

Shropshire Bus Service Improvement Plan

Annual review – October 2022

Introduction

It is a year since Shropshire’s Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) prospectus was produced in response to the Government’s National Bus Strategy: Bus Back Better. It set out a plan **to transform Shropshire’s bus network with new routes, improved levels of service, better information and more affordable fares, such that public transport could become a legitimate choice for travel in a rural county.**

The BSIP prospectus formed a bid to the Department for Transport (DfT) for funding. Unfortunately, the bid was not successful in attracting any funding. However, Shropshire Council and its partners have looked to continue making progress in supporting and developing bus services.

Overview of 2021-22

Highlights:

- Enhanced Partnership Group has continued to meet monthly (and now bi-monthly)
- EP Plan and Scheme were formulated, consulted upon and made
- Bus passenger charter introduced
- Investigation of feasibility / options for DRT (Rural Connect)

Challenges:

- Patronage recovery post-pandemic
- Driver shortage
- Some further service reductions

Further detail on progress/challenges over the last year. Levelling up funding bid for elements of original BSIP prospectus, including Shrewsbury Connect and Rural Connect (DRT).

Multi-operator ticketing to be investigated.

Performance and monitoring

List KPIs/targets and update performance against these.

KPIs	Actual				Target	Measure
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2024/25	
Journey time	We will be reviewing targets & KPIs in our BSIP refresh. The network has been very unstable, and we will use the refresh to decide on a suitable methodology to measure this and establish a current baseline.					
Reliability	83% (in 2017/18)	n/a	Contacted DfT and awaiting response.	Not released as yet	90%	DfT bus statistics table Bus0902 non-frequent local bus services running on time by local authority
Passenger numbers	4.4m	4.3m	1.2m	Not released as yet	5.1m	DfT bus statistics table Bus0109 passenger journeys on local bus services by local authority

Average passenger satisfaction			Passenger Survey conducted July 2021	No planned surveys		
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Delivery

The following table lists the measures proposed in the BSIP prospectus and provides an update on whether any progress has been made, or what the next steps are.

Project/action	Included in EPS (Y/N)	Progress to date	Next steps
Driver recruitment and operator resilience	N	Operators have reported how difficult this has been over the past year and resilience has become an issue	Continue to seek funding opportunities for operators. Actively looking to recruit and train drivers across the board.
Passenger Charter	Y	Reviewed and agreed by the EP	Annual review to take place February 2023
Improved services – frequencies, operating hours, Sundays	N	Not able to progress without immediate funding	Continue to seek funding opportunities.
More affordable fares – consistency	N	Not able to progress without immediate funding	Continue to seek funding opportunities.
Real time information	N	Not able to progress without immediate funding	Continue to seek funding opportunities.
Traffic signal priority	N	Not able to progress without immediate funding	Continue to seek funding opportunities.
Staff capacity and capability	N	Funding secured to create a public transport within the local authority	Continually review requirements and as new schemes are launched.
Single website for public transport information	Y	Discussions with potential designers for this are ongoing	Tender and award to be released early 2023
Bus stop improvement programme	N	Not able to progress without immediate funding	Continue to seek funding opportunities.
Zero emission buses	N	Not able to progress without immediate funding	An Electric vehicle is planned for the new DRT service.
Multi-operator ticketing	N	Not able to progress without immediate funding	Continue to seek operator approval for new multi-ticketing scheme

Greater integration with rail network	N	Discussions ongoing with colleagues in the rail sector	Seeking to link services where possible and within current funding parameters
Rural Connect (DRT)	N	Designs for Pilot Zone, South Shrewsbury are complete and scheduled for mid-2023	Launch Pilot Zone 1 in mid 2023. Also look to launch Zone 2 – East Shrewsbury in late 2023 and potential Zone 3 & 4 in South and North Shropshire.
Shrewsbury Connect	N	Review of current Shrewsbury Park and Ride contract	Look to implement specific elements of the scheme into the contract over the next 2 years.
West Shrewsbury Connect	N	Not able to progress without immediate funding	Looking at an alternative DRT operating zone
Other elements included in the EP Scheme			
Roadworks coordination and minimising disruption for buses	Y	Discussions and proposals sent to operators EP group for agreement	Attain agreement for members to implement proposals
Planning and development – ensuring bus services taken into account	Y	Continued discussions surrounding any planning or developments	Continued.
External funding bids for public transport development	Y	LUF2 – Transport bid submitted incorporating elements of Shropshire’s BSIP	Continue to submit bids that meet the ambition.
Post-pandemic bus network (subject to DfT funding)	Y	Continued development and consideration of a DRT model in pipeline	Launch of DRT pilot proposal and consider areas that would benefit.

BSIP updates

Following our meeting with colleagues from DfT we will refresh our BSIP prospectus in line with evolving ambition for DRT across the county. Our Levelling Up Fund; Round 2 Transport Bid gave us an opportunity to focus solely on the Shropshire Connect brand such as Shrewsbury Connect and Rural Connect (DRT) and these will be the forefront of our ambitions.

The Rural Connect (DRT) pilot is ready to launch in the summer of 2023, and we plan to use this period to understand how to expand the scheme to areas that would greatly benefit. Any funding that could be used to enhance the project would accelerate this process and provide immediate growth in areas not currently served by the existing network.

Any further funding would need to be used to increase patronage growth in rural areas with connectivity and higher service levels are required to encourage users to return to the network. These will all require on-going and additional revenue funding.