

NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY – 2026 BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP) WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL

Document Control

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In March 2021, the Government published a new strategy to improve bus services in England, outside of London – [Bus Back Better](#). The strategy sets out the Government’s vision and opportunity to deliver better bus services for passengers. Essentially this would be more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better coordinated and cheaper bus services. Local transport authorities will be given more powers to improve bus networks in their area.
- 1.2 The Council established an Enhanced Partnership with bus operators to deliver these goals, which came into effect in April 2022. This should safeguard discretionary streams of government funding for bus services to the Council and local bus operators, and also government funding for other local transport schemes.
- 1.3 The bus is seen in the strategy as a key tool in ‘Levelling Up’. In the West Berkshire context this would include enhanced frequencies on many services, new bus links introduced including the use of demand-responsive transport, simplified fares and the extension of inter-operator ticketing, more environmentally-friendly buses, and improved marketing of bus services to wider audiences.
- 1.4 This Bus Service Improvement Plan will be refreshed on a regular basis, and progress against the targets it contains will be reported on every six months. It should be noted that most of the ambitions included within this document will require additional funding, either as one-off investments, start-up costs, or an ongoing commitment.
- 1.5 The West Berkshire Partnership was fortunate to be allocated almost £2.6m in funding for its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in April 2022, although this was not released by the Department for Transport (DfT) until December 2022, and therefore there was an initial delay in progressing proposed schemes.
- 1.6 In May 2023, an additional £480k was allocated through the BSIP+ scheme. This is to be spent on maintaining or improving bus services until March 2026.
- 1.7 In November 2024, BSIP phase 4 funding allocations for [2025/2026](#) were announced. The Council has been allocated capital of £672,548 and revenue funding of £762,211, along with capability and capacity funding of £63,000.
- 1.8 In December 2025 the [Local Authority Bus Grant](#) allocations for [revenue](#) and [capital](#) were announced for 2026 to 2030. For revenue West Berkshire has been allocated £1,100,509 for 2026-27, 2027-28 & 2028-29, a combined total of £3,301,527. For capital West Berkshire has been allocated £546,512 for 2026-27, £557,497 for 2027-28, £568,482 for 2028-29 and £579,468 for 2029-30, a combined total of £2,251,959.
- 1.9 Plans for 2026/27 and beyond will be subject to Local Authority Bus Grant and Consolidated Funding central government determinations and conditions and more details around these will be published later in/around September 2026.

2. Our Bus Vision

2.1. Strategic Context

- 2.1.1. The [Council Strategy](#) contributes towards the [West Berkshire Vision 2036](#), setting out the Council's priorities for improvement. It contains six priorities, all of which benefit from effective public transport. Supporting this Strategy are the [Local Transport Plan](#) (LTP), which covers the period 2011 to 2026; and the [Environment Strategy](#), introduced in 2020, and which runs until 2030.
- 2.1.2. The LTP is supported by a number of strategies, ensuring a joined-up approach to sustainable transport. This includes the [Active Travel](#), [Smarter Choices](#) and [Passenger Transport](#) strategies. The latter was produced in 2014, with three aims:
- To increase the market share for public transport services by making those services a more attractive choice for existing and potential customers;
 - To build upon prior initiatives and tally with future development proposals, so as to better integrate the provision of passenger transport services, and;
 - To help achieve an accessible and safe public transport network.
- 2.1.3. The Environment Strategy builds on the [UK's 2050 net zero target for greenhouse gas emissions](#), and the Council's decision to declare a climate emergency in July 2019. This was upgraded to a [climate and ecological emergency](#) in 2023. It commits the Council to deliver net zero by 2030, supports the national [Transport Decarbonisation](#) plan, and will work towards achieving net zero across West Berkshire.
- 2.1.4. This BSIP supports all of these documents, and follows from the [National Bus Strategy](#), which was launched in March 2021. It is also complementary to other Council strategies, including the [Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan](#), the [Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Strategy](#), and the Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA).

2.2. Extent of Bus Service Improvement Plan

- 2.2.1. This BSIP covers the whole of the West Berkshire District Council area, which is covered by a single [Enhanced Partnership](#) (EP). There is no appetite amongst the bus operators nor the Council to progress franchising at this time in this area, as very few services operate without subsidy.
- 2.2.2. An Enhanced Partnership is an agreement between a local transport authority and the bus operators to work together to improve local bus services. It includes a clear vision of the improvements that the EP is aiming for (the BSIP) and accompanying actions to achieve them (set out in our EP scheme).
- 2.2.3. Franchising is a model for providing bus services used in London and elsewhere in Europe. In a franchising scheme, the local authority will determine the details of the services to be provided – where they run, when they run, and the standards of the services. Bus operators would then provide their services under contract to the local authority. No other services can operate in the franchised area without the agreement of the franchising authority.



Figure 1: Map of West Berkshire

2.2.4. The BSIP covers all registered local bus services that operate in West Berkshire, including those operated under Section 22 permits that provide vital bus services within the district.

2.2.5. We considered that a joint BSIP with any of our neighbouring local authorities would not be beneficial for improving public transport within West Berkshire as the focus would inevitably fall on the more populous area of any Partnership. However, it has been developed taking into consideration our neighbouring local authority views as far as possible, which we have sought to complement, especially regarding cross boundary services.

Services	Hp	Ox	Rd	Sn	Wt	Wk
Jet Black 1, Lime 2, 15, 16, 26, 33,			✓			
2 (Baughurst), 103, 32, WBCC TC, CCB, CCC	✓					
X24/X34, 133		✓				
46, 46a				✓	✓	
47		✓		✓		
110/120, Wiltshire Connect, X20					✓	
43, 93, 145		✓	✓			
154	✓		✓			✓

Key: Hp = Hampshire, Ox = Oxfordshire, Rd = Reading, Sn = Swindon, Wt = Wiltshire, Wk = Wokingham. WBCTC = West Berkshire Community Connect Thatcham Connect.

Table 1: Bus services operating to / from neighbouring local authority areas

2.3. Duration and review of BSIP

- 2.3.1. The document will be reviewed on a regular basis, published on the Council's [website](#) and sent to the Department for Transport when updated. In addition, the targets set in the BSIP will be reviewed every six months, and also published on the Council's [website](#).
- 2.3.2. The work of the BSIP is overseen by the Enhanced Partnership Forum (Forum). This is a group consisting of representatives of: the bus companies operating services within West Berkshire at the time; officers from the Council, including those involved with transport operations, policy, and highway schemes; and other interested parties such as neighbouring local authorities and representatives of bus users. The Forum meets three or four times each year.
- 2.3.3. An annual survey to seek the views of both users and non-users, first conducted in 2021, is used to inform this document and the direction of the Partnership's focus.
- 2.3.4. The BSIP builds upon the work of other strategies and plans within West Berkshire (section 2.1), and in turn informs revisions to them as they are updated.

2.4. Our Bus Vision

- 2.4.1. West Berkshire's bus vision is as follows:

To provide public bus services which connect people to work, education, retail, health and leisure opportunities across West Berkshire and beyond, and helping to deliver sustainable transport for the community.

Where possible we will look to introduce more frequent, evening and weekend services ensuring that the bus is an attractive mode of transport for all.

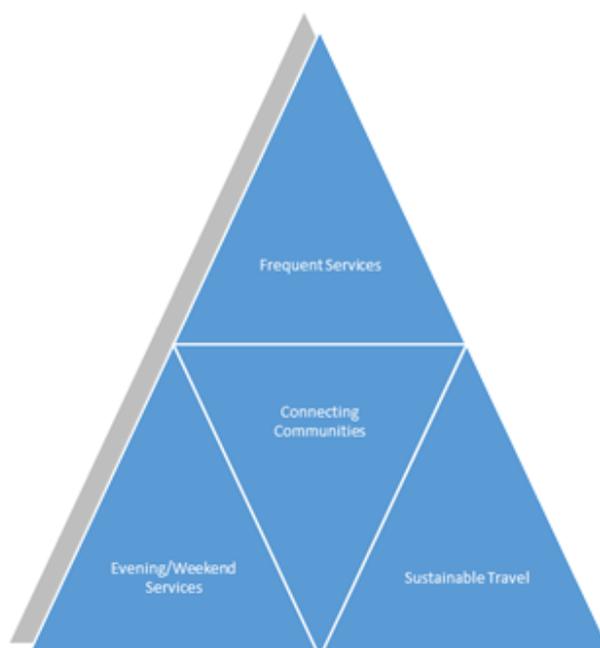


Figure 2: West Berkshire's Bus Vision

3. Current Bus Offer to Passengers

3.1. West Berkshire – the area

3.1.1. [West Berkshire](#) is very much characterised by beautiful countryside and villages, with 74% of the district falling within the [North Wessex Downs National Landscape](#) area. This is reflected in the dispersed and low-density population pattern in West Berkshire.

3.1.2. The [LTP](#) defined four geographical areas in the district, each with differing characteristics, with most of the population being located within the first two. These areas are likely to change in the next LTP.

- Newbury and Thatcham
- The Eastern Area (Purley on Thames, Tilehurst, Calcot and Theale)
- The North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- The East Kennet Valley (rural south-east including Burghfield and Mortimer)

3.1.3. According to [nomis](#), the West Berkshire population was estimated at 161,900 in 2021, slightly above the census figure. ONS figures suggest that around 23% of the population is under 20, 21% is between 50 and 64, and 20% are 65 and over with this number rising. 43% live in Newbury and Thatcham; 18% in the Eastern Area; and 7.5% in Burghfield and Mortimer. The population density is approximately two people per hectare.

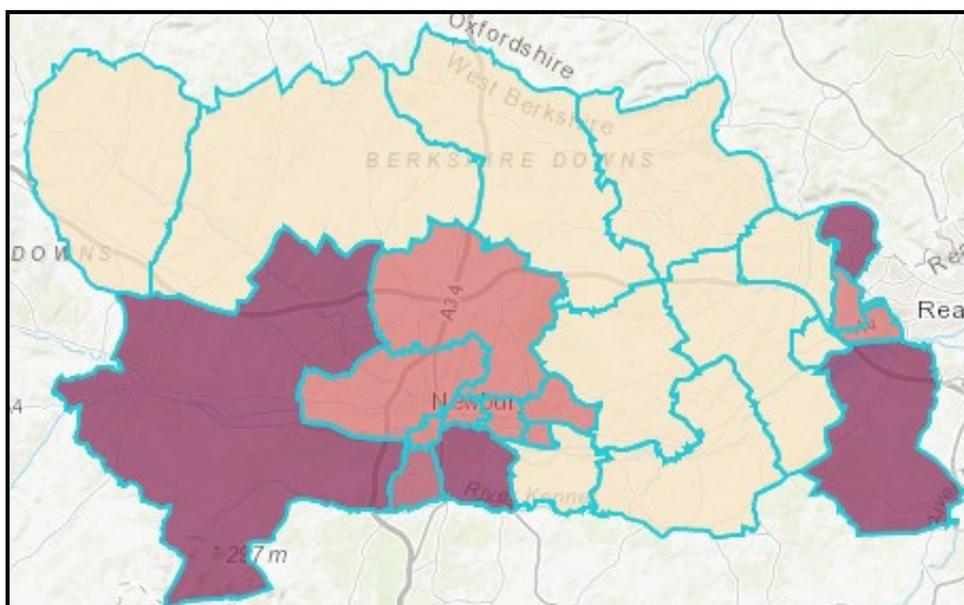


Figure 3: Map showing population by ward (darker colours show more residents)

	Numbers	Percentage (%)		
		West Berkshire	West Berkshire	South East
Economically active	87,800	84.9	82.3	78.4
In employment	84,900	82.3	79.6	75.5
Working in Information and Communication	14,000	13.7	6.1	4.6
Unemployed	2,500	2.8	3.3	3.7

Table 2: Employment (July 2023 to June 2024), [Nomis](#)

- 3.1.4. The high percentage working in Information and Communication are perhaps better placed to work from home. Vodafone’s UK headquarters are still based in Newbury, although the office accommodation has been reduced. Therefore, together with a rising population age, and homes spread widely across the district, commercial bus operation is difficult.
- 3.1.5. With retail, employment and education focussed predominantly in the urban areas, and larger rural settlements, bus services tend to radiate from either Newbury or Reading.
- 3.1.6. High levels of personal wealth and healthy life expectancy, coupled with high levels of car ownership and car use overall exacerbate the difficulties in sustaining local bus services, particularly in rural areas. Notwithstanding the District’s general prosperity, there are a number of small pockets of deprivation. [Census](#) data highlights that whilst only 12% of households in West Berkshire have no access to a car, compared to the national average of 26%, this rises in some parts of Newbury / Thatcham to more than 30%.

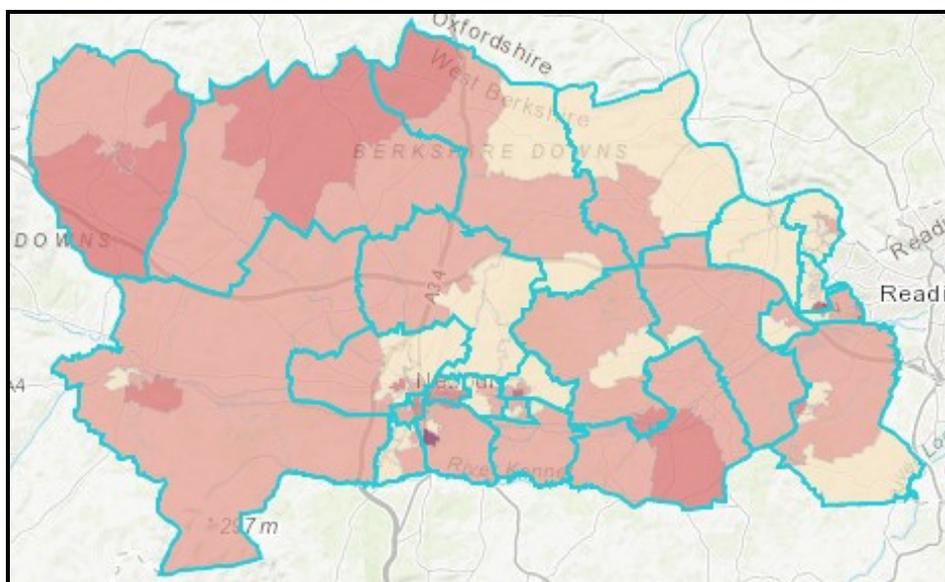


Figure 4: Map showing deprivation (darker colours show more deprivation)

- 3.1.7. Positive retail and residential planning have contributed towards Newbury, the administrative and main retail town in the district, remaining relatively robust in recent years. The Park Way retail and residential development opened towards the end of 2011 in the town centre. Although the changes to high street shopping have had an impact, demand for shop units is still good. Similarly, the Market Street ‘urban village’ development to the south of the Town Centre is now almost complete. It adds 232 residential homes, and 10,200 square feet of new commercial space. [Town Centre Masterplans](#) have been adopted by the Council for Newbury, Hungerford and Thatcham.

3.2. Air Quality and Climate Change

- 3.2.1. There are two AQMAs in West Berkshire. Both are due to road traffic and exceed the Annual Mean NO₂ objective. Newbury AQMA also exceeds the one-hour NO₂ objective:
- A339/A343 (“Burger King”) Roundabout and the adjoining Greenham Road in Newbury

- A4 (Chapel Street) in Thatcham
- according to [UK Air Information Resource](#) these both were revoked in 2024.

3.2.2. West Berkshire's 2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report recognises key elements in the LTP that can contribute towards improving air quality in the district by making the bus more attractive and reducing car usage. These are more frequent and reliable bus services with modern low or zero emission buses. In July 2019, the Council unanimously declared a climate emergency, which has been upgraded to a climate and ecological emergency in 2023. In particular, the Council acknowledged the importance of sustainable transport.

3.3. Bus services

3.3.1. Bus services in West Berkshire are currently operated by a number of companies:

- Go-Ahead (Salisbury Reds, Swindon Bus Company, Thames Travel)
- Horseman Coaches
- Reading Buses (Newbury & District, Reading Buses)
- Stagecoach (Hampshire)

3.3.2. In addition to those services run under an Operator's Licence, another group of services are provided using Section 22 Community Bus Permits. As these provide vital links in the district's transport network, they are also included within the BSIP:

- Carebus Volunteer Group
- Going Forward Buses Community Interest Company
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Ramsbury Community Transport
- West Berkshire Council Transport Services Team

3.3.3. In 2023 and 2024, a number of new or enhanced services commenced. The first seven are funded (at least in part) by the DfT's BSIP funding, and the latter by the DfT's Rural Mobility Fund:

- X34 linking Newbury to Harwell and Didcot. From September 2024 has served the Donnington Heights development.
- 1e Newbury to Thatcham Friday and Saturday evening service, now incorporated into the Jet Black 1 service
- Lime 2/2a Sunday service extended to Mortimer.
- 32 service replaces The LINK between Newbury and Basingstoke with additional peak time and later evening journeys and a Sunday service.
- CCA replaced service 5 between Brightwalton and Newbury Monday to Friday.
- CCB between Thatcham Broadway and Aldermaston Monday to Friday. Replacing the 44 service.
- CCC operating Thatcham Broadway and Sainsburys in Calcot on Mondays and Wednesdays. Replacing the 44 service.
- 110, 120 and [Wiltshire Connect](#) replacing service 20 and X22 between Hungerford and Marlborough.

3.3.4. [West Berkshire Community Connect](#) on-demand transport began in January 2024 and operates in the following areas:

- [Northwest Downlands](#) service began on 15 January 2024 and replaces the 5a and 5c services.
- [Thatcham Connect](#) began on 4 November 2024 and replaces the 41 and 44 services.

3.3.5. West Berkshire Council has produced a public bus route map which shows routes of public bus services within the district. The latest version of the map was produced in March 2025, is published on the [Council website](#) and shown in Figure 14.

3.3.6. An overview of each of the services is included in Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5. Journeys (per week) are current (January 2026), whilst patronage (per month) is from December 2025. All data relates to travel within West Berkshire only.

Operator	Service		Journeys	Patronage
Reading Buses	Jet Black 1*	Newbury-Reading	420	Individual data not shown at request of major operator
Stagecoach in Hampshire	2	Baughurst-Basingstoke	580	
Reading Buses	Lime 2/2a	Reading-Mortimer	418	
Reading Buses	15	Reading-Calcot	243	
Reading Buses	16	Reading-Purley	593	
Reading Buses	26	Reading-Calcot	945	
Reading Buses	33	Reading-Tilehurst	637	
Newbury & District	103	Newbury-Greenham BP	120	
Totals	8		3596	136,283€

Key: SH 2 - only one stop within West Berkshire. 103 - journeys to Bishop's Green supported by Basingstoke & Deane BC. € = Estimate; *Jet Black – late evening journeys between Newbury & Thatcham on Friday & Saturday evenings subsidised by bus grant funding (4 journeys on each evening), included here as not easy to separate.

Table 3: Bus services operated without any direct subsidy

Operator	Service		Funded by	Journeys	Patronage
N&D	1a	Newbury-Thatcham	WBC	127	13,368
N&D	1c	Newbury-Thatcham	WBC	135	
N&D	1d	Newbury-Thatcham	WBC	5	
N&D	2	Newbury-Pigeons Farm	WBC	168	6,409
N&D	3	Newbury-Hungerford	WBC	66	2,686
N&D	4	Newbury-Lambourn	WBC	106	4,358
N&D	6,6a	Newbury-The Ilsleys	WBC	84	3,207
N&D	8	Newbury-Greenham	WBC	148	2,591
N&D	9	Newbury-Racecourse	WBC	158	1,691
SBC	X20	Newbury – Marlborough	WCC	2	Individual data withheld
SBC/SR	110,120 WC	Marlborough-Hungerford	WCC, RMF	20/DRT	
SBC	46, X46	Hungerford-Swindon	SC, WCC	40	
TT	X24/X34	Newbury – Harwell	WBC, OCC	168	1,586
RB	43	Goring - Reading	PC, WBC	55	1,424
WBC*	47	Lambourn-Swindon	OCC, SC, WBC	55	447
CB*	75	Theale-Newbury	S22	1	36
GF*	133	Goring-Wallingford	S22	20	25
OCC	145	Goring-Reading	S22	2	1
HC	154	Stratfield Saye-Reading	BD, PC, WOK	2	9

Operator	Service		Funded by	Journeys	Patronage
WBC	CCA	Newbury - Brightwalton	WBC	10	218
RCT*	Flyer	Aldbourne/Ramsbury-Hungerford	S22	4	86
WBC	WBCC NW	Northwest Downlands/Newbury	WBC	DRT	354
Totals	22			1,376	39,837€

Key: Operator. CB* = Carebus Volunteer Group, GF* = Going Forward CIC, HC = Horseman Coaches, N&D = Newbury & District, RCT* = Ramsbury Community Transport, SBC = Swindon's Bus Company, SH = Stagecoach in Hampshire, SR = Salisbury Reds, SS = Stagecoach in Swindon, TC = Tourist Coaches, TT = Thames Travel, WBC* = West Berkshire Council, * = section 22 operation.

Service. WC = Wiltshire Connect DRT. Patronage for these services represents that of former services 20, X20, X22 (operated by SBC, TC).

Funded by. BD = Basingstoke & Deane BC; BSIP = DfT funding; DWH = David Wilson Homes; HCC = Hampshire County Council; HW = Harwell; PC = various Town and Parish Councils; RMF = DfT Rural Mobility Fund; S22 = Not-for-profit, funded by grants and donations; SC = Swindon Borough Council; WBC = West Berkshire Council, WCC = Wiltshire County Council, WOK = Wokingham Borough Council.

€ = Estimate. 46 was operated by SBC in June 2019.

Table 4 - Bus services wholly or partially funded to operate (non-BSIP funding only)

Operator	Service		BSIP funding	From	Journeys	Patronage
SH	32	Newbury-Basingstoke	WBC, HCC	May-24	224	Individual data withheld
WBC	WBCCTC	Thatcham Connect	WBC	Nov-24	DRT	272
WBC	CCB	Thatcham Broadway - Aldermaston	WBC	Nov-24	12	88
WBC	CCC	Thatcham Broadway - Calcot	WBC	Nov-24	4	53
Totals	4				254	6,570€

Key: Operator: WBC = West Berkshire Council; SH = Stagecoach in Hampshire; TT = Thames Travel; RB = Reading Buses; N&D = Newbury & District.

BSIP Funding provided by: WBC = West Berkshire Council; HCC = Hampshire County Council; OCC = Oxfordshire County Council.

€ = estimated; DRT = Demand Responsive Transport

Table 5: Bus Services funded by BSIP/Bus Grant Funding

3.3.7. Services operated without any direct subsidy make up around 23% of the bus routes, 71% on the bus journeys, over 75% of the passenger trips.

3.3.8. There are also a few registered commercial local school services in West Berkshire. These are services to Little Heath School (Reading Buses 85, 87, 93), Theale Green School (Reading Buses 88 & 90), and Hampshire Colleges (Stagecoach 622).

3.3.9. Vodafone also has a bus service for the use of its employees, provided by Reading Buses, but not open to the general public. This previously substantial network has diminished with most staff now working from home.

3.3.10. All Reading Buses services operate from early morning to late evening, and seven days each week, with service 26 operating 24-hours. These, together with Stagecoach's 32 (formerly The LINK) from Newbury to Basingstoke, form the commercial backbone in West Berkshire thanks to the more densely populated areas which they serve. The Jet Black 1 operates later than other (non-Reading Buses) services, in October 2025 the 1e service was incorporated into the Jet Black

service. Patronage on Reading Buses' services had increased by almost 40% prior to the pandemic.

- 3.3.11. Despite the best efforts of Reading Buses and Newbury & District to develop the 1a and 1c as commercial operations to supplement the core Jet Black 1 service, these are now operating with financial support from West Berkshire Council. There are believed to be many reasons for this - the relatively short distances involved (Thatcham is only 3 miles from Newbury); the lack of bus priority; heavy car dominance between the towns; the cost of using the bus; and the relatively low frequencies of the 1a and 1c.
- 3.3.12. With the exception of Reading Buses, the 32 and X34, all services operate, at best, Mondays to Saturdays between 7am and 7pm. Services in the Newbury / Thatcham area tend to operate hourly, with those extending into the North Wessex Downs being two-hourly at most and largely timed around school movements.
- 3.3.13. From May 2024 the Stagecoach's 32 service has run a later evening service Monday to Saturday, with additional peak-time journeys and a Sunday service.
- 3.3.14. Some West Berkshire villages no longer have any bus or rail service, following gradual decline over the last few decades. These villages include Aldworth, Ashampstead, Fawley, Frilsham, Tidmarsh, and Yattendon, all within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape; and, Sulhamstead and Ufton Nervet in the East Kennet Valley. There is no bus service to Mortimer Station.
- 3.3.15. The 75 was the only demand responsive service in the district operating on Fridays, until the launch of [Wiltshire Connect](#) in Hungerford at the end of October 2023. In January 2024 the Council launched its demand responsive transport service called [West Berkshire Community Connect](#). The first operating area is called [Northwest Downlands](#), and [Thatcham Connect](#) followed in November 2024.

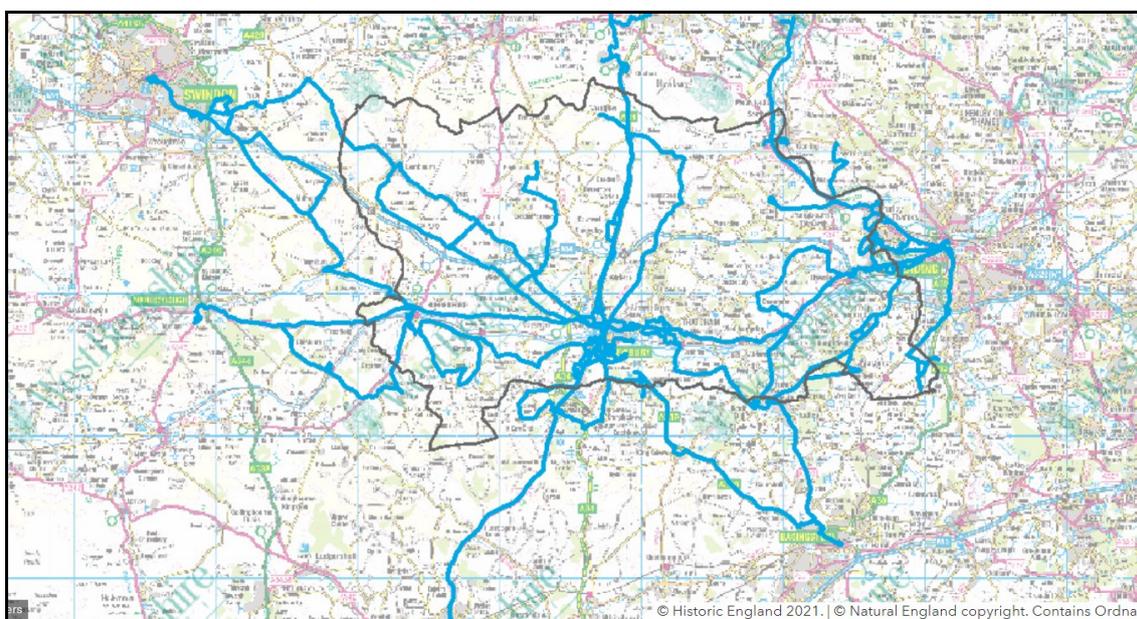


Figure 5: Bus Routes in West Berkshire (Summer 2025)

- 3.3.16. With limited resources, many Newbury-based bus services are inter-worked with the same vehicles, thus potentially building delays throughout the day. These were retimed in September 2021 to improve reliability.

3.3.17. On schooldays most morning peak buses continue through Newbury to serve St Bartholomew's and Park House secondary schools, and Newbury College two miles south of the centre. This does require a number of codes and footnotes in timetables which we strive to present as clearly as possible. This is difficult because each service operates a slightly different route to reduce congestion outside each of the educational establishments.

3.3.18. In recent years, and in particular since 2016, the Council has found that it has had to start operating a number of services itself using accessible minibuses, as the cost of provision from bus operators would have meant that these services were unaffordable. Whilst the majority of these have now been converted to demand responsive transport, service 47 operates as a scheduled service through the day on Mondays to Saturdays. A new 33-seat low floor accessible vehicle started operation on this route from September 2022 to prevent vehicle overloads.

3.3.19. In August 2025 the 7/7a service operating between Newbury and Andover was withdrawn following a decision by Hampshire County Council. In November 2025 the 3c service operated on a commercial basis by Newbury & District between Thatcham and Hungerford Monday to Friday also ended. The 1e service was amalgamated with the Jet Black 1 service in the autumn of 2025.

3.4. Funding for bus services

3.4.1. As can be seen from tables (Table 4 and Table 5), services are financially supported from a variety of sources. Table 6 shows how much is required on top of bus fare revenue for services to operate in the district. The devolved Local Transport Authority Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG) of £137,099/annum helps to fund existing contracted bus services. In addition to the almost £2m invested in local bus services each year, section 22 operations are being operated on a not-for-profit basis, and much of their costs are covered by grants and other donations.

Funding Source		Estimated amount each year (£000s)
West Berkshire Council	Contracted bus services	£827
	In-house section 22 operations	£350
	Concessionary Fares reimbursement	£462
Total West Berkshire Council		£1,639
West Berkshire Town & Parish Councils		£10
Developer contributions inc. Greenham Common Trust		£0
BSIP		£299
Neighbouring local authorities		£50
Total all subsidy		£1,998

Table 6: Financial contributions to bus services

3.4.2. As part of the Government's [Better Deal for Bus Users](#), launched in September 2019, the Council were awarded £108,507 to improve current bus services, restore lost links, and support new bus services. The timing of this support coincided with the start of the pandemic, and it was not appropriate to start additional services when existing routes were struggling. Our improvements are included within the BSIP, but focussed around marketing, recovery of services, additional weekend and evening services, new links, and fares and ticketing initiatives. It is recognised at the time that the funding given is insufficient for most of these improvements.

3.4.3. The above funding has been enhanced by £2.6m BSIP and £478k BSIP+ funding, as well as funding from the Bus Fare Cap scheme. The Council has also been allocated BSIP phase 4 funding for [2025/26](#) following an announcement in November 2024.

3.5. Roads and reliability

3.5.1. The Council keeps a log of congestion hotspots in the district which have a disproportionate effect on bus services. It regularly holds internal Network Management meetings, and external Highways and Utility Co-ordination meetings to minimise disruption on the network and resolve ongoing issues.

3.5.2. Some of these hotspots can be predictable, and particularly affect the peaks. Others can be intermittent, for example caused by inconsiderate parking or issues on the M4 motorway. The nature of the road network in West Berkshire can make it difficult to introduce solutions that promote reliable bus services without causing worse problems elsewhere.

3.5.3. The current hotspots have been identified as:

- Andover Road, Newbury
- Arlington Business Park, Theale
- Atherton Road, Hungerford (not currently an area of concern)
- Bartholomew Street, Newbury (between Pound Street and Market Street)
- Bath Road, Calcot (M4 roundabout to Reading Borough boundary)
- Bulpit Lane, Hungerford
- Carters Rise, Calcot (between Kennet Valley School and Albury Gardens)
- Glendale Avenue, Wash Common
- High Street, Kintbury (approx. 50m approach to Kintbury Square)
- Holt Road, Kintbury (between Harold Road and Newbury Street)
- Inkpen Road, Kintbury (approach to High Street)
- Kiln Road, Newbury
- Kingsbridge Road, Newbury
- London Road, Newbury (whole stretch of road)
- Newbury Street, Kintbury (west of the surgery)
- Priory Avenue, Hungerford (between Bulpit Lane and Priory Road)
- Shaw Road, Newbury
- Valley Road, Newbury
- Villiers Way, Newbury



Figure 6: Bus gate at Park Way bridge, Newbury © Google

3.5.4. Bus priority measures are limited in West Berkshire, and have historically been managed with bus gates, enabling more direct routes for bus services, and preventing through car traffic. The current bus gates are:

- Love Lane/Bastion Street, Newbury – enforced by camera.
- Park Way bridge, Newbury - enforced by camera
- Two sump-busters in Calcot – Underwood Road to Carters Rise, and Pollards Way / The Chase
- Sainsbury's Calcot, allowing buses to exit stop to gain access to Pincents Lane for IKEA
- Rising bollards between Urquhart Road and Braemore Close, Thatcham have now been withdrawn, however work is underway to install an ANPR camera at the location.

3.5.5. A key area of Transport Focus's '[getting passengers back on buses](#)' research was improving punctuality. The graph shows punctuality in West Berkshire since 2014, which has been better than average when compared to other non-metropolitan areas in England over recent years. It has remained fairly consistent at around 83% to 84% until rising during the pandemic. As more traffic and higher passenger numbers are returning, punctuality is again starting to suffer.

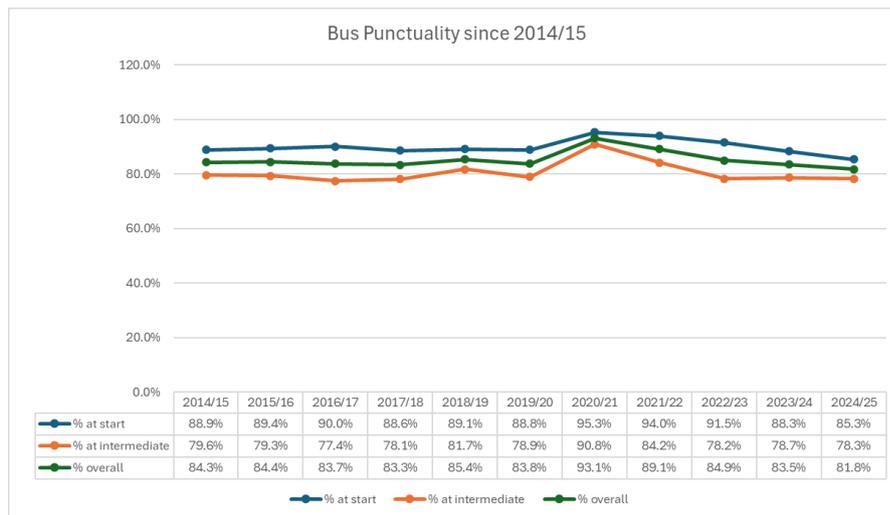


Figure 7: Bus Punctuality

Key: % shown are classed as 'On time', defined as between 1 minute early and 5 minutes 59 seconds late).

3.6. Bus infrastructure

- 3.6.1. There are approximately 1,045 bus stops in West Berkshire, shown on the Council's [online map](#), below. We record the facilities at each stop (including whether they have a shelter, display case, Kassel kerb). Roadside information is maintained by the Council, or operators where they run commercial services. This includes providing information and temporary stops when affected by road works. Is the number of stops still accurate.
- 3.6.2. Bus shelters are owned and maintained by Parish and Town Councils, with limited scope for advertising due to the rural nature of the area. There can be a reluctance of some Parish Councils to take on ownership and liability of shelters. There is a notable lack of shelters in some parts of the district, for example in Burghfield and Mortimer, even at the most well used stops.
- 3.6.3. BSIP funding monies have been made available for Parish and Town Councils to embark on a programme of installing new or improving existing bus shelters, which commenced in 2025 and so far 19 new shelters have been installed across the district.

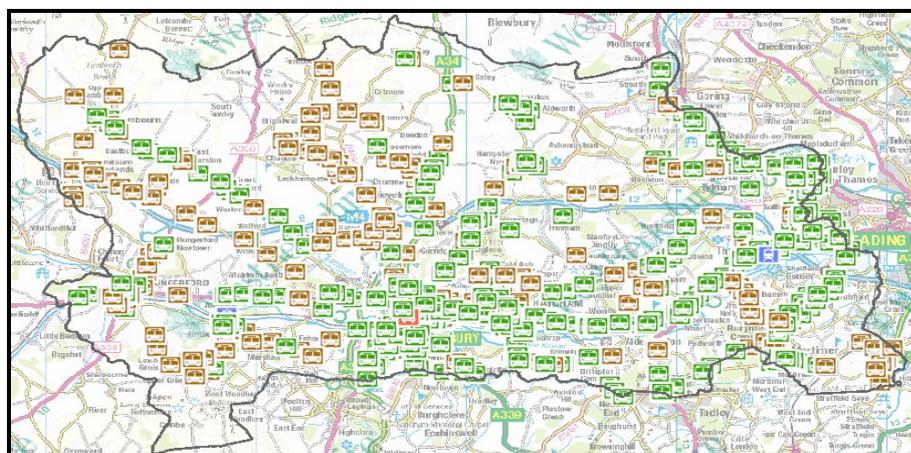


Figure 8: Bus stop locations

3.6.4. The Council owns and maintains the Wharf Bus Station in Newbury, which opened in December 2018. This replaced the former facility in Market Street, to allow for redevelopment (see 3.1.7) and provides a more modern feel to the waiting environment.

3.7. Car parking provision

3.7.1. The Council is responsible for 2,721 spaces in 27 off-street car parks (in Newbury, Thatcham, Hungerford, Lambourn, Theale and Pangbourne), and 469 spaces in 20 on-street parking areas (in Newbury, Thatcham and Hungerford). It also manages 16 resident parking zones covering 92 roads.

3.7.2. There is limited other paid-for parking with the main exception being the 500 space Parkway Shopping Centre car park in Newbury. Free parking is available at supermarkets (some with maximum stays) in Newbury, Thatcham, Hungerford and Calcot, and other out-of-town retail areas including Newbury Retail Park and IKEA in Calcot. Parking charges vary to suit the purpose at each car park.

Location	Car Park Name	Total Spaces	PH	BB	EVCP	MC
Hungerford	Church Street Car Park	54	0	2	4	0
Hungerford	Station Road Car Park	104	0	3	0	0
Lambourn	High Street Car Park	43	0	2	2	0
Newbury	Central (KFC) Car Park	42	0	4	2	1
Newbury	Corn Exchange (Bear Lane) Car Park	70	0	3	0	1
Newbury	Eight Bells Arcade Car Park	31	0	3	1	0
Newbury	Football Club Car Park	65	0	2	0	0
Newbury	Goldwell Park Car Park	66	0	4	0	0
Newbury	Kennet Centre Multi-Storey Car Park	415	0	21	2	1
Newbury	Library Car Park	92	0	2	4	1
Newbury	Northbrook Multi-Storey Car Park	305	0	22	0	0
Newbury	Northcroft Lane Car Park	17	4	0	0	0
Newbury	Northcroft Lane West Car Park	120	0	0	0	0
Newbury	Northcroft Leisure Centre Car Park	97	0	5	2	0
Newbury	Pelican Lane Car Park	74	0	0	0	0
Newbury	Newbury Station Multi Storey Car Park*	495	0	23	6	2
Newbury	West Street Car Park	23	0	0	0	0
Newbury	Newbury Wharf Car Park	7	0	7	0	1
Pangbourne	River Meadow Car Park	27	0	2	0	0
Pangbourne	Station Road Car Park	67	0	4	2	1
Thatcham	Burdwood Centre Car Park	61	0	3	0	0
Thatcham	Gilbert Court (East) Car Park	58	0	0	2	0
Thatcham	Kennet Leisure Centre Car Park	86	28	5	0	0
Thatcham	Kingsland Centre Car Park	201	0	15	0	0
Thatcham	Station Road Car Park	34	0	3	0	0
Theale	High Street Main Car Park	57	0	0	0	0
Theale	High Street West Car Park	10	0	0	0	0

Key: PH – Permit Holders; BB – Blue Badge; EVCP – Electric Vehicles Charging Points; MC – Motorcycle space;

*Weekend Provision =345 spaces, 17 Blue Badge and 2 Electric Vehicle spaces Monday to Friday.

Table 7: Car parks managed by West Berkshire Council (January 2026)

3.7.3. Charges in car parks in Newbury town centre are generally £1.70 an hour with incremental increases for longer periods. On-street parking is generally free for 30

minutes, then starts at £1 for an hour. [Season tickets](#) are also offered within Newbury car parks. Car parks in other West Berkshire towns are cheaper.

- 3.7.4. The Council's current net income budget from parking and blue badges is £1.5 million. Parking charges were increased in 2024, whilst maintaining bus fares. Some short-term parking is available and cheaper than the bus, however generally it is priced more expensively than a single person's return bus fare.

3.8. Other transport

- 3.8.1. There is no current evidence to identify how well bus services are used in comparison to other modes of transport in West Berkshire, however the [Census](#) does provide some information on travel to work. The comparison between 2011 and 2021 in Figure 10 clearly shows the increase in working from home, with consequent decreases in all other modes of travel.
- 3.8.2. West Berkshire has 10 railway stations, on three lines into Reading, all served by Great Western Railway. Most stations are on the Reading – Newbury – West Country line, with Pangbourne also linked to Oxford, and Mortimer to Basingstoke. Bus services operate near, but not directly to, most stations. Newbury Station is served directly by routes 4 and 6, but additional vehicles would be required to extend further services to the station.

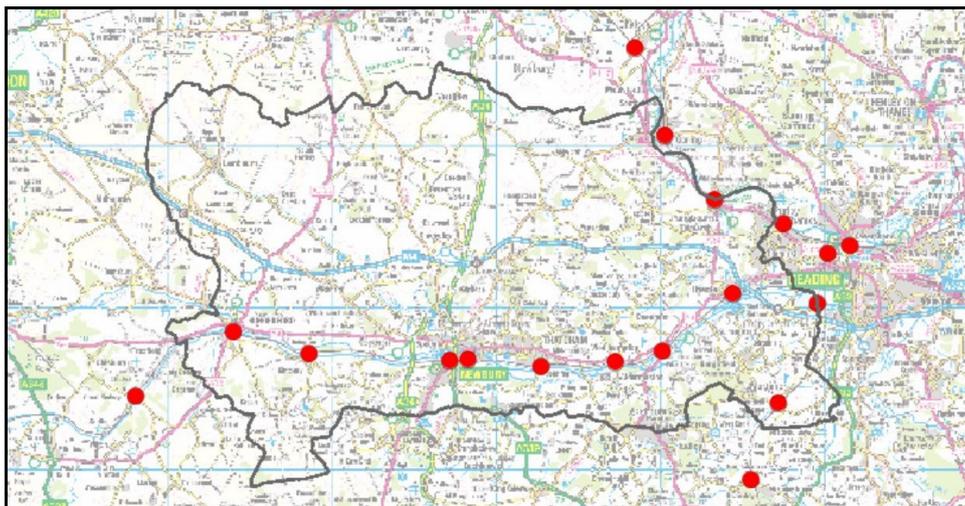


Figure 9: Train Stations in West Berkshire

- 3.8.3. Although National Express briefly re-introduced one daily journey each way from Newbury to Heathrow and London, this has now stopped again as it was a positioning journey for a former contractor to reach another service. We are not aware of any current plans to reinstate this or the South Coast – Newbury – Birmingham service.

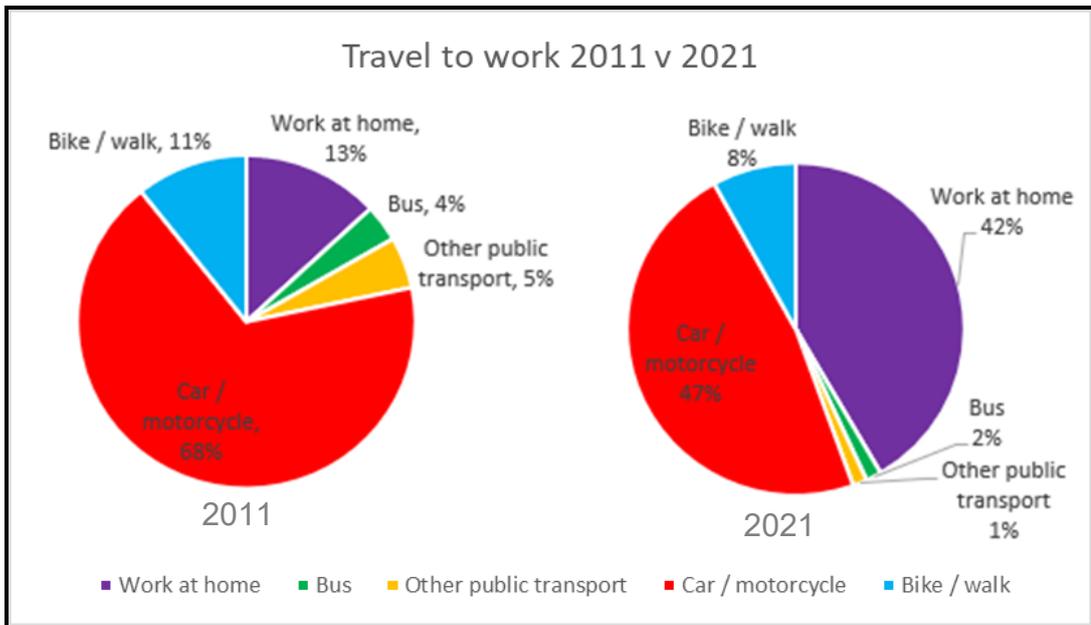


Figure 10: Modal share

3.8.4. Due to the difficulties in providing cost-effective transport within the rurality of West Berkshire, the Council has encouraged and supported community transport. The Council has been supporting fourteen groups, including the Handybus network, providing grant funding to them since its inception in 1988. All groups, with the exception of Readibus, are volunteer based and all operate a range of car schemes and/or minibuses group travel. Transport has to be booked in advance. Every part of the district is covered by at least one scheme.

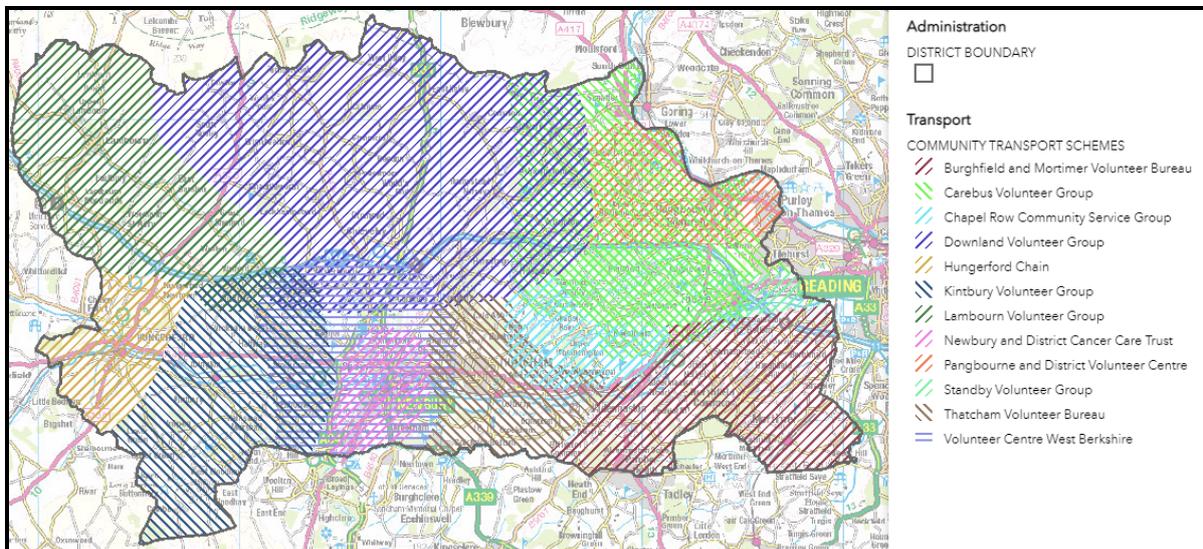


Figure 11: Community transport provision

3.8.5. Taxis and private hire vehicles fulfil an important role as part of an integrated passenger transport network in West Berkshire, since they are able to provide services in situations where other transport services are not available, including a 24-hour door-to-door service.

3.9. Fares

3.9.1. Most bus fares within West Berkshire are based on the traditional idea of fare stages at regular intervals along the route, with fares increasing dependent upon

the number of fare stages passed through. Adult and child tickets are available, as well as singles, returns, day and period tickets. In the Eastern Area, Reading Buses use a zonal fare system, with a low-priced day ticket taking the place of return fares. The maximum age for child tickets can also vary between operators and is not easy to determine for the occasional user.

- 3.9.2. Within Newbury / Thatcham, fares are similar to those in the Eastern Area, although the maximum travel distance is lower. There is also a slight difference between the fares on commercial services and the supported network. Whilst day and period tickets are available, the multi-operator Connect ticket day is expensive for travel in Newbury / Thatcham, as it covers most of West Berkshire. The multi-operator tickets are not valid on Stagecoach services.

Area		Maximum Distance	Adult Single	Adult Return	Child Single	Child Return
Newbury / Thatcham	Supported	2½ miles	£2.00	£3.50	£1.40	£2.00
	Commercial	3 miles	£2.60	£4.20	£1.60	£2.20
Eastern Area		4 miles	£2.30	£4.50*	£1.80	£2.80*
Rural West Berkshire		12 miles	£3.00+	£5.60^	£2.80	£3.90^

Table 8: Bus Fares

Key: * -Day ticket price, no return available Prices subsidised using BSIP funding. Lower introductory offer price applies. ^ -Day tickets are £6.00 Adult, £4.00 Child. + - National Single Fare Cap.

- 3.9.3. Whilst rural fares do offer good value for the distance travelled, there is inconsistency in fares for similar distances on different supported services.
- 3.9.4. Most local bus operators took part in the national £2 single fare cap scheme which ran from 1 January 2023 until 31 December 2024. On the 31 October 2024 the government announced that this fare cap would rise to £3.00 from 1 January 2025 and the scheme is now expected to extend to March 2027.
- 3.9.5. The Council operates the statutory [English National Concessionary Travel Scheme \(ENCTS\)](#) and has not offered any discretionary extras such as companions, extended hours, or other modes since 2016. It has just over 20,000 passes in circulation, of which approximately 5% are disabled cards. An “early bird” discounted ticket was launched across all operators in January 2023 allowing pass holders to travel before 9.30am outside of the Eastern area, brokered by the Forum in October 2022. The cost on Council supported services is £1.50 in Newbury/Thatcham and £2.00 elsewhere. For other services operators can set their own prices, however it is the intention of the partnership to look harmonise fares in line with annual inflation. This was agreed at the September 2025 forum.
- 3.9.6. For those wishing to use both bus and train, PlusBus tickets are available for onward bus travel from Newbury and Reading stations, covering the two urban areas of West Berkshire. Where travel is possible by bus between two places with rail stations, the bus is always the cheapest option. On average a single fare is 61% more expensive by rail, reducing to only 19% more for a return ticket at peak times. Off-peak, whilst a single bus fare is slightly cheaper than rail, a return trip is better value by rail.
- 3.9.7. Information on the methods of payment available for bus fares is not always clear on operators’ websites, even though most now have the ability to pay with cash,

contactless bank card, smartcard, app ticket, or pre-purchased period or multi-journey tickets.

3.9.8. Some local bus operators have also introduced [Tap on Tap off \(TOTO\)](#) on their buses. Newbury & District and West Berkshire introduced this during the summer of 2025.

3.10. Vehicles

3.10.1. Around 65 buses are required to deliver all the bus services in West Berkshire, including the cross-boundary services each day, as well as an additional eight section 22 vehicles. The average age of the fleet used is 9.4 years (or 9.2 years including s22 vehicles) in 2023. Based on data from [DfT Bus Statistics Table BUS06](#), the national average age of a bus is 11.0 years for non-metropolitan areas of England; or 9.7 years for the whole of England (in 2022).

3.10.2. Based on information from all operators (October 2024), 98% of the vehicles used to provide bus services in use in West Berkshire are at least Euro V emission standards, with 80% being Euro VI. Reading Buses have been upgrading engines as well as investing in bio-methane (ultra-low carbon) vehicles. They also have a ZE electric bus in Reading, and Thames Travel will benefit from newer buses following a successful ZEBRA bid by Oxfordshire County Council. Reading Borough Council’s ZEBRA scheme will deliver electric buses on the 26 services in 2026. An electric minibus is now in operation in West Berkshire Council’s fleet.

3.11. Passengers

3.11.1. The following graph shows the number of passengers boarding local bus services in West Berkshire since 2009/10. The trend was relatively positive, albeit with a drop in 2016/17 and 2017/18. This was largely due to a reduction in Council spending on supported bus services which considerably reduced the supported bus network between July and September 2016, together with removing all discretionary add-ons to ENCTS. Even with this drop the number of trips in 2019/20 was still almost 10% higher than in 2010/11, compared to a national drop of 12% (or 16% outside London).

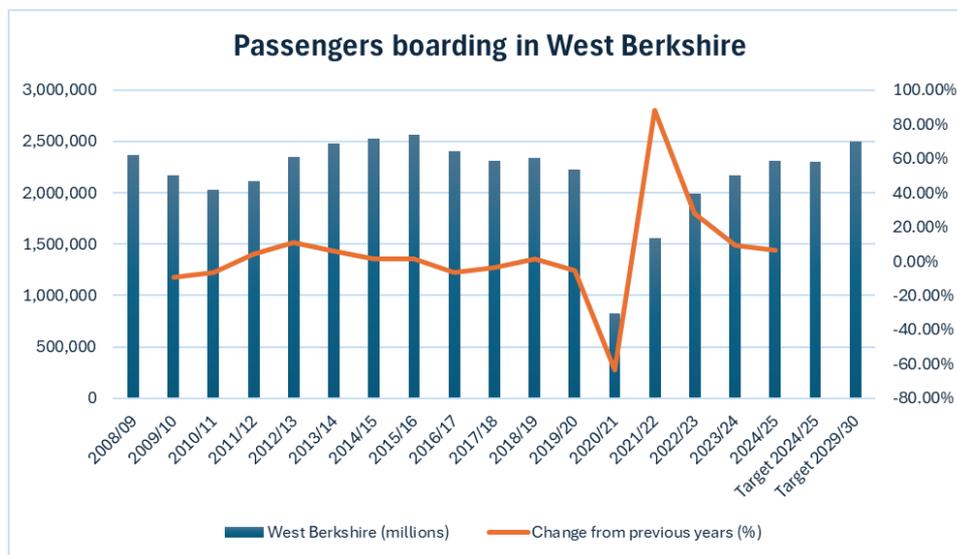


Figure 12: Passenger boarding buses (operator data)

- 3.11.2. Other reasons for changes in passenger numbers can be attributed positively to the Reading Buses services in the Eastern Area (strong customer focus, daily operation, higher frequencies, longer operating hours, reasonable fares, excellent publicity, fleet investment), or negatively to:
- Withdrawal of duplicated Newbury/Thatcham services when Reading Buses acquired Newbury & District.
 - Congestion, causing unreliability to bus times. New developments around the town centre have particularly affected Newbury in recent years.
 - The growth of on-line shopping and loss of some popular shops, rendering visits to town centres less necessary / appealing.
 - The perceived low cost of driving a car, coupled with readily available parking in our town centres.
 - Increases in the numbers of people working from home.
- 3.11.3. The onset of the pandemic affected 2019/20, however this was more prominent in 2020/21 when patronage dropped to 827,782, some 60% below the previous year. Passenger levels are now returning to nearer the pre-pandemic position, especially on the supported services. West Berkshire is still outperforming the national average. For 2021/22, patronage in West Berkshire was only 23% down on 2010/11, compared to 39% nationally; and saw an increase of approx. 7% in 2023/24 over 2010/11.

3.12. Information

- 3.12.1. The Council has a long history of producing quality information regarding public transport, and its [Travel Guide](#) is considered to be Outstanding by the renowned timetable expert [Barry Doe](#). Prior to the pandemic, printed copies were very popular. Printed versions have resumed in September 2023, with an updated edition being made available in November 2024. The Public Transport map has not been printed for a number of years but is also available [online](#). Travel Guides are made available in Council offices, libraries, West Berkshire Hospital (Patient Information Point), some Town and Parish Councils, and on board some buses.

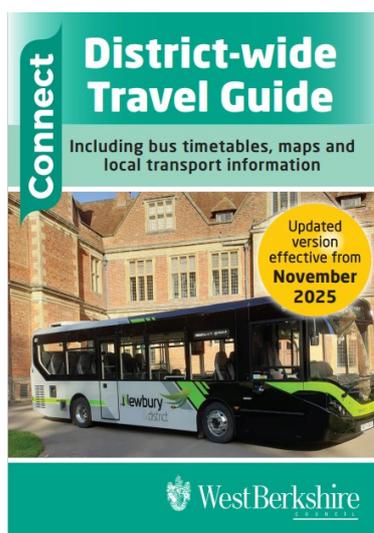


Figure 13: Latest West Berkshire District Wide Travel Guide (Digital only)

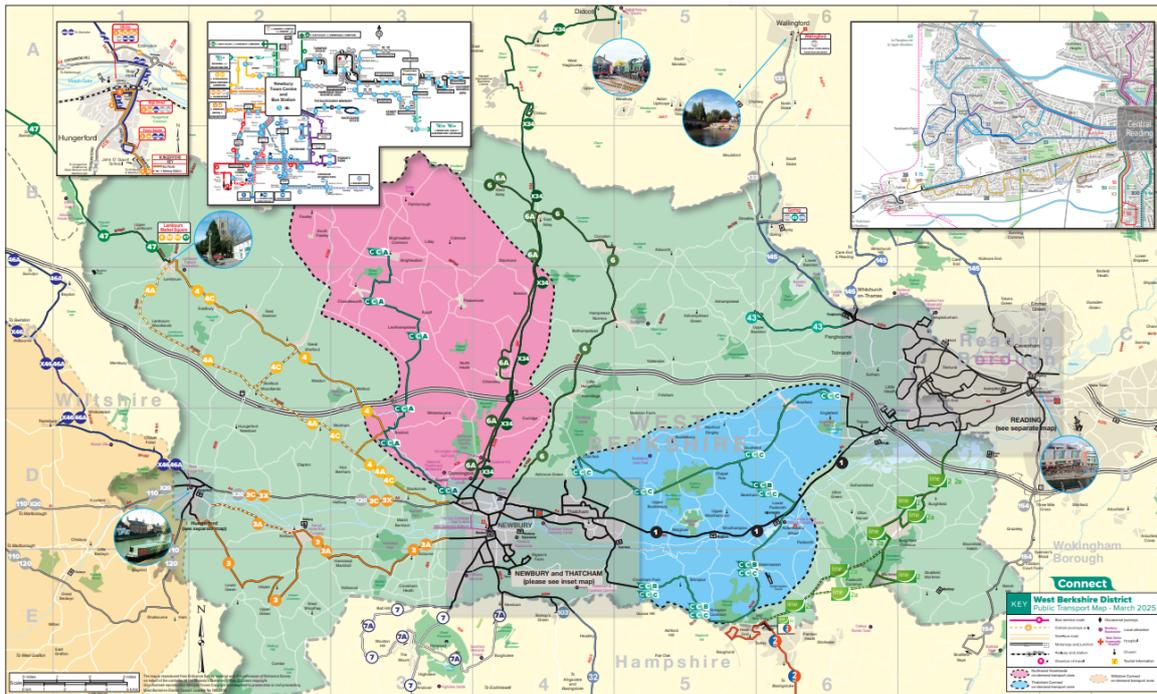


Figure 14: West Berkshire Public Transport Map (latest version)

3.12.2. Services are shown on National Traveline, and operators submit their data to the Bus Operator Data Service (BODS). Other than the Council-operated services, no other section 22 operations are included as there is no legal requirement for these. Next stop announcement systems are on all Newbury & District, Reading Buses, and Stagecoach buses, and have been rolled-out on Thames Travel services. All bus companies use either Facebook or X (formerly Twitter) for live updates, the latter is also used by the Council. Most also have a user-friendly app for passengers.

3.12.3. There are twelve Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) screens in the district, most installed by the Council, but managed by Reading Buses. They are at the following locations:

- Calcot: Beansheaf Stores, Charrington Road (x1), Swanholm Gardens (x1), Sainsbury's (x1)
- Newbury: Rail Station (x1), Park Way (x2), The Wharf Bus Station (x1)
- Thatcham: Broadway (x2)
- Theale: The Crown (x1)
- Tilehurst: Overdown Road / Tring Road (x1)
- West Berkshire Hospital (x1)

3.12.4. We are also looking to increase the provision of RTPI screens throughout the district after securing Local Authority Bus Grant funding.

3.13. Barriers to improvement

3.13.1. The pandemic continues to have an adverse impact on passenger numbers. It is estimated that patronage on the Newbury contracted network is now around 5% below the same period pre-covid, with revenue similar. Some of the factors preventing use include:

- Initial government messages to avoid public transport and continuing anxiety amongst some ENCTS pass holders (although this has significantly diminished in our 2023 survey)
- A wide acceptance amongst employers that employees can continue to work from home
- The rise in internet shopping
- Closure of shops and restaurants – in Newbury’s Parkway anchor stores Debenhams and John Lewis have both closed for good, although Next has now replaced John Lewis and a Primark store opened in April 2025
- Frequency of existing services
- No bus services in many rural villages
- Bus fares perceived to be high

4. Improvements Programme from 2021 to 2026

4.1. What we are hoping to achieve

- 4.1.1. Since 2021 we have attempted to make bus travel a more attractive option in West Berkshire, (particularly for those that do not currently use it), by introducing a number of different initiatives to promote local public bus services.
- 4.1.2. This section includes the delivery of improvements since 2021. Delivery priorities and scheme costs are shown in the associated funding documents submitted to the DfT. Where funding has been allocated by the DfT, it is explicitly referred to.
- 4.1.3. The original deadline for the spending phase 1 and 2 of BSIP funding was March 2025, however this has now been extended to March 2026. This section reflects this change.

4.2. Delivery of improvements since 2021

- 4.2.1. The following sections outline all improvements not just those implemented with BSIP funding.

4.2.2. General Improvements

- The West Berkshire [Enhanced Partnership \(EP\) Plan & Scheme](#) commenced in April 2022 and is a legal agreement between West Berkshire Council and local bus operators. The EP Forum meets at least three times each year and is also attended by neighbouring local authorities, community transport, and user-representative groups. Notes from these forums are published on the [Council's website](#).
- The Council was one of 31 (out of 76) BSIPs to be awarded BSIP Phase 1 funding. We were awarded £2.6m awarded in total with the first payment released in December 2022, an additional £480k BSIP Phase 2 funding was awarded in May 2023. The current iteration of BSIP funding lasts until March 2025 (subsequently extended to March 2026). Council funding for bus services has increased by almost 10% to maintain services impacted by the pandemic and rising costs in the bus sector and this has helped Passenger numbers increase to pre-covid levels.

4.2.3. Training/development opportunities

- Relevant Officers at the Council have undertaken training, joined the [Bus Centre of Excellence](#), become members of the [Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation](#), and have attended the Local Authorities DRT Forum, the national Bus Strategy Forum and neighbouring local authority Enhanced Partnership meetings all with a view to developing the workforce, improving knowledge and training in the sector and sharing in best practice.
- Officers have completed the CILT (UK) Level 3 Practitioner Certificate in Bus Service Commissioning and Operations in the summer of 2025.
- Local Bus Operators have apprenticeship/graduate programmes available and offer training programmes for existing employees.

4.2.4. **Bus Priority Infrastructure.** The Council received BSIP funding to look at bus priority infrastructure in various locations across the district. The progress of these projects is listed below.

- **Atherton Road, Hungerford.** There were problems with overgrown vegetation restricting road the width and holding up bus services terminating in Hungerford. This has now been cut-back and the property owner will continue to provide regular maintenance allowing buses to pass freely. Funding from BSIP which had been allocated was not required for this project.
- **Bus congestion hotspots.** We have embarked on a programme of installing new or replacement bus stop clearway signs and carriageway markings at bus stops across the district to prevent inappropriate parking holding up buses across West Berkshire. Four phases have been completed and phases 5 and 6 are near completion.
- **Three Firs roundabout, Burghfield Common.** Works have been completed at Three Firs roundabout in Burghfield Common to widen the roundabout and improve drainage to assist with bus movements.



Figure 15: Three Firs roundabout

- **Mortimer Railway Station.** The Station is a little way from the village, and only has a small car park, leading people to park on the rural approach roads. A peak-time shuttle from Mortimer, Beech Hill and other nearby settlements would improve this situation, subject to funding a suitability turning facility. A BSIP funded study into the feasibility of installing a bus turning mechanism in the vicinity of Mortimer Railway Station was completed in 2025. The recommendations are being considered.

4.2.5. **Passenger Waiting Environments**

- The Council has commenced a programme alongside town and parish councils of introducing new or improving existing bus shelters across the district which looks to address low satisfaction with passenger waiting environments which has been feedback through our annual surveys. Parish and Town Councils are responsible for installing and maintaining bus shelters across the district.

- The Council secured BSIP funding for this programme and has provided funding to Parish and Town Councils to install bus shelters across the district, installation of shelters began in the summer of 2025. The funding agreement also included monies for on-going maintenance for an agreed period. 19 bus shelters have so far been installed across the district.



Figure 16: New bus shelter at Nevil Court, Thatcham (Summer 2025)

- Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) screens have been upgraded in the following locations:
 - Thatcham (2 screens) and Theale (1 screen) in 2022.
 - West Berkshire Community Hospital.
 - Tring Road in Tilehurst
 - Swanholm Gardens
 - Fernhurst Road/Cherrington Road.
- A new Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) screen installed has also been installed at Newbury Rail Station.

4.2.6. Other Bus Infrastructure

- We have made improvements to Newbury Wharf bus station in 2023 by installing barriers, improved signage and line markings to help improve customer safety at the site.
- A new bus gate is in operation between Love Lane and the new Donnington Heights development in Newbury from 2025 and enforced by an ANPR camera following the outcome of a consultation in [February 2025](#).

4.2.7. Bus Service Support

- **New/enhancements to scheduled services.** Since 2021 a number of new scheduled bus services have been introduced across West Berkshire. Some of the services have been funded by the BSIP and some have been funded by local authorities.
 - In July 2023 the [Thames Travel X34 service](#) operating between Didcot and Harwell Campus was extended as an hourly Monday to Saturday service to Newbury Town Centre. In September 2024 the X34 began serving Donnington Heights, Love and B4494 Oxford Road in Newbury. The service is a joint venture between West Berkshire Council and Oxfordshire County Council and was funded by WB BSIP funding until March 2025, developer contributions are available for at least 5 years.
 - In September 2023 a late evening bus service operating on Friday and Saturday evenings between Newbury and Thatcham by Newbury & District was introduced. It was called the [1e](#) and was funded by the BSIP. In October 2025 this service was incorporated into the Jet Black 1 service and is still funded by bus grant funding.
 - In September 2023 a 2-hourly Sunday extension to Mortimer from Reading was introduced on the [Lime 2/2a](#) service operated by Reading Buses. The service was funded by the BSIP until March 2025.
 - In October 2023 the [110/120](#) routes were introduced by Swindon Bus Company operating between Hungerford and Marlborough replacing the 20,22 services. There are 4 journeys per day on Monday to Friday designed to complement the [Wiltshire Connect](#) on-demand bus service. The service is funded by Wiltshire County Council.
 - In January 2024 Community Connect A (CCA) operated by West Berkshire Council Transport Services began operating between Brightwalton and Newbury Monday to Friday, primarily to connect students with school and college. There are 2 journeys per day, in the morning and afternoon. It was initially funded by the BSIP and replaces the 5 service. It has been designed to complement the [West Berkshire Community Connect Northwest Downlands service](#).
 - In May 2024 the 32 (formerly called The Link) operated by [Stagecoach](#) between Newbury and Basingstoke was enhanced significantly. The service operates later in the evening and has additional peak time journeys Monday to Saturday, and an hourly service on Sunday. The service is funded by BSIP+ contributions from West Berkshire Council and Hampshire County Council until 2026.
 - In November 2024 Community Connect B (CCB) and Community Connect C (CCC) began operating between Thatcham Broadway and Aldermaston/Beenham/Calcot Sainsburys. The CCC service is a 'shopper service' operating two days a week connecting residents to Sainsburys in Calcot. The CCB service operates a peak morning/afternoon journey Monday to Friday and a Friday service from Beenham to Thatcham Broadway with an inbound and return journey. These services have been designed to complement the [Thatcham Connect](#) on-demand transport

service operated by West Berkshire Community Connect and replaces the 41/44 services.

- **Demand-responsive services.** Since 2021 there have been several new on-demand bus services introduced across the district which are designed to connect rural parts of the district with urban centre for shopping and provide onward travel options such as connecting with other bus services or travel modes (i.e. local railway stations).
 - [Wiltshire Connect](#) is an on-demand bus service running Monday to Saturday operating primarily in Wiltshire, however since October 2023 it has also served Hungerford. It is funded by Wiltshire County Council, Hungerford Town Council and with monies from Rural Mobility Fund.
 - [West Berkshire Community Connect](#) on-demand transport launched in 2024 and now operates in two areas of the district. The first service area began in January 2024 by connecting [Northwest Downlands](#) with Newbury, the service operates Monday to Friday and enhances the former 5a and 5c service. [Thatcham Connect](#) launched in November 2024 connecting some villages with Thatcham Broadway Monday to Friday, replacing the 41/44 services. The services are initially being funded by the BSIP.
- **Newbury supported services network.** Following a tender process an eight-year contract (a five year contract with the option of a 3-year extension) was awarded to [Newbury & District Ltd](#) for Newbury-based supported bus services. This and the contract commenced in September 2024.

4.2.8. Fares support

- **Free Bus Travel.** Since 2021 a number of 'free travel' bus days have taken place. These have been in the run-up to Christmas each year (2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024), during the Easter and Jubilee weekends in 2022, and on World Car Free Day in September 2022, 2023 and 2024. From September 2022, this has allowed for free return travel to places outside West Berkshire rather than just on journeys originating in the area. These events have proved popular and have led to patronage growth and will be offered periodically in the future.



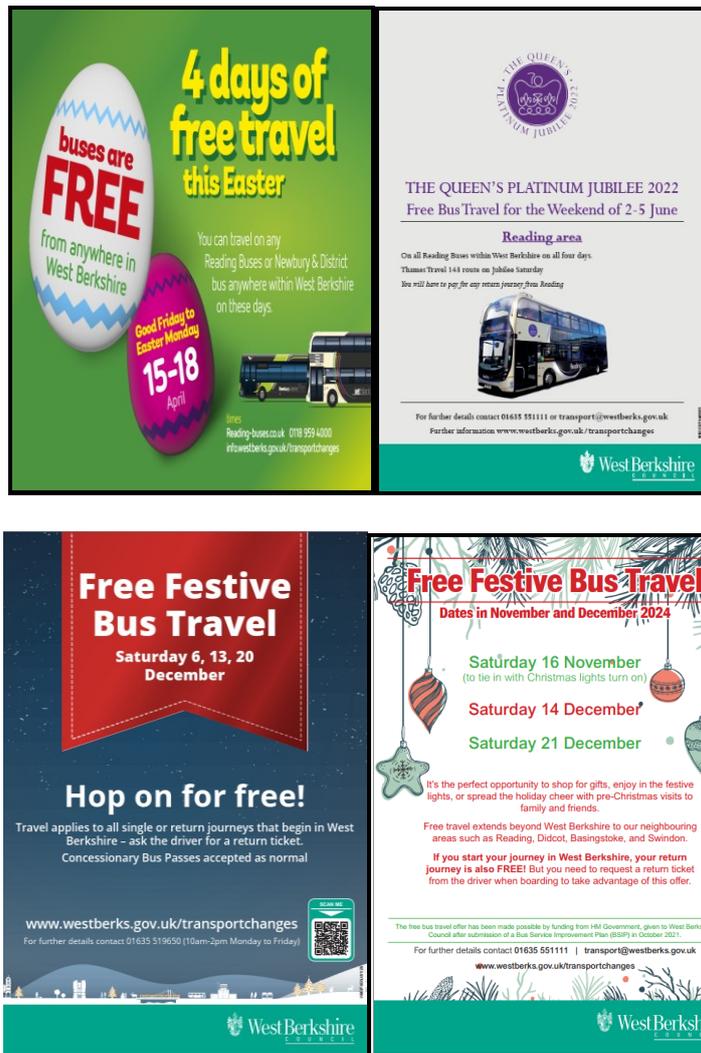


Figure 17: Posters for free bus travel days since 2021

- From January 2023, reduced price tickets (£2 cap per journey) have been available daily on most bus services as part of the national single fare cap scheme. This continued until 31 December 2024 when the fare cap was changed to £3 per single journey from 1 January 2025.
- The Enhanced Partnership has committed to allow users to pay for travel using cash if they choose to, whilst improving payment options with the wider introduction of on-bus card payments.
- Fares on the supported bus services have not changed since 2016, and the Connect range of period tickets such as the day, weekly and monthly tickets have remained unchanged. During the 2024 summer holiday period the Enhanced Partnership provided a reduced ticket offer for the Connect Day and Connect Group ticket to encourage bus travel over this period.



Figure 18: 2024 Summer fare discount poster

- Since 2023, all operators have given clear information about fares on their websites, including those for young people, the Council has also provided information on it's website. This was agreed via the Enhanced Partnership forum.
- Car parking charges in West Berkshire Council operated car parks did increase from April 2024, however this was the first increase since 2018.

4.2.8 Ticketing Reform. Since 2021 a variety of new tickets have been introduced on public buses across the district which are designed to make travel by bus more attractive.

- At the Forum meeting in October 2022, operators agreed to introduce “Early Bird” tickets from January 2023 on a trial basis. These tickets allow those with ENCTS passes to travel before 9.30am Mondays to Fridays for a discounted, but harmonised, fare. They proved so successful that they agreed to continue offering these tickets on a permanent commercial basis.
- The Connect multi-operator scheme now includes Thames Travel and, in the summer of 2022, the scheme introduced a multi-operator Group ticket (in both urban and rural versions) allowing one day's bus travel for up to four people. The rural ticket was launched with an introductory price to boost take-up.
- In March 2023 a multi-operator [All-Bus day ticket](#) was introduced in the Greater Reading area (which includes some areas of West Berkshire). Funding from Reading Borough Council's BSIP allocation were used for this.
- In July 2024 MyBus Oxfordshire multi-operator tickets were introduced, providing unlimited day or weekly travel on nearly all bus services in the Oxfordshire. Tickets can be used on the X34 service between Didcot and Newbury operated by Thames Travel and the 47 between Lambourn and Swindon operated by West Berkshire Council. Funding from Oxfordshire County Council's BSIP allocation were used for this.

4.2.9 Community Transport.

- The Council has continued supporting community transport by providing annual grant payments and regards it as a vital service for those unable to use conventional public buses.
- Community transport operator Downlands Volunteer Group took delivery of Berkshire's first electric community transport minibus in December 2023 with most funding provided by the Council. This vehicle also provides wheelchair access, the first time this has been available in this area. Its operation is being monitored closely by the other community transport providers.

4.2.10 Other measures

- The use of the Connect brand has been enhanced with Council minibuses clearly displaying Community Connect branding. The new on-demand bus service is also advertised as Community Connect.
- All our local public bus operators are providing data to [BODS \(Bus Open Data Service\)](#), which is used to populate journey planners including Traveline. The Council will ensure this information is provided for section 22 operations. In the future, this information will include not only timetables, but fare information, vehicle locations, and details of punctuality.
- The Council continues to look at planned road closures and works and tries as far as is reasonably possible to co-ordinated to minimise disruption to services such as closing roads during off-peak hours.
- Reviews of timetables for key services in the district have been undertaken, and improvements have been introduced to assist with reliability and punctuality where possible.
- All buses (except some minibuses operated under s22 permits) now have on-board next stop audio-visual announcements, wi-fi, USB charging facilities, CCTV and all vehicles provide level boarding.
- The Forum has developed a [West Berkshire Bus Passenger Charter](#) which is published on partner websites and in the Council's Travel Guide (3.12.1). It is short, simple, and easily understood. It includes Council and operator commitments, required passenger behaviour, and how to provide feedback or register a complaint.

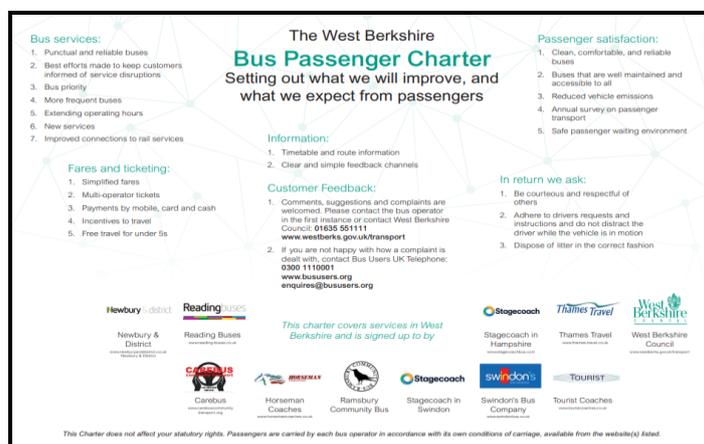


Figure 19: West Berkshire Bus Passenger Charter

- The Council submitted an unsuccessful bid to introduce zero-emission vehicles on public bus service in Newbury as part of the Zebra 2 funding. Trials of car sharing (using [Liftshare](#)) have been promoted in Chaddleworth, East Garston, Great Shefford and Hungerford to improve travel options for the local residents.
- Council-operated electric minibuses have been purchased, and it is the intention to test their effectiveness in a rural area. They are available for West Berkshire Community Connect services, however they will primarily operate on the Thatcham and Northwest Downlands services.
- Information on how to explore West Berkshire by bus (Bus Services for Days Out in West Berkshire) has been added to the [Council's website](#). It currently provides information for 4 bus routes across the district and provides information about visiting Newbury by bus. It is the intention to add more routes in the future. This follows ambition set out in previous published BSIP's to make available information for tourist and leisure purposes.

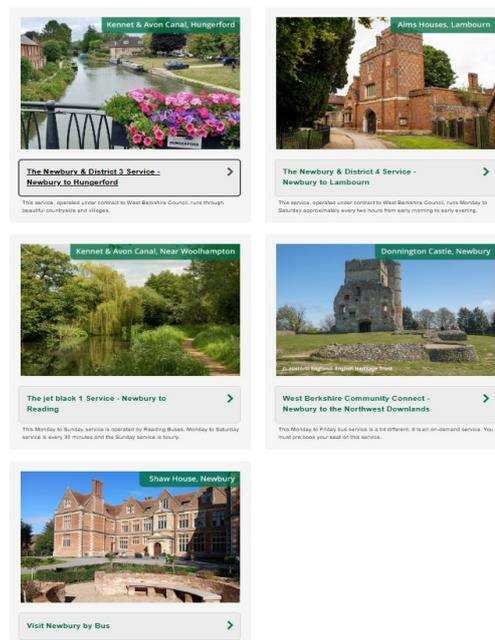


Figure 20: Bus Services for Days Out in West Berkshire available on the [WBC website](#)

- The Council also ran a competition for name the vehicle used on the West Berkshire Community Connect Northwest Downlands service. The winners were announced in [July 2024](#).

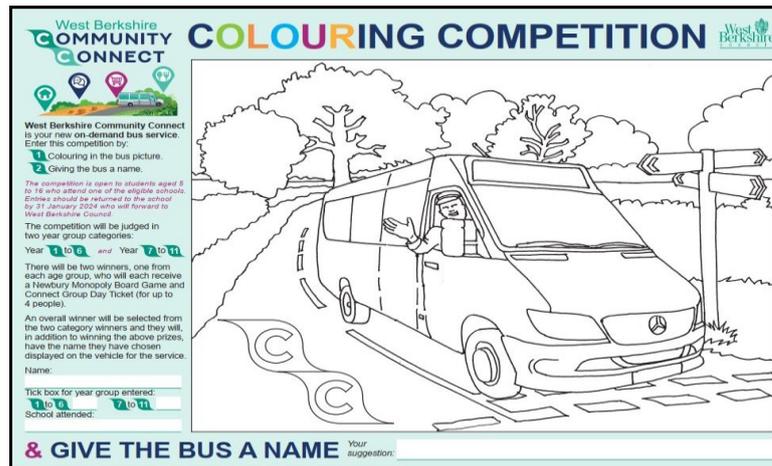


Figure 21: Name the bus competition for Downlands DRT service

4.3. Improvements Programme to 2026

4.3.1. This section outlines the improvements that the Enhanced Partnership will look to introduce up until March 2026. In December 2024 it was announced that the original deadline for BSIP funding of March 2025 had been extended until March 2026 and this section refers to this.

4.3.2. Bus Priority Infrastructure

- **Bus Signal Priority at key locations by March 2026**
 - To improve reliability for public bus services, the Council plans to install equipment to prioritise late-running buses at the busy Robin Hood Roundabout junction in Newbury Town Centre. It will improve reliability on the daily Jet Black 1 route running between Newbury and Reading, and the 1a, 1c, 1d and 6 services will also benefit.
 - The funding for this been made available from the BSIP. A study was completed looking into the feasibility of installing bus priority measures along the A4 Bath Road in Calcot from junction 12 of the M4 to the district boundary.
 - The Council plans to install equipment to prioritise late running buses through the council-controlled traffic signals, improving reliability on the Jet Black 1 which runs between Newbury and Reading. The 15 and 26 services will also benefit. The funding for this has been made available via the BSIP.
- **Congestion Hotspots.**
 - We will continue with a programme of introducing or updating signs and road markings at bus stops to improve reliability for bus services. Phase 7 of these works are currently being planned. We also continue to finalise plans for reducing congestion at some locations with more traffic engineering which would then take place post March-2026.

4.3.3. Other Bus Infrastructure

- **Passenger Waiting Environments**

- The Council will continue with its programme of providing grants to parish and town council's to introduce new or improve existing bus shelters across West Berkshire to continue to address low satisfaction with passenger waiting environments which has been shown on our annual surveys.
- Monies have been made available for the Council to look at installing Real Time Passenger Information Screens (RTPI) at additional key stops and to upgrade some existing bus stops where needed in 2026/27.
- **Bus Stops/Interchanges**
 - We have introduced a pair of bus stops in the Donnington Heights Development – at the junction of Love Lane / Bastion Street. The location for another pair of stops at Donnington Heights have been identified but the road & housing is not yet complete.

4.3.4. **Fares Support and Ticketing Reform**

- Free Bus Travel days will be offered on select Saturdays in December 2025 to assist with boosting local public bus and to encourage the public to access Christmas events by public transport. This initiative will be funded by Bus Grant monies.
- Local bus operators continue support the national single fare cap scheme which. On the 1 January 2025 the National Single Fare Cap was raised to £3.00 (from £2.00) for the period of 1 January to 31 December 2025 (later extended to March-2027).
- We will finalise the review of the bus fares on the Council-supported bus services to simplify the fare structure into simply zones rather than incremental fares, this new scheme will also apply to Connect multi-operator tickets, we will also encourage other operators to participate.
- Some bus operators have made available [tap on tap off readers](#) (TOTO) on their services (Reading Buses and Newbury & District have on all local bus services) and we will continue to work with those that have not readiness for multi-operator fare capping. This would include providing monies to operators to purchase and install the equipment which is being funded with BSIP monies until March 2026.
- We will continue to support the [PlusBus](#) scheme and support developments that allow the purchase of tickets on buses that can then be used on the rail network, rather than the necessity to purchase a through ticket in advance so that it has time to be delivered to the user, or the need to purchase a separate bus ticket for the outward journey.

4.3.5. **Marketing of local bus services**

- We will continue to improve the marketing of bus services. Individual bus service timetables will look to highlight more clearly the community transport alternatives for those that may not be able to use public buses.
- **Promoting Tourism by bus.**

- West Berkshire is notable for its large Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and many of its towns and villages are tourist attractions in their own right. Hungerford is known for its antiques; Lambourn as a centre for racehorse training and home to several famous jockeys; and Pangbourne as a picturesque village on the River Thames, and home to author Kenneth Grahame. There are a number of other attractions too, including:
 - Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel at Pangbourne College
 - Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails along the northern boundary of West Berkshire
 - Kennet and Avon Canal and River Kennet running the length of the district just south of the A4
 - Basildon House (National Trust) and Beale Park Wildlife Centre in Lower Basildon.
- In addition, there are numerous footpaths, Newbury Racecourse, and many fairs and festivals. We will continue to produce information to promote bus access where possible, and work with attractors to seek discounted travel for visitors, including places both outside West Berkshire but accessible by a bus originating in the district.

4.3.6. Other measures

- Oxfordshire County Council's success in its Zebra 1 bid means that newer less polluting vehicles are being cascaded onto Thames Travel services (X24/34) in West Berkshire.

5 Ambitions and Proposals to 2030 and Beyond

5.1 What we are hoping to achieve

- 5.1.1 The West Berkshire Enhanced Partnership has ongoing ambitions for improvements to public transport in the district, and these are detailed below.
- 5.1.2 This section includes our aspirations, although we recognise that some will need to be given more priority than others, and that will be highlighted in our funding bids. Most of these will require external funding to make them a reality, and to allow them to become embedded, however they have been included in the hope that this funding will be forthcoming. Where aspirations refer to bus operations, this excludes those run under section 22 permits unless otherwise stated. Delivery priorities and scheme costs are shown in the associated funding documents submitted to the DfT.
- 5.1.3 Cross-boundary services form a vital element of the overall offer for bus passengers in our area, particularly within Berkshire which consists of six unitary authorities. These services provide opportunities for our residents to access a wider range of employment, education and leisure facilities, alongside attracting commuters and visitors into the district from the wider county and beyond.
- 5.1.4 We will continue to work closely with our partner local authorities, both through the development of the proposals set out within this document and the subsequent delivery of Enhanced Partnership arrangements with local operators. This collaborative working will build on existing arrangements such as the Berkshire Local Transport Body and Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum, which have co-ordinated and overseen the delivery of significant bus enhancements in recent

years, including new mass rapid transit corridors and park & ride facilities, and the Thames Valley and North Hants study.

- 5.1.5 The on-going coordination of plans for enhanced services will focus on ensuring key destinations throughout the county are well served by high-quality bus services, both through the delivery of key new cross-boundary bus priority measures and associated service level enhancements. In addition, we are committed to achieving a more integrated sustainable transport network in Berkshire through enhanced connectivity with rail services and facilities for walking and cycling.
- 5.1.6 We are collectively focused on continuing to build back levels of bus patronage following the reduction during the pandemic, alongside attracting new passengers to subsequently further grow levels of bus usage. This is vital part of achieving our wider objectives relating to the economic recovery, decarbonisation and the delivery of housing through the creation of sustainable communities. It also forms part of the current discussions on the potential for a county devolution deal with the government.
- 5.1.7 As mentioned in 1.7 we have been allocated further BSIP funding for 2025-26 to continue with our programme of providing improvements to bus services in the district.

5.2 Service Level and Network Coverage

5.2.1 Service Frequencies

- Throughout section 5, it is highlighted that more frequent services are seen as the most necessary factor to encourage and improve bus travel. Figure 22 shows the current service frequencies. The Eastern Area already benefits from services operating to higher frequencies, with early morning, evening and Sunday services, so many of the proposed changes are based elsewhere in West Berkshire.
- Our plans in this area are to increase frequencies on the services in the table below, although it is recognised that pump-prime funding will be necessary to achieve most of these aspirations. We would also introduce journeys later than 7pm and introduce Sunday services outside of the Reading Buses commercial network.

Current frequency	Proposed frequency		Services
	2030	2040	
Every 12 mins	Every 10 minutes		26 (peak)
Every 15 mins	Every 10/12 mins	Every 10 mins	26 (off-peak)
Every 20 mins	Every 15 mins	Every 12 mins	16, 33
Every 30 mins	Every 20 mins	Every 15 mins	Jet Black 1, Lime 2/a
Every hour	Every 30 mins	Every 20 mins	1a, 1c, 2, 8, 9,103, 32
Every hour	Every hour	Every 30 mins	X34
Every 2 hours	Every hour	Every 30 mins	43 (Pangbourne to Reading)
Every 2 hours	Every hour		3, 4, 6
Every 2 hours	Every 2 hours		47
Every 2 hours	Demand-responsive		43 (Upper Basildon to Pangbourne)
Less frequent	Demand-responsive		6a,
Less frequent	Less frequent		X20, 46a, X46, 110, 120, 133, 145, 154
Demand-responsive	Demand-responsive		Community Connect, Wiltshire Connect

Figure 22: Proposed service frequencies

- Limited funding has currently been made available for looking at improvements.
- Specific changes we would look introduce include:
 - **Pangbourne-Reading:** An improved frequency between Reading and Pangbourne, but this would be dependent upon a bus turning circle being provided in Pangbourne. This could either be an enhancement of service 43, or an extension of service 16 from Purley.
 - **Newbury contracted network (2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9):** Because of limited resource availability, these services are inter-worked by five buses, restricting frequencies and making departure times less convenient for passengers on some services. We would also seek to run later journeys, at least on Fridays and Saturdays which would include an hourly evening service on services 2, 8, and 9, and a return evening journey on services 3, 4, and 6. We will undertake a review of services in South Newbury (including service 2) to explore whether efficiencies can be introduced.
 - **Reading services:** Restoration of frequencies where they have been reduced due to the impacts of the covid pandemic. All except service 33 (was every 15 minutes), and service 26 (was every 20 minutes on Sundays) have now been restored.
 - **103:** This is currently a Monday to Friday service, financially supported by Greenham Common Trust. A Saturday service would be useful and would also allow for a review of this route and others in south Newbury. There are several attractors at Greenham Park, including the Base café and Arts Centre, the Peace Garden (established by the Greenham Peace Women), and access to Greenham Common, now a designated public parkland.
 - **Sunday services:** We would like to introduce more Sunday services, at least within the Newbury / Thatcham area.

5.2.2 **New services.** Whilst improving frequencies and times / days of operation will be of benefit where bus services exist, it will do nothing for the areas where they do not. The rural nature of much of West Berkshire, and the relatively small rural settlements have led to many areas losing their bus links over time. In addition, there are definite benefits in linking key areas with fast, direct buses, especially along the north-south corridor where no direct rail links exist. Areas where we see the need for new services include:

- **Mortimer Station:** as previously stated in a BSIP funded study has been completed looking into the feasibility of installing a bus turning mechanism at the location to allow for bus services to serve the station and the recommendations are being considered. Any delivery and implementation stage would require further funding.
- **Thatcham Station:** This station is similarly remote from most Thatcham residents. A minibus service linking the station to north Thatcham is seen as a high priority.

- **Hambridge Road, Newbury:** This is a large industrial area between Newbury and Thatcham that currently has no bus service.
- **Coach Services:** Two departure bays in the Wharf Bus Station are dedicated for coach use, allowing integration with bus services. Whilst excursions and tours operate, we wish to see the return of scheduled long-distance coach services which ceased at the outset of the covid pandemic. We asked about this in our 2024 Bus Users Survey (see 6.8).

5.2.3 Demand Responsive Services.

- Following a study into demand responsive transport (DRT) within West Berkshire, we now have a better understanding of the resources required, including the technology available, and the level of service that we should be providing. We were unsuccessful in our bids to the Rural Mobility Fund; however we have used BSIP funding to introduce [West Berkshire Community Connect](#) on-demand transport which launched in January 2024 and now operates in two areas of the district.
- 25/26 Bus Grant funding has been allocated to look at the possible expansion of DRT services as funding would be required for any new areas. The following are areas for consideration:
 - **North East:** This is the scheme we would look to introduce first if funding were to be available, as it was originally meant to be the second scheme covered by BSIP funding. It will cover the area bounded by the B4009 to the west and A4 to the south. It will include the villages of Aldworth, Ashampstead, Bradfield, Bucklebury, Englefield, Frilsham, Hampstead Norreys, Lower Basildon, Streatley, Tidmarsh, Woolhampton and Yattendon. Many of these villages have no bus service.
 - **South East:** This includes the villages of Beech Hill, Padworth, Stratfield Mortimer and Sulhamstead. Current bus services in this area (where they exist) do not provide all direct links that residents would like to make.
 - **West:** Operating between Lambourn and Hungerford, this includes the villages of Eastbury, East Garston, Great Shefford, Hungerford Newtown, Lambourn Woodlands, Shefford Woodlands, Wickham, Weston and Woodlands St Mary, replacing a service that last operated in 2016. It may also be able to provide a more appropriate off-peak service between Hungerford, Inkpen, Kintbury and Newbury.

5.3 Bus Priority

5.3.1 The road network in West Berkshire does not lend itself easily to the installation of bus lanes, and therefore the focus to date has been on bus gates in different forms to give clear advantages to buses over car use and to looking at introducing Bus Signal Priority.

5.3.2 In Newbury, for example, there are limited north-south routes for local traffic. Northbrook Street through the shopping centre is pedestrianised for most of the day; Park Way has a bridge over the Kennet & Avon Canal which is restricted to local buses, taxis and bicycles; leaving only the A339 for general traffic. Any delays

along this route can quickly spread to nearby roads and block the A4 in both directions towards Thatcham and Speen.

5.3.3 Paragraph 3.5.3 shows the currently identified congestion hotspots throughout the district, and some of these have been on the list for a long time, with no obvious solution. With BSIP funding we introduced bus stop clearways at many of these locations, which may relieve congestion at some sites, and have widened a roundabout in Burghfield Common to facilitate bus movements. Other sites may require more controversial solutions including more complex highways works rather than specific bus priority which would require further funding to introduce.

5.3.4 Areas of bus priority that we wish to pursue are outlined below. Where active travel improvements can be made at the same time as improving bus travel, these will be implemented:

- **Pangbourne.** There has been a long-held ambition to increase bus services between Pangbourne and Reading, as for many the station is too far away for them to give up their car. Unfortunately, there is no obvious place to turn a bus within Pangbourne, as the buildings are close to the road; the residential roads have limited off-street parking; and the low railway bridge on Station Road prevents double deck vehicles accessing the station. BSIP funding was allocated for this project in 2022, however following a feasibility study and identification of possible sites, concerns over potential ongoing revenue costs delayed the introduction of the scheme, so this scheme has now been withdrawn from consideration.
- **A4 Bath Road.** The commercial Jet Black 1, 15 & 26 services can experience delays along the A4 from the Reading boundary to the M4 junction 12 roundabout. There is not considered to be the physical road space for bus lanes throughout, however Traffic Signal Priority will be installed and is funded by the BSIP. A feasibility study has been completed during the BSIP 1 funding cycle providing options for Bus Signal Priority which could potentially be taken forward. The Council will consider the options and look to put forward preferred options. However, any implementation and delivery will depend on future funding being made available.
- **Mortimer Railway Station.** The station is just over a mile from the nearest bus stop and a turning circle near to the station will allow the bus service to be extended. As previously discussed, a feasibility study was completed in 2025, any solutions that are recommended would require further funding to be realised.
- **Theale Bridge.** A replacement bridge between Theale and Calcot over the M4 would allow for active and sustainable travel and relieve buses from congestion at the M4 junction 12 roundabout. This would require significant planning, funding and input and would likely be a long-term project, likely post 2030.

5.4 Fares Support and Ticketing Reform

- 5.4.1 We will continue to offer free or reduce price bus days (likely at Christmas and on the annual World Car Free Day) when the opportunity allows to encourage ongoing patronage.
- 5.4.2 Operators have introduced fare capping on some bus services, which we would look to extended further. It is important that the software behind tap-on, tap-off is able to apportion revenue fairly between operators, which is being looked into by the DfT as it will impact cross-boundary services. Funding was allocated by the DfT to enable capital investment for the purchase of ticket machines to enable this function.
- 5.4.3 Once all eligible operators have Tap On/Tap Off (TOTO) readers, and the planned national platform is operational, we will then seek to introduce multi-operator fare capping on public bus services across the district.
- 5.4.4 Discussions with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) regarding options for job seekers tickets for those looking for work were held however this has not resulted in meaningful progress; however, we will look to continue these discussions.
- 5.4.5 We will look to standardise the reduced-price tickets between commercial and contracted operations, including the age limits such tickets relate to (i.e. young people). We support calls for regional and national uniformity of such tickets.
- 5.4.6 We also commit to allowing people to continue to pay for bus fares by cash, whilst supporting alternative payment methods. We recognise that for some people, removing this option will be a barrier to using public bus services.

5.5 Waiting and Interchange Facilities

5.5.1 Passenger Waiting Environments

- We will continue to look to implement improvements to passenger waiting facilities across the district, subject to available funding and parish and town council agreement.
- Ownership and maintenance of shelters reside with the respective Town or Parish Councils. It can be difficult to persuade some Parish & Town Councils to take on this responsibility however we will work with these to encourage investment. Some of the new bus shelters installed are green roofs (roof gardens) and we will continue to push for these to be installed at any subsequent sites.
- If there is to be an increase in bus frequencies coming into Newbury this will require replanning of services using The Wharf Bus Station in Newbury. We will also consider whether enhancements can be made to improve passenger facilities, and how to accommodate any additional stops required in the vicinity, particularly for non-terminating services, perhaps by realigning existing roads.
- Bicycle racks are available adjacent to the Wharf Bus Station for those wishing to travel further afield. We have no current plans to allow bicycles to be carried on buses, however we will keep this option under review.

5.5.2 Railway Stations

- We will continue to review bus routes serving railway stations within the district (and just beyond as appropriate) to ensure that these services meet passenger needs and requirements.
- We have had discussions with Great Western Railway (GWR) about better signposting and the possibility of adding some bus services to the rail network as “bus branch lines”, in line with their internal Integrated Transport Strategy document. We have been unsuccessful in bids for the heavily oversubscribed Great Western Rail Community Fund but we will look to apply again.
- Given the low frequency of bus services in much of West Berkshire, linking bus journeys to train timetables is difficult, especially taking account of occasional disruption on the rail network. The majority of bus services emanating from Newbury are focussed on school movements, which need to be catered for, as these students represent a very high proportion of all passenger journeys in the area.

5.6 Bus Information and Network Identity

5.6.1 Bus services within West Berkshire tend to operate in clusters. Rather than seek to introduce a “West Berkshire” branded network, we will concentrate on giving local identity through the Council’s publicity, ticketing, and a district wide passenger charter. The Council has been using Connect branding for a number of years. It is included on all our publicity including the Travel Guide and roadside timetable displays; it is the name of our multi-operator tickets; and it is displayed prominently on the Council’s section 22-operated vehicles. We will consider whether it is time to refresh the Connect branding.

5.6.2 Network identities are different in each part of the district:

- **West:** These services are tendered by Wiltshire and Swindon Councils (other than service 47, operated under the Connect name) and are in the operator’s livery. As these services have very little mileage in West Berkshire, we would not seek to impose any conditions on their operations.
- **Central / Newbury:** Other than the Stagecoach service from the south and one Thames Travel service from the north, buses here have had a variety of liveries over the years dependent upon the operator at the time. Within the last few years, this position has stabilised with the purchase of Newbury & District by Reading Buses, and all vehicles are now in the distinctive, and smart, Newbury & District livery, which also helps vehicles to appear new – a definite bonus for bus travel.
- **Eastern Area / Reading:** For many years now, Reading Buses have been using a standard livery layout, but in different colours for different services. This approach obviously works as passenger numbers have been growing in recent years against the national trend.

- 5.6.3 All bus stops where passengers are likely to board will have information on bus departure times. We will look at whether QR codes can be added to displays to allow users to link directly to real-time information of their bus.
- 5.6.4 We will look work with operators to look at installing more RTPI (Real Time Passenger Information) screens across the district. 25/26 Bus Grant funding has been allocated for this.
- 5.6.5 We will review through the annual connectivity assessment process, whether there is any data that the Council and operators don't readily collect and identify options for facilitating this to enable future assessments and performance monitoring to be easier.
- 5.6.6 We will continue marketing bus services including seeking discounted travel for visitors to tourist attractions. We aim to be more ambitious with the messages and channels used. 25/26 Bus Grant funding has been allocated for this.
- 5.6.7 We will look to add Fares to BODS information.

5.7 **Bus Passenger Experience**

- 5.7.1 We will expect that all buses have working CCTV to record images in the event of an incident on board. CCTV also covers the Wharf Bus Station in Newbury.
- 5.7.2 We have received requests for improved lighting at some bus stops where early morning and evening services stop, and we will look at what can be done at these locations. We will investigate solar panels / battery storage that can be installed in more remote areas as a cost-effective solution.
- 5.7.3 Vehicles will all provide level boarding. We have asked operators to provide information on where it can be difficult for buses to access stops, so that we can implement measures to assist (e.g. bus stop clearways, parking restrictions). Busier stops have Kassel Kerbs and more rural stops will have hard standing to provide a safe place to board or alight from the bus. At the September 2023 EP forum operators requested that no we no longer use raised (e.g. Kassel) kerbs as vehicles are now sufficiently low as not to need them, and they can cause more damage to buses.
- 5.7.4 We will expect that all buses have working next stop audio-visual announcements, Wi-Fi and USB charging facilities, with the latter facilities expected as standard by younger people. Reading Buses' successful Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) 'Completing the Connection' bid has helped, and we would wish to support similar bids for other operators.
- 5.7.5 We will also investigate an app for all bus travel, possibly as part of a wider multi-modal app to provide more choice for travellers.
- 5.7.6 A review of the West Berkshire Passenger Charter will be conducted in conjunction with the Enhanced Partnership to ensure that it is still relevant.

5.8 **Bus Fleet**

- 5.8.1 The major bus groups Stagecoach and Go Ahead have their own plans to decarbonise their buses, with both aiming to have zero emission UK bus fleets by

2035. In addition, the Council's Environment Strategy seeks to make the district carbon neutral by 2030.

- 5.8.2 We will support bus companies to replace their older and most polluting vehicles with zero emissions ones and support any further bids to the DfT's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA), or alternative, schemes. We will also support non-ZE upgrades and have set targets for this.
- 5.8.3 We are particularly keen to work with our neighbouring Berkshire authorities in relation to the introduction of ZE buses and associated infrastructure, which may take the form of a County Deal.
- 5.8.4 We are also keen to explore whether the Council can fund or facilitate carbon-neutral refuelling stations, whether that is electricity, hydrogen, or other alternatives, although this is likely to be a longer-term initiative.
- 5.8.5 We have no current plans to allow bicycles to be carried on buses, however we will keep this option under review.

5.9 Accessibility and Inclusion

- 5.9.1 **Community Transport** - We have highlighted that community transport provides an important link in the transport provision in West Berkshire and we will continue to support and promote this for those unable to use conventional buses. We have facilitated additional resources in the Newbury / Hospital / Thatcham area working with Volunteer Centre West Berkshire, as well as Berkshire's first electric community transport minibus in the Downlands.
- 5.9.2 **Shared care use** - We will work with the Council's Transport Policy team to seek expansion of the current car club to provide additional options, especially where DRT is not currently planned. The car club currently provides 24-hour access to hire cars in Newbury. Trials are also partnered with Liftshare to promote car sharing in Chaddleworth, East Garston, Great Shefford and Hungerford. It is hoped that the scheme can be expanded in the future to more remote areas of the district.
- 5.9.3 **Independent Travel Training** - We will work with Homes to School Transport (HTST) colleagues to deliver an Independent Travel Training Programme designed to help those with special educational needs use public transport. 25/26 Bus Grant funding has been allocated for this.

5.10 Longer-term transformation of the Network

- 5.10.1 It is recognised that not everything within this section will be delivered by 2030, especially without additional external funding, so anything outstanding will form the basis of our future plans post 2030.
- 5.10.2 We recognise that any schemes for A4 Bath Road in Calcot and a new bridge at Theale will enhance the viability for any provision for a Park and Ride for services into Reading Town Centre.

6 Public Engagement

6.1 Annual Bus Surveys

- 6.1.1 In August 2021, the Council conducted its first annual survey to identify current satisfaction with a range of issues, as well as gain insight into what people would like in order to use bus services or use them more often. The 2022 survey looked particularly at bus use and satisfaction, the cost of travel, and how our BSIP funding is proposed to be spent, which has been built on in our 2023 and [2024](#) surveys.
- 6.1.2 The [2025](#) survey concentrated on satisfaction with local bus services, analysis of the results can be found in the [October 2025](#) targets report.
- 6.1.3 We are confident that our consultations are still providing us with a good base for judging public perception of local bus services each year by the number of validated responses received. In 2015 (414) and 2016 (399) we consulted on cuts to bus funding. In 2024 we received 931 responses, compared to 712 (2021), 1,305 (2022) and 1,020 (2023). For the 2025 survey on satisfaction, we had 700 validated responses.
- 6.1.4 We may look to review how often these surveys are undertaken, however it is the intention to continue to conduct regular surveys as it helps to gain an insight to peoples views of bus travel and the improvements that have been made to the network in the recent past.

6.2 Frequency of travel

- 6.2.1 People appear to be using the buses a little less in 2025. Whereas around a third of respondents used the bus at least weekly in 2021 and 2022, with the number increasing to almost 40% in 2023, to just over 40% in 2024, it has decreased slightly to 38% in 2025. This maybe because more non-users have completed the survey in 2025 or it could be due to the increase in the National Single Fare Cap to £3.00.

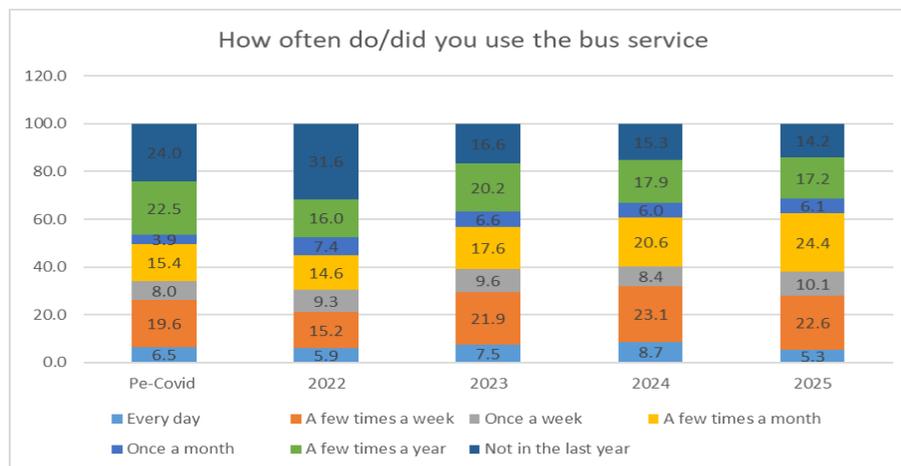


Figure 23: How often do/did you the bus service

Note: for 2025 survey Not in the last year also includes those that answered never.

- 6.2.2 The DfT have been concerned that ENCTS passholders have not returned to the bus network following covid. We have identified from surveys prior to 2024 that in West Berkshire, passholders use the bus daily (2%), at least weekly (48%), and at least monthly (77%).
- 6.2.3 From the 2021 survey, we know that around two thirds of users catch the bus in the morning, dropping to 40% in the afternoons. A further 36% travel at differing times.

The bus is most used for: shopping (71%), appointments (54%), seeing friends (49%) and days out (39%). The relatively low figures for work (21%) and education (9%) were likely caused by changing working habits during the pandemic, and the very low response rate amongst under 18s in the 2021 survey (1.5%).

6.2.4 There is consistency in reasons for not travelling over the years, although it is noticeable that the convenience of the car is now less of a factor, as is the lack of knowledge of buses.

Reason for not travelling	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Buses are not at suitable times	68%	51%	68%	48%	41%
Car is more convenient	60%	52%	44%	45%	42%
The bus doesn't go where I need to get to	46%	32%	35%	37%	33%
I prefer to walk / cycle (*or use the train)	11%	14%	18%	16%	10%
Bus stops are not in convenient locations	13%	13%	12%	12%	12%
The bus is too expensive	18%	10%	11%	5%	7%
* There is no bus service	*	7%	9%	*	*
I don't know enough about buses to be confident to use them	15%	14%	7%	7%	4%
I have difficulty getting to the stop / using the bus	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%
* Don't need to travel	*	n/a	3%	*	*
* The bus journey is too long	25%	4%	2%	*	*
I don't feel safe on the bus or waiting for the bus	*	*	*	*	1%
I don't need to travel any more regularly	*	*	*	*	17%
Other reasons	*	3%	3%	3%	*

Table 9: Reasons people do not use buses

Key: * Not asked as a specific option. Different options asked in 2021. Respondents could tick more than one box.

6.2.5 For those that indicated that they didn't use the bus, or didn't use it at least weekly, we asked what would encourage more use. Unsurprisingly the responses correlate against why people do not use the bus.

Would encourage (more) bus use	2023	2024
More frequent services	28%	27%
More routes or destinations	24%	20%
Later / evening services	10%	12%
Cheaper fares (or don't increase the fare cap)	9%	7%
More direct / quicker journeys	5%	8%
Better links to rail	4%	4%
More weekend buses (Sundays)	3%	5%
Buses at commuting times	2%	1%
More convenient bus stop locations	2%	2%
Better information	2%	3%
More reliable	2%	2%
Other reasons	10%	7%

Table 10: What could encourage bus use?

6.3 Free bus travel

- 6.3.1 As discussed in section 4.2.8 the Partnership has run a number of free bus events since 2021. At the time of the 2022 survey, users could have been aware of events through to June 2022. With each event, both knowledge of the free travel, and those taking part grew from the previous time. The 2023 survey showed that 30% had used the free bus days, with the increase possibly attributed to the six Saturdays of free buses at the end of 2022. In 2024 the survey showed that 24% had used free bus days, this is less than 2023 however we did offer less free days of travel.
- 6.3.2 Of those that used the free travel at least once in last year's survey, 61% confirmed that it has made it more likely that they will pay to use the bus in the future – a great result which is borne out by patronage data. Of the 39% who wouldn't, almost a quarter said this was because they already use the bus regularly. A slightly different question was asked in 2023 and 2024, to which 67% in 2024 (40% 2023) confirmed that they have used buses more because of the free bus days offer.

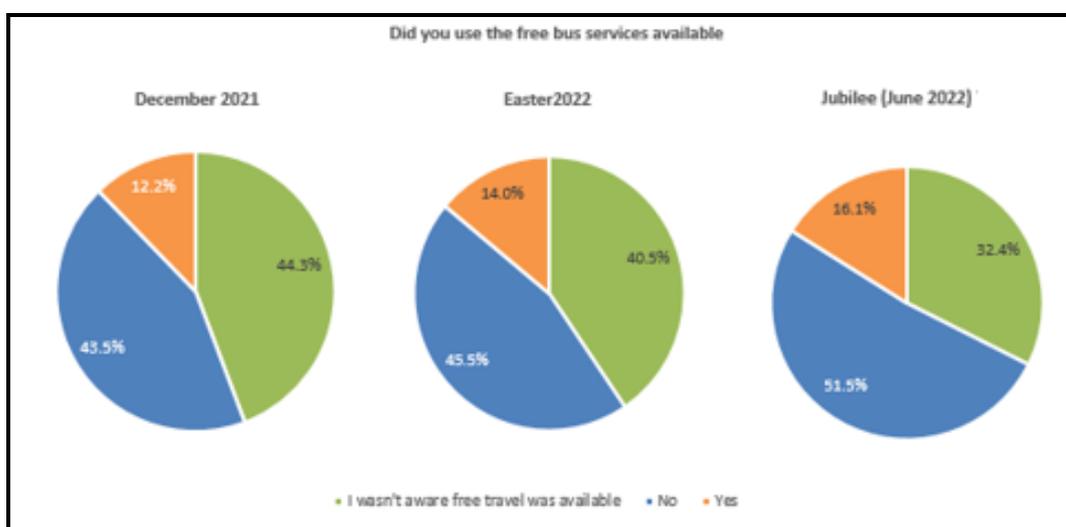


Figure 24: Use of free travel promotions

- 6.3.3 In the 2024 survey respondents were asked that if free travel was offered for World Car Free Day and Christmas 2024 would this be taken advantage of. 69% of respondents said they would take this offer up. Early results from 2024 Free Travel Day offer shows that there has been an increase in take up from 2023 to 2024, which we hope will be reflected future surveys undertaken.

6.4 Fares and ticketing

- 6.4.1 In the 2021 survey, 62% of respondents were in favour of a day ticket valid on all buses. For 2022, we asked which of eleven specific proposals for reducing fares respondents would prefer, as well as letting them come up with their own suggestions. For the proposals, people could rank them from best to worst. A score of 10 would be favoured by everyone. Only those that pay for travel provided answers. Whilst the two most popular options were for reductions to current fares, it is interesting to see that the ability to make card payments was very popular.

What bus fare or ticketing scheme would make you more likely to use the bus service in future	Score (out of 10)
Reduced daily ticket price up to £1 off current fares	8.9
Reduced daily ticket price up to 25% of current fares	8.6
Ability to pay on all buses using a credit or debit card	8.3

What bus fare or ticketing scheme would make you more likely to use the bus service in future	Score (out of 10)
Newbury / Thatcham day ticket valid on all buses	7.7
Short-hop one-way fare of £1 (e.g. up to two stops)	7.1
Ability to pay on all buses using cash	6.3
Family tickets for bus travel	6.0
Automatic daily price cap for bus travel even if you use several buses	5.7
Consistent age limit for young people's reduced fares across all services	5.6
Zonal rather than graduated fares (e.g. all travel within Newbury same cost)	5.1
Job-seekers reduced fare pass	4.1

Table 11: Fares and ticketing proposals

6.4.2 168 respondents gave further thoughts on the subject, with the most popular requests being:

- For carnets of tickets, either physical or on smartcards or apps.
- Reduced price travel for ENCTS pass holders before 9.30am.
- Cheaper fares.
- App-based, pre-paid smartcards or online ticket purchase.

6.4.3 The Partnership is committed to many of these suggestions. Carnets are already available in the rural areas, as are app-based tickets and pay by card or phone for most journeys. Discussions have commenced with the partnership on consistent age limits for young people.

6.4.4 For 2023 we asked about four specific fare options that are now available: a reduced price ticket for ENCTS pass-holders to travel before 9.30am on weekdays ("Early bird", 4.2.8); group tickets available across West Berkshire (Reading or Connect); and the national £2 fare cap. Whilst usage is still quite low for early bird and group tickets, 60-70% of those that have used them believe that they will encourage use, as will 20-30% of all respondents. In 2024 we also asked about the Multi-Operator All Day Reading Bus Ticket and 12% said they had taken advantage of this ticket and Tap On Tap Off Scheme where 22% said they have advantage of this ticket.

6.4.5 The national £2 fare cap has proved more popular (37% use rising to 53% in 2024, only 32% 21% in 2024) unaware), with over 50% (70% in 2024) of respondents suggesting that it will encourage bus use. Interestingly, most of its users don't travel as frequently as those using the other fares initiatives, perhaps because more frequent users use period passes instead which can offer better value for money.

6.4.6 The table below outlines the results for awareness of the ticketing improvements from the 2023 and 2024 surveys. The results show that awareness of tickets are growing as is usage, however there is still some work to be done to increase this further.

	ENCTS holders	All respondents		Travel at least	
	Have used	Encourages use	Once / week	Once / month	
Early Bird					
Have used ticket	12%	7%	65%	77% (74%)	92% (95%)

		(10%)			
Aware but not used	28%	24% (26%)	27%	49%	79%
Not aware	60%	69% (63%)	24%	31%	58%
Tap On Tap Off					
Have used ticket		21%		56%	85%
Aware but not used		31%		46%	78%
Not aware		48%		29%	52%
Multi-Operator 'All Day Reading Bus Ticket					
Have used ticket		12%		69%	88%
Aware but not used		30%		48%	80%
Not aware		58%		30%	56%
Reading All-Bus Group Ticket					
Have used ticket		9% (9%)	68%	63% (66%)	89% (90%)
Aware but not used		26% (28%)	22%	56%	83%
Not aware		65% (63%)	17%	29%	57%
Connect Group Day Ticket					
Have used ticket		4% (7%)	58%	61% (69%)	90% (95%)
Aware but not used		27% (29%)	23%	56%	83%
Not aware		69% (63%)	17%	29%	57%
National £2 single fare cap					
Have used ticket		37% (53%)	86%	51% (48%)	82% (78%)
Aware but not used		31% (26%)	31%	40%	65%
Not aware		32% (21%)	41%	23%	43%

Table 12: Results from 2023 & 2024 survey

(%) – 2024 results

6.5 DfT-funded schemes

- 6.5.1 Since being awarded BSIP funding, we have taken the opportunity to seek views on proposed bus service improvements through our annual surveys. Of those that live within the catchment of each scheme, over half of respondents claimed that they would make more use of the bus if the schemes were implemented when asked in 2022.

Proposed scheme	Use bus more
North West Downlands DRT	60%
Newbury to Harwell new service	63%
North East Downlands DRT	57%
Pangbourne to Reading improved frequency	69%

Table 13: BSIP Funded proposals

- 6.5.2 **North West Downlands DRT.** 11% of survey respondents live in this area. 17% of these use the current services, and 42% expect to use the DRT. Only 65% of those that use the current services expect to use DRT, therefore the marketing will need to be clear that the DRT is an enhancement of the current services. Use will predominantly for leisure (68%), shopping (54%), and medical appointments (30%). It will be used less for work (16%) or education (9%). When asked why those that live in the area would not use the service, it again highlighted that we need to be clear with our marketing to attract users.
- 6.5.3 **Newbury to Harwell.** This service started in July 2023. Whilst there have been some issues with reliability due to roadworks in Oxfordshire and incidents on the A34, it is carrying steady numbers.
- 6.5.4 The table below shows how often, and why, the service will be used. Comparing expected use from the 2022 survey, demand is reduced and more will need to be done to advertise the benefits of the service. This maybe because of the need to change buses to reach Oxford, although almost half appear willing to do that. 29% of respondents believe that they will use the service at least once a year. In 2024 we asked whether you have used or would considering using the service 44% of respondents said they would consider using the service.
- 6.5.5 Unsurprisingly, those planning on using the service for education are expecting to use it daily (25%) or weekly (75%), whilst around 60% of those using it for work will do so at least weekly. For most potential users however, they will use it less frequently.

Reason for travel	All respondents	Daily	At least weekly	At least monthly
2022 response		5%	18%	64%
All respondents		1%	4%	12%
Work at Harwell	3%	0%	57%	57%
Work elsewhere	7%	10%	60%	70%
Education	1%	25%	75%	75%
Onward travel	47%	2%	10%	38%
Shopping	49%	2%	11%	44%
Leisure	62%	1%	8%	41%
Other	19%	2%	16%	46%
> Connect to rail	> 37%			
> Visit family / friends	> 23%			
> Medical appointments	> 20%			

Figure 25 How often will people use this service?

- 6.5.6 **North East Downlands DRT.** 17% of the survey respondents live here, an area mostly without bus services. 12% use the current 143 service, and 16% will use the DRT scheme. Similar to the North West Downlands, only 65% of current bus users expect to use the DRT.
- 6.5.7 **Pangbourne to Reading.** 8% of respondents live in Pangbourne, of which 68% used the then 143 (now the 43) service, and 84% use the train. 66% use both the bus and train. 85% of those in Pangbourne will use a more frequent bus service, including 72% of current train users.

6.5.8 Two additional schemes were added this year, both commencing in September 2023.

- **Newbury to Thatcham Friday & Saturday evening service.** The daytime service is used by 29% of respondents, of which 62% will use this enhancement.
- **Mortimer Sunday service.** The daytime service is used by 7% of respondents, of which 76% will use the enhancement.

6.5.9 Due to the number of new routes and improvements to services that have been introduced since 2021 we asked a question about this in the 2024 survey. When asking about whether respondents would use services that have been improved for the Lime 2/2a 30% indicated they would and for the 32 (formerly The LINK) 76% respondents indicated they would.

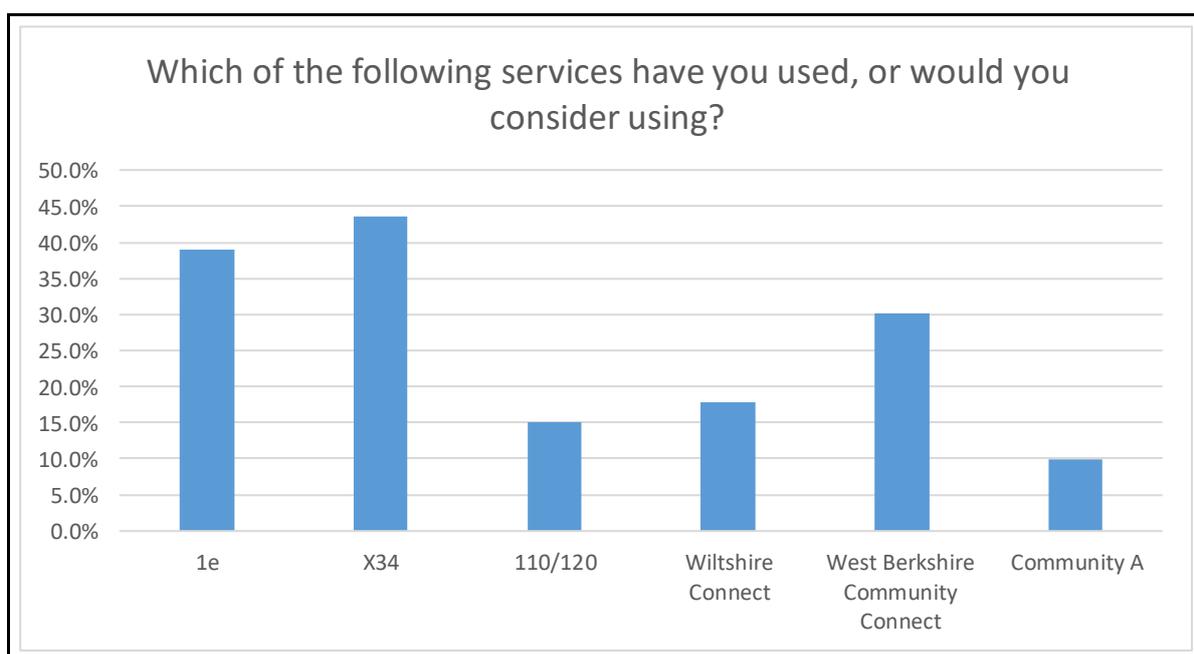


Figure 26: Services users have used or would consider using 2024 survey

6.6 Satisfaction

6.6.1 In 2021 we asked bus users about satisfaction with a range of factors. The net satisfaction ranged from 72% positive for drivers' customer care skills, to 18% negative for current bus timetables, although this was the only factor that had a negative net satisfaction.

6.6.2 From this, it was clear that the current times of buses, including how often they run, is the biggest issue. This is not unexpected due to the rural nature of the district and its low population densities, especially outside of the towns. It is unfortunate that we have not been allocated any funding to address this.

Attribute of Current Bus Services	Net Satisfaction
Drivers' customer care skills	72.2
Cleanliness of the buses	65.9
Comfort on the buses	60.1
Time keeping / reliability of the buses	58.3
Time on bus to complete journey	53.0
In journey information (e.g. next stop announcements)	44.2

Attribute of Current Bus Services	Net Satisfaction
Choice of ways to buy ticket	43.7
Facilities at your usual bus stops	34.1
Provision of bus information (printed / online / at stop / apps)	32.9
Choice of ticket types available	32.8
Environmental friendliness of the buses (fuel type)	31.3
Cost of bus fare	24.7
Current bus routes	21.8
Response to road closures / works	20.6
Current bus timetables (times / days of operation / frequency)	-18.0

Table 14: Net Satisfaction of Bus Users 2021

Note: Net satisfaction is the difference between those that were satisfied or very satisfied, and those that were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

6.6.3 In 2022 we focussed the satisfaction questions on the key elements of bus travel: value for money; punctuality; length of time on the bus; information about bus services; and the passenger waiting environment. For 2023 we also added frequency of service as that is a key reason for people not using buses and this was the same for 2024. Whilst people are more satisfied with value since the introduction of the national fare cap and the West Berkshire 'Free Bus' days, all other measures have shown a decline in satisfaction.

6.6.4 Whilst it is disappointing that overall satisfaction has dropped since 2023, it is still higher than 2021 for value, time on bus and information. It is worrying that satisfaction with the waiting environment continues to drop, and this needs to be a focus for the future.

2024 % (Change from 2023)	All Respondents	Bus Users	Bus Users Net Satisfaction
Bus Services Overall	43 (-1)	50 (-10)	27(-14)
Value for Money	61 (6)	72 (4)	62 (5)
Punctuality	57 (2)	68 (2)	51 (0)
Frequency of service	32 (5)	38 (1)	n/a
Length of time on the bus	55 (2)	65 (-2)	48 (-9)
Information about bus services	47 (1)	55 (-1)	32 (-6)
Passenger waiting environment	34 (-1)	41 (-3)	12 (-8)

Table 15: 2024 Satisfaction Ratings

Note: Net satisfaction is the difference between those that were satisfied or very satisfied, and those that were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

6.6.5 Following a suggestion made at a Forum in 2023 we also asked about satisfaction with the last bus journey made, as this would give a more accurate comparison with the Transport Focus surveys undertaken in other parts of the country. Whilst Table 14 gives an indication of where we need to get better to attract car users, Table 15 gives a better indication of the things that are important to those that do use the bus.

2024 Last bus journey (2023 journey)	All Respondents who used bus in last year	Bus Users i.e. within last month	Bus Users Net Satisfaction

2024 Last bus journey (2023 journey)	All Respondents who used bus in last year	Bus Users i.e. within last month	Bus Users Net Satisfaction
Bus Services Overall	70.1% (0)	75.1% (0)	57.7% (65.8%)
Value for Money	74.5% (7)	77.63% (7)	67.36 % (63.7%)
Punctuality	74.1% (-2)	73.85% (-1)	62.4% (61.7%)
Frequency of service	42.8% (-2)	44.7 (-3)	3.5% (11.8%)
Length of time on the bus	65.7% (0)	69.4 (-2)	55.45 (62.9%)
Information about bus services	54% (-1)	56.4 (-2)	34.9% (41.5%)
Passenger waiting environment	43.7% (-1)	45.7 (-3)	18.8% (26.2%)

Table 16 2024 satisfaction ratings with last bus journey

6.6.6 Satisfaction with the last journey based on frequency of travel shows that satisfaction tends to drop for those travelling less often. It is also lower for daily users (except for information and waiting environment) maybe reflecting their need to travel by bus in some cases rather than by choice.

2024 % (2023 % change)	Daily	Few / week	Weekly	Few / month	Monthly	Few / year
Bus Services Overall	61 (-8)	75 (-2)	78 (-3)	73 (-3)	69 (-3)	61 (-6)
Value for Money	68 (-2)	75 (-1)	83 (14)	82 (9)	80 (17)	63 (-2)
Punctuality	56 (2)	70 (-7)	87 (6)	77 (-1)	82 (3)	75 (4)
Frequency of service	39(-5)	49 (0)	50 (2)	42 (-8)	42 (0)	35 (9)
Time on the bus	56(-17)	72 (-4)	75 (2)	71 (1)	67 (6)	51 (-2)
Information	51(-15)	56 (-2)	59 (6)	57 (-1)	60 (-4)	45 (3)
Waiting environment	39(-13)	47 (-1)	46 (-4)	46 (1)	47 (-8)	36 (-1)

Table 17: 2024 Satisfaction by frequency of travel

6.6.7 Based on the satisfaction with the last journey, in 2023 the biggest differences are by age. 18 to 24s (62%) and over 75s (63%) are significantly less happy than those of other age groups (69 to 83%).

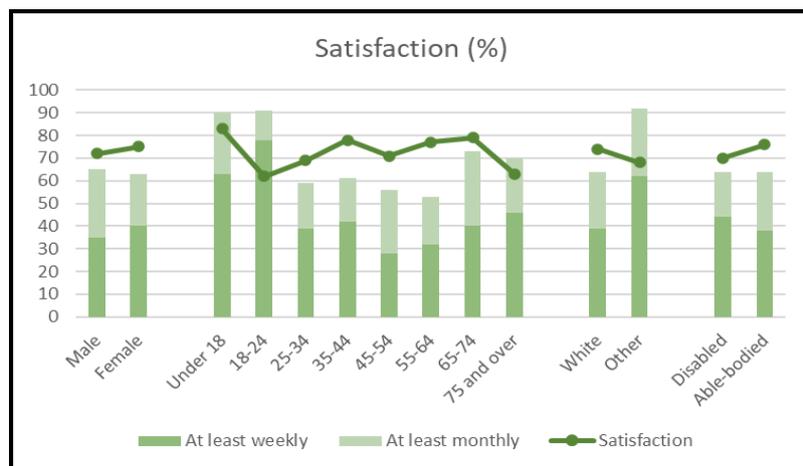


Figure 27: Satisfaction and travel frequency by category in 2023

6.6.8 In 2025 our annual survey focused mainly on satisfaction, analysis of these results can be found in [October 2025](#) targets report. However, it is pleasing to report that overall satisfaction seems to have increased since 2024.

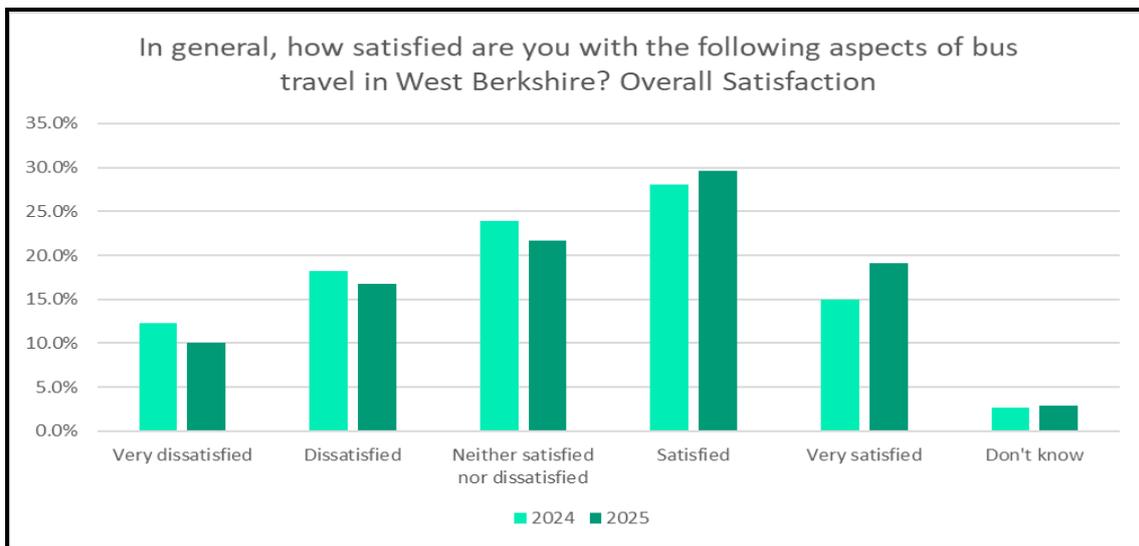


Figure 28: Satisfaction with local bus services in 2025

6.7 Passenger waiting environments

6.7.1 In the 2024 survey we also asked respondents if there was one change to that they could make to passenger waiting environments what would it be. 30% respondents asked for more Real-Time Passenger Information Screens, 19% asked for bus shelters to be installed, 11% asked for more detailed timetable information.

6.7.2 This was asked because of the continuing drop-in satisfaction rates for Passenger Waiting Facilities. We have received BSIP funding to undertake a programme of Passenger Waiting Environment improvements, we have started a programme of providing grants to local town/parish councils to install/upgrade bus shelters across the district and will continue to monitor satisfaction ratings.

6.8 Coach services in West Berkshire

6.8.1 In 2024 we asked questions about long distance coach services serving West Berkshire following the withdrawal of the National Express services in Newbury to find out whether there was something that respondents would welcome. 77% of respondents indicated that would consider using Coach services if they returned to West Berkshire. We also asked respondents where they would like to do if long distance coach services were to resume.

Place	% response rate
London	76%
Birmingham	24%
South Coast	63%
West Country	48%
Other	26%

Table 18: Destinations for scheduled coach services serving West Berkshire

6.8.2 This response about coach services provides an evidence base for discussions with coach operators about resumption of scheduled coach services serving the district.

6.9 Suggested improvements

6.9.1 In the 2021 survey we asked respondents to tell us of their suggestions for how local bus services could be improved. We have refined this to ask for only one change. It is clear from responses throughout the surveys that even where satisfaction is high for current service provision, there is a clear wish for improved frequencies and services connecting to more places, both within and outside of West Berkshire.

Suggested change	Improve one thing
More frequent services	30%
Additional bus links	24%
Evening buses	11%
Weekend buses	6%
Better connections (including to rail, schools)	6%
Fares and ticketing improvements	6%
Better reliability / faster journeys	5%
Better buses	4%
Improved information and promotion	3%
Improved passenger waiting environment	2%
No changes	2%
Other service improvements	1%
Other	1%

Table 19: Suggested improvements

6.9.2 We then gave respondents a chance to share any thoughts they had regarding bus travel. As this was a free-text box, some chose to use it to re-emphasise early comments, whilst others wanted to say how good or bad they felt the current position was.

6.9.3 One major change from last year is that there are more calls for new bus links rather than improved frequencies. This maybe because respondents can see that the Council and bus operators are being pro-active with new services (X34, 1e, Sunday Mortimer service). Other responses are broadly in line with last year.

Comments	2024	2023	2022
Requests for new bus links	13%	27%	14%
Positive comments about current position	22%	16%	21%
Negative comments about current position	17%	9%	4%
Requests for more frequent services	7%	9%	16%
Requests for better evening and Sunday services	5%	7%	10%
Requests for better reliability or faster journeys	8%	6%	6%
Requests for affordable services	5%	6%	7%
Requests for better information or promotion	4%	5%	8%
Requests not to cut bus services	3%	5%	n/r
Requests for improved comfort and cleanliness on board	4%	3%	2%
Requests for improvements to the waiting environment	5%	2%	3%
All other comments	7%	5%	9%

Table 20: Final Comments

6.9.4 Broadly, given free range (rather than the previous question), there are still similar trends in what respondents want.

6.10 Who completed the survey

6.10.1 One of the misgivings we had with the 2021 survey results, is that we had a poor response rate from younger people. Those aged up to 24 only accounted for 4.1% of the responses, and those aged 25 to 34, a further 5.4%. In contrast, those aged 66 and over made up over 43% of the responses. A couple of positives though, is that two-thirds of respondents would recommend bus use, and 20% would like to join a user group focussing on bus travel.

6.10.2 In 2022, we made an effort to attract more responses from young people, including posting a TikTok video and visiting some schools. The responses from those up to 24 had risen to 6.8%. Whilst this may not seem that many more, it represented an increase from 29 to 89 respondents. 25 to 34 year-olds added a further 6.3%, meaning that almost one in seven responses were from those under 35. 25% asked to be able to give further views about bus travel.

6.10.3 In 2023, the numbers of young people responding dropped again, but were still up on 2021. 60% of responses were from women, 24% had a disability or other long-term health issue, 36% hold an ENCTS card, and 7% are from an ethnic background. This time almost half of respondents asked to be able to give further views.

6.10.4 In 2024 the number of under 24 respondents remained low (about 3%), with largest group of respondents being ages 65-74. 59% were women, 26% had a disability or a long-term health issue and 6% are from an ethnic background.

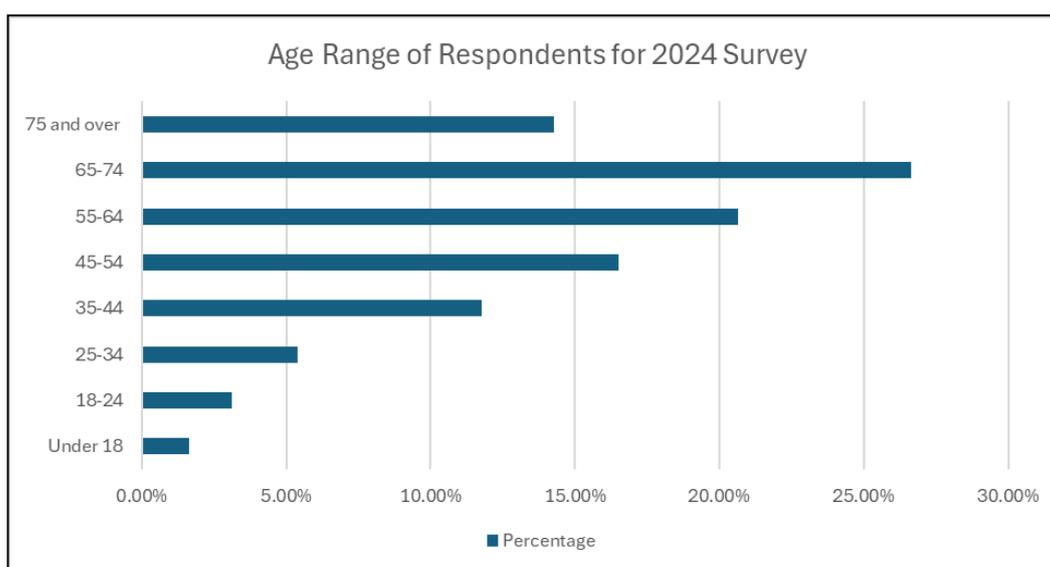


Figure 29: Age Range of respondents for 2024 survey

6.10.5 Respondents in 2024 were from the following geographical areas (3.1.1): Newbury & Thatcham (42%), North Wessex Downs (26%), Eastern Area (21%), East Kennet Valley (4%), or outside West Berkshire (4%).

6.10.6 In 2025 respondents that were under 24 was still low (around 4%), the largest group of respondents was 65-74 (around 31%). 57% respondents were female, 27% had a disability or a long-term health issue and around 6% were from an ethnic background.

6.11 2025 Bus Users Satisfaction Survey

6.11.1 For our [summer 2025](#) survey we asked about customer satisfaction. The survey ran over the summer from June to August 2025. For the 2025 survey on satisfaction, we had 700 validated responses.

6.11.2 A summary of the results has been provided in the [October 2025](#) targets report available on the Council's [Enhanced Partnership](#) webpage.

6.12 NHT Residents Satisfaction Survey

6.12.1 West Berkshire Council participates biannually in the [NHT \(National Highways & Transport Network\)](#) Residents Satisfaction Survey. The survey collects public information about satisfaction with Highways and Transport Services in local authority areas across the country including public transport services.

6.12.2 The Council participated in the 2025 survey and an [summary of the outputs is provided](#). The results of the survey have been shared with local authorities.

6.12.3 For the 2024/25 financial year we set a target of 62% satisfaction in local bus services overall. Results from the 2025 survey show we have met this target, and that we have scored above average for all the public transport measures.

6.12.4 We were also in the top 25% of local authorities for 18/28 measures that across Highways and Transport and that 8 out of the top 10 most satisfied results were public transport related.

Public Transport Measure	NHT 2025 Average	WBC 2025 % (% difference to NHT average)
Local Bus Services (Overall)	56%	62% (+6%)
Local bus services (aspects)	50%	61% (+11%)
Public Transport Information	36%	45% (+9%)
Community Transport	55%	56% (+1%)
Responsive Transport	52%	55% (+3%)
Public transport information (aspects)	51%	55% (+4%)
Frequency of bus services	54%	58% (+4%)
Number of bus stops	66%	68% (+2%)
The state of bus stops	55%	59% (+4%)
Whether buses arrive on time	50%	62% (+12%)
How easy are buses are to get on/off	71%	75% (+4%)
Bus fares	55%	56% (+1%)
Quality and cleanliness of buses	61%	64% (+3%)
Helpfulness of Drivers	67%	72% (+5%)
Personal Safety on Buses	65%	70% (+5%)
Raised kerbs at bus stops	64%	66% (+2%)
The amount of information	52%	55% (+3%)
The clarity of information	52%	56% (+4%)
The accuracy of information	52%	57% (+5%)
Ease of find the right information	49%	53% (+4%)
Information about accessible buses	47%	51% (+4%)
Info to help people plan journeys	54%	58% (+4%)
Reliability of electronic display info	48%	55% (+7%)
Provision of public transport info	51%	56% (+5%)
Provision of bus stops	85%	87% (+2%)

Table 21: NHT 2025 Survey Results

6.13 Public Health survey

6.13.1 In 2023 colleagues in Public Health at West Berkshire Council carried out a study of the experiences of older residents with walking and using buses. The survey ran for 6 weeks over the early summer months. The aim of the survey was to understand the complexities of the ability to travel in West Berkshire to look at shaping Council services that make a difference to local residents.

6.13.2 The high-level patterns/trends from survey are as follows:

- Walking is undertaken overwhelmingly for physical health benefits.
- As people age, they are far more sensitive to the quality and width of the footways.
- Roughly a quarter of the respondents stated that would walk more if they had a companion.
- 35% of respondents worried about personal safety, rising to 46% for female respondents.
- Main safety concerns are trip hazards, bicycles, scooters on footway and anti-social behaviour.
- More women (45%) than men (33%) use buses regularly.
- Bus use is significantly greater in urban areas than rural areas.
- Majority of people in all age groups stated they would be able to use the bus more.
- The improvements that would help people use the bus more are:
 - More frequent services (48%)
 - More reliable services (45%)
 - More routes (36%)
 - Longer operating hours (27%)
 - Real-time information (26%)
 - Paper timetables (19%)
- Covid appears to have reduced travel by bus and car but people are walking more.
- Most respondents have access to a car but this decreases with age.

6.13.3 A series of recommendations are being established from the study, and the Transport Team will work with Public Health colleagues to ensure that the recommendations are considered and worked through.

7 Targets, Performance Monitoring and Reporting

7.1.1 The Council has produced 6 monthly progress (the first was published in April 2022, the latest was published in autumn 2025) report outlining progress against targets set out in the BSIP. This includes patronage, reliability, satisfaction, and vehicle emissions.

7.1.2 We will continue to look to report on the targets set within the BSIP at least every six months, and this information will be published, on the Council's dedicated webpage: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/enhancedpartnership>.

7.2 How and why?

7.2.1 Between the Council and the bus operators, a lot of information is available regarding bus services. This can be from a variety of sources, including:

- Ticket machines – record how many people use the services, what they pay, where they get on
- Apps / websites – can record how many visits to specific pages
- Surveys – can obtain information on satisfaction, changes people would like to see

7.2.2 The BSIP sets targets for journey times, service reliability, passenger levels, and customer satisfaction for 2025 and 2030. Progress against these targets are reported every [six months](#). Whilst there are overall targets for each category, some are further sub-divided to better show specific impacts that the EP is having. Targets set for 2030 are provisional and may be amended in future years as initiatives are implemented.

7.2.3 Targets for the BSIP were originally set in 2021, it is now the intention of the partnership to review these targets going forward.

7.2.4 The following table summarises the key outputs of the BSIP, and how these meet the requirements set out in the National Bus Strategy. This gives an overview of the commitments which the Council and bus operators will work towards to improve local bus services.

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Journey time	Specific targets not set. Journey times will be reviewed by service.				We will examine all services to identify where reliability is lower, and then look at variance on individual journey times.
Reliability					This measures journeys departing from their first stop, and across the whole route using standard methodology (on time is 1 minute early to 5 minutes 59 seconds late). Information will be obtained directly from operators or from BODS.
Start	89.1%	88.8%	90% (<i>this target has not been met will review with partnership</i>)	92%	
Overall	85.4%	83.8%	85%	87%	
Passenger numbers					From Passenger counts submitted by the operators from information drawn from their ticket machines.
Whole of WBC	2,342,715	2,222,530	2,300,000 (<i>Target met</i>)	2,500,000	

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Eastern Area (est.)	1,020,320	968,025	1,000,000 <i>(this target has not been met will review with partnership)</i>	1,050,000	
Average passenger satisfaction					The Council survey data is taken from annual consultation. The NHT measure uses KBI06 Local Bus Services satisfaction.
Council survey (bus users)	No survey		67.9%	69.9%	
NHT survey (all respondents)	60%	59%	62% <i>(target meet in the 2025 survey).</i>	64%	

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Other measures					
Vehicle Emissions	Not recorded	Not recorded	All vehicles to be at least Euro V	All vehicles to be at least Euro VI	Information on vehicles used will be provided by operators.

Table 21: Performance Measures and Targets

8 BSIP Schemes and Proposals Overview Tables

Name of Local Authority or Authorities	West Berkshire Council
Enhanced Partnership(s) and/or Franchising Scheme(s) covered by the BSIP	West Berkshire Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme v5
Date of publication	May 2025
Web address (URL) of the published BSIP	Enhanced Partnership (for local bus services) - West Berkshire Council

Table 22: BSIP Scheme

8.1.1 The following table outlines the phase 1 and 2 BSIP improvements to March 2025 (subsequently extended to March 2026)

Improvements programme to 2025	List of named schemes and measures
Bus priority infrastructure	BP1. Pangbourne Bus Turning Circle. Project has been postponed. BP2. Atherton Road, Hungerford. Remedial works to allow buses to pass without obstruction. BP3. Robin Hood Roundabout, Newbury. Traffic-signal priority for late-running buses. BP4. Bath Road, Calcot. Traffic-signal priority for late-running buses. BP5. Bus congestion hotspots. Wider use of bus stop clearways to keep bus stops clear of parked vehicles.
Other bus infrastructure	BP6. Passenger waiting environment. Installation of bus shelters and other bus stop infrastructure improvements to address low satisfaction ratings and Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI). Screens to be installed at more key bus stops.
Bus service support	BS1. Downlands transport. New on-demand bus service launched. BS2. Pangbourne transport / East Thatcham transport. New on-demand bus services to be launched. BS3. Newbury to Harwell. New hourly service introduced. BS4/6. Support for Council supported services. BS5. Introduction of evening & weekend services. For 1e, Lime 2/2 and Sunday service for Newbury to Basingstoke route. BS7. Support services enhancements for current services. BS8. Donnington Heights. New bus service for housing development.
Fares support	FT1. Simplified fares and improved ticketing.
Other schemes & measures	Marketing. Department for Transport (DfT) Capacity Funding. Transport Officer (Bus Improvement Programme). Temporary post until March 2025. Transport Officer (Capital Scheme Implementation). Temporary post until March 2025. CT1. Community transport support. Ongoing funding guaranteed.

Table 22: BSIP Scheme

8.1.2 BSIP Funding allocations for 2025/26 have been announced and the delivery plan for this funding has been published on the Council's dedicated webpage: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/enhancedpartnership>.

8.1.3 The following table outlines the Ambitions and proposals for 2025-2030 and beyond. All of these proposals would be subject to available funding. Nearly all of these proposals are proposed in the [BSIP delivery plan for 2025-26](#).

Ambitions and proposals for 2025-2030 and beyond	Description (60 words max) Description of proposals listing named schemes/measures with location, where appropriate
Service level and network coverage	BS10. Improved service frequencies, including Saturday 103 service. Included in BSIP delivery plan 25-26 BS11. Evening and Sunday services, Newbury & Thatcham. Included in BSIP delivery plan 25-26. BS12. Evening and Sunday services, rural areas. Included in BSIP delivery plan 25-26. BS13. New services to meet demand, including better rail connections. BS14. Expanded on-demand bus services across the rural areas. Included in BSIP delivery plan 25-26.
Bus priority	BP5. Continued work on Bus congestion hotspots. Included in BSIP delivery plan 25-26. BP1. Recommence work on Pangbourne bus turning circle. BP7. Commence work on Mortimer station if operators onboard with an extended bus service and subject to outcome of feasibility study BP8. Prepare feasibility reports for Theale bridge.
Lower and simpler fares	FS1. Continued work on Free bus travel. Included in BSIP delivery plan 25-26. FS6. Implement Multi-operator fare capping. Included in BSIP delivery plan 25-26. FS7. Continue to offer multiple channels for payment.
Ticketing	TR6. Work will continue to ensure that tickets are available to best meet travel requirements. Costs for ticketing are likely to be shared with improvements to fares.
Waiting and interchange facilities	OI1. Continued work on Passenger waiting environment. Included in BSIP plan 25-26. OI2. Continued work on Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI). Included in BSIP delivery plan 25-26. OI3. Commence work on Rail stations. OI4. Commence work on Bus station if required.
Bus information and network identity	BI1. Improved marketing of bus services, including to tourist attractions.
Bus passenger experience	TR7 Bus (or multi-modal transport) app.
Bus fleet	BF1. Upgrading all vehicles to at least Euro VI (or Euro VII). Included in BSIP delivery plan 25-26. BF2. Upgrade all vehicles to Zero-emission. Included in BSIP delivery plan 25-26. BF3. Carbon-neutral refuelling facilities. Included in BSIP delivery plan 25-26.
Accessibility and inclusion	CT1. Continued support of Community Transport. Included in BSIP delivery plan 25-26.
Longer term transformation of the network	Longer-term proposals not costed.

Table 23: BSIP ambitions and proposals for 2025-2030 and beyond

Glossary

AQMA	Air Quality Management Area
BODS	Bus Operator Data Service
BSIP	Bus Service Improvement Plan
BSOG	Bus Services Operators Grant
DfT	Department for Transport
DRT	Demand Responsive Transport
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ENCTS	English National Concessionary Travel Scheme
EP	Enhanced Partnership
Forum	Enhanced Partnership Forum
GWR	Great Western Railway
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LTP	West Berkshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026
NHT	National Highways & Transport Network
NO ₂	Nitrogen dioxide
nomis	Official Labour Market statistics
ONS	Office for National Statistics
QR	Quick Response matrix barcode
RTPI	Real Time Passenger Information
Section 22	The Transport Act 1985 allows not-for-profit organisations to operate without the need for a full public service vehicle operator's licence. They are not subject to many of the normal licensing or legislative requirements.
ZE	Zero emission
ZEBRA	Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas

Appendices

[BSIP Delivery Plan 25-26](#)

Other relevant documentation

[West Berkshire Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme](#)