

**NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY
TRANSPORT ACT 2000
ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN AND SCHEME**

**SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL
AGREEMENT**

DRAFT

EP PLAN AND SCHEME - CONTENTS

Part 1 – Enhanced Partnership Plan (2022-2032)

1. Definitions
2. Introduction
3. Key Objectives
4. Supporting Policies
5. Competition Test
6. Extent of the Enhanced Partnership
7. Bus Network Overview
8. Outcomes and Interventions to Improve Local Bus Services
9. Consultation Plans and Future Funding Arrangements

Part 2 – Enhanced Partnership Scheme (2022-2032)

1. EP Scheme Content
2. Scope of the EP Scheme and Commencement Date
3. Obligations on the Authorities
4. Obligations on Local Bus Operators
5. Governance Arrangements

Part 3 – Other Aspects of the Somerset County Council Enhanced Partnership

Annex A –

Annex B –

PART 1 - EP PLAN

THE SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN FOR BUSES IS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 138G(1) OF THE TRANSPORT ACT 2000 BY:

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

1. Definitions

- 1.1. In this Enhanced Partnership Plan and Schemes pursuant to it, the following capitalised terms shall have the meanings ascribed to them below in Table 1.

Table 1: Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme Definitions

1985 Act	Transport Act 1985
2000 Act	Transport Act 2000
2017 Act	Bus Services Act 2017
Bus Operators (or Operators)	All Large Operators, Medium Operators and Small Operators running Qualifying Bus Services taken collectively.
BSIP	Bus Service Improvement Plan as required through the National Bus Strategy: Bus Back Better (March 2021)
BUS Group	Bus Users and Stakeholders Group
CREDS	Centre for Research into Energy Demand Solutions
CT	Community Transport
DRT	Demand Responsive Transport
Passenger Charter	Document providing standards passengers can expect
RTI	Real Time Information
SCC	Somerset County Council
The Plan	Enhanced Partnership Plan
The Scheme	Enhanced Partnership Scheme
Think Travel	Think Travel is SCCs Public Transport Information Brand and Portal (online presence)
ZEVs	Zero Emission Vehicles (may be ZEV also)

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. Somerset is predominately rural in nature with a population of 563,900 (2021) covering 4,171 square kilometres. A population density of 163.35 (people/kilometre square) is one of the lowest in England and sparsely distributed across the county with only Taunton, Yeovil, Bridgwater, Frome, and Burnham-on-Sea having a population of over 20,000. West Somerset has the lowest social mobility levels in the country, significantly affecting the opportunities and prospects for young people and the wider population.
- 2.2. The principal urban centres include Taunton (county town), Bridgwater and Yeovil with secondary centres at Wellington, Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge, Chard, Crewkerne, Frome, Glastonbury, Ilminster, Minehead, Shepton Mallet, Street, Wells and Wincanton. The impact of rapid growth in towns such as Wellington and Burnham-on-Sea has been considerable with the M5/A38 corridor through the centre of the county becoming increasingly congested. In terms of access and connectivity these roads play a key role, given 88% of the county's roads are classified as rural, compared to 58% across England.
- 2.3. Around 21% of Somerset's population are 65+ compared to 16% for England whilst 323,000 are aged between 16-64 (57%) of which 273,000 are classed as economically active. Somerset's workplace population is dispersed across the county, with clusters in/around Taunton/Wellington, Bridgwater, and Yeovil plus a notable concentration to the north of the county around Cheddar, Frome, Glastonbury/Street, Shepton Mallet and Wells, reflecting the boundaries of the Bristol/Bath travel to work area(s).
- 2.4. In Somerset, 44.1% of Carbon Dioxide emissions were from transport in 2019, significantly higher than the total UK emissions from transport (27%). Transport emissions in Somerset have also remained stubbornly high with little change in the volume of emissions since the mid 2000's despite improvements in modern vehicles becoming cleaner, less polluting and more efficient. This can be linked to Somerset's rurality which contributes to a lack of alternatives to private motorised transport. This is reflected in data from CREDS place based carbon calculator which shows car use in Somerset is significantly higher than the national average.
- 2.5. There is currently no existing voluntary partnership or other non-statutory arrangement in place between Somerset County Council ("SCC") and its local bus operators. As such the Enhanced Partnership Plan ("The Plan") and Scheme ("The Scheme") represent a new level and process of formal partnership across the county.

3. Key Objectives

3.1. Table 2 provides a brief overview of the key objectives set out within the SCC Bus Service Improvement Plan (“BSIP”) and what these mean regarding the approaches used to deliver the Enhanced Partnership.

Table 2: BSIP Objectives and Enhanced Partnership Approach

BSIP Objectives	EP Approach
Transport Decarbonisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify opportunities to reduce carbon emissions from the fleet • Install infrastructure to support the move to ZEVs • Electrify the Taunton Park and Ride Service • Link with wider policies – parking provision and pricing, and land use and development policies. • Encourage a mode shift from private cars to public transport
A more extensive and frequent network of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set increased frequencies across a core network to provide more opportunities to travel across the day. • Improve the Bridgwater-Taunton-Wellington corridor. • Set a last bus time on key strategic network corridors. • Serve better our remote areas and extend DRT into the evenings and weekends to tie in with the core network. • Bus priority measures to address reliability / punctuality.
Reduce the cost of travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a range of targeted ticket options available across all operators to simplify and reduce the cost of travel by bus and support growth on the core network. • Introduce multi-operator / through tickets to include interchange from DRT on to a public bus / feeder route. • Specifically, reduce ticket prices on Taunton Park & Ride Services. introduce a flat fare town zone within the towns of Taunton, Bridgwater, and Yeovil and revise pricing and product offers on interurban routes.
Improved co-ordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make improvements to existing bus stations in Yeovil, Wells, and Bridgwater and consider options for Taunton. • Identify opportunities for mobility hubs in key locations. • Improve rail and coach interchange with the bus network. • Improve access to hospitals, employment/retail sites, train stations, and further education colleges. • Earlier consideration of bus use/access at planning stage and set clear requirements for the developers. • Develop links with active travel options.
An easily accessible and reliable network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure contactless payment on all local bus services. • Launch and promote the Think Travel portal. • Provide an App / Digital platform for RTI, live bookings, and ticket purchase on DRT. • Roll-out RTI at major bus stops. • DRT using smaller more appealing vehicles to test this approach as part of a centre of excellence.
A comfortable network with improved facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set vehicle standards on key corridors. • Introduce a bus stop design guide and hierarchy model. • Design appealing services for working age travellers.

- 3.2. The objectives set out in Table 2 link to the priorities set out by stakeholders and the public as part of the BSIP process. They form a critical part of The Plan and link to facilities and measures that will be defined and refined over time in The Scheme.

4. Supporting Policies

- 4.1. Complementary policies regarding local bus services will be pursued in The Plan.
- 4.2. Local policies recognise the high level of car use across Somerset (e.g. 82% in Yeovil and similar in Taunton), plus a large amount of cross-boundary travel. Strong emphasis is given to meeting accessibility needs for **all members** of the community.
- 4.3. Increased bus use represents one of only two ways (alongside alternative fuels) to reduce carbon emissions from trips made between our dispersed communities which presents the biggest challenge for decarbonisation. Somerset's recent climate emergency strategy highlights the critical role of increasing mode share by public transport as part of our decarbonisation pathway.
- 4.4. Somerset's Growth Plan (2017-2030) aims to have a productive and innovative business economy, a skilled labour force and supporting infrastructures which businesses will need to thrive. A key barrier is the rural nature of Somerset and limited provision of public transport – those without private car access cannot get to colleges, training or employment in a timely way. The Recovery and Growth Plan (2021) further notes underlying economic challenges have been exacerbated by the pandemic, with public transport accessibility and usage severely reduced.
- 4.5. Several policies, including SCC's Local Transport Plan (LTP) and associated Schedule of Transport Policies (March 2011) highlight the overall expenditure on passenger transport. Somerset ranks in the top half of English shire counties in terms of passenger transport funding, however, relative spending on passenger information was very low and is reflected in the poor public ratings on this service attribute.
- 4.6. The Somerset Bus Strategy (2018) was published during the Government's austerity programme at a time of severe financial constraint with the aim to *"Maintain services most essential in meeting transport needs where the commercial market is unable to provide; and work closely with [others] to change established models of rural bus service provision for the benefit of our communities"*. This needs to be developed in line with latest national policies, structured around the three national themes of Bus Reform, Future of Mobility and Net Zero. Details of Community Transport (CT) and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) are also included in the Bus Strategy.

4.7. Regarding the Somerset Rail, Cycling and Walking Strategies (due to be refreshed shortly), there is an opportunity to take a more integrated approach with buses. Links with active modes are not evident, so emphasis is needed on how/where active travel developments best serve people who could most benefit from it, along with a comprehensive programme which shows how active travel links to the bus network.

4.8. The Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy (2018) sets out how existing highway assets will be managed/maintained, including bus priority as an asset type. Some district level parking policies also relate to bus travel, including reduction of commuter parking where alternatives exist, repurposing smaller car parks as P&R sites (at certain times), increased town centre parking charges, and increased bicycle parking at bus/rail stations. Local district development plans also contain a range of policies related to increased public transport provision/use.

DRAFT

5. COMPETITION TEST¹

This section should include a link to a competition declaration. That declaration does not need to form part of the EP Plan or Scheme document. However, it can be included in one of those documents for completeness, providing it is made clear that it is a separate, standalone document that does not need to go through the EP variation procedures to change it.

DfT Suggested Wording – needs SCC Legal Agreed Wording

- 5.1. SCC has undertaken an assessment of the impacts of The Plan and The Scheme made on 1 April 2022 on competition and believes it will not or is unlikely to have a significantly adverse effect on competition, for the purposes of Part 1 of Schedule 10 of the Transport Act 2000.

¹ See section 8.38-8.39 of the main EP Guidance

6. Extent of the Enhanced Partnership

- 6.1. In response to the Government requirement, SCC has published a notice of intent to prepare an Enhanced Partnership (The Plan and The Scheme), in accordance with Section 138F of the 2000 Act. The Plan and The Scheme will make a substantial contribution to the implementation of the SCC BSIP. It will bring benefits to passengers using local bus services across Somerset by improving the quality and efficiency of the public transport network and supporting the efficient use of the road network and the delivery of sustainable growth, limiting the impacts of additional traffic congestion and air pollution.
- 6.2. Both The Plan and The Scheme are proposed to cover the entirety of the SCC area, which includes Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, and Somerset West and Taunton District Council. Neighbouring Authorities who have been engaged during the production of SCC's BSIP include Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset, Devon County Council Dorset Council, and Wiltshire Council.
- 6.3. The Plan and The Scheme for SCC are proposed to extend throughout the full administrative county of Somerset within its boundary (Figure 1) and changes to this boundary at any time will represent a variation to The Scheme.



Figure 1: SCC Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme Area

- 6.4. The County Council liaises with neighbouring authorities regularly to discuss cross-boundary bus issues. An Enhanced Partnership covering part, or all adjacent local

authorities has been considered, but will not be taken forward at this time. However, the partnership may consider this desirable in the future, for example if a neighbouring authority is proposing an Enhanced Partnership in relation to cross-boundary bus services or development, and the partnership would wish to avoid a patchwork of inconsistent standards. Neighbouring authorities wishing to engage with the SCC Enhanced Partnership would do so initially on a similar non-statutory basis through the SCC Bus Advisory Board.

- 6.5. All operators running bus services in the SCC area have been invited to participate in the preparation of The Plan and The Scheme. The Scheme will come into effect from the 1 April 2022.
- 6.6. The Plan will be in place for 10-years from adoption (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2032) unless revoked earlier by the LTA under Section 138O of the 2000 Act. A full review of the effectiveness of the Plan (including its extent, objectives, and partnership governance) and Scheme (including measures and facilities provided, and requirements imposed) and compliance of both with competition legislation will take place during the 12-months prior to 31 March 2027, forming a mid-term review.
- 6.7. Any changes to The Plan will follow the formal variation procedures as set out in Section 138L of the 2000 Act. The Plan may have different review arrangements to The Scheme.

7. Bus Network Overview

7.1. The SCC Enhanced Partnership or buses can be transformational with the right level of funding and the improvements will:

- Deliver a step change in bus provision for current new bus users
- Provide a high-quality alternative to car travel

OPERATORS AND THE MARKET

7.2. The main operator across the SCC area is First Bus. Market share based on the number of local bus services operated is dominated by First Bus (43.1%). Table 3 outlines the current (2021) market shares.

Table 3: Market Share by Number of Local Bus Services Operated in SCC

Operator	No Subsidy	De-minimis	Subsidy	Total	Market Share*
First Bus (All)	40	4	6	50	43.1%
Fromebus	4	0	11	15	12.9%
SCC In House	0	0	13	13	11.2%
South West Coaches	1	3	6	10	8.6%
Hatch Green Coaches	1	0	9	10	8.6%
Libra Travel	0	0	5	5	4.4%
Mendip CT	0	2	1	3	2.6%
Bakers Dolphin	0	0	2	2	1.7%
Ridlers	0	0	2	2	1.7%
Isle Valley Transport	0	1	1	2	1.7%
ATWEST	0	0	2	2	1.7%
Stagecoach	1	0	0	1	0.9%
South Somerset CT	0	0	1	1	0.9%
TOTAL	47	10	59	116	100%

*Market share based on the total number of local bus services operated

7.3. There is currently no active competition between operators on routes wholly operating within the SCC area. Limited competition occurs on some cross-boundary services between Somerset and Dorset.

LOCAL BUS FLEET

- 7.4. The total size of the local bus fleet across The Plan area is 189 vehicles (based on peak vehicle requirements) with an overall average age of 10 years.
- 7.5. First operate a fleet of 103 buses, many transferred from other areas of the UK, with an average age of 12 years. Smaller operators (including SCC's in-house fleet used on supported contracts and Slinky Demand Responsive Transport services) run a combined fleet of 86 buses with a more diverse mix of vehicles, either operated from new or bought second-hand - overall average age is 8 years.
- 7.6. The local fleet operating across Somerset is of mid-level standard, only three buses being one-year old or less (all with South West Coaches). There are currently no zero emission vehicles in the county and only 11% of buses meet latest Euro VI emission standards. However, 46% of buses are at Euro V standard. Table 4 summarises the key characteristics of the Somerset local bus service fleet.

Table 4: Somerset Bus Fleet Characteristics

Key Metric	Somerset Fleet Proportion
<3 yrs old	4%
<8 yrs old	39%
Euro 6	11%
Euro 5	46%
Euro 4	31%
<Euro 3	12%
Upgraded	5%
Single deck	81%
Double deck	19%
Single door	100%
Dual door	0%

- 7.7. Table 5 shows the bus vehicle fleet by operator and indicates potential to reduce carbon emissions from the fleet through retrofit upgrades to Euro V/VI for under half of all buses.

Table 5: Somerset Bus Fleet Analysis by Local Bus Operator

Operator	Fleet Total	Ave. Age	Euro VI	Euro V	Euro IV or less
First Bus	103	22	0	48	55
South West Coaches	23	9	4	9	10
Fromebus	18	11	0	7	11
Hatch Green Coaches	11	6	0	10	1
Libra Travel	8	8	0	5	3
Bakers Dolphin	3	10	0	2	1
SCC in-house fleet	23	5	17	5	1

Total	189	9	21	86	82
--------------	------------	----------	-----------	-----------	-----------

FACTORS AFFECTING THE LOCAL BUS MARKET

- 7.8. There are several factors which are considered will affect, or have the potential to affect, the local bus market over the life of The Plan:
- Population density of 164 people/km² is one of the lowest in England.
 - A rural county with a population of c564,000 spread over 4,171 km².
 - West Somerset has the lowest social mobility in England.
 - 84% of households have access to one or more cars (74%, England).
 - Somerset has the 4th lowest bus use per population in England.
 - There has been a 40% decline in local bus patronage over the last 10-years.
 - 42% of local bus passenger journeys used concessionary travel passes.
 - Only 3.5 commercial kilometres operate for every 1 supported (England is 7:1).
 - Only 1% of commuter journeys across Somerset are made by bus (84%, car).
 - 78% of local bus distance occurs between 9am and 4pm.
 - The top 5 performing routes carry 36% of all local bus passenger journeys.
 - Somerset has an aging population putting pressure on local service viability
 - Average parking charges are low making bus travel financially unattractive
 - A complex fares and ticketing system set against the low parking charges
 - A requirement to continue to decarbonise and modernise the bus fleet
 - A requirement for bus services to connect better with rail and coach modes
 - A requirement for bus services to connect new housing and job opportunities
 - The cost of transport being a barrier for young people in deprived communities and/or low paid jobs, particularly if seeking work or starting new employment
- 7.9. There are several primary and secondary towns situated across Somerset. These are generally well connected by the highway network and provide the opportunity for a core local bus network to develop along key axis. However, there is a significant 'north/south' divide in the prosperity of local bus services across Somerset with a more substantive and viable network operating in the north of the SCC area supported by the 'pull-effect' of movements to neighbouring North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset LTA areas.
- 7.10. There is little in the way of a local rail network and the current local bus network could do more to provide regular and reliable connections to the rail stations that do exist across the SCC area and which provide strategic links to locations across the South West and England.

7.11. Congestion levels are relatively high in several town centres and this is forecast to increase over the lifetime of The Plan, justifying bus priority interventions planned in the BSIP.

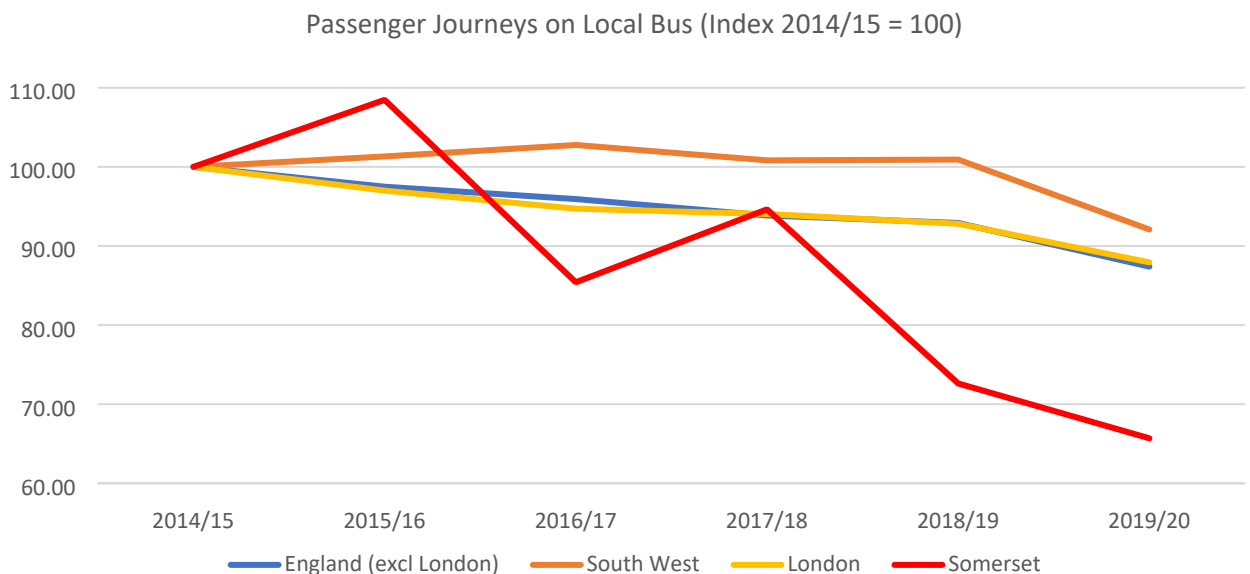
PATRONAGE

7.12. The number of bus journeys across Somerset has been falling consistently over several years - 8.9 million (2014/15) to 6.3 million (2018/19), and then down to 5.9 million (2019/20, when the pandemic started to impact on travel demand).

7.13. On average, Somerset residents make fewer bus journeys per year (14.0) versus the South West (38.9).

7.14. As an index, patronage in Somerset has fallen by around 34% in the last five years, faster than England, London, and the South West. Figure 2 suggests the local bus market in Somerset needs significant revitalisation through further investment into the transport system.

Figure 2: Journeys on Local Bus Services (Indexed) 2014/15 to 2019/20



Source: Bus Statistics Gov.UK (Table BUS0109)

7.15. The onset of the Coronavirus pandemic had an unprecedented impact on bus patronage and all other forms of transport as a number of restrictions on movement and social interaction were implemented by Government to protect public health.

7.16. Patronage has progressively improved over time and as of September 2021 sits at around 80% of normally observed levels based on local bus operator data and commentary.

7.17. Extrapolation of the current trend would indicate that passenger levels may have reached 90% by April 2022 when the Enhanced Partnership is implemented. This is the expectation of all local bus operators across Somerset. Therefore, there is a real risk that the residual impact continues into 2022/23.

NETWORK OFFERING

- 7.18. Detailed analysis of the bus network has been undertaken to understand:
- the relative provision of bus services and levels of service (frequencies and spread of operation by day); and
 - accessibility to a range of destinations including town centres, health, education, employment, and essential services; and the provision and adequacy of passenger infrastructure.
- 7.19. There are core bus corridors across Somerset with the majority originating in Taunton along with the string corridors seen travelling across the boundary from Somerset Towns to North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset LTA areas. Across these corridors and other new alignments there is potential to grow passenger numbers where a strong bus offer is delivered.
- 7.20. Aligned to the Government's ambition for bus priority schemes, there is a programme outlined to deliver improvements to prioritise bus within main Somerset towns (e.g., Taunton and Yeovil) with a focus on two aspects:
- Measures to make it easier for buses to travel into and through these towns, which could be physical, for example junction improvements and the introduction of bus lanes, or digital, for example giving buses priority at traffic signals; and
 - Measures to improve passenger experience, for example improved waiting facilities and real-time information underpinned by a Passenger Charter setting out expected standards of delivery.
- 7.21. This investment package is a fundamental component of our ambitious BSIP, and further detail is included in The Scheme.

AVAILABILITY OF TRAVEL PLANNING AND PASSENGER INFORMATION

- 7.22. An online survey (2021) sought to understand how both non-bus users and regular users obtained information on local bus services (Table 6).

Table 6: Public Search Types for Public Transport Information Sources

Information Source	Non-Users: % of respondents	Regular Users: % of respondents
Paper timetable	15	16
Timetable at the bus stop	29	28
Telephone enquiry	5	2
SCC website	8	2
Local bus company website	75	59
Another website	21	15
Mobile App	22	21
Word of mouth	14	10
Existing Knowledge	N/A	15

- 7.23. The results present a clear gap between awareness/utilisation of operator-specific websites and the SCC website regarding how and where new and existing customers seek their information.
- 7.24. There is a reasonable proportion of users who continue to rely upon static information sources, especially timetables posted at bus stops, the use of which is higher than the use of mobile apps. Currently static timetables are provided using a mix of operator and LTA resources depending on the nature of the services and consistency of information can be an issue.
- 7.25. Availability of comprehensive passenger information is provided through a wide mix of sources including online information, printed information (at stop or as a leaflet), and information dispensed by telephone enquiry service.
- 7.26. A new 'Think Travel' portal providing a single source for all local bus and journey planning information is due to be launched by SCC in Q3 2021/22. This will replace the current low level of information available for local bus services across the SCC website.
- 7.27. The current 'Travel Somerset' website includes more complete and comprehensive information for walking and cycling with links for route maps across the county. There are also individual 'Getting Around' pages for respective settlements providing a more comprehensive set of information and useful weblinks, but only targeted to the specific location.
- 7.28. PlusBus is available for Taunton and Yeovil as well as through ticketing to destinations such as Minehead (for Butlins), however, complete information (e.g. cost, where and how to purchase) on these integrated options are extremely hard to find without some prior knowledge and such offers are generally poorly publicised.

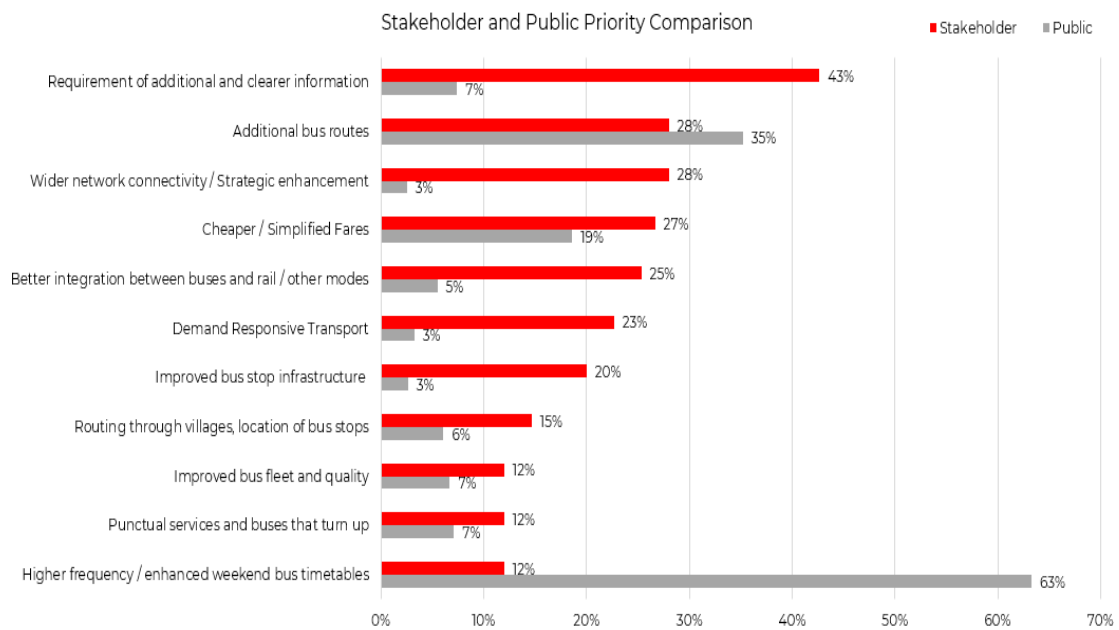
BRAND IDENTITY

- 7.29. SCC has developed the Think Travel brand that can be used for multiple purposes from general travel information to the promotion of new infrastructure and campaigns. The objectives for this brand are:
- to provide timely travel information for users of public transport;
 - to promote different ways to travel around the county and try to influence consumer behaviour to make sustainable modes first choice; and
 - to communicate transport improvements and investments around the region.
- 7.30. The brand will ensure a single source of accurate and consistent information provision and will be customer focused ensuring that the provision of information meets customer requirements and encourages different travel behaviours. There will be digital functionality and a physical presence on the ground, for example bus stops, cycling routes, etc. The brand can be developed to enable integration with the Government's new national bus brand, and provision is included in our financial ask for its further development, e.g., linkages with proposed new Digital DRT services.

THE PASSENGER EXPERIENCE AND PRIORITIES

- 7.31. To fully understand the key issues and priorities across Somerset, it was important to engage with as many different organisations and user groups as feasible. This was approached using a three-stage engagement plan.
- 7.32. In lieu of a formally organised SCC bus user forum, an initial scoping exercise was undertaken to identify a wide and diverse range of stakeholder organisations and, where possible, obtain a named contact within each.
- 7.33. These organisations were then categorised into four main groups for conducting stakeholder workshops, defined as; All public transport (bus, coach, rail, community transport) providers; council representatives (Town/Parish/District Councils, SCC's internal teams, and Neighbouring LTAs); Local bus user and campaign groups; Business and other special interest groups (covering a range of user needs from key attractors to passenger generators such as FE Colleges, Local Businesses, equality and diversity groups, the youth sector, and support agencies)
- 7.34. SCC also designed and hosted an online survey to capture the wider views of the public. The public survey was live from 19th July to 15th August 2021 and returned 1,549 responses (98% resident in Somerset).
- 7.35. This provided SCC with a rich dataset encompassing a diverse range of views and issues to help inform the key priorities for the BSIP.
- 7.36. From the public online survey, only 8% of respondents were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their local bus services. The top three issues preventing increased use were identified as 'Buses not going to places people want them to go' (41%), 'No buses running where people lived / worked' (37%) and the 'Cost of fares' (20%).
- 7.37. Regarding measures to encourage greater bus use, the top two related to previous barriers of buses not operating where/when were necessarily required – 'Earlier morning/late evening buses (including weekends)' (40%) and 'More direct services' (21%) – whilst 'Better information' (15%) ranked third, which suggests a lack of awareness of options could also be a factor for further consideration.
- 7.38. Finally, from the responses, a top five list of improvements were drawn out for incorporation into the BSIP. These were 'Real-Time bus tracking/information' (35%), 'Better Bus/Rail integration' (33%), 'A single ticket to use across all buses' (25%), 'Easy to read/clearer timetables' (24%) and 'Cleaner, greener buses' (23%).
- 7.39. Based on the common categories identified through the coding process the qualitative analysis of the public open text responses found the top three categories which stood out were - 'Higher frequencies/enhanced weekend timetables' (63%), 'Additional bus routes' (35%) and 'Cheaper and simplified fares' (19%), whilst all remaining categories scored <10%.
- 7.40. In contrast, the top five priorities for formal stakeholder groups were 'Additional and clearer bus service information' (43%), 'Additional bus routes' (28%), 'Wider network connectivity/strategic enhancement' (28%), 'Better integration with rail and other modes' (27%) and 'Cheaper and simplified fares' (25%). Figure 3 highlights and compares these results.

Figure 3: Public and Formal Stakeholder BSIP Priorities



- 7.41. Following on from stage-one and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative feedback, stage-two sought to take a deep dive into the various priorities to steer the final direction of the BSIP.
- 7.42. Based on the priorities understood from Stage-One, a series of key bus improvement attributes were derived. Within each, a sub-series of specific improvements were presented through the online *Mentimeter* interactive feedback platform.
- 7.43. Participants were asked to give their views on each proposed improvement using a five-point Likert Scale, where 1 = 'Not Important' through to 5 = 'Very Important'. Improvements were considered on their own merits and not be ranked in order of preference against other proposed attributes outlined.
- 7.44. The key points from the overall findings for each priority were:
- A consensus on the need for an all-Somerset bus app and less importance toward a single network brand/identity. RTI scored the highest overall for options presented with support for RTI at more bus stops across the network supported by QR codes at all bus stops.
 - Consensus on more inter-urban bus services with feeder routes into a core network, supported by increased 'Park & X' options (e.g., park & bike) evidencing a need for a multi-modal approach. Increased rural services with DRT in rural areas was strongly supported.
 - Consensus on the ability to book DRT in real-time with an app (e.g., a Digital DRT solution). A wait time of up to 60-minutes was acceptable versus 30-minutes helping to set the parameters for this deliverable. People felt that current DRT, providing point-to-point journeys, should be changed to DRT acting as a feeder to interchanges on a core network.

- There was a clear preference for a strategic hourly network coupled with maintaining good cross-boundary services to/from neighbouring authorities. Providing greater access to the coastal areas was important alongside Exmoor.
- Good consensus was found for the provision of RTI at rail stations plus better bus connections to rail stations. The mobility hub concept was also important and favoured. Making train stations more bus friendly and active travel links (walking and cycling) to bus stops scored close to 4.0.
- A new all operator youth fare was highly favoured (scoring above 4.0), as was reducing the number of ticketing options across the network and an all-operator ticket for groups/families.
- There was a strong preference for decreasing journey times and setting service levels based on general population size. Feeder routes into high frequency core networks returned the highest overall average score and regarding extending timetables, there was clear preference for later evening buses, as opposed to earlier morning buses.
- Improvements to bus shelters and seating/lighting at stops were seen to be important suggesting support for a bus stop hierarchy and design guide strategy in this area.
- There is good consensus for better bus-rail interchange and respondents felt walking up to 400m to a facility was acceptable.

7.45. In summary, additional information, additional routes, wider network enhancements, cheaper and simplified fares, higher frequency and enhanced weekend services, and a core hourly network for the entire county remained the top priorities following Stage-Two.

BUS JOURNEY SPEEDS AND CONGESTION IMPACT

- 7.46. Regarding average bus vehicle speeds, the Somerset network operates at a generally higher average speed across all road types. This is as a direct result of the highly rural nature of the county and lower proportion of primary roads in large urban areas. However, average speeds have gradually fallen in line with regional and national trends showing increases in car use. Somerset tracks the trend for rising car use across England very closely.
- 7.47. Data suggests that planned and actual bus speed differ between peak and off-peak periods, leading to conclusions that peak periods cause the most significant impacts on bus speeds across Somerset, albeit in isolated pockets within the primary and secondary towns.
- 7.48. As a direct result of fluctuating bus speeds, average journey times also differ, with journeys being slower by almost 50% in the morning midweek peak. This presents problems for bus services in terms of reliability and passenger perception, particularly for commuters who are a key target for mode shift.
- 7.49. Using detailed data analysis, we can isolate the 'flagged' routes and locations on each route where hot-spot delays occur. This allows us to develop strategies described later in The Scheme regarding interventions that will reduce average journey times in line with BSIP targets and which are designed to maximise passenger benefit compared to the intervention outlay incurred.
- 7.50. However, the overall performance of average journey time is within the tolerances of the -1/+5 minute 'on-time' window, with average lateness outside of this 'on-time' window occurring across 8% of the scheduled trips analysed. This indicates that small interventions will reduce average journey times to their current schedules and furthermore, allow the network to lower its average journey times through the BSIP.

8. Outcomes and Interventions to Improve Local Bus Services

- 8.1. Following detailed analysis of the current local bus network across Somerset, an in-depth stakeholder engagement process that has sought the views of a wide range of formal stakeholders in addition to over 1,500 members of the public we have developed a set of key outcomes that will revitalise the local bus market across Somerset and put the passenger first in terms of accessibility and confidence in the network. Table 7 summarises these required outcomes and are not listed in any order of priority.
- 8.2. The objectives sit in parallel with plans to decarbonise the local bus fleet, bring parking and planning development in line with local bus network design, and deliver the BSIP progressively with multiple partners representing a wider audience than just public transport providers.

Table 7: Outcomes to Improve Local Bus Services based on SCC BSIP Aims

Outcomes	BSIP Deliverable	Required Interventions (Deliverables)
Transport Decarbonisation	1	Somerset local bus network – decarbonisation plan
	2	Park and Ride – Electric Buses and Lower Fares
More extensive and frequent service network	3	Minimum 60-minute core bus network
	4	7am to 7pm core bus network
	5	15-minute principal town corridor
	6	Demand led hub & spoke feeder network
	7	Digital DRT – the next step for Somerset
Reduce the cost of travel	8	No-fuss multi-operator ticketing
	9	Youth fare 16-25 year olds across Somerset
	10	All Operator Family and Group Tickets
	11	Reduced flat fares across Somerset towns
Improved co-ordination	12	Integration between rail and coach across Somerset
	13	Somerset Think Travel Portal
An easily accessible and reliable network	14	Somerset Local Bus Network – Vehicle Standards
	15	Progressive increases in bus priority measures
A comfortable network with improved facilities	16	The Somerset Bus Information and Branding Strategy
	17	Bus Station Improvements
	18	Stop design and information – increased user confidence

8.3. In seeking to reverse decades of local bus passenger decline and move Somerset out of the bottom five LTA areas regarding passenger journeys per head, delivery of the objectives outlined in Table 7 have focused on making the network more attractive, expansive, easy to use, more direct, and more affordable and thus, delivery of these objectives will improve the quality and effectiveness of local bus services in The Scheme area.

8.4. The Scheme will provide the facilities and measures in detail to deliver each planned objective set out in The Plan (Table 7) and the accompanying SCC BSIP. Using bespoke variations under the powers at Section 138E of the 2000 Act The Scheme will become more refined in its approach to each objective over time as the

partnership process and known levels of funding become clearer through The Plan and The Scheme duration.

9. Consultation Plans and Future Funding Arrangements

- 9.1. SCC's plans for consulting operators and passenger groups on how well The Plan and The Scheme is working centre on quarterly Bus Advisory Board meetings and agenda items focused on task/finish/evaluate activities.
- 9.2. Linked to the Bus Advisory Board will be the Bus Users and Stakeholders (BUS) Group. This will comprise a wider range of bus user representatives and stakeholders with a vested interest in the local bus network (e.g., local businesses, and tourist locations). This group will be able to challenge the success of deliverables achieved through the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Schemes, providing feedback and evaluation to the Bus Advisory Board via the BUS Group Chair and passenger representatives.
- 9.3. Further to regular consultation on the performance of The Plan and The Scheme, securing the right level of funding is also critical to ensure that:
 - Everyone, no matter where in Somerset, is connected to opportunity; and
 - Existing business can grow, and Somerset is able to continue attracting new businesses and inward investment.
- 9.4. The Bus Advisory Board will seek to draw on multiple funding sources where appropriate and if applications for funding are successful, to deliver the desired outcomes of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme:
 - Bus Service Improvement Plan funding allocation from Central Government
 - Rural Transport Fund (RTF)
 - Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) Fund
 - Town Funds (TF)
 - Future High Street Funds (FHSF)
 - Developer contributions (e.g. Section 106)
 - Reinvestment of operator revenue generated by schemes
 - Other external funding opportunities as they arise (e.g. additional government grants or grants from rail operators)

PART 2 – EP SCHEME

THE SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP SCHEME FOR BUSES IS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 138G(1) OF THE TRANSPORT ACT 2000 BY:

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

[Individual agreements may also wish to list the names of lower tier authorities as parties to the EP Scheme² – especially if such authorities are responsible for delivering specific elements of the LTA's obligations, such as new bus priority measures.

Note: *The EP Scheme sets out the legal obligations on the relevant Local Authorities (including highway authorities) and local bus operators and is the mechanism by which the commitments made in the BSIP and the EP Plan are delivered 'on the ground'. It places an obligation:*

(a) on those authorities to deliver its requirements;³ and

(b) on all bus operators to abide by the standards of service it imposes.

Enforcement action can be taken by the registration authority if any bus operator fails to abide by such standards – including the cancellation of individual local bus service registrations.⁴

It is very important that both parties are clear about their respective obligations and that they are, as far as possible, comprehensively, accurately, and unambiguously recorded.

It is not necessary to list the bus operators or individual bus services that will need to comply with EP Scheme requirements. However, it may be helpful for the LTA to maintain a list and make it available separately to bus operators.^{5]}

Section 1 – EP Scheme Content

This document fulfils the statutory requirements for an Enhanced Partnership Scheme. In accordance with statutory requirements in Section 138 of the 2000 Act, The Scheme document sets out:

Section 2 - Scope of The Scheme and commencement date

Section 3 - Obligations on the Local Authorities

² NB – the District Councils in Somerset have not been included in the EP Scheme at this stage but where necessary will be introduced in variations where their involvement is necessary for the delivery of specific Measures and/ or Facilities – for example in bus station improvement.

³ See s.138J of the Transport Act 2000

⁴ This can be either the Traffic Commissioner, or, the LTA. See Sections 6D, 6E and 6G of the Transport Act 1985

⁵ This would be a voluntary addition to the mandatory operator notification requirements when the EP is made – see paragraph 6.8 of the EP Guidance and s.138G(5) of the Transport Act 2000

Section 4 - Obligations on Bus Operators

Section 5 – Governance Arrangements

The Scheme can only be put in place if an associated EP Plan (The Plan) has been made. Therefore, this document should be considered alongside The Plan.

The Scheme has been jointly developed by Somerset County Council (acting also as the Local Highway Authority), relevant lower tier authorities and those bus operators that provide local bus services in The Scheme area. It sets out obligations and requirements on both the Local Transport Authority (LTA), lower tier authorities, and operators of local services to achieve the intended improvements, with the aim of delivering the objectives of The Plan.

Section 2 - Scope of the EP Scheme and Commencement Date

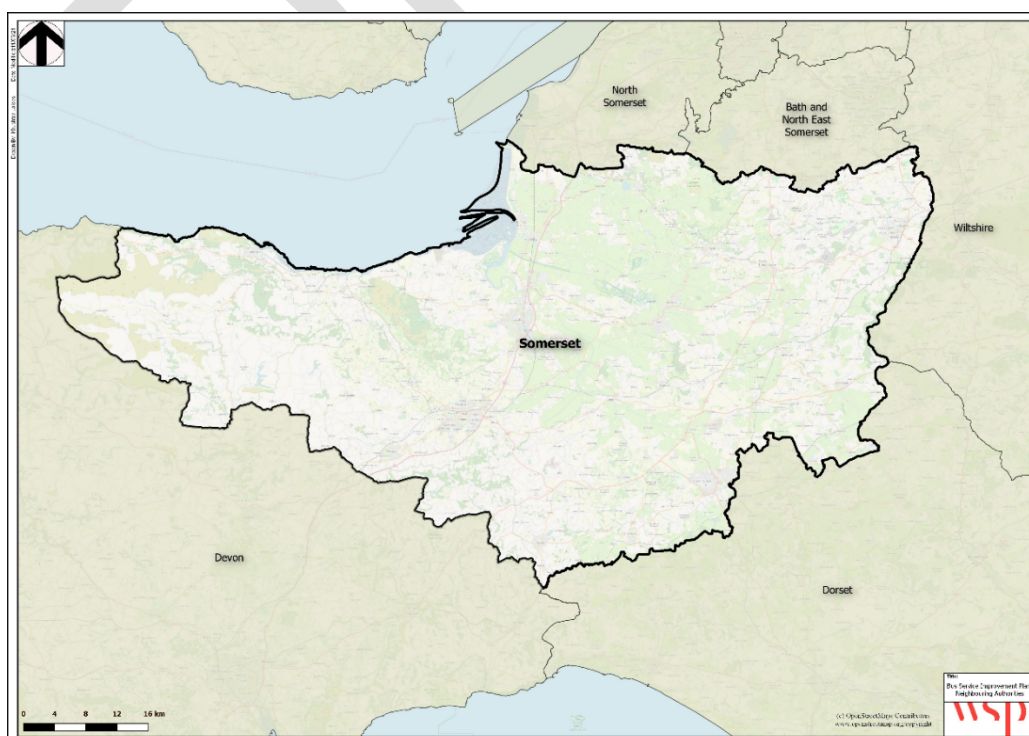
Description of Geographical Coverage

*[This should provide a breakdown of what specific geographical areas are covered by the EP Scheme. If an **Advanced Quality Partnership Scheme ('AQPS')** is being retained, this section should also explain its geographical coverage – see BSIP guidance on retention of an AQPS. Similarly, any geographical areas that are subject to separate franchising proposals should be explained here. Note, the BSIP requires the full geographical area of the LTA to be covered by a statutory proposal – either an EP Plan/EP Scheme, franchising, or a combination of both.*

The EP Scheme will support the improvement of all local bus services operating in the entirety of the Somerset County Council area.

Map of EP Plan and EP Scheme Areas

The map below identifies the geographical area covered by The Scheme. The area is the same as that covered by The Plan.



Commencement Date

The Plan and The Scheme are made on 1 April 2022. The Plan will have no end date but will be reviewed every five years from the commencement date or as agreed jointly by parties to the Plan.

The Scheme will have no specific end date but progress will be reviewed by Somerset County Council on a quarterly basis and publicly accessible reports will be prepared on a routine basis. The Scheme cannot be revoked unless the Plan relating to it is also revoked. Where there is a Plan in Place there must be at least one Scheme made under it. (see Section 5).

[Not all the requirements of the EP Scheme need to come into force at the same time. Subsequent milestone dates can be included in the EP Scheme by which certain facilities and measures (Section 3) and bus operator obligations (Section 4) will be introduced after the commencement date].⁶

Exempted Services

[An EP Scheme can exempt (within the rules set out in the EP guidance⁷) certain types of local service from compliance with some or all the requirements of the EP Scheme.

For example, this might include services that are required to be registered as 'local' bus services because they fall within its definition but are not primarily aimed at serving local people – such as long-distance coach services that are registered as local bus services at the start and end of their journeys or hop on-hop off sightseeing tours.

If possible, this section should use descriptions of the type of service that is exempted, rather than a list of the services themselves (because the EP Scheme would need to be formally amended if the list changed). Any content will need to be negotiated with relevant operators of those services and local bus operators and included in the EP Scheme. Below is some example text]

The following services are exempt from the requirements of the EP Scheme:

- a service which has part, or all its route registered as a local service in the EP geographical area, but where that part of its route is 10% or less of the overall route distance covered by the service from its service start to service end point.
- A service which is registered as a local service under section 6 of the Transport Act 1985, but which would otherwise be an excursion or tour within the meaning in section 137(1) of that Act is exempt from the headway requirements in section 4 of this agreement.

⁶ This provides flexibility for different parts of the EP Scheme to come into effect on different dates.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-services-act-2017-enhanced-partnership-creation>

DRAFT

Section 3 - Obligations on the Authorities

[This is the section that lists the specific interventions that the LTA, Highways Department, Lower-Tier Authorities etc. will deliver as part of the EP Scheme. The key here is that it should specify as precisely as possible **who** is responsible for each intervention, **when** it will be provided and **for how long**, and **what action or activity it will involve**. As with all EP Scheme content, it is important to be comprehensive and precise about exactly what will be delivered, to avoid potential misunderstanding or disagreement later].

Summary of obligations on authorities

[A summary of the obligations on the different tiers of the local authority is a good way of clearly identifying the local authority stakeholders that will be responsible for delivering specific outcomes, without needing to scan through this section of the document as a whole – which may be lengthy. The example below, using Hertfordshire as an example, is a simple table that lists the relevant authority responsible for each obligation. Depending on the length, it can appear here in its entirety or be referenced, with the table itself included as an annex.]

The following matrix summarises the specific interventions that authorities are required to deliver as part of the EP Scheme:

Responsibility	Local Authority	Local Transport Authority	Local Highway Authority
Facilities			
Bus Lanes described in section *****			•
Bus Stops Described in section *****			
.....			•
Facilities			
Bus Lane enforcement described in section *****			•
.....	•

Facilities⁸

[Give a list of the facilities to be provided and describe how they will be provided and when this will happen. It should also be used to record existing facilities (which would prevent them being withdrawn later without formal or bespoke variation). Some examples for what facilities might be covered are:

⁸ Provided under s.138D(1) of the Transport Act 2000

- *New and existing Bus Lanes (potentially including hours of operation)*
- *New and existing Bus Gates*
- *Pedestrian crossing upgrades*
- *Traffic signal upgrades*
- *New bus stop/stand infrastructure*
- *Real-time information displays*
- *Hydrogen Refuelling facilities*
- *Charging infrastructure for electric buses*

Subject to the award of sufficient funding, Somerset County Council will provide the Facilities set out below. This will need to be varied in order to implement the Facilities, following discussion and agreement with the Board or by way of the Statutory Mechanism.

More extensive and frequent network of services: Bus Priorities to Address Reliability and Punctuality

SCC shall seek to develop a programme of bus priority improvements within the identified towns of Taunton, Bridgwater, Wellington, Yeovil, and Minehead;

SCC shall seek to develop a further programme following a feasibility study for additional measures at remaining primary town locations across the county; and

SCC shall seek to pursue delivery of enhanced digital infrastructure, including Urban Traffic Management and Control (UTMC) system 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, initially organising bus stop stock into four priority tiers and developing a bus stop design criterion for each tier before rolling out required upgrades and improvements on a corridor / route priority basis aligned to other objectives listed under 'measures'.

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 in parallel with the organisation of bus stops into priority tiers and the following programme of works coupled to corridor / route development; and

SCC, using Think Travel as the stimulus, will seek to further develop its online presence to enable journey planning and real time information. Subject to funding, this may be further rolled-out to an app-based platform allowing journey planning, real time bus information, e-purse technology, and Digital DRT bookings.

For example, when providing Bus Lanes (new or existing) as a ‘facility’ the text will look like:]

Bus Lanes

‘[Name of LTA] will provide and maintain the list of Bus Lanes described in Annex A.’

*[The granularity of exactly what bus lanes are provided, where and by whom are described in the example **Annex A** at the end of the template). This format can also be used to describe other types of bus priority infrastructure such as the location of bus gates or junctions fitted with traffic signal priority.*

Example text on Bus stop infrastructure:]

Bus Stops

- *‘[Name of LTA] will provide new bus stop infrastructure at locations listed in Annex B’*
- *‘Existing bus stops to be improved, as detailed in Schedule [Insert Schedule in Annex B], and will incorporate:*
 - *Real time information displays*
 - *Appropriate size and siting*
 - *Lighting*
 - *CCTV for security*
 - *Bench seating*
 - *Accessibility adjustments both to and at the bus stop*
 - *Cleaning protocols and standards for bus stops*
- *‘[Name of Local Authority] will maintain bus stop infrastructure in accordance with the standards set out in the schedule in Annex B [Insert Schedule].’*

[The key here is that the EP Scheme should include precise details that describe exactly what facilities will be provided and what other roles and services the relevant Local Authorities will provide in relation to them, such as maintenance and, in the case of bus lanes, bus lane enforcement.

Adding to or modifying the list of facilities using a bespoke variation

*As explained in paragraph 7.19 of the EP Guidance, the powers of bespoke variation can be used to add additional commitments at any point without the need to follow formal variation procedures – **although an operator objection mechanism (not***

necessarily the existing statutory one) is always required. Example wording of how bespoke arrangements might be used to add new content on facilities is as follows:

The first example allows new bus lanes to be added to the EP Scheme by amending the example Annex A and using a bespoke variation and operator objection mechanism.]

New Bus Lanes

New bus lanes can be added to the list at Annex A using a bespoke variation under the powers at s.138E of the Transport Act 2000.

[There then follows a simple example of what an operator objection mechanism might look like – this one based on there being no objections received from existing operators on individual corridors that receive the new bus lanes:]

All operators running local bus services along any part of the corridor that would be subject to the new bus lanes can object to the proposals. Those proposals will only go ahead if no objections are received.

[The second example, is a blanket power to vary the scheme by replacing an existing annex with a revised one, using the bespoke variation mechanism in section 5 of the template].

Real time passenger information screens

The *[Name of Local Authority]* will install 15 additional real-time passenger information screens across the EP Scheme area per annum. The initial list of locations is at Annex *[Insert Annex]*.

The *[Name of Local Authority]* will maintain existing and new screens in a fit-for-purpose state and replace screens when they stop working.

Any programme for subsequent installations will replace *[Annex]* using the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Bespoke Variation arrangements at Section 5.

This requirement on the Local Authority could then be complemented by requirements in Section 4 that compel bus operators to, for example, provide real-time data. This section could also specify further technical detail – such as how local bus operators interface their IT systems with the screens – or include it under Section 4.

The third example allows the Local Authority to make a commitment to developing a website and app, with changes to the specification after annual review being implemented as a bespoke variation.]

Website and app upgrades

The *[Name of Local Authority]* will secure the design, procurement and launch of a new 'Buses' website, and develop a new smartphone app to include, but not be limited to:

- Service timetables for all registered local bus services in *[Local Authority Geographical area]* for download or interrogation
- Maps to illustrate main towns, villages and road served, and a network overview map
- Journey planning
- Fares information
- Mobile ticket purchasing functionality
- News and events information
- Access to real time information

The new app will be launched *[timeframe⁹]*, and the *[Name of Local Authority]* will review it annually throughout the EP Scheme. The new website will be launched by the end of the second year of the EP Scheme and reviewed annually thereafter.

The detailed specification of the new website, and a delivery plan to implement further development of both the website and app following each annual review will be adopted by EP Scheme Bespoke Variation arrangements at section 5.

[These requirements could then be complimented by requirements on operators under Section 4. This could require them, for example, to ensure that specified information, such as real-time data, is ‘fed’ to the new website and app. It could also mandate that only this app and website will be used in the EP Scheme area – with individual bus operator websites and apps not permitted to cover the EP Scheme area – so that local people have a single portal for this functionality. This section (or Section 4) could also specify further technical detail – such as how local bus operators interface their IT systems with the website or app.]

⁹ Subject to pre-agreement between the LTA and the operators.

Measures¹⁰

[This section describes the 'measures' that Local Authorities have agreed to take to improve buses. They can be measures taken by the LTA itself, the Local Highway Authority, or a lower-tier authority such as a district council. The key here again is that the section should set out precisely what is to be provided, by whom, when and for how long. Some examples of content and wording are as follows:]

Subject to the allocation of sufficient funding, Somerset County Council will seek to introduce the measures set out below. This will need to be varied in order to implement the measures, following discussion and agreement with the Board or by way of the Statutory Mechanism.

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 across a core network of local bus services, running across a set daily period and supplemented by additional, lower frequency services outside of these hours to provide more opportunities for travel across the day;

SCC will explore opportunities to specifically strengthen the local bus service offer across the Wellington-Taunton-Bridgwater corridor;

SCC will explore ways to better serve rural communities, tourism 'honey-pots', and socially isolated communities through use of more innovative modes such as Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DRT). It is envisaged that such services would be coordinated with changes to the core local bus network.

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 the young persons passenger group;

SCC will seek to work with operators to introduce multi-operator and through ticketing, with this seen as strengthening the core network offer and making interchange between the core network and feeder network solutions (e.g., Digital DRT) more attractive;

SCC shall explore opportunities to support, with revenue funding, reduced ticket prices on the Taunton park and ride service and local town networks, with a view to these becoming self-supporting after an agreed trial period.

¹⁰ Provided under s.138D(2) of the Transport Act 2000

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 key bus interchanges in Taunton, Yeovil, Wells, and Bridgwater to varying levels to better facilitate multi-modal interchange where appropriate and will seek to implement such schemes where feasible according to available budget;

SCC will work to identify locations and opportunities for mobility hubs and subject to funding develop and implement these in partnership with operators to ensure there is network strength and interchange opportunity to justify further investment in upgraded facilities;

SCC will work with operators to ensure critical trip generators are better embedded into the core and feeder network patterns where feasible. Locations could include but are not limited to: hospitals; further education facilities; shopping centres; major employment centres; and train stations;

SCC will work with train operating companies and network rail to understand opportunities to better develop and deliver coordinated services and facilities between bus and rail services across The Scheme area and implement these where feasible; and

SCC will seek to better embed the local planning process and parking pricing and capacity strategies into its approach to public transport provision to ensure priority is given to more sustainable modes.

An Easily Accessible and Reliable Network: Ensuring an attractive network proposition to new and existing passengers is presented

SCC will work with operators to ensure that all local buses are able to accept contactless payment for all fare types by no later than 1 April 2022;

SCC will launch its Think Travel Portal by no later than 1 April 2022. This will provide a single location for all public transport information across Somerset and the platform for further measures to be delivered; and

SCC will explore and where possible implement the opportunities presented by Digital DRT concepts and applications in rural areas to understand the feasibility of using a combination of delivery models to provide greater rural accessibility. This work will look at, but not be limited to: smaller MPV style vehicles, evening and night-time services, delivery by CT operators.

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 operators to explore and where possible implement opportunities to set minimum vehicle standards across the network and tailored, where advantageous, to different corridors or routes; and

SCC will work with operators to ensure services are designed to be specifically appealing to work age travellers, young people, family groups, and leisure travellers.

Transport Decarbonisation: SCC will support operators in enabling Somerset to have an entirely zero emission local bus fleet.

SCC shall work with 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 and where possible implement opportunities to deliver Digital DRT services with zero emission buses which may be smaller, MPV style vehicles using plug-in charging technology.

SCC shall commission a longer-term decarbonisation strategy with a structured and costed delivery plan.

Bus Lane Enforcement

[This can set out precise arrangements:]

Local Highway Authorities will use the discretionary powers granted in the Traffic Management Act 2004 to enforce the following list of bus lanes *[from 8am to 5pm Weekdays/ 10am-4pm Weekends]* with CCTV equipment. *[List of bus lanes in an Annex]*

A list and installation programme for enforcement cameras on those bus lanes is at Schedule *[Insert Schedule]* in Annex A.

[And can include a mechanism to expand on the list of bus lanes/ CCTV sites:]

Any programme for subsequent installations will amend Schedule *[Insert Schedule]* using the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Bespoke Variation arrangements at Section 5.

[Or it can include a commitment to develop future arrangements:]

Local Highway Authorities will develop with bus operators an evidence-based assessment process to determine the initial need and continued operational business case of any bus lane enforcement system used under this EP Scheme.

[And include a mechanism to adopt it:]

Any assessment arrangements will be adopted into the EP Scheme using the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Bespoke Variation arrangements at Section 5.

Managing roadworks in the EP Scheme area

[This can set out precise arrangements, for example on a key route network:¹¹]

From [date] the Local Highway Authority will give all bus operators a minimum of [14 days] notice of planned roadworks on the key route network in Annex [Insert Annex].

[Or it can include future arrangements]

By [date] each Local Highway Authority will establish with local bus operators a mechanism to minimise disruption to local bus services from both planned and emergency roadworks. This will include liaison with bus operators to ensure that the co-ordination of works across the network minimises disruption, as well as setting out their processes and procedures for the provision and management of street works permits in the EP Scheme area.

[And include a mechanism to add it to the EP Scheme:]

Any mechanism will amend the Scheme using the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Bespoke Variation arrangements at Section 5.

Applying a fare subsidy

The National Bus Strategy, the BSIP Guidance and individual LTA published BSIPs also provide for LTAs to subsidise fares. The EP Scheme can accommodate any arrangements that are agreed between the LTA and bus operators – provided they meet relevant competition law and state aid rules.¹² The key is negotiating and then describing the arrangements properly in the EP Scheme. That will involve negotiating the subsidy agreement with the bus operators first, then recording the funding arrangements for the agreed scheme in the EP Scheme as a LTA ‘measure’. This is because there is no mechanism in the EP legislation to require operators to implement a fares subsidy; an EP Scheme can only put an obligation on the LTA to fund one, so the bus operators must voluntarily co-operate – meaning close partnership working is key. Individual LTAs may wish to consider implementing any funding arrangements via separate contractual arrangements.

Here are some very basic examples:¹³

Providing a flat fare on all local bus services in a described geographical area¹⁴

*[Insert Local Transport Authority] will provide [£****] funding from [date] to [date] to subsidise a £1 flat fare on all bus services in the geographical area described by the map in Annex [insert annex].*

This is a simple ‘measure’ that commits the LTA to spending a fixed pot of money to deliver a £1 flat fare on all existing bus services in a defined area. More complex

¹¹ These arrangements may also require operators to liaise with the Registration Authority – e.g. to adjust individual service registrations.

¹² Further guidance on competition is provided in the EP Guidance document.

¹³ These and other more complex arrangements may also need to take into account other factors such as generation factors, additional costs, flexibility around shared risk between the LTA and operators etc.

¹⁴ This could be the area of the whole EP Scheme or a separately defined area within it.

arrangements will require further granularity – e.g. for example, on reimbursement processes.

Providing a flat fare on specific local bus service routes¹⁵

[Insert Local Transport Authority] will provide [£****] funding from [date] to [date] to subsidise a flat fare on the individual routes described in Annex [insert annex]. Amendments to the Annex will use the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Bespoke Variation arrangements at Section 5.

[This example does not specify what the flat fare is, it just commits funding. This is to take into account the fact that individual services on those routes may be introduced or cease running, or fares income may increase or decrease, which can affect the level of subsidy and therefore the level of flat fare].

Providing subsidy to deliver specific fare reductions

[Insert Local Transport Authority] will provide [£****] funding from [date] to [date] to subsidise the following fare reductions across the EP Scheme geographical area:

Existing Commercial Single Fare	Subsidised Single Fare
£2.80	£1.90
£4.20	£2.80
£5.20	£3.50
£6.30	£4.20

[This can also include further detail on the funding model that will be adopted.]

Section 4 - Obligations on Local Bus Operators¹⁶

[This section describes the standards of service that those operating registered local bus services in the EP Scheme area must meet. The key here again is that the section should set out as precisely as possible **what** standards are to be met, **when** and **for how long**. These can either be listed here or included in an annex(es) or schedule(s). Examples of content and wording are given below. Remember that any obligations can be subject to bespoke variation arrangements:]

Subject to the allocation of sufficient funding, the obligations set out below will apply to local bus operators. This will need to be varied in order to implement the obligations, following discussion and agreement with the Board or by way of the Statutory Mechanism.

Vehicle Standards

Bus operators in Somerset will work with SCC to establish a minimum vehicle standard for use across the local bus network. Facets of this standard will relate to,

¹⁵ LTAs should conduct a Schedule 10 competition test for proposals to subsidise individual bus routes – see Paragraph 8.38 of the EP Guidance.

¹⁶ Under s.138C of the Transport Act 2000

but not be limited to: emission standards, CCTV, on-board passenger facilities (e.g., WiFi, USB ports); audio visual passenger systems, and ticketing systems.

Vehicle standards

[This example allows the EP Scheme to specify vehicle standards that must be met by all local bus services in the EP area. The EP Scheme can also specify different standards that apply to a key route network, a defined geographical area or even on individual corridors].

- New vehicles registered on or after the EP Scheme commencement date must meet the following requirements:
- Emissions standards, including potential milestones for standards to be met (e.g. Euro IV, moving to X% Euro VI by 202x, or Y% zero emission buses by 202x).
- CCTV installed for safety and security. This will provide images inside the vehicle for safety and security and facing forwards from the vehicle to help identify traffic issues.
- Free Wi-Fi.
- Automatic Vehicle Location equipment installed that will feed into the relevant LTA's real time information system.
- Heating and cooling for customer comfort.
- USB charging available, including at every wheelchair space and priority seats.
- Audio visual announcements:
 - Next stop audio announcements on both decks, including through an induction hearing loop at every wheelchair space and priority seats.
 - Next stop visual announcements on both decks.
 - Take all reasonable steps to alert passengers on both decks to route diversions through audio announcements on the vehicle.
 - Take all reasonable steps to alert passengers on both decks to route diversions through visual displays on the vehicle.
- A display showing onward connection details by bus, train, metro or air, where applicable, from open data sources.
- Option to pay for tickets through contactless ticketing.
- Livery.

Timetable changes

Bus operators will work towards a system of agreed timetable change dates across the local bus network in Somerset and significantly increased coordination with local and national rail service timetables at bus/rail interchanges.

Timetable Changes

[Individual EP Schemes may also include restrictions on timetable changes – for example, to add further stability to the network.]

These restrictions can apply, for example, across the whole of the EP Scheme Area, in a specified geographical area, or even on individual corridors. Some example wording:]

Timetables within the [whole EP Scheme area/ specified geographical area/ specific corridors] can only occur on these dates [list specific calendar dates – e.g. 1 March, 1 June etc] or [for example, there could be a requirement that each individual bus operator can only make timetable changes a fixed number of times a year].

Ticketing

Bus operators in Somerset shall simplify fares and undertake targeted promotions to drive growth.

Bus Operators in Somerset shall ensure that all buses used on local bus services will be able to accept contactless payment for all ticketing products offered.

Bus operators will consider the options for introducing a group/family ticket into their portfolio of ticket options to encourage more group travel by public transport

Ticketing

[Below are some examples of how an EP Scheme can include ticketing requirements. As with the rest of this template, it is for individual LTAs and their operators to decide specific content.]

Mandating existing ticketing structures

*[An EP Scheme can include comprehensive requirements on ticketing. An example, based on the **Transport for West Midlands (TfWM)** EP Scheme, mandates an existing ticket suite and payment technology:¹⁷]*

The following ticket types must be offered and accepted by all local bus services in the EP Scheme Area. Services offering no more than two journeys in each direction per day will not be required to participate in the multi-operator ticketing scheme. The overall schemes for these tickets will be managed by [insert Local Transport Authority or other management arrangements].

The following ticket types must be offered:

- nBus (full suite)
- nNetwork (full suite)

¹⁷ This is an existing technology in TfWM. See paragraph below on Government policy on developing new ticketing and payment technology.

Ticket vending machines may be provided by *[insert LTA]* at the bus stops listed in Schedule *[insert schedule]*. These will be capable of selling operators' own tickets, as well as network tickets. Operators wishing to use this facility will need to agree a separate arrangement and fee with *[insert LTA]*.

For the existing multi-operator capping schemes, the following ticket types must be offered and accepted by all services in *[or entering into]* the EP Scheme area (excluding those services offering no more than 2 journeys in each direction per day):

- *[Brand name]* multi-operator capping on smartcard
- *[Brand name]* multi-operator capping contactless

Mandating new ticketing arrangements

[When deciding what ticketing suite to adopt from scratch, it is advised that LTAs and their operators undertake informal discussions first, jointly to develop a detailed suite of tickets and then establish a brand under which the tickets are offered to passengers. As with the example above, once this is achieved, it is only then necessary to mandate in the EP Scheme that bus operators must accept that suite of tickets and ways to pay (e.g. smartcard and contactless via app) on their buses. This removes the need to mandate technologies – where the Government has said in the National Bus Strategy that it will adopt a strategic approach.]

Setting the price of a suite of multi-operator tickets

[The EP Scheme can also set the price of multi-operator tickets and arrangements for reviewing it]:

The price of *[brand name]* multi-operator smartcard and contactless will be as follows:¹⁸

Day ticket: *[insert price]*

Weekly: *[Insert price]*

Monthly: *[Insert price]*

Annual *[Insert price]*

Carnet *[Insert price]*

[Specific multi-operator through ticket(s)]: [Insert price]

[Price reviews can either be automatic – e.g., on an annual basis related to Consumer Price Index, or using a bespoke review mechanism. A simple example of this is below:]

The price of all the above multi-operator tickets will be reviewed *[set review period – e.g. every six months]*. Amendments to individual prices will use:

¹⁸ Individual LTAs and operators will need to ensure that existing ticketing technology supports any pricing structures.

[Two example options:]

- the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Bespoke Variation arrangements at Section 5
- a [28-day] operator objection mechanism. All operators applying the price cap are eligible to object. Changes can only be implemented if there are no operator objections [or other level of objection agreed by individual LTAs and their operators] at the end of the objection period.

Enhancing Frequency

Bus operators will explore and where possible implement opportunities where current local bus service frequencies can be further enhanced and establish if such enhancements will be commercially viable or if they will require initial or continued funding through the BSIP to achieve.

Enhancing Frequency

[The EP Guidance explains how the under and overprovision of bus services on individual corridors can be addressed.¹⁹ An EP Scheme can also contain LTA commitments to fund frequency enhancements on individual bus corridors (as an EP ‘Measure’). This can serve two purposes:

- It records on what corridors LTAs have agreed to fund frequency enhancements and what the arrangements are;
- Those arrangements can form part of the overall Schedule 10 competition test.²⁰

Taking ‘Example 1’ at paragraph 8.18 in the EP Guidance, the commitment could look like this:]

Route Description	Enhancement Description	Duration of Service Enhancement
Along the High Street in Anytown between the bus station and Anytown Railway station.	An additional two buses an hour in either direction between 8am and 8pm – Monday to Friday.	12 months from start of contract.

[In ‘Example 2’ at paragraph 8.20:]

Route Description	Enhancement Description	Duration of Service Enhancement
Along the High Street in Anytown between the bus station and Anytown Railway station.	Four buses an hour in either direction between 6pm and 11.30pm – Monday to Sunday.	12 months from start of contract.

¹⁹ Paragraphs 3.60-3.61 and 8.12-8.20

²⁰ Paragraphs 8.25-8.39 of the EP Guidance Document

[These arrangements can be inserted into the EP Scheme as an Annex with individual entries inserted or amended using bespoke variation arrangements (e.g. at Section 5) when contracts are awarded or after retendering. So, in the examples above, the variation mechanism could be used to amend the route, enhancement description or duration if the LTA decided to provide further funding beyond the initial 12 months].

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.

Where appropriate bus Operators will be required to operate even headways across corridors where two or more services combine and to coordinate timetables between services across the network to enable increased interchange.

Limiting Frequency

[An EP Scheme can also set an upper limit on the frequency of bus services on individual corridors.²¹ It can do this either by limiting the number of buses on a corridor or by requiring even headways.²² Some example wording is as follows]:

Frequency of Bus Services

Individual corridors will be subject to a frequency limitation. The details are listed in Annex *[Insert annex]*.

[The accompanying annex would look like:

Corridor description	Description of frequency restriction
The High Street in Anytown, from the junction with Billet Lane to the junction with Lower Kings Road	Maximum of six buses an hour in each direction between 7am and 7pm on weekdays, excluding public holidays.
Along the full length of Bridgewater Road in Anytown	Maximum of eight buses an hour in each direction between 7-9am and 4-7pm on weekdays. Maximum of ten buses an hour on Saturday in each direction between 10am-3pm.

²¹ Bear in mind that if the EP Scheme does so, the LTA must take on the registration function from the traffic commissioner for all local bus services wholly within the EP Scheme area (see Section 6G of the Transport Act 1985).

²² See also advice about qualifying agreements at paragraphs 8.40-8.41 of the EP Guidance.

*The key here is to ensure any frequency limitations are set out clearly both in terms of **where** and **when** they apply. This section can also include review arrangements – e.g. using KPIs to trigger a review using, for example, load factors.²³*

Even Headways

[It is important that careful consideration is given to how a headway requirement would work in practice – particularly where different routes operate on individual corridors. Below is an example of wording that implements a simple headway requirement on named individual routes].

Local bus services operating on the corridors listed in Annex [List annex] must co-ordinate their timetables to ensure there are even gaps between individual bus services.

[The accompanying Annex would just be a description of the corridors and when the requirement applies:

Corridor Description	Hours of operation
From the bus station in Anytown and along the following roads: Cowper Road, Springfield Road, Billet Lane...etc	From 7am-7pm weekdays, including public holidays.

Or the Annex could comprise a map with the corridors highlighted plus a description of when the requirement(s) applies.]

Co-ordinating Timetables

[Requirements for operators to co-ordinate timetables can take a number of forms. Some simple examples are listed below.]

Co-ordination with Light or Heavy Rail Services

Where possible, bus operators will be expected to coordinate local bus service timetables with light and heavy rail services where interchange locations are served as part of the local bus service route.

Bus operators will be required to make best endeavours to allow flexibility to accommodate late connections where possible.

Co-ordinating with Light or Heavy Rail Services

²³ Also bear in mind that if in future operators do not abide by these restrictions, the whole route must be competitively tendered and existing commercial services on them cancelled. See advice at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-bus-services-act-2017-local-bus-service-registration-in-enhanced-partnership-areas>

Local bus services stopping at the bus stops listed in Annex *[Insert annex]* must co-ordinate their timetables with stopping arrangements for the rail service also listed in the schedule.

[The schedule would look like this:

Bus Stop location	Associated rail service
Either the bus stop identification number or details of physical location (e.g. Station Road in Anytown 300m westbound from Anytown Railway Station).	Define the rail service or light rail service that the bus service timetables must co-ordinate with (e.g. London Northwestern Railway service from London Euston to Anytown).

[The requirement to co-ordinate timetables could also be limited to operators, for example, ‘making best endeavours’ to co-ordinate timetables. This of course is not enforceable through the EP Scheme but may be helpful in putting pressure on operators to do so. The wording could always be strengthened in future if this approach demonstrably did not work. Detailed arrangements may in any case also require further flexibility to ensure outcomes are in the best interest of passengers, taking into account, for example, short-term variations in rail timetables for Christmas or Autumn leaf-fall, or where co-ordination would have an unacceptable adverse effect on overall bus journey times. This also applies to the section below.]

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 to facilitate interchange. Operators must make best endeavours to allow flexibility for 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)

[This is intended to allow passengers to make a through journey using two or more buses that have co-ordinated timetables to minimise the interchange delay. It could be used, for example, to co-ordinate a rural feeder serving several villages with a ‘main’ bus service heading into a market town (coupled with a through ticket and integrated Real-Time Information).

It can also be used to require local bus services to co-ordinate with other types of road transport such as DRT (with the DRT operator’s voluntary agreement)]

The bus services listed in Annex *[Insert annex]* must work with DRT providers to co-ordinate their timetables so that passengers may make a through journey that minimises the interchange delay.

[The Annex would look like this:

Service 1	Service 2	Service 3
-----------	-----------	-----------

<p>Any DRT service operated by Anytown District Council stopping at (either the bus stop identification number or details of physical location).</p> <p>Or a local bus service with particular origin and destination – e.g. from Anytown 1 to Anytown 2.</p> <p>Or a particular bus service operating at a particular time of day</p>	<p>Any local bus service stopping at (either the bus stop identification number or details of physical location)</p> <p>Or it can specify any services operating from that stop that have a particular destination – e.g. a named market town.</p> <p>Or it can specify that service co-ordination needs to happen at a particular bus stop at certain times – e.g. 8am-10am and 4pm-7pm weekdays.</p> <p>Or a particular bus service operating at a particular time of day.</p>	<p>.....etc</p>
--	--	-----------------

[The aim here is to have reached prior agreement with the operators of the services to be co-ordinated and to record the arrangements here. Bear in mind that the more specific the requirement on local services, the more likely those arrangements may need to change over time, so a bespoke variation arrangement should be built in.]

Co-ordinating a DRT service that worked in a purely demand responsive way would be difficult for a bus operator running a registered fixed timetable service. In these circumstances, the DRT service would need to ensure it reached the bus stop in good time to connect with a particular registered bus service – so this arrangement would not be covered by an EP requirement. But that would not prevent the EP including arrangements for the bus operator to accept a through ticket.]

Adding to or modifying the list of standards of service using a bespoke variation

[An example of how a bespoke variation might be used to add new content on standards of service is as follows:]

Number of timetable change dates

[This can set specific dates]

Bus Operators will limit timetable changes for local bus services on the following dates:

[Specify dates – e.g. 1 January, 1 May, 1 September etc].

[Or limit to a maximum per annum, at each operator’s discretion]

Bus operators may only change their timetables a maximum of three times per annum.

[Provision also needs to be made for unforeseen circumstances. This might include changes to timetables on cross-boundary services, to rail or DRT services. Separate arrangements may be required to deal with cross-boundary services if this involves several separate EP agreements in neighbouring LTAs.]

Other specific changes can be made to individual timetables in unforeseen circumstances. This will require the agreement of all affected bus operators and the *[insert LTA]*.

[And this is how it could all be covered by a bespoke variation arrangement.]

These arrangements will be adopted and varied in future using the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Bespoke Variation arrangements at section 5.

Section 5 – Governance Arrangements

[Some governance arrangements are set out in the legislation – such as the operator objection mechanism when an EP is first ‘made’. The EP Guidance also suggests using an EP Forum to guide the EP process, not only when determining the initial EP Plan and Scheme, but also when changing things in the future. The EP Guidance also covers the operator objection mechanism in detail.²⁴

Here is some example content for future arrangements after the EP is ‘made’.]

Bus Advisory Board

The future content and arrangements for the variation and revocation of the EP Plan and EP Scheme will be considered by the Bus Advisory Board, whose members comprise:

- Somerset County Council (as Local Transport Authority and Local Highway Authority);
- Planning Authority representation as necessary on specific matters
- Bus Operators who are subject to the Somerset Enhanced Partnership requirements;
- Rail Operators providing rail services to the public in Somerset;
- Neighbouring Transport Authorities where there are cross boundary routes;
- Chair of the Bus User and Stakeholder Group;
- Bus Passenger Representative(s) as specified by the Local Transport Authority.

[This is where the members of the EP Forum are listed. They should comprise all the key stakeholders responsible for its content. As a minimum it should list the LTAs and relevant lower-tier authorities that will be delivering the EP Scheme and a statement that it includes bus operators providing local bus services.]

²⁴ Section 4 starting on Page 27.

It should also list the other organisations that have agreed to take part and allow for the provision of guest attendees.

The Bus Advisory Board is supported in its decision making by themed working groups, all of which take forward the more detailed workstreams. There will be oversight of the Enhanced Partnership from the Somerset County Council Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee. The structure of this governance is illustrated in Figure [Insert Governance Flow Chart Structure].

Future content and arrangements for the variation and revocation of The Plan and The Scheme will be considered by the Bus Advisory Board.

Conduct of meetings of the Bus Advisory Board

Meetings of the Bus Advisory Board will be held as if they are meetings of a decision-making body for the purposes of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. Accordingly:

- Meetings will be held in public although the public may be excluded from meetings or parts of meetings where a report contains confidential or exempt information or where a members' debate may lead to disclosure of confidential information. Confidential information to be discussed or which is likely to be discussed must be identified in advance of the meeting by the owner of the information;
- At least five clear working days' notice will be given, in writing, to each member of every ordinary meeting of the Bus Advisory Board, to include an agenda and accompanying reports relating to the business to be transacted at the meeting. Late items will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, with the agreement of the Chair;
- Meetings of the Bus Advisory Board will be held at least quarterly with the meeting arrangements including dates and times agreed by the Chair in consultation with the Board members;
- Agendas, minutes and reports of the Bus Advisory Board will be published on Somerset County Council's website. The only exception to this relates to confidential or exempt information;
- The Bus Advisory Board may invite third parties to participate in meetings of the board and/ or be members of sub-groups or project teams established by the Bus Advisory Board.
- Third parties may request to address the Bus Advisory Board on a specific issue or proposal. The Chairman of the Bus Advisory Board will determine whether to grant the request.

Decision-making

The Bus Advisory Board is an informal forum for collaborative discussion to formulate recommendations to its constituent organisations. Bus Advisory Board

members will aim to come to a consensus view if possible and to acknowledge any areas of difference of opinion (subject to the bespoke arrangements for varying or revoking the Enhanced Partnership Scheme set out below where the procedure set out therein will apply). Any formal decisions will be a matter for the individual authorities to take under their own established governance processes.²⁵

It may also set out practical arrangements, such as:

- *how often [and where] the EP Forum will meet;*
- *Decision-making process and how the operator objection mechanism will operate administratively*
- *the arrangements for notifying attendees, circulating papers and for convening additional non-scheduled meetings, for example, to deal with urgent issues;*
- *arrangements for adding new (non-statutory) members such as representatives of major local employers.²⁶*

These arrangements and list of Forum members can also be modified using a bespoke variation mechanism.]

Review of EP Scheme

Once The Scheme is made, it will be reviewed by the Bus Advisory Board every six months following publication of data on progress towards targets, as required by the BSIP – this will ensure any necessary action is taken to deliver the targets set out in the BSIP. Somerset County Council will initiate each review.

The Bus Advisory Board can also decide to review specific elements of the scheme on an ad-hoc basis. Bus Advisory Board members should contact Somerset County Council using the following email address [email address] explaining what the issue is and its urgency. The LTA will then decide whether to table at the next scheduled meeting or make arrangements for all or the necessary Bus Advisory Board members to gather more quickly.

Bespoke Arrangements for Varying or Revoking the Enhanced Partnership Scheme

[This is a very important section as it provides boilerplate example text for bespoke arrangements, including a separate operator objection mechanism, that can be included in an EP Scheme when it is 'made' to allow it to:

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ Although only bus operators can participate in the objection mechanism.

(a) 'fold in' new obligations on LTAs or Standards of Service on operators that are negotiated and agreed between LTA and local bus operators any time after the EP Scheme is 'made' – e.g., in the light of new LTA funding;

(b) revoke or modify obligations on LTAs or Standards of Service; or

(b) revoke an EP scheme²⁷.

IMPORTANT: These arrangements can take the place of the formal variation or revocation procedures set out in the 2000 Act (the whole agreement can be varied in this way if desired). An operator objection mechanism is always required, but if no alternative bespoke variation mechanism is included and applied generally or applied to individual sections of the template, the formal variation mechanism as set out in legislation (including the statutory objection mechanism) must always be used. (see section 7.4 of the EP Guidance).

Note that a bespoke arrangement can apply to any variation of an EP Scheme (e.g. to add, modify or delete content) or to the variation of specific parts of the EP Scheme – provided it is clear what sections of the EP Scheme will be subject to these bespoke arrangements. Different bespoke arrangements and objection mechanisms can also apply to change different elements of the EP Scheme. Examples of text referencing those powers are included below:]

Under powers at s.138E of the Transport Act 2000, Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations where this section is quoted will be subject to the bespoke agreement and decision making mechanism also as set out in this section.

[Even the bespoke variation mechanism itself can be changed or new variation procedures for particular sections (e.g., to modify ticketing arrangements) added. The example below uses the statutory objection mechanism to do so.]

Changes to or new flexibility provisions added to the EP Scheme under s.138E of the Transport Act 2000 shall only be included in the EP scheme if they satisfy the statutory objection mechanism as set out in The Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018.

Proposer of a variation

Consideration will be given to potential Scheme variations highlighted either by Somerset County Council, one of the organisations represented on the Bus Advisory Board, or by an operator of local bus services. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the BSIP, The Plan and current local transport policies. Such requests should be in writing and submitted to **[email address]**. The LTA will forward all requests onto all Bus Advisory Board members within **[5 working days]**.

Decision-making process and bespoke objection mechanism

[There are a number of mechanisms that can be used to decide whether to adopt a variation using bespoke arrangements. It does not need to be elaborate. For

²⁷ Which, if there is only one Scheme will automatically revoke the Plan at the same time.

example, this can be using a simple vote of hands by bus operators at an EP Forum in the example directly below. Or a separate 'Decision Board' could be established comprising, for example, only the LTA and an EP Forum-nominated quorum of representatives from bus operators providing local bus services.]

On receipt of (or having itself initiated) a request for a variation under this section, Somerset County Council will reconvene the Bus Advisory Board, giving at least 14 days' notice for the meeting, to consider the proposed variation. If the proposed variation is agreed by all bus operator representatives present, and if Somerset County Council also agrees, the LTA will make the EP Scheme variation within seven working days and publish the revised EP Scheme on its website. Bus Advisory Board members who are absent or not expressing a view at the meeting (either in person or in writing²⁸) will be deemed to be abstaining from the decision.

[Or it can use the statutory objection mechanism:]

On receipt of a request for a variation under this section, *[Name of Authority]* will reconvene the EP Forum, giving at least 14 days' prior written notice for the meeting to all EP Forum members, to consider the proposed variation. If the proposed variation is agreed by all bus operators present and *[Name of Authority]* also agrees, *[Name of Local Authority]* will commence the statutory objection mechanism.²⁹ If objections do not reach the statutory objection limits,³⁰ the variation will be made [70 days³¹] after the end of the objection period.

[Alternatively, specific arrangements can be put in place to deal with particular types of variation. Take the example below of bus priorities that will comprise new 'facilities' provided by the LTA on a specific bus corridor:]

Revocation of an EP Scheme

If Somerset County Council or another member of the Bus Advisory Board believes it is necessary to revoke The Scheme, the Bus Advisory Board will be reconvened. If the decision is taken to revoke The Scheme *[it will follow the legislative procedures for revocation or use bespoke arrangements as set out earlier in this section]*

If at any point in the future, any area covered by The Scheme is included in a bus franchising scheme, the relevant requirements set out in The Scheme document will cease to apply to areas covered by the franchising scheme, in line with the arrangements set out in the franchising scheme.³²

Data sharing

²⁸ This could also include proxy voting, if the operators concerned provide written confirmation to the LTA.

²⁹ As set out in The Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018

³⁰ See EP Guidance for further background on the statutory objection mechanism.

³¹ The statutory registration period. This could be a longer period, agreed between the LTA and operators

³² Section 123H(6)-(8) of the Transport Act 2000

The EP guidance gives advice on confidentiality. This section could also set out how data protection and passenger details will be processed. A detailed description of GDPR rules is beyond the scope of this template.

DRAFT

Example Schedule of facilities

[This example is taken from the TfWM EP Scheme. This table can also be used to describe new bus lanes that the LTA has agreed to introduce as part of, say, a future variation made under bespoke arrangements]

Current bus lanes

The current bus lanes detailed in the table below will be maintained by the relevant Local Highway Authority as part of the EP Scheme.

DRAFT

This format could also be adapted to introduce, for example, bus priority at traffic lights:

Intervention number	Traffic Signal Description	Hours of operation	Category of vehicle that would benefit From priority	Responsibility for maintaining
1				
2

DRAFT

Example Schedule of Measures

[This example is taken from the TfWM EP Scheme]

Bus Lane Enforcement

Bus lane enforcement will be carried out using cameras to be provided at the following locations and will be implemented from *[date]*. The cameras will be maintained and operated by the Local Highway Authorities as part of the EP Scheme.

DRAFT

Example Definitions for use in the document

NOTE: These definitions are examples only. They are not obligatory. It is for individual partnerships to determine whether to use them or vary/expand them or adopt something else.

[This section should be used to define specific terms used in the document. Some suggested definitions (presented as a menu) are as follows]:

AQPS – Advanced Quality Partnership Scheme made pursuant to section 114(1) of the Transport Act 2000 (as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008 and the Bus Services Act 2017).

Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) – means for automatically determining and transmitting the geographic location of a vehicle, allowing it to be tracked in real time.

Bus Franchising Area – area in which a statutory franchising scheme operates, as prescribed in the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Bus Services Act 2017 (section 123). Bus services in the area are controlled and specified by the transport authority, with bus operators providing services under one or more contracts.

Bus Gate – short stretch of road carriageway that is restricted to use by buses and (where specified) taxis and other authorised vehicles as indicated on appropriate signage on the approach.

Bus Lane – signposted lane, designated for use by registered local bus services and (where specified) taxis and other authorised vehicles, at the times also indicated by signage.

Bus Lane Enforcement – action taken to ensure that bus lanes and bus gates are used only by authorised vehicles. This is often carried out by using cameras to record unauthorised use, with the issue of civil penalties to offenders under section 144 of the Transport Act 2000.

Bus Stand – bus stop clearway as defined in accordance with paragraph 1(a) of Part 1 to Schedule 19 of The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 but which will permit a local bus to stand within the clearway for as long as maybe necessary up to a maximum period of 10 minutes.

CCTV – closed circuit television system, whereby static or mobile cameras are used to record offences or for surveillance and safety and security purposes.

CVRAS – Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme (CVRAS) and is a certification scheme for manufacturers of retrofit emissions reduction technology that will enable Clean Air Zone (CAZ) compliance of legacy fleet vehicles to address the air pollution emissions from buses.

Designated Feeder Service – bus service specifically designed by the operator and accepted by [Name of Authority] as one that connects with another service allowing passengers to interchange at designated bus stops or bus stands

Enforcement Camera – roadside camera that records and produces suitable evidence of unauthorised use of bus lanes or bus gates for the Local Highway Authority to issue civil penalties under section 144 of the Transport Act 2000.

EP Scheme Area – area to which this EP Scheme document applies.

Euro VI equivalent standards – Euro VI diesel bus or a bus with CVRAS approved technologies retrofitted to a diesel bus to reduce NOx and PM emissions and achieve Euro VI equivalent standards

Facilities – physical assets that are provided at specific locations along particular routes (or parts of routes) within the EP scheme area or new and improved bus priority measures. This is deemed for such purposes of section 138D(1) of the Transport Act 2000.

Measures – improvements with the aim of:

- Increasing the use of local bus service serving the routes to which the measures relate or ending or reducing a decline in their use; or
- Improving the quality of local bus service.

Slot Booking System – system and process set out to manage the number of buses using a particular bus stop and their headway.

Local Authorities – prescribed under section 23 of the Local Government Act 2003.

Local Highway Authorities – Local Authority with responsibility for the maintenance of highway infrastructure in its local authority area. In the case of this EP Scheme, this means [list authorities].

Local Transport Authority (LTA) – collectively [name of authority(ies)].

Multi-Operator Capping – common fares and ticketing product, applied across multiple bus operators, that will cap a user's travel cost according to the lowest price available for the journey or journeys made.

Multi-Operator Ticketing – common fares and ticketing product applied and accepted by multiple operators.

Network Stability Protocol – specified dates through the year, agreed between [name of Local Authority] and bus operators, on which local bus service changes take place.

Real Time Information – using technology to track the location of buses in real time. Information is transmitted to bus stops or devices to indicate to passengers the predicted arrival time at a particular point.

Registered Local Bus Service – as set out in Section 2 of the Transport Act 1985.

Street Works Permit – permit issued by Local Highway Authorities to any organisation that wishes to undertake street works, with the aim of managing works on the public highway. Local authorities have powers to operate permit schemes

under Part 3 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 and The Traffic Management Permit Scheme (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

TRO – Traffic Regulation Order, made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 or any other enactment regulating the use of roads or other places.

[Name of Authority] Enhanced Partnership Plan – document made pursuant to section 138A of the Transport Act 2000 and which is required to be in place for an EP Scheme to be made.

Zero Emission Vehicle – vehicle that emits no pollutants at its tailpipe.

END OF DOCUMENT

DRAFT