Making Surrey a better place

Surrey Transport Plan:
# Passenger Transport Strategy:
Part 1 - Local Bus

July 2014

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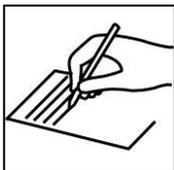
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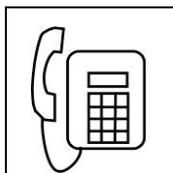
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Surrey Transport Plan, 2011-2026

Local Bus Strategy

July 2014

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Executive Summary

This is the Passenger Transport Local Bus Strategy, one of the components of the Surrey Transport Plan.

The local bus network is an integral part of the transport system in Surrey. Buses provide access to schools and colleges for young people, to shopping and leisure facilities at the evenings and weekends and are a vital lifeline for older people who wish to maintain their independence. Buses can also be a more cost effective and environmentally friendly alternative to the car. In Guildford the thriving Park and Ride network helps to relieve congestion on key corridors and removes traffic from the busy town centre.

Surrey County Council, as the local transport authority, has an important role in the delivery of local bus services. The county council subsidises socially necessary services where they cannot be provided commercially, which amounts to around a third of the bus services operating in Surrey. Surrey County Council is also responsible for the highways on which the buses run, the traffic signals, junctions and bus lanes that can expedite their movement, as well as bus stop infrastructure, information and passenger waiting facilities that can make a big difference to a passenger's travel experience.

The aim of the Local Bus Strategy is:

To deliver and maintain an effective, safe and sustainable bus network in Surrey.

The objectives are:

1. *To provide reliable and punctual bus services*
2. *To maintain a sustainable network of financially-supported bus services*
3. *To improve the accessibility of bus services for passengers*

Delivery of these objectives will be achieved through the following areas of work:
- Focussing on improvements to bus punctuality and journey time reliability through Bus Punctuality Partnerships
- Restructuring the supported bus service network to deliver better value for money and a better service for passengers
- Continued support for Park & Ride in Guildford
- Coordinating and supporting community transport and demand responsive transport provision in areas where it is more effective and sustainable than regular bus services
- Working with partners to ensure that passenger information and infrastructure is delivered in a cost effective manner

Partnership working with bus operators, the boroughs and districts, and with the wider Transport for Surrey Partnership will be essential to the delivery of this strategy. Maximising use of developer funding will also be a key factor in delivering the stated objectives, particularly in light of current financial constraints across the public sector.

Surrey County Council has published the Surrey Rail Strategy, which recognises bus and rail integration as a key theme.
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1 Introduction: this Local Bus Strategy and the Surrey Transport Plan

1.1 This Local Bus Strategy document

This is the Passenger Transport Strategy: Part 1 – Local Bus. The Passenger Transport Strategy is one of the components that make up the Surrey Transport Plan.

A public consultation on the draft strategy was held between September and November 2010. The results of this consultation have helped to inform the strategy.

A formal consultation report, to be produced in 2011, will give details of who was consulted, the consultation feedback received and how it was reflected in any changes to the final strategy.

1.2 The Surrey Transport Plan

Surrey's third local transport plan (LTP3) is to be called the Surrey Transport Plan. The new plan will commence from April 2011 and will look ahead to 2026.

The Surrey Transport Plan will replace the current LTP, namely the Surrey Local Transport Plan second edition: 2006/07 – 2010/11 (March 2006), known as LTP2.

Documents are available giving an introduction to the Surrey Transport Plan and its overarching vision and objectives and an explanation of key abbreviations and acronyms used in the Surrey Transport Plan.

2　Background and terms of reference

The Passenger Transport Strategy has been developed within the context of the overarching vision and objectives of the Surrey Transport Plan. With regard to this, the Local Bus Strategy will deliver against all four objectives, as outlined below.

Effective transport: To facilitate end-to-end journeys for residents, business and visitors by maintaining the road network, delivering public transport services and, where appropriate, providing enhancements.

- Stable, long-term bus network, including county council-funded supported services, providing confidence that the bus is a viable travel option

- Continuing innovation in marketing, ticket offers, new buses and driver training, delivered by commercial bus operators both independently and in partnership through Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs) (now called Voluntary Partnership Agreements)

- Continuing provision of Guildford Park and Ride services which offers an attractive means to access key services and facilities in the county town; currently almost one million passenger trips per annum

- Education transport, Demand Responsive Transport, Community Transport and coach services help different people to access passenger transport in ways which meet their needs

Reliable transport: To improve the journey time reliability of transport in Surrey.

- Recent research by Passenger Focus identified that improved reliability is bus passengers' top priority[1]

- Formalisation and expansion of measures to improve reliability, delivered through the creation of three area Bus Punctuality Partnerships covering the most congested areas of the county; building on the various quality bus partnerships in the county delivered during the LTP1 and LTP2 periods

- Continuation of Bus Voluntary Partnership Agreements (previously termed Quality Bus Partnerships) which deliver reliability improvements amongst other developments

- Maintenance of existing, and potential new provision of, bus lanes, bus gates and intelligent bus priority at traffic signals to help improve the reliability of bus services. Many buses are now fitted with Surrey's Real Time Passenger Information system, the on-bus components of which can be used to trigger suitably equipped traffic signals to allow late-running buses to have priority. External funding is likely to be required to deliver bus lanes and bus gates in the medium term future

- Buses will continue to provide an alternative to car travel; by providing this alternative, levels of congestion and unreliability for all users of the road network in Surrey are reduced

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[1] Bus Passenger Priorities for Improvement (Passenger Focus, March 2010). 'More buses are on time or within five minutes of when they are scheduled to arrive' was the top ranked priority for improvement identified for 'All passengers' and also for each of the segments surveyed: 'Metropolitan', 'Urban' and 'Rural' and also 'Non-concessionary' and 'Concessionary' passengers. It was also the top ranked priority in the South East.

Safe transport: To improve road safety and the security of the travelling public in Surrey.

- Increasing numbers of buses are being fitted with onboard CCTV cameras which can help dissuade crime and antisocial behaviour, and can help identify those who display such behaviours

- Improvements made to bus stops are always planned to enhance the personal safety of those waiting at them

Sustainable transport: To provide an integrated transport system that protects the environment, keeps people healthy and provides for lower carbon transport choices.

- Based on average loadings, buses are less polluting than cars. The Confederation of Passenger Transport says that according to the Department for Transport's Carbon Pathways Analysis, the CO_2 per car passenger kilometre is 130g CO_2, per bus/coach passenger kilometre it is 69g CO_2.[2]

- Bus operators have been introducing newer buses with cleaner engines to their routes in Surrey

- In sensitive areas, such as the Surrey Hills, buses provide sustainable access along traffic-sensitive roads

2.1   Links with other county and national policies

The 'Confident in our Future' Corporate Strategy 2013-18 sets out the county council's vision and objectives for the county over the next five years. It is a high-level document that tells our residents, Members, partners and staff about where we see the Council in five years time, what we want to have achieved by then and how we will get there. This strategy will play an important role in tackling climate change by offering a more fuel efficient single-vehicle alternative to multiple cars making the same journey, and by improvements to bus engine technologies. It also supports reduced spending through use of our new criteria for supporting local bus services.

On a national policy level, our work on buses is expected to contribute to several of the main goals set out in "Delivering a Sustainable Transport System" (published by DfT in November 2008). The first national transport goal is to "support economic growth" in part by "maximizing the value for money from transport spending". This strategy emphasizes the need to work in partnership, delivering gains which are more than the sum of isolated improvements, and also encompasses our revised criteria for spending on support for local bus services.

The second of the national transport goals is to "reduce carbon emissions" – as with the Corporate Strategy, buses will play their part in this by offering a more efficient single-vehicle alternative to multiple cars making the same journey, and by improvements to bus engine technologies. Schemes such as Park and Ride are specifically targeted at removing car trips from town centres, reducing local carbon emissions. The third national transport goal is "promote equality of opportunity" and the bus can play a key

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[2] http://www.greener-journeys.com/the-benefits/environment

role here by providing travel for people without access to a car, and to specific groups such as the elderly and disabled (through the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme which gives free bus travel) and our student fare cards (reducing the cost of travel for 16-19 year olds in continuing education).

2.2   Statutory duties

The Transport Act (1985) removed the previous system of licensing of local bus operators/services and the duties of local authorities to coordinate public transport in their areas. It replaced these with the system still in existence – bus operators with the freedom to register any service they see fit, with local authorities empowered to subsidise socially necessary bus services which the marketplace does not provide.

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) requires buses to be made accessible to people with impairments, including those in wheelchairs. All new buses introduced into service are already accessible. All single deck buses used on public bus services must comply with access requirements from 2015 and double deck buses by 2017.

The Local Transport Act (2008) introduced changes to the legislation surrounding Quality Bus Partnerships and Quality Contracts, and gave more powers to the Traffic Commissioner to recommend work that local authorities should carry out to improve bus performance. The Traffic Management Act (2004) means that Local Authorities have a responsibility to manage the highway network to promote efficient movement and reduce congestion, which was not the case during the second Local Transport Plan. These two Acts will feed into our work on Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnerships, and the county council's Traffic Manager will play a key role in tackling the identified problems.

Consequently, the provision of attractive and effective bus services is a high priority.

3 Problems and challenges

3.1 Background to the local bus network

In order to understand the problems and challenges which are involved in providing Surrey's bus network, this section first looks at the roles and responsibilities of the various bodies involved in the provision of bus services in Surrey.

Bus operators: There are around 30 bus operators in Surrey, ranging in size from small independently owned companies to subsidiaries of large international bus and train operating groups. These various companies operate some 65% of the bus services in Surrey commercially. The other 35% of services are run by the operators and subsidised by either Surrey County Council or Transport for London.

Surrey County Council: Key roles in relation to the bus network are:
- As the local highway authority, responsible for the roads on which buses run, apart from motorways and trunk roads which account for a small fraction of bus routes in Surrey and are operated by the Highways Agency. Surrey County is also responsible for traffic management on the local road network, and also the installation of bus lanes, bus priority measures, traffic signal priority for buses and the location of bus stops.
- As the local transport authority, responsible for the provision of socially necessary bus services where the commercial network cannot find a business case to do so, under the provisions of the 1985 Transport Act
- Ownership of the bus stop infrastructure, including poles, flags and timetable cases, except those belonging to Transport for London

Transport for London – London Buses: TfL London Buses is responsible for specifying the bus services to be operated across the whole of London. It operates its bus network differently from the way Surrey County Council does. London Buses puts out to tender each route, specifying fares, frequencies and times of operation. Because travel demand does not stop precisely at the London border, some of these London Buses services run into Surrey. TfL also installs bus stop poles and flags at stops served by its buses in Surrey, and these meet the same standards as our own new bus stops.

Surrey's eleven borough and district councils: Roles include:
- Responsible for bus shelter provision, primarily through their agreements with advertising shelter providers.
- May operate community transport/dial-a-ride services, and can also pay for conventional local bus services if they choose

Parish and town councils: Can fund and provide bus shelters, and can also pay for conventional local bus services if they choose.

3.2 Challenges

The county of Surrey provides a challenging environment in which to operate bus services:
- A generally high standard of living is reflected in high levels of car ownership and in the expectations of residents for the quality of services
- Congested roads and dispersed travel patterns present challenges for bus operation

- Expectations about the levels of fares and services on bus routes in Surrey could be raised by the lower fares and level of services provided in neighbouring Greater London, where a franchise system operates, especially where these bus services extend into Surrey. While bus services in London had an overall satisfaction rate of 80% in 2009[3], the figure for Surrey was 52%[4].

3.3 Opportunities

- Free off-peak travel concession for pensioners and people with disabilities helps build a 'bus habit' amongst these groups, sustaining the demand for travel by bus
- Future major housing developments proposed in areas of Surrey present an opportunity for the bus to play an effective role as an alternative to the private car
- Several high frequency bus routes which run into the county from London provide for significant numbers of journeys wholly within Surrey, usually at no or low cost to the county council
- Fares on London Buses services operating in Surrey are low in comparison with those on the rest of Surrey's bus network, and passengers using these routes have the option of using the quick and convenient Oyster smartcard as payment for bus fares
- Advances in technology are making information about bus travel easier to find (internet and bus real time passenger information), and making it easier to use buses (smartcards meeting the DfT's national standard for transport smartcards)
- The increasing cost of private motoring and greater public awareness of environmental issues give public transport an enhanced status and make it a more viable mode of travel for some.

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[3] Public Transport Statistics Bulletin GB: 2009 Edition; Department for Transport
[4] NHT (National Highways & Transport Network) Public Satisfaction Survey 2009

4 Aim, objectives, indicators and targets

4.1 Aim and objectives

The aim and objectives for the Local Bus Strategy are proposed as follows:

Aim: To deliver and maintain an effective, safe and sustainable bus network in Surrey.

Objectives:
1. To provide reliable and punctual bus services
2. To maintain a sustainable network of financially-supported bus services
3. To improve the accessibility of bus services for passengers

4.2 Indicators and targets

The county council monitors bus punctuality and reliability on an annual basis, through manual surveys at key timing points on the bus network, through bus operator data, and increasingly through use of Surrey's real time passenger information system for buses. This meets the requirement of National Indicator 178 "Bus Services Running on Time". The county council also collects data on the patronage of buses in Surrey.

Large parts of the bus network in terms of both design and operation are not under the control of the county council. Targets may therefore be missed or substantially exceeded because of external factors. There is currently some degree of uncertainty within the bus industry over several sources of revenue which have previously helped support the local bus network. This is for several reasons. Public sector funding for supporting bus services is likely to be lower than over the last five to ten years. The method for calculating the reimbursement bus operators receive for carrying concessionary free travel passenger is changing in the 2011/12 financial year and it is not yet clear what the impact of this will be. The fuel duty rebate bus operators currently qualify for (Bus Service Operator Grant) is also being reduced by 20% over three years from 2012/13. Setting realistic targets is therefore difficult, and they will be reviewed during the lifetime of this strategy (probably in 2016 in the first instance). At the moment, however, we believe it is realistic to propose that:

Target 1. We aim to maintain bus patronage at current levels or above, based on the current bus network coverage.

Improved bus service reliability is a key driver for this strategy. Until the various Bus Punctuality Partnerships detailed in this document start work, the baseline reliability figures for these areas will not be known, and nor will it be clear what a challenging, but realistic, target and trajectory should be. The Department for Transport has set a general target of 90% punctuality for local bus services by 2014. We therefore propose the following:

Target 2. We aim to meet the DfT's target of 90% punctuality for local bus services by 2014. Services which currently have punctuality of less that 90% will follow a course of continuous improvement (and not drop any lower than their current levels) until reaching the target in 2014. In areas with Bus Punctuality Partnerships, bespoke targets for improvement will be set.

In addition to these two targets, it is a general goal to achieve a financially sustainable supported bus network by the end of the Bus Review (currently planned for 2012).

Indicator name	Topic Strategy promoter	Description	Target & Baseline	Rationale
PT2 – Bus patronage	Local Bus	NI 177 Annual bus patronage on all conventional bus services in Surrey	Maintain bus patronage at 2009/20110 level of 29.88 million passenger journeys	Specific – clear target set Measurable – information is collected by bus operators Achievable – through a stabilised supported bus network achieved by Bus Review, and commercial initiatives Relevant – aligns with STP objectives to ensure effective, reliable and sustainable travel in Surrey Time-based – Measured annually
PT3 – Bus punctuality	Local Bus	NI 178 Bus services running on time – frequent and non-frequent services	Work with partners to improve punctuality of non-frequent services to 90% by 2014/15 in line with DfT guidance and maintain Excess Waiting Time for frequent services at current level of 1.42 mins, based on rolling three-year average	Specific – clear target set Measurable – on-street surveys and interrogation of RTPI systems carried out by County Council, can be backed up by operator information where available Achievable – through timetable changes and works identified through Bus Punctuality Partnerships Relevant – aligns with STP objectives to ensure effective, reliable and sustainable travel in Surrey Time-based – Punctuality surveys carried out annually

5   Options

Bus services in Surrey, and improvements/enhancements to them, are presently delivered through a variety of measures and interventions.

There are also other options that could be used, or used more often or widely, that we have considered.

The full range of options is set out below, broken down by the proposed objective to which they most closely relate.

5.1   Options to provide effective local bus services

5.1.1 Commercial bus services

Bus operators run many commercial bus services at their own financial risk. Timetables and fares are set by the bus operators and although the county council has no direct influence on the operation of these services, we work with operators in partnerships to deliver improvements to these services. Bus operators can also take commercial decisions to run marketing campaigns, invest in new buses and provide enhanced driver training.

5.1.2 Non-commercial bus services

Surrey County Council funds additional bus services in Surrey to meet the need for bus travel in areas where bus operators cannot run such services at a profit. (Transport for London also funds some bus services which operate in Surrey, having originated in the London area.) The situation is kept under continual review, because the commercial bus network itself is constantly changing.

5.1.3 Education transport

There is a duty placed on local authorities to provide free home-to-school transport for those "entitled scholars" living beyond the statutory distances from school. By integrating planning and scholar allocation processes in conjunction with local bus service planning, the county council is able to place such students on transport in the most cost-effective way. Wherever practicable and appropriate, a Pass is issued to allow travel on a scheduled public bus service. There are also a number of 'school special' local bus services at school times, primarily to facilitate travel where the bus network, timing or capacity was lacking. Some are being withdrawn from September 2011 as a result of the ongoing Bus Review and limited budgets, but all entitled scholars will continue to receive free travel.

For those students aged 16-19 attending school or college, and who are not entitled to free transport, the county council provides a Bus Student Farecard scheme, which allows them to travel on public bus services at child rather than adult rates, not only on the journey from/to home, but also on virtually all other services in the county at any time of day or day of the week.

5.1.4 Demand Responsive Transport

One way in which we aim to meet the diverse travel needs of Surrey's residents is through Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services, where these are seen as the most appropriate. Surrey's BUSES4U services in Mole Valley, Reigate, Tandridge and north Waverley (Farnham) are run to no fixed schedule and their routes are determined by the requests made by passengers. Policies on DRT will be further developed in an upcoming Community Transport/Demand Responsive Transport Strategy, to follow in 2011/12.

5.1.5 Community Transport

Developing transport schemes that meet the mobility needs of Surrey's vulnerable, disabled and/or geographically isolated residents is extremely important to the county council. In partnership with our neighbouring borough and district councils, the county council has helped develop dial-a-ride services and other community transport services in every area of the county. Support and technical advice is given annually to all dial-a-ride services, community bus groups and voluntary car schemes. Community Transport exists to meet the special travel needs of people who cannot travel on conventional public transport. It complements, rather than competes, with mainstream public transport. The county council is exploring the concept of a Social Enterprise Model for the Community Transport sector, which would allow individual operators to join together to bid for larger transport contract work. Policies on Community Transport will be further developed in an upcoming Community Transport/Demand Responsive Transport Strategy in 2011/12.

5.1.6 Services provided through agreements with developers

In some cases, buses can be funded through agreements with developers, where a developer provides funding to mitigate against the traffic impact of a new development. There are several mechanisms for taking such agreements forward, including section 106 agreements, which are probably the best known. Several bus services in Surrey have been provided through agreements with developers. Larger developments are the most likely to result in section 106 funding for bespoke site-specific public bus services. Our experience has also shown us that unless bespoke bus routes are actively marketed during their operation, they may not attract sufficient passenger numbers to make them commercially sustainable when the Section 106 funding runs out (usually after five years) so intensive marketing efforts and active involvement of the bus operator are necessary, and this is something the county council is well placed to take forward, through measures such as Voluntary Partnership Agreements. Some developments may be able to support modifications/diversion to an existing bus route which can achieve significant levels of bus access for the development site at a lower cost than a site specific bus service, and the county council is keen to assist developers in understanding the best public transport solution for their site.

5.1.7 Coach services

Coach services are an important part of the longer-distance public transport scene, and like buses use roads maintained by the county council. However, unlike buses, there is no statutory requirement upon the county council to support socially necessary coach services.

A number of coach services call at locations in Surrey. We recognise that at present most of these have a limited impact on the Surrey public transport scene. However the 701 Woking RailAir service from Woking to Heathrow Airport is a key strategic link which

shows how coach services can play their part in enhancing the local transport network. Around two-thirds of its passengers are interchanging to or from the local rail network, encouraging sustainable access to the airport. In the evenings, the 701 also provides a very useful link between Woking station (convenient for the town centre) and St Peter's Hospital.

5.1.8 Quality Contract Schemes
Quality Contract Schemes allow a local authority to replace the existing deregulated bus market in an area with a system of contracts, as in London. In order for this to take place, such a move must meet five 'public interest' criteria. A scheme proposal must also be considered by an independent board.

5.1.9 Qualifying Agreements
Qualifying Agreements apply to bus operators only, and cover arrangements which are to the benefit of the passenger (for example, two bus operators agreeing to coordinate timetables on a shared section of route) but which might otherwise fall foul of competition legislation. To confirm such an agreement requires the certification of the relevant local authority (in the case of agreements in Surrey, this would be Surrey County Council).

5.2 Options to improve the reliability of local bus services

5.2.1 Bus Punctuality Partnerships
Bus Punctuality Partnerships (BPPs) are formal agreements between a local authority and bus operators in its area to work together (including data sharing arrangements) to tackle the causes of bus unreliability. Such arrangements need to be notified to the relevant Traffic Commissioner, and template agreements for BPPs are published by the Department for Transport.

Improving bus punctuality will be key to improving the County Council's performance in National Indicator 178 "Bus Services Running on Time".

5.2.2 Quality Partnership Schemes
Quality Partnership Scheme is the new name for Statutory Quality Bus Partnership (QBP). Such schemes allow a local authority to specify the facilities that it will provide through a partnership, while operators of bus services wishing to use the facilities must undertake to provide services to a certain quality standard. The Traffic Commissioners can take action against bus companies that use the improved facilities without meeting the agreed standards. As part of the Quality Partnership Scheme, the local authority and the bus operators can agree service frequencies, timetables (ensuring evenly-spaced services on routes with more than one operator) and maximum fare levels.

5.2.3 Voluntary Partnership Agreements
A Voluntary Partnership Agreement is the new name for what used to be called a Quality Bus Partnership (QBP), introduced by the Local Transport Act 2008. They are voluntary agreements to which bus operators, the local transport authority (Surrey County Council in Surrey) and third parties (such as borough or district councils, or businesses) sign up, to deliver benefits to bus passengers. They generally (but not exclusively) involve commercially operated bus services over which the county council would otherwise have very little influence. They represent the main way in which the county council can deliver improvements on the commercial bus network. Typically, the local authorities undertake

to provide improved bus facilities (such as bus stop improvements or bus priority measures) and the operators undertake to provide bus services to an improved standard, through measures such as new buses and improved staff training. Measures to improve punctuality and reliability of bus services are also key outputs.

We have implemented a range of successful QBPs, comprising corridor schemes concentrating on a principal travel routes and area-based schemes incorporating many routes and several operators. We have demonstrated effective working with other local authorities as part of the Magna Carta QBP and the Blackwater Valley Area QBP, which both cover routes which cross the Surrey border into other local transport authority areas.

5.2.4 Park and Ride schemes

Park and Ride schemes, though not themselves conventional local bus schemes, show how buses can play an essential part in tackling congestion in town centres. By replacing multiple car journeys with a single bus and by improving access to a town centre, Park and Ride schemes can also improve the environment and boost the local economy. So far, Guildford has been the only Surrey town where we have implemented a Park and Ride network, helping to protect its historic town centre environment and narrow streets from untrammelled growth in car traffic.

Following the introduction of the Merrow park and ride site, there are now three sites serving Guildford, and the service carries nearly a million passenger journeys a year.

Until now, the Park and Ride service has been supported by Guildford's on-street parking charges, as part of the overall package of parking measures in the town. Reflecting the overall picture of public sector finances, we will emulate financial good practice which can be found at other leading Park and Ride schemes in the country, and ensure that in the medium term, Guildford Park and Ride becomes cost-neutral, while still maintaining punctuality and reliability of services.

5.2.5 Bus lanes

Bus lanes can significantly assist buses to operate more punctually and reliably by ensuring that buses can by–pass traffic congestion, and they can also allow bus journey times to be reduced.

5.2.6 Intelligent bus priority/selective vehicle detection

This uses Surrey's bus real time passenger information system to track buses as they approach traffic lights. Where buses are running late, traffic lights are changed in favour of the bus, assisting in ensuring punctual and reliable bus services. We aim to introduce such measures at locations which will benefit services by reducing journey times and increasing the reliability of services.

5.2.7 Bus gates

We seek to implement bus-only gates as part of new or existing developments to enable buses to more effectively access developments which otherwise seek to restrict general traffic. This will improve the accessibility of major developments while preserving the local streetscape and environment.

5.2.8 Traffic management measures

Complementary traffic measures, such as traffic calming and yellow lines, can help bus routes operate more punctually and reliably. However, insensitively designed traffic calming can make bus access more difficult. We will follow best practice and work with colleagues to deliver effective traffic management solutions. This will also be a key theme of our Bus Punctuality Partnerships.

5.3   Options to improve the accessibility of local bus services

5.3.1 Bus passenger infrastructure measures

Surrey County Council owns the roadside bus stop infrastructure (bus stop poles, flags and timetable cases). Over the last ten years we have delivered a major programme of new and improved bus stops in Surrey, and have now replaced around half of the bus stops in Surrey with modern equipment. We also undertake an ongoing process of assessment of the need for bus stops. This encompasses any need for new stops, requirements for relocation of existing stops, and sometimes the continued requirement for bus stops which have become very lightly used due to demographic or land use changes. Guidance from the DfT on best practice for inclusive mobility suggests that no household on a bus route should be more than 400m from a bus stop, and changes in the location of houses may mean from time to time that new bus stops need to be added, or locations changed.

Improvements to local bus infrastructure are frequently mandated to make new developments more accessible by non-car modes and therefore mitigate their traffic impact, with developers providing funding. The county council will continue to advise on relevant improvements to bus infrastructure as new development proposals come forward, as well as delivering previously agreed developer-funded schemes. It is estimated that up to approximately £1m of developer funding may be available for bus infrastructure, service improvements and travel incentives at present, and the county council is delivering these as fast as resources allow. Section 7.4 gives more detail of delivery of these schemes.

5.3.2 Improving bus shelters

The county council recognises that a high quality passenger waiting environment is fundamental in improving and promoting passenger transport, and bus shelters are an integral part of this. Indeed, the provision of a good, clean, well-lit shelter with good levels of information can be the key factor in the decision-making process for people deciding which mode of transport to use.

Traditionally the responsibility of providing bus shelters in Surrey lies with the boroughs/districts and some parish councils. The majority of shelters are sourced through agreements with commercial bus shelter advertising companies. Over the course of LTP2, the county council has taken an increasing interest in either providing grants to borough or parish councils to contribute to their efforts to buy bus shelters, or in directly purchasing shelters for key locations where no one else is willing to fund a bus shelter. To facilitate this, the county council has set up a framework contract with a number of suppliers for the provision and maintenance of bus shelters.

5.3.3 Improving accessibility at bus stops

Raised kerbs at bus stops make buses easier to access for vulnerable sections of society who would otherwise be excluded, improve accessibility and social inclusion. We

have usually concentrated such improvements on QBP routes, especially those on which low-floor accessible buses are deployed, allowing the whole service to be advertised as easily accessible for passengers with mobility difficulties, or with bulky shopping, or with buggies etc. Guidance from the DfT on best practice for inclusive mobility suggests that kerbs should be 160mm high, though site-specific considerations mean that kerbing cannot always be this height.

We are fully aware of our responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act. While operators are responsible for replacing their vehicles with DDA compliant ones by the statutory deadlines, our work is concentrated at bus stops. Whenever a bus stop is installed or relocated, we try to ensure (subject to affordability constraints) that hard standing is provided, that crossovers with dropped kerbs are constructed to allow access to the other side of the road (provided that doing so would not introduce a new safety risk). We are also taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the layout of shelters, bus stop poles and queuing areas are arranged to meet guidance from the DfT on best practice for inclusive mobility. However, with responsibility for 5,500 bus stops throughout the county we have to be mindful of the fiscal realities in achieving DDA compliance. We also seek to influence borough and district councils over shelter locations to ensure that they align properly with bus entry/exit doors. In addition, we also recognise that a holistic approach needs to be taken to the provision of DDA compliant infrastructure. Raised kerbs allowing level access to buses are of no help unless dropped kerbs are available nearby to allow travellers with mobility difficulties to get to the bus stop in the first place.

5.3.4 Passenger transport information
The county council's [Passenger Transport Information Strategy](#) covers in more detail the whole of our work in providing passenger transport information over all modes, and through all media. The purpose of the strategy is to define the minimum standard of information provision required of all operators in Surrey, and work on information through QBPs and other similar initiatives. Provisions within the strategy to enforce these standards will be used to deliver consistent quality.

In addition to traditional methods of communicating bus information, over the last five years we have also become more heavily involved in methods of electronic information distribution. Timetables for all bus routes in Surrey are now downloadable from the Surrey County Council website, and real time information is also available through another part of the website. We have introduced real time information through mobile phone text messaging facilities and continue to investigate future delivery channels such as smartphone applications.

5.3.5 Influencing commercial fare levels
Fares levels on commercial services are not a matter on which the county council is allowed to dictate policy, although we will assist operators through endorsing Qualifying Agreements where appropriate (see section 7.2). Commercial operators are free to set fares on their own services without specific regard to the impact on local authority objectives, but we enjoy excellent working relationships with Surrey's bus operators, and believe that we can offer advice/influence on fares which will deliver mutual benefits both for the bus operators' commercial objectives and our own objectives.

5.3.6 Fares on tendered services

When tendering a service we may set only a maximum fare or we may choose to develop a complete faretable as part of the tender agreement. We take into account the fares charged on any nearby commercial services when setting fares. Where routes are shared, fares on supported services will not undercut those charged on the commercial services.

5.3.7 Ticketing schemes
Surrey County Council administers the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (which gives free bus travel throughout England) for senior citizens and people with disabilities on behalf of the 11 Surrey districts and borough councils, and from April 2011 has full responsibility for the scheme.

Surrey County Council also provides both train and bus student fare card schemes, giving savings on public transport ticket prices. The scheme is administered by Passenger Transport Group and resourced by the Children and Young People directorate. Both student fare card schemes have an integral role within Surrey County Council's policy on post-16 transport provision

5.3.8 Intermodal integrated ticketing
Over the last five years integrated Rail-Bus tickets have been introduced in many locations in Surrey including Woking, Guildford, Redhill and Horley, sometimes with the involvement of the county council and sometimes as commercial initiatives between operators Most of the intermodal tickets available in Surrey are of the "PlusBus" standard. We intend to remain open to any opportunities that present themselves, particularly when there is a commercial imperative from the operators, to implement new integrated ticketing schemes.

5.3.9 Smartcard ticketing
Developments in smartcard technology are a way of making public transport more accessible and attractive to customers, recognised as such in the new Transport White Paper[5]. Both South West Trains and Southern, the county's two major train operators, expect to introduce an ITSO-standard smartcard ticketing system within the next few years. ITSO is the DfT-mandated national standard that ensures that transport smartcard tickets issued by any operator can be used on the services of any other operator provided that an appropriate travel ticket has been loaded onto it. If current DfT-led work progresses as planned, ITSO and London's Prestige-standard Oyster smartcard will soon be able to 'talk' to each other. The proof-of-eligibility passes for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme are also issued as ITSO-standard smartcards. Taken together, these three schemes will comprise a substantial mass of smartcard ticket holders in Surrey. Several bus operators in Surrey have started the process of fitting their buses with smartcard readers. To give two examples, Stagecoach's bus fleet is now fitted with smartcard readers, while Metrobus will be accepting a multi-modal rail-bus smartcard ticket in the Horley/Crawley area by 2012.

As a single smartcard, no matter whom it is issued by, can hold a variety of different tickets, there is a significant potential to use smartcards to make it easier to make journeys comprising more than one bus operator, or a train-bus combination. Pre-loaded credit could be deducted from a passenger's smartcard, and with suitable back-office systems, deductions could be capped at the price of any area- or operator-based travelcard.

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[5] *Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon,* Department for Transport (January 2011)

As well as making journeys easier for potential passengers, smartcards can also assist in helping buses operate more punctually, because the time spent in cash handling is reduced, and there are fewer risks of delay when passengers board without the correct change for their bus ticket.

5.3.10 Improved integration with other transport modes

The bus network is part of the overall passenger transport network in Surrey, and this is also supported by the Surrey Rail Strategy, which recognises bus and rail integration as a key theme. We are always keen to promote multi-modal passenger transport journeys where possible and practical, and to promote sustainable access to passenger transport facilities. Our programme of bus and bus/rail interchange improvements supports this, as does our aspiration for flexible, multi-mode smartcard ticketing options. This will be more attractive to passenger and can also help address rail capacity issues across the network.

Surrey County Council has published the Surrey Rail Strategy, which recognises bus and rail integration as a key theme. It also recognises smartcard technology as an option to address capacity issues network-wide.

The development of smartcards will eventually help passengers make multi-modal journeys (or single mode, multi-bus operator journeys) by removing the need to buy separate tickets. Timetable integration between buses and trains where bus stops and railway stations are close together is a worthy goal. However in a county with a dense rail network and bus services which often pass more than one railway station, it is difficult to ensure that buses can always meet trains at every railway station.

6   Appraisal of options

These potential solutions have been assessed using a simple appraisal framework considering the interventions against the following criteria:

- policy compatibility, by assessing the contribution interventions will make to meeting policy objectives, including impacts in relation to climate change and air quality;
- cost of implementation and requirement for future maintenance/operation, and potential funding opportunities;
- deliverability and risk, considering the likelihood of being able to implement interventions successfully.

This analysis has helped to inform the preferred strategy.

7 Preferred strategy

The main areas the strategy will focus on are:

- Low-cost measures to improve bus service punctuality/reliability
- Encouraging commercial bus services, and commercially driven initiatives from bus operators;
- Providing supported services using prioritisation methodology;
- Continuation and development of partnership arrangements between the county council and bus operators
- Continued support for Guildford Park and Ride
- Support for the development and provision of Demand Responsive Transport, Community Transport and coach services
- Continuation and development of passenger transport information provision
- Continuation of physical works to improve bus stops and enhance integration with other modes

7.1 Low-cost measures to improve bus service punctuality and reliability

Because improved reliability is the number one priority for bus passengers, this is the objective on which we intend to focus the most improvement work, as it offers the chance to get the most reward for the level of resource required. The terms 'reliability' and 'punctuality' are used differently by transport operators and passengers. What most passengers would refer to as 'reliability' (whether the bus is on time or not) is what transport operators would term 'punctuality', while transport operators use the term 'reliability' to indicate whether the service operated at all.

During the lifetime of this strategy, we intend to develop three Bus Punctuality Partnership (BPP) working groups covering (1) Guildford and Woking, (2) the Blackwater Valley, and (3) Redhill and Reigate. The Guildford and Woking BPP working group held its inception meeting in May 2010. The Transport for Surrey Passenger Transport Working Group will oversee the work of these three groups to ensure a countywide consistency of approach. If necessary, the Transport for Surrey Passenger Transport Working Group will be able to take issues arising from the BPPs to the Transport for Surrey Partnership Board itself to enable key partners to be involved in delivering solutions to problems identified through the BPP.

We plan that our BPPs will identify the full range of issues that need to be tackled in order to improve the punctuality/reliability of bus services. However, with limited budgets for capital improvements likely to be available, there will be a close focus on low-cost measures that have a measurable difference. We are already beginning to identify changes to parking restrictions and enforcement, and re-phasing of traffic signals, as two such opportunities.

7.2 Encouraging commercial bus services and commercially driven initiatives from bus operators

The county council will seek any opportunity to encourage bus operators to provide bus services in Surrey commercially. This will apply both when one operator decides that it is no longer prepared to operate a service commercially and we want to see the service continued (or reinstated if the bus operator has actually ceased operations), and also when a new need has arisen. If no bus operator is prepared to provide a service commercially, we will test the service against our priorities (see section 7.3) and

available budget before making a decision on whether we will financially support its provision.

We will give our support to Qualifying Agreements where these deliver improvements for Surrey's current or potential bus users.

We are particularly keen to explore with bus operators opportunities to extend ITSO-standard smartcard acceptance onto local buses. We would expect bus companies to install this equipment themselves on a commercial basis, following the example of several operators in Surrey who have already embarked on this process. However, we will look at how we can potentially exploit our responsibility for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme, which is based on smartcards, to build up the transport smartcard offer. We will also take forward discussions with train operators, when appropriate, to introduce rail-bus tickets onto smartcards.

We do not currently propose to take forward any Quality Partnership Schemes (as these have a statutory basis which we have not found necessary to date in our work in partnership with bus operators) or Quality Contract Schemes. Rather, we will focus on Voluntary Partnership Agreements to take forward a partnership approach to improving commercial bus services (see section 7.4)

7.3   Providing supported bus services where prioritised

We have a limited revenue budget for supporting bus services. We have therefore developed a prioritisation methodology for the supported bus network, which has underpinned recent work on the county council's Bus Review and will continue to be used in future years to identify bus services which need the financial support of the county council.

The prioritisation methodology is based on the following principles:
- Focus on the areas with strongest demand
- Have routes that complement one another
- Have a network which is simple and easy to understand
- Have a reduced need for subsidy in the long term
- See an increase in some services where this is identified as necessary
- Serve areas of greatest social need
- Should have improved reliability
- Avoid having services which are under-used and,
- Where possible, have evenly spaced services where common sections of routes are served

We consider that these principles will ensure that the supported local bus network best meets the transport requirements of Surrey's residents, businesses and visitors given the financial resources available.

Where development-related Section 106 funding is planned to support a bus route serving the development, we will seek to ensure that there is a realistic and achievable plan in place to attract sufficient usage to ensure that the routes can be operated commercially by the time Section 106 funding ceases, or that the route will form an important route within a coordinated bus network, to support its ongoing viability.

7.4 Continuation and development of partnership arrangements between the county council and bus operators

The successful delivery of QBPs in Surrey over the last ten years leads us to propose that Voluntary Partnership Agreements (rather than statutory schemes) will be the preferred mechanism for the delivery, where funding allows, of bus service improvements on a holistic, route-long basis. We intend that the key improvements to be delivered through (Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) should be:

- Real Time Passenger Information. This gives confidence to passengers about exactly when their bus will arrive, using displays at key bus stops. The introduction of RTPI also allows on-bus displays giving information about the next bus stop being approached, helping passengers unfamiliar with the route. Given the funding required to introduce and then operate RTPI, the system gives the best return when introduced along with other quality upgrades, best delivered through Voluntary Partnership Agreements.
- Improved passenger waiting infrastructure on the roadside, including bus shelters
- Bus priority measures, such as bus lanes, bus gates and intelligent bus priority at traffic lights. We will ensure that any physical measures assist with the operation of reliable bus services in the vicinity, and that solutions are consistent with the scale of the general traffic pressure on the road. We will monitor and review the effectiveness of existing bus lanes in Surrey, and work with bus operators to identify any changes which might become necessary, as well as to identify future needs.
- Improved information, delivered through the most appropriate and cost-effective media.
- Improved driver training to deliver more fuel-efficient driving techniques, further improved customer care, and enhanced awareness of the needs of passengers with impairments, including those who have "invisible disabilities".
- Measures to improve punctuality and reliability of bus services – these will be developed in a bespoke fashion depending on local operating characteristics and constraints.

VPAs can include many different partners, and the county council will look to work with other local authorities (county, unitary and borough/district councils as appropriate), Transport for London, businesses and major travel generators such as Heathrow and Gatwick Airports, as appropriate. The airport operators, for instance, are key partners in existing QBPs such as the Runnymede QBP (routes to Heathrow via Staines/Egham) and the Fastway network centred on Gatwick Airport.

We will work with borough and district council colleagues to ensure the delivery of commitments made by developers to fund improved bus infrastructure and bus services. We will also give advice to borough and district colleagues on future developments to ensure appropriate bus improvements support such developments. Wherever possible we aim to link together various development-related bus improvements along particular bus routes. By utilising existing QBPs/VPAs or creating new ones, investment managed by the county council from developer funding can then be used as a contribution towards the Partnership, with bus operators bringing additional investment in the form of new vehicles, enhanced service frequency, extended hours of operation, enhanced staff training and/or publicity campaigns. The county council will actively oversee the various developer-funded bus commitments and link these up into infrastructure schedules covering particular routes, allowing 'step changes' to be delivered for the benefit of passengers – both existing and potential.

7.5 Continued support for Park and Ride

We intend to ensure the continuing success of the current Guildford Park and Ride network, reviewing car park capacity, bus service frequencies, fares and other quality measures from time to time, as appropriate.

In order to protect sites of international and European importance for nature conservation from harm or loss, areas of land covered by the following designations will not be considered as potential locations for the future development of Park and Ride facilities within Surrey:

- Ramsar Sites designated under the 1971 Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat.
- Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated under the European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC & 2009/147/EC)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated under the European Union Directive on the Conservation of Habitats & Wild Fauna & Flora (92/43/EEC).

As set out in section 5.2.4, moving Guildford Park and Ride to a situation in which it becomes cost neutral will take place in the medium term.

7.6 Support the development and provision of Demand Responsive Transport, Community Transport and coach services

Where conventional bus travel is not the answer to the need for passenger transport provision in some areas, DRT, Community Transport, or indeed taxi provision, might provide an answer. More details on this subject can be found in the Community Transport and Taxi Strategies which will be produced by the county council in the near future. In terms of coach services, we will (where possible) encourage coach operators to provide services which are complementary to Surrey's public transport network, and which meet the present and future needs of passengers.

7.7 Development of a strategy for delivery of passenger transport information

Good quality, relevant, and easy-to-use information about passenger transport alternatives to car travel is essential for people to make fully informed choices about their travel behaviour. There are many different opportunities for passengers to be presented with information about bus travel, with different requirements depending on what stage of the journey a passenger is at (pre-planning, itinerary-checking, on-the-move updates).

More details on this subject can be found in the Passenger Transport Information Strategy, published separately.

7.8 Works to improve infrastructure and enhance integration with other modes

We intend that proposals for new bus passenger waiting infrastructure should take into account increased understanding of personal security issues, and we may remove old bus stops which are in unsafe locations and where improvements to personal safety and security are otherwise impossible. To deliver best value for taxpayers, we may consider allowing bus operators to improve roadside infrastructure and/or information, or upgrade existing outdated roadside equipment. As bus stops are traffic signs, ultimate responsibility for them rests with the county council, so any new infrastructure installed by third parties would need to be approved by the county council in terms of location and design, to meet our standards.

We will continue to make all reasonable efforts to implement the provisions of the DDA as they apply to our work. Bus stop layouts should take account of accessibility when they are changed, and raised kerbs implemented when possible. Guidance from the DfT on best practice for inclusive mobility suggests that all bus stops should have a 24-hour clearway marking and the ban on parking should be enforced, and we will investigate this.

In line with corporate moves to work more closely with borough/district councils in areas of mutual interest to achieve best value, it is considered that a countywide approach to the supply and installation of bus shelters could offer strategic advantages and better integration with the passenger transport planning functions undertaken by the county council. A closer and more integrated approach to bus stop facilities between the county council and borough/district councils would offer opportunities to maximise the quality of waiting facilities for bus passengers. Such an approach will be investigated during the course of this Strategy.

The delivery of end-to-end journeys is a key feature of the government's new White Paper[6] on Transport and physical integration of buses and trains is something we remain keen to explore too. We will continue to explore low-cost ways of making bus stops more visible to rail travellers through better information and signage about local bus services, and vice versa, involving train and bus operators in delivering improvements whenever possible. In the medium to longer term we aspire to more significant projects such as the award-winning Horley station bus/rail interchange (delivered using LTP funding three years ago). Town centre developments offer particular opportunities for taking forward such improvements where these are in close proximity to a railway station.

Having been very successful in increasing the amount of cycle access to railway stations, we would also like to take forward ideas for installing good quality cycle facilities at key bus stops to increase the catchment area for bus services.

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[6] *Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon,* Department for Transport (January 2011), p. 51.

7.9 Strategy Toolkit

Measures and interventions related to the **Local Bus** Strategy	Contribution to Objectives				Strategy which is the main promoter of the measure
	Eff	Rel	Saf	Sus	
Infrastructure Measures					
Low-cost measures to improve bus service punctuality/reliability	✔	✔		✔	Local Bus
Park and Ride	✔	✔			Local Bus
Bus stop infrastructure	✔	✔		✔	Local Bus
Transport interchange infrastructure	✔	✔		✔	Local Bus
Management of Infrastructure					
Providing supported bus services using prioritisation methodology	✔			✔	Local Bus
Encouraging commercial bus services, and commercially driven initiatives from bus operators	✔	✔		✔	Local Bus
Continuation and development of partnership arrangements between the county council and bus operators	✔	✔	✔	✔	Local Bus
Support for the development of coach services	✔			✔	Local Bus
Demand Responsive Transport	✔	✔	✔		Local Bus
Community Transport	✔		✔	✔	Local Bus
Smart card ticketing	✔			✔	Local Bus
Information Provision					
Continued support for passenger transport information produced by train/bus/coach operators	✔	✔		✔	PT Information
Continuation and development of passenger transport information on Surrey County Council's website	✔	✔		✔	PT Information
Continuation and development of electronic real time passenger information	✔	✔		✔	PT Information

8   Delivery of the preferred strategy

Delivery of the strategy will be led by Surrey County Council's Travel and Transport Group, which sits within the Environment and Infrastructure Directorate.

The Surrey Transport Plan does not currently contain a funded implementation programme of bus measures, so it is intended that the Local Bus Strategy's capital elements read as an aspirational programme at this stage. As the extent of available financial resources becomes clearer, a programme will be developed including those bus measures that the county council intends to prioritise.

Infrastructure schedules to be developed by the county council will allow packages of development-related bus improvements to be linked together to form the local authority contribution towards new or existing Voluntary Partnership Agreements to lever in additional external funding from bus operators. Although the situation changes frequently, it is estimated that there is at least £1m of developer funding earmarked for bus services or bus infrastructure improvements currently available to invest.

Good partnership working will be essential to identify external funding opportunities, hence the emphasis of the Local Bus Strategy on Bus Punctuality Partnerships and Voluntary Partnership Agreements.

In terms of revenue funding, we will continue to financially support local bus services, in line with our statutory responsibilities. However the quantum of that support will be lower, and will be spent in line with the priorities we have established for local bus support (see section 7.3). We will also seek new and innovative funding opportunities for bus services, working with large businesses, or major trip generators like airports, to see if it is possible to construct new bus services which could generate mutual benefits without significant cost to the county council.