

Notes of West Berkshire Enhanced Partnership Forum

Thursday 29 February 2024 Forum No. 6

Present were representatives of:

- Bus Operators (Reading Buses, Stagecoach, Go-Ahead, and West Berkshire Council).
- West Berkshire Council (Network Management, Transport Services).

Apologies were received from:

- West Berkshire Council Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel.
- A representative from West Berkshire Learning Disability Partnership Board.
- A representative from Thames Travel.

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

Notes from Forum No. 5 in September 2023 were agreed.

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

- Free Bus Travel – Three Saturdays around Christmas 2023. WBC requested operators to share any data **ACTION: Ops**
- WBC await ZEBRA 2 bid decision; Decision will be available in March 2023. **ACTION: WBC**
- School Transport – No specific coach tenders issued. No more planned until next academic year.

Document & Funding:

- Received BSIP+ funding from DfT in September 2023.
- BSIP document updated with light touch completed in October 2023. Included Bus Survey 2023 analysis.
- EP Plan & Scheme
 - Council updated and re-published the EP Plan/Scheme Version 3 in January 2024 upon request of DfT
- Council Budget 2024/2025
 - Happening tonight and its open meeting available on YouTube (29th Feb 2024)
 - Proposal in reduction of Community Transport
 - Changes in Capital Projects (5-6%)
 - £25k allocated to clean road signs.
- BSIP 2024 Update
 - LA's to submit updated BSIP to DfT by 12 June 2024. **ACTION: WBC**

Targets:

- Looking at journey time data for schemes where bus priority schemes identified:
 - E.g. Robinhood Roundabout and A4 Bath Road Calcot
- Information gathered from BODS and operators.

Scheme Progress

- BP1. Approval not granted by Council's Corporate Board to progress. Considering allocating this funding to Capital Projects (e.g. Bus shelters/Bus stop infrastructure) subject to PAR.
- BS2. Pangbourne Transport – Considering change scope of on-demand bus service to incorporate current 41/44 bus routes. No longer serve Pangbourne & Upper Basildon.
- BP3. Robin Hood. Unlikely scheme will complete before March 2025. Look at Traffic Signal Priority, and possibly to buy equipment prior to implementation **ACTION: WBC**
- Operators' views & suggestions** – Oxfordshire tried smart traffic lights options in few services and identified 10s improvement in latency. This has been tested with Ticketer machine (v7/v9) which is 4G technology. However, suggested to test with 5G technology.

- BP4. Bath Road, Calcot. Feasibility study commissioned. Most likely focus will be traffic light priority to M4 junction. Schedule to finalise in Spring 2024 **ACTION: WBC**
- BP5. Congestion Hotspots. Phase 1 completed. Phase 2 being prepared **ACTION: WBC**

Services:

- BS1. Downlands DRT. Launched on 15 January 2024. Identified some minor technology issues which are being looked into to achieve greater efficiencies. Community Engagement – involving school pupils for naming the vehicle through a colouring competition **ACTION: WBC**

FT1. Fares/Ticketing:

1. £2 Fare Cap. Patronage appears to have increased, but it is most effective for longer-distance journeys. Boarding time reduced by Tap off/on, by approx. 30%. **ACTION: Ops**
2. Early Bird. Operators to consider extension into Eastern area. If not possible then other options could be considered. **ACTION: WBC**
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**

New Proposals

Bus Stops and Shelters

- Implement package of improvements to bus stops and shelters. Includes improvements for stops, shelters and lighting facilities. **ACTION: WBC**
- Programme of works being drawn up.
- Looking to secure agreements with Parish Councils which would.
 - Provide initial up-front installation costs.
 - Provide long term maintenance agreements for period of time.
 - Agreement to take on long-term ownership.
 - Agreement being sought for this to progress and for submission of PAR to DfT

Link Service

- Proposal to enhance service
 - Later evening service Monday to Saturday
 - Hourly Sunday service.
 - 2-year pilot.
- Funded via BSIP+ (Hampshire and West Berkshire funding).
- Agreement sought and received for implementation. **ACTION: WBC/Stagecoach**

41/44 On-demand bus service

- Change scope of on-demand bus service (BS2) to incorporate current 41/44 bus routes.
- No longer serve Pangbourne, Upper Basildon.
- Looking at details of zone.
- Agreement sought and received for this change, subject to PAR. **ACTION: WBC**

Other Issues

Network Tender:

- Reading Buses awarded contract from September 2024 for bus services originating in Newbury.

Other supported services

- Contract for 143 services ends in September 2024

Next Forum scheduled for 13.30 on Thursday 23 May 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

PAR Project Adjustment Request

RB Reading Buses

WBC West Berkshire Council

ZEBRA Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas