

Northamptonshire Bus Strategy

Fit for Purpose



April 2018



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Northamptonshire Bus Strategy

This is Northamptonshire County Council's new Bus Strategy produced following consultation in October 2017. It replaces the previous version which was published in January 2013.

It sets out the overarching vision for buses within Northamptonshire and sets out our strategy to achieve it. This strategy is one of a series of thematic daughter documents to the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan that was adopted in April 2012.

Financial constraints mean that the County Council is withdrawing its subsidy for local bus services, and we need to make changes to our existing Bus Strategy to reflect this.

The section of the existing Strategy relating to the Subsidised Bus Network has therefore been completely rewritten with a new Policy BUS 2, with all existing policies relating to subsidised services deleted. The remaining policies are largely unchanged from the January 2013 strategy, although most of them have been renumbered and some of the supporting text has been updated.

This strategy was approved and adopted by Northamptonshire County Council's Cabinet in March 2018.

This strategy together with the other daughter documents and the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan itself can be viewed on the County Council's website at:

<http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/northamptonshire-highways/transport-plans-and-policies/Pages/local-transport-plan.aspx>

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Contents

Theme & Content	Page No.
Northamptonshire Transportation Plan: Fit for Purpose	5
Strategy	9
The Commercial Bus Network	12
The Subsidised Bus Network	14
Fares and Ticketing	15
Bus Service Information	17
Bus Stops and Interchanges	18
Bus Priority	20
Low Carbon Emission Buses	21
Northamptonshire Arc Transit	21
Coaches	22
Community Transport	23
Developer-Funded Bus Services	24
Delivering the Strategy	29
Scheme Funding	29
Appendix 1 – Summary of Policies	31
Appendix 2 – Guidelines for Bus Service Frequency in New Developments	34
Appendix 3 – Guidance on Designing Developments for Bus Services	38

Northamptonshire Transportation Plan: Fit for Purpose

Transportation is not an end in itself. The movement of people and goods takes place not for its own sake, but to fulfil the diverse needs and desires of the public. Therefore the County Council's transport policies are similarly promoted for their effect on other specific goals, priorities and objectives, rather than as an end in themselves.

Northamptonshire Transportation Plan Vision:

For Transport and Travel to contribute towards making Northamptonshire a great place to live and work, through creating tangible transport options to satisfy individual needs and to encourage more sustainable travel. The transport system will provide fast and efficient movement of people and goods, and will be accessible for all. Expanding networks and capacity of networks in Northamptonshire will be fully integrated into new developments and regeneration areas to support more sustainable communities.

Economic growth and prosperity is a top priority for Northamptonshire and connectivity has a vital role to play in encouraging businesses to locate to the area, and getting people to work and services such as education and health, as well as to leisure activities and for shopping. Improved technology and local accessibility will reduce the need to travel, whilst supporting economic growth, within a low carbon environment and Northamptonshire will become an exemplar for the latest developments in information technology, fuel technology, and new forms of transport.

The County Council will work in partnership with all stakeholders and the wider community to deliver this transport vision and strategy.

This Transportation Plan needs to be both aspirational and realistic at the same time. Current economic climates mean that transport is certainly in a more austere time than in the last 15 to 20 years and this plan needs to reflect that but at the same time still plan for future growth .

**The overall aim for this Transportation Plan is:
'Northamptonshire Transportation - Fit for..... Purpose'**

The aim 'fit for purpose' means creating a network that delivers exactly what Northamptonshire needs to be able to function plus what it needs to be able to grow, no more and no less.

This overarching aim can then be broken down into six objectives that have been chosen to guide this Transportation Plan. These objectives have been drawn up to reflect the issues which have been identified as locally important through consultation, while at the same time reflecting wider national and local policy context. These objectives have been deliberately chosen to reflect the

main impacts that transport can have on the wider community, rather than being linked to particular schemes or measures. They form the basis upon which the policies and programmes contained in this Plan have been developed.

1. **Fit for.....the Future** – creating a transport system that supports and encourages growth and plans for the future impacts of growth, whilst successfully providing benefits for the County.

2. **Fit for.....the Community** – through the transport system help to maintain and create safe, successful, strong, cohesive and sustainable communities where people are actively involved in shaping the places where they live.

3. **Fit to.....Choose** – ensuring that the people of Northamptonshire have the information and the options available to them to be able to choose the best form of transport for each journey that they make.

4. **Fit for.....Economic Growth** – creating a transport system that supports economic growth, regeneration and a thriving local economy and successfully provides for population and business growth.

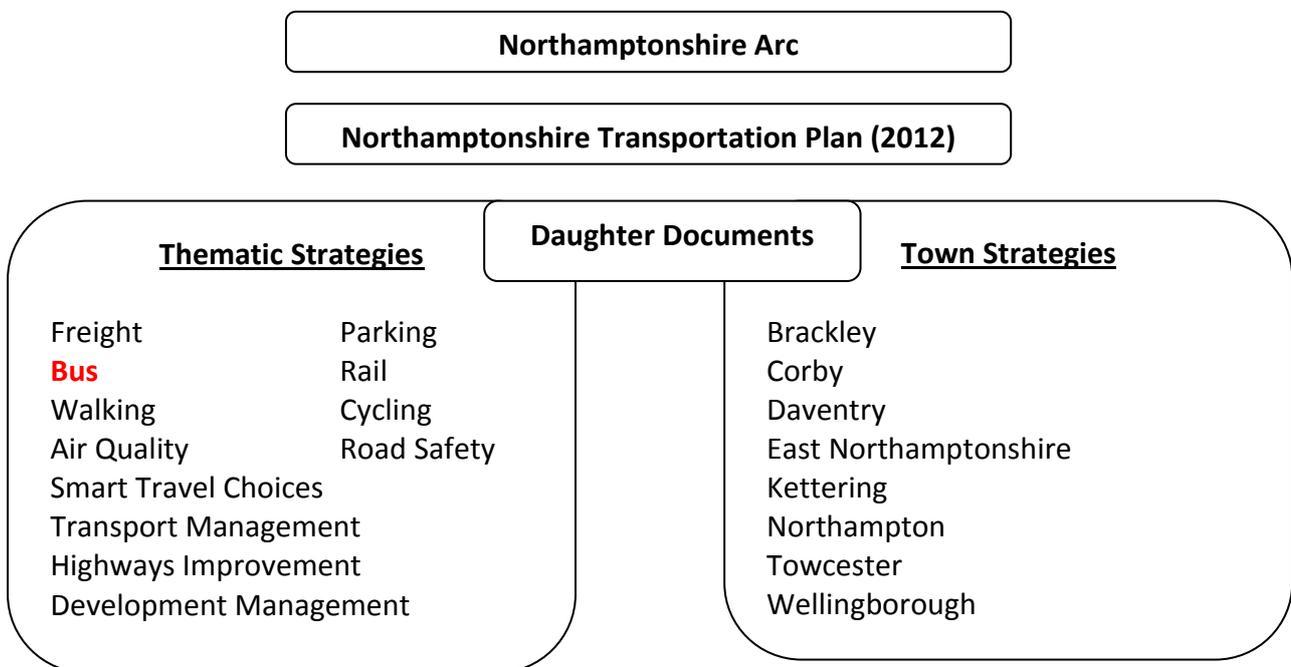
5. **Fit for.....the Environment** – to deliver a transport system that minimises and wherever possible reduces the effect of travel on the built, natural and historic environment.

6. **Fit for.....Best Value** - being clear about our priorities for investment and focusing on value for money by prioritising what we spend money on and how it can be beneficial for the county as a whole and search for alternative sources of funding.

Daughter Documents

This Strategy is the part of a series of documents which will eventually form the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan ‘suite of documents’. This suite of documents will include strategies or plans covering a range of transport themes and also detailed geographic strategies or plans for the Northamptonshire’s main towns.

Thematic strategies or plans that will be developed as daughter documents to the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan, of which the Bus Strategy is one:



Northamptonshire Bus Strategy

The Bus Strategy gives more detail on elements of the Northamptonshire Arc, such as Northamptonshire Arc Transit. It helps to deliver modal-shift as part of the North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategies; and by improving connectivity within the county can help the work of the Local Enterprise Partnerships. Improved bus services can also have advantages in terms of equalities and quality of life, particularly for those who do not have access to a car.

The following table shows how the Bus Strategy document ties in with the six over-arching Northamptonshire Transportation Plan objectives:

Northamptonshire Transportation Plan Overarching Objectives						
	Fit for..... the Future	Fit for..... the Community	Fit to..... Choose	Fit for..... Economic Growth	Fit for..... the Environment	Fit for..... Best Value
Bus Strategy	Increasing the attractiveness of bus travel will encourage modal shift and allow the housing growth proposed in the county to be accommodated.	Consultation with the local community will help us shape a bus service that best serves the need of the people in the local area.	Improving bus services will increase the number of choices available for people when deciding how to travel and will increase accessibility.	Improved bus services will help people to access jobs and the training that they need to get jobs.	Increasing the proportion of people that travel by bus rather than private car will reduce the vehicle emissions that are harmful to the environment.	We will deliver bus service and bus infrastructure improvements that represent value for money.

The Bus Strategy provides our overall policies for bus services and specific proposals for rural and inter-urban networks. Specific bus service proposals for some towns are included in Town Transport Strategies which also form part of the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan.

Strategy

This bus strategy forms an integral part of the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan, Northamptonshire County Council's Local Transport Plan. The bus strategy sets out the council's plans and policies in relation to bus services across the county.

The bus strategy aim is to.....increase the attractiveness of bus travel to encourage modal shift and allow the housing growth proposed in the county to be accommodated.

The County Council's role in bus services

The basis on which bus services are provided in Northamptonshire results from the 1985 Transport Act, and essentially remains unchanged today. Bus operators are responsible for providing those services which they consider to be commercially viable, and setting the routes, frequencies, timetables and fares on those services. The County Council has a duty to secure the provision of services it considers should be provided to supplement the commercial network. It can secure those services either by negotiating for additional journeys to complement the commercial network, or by seeking tenders to provide those services. Because of the pressure on its budget, the County Council is currently consulting on a proposal to withdraw its whole budget for bus services in 2018/19.

The County Council can also play a key role in encouraging use of the commercial bus network, through its various duties and powers as local highway and transport authority. We use these powers because it is in our interests to ensure that the commercial bus network coverage is as extensive as possible to limit the amount we need to spend on providing services. But there are also other benefits from ensuring people use the bus; these include reduced congestion and carbon emissions, and also the benefits from ensuring people can have good access to jobs and services and contribute to the economy.

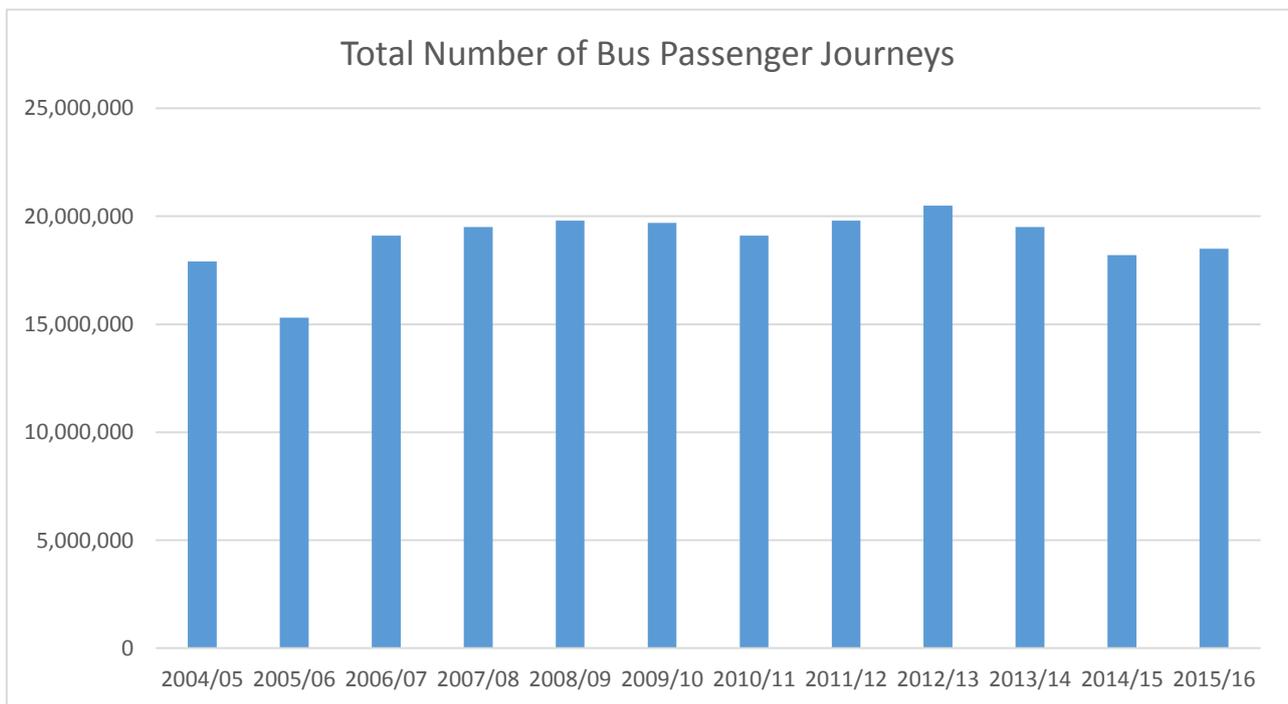
Examples of the ways in which the County Council can support the commercial bus network are:

- Providing or allowing the provision of bus stops and shelters
- Ensuring information is available about bus services
- Ensuring that buses move as freely as possible on our roads, and do not suffer unduly from traffic congestion
- Assisting with investment in vehicles where that investment may not be justified on a fully commercial basis

The County Council is also responsible for administering the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme within Northamptonshire.

In recent years, the county’s bus operators have revised their networks to create timetables and routes which are easy to remember and which better meet the needs of the majority of travellers. Frequencies have been increased on many routes and attractive fare offers created. The County Council has supported these changes, using funding from a variety of sources, constructing improved infrastructure, introducing bus priority measures and real-time passenger information, and in some cases investing in new vehicles or using ‘kick-start’ funding to increase frequencies.

The figure below shows the total number of bus passenger journeys in Northamptonshire for each year between 2004/05 and 2015/16.

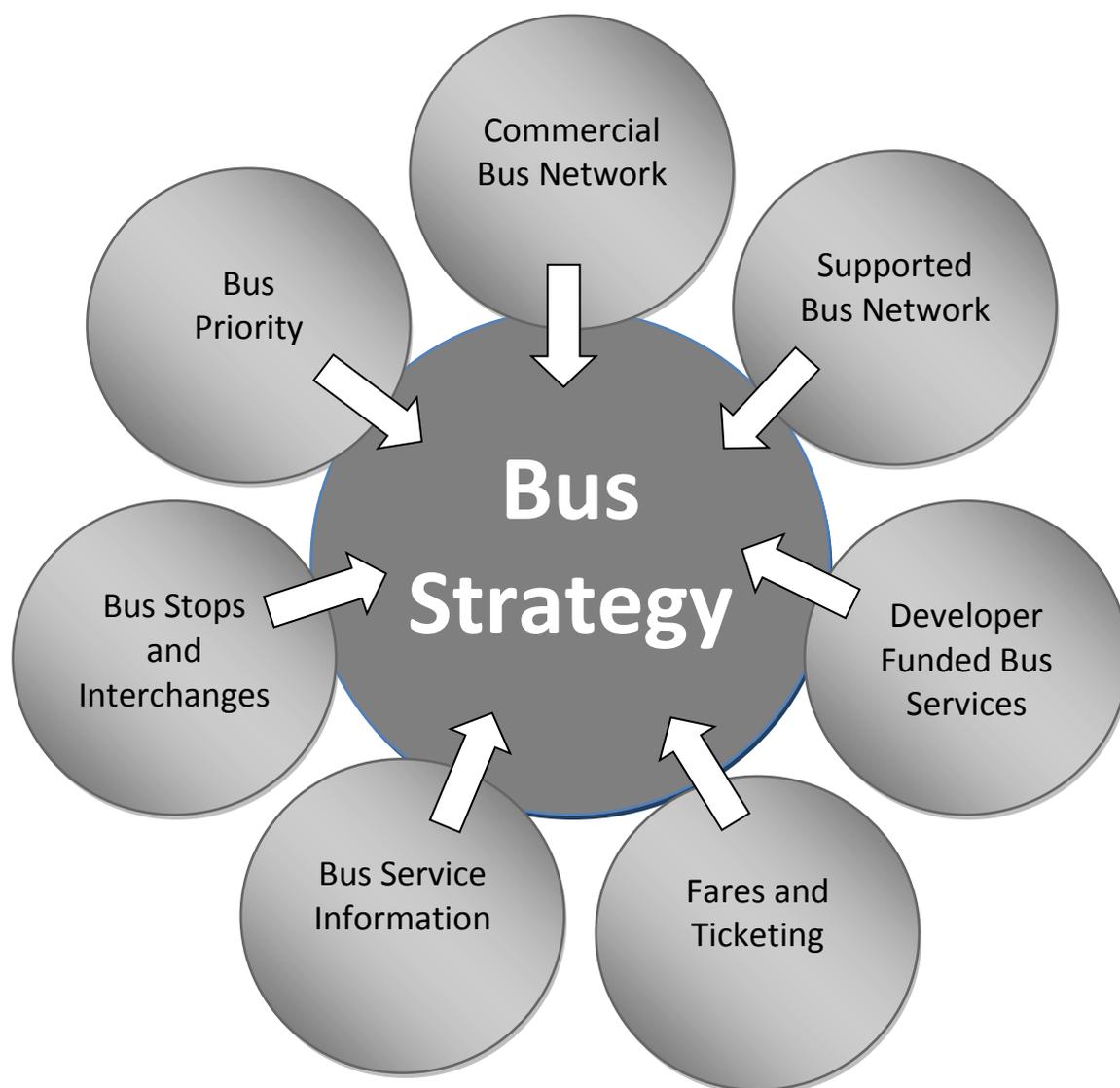


Source: Bus Statistics (Bus 0109a/b), Department for Transport

Format of the bus strategy

The remainder of this document sets out our plans and policies in relation to:

- The commercial bus network
- The supported bus network
- Developer-funded bus services
- Fares and ticketing
- Bus service information
- Bus stops and interchanges
- Bus priority



The Commercial bus network

Although the County Council is not directly involved in delivering commercial bus operations, they play a very important role in meeting the objectives of the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan. Because they are, or can be, used by many more people they can play a key part in meeting the demand for additional transport capacity on a congested road network, or for meeting our obligations in relation to climate change.

In developing our Fit for... Growth policies we have identified that to accommodate the levels of growth set out in the two joint core strategies for the period to 2026-31, the number of bus passengers will need to rise by around 50% from the 2012 base figure. Such an increase would obviously be commercially attractive to operators as it would increase their income, making marginal services more viable, while on currently heavily-used services increased demand would be likely to require either increased frequencies or the use of larger vehicles.

However, the challenge is to make the 50% increase possible. The larger bus-operating groups (at least) will understand the measures which can encourage increased use of their services:

- Attractive frequencies
- Easy to understand timetable patterns
- Attractive journey times
- Good fares offers
- Reliability and punctuality

However, when introducing such improvements commercial operators need to get pay-back over a relatively short period.

The County Council can help the commercial operators to grow their services, by making investments in the on-street infrastructure at the same time as improvements are made to the services. However, we can also help more directly by funding, or sourcing funding from other public or private sources, to either lessen the risk on operators of expanding their services or allowing a longer period for the services to achieve commercial payback. Developer funding of services to sustainable urban extensions is perhaps the classic example of this scenario.

By 2026-31 we anticipate that increased bus patronage will have led to a number of services operating at greater frequencies than they do today. We anticipate that the following inter-urban services might run at a greater than hourly frequency:

To run every 15 minutes:	
X4	Northampton – Wellingborough – Kettering – Corby
19	Kettering – Rothwell - Desborough
To run every 20 minutes:	
D1/D2	Northampton – Daventry (to Rugby)
X1	Corby – Kettering – Burton Latimer - Wellingborough

44/45	Wellingborough – Irthlingborough
X46/X47	Northampton – Wellingborough – Rushden – Raunds – Thrapston
88/X89	Northampton – Towcester
500	Brackley – Farthinghoe - Banbury

To run every 30 minutes:

D3	Northampton – Bugbrooke
X4	Northampton – Wellingborough – Kettering – Corby – Peterborough
X4/X7	Milton Keynes – Northampton
X7	Northampton – Brixworth – Market Harborough
11	Daventry – Long Buckby
49/50	Kettering – Rushden – Bedford
X89/X91	(Northampton or Brackley or Daventry) – Towcester – Milton Keynes

Services not listed in this table are expected to continue to operate at existing frequencies.

A similar strategic view for commercial services in the larger towns is included in the relevant Town Transport Strategy.

Policy BUS 1

We will work with commercial bus operators to sustain and enhance their core commercial networks, with the aim of improving the frequencies of core commercial services by 2026-31.

The supported bus network

As explained earlier in this document, the County Council has a duty to secure the provision of services it considers should be provided to supplement the commercial network. The financial constraints under which the County Council currently operates mean that maintaining a separate network of subsidised local bus services is no longer feasible. However, we will continue to meet our statutory responsibilities by continuing to support Home to School Transport and Adult and Children’s Social Care Transport.

Through the implementation of our Network Northamptonshire Total Transport initiative, which aims to secure more efficient provision of services from our own home to school and social care transport operations, and those of other public sector areas such as colleges and health, we will explore opportunities to make services available to wider sections of the community.

Policy BUS 2

We will continue to support Home to School Transport and Adult and Children’s Social Care Transport.

Through our Network Northamptonshire Total Transport initiative, we will explore opportunities to make services available to wider sections of the community.

Fares and Ticketing

The County council's role in relation to bus fares and ticketing encompasses four linked areas:

- Administration of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme in Northamptonshire
- Facilitating the introduction of multi-operator ticketing schemes
- Facilitating the introduction of smartcard technology

National Concessionary Travel Scheme

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme introduced, from 1st April 2008, free travel for older and disabled people on local bus services across England. From 1st April 2011, the County Council took over the administration of the scheme in Northamptonshire from the district and borough councils.

The eligibility criteria for the scheme are set nationally. Free travel is offered between 0930 and 2300 on Monday to Friday and all day on Saturday and Sunday. The County Council (and district and borough councils) have powers to enhance the national scheme, but have chosen not to do so.

Concessionary passes are issued through Northamptonshire Libraries, which provide a ready-made network of outlets.

Multi-operator ticketing schemes

Multi-operator ticketing schemes serve those passengers who need to use the buses of more than one operator as part of their journey, and help to encourage bus usage for such journeys. A recent report from the Competition Commission has underlined the importance of such tickets, and recommended their wider expansion.

The County Council has already worked with operators to introduce a multi-operator ticket in Northampton (the Buzz Card). There may be benefits from developing the Buzz Card product further, e.g. with a child ticket or as an add-on ticket for journeys from outside the Buzz Card area.

There may also be benefits from developing multi-operator tickets for other larger towns in the county (Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough) and also a county-wide ticket. Where appropriate schemes may be developed in partnership with neighbouring local transport authorities. Plus-Bus tickets, offering bus travel as an add-on to a rail ticket, are available for travel by the services of one or more bus operators in Corby, Kettering, Northampton and Wellingborough.

Policy BUS 3

Working with operators, we will consider expansion of multi-operator ticketing schemes through:

- Further development of the Northampton Buzz Card;

- The introduction of schemes in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough;
- A county-wide ticket

Smartcards

Smart and integrated ticketing has the potential to revolutionise the way passengers use public transport, with benefits for passengers, authorities and operators. Smart tickets, usually embedded in a micro-chip, can also be held on a mobile phone. They offer more innovative products than conventional tickets, such as an electronic purse, where passengers can top-up a smartcard with credit. This offers greater flexibility and reduces the need to queue and have changes available. Smart ticketing technology can also support a variety of fare options, for example providing discounts after a certain number of journeys or enabling the passenger to build up 'loyalty' points that buy free or discounted additional journeys.

The County Council has already worked with bus operators to introduce electronic ticket machines capable of reading the smartcards used for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme. This is the first step of a much wider smartcard scheme that will encompass not only buses, but also trains, parking and all forms of concession. The aim is to expand the scheme to incorporate different leisure and social activities.

The expansion of smart ticketing could create new opportunities for existing and new ticket retailers enabling advance purchase rail and coach tickets to be bought on-line through third-party retailers. Tickets could also be bought in local retailers such as newsagents.

Policy BUS 4

We will support any proposals from operators to use smartcards for further ticketing products, and will consider wider applications for smartcard technology giving access to a wider range of services.

Bus Service Information

Developments in information technology mean that there are an increasing number of ways in which passengers can gain information about bus services. While most commercial bus operators produce leaflets and maintain websites to advertise their services, the County Council is involved in ensuring that comprehensive information is available to passengers for all operator's services.

Website – We maintain on our website timetable information for all registered local bus services operating in Northamptonshire, together with mapping information showing bus routes and the locations of marked and unmarked bus stops.

Maps – We produce maps, available in printed form and on our website, showing all bus services in the county, including summary information on service frequencies.

Real-time information – We work with operators to provide a system of real-time information for bus services in the county. For all bus stops we make information on next departures available via our website and a text-messaging service. At busy bus stops, we provide real-time information displays.

Traveline – We provide information to Traveline (the national public transport enquiry service) which is made available via their telephone and on-line enquiry services and which through the NextBuses services can give information on buses to a particular bus stop via either an app or a texting service.

Policy BUS 5

Access to real time information will be improved to make public transport easy and simple to use and more attractive. This will include 'live' display boards at stops, text-services and a simple and easy to use website which allows users to make well-informed decisions about whether, when and how to travel.

Policy BUS 6

An interactive multi-modal journey planning service will be introduced, using local network information, which enables users to identify options for end-to-end journeys and to select the option that best meets their travel needs.

Bus Stops and Interchanges

Bus stops

Bus stops need to be located so that, as far as possible, all housing areas and major employment locations are within 400 metres (about 10 minutes walk) of a bus stop. The same principles should apply to other types of development, and for major attractors (such as a hospital or sports stadium) - the stop should be located as close as possible to the entrance. Stops also need to be located where there are good pedestrian links, good street lighting and, where possible, where there is plenty of human activity. This is not often easy to achieve, as the siting of a stop is often sensitive locally. A key role of the County Council is to agree the siting of bus stops, with a variety of interested parties.

Ideally each bus stop should have a flag, a timetable case (except for stops which are only used for alighting), and hard-standing, including a raised kerb to give level access to and from the bus, since within a few years all buses will need to be low-floor. However, many stops (particularly in rural areas) have been un-marked for so long that there may be practical difficulties, or objections, to such provision. In addition, the cost of upgrading all stops is likely to be prohibitively expensive, especially as many stops are very lightly used.

Policy BUS 7

We will continue to concentrate our resources for bus stop improvements on the most heavily-used routes and stops, but also seek to ensure each village in the county which has a bus service is provided with at least one marked stop (normally in each direction) with a timetable case and raised boarding facilities.

Bus Interchanges

Bus interchanges are located at key locations where people change between different bus routes or between the bus and other forms of transport. They are generally located in the larger town centres, or near railway stations where these are served by bus.

Town centre interchanges vary considerably in terms of the facilities provided, and we have defined essential, preferred and desirable facilities which could be provided as follows.

Essential facilities:

- Timetable information
- Covered waiting areas
- Telephones
- Raised boarders/disabled access to all bus bays
- Safe walking access
- Good cycling access

- Secure cycle parking

Preferred facilities:

- Staffed information or enquiry bureaux for ticket sales
- Secure waiting areas
- Toilets
- Well located in relation to town centre or railway station

Desirable facilities:

- Real time information
- Refreshment facilities
- Retail outlets
- Taxi rank

	Essential facilities	Preferred facilities	Desirable facilities
Northampton town centre	All	All	All
Corby, Daventry, Kettering and Wellingborough town centres	All	All	Some
Brackley, Rushden, Oundle, Thrapston and Towcester town centres	All	Most	Some

Where a bus interchange is located at a rail station, we would expect many of the above facilities to be provided as part of the railway infrastructure. We would expect the following facilities to be provided as part of the bus interchange:

- Timetable information
- Covered waiting area
- Raised boarders/disabled access to all bus bays
- Safe walking route from rail station entrance to bus stop(s)
- Real time information (desirable)

Specific proposals for improvement of bus interchanges, and provision of new ones, will be found in town transport strategies.

Policy BUS 8

Where new or improved bus interchanges are provided, we will expect them to be provided with a range of facilities appropriate to their location.

Bus Priority

Bus priority is needed when there is too much traffic on the road network and too little capacity for it all to flow freely. Buses are often delayed because the movements they need to make are not prioritised by the traffic system. This includes buses leaving the end of a bus lane or bus priority route to re-join the general traffic stream; buses on radial routes at points where they cross orbital routes; and buses that have to leave and re-join main roads to serve villages.

Giving buses priority over cars recognises the bus's greater efficiency in the use of road space, by placing emphasis on maximising the throughput of people, rather than the number of vehicles.

Bus priority measures contribute to:

- Ensuring that buses run to time;
- Reducing scheduled running times, to help make buses more competitive with cars;
- Improving reliability, e.g. consistency of journey times;
- Avoiding circuitous routing in traffic management systems;
- Maintaining good bus access, e.g. to town centres; and
- Increasing the bus's modal share of the travel market.

Bus priority is most successful if it is adopted along complete route corridors and accompanied by high vehicle and operational standards and high profile marketing.

The most common form of bus priority is to give buses exclusive or priority access to a section of road. This can include the provision of bus-lanes, bus-only roads and exempting buses from banned turns. A limited degree of bus priority can also be achieved at traffic signals by allowing buses an extension or an early-call of the green phase, so that the delay they suffer is reduced.

When considering the provision of bus priority measures it is necessary to understand the current and future problems being tackled, and the impact that the bus priority measures will have. The selected improvement should be that which, in any circumstance, will maximise the throughput of people.

Because these circumstances vary by location, proposals for bus priority measures will be included in the town transport strategies.

Policy BUS 9

We will consider the provision of appropriate bus priority measures:

- Where buses are delayed by the volume of traffic on the road network, and
- The provision of bus priority maximises the throughput of people.

Where possible we will introduce such measures along complete route corridors, and in concert with other investments and promotions, to maximise their effectiveness.

Low Carbon Emission Buses

In April 2009, the Department for Transport introduced a change to the Bus Service Operators' Grant such that bus operators using Low Carbon Emission Buses will receive a higher rate of payment under the grant.

A Low Carbon Emission Bus is defined as one achieving a 30% reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions compared to the average Euro 3 diesel bus of the same total passenger capacity. A vehicle will not qualify if it achieves the reduction simply through its fuel type, unless the fuel it uses is 100% biogas.

Although Low Carbon Emission Buses use significantly less fuel, they are more expensive to operate. To address the consequent imbalance in overall costs, but help achieve carbon reduction targets, the government has offered several rounds of funding to meet the cost difference between the purchase price of a low carbon bus and its diesel equivalent.

Policy BUS 10

The County Council will work with local operators and Government (including through the Green Bus Fund) to introduce hybrid (diesel/electric) and electric buses in Northamptonshire.

Northamptonshire Arc Transit

Looking into the future, we are committed to investigating a rapid transit network for the Northamptonshire Arc, which we have termed Northamptonshire Arc Transit (NAT). This will provide next-generation services on the core urban and inter-urban routes, link the main towns and provide access to town centres and major trip generators such as hospitals, universities and colleges and business parks. This is essential to achieve a transformation and major step-change in the use of public transport and by doing so reduce the twin challenges of managing predicted traffic growth to avoid major congestion and reducing carbon emissions.

A Travelstyle analysis has been undertaken of the country to help understand the potential to increase the use of public transport and where improvements and other measures could best be targeted. This analysis shows that those groups which have the highest propensity to use public transport make up a significant proportion of the populations in Northampton, Corby, Daventry and Wellingborough. This helps to confirm that there is a potential market for an improved mass-transit network linking these towns.

However, it is imperative that NAT is economically viable. This will help to avoid the difficulties faced by some other schemes elsewhere in the county. The County Council has already commissioned work on an initial business case for NAT. This is looking at potential routes and phasing as well as a funding strategy and how the network could operate. The business case work will start to inform which technology, or mix of technologies, would work best in Northamptonshire.

Policy BUS 11

Investigate a rapid transit network for the Northamptonshire Arc that provides:

- Rapid and frequent links between existing urban and planned growth areas
- Modern high-capacity, low-emission vehicles coupled with latest technology guidance, command and control systems,
- High levels of journey time reliability, approaching metro standards
- High quality real time information when and where passengers need it
- Smart, multi-modal integrated ticketing

Coaches

Northamptonshire is served by two National Express coach services:

- Five or six journeys per day connecting Northampton with London
- Seven journeys per day connecting Northampton with Luton, Luton Airport, Heathrow Airport and Gatwick Airport

In the past, many more towns across the county have been served by express coach services, and we would welcome any express coach operators wishing to introduce additional coach services from the county's towns, particularly where they provide a journey need which is not otherwise met by public transport. We would particularly welcome any proposals to introduce coach services using the A14 corridor and connecting with the north-south rail lines en route.

Policy BUS 12

The County Council will welcome any proposals from express coach operators to introduce additional coach services in the county.

Community Transport

As more and more buses become low-floor, bus services can be used by more people with mobility problems who were not previously able to use them because, for example, they were in a wheelchair or unable to climb the steps into the bus. However, there will continue to be a small number of people who are unable to use bus services either because of the difficulty in getting to or from the bus stop, or because the bus service does not provide a link to local facilities, such as the doctor's surgery in a neighbouring village.

Because of the need to provide door-to-door transport, such community transport schemes are effectively specialised taxi services. Such services are generally operated by voluntary, non profit-making organisations, and come in all shapes and sizes, generally using minibuses or volunteer's private cars. They may service a large area or just one village, and may only provide transport for a specific purpose (such as access to hospital appointments) or for a wider variety of purposes.

While their use is likely to be restricted to people who meet eligibility requirements in terms of age or disability, such services provide an essential service to those who use them. Largely through voluntary efforts, they secured approximately 256,000 passenger journeys per annum, of whom some 20,000 are wheelchair users in 2015/6.

A number of community transport operators have expanded their services to provide a service to the whole community to fill gaps in the bus network, such services are particularly beneficial for the elderly and disabled as concessionary bus passes can be used to provide free travel at appropriate times of day.

The County Council cannot afford to fund such a community transport service across the county, however, we will seek to support new operators to launch their services, and also have a grant process which allows operators to bid for continued funding.

Policy BUS 13

Within available resources we will seek to:

- Support operators with advice and financial support to launch new community transport services.
- Provide a grant process through which operators can bid for on-going support for their schemes.

Developer-funded bus services

National and Local Planning Policy makes clear that, whenever possible, development of all kinds should take place in locations that are accessible by a variety of non-car modes, and public transport in particular. Within Northamptonshire, access to bus services represents the principal public transport mode to access employment, study, leisure and other amenities and services.

Planning policy makes clear that locating development in places already well-served by public transport is the optimum way of achieving this. National Guidance set out by the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation (Planning for Public Transport in New Development, 1999) sets a threshold of 400m walk as the recommended maximum distance from stops served by regular bus services.

However, many developments, particularly large ones, will represent extensions of existing built-up areas. In these cases in particular, it is likely additional provision, in the form of service diversions, extensions or additional frequencies, would be necessary to both ensure occupiers and visitors are served, and in many cases achieve agreed highways and carbon emissions mitigations by reducing car dependence. The modal shift policies within the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan are especially pertinent given the scale of development that remains anticipated for the County as a whole, concentrated in the large urban areas.

In line with the general principle that developers should be required to mitigate the impacts of their own proposals, the County Council will, within the constraints imposed by the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, expect developers to fund any new bus-related infrastructure required to improve access to their development, and to fund the resources required for the provision of any altered, extended or new bus services required until such a time as the anticipated revenue makes them commercially sustainable.

Please see appendix 2 – Guidelines for Bus Service Frequency in New Developments for more information.

Bus Stops

In line with CIHT standards, and accepted best practice, Northamptonshire County Council will generally require all major developments to demonstrate that bus services can be accessed at stops within a 400m (about 10 minutes) walk of any part of the development. Internal development layout and urban design should have full regard to the location of existing bus stops, and clearly signal where new stops are to be provided. Higher density development near existing or proposed bus stops is strongly recommended. However it is accepted that achieving the 400m target may not always be strictly achievable.

Where developers propose new bus stops in existing neighbourhoods, it is for the developer to consult with the local affected parties, and agree with the County Council, safe and appropriate locations for such stops.

This 400m target is generally achievable where stops are spaced between 250 and 300m apart. The Council will resist stops being more closely sited than 200m to prevent services from being unduly delayed.

New stops shall conform to the County Councils standards for bus stop infrastructure. This shall include:

- A safe, paved waiting and alighting area incorporating a raised boarder of at least 4m to facilitate disabled and pushchair step-free access to the bus
- A paved connection no less than 1.8m wide to an existing footway, or failing that to a dropped kerb crossing to a footway on the opposite carriageway
- A “Trueform” Post and flag, with integral banner timetable case
- Where appropriate and feasible, a shelter, of typical roof dimensions no less than 2m x 4m. The Council will generally require developers to seek adoption of shelters by a third party, generally the Parish Council. Alternatively a commuted sum to provide for maintenance will be required. (In either instance the developer should liaise with the appropriate local authority to determine that their requirements as to the type of shelter to be provided, in terms of minimising maintenance liability. This may include a requirement to use specific make of shelter for which they have a maintenance contract or hold parts.)

Policy BUS 14

Developers will be expected to demonstrate that the great majority of their development is within 400m reasonable and safe walking route of bus stops served by regular services to the nearest major facilities and centres. Where this is not the case, new stops and/or service diversions shall be provided by the developer. To achieve higher levels of modal shift, it is recommended that the majority of occupiers are within 250m of stops, through careful consideration of urban design and density.

Bus services

While smaller developments, if well-located on existing bus routes, might have no requirement for bus improvements, or only require the provision of additional stops, it is likely that large developments, with their own extensive internal road layout will require either existing bus services to be diverted to serve them, or new bus services to be provided, in order to ensure that the development is adequately served by bus.

As a minimum baseline, our general expectation is that new development should enjoy at least the same level of access to bus services as similar existing neighbourhoods or developments within the same town or area.

However, in line with the principles of sustainable development embodied in the National Planning Policy Framework, we would expect such proposals to seek to deliver a higher level of sustainable travel behaviour, and to achieve this, given relatively low public transport mode shares in the County, it may well be necessary to provide significantly higher levels of public transport than similar existing development. This is likely to include appropriate bus service diversions, extensions, and/or frequency enhancements to deliver a service sufficiently attractive to achieve an appropriately high mode share for bus use, especially at peak times.

Smaller developments, where located within 400m of existing regular bus services, are likely to require no action to augment bus services. However, within a corridor or locality, the cumulative effect of a number of smaller-scale developments, of up to 200 dwellings each, can be considerable, both on local highways and amenity, especially where these proposals are located some distance from existing bus services. In localities where numerous smaller-scale individual residential development proposals are emerging through Local Plans or otherwise through the development control system, and are likely to have such an impact, but where the feasibility and/or costs of delivering effective public transport improvements clearly lies beyond what is reasonable for any given single development; the County Council will evaluate, cost and secure contributions on a pooled basis, based on a written evidence base document, in line with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations.

In all proposals where Transport Assessments are required, developers shall clearly set out the number of trips expected to be generated by each mode, including by bus. Credible mode shares, when compared with the existing census-derived data for journey-to-work mode, should be set out, having regard to the level of access to high quality bus services. Where no better bus service is provided than that currently on offer to existing residents or occupiers, a significantly higher bus mode share is not credible, and will not be accepted by the County Council.

Where a developer wishes to claim a higher bus mode share than comparable existing areas, they should set out in the Transport Assessment, and where appropriate the Framework Travel Plan, the measures they propose to implement to achieve this. This may include:

- service extensions or diversions to bring occupiers closer to the service;
- enhanced frequency of service, reduced journey time (including through implementation of bus priority);
- better information, including specific measures in Travel Packs for new occupiers;
- incentivisation of bus use through marketing and tariff initiatives. The Council will typically expect all residential developments to offer each household a voucher redeemable by the local operator towards the cost of 28 days free local travel. The developer would be expected to cover only the cost of redeemed vouchers, and a small administration fee;

- In certain instances, in particular on longer inter-urban services where frequency augmentation is unrealistic, working with commercial bus operators to improve vehicle quality and/or on-bus journey experience, will also be appropriate.

The impact of these measures on bus trip generation should be estimated, and where appropriate, justified. The impacts of such initiatives beyond the development are in most cases likely to exceed the direct impact on journeys from the development itself. Developers are encouraged to incorporate such effects within their overall highway mitigation strategies as appropriate.

In order to ensure that bus services can run effectively through new developments, the road layout needs to be planned for bus accessibility. As well as ensuring that the great majority of their development is within 400 metres of a bus stop, bus routes through developments need to be as direct as possible (to reduce transit times) and suitable for use by large vehicles.

As a general principle, the Council will expect all developer-funded bus services, or augmented/diverted services serving new development, to be commercially viable when development is complete. This will include any evening or Sunday services provided. Developers are therefore strongly advised to consult the relevant commercial bus operators while they are formulating their proposals, at an early stage.

Based on the development's level of bus trip generation/modal share, developers will be expected to include in their Transport Assessment a financial model which demonstrates the viability of the new/diverted bus services during the period of development build-out, and which clearly demonstrates that these services achieve commercial viability when the development is complete.

Policy BUS 15

Developers will be expected to ensure that where a bus service is planned to run through a new development, the road layout is suitable for accommodating large vehicles.

Developers will be expected to provide funding to meet the gap between revenue and costs for new, diverted or enhanced bus services where these are necessary to ensure their development is adequately served by bus or to achieve the modal shift by bus identified within their Transport Assessment.

Within their Transport Assessment, developers will be expected to:

- Demonstrate that the proposed service is sufficient to achieve the modal share forecasts contained in their Transport Assessment
- Demonstrate that the service will become commercially viable when the development is complete.

Service diversions into new developments can easily create wider negative impacts on existing bus users and communities, through added journey circuitry and time; and by pulling services away from existing neighbourhoods. The Council recognises that commercial operators clearly wish to protect existing established revenue streams. The Council will generally resist proposals that add excessive circuitry to existing routes, including double-running in particular, and those that involve more residents being placed more than 400m away from the proposed diverted service than the new development offers.

In Appendix 2 we set out our guidance to developers as to the level of service that we would expect to be acceptable in achieving a sufficiently high bus trip share, in the light of the general principles set out above.

Good highway and development layout design can help to reduce the costs of operating bus service and increase the attractiveness of services to passengers by making the route through the development as short and direct as possible, while also ensuring that all areas are within a short walking distance of bus stops. Guidance on how this can be achieved is set out in Appendix 3.

Delivering the Strategy

The table below demonstrates how these policies contribute to the objectives of the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan and the corresponding six objectives of the Bus Strategy.

NTP Objectives	Bus Strategy Objectives	Policies
Fit for...the Future	Increasing the attractiveness of bus travel will encourage modal shift and allow the housing growth proposed in the county to be accommodated.	1, 3, 4, 6, 11, 12, 14, 15
Fit for...the Community	Consultation with the local community will help us shape a bus service that best serves the need of the people in the local area.	2, 7, 11
Fit to...Choose	Improving bus services will increase the number of choices available for people when deciding how to travel and will increase accessibility.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15
Fit for...Economic Growth	Improved bus services will help people to access jobs and the training that they need to get jobs.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 14, 15
Fit for...the Environment	Increasing the proportion of people that travel by bus rather than private car will reduce the vehicle emissions that are harmful to the environment.	1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Fit for...Best Value	We will deliver bus service and bus infrastructure improvements that represent value for money.	7, 13

Scheme Funding

Funding for the Bus Strategy could come from a number of different sources, including:

- The Integrated Transport Block (Northamptonshire Transportation Plan)
- Central government grants
- Section 106 Agreement contributions from developers
- Developer led Infrastructure delivery secured through Section 278 agreements
- Localism
- Match funding from the public sector
- New sources of grant funding from public bodies
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Partnership with commercial operators

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Appendix 1 - Summary of Policies:

Policy BUS 1

We will work with commercial bus operators to sustain and enhance their core commercial networks, with the aim of improving the frequencies of core commercial services by 2026-31.

Policy BUS 2

We will continue to support Home to School Transport and Adult and Children's Social Care Transport.

Through our Network Northamptonshire Total Transport initiative, we will explore opportunities to make services available to wider sections of the community.

Policy BUS 3

Working with operators, we will consider expansion of multi-operator ticketing schemes through:

- Further development of the Northampton Buzz Card;
- The introduction of schemes in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough;
- A county-wide ticket

Policy BUS 4

We will support any proposals from operators to use smartcards for further ticketing products, and will consider wider applications for smartcard technology giving access to a wider range of services.

Policy BUS 5

Access to real time information will be improved to make public transport easy and simple to use and more attractive. This will include 'live' display boards at stops, text-services and a simple and easy to use website which allows users to make well-informed decisions about whether, when and how to travel.

Policy BUS 6

An interactive multi-modal journey planning service will be introduced, using local network information, which enables users to identify options for end-to-end journeys and to select the option that best meets their travel needs.

Policy BUS 7

We will continue to concentrate our resources for bus stop improvements on the most heavily-used routes and stops, but also seek to provide each village in the county with a bus service that has at least one marked stop (normally in each direction) with a timetable case and raised boarding facilities.

Policy BUS 8

Where new or improved bus interchanges are provided, we will expect them to be provided with a range of facilities appropriate to their location.

Policy BUS 9

We will consider the provision of appropriate bus priority measures:

- Where buses are delayed by the volume of traffic on the road network, and
- The provision of bus priority maximises the throughput of people.

Where possible we will introduce such measures along complete route corridors, and in concert with other investments and promotions, to maximise their effectiveness.

Policy BUS 10

The County Council will work with local operators and Government (including through the Green Bus Fund) to introduce hybrid (diesel/electric) and electric buses in Northamptonshire.

Policy BUS 11

Investigate a rapid transit network for the Northamptonshire Arc that provides:

- Rapid and frequent links between existing urban and planned growth areas
- Modern high-capacity, low-emission vehicles coupled with latest technology guidance, command and control systems,
- High levels of journey time reliability, approaching metro standards
- High quality real time information when and where passengers need it
- Smart, multi-modal integrated ticketing

Policy BUS 12

The County Council will welcome any proposals from express coach operators to introduce additional coach services in the county.

Policy BUS 13

Within available resources we will seek to:

- Support operators with advice and financial support to launch new community transport services.
- Provide a grant process through which operators can bid for on-going support for their schemes.

Policy BUS 14

Developers will be expected to demonstrate that the great majority of their development is within 400m reasonable and safe walking route of bus stops served by regular services to the nearest major facilities and centres. Where this is not the case, new stops and/or service diversions shall be provided by the developer. To achieve higher levels of modal shift, it is recommended that the majority of occupiers are within 250m of stops, through careful consideration of urban design and density.

Policy BUS 15

Developers will be expected to ensure that where a bus service is planned to run through a new development, the road layout is suitable for accommodating large vehicles.

Developers will be expected to provide funding to meet the gap between revenue and costs for new, diverted or enhanced bus services where these are necessary to ensure their development is adequately served by bus or to achieve the modal shift by bus identified within their Transport Assessment.

Within their Transport Assessment, developers will be expected to:

- Demonstrate that the proposed service is sufficient to achieve the modal share forecasts contained in their Transport Assessment
- Demonstrate that the service will become commercially viable when the development is complete.

Appendix 2 – Guidelines for Bus Service Frequency in New Developments

Residential and Residential-led Mixed-Use Developments

Where it is necessary to improve the timetable of a bus service to serve new developments, this can generally be achieved in one or more of the following ways:

- By enhancing an existing service, either in frequency or period of operation
- By the diversion or extension of an existing service.
- By the provision of a new service.

New services

The provision of a totally new service will normally be the most expensive way of serving a new development. New services linking a development to the nearest town centre will not generally be appropriate for new development of less than 1500 dwellings, unless there is significant unmet demand from existing developed areas which the service is able to meet.

New services linking housing to an out-of-centre industrial estate may be an appropriate and effective way of increasing bus usage. However, such a service is only likely to become commercially viable where it is able to serve an area significantly larger than a single new housing development.

Diverted or extended services

Diversion or extension of an existing service is likely to be the most effective way of serving smaller developments, and can also be an appropriate way to serve larger developments in their early stages. How this can be achieved will be dependent on individual circumstances.

The most effective initial frequency for a diverted or extended service is likely to be the frequency already in operation, as the alternative may be a timetable which is unattractive to existing passengers.

Bus operators are unlikely support diversions of services which extend the journey times of a large number of existing passengers while attracting minimal additional patronage, as such circumstances are likely to lead to a reduction in overall usage.

Frequencies

In general, for urban settlements of larger than 10,000 population, we do not consider a daytime frequency of less than 30 minutes to be sufficiently attractive to generate meaningful patronage, or to be sufficiently marketable in the round to be commercially sustainable.

For smaller market towns and rural settlements, an hourly daytime frequency is considered a good sustainable frequency, especially if the service is a direct inter-urban route, with high-quality

vehicles. Typically most villages of over 2,000 population already sustain such a service, and also offer a range of other local amenities.

Generally, in the largest towns, including Northampton and Corby, commercial services of up to every 10 minutes are offered. The growth towns of Kettering, Wellingborough offer urban services up to every 20 minutes. Typically, a frequency enhancement of one bus per hour above the existing most frequent local service is likely to be the maximum which can be commercially sustained in any of these towns, and any significantly higher frequency would not be supported unless it was clearly demonstrated that it would be required to achieve the levels of modal shift set out in the Transport Assessment, and could be commercially sustained in the long-term. In no case will a developer be expected to fund the enhancement of a town service to a frequency greater than every 10 minutes, as such a frequency is only justified where demand cannot be accommodated at a lower frequency.

Where an existing regular service can be re-branded and upgraded with high-specification vehicles, in conjunction with the commercial operator, developers will be expected to contribute no more than 30% of the capital cost of such initiatives, which should be agreed in advance with the operator, and directly secured with them. Such measures can cost effectively secure overall patronage uplifts in excess of 16% and offer a lower-cost means of achieving higher bus mode share than service diversion or frequency enhancement.

While large developments in particular are being built out, this clearly takes place over many years. During this period, while it will usually be necessary to provide a higher level of service than can be sustained commercially, it is accepted that given the costs of providing bus service resources, a phased approach to service build-up should be taken to contain the costs of providing the service. The following table sets out triggers for phased delivery of service increments, where developers are funding either a new service, or augmenting an existing one:

Development triggers for bus services frequency

Developer funded frequency	Intended commercial frequency			
	30 minutes	20 minutes	15 minutes	10 minutes or higher
Hourly	First occupation	First occupation	First occupation	First occupation
30 minutes	67% occupied	50% occupied	40% occupied	25% occupied
20 minutes		80% occupied	60% occupied	40% occupied
15 minutes			80% occupied	55% occupied
10 minutes				80% occupied

Evening and Sunday services

The provision of evening and Sunday services encourages overall demand for bus travel, even in normal Monday – Saturday daytime operating hours. However, because demand during these times is reduced and operating costs are increased, the population required to support a commercially viable service in the long-term is increased.

The potential viability of new evening and Sunday services are likely to be increased if the services is also able to serve an existing corridor without a bus service at such times.

Because of demand generated by Sunday trading, current experience suggests that in general terms Sunday services are more likely to be commercially viable than Monday to Saturday evening services. However, much will depend on the nature of attractors for both evening and Sunday travel in the area under consideration.

An hourly evening or Sunday bus service frequency is likely to be the minimum required to generate sufficient patronage for long-term viability in larger urban areas.

In general terms, experience within Northamptonshire suggests that a Sunday service will not become commercially viable where the Monday to Saturday daytime frequency is less than every 30 minutes, and that a Monday to Saturday evening service will not become commercially viable where the daytime frequency is less than every 15 minutes.

Commercial and Employment developments

The Council expects that all employment developments are provided with a high quality bus service from first occupation, both to reduce low-occupancy car travel, peak time highways impacts, and overall car dependency and their associated emissions. They also permit access to employment opportunities for a wide range of people, and are essential to social inclusion.

The general principles for service provision identified above for residential development also applies to employment and commercial developments. However, the varying types and densities of such development make it much more difficult to offer general advice.

Northamptonshire continues to exhibit significant demand for large-scale, large footprint employment development. These typically are on peripheral sites, located nearer the strategic road network than residential neighbourhoods. They also typically involve shift operations. These movements are site-specific and hard to predict. Therefore, in line with the 20% mode-shift target, but having regard to a minimum 10 passengers needed to make a journey reasonably viable, a threshold of 50 employees starting or finishing work within a 15-minute window will be that which requires the funding of a journey to the nearest town centre, where an existing journey is not available within 30 minutes before the start of shift, or within 30 minutes of the end of shift. Experience has shown that such services have proven to become highly popular.

For other uses, including medical facilities and sui generis proposals which do not fall within a specific use class such as cinemas and garden centres, the specific location and nature of the development will mean that specific bespoke solutions are developed. Early dialogue with the County Council is especially recommended for such applications.

Appendix 3 – Guidance on Designing Development for Bus Services

Good development design is essential to facilitate the effective and efficient operation of bus services, while also having regard to wider good urban design practice. Bus circulation through developments should be as direct as possible, with minimal use of hard traffic calming features.

Roads to be used by bus services shall be a minimum of 6.5m wide, and avoid any priority displacement. 90 degree staggers, and convoluted horizontal alignments will not be acceptable. If deterrence of general through traffic is desirable, the incorporation of bus gates (“tank trap” design to Northamptonshire County Council specification) offers a possible solution. On-street parking, and where appropriate, central pedestrian refuges, can achieve necessary traffic calming along bus routes.

Development design should assume 12.8m x 2.55m full-size vehicles when designing for bus circulation.

Developers are expected to ensure development phasing and traffic management affords sufficiently early bus access before building occupation of the relevant phase. Developers will be expected to ensure bus services are permitted access to un-adopted roads both during and after construction, which shall be completed to an appropriate standard, and made available at an appropriate agreed construction stage. Conditions on planning consent may be sought to achieve this.

It may be necessary to incorporate temporary or permanent bus turning facilities within larger developments especially when design and/or phasing of construction operations does not allow circulation through the development. Such facilities should not require the bus to make a reversing manoeuvre.

Reducing walking distance to bus stops is essential, while also putting the bus service in a highly prominent place. It is good practice to site stops at nodes where major pedestrian routes and side roads cross the bus route. In all developments, higher-density development or users, (such as offices and hotels on employment developments), should be located as near as possible to bus stops, with direct, inter-visible pedestrian links where necessary. Ideally, bus stops should be closer to main entrances of major facilities than parking spaces. Footprints of large buildings should address the bus route in such a way that bus stops are nearer the main entrances than car parking, wherever possible, and in no case more than 400m from each main entrance.

In mixed use developments, or large urban extensions, local centres should be directly served by the bus route, with prominent shelters and nearby associated cycle parking, to promote conjoined journeys and sustainable multi-modal interchange. The incorporation of designated kiss-and-ride and park-and-ride spaces at such stops is encouraged.

The location of bus stops can create amenity issues, especially in higher-density residential developments. Typically, these issues can be avoided where stops are sited within or adjoining public open space areas, or in public squares. Where this is not possible, flank walls can offer a solution. Bus stops directly outside key frontages will be resisted. Stop locations should discourage blocking by car parking. The provision of bus lay-bys offers one potential solution, as does dedicated on-street parking bays especially in higher-density development (over 40 dwellings per hectare).

More detailed guidance is also available, please see:

Buses in Urban Developments, Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation 2018
Bus Services & New Residential Developments, Stagecoach UK Bus 2017

Northamptonshire Bus Strategy

For more information please contact
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