

West Cheshire Bus Service Improvement Plan Bus Back Better



AINTREE
Coachline



Arrowebrook
Coaches LTD



D&G Bus

M
MOTT
MACDONALD

 **Stagecoach**

Warrington's
own buses 

Contents

Executive summary	1
1 Overview	6
1.1 Coverage	6
1.2 Legislation and Procedure	8
1.3 BSIP Context and Guidance	9
1.3.1 The aims of the National Bus Strategy	9
1.3.2 The local mechanism by which this will be achieved	11
1.3.3 A Cheshire West and Chester Bus Service Improvement Plan	12
1.4 A Landmark Opportunity	13
1.5 Local Policy Context	13
1.5.1 Third Local Transport Plan	13
1.5.2 Local Plan 2010-2030 (Part One) Strategic Policies	15
1.5.3 Cheshire and Warrington LEP Transport Strategy	16
1.5.4 Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP)	17
1.5.5 Local Area Transport Strategies (Chester, Northwich and Winsford)	19
1.6 Traffic Management Act 2004 – Moving Traffic Restrictions	20
2 Current Bus Offer to Passengers	21
2.1 Bus Service Supply	21
2.1.1 The bus network	21
2.1.2 Bus service frequency	25
2.1.3 Demand-Responsive Transport	28
2.1.4 Vehicle ages	29
2.1.5 Frequent service accessibility	29
2.1.6 Bus Journey Times	30
2.1.7 Network identity	31
2.1.8 Bus depots	34
2.1.9 Peak time delays	34
2.1.10 Ticketing products and fares	35
2.1.11 Bus priority measures	36
2.1.12 Bus network infrastructure	37
2.1.13 Summary of bus network provision	38
2.2 Bus Service Demand and Performance	39
2.2.1 Bus usage	39
2.2.2 Ticket Sales	42
2.2.3 Bus reliability and punctuality	46
2.2.4 Public engagement survey	47
2.2.5 Summary of bus demand and performance	50

2.3	LTA Support for Bus Services	51
2.4	Other factors that affect the use of local bus services	52
2.4.1	Park and Ride	52
2.4.2	Park and Ride Routes	52
2.4.3	Rail Offer	53
2.4.4	Car Traffic Volumes	53
2.4.5	Car parking	55
2.5	CW&C Bus Review Task Group work outcomes	56
2.6	Summary of Bus Service Performance in CW&C	57
3	Headline Targets (& Vision and Objectives)	60
3.1	Vision	60
3.2	Objectives	61
3.3	Why Bus?	64
3.4	Local Context (Issues and Opportunities)	64
3.5	Logic Map	65
3.6	Targets	68
3.6.1	Measure and target for passenger growth	68
3.6.2	Measure and target for customer satisfaction	70
3.6.3	Measure and Target for reliability improvements	70
3.6.4	Measure and Target for journey times	72
4	Delivery	75
4.1	Summary description of Improvements	76
4.2	Delivery Themes: Make improvements to bus services and planning	79
4.2.1	More frequent and reliable services	79
4.2.2	Improvements to planning / integration with other modes	83
4.2.3	Improvements to fares and ticketing	87
4.3	Delivery Themes: Make improvements to bus passenger experience	90
4.3.1	Higher spec buses	90
4.3.2	Improvements to passenger engagement	93
4.4	Packages of Actions	97
4.5	Summary of Delivery Conclusions	112
4.6	BSIP Outline Funding Form	113
5	Reporting	114
5.1	BSIP Revisions	114
5.1.1	BSIP and EP timescales	114
5.2	Enhanced Partnership set-up	115
5.3	Cheshire West and Chester Bus Passenger Charter	116
6	Overview Table	118

Appendices	126
A. Letters of support from bus operators	127
B. Funding request proforma	128

Executive summary

Introduction

Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) and the fledgling Enhanced Partnership working group are delighted to provide a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to the Department for Transport (DfT) to introduce and explain our ambitious plans for the future of bus in our borough. This vital plan outlines how we intend to take advantage of this unique opportunity to provide a genuinely transformational enhancement to the quality, frequency, useability and legibility of local bus services. This is presented in line with the Government's ambitious National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better'.

Bus Review Task Group

The plan follows from the excellent running start provided by the Council's Bus Review Task Group in 2020 and early 2021. This group pre-emptively engaged in baseline review, consultation and workshopping activities to ultimately identify a number of key priorities for investment in advance of the publication of the National Bus Strategy.

Collaborative Approach

Our plan has been collaboratively produced with bus operators themselves to ensure that we prioritise the right actions to: first stabilise the bus network against future cuts and decline, facilitating a full recovery from the worst impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to create a platform from which to build; and then grow the network, bolstering frequencies to create a good level of service throughout the day and week while simultaneously enhancing the quality and identity as one cohesive network, improving value for money, and simplifying both fares and ticket delivery to remove a critical barrier against use by members of the public.

Consultation

The plan has been produced following a period of comprehensive consultation with the public via a widely available online survey. The survey has enjoyed an excellent rate of completion with responses received from individuals as well as representatives of local

businesses, charitable and community organisations, local campaign and political groups, and third sector organisations. In this way we can be confident that we have addressed the burning issues for the current and potential users of bus services, reducing the barriers to bus use as much as possible and targeting interventions to ensure a mode-shift to bus from the private car. Therefore, we confidently put forward a plan to facilitate increased take-up of bus services into the future.

Priorities for the BSIP

The priorities for this transformational plan, as derived from the collaborative work with bus operators, the previous Bus Review Task Group work, and consultation with the public and local organisations are as follows:

Figure 0.1: Cheshire West and Chester BSIP Priorities



Existing Context

The current provision of bus service varies greatly across the borough and by time of day, with urban centres well served during the day but much lower levels of service during evenings and Sundays. Smaller towns and rural areas are relatively poorly served throughout the week. A key issue is the lack of available funding at a local level to support

commercially unviable routes and this will need significant future consideration, both in terms of stabilising the network, and growing it for the future.

The decline in bus patronage in Cheshire West and Chester in recent years has been substantial and more severe than for England as a whole. While bus services generally operate reliably and punctually, the number of bus journeys per head is lower in CW&C than many comparable local authorities. The results of the public engagement survey offer some insight into the reasons for this, with comparative journey times, operating times and accessibility to desired destinations cited as the most common reasons for people not using the bus.

Vision for the bus network

We have drawn on numerous local and national sources, including the National Bus Strategy itself, to outline the following clear vision for future bus transport in Cheshire West and Chester.

“To make bus a mode of choice for the full cross-section of society by removing barriers to travel and making buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper. To build in greater levels of community involvement, to both reverse the recent shift in journeys away from public transport and encourage passengers back to bus, and also to improve on pre-pandemic levels of service. To create a network that supports the Council’s strategic priorities of tackling climate change; growing the local economy and delivering secure jobs; supporting children and young people to get the best start in life; supporting older residents and rural communities; and enabling more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives”.

In essence, we have ambitions to make the bus network in Cheshire West and Chester a true exemplar for mixed urban and rural areas, with reliable and frequent services, targeted bus priority, a unified network, improved fares and ticketing and excellent levels of information.

Targets

We have provisionally selected a number of targets for the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership that cover the CW&C area as a whole. In line with guidance, we will work to

report performance, where possible, against these targets every six months, and update the targets annually.

The specific targets selected for this initial BSIP period are as follows:

Table 0.1: Cheshire West and Chester Initial BSIP Targets

BSIP Target Area	Current performance (2018/19)	Specific Target (2024/25)
Passenger Growth	9.3 million pax per year	10% growth (10.2 million pax per year)
Passenger Satisfaction	87% overall satisfaction level	92% overall satisfaction level
Reliability	86% bus services on time	90% bus services on time
Journey Time	-	No increase for all routes with a frequency of 2 buses per hour or more

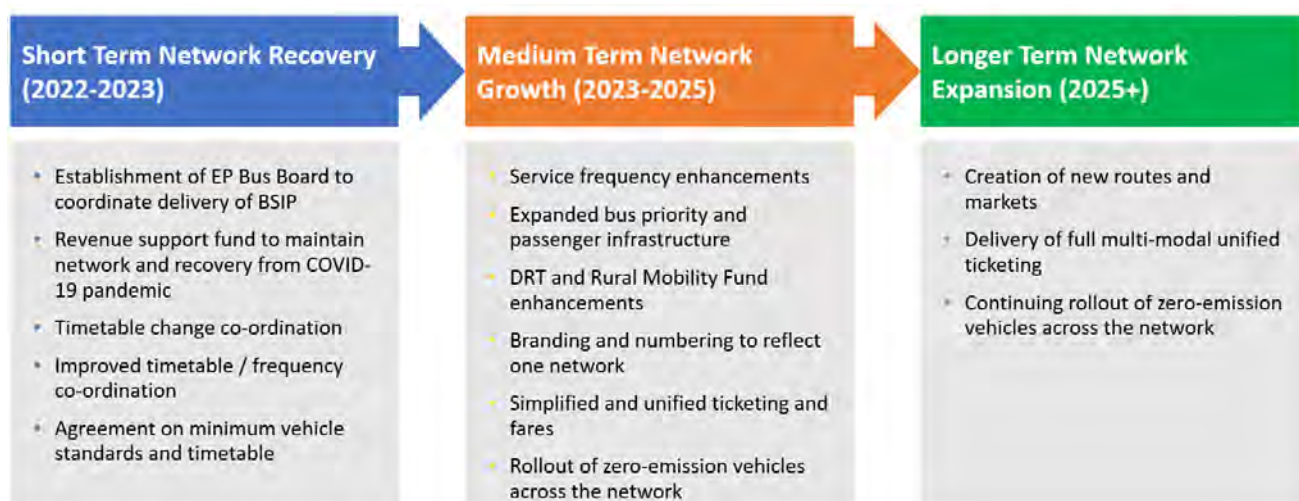
Delivery

Building on the work undertaken by the Bus Review Task Group in 2020 and early 2021, the BSIP process has identified a series of core actions. These may be broken down into three specific timescales as detailed below

- Short Term Network Recovery (2022/23) – covering the actions required to ensure a full network recovery to pre-pandemic patronage levels, stabilising the network, commencing work on simplification of network, timetables, fares, and information, and providing a platform for growth.
- Medium Term Network Growth (2023-2025) – focusing on improvements to daytime frequencies on key corridors for growth and in extending evening and Sunday periods where bus service levels currently fall away sharply. Investment will also be made in creating a significantly more unified product for bus with elements of common branding, ticketing, and common numbering protocols. Utilisation of ZEBRA funding or similar future sources to acquire and begin rollout of zero emissions vehicles across the network.
- Long Term Network Expansion (2025+) – outside of the scope of this BSIP, it is anticipated that the network will be expanded further with new routes and services

added, providing enhanced coverage to areas that are not currently well served. In this longer-term timescale, further innovations will become fully embedded into the every-day experience of bus passengers including multi-modal ticketing and integration with full inter-availability and value for money fare capping for local journeys.

Figure 0.2: Five Year Delivery Plan



The actions proposed within the initial BSIP for CW&C aim to deliver a transformational change in the cohesiveness, attractiveness, coverage and quality of the local bus network. We present in this plan an ambitious but realistic set of activities, actions and interventions to address the issues on the ground and deliver change, responding to every aspect of the National Bus Strategy. To deliver this change, the network must first be stabilised and recovered from the scarring impact on passenger behaviours from the pandemic. This will then provide a firm platform from which the planned network growth and expansion can be delivered to facilitate a new era of growth in sustainable bus travel in Cheshire West and Chester to support wider economic, environmental and social goals.

1 Overview

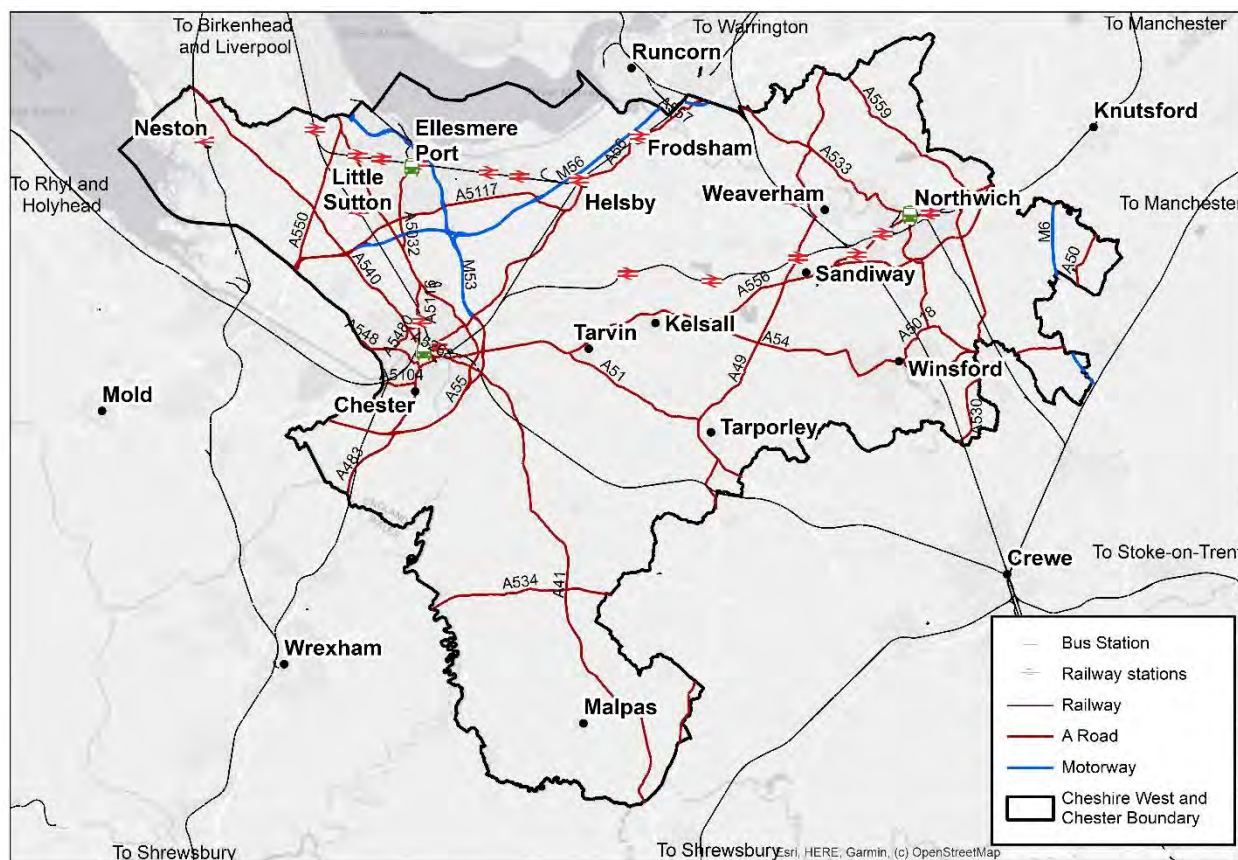
This section sets out an overview of the context and purpose of this Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C).

1.1 Coverage

An early decision was taken that the CW&C geography required a BSIP of its own. Whilst CW&C has strong links to the neighbouring authorities of Warrington, Cheshire East, the Liverpool City Region, and into Wales, Chester is a dominant centre for the borough, is in the top 100 sized towns and cities in the UK and operates as a significant hub for the local bus network in its own right. As such, whilst cross-boundary services make up a significant proportion of the network the needs of the CW&C geography are distinctive from its surrounds and a separate BSIP is considered to offer the best way forward to drive improvements to the local bus offer.

This Bus Service Improvement Plan covers the geography of the unitary authority of Cheshire West and Chester. This authority lies in North West England and has borders with Warrington, and, alongside Cheshire East, forms half of the ceremonial county of Cheshire. It also borders Flintshire and Wrexham County Boroughs within Wales, and lies to the south of Liverpool City Region (bordering both Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council and Halton Unitary Authority).

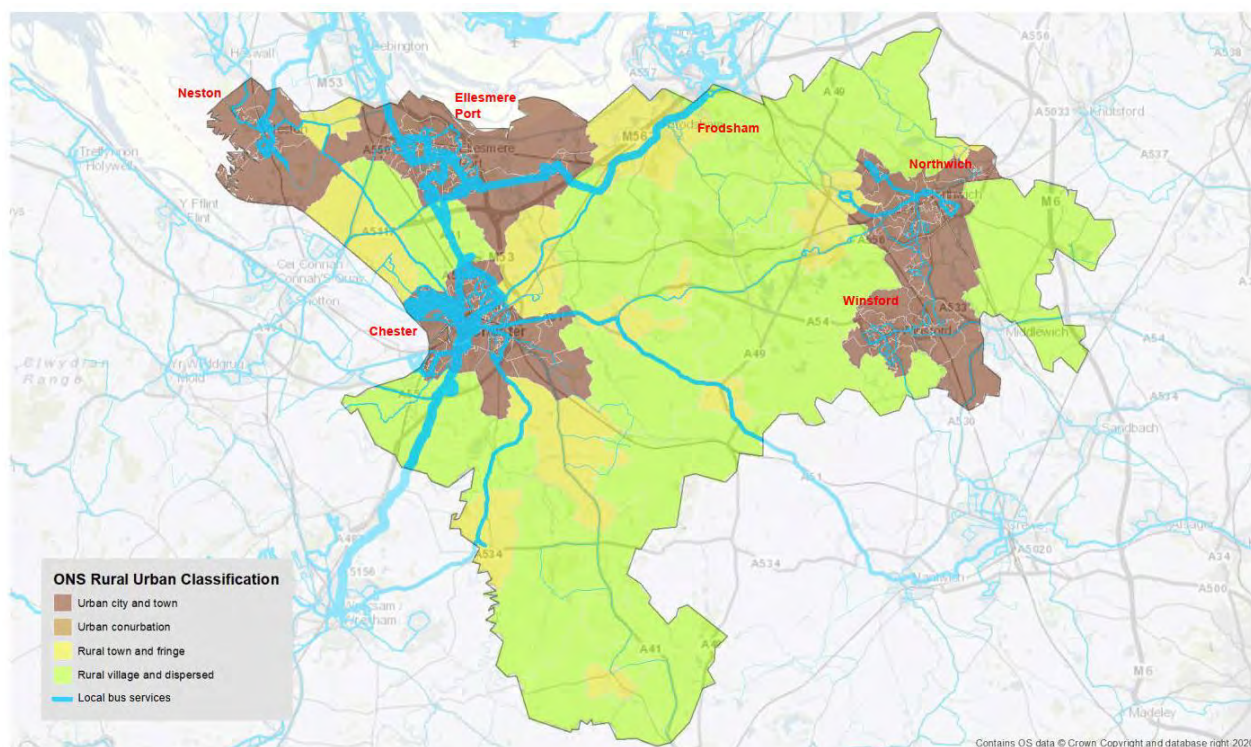
Figure 1.1: CW&C BSIP Coverage and Existing Transport Infrastructure Network



Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council

The Cheshire West and Chester geography covers a diverse area, with a number of urban centres along with a largely rural area in the central and southern parts of the borough. Figure 1.2 shows the ONS urban and rural classifications for each part of the borough.

Figure 1.2: ONS Rural Urban Classification



Source: ONS / CW&C Bus Review Task Group

1.2 Legislation and Procedure

In response to a directive from the DfT following the release of the National Bus Strategy in March 2021, CW&C published a statutory notice that they intend to prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan for local buses in June 2021. An Enhanced Partnership is a statutory partnership between one or more Local Transport Authority and one or more of their local bus operators that sets out how they will work together to deliver strategic bus outcomes within the defined geographical area. This BSIP presents the strategic outline plan for improvements to the local bus offer and is intended to be followed by the formal establishment of an Enhanced Partnership scheme by April 2022 in accordance with the Bus Services Act 2017, the National Bus Strategy, and further relevant guidance expected from the DfT in due course. A further, more detailed, Enhanced Partnership Plan which provides more information on the specific interventions and the role of each constituent member of the Enhanced Partnership (EP), will be required to accompany the signing of the partnership agreement by April 2022.

This BSIP has been prepared to cover in detail the period extending to the end of financial year 2022/23, but includes interventions that will necessarily extend beyond this timeframe in their scope and development. The document will therefore be reviewed on an annual basis ahead of each financial year. At present we expect the first review to be in early 2023, although an update of this first issue may be required to better align with funding guidance expected before the establishment of the Enhanced Partnership. The next update of the CW&C Local Transport Plan is also anticipated to commence during the 2022/2023 financial year and this will incorporate the contents of this BSIP as the core strategy for bus for the authority.

This document has been prepared in collaboration with the local bus operators, and in consultation with local users and stakeholders via an electronic survey which was completed by local residents, elected members of CW&C Council, town and parish councillors, representatives and members of various organisations including voluntary and community groups, local business and public sector organisations. Letters of support from the majority of bus operators, including all major operators within the region, are included as Appendix A.

1.3 BSIP Context and Guidance

This document has been prepared in response to the DfT's National Bus Strategy "Bus Back Better", released in March 2021.

1.3.1 The aims of the National Bus Strategy

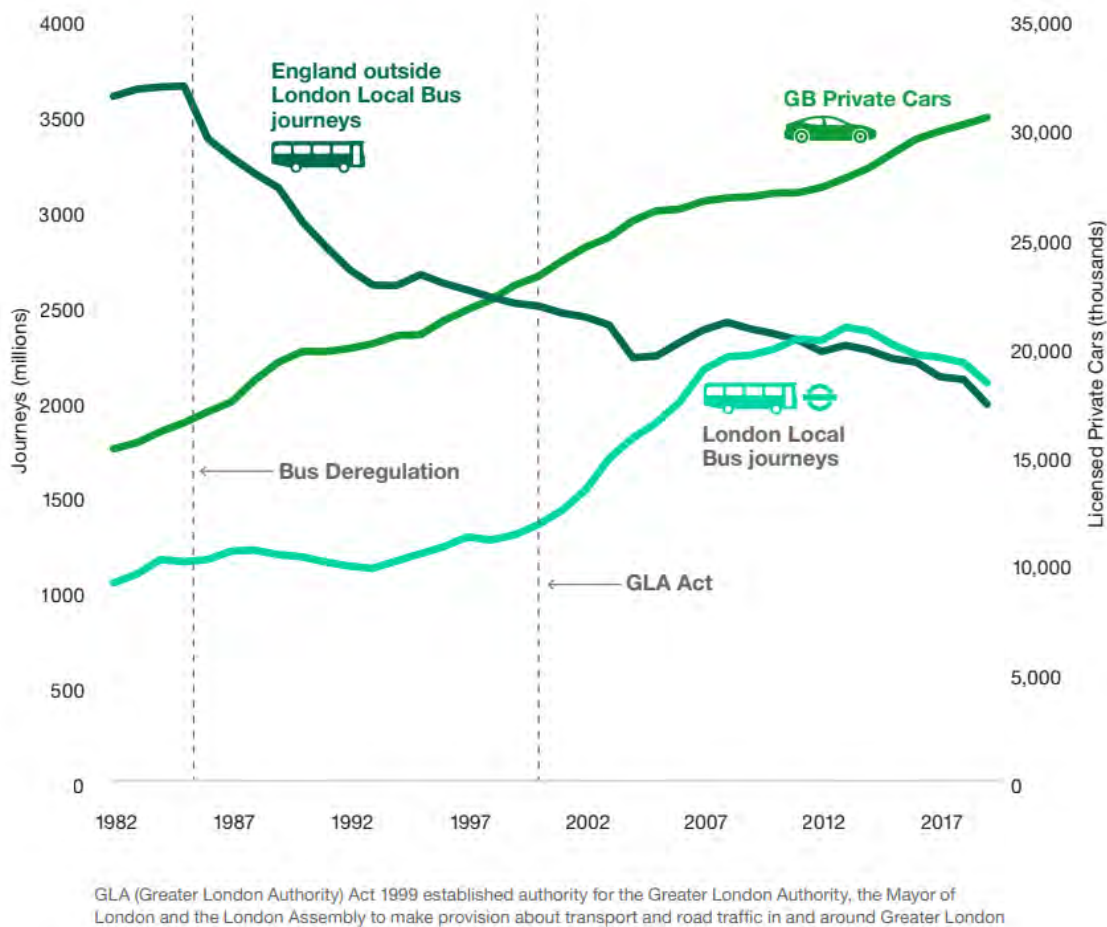
In response to falling passenger numbers during the first COVID-19 pandemic related national lockdown, the Government provided the discretionary COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) Restart scheme and continued to pay out Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) at pre-COVID-19 levels. In July 2021 it was confirmed that further Bus Recovery funding was to run through to the end of financial year 2021/22 and it is not unreasonable to expect that similar funding will need to continue in some form for a further period due to concerns that passenger numbers will likely remain depressed below 2019 levels for some time. Simultaneously, the Government, through the NBS, recognises the combination of post-COVID-19 financial support and current bus patronage numbers provide LTAs and operators with a significant opportunity to reset service patterns and

networks, simplify fares and ticketing and address the many traffic bottlenecks that affect the reliability and punctuality of local bus services.

As a result, the ambition of the National Bus Strategy goes above and beyond getting bus use back to what it was before the pandemic; the aspiration of the Strategy is to reinvigorate bus provision across the country, increase patronage and raise buses' mode share. Yet, this can only be achieved through ensuring that buses become an attractive alternative to the car for far more people; shifting the perception of bus from being the 'mode of last resort' to the preferred mode of choice for a large proportion of the population.

However, there is a long way to go to achieve this ambition. Bus journeys outside of London have endured a 40% decline nationally between 1985 and 2019, as shown in Figure 1.3. Despite accounting for nearly three out of four public transport trips nationally, buses are still seen by many as unattractive, slow, expensive, and disconnected in urban areas, and have disappeared almost entirely from many rural communities.

Figure 1.3: Bus Use and Car Ownership 1982-2019



Source: National Bus Strategy for England, DfT

In response, the 'Bus Back Better' strategy promises investment in the form of thousands of new low emission buses, hundreds of kilometres of new bus priority lanes and infrastructure, and new promises on integration and multi-modal / multi-operator ticketing, reversing the fragmentation caused by bus deregulation in the mid to late 1980s.

1.3.2 The local mechanism by which this will be achieved

Effective collaboration between the LTA and respective bus service providers underpins much of what the National Bus Strategy aspires to achieve. Cheshire West and Chester Council has decided to pursue the Enhanced Partnership approach, and has worked closely with local bus operators and received input from the public to develop its BSIP. The desired outcome is to form a statutory Enhanced Partnership by April 2022 that will provide a framework for implementing the interventions contained within the BSIP, and will

dictate the statutory roles and responsibilities of each partner over such factors as timetabling, ticketing, fare-setting, quality and network co-ordination.

It is envisaged that the aspirations and measures detailed in this BSIP will improve the legibility, availability, reliability, efficiency and convenience of bus services, thus making bus a more attractive mode of travel, resulting in increases in patronage numbers on services in Cheshire West and Chester.

1.3.3 A Cheshire West and Chester Bus Service Improvement Plan

In line with Department for Transport guidance, this Bus Service Improvement Plan forms the key strategy document for delivering the vision set out in the National Bus Strategy within Cheshire West and Chester. It provides a high-level overview of the interventions required to be delivered under the proposed Enhanced Partnership framework, clearly identifying both issues and opportunities across the full LTA area. Rigorous engagement with all parties involved in the Enhanced Partnership will form a key part of delivery of the bus network that Cheshire West and Chester (and its constituent operators) want to see: a network that secures maximum reliability, efficiency, convenience, comfort, and inclusivity for all.

In line with BSIP preparation guidance, the Cheshire West and Chester BSIP has been developed in collaboration with bus operators and other relevant parties, to make a case for receiving a share of the £3bn of transformational funding available. This BSIP presents:

- contextual information and background
- a summary of the current bus offer in CW&C, and an analysis on how it is used and the challenges it faces.
- An overview of a series of packages of improvements that have been identified, to achieve the objectives and aims of the BSIP
- Details of proposed targets for measurable improvements to the local bus offer
- A summary of next steps for the development of the plan and implementation of the Enhanced Partnership including the establishment of a local Bus Passenger Charter to give passengers a clear understanding of what they can expect of bus operators and the Council in relation to bus services in CW&C.

1.4 A Landmark Opportunity

The National Bus Strategy and this local BSIP present a landmark opportunity to induce a much needed and marked modal shift away from the private car towards bus through improving the efficiency, convenience, attractiveness and adaptability of CW&C's local bus network. The fundamental importance of inducing this shift is ever increasing. This is reflected in CW&C's unanimous declaration of a climate emergency in May 2019. The BSIP presents a sustainable, holistic, transformational, and most crucially, deliverable transport vision for the borough, to be achieved by engaging in a collaborative, evidence-based approach which underpins our findings through rigorous collaboration in development and delivery. Our aim is for this plan to bring life-changing environmental, social and economic benefits for the borough.

1.5 Local Policy Context

Cheshire West and Chester has an existing body of policy and strategy on the vision, ambitions, aims and objectives for the borough in relation to planning, transport and the climate emergency. A summary of the content of the most relevant policy documents is included here; although a fuller policy document review has been undertaken as part of the collation of useful supporting evidence during the production of this BSIP..

1.5.1 Third Local Transport Plan

Cheshire West and Chester's Third Local Transport Plan (LTP3), published in 2017, states that the key priorities for transport in CW&C are:

- Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks that support sustainable economic growth in West Cheshire and the surrounding area
- Reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt the transport networks to the effects of climate change
- Manage a well-maintained transport network
- Contribute to safer and more secure transport in West Cheshire and promote types of transport which are beneficial to health
- Improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity

- Ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment in West Cheshire.

LTP3 recognises that accessibility to opportunity is not equal across the borough, resulting in many people encountering difficulties when trying to access employment, education, healthcare, leisure and retail.

Despite areas of deprivation, overall car ownership in the borough is above the national average at 81%, and car is the dominant mode of commuting to work, accounting for 74% of commute trips, compared to 5% who use bus and 13% who walk or cycle. Traffic volumes in CW&C have grown by a quarter since 1993 and are forecast to grow further still in the coming years. Consequently, congestion remains a problem in some parts of the borough.

The use of bus (and other sustainable modes of travel) is recognised as an important part of the borough's approach to tackling climate change.

Consultation with the public in the 'Let's Talk' exercise found strong support for improving public transport, especially local bus services. Younger and older people are reliant on local bus services for accessing social activities, medical appointments, work and schools and colleges. In light of the challenges faced by CW&C residents relating to access to opportunities, the Council committed to:

- Work to increase accessibility to employment and training opportunities, to key services from rural areas; and to health services
- Ensure that new developments and local services are built in accessible locations
- Improve and encourage the use of local bus services
- Improve physical accessibility and remove barriers to mobility especially for disabled and older people.

1.5.1.1 Implications for CW&C BSIP

LTP3 identifies a number of key issues relating to accessibility in the borough, particularly for older and younger people, people who live outside of Chester, and those who live in more deprived parts of the borough. Whilst not the solution to all problems, the local bus network does offer a viable solution to many accessibility problems, due to its flexibility to

adjust to demand, its potential cost-effectiveness, and its relative speed over longer distances compared to other sustainable modes such as walking and cycling.

CW&C has already stated its ambitions and commitment to improving and encouraging the use of the local bus network, and the creation of a specific 'Bus Review Task Group' in 2020 was an important starting point on this journey. This BSIP presents the opportunity to further build on this work, and take advantage of national funding sources to accelerate improvements to the network.

1.5.2 Local Plan 2010-2030 (Part One) Strategic Policies

Cheshire West and Chester's Local Plan was adopted in 2015 and covers the period from 2010 to 2030. The overarching aim for the borough, according to the Local Plan, is to be a desirable and attractive place to live, work, learn and visit with vibrant towns and rural villages. New housing and employment opportunities in sustainable and accessible locations will enable the borough to attract inward investment. The needs of all communities, in particular those of an ageing population, will be provided for.

By 2030, the Council aims for the delivery of around 22,000 new homes within the borough, equating to 1,050 new homes a year from 2010. The city of Chester and the towns of Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford will be the main focus for development to make the most of already developed land and integrate with home, jobs, services and facilities in the most accessible locations. However, there is also expected to be significant development in the rural areas, again located in the most sustainable settlements.

To support and enable the development ambitions of the Local Plan, development and associated transport infrastructure should:

- Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks that support sustainable economic growth in the borough and the surrounding area
- Reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt our transport networks to the effects of climate change
- Contribute to safer and secure transport and promote forms of transport that are beneficial to health
- Improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity

- Ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment

Additionally, the Local Plan states that opportunities to improve public transport facilities will be taken wherever possible, through improved services, interchange facilities and parking at railway stations.

1.5.2.1 Implications for CW&C BSIP

With 22,000 new homes planned in CW&C by 2030, and with a commitment to providing and developing reliable and efficient transport networks to support that development, the BSIP presents an opportunity to address the elements of the bus network which are currently deficient and would, if left unattended, inhibit delivery of the sustainable development plans of the Local Plan.

Additionally, the bus network is a vital source of accessibility to jobs and key services, particularly for younger, older and disabled persons who are less likely to have access to a car. Therefore, improvements to bus services as planned within the BSIP will be vital for supporting greater equality of opportunity. In reality, the BSIP aims to go beyond just providing bus services for those who aren't able to drive, towards making bus a more attractive proposition than driving and thus generating mode shift by enticing people from car to bus.

Finally, the BSIP seeks to help to address the environmental challenges faced within the borough, and provide a more sustainable and less polluting way of travelling to, from and within the borough.

1.5.3 Cheshire and Warrington LEP Transport Strategy

The Cheshire and Warrington LEP produced their Strategic Economic Plan covering the period to 2040, which sets out the ambitious growth plans for the sub-region. The LEP aims to see the region achieve £50bn of GVA a year. The Transport Strategy was developed in 2017 in recognition of the vital role transport must play to achieve the aspirations for growth and economic development.

The strategy aims to improve connections to support development of priority employment sites including those within Cheshire Science Corridor, and to create fast and frequent

connectivity between sub-regional centres for people and freight. It notes that transport planning and design in Cheshire and Warrington should be integrated, accessible and inclusive, customer focused, sustainable, resilient and safe, and embracing change. It further looks to support areas of success and enhance prosperity in the region via the creation and support of:

- Dedicated, high quality inter-urban corridors to Manchester, Liverpool, Wales, Birmingham and Yorkshire
- Direct links to London and other top city economies
- Fast, reliable connectivity to key international gateways.

1.5.3.1 Implications for CW&C BSIP

The LEP Transport Strategy notes that bus has greater flexibility and range than other sustainable modes of transport, thus has a greater potential to increase connectivity between key centres in the sub-region. Therefore improvement of bus services is likely to result in greater uptake of bus as a sustainable method of travel in the sub-region. To address the outcomes of the transport strategy, the BSIP must:

- Identify locations where current bus provision is poor and set out guidance requiring bus providers and the Council to undertake regular branch reviews to ensure the bus network is continually evolving to meet needs generated by new housing developments and employment sites.
- Prioritise investment in technologies such as real time information and service updates at bus stops, interchanges or via smartphone apps to improve the passenger experience.
- Place strong emphasis on multi-modal integration, including bus with rail.

1.5.4 Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP)

In May 2019, Cheshire West and Chester Council declared a Climate Emergency, in recognition of the threat climate change presents to everyday life, the need to act in-line with worldwide agreements on climate change, and that the Council must play its part in leadership on this issue. With its high concentrations of industrial activity in the north of the borough, CW&C is in fact the fourth highest emitting local authority nationally. The borough is aiming to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045, and the Climate Emergency

Response Plan (CERP) sets out the actions the Council will take to respond to the climate emergency.

The Council adopted three principles in relation to determining its response approach; the plan should be:

- Democratically led
- Underpinned by the best available evidence and data
- Co-produced with communities to ensure it harnesses the skills and efforts of our residents.

On-road transport accounts for 19% of the borough's 4 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year. Improving accessibility and reliability of public transport, with the Council having more direct influence on the bus network, were noted as key factors which would help people make low-carbon journeys. The fact that only 10% of journeys to work are made by bus within the Chester urban area, where the bus network is most dense, highlights the scale of the challenge facing CW&C. To achieve the necessary reductions in carbon emissions, the following measures will need to be realised:

- 17% reduction in total travel demand by 2025, and a 25% reduction in car travel. By 2050, these figures will need to increase to 25% and 38% respectively.
- Public transport modal share needs to increase from less than 10% to 18% by 2025 and 29% by 2050.
- Public transport vehicles need to be low-carbon, with 100% of rail being low carbon and 51% of buses low-carbon by 2025.

The Council committed to reviewing bus transport with operators, to review the options for zero emission buses to achieve 51% electrification by 2025 and 100% electrification by 2030. Responses to the Climate Emergency Task Group relating to transport noted that as well as improving sustainable transport infrastructure, more could be done to communicate with, engage and educate people on public transport options.

1.5.4.1 Implications for CW&C BSIP

The CERP demonstrates a clear commitment by Cheshire West and Chester Council to tackling the climate emergency within the borough's boundary. As the second largest

source of carbon emissions in the borough, road transport is a key priority for addressing the climate emergency, and improving bus services in terms of reliability, accessibility and environmental credentials for the benefit of the environment adds an additional impetus and rationale to the BSIP.

1.5.5 Local Area Transport Strategies (Chester, Northwich and Winsford)

Although Chester is the centre best-served by bus in CW&C, service provision is significantly lower on a Sunday than the rest of the week. Infrastructure relating to bus, such as bus priority measures and the new Bus Interchange, are reasonably good in Chester, but there remains scope for further improvements, particularly along some of the busiest corridors and junctions on the approach to the city centre.

Northwich is poorly served by the bus network, particularly outside of weekday and Saturday daytimes, thus limiting the accessibility by sustainable modes to the new leisure facilities within the town centre. Public consultation conducted to support the Transport Strategy development identified that the lack of evening bus services was a key barrier to access which needed to be addressed. As well as bus accessibility to the town centre, access to key employment sites, such as Gadbrook Park, Leighton Hospital, and other urban centres such as Winsford, Warrington and Crewe, was identified as an issue which limited people's ability to access employment opportunities.

Travel in Winsford is dominated by private car, resulting in congestion, poor air quality, and exclusion from access to services for those without a car. The centre of Winsford is poorly served by bus, walking and cycling networks. Additionally, public transport links between Winsford and surrounding locations, such as Northwich, Manchester, Crewe and Chester are relatively poor, limiting people's access to jobs, educational opportunities and healthcare provision.

1.5.5.1 Implications for CW&C BSIP

Despite being the hub of the CW&C bus network, there remains scope for improvement to the provision of bus services in the city. That said, it is recognised that Chester is currently the best-served settlement in CW&C in terms of the bus offer, and the BSIP should seek to level up the accessibility to bus services across the borough, rather than further improve Chester's provision to the detriment of other settlements.

The Northwich Transport Strategy has already identified deficiencies in the town's bus network, and makes recommendations on areas of improvements. These recommended improvements are in line with many of the ambitions of the BSIP, and thus provide a starting point for specific schemes relating to buses in the Northwich area for inclusion in the BSIP. Support of TfN's integrated ticketing system would be of benefit across CW&C, not only in Northwich, and thus should be an ambition of the BSIP.

As an area with some of the more deprived parts of the borough and poor bus network, Winsford can benefit from a step-change in public transport accessibility as a result of the BSIP, given the likely latent demand for bus travel within the town and to nearby localities. A key focus of the BSIP is to address existing gaps in the market, perhaps as a result of legacy decisions and a lack of joined-up thinking on the bus network, in order to make bus services the go-to mode of choice for more people.

1.6 Traffic Management Act 2004 – Moving Traffic Restrictions

A further recent change to traffic management policy has presented a significant opportunity for Cheshire West and Chester Council in the delivery of the BSIP. This change in policy relates to Moving Traffic Restrictions which were previously only enforceable by the Police. Recent changes brought in by Central Government now that the Council has an opportunity to apply for the powers to enforce these restrictions which include bus lanes, cycle lanes, 'School Keep Clear' clearways and pedestrian zones. The practical application of this is that it presents a significant opportunity for the Council and partners to deliver the improvements specified with this BSIP due to its ability to effectively monitor and enforce bus priority measures without the support of third parties. If enacted following consultation, this will make a real difference, demonstrating significant improvement over previous bus strategies in which effective monitoring and control of restrictions was limited by the prevailing legislation.

2 Current Bus Offer to Passengers

This section presents a headline summary of key information relating to the local bus offer. A more detailed review of policy and evidence has been undertaken to underpin the development of this section, as part of the collation of evidence undertaken during the production of this BSIP.

2.1 Bus Service Supply

This section provides an overview of the existing bus network, to show the extent and quality of the bus offer to the residents and workers of CW&C. The review of the existing network forms the basis of the BSIP, as it highlights the gaps and opportunities within the existing market. As well as details on bus services, frequencies and fares, an online public engagement survey relating to bus services in CW&C was completed by over 1,650 people (representing themselves, local CW&C, town and parish councils, local community and business groups and other organisations) during August 2021, the results of which are summarised later in this section

2.1.1 The bus network

The diverse borough of Cheshire West and Chester is served by around 50 bus routes, many of which straddle the boundary into neighbouring authorities, including those within North Wales. The bus network is, to a large extent, focused on Chester and Ellesmere Port in the west of the borough, and Northwich and Winsford in the east of the



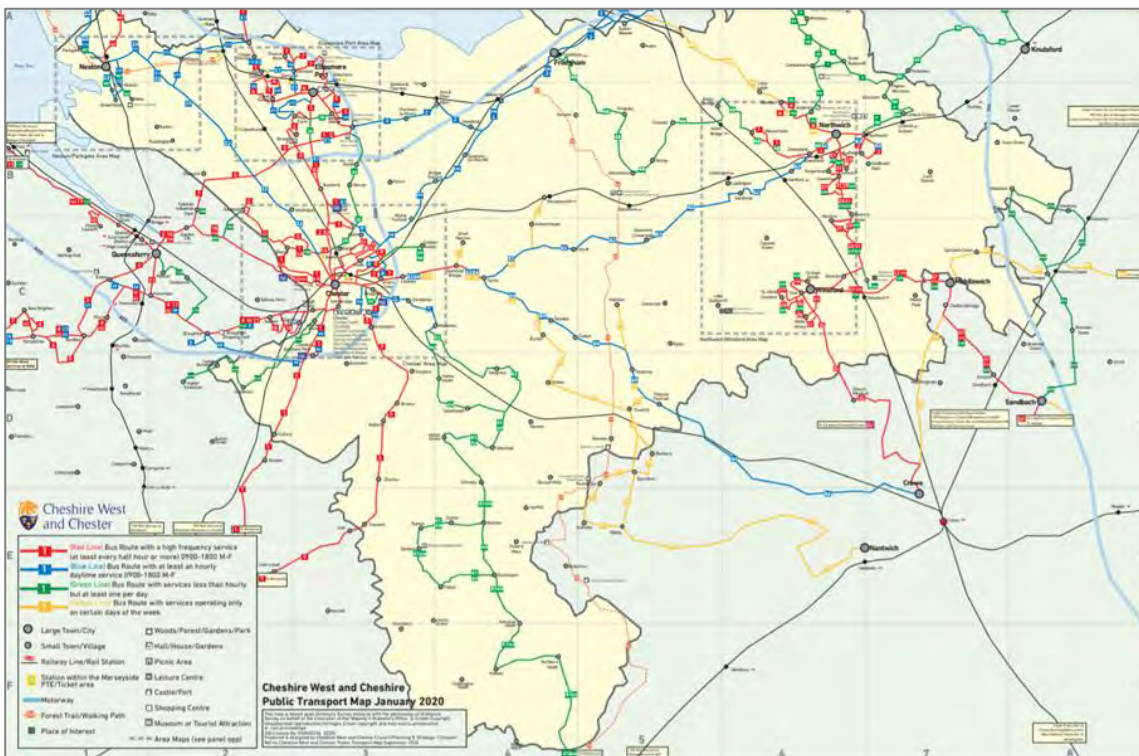
The Award-winning Chester Bus Interchange

borough – CW&C's four most populous settlements. As Figure 2.1 highlights, the bus network is generally denser in the western part of the borough than the east, although

there are a number of regular services in the eastern area. In terms of routing arrangements, local and inter-urban services in Chester tend to run radially to and from the urban centre of Chester, rather than as cross-city services although, until recently, the Park and Ride system followed a cross-city arrangement.

The main urban areas of the borough are bisected by a sizeable, sparsely populated rural expanse with considerably fewer, and less frequent bus services operating. Figure 2.1 shows that many of the villages in these areas are not served by any frequent bus service (green indicates routes with a frequency of less than once per hour; yellow indicates routes which only run on some days of the week).

Figure 2.1: Cheshire West and Chester Public Transport Map, January 2020



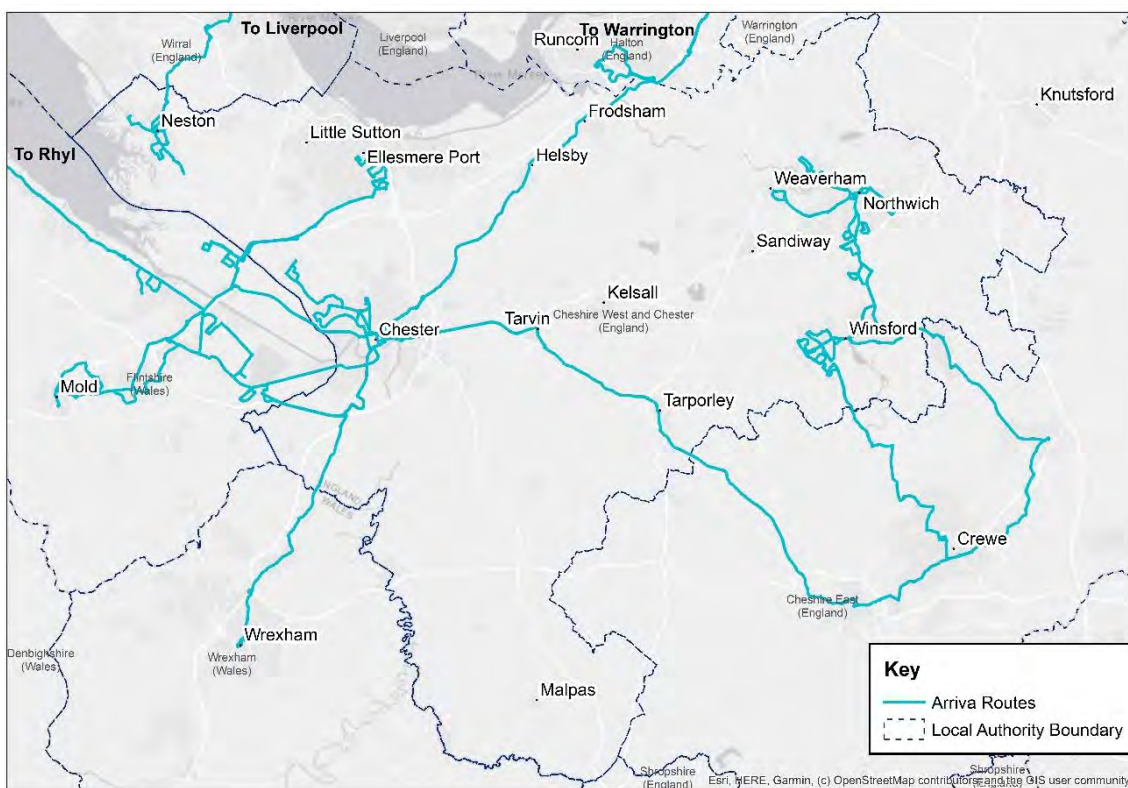
Source: Cheshire West and Chester, 2020

Consequently, this absence of frequent routes disconnects small villages from essential services and facilities in urban areas, and also severs Northwich and Winsford in the east from Ellesmere Port and Chester in the west in terms of bus accessibility. This is reflected in a journey from Winsford to Chester solely by bus, a distance of 16 miles as the crow flies, requiring two buses and taking approximately 2 hours. Bridging these two parts of the borough through public transport is an ongoing challenge with only an hourly rail service

between Chester and Northwich, and no direct rail service between Chester and Winsford, nor between Ellesmere Port and either Northwich or Winsford.

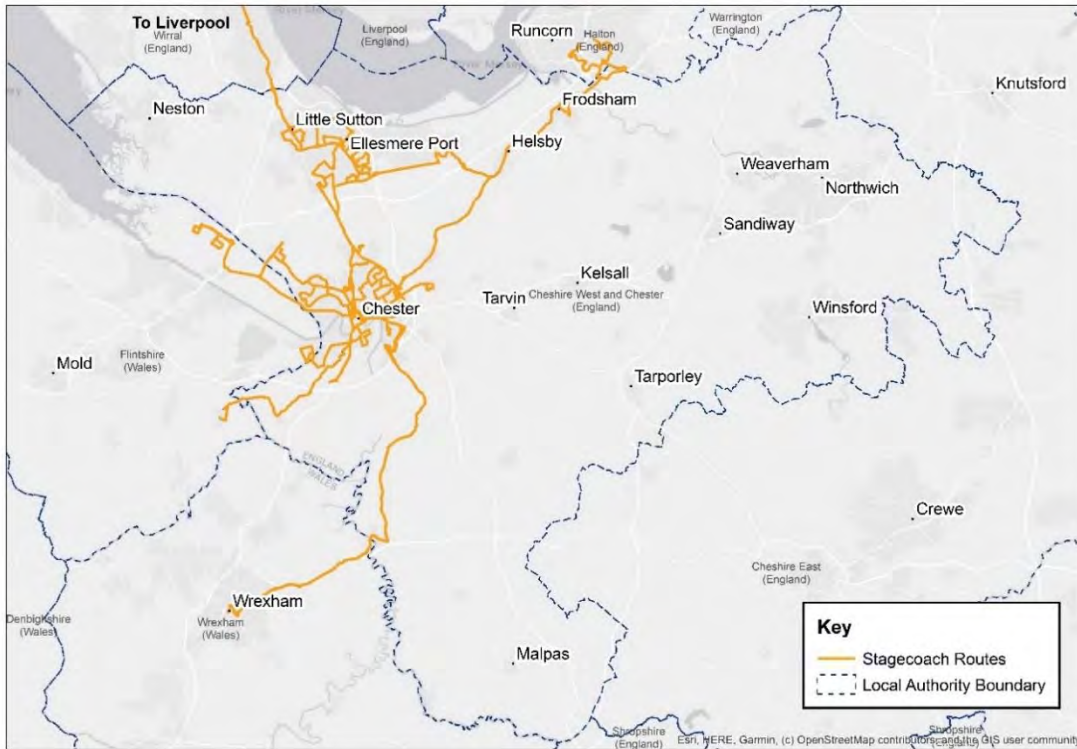
Arriva and Stagecoach are the dominant bus operators in CW&C, providing 90% of weekday daytime services between them. The remaining routes are provided by smaller operators that provide a mixture of commercial and supported services. Arriva and Stagecoach's primary routes, and the combined primary routes of other operators, are shown in Figures 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 respectively.

Figure 2.2: Arriva Routes within CW&C



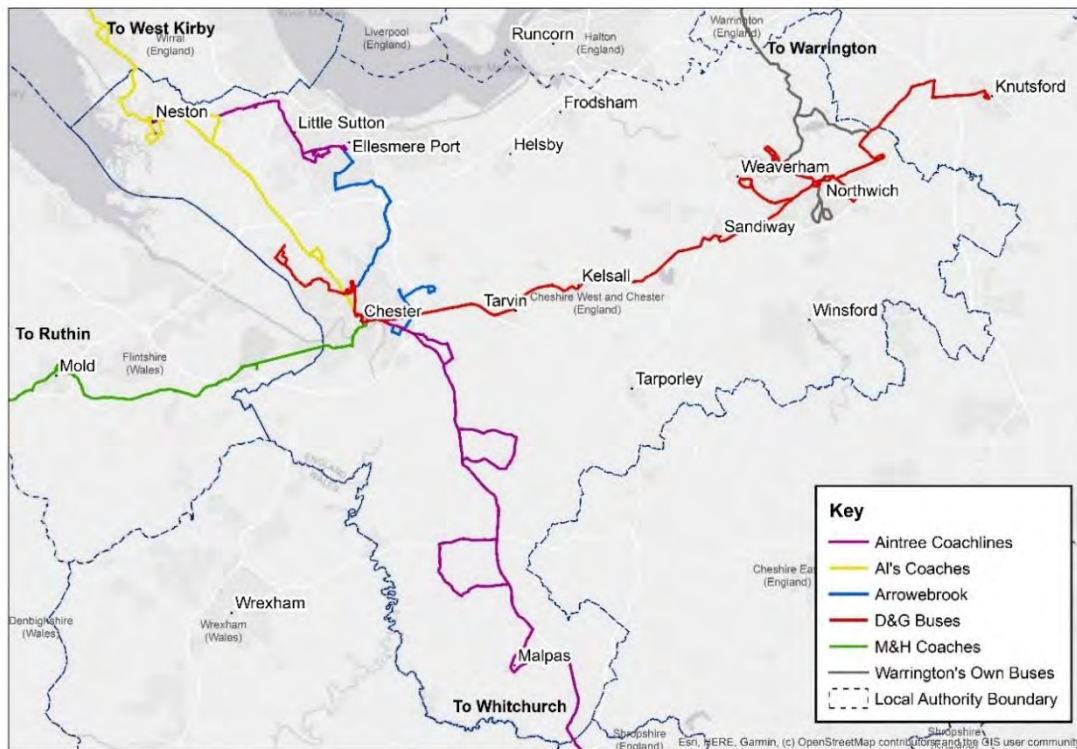
Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council

Figure 2.3: Stagecoach Routes within CW&C



Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council

Figure 2.4: Other Operator Routes within CW&C



Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council

2.1.2 Bus service frequency

Table 2.1 below shows the number of buses per hour serving each of the six largest settlements for different time periods during the week.

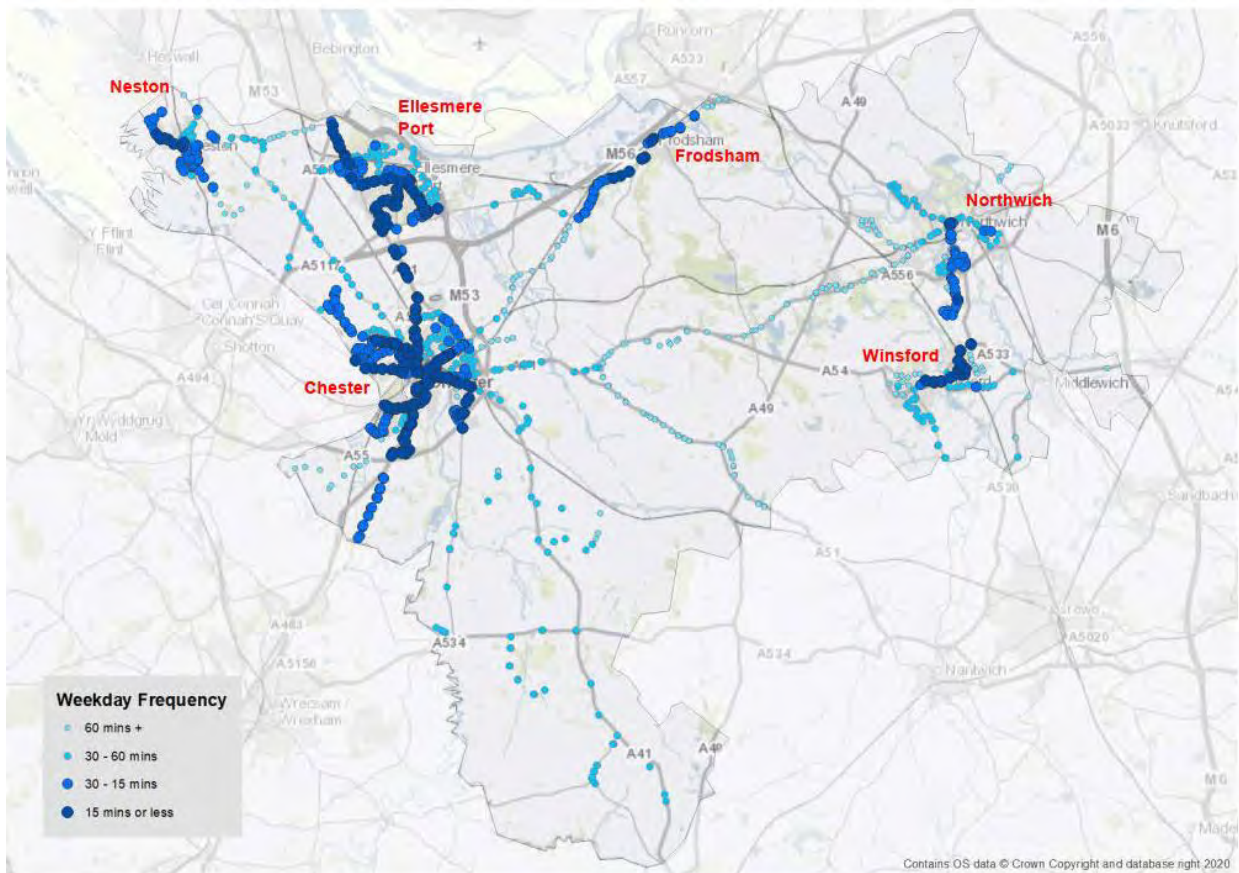
Table 2.1: Buses per hour by urban centre

Settlement	Buses per hour				
	Weekday Daytime	Weekday Evening	Saturday Daytime	Saturday Evening	Sunday
Chester	74	10	74	10	34
Ellesmere Port	12	1	11	1	5
Northwich	13	4	13	4	2
Winsford	5	2	5	2	0
Frodsham	3	0.25	3	0.25	1
Neston	4	1	3	1	1

Bus services per hour in each urban centre highlights the concentration of services in the western part of the borough, particularly in Chester, and demonstrates the very large disparity in accessibility to bus services across the borough. Outside of Chester, there is particularly limited provision of services during the evenings and on Sundays; Northwich, Winsford and Frodsham have very few (if any) buses serving them on Sundays. This demonstrates a clear gap in the market-led provision of buses in these localities. Although there are patches of deprivation throughout the borough, there are particular concentrations around Ellesmere Port and Winsford, which are also localities with relatively poor levels of bus service provision.

Figure 2.5 shows the frequency of bus services which call at each bus stop in the borough. The concentration of high frequency bus services in Chester and Ellesmere Port is evident, with the smaller concentrations in the other urban centres. The number of corridors with high frequency services is reasonably low.

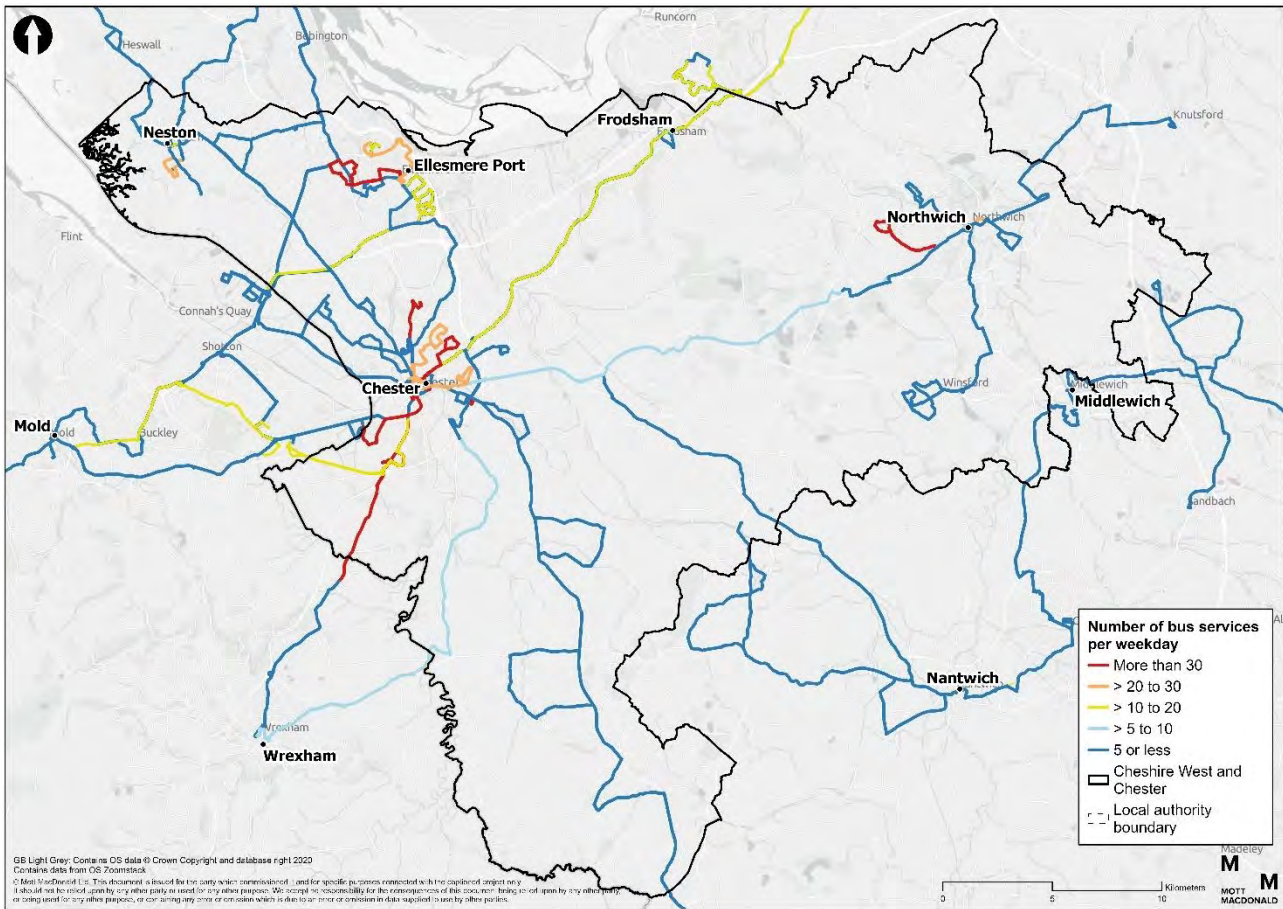
Figure 2.5: Average hourly bus stop frequency (weekday AM Peak)



Source: CW&C Bus Review Task Group

Figure 2.6 shows the number of buses per day operating on each section of road in the borough, with the red indicating the most services and blue indicating the fewest.

Figure 2.6: Density of Service Provision



Source: CW&C

Table 2.2 and Table 2.3 show that Arriva and Stagecoach are the dominant operators in CW&C, operating 90% of daytime services, 100% of weekday and Saturday evening services, and accounting for 88% of the kilometres covered by buses in CW&C each week. Although there are two dominant operators, their respective services are mostly serving different markets and therefore are not direct competitors in most cases. The voluntary quality partnership agreement in place on the 1/1A/15/15A Blacon Pointer routes is an exception to this and a best practice example within the borough of cooperation between operators and the local transport authority; in this case operators both operate on the same route at similar frequencies, accept each other's day and weekly tickets, and have agreed to co-ordinate timetables and service quality. In this way they do not compete but co-operate with each other. See Case Study in Section 2.1.7 for more information on this.

Table 2.2: Number of services per hour by operator, and percentage of services operated by each operator

Operator	Number of services and percentage share of service in that time period									
	Weekday Daytime		Weekday Evening		Saturday Daytime		Saturday Evening		Sunday	
Arriva	29	31%	10.5	71%	29	31%	10.5	71%	8.5	22%
Stagecoach (including Park and Ride)	49	52%	3	22%	49	52%	3	22%	25	65%
Arriva / Stagecoach Blacon Pointer VQP	7	7%	1	7%	7	7%	1	7%	3	8%
M & H Coaches	<1	<1%	0	0%	<1	<1%	0	0%	0	0%
Aintree Coachlines	6	6%	0	0%	5	5%	0	0%	0	0%
D & G Bus	1.5	2%	0	0%	1.5	2%	0	0%	2	5%
Al's Coaches	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Arrowbrook Coaches	<1	<1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Warrington's Own	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	95		15		94		15		39	

Table 2.3: Bus Operator Kilometres Share per week

Operator	Number of Kilometres per week	Percentage of Kilometres
Stagecoach (including Park and Ride)	271,075	60%
Arriva	128,883	28%
Aintree	28,516	6%
D & G Coaches	13,035	3%
Other operators	11,746	3%

Source: CW&C BRTG

2.1.3 Demand-Responsive Transport

There is no commercially run bus-based Demand-Response Transport (DRT) system in place in Cheshire West and Chester at present, although a pilot funded through the Rural Mobility Fund will create a test case for this in upcoming months. There are however a number of Council-operated/supported community transport schemes, which provide transport to those who can't access standard public transport, due to location or disability. Some of these are run by independent charities, and many have to be booked in advance and therefore can't really be classified as Demand-Responsive Transport. Instead, taxis

and private hire vehicles provide most of the transport cover in this area, and there is a clear gap in the market which might potentially be filled by a DRT-type product.

2.1.4 Vehicle ages

Full information on the age of vehicles operating within CW&C has not been obtained in time for the publication of the BSIP. Anecdotal evidence suggests that vehicle fleet age is older than average particularly in the case of the smaller operators. It should be noted that there is not a direct relation between vehicle age and quality, however and many of the older vehicles are of a relatively high quality albeit with lower overall engine efficiency and emission standards.

2.1.5 Frequent service accessibility

The above sections have explored the differences in bus service provision between different parts of the borough. The following table shows what impact the variations in bus services and frequencies have on accessibility to frequent bus services for CW&C residents. Our recent public engagement survey found that a lack of close proximity to a bus stop and infrequent services were two of the most common reasons for people not regularly using buses in CW&C. However 75% of respondents said they lived within a 10 minute walk of their usual bus stop.

Table 2.4: Proportion of residents within 600m of a bus stop with specified frequencies

Locality	15-minute service frequency	30-minute service frequency	60-minute service frequency
Chester	91%	100%	100%
Ellesmere Port	85%	98%	98%
Northwich	15%	77%	97%
Winsford	42%	69%	99%
Frodsham	0%	76%	76%
Neston	75%	100%	100%
Rural	11%	46%	61%

Source: Arup / CW&C

The data here further emphasises the differences in the borough, with over 90% of Chester residents having easy access to a 15-minute service frequency, compared to 0% in Frodsham and 15% in Northwich. The lack of close proximity to frequent bus services in

Northwich, Frodsham, rural areas and to some extent Winsford, highlights the challenges that people in these areas face when trying to travel by bus, and demonstrates why car dependence is rife. Whilst car ownership in CW&C is above the national average, there are areas of the borough, especially within Northwich, Winsford and Ellesmere Port, where car ownership is lower. A lack of access to a car, combined with poor bus (and rail) services means many people are left in transport poverty, with no easy access to employment opportunities, education and key services such as healthcare, resulting in negative socio-economic impacts.

Furthermore, the climate emergency declared by CW&C Council in 2019 was intended to serve as a clear statement on the Council's approach to addressing climate change, an increasing threat to the borough. Without commercially viable bus services, nor sufficient funding to cover the shortfall, people in CW&C have limited choices when it comes to sustainable transport options, and therefore are more likely to opt for their car, which generates carbon emissions and negatively impacts upon the environment and air quality, as well as the health of the individual.

2.1.6 Bus Journey Times

Table 2.5 shows car (top line) and bus (bottom line) journey times between the seven largest settlements in Cheshire West and Chester during the inter-peak period on a weekday. The bus journey times use bus only, and do not include rail even if available. Bus journeys include waiting times between buses at changes, but do not include any waiting time prior to the first bus.

Table 2.5 Comparative journey times between selected locations (including waiting time at changes for bus)

	Ellesmere Port	Northwich	Winsford	Frodsham	Helsby	Neston
Chester	Car: 19 minutes	35 minutes	30 minutes	24 minutes	20 minutes	24 minutes
	Bus: 35 minutes	81 minutes	139 minutes	38 minutes	29 minutes	44 minutes
Ellesmere Port	-	30 minutes	30 minutes	18 minutes	12 minutes	18 minutes
		118 minutes	176 minutes	38 minutes	28 minutes	36 minutes
Northwich	-	-	12 minutes	22 minutes	26 minutes	40 minutes
			42 minutes	54 minutes	93 minutes	161 minutes
Winsford	-	-	-	26 minutes	30 minutes	45 minutes
				109 minutes	143 minutes	211 minutes
Frodsham	-	-	-	-	6 minutes	28 minutes

	Ellesmere Port	Northwich	Winsford	Frodsham	Helsby	Neston
					9 minutes	107 minutes
Helsby	-	-	-	-	-	22 minutes
						100 minutes

Many of the journeys in the above table require two buses, and in some cases three buses. It can be seen that all journeys are quicker by car than by bus. It should be noted that for many of the above journeys, the journey can be made more quickly if rail is used as well. Looking at bus only journey times, there is a large difference in journey times – up to four and half a times as long for Winsford to Neston, and nearly six times as long for Ellesmere Port to Winsford. Given a choice between car and bus, it is evident that bus journey times are not currently competitive with car, albeit without consideration of parking availability.

2.1.7 Network identity

The National Bus Strategy highlights the importance of making local bus networks easier to understand. Consistent, easily recognisable branding and marketing strategies are integral to developing a strong network identity across local authority areas. As noted above, a range of different operators run services in CW&C, and besides the Blacon Pointer, there is no clear network branding beyond the corporate branding of the respective operators. In turn, the National Bus Strategy advocates the prescription of universal branding for local areas which reflect the identity of local communities; yet deregulation and privatisation has limited the effective delivery of this in the past, with bus company local branding being more reflective of the operator (e.g. Stagecoach Gold and Arriva's 'Sapphire' fleets). Whilst these examples of branded services have provided attractive, comfortable, and greener services for bus users, these fleets have arguably simultaneously further fragmented the wider CW&C network identity, decreasing fleet legibility for users. This is reflected in the range of buses in CW&C's bus fleet in Figure 2.7 to Figure 2.12

Figure 2.7: Warrington's Own Buses Branding



Figure 2.8: D&G Bus Branding



Figure 2.9: Arriva Sapphire Bus Branding



Figure 2.10: Arriva Older Fleet Branding



Figure 2.11: Stagecoach Gold Branding



Figure 2.12: Stagecoach Older Fleet Branding



Whilst there is currently no coherent local branding across the borough, CW&C has established easily recognisable, unique branding across its Park and Ride fleet (Figure 2.13). Simultaneously, this has allowed the authority to coordinate and promote dedicated marketing campaigns as shown in Figure 2.14.

Figure 2.13: Chester Park and Ride Bus Branding



Figure 2.14: Distinct Branding Facilitating Marketing Campaigns



Case Study: Blacon Pointer (1/1A/15/15A) Voluntary Quality Bus Partnership

In 2010, CW&C initiated a voluntary partnership (VQBP) arrangement with Arriva and initially First, now Stagecoach, to resolve a difficult situation in Blacon and Saughall in the west of Chester. The route had previously seen up



to 36 buses per hour using sections of road, causing complaints from residents regarding safety and environmental impacts. A key achievement of the voluntary partnership was timetable coordination, ensuring regular 5-minute headways. In addition to timetable

coordination, a brand identity was established - the Blacon Pointer - with associated marketing in the consistent purple and orange colouring, although buses retain their operator's livery. The service is seen as the first choice for travel for many residents in the area, and the Council is immensely proud of this successful partnership, one of the first of its kind in the country.

The fragmented nature of the wider bus network in CW&C presents challenges for CW&C in maintaining their website and online resources with up-to-date information on bus routes, timetables and fares. Funding and resources at the authority's disposal limit the content of the website to a list of routes, their destinations, operators and in some cases timetables, plus links to Traveline and some operators' websites. In an attempt to improve

service provision, CW&C are in the process of relaunching their 'itravelsmart' app, which, it is hoped, will contain up to date information on all transport options in the borough, including bus, and will report live travel information such as the predicted arrival time of bus services.

2.1.8 Bus depots

Bus depots are spread out across the borough, and some operators' depots are located outside the borough. The location of each operators' depot(s) and the Peak Vehicle Requirement (PVR) at that depot is listed in the table below. This also includes buses servicing non-CW&C routes.

Table 2.6: Operator depots and PVR

Operator	Depot location	PVR
Stagecoach	Waverton, Chester	39
	Rock Ferry, Birkenhead	47
Arriva	Hawarden (Chester), Wales	25
	Winsford	34
	Runcorn	46
D&G	Crewe	27
	Wincham, Northwich	8
Al's Coaches	Birkenhead	Unknown
Aintree Coachline	Hooton, Ellesmere Port	12
Warrington Own Buses	Warrington	100
Arrowebrook Coaches	Croughton	6
CW&C's Own Fleet	Rivacre, Ellesmere Port	20

2.1.9 Peak time delays

Current bus timetables for services in CW&C do not appear to make adjustments for peak time congestion when calculating journey times, as many show the same journey times for morning peak and midday journeys, as shown for a selection of routes in Table 2.7. This may in part be due to the impact of COVID-19 in which, for a period, roads were considerably quieter than usual, however conversations with operators have revealed that

this is mainly due to generally low levels of congestion on roads in the borough. Most services operate at a low enough frequency and with sufficient recovery time to allow layover to recover any time lost due to delays if needed.

Table 2.7: Peak and Off-Peak Timetabled Travel Time Comparison

Route number (Operator)	Origin	Destination	AM Peak travel time	Inter-peak travel time	Time difference
1/1A (Stagecoach)	Blacon Parade	Chester Bus Interchange	17 minutes	17 minutes	0 minutes
2 (Stagecoach)	Ellesmere Port Bus Interchange	Chester Bus Interchange	36 minutes	35 minutes	1 minute
10A (Arriva)	Connah's Quay (Golftyn Garthorpe Avenue)	Chester Bus Interchange	31 minutes	31 minutes	0 minutes
16 (Stagecoach)	Chester Bus Interchange	Saltney, Sandy Lane Terminus	29 minutes	29 minutes	0 minutes
31 (Arriva)	Crewe Bus Station	Northwich Interchange	1 hour 9 minutes	1 hour 9 minutes	0 minutes
82 (D&G Bus)	Rudheath (Doctors Surgery)	Chester Bus Interchange	1 hour 29 minutes	1 hour 29 minutes	0 minutes

2.1.10 Ticketing products and fares

At present, there is little coordination with regard to ticketing. Operators do not generally accept each other's tickets, except on the Blacon Pointer VQBP between Arriva, Stagecoach, and D&G Buses. Arriva, Stagecoach, D&G and Warrington's Own Buses all offer a daily, weekly, monthly tickets, as well as singles and returns. Apart from the VQBP, these are only usable on the respective operator's own services with no interchangeability or inter-availability. In addition, Stagecoach and Arriva offer termly and annual student passes. Ticketing details for other operators in CW&C are not normally available on their websites

The creation of a VQBP between Stagecoach and Arriva to establish a multi-operator ticket exclusively for the VQBP demonstrates the ability and willingness to collaborate in this way under appropriate conditions. There is the potential for the Blacon Pointer partnership to act as a blueprint for other similar arrangements. For simplicity, Table 2.8 provides a breakdown of day ticket fares only by operator to give an indication of ticket

prices, but operators listed here offer a range of other ticket types, including singles, weekly and monthly tickets, as well as term time passes for students and children.

Table 2.8: Summary bus fares by service operators

Operator	Blacon Pointer Day Ticket	Adult Day (most appropriate local zone selected)	Network Return
Stagecoach	£2.70	£4.00	-
Arriva	£2.70	£4.60	-
Warrington's Own Buses	-	£5.95	-
D&G Buses	-	-	£5.50

Apart from the VQBP, the only other multi-operator ticketing offer available within CW&C is the National Rail Plusbus add on that allows unlimited bus travel throughout a specific area over the course of a day. Plusbus is available for both Chester and Ellesmere Port although the areas of validity in both cases are rather tightly contained within the extents of the settlements themselves. Some restrictions apply on these tickets, for instance the Plusbus ticket is not valid on the City Rail Link bus in Chester which is a rather counter-intuitive restriction, given that this is one of the first interactions visitors have with buses in the city. The Council does, however, offer a stored value, the Cheshire Travelcard, which enables passengers to top up with cash and then use it to pay for tickets on the bus. It is accepted by most operators, and Arriva give a 10% discount when using it to purchase a single ticket.

Figure 2.15: Cheshire Stored Value Travelcard



2.1.11 Bus priority measures

There are currently 2km of bus lanes in the CW&C area, all of which are within the Chester area and located at:

- Hough Green, Chester
- Sealand Road, Chester

- Wrexham Road, Chester
- Upper Northgate Street Chester
- Love Street, Chester
- Frodsham Street, Chester
- St Oswald's Way to Oulton Place Slip Road, Chester.

There are also facilities buses are allowed to use on Boughton Road and on Liverpool Road that were suspended during the pandemic and have not yet been brought back into use as an ongoing review looks into the future balance of their use, highway needs and active travel needs. Many of these facilities serve both the service bus and Park and Ride networks and, given their use by buses, taxis, private hire vehicles and motorcycles, can provide faster journey times and uncongested road-space for a variety of non-private-car vehicles. These measures work most effectively in areas of congestion and delay for buses and other vehicles, and need to be carefully located so as to cause maximum benefit for non-car trips rather than in locations where they are easily incorporated but of potentially less benefit.

Chester also has an Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) system in place which allows the potential for detection of buses and the live alteration of signal timings to facilitate quicker journeys for bus vehicles. It should be noted, however, that this system has been in place for some time and does not currently make use of the latest technology available to selectively offer bus priority.

It will be important to build on these existing assets within the BSIP to ensure that bus priority is targeted in the most effective and beneficial locations to facilitate bus journeys and to encourage mode shift from private car to more sustainable modes of transport.

2.1.12 Bus network infrastructure

The £13.5m Chester Bus Interchange, and accompanying public realm, is an award-winning bus station which opened in 2017 and can handle up to 156 buses per hour at its 13 stands. Currently, around 800 buses use the facility each day, including National Express coach journeys, with an improved user interface for rail users, pedestrians and cyclists, amongst the core benefits. The bus interchange has good quality facilities including real-time information, retail (including a coffee shop), high quality toilets, a

Changing Places facility, and baby-changing facilities and informal provision for bus layover and staff welfare. The Council is responsible for day-to-day operation of the Interchange. As the focus of the Chester bus network, the new facility provides a vital role in improving the public transport infrastructure of Chester.

Ellesmere Port bus station, located in the town centre, has recently also undergone a transformational relocation and refresh. All buses which serve Ellesmere Port call at the bus station.

In Northwich, there are seven bus stops along Watling Street in the town centre which serves as the bus hub, whilst in Winsford there is no dedicated bus terminus, but a series of stops around the town centre on Dene Drive and High Street. Similarly in Neston, there is no dedicated bus terminus, although the rail station, located in the town centre, acts as a mini transport hub, with bus services calling there, and a stop at Brook Street forming the most popular central stop. Frodsham and Helsby have no dedicated bus stations.

In total, CW&C has a total of 2,663 bus stops across the borough, of which 847 (32%) are unmarked on the highway, 563 (21%) have a shelter, and 1,357 (51%) have timetable information displayed. The Council is responsible for maintaining most of these bus stops and the shelters, however it currently has a contract in place with Clear Channel to maintain and provide advertising for 114 of the 563 stops with a shelter (20%).

2.1.13 Summary of bus network provision

The overall provision of bus services varies greatly across the borough, with the urban centres (particularly Chester and Ellesmere Port) being relatively well served on Monday-Saturday daytimes. However, evenings and Sundays tend to have much lower service provision across the borough. This leads to lower levels of connectivity than desirable to core attractors such as employment, education, health and leisure opportunities outside of core hours, and reduces the mode share of bus for these trips.

Smaller towns like Neston, Frodsham, Helsby and rural areas, are relatively poorly served throughout the week. The rural nature of the central and southern part of the borough presents particular challenges in terms of running financially viable services.

Bus frequencies in some parts of the borough and at certain times of the week are a clear issue to be addressed in the BSIP – a key issue is the lack of available funding at a local

level to support commercially unviable routes and this will need significant future consideration, both in terms of stabilising the network, and also in terms of fostering sustainable growth in the future.

A further issue is a general lack of integration between bus services and other modes including rail and even Park and Ride services. In the past, this has been understood to be substantially due to buses being in competition with other forms of transport, however the National Bus Strategy presents the opportunity to create a step-change towards a unified and mutually supportive sustainable transport network in which each mode plays its part.

2.2 Bus Service Demand and Performance

Having provided an overview of the bus network offer, this section covers the trends in bus usage in recent years and the performance of the network.

2.2.1 Bus usage

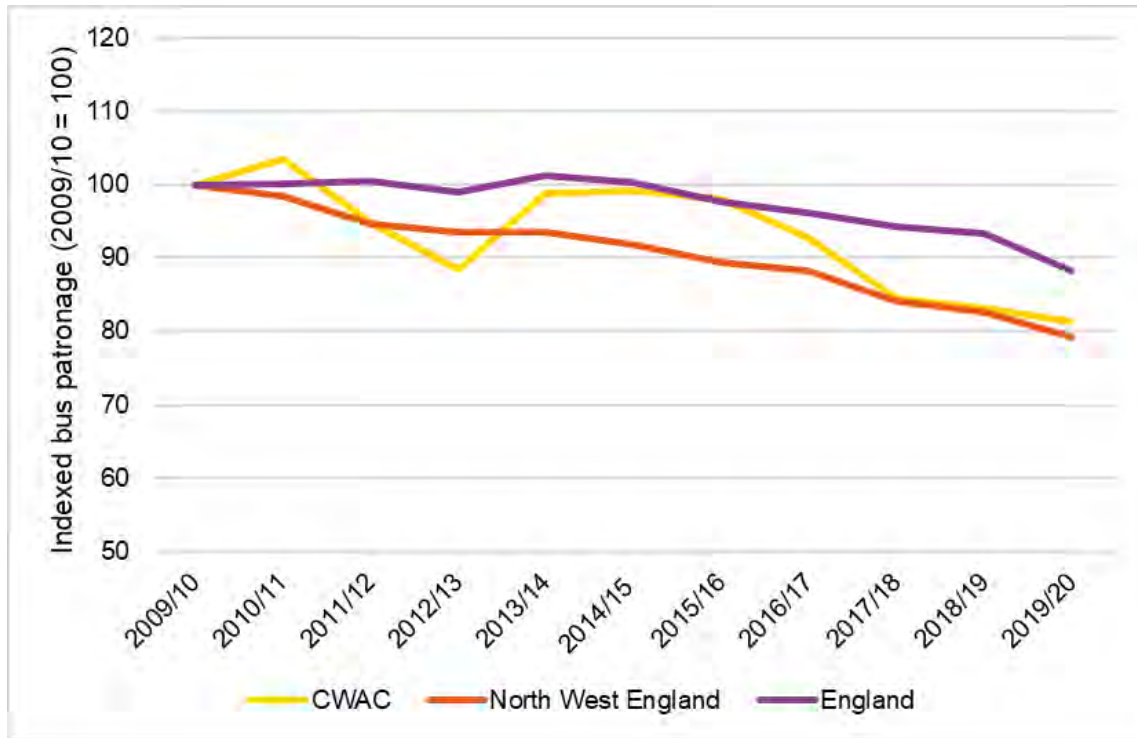
Like most areas outside London, bus usage in Cheshire West and Chester has seen a gradual decline in recent years. From a high of 11.6 million in 2010/11, the number of bus passenger journeys fell to 9.1 million in 2019/20, albeit with some rises and falls during that period. The full effect of the Covid-19 pandemic is not seen in this data, but evidence from operators suggest patronage fell to a low of around 25% of 2019/20 figures, but have since recovered to around 65-70%.

Figure 2.16: Patronage on CW&C local bus services (millions) 2009/10-2019/20



Source: DfT, BUS0109

When compared regionally and nationally, it can be seen in Figure 2.17 that Cheshire West and Chester has declined by significantly more than the national average (19% decrease compared to 12% nationally) between 2009/10 and 2019/20, albeit this is in line with the average for North West England. This highlights the challenge that CW&C faces; providing a consistent level of bus service in a borough with a mixture of rural and urban areas, and areas of deprivation interspersed with relative affluence.

Figure 2.17: Indexed bus patronage, 2009/10-2019/20

Source: DfT, BUS0109

For comparison, Table 2.9 shows the number of bus passenger journeys per head of population, prior to COVID-19, for a selection of comparable local authorities and North West England.

Table 2.9: Bus passenger journeys per head of population (2018/19)

Locality (selected comparators)	Bus journeys per head of population
Cheshire West and Chester	27.5
Cheshire East	11.1
Durham	41.9
York	75.1
Kent	34.0
Essex	28.8
North West England	52.6
England	76.9

Source: DfT, BUS0110

It can be seen that Cheshire West and Chester has the second lowest number of bus journeys per head of population of the local authorities shown in the table; only Cheshire East has a lower rate. The number of bus journeys made per head of population in CW&C

is just over half of the number for the North West of England as a whole, and just over a third of the national rate for England.

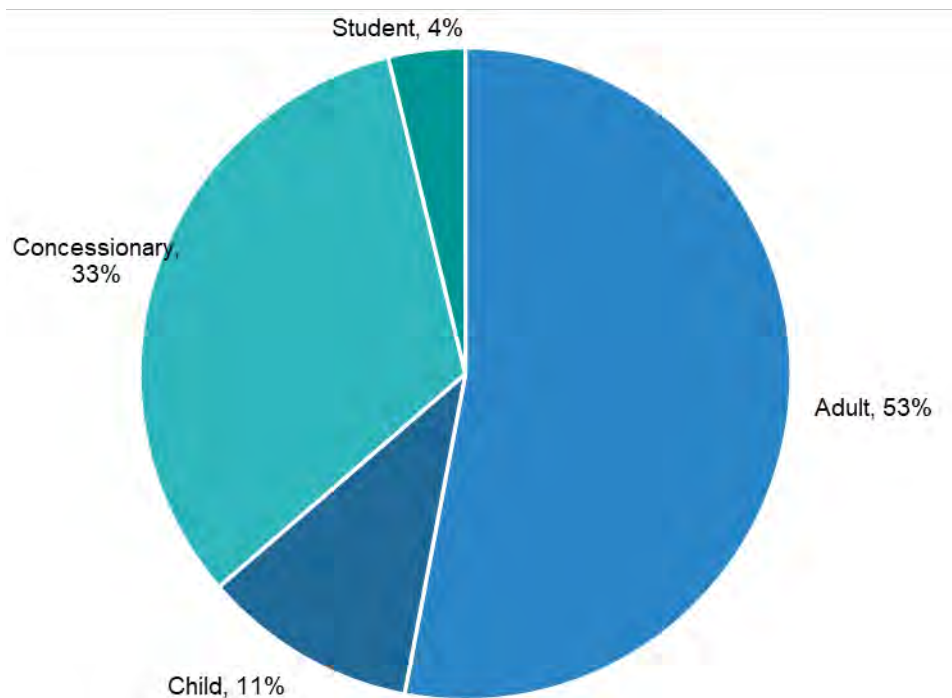
Concessionary pass holders (elderly and disabled) account for around 30-33% of bus passenger journeys in the borough, which is above the North West England average of 29-30%, and the national average of 22-23%. However, despite having one of the oldest and fastest ageing populations nationally, the actual number of journeys made by concessionary pass holders in CW&C has fallen from 2.9m in 2016/17 to 2.5m in 2019/20, a 14% decrease. This indicates that even for concessionary holders, the bus is becoming a less attractive option when choosing how to travel, suggesting bus services currently do not adequately cater for the needs of the communities, especially older people and disabled people.

The above data shows that, when compared nationally and regionally, usage of bus in Cheshire West and Chester lags behind, and has suffered greater decline than other areas. This may in part be explained by the borough having large areas of rurality, where population density is low along with a number of relatively small urban centres (Chester, the largest centre, has a population of 79,000) spread out across the borough, which makes operating commercially sustainable bus services a challenge. The resources of the Council are limited and therefore its scope for supporting services is restricted to only the most essential, such as the 26 service between Ellesmere Port and Chester via Wervin and Stoak.

2.2.2 Ticket Sales

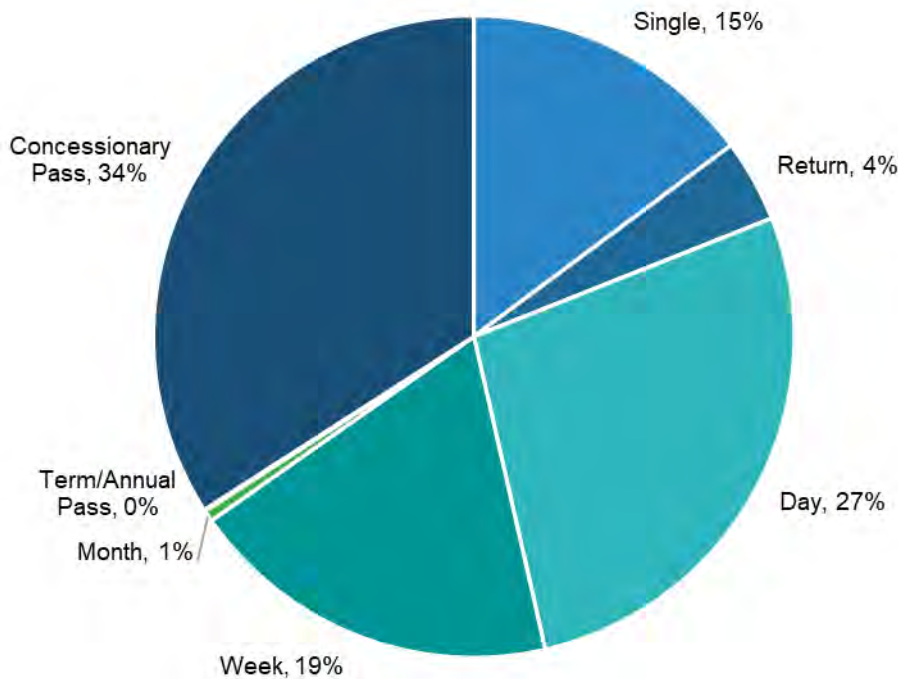
This section considers bus usage in CW&C in more detail, based on ticket sales data provided by the operators.

Figure 2.18: Bus ticket purchases/usage by user group



Adults account for the majority of bus users, based on analysed ticket purchases (Figure 2.18), with just over half of bus users purchasing/using an adult ticket (this includes singles, day tickets, week/month tickets, and annual passes). People using a concessionary pass (either for seniors or those with a disability) account for a third of bus users (Figure 2.19).

Figure 2.19: Bus ticket purchases by ticket type



In terms of the types of tickets used, concessionary passes are the most commonly used, accounting for around a third of tickets. Among fare-paying passengers, day tickets are the most common, at 27%, followed by weekly tickets (19%) and singles (15%). Excluding concessionary passes, 70% of bus ticket purchases are for tickets only valid on one day (singles, returns and day tickets). Given that weekly, monthly, term and annual passes can represent better value for money than buying a ticket every day for daily users, the indication is that a large proportion of bus passengers use the bus on an ad-hoc or semi-regular basis, rather than for a daily trip such as commuting to work or for education purposes. This suggests an overall lack of regularity or commitment to bus usage, and a desire to retain the option to switch to an alternative mode on any given day.

Patronage data has been provided for many routes from 2019 – the baseline year for the BSIP. For commercial confidentiality reasons, the actual patronage for each route cannot be reported here, but the routes have been grouped according to patronage range, shown in Table 2.10, with an indication of the type of route (urban, inter-urban and rural). It should be noted that patronage was not received for all routes, and only routes for which data has been received have been included. Additionally, many of the routes listed below cross the CW&C boundary into neighbouring local authorities; patronage for these routes covers the

whole length of the route and will not, therefore, reflect patronage within CW&C specifically.

Table 2.10: Rank of routes by patronage

Annual Patronage	Services and route classification
Over 500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 – Chester – Liverpool – Inter-Urban • 1/1A – Chester – Blacon Circular – Local • 2 /X2 – Chester – Ellesmere Port – Runcorn – Inter-Urban
250,000 – 500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 – Northwich – Weaverham – Inter-Urban • 5/5A – Chester – Huntington – Inter-Urban • 16/16A – Chester – Saltney Circular – Local • 29 – Northwich – Winsford – Inter-Urban • 31 – Northwich – Winsford – Crewe – Inter-Urban • 40 – Chester Railway Station – Chester City Centre – Local • 53 – Chester – Kingsway – Local
100,000 – 250,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 – Wrexham – Chester – Inter-Urban • 2 – Northwich – Rudheath – Local • 4 – Northwich – Barnton – Local • 4/4B/4S/X4 – Chester – Mold – Inter-Urban • 5 – Ellesmere Port – Mold – Inter-Urban • 5A – Ellesmere Port Circular – Local • 7 – Green Lane Circular – Local • 9 – Pipers Ash – Chester – Local • 15/15A – Chester – Saughall – Local • 37 – Northwich – Winsford – Sandbach – Crewe – Inter-Urban • 41 – Chester – Whitchurch – Rural • 51 – Chester – Plas Newton – Local • 82 – Chester – Northwich – Inter-Urban • 84 – Crewe – Chester – Inter-Urban • 487 – Neston – Liverpool – Inter-Urban • X30 – Chester – Warrington – Inter-Urban
50,000 – 100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 – Chester – Huntingdon / Wrexham – Inter-Urban • 7 – Ellesmere Port – Overpool – Local • 10 – Chester – Connah's Quay – Inter-Urban • 10A / 11 – Chester – Holywell – Inter-Urban • 11 – Chester – Rhyl – Inter-Urban • 22 – Chester – West Kirby – Inter-Urban • 26 – Ellesmere Port – Chester via Stoak – Rural • 272 – Ellesmere Port – Neston – Inter-Urban
Less than 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 – Chester – Mold – Inter-Urban • 8 – Chester – Pipers Ash and Green Lane – Local • 15X – Chester – Saughall – Urban • 21 – Chester – Frodsham – Inter-Urban • 48 – Frodsham – Northwich – Rural

Annual Patronage	Services and route classification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 61/62 – Chester – Higher Kinnerton – Rural • 89 – Northwich – Knutsford – Rural • 200 – Chester Shopper Hopper – Local • 204 – Chester – Deeside Shuttle – Inter-Urban • Cat 9/9A – Northwich – Warrington – Rural • X1 – Chester – Ruthin – Rural • Rural Rider – Rural

Generally the local and inter-urban routes focused around Chester and Northwich are the more heavily used, while rural routes tend to be less well used as might be expected and broadly according to frequency of service.

2.2.3 Bus reliability and punctuality

CW&C, like all local authorities, submit bus punctuality data to the Department for Transport. Table 2.11 shows the figures for bus punctuality data for 2014/15 – 2020/21. On time is defined as being within a 6-minute window of the scheduled arrival time – no more than 1 minute early and no more than 5 minutes late.

Table 2.11: Bus punctuality (2014/15 – 2019/20)

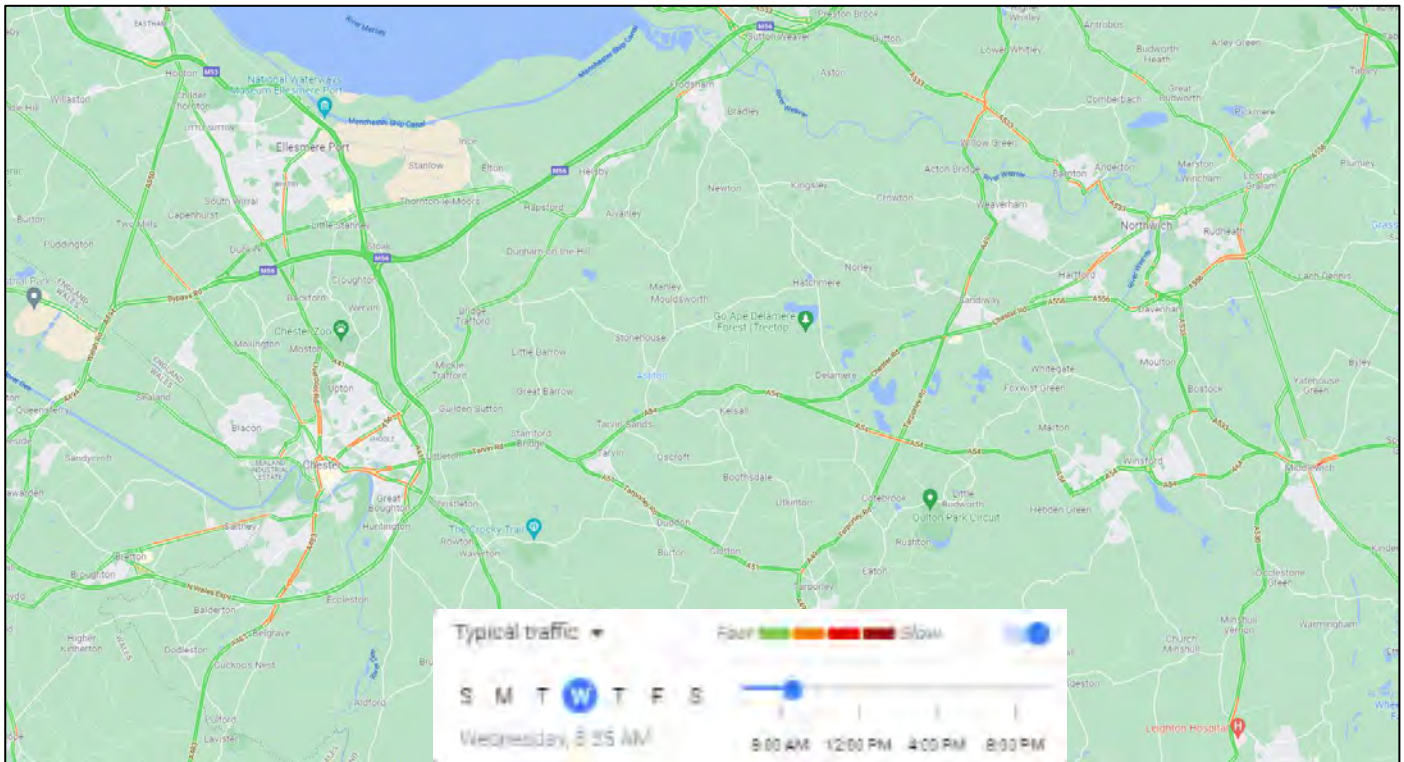
Table	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2020/21
% of passenger journeys arriving on time	87%	83%	84%	86%	86%	88%

Note: 2019/20 data not collected due to Covid-19

It can be seen there have been some fluctuations in the proportion of services arriving on time, with steady improvements between 2015/16 and 2020/21, although there does remain some room for improvement.

Congestion in Cheshire West and Chester is considered to be relatively modest with just localised issues around the main centres (particularly Chester) at peak times. The following extract from Google Maps shows the situation at 08:30 on a typical weekday (although it should be noted that this is likely affected by reduced traffic observed during the COVID-19 pandemic).

Figure 2.20: Typical Weekday Traffic Congestion in Cheshire West and Chester



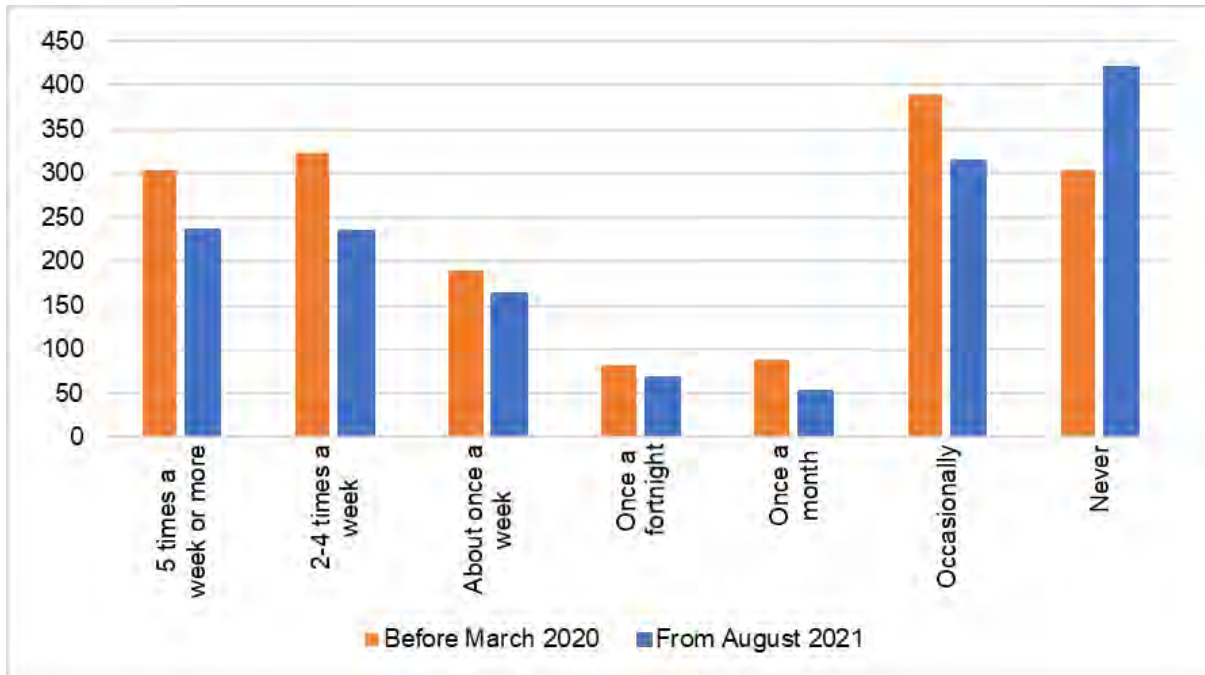
Source: Google Maps 2021

2.2.4 Public engagement survey

In August 2021, CW&C Council ran an online public engagement survey to gather bus users and non-users' views on the current bus network and what would encourage them to use bus more. It was completed by 1,664 people, representing themselves, local CW&C, town and parish councils, local community and business groups and other organisations. A summary of the survey's results are presented here, although a fuller examination of the results has been undertaken by CW&C Council and has fed into the full collation of evidence undertaken to support this BSIP.

People were asked how often they used the bus prior to March 2020, and how often they expect to use it from August 2021; it can be seen from Figure 2.21 that respondents are reporting that they intend to use the bus less frequently from now on; 'never' is the only response to see an increase. This presents a substantial challenge, given the Climate Emergency Response Plan's clear objective to encourage modal shift as part of the ambition to be a net zero emissions authority.

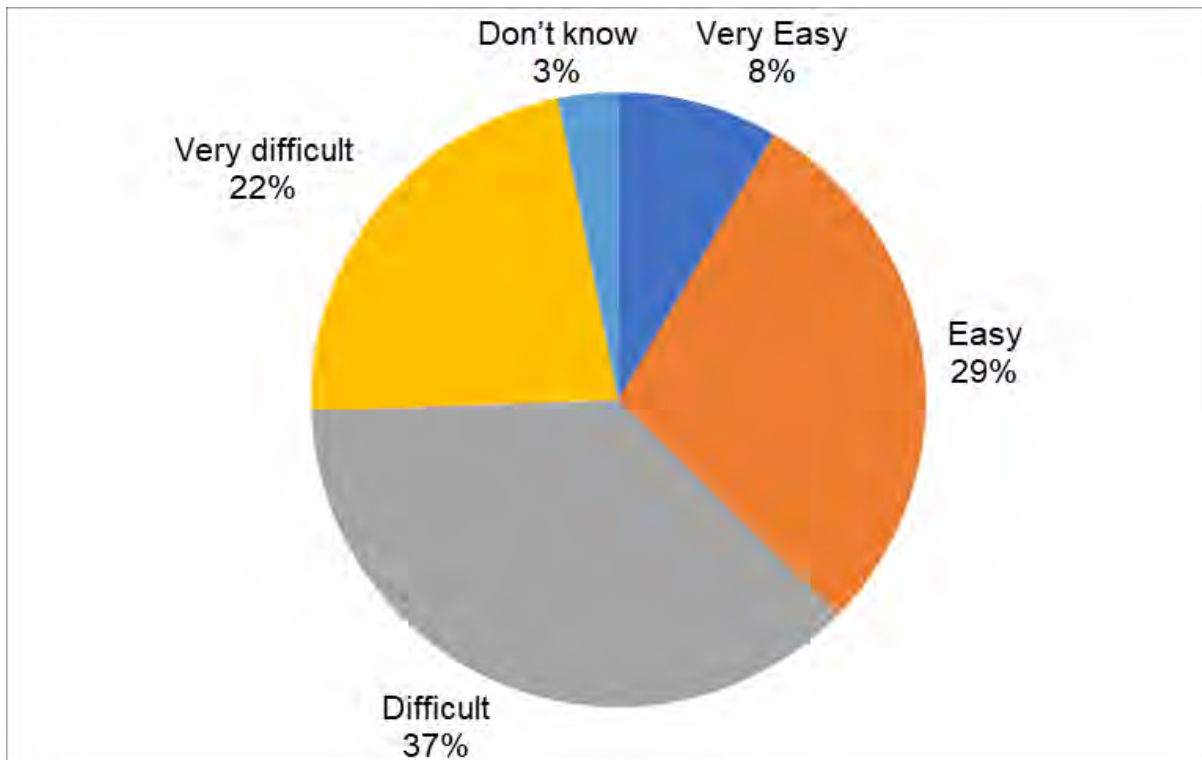
Figure 2.21: Frequency of bus usage, prior to March 2020 and from August 2021



Source: CW&C Public Engagement Survey, 2021

In terms of how easy respondents find it to use the bus to get to where they need to go, Figure 2.22 shows that nearly 6 in 10 respondents reported finding it difficult or very difficult, which is likely to discourage people from using the bus. The anticipated decline in bus usage indicated in Figure 2.21 along with the reported difficulty in getting to desired destination means there is likely to be some additional resistance to using buses in the future and therefore targeted interventions will be needed to overcome this. These interventions, and further discussion on the initial priority of network recovery is presented in sections 3 and 4 of this document.

Figure 2.22: Ease of getting to desired destination by bus



Source: CW&C Public Engagement Survey, 2021

The most common recorded reasons that prevent people from using the bus were:

- Quicker to drive (51% of respondents)
- Doesn't operate at required times (45%)
- The bus route/stops are inconvenient (43%)
- I don't think the bus is frequent enough (40%)
- Doesn't go to my preferred destination (31%)
- Too expensive (30%)

In terms of the factors which would encourage respondents to use buses more, the most frequently selected responses were:

- Improve frequency of local bus services (66% of respondents)
- Extend hours of operation later into the evening (56%)
- Better choice of destinations (43%)
- Provide more bus services on Sunday and Bank Holidays (42%)

- Better information at bus stops and shelters e.g., real time passenger information screens (38%)
- Journey times on bus services made quicker (33%)

Further discussion on the second priority of network growth is presented in sections 3 and 4 of this document.

It can be seen that there is a range of reasons for why people don't use the bus and what would encourage them to use it more, with key reasons focused on operating times, frequency, availability of nearby services to desired destinations, and comparability of journey times to the private car (where available).

2.2.5 Summary of bus demand and performance

The substantial decline in bus patronage in Cheshire West and Chester, at a more severe rate than England as a whole, cannot be ignored. Whilst bus services generally operate reasonably reliably and punctually, the number of bus journeys per head of population is lower in CW&C than many comparable local authorities. This is perhaps reflected in the relatively high proportion of people who purchase tickets valid for one day, indicating an ad-hoc approach to bus usage, rather than people's first choice. The results of the public engagement survey offers some insight into the reasons for the relatively low usage of bus services with operating times and accessibility to desired destinations cited as some of the most common reasons.

In recent years, declining levels of passenger demand have led to an unstable network around the borough with frequent service changes and withdrawals. This has led to a perceived lack of reliability and network useability for passengers creating a positive feedback loop in which fewer passengers triggers further reductions which reduces passengers etc. The Government support provided during COVID-19 has had the effect of reducing this network instability, however this is temporary as blanket Government support will shortly be withdrawn. This, added to the large number of operators and ticketing products available, serves to cause confusion and further reduce the attractiveness of the bus product.

Finally, unattractive fare levels compared to the daily perceived costs of the private car, and low quality standards on some services, are seen to further reduce the comparative

attractiveness of bus. The BSIP must seek to address these issues if it is to successfully engender mode shift.

2.3 LTA Support for Bus Services

The Cheshire West and Chester Council transport team has an estimated 11.8 FTE members of staff working in some capacity on bus activity, with a range of seniority and experience among the team members. The team works hard to deliver services such as maintaining bus stops and other infrastructure, maintaining the bus service registrations database, contracting and (in some cases) providing directly supported services, managing concessionary ticketing payments to operators, contracting and managing the Park and Ride network, managing back office systems and transport alerts to the public, keeping online content up to date and updating bus stop information with the latest timetable and any passenger notices regarding road closures. The team works closely with operators to ensure services are relevant to the needs of communities and provided in a cost-effective manner, offering good value for money. The Council has a budget of around £4.2m per year to cover these activities, which includes staff salaries. The various budget components are broken down as follows:

- Local Bus - £855,000
- Infrastructure excluding depreciation - £85,000
- Information provision - £165,000
- Concessionary Fares re-imbursement to bus operators - £2,780,000
- Concessionary Fares cost of customer cards - £105,000
- Chester and Ellesmere Port Bus Stations maintenance - £300,000
- Travelcard administration - £31,000.

31 bus services in CW&C receive some degree of financial support from the authority. An additional six receive support from another local authority. The CW&C-supported services are a mixture of 'de minimis' contract, minimum cost and minimum support, depending on the nature of the service, and are run by a mixture of operators. A total of just over £855,000 a year is spent on supporting local bus services in CW&C, and the eligibility of bus services to receive funding support is based on 1) Economic & Environmental

Sustainability, 2) Accessibility and 3) Financial Consideration. In this way, the social need for the service is considered alongside the commercial return.

2.4 Other factors that affect the use of local bus services

2.4.1 Park and Ride

Cheshire West and Chester Council operates a bus-based Park and Ride system in the city of Chester, with three car parks currently in operation, plus another at Sealand Road which is currently not in use. There are over 3,100 spaces across the four park and ride sites. Buses operate every 12 minutes between 7am and 7pm on a weekday, every 12 minutes between 8am and 7pm on a Saturday, and every 15 minutes between 9:30am and 5:30pm on a Sunday and bank holidays. Tickets cost £2 return for an adult with up to two accompanying under 16s

Vehicles used on the Park & Ride service are of high quality, with WiFi, USB charging, mock leather seats and Euro VI engines. The Park & Ride service is particularly well-used in the summer and Christmas periods, indicating its popularity and convenience for tourists visiting the city.

However, the Park and Ride system in Chester is loss-making and has been for a long period of time. It must be noted, however that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated health messaging concerning public transport, the services were demonstrating increases in passengers. The BSIP must consider how this vital component of the sustainable transport network within Chester could be improved and made more attractive to those that currently drive into the city, including difficult questions over its relationship with the rest of the local bus network. A key consideration will be in the pricing of parking in Chester City Centre since the Park and Ride system must offer a cheaper alternative for most city centre journeys to attract users.

2.4.2 Park and Ride Routes

Until recently, the two Park and Ride routes in Chester ran as cross-city services. PR1 ran between Wrexham Road and Upton sites (Chester Zoo), while PR2 ran between Sealand Road and Boughton Heath. Both services called at the Bus Interchange, but only PR1 called at the rail station to provide a direct Zoo shuttle service for rail passengers (in

addition to its main function as a Park and Ride service) . However, in recent months (2021), and due in part to the use of Sealand Road car park as a COVID-19 test centre, the service has been modified with the Sealand Road service suspended. The remaining three routes do not currently run as cross-city services, although tickets can be used on all Park and Ride routes, allowing interchange in the city centre to access other destinations. It is unclear whether this cross-city services will return once the Sealand Road service resumes.

2.4.3 Rail Offer

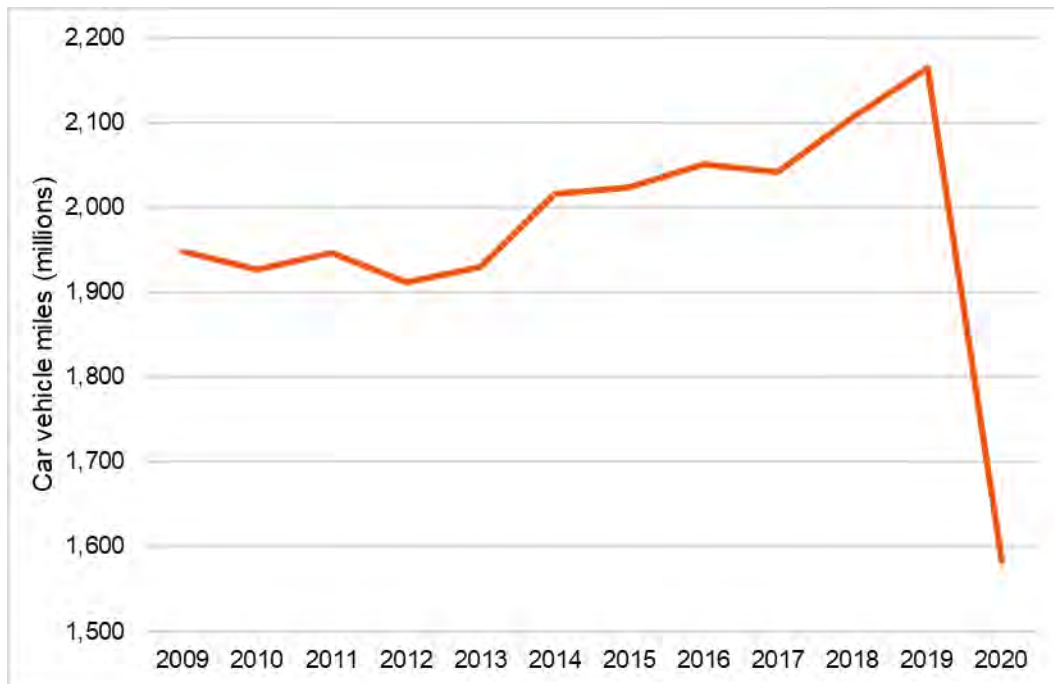
There are 21 rail stations within Cheshire West and Chester, with a wide offer in terms of destinations beyond the borough. However, rail connectivity within the borough and between the borough's urban centres is relatively poor with no direct services between Chester and Ellesmere Port, or between Ellesmere Port and either Northwich or Winsford, or between Chester and Winsford. Service frequencies on some routes are quite low – for example, Northwich is served by only one train per hour on the Chester-Manchester Piccadilly mid-Cheshire line route. The relatively poor intra-borough rail offer is reflected in the 1% rail modal share for commuting¹ compared to 5% for bus. The limited scope of the rail offer means bus is generally considered the more viable public transport offer for most CW&C residents and workers travelling within the borough.

2.4.4 Car Traffic Volumes

Figure 2.23 shows traffic levels in Cheshire West and Chester over recent years; this shows an upward trend until the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

¹ Census 2011

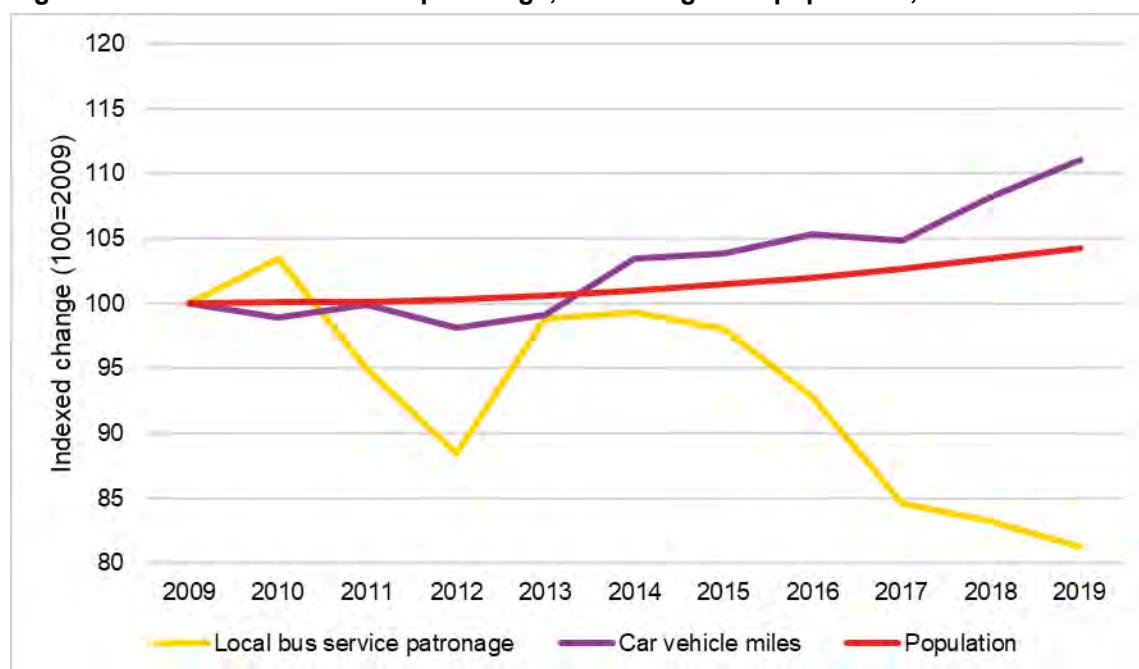
Figure 2.23: CW&C Annual car traffic (millions of miles), 2009-2020



Source: DfT, TRA8902

Figure 2.24 shows an index of bus patronage on local bus services, car vehicle miles and population in CW&C between 2009 and 2019. It shows that population has grown steadily by about 4% over the period. During this period, bus patronage has fallen by around 20%, while car vehicle miles have increased by 11%, indicating both a shift in modal share from bus to car over the last 10 years, and an increase in number of journeys per resident. This data does not include the impacts of the pandemic.

The strategy contained within this BSIP will need to halt and reverse the trend of mode shift from bus to private car if the borough is to meet its decarbonisation targets, and climate change responsibilities. This will require making bus services significantly more attractive to the user compared to the private car.

Figure 2.24: Indexed CW&C bus patronage, car mileage and population, 2009-2019

Source: DfT, TRA8902, BUS0109 and ONS

2.4.5 Car parking

Publicly and privately owned public car parks can be found in all the main settlements of Cheshire West and Chester and tariffs vary significantly between the settlements. Charges have only recently been introduced in Northwich, Frodsham and Helsby. Within the town centres across the borough, there are over 23,000 car parking spaces, including 8,370 in Chester, 7,000 at Cheshire Oaks, 2,400 in each of Ellesmere Port and Northwich, and 1,200 in Winsford². These are a mixture of publicly and privately owned, and a mixture of charged and free. Table 2.12 shows the 2-hour and 8-hour/all day tariff for a selection of car parks across the borough.

Table 2.12: Tariffs at selected car parks

Car park (locality)	Number of spaces	2-hour tariff	8-hour/all day tariff
Little Roodee (Chester)	452	£5.00	£5.00
Market Place (Chester)	625	£3.00	£6.00
Delamere Street (Chester)	351	£3.00	£6.00
Memorial Hall (Northwich)	219	£0.20	£1.10
Cumberland Street (Northwich)	120	£1.00	£1.00

² Cheshire West and Chester Parking Strategy, 2016

Car park (locality)	Number of spaces	2-hour tariff	8-hour/all day tariff
Dene Drive (Winsford)	286	Free	Free
Wellington Road (Ellesmere Port)	1,088	£0.50	Not available (4-hour max stay)
Civic Centre (Ellesmere Port)	395	£0.50	£2.00
Frodsham Station (Frodsham)	131	£0.20	£1.50
Station Avenue (Helsby)	21	£0.20	£1.50

It can be seen that outside of Chester, all day parking is available for £2.00 or less in all of the selected car parks. When compared to the cost of a day bus ticket (Stagecoach offers the cheapest day ticket at £4.00 for an adult), driving to the town centre and all-day car parking, especially outside of Chester, can be significantly cheaper, especially if more than one person is making the trip.

In Chester, all day parking is available for as little as £5.00-£6.00 in car parks on the edge of the city centre. Whilst more expensive than other localities, it is still relatively cheap compared to the cost of a day bus ticket or even a Park and Ride ticket (£2.00 return per person). Again, when two or more people are travelling together, car parking in the city centre can be similar to the cost of Park and Ride tickets but offers the option of parking closer to the city centre's facilities. As a result, bus and Park and Ride services do struggle to claim mode share given the relatively inexpensive alternative options associated with the private car. It is clear that, alongside measures within the BSIP to make bus services more attractive, there will need to be some complementary demand management measures to reduce the attractiveness of the private car if we are to see the level of mode shift to bus that is required for decarbonisation and climate change imperatives. It should, of course, be noted that this presents a challenge to local authorities when a significant amount of charged parking is priced by the private sector, as is the case in CW&C.

2.5 CW&C Bus Review Task Group work outcomes

In March 2020, prior to the publication of the National Bus Strategy, CW&C commissioned a Bus Review Task Group to undertake a review of the existing bus provision in the borough, and recommend actions for addressing the issues identified. It considered four main areas relating to buses in CW&C:

- Local Bus Services

- Park and Ride
- Home to School
- Community and Rural Transport

After completing a baseline assessment and identifying challenges and opportunities, a long list of interventions was compiled, which were grouped into nine thematic groups. The action plan for each of the nine thematic groups identified short, medium and long-term priorities, with indicative costings. A number of the thematic groups align with National Bus Strategy ambitions: increasing partnership working, implementing physical infrastructure, improving the pricing and ticketing offer and enhancing transport integration. The task group is currently paused while the BSIP development is in process but much of its work to date has proved invaluable in shaping this Plan.

2.6 Summary of Bus Service Performance in CW&C

To complete the review of the current bus offer in CW&C, there is a need to compare the existing offer with the type of network that is envisaged as exemplar within the National Bus Strategy. As such the following table has been produced which presents the criteria from Chapter 2 of Bus Back Better ‘The Buses We Want’ and asks whether these criteria are currently being met by existing bus services in CW&C. In each case, the purpose of this exercise is not primarily to highlight shortcomings of the endeavours of the providers of the existing network (from the Council and bus operators) – these are often driven by the complexity of securing improvements in the current deregulated and legislative environment, and a shortfall in funding. Instead the purpose of this analysis is to paint a realistic picture of the work that must be done in order to be able to claim that each criterion of a truly customer focused bus offer is satisfactorily met.

Table 2.13: Comparison of Current Bus Network Performance with Bus Back Better Aspirations

The Buses We Want (From Bus Back Better, 2021)	Currently met in CW&C?	Comment
Frequent	X	Bus routes in CW&C have an average frequency of 1.8 per hour although there are some services at 4 or even 6 per hour by exception.
Fast and Reliable	X	Bus journey times generally compare poorly with the private car and the lack of bus priority outside Chester makes reliability vulnerable to delay at pinch points.
Cheap	X	Bus fares are generally high compared with the cost of motoring and compare unfavourably against parking costs, even in Chester City Centre.
Comprehensive	X	Many parts of the borough are poorly served by buses with some of the smaller villages receiving no service.
Easy to understand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accurate information - Common numbering - Local branding - Good evening and weekend frequencies - High frequency trunk services - Multi-operator ticketing - Co-ordinated timetable changes - Heavy promotion and marketing 	X	Fewer than half of bus stops have timetable information within the borough. Multiple use of the same route numbers due to multiple local depot locations and little common branding. Poor evening and weekend frequencies. Multi-operator ticketing only on Blacon Pointer. No formal coordination of timetable changes. Limited promotion and marketing e.g. lack of marketing of Cheshire TravelCard or PlusBus initiatives.
Easy to use	X	Large number of operators, fares and tickets, and limited online or app-based information.

The Buses We Want (From Bus Back Better, 2021)	Currently met in CW&C?	Comment
Good to ride in	X	Vehicles are of mixed quality, with some high quality and relatively new vehicles, while others are older models cascaded from other areas.
Integrated with other modes	X	Little integration between bus and other modes with limited interchange information even at major rail stations. Limited integration with Park and Ride due to historic consideration of the networks as distinct and separate.
Green	✓	Many vehicles do meet Euro VI standards, but further improvement is necessary and desirable to reduce the polluting and carbon impact of the local network.
Accessible and inclusive	✓	All vehicles are accessible with space for wheelchairs etc. Some have full kneeling technology for almost level boarding.
Innovative	X	Limited investment in innovative new bus solutions due to lack of available budget.
Safe	✓	Vehicles generally have CCTV and are well lit.

The table above highlights that there is some considerable distance to go before the aspirations of the National Bus Strategy could be considered to be met within Cheshire West and Chester. The packages of actions recommended as part of this BSIP will address these challenges and present strategies for the bus network to meet many more of the aspirations than it does at present.

In the following section, the vision and objectives of the BSIP are explored in more detail alongside the targets that are planned to be achieved by the packages of actions. In Section 4, the actions themselves are described and packaged so as to meet the specified delivery themes for the BSIP process.

3 Headline Targets (& Vision and Objectives)

In this section, we set out the vision for bus services in Cheshire West and Chester. This is based on the aspirations put forward as part of the National Bus Strategy, but also considers the unique circumstances prevalent in CW&C. It further details the specific objectives that have been derived for the strategy and presents how the proposals included align with the objectives.

Following this, the section determines and presents the proposed set of targets which it is envisaged that the BSIP strategic packages will meet. The methods by which these are calculated are discussed and the targets themselves presented.

3.1 Vision

In Cheshire West and Chester, a local Bus Review Task Group (BRTG) was established in July 2020 in advance of the 2021 publication of the National Bus Strategy, recognising the importance attached locally to trying to secure major improvements to the local bus offer. The task group reviewed the issues, constraints and barriers associated with bus travel in the borough and made a number of recommendations on priorities for investment (35 priorities distilled into 9 themes). As discussed in the 'Objectives' section below, the task group eventually proposed 9 themes for investment within the borough, and further objectives to facilitate these, however the National Bus Strategy was released before the group had articulated a comprehensive vision for these priorities. This work has been continued and advanced as part of this BSIP, which has drawn on numerous sources, including the National Bus Strategy itself, to outline the following clear vision for future bus transport in Cheshire West and Chester.

“To make bus a mode of choice for the full cross-section of society by removing barriers to travel and making buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper. To build in greater levels of community involvement, to both reverse the recent shift in journeys away from public transport and encourage passengers back to bus, and also to improve on pre-pandemic levels of service. To create a network that supports the Council’s strategic priorities of tackling climate change; growing the local economy and

delivering secure jobs; supporting children and young people to get the best start in life; supporting older residents and rural communities; and enabling more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives”.

It is hoped that, through the implementation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan for Cheshire West and Chester, that the fledgling Enhanced Partnership will become a model for the development of a stable, co-ordinated, and appealing bus offer that will make a major contribution to positive social, economic and environmental outcomes for residents, employees and visitors to the borough alike.

3.2 Objectives

In order to realise the vision articulated above, a number of objectives have been developed for the strategy of actions developed within this BSIP. These are designed to reflect the needs of the travelling public, and the views of a wide cross-section of society as expressed in consultation. The objectives are rooted in the outcomes of extensive work with the local bus operators and passengers as part of this BSIP and the foundational work undertaken in 2020/21 by the Bus Review Task Group within Cheshire West and Chester Council, to develop a prioritised plan to improve the bus network within the borough. The objectives have been derived from numerous sources and harvested through a review of relevant local and national policy documents. In total 8 broad themes emerged from the multiple objectives reviewed for each study. The following table introduces these themes and presents the raw objectives extracted from the policy document review, alongside the source of each. The documents represented in this table include:

- The third Local Transport Plan for CW&C (LTP3)
- Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Local Plan)
- Cheshire West and Chester’s Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP)
- Chester, Northwich and Winsford Transport Strategies (C/N/WTs)
- The Cheshire and Warrington LEP Transport Strategy (LEP TS) and
- The Bus Review Task Group Interventions Report (internal document – never published) (BTRG).

Table 3.1: Emerging Themes and Repeated Objectives from Policy Review

Theme	Extracted Objective	Source
1	Climate change	Reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt our transport networks to mitigate the effects of climate change.
		Take action on climate change by promoting energy efficiency and energy generation from low carbon and renewable resources.
		Tackling the climate emergency and reducing carbon emissions in construction and operation
2	Enhancing connectivity	Enhancing transport connectivity to and from the rural hinterland, and across local, regional, and national borders
		Improve connections to support development of priority employment sites including those within Cheshire Science Corridor
		Fast and frequent connectivity between sub-regional centres for people and freight
		Support existing areas of success through:
		a) Dedicated, high quality inter-urban corridors to Manchester, Liverpool, Wales, Birmingham and Yorkshire
		b) Direct links to London and other top city economics
		c) Fast, reliable connectivity to key international gateways
		Meeting the needs of passengers
3	Equality	Improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity.
		Work to increase accessibility to employment and training opportunities, to key services from rural areas; and to health services;
		Improve physical accessibility and remove barriers to mobility especially for disabled and older people.
		Achieving value for money
4	Growth and regeneration	Support regeneration in the most deprived areas of the borough and ensure those reliant on non-car modes of transport can access jobs and services.
		Improve connections to support development of priority employment sites including those within Cheshire Science Corridor
		Reliable journey times with all growth areas within 1 hour, door to door, from all parts of Cheshire and Warrington.
		Provide and develop reliable, efficient transport networks that support sustainable growth and improve accessibility to jobs and services
		Helping economic recovery from the COVID-19.
5	Quality of Life	Ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment in West Cheshire.
		Improving air quality
6	Reliability and efficiency	Increasing the reliability, safety and efficiency of core transport networks for the city;
		Travel by car and sustainable modes within 30 minutes between key centres
		Reliable journey times with all growth areas within 1 hour, door to door, from all parts of Cheshire and Warrington.
		Provide and develop reliable, efficient transport networks that support sustainable growth and improve accessibility to jobs and services
		Transport planning and design in C+W should be integrated, accessible and inclusive, customer focused, sustainable, resilient and safe, and embracing change.
		Reducing congestion
7	Safety and Health	Contribute to safer and secure transport and promote forms of transport that are beneficial to health.
		Improve physical accessibility and remove barriers to mobility especially for disabled and older people.
		Increasing the reliability, safety and efficiency of core transport networks for the city;
		Transport planning and design in C+W should be integrated, accessible and inclusive, customer focused, sustainable, resilient and safe, and embracing change.
		Work to increase accessibility to employment and training opportunities, to key services from rural areas; and to health services;
		Positive contribution to public health
8	Sustainable accessibility	Improving Chester's sustainable accessibility and alternative transport offer;
		Transport planning and design in Cheshire and Warrington should be integrated, accessible and inclusive, customer focused, sustainable, resilient and safe, and embracing change.
		Ensure all development is supported by the necessary provision of, or improvements to infrastructure, services and facilities in an effective and timely manner to make development sustainable and minimise its effect upon existing communities.
		In order to minimise the need for travel, proposals for new development should be located so as they are accessible to local services and facilities by a range of transport modes.
		Promote safe and accessible environments and developments with good access by walking, cycling and public transport.
		Ensure that new developments and local services are built in accessible locations;
		Travel by car and sustainable modes within 30 minutes between key centres
		Provide and develop reliable, efficient transport networks that support sustainable growth and improve accessibility to jobs and services
		Support regeneration in the most deprived areas of the borough and ensure those reliant on non-car modes of transport can access jobs and services.
		Improving accessibility for all, regardless of age and ability, for work, leisure and services

From the above analysis, a number of clear objectives have been derived from the eight themes identified. For each a description has been derived from the individual components shown in Table 3.1: Emerging Themes and Repeated Objectives from Policy Review . It is recommended that these form the core objectives for the BSIP and EP work to follow.

They are:

1. **Mitigating against Climate Change:** Reduce carbon emissions from transport by adapting our transport networks to take advantage of low carbon and renewable resources to mitigate the effects of climate change
2. **Enhancing Connectivity within Cheshire West:** Enhance transport connectivity within Cheshire West between urban and rural areas and across local, regional and national borders
3. **Promoting Equality of Opportunity:** Work to increase equality of opportunity within Cheshire West and surrounding areas by installing minimum standards of transport accessibility for all areas, and regardless of individual circumstance
4. **Supporting Growth and Regeneration:** Support sustainable economic growth and regeneration within Cheshire West and surrounding areas by improving connectivity between key growth sites and accessibility to jobs and services
5. **Raise Quality of Life within Cheshire West and surrounding areas:** Ensure that transport helps to improve quality of life and enhances the local environment within Cheshire West and surrounding areas
6. **Ensure that the Transport Network is Reliable and Efficient:** Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks, that are integrated, accessible and inclusive, customer focused, sustainable and resilient
7. **Improve the safety and health benefits of the transport network:** Contribute to safer and more secure transport in Cheshire West and surrounding areas and promote types of transport which are beneficial to health
8. **Enhance the accessibility of the sustainable transport network:** Create a highly accessible sustainable transport network in Cheshire West and surrounding areas that offers an attractive and viable alternative to the private car throughout the day.

These objectives are highly important as they will form the basis on which potential bus interventions will be assessed within the BSIP. As such they have been fully agreed with the wider Enhanced Partnership group.

3.3 Why Bus?

The objectives defined in the section above are necessarily agnostic of a modal solution. Some investigation is therefore required for each as to why the objectives noted are most appropriately served by bus-based solutions. In each case, it is believed that buses' ability to provide flexible, high frequency, high quality, sustainable and low carbon public transport solutions represents the best and most practical option. The following table shows the logical mapping of this and the rationale for why bus is considered the optimal solution.

Table 3.2: Mapping of Objectives to Bus-Based Solutions

Objective	Why Bus?
Mitigating against Climate Change	Full buses produce significantly lower CO2 levels per passenger than cars, and can be completely zero emission
Enhancing Connectivity with Cheshire West	Bus services can provide vital links between modes across impermeable barriers but they need to run frequently, and late and early enough to be useable
Promoting Equality of Opportunity	Unlike private cars, bus services can be made available to everyone, regardless of financial security, disability or stage of life.
Supporting Growth and Regeneration	Bus services can play a vital role in linking residential communities to areas of employment, education, leisure, and retail, thereby increasing the catchment of these developments and raising their viability
Raise Quality of Life within Cheshire West and surrounding areas	By reducing the number of motorised vehicles on the road, bus services can contribute to quieter, more pleasant and safer streets with better levels of air quality and improved levels of wellbeing
Ensure that the Transport Network is Reliable and Efficient	With co-ordination between operators and across modes, bus services can play a vital intermediate role in an efficient and reliable sustainable transport network, providing medium range connectivity and accessibility to areas not served by rail
Improve the safety and health benefits of the transport network	By removing private cars from roads, improved bus services can improve road safety and reduce the amount of inactive time people spend behind the wheel
Enhance the accessibility of the sustainable transport network	A key deficit in the accessibility of bus compared to that of the private car is the convenience of having a car available whenever it is required. By increasing the availability of bus services throughout the day and week, and the coverage of the bus network, buses can be made more attractive relative to cars and thereby increase their mode share.

3.4 Local Context (Issues and Opportunities)

In addition to the objectives for the bus strategy described within this BSIP discussed above, it is useful to define the specific context of the local bus network within Cheshire

West and Chester in a concise series of points. These summarise the specific issues and opportunities as identified in Section 2 and as derived from the review of relevant local and national policy documentation. In a similar vein to the process described for the objectives, a number of relevant documents were reviewed, most notably the output work from the Bus Review Task Group in 2020/21, and the specific opinions expressed within the BSIP consultation in summer 2021 with both operators, stakeholders and the public. Specific issues and opportunities noted within these were extracted and compared, allowing a series of summary issues and opportunity themes to be identified. These may be grouped into eleven primary themes:

- Lack of available funding to support socially necessary routes
- General lack of buses serving rural communities despite 27% of population living in these communities
- Low mode share of bus against private car due to the difficulty in attracting users
- Low evening and Sunday frequencies across the borough
- Network instability is emerging as passengers fall with reductions in both commercial and supported services in recent years
- Network fragmentation due to a large and complex variety of operators, fares, network boundaries and areas of responsibility
- Poor connectivity to employment, education, health and other opportunities in some areas
- Low levels of integration between services and with other modes in some cases
- Reduced levels of commuting due to increased digital economy
- High relative fare levels compared with the cost of motoring and parking
- Low standards of vehicle quality on some services

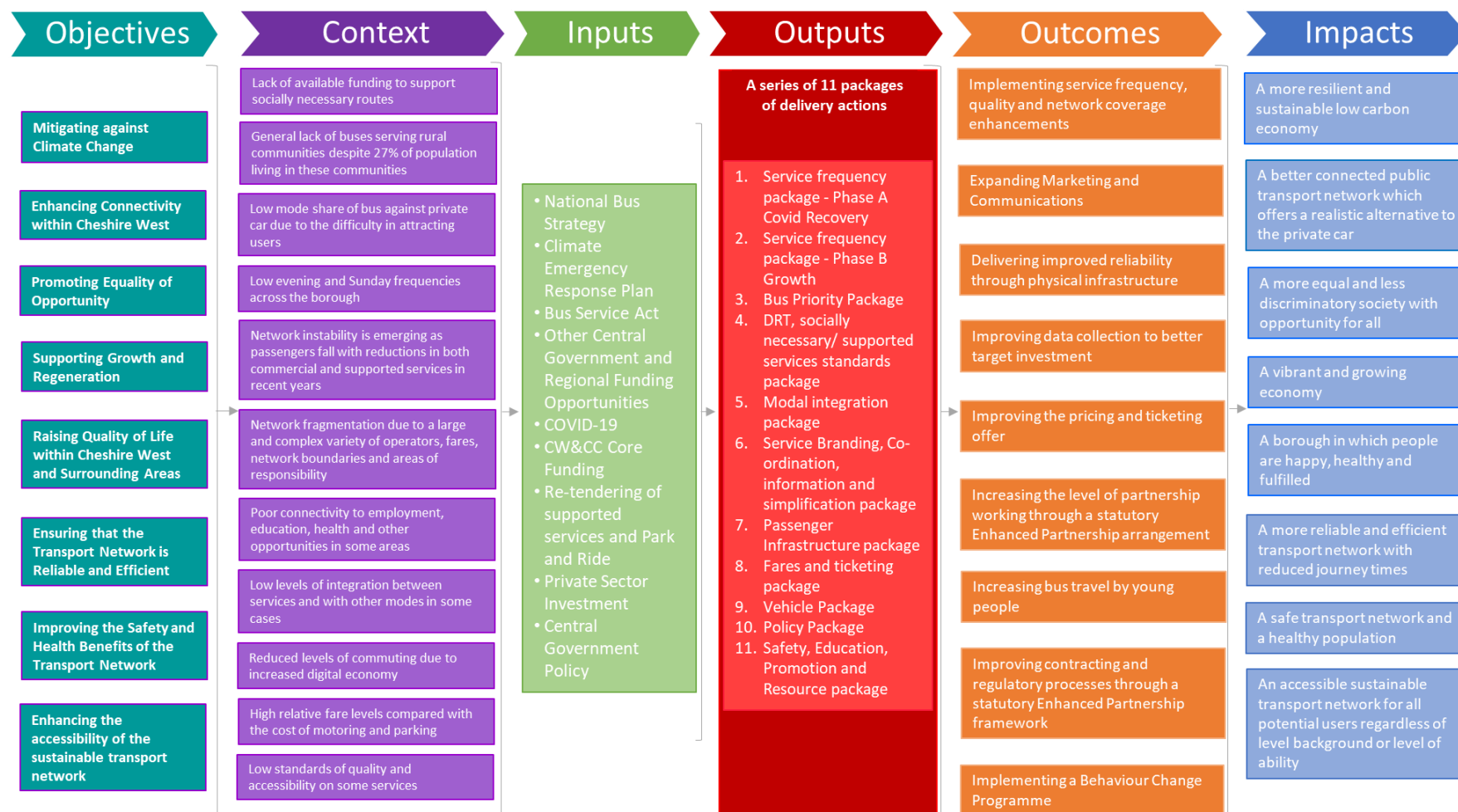
The solutions put forward by the BSIP will need to consider how best to address each of these issues.

3.5 Logic Map

The mapping of the objectives and contextual issues and opportunities to the potential outputs, outcomes and impacts of the BSIP strategy for CW&C are best shown in a

graphical 'logic map'. An outline of this is provided in Figure 3.1, which links into the specific delivery themes and packages of actions that are discussed in more detail in Section 4.

Figure 3.1: Cheshire West and Chester BSIP Logic Map



3.6 Targets

It is a requirement of every Bus Service Improvement Plan to put in place a regime to monitor key metrics of performance of the local bus network. In addition, they must set robust targets for future improvements to the network in line with the BSIP. Good performance targets must:

- Set and drive ambition in delivery
- Be readily understood and interpreted
- Be measurable and provide accountability on performance

The measurements and targets we have provisionally selected for the Enhanced Partnership cover the CW&C area as a whole. In line with guidance, we will work to report performance, where possible, against these targets every six months.

A BSIP must provide performance indicators and targets for four areas:

- Passenger Growth
- Customer Satisfaction
- Reliability
- Journey Times

These are addressed in turn below.

3.6.1 Measure and target for passenger growth

<i>Measure</i>	Total passenger journeys per year
<i>Means of Monitoring</i>	This measure is for the total volume of passenger journeys made on the local network. This measure will be a continuation of the operator returns made on annual basis to the local authority and reported nationally through DfT statistic BUS0109b. The metric includes all fare paying and pass travel journeys for journeys in the local area.

<p>Proposed Performance Target</p>	<p>2018/19: 9.3 million</p> <p>2024/25: 10% growth (10.2million)</p>
<p>Evidence for target setting</p>	<p>Is this target ambitious? The local network has recorded year on year passenger decline for the past 5 years that is reflective of the national and local longer term trends in declining bus usage. Additional challenges are now faced in response to changed travel behaviours as a result of the pandemic. Arresting a decline of this nature requires the kind of ambitious, multi-faceted and co-ordinated set of improvements set out in this plan. We have made a measure by measure assessment of the potential impact of the plan across our route groupings to understand the potential uplifts in passenger usage that might be possible. We believe that to realise the full impact of these investments they must be sustained and measured over a longer time period of up to 10 years – by which time we would expect a significantly higher level of passenger growth to be achieved.</p> <p>Is this target realistic? Evidence from best practice examples in the UK suggest that it is possible to attract new users to local bus networks when the right conditions are in place. The BSIP and EP are working to bring many of the levels of bus integration, quality and coverage that London (and to a lesser extent other UK successful operator / authority partnerships) have achieved with a significant degree of success in raising passenger levels. As recently as 2015 passenger levels were recorded locally at over 10 million.</p>

3.6.2 Measure and target for customer satisfaction

Measure	Overall Bus Journey Satisfaction
Means of Monitoring	This measure is of overall satisfaction with the local bus journey as measured by the national programme of surveys undertaken by Transport Focus in the CW&C area. The recorded metric relates to the question: “Overall, taking everything into account from start to end of the bus journey, how satisfied were you with your bus journey?” with responses “very satisfied” and “fairly satisfied” measured in this overall percentage satisfaction metric.
Proposed Performance Target	2018/19: 87% (Autumn 2019 results) 2024/25: minimum 92%
Evidence for target setting	<p>Is this target ambitious? The proposed target of 92% would move CW&C from being a below average performer on this measure (compared to other areas) to a top third performer (according to 2019 results).</p> <p>Is this target realistic? The proposed measures in this plan should significantly improve the local bus product for passengers. Our expectation is that the proposed investment in the local network will see it become one of the best performing local networks.</p>

3.6.3 Measure and Target for reliability improvements

Measure	Proportion of bus services running on time
----------------	--

<i>Means of Monitoring</i>	<p>This measure will use the long-established bus punctuality metric reported nationally by the DfT as “BUS0902: Non-frequent bus services running on time by local authority”. This was formerly part of the National Indicator set as indicator 178a and captures and records the metric for all buses in CW&C. The measure assesses bus punctuality, defined for this measure as the percentage of non-frequent buses (those with frequencies of less than 6 per hour) on time. This includes all scheduled services and is measured by whether the bus departs within its “on-time” window of 1 minute 0 seconds early to 4 minutes 59 seconds late. Buses that fail to run are treated as “late” and not ignored in the calculations. The calculation of the indicator incorporates measurement of “on time” along the route, whilst the final calculation made is weighted according to the relative volume of passengers on each route/operator.</p>
<i>Proposed Performance Target</i>	<p>2018/19: 86%</p> <p>2024/25: 90%</p>
<i>Evidence for target setting</i>	<p>Is this target ambitious? In 2019 the Office for Rail Regulation set a minimum target of 90% reliability for all rail operators providing local services. Bus passengers should expect similar from a modernised local bus network.</p> <p>Is this target realistic? The proposed measures in this plan should provide the means to make targeted improvements to bus journey times and reliability to deliver on this indicator target. It is noted that the package of measures around fares and ticketing will</p>

	play a significant role alongside priority measures in ensuring smooth journeys and faster boarding of passengers to reduce delays at busy times.
--	---

3.6.4 Measure and Target for journey times

Measure	Annual change in aggregate journey times on all routes with a frequency of 2 or more buses per hour.
Means of Monitoring	<p>This metric will measure evening peak end to end journey times for all local bus routes of a service frequency of at least 2 buses per hour. 2018/19 will be established as the base year and set as an Indexed value of 100. Subsequent years' timetabled times will be measured on the basis of the proportional change to planned journey time. A passenger volume weighted average will be combined across all routes to devise an indexed value to monitor change in journey times.</p> <p>This measure is designed to assess whether customer journey times on all key routes are improving or worsening on a year-by-year basis. Whilst the reliability/punctuality metric measures performance against published timetables this measure seeks to assess whether the planned and published journey time for customers is being maintained on a year by year basis. Where highway congestion is allowed to proliferate allowances would, without intervention, otherwise lead to the adjustment of planned timetables leading to slower journeys for bus passengers. In contrast, where bus priority measures are introduced into congested</p>

	environs it would be possible to improve bus journey times.
<i>Proposed Performance Target</i>	2018/19: 100 (base year indexed value) 2024/25: 100 (target value, indexed)
<i>Evidence for target setting</i>	<p>Is this target ambitious? Based on historic trends that have recorded long term growth in general traffic levels, it can be expected that congestion is likely to pose a significant risk to current timetabled bus journey times. This target seeks to ensure that no degradation in journey times results, and this will be a function of investment in targeted bus priority measures to address pinch points, and planned ticketing measures which will speed up boarding of services.</p> <p>Is this target realistic? It is vital that through this period of planned investment and growth that bus journey times do not worsen. Measures are planned to secure this and careful monitoring using vehicle tracking is anticipated to be important to identify and devise tactical interventions to address issues where they do arise. We anticipate investment in UTMC priority for buses will play a major role in delivering this target.</p>

All indicators are measuring performance against a baseline year of 2018/19, prior to the impacts of the pandemic. All targets are currently based on an assumption of full delivery of this plan, and at requested funding levels. They also therefore assume a return to pre-pandemic levels of bus usage and general travel patterns by 2022/23. The high levels of uncertainty around this assumption mean that adjustments may need to be made as all the wide-

ranging implications of the planned recovery from the pandemic on transport patterns are monitored on an ongoing basis.

4 Delivery

This section sets out our strategy for the delivery of our ambition, our vision and our objectives. Many combined factors and interventions are necessary to deliver successful outcomes and the creation of a Cheshire West and Chester Enhanced Partnership, a Bus Service Improvement Plan and the promise of significant new funding present a unique opportunity to develop a step change in the cohesiveness, coverage, quality and attractiveness of bus travel in the area.

We have organised this section around the five main themes of intervention as requested by the DfT BSIP guidance. Each of these main themes has a supporting set of Delivery Themes – giving rise to a total of 20 Delivery Themes labelled A to T. For all of the BSIP guidance Delivery Themes we set out a summary of the current provision / situation, the proposed strategy for tackling the delivery theme, and references to our proposed packages of actions to deliver the strategy. The delivery themes are presented in the same order as the DfT requested BSIP “Overview Table” included in Section 6:

- Section 4.2.1 presents delivery themes relating to “More frequent and reliable services”
- Section 4.2.2 presents delivery themes relating to “Improvements to planning / integration with other modes”
- Section 4.2.3 presents delivery themes relating to “Improvements to fares and ticketing”
- Section 4.3.1 presents delivery themes relating to “Higher spec buses”
- Section 4.3.2 presents delivery themes relating to “Improvements to passenger engagement”

The strategy and interventions outlined here have been developed in response to our vision and objectives (set out in Section 3), through detailed consideration of the evidence presented in Section 2, reflecting on passenger feedback, and in partnership with local operators.

4.1 Summary description of Improvements

As noted within Section 3 of this document, a vision has been articulated for the BSIP that seeks to encompass the aspirations and ambition of the National Bus Strategy, and the local specific considerations of the borough. These latter aspects have been defined through consultation with the public and bus operators and are consistent with existing policy documentation and the work undertaken by the local Bus Review Task Group in 2020/21.

The vision for the BSIP is ***“To make bus a mode of choice for the full cross-section of society by removing barriers to travel and making buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper. To build in greater levels of local leadership, to both reverse the recent shift in journeys away from public transport and encourage passengers back to bus, and also to improve on pre-pandemic levels of service. To create a network that supports the Council’s strategic priorities of tackling climate change; growing the local economy and delivering good jobs; supporting children and young people to get the best start in life; supporting older residents and rural communities; and enabling more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives”.***

Underneath this vision, a number of objectives were derived from overarching themes obtained from the consultation, policy review and conversations with bus operators. These coalesced into eight core objectives to shape the direction of the strategy as follows:

1. **Mitigating against Climate Change**
2. **Enhancing Connectivity within Cheshire West**
3. **Promoting Equality of Opportunity**
4. **Supporting Growth and Regeneration**
5. **Raise Quality of Life within Cheshire West and surrounding areas**
6. **Ensure that the Transport Network is Reliable and Efficient**
7. **Improve the safety and health benefits of the transport network**
8. **Enhance the accessibility of the sustainable transport network**

Although these objectives provide clear direction in terms of the types of interventions that should be included within the BSIP strategy, they do not provide much information on the core local narrative around bus improvements within Cheshire West and Chester itself. In this case, and building on the work undertaken by the Bus Review Task Group to identify core local priorities for investment, the BSIP process has identified the following key priority outcomes for the CW&C Enhanced Partnership to deliver.

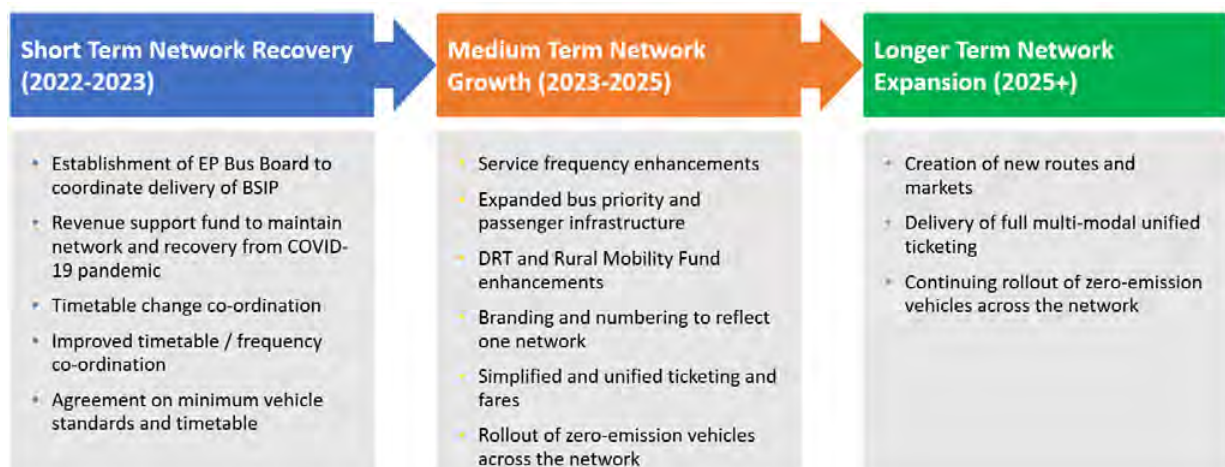
- **Short Term Network Recovery (2022/23)** – given the reductions in bus patronage since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing requirement for public sector support in the maintenance of current bus service levels as a result, the short-term priority of the BSIP must be to recover patronage and network services to pre-pandemic levels to provide a platform for growth. In reality this will require a combination of actions to re-incentivise use of bus services for the passenger including commencing a programme to refurbish and renew bus vehicles, improve information, enhance marketing and promotion, investment to stabilise the commercial ability of operators to provide service frequencies, and consideration of appropriate and available measures for the management of demand for the private car to facilitate mode shift back towards bus.
- **Medium Term Network and Passenger Growth (2023-2025)** – as the bus network is restabilised and returned to near pre-pandemic levels of commercial viability, there is a clear need and ambition to grow the network and improve the overall bus product to better meet passenger needs. A key focus for this is evenings and Sunday periods when bus service levels fall away sharply. Investment will be made in maintaining levels of bus service later into the evening and weekends than currently occurs, and in creating a significantly more unified product for bus with elements of common branding, ticketing, co-ordinated timetabling and common numbering protocols. Subject to delivery and availability of back-office solutions by the end of this period, a multi-operator ticketing platform will support fare capping in relevant areas. In advance of this a new value for money child/youth/under 19 discounted ticketing product will be introduced

(potentially using the existing young careers card as a platform to build upon). Reliability improvements will also be part of the package through targeted priority measures. It is during this phase of the process that we anticipate the rollout of Zero-Emission vehicles to commence utilising future rounds of ZEBRA funding or similar future national initiatives.

- **Longer Term Network Expansion (beyond 2025)** – further into the future than the timeframes currently covered by this initial version of the BSIP, it is anticipated that the network will be expanded further with new routes and services added, providing expanded and enhanced coverage to areas of the borough that are not currently well served. In this longer-term timescale, further innovations will become fully embedded into the every-day experience of bus passengers including multi-modal ticketing and integration with full inter-availability and value for money fare capping. Aspects of these measures sit outside of the funding ask of the initial period of this BSIP, but are, however, considered important future aspirations for the borough, likely to feature in growing detail in future iterations of the BSIP as it passes through its annual cycle of review and update, and requiring increased emphasis on sub regional working using common themes. These updated versions will necessarily adjust the delivery targets, policies and programmes according to the ultimately realised funding profile.

These delivery stages are represented in the following diagram.

Figure 4.1: Five Year Delivery Plan



The strategy and proposed interventions that are presented here represent a bold and ambitious plan for a major step change in the cohesion, coverage, quality and attractiveness of bus travel in the area. They are, nonetheless, tempered by a pragmatic realism over what the plan can achieve over the forthcoming period between 2022 and 2025, and an initial view over the funding package that can be secured. It must be emphasised that, at the time of writing, there is a lack of clarity on the extent and distribution of funding being sought to deliver this plan, as presented. Equally the proposed improvements in this plan whilst highly ambitious are also a considered and pragmatic interpretation of what can be delivered against the potential scale of funding available. As a result some of the boldest ambitions of the national bus strategy for very high frequency services, and seamless multi-modal integrated ticketing are not fully delivered by this plan. The requested proforma for funding (attached as Appendix B) sets out details of the funding requested to support the delivery of this plan. We would, of course, welcome the opportunity to further increase the reach of ambition of this plan if more funding could be made available to help realise all of the national bus strategy objectives in a shorter time frame.

4.2 Delivery Themes: Make improvements to bus services and planning

The following section presents a summary of the current provision / situation relating to delivery themes A:D and the proposed strategy for tackling the delivery theme. References are then provided for the proposed actions to deliver the strategy which are set out in more detail as 11 packages of actions in Section 4.4.

4.2.1 More frequent and reliable services

Delivery Theme	A: Review Service Frequency
Current Provision	A mixed picture of current provision with good levels of daytime frequency on some local routes, but with significant weaknesses

	in providing meaningful levels of service extending to outlying and rural areas, and for evenings and weekends.
BSIP Strategy	<p>Phase A – Covid Recovery. For the period 2022/23 the focus will be on recovery of pre-pandemic levels of patronage. In order to support this, continued public funding will be required to ensure that good levels of service frequency are maintained. This will be delivered through the Enhanced Partnership and underpinning financial support will be accompanied by improved network co-ordination. This will include modifications to routes and timetables to better co-ordinate service provision and where possible provide clockface combined frequencies on key corridors. To help ensure network stability there will only be a limited number of dates per year for timetable changes for the area.</p> <p>Phase B – Passenger Growth. From 2023/24 a sustained and co-ordinated package of service improvements is proposed that will enhance service frequencies to support passenger growth across Local, Inter-Urban and Rural geographies.</p>
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 1: Service Frequency – Phase A Covid Recovery package • Package 2: Service Frequency – Phase B Growth package

Delivery Theme	B: Increase bus priority measures
Current Provision	Bus priority measures are not a dominant feature of the network at present; there are around 2km of bus lanes within Chester, along with some bus gates and bus-only sections (some of

	which are currently out of use). The existing UTMC system in Chester has been in place for a long time, and is limited in its capabilities with regard to bus; it does not use the latest technology available in this area.
BSIP Strategy	Major congestion and peak time journey delay issues on radial corridors are not as significant in CW&C as in some other areas, therefore the strategy emphasis is on providing meaningful priority at pinch points, junctions, and key approaches rather than wholesale corridor priority interventions. These will include signal priority through new UTMC systems in Chester and Ellesmere Port using the latest technology available, and modal filters, rather than pursuit of longer corridor bus lane based provision. In Northwich and Winsford, a new co-ordinated SCOOT system is proposed to facilitate connected junction delay minimisation and queue reduction.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 3: Bus priority package

Delivery Theme	C: Increase demand responsive services
Current Provision	A trial is currently underway, with monies from the Rural Mobility Fund, to bring innovative demand responsive public transport services to areas which are currently somewhat disconnected from the existing provision. These will sit alongside existing dial-a-ride and PlusBus services provided by the Council using their own fleet of dedicated accessible buses and aimed at those that find mobility (and using standard public transport) difficult.

BSIP Strategy	CW&C is the recipient of £1.075million funding from the Rural Mobility Fund for developing a substantial pilot of a modern demand responsive offer. Through the BSIP, we will seek to secure the long-term future and expansion of the most successful elements of this trial. Key principles to be advanced include: emphasis on connecting into improved conventional services, establishing efficient contractual and operational mechanisms to make best use of vehicle resources and pursuit of shared development of technology with other UK areas.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Package 4: DRT, socially necessary/ supported services standards package

Delivery Theme	D: Consideration of bus rapid transport networks
Current Provision	There are currently no bus rapid transport networks in Cheshire West and Chester.
BSIP Strategy	At present there is no specific ambition for a distinct bus rapid transport product in Cheshire West and Chester, albeit many of the characteristics of such a system are embedded within our other plans, and longer-term timescales beyond the scope of this initial BSIP may facilitate future plans should they become necessary.
Proposed Actions	Not applicable.

4.2.2 Improvements to planning / integration with other modes

The following section presents a summary of the current provision / situation relating to delivery themes E:H and the proposed strategy for tackling the delivery theme. References are then provided for the proposed actions to deliver the strategy which are set out in more detail as 11 packages of actions in Section 4.4.

Delivery Theme	E: Integrate services with other transport modes
Current Provision	<p>Integration between bus and rail varies across the borough but on the whole is limited, with many rail stations receiving no regular bus service, especially the more rural stations. Plusbus³ tickets are currently available in Chester and Ellesmere Port, and are accepted by some operators. Chester has good medium and long-distance rail connectivity but, outside of the city, access to rail is much poorer and more limited, particularly towards the south of the borough. A bus-based Park & Ride service across 4 (1 currently suspended) sites is in operation in Chester. This service operates largely as a separate mode and service from the local bus network.</p>
BSIP Strategy	<p>Targeted improvements to the integration of bus with other transport modes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station to Chester City Centre City-Rail-Link bus product improvements • Plusbus improvements (availability on all operators, including supported services) • Timetable and information co-ordination improvements at Rail stations • Timing interventions to improve connectivity

³ Not to be confused with the Council's accessible transport PlusBus scheme in Chester, Ellesmere Port and Neston.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chester Gateway – development options that include routing and access priority for bus /rail interface. • Package of improvements to improve the Park & Ride product to be developed, focused on attracting car users to switch to this offer
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 5: Modal Integration package

Delivery Theme	F: Simplify services
Current Provision	<p>The bus network in CW&C can appear complex, with multiple routes having the same number – there are four services numbered 1, including three which serve Chester. Additionally, in Chester city centre, there can be some confusion relating to routing, stop locations, and circulation, which presents challenges for potential users or visitors to the city.</p>
BSIP Strategy	<p>Our approach to the simplification of services aims to make using bus an easy and straightforward experience for all passengers. The following improvements will be targeted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible re-numbering to remove duplicate service numbers for different routes e.g. re-number the 1/1A Blacon Pointer service • Improve routing, circulation and boarding stop plans for services in Chester to simplify the network for passengers • Provide improved availability of simple mapping of network to aid passenger interpretation and access.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clockface / regular interval timetables where possible • Fare simplification / harmonisation
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 5: Modal Integration package • Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package • Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package

Delivery Theme	G: Review socially necessary services
Current Provision	<p>The Council support 31 bus services (September 2021) in the borough, which are deemed socially or economically valuable, but there are several routes / villages which are not well served and could be better served with additional funding.</p>
BSIP Strategy	<p>Through our BSIP, we want to secure improved funding for establishing a stable and trusted network of socially necessary services, therefore the Enhanced Partnership will offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more creative opportunities to efficiently provide socially necessary services through better management of all resources • collaboration with existing community transport providers • review of all supported services to blend with revised commercial routes and create one unified network

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interventions to support accessibility for otherwise broken links (e.g. between Winsford and Northwich in the evening) • further consideration of improvements to school services and commercial services that provide essential school transport for non-eligible schoolchildren.
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 4: DRT, socially necessary/ supported services standards package

Delivery Theme	H: Invest in Superbus networks
Current Provision	There are currently no Superbus networks in Cheshire West and Chester.
BSIP Strategy	CW&C and partners believe that there is potential for the proposed package of measures to be considered a Superbus network as it includes a full package of vehicle, priority, fares, timetable, information and branding improvements. Further guidance would be required to understand the merits of the use of this nomenclature to progress these proposals under this branding
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 1: Service frequency – Phase A Covid Recovery package • Package 2: Service frequency – Phase B Growth package • Package 3: Bus Priority package

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package • Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package
--	--

4.2.3 Improvements to fares and ticketing

The following section presents a summary of the current provision / situation relating to delivery themes I:K and the proposed strategy for tackling the delivery theme. References are then provided for the proposed actions to deliver the strategy which are set out in more detail as 11 packages of actions in Section 4.4.

Delivery Theme	I: Lower fares
Current Provision	Besides the VQBP, fares are set by operators for their own tickets, with most operators offering a mixture of single, return, day, weekly, monthly and termly/annual tickets. Day tickets range between £4.00 and £5.95, covering slightly different geographies.
BSIP Strategy	<p>Assuming a suitable platform and back-office system are available, we wish to develop a wider multi-operator ticketing offer. Key elements of this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi operator ticket product to include fare capping to ensure customer value for money for all internal geographies where this is possible (noting the additional complexity of cross – border issues with neighbouring authority schemes)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new universal Child / Youth / under 19 discounted fare to be introduced on a shorter timescale, expected to be in advance of above. • integrated local ticketing to lower fares for regular users • other initiatives focused on key groups such as jobseekers, apprentices, young adults etc • Building-in of key future requirements to allow the system to be adapted for multi-modal purposes (beyond the timescales of this initial BSIP)
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package • Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package

Delivery Theme	J: Simplify fares
Current Provision	At present, each operator has their own ticketing offer, with some operators offering a variety of day / weekly / yearly tickets across a range of geographies, which on the whole are not accepted by other operators. However, the VQBP in Chester is a best practice example where operators accept each other's tickets, and offer a value for money fare structure.
BSIP Strategy	Subject to national availability of a back-office solution, the BSIP aspires to a fully contactless, multi-operator ticketing offer, with a daily and weekly capped pricing model. This would see full acceptance of products across all commercial and tendered services within the Enhanced Partnership.

Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 5: Modal Integration package • Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package • Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package
------------------	---

Delivery Theme	K: Integrate ticketing between operators and transport providers
Current Provision	<p>The VQBP is the only local agreement between bus operators in CW&C to accept each other's tickets. National Rail's Plusbus scheme is available in Chester and Ellesmere Port, and is valid on some but not all bus services. Beyond this, there is no formal multi-operator ticketing offer available in CW&C, either for buses alone or combined with other modes. A multi-operator stored value smartcard does exist (Cheshire TravelCard) but this is not well promoted or used.</p>
BSIP Strategy	<p>The partnership will commit to working with Transport for the North, DfT, Transport for Wales, rail operators and neighbouring authorities to develop regional and national solutions to allow the eventual expansion of the local authority offer into wider networks. We see potential for modernisation of the Plusbus product to be a potential route to a trusted consumer product, with a new back office system, and digitised usage to provide trusted revenue allocation and daily/weekly fare capping. Ultimately the Plusbus product should be universally and widely available across all geographies.</p>
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 5: Modal Integration package

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package • Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package
--	--

4.3 Delivery Themes: Make improvements to bus passenger experience

4.3.1 Higher spec buses

The following section presents a summary of the current provision / situation relating to delivery themes L:P and the proposed strategy for tackling the delivery theme. References are then provided for the proposed actions to deliver the strategy which are set out in more detail as 11 packages of actions in Section 4.4.

Delivery Theme	L: Invest in improved bus specifications
Current Provision	The age and specification of vehicles in local operation are varied. All of the two largest operators' vehicles are fitted with CCTV, but a number of local buses do not currently meet the minimum environmental standards that the BSIP aspires to deliver, with the marginal viability of a number of local services determining cheaper, older vehicles being operated.
BSIP Strategy	CW&C aspires for vehicle specifications that support local commitments to address Climate Change and decarbonisation. Whilst we recognise the rationale for the historic model of cascaded vehicles in use in smaller urban areas such as those in CW&C's main bus networks, we see BSIP as a key opportunity to raise the bar and give residents and businesses greener, modern vehicles with facilities that are accessible and

	attractive to new users. Minimum standards will be introduced which will require funding support. We understand that there may be separate national funding channels to apply to for support for this activity.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 9: Vehicle package

Delivery Theme	M: Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services
Current Provision	Buses in CW&C meet minimum accessible standards and have space on-board for a wheelchair, with some using low floor 'kneeling' facilities to enable wheelchairs and pushchairs to board. However, the latest technology needs to be fully incorporated and rolled out across the full fleet to meet a wider range of needs.
BSIP Strategy	The BSIP includes a commitment to new vehicles and minimum standards on accessibility across network. These will be included within the Passengers' Charter.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 9: Vehicle package

Delivery Theme	N: Protect personal safety of bus passengers
Current Provision	All of the two main operators' buses have on-board CCTV, and drivers receive training on counter-terrorism and supporting

	passengers with additional needs. Previously, the Council's Safer Travel Team would go into schools and educate young people on safety and behaviour while travelling by bus, which resulted in positive outcomes on buses. Lack of funding has forced this service to cease.
BSIP Strategy	Restoration of links with schools and reinstatement of safer travel training is an aspiration of the BSIP, which could be combined with education on wider sustainable travel and environmental issues to assist in the development of a new generation of bus users.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 9: Vehicle package • Package 11: Safety, Education, Promotion and Resource package

Delivery Theme	O: Improve buses for tourists
Current Provision	CW&C, and in particular Chester, attract a significant number of tourists to the area. As visitors to the area, it can be extremely difficult to find easily digestible and accurate information on ticketing, routes and timetables for buses in CW&C.
BSIP Strategy	Investment and improvement to the bus network as a whole will improve the offer for tourists. Specific key aspects of which will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park & Ride improvement (signage/visibility) • Integrated ticketing (multi-operator and multi-modal) • Simple and cohesive network • Rail station link improvements • Information improvements (especially online)

Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package • Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package
------------------	---

Delivery Theme	P: Invest in decarbonisation
Current Provision	Vehicles operating in CW&C are of a mixture of ages and specification in terms of emissions. None of the vehicles are yet fully hydrogen or even diesel-electric hybrid, although a small number of LPG vehicles are in use on the network. Many vehicles do already meet Euro VI standards however.
BSIP Strategy	New and minimum standards for vehicles shall be agreed within the Enhanced Partnership. Additionally, we wish to invest in charging/fuelling infrastructure at Hubs/Interchanges/Depots as needed, to enable deployment of electric and/or hydrogen vehicles across the network. It is assumed that the funding for this would be available via future ZEBRA or similar national funding initiatives.
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 9: Vehicle package

4.3.2 Improvements to passenger engagement

The following section presents a summary of the current provision / situation relating to delivery themes Q:T and the proposed strategy for tackling the delivery theme. References are then provided for the proposed actions to deliver the strategy which are set out in more detail as 11 packages of actions in Section 4.4.

Delivery Theme	Q: Passenger charter
Current Provision	There is not currently a Passenger Charter in place in CW&C, although some operators do have their own.
BSIP Strategy	The BSIP commits to preparing a Passenger Charter for the Enhanced Partnership in line with the guidance provided, which will include minimum standards on bus specifications and what passengers can expect to receive in terms of levels of service and passenger experience. Further information about the proposed contents and coverage of such a charter is presented in Section 5.
Proposed Actions	In conjunction with operators and other stakeholders, and with a possible cross-border interface, we will develop and publish a Passenger Charter

Delivery Theme	R: Strengthen network identity
Current Provision	There is currently no consistent identity across the bus network, except for the branded VQBP in Chester. In part, the high number of cross-boundary services in CW&C means that a consistent, strong identity is not an easy or necessarily achievable outcome for all services.
BSIP Strategy	Our emphasis will initially be to prioritise the development of the practical components of a coherent network identity, potentially building on existing initiatives such as 'ITravelSmart'. For example, it is far more important initially to firmly establish authoritative and easy to understand information, route frequencies and networks, and universal ticketing availability than to develop new logos and colour schemes – particularly

	<p>where differential branding will always remain significant due to cross-boundary services. However, once practical improvements begin to come into place we will introduce something similar to the VQBP example with as a minimum, a simple recognition on buses' livery of their affiliation with the local network scheme to be in place. Branding can play an important role in improving consumer confidence in a single bus product (once that product exists). Therefore online and at-stop information will ultimately be developed with a new network wide CW&C identity that can co-exist with identities from adjacent areas. For bus vehicles a minimum standard will be to ensure that all bus door/bus entrances contain a clear and recognisable identity tag / vinyl that builds confidence in ticketing inter-availability, information context and the local passenger charter for the EP. For this we are considering sub regional synergies such as a joint Passenger Charter and cross-border ticketing.</p>
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package

Delivery Theme	S: Improve bus information
Current Provision	<p>The CW&C Council website provides a list of bus routes operating in the area, and where available a timetable and a link to the operators' websites. Information on operators' websites varies, with some offering maps, timetables and ticketing details, while others are more limited. There is no central resource of all bus information for the borough.</p>

BSIP Strategy	We commit to producing a refreshed and comprehensive online portal providing access to all fares and timetable information in a single place as a key feature of the BSIP. We will bring all services into modern data standards with timetable, fares and vehicle tracking giving open access via the Bus Open Data Services (BODS) initiative to allow real time information to be fully available to third party information providers (e.g. Google maps), as well as to a refreshed local iTravelSmart phone app.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 5: Modal Integration package • Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package • Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package

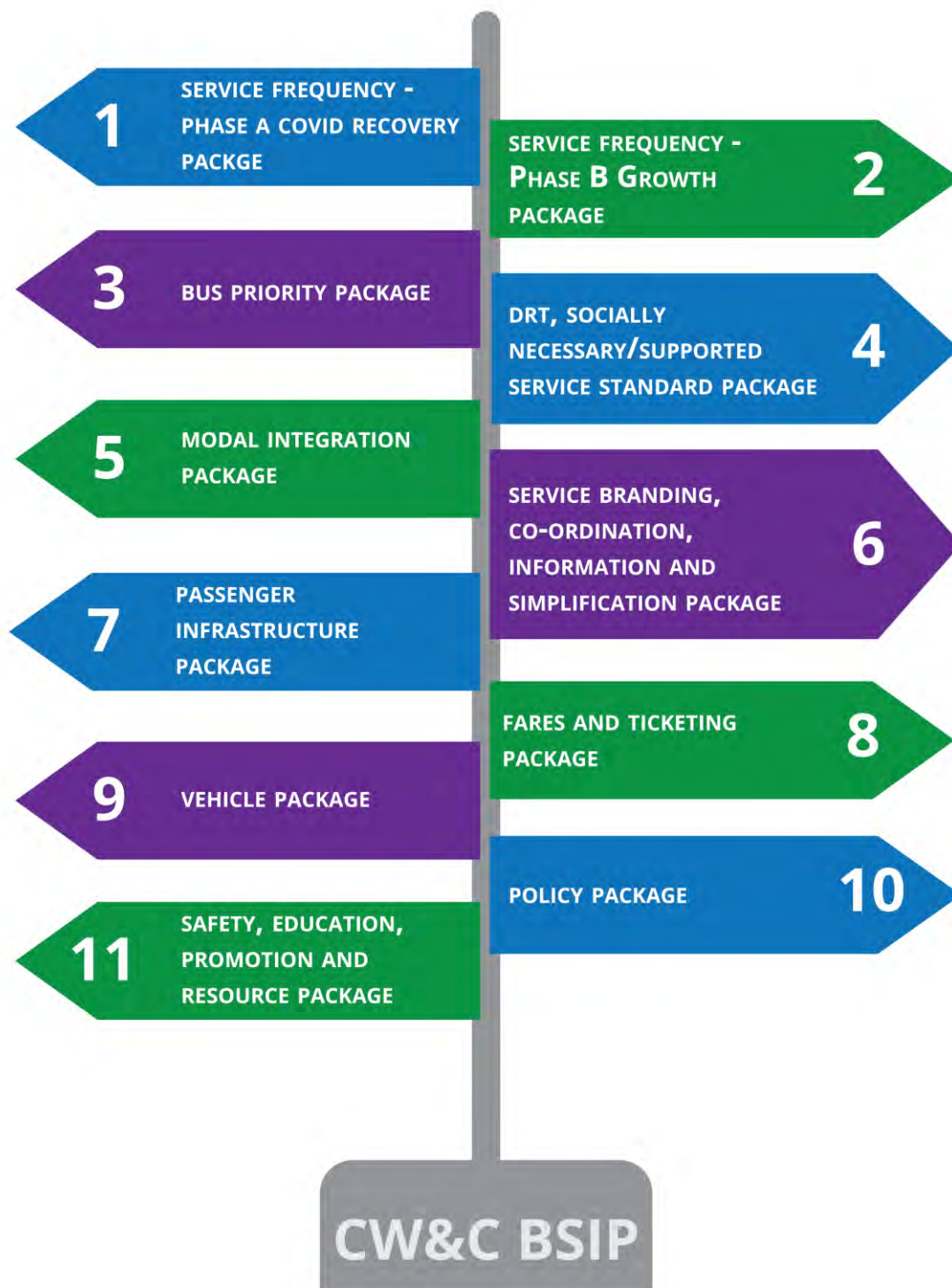
Delivery Theme	T: Other Longer Term measures
Current Provision	A large variety of external factors are a significant influence on local bus usage. Of most significance to the development of this strategy are the council's own policies and actions with regard to car parking. CW&C adopted its new Car Parking Strategy in 2017 and will shortly be re-tendering the Park & Ride contract, both of which influence the usage of local bus services, and have potential to go further in encouraging increases in bus patronage.
BSIP Strategy	Car parking policy, particularly with respect to quantity and tariffs in central locations, should take account of impacts on bus usage, climate change and modal targets. In particular, central car parking tariff setting should pay significant regard to its impact on Park and Ride demand and use. Increasing central

	<p>car parking charges at the busiest times of the day and reducing Park and Ride charges to take advantage of spare capacity is likely to have a long term beneficial impact on both the air quality and carbon footprint of the city, and on the long-term viability of Park and Ride.</p> <p>In addition issues of on-street parking availability and enforcement are also to be addressed, with a new commitment to better enforcement to ensure “fly-parking” does not disrupt the reliability and smooth running of buses on routes, and in known trouble spots.</p> <p>A further activity that is not addressed directly under any of the other delivery themes, but is an area of required intervention is the provision of updated bus stop / hub infrastructure. A series of locations have been identified for modernised and improved kerbside passenger facilities.</p>
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 10: Policy package • Package 7: Passenger Infrastructure package

4.4 Packages of Actions

In total we have identified and programmed 11 packages of actions (interventions) that will deliver our Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Figure 4.2: CW&C BSIP Packages of Actions



In combination these will address all of the delivery themes discussed above.

No.	Packages	Delivery Themes Addressed
1	Service frequency – Phase A Covid Recovery package	A, H
2	Service frequency – Phase B Growth package	A, H
3	Bus priority package	B, H
4	DRT, socially necessary/supported service standard package	C, G
5	Modal Integration package	E, F, J, K, S
6	Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package	F, K, I, J, O, R, S
7	Passenger Infrastructure package	T, E, F
8	Fares and Ticketing package	I, J, K, H, S
9	Vehicle Package	L, M, N, P
10	Policy Package	T
11	Safety, Education, Promotion and Resource package	Q, O, N

The proposed elements of each package are presented below. It should be noted that all content is subject to the ultimate scale of the final funding award in Cheshire West and Chester.

Package 1: Service frequency – Phase A Covid Recovery package	
Action (Intervention)	Description
<i>Revenue support fund to maintain network</i>	Assuming national government emergency financial support for bus services due to the pandemic ends in March 2022 there is a need for the Enhanced Partnership to establish a fund for targeted use to ensure that commercial bus services continue to operate at a frequency and scale that allow passenger levels to recover to pre-pandemic levels. The partnership will administer a fund to provide this essential support for financial year 2022/23. Funding awards will also be linked to the other aspects of this package. Further funding may be required beyond the 2022/23 period and the need for this will be reviewed in light of the prevailing circumstances regarding the pandemic and its ongoing impacts in late 2022. This will be considered in later iterations of the BSIP document.
<i>Timetable change co-ordination</i>	An early agreement will be sought to ensure that changes to bus service timetables in the area are introduced on a limited number of dates per year.
<i>Improved timetable / frequency co-ordination</i>	As part of the financial recovery package, agreement will also be sought to make tactical modifications to the network - in particular to improve the co-ordination of routes and timetables between operators to remove duplicative elements, and to try and provide combined route clockface / regular interval timetables on key corridors.

Package 2: Service frequency – Phase B Growth package	
Action (Intervention)	Description
Local service frequency enhancements	A programme of service enhancements has been identified for Phase B and beyond that will offer more frequent daytime services, and also additional evening and weekend services. The selection of routes for enhancement will be dependent on the speed and progress in Phase A recovery, and further analysis on the opportunities available. In most cases we would expect that a significant amount of "pump prime" funding support will be needed to improve service provision, with an expectation that a closely monitored tapered withdrawal of funding support will occur as the improvements realise passenger growth and revenue. Early analysis has identified possible daytime improvements on the Boughton Road, Vicars Cross Road, Hoole Road, Blacon / Saughall, Upton and Neston / Hooton / Ellesmere Port corridors, and further evening and weekend improvements on the Vicars Cross Road, Saltney and Newton local routes.
Inter-urban frequency enhancements	As above: with options for improvements identified on the Chester to Ellesmere Port / Frodsham / Runcorn, Christleton / Waverton / Tattenhall, Northwich, Tarporley / Crewe corridors.
Rural frequency enhancements	As above: with options for improvements identified on the rural sections of the following corridors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chester to Ellesmere Port / Frodsham / Runcorn, - Christleton / Waverton / Tattenhall - Northwich local services - Tarporley / Crewe - Chester / Dodington / Higher Kinnerton - Ellesmere Port / Deeside / Mold and - Neston / Hooton / Ellesmere Port.

Package 3: Bus priority package	
Action (Intervention)	Description
<i>UTMC interventions</i>	Work to improve the Urban Traffic Control (UTC) systems already in place in the borough to provide enhanced bus priority. In the towns of Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Northwich it is planned to introduce UTC, and in Chester and Ellesmere Port the systems will be augmented with Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC). This system will enable virtual bus detection (linked to bus operators ticketing machines), and consequently allow real time tracking of vehicles and comparison to scheduled timetables. Traffic signal timings can then be updated in real time to bring delayed buses back onto timetable.
<i>Chester area highway interventions</i>	A programme of radial corridor improvements is proposed in Chester for the roads of A483 Wrexham Road, A548 Sealand Road, A51/A5115, and A56 Hoole Way which will tackle delay points to bus services with targeted link and junction works in a similar vein to recent pinch-point works.
<i>Towns and rural areas</i>	In coordination with larger scale packages of works, consultation with bus operators has identified localised problem areas where delays regularly occur to scheduled services. Consequently, a programme of small-scale works are planned to tackle these issues. These works are scheduled to include: extended waiting restrictions around schools, management of on-street parking on bus routes, and upgrades of problem bus stops.

Package 4: DRT, socially necessary/supported services standards package	
Action (Intervention)	Description
<i>Extension of targeted trials of pre-booked flexible route bus services</i>	Subject to lessons learnt from the Rural Mobility Fund pilot a proposal to scale the service to match changing demand.
<i>Supported services review</i>	<p>A full review of local supported services in the context of the Enhanced Partnership to re-assess what a minimum service frequency should be on relevant routes, and to take opportunities to sustainably develop the commercial network and routes to avoid "cliff-edge" viability of commercial services and simpler mechanisms for public sector funding support. New funding to secure provision that offers stable connectivity to communities that develops long term confidence to allow people to access opportunity, community and services.</p> <p>As part of this the Enhanced Partnership will consider how best to target improvements to school service provision including both dedicated school services and general services that provide essential connectivity for non-eligible schoolchildren to school.</p>
<i>Supported services standards</i>	A minimum standard specification for bus vehicles can be incorporated into the Enhanced Partnership agreement to improve the passenger offer, and support environmental targets.
<i>Community enhancing routes</i>	New bus service interventions to support accessibility for otherwise broken links that restrict social mobility and community cohesion (e.g. Winsford – Northwich evening, and rural connection links). Look to pursue a community transport model, investigate and develop a pilot project for a community transport offer within a rural area with the

	ultimate intention of rolling this out across the borough if a commercially viable model can be adopted.
<i>Collaboration with healthcare and third sector providers</i>	Establish a forum to seek and understand the opportunities for integration of healthcare and community transport provider services to ensure more efficient use of vehicles, drivers, and service provision.

Package 5: Modal integration package	
Action (Intervention)	Description
<i>Park & Ride Investment</i>	Improvements to the current Chester P&R provision across 4 sites to better publicise its offer and improve the current experience with modernised facilities. This important service could play a stronger role in ensuring that bus delivers on local mode share and climate change targets for Chester City Centre.
<i>Station link service</i>	Improvements to the shuttle bus service between Chester rail station, Chester Bus Interchange, and the city centre to better publicise the service and more directly facilitate engagement of rail passengers with the local bus network for connecting travel.
<i>Plusbus improvements</i>	The Plusbus ticket scheme offers great potential for better integration. Improvements targeted include: supporting national level development and promotion of the scheme into modern e-ticketing methods; supporting local development and promotion of the scheme; ensuring that all local services including supported services and specialist services such as City Rail Link are within the scheme.

<i>Timetable and information at rail stations</i>	All rail stations in the borough to have connecting bus information available at station and online.
<i>Timing interventions to improve connectivity</i>	As part of service frequency and routing reviews by the Enhanced Partnership a "by default" review of interface connections between rail and bus services with a particular emphasis on rural routes interfaces for onward travel/returning travel by rail.
<i>Chester City Gateway</i>	A commitment to exploring opportunities from this major commercial development centred on the rail station to revise bus service routing to improve connectivity into Chester station.

Package 6: Service branding, co-ordination, information and simplification package	
Action (Intervention)	Description
<i>Information</i>	A fresh, properly funded central resource for the Enhanced Partnership to develop online and on-network information that is authoritative, coherent, easily accessible and understandable and up to date. Specifically to ensure that maps and timetables are cyclically updated with the new fixed timetable change dates, that fares information is fully available online (as a minimum) for all non-fare stage based products.
<i>Route numbering simplification</i>	Historic division of services means that there are multiple bus routes operating with the same service number in the geography. Some are because their route identity is taken from neighbouring urban areas, however where possible these duplicate numbers are to be changed to aid useability of the local network e.g. renumbering of the Blacon Pointer 1/1A service to avoid duplication with other 1 services.
<i>Network branding</i>	As a significant number of services in CW&C are cross-boundary and key services take on their network identity from neighbouring authorities including Wales, and the Liverpool City Region it will be impossible to establish a complete cohesive branding of the CW&C network. Nonetheless elements of branding play an essential role in improving consumer confidence in a single bus product that can be used with confidence. Therefore online and at-stop information should be developed with a new network wide CW&C identity that can co-exist with identities from adjacent areas. For bus vehicles a minimum standard will be to ensure that all bus door/bus entrances contain a clear and recognisable identity tag / vinyl that builds confidence in ticketing inter-availability, information context and the local passenger charter for the EP.

Package 7: Passenger infrastructure package	
Action (Intervention)	Description
<i>Real time information</i>	Action by the EP team to ensure that all local bus services provide all required information to the BODS system to allow open third party access to real time bus information. High footfall bus nodes to have at stop real-time information including: Chester Zoo, Countess of Chester Hospital, Cheshire Oaks, Winsford Town Centre, Winsford Railway Station, Pepper Street (Chester), Northwich Railway Station, Ellesmere Port, and Neston. Publicity of local and national resources for mobile phone tracking of real time bus information including upgrades underway of local travel planning app iTravelSmart.
<i>Stop infrastructure</i>	Key bus stop and passenger waiting areas to be improved that are planned to be included in this programme: Foregate Street (the busiest on-street bus stops in Chester); Northwich town centre's main bus hub (Watling Street); and Winsford, Neston and Ellesmere Port primary stops. In addition, the stops outside the Countess of Chester Hospital with new road crossing facilities.

Package 8: Fares and ticketing package	
Action (Intervention)	Description
Multi-operator ticketing	As advised by DfT guidance we expect availability of a national system/platform for a "back office" function that allows for efficient implementation of a multi-operator ticketing scheme. Work to establish and administer such a scheme will require significant initial effort to devise, agree and establish the products and systems. Ongoing resource will be required to administer the function and distribute revenue equitably. We do not expect such a system to be fully operational before 2024/25.
Simpler ticketing	Subject to national availability of the back office solution a proposed fully contactless enabled multi operator daily / weekly /monthly / annual capped pricing model that is for the customer a simple universally accepted central product. Full acceptance of products across all commercial and tendered services in the area.
Lower fares	Daily / weekly / monthly / annual multi operator price caps to be agreed upon implementation of multi-operator ticketing with back office (as above). In advance of this we will seek to introduce a new inter-available lower fare Child/Youth product for under 19s. Once established a further tier of similarly discounted travel for under 25s is to be targeted. The aim is to ensure that integrated local ticketing will lower fares for regular users and provide targeted initiatives that assist social mobility for key groups such as jobseekers, apprentices, and young adults etc
Integrate ticketing across	A commitment to work with Transport for the North, rail operators and neighbouring authorities to develop regional and national solutions to allow the eventual expansion of the local LA offers into wider ticketing networks. We see potential for modernisation of the Plusbus product

<i>modes and geographies</i>	to be a potential route to a trusted consumer product, and with new common back office and digitised usage to provide trusted revenue allocation to operators.
-------------------------------------	--

Package 9: Vehicle package	
Action (Intervention)	Description
Zero emissions vehicles	Investment in a new fleet of zero emission vehicles (either battery electric or hydrogen) for use on high frequency routes around the borough. By 2025 we would wish to see 50% of short range local buses in the area operated by electric or other zero emission vehicles, requiring a complimentary investment in depot infrastructure. However the EP will not be prepared to trade off drops in service provision, and service provision growth to fund more expensive vehicles. We have nominally identified the level of additional investment we think might be required to meet these targets by 2025 - however we acknowledge that the funding for greening of the fleet may be expected to come through other funding streams from DfT such as future ZEBRA funding or other similar national funding initiatives.
Vehicle emissions standards	The borough wishes to see all local buses at a minimum of Euro VI standard by the end of 2024/25. This will require a commitment to additional funding of supported services to pay for more expensive, modern vehicles, and to work with government in securing investment from parallel funding initiatives to "green" the nation's (and CW&C's) bus fleet.
Other vehicle standards	All buses to meet standards for access, RTI tracking, contactless payment, and stop audio-announcement (if possible) by the end of 2022/23 (subject to availability of national system provision elements).

Package 10: Policy package	
Action (Intervention)	Description
<i>Parking policy</i>	<p>An update to the borough's adopted Parking Strategy is required to further integrate policy on parking pricing in town centres with the aims and aspirations of the Enhanced Partnership team, to establish positive and long-lasting behavioural change. In particular, pricing of parking in Chester City Centre (and other large centres) needs to support the drive to reduce car mode share to these locations and transfer a significant amount of demand to bus and Park and Ride services. This policy work has already begun but has further to go.</p> <p>As part of this, there is a need for the Council to exert more direct control over the pricing practices of private car park operators within the borough to avoid the efforts of strategy being undermined by cheaper private car parks, and to instil long-lasting behavioural change. In tandem there is a need to consider further parking policy change such as the implementation of a workplace parking levy or other schemes in order to incentivise use of alternative modes.</p>
<i>Local Plan / planning / development planning</i>	<p>The Council has a proactive history in aligning local planning policy with the needs and aims of the parking and public transport strategies. A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was introduced in 2017 that provided further detail and guidance on the implementation of Local Plan policy STRAT 10 and the requirement for car and cycle parking spaces in new developments taking account of the provision of alternative transport facilities. The SPD may need to be updated in line with the aspirations of the BSIP to enable consideration of the availability of, and opportunities for local bus hubs for new development, including the provision of information and facilities to maximise their useability.</p>

Package 11: Safety, education, promotion and resource package	
Action (Intervention)	Description
<i>Delivery Resource</i>	In order to co-ordinate, manage, and oversee delivery of the full range of packages of intervention and actions additional resource will be required equivalent to two additional FTE staff working on behalf of the partnership.
<i>Safety interventions</i>	Commitment to minimum standard driver training schemes across all operations with regard to counter terrorism, disability, customer conflict and modern day slavery. Commitment to re-establishment of education teams to work with school children to develop bus safety awareness and establish long-lasting behavioural change, alongside of sustainable travel promotion (see below). Commitment to re-establish travel-training schemes for vulnerable people or people with disabilities to ensure awareness and knowledge of the local bus network and to maximise useability.
<i>Sustainable travel promotion</i>	Behavioural change package to drive modal shift, and staff resource investment to provide educational resource and travel training support and advice to children, parents and students to develop confidence in the new CW&C bus product for future generations. Marketing and promotion more generally of all aspects of the improving service offer - including development of network of community ambassadors working closely with schools and colleges to better promote public transport.

4.5 Summary of Delivery Conclusions

In this section, we have set out our ambition and strategy for delivery of each of the 20 Delivery Themes identified by the DfT for BSIPs to progress. We have then presented 11 Packages of actions to deliver across the Delivery Themes

on the outputs and outcomes that will provide a step change in the cohesiveness, attractiveness, coverage and quality of the local bus network.

Appendix B sets out in the DfT prescribed template the proposed funding requirements for each of the 11 Packages as presented in this plan.

4.6 BSIP Outline Funding Form

As required, the outline funding form for this BSIP has been completed and submitted in parallel to this document. The form has been completed as guided, however we note that we have used the package headings from this main BSIP document to break down funding asks line by line. This is to provide a clear narrative flow from the BSIP document through to the spreadsheet and to provide clarity on the amount of funding requested for each package and package component. We hope this provides enough clarity for your requirements, however we are happy to produce a version of this spreadsheet using alternative headings if required and requested.

5 Reporting

5.1 BSIP Revisions

The BSIP is a live and dynamic document, which will be updated as and when required, (as a minimum this will be done at least every 12 months) in conjunction with the operators and other partners in CW&C. As part of this ongoing iterative process, progress within CW&C with respect to the targets on buses set out in Section 3 will be reported every six months on the Council's BSIP webpage (<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/bus-strategy>). This is also where any revisions to the main BSIP document will be published, along with any explanations of why revisions have been made to the BSIP.

5.1.1 BSIP and EP timescales

Based on the BSIP guidance, we have developed the following timetable for the implementation and revision of the BSIP, and the implementation of the Enhanced Partnership:

- By 31st October 2021 – publication of CW&C's BSIP
- 31st March 2022 – publication of revised BSIP / Enhanced Partnership Plan following expected announcement of funding allocation, including review of the targets presented in Section 3
- By 31st March 2022 – establishment of a 'Bus Board' formed of representatives from CW&CC and bus operators to oversee the Enhanced Partnership and delivery of the interventions noted
- By 31st March 2022 – launch of Enhanced Partnership
- From 1st April 2022 – implementation of the BSIP through the Enhanced Partnership
- Starting in September 2022, six monthly (September and March) reporting on the progress of the Enhanced Partnership towards achieving the targets set out in the BSIP

- From February/March 2023 – as required, annual revision of the BSIP in to reflect any changes to the bus context in CW&C, including review of the targets set in March 2022, and funding requirements.

It is noted that work to refresh the current Local Transport Plan is expected to commence in 2022/23. Ideally this will happen concurrently with the post-funding announcement review of the BSIP.

5.2 Enhanced Partnership set-up

In June 2021, CW&C announced its intention to establish an Enhanced Partnership (EP), comprising itself and all operators in the CW&C area by 31st March 2022, to implement the BSIP. There is expected to be one EP, covering the totality of the CW&C borough geography. There have been collaborative discussions between CW&C, operators and sub-regional partners during the BSIP development process; this groundwork will form a strong foundation for further discussions and agreement of the format and details of the EP Plan to deliver the specific outcomes of the BSIP.

Assuming the necessary funding is made available, CW&C Council intends to dedicate up to two FTE members of staff to the partnership, complimenting the existing LTA resources dedicated to bus work. These resources will be responsible for implementing, managing and overseeing the delivery of the BSIP through the EP, and to work on behalf of the EP. They will also be involved in undertaking traffic commissioner duties recently transferred to CW&C in terms of bus service registry.

The establishment of the Enhanced Partnership will follow the DfT guidance and statutory requirements as set out in s.138A of the 2000 Transport Act. Initially, an EP Plan will be produced, expanding on some of the initial vision, objectives and measures included within this BSIP, to bring further detail and clarity on how the EP will look and function, and its mandate for bringing about improvements to the bus services in CW&C. It will set out its scope and remit, the intended outcomes of the EP, the interventions needed to realise those

outcomes, and how it will go about reporting the progress towards the targeted outcomes of the EP.

5.3 Cheshire West and Chester Bus Passenger Charter

As noted within Paragraph 99 of the Government Guidance for the creation of BSIPs, these documents must include reference to the creation of a Bus Passenger Charter. In Cheshire West and Chester's case, the charter will be developed in full collaboration with local bus operators and the wording and commitments therein agreed fully amongst the partners. Given the unique circumstances around CW&C and the large proportion of cross-boundary services that operate, there is a strong possibility that the passenger charter will be developed alongside neighbouring authorities within the Cheshire and Warrington Sub-Region namely Cheshire East and Warrington borough councils. Input will also be sought from other key neighbours including Liverpool City Region and North Wales authorities / Welsh Government through Mersey-Dee Alliance.

The passenger charter for the borough will need to include challenging but realistic targets and commitments with regard to the quality, ease and value-for-money of the bus journey provided to passengers. It is expected to include commitments on:

- Vehicle age and cleanliness
- Punctuality and Reliability
- Proportion of services operated over a rolling period as per equivalent measures in the rail industry
- Accessibility of buses and proportion with full 'kneeling' capability
- Information and infrastructure provision at bus stops
- Assurances on value for money and fare increases e.g. linking these to inflation as occurs within regulated fares within the rail industry

The passenger charter will also include full details of how passengers may seek redress over instances in which the service provided has fallen short of the standards laid out. This will be accompanied by a corresponding investment in

resource to look into and investigate complaints and to provide suitable remedial action including compensation where this is warranted.

The passenger charter will be specified, agreed, and overseen by the Enhanced Partnership Bus Board following the commencement of the EP in April 2022.

The wording and contents of the document will be developed in detail over the following months and included within the Enhanced Partnership Plan to be submitted to DfT in March 2022.

6 Overview Table

The following table(s) use the stipulated DfT BSIP “Overview Table Template” to provide a summary of all of the headline content of this BSIP.

Name of authority or authorities	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Franchising or Enhanced Partnership (or both):	Enhanced Partnership
Date of publication	31 st October 2021
Date of next annual update	31 st March 2022
URL of published report	https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/bus-strategy

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Journey time	100 (base year indexed value)	N/A	100 (target value, indexed)	Evening peak end to end journey times for local bus routes operating at least twice per hour. 2018/19 will be the base year and set as an Indexed value of 100. Subsequent years' timetabled times will be measured on the basis of the proportional change to planned journey time.

Reliability	86%	Data not reported due to Covid	90%	Proportion of non-frequent bus services which depart 'on time' within the six-minute window definition, as per the DfT's long-established bus reliability metric "Bus0902: Non-frequent bus services running on time by local authority".
Passenger numbers	9.3 million	Data not reported due to Covid	10.2 million	Total number of passenger journeys on local bus services originating in the CW&C area, as reported through the DfT's BUS0109b.
Average passenger satisfaction	87% (Autumn 2019)	N/A	92% (minimum)	Overall bus journey satisfaction as measured through the national programme of surveys undertaken by Transport Focus in the CW&C area.

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/No	Explanation (max 50 words)
Make improvements to bus services and planning		
More frequent and reliable services		
Review service frequency	Yes	Phase A – Covid Recovery: focus on recovery to pre-pandemic patronage levels by 2022/23;

		<p>funding required to maintain good levels of service frequency. This will be complemented by improved network and timetable coordination.</p> <p>Phase B – Passenger Growth: From 2023/24, a sustained and co-ordinated package of service improvements to further enhance service frequencies.</p>
Increase bus priority measures	Yes	Targeted interventions at key pinch-point junctions and approaches where bus delays are common. Implementation of new bus technology UTMC system and modal filters in Chester and Ellesmere Port. In Northwich and Winsford, a new co-ordinated SCOOT system is proposed to facilitate connected junction delay minimisation and queue reduction.
Increase demand responsive services	Yes	We will seek to secure the long-term future and expansion of the most successful elements of our trial that is ongoing, funded by Rural Mobility Fund monies. There will be an emphasis on connecting with conventional services, sharing technological developments nationally, and establishing systems for efficient use of vehicle resources.
Consideration of bus rapid transport networks	Yes	Currently there is no specific ambition for a distinct bus rapid transport product in Cheshire West and Chester, although many of the characteristics of such a system are embedded within our other plans; longer-term timescales beyond the scope of this initial BSIP may

		facilitate future plans should they become necessary.
Improvements to planning / integration with other modes		
Integrate services with other transport modes	Yes	Targeted improvements to better integrate bus with other modes, such as bus connectivity to Chester rail station through the existing City-Rail-Link bus to the city centre and forthcoming Gateway development; Plusbus improvements with acceptance by all operators (including City-Rail-Link); bus timetable and information improvements at rail stations; and Park & Ride improvements.
Simplify services	Yes	Improvements will be aimed at making bus an easy and straightforward experience for all passengers by removing duplicate service numbering where possible, improve routing and circulation in Chester city centre, provision of simple network mapping, clockface timetables where possible, and fare simplification.
Review socially necessary services	Yes	<p>We want to establish a stable, trusted network of socially necessary services, therefore the EP will offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creative opportunities to efficiently provide such services through better resource management • collaboration with existing community transport providers • review and enhance supported services to blend with revised commercial routes

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interventions for otherwise broken links.
Invest in Superbus networks	TBC	We believe there is potential for the proposed package of CW&C BSIP measures to be considered a Superbus network; it includes a full package of vehicle, priority, fares, timetable, information and branding improvements. Further guidance would be required to understand the merits of using this nomenclature to progress proposals under this branding.
Improvements to fares and ticketing		
Lower fares	Yes	A commitment to rapidly develop a new universal child/youth/under 19 discounted fare and, assuming the availability of a back-office solution, develop a full multi-operator ticketing system, with fare capping. This would be used to administer the child/youth fare, lower fares for regular users, other initiatives focused on specific groups, and facility for multi-modal usage adaptation in future.
Simplify fares	Yes	Subject to national availability of a back-office solution, the BSIP aspires to a fully contactless, multi-operator ticketing offer, with a daily and (potentially) weekly capped pricing model. This would see full acceptance of products across all commercial and tendered services within the Enhanced Partnership.
Integrate ticketing between operators and	Yes	The partnership will work with relevant parties to develop a national and regional ticketing offer across a wider geographical area, with

		new common back-office provision and digitised usage. We see potential for modernisation of the Plusbus product to be a potential route to a trusted consumer product with universal acceptance.
Make improvements to bus passenger experience		
Higher spec buses		
Invest in improved bus specifications	Yes	The BSIP must prioritise improvements to vehicle cleanliness and give residents and businesses greener, modern vehicles with facilities that are accessible and attractive to new users, and to meet local commitments to address Climate Change and decarbonisation. Minimum standards will be introduced which will require funding support through BSIP and other routes.
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services	Yes	The BSIP includes a commitment to new vehicles and minimum standards on accessibility across network. These will be included within the Passengers' Charter.
Protect personal safety of bus passengers	Yes	Restoration of links with schools and reinstatement of safer travel training is an aim of the BSIP, which will be combined with education on wider sustainable travel and environmental issues to assist in the development of a new generation of bus users.
Improve buses for tourists	Yes	Investment and improvement to the bus network as a whole will improve the offer for tourists. Specific key aspects of which will be:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park & Ride improvement (signage/visibility) • Integrated ticketing (multi-operator and multi-modal) • Simple and cohesive network • City-Rail-Link improvements • Information improvements (especially online)
Invest in decarbonisation	Yes	New and minimum standards for vehicles (Euro VI) shall be agreed by the Enhanced Partnership. Additionally, we will invest in charging/fuelling infrastructure at Hubs/Interchanges/Depots as needed, to enable deployment of new electric and/or hydrogen vehicles across the network.
Improvements to passenger engagement		
Passenger charter	Yes	The BSIP commits to preparing a Passenger Charter for the Enhanced Partnership in line with the guidance provided, which will include minimum standards on bus specifications and what passengers can expect to receive in terms of levels of service and passenger experience.
Strengthen network identity	Yes	The initial priority will be on establishing the practical components of a coherent network identity. Once established, we will introduce a simple recognition on buses' livery of their affiliation with the local network scheme. Online and at-stop information will ultimately

		be developed with a new network wide CW&C identity.
Improve bus information	Yes	Commitment to producing a refreshed comprehensive online portal providing access to fares and timetable information in one place. We will bring all services into modern data standards with timetables, fares and vehicle tracking via the Bus Open Data Services (BODS) initiative to share real time information fully with all information providers.
Other		
Other	Yes	A range of supplementary measures which expediate bus operations and encourage patronage, such as a review of town/city centre car parking capacity and tariffs, enforcement of illegal parking which obstruct bus routes, review of on-street parking availability, plus a programme of updates and modernisation of supporting bus infrastructure.

Appendices

A.	Letters of support from bus operators	127
B.	Funding request proforma	128

A. Letters of support from bus operators



21st October 2021

Kristy Littler
Transport Manager – Transport and Infrastructure
Transport and Highways
Cheshire West and Chester

Dear Kristy,

Re: BSIP - Cheshire West and Chester

We believe that the BSIP document created in partnership between ourselves, other operators and the council creates an exciting opportunity for Cheshire West and Chester and its partners to create the region we want to be part of.

The plans outlined in the BSIP offers an opportunity to deliver an integrated and inclusive transport network across Cheshire West and Chester, sustaining the existing level of service, levelling up and better connecting places, communities, and economic assets within the region and beyond.

A focus on public transport, will prioritise investment in a sustainable future, supporting a green recovery from COVID-19 and tackling the climate emergency through the decarbonisation of the transport sector. This funding will enable the local authority to work with operators and invest in the bus network with a modern, integrated transport system essential for the region's economy to flourish and communities to thrive.

We are supportive of the Cheshire West & Chester BSIP submission to the DFT which will deliver a range of improvements in the region better connect places, communities and economic assets and are delighted to offer our support for this proposal.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Hoare'.

Richard Hoare
Commercial Director
Arriva North-West & Wales

Mrs. Kristy Littler
Transport Manager – Transport and Infrastructure
Environment and Communities
Cheshire West and Chester Council
4 Civic Way
Ellesmere Port
CH65 0BE

18 October 2021

Dear Mrs Littler

SUPPORT FOR BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP)

I am writing to confirm our support for Cheshire West and Chester Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan bid.

Stagecoach welcomes the National Bus Strategy and is a keen and willing partner to Cheshire West and Chester Council.

We are pleased to have worked with yourselves and other bus operators collaboratively on the Bus Service Improvement Plan bid and fully support the vision that the bus becomes the mode of choice.

The comprehensive and ambitious range of delivery measures proposed within the bid will achieve a transformational change to the bus network in Cheshire West and Chester through delivery of real and meaningful improvement of frequency, bus quality and emissions, journey time and lower and simpler fares and multi operator ticketing.

We look forward to working closely with you to deliver the Bus Service Improvement Plan to realise sustainable improvements to the bus network, which will achieve increased bus usage and reduced dependency on the private car.

Yours sincerely



Matt Davies
Managing Director
Stagecoach Merseyside and South Lancashire

**Mossfield Road
Adderley Green
Stoke-on-Trent
ST3 5BW**

D&G Bus

Phone: 01782 332337

Web: www.dgbus.co.uk

E-mail: info@dgbus.co.uk

Mrs Littler
Civic Offices
4 Civic Way
Ellesmere Port
CH65 0BE

15th October 2021

Dear Mrs Littler,

RE: Cheshire West and Chester BSIP Letter of Support

I write to offer my support of the proposal for your Bus Services Improvement Plan in Cheshire West and look forward to working with you to deliver positive and sustainable outcomes to increase bus ridership in the borough.

Yours Sincerely,



Kevin Crawford
Operations Director
D&G Bus Ltd

D&G Bus Ltd.

Registered in England no. 6918592 VAT registration no. 978 489 043
Registered office: Mossfield Road, Adderley Green, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 5BW



Warrington Borough Transport Ltd
Wilderspool Causeway
Warrington WA4 6PT

tel 01925 634296
fax 01925 418382
email mail@warringtonsownbuses.co.uk
web warringtonsownbuses.co.uk

Private & Confidential

Kristy Littler
Transport Manager – Transport and Infrastructure
Cheshire West and Chester Council
Civic Offices,
4 Civic Way,
Ellesmere Port.
CH65 0BE

15th October 2021

Dear Mrs Littler,

BSIP Letter of Support

I write to offer my support of the proposal for your Bus Services Improvement Plan in Cheshire West and look forward to working with you to deliver positive and sustainable outcomes to increase bus ridership in the borough.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Wakerley".

Ben Wakerley
Managing Director



12 Dingwall Drive
Greasby
Wirral
CH49 1SG

01244 382444

In Confidence

Kristy Littler
Transport Manager – Transport and Infrastructure
Cheshire West and Chester Council
Civic Offices, 4 Civic Way,
Ellesmere Port
CH65 0BE

21 October 2021

Dear Mrs Littler,

BSIP Letter of Support

I write to offer my support of the proposal for your Bus Services Improvement Plan in Cheshire West and look forward to working in partnership with you and other bus operators to further enhance and increase bus services for passengers in the borough.

Yours sincerely

Tony Parsons

Tony Parsons
Director

AINTREE COACHLINE

CWACC

4 Civic Way

Ellesmere Port

CH65 0BE

Aintree Coachline
Unit 13, Sefton Industrial Estate
Sefton Lane
Maghull
Merseyside L31 8BX

Tel: 0151-526-7405

Fax: 0151-520-0836

Email: info@aintreecoachline.com
weddings@aintreecoachline.com

Web: www.aintreecoachline.com

VAT No: 414873152

15th October 2021

I write to offer my support of the proposal for your bus Services Improvement plan in Cheshire West and look forward to working with you to deliver positive and sustainable outcomes to increase bus ridership in the borough

Mr J Cherry

Proprietor



Ms Kristy Littler
Transport Manager – Transport and Infrastructure
Transport and Highways
Cheshire West and Chester Council
Nicholas House,
1 Blackfriars,
CHESTER,
CH1 2NU

Westfields
c/o Municipal Buildings
Earle Street
Crewe
CW1 2BJ
www.cheshireeast.gov.uk

26th October 2021

Dear Kristy

RE: BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLANS – NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES

Following the production of our respective Bus Service Improvement Plans, I wish to acknowledge the close cooperation that has taken place between the neighbouring local transport authorities in the sub-region; namely Cheshire West and Chester Council, Warrington Council and ourselves at Cheshire East Council.

Building on earlier work to produce a sub-regional bus strategy with support from the Cheshire and Warrington LEP, we have worked effectively to consider strategic issues of shared importance e.g. cross-boundary routes and inter-operators ticketing. This is especially important as we broadly share the same set of operator partners in the bus industry.

I believe we have a strong foundation for transforming the experience of bus travel across our sub-region, which will contribute to Government's priorities for levelling-up and climate change. These priorities are consistent with those for the local authorities.

The working arrangement we have evolved will be invaluable as we move into the preparation of Enhanced Partnerships, as a better mechanism for delivering local bus improvements. Of course, achieving our ambition relies on the funding requirements set out in our Bus Service Improvement Plans so we must be optimistic that these funding requirements will be met.

I confirm that the set of BSIP's for the Cheshire and Warrington area are consistent in their ambition for the future and look forward to working with you in delivering these plans.

Yours sincerely

Richard J Hibbert

Richard Hibbert
Head of Strategic Transport and Parking



WARRINGTON

Borough Council

Mrs K Littler
Transport Manager
Cheshire West & Chester Council
2nd Floor, Nicholas House
1 Blackfriars
Chester
CH1 2NU

Your Ref:
Our Ref: STS/AJ/300

Professor Steven Broomhead
Chief Executive

David Boyer
Director
Environment and Transport

East Annex
Town Hall
Warrington
WA1 1UH

28th October 2021

Dear Kristy

BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLANS – CROSS AUTHORITY INTERWORKING

I refer to the ongoing engagement on our respective Bus Service Improvement Plans in response to the National Bus Strategy. I would like to emphasise how our ongoing collective engagement across the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region is aligned and strongly supportive of each other's intentions, as clearly evidenced by the development of our sub-regional bus strategy. Together we will build on our respective targets ensuring that improvements in service levels and the wider bus offer, particularly in respect of cross-boundary services, will enable us to build bus back better.

Warrington Borough Council looks forward to further fruitful engagement as we develop our Enhanced Partnerships and evolving BSIP's with effective and strong collaborative working alongside our local bus operators.

Yours sincerely,

ALYN JONES
Specialist Transport Service Manager
Direct dial: 01925 442620
Email: alyn.jones@warrington.gov.uk

B. Funding request proforma

