
NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY TARGET PROGRESS – OCTOBER 2023 WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL

The Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) identifies a number of targets.

Progress against those targets is reported below.

The Enhanced Partnership between the Council and the bus operators has been successful in being awarded £2.6m from the Department for Transport, for spending by March 2025. The funding has been released and the Council has begun the process of using the monies to improve bus services.

A service between Harwell Science & Innovation Campus and Newbury has been introduced, we have also introduced a late evening service between Newbury and Thatcham on Fridays & Saturdays and have bought back a Sunday bus service between Mortimer and Reading.

In May 2023 the Council was awarded an additional £239,039 for both 2023/24 and 2024/25 as part of the BSIP scheme.

It is intended that these monies will be spent on ensuring the continuation of the existing bus network, looking at service enhancements and introduction of late evening/Sunday services.

For more information on targets, and proposals that may lead to improvements, please refer to the 2023 BSIP.

1. Journey time

A method of calculating an overall target for journey time was considered by the EP Forum in October 2022, however it was felt that the Partnership would be better served by examining point-to-point journey times regularly instead.

Point-to-point journey times have been provided for a 4-week period in February 2023, however, having collated these extensive datasets it is considered that we may be better placed to focus on bus corridors in the district specified for priority measures.

Agreement was provided at the May 2023 EP Forum. This data will be used to inform future actions to improve reliability and journey speeds.

The Council is now looking at how this target can be achieved.

2. Reliability

We are monitoring reliability and will increase future targets if current rates improve. It is already noticeable that reliability is being affected again as more people return to normal life following the covid pandemic. Essential roadworks across the district have also contributed to a decrease in reliability levels. Data is recorded quarterly.

The Council is working with the operator to review the timetables for the new X34 service to improve reliability on this Newbury-Harwell corridor and are delivering on the first phase of congestion hotspot (clearways) works to assist with reliability in the Newbury and Hungerford areas.

Reliability	Actuals 2018/19	Actuals 2019/20	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/23	6 months to 30 Sept 2023	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30
Start	89.1%	88.8%	94.0%	91.5%	85.9%	90%	92%
Overall	85.4%	83.8%	89.1%	84.9%	84.5%	85%	87%
Eastern Area overall	Not recorded		88.3%	86.2%	85.8%	86%	88%

3. Passenger growth

The Eastern Area is composed of Purley on Thames, Tilehurst, Calcot and Theale. The data is estimated until the end of Q1 2022/23, with boarding details captured after this.

To boost passenger numbers, we launched a Connect Group Day Ticket (unlimited travel for up to 4 people), an Early Bird Concessionary Fare Ticket, operators have taken part in the National £2 fare cap scheme, we also provided free bus travel on World Car Free Day 2023.

Passenger numbers	Actuals 2018/19	Actuals 2019/20	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/2023	6 months to Sept. 2023	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30
Whole of WBC	2,342,715	2,222,530	1,555,987	1,987,043	1,053,678	2,300,000	2,500,000
Eastern Area (est.)	1,020,320	968,025	702,548	816,537	479,266	1,000,000	1,050,000

4. Customer satisfaction

From 2022, the Council's annual survey captures a satisfaction rating, which can identify the satisfaction of existing users as well as all respondents. In 2023 we also asked about satisfaction with the last journey made following a suggestion via the Enhanced Partnership Forum, as it was felt this would give a more accurate comparison with the Transport Focus surveys undertaken in other parts of the country.

For a further breakdown of satisfaction please refer to the 2023 BSIP document section 5.8 for more detail.

It is disappointing that overall satisfaction has dropped since last year. Satisfaction is still higher than 2021/22 for value (more than double) in relation to time on bus and

information. Satisfaction with the waiting environment continues to drop, and this needs to be an area of focus for the Council.

Customer Satisfaction	Actuals 2018/19	Actuals 2019/20	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/23	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30
Council survey (bus users)	No survey		65.9%	59.7% (71.1%)	67.9%	69.9%
Council survey (all respondents)	No survey		46.8%	43.6% (70.6%)	Not set	
NHT survey (all respondents)	60%	n/a	59%	56%	62%	64%

Note: The figures in brackets under the 2022/23 satisfaction results relate to last journey made satisfaction.

5. Vehicle emissions

Very few buses in West Berkshire are older than Euro V emission standards. These older vehicles tend to be used more sparingly.

Vehicle Emissions	Actuals 2018/19	Actuals 2019/20	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/2023	6 months to 30 Sept 2023	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30
At least Euro V	Not recorded			96%	95%	All vehicles	
At least Euro VI	Not recorded			49%	77%		All vehicles