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# NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL TARGET PROGRESS: OCTOBER 2025

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 West Berkshire's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) identifies several targets which are reported against on a regular basis. Progress against those targets is detailed in this report.
- 1.2 The report also provides an overview of the BSIP and Bus Grant funded projects (as of October 2025) and gives a summary of the results from the 2025 West Berkshire Bus Services survey.

## 2. Funding overview

- 2.1 In 2022, the [Enhanced Partnership](#) between the Council and the bus operators was successful in being awarded £2.6m from the Department for Transport (DfT) and in May 2023 the Council was awarded an additional £239,039 for both 2023/24 and 2024/25 as part of the [BSIP+ scheme](#).
- 2.2 The funding allocations were released, and the Partnership has been using the monies to improve local public bus services in West Berkshire. In December 2024 the Department announced that the deadline for spending monies was extended to **31 March 2026**.
- 2.3 The Council also received the following [bus funding allocations](#) for 2025/26: BSIP Capital £672,548; BSIP Revenue £762,211, Capacity & Capability Grant £63,000 and Local Authority Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG) of £137,099. To meet the funding eligibility criteria the Council submitted a delivery plan to the DfT which has been published on the [Council's website](#).
- 2.4 For more information on targets, and proposals that may lead to improvements, please refer to the West Berkshire Bus Service' Improvements Plans (BSIP) available on the [Council's website](#).

## 3. Journey time

- 3.1 A method of calculating an overall target for journey time was considered by the EP Forum in October 2022, however, having collated extensive datasets it was considered and agreed at the May 2023 EP Forum that we may be better placed to focus on bus corridors in the district specified for priority measures. This data will be used to inform future actions to improve reliability and journey speeds.
- 3.2 The Council has been working with operators on journey time data for the following corridors where bus priority schemes are being considered. Data has also been gathered from BODS (Bus Open Data Service):
  - A4 Bath Road in Calcot – between the junction with the M4 and the Reading borough boundary.
  - Robinhood roundabout in Newbury Town Centre.
- 3.3 The corridors above are those where we will be installing signal priority for buses. Comparison will be made with comparable corridors where bus priority schemes are not being considered once the works are complete.

3.4 We have been given bus grant funding to look at bus priority measures at the location outlined above. As of October 2025, we have been working with suppliers to fit bus signal priority at these locations and expect this to be installed by March 2026.

#### 4. Reliability/Punctuality

4.1 We are monitoring reliability and punctuality closely. It is evident that this was affected as people returned to normal life following the covid pandemic.

4.2 Essential roadworks across the district have also contributed to a decrease in reliability levels. Punctuality data is recorded quarterly.

4.3 Reliability dropped in 2023/24 due to flooding and a series of utility works on major routes and this has dropped further in 2024/25 which continues to be a concern. This was discussed with the Partnership and at a Local Authority level to look at alleviation measures.

4.4 Major road works the spring/summer of 2025 have had an impact on the reliability of local bus services and we are aware that roadworks are planned on a major through road in the South Newbury area during the first half of 2026 which will have a measurable impact on Newbury-based bus services.

4.5 Operators have been reviewing timetables to improve reliability and punctuality, and the Council have delivered on the four different phases of congestion hotspot (clearways) works to assist with reliability across the district.

Reliability	Start (%)	Overall (%)	Eastern Area Overall (%)
Actuals 2018/19	89.1%	85.4%	Not recorded
Actuals 2019/20	88.8%	83.8%	
Actuals 2021/22	94.0%	89.1%	88.3%
Actuals 2022/23	91.5%	84.9%	86.2%
Actuals 2023/24	88.3%	83.51%	86.01%
Actuals 2024/25	85.36%	81.84%	84.92%
Actuals Apr-Sept 2025	89.01%	85.44%	88.87%
Target 2024/25	90%	85%	86%
Target 2029/30	92%	87%	88%

**Table 1: Reliability/Punctuality on West Berkshire Bus Routes**

**Note:** The Eastern Area is composed of Purley on Thames, Tilehurst, Calcot and Theale.

#### 5. Passenger growth

5.1 To boost passenger numbers, we have launched a Connect Group Day Ticket (unlimited travel for up to 4 people), an Early Bird Concessionary Fare Ticket, operators have taken part in the National £2 fare cap scheme in 2023-2024 and £3 fare cap scheme in 2025.

- 5.2 We have also provided free bus travel on selected days since 2021 which included World Car Free Day 2024 and three Saturdays in the run up to Christmas 2024. It is also the intention to offer free bus travel on selected Saturdays in the run up to Christmas 2025.
- 5.3 The target set for passenger growth by the partnership for 2024/25 for the whole West Berkshire has been met which is positive, however the target for the Eastern Area overall has not, so the Partnership will have discussions about how the situation can be improved.

Passenger Numbers	Whole of WBC	Eastern Area
Actuals 2018/19	2,342,715	1,020,320
Actuals 2019/20	2,222,530	968,025
Actuals 2021/22	1,555,987	702,548
Actuals 2022/23	1,987,043	816,537
Actuals 2023/24	2,168,208	958,358
Actuals 2024/25	2,306,674	992,446
Actuals Apr-Sept 2025	1,122,347	488,014
Target 2024/25	2,300,000	1,000,000
Target 2029/30	2,500,000	1,050,000

**Table 2: Passenger numbers on West Berkshire Bus Routes**

- 5.4 For passenger growth purposes the Eastern Area is composed of Purley on Thames, Tilehurst, Calcot and Theale. The data is estimated until the end of Q1 2022/23, with actual boarding details captured after this.

## 6. Customer satisfaction

- 6.1 From 2022, the Council's annual survey captures a satisfaction rating, which can identify the satisfaction of existing users as well as that for all respondents.
- 6.2 In 2023 we also asked about satisfaction with the last journey made following a suggestion via the Enhanced Partnership Forum, as it was felt this would give a more accurate comparison with the Transport Focus surveys undertaken in other parts of the country. For a further breakdown of satisfaction please refer to the 2023 BSIP document section 5.8 for more detail.
- 6.3 Disappointingly, overall satisfaction had dropped for 23/24. Satisfaction was still higher than 2021/22 for value in relation to time on bus and information. Satisfaction with the waiting environment continues to drop, and the Enhanced Partnership have been using some of the allocated funding, in partnership with our local parish and town councils, to address this moving forward.
- 6.4 Our annual bus user survey ran again over the summer of 2024 through to 29 September 2024, to capture satisfaction data for 2023/24. In the [summer of 2025](#) we ran a survey asking about satisfaction with local bus services. The overall satisfaction is reported in Table 3; a more detailed overview of the results can be found section 9 of this report.

Customer Satisfaction	Actuals 2018/19	Actuals 2019/20	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/23	Actuals 2023/24	Actuals 2024/25	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30
Council survey (bus users)	No survey		65.9%	59.7% (71.1%)	50% (70.1%)	61.4% (73.1%)	67.9%	69.9%
Council survey (all respondents)	No survey		46.8%	43.6% (70.6%)	43% (70%)	48.7% (71.4%)	Not set	
NHT survey (all respondents)	60%	n/a	59%	56%	n/a	n/a	62%	64%

**Table 3: Satisfaction ratings for West Berkshire Bus Services**

**Note:** The figures in brackets relate to last journey made satisfaction. 2025 score for bus users for those who use once a month or more.

## 7. Vehicle emissions

7.1 Very few buses in West Berkshire are older than Euro V emission standards. These older vehicles tend to be used more sparingly.

Vehicle Emissions	Actuals 2018/19	Actuals 2019/20	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/2023	Actuals 2023/2024	Actuals 2024/25	Target for 2024/25	Target for 2029/30
At least Euro V	Not recorded			96%	95%	100%	All vehicles (100%)	
At least Euro VI				49%	77%	84%		All vehicles (100%)

**Table 4: Vehicle Emissions on West Berkshire Bus Services**

7.2 West Berkshire Council have purchased several electric minibuses which will be used on [West Berkshire Community Connect services](#).

7.3 Reading Buses and [Newbury & District](#) have introduced new vehicles into their fleet which are being used on public bus routes across the district.

## 8. Bus Grant improvement programme: 2025/26

8.1 The Council has been given funding from the DfT (Department for Transport) to use on improving public bus services within the district. There are two different streams of funding: Capital and Revenue.

8.2 In this section we outline the latest position on improvements funded by the BSIP/Bus Grant funding since 2021 (October 2025 position summarised) these are the projects outlined in the [25-26 delivery plan](#).

Type	Project	Detail	Progress
Capital	<b>BF2. Upgrade vehicles to zero emissions</b>	Solutions to ensure that vehicles are all zero emission by specified date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procurement underway for zero emission council minibuses for use on public bus services.</li> </ul>

Capital	<b>BF3. Carbon Neutral Facilities</b>	Charging point facilities for zero emission vehicles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active planning for site in Thatcham underway.</li> <li>• Investigating options for Council's Fleet depot.</li> </ul>
Capital	<b>BP1. Pangbourne Bus Turning Circle</b>	Provide turning facility for buses to improve public bus links to the villages and act as a transport hub.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WBC Operations Board support not given.</li> <li>• Alternative project approval obtained from DfT.</li> <li>• <b>Project complete no funding required.</b></li> </ul>
Capital	<b>BP2. Atherton Road, Hungerford</b>	Cut back vegetation to allow buses to pass more freely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Project complete with BSIP funding not required.</b></li> </ul>
Capital	<b>BP3. Robinhood Roundabout, Newbury</b>	Install bus priority at junction to improve bus reliability, part of wider junction remodelling works.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proceeding with traffic signal priority, procurement complete.</li> <li>• Work underway with suppliers to install before March 2026.</li> </ul>
Capital	<b>BP4. Bath Road, Calcot</b>	Install bus priority on busy bus corridor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feasibility study commissioned, has now been completed.</li> <li>• Proceeding with traffic signal priority, procurement complete.</li> <li>• Work underway with suppliers to install before March 2026.</li> </ul>
Capital	<b>BP5. Congestion Hotspots</b>	Schemes to improve issues with congestion for bus services across the district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 phases of bus stop clearway markings completed/near complete by October 2025.</li> </ul>
Capital	<b>BP7. Mortimer Station Bus Turning Facility</b>	To undertake study into feasibility for providing bus turning facility to improve bus links.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feasibility Study completed.</li> <li>• Study outcomes being considered by local authority.</li> </ul>
Revenue	<b>BS1. Downlands Transport</b>	Launch on-demand bus service replacing 5, 5a, 5c services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West Berkshire Community Connect launched in January 2024; vehicle purchased for service.</li> <li>• Ongoing publicity campaigns to build patronage. <b>Project complete.</b></li> </ul>
Revenue	<b>BS2. Thatcham Connect</b>	Launch on-demand bus service in East Thatcham replacing 41/44 service as priority over Pangbourne.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thatcham Connect launched in November 2024.</li> <li>• Electric minibus delivered for service.</li> <li>• <b>Project complete, monies need to be spent by March-26.</b></li> </ul>
Revenue	<b>BS3. Newbury to Harwell</b>	Provide a bus service between Newbury and Harwell Campus to access jobs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• X34 service launched in July 2023.</li> <li>• Developed service from September 2024 to serve Donnington estate.</li> <li>• <b>Project complete by March 2025.</b></li> </ul>

Capital/Revenue	<b>BS6. Support service for Council supported services</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing support for supported bus network.</li> </ul>
Revenue	<b>BS11. Evening/Sunday service, Newbury &amp; Thatcham</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to provide revenue support for later evening service between Newbury and Thatcham.</li> </ul>
Revenue	<b>BS12. Introduction of evening/weekend services – rural areas</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued support of 32 service.</li> <li>• Looking at feasibility of X34 Sunday service.</li> </ul>
Revenue	<b>BS14. Expanded DRT services</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review on-going of on-demand transport offer.</li> <li>• Future services subject to outcome from Spending Review.</li> </ul>
Revenue	<b>BS17. 1a/1c service support</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued support of North/South Thatcham bus service.</li> </ul>
Revenue	<b>FS1. Free/reduced fare bus travel</b>	Free Travel days and opportunities to reduce costs for bus travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Free Bus Travel Christmas 2025.</li> <li>• Looking at Multi-Operator Ticketing Scheme for operators.</li> </ul>
Capital	<b>FS6. Multi-Operator Scheme</b>	Set-up and running costs for scheme including TOTO for supported services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TOTO (Tap on Tap Off) launched on Newbury &amp; District and West Berkshire Council operated services.</li> </ul>
Capital/Revenue	<b>II1. Improved marketing of bus services and other transport modes including tourist services.</b>	Marketing Campaigns to encourage bus use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements to bus operator website.</li> <li>• Travel guide published.</li> <li>• Publicity for 43 service.</li> </ul>
Capital	<b>OI1. Passenger Waiting Facilities</b>	To install new/improved passenger waiting facility across district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New bus shelters installed during summer of 2025 including those with Green Roofs.</li> </ul>
Capital	<b>OI2. Real Time Passenger Information Schemes</b>	RTPI Screens and upfront maintenance costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement options be considered.</li> <li>• Review of sites underway.</li> </ul>
Capital	<b>OI5. Bus Gate Review</b>	Improve effectiveness of bus gates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expect to install a new enforcement system for the bus gate at Kennet Heath by early 2026.</li> </ul>
Capital	<b>OI6. Bus Stop Requests</b>	Bus stop requests for existing and new services and associated infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New bus stops for X24/X34 installed.</li> <li>• Bus stop audit planned.</li> </ul>
Revenue	<b>SS2. Independent Travel Training</b>	Deliver an Independent Travel Training Programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning underway for this programme.</li> </ul>

**Table 5: October 2025 Bus Grant Delivery Plan projects**

8.3 Bus Grant and Capacity support funding has also been provided for officer support from Capital and Revenue budgets until the end of March 2027. For reporting purposes to the DfT the project is called ST1. Capacity Support.

8.4 *For information:* Some of projects outlined in Table 5 need to be complete by March 2026 and some of the projects reference numbers have changed for 25/26 Bus Grant funding purposes.

## 9. Overview of 2025 Bus Service Survey results

9.1 The [West Berkshire Bus Service Survey 2025](#) ran on the Council's website in the summer of 2025.

9.2 The survey's main purpose was to ask respondents how satisfied they were with public bus services in the district. The survey took approx. 5 minutes to complete and closed to respondents on 31 August 2025. We received 700 validated survey responses which was a positive outcome as we did less publicity than we have done for prior surveys.

9.3 We have undertaken annual bus surveys since 2021 as part of the bus strategy work; the surveys have formed an important part of the bus strategy work and has helped formed the programme of improvements. The satisfaction rating for passenger waiting facilities was a cause for concern, we were able to use this as evidence to ask the DfT (Department for Transport) to agree to use grant funding to improve the passenger offer.

9.4 The overall satisfaction and last journey ratings have been reported in Table 3 for 2024-25 in section 6. Broadly satisfaction in public bus services has for the most part increased since the 2024 survey which is positive and maybe a reflection on the series of measures that have introduced on local bus services in the last few years. The survey asked for an overall satisfaction rating (see Figure 1) and also for rating for the last journey (see Figure 2).

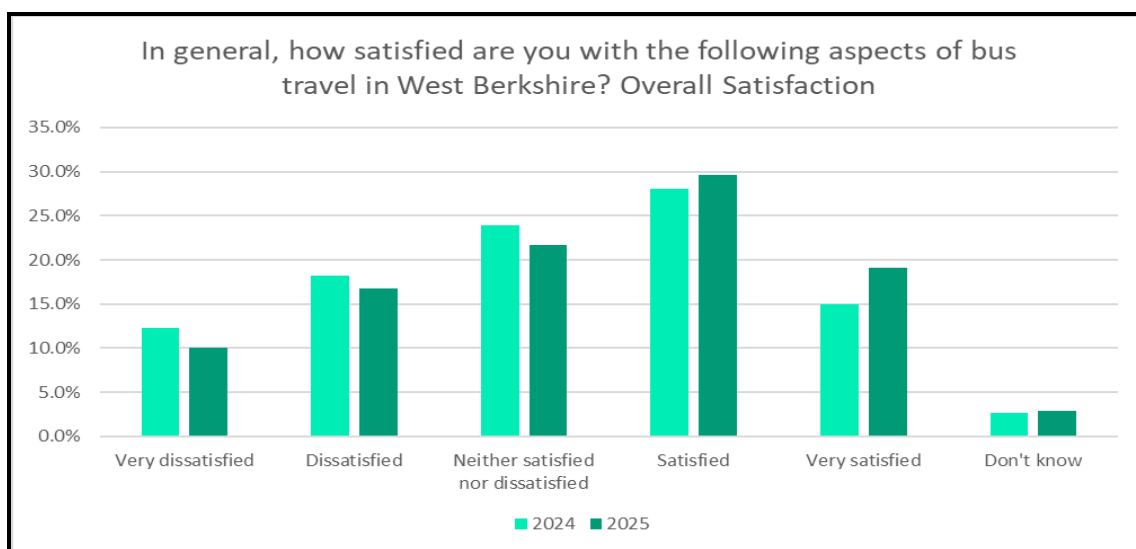
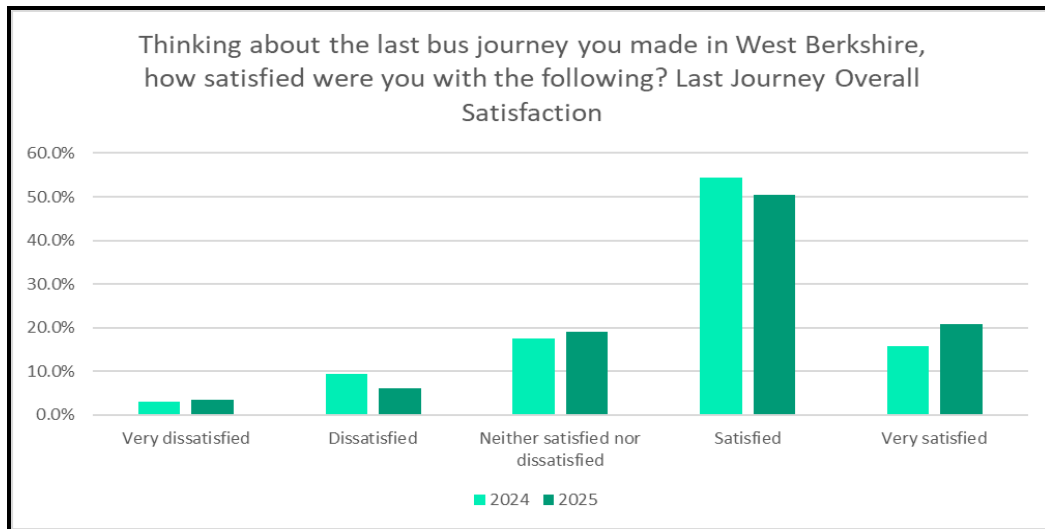
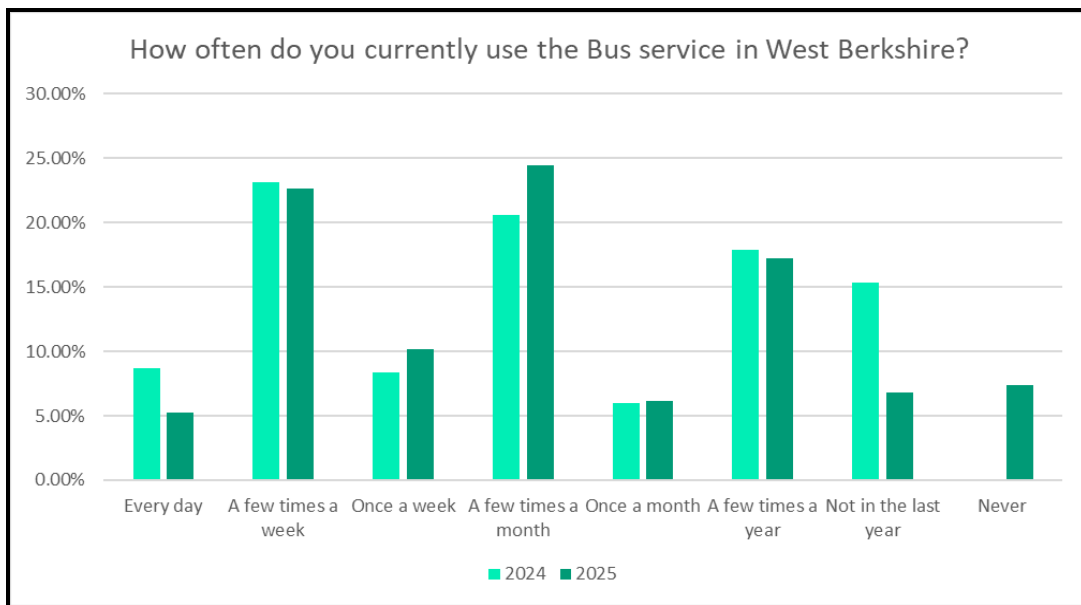


Figure 1: Overall satisfaction in local bus services



**Figure 2: Last journey satisfaction with local bus services**

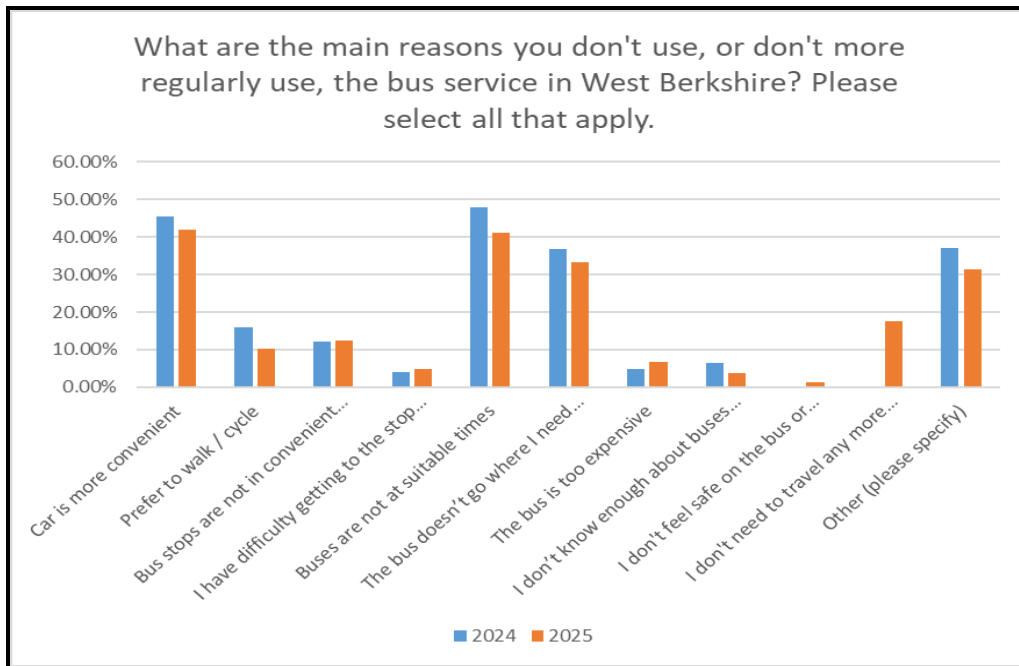
9.5 In comparison to the 2024 survey a higher percentage of respondents stated they had used the bus within the past three months - 78.4% in 2025 compared to 77.6% in 2024. This increase may be due to less non bus users having responded to the survey, compared to 2024.



**Figure 3: How often respondents use local public bus services**

9.6 We also asked respondents to give feedback on reasons as to why they don't use or (don't regularly use) buses. The most common reasons were that the Car is more convenient (41.95%) and buses are not a suitable time (42.27%) however this is decrease from those that selected this in 2024.

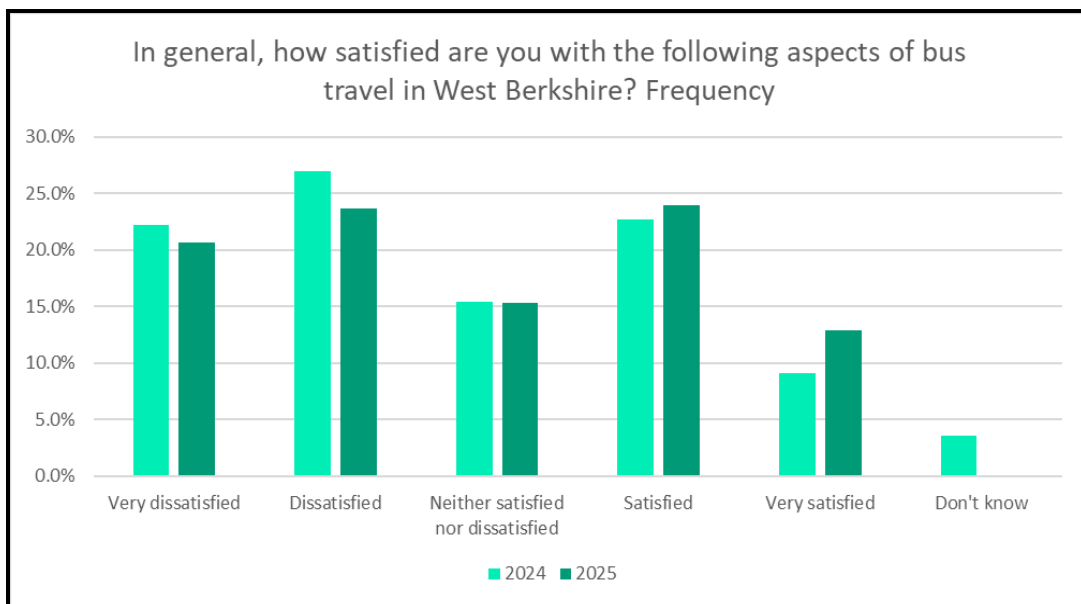
9.7 There has been a been an increase in those that have selected the bus is too expensive which could be due to the increase in the National Single Fare Cap from £2 to £3 which on many local bus services in January 2025.



**Figure 4: Reasons respondents don't use or more regularly use the bus**

9.8 As well as asking respondents to rate their overall satisfaction with bus services (and for their last journey) the survey also asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with value for money, punctuality, frequency of services, length of time on the bus, information about bus services and passenger waiting environments. Responses in the survey show that satisfaction level for value for money has decreased which is likely due to the change in the National Fare Cap Scheme.

9.9 Figure 5 shows the breakdown of satisfaction rates for Frequency (which is a concern of bus users), it shows that there has been an improvement in the ratings from 2024 to 2025.

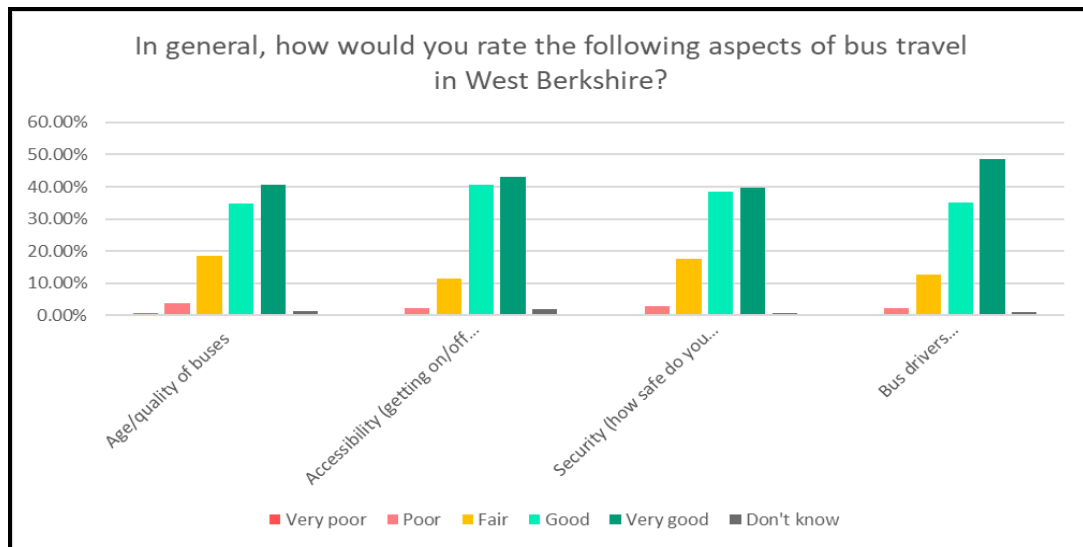


**Figure 5: Satisfaction in Frequency of services**

9.10 In the 2025 survey we introduced a question asking respondents to rate, from very good to poor, the following aspects of the bus services: Age/Quality of buses,

Accessibility (getting on/off bus), Security (how safe do you feel on the bus?) and Bus drivers (friendliness/professionalism).

9.11 The results showed that majority of respondents answered good or very good and made up over 75% of all responses. The lowest rated being Age/Quality of buses and the highest rated being Accessibility with 83.73% of respondents rating this good or very good, with bus drivers only slightly behind with 83.72%.



**Figure 6: Breakdown of satisfaction for various aspects of travel**

9.12 Initial results have been shared with local bus operators at the September 2025 Enhanced Partnership Forum.