

Bus Back Better: Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme Process

Somerset County Council Workshop

November 2021



Part 1 – Process Background



The National Bus Strategy - Recap

On Monday 15 March 2021 Government launched Bus Back Better, a new national bus strategy for England with aims to rejuvenate local bus services by making them:

- > **More attractive for passengers**
- > **More affordable**
- > **Easier to understand and use**
- > **Faster and more reliable**
- > **Greener**

It acknowledges the decades-long national decline in bus patronage and points to places which have bucked this trend.

Somerset County Council has now produced and submitted the required Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for consideration by the DfT – this outlines the authority’s vision and funding requirements.

The next required step is to produce an **Enhanced Partnership** Plan and Scheme document by the end of March 2022.



Somerset's BSIP had Six Themes

Somerset County Council's BSIP, submitted on 29th October 2021 outlined plans requiring c£165m of funding over an initial three-year period and focusing on action across **six key areas**:

1. Transport decarbonisation
2. More extensive and frequency network of services
3. Reducing the cost of travel
4. Improving coordination (between all modes)
5. An easily accessible and reliable network
6. A comfortable network with improved facilities



What is an Enhanced Partnership

- > The EP is the means by which the BSIP will be delivered. It follows a statutory process, clearly defined in the guidance issued by DfT following the Bus Services Act 2017 and updated in light of the National Bus Strategy.
- > An Enhanced Partnership comprises:
 - an **EP Plan** – The high-level vision and objectives for bus services in the local area which is expected to closely follow relevant sections of the BSIP; and,
 - the **EP Scheme** – This sets out the precise detail of how the BSIP vision and objectives will be achieved, including any commitments made by the LTA or standards to be met by bus operators.



Formal Objection Period

- > Following preparation of the draft EP Plan and Scheme and notification to operators of that fact, there is a period of time where operators are able to raise any formal objection to the proposals.
- > This must be at least 28 days, and because of the tight timescales to meet the April deadline this is likely to be kept to the minimum.
- > There should be no surprises at this point, and if due process has been followed with active engagement between the LTA and bus operators, no objections should be forthcoming.



Formal Consultation

- > Following the objection period a formal consultation period must take place, including several identified statutory consultees such as:
 - all operators of local bus services affected by any of the proposals;
 - organisations that represent local passengers;
 - other local authorities that would be affected by the proposals;
 - the Traffic Commissioners;
 - the chief officer of police for each area to which the plan relates;
 - Transport Focus;
 - the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA); and
 - such other persons as the authority thinks fit.

- > It is also recommended that any relevant organisations that have not participated in consultations to date should also be directly consulted.



Process Timeline



Week Commencing (Mon)	13/09/2021	20/09/2021	27/09/2021	04/10/2021	11/10/2021	18/10/2021	25/10/2021	01/11/2021	08/11/2021	15/11/2021	22/11/2021	29/11/2021	06/12/2021	13/12/2021	20/12/2021	27/12/2021	03/01/2022	10/01/2022	17/01/2022	24/01/2022	31/01/2022	07/02/2022	14/02/2022	21/02/2022	28/02/2022	07/03/2022	14/03/2022	21/03/2022	28/03/2022
Stakeholder Engagement (BSIP)	█	█	█																										
Final Document Preparation (BSIP)			█	█	█	█	█																						
Submission of SCC BSIP							█																						
Enhanced Partnership Process																													
Document Structure (Plan / Scheme)							█	█																					
Draft Document (Plan / Scheme)								█	█																				
Finalisation of Draft Plan / Scheme										█	█																		
Endorsement at Partnership Level											█																		
Objection Period (28 Days)												█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
Formal Consultation Period (28 Days)																													
Final Amendments (If needed)																							█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Cabinet / other approvals																							█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Making of the EP Plan & Scheme																										█	█	█	█
BSIP Document and Submission	█	█	█	█	█	█	█																						
Draft Document							█	█	█	█																			
Final Draft Document										█	█																		
Consultation and Engagement Stages												█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
Final Document																							█	█	█	█	█	█	█



Part 2 – EP Scheme Overview



The Scheme LTA Obligations

- > Somerset's obligations through the delivery of the Enhanced Partnership will be detailed in The Scheme.
- > The Scheme must specify the 'facilities' (if any) that are to be provided by the authority and the 'measures' (if any) that are to be taken (and the date from which each would be available – if this is not the start of the scheme). Each are defined as:
 - **Facilities** – new physical assets or changes to them that are provided at specific locations within the scheme area. These will mainly relate to increases in bus priority measures, and presenting the local bus network as a single system that works together.
 - **Measures** – cover anything else that the LTA can deliver within its powers to support the BSIP ambitions, e.g., Lowering fares, DRT, service subsidy.





Part 3 – EP Scheme Walk-Through



Facilities, Measures & Obligations

It should be noted that all listed LTA facility and measure obligations are subject to the award of sufficient funding through the BSIP process. Somerset County Council will, subject to funding, provide the facilities and measures listed in the following pages.

Furthermore, subject to the allocation of sufficient funding, the listed Bus Operator Obligations are proposed to once The Scheme is 'made'. Bus Operator Obligations are listed after the following proposed LTA facilities and measures.

The Scheme will need to be varied in order to implement the measures, facilities and operator obligations following discussion and agreement with the Board or by way of the Statutory Mechanism once funding allocations are known / come on line.



LTA Facilities (1)

- > **More extensive and frequent network of services: Bus Priorities to Address Reliability and Punctuality**
 - SCC shall seek to develop programmes for bus priority improvements across identified towns in addition to pursuing the delivery of enhanced digital priority infrastructure and digitally enabled information provision.
- > **A Safe and Comfortable Network: Introduce a Bus Stop Design Guide and Hierarchy Model**
 - SCC shall seek to develop a programme of targeted bus stop improvements across The Scheme area.



LTA Facilities (2)

- > **An Accessible and Reliable Network: Facilities to provide wider access to information across the local bus network**
 - SCC will seek to develop a programme to identify and roll-out real time information (RTI) at key locations across the local bus network and will seek to further develop the online presence of it's Think Travel information portal.



LTA Measures (1)

- > **Transport Decarbonisation: SCC will support operators in enabling Somerset to have an entirely zero emission local bus fleet.**
 - SCC shall work with Bus Operators to explore and if possible implement the opportunity to electrify the Taunton Park and Ride service and an exemplar inter-urban corridor to test this technology in different operating environments.
 - SCC will explore opportunities to deliver Digital DRT services with zero emission buses as well as commissioning a longer-term decarbonisation strategy with a structured and costed delivery plan.

- > **More extensive and frequent network of Services: SCC will seek a range of measures to meet priorities for a more extensive local bus network**
 - SCC will explore opportunities to set increased frequencies and service durations across a core network of local bus services and explore ways to better serve rural communities using concepts such as Digital DRT.



LTA Measures (2)

- > **Reduce the Cost of Travel: SCC will support operators in enabling simpler fares and targeted promotions to drive growth**
 - SCC shall explore opportunities to support, with revenue funding, targeted discounts on fares to encourage growth in various target passenger markets and work with operators to introduce multi-operator and through ticketing.
- > **An Easily Accessible and Reliable Network: Ensuring an attractive network proposition to new and existing passengers is presented**
 - SCC will work with Bus Operators to ensure all local buses are able to accept contactless payment for all fare types by no later than 1 April 2022 and that it's Think Travel information portal is operational by no later than the same date.



LTA Measures (3)

- > **Improve Coordination: SCC will support work to create greater coordination between public transport services and access to trip generators**
 - SCC will work with District colleagues to understand the feasibility of undertaking works at bus interchanges, develop new Mobility Hubs, and embed planning and parking processes into it's approach to public transport.
 - Where feasible SCC will work with Bus Operators to ensure key trip generators are embedded into the bus network, and with train operators to understand opportunities to develop and coordinate bus and train services.

- > **A Safe and Comfortable Network: SCC will establish ways to ensure users feel confident and secure in using public transport across Somerset**
 - SCC will work with Bus Operators to explore opportunities to set minimum vehicle standards and ensure services are designed to be specifically appealing to work age travellers, young people, families, and leisure travellers.



Operator Obligations (1)

> Vehicle Standards

- Bus Operators in Somerset will work with SCC to establish a minimum vehicle standard for use across the local bus network.

> Timetable changes

- Bus Operators will work towards a system of agreed timetable change dates and significantly increased coordination with rail services.

> Ticketing

- Bus Operators in Somerset shall ensure that all buses will be able to accept contactless payment for all ticketing products offered by 1 April 2022.
- Bus Operators in Somerset shall simplify fares, undertake targeted promotions to drive growth, and consider options for introducing targeted fare products to encourage more youth/group travel by public transport.



Operator Obligations (2)

> Enhancing Frequency

- Bus operators will explore and where possible implement opportunities where current local bus service frequencies can be further enhanced and establish if these will be commercially viable or require initial / continued funding.

> Limiting Frequency

- Bus Operators will not be expected to change the frequency of any services that are included within the Enhanced Partnership Scheme without agreement being sought through the Bus Advisory Board.
- *Note: Agreement of the routes to be included in the Enhanced Partnership Scheme, will be an important early task as part of the Enhanced Partnership change process.*
- Where appropriate Bus Operators will be required to operate even headways where two or more services combine and to coordinate timetables.



Operator Obligations (3)

> **Co-ordination with Light or Heavy Rail Services**

- Where possible, Bus Operators will be expected to coordinate local bus service timetables with rail services where interchange locations are served.
- Bus Operators will be required to make best endeavours to allow flexibility to accommodate late connections where possible.

> **Co-ordination between local bus services or between local buses and other types of road transport such as Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)**

- Bus Operators will ensure where possible, timetables are coordinated with other core and feeder network road transport services at agreed interchange locations. Bus Operators must make best endeavours to allow flexibility for late connections where possible.



Variation Mechanisms

- > Any change can be made to the EP scheme where any member of the Board has made a proposal for a change.
- > The Board will then consider the proposal in due course and the proposal will be implemented if it receives the unanimous support of bus operators and the support of the County Council.
- > This procedure is most suited to simple, uncontentious changes.
- > The requirement for unanimity will exclude anything controversial, in that case the statutory procedure will apply.





Thank you for your time

Your contact is

Transport@somerset.gov.uk