



Reading Transport Strategy 2040 Sub-Strategy:

Reading Bus Service Improvement Plan 2024

June 2024



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

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1 Our Bus Vision

Background

In March 2021, the DfT published its National Bus Strategy: Bus Back Better. At its core, the document set out the government's programme for improving bus services following the challenges presented by the COVID Pandemic. Further, it also established ambitions to grow ridership beyond the pre covid levels. To do so, the Strategy notes that services would need to be more frequent, faster and more reliable, cheaper, more comprehensive, easier to understand, easier to use, better to ride in, better integrated with other modes and each other, greener, accessible and inclusive by design, innovative, and seen as a safe mode of transport.

To secure eligibility to funding for bus services following the publishing of the report, Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) were required to produce Bus Service Improvements Plans (BSIPs), available to the public and setting out a plan for improving bus services in the local area.

As an outcome of the success of our BSIP 2021, Reading was one of only 31 local authorities originally awarded funding for its implementation. Reading was awarded BSIP Phase 1 funding of £26.263m for the period 2022 to 2025 to deliver the infrastructure and service improvements set out in its BSIP. Details of the delivery of these initiatives is included later in this document, however the overall objectives aimed to provide:

- Intensive service and investment on key corridors and routes that are easier to understand.
 - New services responding to demand and social inclusion needs. Significant increases in bus priority.
 - Longer term transformation of networks through Bus Rapid Transit and other measures.
 - Service patterns integrated with other modes.
 - Seamless, integrated local ticketing between operators and across all types of transport.
 - Lower and simpler fares.
 - Clearly branded local bus network presented as a single system that works together with clear passenger information.
 - Modern buses and decarbonisation.
 - Bus services that are safe and perceived to be safe by all.
 - Giving bus passengers more of a voice and a say.
-

The government published updated requirements in 2024 setting out the need for LTAs to update their original BSIPs produced for 2024 to access their allocated funding for the 2024/25 financial year. This document therefore establishes progress to date, and our ambitions and proposals for the longer term in line with our Local Transport Plan and other regional and local strategies.

Our Bus Service Improvement Plan

Our BSIP 2021 was only the first stage of our overall plan for buses in Reading as outlined in our new Reading Transport Strategy 2040. Our new BSIP 2024 outlines how we plan to further enhance bus services in Reading, providing even better access to opportunities across the borough, continuing to combat the poor air quality affecting some parts of our town, providing another step forward to create a net zero-carbon Reading and support the vision and objectives of the Reading Transport Strategy 2040.

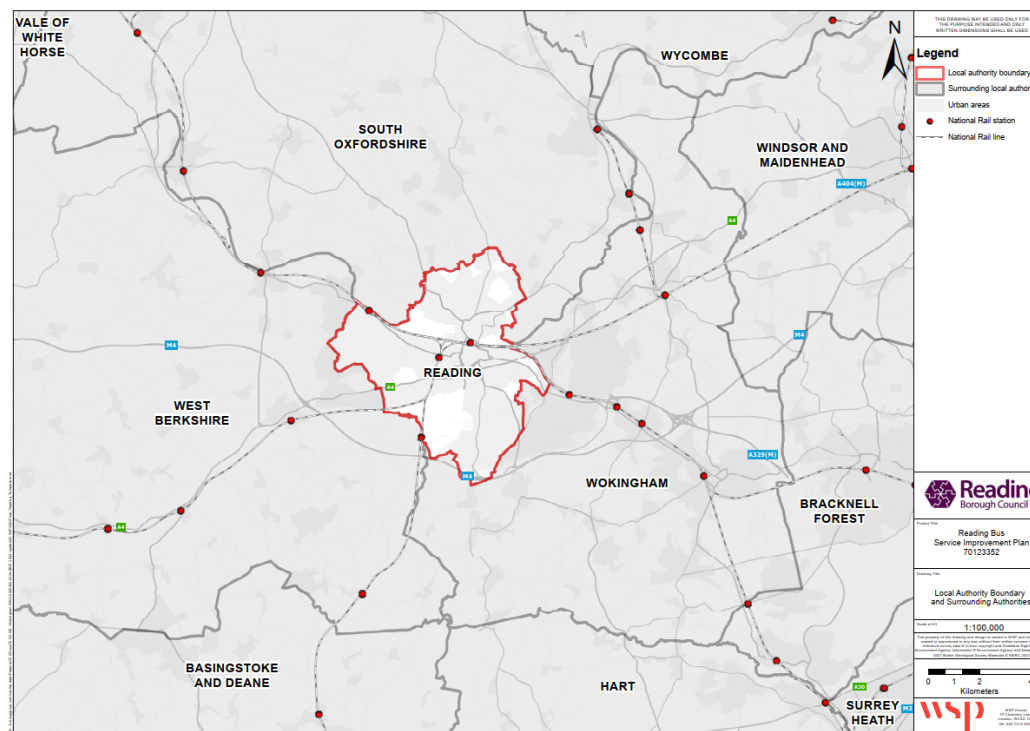
In line with the original published BSIP, this updated BSIP covers all local bus services in the Reading LTA area as shown below in Figure 1-1. This BSIP has been developed in partnership with local bus operators and neighbouring local authorities, taking account of previous feedback from residents and key stakeholders.

We continue to work closely with our neighbouring local authorities and stakeholders, particularly Wokingham Borough Council, West Berkshire Council and Oxfordshire County Council, to ensure a true sense of collaboration and partnership with the objective of providing passengers with a coherent and joined-up network across the region. Cross-boundary services form a vital element of the overall offer for bus passengers in Reading, particularly within Berkshire which consists of six unitary authorities. These services provide opportunities for our residents to access a wider range of employment, education and leisure facilities, alongside attracting commuters and visitors into the borough from the wider county and beyond.

Following requirements set out for the 2021 BSIP, Reading has formed an Enhanced Partnership involving the Council and bus operators across the borough, a formal means through which improvements could be agreed. These improvements have come in several forms to date, including working with operators to establish and provide socially inclusive services, improving fare structures to ensure consistency as well as lower fares, and developing conversations around where best to focus bus priority infrastructure interventions.

This partnership was formed with the 3 largest operators in the Borough: Reading Transport Limited (Reading Buses), Arriva The Shires Ltd and Go Ahead.

Figure 1-1 - Reading Borough BSIP Area



Our Bus Vision

Reading Borough Council has a bold and ambitious vision for the future of bus travel in Reading as evident from our approach to bus travel and success over the last 20 years. This is aligned to the national vision and objectives set out in the National Bus Strategy as well as our local vision for sustainable transport set out in the Reading Transport Strategy 2040, and the wider Reading 2050 vision.

Our new Reading Transport Strategy 2040 Vision sets the focus for an ambitious programme of measures to enable and encourage sustainable travel choices in the town by 2040, by providing attractive alternatives to the private car. Our vision is to deliver a sustainable transport system in Reading that creates an attractive, green and vibrant town with neighbourhoods that promote healthy choices and wellbeing. Future mobility options will enable everyone in Reading to thrive, enjoy an exceptional quality of life and adapt to meet future challenges and opportunities.

Our Reading Transport Strategy 2040 contains the following policies in relation to buses:

- We will work with bus operators, businesses, health service providers and education establishments towards delivering high quality fast, frequent and reliable bus services that are not forced to take second place to excessive or inappropriate car use.
 - We will maximise the use of bus services by ensuring space on the highway is dedicated to buses or shared for buses, taxis, cycles and emergency vehicles where feasible, to ensure equality of urban mobility and to free up space for regeneration of streets with planting and improvements to the public space.
 - We will work with neighbouring authorities and other parties to enable the provision of community transport services in Reading for the benefit of our residents and reduce social isolation.
 - We will work with health services and adult social care services and communities to deliver accessible public transport services that work for communities and help address social needs, such as keeping elderly mobile and tackling loneliness.
-

Our Reading 2050 vision was established following extensive engagement with local businesses and community groups, as well as the University of Reading. The outcome of which was a vision which would centre around three key themes, a green tech city, a city of culture and diversity and a city of rivers and parks.

The Reading 2050 vision is for an internationally recognised and economically successful city region, and at its heart, this vision continues to envisage low carbon living as the norm in the built environment, with technology and innovation combining to create a dynamic, smart and sustainable city with a high quality of life and equal opportunities for all.

Our longer-term Vision for Bus remains unchanged from the original 2021 BSIP as it continues to reflect our ambitions for the bus network in Reading. This is shown in Figure 1-2 below.

Figure 1-2 - Reading Vision for Bus



Also considered in the vision are the numerous key challenges that the network continues to face, notably the impact of traffic congestion on bus services, which has worsened since the original dip during the pandemic; the need to reduce inequalities, with key areas in Reading suffering high levels of social inequality; poor air quality which results from congested parts of the road network; and continued major residential developments, particularly outside the borough boundary.

Local policy context and alignment

The 2024 BSIP refresh has been produced in line with key national, regional and local policies:

Figure 1-3 - National, Regional & Local Policy Context

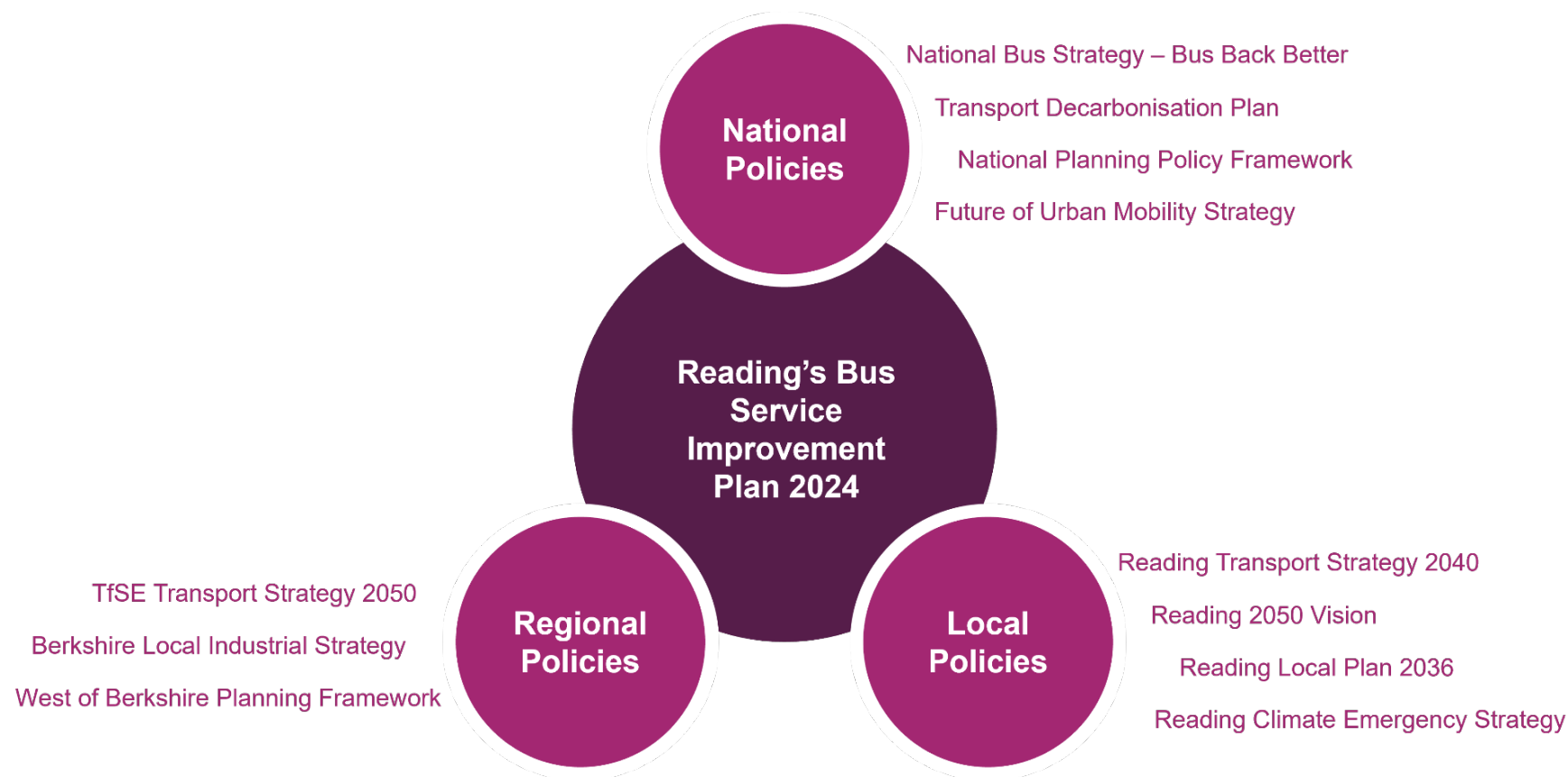


Figure 1-4 - Reading Transport Strategy - Five Key Objectives



Reading Transport Strategy

Our BSIP continues to be fully aligned with our Local Transport Plan (LTP), the Reading Transport Strategy 2040, which promotes a vision for 'a sustainable transport system in Reading that creates an attractive, green and vibrant town'.

Future mobility options will enable everyone in Reading to thrive, enjoy an exceptional quality of life and adapt to meet new challenges and opportunities.

The five key objectives established in the Transport Strategy are reflected in the BSIP Vision and will flow down into the programme and projects being delivered currently and planned for the future.

The BSIP will form a sub-strategy to the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 including greater detail around delivery and the required funding. The BSIP remains a critical element to achieving our overall vision and has been aligned to our other LTP sub-strategies.

Reading Local Plan

Our Local Plan is the document that sets out the strategy for how development takes place in Reading and is the main consideration in deciding planning applications. We are currently consulting on a partial update to our Local Plan which was adopted in November 2019 and noted in our original BSIP.

The updates to the Local Plan will ensure that key parts of the plan are in line with wider strategy and policy, and that they achieve local development that best meets the needs of the council and its communities.

Selected policies in the Local Plan are proposed to be updated to remain consistent with the more recent Transport Strategy and to ensure that progress in investment in the transport network is acknowledged when planning future development. Local Plan policies will remain supportive of sustainable transport measures, smart solutions and acknowledge the challenges presented by the declaration of a Climate Emergency.

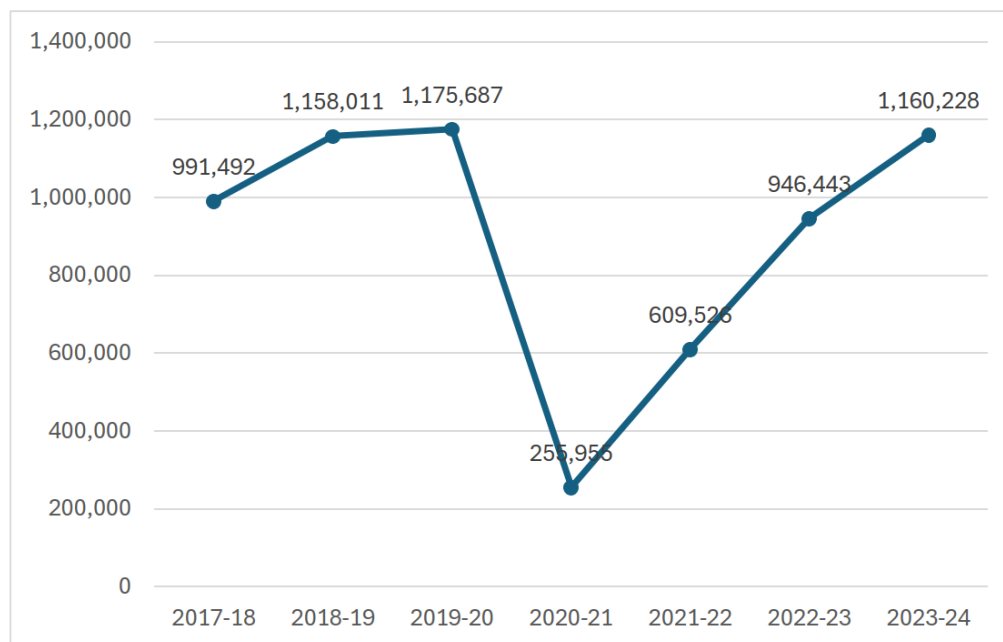
Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The 2024 BSIP refresh sits as the first updated iteration of Reading's Bus Service Improvement Plan. It is planned that, in line with DfT guidance, this BSIP takes a ten-year view including the current year through to 2034 and will be revisited periodically in order to update on key targets and performance monitoring, as well as update on infrastructure implementation progress made and revisited scheme aims. The BSIP provides:

- A projection to complete the current BSIP period programme through 2024/25;
- A future programme with greater detail in the first four years 2025/26 to 2028/29; and
- An aspiration programme for the final five years through to 2033/34.

In addition to updating the BSIP periodically, LTAs have been requested to produce a Bus Connectivity Assessment (BCA) as part of the BSIP 2024. The BCA will report on a range of issues relating to connectivity, patronage, types of vehicles and services, innovation and uses of funding. Data obtained and collated through the BCA will aid the Government in understanding the direct impact of funding on bus networks across the UK and how best to distribute funding to achieve the strategies set out in the National Bus Strategy.

Figure 1-5 - A33 BRT Passenger Growth



Case Study – Bus Rapid Transit development on the A33 corridor

Reading Borough Council has invested in phases of BRT construction along the A33 to speed up bus services and develop the market. The adjacent graph shows the annual passenger numbers on BRT services along the A33 showing the significant rise in passengers prior to COVID and the subsequent recovery.

Services were operated as a Reading Borough Council contract prior to November 2020 and subsequently with altered commercial services. The number of passengers carried annually is shown in Figure 1-5

2 Current Offer to Bus Passengers

Introduction

The following section lays focus on the current offer of bus services to passengers in Reading. In line with guidance, it revisits key facts and insights compiled in the original 2021 BSIP, pulling out key information to give an overview of bus performance in the area. Firstly, a context overview is given, with key facts updated where relevant and a discussion of the challenges facing the network. Additionally, and in line with the previous BSIP, information about bus ridership is discussed, as well as how Reading compares to national averages. The remainder of Section 2 is structured around the 12 National Bus Strategy objectives, with each objective highlighting key strengths and weaknesses in the current bus offer.

Overview

The Council was notified it had been awarded indicative BSIP funding in late April 2022 and was issued with this funding confirmation in early 2023. Whilst this has delayed the commencement of work on the council's BSIP programme we are still on track to deliver most elements by 2025. Reading's BSIP 2021 programme includes a range of both capital and revenue measures, with the funding award consisting of £15.939m capital and £10.324m revenue grant funding. The key elements of the programme are set out below:

Capital schemes:

- Phase 5 of the South Reading BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) scheme.
 - Programme of five new bus lanes on key routes in the Borough.
 - Improvements to passenger and staff welfare facilities at MereOak Park & Ride site.
 - Package of town centre public transport enhancements, bus signal priority measures and improvements for passengers at bus stops across Reading.
 - Replacement and enhancement of existing Real Time Passenger Information displays, which include audible facilities.
-

Revenue initiatives

- Introduction of a multi-operator fares discount scheme.
- Programme of bus service enhancements including contracted services for Buzz 9, Buzz 18 and Sunday Park & Ride services.
- Communication and Marketing programme to publicise the enhancements delivered through the BSIP programme as well as promoting travel by bus.
- Development of initial proposals for future bus priority measures in the borough.
- Management of the EP arrangements and programme delivery support.

Key challenges

The information displayed in **Table 2-1** below offers a useful overview of a number of the challenges that face the bus network in Reading. Firstly, is that Reading itself is a large trip attractor, with a population of 161,780 in 2020 and a further 60,000 living in neighbouring Earley, Woodley, Calcot and Tilehurst. Trips are generated to the centre of Reading, with a number of large shopping centres, notably The Oracle, and a host of other hospitality and retail options. In addition, in 2020 Reading had approximately 120,000 people working in the borough, with more jobs in the area than people of working age. The result of which is that daily commuting patterns are considerable, and with a proportion of these trips originating outside the borough, attracting private car users to switch modes to public transport is challenging.

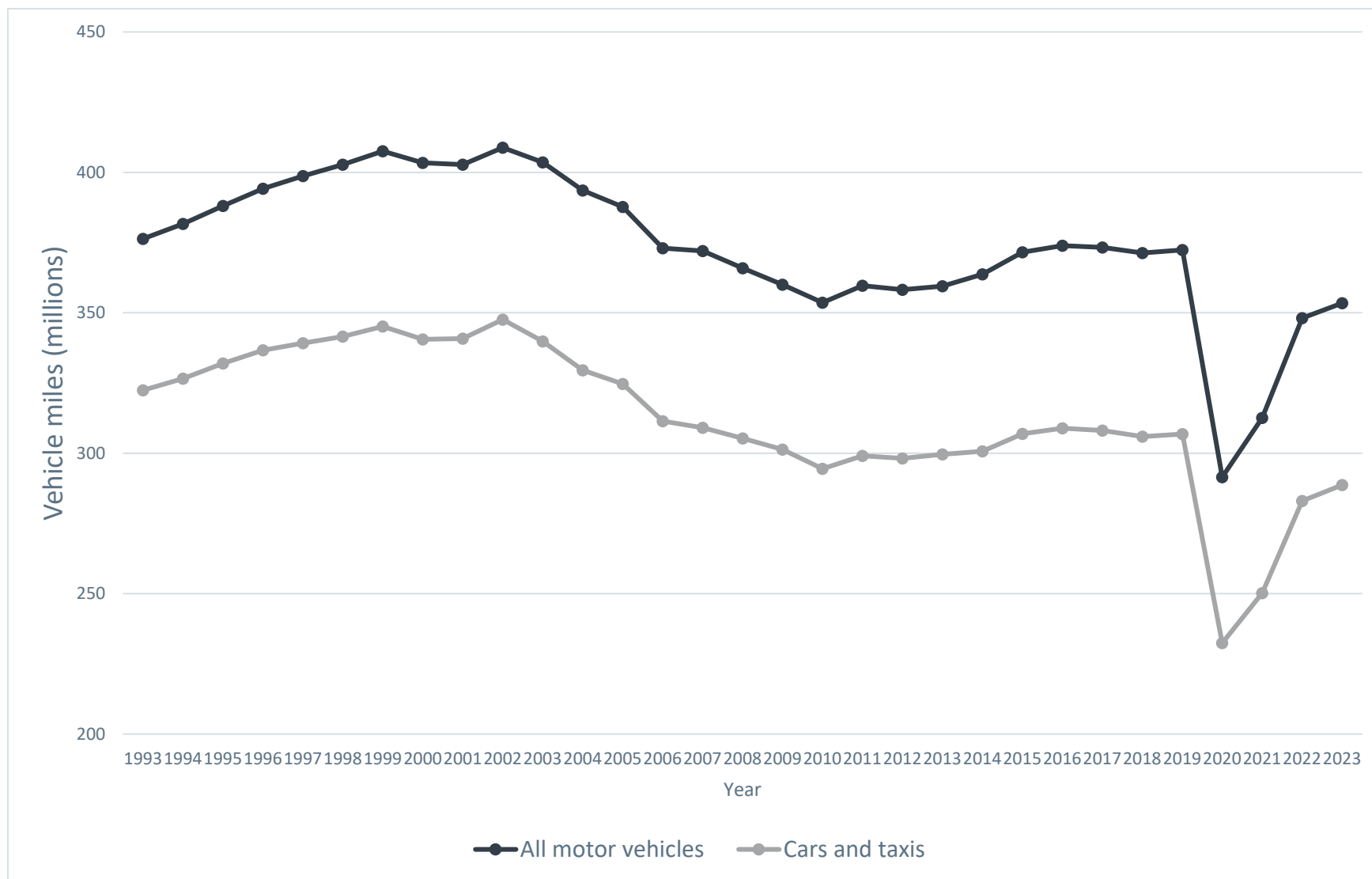
Significant residential growth is another challenge which has continued to remain prevalent since the previous BSIP. Our Local Plan forecasted an additional 689 homes to be delivered within the borough each year to 2036, and after accounting for the Local Plans of neighbouring authorities this increased to 2,600 new homes every year across the wider area. This development continues to contribute to a congested road network.

As displayed in **Figure 2-1**, despite a fall in vehicle miles in the borough during the pandemic, by 2021 this figure was increasing once again, and the trajectory shown for 2022 suggests that traffic is likely to return to pre-covid levels. This congestion not only hinders Reading socially and economically, but also directly affects the ability for Reading to reach its vision of buses as a natural option for travel, with a much-reduced carbon footprint for transport in Reading.

Table 2-1 – Key Information about Reading

Measure	Details
Population (borough)	161,780 in 2020 with a further 60,000 in Earley and Woodley (extending into Wokingham Borough), Calcot and Tilehurst (extending into West Berkshire)
Area	40.4 km ²
Population density	3,969 people per km ² , similar to many outer London boroughs
Development	Local Plan forecasts 689 homes per year to 2026, increasing to 2,600 homes per year across the wider area in addition to extensive recently completed sites
Employment	Approximately 120,000 with more jobs than workers living in the borough which creates considerable in-commuting
Retailing	The Oracle is ranked in the top 50 shopping centres in the UK
Transport	<p>Reading Station on the Great Western Main Line is one of the busiest in the UK (12.4 million entries and exits in 2022/23).</p> <p>Reading West Station has 290,000 entries and exits and Tilehurst Station has 320,000.</p> <p>Reading Green Park Station on the Reading to Basingstoke line opened in 2023.</p> <p>The M4 motorway passes to the south with connections to London, Heathrow and other major airports</p>

Figure 2-1 - Annual traffic by vehicle type in Reading



Passenger Usage & Growth

In line with passenger usage figures published during the original BSIP, Figure 2-2 and Figure 2-3 set out total bus journeys per year and bus journeys per head of population. As displayed in Figure 2-2, a substantial drop of 66.7% occurred between 2019/20 and 2020/21, in line with the covid pandemic, when the population was advised against using public transport. Despite this significant reduction, Reading has since experienced a healthy growth in passenger journeys, with an upward trend which as of 2022/23 sits at approximately 78% of the total for 2019/20.

Figure 2-3 which displays passenger journeys per head of population, as well as a comparison with the South East and countrywide average, shows a similarly positive trend. As with the rest of England, Reading is experiencing a steady increase back to pre-covid levels. In comparison however, Reading is starting from a much stronger position, with significantly higher journeys per head than both the South East and England wide averages.

Figure 2-2 - Passenger journeys on local bus services in Reading by year

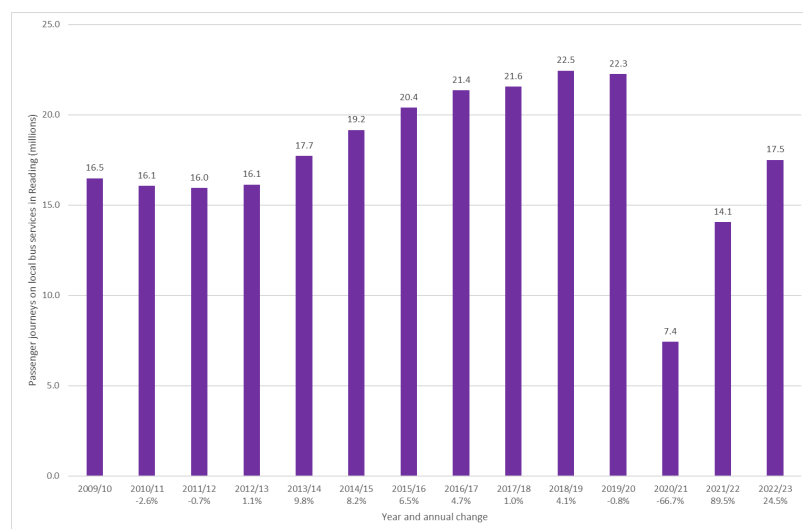
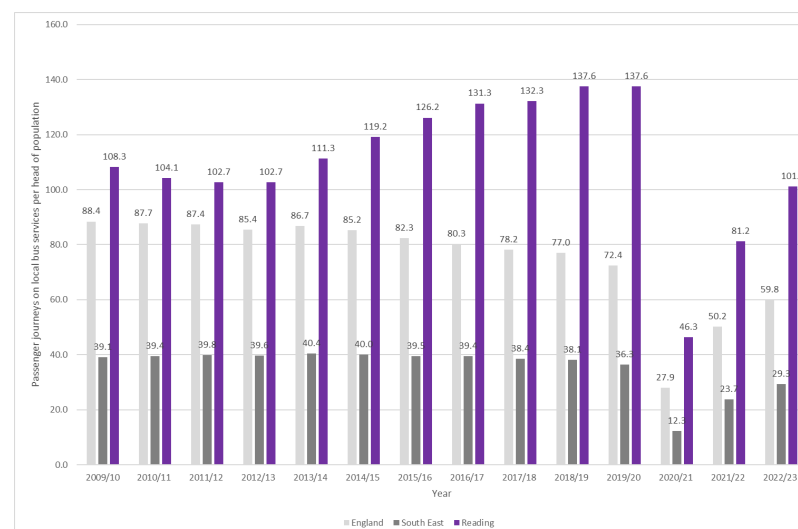


Figure 2-3 - Passenger journeys on local bus services per head of population by year



Alignment with National Bus Strategy targets

The following discussion lays out Reading's current bus offer to passengers through the format of the 12 National Bus Strategy objectives. Table 2-2 shows how Reading's funding allocation from the 2021 BSIP funding round has been divided to date. More information on spending for 2024/25 is provided in Section 3.

Our current spending on buses is as follows:

Table 2-2 – Spending on buses by Reading Borough Council in 2022/23 and 2023/24

	2022/23 Capital	2022/23 Revenue	2023/24 Capital	2023/24 Revenue	Source
Concessionary fares reimbursement	£0	£4,225,287	£0	£3,961,505	
Bus Priority Infrastructure	£329,145	£0	£1,003,731	£248,266	BSIP funding
Other Infrastructure	£0	£0	£63,461	£15,611	BSIP funding
Bus Service Support	£0	£26,240	£0	£2,460,998	BSIP funding
EP Delivery: LTA Costs	£0	£113,318	£22,772	£16,432	BSIP funding
Other	£0	£0	£0	£0	
Total	£329,145	£4,364,845	£1,089,964	£6,702,812	

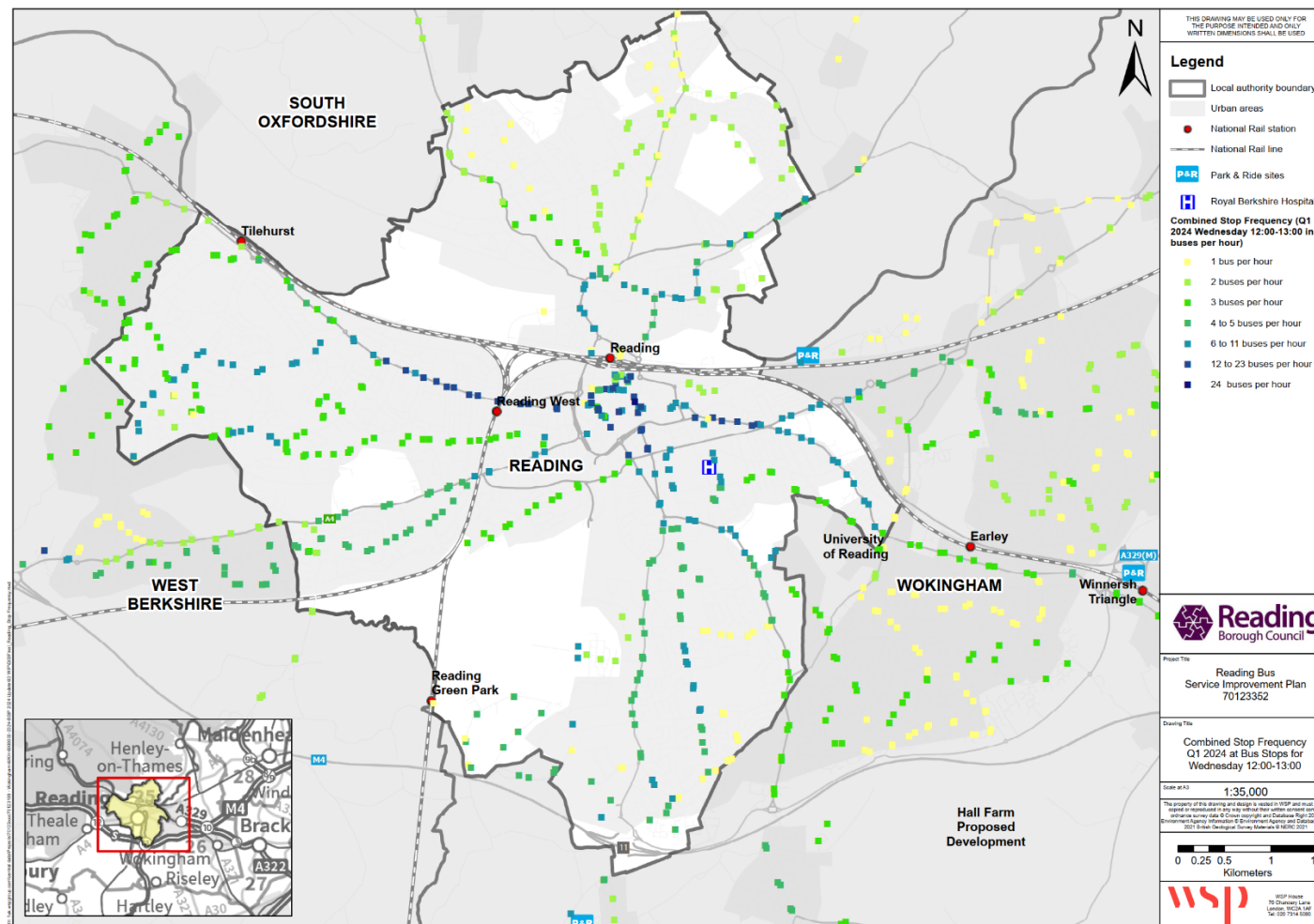
2.1 More frequent

The NBS sets out turn-up-and-go services, that is, services with frequencies high enough such that passengers don't need to check timetables as the target for bus services across the UK. In Reading, turn-up-and-go services are in place on its eight main bus corridors as shown in below:

- East Reading (Kings Road / Wokingham Road) Bus Corridor
- South East Reading (Hospital / University / Sinfield Road) Bus Corridor
- South Reading (Basingstoke Road) Bus Corridor
- South Reading (A33 / Mere oak Park & Ride) BRT Corridor
- South West Reading (Bath Road / Southcote Lane) Bus Corridor
- West Reading (Meadway) Bus Corridor
- West Reading (Oxford Road) Bus Corridor
- North Reading Bus Corridor

As displayed in Figure 2-4 below, many of these corridors, particularly to the south of Reading see between 4-5 and 6-11 buses per hour, with bus stops which see fewer than 2 buses per hour limited to a small area in the south east and a portion of the north of Reading. This frequency is highest in the centre and surrounding areas, with many bus stops seeing frequencies as high as 12-23 and 24+.

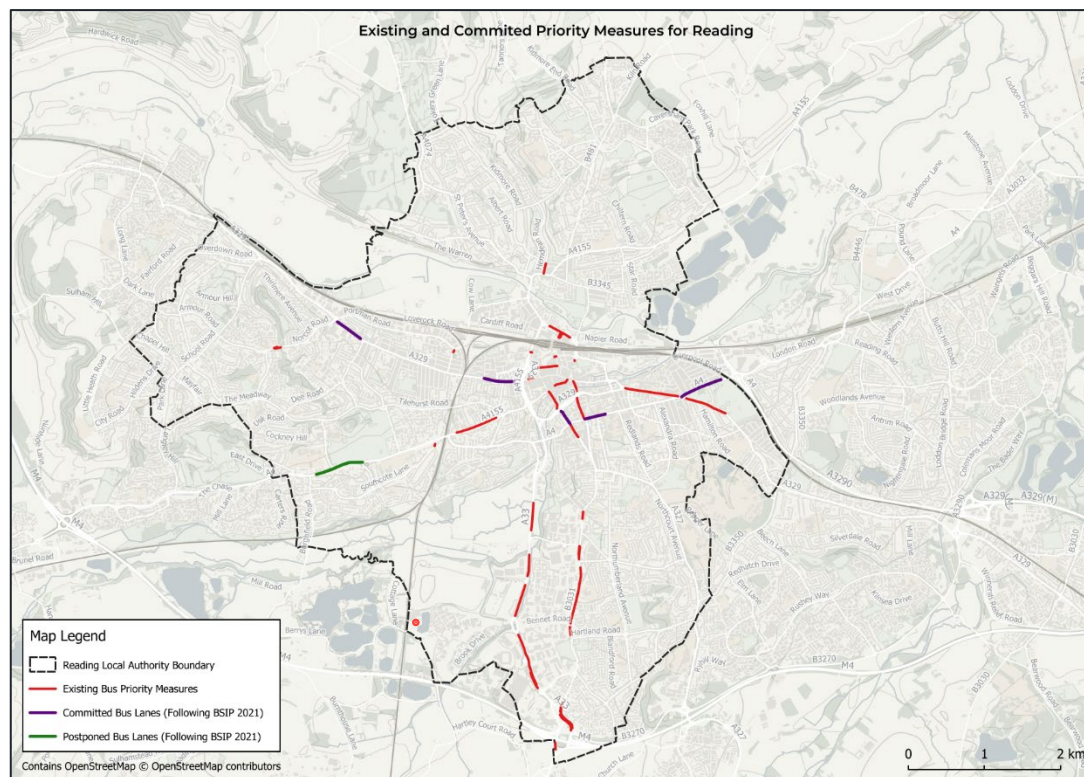
Figure 2-4 - Combined Stop Frequency Q1 2024 at Bus Stops Wednesday 12:00-13:00



2.2 Faster and more reliable

Reading has made bus priority infrastructure implementation a strong focus in recent years, as demonstrated through the targets in our 2021 BSIP. Reading currently has over 11km of bus lanes, seven bus gates and bus priority at signalled junctions (displayed in Figure 2-5). All of which contribute towards faster and more reliable bus services in the borough. Also shown in Figure 2-5 are the 5 committed bus lanes that received funding following the 2021 BSIP and 1 currently unfunded bus lane, more detail of which is included in Section 3.

Figure 2-5 - Existing and committed bus priority infrastructure map



2.3 Cheaper

Reading continues to offer good value single fares of no more than £2 throughout the borough through the Department for Transport's £2 single fares cap. Reading Buses launched a press release surrounding this scheme to encourage up take, which is shown below in Figure 2-6.

Delivery of the BSIP programme commenced with the launch of the Reading All-Bus ticket discount scheme in March 2023. This sets a daily cap for travel within Reading to ensure no one pays more than a set fare for unlimited travel undertaken in a day. The offer includes travel on services operated by Reading Buses, Thames Travel, Arriva and Thames Valley Buses. In addition, tap-on tap-off contactless payment on all the main operators has been introduced from 1 November 2023, with an introductory offer of £3 for all-day travel until 31 December 2023 which was also funded by the BSIP grant. The All-Bus ticket scheme has proved extremely popular with over 2m tickets sold in the first year (illustrated in Figure 2-7 below), saving residents in Reading over £2m in fares as a result. The all-day discount scheme also complements the Government's national £2 single fare scheme.

Figure 2-6 - Reading Buses £2 single fare press release

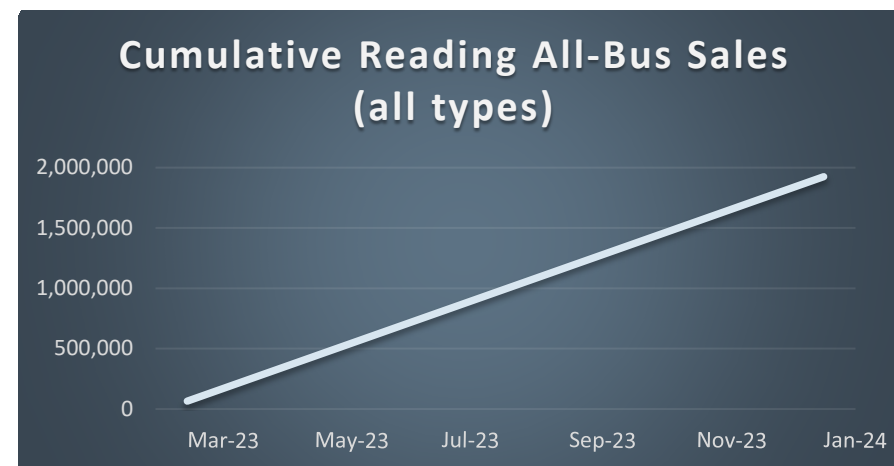


Figure 2-7 - Sales of Reading All Bus Ticket

2.4 More comprehensive

Reading offers bus passengers a comprehensive service both geographically, as shown in Figure 2-4, but also in its timetabling throughout the weekend and night services. As shown in Figure 2-8 and Figure 2-9 below, services in Reading maintain a high frequency on weekends, with various bus corridors maintaining 6-11 buses per hour, and many more maintaining at least 2 buses per hour.

Further to this, the Council supports a number of services in the borough which are seen as necessary in order to ensure a comprehensive service and address gaps in the network. These are:

- Route 9, which serves south Reading including the new Reading Green Park Station.
 - Route 650, which provides a Sunday service to Green Park village and Mere oak Park and Ride.
 - Route 42 which had served as a cross-town route between Rivermead Leisure Centre and a new housing development to the east of the town. The BSIP funding allowed this service to be enhanced and extended to not only serve these locations but extend to the new River Academy Secondary School as well as serving a previously discontinued route to the west of Reading up Kentwood Hill to Tilehurst Village centre.
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Figure 2-8 - Combined Stop Frequency Q1 2024 at Bus Stops Saturday 12:00-13:00

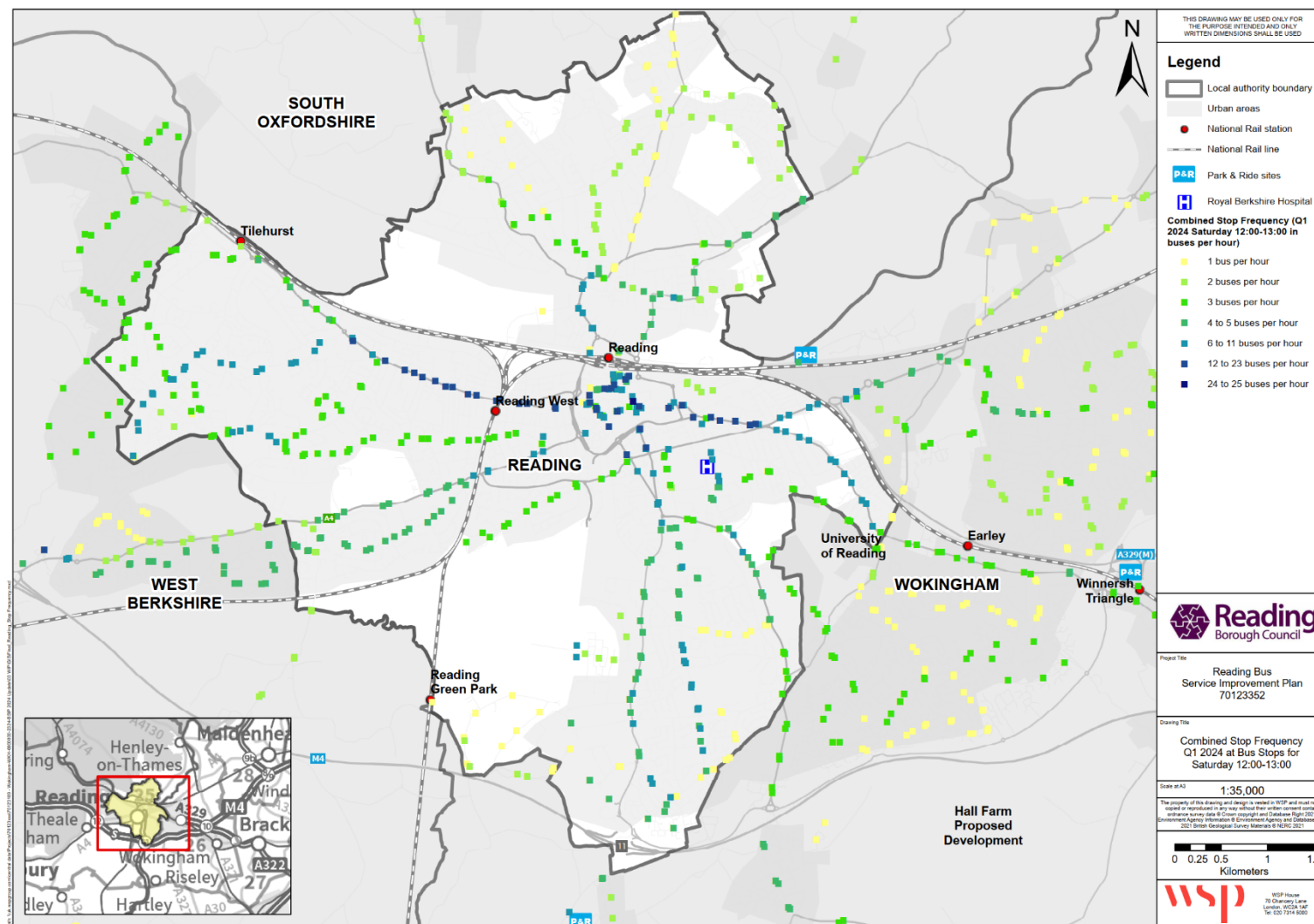


Figure 2-9 - Combined Stop Frequency Q1 2024 at Bus Stops Sunday 12:00-13:00

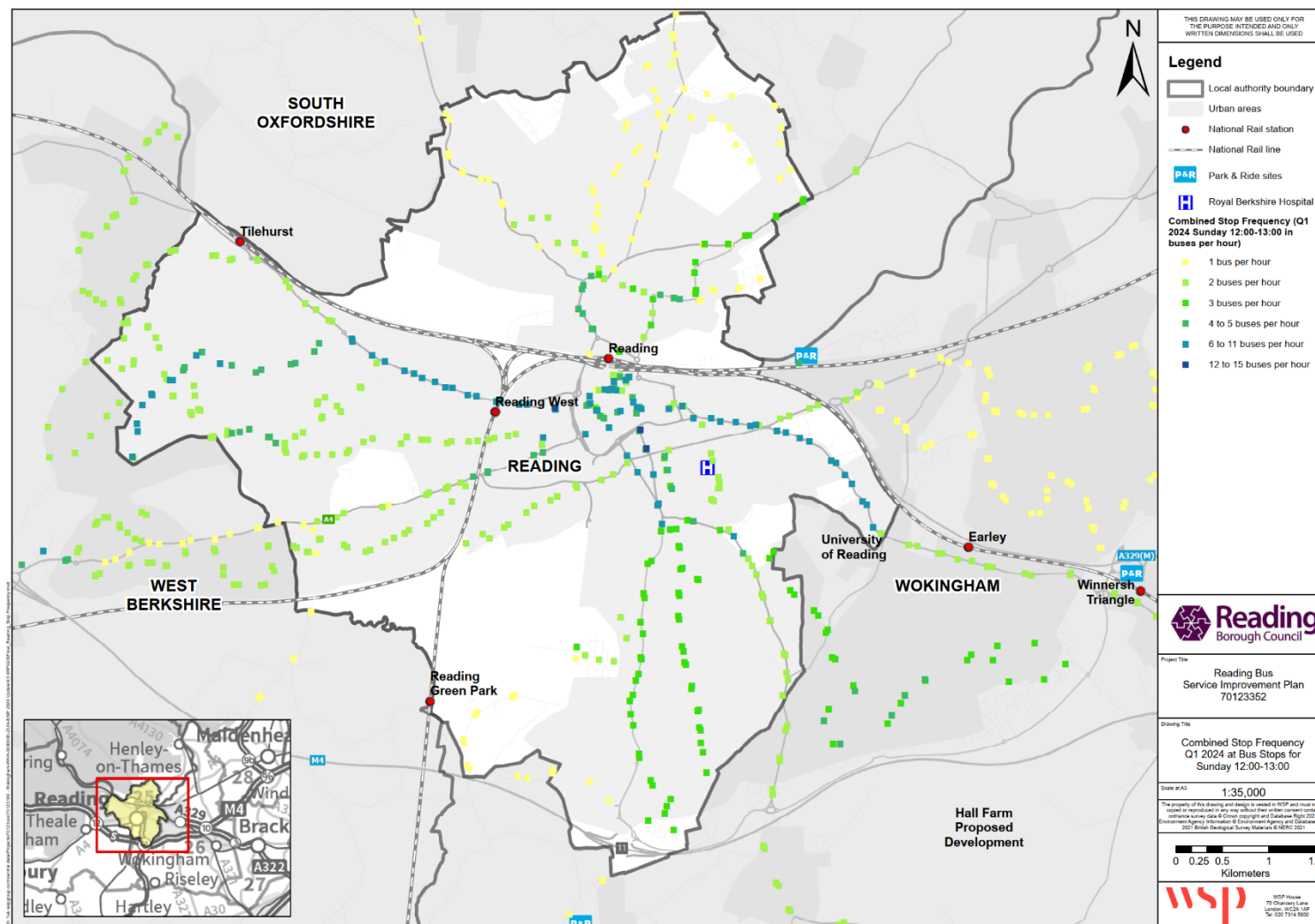
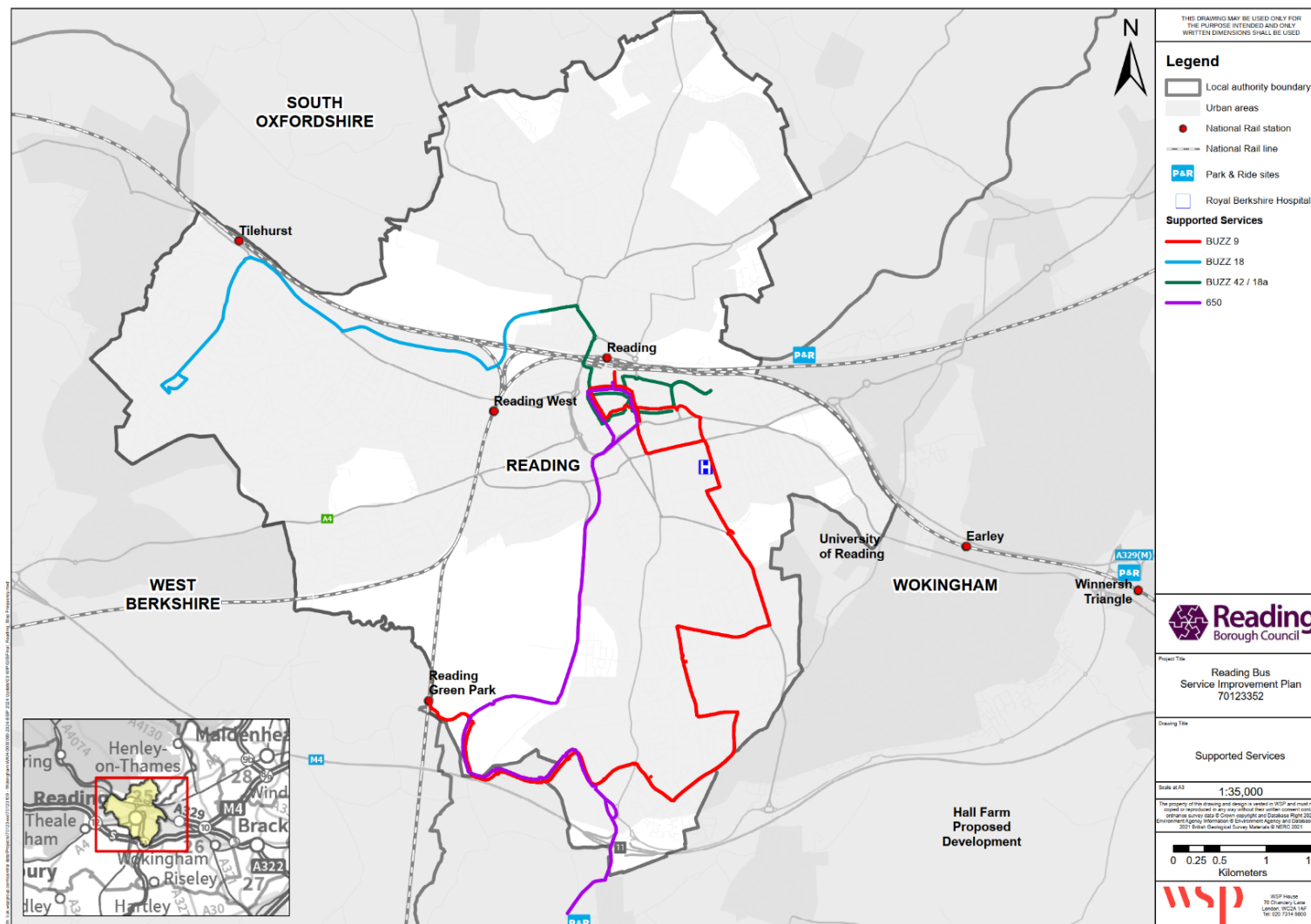


Table 2-3 – Reading Supported Services

Service	Areas	Operating Hours Mon-Fri	Operating Hours Sat	Operating Hours Sun	Buses per hour peak Mon-Fri	Buses per hour off-peak Mon-Fri	Buses per hour Sat	Buses per hour Sun
9	Central Reading – Royal Berkshire Hospital, Whitley Wood – Green Park	0600 - 2030	0600 - 2030	-	1	1	1	0
18a		0600 - 2000	0630 - 2030	0800 - 1900	3	0	0	0
18 (new)	Tilehurst Triangle – Kenavon Drive via Kentwood Hill, Oxford Road, Rivermead, Friar Street, Forbury Road	0600 - 2000	0630 - 2030	0800 - 1900	1	2	2	1
42 (old)	Rivermead – Kenavon Drive via Central Reading	0600 - 1930	0700 - 1900	-	3	2	2	0
650	Central Reading – Green Park – Mere oak Park and Ride	-	-	0730 - 2030	0	0	0	1

Figure 2-10 - Reading Supported Services

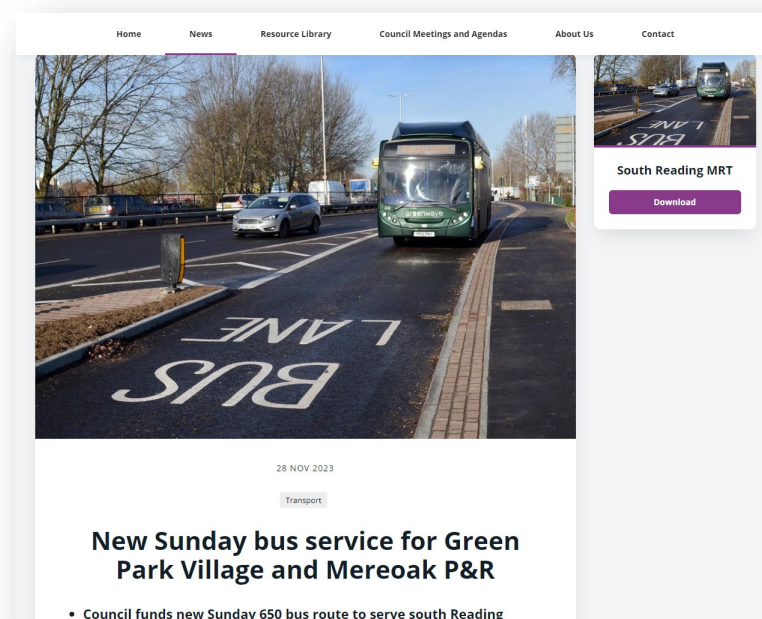
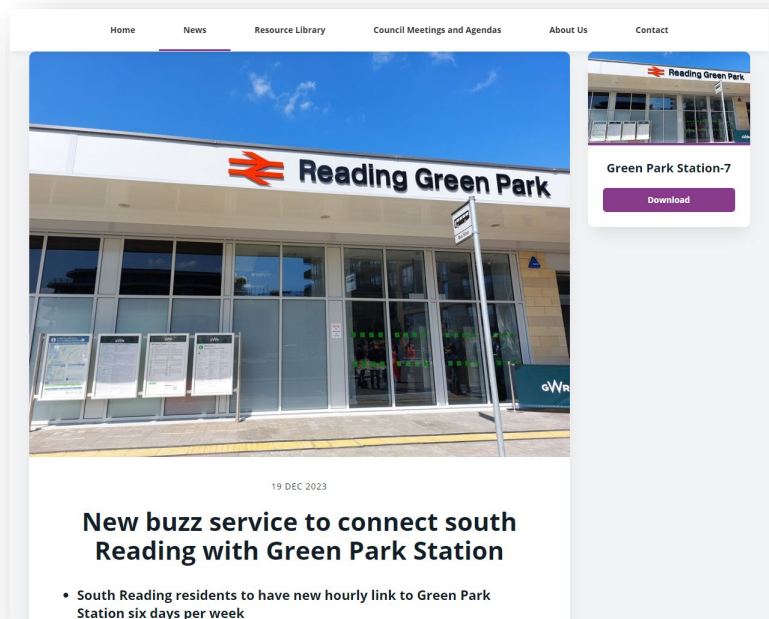


2.5 Easier to understand

Following the 2021 BSIP, we commenced a review of bus services in the borough, particularly bus services serving employment and commercial developments to the south of Reading, which were seen as having the most potential for simplified services, in order to make services easier to use. The benefits of which would include more reliable and more useful bus services, particularly in areas of less advantage. This scheme has since been completed, and can be summarised as follows:

- Commercial route reorganisations replaced routes 7, 8 & 9 with 'MereOak P&R 600' extended south of the P&R site to serve Riseley and Shinfield Thames Valley Park both hourly, improving combined service through Three Mile Cross Mon-Sat. Extra services to MereOak P&R only to offer up to a combined 15 min frequency.
 - Additionally, Mon-Fri peak service X3 to Shinfield Park has been absorbed into the 600 as 603 with additional peak journeys.
 - As a result of commercial decisions, route 9 was tendered as an enhanced contracted service by the Council (supported by BSIP funding). This enhanced service commenced from January 2024 as the newly branded BUZZ9 route, which was extended to offer connections between train services at Reading Green Park Station, South Reading and to the Royal Berkshire Hospital, as well as offering a new Saturday service to the timetable.
 - New Sunday and Bank Holiday RBC contract service 650 was introduced from Dec 2023 to re-establish Sunday services for Green Park Village, and MereOak for coach connections.
 - The existing BUZZ42 service has been extended and re-branded as the new BUZZ18. This becomes more recognisable to passengers that had access to the previous Route 18, which the BUZZ42 has now re-established.
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Figure 2-11 - Publicity for new supported Routes 9 and 650



2.6 Easier to use

Alongside the work to make services easier to understand, we have also taken significant steps towards making them easier to access and use. Primarily, this has come in the form of introducing the Reading All-Bus multi-operator day ticket, which allows passengers to use any bus across the network without having to consider what operator they might have prepaid a ticket with.

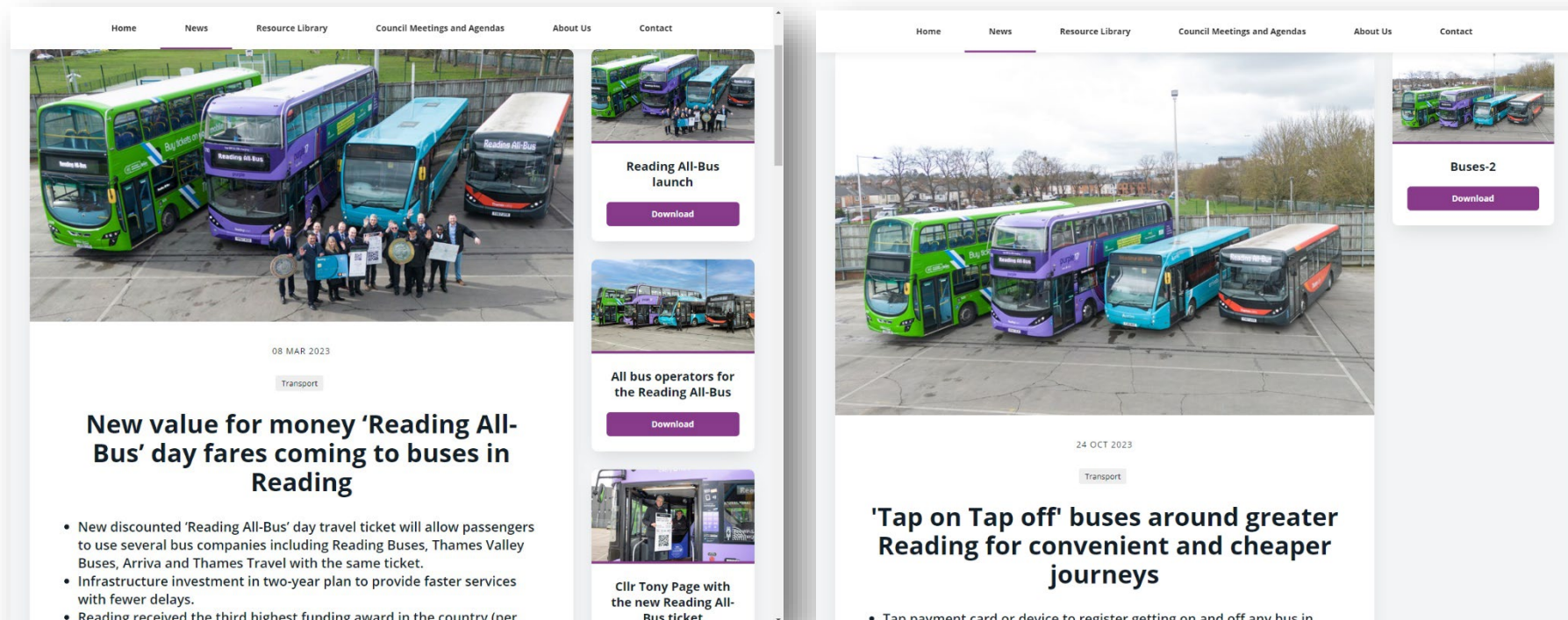
Notably, this has made services easier to use in places such as Caversham, where three operators serve the network. This new initiative removes cost and time penalties and promotes modal shift by ensuring that passengers are no longer forced to make choices over which service they use, but rather can use the next service that arrives irrespective of who operates it.

In addition, through the scheme, previous daily ticket prices for adults, groups and youth travel across all operators' bus services in the Greater Reading urban area have seen significant reductions following daily price capping that was introduced in November 2023.

Whilst it is difficult to solely attribute the increased patronage Reading has seen over the last 2 years with this specific fares initiative, there is no doubt that the actual reduction in fares has occurred at a time when virtually all other living costs have increased. A considered approach has been taken in setting the ticket price, and managing its increase as we approach the end of the scheme in March 2025.

As well as the introduction of the Reading All-Bus ticket, since producing the previous BSIP Reading has also seen the introduction of 'Tap on Tap off' payment, which compliments other improvements made and further supports the ease of access to bus services. The press release for both the Reading All-Bus ticket and 'Tap on Tap off' payment can be seen in Figure 2-12 below.

Figure 2-12 - Publicity for the All-Bus multi-operator day ticket and Tap on Tap off



2.7 Better integrated with other modes and each other

Bus services in Reading continue to integrate well with other transport modes in the borough. As previously displayed, Figure 2-4 shows bus stops in Reading, which can be seen in proximity to Reading Railway Station in the town centre, Reading West Station in the west, the new Reading Green Park Station in the south, and Earley to the east in Wokingham Borough. Reading is also served by Park and Ride sites at MereOak in the south and Thames Valley Park in the east, both of which are located in Wokingham Borough.

Following the previous BSIP it was noted that the bus network could be better integrated through a new Park and Ride service for the Royal Berkshire Hospital and the University of Reading. Whilst we have discontinued work on this improvement due to its benefits now being provided by a RBH sponsored bus service, the Council, through its enhanced BUZZ9 service, has provided a missing link through improved connections from Green Park Village and South Reading to the Royals Berkshire Hospital.

2.8 Greener and Better to Ride in

As illustrated in Figure 2-13, since the previous 2021 BSIP, Reading Buses now has a fleet of 60 low emission Compressed Natural Gas buses. Other local bus operators are yet to use low or zero carbon buses in Reading.

Figure 2-14 also displays a picture of a Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) powered bus which is currently in use on the new supported route Buzz 9 at Green Park Station. In section 4 we will go on to discuss our proposals to introduce 24 zero emission, battery-electric buses.

Figure 2-13 - Reading Buses Existing Fleet Fuel Type

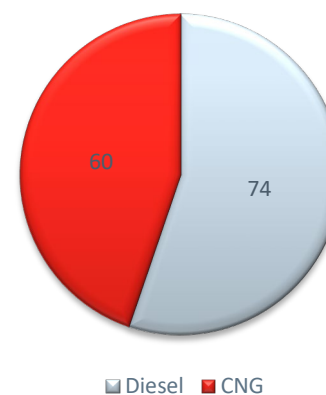


Figure 2-14 - A CNG powered bus on new supported route Buzz 9 at Reading Green Park Station



2.9 Accessible and inclusive network, by design

Significant steps have been taken using funding from BSIP 2021 to upgrade 52 bus stops around the bus network up to Summer 2024. These upgrades include providing a more accessible, safe and comfortable waiting environment, with some stops receiving green roofs, hard stands and also disabled access where it is currently missing. This is a significant contribution to improving the Customer Experience across the network and complements the investment in new vehicles and bus priority.

These are;

- 12 new bus stops to support the new bus services
- 7 new green roofed bus shelters
- 8 bus shelters refurbished with green roofs
- 2 other bus shelters refurbished
- 18 bus stops with improved accessibility including wheelchair access
- 5 other bus stop improvements

An example of the upgrades being implemented is shown in Figure 2-15 below.

More detail is provided in Section 3.3 as these interventions continue to be implemented.

Figure 2-15 - Bus stop accessibility improvements completed in 2024



2.10 Innovative

Reading has always been a Trailblazer when it comes to innovation. We are therefore working from quite a high baseline when considering further improvements. Working with local operators the area has seen many innovative projects being implemented in advance of these becoming mainstream. Reading were early adopters of Low Emission technology with the introduction of Compressed Natural Gas/Bio-Methane (CNG) with 40% of the Reading Buses fleet now running on sustainably sourced bio-methane, reducing carbon emissions by up to 84%. The initial batch was funded by the Green Bus fund, with others being introduced commercially. In addition, to further improve the environmental credentials of the local bus network, all the Reading Buses diesel fleet has been retrofitted to meeting Euro 6 standards, using government funding.

Real Time information has also been a feature of the network in Reading, being an early adopter on core routes from 2004, and since being fitted to entire fleet since 2020. Real time screens on vehicles display next departures from rail stations, live from National rail enquiries, from a few stops before the station, helping customer make integrated journeys.

To improve accessibility for those with additional needs, Buses have speakers on the outside that read out the destination display when the doors open. Second wheelchair bays were introduced in 2017, and this subsequently formed the basis of the recent government 'enhanced accessibility specification'.

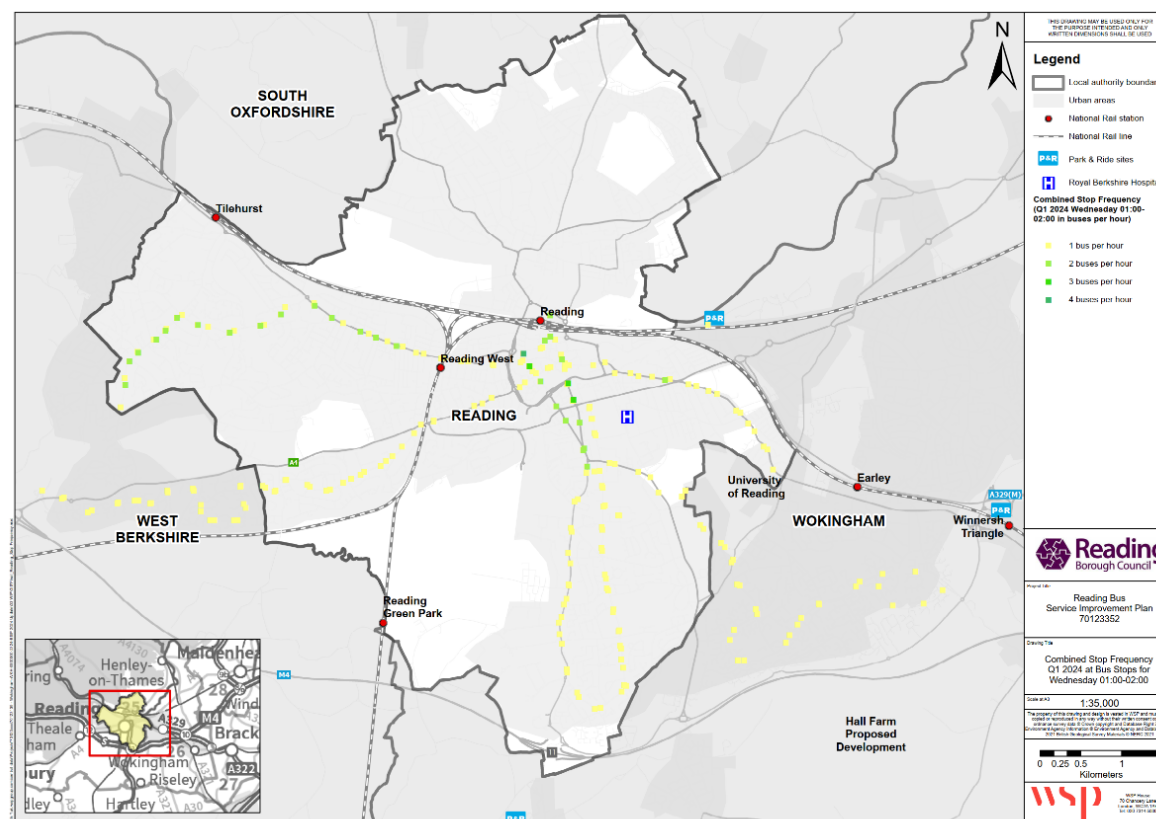
The introduction of our 'Reading All-Bus' multi-operator ticket, one of the first of its kind, was introduced in March 2023 and further demonstrates how Reading leads the way on developing the public transport offer and to improve access and simplicity to public transport.

These are just a number of examples of the innovative approach taken by the Local Authority and Bus Operators in the area to drive patronage growth and improve the customer experience for users of the network.

2.11 A safer mode of transport which is seen as safe

As displayed in Figure 2-16, Reading offers night services on a number of key corridors. This is a crucial service that allows passengers who may work unordinary hours to get to and from work. In spite of the positive coverage offered on the network during night time hours, there is a clear lack of service to the north of Reading, as well as surrounding Royal Berks Hospital.

Figure 2-16 - Combined Stop Frequency Q1 2024 for Wednesday 01:00-02:00



2.12 Other

The following BSIP 2021 improvements are relevant:

Table 2-4 – Other BSIP improvements completed

Scheme title (and Scheme ID)	Delivery confidence score	Narrative
BSIP and EP development and passenger charter (officer in post) (RBC05BPC)	Achieved	<p>Scope: Establish passenger charter and manage BSIP and EP</p> <p>Benefits: Provides the staff resource to manage the BSIP improvements</p> <p>This scheme has been completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Considerable resource has been required to manage the BSIP and EP measures including independent legal advice on setting up the fares scheme ■ A passenger charter was completed in 2023 ■ RBC has partnered with Transport Focus and Reading Buses to take part in 2023 and 2024 bus satisfaction surveys ■ Regular correspondence with operators is ongoing

2.13 Bus Connectivity Assessment

It was requested by the Government that all Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) produced a Bus Connectivity Assessment (BCA) to accompany this BSIP. The BCA, which is submitted directly to DfT through an online survey portal, reports on a range of issues relating to connectivity, patronage, types of service, innovation and uses of funding. Data from the BCAs will help the Government to understand the impact of recent and future funding interventions.

A BCA for the Reading area has been completed and submitted alongside this BSIP. Currently the headline figures from the analysis are being reported, mainly because of the short timescales under which the analysis was completed.

The process of data collation has however provided a rich dataset which will be used over the coming months to define future priorities more clearly for investment.

In the assessment for Reading we are treating the whole of Reading as urban, as it is formed largely of the urban area of Reading and its suburbs. On the standard urban-rural classification only one small output area in Reading is classed as rural and that would present a disproportionate assessment if included.

We have taken a hybrid approach to assessing access and connectivity. We have used Podaris software to calculate a range of quantitative metrics for access to the seven destination types. We have used publicly accessible datasets for the destinations (such as NHS data for hospital locations, DfT data for school locations, OpenStreetMap data for shopping) and ONS Census 2021 data for residential population locations.

We have not calculated access to ports / airports / other specific destination sub-type because there are no ports / airport / etc in Reading, so this is not relevant to our bus network, residents or visitors.

Officers have separately prepared a qualitative assessment of the relevant factors (punctuality, passenger satisfaction, safety etc). This has considered our experience and knowledge and insight from passenger surveys. No category weightings have been used for this initial assessment.

3 Improvements Programme to 2024/25

3.1 Introduction

This section sets out the improvements that we will complete this financial year and is structured around our internal categories used for managing the BSIP programme. Table 3-1 is a continuation of Table 2-2 set out in Section 2 and sets out both the spending broken down per category, and the source of the funding. A breakdown is given for every scheme being undertaken including a delivery confidence score, and a delivery progress update.

Table 3-1 – Spending on buses by Reading Borough Council in 2024/25

	2024/25 Capital	2024/25 Revenue	Source
Concessionary fares reimbursement	£0	£4,000,000*	
Bus Priority Infrastructure	£9,718,488	£567,418	BSIP Funding
Other Bus Infrastructure	£3,145,539	£59,389	BSIP Funding
Bus Service Support	£0	£5,186,095	BSIP Funding
EP Delivery: LTA Costs	£22,772	£324,849	BSIP Funding
Total	£12,886,799	£10,137,751	

*Current indication based on budgeted forecast, but will be based on actual trips made

Additionally, the Council has been successful in securing £4.7m grant funding from Government Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (Zebra) 2 fund. The requirements of the grant funding are that it will contribute up to 75% of the cost difference between

an electric bus and a standard conventional diesel bus equivalent of the same total passenger capacity. For infrastructure, the funding will contribute up to 75% of the total capital expenditure incurred as a result of its purchase and installation. Reading Buses has committed to fund the difference between the grant funding and the costs to purchase the 24 new electric buses and associated charging infrastructure.

3.2 Bus priority infrastructure

Table 3-2 – Bus priority infrastructure improvements in 2024/25

Scheme title (and Scheme ID)	Delivery confidence score	Narrative
Bus Lanes on A33 for South Reading BRT Phases 5 & 6 (RBC01A33)	Likely	<p>Scope: New outbound and inbound bus lanes on the busy A33 corridor</p> <p>Benefits: Faster and more reliable journeys on bus routes 10, 50, 600, 603 & 650 serving destinations in south Reading, MereOak Park & Ride and beyond</p> <p>Completion date: March 2025</p> <p>We are confident that we will achieve this completion date because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Our contractor was mobilised in March 2024 ■ Contractor compound set up ■ Trial holes and clearance works completed ■ Permanent works now underway, with key deliverables (such as the new pedestrian bridge install) expected Autumn 2024 ■ New bus shelters ordered

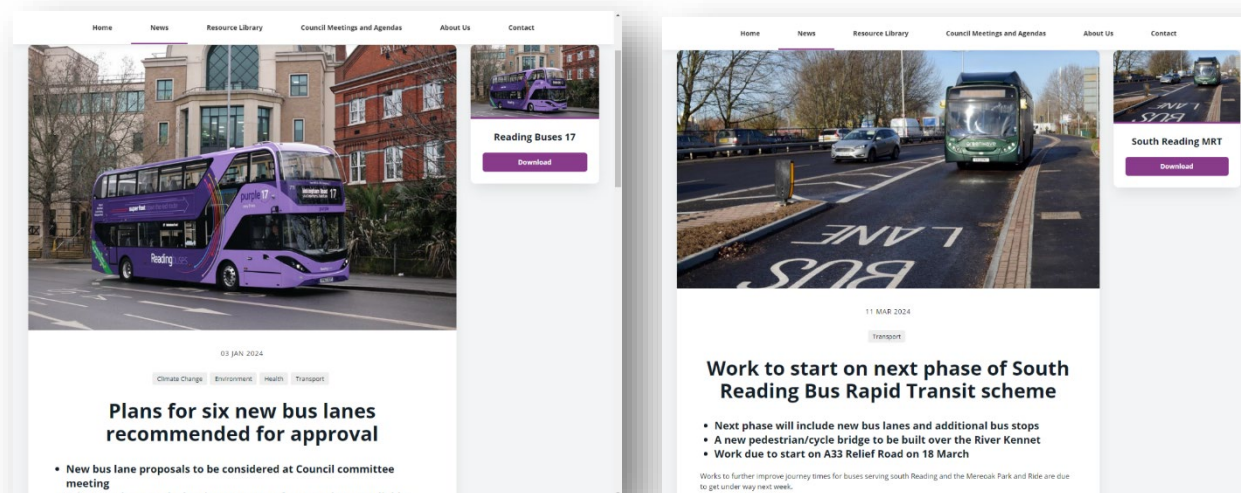
<p>Inbound Bus Lane on A327 Southampton Street from Pell Street to Oracle Roundabout (RBC01BSS)</p>	<p>Likely</p>	<p>Scope: New inbound bus lane on the busy A327 Southampton Street corridor that links south Reading to the town centre</p> <p>Benefits: Faster and more reliable journeys on bus routes bus routes 5, 6/6a & 11</p> <p>Completion date: March 2025</p> <p>We are confident that we will achieve this completion date because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Detailed design, statutory consultation and committee approval are complete ■ We are currently appointing the contractor ■ We are currently selecting from two possible designs: one with and one without re-signalling the roundabout
<p>Develop Bus Lanes for Caversham (RBC01DCA)</p>	<p>Very Unlikely</p>	<p>Scope: Develop a detailed delivery programme for bus lanes linking Caversham in the north of Reading to the town centre</p> <p>We will not develop a detailed delivery programme for bus lanes for Caversham during the current BSIP period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This financial year we will use the revenue funding to collect traffic data in our May 2024 cordon count and we will complete an options study, which will put us in a stronger position to take forward this scheme during the next BSIP period ■ We have reallocated the capital funding to our other bus priority schemes as approved by the DfT on 19 April 2024 ■ We want to take forward this scheme during the next BSIP period – see Section 4.

<p>Inbound Bus Lane on A4 London Road between borough boundary and Amity Road (RBC01LON1)</p>	<p>Likely</p>	<p>Scope: New inbound bus lane on the busy A4 London Road corridor that links east Reading to the town centre</p> <p>Benefits: Faster and more reliable journeys on bus routes 13, 14, 127, 300, 850, Thames Valley Park shuttle, and Heathrow RailAir coach</p> <p>Completion date: Summer 2024</p> <p>We are confident that we will achieve this completion date because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Detailed design, statutory consultation and committee approval are complete ■ Construction work is modest: our in-house team is preparing to implement the signing and our term contractor is preparing to implement the lining
<p>Inbound Bus Lane on A4 London Road from Sidmouth Street to London Street (RBC01LON2)</p>	<p>Feasible</p>	<p>Scope: New inbound bus lane on the busy A4 London Road corridor that links east Reading to the town centre</p> <p>Benefits: Faster and more reliable journeys on bus routes 3, Buzz 9, 19a/19b/19c & 21/21a</p> <p>Completion date: Autumn 2024</p> <p>We are confident that we will achieve this completion date because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Detailed design, statutory consultation and committee approval are complete ■ We are currently appointing the contractor

Outbound Bus Lane on A329 Oxford Road between Zinzan Street and George Street (RBC01OXF1)	Likely	<p>Scope: New outbound bus lane on the busy A329 Oxford Road corridor</p> <p>Benefits: Faster and more reliable journeys on bus routes 15/15a, 16, 17 & 143 that link the town centre to destinations in west Reading</p> <p>Completion date: Summer 2024</p> <p>We are confident that we will achieve this completion date because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Construction started in January 2024 including upgrading the bus stop area and making kerb modifications
Outbound Bus Lane on A329 Oxford Road between Pangbourne Street and Norcot Junction (RBC01OXF2)	Likely	<p>Scope: New outbound bus lane on the busy A329 Oxford Road corridor</p> <p>Benefits: Faster and more reliable journeys on bus routes 16, 17 & 143 that link the town centre to destinations in west Reading</p> <p>Completion date: Summer 2024</p> <p>We are confident that we will achieve this completion date because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Detailed design, statutory consultation, and committee approval complete ■ We are currently appointing the contractor
Outbound Bus Lane on A4 Bath Road from Circuit Lane to Granville Road (RBC01BAT)	On Hold or Discontinued	<p>Scope: New outbound bus lane on the busy A4 Bath Road corridor linking the town centre to west Reading</p> <p>We will not implement this bus lane during the current BSIP period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The detailed design, statutory consultation and committee approval are complete ■ However, the detailed design found drainage issues which result in the cost estimate exceeding the budget ■ We want to take forward this scheme during the next BSIP period – see Section 4


Develop Bus Lanes in West Reading (RBC01DWR)	On Hold or Discontinued	<p>Scope: Develop a detailed delivery programme for bus lanes in west Reading</p> <p>We will not develop a detailed delivery programme for bus lanes for west Reading during the current BSIP period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We have reallocated the capital funding to our other bus priority schemes as approved by the DfT on 19 April 2024 ■ We want to take forward this scheme during the next BSIP period – see Section 4
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Figure 3-1 - Publicity for committed bus priority infrastructure



3.3 Other bus infrastructure

Table 3-3 – Other bus infrastructure improvements in 2024/25

Scheme title (and Scheme ID)	Delivery confidence score	Narrative
Bus stop enhancements (RBC02BSE)	Very Likely	<p>Scope: Enhancements to several bus stops to improve passenger facilities, with upgrades including green roofs, hard stands and disabled access where it is currently missing</p> <p>Benefits: More accessible, safer and comfortable waiting environment</p> <p>Completion date: August 2024</p> <p>We are confident that we will achieve this completion date because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Enhancements to 33 bus stops have already been completed, with another 19 on order for summer 2024 ■ A package of measures have been developed and are being undertaken by contractor ■ Bus shelter works have been procured ■ New bus stops and hard standing have been installed for Buzz 18 route extension ■ Three bus shelters have already had green roofs applied ■ Green roofed bus shelters are also on order for the A33 BRT corridor 

<p>Improved access arrangements and passenger facilities at MereOak Park Ride (RBC02MPR)</p>	<p>Very Likely</p>	<p>Scope: Improve bus access arrangements and staff and passenger facilities at MereOak Park and Ride</p> <p>Benefits: Improved facilities for passengers on bus routes 300, 600 & 650 which use this facility.</p> <p>Completion date: October 2024</p> <p>We are confident that we will achieve this completion date because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Design of new facilities and drainage completed Spring 2024 ■ Planning permission obtained ■ We intend to proceed with design and build contract in Summer 2024 <p>The work to improve bus access to/from Three Miles Cross has been designed for us by Wokingham Borough Council. with construction in June 2024.</p>
<p>Real time passenger information displays (RBC02RTP)</p>	<p>Very Likely</p>	<p>Scope: Implementation and review of Real Time Passenger Information displays at passenger waiting facilities</p> <p>Benefits: We are reviewing the location of on-street RTPI displays to ensure that information is supplied at the most useful locations such as busy town centre shops, railway stations and existing and new park and ride locations, and we will update on-street RTPI displays to offer fully accessible information for people with a disability</p> <p>Completion date: March 2025</p> <p>We are confident that we will achieve this completion date because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Proposals have been received from a system contractor for implementation in Summer / Autumn 2024 ■ We have instructed them to proceed

<p>Town centre public transport infrastructure (RBC02TCI)</p>	<p>Very Likely</p>	<p>Scope: Works to improve town centre public transport infrastructure, notably, the Jacksons Corner bus stop scheme which will see bus stops moved away from the congested footway to a build out</p> <p>Benefits: More accessible, safer and comfortable waiting environment</p> <p>Completion date: works completed March 2024 with one extra bus shelter to be added.</p> <p>We are confident that we will achieve this completion date because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Construction started in February 2024 and required two bus shelters to be re-sited and the direction of a one-way side road reversed ■ The scheme is supported by developer contributions
<p>Traffic signal bus priority measures (RBC02TSB)</p>	<p>Discontinued via PAR</p>	<p>Scope: Package of traffic signal bus priority measures at key junctions to complement new bus priority lanes</p> <p>We have discontinued work on this improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We will implement traffic signal bus priority measures as part of the bus lane schemes described in Section 3.2, providing faster and more reliable journeys

Figure 3-2 - New bus shelter with a green roof



Figure 3-3 - Jackson's Corner new bus stop buildout and re-arranged bus shelter



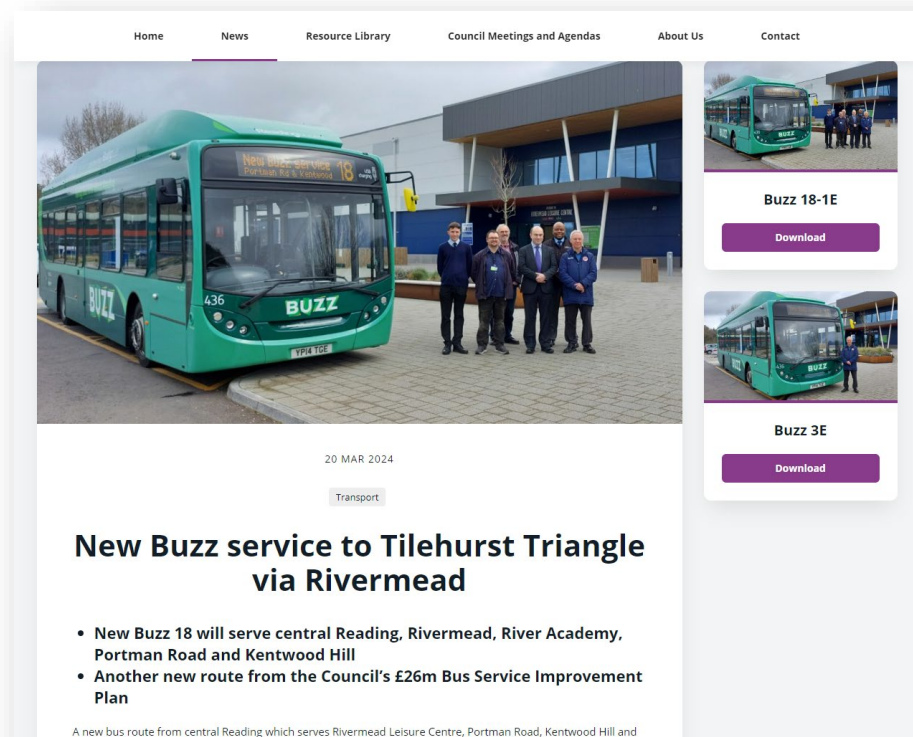
3.4 Bus service support

Table 3-4 – Bus service support improvements in 2024/25

Scheme title (and Scheme ID)	Delivery confidence score	Narrative
Extend and improve frequency of BUZZ42 (RBC04B42)	Achieved	<p>Scope: Route 18 (formerly 42) will be extended from Rivermead to Tilehurst, with existing frequency up to every 20 minutes, maintained at Kenavon Drive (the end of the previous route), and frequency of the extended route will be up to every 40 minutes</p> <p>Benefits: The extension connects residential areas to employment, education and leisure facilities, and improves frequency in west Reading (by approximately 50%), including a new Sunday service from Rivermead to Tilehurst</p> <p>Completion date: April 2024</p> <p>This supported service was introduced in April 2024.</p>
Demand responsive and other service developments (RBC04DRD)	Discontinued via PAR	<p>Scope: Develop increased Demand Responsive Services as flexible extensions of existing routes</p> <p>We will not develop increased Demand Responsive Services during the current BSIP period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The benefits of this scheme of enabling more direct journeys from residential areas to workplaces and other destinations outside the town centre have been delivered by new, fixed bus routes 9, 18 & 650 described above

Park & Ride for Royal Berks Hospital and University of Reading	Discontinued via PAR	<p>Scope: Introduce new Park and Ride service for Royal Berkshire Hospital and University of Reading.</p> <p>This scheme was discontinued via the PAR process, as a similar service was introduced by the Hospital.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Council have supported this service and offered initiatives such as free parking during the initial launch of the service. ■ To complement the Park and Ride scheme, the Simplify South Reading scheme below has also enhanced services from the south Reading corridor, providing additional services from Green Park to the Hospital (via residential areas in the south).
Simplify South Reading services	Complete	<p>Scope: Work with Operators to simplify and develop services in South Reading, providing additional services that connect neighbourhoods to key locations and amenities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Enhancements to bus services have been progressed, with the new Buzz 9 services commencing in January 2024, including services between the town centre and Whitley Wood, with the additional BSIP funded services to Green Park Station and the business park. This has ensured that local residents fully benefit from the new station facility at Green Park which was delivered by the Council and opened in May 2023, and unlocks new connections to the Hospital.

Figure 3-4 - Publicity for the new route 18 supported service



3.5 Fares support

Scheme title (and Scheme ID)	Delivery confidence score	Narrative
Fares reduction and adapting the network scheme (RBC04FRS)	Very Likely	<p>Scope: Work with operators to develop proposals for a simpler fares structure through the Enhanced Partnership arrangements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Delivery of the BSIP programme commenced with the launch of the Reading All-Bus ticket discount scheme in March 2023. This sets a daily cap for travel within Reading to ensure no one pays more than a set fare for unlimited travel undertaken in a day. The offer includes travel on services operated by Reading Buses, Thames Travel, Arriva and Thames Valley Buses. In addition, tap-on tap-off contactless payment on all the main operators has been introduced from 1 November 2023, with an introductory offer of £3 for all-day travel until 31 December 2023 which was also funded by the BSIP grant. The All-Bus ticket scheme has proved extremely popular with over 2m tickets sold in the first year, saving residents in Reading over £2m in fares as a result.

3.6 Other schemes and measures

Scheme title (and Scheme ID)	Delivery confidence score	Narrative
Bus information (improvements to quality of information provided at stop etc) (RBC09BUI)	Very Likely	<p>Scope: Quality of information displayed at bus stops and online will be increased, and the scheme will improve bus passenger safety monitoring where required - Completion date: March 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 100 new real time displays at bus stops across Reading Borough ■ Audio enabled for visually impaired users ■ Includes all operators' services not just Reading Buses. ■ Replaces life expired unreliable screens ■ Benefits: Improved information to enable passengers to use buses more easily <p>We are confident that we will achieve this completion date because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We have worked with Enhanced Partnership partners to improve the information available to both current and prospective passengers ■ Issues remain regarding the shared nightly use of bus stops in the town centre by buses and taxis

4 Ambitions and Proposals for 2025 and beyond

4.1 Introduction

This section sets out the proposals and actions which will collectively deliver the overall vision to transform bus services in Reading from 2025 onwards. For each proposal, individual actions have been identified to contribute towards the objective, alongside an analysis of the existing situation which the proposals seek to enhance. The proposals have been established as key elements of the overall strategy, which collectively will deliver a step-change in the provision of bus services.

Our proposals will help increase buses' mode share by making them an attractive alternative to car travel for more people. We will achieve this by making buses faster and more reliable - through our bus priority measures, cheaper – through our fares and ticketing initiatives and more comprehensive through our service level and network coverage plans.

We will make buses easier to understand and easier to use through our bus information, waiting facilities and real-time passenger information improvements and better to ride in through our improvement works to the road surface and at key junctions. We will ensure buses are seen as safe mode of transport through security improvements to both bus stops and on-board buses and ensure the high levels of accessibility already experienced on buses in Reading is maintained and enhanced through our fleet investment working with our Access and Disability Group.

We will deliver better integration with other modes through our service level and network coverage plans providing good access to Reading's four railway stations as well as to our Park and Ride mobility hubs with interchange to the National Coach Network. We will make buses greener and innovative through our ZEBRA plans to roll out electric buses across Reading.

This section sets out our ambitions and proposals for the 2025 and beyond, firstly for the four-year period 2025/26-2028/29 and finally for the longer-term period 2030-2040.

4.2 Service level and network coverage

Our proposals for the four-year period 2025/26-2028/29 are as follows:

Table 4-1 – Service level and network coverage proposals

Scheme title	Existing Situation	Action
Enhance 'Buzz' supported services	<p>Reading has the second highest level of local bus travel in England per head of population outside of London, providing the passenger volumes needed to sustain a strong scheduled local bus network.</p> <p>Nevertheless, due to their current commercial viability, there remain neighbourhoods that are not currently well served. In addition, there is a lack of good direct orbital routes connecting local neighbourhoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance frequency of Council's existing 'Buzz' branded supported network, facilitating growth, towards a commercially sustainable service model. To identify key under-served network corridors and work with Operators to develop services not provided by the commercial network
Royal Berkshire Hospital	There is less service during the evenings and we want to bring evening services to the standard specified in the National Bus Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved evening services to Royal Berkshire Hospital and stations including late night and 24hr, Sunday and Park and Ride support.

<p>East Reading Supported Services</p>	<p>There is a recognised problem with development of major housing in North Wokingham and Winnersh that has no bus services provided and not much likelihood of commercial bus services being able to serve these. Many of the journeys made from the new developments are now made by car to Reading for access to the University, hospital, main line rail transfer, shopping leisure education and employment purposes.</p> <p>Reading Borough Council will introduce a new bus lane on London Road as part of its BSIP1 bus priority investments which will be used by the reinstated 500 P&R buses.</p> <p>Due to changed workplace patterns and leisure demographics the 'new' P&R service is unlikely to be commercially viable and with the future possibilities of BRT along the A329M being proposed for a study with Wokingham, there exists the possibility that the 500 P&R will struggle and possibly be subject to further withdrawal.</p> <p>Working in partnership with Wokingham Borough Council, Reading would like to introduce enhanced bus services, that would be further benefited by the newly introduced bus priority measures on London Road.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Enhance the existing services from the East of Reading, to better serve emerging residential areas as well as providing increased frequency to 2 key park and ride sites to the East of Reading. Providing an additional 2 buses to the service will offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhanced P&R capacity • Extend operating period for workers at Winnersh Triangle • provide 25 new trips per day from the North Wokingham estates to Reading. • Increase service from Winnersh Village by 33% • Run AM peak trips inbound via Royal Berks Hospital to serve their staff.
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4.3 Bus priority

Our proposals for the four-year period 2025/26-2028/29 are as follows:

Table 4-2 – Bus priority proposals

Scheme title	Existing Situation	Action
South Reading Bus Rapid Transit Scheme	<p>Our new LTP4 sets out a vision of a series of BRT routes in Reading, linking the town centre with key destinations and park & ride facilities.</p> <p>Through BSIP-1 we have continued the implementation of the South Reading BRT scheme, which serves key destinations including Kennet Island housing development, Green Park business park, Green Park Village, Select Car Leasing Stadium, Campus Reading International and MereOak P&R facility.</p> <p>To date, we have implemented over 4,500m of BRT route and traffic signal priority at key junctions on the A33. This has enabled reductions in journey time of up to 16% during peak periods through the avoidance of traffic congestion leading to faster and more reliable timetables. Passenger numbers on the BRT services increased from 316,000 in 2010 to 1,175,687 in the year 2019-20, and following the pandemic, recovered to 1,169,228 in the year 2023-24.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of the delivery of South Reading BRT scheme – bus lanes and traffic signal upgrades on the A33 to connect to existing network that has been delivered in phases 1 to 5.

<p>Bus Priority Measures</p>	<p>Reading has a strong track record of delivering bus priority measures, supported by bus lane enforcement. Further to those schemes being delivered as part of BSIP-1, we are developing detailed plans to continue investing in bus priority on our eight main bus corridors to improve bus speed, reliability and punctuality and to enable increases in frequency of service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bus lane – outbound from Circuit Lane to Burghfield Road (roll-over from BSIP 1) (south west) ■ Bus lane and traffic signals upgrades – inbound approaching Burghfield Road (south west) ■ Bus lane – inbound small section taking one of the two lanes at junction of Queens Road and Watlington Street (east) ■ Bus lane and traffic signals upgrades – Basingstoke Road inbound approaching Hartland Road (south) ■ Bus lane – Oxford Road inbound approaching Reading town centre (west) ■ Bus lane – Oxford inbound approaching Norcot Roundabout (west) ■ Bus lane – Portman Road approaching Norcot Roundabout (west)
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Bus Priority Measures – Signal Upgrades

Whilst the Council has had success in delivering Bus Lane Measures throughout the Borough, and providing signalised priority as part of these schemes, there remains a significant gap in signalised bus priority throughout the borough, which if improved could deliver significant benefits to bus reliability and journey times.

- Invest in signal upgrades particularly at key junction pinch points or in connecting to existing bus priority infrastructure, providing a complete bus priority corridor. This Includes:
 - Craven Road, Eldon Road, London Road Junction
 - Bennet Road, Basingstoke Road Junction
 - Southampton Street IDR Roundabout
 - Castle Street IDR Roundabout
 - Berkeley Avenue Junction
 - Burghfield Road Junction
 - Duke Street IDR Junction
 - Kings Road, Watlington Street Junction

4.4 Lower and simpler fares

Our proposals for the four-year period 2025/26-2028/29 are as follows:

Table 4-3 – Lower and simpler fares proposals

Scheme title	Existing Situation	Action
Multi-Operator Ticket	<p>As a result of the BSIP-1 Funding, the Council, in partnership with local operators, has introduced a true multi-operator travel card allowing passengers to make multiple journeys throughout the day, using services provided by each and any of the operators included within the Enhanced Partnership. This has been further enhanced with the instruction of a fully functional “tap-on tap-off” system (and capped fare) that also works between all operators. We have seen period on period growth in passengers utilising these tickets, both as a result of their convenience and value (as a result of the reduced fares made possible by BSIP-1).</p> <p>In the absence of a national scheme, the Enhanced Partnership wishes to continue with this successful scheme and extend it to capture better value, weekly, monthly, season tickets etc, providing additional choice to potential passengers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of the Reading All-Bus multi-operator day ticket. (BSIP funding required to provide back-office functionality for reconciliation purposes and operator reimbursement as well as passenger discount). In coordination with EP Members, develop and introduce Reading All-Bus Weekly, Monthly and other Season tickets. Working with neighbouring LAs to introduce a Wider Area All-Bus ticket for journeys across the Thames Valley.

Continuation of the national £2 fare cap	Reading continues to offer good value single fares of no more than £2 throughout the borough through the Department for Transport's £2 single fares cap. Whilst many of the urban routes within Reading already benefited from low fares, the Council and Enhanced Partnership would support the continuation of a national scheme, and particularly for longer journeys, where this reduced fare has resulted in significant passenger growth, with cheaper fares being a critical factor in securing long term behavioural change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of the £2 single anywhere scheme. Subject to central Govt funding not continuing for the £2 single scheme RBC would like to see a comparable scheme that provides a reduced fare single for all journeys adult journeys and a lower fare for school children and young people.
Park and Ride fares	The Park and Ride facilities within the Greater Reading Area offer variable levels of service and are currently underutilised. Some of the measures currently being implemented through BSIP-1 are expected to improve journey time and reliability from P&R sites to the South and East of Reading, however further incentivisation to passengers could generate additional growth. P&R is a critical part of our LTP2040 and these facilities should be better utilised/exploited to offer a genuine alternative to private vehicle use in the urban area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Park and Ride fares that are attractive to people, linked to proposed fare reduction schemes and/or reduced parking fees.
Young Person Concessions	A large proportion of young people already benefit from accessing local bus services for school and recreational travel, however Reading still experiences large volumes of young people being transported to school via car. This generation of passenger is key to the future of public transport, and building a culture of young adults choosing public transport, may influence future and long term travel behaviours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce additional concessions for young people, making it more affordable, and facilitating generational behavioural change. Further work will be required with the EP to introduce a suitable scheme, which could include £2 daily fare cap

4.5 Ticketing

Scheme title	Existing Situation	Action
Payment Methods	All Bus Operators offer a variety of ticketing and payment methods, and the Enhanced Partnership is committed to retaining and enhance these facilities and ticket options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Council and EP Members make a commitment to retain cash fares on all bus services in Reading (no funding requirement) ■ The Council and EP Members make a commitment to enhance ticket choices through the development of Tap-on Tap-off ticketing. (no funding requirement) ■ The Council and EP Members make a commitment to support in the implementation of national multi-operator ticketing schemes. (no funding requirement)

4.6 Waiting and interchange facilities

Scheme title	Existing Situation	Action
Town Centre Enhancements	<p>We have provided bus gates to manage timed access of other vehicles to the town centre bus priority loop and we have introduced red route restrictions to regulate parking in the town centre.</p> <p>Effective management of the use of bus stops and bus stands is an ongoing partnership between the Council and operators to ensure that bus services and other highway users with privileged access to the town centre such as taxis, deliveries and disable parking can also be accommodated.</p> <p>As the focus of Reading's bus network is the town centre and station it is essential that sufficient wayfinding and Real Time Information is available to passengers making onward journeys, providing model connectivity.</p> <p>With Bus infrastructure being a significant feature of the town centre further enhancements, beyond those made during BSIP-1 are required in order to reduce conflicts between waiting passengers and pedestrians. Improvements to the waiting facilities will support a consistent approach inline with the EP Passenger Charter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Undertake a Town Centre Area Study to identify improvements that can improve access and reliability of bus services, including by way of traffic restrictions and road space and kerb-side reallocation. ■ To develop and enhance the bus stop wayfinding facilities across the town and particularly from key hubs such as Reading Station. This can include interactive displays, that include wayfinding and RTI. ■ To continue to improve waiting facilities around the town centre, improving accessibility and to avoid model conflicts (passengers, pedestrians, vehicles, cycles).

Bus Stop Enhancements	<p>Reading's bus network generally has low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, and we want people using our bus network to feel welcome and safe.</p> <p>As part of BSIP-1, Bus stops have been upgraded on many routes with new bus shelters, proper access, real-time information and a clean and welcoming environment. However, there are still some bus stops with inadequate facilities or old bus shelters which need upgrading or replacing. In addition, new bus stops need to be provided close to new development including new retail parks and new housing to improve access and make using buses easier and more convenient.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ To enhance waiting facilities at key hubs across the town (including Reading University, Royal Berkshire Hospital, Town Centre and Park & Ride Sites).■ To continue the programme of refurbishment and enhancement of bus stops across Reading, offering a consistent experience to passengers, in line with the EP Passenger Charter.
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4.7 Bus information and network identity

Scheme title	Existing Situation	Action
Marketing	<p>Reading has a history of being a Bus City and has historically marketed the success of its Bus Services. Using BSIP-1 funding we built upon this with regular marketing and communication campaigns focussed on different workstreams, such as the multi-operator “Reading All-Bus” ticket, the introduction of Tap-on Tap-off, and the various enhancements funded through BSIP.</p> <p>We have utilised several media formats including on-street and radio campaigns, and have had good engagement throughout, including through our primary bus slogan, “There’s a Bus for that” developed through our BSIP 1 programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To continue to invest in proactive marketing and promotion of Public Transport (services and infrastructure), utilising the “There’s a Bus for That” slogan.
Real Time Information	<p>There is currently a good level of information provided for bus passengers in Reading, both at stops and through services such as the Reading Buses website and app.</p> <p>The BSIP-1 allowed us to upgrade the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) displays at around 100 bus stops and key interchanges as well as providing audible announcements providing greater accessibility and inclusion for passengers. However there remain further key bus stops without any RTPI and it is the Councils ambition that (in line with the Passenger Charter) all passengers experience a consistent bus journey, with the waiting facilities and bus information being their gateway to accessing bus services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide accessible (audible) Real Time Information displays at a further 50 bus stops where this is not already provided, and would offer benefit to passengers.

4.8 Bus passenger experience

Scheme title	Existing Situation	Action
Road Surfacing	<p>Although there has been significant investment in improving the condition of roads in Reading, due to the volume of HGV vehicle movements through Reading, we continue to see widespread degradation of road surfaces.</p> <p>The condition of road surfaces has a significant impact on the passenger experience and the comfort of their ride. Resurfacing the established bus lanes would offer a further significant benefit to bus passengers, and could be done alongside our network identity ambitions, to introduce coloured road surfacing in bus lanes, highlighting the extent and quality of our bus (infrastructure) network.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in Bus Lane “identity” through the resurfacing and colouring of all bus lanes in Reading, making them more identifiable and a feature of the highway network.

4.9 Bus fleet

Scheme title	Existing Situation	Action
Zebra 2 / Decarbonisation of Fleet	<p>Reading Buses has invested in low carbon double deck buses, with 60 compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles currently 45% of the overall Reading fleet. They have also taken the first step to zero carbon, again with double deck buses in the form of a converted battery electric vehicle and the company has trialled a new battery electric vehicle. This has provided the experience and confidence needed to continue the transition to full electric in the future.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that the new Electric Vehicle Bus Fleet is introduced in accordance with Zebra 2 Funding (no BSIP funding required). To further invest in extending the fleet of zero emission vehicles (30 vehicles), working towards the Councils and Governments net zero ambitions.

4.10 Accessibility and inclusion

Scheme title	Existing Situation	Action
<p>Accessibility and Inclusion</p>	<p>Reading Borough Council runs an Access and Disabilities Working Group (ADWG) which is made up of local councillors, officers, residents and other local stakeholders with a particular interest in accessibility issues. The ADWG campaigns for improved access for people with disabilities and acts as a pressure group in identifying and promoting public awareness of problems of access for disabled people to public buildings, commercial premises, the highway network and public transport within the Borough.</p> <p>Over the years the ADWG has worked with Transport Officers and Reading Buses to discuss a range of transport and accessibility issues. Through this input improvements have been made to the specification for accessibility of new buses in Reading as well as to the bus stop infrastructure and real time systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To provide Bus User Travel Training for disadvantaged groups, making bus travel available and accessible to all. ■ To continue the programme of refurbishment and enhancement of bus stops across Reading, offering a consistent experience to passengers, in line with the EP Passenger Charter. ■ To provide accessible (audible) Real Time Information displays to the remaining bus stop locations, providing a consistent passenger experience in line with the EP Passenger Charter. ■ Invest in new “on-bus” passenger information and audible displays to ensure that information is inclusive.

4.11 Longer term transformation of the network

We want to commence studies and design work to support the following proposals for the longer term period 2030-2040:

Scheme title	Existing Situation	Action
<p>Longer Term Vision for the transformation of Reading Bus Network</p>	<p>Reading Borough Council has a strong track record of investment in the bus network over the past 20 years and particularly through its BSIP 2021 allocation resulting in some of the highest bus use in the country. There is however still a huge amount of work and investment needed to ensure that travel by bus becomes relevant to even more people travelling in Reading and bus use remains an attractive solution as the pressures on the transport network increase.</p> <p>The Council has recently adopted the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 which outlines our longer-term vision for transport through to 2040 including for travel by bus as well as the schemes and initiatives to deliver this vision.</p> <p>Reading Transport Strategy (RTS) 2040 Vision</p> <p>“To deliver a sustainable transport system in Reading that creates an attractive, green and vibrant town with neighbourhoods that promote healthy choices and wellbeing. Future mobility options will enable everyone in Reading to thrive, enjoy an exceptional quality of life and adapt to meet future challenges and opportunities.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Undertake a corridor Study of the A3290/A329(M), to identify how bus priority measures could be introduced to improve reliability and viability of enhanced Bus Services from the east of Reading. ■ Undertake corridor/park and ride studies to the North and West of Reading, to identify viability and understand what bus priority measures would be required in order to create a reliable and attractive service offering. ■ Extend the existing South Reading BRT services, to maximise the return on investment (in infrastructure) and extend coverage of BRT to further areas south and southeast of Greater Reading area. ■ Undertake a Caversham (North) Bus study, including a full review of current services and operations and what bus priority measures (or mitigations) can be introduced to support passenger growth (and service reliability). ■ Work with Network Rail and Great Western Railway to improve interchange and access to buses from Reading station including outside the Brunel Forecourt (current RailAir bay).

	<p>The actions we have outlined in this table will help us to deliver the vision of our RTS and ensure that the bus network across Reading remains an attractive and relevant proposition to the residents and visitors to Reading.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Investigate the potential to provide further concessions to an extended group including young people or people living in low-income households as well as for extended periods of times within Reading.
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4.12 Bus Driver Recruitment and Retention

Although, like many areas of the country, Reading has experienced difficulty recruiting and retaining skilled staff (including drivers and engineering staff) mainly due to competition from other similar sectors including logistics and home delivery employers and wage competition in the market.

Operators have worked to resolve these issues, and the investment in vehicles, fare simplification and bus priority to make the role of driver a less stressful and more attractive prospect continues to contribute positively to an improved situation. This will continue to be monitored, working closely with the area's bus operators to get early warning of any emerging issues.

5 Targets, Performance Monitoring and Reporting

Pre-pandemic, demand for bus services grew demonstrating that a high-quality offer attracts new users with over 6.5 million vehicle kilometres being operated in 2019/20. 17% of passenger journeys in 2023 were free to users under the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS), lower than the South East (23%) and England as a whole (19%). Figure 5-1 shows the strong performance of bus services in Reading over a sustained period.

Table 5-1 shows the progress made towards the targets set in the 2021 BSIP.

Table 5-1 – Targets

Target	Target for 2024/25	Achieved by 2024	Measurement
Bus journey time			
Average bus journey time within Reading Borough (daytime 7am to 6pm)	17 mins 1 sec (15.7 km/h)	Awaiting data analysis*	Analysis of timetable data from a sample of services from each bus corridor
Reliability and punctuality			
Percentage of bus miles operated by Reading-based services	99.5%	Awaiting data analysis*	Based on total lost mileage data for Reading-based services reported by the operator
Average excess waiting time for frequent services	1 min 8 secs	Awaiting data analysis*	Based on analysis of real time passenger information data from a

Non-frequent services running on time	92%	Awaiting data analysis*	sample of services from each bus corridor across the borough
Passenger growth targets			
Annual passenger journeys within borough	24.0 million	17.5 million in 2023, reflecting post-pandemic recovery	Based on operator data reported to DfT bus statistics Table BUS01e (previously BUS0109)
Annual passenger journeys per head of population within borough	148.5	101.1 in 2023, reflecting post-pandemic recovery	Based on operator data reported to DfT bus statistics Table BUS01f (previously BUS0110)
Passenger satisfaction targets			
Overall bus passenger satisfaction	95%	86% [lower than previous years]	Based on Transport Focus Bus Passenger Survey

* For those elements awaiting data analysis, the impact of investment is not yet being observed as schemes are in the design or delivery phase – Monitoring will be completed following scheme implementation as the impacts are realised.

An annual monitoring report will be linked with the Bus Connectivity Assessment.

6 Overview Table

6.1 Overview Table

Following publication of the DfT guidance on preparation of the 2024 BSIP, feedback from Local Transport Authorities resulted in supplementary guidance being issued in relation to the required format for the 'BSIP schemes and proposals overview table' (Section 6 of the 2024 BSIP template, summarising the future programme aspirations).

As a result of the new guidance, an Excel spreadsheet has been issued to LTAs to complete and submit to DfT alongside their BSIP document for publication. The spreadsheet will assist DfT in compiling the responses from LTAs and replaces the requirement to include a BSIP Overview Table in a prescribed format within the BSIP for publication. Completion and submission of the Overview Table in the prescribed spreadsheet to DfT becomes a requirement of receiving DfT BSIP funding.

We have provided a summary of the future schemes and proposals within Section 4 of this document in addition to the separate submission of the Overview Table directly to DfT.

Strategic Transport
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices, Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

Email: transport@reading.gov.uk

Website: www.reading.gov.uk/RTS2040