

Notes of West Berkshire Enhanced Partnership Forum

Thursday 14 September 2023 Forum No. 5

Present were representatives of:

- Bus Operators (Go Ahead, Reading Buses, Stagecoach, West Berkshire Council).
- West Berkshire Council (Network Management, Transport Services).
- West Berkshire Council Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel.
- Other parties (Volunteer Centre West Berkshire).

Apologies were received from:

One West Berkshire Council representative and a representative from West Berkshire Learning Disability Partnership Board.

The Service Lead for Highways and Transport Innovation from West Berkshire Council chaired the meeting.

Notes from Forum No. 4 in May 2023 were agreed.

Matters arising from previous Forum, which are not covered in the Agenda:

- Changes to EP on service frequencies and bus announcements. These changes will be made along with changes as a result of the BSIP+ funding. **ACTION: WBC**
- Bus charter – to be available on Council and bus operator websites. **COMPLETED**
- GWR Community bid was unsuccessful as they were heavily oversubscribed. **COMPLETED**

Funding:

- Noted that first tranche of BSIP+ funding (£239k) should be received by the end of September. The Project Adjustment Request has been submitted. **ACTION: DfT**
- It will be used to ensure continuity of existing supported bus services (still awaiting confirmation of Council BSOG funding from DfT).
- Remaining funds will support enhancements to:
 - The Link (frequency, Sundays) if also supported by Hampshire.
 - Newbury town services (evenings and/or Sundays).
 - Additional DRT.
 - Maintaining BB3 service if required following implementation of BP1.

ACTION: All

Targets:

- Journey times data concentrated on specific BSIP and comparable corridors. To be identified and data provided to transport@westberks.gov.uk **ACTION: Ops**

BSIP Capital Schemes:

- BP1. Pangbourne. Currently gathering information. Full consultation to follow. **ACTION: WBC**
 - BP3. Robin Hood. Journey-time impacts being modelled. Traffic light priority for buses proposed, with works planned for 2024. **ACTION: WBC**
 - BP4. Bath Road, Calcot. Feasibility study commissioned. Most likely focus will be traffic light priority to M4 junction. **ACTION: WBC**
 - BP5. Congestion Hotspots. Phase 1 of implementing / renewing bus stop clearways in South Newbury is now in progress. Phase 2 will be circulated to operators shortly. **ACTION: WBC**
- It was noted that large bus operators no longer require Kassel Kerbs, so future schemes may not include them (and may be able to remove them). **ACTION: WBC**
- Operators to review congestion hotspot list as not updated for a while. **ACTION: Ops**

Bus Services:

- BS1. Downlands DRT. Project delayed due to data-protection issues which should be resolved imminently. Launch still expected in 2023. **ACTION: WBC**

BS2. Pangbourne. Will follow completion of BP1.

BS3. Harwell. X34 service commenced in July 2023. Initial positive feedback; ongoing monitoring to continue.

COMPLETED

BS4. Newbury / Thatcham evening service. Commenced 8 September with promising patronage despite comms being delayed until following week.

COMPLETED

BS5. Mortimer Sunday service. Commenced 10 September.

COMPLETED

FT1. Fares/Ticketing:

1. £2 Fare Cap. Patronage appears to have increased, but it is most effective for longer-distance journeys. Season/multi-journey tickets no longer offer great value so some concern raised as to whether this impacts on boarding times.
2. Early Bird. Operators to consider extension into Eastern area. If not possible then other options could be considered. **ACTION: Ops**
3. Liberal Democrat manifesto pledge: Local Ticketing Schemes linking discounted Bus/Train Travel. Unclear how it would work. **ACTION: WBC**
4. Multi-operator ticketing scheme: with Council Legal Services for comment. **ACTION: WBC**

Other issues:

- Bus Users Survey 2023. Survey just closed with over 1100 responses. Analysis will be included in BSIP update. **ACTION: WBC**
- Supported bus services network tender. Tendering is in progress and hopefully the result can be announced at the next forum. **ACTION: WBC**
- Promotions. Free bus travel is again offered for World Car Free Day (Friday 22 September). Council also considering options for December – free travel on Saturdays / low flat fare rate throughout month. **ACTION: WBC/Ops**
- ZEBRA 2. Announced on 8 September, aimed at rural areas, with bids to be made by mid-December. Agreed that WBC would work with Reading Buses on a bid. It is not appropriate for Go Ahead and Stagecoach to be included due to peripheral nature of services. **ACTION: WBC/RB**
- BSIP Update. DfT have now removed the need for an annual update, however a light-touch update will be produced. **ACTION: WBC**
- School transport. Operators to consider if they have capacity to ease current school transport coach resource issues. **ACTION: WBC/Ops**
- Health service. Noted that Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & Berkshire West (BOB) alliance are looking at resource from the voluntary and community health sector to help with hospital transport.
- Stockcross. Noted that works to install a cycleway from Stockcross to the A4 commence shortly.

Next Forum scheduled for 13.30 on Thursday 29 February 2024 at Shaw House, Church Road, Newbury, RG14 2DR.

Abbreviations:

BSIP Bus Services Improvement Plan

BSOG Bus Services Operators Grant

DfT Department for Transport

DRT Demand Responsive Transport

EP Enhanced Partnership

GWR Great Western Railway

Ops All Operators

RB Reading Buses

WBC West Berkshire Council

ZEBRA Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas