



# 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan

Developing local bus services in

# Luton



published June 2024

## Executive Summary

Luton's refreshed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) aims to achieve continuous improvement and growth in the use of our bus network within the conurbation. It will enable us to deliver our vision to make Luton a bus friendly place and improve quality of life by providing a more sustainable network of bus services that are safe, frequent, reliable, and easy to use. Through our 'Better Buses Luton' platform, our 2024 BSIP directly responds to the requirements of the Government's National Bus Strategy and builds upon the excellent progress that has already been made to improve bus services through the first round of BSIP. If funds through the 2024 BSIP are approved, it will enable the Council to work with bus operators to deliver further improvements:

- Continue the delivery of evening and Sunday services
- Continue to support bus operators in developing their networks with improved frequencies
- Continue offering a discounted multi operator ticket both for adults and children
- Introduce fare capping to make sure daily and weekly travel is more affordable
- Ongoing improvements to the waiting environment with more bus shelters
- Provide more real time information at bus stops with voice announcements
- Support operators in the delivery of audio visual announcements on all buses
- Expand the red route network and more traffic signal priorities to help operators deliver a reliable and punctual bus service
- Improve junctions to ease traffic flow and improve bus punctuality and reliability
- Expand the Park and Ride facility by doubling car parking capacity and provide Airport parking services to ensure the Park and Ride service is viable and sustainable in the long term
- Work with bus operators through Zebra and other funding streams to deliver a zero emission fleet in the long term

Luton's initial funding of £19.1m is being invested in response to passenger priorities based on surveys conducted during the production of the initial BSIP in 2021; specifically targeting investment in the bus network by delivering later buses and more buses on Sundays, we have also enhanced some key services during the day to provide better connections to health/education facilities and London Luton Airport.

Through our 2021 BSIP funds we have, or we are:

- Providing around 7,000 extra bus journeys a month with more buses in the evening and Sunday and supporting the development of the commercial routes with better frequencies. Total bus journeys in Luton have increased from 48,000 to 55,000 per month, representing an increase of around 14.5%
- Investing in discounted weekly multi operator Hip Hop tickets both for adults and children, reducing the price by 33% for adults and 26% for child, this has resulted in adult weekly sales increasing by 34% from 18,600 tickets per month to 25,000 and the child ticket sales have increased by 128% from 2,500 tickets per month to 5,500, offering affordable travel to passengers and helping with the cost of living
- Installing 130 new bus shelters and have improved access at 30 bus stops for the elderly, disabled and passengers with prams
- Installing 100 more Real Time Information screens at key locations to deliver up to date information for passengers
- Delivering more traffic signal priorities at key junctions with more traffic enforcement cameras and expanding our red route network to ensure passengers can rely on buses to arrive on time

- Planning to construct a brand new Park and Ride facility on the outskirts of Luton with 350 parking spaces to reduce traffic congestion in the town centre and improve air quality.
- Delivering various marketing activities to promote bus use
- Delivered a Passenger Charter

We have exceeded our targets on bus passenger numbers, they have exceeded Pre Covid levels, and we expect bus ridership within the Luton conurbation to grow even more in the period 2024/25 and beyond. We want bus services in Luton to be viewed positively and we hope to attract more users as they feel buses are a more convenient way to travel compared to private cars.

To encourage more people to use buses in Luton, it is essential that we secure more funding through this 2024 BSIP to maintain the momentum and enhance our existing BSIP measures such as our evening and Sunday services to make buses even more accessible, continue discounting the multi operator tickets to make bus travel more affordable, continue to improve coverage of our bus network by improving frequencies and reliability, expand our provision of real time information and continue to improve the roadside infrastructure to improve the overall passenger experience.

Our 2024 BSIP will support the continued delivery of:

- Simpler and more cost-effective fares
- Cheaper fares for children and young people to encourage them to become regular users of buses and dissuade them from being car owners in the future
- An integrated bus network, with enhanced services that provide better connections to health and education facilities
- One set of integrated information for all – making it easier for passengers to plan and use the network not just in Luton but in the neighbouring authorities of Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council as well as outlying routes into Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire
- More reliable bus journey times and, where feasible, better routing to make journeys faster
- Continued improvement in our infrastructure that supports our services

Our BSIP also includes a Bus Passenger Charter which has been developed in partnership with bus operators and neighbouring authorities of Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council to ensure that bus operators play an active part in delivering Luton's vision for bus services. We will continue to work with bus passengers, bus operators, neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders and continue with our Bus Service Improvement Plan through this BSIP beyond 2025. We are excited for the step-change in bus service provision that is being delivered within the Luton conurbation currently and in the future.



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# 1. Our Bus Vision

## 1.1 Background and Purpose

### 1.1.1 'Bus Back Better' in Luton and its wider conurbation

The Department for Transport's (DfT) 2021 National Bus Strategy (NBS) for England offered an opportunity for step changes in local bus services within the Luton Conurbation. Luton's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) was produced and submitted to the DfT on 31 October 2021. A copy of the 2021 Luton BSIP can be found [here](#).

At its Joint Board meeting on 1 June 2021, Luton Council supported the Council's report to proceed with the development of an Enhanced Partnership (EP), opting to work with local bus operators and other key stakeholders in partnership to deliver Luton's 2021 BSIP. The EP Plan and EP Schemes were published in November 2022 (the latest copy can be found [here](#)) setting out the bold and ambitious plans to transform the quality of bus services within the Luton conurbation by making them more attractive, convenient, good value and popular for all to use.

The EP was agreed between Luton Council, the five bus operators (Arriva, Centrebus, Grant Palmer, Stagecoach, and Uno) serving the Luton conurbation and neighbouring authorities of Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council. An EP is an agreement between Luton Council and local bus operators to work together to improve local bus services. The EP consists of an overall plan, supported by various schemes to achieve the aims of the plans. Luton Council and bus operators also worked in collaboration with neighbouring authorities of Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council and jointly agree on some of the EP Schemes such as fares, passenger information and customer charter that involves cross boundary bus services. The EP offers a great opportunity to work in partnership to jointly deliver initiatives that helps improve the overall bus offering to the residents of Luton and the wider conurbation of Dunstable and Houghton Regis. The EP consists of an overall improvement plan, supported by several improvement schemes to achieve the aims of the plan.

The bus network within the Luton conurbation is a vital public service that plays a major role in the way many people go about their daily lives. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, around 192,000 bus journeys were made each week on bus services within the Luton conurbation. The Luton Dunstable Busway (the Busway) that was constructed at a cost of £91m and opened for bus operations in 2013 delivered nearly 50% of the total ridership by 2019 with double digit growth in five consecutive years from its opening. The partnership recognises that buses offer an environmentally friendly mode of transport to take people to work, health facilities, educational institutes, shopping, and other leisure opportunities reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality.

In response to the opportunities offered through the National Bus Strategy (NBS), the requirement in 2024 is to refresh the BSIP that was published in 2021 and describe how a properly funded Enhanced Partnership (EP) will continue to achieve its overarching goal to grow bus patronage back to pre-Covid levels, and then beyond. As with the 2021 BSIP, the 2024 BSIP has been developed in partnership with local bus operators; Arriva, Centrebus, Grant Palmer, Stagecoach, and Uno and in collaboration with the neighbouring authorities of Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council. The measures contained within the 2024 BSIP includes future funding requirements beyond 2025 for schemes that have and are being introduced in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

### 1.2 Geographical Area

The 2024 BSIP covers the conurbation that covers the Luton and Dunstable urban area including the settlements of Luton, Dunstable, and Houghton Regis in the east of England. Despite the straddling district boundaries, the conurbation shares many facilities including an integrated bus service and the large Luton and Dunstable University Hospital. Bus passengers travelling within the conurbation are not concerned with administrative boundaries and as such the 2024 BSIP recognises the need to work in collaboration with neighbouring authorities. The conurbation is located in the southern part of the ceremonial county of Bedfordshire, England, and includes the unitary authority of Luton, and part of Central Bedfordshire. The current population (2021 census) is 286,803. This is an increase of 9% from the 2011 population of 258,018.

Luton is a unitary authority situated in the east of England with a population of 225,300, representing an increase of 10.9% from 203,200 in 2011 (2021 census). This is higher than overall increase in England of 6.6%. The Luton conurbation area is growing due to developments within Luton and physical expansion of the three towns and large redevelopment of Luton including redevelopment of the former Vauxhall Motors factory complex. There is also a planned development in the east of Luton of approximately 2,000 homes.

The Luton and Dunstable urban area is considered part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub Region, part of the East of England. The East of England Regional Spatial Strategy has outlined and identified the urban area for growth, as part of the Sustainable Communities Plan. It is also considered part of the London Commuter Belt. Luton is home to the fifth largest Airport in the UK. The airport has undergone significant expansion in recent years.

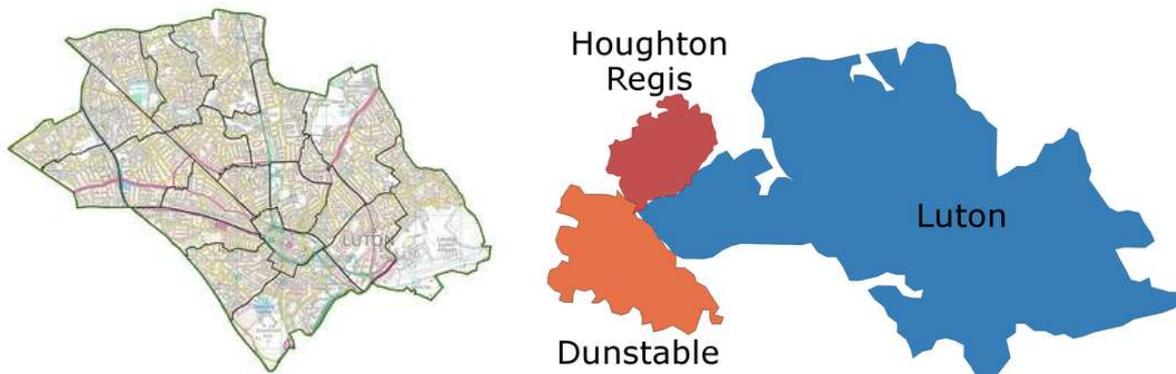


Figure 1: Maps showing the Luton Borough Council boundary (left) and the wider conurbation (right)

The 2024 BSIP reflects the specific characteristics of the bus network within the conurbation that includes bus services operating on the Luton Dunstable Busway. The construction of the Busway was completed in late 2013 and since its inauguration, Luton Council has worked in collaboration with the neighbouring authority of Central Bedfordshire Council and bus operators to develop a network of services that are fast and frequent. Bus services operating on the Busway experienced significant growth in passenger numbers until 2019/20 when the pandemic struck and severely affected bus usage and ridership numbers. Almost 50% of Luton’s bus ridership derives from the Busway services. There are several other cross boundary services originating from Luton that serve neighbouring authorities of Central Bedfordshire, Bedford, Milton Keynes and Hertfordshire. During the period of development of this 2024 BSIP, there have been on-going discussions with neighbouring authorities to ensure alignment of plans and actions, particularly regarding cross boundary bus services, and covering issues of common interest, such as branding, fares and ticketing. Luton Council are also working in collaboration with Bedford Borough Council due to the historic and ceremonial affiliation of the old Bedfordshire County Council. The maps below provide an illustration of the Luton unitary authority boundary and the Luton conurbation.

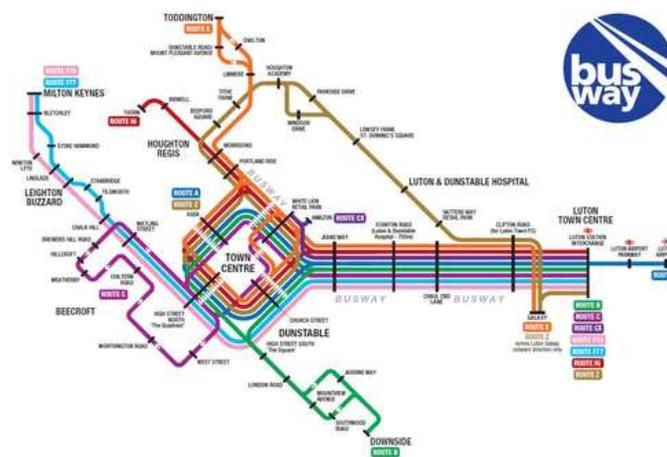


Figure 2: Map showing the Luton-Dunstable Busway network

### 1.3 Our Vision Statement

Through this BSIP, we will continue to provide a clear, compelling, and ambitious vision for bus services in Luton ensuring that our vision, aims, goals and objectives are delivered both in the short to medium term and in the longer term beyond 2029. We will ensure that we collaborate closely with neighbouring authorities. We will continue to deliver bus services through our key goals, objectives, aims and our overall vision of bus services in Luton.

## Objectives to Deliver Luton's Vision for Bus Services

### Better network coverage

Provide a comprehensive network that is safe, frequent and reliable with more buses in the evenings and weekends, and better connections to health/education facilities during the day

### Better value and integrated fares

Provide a bus network that is more affordable than driving by offering simpler means of travel, extending the validity of tickets to use on all five local bus operators

### Better journey times and reliability

Provide a reliable and punctual network of bus services by working closely with bus operators to identify pinch points and a better choice of services through the multi-operator ticket

### Better information

Provide information that is simple, consistent and easier to understand from a shared source

### Better vehicle standards

Work with operators to develop a long-term fleet replacement plan and access alternative funds such as ZEBRA to deliver a zero-emission fleet by 2040

### Better customer engagement

Continuous development of a meaningful Customer Charter that delivers confidence to bus users and develops a network which responds to evolving needs through active engagement

Luton Council in partnership with bus operators, neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders have held many discussions in response to the National Bus Strategy to discuss issues affecting the bus network in Luton since the pandemic. The 2021 BSIP funds awarded to Luton Council are being invested to improve bus services that best meets the needs of bus users and implement measures that will encourage more people to use the buses. There are shared ambitions to build on the significant improvements already being made to the bus offering in Luton since April 2023 using the 2021 BSIP funds (see details of improvements in Section 2). The EP Board along with other stakeholders and neighbouring authorities are fully committed and behind the vision, aims, goals and objectives set for our refreshed 2024 BSIP. The visions for buses in Luton are in line with the 12 key objectives in the National Bus Strategy and are set out below:

### Our vision

To make Luton a bus-friendly place and improve quality of life with a more sustainable network of bus services that are safe, frequent, reliable, comprehensive and easy to use.

### BSIP aims

To deliver continuous growth in bus ridership and improve overall customer satisfaction

### BSIP goals

- To develop a network of bus services that are more accessible and affordable, and encourages more people to use the bus instead of driving by car
- To deliver profitable growth that allows operators to reinvest in the network and deliver continuous improvements
- To deliver 'kick-start' funding for new services and enhanced frequencies

### BSIP objectives

To build a bus network that is:

- **Welcoming** - friendly and easy to use
- **Affordable** - offering good value for money and a wider variety of tickets
- **Reliable** - services that people can depend on to be on-time
- **Comprehensive** - a network that is frequent, plus more accessible in the evenings and on weekends
- **Eco-friendly** - improving air quality with low- and zero-emission buses

### 1.4 BSIP Refresh and Local Transport Plans (LTPs)

Luton’s Local Transport Plan (LTP4) sets out Luton’s strategic priorities and policies to achieve more sustainable access to goods and services in the town over the next 20 years by encouraging and enabling more walking, cycling and the use of public transport. The 2024 BSIP supports and complements our other schemes for improving local bus services and transport including the Local Transport Plan. Luton’s current Local Transport Plan (LTP4) covers the period from 2020-2040. It has several overarching priorities which have been considered when formulating the 2024 BSIP ensuring that the two plans will complement and support each other. The relationship between EP Board members’ BSIP ambitions, the LTP and these thematic action plans, and the Council’s annual review of its five-year work programme is shown below:

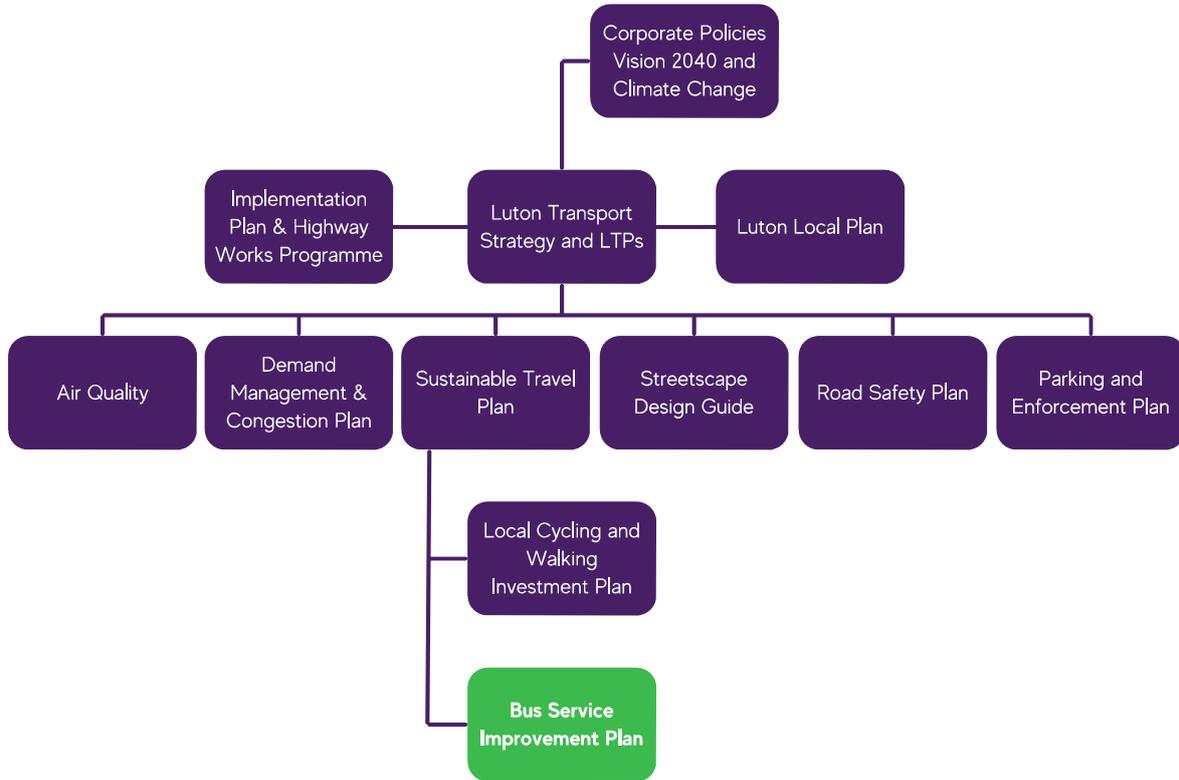


Figure 3: Diagram showing the alignment of the BSIP with Luton’s LTP4

# 2. Current Bus Offer in Luton

## 2.1 Network Description

Luton and the wider conurbation including Dunstable and Houghton Regis are served by 46 bus routes to and from Luton. A total of 22 routes are wholly within the Luton unitary boundary serving the 20 council wards. The remaining 24 routes provide cross boundary services into Milton Keynes, Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Luton also boasts the Luton Dunstable Busway (the Busway) constructed in 2013 and provides a high frequency of services between Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis, the Busway is extended beyond Luton Interchange by a non-guided section of road that is restricted to buses between Luton Interchange and London Luton Airport, two of the Busway services are extended to London Luton Airport providing a high frequency connection of 7 buses per hour to the airport. The Interurban services such as the F70/F77 to Leighton Buzzard and Milton Keynes along with the E service to Toddington also use the Busway to speed up journey times making them a more attractive proposition for longer distance travellers. Attached Appendix 1&1a details the current bus offering to residents within the Luton conurbation.

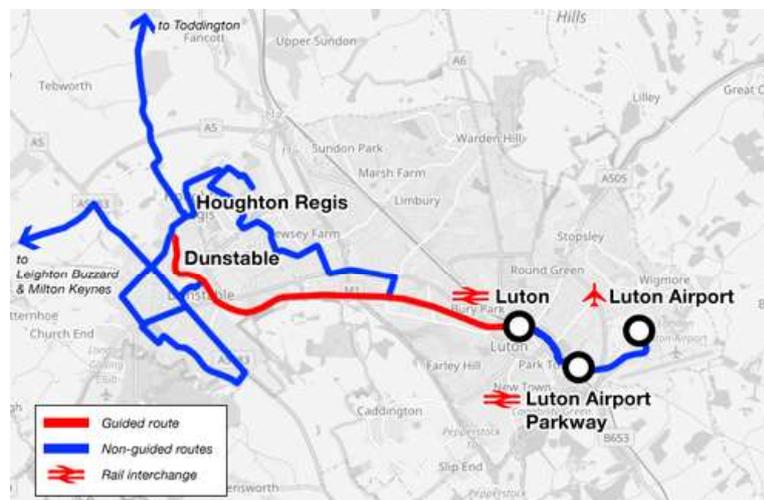


Figure 4: Map showing the Luton-Dunstable Busway routes

The attached Appendix 1&1a shows the network of services provided both in Luton and in the wider Luton, Dunstable, and Houghton Regis conurbation. The width of the bus line on the map indicates the average weekday frequency on the link. The wider the line representing a high frequency corridor and the thinner the line represents a low frequency corridor.

The Busway is 9.8km long with a concrete track along a 7.7km section to take the two small, guided wheels along the front section of the bus so that vehicles can run smoothly at speeds up to 40 mph. The Busway is served by 8 different bus services jointly providing 17 buses an hour between Dunstable and Luton, delivering a truly 'turn up and go' service of at least every 4 minutes. Through BSIP we have introduced discounted weekly multi operator tickets both for adults and children that allows passengers to use any of the five bus operators' services within the Luton conurbation, thereby allowing greater access of buses for passengers and more frequent services, this is not restricted to the Busway, the multi-operator ticket is valid on all bus routes within the Luton conurbation to include Dunstable and Houghton Regis.



Figure 5: The Luton-Dunstable 'busway' delivers a super high frequency service with 17 buses an hour, making up nearly 50% of all bus passenger journeys that originate to and from Luton within the conurbation

Luton is one of the most densely populated towns in England and the opportunity to deliver passenger growth is significant compared to the rest of the East of England. Passenger journeys per head in Luton increased from 40.7 in 2012 to 50.5 in 2019 compared to the decline in the East of England from 32.3 to 28.3 during the same period. Luton offers tremendous opportunities to deliver bus passenger growth through the delivery of a high-quality bus service as already proven through the 2021 BSIP measures.

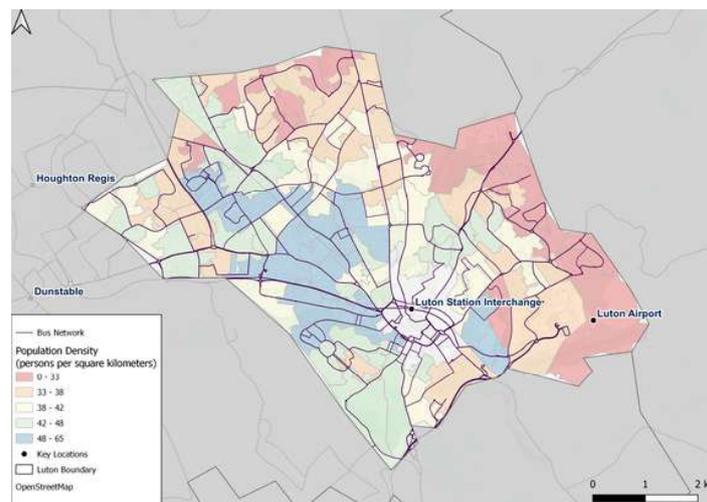


Figure 6: Map showing population density in Luton

Our long-term vision is to increase bus ridership per head significantly and with the growing population of Luton, we are confident that through all current and future BSIP measures we will deliver significant growth as we have already delivered successful growth from existing BSIP measures.

Annual Passenger Journeys Per Head							
Year	Nottingham	Reading	Milton Keynes	Luton	Bedford	East of England	Comments
2011/12	163.3	102.7	35.4	40.7	42.7	32.3	
2012/13	157.7	102.7	35.6	46.4	39.9	31.4	
2013/14	156.8	111.3	37.5	41.0	42.6	31.9	
2014/15	156.5	119.2	37.3	38.2	37.1	31.0	
2015/16	149.2	126.2	38.1	40.9	39.4	29.9	
2016/17	151.8	131.3	36.1	45.3	38.5	30.6	
2017/18	146.4	132.3	37.9	39.5	35.9	28.2	
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>145.0</b>	<b>137.6</b>	<b>31.8</b>	<b>50.5</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<i>Pre-Covid Baseline</i>
2019/20	131.2	137.5	31.3	49.3	29.8	27.3	
2020/21	46.3	46.3	11.9	20.9	8.8	9.3	
2021/22	93.4	81.2	18.3	33.0	16.6	17.5	
2022/23	117.6	101.1	22.4	39.4	19.9	22.0	
Post Covid Recovery Rate							
2020/21 v Pre Covid	32%	34%	37%	41%	27%	33%	
2021/22 v Pre Covid	64%	59%	57%	65%	50%	62%	
2022/23 v Pre Covid	81%	73%	70%	78%	60%	78%	

Source: DfT Passenger Journeys on Local Bus Services by Local Authority England, from 2009/10 (Table BUS01f)

Table 1: Annual passenger journeys per head in Luton, comparable LTAs and the East of England region

## 2.2 Passenger Facilities

The main Luton Interchange is located in the town centre adjacent to the main railway station in Luton which is served by two train operators, East Midlands Railway and Thameslink. The Interchange has a travel hub where information regarding bus and train services can be obtained and bus tickets for all operators can be purchased. Majority of the buses serving Luton operate via the Interchange and provide a good link between bus services from different areas of Luton to onward rail journeys for passengers heading South primarily to London and heading North primarily to Bedford. The Busway which is owned and maintained by Luton Council, provides excellent bus services from Houghton Regis and Dunstable to Luton and links with the trains, passenger using the Busway from Houghton Regis and Dunstable have the fastest option to get to London by bus and train compared to any other mode of transport. It also provides a high frequency link to one of the major employers in Luton, London Luton Airport. The Interchange also serves as a hub for excellent bus to bus connections.

The Busway has six bus stops between the Interchange and Dunstable. All these stops are equipped with RTPI (Real Time Passenger Information) displays showing services in real time and displaying news and weather feeds as well as other information when required. The stops are clean and well-lit and covered by CCTV with emergency help points.

There are three railway stations within the Luton Boundary, the main station is located in the town centre adjacent to the Interchange and only a short walk of less than 5 minute from the main shopping mall, this station manages around 3.8million passenger journeys per annum. Leagrave station is situated on the north side of Luton and is served by frequent bus services, Luton Airport Parkway Station (the Parkway), is situated on the south side of Luton and is also served by a frequent bus service from Luton Interchange. Plans are also in place to introduce a brand-new Park and Ride facility that will also serve the Parkway for passengers to continue their onward journeys by train to London and Bedford and also their last mile journey to the airport via the DART service.

The Parkway is connected by the Direct Air-Rail Transit link (DART). The DART is a 2.3km track and is a fully automated electric powered shuttle service that takes less than 4 minutes to connect from the Parkway Station to the London Luton Airport. In its first full year of operation, the DART has carried 2.7 million passengers between the Parkway and London Luton Airport.

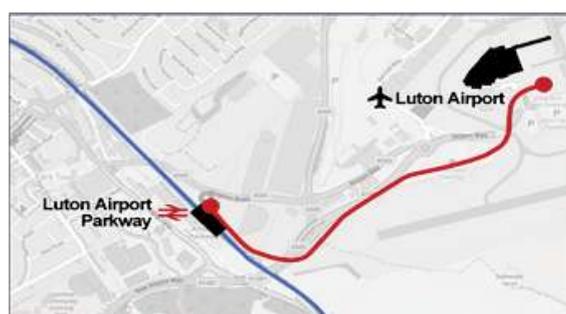


Figure 7: Map showing the DART route in Luton

Luton Council is responsible for the replacement and maintenance of 794 bus stops and shelters. The shelters and bus stops are maintained through two contracts. An advertising company provides bus shelters at key locations in exchange for advertising space, the cost to Luton Council under current arrangement is negligible. However, from 2028 as part of Luton’s Transport Strategy to support a healthy living, the council has made a conscious decision to ban the advertisement of unhealthy foods in public advertising spaces owned by the council, this will therefore result in the termination of the bus shelters contract with the third party. The council will require a different funding stream to install, maintain and replace bus shelters currently provided free of charge by the advertising agencies. Through the first round of BSIP funding, the council has installed or replaced 130 shelters at several key locations, also improving footway access.

Real Time information screens are provided at key bus stops, through the 2021 BSIP funding, a further 100 screens are currently being installed at several key locations. Luton Council aspire to have real time information screens at the majority of bus stops by 2029.

Figure 7 highlights that the majority of people living in Luton have access to a bus stop within 400 metres; through this 2024 BSIP, we will continue to ensure that they are provided with appropriate service levels beyond 2025 and delivering high frequency services in the long term.

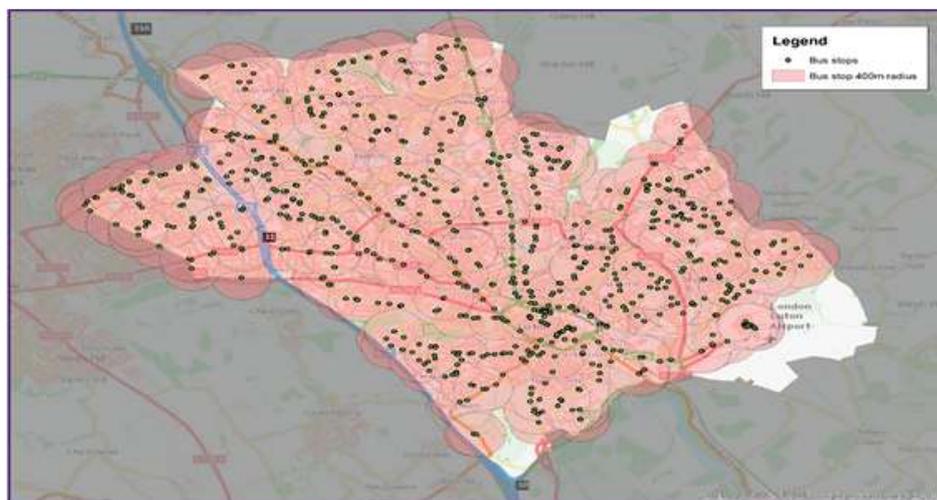


Figure 8: Map showing bus stop coverage in Luton

### 2.3 Bus Services

Bus services within the conurbation are provided by five bus operators. The main operator has around 78% of market share with the remaining 22% shared by the remaining four bus operators. There is a mixture of urban and interurban bus routes that are served with some high frequency services within the Luton area. The Inter urban services provide vital connections to the neighbouring authorities of Central Bedfordshire, Bedford, Hertfordshire, and Milton Keynes.

On preparing the original BSIP in 2021, it was recognised that due to the unique nature of the bus network in Luton involving the Busway, the Luton BSIP would include measures that consider the bus network beyond Luton and covers the Luton conurbation to include the Dunstable and Houghton Regis areas. Both ends of the Busway are undergoing significant development in terms of housing and commercial.

Planning applications for residential developments in and around Luton town centre generally include the condition to be car-free so there is a need to ensure highway infrastructure for non-car travel is attractive and accessible and bus travel should be at the centre of this because of its non-seasonal nature, (compared to modes such as walking and cycling, which will vary depending on weather patterns). An example of this is the High Town area situated to the north of Luton town centre. Planning application and approval for new developments will result more than 1,200 dwellings being built in an approximate space of 0.036 km<sup>2</sup>. Any developer contributions arising from this would not be sufficient to sustain bus services in the long-term, this would require on-going funding from other funding streams to maintain and develop a bus service for the longer term.

Houghton Regis with a population of around 18,000 is linked to Dunstable in the South, it shares the same challenges that Luton and Dunstable face in terms of traffic congestion. The Busway has played an integral part in encouraging more people to use the fast, direct route to Dunstable and Luton. The regeneration of Houghton Regis on 22-hectare site includes the development of various education establishments and a new leisure centre along with an integrated health and care hub. This provides significant opportunities to increase ridership on the Busway.

In 2019, Luton Council granted planning permission for a 23,000-seat stadium at the Power Court in the centre of Luton, which will be the new home of Luton Town Football Club. The location is popular with football supporters as it remains within Luton and is around one mile away from the current Kenilworth Road stadium and not far from Luton railway station. The Power Court development will also bring new shops, leisure facilities, a hotel, and homes. It is estimated that this development alone could boost the Luton economy by £68 million.

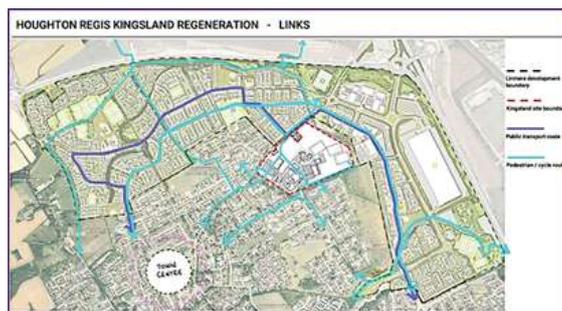


Figure 9: Map showing the Houghton Regis Kingsland regeneration plan

Industrial property developer Prologis has acquired the former Luton head office site for Vauxhall Motors for redevelopment. The 17-acre site will be redeveloped in two stages providing 30,000 square feet of purpose-built space suitable for warehousing, logistics and manufacturing. The site is located one mile from London Luton Airport and is covered by a high frequency bus route between the airport and Luton Interchange. Through our living and evolving BSIP we will ensure that our bus network develops to ensure that all these schemes are accessible by bus.

In February 2023, the airport submitted to the government a Development Consent Order(DCO) to expand the airport that would allow it to manage 32 million passengers per annum by 2040 (current passenger numbers to Feb 2024 was 16.3 million per annum), if consent is given, London Luton Airport estimates the creation of 11,000 new jobs providing both challenges and opportunities in tackling congestion and continuous development of the bus network.

The population within the Luton conurbation (including Dunstable and Houghton Regis) grew by 9% between 2011 and 2021. However, Luton’s population alone grew by 10.9% in the same period compared to England’s average of 6% (source, 2021 census). Between 2012 and 2019, bus passenger numbers in Luton increased by 30% compared to an overall decline in passenger numbers of 8% for the East of England area. The covid pandemic resulted in passenger numbers dropping to 4.5 million in 2021.

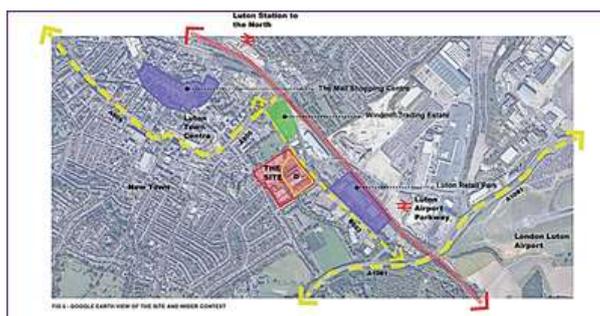


Figure 10: Map showing the site of the former Vauxhall motor complex

The table below provides a great level of optimism in terms of passenger recovery as Luton is showing a healthier recovery rate in comparison to nearby authorities of Bedford and Milton Keynes and slightly better than the rest of East of England and surprisingly better than two of the most highly regarded areas of England (Nottingham and Reading) when it comes to the delivery of high-quality bus services. Passenger numbers within the Luton conurbation have increased significantly since the pandemic and now exceed Pre Covid levels as data will show later in this report. The EP Board and partners took the view that when reporting passenger numbers, it would be more appropriate to report on the wider Luton network to include Dunstable and Houghton Regis. Moving forward, we have therefore decided to report on revised passenger numbers that are truly aligned to our BSIP and will include the Luton Dunstable Houghton Regis conurbation and not just Luton. We will therefore provide revised targets later in this report. Our simplified multi operator ticketing scheme that delivers affordable bus travel also covers this wider area, it would therefore be prudent to report the wider success of the various BSIP measures and the associated passenger movement to monitor ridership before and after the interventions made through the BSIP funding. report the wider success of the various BSIP measures and the associated passenger movement to monitor ridership before and after the interventions made through the BSIP funding.

Annual Journeys Made By Bus (Millions)							
Year	Nottingham	Reading	Milton Keynes	Luton	Bedford	East of England	Comments
2011/12	49.6	16.0	8.8	8.3	6.7	189.5	
2012/13	48.7	16.1	9.0	9.6	6.4	185.7	
2013/14	48.7	17.7	9.6	8.5	6.9	189.7	
2014/15	49.2	19.2	9.7	8.1	6.1	186.6	
2015/16	47.6	20.4	10.0	8.8	6.5	181.8	
2016/17	49.4	21.4	9.5	9.8	6.5	187.3	
2017/18	48.2	21.6	10.1	8.5	6.1	173.9	
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>175.3</b>	Pre-Covid Baseline
2019/20	43.7	22.3	8.2	10.5	5.2	170.0	
2020/21	15.6	7.4	2.9	4.5	1.5	58.3	
2021/22	29.9	14.1	5.3	7.4	3.1	111.4	
2022/23	37.6	17.5	6.5	8.8	3.7	139.8	
Post Covid Recovery Rate							
2020 v 2019	89%	99%	96%	97%	90%	97%	Minor Covid Impact
2021 v 2019	32%	33%	34%	42%	27%	33%	
2022 v 2019	61%	63%	62%	69%	54%	64%	
2023 v 2019	77%	78%	76%	81%	65%	80%	

Table 2: Bus passenger numbers 2011/12 to 2022/23

Prior to the 2021 BSIP, all bus services in Luton were provided by bus operators on a commercial basis. Luton withdrew funding for all tendered services as part of the austerity measure in 2012. Through the 2021 BSIP, significant funding has been made available to reintroduce evening and Sunday bus services that are regarded as a social necessity and will continue to require funding in the future beyond 2025.

Through the 2021 BSIP funds, Luton Council has funded the introduction of new services and enhance existing services through a form of 'Pump Priming' funding. The funding has been delivered to a select few services where both the council and bus operators believe that services beyond the funding period will become commercially viable and are sustainable in the long term.

Planning permission has also been approved for the construction of a brand-new Park and Ride Facility that has been funded through the 2021 BSIP. Construction of the facility will commence soon with provision of 350 parking spaces. It is estimated that around 328 cars per day will be intercepted resulting in few cars entering the town centre from key corridors in the south. The Park and Ride site will be a timely intervention to cater for the football traffic with the planned development of the new football stadium.

## 2.4 Park & Ride

Our BSIP includes plans for the development of a new Park and Ride facility on the outskirts of Luton. The site will accommodate 350 car parking spaces and it is anticipated that 328 cars per day will be intercepted to reduce traffic congestion on relevant corridors heading into Luton. The site at Butterfield has received planning permission and construction will commence soon with a view to commencing operation from 2025.

Our 2021 BSIP includes funds for the provision of a frequent Park and Ride bus service between Butterfield and Luton also serving the Parkway for onward DART and train connections. The overall journey time is expected to be 10 minutes for a 5-mile route and will be an attractive proposition for current car users. The site will also serve matchday football traffic further alleviating traffic congestion from the town centre and improving air quality.

## 2.5 Bus Fares

Bus fares in Luton are set by bus operators and prices ranged from offering 14% to 32% discount to children on adult fares. Prior to the 2021 BSIP, only three of the five bus operators accepted the 'Hip Hop' multi operator ticket. The price of the multi operator ticket was set at a premium thereby discouraging passengers from purchasing such tickets and therefore restricting their travel to a single operator's bus service by purchasing the operators' own product. Through the 2021 BSIP we have significantly discounted the adult and child weekly 'Hip Hop' multi operator tickets, the price is lower than the main bus operator's own product. The multi operator ticket is now widely accepted on all 5 bus operators' services. This measure allows passengers to access more services delivering a much-improved frequency as they do not have to wait for a particular operator's bus service. This is a significant positive intervention that has resulted in delivering affordable bus travel to all and aiding the 'cost of living crisis'. The great value of this ticket has aided passenger growth and has aided a speedy recovery of passenger numbers post covid.

“ The multi operator Hip Hop ticket is now accepted by all bus operators in Luton. We have discounted the price of the weekly Hip Hop ticket from £19 to £13 for adults and from £13.50 to £10 for children, making bus travel more affordable and supporting the cost of living crisis. ”

All five bus operators have participated in the National £2 flat fare scheme, feedback from bus operators is that the flat £2 fare scheme has primarily benefitted inter urban services operating cross boundary. The EP Board built on the £2 flat fare scheme to deliver the discounted 'Hip Hop' weekly multi operator ticket both for adults and children, thereby complementing the £2 flat fare and providing greater value travel for those making bus journeys within the Luton conurbation.

LUTON DUNSTABLE AND HOUGHTON REGIS						
Operator	Type	Day	3 Day	Week	12 Day	Month
Arriva	Adult	£5.50	£14.50	£20.50	£54.00	£70.00
	Child	£3.80		£16.00		£53.00
Centrebus	Adult	£4.60		£16.00		£60.00
	Child	£3.30		£13.00		
Grant Palmer	Adult			£16.00		£55.00
	Child					
Multi Operator Hip Hop	Adult	£5.00		*£13.00		
	Child	£3.50		*£10.00		
	Family	£9.50				
* Discount through BSIP, normal price £19.00						
** Discounted through BSIP, normal price £13.50						

Table 3: Multi-journey ticket products and prices (by operator) in Luton

The discounted adult and child weekly 'Hip Hop' multi operator ticket has proved to be a success and sales of the tickets has been very encouraging, we believe that the great value offered by these tickets have driven growth in bus passengers and helps families on low income and contributes towards the cost of living crisis.

## 2.6 Bus Priority

Whilst traffic congestion in Luton has reduced post the pandemic, previously Luton was in the top 10 most congested towns and cities, it is now out of the top 10 thanks to reconfiguration of the road network and the construction of the Busway. Plans are in place through the 2021 BSIP to provide a bus lane on the main bus corridor that provides services between Luton and Dunstable connecting with L&D University hospital and several education facilities. A bus lane is already in existence on the opposite side of the dual carriageway. Through 2021 BSIP funds, work is also being carried out at signalised junctions highlighted by bus operators as being an issue to bus priority. A review of the red routes in the borough has been undertaken and the BSIP includes plans to extend the red route network on roads highlighted by bus operators as being an issue in congested areas such as the roads around the Luton and Dunstable University Hospital. Traffic enforcement cameras are also being installed to ensure buses are not held up due to inconsiderate parking and abuse of red routes and bus lanes. It will also improve access for buses at bus stops.

## 2.7 Marketing and Information

Significant marketing activity has taken place to promote the network in Luton and the wider conurbation. Thousands of leaflets have been distributed promoting the discounted multi operator ticket, the lifting of pre 09:30 restriction for ENCTS and Disabled Pass holders, the forthcoming network changes, and connections to the hospital. An event was held over the Easter period in 2024 in Luton Town centre with involvement from all bus operators to promote the bus network and enhancements to the bus services and get feedback from passengers.

We have also delivered targeted marketing to encourage more people to use the buses by promoting the weekly 'Hip Hop' multi operator ticket, this was specific to education establishments, health facilities including GP surgeries and local businesses.

In collaboration with Central Bedfordshire and Bedford, we have also delivered joint marketing on a 'Day Out' booklet to promote social journeys and are in the process of delivering a single timetable booklet detailing all bus service information within the Pan Bedfordshire area. We have also produced the network map that covers Luton, Dunstable, and Houghton Regis. This is attached as Appendix 1&1a.

We are also planning on marketing the bus to train connection in conjunction with Train Operating Companies. The marketing will focus on the quickest journey time available for those travelling from Houghton Regis and Dunstable to London and Bedford on the trains. The Busway provides the fastest option, faster than the car.



Figure 11: Examples of Luton BSIP marketing

## 2.8 2021 BSIP Delivery

Several BSIP measures have been delivered from the 2021 BSIP funds that are in line with the 12 key topics covered by the National Bus Strategy and Luton's vision for bus services. The items listed below are ongoing:

<b>Bus Priority Infrastructure</b>	 <p>Traffic signal priority for buses at ten junctions within Luton to improve punctuality and reliability. <b>Faster and more reliable buses.</b></p>
	 <p>Extension of the red route network at key locations to allow better access for buses at key pinch points caused by parking and access to bus stops, delivering improvements to punctuality and reliability. <b>Faster and more reliable buses.</b></p>
	 <p>Enforcement cameras at key locations to dissuade bus lane use and inconsiderate parking by other vehicles. <b>Faster and more reliable buses.</b></p>
<b>Other Infrastructure</b>	 <p>130 new bus shelters at prominent locations, including footway improvements in vicinity of bus stop to deliver more accessible infrastructure. <b>Improved waiting facilities and ease of access.</b></p>
	 <p>100 new Real Time Information Screens at key bus stop locations delivering better information for bus passengers. Top 3 priorities from passengers from survey conducted in 2021. <b>Easier to understand.</b></p>
	 <p>Standardised roadside information at all bus stops within the Pan Bedfordshire area to include Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council. New standard timetable holders are also being installed. <b>Easier to understand.</b></p>
	 <p>Construction of a brand new Park and Ride facility on the outskirts of Luton, to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. Provide an alternative mode of transport for non-users and also help reduce congestion during football matches by extending opening hours. <b>Better integrating with other modes and other buses.</b></p>

### Fares Support



To complement the DfT's flat single fare of £2, we have discounted the weekly 'Hip Hop' multi operator that is now valid on all five bus operators' services within the Luton conurbation including Dunstable and Houghton Regis. The adult price is reduced from £19 to £13, and the child price reduced from £13.50 to £10. This offers annual savings of around £400 for adults and £175 for children and helping with the 'cost of living crisis' (based on 50x weeks of travel annually). **Cheaper and easier to use.**



Pre-09:30 free travel restrictions lifted for the Elderly and Disabled to encourage bus usage and improve post covid ridership recovery for these group of passengers. **Cheaper and easier to use.**

### Bus Service Support



Introduction of buses later in the evenings and Sunday to extend the bus operating day. Providing social necessity bus services, help the night time economy and deliver value for money on season tickets. Planned introduction of a brand new Park and Ride bus service operating at a 10-minute frequency (see appendix 2 and 2a). **More frequent and comprehensive network.**



More frequent services by introducing new services to Bushmead that provides better access to education facilities. More buses to the Luton Dunstable University Hospital and more buses between Luton and London Luton Airport (see appendix 2 and 2a). **More frequent and comprehensive network.**



Supporting the retention of pre covid bus frequencies to ensure buses remain an attractive choice and stop further decline of passenger numbers post the covid pandemic. **Retaining frequencies and maintaining a comprehensive network.**

### Marketing



'Bus Back Better' Marketing. Promoting discounted Hip Hop Tickets, New Services, New Network Map, Promoting Bus/Train Connection, and planned introduction of All-in-One App for single stop bus information for Pan Bedfordshire Area. Production of Days out leaflets and timetable booklet in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council. **Easier to understand.**

### Passenger Voice



Delivery of a Passenger Charter in partnership with Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Council. Regular customer satisfaction surveys conducted by Transport Focus to better understand customers' perception of bus services in Luton. **Giving passengers a voice.**

## 2.9 BSIP Outcomes So Far

### 2.9.1 Passenger Satisfaction

Funding from the 2021 BSIP has aided significant improvements to bus services within the Luton conurbation and delivered excellent passenger growth.

Bus operators have faced significant challenges since the pandemic with higher-than-normal operating costs, a national driver shortage and challenges in recruiting other skilled staff such as bus mechanics and technicians. The impact of the driver shortages has been felt in the quality of service being provided by bus operators and is reflected in the 2023 Transport Focus Survey. We have therefore decided to revisit our future customer satisfaction targets. However, The EP Board is confident that future surveys will deliver better outcomes since key BSIP measures were introduced in the Autumn of 2023 and the bus network improvements took place from the beginning of April 2024. The delay in extending the bus operating times beyond early evening and more buses on Sundays were primarily down to the national driver shortage. However, Bus operators have worked hard in Luton to improve their driver establishment and are now in a position to deliver the extra evening and Sunday services along with more journeys during the day to key destinations such as education and health facilities.

The delay in introducing the Bus Service Support measures means we have extended the support of these services beyond 2025 to March 2026.

Luton's 2021 BSIP measure of fares support has demonstrated that bus fares that are affordable, simple, and easy to understand along with better service delivery, passenger numbers can increase as shown in Table 4 on the next page. The latest Transport Focus Survey results are detailed in Figure 12.

Overall satisfaction with bus journey is in line with national average, however, we do not want to be average and we are confident that the measures we are taking through the 2021 BSIP will improve the overall satisfaction levels and the key measures such as discounted fares and enhancements to the bus network had not been introduced at the

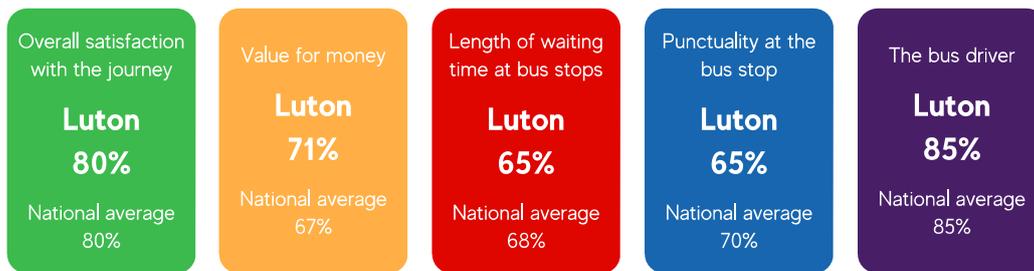


Figure 12: Transport Focus survey results (2023) benchmarking Luton against the national average

time of this survey, we are therefore confident that we score higher in the next round of surveys as passengers have noticed the improvements and is reflected in the very encouraging recovery rates.

The challenges faced by bus operators to recruit bus drivers and other skilled staff has influenced the overall satisfaction with bus journeys in the Luton conurbation. Driver shortage has resulted in poor service delivery on many occasions. However, bus operators have been working hard with their recruitment and are now in a much better position than they were 12 months ago.

### 2.9.2 Passenger Numbers

As demonstrated in Table 4 below, Luton’s passenger recovery post covid has been very encouraging and is reflected in the latest passenger data. However, as explained earlier, the EP Board has been monitoring passenger numbers differently compared to those published periodically by the DfT. Our data takes into account the unique nature of the bus network within the Luton Conurbation given that a high volume of bus trips are made on the Busway and within the straddling district boundaries. The multi operator ‘Hip Hop’ ticket is valid for travel on all services within the Luton conurbation including Dunstable and Houghton Regis and as such the BSIP intervention on Fares Support and Bus Service Support is wider than the Luton boundary, it therefore allows us to monitor and gauge the success of these measures on a wider scale. Our future targets will reflect this and will include ridership in the wider Luton conurbation.

“ We have exceeded our 2023/24 passengers target by 10%, which means ridership is now higher than pre Covid levels. ”

Passenger count includes the wider conurbation of Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis						
Passenger Recovery Rate - All Passengers						
Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Recovery Rate (%)	100%	97%	38%	67%	84%	102%
2021 BSIP Target	N/A	N/A	47%	74%	86%	92%
Passenger Numbers	12,208,023	11,866,198	4,681,311	8,186,960	10,264,356	12,460,942
<b>"Passenger recovery rate for 2023/24 is 10% better than our 2021 BSIP projections"</b>						
Passenger Recovery Rate - Adult and Children Passengers						
Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Recovery Rate (%)	100%	97%	40%	70%	89%	110%
Passenger Numbers	9,589,807	9,321,292	3,048,692	6,747,298	8,525,698	10,563,159
<b>"Great success on adult and child passengers, recovery rate exceeds pre-Covid level by 10%, aided by the discounted Hip Hop multi operator ticket"</b>						
Passenger Recovery Rate - ENCTS and Disabled Passengers						
Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Recovery Rate (%)	100%	97%	32%	55%	66%	72%
Passenger Numbers	2,618,216	2,544,906	831,819	1,439,662	1,738,658	1,897,783

Table 4: Post-covid passenger recovery rates in Luton

The above data derives from quarterly passenger data submitted by bus operators as part of the EP agreement. Detailed ridership data by routes is currently not available and we will work with bus operators to develop a robust monitoring process that includes operators providing ridership data by route, mileage operated data to monitor reliability and journey compliance data to monitor punctuality. Bus operators have struggled post covid in terms of resources to provide the required data, as the situation improves, we will amend the EP and ensure that bus operators supply Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to gauge the success of all BSIP interventions moving forward.

Elderly and Disabled ridership is getting better and encouraging to note that in 2023/24 the recovery was at 72% compared to 2018/19. From 1 April 2023, through our BSIP measure for supported fares, we lifted the pre 09:30 restrictions for the elderly and disabled passholders and around 150,000 journeys have been made before 09:30 between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. We will continue to promote and market the improved bus offering and encourage more elderly and disabled people to use the buses.

### 2.9.3 Punctuality and Reliability

Punctuality and reliability of services has been affected due to the driver shortage; bus operators are now in a much better position. There are significant positive services changes planned by the main bus operator in June 2024, we are confident that punctuality and reliability of buses in Luton will improve significantly. During 2022/23, several factors affected the timely operation of bus services that included the closure of the Busway and significant highways works in Houghton Regis.



Figure 13: Punctuality of buses in Luton

### 2.9.4 Journey Times

We continue to work with bus operators for the provision on average journey time by route and will endeavour to include this requirement moving forward as and when we review our EP to make sure it is aligned with the 2024 BSIP beyond 2025. Below are key examples of reduction in journey times since the construction of the Busway. Given that nearly 50% of bus ridership in Luton derives from the Busway, this provides a significant analysis and demonstrates the progress made on journey times aided by the Busway.

Trip details via The Busway	Before (minutes)	After (minutes)	Reduction in Journey time (%)
Dunstable to Luton	40	15	63%
Parkside to Dunstable Centre	23	13	43%
Parkside to Luton	40	25	38%
Toddington to Luton Centre	50	26	48%
Dunstable to London Luton Airport	40	19	53%
Milton Keynes to Luton	105	95	10%
Leighton Buzzard to Luton	60	50	17%

Table 5: Journey time analysis on services using the Busway

### 2.9.5 Network Enhancement

There has been a delay in implementing the planned network improvements that were in our 2021 BSIP, primarily down to the national driver shortage resulting in bus operators unable to provide the additional resources that were required for the enhancements. In addition to this, operators have faced significant increases in bus operating costs due to higher-than-normal pay settlements, volatile fuel prices, increases in prices for parts and material to maintain the buses. The major operator with an 80% market share has been working hard to get to full establishment of drivers and other skilled staff, we are now in a position to implement the enhancements that were planned as driver availability has improved significantly.

Through 2021 BSIP funding, we have reintroduced the evening and Sunday services that were withdrawn over a decade ago due to austerity measures. Bus Passengers in Luton previously felt that they were not getting value for money especially those who purchase season tickets, feeling that the tickets did not allow them to access buses later in the evening and the provision for bus services on Sundays was not sufficient. With the increased offering we are confident that satisfaction on value for money will increase in future years.

Through BSIP we have also looked at the daytime network and improved connections to key education and health facilities. Timetables have been improved where services were infrequent or had gaps in the timetable that made

services unattractive. As part of the review, we also considered earlier buses due to many unprompted comments from the survey conducted in 2021 where users and non-users commented on lack of early morning buses on some services as well as the lack of evening and Sunday services.

Through BSIP we have introduced 7,000 extra bus journey per month delivering better day time connections to key places such as Luton Sixth Form College, Cardinal Newman School, Luton and Dunstable University Hospital and Luton Airport. We expect ridership to increase by around 0.5 million passenger per annum through these enhancements once the services have established themselves, this will provide a boost to the nighttime and Sunday economy as more comprehensive options to travel by buses are introduced.

“ We have introduced 7,000 extra bus journeys per month through the 2021 BSIP funding adding to the current 48,000 journeys ”

We have also set aside funding for the provision of a high frequency bus service between the new Park and Ride Site and Luton town centre. The new Park and Ride facility and the associated bus operation fulfils one of Luton’s policy objectives and that is to alleviate congestion and improve air quality in the town centre. Luton town centre’s future development plans involves a significant reduction in car parking spaces. The provision of a new Park and Ride site on the outskirts helps restore parking spaces that will be lost in the centre. The Park and Ride service will help facilitate a new provision for football fans during match days when Luton Town Football Club play at home.

The peak hour traffic reduction originating from key corridors from the Butterfield site could be as high as 328 cars per day. There are plans to expand the Park and Ride site in the future.

The introduction of the ‘Hip Hop’ multi operator ticket has resulted in passengers being able to access a more comprehensive network. Passengers now have a multiple choice of services operated by different operators on common section of corridors and common origin and destination of bus routes.

### 2.9.6 Luton’s Bus Fleet

The five bus operators provide services from locations that are based in Luton, Bedford, Hatfield and Flitwick. The fleet current fleet profile does not include any zero emission buses. The greenest bus utilised by operators is a Euro VI emission standard. The breakdown of the current fleet profile is provided in the Bus Connectivity Assessment. The council will work with bus operators and conduct a feasibility study in terms of readiness to introduce a zero-emission fleet in the long term. is categorised by emission standards, where the Euro VI represent the newest and least polluting and Euro III represents the greatest polluting engines. At present none of the bus operators provide any zero emission buses within the Luton conurbation.

All vehicles in Luton provide the following facilities for bus passengers:

- Contactless payments
- Low floor easy access buses
- Spaces for wheelchair, buggies, and luggage
- A fold up bike is permitted if it fits in the luggage area
- CCTV coverage to support safer travel
- On-board audio/visual announcement systems are being fitted to comply with the forthcoming PSVAR regulations to ensure accessibility and inclusion for all passengers

### 2.9.7 Bus to Bus Integration

Integration between different bus services and operators has improved significantly. With the introduction of the discounted weekly ‘Hip Hop’ multi operator tickets, passengers are now able to travel on all five bus operators’ services not just within Luton but the wider conurbation of Luton, Dunstable, and Houghton Regis. Bus to bus integration is positively driven by the fact that the vast majority of bus services serve the Interchange, thereby providing a good connection point between buses. We will continue to develop initiatives that makes it easier for passengers to access all the available bus routes within the Luton conurbation and improve frequencies.

### 2.9.8 Bus to Rail Integration

Since bus operations began on the Busway, bus to rail integration has improved significantly with faster journey times on the Busway, the overall passenger experience between the two modes of transport has improved significantly. The Luton Interchange is built adjacent to the railway station and all buses serving Luton operate via the interchange providing good integration between buses and trains. All operators participate in the PlusBus scheme, and we have BSIP funds available to promote Bus to Rail Integration.

### 2.9.9 Customer Relations

All bus operators contact details are available in a prominent place which allows passengers to share their comments and suggestions on the quality and performance of bus services in their areas. All operators have a website where bus tickets can be purchased including the discounted weekly 'Hip Hop' multi operator tickets. Timetables, fares, and route information can also be found on the websites.

As part of our 2021 BSIP measure, we plan to introduce an All-in-One App that covers the Pan Bedfordshire areas of Luton, Central Bedfordshire, and Bedford. The one stop App will provide information on routes, timetables, fares, service changes and other relevant information that is useful to bus passengers.

### 2.9.10 Passenger Charter

Following Transport Focus and Bus Users UK best practices, we have produced a clear and simple Passenger Charter (attached as Appendix 4) in collaboration with the neighbouring authorities of Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council. The charter provides bus passengers with an opportunity to provide feedback on their bus journey experience and on the few occasions that journeys do not go to plan. This measure provides confidence to use bus services to existing and new customers. We hope that this will help to increase bus passenger numbers and improve customer satisfaction levels moving forward. The charter will be reviewed by the Enhanced Partnership Board every 24 months, with passengers and passenger advocacy groups consulted on any revisions. The passenger charter will be made widely available through Luton Council and bus operator websites with paper copies available from operator and council offices. Key aspects of the Customer Charter will also be displayed prominently at major bus stops and interchanges.

### 2.9.11 Disruption to Bus Services

Luton Council is working closely with bus operators and utility companies to minimise disruptions to buses when highway work is carried out. The Council engages with utility companies and provides regular updates to bus operators to ensure they are aware of future highway works.

## 2.10 Baseline Spending in Local Buses

The baseline funding in Table 6 below reflects the fact that improvements to the bus network in terms of more buses in the evening and Sunday along with better frequencies and connections during the daytime will only come into force from 1 April 2024. There was an element of funding provided to bus operators in 2023/24 to ensure they retain pre covid frequencies on key routes as any reduction in frequencies would have proved detrimental to our objectives of delivering passenger growth since frequencies reductions tend to dissuade existing users and discourages new user as it proves to be an unattractive offering to passengers. The retention of pre covid frequencies in the main has aided a faster recovery of passenger numbers.

The spending detailed in Table 6 takes into account the baseline spending on buses by Luton Council in 2022/23 and 2023/24, covering both revenue and capital budget through key headings. More details of revenue and capital spending through the 2021 BSIP funding can be found in the attached Appendix 2 & 2a.

A significant amount of spending through the 2021 BSIP funds is planned for 2024/25 and 2025/26. Due to the delay in the introduction of evening and Sunday services along with some daytime enhancements to bus services, we have extended the Bus Service Support fund to run beyond 2025 and into 2026. The 2024 BSIP reflects the fact that further funding for the evening and Sunday services will be beyond 2026 in the 2024 BSIP. Another significant spend beyond 2024 is the construction of the Park and Ride facility at Butterfield and the associated costs for operating the bus services from 2025.

Details	2022/2023 (000)		2023/2024		Source of Funding
	Revenue	Capital	Revenue	Capital	
Concessionary Fares Reimbursement	£3,300,000	£0	£2,400,000	£0	Luton Council Budget
Pre 09:30 Concessionary Fares Reimbursement	£0	£0	£400,000	£0	2021 BSIP
BSOG	£75,000	£0	£75,000	£0	Luton Council Budget
Busway Maintenance	£225,000	£0	£320,000	£0	Luton Council Budget
Provision of Bus Stop and Shelters	£65,000	£0	£65,000	£0	Luton Council Budget
Provision of Roadside Information	£30,000	£0	£30,000	£0	Luton Council Budget
Bus Priority Infrastructure	£2,398	£0	£15,830	£174,670	2021 BSIP
Other Infrastructure	£0	£299,615	£106,224	£1,976,283	2021 BSIP
Fares Support	£0	£0	£1,439,000	£0	2021 BSIP
Bus Services Support	£0	£0	£565,982	£0	2021 BSIP
Marketing	£0	£0	£46,000	£0	2021 BSIP
Passenger Voice and Transport Focus Surveys	£0	£0	£24,000	£0	2021 BSIP
EP/Franchising Delivery – Luton Council Costs	£72,321	£0	£425,000	£0	2021 BSIP
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£3,769,719</b>	<b>£299,615</b>	<b>£5,912,036</b>	<b>£2,150,953</b>	

Table 6: Baseline funding for the period 2022/23 and 2023/24

Route	Destination	LUTON BSIP MEASURE - BUS SERVICE SUPPORT		Funding Period	
		Details	BSIP Support	From	To
1	Luton Farley Hill	Later buses in the evenings - Monday to Sunday	Tender	02/06/2024	28/03/2026
4	Luton and Farley Hill	Later buses in the evenings - Monday to Sunday	Tender	02/06/2024	28/03/2026
12	Luton and Stopsley	Later buses in the evenings - Monday to Sunday	Tender	02/06/2024	28/03/2026
17/17A	Wigmore, Luton, L&D University Hospital, Lewsey Farm	Later buses in the evenings Monday to Saturday	Tender	07/04/2024	28/03/2026
23	Luton and Sundon Park	Later buses in the evenings Monday to Sunday plus new Sunday daytime service	Tender	02/06/2024	28/03/2026
24	Luton, Bushmead, Marsh Farm, L&D University Hospital Lewsey Farm	Later buses in the evenings Monday to Sunday plus new Sunday daytime service	Tender	02/06/2024	28/03/2026
26	Luton to Bushmead	New direct service to cater for education facilities - Monday to Friday	Commercial - BSIP 'pump priming' funding	02/06/2024	28/03/2026
27	Luton Marsh Farm	Later buses in the evenings - Monday to Sunday	Tender	02/06/2024	28/03/2026
28	Luton to Hockwell Ring	Later Buses in the evenings Monday to Saturday	Tender	02/06/2024	28/03/2026
29	Luton to Runfold	Later buses in the evenings - Monday to Sunday	Tender	02/06/2024	28/03/2026
32	Luton to Hockwell Ring	Later buses on Sunday evenings	Tender	02/06/2024	28/03/2026
37	Luton, L&D University Hospital and Lewsey Farm	Frequency increase to half hourly with through journeys connected to 17/17A timetable for better connection to L&D University Hospital with more direct service from Wigmore	Commercial - BSIP 'pump priming' funding	07/04/2024	28/03/2026
3/3A/30	Luton, Park Town, Culverhouse, Bushmead	Improved timetable with regular journeys and new link to Bushmead	Commercial - BSIP 'pump priming' funding	29/04/2024	28/03/2026
F70/F77	Milton Keynes, Leighton Buzzard, Dunstable, Luton and London Luton Airport	Service extended half hourly to London Luton Airport from Luton	Commercial - BSIP 'pump priming' funding	02/06/2024	28/03/2026
MK1	Milton Keynes, Luton, London Luton Airport	Frequency between Luton and London Luton Airport increased from hourly to half hourly	Commercial - BSIP 'pump priming' funding	02/06/2024	28/03/2026
200	Luton to Whipsnade Zoo	Summertime special bus service to Whipsnade Zoo to encourage ENCTS and Disable Passholder to use buses again and encourage more leisure trips by bus	Commercial - BSIP 'pump priming' funding	30/03/2024	31/08/2025
P&R	Butterfield, Parkway Station, Luton	New Park and Ride Bus service from the planned construction of a brand new Park and Ride facility at Butterfield	Tender	TBC	TBC

Table 7: Details of fixed line bus route enhancements delivered through 2021 BSIP funding

The Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis bus network map highlights the services that have been funded through the 2021 BSIP funding pot, these are shown on the map attached as Appendix 1&1a.

## 2.11 Main Areas of Opportunity and Conclusion

Luton Council and partners recognise that 'Bus Back Better' sets a high bar for improving bus services and Luton's ambitious BSIP will deliver each of the NBS's aspirations in ways that reflect the need of the conurbation's residents, past surveys through our own resources and Transport Focus highlights the need for the provision of

frequent, faster and more reliable services that are good value for money and easy to use. Bus networks have to be comprehensive. The daytime bus network within the Luton conurbation adequately serves the key attractors such as hospitals, education facilities, the town centre, and large employers such as London Luton Airport and Amazon. However, we can do better and provide high frequency routes that provide a truly 'turn up and go' frequency that we believe is the main attractor along with affordable fares to encourage more nonusers to change their travel habits and use the bus instead of their cars.

The much-envied Busway delivers a comprehensive service that delivers faster journeys and connections to the key areas of Luton, Dunstable, and Houghton Regis. Bus operators have taken advantage of the Busway to reroute some of the inter urban routes to operate via the Busway making journey times more attractive. A survey carried out prior to preparing the 2021 BSIP highlighted the need for more early morning, evening, and Sunday services. Through our 2021 BSIP measures we are delivering more buses in the evenings and Sundays and supporting the development of the daytime commercial network. An extra 7,000 bus trips per month are being added to the network from April 2024.

Luton is one of the most densely populated town without a city status. Car ownership has increased significantly. According to an RAC report, nearly 85,000 car registrations at addresses in Luton, this represents a 13% increase from a decade ago when registrations were at 75,000. This means there is 1 car registered for every 1.8 adults in Luton compared to national average of 1.7. Across Britain Car ownership has increased by 11% according to the RAC report. However, Luton has seen a significant increase in population, 10.9% between 2011 and 2021, this is much higher than the average for England at 6%.

Table 8 below compares population density with Nottingham and Reading who have one of the highest bus usages per head in England, this provides us with optimism and challenges that we can deliver significant ridership growth in Luton through a high-quality bus services that is supported with excellent infrastructure.

Population Density Per Km	
Town/City	Per KM
Nottingham	4,462
Reading	4,005
Milton Keynes	873
Bedford	364
<b>Luton</b>	<b>4,914</b>

Source - ONS Mid 2019

Table 8: Population density in Luton benchmarked against comparable towns

Whilst the increase in car ownership poses significant challenges in terms of traffic congestion and delivering a punctual and reliable bus operation, it also brings with it opportunities for modal shift from cars to other modes of transport including encouragement to use buses through an enhanced alternative offering comprehensive, safe, reliable, frequent, affordable, and easy to use.

Luton Council and partners will build on the success achieved so far through the 2021 BSIP funds to deliver more improvements and increase passenger numbers to a level that has never been reached.

Journeys per head in Luton are significantly higher compared to the rest of the East of England and we aim to increase this further through the 2021 BSIP and beyond 2025.

# 3. BSIP Improvements to 2025

## 3.1 Progress Since Publication of 2021 BSIP

Since the 2021 Bus Service Improvement Plan, Luton Council in partnership with bus operators and neighbouring authorities have made positive progress on the delivery of the BSIP measures. Details of all the BSIP initiatives have been provided in Section 2 of this report. As previously mentioned, the delivery of one of the key elements of the BSIP was delayed due to the widely advertised national shortage of drivers. This held us back in implementing a comprehensive network of bus services that included bus operating later in the evening, more buses on Sundays and also providing better connections during the daytime. All these initiatives are now in place and have been introduced from April 2024. Given the delay, Luton Council has taken the opportunity to extend the 2021 BSIP for supported bus services to March 2026.

One of the highlights of the 2021 BSIP delivery programme was the successful introduction of a discounted adult and child 'Hip Hop' multi operator ticket. This is made a significant positive impact on passenger number as the offer not only provides affordable bus travel and assist with the cost- of-living crisis, but it opens up a wider network of bus services for passengers who purchase these tickets. Given that this ticket was previously available at a premium price and was more costly than bus operators own product, the ticket now offers even greater value as it is priced to be cheaper than the main operators own weekly ticket price. Furthermore, the validity of the ticket goes beyond the boundaries of Luton and covers the wider area of Luton, Dunstable, and Houghton Regis, thus making it even more popular.

Significant other measures have been progressed including improvements to waiting facilities, provision of better and up to date information, lifting restrictions on pre 09:30 travel for the elderly and disabled.

One of the big capital projects is the construction of the Park and Ride site at Butterfield. The construction is expected to commence in the summer of 2024 with a view that bus operations will commence from the site from early to mid-2025.

We will use the 2021 BSIP as a positive platform to deliver further improvements beyond 2025 and plan a long-term vision for the bus network within the Luton conurbation.

## 3.2 Resource and Capital for the 2021 BSIP Delivery Programme

Table 9 is a summary detailing the BSIP Delivery Programme for bus improvements (both resource and capital) until the end of 2024/25, with the exception of Bus Service Support that has been extended to the end of 2025/26. More details on each of the category and the associated scheme and or intervention are attached in the Luton Council BSIP Overview Table as Appendix 5.

Categories	2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025		2025/2026		Totals	
	Res	Cap	Res	Cap	Res	Cap	Res	Cap	Res	Cap
Bus Priority Infrastructure	£2,398	£0	£15,830	£194,154	£81,772	£548,846	£0	£0	£100,000	£743,000
Other Infrastructure	£0	£299,615	£106,224	£1,749,293	£361,276	£4,555,092	£0	£0	£467,500	£6,604,000
Fares Support	£0	£0	£1,459,302	£0	£2,631,457	£0	£0	£0	£4,090,759	£0
Bus Service Support	£0	£0	£565,982	£0	£2,083,741	£0	£2,891,643		£5,541,366	£0
Marketing	£0	£0	£46,000		£179,000	£102,975	£0	£0	£225,000	£102,975
Passenger Voice	£0	£0	£24,000	£0	£51,000	£0	£0	£0	£75,000	£0
EP/Franchising delivery LTA costs	£72,321	£0	£425,000	£0	£698,179	£0	£0	£0	£1,195,500	£0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£74,719</b>	<b>£299,615</b>	<b>£2,642,338</b>	<b>£1,943,447</b>	<b>£6,086,425</b>	<b>£5,206,913</b>	<b>£2,891,643</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£11,695,125</b>	<b>£7,449,975</b>

Table 9: Summary of resources and capital for the 2021 BSIP Delivery Programme

At present Luton Council and partners do not expect any further delays in implementing the various measures to 2025. However, the construction of the Park and Ride scheme is yet to commence and as with all major construction projects, there is a possibility that issues arise that may cause delays to the construction and subsequent delay in commencing the operation of the Park and Ride site.

The Bus Service Support element of the funding has been agreed with bus operators on a fixed price basis for the duration of the funds, a clause has been included that allows the extension of the tenders once Luton Council secures further funding beyond 2026.

### **3.3 Driver Recruitment and Retention**

All operators who are part of the Better Buses Luton EP have staffing plans that highlight the numbers of staff required in order to operate bus services successfully and to a high standard, vacancies, known leavers (such as planned retirement) and historical staff turnover which allows them to accurately plan staff recruitment and training. Our operators use a wide range of innovative recruitment techniques from “recommend a friend” (which is an extremely popular avenue for recruiting from the local community) and depot open days to working with the DWP and local Job Centres to help advertise and fill vacant roles. All operators have in-house training teams and ensure that staff receive mandatory CPC training in a wide range of topic areas.

The main operator Arriva, who employs around 75% of the total bus staff have a dedicated central team of recruiters who apply best practices from other regions of Arriva to improve their recruitment process. Bus operators are also offering a different joining scheme for drivers and engineers to encourage more people to join the industry. These schemes include a starter bonus paid as a lump sum to those that join the operator as a driver or a skilled member of staff such as mechanics, technicians, and electricians.

As part of the Enhanced Partnership, we will continue to work together through EP Board Meetings to monitor staffing levels and we will work together with organisations such as DWP and local job centres to advertise and fill job vacancies.

# 4. Ambitions for 2025 and Beyond

## 4.1 Overview

We are delighted that the measures that we have implemented through the 2021 BSIP have already delivered a number of successes. Most importantly customer numbers in Luton have recovered and grown so that in 2023/24 total passenger numbers are 2% higher than pre-covid levels.

- Adult and child passengers are 10% higher than pre-covid levels
- While the recovery of elderly and disabled passengers (ENCTS) has been slower, overall recovery is better than the rest of the East of England at 72%

We have introduced a number of measures that have made bus travel in Luton even better value as we have helped to support individuals and families during the cost-of-living crisis.

We have also extended the period of time free travel is available to ENCTS passengers to the full day and we believe that through more marketing and improved information we will see growth in the number of journeys made by people using ENCTS passes.

In our 2021 BSIP our stated passenger recovery target for 2023/24 was 92% of pre-covid levels. We have beaten this target by 10% with passenger recovery at 102% in 2023/24, which means that we have delivered our target for the first 2021 BSIP and have almost reached a level we did not expect to achieve until 2026/27.

During the life of the 2021 BSIP we have extended the geographical area covered to include the wider conurbation of Luton that includes Dunstable and Houghton Regis and in doing so we have ensured that we have considered passenger numbers in this wider area for the purpose of monitoring the impact of our 2021 BSIP interventions – for clarity our baseline figures includes passenger numbers for the wider area and ridership data from 2019/20 to 2023/24 has been supplied by bus operators on a quarterly basis as per our EP agreement based on the new area. We will therefore change our base target moving forward and report passenger numbers for the new wider area.

We took the decision to include the wider area due to the unique nature of the bus network in Luton that includes the Busway with high frequency services between the three towns that make up the wider conurbation.

It should also be noted that the multi-operator Hip Hop ticket that we have discounted and heavily promoted is also valid in this wider area of Luton, Dunstable, and Houghton Regis.

Given the above, for the 2024 BSIP we will realign our base passenger figures and our projections will include ridership within the wider conurbation.

We are extremely pleased that the measures we have delivered to date via the 2021 BSIP have resulted in more people using public transport in the Luton area and are confident that the measures we will deliver going forward will help us to not only grow passenger numbers further but also allow us to help buses become more punctual and reliable, quicker and deliver even greater levels of customer satisfaction. Our plans beyond 2025 include the continuation of the discount on the multi operator Hip Hop ticket and introduction of more journeys during the day. It is imperative that we maintain the momentum and offer the discounted tickets along with the comprehensive offering of evening and weekend buses.

During April 2024 in partnership with local bus operators we have introduced a number of improvements to the bus network including more journey in the week at weekend during the early morning and late evening. At the time of producing this 2024 BSIP, these improvements have had little time during which to influence journey numbers and satisfaction levels, but their affect will be felt over the next 12 months and beyond as we expect the introduction of the extra 7,000 bus journeys to deliver a further 0.5 million passenger journeys per annum.

## 4.2 Service Level and Network Coverage

Working with industry leading marketing and communications experts Best Impressions we have produced an easy to understand all operator map for the Luton, Dunstable, and Houghton Regis conurbation (see appendix 1 and 1a).

The map shows all the regular bus services that operate in the area with the width of the line illustrating each route indicating the frequency of the service i.e., the thicker the line the more frequent the service.

The map clearly shows local areas within the conurbation such as Marsh Farm, Stopsley, Leagrave and Bramingham as well as key destinations such as Luton and Dunstable University Hospital, Luton Airport Parkway and London Luton Airport. Such a comprehensive all operator map has not previously been available and is now available for use by all stakeholders including the council and bus operators in order to promote the entire bus network and multi-operator tickets.

We believe that the bus network in Luton has evolved over a number of years to serve key destinations. The majority of services are “stand alone” and provide fast and direct bus services that are easy for the travelling public to understand and use with regular clock face departure times.

The majority of services operate via the Luton Interchange situated in the town centre thereby allowing better integration with other bus services and other modes such as local and national train services.

The interchange has a transport hub that provides information relating to buses and trains as well as longer distance coach services. Customers are able to buy tickets for all operators at the interchange and access information that will help make their journeys easy and seamless.

Through the 2024 BSIP funding we intend to also provide driver welfare facilities at the transport hub which will bring with it a number of benefits including improved staff engagement, lower staff turnover and operational efficiencies that will help ensure bus services remain commercially sustainable and reliable.

The attached Appendix 3 provides details of operating times and frequencies for all bus services in the conurbation. The appendix also provides details of services that have been enhanced through 2021 BSIP funds delivered through a mixture of tenders and “pump prime” funding. As previously highlighted the service enhancements were introduced from April 2024 and the funding period has been extended to March 2026.

The daytime services that have received “pump prime” funding provide enhanced links to key destinations including health and education facilities and our expectations are that these enhancements and new routes will become commercially viable after two years of supported operation. It is our intention to fund more of these type of improvements over the coming years with the expectation that they will also become commercially viable beyond 2029.

Route	Current Frequency	Proposed Frequency	Current number of buses	Proposed number of buses	Destination
12	15	10	4	5	Luton - Stopsley
23	60	30	1	2	Luton - Sundon Park
28/28B	30	20	3	5	Luton - Hockwell Ring
321/721	30	15	8	9	Luton – Watford ( <i>Frequency Increase Saturday only</i> )
42	60	60	1	2	Bedford – Toddington ( <i>extend service to Luton</i> )
17/17A	15	10	5	2	Wigmore-Luton-Lewsey Farm

Table 10: List of proposed service frequency increases from 2025 to 2029

For over a decade, bus operators have not been able to provide evening and weekend services due to funding cuts through austerity measures. Through the 2021 BSIP, we have also supported the introduction of a number of evening and weekend services which provide improved links to vital destinations and support Luton’s nighttime

economy; however, we do not expect that these services will become commercially viable and will require on-going financial support as will other evening and weekend services that are introduced or enhanced post 2025.

In the short term we will review the performance of each individual bus route and support bus operators to increase frequencies on routes that we believe will deliver growth and become commercially viable beyond 2029. As a general principle, frequency increases on key bus routes is all about pump-priming additional capacity in order to cater for the continued growth being delivered through the BSIP. As patronage rises so do the number of seats per hour required, but this results in an immediate big jump in costs for every additional vehicle put on the road and it takes time for the growth to catch back up with that cost. Our proposals for 2025-2029 is all about continuing to facilitate this growth trend that we are experiencing in Luton and support the enhancement of services listed in Table 10 earlier.

Our long-term ambition beyond 2029 is to have a 10-minute frequency on all major routes in the conurbation linking key suburbs, health, education, retail, and employment sites with the city centre interchange.

Through 2021 BSIP we have already secured capital and revenue funding to construct and operate a 350-space Park and Ride facility on the outskirts of the town at Butterfield.

Through the 2024 BSIP funding we intend to expand the Park and Ride facility by a further 350 car parking spaces and in doing so reduce the number of cars travelling into the town centre helping to reduce congestion and vehicle emissions. By expanding the facility to 700 car parking spaces, our plan includes the provision of Airport Parking, this will deliver vital revenue in the future to ensure that the whole Park and Ride operation becomes commercially viable and sustainable in the long term beyond 2029 without the need for further funding.

The Park and Ride facility will compensate for the loss of town centre car parking spaces as the area is redeveloped and the number of town centre car parks is reduced in line with stated goals. It will also allow people to access an ever-expanding London Luton Airport.

As London Luton Airport expands it is exploring ways by which staff and customers can access the airport in an environmentally sustainable way. In order to achieve this the airport is considering funding Demand Responsive Transport services to provide access to the airport in the early morning and late evening. Luton Council and London Luton Airport are now committed to working together to discuss how DRT vehicles could be used at other times of the day to provide services to areas in the conurbation more cost efficiently than through the use of larger vehicles operating on fixed line routes. Providing DRT in such a way with funding from London Luton Airport means that vehicles will be heavily utilised throughout the day making the operation more likely to become commercially viable in the longer term.

Luton Council's 'Vision for Bus' and the UK Government's 'Bus Back Better' both set clear ambition for better bus services in the evenings and at weekends to reflect peoples 24 hour lives. We already have a good bus network in Luton with the Busway now offering a 24-hour service catering for airport staff and air passengers, we have introduced evening and weekend services on key corridors through the 2021 BSIP Funds. But to meet our ambition and to act on feedback from customers through the Transport Focus Surveys, there is more to do. We have the opportunity to enhance the availability of buses at off peak times. Our proposal to develop the bus network are guided by a need to deliver a frequency of at least every 10 minutes on our core routes. This is our long-term ambition and one that we are confident will deliver significant growth is passenger numbers.



Figure 14: Measures affecting service level and network coverage

### 4.3 Bus Priority

A lack of road space in the Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis conurbation means that it is difficult if not impossible to introduce further bus lanes. This does not mean however that we are not ambitious in our desire to introduce more bus priority measures to help make bus journeys more reliable, punctual, and faster.

We are fortunate that the conurbation already benefits from the phenomenally successful Busway which at peak provides punctual and reliable bus services that operate every 4 minutes or more as it delivers almost 50 percent of all bus journeys made in the conurbation.

Bus journey times within the conurbation are fairly attractive and 'end to end' journey times on most routes are between 10 and 20 minutes, given that a significant number of passengers board and alight midway through the route, journey times for those group of passengers are even lower. Bus priority is more designed for delivering reliable and punctual journeys, passengers should be able to rely on buses arriving on time at their boarding and alighting destinations.

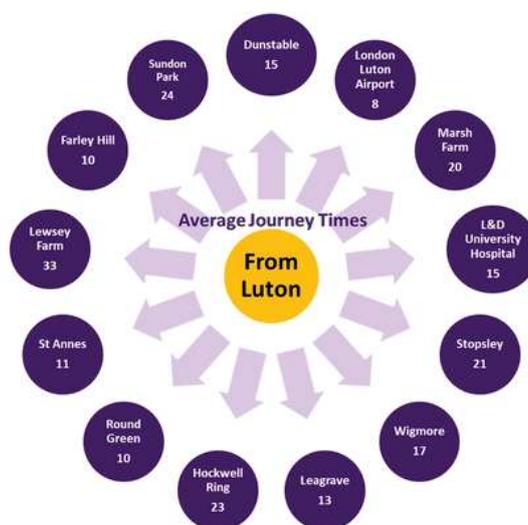


Figure 15: Average journey times (in minutes) from Luton to nearby towns and other key destinations

Our ambition is to provide fast, punctual, and reliable bus services throughout the whole area and not simply on the Busway. Through the 2021 BSIP, the council in collaboration with bus operators identified 16 junctions for possible improvements to allow priority for buses at these junctions, following a detailed study of all the identified junctions, the council has finalised a list of 6 junctions where further improvements can be achieved as all other locations were deemed to have maximum capacity or work had already been conducted. Through the 2024 BSIP we will carry out a further feasibility study on additional pinch points that are deemed to cause delays to bus services with a view to developing a strategic review of these junctions to ensure that bus priority is achieved without having a detrimental impact on the overall traffic flow, which could create a knock-on effect on other roads and bus routes.

The council will also look to increase the number of enforcement cameras along bus routes to further extend enforcement at locations where indiscriminate parking and breaches of the red route regulations are prevalent.

The council has developed the red route policy in order to implement and enforce red routes throughout the borough. The council will look at extending the red route network in the Bury Park area, which is one of the main corridors for buses in and out of Luton. The congestion in the area causes significant delays to several bus routes.

We will also look to employ dedicated traffic enforcement officers who will focus on helping to keep buses running smoothly and on time.

As part of London Luton Airport's expansion plans, there is a significant project to dual Vauxhall Way, this project involves acquisition of land and is estimated to cost around £80m which will be funded by London Luton Airport

and other capital funding streams. This will improve the delivery of the Park and Ride service long with bus routes A, F77, 12, 17, 17A, MK1, 100 and 88 as the plans are to have a dedicated bus lane on the dual sections of the road. Vauxhall Way is a corridor within Luton between A1081 and Hitchin Road. It is a busy link in both morning and evening peak hours. It is a key connector to and from the Airport, M1, Hitchin and North Luton.

As part of the A505 Vauxhall Way traffic improvements, the council has considered and completed the design stage of the current roundabout at Crawley Green Road/Vauxhall Way junction to be converted to a signalised junction. This requires significant funding that the council hopes can be secured through this 2024 BSIP, with a small element of capital funding being complemented from the council's LTP funding pot. This will once again benefit the services listed under 4.3.8 as this junction will provide priority to buses.



Figure 16: Map showing the extent of the Vauxhall Way Model

The council is currently conducting a detailed study to improve the junction of Waller Avenue/Marsh Road/Leagrave Road. The junction will again provide traffic signal priority to buses and will benefit bus routes 23, 27, 28 and 28B. A proportion of the funding will be provided from the council's capital and active travel fund with the remainder being requested through this 2024 BSIP.



Figure 17: Measures affecting bus priority

#### 4.4 Fares and Ticketing

2021 BSIP funding has already allowed us to deliver a fares and ticketing initiatives that offer even better value to passengers, and which have helped families during the cost-of-living crisis.

We have significantly reduced the cost of the weekly multi-operator Hip Hop ticket for both adults and children alike which has helped to drive up usage and overall passenger growth. We will use the 2024 BSIP funding to maintain existing discounts for Hip Hop tickets and to also introduce automatic fare capping to ensure travel for a day never exceeds the cost of a daily Hip Hop ticket and likewise with weekly travel and the cost of weekly Hip Hop tickets.

The Hip Hop ticket is a great example of what providing simple, affordable fares can mean for adults and children and bus use. We want to maintain this success and continue offering this discount as not only does it deliver our objective of cheaper simpler fares, but it also provides passengers with better frequency of services on bus routes that are served by more than one bus operator, prime example of this is the Busway where three bus operators provide a high frequency service that is truly a ‘turn up and go’ service.

2021 BSIP funding was also used to make ENCTS travel available all day for eligible elderly and disabled passengers rather than just post 0930. This initiative has seen eligible passengers start to return to the bus network post covid, but not in the numbers hoped. The 2024 BSIP funding will therefore be used to promote the improvement to the ENCTS scheme to encourage more older and disabled people to get active helping to alleviate loneliness and improve mental and physical health.

PlusBus is already available in the Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis conurbation and our short-term priority is to promote the knowledge and use of this ticket. Longer term we will use the 2024 BSIP funding to introduce bus and train through ticketing for specific bus-rail journeys.



Figure 18: Measures affecting fares and ticketing

#### 4.5 Passenger Experience

Below we will highlight how we have already, and intend to, improve the overall passenger experience by:

- Improving bus stops, bus stations and interchange
- Improving bus information and network identity
- Improving accessibility, inclusiveness, personal safety and security
- Implementing the Bus Passenger Charter

It is important that we provide bus users with comfortable and safe facilities where they can wait for their bus services to arrive. 2021 BSIP funding means that Luton has already installed 130 brand new bus shelters with more to follow beyond 2025.

When upgrading bus shelters, we have and will continue to ensure that we take into consideration the needs of people with disabilities and make footway improvements in the vicinity of the bus stops and shelters. We will also modify shelters where possible with Kassel Kerbs to allow stepless entry onto buses, all of which will be DDA compliant and have adequate wheelchair spaces.

By 2028 Luton intend to ban the promotion and advertising of unhealthy foods within the town which means that bus shelters provided for free, with advertising space that is sold by the shelter provider, will need to be purchased or replaced by the council for which 2024 BSIP funding will be required. Luton’s Local Transport Plan also highlight the requirement for all bus shelters to be powered by sustainable solar power in order to help achieve its aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2040.

Thanks to 2021 BSIP funding over 100 new Real Time Information screens have been erected at key locations throughout Luton. The 2024 BSIP funding will be used to install even more screens and to upgrade RTPI infrastructure so that customers can also benefit from audio announcements at the touch of a button.

Along with new multi-operator maps, the promotion of multi-operator tickets the bus network in Luton is becoming more seamless and is beginning to be promoted under the “Better Buses Luton” banner which helps promote a united network.

We also believe that bus users benefit from having a friendly face to help answer any questions that they may have about buses in the conurbation and onward travel. To this end 2024 BSIP funding will be used to employ bus ambassadors who will be on hand at the main interchange to help and support bus users.

The Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR) were created to deliver equality of opportunity for disabled bus and coach users, enabling all passengers to travel easily, confidently, and safely. We will use 2024 BSIP funding to ensure that all buses used to operate local bus services in the Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis conurbation will meet these requirements by supporting bus operators to speed up the installation of Audio-Visual announcements on their fleet.

We will also help local operators to maintain the standard of their bus fleet by supporting mid-life bus refurbishments to the tune of 50%.

We will improve personal safety and security by ensuring that the interchange and bus stops are well lit, that CCTV is in place at the interchange, key stops and on all buses. CCTV cameras are already in place at all bus stops and shelters on the Busway.

Thanks to mandatory periodic CPC driver training all staff will receive training relating to passenger safety and dealing with emergency situations on or off the bus. We will ensure that through our EP all five bus operators have a proper "code red" procedure with the emergency services. All buses are fitted with CCTV cameras.

As part of our ongoing safety measures for the Busway, we will install fencing on key sections of the Busway to prevent pedestrians from encroaching on the Busway. We will also look at the fitment of speed warning devices on all buses using the Busway to further improve safety.

As well as the provision of a Customer Charter all bus operators within the EP have dedicated facilities that allow customers to contact them in order to make complains, suggestions and commendations. Through our EP we will work with bus operators to provide standardised procedures that encourages passengers to provide suggestions in respect of passenger safety. These suggestions will be regularly collated and discussed at EP Board Meetings.

Collaborating with our partners at Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council as well as local bus operating companies we have produced and started to implement a region wide Bus Passenger Charter (see Appendix 4) that helps provide local people with the confidence to use services. We will work to evolve our Charter so that it includes publication of performance statistics such as punctuality and reliability. We will also develop the Charter in partnership with operators so that it includes a "last journey guarantee". We will use the updated guidance from the DfT to continuously improve and develop the charter that provides bus passengers with assurances when using the bus services within the Pan Bedfordshire area.



Figure 19: Measures affecting passenger experience

#### 4.6 Bus Fleet

Luton Council strongly believes that buses are vital to ensuring the economy meets its carbon neutral targets and to clean up the town's air. Currently a fleet of around 120 buses are used on the network in Luton, the most environmentally friendly fleet operates with a Euro 6 emission standard.

The main bus operator in Luton is Arriva, the company was acquired fairly recently by an investment group who have yet to announce their long-term fleet replacement plan and investment in zero emission buses. Luton Council

will work closely with all bus operators and encourage the introduction of a zero-emission bus fleet in Luton as part of Luton's ambitions to become a carbon neutral town by 2040.

As a start point, Luton Council have set aside funds from the 2021 BSIP for the operation of a high frequency bus service from the new Park and Ride site, this will involve the procurement of electric buses by the successful bidder as the condition of the tender will stipulate the requirement for 3 electric buses to operate the service. This will provide a good starting point for our vision for an emission free bus service. Luton Council recognises the need to move at a faster pace and with greater level of ambition and ensure the scale that the town's bus fleet represents and is exploited to the full to enable the much greater progress on decarbonisation of other fleets and reduce total road transport emissions.

We will actively look at alternative funding stream such as Zebra to procure a zero-emission fleet initially for the Busway and in the future look at high frequency services that can be switched to zero emission buses.

We will work with bus operators and look at their infrastructure to assess whether their existing operating sites can be transformed to accommodate a zero-emission fleet. Whilst we are confident that the main bus operator Arriva is able to accommodate a zero-emission fleet at their existing site, there are challenges with other operators who may not be able to provide additional capacity for the associated infrastructure to convert the fleet to zero emission. We will work with all operators to explore all possible options and look at alternative funding streams to allow the modification work that may be required for a zero-emission fleet.

#### **4.7 Long-term Transformation of the Network**

Passenger numbers within the Luton conurbation have returned to pre-Covid level and more. It is vital that commerciality of the local bus network, the EP continues to deliver passenger growth to secure long-term financial sustainability of the bus network and secure the bus services which local residents rely upon to carry out their day to day lives. Alongside exceeding the key milestone is passenger growth, Luton Council and partners' vision and aim is to deliver more 'turn up and go' frequencies on key corridors with at least a 10-minute frequency while aiming to change the way bus services operate and deliver more fast and direct services between major attractors to cater for commuters, health workers, students, and leisure journeys.

Luton Council will construct a Park and Ride facility through the 2021 BSIP funds that will deliver a fast and frequent bus service between the site and the interchange from 2025/26. Our plans beyond 2026 is to expand the facility and double the capacity of the Park and Ride site through the 2024 BSIP funding and deliver a bus service that caters for commuters heading into Luton Town Centre, London Luton Airport staff and air passengers, in doing so, we will deliver a sustainable Park and Ride service that will require minimal funding beyond 2029 as income from the airport parking will aid the funding of the whole Park and Ride facility and the associated bus services between the site, airport and the Interchange.

We will continue the development of the Busway by ensuring all buses operating on the whole section of the Busway are zero emission by 2040, we are also working with operators to deliver additional capacity through the introduction of double-deck buses. We recognise that, to deliver a safe and comfortable service on the Busway, we have to be mindful of the frequency at which the Busway is served as over bussing can pose safety risks. Delivering additional capacity through the introduction of higher capacity buses provides further opportunities to deliver passenger growth.

We will consider an ambitious project to extend the Busway beyond Dunstable to deliver faster journeys for resident beyond Houghton Regis. We recognise that this will require a detailed feasibility study and will take years to implement beyond 2029.

Luton Council has ambitions to deliver a zero-emission fleet by 2040 and we will work closely with bus operators and ensure we take full advantage of future funding streams that allows us to speed up the introduction of a zero-emission fleet.

We will ensure that bus services are accessible over longer operating period and all key areas within the Luton conurbation are covered throughout the day to include later buses in the evenings and more buses during the weekends.

We will ensure that we maintain the current arrangements on the multi operator ticket and in the long term consider a single type of ticket that covers the network beyond the Luton conurbation into Central Bedfordshire and Bedford.

We will continue the roll out of Real Time Passenger Information Screens to ensure all stops with high level of boarding has real time information and roll out of real time voice announcement will be integrated in our over passenger information strategy.



Figure 20: Summary of Luton Council's 'Vision for Bus' and its 2024 BSIP

# 5. Monitoring & Reporting

## 5.1 The BSIP Targets

The targets set in the 2021 BSIP have been reviewed and a revised base has been calculated based on the fact that passenger numbers now include services covering the wider Luton conurbation that includes Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis. Given the unique service profile involving the Busway along with the wider validity of the Hip Hop multi operator tickets, the EP Board agreed that passenger numbers should be measured to include the wider area as it provides a valuable insight as to how various interventions involving the wider conurbation has impacted on bus usage.

Bus operators have also been faced with an unprecedented level of driver shortages post the pandemic and recruitment of drivers has been a significant challenge over the last 3 years. This has impacted on service delivery and the reliability and punctuality data for this period reflects the issues faced by bus operators. However, the driver situation has significantly improved, and we are confident that future data will show a positive move towards our aspirations of delivering a reliable and punctual bus service for the resident of Luton, Dunstable, and Houghton Regis. Our published 2021 BSIP targets are detailed below along with our revised targets.

## 5.2 Monitoring and Reporting

The 2024 BSIP covers the period 2025–2029. Luton Council and partners will await further guidance from the DfT on future public reporting regime of progress in delivering the BSIP and outcomes data against the above BSIP targets. Admittedly, Luton Council has previously faced challenges to obtain relevant data to report against BSIP targets, the council will apply a more stringent monitoring and reporting process that allows regular monitoring and reporting as per DfT guidance.

## 5.3 Bus Connectivity Assessments

To complement the 2024 BSIP, the Bus Connectivity Assessment for Luton has been completed and presented as a separate document as required by the DfT.

Name of authority or authorities:	Luton Council
Franchising or Enhanced Partnership (or both):	Enhanced Partnership
Date of publication:	June 2023
Date of next annual update:	June 2024

Targets	2018/19 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2028/29 Target	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Overall Satisfaction With Journey	85%	80% (-5%)	82%	85%	As reported in Transport Focus Surveys
Value for Money	62%	71% (+9%)	75%	80%	As reported in Transport Focus Surveys
Length of waiting time at bus stop	NA	65%	67%	70%	As reported in Transport Focus Surveys
Punctuality at the bus stop	76%	65% (-10%)	67.5%	75%	As reported in Transport Focus Surveys
The Bus driver	69%	85% (+16%)	87%	90%	As reported in Transport Focus Surveys
Punctuality	80%	77% (-3%)	80%	90%	Derived from data provided by bus operators to Luton Council and DfT
Reliability (Scheduled Kms Operated)	99.5%	99% (-0.5%)	99.25%	99.5%	Scheduled mileage operated, based on statistics provided by operators
Passenger Numbers	12.2m	12.5m (+0.3m)	13.0m	14.0m	Data from operators on total journeys within the Luton conurbation as reported quarterly to Luton Council

# 6. DfT BSIP Overview

## 6.1 BSIP Overview Table

The Overview table is attached as Appendix 5 (Luton Council BSIP Overview Table). Below is a list of summarised NBS Objectives along with title of schemes/proposals planned for delivery between 2025 and 2029.

**Better Buses Luton**  
Driving Improvements

**Service Level and Network Coverage**

- ★ More buses in the evenings and weekends
- ★ 'Pump Priming' funds for daytime bus frequency increases

Capital (£k)	Revenue (£k)
0	6,258

**Better Buses Luton**  
Driving Improvements

**Lower and Simpler Fares**

- ★ Discounted multi operator tickets to make bus travel affordable
- ★ Unrestricted travel for the elderly and disabled passengers

Capital (£k)	Revenue (£k)
0	11,472

**Better Buses Luton**  
Driving Improvements

**Waiting and Interchange Facilities**

- ★ 300 new bus shelters/bus stops
- ★ Prominent marking of bus cages on roads at bus stops to ease access
- ★ Provision of drivers' rest facilities at Luton Interchange

Capital (£k)	Revenue (£k)
8,843	0

**Better Buses Luton**  
Driving Improvements

**Bus Passenger Experience**

- ★ Transport Focus Surveys - customer feedback and satisfaction
- ★ Speed Alert devices on all buses to improve safety
- ★ Fencing on Busway to improve safety
- ★ Development of Passenger Charter
- ★ Regular bus events to promote bus services and get passenger feedback
- ★ Provision of Bus Ambassadors to assist passengers

Capital (£k)	Revenue (£k)
2,300	679

**Better Buses Luton**  
Driving Improvements

**Bus Fleet**

- ★ Feasibility Study - Bus operators' readiness for zero emission buses

Capital (£k)	Revenue (£k)
0	54

**Better Buses Luton**  
Driving Improvements

**Bus Priority**

- ★ Enforcement Cameras at key locations
- ★ Further feasibility study on traffic signal priority around Luton
- ★ Expansion of Red Routes to improve access for buses
- ★ Dedicated bus enforcement officers to maintain clearway for buses
- ★ Junction improvement - Waller Avenue/Leagrave Road/Marsh Road
- ★ Junction improvement - Crawley Green Road/Vauxhall Way

Capital (£k)	Revenue (£k)
6,550	621

**Better Buses Luton**  
Driving Improvements

**Ticketing**

- ★ Maximum capping on daily and weekly tickets
- ★ Promotion of PlusBus tickets

Capital (£k)	Revenue (£k)
120	849

**Better Buses Luton**  
Driving Improvements

**Bus Information and Network Identity**

- ★ 150 Real Time Information Screens
- ★ 200 new timetable cases and timetables
- ★ BSIP Marketing activity to raise awareness on bus travel in Luton
- ★ Production of timetable booklet covering Pan Bedfordshire area
- ★ Production of network map with 'Hip Hop' boundary

Capital (£k)	Revenue (£k)
865	960

**Better Buses Luton**  
Driving Improvements

**Accessibility and Inclusion**

- ★ Real time audio announcements at bus stops
- ★ Fitment of audio visual systems on buses
- ★ Access improvements at bus stops

Capital (£k)	Revenue (£k)
2,240	0

**Better Buses Luton**  
Driving Improvements

**Longer Term Transformation of the Network**

- ★ Gap analysis on current bus network and future demand
- ★ New DRT Service to support fixed line routes and London Luton Airport
- ★ Park and Ride bus operations and expansion of Park and Ride facility

Capital (£k)	Revenue (£k)
3,150	3,207

## 6.2 Bus Operators' Participation in the BSIP

There are five bus operators that provide services in Luton:

- Arriva
- Centrebus
- Grant Palmer
- Stagecoach
- Uno

All five bus operators participate in the Bus Service Improvement Plan and all five operators are members of the Enhanced Partnership Board. Luton Council has received full support from all five bus operators during the production of the 2021 BSIP and the 2024 BSIP. Through the EP we have jointly delivered BSIP measures that has contributed to passenger growth, Luton Council will continue to work in partnership with bus operators to deliver our ambitious plans contained within both the 2021 and 2024 BSIPs and fulfil both our short and long-term plans for buses in Luton through the BSIP funds (see appendix 6 - 2024 BSIP Letters of Support).

