

Cabinet

14 September 2023

Update on the Warwickshire Bus Service Improvement Plan

Recommendations

That Cabinet

- 1) Agrees the list of prioritised capital and revenue measures (Appendices A and B) taken from the Warwickshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) supported by the Warwickshire County Council Cross Party Working Group;
- 2) Approves the programme of revenue-funded measures (Appendix D) aligned to the Warwickshire BSIP being brought forward for delivery through the £2.072m BSIP Plus revenue grant allocation for 2023-24 awarded to the County Council by the Department for Transport, including adding the measures onto the Warwickshire Enhanced Partnership Scheme; and
- 3) Agrees to a further report being taken to Cabinet seeking approval of a proposed programme of revenue-funded measures aligned to the Warwickshire BSIP to be funded by the £2.072m BSIP Plus revenue grant allocation to the County Council for 2024-25, including adding the measures onto the Warwickshire Enhanced Partnership Scheme.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to summarise the progress made by Warwickshire Enhanced Partnership (EP) in implementing the Warwickshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) since publication in October 2021. The Warwickshire BSIP was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT), as a bid for the allocation of a £152.824m contribution (comprising a combination of capital and revenue funding) towards the cost of delivering a 3-year programme of bus improvements between 2022-23 to 2024-25 at a total cost of £216.450m, which aimed to meet the bus patronage growth and increased bus modal share aspirations set in the National Bus Strategy.
- 1.2 In partnership with bus operators, over 70 Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) submitted a BSIP to the DfT for a share of the £3bn funding pot set aside by the Government to boost bus services and level up transport outside London. However, less than half of the LTAs received funding. The County Council and other neighbouring Shire Authorities were unsuccessful in the first round

of BSIP funding.

Notwithstanding, the Council's Cross Party Member Working Group, formed after a Motion (Bus Services in Warwickshire) put forward to Full Council on 1 July 2021 to support officers and bus operators in drawing up a fully costed Warwickshire BSIP, led the undertaking of a sifting exercise of the measures in the Warwickshire BSIP measures to determine a prioritised shortlist of those measures that offer the best value for money based on an appraisal of strategic, economic, financial, commercial and management criteria. The highest scoring capital measures are detailed in Table 1 at Appendix A of this report and include implementing bus stop improvements on key corridors, developing new or improving interchanges and delivering bus priority across a wide range of locations. The highest scoring revenue measures are detailed in Table 2 at Appendix B of this report and include maintaining the existing subsidised bus network, introducing a mobility credit scheme, introducing a multi-operator day ticket to integrate with rail, piloting a low fare scheme, introducing a jobseeker scheme, and integrating bus services and timetables.

- 1.3 The measures set out in Appendices A and B were prioritised by the because in unison they deliver the transformational objectives set out in the Warwickshire BSIP as follows:
 - A fully integrated bus services on the Warwickshire Bus Network;
 - The availability of simple multi-bus operator tickets, multi-modal tickets and 'tap on / tap off' fare payment, like London;
 - Bus priority measures on the local highway network;
 - High quality information for all passengers;
 - Better turn-up and go (demand responsive transport) service frequencies that keep running into the evening and weekends;
 - Growing bus patronage;
 - Financial support for buses;
 - Other factors that affect bus use, seeking a change of thinking regarding car parking in town centres to encourage modal shift onto buses; and
 - Supporting the Decarbonisation agenda of the County Council and Government and help UK reach net-zero.
- 1.4 The BSIP measures in the 3-year programme of bus improvements not prioritised were the roll-out of enforcements cameras at bus stops, financial support for the fitting of audio-visual next stop equipment on buses, delivery of a new bus service on the Nuneaton – Magna Park – Lutterworth or Rugby corridor and development of further Park and Ride sites.
- 1.5 The combined list of prioritised capital and revenue measures set out in Appendices A and B are taken from the 3-year programme in the Warwickshire BSIP were entirely dependent on the County Council obtaining the £152.824m funding contribution being awarded by the DfT to enable implementation. The combined list of measures is not affordable in terms of the use of County Council resources to secure delivery either now or in the future. These priorities are subject to further rounds of Government funding being available and allocated to the County Council.

- 1.6 Cabinet authorised the Executive Director for Communities to make the Warwickshire EP Plan and Scheme at its meeting on 10 March 2022. In December 2022, the Warwickshire EP Scheme was made between the County Council and bus operators in line with Section 138G of the Transport Act 2000 and Section 9 of the Bus Services Act 2017. The Warwickshire EP Scheme comprises a programme of ‘business-as-usual’ measures included in the Warwickshire BSIP not dependent on receiving any BSIP funding from the DfT. An update on progress is provided in Table 3 at Appendix C of this report.
- 1.7 In May 2023, the Government announced the extension of funding support for bus services in England (outside London) up to 2025 in a package totalling £500m comprising the following funding streams:
- £160m BSIP Plus funding aimed at LTAs who were unsuccessful in the first round of BSIP funding and set for the purpose of supporting, protecting and enhancing bus services, creation of new routes and the introduction of new fares initiatives and infrastructure – the DfT has relaxed its rules applied to the first round of BSIP funding and allowed the fund to be directed at supporting existing bus services, a total of 63 LTA’s will benefit from a combined total of £80million in the first round of BSIP Plus allocations;
 - £140m to bus operators through a new mechanism that will sit alongside the current Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG); and
 - £200m to fund continuation of the pilot £2 Bus Fare Cap Scheme until October 2023, and subsequently, the cap will increase to £2.50 between November 2023 - November 2024, at which point the Government will review the effectiveness of the pilot scheme and future bus fares, most bus operators on the Warwickshire EP have agreed to continuing participating in the scheme are minded that although the £2 Bus Fare Cap Scheme has been beneficial, it is debatable whether modal shift has been created as the majority of people taking advantage of the scheme are existing passengers.
- 1.8 It is important to note that the BSIP Plus funding supersedes the Bus Recovery Grant until 2025, with the subsequent funding settlement to be arranged in the next parliament. Previously, the DfT distributed Bus Recovery Grant monies to bus operators for the purpose of supporting commercial bus services in England, i.e., countering the ongoing detrimental impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their revenue from reduced patronage. However, the DfT has made it clear that the BSIP Plus funding is classified as LTA money and is focused on enabling LTAs to make local decisions on protecting bus services and increasing LTAs control of their local bus network. Consequently, this has reduced the sum of supportive funding bus operators are to receive from central Government.
- 1.9 The DfT has confirmed that the County Council will receive £2.072m BSIP Plus revenue funding grant in 2023-24 and 2024/25, a total of £4.144m. After engagement with the Council’s Cross Party Working Group and Warwickshire EP a provisional agreement was reached regarding the proposed measures to

be funded by the BSIP Plus funding allocation for 2023-24 subject to approval from Cabinet. The funding will help the County Council to achieve the following prioritised BSIP measures set out in Appendix B:

- Funding to maintain existing subsidised bus network; and
- Improvements to subsidised bus network.

1.10 The proposed use of a proportion of the BSIP Plus funding to support existing bus services in Warwickshire is based on a priority to maintain access to employment sites, education (e.g., schools, colleges and universities), hospitals, key residential areas, medical centres, town centres, leisure amenities and public transport interchanges and religious places of worship. This would ensure continued connectivity for communities across the county, in acknowledgement of the pressure on commercial bus services in the current challenging environment where bus patronage is only 85% of pre-Covid levels.

2. Financial Implications

2.1 The combined list of prioritised capital and revenue measures set out in Appendices A and B taken from the 3-year programme in the Warwickshire BSIP are dependent on further rounds of Government funding being available to secure implementation.

2.2 The DfT has confirmed that the BSIP Plus funding allocation for Warwickshire County Council over a 2-year period is £4.144million split confirmed in the table below:

Warwickshire BSIP Plus Revenue Funding Allocation from the DfT	
Financial Year	Sum
2023-24	£2,072,248
2024-25	£2,072,248
Total	£4,144,496

2.3 The funding must be spent in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding between the DfT and the County Council, in which, the DfT stipulate that:

- The BSIP Plus funding must be spent on bus measures and cannot be used for measures that primarily benefit other modes of transport, with secondary benefits for buses (e.g., road maintenance); and
- The grant funding to be spent within a reasonable timeframe and outputs delivered within 12 months of funding receipt.

2.4 In line with the Council's Levelling Up approach towards building stronger communities, encouraging economic growth and improve transport connectivity, it is proposed that a proportion of the BSIP Plus funding be used to create more self-sustaining bus services by providing a more attractive offer for communities. Current patronage levels on urban and peri-urban bus

services could be increased leading to subsidised services becoming commercial due to patronage and revenue growth, and therefore, reducing pressure on our bus service support revenue budget and providing Best Value. In a partnership approach, relevant bus operators must agree to deliver commitments aimed at growing the market, e.g., fare initiatives, multi-bus operator ticketing and marketing activities. Council officers will continue to seek to amalgamate home-to-school transport with conventional bus services to create efficiencies, where possible.

2.5 If a proportion of the BSIP Plus funding is not directed at supporting existing bus services, then the impact on the County Council could be bus operators decide to:

- Reduce service level frequencies on commercial services;
- Withdraw services and/or journeys at certain times of day;
- Withdraw sections of bus routes or a complete bus service; and
- Reduce inter-urban services connecting rural settlements and small towns to large urban areas.

Any of the scenarios listed above would place immense pressure on the Council's bus service support revenue budget.

2.6 The current proposal is for the BSIP Plus revenue funding for 2024-25 to be directed towards funding:

- The expansion of demand responsive transport provision to more areas across the county;
- Continued support of existing bus services;
- Further improvements to existing services;
- Production and distribution of Warwickshire smartcards as part of the Pilot Warwickshire Multi-Bus Operator Smartcard Scheme;
- Procurement of a mapping platform supporting officers and bus operators planning, coordinating and promoting temporary bus route alterations during roadworks; and
- Printing a QR Code at every bus stop in Warwickshire enabling swift access to bus information via an app.

The proposal will help the County Council to achieve the following prioritised BSIP measures set out in Appendix B:

- Funding to maintain existing subsidised bus network;
- Improvements to subsidised bus network;
- Provision of further Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services; and
- Standardisation of Ticketing Products.

2.7 A further report will be taken to Cabinet seeking approval of the confirmed programme of revenue-funded measures aligned to the Warwickshire BSIP being brought forward for delivery through the forthcoming £2.072m BSIP Plus revenue grant allocation for 2024-25, including added them onto the Warwickshire EP Scheme.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 The risk of reduced service frequency levels on commercial bus services would take the Council below the aspirational Warwickshire bus network provision threshold promoted in the Warwickshire BSIP. This details the aims for service frequencies and hours of operation along different types of bus route and locations across the county and is presented in Table 5 at Appendix E of this report.
- 3.2 Reductions to service frequency levels on commercial bus services would severely compromise the Warwickshire bus network leading to a further noticeable reduction in bus patronage, and furthermore, modal shift away from bus travel onto private car. This would lead to additional pressure on local highway network, e.g., increased levels of congestion, which would have air quality and other environmental implications including compromising the carbon neutrality aspirations of the Council - who declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019.
- 3.3 Implementation of the Warwickshire EP Scheme will contribute towards increasing patronage on bus services to pre-pandemic levels, which will support the County Council achieving its carbon-neutral objective, due to modal shift from the car onto public transport presenting environmental benefits, e.g., improved air quality.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 Progression of the Coventry All Electric Bus City Scheme is at an advanced stage with approximately 50 electric specification buses procured by National Express Coventry in operation including on cross-boundary bus services serving Leamington, Nuneaton, Bedworth and Kenilworth. It is hoped that Stagecoach Midlands will be operating electric buses on their cross-boundary routes in 2024-25, and thus, all five Borough / District areas in Warwickshire would be served by the scheme. This is further evidence of the buses to the economy and local communities.

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 5.1 If Cabinet approve the recommendations in this report, the key milestones will be as follows:
- Commence the bus marketing campaign (including production of a Bus Information Guide) in the Warwickshire EP Scheme – September 2023; and
 - Commence implementation of the proposed measures to be funded by the BSIP Plus funding allocation for completion by the end of March 2024, with any subsequent procurement requirements discussed with the Procurement Team prior to commencement;
 - Update the formalised framework guiding decision making on where bus service revenue support is directed, in line with the refreshed Warwickshire Local Transport Plan and Warwickshire BSIP by end of

March 2024; and

- Report to Cabinet regarding programme of revenue-funded measures aligned to the Warwickshire BSIP to be funded via £2.072m BSIP Plus revenue grant allocation for 2024-25 – Spring / Summer 2024.

Appendices

1. Appendix A: Table 1 - Prioritised Shortlist of Capital Measures taken from the Warwickshire BSIP after Completion of the Sifting Appraisal Process
2. Appendix B: Table 2 - Prioritised Shortlist of Revenue Measures taken from the Warwickshire BSIP after Completion of the Sifting Appraisal Process
3. Appendix C: Table 3 - Update on Warwickshire EP Scheme Comprising 'Business as Usual' Measures not Dependent on BSIP Funding
4. Appendix D: Table 4 - Proposed Use of the BSIP Plus (£2.072million) Revenue Funding Allocation to Warwickshire County Council for 2023-24
5. Appendix E: Table 5 - Warwickshire BSIP Aspiration - Bus Network Provision Threshold

Background Papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): N/A This is a countywide report.

Other members: Warwickshire County Council Cross Party Working Group:

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Cllr Sarah Boad (Leamington North Electoral Division)
Cllr Jonathan Chilvers (Leamington Brunswick Electoral Division)
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Cllr Jan Matecki (Budbrooke & Bishop's Tachbrook)
Cllr Tim Sinclair (Stratford North Electoral Division)
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Members of Chair and Spokespersons of Communities Overview and Scrutiny
Committee: Councillors Jeff Clarke, Jonathan Chilvers, Sarah Feeney, and Jenny
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Appendix A

Table 1: Prioritised Shortlist of Capital Measures taken from the Warwickshire BSIP after Completion of the Sifting Appraisal Process		
No	Prioritised BSIP Measure	Summary
1	<p>Bus Corridor Infrastructure Improvements on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuneaton, Atherstone, Polesworth Corridor; and • North Stratford, Town Centre, Southern Stratford, B4632 Corridor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of works to be fixed to accommodate by way of pinpointing locations on each corridor where enhancement work would be beneficial in liaison with the relevant bus operators, i.e., a targeted approach rather than focusing on improving the entire bus corridor; • Scope of works to include bus priority measures, real time information, bus stop accessibility improvements, alleviating pinch-points on the highway and improved paper-based information at key bus stops; • Projected Benefits-to-Cost Ratio of 3.5 (High) for Nuneaton – Polesworth Scheme; and • Projected Benefits-to-Cost Ratio of 4.4 (Very High) for North Stratford – B4632 Corridor Scheme.
2	<p>Launch Pilot Warwickshire Multi-Bus Operator Smartcard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially involve extending the SWIFT GO back-office system managed by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) to include additional 'Warwickshire' products; • Possibly include provision of ticket machine infrastructure, which will enable bus operators who use different payment and settlement systems to accept and clear all transactions made via the Warwickshire smartcard; and • Supported by the WCC Cross Party Working Group and Warwickshire EP.
3	<p>Bus stop improvements on bus corridors below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuneaton, Bedworth, Kenilworth, Leamington, Warwick, Stratford-upon-Avon • Rugby, A428 Corridor <p>Plus, selected individual locations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme will focus on delivering bus priority measures, real time information, bus stop accessibility improvements, bus shelters and tackling pinch-points in the highway to support the operation of the Coventry All Electric Bus City Scheme; • Real time information provision at other urban areas, market towns, hub locations and key bus stops (focal points) in rural settlements; and • Appraisal Score – 22/36

4	Rugby A426 Leicester Road Superstop (opposite Elliott's Field Retail Park)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design of scheme is already complete courtesy of £0.079million Section 106 developer-funding. Further capital funding sought to cover unexpected land acquisition and service diversion costs; and • Supported by the WCC Cross Party Working Group and Warwickshire EP.
5	Nuneaton Town Centre Bus Accessibility Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue funding secured for scheme development costs through BSIP Plus funding for 2023-24 awarded to the County Council, which will be the first stage of scheme progression in accordance with a phased scheme delivery approach, funding permitting; and • Appraisal Score for each proposed Scheme – 23/36.
6	Nuneaton Bus Bridge	
7	Rugby Bus Interchange	

Appendix B

Table 2: Prioritised Shortlist of Revenue Measures taken from the Warwickshire BSIP after Completion of the Sifting Appraisal Process		
No	Prioritised BSIP Measure	Overall RAG Rating Score (Maximum 12)
1	Funding to maintain existing subsidised bus network	9
2	Maintaining pre-Covid levels of bus subsidy	8
3	Improving frequency and evening/Sunday services	8
4	Improvements to subsidised bus network	8
5	Pilot a reduced fares promotion	8
6	Standardisation of Ticketing Products (will also require a projected capital investment of £0.690million)	8
7	Young person's ticket incentives	7
8	Integrating bus services and timetables to ensure multi-modal connections	
9	Jobseekers Scheme	7
10	Provision of further Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services	6
11	Multi-Bus Operator Day Ticket (Integration with Rail) – will include a capital cost for set-up to be identified during scheme development stage	6
12	Mobility Credit Scheme	6
	<u>Develop the network, improving links and frequency in a phased corridor approach:</u>	
13	Improved bus links to Birmingham International Airport / NEC	6
14	Nuneaton - Magna Park - Lutterworth - Rugby	6
15	Banbury - Gaydon - Southam - Coventry	6
16	Stratford-upon-Avon - Wellesbourne - Gaydon - Southam – Daventry	6
17	Atherstone or Polesworth - Coleshill - Birmingham International	6

Appendix C

Table 3: Update on Warwickshire EP Scheme Comprising 'Business as Usual' Measures not Dependent on BSIP Funding		
No	Measure	Update Summary
1	Launch of a Pilot Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This pilot scheme is co-funded by a Rural Mobility Fund contribution from the DfT and commenced operation in May 2022; and Patronage of the service continues to increase, and recently for the first time, exceeded comparative monthly patronage on the conventional bus service it replaced.
2	Define minimum standards for information	Minimum standards for bus information have been agreed by the Warwickshire EP and are ratified in the EP Scheme.
3	Develop a marketing campaign including production of a Bus Information Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A brand name and logo for the Warwickshire EP is in the process of being developed for agreement between the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning, Warwickshire EP Board and WCC Corporate Board; and The finalised branding will be included in a forthcoming marketing campaign aimed at boosting bus patronage across the county.
4	Define vehicle quality standards	Vehicle quality standards have been agreed by the Warwickshire EP and are ratified in the EP Scheme.
5	Parking policy and enforcement	WCC officers are in the process of procuring a Consultant to undertake a wider review of parking provision in Leamington Town Centre, i.e., parking availability and pricing, to explore how changes to parking provision could support bus services.
6	Develop guidelines for large new developments	A Warwickshire Design Guide covering large developments (including bus stop design and access considerations) was endorsed by Cabinet in January 2022.
7	Maintenance of network, including a further Warwickshire Bus Network Review	A Warwickshire Bus Network Review undertaken annually in liaison with the Warwickshire EP and WCC Cross Party Member Working Group.
8	Review of S106 contributions	WCC officers have undertaken a review of Section 106 developer contribution monies received to support bus services and deliver supporting on-street bus infrastructure.
9	Feasibility studies for supportive policies, i.e., Workplace Parking Levy, Red Routes and Road User Charging	Feasibility studies to be undertaken as part of the wider refreshment of the Warwickshire Local Transport Plan, which will ensure integration with other key transport policies.

10	Launch of a Warwickshire Bus Passenger Charter	A Warwickshire Bus Passenger Charter has been agreed by the Warwickshire EP and is ratified in the EP Scheme.
11	Pilot Bus Priority Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A consultant is identifying the mechanism enabling delivery of 'extended green light' bus priority at 4 no. traffic signal-controlled junctions in Leamington and Bedworth; and• The Consultant will establish a delivery plan based on rolling out the bus priority measures to other key traffic signal-controlled junctions across Warwickshire, funding permitting.

Appendix D

Table 4: Proposed Use of the BSIP Plus (£2.072million) Revenue Funding Allocation to Warwickshire County Council for 2023-24			
No	Proposed Measure	Projected Allocation	Percentage of Total Grant
1	<p><u>Mitigation against High Priority Reductions to Bus Service Provision:</u> Give parts of the Warwickshire bus network more support and to protect bus services to ensure they can be sustained.</p>	£1.031million	49.8%
2	<p><u>Bus Service Enhancements:</u> Bus service improvements requiring some kickstart funding based on a long-term approach investing to sustain parts of the Warwickshire bus network, with a view of making selected tendered bus services fully commercial as an outcome of patronage and revenue growth.</p> <p>Note: The funding to be discharged on the strict condition that relevant bus operators agree to deliver commitments placed on them to grow the market, e.g., fare initiatives, multi-bus operator ticketing, joint marketing, set targets and entering a formal agreement with WCC.</p>	£0.741million	35.8%
3	<p><u>Marketing Communications:</u> Fund a marketing campaign directly linked to the improvements (such as bus service enhancements) delivered through the BSIP Plus funding.</p>	£0.150million	7.2%
4	<p><u>IV. Contribution towards Development of a Programme of Prioritised Measures taken from Warwickshire BSIP</u> Development of proposals focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuneaton Town Centre Bus Accessibility Improvements. • Nuneaton Bus Bridge; and • Rugby Bus Interchange. 	£0.150million	7.2%
Total Funding Sum		£2.072,248	100%

Appendix E

Table 5: Warwickshire BSIP Aspiration - Bus Network Provision Threshold

	Monday to Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Core Networks Urban and Peri-urban	20 minutes between 0530-0700	20 minutes between 0530 to 0900	20 minutes between 0800 to 1800
	10 minutes between 0700-1830	10 minutes between 0900 to 1600	30 minutes between 1800 to 2100
	20 minutes between 1830-2300	20 minutes between 1600 to 2300	
Core Network Interurban & Suburban	30 minutes between 0530 to 0700	30 minutes between 0530 to 0900	30 minutes between 0800 to 2100
	15 minutes between 0700 to 1830	15 minutes between 0900 to 1600	
	30 minutes between 1830 to 2330	30 minutes between 1600 to 2300	
Local Network & Rural Core network	60 minutes between 0600 to 0700	60 minutes between 0600 to 0900	60 minutes between 0800 to 1800
	30 minutes between 0700 to 1830	30 minutes between 0900 to 1600	
	60 minutes between 1830 to 2300	60 minutes between 1600 to 2300	
Supporting Network	We will ensure that the supported and part supported services continue to develop under the same principles of the core and local networks for access to employment, education and other activities, and to become a viable alternative to the private car.		
Demand Responsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● - U bus ● – IndieGo ● - Community Transport <p>We will consider how each individual service can be brought together to complement each other, and the fixed route bus network, reduce the administrative overheads, and make more efficient use of the available resource. Additionally, we will consider how this resource can be used to provide a more flexible and sustainable solution to socially necessary supporting services, including rural areas away from main corridors, rather than traditional fixed route services.</p>		
Integration	The bus network will be enhanced to ensure that bus services are timed to connect with each other, with a focus on meeting the specific times in the early morning and evening, and where services are operating at wide headways. Where practicable bus services will be arranged to provide multi-modal interchange.		