



Department
for Transport

National Bus Strategy: Bus Service Improvement Plans

Guidance to local authorities and bus
operators

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1. Introduction

Why Bus Service Improvement Plans?

1. The National Bus Strategy ('the Strategy') sets out an ambitious vision to dramatically improve bus services in England outside London through greater local leadership, to reverse the recent shift in journeys away from public transport and encourage passengers back to bus. Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and local bus operators must work at pace with local communities to plan and deliver a fully integrated service with simple, multi-modal tickets, more bus priority measures, the same high-quality information for all passengers in more places, and better turn-up-and-go frequencies that keep running into the evenings and at weekends.
2. The quality of bus services before the pandemic varied greatly across the country and the Government is determined that great bus services should be available to everyone, everywhere. The Bus Services Act 2017 provides the tools needed to deliver this and the Strategy commits £3 billion of new funding to support this. The pandemic has resulted in stronger and closer cooperation between LTAs and their local bus operators and we need to capitalise on this good work, so all the ingredients needed to deliver long overdue improvements to bus services are already in place.
3. As the Strategy explains, there can be no return to a situation where services are planned on a purely commercial basis with little or no engagement with, or support from, LTAs. Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) are how LTAs, working closely with their local bus operators and local communities, address this – by setting out a vision for delivering the step-change in bus services that is required by the Strategy. A BSIP is the essential first step as it will be the extent of the ambition, delivered through an Enhanced Partnership or franchising, that will be critical when Government decides how new funding is allocated.

What will central government do to support the aims and objectives in the BSIP?

4. The Government has provided over £1 billion of financial support to buses during the pandemic so far, to allow the sector to provide the essential services needed for key workers to get to work. The Strategy makes it clear that Government has a continuing role to play in promoting the use of buses, to attract lapsed, existing and new users and reverse the decades of decline in passenger numbers. We also recognise that the pandemic has had a severe impact on passenger demand – in part resulting from Government messages not to use public transport.
5. As the Strategy sets out, to address this, we will support an industry-led ‘Back to Bus’ campaign later this year to promote the reformed network, improve public confidence and address misconceptions, encouraging people to use the bus.

Purpose of this guidance and who should read it

6. This guidance is intended to help each LTA and their local bus operators develop an ambitious BSIP to improve local bus services and access new funding. In particular, it will help LTAs understand what is required.
7. Individual LTAs must take responsibility for how their BSIPs will be produced and delivered. This is not a step-by-step guide on how they and their bus operators develop the BSIP. That will depend on a range of local circumstances and available data that LTAs and their bus operators are best placed to understand and take decisions on. Its purpose is to build on what the Strategy sets out about the objectives for buses and provides advice on using BSIPs to deliver the outcomes required by the Strategy itself. It also explains how LTAs and their bus operators can build on the relationships developed during the pandemic to forge the even closer working arrangements that are required to deliver an ambitious and successful BSIP.

Timescales and context

8. The next year provides a unique opportunity to deliver significant improvements for passengers. That is why it requires urgent action. The Strategy sets a fast-paced agenda to transform bus services and encourage the return of passengers including by promoting modal shift. To deliver this, there are specific dates by which LTAs must take each of three steps:

- **Step 1 - by the end of June 2021**

Decide which statutory path to follow - pursue an Enhanced Partnership (EP) Scheme or develop a bus franchising assessment.

- **Step 2 – by the end of October 2021**

Publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan.

- **Step 3 - by the end of March 2022**

Have either an EP Scheme in place or be following the statutory processes to develop a bus franchising assessment. As the Strategy says, those LTAs (other than mayoral combined authorities) which wish to pursue franchising must be able to satisfy the Secretary of State that they have the capacity and resources to deliver the franchised model chosen. Since franchising can take several years, and we want to deliver change for all parts of the country quickly, LTAs (other than those already pursuing a franchising assessment, such as Greater Manchester) should also commit to establishing an Enhanced Partnership in the meantime. If LTAs believe they can deliver franchising sufficiently quickly, we will consider allowing them to skip the EP stage.

9. Further detail on all these steps is provided next.

STEP 1 – DECIDE WHICH STATUTORY PATH TO FOLLOW - PURSUE AN EP OR DEVELOP A BUS FRANCHISING ASSESSMENT

10. As stated in the Strategy, **by the end of June 2021**, to be eligible for continued access to COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) every LTA must have:
 - Published a statutory notice that they intend to prepare an EP Plan and Scheme¹; and/or
 - Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs), may publish a statutory notice that they intend to prepare a franchising assessment². Non-MCAs can apply for franchising powers from the Secretary of State. All franchising powers requests will be subject to the requirements in para 8 above.
11. The Strategy sets a clear blueprint for improving bus services and it will be for LTAs to decide whether it is best achieved via an EP or preparing a franchising assessment and publishing a statutory notice to that effect. Nothing further is required on a statutory basis by the end of June. Template EP and franchising notices of intent are at **Annex A**.
12. The latest detailed guidance on Enhanced Partnerships and Franchising can be found here, as well as an overview of the Bus Services Act 2017 (which amends the Transport Act 2000):
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-services-act-2017-new-powers-and-opportunities>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-services-act-2017-enhanced-partnership-creation>

¹ As required by S.138F(1)(a) of the Transport Act 2000

² As required by S.123(4) of the Transport Act 2000

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-services-act-2017-bus-franchising-creation>

13. This guidance is being reviewed to ensure that it is fully consistent with the National Bus Strategy, and a new version of the EP and franchising guidance will be published shortly. In the meantime, it is important to note that only underlined text in those documents is statutory guidance. Where there are any potential conflicts, this document and the National Bus Strategy represent the Government's current views and supersede the non-statutory aspects of the guidance linked below.
14. As explained in the Strategy, bus operators must co-operate with this process to continue to receive CBSSG and future forms of discretionary funding. This requirement will be included in the revised Terms and Conditions for that funding.
15. A given geographical area can only have an EP or a franchising arrangement. However, it is possible for an LTA to divide up its geographical area into separate areas that are covered by an EP or franchising or multiple EP schemes and/ or franchised areas. But the whole LTA geographical area must be covered by either an EP, be subject to a franchising assessment, or a combination of both.
16. If notices of intent have been issued for an EP and franchising, the BSIP should take into account both potential methods for delivery.

LTA's which are not MCAs and wish to pursue franchising

17. An LTA that is not an MCA cannot access franchising powers at present. This will require the successful passage of secondary legislation and the consent of the Secretary of State. We support the use of franchising and will allow any LTA which has the capability and intention to use franchising powers at pace to deliver improvements for passengers.
18. In assessing LTA capability, the Secretary of State expects LTAs to demonstrate the capability in traffic management necessary to ensure buses are prioritised appropriately. The Secretary of State will reserve the right to refuse an application for franchising if he believes a LTA does not, or will not, have the capability and resources to deliver the franchised model chosen; or that an EP would deliver the improvements proposed more quickly and cost-effectively.
19. We will open up access to franchising powers, subject to legislation, for any LTA which shows it meets the criteria above. However, it will not be possible for an LTA to issue a franchising notice until it has been granted franchising powers and failure to issue any notice will result in the LTA being unable to access new funding. Therefore, any LTA which wishes to request access to franchising powers should issue a notice of intent for an EP by the end of June.
20. Developing an EP in the meantime is not wasted effort. Part of the franchising process requires the LTA to complete an options assessment exercise, identifying

those options with the potential to achieve the objectives it has set. Working closely with operators on an EP will provide important data to assess whether an EP offers a better alternative. Access to franchising powers does not compel the LTA to use them.

Swapping between franchising and an EP

21. Issuing a notice to pursue either franchising or an EP does not prevent an LTA from subsequently changing to the other option. However, LTAs should be mindful of the importance in the Strategy of aiming high, delivering at speed and meeting the March 2022 deadline to access new funding (see **Step 3** below). For example, if an LTA believes, after an EP notice of intent has been issued and subsequent discussions with operators, that it will not deliver the outcomes set out in their BSIP or that, after initial work, a 'full' franchising assessment is unlikely to deliver its ambitions more effectively than an EP, then a switch can be considered. As explained above, a non-MCA must obtain franchising powers from the Secretary of State to pursue a franchising assessment. Once it has, it can decide, at any point, to switch back to an EP.
22. LTAs switching from one statutory process to the other would need to begin the new process from the start of its statutory requirements – i.e. publishing a notice of intent to follow the EP/ franchising process. However, the Government would not automatically expect the BSIP to be updated as well. This would also apply for LTAs switching from an EP to franchising and back again.

Interaction of schemes with existing Advanced Quality Partnerships (AQPS)

23. AQPSs may fall short of some of the requirements in the new Strategy, in particular for multi-modal or multi-operator tickets to be available at a set price. We would expect BSIPs to include plans to revoke most of the relatively small number of existing AQPSs. However, a few may need to remain, for example where they support existing bus priority and all sides agree that they are working well. The revocation will coincide with the 'making' of an EP or franchising scheme - which should offer the opportunity to include both the benefits previously available under the AQP, and multi-operator ticketing and other benefits needed to fulfil the requirements of the Bus Strategy. Operators' consent is required for revocation. As with EPs, bus operators will be required to cooperate with the process to receive discretionary funding, including CBSSG.

Early engagement with local bus operators

24. It is for the LTA to decide which statutory option(s) to pursue. Franchising is not the only route to better and more locally accountable bus services. Most of the outcomes from franchising can be delivered using an EP if the LTA and its local bus operators work together. They also offer significantly more flexibility than franchising and can deliver benefits to passengers far more quickly.

25. This means that the decision on statutory routes needs to be an informed one, taken in the best interests of local people. Before a notice(s) of intent is issued, each LTA/ MCA must discuss both options with their local bus operators. This will provide them with an important opportunity to influence the way forward and table proposed partnership measures that, taking into account the ambitions and agenda driven by the Strategy, they believe will quickly deliver the dramatic improvements to bus services that are required.

STEP 2 – PUBLISH A BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

26. Local authorities should develop and publish a BSIP by 31 October 2021. A BSIP sets out the outcomes which the LTA would like to see and can therefore be developed alongside deciding whether to pursue an EP or franchising.
27. Where an LTA decides to pursue an EP, the BSIP content will set out a high level vision and key interventions to deliver it, with the EP plan containing the detail of how they will be delivered, so that the documents make up a blueprint for bus service improvement. The BSIP will need to be developed in collaboration with bus operators; and other stakeholders such as bus user, service provider and local business groups should also be consulted. LTAs may wish to make an outline estimate of funding needed, accepting that it will be broad and not definitive at this stage – we will issue further guidance on funding and assessment in the summer. Further details on what a BSIP should contain and how to deliver it are outlined in the sections below.
28. Where an LTA has issued a statutory notice to pursue franchising, the BSIP sets out how it plans to improve bus services if it took a decision, following development of a franchising assessment, to improve bus services under a franchised model. The BSIP is still required alongside the statutory steps required to implement bus franchising, as set out by the Transport Act 2000³.
29. Where an LTA is pursuing both franchising and an EP in different parts of its area, the BSIP should set out a vision across the whole LTA, with the franchising assessment and EP plan drawing on it for the relevant areas which they are covering.
30. A template BSIP is at **Annex B**.

STEP 3 – HAVE AN EP IN PLACE, EITHER AS AN END-STATE OR AS A TRANSITION STATE TO FRANCHISING

31. **From April 2022** – The BSIP should be delivered using one of the two statutory options under **Step 1** above.

³ As amended by the Bus Services Act 2017

32. By this date, each LTA (except those, such as Greater Manchester, which were already following the franchising process at the time of the Bus Strategy) will need to have an EP in place. This will be either as an end-state, or as a transition state to franchising, depending on their choices. We ask for the EP stage from those pursuing franchising because the public expects swift improvements. If LTAs which wish to pursue a franchising scheme can convince us they can deliver it quickly, we may at our discretion allow them to skip the EP stage.
33. Further guidance on what is required to be delivered using an EP or franchising by April 2022 will follow in our updated EP and franchising guidance shortly.

Future government funding

34. **Access to a share of the new £3 billion funding will require the LTA to issue a notice of intent, produce a BSIP and have an Enhanced Partnership in place (where this is being pursued) by the dates required.** This funding will cover both capital and revenue support. The Government will issue further guidance in the summer about how funding will be allocated. However, we are able to provide the following high level guidance at this stage.
35. We anticipate two tranches of funding being available, one allocated by formula to all local authorities based on the overall quality of their BSIP, together with other relevant information; and a separate tranche of funding for specific larger schemes.
36. In assessing the overall quality of BSIPs, the Government will give particular weight to measures which support local bus markets as they emerge from the pandemic, for example bus priority and targeted fares reductions.
37. BSIPs will enable the Government to understand the appetite for transformational investments which support the bus sector in the funding period and over the long term (i.e. beyond 2025). In relation to specific schemes, the BSIP will be assessed as a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). Further assessment will be required after the SOBC stage and additional guidance on the assessment process will be issued as part of the funding guidance mentioned above.
38. To support LTAs in forming partnerships and developing BSIPs, we will make £25 million available in the 2021-22 financial year to improve LTA capacity and capability to deliver BSIPs, EPs and franchising assessments. Further details of this support package is set out in paragraph 128 below.

Other Government funding streams

39. The Strategy also explains that, as part of the wider reform of the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG), we will consult on linking payment of that reformed grant to BSIP commitments. Government will also take into account an LTA's performance with respect to the policies set out in the Strategy when considering funding allocations for wider, non-bus local transport schemes.

2. Bus Service Improvement Plans

Part 1 – Content and purpose

Who should produce a BSIP?

40. A BSIP must be produced by upper-tier authorities (e.g. Combined Authority/County Council). As a minimum, a single BSIP should cover each LTA's full geographical area (e.g. MCA or County Council area), all local bus services within it (including cross-boundary ones), and take proper account of the differing needs of parts of that area (e.g. urban and rural elements).
41. LTAs may also join together to produce a single BSIP – particularly where local economies and travel patterns overlap significantly. We expect LTAs to collaborate to resolve any cross-boundary issues. Where all, or the vast majority of, services in one area run across the border into another area (for example a small unitary authority with services running into a shire authority), we would expect a single BSIP to be produced. **We also expect to see shared arrangements across any areas wishing to become new or expanded MCAs in the future⁴.** There can also be other real advantages in developing a multi-LTA BSIP:
 - LTA resources and funding can be pooled to improve efficiency and cut costs.
 - A joint scheme properly joins up cross boundary bus services.
 - Local bus operators can share resources to develop the BSIP in a joined-up way.
42. The BSIP should explain the reasons for adopting a single or multi LTA geographical area.
43. BSIPs should be produced in close consultation with operators, who will have some of the data needed. See also below for third-party involvement.

⁴ A decision whether to develop a multi-area EP a required statutory step for all LTAs under the Transport Act 2000.

What are BSIPs for?

44. BSIPs should describe in outline how LTAs and operators in an area can achieve the overarching goal of the National Bus Strategy - to grow bus patronage: both to build it back after the pandemic and then to increase it and raise buses' mode share.
45. Given that BSIPs will have to be produced within six months, they will necessarily be outlines. We do not expect vastly detailed and granular documents running to hundreds of pages. Nor will we take them as definitive or immutable commitments or statements of intent on your part. Their main purpose is to get everyone thinking about what questions need to be addressed in the area, to explore possible answers, and to provide an early basis for funding decisions in the autumn and winter in preparation for the financial year 2022/3 when transformational funding begins.
46. See paragraph 126 below for further details of the DfT capability fund which will help LTAs with the resource they may need to compile BSIPs.

What should BSIPs say?

The current situation

47. Using available operator, population and travel demand data, you should gather evidence on the areas set out below. DfT will supply an annex setting out the data we will ask you to publish, but we would expect you to develop your BSIP taking account of:
 - basic information about your current bus network(s) and the roads they run on: bus patronage levels and trends; the density of service; the proportion of people within walking distance of a frequent service; average fares per km; mileage of bus lane; buses' modal share and how it has changed in recent years; road congestion and traffic levels and how they have changed in recent years; data on average bus speeds and how they affect bus operation and use; how readily comprehensive information is available; size and age of fleet; what if any common ticketing or partnership and coordination arrangements there are, etc.
 - information about the local operators and the LTA: is there one dominant operator or a mix of operators? To what extent are services (including branding and ticketing) specified centrally by bus operators or are they designed with local people in mind? What contact is there between the LTA and the bus operator(s)? How many staff does the LTA have working on buses, what do they do, and what is their seniority? How much funding does the LTA provide for supported services, other than school services? Does it publish timetables or promote services?
 - what and where are the main barriers to bus usage and growth in your area - congestion, lack of bus priority, a confusing network, lack of easily-accessible information, lack of common ticketing, an elderly bus fleet, whether services connect with each other easily or there are long waits, etc.

- the main areas of opportunity, such as places or markets that are underserved.
- any specific local evidence of the benefits of improving bus services for example economic, environmental and social evidence
- how, if possible, services in your area compare to the best in England, such as the places mentioned in the National Bus Strategy.

48. It is mandatory that BSIPs seek and report the views of passengers and third parties on the merits and demerits of bus services locally and the performance of the LTA and the local operators. These should include local transport users' groups, MPs, local services and business organisations and so on. Passenger survey data, if any, should be reported.

Proposals for improvement

49. BSIPs should then describe in outline how you and operators propose to deliver the key goals of the Bus Strategy in your area. These are making services:

- *more frequent*, with turn-up-and-go services on major routes and feeder or demand-responsive services to lower-density places.
- *faster and more reliable*, with bus priority wherever necessary and where there is room.
- *cheaper*, with more low, flat fares in towns and cities, lower point-to-point fares elsewhere, and more daily price capping everywhere.
- *more comprehensive*, with overprovision on a few corridors reduced to boost provision elsewhere and better services in the evenings and weekends, not necessarily with conventional buses.
- *easier to understand*, with simpler routes, common numbering, co-ordinated timetable change dates, good publicity, and comprehensive information online.
- *easier to use*, with common tickets, passes and daily capping across all operators, simpler fares, contactless payment and protection of bus stations.
- *better integrated with other modes and each other*, including more bus-rail interchange and integration and inter-bus transfers.

50. Each of these areas is explored in more detail below.

51. In a few cases, LTAs may wish to say that some aspects of the service do not need improvement - for instance where a very high, turn-up-and-go frequency is already provided. But even in high-performing bus towns, further improvements (for instance to priority and fares) are always necessary.

52. BSIPs need not include an exhaustive list of specific interventions. This granularity will be developed as part of an EPS or as any necessary part of a franchising

process. A BSIP might, for instance, say that a bus lane or bus priority is needed on the Anytown Road corridor - but not that a 1km bus lane is needed between 150 and 425 Anytown Road and a bus gate at the junction of Anytown Road and Anytown Avenue. Greater detail can be provided, however, if LTAs wish.

53. We are interested in conventional buses but also in innovative ideas for journeys which are difficult to serve well with conventional buses. For instance, as stated in the Strategy, large workplaces and destinations with anti-social hours, such as hospitals or out-of-town business parks, could be given their own demand-responsive bus service.
54. We will expect you to consider and report on what is required to co-ordinate bus services with other public-sector transport provision (hospital patient transport services, school transport, provision by the Department for Work and Pensions and so on) to minimise duplication and maximise journey opportunities – the so-called “Total Transport” approach. We will also work nationally to ensure that other government departments are brought in to this agenda.

Post-COVID challenges

55. Buses' adaptability is one of their great strengths. BSIPs should address how networks might change in response to any lasting demand changes due to COVID-19. This need not mean reductions in demand - there might, perhaps, be more local or inter-suburban journeys even as there are fewer journeys into city centres. BSIPs may also propose short-term measures to attract passengers back, rebuild confidence in buses and prevent a car-led recovery.
56. We recognise, however, that October is likely to be too early to make firm judgments about what is happening to demand. BSIPs should also reflect the requirements set out in the Bus Strategy for the post-COVID period, namely to maximise the number of services provided, supporting them and re-growing the customer base; prevent a scaling back of services to just the most profitable routes; focus on the entire network and plan for the longer term; and ensure bus services meet the changing needs of local communities and do not change suddenly or unexpectedly.
57. COVID-19 has threatened the viability of some previously commercially-viable services. BSIPs should explore which parts could become commercially viable again with the right capital investment (e.g. in bus priority), and which parts will not return to viability, but are socially or economically necessary – and how these could best be supported

Part 2 – Drafting the BSIP

Gathering data to understand the scale of the problem

58. To deliver significant improvements to buses in a BSIP area, it is necessary to understand how buses in the area are currently performing so that LTAs and operators can develop a shared understanding of the most urgent priorities for the

BSIP. The BSIP should draw on the most relevant and available data. We encourage LTAs to approach operators at an early stage for information and data.

59. In considering what data to gather, the Government would generally recommend considering data over a five-year period. However LTAs may wish to consider the extent to which COVID-19 has resulted in fundamental changes in passenger demand and therefore whether pre-COVID data remains relevant.
60. To determine this, the BSIP should, as a minimum, take into account available operator and LTA data on:
 - Passenger numbers by route, time of day and ticket type.
 - Bus vehicle speed and congestion data by route and time of day – using GPS vehicle data from operators.
 - Bus average journey times.
 - Granular data on single operator fare volumes for single fares, flat fares such as youth or hopper fares, period passes (daily/weekly/monthly), flexible/carnet tickets, annual season tickets and concessionary passes – including the average price. Also, the use of any multi-operator or through ticketing and the split between cash and electronic payment including concessionary fares.
 - The current bus market share compared to other modes, particularly the private car. This should be split between urban and rural where possible.
 - Bus service frequency (including days of operation).
 - Bus stop network density.
61. Where particular datasets are not available, the BSIP should explain why and what urgent action will be taken to fill the data gap.
62. The Strategy sets out a number of key issues that every BSIP should address and these are set out in the section below on ambition. If other factors have adversely affected bus growth, these should be addressed in the BSIP as well, supported by data (such as past surveys and published statistics, where available). A good approach is to look at buses from the point of view of people that don't use them or do so infrequently, to understand why. This might include considering alternatives to bus use such as the cost and availability of parking; land use planning; actual and perceived passenger safety; and connections and coordination of timetables.
63. These are just some examples. The aim is for the LTA, bus operators and any other stakeholders such as passenger groups to work together to understand what factors are currently holding back bus patronage growth. This will inform the package of measures included in the BSIP and the subsequent EP or franchising assessment.

Confidentiality

64. It is possible that some of the information obtained and used during BSIP development will be commercially sensitive. The LTA should seek to aggregate information it obtains where possible and appropriate - given the nature of the work

being undertaken on the BSIP - and put in place measures to avoid inadvertently disclosing any commercially sensitive information provided by a bus operator. If an operator can demonstrate that certain information they provide is commercially sensitive, authorities should also look favourably upon any request from the operator concerned for a confidentiality or non-disclosure agreement.

Setting targets

65. We expect BSIPs to set targets for journey time and reliability improvements for the LTA as a whole and for each of the largest cities and towns, as well as for passenger growth and customer satisfaction. LTAs should show what progress they expect to make by 2025 and also 2030; and progress against these targets should be reported publicly every six months.
66. For individual measures in the BSIP, LTAs should explain how they contribute to the delivery of the targets.

TOPICS TO BE COVERED BY BSIPs

67. This section provides further guidance on areas which the Government expects to see covered in BSIPs. It should be read in conjunction with the strategy and is designed to provide further advice in the preparation of BSIPs. All areas listed below should be included in the BSIP. LTAs and operators may also wish to cover other topics referenced in the Strategy and not covered here and may do so at their discretion.

Intensive services and investment on key corridors, with routes that are easier to understand

68. LTAs should work with operators to set the daytime, evening and Sunday service levels that different communities need. In densely populated areas, EP or franchising agreements should ensure that key radial roads have buses so often - every few minutes - that passengers never need a timetable. Evening services on these roads should be at least every 15 minutes.
69. LTAs and operators should also consider network design – for example, whether local needs are best met through infrequent ‘branch’ services of main routes which provide through journeys at the expense of frequency, or through high-frequency feeder routes connecting to the main line service instead, with through ticketing at no extra charge. Service planning should make sure that buses are appropriately spread between corridors, avoiding significant over and under provision.
70. In considering network design, LTAs and operators should agree common route numbering systems – for example, to avoid two routes with the same number serving the same bus stops. Buses from different operators on the same route should be

shown on the same timetable. Routes should be as far as possible the same in the evenings and weekends as in the daytime.

71. Consideration should be given to whether to simplify routes; for example, whether networks should have more high-frequency major route services rather than lots of low-frequency services combining. Route variations and letter suffix routes should be reduced.
72. BSIPs should also consider network design and avoid providing infrequent through services to everywhere or divert buses away from the main route to serve smaller places, reducing speed and convenience for people travelling between a route's major points. On high-frequency services, BSIPs should consider whether more use could be made of good hub-and-spoke connections, with frequent feeder buses connecting into frequent major routes and through ticketing. This becomes possible if frequency and reliability improve and with the consideration of demand responsive transport options. Overprovision on some urban corridors with dozens of competing buses every hour should be reduced to boost under provision elsewhere.
73. For BSIPs, LTAs should set out which corridors they consider to be appropriate for this high intensity treatment and whether they consider that this requires an increase (or reduction) in service frequencies compared to the current position. Where LTAs consider that feeder services are appropriate, they should set this out.

There must be significant increases in bus priority

74. The Strategy explains that to increase bus modal share, buses must become an attractive alternative to the car for far more people. The key to doing this is making them faster and more reliable. The Government expects plans for bus lanes on any roads where there is a frequent bus service, congestion, and physical space to install them. Bus lanes should be full-time and as continuous as possible. They should be part of a whole-corridor approach, including other physical measures such as:
 - Traffic signal priority;
 - Bus gates, which allow buses to enter a road that prohibits access to other traffic, and;
 - Clear and consistent signage for traffic and for bus users.
75. The impact of vehicles loading and unloading on bus lanes should be minimised, so hours should be restricted, or loading bays inset or moved close by but away from the main carriageway, with consideration of the views of local businesses. LTAs should consider physical changes to road layouts to allow the provision of continuous bus lanes. Where there is insufficient space for a bus lane, LTAs should consider point closures of some main roads to private cars, allowing through traffic on other main roads nearby.

76. Issues such as bus stop locations and spacing, parking provision, impact of vehicle loading, and removal of buildouts and pinchpoints will need to be addressed in the development of the EP. Non-residential parking will not generally be an efficient use of road space on such routes.
77. Difficult decisions or commitments may be needed by both the operator and LTAs. Close co-operation with and between authorities with relevant highways and traffic powers is essential.
78. BSIPs will not be able to consider all of these issues in detail, but should set out which corridors will be prioritised for bus priority treatment. The extent to which individual LTAs commit to new bus priorities in their BSIP will be an important indicator of ambition as well as providing confidence to local bus operators that these outcomes – which will influence their reciprocal action and investment – will be delivered.
79. The Department will consider proposals for capital investment as Strategic Outline Business Cases. LTAs should therefore describe corridors and potential packages of measures at a high level, but will not need to have identified a preferred option.
80. Most MCAs now have a Key Route Network (KRN) of the most important local roads for which they share powers to operate and manage with their constituent Local Highways Authorities. The Government plans to consult on strengthening the KRN approach to give MCAs more powers to manage key routes, helping to enable integrated highways and transport planning, better delivery of services across local authority boundaries, and give MCAs greater accountability.
81. Where LTAs commit to bus priority improvements, the Department expects bus operators to make firm and clear commitments to improve the customer offer, which can be included in the resultant EP scheme.

Fares must be lower and simpler

82. Lower and simpler fares attract passengers. They are an investment not just in transport but in town centres, in social inclusion and in a greener future. Fares policy should be an integral part of BSIPs. Lowering fares will either be a commercial decision for each operator or may require subsidy from the LTA – which each operator would negotiate separately with the LTA during EP or franchising assessment development.
83. Within cities and towns, the Government wants low flat fares (or maximum fares and daily price caps) to be the norm, as in London, as well as lower single fares and more, low, daily price capping. BSIPs should also consider youth fares; initiatives such as the youth fares implemented in Merseyside had a positive impact on patronage and the Government wants to see this replicated across the country.

84. The Government expects there to be consideration of fares in BSIPs. At this stage, BSIPs should set out which fares have been identified as suitable for reform. For example, a LTA might choose to introduce a new fare for a group such as young people or job seekers, create a flat fare within a given area, or create a zonal fare system. Details such as the precise fare level can be included in the EP.

There must be seamless, integrated local ticketing between operators and this should be across all types of transport

85. The Strategy sets out a bold ambition for an integrated ticketing approach to allow passengers to buy a through journey for local bus, rail and metro with a single tap on a smartphone. BSIPs should set out at a high level what is required to deliver no-fuss, multi-operator tickets and price caps on contactless credit and debit cards, at little or no premium to single operator fares, and where appropriate how this could be expanded to tickets that cover all travel modes (bus, light rail/metro, rail). All buses should accept contactless payment and all operators running on the same route should accept the same tickets.
86. Full multi-operator contactless ticketing requires the provision of a back-office solution. At this stage, LTAs and operators should assume that a technical solution is available and should not seek to develop this independently.
87. All operators should work with each other and their LTAs to overcome historic challenges around commercial agreements and pricing so that they can deliver the ticketing outcomes demanded by the Strategy through an EP (or delivered by LTAs through their franchising assessment).

Service patterns must be integrated with other modes

88. Bus journeys are not made in isolation but form part of an overall journey package that can include walking, cycling, park and ride or light rail and BSIPs should be developed in this context. A BSIP should consider these whole journeys so that buses can form an integral and attractive part of them.
89. More bus routes and demand-responsive services should serve railway stations and for easy connections between modes, bus services should be timed to connect with trains. Buses must also work better with each other to eliminate poor connections and uncoordinated timetables. Where services are regular, but not frequent (often in rural areas), connectivity should be maximised. Hub models can connect services, with buses all arriving and departing at the hub town within the same window each hour, ideally all servicing the same centrally located bus or railway station. Bus stations should be protected from closure and redevelopment and be improved and well maintained.
90. At this stage, BSIPs should identify key transport interchanges and set out whether services are considered to be adequate and timetable changes are required. It

should also set out what engagement already takes place, or is planned to take place, between operators from different transport modes, to address these issues.

The local bus network is presented as a single system that works together, with clear passenger information

91. BSIPs should consider strong network identities so that to passengers it feels like a coherent, consistent, strongly-branded operation which gives people confidence in using it – so that passengers know when the bus will arrive, what the fare will be and what the experience will be like. Typefaces, liveries and logos create an impression of unity.
92. Bus stops should show accurate information about the services stopping there. Better passenger information will require joint working between the LTA and bus operators so that, for example, new bus stop RTI display locations can be informed by bus operator boarding and alighting data, or that fare information and other passenger information can be co-hosted on a new or improved website or app. Every town, city and rural area should have easy to access, up to date maps, showing all local bus services. Bus stops should be named consistently by operators running the same bus routes. Local branding should reflect the community and not the operator, though successful existing brands should not be sacrificed.
93. Timetable changes should be minimised and co-ordinated across operators, so they happen at the same time. There should be heavy promotion and marketing to familiarise non-users with their local buses, to demystify the service for non-users, and introductory offers to promote the service to them.
94. In holiday destinations and scenic areas, much more should be done to promote buses to visitors. Popular tourist areas such as the West Country and the national parks are often blighted and congested by too many cars. More must be done to promote buses to visitors, with improved services, easily accessible information, park-and-ride sites and special tickets. LTAs need to consider how work could be undertaken with tourist attractions and venues to promote and facilitate bus travel to the site e.g. more accessible parking/stops for buses and coaches.
95. Disabled people and those with protected characteristics must be able to use bus services as easily as other passengers. Making buses more accessible (not just the vehicles themselves, but also bus stops, bus stations, and by providing excellent customer service) also benefits other passengers.
96. To support the Strategy's vision, BSIPs should provide information on existing provision of real time information, what expansion is proposed and why, existing information provision at bus stops and plans for its improvement, and plans for a local brand.

Modern buses and decarbonisation

97. The Strategy supports the introduction of at least 4,000 more zero-emission buses, with the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas scheme helping support the delivery of this through providing funding to LTAs in partnership with local stakeholders. At a local level, every LTA that wishes to receive funding from the Department for local transport projects must develop ambitious strategies, targets and measures for cutting carbon from transport in their area. All LTAs must work with bus operators and energy providers to include ambitions to decarbonise the local bus fleet in their BSIPs. We would expect to see the relative ambition of areas reflected in these plans, with an expectation of all areas fleet to move to zero emission in the long run. Local standards for zero-emissions must be set in partnership and franchising schemes ensuring that commitments to invest are delivered. BSIPs (and subsequent EP/ franchising proposals) need to be flexible enough to respond to future funding schemes that the Department may run to support decarbonisation of fleets. They also need to have scope to meet future government targets that could be set to meet UK decarbonisation commitments.
98. Buses should offer end to end accessibility and provide ample areas for pushchairs and luggage in addition to the wheelchair space, so that everybody can travel with confidence. They should also offer audible and visible information, in addition to WIFI and charging as standard - allowing people to work and interact online whilst they travel and make better use of their time. More buses, particularly in rural areas, should also carry cycles.

Give bus passengers more of a voice and a say

99. BSIPs must include a passengers' charter giving bus users rights to certain standards of service, including punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, proportion of services operated, information and redress. There must be mechanisms for redress at a local level and means to ensure these standards are met, which could include forums such as establishing Bus Advisory Boards. This will be backed with action at national level as set out in the Strategy.
100. Further guidance on establishing and maintaining a Bus Passenger Charter is at Annex C. It is not necessary to create a full charter as part of creating a BSIP, but BSIPs should commit to the creation of a charter and set out key provisions to be included.
101. Bus services should also be safe and perceived to be safe by all. BSIPs should include how LTAs and bus operators will ensure this is delivered. Areas to consider are:
- **Walking routes to bus stops** - LTAs should plan and maintain routes to stops with safety in mind, ensuring, where appropriate, that they are well-lit and support natural surveillance – especially those used by evening and night buses (operator boarding and alighting data can help with this).

- **The waiting environment** - Siting of bus stops should take into account convenience and safety, with LTAs ensuring, where necessary, they are well-lit and covered by new or existing CCTV. Bus stations should also be adequately staffed and monitored.
- **Staffing and procedures** - Bus drivers should have appropriate passenger safety training to deal with emergency situations on or off the bus. Drivers should be able to contact depot staff at all times and operators have proper 'code red' procedures with the emergency services so that help can be summoned quickly. Vehicles themselves should have working CCTV.
- **Customer relations** - Bus operators should include safety in their marketing and customer charter - with clear and publicised procedures to deal with complaints or suggestions on how to improve passenger safety. Bus operators should liaise with local police and other stakeholders such as local schools to address safety concerns.
- **Information provision** – Good quality passenger information can help to reassure passengers about safety issues such as when the bus will arrive at the stop and where individual passengers will board and alight for their journey, especially important for those that may be unfamiliar with the local area. Buses themselves should have next stop announcements, for example, so that everyone knows where the bus is going and when they have reached their stop.

More demand-responsive services and 'socially necessary' transport

102. In lower-density areas and at less popular times, conventional fixed-route buses can never compete with the attractiveness or flexibility of the car. Infrequent, irregular services with long journey times discourage patronage. Aided by technology, demand-responsive transport (DRT) can address this, offering a more personal, on-demand service, taking people from their doors or closer to their doors than a regular bus, integrated with conventional buses, where they exist. In developing BSIPs, LTAs should consider the role of DRT in improving access to bus services in rural areas.

103. DRT should be provided in the evenings and late at night. Places that are economically disadvantaged should also be included in that thinking to connect them better to centres of employment, broadening opportunities and the choice of work, education and leisure for those who live there. Better services must be provided to places of employment off existing main bus routes, such as out-of-town industrial estates and factories, and services should meet the needs of passengers who do shift work. Again, this could be done with integrated DRT geared to shift times. There is a role to play for employers in helping with this that the BSIP should consider.

104. Although EP and franchising legislation does not apply to community bus services⁵, the LTA will already be providing a range of bus transport that is not commercially viable but which it considers 'socially necessary' to enable local people to have

⁵ S.123J and 138C of the Transport Act 2000 exclude services provided under s.22 of the Transport Act 1985.

access to bus services. Community bus services can provide an important contribution to meeting overall bus transport needs and the BSIP should reflect this.

105. Particular consideration should be given to the provision of transport to facilitate access to social and leisure services. In considering such services, local authorities should consult those with expertise on local needs in relation to loneliness and social isolation, including groups at risk of loneliness and providers of social prescribing schemes.
106. LTAs should consider the scope for applying Total Transport principles, as explored in the Department for Transport's 2015 pilots. The feasibility report and pilot review, including benefits, outcomes and lessons learned was published in 2019 and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/total-transport-feasibility-report-and-pilot-review>.

Longer term transformation of networks through Bus Rapid Transit and other measures

107. BSIPs should provide the Government with information on local areas' ambitions for bus over the longer term. In the strategy, the Government commits to supporting bus rapid transit and other schemes which lie between conventional bus and light rail, aiming to bring the benefits and user experience of light rail to bus corridors. LTAs should include aspirations in this area in their BSIPs, even if they are not yet at SOBC stage, to help generate a better understanding of where such schemes are potentially feasible.

Regular updates

108. BSIPs will be 'living' documents and can be altered (and republished) if the LTA, working closely with its bus operators, believes this is necessary. BSIPs should be revised at least every twelve months to ensure they remain relevant and that the plans within it are working as intended. Revised versions should also be sent the Department for Transport at: BSIP@dft.gov.uk. Please title your email 'Published revised BSIP for [insert name of authority]'.

Part 3 – LTAs and bus operators working together

109. This part of the guidance provides advice on how LTAs and their local bus operators can work productively together to develop a high quality BSIP. It is particularly focussed on the joint working required to deliver a BSIP where it will be translated into an EP.

110. Although the LTA is ultimately responsible for producing the BSIP, it cannot unilaterally decide what goes in it. We also expect operators to engage constructively in discussions, offering active suggestions for improvement, explaining what they can and cannot support and why and seeking to resolve any differences of view constructively and in the best interests of current and future bus users.
111. If the LTA has chosen an EP to deliver its BSIP there is an operator objection mechanism. Working together from the outset is therefore vital. The BSIP needs to set out a vision which the EP can deliver.
112. The objection process is designed to ensure that any proposal which requires delivery by operators is realistic and will not have unintended consequences for passengers. We do not wish to see operators using the objection process lightly and would expect any potential objection to have been raised with the LTA at an early stage with practical suggestions for changes. Nor do we wish to see operators feeling forced to use this mechanism during the EP delivery phase because the BSIP process has not properly taken their views into account.

Joint working between stakeholders

Create a forum for discussion

113. If a BSIP is to be effective, a forum should exist for the free and frank exchange of views, data and ideas from its members on how to improve bus services in the BSIP's geographical area. Its members will of course include all local bus operators and those running cross-boundary services. However, there will be other groups that can contribute, such as bus user groups and representatives of disabled people, and local business groups. Where LTAs are not also highways authorities, it will be important that highways authorities regularly attend the forum and recognise its importance, since they will be crucial in delivering bus priority measures. Not all need to attend every meeting and sub-groups can be commissioned for individual stakeholders to discuss and develop draft BSIP content to bring back to the wider forum for consideration.
114. These will be informal discussions to encourage co-operative working, so it is not necessary for them to be led by the LTA. Collectively, stakeholders may prefer the forum to be independently chaired or the chair to revolve amongst its members, to give confidence that all views will be represented and properly taken into account. What is important is that the forum is seen by all as a place that encourages and facilitates an open and honest exchange of views, without fear of ridicule or recrimination.
115. The forum should provide an opportunity for an open discussion about current deficiencies in the market and how they might be addressed, perhaps starting by reviewing any existing partnership agreement and/or comparing members' key asks.

Role of the LTA

116. It will be for the LTA to host BSIP discussions and arrange the first meeting. The LTA should work closely and in a spirit of co-operation with bus operators, community transport bodies and other relevant organisations. The LTA is not wholly responsible for drafting its content. BSIP content is developed jointly through discussion and negotiation, primarily between the LTA and its bus operators.

Role of local bus operators

117. It is essential that local bus operators work together to set out clearly what they want from the BSIP or any later statutory partnership process. This will involve operators discussing and reaching an agreed joint position amongst themselves on what they wish collectively to see included in the document and be prepared to negotiate this as a collective with the LTA. Asks should be specific, for example asking for bus priority measures on particular routes, rather than simply asking for more bus priority.

118. This process is designed to give operators a real say in what is delivered, so all operators should participate in the BSIP process. Individual operators, particularly the medium and 'big 5' operators must put forward company representatives that have the authority to negotiate and make decisions during forum discussions, rather than afterwards. Neither a BSIP nor an EP should focus on large operators. The EP objection mechanism is specifically designed to prevent a single dominant operator from having a veto.

119. To help this, operators should agree who will pull together and present the collective bus industry view when commenting on or providing written content for BSIP drafts. This can be for the whole BSIP development process or for individual sections/meetings. We would expect operators to hold their own separate meetings to discuss and formulate their proposals and draft content for discussion with the LTA. It is necessary and perfectly acceptable for local bus operators to have private discussions on the drafting suggestions that they intend, as a group, to share with the LTA in the forum. Advice that the Department has developed with the Competition and Markets Authority on how to avoid competition issues during the BSIP drafting process is at Annex D.

120. Where bus operators do not participate in these discussions, the Government reserves the right to cease paying the COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) to them.

How those discussions become a clear way forward under a BSIP

121. LTAs and bus operators should identify where there is agreement about what should be done. Where there is disagreement, it may be helpful to consider whether measures will contribute to targets and how quickly. This document describes the level of information required in each section under each heading.

How might that translate into the content of an EP?

122. Once the BSIP has been agreed and the Government has set out the funding that it will provide, specific measures can be included in an EP. This will include both commitments by the LTA and reciprocal ones from bus operators.

An EP as part of a wider agreement

123. A BSIP can also form part of a wider agreement that sits outside of, but complements, the EP. The Transport Act 2000 defines what types of ‘facilities’, ‘measures’ and ‘standards of service’ can form part of an EP. But this does not prevent the LTA and operators from agreeing, on a voluntary or contractual basis, a wider agreement that includes other initiatives or mechanisms outside of what is possible under an EP to support and deliver Strategy outcomes.

Evidence of operator support

124. All operators are strongly encouraged to express their views on the BSIP. In all cases, a BSIP should be accompanied by letters of support from operators representing at least 80% of registered mileage in the geographical area covered by the BSIP. In the absence of this, the LTA must explain why this level of support is not achievable.

Publishing the BSIP

125. The LTA must publish its BSIP on its website and send the link to the Department of Transport at BSIP@dft.gov.uk. Please title your email ‘Published BSIP for [insert name of authority(s)]’.

Local Transport Authority capacity and capability

126. We recognise that the LTAs are being asked to take on an important role in delivering the outcomes of the Strategy, in partnership with their local operators. To support LTAs in taking on this work, the Government has committed to provide £25 million in 2021/22 on a capacity and capabilities programme.

127. As a first step, we have made capacity funding available to all LTAs to support them in their immediate work on EPs and BSIPs. This has been allocated to each LTA on request, and it represents the minimum amount of capacity funding that LTAs will be eligible to receive.

128. Further capacity funding will be made available by 30 June, based on engagement with LTAs to understand the ongoing needs of partnerships in developing their plans.

129. The purpose of the £25 million capacity and capabilities programme is to:

- bring in additional capacity to support the timely development of EPs and BSIPs. Funding could be used to recruit additional staff or procure consultants to support the partnership in pulling together their plans, especially in the short term where current LTA or partnership capacity is limited, or where specialist support is needed;
- create a legacy of capability in LTAs on bus-related issues. We know that capacity and capabilities on bus policy varies significantly between LTAs, and that many authorities have lost valuable in-house skills over the years. Where possible, LTAs should look to build up that in-house capability so that they can continue to maintain and improve bus interventions whilst adapting to significant market change;
- develop a network of LTAs, facilitated by DfT and consultants, to support authorities in their work to develop and deliver BSIPs and EPs. This will serve as a forum to discuss NBS related issues and facilitate the exchange of best practice. This could include online workshops, tutorials, with follow-up FAQs and advice. It could also include some direct support to individual, or groups, of LTAs where assistance is needed to move this work forward. Much of this is likely to be taken over by the Bus Centre of Excellence once that is established;
- establish a Bus Centre of Excellence to enable the delivery of a long-term programme of activities and support. The centre will be co-sponsored by the Department, and training will be managed and delivered by experts from across the bus sector. This will focus on: public transport service planning and network design, performance oversight, contract procurement and competitive tendering⁶, design and development of bus priority measures, and wider traffic management measures to improve local bus performance;
- support a peer network of senior leaders working to deliver bus transformation, to support the sharing of experience and solutions across the private and public sector.

⁶ Existing DfT guidance on tendering best practice can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tendering-road-passenger-transport-contracts-best-practice-guidance>

3. Annexes

ANNEX A: MODEL NOTICES OF INTENT TO PREPARE A FRANCHISING PROPOSAL OR AN EP

MODEL EP NOTICE

Notice of Intent to Prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Schemes

[Date]

At its meeting on [date], [Name of LTA] gave approval to proceed with the development of an Enhanced Partnership. The commencement of this is confirmed through this notice of the intention to prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan and accompanying Enhanced Partnership Schemes, as required and set out in section 138F of the Transport Act 2000.

MODEL MCA FRANCHISING NOTICE

[Name of LTA] Notice

[Date]

In accordance with sections 123B and S123C(4) of the Transport Act 2000 ('the 2000 Act'), the [name of authority] ('Authority') has authorised the publication of this notice, confirming that it intends to prepare an assessment of a proposed bus franchising scheme ('Proposed Scheme').

The Proposed Scheme as currently envisaged will cover [geographical area of the proposed scheme] ('Area' / 'Region').

Pursuant to section 123C (2) (a) of the 2000 Act, the Secretary of State's permission to carry out the assessment of the Proposed Scheme is not required because the scheme relates to the Area of a Mayoral Combined Authority.

The Bus Services Act 2017 amended the 2000 Act to provide the Authority with powers to reform the bus market and these provisions provide for new types of partnership schemes and the option to franchise bus services.

The Authority has directed [name of LTA] as the Transport Executive for the Area/Region to assess the new bus reform options available under the Act including an assessment of the Proposed Scheme. Before undertaking such an assessment section 123C(4) of the 2000 Act prescribes that the Authority must publish a notice stating that they intend to prepare such an assessment.

You can find out more on the [name of LTA] website. For further information, please contact [contact details].

ANNEX B: BSIP TEMPLATE

NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY

BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

[NAME OF AUTHORITY OR AUTHORITIES]

HEADLINE MESSAGES TO AID BSIP DRAFTING

The BSIP is a vitally important document that drives forward the productive partnerships supported by an EP or a franchising assessment that are needed to make a step change in bus services required by the National Bus Strategy ('the Strategy'). It is important to bear this in mind during drafting as it will be the framework for future delivery and, in part, **act as a bidding document for future funding (see paragraphs 34-39 above)**. LTAs should cross-check with the EP and/or franchising guidance to ensure that the proposals in a BSIP content would maximise the use of the powers available.

LTAs should draw on existing work such as local transport plans and other detailed plans, data and strategy documents that exist or are currently being developed. Remember, the overall aim of the BSIP and its individual sections is to explain LTA ambition to improve buses and the plans and policies that will deliver them. Where those plans and policies do not currently exist in a particular section, the BSIP should explain what the ambition is, how proposals will be developed and when.

Overall, the BSIP should:

- Be developed by LTAs in collaboration with local bus operators, community transport bodies and local businesses, services and people.
- Focus on delivering the bus network that LTAs (in consultation with operators) want to see, including how to address the under provision and overprovision of bus services and buses integrate with other modes.
- Set out how it will grow bus use.
- Set out how it will be delivered.
- Be updated annually and reflected in the authority's Local Transport Plan.
- Seek to influence the share of the £3 billion of transformation funding (if it meets the Step 1-3 requirements set out above).

Section 1 – Overview

- Name of LTA(s) that the BSIP covers. This should also set out whether the BSIP covers a single LTA or more than one and the justification for that decision.
- Map showing geographical area(s).
- Explanation of whether that area(s) are proposed to be covered by an enhanced partnership scheme and/ or will form part of a franchising appraisal. All the LTA geographical area must be covered either by an EP or a franchising proposal

(Advice on using both an EP and franchising see advice on using both under Step 1 of the main guidance).

- Duration of the published BSIP, arrangements for annual review and how it will be aligned with wider Local Transport Plans.

Section 2 - Current bus offer to passengers

The Strategy requires BSIPs to drive improvements to local bus services in a number of ways – for example, by setting targets for passenger growth and developing plans for multi-modal ticketing. This section should provide an analysis and data of how the current bus network compares to the BSIP aims and objectives set out in the subsequent sections.

Analysis of existing local bus services compared to BSIP outcomes

- How current services meet or fall short of BSIP expectations as set out in this guidance and the Strategy.

LTA financial support for bus services

- Explain the financial support that the LTA(s) is providing for subsidised public bus services, listing the numbers of routes and route mileage supported.

Other factors that affect the use of local bus services

- This should include the extent and pricing of parking provisions in town and cities and the split between LTA and private sector provision. It should also include current LTA spending on parking enforcement.

Section 3 - Headline targets

Targets for improvement should be covered in this section. Each section should include an explanation of how and why these targets were chosen and what the percentage increase is on existing performance. The key here is that these targets should be assessed using existing available data or data that the partnership has or can compile. It is also vital to think about clear objectives and how success will be judged and explain your thinking here.

Targets for journey times and reliability improvements

- These should cover the LTA(s) area as a whole and provide specific data for each of the largest cities and towns in its area.
- Performance against these targets must be reported against and published at least every six months.

Targets for passenger growth and customer satisfaction

- This should include details of how this will be measured.

Section 4 – Delivery

This is the main body of the BSIP. Its purpose is to explain how the requirements set out in the Strategy are to be delivered. Many factors and interventions by the LTA and local bus operators will influence and contribute to delivering outcomes. The purpose of this section is for the BSIP to set out detailed policies in each of the areas, explain delivery in more detail and how they each will work together to improve local bus services. The BSIP should contain a separate section on each as set out earlier in this guidance (paragraph references are given for ease).

Section 5 – Reporting

This section should set out the arrangements for publishing six-monthly performance against BSIP targets. Please include the URL on your website where these reports will appear.

Section 6 – Overview table

This section should summarise the key outputs of the BSIP and how it meets requirements set out in the Strategy. The purpose of this section is to give readers, including passengers and the Department, an overview of the commitments in the BSIP which LTAs and operators will work towards to improve local bus services. LTAs should complete all sections of the template.

BSIP Overview Table Template

Name of authority or authorities:	
Franchising or Enhanced Partnership (or both):	
Date of publication:	
Date of next annual update:	
URL of published report:	

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Journey time				
Reliability				
Passenger numbers				
Average passenger satisfaction				

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/No	Explanation (max 50 words)
Make improvements to bus services and planning		
<i>More frequent and reliable services</i>		
Review service frequency		
Increase bus priority measures		
Increase demand responsive services		
Consideration of bus rapid transport networks		
<i>Improvements to planning / integration with other modes</i>		
Integrate services with other transport modes		
Simplify services		
Review socially necessary services		

Invest in Superbus networks		
<i>Improvements to fares and ticketing</i>		
Lower fares		
Simplify fares		
Integrate ticketing between operators and transport		
Make improvements to bus passenger experience		
<i>Higher spec buses</i>		
Invest in improved bus specifications		
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services		
Protect personal safety of bus passengers		
Improve buses for tourists		
Invest in decarbonisation		
<i>Improvements to passenger engagement</i>		
Passenger charter		
Strengthen network identity		
Improve bus information		
Other		
Other		

ANNEX C: BUS PASSENGER CHARTER GUIDANCE

Overview

We want to enable passengers to hold local authorities and operators to account for delivering against the BSIPs. A BSIP should include a Bus Passenger Charter (BPC) that sets out for passengers how to use bus services and what passengers can expect from bus operators delivering local bus services across their area.

The BPC should signpost passengers to routes for recourse, enabling passengers to provide feedback on how LTAs and operators are performing in meeting their commitments in the BSIPs.

How would a Bus Passenger Charter work?

The Bus Passenger Charter would set out the commitment made between local authorities/bus operators and the passengers they serve to ensure certain standards are met for each journey. It translates the Bus Service Improvement Plan into a tangible set of outcomes that passengers should expect to see when taking a bus journey.

The Charter should signpost customers to feedback channels so that passengers have a voice and enabling operators/local authorities to address the concerns of passengers.

It should be made clear what the Charter will set out and be explicit that it will not create any new legal relationship with the passengers. It is expected that the Local Transport Authority will develop their Bus Passenger Charter in collaboration with bus operators and passengers or passenger advocacy groups. There should also be a commitment to review the charter on a fixed basis and to consult on any revised versions.

In taking decisions authorities must ensure they comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). By providing a place to commit publicly to developing transport provision in a manner which eliminates unlawful discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity, Passenger Charters can help authorities to explain to passengers the steps they are taking to fulfil the Duty and to support inclusive transport services.

The Bus Passenger Charter should be published on the local authority website and where possible, also on the participating bus operators websites too. There also needs to be consideration of the accessibility of the BPC and how we can also offer non-digital guidance to passengers.

Passenger commitments

The BPC should promise certain standards of service to passengers, including punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, proportion of services operated, accessibility of buses and related infrastructure to groups with protected characteristics, information and redress. There must be mechanisms for redress at a local level and means to ensure these standards are met.

BSIP commitments

LTAs may also decide to use the BPC to communicate to passengers the tangible outcomes they should expect to see from BSIPs.

ANNEX D: GUIDANCE ON NEGOTIATING BSIPS AND COMPETITION LAW

Introduction

1. The published EP guidance already provides advice on how competition law relates to negotiating an EP agreement, both between operators and with the LTA. That guidance is also relevant to developing a BSIP and readers may wish to refer to this first. This annex provides additional guidance, focussed on developing BSIPs.
2. A BSIP is not a statutory document, nor does it deliver anything on the ground – that is the purpose of an EP or franchising assessment. Negotiating a BSIP may necessarily involve a combination of discussions between operators and the LTA and operator-only discussions without the LTA present. This is for practical reasons. Operators may be prepared to be more open without the LTA in the room, or to make contributions to the BSIP in ways they may feel unable or uncomfortable to do if the LTA were present, for a variety of reasons. For example, the LTA can become the bus registration authority under an EP (instead of the traffic commissioner) and are also the ‘client’ for socially necessary bus services and other tendered contracts.
3. The BSIP also tasks operators with producing the ‘shopping list’ of initiatives, measurables or deliverables that they believe are necessary for inclusion in the BSIP, to deliver the improvements required by the Strategy. It is likely, and perfectly reasonable, that operators will only wish to share the results of that process with the LTA once it has been discussed, developed and agreed between the operators themselves.

How might competition issues impact on BSIPs?

4. The principal issue that needs to be avoided in operator-only discussions on BSIPs are **discussions about the future of individual operator businesses - pricing intentions, including rebates or discounts or commercial strategy, such as what an individual operator’s future fares strategy will be.**
5. These could be seen to have particular relevance in the following outcomes set out in the Strategy and this guidance.

Lower and simpler fares

6. Reducing fares will either be a commercial decision for each operator or may require subsidy from the LTA – which each operator would negotiate separately with the LTA during EP development. Neither of these outcomes require conversations between operators. It is acceptable to discuss how fare structures could be simplified as the EP legislation can mandate what ticket structures and types should be offered by all operators in the EP area.

Multi-operator ticketing

7. The Strategy particularly requires the BSIP to set out how they will deliver no-fuss, multi-operator tickets and price caps on contactless credit and debit cards, at little or no premium to single operator fares – with all buses accepting contactless payment. Capping levels for multi-operator tickets and arrangements for through ticketing will be delivered through the subsequent EP or a franchising arrangement, not the BSIP. The EP guidance already provides advice on through ticketing and setting the price of a multi-operator ticket (which can be mandated in an EP) and also that multi-operator ticketing can be zonal, covering a geographical area.
8. A potential focus for the BSIP could be how the obstacle of commercial agreements between the LTA and operators and between operators could be overcome to deliver the ticketing outcomes demanded by the Strategy. The agreement(s) itself would be negotiated as part of EPS development (such agreements are not required under franchising).

Network design

9. The Strategy requires BSIPs to cover network design. This may involve changes to the bus network that was previously provided under the (pre-Covid) deregulated market. We would expect the LTA to take the lead on this, using available operator and other data to, for example, determine where there are gaps in network coverage and where there is overprovision – e.g. on urban corridors. Advice is provided in this guidance on dealing with commercially confidential information and the LTA can then use this data to, for example, apply funding to fill gaps in the network using their tendering powers. To address overprovision, the existing EPS powers can be applied to set maximum frequencies on individual routes or require even headways.

Conclusion

10. The corollary is that none of these issues should be insurmountable in the context of BSIP discussions. Those discussions are about how bus services will improve in the BSIP geographical area and how those improvements will collectively be delivered by the LTA and their bus operators. The specific actions and interventions required to do so will form part of the EP negotiations or a franchising assessment.
11. The BSIP is not required to consider or explain its impact on individual operators. Although individual operators will of course privately bear this in mind as they contribute to BSIP development, it does not need to be publicly shared or discussed with other operators. Individual operators can of course discuss impacts or potential impacts, on a confidential basis, during BSIP development with the LTA if they wish.

Further Guidance

12. The Strategy also raises other competition issues that the Government will provide further guidance on as soon as possible.