

# York Bus Service Improvement Plan

Developing the bus network in York

Draft final for Executive Decision

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Bus Operators and Council working together to deliver better bus services for York



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## Foreword

This document sets out City of York Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in response to the National Bus Strategy. The BSIP sets out how York will continue its long standing programme to improve bus services in York to encourage greater use of the service – in support of the city's local transport and environmental policies, and to recover service use to levels seen before the covid pandemic – indeed higher than that.

The bus has always been very important in York's transport. Why is this? There are many reasons.

Firstly, bus services are important because they combat congestion - one of the biggest destroyers of time and productivity in modern urban economies. In York, pre-covid, the buses carried a lot of trips – nearly 16<sup>1</sup> million in 2018/19, 4 million of those on park and ride. This was a growth of 60% over the 2000 total of 10 million trips. Also, 8%<sup>2</sup> of journeys to work in York are on the bus, compared to 3% nationally. Because the bus is an efficient user of limited roadspace (a double decker bus is the length of 2 cars, but can carry up to 80 people) it makes sense to support further use of the bus with the objective of managing congestion in York.

Secondly, bus services support York's economy. Policies to grow York's economy require a flexible local labour market – allowing employees to travel easily to a range of job opportunities<sup>3</sup>, and giving employers access to a pool of labour spread over a wide area. The University of York, York College and York St John University are all on high frequency bus routes, and the city centre is at the heart of many high frequency routes, making bus an important means for people to access jobs, training opportunities, further and higher education.

Bus services also support York's city centre. Research has shown that 25% of people in the centre of York got there by bus<sup>4</sup>; meanwhile other research<sup>5</sup> has shown that bus passengers are responsible for between 25% and 33% of expenditure in city centres, with an average spend per trip of £54. If these figures were applied to the number of visitor trips to York each year (approximately 8 million), a spend of around £100 million per year is implied, with spending by

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Transport statistics, 2019

<sup>2</sup> UK 2011 Census

<sup>3</sup> Department for Transport appraisal guidance on transport and productivity

<sup>4</sup> JMP Movement and Access Study for central York, 2011

<sup>5</sup> Institute for Transport Studies (Leeds University) for Greener Journeys: The Economic Value of Bus Services, 2014

residents of York, who use the bus to get into the city centre, additional to this figure<sup>6</sup>. As such, improving bus services is essential to CYC's wider ambitions to develop the city centre and assist in its recovery from the economic downturn brought by covid.

Effective bus services are also a key component in the City Council's programmes to reduce poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion in York. The original work by the Cabinet Office's Social Exclusion Unit<sup>7</sup> made it clear that availability of reliable and affordable public transport allows people without access to cars to reach training, healthcare, childcare, a range of job opportunities and simply allows people to visit, and be visited by, their friends and relatives, and this link is re-emphasised in the National Bus Strategy and correspondence from Baroness Vere more recently<sup>8</sup>. As such, effective bus services can be key to promoting not just economic growth, but also improving health and wellbeing and reducing mental illness, particularly in a city like York, with a relatively low rate of car ownership<sup>9</sup>.

Furthermore, bus services have a key role in complementing York's policies to encourage walking and cycling. Studies of travel behaviour<sup>10</sup> have shown that people are more likely to adopt walking and cycling as their main means of getting around if a good bus service is also available – even if they only use it when the weather is poor or they have something heavy to carry. In this way, this BSIP is complementary to, not in tension with, York's investment in active travel through the Active Travel Fund and the city's own walking and cycling funding, which is extensive.

Finally, good public transport is a key ingredient in making a city an attractive place to live<sup>11</sup> and is important in forming visitors' first impressions of York. On the basis that the first time visitor of today might be the regular visitor, resident or even investor in the York of tomorrow, the public transport network should be developed to give a consistently good impression of the city – through its being punctual, attractive and pleasant to use.

Consequently, York sees supporting its bus services as essential, agreeing with the imperative to improve services set out in the National Bus Strategy. However, that is not to say bus services in York are currently perfect, and this document presents substantial analysis identifying shortcomings where there is scope to improve the network. Congestion across York slows down

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<sup>6</sup> There are approximately 16 million bus trips per year in York, with two-thirds of these starting or finishing in the city.

<sup>7</sup> Making the Connections: final report on transport and social exclusion, Social Exclusion Unit 2003

<sup>8</sup> Baroness Vere, letter to local transport authorities, September 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Bus Network Review, Steer Davies Gleave for City of York Council, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Evaluation of LSTF Projects, Department for Transport, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, Livability Study, 2012.

journeys and makes them unreliable. The growth aspirations set out in York's draft Local Plan will need an effective bus service – we need to make sure that happens.

So this document sets out how City of York Council will work with bus operators and community stakeholders to develop bus services in York – address current shortfalls, and for the future build a strong and stable network to act as a glue binding together much of York's social and economic fabric; in the process supporting the principles set out in the National Bus Strategy.



### **Our vision for bus services in York**

Our vision is straightforward and builds on the policies in York's Local Transport Plan, and our draft Local Plan.

In short, we want York to have a bus network which is:

- Inclusive - minimizing social exclusion by offering easy, comprehensive and cheap transport around the city
- accessible to all – easy to use by everyone in the city, including people with impaired mobility or senses
- attractive – enough to mean driving is not the default option for many trips in York
- welcoming – to our many visitors, whether they are coming to York for a day at the races or a four year degree course
- A source of pride for the city and its residents

We also want York's bus network to be just one of a number of excellent bus networks in the wider Yorkshire Region, and we want seamless travel between the buses in York and trains and buses outside the York administrative area.



## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for York. The city's bus network is currently delivered by City of York Council, bus operators and community stakeholders working together through a voluntary quality bus partnership which has worked hard to improve services for over 20 years. This document sets out the development of the partnership and network to meet the challenges set down in the National Bus Strategy (NBS).
- 1.2 In the partnership, the city council provide and manage the roads which bus services use, and the bus stops and shelters used by passengers. The bus operators provide the bus services themselves – the vehicles and their drivers. So whilst the bus operators are accountable for the services running to time, they can only do that if the roads are managed effectively by the local authority. There are also a number of elements delivered in partnership, such as the bus timetables in the city, which are produced by the council but financed by the operators. This document will set out how the existing arrangements can be transitioned to a Enhanced Partnership model, as set out in the NBS.
- 1.3 We recognise, then, that because many elements, controlled by different parties, come together to provide a “good” bus service, there is a need to respond to the challenge of NBS by setting out a co-ordinated plan for the development of York's bus network, so that the city council can identify its priorities in seeking capital funding; so that the bus operators can have the confidence to invest in improving services in York and so that it is clear who is responsible for each attribute of the bus service, and to articulate our network development funding “ask” to the DfT. Our ask is informed by data, consultation we have undertaken this Summer informing a refresh of York's Local Transport Plan discussion with York's bus operators and input from other groups, including the York Bus Forum and York Civic Trust's Transport Advisory Group.
- 1.4 This BSIP sets out the measures that the partners will work together to deliver over the next 3 years – a period aligned with the DfT's commitment of £3bn expenditure to improve local bus services up to the 2024/25 year, and then further investment beyond 2025. As such, this document, and the “daughter” documents and evidence base in its appendices will be updated annually to reflect York, and its bus network's, development and discharge the duty on LTAs to publish an annual update of their BSIPs.
- 1.5 The BSIP is split into a number of thematic sections. Each section comprises:
  - An analysis of the current situation
  - A statement of commitments made by CYC, the bus operators, or other parties, to address identified shortcomings outwith (and often in advance of the publication of) the National Bus Strategy
  - A statement of the ask we are making to DfT to develop York's bus network to the standard set out in NBS.

- 1.6 The effect of the covid pandemic is still playing out on bus services. At the time of writing, service use in York has returned to between 65% and 80% of pre-covid volumes, with significant differences between services and markets. The commute market remains depressed, whilst the leisure and visitor market is performing well. There are other significant uncertainties in the short to medium term around availability of driving staff. This BSIP has needed to bear these factors in mind in making its commitments and asks. Whilst it presents a framework for developing bus services, this is presented in outline to maintain flexibility in delivery and take account of uncertainty as the BSIP measures are implemented.
- 1.7 Consequently, where we have made asks of the DfT these have been prioritised into one or more of the following categories:
- Bus Recovery from covid and its consequences
  - Stabilisation of the network in the medium term
  - Reduce social exclusion (by improving the network)
  - Improving the offer for customers
- 1.8 This prioritization is reflected in the rankings given to measures in the BSIP spreadsheet requested by DfT.



**York's BSIP in relation to adjacent authorities.**

Peoples' need to travel is independent of the boundaries of local authorities and analysis suggests around one-third of bus trips in York originate outside the CYC boundary. Consultation with North Yorkshire County Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority formed an important part of CYC's consultation on its BSIP.

The consultation revealed how York functions as a key trip attractor in a rural area with a population of around 500,000 people. Delays experienced by buses as they travel through York adversely effect their reliability in the rural areas surrounding the city. As such, measures to improve service reliability in York itself have beneficial effects far beyond CYC's boundary. Many bus passengers travelling into York from outside are effected by the need to use more than one bus (for example, they might arrive from Leeds on a CityZap service and travel on to York University on a First bus) and this has informed the proposals we put forward about developing new ticketing products.

We have a long-standing partnership with North Yorkshire County Council, who have historically administered much of the York concessionary fare scheme. At a more general level, we have regular catch-ups with officers in adjacent authorities and there is a regular exchange of information with West Yorkshire Combined Authority, including joint procurement of services like real time information services. Whilst we have no contractual relationships or joint procurements with East Riding of Yorkshire Council we regularly meet with their officers to discuss the bus network in the two authorities.

We have taken the decision not to submit a joint BSIP with NYCC, although there will be considerable joint working on bus services as the York and North Yorkshire mayoral combined authority is developed. The decision not to submit a joint BSIP at this stage has been taken because of the different development priorities of the York "city" network, as set out in the York LTP, and the pre-existence of the York Quality Bus Partnership. However, there has been work together on the ticketing aspects of the proposals set out in this BSIP, a discussion of congestion and delay in York and its effect on services in the county, and work on trying to use similar governance structures.

The submission of separate BSIPs to DfT now does not preclude development of a joint BSIP later, with a decision on that being made as proposals for the future combined authority are developed.

## 2 Description of the York bus network

- 2.1 A map of York, and one of its bus network, can be found in the Evidence Base provided alongside this document.
- 2.2 York's bus network primarily serves York City, where two thirds of all trips on the network both begin and end. However, the network has a number of unusual characteristics.
- 2.3 Firstly, because York sits in the middle of predominantly rural hinterland, the city is at the terminating end of a large number of routes feeding into the city. These routes tend not to be entirely rural in character – but operate to other regionally important towns and cities (for example, Hull, Leeds, Scarborough, Selby and Harrogate) through the rural area around York. Because of this, an unusually large number of operators (seven) provide local services in York. The city's largest operator (First York) operates almost entirely within the city boundary. However, nearly all corridors in York feature services provided by more than one operator. This has the implication that co-ordinating the softer parts of the bus service offer – roadside display timetables and multi-operator ticketing – is particularly important in York. This has been done for the last 20 years through the York Quality Bus Partnership.
- 2.4 A second implication of the large number of operators in York is that the city's largest operator, First York, is relatively small, and does not have the same purview across the network as a whole that an operator who provided 90% of the mileage in an area would enjoy, and there is very little of the York network where FirstYork is the only operator providing services. However, this does mean that there is significant competition for tenders in York and on the road competition has acted to keep fare levels on fully deregulated services in check.
- 2.5 The city also has an established park and ride network, comprising six sites serving the city's principal approach roads. This service, which carries 25% of passengers in York, is operated under a licence agreement to CYC by FirstYork. Under this, FirstYork pay CYC a fee for operating the service and, in return, CYC contractually specify aspects of the service, including vehicle specifications, fare levels, routes and frequencies. This arrangement has allowed CYC, and FirstYork, to take advantage of a number of rounds of green bus funding, resulting in 5 of the 6 park and ride services being operated using fully electric vehicles – one of the largest fleets of electric buses outside London. The current park and ride contract comes to an end in 2024.
- 2.6 A further service, to York University, is controlled through an agreement with the University, and around 15% of bus mileage in York is operated through conventional subsidised tenders.
- 2.7 As such, only around 50% of bus journeys in York take place on a fully deregulated bus service which is entirely free of specification of aspects of the service by CYC or other organisations such as York University.

- 2.8 In addition, central York is covered by a Clean Air Zone (CAZ), with bus operators required to use buses of Euro VI or better for any vehicle which operates more than 5 times a day into the zone. Finance to do this was provided by CYC, although many operators upgraded their vehicles through their commercial fleet replacement policies. For park and ride services and tendered services, use of Euro VI, or electric, buses was a tender condition.
- 2.9 These initiatives have fostered much collaborative working between CYC and York's bus operators, and we look to develop this in our BSIP and Enhanced Partnership.
- 2.10 York is also about to enter a period of great change and development. The city's draft Local Plan envisages an increase in the city's population of around 25%. There are a number of major projects taking place, particularly:
- York Central – a mixed development on brownfield land on the edge of York city centre, comprising up to 100,000m<sup>2</sup> of office space and 2,500 homes. This development's planning conditions and Section 106 agreement include three new stretches of bus lane, substantial contributions to new bus services and green travel plan initiatives;
  - A rebuilding of the area in front of York Station, to improve its amenity of for pedestrians, cyclists and visitors to the city, as well as providing an improved bus interchange with better facilities for passengers, substantially more bus stops and the opportunity to turn buses, allow some bus layover and more effectively separate local buses from rail replacement services and special event coaches, so that problems on the rail network do not adversely effect local buses;
  - The Castle Gateway project in the south eastern quadrant of York city centre, which will improve the bus interchanges in this area.
- 2.11 There are also improvements being made to the two strategic roads around York – the A1237 northern ring road, which is being dualled for approximately half its length, and the A64 southern bypass, which is being improved east of York. The upgrades of these two routes give scope for reassignment of significant volumes of traffic away from York city centre, with resultant reductions in traffic volumes in the city centre and improvements to bus services in the city centre.
- 2.12 The Local Plan also includes a number of large developments on the outside of York, with the three largest having an ambitious target for 15% mode share to bus for commute trips. It is anticipated that this will be provided through new, high quality dedicated services to the developments.

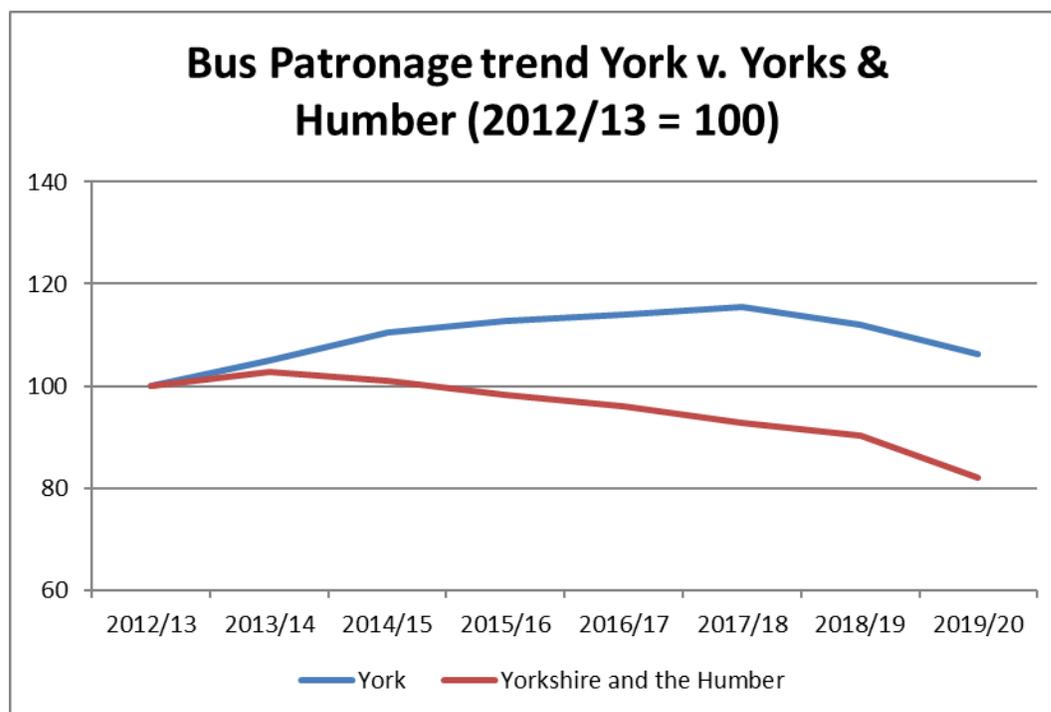


### 3 Where are we now and where do we want to be?

#### *Where we are now*

- 3.1 The current York bus network is the product of many things, but particularly:
- A 30 year history of investment in bus services in York, resulting in the ring of 6 park and ride sites, all supported, to some extent, by bus priority lanes;
  - A 20 year old voluntary Quality Bus Partnership, which has adapted and changed with circumstances, most recently providing a platform for the sudden and widespread changes to the bus network bought by the covid pandemic
  - From approximately 10 years ago, a more joined up approach to service provision which has seen the Council and operators come together to jointly fund various aspects of the bus network, including traffic management, quality surveys, provision of roadside display timetables and other passenger information; and creation of a multi-operator ticket. Creation of an enhanced partnership is an opportunity to continue and develop this work.
- 3.2 As such, bus services in York have seen some success over the last 10 years, with significant pre-covid increases in passenger numbers (see figure 3.1), such that the last complete pre-covid year (2018/19) had passenger numbers 12% above volumes seen 7 years before. In comparison, for the Yorkshire and Humber Region, bus passenger numbers fell by 10% over the same period.

*Figure 3.1: Bus patronage in York*

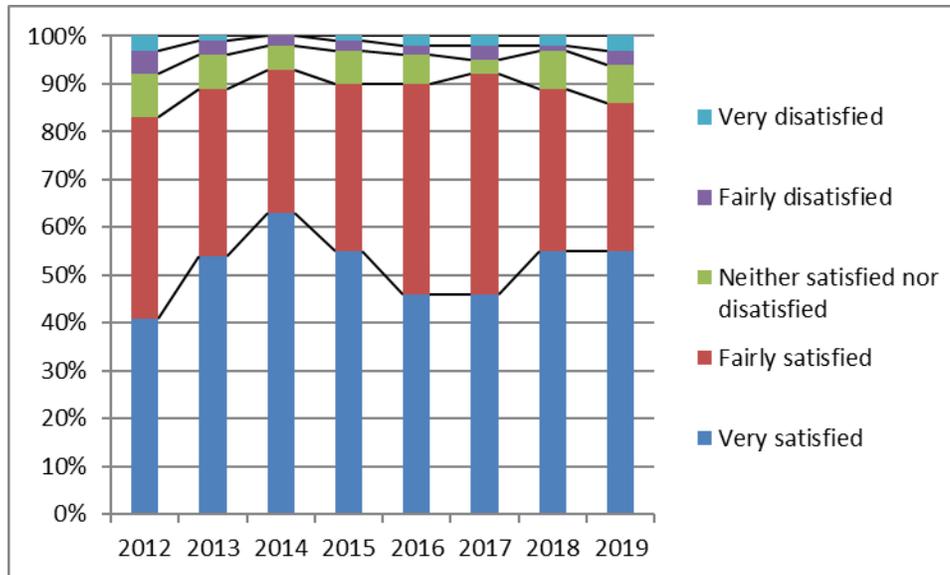


- 3.3 The increase seen in Figure 3.1 came after a more general increase in patronage over the years preceeding 2012/13. An estimate of pre-deregulation bus passenger numbers in York is difficult to come by, but there were approximately 10 million bus journeys in 2000, compared to the peak in 2017/18 of 16.3 million, an increase of nearly two-thirds in a 17 year period, something which is relatively unusual, although not unknown.
- 3.4 By the 2017/18 year York had one of the highest bus trip rates per head for local authorities in England (ranked at 11 of 80 authorities). However, it is not enough to look at a rising passenger trend and high trip rate and conclude that is enough. There was a small fall in passenger numbers between 2017/18 and 2018/19, with a further fall (although this was at least partly related to the covid trip suppression in March 2020) in 2019/20. In the 2020/21 year, which was entirely effected by covid and lockdowns, bus patronage in York was approximately 25% of the 2019/20 year. At the time of writing patronage has recovered to between 65% and 80% of pre-covid volumes, varying from service to service.

#### *Passenger Satisfaction*

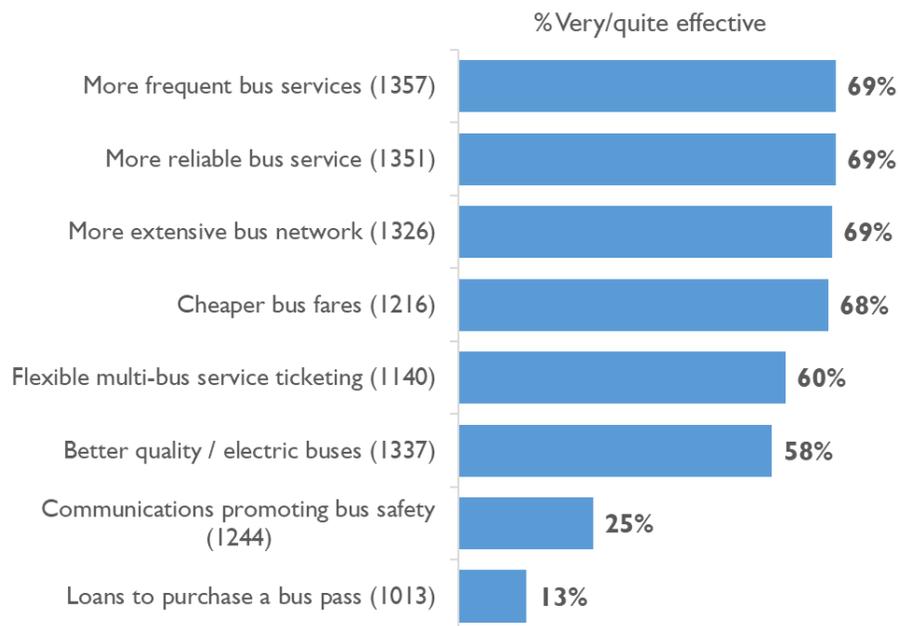
- 3.5 The York QBP has bought into the Transport Focus Bus Passenger surveys every year since 2013, giving us a complete dataset on passenger satisfaction (the figure presented for 2012 is based on a separate, but similar, exercise undertaken in-house, which is felt to be comparable) (see figure 3.3). The passenger satisfaction ratings peaked in the 2014 (in which year we had the highest satisfaction of anywhere surveyed by Transport Focus in England), remaining above 90% until the 2018 survey, but falling more (to 86%) in the 2019 survey. It is likely that some of these changes in passenger satisfaction are related to the loss of passengers since 2018, and further interrogation of the data (see Evidence Base) demonstrates a particular reduction in satisfaction around perceptions of vehicle quality and service punctuality, which have informed the proposals we make in this document under the heading of **Improving the offer to customers**.

Figure 3.2: Overall Passenger Satisfaction with bus services in York



- 3.6 In 2021 we commenced work on York's fourth Local Transport Plan. Survey work undertaken preparing the evidence base for the Plan suggests that members of the public in York (sample size = approx. 1400) saw improvements to frequency, reliability, bus network extent, cheaper fares, better ticketing and better/ electric vehicles as being particularly critical to encouraging greater bus use. In a separate question residents were asked what they may do to travel more sustainably around York, with 17% saying they wanted to use public transport more (on top of 55% who said they were already using it). This was the second most likely behavior change in the city, after converting to an electrical vehicle. It emphasizes the point that an effective bus service in York is essential to achieving large scale beneficial change in peoples' travel behavior.

*Figure 3.4: Consultation on Bus Service Improvements (2021 LTP4 consultation). “What change would make you most likely to use the bus service more?”*



- 3.7 **Notable in the data (see the Evidence Base published alongside this document) is that it paints a picture of York as a city where there is already a high level of public transport use** – nearly two-thirds of the residents who responded to the survey said they used the bus at least a bit. This has the implication that most residents of the city have a basic understanding of the network: where the routes go, their frequency and fares. The bus network is not a “closed” system to them, although making it more attractive would make them more likely to use it more. It also has the implication that many of York’s bus users are car available – the right offer would lead to them using the bus for a greater proportion of their trip making. This BSIP intends to build on that – with the intention of increasing use rates so that the person who uses the bus once a month begins to use it once a week, ideally replacing a car trip. The person who uses the service once a week might start to use it three or four times – because the service is more attractive. We can also see, from figure 3.3, that over two-thirds of residents see many of the measures set out in this BSIP as likely to encourage them to use the bus more, including a detailed travel behavior change section of the document.

### *Targets: growth and passenger satisfaction*

- 3.8 Below we set out a series of targets.
- 3.9 First of all, we wish to use this BSIP as our framework to recover our bus network back to pre-covid levels of use. As said earlier, at the time of writing (late September 2021) we are seeing a patronage recovery of 65%-80%, varying from service to service, although there are other challenges – particularly the availability of drivers. We wish to see a recovery to over 90% of pre-pandemic patronage levels by April 2022. **By April 2025 we are setting a target of growth to 20 million passenger trips a year – a 25% increase on the peak seen in 2017/18.** However, we believe that this is achievable through the policies set out in this document because they accord to the local priorities identified through the Local Transport Plan consultation.
- 3.10 Separately we are setting a target for overall passenger satisfaction, as measured by Transport Focus’s surveys, of 95%, this being 2% higher than the previous maximum satisfaction seen in York, in 2014, but 9% higher than the last set of surveys in 2019. Again, we think this is achievable, if challenging, based on the network improvements which will flow from the policies and interventions set out in this document.

#### **The importance of “good” growth in passenger numbers**

As well as having high use of buses, there is also high use of active modes in York, including a particularly high level of cycling. City of York Council is leading a number of interventions, including some funded from the DfT’s Active Travel Fund, to increase cycling and walking levels in York alongside increasing bus use. Obviously, we wish more people to **BOTH** travel actively and use the bus – we don’t want to simply attract pedestrians and cyclists to use the bus for trips they would have otherwise travelled actively.

Consequently, this BSIP includes measures principally aimed at transferring car trips to bus, and/ or to reduce social exclusion by enabling trips which are currently not happening because they are suppressed by absent or poor bus services. Several of the measures in the BSIP have been carefully targeted in this way and are integrated into City of York Council’s more general travel behavior change work.

This stance is in line with York’s current Local Transport Plan, which prioritises sustainable modes and looks to develop quality alternatives to travelling by car.

## 4 Making the buses run on time – tackling slow journeys, delays and unreliability

### *Introduction*

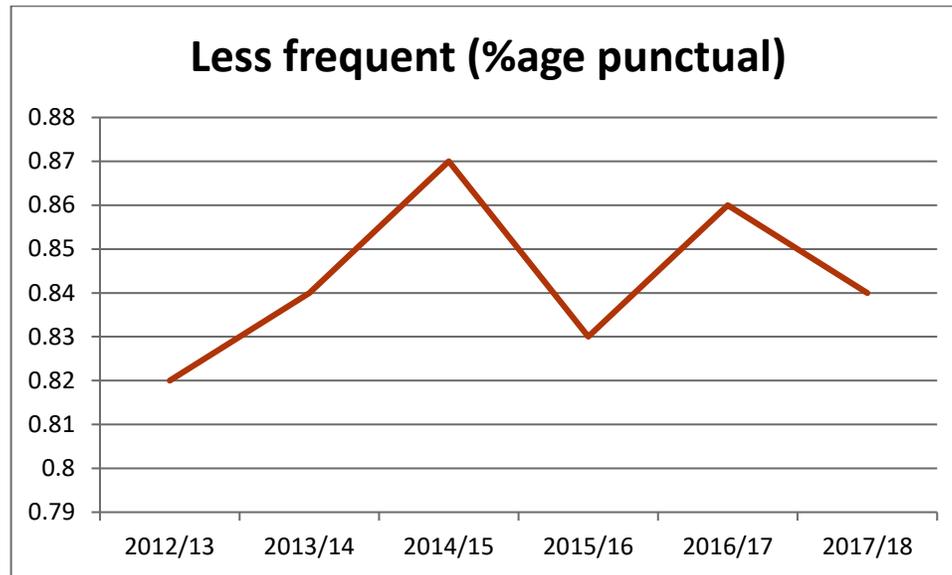
- 4.1 69% of our questionnaire respondents said that more reliable bus services would encourage their use of buses in the city. Poor perceptions of punctuality can also be seen in the data collected about passenger satisfaction in York by Transport Focus. We have worked with First York to identify the most congested locations on York’s bus network in assembling the data behind this BSIP. The analysis produced by First York can be seen in the Evidence Base for this document.

### *Background*

- 4.2 As the National Bus Strategy sets out, poor punctuality of services is a serious problem for passengers and bus operators alike and suppresses use of the network. In parts of York congested roads slow services down, making them less attractive, and increase operating costs, because more buses are required to operate a given service as end to end journey time increases. Furthermore, buses stuck in traffic are, when diesel, usually still emitting pollution and using carbon, so there is an important relationship between measures to cut congestion and CYC’s work to improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions across York. This was reinforced to us during Lockdown, when it was possible to operate some routes in York with far fewer buses, but at the same frequencies as normal, because lower traffic volumes meant end to end journey times were much shorter.
- 4.3 Consistently slow journeys are one problem, but what is worse is inconsistent journey times. As bus services operate to a timetable, a stage of a bus journey which takes 5 minutes one day, but 10 the next is a significant operating problem. The service would need to either be timed to be late on the “10 minute” day, or to wait time somewhere on the “5 minute” day. Both options are frustrating for passengers – and bring wider problems. If the bus has to wait somewhere, kerb space must be provided for it to do that, which is a problem in a city like York where waiting space for buses is in very short supply in the city centre.
- 4.4 In this section we consider how the BSIP will improve service speeds and punctuality.

## How does York perform now?

Figure 4.1: Bus Punctuality in York<sup>12</sup>



- 4.5 As can be seen from Figure 4.1, punctuality of less-frequent bus services in York is generally between 80% and 90%, a significant improvement compared to earlier years – for example, in 2007/8 only 47% of less-frequent services were assessed to be on time. This change is the product of much work by York’s QBP, through its Performance Group, which focuses on service reliability.
- 4.6 These figures compare well against other urban areas, particularly other historic towns and cities with similarly constrained and congested road networks<sup>13</sup>. Nonetheless, there remains room for improvement - with other towns and cities, for example Nottingham, able to demonstrate higher still levels of timetable adherence. Furthermore, whilst timetables are adhered to, we want to make bus services as fast and competitive as we can. Some timetables now undoubtedly include “padding” time to counter inconsistent journey times on some roads in York, and we are seeking to eliminate this, as much as possible, through the measures set out in this document.

### Targets: punctuality

- 4.7 Consequently, our targets for 2024/5, in relation to bus punctuality in York are:
- 90% of less frequent services will be punctual

<sup>12</sup> Statistics for punctuality taken from Department for Transport’s Bus and Coach Statistics, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Bath and North East Somerset, 78%; Peterborough 77%; Southampton 77%.

- Excess wait time for frequent services (not reported here) will be no more than 45 seconds.

### *Proposed Measures: punctuality*

- 4.8 In relation to bus service punctuality, we have a number of objectives, specifically:
- To continue to improve punctuality of services in York
  - To improve the end to end journey speed of existing bus services in York
  - To ensure that any new bus services are punctual and have journey times which are competitive with those by car.
- 4.9 There are six strands to our strategy, these are:
- Maintaining our assets to get the best use of our existing highways capacity
  - Actively managing traffic to keep buses running to time
  - Tackling bottlenecks
  - Improving whole corridors to make bus services faster
  - Managing services in the city centre
  - Other strategies which can reduce bus journey times (for example, ticketing strategies which minimize boarding times).
- 4.10 These are explained below.

### *Making the most of what we have already: maintaining our assets*

- 4.11 It's obvious really, but measures which improve traffic flow also improve the flow and reliability of bus services. Whilst there are innumerable products and techniques available to manage traffic effectively, there is a very important role in maximising the use of the many systems York already has installed. As such, City of York Council will commit to maintaining the equipment it already has installed in the city to manage traffic. These include:
- Extensive bus priorities on many key radials – particularly supporting in-bound movements;
  - An Urban Traffic Control (UTC) system covering much of the city. This system gathers data about the amount of traffic on key roads in York and sets the traffic lights accordingly to minimise delays;
  - CCTV cameras covering key junctions across York, including many on the inner ring road, key road junctions on the city's principal routes, and junctions with major roads such as the A64(T)
  - Variable Message Signs (VMS) on York's principal roads which can be used to direct traffic if necessary (for example, away from a road traffic accident) and real time screens at bus stops which can be used to relay messages to passengers
  - Use of apps, twitter etc to relay information to bus passengers and road users in real time



- **More recently, CYC has developed a “real time model” for assessing traffic flows in York and optimising signals to minimize congestion.** This takes data from a number of sources (for example, mobile phone signals), assessing traffic flows and speeds. We are exploring how this model can be used to give signals based bus priority in the future.
- 4.12 At the time of writing much work is in progress on this front, including resurfacing many of the major junctions around York and replacing the vehicle counting loops installed in the road surface which send data to the UTC, often with cameras able to identify and count different types of vehicle. The City Council is also refurbishing the VMS signs around the city and adding to the number of sites where traffic cameras are installed.
- 4.13 **BSIP Commitment R1:** City of York Council will commit to continuing this work with the intention of using best endeavours and whatever funding is available to ensure all existing systems in the city are kept in good working order, and to demonstrate their value in improving traffic flows in York.
- 4.14 **BSIP Commitment R2:** City of York Council will use its traffic real time model to provide signals based bus priorities. The model will identify late running buses and prioritise them at junctions, using the methodology which is already proven in South Yorkshire. This can be used, particularly, to tackle inconsistent journey times.

### *Active management of traffic*

- 4.15 The Traffic Control Centre in the council’s offices has an important role in managing traffic flows in York to minimise disruption day to day, and inform bus passengers (and other road users) of any delays. Since 2013 “Network Monitoring Officers”, initially funded by York’s Better Bus Area Fund, but more recently funded voluntarily by York’s bus operators, have been on duty 12 hours a day, Monday to Saturday, monitoring traffic flows and adjusting traffic signals to reduce congestion and delay to bus users. They are also a key line of communication with bus operators – advising them of delays and any incidents which may cause late running. The Network Monitoring Officers can:
- Change traffic lights to reduce the length of a traffic jam;
  - Send messages to the real time screens and variable message signs around York to advise bus passengers and road users of any delays;
  - Co-ordinate action between operators to overcome problems on street.

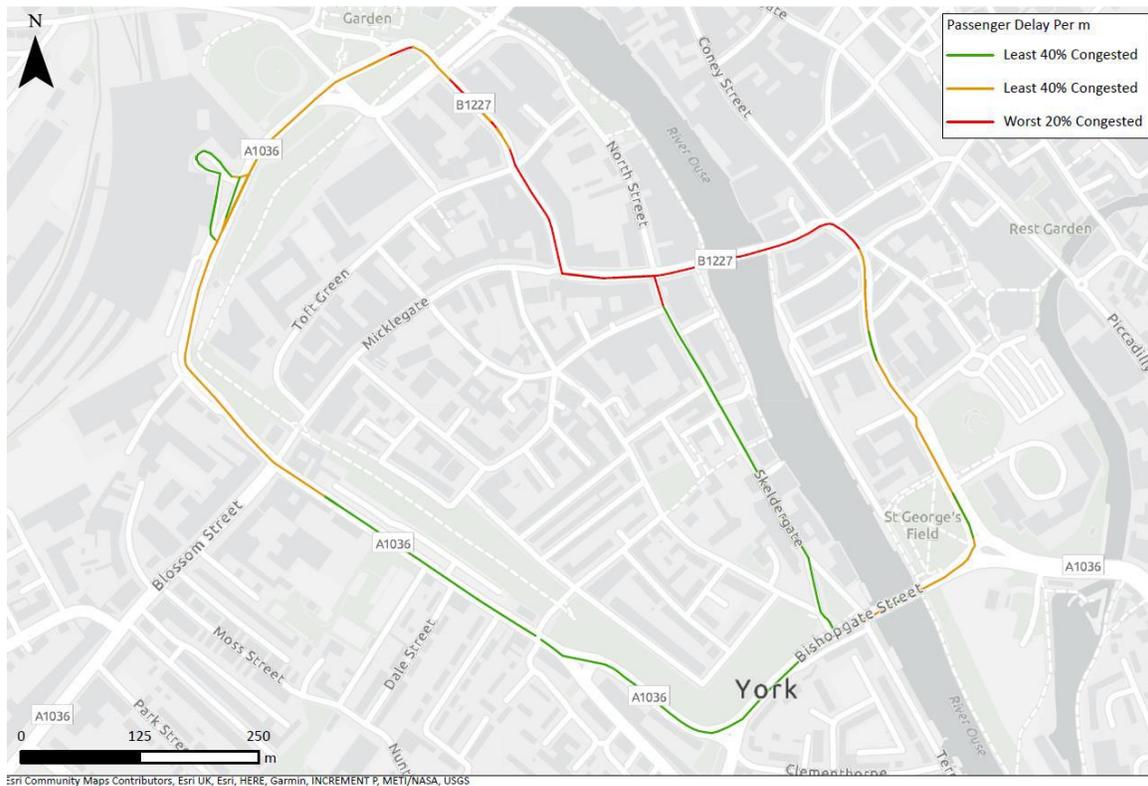


- 4.16 They also have an important role managing traffic during York's many festivals and special events – for example, they are extremely important in co-ordinating the city council and bus operators during York's race meetings and festivals, and they take a leading role in planning bus services around roadworks in the city.
- 4.17 The city council has also, through the Better Bus Area Fund, employed two "Bus Wardens" who act as the bus network's "boots on the ground". The Wardens undertake many important functions, including:
- Keeping bus routes, bus lanes and bus stops clear of obstructions – for example, by moving vehicles on which are parked (including for loading) in such a way that they obstruct buses, or by assisting whenever a highway is blocked – for example by utilities work, maintenance work or by an accident;
  - Maintaining many of the bus stops, shelters and bus timetables around the city;
  - Inspecting and sorting out problems which are reported about the bus network – for example, vegetation which obscures bus stops;
  - Assisting passengers during special events – during one-off major events, or for regular special events, such as race meetings or the university open days;
  - Assisting passengers from day to day with enquiries;
  - Collecting information about persistent causes of delay (for example, poorly phased traffic signals, loading vehicle obstructions) so that rectification action can take place.
- 4.18 This work is co-ordinated through the "Performance Group" of the Quality Bus Partnership. This group meets monthly and discusses upcoming special events and major roadworks. It also reviews a monthly performance indicator (see Evidence Base) to consider performance across York's bus network as a whole and agree any action required to remedy a dip in punctuality. This indicator is published on the CYC website every month.
- 4.19 **Ask R1:** £150k pa for three years to continue to fund the two Network Monitoring Officers and Bus Wardens, as set out above. After the three year period, if successful, funding for these posts would revert to the operators. **We are requesting this to help the network recover from the covid pandemic as this funding would provide operator relief from these charges**
- 4.20 **Commitment R3:** is that the Performance Group of the QBP will take an important role in planning for special events, including sports events and festivals. This will include making decisions on warden and NMO cover for these events – and provision of other staff by operators or CYC.
- 4.21 **Commitment R4:** the Performance Group will continue to review performance on a monthly basis, publish its punctuality indicator, and agree appropriate mitigations as required.

### Tackling hotspots and bottlenecks

4.22 Bus service reliability suffers due to bottlenecks on the network. Figure 4.2 shows delayed representation of bus delays in the centre of York, identified as part of the work preparing this BSIP. A key challenge for the BSIP is to work to identify, and where possible, eliminate the various bottlenecks on their network. This work will be taken forward by the York Enhance Partnership, and schemes will be advised in the 2022 update to the BSIP.

Figure 4.2 Bus Delays in central York (by permission, FirstYork)



4.23 We know from previous interventions that small scale interventions – which might change the shape of a yellow box junction to reduce exit-blocking, retime a set of signals, make small changes to junction geometry or provide bus boarders – are very good value for money and can, cumulatively, have a large beneficial impact on bus journey times and reliability.

- 4.24 **Commitment R6:** City of York Council will continue to work with the bus operators to develop a series of small schemes to, where practicable, tackle bottlenecks. This will be financed through an annual capital “fund of £50,000 pa for small schemes, or targeted capital spend for larger schemes, which may require preparation of a business case. The Performance Group and Better Bus Area Groups of the Quality Bus Partnership will be instrumental in prioritizing the schemes for action. **Ask R2:** CYC request that the DfT match the £50,000 small measures fund with a further **£50,000 pa** which can be used to tackle small scale sources of unreliability on York’s bus network, or make the case for larger scale interventions. **This is requested to help stabilise the bus network in the medium term.**
- 4.25 **Commitment R7:** CYC will work with developers to use S106 settlements to fund and deliver localized bus priority schemes where these are needed to offset the impact of development related traffic. We already have a significant programme of work being progressed this way – particularly connected with the York Central site, but this approach will be applied to other development sites as they come forward.
- 4.26 **Whole corridor measures:** Often, a series of junctions along a corridor will conspire to delay bus services seriously, because a service will accumulate delay at each junction, leading to a very large cumulative delay over the whole corridor. In these instances it is appropriate to look not just at individual bottlenecks, but whether there is scope for measures to improve services along the corridor as a whole – an approach we have recently taken on the A1036 Tadcaster Road to the west of York. Such measures might be bus lanes, co-ordination of signals or schemes to reduce traffic volumes on a particular route (for example, through access restrictions, changes to signs to direct traffic away from the route or measures to encourage motorists to travel in a different way – for example the “Travel behaviour change” projects being undertaken by York’s I-Travel sustainable transport behavior team<sup>14</sup>). Obviously, there is also scope to reduce cumulative delays through a series of stand-alone measures at individual junctions on the corridor.
- 4.27 In some cases work will need to take place to improve conditions for bus services in advance of extra traffic from new residential or employment development using a route. In these instances, there may also be a need to develop bus priority measures to ensure a competitive public transport service is provided to the new development.

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<sup>14</sup> For more details, please see [www.itravel.york.info](http://www.itravel.york.info)

- 4.28 CYC's planning team has been working alongside developers in York, and a programme of Section 106 funded bus priorities has been developed, in particular measures on the A59/ Water End/ Leeman Road corridor to provide reliable services to the York Central development. We are currently assessing the impact of additional traffic on two key radial corridors in the city – Wigginton Road and Fulford Road – to assess the potential for bus priorities on these corridors using micro-simulation models. This work, which predates BSIP preparation, is being funded from CYC's transport capital programme. We are working alongside West Yorkshire Combined Authority to deliver a Transforming Cities Fund project to improve bus services on the Tadcaster Road corridor.
- 4.29 **Commitment R8:** The Performance Group of the Quality Bus Partnership will work to identify and prioritise routes requiring "whole corridor" measures. These will be financed through a variety of vehicles, including City of York Council's Capital Programme, the DfT BSIP support funding and other funds as they become available. The CYC's transport scheme development funding will be used to make the case for bidding for funds to make larger interventions.
- 4.30 **Commitment R9:** City of York Council will work with developers through the Local Plan to upgrade corridors to ensure that new developments have bus services with journey times that are competitive with the private car. Measures will be funded through developer contributions (either Section 106 contributions or, if appropriate, tariffs or Community Infrastructure Levies (CIF)). Bus operators will have an important advisory role in these negotiations. This is discussed at more length in the section of this document which sets out policy in relation to the Local Plan development of York.
- 4.31 **Ask R3:** City of York Council request an indicative fund of £15m to provide radial bus priority measures on corridors where these are not currently available/ improvements to existing radial bus priority provision or delivery of high quality services to the sites identified in the Local Plan. The deployment of these funds is contingent on a number of studies which are currently underway (for example, looking at bus routing in central York and on key radials such as Wigginton Road, Tadcaster Road and the A19 Fulford Road and for sustainable transport access to the larger sites allocated in the Local Plan (see Section 13)). A detailed programme will be advised in the BSIP published in 2022, so the funding ask set out here is an indication with specific information to be advised later – following technical studies and publication of York's new Local Transport Plan in 2022. **This measure is required to improve the customer offer for buses.**

## The city centre

- 4.32 94% of the area inside the York's city walls is a conservation area. The character and fabric of the city have been preserved through retention of York's historic road network with relatively few concessions to motorised traffic, when considered alongside the 1960s inner ring roads constructed in many other historic towns and cities. However, although this means the city centre's character is intact, it imposes constraints on the easy operation of bus services. As nearly all of York's bus services either serve or pass through the city centre, the effective management of traffic there has a bearing on the operation of the whole of the bus network. Consultation with adjacent authorities has also shown that the effective operation of York city centre for buses is key for reliable provision of bus services in North and East Yorkshire.

### *A city centre bus priority route*

- 4.33 Although there are short stretches of bus/ taxi only streets in the centre of York there is currently no complete bus priority spine route all the way through York city centre. **Commitment C5** is that bus operators will work with City of York Council to consider the feasibility of such a route and will work to make the necessary financial case for delivering the route if a positive business case can be made for the intervention once its full impacts are assessed. Progress on this aspect of the BSIP will be advised in the 2022 BSIP update, following a study commissioned by CYC, as part of the LTP process, in late 2021. Costs of delivery are assumed to be within the £15m block for whole corridor measures as advised above.

## Other reliability measures

- 4.34 Complementary measures to improve reliability, by reducing boarding times by changing ticketing systems, or reducing traffic volumes through behavior change campaigns, are discussed in sections 6 and 11 of this document.

## 5 Greening the bus fleet

- 5.1 58% of respondents to the York Local Transport Plan consultation said that better quality/ electric buses would encourage them to use public transport more. Ageing vehicles and deteriorating fleet quality are also thought to be one of the reasons why York has seen recent falls in passenger satisfaction with bus services, something that is born out by the data collected by Transport Focus – although the introduction of many Euro VI buses to support York’s Clean Air Zone during 2020 has reduced the average age of the fleet in the city considerably.
- 5.2 Air quality in York can be poor (itself a function of the city’s low-lying location, protection from winds by surrounding hills and several “canyon” locations in the city centre with high buildings on both sides of narrow roads), CYC and bus operators<sup>15</sup> have worked hard to reduce use of pre-Euro VI diesel buses in York, supporting the City Council’s Air Quality Action Plan. Measures enacted so far have included introduction of:
- 33 electric buses bought into use on York’s park and ride service between 2014 and 2020, the second largest fleet of electric buses outside London
  - Conversion of all diesel buses entering central York more than 5 times a day to Euro VI, to deliver a Clean Air Zone in central York. This measure was principally funded by CYC (£1.6m), although operators replaced some buses commercially through pre-determined fleet renewal.
- 5.3 First have also invested in a new sub-station in their depot, giving them the ability to charge up to 50 electric buses at once. Northern PowerGrid have committed to upgrading the substation which feeds First’s depot, which would allow charging of First’s entire fleet.
- 5.4 A bid to the DfT’s ZEBRA fund was accepted in July 2021. If successful this will finance replacement of 42 diesel buses with electric buses and result in around 50% of the bus mileage in York, including the entire park and ride network, to be operated electrically.
- 5.5 Our BSIP **target** is to:
- Convert all bus services operating predominantly in the York urban area to electric vehicles by 2024/25
  - To convert all inter-urban and rural services to Euro VI diesel by 2024/25 (if it not practical to electrify the routes).

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<sup>15</sup> As a complementary measure, City of York Council is working with the local taxi trade to encourage greater take up of hybrid and electrically powered vehicles in the taxi fleet, adopting electrically powered vehicles itself for its fleet, and installing fast charging points at car parks and park and ride sites around the city to encourage take up of electric cars more generally.

The action plan for continuing this work is:

- **Commitment E1** is that CYC and the bus operators agree to recognise the importance of improving air quality across York, both by encouraging transfer from car trips to bus trips and through improving emissions from bus services.
- **Commitment E2** is that CYC has a key role in facilitating/ co-ordinating operators' responses to the various Government grants directed at reducing emissions from public transport. CYC pledges to maintain equality of opportunity for bidding, although the council will obviously target activities towards greatest gain for York.
- **Commitment E3** is that CYC will use the services it specifies as a mechanism to encourage take up of vehicles with lower emission levels.
- **Ask E1** is that DfT fund conversion of the remainder of the York bus fleet to electric power between now and 2025. This would require an investment of approximately £12m to cover 60 buses and associated infrastructure. The current ZEBRA bid is for £9m covering 44 buses. If this bid is unsuccessful then we would wish to increase our electric bus ask to £21m. **This measure is to (a) stabilize the network in the medium term (b) improve the customer offer.**



## 6 Fares and ticketing

### *Introduction*

- 6.1 68% of respondents to our survey said that cheaper bus fares would encourage them to use public transport more; and 60% said that more flexible ticketing would encourage use. These two figures together, particularly the second, which is perhaps less intuitive and betrays York's large number of operators, suggest that fares and ticketing reform will be important to meeting the patronage growth targets set out in this BSIP.
- 6.2 Fares and ticketing for public transport is in a period of rapid change. Traditional cash fares are being replaced by new ways of paying for tickets, such as smartcards, mobile phone based payment and payment direct from debit and credit cards, a process which has been accelerated by covid-driven initiatives to reduce cash handling. City of York Council welcomes the ticketing initiatives set out in the National Bus Strategy.



### *Current situation*

- 6.3 York already has a multi-operator ticket – “All York”. Launched in 2014, it had achieved sales of approximately £250k a year by 2019. There is, however, some way to go before the ticket meets the requirements of multi-operator tickets – available with no premium over single operator tickets – as set out in the National Bus Strategy. Furthermore, whilst the ticket is available on paper and on smartcard, it is not available as an app based product or for purchase off the bus. Bus-Rail integrated tickets are available through PlusBus tickets, although there are no York specific products (for example, allowing onward travel to York University from the Railway Station). As commented earlier, York is at the centre of a large rural hinterland. There are many bus trips which begin in this area, but out of the City of York Council area, and require a change of bus to reach a destination in York (e.g. a passenger might travel from Leeds on a CityZap service, then travel on to York University using a First service). Consultation with user groups and adjacent local authorities has outlined that many such journeys, requiring two tickets, are expensive and hence not attractive. Our consultation with East Riding of Yorkshire Council and North Yorkshire County Council – as well as the companies who operate buses into York from these areas, revealed that they saw this as a priority for York’s BSIP.
- 6.4 An important consideration is also that, by providing a multi-operator ticket which carries no price premium in an area with many corridors used by more than one bus operator, effective frequency can be substantially increased for many journeys in the city – because passengers will be able to get on the first bus to arrive. As such this will drive patronage up by reducing wait times, irrespective of fare levels.
- 6.5 We also see it as a priority to improve ticketing options for younger people. At the moment there is inconsistency between operators in York in what their young peoples’ offer is, and we are aware of the more general work done by Transport Focus setting out how younger people find the cost of bus tickets to be a significant cause of social exclusion, erecting barriers to them being able to access to training opportunities in particular. Below we propose a significant reform of tickets for younger people in York.

### *Our vision and targets*

- 6.6 The Quality Bus Partnership believe that there is potential to unlock significant demand for buses in York through a thorough re-engineering of the ticketing offer in the city. In particular, we set the targets of:
- Creating a multi-operator ticket which does not have a premium over operators single/ return fare products and makes use of tap on-tap off to cap daily costs for users, irrespective of the number of times they travel. This will reduce ticket costs and increase, on some corridors significantly, effective frequency by allowing passengers to get on the first bus to arrive at their stop.
  - Creating tickets which enable movement by bus by young people.
  - Creating a range of tickets to make it easier to undertake multi-modal (through links with the rail network) and cross boundary travel into or out of York.
- 6.7 Our pre-existing commitments to deliver the improvements to ticketing are set out below:
- **Commitment T1:** develop an app-based AllYork ticket
  - **Commitment T2:** develop All York tickets for purchase off the bus (including monthly and annual products). These can be marketed through employers and to residents of new property developments
  - **Commitment T3:** review the range and pricing of AllYork ticketing products, through the Enhanced Partnership's ticketing group, to ensure that they are attractive and can contribute fully to delivering York's transport policies. A particular focus of this work will be to develop a ticket which carries no price premium over single operator tickets and gives bus passengers access to any service in York on an equal footing
  - **Commitment T4:** develop a smart AllYork carnet of journeys ticket product, which can be used alongside fare capping
  - **Commitment T5:** is that the QBP will support and promote PlusBus and work with train operating companies to develop local rail/ bus products. This will include rail add on tickets to large trip attractors and special events in York, and use of the park and ride to access rail services.
  - **Commitment T6** is that we will work with officers in North, East and West Yorkshire to develop a range of tickets to incentivize onward travel in York as an attractively priced add-on to inter-urban tickets.
  - **Commitment T7** is to investigate other opportunities for sales of bus tickets to access York's many festivals and special events. Again, this will be developed through the QBP's Marketing Group.
  - **Commitment T8** is that CYC will provide finance to allow tap-on-tap-off credit card use on all the city's buses. This will be made easy to operate in York because all seven operators in the city use compatible Ticketer machines, a situation made possible by earlier investment by CYC in ticketing platforms.

- 6.8 We used this document to make two funding asks in relation to this workstream:
- **Ask T1** is for support for work to investigate how the new multi-operator/ capped fare/ integrated tickets can be introduced and priced. We are requesting funding of £50,000 pa to support a commercial officer to develop the ticket products for three years, plus a further £100,000 to support business case development. **We see this as a critical element in our strategy to improve the customer offer.**
  - **Ask T2** is related to developing a more attractive young person's ticket product. Our initial work has suggested an improved York young person's ticket would comprise five elements:
    - A development of the existing ITSO young persons' travel card in York for use alongside the tap-on-tap-off fares set out above
    - An agreement between operators as to the age of eligibility – ideally 19
    - Extension of the current fare structure used on park and ride, whereby up to 3 young people can travel at no extra cost with a fare paying adult, across the whole network
    - Development of a young persons' low flat fare (for example of 50p per trip) which would be available alongside tap on tap off so that the daily cost of travel is capped
    - Development of an annual/ termly pass for younger people
  - We appreciate that it will be necessary to provide pump prime funding for a concession of this nature. We request funding of £5,000,000 to deliver this concession for a three year period in York. After this period we would look to provide this concession either on a commercial basis or (if available) with further DfT funding. **This is an important part of our strategy to improve the customer offer**, and will also reduce social exclusion by improving young peoples' access to education and training.

#### Why not free travel?

Providing free travel for young people was considered in producing this BSIP, but has not been taken forward for the following reasons:

- Bus is one of a number of sustainable ways to get around in York. City of York Council have worked for many years to encourage walking and cycling to school, as both a public health and sustainable transport measure. We wish to continue that work, which could be undermined if free bus travel for young people caused many to catch the bus rather than walk or cycle.
- Our view is that a free ticket might distort the market for bus travel and give pulses of very high demand for short distance trips at school start/end times which would be difficult to accommodate
- We don't wish to produce a "cliff edge" where young people suddenly have to pay full fare once they lose entitlement to free travel, possibly leading to a permanent change in behaviour away from bus at that point.

## 7 Bus Network Coverage

- 7.1 69% of respondents to the Local Transport Plan consultation said that a more extensive bus network would lead to them making more use of York's bus services.
- 7.2 This poses a particular challenge at the moment, as the network has not yet stabilised following the pandemic. Particular pressures are:
- Passengers have not yet returned to bus services at their pre-covid volumes, and it is not clear what patronage would look like once a mature state has been achieved, or what support might be needed in the medium term to provide the "pre-covid" network
  - In the short to medium term driver shortages mean that it is extremely challenging to provide the levels of service which were available before the pandemic. In York, at the time of writing, a number of services are operating at a reduced frequency because of driver shortages
  - Local authorities are experiencing exceptional cost pressures, which force them to consider provision of non-statutory services, such as supported buses, in an environment when there may be cuts in other areas
  - Whilst the National Bus Strategy and BSIP process offer the opportunity for finance for the next 3 years to support additional services, it is not clear what finance may be available in the longer term, given that additional bus services tend to require ongoing support, even on a reducing support profile.

### *Transport needs in York*

- 7.3 Accordingly, analysis undertaken in a bus network review for York (Evidence Base) illustrated a number of issues with network coverage in the city, which are as follows:
- Despite generally good coverage and reasonably high service frequencies, there are some areas of the city which suffer from poorer access to services, and some periods when services do not operate – particularly Sundays and evenings in some areas
  - Service levels can be inconsistent, with routes operating on a range of frequencies – for example, every 7.5, 10, 12, 15 and 30 minutes, with some services not operating at clockface intervals – something which is confusing for passengers
  - Many of York's "regular" services start their "regular" frequency service relatively late in the day and finish relatively early. Some services have reduced frequencies in the middle of the day to accommodate driver breaks.
  - There are also some areas of York which, whilst they see frequent bus services, suffer from slow journey times to the city centre because the provided routes are indirect.

- 7.4 This analysis was undertaken on York's pre-covid network. It should be pointed out that the network which is currently operating – on a temporary basis driven by driver shortages – has further shortcomings, such as lower frequency services on many key routes.

### *Our target*

- 7.5 Our target is to provide a commercially viable regular, dependable service to as much of the city as possible, free of public funding after the initial 3 year pump prime period, comprising:
- A 10 minute (or better) frequency of service between 7AM and 7PM Monday to Friday on the main routes in the city, including the park and ride network, with services every 30 minutes in the evening and on Sundays
  - A 30 minute frequency of service between 7AM and 7PM on the other urban routes in York with services every hour in the evenings and on Sundays
  - Improved services to other destinations, dependent on what is affordable once the frequency enhancements set out above have been delivered.



- 7.6 Although much of the network already operates at our near to these standards, pump priming funding would be required to deliver a network to this standard. We have assumed this falling to zero on a three year profile.
- 7.7 A particular concern is York's 59 park and ride service. This was provided from a park and ride site on the A59 at Poppleton, which approaches York from the north west and is the road linking York with Harrogate. The site has, however, been used for covid testing since April 2020, with use as this projected until at least April 2022, and it is reasonable to conclude that it cannot be bought back into use without significant pump priming funding to rebuild the market it has lost whilst being out of use for (at least) two years. Nonetheless, in the medium to long term this park and ride service is essential to serving the York Central development. The site has also recently received a solar canopy feeding an EV hyperhub and is operated using electric buses.
- 7.8 Consequently, **Ask BN1** is for a **£3,000,000** fund which can be used to enhance York's bus network. This will be deployed on a mixture of measures including pump prime funding for the return of the Poppleton Bar park and ride service, frequency enhancements to provide a "true" 10/ 30 minute frequency service on routes in the city and, if affordable after the pump-prime projects, enhancements to increase areas served by York's bus service. However, as stated above, it is difficult to judge the scope for this until the network has reached a mature state after the recovery from the pandemic. **This Ask relates to all four of the categories of support: Bus Recovery from covid and its consequences; Stabilisation of the network in the medium term; reducing social exclusion and Improving the offer for customers.**
- 7.9 Critical to the deployment of these funds will be a clear monitoring and evaluation framework which will be used to assess how this funding can be used to greatest effect/ best value across the network.

### *Services in the central area of York*

- 7.10 York city centre has a large pedestrianised area which is, for the safety of residents and visitors, only accessible on foot during the majority of the day. The Council are considering the expansion of the footstreets and opportunities to increase non-car based accessibility to its boundaries in particular for citizens with restricted mobility. Notwithstanding the expansion of footstreets proceeding or not, the 2022 BSIP and emerging Local Transport Plan will need to consider commercially viable options for this challenge. **Ask C1** is for funding to explore and model with operators commercially viable options for citizens with restricted mobility to alight closer to footstreets than currently available by the Bus Network. Consequently, we request £50,000 to bring forward and outline business case for BSIP 2022 and LTP4 as to commercial trials. **If a service is delivered this measure will improve the offer to customers.**

## 8 Information for passengers

### Introduction

- 8.1 Effective and easily readable information on bus services is critical to making them easy to use – both for regular users and first time users. We have worked hard with the QBP to ensure that every bus stop in York has comprehensive all-route information, with all timetables including route maps for the services stopping there. 87% of users in Transport Focus’s 2019 surveys rated the information provided at bus stops in York positively.

### The current situation

- 8.2 Through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and Better Bus Area Fund programmes, bus information in York was transformed in 2014/15 from some of the worst in the UK, to being some of the best (Figures 8.1 and 8.2). The improvements have included:
- Easy to read, stop specific timetables, showing all operator’s services together
  - Route diagrams showing where each service goes
  - In the city centre, maps to show interchange opportunities
  - The itravel York website and journey planner
  - Revisions and improvements to the York bus route map.
- 8.3 To support the new timetables we agreed six service change dates each year with York’s bus operators. This makes it easier for users to remember timetables and be confident services have a degree of stability.

Figure 8.1: On street information in 2012 and...



Figure 8.2: ...in 2014



- 8.4 More recently, the many changes to services as a result of covid have proved to be a challenge to providing this quality of information and York, like many authorities, has not been able to provide roadside display information to the quality it desires since March 2020. However, we are now beginning to restart provision of this information – hence **Commitment I1** will see the return of composite timetables featuring route maps and services from all operators will return to all of York’s bus stops as soon as is practicable. We will also seek to move back to a maximum of four service change dates a year.
- 8.5 City of York Council has also installed approximately 100 on-street real time information screens (figure 9.3) which give bus times according to their position on the road network, as registered by GPS equipment on each bus. The real time screens are concentrated in the city centre, at the district centres, such as Acomb and Haxby, and at heavily used stops out of the city centre, including York District Hospital, York St John University, the University of York, York College and the park and ride terminals.
- 8.6 The council has fitted all bus stops in York with QR codes and Near Field Communications (NFC) chips and coils to make it easy for phone users to access real time information for each stop.

Figure 8.3: Real time screen



- 8.7 The council also provides a range of bus information and journey travel services through the [www.itravelyork.info](http://www.itravelyork.info) website.
- 8.8 Pre-covid, the council maintained, through Better Bus Area funding, an enquiry desk in the Travel Centre of the Railway Station which offered a range of bus timetables, sold period bus tickets (including tickets for National Express) and can assisted with enquiries. Use of this facility was approximately 2,000 enquiries per month. Unfortunately, this facility was lost during covid and a subsequent refit of York Station's Travel Centre. However, the improvements at York station offer the opportunity to reinstate the enquiry desk within the new bus interchange at the front of the Station.
- 8.9 Bus operators produce their own paper timetables. These will continue to be distributed via libraries, the Bus Enquiry Desk at the Railway Station, the Tourist Information Office and a host of other outlets.

### *Target*

- 8.10 Our target is to continue with our current activity, but expand it by:
- Reproviding the Inquiry Desk for bus passengers at the Railway Station
  - Expand and improve our real time estate
  - Provide audio-visual announcements on buses in York which don't currently have them
- 8.11 **Commitment I2:** bus operators will continue to produce their own timetable leaflets and publicise their services on their websites and via third party apps.
- 8.12 **Commitment I3:** City of York Council will maintain the [www.itravelyork.info](http://www.itravelyork.info) website and its journey planner.
- 8.13 **Commitment I4:** City of York Council will maintain the on-street real time information screens.
- 8.14 **Commitment I5:** the Bus Enquiry Desk at York Station will be reopened as part of the Station Frontage project. **However, we are making a capital Ask (I1) of £100k towards providing this facility. This is to assist the network's recovery from the pandemic.**



### *Audio-visual announcements*

- 8.15 Audio-visual announcements are very valued by people with impaired vision and visitors to York, who use them to help navigate around the city. Consultation with bus users revealed that provision of AV announcements was one of their top 5 priorities for improving York's bus network. **Commitment I6** is that City of York Council will work with bus operators to encourage provision of audio-visual announcements on buses and at bus stops. **Ask I2 is for £200,000 to provide AV equipment on the 100 buses in York which are not currently equipped. This is to improve the customer offer and reduce social exclusion.**
- 8.16 **Ask I3 is for £800,000** to double the number of real time screens in York through purchase of 100 battery powered screens for use in suburban and rural locations, where bus services tend to operate at lower frequencies and real time information is particularly valued. **This will improve the customer offer.**
- 8.17 We are also aware that much of our existing real time estate is ageing, having been installed between 2008 and 2015, and that by the end of the funding period for this BSIP some of the equipment will be life expired. **Consequently Ask I4 is for £500,000 to replace real time equipment we expect to become life expired before 2024/5. This will help the network stabilise in the medium term.**



## 9 Stops and shelters

### *Current situation*

- 9.1 There are approximately 1,100 bus stops across York, around 300 of which have a passenger shelter. Through York's Better Bus Area programme the vast majority of stops in York, and all the stops on more frequent routes, were refurbished and CYC currently has a fund of £100,000 per year which is used to replace/ refurbish tired and life-expired stops and shelters across the network. Effective management of this programme has resulted in 93% of York's bus passengers being satisfied with the state of their bus stop in Transport Focus's 2019 survey. Some bus shelters in the city centre are provided through an advertising agreement with JC deCaux. This expires in 2024, and we will look to use the replacement contract as a way to achieve the best uplift in the bus stop/ shelter stock in York.
- 9.2 In the city there is a clear hierarchy of bus stops, ranging from stops which are currently disused or used only by home to school bus services, through to the interchanges in the city centre. Table 9.1 (overleaf) shows what CYC will aspire to provide at stops at each level.

### *Target*

- 9.3 Our target is to improve our bus stops and shelters to support our objective of making the network as inclusive as possible. Feedback from York Bus Forum has highlighted the important role of providing shelters, places to sit and Kastle kerbs to promote easy boarding and alighting at stops, including when wheelchair ramps are used.

### *Action Plan*

- 9.4 The bus stops are also the "shop window" for the network. Hence, their upkeep is important. **Commitment S1** is that City of York Council will use best endeavours to maintain bus stops in the city. All shelters are cleaned every quarter – or every month in the city centre and we will continue to do this. Stops without a shelter are serviced annually and on timetable change dates.
- 9.5 We also wish to upgrade our bus stops and shelters with a programme to provide as many as possible with a bench, kastle kerb, hard standing and lighting to make them easy to use by people with a range of mobility and sensory impairments, and to improve personal security at stops – particularly shelter which are not lit. Consequently we are asking (**Ask S1**) the DfT to match the **£100k** per year CYC is already investing in improving bus stops across York. We will develop a programme alongside bus user groups – indeed are already doing this with the York Bus Forum. **This will reduce social exclusion and improve the offer to customers.**

**Table 11.1: Facilities at bus stops in York**

<b>Stop</b>	<b>Pole/ flag</b>	<b>Timetable case</b>	<b>Markings on highway</b>	<b>Raised kerb</b>	<b>Shelter</b>	<b>Destination board on shelter</b>	<b>Real time equipment</b>	<b>CCTV equipment</b>
<b>Unused stop</b>	None	None						
<b>School bus only stop</b>	Round pole, plate flag	None						
<b>Infrequent service stop (&lt; 4 buses/ hour)</b>	Round pole, plate flag.	Single case	If required	If required	If required			
<b>Frequent service stop (&gt; 4 buses hour)</b>	Square pole, box flag.	Double case or poster case in shelter	If required because of parking activity in stop	Yes	If merited by demand/ space available/ no planning constraints	None		
<b>District centre/ trip generator<sup>16</sup></b>	Square or RTI pole, box flag	Poster case in shelter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No, although may be covered by other systems
<b>City centre stop out of interchange cluster</b>	Square or RTI pole, box flag with landscape orientation	Poster case in shelter/ double or triple case	Yes	Yes	Consult Design Manual	Yes	Yes	No, although may be covered by other systems
<b>City centre stop in interchange cluster<sup>17</sup></b>	Square or RTI pole, box flag with landscape orientation	Poster case in shelter.	Yes	Yes	Consult Design Manual	Yes, or large board for interchange	Yes	Yes, in shelter or through existing city centre cameras where these are already installed.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. a district centre (for example, Acomb Front Street, Heworth) or a big trip generator away from the city centre (e.g. York District Hospital, York University, York College, Monks Cross, Clifton Moor) or at a park and ride site.

<sup>17</sup> The five interchanges are at Piccadilly, Stonebow, Exhibition Square/ Museum Street, Rail Station and Rougier Street (York Central interchange).

## 10 Customer service

10.1 The QBP wishes bus passengers in York to experience customer service we can be proud of. We set out how this will be delivered in this section of the report. Our vision is that bus services in York are known for providing excellent customer care, being responsive to customers needs and comments, with clear and easy ways to contact service providers.

### *Customer Contact*

10.2 CYC will continue to maintain the framework for a single point of contact for bus operators – through the [buses@york.gov.uk](mailto:buses@york.gov.uk) e-mail address, itravel website and twitter and York travel phone number.

### *Customer Charter*

10.3 York already has a Customer Charter, which was developed in 2016 (see Evidence Base). Although the existing Customer Charter contains many aspects of good practice we are aware that it does not contain any commitments on redress.

10.4 **Commitment CS1** is that the EP will develop their customer charter to include redress, particularly around late buses and buses which do not run. We will also work with operators to sign them up to a protocol which guarantees any wheelchair user not able to access a wheelchair space on the first bus to arrive at their stop a book a taxi for for their journey.

### *Bus User Group*

10.5 York has an existing Bus Forum whose views have been sought in the production of this BSIP. Commitment CS2 is that CYC and the bus operators will work with the Bus Forum and other representatives of bus passengers to constitute a consultative group meeting the best practice standards set out in the Transport Focus advice to local authorities on setting up such groups<sup>18</sup>, to ensure that they are representative of a cross-section of bus users in York.

10.6 **Commitment CS2** is that the QBP will maintain a Bus User Group. The costs of doing so are minimal, but will be met by CYC.

### *Bus surgeries*

10.7 A number of “surgeries” have been held with bus users pre-covid. These provide an ideal opportunity for bus passengers to “drop in” and provide feedback to bus operators about their services. **Commitment CS3** is that the QBP will support a regular programme of bus surgeries at a range of locations across the city.

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<sup>18</sup> Transport Focus (need document reference) 2021

### *Surveys of bus passenger satisfaction*

- 10.8 Since 2012 City of York Council has undertaken surveys of bus passenger satisfaction in York. Since 2013 these have been undertaken by Transport Focus as part of their UK-wide work. The surveys allow the council to measure change in York's bus services over time and benchmark bus services in York against those in other towns and cities. **Commitment CS4** is that CYC will continue this series of surveys, funding them through the Better Bus Area agreement with operators.
- 10.9 There is no "Ask" associated with this area of activity.



## 11 Travel Behaviour Change and service marketing

- 11.1 Thus far this document has proposed either infrastructure measures or changes to fares and ticketing – but in fact there is third ingredient, which builds on the existing travel behavior change activity which has been ongoing in York for several years.
- 11.2 As we set out in section 2, we do not seek simply growth in the number of bus users, but targeted growth achieved by people transferring from using their car for trips – or travelling to opportunities opened up by improving York’s bus network.
- 11.3 We are already working with the developers behind York’s largest developments to encourage residents to use sustainable travel. We will continue to do this (commitment M1), with the activity funded through sites Section 106 agreements.
- 11.4 We will also work more generally to encourage greater bus use amongst current residents of York. Much of this will be using our established I-travel York team, who currently provide a range of travel behavior services, to employers, and in residential areas. Much of this work will continue to use the “nudge” techniques which we are using, particularly, to increase active mode take up in support of the Active Travel Fund schemes in York as they are delivered.
- 11.5 We wish to employ the techniques we are already using to encourage greater use of bus services in York – particularly exploiting the bus’s advantage for accessing York city centre and the city’s secondary centres and large trips generators, such as the Hospital. We will consider a number of techniques for this including conventional advertising and promotion of the network, through nudge techniques to individual travel behavior planning/ coaching. We would like to enact specific schemes to incentivise drivers to give up cars in exchange for a range of sustainable travel alternatives – although this would have to be flexible to accommodate a range of different travel requirements around individual’s trip making patterns.
- 11.6 Consequently, Ask M1 is for **£300,000** pa to support travel behaviour change techniques to encourage greater use of bus services. **This will help stabilise the network in the medium term and improve the offer to customers.**

## *Marketing*

- 11.7 **Commitment M3** is to maintain the existing QBP marketing group, **incorporating it into the Enhanced Partnership.**
- 11.8 We will continue to promote the use of the existing “York by bus” brand, which is already used for York’s multi-operator ticket, customer charter and roadside information displays. This will be our **Commitment M4.**
- 11.9 We do, however, recognise the value of operator’s own brands in York – many of which have hard-won reputations for excellence – for example Coastliner recently won the best bus route in the UK award. Thus must also recognise that many of the buses in York operate further afield and the existing branding is an extremely effective indicator of their route and destination.



## 12 The Park and Ride Estate

- 12.1 York has an extensive park and ride network, with six sites, providing around 5,000 parking spaces around the city. Before covid the park and ride service carried around one-third of all bus trips in York. Although the service is often perceived to be principally for visitors to York and commuters to the city centre, in practice it provides many local trips, with park and ride sites located adjacent to York College, York University, the business park/ retail at Monks Cross and retail at Fulford. On a typical day, 2,000 cars are parked at the ring of park and ride sites, enough to make a traffic queue 10km long. However, on busy days all the spaces at all the sites can be full.
- 12.2 In 2019 the Rawcliffe Bar site began offering a park and ride service to York Hospital which was used by medical staff throughout the covid pandemic.
- 12.3 The service has an excellent reputation both locally and regionally. As of Summer 2020, five of the six sites have been operated with electric buses, giving York one of the largest electric bus fleets in the UK.
- 12.4 We are, however, aware that the park and ride sites present a substantial asset base for the city which can be used to greater advantage than they perhaps have been to date.
- 12.5 **Commitment P&R1** – is to maintain and improve the existing services so that they continue to enjoy high customer satisfaction and provide an attractive way for visitors and commuters to access central York..
- 12.6 **Commitment P&R2** – is to consider how the estate can be used to cater for other trips – for example overnight stays and rail station feeder trips. Elsewhere we are aware that park and ride sites are used by inter-urban buses and coach services, something which offers the potential to reduce trip making on the trunk road network. The park and ride estate could, for example, be used to allow people to park and travel to central Leeds on a CityZap service, as well as to central York. Achieving this would require a modest investment in small alterations to sites – for example, to provide bus stops and shelters for services heading out of York as well as into York. We would also like to:
- Staff some of the terminals for longer into the evening, so that they are secure locations to wait. This is particularly important at the Askham Bar site, which is next to York’s FE college, and the Monks Cross site, which is next to a range of retail/ entertainment venues, including York’s new Community Stadium.
  - Develop complementary services at the sites to offer onward sustainable travel. The sites already offer secure cycle lockers, but we would like to be able to offer a range of mobility services, including e-bikes and e-scooters (York currently has an e-scooter trial) and car club vehicles.
  - Refurbish the two oldest sites, built in the mid-1990s, to bring them up the standard of the other sites.

- 12.7 We request an indicative capital fund of £5m to fund this workstream. (Ask P&R1). A work programme will be advised in the 2022 BSIP update. **This will help stabilise the network in the medium term, reduce social exclusion and improve the customer offer.**

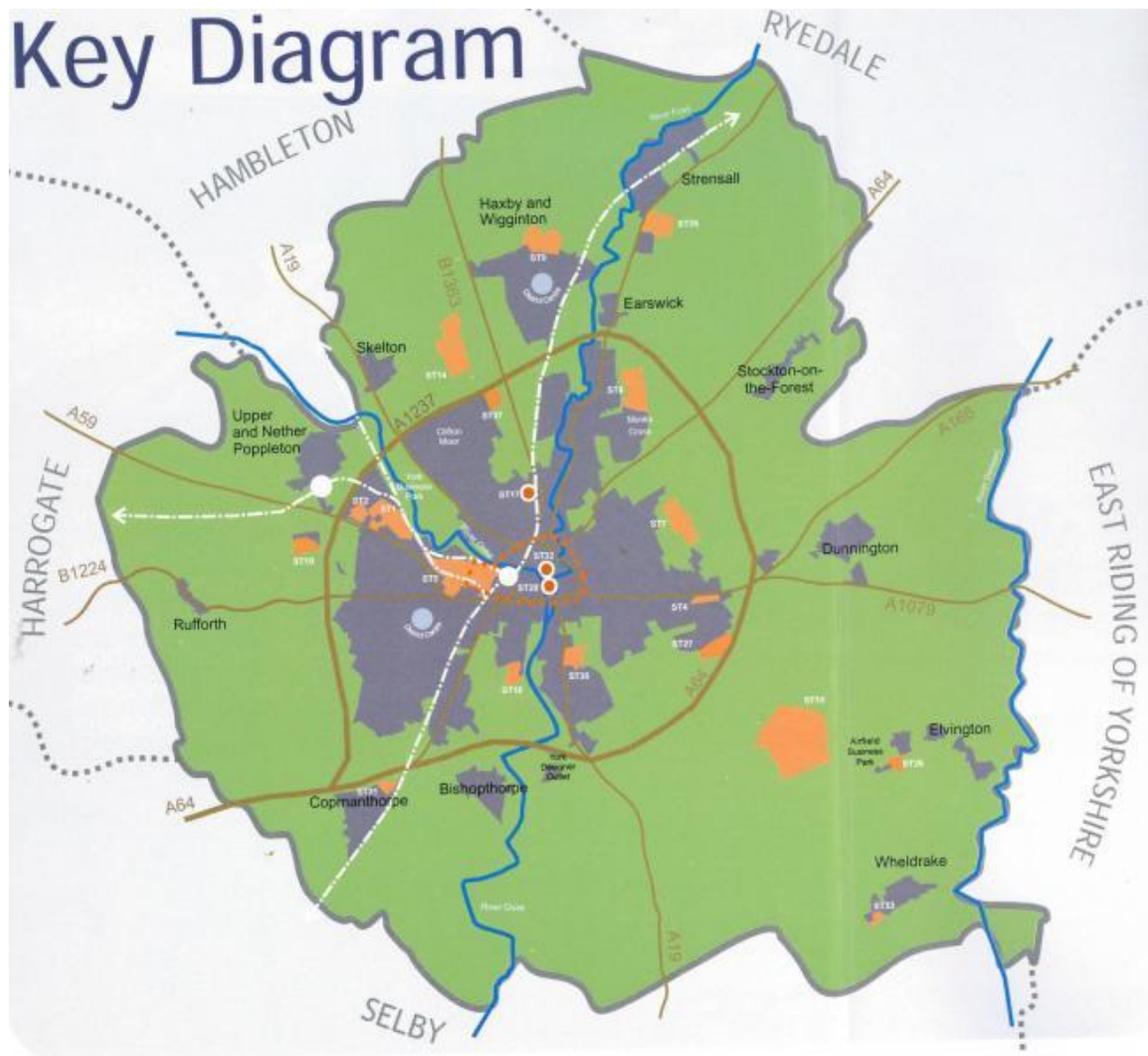


## 13 Serving new development

### Introduction

- 13.1 York's emerging Local Plan will set out how the city will grow to accommodate additional jobs and households. Figure 6.1 shows the location of the principal developments in the city. A key role for the BSIP and York's Enhanced Partnership will be to ensure bus services for the new developments in York are as effective as they can be. This section of the BSIP sets out how CYC and the EP will meet this challenge.

Figure 13.1: Developments in York: Local Plan Key Diagram



## *Approach*

- 13.2 In order to serve these developments without traffic having a substantive adverse impact on York city centre and key radial routes there is a need to continue to develop bus services. As such, the Local Plan contains an aspiration that 15% of journey to work trip making from the larger new developments will be by bus.
- 13.3 This has a number of implications for bus services in York, particularly:
- How can effective local services be provided to/ from the new developments? What principles should underlie service planning? What do the developers need to provide to allow delivery of effective bus services?
  - How can residents of the new developments and employees at new employment be incentivised to use bus services, particularly, what facilities should be provided for bus passengers in the new developments, and what ticketing can be provided to encourage take-up?
  - How can bus services in York allow people from the new developments to not just access the city centre by bus, but interchange to access a range of job opportunities, training locations and services across the city, using different bus services?
  - How can the bus best get people to the railway station for onward travel beyond York?
  - Is there a role for longer distance services directly connecting some of the developments with locations further afield – for example, between the new development at Langwith and central Leeds?
  - How can bus services be delivered, given the phasing of developments with houses being built over several years, and full build out perhaps taking 10 years or more?



- 13.4 A further issue is how the impact of new traffic on existing roads in York can be mitigated, for example, through new capital schemes in the city centre or on the corridors approaching the city centre.
- 13.5 The policy on serving new developments by bus is as follows:
- 13.6 **Commitment D1** is that CYC will work with developers to establish bus priority into any new development in York, to make buses as time competitive as reasonably possible with private cars. This would include, for example, segregated, grade separated, crossing points of York’s outer ring road for bus services into York city centre from new developments outside of the outer ring road. A precedent for this is the bus priorities being provided as part of the York Central development.
- 13.7 **Commitment D2** is that CYC, as planning authority will give careful consideration to how new developments will be served – specifically whether they should be served by completely new services, existing services which are diverted off line of route or extended to the new development, or frequency enhancements to existing services. The key consideration will be to balance the commercial viability of the new/ altered services against providing the most competitive journey times from the new development to key trip attractors such as York city centre and large local employment sites.
- 13.8 **Commitment D3** is that, in planning services, CYC will look not just at local links, but whether some movements from the developments would be best catered for by providing longer distance express coach links. A good example would be whether there is scope to link the development sites to the east, south and west of York directly to central Leeds through a coach link. New development sites should also be linked to a railway station. In some cases the most appropriate station may not be York, but could be Poppleton, other existing stations such as Selby, or the proposed station at Haxby.
- 13.9 Experience tells us that the best planning for new sites is facilitated through engagement between site promoter, planning authority and bus operators as early as possible. **Commitment D4** is that CYC will look to include bus operators in discussions about new developments at an early stage so that bus operators are able to input into site design and ensure development masterplans facilitate effective bus operation.
- 13.10 **Commitment D5** is that CYC and the QBP will work together to develop a “Bus Service Development Guide” which will form a part of the supplementary planning guidance for York’s Local Plan. This will set out how developments can be configured to encourage use of bus services – and ensure the bus services to the developments are reliable and attractive.

- 13.11 **Commitment D6** is that new developments have a clearly identifiable “Public Transport Hub” which will be in the centre of the new developments, co-located with the principal trip generators in each development – for example, schools and nurseries, GP’s surgeries, shops. The hubs will be equipped with very high quality bus stops, comprising, but not limited to, a heated shelter, real time information, information boards, and machines for purchasing bus tickets off the bus.
- 13.12 **Commitment D7** is that as a general design guideline, the services provided to large new developments will be developed to be as attractive as the nearest park and ride alternative. As such they will not only include substantial priority within the development and linking the development to the existing road network (as set out in Commitment D1), but should also include priorities, many of them new, on the existing road network.
- 13.13 Under **Commitment D8**, developers will be encouraged to make full use of ICT in any new property to make real time information available to new residents.
- 13.14 **Commitment D9** acknowledges the importance of attractive ticketing offers to new residents (or new employees at employment sites) in encouraging people to use the bus. The QBP will work with developers to provide a range of tickets which will encourage early use of the bus service, but will retain bus users on the network over the longer term. This is likely to include developing AllYork tickets for purchase off the bus, and a range of other products – for example, for scholar travel and carnet/ stored value products, as well as single operator products.
- 13.15 It is assumed that these commitments will be funded by S106 settlements and/ or a York CIL, so there is no “Ask” to DfT associated with this set of interventions. However, because of the importance of development in York this section is included for completeness.

## 14 Organisational Development

- 14.1 We recognize that delivering the National Bus Strategy will be extremely challenging, placing new responsibilities on both local authorities and bus operators. Although York has benefited from having a QBP, it is not enough to simply rebadge the existing QBP as an Enhanced Partnership.
- 14.2 The QBP is currently structured around the following groups:
- A “Main group” – which meets quarterly and consists of – senior bus company staff, Councillors, and senior CYC officers. This group is chaired by the Confederation for Passenger Transport
  - A Performance group – which meets monthly and concentrates on operational matters – for example, punctuality and challenges to punctuality such as roadworks. This is primarily operational level staff such as traffic managers and head drivers. This group is chaired by the Network Manager for First
  - A Marketing group – meets online , and occasionally in person, on a task and finish basis. This group is chaired by Arriva.
  - Ticketing group – which administrates the All York ticket. The group meets as required and is chaired by Transdev. It has a formal voting structure.
  - A Better Bus Area group - which is often rolled into “main” QBP meetings, but is chaired by East Yorkshire. This group controls the budget of approximately £200k, which is funded by operators. Voting structure for this and ticketing decisions. It has a formal voting structure.
- 14.3 There is no dedicated officer resource for the York QBP, with various officers accommodating QBP tasks within their other workload. The Main QBP is administrated by the Sustainable Transport Manager, and Performance Group by the Public Transport Planner.
- 14.4 There is a Bus Forum, which is entirely independent and meets outside of the QBP (although its representatives are often invited to QBP meetings). CYC officers attend the Bus Forum’s monthly meetings, to take note of issues experienced on the network and provide a regular update on the Council’s activities.
- 14.5 In delivering the measures within the BSIP we commit to reforming the QBP to include:
- A CYC officer specifically tasked with running the QBP and delivering the programme set out in this document
  - A new consultative group for passengers and their representatives (alongside the surgeries etc identified in Section 10).

- 14.6 We will consider adding wider Mobility as a Service capability into the Enhanced Partnership through section 19 operators and other forms of public transport such as taxis, private hire vehicles and rail. **Ask OD1** is for **£50,000** per year for the three initial years of the Enhanced Partnership to fund a Partnership Officer, who will oversee delivery of the programme set out here. **This ask is against all four of the priorities to: Bus Recovery from covid and its consequences; Stabilisation of the network in the medium term; reduce social exclusion; and improving the offer for customers**



## CONTROL SHEET

Project name/ number: York BSIP

### Version Control:

Version	Date	Notes
1.	10/09/2021	Draft for internal feedback
2.	29/09/2021	External feedback (limited)
3.	05/10/2021	Internal sign off
4	08/10/2021	This version