

Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan

12 October 2021



1.0 Executive Summary

On 15 March 2021 the Government published the National Bus Strategy for England 'Bus Back Better'¹. The Strategy sets out an ambitious vision to dramatically improve bus services across England (outside London) to first reverse the long term decline in the number of journeys made by bus and second encourage passengers back to the bus, post the Covid-19 pandemic. It is intended that the Strategy will deliver cheaper, more frequent and more reliable bus services for passengers.

The Strategy requires the establishment of a formal partnership arrangement, led by the Council, as the Local Transport Authority (LTA), for all local bus services operated within the city boundary. All LTAs outside London are required to enter into a formal partnership arrangement with local bus operators. Entering into a formal partnership is necessary in order for LTAs and bus operators alike to be eligible for any future Government funding. The partnership arrangement could either be a franchise or an Enhanced Partnership².

The Council approved the development of an Enhanced Partnership with the city's bus operators, and published a Notice of Intent³ on the 25th June 2021.

The National Bus Strategy also requires the Council, as LTA, to lead the preparation of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for submission to the Department for Transport (DfT) by the end of October 2021. The BSIP must set out what the Partnership will deliver in order to make buses easier, cheaper and more convenient to use. The final stage in the process is the publication of an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme. This must be achieved by 31 March 2022.

Achievement of these deadlines is essential in order to have access to £3bn of discretionary funding for the delivery of the National Bus Strategy.

This report explains the context for the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan, the vision for Plymouth's bus services, the themes which the Plan must address, the input of key stakeholders in shaping the proposals and the measures which are proposed to deliver a step-change in Plymouth's bus services.

¹ [Bus back better - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/bus-back-better)

² The main difference versus franchising is that operators in an Enhanced Partnership have a much greater role, working with Local Transport Authorities to both develop and deliver improvements for passengers. Enhanced Partnerships also offer significantly more flexibility than franchising.

³ [Microsoft Word - 210625 - Statutory Notice - Final \(plymouth.gov.uk\)](#)

2.0 Background

The National Bus Strategy has set a fast-paced agenda to transform bus services and encourage the return of passengers. As part of the Strategy, Local Transport Authorities must take each of three steps (Table One).

Table One: National Bus Strategy Delivery Stages

Step 1 – by 30 June 2021	Step 2 – by 31 October 2021	Step 3 – by 31 March 2022
Decide which statutory path to follow (Enhanced Partnership or franchising) and publish a statutory notice to that effect.	Publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan	Have their Enhanced Partnership in place

The goal of the National Bus Strategy (NBS) 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.’* To achieve this goal the NBS identifies the need to make buses:-

- More frequent
- Faster and more reliable
- Cheaper
- More comprehensive
- Easier to understand
- Easier to use
- Better to ride in
- Better integrated with other modes and each other
- Greener
- Accessible and inclusive by design
- Innovative
- Seen as a safe mode of transport

These are the themes which the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan responds to.

Through supporting the development of a comprehensive bus network the BSIP delivers the strategy set out within the Plymouth Plan, in particular policies HEA6 (Delivering a safe, accessible, sustainable and health enabling transport system) and GRO4 (Using transport investment to drive growth, and commitment to facilitate the use of sustainable transport modes). This is because, through the BSIP, we will actively support the Plymouth Plan policy commitments to:-

- [Deliver] a public transport system that everyone can use, including working with the bus companies to provide easier ticketing, clear journey planning and timetable information, and accessible boarding and alighting across the city. HEA6(5)
- [Work] with public transport providers to ensure that each neighbourhood is well connected to the city's High Quality Public Transport Network offering good accessibility to key destinations. HEA6(6)
- [Work] with our partners, including the charitable sector, to provide community transport to enable people who cannot use conventional public transport to access health, leisure, shopping and social opportunities within the city and surrounding area. HEA6(9)

- [Work] with regional partners, agencies and public transport operators to deliver an integrated transport system across all modes covering key locations within and adjoining the Plymouth Travel to Work Area. HEA6 (10)
- [Continue] to support the High Quality Public Transport Network and improve public and sustainable transport services through, where appropriate, subsidies and new infrastructure. GRO4 (1)
- [Maintain, improve and expand] the network of Park & Ride facilities and services, addressing the needs of both Derriford and the City Centre including a new facility at Deep Lane, exploring suitable locations for new facilities and considering the reallocation of space at existing sites. GRO4 (2)
- [Continue] to support and develop new and existing local passenger ferry services, by working with stakeholders. GRO4 (3)
- [Continue] to support and where feasible expand Community Transport schemes. GRO4 (7)
- Use smarter choices and travel planning to provide and promote travel choice, through the planning process GRO4 (13) and
- [Develop and deliver] targeted infrastructure interventions, consistent with the long term vision and objectives for transport set out in the Joint Local Plan. GRO4 (15)

The BSIP also supports the following policies of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan:- SPT9 (5)5, where it states that the local Planning and Highway Authorities with key stakeholders will deliver: “realistic sustainable transport choices and increasing the integration of transport modes so that people have genuine alternative ways to travel.” SPT9 (6), which seeks to get the most out of our existing network and encourage behavioural change, SPT9(9) (delivering transport projects which provide a safe and effective transport system) and SPT (10) ‘taking local control of our transport future, embracing localism, generating independent resources to transform transport investment, and embracing changes in travel technology.’

3.0 Plymouth’s Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021

3.1 Introduction

The BSIP is designed to deliver a reformed network, improve public confidence and address misconceptions, to encourage passengers back. We want buses to be both tools of inclusion and the transport of choice and therefore, the partnership of the Council and public and community transport providers want to make **Plymouth’s buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper.**

Through the Bus Service Improvement Plan the ambition is:-

- To make the buses the natural choice for everyone, not just those without cars
- For buses to be a practical and attractive alternative to the car for more people
- For main road services to run so often that you don’t need to refer to a timetable
- More frequent services and better coverage in the evening and at the weekend
- More demand responsive services (such as Dial-A-Ride) using smaller vehicles for areas of the city unserved, or barely served, by conventional buses on fixed routes and timetables
- Simple, cheap, fares that you can pay with a contactless card
- To introduce technology to allow daily and weekly price capping across all operators to give passengers the best price for their journeys
- A network that feels like a network, with
 - Easy to understand and coordinated services
 - Consistent high standards
 - Comprehensive information

- We want greener buses, both directly and indirectly improving air quality, reducing carbon emissions, tackling traffic congestion and supporting Plymouth's sustainable growth
- We want faster and more reliable services

The Bus Service Improvement Plan covers the city of Plymouth. The justification for the BSIP purely relating to the city boundary is that approximately 77% of registered routes operate exclusively within the city boundary.⁴ Furthermore, ONS data relating to commuting patterns indicates that Plymouth is relatively self-contained in terms of employment, with 67 per cent of all workers usually resident in the city also working here.

However, the City Council recognises that the travel to work area goes beyond the Council's administrative boundary and, in order to make buses the natural choice for everyone, not just those without cars, and reduce the number of cars crossing the city boundary every day, boosting bus patronage in the longer term, cross boundary bus routes into and out of the city are also important. During the development of this BSIP we are working closely with neighbouring Local Transport Authorities; Cornwall Council, Devon County Council and Torbay Council and will continue to work with neighbouring authorities during the delivery of this BSIP and the development of future Plans.

This BSIP will span the period 2021 to 2034, aligning with the ending of the current Plymouth Plan⁵ period, a ground-breaking plan which sets a shared direction of travel for the long term future of Plymouth bringing together a number of strategic planning processes into one place.

Alignment with the Plymouth Plan has been chosen because, since 2017, Plymouth's Local Transport Plan, and hence transport policies, has been integrated within the Plymouth Plan. This BSIP will be a delivery plan of the Plymouth Plan and hence through working to the same timescales as the Plymouth Plan it will help ensure the guiding transport strategies and the delivery plans, are aligned.

The BSIP must be reviewed annually and it is envisaged that this will take place in October each year, through Public Scrutiny.

3.2 BSIP Development

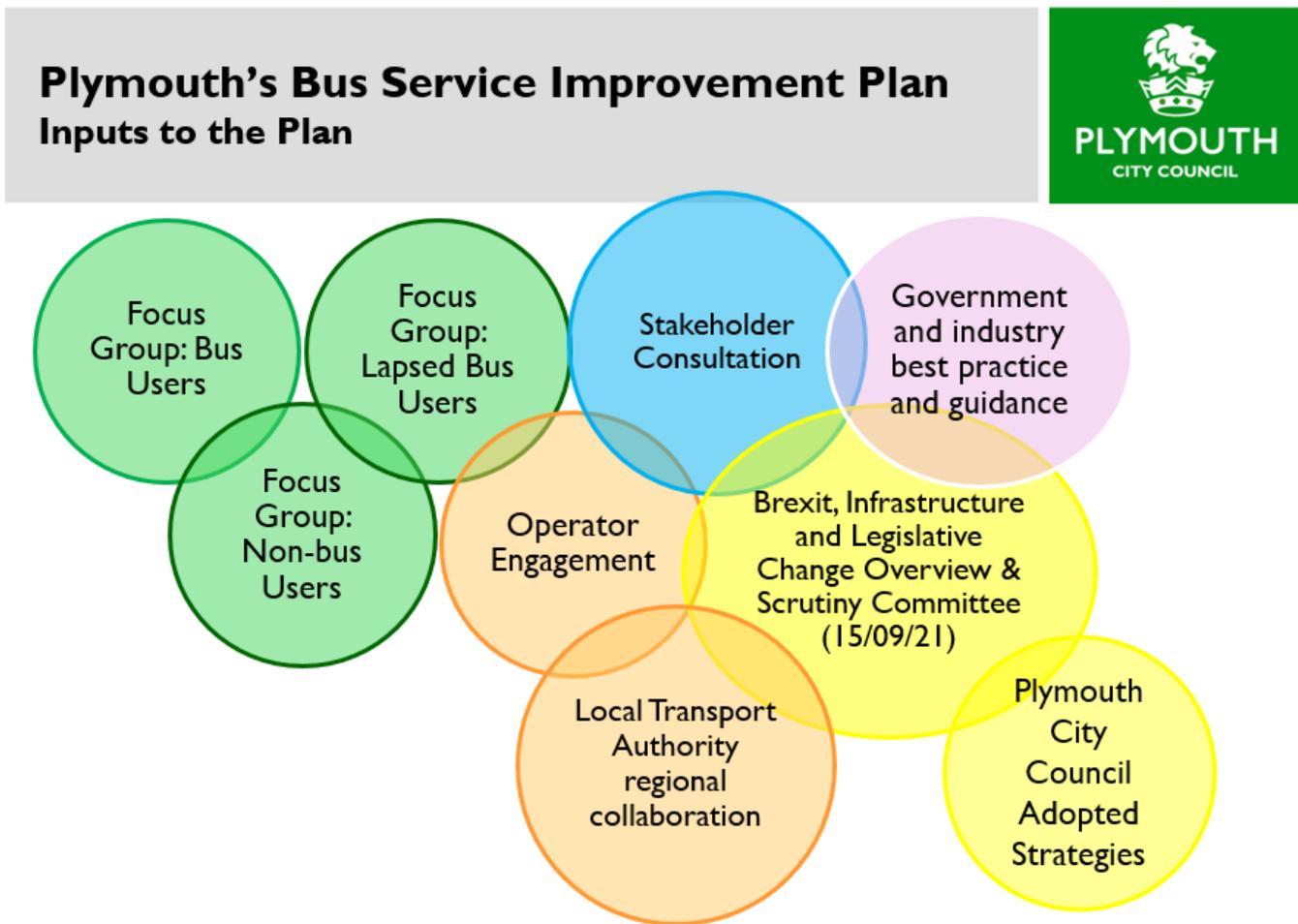
To support the development of the BSIP the Council have:-

- Worked collaboratively with Plymouth's public transport providers; bus, rail, water and community transport.
- Consulted with key stakeholders, including local MPs, Members and businesses, on their opinion regarding what improvements need to be made to the City's bus service and
- Commissioned a series of focus groups involving current, lapsed⁶ and non-bus users in order to understand what residents want from Plymouth's bus services and what would encourage greater bus use.
- Scrutinised national data on the needs of bus passengers to allow local data to be compared with national research.

⁴

⁵ The Plymouth Plan 2014 -2034 <https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/planningandbuildingcontrol/plymouthplan>

⁶ Residents who used to travel by bus pre the Covid-19 pandemic

Figure One: Plymouth's Bus Service Improvement Plan – key inputs

Further consultation is planned, once the BSIP has been developed, and before the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme are completed, in order to ensure the BSIP and Enhanced Plan and Scheme meet the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

3.3 BSIP Proposals

Information from consultation undertaken to date has been used to inform what works well, and what needs to be improved, with regards to Plymouth's bus service. Drawing on this information proposals for enhancing bus services have been developed. The information has also informed the prioritisation of measures which the BSIP will look to develop first. The delivery of all the measures set out is subject to securing funding.

Amongst bus-users the most frequently used words to describe the future bus service they'd like to see were '**frequent, reliable and safe**'. Amongst lapsed bus users the words were '**reliable, clean and affordable**' and amongst non-bus users '**fast, reliable and cheap**.'

This feedback was echoed by the wider stakeholder group. The top priorities stakeholders wanted the BSIP to address were **cheaper fares and more frequent services**, with the group identifying '*Availability and frequency of services, quality of buses, cleanliness of buses, reasonable fares, reliable services, and key corridors are served well*' as the features of Plymouth's bus service which they most liked. Fares,

journey times, fear of Covid-19, unreliability and poor links to places of work were barriers to bus use which were identified with other improvements respondents sought including *'improving and or implementing RTPI, tickets being used across multiple operators, cheaper fares, extending routes to centres such as Derriford, additional park and ride sites, park and ride services that are direct and weekend and evening services need to be improved'*.

In 2019 Transport Focus conducted an extensive survey seeking to understand bus passenger's priorities. The results (Figure Two) demonstrate that feedback regarding Plymouth's bus services is similar to the national picture with frequency, destination choice and value for money being key factors for bus users.

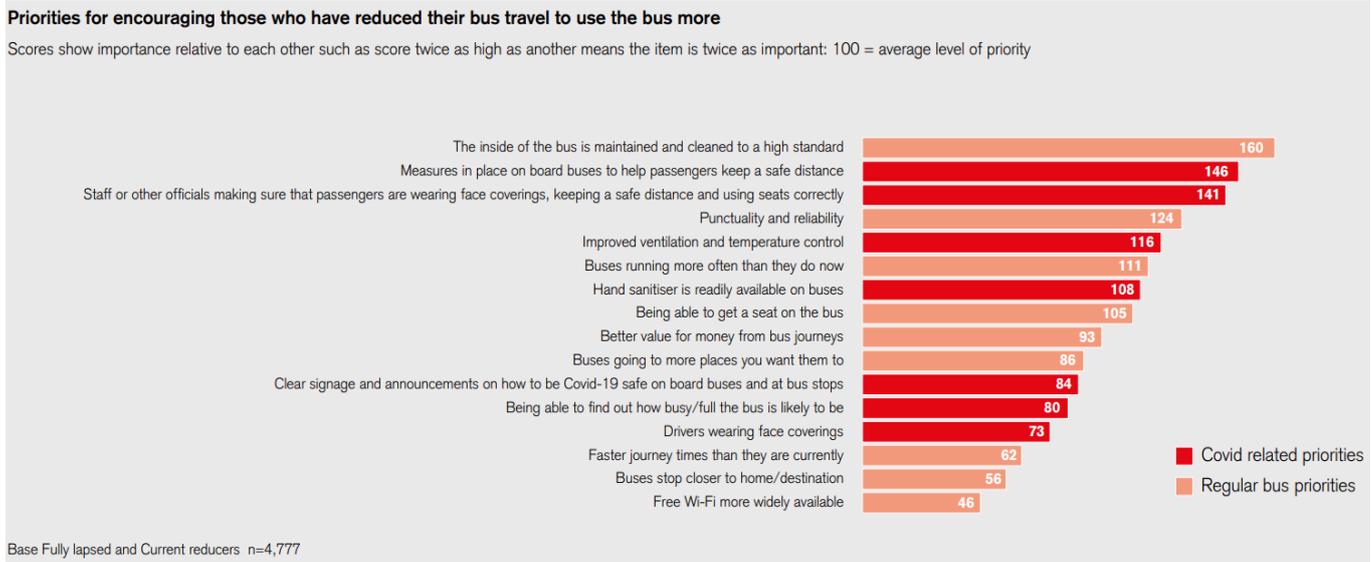
Figure Two: Transport Focus – Bus Passenger Priorities (2020)

- The top three priorities centre on the bus network: 'running more often'; 'going to more places'; and 'more on time at stop'. Value for money was fourth followed by 'more journeys on time' fifth.
- The priorities for improvement are fairly consistent by age group except for those age 35 to 64 where 'value for money' comes through more strongly.
- Improvements associated with 'the bus itself' are second to 'the bus network' related improvements.
- Their attitude towards bus is generally positive; less than half agreed with the statement "I only use buses if I have to".
- Around three fifths of users can access a car frequently and make regular journeys using the car. Around 3 in 10 of these users said 'all or most' of their car journeys could be made by bus. However this group attitudinally were also a little more averse to buses.
- Around half of users felt buses could play a reasonable role in reducing air pollution.

This research was conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic. In spring 2021 Transport Focus therefore undertook further research to the views and experiences of over 10,000 current, fully lapsed and non-users about bus services in Great Britain and considered priorities for increased use (Figure Three). The results show that there are new, Covid-19 based priorities, which bus services need to respond to. However, the core priorities of frequency, reliability, value and punctuality remain.

The Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan has been developed mindful of both the new, hopefully short term, requirements public transport must deliver against and the core priorities for an attractive bus network.

Figure Three: Transport Focus – The Route ahead, getting passengers back on buses – Findings from a major survey of current and lapsed passengers and non-users (June 2021).



3.3.1 Proposals to make Plymouth’s bus services more frequent

Consultation on Plymouth’s bus services has shown that:-

Theme	Bus users	Lapsed bus users	Non-bus users
Frequency	Happy with the frequency but they disliked the lack of provision in the evenings and at weekends.	Frequency of buses was viewed “as ok” but they felt the evening and night service were poor The concept of a turn up and go service (on major urban routes) without a timetable was universally liked.	Generally frequency was considered poor, particularly if you live on the edge of the city. They were aware that evenings and weekends had even lower service provision, but indicated an interest to use the bus for social purposes

In response it is proposed that the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to deliver:-

- 5 minute combined daytime frequency on core corridors until 7 pm
- Saturday daytime frequencies to match Monday – Friday daytime frequencies
- An improved evening and weekend frequency – minimum of 15 minute combined frequency on core corridors.

This will require co-ordination of timetables between individual services and potentially between operators as well.

- To focus on six core corridors and an urban loop-
 - City Centre - Devonport (via Union Street) – St Budeaux Square
 - City Centre – Wolseley Road – Saltash
 - City Centre – Mutley Plain – George Junction Park and Ride
 - City Centre – Outland Road – George Junction Park and Ride
 - City Centre – Plympton Ridgeway
 - City Centre – Plymstock Broadway
 - Urban loop ‘Big circle’ - Higher St Budeaux, Whitleigh, Southway, George Junction, Derriford, via Forder Valley Link Road, to Plympton, Sherford and Plymstock

3.3.2 Proposals to make Plymouth’s bus services faster and more reliable

Consultation on Plymouth’s bus services has shown that:-

Theme	Bus users	Lapsed bus users	Non-bus users
<i>Making buses faster and more reliable</i>	<p>Most were happy with the reliability. Some of the routes they used had similar journey times compared to the car and were often quicker (with the exception of roadworks) and cheaper (compared to parking all day) but they’d like more direct routes with less stops.</p> <p>Bus priority schemes were liked and the park and ride noted for being particularly fast and direct compared to other services.</p>	<p>The length of time to complete a journey was an important barrier to use.</p> <p>They felt that the buses were not always reliable (running late / cancelled – with little /no notice) and had slow journey times with too many stops.</p> <p>Bus priority lanes were particularly liked, and they wanted more of them</p> <p>More direct routes (reducing overall journey times) and more frequent bus service would encourage future use.</p> <p>The majority do not want to change buses to reach their destination.</p>	<p>There was a perception of poor reliability with the perception that buses were not always on time or could be cancelled with little or no notice and were not aware how they could check the buses progress on the route.</p> <p>Slow journey times, indirect routes and too many stops were comments that were often repeated.</p>

In response it is proposed that the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to deliver:-

- Improvements focussed on six core corridors and the urban loop-
 - City Centre - Devonport (via Union Street) – St Budeaux Square
 - City Centre – Wolseley Road – Saltash

Scheme: Wolseley Road Bus Priority	Bus priority measures introduced eastbound on Wolseley Road.
------------------------------------	--

- City Centre – Mutley Plain – George Junction Park and Ride

Scheme: Mannamead Road bus priority	Bus priority measures on Mannamead Road (northbound), connecting with the Manadon roundabout improvements
-------------------------------------	---

- City Centre – Outland Road – George Junction Park and Ride

I36: Meavy Way	Reconfiguration of the Crownhill cloverleaf to accommodate bus movements, removing approximately a mile from existing bus journeys
----------------	--

- City Centre – Plympton Ridgeway
- City Centre – Plymstock Broadway

Scheme: Eastern Corridor Junctions	A series of minor junction improvements on key bus routes with localised cycle and walking enhancements.
Scheme: Pomphlett to The Ride	A scheme to improve journey times and reliability of bus services as well as walking and cycling improvements in the area.

- Urban loop 'Big circle' - Higher St Budeaux, Whiteleigh, Southway, George Junction, Derriford, via Forder Valley Link Road, to Plympton, Sherford and Plymstock

Scheme: Longbridge Road	A bus contraflow scheme to significantly reduce journey times around A38 Marsh Mills junction.
Scheme: Crownhill Road	Bus priority on Crownhill Road

In addition the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan we will deliver the following to reduce dwell times at bus stops and other causes of delay:-

- The promotion of even more cashless payments on buses
- Tap on, tap off technology to support fare capping
- Bus Stop Clearway Orders at all bus stops
- A rationalisation of bus stops which are treated as timing points, removing those which cause an unnecessary delay for passengers.

3.3.3 Proposals to make Plymouth's bus services cheaper

Consultation on Plymouth's bus services has shown that:-

Theme	Bus users	Lapsed bus users	Non-bus users
Making buses cheaper	Costs were viewed as "reasonable" and "well priced" – and generally lower than using a car and parking, suggesting they viewed the service as good value for money	Ticket costs were viewed as having "increased" but weren't noted as a specific barrier to travel, but did need to be competitive with other alternatives (e.g. shared taxi) Ticketing across different services was viewed as confusing and frustrating and there was a clear interest in single integrated ticketing across services	The overall perception was that ticket costs were expensive.

In response it is proposed that the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to deliver:-

- Participation in the Cornish Interoperable Ticketing programme along with neighbours Devon County Council and Torbay Council for cross-boundary services
- A simple to understand, competitively priced suite of inter-operable ticket covering all bus operators- to be delivered through an enhanced 'Skipper' ticket offering great value for commuters and leisure riders, which can be paid for with a contactless card.
- Common fare zones across all bus operators
- Raising the age of eligibility to use child fares to 19.

3.3.4 Proposals to make Plymouth's bus services more comprehensive

Consultation on Plymouth's bus services has shown that:-

Theme	Bus users	Lapsed bus users	Non-bus users
Making buses more comprehensive	As existing users they were happy with the destinations served but acknowledged that others found it difficult, particularly if you had to travel to the centre of the city to change and then come back out to get to your final destination. The city centre is still a key destination – but others are also important to them. Other destinations include major employers (Dockyard, Derriford Hospital) and leisure and shopping destinations (local beaches, retail parks, leisure centres). They liked not having to worry about where to park (parking was often restricted at work / and not always available on busy days in the city) There was support for the use of demand responsive vehicles to	The use of demand responsive vehicles was also liked, but they were sceptical about how it would work in practice. The city centre is still a key destination – but others are also important to them. Other destinations include major employers (Dockyard, Derriford Hospital) and leisure and shopping destinations (local beaches, retail parks, leisure centres).	The city centre is still a key destination – but others are also important to them. Other destinations include major employers (Dockyard, Derriford Hospital, factories at Estover) leisure and shopping destinations.

	extend the service to rural areas and introduce the turn up and go service (on major urban routes).		
--	---	--	--

In response it is proposed that the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to deliver:-

- An improved park and ride network -10 minute service frequency on all park and ride services
- Park and Ride to operate on Sunday's
- Park and Ride to serve additional destinations;
 - Derriford Hospital from Coypool Park and Ride
 - Devonport Dockyard from Milehouse Park and Ride
- Support the expansion of Dial-a-Ride services to and from key hubs and destinations
- Provide a 'big circle' service serving - Higher St Budeaux, Whitleigh, Southway, George Junction, Derriford, via Forder Valley Link Road, to Plympton, Sherford and Plymstock

3.3.5 Proposals to make Plymouth's bus services easier to understand

Consultation on Plymouth's bus services has shown that:-

Theme	Bus users	Lapsed bus users	Non-bus users
<i>Making buses easier to understand</i>	Most users didn't use the service information on the bus stop and went online or used an App on their mobile phone to get information. Older users (not "Tech" savvy) were happy using the information at the bus stop. Bus timetables were difficult to understand but the majority were aware of how they could access bus timetable information on their smart phone or online.	The information at the bus stop was little used and they also had little awareness of how to access timetable information online / smart phone apps, but they felt confident they would be able to repeat previous journeys they had made.	The majority were not aware of how they could access bus timetable information on their smart phone or online and thought it would be difficult to find and use There was the perception that it could be difficult to work out which bus you should catch when more than one service travelled the same route.

In response it is proposed that the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to deliver:-

- A common specification for how we want information on timetables and shelters to look
- Publicity showing days out by public transport in city and surrounding area
- Route and destination based personalised travel planning supporting people to gain skills and confidence in bus routes, timetables and ticketing information.
- A better comprehension of the available online tools
- Expanding the 'Plymotion' brand to cover bus related material such as bus stops, timetable cases, webpages, apps, on the bus and all publicity to promote an integrated, visible, sustainable transport network.

3.3.6 Proposals to make Plymouth's bus services easier to use

Consultation on Plymouth's bus services has shown that:-

Theme	Bus users	Lapsed bus users	Non-bus users
<i>Making buses easier to use</i>	<p>Convenience was very important to their usage, most used the bus or park and ride, because they were close to a bus stop where they lived and priority bus lanes made their journey quicker / or about the same time as an alternative journey by car.</p> <p>There was frustration you couldn't travel to your final destination using one ticket and confusion if you used a ticket for the same route with a different operator.</p> <p>Make them more child friendly – have a family / children's bus</p> <p>Have contactless payment on all buses.</p> <p>Single ticketing / through ticketing between operators was felt to be really important and make them more likely to use a combined service.</p>		<p>Overall there was little knowledge about the tickets options available.</p> <p>They were not aware of the Skipper Ticket – but had heard of a Day Rider</p>

In response it is proposed that the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to deliver:-

- The promotion of the availability of contactless payments
- Route and destination based personalised travel planning supporting people to gain skills and confidence in bus routes, timetables and ticketing information; supported by route based material
- An expansion of the Skipper ticket to include, initially, ferries and, ultimately, rail journeys and actively market the availability of the ticket.
- A co-ordinated map of Plymouth's bus network – which includes basic frequency information, twice yearly, with key public transport information on the reverse of the map to include; contact details, ticket information. Skipper etc and complementary bus ticket to all households in Plymouth.

3.3.7 Proposals to make Plymouth's bus services better to ride in

Consultation on Plymouth's bus services has shown that:-

Theme	Bus users	Lapsed bus users	Non-bus users
<i>Make buses better to ride in</i>	<p>The newer buses offered a much better customer experience. The addition of WIFI and charging points was particularly liked among younger users.</p> <p>Some of the buses are older and personal space is limited. The older "tired" buses were felt to be inadequate.</p> <p>One important aspect that was noted was that they wanted more</p>	<p>In the main buses were viewed as tired and often dirty – but they have noticed the newer buses and felt these would offer a better passenger experience.</p> <p>One important aspect was that they wanted more personal space when traveling (avoiding other passengers with personal hygiene</p>	<p>They viewed drivers positively and were not expecting there to be any issues.</p>

	<p>“personal space” when traveling and this was not linked to COVID.</p> <p>They disliked sitting next to someone who had personal hygiene issues / played loud music or was involved in a loud phone call – all of which they wanted to avoid.</p> <p>Negative comments related to the journey time being too long with the bus stopping too many times and being “hot and sticky” (Heat wave - 30C during survey)</p>	<p>issues/loud music or telephone conversations)</p> <p>They felt they weren't always “treated like a customer” by drivers and had a number of other issues ranging from drivers going too fast to stopping and starting abruptly and driving off before passengers had time to take their seats.</p>	
--	---	---	--

In response it is proposed that the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to deliver:-

- A Plymouth customer charter
- Buses no more than 10 years old operating in Plymouth, within 5 years of the start of the Enhanced Partnership
- A continue enhanced cleaning regime
- Provision of audible and visible information, in addition to WiFi, on all services within an agreed time period
- All new buses to have charging points
- Targeted limited stop services on certain routes and times of the day on top of the regular journeys.

3.3.8 Proposals to make Plymouth’s bus services better integrated with other modes and each other

Consultation on Plymouth’s bus services has shown that:-

Theme	Bus users	Lapsed bus users	Non-bus users
<i>Making buses better integrated with other modes and each other</i>	Unlike the non-user and lapsed users, most would change buses to reach their destination.	No comments	No comments

In response it is proposed that the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to deliver:-

- Expanding Skipper to include ferries in the first instance and then rail
- Better co-ordination of rail timetables with bus services; including through Personalised Travel Planning
- An expanded park and ride service including consideration of off-bus ticketing

3.3.9 Proposals to make Plymouth’s bus services and bus stops greener

Consultation on Plymouth’s bus services has shown that:-

Theme	Bus users	Lapsed bus users	Non-bus users
<i>Making buses and bus stops greener</i>	Unlike the non-user and lapsed users, most would change buses to reach their destination.		

In response it is proposed that the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to deliver:-

- Retrofit all buses with appropriate technology to improve emissions and fuel efficiency; subject to satisfactory trials
- Bid for funding through the NBS to replace the whole fleet with Zero Emission Buses by 2030
- Introduce green 'living' roofs and solar panels on bus stops at key locations

3.3.10 Proposals to make buses accessible and inclusive by design

Limited feedback has been received with regard to how to make buses and accessible by design. However, the inclusivity of Plymouth's bus network is key and hence it is proposed that the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to deliver:-

- A Plymouth customer charter
- Audio-visual announcement / next bus information
- Space available for wheelchair users, mobility scooters and pushchairs / prams
- Travel centres at key locations; potentially within Mobility hubs, to provide off-bus support and facilitate future cashless payments etc

3.3.11 Proposals to make Plymouth's bus services seen as a safe mode of transport

Consultation on Plymouth's bus services has shown that:-

Theme	Bus users	Lapsed bus users	Non-bus users
<i>Seen as a safe mode of transport</i>		Most respondents indicated that health concerns / the increased risk of COVID transmission were the main reasons they don't use the service. "You want to avoid crowded buses"	They did perceive that a bus offered a safer travel solution than a taxi - particularly for young girls / women with bus CCTV providing some degree of reassurance – "It's a safe place" - "people know about it".

In response it is proposed that the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to deliver:-

- Identify of bus stop and shelters which require additional lighting, with lighting being included in the specification for the new bus shelters to be procured in 2022
- More bins at bus stops
- A review CCTV coverage at bus stops

3.4 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Priorities

Based on stakeholder feedback the priorities for Plymouth's Bus Service Improvement Plan is to deliver a network:-

- With high frequencies on our core corridors, which are available seven days a week, both in the evenings as well as during the day, enabled by high quality infrastructure reducing journey times.
- Which connects with more destinations
- Which delivers great value for money
- People are supported and empowered to use

The guidance from the Department for Transport says that the Government will give particular weight to measures which support local bus markets as they emerge from the pandemic, such as bus priority and targeted fares reductions. The priorities set out above are felt to align well with this guidance as well as responding to the needs of Plymouth's current, lapsed and potential bus users.

3.4 BSIP Targets

Bus Service Improvement Plans must set targets for 2024/25 and 2030 for journey time and reliability improvements, passenger growth and customer satisfaction. Performance against these targets must be published every six months.

3.4 Targets for journey times and reliability improvements

In accordance with the Transport Focus best practice guidance 'Setting targets in Bus Service Improvement Plans' (TF, 2021), as a Plymouth BSIP partnership we will:-

- set reliability and journey-time targets for different times of the day and days of the week, as well as an overall target
- focus on transport corridors

3.4.1 Journey time

Journey times will principally be monitored using Plymouth's Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system.

RTPI will be used to monitor the average journey time between two points on Plymouth's six core bus corridors. The majority of Plymouth's buses operate for at least part of their journey on these corridors. Journey time is therefore key, both for passenger satisfaction of routes which operate exclusively along these corridors, and also for services which inter-link and inter- connect with the core corridor to allow operators the ability to provide frequent, reliable interconnections.

In addition to monitoring average journey times on Plymouth's core corridors, we will also use RTPI to monitor the impact infrastructure and enforcement interventions, gathering pre and post intervention data so that the impact on journey times can be quantified.

The BSIP will also monitor and report passenger satisfaction with on-bus journey times, using the results of the Transport Focus Bus Passenger Satisfaction survey. This is because both journey time and people's perception of journey time are both important.

In recognition of the need for bus journey times to be competitive to those of the private car, in order to encourage modal shift, we will also monitor and set a target for bus journey times, relative to those of the private car for both weekdays and weekends

3.4.2 Bus journey reliability

Two metrics will principally be used to monitor bus journey time reliability; lost mileage (as reported by the percentage of scheduled mileage which did not operate) and bus punctuality at all timing points.

The data will be embellished by data collected through both the National Highways and Transportation survey (NHT) on the satisfaction of passengers with respect to buses arriving on time (NHT, 2020 – PTB104) and also the results of the Transport Focus Bus Passenger Satisfaction survey, specifically satisfaction with punctuality. This is because both the reliability of bus services, and people's perception of that reliability are both important.

Plymouth's performance will be compared with national and regional data.

3.4.3 Targets for passenger growth and customer satisfaction

3.4.3.1 Passenger growth

To monitor the impact of this BSIP we will monitor annual bus patronage; both in totality and disaggregated between fare paying and concessionary patronage.

In order to supplement the data and allow comparisons between Plymouth's performance both regionally and nationally, we will also monitor:-

- Bus passenger journeys per head of population
- Method of travel to work by all residents aged 16-74 in employment, by Plymouth and South West Devon JLP Planning Authority; noting that this data is collected as part of the Census and hence only available every 10 years.

3.4.3.2 Passenger satisfaction

In accordance with the Transport Focus best practice guidance 'Setting targets in Bus Service Improvement Plans' (TF, 2021), as a Plymouth BSIP partnership we will set targets for overall satisfaction with the bus journey.

The overall satisfaction with public transport will be monitored using the national Highways and Transportation survey indicator KBI 06 – Local bus services (overall).

In addition we have set targets for measuring satisfaction with the things that matter most to passengers and potential passengers (TF, 2021) the Plymouth BSIP will therefore also monitor:-

- Satisfaction with value for money

- Satisfaction with punctuality and
- Satisfaction of on-bus journey time

The data will be drawn from both the Transport Focus Bus Passenger Surveys and National Highway and Transportation surveys, where the data is available, allowing both the opinion of bus passengers (Transport Focus survey) and potentially non-bus users (the NHT survey is sent to a random selection of household across the City and hence it's likely the responses include both bus and non-bus users) to be considered. In drawing on this data we note the likelihood that the Transport Focus survey will change (TF 2021) and hence future data might not be comparable with future surveys. However, at the time of writing this BSIP, it is still the most comprehensive data set available.

Where possible the data will also be broken down into different passenger groups in recognition that passengers are not ubiquitous and this data will inform future BSIP action plans.

Performance against these targets will be reported against and published on the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership Plan and scheme webpage (<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/parkingandtravel/publictransport/nationalbusstrategy>) every six months.

In addition to the required targets for journey time, reliability, passenger growth and customer satisfaction, is intended that the following metrics will also be monitored so that performance against the National Bus Strategy themes can be kept under review.

Theme	Measure	Aspiration	Achieved by
Make buses greener	Emissions – % of fleet being Euro 6 standard or better	100%	2030
Make buses greener	Emissions – % of fleet being zero emission vehicles	100%	2030
Better to ride in	Average fleet age	7.5 yrs.	2030
Better to ride in	Fleet providing Wi-Fi and free USB charging	100%	2030
Easier to use	Cashless payments	90%	2030
Faster and more reliable	Reduction in dwell times	50%	2030

4.0 Financial Implications

The Government has currently made £224,418 available to the Council, through the Bus Capacity Fund, to support the development of the Enhanced Partnership and associated Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Delivery of an Enhanced Partnership will require funding. The Enhanced Partnership must start by the 1st April 2022 and the Department for Transport have advised that funding is likely to be available in two tranches; with one tranche being allocated on a formulae basis to Local Transport Authorities and the second tranche, for larger schemes, being competitively awarded.

The Bus Service Improvement Plan is a bidding document. The proposals set out in the Plan must be ambitious. They must demonstrate delivery of the objectives of the National Bus Strategy and a vision for delivering a step-change in bus services through an Enhanced Partnership.

The Bus Service Improvement Plan must also be accompanied by a presentation of funding requirements, including alternative sources of funding available to support delivery of BSIPs such as operator or Local Transport Authority contributions. However, there are no financial commitments on the part of the Government, Council or public transport operators associated with the submission of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and the Department for Transport explicitly state that they 'do not expect BSIPs to provide detailed, definitive costings.' Furthermore, the National Bus Strategy: Bus Service Improvement Plans guidance produced by the Department for Transport states that 'BSIPs will enable the Government to understand the appetite for transformational investments which support the bus sector in the funding period and over the long term (i.e. beyond 2025).'

The indicative 'ask' from the Department for Transport for the delivery of the proposals within the draft Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan is circa £118M for the period 2022/23 – 2029/30.

The financial implications on existing Council budgets is still to be confirmed. However, the forecast match funding by the Council and third parties (such as developer contributions) is circa £28M, with contributions from the *Productive Plymouth* Transforming Cities Fund 22/23 programme, S106 developer contributions and the Councils core budgets for the provision of non-commercial bus services and the maintenance of bus stop infrastructure. It is not expected that there will be any calls on the Council's revenue budget over and above what is already in the base budget. The potential contribution from Plymouth's bus operators is currently being determined.

Failure to deliver an Enhanced Partnership has the potential for significant, adverse implications, on existing Council budgets if Government funding is unavailable for bus service development and support in the future.

5.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet:-

1. Notes the timescales for completion of the BSIP and the requirement to subsequently publish an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme.

Reason: *To reflect the requirements set out in the National Bus Strategy for England 'Bus Back Better' and to ensure funding is secured for the Plymouth bus network in the future.*

2. Endorses the ambitions of the BSIP and the aspiration to make Plymouth's buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper.

Reason: *To meet the requirements of the National Bus Strategy and to set out clear aspirations for the future Plymouth bus network.*

3. Endorses the thematic proposals of the BSIP as a comprehensive suite of measures which support the policies of the Plymouth Plan and the needs of Plymouth's current and future bus users.

Reason: *To meet the specific requirements of the 'National Bus Strategy: Delivering Bus Service Improvement Plans using and Enhanced Partnership' guidance.*

4. Endorses the emerging priorities of the BSIP

Reason: *To meet the specific requirements of the 'National Bus Strategy: Delivering Bus Service Improvement Plans using and Enhanced Partnership' guidance and guide the finalisation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.*

5. Delegates approval of the final BSIP to Cabinet Member for Transport

Reason: *To allow the finalisation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan by the 31st October, 2021, as required by the Department for Transport in order to ensure funding is secured for the Plymouth bus network in the future.*