



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**



Oxfordshire Enhanced Partnership Plan & Scheme

Updated March 2024



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PART A: ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP (EP) PLAN

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Oxfordshire Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan was first made in accordance with Section 138G(1) of the Transport Act 2000 by Oxfordshire County Council ('the Council') on 18 January 2023.
- 1.2. The EP Plan covers the county of Oxfordshire and all non-exempt bus services operating within it, including cross-boundary services. Oxfordshire is a discrete area with a relatively self-contained network, and as such the Council do not consider it necessary to enter joint EP arrangements with any neighbouring authorities.
- 1.3. The purpose of the EP Plan is to set out the relevant context under which the Council and local bus operators seek to achieve the overarching outcomes of the National Bus Strategy, which are to build back bus use to pre-pandemic levels and ultimately exceed those levels, and to increase mode share still further in the future. The detailed commitments made by each party are contained in the EP Scheme which forms Part B of this document.
- 1.4. The Council determined that an EP was the preferred mechanism for securing improvements to local bus services in the county as a result of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The Oxfordshire area is therefore covered by a single EP Plan and Scheme from 31 January 2023 until further notice.
- 1.5. The objective of the EP Plan and Scheme is to facilitate a significant increase in local bus patronage over its life. The measures contained in the EP Scheme will enable this by:
 - keeping buses at the heart of decision-making;
 - making buses faster and more reliable;
 - upgrading bus infrastructure;
 - improving the image of buses; and
 - making buses easier to access and understand.
- 1.6. The current Oxfordshire bus map (correct in April 2024) is shown overleaf in Figure 1, and indicates the geographical coverage of the EP. For avoidance of doubt, the geographical boundaries of the EP are the administrative boundary of Oxfordshire County Council.
- 1.7. All the Council's neighbouring authorities hold or are progressing similar proposals for EP Plans and Schemes. The effect of the EP Plan and Scheme on other areas will be to enhance those bus services which operate on a cross-boundary basis and ensure that standards are raised throughout the sub-region.

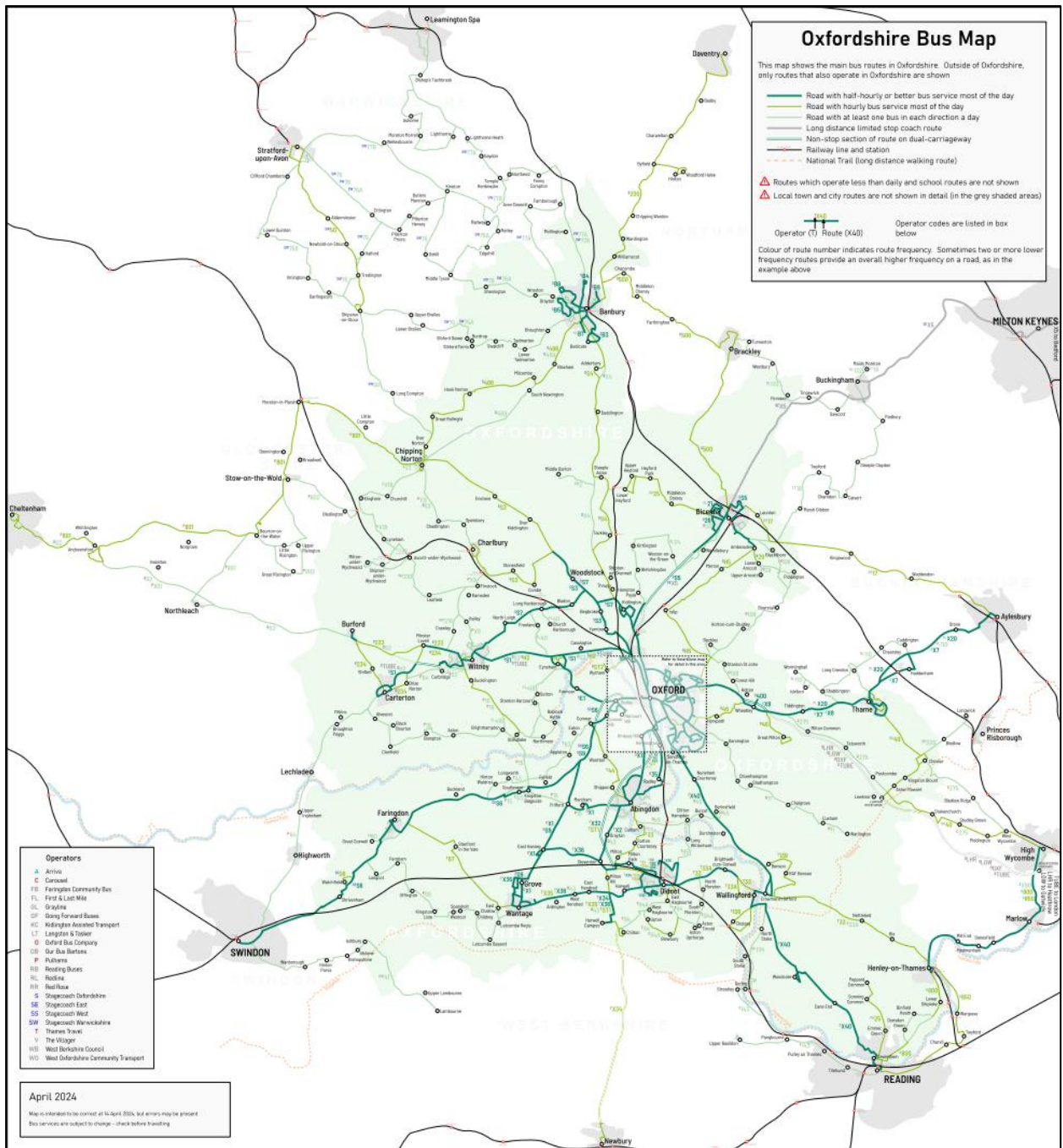


Figure 1 - Map of bus services in Oxfordshire (April 2024)

- 1.8. The BSIP contains a significant programme of works, many of which have already been delivered, that seek to improve bus services in Oxfordshire. BSIP funding was allocated by the Department for Transport in April 2022 and later in May 2023 (BSIP Phase 2) that together fund many of the schemes of the BSIP. These funded schemes are contained within the EP Scheme. For the schemes for which BSIP funding is not confirmed, the Partnership will explore alternative sources of funding with the view to delivering these schemes as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- 1.9. How the Council is embedding the BSIP in the operation of this partnership is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 - BSIP Objectives and EP Approach

BSIP objective	EP approach
1. Keeping buses at the heart of decision-making	<p>Embed Council commitment and the corporate priority to <i>'invest in public transport to significantly reduce reliance on car journeys'</i></p> <p>Governance of EP via the Enhanced Partnership Board informs decision making, e.g. via the County/City Council Joint Member Group</p> <p>The Local Transport & Connectivity Plan Mode Hierarchy is applied to reflect the priority given to bus and ensure that positive decisions are made to promote and support bus travel and improve integration with other modes</p>
2. Making buses faster and more reliable	<p>Achieve a 10% improvement in bus productivity in Oxford city</p> <p>Implement bus priority measures at key locations including Oxford city centre</p> <p>Improved management of roadworks, including appointment of a bus champion</p> <p>Implement signal detection technology improvements</p>
3 Upgrading bus infrastructure	<p>Identification and improvement of the bus stop estate, with defined standards</p> <p>Development of the mobility hub concept in rural areas and areas associated with growth</p> <p>Improvement to Real Time Information provision</p> <p>Greater emphasis on the quick and timely deployment of funds already held by the Council for improvement of the bus stop estate</p>

BSIP objective	EP approach
4. Improving the image of buses	<p>Developing a consistent/single brand for the Smartzone area services, including livery</p> <p>Consideration of measures to assist boarding/alighting on certain busy routes</p> <p>Roll out of audio-visual systems, Wi-Fi and device charging on new vehicles</p> <p>Ensuring buses are promoted by the Council and partners through existing and new channels</p>
5. Making buses easier to access and understand	<p>Development of an improved bus network, with greater hours of operation and coverage</p> <p>Improvement of cross-boundary bus links</p> <p>Modernisation and improvement of multi-operator ticketing systems</p> <p>Simplification of bus ticket range, including extension of youth fares</p> <p>Behavioural change initiatives with employers</p> <p>Enhanced publicity and customer information</p> <p>Development of a customer charter</p>

1.10. The EP replaces the previous voluntary Quality Partnership arrangements which existed in Oxfordshire.

2. Current Situation

Network Characteristics

- 2.1. Historically, Oxfordshire has had a successful commercial bus network. This is largely due to very significant use of the bus for journeys to, from and within Oxford, the county's main centre. But this has come under significant pressure due to changing post-pandemic travel patterns, which has seen bus use only return to 90-95% of pre-pandemic levels.
- 2.2. Oxfordshire's bus use per capita is the highest for any shire county in mainland England. This is a significant achievement given that Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South East, and is due to historical partnership working between the Local Transport Authority (LTA) and local bus operators.
- 2.3. The Oxfordshire bus network is made up of several elements:
 - Frequent urban routes in Oxford city;
 - Premium inter-urban routes;
 - Second tier inter-urban routes;
 - Local routes within the county towns; and
 - Routes linking local villages to the county towns.
- 2.4. Frequent urban routes in Oxford have a high level of demand arising from the city's high-density urban form and demographics. There are current frequencies of more than 20 buses per hour on some radial routes in Oxford – these bus services have historically operated on a fully commercial basis from 0500 to 0000 daily with night bus services until 0300 on many of the main corridors.
- 2.5. Competition between the two major operators, Go-Ahead (Oxford Bus Company) and Stagecoach West, on the key corridors matured into a Qualifying Agreement in 2011. Since then, services on some key corridors have been coordinated with a joint ticketing arrangement in place (branded as SmartZone, which is available on most buses in the city).
- 2.6. Premium inter-urban routes link Oxford with the County's main towns using fast main 'A' roads. These are designated as 'Premium Routes' and there has been some investment in improved infrastructure over the last two decades. The stated aim for the concept is a frequency of at least 4 buses per hour during weekday daytimes, with at least an hourly evening and Sunday service. Growth in frequencies and passenger numbers has been driven by development in Oxfordshire's main towns.
- 2.7. These corridors link Oxford with areas such as Aylesbury, Thame, Abingdon, Wallingford, Reading, Wantage, Swindon, Witney, Carterton, Kidlington and Bicester, and are provided by four of the county's main operators: Go-Ahead Group (Oxford Bus Company and Thames Travel), Stagecoach West and Arriva.

- 2.8. Second-tier inter-urban routes generally provide links between Oxfordshire's towns, and there are some less-frequent routes connecting with Oxford. Typically, these bus services operate at least hourly during weekday daytimes. There is a mixture of fully commercial but also on some financially supported bus services. Some are currently partly funded by developer contributions, either on a pump-priming or lifeline basis. Most of these routes have evening and Sunday services, although last journeys of the day are generally earlier than for the 'Premium' inter-urban routes.
- 2.9. Banbury, Witney and Didcot benefit from local urban services which offer more comprehensive coverage of the towns. The most developed network is in Banbury, with some services operating up to 4 buses per hour with support from developer contributions. Great Western Park in Didcot benefits from a similar level of frequency, together with frequent links to major local employment centres at Harwell and Milton Park. In both Banbury and Witney, some urban services are provided by community transport operators.
- 2.10. Some lower frequency inter-urban and connector services provide links from rural areas into Oxford and the county towns. Generally daytime only services, several are provided by community transport operators who have taken over routes from commercial providers following withdrawal of public sector financial support.
- 2.11. Away from the main inter-urban bus routes along main roads, there are many Oxfordshire villages which have no local bus service. The lack of access to the public transport network for people living in these settlements is a significant issue, which is being addressed by some of the measures set out in this Plan.
- 2.12. Whilst the Oxfordshire bus network is largely self-contained, there are several important bus routes operating into neighbouring LTA areas which are Buckinghamshire, West Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, Swindon, West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham.
- 2.13. In the 2022/23 financial year the Council provided £6.3 million of financial support to the bus network (excluding concessionary fares and income from entitled student travel). This can be broken down broadly as shown in Figure 2 below. It is the intention of the Council to maintain financial support for the bus network subject to funding availability.
- 2.14. The LTA has been extremely successful at leveraging Section 106 contributions from the promoters of development schemes, and it is expected that this will be an increasing source of income in the future as further growth takes place.
- 2.15. Such contributions have always been considered as an investment in the future Oxfordshire bus network, and as such are intended to cover the cost of an agreed level of bus service serving a new development for an initial period.

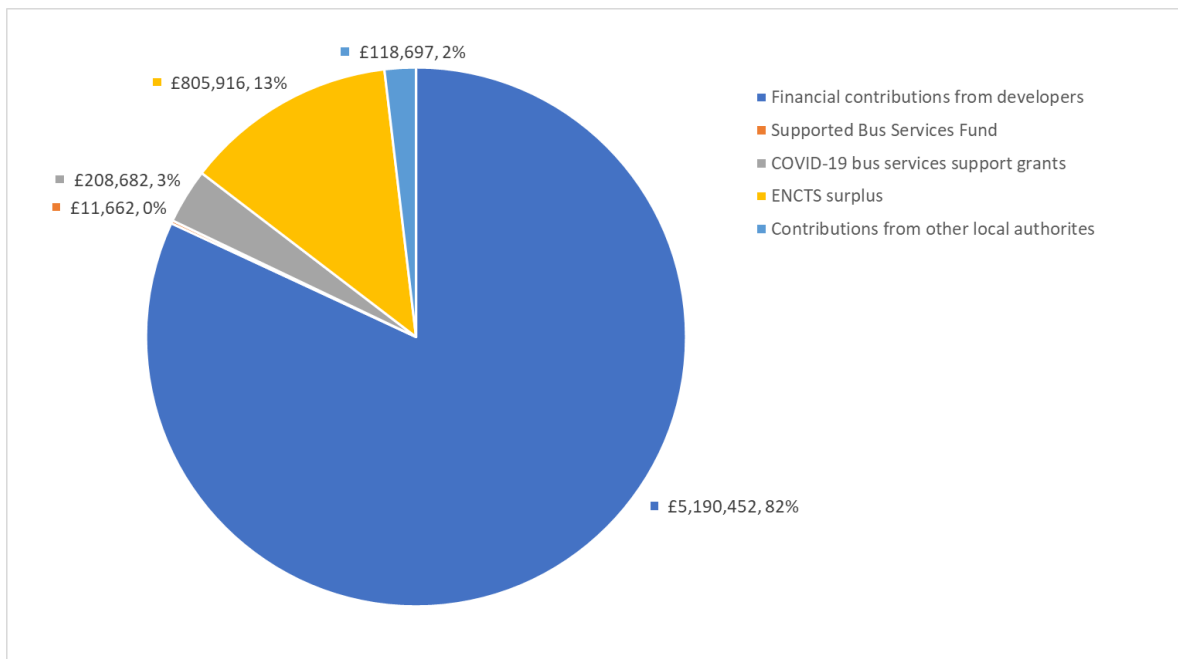


Figure 2 - Sources of financial support for bus services in Oxfordshire spent by Oxfordshire County Council in 2022/23¹

Recent Trends

- 2.16. Due to its considerable success, the current Oxfordshire bus network is provided on a largely commercial basis. The network has remained relatively stable since 2016 when supported bus services were removed due to financial constraints.
- 2.17. Figure 3 indicates the strong growth in bus patronage between 2010 and 2014, followed by a period of relative decline through to 2019/20, and a significant decline in 2020/21 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. The latest figures for 2022/23 show a significant step towards returning to pre covid levels.
- 2.18. Several factors were responsible for the reduction in passengers, including increasing levels of general traffic leading to delays (especially in Oxford and the larger towns), with a corresponding increase in journey times and decline in reliability. This is compounded by increasing levels of roadworks, particularly associated with growth.
- 2.19. As a result, increased operating costs and declining patronage caused a deterioration in commercial viability to bus operators. Commercial rates of return have declined below the level required to replace the fleet on a systematic basis, which resulted in an increase in the average age of the Oxfordshire fleet and the withdrawal of some of the weaker commercial routes.

¹ Source: Oxfordshire County Council own data

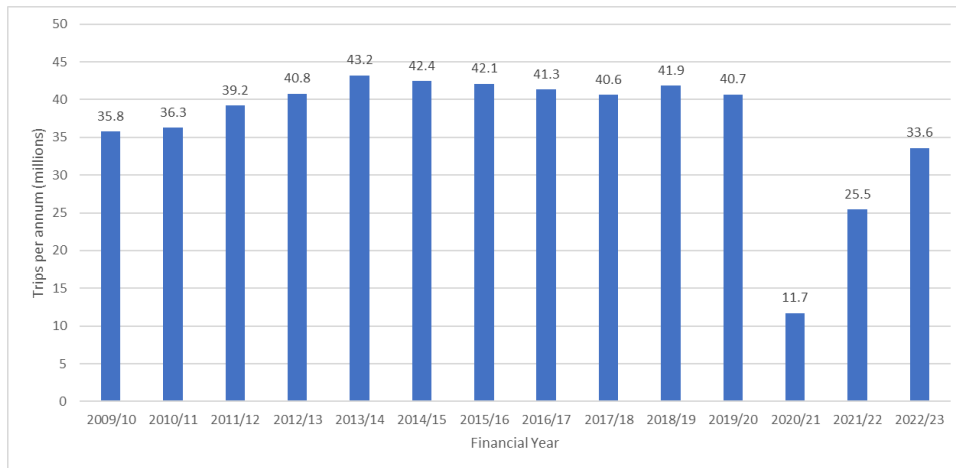


Figure 2 - Number of bus journeys in Oxfordshire²

- 2.20. During the COVID-19 pandemic, bus patronage fell significantly, and the Government provided welcome financial support for the continued operation of an almost complete bus service around the county. Passenger numbers have increased but are still below the levels necessary to sustain full commercial operation of the pre-pandemic bus network.
- 2.21. Currently, overall bus patronage is running between 90% and 95% of pre-Covid levels, with variations between Oxford, other county towns and rural areas. Pressures relating to the reduction in Government financial support and ongoing problems with staff retention and recruitment resulted in changes to the network in August 2022.
- 2.22. BSIP funding, together with a new Council budget for rural and community transport, enabled a significant boost to the network and provided much needed stability for passengers during the BSIP period. BSIP funded investments such as in bus priority will help secure the longer term future of many of these routes however there remains a risk to some services beyond March 2025.

Factors affecting bus use in Oxfordshire

- 2.23. There are several factors likely to affect bus use during the Plan period. These are outlined below.

Geography and demography

- 2.24. Oxfordshire is one of the most rural counties in South East England. Provision of bus services in the rural areas is considerably sparser than in the towns, in Oxford city or on main radial corridors.

² Department for Transport (2022) Local bus passenger journeys (BUS01). Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/bus01-local-bus-passenger-journeys>. Date Site Accessed: 09/01/2024

- 2.25. Oxfordshire covers just over 1,000 square miles and has an estimated current population of 725,300 in 2021, approximately 162,100 of whom live in Oxford. ONS data suggests that 23% of the population are aged over 60.
- 2.26. There are high levels of personal wealth, coupled with high levels of vehicle ownership in many areas outside of Oxford (10.8% of households did not own a car in South Oxfordshire in 2021, 11.5% in West Oxfordshire, 12.2% in Vale of White Horse, 14.7% in Cherwell, but 32.1% in Oxford). The county is the 10th least deprived of 151 upper-tier authorities, but there are significant pockets of deprivation. One area in Oxford is in the 10% most deprived nationally, with a further 16 amongst the top 20% – six of these are in Banbury and one in Abingdon.
- 2.27. In Oxfordshire’s deeper rural areas, the operation of commercially sustainable conventional bus services is extremely challenging. Consideration is therefore being given to adoption of alternative means of provision in these areas.

Growth and development

- 2.28. Oxfordshire is an attractive location to live and work, and as such very significant growth of the population and housing stock over the next 12 years is expected. The most recent wave of Local Plans in the county (ending in 2031/2034) allocated sites for 100,000 new dwellings for this period, summarised in Table 2. Some have already been delivered and some may be delivered late, but at a conservative estimate some 50,000 new dwellings will be delivered in the decade from 2022 onwards.
- 2.29. Oxfordshire’s internal estimate of population growth is for an increase of 13,600 new residents per annum over this period, or an almost 20% increase in population from the 2019 estimate of 697,000 people over the next decade.
- 2.30. The LTA is already planning for new bus services for most of these new residents, which will be funded by Section 106 payments negotiated from developers to establish the services as viable commercial operations. The effect of population growth from planned new developments is predicted to increase the number of County bus passengers by 10%, or by 4 million passengers per annum, by the tenth year (2031).
- 2.31. A summary of some of the major housing development proposals currently being delivered and forthcoming expected through adopted Local Plans is included in Table 2 below.

Table 2 - Planned development of 200 homes or more across Oxfordshire, with indicative housing numbers as specified in the respective Local Plans

District	Development (and estimated quantum)
Oxford City	<p>Barton (800-1,200)</p> <p>Littlemore Park (270)</p> <p>Northern Gateway (500)</p> <p>Osney Mead (247)</p> <p>Oxpens (450)</p> <p>Student Castle, Osney Lane (206)</p> <p>Thornhill Park (534)</p>
West Oxfordshire	<p>East Witney (450)</p> <p>Land at Milestone Road, Carterton (200)</p> <p>Land East of Chipping Norton (1,200)</p> <p>Land East of Woodstock (300)</p> <p>North Witney (1,400)</p> <p>Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village, Eynsham (2,200)</p> <p>REEMA North and Central, Carterton (300)</p> <p>West Eynsham (1,000)</p>
Cherwell	<p>Bankside Phase 2, Banbury (600)</p> <p>Bolton Road, Banbury (200)</p> <p>Canalside, Banbury (700)</p> <p>Drayton Lodge Farm, Banbury (250)</p> <p>Gavray Drive, Bicester (300)</p> <p>Graven Hill, Bicester (2,100)</p> <p>Higham Way, Banbury (150)</p> <p>North of Hanwell Fields, Banbury (544)</p> <p>North-West Bicester (3,293)</p> <p>South of Salt Way – East, Banbury (1,345)</p> <p>South of Salt Way – West, Banbury (150)</p> <p>South-East Bicester (1,500)</p> <p>South-West Bicester Phase 2 (726)</p> <p>Southam Road, Banbury (600)</p> <p>West of Bretch Hill, Banbury (400)</p>

District	Development (and estimated quantum)
Vale of White Horse	Crabhill, Wantage (1,500) Dalton Barracks (1,200) East of Coxwell Road, Farington (200) East of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor (880) East of Sutton Courtenay (220) Grove Airfield (2,500) Land South of Park Road, Faringdon (350) Milton Heights (400) Monks Farm, Grove (885) North of Abingdon-on-Thames (950) North of East Hanney (80) North of Shrivenham (500) North-East of East Hanney (50) North-West of Abingdon-on-Thames (200) North-West of Grove (400) North-West of Radley (240) North-West of Valley Park, Harwell (800) South of Faringdon (200) South of Kennington (270) South-East of Marcham (90) South-West of Faringdon (200) Valley Park, Harwell (2,550) West of Harwell, Harwell (200) West of Stanford-in-the-Vale (200)
South Oxfordshire	Berinsfield (1,700) Chalgrove (3,000) Culham (3,500) Didcot (6,339) Henley-on-Thames (1,285) Land North of Bayswater Brook, Oxford (1,100) Land South of Grenoble Road, Oxford (3,000) Northfield, Oxford (1,800) Thame (1,518) Wallingford (1,070) Wheatley Campus, Oxford (500)

Congestion

- 2.32. The Council and local bus operators work proactively together to identify local congestion locations. Congestion on the network can lead to a vicious cycle of

delays, increased journey times and increased resource requirements leading to higher fares or service reductions, a decline in patronage and further increased congestion.

- 2.33. To tackle these issues, the Council and bus operators entered a Punctuality Improvement Partnership (PIP) in 2020. The current target for services measured at origin points is 90% of all journeys operating within a window of no more than one minute early or five minutes late.
- 2.34. Whilst current performance is 80%, this metric may be less important than average bus speed in the context of the Oxfordshire frequent bus network. In Oxford city, bus speeds declined on most corridors over the period 2015 to 2023 as indicated in Table 3. More recently speeds have further reduced due to significant city centre roadworks and implementation of active travel infrastructure in advance of bus priority measures.
- 2.35. Measures undertaken through the EP Scheme intend to reverse this downward trend and improve bus journey times for passengers, leading to a virtuous circle of increased productivity and patronage growth.

Table 3 - Average Bus Speeds on key corridors in Oxford City

Corridor	2015 speed (mph)	2018 speed (mph)	2023 speed (mph)	% change 2015 to 2023
Banbury Road (service 2)	16.01	15.02	14.6	-8.8
Iffley Road (service 3)	12.72	13.34	11.5	-9.6
Botley Road/Old Road (service 4)	17.47	16.97		n/a
Botley Road (service 4A)	-	-	12.3	n/a
Cowley Road (services 1/5)	11.92	11.41	11.5	-3.5
Woodstock Road (service 6)	18.42	15.85	13.4	-27.3
London Road (service 8)	11.90	11.45	10.5	-11.8
Abingdon Road (service X13, later X3)	16.89	14.97	13.3	-21.3

- 2.36. Bus journey times may also be affected by the roll out of 20mph areas which form part of the Council's commitment to 'Vision Zero' (the elimination of deaths and serious injuries from road traffic collisions in Oxfordshire). Where proposals are requested on a bus route the Council will work with bus operators to assess the likely impact on bus journey times to enable a balanced approach to be taken.

Transport policy, climate change and air quality

- 2.37. The Council declared a 'climate emergency' in April 2019 and adopted a Climate Action Framework. The Council identified several policy objectives in relation to transport, which include:
- tackling the 'climate emergency' through rapid decarbonisation, proper accounting of carbon emissions and ambitious targets, as well as supporting climate resilience; and
 - increased investment in an inclusive, integrated, county-wide active and sustainable travel network fit for the 21st century to improve choice and reduce car journeys across the county.
- 2.38. Part 1 of the Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP), adopted in 2022, contains ambitious targets for which public transport is key, including:
- replacing or removing 1 in 4 current private car trips by 2030;
 - delivery of a zero-carbon transport network by 2040, alongside replacement or reduction of 1 in 3 current private car trips; and
 - delivery of a transport network which contributes to a climate positive future by 2050.
- 2.39. There are 13 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Oxfordshire, all areas with good bus connectivity, where patronage growth through improved services and vehicle restraint will assist with improving air quality in these locations. In Oxford city centre, the County and City Councils are progressing a Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ) pilot, the first phase of which came into place in April 2022, (with further phases planned).
- 2.40. The Council continues to work with and support bus operators in decarbonisation of the county's bus fleet. In March 2022, the Council was awarded £32.8 million from the government's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme. Along with £6m from the Council itself and £43.7m from bus companies Stagecoach and the Go-Ahead Group, the scheme will deliver 159 electric buses and the associated infrastructure. The first buses were delivered in November 2023 and are already in service.
- 2.41. This funding remains dependent on the progression of a package of transport schemes for Oxford City which deliver improvements in bus productivity in this area. This includes (as a first stage) a series of new traffic filters which provide priority for bus services and active travel. This is proposed to be followed by a Workplace Parking Levy to further discourage car trips and significantly improve bus journey times, increase reliability and support the roll-out of zero-emission buses through the ZEBRA project. In addition the Council is currently considering a new Traffic Regulation Condition (TRC) to formalise updated emission requirements for registered local bus services in Oxfordshire.

Car parking availability and pricing

- 2.42. Within Oxfordshire, parking charges and availability vary between Oxford city centre, its suburban district centres and county town centres. Off-street parking

is generally administered by the city/district councils, which have their own policies and practices regarding provision and charging in their off-road car parks. The Council is only responsible for on-street parking and, since November 2021, for parking enforcement throughout Oxfordshire.

- 2.43. Oxford city centre is the most expensive location for on-street parking, with longer-term stays discouraged in favour of the comprehensive Park & Ride system – which has five sites located on or close to the ring road, with new sites and ‘transport hubs’ under development aimed at encouraging switch from car to bus earlier in the journey. The private Westgate car park has a significant impact on pricing and network management in the city centre and the Council works closely with the operator to manage periods of high demand.
- 2.44. Outside the city centre, the extent and cost of public car parking at the Oxford University Hospitals Trust sites in Headington is a particularly difficult and emotive subject, but the Trust have staff parking policies which are pro-bus and encourage use of the extensive (and expanding) network of direct bus links. The Trust subsidises bus travel through additional discounting to bus passes and an employee ticketing arrangement.
- 2.45. In the rural districts, discounted or free parking is perceived as a means of encouraging footfall to town centres. Consequently, Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire councils offer free parking for limited time periods in their car parks, whilst West Oxfordshire has a free off-street parking policy. Parking is also free in the privately-operated Bicester Village and Banbury Gateway Shopping Parks, which reduces the scope for more realistic charges elsewhere in the area.
- 2.46. This Partnership needs to work to encourage provision and the use of other modes of transport to serve employment areas and retail areas. This should be carried out alongside a comprehensive parking management policy that seeks to effectively manage parking demand and encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport to these locations.

3. Engagement

Existing consultations

- 3.1. Three sources of information are available regarding passenger experiences of using the bus services in Oxfordshire, and what both users and non-users might want to see through the BSIP and EP processes:
- surveys undertaken by Transport Focus (2016, 2019 and 2023);
 - an engagement exercise undertaken by the Council in preparation of its BSIP (2021); and
 - National Highways & Transport Network (NHT) surveys
- 3.2. The Transport Focus work is undertaken as part of an annual national project to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of the bus network in each local authority area, and amongst the larger transport groups. Table 4 below highlights some of the key outcomes from the survey and compares it to similar exercises undertaken in previous years.

Table 4 - Bus Satisfaction in Oxfordshire

	2016 (%)	2019 (%)	2023 (%)	% points change (2016 to 2023)
Overall satisfaction	91	93	78	-13
Value for money	60	61	63	+3
Punctuality	72	71	68	-4
Journey time	85	82	75	-10
Bus stop	82	85	75	-7

- 3.3. The exercise revealed generally high levels of customer satisfaction, value for money is the lowest ranked of all the major categories but has much improved most likely due to the introduction of the national fare cap in January 2023. Figures for Oxfordshire tend to reflect the national trends and averages, and the decline is not surprising given that the bus industry as a whole has faced significant challenges over the past two years. 2023 has also been a particularly disruptive time for bus services in Oxford due to the extended closure of Botley Road by Network Rail.
- 3.4. In summer 2021, the Council undertook an engagement exercise related to the preparation of the BSIP. Four groups were particularly targeted:
- general public;
 - Oxfordshire County Council members;
 - town and parish councils; and

- wider stakeholders.

3.5. All four surveys gave a clear preference for more frequent buses, new bus routes and more reliable buses, the themes of which underpin the proposals set out in the BSIP and subsequently the EP Plan and Scheme.

3.6. The responses endorse and strengthen the Premium Route policy of frequent services, the rural flexible bus strategy, the Eastern Arc rapid transit proposal and the emphasis on bus priority measures to secure reliable and faster journeys.

3.7. Figures 4 to 9 below summarises the preferences of each group.

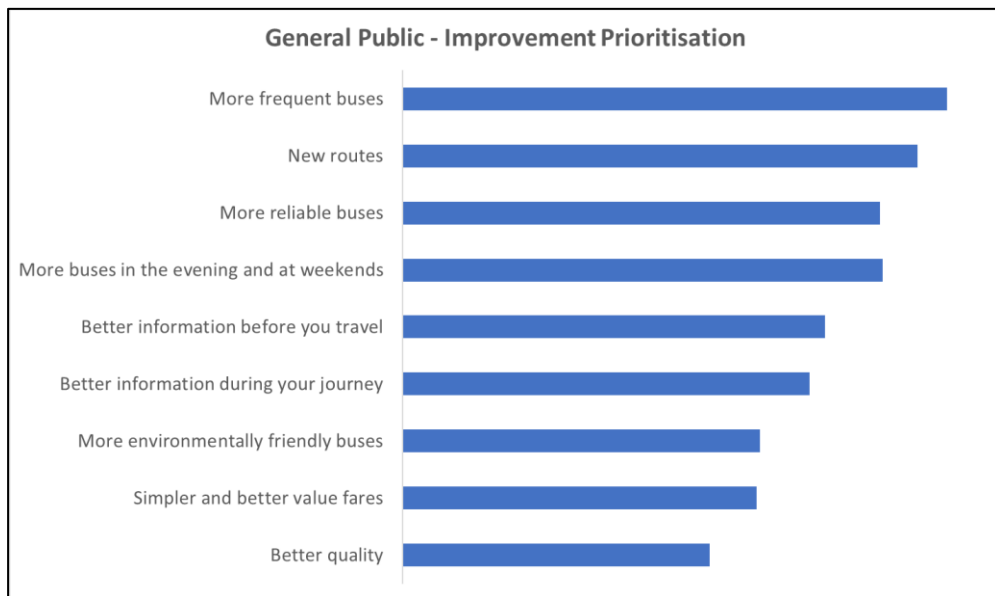


Figure 3 - Preferences of the general public

Responses: 261 (207 bus users)

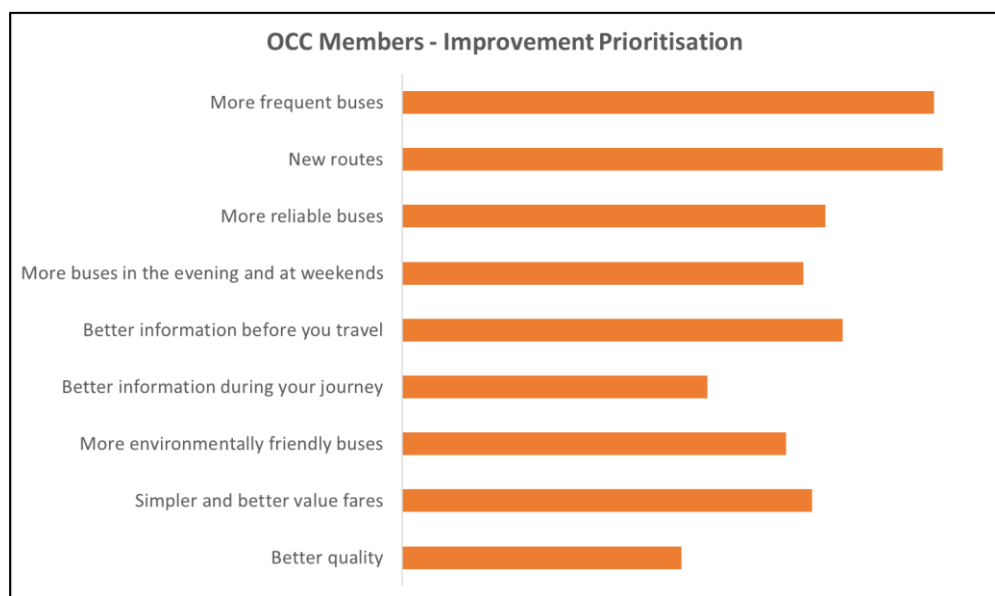


Figure 4 - Preferences of OCC members

Responses: 20

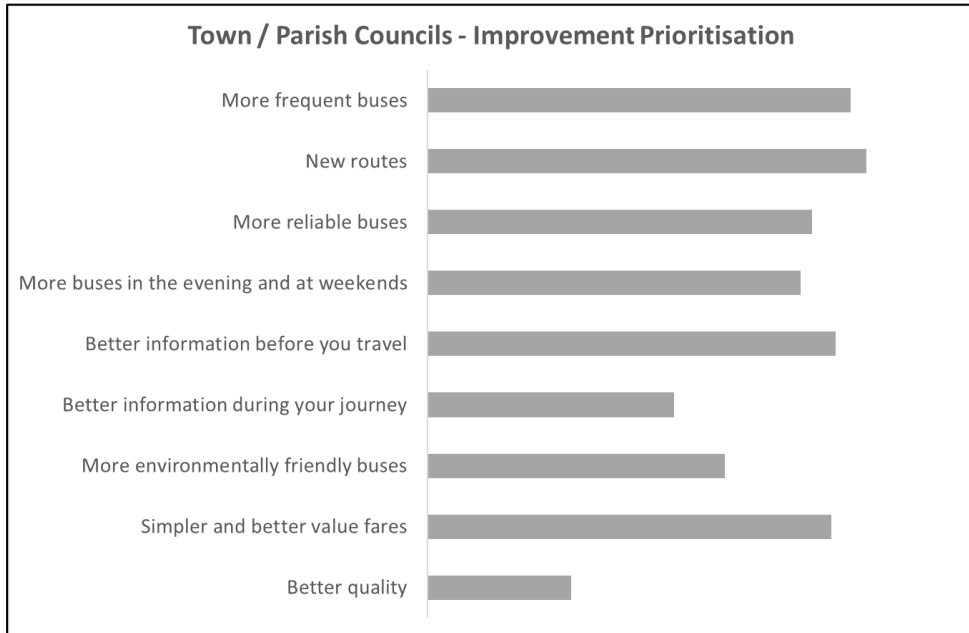


Figure 5 - Town and Parish Council Priorities for Improvements

Responses: 39

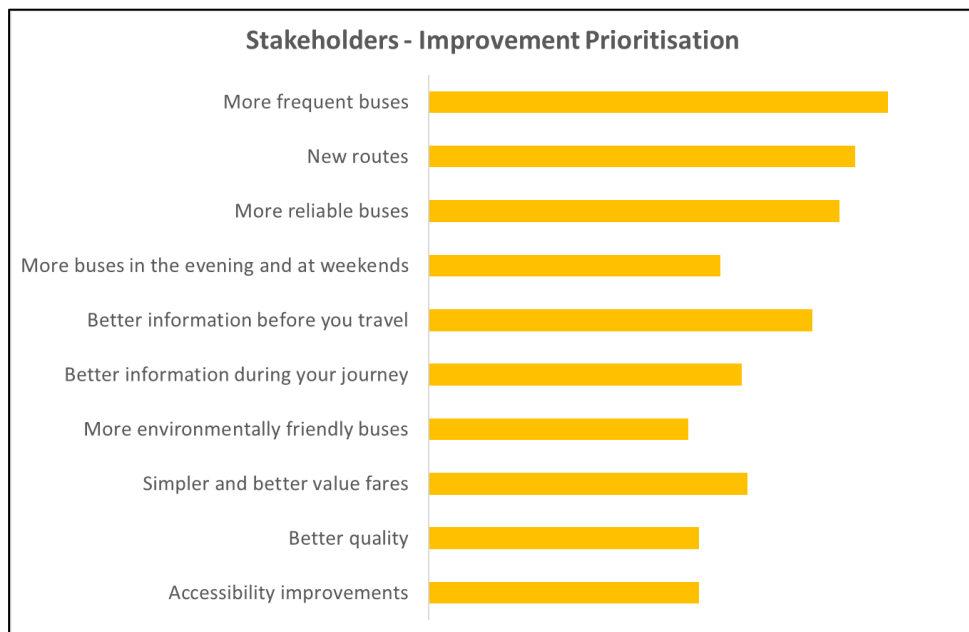


Figure 6 - Stakeholder Priorities for Improvement

Responses: 14

Figure 4: Results of bus improvement prioritisation surveys

3.8. The Council also received some additional comments on buses as part of its public consultation on its Draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. Overall, the policies in 'public transport' chapter of the LTCP were well supported with policies in this chapter averaging 75% 'strongly support' or 'partially support'. The 'bus strategy' policy was particularly well supported with 86% of respondents 'strongly' or 'partially' supporting the policy. The importance of

buses and the need to improve the public transport system to meet the LTCPs goals was a recurring comment throughout the questionnaire.

- 3.9. Respondents identified a very wide range of additional considerations in free text responses. In total 11 different topics were identified, with a range of specific suggestions within each of these. The 2 most common topics were 'general public transport comments' and 'cost'.
- 3.10. General comments about public transport were wide ranging and included a range of suggested ways to improve the bus system in Oxfordshire or complaints about the current system. The most comments were around the need for more bus services, the need to stop cuts to bus services and the need for reliable bus services.
- 3.11. Comments about 'cost' were all related to the need to make bus services cheaper in Oxfordshire. This included suggestions to make bus services free for young people, free park and ride and subsidised bus fares.
- 3.12. The Council is part of the National Highways & Transport Network (NHT) which conducts research into customer satisfaction including views on local bus services. Recent survey results in 2023 indicate that Oxfordshire residents are most satisfied with:
- the provision of bus stops (83%);
 - how easy buses are to get on/off (73%);
 - helpfulness of drivers (71%); and
 - personal safety on the bus (71%).

People are least satisfied with public transport information (38%) and information about accessible buses (46%).

Future consultation plans

- 3.13. The Council will review the BSIP on an annual basis, and the EP Board will periodically review the EP Plan and Scheme, led by the Council. The outcomes from this may be to revise the BSIP, vary the EP Plan and Scheme or producing new EP Plans and Schemes. In all of these processes, the Council will engage with stakeholders and bus users, and seek feedback on performance and priorities for the Partnership to consider.
- 3.14. The Council follows the Gunning principles of good engagement, and it will apply these to how it consults on revisions to the BSIP, variations to the EP Plan and Scheme, and new EP Plans and Schemes. These principles are:
- consultation must be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage. A final decision has not yet been made, or predetermined, by the decision makers;
 - there is sufficient information provided, including the reasons for proposals, to allow for intelligent consideration and response. The information

- provided must relate to the consultation and must be available, accessible and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response;
 - there is adequate time for people to consider a proposal, participate and respond. The length of time given for consultee to respond can vary depending on the subject and extent of impact of the consultation; and
 - conscientious consideration must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made. Decision-makers should be able to provide evidence that they took consultation responses into account.
- 3.15. The Council will, as a minimum, always consult the below groups when reviewing the BSIP, consulting on variations to the EP Plan and Scheme, or developing new EP Plans or Schemes:
- the Area Traffic Commissioner;
 - the Competition and Markets Authority;
 - all local bus operators;
 - Thames Valley Police;
 - all District Councils in Oxfordshire;
 - all neighbouring Local Transport Authorities;
 - Transport Focus;
 - Bus Users UK;
 - any local group recognised by the Council as representing the interests of bus users; and
 - groups in Oxfordshire recognised by the Council as being representative of groups with protected characteristics.
- 3.16. The Council will continue to engage with local parish transport representatives through meetings which are held three times a year.
- 3.17. The Council will always seek to consult other groups and the public where feasible. Who to consult and how this will be done will depend upon the nature and extent of the consultation in question.
- 3.18. The Council will engage as early in the process of revisions to the BSIP, variations to the EP Plan and Scheme, and new EP Plans and Schemes as it can. Prior to each consultation, the EP Board will develop an engagement plan for ratification that will set out in detail how this will be undertaken. This plan will be published on the Council's website.
- 3.19. The Council will seek to engage with passengers to get a good understanding of their priorities. The primary mechanism for understanding the priorities of passengers will be an annual bus passenger survey undertaken as part of monitoring the BSIP, to be delivered by the Council. The Council will also engage with local passenger representative groups, Transport Focus, and Bus Users UK through the EP working groups and/or Partnership Forum as a minimum requirement, but also through regular meetings with these groups.
- 3.20. As a minimum requirement, it is anticipated that the following channels will be used to engage with stakeholders, bus users, and the public as part of future

consultations. The Council will seek to exceed these minimum requirements where it can feasibly do so by:

- utilising the Oxfordshire County Council website;
- accepting comments through the Oxfordshire County Council BSIP email on bsip@oxfordshire.gov.uk;
- publicising through the Council's social media profiles, and working with operators to share information through their social media profiles as well;
- contacting all groups identified in paragraph 3.14 via email or post, asking for comment;
- working with bus operators to publicise information on the consultation on board buses, subject to available space; and
- making hard copies of the documents being consulted upon available on request.

3.21. As part of other duties, such as consulting on new highway schemes or changes to bus services, the Council and bus operators are subject to other statutory requirements on engagement and consultation. These are separate processes outside of the remit of this EP Plan and Scheme.

4. Governance and Review

EP Plan and Scheme length and review

- 4.1. The EP Plan and Scheme is in effect from 31 January 2023 until further notice.
- 4.2. The intention is to keep the EP Plan and Scheme as a living document. The Enhanced Partnership Board (EP Board) will regularly review its content, and commits to a comprehensive review of the whole EP Plan and Scheme no later than 31 March 2025, to align with the end of the anticipated BSIP funding period. Further reviews will take place at no greater than three-yearly intervals from the date of the previous review but may take place more frequently where required.
- 4.3. The EP Scheme is only applicable if the EP Plan is in place. Therefore, should the EP Plan be revoked, the EP Scheme will automatically cease to take effect. Equally, the EP Plan would be revoked should no EP Scheme(s) be in force.

Governance arrangements

- 4.4. The EP Plan and Scheme is overseen by an EP Board. This consists of 10 voting members – 5 officers from the public sector and 5 from the private sector, as detailed in Table 5 below. The EP Board takes decisions on matters relating to the EP Plan and Scheme on a consensus basis, and by exception taking decisions by a vote of its members.

Table 5 - Oxfordshire EP Board Members

Member organisation	Votes
Oxfordshire County Council officers	3
Oxfordshire City & District Council officers	2
Operator with >25% market share: Go Ahead Group (Oxford)	2
Operator with >25% market share: Stagecoach West	2
Other Bus Operators	1

- 4.5. In this way, neither the public nor private sectors have an absolute veto on matters decided by the EP Board relating to the EP Plan and Scheme. A simple majority is required for decisions to be made. The Council solely has powers relating to Enhanced Partnerships under the Bus Services Act 2017, such as the decision to make a variation, and this is not changed by any decision of the EP Board. But when exercising these powers, the Council should be guided by the discussions and decisions of the EP Board. Market share of operators in Table 5 is determined by the percentage of route mileage operated by qualifying operators.
- 4.6. The Board will meet at least four times per year, in person or virtually. The position of Chair will be held on a rotational basis with public and private sector partners each holding it twice per year. By exception, the position of Chair may

also be held by a mutually-agreed independent person for a maximum of 6 months. Similarly, District/City representatives would be rotated and agreed annually.

- 4.7. For a proposal to be accepted, a majority of those in attendance is required. Board members are required to propose deputies should they be unable to attend meetings. Should other bus operators achieve >25% market share, the Board will be reconstituted as appropriate.
- 4.8. Beneath the EP Board, a separate Partnership Forum may be convened in times where substantial or strategic changes to the BSIP are required or are being considered. The Partnership Forum is comprised of Board members plus other stakeholders who have an interest in the bus network. These are currently:
 - Bus Users UK;
 - Transport Focus;
 - any local group recognised by the Council as representing the interests of bus users;
 - Oxford Brookes University;
 - University of Oxford;
 - MEPC plc (owners of Milton Park);
 - Harwell Campus / Science and Technology Funding Council;
 - UKAEA Culham Campus;
 - Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust (subject to continued funding being made available); and
 - Representative of community transport operators.
- 4.9. Many of the stakeholders listed above are also members of the working groups and/or may be invited to join or present at individual meetings as appropriate. Recognised bus user groups (Transport Focus and Bus Users UK) may be invited to attend Board meetings in a non-voting capacity. They may contribute to the matters on the agenda at the discretion of the chair.
- 4.10. The agenda of each EP Board meeting will be decided by the Chair of the Board and the Secretariat to the Board, taking account of any requests for agenda items received from Board members. It is anticipated that to keep an overall view of current progress on the delivery of the EP, agenda items are likely to include updates from Working Groups, Highlight Reports, Project Plans, and main risks to the EP. This agenda is subject to change for each meeting.
- 4.11. The EP Board is supported by Working Groups aligned to the BSIP and EP objectives outlined in Section 1. The Working Groups are the main delivery mechanism for measures approved by the EP Board, although the EP Board will retain its role as the primary decision-making authority for the Enhanced Partnership.
- 4.12. The membership of these Working Groups will be decided annually by the EP Board and can include non-EP Board members in their membership. The

groups will meet at least three times annually, and the EP Board will be required to approve the terms of reference of the Working Groups on an annual basis.

- 4.13. The Working Groups and the areas of interest are shown in Table 6 below. These are the interventions the partnership believes are necessary to deliver the objectives of the EP. Additional Working Groups may be established by the EP Board. Existing Working Groups may also have their areas of focus changed or be abolished by the EP Board at any time.

Table 6 - EP Working Groups

Group Name	Areas covered
Keeping buses at the heart of decision-making	Interaction of enhanced partnership outputs with other Council / Stakeholder workstreams Bus strategy
Making buses faster and more reliable	Bus priority schemes Roadworks management Pinch points and congestion hotspots Punctuality and journey time improvement
Upgrading bus infrastructure	Bus stops Mobility hubs Real Time Information (estate / systems) Bus Interchanges New developments – bus access Decarbonisation infrastructure
Making buses more attractive	Branding and marketing Quality standards Vehicle features Funded fares and ticketing initiatives Behavioural change initiatives Real Time Information (customer facing tools) Publicity and customer information Customer charter

Bespoke arrangements for varying or revoking the EP Plan and Scheme

- 4.14. The EP Plan cannot be varied without recourse to the full formal variation procedure laid down by Section 138K of the Transport Act 2000.
- 4.15. Under powers at Section 138E of the Transport Act 2000, EP Scheme variations where this section is quoted will be subject to the bespoke voting mechanism set out below.

- 4.16. Consideration will be given to potential EP Scheme variations proposed by a member of the EP Board. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the BSIP, EP Plan and current local transport policies. Such requests should be in writing and submitted to the LTA by email at bsip@oxfordshire.gov.uk.
- 4.17. On receipt of a request for a variation under this section, the Council will convene the EP Board with at least 14 days' notice to consider the proposal. If the proposed variation receives the required number of votes, the variation can be made subject to any Council approval processes that may be necessary.
- 4.18. Once the EP Scheme variation has received sufficient approval, the Council will publish the revised EP Scheme on its website. EP Board members who are absent or not expressing a view at the meeting (either in person or in writing) will be deemed to be abstaining from the decision.
- 4.19. Any variation proposal rejected may be resubmitted no sooner than 6 months from the date of initial rejection.
- 4.20. If any member of the EP Board considers it is necessary to revoke the EP Scheme, the EP Board will be convened. If the decision is taken to revoke the EP Scheme it will follow the legislative procedures for revocation. Timescales and voting requirements are as per for paragraph 4.17 above.
- 4.21. If at any point in the future, any area covered by this EP Scheme is included in a bus franchising scheme, the relevant requirements set out in this EP Plan and Scheme will cease to apply to areas covered by the franchising scheme, in line with the arrangements set out in the scheme and as per the terms of Section 123H(6)-(8) of the Transport Act 2000.

Implications for Small and Medium Sized Operators (SMOs)

- 4.22. The vast majority of commercial services in Oxfordshire are provided by large operators. However, a small proportion are provided by small and medium sized operators (SMOs). It is important to ensure that the effects of the partnership do not unduly impact upon smaller operators' ability to engage or to comply with requirements.
- 4.23. The EP Board structure affords operator voting rights to both large and small operators. In addition, some operator requirements may not be placed upon certain categories of service which represent many smaller operators' main commercial interests. In other cases, funding will be made available to support SMOs to meet the requirements.

Competition Test

- 4.24. The Council has undertaken an assessment of the impacts of the EP Plan and Scheme, made on 18 January 2023 and updated in March 2024, on competition and believes it will not or is unlikely to have a significantly adverse effect for the purposes of Part 1 of Schedule 10 of the Transport Act 2000.

- 4.25. The implementation of an EP Plan and Scheme is intended to deliver improvements to bus services for passengers in a deregulated environment. The EP is not expected to have significant adverse effects on competition as operators remain free to amend and introduce new services in the area provided that the necessary standards contained in the EP Scheme are met.
- 4.26. In any event, the LTA considers that the EP Plan and Scheme would be justified because:
- (a) it is with a view to achieving one or more of the following purposes:
 - securing improvements in the quality of vehicles or facilities used for or in connection with the provision of local services;
 - securing other improvements in local services of benefit to users of local services; and
 - reducing or limiting traffic congestion, noise or air pollution
 - (b) its effect on competition is or is likely to be proportionate to the achievement of that purpose or any of those purposes.
- 4.27. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) were consulted on the EP Plan and Scheme as required by Section 138F of the Transport Act 2000.

PART B: ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP (EP) SCHEME

5. Introduction

- 5.1. This document fulfils the statutory requirements for an EP Scheme, in accordance with Section 138 of the Transport Act 2000.
- 5.2. The EP Scheme sets out the legal obligations on Oxfordshire County Council and local bus operators and is the mechanism by which the commitments made in the BSIP and EP Plan are delivered. It places obligations:
 - (a) on local authorities to deliver their requirements; and
 - (b) on all bus operators to abide by the standards of service it imposes.
- 5.3. Enforcement action can be taken by the registration authority if any bus operator fails to abide by such standards.
- 5.4. The EP Scheme has been jointly developed by the Council and bus operators that provide local bus services in the county, with the intention of achieving the intended improvements and delivering the objectives of the associated EP Plan.

Commencement date and review

- 5.5. The EP Scheme is in effect from 31 January 2023 until further notice.
- 5.6. The intention is to keep the EP Plan and Scheme as a living document. The Enhanced Partnership Board (EP Board) will regularly review its content and commits to a comprehensive review of the whole EP Plan and Scheme no later than 31 March 2025, to align with the end of the anticipated BSIP funding period. Further reviews will take place at no greater than three-yearly intervals from the date of the previous review but may take place more frequently where required.
- 5.7. The EP Scheme is only applicable if the EP Plan is in place. Therefore, should the EP Plan be revoked, the EP Scheme will automatically cease to take effect. Equally, the EP Plan would be revoked should no EP Scheme(s) be in force.

6. Scope

Geographical scope

- 6.1. This EP Scheme and Plan covers the area of the county of Oxfordshire, as marked by the administrative boundary of the Council. This is shown by the substantive area shaded in green in the current Oxfordshire bus map (correct at September 2023) in Figure 1.
- 6.2. Whilst the scope of the Scheme and Plan are within the county of Oxfordshire, both the Council and local bus operators will work positively and collaboratively with neighbouring Local Transport Authority areas in improving cross-boundary services. This will consider the priorities of those Local Transport Authorities.

Exempted services

- 6.3. The EP Scheme covers all local registered bus services operating in the county of Oxfordshire, with the exception of:
- long distance coach services where less than 50% of the route length is registered within Oxfordshire and where the service is operated by a vehicle registered as a coach;
 - local bus services which are operated under contract to other local authorities;
 - local bus services which operate during school term time only and are primarily intended to convey school children;
 - local bus services operated under Section 22 of the Transport Act 1985 (“community bus services”);
 - publicly-registered bus services whose primary role is to serve tourism and the leisure market, for example city sightseeing buses in Oxford;
 - a service which is registered as a local service under section 6 of the Transport Act 1985, but which would otherwise be an excursion or tour within the meaning in section 137(1) of that Act; and
 - services operated because of the historical interest of the vehicle.

7. Facilities, Measures and Requirements

7.1. Facilities, measures, and requirements to be provided under the EP Scheme are detailed in annexes as follows:

- Annex A: Facilities to be provided by Oxfordshire County Council;
- Annex B: Measures to be undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council;
- Annex C: Requirements to be met by local bus operators; and
- Annex D: Summary of funded BSIP Schemes

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

7.3. **Measures** are defined as improvements with the aim of:

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

7.4. All obligations on the local authority with respect to facilities and measures apply to Oxfordshire County Council. The Council will liaise with Oxford City Council/District Councils, town and parish councils with regards to bus shelters as they can be responsible for ownership and maintenance of these.

7.5. All obligations on local bus operators are detailed in Annex C and apply to any registered local bus service provided that it is not exempted from obligations under the EP Plan or Scheme, unless otherwise stated in the list of requirements.

Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan (COTP), Core Schemes and ZEBRA – Delivery of associated improvements

7.6. The Council has developed and consulted on its proposed Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan, which includes a number of schemes and measures designed to enhance and prioritise public transport alongside Active Travel. The COTP proposals include three main ‘core schemes’ designed to achieve this – an extended Zero Emission Zone, a new Workplace Parking Levy and a series of additional traffic filters in Oxford City, which would greatly reduce traffic congestion on bus routes. These are illustrated on the plan below.

7.7. The Council plans to install six traffic filters, the main ‘core scheme’ infrastructure measure designed to reduce traffic levels and significantly improve operating conditions for buses thus supporting Oxfordshire’s Zero Emissions Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) project. These are currently proposed to be operational by the end of October 2024, subject to the re-opening of Botley Road following completion of rail engineering works. They will be maintained in a fit-for purpose state throughout their operational life, with the Council

committed to fixing any issues with this infrastructure in an efficient and timely manner.

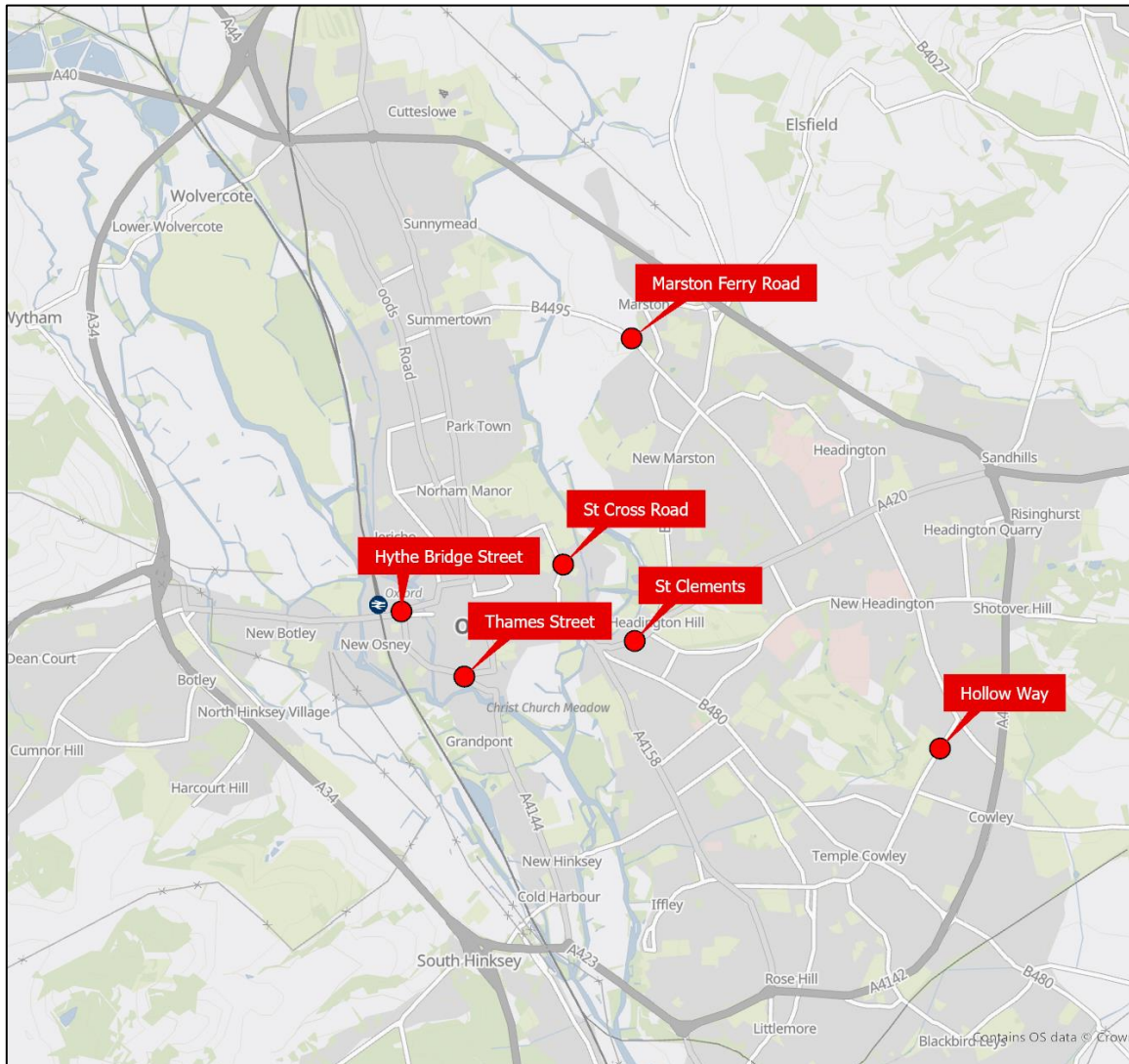


Figure 7 - Location of traffic filters

- 7.8. These schemes form part of a wider package of measures to improve bus productivity and increase bus use (Table 7). The Council will introduce and maintain indefinitely (subject to consultation, funding and external approvals) this core package of measures to improve bus productivity and increase bus use in the Oxford SmartZone area.
- 7.9. In combination, we estimate these measures will result in bus productivity improvements of at least 10% within the Oxford SmartZone area, compared to a 2019 base, by the end of 2025. This means 10% fewer vehicles and drivers will be required per passenger mile travelled on buses within the SmartZone.
- 7.10. Bus productivity is being monitored independently by a third-party provider, with metrics agreed by the EP Board. If the measures above do not deliver a minimum 10% productivity improvement, the Council will commit to working

with bus operators to identify and implement additional measures to achieve the 10% improvement.

Table 7 - Impact of Central Oxford measures on buses in Oxford

Measure	Implementati on date	Increases bus productivity & use by.... Improving bus journey times & reliability	Increases bus productivity & use by.... Managing demand for car travel	Increases bus productivity & use by.... Generating funding for bus service improvements
Trial traffic filters	October 2024			
Permanent traffic filters (subject to successful trial)	2026			
Zero emission zone	2026			
Workplace parking levy	2026			
A40 bus lane and new Transport Hub	2025			
A44 and Woodstock Road bus lanes	2023 - 2024			
Bus priority at traffic signals	2023 – 2025			
Enhanced real time passenger service information	2023 - 2025			
Controlled parking zones	2022 – 2025			
Removal of on-street parking	2022 – 2025			
Improved network co- ordination including proposed Lane Rental Scheme	2025			(as permitted)

7.11. Go-Ahead (Oxford Bus Company/Thames Travel) and Stagecoach are procuring and will operate the fleet of new buses and infrastructure at depots to enable all bus routes wholly within the Oxford Smartzone area to be operated by new zero emission vehicles. These new buses will meet the latest accessibility standards and have audio and visual passenger information in operation at all times.

- 7.12. The first zero emission buses were operational in Oxford in November 2023, and all routes wholly within the Oxford Smartzone area will be fully operated by zero emission buses by the summer of 2024. All buses funded by ZEBRA must remain in operation on routes in Oxfordshire for a minimum of five years. Operators will also use reasonable efforts to ensure that any vehicles surplus to requirements as a result of ZEBRA funding are redeployed on other routes within Oxfordshire. To support this the Council is currently consulting on a Traffic Regulation Condition (TRC) to set minimum emissions requirements within the Oxford city administrative area and the County as a whole.
- 7.13. The COTP core schemes are anticipated to make operational savings for operators, through investment in new vehicles and improvements in journey times. In addition to the up-front investment they have committed to the ZEBRA project in lieu of these expected benefits, local operators have committed to re-invest ongoing savings made in improving local bus services.

Cherwell Street, Banbury

- 7.14. The Council will deliver improvements to bus journeys along Cherwell Street, Banbury, into the town centre, to gain priority over general traffic. This will be operational, subject to technical feasibility, detailed design, and statutory consultation, by 31 March 2025. These improvements will be maintained in a fit-for-purpose state throughout their operational life, with the Council using its best endeavours to fix any issues with this infrastructure in an efficient and timely manner.
- 7.15. In delivering these improvements, the Council will seek to connect this scheme with existing priority measures and planned schemes in Banbury. This includes the existing bus lane on George Street in Banbury, and planned improvements on Tramway Road in Banbury.

Other bus priority infrastructure improvements

- 7.16. The Council and the bus operators will work in partnership to improve bus journey times across Oxfordshire through a range of further potential service and infrastructure changes. Both the Council and bus operators will commit to deliver improvements necessary to improve bus journey times, subject to consultation, funding, and external approvals.

Real time information improvements

- 7.17. The Council are installing 50 new or upgraded real time information screens across the Enhanced Partnership area per annum. The Council will maintain these additional screens and existing screens in a fit-for-purpose state, and will replace screens subject to funding availability. How these improvements will be targeted will be agreed with operators, and may be subject to local consultation where substantial infrastructure works are required.

- 7.18. The Council will also seek to deliver additional functionality to the real time system, and seek to integrate with new solutions and technologies. This is subject to funding being available, and agreement with operators.
- 7.19. Operators will provide vehicle location data and real time predictions to the Council or its nominated data systems supplier using generally accepted data standards, either as currently or as they develop. The operator must provide to the Council free access to this data with no additional or ongoing cost to the Council. Both operators and the Council or its nominated data systems supplier must maintain appropriate cyber security protections to enable this without significantly compromising data security.

Bus priority at traffic signals

- 7.20. The Council are delivering improvements that prioritise buses at up to 110 traffic signals across Oxfordshire by 31 March 2025, subject to feasibility and detailed design. The Council will maintain this infrastructure and supporting software in a fit-for-purpose state.
- 7.21. Operators will provide vehicle location data and real time predictions to the Council or its nominated data systems supplier using generally accepted data standards, either as currently or as they develop. The operator must provide to the Council free access to this data with no additional or ongoing cost to the Council. Both operators and the Council or its nominated data systems supplier must maintain appropriate cyber security protections to enable this without significantly compromising data security.

Fares and Ticketing arrangements

- 7.22. All operators and the Council are committed to investigating, trialling, and implementing where feasible simplified fares, multi-operator tickets, and other types of ticketing innovation to serve passenger in Oxfordshire. Any such ticketing schemes will be considered by the Enhanced Partnership Board, and where required be included within the scope of this Enhanced Partnership. The terms and conditions of any such schemes will be negotiated between the Council, operators, and other partners in those schemes.
- 7.23. All operators and the Council are committed to work in partnership to trial a discounted ticket for persons aged 16 to 18 years old (inclusive) and to a new county wide multi operator day ticket.
- 7.24. All operators and the Council worked in partnership to offer £1 flat fares in Oxfordshire on the four Sundays immediately preceding Christmas in 2023 and commit to delivering this again in 2024.
- 7.25. All operators subject to this partnership are required to continue to accept current joint ticketing arrangements that are in place in Oxfordshire on any services that are subject to those arrangements during the funding period. Any new services and operators seeking to operate in areas covered by these joint

ticketing arrangements must use their best endeavours to accept these ticketing arrangements on their services.

- 7.26. All operators commit to accepting contactless payment for all ticket products offered in Oxfordshire by 2025. Additionally, on bus contactless payment must be offered on all local bus services covered by this partnership.
- 7.27. The Council also commits to proactively promoting the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) to those who meet the eligibility criteria for the appropriate passes.

Improvements to bus services

- 7.28. The Council and bus operators will identify opportunities to improve and enhance local bus services, based upon the service priorities established in the Bus Service Improvement Plan - these being frequent urban routes, primary interurban routes, and secondary services.
- 7.29. Where operational savings are made because of investment from the BSIP and other operational investments, it is expected that operators will use their best efforts to ensure that these are re-invested in improvements to local bus services in Oxfordshire, subject to commercial and technical feasibility.
- 7.30. The Council will also use reasonable endeavours to manage and maintain the existing local bus network in close cooperation with bus operators, subject to available and future funding.
- 7.31. The Council will work with bus operators, and neighbouring local authorities and developers where applicable, to introduce and maintain specific services and enhancements, wholly or partly funded through the Department for Transport's Bus Service Improvement Plan or other funding and are presented in more detail in Annex B.
- 7.32. New or enhanced services to be funded by BSIP are:
- Newbury – Harwell – Didcot (X34);
 - Bicester – Brackley (500);
 - Witney – Carterton – Swindon (64);
 - Bicester – Kirtlington – Oxford (24);
 - Didcot – Blewbury – Upton (94/94A);
 - Cowley – Wheatley (46);
 - Southmoor – Appleton – Oxford (63);
 - Oxford – Benson – Wallingford – Reading (X40);
 - Sonning Common – Reading (25);
 - Carterton – Oxford (express service) (SX1);
 - Banbury – Kidlington – Oxford (express service) (X4);
 - Kidlington – JR Hospital – Churchill Hospital – Thornhill P&R (700);

- 7.33. Retained services to be funded by BSIP are:

- Botley – Oxford (4A);
- Minchery Farm – Cowley – Oxford (5A); and
- Abingdon – Cumnor – Oxford (33).

7.34. During the EP period the following bus services are or will be introduced using other sources of funding:

- Faringdon – Uffington – Wantage (68);
- Bicester – Ardley – Souldern – Bicester (81);
- Bicester – Finmere – Fringford – Bicester (82);
- Bicester – Langford – Horton-cum-Studley – Forest Hill – Oxford (108);
- Watlington – Reading (122/123);
- Watlington – Thame (126/127); and
- Various irregular off-peak journeys to communities with a population of >500 with no alternative bus service.

Improvements to bus stops and interchanges

7.35. The Council has secured funding to develop a network of Transport Hubs across Oxfordshire. This is with the intention to provide an enhanced passenger experience waiting at interchanges and interchanging between services and different modes of transport, and to improve the overall quality of the built environment. Operators are expected to contribute positively and proactively to this work, and this will require contributions from local stakeholders.

7.36. The Council will seek to maintain current bus stops and interchanges to their current standards. The Council will use reasonable endeavours to seek opportunities and funding to improve the quality of local bus stops, park and ride facilities, and interchange facilities.

7.37. The Council and bus operators will work with train operating companies to better develop and deliver coordinated services between bus and rail services across the Scheme area. This will require positive input from all parties, and the need to balance the need to interchange between bus and rail and other markets served by both bus and rail services.

ANNEX A: FACILITIES TO BE PROVIDED BY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Objective: Making buses faster and more reliable

Facility provided	Location	Timescale
Bus gates	Oxford (High Street) Oxford (Abingdon Road/St Aldates) Oxford (George Street) Oxford (Magdalen Street East) Oxford (Castle Street/Norfolk Street) Oxford (Barton Park/Foxwell Drive) Banbury (Usher Drive/Rother Road) Didcot (Station Road) Didcot (Diamond Drive/Larch Drive)	Existing facilities to be retained at least at current hours of operation
	Wantage (Elder Way)	
Bus lanes	Botley (West Way) – eastbound from Eynsham Road to Seacourt Oxford (Botley Road) – eastbound from Seacourt to Binsey Lane Oxford (Botley Road) – westbound from Osney Bridge to west of Bridge Street Oxford (Abingdon Road) – northbound from Redbridge P&R to Canning Crescent Oxford (Abingdon Road) – southbound from Old Abingdon Road to Redbridge P&R Oxford (Old Abingdon Road/Bertie Place) – eastbound from Go Outdoors to Abingdon Road	Existing facilities to be retained at least at current hours of operation. Bus lanes will only be removed if modelling can show that alternative bus priority measures would improve bus journey times and cycle and pedestrian safety

	<p>Oxford (London Road) – eastbound from Gipsy Lane to Osler Road</p> <p>Oxford (London Road) – westbound from Gladstone Road to Stile Road</p> <p>Oxford (London Road) - eastbound from Gladstone Road to Lyndworth Close</p> <p>Oxford (London Road) – westbound from Thornhill P&R to Headington Roundabout</p> <p>Oxford (A4185 Banbury Road) – southbound from Carlton Road to Grove Street</p> <p>Oxford (A4185 Banbury Road) – southbound from Cunliffe Close to St Margaret’s Road</p> <p>Oxford (A4185 Banbury Road) – northbound from Bevington Road to Cunliffe Close</p> <p>Oxford (A44 Woodstock Road) – southbound from Pear Tree P&R to BP Garage</p> <p>Oxford (Woodstock Road) – northbound from Leckford Road to outside 229 Woodstock Road</p> <p>Oxford (Woodstock Road) – southbound from roundabout with A40 to Beech Croft Road</p> <p>Kidlington (A4260 Oxford Road) – southbound from The Broadway to Kidlington Roundabout</p> <p>Banbury (George Street) – eastbound from Christchurch Court to Cherwell Street</p> <p>Yarnton (A44) – southbound from Turnpike PH to Pear Tree Interchange)</p>	
Pre-signal detection/ advance	<p>Oxford (Botley Road) – eastbound</p> <p>Oxford (A44 Woodstock Road) – southbound</p> <p>Oxford (Abingdon Road) – northbound</p> <p>Abingdon (Wootton Road) – northbound</p> <p>Yarnton (A44) – southbound</p>	Existing facilities to be retained

Objective: Upgrading bus infrastructure

Park & Ride	Thornhill Park & Ride – terminal building Water Eaton Park & Ride – terminal building	Existing facilities to be retained at least at current hours of operation
Bus stops	All County	Existing facilities to be maintained at an acceptable level

ANNEX B: MEASURES TO BE PROVIDED BY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Measures that are to be funded through the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA)

Scheme Name	Details	Location	Timescale for delivery
Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan (COTP) and Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA)	<p>As part of COTP , a series of ‘Traffic Filters’ are planned at strategic points across Oxford that are intended to prioritise buses, active travel and other permitted vehicles. These ‘Traffic Filters’ would be similar to the current successful Oxford City Centre bus gates, which use camera technology backed by the appropriate enforcement legislation, signage and penalties for infringement.</p> <p><i>Note: achieving this measure, and the associated 10% improvement in bus productivity in Oxford SmartZone that this and other measures will deliver is required for the delivery of ZEBRA works by bus operators, as outlined in Annex C.</i></p>	The planned locations of traffic filters are on Thames Street, Hythe Bridge Street, St Clements, St Cross Road, and Hollow Way.	<p>Bus priority scheme (Traffic Filters) committed: December 2022</p> <p>Traffic Filters ETRO approved by Cabinet: 29/11/2022</p> <p>Infrastructure delivered: October 2024</p> <p><i>All timescales are subject to detailed feasibility work and consultation, and works to Botley Road Bridge</i></p>

Scheme Name	Details	Location	Timescale for delivery
Countywide traffic signals upgrade	<p>This will be a rolling programme of installation and upgrades to the existing capability of traffic signals across Oxfordshire, using Urban Traffic Control (UTC) capability.</p> <p>As a minimum each signal installation ,will be configured to detect approaching buses through an interface with the AVL (Automatic Vehicle Location) component of Oxfordshire’s Real Time Information system. The traffic light sequence at each signal installation can then be progressed more quickly to offer the oncoming bus a green light, or a green signal can be extended to allow an approaching bus to pass.</p>	<p>These upgrades will initially focus on upgrading signals on the premium bus routes in Oxford and the major towns in Oxfordshire. As the programme progresses, this will then be rolled out to signal locations along the interurban premium bus route corridors.</p>	<p>Continuous delivery until 31 March 2025</p>

Scheme Name	Details	Location	Timescale for delivery
Banbury – Cherwell Street bus lane / journey time improvements	<p>This scheme constitutes measures to improve bus journey times from the current George Street / Cherwell Street Junction, into the town centre, to the Cherwell Street / Bridge Street junction, a distance of 155 metres.</p> <p>The scheme options are considering an extension to the existing bus lane on George Street and/or improvements at the Cherwell Street/Bridge Street traffic signals. An extended bus lane would provide a length of bus lane of 305 metres. The scheme is also likely to require reconfiguration of traffic islands between George Street and Bridge Street.</p> <p>This scheme is part of a package of infrastructure in Banbury that will significantly improve local bus services in the town. The most notable is access improvements to Banbury Station along Tramway Road (£4.56 million), when combined with this scheme, will improve bus journey times from the town centre to the east of the town.</p>	Cherwell Street, Banbury	<p>Recommended Option and public engagement: February/ March 2024</p> <p>Preferred Option: March 2024</p> <p>Feasibility: April/May 2024 Preliminary/Detailed Design: June/July 2024 Construction Start: August/ September 2024</p> <p>Construction Completed: March 2025</p> <p><i>All timescales are subject to detailed feasibility work and consultation</i></p>

Scheme Name	Details	Location	Timescale for delivery
Real time information	<p>Deliver a rolling programme of enhancements to the at-stop real time information and supporting software capability. This will consist of a mixture of signs and totem poles at 230 bus stops, with stops along the premium bus routes in Oxford and the major towns being prioritised, along with real time infrastructure at key hubs. Additionally, an upgrade to the 'Oxontime' system is proposed. This will provide a functionality that will tell users at the roadside when a bus is cancelled. Furthermore, any other network updates to be displayed, which would improve the customer experience. This data is already supplied by operators to the County server, but the system is not currently configured to display such essential information.</p>	Countywide	<p>This will be a rolling programme of RTI upgrades to be delivered until 31 March 2025. Delivery will be subject to site assessments and public consultation as required.</p>

Scheme Name	Details	Location	Timescale for delivery
Rural bus project	Two semi-flexible new bus routes were planned to be created in the more rural parts of Oxfordshire that experience the highest levels of transport deprivation and poor accessibility in the county. Following passenger feedback, it was decided that these would be converted to fixed route operations.	<p>New North Downs service – service 94/94A links the rural villages of North Moreton, South Moreton, Aston Tirrold, East Hagbourne, West Hagbourne, Blewbury and Upton to Didcot with an improved hourly frequency and earlier/later buses. There will be integration with Premium inter-urban bus and rail services in Didcot.</p> <p>New Cherwell Valley service – service 24 links Kirtlington, Bletchingdon and Hampton Poyle to Oxford and Bicester. New provision has been made for Wendlebury and Weston-on-the-Green.</p>	The Cherwell Valley service started on 13 February 2023 and the North Downs service started on 26 November 2023.

Scheme Name	Details	Location	Timescale for delivery
New cross border services	<p>Three new routes have been introduced.</p> <p>Service X34 between Newbury – Harwell Campus and Didcot links key employment locations in West Berkshire and Oxfordshire. BSIP funds provide the section between Newbury and Harwell, which is an extension of existing services to Didcot.</p> <p>Bicester – Brackley. This cross-border service into West Northamptonshire has been improved to hourly and linked to existing service 500 providing direct links to Banbury.</p> <p>Witney – Swindon: service 64 introduced to restore cross-county connections between Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and Swindon.</p>	<p>Newbury – Harwell Campus – Didcot, hourly Mondays to Saturdays</p> <p>Bicester – Brackley (and on to Banbury), hourly Mondays to Saturdays</p> <p>Witney – Carterton – Lechlade – Swindon, with restored services to Kencot and Filkins. Four journeys on Mondays to Saturdays</p>	<p>The Bicester – Brackley service started on 5 June 2023.</p> <p>The Newbury – Harwell service started on 24 July 2023. (This is partly funded by West Berkshire Council).</p> <p>Witney – Swindon started on 27 November 2023.</p>
X40 bus route enhancement	To extend the duration of financial support on the X40 ‘River Rapids’ bus service which will enable the operators to justify investment in new vehicles as well as frequency improvements. It will also increase the time in which the service has to become commercially sustainable.	Oxford - Wallingford – Reading, improvement to every 20 mins throughout	Tender to be issued in March 2024, service to start in October 2024.

Scheme Name	Details	Location	Timescale for delivery
Enhancement to service 25 (Reading – Sonning Common)	The potential enhancements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing the daytime off-peak/Saturday frequency to every 30 minutes; • providing an hourly evening service; and • increasing the Sunday service to hourly. 	Reading – Sonning Common, with additional funding support from Section 106 and Reading Borough Council	Procurement agreement by February 2024, enhancement to commence as soon as possible after this date.
Express SX1 Carterton to Oxford	To provide a new SX1 service (alongside the S1 service) which will provide faster more direct services between Carterton and Oxford.	Carterton to Oxford	Service to start in April 2024.
Express X4 Banbury to Oxford	Service X4 provides faster and more direct services between Banbury and Oxford, alongside existing service S4.	Banbury to Oxford	Service was operational from 4 September 2023.
Retention and improvement of Oxford orbital services, including new weekend services	To provide support to existing service 700 (which has struggled to become commercially sustainable) during the period July 2023 to March 2025, and provide an hourly service on Saturdays and Sundays to facilitate staff and visitor travel.	Kidlington – Oxford Parkway – JR Hospital – Churchill Hospital – Thornhill P&R	Support and enhancements in place from December 2023.
Financial support for Oxford bus network – 4A, 5A, 33 and X40	To provide financial support for bus services affected by the Botley Road closure as well as some minor additional changes elsewhere, to maintain connectivity to the west of Oxford and in South Oxfordshire	Oxford and South Oxfordshire	Support in place from August 2023 until October 2024

Scheme Name	Details	Location	Timescale for delivery
SBSF Projects	To continue services originally funded by Supported Bus Services Fund in 2020/21: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 46 (Wheatley – Cowley); and • 63 (Southmoor – Oxford). 	Oxford, Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire	Support ongoing from August 2022
Journey Planning	To commission research into travel to work behaviours, including barriers and motivations for bus use at various areas within the County where there are large clusters of employers. The results will be used, as funding allows, to support the design and implementation of bespoke interventions that aim to increase bus use.	Exact areas of focus to be determined but likely to include; Banbury, Bicester and Didcot.	Out to tender late February/March 2024. Survey live May to July 2024. Interventions roll out October 2024 to March 2025. Final report March 2025.

Other general measures

Objective	Area	Measures	Timescale
Keeping buses at the heart of decision-making	Enhanced Partnership Board	Make suitable officers available for all meetings of the Enhanced Partnership Board	Ongoing

Objective	Area	Measures	Timescale
Making buses faster and more reliable	Roadworks management	Provision of Route Monitor (via Elgin) to identify works on bus routes and ensure data sharing with bus companies	Delivered in February 2022. Now ongoing
		Permanent provision of an Active and Bus Travel Champion within the Network Management Team to support works promoters with active and bus travel mitigations	Ongoing
		Review existing Qualifying Agreement Routes to ensure suitability to bus operators	Delivered January 2022
		Deliver further improvements to Street Manager (working jointly with DfT)	Ongoing
		Promote active and bus travel mitigations via the HAUC local and regional groups	Ongoing
		Ensure that filming and public events on and adjacent to the highway have suitable mitigations for active and bus travel	Ongoing

Objective	Area	Measures	Timescale
		<p>Advise operators of planned works adhering to nationally set notice periods as follows: Minor works – 3 days Standard – 10 days Major – 3 months</p> <p>Together with active engagement with bus operators and Works Promoters on bus mitigations measures to support service provision.</p> <p>Application to the DfT for Lane Rental powers to further enhance the network management function on key routes at key times.</p>	Ongoing
	Parking and Moving Vehicle enforcement	Use intelligence driven data to identify parking and enforcement hot spots across the County and enforce appropriately with particular emphasis on bus routes	Ongoing
		Implement new restrictions (including Controlled Parking Zones) across the County to better manage the flow of traffic with particular emphasis on bus routes	Ongoing
		Introduce physical measures (e.g. ANPR, mobile cameras) to enable enforcement of moving traffic offences including bus stop clearways	Ongoing

Objective	Area	Measures	Timescale
	Highway Asset Management & Maintenance	Give enhanced priority to bus critical infrastructure when identifying maintenance schemes for investment. Commensurate with other needs / demands	Ongoing
		Acknowledge the potentially heightened adverse effect that a safety / serviceability defect can have on the network and its users where bus infrastructure is concerned and to ensure this consideration is reflected in the categorisation of those defects for repair, in line with the Council's adopted policies and risk-based approach	Ongoing
		Ensure that the importance of bus infrastructure is reflected in the Council's updated Strategy and Plan for Highway Asset Management	Published September 2022
		Ensure that the presence of high frequency, premium and otherwise essential bus services is considered in the designation of sub-sets of the highway maintenance network; such as the Winter Service Network and the Resilient Network	Ongoing
Upgrading bus infrastructure	Bus stop accessibility and improvement	Define corridor-based programmes of bus stop improvement measures – shelters, improved signage kerbing, buildouts, lay-by repairs etc	Commenced September 2023
	Real Time Passenger Information	Continued roll-out and replacement of new RTPI screens at key locations	Ongoing
	Traffic signal priority	Installation and upgrades to the existing capability of traffic signals across Oxfordshire using UTC.	March 2025

Objective	Area	Measures	Timescale
Making buses easier to access and understand	Bus network support	Continue to secure S106 funds from development and utilise on bus network support	Ongoing
		Support new rural and community transport services from dedicated budget	Ongoing
	Bus information	New maps and timetables provided with a dedicated budget	Ongoing

ANNEX C: REQUIREMENTS TO BE MET BY LOCAL BUS OPERATORS

Measures that are to be funded through the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA)

Scheme Name	Details	Location	Timescale for delivery
Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA)	<p>Delivery of 159 electric buses, as well as ancillary upgrades to depots, for both Stagecoach and Go-Ahead (Oxford Bus Company). These buses primarily operate within Oxford</p> <p><i>Note: achieving this measure is dependent upon the delivery of works to improve bus productivity by 10% in Oxford SmartZone by Oxfordshire County Council, as outlined in Annex B.</i></p>	Oxford	<p>Vehicle tender award and orders placed: by January 2023</p> <p>Depot works: From 1 April 2023 until Spring 2024</p> <p>Vehicle delivery: From November 2023 to Summer 2024</p>
Youth Fares	<p>Trial of a discounted ticket for persons aged 16 to 18 years old (inclusive). Likely to take the form of a young persons countywide multi operator day and week ticket.</p>	Countywide	<p>Estimated commencement by April 2024</p>

Scheme Name	Details	Location	Timescale for delivery
Oxford Multi-Operator Ticket App	Stagecoach and Go-Ahead (Oxford Bus Company) have developed and will continue to offer multi-operator app ticketing for Oxford Smartzone. This provides multi-operator ticketing through a single user interface, using QR codes.	Oxford	Introduced in August 2022, ongoing offer
Countywide multi operator ticket	All operators to offer the new county wide multi operator day ticket for adults when developed. This may also include a week-long ticket option.	Countywide	Estimated commencement by April 2024
£1 Sundays in December 2023 and 2024	All operators to offer £1 single journeys for the 4 Sundays in December leading up to Christmas in 2023 and 2024.	Countywide	December 2023 and December 2024

Other general measures

Objective	Requirement	Timescale
Keeping buses at the heart of decision-making	Make suitable company officers available for all meetings of the Enhanced Partnership Board, where relevant	Ongoing
Upgrading bus infrastructure	Ensure that Premium Route number grids are updated where a service change involves alterations to route numbers within 10 days	Ongoing
	Ensure that updated timetables are provided at bus stops where a service change involves alterations to timetables within 10 days	Ongoing
Improving the image of buses	All buses operating into Oxford City Centre to meet Euro V emission standards in line with the Low Emission Zone	Completed
	All buses operating into Oxford City Centre to meet Euro VI emission standards in line with Traffic Regulation Condition (TRC)	To be determined subject to the Council's emissions consultation outcome
Making buses easier to access and understand	Proactive marketing and promotion of bus services through appropriate printed and online publicity and local campaigns to raise awareness	Ongoing

ANNEX D: SUMMARY OF FUNDED BSIP SCHEMES (correct as at 20 February 2024)

Category of scheme	Scheme ID	Scheme Name	BSIP Funding allocation	Final delivery date	Who is responsible for delivery	Key Outputs
Bus Priority Infrastructure	OXF01COT	Oxford Traffic Filters	£3,400,000	31/10/2024	OCC	Implementation of traffic filters at 6 locations in the city of Oxford
Bus Priority Infrastructure	OXF01BCB	Cherwell Street, Banbury	£2,300,000	31/03/2025	OCC	Implementation of various bus priority infrastructure on and around Cherwell Street in Banbury
Bus Priority Infrastructure	OXF01CSU	Countywide Traffic Signals	£1,243,028	31/03/2025	OCC	Installation of and upgrades to traffic signals to provide priority to buses at various junctions
Bus Service Support	OXF04SBP	SBSF Services	£754,645	28/08/2022	OCC	Continuation of the services which were reintroduced using Supported Bus Services Fund as set out in Annex B
Bus Service Support	OXF04CBB	Bicester – Brackley Service	£416,000	05/06/2023	OCC	The provision of a new bus service as set out in Annex B
Bus Service Support	OXF04NHD	Newbury – Harwell – Didcot service	£205,000	24/07/2023	OCC	The provision of a new bus service as set out in Annex B
Bus Service Support	OXF04FSO	Financial support for Oxford bus network – 4A, 5A, 33 – and X40	£233,568	28/08/2023	OCC	Financial support for bus services as set out in Annex B
Bus Service Support	OXF04X4B	Express X4 Banbury to Oxford	£129,834	04/09/2023	OCC	The provision of a new bus service as set out in Annex B
Bus Service Support	OXF04NRB	New rural bus services	£519,335	26/11/2023	OCC	The provision of new bus services as set out in Annex B
Bus Service Support	OXF04OOS	Retention and improvement of Oxford orbital services, including new weekend services	£415,442	26/11/2023	OCC	Financial support for the 700 and increased frequencies at weekends
Bus Service Support	OXF04WES	West Oxfordshire to Swindon bus service	£255,000	27/11/2023	OCC	The provision of a new bus service as set out in Annex B
Bus Service Support	OXF04X40	X40 bus route enhancement	£214,285	31/10/2024	OCC	Enhancements to the X40 as set out in Annex B

Bus Service Support	OXF04S25	Enhancement to service 25 (Reading – Sonning Common)	£130,000	01/09/2024	OCC	Enhancements to service 25 as set out in Annex B
Bus Service Support	OXF04SX1	Express SX1 Carterton to Oxford	£249,353	01/04/2024	OCC	The provision of a new bus service as set out in Annex B
EP Delivery: LTA Costs	OXF05LID	Additional staffing - Lead Officer (Infrastructure Delivery)	£114,444	11/09/2023	OCC	The employ of a Lead Officer for Infrastructure Delivery at the Council
EP Delivery: LTA Costs	OXF05LSI	Additional staffing - Lead Officer (Service Improvements)	£171,666	11/09/2023	OCC	The employ of a Lead Officer for Service Improvements at the Council
EP Delivery: LTA Costs	OXF05LNM	Additional staffing - Lead Officer (Network Management)	£137,272	25/09/2023	OCC	The employ of a Lead Officer for Network Management at the Council
Fares Support	OXF04CFS	Countywide multi operator day ticket	£100,000	01/04/2024	OCC and bus operators	The introduction of a new countywide multi operator day ticket
Fares Support	OXF061SD	£1 fares on Sundays in December 2023 and 2024	£200,000	03/12/2023	OCC and bus operators	Offer £1 journeys on the 4 Sundays leading up to Christmas in Dec 23 and 24
Fares Support	OXF06YOU	Youth Fares	£1,543,531	01/04/2024	OCC and bus operators	The introduction of a new discounted youth ticket product
Marketing	OXF07JOP	Journey Planning	£100,000	31/03/2025	OCC (and bus operators where appropriate)	Completion of research into travel to work behaviours, including barriers and motivations for bus use
Other Infrastructure	OXF02RTI	RTPI Upgrade	£1,800,000	31/03/2025	OCC	Installation and upgrade of RTPI screens across the County
Ticketing Reform	OXF03MOA	Multi-operator ticketing app	operator funded	01/08/2022	Bus operators	Main bus operators to offer multi-operator app ticketing for Oxford Smartzone

ANNEX E: OXFORDSHIRE BUS PASSENGER CHARTER

Introduction

This Bus Passenger Charter applies to bus services across Oxfordshire that are covered as part of the Oxfordshire Enhanced Bus Partnership. This charter sets out what you can expect from your local bus operator and local council, how operators and Oxfordshire County Council (the County Council) will put things right when things go wrong, and your rights as a passenger. It also sets out how you can make the most of riding buses across Oxfordshire.

Both the County Council and local bus operators work in partnership to make buses better for you. But each have their own distinct responsibilities in doing so. As a general rule, anything to do with infrastructure (e.g. bus stops) is a matter dealt with by the County Council, and anything to do with the buses and bus services themselves is dealt with by the operator of that bus service.

This Bus Passenger Charter is intended as a *minimum standard* for bus services in Oxfordshire. Individual bus operators and the County Council may have their own passenger or customer service charters that go above and beyond these minimum standards. Both the County Council and local bus operators commit to exceeding these minimum standards where feasible to do so.

What you as a passenger can expect from bus operators

Local bus operators are the companies that run local bus services themselves, either commercially or under a contract. On all services, you can expect the following.

Buses will be safe, clean, and comfortable

All local bus operators commit to providing the highest standard of service every day. Buses will be cleaned every day before starting service, and where possible will be cleaned during the day.

All buses are maintained by skilled staff to ensure that they provide a comfortable journey, including checking heating, cooling, and lighting. Drivers also receive training to ensure that they provide you with a safe and comfortable journey, and make you feel welcome when getting on board.

Should you feel unsafe or have an emergency, you should contact the driver when it is safe to do so. All our bus companies work with the Police and other safety agencies to ensure that your journey is safe.

Many buses are fitted with CCTV for your safety, with recordings of people on buses kept in line with best practice guidance from the Information Commissioners Office. There should be signs on board the bus indicating if the bus has CCTV or not.

All bus operator staff are trained to ensure that your safety and comfort come first. Every bus company wants to ensure you enjoy travelling with them, and to make your

journey a pleasant experience. All drivers receive training in addition to the statutory minimum requirements to improve their customer service.

We aim to ensure that the service is reliable, and keep you informed during times of disruption

Sometimes buses do get delayed, and for a variety of reasons. The most common cause of delays is traffic. The County Council is the local highway authority for Oxfordshire and has a statutory duty to ensure that traffic moves freely on the local highway network.

Both the County Council and local bus operators will work together to identify areas of the County where traffic congestion is making buses unreliable. They will then work together to make improvements to roads that will make buses more reliable. The County Council will then look to make highway improvements in those areas that improve the reliability of buses. In all of its highway improvements, the Council will ensure that improving the reliability of buses is considered as a high priority. In making those improvements, the County Council will consult with bus passengers as part of statutory consultations as a minimum.

Local bus operators will do their utmost to keep to the timetables advertised. You should expect that no bus service should run any more than one minute early, or five minutes late. The reliability of bus services is regularly monitored, and issues reported to the Area Traffic Commissioner.

In the event of delays occurring, both the County Council and bus operators will endeavour to keep you informed, and to help you on your journey. In the first instance, we will attempt to inform you before your journey starts. Such disruption will be communicated by either bus operators or the County Council to local media, the local real time information system, Traveline, and to other organisations. Information on such disruption will also be posted on social media through the accounts of operators and Oxfordshire County Council.

Many buses also report disruption in real time through a live data feed. This means that you may be able to check delays to services through an online journey planner, such as Traveline or Google Maps. Local bus operators and the County Council will do everything possible to ensure that this data is accurate and up-to-date.

At some of the busier bus stops, real time running screens may be provided that will provide details of any delays to service. The County Council will ensure that the screens are well maintained, are visible, meet the highest standards of accessibility, and contain up-to-date information on any delays to services. The County Council will also seek to increase the number of bus stops that have real time screens at them.

If disruption happens when you are on the bus, your driver will do what they can to keep you informed about the delays. This is subject to it being safe for them to do so while driving.

Sometimes, delays can be predicted, for example through planned road closures. Both the County Council and local bus operators will advertise the planned disruption as far

in advance as possible, including details of proposed diversions. Where bus stops will be closed or routes diverted, the County Council will ensure that this is advertised at the affected stops in advance.

We will make it easy for you to find out how to travel by bus

Both the County Council and local bus operators want to make it easy for you to find out when buses run, where to, and how much they cost.

Both bus operators and the County Council will publish timetable, fares, and real time running information online in compliance with the requirements of the Bus Services Act 2017. Information on services and fares will also be provided on the websites of local bus operators and the County Council.

Each bus stop will contain up-to-date timetable information and route maps for services serving that stop. At stops where real time screens are provided, the information will be up-to-date and based on real time running of buses serving that stop. Where real time running by a service (for example there may be issues with the data feed from the bus), the timetabled departure time will be shown on the real time screen.

Each bus will have the ultimate destination and service number on the front of the bus, and the service number will be displayed on the rear of the bus as well. The service number and destination may also be shown on the side of the bus.

Local bus operators and the County Council will also publish timetables on their respective websites, and route maps. Both will also endeavour to ensure that these are also provided at local travel information points, bus stations, and railway stations.

Local bus information may also be provided through other parties, such as online journey planners. Both the County Council and local bus operators will work with these providers to ensure that information provided to them is up-to-date. However, the accuracy of any information given to you by these parties is their responsibility.

You can also get service information through Traveline: telephone 0871 200 2233, text 82468 from bus stops showing a text code or online at www.traveline.info.

Notification of service changes will be available at least 21 days in advance and information will be supplied to customers, on request, by post. Notices will also be available on buses.

We will help you travel with confidence

Both the County Council and the local bus operators want to make using the bus available to the widest possible range of people. Everybody should be able to use their local bus service.

All people should be able to easily board buses at their local bus stop and access information in an accessible way. All bus stops on major routes have raised kerbs that allow for level boarding. When the County Council upgrades bus stops, it will ensure

that level boarding is provided at those stops. All bus information at the stop will be clear and legible.

Bus companies are required to run accessible buses, and give accessibility training to all staff. Local buses will provide accessible seating near the entrance to the bus which prioritises disabled and elderly customers. All bus operators will make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of individual customers, as per the requirements of the Equalities Act.

All bus operators will give training to staff in helping people with disabilities to travel on buses. This training will be kept up to date and be regularly undertaken.

Both the County Council and local bus operators will provide dedicated helplines and support for people with disabilities. Local timetable and fare information will be provided in accessible format on request, for example in large print or Braille.

What happens when things go wrong

Occasionally things will go wrong, despite our best efforts. We will do what we can to put things right for you when they do go wrong, and here we set out how we plan to do this.

If there is a problem with the infrastructure, you should contact the County Council

Infrastructure such as bus stops and roads can get damaged and fall into disrepair. Should a bus stop be damaged in any way, it should be reported to the County Council's Highways Team. This can be done online through <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/contactus/contact-highways-team>. You can also write to the County Council at County Hall, New Road, Oxford, OX1 1ND.

If there is a problem with the bus service, you should contact the bus operator

All local bus operators must provide you with their contact information on request. Each local bus operator must make available to you details of their complaints and customer service process, and be easy for you to contact them. They should tell you clearly how your issue should be dealt with.

If you are seeking a refund on your fare, the bus operator must make this process clear to you.

What you can do if your matter is not dealt with in a way that is to your satisfaction

If your issue is to do with bus stops or infrastructure and has not been dealt with in a way that is to your satisfaction, the County Council has a formal complaint procedure. You should report your complaint via the County Council website in the first instance at <https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/generalcomplaintform>. Once you contact the County Council it will respond to you within three days, to find out more about your complaint and let you know how the County Council will work with you to resolve it.

Should your complaint to the County Council not be resolved to your satisfaction, you may be able to appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman. To find out more and to take your issue further, look at their website at www.lgo.org.uk, and their telephone number is 0300 061 0614.

If your issue is to do with the bus service or bus, and the operator has not dealt with the matter to your satisfaction, you have the option of approaching Bus Users UK, who will try to resolve the issue for you. Their website is www.bususers.org, and their telephone number is 0300 111 0001.

Bus Users UK may refer your complaint to the Bus Appeals Body, whose website is www.busappealsbody.co.uk. Local bus companies are expected to act on the Bus Appeals Body's recommendations.

Your legal rights

When travelling on local buses, you have several legal rights that we would like to make you aware of.

All passengers on local buses have the right to:

- Non-discrimination with respect to tariffs and contract conditions based, directly or indirectly, on nationality;
- Non-discrimination of anyone with a disability or restricted mobility as well as financial compensation for loss or damage of their mobility equipment in case of accident;
- Adequate information throughout your trip;
- Minimum rules on travel information before and during your journey as well as general information about your rights in terminals and online;
- A complaint handling mechanism by operators made available to you;
- Contact details of an Enforcement Body, responsible for enforcing passenger rights regulations and, where appropriate, imposing penalties.

If you are elderly and of the State Pensionable Age:

- You can apply for a bus pass. If you meet the criteria, the County Council must issue you a pass. Information on how to apply for a bus pass can be found on the County Council website at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/public-transport/bus-passes/older-persons-bus-pass.
- Local buses must accept the bus pass and allow you to travel for free with this pass so long as you are eligible for it, and you travel on a weekday after 9:30am and anytime on a Saturday, Sunday, or Public Holiday. Some bus operators may extend this free travel period to include weekdays before 9:30am, but this is entirely at their own discretion.

If you have a disability:

- Buses designed to carry over 22 passengers on local and scheduled routes must comply with the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR);

- Drivers of buses must provide disabled passengers with certain types of assistance for example deploy boarding ramps and lifts when required, provide wheelchair users with assistance to board or alight the vehicle etc.
- For infrastructure, the County Council is subject to the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and has a duty to make reasonable adjustments;
- The Equality Act 2010 also outlines that transport operators must make reasonable adjustments for disabled passengers;
- If you are eligible for a statutory bus pass and you meet the criteria, then the County Council must provide you with it. Information on how to apply for a bus pass can be found on the County Council website at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/public-transport/bus-passes/disabled-persons-bus-pass.
- If you cannot travel on your own, you may be eligible for a companion bus pass, which allows them to travel with you for free and must be accepted by bus operators, although your companion cannot travel on their own. Information on how to apply for a companion pass can be found on the County Council website at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/public-transport/bus-passes/companion-bus-pass.
- Local buses must accept the bus pass and allow you to travel for free with this pass so long as you are eligible for it, and you travel on a weekday after 9:00am and anytime on a Saturday, Sunday, or Public Holiday. Some bus operators may extend this free travel period to include weekdays before 9:00am, but this is entirely at their own discretion.