to establish at which locations this may be possible.

We have also had discussions with them regarding traffic flows and renewing the life expired signals in Salisbury and will engage with them regarding the ongoing work to develop and deliver improvements along the A303.

- 5.7** We will continue to work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities, notably Swindon Borough Council and WECA, to ensure that any changes in nearby settlements will be consistent and co-ordinated with those in Wiltshire, thus ensuring a consistent strategy for buses across the authority borders.

Increase bus service frequencies on key interurban and town services

- 5.8** Our previous analysis of travel to work patterns and travel to work areas within Wiltshire and beyond, highlighted significant opportunity to improve the bus offer for journeys within the travel-to-work areas to Swindon, Bath and Salisbury respectively. This is where we will focus our attention to improve frequencies.
- 5.9** We have begun working towards developing our first Superbus route in conjunction with our term consultants, Atkins and as such, we are aiming for our ambitions to increase frequencies on the identified Super Bus Routes to be realised, albeit at a slower pace, due to the lack of BSIP funding.
- 5.10** Our ambition was to grow our current town bus networks in Wiltshire to at least 2 buses per hour. However, for the time being, this needs to be revised in light of the funding situation.
- 5.11** In Salisbury, our ambition remains that services should provide a turn up and go feel for passengers along key bus corridors, but in the absence of BSIP funding, a new target for achieving this needs to be considered with our EP.

Increase evening and weekend provisions on key interurban services and town services

- 5.12** As reported last year, local feedback has shown us that later services and weekend provision is key to building bus patronage within Wiltshire. We will continue to work with operators to identify opportunities where the bus offer can be strengthened in the evening and weekends. Our bus operators are reporting that patronage growth is actually most notable at the weekends now, so there is clearly scope to build on that.
- 5.13** If we gain funding to increase evening and weekend services the focus will be on services to the Swindon, Bath and Salisbury areas, with a focus on the interurban services and supporting town/city services required to provide connectivity for bus users in Wiltshire.

Improve links with major employers and businesses

- 5.14** We now have a good understanding of the areas where limited transport links, particularly by bus, are barriers to accessing employment opportunities and limit the available labour market for major businesses in Wiltshire and as such, impacts their operations and productivity.
- 5.15** Particular locations highlighted include
- Bumpers Farm Industrial Estate in Chippenham
 - Port Marsh in Calne
 - Leafield Industrial Estate in Corsham, alongside MoD sites in Corsham
 - Solstice Park, Amesbury
 - Southampton Road retail area, Salisbury.

- 5.16** In these areas there is potential for either more frequent bus services to coincide with working patterns or developing DRT services to provide access to employment opportunities. We are planning to undertake work over the next year to better understand where this demand originates from and at what time to develop improvements, either through enhancements to the bus network or DRT, to improve access to employment opportunities in Wiltshire.

Bus lane enforcement

- 5.17** We have identified locations where bus lane use is hampered by cars parking illegally. Over the next year we will use Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera technology to enforce this much better.

Increase demand responsive services

- 5.18** Due to the rurality of Wiltshire, there are significant opportunities to introduce D-DRT (Digital Demand Responsive Transport) services to the county and we have identified a number of locations where we believe DRT would be an effective solution to address rural isolation and improve mobility and access to key services. This will also support the Government's commitments to tackling air pollution and reducing carbon emissions by reducing reliance on private vehicles.
- 5.19** In early 2023, we are planning to launch our new `Wiltshire Connect` DRT service in the Pewsey Vale and Marlborough area. This will be part-funded by utilising the government's Rural Mobility Fund (RMF) and through remodelling our existing bus network in the area. By doing so, we are also improving the remaining timetabled services in the Pewsey Vale by making routes more direct with faster end-to-end journey times. `Wiltshire Connect` will provide an on-demand service for the deeper rural areas which do not currently have access to a regular timetabled service. As part of the RMF project, we are investing in new DRT Cloud-based technology and new Mercedes Sprinter low floor vehicles to ensure that the new service is of a high quality and is designed to encourage modal shift. We are also working in partnership with GWR on integration at rail stations and cross promotion opportunities, as the DRT vehicles will serve three rail stations, Bedwyn, Pewsey and Hungerford.
- 5.20** Wiltshire Council are also utilising best practice from both our prior experience, and that of other LTAs in the country, to maximise the potential of DRT in Wiltshire. For example, we are currently exploring options for providing DRT to improve access to Melksham railway station and in the west of the county around Mere and Warminster. We are also exploring the potential benefits of introducing a hybrid-model based on utilising Special Educational Needs (SEN) vehicles for DRT during what otherwise would be significant downtime for vehicles.
- 5.21** In respect of access to employment, it is clear that a number of employment sites in the county would not sustain a regular bus service and therefore a DRT service could be a more sustainable transport solution. For example, we have held discussions with Center Parcs near Warminster around the challenges of their employees accessing the site for various shift patterns and the 160-acre Solstice Business Park on the edge of Amesbury has been identified as potentially benefiting from a DRT service to improve access to employment particularly for shift workers.
- 5.22** The `Wiltshire Connect` DRT model being piloted in the RMF project could be deployed in other rural areas of Wiltshire with additional DRT and/or hybrid services replacing under-performing deep rural timetabled services which post-pandemic are struggling to return to sustainability in some cases. This would allow us to replicate the improvements we have made in the RMF project to the remaining timetabled rural services by making routes more direct and speeding up the

end-to-end journey time which aligns with our priorities in the BSIP generally. Any expansion of DRT however is subject to both capital and revenue future funding challenges and it is clear that any increase in DRT, must be financially sustainable for the Council.

Picture 5.1 Mock-Up of Wiltshire Connect DRT bus



6 Planning and Integration

Mobility hubs and active transport

- 6.1 We have begun investigating suitable locations for mobility hubs, in both rural and urban locations to allow for integration of bus services with active travel measures such as cycle infrastructure. These hubs will be designed and developed in a way that encourages and enables increased levels of travel by bus.
- 6.2 Mobility hubs can also provide an important interchange location for new housing and employment development, and as such over the next year we will be identifying locations which provide access to bus services for new residents without disrupting the operation of bus services along the corridor.

Develop improved integration between bus and rail services

- 6.3 We have made some good progress over the past year, working with the local Train Operating Companies (TOCs) to better integrate bus and rail. We were successful in being awarded GWR Community Fund money in the summer and have embarked on a project with them to improve wayfinding between six of our rail stations and nearby bus stops. In addition, we are working with GWR on a project to improve the bus infrastructure at Bedwyn Rail Station and to re-brand and market two of our bus services as bus/rail links.
- 6.4 We have made some minor improvements to improve connectivity between bus and rail services within Wiltshire over the past year. The introduction of the new 99 bus service to improve access to Chippenham and Swindon Rail Stations from communities in the Malmesbury area. We are also planning to review connectivity to the stations at Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge, Westbury, Chippenham, Pewsey, Melksham, Great Bedwyn, Pewsey and Salisbury. This will include the potential retiming of bus services to provide more efficient interchange with rail services and provide earlier and later bus services to create new public transport connections for commuters.
- 6.5 We have been working to improve the quality of the interchange between modes at Salisbury railway station by continuing design work on an interchange adjacent to the railway station; it is hoped this work will be complete within the next 12 months.
- 6.6 If further funding becomes available, we will work with neighbouring authorities to identify opportunities where a rail station may meet the needs of Wiltshire residents, for example Kemble in Gloucestershire. This will open up new public transport opportunities, thus supporting our wider economic and social goals.



7 Simplify Services

- 7.1** Our existing inter-urban and town services within Wiltshire are designed to be easy to use and understand. However, the provision of rural services can often be complicated with relatively long journey times, serving slightly different routes at differing times of the day, in order to meet differing travel needs (particularly for students).
- 7.2** Over the next two years, and following stakeholder and public engagement, we intend to review our rural and deep-rural services with a view to simplifying them where possible. We recognise that DRT can play an important role to enable us to do this, whilst improving rural mobility. For example, through our RMF Network Review, we have revised the Pewsey Vale network with the proposed new DRT service reducing journey duration from 60 to 40 mins.

Review socially necessary services

- 7.3** Wiltshire Council has continued to provide socially necessary services over the last decade but without funding for the BSIP we are not currently in a position to strengthen these socially necessary services. In the longer term, it is still our ambition to enhance evening and Sunday services, particularly in the Salisbury area, and to provide a comprehensive service offer focused on the interurban services where it is felt that there is the best opportunity for patronage to grow quickly.

Invest in the Superbus network

- 7.4** The Superbus network is based on where current bus service frequencies are higher than hourly, and where the assessment of journey-to-work areas illustrates potential to develop services to meet latent demand. Creating the Superbus network entails increasing frequencies, and where feasible, removing poorly-patronised diversions to villages and serving these villages differently, either through local services, DRT, taxi-buses or Community Transport, or through the provision of mobility hubs.
- 7.5** The network, along with the Salisbury urban network, is our priority for investment in roadside passenger infrastructure, passenger information including RTPI, investment in bus priority measures in town centres, and in other measures such as parking and loading reviews elsewhere. In return, these services will be the focus of investment by operators in high-specification vehicles. Improvements to interchanges on the Superbus Network will focus on hubs in our principal towns and larger market towns. However, without BSIP funding, we are now investigating other ways in which we can begin to develop the Superbus Network. For example, we have just been successful in obtaining internal funding to undertake the feasibility and design of our first Superbus route in 2023/24. However, going forward, the significant funding required for many of the BSIP schemes is very unlikely to be funded from any internal budgets at Wiltshire Council, as there are too many other cross-department budget requirements and pressures to make this a feasible option.

8 Fares and Ticketing

- 8.1** A number of the initiatives outlined in our BSIP (2021) related to lowering fares. Whilst this is still an aspiration for us, without significant additional funding coming forward we are currently unable to progress with most of these ambitions. Regardless, our aims in the longer term remain very similar and we are hoping that most of our operators will participate in the national £2 fare cap in early 2023.

Develop ticket products suitable for part-time commuters

- 8.2** In Wiltshire, First, Faresaver, Go South Coast and Stagecoach offer multi-day ticket bundles on services but there is low public awareness of these tickets and the conditions. If funding were to become available, we would propose to simplify this system through standardised flexible ticketing products covering all of Wiltshire and the bus operators, with a key focus on advertising these tickets to embrace the increasingly flexible nature of passenger journeys. Without BSIP funding we will continue to promote the products already available and work with operators to promote any new offers they introduce.

Develop initiatives to encourage young people to use the bus

- 8.3** Attracting and retaining young people as bus passengers will continue to be a key component of the Wiltshire BSIP. The cost of bus fares is often seen as a causal factor for young people to avoid using buses. Young person's ticket eligibility within Wiltshire is currently variable, and Wiltshire Council believe this is a barrier to travel for younger people.
- 8.4** If further funding becomes available then we will introduce fare initiatives that can be supported by ticketing platforms and flexible ticketing products, to encourage young people up to the age of 25 to continue to utilise the bus service after they have the option to own their own vehicle. It is envisioned this ticket would also be offered to jobseekers to promote social mobility and reduce barriers to employment within Wiltshire.
- 8.5** We will introduce fares initiatives and promotions as part of the launch of the new DRT service in 2023, including products specifically aimed at young people.
- 8.6** Without additional funding, our approach will be to try and reduce the number of young people being driven to school by their parents, as well as those driving their own vehicle to school, by decreasing the financial burden of using the bus. Our first step towards this will be reviewing the current routing of bus services to ascertain whether they are meeting the demands of young people, particularly in relation to transport to schools. A focus will be on targeting students over the age of 16 and those travelling to schools within 2-3 miles of where they live.

Concessions

- 8.7** Wiltshire Council is fully committed to supporting bus operators as they seek to respond to the challenges of inflationary pressures and the need to increase revenues by attracting back customers who have stopped travelling by bus during the Covid-19 pandemic. To assist with this, since September 2022, we have experimentally removed the pre-9:30 time restrictions for concessionary users to encourage pass-holders to travel.

Develop existing multi-operator ticketing schemes

- 8.8** For the most part, bus routes in Wiltshire are not contested by multiple competing operators, nor are there many sections of road on which different operators provide parallel commercial services. One major exception is the Activ8 service between Andover, Tidworth and Salisbury, and here Salisbury Reds and Stagecoach South accept each other's tickets.
- 8.9** There are some trip attractors located outside major urban centres where the lack of through-ticketing may clearly be constraining demand, and the ability of staff and visitors to reach these facilities. Examples are Salisbury District Hospital and Great Western Hospital in Swindon.
- 8.10** With additional funding we would aim to develop ticketing schemes which extend the reach of bus services by:
- Extending the current Swindon multi-operator ticket boundary beyond Royal Wootton Bassett, and develop app-based fulfilment alongside the current Smartcard scheme to make it more easily accessible
 - Proposing a £1 flat fare for journeys in Salisbury city for passengers using “tap-on, tap-off” ticketing
 - Developing a Salisbury ‘add-on’ scheme to allow connecting journeys to be made at no extra cost
 - Identify towns where an “add-on” fare would work for cross town journeys similar to that available in the PlusBus scheme
 - Expand the successful Avon Rider offer to cover the Bath travel to work and connecting town services; and
 - Offer a countywide multi-operator season ticket.
- 8.11** In the absence of any additional funding, we will work with operators to promote multi journey ticketing wherever this is feasibly an option.

Fares for groups, couples, family & single parent families

- 8.12** Bus fares within Wiltshire are often unable to compete with the cost of the car when there is more than one passenger within a group. With additional funding, we would aim to develop product (s) with operators that allows better value group fares within Wiltshire, in order to increase the competitiveness of the bus against the car.



Account-based ticketing schemes

- 8.13** Conventional bus ticketing systems can lead to long dwell times at bus stops. Various improvements have been made over recent years, with the option of cashless payment by contactless bank card, reducing cash handling and change giving, and with season and carnet ticket products being made available by Smartcard, and in greater number, by mobile phone app. These have been adopted by all the major bus operators in Wiltshire. 'Tap on tap off' has been introduced by two of our operators recently; Salisbury Reds and First Bus.
- 8.14** There is more than one ticket machine supplier currently in use by bus operators in Wiltshire so the development of a supplier-agnostic solution and back office is necessary. DfT has stated that a local transport authority should assume that a solution is in place by the end of the BSIP funding period. The provision of a second card reader on each bus to enable passengers to 'tap off' separately from those tapping is necessary so with additional funding, we would look to equip all buses used on services operating in Salisbury, interurban routes and town networks across Wiltshire, with second card readers. Without funding, we will work with our operators to promote the benefits of 'tap on, tap off' particularly via our Connecting Wiltshire website and social media feeds.

Ticketing between different modes

- 8.15** Recently, First Bus have been leading on a project to digitise PlusBus and this development work, while still ongoing, is reaching the final stages. One of our local TOCs, GWR, hope to be able to start using this development work from the 2023/24 financial year. The development work allows a single barcode to be read by both railway retail systems e.g. ticket barriers, train crew ticketing equipment, and Ticketer bus retail equipment.
- 8.16** As well as the ability to digitise the PlusBus product, the technology will allow other types of multi-modal ticket such as rangers/rovers and through tickets from train to bus to be retailed and validated digitally by both modes.

9 Bus Passenger Experience

Higher specification vehicles

- 9.1 Bus operators in Wiltshire have made significant investment in their vehicle fleet, and many vehicles used on the key interurban services to the east and south of the county in particular, are to a very high standard. Wiltshire Council are also investing in high specification Mercedes Sprinter vehicles for the new DRT service.
- 9.2 We will work with our bus operators to assess customer's (bus and non-bus users) priorities. Where passengers are on buses for some time, as with interurban services, we will recommend a broad specification which is likely to focus on seat pitch, leg room and ambience as well as the provision of wi-fi and power socket connections. We would then seek that new investment in buses meets that specification.

Upgrade existing bus stop infrastructure and interchange provision

- 9.3 It is still our intention to complete an audit of all bus stop infrastructure within the county in order to develop a baseline understanding of where improvement is required in terms of provision for passengers boarding and alighting, passenger information and shelter facilities. However, without BSIP funding, this may now take considerably longer to complete using our current staffing resource and funding situation.
- 9.4 Nonetheless, we have begun work on a set of standards for bus stop provision based on current guidance, such as 'Inclusive Mobility,' and feedback from relevant stakeholders and user groups. These standards will be developed around the function of stops, the bus routes and communities they serve, the nature of the stop (urban, rural, conservation areas) and will improve accessibility standards by meeting the requirements of the Equality Act. We will then develop a programme to apply these standards across Wiltshire. Without BSIP funding, this programme will take some time to complete but we will look for alternative funding opportunities wherever available to fund this and will use Capacity Funding to employ someone within the team to undertake this piece of work, alongside other BSIP-related work streams.
- 9.5 We have also begun investigation into how best to develop a consistent quality standard for shelter provision throughout Wiltshire. It is our intention that at the interchanges in Wiltshire (both bus/bus and bus/rail) we will develop enhanced standards. The standard will include wayfinding to assist passengers in accessing and getting around interchanges, particularly for those new to buses.



Protect personal safety of bus passengers

- 9.6** In our first BSIP we were seeking funding to undertake a series of audits of walking routes to bus stops in our towns and villages, particularly those on the key interurban network, with a view to ensuring that walk routes are level, well-lit, have safe crossing points and are not obscured by vegetation or other things. There is clearly much benefit in still doing this, and if we are able to successfully employ another member of staff through Capacity Funding in the coming year, this will be one of their key projects. In the meantime, when we undertake the bus user survey next year, we will ask questions around this subject, in order to inform a prioritised list of locations where users feel it would be advantageous to improve personal safety.

Improve the bus offer for tourists

- 9.7** We already provide a good range of bus information for tourists using the Connecting Wiltshire website in order to raise awareness of opportunities to visit locations by bus. However, there is clearly further scope for improving tourist connectivity in Wiltshire by bus, particularly in relation to major tourist destinations such as Stonehenge, Avebury and Longleat. In the past we have commissioned promotional videos to encourage tourists to visit these sites using sustainable modes of transport and we have worked with the National Trust who at some locations, offer lower entry fees for those visitors arriving by bus.
- 9.8** Going forward, we will work more with our partners in the tourism and leisure sectors and our bus operators to see how we can further incentivise travel by bus. We will promote more people travelling the [Great West Way](#) by bus and rail by providing better visibility and more details on the Connecting Wiltshire website and social media feeds.
- 9.9** We have recently begun working with GWR to improve the rail/bus offer for tourists and to brand certain routes as tourist bus/rail links. For example, bus services call at some of our major honey-pot sites such as Avebury, but little is presently being done to market these services to visitors.

10 Decarbonisation

Pursue opportunities to bid for zero-emission buses

- 10.1** When opportunities become available, we will develop funding bids to the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) Fund and other sources for zero-emission buses. The initial focus will be on services where daily mileages are within the operating range of depot-charged battery-electric buses. This is likely to mean an initial focus on the local services in Salisbury, but we will consider other locations, particularly where operation of zero-emission buses could give buses preferential access to town centres and other environmentally-sensitive locations.

Electric buses

- 10.2** In discussion with operators, it is clear that there are three main barriers to the uptake of electric buses at present; namely range, cost and the provision of charging infrastructure for buses. The provision of charging infrastructure is something that is being looked at in further detail over the coming months as part of the revised Wiltshire Council Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy and we will consider bus charging locations as part of this.
- 10.3** With additional funding, we would conduct analysis of the technologies available for making longer-distance services zero-emission. This will need to consider the requirements of services; the nature and distances of the routes being served in order to identify the most appropriate and efficient technology for operating bus services in Wiltshire.
- 10.4** The use of hydrogen is also something we have been discussing with the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP recently and we will continue to take part in regular meetings with them at this work progresses.

Prioritise services at locations which operate through an Air Quality Management Area

- 10.5** There are currently eight Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAS) in Wiltshire. As an authority, we have a statutory requirement to mitigate against poor air quality. As such, we will ensure our work to bring zero-emission buses to the county will prioritise routes operating in these areas to maximise the benefits of reduced emissions and improved air quality.
- 10.6** In September 2022, we submitted a bid to DEFRA to promote and market bus services in our AQMAS; the outcome of this will be known in January 2023.

11 Passenger Engagement

Introduce a Passenger Charter

- 11.1** Working alongside our bus operators and bus users, we will devise a passenger charter which will outline what passengers should expect from our network. This charter will set the minimum standards for bus services within Wiltshire and clarify pathways of contact for elements such as information and complaints.

Develop community-based feedback mechanism

- 11.2** To encourage engagement and ensure that the Enhanced Partnership reflects the needs of the people of Wiltshire and to better develop an understanding of the localised transport needs within Wiltshire, we will engage with our Community Area Boards, specifically via the Local Highways and Footways and Improvement Groups (LHFIGs) to ensure all local bus issues are raised through this forum. This forum will act as a continuous way of engaging with local bus users and addressing their concerns regarding local issues. It will also be important to gather views from non-bus users to understand barriers to using the bus for journeys in Wiltshire.
- 11.3** We now meet on a monthly basis with the passenger transport community group Option 24/7, who have long had an interest in public transport across Wiltshire. Work will continue with the group to ensure impartial community focus feedback can be achieved to improve bus service provision across Wiltshire.

Develop a centralised source to provide bus passenger feedback

- 11.4** As part of our efforts to develop a standardised channel for passenger engagement with the bus network within Wiltshire we will use the Connecting Wiltshire website as the primary platform to achieve this goal.

Strengthen network identity

- 11.5** At present, information relating to bus services within Wiltshire is potentially confusing and disjointed as different operators provide information in different formats and styles and Wiltshire Council presently have little budget to undertake bus marketing and promotion. However, we have now started to use the Connecting Wiltshire website more extensively alongside its associated branding to better market our services going forward. We will continue to engage with operators to ensure the site also meets their needs and provides specific reference to their own initiatives. We will work with our local bus operators to develop public awareness of this platform as a standardised point of information for bus passengers. Connecting Wiltshire branding, types-faces, liveries and logos will be used in order to strengthen the network identity.

Improve Bus Information

- 11.6** At present, there is no funding available to produce a long-term marketing strategy. However, we are aware that physical information provided at the roadside within Wiltshire is currently inconsistent and lacking any standard formatting. We are making our priority focus standardising the provision of roadside timetable information into a format which is more consistent across the county. The information will be branded using Connecting Wiltshire so that passengers can identify a coherent, consistent and strongly-branded operation, giving people the confidence to use it.

- 11.7 Without BSIP funding, it will not be possible for Wiltshire Council to provide a significant upgrade to all information at bus stops within the county in a short timescale. That said, we are now working towards developing a specification for information provision at bus stops based on the number of bus services calling at the stop. At a minimum, these stops will feature a flag, timetable case and standardised timetable information. As and when funding becomes available, we will upgrade stops accordingly and will continue to work with operators on providing roadside information.
- 11.8 If we are successful in obtaining any further funding, we will also focus on advertising the benefits and connectivity available by using the bus network within Wiltshire. This will include online advertising campaigns and local leaflet drops to advertise the key services and amenities which they unlock access to.

The Connecting Wiltshire website is a source of local bus information



Upgrade and expand Real-Time Passenger Information (RTPI)

- 11.9 Wiltshire Council has recently renewed the RTPI system currently in use in Salisbury and the new system will be in operation from February 2023. Funding for part of the networks RTPI replacement has been secured through Section 106 money. We were also successful in obtaining a modest amount of capital funding to further expand RTPI at a limited number of locations across the county in 2022/23. This will be prioritised on the Superbus, interurban and town network routes.
- 11.10 The provision of additional RTPI information at stops will also be defined when setting new standards for stops. It is anticipated there will be a degree of flexibility within this system which will allow for integration with other local authorities RTPI systems.

Operator Information

- 11.11** We will ensure each operator providing bus services in Wiltshire has at the very least a website and mobile phone app with basic service information (timetables, fares, maps) to an agreed 'best practice' specification. As part of the Enhanced Partnership, the provision of a website and basic service information, alongside agreeing to the best practices outlined in the passenger charter, will be a pre-requisite to being able to operate within Wiltshire.

Promote Connecting Wiltshire

- 11.12** As there is limited awareness of the Traveline national website, we intend to focus our efforts on using Connecting Wiltshire as the centralised point of information for public transport in Wiltshire. Through promoting this site, we hope to improve public understanding of the bus network in the county and provide a platform which facilitates and encourages use of the bus for journeys in Wiltshire. However, we will still advertise Traveline at bus stops and on the website as for many, we know this remains a trusted source of bus information, particularly in terms of detailed timetable information.

Standard dates for timetable changes throughout the year

- 11.13** To ensure consistency and avoid confusion for passengers, we will work with our bus operators to standardise when timetables change within Wiltshire. This will allow us to maximise marketing efforts and minimise impacts of changing timetables on the passengers.

12 Processes and Procedures

Other (Processes, procedures and relationships)

Developing the Local Transport Plan 4

12.1 The BSIP will help support the delivery of LTP4 policies and help deliver the outcomes of the government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan. Our next BSIP will be developed in conjunction with LTP4.

Develop a Wiltshire Council Highway Network Management Plan

12.2 Wiltshire Council will be developing a Highway Network Management Plan. As outlined in our LTP, this will describe the council's approach to network management which will include:

- Dealing with congestion 'hot spots' and maintaining journey time reliability on key routes
- Monitoring traffic on key routes and managing traffic in the largest market towns
- Developing and implementing a road and user hierarchy
- Detail what arrangements are in place at the regional level to aid network management co-ordination and consistency
- Set out how the performance of the council and its network function is monitored.

12.3 The plan will provide the framework for how we as an authority manage investment, maintenance, street-works and incidents to support the operation of bus services in Wiltshire. Our bus network hierarchy, which is currently based upon existing operations, patronage and travel patterns, will provide a framework for directing investment and will also be recognised in the Highway Network Management Plan.

Highways management to improve ride quality on key interurban and town bus routes

12.4 Through consultation, some operators raised concerns regarding the quality of road infrastructure. As such, we aim to be proactive in improving the ride quality for bus passengers through considering the impact of road design on this and carrying out remedial works where appropriate. Developing a Wiltshire Council Highway Network Management Plan will establish the basis of this approach and the priorities.

Street-works processes

12.5 Operators within Wiltshire have raised concerns regarding the operational impact of temporary highways works. This not only impacts operations; it affects the reputation and image of buses and also passengers. To address these concerns, we will introduce holistic assessments of the impacts of temporary roadworks and closures to ensure that these works are planned to minimise the impacts on the bus network.

12.6 We will also improve communication with our bus operators to ensure they are informed about temporary highways works within the county and the extent to which this may impact their services. We will ensure operators are provided with sufficient notice in order to effectively plan for any diversions that may be required and to inform passengers. However, we acknowledge that in the case of statutory utilities companies undertaking emergency repairs, this is not always possible in a timely manner.

Car Parking and Park and Ride

- 12.7** Last year, we set out how we intend to review the impact of car parking upon the operation of the bus network within Wiltshire. However, without BSIP funding this is likely to be unachievable given current resources, although the Transport Strategies in development for each of our towns via the Local Plan process, will investigate this matter further as part of that work. Going forward we will identify areas where car parking is currently impacting the operation of bus services and develop mitigation and enforcement under the framework outlined in the Highway Network Management Plan.
- 12.8** Wiltshire currently has a well-established Park & Ride (P&R) offer in Salisbury with five P&R sites. The success of these sites is heavily influenced by parking policy and as such, this will be an important factor in the development of a revised parking strategy for Salisbury. Our approach to P&R will also be considered further as part of LTP4 but we envisage this may evolve from the current, traditional P&R model. Usage at our Park and Ride sites has struggled to increase since the pandemic with fewer people travelling into city centre offices and other changing travel habits.

Develop planning policy and processes to support the bus

- 12.9** As a planning authority we can utilise planning policy and decisions to support the delivery and operations of bus services and infrastructure in Wiltshire and support the ambitions of the BSIP.
- 12.10** Planning policies relating to the location of housing and employment development, parking standards and density of housing can help reduce car dependency and encourage bus use, putting the bus at the centre of proposals for new development.



- 12.11** We are helping to develop policies for our emerging Local Plan (for the period 2016-2036) which support the aims of the BSIP and we will engage with bus operators in developing the spatial strategy and supporting policies.
- 12.12** As the local planning authority, we will work to align transport planning and spatial planning more closely, helping to develop new standards and guidance to ensure that new housing developments are built in locations where it will be commercially viable to serve the site by extending existing local bus services. We will ensure that development is future-proofed with layouts that make it easy to operate a bus service through them, incorporating accessible bus infrastructure and ensuring walking distances to the bus route are minimised.

- 12.13** We will work to embed stronger public transport accessibility tests into development planning processes and will require developers to better engage with local bus operators at the pre-application and pre-master-planning stage. We will set a threshold at which bus operators must be consulted on all large planning applications.

Work with National Highways

- 12.14** We work closely with National Highways who are responsible for the operation and management of the Strategic Road Network (SRN). In Wiltshire the A36, A303 and the M4 are part of the SRN. We will continue to work in co-operation with National Highways to support bus operations in Wiltshire and identify opportunities to reduce delays to our key bus services including on our Superbus routes and on the A36 in Salisbury.

Work with the Western Gateway STB

- 12.15** We will work with our partners in the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body (Western Gateway STB) to monitor opportunities for improving the bus offer in the region through infrastructure or service investments. The STB also presents a possible avenue for funding to deliver improvements to the bus offer in Wiltshire.
- 12.16** We have a strong working relationship with our adjacent authorities, and we have recently set up a South-West officers group to meet and discuss all issues related to BSIPs and EPs in order to learn from and share best practice.

Co-operation and co-ordination with neighbouring authorities

- 12.17** We will continue to work with neighbouring local authorities on functions which effect bus planning and operations including:
- Planning and development management for new residential and employment sites
 - Street-works, utilities works and disruptions
 - Strategic plans for transport networks
 - Transport scheme and business case development for schemes which cover all modes of travel.

Develop alternative funding streams outside DfT BSIP money

- 12.18** This is presently one of our key work areas. We are exploring all funding streams available to us to support our ambitions relating to the BSIP. We are utilising Section 106 funding and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support our bus network ambitions.

Appendix 1

Table 13.1 The Enhanced Partnership Plan - Aims and Objectives

Aim/Objective	How we will achieve this
Review Service Frequency “More buses, More Often”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase service frequencies, including evenings and weekends. • Develop our inter-urban and Superbus Network. • Develop improved links to employers.
Increase Bus Priority Measures “Get buses moving”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and deliver bus priority measures. • Conduct route reviews to identify changes to highway geometry, kerbside regulations and enforcement which might benefit buses. • Mitigate the impact of roadworks. • Increased enforcement of car parking and bus lane and bus priority infringements.
Increase Demand Responsive Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop innovative solutions for locations that are hard to reach by conventional buses in conjunction with the commercial and community sectors. • Build upon current extensive experience with DRT.
Consideration of Bus Rapid Transport Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop bus priority measures which enable services with BRT characteristics. • Improve real time information provision. • Develop our Superbus interurban service network.
Integrate Services with Other Transport Modes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus and rail integration. • Identify and develop opportunities for mobility hubs and active transport.
Simplify Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider re-planning routes to simplify where feasible • Reduced bus service variations. • Coordinated service change dates.
Review Socially Necessary Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase evening and weekend service. • Develop DRT proposals. • Identify opportunities to enhance supported services. • Provide improved access to employment.
Invest in Superbus Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop our Superbus and interurban networks.

Aim/Objective	How we will achieve this
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve service frequencies in evenings and at weekends. • Development of these networks will be supported by extensive bus priority, investment in bus stop infrastructure and passenger information, including real-time.
Lower fares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent offers to young people and jobseekers across Wiltshire. Refined multi-operator ticketing. • Review distance based fares.
Simplify ticketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify fares and fare zone boundaries. • Refined multi-operator ticketing. • Tap On Tap Off
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services “Buses for all”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct bus stop safety and accessibility audit. • Improve the quality of our bus stops, including providing accessible bus stops. • Provide improved information at bus stops including real time. • Provide audio visual announcements on buses.
Protect Passenger Safety of Bus Passengers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct bus stop safety and accessibility audit. • Improve access to bus stops. • Provide CCTV on buses and at bus stop facilities. • Introduce a Passenger Charter.
Improve Buses for Tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve information onboard buses and at stops. • Improve marketing in tourist areas
Invest in decarbonisation “Cleaner Buses”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a study to identify most appropriate technology for delivering cleaner buses in Wiltshire. • This study will inform future Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) funding
Passenger Charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Passenger Charter. • Work with community based passenger focus teams
Strengthen Network Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a centralised source of information – the Connecting Wiltshire brand.

Aim/Objective	How we will achieve this
<p>Improve bus information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop comprehensive bus service information for customers, with improved web presence. • Use technology and social media to provide bus information. • Improve information at bus stops, including real time. • Coordinated service change dates.
<p>Other factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a marketing strategy. • Learn from others and co-ordinate with neighbouring authorities and sub- national bodies. • Wiltshire Council pan-department internal bus delivery group to maximise the benefits of expertise across the council in informing the improvements to the bus network and supporting its ongoing operation. • Develop planning policies which provide benefit to bus services. • Conduct a review of car parking supply, demand and charges. • Develop a Highway Network Management Plan. • Ensure buses are considered buses as part of highway quality improvements. • Establish an internal Wiltshire Council bus delivery group.

