

Bus services in Wiltshire

Where is the future?

29th March 2016 / for Wiltshire Council meeting

This set prepared with data from the Option 247 team – <http://option247.uk>

Background



1. Wiltshire Council required to save 2.6 million from a 5.2 million spend on bus support
2. Bus services provide vital economic, social and personal connections.



Option 247 offers a window of opportunity to provide a public transport network well set for the future, whilst making the require savings from council funds.

Before we look at the "option 247" suggestions, let's consider the current system and it's continued operation with cuts to meet the budgetary needs

Current Services



Around a half of the services in Wiltshire run without council support
These are "**commercial services**"

“Supported services” are run to a specification laid down by Wiltshire Council and receive at least some council financial help

Commercial services are run to a specification laid down by the operator

Services are run subject to a wide range of structure / rules / laws

Current support cuts

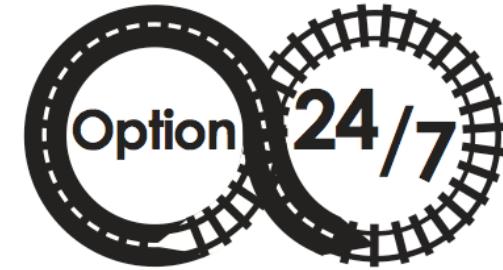


- * Removing bus support from a service will in most cases result in services being withdrawn
- * Reducing bus support will in most cases result in the service being reduced
- * Removing or reducing bus subsidy on a supported service resulting in that service being removed or reduced may also cause linked commercial services to be withdrawn

Examples

- 234 bus at 18:35 (commercial, Chippenham to Trowbridge) no longer runs; withdrawn at the time that funding was withdrawn for later evening services. No longer viable.
- 271 bus at 21:30 from Bath to Melksham appears dependent on supported 20:05 bus from Devizes to Bath.

Current Service Changes



- * Commercial services may cease or change at 56 days notice by the operator (or with immediate effect if the operator ceases trading). Where such a change results in significant gaps in provision, Wiltshire Council has the option of contracting for a supported service.
- * Council interventions at such times are typically emergency in nature without proper time to analyse, plan, consult or tender but can set the scene for medium to long term provision.

Examples

- Bodmans ceased trading
- 231 ceases on 24th April. Daytime services covered by FareSaver; commercial evening services Bath to Chippenham now to be provided under a support contract where previously they were commercial
- 234 early evening buses

Current Service Issues



- * Cherry Picking
- * Operational Convenience
- * Business targets rather than customer targets are the no. 1 priority
- * Competitive rather than co-operative
- * Ticket interchangeability or lack thereof
- * Joined up information, network, timetable or lack thereof
- * Income maximisation by raising fares (distorted further by ENCTS mechanism)
- * Need for shortterm-ism in a competitive market
- * Additional laws and regulations and higher expectations increase cost per seat provision

Wider financial picture

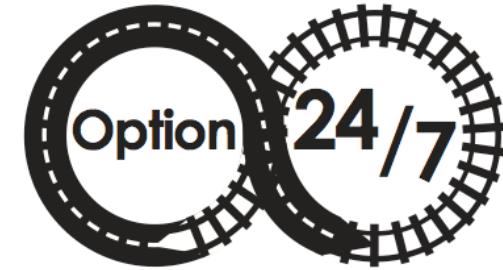


Bus support - £5.1 million **but don't forget**

- BSOG (Bus Service Operator's Grant)
- ENCTS (English National Concessionary Travel Scheme) payments
- Central staff costs - team of six dedicated plus management

and you're talking more than twice that £5.1 million

Wider still, and wider



School transport and social transport

- do costs increase if supported buses using the same vehicles are withdrawn?
- are extra costs incurred where a supported bus that was used is withdrawn?

Wider still ... if services are reduced ... health and employment budgets

- how will people get to doctors and hospital?
- how will people get out to do their shopping?
- will people become less healthy / more homebound and need support?
- will people still be able to get to work and back?
- will more car parking need to be provided / further environmental cost (e.g. Devizes and B-o-A)

Would people use less buses?



What would the wider effect of the bus cuts be on the current user base?

- * We can't be sure - no follow up information was available when we asked for follow up data on the cuts to / withdrawal of the Melksham Rail Link bus and the evening 234 service. Qualitative comments indicate hardships causes but no quantitative data is available.
- * Reducing town buses to a frequency of just a handful a day (Pewsham experiment) resulted in the new service being unused, but it would be equally possible in areas where there's no practical alternative that the few remaining services would be full.

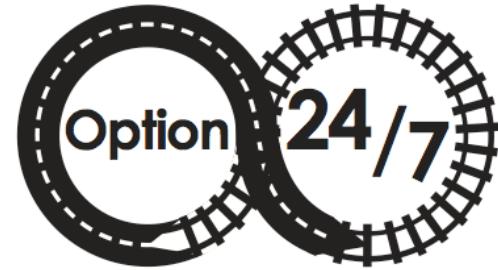
Frequency effects use



- * It's probable that a service that drops from every 2 hours to every four will lose traffic per bus - people not being prepared to wait for the longer period, nor will they want 4 hours at destination to do their shopping.
- * Increased frequency to a "turn up any time" service where the passenger flows will stand it results in a change of ethos and significant switch towards bus.

We congratulate Stagecoach on running every 20 minutes from Swindon to Chippenham, and Faresaver on moving up to a 20 minute frequency on the x31 from 24th April.

Conclusion (1)



* **Cutting services as suggested** as a route to save money as suggested by all options offered in the current Wiltshire Council consultation will result in a significant loss of bus traffic / will be one step in a downward spiral where each pound spent from the reduced budget will itself buy less, thus encouraging further cuts in following years. Further costs will also be incurred in other budgets, as well as potential short term costs such as redundancy payments.

Conclusion (2)



* **Maintaining subsidy as it stands** will result in further pressures as the issues described above continue, indeed with pressure to increase subsidy as operator costs increase, BSOG reduces, the population ages giving rise to more council-paid journeys under ENCTS, existing money will buy less and there will be upward pressure. Maintaining subsidy would also be contrary to the council's stated objective of saving money.

Conclusion (3)



- * We see little evidence that a **withdrawal of all support** as canvassed under option 6 would result in the provision of replacement commercial services to any significant degree.

"where that's been tried in the past, it has proven to be a very short lived experiment"

A wider picture



- * Devolution / devolvement is encouraging us to take more local responsibility for local services.
- * Government direction (such as the bus bill) is facilitating bus service to be competed for at a "per contract" rather than a "per passenger" level; that ability is already present, but significant practical obstacles to its widespread adoption are being removed. Ref: Andrew Jones, Minister at Department for Transport, Michelle Donelan, MP for Chippenham.
- * 'West of England' are moving along this bus contract route, seeing its benefits, and services that cross the boundary into their area may have to be part of their contracts or subject to exemption certificates and then requiring funding and viability purely on the Wiltshire element of their operation. (x31, 41, x72, x76, x83, x86, 94, 114, 232, 271, 272, 228, 265 and 635 - list may not be complete due to fragmented information available under current system!)

So we should ...



- Look at all public transport services as a network / system - not just some buses
- Meet passenger requirements more efficiently
- Follow along government, MP and neighbouring authority directions
- Have public input into network shape
- Remove need for expensive emergency interventions
- Have a system that looks to the future
- Look at total journeys
- Encourage operators to work for a common goal
- Co-ordinate timetable and network changes
- Encourage new traffic not just service existing users
- Remove distortions caused by ENCTS / reduce ENCTS journey proportions
- Provide stability for operators
- Remove expense from operators of competing per passenger and frequent changes



We believe that we can get very close to meeting all of these objectives, within a 2.5 million pound support budget for each of the next 5 years.

We believe we have identified the "elephants in the room" which would cause issues, and have identified approaches which would clear them.

Who are “we”?



We are the community people who formed the basis of the "Save the Train" campaign which pressed for appropriate rail services on the TransWilts line, together with a nucleus of around a dozen other key and very fully informed supporters, and wider support too.

Now that line has a better service, "Save the Train" members are consistent long term supporters of the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership, and continue to work for the success of the total service - a combination of what existed prior (which now works with practical return options on additional trains) and what's been added (which is also working).

We assisted in bringing external funding for the initial trial period, and in working with others to ensure that the service has a stable, long term future without the need for council revenue funding, either directly or through ENCTS.

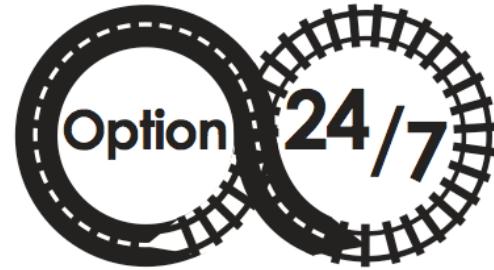


As a partnership of train operator, council and community elements, it's not been TransWilts' mandate to campaign for a different bus solution to the ones suggested by Wiltshire Council in their consultation. However, if and as we move towards a community and council partnership / agreement to consider other options which include the supported bus network, the partnership would almost certainly be on board and active for the long term.

Community Rail Partnerships bring £4.20 of local benefit for every £1 spent on them according to ACoRP - that's a general figure across the UK, and it's suggested that the benefit of the TransWilts may be greater. At the recent GW community rail conference, the most heavily attended seminar / discussion was the one on road / rail working together, and consensus is that there are significant benefits to be gained from community and volunteer involvement.

There is also significant support from outside the rail group - the majority of the dozen nucleus referred to earlier falls into this category.

Headlines



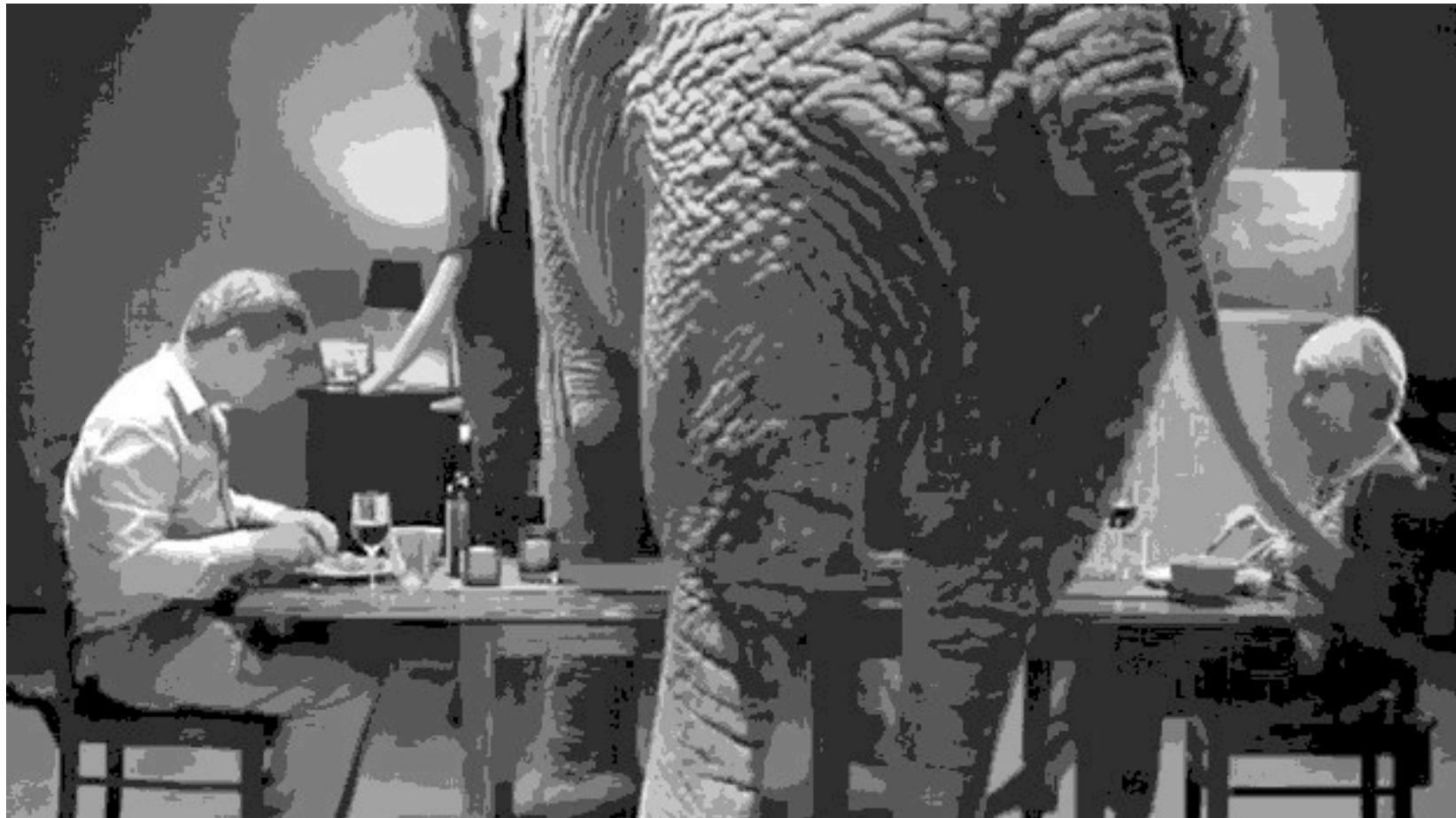
- All public buses operated by commercial companies
- Initially same companies as at present
- But these may change over time, again as at present

- Network / routes and timetables to be set by the local transport authority (LTA)
- Contracts / franchises to be bid for to provide drivers and vehicles and run services
- Local transport committees to recommend routes / timetables

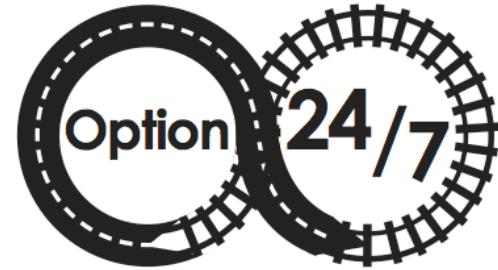
- Minimum vehicle facilities and standards to be set
- Interim arrangements to ensure continuity and fair opportunity for existing operators
- fares to be collected by bus operators for LTA (can't do a "London" and go cashless?)
- Contracts to include bonus payments for exceeding performance targets

- Contracts to run for 7 to 10 years
- Service changes to be planned well in advance / in line with rail industry timings

Elephants!



Elephant - Risk



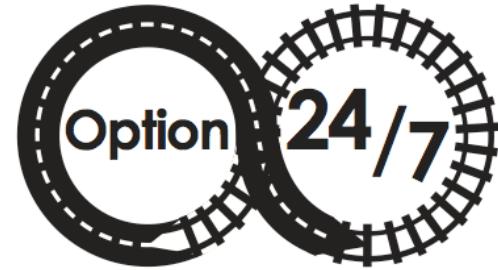
Financial risk in terms of farebox income shifts to the Council. However, buses need to run / carry people and with extra services requiring clearance certificates, the risk for a competitive service is significantly reduced. Whilst plans are to co-ordinate all public transport changes to 2nd Sunday in December and 2nd Sunday in May, minor changes 1st Sunday in September, it will remain possible to take action at any point at 56 days notice.

Although ENCTS is not up for review in current legislation, it's possible that it may over coming years. Risk is alleviated at that point if service specification is with the LTA directly rather than indirectly.

Risks from the current system (such as the need for emergency provision when a commercial route is withdrawn) are reduced - so risk isn't a one-way street.

We also note government plans to extend school days; again the risk can be reduced by the ability to amend services and patterns should the new school day not be covered by a single driver shift any longer, or evening school ending coincide with evening work ending times.

Elephants - Operators



Operators feel that a change in the system will reduce the value of their investment / put their livelihood at risk. However, you'll note steps to alleviate that concern / provide a shift over during current vehicle life - and if the alternative of cuts goes ahead, chances are they'll end up worse off with no supported services to run and the commercial side withered.

Concern has been expressed that at Council level experts are required to handle these issues, but with a team of six staff currently in the Public Transport team, including contracts experts, and a legal department, the resources are already in place and will be redeployed.

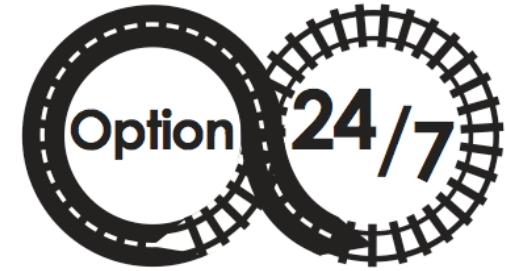
Elephants - Political



Public Transport has been quoted to us as a "poisoned chalice" portfolio at Council - and the current consultation and strong objection to any cuts is targeted against Wiltshire Council. Under the new scheme, responsibility partially lies with the local transport committee, but credit for being slightly ahead of the game and introducing it goes to the politicians.

As benefits such as better journey times (due to better connections), through services where previously changes were needed, and more people being able to use the bus ... lower adult fares, better ticketing options, higher quality vehicles ... come on-stream, the decision makers at a political level can again look at the key positive decision they've taken to move this approach forward.

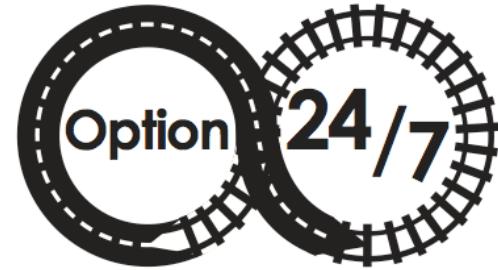
**Do the figures add up?
Will it gain public support?**



Yes - the figures do add up.

With some new money (NOT from council budgets - see following), with an informed campaign to ensure the public's aware of the 'meltdown' alternative that's been averted, and with new opportunities offered, we believe that public sentiment will be on side. Many more winners than losers, and the losers will only loose a little!

Option 247



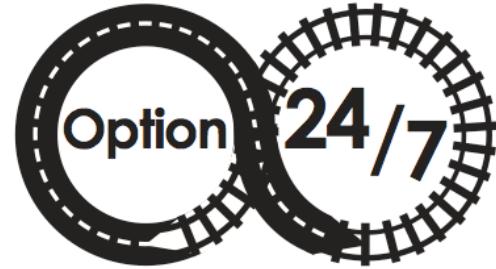
Option 24/7 is a working title ... looking at public transport requirements and requests all day, every day.

None of the specific examples quoted should be considered to be 'set in stone' as it's up to local transport groups / committees (LTCs) to balance their needs and for the local transport authority (LTA) to review and balance those needs on a wider basis, and include them within service specifications to the contracted operators.

Option 24/7 looks at requests over the whole 24 hour period, but it's unlikely that much will run in the middle of the night; some requirements may need to be met with alternatives, and some requests may not be met.

Although option 24/7 has only emerged as a title alongside the current consultation, preliminary work and studies were undertaken in the preceding 12 months. And it is very much hoped that the climate will be such that the work can continue alongside and in partnership with the Local Transport Authority into the future.

Some detail (1)



Town and Country

- * Linking town services in with interurban services such that they run together.
- * Saving vehicle termination / turn around time
- * Encouraging new traffic onto town and interurban buses too
- * Not 'new buses' - just updated ones (and saves some town bus vehicles)
- * Example - Devizes town bus runs into x72

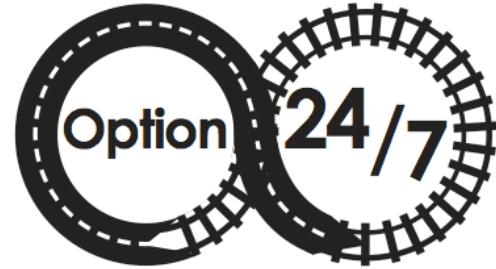
Some detail (2)



Rail Connection

- * Ensuring that timings and stops make for good total journey connections
- * Not 'new buses' - just updated ones
- * Extra revenue via designation support - see later
- * Example - Melksham Town bus (14 / 15)

Some detail (3)



Full day services

- * Providing journey to and from work, including those who's commute gives them a long day
- * Not 'new buses' - just extended day ones

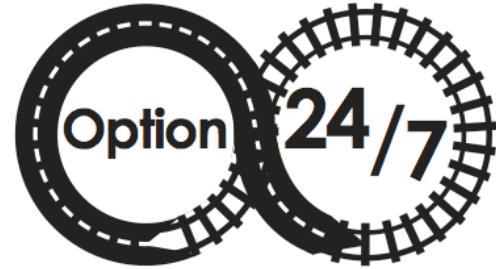
Some detail (4)



Fanning

- * Alternate routes between towns so that different village groups are served
- * Not 'new buses' - updated ones (saves some local bus vehicles)
- * Example - alternate Bath to Melksham via Corsham, Melksham to Trowbridge via Holt - replacing 68 and 69
- * Example - 265 to fan through Westbury (already does 'Town and Country' in Warminster)

Some detail (5)



Plusbus

- * Already available in Chippenham (but no longer frequent town bus e.g. Pewsham) and Salisbury
- * Adds bus to train for total journey
- * To be encouraged for other town - Trowbridge & Melksham first candidates
- * Also Westbury, Warminster and Bradford-on-Avon
- * Possible extension of Chippenham to Lacock?
- * No change to buses beyond those covered in rail connection element

Some detail (6)



Explorer

- * Services joined up across towns to provide through transport too
- * Not 'new buses' - more attractive use of existing ones!
- * Example - Yate - Malmesbury - Swindon

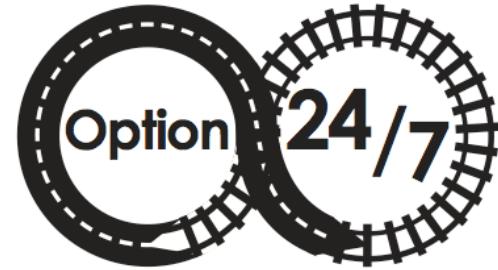
Some detail (7)



Regularise services

- * Co-ordinate different routes that share a common section
- * Not 'new buses' - just updated ones (and may save fill in vehicles)
- * Example - 87 and 2 south of Devizes to provide Lavington services

Some detail (8)



Serve tourist markets and journeys

- * Not 'new buses' - more attractive use of existing ones!
- * Example - no. 2 via both Devizes museum and Stonehenge Visitors Centre

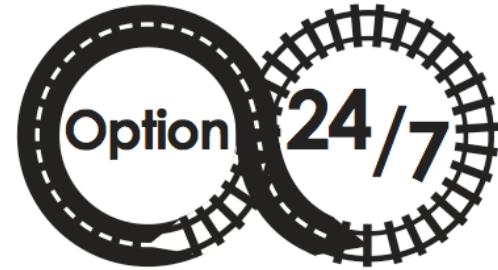
Some detail (9)



Serve new roads and changing needs

- * Not 'new buses' - more attractive use of existing ones!
- * Example - Melksham Town runs via Portal Way and Bowerhill Industry

Some detail (10)



Community

- * Encourage Community Transport where it's best suited - probably on irregular services
- * Not 'new buses' - may save vehicles used for occasional runs at present though few in number
- * Examples - Lacock to Corsham, Warminster to Devizes via Chitterne

All through the county



- * Combined / interchangeable ticketing
- * Minimum quality of vehicle provision
- * Link ups timetables and information
 - * Lots more through services
- * Planned connections including to rail for longer journeys

On finance



Currently support is as follows (from WC consultation)

Go Ahead - Over £1m

Frome Minibuses - Around £565k

Stagecoach - Over £550k

APL Travel - Around £540k

Wheelers - Around £410k

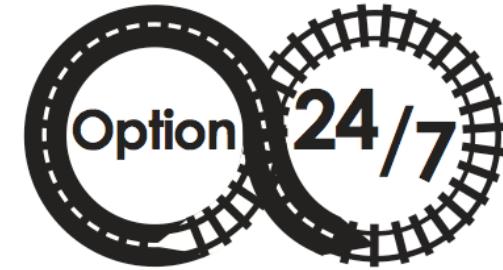
Coachstyle - Around £380k

Thamesdown - Around £375k

First - Around £280k

Faresaver - Around £280k

Designation Support

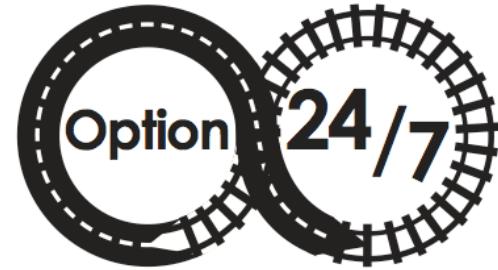


Assuming TransWilts service designation passes

Initial sums for Chippenham and Melksham (14, 15, 44, perhaps 10)

- **Rail service designation allows local amendment of fares**
- Experience / Severn beach line
- Fares "via Melksham" undercut buses and are very low
- Supplement 50p per ticketed journey sold at these fares
- Plusbus to be priced at 50p x 2 below local bus fare
- extra income provides around 50k of support over 2 towns
- explored informally with DfT - supported if clearly a local initiative

Building on designation



Heart of Wessex CRP services are already designated

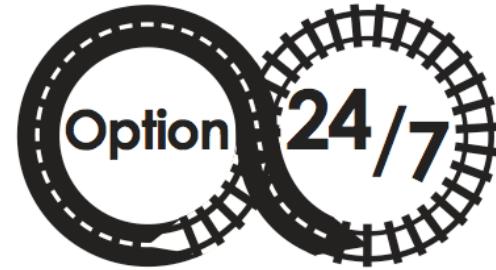
- Potential for Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge, Westbury buses

TransWilts extension to Salisbury

- Potential for Warminster buses

Avoncliff and Dilton Marsh potential too. No designation at Pewsey or Bedwyn; Tisbury in the future.

Basketing of routes/fares



Profitable trunk routes and town services that need support are merged

- Overall baskets remain commercially viable
- Operator income can be increased by encouraging network use
- Station connections encourage transfer from bus to train reducing ENCTS use

Potential services (1)



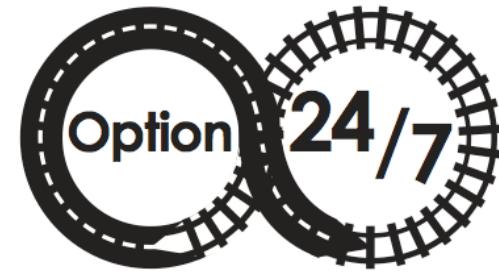
COMMERCIAL GROUP

R1 + R2 + R3/PR3 + R4 + R5 + R6 + R8 + 12, 14 + City + Hosp

51 + 53

TOTAL COMMERCIAL GROUP SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT - £0

Potential Services (2)



COMMERCIAL + DESIGNATED GROUP

X31 + 10 + 44

271/2 + X72 + X34 + 1, 1a, 1c + 14, 15 + 68 + DTWW + DTRG + 69

55 + 33/X33 + 40 + WBTB + 42/43 + 55A

265 + 50, 54, 57 + 58 + 65, 66, 67 + 98 + 94 + 60

COMMERCIAL + DESIGNATED GROUP SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT - £0

Potential services (3)



EXPLORER GROUP

X3 + 44

X5 + Actv8 + 66/67 + 5

X7 + X7R

49 (£39499.96 Subsidy)

2 (£216995.01 Subsidy)

X12 (£14568.18 Subsidy)

31 + 41 (£165374.15 Subsidy)

58 + 77, 85, 87 + C2W (£423911.77 Subsidy)

TOTAL EXPLORER GROUP SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT - £860349.07

Potential services(4)



SUBSIDISED GROUP

80 + 217 + 19, 20, 21, 22 + 46/48 + 70A (£515838.21 Subsidy)

92 + 30 + 35 + 635 + 91 (£277511.86)

25, 26, 27 + 29 + 158 + Mere TB (£519849.35 Subsidy)

37 (£86963.48 Subsidy)

52 (£55160 Subsidy)

53 (£48199.46 Subsidy)

66 (£14688.48 Subsidy)

87 (£44621.14 Subsidy)

93 (£53341.99 Subsidy)

228 (£10000.08 Subsidy)

BAV (£14000.63 Subsidy)

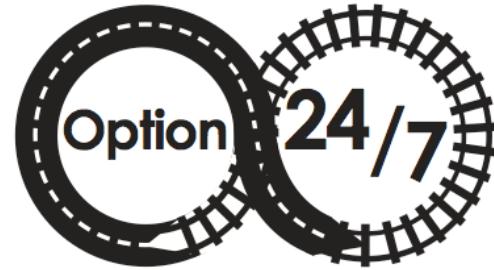
TOTAL SUBSIDISED GROUP SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT - £1640174.68

Potential services (5)



COMMUNITY BUS POT - £76248.92

Financial totals

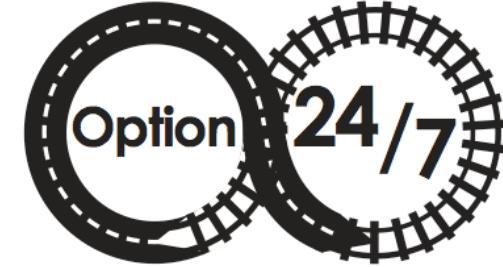


TOTAL WILTSHIRE COUNCIL SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT - £2,576,772.67

CURRENT WILTSHIRE SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT - £5,076,772.67

TOTAL SAVING - £2,500,000

Community and Council



We note that Wiltshire Council hasn't bid for the 'Sustainable Travel Transition Year Fund' for the forthcoming financial year, but **is looking to bid for the access fund** for the following year which may provide some transition help.

"Wiltshire Council has considered making a bid to the Government's £20 million 'Sustainable Travel Transition Year 2016/17 Fund'. However, given the very tight timescales, the requirements of the bid, limited resources and the failure of the Council's 2015/16 Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid extension, it has been decided that the Council's efforts are better targeted at making a bid to the £560 million Access Fund which the Dept. for Transport is to launch later in 2016 for commencement in 2017/18. As part of this process, the Council will engage with relevant key partners and community groups to seek to develop the best bid possible" (Facebook, 16th March)

We look forward to engaging - hopefully you consider us a key partner, but at least as a community group.

Small print



The figures quoted in the latter sections of this document are from currently available figures, and work on the assumption of similar services within the groups. In practise, work from PTCs and the PTA and changes would lead to amendments - potentially both downwards and upwards.

The examples / historic data are just that, and the elements will require public and local expert input across the county to ensure we get the best results.

Timeline



- * Decide and specify services from summer 2016 to year end
- * New Plusbus zones to be implemented December 2016
- * Prepare for new services during 2017 in detail
- * Amend fares for designation in September 2017
- * Most service changes to start on 10th December 2017

Conclusions



Wiltshire has a window of opportunity to save support money from buses, while providing a better overall service for the future that will improve the quality of life and use for many people, help the environment and the economy, ensure the medium term survival of a viable bus service using companies and skills available in the county, and be popular amongst the public too.

The authors of this presentation are ready and willing to support the approaches outlined, or tuned approaches along the same lines, in the medium term - just as some of them have done with rail services from Swindon and Chippenham to Westbury.

We look forward to working further with you for the mutual benefit of the people of Wiltshire, visitors, and all the parties involved.