



Department
for Transport

National Bus Strategy: 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plans

Guidance to local authorities and bus operators



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1. Introduction

The National Bus Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plans

1. The National Bus Strategy for England¹ ('NBS') was published in March 2021. It sets out an ambitious vision and a comprehensive strategy to transform the quality of bus services in England outside London, making them more attractive, convenient, good value and popular for all to use. Although much has happened since then, it remains the primary statement of the Government's policy on buses. A successful bus service is good for the economy, for the environment, for the cost of living and for the quality of life in cities, towns and villages across the country.
2. Locally-driven change is central to delivery of the NBS, through new forms of partnership between the 80 local transport authorities (LTAs) in England outside London², bus operators and local stakeholders. In the NBS, the statutory framework for delivery of the strategy through partnership is provided by the Bus Services Act 2017 and the key document setting out the vision, objectives and delivery plans of LTAs and their partners at the local level is the **Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)**.
3. The NBS explains that there can be no return to a situation where bus services are planned on a purely commercial basis with little or no engagement with, or support from, LTAs. BSIPs are how LTAs, working closely with their local bus operators and local communities, address this – by setting out a vision and plan for delivering the step-change improvement in bus services required by the NBS.
4. All LTAs seeking DfT bus funding were asked to choose their preferred option for the new form of partnership under the NBS by June 2021: either an Enhanced Partnership (EP) or bus service franchising. The NBS then set the challenge of developing a well-evidenced, comprehensive and ambitious BSIP by October 2021. Guidance on the structure and content of BSIPs, and on the collaborative process for producing them, was issued by DfT in May 2021³. In an impressive achievement, all LTAs successfully produced a BSIP on time.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-back-better>

² Mayoral Combined Authorities, shire counties and relevant unitary authorities. As of 1 April 2023, with the abolition of Cumbria County Council and its replacement by Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council, there are 80 local transport authorities (LTAs)

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-service-improvement-plan>

Recovery from the pandemic and beyond

5. The 2021 BSIPs were produced in the ongoing aftermath of the Covid pandemic, which struck with immense impact in March 2020. Lockdown led to drops of initially up to 90 per cent in bus use, and throughout 2020 and into 2021 the focus of the whole sector - national and local government, bus operators and all other sector stakeholders alike - was to ensure the very survival of the bus service. That this was achieved is a source of pride to the entire sector. This effort was supported by over £3bn of DfT emergency and recovery funds.
6. The NBS set out a mission to rebuild bus patronage and mode share first to 2019 levels, and then to go beyond. This is a process which remains ongoing in the context of the cost of living crisis and changes to working and shopping patterns which have been described as the squeezing of a decade or more's worth of change into just two years.
7. In May 2023 the Department moved on from a series of short term Covid support and recovery bus funding packages, when DfT Ministers announced a £300m funding package for the sector for the period July 2023 to March 2025.⁴ The May 2023 announcement launched BSIP+ (now called BSIP Phase 2), a £160m funding pot for the delivery of BSIPs by LTAs in addition to the £1.04bn first round of BSIP funding awarded to 34 LTAs for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25. As a result, all LTAs now have dedicated funding for delivery of their BSIP.
8. In October 2023 the Government announced the continuation of the national £2 fare cap scheme (launched in January 2023) through to December 2024, to help rebuild patronage and assist households with the cost of living. It also announced additional BSIP Phase 3 funding for LTAs in the North and Midlands as part of the Network North command paper⁵.
9. In this context, the time is now right to invite LTAs to refresh and update their BSIP documents.

The 2024 BSIP

10. A BSIP is a public document published on the LTA's website, intended to set out clearly the vision and plan for improving bus services and growing bus patronage in the local area, in line with the National Bus Strategy.
11. The key themes for the 2024 BSIP are as follows:
 - **Updating the baseline to 2023/24:** updating the 2021 BSIP's account of the current situation to reflect all developments since 2021, including evolution of the local bus market post-pandemic and its issues and opportunities; highlighting achievements made since 2021 in progress with

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-extends-2-bus-fare-cap-and-protects-vital-services>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/network-north>

the delivery of locally-driven change whether through Enhanced Partnership and/or franchising schemes.

- **Setting out the improvement programme in financial year 2024/25:** to reflect the known funding envelope of BSIP funding (phases 1, 2 and 3, as relevant to each LTA) and all other funding sources for BSIP delivery, including the LTA's own resources.
 - **Getting ready for 2025 and beyond:** refreshing the plan's ambition and content to set out a high quality and flexible pipeline of prioritised proposals for the four years 2025/26 to 2028/29, nested within the BSIP's overall 10 year plus vision, attractive to funders, and ready for delivery as opportunities for funding arise.
12. Every LTA should produce a 2024 BSIP to secure the release of its BSIP funding for 2024/25. BSIPs should be comprehensive and authoritative, whilst also being concise and accessible to the public. LTAs and their partners should consider the extent to which they wish to revise their 2021 BSIP: whether they wish to use this opportunity to restructure and shorten their document, or whether they are content to update and refresh their 2021 BSIP within its existing structure.
 13. The 2024 BSIP will not function as a bidding document for specific DfT funds. Every LTA now knows its funding envelope for financial year 2024/25, whilst no LTA yet has a complete funding envelope for the period beyond 2025. The 2024 BSIP should clearly distinguish between (a) what has been delivered/will be completed by the end of 2023/24, (b) what is programmed for delivery in 2024/25 with the known funding envelope, and (c) the ambitions and priorities for future delivery in 2025 and beyond, subject to future funding opportunities and (in the case of the North and Midlands) expected BSIP Phase 3 funding allocations. The purpose of the 2024 BSIP is to set out a realistic and attractive plan which explains clearly what will have been delivered by the end of 2024/25 and also sets out a 'shop window' of ambitions and proposals for the years after 2025. Although the 2024 BSIP is not a bidding document, it is the delivery plan for 2024-25 funding and a report on what has already been achieved with BSIP funding, and it may be used as a factor by Government to determine future levels of funding.

Embedding monitoring and public reporting of performance

14. In line with the NBS, the monitoring and reporting of progress in implementation and delivery of the plan is a central facet of the BSIP. The strategy was clear that BSIPs should be updated annually with six monthly public reporting of progress against targets set out in the BSIP. Many LTAs have successfully put in place the resources and systems necessary to deliver these requirements, but other LTAs have found it more of a struggle to do so.
15. Going forward, this public reporting regime will be replaced by a new cycle of public reporting of progress in delivering the BSIP and outcomes data against BSIP targets for bus speed, punctuality, reliability, passenger satisfaction and

so on. The data and monitoring requirements for this periodic report will be integrated with the Bus Connectivity Assessment (BCA) exercise the Government will be asking LTAs and operators to conduct in spring 2024 and subsequently annually. Work is currently under way to design this process to be as easy as possible for LTAs to carry out, whilst remaining useful to all parties. Work is also underway to ensure the monitoring and reporting regime for BSIP outputs is consistent with that applied across the new Network North programmes, including BSIPs, which is expected to apply quarterly. Further information will be issued as soon as possible on the format and timing for this periodic monitoring report. The requirements for the 2024 BSIP document are set out in Section 3 of this guidance.

16. A further update to the BSIP document is likely to be required in 2025. After that, BSIP documents themselves will be updated on a less than annual basis responding to need, including synchronising with cycles for Government's multi-year spending plans.

Status of this guidance and timetable

17. This guidance document is for all LTAs in England outside London. Separate, brief guidance will be issued to LTAs in the North and Midlands regarding their specific proposals for 2024/25 BSIP Phase 3 indicative funding.
18. This guidance is intended to help LTAs and their local partners to update their BSIP, keeping it up to date and relevant. Although it provides a step-by-step guide on how to update the document in line with the key themes for the 2023/24 BSIP refresh, it is not binding. Individual LTAs continue to hold responsibility for whether and how their BSIPs are produced, and what they contain.
19. Nevertheless, **the submission of a 2024 BSIP to DfT by 12 June 2024** is a condition of the provision of any DfT BSIP funding in financial year 2024/25.

2. Progress since 2021

The 2021 BSIPs

Statutory path: Enhanced Partnership or franchising

21. The NBS set out a three-step process for LTAs for the delivery of the strategy at the local level:
 - Step 1: Decide which statutory path to follow: whether to pursue an Enhanced Partnership scheme or develop a bus franchising assessment (by June 2021)
 - Step 2: Publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan (by Oct 2021)
 - Step 3 (for LTAs not moving directly to a bus franchising assessment): Have an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme in place - either as an end-state, or as a transition state to franchising.
22. Of the 79 LTAs in England outside London in 2021, 76 opted to go down the statutory path which involved preparing and making an EP Scheme (some with the intention of doing so as a transition state to franchising). Three LTAs opted to develop a bus franchising assessment immediately: Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough⁶.

Publishing a BSIP

23. All LTAs then moved on to preparing a BSIP. The Department published guidance to LTAs on the preparation of BSIPs in May 2021⁷ and made available £25m in support funding to enable LTAs to do the necessary work.
24. Six of the 79 LTAs decided to prepare a joint BSIP: (i) the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council, (ii) Lancashire County Council and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, and (iii) the North East Joint Transport Board on behalf of the North of Tyne Combined Authority and

⁶ Further LTAs, including West Yorkshire, West Midlands and South Yorkshire have subsequently opted to start the process of assessing a move to franchising, as they are free to do.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-service-improvement-plan>

the North East Combined Authority. Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council prepared a joint BSIP for the Greater Nottingham area, but Nottinghamshire County Council also prepared a separate BSIP for the rest of Nottinghamshire. Accordingly, 76 BSIPs were produced and submitted to DfT in October 2021.

Assessment and BSIP Phase 1 funding

25. All BSIPs were then assessed by DfT for the purposes of allocating BSIP Phase 1 funding for the three-year period 2022/23 to 2024/25. Indicative funding allocation offers were made to 31 BSIPs covering 34 LTA areas scoring highest in the assessment. These LTAs responded with their proposed revised BSIP delivery programme in the light of the DfT offer in June 2022 which ultimately resulted in a grant agreement supported by a Memorandum of Understanding between DfT and the LTAs being signed separately for each of the 31 funded BSIPs.
26. Meanwhile, LTAs with BSIPs which were unsuccessful in receiving a funding offer in 2022 were provided with feedback surgeries on their BSIP and a named relationship manager as a focal point for communication with DfT. LTAs were also given a capacity grant sufficient to enable them to continue to put in place a statutory EP and employ at least one Enhanced Partnership officer to deliver those elements of their BSIPs which could be delivered with non-BSIP funding sources and on a commercial basis (including a bus passenger charter), and to build their partnership with local operators so as to be ready for potential future funding and commercial investment opportunities.

BSIP Phase 2 (BSIP+) funding

27. In May 2023, BSIP Phase 2 funding (called BSIP+ at the time) funding for LTAs was announced as part of the Government's package of up to £500m to protect bus services, keep travel affordable and support the bus sector's long-term recovery through to March 2025⁸. This was allocated in a way that has ensured that all LTAs now have some BSIP Phase 1 or Phase 2 funding.

BSIP Phase 3 (Network North) funding

28. In October 2023, BSIP Phase 3 funding was announced for LTAs in the North and Midlands, as part of the Network North programme repurposing funding previously committed to HS2 Phase 2. The funding amounts to over £1billion and flows from the commitment made that every penny saved from the cancellation of HS2 Phase 2 would be redeployed to other transport projects in the North and Midlands.

BSIPs - the position in Autumn 2023

29. Of the 76 BSIPs submitted in October 2021, 69 LTAs published a 2022 update to their BSIP on their websites.

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-extends-2-bus-fare-cap-and-protects-vital-services>

30. Of the 76 LTAs going down the EP route, 71 had formally 'made' their statutory EP scheme as at December 2023, with the rest on track to have them made by the end of 2023/24. Of the 3 LTAs which decided in 2021 to go down the franchising route without EPs, Greater Manchester commenced its first services under its franchising scheme in September 2023, Liverpool City Region announced in October 2023 that it will move to franchising over the period 2026-28, and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is at an advanced stage of its franchising assessment.
31. 34 LTAs are currently in Year 2 of delivery of their agreed BSIP programme of schemes. The BSIP programme nationwide currently comprises approximately 550 schemes including bus priority infrastructure, other bus infrastructure, marketing, ticketing, fares support and bus service support schemes accounting for £445m capital funding ('CDEL') and £639m revenue funding ('RDEL') over the three year period to March 2025. Delivery of the BSIP programme by LTAs is subject to regular periodic reporting to DfT and a process for reporting and requesting adjustments to the content, funding or delivery date of the schemes in it.
32. 64 LTAs have been allocated a share of the £150m BSIP+ (now BSIP Phase 2) RDEL funding for 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years. (Of these 18 received an additional allocation on top of their BSIP Phase 1 funding.) Payment of half of the BSIP+ funding allocation is dependent on completion of the process of making the statutory EP scheme and publishing it on the LTA's website.
33. 38 LTAs in the North and Midlands have been indicatively allocated their share of the £150m BSIP Phase 3 RDEL funding for 2024/25.
34. Therefore, with all LTAs having access to BSIP funding through to March 2025, the time is now right for a thorough update of the original 2021 BSIP documents. A key part of the task now is to update the prioritisation of bus service improvement schemes and measures in the 2021 BSIP to take account of the known funding envelope to March 2025, whilst refining and updating the vision and ambition set out in the 2021 BSIPs and setting out improvement proposals for 2025/26 and beyond.

3. Updating your BSIP

35. In this chapter, guidance is provided on how BSIP documents based on the 2021 guidance should be updated to take account of the three key themes for the 2024 BSIP, as described more fully in para 9 and summarised below:
- 1) Updating the baseline to 2023/24.
 - 2) Setting out the 2024/25 programme.
 - 3) Getting ready for 2025 and beyond.

Document purpose

36. The purpose of the BSIP document is:
- to describe the bus network as it currently is, and the vision for the improved bus service that the LTA (in consultation with operators and others) wants to see in the BSIP area;
 - to set out how the LTA will achieve the objectives of the NBS, including the key objective of growing bus patronage, in its specific local context;
 - to set out a detailed plan for delivery of the above that is aligned with the rest of the LTA's Local Transport Plan.
37. BSIPs should be comprehensive and authoritative, but also concise and accessible to the public. In 2021, many LTAs put much of their detailed evidence base material in a separate document, summarised and cross-referenced in the BSIP document. This permitted the BSIP to be a more manageable length. LTAs should consider such an approach for the 2024 BSIP. If a separate evidence base document is to be used, it must be published alongside the BSIP and be easy to find and use.
38. The 2021 BSIP also partly functioned as a bidding document for future funding⁹. This does not apply to the 2024 BSIP, where the allocations for 2024-25 have already been set, albeit indicatively for Phase 3 BSIP. Instead the 2024 BSIP should clearly distinguish between (a) what has been delivered/will be completed by the end of 2023/24, (b) what is programmed for delivery in 2024/25 with the known funding envelope, and (c) the ambitions and priorities for future delivery in 2025 and beyond, subject to future funding opportunities

⁹ [bus-service-improvement-plan-outline-funding-form.ods \(live.com\)](https://bus-service-improvement-plan-outline-funding-form.ods.live.com)

and (in the case of the North and Midlands) expected BSIP Phase 3 funding allocations.

Requirements

39. All LTAs produced a BSIP in 2021 and published it on their website in an appropriate and easy-to-find location. **All LTAs seeking to be in receipt of DfT BSIP funding should publish an updated and refreshed BSIP, superseding the 2021 document, by 12 June 2024**, also submitting a copy to DfT at bsip@dft.gov.uk.

Geography

40. In 2021 the option for LTAs to work together to produce a joint BSIP was offered, and encouraged where two or more LTAs share a single bus market area (or functional economic area/travel to work area). Only six LTAs took up this option in 2021, with three joint BSIPs being produced. In 2024 it is not expected that these decisions on BSIP geography need to be revisited and the explanations in the 2021 BSIP for the choice of BSIP geography can be simplified or removed. However, the arguments for the benefits of joint BSIPs still stand, and so where LTAs wish to move to a new joint BSIP in 2024, this is encouraged.
41. The 2021 guidance specified that the minimum geography for a BSIP was one whole LTA area. However, in Nottinghamshire, in line with the longstanding practice of producing two Local Transport Plans (one jointly with Nottingham City Council for the Greater Nottingham conurbation, and one for the rest of the county), two BSIPs were produced. This 2024 guidance formalises that practice. If LTAs decide to produce separate LTPs for part of their areas (joint with neighbouring LTAs or otherwise), in order to reflect functional economic areas and/or transport geographies, then this is an adequate justification for separate BSIPs. In exceptional circumstances it will remain permissible for a BSIP area not to be congruent with its corresponding LTP area, but a strong case for this geography would need to be made. In all cases, should a BSIP area comprise less than the whole LTA area, its geography should be precisely stated (eg in terms of council wards), so that its resident population is clear.
42. Where there has been local government reorganisation and/or a new Combined Authority has been implemented since 2021, BSIP geography must be considered. We expect to see a single BSIP for areas that have become new or expanded Combined Authorities since 2021. For those areas becoming or planning to become Combined Authorities in 2025 or beyond, the pathway to a single BSIP after 2024 should be set out.

Joint working and consultation

43. It is a requirement that BSIPs should be produced in close consultation with bus operators and relevant other stakeholders. In 2021, detailed guidance was provided on how LTAs and local bus operators should work together on producing the BSIP, in particular in the context of working towards a statutory

EP¹⁰. In 2024, for the LTAs that chose the EP route to delivery of the NBS, it is expected that their EP Board and stakeholder group should be in place, and should be the forum through which discussion and action to produce the 2024 BSIP should occur. LTAs pursuing franchising without creating an EP should use appropriate fora and mechanisms to ensure local stakeholders including bus operators have the opportunity to input into the process for generating ideas and proposals for the BSIP and have been consulted on its final content.

44. After the 2024 BSIP is published, where appropriate, EP Boards should revise and update their Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes accordingly.

Consideration of value for money

45. As stated in paragraph 38, unlike the 2021 BSIP, the 2024 BSIP does not have the function of being a bidding document for BSIP funding. Approval of BSIP Phase 1, 2 and 3 funding has been, or will be, subject to standard DfT processes for assuring value for money from local transport schemes: schemes of cost £20m or over (£50m in Mayoral Combined Authority areas) are subject to the approval of a transport business case in the required format; schemes of cost below £20m (£50m in MCA areas) requiring written confirmation from the LTA's section 151 officer that the scheme constitutes value for money. The 2024 BSIP document should therefore be able to state that the pre-2024/25 and 2024/25 BSIP delivery programmes described in the document have been assured as value for money¹¹.
46. Regarding ambitions and proposals for future delivery in 2025 and beyond, the 2024 BSIP constitutes a plan rather than a bid for funds. Therefore there is no requirement at this stage for formal assurance on the value for money of proposals. Nevertheless, value for money and affordability remain crucial considerations in the development of ambitions and proposals for the period after 2025. DfT expects LTAs to only include proposals that they expect to be likely to offer value for money. LTAs should use techniques for option generation, appraisal of the likely scales of costs and benefits, and preferred option selection for bus service improvement schemes to guide the development of proposals which in due course are capable of being assured as value for money. DfT Transport Analysis Guidance¹², the DfT Small Schemes Appraisal Toolkit¹³ and the Bus Centre of Excellence¹⁴ provide resources for examples of best practice in this area.

Document structure

47. The 76 existing BSIP documents based on the May 2021 BSIP guidance vary quite widely in length and content, not least in how much of the baseline data and evidence base was put in the main body of the document as opposed to annexes or supporting documents. However, almost all followed the structure set out in the BSIP template in Annex B of the 2021 guidance.

¹⁰ [2021 BSIP guidance, paras 109-124](#).

¹¹ Subject to these processes having been undertaken and approvals having been made.

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/transport-analysis-guidance-tag>

¹³ [Levelling Up Fund Round 2: Small scheme appraisal toolkit user guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁴ <https://www.buscentreofexcellence.org.uk/resources>

48. Table 1 sets out the recommended structure for the 2024 BSIP document, reflecting the four themes for the 2024 refresh, as compared to the 2021 template.

Table 1: 2024 BSIP template

Section	2021 template (now superseded)	2024 template (now current guidance)
1.	Overview	Our bus vision
2.	Current offer to bus passengers	Current offer to bus passengers
3.	Headline targets	Improvements programme to 2024/25
4.	Delivery	Ambitions and proposals for 2025-2030
5.	Reporting	Targets, performance monitoring and reporting
6.	Overview Table	DfT format BSIP Overview Table

49. Guidance in this section is set out according to the new 2024 structure, with an emphasis on how to update the document from the structure set out by the 2021 BSIP template. This should be the most helpful to the majority of LTAs.
50. For those LTAs whose 2021 BSIP document followed a different format, it is also possible to follow this guidance to refresh the 2021 BSIP document according to the three refresh themes. It is up to LTAs to decide whether to refresh their 2021 BSIP document within its 2021 format or to restructure it according to this new guidance on structure. Those elements of the BSIP content that it is mandatory to refresh for the BSIP to be accepted by DfT are flagged.

Section 1: Our bus vision

51. Section 1 of the BSIP should set out:
- A map of the geographical area the BSIP covers, clarifying which LTA area(s) it includes¹⁵. Clarification of the Enhanced Partnership scheme(s) made or planned for the BSIP area and/or the parts of the BSIP area covered by a franchising scheme or franchising assessment. All of the BSIP geographical area must be covered either by an EP or a franchising proposal.
 - Duration of the published BSIP, arrangements for its periodic monitoring, evaluation and review and its alignment with the relevant LTP(s).
52. It should also contain 'Our Bus Vision' - a short, clear statement or graphic setting out the shared vision for buses in the LTA area (or BSIP area in the case of a joint BSIP). This vision should be in line with the LTA's evolving LTP, other relevant local authority policies, plans, strategies and programmes (such as for town centre vitality), and the vision for buses set out in the NBS, including in its Chapter 2, 'The Buses We Want'¹⁶.

¹⁵ or parts of LTA areas, defined in terms of council wards, if appropriate

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-back-better> , pp26-32

53. The meaning of ‘our’ in ‘Our Bus Vision’ should be as wide as possible, having taken into account the views of stakeholders and the community. However, as with the LTP, decisions on the vision ultimately belong to the LTA. In areas with a bus EP, the vision should be the shared vision of the LTA and the EP board.

A vision for buses in line with the Local Transport Plan

54. The BSIP as a policy statement must be subsidiary to the LTA’s overarching statutory LTP. Every opportunity should be taken to make the BSIP document shorter and clearer by cross-referencing rather than repeating material from the LTA’s overarching LTP.
55. The BSIP should also contain a simple diagram showing the relationship between the BSIP and the statutory LTP to which it forms a subsidiary document, alongside other local plans and strategies.

The buses we want: a vision for buses in line with the National Bus Strategy

56. Almost all social, economic and environmental objectives for the role of the bus in the local transport system can be boiled down to the simple, practical and measurable objective to **grow bus patronage**¹⁷. That is why the NBS’s overarching vision, copied below, remains at the centre of the national vision for all BSIPs:

Our goal is to get bus use back to what it was before the pandemic. Then we want to increase patronage and raise buses’ mode share. We can only do these things by ensuring that buses are an attractive alternative to the car for far more people.¹⁸

57. The key goals flowing from that vision remain the key goals for all BSIPs. Making buses an attractive option for far more people means making them:
 - **More frequent**, with turn-up-and-go services on major routes and feeder or demand-responsive services to lower-density places.

¹⁷ The more passengers each bus carries, the more space-efficient and carbon-efficient the bus mode of transport becomes. Hence one of the quickest means of improving both the traffic and carbon efficiency of any given local transport system is to persuade some people to switch to the bus from less space-efficient or carbon-efficient modes of transport for those trips where such a switch can make sense. Meanwhile, local bus services provide a vital lifeline for all members of the community who do not have access to a private vehicle (some of the time or all of the time), or who are unable to drive a car, ride a bike or walk far for any reason. They are also vital to the functioning of the local economy by allowing people to get to workplaces. Hence the concept of socially and economically necessary bus services (SENS) and of minimum standards for the SENS network. The simplest and most efficient way to fund a good SENS network is for the bus service to have a good revenue base of fare-paying passengers by being attractive to all kinds of people, including those who do have a private vehicle available, for those trips where taking the bus can make sense.

¹⁸ [Bus Back Better, page 28](#)

- ***Faster and more reliable***, with bus priority wherever necessary and where there is room.
- ***Cheaper***, with more low, flat fares in towns and cities, lower point-to-point fares elsewhere, and more daily price capping everywhere.
- ***More comprehensive***, with overprovision on a few corridors reduced to boost provision elsewhere and better services in the evenings and weekends, not necessarily with conventional buses.
- ***Easier to understand***, with simpler routes, common numbering, co-ordinated timetable change dates, good publicity, and comprehensive, accurate information online.
- ***Easier to use***, with common tickets, passes and daily capping across all operators, simpler fares, contactless payment and protection of bus stations.
- ***Better integrated with other modes and each other***, including more bus-rail interchange and integration and inter-bus transfers.
- ***Better to ride in***, with comfortable, high-specification, modern buses.
- ***Greener***, zero emission buses (zero emissions of carbon at the tailpipe).
- ***Accessible and inclusive network, by design***, not only bus vehicles but bus stations, bus stops, and access routes to bus stops.
- ***Innovative***, harnessing entrepreneurship to constantly strive for a better product.
- ***A safe mode of transport which is seen as safe***, addressing issues of personal safety and security on board and at stops as well as driver and vehicle safety standards.

58. This set of twelve objectives provides LTAs with a starting point for both the analysis of the current bus service offer to bus passengers and the proposals for its improvement. Other ways of structuring the BSIP, and setting out the BSIP's key objectives - for example, to align with the LTA's LTP - are also valid, so long as the key content is included.

Section 2: Current offer to bus passengers

59. This section should provide useful information about the current bus service in the BSIP area and analysis of how it compares to the aims and objectives of the bus vision. It should distil the key facts and insights from the evidence-gathering exercise which underpinned the production of the BSIP in 2021.
60. Some LTAs systematically compared the current offer to bus passengers to the ideal set out in the twelve NBS objectives as a means of identifying the key strengths and weaknesses in the current bus offer, and pointing towards the priorities for improvement proposals. They used a format of setting out the

facts in the main text and making a commentary on the conclusions drawn in a summary text box. Such an approach is recommended, but is not compulsory.

61. The key objectives for the 2024 BSIP's account of the current offer to bus passengers are:
 - to refine the presentation of data (including as maps, tables and charts) to make the key facts and insights about the current bus service offer to passengers as clear and accessible as possible, identifying and spotlighting the key metrics of bus performance against the bus vision;
 - to update the data for those key metrics to provide a record of change since 2021 and to create a new baseline for the measurement of progress against targets.
62. The opportunity should also be taken to ensure that the analysis of the bus market within the LTA area is in line with the geographical framework being used for the LTP. For example, this could include the definition and mapping of the key urban centres and other major trip attractors (including employment locations), and the transport corridors within them and between them.

Updating the evidence base

63. The 2021 BSIP guidance provided checklists of data to be gathered to make up the evidence base for development of the BSIP. These are summarised at **Annex A**. LTAs and EP Boards should identify which elements of their 2021 BSIP evidence base have proved to be the most useful for developing and implementing their BSIP and focus on updating it to produce a new baseline for the 2024 BSIP. The 2021 data should be included so as to develop a time series of key data and indicators of performance.

Presenting the key facts and insights about the current bus offer

64. The 2021 BSIPs varied in how much of the evidence base was incorporated into the main BSIP document and how much was annexed into a separate document. In the 2024 BSIP, the opportunity should be taken to review the presentation of the evidence base in Section 2 to spotlight the key facts and insights about the current offer to bus passengers, and (where appropriate) to shorten the 2021 document by moving data and information into appendices.
65. Maps, charts and tables are an excellent tool for conveying information about the nature of the BSIP area and its bus network. A particular focus for the 2024 BSIP should be to review the presentation of data and information in the BSIP document, refining and rationalising it to a clear and informative set of maps, charts and tables, suitably updated. The opportunity should be taken to move lengthier series of tables and charts into appendices.
66. This section of the BSIP must also present information on baseline spending on buses by the LTA in 2022/23 and 2023/24, covering both revenue and capital budget key headings, including supported services, concessionary fares

reimbursements to bus operators¹⁹, other fares support and ticketing schemes, bus infrastructure, zero-emission buses, and so on. The sources of funding for this spending should be clarified and quantified, separating out:

- bus budget(s) funded from the LTA's own resources (including grant funding from the annual local government finance settlement, s106 funding²⁰, and all other LTA funds);
- DfT bus funding including from BSIP²¹ and CRSTS, local authority BSOG and Zero-Emission Bus;
- other Government funding, such as Transforming Cities Fund, Housing Infrastructure Fund, Levelling Up Fund, etc.

Information on the LTA's supported services network

67. A table setting out the supported fixed-route network (routes and times of the day/days of the week) should be provided, ideally supported by a map. The table should clearly set out those services (routes by time of day/day of week) that have been procured by contract and those which have been supported by other means including de minimis payment. The full table could be set out in an annex if lengthy. The map and table should also clarify the areas covered by demand responsive transport (DRT) schemes.

Section 3: Improvements programme to 2025

68. This section should set out clearly the delivery programme for bus improvements (capital and revenue funds) until the end of financial year 2024/25, within the known funding envelope available from BSIP grants²² plus all other budget sources, including the LTA's own resources and bus operators' investment plans, plus CRSTS²³, Levelling Up Fund, Housing Infrastructure Fund and Transforming Cities Fund, where relevant.
69. This section should set the programme for 2024/25 firmly in the context of progress with delivery of bus improvements since publication of the 2021 BSIP. Those LTAs that were in receipt of BSIP Phase 1 funding should summarise progress on delivery of their delivery programme as agreed with DfT, using the scheme names and categories already in use for management of the programme, for example in the quarterly reporting process²⁴. All other LTAs should set out their progress with delivery of bus service improvements since 2021, including but not limited to those funded with BSIP+. LTAs should take the opportunity to link the schemes delivered since 2021 back to the analysis of

¹⁹ Including English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) and any other local concessionary fares schemes

²⁰ Planning Agreements or Planning Obligations made under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

²¹ including all BSIP phases of funding to date: Phase 1 (original award), Phase 2 (BSIP+) and Phase 3 (Network North announcement – North and Midlands LTAs only).

²² including BSIP Phases 1, 2 and 3 (Phase 2 being BSIP+ and Phase 3 being Network North)

²³ City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement

²⁴ Bus priority infrastructure, other bus infrastructure, bus service support, fares support, ticketing reform and other schemes.

the priority changes needed to improve the current bus offer towards the goals of the NBS and bus vision.

Bus driver recruitment and retention

70. As a new requirement for 2024 BSIPs, we expect LTAs and operators to consider what steps they will take in 2024/25 to co-operate on addressing bus driver and other key staff shortages, in particular identifying depots with a vacancy rate and by working with DWP and Job Centres to recruit and train staff.

Section 4: Ambitions and proposals for 2025 and beyond

71. This is a key section of the BSIP and should set out ambitions and proposals for improvement for the period after 2025. In this section, the aims and ambitions set out in general terms in the bus vision must be translated, into specific ambitions and proposals for specific places in the period after April 2025, using analysis of the current situation and planned outcomes of improvements to be completed by March 2025,
72. The timescales for these ambitions and proposals in the BSIP should have a dual time horizon structure, as follows:
 - a long term view of at least ten years (such as 2025-2035, or 2025-2040, preferably aligned with the LTA's overarching LTP)
 - a firmer set of priorities and proposals for implementation over the 4 year period 2025/26-2028/29.
73. The purpose of this dual time horizon structure is to develop a high quality and flexible pipeline of prioritised proposals or interventions (physical or policy), attractive to funders, ready to go as opportunities for funding arise. LTAs which set out a ten-year horizon for their 2021 BSIP are encouraged to take the opportunity to roll forward their vision to (say) 2035, but it is not compulsory to do so. LTAs that prefer to align the time horizon of their BSIP vision with their LTP are free to do so. However, all LTAs must set out their ambitions and proposals for the 4 year period 2025/26-2028/29.
74. LTAs in the North and Midlands are reminded that they will receive ongoing BSIP funding through 2028/29 from Network North, alongside CRSTS or LITS²⁵ funding, and this funding should be considered as core funding sources when setting a realistic level of future ambition.

Structure of this section

75. The NBS objectives generate a list of topic areas for BSIP ambitions and proposals. The 2021 guidance provided a template for the order in which those topics could be tackled in the BSIP²⁶. Some LTAs followed this structure in

²⁵ City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) or Local Integrated Transport Settlement (LITS)

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-service-improvement-plan> , pp30-34

their 2021 BSIP and some did not. This guidance for the 2024 BSIP provides a slightly amended recommended structure for this section of the BSIP, which LTAs are free to use or not use. It is acceptable for LTAs to choose to follow a structure that is in line with their own LTP, or to simply update their ambitions and proposals within the structure used in their 2021 BSIP. What is mandatory is that the refresh themes²⁷ are reflected in every 2024 BSIP.

76. The new template for ambitions and proposals after 2025 is as follows:

- 1) Bus network planning and improvements to bus services: service level and network coverage
- 2) Bus priority: delivering faster and more reliable services on priority routes/corridors
- 3) Improvements to fares and ticketing
- 4) Improvements to the bus passenger experience:
 - a) improved bus stops, bus stations and interchanges
 - b) improved bus information and network identity
 - c) accessibility, inclusiveness, personal safety and security
 - d) implementing the Bus Passenger Charter
- 5) Improvements to the bus fleet
- 6) Longer term transformation of the network

77. LTAs are encouraged to provide examples of bus service improvements in the above categories developed and/or delivered in the past two years which constitute best practice or are otherwise of interest. Networking and sharing of ideas and best practice between LTAs and EP Boards²⁸ is strongly encouraged, and is being supported by the new Bus Centre of Excellence²⁹.

Ambitions and proposals for service level and network coverage

78. LTAs are asked to use the 2024 BSIP to:

79. **Classify and map your network.** In Section 2 'Current bus offer to passengers' the key bus routes and bus corridors (roads served by more than one route) and the frequency of service on them at relevant times and days of the week (eg weekday daytimes, evenings, peak periods and Saturdays/Sundays) should already have been identified. Key destinations/trip attractors, such as town centres, shopping centres, hospitals, business parks,

²⁷ As set out in paragraph 33 of this guidance

²⁸ Enhanced Partnership Boards, where the LTA is following the enhanced partnership route (does not apply to those LTAs following the franchising route)

²⁹ <https://www.buscentreofexcellence.org.uk/>

plus key interchanges such as railway stations, should have been identified as network nodes.

80. The routes in the network should be classified or colour coded into meaningful categories, which distinguish between the busiest, best-patronised routes and other key fixed routes (for example, other routes that it is socially and economically necessary to retain in the network). These should be represented both in a table and on a map. Having classified and mapped the service level offered by the fixed route network, the areas which cannot be served by fixed bus routes at an acceptable cost per passenger trip should be identified and mapped. These are areas where creative and innovative alternative non-fixed route provision (including but not limited to demand responsive transport) is appropriate.
81. **Set stretch standards for service level.** The BSIP should then set out, for each route type, credible but stretching service standards for frequency and hours of operation by time of day/day of week, to achieve the vision of bus service improvement. These could be separated into short term and long term ambitions.
82. Priorities for simplifying the fixed route network and making it easier to understand and use, for example by improving interchanges, should also be set out.
83. **Ambitions and proposals for enhanced network coverage.** The BSIP should set out prioritised proposals and ambitions for enhancing network coverage, both in terms of new/restored fixed routes and in terms of identifying areas where fixed routes are unlikely ever to be viable and therefore other forms of provision are to be sought, including demand responsive transport (DRT) and/or other creative and innovative solutions to delivering accessibility. In BSIP areas employing the Enhanced Partnership approach to delivering bus service improvement, the BSIP should set out priorities for supported services.

Ambitions and proposals for bus priority

84. The NBS states that to increase bus use, buses must become an attractive alternative to the car for far more people. The key to doing this is making them faster and more reliable. The NBS therefore expects plans for bus priority on roads where there is a frequent bus service, traffic congestion, and the physical space to install it. Bus lanes should be as continuous as they need to be, and have the hours of operation they need to have, to insulate buses from delays caused by traffic congestion and parked vehicles. The Plan for Drivers confirms that this means bus lanes should be provided only where they are needed and should operate only when buses are running or when traffic is heavy enough to cause delays to buses.
85. Section 2 on the current bus offer to passengers should have set out information on the severity of traffic delays on defined key sections of the main bus corridors in the BSIP area, as well as a listing and mapping of the location and purpose of existing bus priority measures along each corridor.
86. The 2024 BSIP should set out a plan for delivering and maintaining all the bus priority needed in their area to deliver the outcome of improving bus operating

speed and punctuality. It should set out clear, general principles and policies for the package of measures to be adopted to deliver and maintain bus priority on any given bus corridor, and a prioritised list of the corridors to be programmed for treatment. The BSIP must also set out the plan for monitoring and maintaining the effectiveness of schemes previously implemented to ensure bus lanes help rather than hinder traffic.

87. DfT will be publishing new detailed guidance on bus priority, which should be used during the process of planning, designing, implementing, operating/maintaining and monitoring the delivery of bus priority measures and schemes.
88. Where LTAs commit to bus priority improvements, the Department expects bus operators to make firm and clear commitments to improve the customer offer, which should be included in the EP scheme.

Ambitions and proposals for simpler and more affordable fares

89. Fares policy should be an integral part of BSIPs. Simpler and more affordable fares attract passengers. They are an investment not just in transport but in town centres, social inclusion and a greener future.
90. The NBS set out the objective for affordable flat fares (or maximum fares and daily price caps) to be the norm in cities and towns, as well as lower single fares and more, low, daily price capping.
91. Since then, all places in England outside London have benefitted from either the national single £2 fare cap scheme since January 2023 (where operators have participated) or from local single fare cap schemes in some Mayoral Combined Authority areas since 2022.
92. BSIPs should focus on quantifying and assessing the impact of these schemes to date on increasing bus patronage.
93. BSIPs should also set out ambitions and proposals for extending youth fares for younger people and better concessionary fares for groups such as jobseekers, care leavers and armed services veterans. Initiatives such as the youth fares implemented in Liverpool City Region have had a positive impact on patronage and the Government wants to see good practice in this matter replicated across the country.
94. BSIPs should include consideration of zonal fares, flat fares and capped fares, and their relationship to the price of one day and weekly tickets, and set out a preferred approach. Fares could be applied across an Enhanced Partnership (EP) area, other travel zones agreed by EPs, or even across EP boundaries covering multiple EP areas reflecting local bus usage, such as educational or commuter catchments. Fares should also ideally be supported by contactless and smart ticketing facilities where possible.
95. Details such as the precise fare level are not a matter for the BSIP and should be a matter for the Enhanced Partnership plan and scheme.

Ambitions and proposals for ticketing

96. The NBS's ambition is to achieve seamless, integrated local ticketing between operators and across different public transport modes. For example, allowing passengers to buy a through journey for local bus, rail and metro with a single tap on a smartphone. BSIPs should set out ambitions at the local level to deliver multi-operator or inter-operable tickets and price caps and where appropriate, how this could be expanded to tickets that cover other transport modes, including light rail and rail. In the longer-term we would like to see the roll-out of smart, multi-modal ticketing on a place-by-place basis in areas where multi-modal journeys take place (and it is applicable), with multi-operator ticketing a key milestone to achieving this goal. BSIPs should support this vision.
97. The NBS sets out that all buses should accept contactless payments and all operators running on the same route should accept the same tickets. BSIPs should include the same ambition and set out proposals for delivering this. DfT is working with West Midlands Combined Authority, Project Coral (a consortium of bus operators) and Midlands Connect to develop a single national back-office solution for multi-operator contactless ticketing, which includes both bus and tram services. The solution will be made available to LTAs across England (outside of London) in due course and LTAs should not seek to develop this independently.
98. All operators should work with each other and their LTAs to overcome historic challenges around commercial agreements and pricing so that they can deliver better ticketing outcomes. In Enhanced Partnership areas, the appropriate steps for delivery can be agreed by EP Boards and set out in EP Schemes.

Ambitions and proposals for improved waiting and interchange facilities

99. BSIPs should cover the needs of the bus user for their whole bus trip, including access to the bus stop and good quality waiting facilities at bus stops, bus stations and key interchange locations. In this spirit, BSIPs should include ambitions, priorities and proposals for this aspect of the overall bus passenger experience.
100. Some LTAs already keep an inventory of their bus stops and the level of facilities and maintenance provided at each. Some categorise bus stops according to their level of usage and importance, and have a standard for the level of facilities to be provided at each type of stop (for example, shelter, seating, build outs and Kassel kerbs, lighting, litter bins, planting, static information, real-time information, other provision for the mobility impaired or vision/hearing impaired, CCTV and other safety/personal security measures). Any such information should be summarised in Section 2 on the current bus offer to passengers.
101. BSIPs should set out ambitions and proposals for improving waiting facilities by means of setting stretch service standards for different categories of bus stops and interchanges, and setting out prioritised proposals for upgrade programmes to deliver those standards. Standards and plans for ongoing maintenance should be integral to these proposals.

102. Travel hubs are a recent, fast-developing concept for small multi-modal interchanges that improve the integrated transport offer in villages and suburban neighbourhoods. Their transport facilities may span a bus interchange, car parking (including for car clubs/car share), cycle parking (including for privately owned and dockless/docked shared bikes), and other local facilities such as tourist information, recycling, public toilets and so on. Where such hubs are at a railway station, all the better for transport integration.
103. BSIPs should set out prioritised ambitions and proposals to improve the integrated transport offer and passenger experience at key interchanges including travel hubs, bus stations and rail stations. Standards and plans for ongoing maintenance should be integral to these proposals. The BSIP should set out what engagement takes place, or will take place, to ensure that all the different operators and asset owners are involved in delivering these proposals.

Ambitions and proposals for improved bus information and network identity

104. Passengers deserve good quality bus information and the BSIP should set out the action that will be taken to provide it to them. Passengers want to know when the bus will arrive, what the fare will be and what the experience will be like. Better passenger information requires joint working between the LTA and bus operators, including to ensure that accurate information is supplied to NaPTAN³⁰ and BODS³¹.
105. Bus stops should show up-to-date and accurate information about the services stopping there. BSIPs should explain existing information provision at bus stops and plans for its improvement. Bus stops should be named consistently across operators bus routes over the same locations, and be accurately input via NaPTAN.
106. BSIPs should provide information on existing provision of real time information ('RTI'), what expansion is proposed and how LTAs and operators will collaborate so that bus stop real-time information (RTI) displays are accurate and accessible.
107. BSIPs should set out how LTAs and bus operators will collaborate to ensure that information on fares is widely available, including on journey planner websites and apps, including by ensuring full participation in BODS.
108. BSIPs should consider strong network identities so that to passengers it feels like a coherent, consistent, strongly-branded operation which gives people confidence in using it. Typefaces, liveries and logos create an impression of unity. Local branding should reflect the community and not the operator, though successful existing brands should not be sacrificed.
109. Every town, city and rural area should have easy to access, up to date maps, showing all local bus services.

³⁰ NaPTAN: the National Public Transport Access Nodes dataset – see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-public-transport-access-node-schema>

³¹ BODS: Bus Open Data Service – see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bus-open-data-service>

110. Timetable changes should be minimised and co-ordinated across operators, so they happen at the same time.
111. BSIPs should set out ambitions and proposals for promotion and marketing to familiarise non-users with their local buses, to demystify the service for non-users, and introductory offers to promote the service to them.
112. In holiday destinations, scenic areas and popular places for recreation, much more can be done to promote buses to visitors. Popular tourist areas and places, including in the national parks, are often blighted and congested by too many cars. More should be done to promote buses to visitors, with improved services, easily accessible information, park-and-ride sites and special tickets. LTAs should work with visitor attractions and venues to promote and facilitate bus travel to them, for example, through information and more accessible parking/stops for buses and coaches.

Ambitions and proposals for accessibility and inclusion

113. Buses should offer end to end accessibility and provide ample areas for pushchairs and luggage in addition to the wheelchair space, so that everybody can travel with confidence. They should also offer audible and visible information, in addition to wi-fi and charging as standard – allowing people to work and interact online whilst they travel and make better use of their time. More buses, particularly in rural areas, should also carry cycles.
114. Disabled people and those with protected characteristics must be able to use bus services as easily as other passengers. Making buses more accessible (not just the vehicles themselves, but also bus stops, bus stations, and by providing excellent customer service) also benefits other passengers. LTAs should take steps pro-actively to understand the accessibility and wheelchair accessibility of bus stop infrastructure in their area (including the accessibility of stops in rural areas) and to develop schemes upgrade or replacement schemes where existing provision is inadequate. Research is currently being undertaken to understand disabled passengers' experience of bus and coach stations and stops, and we hope to provide guidance on providing inclusive facilities in the future.

Ambitions and proposals for buses which are safe and seen as safe

115. Bus services should also be safe and perceived to be safe by all. BSIPs should include how LTAs and bus operators will ensure this is delivered. Areas to consider are:
 - **Walking routes to bus stops** - LTAs should plan and maintain routes to stops with safety in mind, ensuring, where appropriate, that they are well-lit and support natural surveillance – especially those used by evening and night buses (operator boarding and alighting data can help with this).
 - **The waiting environment** - siting of bus stops should take into account convenience and safety, with LTAs ensuring, where necessary, they are well-lit and covered by new or existing CCTV. Bus stations should also be adequately staffed and monitored.

- **Staffing and procedures** - bus drivers should have appropriate passenger safety training to deal with emergency situations on or off the bus. Drivers should be able to contact depot staff at all times and operators have proper 'code red' procedures with the emergency services so that help can be summoned quickly. Vehicles themselves should have working CCTV.
- **Customer relations** - bus operators should have clear and publicised procedures to deal with complaints or suggestions on how to improve passenger safety. Bus operators should liaise with local police and other stakeholders such as local schools to address safety concerns.
- **Information provision** – Good quality passenger information can also help to reassure passengers about safety issues.

Improving the bus passenger experience – bus passenger charters

116. The 2021 BSIP guidance set out the requirement for all BSIPs to include plans for the development of a Bus Passengers' Charter giving bus users rights to certain standards of service, including punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, proportion of services operated, information and redress. The Charter must provide for the mechanisms for redress at a local level and the means to ensure these standards are met, which could include forums such as establishing Bus Advisory Boards.
117. The 2024 BSIP should set out progress with the introduction of a Charter locally and the ongoing delivery of the standards and mechanisms set out in it. Where there has not yet been progress towards delivery of a Charter, BSIPs should set out plans to catch up.
118. **Annex B** sets out updated DfT guidance on Bus Passenger Charters. This guidance should be taken into account in preparing the 2024 BSIP and in developing/improving the BSIP area's Bus Passenger Charter.

Ambitions and proposals for improving the bus fleet

119. The NBS supports the introduction of zero-emission buses (ZEBs), with the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme helping support the delivery of this through providing funding to LTAs in partnership with local stakeholders.
120. BSIPs should set out ambitions and proposals for working with bus operators and energy providers to decarbonise the local bus fleet, with the expectation of moving the whole fleet zero emission over time. Local standards for zero-emissions must be set in partnership and franchising schemes ensuring that commitments to invest are delivered. BSIPs (and subsequent EP/ franchising proposals) need to be flexible enough to respond to future funding schemes that the Department may run to support decarbonisation of fleets. They also need to have scope to meet future government targets that could be set to meet UK decarbonisation commitments.

Ambitions and proposals for longer term transformation of the network

121. BSIPs should set out information on the LTA's ambitions for bus over the longer term. This can include the development of bus rapid transit (BRT) and other schemes which lie between conventional bus and light rail, aiming to bring the benefits and user experience of light rail to bus corridors. LTAs should include aspirations in this area in their BSIPs, even if they are at an early stage of development, to help generate a better understanding of where such schemes are potentially feasible. CRSTS funding, and in the North and Midlands LITS³² funding, are possible funding sources for BRT schemes.

Section 5: Targets, performance monitoring and reporting

122. This section should put in one place the targets set out in the 2021 BSIP, and summarise the monitoring evidence to date of performance against those targets. These will typically include, though not necessarily be limited to:
- Targets for bus speed, punctuality and reliability improvements;
 - Targets for passenger patronage growth and customer satisfaction;
 - Targets for network coverage and accessibility to services (geographical and service hours of operation)
123. As stated in paragraph 14 of this guidance, a new periodic monitoring report for the public reporting of progress in delivering the BSIP and outcomes data against BSIP targets will be instituted in 2024, replacing the previous requirement for six-monthly public data updates. The data requirements for this monitoring report will be to the maximum extent possible integrated with the data requirements of the Bus Connectivity Assessment (BCA) exercise the Government will be asking LTAs and operators to conduct in spring 2024 and subsequently on a periodic basis, potentially annually. The text box below provides interim information on the BCA exercise.
124. Work is currently under way to design this process to be as easy as possible for LTAs to carry out, whilst remaining useful to all parties. As a result we are not asking LTAs to define new performance metrics or new targets against performance metrics at this stage. Further information will be issued as soon as possible on the format and timing for the BCA exercise and the BSIP monitoring report, which is being aligned with the processes for Network North.

³² LITS – Local Integrated Transport Settlement

Bus Connectivity Assessments (BCAs)

In Spring 2024, Government will ask all LTAs to submit bus connectivity assessments (BCAs). BCAs are process to identify the best bus network to meet bus connectivity objectives for the local transport authority (LTA) area at varying levels of public funding support. They will be completed annually, led by the LTA working closely with from bus operators, to feed into the LTA's budget setting process. As part of this process, operators and LTAs will be expected to report on a range of issues, including but not limited to:

- **Connectivity:** assessment of the connections of the LTA's bus network between employment, leisure, services and residential locations, and the costs associated with maintaining and improving that connectivity;
- **Patronage:** actions taken to grow patronage;
- **Types of Service:** percentage and cost of tendered services, numbers of zero-emission buses, DRT services;
- **Innovation:** innovative approaches to growing revenue;
- **Funding:** annual transport budget and use of specific grants.

Data from the BCAs will help Government to understand the impact of recent funding interventions and to determine what, if any, new policy and/or funding interventions are needed.

BCAs will complement the 2024 BSIP, with evidence and information gathered for the BSIP being relevant for the BCA and vice versa. The exercise is designed to support the LTA with identifying the best bus network available at varying levels of funding (including more and less than is currently available), plus informing future Government decisions on bus interventions. These activities will also provide evidence for and feed into the LTA's local transport plan.

Section 6: BSIP schemes and proposals overview table

125. This section should comprise a stand-alone table which sets out the 'plan on a page' – although in practice it may stretch over 2-3 A4 pages or more. Its purpose is to provide all readers of the document with an overview of the BSIP and to ensure that there is a standard set of overview information on BSIP schemes and proposals across the country in the same format, irrespective of the different approaches to the rest of the document taken by LTAs.

126. The required format is set out below.

127. The first section of the table comprises simple information about the coverage of the BSIP document and where it is publicly available online to read and download.

128. The second section of the table comprises a summary of the 2024/25 programme set out in Section 3 of the BSIP. This should comprise a list of named schemes and measures which are identifiable against the Enhanced Partnership Scheme and the programme management and monitoring information already being provided to DfT (in the case of BSIP Phase 1 funded authorities, the annex to the funding agreement). Schemes and measures should be listed according to categories being used in BSIP Phase 1

programme management to date; for LTAs with BSIP Phase 2 funding only it is valid for some categories to have no schemes in them. Where the scheme or measure names do not fully capture their location (or corridor or area affected), more detail is requested. Scheme or measure budget/estimated cost should be listed where this information is already publicly available.

129. The third section of the table should summarise the ambitions and proposals for 2025 and beyond, by topic area as set out in this guidance. Ambitions and proposals should be to the maximum extent possible have been worked up into named 'pipeline' schemes and measures, with as much information as is available on estimated costs or order of costs and location.
130. A section of the BSIP overview table dealing with performance targets will not be required at this stage, and instead will be subject of further guidance in spring 2024 as described in paragraphs 121-123. The 2021 BSIP targets, and an account of progress against them to date, including available monitoring evidence, should have been summarised in Section 5, as set out in paragraph 120.

Evidence of operator support

131. Bus operators are strongly encouraged to participate in development of the BSIP through the appropriate channels, including the EP board and stakeholder groups. Letters of support for the BSIP from operators and other key stakeholders are a good way to show that the BSIP has broad local support, and can be included in an annex to the BSIP document for submission and publication. If local operator support for the BSIP is not forthcoming, the LTA must explain why this support has not been achievable.

BSIP Overview table (required format for all BSIPs)

Name of Local Authority or Authorities	
Enhanced Partnership(s) and/or Franchising Scheme(s) covered by the BSIP	
Date of publication	
Web address (URL) of the published BSIP	

Improvements programme to 2025	List of named schemes and measures Where appropriate provide location and cost	Budget/est. cost (£k)
Bus priority infrastructure		
Other bus infrastructure		
Bus service support		
Fares support		
Ticketing reform		
Other schemes & measures		

Ambitions and proposals for 2025 and beyond	Description (60 words max) Description of proposals listing named schemes/measures with location, where appropriate	Estimated cost/order of cost (£k)
Service level and network coverage		
Bus priority		
Lower and simpler fares		
Ticketing		
Waiting and interchange facilities		
Bus information and network identity		
Bus passenger experience		
Bus fleet		
Accessibility and inclusion		
Longer term transformation of the network		

Annexes

A. Checklists of data to be gathered as evidence base for development of the BSIP (from 2021 BSIP Guidance)

This annex integrates the checklists presented in paragraphs 47 and 60 of the 2021 guidance.

2021 Guidance Paragraph 47

We would expect you to develop your BSIP taking account of:

- basic information about your current bus network(s) and the roads they run on: bus patronage levels and trends; the density of service; the proportion of people within walking distance of a frequent service; average fares per km; mileage of bus lane; buses' modal share and how it has changed in recent years; road congestion and traffic levels and how they have changed in recent years; data on average bus speeds and how they affect bus operation and use; how readily comprehensive information is available; size and age of fleet; what if any common ticketing or partnership and coordination arrangements there are, etc.
- information about the local operators and the LTA: is there one dominant operator or a mix of operators? To what extent are services (including branding and ticketing) specified centrally by bus operators or are they designed with local people in mind? What contact is there between the LTA and the bus operator(s)? How many staff does the LTA have working on buses, what do they do, and what is their seniority? How much funding does the LTA provide for supported services, other than school services? Does it publish timetables or promote services?
- what and where are the main barriers to bus usage and growth in your area - congestion, lack of bus priority, a confusing network, lack of easily-accessible information, lack of common ticketing, an elderly bus fleet, whether services connect with each other easily or there are long waits, etc.
- the main areas of opportunity, such as places or markets that are underserved.
- any specific local evidence of the benefits of improving bus services for example economic, environmental and social evidence
- how, if possible, services in your area compare to the best in England, such as the places mentioned in the National Bus Strategy.

It is mandatory that BSIPs seek and report the views of passengers and third parties on the merits and demerits of bus services locally and the performance of the LTA and the local operators. These should include local transport users' groups, MPs, local services and business organisations and so on. Passenger survey data, if any, should be reported.

2021 Guidance Paragraphs 59-61:

In considering what data to gather, the Government would generally recommend considering data over a five-year period. However LTAs may wish to consider the extent to which COVID-19 has resulted in fundamental changes in passenger demand and therefore whether pre-COVID data remains relevant.

To determine this, the BSIP should, as a minimum, take into account available operator and LTA data on:

- Passenger numbers by route, time of day and ticket type.
- Bus vehicle speed and congestion data by route and time of day – using GPS vehicle data from operators.
- Bus average journey times.
- Granular data on single operator fare volumes for single fares, flat fares such as youth or hopper fares, period passes (daily/weekly/monthly), flexible/carnet tickets, annual season tickets and concessionary passes – including the average price. Also, the use of any multi-operator or through ticketing and the split between cash and electronic payment including concessionary fares.
- The current bus market share compared to other modes, particularly the private car. This should be split between urban and rural where possible.
- Bus service frequency (including days of operation).
- Bus stop network density.

Where particular datasets are not available, the BSIP should explain why and what urgent action will be taken to fill the data gap.

B. Bus Passenger Charters: updated guidance to Local Transport Authorities and bus operators

Overview

This information provides updated guidance on establishing and maintaining a Bus Passenger Charter ('Charter'). It replaces information on developing a Charter that was included in 2021 BSIP guidance to accompany the National Bus Strategy.

We want to enable passengers to hold local authorities and operators to account for delivering against their Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs). A BSIP should include a Charter that sets out what passengers can expect from their local bus services. The Charter should signpost passengers to routes for recourse, enabling them to provide feedback on how Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and operators are performing in meeting their commitments in the BSIPs.

This guidance seeks to provide a more detailed framework to support LTAs to develop Bus Passenger Charters in collaboration with bus operators and passengers or a passenger advocacy group. We expect to see this guidance reflected in Charters when they are revised on a periodic basis.

Background

The National Bus Strategy, published in March 2021, set out plans to deliver better bus services for passengers across England. This Strategy included a requirement for Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to draw up BSIPs outlining changes driven by what passengers and would-be passengers want.

It also required LTAs to create a new Bus Passenger Charter within their BSIPs giving bus users rights to certain standards of service, including punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, proportion of services operated, information and redress. The Strategy was clear that there must be mechanisms for redress at a local level and means to ensure these standards are met, which could include forums such as establishing Bus Advisory Boards. This will be backed with action at national level, as set out by the Strategy, in due course.

Significant progress has been made to date in many areas to develop Charters that clearly set out what passengers can expect from bus operators delivering local bus services and we commend this.

We are now revising our guidance on developing a Charter to better support local authorities where Charters are still being drawn up to help ensure that standards that already exist in law and statutory guidance on punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, proportion of services operated, information and redress, and accessibility are being considered as a minimum when Charters are being developed.

By providing this more detailed framework to guide Charter development, we are seeking to ensure that all Charters are of a robust standard; to improve consistency between different LTA areas (particularly where there are cross-boundary bus

services); to inform all passengers about what to expect when they travel by bus; and to ultimately increase passenger satisfaction. Local authorities are entirely free to expand on this framework with their own more ambitious provisions.

We expect to see the content in this guidance reflected in Charters when they are revised and consulted upon on a periodic basis. For some areas with well-developed and well-established Charters no changes may be required, whereas others at an earlier stage of creating a Charter may need to use this guidance to support its development.

How does a Bus Passenger Charter work?

Bus Passenger Charters set out commitments made by local authorities and bus operators to the passengers they serve to ensure certain standards are met for each journey. They translate the BSIP into a tangible set of outcomes that passengers should expect to see when taking a bus journey.

Charters should signpost passengers to feedback channels so they have a voice, and so that operators and local authorities are made aware of, and are able to, address concerns.

It should be made clear what the Charter will cover and the services in scope and be explicit that it will not create any new legal relationship with the passengers. LTAs are expected to develop their Charter in collaboration with bus operators and passengers or passenger advocacy groups. There should also be a commitment to review the Charter on a regular fixed basis and to consult on any revised versions.

In taking decisions LTAs must ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). By providing a place to commit publicly to developing transport provision in a manner which eliminates unlawful discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity, Charters can help LTAs explain to passengers the steps they are taking to fulfil the Duty and to support inclusive transport services.

The Charter should be published on the local authority website and where possible, on participating bus operators' websites. There also needs to be consideration of the accessibility of the Charter (to ensure that it is written clearly in plain English and promoted on buses, on bus shelters and at bus stations) and how non-digital guidance can be offered to passengers, including in alternative accessible formats where required.

Guidance - Passenger commitments

Passenger commitments

We want to make sure that all bus passengers are aware of the standards they should expect from their journey, and what to do if those standards are not met.

The Charter should promise certain standards of service that passengers can expect, including punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, accessibility of buses and related infrastructure, service information, redress, safety and passenger responsibilities..

There must be mechanisms for redress at a local level and means to ensure these standards are met.

The following content sets out guidance on commitments in each of these areas that should be included in a Charter. This is drawn from existing law and statutory guidance and represents the minimum commitments that we would expect to see outlined in a Charter.

LTAs are encouraged to go beyond our baseline expectation in their Charters with more ambitious commitments for passengers that are tailored to their network or wider region.

Punctuality

A Charter should set out commitments on service punctuality. There may sometimes be circumstances that are outside an operator's control that can affect service reliability, but (in line with statutory guidance from the Senior Traffic Commissioner) passengers should feel confident that their bus will arrive on time, meaning that it departs no more than one minute early or 5 minutes after its scheduled time. Overall, 95% of buses should meet this standard.

For frequent bus services (i.e. where the service interval is 10 minutes or less), six or more buses should depart within any period of 60 minutes and the interval between consecutive buses should not exceed 15 minutes. Overall, 95% of buses should meet this standard.

For flexible bus services, operators are not required to accept every booking. However, once an operator has accepted a booking for a specific time, there is a 20-minute window in which the bus should arrive. This time window can work in one of two ways: either a period specified by the operator (i.e. the vehicle will arrive at a particular stop between 10:00am and 10:20am) or be specified by reference to the pick-up time requested by the passenger (i.e. not more than 10 minutes before or 10 minutes after the agreed pick-up time).

For example:

"As a passenger, you can expect your bus to arrive at your starting point within five minutes of the schedule time".

"For [name of frequent bus route] services, you can expect to be able to catch a bus every [10] minutes."

"If you are travelling on a [name of flexible bus] service, you can expect your bus to arrive within a 20-minute window of the time specified when the operator accepts your booking. They will provide information about this to you when you make a booking."

Vehicle cleanliness

Passengers should expect to travel on a bus that is clean. The Charter should make clear to passengers that their bus will be cleaned regularly, both inside and out, in accordance with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's guide to maintaining roadworthiness. You may wish to specify the frequency of this.

For example:

"You should expect to travel on a bus that is clean. Buses will be cleaned inside daily".

Accessibility of buses and related infrastructure

LTAs are generally responsible for roadside infrastructure that supports bus services, including bus stations and stops. In undertaking their activities LTAs and other public bodies are subject to the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the duty to make reasonable adjustments. The Charter should encourage passengers to contact the relevant authority if facilities do not offer the level of accessibility to meet their needs, and routes of redress for non-compliance with accessibility legislation should be identified.

Buses should be accessible so that passengers can travel with confidence. It should be made clear that the bus driver or conductor will provide reasonable assistance to disabled people, including wheelchair users to board and alight the bus and that passengers with an assistance dog must be granted access to the vehicle.

Passengers must be asked to vacate the wheelchair space if they observe, or are informed, that a wheelchair user will be boarding the bus and the passengers and their belongings can be accommodated on a different part of the bus. Operators should implement policies, consistent with their Equality Act 2010 duties, on what drivers should do if passengers unreasonably refuse to move.

Local operators may also have their own additional measures to support disabled passengers. For example, if the wheelchair space is already occupied by another wheelchair user, the driver will ask their control room to arrange alternative transport for the second wheelchair user. If this is the case, this ought to be highlighted in the Charter.

For example:

"We want everyone to be able to travel by bus with confidence. All people should be able to easily board buses at their local bus stop and to obtain information in an accessible way."

"The bus driver or conductor should provide reasonable assistance to disabled passengers, including wheelchair users, to board and alight the bus."

Information

It should be made clear to passengers where they can find the information that will help them to use the bus. The information should be available in an accessible format. A Charter should state that operators and the LTA will make available the most up-to-date information on available routes; frequency of services, days of operation, fares and stops, as well as how they will do this, to help passengers plan and successfully complete their journeys (e.g. by directing them to a journey planning resource). It should also be clear that the bus operator will keep passengers adequately informed with essential information about their journey.

For example:

"We want it to be simple for you to find out when buses run, where to, how much they cost, and how to plan your journey. You can access this information by

[instructions on how to access information]. This information is available in an accessible format at [instructions on how to access this information]"

"If there is disruption to your journey, your driver will do all they can to keep you informed about the delays."

Redress

The Charter should signpost passengers to feedback channels so they have a voice, and so operators and LTAs are made aware of and able to address the concerns of passengers. The Charter should require that within a month of a passenger making a complaint, the operator must respond by saying whether a complaint has been substantiated, rejected, or is still being considered.

It should be made clear that if a passenger does not receive a response to their feedback or complaint within the specified timescale or they are not happy with the response they receive, they should raise their complaint with Bus Users UK, an alternative dispute resolution body for bus passengers. Contact information for Bus Users UK should be provided.

For example:

"Sometimes, issues may occur during a journey and can be frustrating. We will do what we can to make things right if any of these standards aren't met. If you need to get in touch to share feedback or make a complaint, please contact us on [contact information].

"If you don't receive a response or you aren't happy with the response you receive, you can raise your complaint with Bus Users UK, an organisation that represents the interests of bus users."

"Bus Users UK is an approved Alternative Dispute Resolution body for the bus and coach industry and can help with complaints on most aspects of a bus journey. Bus Users UK can be contacted online at: <https://bususers.org/contact-us/>; via email at: complaints@bususers.org; by telephone: 0300 111 0001; or in writing at: Bus Users UK, 22 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1PR."

Safety and passenger responsibilities

Bus services should be safe and perceived to be safe by all. Bus operators should include safety in their marketing and customer charter, with clear and publicised procedures to deal with complaints or suggestions on how to improve passenger safety.

You may wish to include content in your Charter on passengers' responsibilities while travelling on a bus, particularly with regard to treating other passengers and the bus driver respectfully. This could reference the expectations of passengers as outlined in The Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers) Regulations 1990, and make reference to local bus operators' own Conditions of Travel.

For example:

"Your driver will be trained to support you and other passengers in the unlikely event of an emergency, and our buses are regularly maintained to ensure your safety."

"You should treat fellow passengers and your bus driver with courtesy and respect and expect the same in return."

"You must not distract the bus driver and should only speak to them while the vehicle is moving if you have concerns about your or a fellow passenger's safety or there is an emergency."

"Passengers must travel with a valid bus ticket, pass or smart ticket, and be able to show this for inspection during their journey if asked)."

BSIP commitments

LTAAs may decide to use the Charter to communicate to passengers the tangible outcomes they should expect to see from BSIPs.

Additional information and support

Transport Focus is the independent watchdog for transport users. It has supported many LTAs with the development of their BSIPs and has created further guidance: [Passenger charters for Bus Service Improvement Plans](#).