

**STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY
TRANSPORT ACT 2000
ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN AND SCHEME**

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1 INTRODUCTION

The National Bus Strategy (Bus Back Better), published by Government in March 2021, sets out a high level of ambition for the improvement and development of bus services in England, to reverse the historic decline in patronage overall in England, and to provide the means for bus services to recover from the significant reductions in patronage as a result of the restrictions imposed to control the Covid-19 pandemic.

Government provided Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) with a choice of pursuing franchising of bus services or the Enhanced Partnership process, with a decision required by the end of June 2021. Staffordshire County Council pursued the Enhanced Partnership process, reflecting the history of successful partnership working with bus operators.

LTAs were then required to prepare and publish Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) by the end of October 2021. These documents are intended to describe the state of bus services and the market for travel, express ambition for change and develop a comprehensive suite of interventions to increase the number of passengers on bus services. Staffordshire County Council prepared a BSIP which can be found here: <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Transport/buses/Staffordshires-Bus-Service-Improvement-Plan.aspx>.

The BSIP provides the overarching framework for the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EP Plan) and Enhanced Partnership Scheme (EP Scheme). The EP Plan summarises the main themes of the BSIP in setting out an analysis of local bus services in Staffordshire, the objectives for the quality and effectiveness of bus services and how the EP Scheme or Schemes are intended to achieve these objectives. The EP Scheme describes the Facilities, Measures and Obligations to be implemented meet those objectives and how the partnership is constituted and operates.

Both the EP Plan and the EP Scheme have been prepared by Staffordshire County Council, in consultation with the bus operators and district councils, under the Transport Act 2000 (c.38).

1.1 COMPETITION TEST

Staffordshire County Council has undertaken an assessment of the impacts of the EP Plan and Scheme [*made on 31 March 2022*] on competition for the purposes of Part 1 of Schedule 10 of the Transport Act 2000. If all the ambitions of the BSIP and EP are fully funded, the authority believes it will or is likely to have a significantly adverse effect on competition. However, the authority believes the EP Plan and Scheme(s) is justified because:

(a) it is with a view to achieving one or more of the following purposes:

- securing improvements in the quality of vehicles or facilities used for or in connection with the provision of local services;

- securing other improvements in local services of benefit to users of local services; and
- reducing or limiting traffic congestion, noise or air pollution.

(b) its effect on competition is or is likely to be proportionate to the achievement of that purpose or any of those purposes.

The Competition and Markets Authority has also been consulted on the proposals as required by section 138F of the Transport Act 2000.

2 PART 1 - EP PLAN

THE STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN FOR BUSES IS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 138G(1) OF THE TRANSPORT ACT 2000 BY:

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

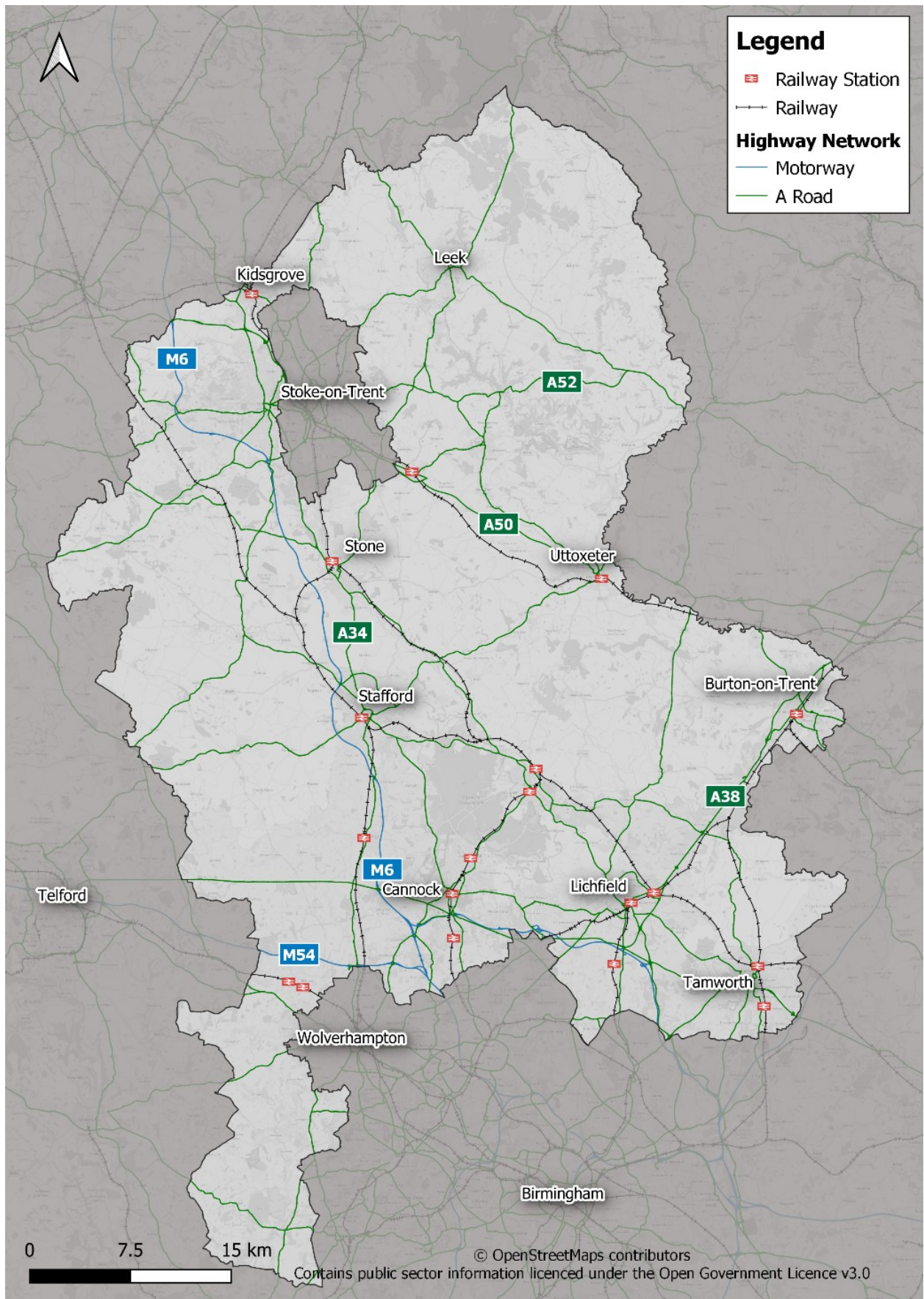
This Enhanced Partnership (EP) covers the entire administrative areas of Staffordshire County Council as illustrated at Figure 1-1.

The EP Plan will apply during the period of 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2033 and will be reviewed by Staffordshire County Council in August 2024 and then every three years. In the years that it is reviewed, it will follow Staffordshire County Council's review of its Bus Service Improvement Plan in October of each year, starting in October 2023.

Staffordshire County Council continues to work closely with all eight Districts and Boroughs within Staffordshire, ensuring that Public Transport is considered a major priority line with Staffordshire's Integrated Transport Strategies.

Staffordshire County Council engages in frequent dialogue with bordering Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to discuss cross-boundary transport issues. This engagement will continue throughout the EP period to ensure consistency and continuity of bus service provision across local authority boundaries.

Figure 1-1 - Staffordshire County Council Administrative Area



2.1 EP Links to Policy Objectives

The EP alongside Staffordshire's Bus Service Improvement Plan will contribute to the delivery of policies outlined within Staffordshire's existing LTP3 (and any subsequent update or revision), including but not limited to:

- We will help to improve bus services;
- We will support residents with mobility impairments and those without access to a private motor vehicle;
- We will seek to improve and integrate 'other' transport services;
- We will promote alternatives to private motor vehicles;
- We will promote the use of low-emitting vehicles and vehicle efficiency; and
- We will reduce emissions from road transport.

2.2 The Staffordshire Bus Network and Bus Market

Staffordshire's bus network is provided by a number of different operators, ranging from subsidiaries of large national public transport groups, to small independent operators with only a few vehicles.

2.3 Bus Service Supply

Due to the large size of Staffordshire, the bus network is naturally complex with over 300 separate services covering the county. All of the major settlements have their own town networks. Frequencies of these services vary but are generally a minimum of half-hourly within the urban area with many routes operating every 15 minutes.

Within Staffordshire there is currently no bus service providing a 'walk-up' frequency of 6 buses per hour (bph) whilst other services are regular but at a relatively low frequency. These frequencies are variable on the inter-urban services and there are limited bus provisions during the evening and Sunday services. Within the county there is also variable connectivity to major employment locations.

2.4 Bus Service Infrastructure

Historically, and due to lack of funding and physical resource, current ownership of bus stop infrastructure, bus stations and interchanges have been the responsibility of the District/Borough Councils and the Parish Councils. Within Staffordshire there are around 5,000 bus stops, 6 bus stations and 4 interchanges. These are described in more detail in the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Appendix A1.

The current situation has led to a total lack of consistency and mix of different shelters matching the corporate branding of each area, different types of publicity and inconsistent information. All are now in desperate need of either a refresh, refurbishment or replacement in order to maximise attraction and utilise the use of emerging digital technology.

2.5 Bus Fares

Bus fares vary substantially across the county. As would be expected for an authority of the size and diversity of Staffordshire, the complexities of the bus network means that cash single and return fares vary by operator with differing fare values,

increments and distances. Cash fare information is often not publicly available. This complexity, particularly on shared corridors, means that the publication of fares details as part of at-stop information is difficult. These complications of fares, and overlapping fare zones make difficulties in providing clear and comprehensive fares information to users and potential passengers.

At present there is a multi-operator ticketing scheme available within Staffordshire, but only offering one day tickets and no weekly or longer-duration products, and there are inconsistent fare offers for key groups such as students, young people and job-seekers.

2.6 Bus Passenger Information

Staffordshire County Council's website provides both links to operators' own websites, as well as detailed timetable information via the lists of services for each town/area. Journey planning functions are directed to the Traveline website.

Real-time information is provided by Staffordshire County Council at a number of locations across the county. However, this provision is limited and information at stops can vary based on location and operator presence.

2.7 Bus Fleet

The fleet age profile of vehicles operating within Staffordshire is mixed, although many operators are continuing to invest in newer vehicles. The influence of the requirements of Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), bordering the county to the south, means that many buses used in south Staffordshire are to Euro VI standard. Elsewhere emissions standards vary.

The passenger environment onboard many fleets are functional, with the age profile meaning that only some provide modern facilities such as USB charging points or next stop audio-visual announcements.

There is scope to improve both emission standards and passenger amenity on buses in Staffordshire.

2.8 Bus Priority Measures

Staffordshire has a number of existing bus priority measures in place, comprising bus lanes, bus gates and bus-only turns at key junctions. These are described at Appendix A1 of the EP Scheme. However, there is scope to develop priorities on a 'whole route' basis to maximise the benefits of journey time reductions and improvements to service reliability.

2.9 Bus Service Outcomes

According to Department for Transport bus statistics, the bus passenger trip rate is around 16.6 and has been falling over recent years. This rate is lower than the neighbouring West Midlands Combined Authority Area, Warwickshire, Derbyshire, Telford & Wrekin and Stoke-on-Trent, and is lower than would be suggested by the level of zero car ownership amongst households in Staffordshire. This suggests that

the bus passenger trip rate should be around 50% greater, at around 30 trips per year.

There are a number of exogenous factors for this:

- There is a high level of both in-commuting and out-commuting, which is more difficult for public transport to capture these trips at either the trip origin or trip end, a key consideration for interventions developed for this BSIP;
- The main town centres have lost a significant amount of retail activity over recent years, especially since Covid-19.
- Abundance of free or cheap parking in town centres, retail parks and employment areas (although overspill on-street parking is now an issue in most employment areas);
- Lack of services to some large employment areas adjacent to motorway junctions, with the nature of the employment (distribution) not lending themselves to bus use for employees to access the sites; and
- Anecdotally, high levels of private hire taxi use in some areas.

Demographic analysis and feedback from the Employment Service indicates that some areas with a higher propensity to use bus services, for all categories of journey, are poorly connected to the major employment sites, with public transport journeys involving interchange with associated interchange penalties of longer trip times.

2.10 Passenger experience and priorities for improvement

As part of the development of this BSIP, Staffordshire County Council ran a passenger engagement survey between 19 Aug 2021 and 17 September 2021, to gather views from Staffordshire residents. The survey aimed to understand views on the current bus network and highlight priorities for the future.

Respondents were asked different questions based on whether they were a current bus user or non-user. Of the 1,900 responses, nearly two-thirds were current bus users, with usage higher amongst concessionary bus pass holders, those without a car and younger respondents.

Reasons for using the bus in Staffordshire include for shopping (55%), socialising (54%), travel to work (37%) or for medical reasons (34%). For current users, respondents' feelings towards the bus were generally positive. Feelings of safety scored higher than affordability, reliability and accessibility.

When existing users were asked about what may make them use bus services more, lower fares, real time information/tracking arrival and better timetables (more frequent / evening / Sunday services) were the top answers.

Non-users cited lack of a service to their destination as the top reason for not travelling by bus, with a lack of early/late services being second. When asked what might encourage them to use buses, as with current users, real time information at stops, improved reliability and better connections were the top responses.

Contactless payments and lower fares also ranked highly. It is disappointing to note that whilst many operators have been accepting contactless payments for the past few years, knowledge of this hasn't been communicated widely or clearly enough to reach a base understanding amongst potential passengers.

Staffordshire County Council propose to repeat the survey each year to inform the annual review of the BSIP and in turn to inform the priorities for delivery on the part of the Enhanced Partnership.

2.11 Journey time trends

There is currently no open-source information available regarding bus journey times in Staffordshire. As such, information published by the DfT regarding the delay and speed on locally managed 'A' roads has been used as a proxy for understanding bus journey trends in Staffordshire.

The data suggests that the average delay on locally managed 'A' roads within Staffordshire has increased since 2016 from 30.1 seconds per vehicle per mile (spvpm) to 31.0 spvpm in 2019. As delay has increased, average speed on locally managed 'A' roads has decreased slightly from 29.1 km/h in 2016 to 28.8 km/h in 2019. Both of these metrics perform relatively well compared to the national average, although delay will still have an impact on bus services. The increased journey times and lower levels of reliability caused by congestion can reduce the desirability of bus services to customers as well as increasing the financial cost of delivering the bus service. The measures supported by the EP will work to improve journey times and reliability in Staffordshire through improvements to bus priority.

2.12 Objectives

The following objectives set out the vision for bus services in Staffordshire. Delivery of these objectives will depend on the availability of funding and the deliverability and timing of specific interventions.

Objective	How We Will Achieve This
Review Service Frequency "More buses, More Often"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased frequencies, including evenings and weekends New services Strengthened Inter-urban Network Data lead approach to reviewing services
Increase Bus Priority Measures "Getting buses moving"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and enforce bus priority measures Route reviews Mitigate the impact of roadworks
Increase Demand Responsive Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop innovative solutions for locations that are hard to reach by conventional buses in conjunction with the commercial and community sectors Embrace technology alongside traditional methods to access DRT services

Objective	How We Will Achieve This
Consideration of Bus Rapid Transport Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strong spinal routes for the future network • Improve master planning to ensure good penetration by bus
Integrate Services with Other Transport Modes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus and rail integration
Simplify Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider re-planning routes • Specific service change dates
Review Socially Necessary Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evening and weekend service increases • DRT proposals • Identify opportunities to enhance supported services • Provide improved access to employment
Invest in Superbus Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interurban Superbus network of improved key services, including timetable and vehicle enhancements • Improved frequencies in evenings and at weekends • Underpinned by improved bus priority, investment in bus stop infrastructure and passenger information, including real-time.
Lower fares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent and cheaper offers to young people and jobseekers across Staffordshire • Multi-operator ticketing • Fares initiatives
Simplify ticketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify fares and fare zone boundaries • Multi-operator ticketing • Tap on Tap Off • Consistent and cheaper offers to young people and jobseekers across Staffordshire • Reduce complexity of current historic fare structure
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services “Buses for all”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in accessible bus stops • Bus refurbishment schemes • Information at bus stops including real time • Audio visual announcements on buses • Consistent bus stop naming
Protect Passenger Safety of Bus Passengers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to bus stops • CCTV on buses and at bus stop facilities • Passenger Charter

Objective	How We Will Achieve This
Improve Buses for Tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop local leisure travel • Marketing in tourist areas • DRT services
Invest in decarbonisation “Cleaner Buses”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate scope for zero-emission vehicles • Clean vehicle retro-fit scheme and fund to support Superbus standards
Passenger Charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Passenger Charter
Strengthen Network Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review bus stop branding
Improve bus information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop comprehensive and standardised information • Increase bus stop information, including real time • Coordinated service change dates • QR code role out • Disruption messaging tool
Pulling it all together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing Strategy • Learning from others • Transport team development

Delivery of interventions against these objectives will contribute to the four key targets for outcomes that Staffordshire County Council has identified. These are:

- To improve bus journey times;
- To improve bus journey time reliability;
- To increase passenger numbers; and
- To improve passenger satisfaction.

2.13 Bus Service Improvement Plan initiatives

The BSIP published by Staffordshire County Council in October 2021 was developed in collaboration with the county’s bus operators. It sets out a number of initiatives agreed between the Council and operators as proposals for investment, subject to securing funding, which would deliver against the targets for a better bus network for Staffordshire.

The BSIP is reviewed regularly and updated as necessary. The current version of the BSIP can be found on the Staffordshire County Council website.

The table below summarises the proposals outlined for implementation in the Bus Service Improvement Plan and which therefore this Enhanced Partnership will seek to develop and deliver subject to scheme feasibility and the Partnership being able to identify and secure appropriate levels of funding from the National Bus Strategy and from other sources. The latest list of aspired initiatives not yet delivered can be found in Appendices A.3, B.3, and C.3.

Initiative title	Description	Funding status
Bus Priority and Traffic Management	Scoping and delivery of new priority measures and junction improvements on core routes, review and adjustment of existing TROs and priority measures to ensure better effectiveness. Whole route reviews and delivery of measures agreed with operators, existing study recommendations or new joint reviews.	Funding yet to be identified
Additional RTI infrastructure	New totems, increased RTI on-street, digital publicity, solar solution at bus stations, review/relocation of existing infrastructure, upgrade strategically-located VMS, new RTI contract	Funding yet to be identified
Bus stations, publicity and information	Significant improvement/refurbishment and investigation of potential new bus stations and interchanges across the county, replace/refurbish existing roadside infrastructure, improve stop accessibility. Working with partners to enhance infrastructure provision improves the image of public transport, with attractive bus stations encouraging passengers into town centres and supporting economic vitality	Funding yet to be identified
Young Person fares initiatives	New standardised offer for young people, up to age of 22	Funding yet to be identified
Smart ticketing – ticketing reform	Smart ticketing equipment and systems	Funding yet to be identified
Network enhancement funding	One year funding to allow patronage to re-establish (demonstrating which services are heading back to full commercial viability, and would then benefit from targeted investment for further growth) and network reviews to be undertaken, with new services coming into effect from 2023. Pump priming of evening and Sunday services on key routes, to further establish all-day viability of the enhanced services	Funding yet to be identified
Network enhancement funding (2)	Pump priming of additional daytime, evening and Sunday services on key routes, to further establish viability of the enhanced services, meaning patronage attracted due to journey opportunities from early to late 7 days per week	Funding yet to be identified
Swadlincote-Burton-Hospital corridor scheme	Corridor is showing promising signs for further growth, if the right package of interventions and frequency uplifts implemented. EVs covered in request below, some priority measures in general scheme at under Bus Priority Infrastructure	Funding yet to be identified
Keele-Newcastle-	Corridor is showing promising signs for further	Funding yet to

Initiative title	Description	Funding status
Stoke-Hanley-Biddulph corridor scheme	growth, particularly with journeys focussed towards Keele University, if the right package of interventions and frequency uplifts implemented. EVs covered in request below, some priority measures in general scheme under Bus Priority Infrastructure	to be identified
DRT/Community Transport service expansion	Expansion of current CT/DRT services to more areas of the county, to provide key links and feed in to the established commercial bus network.	Funding yet to be identified
Tourist services – marketing	Marketing campaign with tourist locations to promote access by bus	Funding yet to be identified
Rebuilding concessionary travel	Marketing campaign to rebuild concessionary travel trips	Funding yet to be identified
Additional staff	Additional staff to support roadworks communications, timetable replacement, network coordination	Funding yet to be identified
Passenger charter costs	More in-depth annual passenger surveys, to monitor passenger satisfaction on a disaggregated basis (local network by local network), to assist with annual BSIP and further targeted network enhancements.	Funding yet to be identified
EV Delivery Project	Work with Staffordshire County Council to introduce zero emission buses to the network	Funding yet to be identified

If funding is secured for all of the above initiatives, and delivery is achieved, the BSIP sets out the following targets to be achieved by 2025.

Category	Target	Description
Journey time	7% reduction	Review change in areas where priority measures are implemented
Reliability	85.5% punctuality at registered timing points	DfT statistics BUS0902 or operator-provided data
Passenger numbers	16.0m	DfT statistics BUS0109 or operator-provided data
Average passenger satisfaction	5% increase, to 91%	New Transport Focus twice yearly passenger survey, plus repeat of SCC online user and non-user survey

3 PART 2 – EP SCHEME

**THE STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP SCHEME
FOR BUSES IS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 138G(1) OF THE
TRANSPORT ACT 2000 BY:**

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

3.1 Definitions

In this Enhanced Partnership Plan and any Schemes made pursuant to it, the following capitalised terms shall have the meanings ascribed to them below:

Table 1 - Definitions

1985 Act	Transport Act 1985
2000 Act	Transport Act 2000
2017 Act	Bus Services Act 2017
Board	The committee of selected Staffordshire Bus Operator representatives and Staffordshire County Council representatives responsible for considering suggestions put forward by the Forum and making decisions including specific Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations.
Bus Operators (or Operators)	All Operators running Qualifying Bus Services taken collectively.
Enhanced Partnership	The Enhanced Partnership covering the geographic extent of the administrative boundary of the county of Staffordshire shown for identification purposes only on the plan at Figure 1.
Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation	This comprises either: <p style="margin-left: 40px;">(a) A variation of the relevant Enhanced Partnership Scheme as a result of the voting mechanism set out in section 3.7.2 with respect to Facilities, Measures or Obligations.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">or</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">(b) A variation of the EP Scheme agreed as a result of the voting mechanism set out in Section 3.7.3.</p> <p>Each of which will then constitute a formal variation of the relevant scheme for the purposes of s.138E(1) of the 2000 Act.</p>
Facilities	Those facilities referred to in Appendix A which shall be deemed such for the purposes of s.138D(1) of the 2000 Act.
Forum	The committee of all Staffordshire Bus Operators, Staffordshire County Council, district and borough councils, and anyone else invited, responsible for considering all issues affecting the Enhanced Partnership, and making recommendations to the EP Board in line with the Enhanced Partnership governance arrangements.

Geographic Area Representative	The largest eligible Operator in each of the five main areas of the county (Burton-on-Trent, Cannock, the Potteries, Stafford and Tamworth).
Measures	Those measures referred to in Appendix B which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of s.138D(2) of the 2000 Act.
Non-qualifying Bus Service	Services excluded from classification as Qualifying Bus Services.
Operator Objection Mechanism	As defined at The Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018
Other Operator representative	The elected representative for Operators who are not one of the five Geographic Area Representatives.
Qualifying Bus Service	<p>A registered local bus service with one or more stopping place within the geographical area of the Enhanced Partnership, with the exception of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any schools or works registered local bus service not eligible for Bus Service Operators Grant; • Any cross-boundary registered local bus service with less than 10% of its registered mileage within the Enhanced Partnership area; • Any services operated under section 22 of the 1985 Act; • Any registered local bus service which is an excursion or tour; • Any special services such as for football matches or special events; and • Any other registered local bus service that the Operators (through the Board voting mechanism in Section 3.7.2 and Staffordshire County Council decide should be excluded from all or specific requirements of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme. <p>For the avoidance of doubt, a list of Qualifying Bus Services will be published at the start of each County Council financial year.</p> <p>In addition, any tendered service on which the tendering authority takes the revenue risk will not be subject to the Operator Objection mechanism, consistent with The Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018</p>
Requirements	Those requirements placed upon Bus Operators identified as such within Appendix C which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of s.138C of the 2000 Act.
Traffic Commissioner Powers	'Relevant registration functions' of Traffic Commissioners to the extent that they relate to a 'relevant service' both within the meanings given to them under section 6G(10) of the 1985 Act.

3.2 Section 1 – EP Scheme Content

This document fulfils the statutory requirements for an EP Scheme. In accordance with statutory requirements in Sections 138A-138S of the Transport Act 2000, the EP Scheme document sets out:

Section 2 - Scope of the EP Scheme and commencement date

Section 3 - Obligations on the Local Authorities

Section 4 - Obligations on Bus Operators

Section 5 – Governance Arrangements

The EP Scheme has been jointly developed by Staffordshire County Council and those bus operators that provide local bus services in the EP Scheme area. It sets out obligations and requirements on both Staffordshire County Council and operators of local services in the Staffordshire County Council administrative area in order to achieve the intended improvements, with the aim of delivering the objectives of the associated EP Plan.

3.3 Section 2 - Scope of the EP Scheme and Commencement Date

3.3.1 Description of Geographical Coverage

The EP Scheme will support the improvement of all local bus services operating in the administrative area of Staffordshire County Council, as shown at Figure 1-1 of the EP Plan.

3.3.2 Commencement Date

The EP Scheme enters into force at the same time as the EP Plan on 1 August 2023.

3.3.3 Review and Duration

The EP Scheme has an end date of 31 July 2033. The EP Scheme will be reviewed by the Partnership Board at least annually on the anniversary of the commencement date, and the Facilities, Measures and Obligations contained within in will be reviewed at least every 12 months.

3.3.4 Exempted Services

Exempted services are defined in Table 1 at the start of Part Two.

3.4 Section 3 - Obligations on the Authorities

3.4.1 Facilities

Existing Facilities maintained by Staffordshire County Council are shown at Appendix A.1. These consist of bus priority schemes; bus stations and interchanges; and bus stops.

Any change to the inventory of existing bus priority schemes or bus stations or interchanges outlined at Appendix A.1 is subject to the approval of the Enhanced Partnership Board under the voting mechanism defined at Section 3.6.2. In addition, any proposal to remove bus priority schemes or bus stations and interchanges or

amend the scope of these is subject to there being no objections received from Operators of Qualifying Bus Services utilising those Facilities at the time the proposal is made (see Section 3.7.2 – variation).

Facilities that the Board have agreed should be made and which have received any consents necessary from Staffordshire County Council for implementation are shown at Appendix A.2.

Facilities identified in the BSIP but not yet subject to confirmed funding or approvals are shown in Appendix A.3.

3.4.2 Measures

Existing measures provided by Staffordshire County Council are shown at Appendix B.1.

Measures that the Board have agreed should be made and which have received any consents necessary from Staffordshire County Council for implementation are shown at Appendix B.2.

Measures identified in the BSIP but not yet subject to confirmed funding or approvals are shown in Appendix B.3.

3.5 Section 4 - Requirements on Local Bus Operators¹

The existing Requirements of Operators in providing Qualifying Bus Services are shown at Appendix C.1.

Requirements on Operators that will apply on the making of this Scheme are shown at Appendix C2. Further requirements that may be agreed by the Board from time to time are also shown at Appendix C.2.

Obligations identified in the BSIP but not yet subject to confirmed funding or approvals are shown in Appendix C.3.

3.6 Section 5 – Governance Arrangements

For decision-making purposes, the Enhanced Partnership will be governed by the Board. It is supported by a wider stakeholder Forum.

3.6.1 Forum

The Forum will provide opportunities for discussing issues of all kinds affecting the Staffordshire bus network, consulting with and building consensus across the various stakeholders and making recommendations and suggestions to the Board.

Detailed Terms of Reference are shown at Appendix D.1.

The Forum may develop and submit recommendations to the Board including, but not limited to, the following themes:

- Better network coverage and scale

¹ Under s.138C of the Transport Act 2000

- Better integration between modes
- Better and clearer information
- Better journey time reliability
- Better value and integrated fares
- Better vehicle standards and lower emissions

Membership of the Forum will comprise the following:

- All Bus Operators running Qualifying Bus Services (attendance by Operators is voluntary)
- Staffordshire County Council (Passenger Transport and Highways)
- Community Transport operators
- All district and borough councils in Staffordshire
- All Staffordshire train operating companies
- Neighbouring Local Transport Authorities.

The Forum Chair will be Staffordshire County Council's lead member for the transport portfolio or his or her selected deputy.

In addition, from time-to-time other external organisations may be invited to join the Forum on an advisory basis for fixed periods to provide specialist expertise. From time to time (not more than once per financial year) a wider conference of all relevant parties, including representatives of organisations such as bus user groups, businesses and the Local Enterprise Partnership, in addition to Forum members, may be invited to review and discuss the progress of, and future opportunities for, the partnership.

3.6.1.1 Meeting arrangements:

Forum meetings will take place not less than twice per year, normally six calendar weeks before each Board meeting. Forum meetings will be arranged, chaired and minutes taken by Staffordshire County Council.

Agendas and meeting papers (including a copy of minutes and outcomes of decisions taken at the previous Board) will be circulated by Staffordshire County Council no less than one week in advance of each meeting, and draft minutes circulated no more than two weeks after each meeting. Draft minutes will be approved at the next Forum meeting.

If required, decisions of the Forum will be made by way of a vote through a show of hands, with a simple majority required to pass any decision.

Proposals generated by the Forum for changes to Facilities, Measures and Obligations, if voted in favour by a Forum majority, will be passed to the Board Chair for consideration at the next Board meeting.

3.6.1.2 Forum Annual General Meeting (AGM):

The final Forum meeting of each financial year will be the designated Forum AGM. All Operators will be invited to self-nominate or nominate other willing Operators for Board membership, to represent themselves and all other Operators in their category, ahead of the Forum AGM. A ballot will be organised by Staffordshire County Council at the Annual General Meeting to select Operators' preferred Board representatives (Section 3.6.2.1).

3.6.2 Board

The Board will be the decision-making body of the Enhanced Partnership. Detailed Terms of Reference are shown at Appendix D.2.

Certain decisions of the Board may constitute Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations pursuant to Section 3.7.2 hereof if the requirements therein are met.

Membership of the Board will comprise the following representatives:

- 3x Staffordshire County Council officers (voting)
- 6x Operator representatives (voting)

Initially the Chair will be chosen from the Staffordshire County Council officers on the Board. The Chair will be elected annually by Board members.

Board meetings will require a quorum of four Operator representatives and two Staffordshire County Council representatives. An Operator representative may, if necessary, arrange for an alternate or deputy from the same category to participate with voting rights.

The Board may constitute working groups as it may consider helpful from time to time to research particular matters of relevance and report back. Detailed Terms of Reference are shown at Appendix D.3.

3.6.2.1 Operator representative selection:

Six Operator representatives will be selected, comprising the largest Operator in each of the five main areas of the county (Burton-on-Trent, Cannock, the Potteries, Stafford and Tamworth), plus one representative for all other Operators.

Where Operators are part of the same holding company or group, or have one or more common Persons of Significant Control, they will be considered a single entity and eligible to only to hold one Operator representative position between them. In such cases, the single entity will hold the representative position for its largest operation (determined by annual Staffordshire bus network kilometres), with the other area(s) then represented by the next largest Operator eligible to be a representative.

The Other Operator representative will be selected by ballot amongst Operators who are not one of the five geographic area representatives. They will be invited to self-nominate in writing to Staffordshire County Council's Head of Transport Operations and Future Connectivity prior to each Board AGM. Voting will be on the basis of one vote per eligible Operator (where Operators are part of the same holding company or group, or have one or more common Persons of Significant Control, they will only be

entitled to one vote between them). Where there is a tie, a run-off vote will take place between the leading tied Operators.

3.6.2.2 Role of Board members:

The Other Operator representative will be acting on behalf of all Other Operators, not on behalf of their own company alone.

Representatives will be responsible for ensuring attendance at all Board meetings in that year, and ensure they have:

- (a) fully reviewed and understood all meeting papers in advance of attendance
- (b) the required mandate from the Operators they represent.

3.6.2.3 Board decision-making:

Decisions imposing financial commitments on any party can only proceed to a vote when the financial implications on all parties have been discussed and acknowledged. If necessary, provisions can be made to ensure affordability to relevant parties impacted.

Decisions of the Board will be made by way of a vote through a show of hands.

Unless stated otherwise in this document, decisions will be passed by way of receiving **at least 66%** of votes in favour from members of the Board entitled to vote (on a one representative, one vote basis). Any abstained votes will be noted as such.

All votes will be cast as part of the meeting's proceedings; where members of the Board are voting remotely (for example using internet meeting hosting software) they will be required to be visibly casting their vote with their face and hand clearly visible, for vote auditing purposes.

Operators will be entitled to make known their concerns in writing to Staffordshire County Council's Head of Transport Operations and Future Connectivity if they object to a particular vote of the Board. Staffordshire County Council will review the circumstances and consider whether these are such that use of its veto is required as provided for below.

3.6.2.4 Staffordshire County Council veto

These controls ensure that the voting system:

- Does not allow an individual Operator to influence the Enhanced Partnership to its own commercial benefit or to harm competitors;
- That there is no opportunity for a group of Operators to vote in a co-ordinated manner to mutual benefit on a sustained basis; or
- That there is no discrimination between Operators; and that actual or potential competition, entry to new services and by new Operators, or innovation, is not inhibited.

Staffordshire County Council may, in exceptional circumstances, exercise a veto over Board decisions which it may reasonably believe or suspect as having anti-competitive implications or being otherwise significantly against the public interest.

If Staffordshire County Council exercises its veto, operators will have a right to appeal the decision. The first stage will be to take the decision to a member of Staffordshire County Council's Senior Leadership Team not involved with the EP process. Written representations will be provided by both parties within agreed timescales, with the arbiter providing a written response within agreed timescales.

If the outcome of the first stage appeal is not accepted by either side, the second stage will be to take the matter to a mutually-agreed external independent arbiter for a final binding decision. The form of representations and timescales will be agreed with by all parties once the independent arbiter has agreed to take on the review and decision.

3.6.2.5 Meeting observers:

Any other Bus Operator, Community Transport operator, Staffordshire County Council and district and borough council representatives will be able to attend the Board meetings as observers but will not have the right to vote. Observers may be invited to make comments or ask questions of the Board at the Chair's discretion or invited to defer these until the next Forum meeting. They may, at the Board's discretion, be required to sign an appropriate Confidentiality Agreement if any discussions or papers submitted include information that is commercial in confidence.

3.6.2.6 Meeting arrangements:

Board meetings will take place not less than twice per year at regular intervals between each Forum meeting, with provision for additional meetings as required to take decisions which in the opinion of the Chair cannot be deferred to a scheduled meeting, provided that a quorum can be achieved, with not less than two weeks' notice being given. Meetings will be arranged and minutes taken by Staffordshire County Council.

Agendas and meeting papers will be circulated to all Board members no less than one week in advance of each meeting date. All invitees are then provided with the opportunity to request additional items for inclusion on the agenda, as long as the request is received by the appropriate Staffordshire County Council officer by the close of business on the working day after the draft agenda has been issued.

Draft minutes circulated to all Board members no more than two weeks after each meeting. Draft minutes will be approved subject to any issues raised by Board members within 2 weeks of circulation then circulated by the Board Chair to the Forum.

3.7 Arrangements for Reviewing, Varying or Revoking the Enhanced Partnership Scheme

3.7.1 Review of Enhanced Partnership Scheme

Once the EP Scheme is made, the Facilities, Measures and Obligations will be reviewed by the Board every twelve months following publication of data on progress towards targets, as required by the BSIP. Staffordshire County Council will initiate

each review. This Board will consider this review and instruct Staffordshire County Council to make the relevant changes as required.

The Board can also decide to review specific elements of the scheme on an ad-hoc basis. Board members should contact the Board chair. The Chair will then decide whether to table at the next scheduled meeting or make arrangements for all or the necessary Board members to gather more quickly.

3.7.2 Changes to the Enhanced Partnership Scheme

Any changes to the Facilities, Measures or Obligations set out in Appendices A.1 to C.3 will be considered bespoke changes to the EP Scheme. Any Operator of Qualifying Local Services or Staffordshire County Council may bring a proposal or proposals to the Board Chair where it or they will be considered.

This document contains the amended Appendices, as voted for approval by the EP Board, as noted below.

Drafting date and author	Change	Approved by EP Board - date
13/05/2024 SCC/Atkins	Updating appendices B and C to reflect BSIP+ spending and other funding etc	16/05/2024

The Board will then consider the proposal or proposals and any accompanying evidence and vote on the change proposed by the Forum, an Operator or Staffordshire County Council at its next meeting. Staffordshire County Council will then amend the relevant Appendix or Appendices to this EP Scheme if the Board votes in favour of the change in line with the Board decision making process set out in Section 3.6.2.3.

The EP Board will also consider when any such changes shall come into force, and / or the linking of the changes (for instance, any Operator Obligations to take effect only once any enabling Local Authority Facilities or Measures have been implemented, taking account of the lead time for service registrations should these be required).

As per Section 3.4.1 above, any proposal to withdraw or reduce the scope of any bus priority scheme or named passenger interchange or bus station Facility requires the written approval of all Operators of Qualifying Services using that scheme at the time the proposal is made.

In the event that a number of Operators which would trigger the default Operator objection mechanism (as set out in the Enhanced Partnerships and Schemes

(Objections) Regulations 2018 as may be varied from time to time) raises concerns in writing to a minimum of one subsequent Board meeting about a previous decision of the Board, the decision-making process for Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations will revert to the default Operator objection mechanism contained in those regulations to review that decision and as appropriate for future decision-making purposes.

3.7.3 Other Changes to the Enhanced Partnership Scheme

Any other proposals (i.e. content other than Facilities, Measures and Obligations) for changes to the EP Scheme will be considered under Section 138L of the Transport Act 2000. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the BSIP, EP Plan and Staffordshire County Council's current local transport policies. Any such proposals should be in writing and submitted to the Board Chair.

Any Operator of Qualifying Local Services or Staffordshire County Council may bring a proposal or proposals to the Board. The Board will then consider the proposal or proposals and any accompanying evidence and vote on the change at its next meeting. Staffordshire County Council will then follow the process set out in Section 138L of the Transport Act 2000 and The Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018 on behalf of the Board.

3.7.4 Revocation of an EP Scheme

Should Staffordshire County Council or any other member of the Board believe that it is necessary to revoke the Plan or Scheme, then it must express this in writing to the Board chair. The Board will then consider and vote upon the proposal. Should the Board vote to revoke the Plan or Scheme, Staffordshire County Council will then follow the process set out at Section 138O of the Transport Act 2000.

3.7.5 Data sharing and commercial confidence

At all times each member of the Forum and Board will respect data confidentiality and will ensure the Forum and Board observe processes to maintain and respect commercial confidentiality as required. Should any member believe there has been a breach of confidentiality, they should raise this with the Board Chair.

3.7.6 Enforcement

Should Staffordshire County Council decide that it wishes to take on the Traffic Commissioner powers, it will follow the procedure to amend the EP Scheme under Section 138L of the Transport Act 2000.

A Appendix A: Facilities

A.1 Existing

Bus Priority Schemes

The current bus priority infrastructure within Staffordshire is as follows:

- Burton High Street, Burton-on-Trent
- Barracks Road bus lane, Newcastle-under-Lyme
- Perton bus gate, South Staffordshire
- Bridge Street right turn, Stafford
- South Walls bus lane, Stafford
- Chell Road bus lane, Stafford
- John Amery Drive pedestrian crossing bus gate, Stafford
- Stone Business Park bus gate, Stone
- King Edward Place bus lane, Burton-on-Trent
- Worthington Way right turn, Burton-on-Trent

Bus Stations and Passenger Interchanges

The current bus station and interchange position in Staffordshire is as follows:

- 6 Bus Stations in Staffordshire currently all maintained by Districts and Borough Councils; and
- 4 Bus Interchanges in Staffordshire currently all maintained by Districts and Borough Councils.

Bus Stops

The current bus stop infrastructure position in Staffordshire is as follows:

- 4,900 bus stops;
- 1,088 shelters in Staffordshire;
- Only 206 shelters are maintained by Staffordshire County Council;
- 168 RTPI displays (at 152 locations) managed and maintained by Staffordshire County Council; and
- 113 bus stops have roadside information provided by Staffordshire County Council.

Existing roadside information, bus stop flags and RTI equipment will be maintained. The County Council will work with operators to develop a consistent approach to at-stop information provision, and all parties will work together to clarify responsibilities for roadside infrastructure maintenance and updating.

The County Council will work with bus operators to determine locations where intelligent bus priority can be provided at traffic signal-controlled junctions

The County Council invest in digital tools to support highway network management and information sharing with operators, to allow efficient and timely notifications of need for service alterations and diversions. This will allow sufficient notice to be given to operators to ensure that suitable mitigation is put in place to reduce disruption to services. These mitigations could include (but not exclusively) the allowance of buses to pass through the roadworks site, provision of shuttle services along sections of the route otherwise suspended, or other discussion between the County Council (Public Transport and Highways departments), bus operators and the roadworks sponsor to determine other potential solutions to maintain services. The notification system may be through an enhanced online portal, or other means, but will provide a key information link between operators and the Highways department.

The County Council will engage with operators as part of the development of major road schemes, to allow operator’s inputs to be considered as scheme designs are progressed. This engagement will be at all appropriate stages of the project’s development, and be well in advance of any formal public consultation.

A.2 Proposed

Maintain existing RTI system, deliver agreed and funded expansion and seek further funding to support wider roll-out.

Continued liaison with Districts and Boroughs regarding major bus interchange facilities, and regular engagement with all partners regarding continuation or change of facilities.

A.3 Facilities for consideration subject to funding, feasibility and Board and Staffordshire County Council (where required) approval

Initiative title	Description	Funding status
Bus Priority and Traffic Management	Scoping and delivery of new priority measures and junction improvements on core routes, review and adjustment of existing TROs and priority measures to ensure better effectiveness. Whole route reviews and delivery of measures agreed with operators, existing study recommendations or new joint reviews.	Funding yet to be identified
Additional RTI	New totems, increased RTI on-street, digital	Funding yet to

Initiative title	Description	Funding status
infrastructure	publicity, solar solution at bus stations, review/relocation of existing infrastructure, upgrade strategically-located VMS, new RTI contract	be identified
Bus stations, publicity and information	Significant improvement/refurbishment and investigation of potential new bus stations and interchanges across the county, replace/refurbish existing roadside infrastructure, improve stop accessibility. Working with partners to enhance infrastructure provision improves the image of public transport, with attractive bus stations encouraging passengers into town centres and supporting economic vitality.	Funding yet to be identified
Swadlincote-Burton-Hospital corridor scheme	Corridor is showing promising signs for further growth, if the right package of interventions and frequency uplifts implemented. EVs covered in request below, some priority measures in general scheme at under Bus Priority Infrastructure	Funding yet to be identified
Keele-Newcastle-Stoke-Hanley-Biddulph corridor scheme	Corridor is showing promising signs for further growth, particularly with journeys focused towards Keele University, if the right package of interventions and frequency uplifts implemented. EVs covered in request below, some priority measures in general scheme under Bus Priority Infrastructure	Funding yet to be identified

B Appendix B: Measures

B.1 Existing

Existing Services

Due to the large size of Staffordshire, the bus network is naturally complex with over 300 separate service covering the county. Bus operations within the county are centred around major settlements, with a split between commercial services and others operating under tender to Staffordshire County Council. Longer-distance routes operate between the major conurbations within and just outside of Staffordshire, including to Birmingham, Derby, Hanley, Telford, Uttoxeter, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

All of the major settlements have their own town networks. Frequencies of these services vary, but are generally a minimum of half-hourly within the urban area with many routes operating every 15 minutes.

Rural areas of the county are provided by either infrequent scheduled bus services (some on certain days of the week only), or form part of the Staffordshire Moorlands Rural Mobility Fund trial demand responsive scheme.

Evening and Sunday service provision varies across the county. Funding for such services from Staffordshire County Council has been reduced due to wider budgetary pressures.

Services are operated by approximately 20 operators, ranging from subsidiaries of national groups, to large local independent and community transport operations.

Where route numbers are identified within the BSIP and or Enhanced Partnership document these are correct as of November 2021. Routes might be renumbered, or rerouted throughout the course of the EP Plan & EP Scheme.

Tendered Contracts

As of December 2021, Staffordshire County Council financially supports 27 services, most are for the operation of entire daytime services, with a focus on fulfilling mobility needs across the County.

Information Provision

Staffordshire County Council's website provides both links to operators' own websites, as well as detailed timetable information via the lists of services for each town/area. Journey planning functions are directed to the Traveline website.

B.2 Proposed

Collaboratively review each operator's network to determine highway network issues and incorporate identified hot-spots within a list of future measures for review and action.

Work with operators to review and expand the Knot Card scheme, introducing additional products (for example child, week, month) and review operator acceptance and scheme funding. This review will take place within the first 6 months after this Enhanced Partnership is made.

Work with operators to develop and implement a Passenger Charter for Staffordshire.

B.3 Measures for consideration subject to funding, feasibility and Board and Staffordshire County Council (where required) approval

Initiative title	Description	Funding status
Young Person fares initiatives	New standardised offer for young people, up to age of 22 (support to operators as patronage generation covers costs)	Funding yet to be identified
Smart ticketing – ticketing reform	Smart ticketing equipment and systems	Funding yet to be identified

Initiative title	Description	Funding status
Network enhancement funding	One year funding to allow patronage to re-establish (demonstrating which services are heading back to full commercial viability, and would then benefit from targeted investment for further growth) and network reviews to be undertaken, with new services coming into effect from 2023. Pump priming of evening and Sunday services on key routes, to further establish all-day viability of the enhanced services	Funding yet to be identified
Network enhancement funding (2)	Pump priming of additional daytime, evening and Sunday services on key routes, to further establish viability of the enhanced services, meaning patronage attracted due to journey opportunities from early to late 7 days per week	Funding yet to be identified
DRT/Community Transport service expansion	Expansion of current CT/DRT services to more areas of the county, to provide key links and feed in to the established commercial bus network.	Funding yet to be identified
Tourist services – marketing	Marketing campaign with tourist locations to promote access by bus	Funding yet to be identified
Rebuilding concessionary travel	Marketing campaign to rebuild concessionary travel trips	Funding yet to be identified
Additional staff	Additional staff to support roadworks communications, timetable replacement, network coordination	Funding yet to be identified
Passenger charter costs	Costs for more in-depth annual passenger surveys, to monitor passenger satisfaction on a disaggregated basis (local network by local network), to assist with annual BSIP and further targeted network enhancements.	Funding yet to be identified

C Appendix C: Requirements

C.1 Existing

None

C.2 Proposed

Timetable changes

Operators will limit timetable changes for Qualifying Local Services to specific dates decided by the Board.

Simpler Ticketing

In advance of funding being made available for the aspects of Simpler Ticketing referred to in the BSIP, Operators will use reasonable endeavours to collaborate with Staffordshire County Council to:

- Make consistent existing 'own-operator' ticketing scheme boundaries in order to make the bus product simpler for passenger;
- Harmonise fare products (though not the price);
- Where these don't currently exist, develop carnet products to better meet the needs of part-time commuters;
- Work with Staffordshire County Council to review and expand the Knot Ticket scheme, introducing additional products (for example child, week, month) and review operator acceptance and scheme funding. This review will be undertaken within 6 months of this Enhanced Partnership being made; and
- Develop a multi-operator smart ticketing scheme agreement and identify the resource and funding requirements and any technical challenges.

Any scheme developed will be in line with the relevant ticket block exemption rules.

Passenger Charter

Work with Staffordshire County Council to develop and implement a Passenger Charter for Staffordshire.

C.3 Obligations for consideration subject to funding, feasibility and Board and Staffordshire County Council (where required) approval

Initiative title	Description	Funding status
EV Delivery Project	Work with Staffordshire County Council to introduce zero emission buses to the network.	Funding yet to be identified

D Appendix D: Terms of Reference

D.1 Terms of Reference – Forum

The Forum will:

- Consider the available evidence from Staffordshire County Council's monitoring against the BSIP targets of patronage, journey time, reliability and passenger satisfaction;
- Consider how delivery of existing and potential Facilities, Measures and Obligations can assist in delivering outcomes against those targets;
- Develop and continuously review a process to prioritise available funding to potential Facilities, Measures and Obligations;
- Develop investigations, feasibility studies and costed business cases for the development and implementation of Facilities, Measures and Obligations for submission to the Board for consideration and approval;
- Liaise with equivalent governance bodies in neighbouring Enhanced Partnership, on matters both of policy and direction and on specific cross-boundary issues; and
- Liaise with the Board on the forward work programme.

D.2 Terms of Reference – Board

The Board will provide detailed technical project direction and scrutiny on interventions within the Enhanced Partnership Plan as well as having oversight and direction of financial delivery and the monitoring and evaluation framework.

In outline, the Enhanced Partnership Board will aim to:

- Review proposals brought to it by the Forum in respect of Facilities, Measures and Requirements, and any accompanying evidence;
- Satisfy itself that the any such proposals are sufficiently and appropriately evidenced;
- Vote on whether to proceed with such a change, and request Staffordshire County Council to apply its normal statutory powers as required to deliver any such change, and request Staffordshire County Council to amend the EP Scheme as appropriate;
- Review proposals brought to it by the Forum for changes to the EP Plan and Scheme, and if content initiate the required process to make such changes;
- Establish working groups and invite the views and participation of wider stakeholders as required to assist in the development of these investigations, feasibility studies and business cases;
- Direct Staffordshire County Council to monitor outcomes against the stated targets and use this evidence to develop its policy in considering proposals brought to it by the Forum;
- Liaise as required with the Forum in considering scheme proposals and in providing direction as required from time to time on the content of the proposals and supporting evidence bases brought to it by the Forum.

D.3 Terms of Reference – Working Group

A Working Group constituted by the Board will:

- Have its membership determined by the Board;
- Be constituted from time to time by the Board as required with a specific brief and timescale to report back as appropriate; and
- Deliver a written response to the Board's brief for the Board's consideration.

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