

# Notes of West Berkshire Enhanced Partnership Forum

Thursday 6 February 2024 - Forum No. 9

Present were representatives of:

- Bus operators (Reading Buses, Thames Travel, Stagecoach South, and West Berkshire Council)
- West Berkshire Council (Network Management, Transport Services)
- Community Transport Operators (Volunteer Centre West Berkshire)

The Service Lead for Highways and Transport Innovation from West Berkshire Council chaired the meeting.

Notes from Forum No. 8 in September 2024 were agreed.

## Matters arising from previous Forum, which are not covered in the agenda:

- Annual Bus Survey – results to be incorporated in BSIP refresh. **ACTION: WBC**

## Documentation & Funding:

- **2024/2025 Funding** – Fares schemes must be paid for/finished by 31 March 2025; other revenue/capital support to continue until March 2026 subject to commitment being made by the 31 March 2025. New PAR process in place, no need to raise PAR for smaller fund reallocation (under £5 million), still required for transferring funding between capital and revenue projects.
- **BSIP Refresh** – BSIP 2025 being updated to reflect current position. **ACTION: WBC**
- **Bus Grant 2025/2026 allocation and delivery plan** – Delivery plan to be submitted to DfT by 31 March 2025, BSIP and BSOG payment depends on submission. **ACTION: WBC**

## BSIP Targets:

- **April 2025 Targets Report** – 6 monthly BSIP target report to be published in April 2025, includes, patronage/passenger growth, punctuality/reliability and vehicle emissions at least Euro VI. Operators to send in data in March/early April. **ACTION: WBC & Ops**

## BSIP Scheme Progress:

- **BP3. Robin Hood & BP4. Bath Road Calcot** – Looking at procurement process for traffic signal priority. To be finalised before end of March 2025. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BP5. Congestion Hotspots** – Phase 3 Congestion hotspots completed, Phase 4 planned and work to begin in March 2025. Previous phases have seen to have positive affect. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BP6. Passenger Waiting Facilities** – Programme for phase 1 agreed including 22 shelters, SLA has been finalised, 2 parishes so far paid and 4 RTP1 screens have been installed. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BS2. Thatcham Connect** –service launched on 4 November 2024 alongside fixed route services CCB and CCC. Northwest Downlands service has been operating for over 12 months so a review of the service is to be conducted **ACTION: WBC**
- **BP7. Mortimer Station Bus Turning Facility** – Feasibility study ongoing, data has been provided, site visit undertaken, traffic survey commissioned. No stand out location identified, report to be finalised by March 2025.
- **FT1. Fares/Ticketing**
  - Christmas Free Bus Travel - Positively received, seen to provide good support for local economy.
  - TOTO – In process of installing on in house vehicles. **ACTION: WBC**
  - Zonal Fare Scheme – Plans to introduce Connect Urban, Connect Rural and Connect West Berkshire as flat single fare tickets. To introduce from April 2025. WBC to ensure the fare changes don't impact any operators with participation in £3 fare cap scheme **ACTION: WBC**

## Operators Comments/Feedback:

- **Updates on passenger levels/services/vehicles/reliability –**
  - Reading Buses – significant investment in Jet-black and Newbury & District fleet, all buses Euro VI excluding 2 used for the Vodafone service which are Euro V, Passenger levels on local network are doing well, 1e had good launch and passenger levels are stable, positive feedback for Lime 2a Sunday extension.
  - Thames Travel continuing introduction of Euro VI vehicles, repainting to be done on some vehicles. Patronage on revised X34 route via Donnington growing.
  - Stagecoach – Patronage on 32 service growing, positive numbers on Sundays, concerns about punctuality.
- **£2/£3 fare cap –** Slight reduction on patronage following fare cap rise, difficult to fully attribute to the cap rise due to usual decrease in patronage over January.
- **Other –** Concerns raised about punctuality of services across network

## 2025/26 BSIP Proposals:

- Draft delivery plan presented, operators made comments and suggestions; costs to be provided by operators by 28 Feb. **ACTION: Ops**

## Other Issues:

- **Tendered Network Review –** Review underway looking at potential changes to be implemented September 2025 and impacts of new developments. Due to be complete end of March 2025 **ACTION: WBC**
- **EP Plan and Scheme variation requests –** Consider link to 25/26 delivery plan. **ACTION: WBC**
- **Bus services for days out in West Berkshire –** information on [West Berkshire Council](#) website highlighting using buses to explore district. WBC to forward link to operators. **ACTION: WBC**
- **[Report a Problem](#) –** request for operators to use website. **ACTION: Ops**
- **Kennet Heath Bus Gate Transponder –** Improvements being considered, request for operators to check if tags are working properly before reporting to WBC **ACTION: Ops**
- **S106 funding for Speen –** funding available for Community Bus services in Speen. **ACTION: CT**
- **4c bus service changes –** feedback on changes to 4c morning service for Schools.
- **Concessionary Fares Companion Passes –** decision due 13 February 2025.

## Any Other Business:

**English Devolution White Paper –** information provided about Government announcement in December 2024.

Next Forum scheduled for 13:30 on Thursday 22nd May 2025 at Shaw House, Church Road, Newbury, RG14 2DR

## Abbreviations:

|      |                              |       |                           |
|------|------------------------------|-------|---------------------------|
| BCA  | Bus Connectivity Assessment  | PSVAR | Public Service Vehicle    |
| BSIP | Bus Service Improvement Plan |       | Accessibility Regulations |
| BSOG | Bus Services Operators Grant | RB    | Reading Buses             |
| CT   | Community Transport          | RTPI  | Real-Time Passenger       |
| DfT  | Department for Transport     |       | Information               |
| DRT  | Demand Responsive Transport  | S106  | Section 106               |
| EP   | Enhanced Partnership         | SLA   | Service Level Agreement   |
| GWR  | Great Western Railway        | TOTO  | Tap-on/Tap-off            |
| Ops  | All Operators                | WBC   | West Berkshire Council    |
| PAR  | Project Adjustment Request   | WBCC  | West Berkshire Community  |
|      |                              |       | Connect                   |