Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Bus Service Improvement Plan

Summer 2024 edition

Contents

About this document

This is the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for the Borough, which lays out how the Council will work in partnership with bus operators to grow a network of integrated bus services around the Borough that are a great choice for many of the journeys people make.

Document accessibility

Effort has been made to ensure that this document is presented in a widely accessible format.

If you require this information in an alternative format, please contact us to discuss your requirements:

- Email: customer.service@rbwm.gov.uk
- Telephone: 01628 683 800

Development of this plan

The development of this plan has been informed by:

- Bus operator's feedback
- Consultation from our residents
- National research and guidance

We have collected data, utilising nationally available datasets from Department for Transport and working closely with operators and neighbouring authorities. This has been in line with expectations set out in the BSIP guidance. The following data has been collected, analysed, and used to inform the evidence base behind our targets and suggested measures:

- Details and maps of local commercial and supported bus services
- Case studies of multi-operator ticketing and Demand Responsive Transport schemes
- Local bus fares and those in neighbouring authorities
- Local bus frequencies and those in neighbouring authorities
- Details and maps of local bus stops (including those with real-time information)
- Percentage of bus services running on time (locally and in neighbouring authorities)
- Patronage on local bus services (locally and in neighbouring authorities)
- Distance travelled on local bus services (locally and in neighbouring authorities)
- National Highways and Transport Network public transport satisfaction scores (locally and in neighbouring authorities)
- Problem locations on the bus network from operators
- On-board timing surveys on two services
- On-board passenger surveys
- Non-bus user qualitative and quantitative research

Not all operator data is provided within the BSIP as some metrics are commercially sensitive, however, data has been consolidated as to provide summary findings. Some data, such as bus stop

and arrival and departure timings, have not been provided by some operators, as they do not have the capability to collect this.

Document history

This version is the summer 2024 update to the plan (the second published version of the plan).

The original plan was published in 2021.

Development funding

The development of the original edition of this document was funded by UK Government.

Foreword

The National Bus Strategy, Bus Back Better, was published on 15 March 2021. The national ambitions within this Strategy were to support the Council's own Local Transport Plan and were aligned with the Borough's Environment and Climate Strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in December 2020, which seeks to tackle air quality issues and reduce congestion, thereby improving the local environment for residents. For many, buses are a lifeline to employment, education, medical appointments, and leisure, and are essential to the local economy. We recognise the vital role that buses play and have ambitions to improve the current offer for existing passengers.

This, in turn, will help draw more people towards using the bus. Getting more people on buses will reduce the number of cars on our roads, freeing up road space, and crucially, help improve our air quality. The opportunity to submit a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) has allowed us to set out our ambitions for the future of our bus network. We have outlined the measures which, if funding is forthcoming, would enable us to achieve our objectives within the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead. Within our BSIP, we have responded ambitiously and positively, aiming to achieve significant improvements to bus services for our residents. The measures cover several key areas, including increasing bus frequencies, reducing fares, improving buses, and introducing multi-operator ticketing and more.

The BSIP will be a live document, and we will continually review and update it to ensure residents are aware of our priorities. We look forward to working closely with local bus operators and neighbouring authorities in the coming months and years to improve the bus network and ensure residents have access to a safe, reliable, accessible, and affordable bus network.

Cllr Hill
Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport, Customer Services, HR, IT

Introduction

The National Bus Strategy (Bus Back Better) was published by in March 2021 and sets out an ambitious vision to dramatically improve bus services in England outside London through greater local leadership. Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and local bus operators must work at pace with local communities to plan and deliver a fully integrated service that will grow patronage.

Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) are the documents that sets out how Councils, working closely with their local bus operators and local communities, will achieve this – by setting out a vision for delivering the step-change in bus services that is required by the National Bus Strategy.

A BSIP is the essential first step as it will be the extent of the ambition, delivered through our Enhanced Partnership with local bus operators, that will be critical when the Government decides how and where future funding is to be allocated.

This BSIP covers the full administrative area of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. A corresponding 'Enhanced Partnership' for bus services has been established for the same area between the Council, bus operators and local stakeholders, supported by an associated Enhanced Partnership Scheme and Plan.

Our BSIP will be the framework for future delivery and, in part, act as an evidence base for future funding. The government require BSIPs to be high level, strategic documents that include a vision for buses and the measures to deliver it.

We know that the average bus trips per head of population in 2023 in the Borough was 6.7, which is significantly lower than the national average and other Berkshire authorities. We have a great opportunity, following on from the National Bus Strategy, to make a marked improvement in bus usage in the Borough. Post-pandemic, the number of bus journeys made by fare paying passengers has recovered and showing signs of exceeding pre-pandemic usage. However, the number of bus journeys made by holders of the free, national bus pass is lower than pre-pandemic usage. The

Council has ambitions to continue to grow patronage, bringing us up to the levels of other Berkshire authorities and potentially beyond.

Our BSIP is a hugely valuable opportunity to improve the bus network in RBWM in line with the National Bus Strategy, contributing to a borough of safer, greener and cleaner communities, with opportunities for all.

Vision

> *'An affordable, accessible, safe, convenient, environmentally friendly and integrated bus network, that grows bus patronage and the modal share of buses'*

Developing the vision

The vision has been developed through collaborative discussions with bus operators and neighbouring authorities, in addition to on-board surveys and non-bus-user surveys that were commissioned to inform this plan.

Achieving the vision

To achieve the vision, this plan identifies

- **Aims** – what we'll work towards
- **Approach** – how we'll work

Aims

The vision will be achieved through delivering against the following core aims. Each of the suggested measures contributes to at least one of these.

1. **Attractive service:** Buses will offer and promote a quality service that attracts people to use the bus more often
2. **Accessible:** Buses will provide people with an option to access work, services, and leisure activities, accessible to the widest cross section of the population
3. **Affordable:** Operators will offer and promote affordable fares and multi-operator ticketing
4. **Integrated:** The bus network will encourage integration with other modes of transport
5. **Understandable:** Information will be widely available and accessible to all users
6. **Attractive infrastructure:** Infrastructure supporting the bus network will be contemporary, well-maintained, and consistent

Approach

The following, four pillar approach has been developed, informing how we will work towards our vision and aims.

Customer focussed: For the bus network to compete with other modes, it needs to be developed in a way that provides a quality service that is affordable, accessible, reliable, and available.

Partnership working: The Council recognises that it cannot fully meet its obligations without closely working with residents, businesses and stakeholders including operators of all services. The Council will work with bus operators, in the form of Enhanced Partnerships, to deliver the BSIP.

Evidence driven: The suggested recommendations in the BSIP represent a significant investment from the Council, operators and other funding and delivery bodies in terms of money and resources. The Council will therefore continually monitor the bus network, enabling the impact of introduced measures to be understood. A monitoring plan is developed as part of this BSIP to ensure monitoring is carried out from an early stage.

Responsive: The BSIP presents the opportunity for the Council to have access to more accurate and contemporary data on the bus network. Working with operators and other stakeholders, this data can be used to react to changes in demand. Additionally, changes in the landscape, such as new developments or a large new employer are continually occurring, and therefore we will be consistently reviewing opportunities to increase patronage.

Current offer

Overview

As of January 2024, there are 33 public bus routes operating around the Borough (excluding school buses, specialist dial-a-ride and private business park shuttles). Fourteen of these bus routes are financially supported by Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, with a further five cross-boundary services financially supported by neighbouring local authorities. There are 14 services run on a fully commercial basis, some of these in a commercial partnership with Heathrow Airport.

The Borough is formed around three main built-up areas – Maidenhead, Windsor & Eton and Ascot & The Sunnings – but also comprises the villages, hamlets, farmland, woodland and reservoirs between them, as well as the large Windsor Great Park estate.

To the east of the Borough is Heathrow Airport, which is both a major 24-hour centre of employment and a very well-connected travel hub for connecting local, regional, national and international travel. Beyond Heathrow Airport to the east is Greater London.

The Borough is also surrounded by a necklace of nearby towns with important economic and social links to the Borough that generate demands for travel – the largest of these being Slough, Staines, Bracknell, Wokingham, Reading and High Wycombe.

The bus network has the opportunity to integrate with the Borough's rail network, which consists of three east-west corridors:

- London – Slough/Windsor – Maidenhead – Reading
- London – Staines – Wraysbury – Sunnymeads – Datchet – Windsor
- London – Staines – Sunningdale – Ascot – Bracknell – Reading

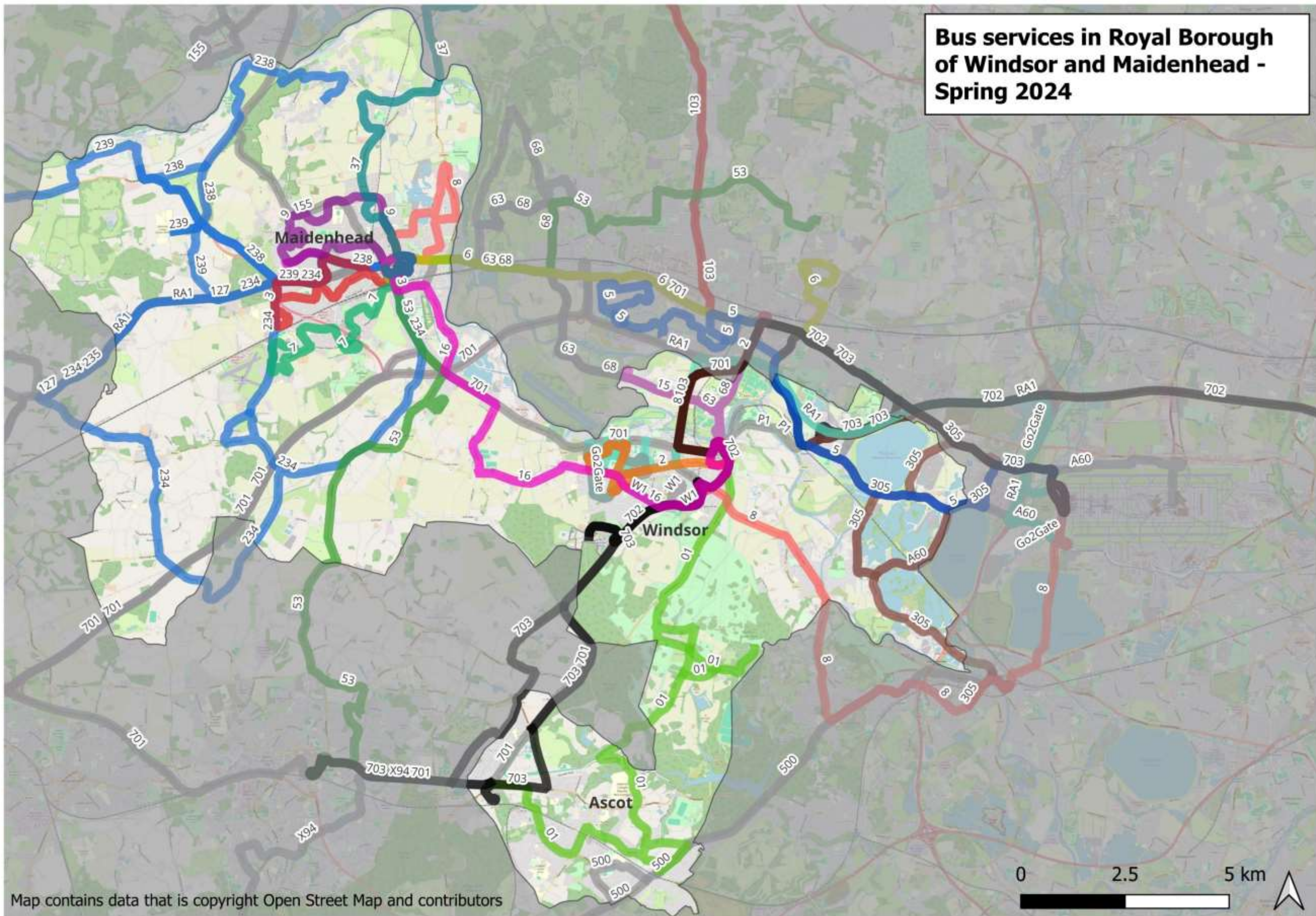A map of the Borough's current bus services is provided overleaf as figure 1.

Figure 1: Map of all current bus services in Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Patronage

In 2022/23 there were 1.03 million journeys on local bus services in RBWM. This equates to 6.7 journeys per head. This is one of the lowest rates nationally, and the Council has ambitions to bring bus patronage up to the levels seen in the wider Berkshire area, which is reflected in the 'targets' section and in line with the aims of the Council's Environment and Climate Strategy (2020).

Generally, bus usage has decreased in recent years. This is exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic when overall travel demand was suppressed, and bus users were instructed for a period to not travel by bus unless essential, as can be seen in Figure 2. Most recently, bus patronage amongst fare paying passengers does appear to have recovered and may now exceed pre-pandemic passenger numbers – brought about in part by the national £2 bus fare cap. However, bus journeys by English National Concessionary Travel passholders currently remains substantially below what it was pre-pandemic.

The National Bus Strategy and BSIP are the ideal opportunity to set out aims and measures to reverse this trend and increase bus use across the Borough. Our aim is to not only get back to pre-COVID levels but to significantly increase bus usage.
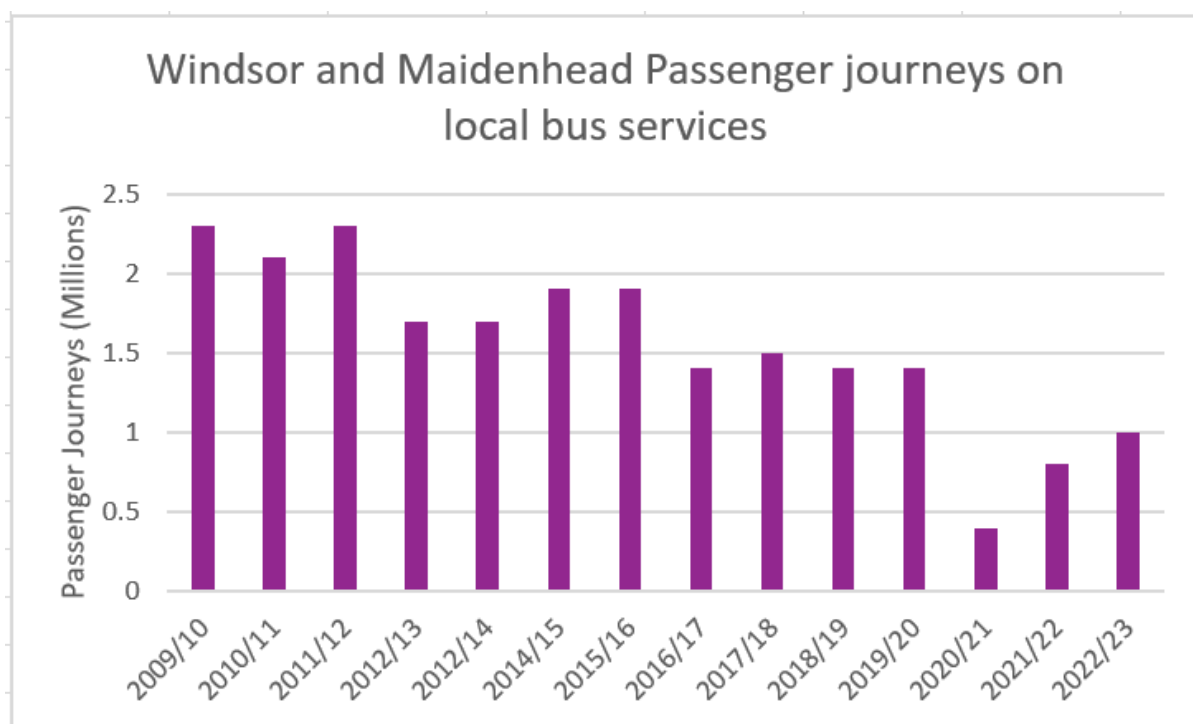

Figure 2: passenger journeys on local bus services. Source: Department for Transport statistic table Bus01e

Public perception

The Council commissioned research pre-pandemic that captured the views of both bus and non-bus users within the Borough. As part of the development of this Plan, the Council carried out on-bus surveys to capture the views of bus users on the current bus offer and how it can be improved. Research on non-bus users was also carried out in the form of quantitative and qualitative research methods, to understand why those people do not use the bus, and crucially, what would persuade them to do so. The following patterns were identified that demonstrate some of the typical behaviours of residents in the Borough with regards to bus use:

- Whilst most people use the car (over half of the sample) and nearly half use the train, approximately a third in the sample use the bus regularly. However, the bus is not usually the mode of transport they most often use, even amongst bus users.
- Rural residents tend to stay rural, but others tend to be travelling to/from towns in the area for social and work reasons.
- People who use the bus are more likely to commute using the bus, and the bus is used less often than it might be for social and leisure reasons
- The alternatives to taking the car which people consider are taking the train or taking a private hire vehicle
- People cited flexibility, privacy and quicker journey times as key reasons for driving

These behaviours helped to inform the suggested measures that the Council is putting forward as part of this Plan.

Journey opportunities

The foundations of achieving high bus use are in the network, or more simply, where the routes serve. Fundamentally, buses should pick people up from where they are and take them to where they want to go. If routes are not designed in a way that meets the demand, then patronage will be restricted. Therefore, it is vitally important that to improve the bus offer, the network must be designed to meet the demand.

From meeting regularly with our operators, we know that while some regularly review their routes using patronage and other useful data and make the appropriate changes to try to meet demand, some operators do not regularly review their routes due to resource or financial constraints. Some operators have not reviewed their routes in several years, meaning that there may have been changes in demand occurring that they are not adapting to and therefore losing existing and potential passengers. For example, if a new development is constructed, or a large employer moves to the area, there will be demand that could be captured.

Our on-board surveys showed that 20% of the sample said that no direct route/too many changes to their destination stops them from taking the bus more often. Similarly, our bus non-user research concluded that a general opinion is that buses do not travel to the 'right destinations'. People want to be able to go door to door with one mode of transport, rather than two or more buses, or a bus and a train for example. It was also emphasised that routes are too long and convoluted, and people want their journey to be similar in convenience and length to the use of the car.

Route types

Route typologies describe what types of locations a bus route connects. Bus services in the Borough largely reflect the aforementioned development patterns and connection points in the places they connect. Services fall into five such groups:

Town routes: shorter routes, contained within a single built-up area (6 bus routes in RBWM)

Interurban routes: linking built-up areas and key destinations, whilst also serving smaller communities along the way (15 bus routes in RBWM)

Village link routes: connecting one or more villages to a nearby town or towns. Unlike interurban services, where these services link two towns it is in an incidental and indirect way with the purpose of connecting the villages to the towns, not the towns to one another (9 bus routes in RBWM)

Specialised airport routes: providing additional services to Heathrow Airport beyond those provided by standard interurban services, e.g. with limited stops or operating hours (2 bus routes in RBWM)

'Demand Responsive Transport' services: taxi bus-type services where passengers can pre-book a journey to/from a range of locations, usually within defined service zones, with the bus varying the journeys it makes to deliver the booked journeys (1 bus service in RBWM, plus a dial-a-ride service for eligible persons with limited mobility)

Regularity and frequency

Regularity describes whether there is a consistent, even spacing between one bus and the next. Frequency describes the time gap between one service and the next. Together, these describe the service interval.

Irregular and/or infrequent services require the traveller to plan carefully ahead to ensure that they catch a bus at a specific time, and are brittle – if a customer misses a bus, needs to change their plans or if a journey is cancelled, it can leave the customer reliant on an alternative means of travel to complete their journey.

In contrast, a regular service makes journeys more predictable and easier to plan with consistent, clockface departures, whilst frequent services give customers more flexibility to not have to plan their journeys, and the impact of a missed or cancelled bus is reduced. A regular, frequent service will give the greatest number of people, the maximum number of opportunities to meet their journey needs by bus. This includes both encouraging existing passengers to use buses more often, and encouraging new people to try the bus:

- In on-bus surveys of existing passengers, 61% of respondents indicated that more frequent services would lead to them using buses more. This was significantly higher than any other factor affecting how often people travelled by bus.
- In the bus non-user research, one of the key barriers to people using the buses is they are thought to be 'too infrequent'.

Table 1 shows how bus services in the Borough fall on a scale of service intervals. The scale provides a roadmap of how services with potential to be more useful to more people can be grown over time. This could include through funding the initial investment in fleet and early years operating costs, until patronage grows as a result of the improved service to make the new service level self-sustaining.

Service interval level	How often the bus comes (typical, main service hours)	Commercial bus services at this level	Supported bus services at this level	Total no. bus services at this level
Level 0	No services	N/a	N/a	N/a
Level 1	Limited journeys (3 return journeys or fewer per day)	3	4	7
Level 2	Irregular	0	8	8
Level 3	Regular – Two-hourly	0	1	1
Level 4	Regular – Hourly	8	6	14
Level 5	Regular – every 30 minutes	3	0	3
Level 6	Regular – every 20 minutes	0	0	0
Level 7	Regular – every 11-15 mins ('turn up and go')	0	0	0
Level 8	Frequent (every 10 mins or better)	0	0	0

Table 1 – Current service intervals

Currently, the most frequent bus services in the Borough run every 30 minutes (the Thames Valley Buses 7, First Bus 8 and Go2Gate services). Just over half (52%) of bus services are regular, hourly services or better. Almost all commercial bus services run hourly or every 30 minutes – the three exceptions are overnight services, two of which are funded by Heathrow Airport and the third takes advantage of positioning journeys for vehicles between depots and their regular service route.

Conversely, 45% of bus routes have irregular or limited service, with the vast majority of these routes being supported by local authority funding. Indeed, two thirds of bus routes supported by local authority funding are irregular or limited services, providing connections that otherwise would not exist but that do not meet the needs and expectations of most potential bus users.

There are currently no services that are frequent enough that passengers are likely to be willing to 'turn up and go' at the bus stop without checking departure times in advance (generally accepted to be a quality of a regular service that runs every 15 minutes or better). The consensus amongst respondents to survey work conducted to support the development of this plan was that a 'turn up and go' service would be needed to encourage them to switch journeys to the bus.

The National Highways and Transport 2023 satisfaction score for the service interval of bus services was 39%, which is exceptionally low when compared to a Berkshire average of 55% and national average of 51%.

Not every bus route will be suitable for the highest service interval levels – but understanding service intervals provides a framework for investigating where opportunities for improvement may lie.

Figure 3, overleaf, provides a map of the current bus services in the Borough, highlighting those services that are service interval level 4 (regular, hourly) or better.
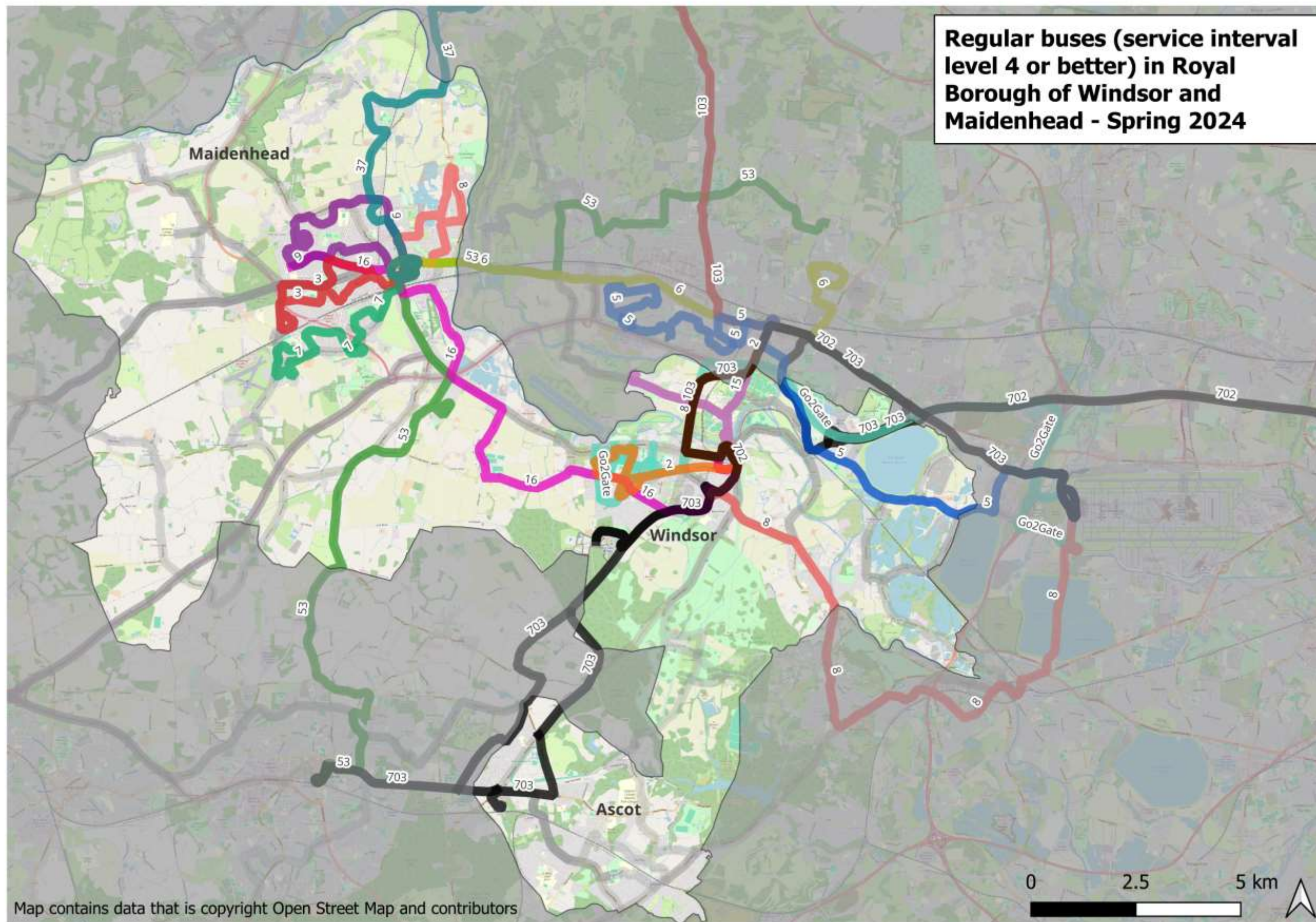
Figure 3. Map highlighting bus services in Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead that have a regular hourly service interval (i.e. Level 4) or better

Hours and days of operation

The days of operation are the days of the week on which the service operates. The hours of operation for a service are the hours between the first and last journeys of the day, which can vary by day of the week. Together, the hours and days of operation of a bus service describe the service span.

Typically, the spans of bus services in the Borough have been designed around work commute, school and shopping journeys, which are concentrated Monday to Saturday, during the day. However, in some parts of the Borough there are additional important markets which create strengthened demand for journeys at other times of the day or week. One such example is the large numbers of shift workers at Heathrow Airport and hospitality workers in Windsor with early starts and late finishes; another example is the visitor and leisure travel market that creates demand in evenings and weekends. Sometimes these markets can best be served with dedicated, specialised routes, but more often passenger flows follow similar geographical trajectories to those during the day and present an opportunity to add additional earlier and later departures as 'shoulder' services to the regular daytime journeys.

As well as serving new markets, such shoulder services also play a vital role in ensuring buses are well used during the day too. For example, adding an evening bus service can increase the number of people travelling earlier in the day who can rely on the later evening bus as a way to enable them to be flexible if their plans are not fixed or might change, *even if they do not end up travelling on the new, later bus journey itself* but instead come home on a daytime bus.

Thinking about hours of the day, shoulder services can be developed from a daytime route in a stepwise way, first adding 'twilight shoulder' services immediately before and after the daytime services, and later adding 'night shoulder' services before and after the twilight shoulder, as demonstrated in Figure 4.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
O	O	O	O	N	N	T	T	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	T	T	N	N	N

Figure 4: Diagram showing how the service span of daytime-based services between 8am and 6pm (marked 'D') can be augmented initially by twilight shoulder services from 6am to 8pm ('T') and then again by night shoulder services from 4am to midnight ('N'). Overnight services, between midnight and 4am, are marked 'O'. The upper row of the diagram gives hours on the 24-hour clock.

Similarly, bus services may be able to increase the days of the week they operate – firstly to run every weekday, then adding Saturdays to this, before finally building to an every day service.

This provides a framework for understanding existing spans of existing bus services, and where opportunities for service improvements may lie. Tables 2 and 3 document current service spans, with regards hours and days of operation respectively.

Service span - hours	Commercial bus services	Supported bus services	Total no. bus services
Daytime only	1	14	15
Daytime with twilight shoulder	6	4	10
Daytime with twilight and night shoulders	4	0	4
(Not applicable – no daytime service)	3	1	0

Table 2: Numbers of bus routes with given service spans (hours)

Service span - days	Commercial bus services	Supported bus services	Total no. bus services
Specific days only (e.g. 'Tuesdays only')	0	6	6
Monday – Friday	1	5	6
Monday – Saturday	3	5	8
Every day	10	3	13

Table 3: Numbers of bus routes with given service spans (days)

Most commercial bus routes run every day and have twilight shoulder services – with some having night shoulder services too. There may be scope, subject to an individual assessment by route, to financially support trials for those commercial services that are not every day or which do not have night shoulder services to expand their span of operation.

Most supported bus services run daytime only, and many run on only weekdays or even only selected weekdays. These reduced service spans for supported bus services keep costs low and mean the budget can stretch to supporting minimum services across more communities.

Corridors

There are corridors where more than one bus service follows the same route, which can create a combined service interval and span of service that provide more journey options for passengers. These can be useful, where there is a coordination of the timings of services such that service intervals are evenly spaced, and where ticketing allows customers to use either service without financial penalty.

Corridors within the Borough are identified in Table 4, below.

Understanding these corridors can help to identify where infrastructure improvements and bus priority measures may have more impact.

Other than where the routes that come together to form the corridor are part of a 'family' of routes, there is no timing coordination in these corridors, meaning that the benefit of having multiple bus services may not be fully realised from a bus users' perspective. Similarly, other than where all routes on a corridor are provided by a bus operator, once a passenger has purchased a return ticket on their outbound journey, they are unable to benefit fully from all journey options on the return leg as their existing ticket will only be valid on certain journeys.

Corridor	Bus routes	Buses per hour (per direction)	Timing coordination	Ticketing coordination
Windsor – Ascot	01, 701, 703	1 – 2	No	No
Windsor – Legoland	701, 702, 703	2	Yes	Yes
Windsor – Dedworth	2, 16, W1	2 – 3	No	No
Windsor – Slough	2, 8, 103, 701, 702, 703	5 – 6	No	No
Eton Wick – Eton – Slough	15, 63, 68	1 – 2	No	No
Heatherwood Hospital – Bracknell	701, 703, X94	1 – 2	No	No
Maidenhead – Furze Platt	9, (Arriva) 7	2	No	No
Maidenhead – St Mark's Hospital	3, 9, 234, 235, 238, 239	1 – 2	No	Yes
Maidenhead – Hurley	238, 239	Less than 1	Yes†	Yes
Maidenhead – Knowl Hill	234, 235	Less than 1	Yes	Yes
Maidenhead – Taplow	6, 53	2	No	No

Table 4: Corridors in the Borough where multiple routes connect the same destinations

Supported bus services

Many of the Borough's bus services are operated as commercial ventures by privately owned and managed bus companies, and there is no obligation for the Council to fund any public bus services. The Council does have the powers under the Transport Acts (1985, 2000) and Local Transport Act (2008) to enter into agreements with public transport operators to secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the Council consider it appropriate to meet any public transport requirements within the county which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose, to keep communities connected. The Council partly or wholly funds some such services, equating to a total annual cost to the Council of approximately £870,000. In addition, some bus services that pass through the Borough operate under contract to neighbouring local authorities.

A list of all current bus services in the Borough and their status as either a commercial partly supported or fully supported service is provided in Appendix A.

Marketing and promotion

Fares and ticketing

Fares and ticketing play a vital role in bus usage. The prices of fares, the types of ticket available and how people can buy tickets make up part of the experience of using the bus, and therefore need to be considered in any development of a bus network.

At the time of writing in May 2024, the government are supporting a national £2 fare cap for a one-way bus journey. This was originally launched in January 2023, shortly after the original publication of this Plan, and has been extended until December 2024. This has both reduced the price of travel and substantially simplified the range of fares in the Borough, which were two key issues identified in the first published version of this Plan. Critically, it has allowed potential passengers to know how much their journey will cost before boarding the bus.

Patronage data suggests that this simple, affordable fare has seen fare-paying passengers return to bus services – seemingly now in slightly greater numbers than before the pandemic, and growing. Most bus operators in the Borough have chosen to be involved in the £2 scheme, but two operators chose not to be.

Once this scheme concludes, however, the default position of bus operators will be a return to previous fare arrangements – with each bus operator having their own ticket types and prices. The public perception surveys suggested that the sheer number of ticket types provides a complicated environment for passengers wishing to undertake journeys that involve routes with more than one operator, acting as a deterrent to choosing the bus as the preferred method of transport.

There is a need therefore to review how ticketing could be kept as simple as possible after December 2024. This could include improved information and publicity, review of purchase channels, multi-operator ticketing, mutual ticket acceptance arrangements between bus operators, loyalty schemes and fare cap arrangements. It could also include greater promotion of 'PlusBus', a discounted bus ticket for people making a combined rail and bus journey. The ticket allows passengers to take unlimited local bus travel around town at the start, the end, or on both ends of a train journey.

With regards to prices, it is likely that prices will rise at the conclusion of the £2 cap. An analysis of pre-cap fares on services within the Borough were considerably higher than this, and compared to services in neighbouring authorities showed that fares in the Borough are more expensive than four out of five nearby authorities. This is based on the average cost of a day ticket across all RBWM services against an average of 6 services in the other authorities. Table 5, below, shows the comparison in 2021 (pre-fare cap).

Local Authority area	Average day ticket
Windsor and Maidenhead	£5.30
Bracknell Forest	£6.07
Slough	£5.22
Wokingham	£4.18
Buckinghamshire	£4.18
Reading	£4.00

Table 5: Average day ticket prices across local authority areas, in 2021 (pre £2 fare cap)

It will not be possible for the Council to continue to subsidise fares when the national fare cap expires. However, the cost of using the bus will likely continue to be competitive with the costs of other forms of travel. Figure 4 below compares the average cost of owning a car per day with the average bus day ticket in the Borough. The average annual cost of running a cost apportioned per day is 76% more than that of an average day bus ticket in the Borough, which is significant.

Figure 4. Cost comparison of the costs of a day's bus travel in the Borough compared to the cost of a day's car travel. Source: pre-fare cap research

A particular challenge, however, is that a proportion of these costs associated with running a car are fixed and upfront – such as insurance, tax and maintenance. The relative affordability of the bus makes for a persuasive case for households to switch to the bus instead of a car, but it can only be persuasive if the message reaches households at the time that decisions on large, annual costs are due, such as Vehicle Excise Duty payments, MOTs, parking permit renewals and insurance renewals – however, it is a relatively ineffective message outside of those times.

Additionally, whilst buses have the potential to play a much more significant role in meeting residents' transportation needs, most households will continue to require a car for a proportion of the journeys they make. The economic case for choosing to not run a car for a year is likely to be more persuasive for household decision making around second (and third, etc) cars, and messaging would benefit from being targeted as such. Critical too will be investment in and promotion of other travel options that give people choices for journeys that buses will not be able to support, to give a holistic offer to households that reduce their number of cars. Alongside existing taxi services and investment that is being made in walking, wheeling, cycling and rail, there is a particular need for the Borough to attract investment into car clubs to create this holistic offer.

There are every day, variable costs associated with car travel too – most especially fuel and destination parking. Comparisons between these costs and bus tickets will be more powerful than full-year running costs, particularly for encouraging residents to switch individual trips to the bus, including encouraging bus non-users to give the bus a try in a low-commitment way. As with any marketing, identifying channels and timing that deliver this message at optimum moments in people's journey planning decision making will be crucial.

Prior to the introduction of the £2 fare cap our on-board survey showed that only 7% of people asked said that fare prices were stopping them taking the bus more often, and satisfaction with 'value for money' was rated 4.33 out of a possible top score of 5 (i.e. 87%). Additionally, our survey found that many people who didn't use the bus overestimated how much the bus would cost to use. This is reflected where the 54% satisfaction rate with bus fares amongst bus users in the survey

compares with a 50% satisfaction rate amongst the local population overall (source: National Highways and Transport annual satisfaction survey, 2023).

Therefore, effective marketing – including both simplification and promotion – of fares is likely to be a fruitful and achievable course of action at the conclusion of the £2 fare cap, even if continued direct discounting of fares will not be possible. Enacting other measures that encourage people to use buses more will also help bus operators to keep their fares as low as possible.

Bus information

Bus users require information ahead of time on bus routes and where they stop; bus times; and fares. Bus users also benefit from live information on bus arrival times and disruption. Bus information is a recognised area for improvement. When surveyed, residents rated bus information provision particularly poorly, with a score for ease of finding the right information of 44%, compared to 53% for the Berkshire average and the national average of 55%.

Since the first edition of this plan, the Council has created and introduced the processes to maintain a webpage with all bus routes listed and links to times on bus operator websites. Some, but not all, bus operators provide maps and fare information on the linked websites. The Council additionally partners with bus operators and Buckinghamshire Council to ensure information on bus services is correct and up to date in national databases that supply information to journey planning apps and websites.

Printed timetable information is provided through the same partnership with Buckinghamshire Council and bus operators, with Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead providing timetable

cases at bus stops, Buckinghamshire Council printing timetables, and bus operators posting the timetables at stops. A key area for improvement is the condition of timetable cases in the Borough – where these are damaged or missing, posted timetables can go missing, or may not be possible to affix. Similarly, bus stop flags are not currently used consistently to display location and service information in a reassuringly consistent manner to bus users.

As a result of budget constraints, there is currently no network map of services in the Borough, which is a constraint on helping new users understand their travel options. In town centres, 'Where to catch your bus's information showing which buses call at each stop has also been absent, but it is proposed to reinstate this for Maidenhead and Windsor in late 2024.

Almost all buses in the Borough now broadcast their real-time position. Bus passengers 'in the know' can access this information on some bus operator websites, and links have been provided to these facilities from the Council's website. Most bus users (and prospective bus users) desire to have the information available to them as a countdown timer at the bus stop – with 13% of survey respondents reporting this would increase the amount they used the bus. Some of the Borough's busiest bus stops have real-time information, but many more stops have sufficient actual or potential service use to justify its introduction. In the medium- and long-term increased rollout of real-time passenger information is likely to grow bus use – but its rollout will be subject to funding being identified.

Performance

Punctuality and reliability

Punctuality and reliability are key elements in attracting bus patronage. Reliability refers to whether a bus operates a journey that it was intended to make, whilst punctuality refers to whether the bus arrives and departs at its stopping points on time. Combined, good punctuality and reliability ensure passengers can make their journeys in the way they expect, and meet their own commitments such as arriving at work, school or appointments on time, or plans made with family and friends. If people cannot rely on a bus to turn up on time, or the journey to take more time it is expected to, then bus patronage will fall far short of its potential.

Punctuality in RBWM is favourable in comparison with nearby local authorities. Figure 5, below, shows that for 2018/19, RBWM had the highest percentage of services running on time at 95% (defined as between 1 minute early and 6 minutes late). The figure of 95% was, however, unusually high in comparison with previous years, which typically saw figures of between 85% and 90% of services running on time. The 2020/21 figure for the percentage of services running on time within RBWM is 87%; despite a drop from 2018/19, this is still a relatively high percentage in comparison to nearby authorities. More recent figures are not currently available.

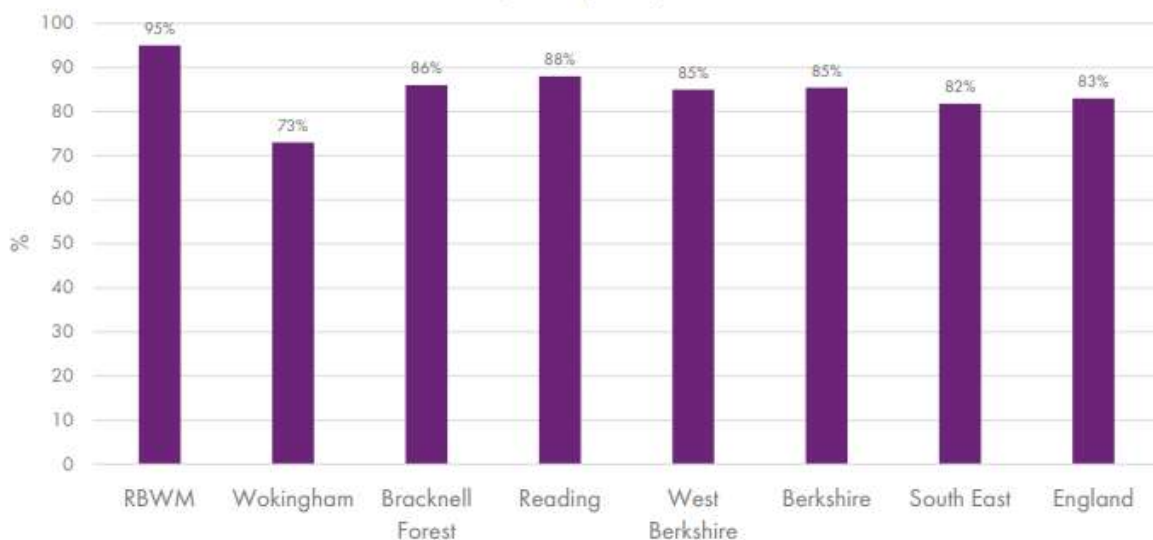## Bus services running on time (%): RBWM vs Berks authorities (2018/19)

Figure 5. Punctuality of bus service in 2018/19, comparing the Borough with other Berkshire authorities and measures for all Berkshire, all South East England, and all England

A reason for the higher percentages of services running on time in the Borough compared to other nearby authorities may be because operators build more recovery time into their schedules. This has a very helpful effect on reliability and punctuality which secures existing patronage. However, it can also increase journey times and operating costs as buses that have issue-free journeys must unproductively wait time along route to avoid getting ahead of schedule, which can result in frustrating, slow journeys and higher fares which can stifle opportunities to grow patronage further.

To tackle this, whilst an element of schedule slack is essential to ensure reliability and punctuality in unusual circumstances, it is important that the amount of recovery time within schedules is minimised. We have worked closely with the operators to identify areas of concern based on their daily experience where delays or issues may occur, alongside our findings from the data analysis. This allows the Council to focus measures on the 'problem areas', which can improve reliability with the aim of increasing patronage.

One example of a problem area reported by bus operators was Windsor town centre. To evidence this, we asked operators to provide us with data that tracks arrival and departure time from bus stops along their routes. An analysis of Thames Valley services showed that the average lateness across stops on their 2 service, which mainly covers Windsor town centre, is 3:54 late. An average of their five Maidenhead services (3, 7, 8, 9, 234/5/8/9) was 1:48 late. For the 2 service, the average lateness at the Windsor Parish Church stop, which is on the high street, was 3:17 late. It is recognised that this degree of lateness is still 'on-time' as defined by DfT, however they indicate delays on top of any time that operators build into their schedules, and help identify areas for improvement.

Although these findings are based on one weeks' worth of data in October 2019, it provides a consistent period to work from across each route. Dwell time was considered in this analysis, as to understand if the delays are caused by congestion or in fact more passengers boarding and alighting.

An analysis of the 2 services showed that average dwell time at Parish Church, Windsor was 1:38, compared to 1:14 as an average of all stops on the route. This suggests that although dwell time is higher, the unreliability on Windsor High Street is due to congestion. Going forward, the Council would like to monitor bus stop arrival and departure data (timing data) more regularly and have a larger dataset from which to make recommendations. Not all operators have access to this data, and it is often provided in different formats. We would therefore like to work closely with operators to ensure they have the capability to collect and provide us with this data in a consistent format.

This provides an insight into timing data at the problem locations, a larger dataset from which ongoing monitoring is conducted is required in order to deduce more accurate conclusions. Anecdotal evidence on the impact of congestion in Windsor town centre is supported by the timing data we have collected, and operators have stressed the need for improvements in this area to increase the reliability of their services.

Our on-board bus surveys showed that on average, our sample rated their satisfaction of punctuality as 4.41 (where 1 is low, 5 is high), and 18% of the sample said that more reliable services would make them use buses more.

It is an ambition of the Council to ensure the network has appropriate capacity to operate reliable bus services, particularly at peak times when the operators have reported that they experience delays.

Infrastructure and assets

The infrastructure that supports the bus network plays an important role in the end-to-end experience of passengers. Poor bus infrastructure, such as older buses and unmaintained bus stops deter people from using the bus. On the other hand, investment in infrastructure, such as modern buses and well-maintained bus stops with real-time information makes for a more appealing journey.

Vehicles

In terms of physical infrastructure, the buses used are the responsibility of the operator. The Council can influence the specification of buses on supported services, and we are currently exploring the different options for this for future tenders, such as Euro 6, hybrid or electric vehicles.

Our on-board surveys showed that the average satisfaction score for the condition of the buses was 4.4 (where 1 is low, 5 is high). Furthermore, 9% of survey responses said that improved buses (Wi-Fi, charging ports etc) would make them use buses more, and 4% said that better maintenance or improved bus stops would make them use buses more.

The score for the cleanliness and quality of buses was 64%, compared to 68% for both the Berks and national average.

Based on our findings we have suggested a medium-term measure of working with operators to improve the ambience and technology on board buses. This includes retrofitting technology such as phone charging sockets where operators are unable to provide this currently.

Delivery plan to 2025

Upon its original publication in October 2021 for its first submission to the Department for Transport, this Plan contained a set of objectives and proposed short-, medium- and long-term actions.

Progress on action plan

The majority of the actions required new, external funding to deliver. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has since been awarded £874,000 of Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus (Phase 2) funding as well as benefiting from national funding for the £2 fare cap, which combined with limited local resources will see a delivery plan through to early 2025 as set out in Table 6. The amount of funding and the type of funding (i.e. revenue) has enabled the Council to deliver on some of the short-term priorities in the originally published Plan, as follows:

Proposed action	Status	Action origin	Progress to date
Review Borough bus network	Complete	Plan (first edition)	Network review conducted alongside preparatory work for the retendering of supported bus services in 2024/5
Single bus info webpage	Complete	Plan (first edition)	Now live on RBWM website, with processes in place to ensure it remains up to date
Trial cheaper tickets	Complete	Plan (first edition)	The national £2 bus fare cap has delivered on this action, and has resulted in growing patronage amongst fare payers
Support bus driver recruitment	Complete	Enhanced Partnership Board	Bus companies invited to Council-organised recruitment fares to meet jobseekers
Integrate school services with supported bus services	Complete	Network review	Planned supported bus services post-retendering refined with input from school transport planning officers
Junction improvement: River Street and Thames Avenue, Windsor	Complete	Plan (first edition)	An additional lane has been added to River Street on northbound approach to Thames Avenue, enabling buses continuing ahead to not be held back by traffic turning right
New Demand Responsive Travel "Go To Gate" service	Complete	Bus operator led	Service launched summer 2023
Extension of 103 bus service to Windsor	Complete	Bus operator led	Service launched autumn 2023
Enhanced Ascot – Windsor (direct) services	In delivery	Bus operator led	Early morning journeys and enhanced peak service interval introduced. Buses now serve Heatherwood Hospital main entrance and Ascot shops. Improved all day service interval planned for late 2024.

Proposed action	Status	Action origin	Progress to date
Enhanced Maidenhead – Windsor supported service contract	Planned	Network review	Preparing to issue Invitation to Tender
Enhanced Staines – Datchet (via Wraysbury) supported service contract	Planned	Network review	Preparing to issue Invitation to Tender
Enhanced Maidenhead town supported services contract	Planned	Network review	Preparing to issue Invitation to Tender
Enhanced Hurley & Waltham's area supported services contract	Planned	Network review	Preparing to issue Invitation to Tender
Enhanced Ascot – Windsor (via Sunningdale) supported service contract	Planned	Network review	Preparing to issue Invitation to Tender
Bus Passenger Charter	Planned	Plan (first edition)	Planned to launch 2024
Resident Advantage Card discount scheme	Proposed	Plan (first edition)	Proposal to introduce this to coincide with the conclusion of the national bus fare cap. Bus operators would be asked to 'opt-in' and determine what discount they would be willing to offer.
Town centre 'Where to catch your bus's information	Proposed	Enhanced Partnership Board	Content in development
ENCTS bus pass promotional campaign	Proposed	Patronage figures	The Borough supported the national campaign in summer 2023, and will look at options to follow up with a targeted local campaign in 2024

Table 6: Improvement programme: proposed, planned and completed actions through to early 2025

Progress on original objectives

Table 7, overleaf, reviews progress to date on objectives set in the original plan, for patronage, customer satisfaction, reliability and journey time. Given the limited intervening period since the publication of the original plan, the lag time in the release of the statistical sets that are used as measures and the continued post-pandemic recovery, the results should be interpreted with care.

Theme	Measure and source	Baseline	Objective for 2023	Actual for 2023	Analysis
Patronage	Bus trips per head, per year *Source: Passenger journeys on local bus services, Department for Transport data table BUS01f*	9.3 (2019)	17.0 (in line with 2019 Berks. average, excluding Reading)	6.7 (2023)	• Both baseline and 2023 objective are based on pre-pandemic ridership, in line with an ambition to both recover patronage to pre-pandemic levels and grow beyond this. • The actual figure for 2023, which reflects the most recent data available at publication, is a year out of date, in a period where bus usage has continued to recover from the pandemic including as a result of the £2 bus fare, and so is likely to considerably underestimate current position. It also is dated just 5 months post the publication of the original Plan • The March 2023 Berkshire average, excluding Reading, was down to 13.2 trips/head, down from 18.7 trips/head in 2019. • Bus operators are reporting that fare paying passenger journeys now exceed pre-pandemic levels in the Borough, but that concessionary passholder journeys remain well down.
Customer satisfaction	Reported satisfaction with bus services *Source: Overall satisfaction with local bus services, National Highways and Transport survey*	48% (2019)	58% (in line with wider Berks average)	45% (2023)	• There has been a small decline in satisfaction between 2019 and 2023 • However, prior to 2023 satisfaction had been improving, with 54% satisfaction in 2022 for the Borough • The wider context for satisfaction across Berkshire has remained static, at 58% overall satisfaction • It remains to be seen whether the dip in satisfaction with bus services was an anomaly for 2023 result
Reliability and journey times	Proportion of bus services running on time *Source: Non-frequent bus services running on time, Department for Transport data table BUS09a*	87% (2021)	90%	Data not available	• Data more recent than the 2021 baseline was not available at the time of publishing this update

Table 7: Summary of progress against objectives published in October 2022 Bus Service Improvement Plan

Ambitions and proposals for beyond 2025

This section of the plan sets out how the Council, working with partners, will work to achieve this plan's vision and aims, to increase bus patronage and develop the bus network.

Any future funding opportunities that the Council applies for will be informed by the measures outlined in this section, and therefore these measures have been carefully considered using a range of key factors.

The measures that have been put forward are based on evidence and data outlined in the 'current offer' section, including:

- the engagement with bus users;
- detailed survey of bus non-users;
- bus patronage;
- bus stop arrival and departure times
- extensive research on bus fares, Demand Responsive Transport and multi-operator ticketing schemes;
- discussions with operators and neighbouring authorities

The measures put forward are grouped into short, medium and long-term ambitions. This enables the Council to plan for any relevant future funding opportunities. It is our ambition that:

- short-term measures be completed during 2024/25 financial year
- medium-term measures be completed by 2028/29 financial year
- long-term measures are delivered in the 2030s

For each measure, the reason why this has been put forward is explained, in addition to how the success of it will be measured.

Table 8 is a summary of these proposed measures followed by supporting detail of why each measure has been identified and the benefit it will bring. The table is split into short, medium and long term measures.

Appendix F has additional information and research related to selected proposed measures.

Funding

The Council's ability to deliver these measures will be determined in the large part by the ability to secure suitable external funding, for example grant funding or contributions made by developers. Some short-term measures the Council have been delivered using Council staff time and careful allocation of the Borough's budget for supported bus services. Service enhancements launching over the course of this year are supported by the government's "BSIP Phase 2" funding, as well as developer contributions.

As part of our Enhanced Partnerships, we will work with operators to identify sources of funding that they are able to bid for, which will help them in improving and growing their services.

Table 8: All proposed measures

Ref.	Measure	Status and timeframe	Detail	Why was this chosen?	How will this be measured?	Which aims does this contribute towards?
BSIP001	Review Borough bus network	Complete	A review of the network, with the aim of capturing any uncovered demand and maximising bus patronage	Lack of recent review of services from some operators Continuous changing demand for travel in the Borough Unserved destinations highlighted in engagement with residents	Patronage Passenger satisfaction	Accessible Integrated
BSIP002	Integrate school services with supported bus services	Complete	A review of school bus services, and any opportunities to reconfigure supported public bus services to provide the school journeys instead	Ensure optimum use of available funding	Cost avoided	Affordable Integrated
BSIP003	Trial of cheaper fares	Complete	Trial cheaper fares The proposed localised low fare trial has instead occurred through the national £2 bus fare cap	Relative high fares compared to neighbouring authorities Engagement with residents Discussion with bus operators	Patronage Passenger satisfaction with fares	Affordable
BSIP004	Support bus driver recruitment	Complete	Bus companies invited to Council-run recruitment fares, to meet job-seekers	National shortage of bus drivers, causing reliability issues for services	Feedback from bus operators	Attractive service Affordable
BSIP005	Junction improvement: River Street and Thames Avenue, Windsor	Complete	An additional lane has been added to River Street on northbound approach to Thames Avenue, enabling buses continuing ahead to not be held back by traffic turning right	Bus operators identified location as a significant source of delay to journeys	Punctuality Journey time (scheduled and actual)	Attractive service
BSIP006	New Demand Responsive Transport service "Go To Gate"	Complete	New direct Demand Responsive Transport service from Dedworth to Heathrow Airport	Business venture	N/a	Accessible Integrated
BSIP007	Extension of 103 bus service to Windsor	Complete	Extension of existing High Wycombe – Slough "Chiltern Hundreds" bus service to Windsor	Business venture	N/a	Accessible
BSIP008	Enhanced Ascot – Windsor (direct) services	In delivery Short-term	Early morning journeys and enhanced peak service interval introduced. Buses now serve Heatherwood Hospital main entrance and Ascot shops. Improved all day service interval planned for late 2024	Business venture Network review identified near-miss connections to hospital main entrance and High Street shops	Patronage	Accessible

Ref.	Measure	Status and timeframe	Detail	Why was this chosen?	How will this be measured?	Which aims does this contribute towards?
BSIP009	Enhanced Maidenhead – Windsor supported service contract	Planned Short-term	As part of the review of supported bus service contracts, investigate opportunities to extend route 16 beyond Maidenhead town centre to connect a greater proportion of town residents with Windsor; and to connect Windsor to St Mark's Hospital	Network review identified issue: currently most door-to-door journeys from Maidenhead to Windsor require a change of bus in Maidenhead town centre Network review identified gap: no direct service from Windsor to St Mark's Hospital	Patronage	Accessible
BSIP010	Enhanced Staines – Datchet (via Wraysbury) supported service contract	Planned Short-term	Investigate whether service can be extended to Windsor and King Edward VII Hospital Investigate options for serving both Coppermill Road and Welley Road in Wraysbury equally	Feedback from residents Network review identified lack of connectivity to hospital from Datchet and Wraysbury	Patronage	Accessible
BSIP011	Enhanced Maidenhead town supported services contract	Planned Short-term	Investigate opportunities to reduce journey times and enable return journeys to/from St Mark's Hospital Investigate opportunities to connect Cox Green to Newlands Girls School at the beginning and end of school day	Feedback from residents Network review identified long journey times and lack of direct return journeys from hospital	Patronage	Accessible
BSIP012	Enhanced Hurley & Waltham's area supported services contract	Planned Short-term	Investigate whether services could be more direct whilst continuing to serve the villages Investigate 6 day/week service to Henley Introduce direct return journeys to St Mark's Hospital for those village that lack one currently Investigate opportunities to reconfigure 234 and 235 bus services to create a new link to Twyford for these villages, as part of the review of supported bus service contracts	Feedback from residents Network review identified long journey times and lack of direct return journeys from hospital Network review identified villages lack a link to Henley on market days Network review identified gap: services between Maidenhead, Knowl Hill and Twyford currently only run on Saturdays	Patronage	Accessible
BSIP013	Enhanced Ascot – Windsor (via Sunningdale) supported services contract	Planned Short-term	Investigate opportunities to divert the service to call additionally at King Edward VII Hospital Investigate opportunities to connect more Windsor residents with Heatherwood Hospital Investigate opportunities to better serve Windsor Great Park, especially at weekends	Feedback from residents Network review identified near-miss connections to the hospitals Network review identified an opportunity to better serve the weekend tourist market	Patronage	Accessible
BSIP014	Bus Passenger Charter	Proposed Short-term	Create a Bus Passenger Charter giving bus users rights to certain standards of service	Engagement with residents and bus operators	Passenger feedback	Attractive service Understandable

Ref.	Measure	Status and timeframe	Detail	Why was this chosen?	How will this be measured?	Which aims does this contribute towards?
BSIP015	Town centre 'Where to catch your bus's information	Proposed Short-term	Introduce 'Where to catch your bus's information at town centre bus stops	Feedback from residents and bus operators	Passenger satisfaction with bus information	Understandable Integrated
BSIP016	Resident Advantage Card discount scheme	Proposed Short-term	Investigate opportunities for bus operators to offer promotional discounts to residents as part of the existing RBWM Advantage Card scheme	Relative high fares compared to neighbouring authorities Engagement with residents	Patronage Passenger satisfaction with fares	Affordable Understandable
BSIP017	ENCTS bus pass promotional campaign	Proposed Short-term	Targeted promotion of ENCTS bus pass to older and disabled people who have lapsed or have become eligible post-pandemic	Post-pandemic, whilst fare paying passengers have returned to buses, bus use by passholders remains markedly low	ENCTS patronage	Affordable Understandable
BSIP101	Multi-operator ticket product	Aspirational, unfunded proposal Medium-term	Initially a feasibility study into the implementation of a multi-operator ticket product for the area, focused on day tickets and ticket carnets. Subject to outcome of feasibility study, continue to product launch	Engagement with residents, bus operators and neighbouring local authorities Complex ticketing environment for passengers	Patronage Passenger satisfaction with fares	Affordable Understandable Integrated
BSIP102	Network map	Aspirational, unfunded proposal Medium-term	Commission a network map covering the Borough and connections to neighbouring towns. Ensure contract and/or map assets allow for ongoing updates to the map	Feedback from residents, bus operators and neighbouring authorities	Passenger satisfaction with bus information	Understandable Integrated
BSIP103	Service enhancements: earlier and later buses	Aspirational, unfunded proposal Medium-term	Introduce 'night shoulder' journeys on a service in Windsor or Maidenhead. Funding would be used to support establishment of service, with a view to the service becoming financially self-supporting.	Feedback from residents Network review identified hospitality economy creates a market for shift workers as well as late evening leisure trips	Patronage	Accessible
BSIP104	Better boarding programme: Wider Windsor	Aspirational, unfunded proposal Medium-term	Upgraded bus stop infrastructure in Windsor, to include renewal of expired flags, shelters and information cases and reconditioning of midlife assets. At busier stops without them, introduce shelters, lighting and real-time displays – with potential to trial internet-connected digital ink as an alternative. At stops without them, undertake minor highway works and lining to keep bus stops clear and enable buses to line up flush with the kerb	Engagement with residents, bus operators and neighbouring authorities Currently, a very low proportion of bus stops have real-time information screens	Passenger satisfaction with bus stop infrastructure Patronage	Accessible Attractive infrastructure

Ref.	Measure	Status and timeframe	Detail	Why was this chosen?	How will this be measured?	Which aims does this contribute towards?
BSIP105	Better boarding programme: Maidenhead	Aspirational, unfunded proposal Medium-term	Upgraded bus stop infrastructure in Maidenhead, to include renewal of expired flags, shelters and information cases and reconditioning of midlife assets. At busier stops without them, introduce shelters, lighting and real-time displays – with potential to trial internet-connected digital ink as an alternative. At stops without them, undertake minor highway works and lining to keep bus stops clear and enable buses to line up flush with the kerb	Engagement with residents, bus operators and neighbouring authorities Currently, a very low proportion of bus stops have real-time information screens	Passenger satisfaction with bus stop infrastructure Patronage	Accessible Attractive infrastructure
BSIP106	Better boarding: Taplow Sainsbury's	Aspirational, unfunded proposal Medium-term	New bus stops at Taplow Sainsbury's for services to/from Eton Wick. Note this is in Buckinghamshire, but for the benefit of RBWM (Eton Wick) residents	Passenger feedback	Patronage	Accessible
BSIP107	Better buses: Interior ambience and technology	Aspirational, unfunded proposal Medium-term	Work with bus operators to level up the interior ambience of buses including seats and finishes, and technology such as phone docks and charging	National Highways & Transport survey results	Patronage	Attractive infrastructure
BSIP201	Maidenhead interchange	Aspirational, unfunded proposal Long-term	Investigate options for improved interchange arrangements between buses in Maidenhead, including whether introducing a bus station would be beneficial	Currently, the only location where all bus services call at in the town is an exposed stop on the side of the town bypass	Patronage Passenger satisfaction with bus stop infrastructure	Integrated Attractive infrastructure
BSIP202	Bus priority: smart signals programme (Borough-wide)	Aspirational, unfunded proposal Long-term	Upgrade traffic signals across the Borough to improve general traffic flow, and also to intelligently adjust cycle times to support approaching buses to keep to time	Feedback from bus operators	Punctuality	Attractive service

Monitoring and reporting

The Bus Service Improvement Plan Guidance provided by the Department for Transport gives some direction on targets that should be included within each Council's Plan. It suggests that headline targets should be given for passenger growth, customer satisfaction, reliability and journey times. It also states that Local Transport Authorities should show what progress they expect to make by 2025 and also 2030.

In line with the guidance, the Council has developed a set of bold targets that reflect what we would like to achieve with regards to patronage, user satisfaction and reliability and journey times. We will set short-term targets and medium-term targets that we aim to meet by 2026.

Targets have been decided in collaboration with operators and neighbouring authorities, and they represent the Council's ambition to improve the bus network in the Borough. We have aligned the targets with those of other Council policy, including the Local Transport Plan (2012-26) and the Environment and Climate Strategy (2020-25). Crucially, our targets set are dependent on external funding for the short, medium and long-term measures outlined in the 'suggested measures' section.

However, we acknowledge that targets may change as we move forwards. We will therefore take a dynamic approach to targets and continually review them to ensure they are consistently ambitious yet realistic.

Patronage targets

The Borough is currently ranked as one of the lowest nationally in terms of bus use; the bus trips per head of population is just 6.7. We recognise that this should be improved, and we have analysed the performance of neighbouring Berkshire authorities to understand what the patronage levels can look like in areas similar to our demographic. For this reason, we have set a short-term target to bring patronage up to 17 bus trips per head of population. This is the wider Berkshire average that we would like to aim to reach. This excludes Reading, a Borough that has an exceptionally high bus trips per head of 101 as they have developed an advanced bus network with the Council owning the main operator. In the medium term, we'd like to be one of the leading Berkshire authorities and reach at least 20 bus trips per head. Our long term target is to be the leading Berkshire authority behind Reading, achieving over 30 journeys per head.

User satisfaction

The Council acknowledges that the Borough lags behind on user satisfaction compared to other Berkshire authorities and nationally. This is based on the NHT survey results, a survey conducted nationally by the National Highways & Transport Network. The overall score for local bus services in 2023 is 45% in RBWM, compared to 58% as an average for other Berkshire authorities. We have therefore set the short-term goal to reach the average of the other Berkshire authorities, and moving forwards we would like to increase this to 70%. As with the other targets, this will be continually reviewed to reflect the bus network and may change depending on the Council's and operator's progress.

Reliability and journey time

While the Borough currently performs relatively well with regards to the percentage of journeys on time at 87%, we would like to keep this standard up and have therefore set a target of at least 90% of services on time in the short term. This is in the context of a 2018/19 figure of 95%. We recognise that this however was unusually high in comparison with previous years, and so the short-term target is lower than this as to not set an unrealistic target. This allows some room for delay due to the potential implementation of measures such as increased frequencies that may make achieving a higher figure more difficult. The 2030 target has increased to 95% of journeys on time, as by then we hope to have developed our bus network more significantly and have understood and started to address the problem hotspots on the network. As we develop the BSIP in future years, we would like to set more detailed journey time targets as we investigate potential infrastructure improvements that will aim to increase journey times for buses. This is listed as a medium-term measure in our 'suggested measures' section.

Reporting

The BSIP guidance provided by the DfT gives some direction on reporting arrangements against the targets. It suggests that Councils should set out arrangements for publishing six-monthly performance against BSIP targets. This allows the Council, operators, passengers and DfT to monitor the bus network and understand whether any implemented measures have had their desired effect.

This outlines our aspiration to report against several metrics on a six-monthly or annually (depending on availability of data) basis. By reporting regularly, we can capture data that continuously improves our understanding of the bus network, helping us to inform the measures set out in the 'suggested measures' section. We will aspire to publish the reporting data on our website at https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/transport-and-streets/public-transport every six months so that stakeholders, including residents, DfT, operators and neighbouring authorities are able to view our progress against the targets set in the BSIP. We will also update the BSIP document periodically, to input updated reporting figures against targets, and potentially change targets accordingly.

Furthermore, we will receive feedback from operators through a constant line of communication in the Enhanced Partnerships that we develop alongside them.

We also commit to working closely with operators through the development of Enhanced Partnerships. We have put forward a package of measures in our BSIP that aim to improve the bus network and grow patronage which is of benefit to the operators, and we therefore expect commitment in return. We expect operators to continually engage and be open to trialling measures such as reduced fare prices, increased frequencies and multi-operator ticketing. As part of the Enhanced Partnerships, we also expect the continuous sharing of data (within the necessary legal frameworks in place, such as NDAs) from operators. This will allow us to continue to monitor the bus network and the impact of the measures and evaluate which measures should be implemented going forward. The BSIP will be a live document that is constantly evolving, and the measures and targets within it may change to fit the circumstances at the time. Priorities may change and future updated BSIPs will reflect that.

Appendix A: Bus services in the Borough

Route Number	To and from	Operators	Route type	Regularity and frequency	Operating hours and days	Funding arrangements
1	Ascot, Heatherwood Hospital – Windsor	White Bus Services	Interurban	Irregular	Daytime 6 days/week	Financially supported by RBWM
2	Slough – Windsor – Dedworth	Thames Valley Buses	Interurban	Regular – hourly	Daytime with twilight shoulder 6 days/week	Commercial
3	Maidenhead, town circular via Highfield Lane	Thames Valley Buses	Town	Regular – hourly	Daytime with twilight shoulder 7 days/week	Financially supported by RBWM (some journeys)
5	Cippenham – Heathrow Airport, Terminal 5	Thames Valley Buses	Interurban	Regular – hourly	Daytime with twilight and night shoulder 7 days/week	Commercial
6	Wexham Estate – Slough – Maidenhead	First Berkshire & The Thames Valley	Interurban	Regular – hourly	Daytime with twilight shoulder 7 days/week	Commercial
7	High Wycombe – Maidenhead	Arriva Beds & Bucks	Interurban	Regular – hourly	Daytime with twilight shoulder 6 days/week	Commercial
7	Maidenhead – Woodlands Park	Thames Valley Buses	Town	Regular – 30 mins	Daytime with twilight shoulder 7 days/week	Commercial
8	Maidenhead town circular, via Boulters Lock	Thames Valley Buses	Town	Regular – hourly	Daytime 6 days/week	Financially supported by RBWM

Route Number	To and from	Operators	Route type	Regularity and frequency	Operating hours and days	Funding arrangements
8	Slough Bus Station – Windsor – Heathrow Airport, Terminal 5	First Berkshire & The Thames Valley	Interurban	Regular – 30 mins	Daytime with twilight shoulder 7 days/week	Commercial
9	Maidenhead town circular, via Cranbrook Drive	Thames Valley Buses	Town	Regular – hourly	Daytime with twilight shoulder 7 days/week	Financially supported by RBWM (some journeys)
15	Slough – Eton – Eton Wick	Thames Valley Buses	Village link	Regular – hourly	Daytime 6 days/week	Financially supported by RBWM
16	Maidenhead – Windsor	Thames Valley Buses	Interurban	Regular – hourly	Daytime with twilight shoulder 7 days/week	Financially supported by RBWM
53	Bracknell – Maidenhead – Wexham Park Hospital	Thames Valley Buses	Interurban	Regular – hourly	Daytime with twilight shoulder 6 days/week	Financially supported by RBWM, Bracknell Borough Council and Buckinghamshire Council
63	Slough – Eton Wick – Maidenhead	Red Eagle	Village link	Limited journeys	Daytime Selected days	Financially supported by Buckinghamshire Council

Route Number	To and from	Operators	Route type	Regularity and frequency	Operating hours and days	Funding arrangements
68	Slough – Eton Wick – Burnham – Maidenhead	Red Eagle	Village link	Limited journeys	Daytime Selected days	Financially supported by Buckinghamshire Council
103	Windsor – High Wycombe	Carousel	Interurban	Regular – hourly	Daytime with twilight shoulder 6 days/week	Commercial
127	Maidenhead – Reading	Thames Valley Buses	Interurban	Regular – two-hourly	Daytime Selected days	Financially supported by Wokingham Borough Council
155	Marlow – Maidenhead	Red Eagle	Village link	Limited journeys	Daytime Selected days	Financially supported by Buckinghamshire Council
234	Maidenhead, villages circular via Waltham St Lawrence	Thames Valley Buses	Village link	Irregular	Daytime 6 days/week	Financially supported by RBWM
235	Maidenhead – Hare Hatch	Thames Valley Buses	Village link	Limited journeys	Twilight only 5 days/week	Financially supported by RBWM
238	Maidenhead – Cookham Rise	Thames Valley Buses	Village link	Irregular	Daytime Selected days	Financially supported by RBWM
239	Maidenhead – Henley	Thames Valley Buses	Village link	Irregular	Daytime Selected days	Financially supported by RBWM

| Route Number	To and from	Operators	Route type	Regularity and frequency	Operating hours and days	Funding arrangements
305	Staines – Wraysbury – Datchet – Colnbrook	Bear Buses	Village link	Irregular	Daytime 5 days/week	Financially supported by RBWM
500	Staines – Frimley Park Hospital	White Bus Services	Interurban	Irregular	Daytime 5 days/week	Financially supported by Surrey County Council
701	Reading – Legoland – Slough	Reading Buses	Interurban	Limited journeys	Night and twilight only 7 days/week	Commercial
702	Legoland – London Victoria	Reading Buses	Interurban	Regular – hourly	Daytime with twilight and night shoulder 7 days/week	Commercial
703	Bracknell – Legoland – Heathrow Airport, Terminal 5	Thames Valley Buses	Interurban	Regular – hourly (or better)	Daytime with twilight and night shoulder 7 days/week	Commercial
A60	Sunnymeads – Heathrow Airport, Central Bus Station	Carlone	Specialised airport	Limited journeys	Night and twilight only 7 days/week	Commercial
Go2Gate	Dedworth – Heathrow Airport, Terminal 5	Thames Valley Buses	Demand Responsive Travel	Regular – 30 minutes	Daytime with twilight and night shoulder 7 days/week	Commercial
P1	Windsor, park-and-ride service	White Bus Services	Town	Irregular	Daytime 5 days/week	Financially supported by RBWM

Route Number	To and from	Operators	Route type	Regularity and frequency	Operating hours and days	Funding arrangements
RA1	Reading – Heathrow Airport, Central Bus Station	First Berkshire & The Thames Valley	Specialised airport	Limited journeys	Overnight only 7 days/week	Commercial
X94	Ascot, Heatherwood Hospital – Frimley Park Hospital	White Bus Services	Interurban	Regular – hourly	Daytime 5 days/week	Commercial
W1	Windsor, town circular via Dedworth	White Bus Services	Town	Irregular	Daytime 5 days/week	Financially supported by RBWM

Appendix B: On board survey results
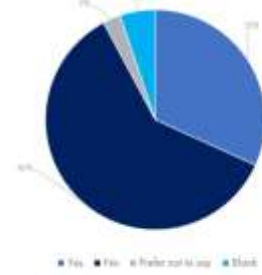
DEMOGRAPHICS

Total: 192 responses
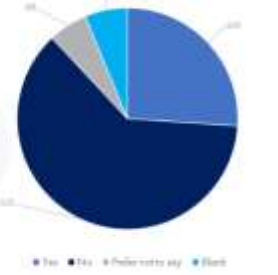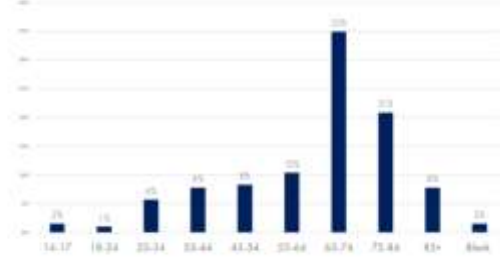

On-board survey: gender split
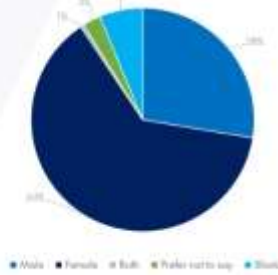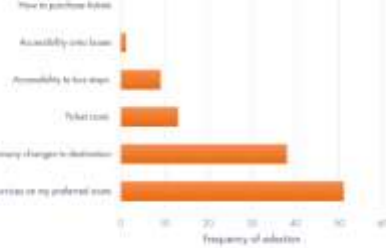

On-board survey: Own a car split

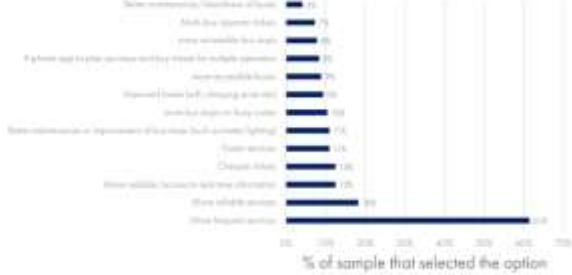On-board survey: Long-term illness or disability split
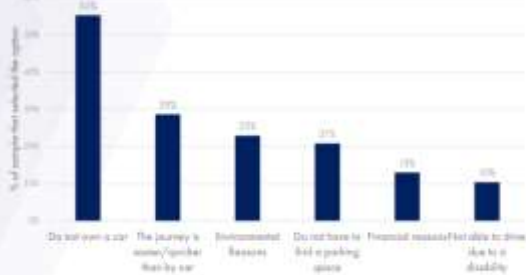

On-board survey: Age split

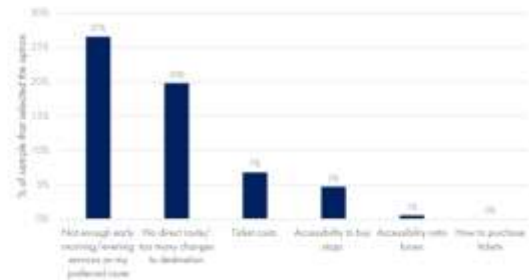Is there anything that stops you taking the bus more often?

On-board survey: What would make you use the bus more often?

On-board survey: Why do you take the bus?

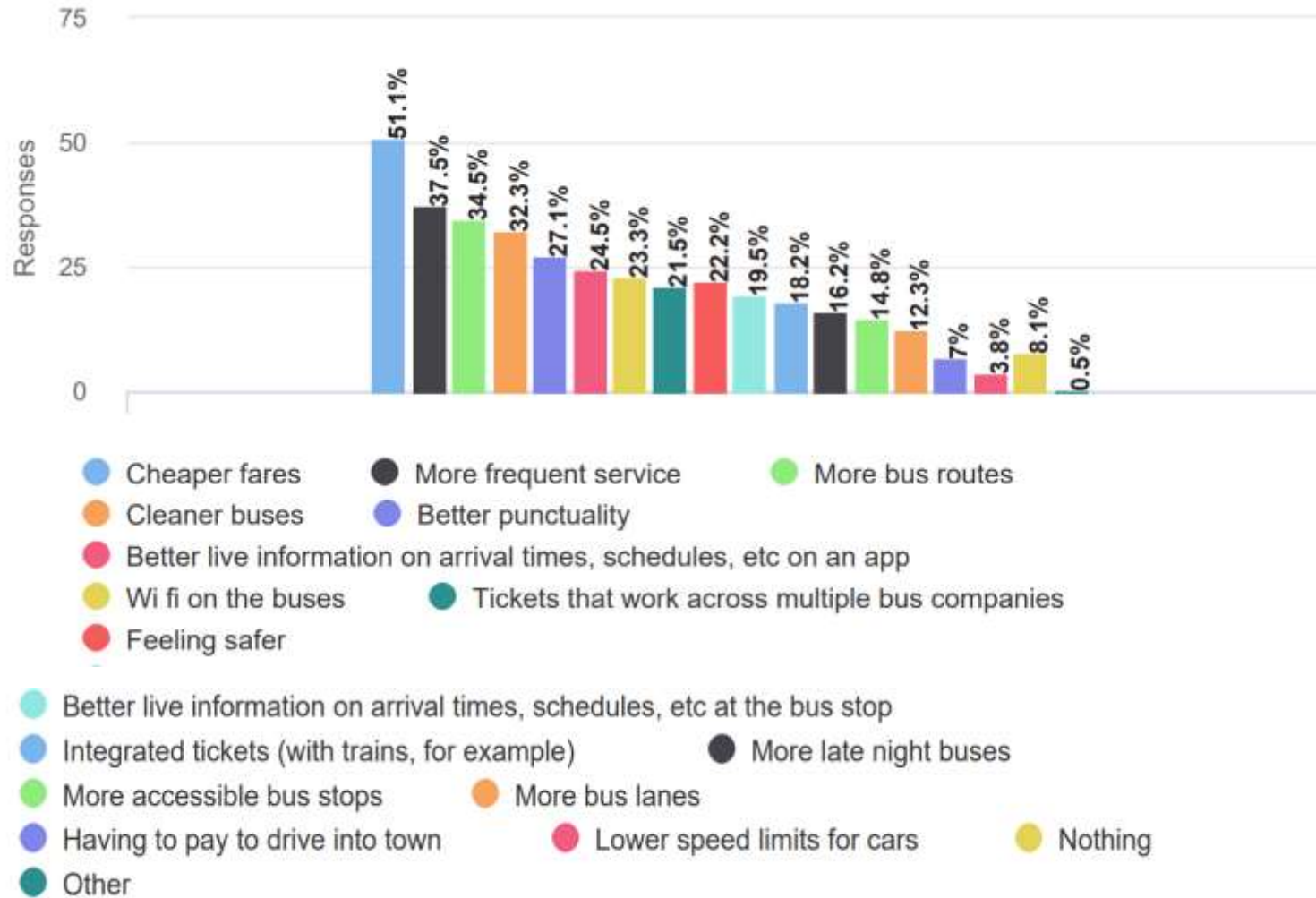On-board survey: What stops you taking the bus more often?

Appendix C: Bus non-user research

Barriers to bus use

Barriers to using a bus in RBWM are often well-rooted and strong

"I used to the get the school bus when I was young. But now I think of old people getting the bus. Pensioners...we have a couple of bus stops in Mortimer and there's always OAPs and school kids waiting. The 'school bus' goes into Reading every day from here."

"In Reading the buses have all this funky branding."

"A 15 minutes wait is acceptable. But it's probably more like 30 minutes. 3 an hour, every 20 minutes feels like about the ends of acceptability."

"There's a bus stop outside our house ..the one on the opposite side goes to Staines. I occasionally see someone waiting for a bus. But it's rare I see someone using the bus."

Not on my radar
- Limited routes
- Infrequent (not every 10-15 mins)
- Slow - convoluted routes
- Need to plan
- Not obvious how to use
- Not easy to get bus info
- Not popular/ modern
- For the elderly & school kids

"In London it feels like everybody does it. It does feel like it [getting the bus] is something for people who can't drive or are elderly."

"It's easier to go to Reading by train by the time we pay to get car parking and with the traffic. But generally, its easier by car. 9 times out of 10 we're nipping here and there, dropping the kids off somewhere. I'd rather cut off my legs than give up my car."

"I used to hate the bus timetables. Whereas I know the train is every 35 mins. 20 past and 10 to. You know the train is going to run. Buses might get caught up in traffic and not be reliable. It's inconsistent."

What would make people use buses

Chart: "What would make people use buses" (Responses)

- Cheaper fares — 51.1%
- More frequent service — 37.5%
- More bus routes — 34.5%
- Cleaner buses — 32.3%
- Better punctuality — 27.1%
- Better live information on arrival times, schedules, etc on an app — 24.5%
- Wi fi on the buses — 23.3%
- Tickets that work across multiple bus companies — 21.5%
- Feeling safer — 22.2%
- Better live information on arrival times, schedules, etc at the bus stop — 19.5%
- Integrated tickets (with trains, for example) — 18.2%
- More late night buses — 16.2%
- More accessible bus stops — 14.8%
- More bus lanes — 12.3%
- Having to pay to drive into town — 7%
- Lower speed limits for cars — 3.8%
- Nothing — 8.1%
- Other — 0.5%

Appendix D: Problem locations

Where is the issue?	What is the issue?	Which bus route is affected?	What is the impact?
Cannon Crossroads, the junction of the A329 and B383 north of Sunningdale.	The area is congested in the PM peak.	1	Causing delays.
Windsor Town Centre (Thame Street)	The area is congested, especially in PM peaks on weekdays and from 12-3 on Saturdays. The bus stop provision is not big enough.	1, W1, P1, 103, 2, 16, 701, 702, 703	Causing delays.
Sunninghill High Street towards Ascot	Congestion from the parked cars on the main road. This is more of an issue towards Ascot as that's the side on which cars are parked. Reallocating parking spaces in the area to improve congestion would also improve reliability of the bus service.	1	Causing delays.
Windsor, River Street	Traffic Congestion especially on school days, peak times and weekends due to road layout on River Street.	2, 703,16, 702	Causing delays.
Windsor, Thames Street, McDonalds	Taxi rank blocking the flow of traffic and food takeaway delivery drivers parking outside, ban cars down the main high street.	2,4,702	Causing delays.
All Saints Church	Buses unable to get close to kerb and to drop off customers safely because buses can hit (tail swing) nearby pillar box.	702, 703	Unable to pull up close to kerb.

Clewer Hill Road/Winkfield Road	Congestion at peak times and Legoland closing time. Traffic lights at the junction of Clewer Hill Road and Winkfield Road should be replaced with mini roundabouts to improve traffic flow. Phased traffic to Legoland.	702,703	Causing delays.
River Street	No right turn (except buses) coming down the hill by the car park towards Slough at the top of river street. Will allow traffic to flow easier and divert traffic away from town centre.	2,702,703	Causing delays.
Ray Street	Very tight, blind bend, vehicles have to reverse if they meet (often)	8	Reversing due to tightness of the bend.
Cookham Pound	The road is very narrow and car drivers don't give way to our buses.	37	

Appendix E: Policy context

Council Plan

The Plan, formally adopted on Tuesday 16 April 2024 by Full Council, has an overall vision to achieve "A Borough of safer, greener and cleaner communities, with opportunity for all" supported by five strategic aims:

1. Put the Council on a strong financial footing to serve the Borough effectively
2. A cleaner, greener, safer and more prosperous Borough
3. Children and young people have a good start in life and opportunities through to adulthood
4. People live healthy and independent lives in supportive communities
5. A high-performing Council that delivers for the Borough.

Achieving financial stability is the Council's top, urgent priority. Intensive work continues to reduce spending and increase income, with the Council committed to taking further immediate and significant action to address the budget gap, including an ambitious transformation programme. Without a balanced budget the Council will not be able to take forward its wider priorities and deliver positive change for the people and places of the Borough.

Local Transport Plan

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) (2012- 26) adopts an evidence-based approach to transport planning and sets out high level policies for all aspects of local highways and transport provision within the Royal Borough, including public transport. The LTP provides an overarching set of policies within which more detailed plans and strategies can be prepared, such as the BSIP. These include policies for:

- Walking and cycling networks
- Provision of secure cycle parking
- Travel information
- Road safety education, enforcement, and engineering
- Smarter choices programmes (designed to promote sustainable travel behaviours)
- Health (including promotion of active travel modes)

Climate emergency

The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead declared a climate emergency in June 2020 setting out the Council's intention to implement national policy and ensure net-zero carbon emissions are achieved by no later than 2050. In December 2020 the Environment and Climate Strategy was adopted which sets out how the Borough will address the climate emergency across four key themes (Circular Economy, Energy, Natural Environment and Transport). The strategy sets a trajectory which seeks to achieve a 50% reduction in emissions by 2025. The Council is addressing these ambitions in local policy.

The BSIP will contribute to achieving the Council's climate objectives, including the themes set out in the Environment and Climate Strategy, by aiming to improve the bus network across several areas including bus priority infrastructure, fares support and ticketing reform.

Borough Local Plan

The Borough Local Plan (BLP) (2013-33) sets out a vision and framework for future development in the period to 2033, addressing local needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure, as well as providing a basis for safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change, and securing good design.

Like the Local Transport Plan, it provides an overarching policy document within which more detailed plans and strategies can be prepared.

Policies T10 and T11 in the Transportation and Movement section of the Plan discuss the ambition of the Royal Borough to improve connectivity to and between urban commercial centres whilst serving rural communities throughout the Royal Borough. The BLP states that the Royal Borough will encourage multi-modal travel and will do so by developing better links between transport, with a specific reference to Maidenhead Rail Station.

Additionally, there are 11 designated Neighbourhood Plan areas within the Royal Borough. Of these, the following have been completed:

- Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale
- Datchet
- Eton and Eton Wick
- Horton and Wraysbury
- Hurley and the Waltham's
- Old Windsor
- Windsor

Communities will always have concerns about transport, but Neighbourhood Plans can allay these concerns by setting out realistic solutions to existing local issues which, in turn, would help to facilitate the delivery of future investment in the Plan area. Also, measures that encourage modal shift to cycling and walking contribute to economic growth by tackling congestion and environmental improvements through reductions in exhaust emissions. Neighbourhood Plans can contain policies to address key transport issues specific to them, such as:

- Facilitating provision of traffic calming and 20 mph speed limits
- Encouraging the provision of transport hubs and interchange between travel modes
- Identifying safe routes for walking and cycling

National Bus Strategy for England

The National Bus Strategy for England (Bus Back Better, 2021) produced by the Department for Transport (DfT) provides a long-term strategy for encouraging the uptake of bus use on buses outside London. The strategy focuses on improvements that help deliver better bus services for

passengers across England, to get overall patronage back to not only pre-COVID-19 levels but also to exceed it.

To achieve this the strategy outlines several opportunities to improve bus provision up to the standards set within London. These include:

- Making services more reliable and more frequent
- Improving communication, accessibility, and inclusivity of services
- Improving co-ordination and integration between services and operators
- Improving bus fare value for money
- Making buses greener, safer, and more comfortable.

Appendix F: Detail on selected proposed measures

Resident Advantage Card discount scheme

A common suggestion that several interview respondents provided was to explore the option of discounts on fares for RBWM Advantage card holders. Local residents who pay Council tax to RBWM are entitled to a free card which gives discounts at a range of attractions, retailers, restaurants, Council services and leisure activities. Working alongside at least one operator that is already willing to take part, we would like to run a trial period of discounted fares for Advantage card holders, to see how that would affect patronage. If this scheme benefited from grant funding support, the Council would have the funds to top-up the operators' revenues should the discounted tickets cause any losses in the short-term. As patronage increases, the need for support funding will decrease and will be phased out. The trial allows us to confirm this and demonstrate that discounted fares can be a viable solution.

We would like to work with at least one operator to trial discounted fares for Advantage card holders over three years. Operators have suggested that in order for reduced fares to be sustainable, patronage of paying passengers (i.e. not concessionary) would have to increase by the same or a higher percentage than fares were discounted by. We would therefore aim to increase patronage by at least the percentage that fares were discounted by so that the operator can run commercially without support. In the short-medium term, we would use the funding to bridge the gap of any losses the operator may experience as a result of the discounted fares.

Approximate grant funding required is based on an assumption that a trial is done with an operator across the whole Borough to discount fares for RBWM advantage card holders by 25%. Without an increase in patronage, a 25% discount for advantage card holders would therefore cause associated annual revenues to drop by 25%. While we know there are approximately 200,000 advantage card holders, our funding requirement is based on the assumption that everyone boarding within RBWM has access to an advantage card. Therefore, we estimate an approximate loss in revenue of up to £200,000 for Year 1. In order for us to provide assurances to the operator(s), allowing them time to adjust to the change in fares and develop an exit strategy if required, the Council would ask the DfT for support for three years, totalling to up to £600,000.

Patronage and user satisfaction will be analysed over the period to track the trends in bus use and passenger experience. The BSIP guidance states that the BSIP will be assessed as a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) and that further assessment will be required after this stage. When we reach this point in the process to unlock funding, we will provide additional detail on our funding request and the supporting evidence behind it. In the accompanying DfT funding template, this falls into the 'fares support category'. Trial of increased frequencies and more evening and Sunday services A conclusion of the 'current offer' section was that the frequencies of bus services in the Borough, often hourly or at irregular intervals, is a barrier to potential bus users. Our engagement with residents of the Borough indicates that more frequent bus services and more evening and Sunday services would make people use buses more, and the general perception of buses in the Borough was that they are too infrequent to serve a useful purpose. As with fares, frequencies are part of operator's commercial strategies and increasing them comes at a cost, particularly as evening and

weekend patronage is perceived to be lower than that of a weekday, when commuter trips occur. Working alongside at least one operator that is already willing to take part, we would like to trial increased frequencies with support from the DfT over three years. A trial of discounted fares for RBWM advantage card holders aims to make bus users take the bus more, and attract current non-bus users. With support from the DfT, a trial allows the Council and the operators to work together to see if discounted fares can become commercially viable through increasing bus patronage in the Borough.

Service enhancements: earlier and later buses

A conclusion of the 'current offer' section was that the frequencies of bus services in the Borough, often hourly or at irregular intervals, is a barrier to potential bus users. Our engagement with residents of the Borough indicates that more frequent bus services and more evening and Sunday services would make people use buses more, and the general perception of buses in the Borough was that they are too infrequent to serve a useful purpose. As with fares, frequencies are part of operator's commercial strategies and increasing them comes at a cost, particularly as evening and weekend patronage is perceived to be lower than that of a weekday, when commuter trips occur. We would like to trial increased frequencies over three years, subject to grant funding support becoming available.

Operators have suggested that in order for increased frequencies to be sustainable, patronage would have to increase by a percentage determined by how many additional buses were operational. The approximate cost of adding a bus to a service over a year (assuming 6 days a week) is between £90,000 and £160,000 (depending on the length and time the route takes). If this represents an increased cost of running the service of 30%, as an example, revenue from fares would have to be increased by at least that percentage in order to make the service commercially viable.

Therefore, up to £500,000 of funding for Year 1 will allow for a trial of up to five additional buses on at least one route in the Borough. In order for us to provide assurances to the operators, allowing them time to adjust to the change in frequencies and develop an exit strategy if required, the Council would ask for grant funding support for three years, totalling up to £1.5m. Patronage and user satisfaction will be analysed over the period to track the trends in bus use and passenger experience. The BSIP guidance states that the BSIP will be assessed as a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) and that further assessment will be required after this stage.

When we reach this point in the process to unlock funding, we will provide additional detail on our funding request and the supporting evidence behind it. In the accompanying DfT funding template, this falls into the 'bus service support' category. A trial of increased frequencies and more evening and Sunday services aims to make bus users take the bus more, and attract current non-bus users. With support from the DfT, a trial allows the Council and the operators to work together to see if increased frequencies can become commercially viable through increasing bus patronage in the Borough.

Bus Passenger Charter

In line with the BSIP guidance which states the requirement to create a Bus Passenger Charter (BPC), the Council would like to give passengers more of a voice and say, and will therefore setup a

BPC in the short-term. We will create a webpage on the Council website that sets out how passengers can use services (timetables, fares, maps of all operators in the Borough) and what passengers can expect from operators delivering bus services across the Borough. The webpage will give the option for passengers to provide feedback so that passengers have a voice and enable the Council in collaboration with the operators to address the concerns of passengers. The Charter will not create any new legal relationship between the Council and passengers, but will open up dialogue and help the Council understand the opinions of passengers on an ongoing basis. The Charter will be reviewed annually to ensure it is kept up-to-date with the relevant needs of passengers. In the accompanying DfT funding template, this falls into the 'EP/franchising delivery: LTA costs' category.

A Bus Passenger Charter gives passengers a voice with regards to bus travel, and can provide constant feedback from which we can work with operators to improve services. Passengers will be aware of what they can expect from operators delivering bus services across the Borough, which creates a more transparent relationship between the Council, bus passengers and operators.

Multi-operator ticket product

A conclusion from the 'current offer' section was that the complex environment for buying tickets acts as a barrier to people using the bus. In RBWM, there are multiple operators running services within the Borough, all of which have different ticket types with different prices (even with the £2 fare cap). There isn't a multi-operator ticketing scheme that allows passengers to use the same ticket across several operators, meaning passengers must buy individual tickets for each service run by a specific operator. Research suggests that the sheer number of ticket types provides a complicated environment for passengers wishing to undertake journeys that involve routes with more than one operator. Engagement with residents emphasised the inconvenience of having to purchase different tickets for different operators. Respondents indicated that a multi-operator ticketing system would make their journey easier and therefore encourage them to use the bus more often. It would also allow the capture of current non-bus users who may be deterred by the complexity of buying tickets.

A number of the operators have also raised the need for easier, multi-operator ticketing and are supporting of the introduction of this measure. Several operators have already been part of the delivery of the multi-operator ticketing in other areas and therefore bring that knowledge and practical experience to the delivery of this measure in the Borough. Therefore, the Council would like to investigate the feasibility of introducing a multi-operator ticketing scheme, including the launch of a website and phone app. This would not necessarily be limited to just RBWM, but we are working closely with Slough Borough Council and Buckinghamshire Council to explore options of a potential cross-Borough ticketing system. We would also like to investigate the scope for including links to Heathrow in any scheme, following their priority for multi-operator ticketing outlined in their 'Bus Vision', published in August 2021.

The Council would like to provide funding of approximately £35,000-£65,000 to conduct a feasibility study into the implementation of a multi-operator ticketing system. A long-term measure is included for the creation of the multi-operator ticketing scheme and website and app launch, should the feasibility study indicate that it should be progressed. Should the study conclude that a multi-operator scheme is feasible, we expect that the funding required would be up to £5 million.

Future monitoring of bus patronage and user satisfaction following an introduction of a multi-operator ticketing scheme will take place to analyse the impact of any improvements made.

A feasibility study into a multi-operator ticketing scheme allows the Council to understand the opportunities and risks associated with introducing such a scheme. Multi-operator ticketing makes the passenger experience simpler and cheaper for those that make journeys that involve more than one operator. Should a scheme be introduced, passengers would no longer need to purchase multiple tickets, as tickets could be purchased and would be accepted on several operators.

Better boarding programme

The importance of the infrastructure supporting the bus network was highlighted in the 'current offer' section. A measure was identified to roll out a programme of improvements to bus stops in town centres. This was also highlighted by the operators as a key point raised in terms of increasing patronage and customer satisfaction. With grant funding support, we would like to improve shelters, lighting and timetable cases where appropriate. The specific bus stops and improvements made will be dependent on the outcomes of the review of the Borough wide bus network as identified in the short-term measures ensuring stops are in the right locations. This measure will involve standardising the bus stops and ensuring all have an obvious bus flag. We would like to work with neighbouring authorities to standardise bus stops which will allow for an easier journey for passengers travelling around the wider Berkshire area.

A further infrastructure improvement will be considered depending on the future plans for the bus fleet to become electric rather than diesel and whether any EV charging infrastructure should be provided at points across the network. This supports the ambition to invest in zero emission vehicle infrastructure within the RBWM Environment and Climate Strategy (2020) and could then be incorporated into the bus stop improvement measures to ensure that future plans are included and a cost-effective use of funding. Future monitoring of bus patronage and user satisfaction following any improvements to bus stops will take place to analyse the impact of any improvements made.

There are a combined 96 bus stops in Windsor and Maidenhead town centres. The replacement of a bus stop is estimated to cost approximately £10k. The number of bus stops selected for improvement will depend on the outcomes of the wider bus network review suggested as a short-term measure. However, should slightly over half of the combined bus stops be selected for improvement, an initial estimate of the programme cost is up to £500k. This will be assessed as a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) and that further assessment will be required after this stage, when we reach this point in the process to unlock funding, we will provide additional detail on our funding request and the supporting evidence behind it.

Upgrades to bus stops in Windsor and Maidenhead town centre improve the end-to-end passenger experience, by providing a more pleasant environment for passengers to wait for and alight the bus. Standardising stops with neighbouring authorities helps passengers to understand the bus network and its link with neighbouring authorities, and improved shelters and lighting will make passengers feel safer. Upgraded flag poles and timetable cases provide better information for passengers, making their journey simpler and easier to plan. These benefits combined can help increase bus patronage in the Borough.

Real-time information screens

It will often be cost effective to introduce real-time passenger information screens in concert with upgrading other bus stop furniture. So, the rollout of real-time information is proposed to be linked to either the better boarding programme, or the potential introduction of digital ink bus stop information displays.

Following on the review of the wider bus network (short-term measure) and to accompany the ambition of improvements at bus stops across RBWM, we would also like to invest in real-time data at bus stop in town centres. Currently, only 11 stops in Windsor and 12 stops in Maidenhead town centres have real-time data, leaving 37 without in Windsor and 36 without in Maidenhead. The 'current offer' section presented 'information' as a key factor in the passenger experience, with 13% of survey respondents saying that access/more reliable access to real-time information would make them use buses more. 71 The provision of real-time information at bus stops improves the end-to-end passenger experience, by providing information to passengers waiting at bus stops on when their bus is expected. Having better access to information can help passengers plan their journey better, which is likely to attract new bus users and make current users take the bus more.

There are a combined 73 bus stops in Windsor and Maidenhead town centres without real-time information. The approximate cost of the hardware and installation per stop is £7,500. Additionally, annual maintenance of the real-time costs approximately £360 per unit. Therefore, to cover all bus stops in the town centre without real-time, in addition to five years of maintenance, the Council would be looking for funding of up to £750,000 of grant funding. In line with other improvements to bus stops, the specific stops identified for real-time data will depend on the outcomes of the review of the Borough-wide network as identified in the short-term measures.

The BSIP guidance states that the BSIP will be assessed as a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) and that further assessment will be required after this stage. When we reach this point in the process to unlock funding, we will provide additional detail on our funding request and the supporting evidence behind it. As with other improvements to bus stops, future monitoring of bus patronage and user satisfaction following the installation of real-time data will take place to analyse the impact of any improvements made.