

# West Cheshire Bus Service Improvement Plan

## Bus Back Better

### First Annual Update



Publication Date 2 December 2022



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# Cheshire West & Chester Council

## Leader's Office

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Date: 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Rt Hon Mark Harper MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

## Dear Secretary of State,

I am delighted to present to you our first annual update of our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for Cheshire West and Chester.

Although, many have found the last twelve months challenging, and the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has not yet been fully completed, we have made some fantastic progress towards delivering the strategy and implementing the real and lasting change that the travelling public wish to see, starting with the formal consultation on and establishment of our first Enhanced Partnership (EP) with our main commercial bus operators.

As part of this process, we have now constituted both an EP Forum and a voting EP Board which has allowed us to commence implementation of some of the key elements of our BSIP, delivering on the priorities you rightly articulated in the National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better' in March 2021.

Since the making of the EP, we have jointly administered a programme to provide free travel to incoming visitors from both Afghanistan and Ukraine, promoted offers to encourage the return to bus of key parts of the market including concessionary pass holders and Park & Ride users. We have continued with our fortnightly working groups, agreeing the role and remit of our Enhanced Partnership officer post, soon to be advertised, continued with drafting our Bus Passenger Charter to be adopted at our next EP Board meeting, and committed to further data and insight gathering with Passenger Focus to inform future iterations of this Plan.



Cheshire West  
and Chester

We have much work to do, and some real challenges with regard to funding to overcome, but we are confident that, with your support, our first-class strategy will allow us to deliver the BSIP, prioritising the improvements that will add the most benefit to people's lives whether they be current or future bus users.

We continue to see growth in passenger numbers after the pandemic, giving us confidence that we can reach and exceed pre-pandemic levels of use, attracting ever more users to this sustainable and convenient mode of transport, and helping to secure our future for generations to come. Devolved powers and associated multi-year funding allocation would only strengthen our limitless ambition.

The Council that I am privileged to lead, is fully supportive of this updated BSIP, and we look forward to working with you over the next year to progress further with the strategy it lays down, delivering ever more of the measures and packages that are required to give us a bus network of which we can all be proud

Yours sincerely



Councillor Louise Gittins  
Leader - Cheshire West and Chester Council



Cheshire West  
and Chester

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) Enhanced Partnership is pleased to provide the first Annual Update of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to the Department for Transport (DfT) to present and explain our ambitious plans for the ongoing development of bus in our borough. This vital plan outlines how we intend to provide a transformational enhancement to the quality, frequency, useability and legibility of local bus services. This is presented in line with the Government’s ambitious National Bus Strategy ‘Bus Back Better’.

We have used our original October 2021 BSIP as a template for the document but have made some significant changes in line with comments received from DfT and to update with the latest bus usage information where available. The changes made since the first edition of the BSIP are summarised in the following table:

**Table 0.1: Changes made to the first BSIP for this first annual update**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Changes from October 2021 BSIP</b>
1.1	Minor updates to reflect 2022 position
1.2	Minor updates to reflect 2022 position
1.3	Minor updates to reflect 2022 position
1.4	Minor updates to reflect 2022 position
1.5	Updated to reflect establishment of Enhanced Partnership
1.6	No material change
2.1	Updated to reflect 2022 position
2.2	Updated to reflect 2022 position
2.3	Minor updates to reflect 2022 position
2.4	Minor updates to reflect 2022 position



2.5	Minor updates to reflect 2022 position
2.6	New section to summarise changes in bus demand
2.7	No material change
3.1	No material change
3.2	No material change
3.3	No material change
3.4	Minor updates to reflect 2022 position
3.5	Updated to reflect 2022 position
3.6	Updated to reflect 2022 position with newly revised targets for 2024/25, and new targets for 2029/30.
4.1	Minor updates to reflect 2022 position
4.2	Minor updates to reflect 2022 position
4.3	No material change
4.4	Updated to reflect 2022 position
4.5	New section
4.6	No material change
5.1	Updated to reflect 2022 position
5.2	Updated to reflect 2022 position
6	Updated to reflect 2022 position

### Bus Review Task Group

The BSIP follows from the excellent running start provided by the Council's cross-party Bus Review Task Group in 2020 and early 2021. This group pre-emptively engaged in baseline review, consultation and workshopping activities to ultimately identify a number of key priorities for investment in advance of the publication of the National Bus Strategy.



## **Collaborative Approach**

Our plan has been produced and updated with bus operators themselves in a fully collaborative and open-book manner. This ensures that we prioritise the right actions to: continue to stabilise the bus network against future cuts and decline, facilitating a full recovery from the worst impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic to create a platform from which to build; and then grow the network, bolstering frequencies to create a good level of service throughout the day and week while simultaneously enhancing the quality and identity as one cohesive network. We aim to improve value for money, and simplify both fares and ticket delivery to remove a critical barrier against use by members of the public. This collaboration now has a formal basis, with the formation of an Enhanced Partnership completed in Spring 2022. This will provide the framework for many future joint operations including marketing campaigns to improve the information that the public have access to on their services.

## **Consultation**

The first BSIP was produced following a period of comprehensive consultation with the public via a widely available online survey. The survey has enjoyed an excellent rate of completion with responses received from individuals as well as representatives of local businesses, charitable and community organisations, local campaign and political groups, and third sector organisations. In this way we can be confident that we have addressed the burning issues for the current and potential users of bus services, reducing the barriers to bus use as much as possible and targeting interventions to ensure a mode-shift to bus from the private car. Therefore, we confidently put forward a plan to facilitate increased take-up of bus services into the future.

## **Priorities for the BSIP**

The priorities for this transformational plan, as derived from the collaborative work with bus operators, the previous Bus Review Task Group work, and consultation with the public and local organisations are as follows:

**Figure 0.1: Cheshire West and Chester BSIP Priorities**



## Existing Context

The current provision of bus service varies greatly across the borough and by time of day, with urban centres well served during the day but much lower levels of service during evenings and Sundays. Smaller towns and rural areas are relatively poorly served throughout the week. A key issue is the lack of available funding at a local level to support commercially unviable routes and this will need significant future consideration, both in terms of stabilising the network, and growing it for the future.

The decline in bus patronage in Cheshire West and Chester in recent years has been substantial and more severe than for England as a whole. While bus services generally operate reliably and punctually, the number of bus journeys per head is lower in CW&C than many comparable local authorities. The results of the public engagement survey offer some insight into the reasons for this, with comparative journey times, operating times and accessibility to desired destinations cited as the most common reasons for people not using the bus. Lack of a combined source of information is also a key explanatory factor for this. Table 0.2 shows the current performance of the bus network in CW&C compared to the aspirations set out in the Bus Back Better strategy.

**Table 0.2: Comparison of Current Bus Network Performance with Bus Back Better Aspirations**

<b>The Buses We Want (From Bus Back Better, 2021)</b>	<b>Currently met in CW&amp;C?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Frequent	X	Bus routes in CW&C have an average frequency of 1.8 per hour although there are some services at 4 or even 6 per hour by exception.
Fast and Reliable	X	Bus journey times generally compare poorly with the private car and the lack of bus priority outside Chester makes reliability vulnerable to delay at pinch points.
Cheap	X	Bus fares are generally high compared with the cost of motoring and compare unfavourably against parking costs, even in Chester City Centre.
Comprehensive	X	Many parts of the borough are poorly served by buses with some of the smaller villages receiving no service.
Easy to understand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accurate information</li> <li>- Common numbering</li> <li>- Local branding</li> <li>- Good evening and weekend frequencies</li> <li>- High frequency trunk services</li> <li>- Multi-operator ticketing</li> <li>- Co-ordinated timetable changes</li> <li>- Heavy promotion and marketing</li> </ul>	X	Fewer than half of bus stops have timetable information within the borough.  Multiple use of the same route numbers due to multiple local depot locations and little common branding.  Poor evening and weekend frequencies.  Multi-operator ticketing only on Blacon Pointer.  No formal coordination of timetable changes.  Limited promotion and marketing e.g. lack of marketing of PlusBus initiative and correspondingly poor uptake.
Easy to use	X	Large number of operators, fares and tickets, and limited online or app-based information.

The Buses We Want (From Bus Back Better, 2021)	Currently met in CW&C?	Comment
Good to ride in	X	Vehicles are of mixed quality, with some high quality and relatively new vehicles, while others are older models cascaded from other areas.
Integrated with other modes	X	Little integration between bus and other modes with limited interchange information even at major rail stations. Limited integration with Park & Ride due to historic consideration of the networks as distinct and separate.
Green	✓	Many vehicles do meet Euro VI standards, but further improvement is necessary and desirable to reduce the polluting and carbon impact of the local network.
Accessible and inclusive	✓	All vehicles are accessible with space for wheelchairs etc. Some have full kneeling technology for almost level boarding.
Innovative	X	Limited investment in innovative new bus solutions due to lack of available budget.
Safe	✓	Vehicles generally have CCTV and are well lit.

### Vision for the bus network

We have drawn on numerous local and national sources, including the National Bus Strategy itself, to outline the following clear vision for future bus transport in Cheshire West and Chester.

- **“To make bus a mode of choice for the full cross-section of society by removing barriers to travel and making buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper.**
- **To build in greater levels of community involvement, to both reverse the recent shift in journeys away from public transport and encourage**

**passengers back to bus, and also to improve on pre-pandemic levels of service.**

- **To create a network that supports the Council’s strategic priorities of tackling climate change; growing the local economy and delivering secure jobs; supporting children and young people to get the best start in life; supporting older residents and rural communities; and enabling more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives”.**

In essence, we have ambitions to make the bus network in Cheshire West and Chester a true exemplar for mixed urban and rural areas, with reliable and frequent services, targeted bus priority, a unified network, improved fares and ticketing, high levels of connectivity with other modes such as rail and active travel, and excellent levels of information.

## **Targets**

We have identified a number of targets for the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership that cover the CW&C area as a whole. In line with guidance, we will work to report performance, where possible, against these targets every six months, and update the targets annually.

The specific targets selected for the first annual update to the BSIP are as follows. It should be noted that the target for passenger growth by 2024/25 has been reduced slightly since the first BSIP issue, due to slower than expected passenger recovery post-pandemic and in light of the lack of funding awarded so far to support the measures contained within the BSIP.

**Table 0.3: Cheshire West and Chester Initial BSIP Targets**

BSIP Target Area	Current performance (latest evidence year stated)	Specific Target (2024/25)	Future Target (2029/30)
Passenger Growth	9.1 million pax per year (2019/20)	6% growth (9.9 million pax per year)	12% growth (10.4 million pax per year) – assumes linear growth
Passenger Satisfaction	87% overall satisfaction level (2018/19)	92% overall satisfaction level	95% overall satisfaction level – in line with best performing national comparators
Reliability	86% bus services on time (2018/19)	90% bus services on time	95% bus services on time – in line with neighbouring authorities
Journey Time	-	No increase for all routes with a frequency of 2 buses per hour or more	No increase for all routes with a frequency of 2 buses per hour or more – assumes no deterioration in journey times

## Delivery

Building on the work undertaken by the Bus Review Task Group in 2020 and early 2021, the BSIP process has identified a series of core actions. These may be broken down into three specific timescales as detailed below

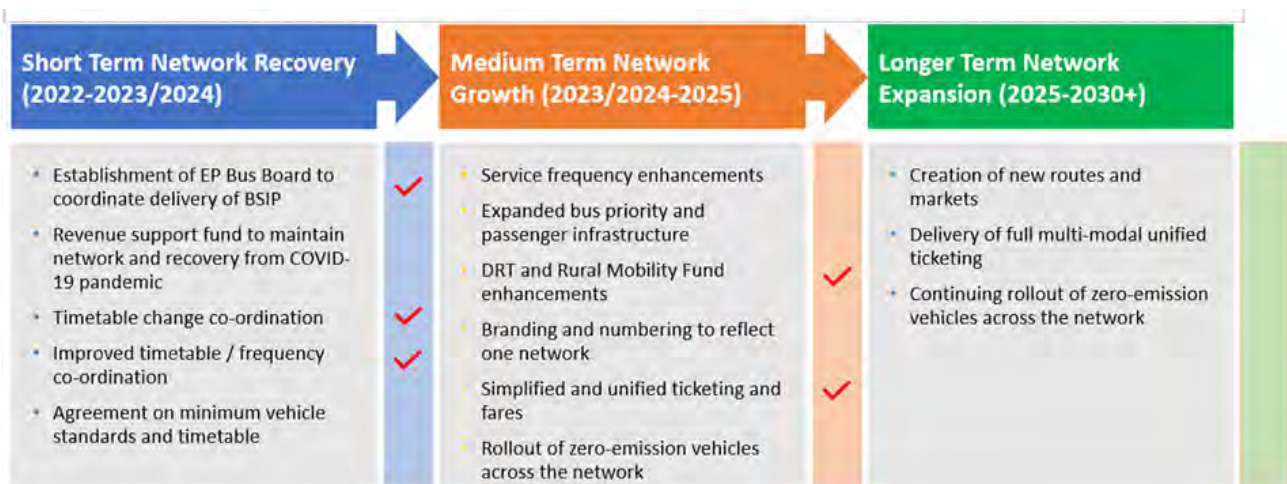
- Short Term Network Recovery (2022-2023/24) – covering the actions required to continue to progress towards a full network recovery to pre-pandemic patronage levels,

stabilising the network, commencing work on simplification of network, timetables, fares, and information, and providing a platform for growth.

- Medium Term Network Growth (2023/24-2025) – focusing on improvements to daytime frequencies on key corridors for growth and in extending evening and Sunday periods where bus service levels currently fall away sharply. Investment will also be made in creating a significantly more unified product for bus with elements of common branding, ticketing, and common numbering protocols. Utilisation of ZEBRA funding or similar future sources to acquire and begin rollout of zero emissions vehicles across the network.
- Long Term Network Expansion (2025+) – outside of the scope of this BSIP, it is anticipated that the network will be expanded further with new routes and services added, providing enhanced coverage to areas that are not currently well served. In this longer-term timescale, further innovations will become fully embedded into the everyday experience of bus passengers including multi-modal ticketing and integration with full inter-availability and value for money fare capping for local journeys.

These three timescales and the core measures proposed for each are shown in the following figure in which ticks are provided to highlight the elements that are already being progressed in some form (November 2022).

**Figure 0.2: Five Year Delivery Plan**





The actions proposed within the initial BSIP for CW&C, and continued within this first annual update, aim to deliver a transformational change in the cohesiveness, attractiveness, coverage and quality of the local bus network. We present in this plan an ambitious but realistic set of activities, actions and interventions to address the issues on the ground and deliver change, responding to every aspect of the National Bus Strategy. We still believe to deliver this change, the network must first be stabilised and recovered from the scarring impact on passenger behaviours from the pandemic, particularly among concessionary pass holders whereon demand is significantly impacted. This will then provide a firm platform from which the planned network growth and expansion can be delivered to facilitate a new era of growth in sustainable bus travel in Cheshire West and Chester to support wider economic, environmental and social goals.

# 1 Overview

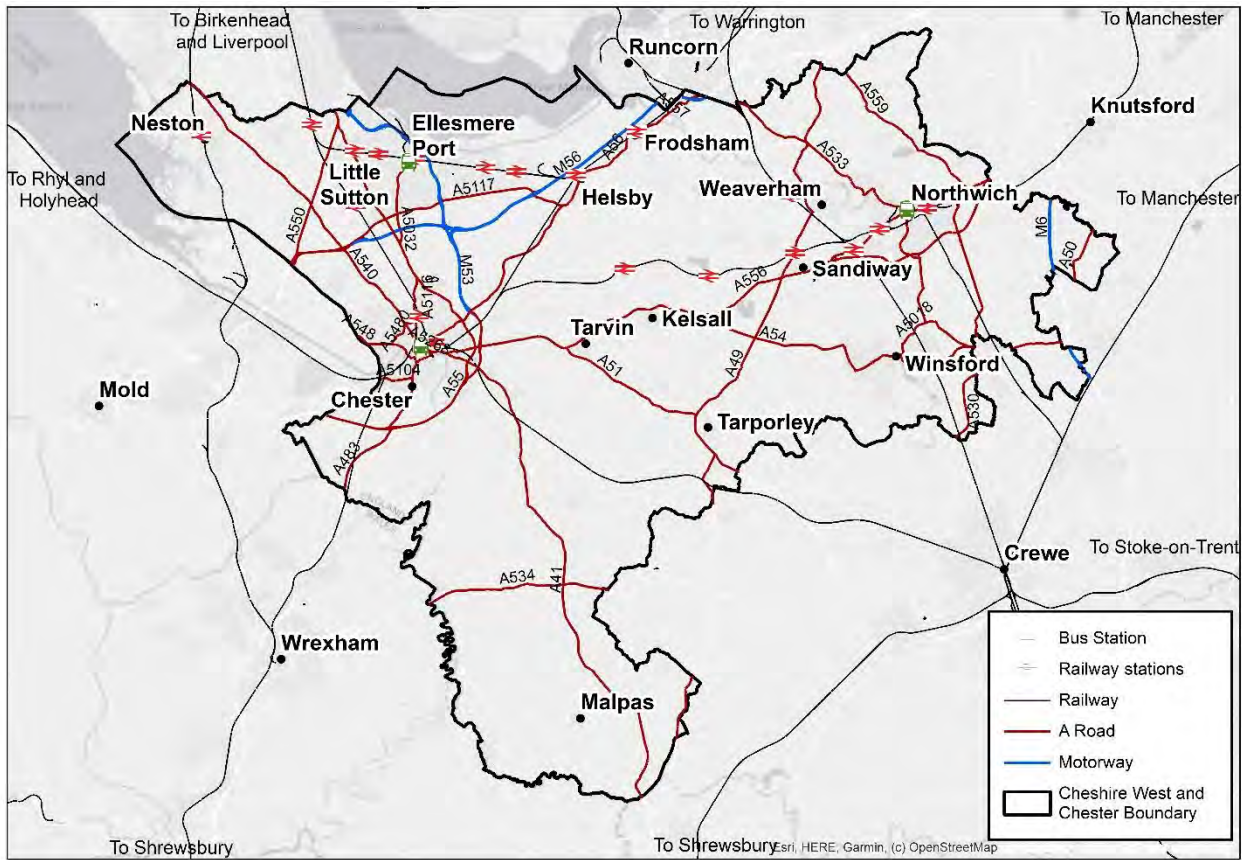
This section sets out an overview of the context and purpose of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C), and notes the progress made since the original BSIP was issued in October 2021.

## 1.1 Coverage

A decision was taken early on in the BSIP process, that the CW&C geography required a BSIP of its own. Whilst CW&C has strong links to the neighbouring authorities of Warrington, Cheshire East, the Liverpool City Region, Shropshire and into Wales, Chester is a dominant centre for the borough, is in the top 100 sized towns and cities in the UK and operates as a significant hub for the local bus network in its own right. As such, whilst cross-boundary services make up a significant proportion of the network the needs of the CW&C geography are distinctive from its surrounds and a separate BSIP is considered to offer the best way forward to drive improvements to the local bus offer.

This Bus Service Improvement Plan covers the geography of the unitary authority of Cheshire West and Chester. This authority lies in North West England and has borders with Warrington, Shropshire and, alongside Cheshire East, forms half of the ceremonial county of Cheshire. It also borders Flintshire and Wrexham County Boroughs within Wales, and lies to the south of Liverpool City Region (bordering both Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council and Halton Unitary Authority).

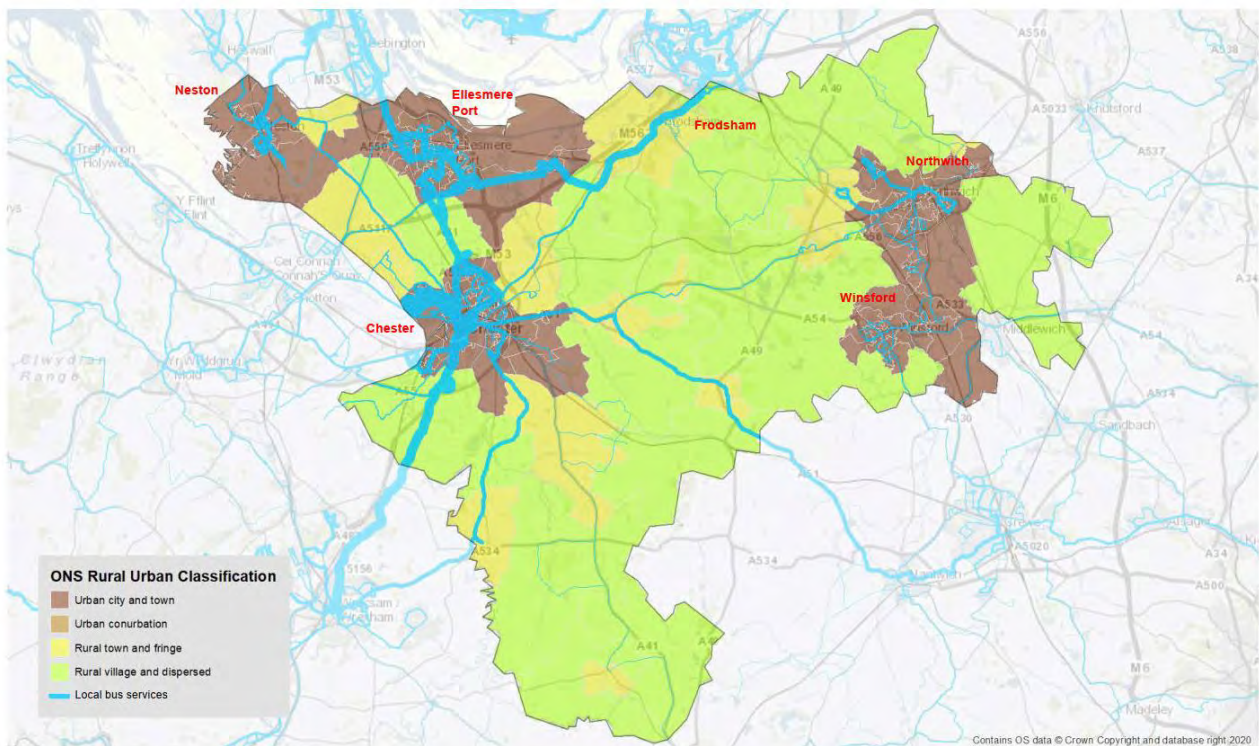
**Figure 1.1: CW&C BSIP Coverage and Existing Transport Infrastructure Network**



Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council

The Cheshire West and Chester geography covers a diverse area, with a number of urban centres along with a largely rural area in the central and southern parts of the borough. Figure 1.2 shows the ONS urban and rural classifications for each part of the borough.

**Figure 1.2: ONS Rural Urban Classification**



Source: ONS / CW&C Bus Review Task Group

## 1.2 Legislation and Procedure

In response to a directive from the DfT following the release of the National Bus Strategy in March 2021, CW&C published a statutory notice that they intended to prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan for local buses in June 2021. An Enhanced Partnership is a statutory partnership between one or more Local Transport Authority and one or more of their local bus operators that sets out how they will work together to deliver strategic bus outcomes within the defined geographical area. The Enhanced Partnership (EP) for Cheshire West and Chester was formally established in April 2022 through the creation of an EP Plan and Scheme in accordance with the Bus Services Act 2017, and includes the operators. The EP Working Group has met fortnightly since the EP's establishment in April 2022, and has had visiting speakers from local transport-related bodies. This BSIP presents the strategic outline plan for improvements to the local bus offer and describes how this will be enacted by the existing Enhanced Partnership. More details on the formation of the Enhanced Partnership, its various institutions and governance arrangements may be found in Section 1.5.

This annual update of the BSIP has been prepared to cover in detail the period extending to the end of financial year 2023/24, but includes interventions that will necessarily extend beyond this timeframe in their scope and development. The document will therefore continue to be updated on an annual basis. The next update of the CW&C Local Transport Plan is also anticipated to commence during the 2023/2024 financial year and this will incorporate the contents of this BSIP as the core strategy for bus for the authority.

This document has been prepared in full and extensive collaboration with the local bus operators. The bus user market data presented in the first edition of the BSIP was collected in consultation with local users and stakeholders via an electronic survey which was completed by local residents, elected members of CW&C Council, town and parish councillors, representatives and members of various organisations including voluntary and community groups, local business and public sector organisations in the summer of 2021. We intend to enhance this data with a new passenger survey undertaken with Transport Focus during the course of 2023 ('Your Bus Journey') and this information will be made available on the EP website and included within the next annual BSIP update. To help us meet the cost for this, several of our operators have expressed their support and will contribute to the survey costs subject to agreement of fair apportionment.

Letters of support from the majority of bus operators, including all major operators within the region, are included as Appendix B.

### **1.3 BSIP Context and Guidance**

This document is a year 1 update of the Cheshire West and Chester Bus Service Improvement Plan that has been prepared in response to the DfT's National Bus Strategy "Bus Back Better", released in March 2021.

#### **1.3.1 The aims of the National Bus Strategy**

In response to falling passenger numbers during the first Covid-19 pandemic related national lockdown, the Government provided the discretionary Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) Restart scheme and continued to pay out Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) at pre-Covid-19 levels. In July 2021 it was confirmed that further Bus Recovery funding was to run through to the end of financial year 2021/22 and similar funding was then made available within 2022/23 in recognition of the fact that passenger

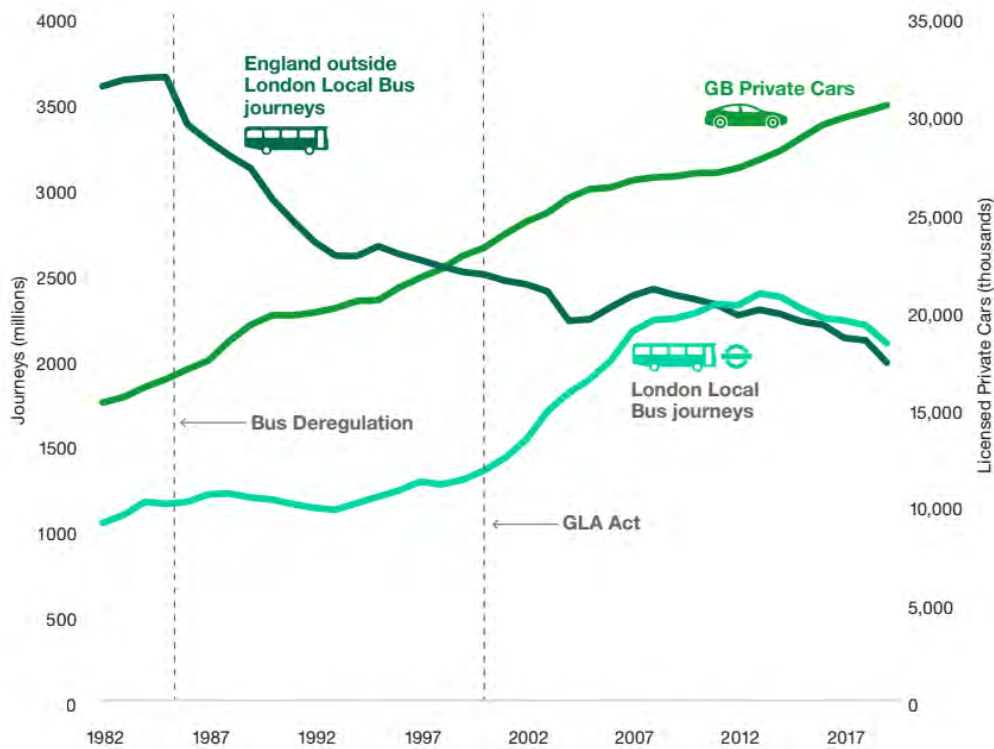
numbers remained depressed below 2019 levels. Simultaneously, the Government, through the National Bus Strategy, recognised the combination of post-Covid-19 financial support and current bus patronage numbers provided LTAs and operators with a significant opportunity to reset service patterns and networks, simplify fares and ticketing and address the many traffic bottlenecks that affect the reliability and punctuality of local bus services.

As a result, the ambition of the National Bus Strategy goes above and beyond getting bus use back to what it was before the pandemic; the aspiration of the Strategy is to reinvigorate bus provision across the country, increase patronage and raise buses' mode share. Yet, this can only be achieved through ensuring that buses become an attractive alternative to the car for far more people; shifting the perception of bus from being the 'mode of last resort' to the preferred mode of choice for a large proportion of the population.

However, there is a long way to go to achieve this ambition. Bus journeys outside of London have endured a 40% decline nationally between 1985 and 2019, as shown in Figure 1.3. Despite accounting for nearly three out of four public transport trips nationally, buses are still seen by many as unattractive, slow, expensive, and disconnected in urban areas, and have disappeared almost entirely from many rural communities.



**Figure 1.3: Bus Use and Car Ownership 1982-2019**



GLA (Greater London Authority) Act 1999 established authority for the Greater London Authority, the Mayor of London and the London Assembly to make provision about transport and road traffic in and around Greater London

Source: National Bus Strategy for England, DfT

In response, the ‘Bus Back Better’ strategy promises ongoing investment in the form of thousands of new low emission buses, hundreds of kilometres of new bus priority lanes and infrastructure, and new promises on integration and multi-modal / multi-operator ticketing, reversing the fragmentation caused by bus deregulation in the mid to late 1980s.

### 1.3.2 The local mechanism by which this will be achieved

Effective collaboration between the LTA and respective bus service providers underpins much of what the National Bus Strategy aspires to achieve. Cheshire West and Chester Council has decided to pursue the Enhanced Partnership (EP) approach, and has worked closely with local bus operators to develop its BSIP, and form its statutory EP in April 2022. The EP provides the framework for implementing the interventions contained within the BSIP, and dictates the statutory roles and responsibilities of each partner over such factors as timetabling, ticketing, fare-setting, quality and network co-ordination.

It is envisaged that the aspirations and measures detailed in this BSIP update will improve the legibility, availability, reliability, efficiency and convenience of bus services, thus



making bus a more attractive mode of travel, resulting in increases in patronage numbers on services in Cheshire West and Chester.

### **1.3.3 A Cheshire West and Chester Bus Service Improvement Plan**

In line with Department for Transport guidance, this Bus Service Improvement Plan forms the key strategy document for delivering the vision set out in the National Bus Strategy within Cheshire West and Chester. It provides a high-level overview of the interventions required to be delivered under the Enhanced Partnership framework, clearly identifying both issues and opportunities across the full LTA area. Rigorous engagement with all parties involved in the Enhanced Partnership continue to form a key part of the delivery of the bus network that Cheshire West and Chester (and its constituent operators) want to see: a network that secures maximum reliability, efficiency, convenience, comfort, and inclusivity for all.

In line with BSIP preparation guidance, the Cheshire West and Chester BSIP has been developed in collaboration with bus operators and other relevant parties, to make a case for receiving future transformational funding as it becomes available. This updated BSIP presents:

- Contextual information and background including a description of the Enhanced Partnership institutions and structure within Cheshire West and Chester
- A summary of the current bus offer in CW&C, and an analysis on how it is used and the challenges it faces.
- A summary of the changes and progress made within the bus network since the initial version of the BSIP
- An overview of a series of prioritised packages of improvements that have been identified, to achieve the objectives and aims of the BSIP
- Details of updated targets for measurable improvements to the local bus offer
- A summary of timescales for the implementation of the plan

## **1.4 A Landmark Opportunity**

The National Bus Strategy and this local BSIP present a landmark opportunity to induce a much needed and marked modal shift away from the private car towards bus through improving the efficiency, convenience, attractiveness and adaptability of CW&C's local bus

network. The fundamental importance of inducing this shift is ever increasing. This is reflected in CW&C's unanimous declaration of a climate emergency in May 2019, accompanied by the poverty emergency declaration in October 2020. The BSIP presents a sustainable, holistic, transformational, and most crucially, deliverable transport vision for the borough, to be achieved by engaging in a collaborative, evidence-based approach which underpins our findings through rigorous collaboration in development and delivery. Our aim is for this plan to bring life-changing environmental, social and economic benefits for the borough.

## **1.5 The Enhanced Partnership and Other Local Policy**

Cheshire West and Chester has an existing body of policy and strategy on the vision, ambitions, aims and objectives for the borough in relation to planning, transport and the climate emergency. A summary of the content of the most relevant policy documents is included here; although a fuller policy document review has been undertaken as part of the collation of useful supporting evidence during the production of the original BSIP.

### **1.5.1 Cheshire West and Chester Enhanced Partnership**

The Enhanced Partnership for CW&C was incorporated in April 2022 with the making of the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme documents. The EP is a statutory partnership between CW&CC as Local Transport Authority, and its local commercial bus operators that defines the terms by which will work together to deliver strategic bus outcomes within the defined geographical area.

The Council liaises with neighbouring authorities regularly to discuss cross-boundary bus issues. An Enhanced Partnership covering part or all of adjacent local authorities has been considered, but will not be taken forward at this time. However, neighbouring authorities are represented on the Enhanced Partnership Forum (described below).

The EP partners meet regularly to discuss common bus issues and opportunities, and to seek collaborative solutions to these. In particular, three regular groups have been established to oversee the operation of the EP and these are described in more detail in the following sub-sections. Further information on specific details of governance, particularly governance is provided in the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Document.

### 1.5.1.1 Enhanced Partnership Working Group

For the day-to-day operational decisions and discussion around the services that make up the Enhanced Partnership, an Enhanced Partnership Working Group has been incorporated to include Cheshire West and Chester Council officers, and representatives from all commercial bus operators within Cheshire West and Chester (Arriva, Stagecoach, D&G Buses, Warrington’s Own Buses, and Aintree Coachline). Please note, since adopting our BSIP Arrowebrook have ceased trading.

EP Working Group meetings are held fortnightly and are used to discuss the ongoing operation and maintenance of the partnership, common issues to be resolved, and agreement of any small changes to services that may be implemented without the requirement to statutorily vary the Plan or the Scheme. The Working Group also identifies the specification and scope of any significant decisions to be taken to the Enhanced Partnership Forum including those that require variations to the Plan or Scheme.

### 1.5.1.2 Enhanced Partnership Forum

The Enhanced Partnership is overseen by an Enhanced Partnership Forum in which all Operators are entitled to participate, although attendance by individual Operators is voluntary. The EP Forum provides opportunities for discussing issues of all kinds affecting the Cheshire West and Chester bus network, consulting with and building consensus across the various stakeholders and making recommendations for decisions to the EP Board.

A full list of members of the Enhanced Partnership Forum is included as Appendix A, but it includes representatives from:

Aintree Coachline	Flintshire County Council
Arriva North West and Wales	Halton Borough Council
Changing Lives Together	Liverpool City Region
Cheshire & Warrington LEP	Marketing Cheshire
Cheshire East Council	NHS Cheshire & Merseyside
CW&CC - Accessibility	Shropshire County Council

CW&CC - Economic Growth	Stagecoach Merseyside and South Lancashire
CW&CC - Transport	Transport Focus
Chester University	Warrington Borough Council
Chester Zoo	Warrington's Own Buses
D&G Buses	Wrexham Borough Council

In addition, from time to time other external organisations area also invited to join the EP Forum on an advisory basis for fixed periods to provide specialist expertise. To date, the Forum has been laying the groundwork for understanding the roles and responsibilities of the EP Forum.

### 1.5.1.3 Enhanced Partnership Board

The EP Board is the decision-making body of the Enhanced Partnership and meets after the EP Forum meeting, to discuss and vote on key decisions. This may include making statutory variations to the EP Scheme where required. Membership of the EP Board comprises the following representatives:

- 2x Large Operators (voting)
- 2x Small Operator (voting)
- 2x Cheshire West and Chester Council to represent fully contracted service operators (voting with decision veto)

Board meetings require a quorum of at least two Operator representatives, with a minimum of one per category (Large/Small) and one Council representative. Any other Bus Operator, and Council representatives are able to attend the EP Board meetings as observers but do not have the right to vote.

Within the group, smaller operators have elected a single spokesperson to represent them at the board meetings. In this case, this board member receives both of the votes afforded to small operators. To date, the EP Board has focused on agreeing its role and responsibilities, establishing governance procedures, and agreeing priority areas for action.

#### **1.5.1.4 Network Review**

As a specified requirement of the National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better', one of the first actions of the Enhanced Partnership was to undertake a comprehensive network review. The review looked at the network's current status, specifically in terms of service viability post withdrawal of the DfT's Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) funding to support services in the autumn of 2022. Every route in the borough was examined, and in discussion with bus operators, classified as viable, marginal or non-commercial. A large proportion of the routes in CW&C were deemed to be non-commercial at present. However, were a 20% uplift in patronage to be achieved, many of the routes would be expected to move into the marginal or even viable category. The findings of the network review were reported to the DfT to inform them of the current state of the network and to help inform prioritisation of future funding schemes.

#### **1.5.2 Third Local Transport Plan**

Cheshire West and Chester's Third Local Transport Plan (LTP3), published in 2017, states that the key priorities for transport in CW&C are:

- Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks that support sustainable economic growth in West Cheshire and the surrounding area
- Reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt the transport networks to the effects of climate change
- Manage a well-maintained transport network
- Contribute to safer and more secure transport in West Cheshire and promote types of transport which are beneficial to health
- Improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity
- Ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment in West Cheshire.

LTP3 recognises that accessibility to opportunity is not equal across the borough, resulting in many people encountering difficulties when trying to access employment, education, healthcare, leisure and retail.

Despite areas of deprivation, overall car ownership in the borough is above the national average at 81%, and car is the dominant mode of commuting to work, accounting for 74% of commute trips, compared to 5% who use bus and 13% who walk or cycle. Traffic volumes in CW&C have grown by a quarter since 1993 and are forecast to grow further still in the coming years. Consequently, congestion remains a problem in some parts of the borough.

The use of bus (and other sustainable modes of travel) is recognised as an important part of the borough's approach to tackling climate change.

Consultation with the public in the 'Let's Talk' exercise found strong support for improving public transport, especially local bus services. Younger and older people are reliant on local bus services for accessing social activities, medical appointments, work and schools and colleges. In light of the challenges faced by CW&C residents relating to access to opportunities, the Council committed to:

- Work to increase accessibility to employment and training opportunities, to key services from rural areas; and to health services
- Ensure that new developments and local services are built in accessible locations
- Improve and encourage the use of local bus services
- Improve physical accessibility and remove barriers to mobility especially for disabled and older people.

The council is waiting for guidance on the preparations of Local Transport Plan 4 to be issued before commencing its update.

#### **1.5.2.1 Implications for CW&C BSIP**

LTP3 identifies a number of key issues relating to accessibility in the borough, particularly for older and younger people, people who live outside of Chester, and those who live in more deprived parts of the borough. Whilst not the solution to all problems, the local bus network does offer a viable solution to many accessibility problems, due to its flexibility to adjust to demand, its potential cost-effectiveness, and its relative speed over longer distances compared to other sustainable modes such as walking and cycling.

CW&C has already stated its ambitions and commitment to improving and encouraging the use of the local bus network, and the creation of a specific 'Bus Review Task Group' in 2020 was an important starting point on this journey. This BSIP presents the opportunity to further build on this work, and take advantage of national funding sources to accelerate improvements to the network.

### **1.5.3 Local Plan 2010-2030 (Part One) Strategic Policies**

Cheshire West and Chester's Local Plan was adopted in 2015 and covers the period from 2010 to 2030. The overarching aim for the borough, according to the Local Plan, is to be a desirable and attractive place to live, work, learn and visit with vibrant towns and rural villages. New housing and employment opportunities in sustainable and accessible locations will enable the borough to attract inward investment. The needs of all communities, in particular those of an ageing population, will be provided for.

By 2030, the Council aims for the delivery of around 22,000 new homes within the borough, equating to 1,050 new homes a year from 2010. The city of Chester and the towns of Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford will be the main focus for development to make the most of already developed land and integrate with home, jobs, services and facilities in the most accessible locations. However, there is also expected to be significant development in the rural areas, again located in the most sustainable settlements.

To support and enable the development ambitions of the Local Plan, development and associated transport infrastructure should:

- Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks that support sustainable economic growth in the borough and the surrounding area
- Reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt our transport networks to the effects of climate change
- Contribute to safer and secure transport and promote forms of transport that are beneficial to health
- Improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity
- Ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment



Additionally, the Local Plan states that opportunities to improve public transport facilities will be taken wherever possible, through improved services, interchange facilities and parking at railway stations.

A refresh of the Local Plan will be undertaken to align with the work required for developing Local Transport Plan 4.

### **1.5.3.1 Implications for CW&C BSIP**

With 22,000 new homes planned in CW&C by 2030, and with a commitment to providing and developing reliable and efficient transport networks to support that development, the BSIP presents an opportunity to address the elements of the bus network which are currently deficient and would, if left unattended, inhibit delivery of the sustainable development plans of the Local Plan.

Additionally, the bus network is a vital source of accessibility to jobs and key services, particularly for younger, older and disabled persons who are less likely to have access to a car. Therefore, improvements to bus services as planned within the BSIP will be vital for supporting greater equality of opportunity. In reality, the BSIP aims to go beyond just providing bus services for those who aren't able to drive, towards making bus a more attractive proposition than driving and thus generating mode shift by enticing people from car to bus.

Finally, the BSIP seeks to help to address the environmental challenges faced within the borough, and provide a more sustainable and less polluting way of travelling to, from and within the borough.

### **1.5.4 Cheshire and Warrington LEP Transport Strategy**

The Cheshire and Warrington LEP produced their Strategic Economic Plan covering the period to 2040, which sets out the ambitious growth plans for the sub-region. The LEP aims to see the region achieve £50bn of GVA a year. The Transport Strategy was developed in 2017 in recognition of the vital role transport must play to achieve the aspirations for growth and economic development.

The strategy aims to improve connections to support development of priority employment sites including those within Cheshire Science Corridor, and to create fast and frequent connectivity between sub-regional centres for people and freight. It notes that transport

planning and design in Cheshire and Warrington should be integrated, accessible and inclusive, customer focused, sustainable, resilient and safe, and embracing change. It further looks to support areas of success and enhance prosperity in the region via the creation and support of:

- Dedicated, high quality inter-urban corridors to Manchester, Liverpool, Wales, Birmingham and Yorkshire
- Direct links to London and other top city economies
- Fast, reliable connectivity to key international gateways.

#### **1.5.4.1 Implications for CW&C BSIP**

The LEP Transport Strategy notes that bus has greater flexibility and range than other sustainable modes of transport, thus has a greater potential to increase connectivity between key centres in the sub-region. Therefore improvement of bus services is likely to result in greater uptake of bus as a sustainable method of travel in the sub-region. To address the outcomes of the transport strategy, the BSIP must:

- Identify locations where current bus provision is poor and set out guidance requiring bus providers and the Council to undertake regular branch reviews to ensure the bus network is continually evolving to meet needs generated by new housing developments and employment sites.
- Prioritise investment in technologies such as real time information and service updates at bus stops, interchanges or via smartphone apps to improve the passenger experience.
- Place strong emphasis on multi-modal integration, including bus with rail.

#### **1.5.5 Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP)**

In May 2019, Cheshire West and Chester Council declared a Climate Emergency, in recognition of the threat climate change presents to everyday life, the need to act in-line with worldwide agreements on climate change, and that the Council must play its part in leadership on this issue. With its high concentrations of industrial activity in the north of the borough, CW&C is in fact the fourth highest emitting local authority nationally. The borough is aiming to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045, and the Climate Emergency

Response Plan (CERP) sets out the actions the Council will take to respond to the climate emergency.

The Council adopted three principles in relation to determining its response approach; the plan should be:

- Democratically led
- Underpinned by the best available evidence and data
- Co-produced with communities to ensure it harnesses the skills and efforts of our residents.

On-road transport accounts for 19% of the borough's 4 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year. Improving accessibility and reliability of public transport, with the Council having more direct influence on the bus network, were noted as key factors which would help people make low-carbon journeys. The fact that only 10% of journeys to work are made by bus within the Chester urban area, where the bus network is most dense, highlights the scale of the challenge facing CW&C. To achieve the necessary reductions in carbon emissions, the following measures will need to be realised:

- 17% reduction in total travel demand by 2025, and a 25% reduction in car travel. By 2050, these figures will need to increase to 25% and 38% respectively.
- Public transport modal share needs to increase from less than 10% to 18% by 2025 and 29% by 2050.
- Public transport vehicles need to be low-carbon, with 100% of rail being low carbon and 51% of buses low-carbon by 2025.

The Council committed to reviewing bus transport with operators, to review the options for zero emission buses to achieve 51% electrification by 2025 and 100% electrification by 2030. Responses to the Climate Emergency Task Group relating to transport noted that as well as improving sustainable transport infrastructure, more could be done to communicate with, engage and educate people on public transport options.

#### **1.5.5.1 Implications for CW&C BSIP**

The CERP demonstrates a clear commitment by Cheshire West and Chester Council to tackling the climate emergency within the borough's boundary. As the second largest

source of carbon emissions in the borough, road transport is a key priority for addressing the climate emergency, and improving bus services in terms of reliability, accessibility and environmental credentials for the benefit of the environment adds an additional impetus and rationale to the BSIP.

### **1.5.6 Local Area Transport Strategies (Chester, Northwich and Winsford)**

Although Chester is the centre best-served by bus in CW&C, service provision is significantly lower on a Sunday than the rest of the week. Infrastructure relating to bus, such as bus priority measures and the new Bus Interchange, are reasonably good in Chester, but there remains scope for further improvements, particularly along some of the busiest corridors and junctions on the approach to the city centre.

Northwich is poorly served by the bus network, particularly outside of weekday and Saturday daytimes, thus limiting the accessibility by sustainable modes to the new leisure facilities within the town centre. Public consultation conducted to support the Transport Strategy development identified that the lack of evening bus services was a key barrier to access which needed to be addressed. As well as bus accessibility to the town centre, access to key employment sites, such as Gadbrook Park, Leighton Hospital, and other urban centres such as Winsford, Warrington and Crewe, was identified as an issue which limited people's ability to access employment opportunities.

Travel in Winsford is dominated by private car, resulting in congestion, poor air quality, and exclusion from access to services for those without a car. The centre of Winsford is poorly served by bus, walking and cycling networks. Additionally, public transport links between Winsford and surrounding locations, such as Northwich, Manchester, Crewe and Chester are relatively poor, limiting people's access to jobs, educational opportunities and healthcare provision, with no direct rail service between Chester and Winsford.

#### **1.5.6.1 Implications for CW&C BSIP**

Despite being the hub of the CW&C bus network, there remains scope for improvement to the provision of bus services in the city. That said, it is recognised that Chester is currently the best-served settlement in CW&C in terms of the bus offer, and the BSIP should seek to level up the accessibility to bus services across the borough, rather than further improve Chester's provision to the detriment of other settlements.

The Northwich Transport Strategy has already identified deficiencies in the town's bus network, and makes recommendations on areas of improvements. These recommended improvements are in line with many of the ambitions of the BSIP, and thus provide a starting point for specific schemes relating to buses in the Northwich area for inclusion in the BSIP. Support of TfN's integrated ticketing system would be of benefit across CW&C, not only in Northwich, and thus should be an ambition of the BSIP.

As an area with some of the more deprived parts of the borough and poor bus network, Winsford can benefit from a step-change in public transport accessibility as a result of the BSIP, given the likely latent demand for bus travel within the town and to nearby localities. A key focus of the BSIP is to address existing gaps in the market, perhaps as a result of legacy decisions and a lack of joined-up thinking on the bus network, in order to make bus services the go-to mode of choice for more people.

## **1.6 Traffic Management Act 2004 – Moving Traffic Restrictions**

A further recent change to traffic management policy has presented a significant opportunity for Cheshire West and Chester Council in the delivery of the BSIP. This change in policy relates to Moving Traffic Restrictions which were previously only enforceable by the Police. Recent changes brought in by Central Government now that the Council has an opportunity to apply for the powers to enforce these restrictions which include bus lanes, cycle lanes, 'School Keep Clear' clearways and pedestrian zones. The practical application of this is that it presents a significant opportunity for the Council and partners to deliver the improvements specified with this BSIP due to its ability to effectively monitor and enforce bus priority measures without the support of third parties. If enacted following consultation, this will make a real difference, demonstrating significant improvement over previous bus strategies in which effective monitoring and control of restrictions was limited by the prevailing legislation.

Whilst the Council have only recently applied to take on these powers from DfT, the opportunities provided are significant and potentially transformative.

## 2 Current Bus Offer to Passengers

This section presents a headline summary of key information relating to the local bus offer. A more detailed review of policy and evidence has been undertaken to underpin the development of this section, as part of the collation of evidence undertaken during the production of this BSIP.

### 2.1 Bus Service Supply

This section provides an overview of the existing bus network, to show the extent and quality of the bus offer to the residents and workers of CW&C. The review of the existing network forms the basis of the BSIP, as it highlights the gaps and opportunities within the existing market. As well as details on bus services, frequencies and fares, an online public engagement survey relating to bus services in CW&C was completed by over 1,650 people (representing themselves, local CW&C, town and parish councils, local community and business groups and other organisations) during August 2021, the results of which are summarised later in this section.

It should be noted that the data used to inform this section comes from a variety of sources with some fully up to date as of November 2022, some from 2021 and some taken from analysis conducted during 2020. For each table and chart presented, we note the source of the data and the year in which it was extracted.

#### 2.1.1 The bus network

The diverse borough of Cheshire West and Chester is served by just under 50 bus routes, many of which straddle the boundary into neighbouring authorities, including those within North Wales. The bus network is, to a large extent, focused on Chester and Ellesmere Port in the west of the borough and, to a lesser extent, Northwich and Winsford in the east of the borough – CW&C's four most populous



**The Award-winning Chester Bus Interchange**

settlements. As Figure 2.1 highlights, the bus network is generally denser in the western part of the borough than the east, although there are a number of regular services in the eastern area. In terms of routing arrangements, local and inter-urban services in Chester tend to run radially to and from the urban centre of Chester, rather than as cross-city services although, until recently, the Park & Ride system followed a cross-city arrangement.

The main urban areas of the borough are bisected by a sizeable, sparsely populated rural expanse with considerably fewer, and less frequent bus services operating. Figure 2.1 shows that many of the villages in these areas are not served by any frequent bus service (green indicates routes with a frequency of less than once per hour; yellow indicates routes which only run on some days of the week).

**Figure 2.1: Cheshire West and Chester Public Transport Map**



Source: Cheshire West and Chester, 2020

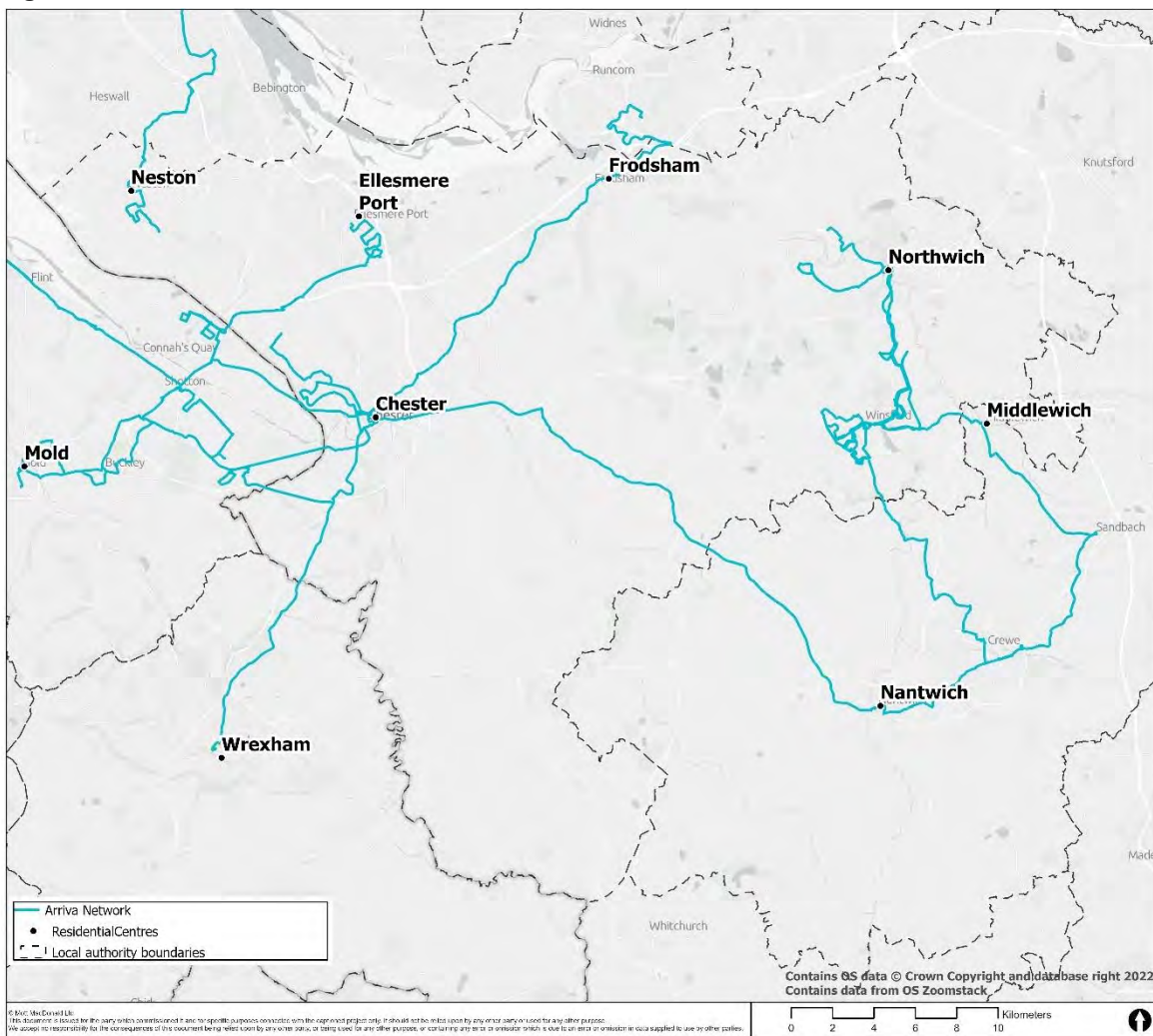
Consequently, this absence of frequent routes disconnects small villages from essential services and facilities in urban areas, and also severs Northwich and Winsford in the east from Ellesmere Port and Chester in the west in terms of bus accessibility. This is reflected in a journey from Winsford to Chester solely by bus, a distance of 16 miles as the crow



flies, requiring two buses and taking approximately 2 hours. Bridging these two parts of the borough through public transport is an ongoing challenge with only an hourly rail service between Chester and Northwich, and n direct rail service between Chester and Winsford, nor between Ellesmere Port and either Northwich or Winsford.

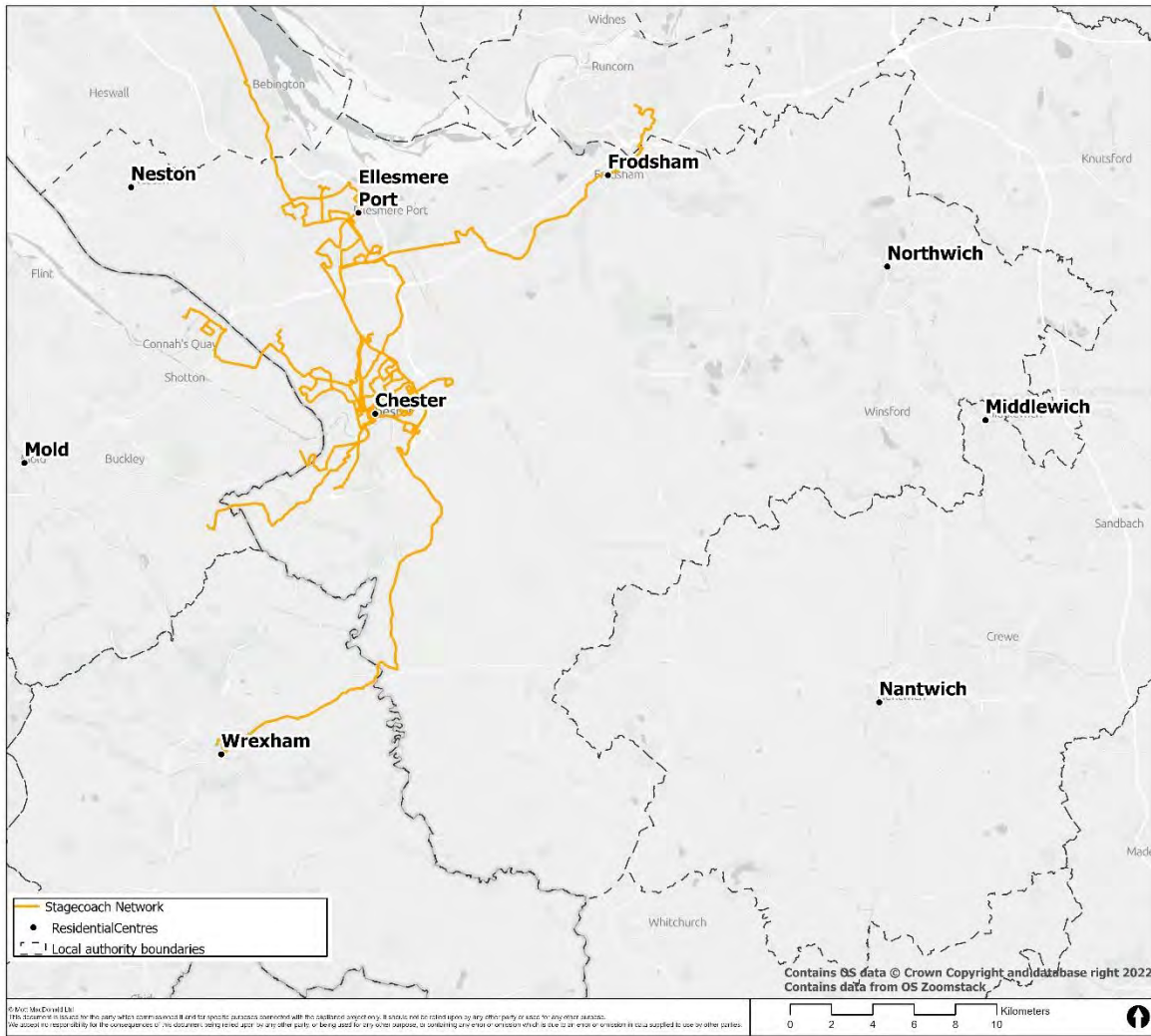
Arriva and Stagecoach are the dominant bus operators in CW&C, providing approximately 90% of Monday to Saturday daytime services and 100% of evening and Sunday services between them. The remaining routes are provided by smaller operators that provide a mixture of commercial, supported and school services. Arriva and Stagecoach’s primary routes, and the combined primary routes of other operators, are shown in Figures 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 respectively.

**Figure 2.2: Arriva Routes within CW&C**



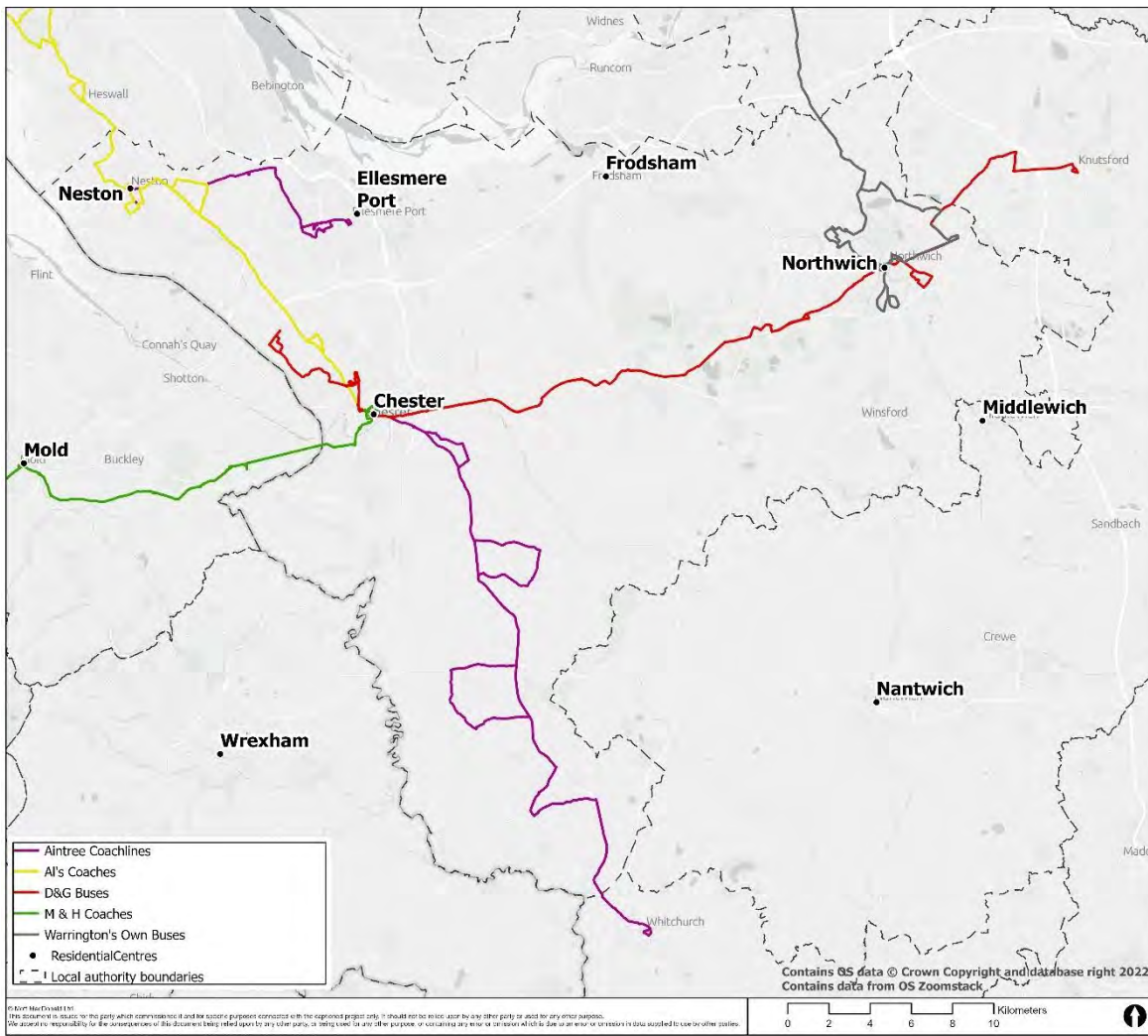


**Figure 2.3: Stagecoach Routes within CW&C**



Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council - 2022

**Figure 2.4: Other Operator Routes within CW&C**



Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council - 2022

### 2.1.2 Bus service frequency

Table 2.1 below shows the number of buses per hour serving each of the six largest settlements for different time periods during the week.

**Table 2.1: Buses per hour by urban centre**

Settlement	Buses per hour				
	Weekday Daytime	Weekday Evening	Saturday Daytime	Saturday Evening	Sunday
<b>Chester</b>	71	12	71	11	33
<b>Ellesmere Port</b>	11	1	10	1	4
<b>Northwich</b>	8	4	8	4	2
<b>Winsford</b>	3	2	3	2	0

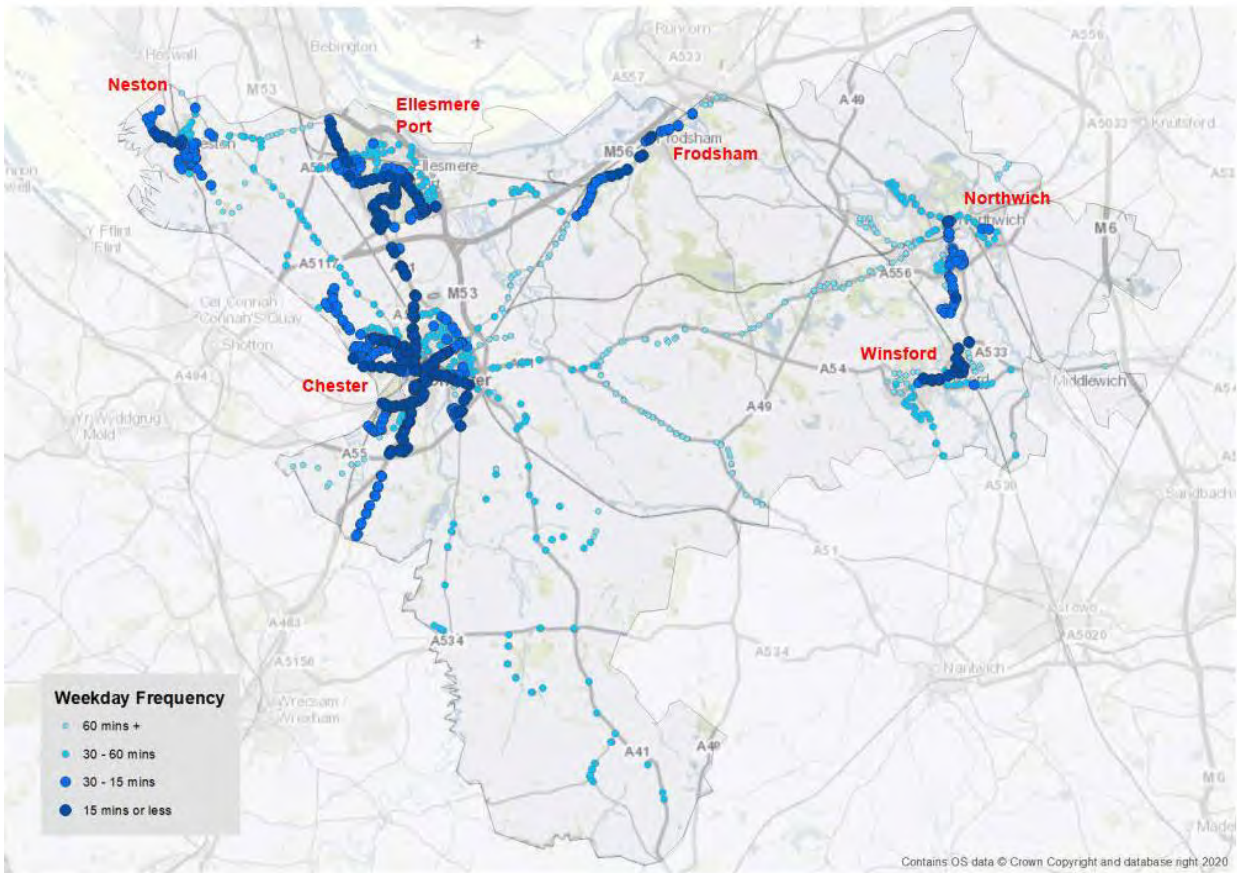
Settlement	Buses per hour				
	Weekday Daytime	Weekday Evening	Saturday Daytime	Saturday Evening	Sunday
Frodsham	4	1	3	1	1
Neston	4	1	3	1	1

Source: Mott MacDonald - 2022

Counts of bus services per hour in each urban centre highlight the concentration of services in the western part of the borough, particularly in Chester, and demonstrate the very large disparity in accessibility to bus services across the borough. Outside of Chester, there is particularly limited provision of services during the evening and on Sundays; Northwich, Winsford and Frodsham have very few (if any) buses serving them on Sundays. This demonstrates a clear gap in the market-led provision of buses in these localities. Although there are patches of deprivation throughout the borough, there are particular concentrations around Ellesmere Port and Winsford, which are also localities with relatively poor levels of bus service provision.

Figure 2.5 shows the frequency of bus services which called at each bus stop in the borough in 2020. The concentration of high frequency bus services in Chester and Ellesmere Port is evident, with the smaller concentrations in the other urban centres. The number of corridors with high frequency services is reasonably low.

**Figure 2.5: Average hourly bus stop frequency (weekday AM Peak)**



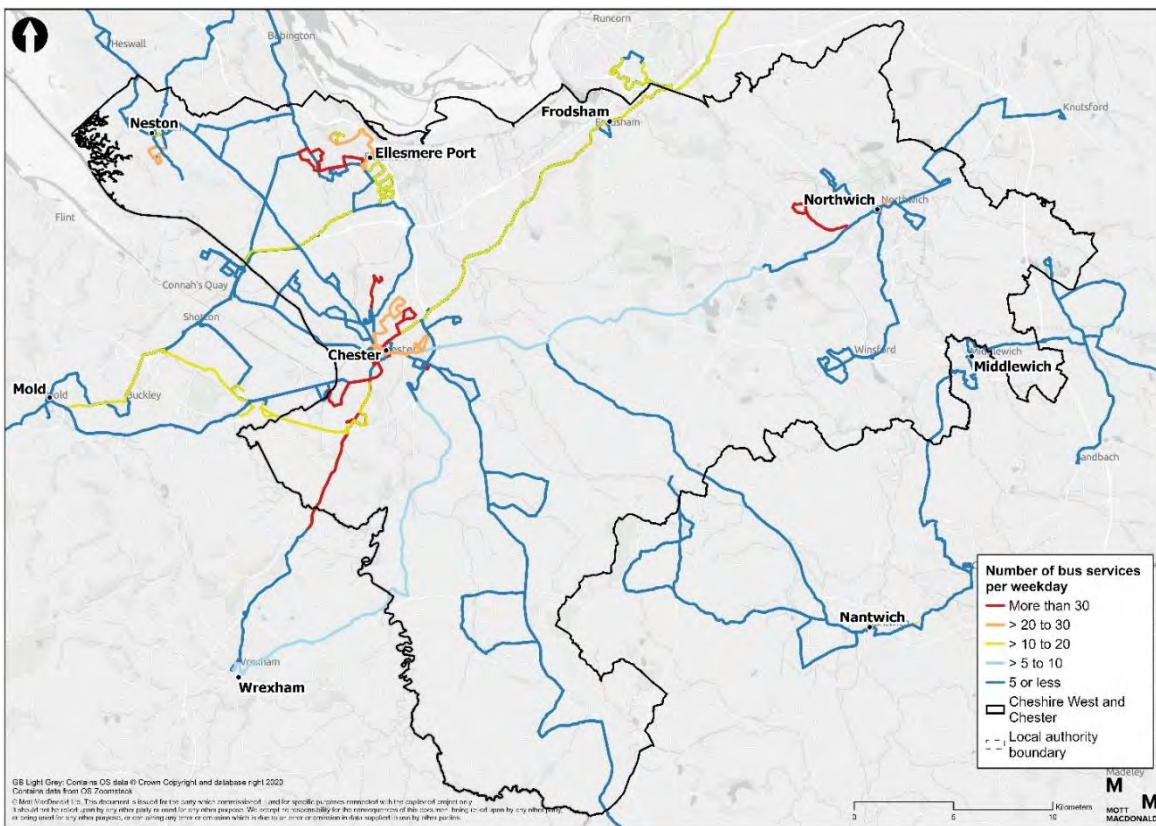
Source: CW&C Bus Review Task Group<sup>1</sup> - 2020

Figure 2.6 shows the number of buses per day that operated on each section of road in the borough during 2021, with the red indicating the most services and blue indicating the fewest.

<sup>1</sup> Based on 2020 data. Frequencies on some routes has since dropped further – see up to data bus route and frequency table in Appendix C.



**Figure 2.6: Density of Service Provision**



Source: Cheshire West and Chester Council - 2021

Table 2.2 and Table 2.3 show that Arriva and Stagecoach are the dominant operators in CW&C, operating 90% of daytime services, 100% of weekday and Saturday evening services, and accounting for around 90% of the kilometres covered by buses in CW&C each week. Although there are two dominant operators, their respective services are mostly serving different markets and therefore are not direct competitors in most cases. The voluntary quality partnership agreement in place on the 1/1A/15/15A Blacon Pointer routes is an exception to this and a best practice example within the borough of cooperation between operators and the local transport authority; in this case operators both operate on the same route at similar frequencies, accept each other's day and weekly tickets, and have agreed to co-ordinate timetables and service quality. In this way they do not compete but co-operate with each other. See Case Study 2 in Section 2.1.7 for more information on this.

**Table 2.2: Number of services per hour by operator, and percentage of services operated by each operator**

Operator	Number of services and percentage share of service in that time period									
	Weekday Daytime		Weekday Evening		Saturday Daytime		Saturday Evening		Sunday	
Arriva	25	29%	12	70%	25	29%	11	68%	10	28%
Stagecoach	45	52%	4	21%	44	51%	4	23%	23	64%
Arriva / Stagecoach / Blacon Pointer VQP	8	9%	2	9%	8	9%	2	10%	3	8%
M & H Coaches	<1	<1%	0	0%	<1	<1%	0	0%	0	0%
Aintree Coachlines	6	6%	0	0%	5	6%	0	0%	0	0%
D & G Buses	2	2%	0	0%	2	2%	0	0%	0	0%
AI's Coaches	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Warrington's Own	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>86</b>		<b>16</b>		<b>36</b>	

Source: Mott MacDonald – 2022

Compared to October 2021, there has been a small decline in the number of services operated during the daytimes, but a slight rise in the evenings. Arrowebrook Coaches have ceased to operate since 2021.

**Table 2.3: Bus Operator Kilometres Share per week**

Operator	Number of Kilometres per week	Percentage of Kilometres
Stagecoach (including Park & Ride)	271,075	60%
Arriva	128,883	28%
Aintree	28,516	6%
D & G Coaches	13,035	3%
Other operators	11,746	3%

Source: CW&C BRTG - 2020

### 2.1.3 Demand-Responsive Transport

There is currently no commercially run bus-based Demand-Response Transport (DRT) system in place in Cheshire West and Chester, although a pilot funded through the Rural Mobility Fund will soon create a test case for this (see Case Study 1). There are however a number of Council-operated/supported community transport schemes, which provide

transport to those who can't access standard public transport, due to location or disability. Some of these are run by independent charities, and many have to be booked in advance and therefore can't be officially classified as Demand-Responsive Transport. Instead, taxis and private hire vehicles provide most of the transport cover in this area, and there is a clear gap in the market which might potentially be filled by a DRT-type product.

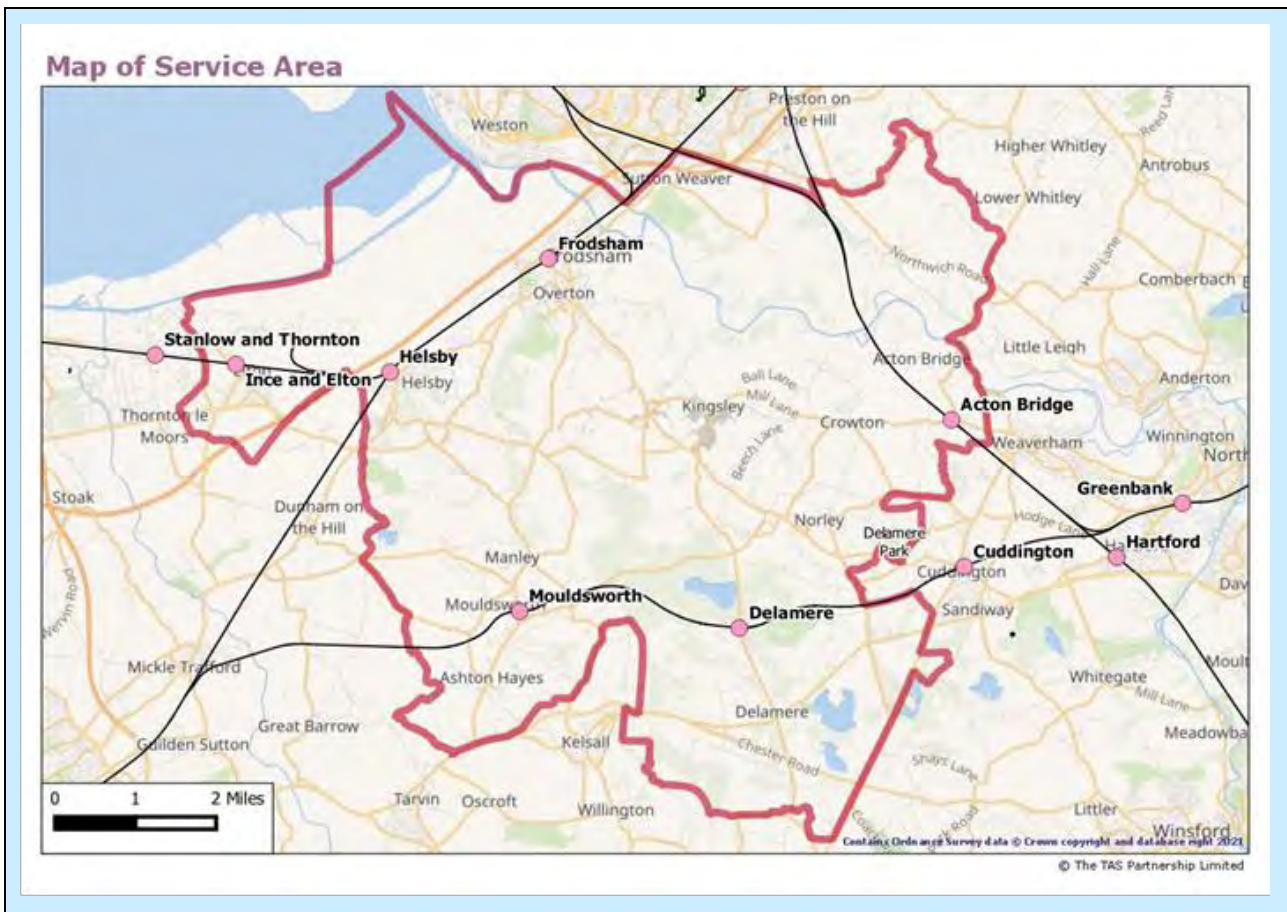
### **Case Study 1: Demand Responsive Transport in Frodsham and Helsby**

Cheshire West and Chester Council was awarded £1.075m from the Department for Transport's Rural Mobility Fund (RMF) through a successful bidding process. This enables a three-year trial of an innovative public transport service for residents living in rural and semi-rural areas (see map). The Council is currently working on the delivery of the trial project which will operate in the Helsby, Frodsham area and the surrounding rural communities including Kingsley, Crowton, Acton Bridge, Norley, Delamere, Manley, Mouldsworth, Alvanley, Hapsford, Ince & Elton. The extent of the service is shown in the map below.

The project allows the Council to look at more innovative solutions that will support economic growth and enhance connectivity between modes for these rural communities. Operating such a service will help to improve air quality, tackle social isolation, connect people to places of work, leisure or education and provide a sustainable travel solution in areas where travel by car would otherwise be the only option. It will include specific journeys that passengers can pre-book through a website, mobile app or non-digital methods.

It is hoped the service will launch in March 2023. The trial will be monitored and, if successful, will provide a valuable testbed for attracting funding to roll out these initiatives to other parts of the borough with similar issues. The pilot gives the council an opportunity to explore new ways of providing travel options at times which better suit the needs of our residents and visitors and will help to inform rural bus service provision in the future.

To support through mobilisation and launch of the service, DfT have buddied the Council with Hertfordshire County Council, providing additional guidance, advice and best practice required for delivering RMF projects.



### 2.1.4 Vehicle ages

Information on the average age of vehicles operating within CW&C has been provided by some operators:

Stagecoach (excluding City Seeing tourism buses): 8.8 years old

Arriva: 10.5 years old

D&G Buses: 12.5 years old

Anecdotal evidence suggests that vehicle fleet age in Cheshire West is older than average across the UK particularly in the case of the smaller operators. It should be noted that there is not a direct relation between vehicle age and quality, however and many of the older vehicles are of a relatively high quality albeit with lower overall engine efficiency and emission standards. Stagecoach has invested in vehicles since 2021, with QR code readers being installed on buses, and all Euro II and III buses being removed from the fleet. The proportion of their fleet meeting Euro V and VI standards has increased.



## 2.1.5 Frequent service accessibility

The above sections have explored the differences in bus service provision between different parts of the borough. The following table shows what impact the variations in bus services and frequencies have on accessibility to frequent bus services for CW&C residents. Last year’s public engagement survey found that a lack of close proximity to a bus stop and infrequent services were two of the most common reasons for people not regularly using buses in CW&C. However 75% of respondents said they lived within a 10 minute walk of their usual bus stop.

**Table 2.4: Proportion of residents within 600m of a bus stop with specified levels of service**

Locality	4 buses per hour	2 buses per hour	1 bus per hour
<b>Chester</b>	91%	100%	100%
<b>Ellesmere Port</b>	85%	98%	98%
<b>Northwich</b>	15%	77%	97%
<b>Winsford<sup>2</sup></b>	42%	69%	99%
<b>Frodsham</b>	0%	76%	76%
<b>Neston</b>	75%	100%	100%
<b>Rural</b>	11%	46%	61%

Source: Arup / CW&C - 2020

The data here further emphasises the differences in the borough, with over 90% of Chester residents having easy access to a 15-minute service frequency, compared to 0% in Frodsham and 15% in Northwich. The lack of close proximity to frequent bus services in Northwich, Frodsham, Winsford and rural areas, highlights the challenges that people in these areas face when trying to travel by bus, and demonstrates why car dependence is so high. Whilst car ownership in CW&C is above the national average, there are areas of the borough, especially within Northwich, Winsford and Ellesmere Port, where car ownership is significantly lower. A lack of access to a car, combined with poor bus (and rail) services means many people are left in effective transport poverty, with no easy access to employment opportunities, education and key services such as healthcare, resulting in negative socio-economic impacts.

<sup>2</sup> Based on 2020 data – it is likely that service reduction in the Winsford area will have negatively affected these figures.

The climate emergency declared by CW&C Council in 2019 was intended to serve as a clear statement on the Council's approach to addressing climate change, an increasing threat to the borough. Without commercially viable bus services, nor sufficient funding to cover the shortfall, people in CW&C have limited choices when it comes to sustainable transport options, and therefore are more likely to opt for their car, which generates higher carbon emissions per person and negatively impacts upon the environment and air quality, as well as the health of the individual.

Furthermore, our Fairer Futures strategy was adopted in March 2022, based on a comprehensive Engagement exercise and co-produced with people with Lived Experience of poverty. At the time of the 2011 Census, 19% (26,297) households in Cheshire West and Chester had no car or van compared to 26% in England. Half of households in very small neighbourhoods (Output Areas) with average household income below £17,000, did not have a car or van. This constrains their access to employment<sup>3</sup>.

### **2.1.6 Bus Journey Times**

Table 2.5 shows car (top line) and bus (bottom line) journey times between the seven largest settlements in Cheshire West and Chester during the inter-peak period on a weekday. The bus journey times use bus only, and do not include rail even if available. Bus journeys include waiting times between buses at changes, but do not include any waiting time prior to the first bus.

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<sup>3</sup> 2011 Census data and Paycheck income data

**Table 2.5 Comparative journey times between selected locations (including waiting time at changes for bus)**

	Ellesmere Port	Northwich	Winsford	Frodsham	Helsby	Neston
Chester	Car: 19 minutes	35 minutes	30 minutes	24 minutes	20 minutes	24 minutes
	Bus: 35 minutes	81 minutes	139 minutes	38 minutes	29 minutes	44 minutes
Ellesmere Port	-	30 minutes	30 minutes	18 minutes	12 minutes	18 minutes
		118 minutes	176 minutes	38 minutes	28 minutes	36 minutes
Northwich	-	-	12 minutes	22 minutes	26 minutes	40 minutes
			42 minutes	54 minutes	93 minutes	161 minutes
Winsford	-	-	-	26 minutes	30 minutes	45 minutes
				109 minutes	143 minutes	211 minutes
Frodsham	-	-	-	-	6 minutes	28 minutes
					9 minutes	107 minutes
Helsby	-	-	-	-	-	22 minutes
						100 minutes

Source: Mott MacDonald - 2021

Many of the journeys in the above table require two, and in some cases three, buses. It can be seen that all journeys are quicker by car than by bus. It should also be noted that for many of the above journeys, the journey can be made more quickly if rail is used as well. Looking at bus-only journey times, there is a large difference between car and bus – up to four and half a times as long for Winsford to Neston, and nearly six times as long for Ellesmere Port to Winsford. Given a choice between car and bus, it is evident that bus journey times are not currently competitive with car, albeit without consideration of parking availability.

### 2.1.7 Network identity

The National Bus Strategy highlights the importance of making local bus networks easier to understand. Consistent, easily recognisable branding and marketing strategies are integral to developing a strong network identity across local authority areas. As noted above, a range of different operators run services in CW&C, and besides the Blacon Pointer, there is no clear network branding beyond the corporate branding of the respective operators. In turn, the National Bus Strategy advocates the prescription of universal branding for local areas which reflect the identity of local communities; yet deregulation and privatisation has limited the effective delivery of this in the past, with bus company local branding being more reflective of the operator (e.g. Stagecoach's 'Gold')

and Arriva's 'Sapphire' fleets). Whilst these examples of branded services have provided attractive, comfortable, and greener services for bus users, these fleets have arguably simultaneously further fragmented the wider CW&C network identity, decreasing fleet legibility for users. This is reflected in the range of buses in CW&C's bus fleet in Figure 2.7 to Figure 2.12

**Figure 2.7: Warrington's Own Buses Branding**



**Figure 2.8: D&G Bus Branding**



**Figure 2.9: Arriva Sapphire Bus Branding**



**Figure 2.10: Arriva Older Fleet Branding**



**Figure 2.11: Stagecoach Gold Branding**



**Figure 2.12: Stagecoach Older Fleet Branding**



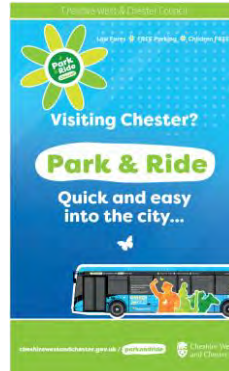
Whilst there is currently no coherent local branding across the borough, CW&C has established easily recognisable, unique branding across its Park & Ride fleet (Figure 2.13).

Simultaneously, this has allowed the authority to coordinate and promote dedicated marketing campaigns as shown in Figure 2.14.

**Figure 2.13: Chester Park & Ride Bus Branding**



**Figure 2.14: Distinct Branding Marketing Campaigns**



**Case Study 2: Blacon Pointer (1/1A/15/15A) Voluntary Quality Bus Partnership**

In 2010, CW&C initiated a voluntary partnership (VQBP) arrangement with Arriva and initially First, (now Stagecoach), to resolve a difficult situation in Blacon and Saughall in the west of Chester. The route had previously seen up to 36 buses per hour using



sections of road, causing complaints from residents regarding safety and environmental impacts. A key achievement of the voluntary partnership was timetable coordination, ensuring regular 5-minute headways. In addition to timetable coordination, a brand identity was established - the Blacon Pointer -

with associated marketing in the consistent purple and orange colouring, although buses retain their operator's livery. The service is seen as the first choice for travel for many residents in the area, and the Council is immensely proud of this successful partnership, one of the first of its kind in the country.

The fragmented nature of the wider bus network in CW&C presents challenges for CW&C in maintaining their website and online resources with up-to-date information on bus routes, timetables and fares. Funding and resources at the authority's disposal limit the content of the website to a list of routes, their destinations, operators and in some cases



timetables, plus links to Traveline and some operators' own websites. In an attempt to improve service provision, CW&C have refreshed their 'itravelmart' app, to include information on hire transport – Ginger e-scooters and Enterprise car club, as well as community transport and Park & Ride operations.

### 2.1.8 Bus depots

Bus depots are spread out across the borough, and some operators' depots are located outside the borough. The location of each operators' depot(s) and the Peak Vehicle Requirement (PVR) at that depot is listed in the table below. This also includes buses servicing non-CW&C routes.

**Table 2.6: Operator depots and PVR**

<b>Operator</b>	<b>Depot location</b>	<b>PVR</b>
Stagecoach	Waverton, Chester	39
	Rock Ferry, Birkenhead	47
Arriva	Hawarden (Chester), Wales	25
	Winsford	34
	Runcorn	46
D&G	Crewe	27
	Wincham, Northwich	8
Al's Coaches	Birkenhead	Unknown
Aintree Coachline	Hooton, Ellesmere Port	12
Warrington Own Buses	Warrington	100
CW&C's Own Fleet	Ellesmere Port	20

Source: Bus Operators - 2021

### 2.1.9 Peak time delays

Current bus timetables for services in CW&C do not appear to make adjustments for peak time congestion when calculating journey times, as many show the same journey times for morning peak and midday journeys, as shown for a selection of routes in Table 2.7. This may in part be due to the impact of Covid-19 in which, for a period, roads were considerably quieter than usual. Most services operate at a low enough frequency and

with sufficient recovery time to allow layover to recover any time lost due to delays if needed, although operators have identified delays on the A51 towards Chester via Vicars Cross.

**Table 2.7: Peak and Off-Peak Timetabled Travel Time Comparison**

Route number (Operator)	Origin	Destination	AM Peak travel time	Inter-peak travel time	Time difference
1/1A (Stagecoach)	Blacon Parade	Chester Bus Interchange	17 minutes	17 minutes	0 minutes
2 (Stagecoach)	Ellesmere Port Bus Interchange	Chester Bus Interchange	36 minutes	35 minutes	1 minute
10A (Arriva)	Connah's Quay (Golftyn Garthorpe Avenue)	Chester Bus Interchange	31 minutes	31 minutes	0 minutes
16 (Stagecoach)	Chester Bus Interchange	Saltney, Sandy Lane Terminus	29 minutes	29 minutes	0 minutes
31 (Arriva)	Crewe Bus Station	Northwich Interchange	1 hour 9 minutes	1 hour 9 minutes	0 minutes
82 (D&G Bus)	Rudheath (Doctors Surgery)	Chester Bus Interchange	1 hour 29 minutes	1 hour 29 minutes	0 minutes

Source: Mott MacDonald - 2021

### 2.1.10 Ticketing products and fares

At present, there is little coordination with regard to ticketing. Operators do not generally accept each other's tickets, except on the Blacon Pointer VQBP between Arriva and Stagecoach. Arriva, Stagecoach, D&G Buses, and Warrington's Own Buses all offer daily, weekly, monthly tickets, as well as singles and returns. Apart from the VQBP, these are only usable on the respective operator's own services with no interchangeability or inter-availability. Stagecoach and Arriva offer termly and annual student passes, while Stagecoach have recently introduced a new range of flexible multi-day carnet tickets to reflect more flexible working patterns. Ticketing details for other operators in CW&C are not normally available on their websites

The creation of a VQBP between Stagecoach and Arriva to establish a multi-operator ticket exclusively for the VQBP demonstrates the ability and willingness to collaborate in this way under appropriate conditions. There is the potential for the Blacon Pointer partnership to act as a blueprint for other similar arrangements. For simplicity, Table 2.8

provides a breakdown of day ticket fares only by operator to give an indication of ticket prices, but operators listed here offer a range of other ticket types, including singles, weekly and monthly tickets, as well as term time passes for students and children.

**Table 2.8: Summary bus fares by service operators**

Operator	Blacon Pointer Day Ticket	Adult Day (most appropriate local zone selected)	Network Return
Stagecoach	£3.00	£4.20	-
Arriva	£2.70	£4.60	-
Warrington's Own Buses	-	£5.95	Various
D&G Buses	-	-	£5.50

Source: Mott MacDonald - 2022

Apart from the VQBP, the only other multi-operator ticketing offer available within CW&C is the National Rail Plusbus add-on that allows unlimited bus travel throughout a specific area over the course of a day. Plusbus is available for both Chester and Ellesmere Port although the areas of validity in both cases are quite tightly contained within the extents of the settlements themselves. Some restrictions apply on these tickets, for instance the Plusbus ticket is not valid on the City Rail Link bus in Chester which is a rather counter-intuitive restriction, given that this is one of the first interactions visitors have with buses in the city. The Council does currently offer a stored value smartcard, the Cheshire Travelcard, which enables passengers to top up with cash and then use it to pay for tickets on the bus. However the TravelCard is expected to be discontinued in the coming months, as part of the ongoing multi-operator Smart Ticketing strategy in this and neighbouring regions. The TravelCard has generally had low passenger usage and better offers are often available from operators, hence its discontinuation.

In place of the TravelCard, CW&C and operators have been working together to progress a multi-operator ticket that will make use of back-office facilities being developed through schemes such as Project Coral. Dialogue is also ongoing with both Transport for the North and Transport for Wales on how CW&C can effectively integrate with wider smart ticketing strategies. As a measure of progress in this regard, Arriva have recently introduced capped contactless fares on their buses in neighbouring Liverpool City Region, several of which cross-over into Cheshire West and Chester, with discussions underway to extend this to other operators via the City Region's Tap and Go strategy.



### **Case Study 3: Supporting Ukrainian and Afghan Bus Offer**

The Council were increasingly aware that many of those arriving had very few items, no access to money and were extremely vulnerable.

The Council's Community and Humanitarian Group supporting the Ukraine response, discussed what support would be beneficial in helping guests feel welcomed and connected in the borough. The team reached out to a number of key services to mobilise time-limited support, this included transport specifically bus travel in the borough.

Through the Enhanced Partnership Working Group many of our bus operators kindly offered Ukrainian guests in the borough free travel for two months.

#### **Aims of 2-month free travel pass:**

- To provide a welcome to the borough
- Promote independence
- Help guests familiarise themselves with the borough and the bus services in the borough
- To assist guests connecting with other guests, the community and services, which has proven extremely beneficial in more remote areas of the borough
- Time-limited to assist with the gap in receiving universal credit/job opportunities or rehousing

The 288 passes issued to date have been a lifeline in helping people attend appointments, school and to help with integration into the community. It has greatly helped Ukrainian guests to meet up and connect with people and to feel more settled in the area.

The Enhanced Partnership Working Group have also introduced a similar offer for our Afghan guests.

### **2.1.11 Bus priority measures**

There are currently 2km of bus lanes in the CW&C area, all of which are within the Chester area and located at:

- Hough Green, Chester
- Sealand Road, Chester
- Wrexham Road, Chester
- Upper Northgate Street Chester
- Love Street, Chester
- Frodsham Street, Chester
- St Oswald's Way to Oulton Place Slip Road, Chester.

Two further facilities on Boughton Road and on Liverpool Road were suspended during the pandemic and have not yet been brought back into use as an ongoing review looks into the future balance of their use, highway needs and active travel needs. Many of these facilities serve both the service bus and Park & Ride networks and, given their use by buses, taxis, private hire vehicles and motorcycles, can provide faster journey times and uncongested road-space for a variety of non-private-car vehicles. These measures work most effectively in areas of congestion and delay for buses and other vehicles, and need to be carefully located so as to cause maximum benefit for non-car trips rather than in locations where they are easily incorporated but of potentially less benefit.

Chester also has an Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) system in place which allows the potential for detection of buses and the live alteration of signal timings to facilitate quicker journeys for bus vehicles. It should be noted, however, that this system has been in place for some time and does not currently make use of the latest technology available to selectively offer bus priority.

It will be important to build on these existing assets within the BSIP to ensure that bus priority is targeted in the most effective and beneficial locations to facilitate bus journeys and to encourage mode shift from private car to more sustainable modes of transport. Operators have expressed desire to work collaboratively within the Enhanced Partnership to improve bus priority provision in the borough.

### **2.1.12 Bus network infrastructure**

The £13.5m Chester Bus Interchange, and accompanying public realm, is an award-winning bus station which opened in 2017 and can handle up to 156 buses per hour at its 13 stands. Currently, around 800 buses use the facility each day, including National

Express coaches, with an improved user interface for rail users, e-scooter hire users, pedestrians and cyclists, amongst the core benefits. The bus interchange has good quality facilities including real-time information, retail (including a coffee shop), high quality toilets, a Changing Places facility, baby-changing facilities, and informal provision for bus layover and staff welfare. The Council is responsible for day-to-day operation of the Interchange. As the focus of the Chester bus network, the new facility provides a vital role in improving the public transport infrastructure of Chester.

Ellesmere Port Interchange along Civic Way was constructed as part of the £16m wider Masterplan investment in Ellesmere Port. The facility provides modern facilities including real time information. In Northwich, there are seven bus stops along Watling Street in the town centre which serves as the bus hub, whilst in Winsford there is no dedicated bus terminus, but a series of stops around the town centre on Dene Drive and High Street provides a comparable function. Similarly in Neston, there is no dedicated bus terminus, although the rail station, located in the town centre, acts as a mini transport hub with bus services calling both there and at a stop at Brook Street which forms the most popular central stop. Frodsham and Helsby have no dedicated bus stations and are served by purely on-street facilities.

In total, CW&C has a total of 2,663<sup>4</sup> bus stops across the borough, of which 847 (32%) are unmarked on the highway, 563 (21%) have a shelter, and 1,357 (51%) have timetable information displayed. The Council is responsible for maintaining most of these bus stops and the shelters, however it currently has a contract in place with Clear Channel UK (CCUK) to maintain and provide advertising for 114 of the 563 stops with a shelter (20%).

As part of our wider infrastructure improvements, since October 2021, £32,000 of investment has been made at bus stops in the borough, through the following improvements: refurbishment of Upton Park & Ride shelter with reglazing, rebranding, new lighting and new RTI screens; new RTI screen also at Wrexham Park & Ride site, and upgrades to Sutton Way Hotel bus stop in Ellesmere Port with new shelter, new hard standing and new seats.

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<sup>4</sup> Correct as of October 2021.

### **2.1.13 Summary of bus network provision**

The overall provision of bus services varies greatly across the borough, with the urban centres (particularly Chester and Ellesmere Port) being relatively well served on Monday-Saturday daytimes. However, evenings and Sundays tend to have much lower service provision across the borough. This leads to lower levels of connectivity than desirable to core attractors such as employment, education, health and leisure opportunities outside of core hours, and reduces the mode share of bus for these trips.

Smaller towns like Neston, Frodsham, Helsby and rural areas, are relatively poorly served throughout the week. The rural nature of the central and southern part of the borough presents particular challenges in terms of running financially viable services.

Bus frequencies in some parts of the borough and at certain times of the week are a clear issue to be addressed in the BSIP – a key issue is the lack of available funding at a local level to support commercially unviable routes and this will need significant future consideration, both in terms of stabilising the network, and also in terms of fostering sustainable growth in the future.

A further issue is a general lack of integration between bus services and other modes including rail and even Park & Ride services. In the past, this has been understood to be substantially due to buses being in competition with other forms of transport, however the National Bus Strategy presents the opportunity to create a step-change towards a unified and mutually supportive sustainable transport network in which each mode plays its part.

## 2.1.14 Summary of changes to Bus Supply since initial BSIP

Since the publication of the initial BSIP in October 2021, a number of changes have been made to the bus network. These are mainly concerned with changes to service levels and frequencies and are summarised in the table below:

Service Number	Between	Change since 2021	Resulting frequency	Operator/s
1	Northwich and Weaverham	Sunday service transferred to Arriva from D&G	Unchanged	Arriva / D&G
2	Northwich and Rudheath	Service removed	-	Arriva / D&G
7	Chester Bus Interchange and Vicar's Cross	Service reduced to hourly	1 bus per hour on Monday to Saturday daytimes	Stagecoach
7A/7C	Winsford Industrial Estate and Winsford Town Centre	New service (subsequently reduced in frequency)	1 bus per hour on Monday to Saturday daytimes	Arriva
8/8A	Chester Bus Interchange and Vicar's Cross / Piper's Ash	Service level increased to hourly	1 bus per hour on Monday to Sunday daytimes	Stagecoach
9	Chester Bus Interchange and Piper's Ash	Service removed	-	Stagecoach
15/15A/15B	Chester Bus Interchange and Saughall	Service increased to 2 per hour. D&G contracted services transferred to Arriva / Stagecoach	2 buses per hour on Monday to Saturday daytimes. 1 bus per 2 hours on Monday to Saturday evenings 1 bus per hour on Sunday	Arriva / Stagecoach (Blacon Pointer VQBP)
16	Chester Bus Interchange and Saltney	Service reduced to 3 per hour	3 buses per hour on Monday to Saturday daytimes 1 bus per hour on Monday to Saturday evenings 2 buses per hour on Sunday	Stagecoach
29/29B	Northwich and Mount Pleasant via Winsford	Service removed	-	Arriva
31/31W	Northwich and Crewe	Service reduced to 1 per hour	1 bus per hour on Monday to Saturday daytimes	Arriva
102	Ellesmere Port Town Centre and Cheshire Oaks	Service reduced to 1 per hour on Sunday	1 bus per hour on Sunday only	Stagecoach (CW&C supported)

<b>Service Number</b>	<b>Between</b>	<b>Change since 2021</b>	<b>Resulting frequency</b>	<b>Operator/s</b>
X1	Chester Bus Interchange and Liverpool	Service reduced to hourly	1 bus per hour on Monday to Sunday daytimes	Stagecoach

Source: Online resources - 2022

## 2.2 Bus Service Demand and Performance

Having provided an overview of the bus network offer, this section covers the trends in bus usage in recent years and the performance of the network.

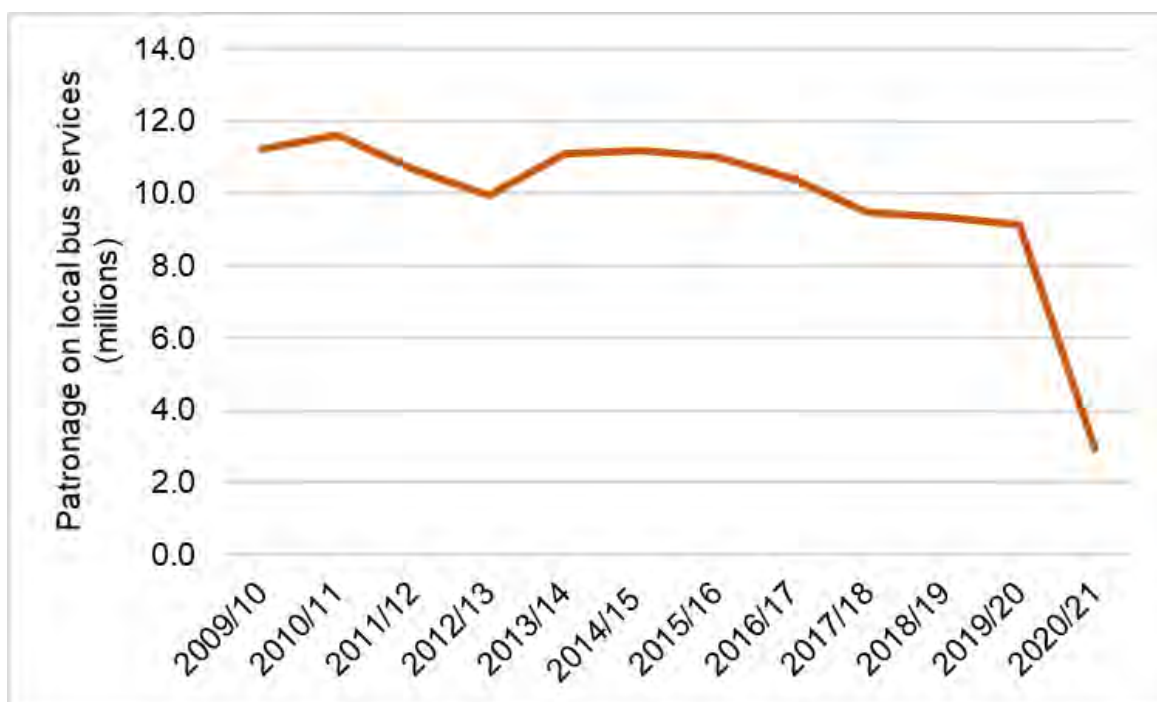
### 2.2.1 Bus usage

Like most areas outside London, bus usage in Cheshire West and Chester has seen a gradual decline in recent years. From a high of 11.6 million in 2010/11, the number of bus passenger journeys fell to 9.1 million in 2019/20, albeit with some rises and falls during that period. The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic may then be seen for the year 2020/21 in this data, with patronage falling to a low of around 33% of 2019/20 figures, but have since recovered to around 80% for fare payers, and 65% for concessionary pass holders.

Operators report that the best recovery has been seen among children and young people, at around 85%.

In this, CW&C lags significantly behind neighbouring authorities, for example in Liverpool City Region the equivalent proportions for fare payers and concessionary pass holders are 87% and 70%, with young person demand often exceeding 2019 levels in some areas.

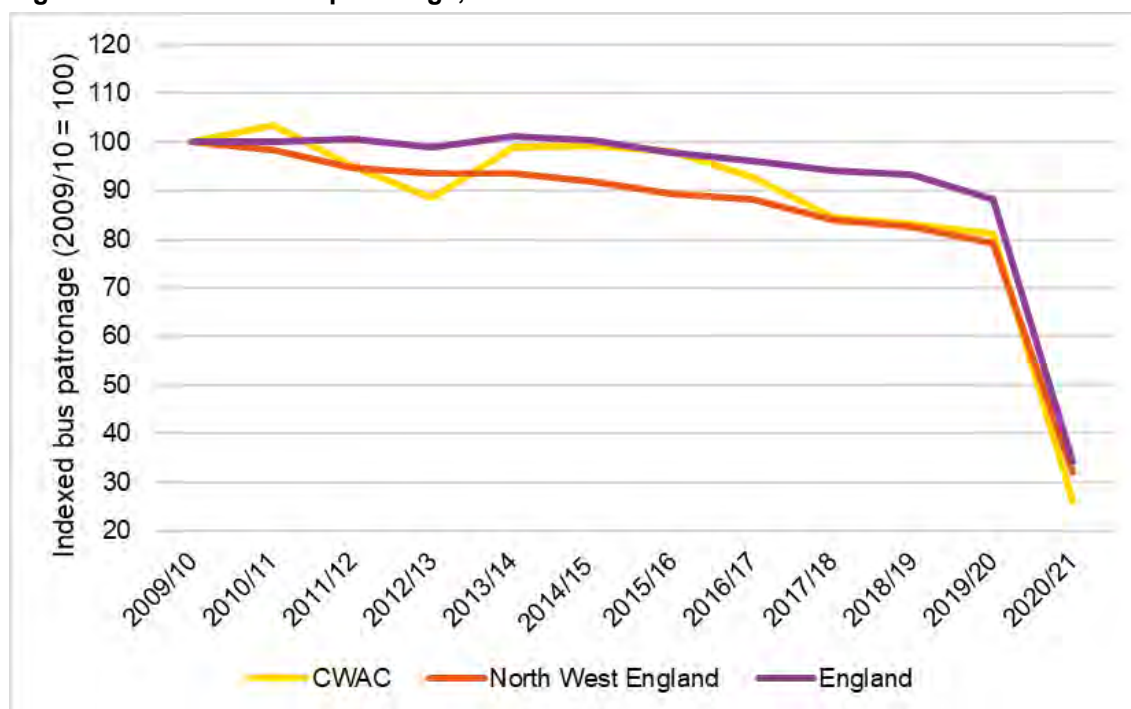
**Figure 2.15: Change in Annual Bus Patronage on services in Cheshire West in Chester between 2009/10 and 2020/21**



Source: DfT Bus Table 0109

When compared regionally and nationally, it can be seen in Figure 2.16 that Cheshire West and Chester has declined by significantly more than the national average (19% decrease compared to 12% nationally) between 2009/10 and 2019/20, albeit this is in line with the average for North West England. This highlights the challenge that CW&C faces; providing a consistent level of bus service in a borough with a mixture of rural and urban areas, and areas of deprivation interspersed with relative affluence.

**Figure 2.16: Indexed bus patronage, 2009/10-2020/21**



Source: DfT, BUS0109

For comparison, Table 2.9 shows the number of bus passenger journeys per head of population, prior to Covid-19, for a selection of comparable local authorities and North West England.

**Table 2.9: Bus passenger journeys per head of population (2018/19)**

Locality (selected comparators)	Bus journeys per head of population
Cheshire West and Chester	27.5
Cheshire East	11.1
Durham	41.9
York	75.1
Kent	34.0
Essex	28.8



Locality (selected comparators)	Bus journeys per head of population
North West England	52.6
England	76.9

Source: DfT, BUS0110

It can be seen that Cheshire West and Chester has the second lowest number of bus journeys per head of population of the local authorities shown in the table; only Cheshire East has a lower rate. The number of bus journeys made per head of population in CW&C is just over half of the number for the North West of England as a whole, and just over a third of the national rate for England.

Concessionary pass holders (elderly and disabled) account for around 24% of bus passenger journeys in the borough, which is in line with the North West England average of 25%, and the national average of 20%. Previously, concessionary pass holders accounted for around 30% of passenger journeys; other parts of the North West and England have seen less of a fall in the proportion of concessionary trips. However, despite having one of the oldest and fastest ageing populations nationally, the actual number of journeys made by concessionary pass holders in CW&C fell from 2.9m in 2016/17 to 2.5m in 2019/20, a 14% decrease. This indicates that even for concessionary holders, the bus is becoming a less attractive option when choosing how to travel, suggesting bus services currently do not adequately cater for the needs of the communities, especially older people and disabled people. This is further compounded by the slowness to return to bus of this demographic following the pandemic with the market in CW&C at only around 65% of that pre-pandemic.

**Case Study 4: Concessionary Travel: extended free travel before 09:30 for English National Concessionary pass holders during school summer holidays 2022**

As Covid restrictions eased and the country turned towards normality the return to public transport in the borough is generally below the numbers travelling prior to the pandemic. This is particularly the case among people who are eligible for free travel with the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) fare scheme. In early Summer 2022 only 63% of concessions were travelling based on pre-Covid passenger numbers. In comparison fare payers were showing signs of recovery, using public transport as their choice of travel.

The slow and stalling return of concessions to bus travel is a concern across England, Wales and Scotland. This situation is starting to affect service viability across the country. Transport Focus identified that more than half of concessionary pass holders are still saying that Covid-19 is still a major concern. The number of bus trips they make is unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels until their anxiety subsides. One of the recommendations in the report suggests that Local Transport Authorities need to consider alternative solutions to growing concessionary patronage.

With this in mind, the inaugural Enhanced Bus Partnership Board held on 18 July 2022, approved an initiative put forward by Cheshire West and Chester Council. This introduced a temporary concession in the borough that allowed free bus travel for concessionary pass holders before 09:30 Monday to Friday between 25 July 2022 until 2 September 2022. During the summer bus services generally carry less passengers on peak journeys. As such the offer was designed to help residents who may have been dissuaded from bus travel at busier periods to take advantage of the opportunity and start to build confidence in using bus services again. The Partnership hoped that this may overcome any anxieties that may have built up during the peak of the pandemic.

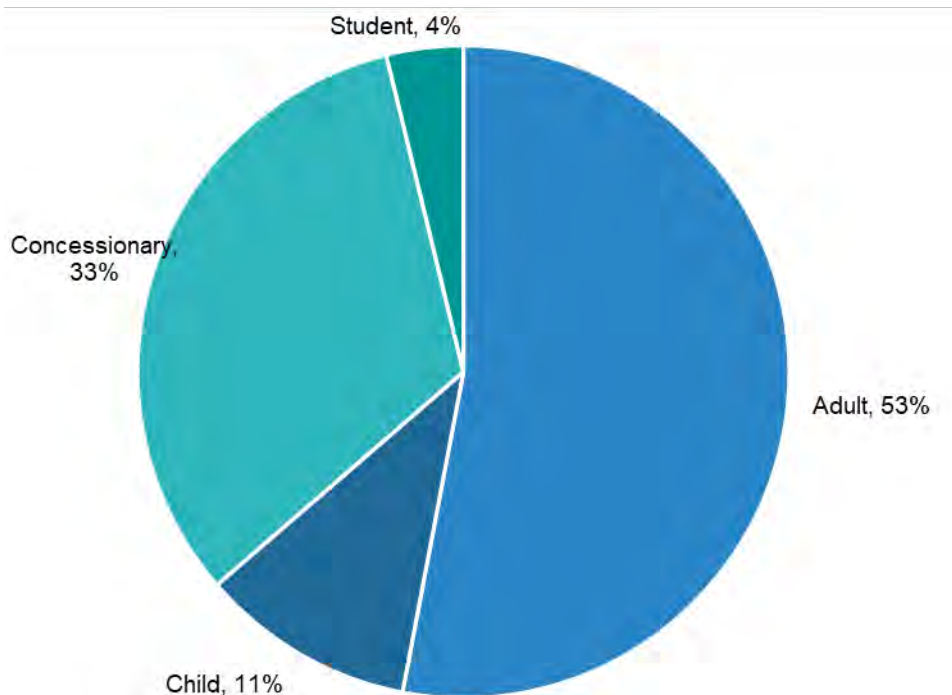
The initiative applied to bus travel for English National Concessionary pass holders travelling on bus services which board within the borough of Cheshire West and Chester or on services from Wales that finish in Cheshire West and Chester. The Council and bus operators monitored this initiative to understand the impact. Operators reported that the offer did not necessarily attract many new passengers, it gave the existing travellers more flexibility in travel time and it did encourage some uplift in growth.

The above data shows that, when compared nationally and regionally, usage of bus in Cheshire West and Chester lags behind, and has suffered greater decline than other areas. This may in part be explained by the borough having large areas of rurality, where population density is low along with a number of relatively small urban centres (Chester, the largest centre, has a population of 79,000) spread out across the borough, which makes operating commercially sustainable bus services a challenge. The resources of the Council are limited and therefore its scope for supporting services is restricted to only the most essential, such as the 26 service between Ellesmere Port and Chester via Wervin and Stoak.

## 2.2.2 Ticket Sales

This section considers bus usage in CW&C in more detail, based on ticket sales data provided by the operators.

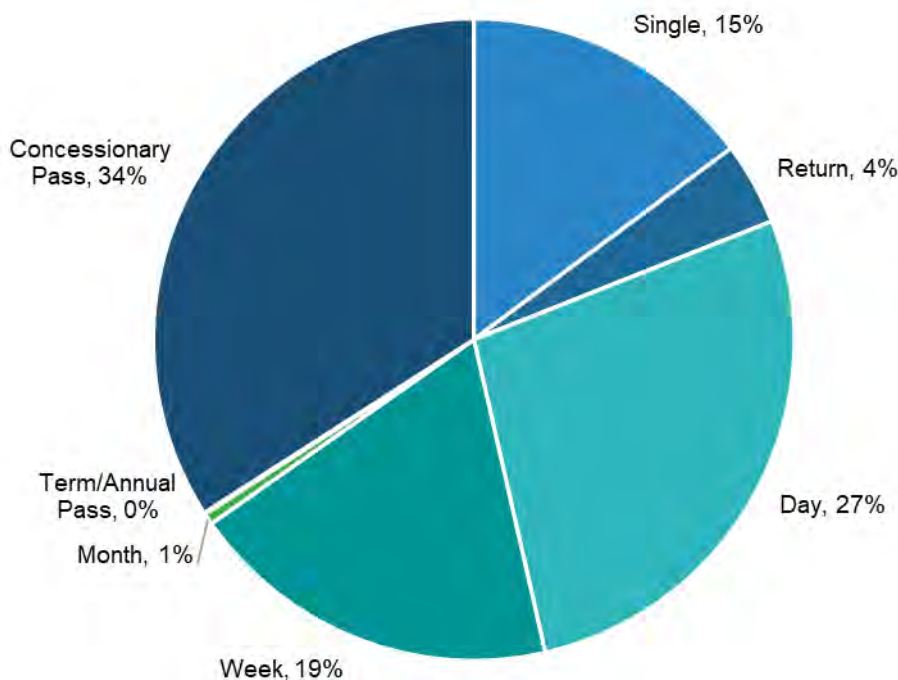
**Figure 2.17: Bus ticket purchases/usage by user group**



Source: Bus operators – 2021

Adults account for the majority of bus users, based on analysed ticket purchases (Figure 2.17), with just over half of bus users purchasing/using an adult ticket (this includes singles, day tickets, week/month tickets, and annual passes). People using a concessionary pass (either for seniors or those with a disability) account for a third of bus users (Figure 2.18).

**Figure 2.18: Bus ticket purchases by ticket type**



Source: Bus operators – 2021

In terms of the types of tickets used, concessionary passes are the most commonly used, accounting for around a third of tickets. Among fare-paying passengers, day tickets are the most common, at 27%, followed by weekly tickets (19%) and singles (15%). Excluding concessionary passes, 70% of bus ticket purchases are for tickets only valid on one day (singles, returns and day tickets). Given that weekly, monthly, term and annual passes can represent better value for money than buying a ticket every day for daily users, the indication is that a large proportion of bus passengers use the bus on an ad-hoc or semi-regular basis, rather than for a daily trip such as commuting to work or for education purposes. This suggests an overall lack of regularity or commitment to bus usage, and a desire to retain the option to switch to an alternative mode on any given day.

Patronage data has been provided for many routes from 2019 – the baseline year for the BSIP. For commercial confidentiality reasons, the actual patronage for each route cannot be reported here, but the routes have been grouped according to patronage range, shown in Table 2.10, with an indication of the type of route (urban, inter-urban and rural). It should be noted that patronage was not received for all routes, and only routes for which data has been received have been included. Additionally, many of the routes listed below cross the CW&C boundary into neighbouring local authorities; patronage for these routes covers the

whole length of the route and will not, therefore, reflect patronage within CW&C specifically.

**Table 2.10: Rank of routes by patronage**

Annual Patronage	Services and route classification
Over 500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 – Chester – Liverpool – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 1/1A – Chester – Blacon Circular – Local</li> <li>• 2 – Chester – Ellesmere Port – Runcorn – Inter-Urban</li> </ul>
250,000 – 500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 – Northwich – Weaverham/Rudheath – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 5 – Chester – Huntington – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 16 – Chester – Saltney Circular – Local</li> <li>• 29 – Northwich – Winsford – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 31 – Northwich – Winsford – Crewe – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 40 – Chester Railway Station – Chester City Centre – Local</li> <li>• 53 – Chester – Plas Newton – Kingsway – Local</li> </ul>
100,000 – 250,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 – Wrexham – Chester – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 4 – Northwich – Barnton/Leftwich – Local</li> <li>• 4/4S/X4 – Chester – Mold – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 5 – Ellesmere Port – Mold – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 6 – Ellesmere Port – Little Sutton – Local</li> <li>• 7 – Green Lane Circular – Local</li> <li>• 8A – Pipers Ash – Chester – Local</li> <li>• 15/15A – Chester – Saughall – Local</li> <li>• 37 – Northwich – Winsford – Sandbach – Crewe – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 41 – Chester – Whitchurch – Rural</li> <li>• 51 – Chester – Neston Drive – Local</li> <li>• 82 – Chester – Northwich – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 84 – Crewe – Chester – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 487 – Neston – Liverpool – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• X1 – Chester – Liverpool – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• X30 – Chester – Warrington – Inter-Urban</li> </ul>
50,000 – 100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 – Chester – Huntington – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 7 – Ellesmere Port – Overpool – Rivacre – Local</li> <li>• 10 – Chester – Connah's Quay – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 10A – Chester – Connah's Quay – Flint – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 11A – Chester – Holywell – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 22 – Chester – West Kirby – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 272 – Ellesmere Port – Neston – Inter-Urban</li> </ul>
Less than 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 – Chester – Broughton Village – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 8 – Chester – Pipers Ash and Green Lane – Local</li> <li>• 15B – Blacon – Countess Hospital – Chester – Urban</li> <li>• 26/26A – Ellesmere Port – Chester via Stoak – Rural</li> <li>• X30 – Chester – Frodsham – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 48/48A – Frodsham – Northwich – Rural</li> </ul>

Annual Patronage	Services and route classification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 61/62 – Chester – Higher Kinnerton – Rural</li> <li>• 89 – Northwich – Knutsford – Rural</li> <li>• 102/103 – Ellesmere Port – Cheshire Oaks – Local</li> <li>• 200 – Chester Shopper Hopper – Local</li> <li>• 204 – Chester – Deeside Industrial Park – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• Cat 9/9A – Northwich – Warrington – Rural</li> <li>• X1 – Chester – Ruthin – Rural</li> <li>• Rural Rider – Rural</li> </ul>
Services which call at only a small number of bus stops in CW&C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7A/7C – Winsford Industrial Estate – Over St John’s – Local</li> <li>• X31 – Northwich – Winsford – Inter Urban</li> <li>• 42 – Crewe – Congleton – Inter-Urban</li> <li>• 70 – Nantwich – Tiverton – Nantwich – Rural</li> <li>• 319 – Sandbach Common – Goostrey – Rural</li> <li>• 811 – Moreton – Deeside – Broughton - Rural</li> </ul>

Source: Bus operators – 2021/22

Generally the local and inter-urban routes focused around Chester and Northwich are the more heavily used, while rural routes tend to be less well used as might be expected and broadly according to frequency of service.

### 2.2.3 Bus reliability and punctuality

CW&C, like all local authorities, submit bus punctuality data to the Department for Transport. Table 2.11 shows the figures for non-frequent bus punctuality data for 2014/15 – 2020/21 (the latest data available). On time is defined as being within a 6-minute window of the scheduled arrival time – no more than 1 minute early and no more than 5 minutes late.

**Table 2.11: Bus punctuality (2014/15 – 2020/21)**

Table	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2020/21
% of passenger journeys arriving on time	87%	83%	84%	86%	86%	88%

Source: Bus0902 Non-frequent bus services running on-time

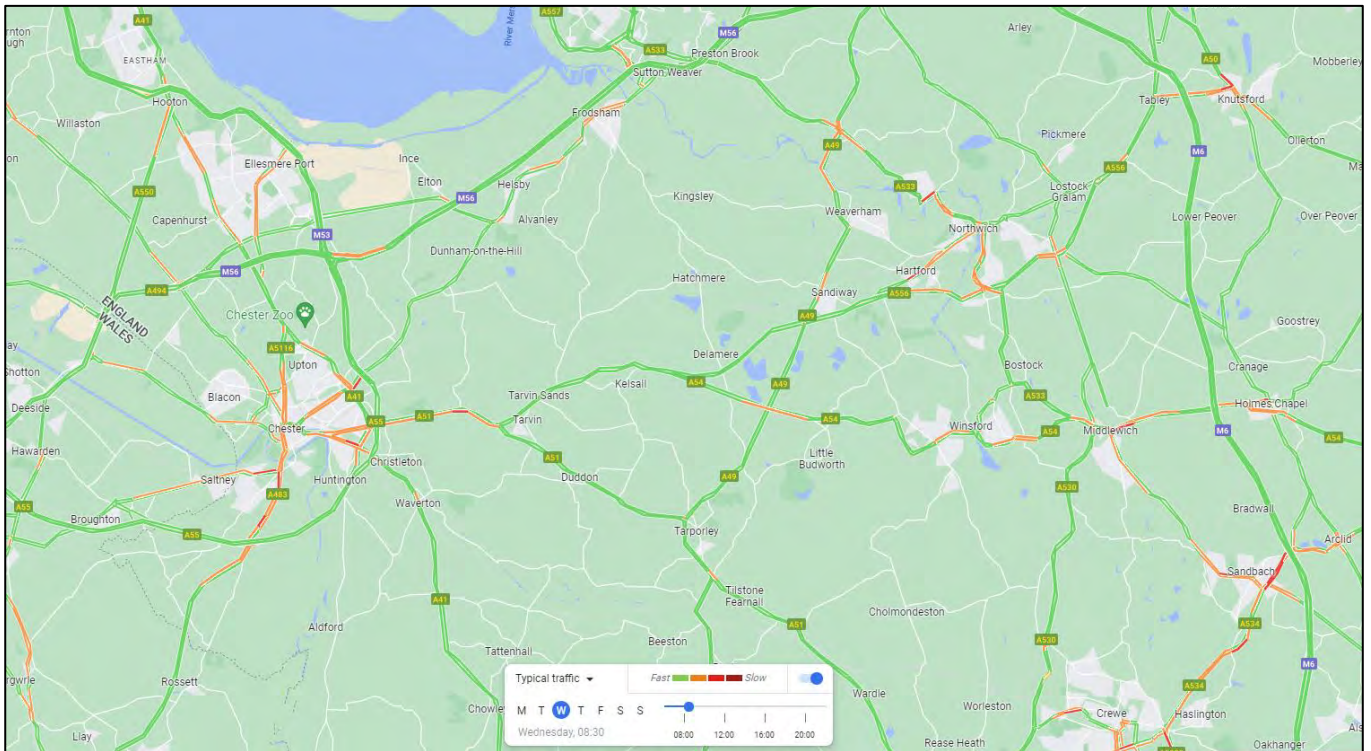
Note: 2019/20 data not collected due to Covid-19

It can be seen there have been some fluctuations in the proportion of services arriving on time, with steady improvements between 2015/16 and 2020/21, although there does remain some room for improvement.



Congestion in Cheshire West and Chester is considered to be relatively modest with just localised issues around the main centres (particularly Chester) at peak times. The following extract from Google Maps shows the situation at 08:30 on a typical weekday (although it should be noted that this is likely affected by reduced traffic observed during the Covid-19 pandemic).

**Figure 2.19: Typical Weekday Traffic Congestion in Cheshire West and Chester**



Source: Google Maps 2022

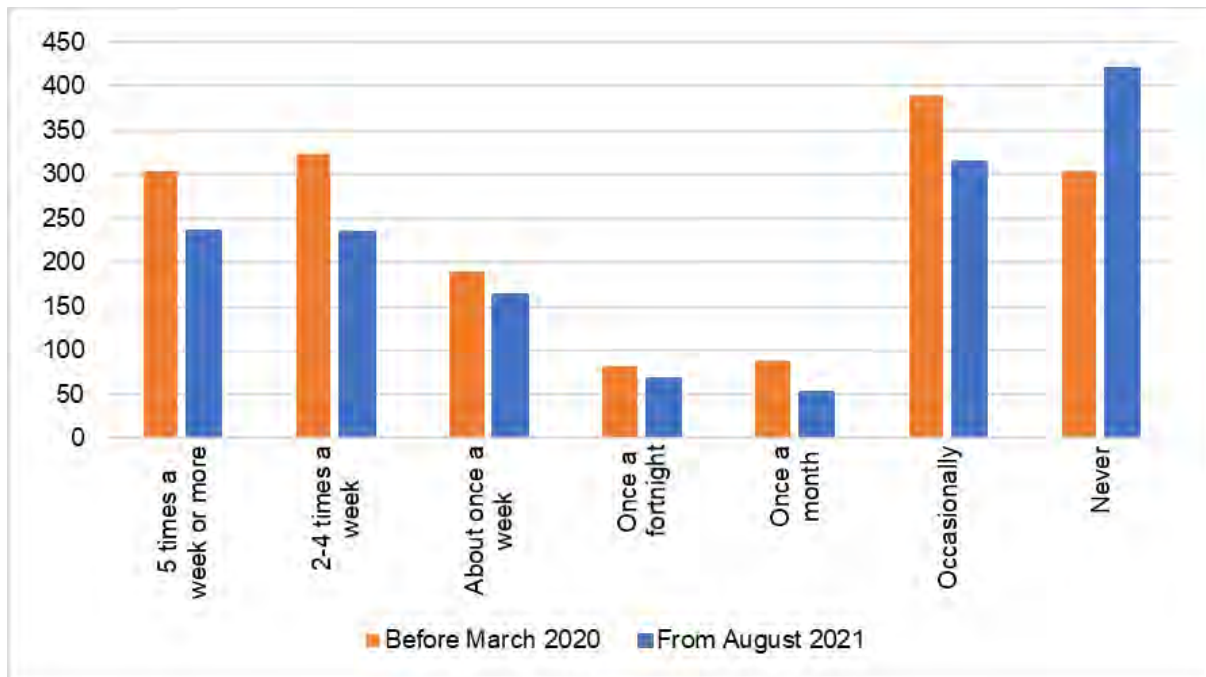
## 2.2.4 Public engagement survey

In August 2021, CW&C Council ran an online public engagement survey to gather bus users and non-users' views on the current bus network and what would encourage them to use bus more. It was completed by 1,664 people, representing themselves, local CW&C, town and parish councils, local community and business groups and other organisations. A summary of the survey's results is presented here, although a fuller examination of the results has been undertaken by CW&C Council and has fed into the full collation of evidence undertaken to support this BSIP.

People were asked how often they used the bus prior to March 2020, and how often they expect to use it from August 2021; it can be seen from Figure 2.20 that respondents are

reporting that they intend to use the bus less frequently from now on; ‘never’ is the only response to see an increase. This presents a substantial challenge, given the Climate Emergency Response Plan’s clear objective to encourage modal shift as part of the ambition to be a net zero emissions authority.

**Figure 2.20: Frequency of bus usage, prior to March 2020 and from August 2021**

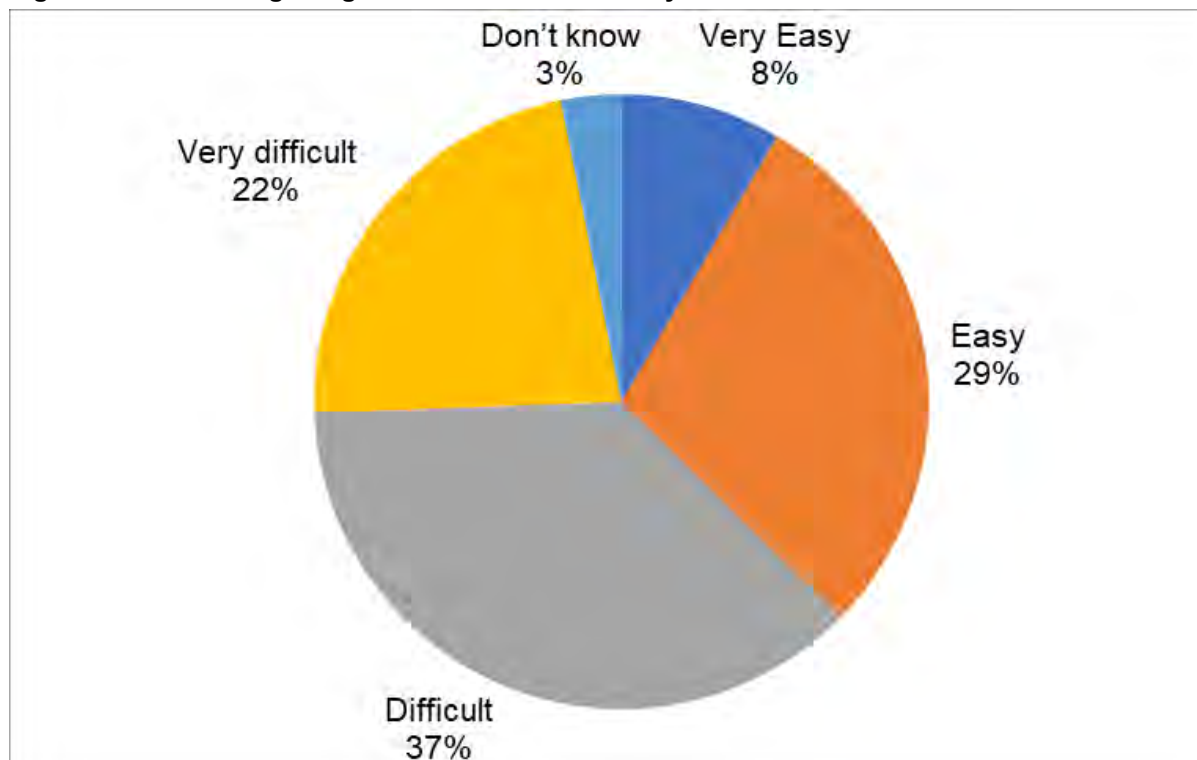


Source: CW&C Public Engagement Survey, 2021

In terms of how easy respondents find it to use the bus to get to where they need to go, Figure 2.21 shows that nearly 6 in 10 respondents reported finding it difficult or very difficult, which is likely to discourage people from using the bus. The anticipated decline in bus usage indicated in Figure 2.20 along with the reported difficulty in getting to desired destination means there is likely to be some additional resistance to using buses in the future and therefore targeted interventions will be needed to overcome this. These interventions, and further discussion on the initial priority of network recovery is presented in sections 3 and 4 of this document.



**Figure 2.21: Ease of getting to desired destination by bus**



Source: CW&C Public Engagement Survey, 2021

The most common recorded reasons that prevent people from using the bus were:

- Quicker to drive (51% of respondents)
- Doesn't operate at required times (45%)
- The bus route/stops are inconvenient (43%)
- I don't think the bus is frequent enough (40%)
- Doesn't go to my preferred destination (31%)
- Too expensive (30%)

In terms of the factors which would encourage respondents to use buses more, the most frequently selected responses were:

- Improve frequency of local bus services (66% of respondents)
- Extend hours of operation later into the evening (56%)
- Better choice of destinations (43%)
- Provide more bus services on Sunday and Bank Holidays (42%)

- Better information at bus stops and shelters e.g., real time passenger information screens (38%)
- Journey times on bus services made quicker (33%)

Further discussion on the second priority of network growth is presented in sections 3 and 4 of this document.

It can be seen that there is a range of reasons for why people don't use the bus and what would encourage them to use it more, with key reasons focused on operating times, frequency, availability of nearby services to desired destinations, and comparability of journey times to the private car (where available).

### **2.2.5 Summary of bus demand and performance**

The substantial decline in bus patronage in Cheshire West and Chester, at a more severe rate than England as a whole, cannot be ignored. Whilst bus services generally operate reasonably reliably and punctually, the number of bus journeys per head of population is lower in CW&C than many comparable local authorities. This is perhaps reflected in the relatively high proportion of people who purchase tickets valid for one day, indicating an ad-hoc approach to bus usage, rather than people's first choice. The results of the public engagement survey offers some insight into the reasons for the relatively low usage of bus services with operating times and accessibility to desired destinations cited as some of the most common reasons.

In recent years, declining levels of passenger demand have led to an unstable network around the borough with frequent service changes and withdrawals. This has led to a perceived lack of reliability and network useability for passengers creating a positive feedback loop in which fewer passengers triggers further reductions which reduces passengers etc. The Government support provided during and after Covid-19 has had the effect of reducing this network instability, however this is temporary as blanket Government support will shortly be withdrawn. This, added to the large number of operators and ticketing products available, serves to cause confusion and further reduce the attractiveness of the bus product.

Finally, unattractive fare levels compared to the daily perceived costs of the private car, and low quality standards on some services, are seen to further reduce the comparative

attractiveness of bus. The BSIP must seek to address these issues if it is to successfully engender mode shift.

## **2.3 LTA Support for Bus Services**

As of late 2022, the Cheshire West and Chester Council transport team has an estimated 11.8 FTE members of staff working in some capacity on bus activity, with a range of seniority and experience among the team members. The team works hard to deliver services such as maintaining bus stops and other infrastructure, maintaining the bus service registrations database, contracting and (in some cases) providing directly supported services, managing concessionary ticketing payments to operators, contracting and managing the Park & Ride network, managing back office systems and transport alerts to the public, keeping online content up to date and updating bus stop information with the latest timetable and any passenger notices regarding road closures. The team works closely with operators to ensure services are relevant to the needs of communities and provided in a cost-effective manner, offering good value for money. The Council has a budget of around £4.2m per year to cover these activities, which includes staff salaries. The various budget components are broken down as follows:

- Local Bus - £880,530
- Infrastructure excluding depreciation - £82,010
- Information provision - £110,659
- Concessionary Fares re-imbusement to bus operators - £2,780,000
- Concessionary Fares cost of customer cards - £105,000
- Chester and Ellesmere Port Bus Stations maintenance - £290,259
- Travelcard administration - £32,000.

34 bus services in CW&C receive some degree of financial support from the authority. An additional six receive support from another local authority. The CW&C-supported services are a mixture of 'de minimis' contract, minimum cost and minimum support, depending on the nature of the service, and are run by a mixture of operators. A total of £1,037,000 a year is spent on supporting local bus services in CW&C, and the eligibility of bus services to receive funding support is based on 1) Economic & Environmental Sustainability, 2)

Accessibility and 3) Financial Consideration. In this way, the social need for the service is considered alongside the commercial return.

## **2.4 Other factors that affect the use of local bus services**

### **2.4.1 Park & Ride**

Cheshire West and Chester Council operates a bus-based Park & Ride system in the city of Chester, with three car parks currently in operation, plus another at Sealand Road which is currently not in use. There are over 3,100 spaces across the four Park & Ride sites. Buses operate at least every 12 minutes between 7am and 7pm on a weekday, every 12 minutes between 8am and 7pm on a Saturday, and every 15 minutes between 9:30am and 5:30pm on a Sunday and bank holidays. Tickets cost £2 return for an adult with up to three accompanying under 16s.

Vehicles used on the Park & Ride service are of high quality, with WiFi, USB charging, mock leather seats and Euro VI engines. The Park & Ride service is particularly well-used in the summer and Christmas periods, indicating its popularity and convenience for tourists visiting the city.

However, the Park & Ride system in Chester is loss-making and has been for a long period of time. It must be noted, however, that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated health messaging concerning public transport, the services were demonstrating increases in passengers. Since the pandemic, demand has recovered to around 65% of previous levels<sup>5</sup> which is lower than the rest of the bus network but is significantly above that which other local authorities have observed on their P&R networks (circa 35% recovery in Leicestershire according to anecdotal evidence). The BSIP must consider how this vital component of the sustainable transport network within Chester could be improved and made more attractive to those that currently drive into the city, including difficult questions over its relationship with the rest of the local bus network. A key consideration will be in the pricing of parking in Chester City Centre since the Park & Ride system must offer a cheaper alternative for most city centre journeys to attract users. In December 2021, CW&C Council trialled a £1 per ticket offer on the Park & Ride system, to try to encourage people to use it in the run-up to Christmas. Unfortunately, rising Covid cases

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<sup>5</sup> Findings from NHT survey (2022)

limited its uptake, but the offer demonstrates CW&C Council's commitment to reinvigorating the system with low cost fares. A refreshed parking strategy for Cheshire West and Chester will be produced in the near future and we will ensure that this will be fully integrated with our BSIP policy proposals to properly incentivise sustainable transport.

### **2.4.2 Park & Ride Routes**

Until recently, the two Park & Ride routes in Chester ran as cross-city services. PR1 ran between Wrexham Road and Upton sites (Chester Zoo), while PR2 ran between Sealand Road and Boughton Heath. Both services called at the Bus Interchange, but only PR1 called at the rail station to provide a direct Zoo shuttle service for rail passengers (in addition to its main function as a Park & Ride service). However, in recent months (since 021), and due in part to the use of Sealand Road car park as a Covid-19 test centre, the service has been modified with the Sealand Road service suspended. The remaining three routes do not currently run as cross-city services, although tickets can be used on all Park & Ride routes, allowing interchange in the city centre to access other destinations. It has not yet been agreed whether cross-city services will return once the Sealand Road service resumes.

### **2.4.3 Rail Offer**

There are 21 rail stations within Cheshire West and Chester, with a wide offer in terms of destinations beyond the borough. However, rail connectivity within the borough and between the borough's urban centres is relatively poor with no direct services between Chester and Ellesmere Port, or between Ellesmere Port and either Northwich or Winsford, or between Chester and Winsford. Service frequencies on some routes are quite low – for example, Northwich is served by only one train per hour on the Chester-Manchester Piccadilly mid-Cheshire line route. The relatively poor intra-borough rail offer is reflected in the 1% rail modal share for commuting<sup>6</sup> compared to 5% for bus. The limited scope of the rail offer means bus is generally considered the more viable public transport offer for most CW&C residents and workers travelling within the borough.

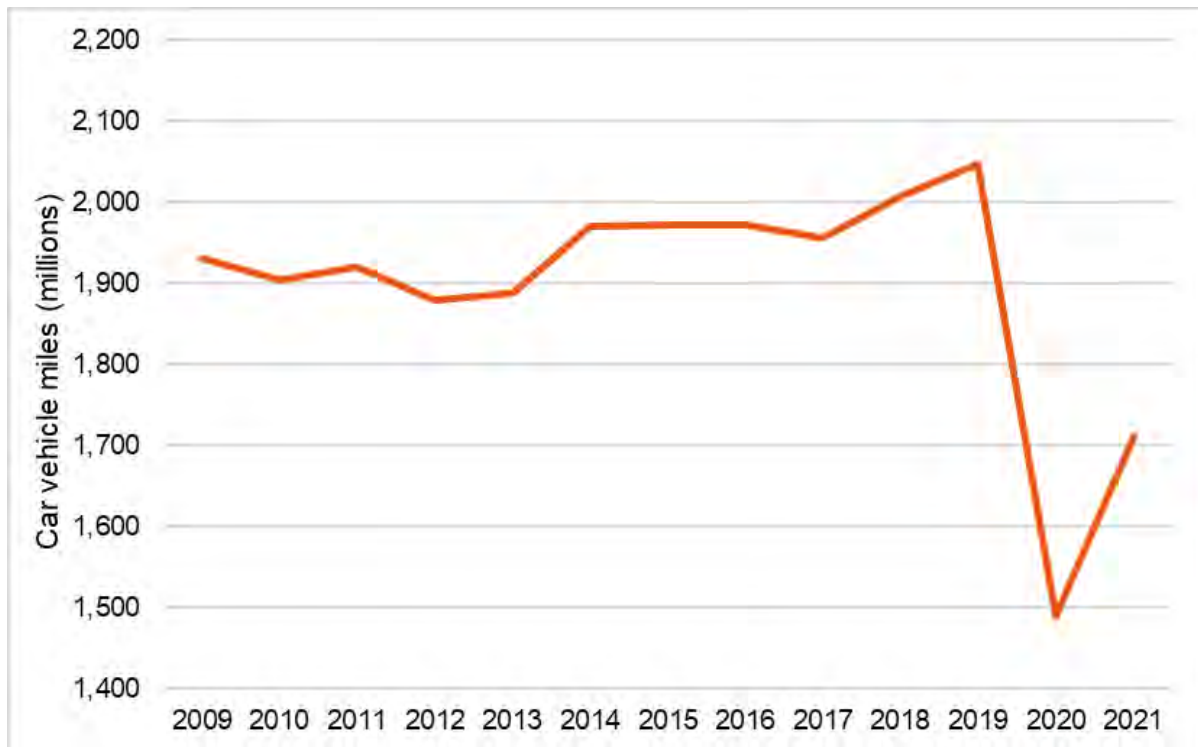
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<sup>6</sup> Census 2011

### 2.4.4 Car Traffic Volumes

Figure 2.22 shows traffic levels in Cheshire West and Chester over recent years; this shows an upward trend until the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Figure 2.22: CW&C Annual car traffic (millions of miles), 2009-2021**

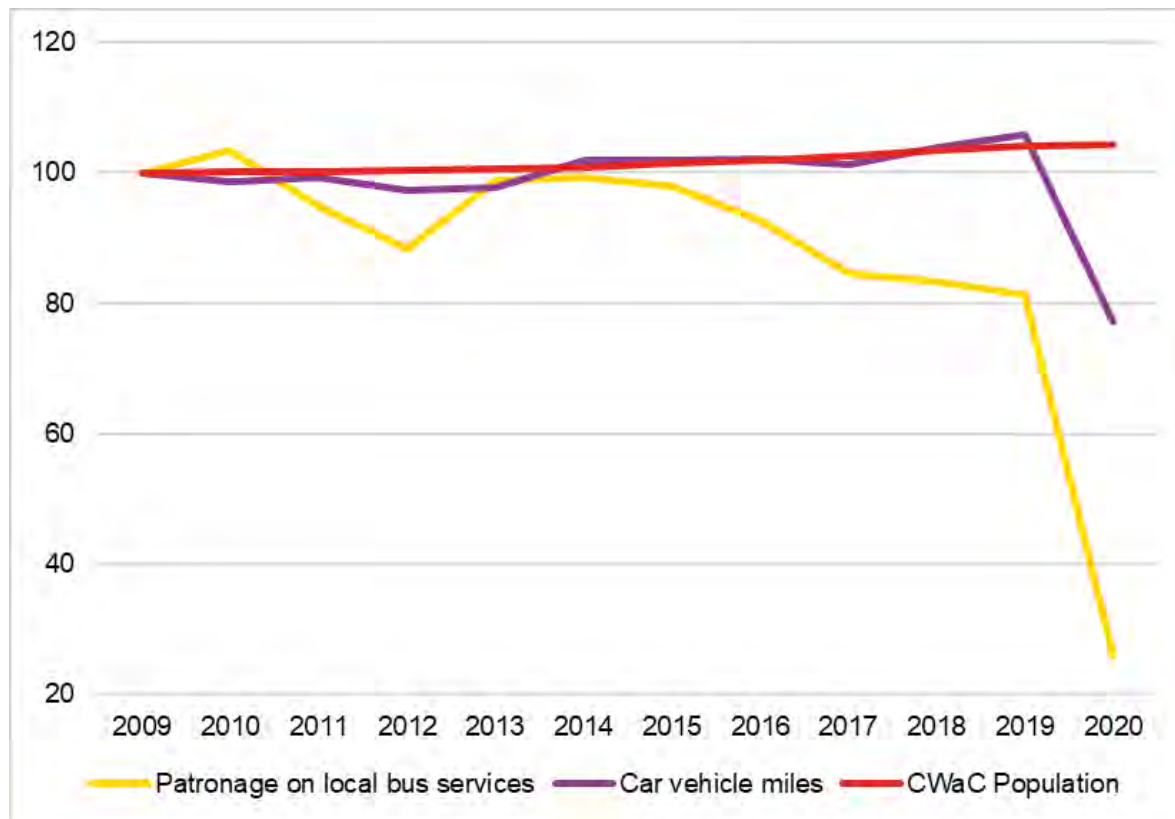


Source: DfT, TRA8902

Figure 2.23 shows an index of bus patronage on local bus services, car vehicle miles and population in CW&C between 2009 and 2019. It shows that population has grown steadily by about 4% over the period. During this period, bus patronage has fallen by around 20%, while car vehicle miles have increased by 11%, indicating both a shift in modal share from bus to car over the last 10 years, and an increase in number of journeys per resident. This data does not include the impacts of the pandemic.

The strategy contained within this BSIP will need to halt and reverse the trend of mode shift from bus to private car if the borough is to meet its decarbonisation targets, and climate change responsibilities. This will require making bus services significantly more attractive to the user compared to the private car.

**Figure 2.23: Indexed CW&C bus patronage, car mileage and population, 2009-2019**



Source: DfT, TRA8902, BUS0109 and ONS

### 2.4.5 Car parking

Publicly and privately owned public car parks can be found in all the main settlements of Cheshire West and Chester and tariffs vary significantly between the settlements. Charges have only recently been introduced in Northwich, Frodsham and Helsby. Within the town centres across the borough, there are over 23,000 car parking spaces, including more than 8,000 in Chester, 7,000 at Cheshire Oaks, 2,400 in each of Ellesmere Port and Northwich, and 1,200 in Winsford<sup>7</sup>. These are a mixture of publicly and privately owned, and a mixture of charged and free. Table 2.12 shows the 2-hour and 8-hour/all day tariff for a selection of car parks across the borough.

**Table 2.12: Tariffs at selected car parks**

Car park (locality)	Number of spaces	2-hour tariff	8-hour/all day tariff
Little Roodee (Chester)	452	£5.00	£5.00
New Market (Chester)	820	£5.00	£13.50

<sup>7</sup> Cheshire West and Chester Parking Strategy, 2016



<b>Car park (locality)</b>	<b>Number of spaces</b>	<b>2-hour tariff</b>	<b>8-hour/all day tariff</b>
Delamere Street (Chester)	351	£3.00	£6.00
Memorial Hall (Northwich)	219	£0.20	£1.10
Cumberland Street (Northwich)	120	£1.00	£1.00
Dene Drive (Winsford)	286	Free	Free
Wellington Road (Ellesmere Port)	1,088	£0.50	Not available (4-hour max stay)
Civic Centre (Ellesmere Port)	395	£0.50	£2.00
Frodsham Station (Frodsham)	131	£0.20	£1.50
Station Avenue (Helsby)	21	£0.20	£1.50

It can be seen that outside of Chester, all day parking is available for £2.00 or less in all of the selected car parks. When compared to the cost of a day bus ticket (Stagecoach offers the cheapest day ticket at £4.20 for an adult), driving to the town centre and all-day car parking, especially outside of Chester, can be significantly cheaper, especially if more than one person is making the trip.

In Chester, all day parking is available for as little as £5.00-£6.00 in car parks on the edge of the city centre. Whilst more expensive than other localities, it is still relatively cheap compared to the cost of a day bus ticket or even a Park & Ride ticket (£2.00 return per person). Again, when two or more people are travelling together, car parking in the city centre can be similar to the cost of Park & Ride tickets but offers the option of parking closer to the city centre's facilities. As a result, bus and Park & Ride services do struggle to claim mode share given the relatively inexpensive alternative options associated with the private car.

It is clear that, alongside measures within the BSIP to make bus services more attractive, there will need to be some complementary demand management measures to reduce the attractiveness of the private car if we are to see the level of mode shift to bus that is required for decarbonisation and climate change imperatives. It should, of course, be noted that this presents a challenge to local authorities when a significant amount of charged parking is priced by the private sector, as is the case in CW&C.

A refreshed Parking Strategy for CW&C will be produced soon and will integrate with the BSIP to properly incentivise public transport against the use of the private car.

## 2.5 CW&C Bus Review Task Group work outcomes

In March 2020, prior to the publication of the National Bus Strategy, CW&C commissioned a Bus Review Task Group to undertake a review of the existing bus provision in the borough, and recommend actions for addressing the issues identified. It is a cross-party group, with a range of political representations within in. It considered four main areas relating to buses in CW&C:

- Local Bus Services
- Park & Ride
- Home to School
- Community and Rural Transport

After completing a baseline assessment and identifying challenges and opportunities, a long list of interventions was compiled, which were grouped into nine thematic groups. The action plan for each of the nine thematic groups identified short, medium and long-term priorities, with indicative costings. A number of the thematic groups align with National Bus Strategy ambitions: increasing partnership working, implementing physical infrastructure, improving the pricing and ticketing offer and enhancing transport integration. The task group is currently paused but much of its work to date has proved invaluable in shaping this Plan, and the group will prove useful in providing an oversight role within the wider structure of the EP.

The following Case Study provides evidence of co-operative working between Cheshire West and Chester Council and bus operators under the Enhanced Partnership structure and highlights how positive outcomes have been achieved simultaneously in several of the above areas of focus.

### **Case Study 5: School transport: Service 2 Chester – Runcorn via Frodsham**

#### **Overview:**

In view of the withdrawal of Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) funding at the end of September 2022, Stagecoach consulted with the Council on changes to some services operating from their Chester depot with a view to reduce the PVR to a sustainable level. One such change was to be the curtailment of service 2 at Frodsham, rather than continuing to

Runcorn. A registration variation was subsequently received to this effect in June 2022. The section between Frodsham and Runcorn is also operated by Arriva North West, but via a different route.

Within the same timeframe, Arrowebrook Coaches announced that they were to cease trading at the end of July 2022. The company operated two commercial services to Helsby High School, an AB43 from Sutton Weaver and an AB44 from Kingsley. Both these services carried pupils who were eligible for a pass under the Council's home to school transport policy and those who were not – mainly from the Frodsham area. Frodsham High School closed in 2009 and most local children who live less than 3 miles from Helsby High School and are not eligible for assisted transport.

The Council obtained passenger data from Stagecoach, and also conducted face-to-face passenger surveys on the section of route between Frodsham and Runcorn. As the route crosses the boundary with Halton, data was shared with them. The data indicated that a significant number of journeys were made on this section of route which included a stop at Halton Hospital. A quotation was sought from Stagecoach to continue the operation to Runcorn.

### **Outcome:**

This sum quoted could not be met alone from the Council's revenue support budget, so discussions were held with the home to school transport team with a view to potentially adapting service 2 to accommodate pupils affected by the withdrawal of service AB43. A revised route and timetable were drafted and offered as an alternative option in the tendering process to compare with a stand-alone school service. The alternative bid by Stagecoach proved cost effective, and Halton Council, who also received complaints about the potential service withdrawal, agreed to partially support the service on a 'cross boundary' agreement basis. The mainstream school transport team agreed to contribute, realising a saving to their budget in comparison with a stand-alone scholars' service with no additional community benefit.

The tri-partite arrangement was agreed in August 2022 which allowed the continuation of this important cross-border link. School pupils are accommodated, customers retain a regular hourly service between Mondays and Saturdays and Stagecoach have confirmed that the service is now sustainable.

The consequences for failing to retain this service would have been wide ranging, resulting in a lack of capacity for school children between Frodsham and Helsby and no suitable provision for fare-pay scholars. The Arriva X30 service was not suitable due to the timetable and the use of single decker vehicles due to low bridges on sections of the route in Runcorn.

## **2.6 Summary of changes to Bus Demand since initial BSIP**

Bus operators have reported a reasonably consistent picture in terms of market changes over the last year since the initial BSIP was submitted in October 2021. Driver retention issues are gradually easing / stabilising and this is mitigating against the need to cut services for driver shortage, which has often been the driving factor in service cuts over the last 18 months. In terms of bus user demographics, the best recovery has been observed in children and young people against the 2019 baseline which is now at over 85% of pre-pandemic levels, and for some services has approached and even exceeded 100%.

All other fare payers (adults) have recovered to between 74% and 80% in CW&C, however concessionary pass demand is only at between 60% and 66% of pre-pandemic levels for major operators. This is several percentage points lower than elsewhere in the UK and is seen as a major issue since the aging population in CW&C forms a major component of bus demand. Operators have noted that CW&C's bus market recovery has been slower than other parts of the country and still lags significantly behind some other areas, perhaps because of the high proportion of white collar office-based employment in which working from home continues to affect demand.

## **2.7 Summary of Bus Service Performance in CW&C**

To complete the review of the current bus offer in CW&C, there is a need to compare the existing offer with the type of network that is envisaged as exemplar within the National Bus Strategy. As such the following table has been produced which presents the criteria from Chapter 2 of Bus Back Better 'The Buses We Want' and asks whether these criteria are currently being met by existing bus services in CW&C. In each case, the purpose of

this exercise is not primarily to highlight shortcomings of the endeavours of the providers of the existing network (from the Council and bus operators) – these are often driven by the complexity of securing improvements in the current deregulated and legislative environment, and a shortfall in funding. Instead the purpose of this analysis is to paint a realistic picture of the work that must be done in order to be able to claim that each criterion of a truly customer focused bus offer is satisfactorily met.

**Table 2.13: Comparison of Current Bus Network Performance with Bus Back Better Aspirations**

<b>The Buses We Want (From Bus Back Better, 2021)</b>	<b>Currently met in CW&amp;C?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Frequent	X	Bus routes in CW&C have an average frequency of 1.8 per hour although there are some services at 4 or even 6 per hour by exception.
Fast and Reliable	X	Bus journey times generally compare poorly with the private car and the lack of bus priority outside Chester makes reliability vulnerable to delay at pinch points.
Cheap	X	Bus fares are generally high compared with the cost of motoring and compare unfavourably against parking costs, even in Chester City Centre.
Comprehensive	X	Many parts of the borough are poorly served by buses with some of the smaller villages receiving no service.
Easy to understand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accurate information</li> <li>- Common numbering</li> <li>- Local branding</li> <li>- Good evening and weekend frequencies</li> <li>- High frequency trunk services</li> <li>- Multi-operator ticketing</li> <li>- Co-ordinated timetable changes</li> </ul>	X	Fewer than half of bus stops have timetable information within the borough.  Multiple use of the same route numbers due to multiple local depot locations and little common branding.  Poor evening and weekend frequencies.  Multi-operator ticketing only on Blacon Pointer.  No formal coordination of timetable changes.

The Buses We Want (From Bus Back Better, 2021)	Currently met in CW&C?	Comment
- Heavy promotion and marketing		Limited promotion and marketing e.g. lack of marketing of PlusBus initiative and correspondingly poor uptake.
Easy to use	X	Large number of operators, fares and tickets, and limited online or app-based information.
Good to ride in	X	Vehicles are of mixed quality, with some high quality and relatively new vehicles, while others are older models cascaded from other areas.
Integrated with other modes	X	Little integration between bus and other modes with limited interchange information even at major rail stations. Limited integration with Park & Ride due to historic consideration of the networks as distinct and separate.
Green	✓	Many vehicles do meet Euro VI standards, but further improvement is necessary and desirable to reduce the polluting and carbon impact of the local network.
Accessible and inclusive	✓	All vehicles are accessible with space for wheelchairs etc. Some have full kneeling technology for almost level boarding.
Innovative	X	Limited investment in innovative new bus solutions due to lack of available budget.
Safe	✓	Vehicles generally have CCTV and are well lit.

The table above highlights that there is some considerable distance to go before the aspirations of the National Bus Strategy could be considered to be met within Cheshire West and Chester. The packages of actions recommended as part of this BSIP will address these challenges and present strategies for the bus network to meet many more of the aspirations than it does at present.

In the following section, the vision and objectives of the BSIP are explored in more detail alongside the targets that are planned to be achieved by the packages of actions. In Section 4, the actions themselves are described and packaged so as to meet the specified delivery themes for the BSIP process.



## 3 Headline Targets (& Vision and Objectives)

In this section, we set out the vision for bus services in Cheshire West and Chester. This is based on the aspirations put forward as part of the National Bus Strategy, but also considers the unique circumstances prevalent in CW&C. It further details the specific objectives that have been derived for the strategy and presents how the proposals included align with the objectives.

Following this, the section determines and presents the proposed set of targets which it is envisaged that the BSIP strategic packages will meet. The methods by which these are calculated are discussed and the targets themselves presented.

### 3.1 Vision

In Cheshire West and Chester, a local Bus Review Task Group (BRTG) was established in July 2020 in advance of the 2021 publication of the National Bus Strategy, recognising the importance attached locally to trying to secure major improvements to the local bus offer. The task group reviewed the issues, constraints and barriers associated with bus travel in the borough and made a number of recommendations on priorities for investment (35 priorities distilled into 9 themes). As discussed in the 'Objectives' section below, the task group eventually proposed 9 themes for investment within the borough, and further objectives to facilitate these, however the National Bus Strategy was released before the group had articulated a comprehensive vision for these priorities. This work has been continued and advanced as part of this BSIP, which has drawn on numerous sources, including the National Bus Strategy itself, to outline the following clear vision for future bus transport in Cheshire West and Chester.

- ***“To make bus a mode of choice for the full cross-section of society by removing barriers to travel and making buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper.***
- ***To build in greater levels of community involvement, to both reverse the recent shift in journeys away from public transport and encourage passengers back to bus, and also to improve on pre-pandemic levels of service.***

- ***To create a network that supports the Council's strategic priorities of tackling climate change; growing the local economy and delivering secure jobs; supporting children and young people to get the best start in life; supporting older residents and rural communities; and enabling more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives".***

It is hoped that, through the implementation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan for Cheshire West and Chester, that the Enhanced Partnership will become a model for the development of a stable, co-ordinated, and appealing bus offer that will make a major contribution to positive social, economic and environmental outcomes for residents, employees and visitors to the borough alike.

### **3.2 Objectives**

In order to realise the vision articulated above, a number of objectives have been developed for the strategy of actions developed within this BSIP. These are designed to reflect the needs of the travelling public, and the views of a wide cross-section of society as expressed in consultation. The objectives are rooted in the outcomes of extensive work with the local bus operators and passengers as part of this BSIP and the foundational work undertaken in 2020/21 by the Bus Review Task Group within Cheshire West and Chester Council, to develop a prioritised plan to improve the bus network within the borough. The objectives been derived from numerous sources and harvested through a review of relevant local and national policy documents. In total 8 broad themes emerged from the multiple objectives reviewed for each study. The following table introduces these themes and presents the raw objectives extracted from the policy document review, alongside the source of each. The documents represented in this table include:

- The third Local Transport Plan for CW&C (LTP3)
- Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Local Plan)
- Cheshire West and Chester's Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP)
- Chester, Northwich and Winsford Transport Strategies (C/N/WTS)
- The Cheshire and Warrington LEP Transport Strategy (LEP TS) and
- The Bus Review Task Group Interventions Report (internal document – never published) (BTRG).

**Table 3.1: Emerging Themes and Repeated Objectives from Policy Review**

Theme	Extracted Objective	Source
1	Climate change	Reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt our transport networks to mitigate the effects of climate change.
		Take action on climate change by promoting energy efficiency and energy generation from low carbon and renewable resources.
		Tackling the climate emergency and reducing carbon emissions in construction and operation
2	Enhancing connectivity	Enhancing transport connectivity to and from the rural hinterland, and across local, regional, and national borders
		Improve connections to support development of priority employment sites including those within Cheshire Science Corridor
		Fast and frequent connectivity between sub-regional centres for people and freight
		Support existing areas of success through:
		a) Dedicated, high quality inter-urban corridors to Manchester, Liverpool, Wales, Birmingham and Yorkshire
		b) Direct links to London and other top city economics
		c) Fast, reliable connectivity to key international gateways
	Meeting the needs of passengers	
3	Equality	Improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity.
		Work to increase accessibility to employment and training opportunities, to key services from rural areas; and to health services;
		Improve physical accessibility and remove barriers to mobility especially for disabled and older people.
		Achieving value for money
4	Growth and regeneration	Support regeneration in the most deprived areas of the borough and ensure those reliant on non-car modes of transport can access jobs and services.
		Improve connections to support development of priority employment sites including those within Cheshire Science Corridor
		Reliable journey times with all growth areas within 1 hour, door to door, from all parts of Cheshire and Warrington.
		Provide and develop reliable, efficient transport networks that support sustainable growth and improve accessibility to jobs and services
		Helping economic recovery from the COVID-19.
5	Quality of Life	Ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment in West Cheshire.
		Improving air quality
6	Reliability and efficiency	Increasing the reliability, safety and efficiency of core transport networks for the city;
		Travel by car and sustainable modes within 30 minutes between key centres
		Reliable journey times with all growth areas within 1 hour, door to door, from all parts of Cheshire and Warrington.
		Provide and develop reliable, efficient transport networks that support sustainable growth and improve accessibility to jobs and services
		Transport planning and design in C+W should be integrated, accessible and inclusive, customer focused, sustainable, resilient and safe, and embracing change.
		Reducing congestion
7	Safety and Health	Contribute to safer and secure transport and promote forms of transport that are beneficial to health.
		Improve physical accessibility and remove barriers to mobility especially for disabled and older people.
		Increasing the reliability, safety and efficiency of core transport networks for the city;
		Transport planning and design in C+W should be integrated, accessible and inclusive, customer focused, sustainable, resilient and safe, and embracing change.
		Work to increase accessibility to employment and training opportunities, to key services from rural areas; and to health services;
		Positive contribution to public health
8	Sustainable accessibility	Improving Chester's sustainable accessibility and alternative transport offer;
		Transport planning and design in Cheshire and Warrington should be integrated, accessible and inclusive, customer focused, sustainable, resilient and safe, and embracing change.
		Ensure all development is supported by the necessary provision of, or improvements to infrastructure, services and facilities in an effective and timely manner to make development sustainable and minimise its effect upon existing communities.
		In order to minimise the need for travel, proposals for new development should be located so as they are accessible to local services and facilities by a range of transport modes.
		Promote safe and accessible environments and developments with good access by walking, cycling and public transport.
		Ensure that new developments and local services are built in accessible locations;
		Travel by car and sustainable modes within 30 minutes between key centres
		Provide and develop reliable, efficient transport networks that support sustainable growth and improve accessibility to jobs and services
		Support regeneration in the most deprived areas of the borough and ensure those reliant on non-car modes of transport can access jobs and services.
		Improving accessibility for all, regardless of age and ability, for work, leisure and services

From the above analysis, a number of clear objectives have been derived from the eight themes identified. For each a description has been derived from the individual components shown in Table 3.1: Emerging Themes and Repeated Objectives from Policy Review . It is recommended that these form the core objectives for the BSIP and EP work to follow.

They are:

- 1. Mitigating against Climate Change:** Reduce carbon emissions from transport by adapting our transport networks to take advantage of low carbon and renewable resources to mitigate the effects of climate change
- 2. Enhancing Connectivity within Cheshire West:** Enhance transport connectivity within Cheshire West between urban and rural areas and across local, regional and national borders
- 3. Promoting Equality of Opportunity:** Work to increase equality of opportunity within Cheshire West and surrounding areas by installing minimum standards of transport accessibility for all areas, and regardless of individual circumstance
- 4. Supporting Growth and Regeneration:** Support sustainable economic growth and regeneration within Cheshire West and surrounding areas by improving connectivity between key growth sites and accessibility to jobs and services
- 5. Raise Quality of Life within Cheshire West and surrounding areas:** Ensure that transport helps to improve quality of life and enhances the local environment within Cheshire West and surrounding areas
- 6. Ensure that the Transport Network is Reliable and Efficient:** Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks, that are integrated, accessible and inclusive, customer focused, sustainable and resilient
- 7. Improve the safety and health benefits of the transport network:** Contribute to safer and more secure transport in Cheshire West and surrounding areas and promote types of transport which are beneficial to health
- 8. Enhance the accessibility of the sustainable transport network:** Create a highly accessible sustainable transport network in Cheshire West and surrounding areas that offers an attractive and viable alternative to the private car throughout the day.

These objectives are highly important as they will form the basis on which potential bus interventions will be assessed within the BSIP. As such they have been fully agreed with the wider Enhanced Partnership group.

### 3.3 Why Bus?

The objectives defined in the section above are necessarily agnostic of a modal solution. Some investigation is therefore required for each as to why the objectives noted are most appropriately served by bus-based solutions. In each case, it is believed that buses' ability to provide flexible, high frequency, high quality, sustainable and low carbon public transport solutions represents the best and most practical option. The following table shows the logical mapping of this and the rationale for why bus is considered the optimal solution.

**Table 3.2: Mapping of Objectives to Bus-Based Solutions**

Objective	Why Bus?
Mitigating against Climate Change	Full buses produce significantly lower CO2 levels per passenger than cars, and can be completely zero emission
Enhancing Connectivity with Cheshire West	Bus services can provide vital links between modes across impermeable barriers but they need to run frequently, and late and early enough to be useable
Promoting Equality of Opportunity	Unlike private cars, bus services can be made available to everyone, regardless of financial security, disability or stage of life.
Supporting Growth and Regeneration	Bus services can play a vital role in linking residential communities to areas of employment, education, leisure, and retail, thereby increasing the catchment of these developments and raising their viability
Raise Quality of Life within Cheshire West and surrounding areas	By reducing the number of motorised vehicles on the road, bus services can contribute to quieter, more pleasant and safer streets with better levels of air quality and improved levels of wellbeing
Ensure that the Transport Network is Reliable and Efficient	With co-ordination between operators and across modes, bus services can play a vital intermediate role in an efficient and reliable sustainable transport network, providing medium range connectivity and accessibility to areas not served by rail
Improve the safety and health benefits of the transport network	By removing private cars from roads, improved bus services can improve road safety and reduce the amount of inactive time people spend behind the wheel
Enhance the accessibility of the sustainable transport network	A key deficit in the accessibility of bus compared to that of the private car is the convenience of having a car available whenever it is required. By increasing the availability of bus services throughout the day and week, and the coverage of the bus network, buses can be made more attractive relative to cars and thereby increase their mode share.

### 3.4 Local Context (Issues and Opportunities)

In addition to the objectives for the bus strategy described within this BSIP discussed above, it is useful to define the specific context of the local bus network within Cheshire

West and Chester in a concise series of points. These summarise the specific issues and opportunities as identified in Section 2 and as derived from the review of relevant local and national policy documentation. In a similar vein to the process described for the objectives, a number of relevant documents were reviewed, most notably the output work from the Bus Review Task Group in 2020/21, and the specific opinions expressed within the BSIP consultation in summer 2021 with both operators, stakeholders and the public. Bus operators were further asked to comment on this in Autumn 2022 and this feedback is also captured in the list below. Specific issues and opportunities noted within these were extracted and compared, allowing a series of summary issues and opportunity themes to be identified. These may be grouped into eleven primary themes:

- Lack of available funding to support socially necessary routes
- General lack of buses serving rural communities despite 27% of population living in these communities
- Low mode share of bus against private car due to the difficulty in attracting users
- Low evening and Sunday frequencies across the borough
- Network instability is continuing due to slow patronage recovery with reductions in both commercial and supported services in recent years
- Network fragmentation due to a large and complex variety of operators, fares, network boundaries and areas of responsibility
- Poor connectivity to employment, education, health and other opportunities in some areas
- Low levels of integration between services, between policy areas (e.g. central parking policy) and with other modes in some cases
- Reduced levels of commuting due to increased digital economy
- High relative fare levels compared with the cost of motoring and parking
- Low standards of vehicle quality on some services

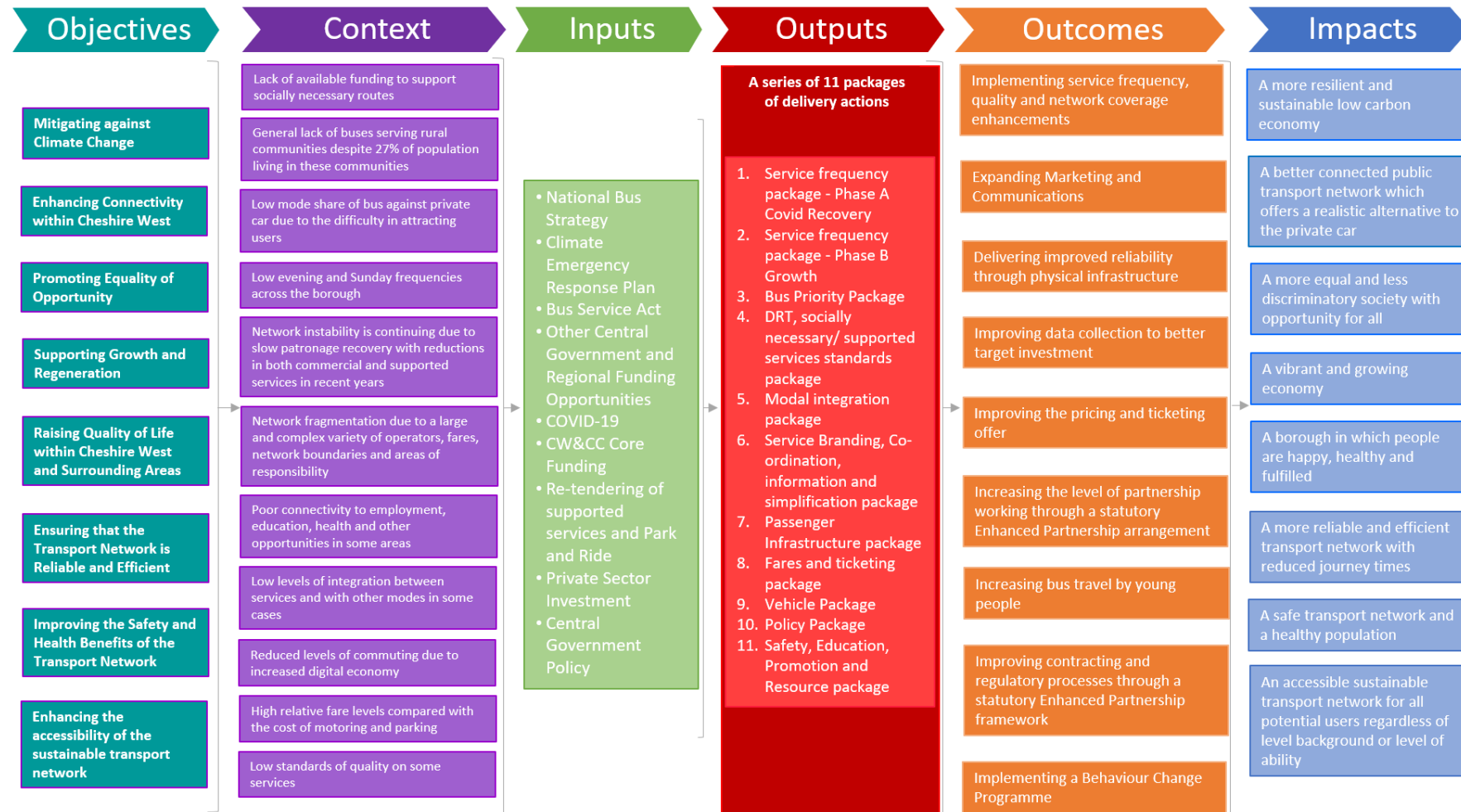
The solutions put forward by the BSIP will need to consider how best to address each of these issues.

### **3.5 Logic Map**

The mapping of the objectives and contextual issues and opportunities to the potential outputs, outcomes and impacts of the BSIP strategy for CW&C are best shown in a graphical 'logic map'. An outline of this is provided in Figure 3.1, which links into the specific delivery themes and packages of actions that are discussed in more detail in Section 4.



Figure 3.1: Cheshire West and Chester BSIP Logic Map



Source: Mott MacDonald

## 3.6 Targets

It is a requirement of every Bus Service Improvement Plan to put in place a regime to monitor key metrics of performance of the local bus network. In addition, they must set robust targets for future improvements to the network in line with the BSIP. Good performance targets must:

- Set and drive ambition in delivery
- Be readily understood and interpreted
- Be measurable and provide accountability on performance

The measurements and targets we have provisionally selected for the Enhanced Partnership cover the CW&C area as a whole. In line with guidance, we will work to report performance, where possible, against these targets every six months.

A BSIP must provide performance indicators and targets for four areas:

- Passenger Growth
- Customer Satisfaction
- Reliability
- Journey Times

These are addressed in turn below. In this first updated BSIP, the targets for passenger growth by 2024/25 have been revised slightly in light of slower than expected recovery growth in patronage over the course of the year as reported in the recent Network Review (July 2022), and also as a result of the unfunded nature of the BSIP measures put forward in this document. We also, for the first time, include extended targets for a longer-term horizon year of 2029/30, demonstrating our long term ambition and our operators commitment to positive change.

### 3.6.1 Measure and target for passenger growth

<b>Measure</b>	Total passenger journeys per year
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<p><b>Means of Monitoring</b></p>	<p>This measure is for the total volume of passenger journeys made on the local network. This measure will be a continuation of the operator returns made on annual basis to the local authority and reported nationally through DfT statistic BUS0109b. The metric includes all fare paying and pass travel journeys for journeys in the local area.</p>
<p><b>Proposed Performance Target</b></p>	<p>2018/19: 9.3 million 2019/20: 9.1 million 2024/25: 6% growth (9.9 million) 2029/30: 12% growth (10.4 million)</p>
<p><b>Evidence for target setting</b></p>	<p><b>Is this target ambitious?</b> Up until 2020/21 (the pandemic induced demand low point) the local network had recorded year-on-year passenger decline that was reflective of the national and local longer term trends in declining bus usage. Additional challenges are now faced in response to changed travel behaviours as a result of the pandemic, however patronage figures for the most recent year show a promising recovery to above 80% of pre-Covid demand for fare paying passengers. Arresting a long-term decline of this nature requires the kind of ambitious, multi-faceted and co-ordinated set of improvements set out in this plan. We have made a measure by measure assessment of the potential impact of the plan across our route groupings to understand the potential uplifts in passenger usage that might be possible. We believe that to realise the full impact of these investments they must be</p>

	<p>sustained and measured over a longer time period of up to 10 years.</p> <p><b>Is this target realistic?</b> Evidence from best practice examples in the UK suggest that it is possible to attract new users to local bus networks when the right conditions are in place. The BSIP and EP are working to bring many of the levels of bus integration, quality and coverage that London (and to a lesser extent other UK successful operator / authority partnerships) have achieved with a significant degree of success in raising passenger levels. As recently as 2015 passenger levels were recorded locally at over 10 million. We have, however, reduced our target slightly from 10% by 24/25 (reported in the previous BSIP) to 6% in light of the fact that the BSIP was not awarded new funding, and on the basis of slower than expected recovery growth in the first year. Nonetheless, we remain committed to long term growth and put forward the ambitious target of 12% growth on 19/20 levels by 29/30 assuming linear growth over the rest of the decade. This will be brought about by a combination of investment sources including (in addition to bus funding) Poverty Emergency funding, LTP support and a renewed focus on Active and Sustainable Travel as a result of the Council's decarbonisation and net zero commitments.</p>
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### 3.6.2 Measure and target for customer satisfaction

<b>Measure</b>	Overall Bus Journey Satisfaction
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<p><b>Means of Monitoring</b></p>	<p>This measure is of overall satisfaction with the local bus journey as measured by the national programme of surveys undertaken by Transport Focus in the CW&amp;C area. The recorded metric relates to the question: “Overall, taking everything into account from start to end of the bus journey, how satisfied were you with your bus journey?” with responses “very satisfied” and “fairly satisfied” measured in this overall percentage satisfaction metric.</p>
<p><b>Proposed Performance Target</b></p>	<p>2018/19: 87% (Autumn 2019 results)</p> <p>2024/25: minimum 92%</p> <p>2029/30: minimum 95%</p>
<p><b>Evidence for target setting</b></p>	<p><b>Is this target ambitious?</b> The proposed target of 95% would move CW&amp;C from being a below average performer on this measure (compared to other areas) to a top-level performer (according to 2019 results), which we consider to be eminently achievable given the solid commitment to partnership working and service improvement expressed within the EP area.</p> <p><b>Is this target realistic?</b> The proposed measures in this plan should significantly improve the local bus product for passengers. Our expectation is that the proposed investment in the local network will see it become one of the best performing local networks in the country with excellent customer satisfaction levels to match.</p>

### 3.6.3 Measure and Target for reliability improvements

<b>Measure</b>	Proportion of bus services running on time
<b>Means of Monitoring</b>	<p>This measure will use the long-established bus punctuality metric reported nationally by the DfT as “BUS0902: Non-frequent bus services running on time by local authority”. This was formerly part of the National Indicator set as indicator 178a and captures and records the metric for all buses in CW&amp;C. The measure assesses bus punctuality, defined for this measure as the percentage of non-frequent buses (those with frequencies of less than 6 per hour) on time. This includes all scheduled services and is measured by whether the bus departs within its “on-time” window of 1 minute 0 seconds early to 4 minutes 59 seconds late. Buses that fail to run are treated as “late” and not ignored in the calculations. The calculation of the indicator incorporates measurement of “on time” along the route, whilst the final calculation made is weighted according to the relative volume of passengers on each route/operator.</p>
<b>Proposed Performance Target</b>	<p>2018/19: 86%</p> <p>2024/25: 90%</p> <p>2029/30: 95%</p>
<b>Evidence for target setting</b>	<p><b>Is this target ambitious?</b> In 2019 the Office for Rail Regulation set a minimum target of 90% reliability for all rail operators providing local services. Bus passengers should expect similar from a modernised local bus network. By 2029/30 we expect significant funding will have become</p>

	<p>available to provide enhanced bus priority both in terms of physical infrastructure and signal priority through UTMC. As such we expect even higher targets to be achievable by 2030. It will be vital for the Council to co-ordinate and join up their policy across disciplines including planning, parking, highways and local transport in order to maximise the benefits of these interventions.</p> <p><b>Is this target realistic?</b> The proposed measures in this plan should provide the means to make targeted improvements to bus journey times and reliability to deliver on this indicator target. It is noted that the package of measures around fares and ticketing will play a significant role alongside priority measures in ensuring smooth journeys and faster boarding of passengers to reduce delays at busy times.</p>
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### 3.6.4 Measure and Target for journey times

<p><b>Measure</b></p>	<p>Annual change in aggregate journey times on all routes with a frequency of 2 or more buses per hour.</p>
<p><b>Means of Monitoring</b></p>	<p>This metric will measure evening peak end to end journey times for all local bus routes of a service frequency of at least 2 buses per hour. 2018/19 will be established as the base year and set as an Indexed value of 100. Subsequent years' timetabled times will be measured on the basis of the proportional change to planned journey time. A passenger volume weighted average will be combined across all routes to devise an indexed value to monitor change in journey times.</p>



	<p>This measure is designed to assess whether customer journey times on all key routes are improving or worsening on a year-by-year basis. Whilst the reliability/punctuality metric measures performance against published timetables this measure seeks to assess whether the planned and published journey time for customers is being maintained on a year by year basis. Where highway congestion is allowed to proliferate allowances would, without intervention, otherwise lead to the adjustment of planned timetables leading to slower journeys for bus passengers. In contrast, where bus priority measures are introduced into congested environs it would be possible to improve bus journey times.</p>
<p><b>Proposed Performance Target</b></p>	<p>2018/19: 100 (base year indexed value) 2024/25: 100 (target value, indexed) 2029/30: 100 (target value, indexed)</p>
<p><b>Evidence for target setting</b></p>	<p><b>Is this target ambitious?</b> Based on historic trends that have recorded long term growth in general traffic levels, it can be expected that congestion is likely to pose a significant risk to current timetabled bus journey times. This target seeks to ensure that no degradation in journey times result, even by 2030, and this will be a function of investment in targeted bus priority measures to address pinch points, and planned ticketing measures which will speed up boarding of services.</p> <p><b>Is this target realistic?</b> It is vital that through this period of planned investment and growth that bus</p>

	<p>journey times do not worsen. Measures are planned to secure this and careful monitoring using vehicle tracking is anticipated to be important to identify and devise tactical interventions to address issues where they do arise. We anticipate investment in UTMC priority for buses will play a major role in delivering this target. It will be vital for the Council to co-ordinate and join up their policy across disciplines including planning, parking, highways and local transport in order to maximise the benefits of these interventions. The intention for the Council to take on powers of enforcement for Moving Traffic Offences to allow the Council to enforce priority features such as bus lanes, will also be of significant importance.</p>
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All indicators are measuring performance against a baseline year of 2018/19, prior to the impacts of the pandemic. All targets are currently based on an assumption of full delivery of this plan, and assuming sufficient funding is made available to enable this. They also therefore assume a return to pre-pandemic levels of bus usage and general travel patterns with 2023. The high levels of uncertainty around this assumption mean that adjustments may need to be made as all the wide-ranging implications of the planned recovery from the pandemic on transport patterns are monitored on an ongoing basis.

## 4 Delivery

This section sets out our strategy for the delivery of our ambition, our vision and our objectives. Many combined factors and interventions are necessary to deliver successful outcomes and the recent creation of a Cheshire West and Chester Enhanced Partnership, as well as the publication of this Bus Service Improvement Plan and the promise of significant new funding present a unique opportunity to develop a step change in the cohesiveness, coverage, quality and attractiveness of bus travel in the area.

We have organised this section around the five main themes of intervention as requested by the DfT BSIP guidance. Each of these main themes has a supporting set of Delivery Themes – giving rise to a total of 20 Delivery Themes labelled A to T. For all of the BSIP guidance Delivery Themes we set out a summary of the current provision / situation, the proposed strategy for tackling the delivery theme, and references to our proposed packages of actions to deliver the strategy. The delivery themes are presented in the same order as the DfT requested BSIP “Overview Table” included in Section 6:

- Section 4.2.1 presents delivery themes relating to “More frequent and reliable services”
- Section 4.2.2 presents delivery themes relating to “Improvements to planning / integration with other modes”
- Section 4.2.3 presents delivery themes relating to “Improvements to fares and ticketing”
- Section 4.3.1 presents delivery themes relating to “Higher spec buses”
- Section 4.3.2 presents delivery themes relating to “Improvements to passenger engagement”

The strategy and interventions outlined here have been developed in response to our vision and objectives (set out in Section 3), through detailed consideration of the evidence presented in Section 2, reflecting on passenger feedback, and in partnership with local operators.

## 4.1 Summary description of Improvements

As noted within Section 3 of this document, a vision has been articulated for the BSIP that seeks to encompass the aspirations and ambition of the National Bus Strategy, and the local specific considerations of the borough. These latter aspects have been defined through consultation with the public and bus operators and are consistent with existing policy documentation and the work undertaken by the local Bus Review Task Group in 2020/21.

The vision for the BSIP is

- ***“To make bus a mode of choice for the full cross-section of society by removing barriers to travel and making buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper.***
- ***To build in greater levels of local leadership, to both reverse the recent shift in journeys away from public transport and encourage passengers back to bus, and also to improve on pre-pandemic levels of service.***
- ***To create a network that supports the Council’s strategic priorities of tackling climate change; growing the local economy and delivering good jobs; supporting children and young people to get the best start in life; supporting older residents and rural communities; and enabling more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives”.***

Underneath this vision, a number of objectives were derived from overarching themes obtained from the consultation, policy review and conversations with bus operators. These coalesced into eight core objectives to shape the direction of the strategy as follows:

1. **Mitigating against Climate Change**
2. **Enhancing Connectivity within Cheshire West**
3. **Promoting Equality of Opportunity**
4. **Supporting Growth and Regeneration**

5. **Raise Quality of Life within Cheshire West and surrounding areas**
6. **Ensure that the Transport Network is Reliable and Efficient**
7. **Improve the safety and health benefits of the transport network**
8. **Enhance the accessibility of the sustainable transport network**

Although these objectives provide clear direction in terms of the types of interventions that should be included within the BSIP strategy, they do not provide much information on the core local narrative around bus improvements within Cheshire West and Chester itself. In this case, and building on the work undertaken by the Bus Review Task Group to identify core local priorities for investment, the BSIP process has identified the following key priority outcomes for the CW&C Enhanced Partnership to deliver.

- Short Term Network Recovery (2022-2023/2024) – given the reductions in bus patronage since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing requirement for public sector support in the maintenance of current bus service levels as a result, the short-term priority of the BSIP must be to recover patronage and network services to pre-pandemic levels to provide a platform for growth. This has begun and the picture in autumn 2022 is significantly above that of 2021. However achieving 100% of 2019 passenger levels will require a combination of actions to re-incentivise use of bus services for the passenger including commencing a programme to refurbish and renew bus vehicles, improve information, enhance marketing and promotion, investment to stabilise the commercial ability of operators to provide service frequencies, and consideration of appropriate and available measures for the management of demand for the private car to facilitate mode shift back towards bus.

**Some work has already been completed to this end and case studies for this are provided in Section 2 and later in Section 4.**

- Medium Term Network and Passenger Growth (2023/2024-2025) – as the bus network is restabilised and returned to near pre-pandemic levels of commercial viability, there is a clear need and ambition to grow the network and improve the overall bus product to better meet passenger needs. A key

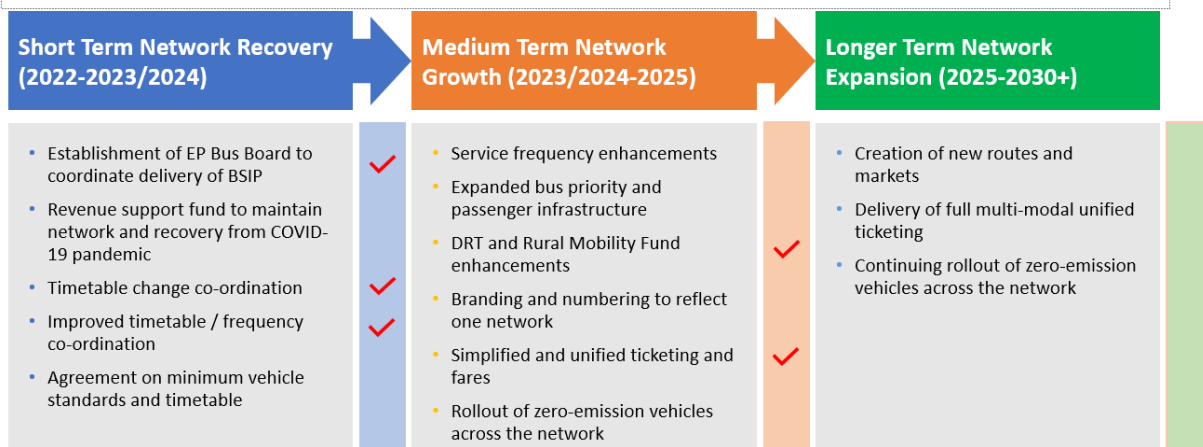
focus for this is evenings and Sunday periods when bus service levels fall away sharply. Investment will be made in maintaining levels of bus service later into the evening and weekends than currently occurs, and in creating a significantly more unified product for bus with elements of common branding, ticketing, co-ordinated timetabling and common numbering protocols. Subject to delivery and availability of back-office solutions by the end of this period, a multi-operator ticketing platform will support fare capping in relevant areas. In advance of this a new value for money child/youth/under 19 discounted ticketing product will be introduced (potentially using the existing young careers card as a platform to build upon). Reliability improvements will also be part of the package through targeted priority measures. It is during this phase of the process that we anticipate the rollout of Zero-Emission vehicles to commence utilising future rounds of ZEBRA funding or similar future national initiatives.

**Some work has already been completed to this end and case studies for this are provided in Section 2 and later in Section 4.**

- Longer Term Network Expansion (2025-2030 and beyond) – further into the future, it is anticipated that the network will be expanded further with new routes and services added, providing expanded and enhanced coverage to areas of the borough that are not currently well served. In this longer-term timescale, further innovations will become fully embedded into the every-day experience of bus passengers including multi-modal ticketing and integration with full inter-availability and value for money fare capping. Aspects of these measures sit outside of the funding ask of the initial period of this BSIP, but are, however, considered important future aspirations for the borough, likely to feature in growing detail in future iterations of the BSIP as it passes through its annual cycle of review and update, and requiring increased emphasis on sub regional working using common themes. These updated versions will necessarily adjust the delivery targets, policies and programmes according to the ultimately realised funding profile.

These delivery stages are represented in the following diagram with red ticks provided alongside to show the elements on which significant progress has already been made (November 2022).

**Figure 4.1: Five Year Delivery Plan**



The strategy and proposed interventions that are presented here represent a bold and ambitious plan for a major step change in the cohesion, coverage, quality and attractiveness of bus travel in the area. They are, nonetheless, tempered by a pragmatic realism over what the plan can achieve over the forthcoming period between 2022/23 and 2025, and an initial view over the funding that can be secured. It must be emphasised that, at the time of writing, there is a lack of clarity on the extent and distribution of funding required to deliver this plan, as presented. Equally the proposed improvements in this plan whilst highly ambitious are also a considered and pragmatic interpretation of what can be delivered against the potential scale of funding available. As a result some of the boldest ambitions of the national bus strategy for very high frequency services, and seamless multi-modal integrated ticketing are not fully delivered by this plan. We would, of course, welcome the opportunity to further increase the reach of ambition of this plan if more clarity on future funding sources could be made available to help realise all of the national bus strategy objectives in a shorter time frame.



## 4.2 Delivery Themes: Make improvements to bus services and planning

The following section presents a summary of the current provision / situation relating to delivery themes A:D and the proposed strategy for tackling the delivery theme. References are then provided for the proposed actions to deliver the strategy which are set out in more detail as 11 packages of actions in Section 4.4.

### 4.2.1 More frequent and reliable services

<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>A: Review Service Frequency</b>
Current Provision	A mixed picture of current provision with good levels of daytime frequency on some local routes, but with significant weaknesses in providing meaningful levels of service extending to outlying and rural areas, and for evenings and weekends.
BSIP Strategy	Phase A – Covid Recovery. For the period 2022/23/24 the focus will be on recovery of pre-pandemic levels of patronage. In order to support this, continued public funding will be required to ensure that good levels of service frequency are maintained. This will be delivered through the Enhanced Partnership and underpinning financial support will be accompanied by improved network co-ordination. This will include modifications to routes and timetables to better co-ordinate service provision and where possible provide clockface combined frequencies on key corridors – some progress has already been made in this regard on, for example, the 2/X30 and the 82/84 combined corridor sections, both of which have multiple operators. To help ensure network stability there will only be a limited number of dates per year for timetable changes for the area.

	Phase B – Passenger Growth. From 2023/24 a sustained and co-ordinated package of service improvements is proposed that will enhance service frequencies to support passenger growth across Local, Inter-Urban and Rural geographies.
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 1: Service Frequency – Phase A Covid Recovery package</li> <li>• Package 2: Service Frequency – Phase B Growth package</li> </ul>

<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>B: Increase bus priority measures</b>
Current Provision	Bus priority measures are not a dominant feature of the network at present; there are around 2km of bus lanes within Chester, along with some bus gates and bus-only sections (some of which are currently out of use). The existing UTMC system in Chester has been in place for a long time, and is limited in its capabilities with regard to bus; it does not use the latest technology available in this area.
BSIP Strategy	Major congestion and peak time journey delay issues on radial corridors are not as significant in CW&C as in some other areas, therefore the strategy emphasis is on providing meaningful priority at pinch points, junctions, and key approaches rather than wholesale corridor priority interventions. These will include signal priority through new UTMC systems in Chester and Ellesmere Port using the latest technology available, and modal filters, rather than pursuit of longer corridor bus lane based provision. In Northwich and Winsford, a new co-ordinated

	SCOOT system is proposed to facilitate connected junction delay minimisation and queue reduction.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 3: Bus priority package</li> </ul>

Delivery Theme	C: Increase demand responsive services
Current Provision	A trial is currently underway, with monies from the Rural Mobility Fund, to bring innovative demand responsive public transport services to areas which are currently somewhat disconnected from the existing provision. These will sit alongside existing dial-a-ride and PlusBus services provided by the Council using their own fleet of dedicated accessible buses and aimed at those that find mobility (and using standard public transport) difficult.
BSIP Strategy	CW&C is the recipient of £1.075million funding from the Rural Mobility Fund for developing a substantial pilot of a modern demand responsive offer. Through the BSIP, we will seek to secure the long-term future and expansion of the most successful elements of this trial. Key principles to be advanced include: emphasis on connecting into improved conventional services, establishing efficient contractual and operational mechanisms to make best use of vehicle resources and pursuit of shared development of technology with other UK areas.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 4: DRT, socially necessary/ supported services standards package</li> </ul>

Delivery Theme	D: Consideration of bus rapid transport networks
Current Provision	There are currently no bus rapid transport networks in Cheshire West and Chester.
BSIP Strategy	At present there is no specific ambition for a distinct bus rapid transport product in Cheshire West and Chester, albeit many of the characteristics of such a system are embedded within our other plans, and longer-term timescales beyond the scope of this initial BSIP may facilitate future plans should they become necessary.
Proposed Actions	Not applicable.

#### 4.2.2 Improvements to planning / integration with other modes

The following section presents a summary of the current provision / situation relating to delivery themes E:H and the proposed strategy for tackling the delivery theme. References are then provided for the proposed actions to deliver the strategy which are set out in more detail as 11 packages of actions in Section 4.4.

Delivery Theme	E: Integrate services with other transport modes
Current Provision	Integration between bus and rail varies across the borough but on the whole is limited, with many rail stations receiving no regular bus service, especially the more rural stations. Plusbus <sup>8</sup> tickets are currently available in Chester and Ellesmere Port, and are accepted by some operators. Chester has good medium

<sup>8</sup> Not to be confused with the Council's accessible transport PlusBus scheme in Chester, Ellesmere Port and Neston.

	<p>and long-distance rail connectivity but, outside of the city, access to rail is much poorer and more limited, particularly towards the south of the borough. A bus-based Park &amp; Ride service across 4 (1 currently suspended) sites is in operation in Chester. This service operates largely as a separate mode and service from the local bus network.</p>
<p>BSIP Strategy</p>	<p>Targeted improvements to the integration of bus with other transport modes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Station to Chester City Centre City-Rail-Link bus product improvements</li> <li>• Plusbus improvements (availability on all operators, including supported services)</li> <li>• Timetable and information co-ordination improvements at Rail stations</li> <li>• Timing interventions to improve connectivity – this has already been progressed in Winsford to co-ordinate better with rail service timings</li> <li>• Chester Gateway – development options that include routing and access priority for bus /rail interface.</li> <li>• Package of improvements to improve the Park &amp; Ride product to be developed, focused on attracting car users to switch to this offer</li> </ul>
<p>Proposed Actions</p>	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 5: Modal Integration package</li> </ul>

<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>F: Simplify services</b>
Current Provision	<p>The bus network in CW&amp;C can appear complex, with multiple routes having the same number – there are four services numbered 1, including three which serve Chester. Additionally, in Chester city centre, there can be some confusion relating to routing, stop locations, and circulation, which presents challenges for potential users or visitors to the city.</p>
BSIP Strategy	<p>Our approach to the simplification of services aims to make using bus an easy and straightforward experience for all passengers. The following improvements will be targeted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where possible re-numbering to remove duplicate service numbers for different routes e.g. re-number the 1/1A Blacon Pointer service</li> <li>• Improve routing, circulation and boarding stop plans for services in Chester to simplify the network for passengers</li> <li>• Provide improved availability of simple mapping of network to aid passenger interpretation and access.</li> <li>• Clockface / regular interval timetables where possible</li> <li>• Fare simplification / harmonisation</li> </ul>
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 5: Modal Integration package</li> <li>• Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package</li> <li>• Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package</li> </ul>

<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>G: Review socially necessary services</b>
Current Provision	<p>The Council support 34 bus services (November 2022) in the borough, which are deemed socially or economically valuable, but there are several routes / villages which are not well served and could be better served with additional funding.</p>
BSIP Strategy	<p>Through our BSIP, we want to secure improved funding for establishing a stable and trusted network of socially necessary services, therefore the Enhanced Partnership will offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more creative opportunities to efficiently provide socially necessary services through better management of all resources</li> <li>• collaboration with existing community transport providers</li> <li>• review of all supported services to blend with revised commercial routes and create one unified network</li> <li>• interventions to support accessibility for otherwise broken links (e.g. between Winsford and Northwich in the evening)</li> <li>• further consideration of improvements to school services and commercial services that provide essential school transport for non-eligible schoolchildren.</li> </ul>
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 4: DRT, socially necessary/ supported services standards package</li> </ul>

<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>H: Invest in Superbus networks</b>
Current Provision	There are currently no Superbus networks in Cheshire West and Chester.
BSIP Strategy	CW&C and partners believe that there is potential for the proposed package of measures to be considered a Superbus network as it includes a full package of vehicle, priority, fares, timetable, information and branding improvements. Further guidance would be required to understand the merits of the use of this nomenclature to progress these proposals under this branding
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 1: Service frequency – Phase A Covid Recovery package</li> <li>• Package 2: Service frequency – Phase B Growth package</li> <li>• Package 3: Bus Priority package</li> <li>• Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package</li> <li>• Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package</li> </ul>

### 4.2.3 Improvements to fares and ticketing

The following section presents a summary of the current provision / situation relating to delivery themes I:K and the proposed strategy for tackling the delivery theme. References are then provided for the proposed actions to deliver the strategy which are set out in more detail as 11 packages of actions in Section 4.4.



<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>I: Lower fares</b>
Current Provision	<p>Besides the VQBP, fares are set by operators for their own tickets, with most operators offering a mixture of single, return, day, weekly, monthly and termly/annual tickets. Day tickets range between £4.20 and £5.95, covering slightly different geographies.</p>
BSIP Strategy	<p>Assuming a suitable platform and back-office system are available, we wish to develop a wider multi-operator ticketing offer. Key elements of this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A multi operator ticket product to include fare capping to ensure customer value for money for all internal geographies where this is possible (noting the additional complexity of cross – border issues with neighbouring authority schemes)</li> <li>• a new universal Child / Youth / under 19 discounted fare to be introduced on a shorter timescale, expected to be in advance of above.</li> <li>• integrated local ticketing to lower fares for regular users</li> <li>• other initiatives focused on key groups such as jobseekers, apprentices, young adults etc</li> <li>• Building-in of key future requirements to allow the system to be adapted for multi-modal purposes (beyond the timescales of this initial BSIP)</li> </ul>
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package</li> <li>• Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package</li> </ul>

<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>J: Simplify fares</b>
Current Provision	At present, each operator has their own ticketing offer, with some operators offering a variety of day / weekly / yearly tickets across a range of geographies, which on the whole are not accepted by other operators. However, the VQBP in Chester is a best practice example where operators accept each other's tickets, and offer a value for money fare structure.
BSIP Strategy	Subject to national availability of a back-office solution, the BSIP aspires to a fully contactless, multi-operator ticketing offer, with a daily and weekly capped pricing model. This would see full acceptance of products across all commercial and tendered services within the Enhanced Partnership.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 5: Modal Integration package</li> <li>• Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package</li> <li>• Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package</li> </ul>

<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>K: Integrate ticketing between operators and transport providers</b>
Current Provision	The VQBP is the only local agreement between bus operators in CW&C to accept each other's tickets. National Rail's Plusbus scheme is available in Chester and Ellesmere Port, and is valid on some but not all bus services. Beyond this, there is no formal multi-operator ticketing offer available in CW&C, either for buses

	<p>alone or combined with other modes. A multi-operator stored value smartcard does exist (Cheshire TravelCard) but is to be removed from circulation imminently in favour of a more holistic smart multi-operator ticketing strategy. See Section 2.1.10 for more information.</p>
<p>BSIP Strategy</p>	<p>The partnership will commit to working with Transport for the North, DfT, Transport for Wales, rail operators and neighbouring authorities to develop regional and national solutions to allow the eventual expansion of the local authority offer into wider networks. We see potential for modernisation of the Plusbus product to be a potential route to a trusted consumer product, with a new back office system, and digitised usage to provide trusted revenue allocation and daily/weekly fare capping. Ultimately the Plusbus product should be universally and widely available across all geographies.</p>
<p>Proposed Actions</p>	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 5: Modal Integration package</li> <li>• Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package</li> <li>• Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package</li> </ul>

### 4.3 Delivery Themes: Make improvements to bus passenger experience

#### 4.3.1 Higher spec buses

The following section presents a summary of the current provision / situation relating to delivery themes L:P and the proposed strategy for tackling the delivery theme. References are then provided for the proposed actions to deliver the strategy which are set out in more detail as 11 packages of actions in Section 4.4.

<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>L: Invest in improved bus specifications</b>
Current Provision	The age and specification of vehicles in local operation are varied. All of the two largest operators' vehicles are fitted with CCTV, but a number of local buses do not currently meet the minimum environmental standards that the BSIP aspires to deliver, with the marginal viability of a number of local services determining cheaper, older vehicles being operated.
BSIP Strategy	CW&C aspires for vehicle specifications that support local commitments to address Climate Change and decarbonisation. Whilst we recognise the rationale for the historic model of cascaded vehicles in use in smaller urban areas such as those in CW&C's main bus networks, we see BSIP as a key opportunity to raise the bar and give residents and businesses greener, modern vehicles with facilities that are accessible and attractive to new users. Minimum standards will be introduced which will require funding support. We understand that there may be separate national funding channels to apply to for support for this activity.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 9: Vehicle package</li> </ul>

<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>M: Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services</b>
Current Provision	Buses in CW&C meet minimum accessible standards and have space on-board for a wheelchair, with some using low floor

	‘kneeling’ facilities to enable wheelchairs and pushchairs to board. However, the latest technology needs to be fully incorporated and rolled out across the full fleet to meet a wider range of needs.
BSIP Strategy	The BSIP includes a commitment to new vehicles and minimum standards on accessibility across network. These will be included within the Passengers’ Charter.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 9: Vehicle package</li> </ul>

<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>N: Protect personal safety of bus passengers</b>
Current Provision	All of the two main operators’ buses have on-board CCTV, and drivers receive training on counter-terrorism and supporting passengers with additional needs. Previously, the Council’s Safer Travel Team would go into schools and educate young people on safety and behaviour while travelling by bus, which resulted in positive outcomes on buses. Lack of funding has forced this service to cease.
BSIP Strategy	Restoration of links with schools and reinstatement of safer travel training is an aspiration of the BSIP, which could be combined with education on wider sustainable travel and environmental issues to assist in the development of a new generation of bus users.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 9: Vehicle package</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 11: Safety, Education, Promotion and Resource package</li> </ul>
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<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>O: Improve buses for tourists</b>
Current Provision	CW&C, and in particular Chester, attract a significant number of tourists to the area. As visitors to the area, it can be extremely difficult to find easily digestible and accurate information on ticketing, routes and timetables for buses in CW&C.
BSIP Strategy	Investment and improvement to the bus network as a whole will improve the offer for tourists. Specific key aspects of which will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Park &amp; Ride improvement (signage/visibility)</li> <li>• Integrated ticketing (multi-operator and multi-modal)</li> <li>• Simple and cohesive network</li> <li>• Rail station link improvements</li> <li>• Information improvements (especially online)</li> </ul>
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package</li> <li>• Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package</li> </ul>

<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>P: Invest in decarbonisation</b>
Current Provision	Vehicles operating in CW&C are of a mixture of ages and specification in terms of emissions. None of the vehicles are yet fully hydrogen or even diesel-electric hybrid, although a small

	number of LPG vehicles are in use on the network. Many vehicles do already meet Euro VI standards however.
BSIP Strategy	New and minimum standards for vehicles shall be agreed within the Enhanced Partnership. Additionally, we wish to invest in charging/fuelling infrastructure at Hubs/Interchanges/Depots as needed, to enable deployment of electric and/or hydrogen vehicles across the network. It is assumed that the funding for this would be available via future ZEBRA or similar national funding initiatives.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 9: Vehicle package</li> </ul>

### 4.3.2 Improvements to passenger engagement

The following section presents a summary of the current provision / situation relating to delivery themes Q:T and the proposed strategy for tackling the delivery theme. References are then provided for the proposed actions to deliver the strategy which are set out in more detail as 11 packages of actions in Section 4.4.

Delivery Theme	Q: Passenger charter
Current Provision	There is not currently a Passenger Charter in place in CW&C, although some operators do have their own.
BSIP Strategy	The BSIP commits to preparing a Passenger Charter for the Enhanced Partnership in line with the guidance provided, which will include minimum standards on bus specifications and what passengers can expect to receive in terms of levels of service and passenger experience. Further information about the proposed contents and coverage of such a charter is presented in Section 5.

Proposed Actions	In conjunction with operators and other stakeholders, and with a possible cross-border interface, we will develop and publish a Passenger Charter
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<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>R: Strengthen network identity</b>
Current Provision	There is currently no consistent identity across the bus network, except for the branded VQBP in Chester. In part, the high number of cross-boundary services in CW&C means that a consistent, strong identity is not an easy or necessarily achievable outcome for all services.
BSIP Strategy	Our emphasis will initially be to prioritise the development of the practical components of a coherent network identity, potentially building on existing initiatives such as 'ITravelSmart'. For example, it is far more important initially to firmly establish authoritative and easy to understand information, route frequencies and networks, and universal ticketing availability than to develop new logos and colour schemes – particularly where differential branding will always remain significant due to cross-boundary services. However, once practical improvements begin to come into place we will introduce something similar to the VQBP example with as a minimum, a simple recognition on buses' livery of their affiliation with the local network scheme to be in place. Branding can play an important role in improving consumer confidence in a single bus product (once that product exists). Therefore online and at-stop information will ultimately be developed with a new network wide CW&C identity that can co-exist with identities from adjacent areas. For bus vehicles a minimum standard will be to ensure that all bus door/bus entrances contain a clear and recognisable



	identity tag / vinyl that builds confidence in ticketing inter-availability, information context and the local passenger charter for the EP. For this we are considering sub regional synergies such as a joint Passenger Charter and cross-border ticketing.
Proposed Actions	Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package</li> </ul>

Delivery Theme	S: Improve bus information
Current Provision	The CW&C Council website provides a list of bus routes operating in the area, and where available a timetable and a link to the operators' websites. Information on operators' websites varies, with some offering maps, timetables and ticketing details, while others are more limited. There is no central resource of all bus information for the borough.
BSIP Strategy	We commit to producing a refreshed and comprehensive web-based resource providing access to all day and season ticket fares and timetable information in a single place as a key feature of the BSIP. We will bring all services into modern data standards with timetable, fares and vehicle tracking giving open access via the Bus Open Data Services (BODS) initiative to allow real time information to be fully available to third party information providers (e.g. Google maps). We will work with DfT to address the challenges experienced by our operators and with neighbouring authorities on cross border services in to Wales.

Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Package 5: Modal Integration package</li> <li>• Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package</li> <li>• Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package</li> </ul>
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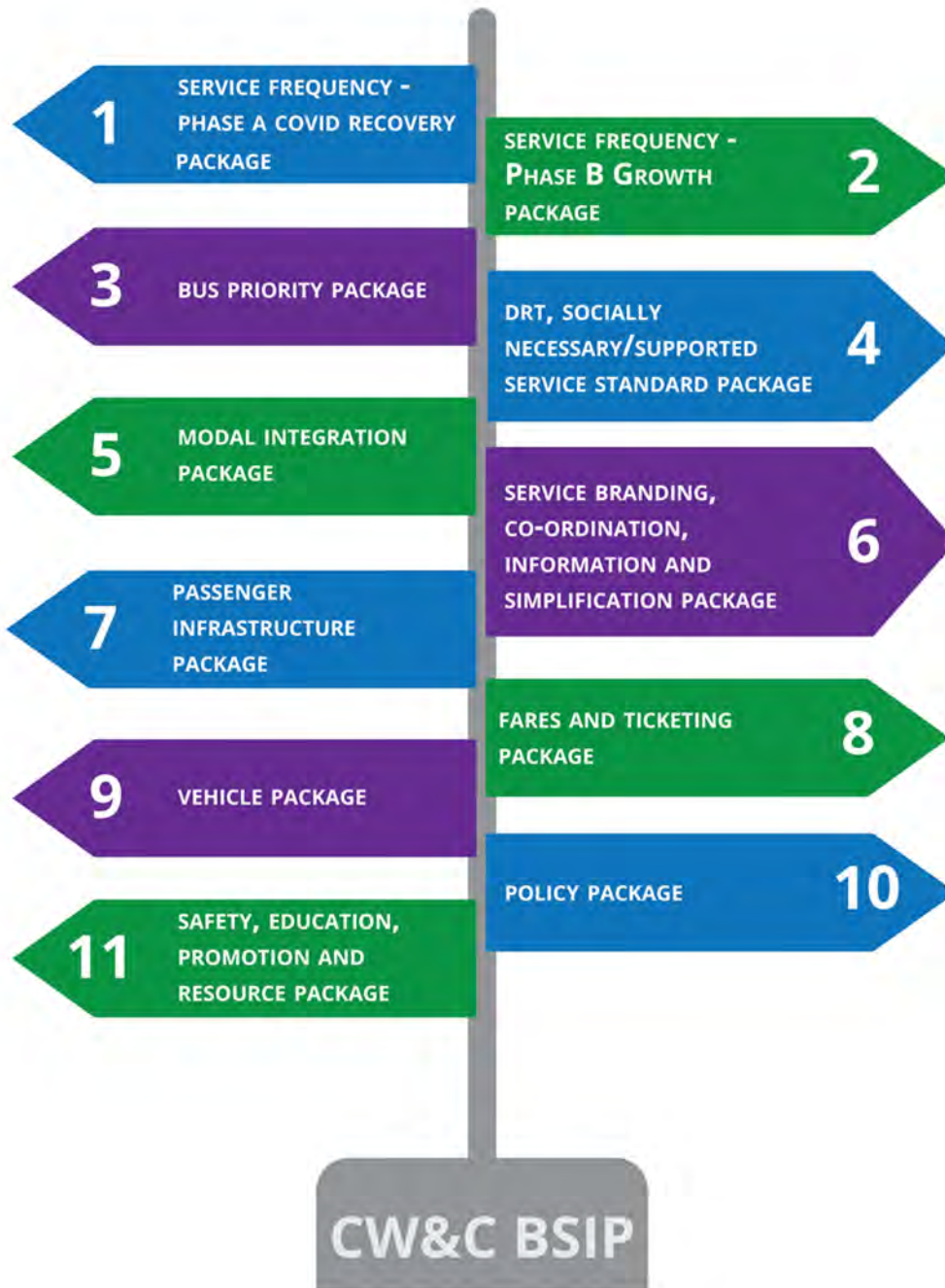
<b>Delivery Theme</b>	<b>T: Other Longer Term measures</b>
Current Provision	<p>A large variety of external factors are a significant influence on local bus usage. Of most significance to the development of this strategy are the council's own policies and actions with regard to car parking. CW&amp;C adopted its new Car Parking Strategy in 2017 (which will soon be refreshed) and will shortly be re-tendering the Park &amp; Ride contract, both of which influence the usage of local bus services, and have potential to go further in encouraging increases in bus patronage.</p>
BSIP Strategy	<p>Car parking policy, particularly with respect to quantity and tariffs in central locations, should take account of impacts on bus usage, climate change and modal targets. In particular, central car parking tariff setting should pay significant regard to its impact on Park &amp; Ride demand and use. Increasing central car parking charges at the busiest times of the day and reducing Park &amp; Ride charges to take advantage of spare capacity is likely to have a long term beneficial impact on both the air quality and carbon footprint of the city, and on the long-term viability of Park &amp; Ride.</p> <p>In addition issues of on-street parking availability and enforcement are also to be addressed, with a new commitment to better enforcement to ensure "fly-parking" does not disrupt the</p>

	<p>reliability and smooth running of buses on routes, and in known trouble spots.</p> <p>A further activity that is not addressed directly under any of the other delivery themes, but is an area of required intervention is the provision of updated bus stop / hub infrastructure. A series of locations have been identified for modernised and improved kerbside passenger facilities.</p>
Proposed Actions	<p>Key actions addressing this delivery theme are included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Package 10: Policy package</li><li>• Package 7: Passenger Infrastructure package</li></ul>

#### 4.4 Packages of Actions

In total we have identified and programmed 11 packages of actions (interventions) that will deliver our Bus Service Improvement Plan.

**Figure 4.2: CW&C BSIP Packages of Actions**



In combination these will address all of the delivery themes discussed above.

No.	Packages	Delivery Themes Addressed	Objectives Satisfied	Targets supported
1	Service frequency – Phase A Covid Recovery package	A, H	1, 2, 3, 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passenger Growth</li> <li>• Customer Satisfaction</li> </ul>
2	Service frequency – Phase B Growth package	A, H	1, 2, 3, 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passenger Growth</li> <li>• Customer Satisfaction</li> </ul>
3	Bus priority package	B, H	1, 2, 4, 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliability Improvements</li> <li>• Journey Times</li> </ul>
4	DRT, socially necessary/supported service standard package	C, G	2, 3, 5, 6, 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Satisfaction</li> <li>• Reliability Improvements</li> </ul>
5	Modal Integration package	E, F, J, K, S	1, 2, 4, 6, 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliability Improvements</li> <li>• Journey Times</li> </ul>
6	Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package	F, K, I, J, O, R, S	2, 6, 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Satisfaction</li> </ul>
7	Passenger Infrastructure package	T, E, F	3, 4, 5, 7, 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passenger Growth</li> <li>• Customer Satisfaction</li> </ul>

No.	Packages	Delivery Themes Addressed	Objectives Satisfied	Targets supported
8	Fares and Ticketing package	I, J, K, H, S	1, 3, 5, 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passenger Growth</li> <li>• Customer Satisfaction</li> </ul>
9	Vehicle Package	L, M, N, P	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passenger Growth</li> <li>• Customer Satisfaction</li> <li>• Reliability Improvements</li> </ul>
10	Policy Package	T	1, 2, 3, 4, 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passenger Growth</li> <li>• Customer Satisfaction</li> </ul>
11	Safety, Education, Promotion and Resource package	Q, O, N	3, 5, 7, 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passenger Growth</li> <li>• Customer Satisfaction</li> </ul>

The elements of each package are presented below. We intend to deliver all of these elements, however it should be noted that all are subject to the amount of available funding that can be identified from various sources for delivery of these packages.

In many cases, we can already demonstrate substantial progress in delivering the elements of each package (as the Case Studies throughout this document have shown). We note for each package the measures proposed and the progress that has already been made in delivery for each.

There is also a need to consider prioritisation of these packages in terms of delivery. This is considered in more detail in Section 4.5.

<b>Package 1: Service frequency – Phase A Covid Recovery package</b>	
<b>Action (Intervention)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><i>Revenue support fund to maintain network</i></b>	Given the intended withdrawal of Bus Recovery Grant funding provided by the DfT, there will be a need for a fund to be established for targeted use to ensure that commercial bus services can continue to operate at a frequency and scale that allow passenger levels to recover to pre-pandemic levels. Assuming that suitable funding is identified, the partnership will administer the fund to provide this essential support for financial year 2023/24. Funding awards will also be linked to the other aspects of this package. Further funding may be required beyond the 2023/24 period and the need for this will be reviewed and updated in light of the prevailing circumstances regarding the pandemic and its ongoing impacts in late 2022. We will also need to consider the impact of the national £2 fare initiative and the impact upon patronage that this measure engenders. This will be considered in later iterations of the BSIP document.
<b><i>Timetable change co-ordination</i></b>	There is a need to ensure that changes to bus service timetables in the area are introduced on a limited number of dates per year so as to minimise confusion and disruption caused to passengers by services changing at short notice.
<b><i>Improved timetable / frequency co-ordination</i></b>	As part of the financial recovery package, there is a need to identify some tactical modifications to the network - in particular to improve the co-ordination of routes and timetables between operators to remove duplicative elements, and to try and provide combined route clockface / regular interval timetables on key corridors.

<p><b><i>Current progress towards delivery</i></b></p>	<p>Following agreement between EP partners, timetable change dates are now limited to 4 dates per year in January, April, July, and September.</p> <p>In addition, agreement has been sought to improve the co-ordination of routes and timetables between operators on key radial routes. This has been agreed in principal on several corridors and timetable co-ordination has already been undertaken (including some revisions that have been necessary to prevent route deregistering). These will continue to be discussed and undertaken where appropriate at regular EP Working Group meetings.</p>
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<b>Package 2: Service frequency – Phase B Growth package</b>	
<b>Action (Intervention)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><i>Local service frequency enhancements</i></b>	A programme of service enhancements has been identified for Phase B and beyond that will offer more frequent daytime services, and also additional evening and weekend services. The selection of routes for enhancement will be dependent on the speed and progress in Phase A recovery, and further analysis on the opportunities available. In most cases we would expect that a significant amount of "pump prime" funding support will be needed to improve service provision, with an expectation that a closely monitored tapered withdrawal of funding support will occur as the improvements realise passenger growth and revenue. Early analysis has identified possible daytime improvements on the Boughton Road, Vicars Cross Road, Hoole Road, Blacon / Saughall, Upton and Neston / Hooton / Ellesmere Port corridors, and further evening and weekend improvements on the Vicars Cross Road, Saltney and Newton local routes.
<b><i>Inter-urban frequency enhancements</i></b>	As above: with options for improvements identified on the Chester to Ellesmere Port / Frodsham / Runcorn, Christleton / Waverton / Tattenhall, Northwich, Tarporley / Crewe corridors.
<b><i>Rural frequency enhancements</i></b>	As above: with options for improvements identified on the rural sections of the following corridors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chester to Ellesmere Port / Frodsham / Runcorn,</li> <li>- Christleton / Waverton / Tattenhall</li> <li>- Northwich local services</li> <li>- Tarporley / Crewe</li> <li>- Chester / Dogleston / Higher Kinnerton</li> <li>- Ellesmere Port / Deeside / Mold and</li> <li>- Neston / Hooton / Ellesmere Port.</li> </ul>

<b><i>Current progress towards delivery</i></b>	Little progress has been made on frequency enhancements at present given the challenging environment with respect to patronage recovery and funding. It is expected that this will follow once the network stabilisation discussed in Package 1 has been safeguarded.
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<b>Package 3: Bus priority package</b>	
<b>Action (Intervention)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><i>UTMC interventions</i></b>	Work to improve the Urban Traffic Control (UTC) systems already in place in the borough to provide enhanced bus priority. In the towns of Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Northwich it is planned to introduce UTC, and in Chester and Ellesmere Port the systems will be augmented with Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC). This system will enable virtual bus detection (linked to bus operators ticketing machines), and consequently allow real time tracking of vehicles and comparison to scheduled timetables. Traffic signal timings can then be updated in real time to bring delayed buses back onto timetable.
<b><i>Chester area highway interventions</i></b>	A programme of radial corridor improvements is proposed in Chester for the roads of A483 Wrexham Road, A548 Sealand Road, A51/A5115, and A56 Hoole Way which will tackle delay points to bus services with targeted link and junction works in a similar vein to recent pinch-point works.
<b><i>Towns and rural areas</i></b>	In coordination with larger scale packages of works, consultation with bus operators has identified localised problem areas where delays regularly occur to scheduled services. Consequently, a programme of small-scale works are planned to tackle these issues. These works are scheduled to include: extended waiting restrictions around schools, management of on-street parking on bus routes, and upgrades of problem bus stops.
<b><i>Current progress towards delivery</i></b>	No specific progress since the first issue of the BSIP, however implementation and improvement of UTC and UTMC systems is still planned in the near future.

<b>Package 4: DRT, socially necessary/supported services standards package</b>	
<b>Action (Intervention)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><i>Extension of targeted trials of pre-booked flexible route bus services</i></b>	Subject to lessons learnt from the Rural Mobility Fund pilot a proposal to scale the service to match changing demand.
<b><i>Supported services review</i></b>	<p>A full review of local supported services in the context of the Enhanced Partnership to re-assess what a minimum service frequency should be on relevant routes, and to take opportunities to sustainably develop the commercial network and routes to avoid "cliff-edge" viability of commercial services and simpler mechanisms for public sector funding support. New funding to secure provision that offers stable connectivity to communities that develops long term confidence to allow people to access opportunity, community and services.</p> <p>As part of this the Enhanced Partnership will consider how best to target improvements to school service provision including both dedicated school services and general services that provide essential connectivity for non-eligible schoolchildren to school.</p>
<b><i>Supported services standards</i></b>	A minimum standard specification for bus vehicles can be incorporated into the Enhanced Partnership agreement to improve the passenger offer, and support environmental targets.
<b><i>Community enhancing routes</i></b>	New bus service interventions to support accessibility for otherwise broken links that restrict social mobility and community cohesion (e.g. Winsford – Northwich evening, and rural connection links). Look to pursue a community transport model, investigate and develop a pilot project for a community transport offer within a rural area with the

	ultimate intention of rolling this out across the borough if a commercially viable model can be adopted.
<b>Collaboration with healthcare and third sector providers</b>	Establish a forum to seek and understand the opportunities for integration of healthcare and community transport provider services to ensure more efficient use of vehicles, drivers, and service provision.
<b>Current progress towards delivery</b>	<p>The Council is currently working on the delivery of a trial DRT project which will operate in the Helsby, Frodsham area and the surrounding rural communities including Kingsley, Crowton, Acton Bridge, Norley, Delamere, Manley, Mouldsworth, Alvanley, Hapsford, Ince &amp; Elton.</p> <p>It is hoped the service will launch in March 2023.</p> <p>To support through mobilisation and launch of the service, DfT have buddied the Council with Hertfordshire County Council, providing additional guidance, advice and best practice required for delivering these projects.</p> <p>See Case Study 1 for more information.</p>

<b>Package 5: Modal integration package</b>	
<b>Action (Intervention)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Park &amp; Ride Investment</b>	Improvements to the current Chester P&R provision across 4 sites to better publicise its offer and improve the current experience with modernised facilities. This important service could play a stronger role in ensuring that bus delivers on local mode share and climate change targets for Chester City Centre.
<b>Station link service</b>	Improvements to the shuttle bus service between Chester rail station, Chester Bus Interchange, and the city centre to better

	publicise the service and more directly facilitate engagement of rail passengers with the local bus network for connecting travel.
<b><i>Plusbus improvements</i></b>	The Plusbus ticket scheme offers great potential for better integration. Improvements targeted include: supporting national level development and promotion of the scheme into modern e-ticketing methods; supporting local development and promotion of the scheme; ensuring that all local services including supported services and specialist services such as City Rail Link are within the scheme.
<b><i>Timetable and information at rail stations</i></b>	All rail stations in the borough to have connecting bus information available at station and online.
<b><i>Timing interventions to improve connectivity</i></b>	As part of service frequency and routing reviews by the Enhanced Partnership a "by default" review of interface connections between rail and bus services with a particular emphasis on rural routes interfaces for onward travel/returning travel by rail.
<b><i>Chester City Gateway</i></b>	A commitment to exploring opportunities from this major commercial development centred on the rail station to revise bus service routing to improve connectivity into Chester station.
<b><i>Current Progress Towards Delivery</i></b>	<p>Investment has been made to the Park and Ride sites as part of the wider infrastructure project reported in Section 2.1.12. Further work is ongoing to review the best mode of operation and contractual model for this service, to allow future investment to be better targeted.</p> <p>Chester City Gateway is being progressed as a project by Cheshire West and Chester Council. An early study, to identify corridor improvements to the busy Hoole Road corridor (a key access corridor for the rail station) has been completed, and further work is planned over the coming year.</p>

<b>Package 6: Service branding, co-ordination, information and simplification package</b>	
<b>Action (Intervention)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><i>Information</i></b>	A fresh, properly funded central resource for the Enhanced Partnership to develop online and on-network information that is authoritative, coherent, easily accessible and understandable and up to date. Specifically to ensure that maps and timetables are cyclically updated with the new fixed timetable change dates, that fares information is fully available online (as a minimum) for all non-fare stage based products.
<b><i>Route numbering simplification</i></b>	Historic division of services means that there are multiple bus routes operating with the same service number in the geography. Some are because their route identity is taken from neighbouring urban areas, however where possible these duplicate numbers are to be changed to aid useability of the local network e.g. renumbering of the Blacon Pointer 1/1A service to avoid duplication with other 1 services.
<b><i>Network branding</i></b>	As a significant number of services in CW&C are cross-boundary and key services take on their network identity from neighbouring authorities including Wales, and the Liverpool City Region it will be impossible to establish a complete cohesive branding of the CW&C network. Nonetheless elements of branding play an essential role in improving consumer confidence in a single bus product that can be used with confidence. Therefore online and at-stop information should be developed with a new network wide CW&C identity that can co-exist with identities from adjacent areas. For bus vehicles a minimum standard will be to ensure that all bus door/bus entrances contain a clear and recognisable identity tag / vinyl that builds confidence in ticketing inter-availability, information context and the local passenger charter for the EP.

<p><b><i>Current Progress Towards Delivery</i></b></p>	<p>Operators have agreed in principal to remove route number duplication where this occurs and proposals for this are currently being considered. It is expected that this will be enacted on timetable change dates within 2023.</p>
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<b>Package 7: Passenger infrastructure package</b>	
<b>Action (Intervention)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><i>Real time information</i></b>	All local bus operators to provide required information to the BODS system to allow open third-party access to real time bus information. High footfall bus nodes to have at stop real-time information including: Chester Zoo, Countess of Chester Hospital, Cheshire Oaks, Winsford Town Centre, Winsford Railway Station, Pepper Street (Chester), Northwich Railway Station, Ellesmere Port, and Neston. Publicity of local and national resources for mobile phone tracking of real time bus information including upgrades underway of local travel planning app iTravelSmart.
<b><i>Stop infrastructure</i></b>	Key bus stop and passenger waiting areas to be improved that are planned to be included in this programme: Foregate Street (the busiest on-street bus stops in Chester); Northwich town centre's main bus hub (Watling Street); and Winsford, Neston and Ellesmere Port primary stops. In addition, the stops outside the Countess of Chester Hospital with new road crossing facilities.
<b><i>Current Progress Towards Delivery</i></b>	Since October 2021, £32,000 of investment has been made at bus stops in the borough, providing upgraded shelters with reglazing, rebranding, new lighting and new RTI screens, new hard-standing and new seats.

<b>Package 8: Fares and ticketing package</b>	
<b>Action (Intervention)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><i>Multi-operator ticketing</i></b>	As advised by DfT guidance we expect availability of a national system/platform for a "back office" function that allows for efficient implementation of a multi-operator ticketing scheme. Work to establish and administer such a scheme will require significant initial effort to devise, agree and establish the products and systems. Ongoing resource will be required to administer the function and distribute revenue equitably. We do not expect such a system to be fully operational before 2024/25.
<b><i>Simpler ticketing</i></b>	Subject to national availability of the back office solution a proposed fully contactless enabled multi operator daily / weekly /monthly / annual capped pricing model that is for the customer a simple universally accepted central product.  Full acceptance of products across all commercial and tendered services in the area.
<b><i>Lower fares</i></b>	Daily / weekly / monthly / annual multi operator price caps to be agreed upon implementation of multi-operator ticketing with back office (as above). In advance of this we will seek to introduce a new inter-available lower fare Child/Youth product for under 19s. Once established a further tier of similarly discounted travel for under 25s is to be targeted. The aim is to ensure that integrated local ticketing will lower fares for regular users and provide targeted initiatives that assist social mobility for key groups such as jobseekers, apprentices, and young adults etc.
<b><i>Integrate ticketing across</i></b>	A commitment to work with Transport for the North, rail operators and neighbouring authorities to develop regional and national solutions to allow the eventual expansion of the local LA offers into wider ticketing

<p><b><i>modes and geographies</i></b></p>	<p>networks. We see potential for modernisation of the Plusbus product to be a potential route to a trusted consumer product, and with new common back office and digitised usage to provide trusted revenue allocation to operators.</p>
<p><b><i>Current Progress Towards Delivery</i></b></p>	<p>A low cost £1 Park and Ride fare was introduced in December 2021 for a limited period in the run-up to Christmas. This was targeted at stimulating demand during the holiday period and was a temporary measure.</p> <p>The Cheshire TravelCard will soon be withdrawn in favour of a new more comprehensive multi-operator smart ticketing solution.</p> <p>Discussions are ongoing with operators and neighbouring authorities including Transport for Wales, Liverpool City Region and more widely through Transport for the North to ensure that Cheshire West and Chester is able to benefit from multiple systems in neighbouring areas.</p>

<b>Package 9: Vehicle package</b>	
<b>Action (Intervention)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Zero emissions vehicles</b>	Investment in a new fleet of zero emission vehicles (either battery electric or hydrogen) for use on high frequency routes around the borough. By 2025 we would wish to see 50% of short range local buses in the area operated by electric or other zero emission vehicles, requiring a complimentary investment in depot infrastructure. However the EP will not be prepared to trade off drops in service provision, and service provision growth to fund more expensive vehicles. We acknowledge that the funding for greening of the fleet may be expected to come through a variety of other funding streams including future ZEBRA funding or other similar national funding initiatives.
<b>Vehicle emissions standards</b>	The borough wishes to see all local buses at a minimum of Euro VI standard by the end of 2024/25. This will require a commitment to additional funding of supported services to pay for more expensive, modern vehicles, and to work with government in securing investment from parallel funding initiatives to "green" the nation's (and CW&C's) bus fleet.
<b>Other vehicle standards</b>	All buses to meet standards for access, RTI tracking, contactless payment, and stop audio-announcement (if possible) by the end of 2023 (subject to availability of national system provision elements).
<b>Current Progress Towards Delivery</b>	No specific progress in this package since first issue of BSIP.

<b>Package 10: Policy package</b>	
<b>Action (Intervention)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><i>Parking policy</i></b>	<p>An update to the borough's adopted Parking Strategy is required to further integrate policy on parking pricing in town centres with the aims and aspirations of the Enhanced Partnership team, to establish positive and long-lasting behavioural change. In particular, pricing of parking in Chester City Centre (and other large centres) needs to support the drive to reduce car mode share to these locations and transfer a significant amount of demand to bus and Park &amp; Ride services.</p> <p>As part of this, there is a need for the Council to exert more direct control over the pricing practices of private car park operators within the borough to avoid the efforts of strategy being undermined by cheaper private car parks, and to instil long-lasting behavioural change. In tandem there is a need to consider further parking policy change such as the implementation of a workplace parking levy or other schemes in order to incentivise use of alternative modes.</p>
<b><i>Local Plan / planning / development planning</i></b>	<p>The Council has a proactive history in aligning local planning policy with the needs and aims of the parking and public transport strategies. A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was introduced in 2017 that provided further detail and guidance on the implementation of Local Plan policy STRAT 10 and the requirement for car and cycle parking spaces in new developments taking account of the provision of alternative transport facilities. The SPD may need to be updated in line with the aspirations of the BSIP to enable consideration of the availability of, and opportunities for local bus hubs for new development, including the provision of information and facilities to maximise their useability.</p>

<p><b>Current Progress Towards Delivery</b></p>	<p>Cheshire West and Chester Parking Strategy is soon to be refreshed and updated and this will need to be in full alignment with the strategy set out in the BSIP. Policy change with regard to city centre pricing has already begun with the implementation of higher parking prices at new car parks in Chester, but there is a need to look more holistically at parking pricing and policy across the borough to ensure a sustainable and progressive integrated transport offer.</p>
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<p><b>Package 11: Safety, education, promotion and resource package</b></p>	
<p><b>Action (Intervention)</b></p>	<p><b>Description</b></p>
<p><b>Delivery Resource</b></p>	<p>In order to co-ordinate, manage, and oversee delivery of the full range of packages of intervention and actions additional resource will be required working on behalf of the partnership. This resource will also be responsible for developing a longer term engagement group with both bus users and non-bus users.</p>
<p><b>Safety interventions</b></p>	<p>Commitment to minimum standard driver training schemes across all operations with regard to counter terrorism, disability, customer conflict and modern day slavery. Commitment to re-establishment of education teams to work with school children to develop bus safety awareness and establish long-lasting behavioural change, alongside of sustainable travel promotion (see below). Commitment to re-establish travel-training schemes for vulnerable people or people with disabilities to ensure awareness and knowledge of the local bus network and to maximise useability.</p>
<p><b>Sustainable travel promotion</b></p>	<p>Behavioural change package to drive modal shift, and staff resource investment to provide educational resource and travel training support and advice to children, parents and students to develop confidence in the new CW&amp;C bus product for future generations.</p>

	Marketing and promotion more generally of all aspects of the improving service offer - including development of network of community ambassadors working closely with schools and colleges to better promote public transport.
<b><i>Current Progress Towards Delivery</i></b>	The Council plans to appoint the Enhanced Partnership officer asap to oversee and administer the various actions, responsibilities and co-ordination role of the Council,  Sustainable transport education visits in schools and other learning institutions has also recently restarted within the borough after the pandemic and there are plans to re-commence travel-training courses in the near future.

## 4.5 Prioritisation of the BSIP Schemes

The schemes noted in the package tables above have been placed into approximate priority order via a process of high level appraisal and consultation with bus operators to better understand their particular priorities. The highest priorities from operators appear to consistently relate to:

- Network patronage recovery to 2019 levels and ultimate growth in demand beyond these levels over the following few years – it is recognised that this will require additional funding to support and stabilise the network as current patronage levels have pushed many services into the ‘marginal’ category of viability
- Integration of bus strategy with local plan, parking and other car restraint policies within town and city centres since this is considered a key deterrent to use of the bus.

The prioritised list of schemes agreed with operators is shown in the following table. The top 18 of these schemes (shown in green) are considered to be the highest priority for development within the next 12-24 months and will form the primary focus of Cheshire West and Chester Council, and required funding identification.

**Table 4.1: Prioritised List of Schemes**

Overall Rank	Scheme Component	Package
1	Revenue support fund to maintain network in 2022/23/24	Package 1: Service frequency – Phase A Covid Recovery package
2	BSIP Delivery Resource – Enhanced Partnership Officer	Package 11: Safety, education, promotion and resource package
3	Timetable change co-ordination	Package 1: Service frequency – Phase A Covid Recovery package
4	Lower fares	Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package
5	Information roll-out	Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package
6	Local Plan / planning / development planning	Package 10: Policy Package
7	Improved timetable / frequency co-ordination	Package 1: Service frequency – Phase A Covid Recovery package
8	Multi-operator ticketing	Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package
9	Sustainable travel promotion	Package 11: Safety, education, promotion and resource package
10	Real time information at stops and smart devices	Package 7: Passenger Infrastructure package
11	Community enhancing routes	Package 4: DRT, socially necessary/ supported services standards package
12	Parking policy integration	Package 10: Policy Package
13	Collaboration with healthcare and third sector providers	Package 4: DRT, socially necessary/ supported services standards package
14	Simpler ticketing	Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package
15	UTMC interventions	Package 3: Bus Priority package
16	Park & Ride Investment	Package 5: Modal Integration package
17	Supported services review	Package 4: DRT, socially necessary/ supported services standards package
18	Timing interventions to improve connectivity	Package 5: Modal Integration package
19	Zero emission vehicles roll-out (with support of Zebra or other national funding)	Package 9: Vehicle Package
20	Route numbering simplification	Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package



<b>Overall Rank</b>	<b>Scheme Component</b>	<b>Package</b>
21	Stop infrastructure improvements	Package 7: Passenger Infrastructure package
22	City-Rail Link service improvements	Package 5: Modal Integration package
23	Timetable and information at rail stations	Package 5: Modal Integration package
24	Plusbus ticketing improvements	Package 5: Modal Integration package
25	Supported services standards identification and implementation	Package 4: DRT, socially necessary/ supported services standards package
26	Vehicle emissions standards identification and implementation	Package 9: Vehicle Package
27	Chester area on-highway bus priority interventions	Package 3: Bus Priority package
28	Extension of targeted trials of pre-booked flexible route bus services	Package 4: DRT, socially necessary/ supported services standards package
29	Inter-urban frequency enhancements	Package 2: Service frequency – Phase B Growth package
30	Local service frequency enhancements	Package 2: Service frequency – Phase B Growth package
31	Rural frequency enhancements	Package 2: Service frequency – Phase B Growth package
32	Safety interventions e.g. driver training and travel-training	Package 11: Safety, education, promotion and resource package
33	Network branding design and roll-out	Package 6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, information and simplification package
34	Chester City Gateway delivery	Package 5: Modal Integration package
35	Other vehicle standards identification and implementation	Package 9: Vehicle Package
36	Integrate ticketing across modes and geographies	Package 8: Fares and Ticketing package
37	Bus priority in towns and rural areas	Package 3: Bus Priority package

## **4.6 Summary of Delivery Conclusions**

In this section, we have set out our ambition and strategy for delivery of each of the 20 Delivery Themes identified by the DfT for BSIPs to progress. We have then presented 11 Packages of actions to deliver across the Delivery Themes on the outputs and outcomes that will provide a step change in the cohesiveness, attractiveness, coverage and quality of the local bus network.

## 5 Reporting

### 5.1 BSIP Revisions

The BSIP is a live and dynamic document, which will be updated as and when required, (as a minimum this will be done at least every 12 months) in conjunction with the operators and other partners in CW&C. As part of this ongoing iterative process, progress within CW&C with respect to the targets on buses set out in Section 3 will be reported every six months on the Council's BSIP webpage (<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/bus-strategy>). This is also where any revisions to the main BSIP document will be published, along with any explanations of why revisions have been made to the BSIP.

#### 5.1.1 BSIP submission timescales

The following timetable for the implementation and revision of the first update of the BSIP has been agreed.

- By 30th November 2022 – submission of CW&C's Draft first annual BSIP update to DfT
- 2 December 2022 – final submission following the conclusion of purdah, and publication of the document on the EP website

It is noted that work to refresh the current Local Transport Plan is expected to commence in 2023. Ideally this will happen concurrently with the next annual update of the BSIP in autumn 2023.

### 5.2 Cheshire West and Chester Bus Passenger Charter

A Draft Bus Passenger Charter has been produced by Cheshire West and Chester Council and the local bus operators. Ratification of this Charter is still outstanding but is being sought at the next EP Board meeting.

## 6 Overview Table

The following table(s) use the stipulated DfT BSIP “Overview Table Template” to provide a summary of all of the headline content of this BSIP.

<b>Name of authority or authorities</b>	Cheshire West and Chester Council
<b>Franchising or Enhanced Partnership (or both):</b>	Enhanced Partnership
<b>Date of First Publication of BSIP</b>	31 October 2021
<b>Date of publication of this year 1 update</b>	2 December 2022 (following purdah)
<b>Date of next annual update</b>	31 October 2023
<b>URL of published report</b>	<a href="https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/bus-strategy">https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/bus-strategy</a>

<b>Targets</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>Target for 2024/25</b>	<b>Target for 2029/30</b>	<b>Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)</b>
Journey time	100 (base year indexed value)	100 (target value, indexed)	100 (target value, indexed)	Evening peak end to end journey times for local bus routes operating at least twice per hour. 2018/19 will be the base year and set as an Indexed value of 100. Subsequent years' timetabled times will be

				measured on the basis of the proportional change to planned journey time.
Reliability	86%	90%	95%	Proportion of non-frequent bus services which depart 'on time' within the six-minute window definition, as per the DfT's long-established bus reliability metric "Bus0902: Non-frequent bus services running on time by local authority".
Passenger numbers	9.3 million	9.9 million (6% growth)	10.4 million (12% growth)	Total number of passenger journeys on local bus services originating in the CW&C area, as reported through the DfT's BUS0109b.
Average passenger satisfaction	87% (Autumn 2019)	92% (minimum)	95% (minimum)	Overall bus journey satisfaction as measured through the national programme of surveys undertaken by Transport Focus in the CW&C area.

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/No	Explanation (max 50 words)
<b>Make improvements to bus services and planning</b>		
More frequent and reliable services		
Review service frequency	Yes	<p>Phase A – Covid Recovery: focus on recovery to pre-pandemic patronage levels by 2022/23; funding required to maintain good levels of service frequency. This will be complemented by improved network and timetable coordination.</p> <p>Phase B – Passenger Growth: From 2023/24, a sustained and co-ordinated package of service improvements to further enhance service frequencies.</p>
Increase bus priority measures	Yes	Targeted interventions at key pinch-point junctions and approaches where bus delays are common. Implementation of new bus technology UTMC system and modal filters in Chester and Ellesmere Port. In Northwich and Winsford, a new co-ordinated SCOOT system is proposed to facilitate connected junction delay minimisation and queue reduction.
Increase demand responsive services	Yes	We will seek to secure the long-term future and expansion of the most successful elements of our trial that is ongoing, funded by Rural Mobility Fund monies. There will be an emphasis on connecting with conventional services, sharing technological developments nationally, and establishing systems for efficient use of vehicle resources.

<p>Consideration of bus rapid transport networks</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Currently there is no specific ambition for a distinct bus rapid transport product in Cheshire West and Chester, although many of the characteristics of such a system are embedded within our other plans; longer-term timescales beyond the scope of this initial BSIP may facilitate future plans should they become necessary.</p>
<p>Improvements to planning / integration with other modes</p>		
<p>Integrate services with other transport modes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Targeted improvements to better integrate bus with other modes, such as bus connectivity to Chester rail station through the existing City-Rail-Link bus to the city centre and forthcoming Gateway development; Plusbus improvements with acceptance by all operators (including City-Rail-Link); bus timetable and information improvements at rail stations; and Park &amp; Ride improvements.</p>
<p>Simplify services</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Improvements will be aimed at making bus an easy and straightforward experience for all passengers by removing duplicate service numbering where possible, improve routing and circulation in Chester city centre, provision of simple network mapping, clockface timetables where possible, and fare simplification.</p>
<p>Review socially necessary services</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>We want to establish a stable, trusted network of socially necessary services, therefore the EP will offer:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creative opportunities to efficiently provide such services through better resource management</li> <li>• collaboration with existing community transport providers</li> <li>• review and enhance supported services to blend with revised commercial routes</li> <li>• interventions for otherwise broken links.</li> </ul>
Invest in Superbus networks	TBC	We believe there is potential for the proposed package of CW&C BSIP measures to be considered a Superbus network; it includes a full package of vehicle, priority, fares, timetable, information and branding improvements. Further guidance would be required to understand the merits of using this nomenclature to progress proposals under this branding.
Improvements to fares and ticketing		
Lower fares	Yes	A commitment to rapidly develop a new universal child/youth/under 19 discounted fare and, assuming the availability of a back-office solution, develop a full multi-operator ticketing system, with fare capping. This would be used to administer the child/youth fare, lower fares for regular users, other initiatives focused on specific groups, and facility for multi-modal usage adaptation in future.
Simplify fares	Yes	Subject to national availability of a back-office solution, the BSIP aspires to a fully



		contactless, multi-operator ticketing offer, with a daily and (potentially) weekly capped pricing model. This would see full acceptance of products across all commercial and tendered services within the Enhanced Partnership.
Integrate ticketing between operators and	Yes	The partnership will work with relevant parties to develop a national and regional ticketing offer across a wider geographical area, with new common back-office provision and digitised usage. We see potential for modernisation of the Plusbus product to be a potential route to a trusted consumer product with universal acceptance.
<b>Make improvements to bus passenger experience</b>		
Higher spec buses		
Invest in improved bus specifications	Yes	The BSIP must prioritise improvements to vehicle cleanliness and give residents and businesses greener, modern vehicles with facilities that are accessible and attractive to new users, and to meet local commitments to address Climate Change and decarbonisation. Minimum standards will be introduced which will require funding support through BSIP and other routes.
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services	Yes	The BSIP includes a commitment to new vehicles and minimum standards on accessibility across network. These will be included within the Passengers' Charter.
Protect personal safety of bus passengers	Yes	Restoration of links with schools and reinstatement of safer travel training is an aim

		of the BSIP, which will be combined with education on wider sustainable travel and environmental issues to assist in the development of a new generation of bus users.
Improve buses for tourists	Yes	Investment and improvement to the bus network as a whole will improve the offer for tourists. Specific key aspects of which will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Park &amp; Ride improvement (signage/visibility)</li> <li>• Integrated ticketing (multi-operator and multi-modal)</li> <li>• Simple and cohesive network</li> <li>• City-Rail-Link improvements</li> <li>• Information improvements (especially online)</li> </ul>
Invest in decarbonisation	Yes	New and minimum standards for vehicles (Euro VI) shall be agreed by the Enhanced Partnership. Additionally, we will invest in charging/fuelling infrastructure at Hubs/Interchanges/Depots as needed, to enable deployment of new electric and/or hydrogen vehicles across the network.
Improvements to passenger engagement		
Passenger charter	Yes	The BSIP commits to preparing a Passenger Charter for the Enhanced Partnership in line with the guidance provided, which will include minimum standards on bus specifications and what passengers can expect to receive in terms of levels of service and passenger experience.

<p>Strengthen network identity</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The initial priority will be on establishing the practical components of a coherent network identity. Once established, we will introduce a simple recognition on buses' livery of their affiliation with the local network scheme. Online and at-stop information will ultimately be developed with a new network wide CW&amp;C identity.</p>
<p>Improve bus information</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Commitment to producing a refreshed webpage providing access to fares and timetable information in one place. We will bring all services into modern data standards with timetables, fares and vehicle tracking via the Bus Open Data Services (BODS) initiative to share real time information fully with all information providers.</p>
<p><b>Other</b></p>		
<p>Other</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>A range of supplementary measures which expediate bus operations and encourage patronage, such as a review of town/city centre car parking capacity and tariffs, enforcement of illegal parking which obstruct bus routes, review of on-street parking availability, plus a programme of updates and modernisation of supporting bus infrastructure.</p>

## Appendices

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# A. Enhanced Partnership Forum Member List

## Member List

<b>1</b>	<b>Council Officers</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Local Bus Operators</b>
	Arriva
	Stagecoach
	D&G Buses
	Aintree Coachline
	Warrington's Own buses
	Als Coaches
	Changing Lives Together
	M&H
<b>3</b>	<b>Local Authorities</b>
	Cheshire East Council
	Halton Borough Council
	Warrington Borough Council
	Flintshire County Council
	Shropshire County Council
	Wrexham County Council
	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
<b>4</b>	<b>Such other persons / organisations</b>
	Transport Focus
	Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
	Poverty and Truth Team
	Police
	College / Universities
	NHS
	Corporate Disability Officer
	Marketing Cheshire
	Bid Team

**Member List**

Destination Cheshire

Regeneration Economic Growth

Wirral Transport Users Associates

**5 Businesses**

Chamber of Commerce

Federation of small businesses

Groundwork

NCIRC

## **B. Letters of support from bus operators**



21<sup>st</sup> October 2021

Kristy Littler  
Transport Manager – Transport and Infrastructure  
Transport and Highways  
Cheshire West and Chester

Dear Kristy,

Re: BSIP - Cheshire West and Chester

We believe that the BSIP document created in partnership between ourselves, other operators and the council creates an exciting opportunity for Cheshire West and Chester and its partners to create the region we want to be part of.

The plans outlined in the BSIP offers an opportunity to deliver an integrated and inclusive transport network across Cheshire West and Chester, sustaining the existing level of service, levelling up and better connecting places, communities, and economic assets within the region and beyond.

A focus on public transport, will prioritise investment in a sustainable future, supporting a green recovery from COVID-19 and tackling the climate emergency through the decarbonisation of the transport sector. This funding will enable the local authority to work with operators and invest in the bus network with a modern, integrated transport system essential for the region's economy to flourish and communities to thrive.

We are supportive of the Cheshire West & Chester BSIP submission to the DFT which will deliver a range of improvements in the region better connect places, communities and economic assets and are delighted to offer our support for this proposal.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Hoare', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Richard Hoare**  
**Commercial Director**  
**Arriva North-West & Wales**



Mrs. Kristy Littler  
Transport Manager – Transport and Infrastructure  
Environment and Communities  
Cheshire West and Chester Council  
4 Civic Way  
Ellesmere Port  
CH65 0BE

18 October 2021

Dear Mrs Littler

### **SUPPORT FOR BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP)**

I am writing to confirm our support for Cheshire West and Chester Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan bid.

Stagecoach welcomes the National Bus Strategy and is a keen and willing partner to Cheshire West and Chester Council.

We are pleased to have worked with yourselves and other bus operators collaboratively on the Bus Service Improvement Plan bid and fully support the vision that the bus becomes the mode of choice.

The comprehensive and ambitious range of delivery measures proposed within the bid will achieve a transformational change to the bus network in Cheshire West and Chester through delivery of real and meaningful improvement of frequency, bus quality and emissions, journey time and lower and simpler fares and multi operator ticketing.

We look forward to working closely with you to deliver the Bus Service Improvement Plan to realise sustainable improvements to the bus network, which will achieve increased bus usage and reduced dependency on the private car.

Yours sincerely



**Matt Davies**  
**Managing Director**  
**Stagecoach Merseyside and South Lancashire**

**Mossfield Road  
Adderley Green  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST3 5BW**

**D&G Bus**

---

**Phone: 01782 332337**

**Web: [www.dgbus.co.uk](http://www.dgbus.co.uk)**

**E-mail: [info@dgbus.co.uk](mailto:info@dgbus.co.uk)**

---

Mrs Littler  
Civic Offices  
4 Civic Way  
Ellesmere Port  
CH65 0BE

15<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Dear Mrs Littler,

**RE: Cheshire West and Chester BSIP Letter of Support**

I write to offer my support of the proposal for your Bus Services Improvement Plan in Cheshire West and look forward to working with you to deliver positive and sustainable outcomes to increase bus ridership in the borough.

Yours Sincerely,



Kevin Crawford  
Operations Director  
D&G Bus Ltd

---

**D&G Bus Ltd.**

Registered in England no. 6918592 VAT registration no. 978 489 043  
Registered office: Mossfield Road, Adderley Green, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 5BW



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**Private & Confidential**

**Kristy Littler**  
**Transport Manager – Transport and Infrastructure**  
**Cheshire West and Chester Council**  
**Civic Offices,**  
**4 Civic Way,**  
**Ellesmere Port.**  
**CH65 0BE**

15<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Dear Mrs Littler,

**BSIP Letter of Support**

I write to offer my support of the proposal for your Bus Services Improvement Plan in Cheshire West and look forward to working with you to deliver positive and sustainable outcomes to increase bus ridership in the borough.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Wakerley".

**Ben Wakerley**  
Managing Director

# AINTREE COACHLINE

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CWACC

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Ellesmere Port

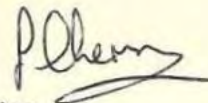
CH65 0BE

15<sup>th</sup> October 2021

I write to offer my support of the proposal for your bus Services Improvement plan in Cheshire West and look forward to working with you to deliver positive and sustainable outcomes to increase bus ridership in the borough

Mr J Cherry

Proprietor



## **C. Autumn 2022 CW&C Bus Service Table**

Table C.1: Autumn 2022 CW&amp;C Bus Service Table

Route No.	Between	And	Via	Buses per hour					Operator	CW&C Supported?
				M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	Sun		
1	Chester Rail Station	Liverpool	Chester Rail Station, Chester Zoo and Ellesmere Port	2	1	2	1	2	Stagecoach	No
1	Chester Rail Station	Wrexham	Chester Business Park and Pulford	4	2	4	2	2	Arriva	No
1/1A	Chester Bus Interchange	Blacon	Circular	6	1	6	1	2	Arriva / Stagecoach / Blacon Pointer VQP	Yes
1	Northwich	Weaverham	Greenbank	2	1	2	1	1	Arriva	Yes
2	Chester Bus Interchange	Ellesmere Port / Runcorn	Hope Farm	2	0	2	0	0	Stagecoach	No
3	Chester Grosvenor Street	Broughton	Broughton Retail Park	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	No
4/4A/4S	Chester	Mold	Broughton and Hawarden	2	1	2	1	2	Arriva	No
4	Northwich	Barnton	Victoria Hospital	2	1	2	1	0.5	Arriva	Yes
5	Chester Rail Station	Huntington / Wrexham	Caldy Valley	3	1	3	1	1	Stagecoach	No
6	Ellesmere Port	Little Sutton	Circular	3	0	3	0	0	Stagecoach	No
7	Chester Bus Interchange	Vicars Cross	Boughton	1	0	1	0	0	Stagecoach	No
7	Ellesmere Port	Ellesmere Port	Overpool and Rivacre (Circular)	2	0	2	0	0	Stagecoach	No
7A/7C	Winsford Industrial Estate	Winsford Town Centre	Winsford Rail Station, Over St Johns	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	No
8/8A	Chester Bus Interchange	Vicars Cross / Piper's Ash	Green Lane	1	0	1	0	1	Stagecoach	No
CAT 9/9A	Northwich	Warrington	Lostock Gralam / Barnton and Stretton	1	0	1	0	0	Warrington's Own	Yes
10/10A	Chester Bus Interchange	Connah's Quay / Flint	Blacon and Queensferry	4	1	4	1	2	Arriva	No
11/11A/11C/11M/11X	Chester Bus Interchange	Rhyl	Broughton and Holywell	2	0.5	2	0.5	0.5	Arriva	No
15/15A/15B	Chester Bus Interchange	Saughall	Blacon	2	0.5	2	0.5	1	Arriva / Stagecoach / Blacon Pointer VQP	Yes
16	Chester Bus Interchange	Saltney	Handbridge	3	1	3	1	2	Stagecoach	No
22/X22	Chester Bus Interchange	West Kirby	Neston and Heswall	1	0	1	0	0	Al's Coaches	Yes
26	Ellesmere Port	Guilden Sutton	Chester	0.5	0	0	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes
31/31W	Northwich	Crewe	Winsford	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	No
37/37W	Northwich / Winsford	Sandbach / Crewe	Middlewich	1	1	1	1	0	Arriva	No
40	Chester Rail Station	Chester City Centre	Circular	4	0	4	0	0	Aintree Coachlines	No
41	Chester Rail Station	Tattenhall / Whitchurch	Waverton	1	0	1	0	0	Aintree Coachlines	Yes
48/48A	Northwich	Frodsham	Greenbank and Kingsley	0.5	0	0	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes
51	Chester Bus Interchange	Plas Newton	Weston Grove (Circular)	2	0	2	0	1	Stagecoach	No
53	Chester Bus Interchange	Kingsway	Hoole Road	3	0	3	0	1	Stagecoach	No
61/62	Chester Bus Interchange	Higher Kinnerton	Westminster Park, Dodleston	1	0	1	0	0	Stagecoach	No
82/82C	Chester Bus Interchange	Rudheath	Kelsall and Northwich	1	0	1	0	0	D & G Buses	No
84	Chester Bus Interchange	Crewe	Vicar's Cross and Tarvin	1	1	1	1	1	Arriva	No
89	Northwich	Knutsford	Lostock Gralam	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	D & G Buses	No
102/103	Ellesmere Port	Cheshire Oaks	Hope Farm	0	0	0	0	1	Stagecoach	Yes
200	Chester Bus Interchange	Chester Racecourse	Shopper Hopper Circular	4	0	4	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes
204	Chester Rail Station	Deeside Industrial Park	Blacon and Saughall	0.1	0	0	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes
272	Ellesmere Port	Neston	Little Sutton and Hooton	0.5	0	0	0	0	Aintree Coachlines	Yes
487	Ness Gardens	Liverpool	Bebington and Birkenhead	2	1	2	1	1	Arriva	No
PR1	Chester Bus Interchange	Wrexham Road P&R	Chester Foregate Street	5	0	5	0	4	Stagecoach	No
PR2	Chester City Centre	Boughton Heath P&R	Chester Foregate Street	6	0	6	0	4	Stagecoach	No
PR3	Chester City Centre	Chester Zoo P&R	Chester Foregate Street	5	0	5	0	4	Stagecoach	No
X1	Chester Bus Interchange	Liverpool	Chester Zoo and Ellesmere Port	1	0	1	0	1	Stagecoach	No
X1	Chester Rail Station	Ruthin	Mold	0.25	0	0.25	0	0	M & H Coaches	No
X4	Chester Railway Station	Broughton / Mold	Buckley	1	1	1	0	0	Arriva	No
X30	Chester Bus Interchange	Warrington	Frodsham and Runcorn	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	No
X30	Chester Bus Interchange	Frodsham / Runcorn	Mickle Trafford and Helsby	0	0.5	0	0.5	1	Stagecoach	No
X31	Northwich	Winsford / Over	Baron's Quay	0	1	0	1	0	Arriva	Yes
			<b>Totals</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>36</b>		

