

# Bus Service Improvement Plan

## November 2022

Blackpool Council



# Foreword



**Cllr Neal Brookes**

*Cllr Neal Brookes, Cabinet Member for Enforcement,  
Public Safety, Highways and Transport*

“I welcome this opportunity to lay out Blackpool Council’s bus transport priorities. Buses should be seen as reliable and cost effective transport for all, helping to support the local economy and address climate change, the latter clearly becoming more urgent.

Blackpool already benefits from a modern bus fleet and network that is the envy of many. Soon we will also have electric buses operating in our town thanks to a successful application for financial support from the Government’s ZEBRA scheme. This can only enhance accessibility and highlight the environmental and decongesting benefits of increased bus use for us all.

Having secured the network through the Covid pandemic with the help of Government support, the Council will now work with operators in the Enhanced Partnership to increase passenger numbers and encourage more people onto buses and out of their cars. Electric buses will improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions significantly.

The Council will continue to focus on the long-term social, economic and environmental well-being of residents and aims to deliver frequent, reliable bus services to key destinations for all in partnership with our operators.”

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Knott End  
Departing in 2 mins

20

FREE  
Wi-Fi

Blackpool  
Transport

583

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## Summary

Blackpool's revised Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) sets out how bus use can be encouraged to grow in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast over the first half of this decade. This plan is an essential first stage prior to Blackpool Council establishing an Enhanced Partnership (EP) in association with all local bus operators and Lancashire County Council, the neighbouring Local Transport Authority. This EP will be in place in early 2023 with all elements having the aim of improving local bus services for passengers and increasing bus patronage.

In accordance with the National Bus Strategy (2021) and local policies, Blackpool Council will lead initiatives to promote bus use for both local residents and visitors, the latter whom arrive in the resort by car, rail or coach. There is a clear need to widely publicise the offer now and also to improve what is available to make bus an even more attractive choice. The Blackpool Tramway will be extended to Blackpool North railway station in 2023, with the railway and tramway termini adjacent to many of the town's key bus routes, services and facilities, enabling seamless travel. There is now a through ticketing arrangement in place between Blackpool Transport Service (BTS) and Northern Railway in addition to the PlusBus ticket.

Blackpool's BSIP has identified a pressing need for new funding; firstly to enhance the existing bus network and secondly to make network improvements. A requirement for a new service has been identified connecting residential areas with employment opportunities, Victoria Hospital and the Airport Enterprise Zone. If the bus network is to compete with car effectively, the network needs to be denser and services more frequent. Fares need to be affordable to all. Bus stops and shelters need improvement and service frequencies need increasing, addressing provision into the evenings and on weekends, particularly Sundays.

A clear requirement for better marketing and promotion has been identified. Coordinated and simplified ticket offers are key, and affordable fares have to be attractive for both existing and new bus users, residents and visitors alike. Bus priority has been identified, featuring new bus lanes, as a means to improve punctuality and reliability. Dedicated staffing is needed to implement, promote and monitor initiatives as the Enhanced Partnership is established.

## Objectives

By means of the measures identified in this plan and with appropriate funding, the Council aims to:

- Deliver frequent and reliable bus services in partnership with bus operators;
- Establish consistent bus ridership growth and identifiable modal shift from car travel to public transport;
- Establish bus as the dominant commuting mode for those living and working in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast;
- Promote bus travel to current non-user groups effectively;
- Ameliorate congestion obstacles to bus passage across the road network;
- Maximise bus service reliability;
- Reduce journey times and enable timetable review;
- Support frequency increases to existing timetables, including evening and weekend services;
- Establish new supported services to fill network gaps where resources allow;
- Improve the bus infrastructure estate, particularly shelters;
- Improve bus information availability and quality;
- Place bus at the centre of the net zero transport emissions reduction strategy;
- Consider the need for future mass transit needs, building on the tramway extension project;
- Support young people in using the bus, with regard to long-term ridership growth;
- Develop a bus stakeholder consultation framework; and
- Establish a rolling bus satisfaction/perception survey programme for current users and non-users.

## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** Blackpool is a coastal town and resort with a mixed economy, but one that has a strong tourism sector. This has suffered from people holidaying abroad and Covid lockdowns, but innovation to maintain the resort's unique offer achieved visitor numbers of 18m per annum pre-pandemic. The resident population comprises around 140,000 persons but this population is increased significantly by visitors – the STEAM report shows that the town attracted 19 million visitors in 2021. It offers around 91,000 beds for overnight stays.

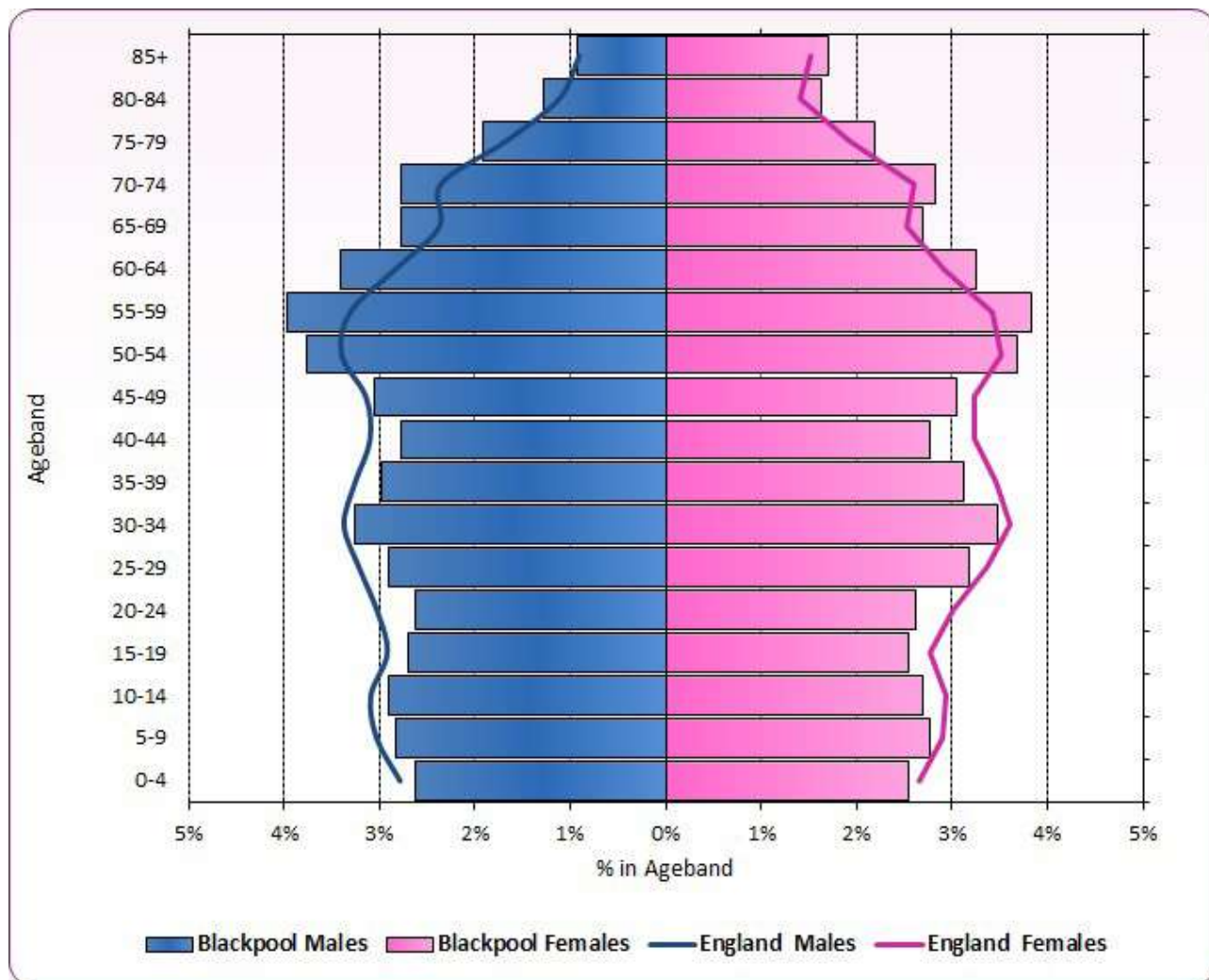
**1.2** As Figure 1 shows, the age range of Blackpool's population is similar to England as a whole, it does not have the bias to older age groups seen in other seaside areas and it diverges only in having a lower proportion in the 15-24 age range and a peak in the 50-60 age range.

**1.3** In Blackpool in 2021, 448 residents were classed as having a learning disability, while a further 3,391 had a moderate personal care disability and 743 required serious personal care. In addition, reflecting the number of visitors attracted to Blackpool, a joint two-year campaign ran with Fylde and Wyre councils called 'Access Fylde Coast' aimed at making the area more attractive and easy to navigate for disabled visitors, including those with hidden disabilities.

**1.4** The Council is a unitary borough being wholly surrounded by the sea to the west and by the Lancashire County Council (LCC) area to the east. It borders the district councils of Wyre and Fylde. The 2019 Index of Deprivation identified Blackpool as England's most deprived place, as did its 2015 iteration.

**1.5** Car ownership in Blackpool is low with 37% having no access to a car or van (Census 2011) but high usage, major cross-boundary flows and a constrained network means that there is congestion and despite its small size, urban layout and the quality of public transport on offer, there is car dependency.

**Figure 1: Age Distribution of Blackpool Population**



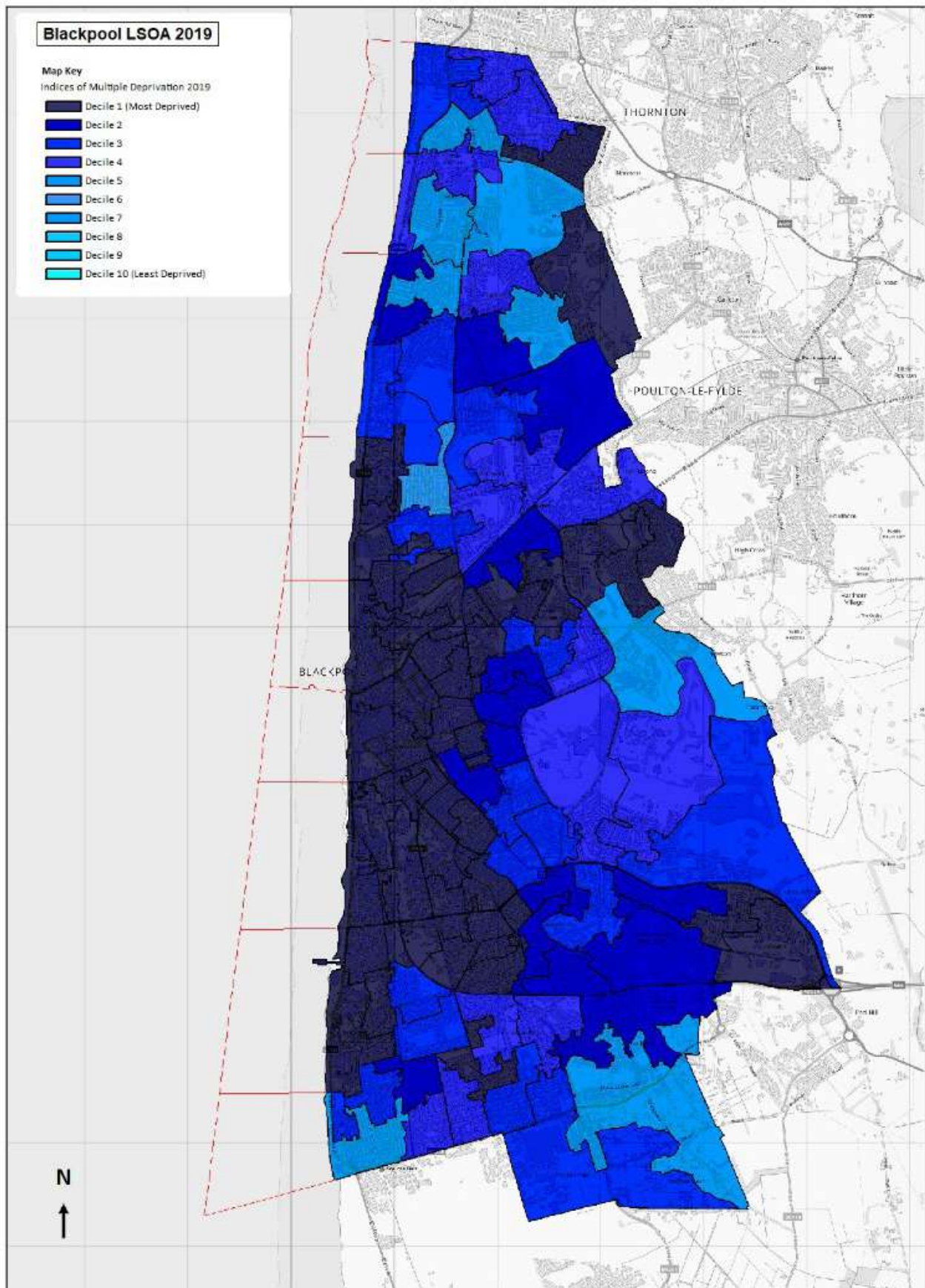
**1.6** Marginalised communities and high unemployment inevitably depresses the number of trips taken by any mode, including bus. Blackpool has the highest deprivation index of any English local authority and as Figure 2 shows the concentration of most deprived areas along the south coastal strip, around the town centre and across to Grange Park in the east. These same areas contain the most significant part of Blackpool’s resident population, which the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) refers to as ‘transient renters’ – being characterised by:

- Singles and homesharers;
- Short term private renters;
- Low rent accommodation;
- Often Victorian terraces;
- Most likely to get a lift to work; and
- Low wage occupations.

This group ought to form a key market for public transport, but the proximity of such residences to the town centre reduces such reliance.



Figure 2: Indices of Deprivation 2019 – Blackpool



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1.7 Blackpool’s population of 140,000 includes just under 84,000 people of working age of whom 25% are economically inactive (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Employment Status in Blackpool**



1.8 Funding is a critical issue for Blackpool Council, after significant austerity cuts and escalating social care commitments the Council has no surplus revenue, therefore without additional capital and revenue resources, further bus network development and improved bus infrastructure will not happen. Additional funding is required to deliver this Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). Currently, there is no Section 106 developer funding supporting the bus network.

1.9 The Blackpool Tramway system complements the bus network and although it has high season ridership volumes, its disadvantage is that its north to south coastal alignment means that it can provide comparatively few trips to people living significantly inland and penetration of the town centre is currently poor. However, a new tramway extension to North railway station and entering the developing Talbot Gateway Central Business District will start to address this difficulty upon opening in 2023. Ticketing products allow seamless bus/tram journeys.

1.10 The municipally owned Blackpool Transport Services (BTS) provides most local services, penetrating into Wyre and Fylde boroughs, one service (BTS 7) crossing both boundaries. It also operates the tramway and its ticket range is fully multi-modal. Blackpool’s bus network (see Figure 4) has been run on commercial lines and although some services have been loss making, particularly in the winter, these have been maintained to keep network integrity. This company has recently adopted a particularly high vehicle specification.

**1.11** Following a successful bid to the Government's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) fund, BTS will move to electric operation over the next few years. It has recently invested in new ticket machines to provide tap on- tap off and contactless card payment alongside App-based tickets and has simplified its fare structures, reducing fares for many trips. App based purchasing offers a range of discounted season products aimed to satisfy the maximum range of travel needs. The Council, however, would like to see cash payments retained on all public transport vehicles.

**1.12** Stagecoach provides three vital inter-urban services using high quality vehicles, which connect Blackpool to regional centres, Preston and Lancaster. Coastliner and Preston Bus also offer very useful, network complementary services, the latter's service 76 as part of Lancashire County Council's tendered bus network.

**1.13** Blackpool is the Fylde Coast sub-region's economic hub and maintaining its connectivity to other centres is vital. The sub-region also includes the key settlements of Lytham St Anne's, Thornton-Cleveleys, Fleetwood and Poulton-le-Fylde. The Fylde Coast is predominately urban.

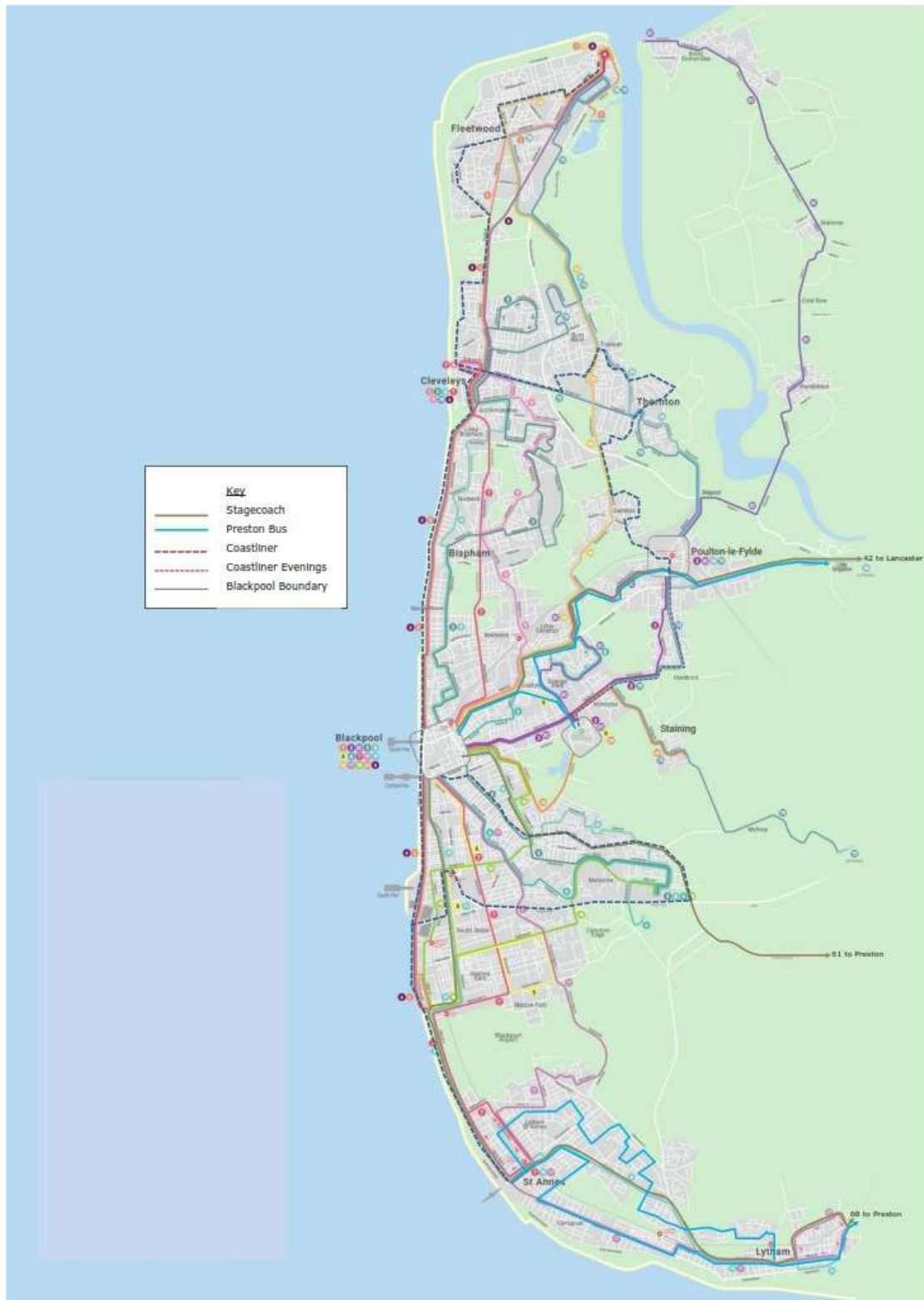
**1.14** Blackpool's bus station on Talbot Road became obsolete and has been redeveloped as part of the Central Business District. A public transport hub centred on Market Street and Corporation Street has been established.

**1.15** In 2023 a better public transport interchange will be established within the Central Business District, linking bus, tram and rail, the line to Blackpool North electrified during 2017/18. The new tramway extension platform features a 'totem' display that will provide real time public transport information.

**1.16** Blackpool has four local railway stations on two separate lines. Blackpool North is the town's main station and offers regular services to Preston then on to a range of destinations including West Yorkshire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and London. North Station is within walking distance of most bus services serving central Blackpool and has a full range of passenger facilities. Broadly one train per hour serves the station at Layton, with services to Blackpool, Preston and beyond.

**1.17** There is an hourly train service all day from Blackpool South, stopping at Pleasure Beach and Squires Gate then via Lytham St Anne's to Preston, with some services running to Colne or Ormskirk. Although Squires Gate station actually lies across the Lancashire boundary it does serve significant areas of housing within Blackpool. South station is not well-sited for access to the town centre but is served by buses on frequent services BTS 5, BTS 11 and Stagecoach 68.

Figure 4: The Fylde Coast Bus Network



## Enhanced Partnership

**1.18** With an agreed BSIP in place, attention has shifted to establishing the Enhanced Partnership (EP) based upon it. The statutory consultation has been carried out and the next stage of the process is underway. An EP Management Board will be formed with representatives from key stakeholders, based on the established Bus Operators' Forum and likely to be confirmed for a first meeting early in 2023. This will take various plan aspects forward.

**1.19** During 2021 Blackpool Council considered the option to produce a joint BSIP, discussing this with Lancashire County Council (LCC), with whom it works closely, but concluded that the Fylde Coast's self-contained geography means that a more local BSIP would meet its circumstances better than would a plan encompassing the whole of Lancashire. This does not negate the need for close working on matters such as service frequencies, cross-border and multi-operator ticketing.

**1.20** The Council works with LCC within the No106Wcard concessionary pass partnership, which is a multi-operator system. The Fylde Coast bus network comprises significant parts of both Wyre and Fylde boroughs of Lancashire and the bus network is economically vital to these areas. The Lancashire BSIP will address the Fylde and Wyre areas as a whole, linking strongly with the Blackpool BSIP.

## 2. Local Policy

**2.1** The Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) identifies bus as a primary transport mode for the Fylde Coast that is particularly important for Blackpool and proposes a long term strategy to promote modal shift to bus, supported by the associated local transport programme which includes elements for bus shelter replacement. The LTP's main objectives are:

- Manage congestion levels on Blackpool's roads, especially where it impacts on local economic performance.
- Improve transport to and within the resort, particularly by more sustainable modes, to enhance the visitor experience and support the local economy.
- Improve access to healthcare, education, employment, shops, social and leisure opportunities and resort attractions, particularly by sustainable modes.

**2.2** In this context, public transport needs to be affordable, frequent, reliable, good quality and convenient to be a realistic and preferred option over the car for both residents and visitors. It needs to be more extensively promoted, particularly for the latter. The VisitBlackpool website carries information on public transport to the resort, including for group travel and links to operators' sites. The Transport Policy website page carries public transport information and links. The Council supports operators in promotion initiatives where this is possible to do so.

**2.3** Pre-Covid, buses carried up to 10 million passengers annually in Blackpool, but this fell to 8.5 million in 2019/20 and only 3.0 million during the pandemic in 2020/21. The Department for Transport (DfT) figures for 2021/22 are awaited.

**2.4** Bus services provide a viable alternative to the car for many for important journeys to work, education and healthcare. Developer contributions to finance bus infrastructure will continue to be sought, e.g. through Section 278 agreements.

**2.5** The Council’s Core Strategy recognises bus transport’s role and seeks to encourage it, particularly through the following two policies:

### **Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (2012 – 2027):**

#### **Policy CS5: Connectivity 1.c**

“Working with bus operators and developers to provide enhanced bus services with efficient, comprehensive routing served by high quality infrastructure, providing bus priority measures where appropriate to enable services to operate efficiently.”

#### **Policy CS27: South Blackpool Transport and Connectivity**

“1. Development proposals in South Blackpool will be required to prioritise sustainable modes of transport between homes, jobs and supporting community facilities.

2. Convenient access to public transport and improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure are required to support major housing and employment growth in this area. This includes:

- a. linking to and extending the existing network of routes within and to/from the area;
- b. creating direct rapid transport connections with the town centre and employment areas; and
- c. preparing, implementing and monitoring Travel Plans.”

**2.6** Several bus routes already serve the south Blackpool area, but services to the main employment areas on the Blackpool and Fylde boundary need improving. The issue is primarily one of accessibility between residential areas, many deprived, and employment opportunities. However, as across the network, more frequent and reliable services are needed to maximise bus patronage.

## **3. Challenges and Opportunities**

### **Challenges**

**3.1** Blackpool’s narrow north-south orientation and the town centre’s location against the sea presents bus network issues and makes it difficult to amend routes. This results in some residential areas having low or no network coverage, partly because north-south running services must effectively divert west to access the town centre. For example, the more easterly A587 corridor has only a low frequency service (BTS 20). This passes Stanley Park, a major hotel and Blackpool Zoo. A more frequent service to attract current car commuters using this corridor is needed, linking trip generators, but would need to be supported over at least a five year period allowing ridership to mature and the service to achieve its maximum commercial viability. Previous low-frequency services have not proved sufficiently attractive or viable.

- 3.2** The 2011 census showed only 9.1% travelled to work by bus. However people may not count their full motoring costs when comparing outlay to bus, while apparently not fully aware of season or group travel products that could cut these bus costs dramatically, although recently high fuel costs and continuing cost of living issues mean this situation might change, although as yet there is little evidence of modal shift.
- 3.3** In the search to increase efficiency and maintain network profitability, route amendments and losses have been inevitable, although these have not been as severe as might have occurred in other areas where a municipal owner operator is not in place. Service frequencies have decreased making it more necessary to consult timetables.
- 3.4** Driver shortages have been a more recent issue, which is being addressed through enhanced recruitment. At the same time information has come online and now onto mobile phones, including real time and a 'bus tracker' facility. The network has been mainly commercial and the funding to support its expansion is not available locally.
- 3.5** Covid had a dire ridership effect, although at the time of writing non-concessionary travel is estimated to be at 104% of pre-pandemic levels; however, concessionary travel lags behind. For the year ending March 2021, the number of local bus passenger journeys in Blackpool decreased by 65%; however this has bounced back with a plus 96% figure to the end of March 2022, buoyed by significant increases in visitor numbers. Government support for essential bus services has been much appreciated.
- 3.6** Generally, traffic levels are now back to pre-pandemic levels or above, so that buses can once more be stuck in congestion. Congestion is now far less predictable in terms of day of week or time of day. The pinch points identified by operators where congestion occurs are listed below (Section 6). Increasing Blackpool's road capacity is not possible without removing verges in a town that is short of green space and biodiversity, or demolishing homes; rarely popular options. Superior traffic control including variable message signage (VMS) has been adopted, but this only goes so far when faced by peak time traffic pressures.
- 3.7** Introducing very high quality vehicles and adopting new technology as it becomes available and is proven to be reliable, can boost ridership particularly with marketing and promotion. During pandemic lockdowns, many people got into the habit of travelling less or not travelling at all. Pre-Covid bus patronage levels are returning and this can be built on. Modal shift can be pursued to achieve an increase in bus ridership above pre-Covid levels, primarily by effective bus travel promotion to current non-users. This does not only apply to Blackpool and its environs but to the surrounding areas and Stagecoach inter-urban services play their role in this.
- 3.8** A policy of increasing frequencies and incrementally introducing new routes, together with strong and persistent promotion, all supported by a long term subsidy model to support increased frequencies and reduce fares, will be needed before consistent modal shift from car to bus will be achieved.

## Opportunities

**3.9** The relatively young Palladium-branded BTS bus fleet remains a revelation to many and a realisation of their quality and the very large number of trips that the network offers, together with those of partner operators including Coastliner and Stagecoach for the inter-urban services to regional centres, does have the potential to achieve modal shift, provided the conditions described above are in place. Awareness raising of what's on offer is key to encourage bus use amongst new and existing users, e.g. tap on- tap off and discounted season products through smartphone Apps.

**3.10** New vehicles and new technology need exploiting for their promotion potential as much as possible. Adopting contactless cards, tap on- tap off and smartphone Apps removes the need for cash change, one of the most oft cited obstacles to bus use alongside not knowing precisely how much change is needed, although cash payment needs to be maintained. Following ZEBRA success, new electric vehicles offering a smoother ride and leading to a cleaner environment will facilitate a valuable promotional campaign.

**3.11** In the light of the challenges section above, the need for a new national motoring taxation system to replace fuel duty will be a primary opportunity if introduced, perhaps relating taxation to the distance travelled and sensitive enough to counter congestion with a higher peak time tariff. Reviewing local car parking arrangements would also assist. As reliance on personal transport decreases, it will be incumbent on the Local Transport Authority to devise innovative parking policy solutions to further encourage bus usage. Improved bus services would help support the local economy by enabling people to access employment and education by a more environmentally-friendly transport mode.

**3.12** New town centre developments and the creation of the Talbot Gateway Central Business District (offices, superstore, retail, hotel, restaurant), creates a new bus and heavy rail commuter market. The move of 3000 staff in two DWP office complexes from out-of-town sites to the Talbot Gateway and proposals to create a central 'Multiversity' site for further education will also boost public transport market share.

**3.13** Further town centre developments include the recently opened Conference Centre, Blackpool Central leisure development, IMAX cinema, Sands Hotel and Blackpool Museum. Redevelopment and regeneration in the central area present opportunities to grow the bus market, for Fylde Coast residents and the many visitors to the resort. Bus connections between the town centre and Stanley Park and Blackpool Zoo have much scope to grow as does the direct tramway link between North Station and the Pleasure Beach.

**3.14** Blackpool's famous Illuminations extend its tourist season beyond most other coastal resorts and following a successful extension in 2022, will shine nightly until January 2nd in 2023. While tourism public transport flows are principally associated with the tramway (and the heritage trams still offer tours), tourists also use the buses. With increased staycation numbers, more seasonal services might be viable.

**3.15** Part of the support for an Enhanced Partnership must include promotion and marketing resources, preferably as part of a national bus travel campaign. Thanks to smartphones, owners now have much easier access to public transport information and discounted ticket purchase options, but people need to be notified of this and encouraged to use it. Promotion needs to get public



transport information to visitors before they arrive by car, train or coach, an obvious challenge. There should be incentives to download bus apps before arrival. Northern Trains is looking at group travel products. An agreement between BTS and Northern Trains means that through ticketing between rail and bus/tram services is now available.

**3.16** Fylde Coast residents and visitors from further afield frequent Blackpool's many attractions and opportunities should be taken to promote bus travel to them wherever possible. This could be by operators liaising with attractions, to give incentives to travel by bus.

## **4. Overview**

### **Clarification of Blackpool Council's Intent to Establish an Enhanced Partnership**

**4.1** The Council will establish an authority-wide Enhanced Partnership (EP). At the time of writing, the EP has undergone its statutory objection and consultation periods and is now scheduled for consideration by the Council's Executive. The process has built on existing good relations with operator partners and is appropriate for Blackpool's geographic area and links to other settlements. Franchising would overly disrupt these good relations and result in the Council largely re-specifying what is in place already. A funded EP, working in partnership with operators, is the best way forward for Blackpool and the Fylde Coast.

### **Details of Enhanced Partnership Proposed Structure and Membership**

**4.2** The Council aims to establish the EP by early 2023 on the basis of agreed Terms of Reference and a chair agreed by consensus. The four current operators will be invited to join as will any new operators that emerge. The Council will provide secretariat, with meetings being convened on a quarterly basis. This group's focus will be delivering the EP Plan that derives from the 2021 Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

**4.3** Each operator will nominate both a representative and a second to the EP Management Board. The Council's transport portfolio holder will be invited to attend and will receive papers. Senior officers will also attend, linking the programme to the Council's transport and wider social and environmental policies.

**4.4** Climate emergency working groups will also receive reports. Clearly in the light of the Council's climate emergency commitments the EP needs to embrace this agenda and act as a spur for modal shift to more sustainable transport, an increasingly urgent imperative.

### **Explanation of Reasons for Adopting a Single Geographical Area**

**4.5** Blackpool is a small unitary authority covering just 35 km<sup>2</sup> with a geography arranged in a relatively narrow strip running north- south. The BSIP/EP are concerned with services within the Blackpool boundary primarily, but where routes cross boundaries there will be joint discussions and agreements, primarily with Lancashire County Council (LCC) as the neighbouring transport authority, but also the district councils of Fylde and Wyre.

4.6 Agreement on the pattern and frequencies of cross-border services and multi-operator ticketing will be required and can be secured through Enhanced Partnership schemes agreed jointly.

### **Arrangements for Annual Review**

4.7 The EP Management Board will engage in an annual review of success against targets and produce a short report, including recommendations for new actions, initiatives and changes in BSIP emphasis, if deemed necessary. A particularly tight focus on achieving reliability and passenger satisfaction is needed. Overall modal shift from car travel is the goal, in the interests of all.

### **Details of Consultation with Operators**

4.8 Ongoing discussions have been held with the four bus operators in Blackpool: BTS, Stagecoach, Preston Bus and Coastliner. All are members of the current Blackpool Bus Operators' Forum, which has discussed the BSIP at its regular quarterly meetings. The statutory objection and consultation exercises yielded no objections to the EP. Letters of support from the operators are appended to this revised BSIP.

## **5. Current Offer**

### **Blackpool's Road Network in Context**

5.1 The M55 is the strategic road serving Blackpool, ending just on the edge of the borough boundary. Preston New Road (A583) connects Blackpool with Preston. Poulton Road (A586) feeds in from the north east.

5.2 There are three principal north to south roads – from west to east the Promenade (A584), Whitegate Drive (A583) / Devonshire Road (B5124) and the A587 corridor. These three roads are interconnected by several east to west roads of varying standards.

5.3 Average traffic speed in Blackpool stood at 17.7mph in 2019 but this increased to 18.4mph in 2020. The slowest section of road is the A5073 linking Preston New Road to the sea front at an average 13.0mph.

5.4 From published DfT data, Figure 5 shows vehicles miles travelled in Blackpool from 2011 while Figure 6 shows average daily flow since 2011. It is of note that the trend in both was broadly flat pre-Covid, with a significant fall in both measures of 16-17% in 2020. This stands in stark contrast to the 65% fall in bus passengers in 2020/21.

Figure 5: Vehicle Miles Travelled in Blackpool by Year

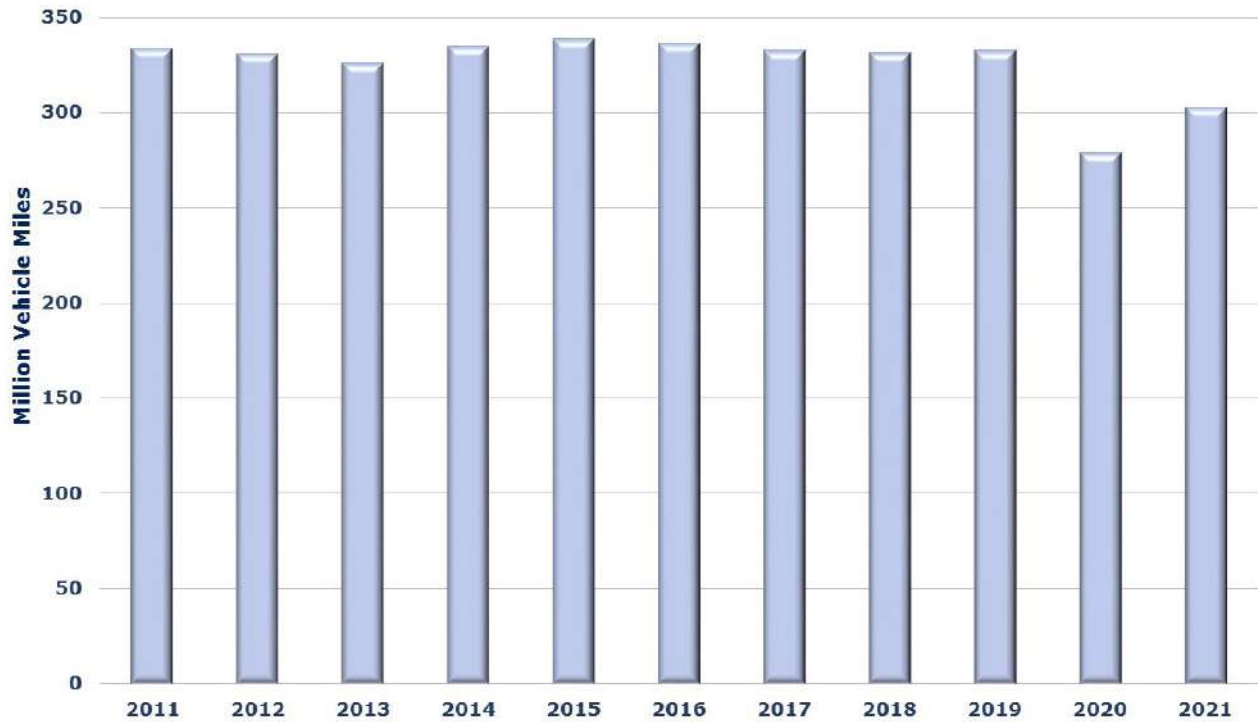
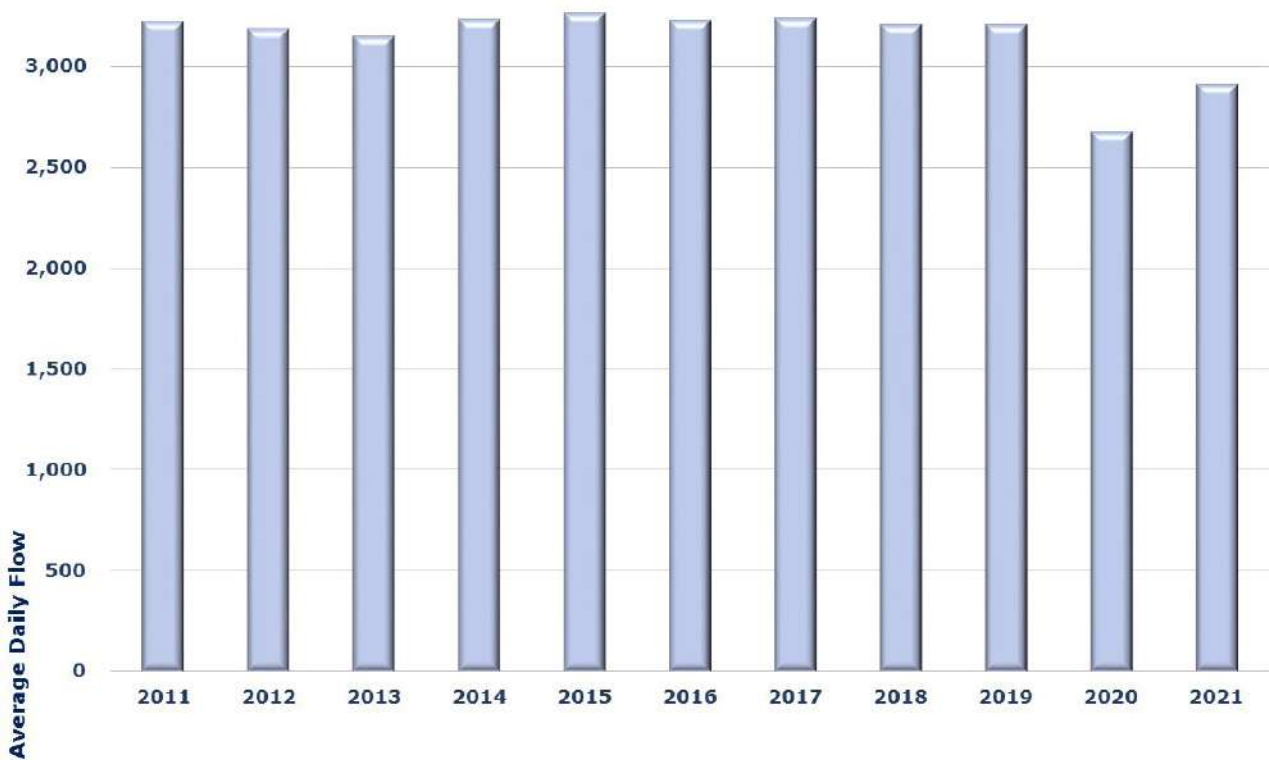


Figure 6: Average Daily Traffic Flow in Blackpool



**5.5** In the town centre there has been a progressive pedestrianisation programme which has closed former through routes and amended some bus routes. In addition, the section of the Promenade near Blackpool Tower and Talbot Square has had significant public realm improvement work. This has giving greater priority to pedestrians moving east- west (town centre to/from sea front) across the Promenade (A584) north to south.

**5.6** Bus services to the south of the town centre are concentrated on the Promenade which has high demands from traffic and pedestrians, limiting road capacity which can result in significant delays, particularly during the Illuminations period, when bus services after dark are diverted.

## **Modal Share**

**5.7** Blackpool Council commissions multi-modal surveys to be carried out three times a year across its road network during a single day in March, June and September. Each survey lasts for a 12 hours (07:00-19:00) and is typically carried out at the following nine junctions:

- 1.** Queens Promenade (A584) / Warbreck Hill Road (B5265) / Dickson Road / Promenade (A584), 4 arm roundabout;
- 2.** Plymouth Road (A587) / Poulton Road (A586) / St Walburgas Road (A587) / Carleton Avenue, 5 arm roundabout (4 arms signalised);
- 3.** St Walburga's Road (A587) / North Park Drive / Newton Drive (B5266) / Whinney Heys Road (one way), 5 arm roundabout;
- 4.** Talbot Road (A586) / Dickson Road / Topping Street, 4 arm signalised junction;
- 5.** Talbot Road (A586) / Promenade (A584), 3 arm signalised junction;
- 6.** Church Street (A583) / Cookson Street / Regent Road, 4 arm junction (2 arms signalised);
- 7.** Cherry Tree Road North / Cherry Tree Road / Clifton Road, 3 arm signalised junction;
- 8.** Talbot Road (A586) / Buchanan Street, 3 arm signalised junction; and
- 9.** Watson Road / St Anne's Road / Marton Drive, 5 arm junction (4 arms signalised).

**5.8** Over the three surveys carried out in 2022, buses made up an average of 1.99% of vehicle movements. However, if this figure is adjusted for typical passenger loadings (assuming 18 for bus and 1.7 for car) bus passengers account for a modal share just over 15%.

**5.9** At local authority boundary points, traffic flows give a good guide to travel demand not confined within the local authority area. Adjusting the survey figures to 2019 levels using TEMPRO suggests just in excess of 282,000 daily cross-boundary traffic movements.

## **Blackpool's Bus Network**

**5.10** Blackpool has a strong local bus network, but with scope for improvement. BTS, the principal operator, has over a number of years simplified the network into one made up mainly of high frequency core routes radiating from Blackpool Town Centre. This has been matched by major fleet investment.

**5.11** Several core services run on twelve minute frequencies under normal circumstances, although some had reduced frequencies during the pandemic restrictions and since due to driver shortages, which have compromised the potential pace of recovery. Notable reductions have applied to the main service 5 to Victoria Hospital and service 9 to Cleveleys which is currently at half its normal

frequency. However, unlike in most other areas, evening frequencies have been maintained. The core services are complemented by lower-frequency services providing key links that would otherwise be unserved.

**5.12** The current Blackpool bus network has been run commercially largely without tendered services, but includes loss making services intended to maintain network integrity. Council revenue support is limited to around £24k per annum. The Council's resource situation means that if the BSIP's stated aspirations are to be achieved, all network and infrastructure improvements will have to be paid for from external resources. Significant improvements proposed in the EP can only proceed on this basis.

**5.13** Stagecoach previously had a depot in Fleetwood but now its presence is limited to three inter-urban services provided by its depots in Morecambe and Preston:

- 42 Blackpool- Garstang- Lancaster;
- 61 Blackpool- Kirkham- Preston; and
- 68 Blackpool- Lytham St Anne's- Preston.

**5.14** Service 42 is broadly hourly, but with a long morning gap and there is no evening service. LCC is considering the introduction of an evening service using its BSIP funding.

**5.15** The main daytime frequency on service 68 which usually increases from every 20 minutes to every 15 minutes during the summer and the Illuminations period has remained at every 20 minutes throughout this year. LCC previously supported evening journeys on service 68 but they were then taken on commercially by Stagecoach.

**5.16** Stagecoach 68 overlaps with BTS 11 over most of its route but coordinating the two is difficult as, service 68 is affected by traffic congestion in Preston which makes reliable coordination with a local service difficult. However, potential for coordination on this corridor could still be explored. The role of the parallel rail corridor from Blackpool South is relevant as it is considered complementary in public transport terms.

**5.17** On Whitegate Drive the Stagecoach 61, the more direct service to Preston via Kirkham, accompanies the BTS 4 and these two could be coordinated on this section. There is a limited late evening service on service 61.

**5.18** Coastliner is a local independent company running three local services into Blackpool, one seasonal (26) serving Marton Mere Caravan Park and Blackpool Zoo. Service 24 provides some unique links across the northern edge of Blackpool. The 21 provides a Fylde Coast sea front service.

**5.19** A full list of bus services operating in Blackpool is shown in Table 1; daytime, evening and Sunday frequencies are indicated in buses per hour (bph).

**Table 1: Bus Services in Blackpool, September 2022**

Service	Description	Operator	Tendered	Cross-boundary	Daytime	Evening	Sunday
1	Fleetwood to Starr Gate via the Promenade	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	1bph	N/A	1bph
2	Poulton to Blackpool Town Centre via Victoria Hospital	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	1bph	1bph	1bph
2C	Knott End to Blackpool via Poulton	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	2bph	2bph	Every 1.5hrs
3	Mereside Tesco to Cleveleys Park via Blackpool	Blackpool Transport Services	Part	Yes	2bph	1bph	1bph
4	Cleveleys to Mereside Tesco via Blackpool	Blackpool Transport Services	Part	Yes	2bph	1bph	1bph
5	Victoria Hospital to Halfway House via Town Centre	Blackpool Transport Services	No	No	3bph	2bph	2bph
6	Mereside to Grange Park via Blackpool Town Centre & Layton	Blackpool Transport Services	No	No	2bph	2bph	2bph
7	Cleveleys to St Anne's via Blackpool	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	2bph	1bph	2bph
9	Cleveleys to Blackpool via Bispham	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	2bph	2bph	2bph
11	Lytham to Blackpool Town Centre via St Anne's	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	3bph	2bph	2bph
14	Fleetwood to Blackpool via Layton	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	4bph	2bph	3bph
17	Blackpool Town Centre to Lytham (Saltcotes Road)	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	2bph	1bph	1bph
18	Blackpool Town Centre to Mereside Tesco via South Shore	Blackpool Transport Services	No	No	1bph	N/A	1bph
20	Staining to Blackpool via Victoria Hospital	Blackpool Transport Services	No	No	Bus every 1.5 hrs, day only	N/A	Every 1.5 hrs
21	St Anne's – Pleasure Beach – Tower – Gynn Square – Cabin – Norbreck- Cleveleys	Coastliner	No	Yes	2bph	N/A	N/A
24	Fleetwood – Cleveleys – Poulton	Coastliner	No	Yes	2bph	N/A	N/A
26	Marton Mere Holiday Village- Tower- Promenade- Pleasure Beach	Coastliner	No	No	1bph	N/A	1bph
42	Lancaster – Garstang- Blackpool	Stagecoach	No	Yes	1bph	N/A	Every 2 hrs
61	Preston – Blackpool via Clifton, Kirkham, Wrea Green	Stagecoach	No	Yes	2bph	1bph	1bph
68	Preston – Blackpool via Freckleton, Warton, Lytham, St Anne's	Stagecoach	No	Yes	3bph	1bph	2bph
76	Blackpool (Abingdon St) – Poulton – Singleton – Weeton – Kirkham – Wrea Green – Warton – Lytham – St Anne's	Preston Bus	LCC tendered service	Yes	1bph	1bph	N/A
Rideability	Community Transport	Blackpool Council	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A

## Supported Services

**5.20** Bus service support is currently limited to around £24k per year to maintain evening and weekend services for two relatively marginal routes, the BTS 3 and the BTS 4. Without these routes, sections of their corridors would have no service at all at these times.

**5.21** Without additional ring-fenced funding there will be no supported service expansion. Apart from the 3 and 4 arrangement, the Blackpool network runs commercially. The previously supported BTS 10 was lost, being heavily loss making, which did provide a connection between Blackpool town centre and St Anne’s via south east Blackpool, which remains a clear network gap.

## Baseline Data

### Bus service provision

**5.22** Due to a variety of circumstances some data provided by operators was mixed in format and availability. Table 2 outlines the change over the past three years in patronage, proportion of concessions and km covered in Blackpool. This is an approximation due to not including all operators.

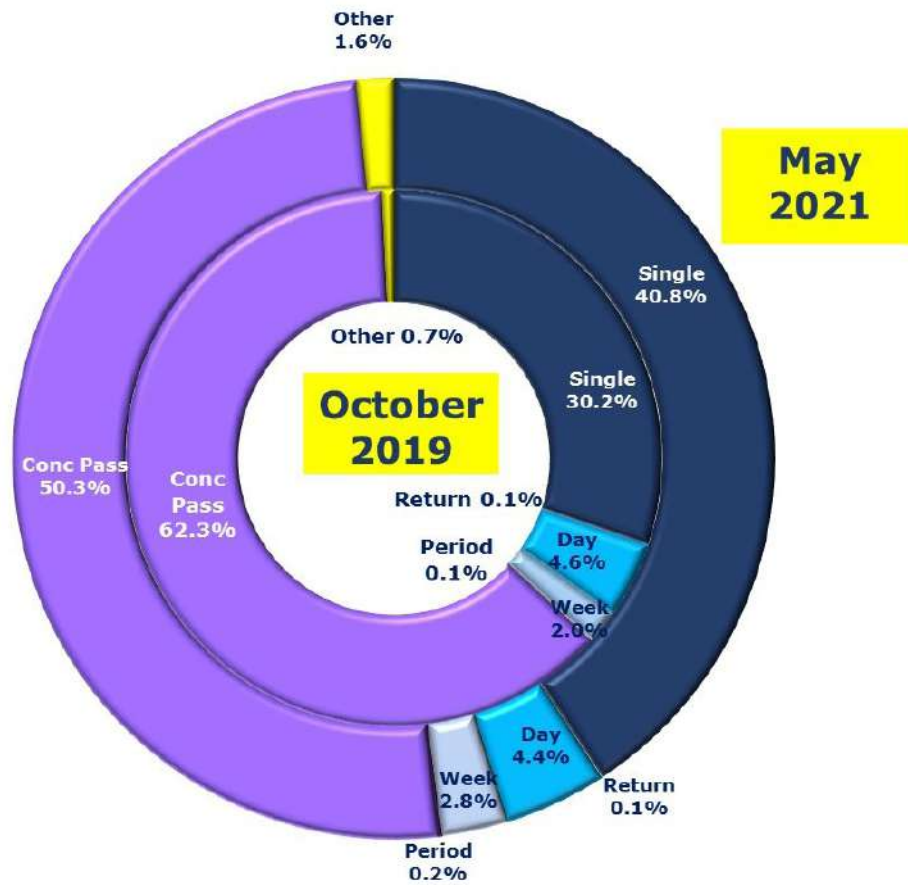
**Table 2: Patronage and km Operated, by Financial Year**

Financial year	Est. patronage ('000,000)	Patronage Change	Est. proportion concessions	Est. km operated ('000,000)	km change
2018/19	8.40	-	33.4%	7.26	-
2019/20	8.24	-1.9%	32.8%	7.20	-0.8%
2020/21	3.27	-60.3%	25.8%	5.06	-29.7%

### Bus passengers

**5.23** Using a snapshot of October 2019 and May 2021 gives a reasonable before Covid and post lockdown picture of bus use. Concessionary pass holders are travelling less, with single fares increasing in sales – Figure 7 shows sales by ticket type.

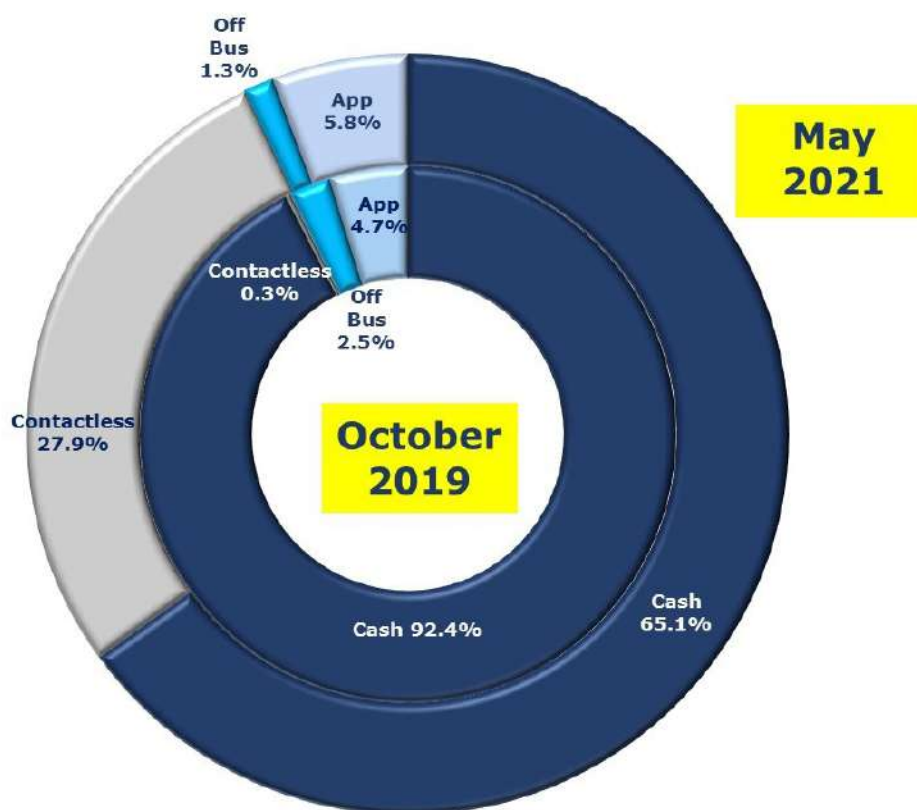
Figure 7: Proportion of Sales by Ticket Type



5.24 Covid had an impact on sales, with fewer sales via off bus channels and an increase in sales via Apps. However, the very high proportion of sales taking place on the bus is detrimental to boarding times; it was difficult to get an accurate picture of cash verses contactless sales but a rough estimate is around 30% of on bus sales now being carried out via contactless bank card as Figure 8 shows. Cashless travel is likely to increase as the technology ‘beds in’.



Figure 8: Sales by Channel



### Council infrastructure

5.25 The current total length of bus lane / bus only road within Blackpool is set out in Table 3, while Table 4 outlines the current status of bus stops within Blackpool.

Table 3: Bus lanes in Blackpool

Location	Length
Central Drive	320m
Talbot Road	108m
Victoria Hospital	80m
Town centre bus hub	314m
<b>Total</b>	<b>822m (0.51 miles)</b>

5.23 Table 4 outlines the current status of bus stops within Blackpool.

Table 4: Bus stops in Blackpool

Number of bus stops	Density of stops per km <sup>2</sup>	Stops with shelters	% shelters	Stops covered by CCTV	% CCTV
679	19.5	239	35.2%	32	4.7%

## Blackpool Tramway

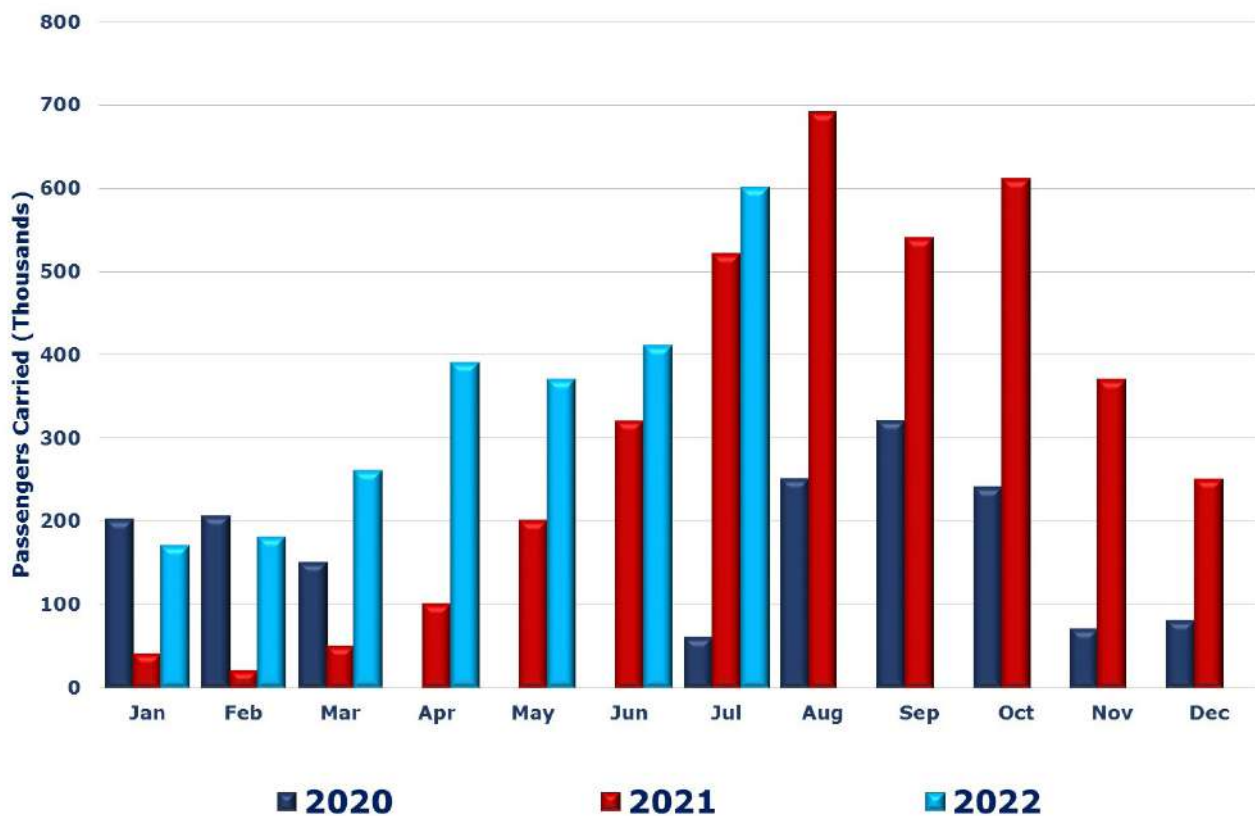
5.26 Blackpool has the UK's longest continually operating tramway, commencing operations in 1885. Since the 1960s it has been concentrated on the 18 km coastal route between Starr Gate and Fleetwood. It is a cross-boundary route with the northern section to Fleetwood falling within the Wyre district of Lancashire. Patronage in recent years is shown in Figure 9.

5.27 In 2012 the tramway reopened after being fully modernised with 16 new, low-floor trams providing the main all-year service. These are supplemented by heritage trams which offer tours and short-workings. The tramway is operated by BTS on behalf of the Council. The modern trams are kept at a purpose-built depot at Starr Gate while the heritage fleet is kept at the main BTS depot on Rigby Road.

5.28 The extension to Blackpool North Station, due to open in 2023, will restore a section of route closed in 1963 and reintroduce trams to the town centre. In anticipation of the new service, two further trams were added to the fleet in 2018.

5.29 The tramway is included within the BTS multi-journey ticket range by default at no extra cost. There is a flat single fare on the tramway (currently £2.90) and a tramway-only return fare at £5. In addition, free travel on trams for holders of concessionary passes is limited to residents of Blackpool and Wyre District only.

Figure 9: Tramway Patronage 2020-2022



## **Parking Provision and Enforcement**

**5.30** Blackpool Council manages an extensive car park portfolio (see Table 5) complemented by privately operated car parks (see Table 6). Average parking costs for both are shown in Table 7. It will be seen that parking charges have increased significantly in both sectors since 2021 after charges were held down during the lockdown periods. It should be noted that affordable parking is essential to a visitor-oriented economy, particularly the town centre retail offer.

**5.31** Many municipal car parks are along the former Central Station railway alignment occupying former railway sidings, primarily for visitors. Inevitably this means that demand for Central car park closest to the Promenade and town centre attractions tends to be the highest, although demand for the Pleasure Beach attraction's private car parking is high and this can overflow into municipal car parks. As Central car park fills, facilities further south come into play, until finally the South car park fills. Out of peak holiday times and particularly in the winter this and other facilities are under used, but there is a need to provide for the peaks.

**5.32** If significant modal shift from car to train, coach and inter-urban bus for tourist travel is to be achieved, then car parking land might be released for more productive uses. Naturally the availability of sufficient car parking space is an important development consideration, despite other modes often being available. A genuine parking under provision is likely to lead to illegal and possibly disruptive parking. Over 530 off-street car town centre parking spaces have recently been lost to make way for new developments, although replacement provision is being planned.

**5.33** With the Blackpool retail economy in a parlous state and a local perception that parking for shoppers is expensive and in short supply, it is not feasible to reduce parking supply to attempt to increase bus ridership. This would be unlikely to be successful with shoppers merely transferring to more car friendly venues. Network improvements combined with service and fare subsidies are likely to be necessary to boost modal shift before parking supply can be reduced and the land recycled for development or use as green-space.

**Table 5: Summary of Council Car Parks and Costs in Blackpool**

<b>Car Park</b>	<b>Spaces</b>	<b>2 Hrs</b>	<b>6 Hrs</b>	<b>12 Hrs</b>	<b>48 Hrs</b>
Alfred Street	77	£3.50	£8.50	£14	£22.00
Banks St	246	£3.00	£5.50	£9.00	£17.00
Bethesda	51	£2.50	£7.00	£9.00	£17.00
Bloomfield Rd	642	£4.00	£7.00	£11.00	£20.00
Bolton St	20	£4.00	£7.00	£11.00	£20.00
Bonny St	142	£3.50	£8.50	£14.00	£22.00
Central	611	£3.50	£8.50	£14.00	£22.00
Chapel St	217	£3.50	£8.50	£14.00	£22.00
Cocker Square	24	£3.00	£5.50	£9.00	£17.00
Cocker St	31	£3.00	£5.50	£9.00	£17.00
East Topping St	219	£3.50	£8.50	£14.00	£22.00
Filey Place	39	£5.50	£11.00	£13.20	-
Foxhall Village	129	£4.00	£7.00	£11.00	£20.00
Gynn Square	57	£2.50	£5.00	£7.00	£17.00
Lonsdale Rd	190	£4.00	£7.00	£11.00	£20.00
Lytham Rd	32	£4.00	£7.00	£11.00	£18.00
Queen St	36	£3.50	£8.50	£14.00	£22.00
Seasiders Way	142	£4.00	£7.00	£11.00	£20.00
South Beach	206	£5.50	£9.00	£9.00	£18.00
South	938	£4.00	£7.00	£11.00	£20.00
S King St	77	£3.00	£5.50	£9.00	£17.00
Talbot Rd	596	£3.50	£8.50	£14.00	£22.00
West St	167	£3.50	£8.50	£14.00	£22.00

**Table 6: Summary of Private Car Parks and Costs in Blackpool**

Car Park	Owner	Spaces	2 Hrs	6 Hrs	12 Hrs	48 Hrs
Car Park	Owner	Spaces	2 Hrs	6 Hrs	12 Hrs	48 Hrs
Coop St	NE Parking	115	£3.00	£5.00	£9.00	£20.00
Jaggy Thistle	NW Car Parks	31	£2.50	£6.00	£11.00	£17.50
York St	NW Car Parks	26	£2.50	£6.00	£11.00	£17.50
Osborne Rd	Private	50	£5.00	£5.00	£10.00	-
St Cuthbert's	Bransby Wilson	40	£2.00	£7.00	£7.00	£12.00
Seymour Rd	Total Parking	190	£2.00	£6.00	£12.00	£24.00
Central Reads	NE Parking	35	£2.10	£4.70	£9.50	£15.00
Hornby Rd	NE Parking	50	£1.70	£3.50	£7.50	£13.00
Houndshell shop	Houndshell	770	£2.70	£7.00	£12.00	-
Counce St	NE Parking	165	£3.70	£5.50	£6.60	£20.00
General St	NE Parking	28	£2.30	£7.00	£12.00	£14.00
Pleasure Beach	Pleasure Beach	295	-	£15.00	£15.00	£25.00
Metropole	Parking Eye	78	£2.00	£9.00	£16.00	£32.00

**Table 7: Average Parking Costs per Hour – Council and Private**

	Spaces	2 Hrs	6 Hrs	12 Hrs	48 Hrs
Council	4,889	£3.75	£7.61	£11.98	£20.45
Change since 2021		16%	14%	13%	38%
Private	1,873	£2.70	£7.77	£11.62	£21.91
Change since 2021		-1%	24%	7%	25%

**5.34** The Council has retained its in-house civil enforcement team, which manages the car parks and also provides an ambassadorial service to welcome and facilitate visitors. Effective on-street enforcement helps bus operations. Significant revenues from parking of around £5.5m per annum more than offset the cost of enforcement.

**5.35** Car park revenues (rather than fines) are an important Council income source and that might be seen to militate against modal shift from car. However, at peak times there is a parking shortage and therefore parking income is maxed out. Other modes are available, in this context – bus, coach and rail.

**5.36** Re allocating parking space would need careful consideration, particularly given Blackpool town centre’s parlous retail position. Management of workplace parking provision can be considered, but its restriction should not lead to undesirable or illegal parking. Some Blackpool workplaces are not that bus accessible, which the plan will seek to address.

## Information about Local Operators

**5.37** Six companies or organisations provide local bus services within Blackpool:

- 1.** Blackpool Transport Services – this is the arm’s length local authority owned operator which runs most local services and the Blackpool Tramway. It has two depots – buses and heritage trams are kept at Rigby Road, which is a traditional bus depot and the modern trams are kept at a purpose-built facility at Starr Gate on the southern periphery of the borough. BTS operations have never been confined within the Borough of Blackpool but its operations outside the borough into St. Anne’s and Lytham increased after it purchased Fylde Borough Transport in the 1990s and expanded into Wyre borough (to Fleetwood, Knott End and Poulton-le-Fylde).
- 2.** Preston Bus – is the former municipally owned operator in Preston. It was initially owned by its management, then sold to Stagecoach, which was forced to divest it to Rotala. Through expansion of tendered services it has become a significant local player in the Preston and Fylde Coast area. Following a competitive tender, this Rotala owned company operates one service (76) into Blackpool under contract to LCC between Blackpool and St Anne’s via Blackpool Victoria Hospital, Wrea Green and Poulton-le-Fylde.
- 3.** Coastliner – this is a small, local company with a depot in Brindley Road. Previously it competed more directly with BTS but has now established a niche market and only one service, 21, competes directly with BTS service 1 between Squires Gate and Cleveleys.
- 4.** Rideability – is the Community Transport organisation for Blackpool and is directly operated by the Council using s19 permits. In 2021/22 it catered for nearly 13,500 trips of which 73% were made by disabled passholders.
- 5.** Stagecoach in Cumbria and North Lancashire – A subsidiary of the national group based in Carlisle, operates service 42 between Lancaster and Blackpool from its depot in Morecambe;
- 6.** Stagecoach in Merseyside and South Lancashire – Another subsidiary of the group based in Bootle, it operates services 61 (via Kirkham) and 68 (via Lytham St Anne’s) from Blackpool to Preston from its Preston depot.

**5.38** The fleet size regularly working on local bus services in and around Blackpool is approximately 138, comprising 75 double decks, 60 single decks and 3 minibuses. Figure 10 shows the fleet by Euro engine rating and Figure 11 by age. Over 96% of the fleet are Euro 5 or better, whilst around 40% are less than five years old. The pandemic, however, has curbed fleet renewal.

Figure 10: Fleet by Euro Engine Rating

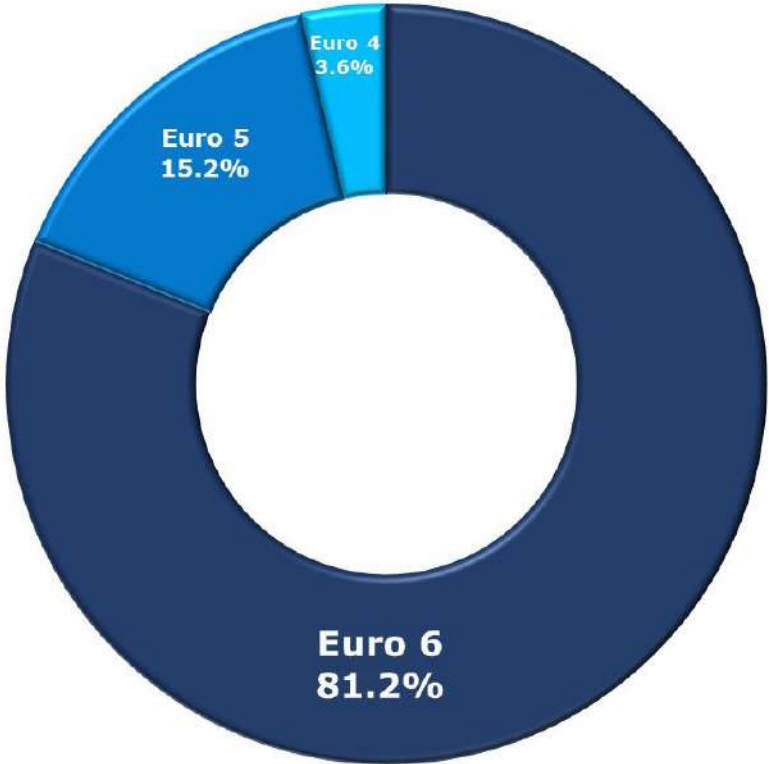
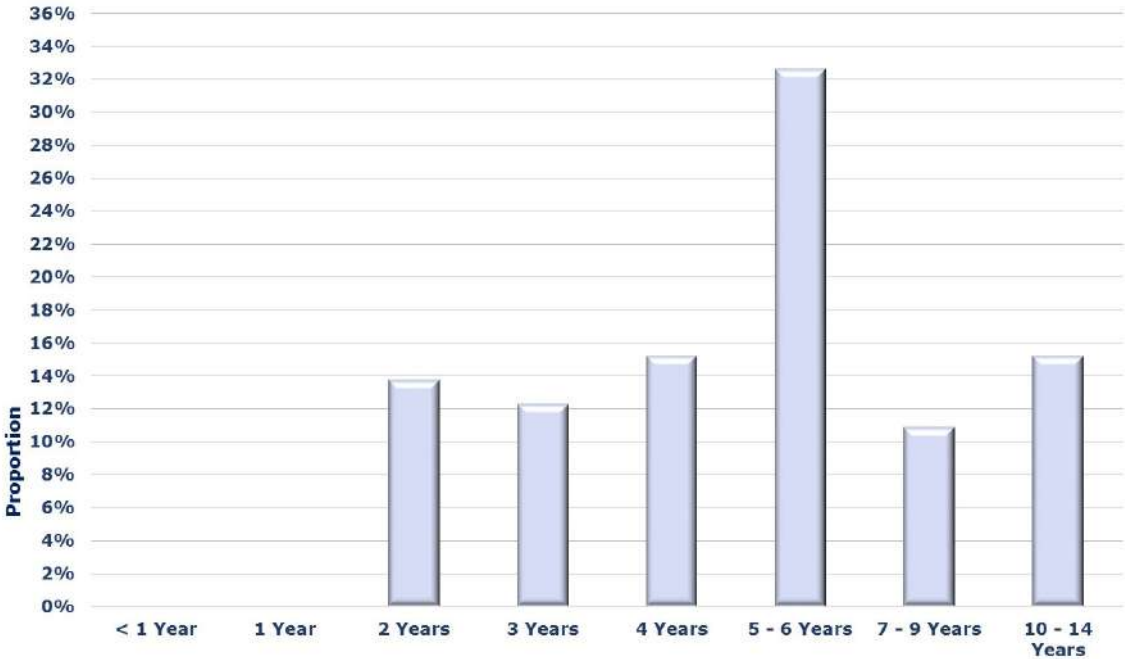


Figure 11: Fleet by Age



5.39 Table 8 outlines the proportion of vehicles with various on board features.

**Table 8: Proportion of Fleet with Features**

Feature	Charging Points	AV Next Stop	On Bus CCTV	Wi-Fi
Proportion	83%	83%	100%	97%

### Local Evidence and Views

5.40 The South Fylde Line Community Rail Partnership has a nominated bus liaison officer concerned with interchange between heavy rail and bus services. This officer has liaised successfully with BTS, which participates in the community rail partnership despite heavy rail competing with its 11 and 7 routes, recognising that sustainable transport modes have a complementary effect on each other.

5.41 The Council ran a bus user group for some years, which BTS attended. The desire for a service between Bispham and Victoria Hospital dominated that agenda. The need for such hospital connections has been considered in the recent network review, but are unlikely to be provided without additional funding.

5.42 BTS has administered a bus user group specific to its own services and this can be built into the partnership monitoring structure.

5.43 In respect of social media, operators have set up their own pages to celebrate good news and provide useful information. Ensuring good bus access to Blackpool's many attractions is key.

5.44 Coastliner 21 and 26 'Beach Bus' both serve the Pleasure Beach as does BTS 1 and the Blackpool Tramway. The tramway extension will provide a close to seamless service between heavy and light rail, connecting the Pleasure Beach with Blackpool North railway station.

### 2019 Passenger Survey

5.45 The TAS Partnership undertook a bus passenger survey on behalf of BTS in 2019. 93.3% of respondents rated the service provided Good or Very Good, whilst 84.6% of respondents were likely to recommend the operator to friends and family. Figure 12 summarises the satisfaction with various aspects of travel, showing that bus stops were the source of most dissatisfaction. Table 9 shows the bus service improvements requested by respondents ranked by popularity, with more frequent services on Sundays the favourite.



Figure 12: 2019 Survey – Satisfaction Results

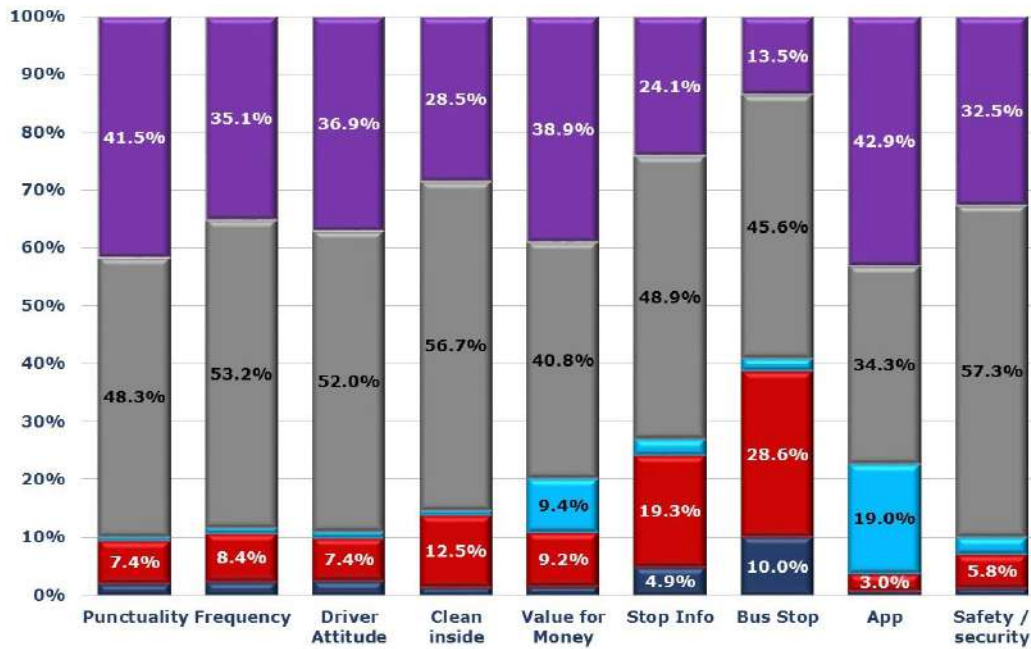


Table 9: 2019 Survey – Requested Improvements

Improvement	% of Respondents
More frequent Sunday	13.2%
Cheaper Fares	13.0%
Contactless	12.7%
More frequent Evening	9.9%
More frequent Daytime	8.7%
Improved Punctuality / Reliability	7.5%
Later Buses	7.3%
Tap On/Off	6.0%
Earlier Morning Buses	5.9%
Friendlier Drivers	5.9%
Shorter Journeys	5.0%
Better Information	4.8%

## 6. Targets and Service Standards

### Journey Times

**6.1** There has been significant effort to improve punctuality but little attention to reducing journey times, many trips being of short duration. At peak times the general traffic flow speed in effect controls bus journey times, for which time is inserted in timetables. This follows through the day when buses tend to run slightly ahead of the timetable, recovering at timing points, particularly during the winter when there is far less tourism traffic. The Promenade in the summer costs considerable bus time, primarily due to tourism traffic, despite the variable message signage (VMS) pointing to early parking that is in operation. A bus lane proposed for part of this space would reduce journey times.

**6.2** Operators have included significant congestion time in their timetables. The timetables can be systematically reviewed to identify where this has happened and it might be possible to recover that time.

**6.3** The Council has produced designs for four initial bus lanes:

- The Promenade, Lytham Road – Chapel Street (northbound)
- Bispham Road, Salmesbury Avenue – Warbreck Hill Road (southbound)
- Talbot Road, Cecil Street – Devonshire Road (eastbound)
- Talbot Road, Mather Street – Devonshire Road (westbound)

The Council's Levelling Up Fund 2 bid included the two Talbot Road bus lanes and improved bus interchange in the town centre.

**6.4** An upgraded traffic control focused bus priority system would help improve journey times where a bus lane cannot be achieved. There is therefore overlap with operator identified issues and the Council's bus priority proposals.

**6.5** Operators identified the following pinch points that can be considered for improvements:

1. The Promenade, Lytham Road to Talbot Square (A584)
2. Approaches to Plymouth Road and Plymouth Road Roundabout (A586/A587)
3. Approaches to Devonshire Square (A583/B5124/B5266)
4. Approaches to Talbot Road/Devonshire Road junction (A586/B5124)
5. Approaches to Starr Gate junction (A584/A5230)
6. Warbeck Hill approach to Devonshire Road (B5265/B5124)
7. Counce Street/Grosvenor Street (linking A586 with A583/B5390)

**6.6** Blackpool's small transport funding allocations and the significant demands upon them have prevented a comprehensive bus journey time improvement programme such as is now envisaged. The four proposed bus lanes would be the start of such a programme, improving bus priority over the course of time.

**6.7** There is also pressure to reallocate road space to cyclists using physically segregated lanes and this will be challenging. Clearly cyclists would need to be able to use bus lanes, which need to be designed so that buses can safely pass cyclists.

**6.8** The Blackpool road network is constrained and it will be a challenge to meet all space re-allocation demands. Modal shift from car will not occur immediately, unless road pricing or tight parking restrictions are introduced, which would have considerable impacts on Blackpool's delicate economy.

**6.9** The network review has considered whether routes can be made more direct, reducing point to point journey times. However, this would result in bus stops being further from some peoples' homes.

**6.10** If journey times on longer distance BTS routes such as the 7, 9 and 11 and the Stagecoach inter-urban services can be reduced significantly, the chances of encouraging bus commuting are enhanced. Inter-urban services do need to pass through inland villages, such as Freckleton (service 68) and Wrea Green (service 61), which makes them somewhat indirect. A daily commuting trip above 30 minutes is a serious disincentive to use bus, when the car is inevitably more direct.

### **Reliability**

**6.11** Measures implemented to allow reduced journey times would also improve service reliability. This has been operators' priority over recent years, difficult to achieve in the light of road congestion and the considerable if temporary town centre works that have taken place.

**6.12** The former BTS 14 route was separated into the 14 and 17 and the BTS 11 was separated into the 9 and 11 to improve service reliability. The BTS 7 survives passing over two borough boundaries.

**6.13** Reliability is recognised as the first priority for users and possibly non-users. Without it modal shift will not be achieved. Punctuality on the Blackpool network is good, standing at 97% 'on-time' in 2020/21 but this, of course, reflects the situation where additional running time has been inserted to allow for predictable congestion.

### **Passenger Satisfaction**

**6.14** A baseline passenger survey is required and this would take place during 2023/24, to be repeated annually. Ambitious targets would be set.

### **Rationale for Overall Network Design**

**6.15** There is a clear balance between network density and fleet efficiency, together with service frequency. It's important to hold fares down, particularly as non-users will seek value for money before adopting bus travel and may judge this on the basis of walk-up fares. Reducing frequencies will inevitably lose existing ridership and being seen to reduce frequencies will discourage modal shift, thus this trend does need to be reversed. Operators have undertaken to increase frequencies if supporting finance is made available. Driver shortages have made some frequency reductions unavoidable, but new drivers are being recruited and trained.

**6.16** Blackpool's north-south orientation, its narrow shape and the need for services to serve or pass through the town centre sited against the sea front, largely dictates the primary bus routes.

**6.17** The bus network has built up incrementally over years managed by people who know the area and its economy intimately. Without subsidy, which has simply not been available, the gaps that do exist in a network that is run solely for profit, cannot be filled. A clear gap resulting from the lack of a service using the east Blackpool corridor and going via the hospital has been identified, a potential route that would be extended to serve the Airport Enterprise Zone (as it used to serve the business park). The network review has taken a comprehensive view of all factors.

**6.18** Any network must focus on the trips that people need in order to maximise service quality and thereby ridership, and be amended as the physical economy of workplaces and other trip generators changes. New industrial estates, including the Airport Enterprise Zone have been sited on the borough's margins where land has been available. If under-provided with bus services, inevitably car-based commuting patterns become established and it will be difficult to reverse this to achieve modal shift if services are not improved. It is not good enough to just provide a bus service; frequency and time-span and where else this service goes in relation to other trip generators also needs to be considered. The town centre's location distorts the network, but it is a primary trip generator.

**6.19** The need to provide the trips that are required and avoid relying on people to change bus, is tempered by the inability to structure an efficient commercial system within such a constrained road network as described above. This was the starting point for the network review that has taken place.

**6.20** The Fylde Coast network is currently largely stand alone. If it is assumed that the current network is maintained, there is one corridor where coordination could improve service provision, between Blackpool, St. Anne's and Lytham with BTS 11 and Stagecoach 68 offering six uncoordinated buses per hour. These buses coordinated on a 10 minute frequency would offer the public a better service and this should be an aim of any partnership, together with liaison with LCC regarding measures in Preston to improve the reliability of service 68.

**6.21** On other corridors:

- BTS 4 and Stagecoach 61 should be coordinated as much as is possible;
- The potential exists to coordinate BTS 1 and Coastliner 21 between Squires Gate and Cleveleys once the frequency of service 1 is restored;
- There are four services by three operators offering five buses per hour between Blackpool and Poulton-le-Fylde on four different routes – there must be potential here to review and seek a more optimal solution.

**6.22** BTS has maintained some low-frequency services on a commercial basis for some time to maintain the network, but the fall in ridership post Covid lockdown, particularly on services heavily dependent on concessionary passengers, throws their continued operation into some doubt. To continue to support their operation, the Council would need additional funding outside its current budget, the alternative being gaps in the network and some areas being unserved.

**6.23** Recommendations for new, amended and increased service frequencies must be supported by subsidy, over at least a five-year period. There has been sufficient competition in the Blackpool bus market to ensure that any viable commercial opportunity will have been taken up. Calculations must be based on winter ridership figures as summer, tourism-boosted figures, cannot be relied upon year on year.

**6.24** A primary concern is the lack of an orbital service connecting dense areas of housing, including deprived estates, with job opportunities, both current and emerging. This was one of the rationales of the previous BTS service 16. The Airport Enterprise Zone is a primary concern, the typical tendered hourly service is unlikely to satisfy demands so a change of approach is proposed, using smaller vehicles to provide a higher frequency to match the core network. Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) options will also be considered further, as will diverting or extending existing services.

**6.25** Consideration is being given to a further seasonal park and ride using the former Jet2 car park at Blackpool Airport off Squires Gate Lane (A5230).

### **Settlement Hierarchy and Service Level Specifications**

**6.26** Blackpool, although it has defined neighbourhoods, is effectively one large built-up area and it would be difficult to define 'settlements' within the borough's boundaries.

**6.27** Service frequencies do need to be increased to stand any chance of competing with car's convenience. This means ideally no service with a frequency below two buses per hour (bph). Suggested frequencies are proposed in Table 10 over the page.

**Table 10: Proposed Service Frequencies (Based on September 2022)**

Service number	Route	Frequency (day)	Target frequency (day)	Frequency (evening)	Target frequency (evening)
<b>Blackpool Transport Services</b>					
1	Fleetwood to Starr Gate via Promenade	1bph	2bph	N/A	N/A
2	Poulton to Blackpool Town Centre via Victoria Hospital	1bph	2bph	1bph	1bph
2c	Knott End to Blackpool via Poulton	2bph	2bph	1bph	1bph
3	Mereside Tesco to Cleveleys Park via Blackpool	2bph	3bph	1bph	1bph
4	Cleveleys to Mereside Tesco via Blackpool	2bph	3bph	1bph	1bph
5	Victoria Hospital to Halfway House via Town Centre	3bph	4bph	2bph	3bph
6	Mereside to Grange Park via Blackpool Town Centre & Layton	2bph	3bph	2bph	2bph
7	Cleveleys to St Anne's via Blackpool	2bph	3bph	1bph	2bph
9	Cleveleys to Blackpool via Bispham	2bph	4bph	2bph	3bph
11	Lytham to Blackpool Town Centre via St Anne's	3bph	4bph	2bph	3bph
14	Fleetwood to Blackpool via Layton	4bph	5bph	2bph	3bph
17	Blackpool Town Centre to Lytham (Saltcotes Road)	2bph	2bph	1bph	1bph
18	Blackpool Town Centre to Mereside Tesco via South Shore	1bph	1bph	N/A	1bph
20	Staining to Blackpool via Victoria Hospital	Bus every 1.5 hrs, day only	1bph	N/A	N/A
<b>Stagecoach</b>					
42	Lancaster- Garstang- Blackpool	1bph	2bph	N/A	1bph
61	Preston- Blackpool via Clifton, Kirkham, Wrea Green	1bph	2bph	1bph	1bph
68	Preston- Blackpool via Freckleton, Warton, Lytham, St Anne's	3bph	4bph	2bph	2bph
	Coastliner				
21	St Anne's- Pleasure Beach- Tower- Gynn Square- Cabin- Norbreck- Cleveleys	2bph	2bph	N/A	N/A
24	Fleetwood- Cleveleys- Poulton	2bph	2bph	N/A	1bph Vic Hosp.
26	Marton Mere Holiday Village- Tower- Promenade- Pleasure Beach	1bph	1bph	N/A	N/A
<b>Preston Bus (for LCC)</b>					
76	Blackpool (Abingdon St)- Poulton- Singleton- Weeton- Kirkham- Wrea Green- Warton- Lytham- St Anne's	1bph	1bph	N/A	N/A

## Local Branding and Promotion

**6.28** All operators have adopted their own vehicle and corporate branding and the Council would not seek to influence this. Bus stops and shelters have received Blackpool Council branding using the corporate colour palette. This could be reviewed and a new design approach taken, using the Council's in house design team. A real time public information totem for the new railway station tramway terminus will use the Council corporate colours.

**6.29** The need to promote public transport travel urgently, particularly following the pandemic's ridership impacts, means that the Council needs to pursue this as part of its transport and its climate change policy plans. Branding of material produced would use the corporate palette but could be varied during design to maximise its effectiveness. If future funding was allocated to the Council, branding guidance laid down by DfT would be followed.

**6.30** Losing sustainable travel promotion and particularly travel planning capacity, due to cuts, has meant this agenda being neglected for some time. The climate emergency has changed this position. However, it is now important that the Council supports its operator partners' promotion efforts on a network basis, pointing out the links between more sustainable transport modes, in this context particularly its tramway and heavy rail.

## Bus Stop Infrastructure

**6.31** The bus shelter estate requires refurbishment and action to remedy this situation has commenced, using Local Transport Plan (LTP) resources and a management contract approach for some of the advertising shelters. Care is being taken to ensure that stops are to standards set out in accessibility guidelines under the relevant legislation. There are also opportunities for innovation and ensuring the shelters are made and operate in a more environmentally friendly way.

**6.32** A rolling shelter replacement programme is required, preferably ensuring that no shelter is older than 10 years. This would also allow the latest advertising technology to be adopted, maximising revenue from this source. Advertising alone cannot fund such a rolling programme and LTP resource is insufficient for this purpose, although 'one-off' exercises to remedy a particular situation can be managed. Thus if the shelter estate is to be recovered within an appropriate two year programme, additional funding will be required.

**6.33** Shelters would be the priority, particularly as many are advertising shelters, but stops also need to be reviewed. Many bus stop flags are mounted on lamp posts, which has the advantage of minimising street clutter, which often emerges as a community priority. Stops in relatively outlying areas with low service frequencies would benefit from basic shelters. These structures offer options to display timetable and promotional information. Quick response (QR) codes will start to be applied to stops and shelters shortly, giving people access to Real Time Information (RTI) for their local stops via their smartphones. Ideally there should be:

- an up-to-date timetable at every stop;
- consideration given to provide route and network connections maps at major stops; and
- fares information at major stops.

## Real Time Information

6.34 QR codes are part of a suite of real time information (RTI) measures. The Council has upgraded two display screens at Victoria Hospital to provide RTI. A further screen has been installed for the town centre bus hub in Market and Corporation Street. An RTI information totem will be provided at the new tramway terminus. Facilities will have the capacity to provide community information or carry revenue generating advertising.

6.35 Operators' smartphone apps provide RTI for their own services on a stop by stop basis. QR codes will offer this multi-operator, avoiding switching between a potential four apps. BTS now also has a bus tracking facility available on its website and App and a similar App-based facility is available for Stagecoach.

## Accessibility

6.36 With additional funding, a rolling upgrade programme to improve Blackpool's bus stops and shelters will be progressed. As a rolling programme is implemented, the process will ensure that stops included meet accessibility criteria.

## Air Quality / Decarbonisation - Local Position Statement

6.37 Blackpool has one central Air Quality Management Area covering the Talbot Gateway around North Station and the area immediately to the south as shown in Figure 13. This includes major bus corridors and reduced emissions from buses would assist with cleaner air. The Council is currently in the process of reviewing air quality data and developing a new air quality strategy for the town.

Figure 13: Air Quality Management Area





**6.38** With 25% of greenhouse gas emissions attributable to transport nationally, it is imperative that this is addressed locally. The Council's climate emergency strategy identifies modal shift from car as an objective, supported by the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan. A small team including two dedicated graduate officers has been employed to assume this agenda, one of whom would join the EP Management Board. A cross-departmental group, including transport specialists, means the issue is being addressed at a corporate level. The successful ZEBRA fund bid, which means electric buses on the Blackpool streets by 2024, has moved this agenda forward considerably.

**6.39** The ZEBRA scheme will provide 115 zero emission buses (ZEBs), 58 single decks and 57 double decks. These will be provided with charging infrastructure. The depot will be refurbished to accommodate the new vehicles. Total scheme cost will be approximately £70m for all parts of the project, supported by £19.6m Government grant. New vehicles will be of an extremely high specification, intended to provide superb customer service and contribute to both improving Blackpool's air quality and reducing local greenhouse gas emissions. The project, together with an electric tramway and electrified railway to Blackpool North, places Blackpool at the forefront of the national transition to a decarbonised public transport system. It will be a vehicle to promote bus travel to current non-users.

**6.40** To inform the Council's strategy and the public's priorities, a climate assembly of interested parties was convened, which cited the following transport priorities:

- The Council should commit to public transport being the primary choice for getting around and into the town by 2022 by making it more accessible, frequent and less expensive;
- Become a pedestrian and cycling-friendly town by 2023;
- Implement an ultra-low emissions zone in the town centre by 2027, charging vehicles that are not electric for access;
- Increase the use of electric vehicles by:
  - encouraging businesses to increase the availability of charge points
  - reducing parking charges in the town centre for EVs
  - introducing a fully electric bus fleet
  - supporting and rewarding taxi companies for switching to EV fleets;
- Other options to encourage modal shift:
  - Car sharing schemes;
  - Public transport vouchers;
  - Season ticket loans

These lend considerable support to the BSIP's objectives. Further third party involvement will be sought throughout the BSIP process and when the Enhanced Partnership (EP) is in place. Given buses' vital economic role, business groups such as the Blackpool Business Leadership Group (letter of support appended) and Business Improvement Districts will be asked to support the Partnership. Voluntary organisations such as the Civic Trust, can also assist. There are other actors beyond the Council that can play a big role in promoting bus.

**6.41** The Council has committed itself to a climate emergency agenda and has assembled a team to take this forward. Nationally 25% greenhouse gas emissions are from transport. Naturally all modes emit some greenhouse gases, but those from the internal combustion engine dwarf that from other propulsion systems. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report adds considerable urgency to this agenda, policy makers are now faced with a crisis situation. Local multi-sector actors can lead, if the necessary powers and resources are available.

**6.42** This bus plan notes that simply transferring to electric cars is unlikely to be the climate change answer. It leaves congestion, particulate generation due to the recognised Oslo effect, effect on the public realm, road safety and public health issues remaining. Not to mention harmful materials used in manufacture and the difficulties of scrapping EVs. Also land take for parking continues. Modal shift to bus addresses these issues, using resources in a much more efficient manner than transition to EV cars. New mass electric transit systems would be more modal shift effective, but far more expensive initially than a bus based approach.

**6.43** Operator partners have plans to transition to EV buses from the next purchase cycle, discussions with vehicle manufacturers having been held. The successful ZEBRA bid will enable the entire BTS Euro 6 fleet to be replaced with state of the art EV buses over three years. These vehicles would significantly cut the remaining greenhouse gases and eliminate NOx/SOx emissions from the largest Blackpool bus fleet. Their specification would be such that a concerted promotion and marketing campaign could achieve significant modal shift from car.

## **7. Delivery of Improvements**

### **Key Corridor Improvements**

**7.1** Key corridors should have 4 buses per hour (bph) or preferably 6bph daytime frequencies. Evening frequencies should be up to 3bph. As mentioned above, to achieve modal shift the partnership needs to be looking at 2bph frequencies minimum.

**7.2** Through engagement and consensus, those key corridors will be defined and priorities identified for improvement, e.g. more Sunday services. The A584, A586, A5099 and B5262 have already been identified as key corridors. Any need for bus rapid transit on these corridors will be kept under review.

### **Bus Priority (Including Measures in the Neighbouring Authorities)**

**7.3** Measures in neighbouring authorities, in this case LCC providing transport management in Fylde and Wyre boroughs, are not under Blackpool Council's control, but opportunities will be discussed with LCC. Agreement on prevailing cross-border frequencies will be necessary.

**7.4** LCC has been successful in being awarded BSIP funding to make significant bus infrastructure improvements on the route covered by services 61 and 68 between Preston City Centre and Lea. This will aid punctuality of the two services.

**7.5** Four new bus lanes have been proposed and their locations are listed above. These would provide benefit for bus passengers in reducing journey times and improving reliability. They would be formative steps in transforming the Blackpool network to one that is bus performance focused.

**7.6** The Council will continue to appraise traffic control-based bus priority options. Ticketer ticket machines now in use in Blackpool have been promoted on the basis that they will interact with traffic light control devices. This would enable bus services to be helped in congested traffic, maximising reliability.

**7.7** Bus lane enforcement cameras have been deployed, excluding private vehicles from the Market Street/Corporation Street bus hub area. This will be the start of a wider town centre programme and further funding will be sought for this. Cameras will provide the enforcement capacity that has always been lacking. They will help keep bus services punctual and reliable.

### **Rural Cross-boundary Network Improvements**

**7.8** Blackpool is a largely urban area, although areas towards the eastern boundary have lower densities for example near Marton Mere and its surrounding urban fringe. Services operated by BTS and Stagecoach serve the Fylde Coast hinterland, much of which is rural. Of most relevance are the Stagecoach services that serve rural areas accessed from the A586, A6, A583 and A584 corridors. For these key routes, the Council supports LCC's Superbus proposals.

### **Covid Impacts – Commercial Viability/Supported Bus Needs**

**7.9** Covid-19 and its associated restrictions had a significant impact on public transport use. Continuation of the bus network has been supported by dedicated external funding since April 2020. The tramway closed completely for a period in 2020 and has received separate financial support from DfT since but its use has recovered well. Fare paying bus ridership has recovered, despite service cuts due to driver shortages and working pattern changes, although concessionary travel lags behind. The tramway has experienced the highest recovery rate of any UK light rail system at 84% of pre-Covid numbers.

**7.10** This may be on the basis that existing bus user groups were affected by lockdown, but their working patterns remained unaffected. Working patterns among non-user groups may have changed more significantly and home working would reduce the demand for bus commuting. On the other hand, such working makes it less attractive to bear a car's fixed costs.

**7.11** Concessionary travel finance arrangements and reimbursement advice have been reviewed at a Government level and the Council has worked with this through the NoWcard ENCTS partnership. The partnership is now reviewing the concessionary scheme in readiness for the 2023/24 financial year. Concessionary spend for the Council in 2020/21 was £3.8m.

**7.12** Reflecting Blackpool's status as a major visitor attraction, the Council dedicated £1.4m to boost the return of visitors and set up a Tourism Business Improvement District. In this, it has been very successful and achieved visitor numbers in excess of pre-Covid numbers.

**7.13** Table 11 shows numbers on Blackpool sea front are at no less than 63% above 2019 figures in 2021, while Table 13 indicates rail arrivals almost returned to pre-Covid levels in 2021; July-only figures for 2022 show figures 22% above pre-Covid numbers. Conversely in Table 12, there is not a commensurate increase in car parking, the implication being that car occupancy is much higher and there is an increase of visitors by coach. Equivalent figures for 2022 are not available.

**Table 11: Blackpool Footfall (August Figures)**

Year	Town centre	Sea front
2019	5,481,000	6,665,000
2020	4,668,000	7,386,000
2021	6,911,000	10,851,000
change 2019-20	-26%	+11%
change 2019-21	+26%	+63%

**Table 12: Blackpool Use of Car Parking (April - August Figures)**

Location	2019	2020	2021	change 2019-2020	change 2019-2021
Off Street	482,251	270,322	431,802	-44%	-10%
On Street	193,013	123,285	194,347	-36%	1%
Total	675,264	393,607	626,149	-42%	-7%

**Table 13: Blackpool Inbound Rail Passengers (April - August)**

Year	Arrivals	July only
2019	593,000	127,000
2020	181,000	57,000
2021	573,000	137,000
2022		155,000
change 2019-20	-26%	-55%
change 2019-21	-3%	+8%
Change 2019-22		+22%

### Multi-operator Tickets/Fares Initiatives/E-vouchers

**7.14** Multi-operator tickets will only be introduced following further discussion and agreement with LCC and operators. Government is now working on a platform to enable new ticketing models. Under the Lancashire BSIP funding a pilot scheme is to be introduced on the Fylde Coast involving mutual ticket acceptance, harmonised fare zones and a consistent reduced fare offer for under 22s.

**7.15** Perception of the cost of group travel would be a challenge, given where fares stand against taxi tariffs. This has always been an issue. Family and group tickets are available, but it seems likely that many non-users are unaware of these and assume multiple walk-up fares must be paid. Opportunities should be taken to market these options and choices.

**7.16** The main phases of Government support for buses during the pandemic were conditional on there being no fares increase, a situation that lasted around two years. Fares thus have lagged behind cost increases and operators have needed to introduce substantial fare increases in 2022, particularly given the high level of inflation.

**7.17** The products that were available in September 2022 are shown in Table 14. It should be noted that the age limit for a young person is 22 on BTS but 19 for Stagecoach but that Stagecoach offers further tickets covering a wider area.

**Table 14: Saver Tickets Available Across the Local Area**

Company	Age group	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Group ticket options
<b>BTS (inc. tram)</b>	Adult	£6.20	£17.50	£62.50	24 hr family (5 people)- £15.50
	Young person	£4.20	£14.50	£52.00	24 hour group (4 adults)- £18.50
<b>Stagecoach</b>	Adult	£4.50	£15.00	£56.99	Lancs group day rider (4 people) - £17.50
	Young person	£2.30	£7.50	N/A	
<b>Coastliner</b>	Adult	£5.50	£15.00	£45.00	N/A
	Young person	£2.70	£8.00	£25.00	

**7.18** Young persons, post-16, fares need holding right down so that driving is less attractive. A scholars' pass needs to be maintained, in partnership with educational establishments. Blackpool and the Fylde College has a bus pass arrangement in place for households with a gross income below £30k pa.

**7.19** Products linked to company travel plans and switching from car travel would be effective as they would be a positive response to questions that prospective new bus riders might ask. These would create almost all new revenue, therefore their price should be held right down.

**7.20** There is already a good ticket product range available, many purchasable through the operator apps. These can cut bus travel costs dramatically, season tickets for example. However, there is a need to market these effectively. It's important to ensure that national ticketing schemes that might be brought in are not inferior to local arrangements.

**7.21** Blackpool has a digital strategy for greater social inclusion which chimes with BTS' ability to issue e-vouchers that offer discounted bus tickets. In this way people can be assisted to access work and education opportunities. The vouchers could be funded by the Council to directly benefit those people who have the greatest financial need. In addition, the system could be developed to create travel maps from home to destinations because the tickets' QR codes will be readable by buses and trams. An E-voucher scheme could also be used to provide discount on bus fares for first time users to encourage the car to be left at home. E-vouchers also could be used for tourists staying in Blackpool and provided by B&Bs and hotels.

**7.22** The Council is in the process of employing a Public Transport Officer, part of whose role would be to deliver bus ridership promotion initiatives, in cooperation with communications and climate emergency colleagues. Survey work is needed, but it is very likely that many individuals and companies are unaware of the bus services and ticketing products that are available to them.

## Evening and Weekend Services

**7.23** Weekend traffic volumes have grown over recent decades, particularly on Sundays as Sunday shopping has become established in people's routines. This should provide a ready market for bus and indeed Saturday frequencies are maintained. However, reduced Sunday bus demand is the reality. Saturday evening offers an early evening 'going out' leisure market, but group travel using hackney/private hire offers stiff competition. Last buses could be timed for pub closing times but that market does not seem to emerge, many people going on to later closing venues.

**7.24** The Council would favour Saturday frequencies being maintained given the level of retail and leisure activity there is on this day, giving a viable alternative to car travel. The Sunday market needs to be researched to identify passenger growth opportunities. Sunday traffic volumes are such that there should be an increasing bus market, if the correct market niches can be identified and yet frequencies are reduced. Service start and finish times might be adjusted. An incremental approach to frequencies needs to be adopted as demand emerges. Most of the Blackpool hospitality industry is open on Sunday, together with an increasing amount of retail. However, this is not universal and a similar bus demand to a weekday will be unlikely to emerge.

**7.25** Sunday bus frequencies should be maintained and the situation kept under review with frequent market research. It should be noted that the tram is well used on Sunday, particularly during the tourist season.

## Easily Accessible Publicity and Information

**7.26** There have been few resources for Council bus promotion work and this has been left to operators to pursue. Concerted long-term programmes rather than one-off exercises are required. The climate emergency and anti-obesity strategies offer further opportunities to promote active travel, including public transport.

**7.27** The Council website and VisitBlackpool, together with the Council's considerable social media presence offer outlets for bus promotion information. Such promotions could be joint campaigns with operators through the EP or Council campaigns for public transport generally.

**7.28** The tram platform information totem and bus hub screen are new means of disseminating public transport information. Messages need to stress value for money fare products, new vehicles, new or amended routes and generally how bus trips can be substituted for car use. A programme of screens is to be rolled out, for all operators' services.

**7.29** Operators have conducted their own promotion campaigns and this will naturally continue. Operator apps are effective and already offer RTI and ticket purchasing facilities. QR codes will complement these. It's important to keep non-smartphone users' needs in view, there being a continuing role for paper timetables and maps. Network identity needs to be strengthened by including all operators own products.

## Integration with Other Modes

**7.30** Blackpool has no control over its rail arrival/departures pattern. It is not always easy to match bus and tram departure times to the rail services because there are no arrivals for notable periods.

**7.31** The new tramway extension will provide close to seamless rail transport to Bispham and crucially the economically vital Pleasure Beach theme park. High frequencies on the existing coastal tramway alignment mean that easy interchange for continuation trips from these points is available. A more even rail arrival/departure pattern would benefit the tramway extension greatly.

**7.32** Rail passengers will pass through a refurbished, level access subway to reach the tramway terminus. For the majority of rail passengers a tram will be waiting. An arrangement between BTS and Northern Railway means that through ticketing from rail to bus/tram is available and can be promoted.

**7.33** There is a long-established PlusBus ticket for Blackpool available based on either North or South stations. This covers an area highlighted in Figure 14. Tickets are valid on all bus services and the tramway at a discounted rate of £4 per day. Weekly and monthly season ticket versions are also available which are of greater utility to Blackpool residents.

**Figure 14: Blackpool PlusBus Area**



**7.34** Part of the National Cycle Network links North Pier to Fleetwood Docks on the coast. E-bikes are available to hire on Talbot Road near to North Station and the public transport hub, and on Anchorsholme Lane to the north of Bispham. Improved walking and cycling links featured in Blackpool's Levelling Up Fund 2 bid. If the bid is successful, public transport and active travel in the Central Business District will be better integrated.

### **Passengers' Charter – Commitment and Key Provisions**

**7.35** A Passengers' Charter has been drafted and will be finalised in liaison with LCC before being brought into operation with the Enhanced Partnership. It addresses the following points:

- a. Responsibility;
- b. Channels for comments and complaints;
- c. Standards for information supply and
- d. Targets for responding honestly and individually.

It outlines aims in relation to:

- Quality of service, infrastructure, information and vehicles;
- Safety at bus stops and on vehicles;
- Reliability;
- Cleanliness and presentation of vehicles and bus stops, particularly after enhanced cleaning was achieved during the pandemic;
- Environmental targets; and
- Accessibility of the service and of information, including for those without digital access.

It will also include a refund promise or mechanism following failure to deliver and a 'get you home' promise if last journeys fail to run. Ways to achieve further communication and communication with bus users regarding the charter and its results, will be sought.

### **Passenger Safety and Customer Relations**

7.36 Passengers need to feel safe both during their journey and at the start and end of their journey. Partners will endeavour that during the early years of the Enhanced Partnership:

- All vehicles are fitted with CCTV.
- A survey is undertaken of bus stops to ensure that:
  - There is adequate lighting including the surrounding area.
  - There are suitable walking routes where stops are away from the housing or facilities they serve.
  - There is CCTV coverage in the town centre, where possible.
- All bus stop shelters that are damaged are replaced or repaired to avoid the prolonged impression of neglect.



**7.37** As part of the Passengers' Charter the Council will work with bus operators to ensure a consistent level of customer service training for frontline staff. This not only includes drivers but also those who come into contact with members of the public directly or via phone, e-mail, etc.

### **Role of Community Transport Services/Operators**

7.38 The Rideability service provides transport for mobility challenged persons using specialist vehicles. This has operated satisfactorily for many years, although finance has been an issue. Aside from this, there has been no history of volunteer-led community transport in Blackpool, principally because in a small, urban area local bus operators are able to provide the majority of the trips required and taxi trips are more affordable.

**7.39** The Rideability service comprises:

- Five dedicated vehicles 08:00-16:00 Monday-Friday
- One dedicated vehicle 08:00-15:00 Saturday
- Six drivers – (Five Monday-Friday plus one Saturday only) plus a casual fleet driver pool (shared with other services).

Vehicles are operated under s19 permits and are relatively new acquisitions. There is a flat fare of £1 per journey for disabled passengers and £2.30 for older passengers who are NoWcard holders, giving a 50% discount. New demand and membership is now emerging and the NHS has promoted the service. The areas immediately adjacent to Blackpool are served by the Wyre and Fylde Dial-a-Bus funded by LCC but do not offer cross-boundary trips into Blackpool.

### **Airport Enterprise Zone**

**7.40** As identified, there is a clear transport deficit between new employment being generated at the Airport Enterprise Zone and Fylde Coast residential areas including Grange Park and Mereside housing estates. Subject to funding, it is proposed to create a new orbital service linking to Victoria Hospital and the Airport Enterprise Zone. This employment and health connectivity focused route would be BSIP funded to run frequently until commercially viable. Also, extension or diversion of services to serve the enterprise zone is being considered.

### **Role of Taxis**

**7.41** Normally there is an adequate supply of both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles to meet market demand, but the pandemic reduced demand, and in parallel to bus, there has been a shortage of drivers, with former taxi drivers attracted by the switch to parcel delivery work. Taxi's role in supporting bus and other more sustainable transport modes is recognised within the LTP process. Fuel prices may affect services, but a good number of EV cars and hybrids are now in use as private hire vehicles and hackney carriages.

## 8. Reporting and Governance

### Forums for Ongoing Discussion

8.1 The Blackpool Bus Operators' Forum will be replaced by the EP Management Board to meet two monthly within the agreed terms of reference. The Council will provide secretariat for this Board.

8.2 Opportunities to contact the non-user public will be sought through the ongoing climate assembly process. One-off opinion surveys might be commissioned.

### Six-monthly Performance Reporting

8.3 The BSIP/EP will require operators to provide information to assemble a response to an agreed performance indicator list, derived from the EP's operator requirements. Blackpool Council will design the spreadsheets required and coordinate data collection and collation. The results will be posted on the Council's website. A means of involving bus users in the performance appraisal process will be sought.

## 9. Proposed calls on BSIP funding

9.1 In addition to needing funding to support the continuation of the existing bus network, there is likely to be a need for further Government support in the following areas:

- Network improvements; new and enhanced services.
  - The Council wishes to enhance frequencies on the main corridor services to achieve modal shift and make bus the first choice for local trips both within Blackpool itself and to and from the wider Fylde Coast.
  - It will support LCC and the operators in seeking improvements to inter-urban services linking Blackpool to Lancaster and Preston.
  - The Council has identified a clear network gap in service provision on the eastern corridor linking residential areas to the Airport Enterprise Zone and Victoria Hospital.
- Bus stop/shelter enhancements.
  - This includes not only new and replacement facilities but also revenue funding to adequately maintain and clean the infrastructure.
- Promotion and Real Time Information.
  - To build on the operators' own information systems and provide up to date information. Although the bus network is dominated by BTS there is a need to promote the network as a whole and to promote money-saving fares and tickets.

- Ticketing reform and fares support.
  - The Council wishes to maintain fares at the lowest sustainable level.
  - It wishes to offer discounted fares to young people aged 16 - 22 to maintain their 'bus habit' and move away from automatic acquisition of a driving licence.
  - The Council's aim is for multi-journey tickets to be available on any bus and not limited to any one operator.
  
- Bus priority, for better punctuality and reliability.
  - The potential for four sections of bus lane has already been identified and the operator partners have identified other pinch points which cause delay.
  
- Bus facility camera enforcement.
  - To expand on those already installed to police bus priority measures.
  
- Marketing.
  - To include public transport in Blackpool alongside the marketing of its other attractions.
  
- Staffing and support, to implement, promote and monitor the Enhanced Partnership.
  - A new role of public transport officer will be created at the Council to promote the activities of the EP and liaise with other appropriate stakeholders, including establishing user consultation and performance appraisal systems.

## 10. Overview Template

<b>Name of authority:</b>	<b>Blackpool Council</b>
Franchising or Enhanced Partnership:	Enhanced Partnership
Date of publication:	November 2022
Date of next annual update:	October 2023
URL of published report:	<a href="https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Parking-roads-and-transport/Transport/Transport-policy.aspx">https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Parking-roads-and-transport/Transport/Transport-policy.aspx</a>

Targets	2019/20	2020/21	2025/26	Description of how each will be measured
Journey time	N/A	18 minutes	17 minutes	DfT's average length of journey at BTS' average speed
Reliability	87.6%	86.7%	90%	Operators' data
Passenger numbers	8.2 million	3.3 million	9 million	Operators' data
Average passenger satisfaction	90.3%	93.3%	96.0%	Satisfaction surveys

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/No	Explanation
<b>Make improvements to bus services and planning:</b>		
<i>More frequent and reliable services</i>		
Review service frequency	Yes	Review of all services undertaken; low evening frequencies on all services, including intra-urban; also low frequencies on Sundays. Aim to increase frequencies on core corridors.
Increase bus priority measures	Yes	Proposals for four bus lanes (two in LUF2 bid) and vehicle detection/traffic control systems at key junctions to improve punctuality and reliability.
Consideration of bus rapid transport networks	Yes	Blackpool's coastal tramway complements the local bus network and is being extended to Blackpool North railway station. Any need for bus rapid transit on key corridors will be kept under review.
<i>Improvements to planning / integration with other modes:</i>		
Integrate services with other transport modes	Yes	Ensure bus- tram and bus/tram- rail links are publicised. New public transport interchange on Talbot Road in LUF2 bid.
Simplify services	Yes	Co-ordinating frequencies on multi-operator corridors.
Review socially necessary services	Yes	Create a new orbital service linking to Victoria Hospital and the Airport Enterprise Zone.

<b>Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Invest in Superbus networks	Yes	Support LCC's development of a Superbus network for the inter-urban services that connect Blackpool to Lancaster and Blackpool to Preston.
<i>Improvements to fares and ticketing:</i>		
Lower fares	Yes	Co-ordinating young person fares, making group and corporate travel attractive. Focus on locking people in with easy to purchase and renew season products. Also do more in terms of advertising the good value bulk ticketing (weekly/monthly tickets).
Simplify fares	Yes	Mutual acceptance of tickets, including co-ordinating fares for all, particularly young people, common zonal structure.
Integrate ticketing between operators and transport modes	Yes	Develop a ticketing offer for the Fylde Coast in association with LCC and operators.
<b>Make improvements to bus passenger experience:</b>		
<i>Higher spec buses</i>		
Invest in improved bus specifications	Yes	To standardise the quality of vehicle offered and match what is already provided by Blackpool Transport. Electric vehicles expected after successful ZEBRA bid.
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services	Yes	To provide more links to health and employment sites. Ensure information is easily accessible.
Protect personal safety of bus passengers	Yes	CCTV on vehicles and covering town centre bus stops. Ensure stops and surrounding areas are well lit at night.
Improve buses for tourists	Yes	Bus routes connect to visitor attractions, but need to be more extensively promoted.
Invest in decarbonisation	Yes	Introduce ZE vehicles through ZEBRA fund. Support other operators upgrading to Euro 6 engine rating.
<i>Improvements to passenger engagement:</i>		
Passenger Charter	Yes	To work with local operators and LCC to create an easy to understand Passengers' Charter.
Strengthen network identity	Yes	Upgrading Blackpool Transport's map to include other operators; create an information hub. New RTI will also be multi-operator.
Improve bus information	Yes	Ensure all bus timetables and fares information (paper, online, on App and at stop, including RTI) are of a high and consistent standard.
<b>Other:</b>		
Other	Yes	Co-ordinate bus service change dates with LCC.

## Appendix – Letters of Support:



# Blackpool Business Leadership Group

October 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

**Re: Blackpool Bus Service Improvement Plan – 2022 revision**

I write in support of this revised plan, which sets out the Blackpool public transport situation clearly and how it can be improved through national investment in the bus network.

Blackpool's buses are an invaluable resource and one that plays a key role in supporting the Blackpool economy, where car ownership is relatively low. The bus provides an affordable alternative to car travel where an individual cannot or does not want to own a car. Naturally the bus is available to children and young people where car ownership is restricted.

The town's environment is important to society including business and the climate emergency is becoming ever more urgent. It's clearly important that transport is electrified and that there is a societal change where a higher proportion of people commute using mass transport as opposed to the private car. Attractive, reliable and comfortable bus services can play a key role in this. Reduced pressure for road space means an improved public realm that is more attractive for investment and a more active, healthy society.

This plan's proposals have the full support of the Blackpool Business Leadership Group, an organisation that has a membership of hundreds of local businesses.

If implemented, the plans would make a significant contribution to local economic growth and a more sustainable future for Blackpool.

Yours faithfully

**Martin Long,**  
Chair, Blackpool Business Leadership Group



RJ/LMF  
17<sup>th</sup> October 2022

Dear Sirs

**Blackpool Council Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022**

I write on behalf of Stagecoach Cumbria and North Lancashire to express the company's support for this document with its proposals to assist operators in improving Blackpool's bus services.

The company has received draft copies of the plan and been kept abreast of its development through the council's Bus Operators' Forum. It is aware of the council's agenda to increase bus ridership relative to other modes in pursuit of climate emergency, public realm improvement and congestion control goals, together with public transport's contribution to social inclusion, and supports these.

If the measures proposed receive financial support, I am confident that they can make a significant difference to Blackpool's bus services and attract the new ridership that is desired, particularly as the post-Covid situation stabilises.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rob Jones".

Rob Jones  
Managing Director

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**Stagecoach Cumbria & North Lancashire**, Second Floor, Broadacre House, 16-20 Lowther Street, Carlisle CA3 8DA  
T: 0345 241 8000 [stagecoachbus.com](http://stagecoachbus.com)

Registered Office: Stagecoach (North West) Limited, One Stockport Exchange, 20 Railway Road, Stockport SK1 3SW.  
(Registered in England & Wales 123665)



**7<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

**Blackpool Council Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022**

Dear Sirs,

I write on behalf of Stagecoach Merseyside & South Lancashire to express the company's support for the Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022 document, with its proposals to assist bus operators in improving Blackpool's bus services.

The company has received draft copies of the plan and has been kept abreast of its development through the council's Bus Operators' Forum and other correspondence. We are also aware of the council's agenda to increase bus ridership relative to other modes in pursuit of climate emergency, public realm improvement and congestion control goals, together with public transport's contribution to social inclusion. We fully support the council's aim in these respects.

If the measures proposed receive financial support, I am confident that they can make a significant difference to Blackpool's bus services and attract the new ridership that is desired, particularly as the post-Covid situation stabilises.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Mellor".

**James Mellor**  
**Commercial Director**

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**Stagecoach Merseyside & South Lancashire**, Head Office, East Lancashire Road, Liverpool, L11 0BB  
**T:** 0151 330 6200 [stagecoachbus.com](http://stagecoachbus.com)

Registered Office: Ribble Motor Services Ltd, One Stockport Exchange, 20 Railway Road, Stockport, SK1 3SW. (Registered in England & Wales No. 03990677)





**Preston Bus Limited**  
221 Deepdale Road  
Preston PR1 6NY

T: 01772 253671

F: 01772 555840

W: [www.prestonbus.co.uk](http://www.prestonbus.co.uk)

11<sup>th</sup> November 2022

### **Blackpool Bus Service Improvement Plan**

To whom it may concern,

Preston Bus is delighted to support the Bus Service Improvement Plan for Blackpool. I am confident that the measures put forward in this plan will drive the recovery of bus patronage and with it a significant contribution to the government's levelling up and decarbonisation agendas in the area. We have worked closely with Blackpool Council and other local bus operators to develop this BSIP, which will enable more people to access fast, reliable journeys to more places in the region and help to support the dynamic growth of our region and to Bus Back Better.

The extensive proposals for bus priority drawn up in discussions with Preston Bus will be welcome contributions to making buses quicker and more reliable, as will the authority's proposals to review operating conditions along routes and identify small-scale changes that help buses. The proposed improvements to the provision of passenger information, both static and real-time, will increase the awareness of residents of bus services and make them significantly easier to find out about and use, while the authority's proposals for disruption messaging will help give users more confidence as they make journeys.

I look forward to working with the authority under the Enhanced Partnership to deliver the proposals both to simplify the fares and ticketing propositions and to introduce multi-operator ticketing and more ticket products to help occasional users, while I welcome proposals to make it cheaper for young people and other groups to travel by bus. Finally, I look forward to the opportunity that funding under the National Bus Strategy will provide to pump-prime higher frequencies. Together these will promote easier access to employment, health, education and leisure opportunities, and modal shift from car.



Registered Address: Hallbridge Way, Tipton Road, Tividale, West Midlands B69 3HW

Company Registration: 02004022



**Preston Bus Limited**  
**221 Deepdale Road**  
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I hope that the Department for Transport will look favourably on this Bus Service Improvement Plan and I look forward to working with Blackpool Council to deliver our joint contribution to the National Bus Strategy.

Yours sincerely,

**Bob Dunn**  
Managing Director

**ROOTALA**  
passenger transport

**Registered Address:** Hallbridge Way, Tipton Road, Tividale, West Midlands B69 3HW

**Company Registration:** 02004022





Mr N Jack  
Chief Executive  
Blackpool Council  
Bickerstaffe House  
Talbot Road  
Blackpool

14 November 2022

**Subject: BSIP and Enhanced Partnership with Blackpool Council**

Dear Neil

Blackpool Council as the local transport authority and sole shareholder of Blackpool Transport Services with widely communicated policies to improve bus travel within Blackpool and the Fylde Coast. This objective has the wholehearted support of the board of Blackpool Transport Services Ltd (BTS).

Our two organizations are fulfilling these declarations and the company has a 115 bus fleet with an average age of only three-years' old, they all have Euro VI engines and we have reduced our diesel consumption by 30% during the past five years' through greater fuel efficiencies. We now feel ready to take the next step and from 2022 increase operating frequencies within the framework of the Council's Bus Improvement Plan.

It is for this reason that the Company has agreed to the Council's proposals to enhance the attractiveness of bus operations. We believe that the BSIP will fulfill our joint aims of an affordable, efficient and a popular bus network that relieves the town's road congestion and reduces emissions.

In summary, the board of Blackpool Transport Services Ltd gives its support to Blackpool Council's submission for grant funding from ZEBRA Phase II.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Cole".

J Cole  
Managing Director

**Blackpool Transport Services**  
01253 473001  
Company registration no. 2003020  
Rigby Road, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY1 5DD  
[www.blackpooltransport.com](http://www.blackpooltransport.com)

# Coastliner Buses

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Brinwell Road Bus Garage, Blackpool, FY4 4QU | | 01253 692700  
Email: coastlinerbuses@gmail.com

18 Nov 2022

Dear Sirs

**Re: Blackpool Council Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022**

I write on behalf of Coastliner Buses Ltd to express the company's support for this document with its proposals to assist operators in improving Blackpool's bus services.

The company has received draft copies of the plan and been kept abreast of its development through the council's Bus Operators' Forum. It is aware of the council's agenda to increase bus ridership relative to other modes in pursuit of climate emergency, public realm improvement and congestion control goals, together with public transport's contribution to social inclusion, and supports these.

If the measures proposed receive financial support, I am confident that they can make a significant difference to Blackpool's bus services and attract the new ridership that is desired, particularly as the post-Covid situation stabilises.

Coastliner Buses is now part of the Transpora group of companies and over the coming months we will be rebranding our operations as Transpora Bus (North West) and investing in newer vehicles. We have also recently won a Lancs CC tender for service 72 (Staining to Blackpool) that will expand our mileage operated in the Blackpool area.

Regards,

Philip Higgs  
Transport Manager



