

# Bus Service Improvement Plan





# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>1</b>		
<b>1 Our bus vision</b>	<b>3</b>		
1.1 Coverage	3		
1.2 BSIP structure and reporting	5		
1.3 Enhanced Partnership context	6		
1.3.1 Cheshire West and Chester Enhanced Partnership	6		
1.4 A vision in line with the National Bus Strategy	10		
1.5 A vision in line with the Local Transport Plan	12		
1.6 Our bus vision	14		
<b>2 Current offer to bus passengers</b>	<b>18</b>		
2.1 Bus service network and frequency	18		
2.1.1 Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)	25		
2.1.2 Frequent service accessibility	28		
2.1.3 Bus journey times	30		
2.2 Bus priority measures	32		
2.3 Ticketing products and fares	35		
2.4 Passenger experience	38		
2.4.1 Waiting and interchange	38		
2.4.2 Information and network identity	39		
2.4.3 Accessibility and inclusion	39		
2.4.4 Safety	40		
2.4.5 Fleet/Vehicle Condition	40		
2.5 Staff and spending	44		
2.6 Supported services	45		
2.7 Bus reliability and punctuality	47		
2.8 Timetabling	50		
2.8.1 Peak time delays	50		
2.8.2 Change in journey times	51		
2.9 Bus usage	54		
2.10 Ticket sales	57		
2.11 Transport Focus – Your Bus Journey Survey	64		
2.12 Summary	68		
<b>3 Improvements programme to 2024/25-2025/26</b>	<b>70</b>		
3.1 Introduction	70		
3.2 Short term priorities	70		
3.3 Short term BSIP funding allocation summary	72		
3.4 Programme of investment to 2025/26	72		
3.4.1 Bus priority infrastructure improvements	74		
3.4.2 Other bus infrastructure improvements	75		
3.4.3 Bus services support improvements	76		
3.4.4 Fares support improvements	78		
3.4.5 Ticketing reform improvements	79		
3.4.6 Other schemes & measures	80		
3.5 Bus driver recruitment and retention	82		
3.5.1 Challenges	82		
3.5.2 Initiatives	82		
<b>4 Ambitions and proposals beyond 2025</b>	<b>85</b>		
4.1 Introduction	85		



4.2	Long term priorities	85	5.2	Progress and targets for passenger growth	102
4.3	Aspirational long-term schemes by 2035	87	5.3	Progress and target for customer satisfaction	104
4.4	Programme of investment beyond 2025 (2026-2029)	89	5.4	Progress and target for reliability improvements	105
4.4.1	Bus priority proposals	90	5.5	Progress and target for journey times	106
4.4.2	Lower and simpler fares proposals	91			
4.4.3	Ticketing proposals	92	A.	Enhanced Partnership Forum member list	110
4.4.4	Waiting and interchange facilities proposals	93			
4.4.5	Bus information and network identity proposals	94	B.	Operator letters of support	111
4.4.6	Bus passenger experience proposals	95			
4.4.7	Bus fleet proposals	96	C.	CW&C Bus Service Spending 2022/23 and 2023/24	114
4.4.8	Accessibility and inclusion proposals	97			
4.4.9	Longer term transformation of the network proposals	98	D.	Service list	115
5	Targets, performance monitoring and reporting	100			
5.1	Introduction	100			



## Foreword

Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&CC) is delighted to present our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), fully refreshed and updated for 2024 in line with Department for Transport (DfT) guidance published in January 2024. The plan has been developed in close collaboration with local bus operators as part of the work of the Enhanced Partnership (EP). The plan provides a bold and ambitious programme of activity in line with the National Bus Strategy for England that seeks to create a network that:

- Makes bus the mode of choice through quicker, more reliable, and more accessible services.
- Improves connectivity for all, reducing transport-related social exclusion and supporting mode shift to public transport and
- Supports the Council's strategic priorities, the objectives of its fourth Local Transport Plan, and the six objectives of the borough plan.

Within the BSIP we put forward a programme of interventions that aim to realise the vision above, with priorities identified both for the current period of 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 for which we have received funding from the Government totalling £2.5m plus an additional similar amount from the Network North (post-HS2 Phase 2) initiative, supported by existing and new commitments to investment and improvement from the council and operators as part of the Enhanced Partnership. Outline plans and priorities are also presented for the next period between 2026 and 2029. These interventions fall into the categories of:

- Bus priority infrastructure
- Fares support
- Other bus infrastructure
- Ticketing reform
- Bus services support
- Other schemes and measures

In response to a request from the DfT to look further ahead and envisage a set of interventions that would truly transform the network by 2035, we have also put forward a set of ambitious and radical schemes that could be delivered during later rounds of BSIP and additional funding sources. We make clear, though, how the investments in the network that we propose to make



today (from service improvements to bus priority to simplified and smarter fares and ticketing to Park & Ride improvements) lay the foundations for the transformational schemes of tomorrow and ensure that the agreements are in place with our partners within the Enhanced Partnership to make these changes permanently and to the benefit of the travelling public within Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) and neighbouring authorities.

Finally, we discuss how we have monitored our progress towards the targets set out in our previous BSIPs. These targets include improvements to bus patronage, customer satisfaction, bus reliability and journey times, to ensure that the network will continue to become more attractive and generate additional demand from passengers. In this way we hope to make bus a mode of choice for short to medium distance journeys.

Our BSIP shows us the way to realise our vision and we look forward to bringing you with us on this journey.





# 1 Our bus vision

This document is the latest (June 2024) update to the CW&C BSIP, responding to new guidance published in January 2024 by the DfT. This first section outlines an updated vision for the improvement of the bus offer in CW&C and sets out an overview of the purpose and context of the BSIP.

## 1.1 Coverage

This BSIP covers the geography of the unitary authority of CW&C, as shown in Map 1.1. The authority lies in North West England and has borders with Warrington, Shropshire 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).

A decision was taken early on in the BSIP process that the CW&C geography required a BSIP of its own. Whilst CW&C has strong links to the neighbouring authorities of Warrington,

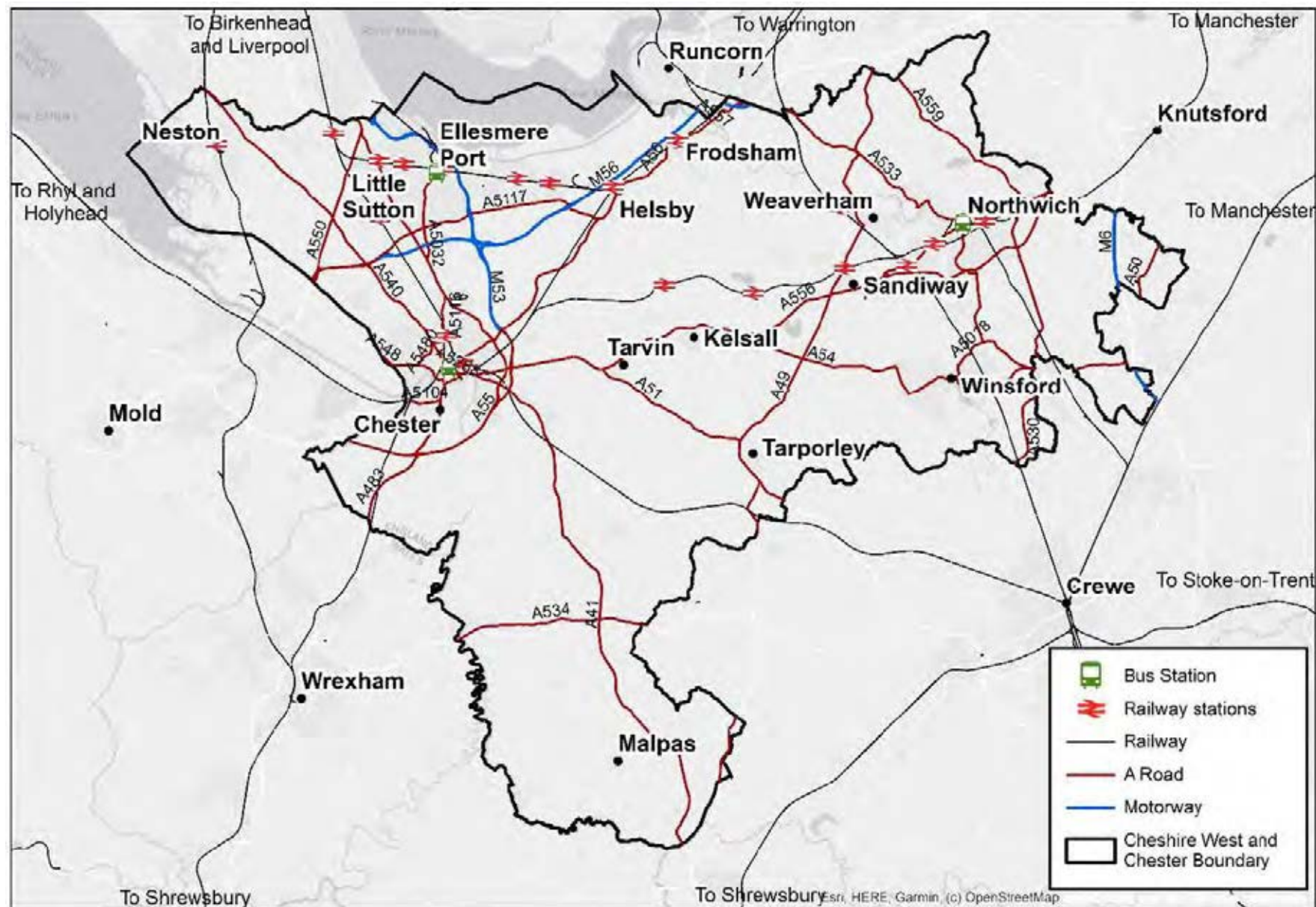
Cheshire East, the Liverpool City Region, and into Wales, Chester is a dominant centre for the borough, is in the top 100 sized towns and cities in the UK and operates as a significant hub for the local bus network in its own right. As such, whilst cross-boundary services make up a significant proportion 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 to drive improvements to the local bus offer.

In June 2021, following the release of the National Bus Strategy (NBS), CW&C published a statutory notice that they intended to prepare an Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan for local buses. The EP for CW&C was formally established in April 2022, meeting the DfT's 31<sup>st</sup> April 2022 deadline, through the creation of an EP Plan and Scheme in accordance with the Bus Services Act 2017.

This BSIP presents the strategic outline plan for improvements to the local bus offer in CW&C and describes how this will be enacted by the existing EP. This document has been prepared in full and extensive collaboration with local bus operators through EP Working Group meetings (see Section 1.3 for EP details).



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



Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&CC)



## 1.2 BSIP structure and reporting

In line with DfT guidance, this BSIP forms the key strategy document for delivering the vision set out in the NBS within CW&C. It provides a high-level overview of the interventions required to be delivered under the EP framework, clearly identifying both issues and opportunities across the full Local Transport Authority (LTA) area. Rigorous engagement with all parties involved in the EP continues to form a key part of the delivery of the bus network that CW&C (and its constituent operators) want to see: a network that secures maximum reliability, efficiency, convenience, comfort, connectivity, accessibility, and inclusivity for all.

In line with BSIP preparation guidance, the CW&C BSIP has been developed in collaboration with bus operators and other relevant parties, to outline both the short-term improvements and long-term ambitions for the bus offer within the borough. This updated BSIP presents:

- Contextual information and background including a description of the CW&C EP institutions and structure.

- A summary of the current bus offer in CW&C, and an analysis on how it is used and the challenges it faces.
- A summary of the changes and progress made within the bus network since the initial version of the BSIP.
- An overview of a series of proposed improvements that have been identified, to achieve the BSIP aims and objectives.
- Details of updated targets for measurable improvements to the local bus offer

This update of the BSIP has been prepared to cover what is programmed for delivery through to 2025/26 within the known funding envelope, followed by a set of priorities and proposals for implementation through to 2028/29, and a further set of interventions that will extend beyond this timeframe as part of a long-term view of at least ten years, up to 2035, in alignment with CW&C's emerging fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4).

A further update to the BSIP is likely to be required in 2025. After that, it is expected that the BSIP will be updated on a less than annual basis responding to need, including synchronising with cycles for Government's multiyear spending plans.



## 1.3 Enhanced Partnership context

### 1.3.1 Cheshire West and Chester Enhanced Partnership

The Enhanced Partnership (EP) for CW&C was established in April 2022 with the making of the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme documents. The EP is a statutory partnership between Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&CC) as LTA, and its local commercial bus operators that defines the terms by which they will work together to deliver strategic bus outcomes within the defined geographical area.

The Council liaises with neighbouring authorities regularly to discuss cross-boundary bus issues. An EP covering part or all of adjacent local authorities has been considered but will not be taken forward at this time. However, neighbouring authorities are represented on the EP Forum (described below).

The EP partners meet regularly to discuss common bus issues and opportunities, and to seek collaborative solutions to these. In particular, three regular groups have been established to oversee the operation of the EP and these are described in more detail in the following sub-sections. Further information on

specific details of the EP, particularly regarding governance is provided in the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Document.

#### 1.3.1.1 Enhanced Partnership Working Group

For the day-to-day operational decisions and discussion around the services that make up the Enhanced Partnership, an Enhanced Partnership Working Group has been incorporated to include CW&CC officers, and representatives from all commercial bus operators within CW&C (Arriva, Stagecoach, D&G Buses, Warrington's Own Buses, and Aintree Coachline).

EP Working Group meetings are held monthly and are used to discuss the ongoing operation and maintenance of the partnership, common issues to be resolved, and agreement of any small changes to services that may be implemented without the requirement to statutorily vary the Plan or the Scheme. To date the EP Working Group have discussed a wide range of topics including, but not limited to, operator/network updates, marketing campaigns, the Bus Passenger Charter, BSIP enhancements, patronage growth, customer satisfaction, funding sources, bus driver recruitment, departure changes and data and monitoring.



The Working Group also identifies the specification and scope of any significant decisions to be taken to the Enhanced Partnership Forum including those that require variations to the Plan or Scheme.

#### 1.3.1.2 Enhanced Partnership Forum

The Enhanced Partnership is overseen by an Enhanced Partnership Forum, held on a quarterly basis, in which all Operators are entitled to participate, although individual Operator attendance is voluntary. In addition, from time-to-time other external organisations are also invited to join the EP Forum on an advisory basis for fixed periods to provide specialist expertise.

The EP Forum provides opportunities for discussing issues of all kinds affecting the Cheshire West and Chester bus network, consulting with and building consensus across the various stakeholders and making recommendations for decisions to the EP Board. To date the EP Forum has discussed the Local Transport Plan, funding sources and new initiatives, marketing campaigns, customer surveys, data and monitoring, and opportunities to increase forum engagement.

A full list of members of the Enhanced Partnership Forum is included as Appendix A, but it includes representatives from:

- Aintree Coachline
- Arriva North West and Wales
- Changing Lives Together
- Enterprise Cheshire & Warrington
- Cheshire East Council
- CW&CC – Senior Access Officer
- CW&CC - Economic Growth
- CW&CC - Transport
- Chester Zoo
- D&G Buses
- Flintshire County Council
- Halton Borough Council
- Liverpool City Region
- Marketing Cheshire
- NHS (including Countess of Cheshire Hospital)
- Shropshire County Council
- Stagecoach Merseyside and South Lancashire
- Transport Focus
- University of Chester
- Warrington Borough Council
- Warrington's Own Buses
- Wrexham Borough Council

#### 1.3.1.3 Enhanced Partnership Board

The EP Board is the decision-making body of the Enhanced Partnership and meets on a quarterly basis, within a fortnight of the EP Forum meeting, to discuss and vote on key decisions. This may include making statutory variations to the EP Scheme



where required. Membership of the EP Board comprises two large operators (voting), two small operators (voting) and two CW&CC officers to represent fully contracted service operators (voting with decision veto). Board meetings require a quorum of at least two operator representatives, with a minimum of one per category (Large/Small) and one Council representative. Any other bus operator, and Council representatives are able to attend the EP Board meetings as observers but do not have the right to vote.

To date, the EP Board has focused on agreeing its role and responsibilities, establishing governance procedures and the Bus Passenger Charter, and agreeing priority areas for action in line with the BSIP and other potential funding sources.

Each of the core operators within the borough (both large and small) engage with the Enhanced Partnership and have found it to be a successful endeavour to improve coordination and collaboration between themselves, other operators, and CW&CC council. Letters of support from most bus operators, including all major operators, within the region are included in Appendix B.

### **Stagecoach Quote of Support**

“Stagecoach wishes to endorse and commend the excellent working relationship that we have with the team at Cheshire West & Chester Council, which has only grown since the formation of the Enhanced Partnership. Good partnership working is based on all parties working toward a common goal, with trust and communication key to the process.

Through a process of bi-weekly catch-up meetings, regular EP working group, forum and board meetings and informal discussions, we feel that collaboration between the Stagecoach team and the Transport and Infrastructure team at Cheshire West & Chester Council is a model which we aspire to replicate in other areas.”









## 1.4 A vision in line with the National Bus Strategy

The DfT acknowledge that almost all social, economic, and environmental objectives for the role of the bus within the local transport system can be boiled down to the simple, practical, and measurable objective to grow bus patronage.

In response to falling passenger numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic related national lockdowns, the NBS set out a mission to rebuild bus patronage and mode share, first to 2019 levels, and then to grow beyond these levels. The NBS noted however that this can only be achieved by ensuring that buses are an attractive alternative to the car for more people. This is a process which remains ongoing in the context of the cost-of-living crisis and changes to working and shopping patterns in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effective collaboration between the LTA and respective bus service providers underpins much of what the NBS aspires to achieve. Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&CC) has decided to pursue the EP approach and has worked closely with local bus operators to develop its BSIP and form its statutory EP in April 2022. The EP provides the framework for implementing

the interventions contained within the BSIP and dictates the statutory roles and responsibilities of each partner over such factors as timetabling, ticketing, fare-setting, quality, and network co-ordination.

The NBS and this local BSIP outline what is needed 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, accompanied by the poverty emergency declaration in October 2020.

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 vision is for this plan to bring life-changing environmental, social, and economic benefits for the borough. The key goals of the NBS, and thus the key goals for all BSIPs are outlined below in Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.1: Key Goals of the National Bus Strategy**



Source: National Bus Strategy, 2021



## 1.5 A vision in line with the Local Transport Plan

CW&C's emerging Fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4) will help to address local transport issues by providing a framework for decisions on future investment. It will set the vision and objectives for transport to support wider goals and ambitions, establish policies to help achieve these goals and outline plans for implementing these policies.

The LTP4 evidence base, which supports the development of the LTP4 providing an overview of the transport networks in CW&C, takes account of national, regional and local priorities including the key vision of the BSIP: "to make bus a mode choice for the full cross-section of society by removing barriers to travel." The relationship between the BSIP and LTP4 is shown below in Figure 1.2.

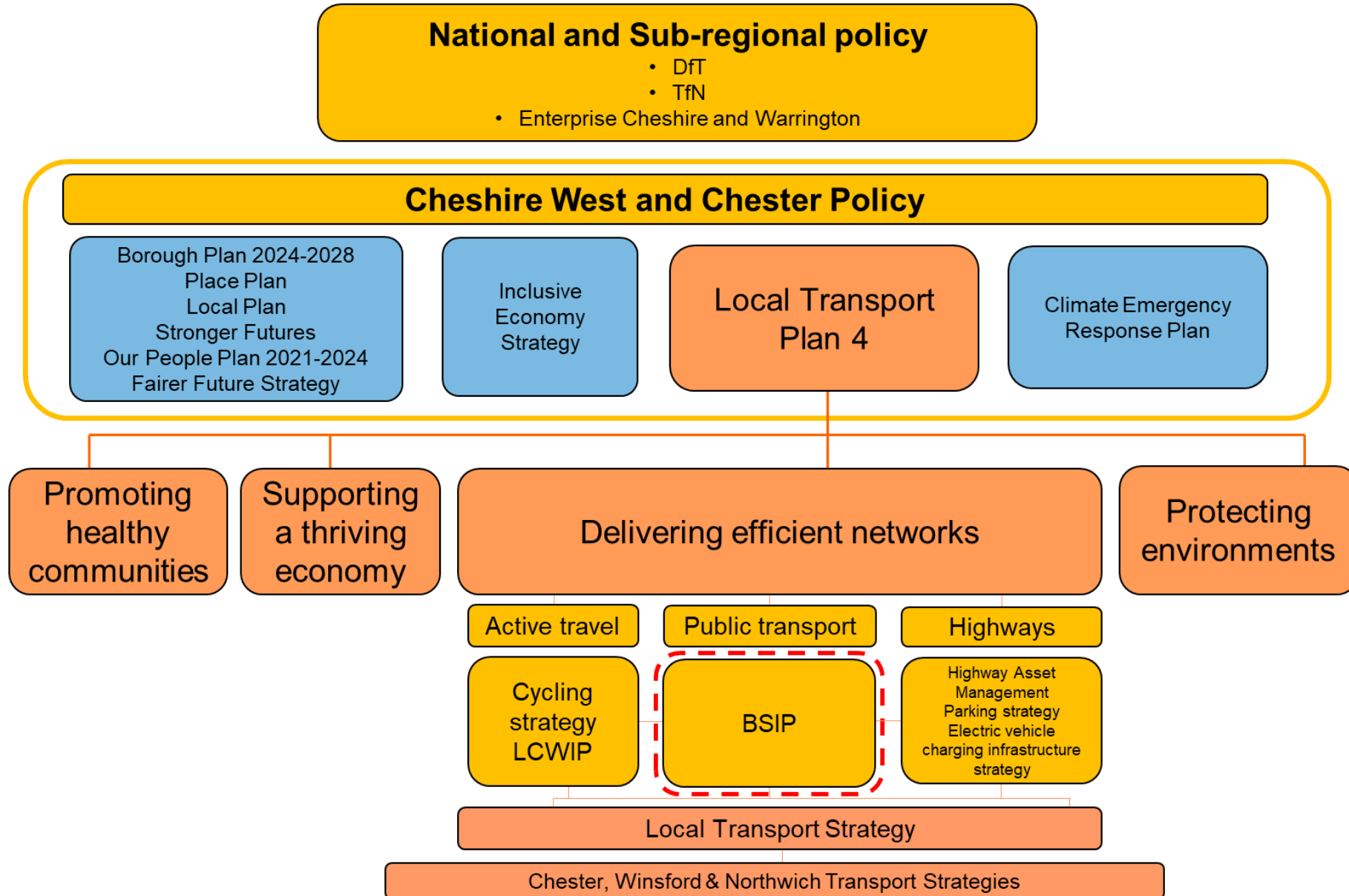
The LTP4 evidence base recognises that accessibility to opportunity is not equal across the borough, resulting in many people encountering difficulties when trying to access employment, education, healthcare, leisure, and retail. Despite areas of deprivation, overall car ownership in the borough is

above the national average at 83%, 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. 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.

The LTP4 evidence base also 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 (including Chester Park & Ride) 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.



**Figure 1.2: BSIP Policy Alignment**



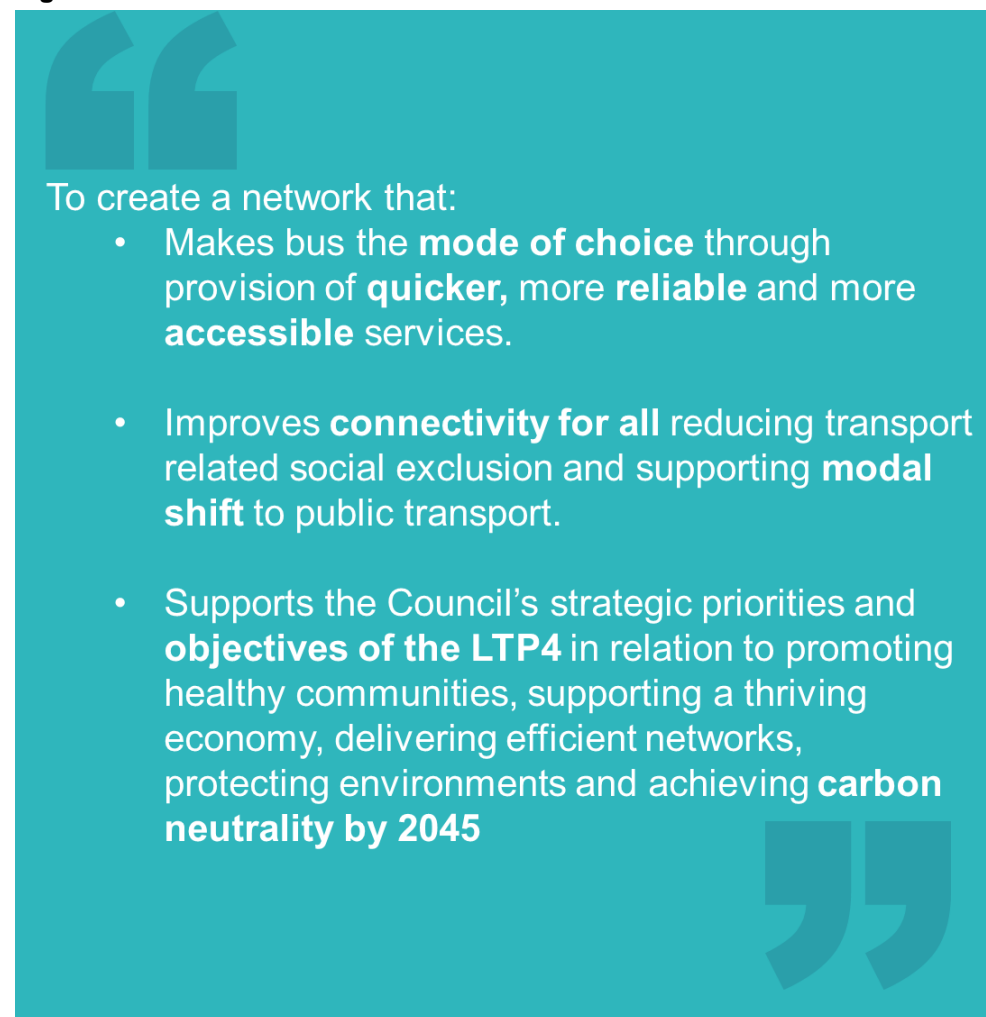


## 1.6 Our bus vision

In CW&C, a vision for the network has been developed in collaboration with Local Authority officers (with guidance from elected members) and the Enhanced Partnership Working Group and set out within the 2021 BSIP. This was developed in response to issues, constraints and barriers associated with bus travel in the borough and made a number of recommendations on priorities for investment. As part of the BSIP 2024 Refresh, this vision has been revisited in discussion with CW&CC and the EP Working Group and updated to ensure alignment with the emerging LTP4 for CW&C. The updated bus vision, associated objectives, and the alignment to LTP4 themes is outlined in Figure 1.3 and Table 1.1.

It is hoped that, through the implementation of the BSIP in CW&C, that the EP 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.








Figure 1.3: Our Bus Vision







Source: Cheshire West and Chester



**Table 1.1: CW&C BSIP 2024 Objectives and LTP4 Alignment**

Theme	Objective(s)	Alignment to LTP4				Summary of rationale
		Promoting healthy communities	Supporting a thriving economy	Delivering efficient networks	Protecting environments	
Connectivity	1. Enhance transport connectivity within and between urban and rural areas and across local, regional and national borders.					Addressing connectivity gaps across the borough, creating better integration.
Efficiency	2. Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks, that are integrated, customer focused, and resilient to provide an attractive and viable alternative to the private car.					Contributing to efficient networks across the borough making buses faster and more reliable. Reducing car dependency and associated car km/vehicle emissions through more attractive service.
Economic growth and regeneration	3. 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.					Increasing connectivity to key centres, regeneration sites and employment areas to, from and within CW&C for residents and businesses.
Sustainability and environment	4. Reduce carbon emissions from transport by adapting our transport networks to take advantage of low carbon and renewable resources. 5. Protect and enhance the local environment within Cheshire West and surrounding areas.					Encouraging use of bus as a sustainable mode of transport to reduce carbon emissions and protect and enhance the natural environment.



Theme	Objective(s)	Alignment to LTP4				Summary of rationale
		Promoting healthy communities	Supporting a thriving economy	Delivering efficient networks	Protecting environments	
Inclusive networks	<p>6. Create a highly accessible, affordable, sustainable transport network to increase equality of opportunity.</p> <p>7. Install minimum standards of transport accessibility for all areas regardless of individual circumstance.</p>					Increasing accessibility to transport services and opportunities for all ensuring communities are well connected, and reducing transport related social exclusion. Ensuring alternatives to private car to remove barriers to accessing employment, training, health or other services.
Health, safety and wellbeing	8. Contribute to safer and more secure transport in Cheshire West and surrounding areas and promote types of transport which are beneficial to health.					Increased use of sustainable modes, enhanced personal safety and security through improved accessibility and high quality facilities.

Source: Mott MacDonald





Chester Bus Interchange

ARISTA COFFEE

STATION NEW



## 2 Current offer to bus passengers

This section provides an overview of the existing bus network, to show the extent and quality of the bus offer to the residents, visitors 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.

### 2.1 Bus service network and frequency

The diverse borough of Cheshire West and Chester is served by over 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, to a lesser extent, Northwich and Winsford in the east of the borough – CW&C's four most populous settlements. As Map 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

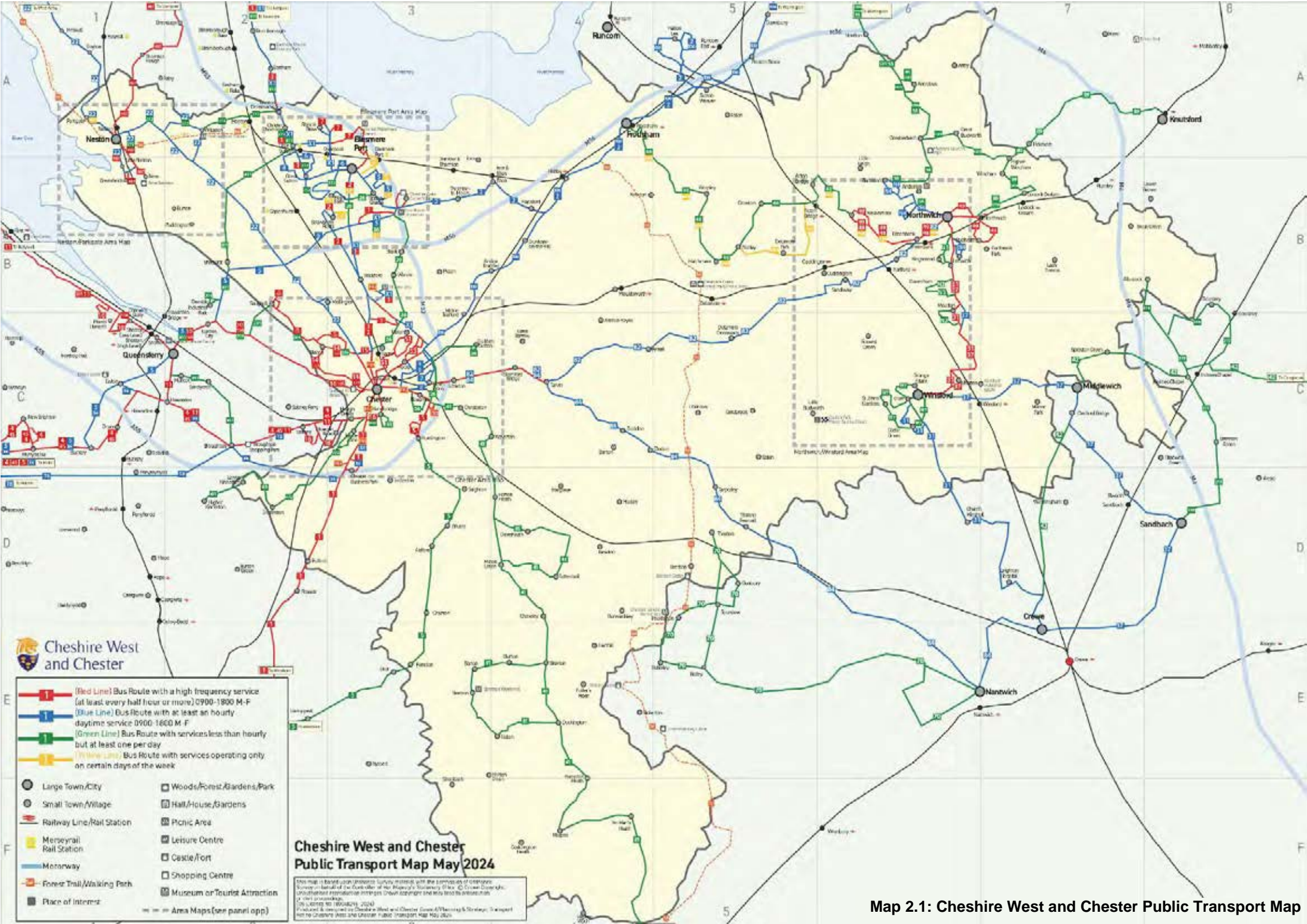
inter-urban services in Chester tend to run radially to and from the urban centre of Chester, rather than as cross-city services.

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. Map 2.1 below shows that many of the villages in these areas are not served by any frequent bus service.

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.

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.





Map 2.1: Cheshire West and Chester Public Transport Map



**Table 2.1: Buses per hour by urban centre**

Settlement	Buses per hour				
	Weekday Daytime	Weekday Evening	Saturday Daytime	Saturday Evening	Sunday
Chester	74	15	74	15	34
Ellesmere Port	11	3	10	3	5
Northwich	9	1	8	1	0
Winsford	3	1	2	1	0
Frodsham	4	1	3	1	1
Neston	4	1	3	1	1

Source: Mott MacDonald, June 2024

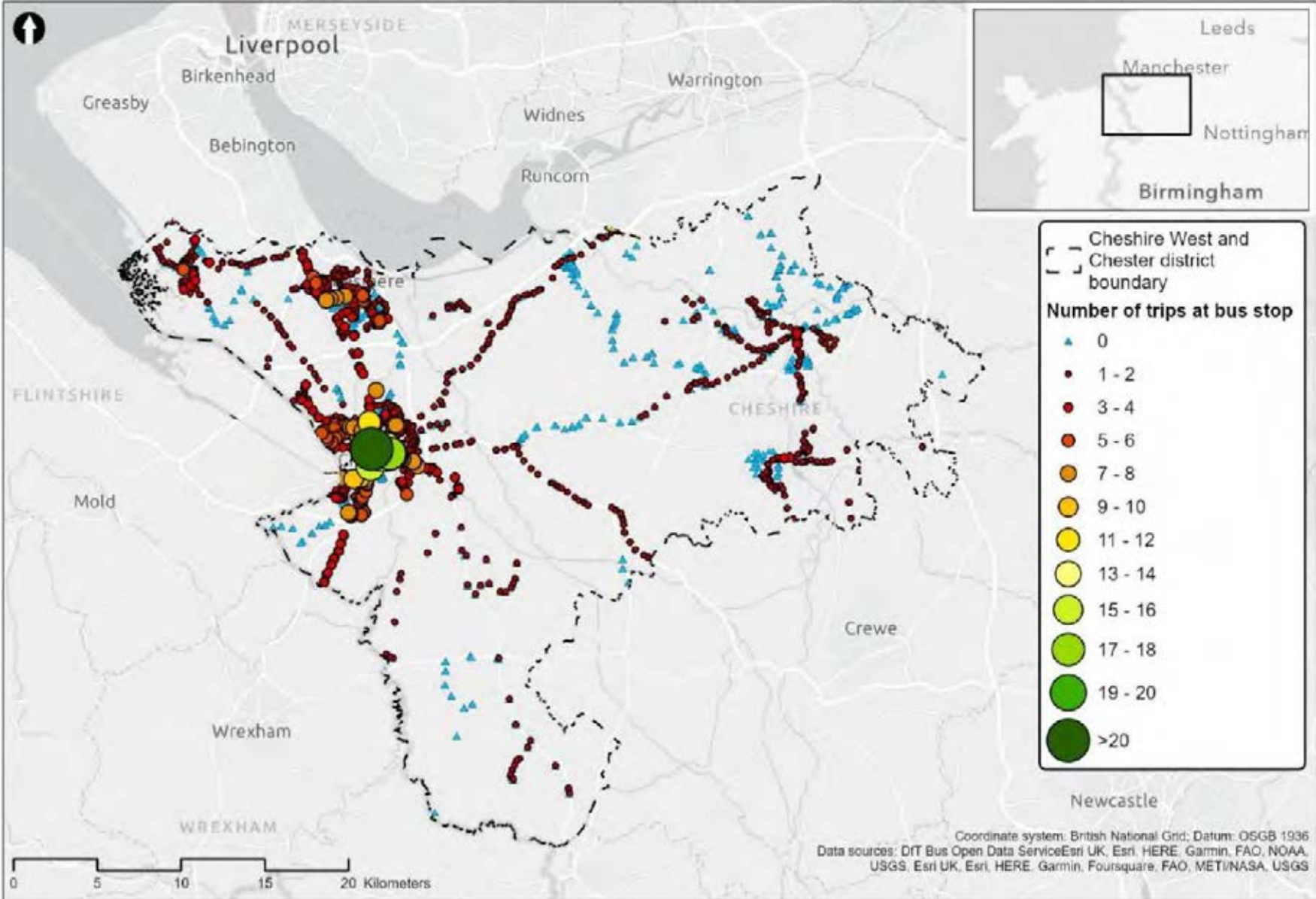
Counts of bus services per hour in each urban centre highlight the concentration of services in the western part of the borough, particularly in Chester, and demonstrate the very large disparity in accessibility to bus services across the borough.

Outside of Chester, there is particularly limited provision of services during the evening and on Sundays. Northwich, Winsford, Frodsham and Neston have very few (if any) bus services 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, particular concentrations exist around Ellesmere Port and Winsford, which are also localities with relatively poor levels of service provision.

Map 2.2 and Map 2.3 show the frequency of bus services that run during the weekday AM peak hour along routes and at stops (including those which are inactive) respectively. These show that bus frequency is highest in Chester followed by Ellesmere Port, but mostly hourly everywhere else. They also show sparse rural coverage, and no weekday AM connection between east and west sides of the borough, or between Northwich and areas to the north. Furthermore, consultation with various groups including local businesses has indicated that a common complaint with existing bus services is that they do not start early enough or finish late enough to be useful for all employment, education, or leisure purposes.



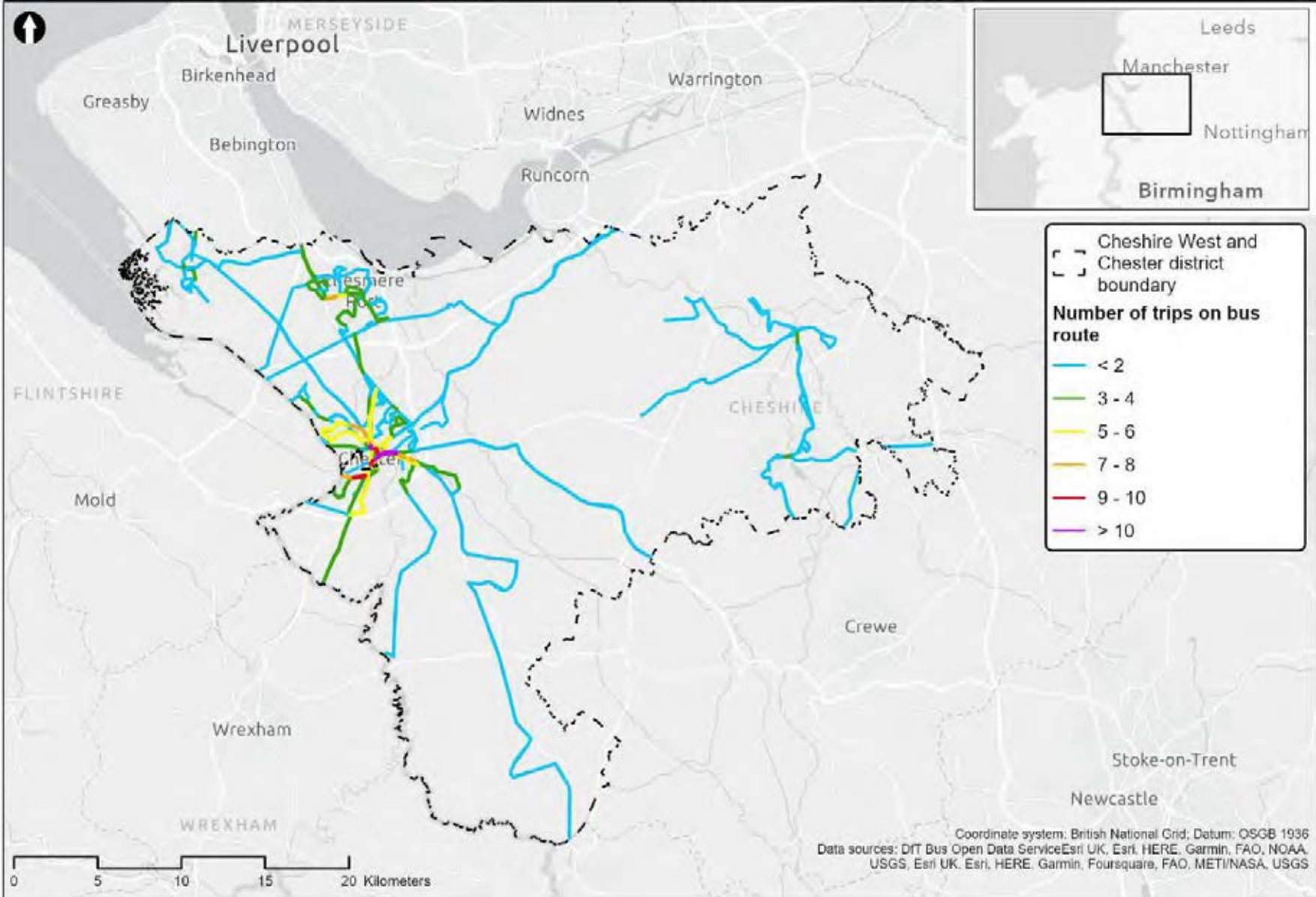
Map 2.2: Weekday AM peak hour bus frequency by stop



Source: DfT Bus Open Data Source, May 2023



Map 2.3: Weekday AM peak hour bus frequency by route



Source: DfT Bus Open Data Source, May 2023



### Case Study 1: Service Improvements

BSIP funding has been used to maintain and enhance the bus network in CW&C, with several services receiving financial support since February 2024:

- Daytime frequency increased to every 30 mins:
  - Service 7 Chester to Vicars Cross
  - Service 49 Northwich Town Service
- Improved evening service provision:
  - Service 2 Chester to Ellesmere Port (Mon-Sat)
  - Service 16 Chester to Saltney (Mon-Fri)
  - Service 37 Northwich to Sandbach (Mon-Sat) in partnership with Cheshire East
  - Service 41 Chester to Tattenhall (1 journey retained)
  - Services 51 & 53 Chester to Plas Newton / Kingsway (Fri & Sat only)
- Improved / retained Saturday service provision:
  - Service 26 Guilden Sutton to Chester/Ellesmere Port
  - Service 82 Chester to Northwich

- Extended hours of operation:
  - Service 40 Chester City Centre/Rail Station Shuttle
- New / retained services:
  - Service 23 Neston to Ellesmere Port
  - Service N3 Northwich to Mount Pleasant/Moulton



Service N3 is a new bus service which has been introduced in the Northwich area. The N3 restores links between Northwich Town Centre, Mount Pleasant, Davenham and Moulton Village.



**Table 2.2: Number of services per hour by operators, 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	
<b>Arriva</b>	18	20%	7	39%	18	20%	7	39%	8	20%
<b>Stagecoach</b>	42	46%	7	39%	41	46%	7	39%	25	66%
<b>Blacon Pointer VQP</b>	14	15%	3	15%	14	15%	3	15%	5	13%
<b>M &amp; H Coaches</b>	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Aintree Coachlines</b>	6	6%	0	0%	5	6%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>D &amp; G Buses</b>	7	8%	1	6%	7	8%	1	6%	0	0%
<b>Al's Coaches</b>	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Warrington's Own</b>	3	3%	0	0%	2	3%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>89</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>37</b>	

Source: Mott MacDonald, 2022

Table 2.2 show that Arriva and Stagecoach are the dominant operators in CW&C, operating 80% of daytime services. 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 14/14A/15/15A Blacon Pointer routes is an exception to this and a best practice example within the borough of cooperation between operators and the LTA; in this case 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 4 in Section 2.3 for more information on this.

Compared to 2022, there has been a small increase in the number of services operated, particularly in the weekday daytime. D&G Buses also have a larger presence in CW&C due to the registration of commercial routes in Northwich/Winsford following de-registration and closure of Arriva's Winsford depot.



### 2.1.1 Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)

CW&CC was awarded £1.075m from the DfT's Rural Mobility Fund for a three-year trial of an innovative demand-responsive public transport service for residents living in rural and suburban areas. Part of the bid submission to Government was to consider an area with challenging public transport connectivity. The area south of Frodsham and Helsby, as shown in Map 2.4, was selected for the trial as a community that is rural with a low density, dispersed population and high car ownership, yet features a few railway stations. Over time conventional bus services have become increasingly ill-suited to residents' needs and are reduced to a single route. A DRT service provides completely new journey opportunities for a large part of the population. For example, the main part of the area has not seen evening bus services since the 1980s.

itravel was launched on 31 July 2023, with passengers able to pre-book their journeys, mainly using the app or via the website or Stagecoach call centre. The service operates 7am until 7pm Monday-Friday. CW&CC were also able to successfully negotiate the inclusion of the service within the £2 fare scheme.

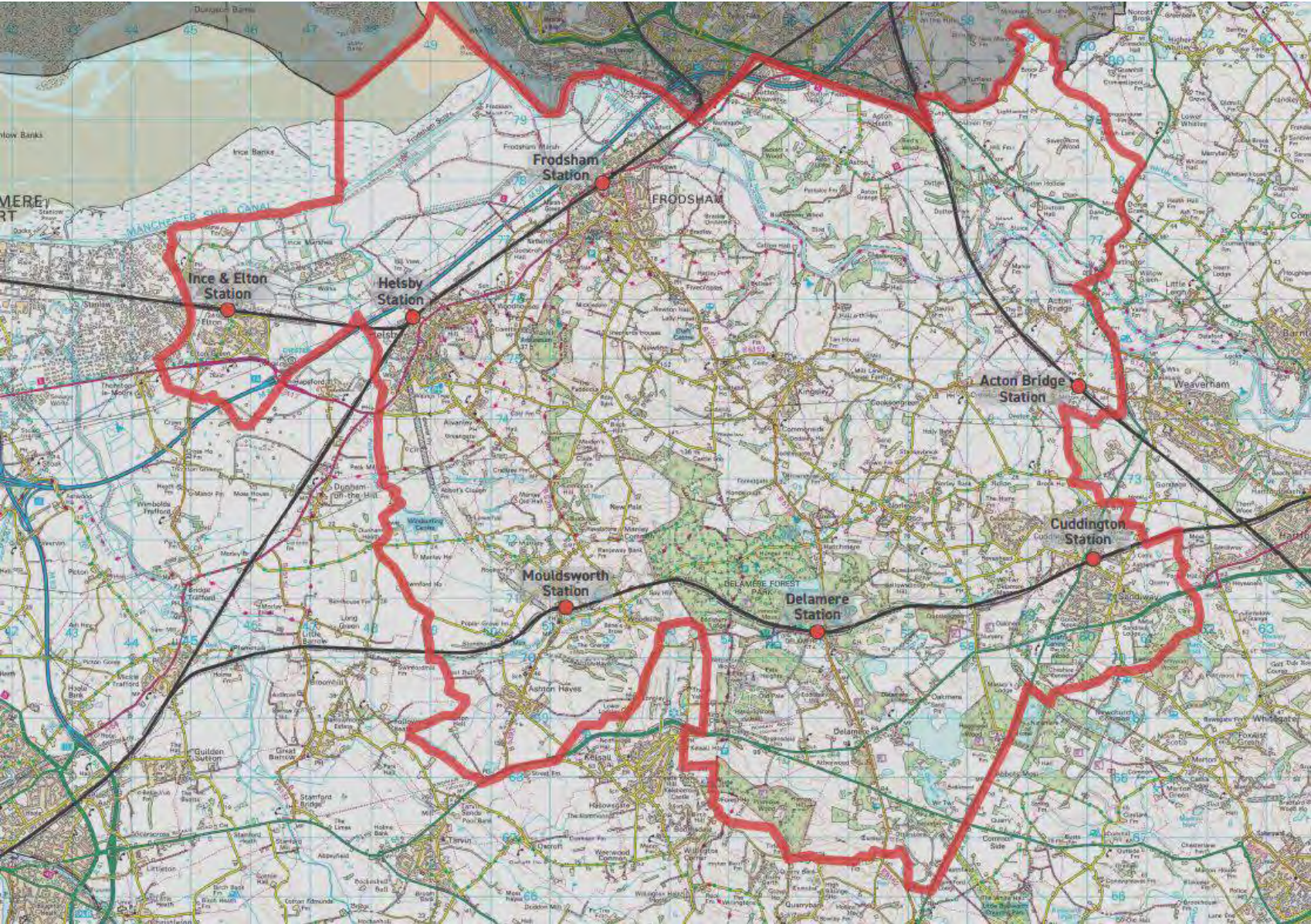
#### Case Study 2: DRT in Frodsham and Helsby

Initially, the two vehicles operating the service were dedicated to specific areas, a rural and town service. However, due to the types of bookings received, one vehicle was utilised more than the other. To improve the efficiency of the vehicles and working with the software supplier Padam, both vehicles were programmed in the back-office system to 'free flow operation' meaning both buses are now flexible and able to roam the travel area. The itravel operator Stagecoach, worked with Padam, to review the journey data collected and adjusted the ratios accordingly to ensure vehicles operated to time, considering the route challenges with narrow roads and speed restrictions. Many new virtual bus stops have been introduced to meet the customer need, broaden appeal, and enhance the customer proposition, facilitating enhanced access to employment, education and social engagements.

As of 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024, itravel has provided 9,525 journeys carrying 12,784 passengers. Of the 3,650 driver and service ratings, 98% of respondents gave a 5 out of 5 rating.



Map 2.4: CW&C itravel Rural Mobility Fund Pilot area



Source: Cheshire West and Chester, 2024



ittravel >>>

Connecting People and Places

On Demand



ittravel on-demand bus



Service >>>



or Phone 0330 678 1545



Funded by  
UK Government



Cheshire West  
and Chester



### 2.1.2 Frequent service accessibility

In 2021, a 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.

The data in Figure 2.1 below shows the proportion of the CW&C population that lives within a 400m radius of each type of bus stop - 400m equates to a 5-minute walk and is considered to be the maximum desirable walking distance to nearest bus stops.<sup>1</sup>

This shows that just over half (54%) of the population live within 400m of a bus stop with at least 1 bus per hour in the AM peak hour. However, the chart also shows that just under a half of the population (46%) either have no access to a bus stop within 400m or only have access to a bus stop not served by buses in the AM peak hour. These latter population areas are more likely to be found in the rural parts of the borough and highlight the

challenge in serving these communities by bus and demonstrates why car dependence is so high.

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 significantly lower (with up to 30% of households with no access to a car within these areas). 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 transport-related social exclusion (TRSE).

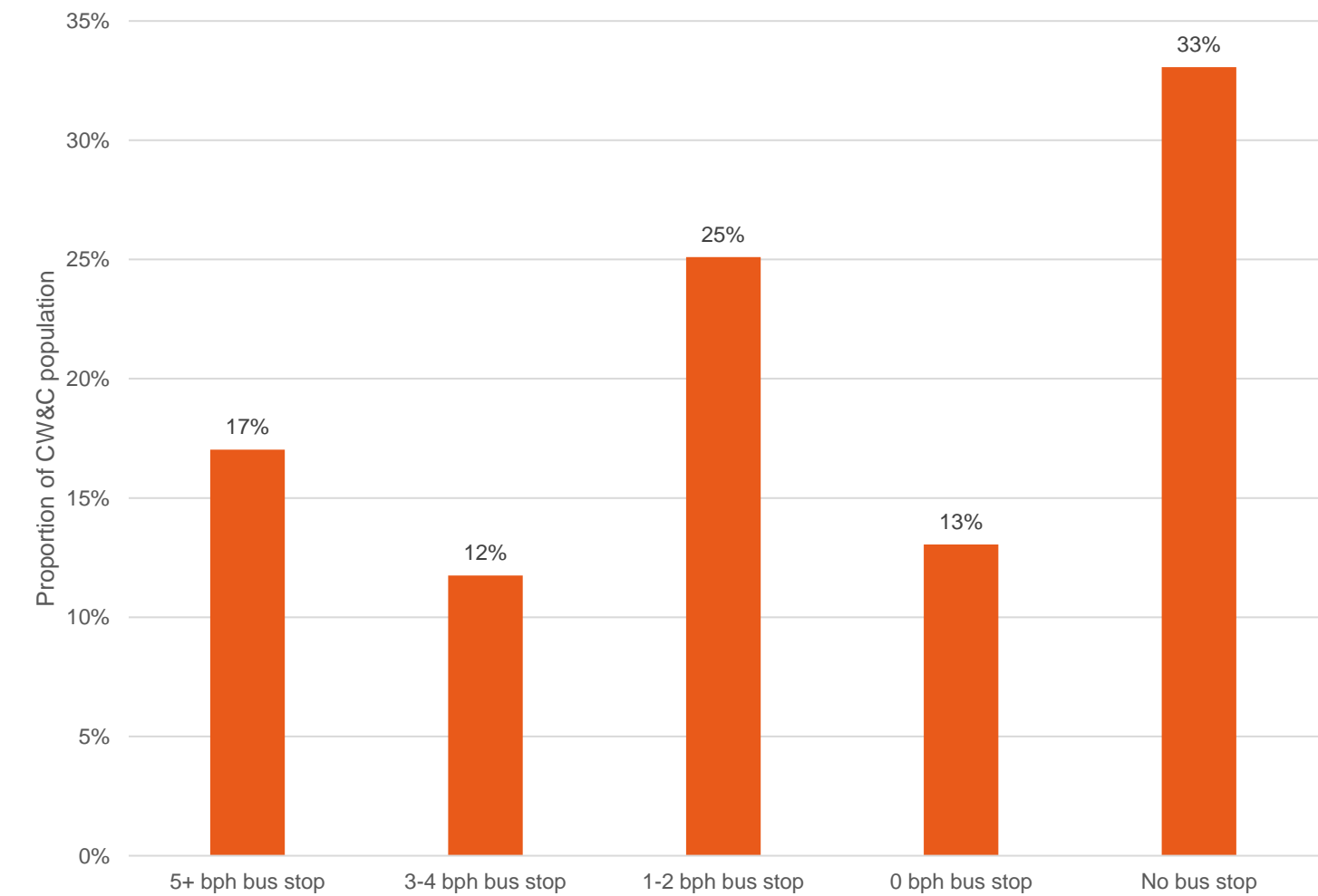
The climate emergency declared by CW&CC in 2019 was intended to serve as a clear statement on the Council's approach to addressing climate change, an increasing threat to the borough. Furthermore, the Fairer Futures strategy was adopted in March 2022, based on a comprehensive engagement exercise and co-produced with people with lived experience of poverty.

---

<sup>1</sup> Planning for Walking, section 6.4



Figure 2.1: Number of residents within 400m of a bus stop, by weekday AM peak-hour stop frequency



Source: ONS Census population 2021, DfT Bus Open Data Source (bph = buses per hour)



2.1.3 Bus journey times

Table 2.3 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 where relevant include waiting times between buses at changes. Many of the journeys in the table require two, and in some cases three, buses. It can be seen that all journeys are quicker by car than by bus. It should

also 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 between car and bus – over four times as long for Winsford to Neston, and nearly five 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 and cost.

Table 2.3: Comparative journey times between selected locations (including waiting time at changes for bus)

	Ellesmere Port	Northwich	Winsford	Frodsham	Helsby	Neston
Chester	Car: 19 minutes Bus: 35 minutes	35 minutes 63 minutes	30 minutes 120 minutes	24 minutes 31 minutes	18 minutes 22 minutes	20 minutes 41 minutes
Ellesmere Port	-	30 minutes 110 minutes	35 minutes 160 minutes	20 minutes 36 minutes	14 minutes 27 minutes	20 minutes 36 minutes
Northwich	-	-	14 minutes 24 minutes	24 minutes 55 minutes	30 minutes 80 minutes	45 minutes 160 minutes
Winsford	-	-	-	28 minutes 103 minutes	29 minutes 131 minutes	50 minutes 210 minutes
Frodsham	-	-	-	-	5 minutes 8 minutes	28 minutes 75 minutes
Helsby	-	-	-	-	-	22 minutes 64 minutes

Source: Mott MacDonald. 2024







## 2.2 Bus priority measures

There are currently 2km of bus lanes in the CW&C area, all of which are within the Chester area as shown in Map 2.5.

Frodsham Street is an area of bus only-access restriction near Hoole Way roundabout. General traffic is allowed on Frodsham Street, but the road is designed to prioritise pedestrian and cycle movements, creating a shared space where traffic is the 'guest'. The bus lanes serve both regular bus services and the Park & Ride networks, along with taxis, private hire vehicles and motorcycles, creating faster journey times and uncongested road spaces for these vehicles.

Two Emergency Active Travel Lanes (which also allowed buses) on Boughton Road and on Liverpool Road 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 & 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.

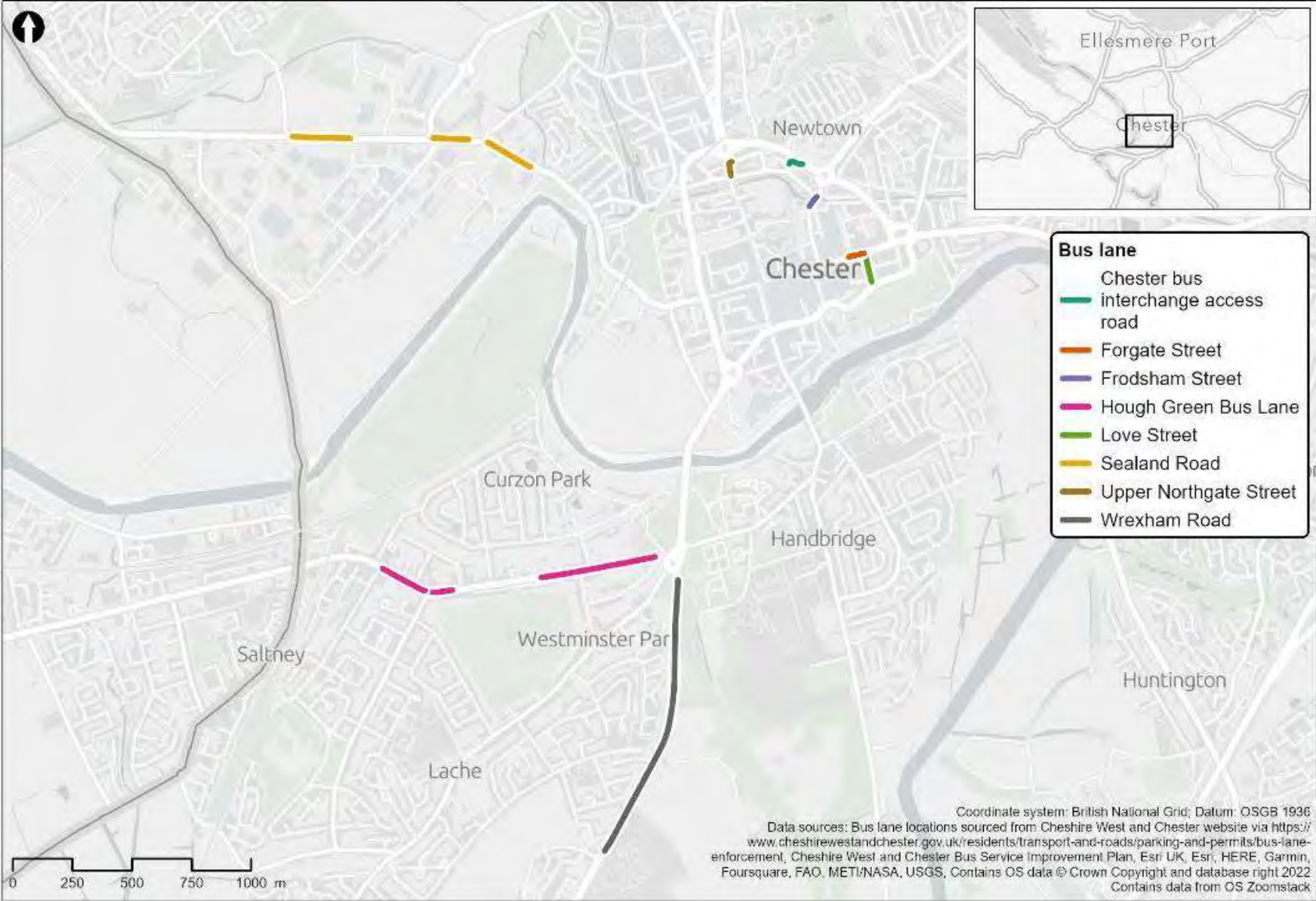
These measures work most effectively in areas of congestion and delay for buses and other vehicles, and need to be carefully located so as to cause maximum benefit for non-car trips rather than in locations where they are easily incorporated but of potentially less benefit.

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. Operators have expressed desire to work collaboratively within the Enhanced Partnership to improve bus priority provision in the borough and a new study to look at potential locations for improvements was started in Spring 2024.



Map 2.5: Current Chester bus lane network



Source: Mott MacDonald, 2023



### Case Study 3: Moving Traffic Offences

From May 2022, councils outside Greater London could apply to the DfT to be designated as a civil enforcement area for moving traffic offences. The powers enable local authorities to enforce contraventions such as making prohibited left- or right-hand turns and accessing no entry roads using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera technology, with a view to reducing dangerous manoeuvres, congestion, and disruption on the road network contributing to increased efficiency of bus journeys.

Following consultation and consideration of traffic counts and accident data, four potential locations were selected for enforcement, three in Chester and one in Ellesmere Port:

- Nuns Road/New Crane Street Junction, Chester (no right turn into Nuns Road, weekdays 4:30 - 6pm)
- Nuns Road/Grosvenor Road Junction, Chester (must turn left into Grosvenor Road, anytime)
- Canal Street/Northgate Street Junction, Chester (no right turn into Northgate Street except buses, anytime)

- Civic Way, Ellesmere Port (no entry except buses, anytime)

The cameras in these locations will capture moving vehicles that contravene traffic regulations. Warning signage has been placed at all locations advising motorists that enforcement will commence on 20 May 2024. A series of media and social media releases has also been planned alongside engagement with stakeholders, for example, with the hackney carriage and private hire trades, residents', and business groups.





## 2.3 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 Voluntary Quality Bus Partnership (VQBP) between Arriva and Stagecoach. Arriva, Stagecoach, D&G Buses, and Warrington's Own Buses all offer 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.

Stagecoach offers a £17.50 adult ticket called the Megarider, including unlimited weekly travel in Chester to the City Centre, Saltney and Saughall. Arriva also offer a weekly ticket in Chester for £17.00 covering places such as Handbridge, Broughton and Queensferry. Arriva offer a family day ticket for £9.60, and Warrington's Own offers a family day ticket for £13.50.

Stagecoach and Arriva also offer term-time and annual student passes.

Following the Government's scheme to cap fares for single bus journeys, as shown in Figure 2.2 most services in CW&C currently offer £2 for a single bus ticket for the majority of

journeys. This cap will last until 31 December 2024. This includes all bus routes except for Aintree Coachlines services 23, 40 and 41, and M&H service T8.

**Figure 2.2: £2 Fare Cap Promotional Poster**



Source: HM Government

For simplicity, Table 2.4 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 2.4: Summary bus fares by service operators**

Operator	Blacon Pointer Day Ticket	Adult Day*	Weekly ticket	Network Return
Stagecoach	£3.20	£4.90	£17.50	-
Arriva	£3.00	£5.10	£17.00	-
Warrington's Own Buses	-	£5.90	£23.00^	-
D&G Buses	-	-	£21.00^	£6.00

Source: Mott MacDonald, June 2024, \* Most appropriate local zone selected, ^ for the full network

The creation of a VQBP to establish a multi-operator ticketing scheme demonstrates the ability and willingness to collaborate in this way under appropriate conditions. There is the potential for the Blacon Pointer partnership between Arriva and Stagecoach to act as a blueprint for other similar arrangements.

Apart from the VQBP, the only other multi-operator ticketing offer 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 quite tightly contained. In May 2024, the Chester City Rail Link bus was added to the PlusBus scheme. This is a particularly beneficial addition to the scheme, as one of the first interactions visitors have with buses in the city.

The Council previously offered a stored value smartcard, the Cheshire Travelcard, which enabled passengers to top up with cash and then use it to pay for tickets on the bus. However, this has been discontinued, as part of the ongoing multi-operator Smart Ticketing strategy in this and neighbouring regions. The TravelCard generally had low passenger usage and better offers are often available from operators, hence its discontinuation.

In place of the TravelCard, CW&C and operators have been working together to progress a multi-operator ticket that will make use of back-office facilities being developed through national schemes such as Project Coral. Dialogue is also ongoing with both Transport for the North and Transport for Wales on how CW&C can effectively integrate with wider smart ticketing strategies.







#### Case Study 4: Blacon Pointer (14/14A/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.

## 2.4 Passenger experience

Passenger experience refers to five key aspects of bus travel which have a direct impact on a passenger's journey from start to finish as outlined below and in Figure 2.5:

### 2.4.1 Waiting and interchange

CW&C has a total of 2,211 active bus stops across the borough, of which 1,612 are marked. Of these 563 have a shelter and 345 have seating or external seating. The Council is responsible for maintaining most of these bus stops and the shelters, with 320 shelters cleaned monthly or quarterly, while a further 114 are maintained with advertising provided by Clear Channel.

Dedicated high-quality interchange facilities are available both in Chester and Ellesmere Port including real-time information, retail, high quality toilets (Chester only), and informal provision for bus layover and staff welfare. In Northwich, there are seven bus stops along Watling Street in the town centre which serves as an interchange, whilst in Winsford, Neston, Frodsham and Helsby there is no dedicated bus terminus and are served by purely on-street facilities.



### 2.4.2 Information and network identity

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.

Whilst there is currently no coherent local branding across the borough, CW&C has established easily recognisable, unique branding across its Park & Ride (P&R) fleet (Figure 2.3).

Simultaneously, this has allowed the authority to coordinate and promote dedicated marketing campaigns (Figure 2.4).

**Figure 2.3: Chester Park & Ride Bus Branding**



Source: CW&C, 2024

**Figure 2.4: P&R Marketing**



The fragmented nature of the wider bus network in CW&C presents challenges for maintaining their website and online resources with up-to-date information on bus routes, timetables, and fares. In an attempt to improve information provision, CW&C have refreshed their 'itravelsmart' app, to include information on hire transport e.g., enterprise car club, as well as community transport and P&R operations.

Real time information (RTI) screens are provided at key bus boarding locations across the borough:

- Chester Bus Interchange
- Chester City Centre
- Chester P&R sites
- Chester Railway Station
- Ellesmere Port Bus Interchange
- Northwich Bus Interchange

A total of 1,357 bus stops across the borough have timetable information supported through Novus FX, the modern software for the provision of electronic and printed information.

### 2.4.3 Accessibility and inclusion

All vehicles are accessible with space for wheelchairs and pushchairs. Some have full kneeling technology for almost level



boarding. Next stop audio and visual announcements are currently available on Stagecoach service 1/X1 and Chester P&R. In line with improved active travel provision, raised kerbs have been installed at specific bus stop locations within Helsby.

#### **2.4.4 Safety**

Arriva and Stagecoach all have on-board CCTV, with drivers receiving training on counterterrorism and supporting passengers with their needs. A review of transport commissioning services is looking to reinstate independent travel training to ensure transport within the borough is inclusive.

CCTV is provided at Chester Bus Interchange 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, covering all operational aspects and public realm areas in partnership with Cheshire Constabulary. CCTV is also in place at Boughton Heath P&R site, with plans for this to be expanded to the other sites in alignment with the P&R procurement (see Case Study 5 below).

A total of 1571 bus stops have adjacent street lighting.

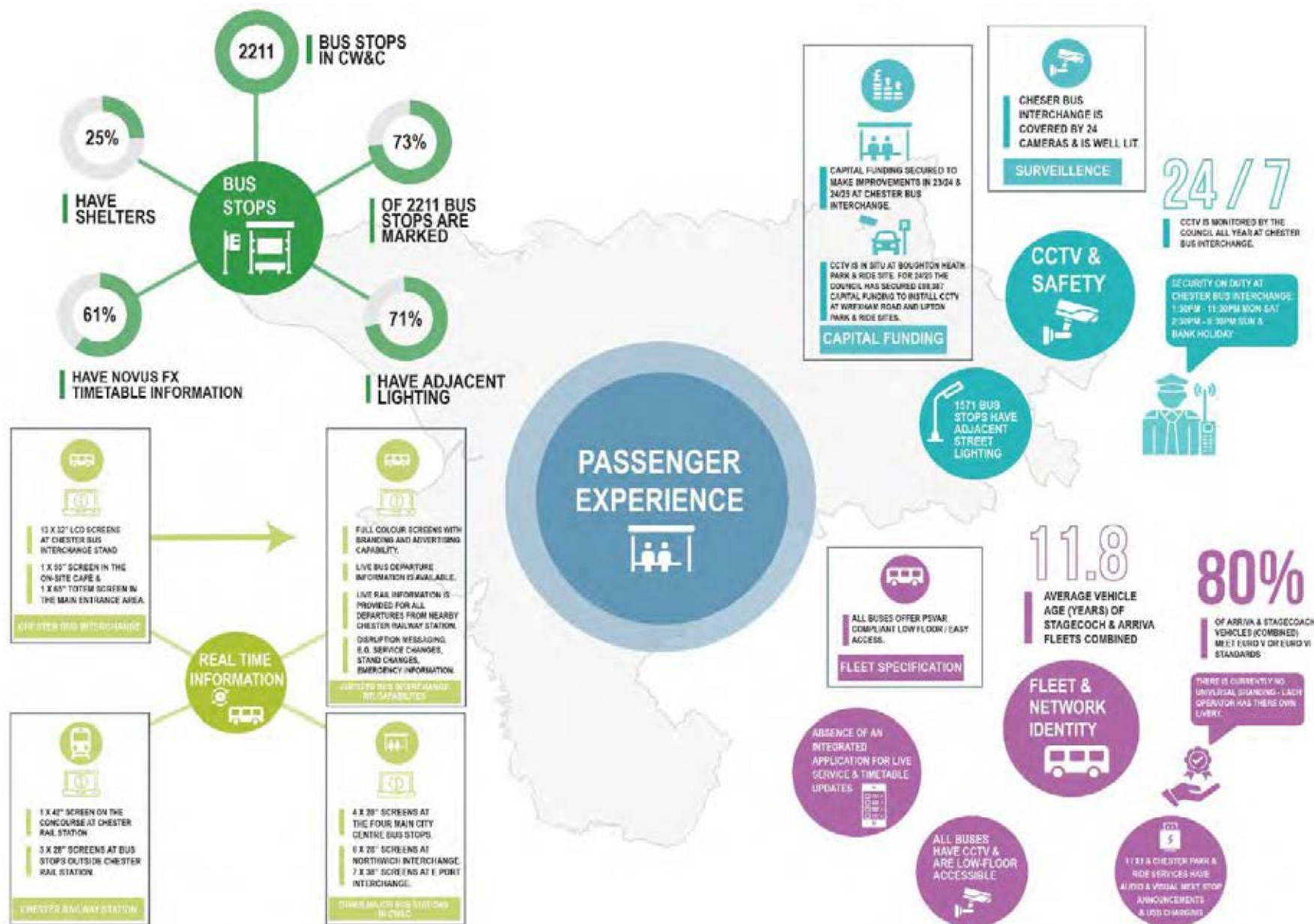
#### **2.4.5 Fleet/Vehicle Condition**

Evidence from the operators suggests that vehicle fleet age in CW&C is older than the average across the UK, particularly in the case of larger operators where fleet investment is often channelled towards high population density areas such as the Liverpool City Region, with older vehicles then cascaded for use in CW&C. This does not necessarily result in poorer vehicle quality, but older vehicles will have lower overall engine efficiency and emission standards.

The current ages of vehicles used on services within the borough suggests significant investment in new vehicles will be required within the next 4-8 years, with a focus on replacing diesel vehicles with alternative-fuel zero-emission vehicles where appropriate. Stagecoach have recently invested in their vehicles with QR code readers being installed, and all Euro II and III emissions standard buses have been removed from the fleet. Most of their fleet now therefore meets Euro V and VI standards as a result. Arriva vehicles used on services towards Wales are fitted with multi-operator tap-on and tap-off readers, while two thirds of the fleet meet Euro V and VI standards.



Figure 2.5: Bus Passenger Experience in Cheshire West and Chester



Source: Mott MacDonald, 2024





STAND 1 - BOARDING

Please purchase travel tickets  
before boarding the bus  
QUEUE OTHER SIDE



## **Case Study 5: Passenger Experience Improvements**

### **Park and Ride – Passenger Offer**

Free travel on P&R in January 2024 saw a 28% increase in passenger numbers (23,233) compared to January 2023 (18,101). The revenue lost, funded through BSIP+, was £55,708. Impact in following months is being closely monitored.

### **Bus Service Number Simplification**

In order to improve the passenger experience, bus numbering has been changed to be less confusing, through a reduction in numbering duplications. In addition, the number of timetable changes which can be made by operators has been reduced to a maximum of four times per year.

### **Bus Passenger Charter**

The Bus Passenger Charter, created in partnership with our team of bus operators, is a pledge to provide the best possible bus network in Cheshire West and Chester. The Charter was published in February 2024 and will be reviewed in June 2024 to align with the updated BSIP guidance.

### **Bus Stop Upgrades**

Since October 2021, £130,000 of investment has been made at bus stops in the borough including refurbishment of Upton P&R shelter with reglazing, rebranding, new lighting and RTI screens; also, a new RTI screen at Wrexham P&R site, and upgrades to Sutton Way Tesco bus stop in Ellesmere Port with a new shelter, hard standing and seats. Other stops have been upgraded across the borough including new shelter installations and raised kerbs in Neston and other locations.

### **CCTV Provision**

In 2023/24 CW&C council funded a CCTV upgrade at Chester Bus Interchange costing £28,652 providing four additional cameras on site and enabling installation of the latest in technology of CCTV camera systems. A further £80,387 capital funding has been secured to install CCTV at Wrexham Road and Upton P&R sites. Further funding has also been secured for lighting upgrades and pigeon deterrent facilities at Chester Bus Interchange.



## 2.5 Staff and spending

As of 2024, the CW&CC Transport and Infrastructure team has an estimated 13.3 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 & 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.

In May 2023, through a 3-year grant award, an Enhanced Partnership Officer was appointed for the borough. The Enhanced Partnership Officer works across transport planning and policy to ensure multimodal considerations are embedded in the BSIP and supports the new and emerging Local Transport Plan for the borough. This includes organising and setting up

working group, forum and board meetings for the Enhanced Partnership, data collection, monitoring and evaluation; and where necessary commissioning informative studies, marketing, and consultation pieces, as well as regular liaison with stakeholders and bus operators in the borough on a regular basis to identify common aims or concerns.

The EP Officer has also worked with students from the University of Chester, who were tasked to conduct surveys at Park & Rides sites and council car parks as well as independent research to develop innovative ways in which the existing offer could be improved to grow patronage in the future.

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 revenue budget of around £4.9m per year to cover these activities, which includes staff salaries, however the total spending on bus-related schemes and activities is significantly higher than this due to the various local and national funding streams available. The various budget components and their respective funding sources are broken down in Appendix C.



## 2.6 Supported services

The majority of the network is operated commercially by private operators, with CW&CC only contributing via the Concessionary fares scheme (effectively subsidising operators to carry elderly and disabled passengers for free). Although commercial services still represent around 75% of the total network during the daytime, this proportion has reduced significantly from the 93% reported in 2022. Operators have expressed concerns that achieving commercial viability of services remains challenging as a result of high costs and slow growth in patronage, and it is therefore possible that the proportion of commercial services within the network will continue to fall in the coming years.

In the case of routes which are considered socially necessary, but not commercially viable, including routes that operate commercially during the daytime but may not be able to do so at evenings and weekends, the Council is able to directly subsidise the operators to provide these services, either via a fully contracted service model, or via de-minimis payments to operators to facilitate extensions to otherwise commercial routes. A table listing all services operating in the borough and the level of financial support received is outlined in Appendix D. This is also represented within Map 2.6 below.

### Case Study 6: Service 2 / School Transport

In June 2022, Stagecoach proposed to curtail service 2 from Chester to terminate at Frodsham, rather than Runcorn, due to unsustainable levels of demand. Within the same timeframe Arrowebrook Coaches ceased trading resulting in the withdrawal of two commercial services to Helsby High School.

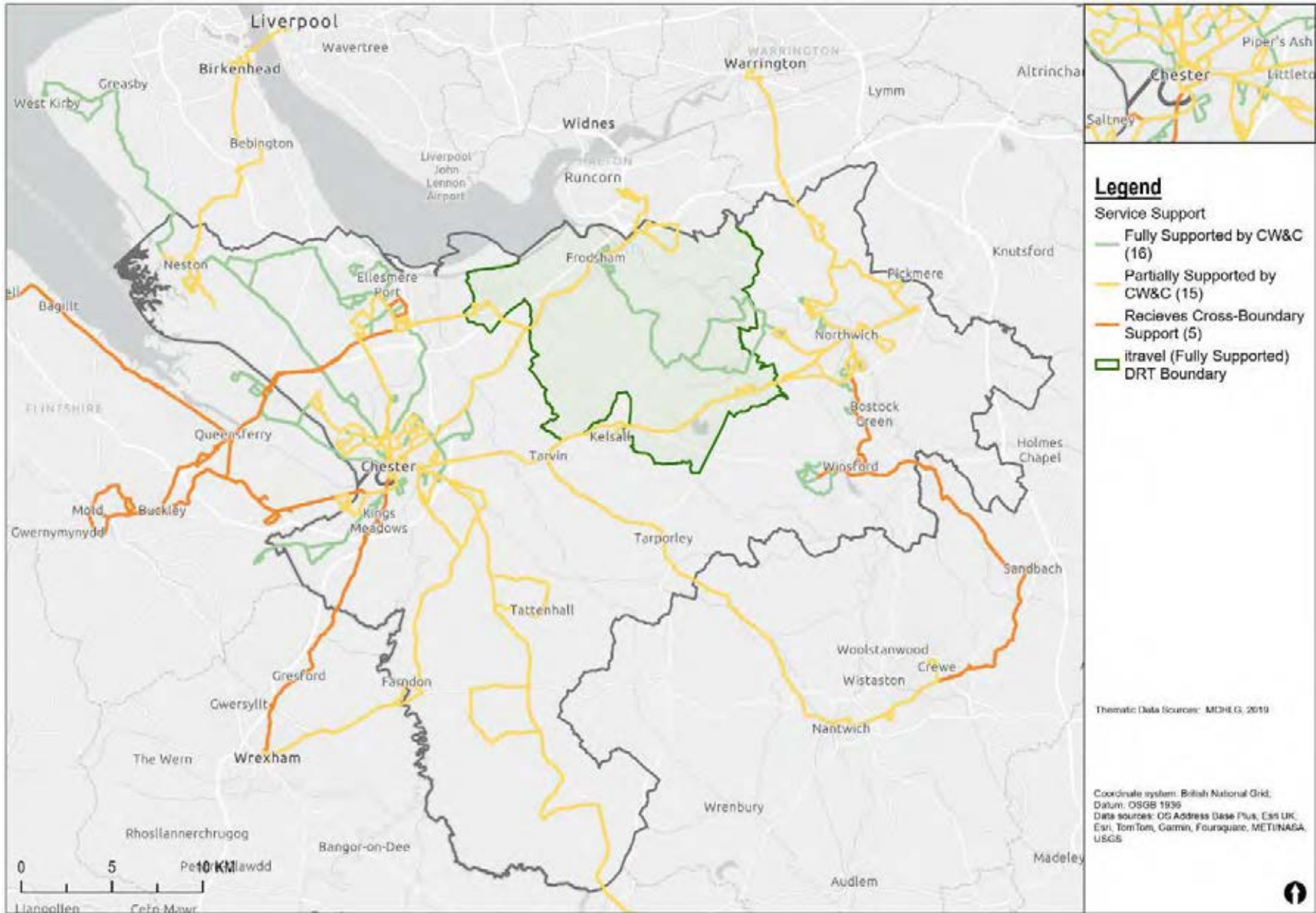
Discussions were held to develop a solution in which service 2 could be adapted to replace the withdrawn scholars service AB43. This was deemed to be the most cost-effective solution, compared with providing a replacement stand-alone scholars service. The school transport team agreed to contribute financially due to the funding saving, while Halton Borough Council also agreed to provide partial support after receiving several complaints regarding the proposed withdrawal.

The tri-partite arrangement was agreed in August 2022 which allowed the continuation of this important cross-regional link. School pupils are accommodated, customers retain a regular hourly service Mondays to Saturdays, and Stagecoach have confirmed that the service is now sustainable.

All fully contracted services are designed to carry scholars for maximum efficiency.



Map 2.6: Bus Service Support Level



Source: Cheshire West and Chester, 2024



**Table 2.5: Bus punctuality (2014/15 – 2022/23)**

Table	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
% of passenger journeys arriving on time	87%	90%	84%	86%	86%	88%	87%	86%

Source: DfT Bus09a: Non-frequent bus services running on-time, Note: 2019/20 data not collected due to Covid-19

**2.7 Bus reliability and punctuality**

CW&C, like all local authorities, submit bus punctuality data to the Department for Transport. Table 2.5 shows the figures for non-frequent bus punctuality data for 2014/15 – 2022/23 (the latest data available). 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.

It can be seen there have been some fluctuations in the proportion of services arriving on time, although there does remain some room for improvement.

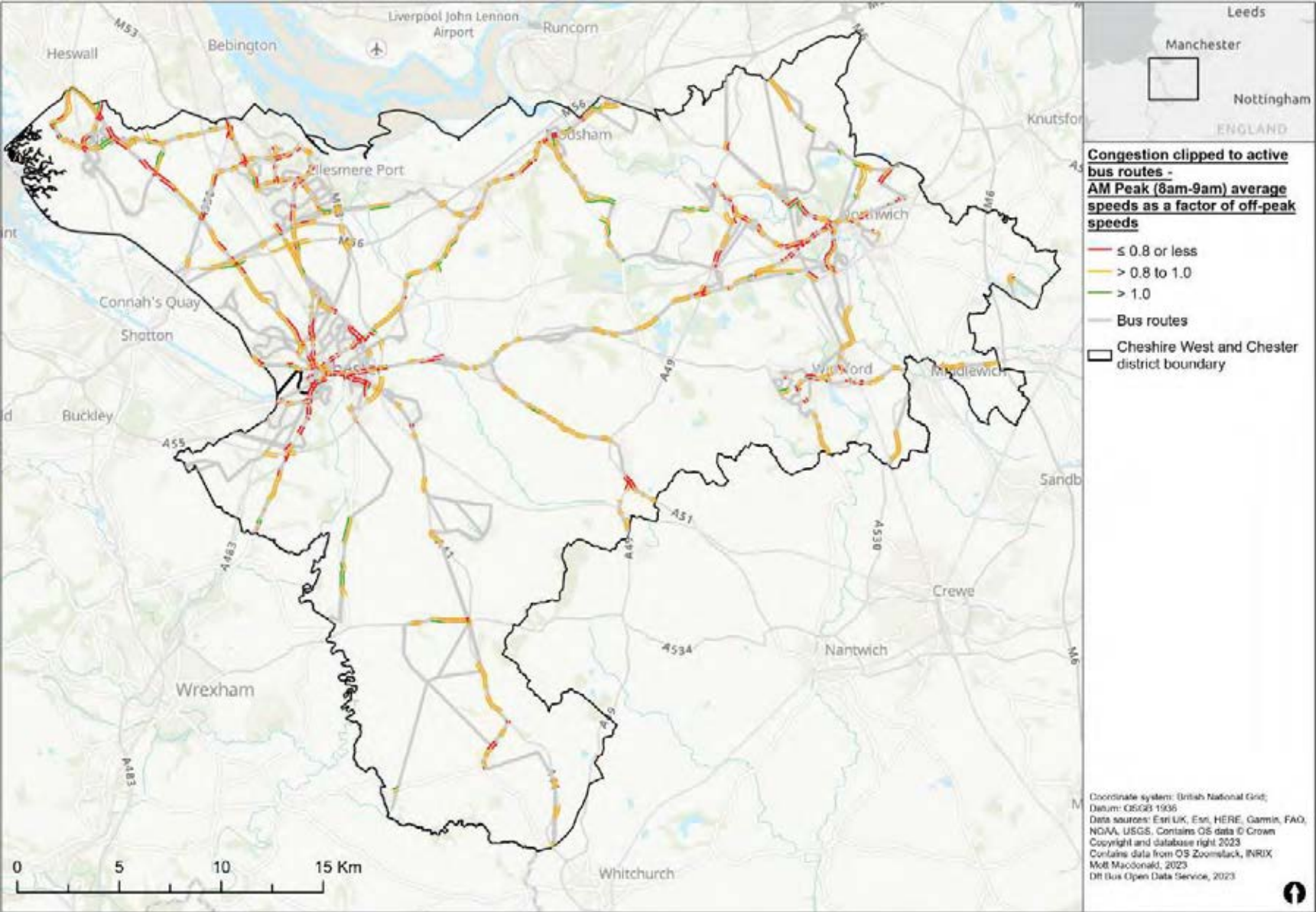
Congestion in Cheshire West and Chester is considered to be relatively modest with just localised issues around the main centres (particularly Chester) at peak times.

Map 2.7 shows typical weekday AM peak hour journey time delays on the CW&C bus network. Congestion is calculated by comparing average vehicle speeds collected via GPS within the AM peak against vehicle speeds during the off-peak, when fewer vehicles are travelling across the network, to produce a congestion factor. A congestion factor below 1 represents a lower peak speed compared to off-peak speed and thus is indicative of congestion.

Map 2.7 shows levels of delay across most of the bus network, with particular concentrations within urban areas. Bus priority measures in these areas are limited.



Map 2.7: Weekday AM peak delays on CW&C bus network



Source: INRIX, Jan-Dec 2022 data, excluding Fridays, weekends and holidays





**Best and worst sun creams**

Paid for subscription required to access sun cream reviews

**Join our Chester family**

Over 2000 per year in your house  
Earn more with our exclusive  
More 1000s of products  
Join our family

5 Huntington  
7 Vicars Cross

10 min

11:27

Bus Stop

0871 200 22 33

Foregate Street, Stop DD



2.8 Timetabling

2.8.1 Peak time delays

Current bus timetables for services in CW&C do not appear to systematically make adjustments for peak time congestion, as many show the same journey times for morning peak and midday journeys, as shown for a selection of routes in Table 2.6.

The exception to this is the 1 route which sees journey times extended by 14 minutes at peak times, despite bus lane provision on Wrexham Road, as shown in Map 2.5.

Most services operate at a low enough frequency, with sufficient time to allow layover to recover any time lost due to delays if needed. However, operators have identified delays on the A51 towards Chester via Vicars Cross, as highlighted by the 5-minute journey time extension to the hourly service 82 between Northwich and Chester at peak times.

Operators have also noted that services within Chester City Centre suffer significant delays at peak times during the occurrence of large-scale events, as special timetables are not usually put in place, and during long-periods of roadworks.

Table 2.6: Peak and Off-Peak Timetabled Travel Time Comparison

Route number (Operator)	Origin	Destination	AM Peak travel time	Inter-peak travel time	Time difference
1 (Arriva)	Wrexham Bus Station	Chester Bus Interchange	59 minutes	45 minutes	14 minutes
2 (Stagecoach)	Ellesmere Port Bus Interchange	Chester Bus Interchange	36 minutes	33 minutes	3 minutes
11 (Arriva)	Queensferry Solar Services	Chester Bus Interchange	38 minutes	36 minutes	2 minutes
14/14A (Stagecoach)	Blacon Parade	Chester Bus Interchange	11 minutes	11 minutes	0 minutes
16 (Stagecoach)	Chester Bus Interchange	Saltney, Sandy Lane Terminus	27 minutes	27 minutes	0 minutes
31 (D&G Bus)	Winsford, near Guildhall	Northwich Interchange	26 minutes	25 minutes	1 minute
82 (D&G Bus)	Northwich Interchange	Chester Bus Interchange	1 hour 7 minutes	1 hour 2 minutes	5 minutes

Source: Mott MacDonald, 2024




## Case Study 7: P&R 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

### Park and Ride – Passenger Offer

For the 40th Anniversary of the Chester Park and Ride, the first 40 passengers at each of the three P&R sites received free travel (usually £2.50), to encourage potential growth. The £300 was funded through the BSIP.



 Pictured left to right: John Ellis Jones, Assistant Team Leader - Transport; Roger Vincent, former Chester City Council officer; Kristy Littler, Transport Manager; Councillor Karen Shore, Deputy Council Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Strategic Transport; Lynne McKie, Transport Team Leader; Roy Greenwood, former Cheshire County Council employee and James Mellor, Commercial Director Stagecoach. Both Roy and Roger were involved in setting up the service in 1983.

## 2.8.2 Change in journey times

Although congestion within CW&C is considered to be modest overall, there is evidence that it has got worse since the pandemic and continues to worsen, having an impact on overall end-to-end bus journey times. Table 2.7 below highlights the impact that worsening congestion has had on timetabled high frequency PM-Peak outbound bus journey times between a base pre-pandemic year (2018/19) and the most recent set of timetables in 2023/24.

It is clear that, aside from a few instances, most bus operators have needed to allow additional time for bus services in the PM peak (outbound direction), with some of the largest proportional changes in end-to-end journey time seen on services between Chester and North Wales. As is seen in Section 5.5, when weighted by passenger usage, the impact of this is an average of 1.7 minutes of journey time per passenger travelling during the PM peak, a not insignificant increase.



**Table 2.7: Change in evening peak journey times for high frequency (>2bph) routes in the PM peak**

Route	Between	And	2018/19 Evening Peak JT (mins)	2023/24 Evening Peak JT (mins)	Change (mins)
1	Chester Bus Interchange	Liverpool Sir Thomas Street	107	111	4
1	Chester Rail Station	Wrexham Bus Station	52	55	3
2	Chester Bus Interchange	Ellesmere Port Bus Interchange	34	37	3
4	Chester Rail Station	Mold	73	81	8
5	Chester Rail Station	Huntington	26	26	0
7	Ellesmere Port Bus Interchange	Rivacre	15	15	0
10	Chester Bus Interchange	Connah's Quay (Brook Rd / Wepre WM)	30	32	2
11	Chester Bus Interchange	Holywell Bus Station	76	81	5
14	Chester Bus Interchange	Blacon Parade	18	18	0
14A	Blacon Parade	Chester Bus Interchange	17	17	0
15A	Chester Bus Interchange	Saughall Church Road	25	25	0
16	Chester Bus Interchange	Saltney Sandy Lane	29	30	1
51	Chester Bus Interchange	Upton Shops	12	12	0
53	Chester Bus Interchange	Kingsway Shops	11	11	0
487	Liverpool Sir Thomas Street	Neston Brook Street	57	57	0
PR1	Chester Foregate Street	Wrexham Road P&R	14	17	3
PR2	Chester Foregate Street	Boughton Heath P&R	10	8	-2
PR3	Chester Foregate Street	Upton P&R	17	18	1

Source: Mott MacDonald, 2024





← Taxi →  
← Changing Places →  
← To Gayle Arena →

### Next Departures

Service	Destination	Operator	Time
10A	Flint	Arcor	F Due
5	Huntington	Oman	C 14:19
40	Railway Station	ANTREE	C 14:19
16	Saltney	Oman	A Due
X1	Liverpool	Oman	K 2 mins
1	Blacon	Arcor	G 2 mins
2	Runcorn	Oman	M 2 mins
100	City Tour Bus	MBN	B 14:20
X1	Ruthin	MBN	C 14:24
1A	Blacon	Arcor	H 14:25

Chester West and Chester

### Park & Ride Departures

Service	Destination	Time	Due
PR2	Boughton Heath P&R	D	Due
PR2	Boughton Heath P&R	D	14:20
PR3	Upton P&R	D	14:21
PR3	Upton P&R	D	4 mins
PR1	Wrexham Road P&R	D	14:27

### Chester Rail Station

Due	Destination	Status
14:25	Holyhead	On time
14:27	Liverpool Lime Street	On time
14:30	Liverpool Central	On time
14:35	Crewe	On time
14:50	Liverpool Central	On time

14:17

### Welcome to Chester

#### Bus Interchange

#### Chester Bus Interchange - Stand Operators Information

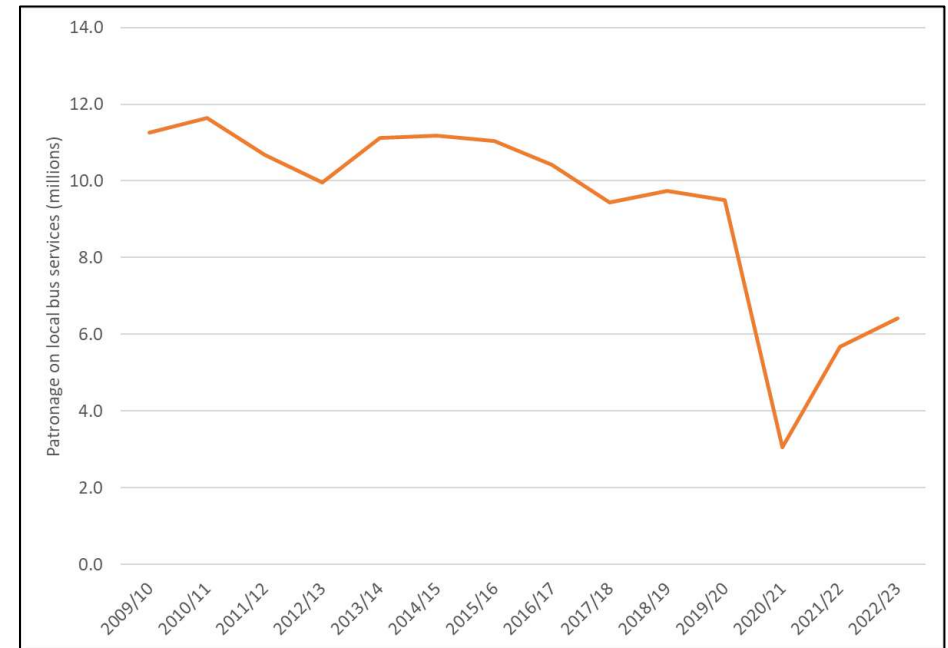


## 2.9 Bus usage

Like most areas outside London, bus usage in CW&C 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 9.5 million in 2019/20 (Figure 2.6), albeit with some rises and falls during that period. The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic may then be seen for the years 2020/21 – 2022/23 in this data, with patronage falling initially to a low of around 33% of 2019/20 figures, recovering to 6.4 million in 2022/23 (around two thirds of the 2019/20 demand).

More recent data from bus operators appears to show a continuing recovery to around 80% of 2019/20 demand for fare-paying passengers, although concessionary pass holders continue to lag behind wider recovery. Operators also report that the best recovery has been seen amongst children and young people in which 85% of 2019/20 demand is observed. It is noted that, CW&C lags significantly behind neighbouring authorities, for example in Liverpool City Region the equivalent proportion for fare payers is exceeding 90% of 2019/20 demand, with young person demand often exceeding 2019 levels in some areas.

**Figure 2.6: Change in annual bus patronage on services in Cheshire West and Chester between 2009/10 and 2022/23**

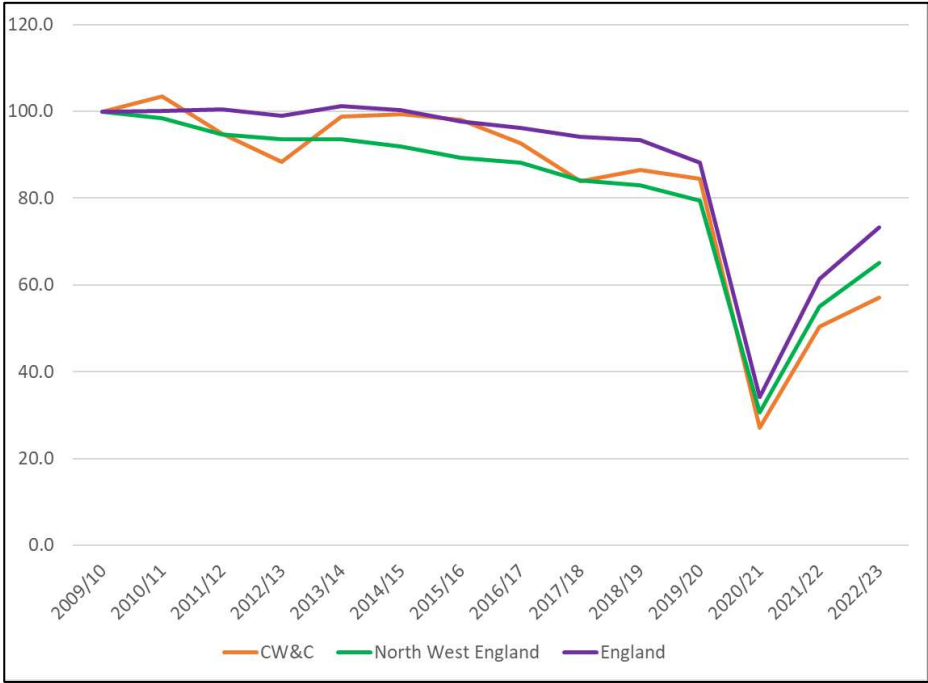


Source: DfT Bus Statistics Table 01e (2024)

When compared regionally and nationally, it can be seen in Figure 2.7 that Cheshire West and Chester declined by significantly more than the national average (19% decrease compared to 12% nationally) between 2009/10 and 2019/20, albeit this was better than the average for North West England.



Figure 2.7: Indexed bus patronage – 2009/10 – 2022/23



Source: DfT Bus Statistics Table 01e (2024)

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. For comparison, Table 2.8 shows the number of bus passenger journeys per head of population, in the full year prior to Covid-19, for a selection of comparable local authorities.

Table 2.8: 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 Bus Statistics Table 01e (2024)

It can be seen that CW&C had the second lowest number of bus journeys per head of population of the local authorities shown in the table in 2018/19; 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 24% of tickets used in the borough, which is comparable with the North West England average percentage of concessionary pass holder journeys as a proportion of total journeys of 23%, and higher than the national average of 19%.



Previously, concessionary pass holders accounted for as many as 38% of passenger journeys (2012/13 and 2013/14); other parts of the North West have therefore seen less of a fall in the proportion of concessionary trips. 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 fell from 3.3m in 2016/17 to 2.8m in 2019/20 to 1.8m in 2022/23, a 45% decrease in six years<sup>2</sup>.

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 completely cater for the needs of the communities, especially older people and disabled people. This is further compounded by the slowness to return to bus of this demographic following the pandemic which may partly indicate an adaptation to other methods of travel used during the pandemic and an unwillingness to return to previous behaviours.

CW&CC and the Enhanced Partnership has remained committed to encouraging the return of concessionary travel. Free bus

travel was provided for concessionary pass holders before 09:30 Monday to Friday between 25 July and 2 September 2022. As bus services generally carry less passengers on peak journeys during the summer, this offer was designed to help residents who may have been dissuaded from bus travel at busier periods to take advantage of the opportunity and start to build confidence in using bus services again. Operators reported that the offer did not necessarily attract many new passengers, but it gave the existing travellers more flexibility to travel pre-09:30.

In addition, CW&CC working alongside local operators, has promoted the DfT's Take the Bus concessionary marketing campaign, as shown in Figure 2.8. This included promotion of concessionary travel on bus and on RTI screens at key locations such as Chester Bus Interchange and at on-street bus stops. With positive promotions the council has seen a 7% increase in growth in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23 reporting a 67% recovery compared to pre-pandemic levels.

---

<sup>2</sup> DfT Bus Statistics Table 01h (2024)



**Figure 2.8: Take the Bus Concessionary Marketing Campaign**



Source: Cheshire West and Chester, 2023

The above data shows that, when compared nationally and regionally, usage of bus in CW&C 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.

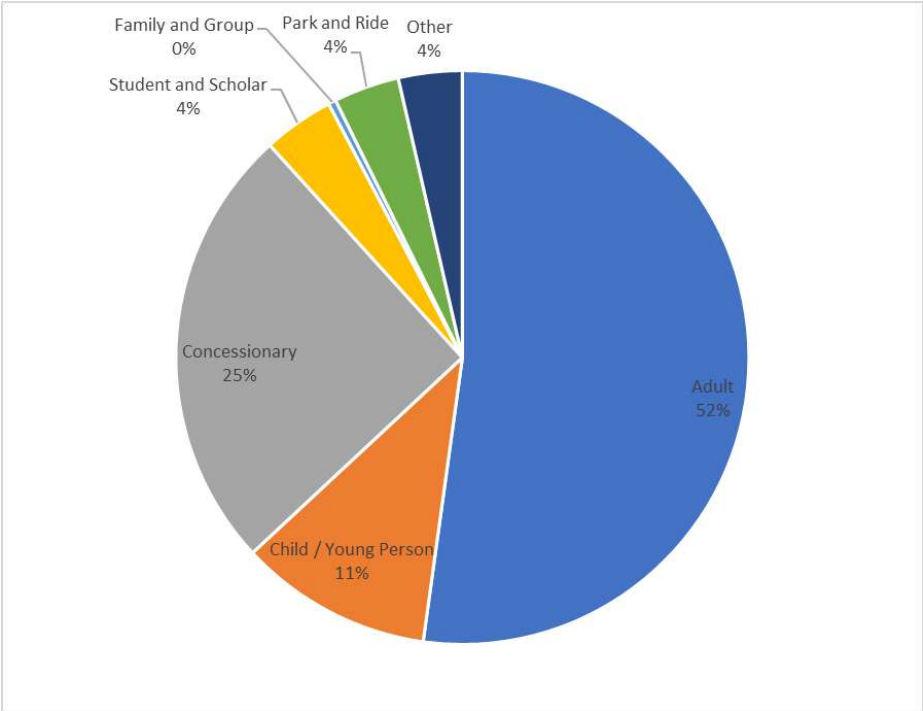
The resources of the Council are limited and therefore its scope for supporting services is restricted to only the most essential. Despite this, the ask from operators for Cheshire West and Chester to support non-commercially viable bus routes has increased significantly since the pandemic, and CW&C now supports, in some way, 36 of the 54 routes within the borough.

## 2.10 Ticket sales

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



Figure 2.9: Bus ticket purchases/usage by user group

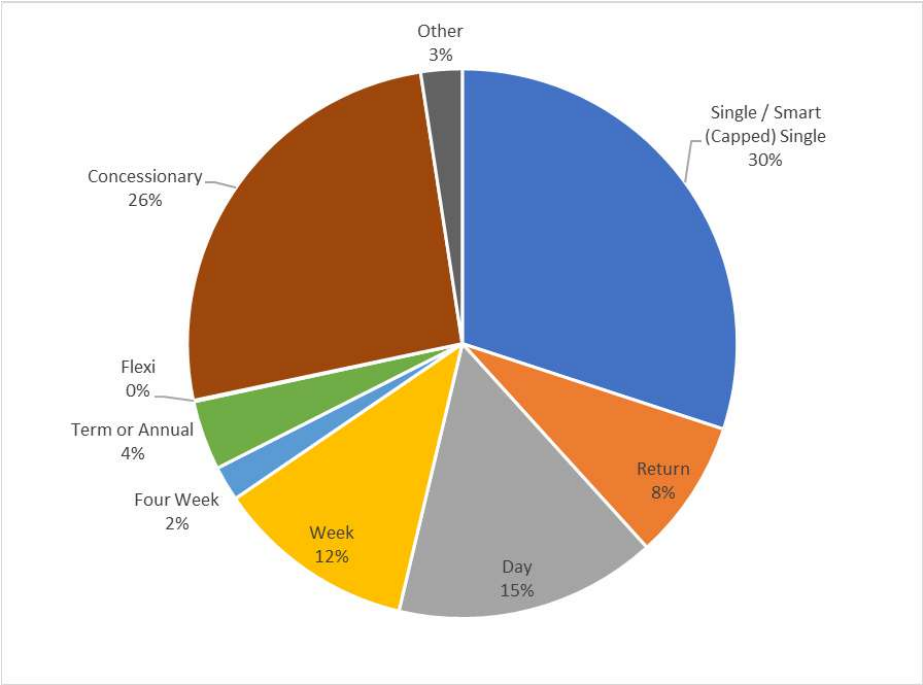


Source: Bus operators – 2023/24

In terms of the types of tickets used, as shown in Figure 2.10, single tickets (including Tap and Go, and Tap On Tap Off smart singles offered by some operators which are capped at daily and weekly maxima) are the most commonly used, accounting for around 30% of tickets. For multi-trip tickets, day tickets are the

most common, at 15%, followed by weekly tickets (12%), returns (8%), and longer periods (four weeks, terms or annual – 6%). Excluding concessionary passes and Other (which includes work discounts and excess fares), 53% of bus ticket purchases are for tickets only valid on one day (singles, returns and day tickets).

Figure 2.10: Bus ticket purchases by ticket type



Source: Bus operators – 2023/24



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 for the most recent financial year (2023/24). 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 2.9 and Map 2.8, 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.

Generally, the local and inter-urban routes focused around Chester and Ellesmere Port are the more heavily used, while rural routes tend to be less well used as might be expected given relatively low frequency of service.

Map 2.9 shows the areas of the borough which cannot be served by fixed routes without challenge, primarily covering central, southern and eastern parts of the borough.

### Case Study 8: Rural Bus Stop Improvements

CW&CC was awarded £992,101 Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) for delivery across 2023/24 and 2024/25 to enable local residents in rural areas to have better access to services, amenities and work opportunities. The Transport Team secured £74,000 of this funding to deliver improvements in 2024/25 to bus stops in the Frodsham and Tattenhall area. The improvements include the installation of raised kerbs and Real Time Displays at specific bus stop locations.





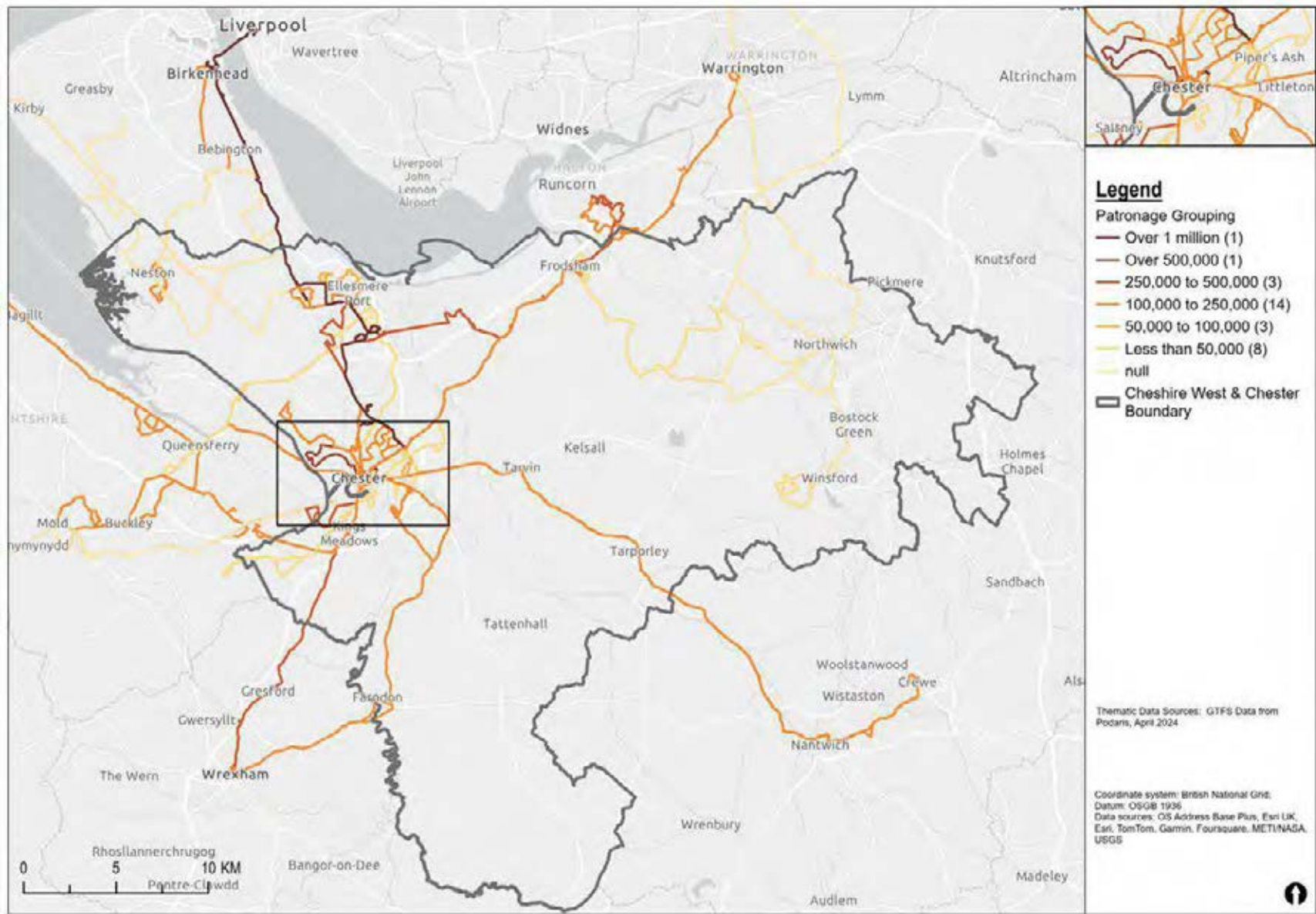
**Table 2.9: Rank of routes by patronage – 2023/24**

Annual Patronage	Services and route classification	
Over 1 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1/X1: Chester to Liverpool (Inter-urban)</li> </ul>	
Over 500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14/14A (formerly 1/1A): Chester to Blacon Circular (Local)</li> </ul>	
250,000 – 500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1: Chester to Wrexham (Inter-urban)</li> <li>2/X2: Chester to Ellesmere Port and Runcorn (Inter-urban)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16/16A: Chester to Saltney Circular (Local)</li> <li>37: Northwich to Crewe (Inter-urban)</li> </ul>
100,000 – 250,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4/4B/4S/X4: Chester to Broughton and Mold (Inter-urban)</li> <li>5: Chester to Huntington and Wrexham (Inter-urban)</li> <li>6: Ellesmere Port to Little Sutton (Local)</li> <li>10/10A/10S: Chester to Connah's Quay and Flint (Inter-urban)</li> <li>11/11A/11C/11M: Chester to Holywell (Inter-urban)</li> <li>15/15A/15B: Chester to Saughall (Local)</li> <li>22/X22: Chester to West Kirby (Inter-urban)</li> <li>31: Northwich to Crewe (Inter-urban)</li> <li>51: Chester to Plas Newton (Local)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>53: Chester to Kingsway (Local)</li> <li>82: Chester to Northwich</li> <li>84: Chester to Crewe (Inter-urban)</li> <li>487: Neston to Liverpool (Inter-urban)</li> <li>PR1: Wrexham Road P&amp;R (Local)</li> <li>PR2: Boughton Heath P&amp;R (Local)</li> <li>PR3: Upton P&amp;R (Local)</li> <li>X30: Chester to Frodsham and Warrington (Inter-urban)</li> </ul>
50,000 – 100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7: Ellesmere Port to Rivacre (Local)</li> <li>7: Chester to Vicar's Cross (Local)</li> <li>8/8A: Chester to Piper's Ash (Local)</li> <li>40: Chester Station to Chester (City Rail Link)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>41/41B: Chester to Christleton and Whitchurch (Rural)</li> <li>49: Rudheath to Weaverham (Rural)</li> <li>N4: Northwich to Barnton (Rural)</li> </ul>
Less than 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3: Chester to Broughton Village (Local)</li> <li>5/5A: Ellesmere Port to Mold (Inter-urban)</li> <li>9: Chester to Piper's Ash (Local)</li> <li>Cat 9/9A: Northwich to Warrington (Inter-urban)</li> <li>23 (formerly 272): Ellesmere Port to Neston (Inter-urban)</li> <li>26/26A/26B: Ellesmere Port to Guilden Sutton (Rural)</li> <li>42: Crewe to Congleton (Inter-urban)</li> <li>48/48A: Frodsham to Northwich (Rural)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>61/62: Chester to Higher Kinnerton (Rural)</li> <li>70: Nantwich to Tiverton (Rural)</li> <li>89: Northwich to Knutsford (Rural)</li> <li>102/103: Ellesmere Port Rail Station to Cheshire Oaks (Local)</li> <li>319: Sandbach to Holmes Chapel (Rural)</li> <li>W7: Winsford Library to Guildhall (Local)</li> <li>itravel DRT (Demand Responsive)</li> </ul>

Source: Bus Operators, 2023/24



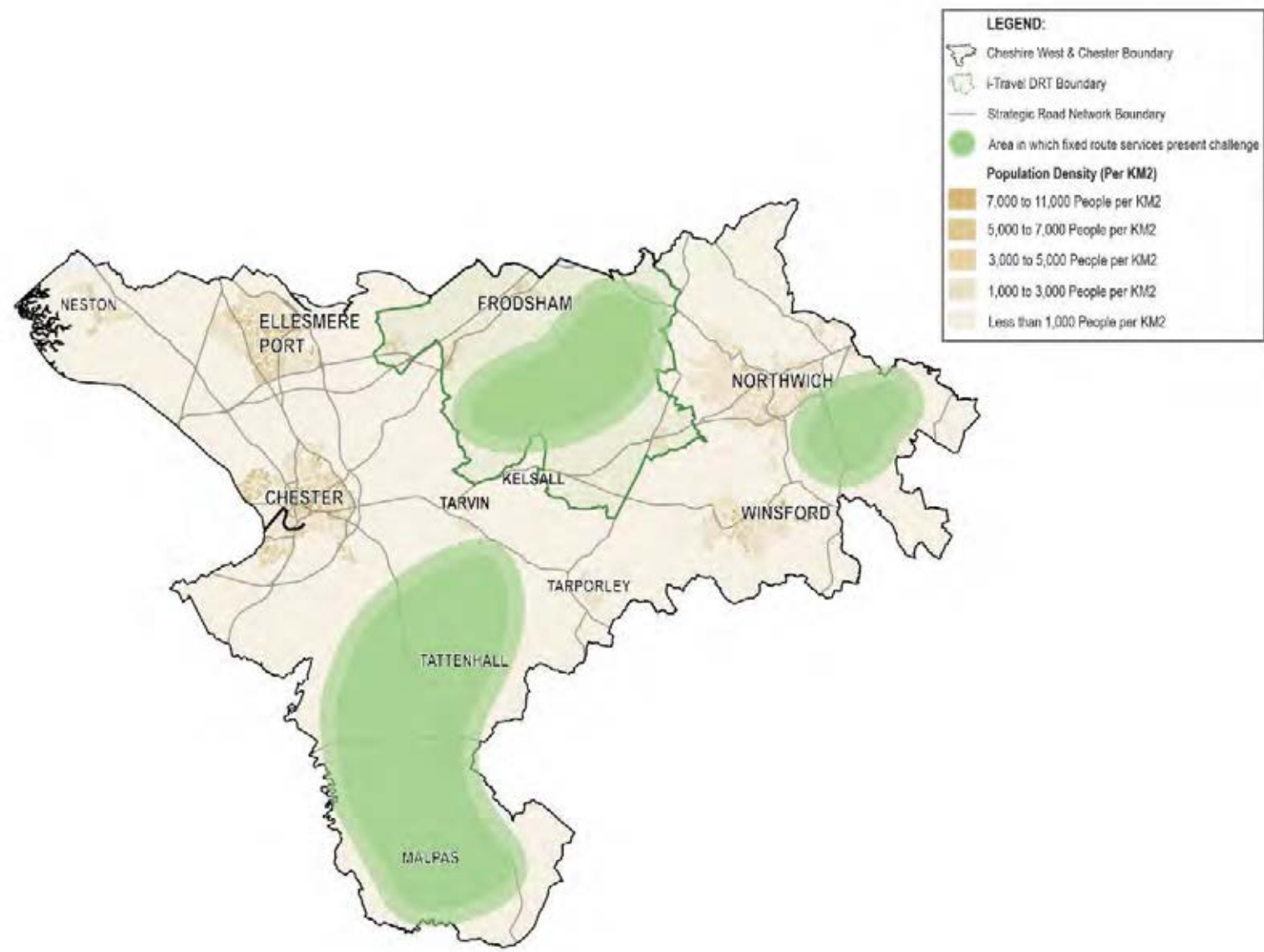
Map 2.8: Bus Routes by Patronage Group



Source: Mott MacDonald, 2024



Map 2.9: Areas in which fixed route services present challenge



Source: Mott MacDonald, 2024



### Arriva Quote of Support

“Arriva Northwest have an excellent working relationship with Cheshire West and Chester Council, mainly down to the creation of the Enhanced Partnership. Our regular meetings give us an opportunity to discuss and work towards what is best for our passengers throughout the entire network.

We feel that continuing with this process can only benefit everyone, especially our passengers within the local community who rely on a joined up, forward thinking network - something we feel this partnership provides.

We look forward to working together in partnership with the council to realise the objectives of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and to deliver material and sustainable improvements in bus services across the region.”



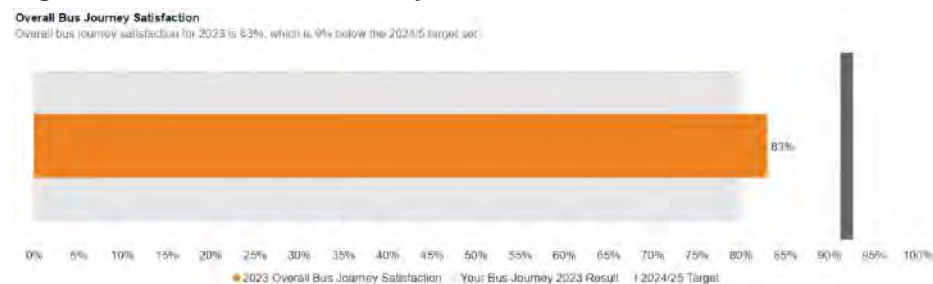


## 2.11 Transport Focus – Your Bus Journey Survey

Launched in January 2023, the Your Bus Journey passenger satisfaction survey from Transport Focus is one of the largest undertaken, including 34 local transport authority areas in England (outside London). The survey has spoken to passengers about their experience on more than 35,000 journeys up until the end of 2023.

In 2023, overall bus journey satisfaction (% of fairly and very satisfied responses) across CW&C was 83%, as shown in Figure 2.11. This figure is 3% higher than the national average (across participating LTA's) of 80%, although is 9% below the 92% target for 2024/25 as set out in the previous BSIP and Section 5.3.

**Figure 2.11: Overall Bus Journey Satisfaction**



Bus journey satisfaction can be further broken down into satisfaction metrics, as outlined in Figure 2.13. It can be seen that CW&C is consistently above the national average for journey satisfaction in all areas. The length of time to wait for a bus is the lowest performing metric, in line with the England-wide survey.

Furthermore, overall value for money for bus journeys across CW&C was 73% in 2023, as shown in Figure 2.12, which is 6% higher than the national average (across participating LTA's) of 67%. The main reason for the value for money (VfM) ratings given by respondents are outlined in Figure 2.14. In CW&C the primary reasons given were the cost for the distance travelled and the cost compared to other modes travelled at 18% each.

**Figure 2.12: Overall Value for Money**

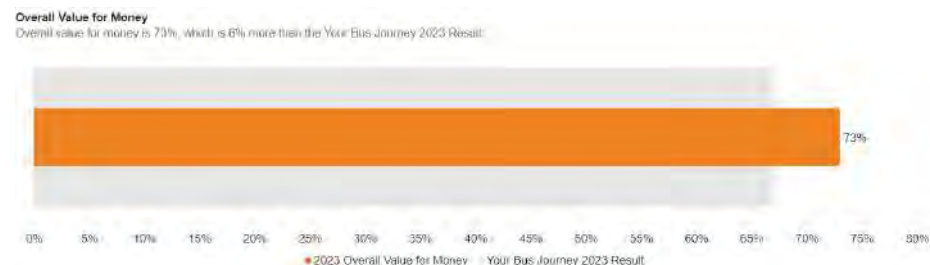
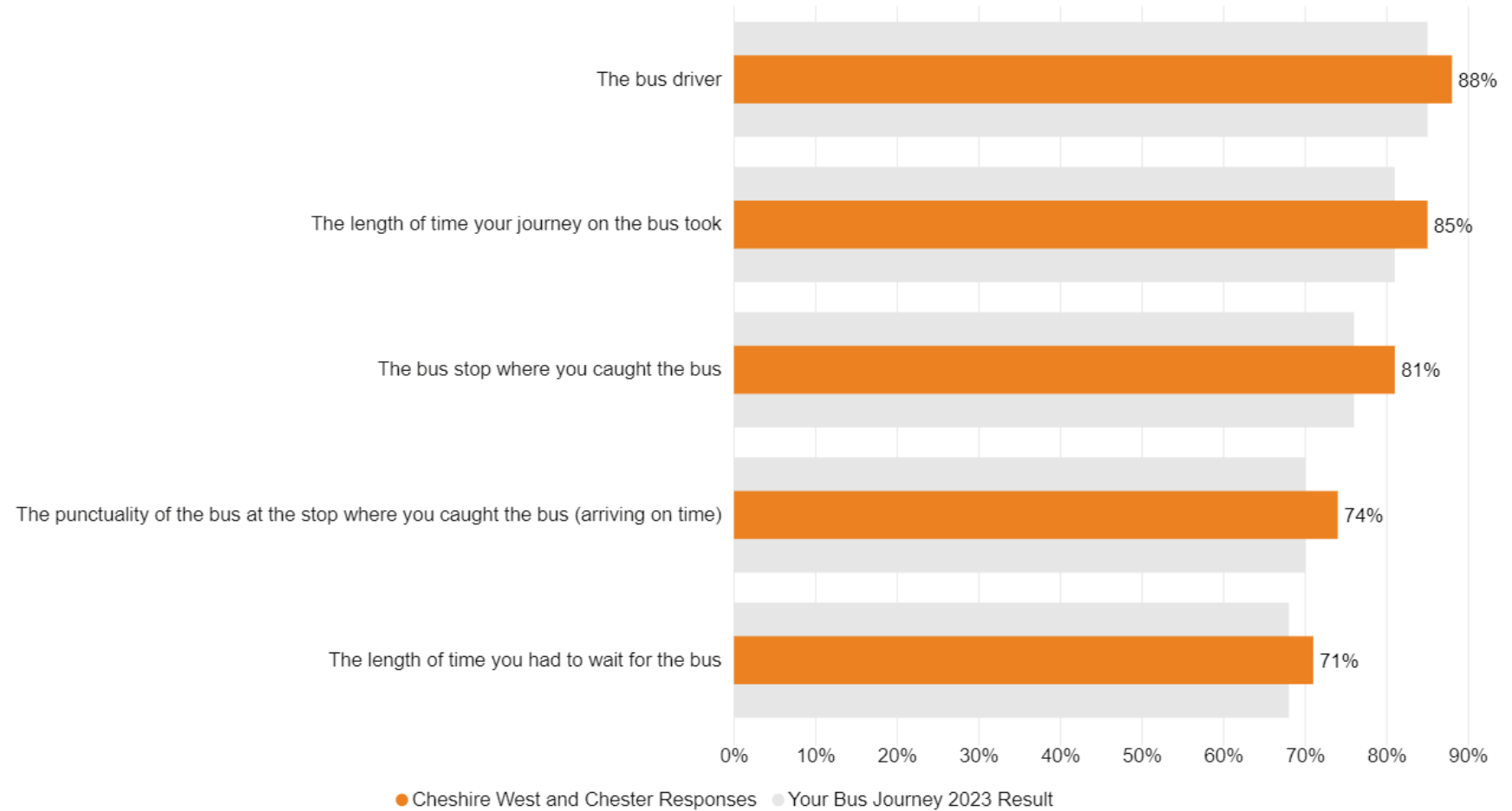




Figure 2.13: Bus Journey Satisfaction Metrics

Bus Journey Satisfaction Metrics

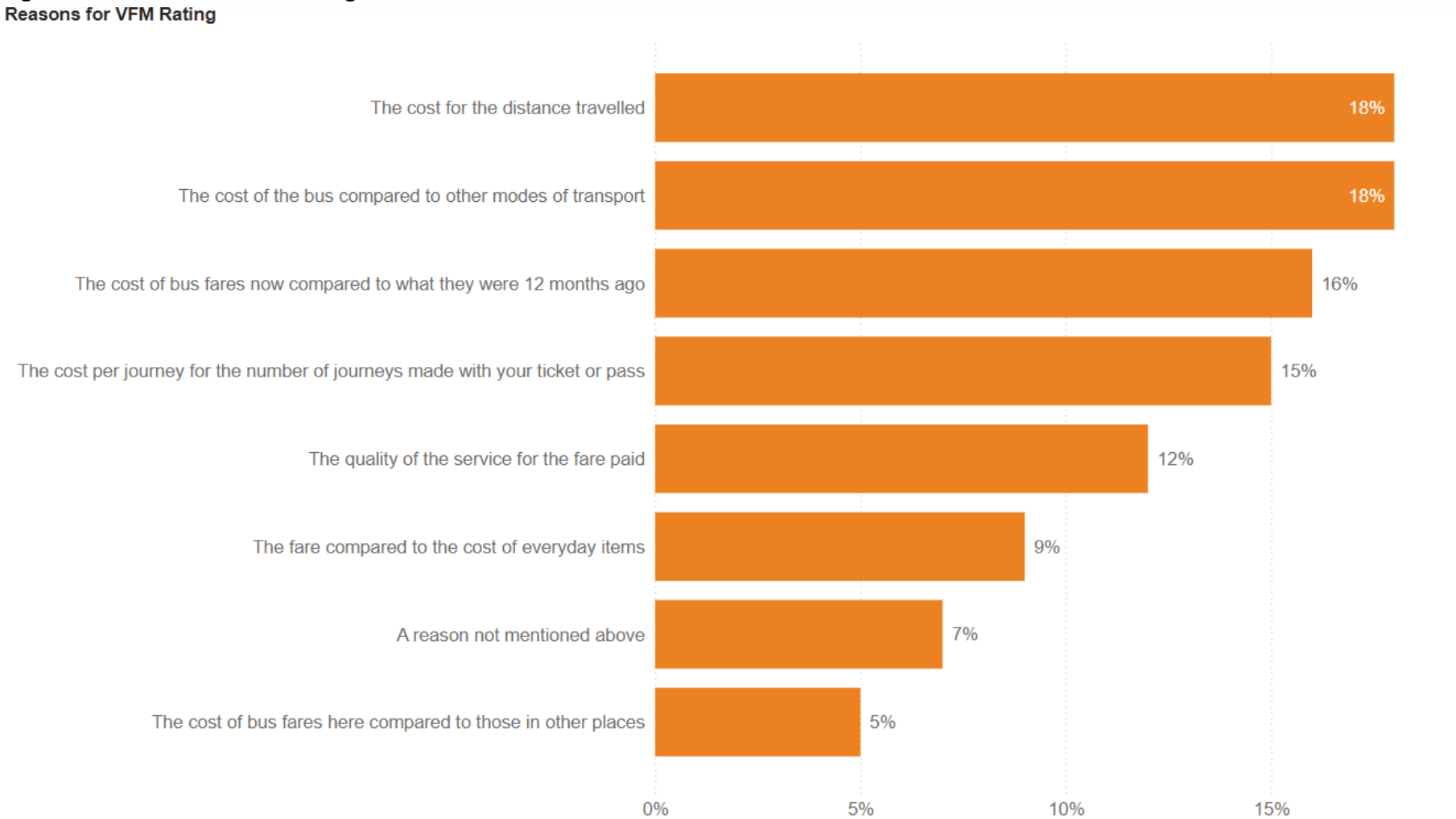
Figures shown are a total of fairly satisfied and very satisfied responses.



Source: Data from Transport Focus Your Bus Journey Survey, 2023 – Chart created by CW&C



Figure 2.14: Reason for VfM Rating



Source: Data from Transport Focus Your Bus Journey Survey, 2023 – Chart created by CW&C







## 2.12 Summary

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 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 & 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.

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. This may be partly due to increased flexible or agile working since the pandemic, but is also emblematic of the fact that, currently, bus is seldom seen as a mode of first choice.



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 and after COVID-19 had the effect of temporarily reducing this network instability, however it has returned in the years since with several services now considered marginal in terms of viability and therefore threatened with deregistration. 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 sub-optimal quality standards on some services, are seen to further reduce the comparative attractiveness of bus. The £2 fare cap for single journeys has had a major positive impact in this regard and has served to reduce the expense of bus journeys for travellers, however there is concern around what will happen if and when this national

initiative is withdrawn. The BSIP must seek to address these long-term issues if it is to successfully generate mode shift.

The following section provides more detail on the measures that we are currently employing, and the longer-term programme of interventions that we have planned in order to address these issues, to generate the required mode shift and improve the offer of bus to passengers.





## 3 Improvements programme to 2024/25-2025/26

### 3.1 Introduction

The ongoing improvements programme within the 2024/25-2025/26 financial years has been formed from a variety of sources and is correspondingly being funded through a number of different funding streams. In particular, the programme has sought to deliver a number of the proposals put forward within the previous (2022) BSIP refresh but has also drawn heavily from best practice delivered elsewhere, and from discussions and consultation with bus operators and from other stakeholders involved in the Enhanced Partnership via the Board and Forum.

In addition, the investments have also been selected based, in part, on their compatibility with the ultimate vision and direction of travel of the bus strategy for Cheshire West & Chester, discussed in more detail in Section 4.2, as well as in line with the vision and objectives of the wider Local Transport Plan. In this way the programme of investment from the current year, through

the rest of the decade to the horizon year of 2035, is intended to show a progression of investment and policy towards the high quality, integrated and easily accessible public transport network envisaged for the borough.

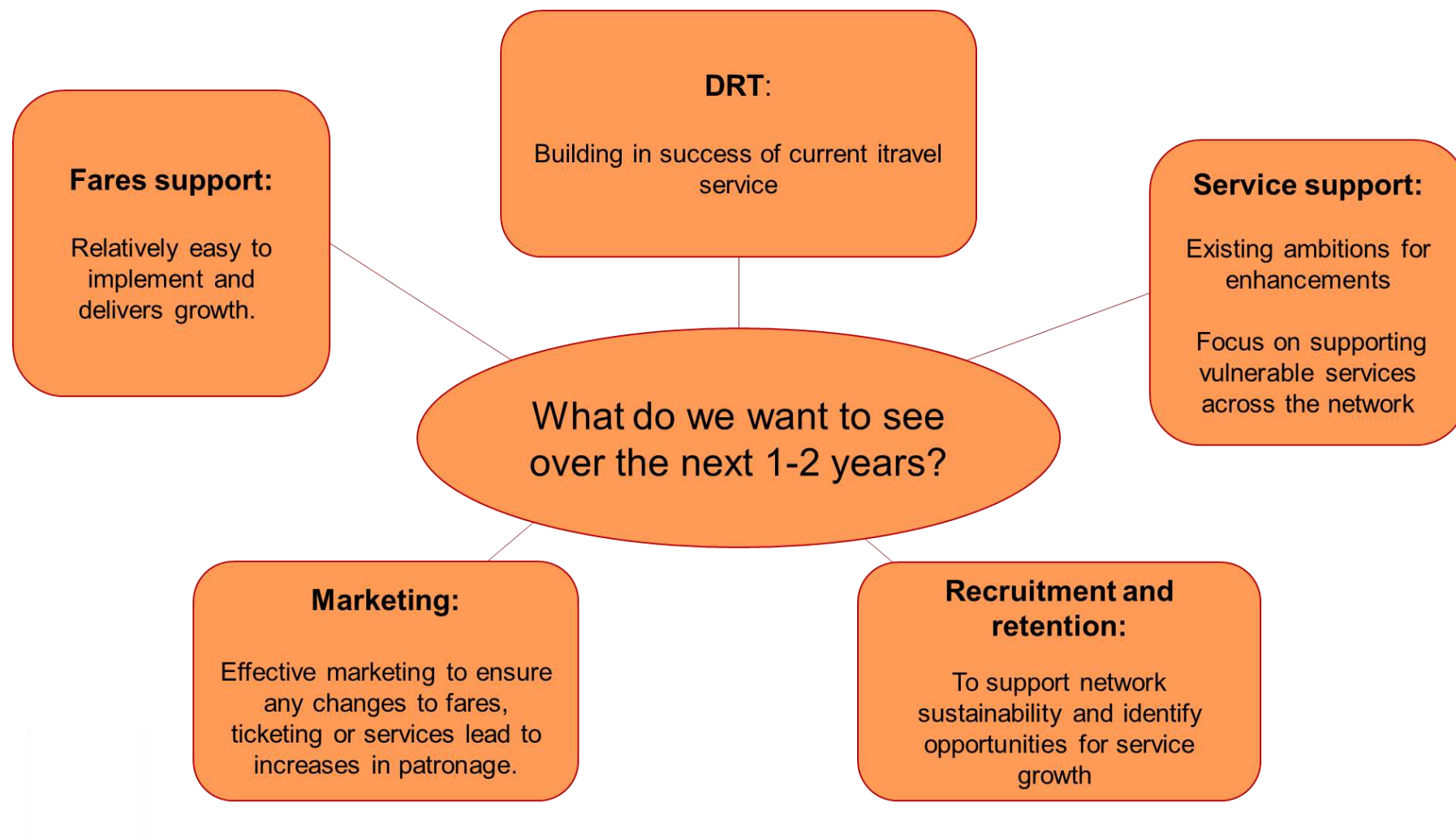
It should be noted that the DfT's BSIP guidance requests the short-term investment programme to cover the financial year 2024/25. However, due to the unique position within CW&C and delayed receipt of funding it was agreed that BSIP Phase 3 funding can be carried forward into a final year of 2025/26. This section therefore outlines the CW&C investment programme for both financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26.

### 3.2 Short term priorities

Based on the above, and in discussion with the EP Working Group the following priorities for BSIP up to 2025/26 were identified:



**Figure 3.1: BSIP Short-Term Priorities**





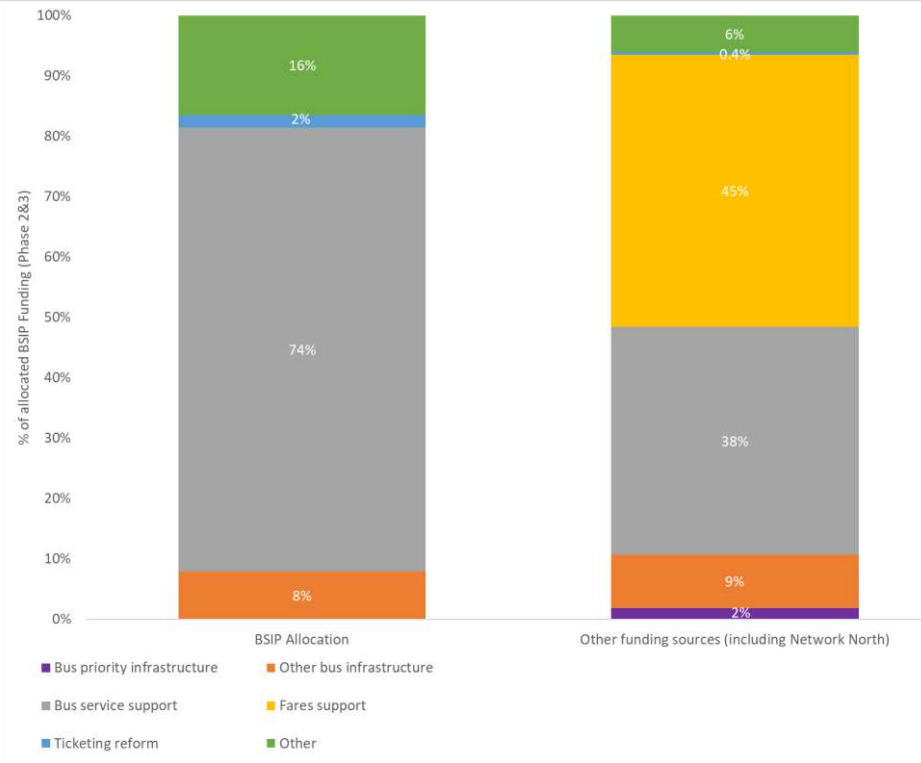
3.3 Short term BSIP funding allocation summary

CW&C have secured £2.58 million worth of funding through BSIP Phase 2 and BSIP Phase 3 to spend on improvements between 2023/24 and 2025/26. Previous BSIP funding received by CW&C in 2023/24 is set out within Section 2.5. A breakdown of how this funding will be allocated across 2024/25 and 2025/26 (as of June 2024) is shown in Chart 3.1. It should be noted that the allocation of funding will be reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the period 2024-2026 in light of any key changes to the network.

3.4 Programme of investment to 2025/26

Building on the work already underway within CW&C and improvements planned up to the end of 2024, further schemes have been identified in line with priorities. Table 3.1 to Table 3.6 set out the improvement programme for bus until the end of financial year 2025/26, to reflect the known funding envelope available from BSIP funding and all other funding sources for BSIP delivery. Due to the unique funding position for CW&C and timescales of receipt of BSIP funding, these tables also set out improvements through to the end of 2025/26 to reflect all BSIP Phase 2 and 3 funding (inc. allocated Network North funding).

Chart 3.1: BSIP Phase 2 & 3 Funding allocation across FY 2024/25 and 2025/26



Source: CW&C

The schemes outlined in Table 3.1 to Table 3.6 have been developed with the long term vision in mind, and in many cases are precursors to further schemes required and set out in more detail within Section 4.



# Information

Whether you are heading to work  
to town, a single bus journey costs  
more than £2 on most routes until  
1 December 2024 across England.

To find out how the Government can help you  
Search 'Help for Households'

Cheshire West & Chester Council

## Health & Safety/Lost Property



**LOST PROPERTY** - If you have lost something while travelling by bus, simply follow the guide below and the bus operator will try to help you get your property back:

- Check the bus operator's name which will be shown on your ticket
- Call the bus operator and have the following information ready:
  - Details of your journey including times of travel and route number
  - A clear description of the property lost

Arriva 0344 800 4411  
Arriva's Coaches 0151 653 0223  
Flixbus 01491 502156  
National Express 08717 910179

Arriva Coaches 0161 327 0700  
DAB Bus 0161 222 2222  
MAN Coaches 0161 270 7000  
Stagecoach 0161 261 2600

Cheshire West & Chester Council



- ↑ Bus Stands J-N
- ↑ Exit
- ↑ Toilets / Changing Places
- ↑ Customer Services
- ↑ Coffee Shop / Newsagent





3.4.1 Bus priority infrastructure improvements

Table 3.1 below outlines a small number of early studies to explore opportunities for bus priority enhancements, identifying where within the borough infrastructure is needed to improve bus reliability, speed up journey times and negate the impacts of congestion on timetables over recent years. The improvements that these studies will recommend will then be delivered over longer timescales within the next delivery period. The bus priority study was commissioned by CW&C in March 2024 and is now underway. Further schemes within this category were highlighted as a priority by operators within the EP working group.

Table 3.1: Bus priority infrastructure improvements programme to 2025/26

Scheme	Description and location
Borough wide bus priority study	Undertake study to understand where other-vehicle-on-bus delay occurs across the network and potential corridors where bus priority infrastructure may be beneficial to improve journey times, reliability, and punctuality.
Cheshire Oaks bus Priority for services from Liverpool and Chester	Feasibility study and early business case development to explore opportunity for development of bus priority around Cheshire Oaks to provide easy and quick priority access into and out of Cheshire Oaks Retail Village, and creation of a bus corridor along the route between Chester station and Cheshire Oaks.
Borough wide highways management strategy	Build on results of bus priority study above and explore how additional highways management measures could help alleviate areas of delay and congestion including potential Red Routes type measures such as on street parking restrictions during peak times etc and methods for enforcing such interventions



### 3.4.2 Other bus infrastructure improvements

A number of other improvements to bus infrastructure have been identified for the immediate short-term to improve passenger information on-board buses, to improve Park & Ride facilities and to facilitate cash payments on board P&R services. The latter has been selected as a preferred alternative to replacing the off-bus cash-accepting ticket machines at P&R sites.

**Table 3.2: Other bus infrastructure improvements programme to 2025/26**

Scheme	Description and location
Borough wide implementation of EPI on key higher frequency demand services	Implement EPI (cloud-based electronic passenger information software) system on key services to provide screens at bus stops with real time journey information as opposed to scheduled bus. This is to be provided on higher frequency and higher demand routes and spread across multiple operators. The scheme will commission and set up the cloud-based server, set up the SIRI connector to deliver the passenger information, and fund the maintenance of the system for an initial period of three years.
Study to assess current operations of the Chester P&R services	Undertake a study to assess the current operations of the Chester P&R services with a view to making recommendations for the future. This includes three main tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Market Assessments for the P&amp;R services</i> – this makes use of the Chester Saturn model to provide an understanding of the potential market for P&amp;R by examining traffic flows passing each P&amp;R site, and to understand the optimum location of future P&amp;R sites.</li> <li>– <i>P&amp;R Market Research</i> – commissioning and analysing questionnaire surveys to gain insight into the reasons for usage and non-usage of P&amp;R sites, and the strengths of these to build upon and weaknesses to address; examples include gauging support on EV Charging, overnight parking provision and creation of multi-modal hubs at P&amp;R sites.</li> <li>– <i>P&amp;R Scenario Testing</i> – to test the potential impacts of future interventions to quantify changes to demand and revenue under each scenario. This will include the provision of a potential new P&amp;R site on the Hoole Road corridor.</li> </ul>
Chester P&R cash and card payments	As an alternative to the provision of new ticket machines, current P&R operator staff to be paid at a higher rate to allow them to handle both card and cash payments on board the bus. This scheme is now in place.
Frodsham and Tattenhall rural bus stop enhancements	Rural bus stop improvements including the installation of raised kerbs and Real Time Displays at specific bus stop locations in Frodsham and Tattenhall.



### 3.4.3 Bus services support improvements

A significant package of additional support for current and extended services is included within the 2025/26 programme. This includes support to prevent de-registration of services that are no longer commercially viable but are socially necessary, and funding to allow the extension of hours of service at evenings and weekends. The Bus Connectivity Assessment and wider Network Review workstreams are currently underway and will help to identify priority areas where later phases of BSIP and other funding should be focused, and the study to examine a potential passenger link for the Origin Industrial area, Ellesmere Port, will also inform later schemes within the BSIP programme to improve access to this area.

**Table 3.3: Bus services support improvements programme to 2025/26**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Description and location</b>
Support network sustainability	Prevent deregistration of current frequency through providing support to the following services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Arriva 487</li> <li>– Arriva X30 Daytime service</li> </ul>
Trial service extensions	Trial extension of a number of services including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Combined evening service between Stagecoach service 2 Chester and Ellesmere Port &amp; service 16 Chester-Saltney Mon-Sat</li> <li>– Experimental Saturday service on Stagecoach 26</li> <li>– D&amp;G 49 Northwich service - improve Mon-Sat frequencies to half hourly (current hourly)</li> <li>– Extend evening services between Northwich and Winsford – D&amp;G services 31/37 Mon-Sat</li> <li>– Increase Mon-Sat daytime frequency to half hourly from hourly - Stagecoach 7 Chester-Boughton-Vicars Cross</li> <li>– Evening link Stagecoach service 51E Chester-Plas Newton and 53E Chester-Kingsway Fri &amp; Sat</li> <li>– Saturday services D&amp;G Buses service 82 Chester–Northwich</li> <li>– Increase Aintree City Rail Link (40) service hours of operation to Mon-Sat 0700-1900.</li> <li>– Additional 18.45 journey on Aintree service 41 Chester–Tattenhall</li> <li>– New Aintree 23 service Neston–Ellesmere Port following deregistration of 272 service</li> </ul>



<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Description and location</b>
Mount Pleasant/ Moulton to Northwich new minibus service	Service N3 - Commission a new minibus service off-peak to operate around Mount Pleasant, Moulton Village and into Northwich. Operating 9.30am – 2pm (Monday - Friday). Ideally this service to be linked with an existing school service.
Service enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Frequency improvements to Stagecoach 1/X1 services - Chester to Liverpool, providing a combined frequency of 15 minutes</li> <li>– Additional early evening journey in each direction for D&amp;G Buses 82 Chester to Northwich service</li> <li>– Re introduce Sunday and Bank Holidays services on Northwich local services (services 49 and N4) Barnton, Rudheath &amp; Weaverham. Services would operate every 90 minutes to Barnton, Weaverham and Rudheath proposed between 0900 and 1800.</li> </ul>
Borough wide bus connectivity assessment and wider network review	Study to determine levels of existing connectivity between production areas and key points of attraction across the borough. Network Review then to consider an optimum network from the bottom up to meet the requirements of the travelling public, to determine where new services may be required to meet existing demand, and to identify areas of poor service and correspondingly low demand at which significant new demand might be induced via the provision of enhanced services.
Study to consider service provision between Ellesmere Port and Origin Industrial area	Study to consider how best to provide connections between Ellesmere Port train station and Origin Industrial Area to provide connectivity at the times of the day at which demand is highest (e.g., shift changes).



3.4.4 Fares support improvements

Fares support schemes for delivery in the period 2025/26 are formed of market research and financial modelling to understand the demand for and impact of the implementation of reduced fares for certain markets. If positive, these studies will facilitate the delivery of these and similar initiatives during later stages of the BSIP programme. These particular initiatives have been selected through EP Working Group discussions and identification of successful schemes in neighbouring localities e.g., the Youth Fare Ticket in Warrington.

Table 3.4: Fares support improvements programme to 2025/26

Scheme	Description and location
Borough wide youth fare cap initiative (16–18-year-olds)	Undertake market research and financial modelling to understand the impact of the introduction of a £1 fare cap for 16–18-year-olds within the borough. The study will also examine the impact of alternative offers / provision for young people and will engage with operators and other stakeholders to establish a task force and ultimately a working group to oversee the project and a trial implementation of the initiative.
Borough wide student bus ticket offer- initial market research and financial modelling	Undertake market research and financial modelling to understand the impact of the introduction of a £1 fare cap for university students / those in apprenticeships /higher education within the borough. Study will need to consider supply and demand of free parking available to students.



### 3.4.5 Ticketing reform improvements

The ultimate aspiration for ticketing within CW&C is to implement a fully integrated multi-operator and multi-modal smart ticketing system with appropriate agreements around revenue allocation and ticket acceptance. The table below presents the early stages of these longer terms aspirations which will need to be undertaken immediately in order to allow a timely roll-out of the ultimate system once funding and technology allows.

**Table 3.5: Ticketing reform improvements programme to 2025/26**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Description and location</b>
82 / 84 Crewe – Chester pilot ticketing scheme	Broker a ticketing / fare agreement and establish an integrated ticketing arrangement between D&G Bus and Stagecoach on the corridor between Chester, Vicars Cross and Tarvin (services 7, 8A, 82 and 84). This will require investment in ticket machine reconfiguration, legal costs associated with agreements, and creation of a suitable method of fare allocation.
Borough wide multi operator ticketing - initial feasibility study	Based on the above, and existing agreements on the Blacon Pointer, undertake initial feasibility study for a wider multi-operator ticketing system. Hold initial discussions and negotiations with operators and required back-office technology providers to broker a mutually acceptable agreement on fare allocation, ticket acceptance and optimum set-up of the system including need for ticket machine reconfiguration.



### 3.4.6 Other schemes & measures

Finally, we present a further set of projects to be undertaken immediately within the 2024/25- 2025/26 financial years. These include a marketing campaign, extension of the existing DRT service operating hours and maximisation of vehicle use, and continuation of a rolling programme of simplification of route numbers to facilitate a more integrated, singly branded, and legible bus network.

**Table 3.6: Other schemes & measures improvements programme to 2025/26**

Scheme	Description and location
Borough wide bus marketing campaign	Support EP Working Group to develop specific borough and bus marketing campaign: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Marketing and promotion of the improved service offer specified in previous tables</li> <li>– Targeted marketing associated with any changes to fares / offers e.g., £1 fare cap for 16–18-year-olds, concessions market</li> <li>– Sustainable travel promotion across borough</li> <li>– Encouraging recovery of the Concessionary Travel market which has declined substantially since COVID</li> <li>– Park and Ride promotions Free Travel January 2024 and half fares February, including advert in council tax newsletter</li> </ul>
DRT- Additional Saturday service within existing ittravel zone	Provide additional ittravel on-demand Saturday service to serve areas within existing ittravel zone (key towns, villages and railway stations in the north of the borough incorporating Frodsham, Sutton Weaver, Acton Bridge, Cuddington, Delamere, Elton and Helsby). Exact area of coverage to be defined.
DRT shuttle opportunities	Working with the Transport commissioning team to explore shuttle opportunities using the electric vehicle
Borough wide route number simplification	Removal of duplication of bus numbers within individual locations in Cheshire West and Chester. Building on the re-numbering of the Blacon Pointer service.
Borough wide multi-modal timetabling coordination	Refinement of timetables to provide better integration with services at rail stations, particularly those of limited frequency e.g. Ellesmere Port towards Helsby, Mid-Cheshire line stations etc
Borough wide general timetabling coordination	Refinement and rationalisation of timetables to ensure clockface service where possible on corridors with multiple services e.g. 2 / X30, 82 / 84 etc.
Borough wide Events Management Plan	Development of a plan for events management within Chester to respond to increase in demand/ pressures on the transport network and ensure right contingencies in plan could help mitigate impact on bus journey times.







### 3.5 Bus driver recruitment and retention

In addition to the interventions proposed within Table 3.1 we recognise the importance of addressing bus driver shortages across the network to support service improvements.

#### 3.5.1 Challenges

Operators have faced significant challenges in recent years in recruiting and retaining drivers, which is impacting the current operation of services and reducing opportunities to improve or grow services. Key challenges include:

- Following the Pandemic and Furlough period, many drivers did not return to work.
- Driver retention is a key issue contributing to staff shortages as a result of anti-social shift patterns and more competitive salaries in other industries.
- Staff shortage leads to lack of resilience for services when drivers are off sick, particularly during winter periods.
- Lack of potential licence-holders looking for work locally.
- Slow licence application process deters potential new drivers.
- Availability of driver training hinders operation of services.

- Recruiting for skilled engineers is also a key issue as wages struggle to be competitive with HGV companies and car dealerships.
- The HGV driver shortage during the pandemic resulted in several people leaving the industry in favour of road haulage.

#### 3.5.2 Initiatives

To start to address the key challenges noted above, operators across the network within CW&C have identified a number of measures to drive recruitment, increase retention and improve driver training to increase network sustainability and improve the overall passenger experience. Stagecoach have implemented the following initiatives to increase driver recruitment:

- Increasing driver pay to ensure this aligns with the wider market and is competitive.
- Providing longer minimum rest breaks for all drivers.
- Improved working patterns, duties, and time between working days.
- Improvements to staff facilities including quiet rooms to provide a better working environment.



- Improved workplace communication – management drop-in sessions, newsletters, digital app for staff.
- ‘Trade Up’ scheme for mature apprentices to qualify as an engineer over 4 years.
- Apprentice scheme for school leavers to train as a skilled engineer.
- Wide advertising of vacancies with focus on social media platforms.
- Working with DWP to recruit and train staff.

D&G Coaches also face staff shortages which impacts services across the network in CW&C, despite taking on a large number of former Arriva drivers. Recognising that there isn’t a significant pool of potential licence-holders locally, D&G are actively recruiting non-PCV licence holders and providing full in-house training. D&G also have engaged an external training partner to increase capabilities and maximise opportunities for new drivers.

Smaller operators such as Aintree Coachline are exploring several measures around working patterns to increase driver

retention and recruitment including, offering more part-time positions and job share opportunities.

Warrington’s Own Buses are also actively exploring ways to maintain a steady pipeline of candidates. Initiatives explored and implemented by Warrington’s Own Buses include:

- Working with partnership streams such as local housing providers to identify tenants looking for training and employment opportunities.
- Regularly attending recruitment events and job fairs
- Working with the Job Centre to provide potential candidates with information about the roles, benefits and career progression opportunities within the bus industry.
- Training drivers through provision of own internal driver training school.
- Staff dedicated to Training and Wellbeing of employees to improve conditions and retention.
- Succession planning internally for other key roles to create pathways for progression with a large talent pool of people within the company.



### **D&G Quote of Support**

“D&G Bus supports the National Bus Strategy and look forward to continuing our close working relationship with CW&CC and fellow operators to deliver the BSIP and the ongoing and sustainable enhancements essential to attract car owners away from the private car and onto the bus network.

All of the proposed measures detailed within the plan will, in various ways, achieve a significant change to the current and evolving network of services within Cheshire West & Chester. The change will be tangible for customers in terms of vehicle quality, greener buses, journey time and convenience as well as simpler fare structure and multi-operator ticketing to allow easy, value for money travel across the network.”

# D&G Bus





## 4 Ambitions and proposals beyond 2025

### 4.1 Introduction

Ambitions and proposals beyond 2025/26 build upon schemes set out within the short-term delivery timeframe to help to deliver the ultimate aspirational network of 2035 as further discussed in Section 4.3.

This section sets out proposals beyond 2025/26 considering:

- a firmer set of priorities and proposals for implementation over 3-year period 2026/27– 2028/29

- a long-term view which aligns with the LTA's overarching LTP4 for the period 2030 – 2035+.

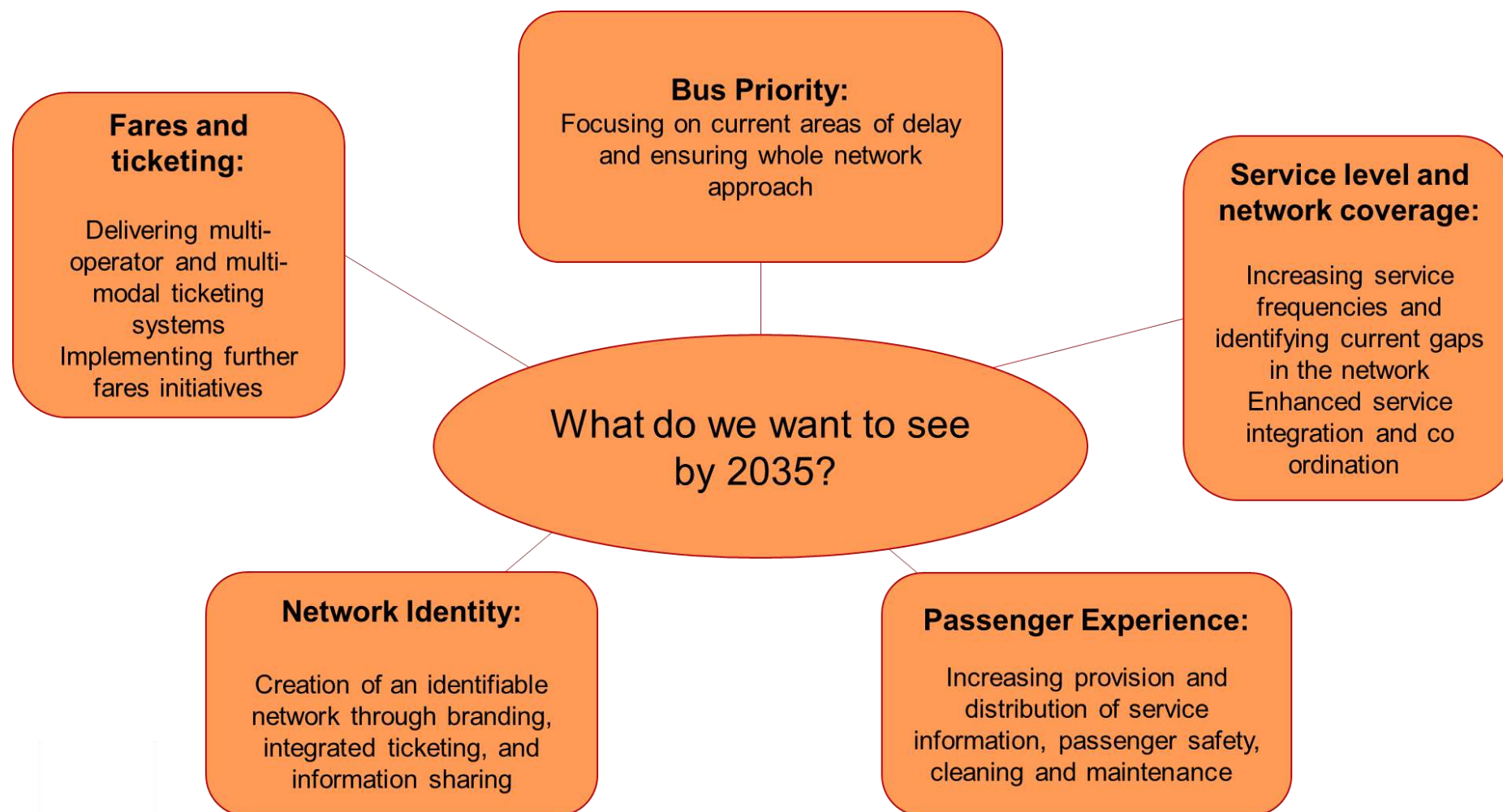
### 4.2 Long term priorities

As with the short-term proposals outlined in the previous section, proposals for both long term horizons have been considered in line with objectives of the LTP4 and key priorities emerging amongst the EP working group, taking inspiration from best practice examples provided through the Bus Centre of Excellence. Key priorities for consideration within the long-term investment programme for CW&C include:





**Figure 4.1: BSIP Long-Term Priorities**





4.3 Aspirational long-term schemes by 2035

To inform the development of the BSIP and the schemes that it will put forward over the next decade, it is first necessary to establish the shape of the ultimate network of 2035 to which we aspire. In line with our vision for bus described in Figure 1.3, we wish to create a network that is fully integrated with itself and with other modes, and in which we have integrated ticketing, regulated timetables, a common brand and a single source for information as standard. Further, we wish the network to be accessible for all and with no part of the borough unable to access bus services to take them where they need to go.

To deliver this, we have selected a set of aspirational projects which we would like to deliver by 2035, and these are presented in Table 4.1 below. These projects have then informed the development of the BSIP programme between 2026/27 and 2028/29 presented in Table 4.2 to Table 4.11.

Table 4.1: Aspirational Long-Term Schemes by 2035+

Scheme	Description and location
Winsford Bus Interchange	Creation of a central off-street bus interchange within Winsford town centre with high quality waiting facilities, information provision, and interchange provision with all services calling at the new facility.
Ellesmere Port Industrial Area (Origin) interchange	Creation of a bus interchange at the proposed new rail station in Ellesmere Port Industrial Area to support connectivity to the Industrial Area from surrounding areas and to promote multi-modal bus / rail journeys to / from the industrial area.
DRT expansion	Major expansion of the existing DRT service to cover all of the rural areas of the borough, and to provide cross-boundary services.
Mid-Cheshire metro	Creation of a network of high frequency interconnected services within Winsford, Northwich and Middlewich to provide connectivity between town centres, residential areas and key areas of attraction (such as Winsford station and Baron's Quay).



Scheme	Description and location
A55 express bus service	Exploring opportunities in collaboration with Welsh Government to provide an express limited stop, frequent, co-ordinated bus service along the A55 to North Wales providing faster access from Chester to North Wales and complimentary feeder capacity to the North Wales Mainline and serving locations not currently served by rail.
Full network integration	Creation of a fully regulated integrated multi-modal public transport service with integrated ticketing, regulated timetables, a common branding and a single source for information
100% zero emission fleet	Depending on improvements to battery and charging technology, delivery of a fully zero-emission fleet of buses in Cheshire West and Chester by 2035
Conversion of high frequency corridors to BRT / Quality Bus Transit	Creation of high quality and high frequency mass transport system on the borough's busiest routes such as the 1/X1 Chester – Chester Zoo – Cheshire Oaks, the Blacon Pointer services, the 1 Sapphire route between Chester and Wrexham, and the City Rail Link route in Chester City Centre.
Hoole Road Park and Ride	Aspirations for a new and high-capacity Park & Ride site adjacent to the M53 and A55 junction and served by frequent by services using Hoole Road. This would also include bus priority on Hoole Road and high-quality facilities at the new P&R site, however, would be dependent on recommendations following a wider review of P&R across the borough.
Gadbrook Park station, interchange and bus link	To revive the fortunes of the commerce park and support a wider improvement in accessibility, creation of a new bus link to connect surrounding areas with Gadbrook Park and to serve the proposed new station on the Crewe / Middlewich line via a new dedicated transport interchange.

Table 4.2 to Table 4.11 set out the further ambitions to be delivered through BSIP for the period 2026-2029 which:

- a. build on proposals outlined within Section 3 for delivery up to 2026; and
  - b. form the basis for longer term aspirations to be delivered within the 2029-2035 and 2035+ timeframes,
- creating a successive programme of investment which works towards aspirational long-term schemes and the overall vision for BSIP.



## 4.4 Programme of investment beyond 2025 (2026-2029)

Proposals outlined in Table 4.2 build on the early studies set out within the short term time frame (Table 3.6) which look to identify where new services, infrastructure, initiatives or service enhancements may be required. The exact requirements of proposals outlined in the table would therefore be determined by ongoing BCA and Network Review work.

**Table 4.2: Service level and network coverage proposals beyond 2025 (2026-2029)**

Scheme	Description and location
Explore opportunities for new services	Based on outputs of BCA and Network Review, explore opportunities to roll out new services in areas of poor or inadequate provision including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winsford/Middlewich – Chester service</li> <li>• Winsford/ Northwich local services</li> <li>• Collaboration with Cheshire East and integration with their BSIP to explore cross boundary services between Cheshire West towns and Macclesfield, Congleton, Wilmslow</li> <li>• Northwich – Runcorn/ Daresbury</li> </ul>
Local service frequency enhancements	Further service frequency enhancements (including evening and weekend frequency and hours of operation) improvements to drive demand growth on the following corridors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boughton Road</li> <li>• Blacon / Saughall</li> <li>• Hoole Road</li> <li>• Newton</li> <li>• Vicars Cross Road</li> <li>• Upton</li> <li>• Saltney</li> </ul>
Inter-urban service frequency enhancements	Further service frequency enhancements (including evening and weekend frequency and hours of operation) improvements to drive demand growth on the following corridors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chester / Ellesmere Port to Runcorn / Warrington</li> <li>• Chester to Northwich</li> <li>• Chester to Christleton, Waverton and Tattenhall</li> <li>• Chester to Tarporley and Crewe</li> <li>• Chester to Whitchurch</li> <li>• Chester to Wrexham</li> </ul>
Rural service frequency enhancements	Further service frequency enhancements (including evening and weekend frequency and hours of operation) improvements to drive demand growth on the following corridors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northwich local services</li> <li>• Ellesmere Port to Mold</li> <li>• Chester to Northwich</li> <li>• Chester to Doddleston and Higher Kinnerton</li> <li>• Neston to Hooton and Ellesmere Port</li> </ul>



#### 4.4.1 Bus priority proposals

In this timeframe, a number of follow-on studies will be required to build on the recommendations of the ongoing Bus Priority Study and to investigate further the feasibility, impact and design of the recommended options. Alongside this, it is known that the Urban Traffic Control (UTC) and Urban Traffic Management and Control (UTMC) infrastructure within CW&C is in need of an overhaul to facilitate future bus priority at signals.

**Table 4.3: Bus priority proposals beyond 2025 (2026-2029)**

Scheme	Description and location
Follow on bus priority studies	Exact requirements to be determined by outputs of bus priority study but will include further option development, feasibility and design of preferred option and business case work to ensure value for money.
Chester to Cheshire Oaks corridor	<p>Following on from earlier feasibility study and business case work continue design and implementation of Chester to Cheshire Oaks corridor. This could be delivered through two phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase 1- focusing on bus priority around Cheshire Oaks to provide easy and quick priority access into and out of Cheshire Oaks Retail Village by bus for 1/X1 services from Liverpool and Chester</li> <li>Phase 2- creation of a bus corridor / bus priority infrastructure along route between Chester station and Cheshire Oaks to provide journey time improvements for direct and frequent services to access retail, health, leisure and employment opportunities, such as Chester Zoo.</li> </ul>
UTC and UTMC system overhaul	Overhaul of all UTC and UTMC infrastructure by addition of Fusion software within Chester, Northwich, Ellesmere Port and Winsford to provide selective vehicle detection, traffic light priority and dynamic timetable recovery, to improve bus priority and journey times across the borough.



#### 4.4.2 Lower and simpler fares proposals

Following on from the initial agreements brokered within the short-term, it might be expected that the lower youth and student fares will be implemented during this timeframe. This will include the implementation of a trial cap to understand impact and uptake and the extension of the more general £2 single journey scheme in line with local commitments from both Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester to retain this beyond the current national expiry date.

**Table 4.4: Lower and simpler fares proposals beyond 2025 (2026-2029)**

Scheme	Description and location
Borough wide youth fare cap initiative (16–18-year-olds)	Following initial trial, extend £1 fare cap for 16–18-year-olds for 12 months based on results of previous study, monitor impact on patronage and consider expanding age bracket.
Extension of current £2 (or equivalent) low fare scheme beyond December 2024	Extension of current £2 (or equivalent) low fare scheme beyond the current national expiry date of December 24 to provide ongoing and consistent low fares for bus users in Cheshire West and Chester in line with the neighbouring Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester.
Trial borough wide £1 fare cap for jobseekers and armed service veterans	Implementation of 12-month trial £1 fare cap for jobseekers and armed service veterans.
Borough wide student bus ticket offer	Implement 12-month trial £1 fare cap for University students / potentially those in apprenticeships for 12 months based on results of previous study, monitor impact on patronage.



4.4.3 Ticketing proposals

Within the 2026-2029 timeframe, it is expected that the agreements reached during the short-term negotiations, alongside the availability of the national back-office solution as promised, will be implemented to allow the adoption of a borough-wide multi-operator ticketing system.

Table 4.5: Ticketing proposals beyond 2025 (2026-2029)

Scheme	Description and location
Borough wide multi-operator ticketing	Implementation of a full multi operator ticketing system that is valid on all services within Cheshire West and Chester (including Park and Ride) and includes agreed multi-operator fee cap rates for day, week and monthly ticketing products. The system will also have the capacity to integrate with systems in North Wales and Liverpool City Region, and will therefore be compatible with both tap-on-tap-off and tap-and-go systems. Back-office system to be provided nationally. System could be delivered under Enhanced Partnership branding (Table 4.7)



4.4.4 Waiting and interchange facilities proposals

A rolling programme of continuous bus-stop and station facility improvements is proposed for this period with enhanced shelters, seating and information supported by technological advancements. In addition, continuing co-ordination of timetabling will allow better co-ordination of services with rail services to help to deliver the ultimate aspiration of a fully integrated network.

Table 4.6: Waiting and interchange facilities proposals beyond 2025 (2026-2029)

Scheme	Description and location
Improved bus stop waiting areas and information	Provision of enhanced shelters, seating and passenger information at high frequency stops including Cheshire Oaks, Chester Zoo, Countess of Chester Hospital, Neston Brook Street, Chester Pepper Street, Northwich Rail Station, Winsford Town Centre, Winsford Rail Station. This will include a rollout of e-Ink (electronic paper display) technology to provide a more cost-effective digital information delivery system.



4.4.5 Bus information and network identity proposals

The primary focus of this workstream during this period will be on converting the network to a single unified brand to be worn alongside individual operators’ branding. This could be formed from the itravel brand or a new identity entirely and would be applied to buses, stops, information, driver uniforms, and web-tools etc to create a sense of a single entity in the EP for all bus requirements within CW&C.

Table 4.7: Bus information and network identity proposals beyond 2025 (2026-2029)

Scheme	Description and location
Enhanced Partnership network branding scheme	Development of a unified brand to sit alongside current operator branding on vehicles, and to be represented on all bus stops, bus stations, information provision and tickets issued within the EP area.
Real time information at high frequency bus stops	Provision and maintenance of RTI at high frequency stops including potential new sites at Cheshire Oaks and Countess of Chester Hospital.
App update	An update to the existing itravel app in Cheshire West and Chester to provide a seamless multi-modal travel planning experience and, ultimately, ticketing purchase and storage.



#### 4.4.6 Bus passenger experience proposals

A number of measures are proposed to enhance the experience for bus passengers, including during the evening and night-time when perceptions of safety may be lower than during the day. These measures would include enhanced cleaning programmes, CCTV and lighting at stops, but would also include additional training for drivers, and enhanced customer complaint process (with a single source for the entire EP area for this) and additional staffing during night hours for student safety.

**Table 4.8: Bus passenger experience proposals beyond 2025 (2026-2029)**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Description and location</b>
Borough wide enhanced cleaning and maintenance regime	An investment in the cleaning and maintenance regime for both bus stops / stations and vehicles, to ensure that litter is not allowed to accumulate, and spills are caught and resolved quickly.
Borough wide safety and security upgrades at bus stops, on buses and along key walk routes	Lighting upgrades/LED Installation on walking routes to key bus stops/shelter with frequent evening services, or within areas of anti-social behaviour/vandalism such as Ellesmere Port to enhance personal safety and security.
Enhanced driver training	Appropriate passenger safety training for drivers to deal with emergency situations on or off the bus. All drivers equipped with ability to contact depot staff and/or emergency services if required.
Customer relations improvements	Enhancement of operator complaint procedures and liaison with local police and schools to address any safety concerns.
Night angels and additional security at Chester Bus Interchange	Work with the University of Chester to explore options to provide night angels and additional security at key Chester Bus Interchanges during busy evening periods. Aimed at promoting student safety.



4.4.7 Bus fleet proposals

In a continual evolution towards a fully zero-emission fleet by 2035, a roll-out of electric, hybrid and hydrogen vehicles is expected during this timeframe, leveraging funding from various national and regional sources, ensuring that these vehicles are placed on the most appropriate routes given range and re-charge requirements. At the same time, a programme of retro-fitting of older vehicles is proposed to ensure that these meet the highest international air quality standards possible.

Table 4.9: Bus fleet proposals beyond 2025 (2026-2029)

Scheme	Description and location
Zero emission fleet	Continue to leverage national and regional funding opportunities to expand the zero-emission component of the fleet that serves urban and shorter-distance routes. This will be supplemented by a programme of natural replacement of previous vehicles with hybrid or fully electric ones.
Minimum emissions standards	Implement a programme of retrofitting older buses not immediately due for replacement to ensure they meet a Euro VI minimum standard of cleanliness.



4.4.8 Accessibility and inclusion proposals

In line with vehicle fleet and bus stop / station improvements, a parallel programme of accessibility improvements to vehicles and stops is proposed to ensure bus services are accessible for all. This will include using the latest technology for boarding and alighting accessibility both on and off the bus and equipping newer vehicles with audio-stop announcements.

Table 4.10: Accessibility and inclusion proposals beyond 2025 (2026-2029)

Scheme	Description and location
Borough wide audible stop announcements	Rollout of current EPI programme to work towards equipping every bus on routes within CW&C with audio-visual stop announcements to improve the usability of the bus for blind/partially sighted people, and to improve the accessibility of buses for those unfamiliar with the locality.
Install raised kerbs at bus stops	Install where possible raised kerbs at bus stops to improve accessibility for people with mobility impairments



#### 4.4.9 Longer term transformation of the network proposals

To pave the way for the delivery of the aspirational schemes described in Table 4.1, a set of interventions are proposed for the 2026-29 time-frame that will facilitate the delivery of these schemes by undertaking feasibility, option development, business case and design work for these. At the same time, trials may be undertaken during this period to examine the feasibility of expanding the existing DRT network, and to prepare for full multi-modal integration including ticketing and branding. Proposals outlined in Table 4.11 directly relate to the longer-term aspirations for 2025 and beyond and focus on the key steps required to deliver these aspirations.

**Table 4.11: Longer term transformation of the network proposals beyond 2025 (2026-2029)**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Description and location</b>
Winsford Bus Interchange feasibility and design work	Undertaking feasibility studies, option development, leading to selection of a preferred option and business case work for a new bus interchange for Winsford.
Ellesmere Port Industrial Area Interchange feasibility and design work	Undertaking early optioneering and feasibility studies to inform a decision on options and business case work for a new bus interchange for Ellesmere Port Industrial Area (Origin).
A55 public transport corridor study	Completion of a feasibility study to examine the potential for and stop locations for a network of limited stop long distance bus routes along the A55 corridor.
DRT trials in unserved areas of the borough	Undertaking of trial expansions of the DRT service to a number of rural communities within mid-Cheshire e.g. Tarporley, Kelsall, Sandiway, including bus leasing, app development and service promotion.
Preparatory work for multi-modal ticketing integration	Commencing negotiations with bus and rail operators, and parallel development of the systems required to fairly allocate revenue, and to set the daily, weekly, and monthly cap limits for various types of journey.
BRT concept development, feasibility and design work	Undertake feasibility work, option development, option selection and business case work to support the development of BRT corridors on the highest demand services and most frequent bus corridors within the borough. An initial study could be implemented on the City Rail Link service to provide a high-quality transport system for this short-distance service.
Gadbrook Park improved bus connectivity	Provision of a network of bus routes from local areas to serve Gadbrook Park to provide sustainable connectivity to this location and prove the demand for an ultimate rail station in this area.
Hoole Road Park & Ride feasibility and design work	Undertake early optioneering and feasibility to inform a decision on whether to undertake further work in support of a new Park & Ride location in north Chester adjacent to the M53 / A55 corridors.





AINTREE COACHLINE  
0151-327 1078

121  
YX05 RFL



## 5 Targets, performance monitoring and reporting

### 5.1 Introduction

It is a requirement of every BSIP 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 selected for the Enhanced Partnership cover the CW&C area as a whole. In line with new guidance, to be published later in the year and to be linked to regular reporting of Bus Connectivity Assessments, a programme of regular monitoring and reporting of progress against targets will be instituted, although this will likely be less frequent than the previously stipulated 6 monthly reports.

In this BSIP, we provide a summary of performance against our key indicators, and targets for the improvement of this performance, within four core areas:

- Passenger Growth
- Customer Satisfaction
- Reliability
- Journey Times

These are addressed in turn below. In this updated BSIP, we include for each of these areas:

- The means by which we have monitored progress against the targets so far, and by which we intend to continue monitoring future progress
- The baseline we have monitored progress against (based on the financial year 2018/2019 i.e. before the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic)
- Previously agreed targets for both the 2024/2025 financial year and the future horizon of 2029/2030
- A summary of performance against these targets to date



- New targets for the end of the current three-year period (2026/2027) and for the future horizon year of 2029/2030
- A summary of evidence used in the setting of those new targets.

It should be noted that, in the tables following, indicators measure performance against a baseline year of 2018/19, prior to the impacts of the pandemic (apart from customer satisfaction for which the methodology of calculation has changed). All targets are currently based on an assumption of full delivery of this plan, and assuming sufficient funding is made available to enable this. They also therefore assume a return to pre-pandemic levels of bus usage and general travel patterns within the next 5 years. 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.





## 5.2 Progress and targets for passenger growth

<b>Measure</b>	Total passenger journeys per year across the CW&C geography
<b>Means of Monitoring</b>	This measure is for the total volume of passenger journeys made on the local network. This measure utilises the operator returns made on annual basis to the local authority and reported nationally through DfT statistic BUS01e. The metric includes all fare paying and pass travel journeys for journeys in the local area, with year ending in March.
<b>Baseline 2018/2019 Performance</b>	9.7 million (previously reported as 9.3 million due to change in reporting methodology) <sup>3</sup>
<b>Previous targets for 2024/25 and 2029/30</b>	2024/25: 6% growth from 9.3 million (9.9 million) 2029/30: 12% growth from 9.3 million (10.4 million)
<b>Performance to date</b>	2019/20: 9.5 million (98% of baseline) 2020/21: 3.1 million (32% of baseline) 2021/22: 5.7 million (59% of baseline) 2022/23: 6.4 million (66% of baseline) <sup>4</sup>
<b>Proposed targets</b>	2026/27: 9.2 million (95% of baseline) 2029/30: 10.3 million (106% of baseline) <sup>5</sup>
<b>Evidence for target setting</b>	<b>Is this target ambitious?</b> Up until 2020/21 (the pandemic induced demand low point) the local network had recorded year-on-year passenger decline that was 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

<sup>3</sup> Bus 01e table from DfT Bus Statistics – November 2023

<sup>4</sup> Bus 01e table from DfT Bus Statistics – November 2023

<sup>5</sup> Based on continuation of recovery trend observed between FY2020/21 and FY2022/23.



	<p>result of the pandemic, however patronage figures for the most recent year show a continuing recovery to 66% of pre-Covid demand for fare paying passengers. Arresting a long-term decline of this nature requires the kind of ambitious, multi-faceted and co-ordinated set of improvements set out in this plan.</p> <p>Although difficult to derive clear trends from such a limited set of annual patronage data since the pandemic, we believe that a continuation of the trend in growth seen since 2021, made possible by the investment recommended within this BSIP, will result in the baseline (pre-COVID) demand being reached and exceeded during the financial year 2028/2029. However, unaided, demand recovery has shown signs of slowing down and even potentially flatlining at current levels with concessionary passholder recovery particularly sluggish.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><b>Is this target realistic?</b> Evidence from best practice examples in the UK (e.g., York, Cornwall, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire) 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 indicating that a strong market for bus is possible with the right stimulus.</p> <p>We have reduced our expectations of growth by the end of the 2026/27 financial year due to slower than expected recovery in several markets including concessionary pass holders, however we remain committed to long term growth and put forward the ambitious target of 6% growth on 18/19 levels by 29/30 assuming a similar trend of growth over the rest of the decade. This will be brought about by a combination of investment sources including (in addition to bus funding) Poverty Emergency funding, LTP support and a renewed focus on Active and Sustainable Travel as a result of the Council's decarbonisation and net zero commitments.</p>
--	--



### 5.3 Progress and target for customer satisfaction

<b>Measure</b>	Overall Bus Journey Satisfaction
<b>Means of Monitoring</b>	This measure is of overall satisfaction with the local bus journey as measured by the national programme of Your Bus Journey 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.
<b>Baseline 2018/2019 Performance</b>	87% very satisfied and fairly satisfied with their bus journey
<b>Previous targets for 2024/25 and 2029/30</b>	2024/25: minimum 92% satisfaction 2029/30: minimum 95% satisfaction
<b>Performance to date</b>	2023: Overall Bus Journey Satisfaction rating of 83% ranging from 89% satisfied with the bus driver, to 71% satisfied with waiting time at the stop. This compares to a national satisfaction level of 80%.
<b>Proposed targets</b>	2026/27: 90% (increase of 6 percentage points from 23) 2029/30: 92% (increase of 8 percentage points from 23) <sup>6</sup>
<b>Evidence for target setting</b>	<b>Is this target ambitious?</b> The proposed target of 90% by 2026/27 would capitalise on CW&C’s higher than average performance against national comparators, and take it to amongst the highest recorded levels of performance in the country according to Transport Focus’ most recent Your Bus Journey survey. Increasing further towards 92% would recapture some of the higher levels of performance recorded prior to the pandemic and represent a return to previous high levels of quality and service.

<sup>6</sup> 2023 used as the baseline in this case due to change of methodology in calculating satisfaction indices.



	<p>We consider this to be eminently achievable given the solid commitment to partnership working and service improvement expressed within the EP area.</p> <p><b>Is this target realistic?</b> 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 in the country with excellent customer satisfaction levels to match.</p>
--	---

#### 5.4 Progress and target for reliability improvements

<b>Measure</b>	Proportion of bus services running on time
<b>Means of Monitoring</b>	This measure will use the long-established bus punctuality metric reported nationally by the DfT as “BUS09a: 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.
<b>Baseline 2018/2019 Performance</b>	86% of services running between 1 min early and 4 mins 59 secs late in 2018/2019 financial year.
<b>Previous targets for 2024/25 and 2029/30</b>	2024/25: 90% 2029/30: 95%
<b>Performance to date</b>	2019/20: Not reported due to COVID-19 2020/21: 88% (increase of 2 percentage points on 2018/19)



	<p>2021/22: 87% (increase of 1 percentage point on 2018/19)</p> <p>2022/23: 86% (unchanged from 2018/19)</p>
<b>Proposed target</b>	<p>2026/27: 90% (increase of 4 percentage points from 2018/19)</p> <p>2029/30: 95% (increase of 9 percentage points from 2018/19)</p>
<b>Evidence for target setting</b>	<p><b>Is this target ambitious?</b> 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. By 2029/30 we expect significant external funding will have become available to provide enhanced bus priority both in terms of physical infrastructure and signal priority through UTM. As such we expect even higher targets to be achievable by 2030. It will be vital for the Council to co-ordinate and join up their policy across disciplines including planning, parking, highways and local transport in order to maximise the benefits of these interventions.</p> <p><b>Is this target realistic?</b> 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 play a significant role alongside priority measures in ensuring smooth journeys and faster boarding of passengers to reduce delays at busy times.</p>

## 5.5 Progress and target for journey times

<b>Measure</b>	Annual change in aggregate journey times on all routes with a frequency of 2 or more buses per hour.
<b>Means of Monitoring</b>	This metric will measure evening peak outbound 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 outbound journey 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>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, lead to the adjustment of planned timetables leading to slower journeys for bus passengers. In contrast, where bus priority measures are introduced into congested environs it could be possible to improve bus journey times towards and beyond those offered in the base year.</p>
<b>Baseline 2018/2019 Performance</b>	100 (base year indexed value for combined bus journey times on routes of at least 2bph in 2018/19)
<b>Previous targets for 2024/25 and 2029/30</b>	<p>2024/25: 100 (target value, indexed)</p> <p>2029/30: 100 (target value, indexed)</p>
<b>Performance to date</b>	2023/24: 104 (4% increase in timetabled outbound PM peak journey times of higher frequency routes since base year)
<b>Proposed target</b>	<p>2026/27: 104 (no further increase in timetabled JTs by 26/27)</p> <p>2029/30: 100 (reduction of timetabled JTs to 2018/19 levels)</p>
<b>Evidence for target setting</b>	<p><b>Is this target ambitious?</b> 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 no further degradation in journey times result, and that targeted investment allows a reduction of JTs to base year levels by 2030. 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><b>Is this target realistic?</b> It is vital that through this period of planned investment and growth that bus journey times do not worsen further. 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</p>



they do arise. We anticipate investment in bus priority through on-street and UTMC measures will play a major role in delivering this target. It will be vital for the Council to co-ordinate and join up their policy across disciplines including planning, parking, highways and local transport in order to maximise the benefits of these interventions. From May 2024, the Council has taken on powers of enforcement for Moving Traffic Offences, allowing the Council to enforce priority features such as bus lanes, which is likely to have a positive effect on the ability to reach this target.





# Appendices

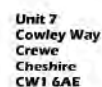


## A. Enhanced Partnership Forum member list

Member List	
<b>1</b>	<b>Council Officers</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Local Bus Operators</b>
	Arriva
	Stagecoach
	D&G Buses
	Aintree Coachline
	Warrington's Own Buses
	Als Coaches
	Changing Lives Together
	M&H
<b>3</b>	<b>Local Authorities</b>
	Cheshire East Council
	Halton Borough Council
	Warrington Borough Council
	Flintshire County Council
	Shropshire County Council
	Wrexham County Council
	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

Member List	
<b>4</b>	<b>Such other persons / organisations</b>
	Transport Focus
	Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington
	Transport for Wales
	Poverty and Truth Team
	Police
	College / Universities (University of Chester)
	NHS Merseyside and Cheshire (including Countess of Cheshire Hospital)
	Senior Access Officer
	Marketing Cheshire
	Bid Teams (Chester BID, Northwich BID, West Chester Commercial BID, Winsford BID, Gadbrook Park BID)
	Destination Cheshire
	Regeneration Economic Growth
	Wirral Transport Users Associates
<b>5</b>	<b>Businesses</b>
	Chamber of Commerce
	Federation of Small Businesses
	Groundwork
	ENCIRC
	Cheshire Oaks
	Chester Zoo





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

Dear Kristy

## Support for Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

I am writing in order to confirm our committed and ongoing support and engagement with Cheshire West & Chester's Bus Service Improvement Plan.

As an operator D&G Bus supports the National Bus Strategy and we work in collaborative partnership with Cheshire West & Chester Council in the Bus Service Improvement Plan, with the ultimate goal that bus becomes the preferred mode of transport in the area.

All of the proposed measures detailed within the plan will in various ways achieve a significant change to the current and evolving network of services within Cheshire West & Chester. The change will be tangible for customers in terms of vehicle quality, greener buses, journey time and convenience as well as simpler fare structure and multi-operator ticketing to allow easy, value for money travel across the network.

We look forward to continuing our close working relationship with you and fellow operators to deliver the Bus Service Improvement Plan and the ongoing and sustainable enhancements essential to attract car owners away from the private car and onto the bus network.

Yours sincerely

*J. Broder*

David Brookes  
Managing Director  
D&G Bus Ltd













## C. CW&C Bus Service Spending 2022/23 and 2023/24

Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2024	Revenue LTA funded including section 106		Integrated Transport Block Capital funded		DFT BSOG		DFT Local Transport Fund (LTF)		DFT Rural Mobility Fund (RMF)		DfT Bus Service Support Grant (BSSG) / DfT Bus Fare Cap Grant (BFCG)		DfT BSIP	Total Spend		
	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Supported Local bus services including S106	854,641	1,151,803	0	0	201,645	201,645	509,508	345,837	0	0	15,185	15,007	21,736	1,580,979	1,736,028	3,317,007
Contribution to cross boundary services managed by other authorities	85,443	85,032	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,443	85,032	170,475
Chester P&R service	1,164,905	1,026,670	0	0	112,673	112,673	0	0	0	0	0	0	48,734	1,277,578	1,188,077	2,465,655
ENCTS Bureau & card production	100,906	136,097	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,906	136,097	237,003
Concessionary fare reimbursement to operators	2,448,761	2,181,129	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,448,761	2,181,129	4,629,890
Infrastructure excluding depreciation	91,070	79,555	52,059	62,593	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	143,129	142,148	285,277
Information provision	178,732	162,598	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	178,732	162,598	341,330
Bus priority measures	0	0	113,217	36,754	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	113,217	36,754	149,971
Chester/Ellesmere Port Interchanges	296,381	358,002	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	296,381	358,002	654,383
Travelcard (Withdrawn 03/23)	30,510	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,510	0	30,510
DRT – itravel (Began 07/23)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8,536	219,673	0	0	0	8,536	219,673	228,209
Marketing (incl. P&R promotion)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	81,855	0	81,855	81,855
Moving traffic contraventions	0	0	0	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,000	100,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,251,350</b>	<b>5,180,885</b>	<b>165,276</b>	<b>199,347</b>	<b>314,318</b>	<b>314,318</b>	<b>509,508</b>	<b>345,837</b>	<b>8,536</b>	<b>219,673</b>	<b>15,185</b>	<b>15,007</b>	<b>152,325</b>	<b>6,264,173</b>	<b>6,427,392</b>	<b>12,691,565</b>



## D. Service list

No.	Between	And	Via	Daytime buses per hour between 13:00 - 14:00 / Evening buses per hour between 19:00 - 20:00					Operator	CW&C Supported	Funding type (e.g. contract, de-minimis)	Funding time (e.g. all day, evening, weekend)
				M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	Sun				
1	Chester Rail Station	Liverpool	Ellesmere Port	2	2	2	2	2	Stagecoach	No		
1	Chester Rail Station	Wrexham	Chester Business Park	4	2	4	2	2	Arriva	No	CB	
2	Chester Bus Interchange	Runcorn	Ellesmere Port	2	1	2	1	0	Stagecoach	Partial	de-minimis	Early & evening journeys Mon - Sat
3	Chester	Broughton	Hough Green	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	No		
4/4S	Chester	Mold	Hawarden	2	2	2	2	2	Arriva	No	CB	
5	Chester Rail Station	Wrexham	Huntington	3	1	3	1	1	Stagecoach	Partial	S106	20-minute frequency throughout Mon - Sat. Evening Fri/Sat
5	Ellesmere Port	Mold	Queensferry	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	No	CB	
6	Ellesmere Port	Little Sutton	Great Sutton	1.5	0	1.5	0	0	Stagecoach	No		
7	Chester Bus Interchange	Vicars Cross	Boughton	2	0	2	0	0	Stagecoach	Partial	de-minimis	30 min frequency Mon-Sat
7	Ellesmere Port	Rivacre	Overpool	2	0	2	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes	contract	All day Mon - Sat
8	Chester Bus Interchange	Piper's Ash	Vicars Cross	0	0	0	0	1	Stagecoach	No		
9	Chester Bus Interchange	Pipers Ash	Hoole Road	2	0	2	0	0	Stagecoach	No		



No.	Between	And	Via	Daytime buses per hour between 13:00 - 14:00 / Evening buses per hour between 19:00 - 20:00					Operator	CW&C Supported	Funding type (e.g. contract, de-minimis)	Funding time (e.g. all day, evening, weekend)
				M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	Sun				
CAT 9 / 9A	Northwich	Warrington	via Wincham (CAT 9) via Barnton 9A)	1	0	1	0	0	Warrington's Own	Partial	de-minimis	Via Lostock Gralam and Wincham All day Mon - Sat
10	Chester Bus Interchange	Connah's Quay	Queensferry	2	1	2	1	2	Arriva	No		
10A	Chester Bus Interchange	Flint	Queensferry	2	0	2	0	0	Arriva	No		
11	Chester Bus Interchange	Holywell	Broughton	2	0.5	2	0.5	0.5	Arriva	No	CB	
14/14A	Chester Bus Interchange	Blacon	circular	5	0	5	0	3	Arriva / Stagecoach / Blacon Pointer VQP	No		
14/14A	Chester Bus Interchange	Blacon	circular	7	2	7	2	1	Arriva / Stagecoach / Blacon Pointer VQP	Partial	de-minimis	Sunday only
15/15A/ 15B	Chester Bus Interchange	Saughall	Blacon	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva / Stagecoach / Blacon Pointer VQP	Yes	contract /de-minimis	All day / early morning journeys
15/15A	Chester Bus Interchange	Saughall	Blacon	1	0.5	1	0.5	1	Arriva / Stagecoach / Blacon Pointer VQP	Partial	contract/de-minimis	Evenings / Sunday only
16	Chester Bus Interchange	Saltney	Handbridge	3	1	3	1	2	Stagecoach	Partial	de-minimis	Evenings Mon - Fri
22/X22	Chester Bus Interchange	West Kirby	Neston	1	0	1	0	0	Al's Coaches	Yes	contract	All day Mon - Sat



No.	Between	And	Via	Daytime buses per hour between 13:00 - 14:00 / Evening buses per hour between 19:00 - 20:00					Operator	CW&C Supported	Funding type (e.g. contract, de-minimis)	Funding time (e.g. all day, evening, weekend)
				M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	Sun				
23	Ellesmere Port	Neston	Little Sutton	0.5	0	0	0	0	Aintree Coachlines	Yes	contract	All day Mon - Fri
26/26A/26B	Ellesmere Port	Guilden Sutton	Chester	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes	contract / de-minimis	All day Mon - Fri / Saturdays
31	Northwich	Crewe	Winsford	1	0	1	0	0	D & G Buses	No		
37	Northwich	Crewe	Winsford	1	1	1	1	0	D & G Buses	No	CB	Evenings
40	Chester Rail Station	Chester	circular	4	0	4	0	0	Aintree Coachlines	Partial	de-minimis	Extend span of day - additional journeys Mon - Sun
41/41B	Chester Rail Station	Whitchurch	Tattenhall	1	0	1	0	0	Aintree Coachlines	Partial	de-minimis	fully support part route Mon - Sat
42	Crewe	Congleton	Middlewich	1	0	1	0	0	D & G Buses	No		
48/48A	Northwich	Frodsham	Kingsley	0.5	0	0	0	0	D & G Buses	Yes	contract	All day Mon - Fri
49	Rudheath	Weaverham	Northwich	2	0	2	0	0	D & G Buses	Partial	de-minimis	Increase frequency Mon - Sat every 30 mins
51	Chester Bus Interchange	Plas Newton	Weston Grove	2	0	2	0	1	Stagecoach	Partial	contract	Early morning, 6:05pm journey and Evenings only Fri & Sat only
53	Chester Bus Interchange	Kingsway	Hoole Road	4	0	4	0	1	Stagecoach	Partial	contract	Evenings only Fri & Sat only
61/62	Chester Bus Interchange	Higher Kinnerton	Doddleston	1	0	1	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes	contract	Full day Mon - Fri
70	Nantwich	Tiverton	Spurstow	0L	0	0L	0	0	D & G Buses	No		
82	Chester Bus Interchange	Northwich	Kelsall	1	0	1	0	0	D & G Buses	Partial	contract	Saturday only
84	Chester Bus Interchange	Crewe	Tarporley	1	1	1	1	0.75	Stagecoach	Partial	contract	Evenings only Mon - Sat Sunday
89	Northwich	Knutsford	Lostock Gralam	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	D & G Buses	No		



No.	Between	And	Via	Daytime buses per hour between 13:00 - 14:00 / Evening buses per hour between 19:00 - 20:00					Operator	CW&C Supported	Funding type (e.g. contract, de-minimis)	Funding time (e.g. all day, evening, weekend)
				M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	Sun				
102/103	Ellesmere Port Rail Station	Cheshire Oaks	Ellesmere Port Bus Interchange	0	0	0	0	2	Stagecoach	Yes	S106	Sunday only
204	Chester Rail Station	Deeside Industrial Park	Blacon	0L*	0	0	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes	contract	Mon - Fri only
319	Sandbach	Holmes Chapel	Goostrey	0L	0	0	0	0	D & G Buses	No		
487	Ness Gardens	Liverpool	Neston	2	1	2	1	1	Arriva	Partial	de-minimis	Joint with LCR
811	Morton	Broughton	Little Sutton and Hooton	0L*	0	0	0	0	Selwyns	No		
N3	Northwich	Moulton	Kingsmead	1	0	0	0	0	Warrington's Own	Yes	contract	Mon - Fri only
N4	Northwich	Barnton	Leftwich	1	0	1	0	0	Warrington's Own	Yes	contract / S106	Mon -Saturday excluding public holidays
PR1	Chester Bus Interchange	Wrexham Road P&R	Chester Foregate Street	5	0	5	0	4	Stagecoach	Yes	contract	Monday -Sunday
PR2	Chester City Centre	Boughton Heath P&R	Chester Foregate Street	6	0	6	0	4	Stagecoach	Yes	contract	Monday -Sunday
PR3	Chester City Centre	Upton P&R	Chester Foregate Street	3	0	3	0	4	Stagecoach	Yes	contract	Monday -Sunday
T8	Chester Rail Station	Ruthin	Mold	1	0	1	0	0	M & H Coaches	No		
W7	Winsford Library	Winsford Guildhall	Over St Johns	1	0	0	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes	contract	Mon - Fri



No.	Between	And	Via	Daytime buses per hour between 13:00 - 14:00 / Evening buses per hour between 19:00 - 20:00					Operator	CW&C Supported	Funding type (e.g. contract, de-minimis)	Funding time (e.g. all day, evening, weekend)
				M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	Sun				
X1	Chester Bus Interchange	Liverpool	Ellesmere Port	1	0	1	0	1	Stagecoach	No		
X4	Chester Railway Station	Mold	Buckley	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	No		
X30	Chester Bus Interchange	Warrington	Runcorn	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	No		
X30	Chester Bus Interchange	Frodsham	Mickle Trafford	0	0.5	0	0.5	1	Stagecoach	Yes	contract	Mon-Sat Evening
			Totals	92	17	89	17	37				