

Bus Service Improvement Plan

October 2021

Blackpool Council



Foreword



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“I welcome this opportunity to lay out Blackpool Council’s transport priorities for bus. Buses should be seen as reliable and cost effective transport for all, helping to support the local economy and address climate change. Thanks to its innovative and far-seeing operators, Blackpool benefits from a modern bus fleet and a network that is the envy of many. This can be built on to bring the accessibility, environmental and decongesting benefits of increased bus use to the fore.

Having secured its network through the Covid pandemic, the council will now work with operators in the envisaged Enhanced Partnership to grow ridership rapidly and to achieve modal shift from car to bus. With the bus fleet likely to start the transition from diesel to electric with the next vehicle purchases, the impact on air quality and greenhouse gas emissions will be considerable.

Above all the council must focus on the economic well-being of its people, who live in the town measured as the most deprived in England. As Blackpool moves forward, frequent, reliable bus services to key destinations will be delivered in partnership.”

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MARKET STREET
NEWSAGENT

Lytham 11

FREE
WiFi

PALLADIUM

Blackpool
Transport

Blackpool
Transport

SNI7 MFU

415

192

Summary

Blackpool's first Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) sets out how bus use can 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. An EP will be in place by the end of March 2022 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 2022, with the rail and tram termini adjacent to many of the town's key bus routes, enabling seamless travel.

This BSIP has identified a pressing need for new funding; firstly to support the existing bus network and secondly to make improvements. A requirement for a new service has been identified connecting residential areas with employment opportunities, Victoria Hospital and the Airport Enterprise Zone. 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 promotion and Real Time Information has been identified, the latter mainly in Blackpool Town Centre. Coordinated and simplified ticket offers are key, and 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.

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 has achieved visitor numbers of 18m per annum (pre-pandemic). The resident population fluctuates around 140 thousand persons.

1.2 The council is a unitary borough being wholly surrounded by the sea and by the Lancashire County Council (LCC) area. It borders the district councils of Wyre and Fylde. The Index of Deprivation 2019 identified Blackpool as England's most deprived place, as did its 2015 iteration. Car ownership is low but high usage and a constrained network means that there can be congestion and for its small size, urban layout and the quality of public transport on offer, there is car dependency.

1.3 The council has no surplus revenue, after significant austerity cuts and escalating social care commitments, therefore without additional capital and revenue resources, further bus network development and bus infrastructure will not happen. Capital schemes required would be prioritised within the Local Transport Plan (LTP) programme but without additional funding this is a small fund and there are many calls upon it.

1.4 A coastal tramway system complements the bus network and although it has high season ridership volumes, its disadvantage being that its alignment means that on its own it can provide comparatively few trips to people living inland. A new tramway extension to the railway station and entering the developing Talbot Gateway Central Business District will start to address this difficulty upon opening in 2022.

1.5 The municipally owned Blackpool Transport Services (BTS) provides most local services, penetrating into Wyre and Fylde boroughs, one service (BTS 7) crossing both boundaries. Blackpool's network (see Figure 1) has been run on mainly commercial lines, although some services have been loss making, particularly in the winter, and have been maintained to keep network integrity. This company has recently adopted a particularly high vehicle specification and is planning to move to electric operation in the next few years. It has recently changed its ticket machines to provide contactless card payment and has simplified its fare structures, reducing fares for many trips.

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

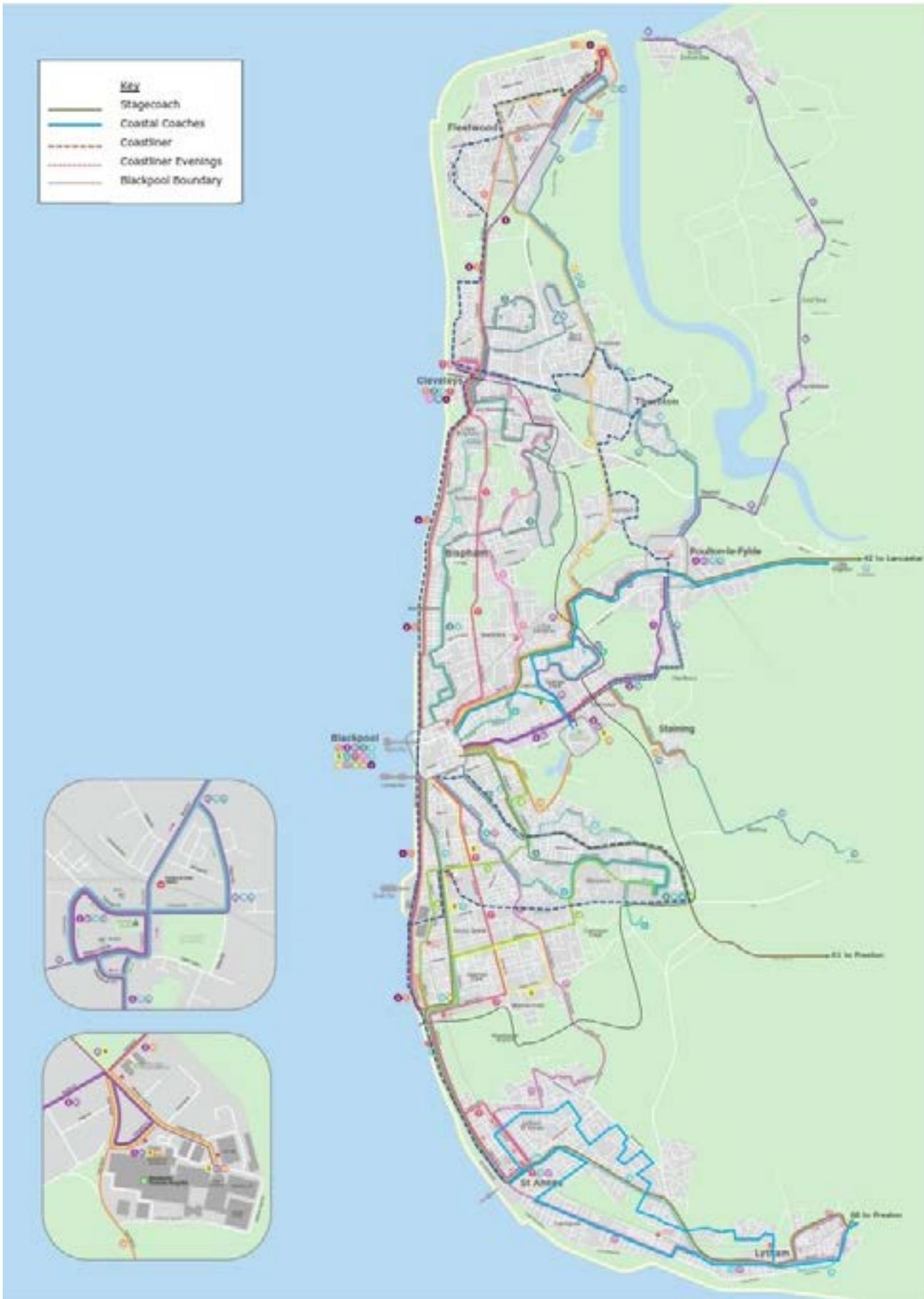
1.7 Blackpool is the Fylde Coast sub-region's economic hub and maintaining its connectivity to other centres is vital. The sub-region also includes the key settlements of Lytham St Anne's, Thornton-Cleveleys, Fleetwood and Poulton-le-Fylde. The Fylde Coast is predominately urban.

1.8 Blackpool's bus station became obsolete and has been redeveloped as part of the Central Business District. As there was no suitable alternative site, the station has not been replaced and instead a public transport hub centred on Market Street and Corporation Street has been established. Abingdon Street also provides stops for important services and a new supplementary public transport interchange will be established within the Central Business District, complementing the new tramway terminus and with good pedestrian access to the railway station, the railway to Blackpool North having been recently electrified.

1.9 Blackpool Council has considered the option to produce a joint Bus Service Improvement Plan (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 single 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 such matters as service frequencies, cross-border and multi-operator ticketing. The council works with LCC within the NoWcard concessionary pass partnership, which is a multi-operator system. As noted, 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.

1.10 Blackpool Council is seeking a joint Enhanced Partnership Scheme to cover the Fylde Coast area, as shown in Figure 1. To progress this, further discussions are necessary between the two local transport authorities, Blackpool Council and LCC, together with all operators of Fylde Coast cross-boundary services that are identified in this document. There is potential for greater modal shift if the planning and provision of bus services is more coordinated; seeking new as well as retaining existing bus users.

Figure 1: The Fylde Coast bus network



Based on Blackpool Transport Services Network Map July 2021 © BTS

Enhanced Partnership

1.11 With an agreed BSIP in place, attention will shift to establishing the Enhanced Partnership (EP) based upon it. Building on the existing Bus Operators' Forum, an EP Management Board will be formed with representatives from key stakeholders. This will determine task and finish groups to take various plan aspects forward.

2. Local Policy

2.1 The council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) embraces 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, bus interchange and real time information. 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/leisure opportunities and resort attractions, particularly by sustainable modes.

2.2 In this context, public transport needs to be frequent, 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.

2.3 Pre-Covid, buses carried up to 10 million passengers annually in Blackpool. Bus services provide a viable alternative to the car for important journeys to work, education and healthcare. The council will continue to support socially-necessary services, if resources are available. It will also maintain a Bus Operators' Forum. Developer contributions to provide bus infrastructure will continue to be sought.

2.4 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.

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

3. Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

3.1 Blackpool’s narrow north-south layout 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 coverage, partly because north-south running services must effectively divert to access the town centre. For example, the more easterly A587 corridor has a low frequency service (BTS 20). This runs past low occupancy areas adjacent to the Stanley Park and Heron’s Reach area which are unlikely to generate significant trips. However, this road connects homes to the south with employment to the north, passing the main hospital, a major hotel and Blackpool Zoo as well as schools. A service to attract current car commuters using this corridor is needed, but would need to be supported over a long period allowing ridership to mature.

3.2 The presence of high unemployment and marginalised communities inevitably depresses the number of trips taken by any mode, including bus. Despite the town’s low car ownership level, car usage is high. 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. Transport Focus figures show that Blackpool has one of the lowest bus commuting to work rates in the country.

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. At the same time information has come on line and now onto mobile phones, including real time. As noted, the network has been mainly commercial and the revenue to support its expansion is not available.

3.4 Covid has had a dire ridership effect that will take time to recover from. For the year ending March 2021, the number of local bus passenger journeys in England outside London decreased by 64%. Government support for essential bus companies has been much appreciated. General traffic levels are now back to pre-pandemic levels, so that buses can once more be stuck in congestion. 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 has been adopted, but this only goes so far when faced by the sheer weight of peak time traffic.

3.5 Introducing very high quality vehicles and adopting new technology as it becomes available and is proven to be reliable can boost ridership. During the pandemic, many people have got into the habit of travelling less or not travelling at all. This makes a return to pre-Covid bus patronage levels challenging and therefore modal shift is absolutely essential to achieve an increase in bus ridership above pre-Covid levels. 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.

3.6 A policy of increasing frequencies and incrementally introducing new routes, together with strong and persistent promotion, all supported by a long term subsidy model, will be needed before consistent modal shift from car to bus will be achieved.

Opportunities

3.7 The relatively young BTS bus fleet (Palladium branded) 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 prompt modal shift. Awareness raising of what's on offer is key to encourage bus use amongst new and existing users, e.g. tap-on and tap-off.

3.8 New vehicles and new technology need exploiting for their promotion potential as much as possible. Adopting contactless cards 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. Positive change can change people's behaviour. New and different electric vehicles offering a smoother ride and leading to a cleaner environment is still a valuable promotional hook.

3.9 In the light of the challenges section above, the need for a new national motoring taxation system to replace fuel duty will be a principal 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.

3.10 As parking demand reduces, more former car parks could be released as development sites, a good proportion for residential use. As well as rejuvenating town centres, this urban densification would be good for public transport, particularly if private car parking was restricted. The London position where many local people feel that a car is not needed, needs to be replicated.

3.11 New town centre developments and the creation of the Talbot Gateway Central Business District (offices, superstore, retail, hotel, restaurant) that Blackpool has not had before, creates a new bus and heavy rail commuter market. Such developments include the new Conference Centre and associated hotel, Blackpool Central leisure development, Tower Street cinema in the Houndshell Phase 2 extension, Sands Hotel and Blackpool Museum. Redevelopment and regeneration 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.

3.12 Blackpool's famous Illuminations extend its tourist season beyond most other coastal resorts, until January this winter. While tourism flows are associated with the tramway (and the heritage trams still offer trips), tourists also use the buses. With increased staycation numbers, more seasonal services might be viable.

3.13 Part of the support for an Enhanced Partnership must include promotion and marketing resources, preferably including a national bus travel campaign. Thanks to smartphones, owners now have much easier access to public transport information. 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 the bus app before arrival. Northern Trains is looking at group travel products. Both Blackpool's buses and trams are on the PlusBus system.

3.14 Fylde Coast residents and visitors from further afield frequent Blackpool's many attractions; opportunities should be taken to promote bus travel 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 intends to establish an authority-wide Enhanced Partnership (EP) and has secured democratic approval for this approach. This builds on existing good relations with our operator partners and is appropriate for Blackpool's geographic area and relationship 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 willing operators, is the best way forward for Blackpool and the Fylde Coast.

Details of Enhanced Partnership proposed structure and membership

4.2 The council will convene the EP by April 2022 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, meetings being convened on a monthly basis. This group's focus will be delivering the EP Plan that derives from the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). Task and Finish groups may assume responsibility for specific projects.

4.3 Each operator will nominate a representative and 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. 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 behave as a tool for modal shift to more sustainable transport.

Explanation of reasons for adopting a single geographical area

4.4 Blackpool is a small unitary authority covering just 35 km² with a geography arranged in a narrow strip running north to south. There is no scope to divide this into separate BSIPs. However, Blackpool Council considers that to prepare a joint BSIP with Lancashire County Council (LCC) would not sufficiently highlight its own issues as they would be likely to be subsumed within the needs of a much wider area. In particular, the general level of service provision in Blackpool is higher, the standard of vehicle better and fares lower than in much of Lancashire.

4.5 The BSIP will address services within the Blackpool boundary primarily, but where services cross boundaries there will be joint discussions and agreements, primarily with Lancashire County Council (LCC) as the transport authority, but also the district councils of Fylde and Wyre.

4.6 Several services cross one boundary and one (BTS 7 – Cleveleys – St Anne’s) crosses both Blackpool-Wyre and Blackpool-Fylde boundaries. Given that the Fylde Coast is effectively a self-contained transport area, the additional complexity of a joint BSIP with LCC and somewhat distant Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, is not necessary. Agreement on frequencies of cross border services and multi-operator ticketing will be required and can be secured through Enhanced Partnership Schemes agreed jointly.

Duration of BSIP and arrangements for annual review

4.7 The EP Management Board will carry out an annual review of success against targets and produce a short report, including recommendations for new actions, initiatives and changes in emphasis, if deemed necessary. A tight focus on achieving, particularly reliability, patronage growth and passenger satisfaction, is needed.

Details of consultation with operators

4.8 Separate discussions have been held with the three bus operators in Blackpool, Blackpool Transport, Stagecoach and Coastliner. All are members of the Blackpool Bus Operator Forum, which met on Tuesday 7th September 2021 to discuss this BSIP.

4.9 Blackpool Transport are willing to work with the council to audit all bus stops and identify opportunities to improve access for all, enhancing the physical infrastructure at stops to improve door to door travel. The company are also supportive of enhancing service frequencies. They consider that:

- multi-operator ticketing on a touch-on, touch-off basis will be difficult given different hardware;
- use of NoWcard as the basis for multi-operator tickets feels like going backwards in technology – contactless now represents about a third of transactions and app-based tickets form a high proportion too;
- There are opportunities for growth along the Preston New Road corridor, given housing development.
- Other operators’ information could be shown on its App if there was a contribution to the cost of it or a relevant reciprocal arrangement.

4.10 Points Raised by Stagecoach were:

- Multi-operator ticketing needs to be a Lancashire-wide solution with local zone products.
- Current evening frequencies are insufficiently frequent for passengers, so funding from LCC and/or Blackpool Council would be needed to provide a half-hourly service. Service 42 has no commercial potential for frequency increase but the company would be happy to try with kick-start funding.
- Inter-urban routes are not suitable for zero emission (ZE) vehicles yet, but the company could look into hybrids with limited ZE running if funding was available.

4.11 Coastliner has identified:

- The main gap in the current Blackpool bus network is a lack of orbital links and direct access to Victoria Hospital.
- Blackpool Promenade (A584) as a major area of concern due to traffic congestion, with no feasible alternative routes (this resonates with the other operators too).
- A trend shifting demand away from Blackpool town centre.

5. Current Offer

Blackpool's road network

5.1 The strategic road feeding into Blackpool is the M55, 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. 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 many east to west roads of varying standards.

5.2 In the town centre there has been a progressive pedestrianisation programme which has closed many former through routes and some bus routes. In addition, the section of the Promenade near The Tower and Talbot Square has had significant public realm improvement work. This has acknowledged significant conflicts between pedestrians moving east to west (town centre to/from seafront) and the Promenade (A584) and tramway moving principally north to south, reducing the carriageway width and giving greater priority to pedestrians.

5.3 The principal effect of the combination of pedestrianisation and the public realm improvement works has been that bus services to the south are concentrated on the Promenade which has reduced capacity and this can result in significant delays, particularly during the Illuminations period.

Modal share

5.4 Blackpool Council commissions multi-modal surveys to be carried out across its road network during a single day in the months of June, September, December and March. Each survey lasts for a 12-hour period (07:00-19:00) and is typically carried out at the following nine junctions:

1. Queens Promenade (A584) / Warbreck Hill Road (B5265) / Dickson Road, 4 arm roundabout
2. Plymouth Road (A587) / Poulton Road (A586) / St Walburgas Road (A587) / Carleton Avenue, 5 arm roundabout (4 arms signalised)
3. St Walburgas 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 roundabout (now signals)
5. Talbot Road (A586) / Promenade (A584) / start of Jubilee Cycleway, 3 arm junction plus promenade area
6. West Park Drive / North Park Drive / Mere Road / Beech Avenue, 4 arm roundabout (Beech Avenue is stopped up)
7. Cherry Tree Road Nth / Cherry Tree Road / Clifton Road, 3 arm signalled junction
8. Lytham Road (B5262) / Station Road, 3 arm junction
9. Watson Road (west) / St Anne's Road / Marton Drive, 4 arm signalled junction plus Watson Road (east)

5.5 If, during a particular survey one or more of the above junctions is likely to be affected by road works or road closures, thus meaning that traffic flows will not be 'typical', then that junction is substituted for another location on the network that is operating normally.

5.6 At these nine points, over the four surveys carried out in 2019, buses made up an average of 2.32% of vehicle movements. However, if these figures are adjusted for typical passenger loadings (assuming 18 for bus and 1.7 for car) bus passengers account for a 20% modal share.

5.7 At boundary points of the local authority, 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

5.8 Blackpool has a strong local bus network. Blackpool Transport, the main operator, has over a number of years simplified a previously very complex network into one made up mainly of high frequency core routes radiating from Blackpool Town Centre. This has been matched by major fleet investment. Several core services run on twelve minute frequencies under normal circumstances, although some have reduced frequencies during the pandemic and due to driver shortages. The core services are complemented by lower-frequency services providing key links that would otherwise be unserved.

5.9 The current Blackpool bus network has been run commercially without tendered services, but includes loss making services intended to maintain network integrity. 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 and an EP can only proceed on this basis.

5.10 Stagecoach previously had a depot in Fleetwood; 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.

5.11 These run at different frequencies and the main daytime frequency on service 68 increases from every twenty minutes to every fifteen during the summer and the Illuminations period. Stagecoach 68 overlaps with BTS 11 over most of its route but coordinating the two is difficult as, firstly, the frequency changes on a seasonal basis and secondly, that service 68 is affected by traffic congestion in Preston which makes coordination with a local service difficult. However, potential for coordination on this corridor could still be explored.

5.12 On Whitegate Drive the Stagecoach 61 accompanies the BTS 4 and these two ought to be coordinated on this section.

5.13 Coastliner is a local independent company running four local services in Blackpool, two of which are seasonal serving Martin Mere Caravan Park and Blackpool Zoo. Coastliner 24 provides some unique links across the northern edge of Blackpool. A full list of services operating in Blackpool is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Bus Services in Blackpool, early September 2021

Service	Description	Operator	Tendered	Cross-boundary	Daytime	Evening	Sunday
1	Fleetwood to Starr Gate via the Promenade	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	2bph	NA	2bph
2	Poulton to Blackpool Town Centre via Victoria Hospital	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	2bph	1bph	1bph
2C	Knott End to Blackpool via Poulton	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	2bph	1bph	Every 1.5hrs
3	Mereside Tesco to Cleveleys Park via Blackpool	Blackpool Transport Services	Part	Yes	3bph	1bph	1bph
4	Cleveleys to Mereside Tesco via Blackpool	Blackpool Transport Services	Part	Yes	3bph	1bph	1bph
5	Victoria Hospital to Halfway House via Town Centre	Blackpool Transport Services	No	No	4bph	2bph	2bph
6	Mereside to Grange Park via Blackpool Town Centre & Layton	Blackpool Transport Services	No	No	3bph	2bph	2bph
7	Cleveleys to St Anne's via Blackpool	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	3bph	1bph	2bph
9	Cleveleys to Blackpool via Bispham	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	4bph	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	5bph	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	NA	1bph
20	Staining to Blackpool via Victoria Hospital	Blackpool Transport Services	No	No	Bus every 1.5 hrs, day only	NA	Every 1.5 hrs
21	St Anne's – Pleasure Beach – Tower – Gynn Square – Cabin – Norbreck- Cleveleys	Coastliner	No	Yes	2bph	NA	2bph
22	Marlon Mere Holiday Village- Tower- Stanley Park – Blackpool Zoo	Coastliner	No	No	1bph	NA	1bph
24	Fleetwood – Cleveleys – Poulton – Victoria Hospital	Coastliner	No	Yes	2bph	Vic Hosp.	1bph
26	Marlon Mere Holiday Village- Tower- Promenade- Pleasure Beach	Coastliner	No	No	1bph	NA	1bph
42	Lancaster – Garstang- Blackpool	Stagecoach	No	Yes	1bph	NA	1bph
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	4bph	2bph	2bph
76	Blackpool (Abingdon St) – Poulton – Singleton – Weeton – Kirkham – Wrea Green – Warton – Lytham – St Anne's	Coastal Coaches	LCC tendered service	Yes	1bph	NA	NA
Rideability	Community Transport	Blackpool Council	NA	Yes	NA	NA	NA

Supported services

5.14 Bus service support is currently limited to maintaining 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. The support was considered for withdrawal, but a decision to provide contingency funding was taken.

5.15 Without additional ring-fenced funding there will be no supported service expansion. As noted, apart from the 3 and 4 arrangement, the Blackpool network runs commercially. The previously supported BTS 10 was lost, being recognised as no longer sustainable following its temporary withdrawal due to extensive sewer replacement works along its route. Although heavily loss making, this service did provide a connection between Blackpool town centre and St Anne's via SE Blackpool, a clear network gap.

5.16 It had been determined previously that the LCC supported services terminating in the town brought a marginal benefit to Blackpool people and thus support was withdrawn, although there will be benefit to Blackpool businesses. This situation can be reviewed, but in the council's current financial position, it is unlikely that support will be renewed. The services' principal benefit is connecting those living in rural areas to the Blackpool retail and leisure centre, the hospital and the Preston regional centre.

Baseline data

Bus service provision

5.17 Due to a variety of circumstances the 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

5.18 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 2 shows ticket type by sales, whilst Figure 3 translates this into likely use.

Figure 2: Proportion of sales by ticket type

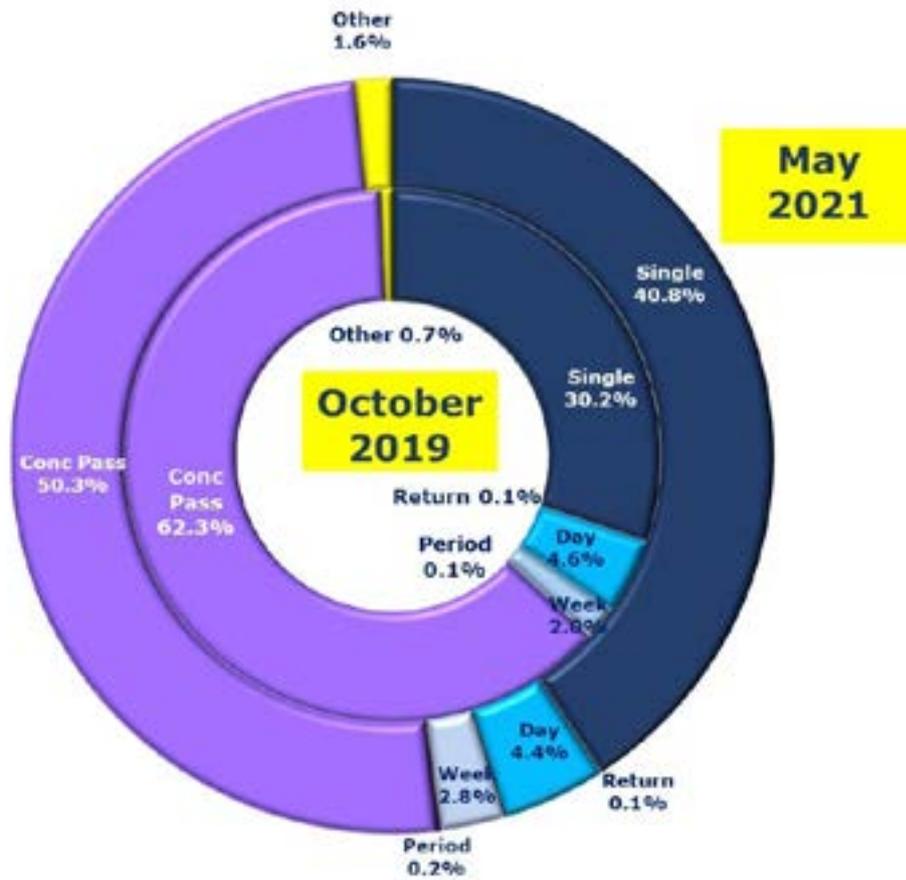


Figure 3: Proportion of likely journeys by ticket type



5.19 Covid had an impact on sales channels, with fewer sales via off bus sales channels and an increase in sales via Apps. The very high proportion of sales taking place on the bus is detrimental to boarding times, it was however difficult to get an accurate picture of cash versus contactless sales but a rough estimate is around 30% of on bus sales are done via contactless bank card as the Figure 4 shows.

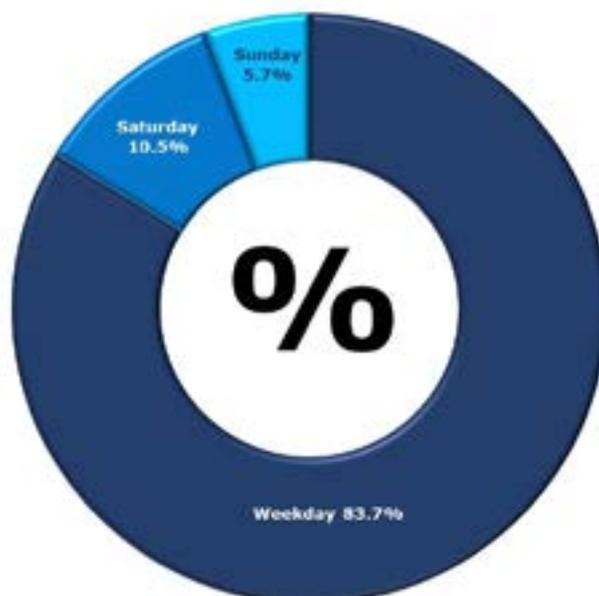
Figure 4: Sales by channel



Travel profile – pre-Covid

5.20 Well over three quarters of journeys by bus in Blackpool take place on a weekday as outlined in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Passengers by day



5.21 Figures 6 to 8 show the profile of journeys by hour for weekdays, Saturdays and Sundays respectively. The peak on a weekday occurs around school finishing time followed by a rather rapid drop off into the evening. Saturdays see a rather rapid rise to the lunchtime peak followed by a gradual decline into the evening. Sundays see a much more even spread across the late morning and early afternoon before the decline into the evening.

Figure 6: Journeys per hour profile – weekdays

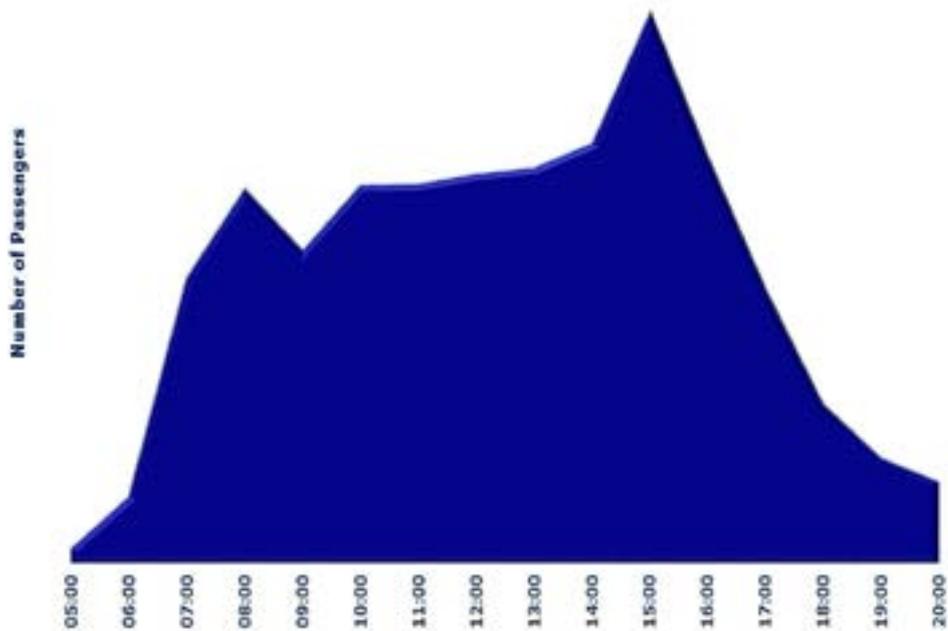


Figure 7: Journeys per hour profile – Saturday

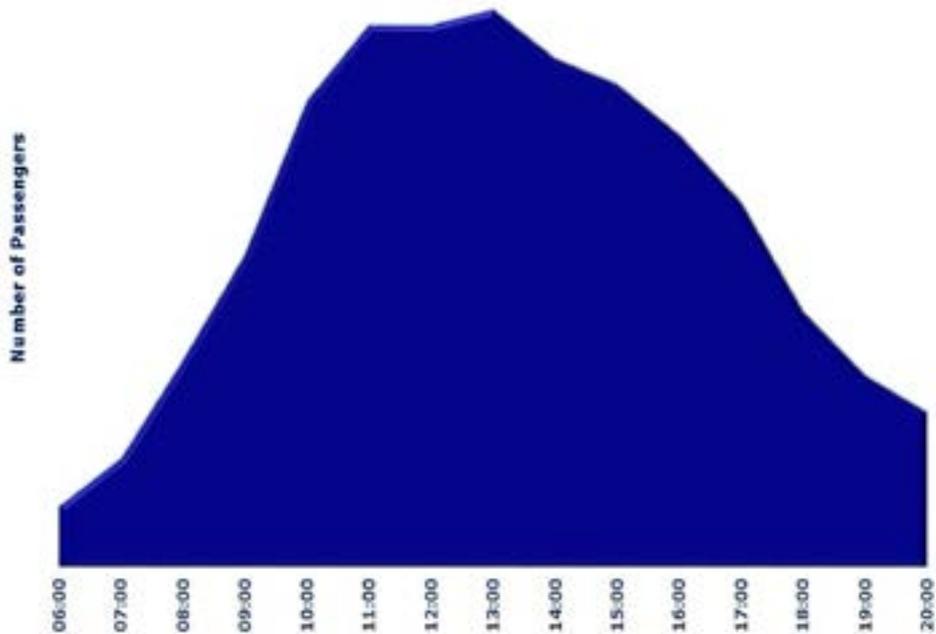
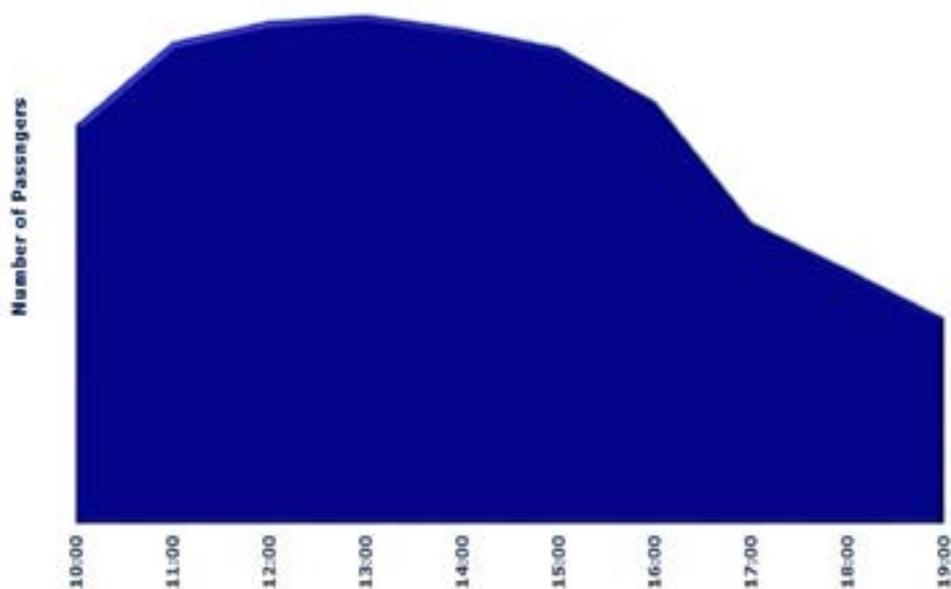


Figure 8: Journeys per hour profile – Sunday



Council infrastructure

5.22 The current total length of bus lane / bus only road within Blackpool is set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Bus lanes in Blackpool

Location	Length
Central Drive	320m
Talbot Road	108m
Victoria Hospital	80m
Town centre bus hub	314m
Total	0.51 miles

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 ²	Stops with shelters	% shelters	Stops covered by CCTV	% CCTV
679	19.5	239	35.2%	32	4.7%

Parking provision and enforcement

5.24 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.

5.25 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 council facilities. 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. 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 a priority development consideration in the urban situation, despite other modes often being available, principally bus and cycling. 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.

Table 5: Summary of council car parks and costs in Blackpool

Car Park	Spaces	2 Hrs	6 Hrs	12 Hrs	48 Hrs
Bank St	246	£2.50	£5.00	£8.00	£14.00
Bethesda	51	£2.00	£6.00	£8.00	£14.00
Bloomfield Rd	642	£3.50	£6.00	£10.00	£14.00
Bolton St	20	£3.50	£6.00	£10.00	£14.00
Bonny St	142	£3.00	£7.50	£12.00	£16.00
Central	748	£3.00	£7.50	£12.00	£16.00
Chapel St	217	£3.00	£7.50	£12.00	£16.00
Cocker Square	24	£2.50	£5.00	£8.00	£14.00
Cocker St	31	£2.50	£5.00	£8.00	£14.00
E Topping St	219	£3.00	£7.50	£12.00	£16.00
Filey Place	39	£5.00	£10.00	£12.00	-
Foxhall Village	129	£3.50	£6.00	£10.00	£14.00
Gynn Square	57	£2.00	£4.00	£6.00	£14.00
Lonsdale Rd	190	£3.50	£6.00	£10.00	£14.00
Lytham Rd	45	£3.50	£6.00	£10.00	£14.00
Queen St	36	£3.00	£7.50	£12.00	£16.00
Seasiders Way	142	£3.50	£6.00	£10.00	£14.00
South Beach	206	£5.00	£8.00	£8.00	£14.00
South	938	£3.50	£6.00	£10.00	£14.00
S King St	50	£2.50	£5.00	£8.00	£14.00
Talbot Rd	596	£3.00	£7.50	£12.00	£16.00
West St	193	£3.00	£7.50	£12.00	£16.00

Table 6: Table 6: Summary of private car parks and costs in Blackpool

Car Park	Owner	Spaces	2 Hrs	6 Hrs	12 Hrs	48 Hrs
Coop St	NE Parking	115	£2.00	£5.00	£12.00	£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	Not known	50	£4.00	£8.00	£12.00	-
St Cuthbert's	Bransby Wilson	40	£2.00	£7.00	£7.00	£12.00
Seymore Rd	NW Car Parks	95	£3.50	£6.00	£12.00	-
Central Rd	NE Parking	35	£1.70	£3.90	£7.50	£13.00
Hornby Rd	NE Parking	50	£1.70	£3.90	£7.50	£13.00
Houndshell shop	Houndshell	770	£2.70	£7.00	£12.00	-
Adelaide St	NE Parking	80	£3.00	£5.00	£12.00	£20.00
Counce St	NE Parking	165	£3.40	£5.00	£6.00	£19.00
General St	NE Parking	28	£2.30	£7.00	£12.00	£14.00

Table 7: Average parking costs per hour – council and private

	Spaces	2 Hrs	6 Hrs	12 Hrs	48 Hrs
Council	4,961	£3.23	£6.65	£10.59	£14.87
Private	1,485	£2.74	£6.27	£10.90	£17.56

5.26 The council has retained its in-house civil enforcement team, which manages the car parks and also provides an ambassadorial role to welcome and facilitate visitors. Effective on-street enforcement helps bus operations.

5.27 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 inter-urban bus, but also coach and rail.

5.28 Re allocating parking space would need careful consideration, particularly given Blackpool town centre's parlous retail position. 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

5.29 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 operates 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 Squires 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).
2. Coastal Coaches – is a small company based on the Fylde which operates one service (76) into Blackpool under contract to LCC.
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.
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, operates services 61 (via Kirkham) and 68 (via Lytham St Anne’s) from Blackpool to Preston from its Preston depot.

5.30 The fleet size regularly working in and around Blackpool is 199, comprising 123 double decks, 39 full size single decks and 37 midibuses. Figure 9 shows the fleet by Euro engine rating and Figure 10 by age. Nearly 90% of the fleet are Euro 5 or better, whilst just under half are less than five years old.

Figure 9: Fleet by Euro engine rating

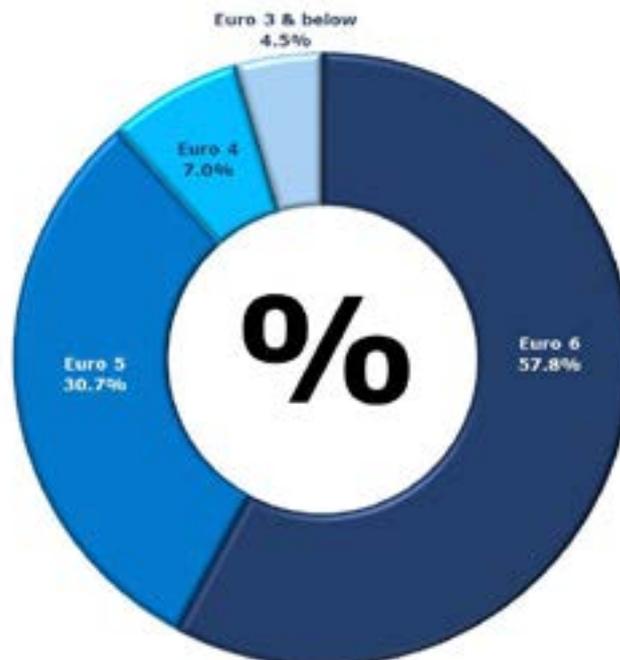
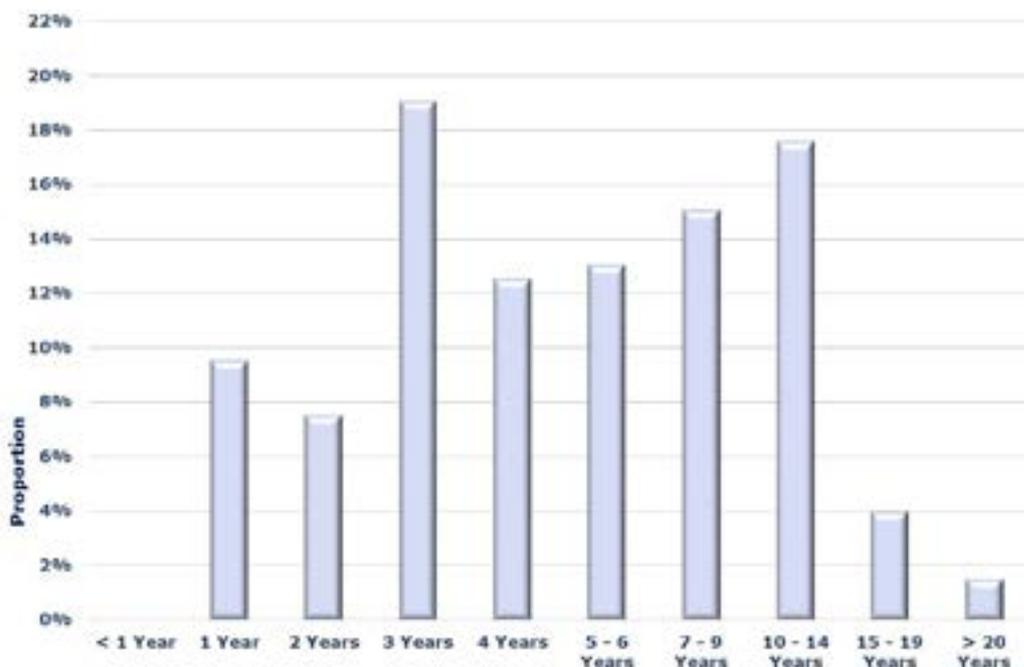


Figure 10: Fleet by age



5.31 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	57.8%	57.8%	69.4%	67.3%

Local evidence and views

5.32 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 synergistic effect on each other.

5.33 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.

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

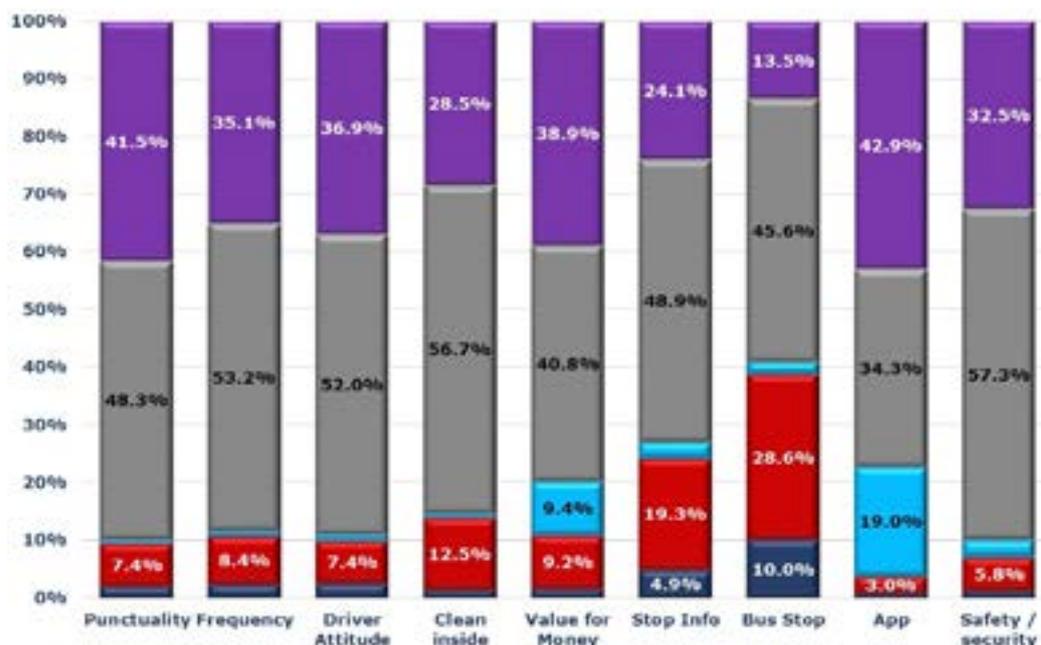
5.35 In respect of social media, operators have set up their own pages to celebrate good news and provide useful information. Ensuring good bus access to Blackpool’s many attractions is key.

5.36 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

5.37 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 11 summarises the satisfaction with various aspects of travel, showing that bus stops were the source of most dissatisfaction with punctuality and safety / security creating the most satisfaction.

Figure 11: 2019 survey - satisfaction results



5.38 Table 9 shows the bus service improvements requested by respondents ranked by popularity.

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 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 ahead of the timetable, recovering at timing points, particularly during the winter when less tourism traffic 'leaks' onto the local distributor network. The Promenade in the summer costs considerable bus time, primarily due to tourism traffic, despite the variable message signage pointing to early parking that is in operation. A bus lane proposed for part of this space would allow journey time reductions to be considered.

6.2 Operators have included significant congestion time in their timetables, which has made identifying issues where action might be taken difficult. 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 identified concepts for four initial bus lanes to be installed, subject to stakeholder engagement, including with ward councillors, and detailed design:

- 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)

6.4 An upgraded traffic control focused bus priority system will be considered to 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 have 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 allocations and the significant demands upon them have prevented a comprehensive bus journey time improvement programme such as that which is now envisaged. The four proposed bus lanes would be only the start of such a programme, improving bus priority over the course of time. There is also pressure to re allocate 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 wide enough so that buses can pass cyclists in lane. 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.

6.7 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.

6.8 If journey times on longer distance Blackpool Transport services 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, which makes them somewhat indirect.

6.9 If a consistent modal shift to bus can be achieved then it will be far easier to reduce journey times as congestion eases, but this is far from certain.

Reliability

6.10 Measures implemented to allow reduced journey times would also improve service reliability. This latter 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.

6.11 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 7 survives passing over two borough boundaries.

6.12 Reliability is recognised as the first on the user and possibly non-user priority list. Without it modal shift will not be achieved.

Passenger satisfaction

6.13 A baseline passenger survey is required and this would take place during 2022/23, to be repeated annually. 99% service satisfaction would be the target, to be achieved up to the 26/27 annual survey.

Rationale for overall network design

6.14 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. 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.

6.15 Blackpool's road layout tends to define the bus network that is possible and attempts to change it rapidly hit this reality. The town's north-south orientation, its narrow shape and the need for services to pass through the town centre sited against the western sea boundary, largely dictates the primary bus routes. Services working west-east are constrained between the sea and the eastern boundary, which latter is semi-rural, the Newton Drive and Talbot Road corridors being the exceptions. The 2C service (BTS) breaks the mould by crossing the river Wyre and providing a rural service to Knott End (see Figure 1).

6.16 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 not run solely for profit, cannot be filled. There is still no connecting bus using the east Blackpool corridor and going via the hospital, a route that could 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.

6.17 Any network must focus on the trips that people need 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. Under provided with bus services, inevitably car-based commuting patterns become established and will be difficult to counter to achieve modal shift if services are not improved. It is not good enough to just provide a bus service; where else this service goes in relation to other trip generators also needs consideration.

6.18 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.

6.19 The Fylde Coast network is currently largely stand alone. If it is assumed that the current network is maintained, there is one corridor where over-bussing will occur, between Blackpool, St. Anne's and Lytham with BTS 11 and Stagecoach 68 offering ten uncoordinated buses per hour. Eight buses per hour coordinated on a 7/8 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.

6.20 On other corridors:

- BTS 4 and Stagecoach 61 should coordinate as much as is possible;
- The potential exists to coordinate BTS 1 and Coastliner 21 between Squires Gate and Cleveleys;
- There are four services by three operators offering six 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.

6.21 There is potential to re-examine the low-frequency services 18 and 20 offered by BTS to provide more logical and direct links. It is possible that the optimum solution is for these to become supported services with BSIP funding while BTS redeploys the resource to bolster frequency on the core routes.

6.22 Recommendations for new, amended and increased service frequencies must be supported by subsidy, over at least a seven-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.

6.23 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 16. The Airport Enterprise Zone is a primary concern and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) options have been considered. However, the typical tendered hourly service is unlikely to satisfy these demands so a change of approach is proposed, using smaller vehicles to provide a higher frequency (every fifteen minutes) to mirror the core network.

6.24 Consider 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

6.25 Blackpool, although it has defined areas, is effectively one large built-up area and it would be difficult to define ‘settlements’ within the borough’s boundaries.

6.26 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:

Table 10: Proposed service frequencies (based on early Sept.’21)

Service number	Route	Frequency (day)	Target frequency (day)	Frequency (evening)	Target frequency (evening)
1	Fleetwood to Starr Gate via Promenade	2bph	2bph	NA	NA
2	Poulton to Blackpool Town Centre via Victoria Hospital	2bph	3bph	1bph	1bph
2c	Knott End to Blackpool via Poulton	2bph	2bph	1bph	1bph
3	Mereside Tesco to Cleveleys Park via Blackpool	3bph	3bph	1bph	1bph
4	Cleveleys to Mereside Tesco via Blackpool	3bph	3bph	1bph	1bph
5	Victoria Hospital to Halfway House via Town Centre	4bph	5bph	2bph	3bph
6	Mereside to Grange Park via Blackpool Town Centre & Layton	3bph	4bph	2bph	2bph
7	Cleveleys to St Anne’s via Blackpool	3bph	4bph	1bph	2bph
9	Cleveleys to Blackpool via Bispham	4bph	5bph	2bph	3bph
11	Lytham to Blackpool Town Centre via St Anne’s	3bph	4bph	2bph	3bph
14	Fleetwood to Blackpool via Layton	5bph	6bph	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	NA	1bph
20	Staining to Blackpool via Victoria Hospital	Bus every 1.5 hrs, day only	1bph	NA	NA
42	Lancaster – Garstang- Blackpool	1bph	2bph	NA	1bph
61	Preston – Blackpool via Clifton, Kirkham, Wrea Green	2bph	3bph	1bph	1bph
68	Preston – Blackpool via Freckleton, Warton, Lytham, St Anne’s	4bph	4bph	2bph	2bph
21	St Anne’s – Pleasure Beach – Tower – Gynn Square – Cabin – Norbreck- Cleveleys	2bph	2bph	NA	NA
22	Marnton Mere Holiday Village- Tower- Stanley Park – Blackpool Zoo	2bph (not standard pattern, late starting service)	2bph	NA	NA
24	Fleetwood – Cleveleys – Poulton – Victoria Hospital	2bph	2bph	NA	1bph Vic Hosp.
26	Marnton Mere Holiday Village- Tower- Promenade- Pleasure Beach	1bph	1bph	NA	NA
76	Blackpool (Abingdon St) – Poulton – Singleton – Weeton – Kirkham – Wrea Green – Warton – Lytham – St Anne’s	1bph	1bph	NA	NA

Local branding and promotion

6.27 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. New real time information screens and information totem for the new railway station tram terminus use the council corporate colours.

6.28 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.

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

Bus stop infrastructure

6.30 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 a portion of the advertising shelters. Care to ensure that stops are to Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) standards is being taken. There are also opportunities for innovation and ensuring the shelters are made and operate in a more environmentally friendly way.

6.31 A rolling shelter replacement programme is required, preferably ensuring that no shelter is older than ten years. This would also allow the latest advertising technology to be adopted, thus maximising revenue from this source. Advertising cannot fund such a rolling programme and LTP resources 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, then additional resources will be required.

6.32 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 approach 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.

Real time information

6.33 QR codes are part of a suite of RTI measures that are to be implemented, funded with LTP resources; additional resources would speed this process. The council has had access to RTI technology for some time. There are two screens at Victoria Hospital. Further screens can now be installed, building upon this. Firstly a trial screen will provide real time information for the defined bus hub area, Market and Corporation Street in Blackpool town centre. Secondly an RTI information totem will be provided at the new tram terminus. Both will have the capacity to provide community information or carry revenue generating advertising. From this point, it is intended to roll out a programme of RTI screen installation throughout the town centre for which BSIP funding would be required.

6.34 Both main operators' smartphone apps provide RTI for their own services on a stop by stop basis. QR codes will offer this multi-operator.

Accessibility

6.35 The BSIP envisages a full estate review of bus stops and shelters and a rolling upgrade programme to improve the passenger waiting environment. This will ensure that stops are all fully DDA compliant.

Decarbonisation - local position statement

6.36 With 25% of greenhouse gas emissions attributable to transport nationally, it is imperative that this is addressed locally within the council's climate emergency strategy. A small team including two dedicated graduate officers have been employed to assume this agenda, one of whom would join the EP Management Board. A cross-departmental group means the issue is being addressed at a corporate level.

6.37 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

6.38 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 is in place. Given buses’ vital economic role, business groups such as the Blackpool Business Leadership Group and the two Business Improvement Districts will be asked to support the Partnership. Voluntary organisations such as the Civic Trust, can also play a role. There are other actors beyond the council that can play a big role in promoting bus.

6.39 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.

6.40 This bus plan notes that simply transferring to EV 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. Modal shift to bus addresses these issues, using resources in a much more efficient manner than like-for-like transit to EV cars. New mass electric transit systems would be more modal shift effective, but far more expensive initially than a bus based approach.

6.41 Operator partners have plans to transition to EV buses from the next purchase cycle, discussions with vehicle manufacturers having been held. The council and BTS have worked together to gain entry to the DfT’s zero emission fund (second round), a successful bid to which would enable the entire 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 might achieve significant modal shift from car.

7. Delivery of Improvements

Key corridor improvements

7.1 Key corridors should have 4bph or preferably 6bph daytime frequencies. Evening frequencies should be up to 3bph. As mentioned above, to achieve modal shift the partnership need to be looking at 2bph frequencies minimum. Through engagement and consensus, key corridors will be defined and priorities identified for improvement, e.g. more Sunday services. The A584, A586, A5099 and B5262 have been identified as key corridors. Any need for bus rapid transit on these corridors will be kept under review.

Bus priority (including measures in neighbouring authorities)

7.2 Measures in neighbouring authorities, in this case LCC providing transport management in Fylde and Wyre boroughs, are not under the council's control, but possibilities will be discussed with LCC. Agreement on prevailing cross-border frequencies will be necessary.

7.3 Four new bus lanes have been proposed and their locations are listed above. These would reap great benefit for bus passengers in terms of reduced journey times and improved reliability. They would be first steps in transforming the Blackpool network to one that is entirely bus performance focused.

7.4 The council's existing commitment to traffic control-based bus priority will be revisited to create an upgraded system. 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 shepherded through congested traffic, maximising reliability.

7.5 Bus lane enforcement cameras will shortly be deployed, excluding private vehicles from the Market Street/Corporation Street bus hub area. This will be the start of a wider town centre programme, BSIP 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.

7.6 In the long run, it is intended that buses have priority across the entire Blackpool network and it is hoped that this approach can continue into neighbouring LCC.

Rural cross-boundary network improvements

7.7 Blackpool is almost an entirely urban area, although areas towards the eastern boundary have lower densities for example the Marton Mere SSSI and its surrounding urban fringe area. Services operated by BTS and Stagecoach serve the Fylde Coast hinterland, much of which is rural. Of most relevance are the Stagecoach services which serve rural areas accessed off the A586, A6, A583 and A584 corridors. For these key corridors, the council supports LCC's Superbus proposals.

7.8 A DRT pilot project to connect communities to the maturing Enterprise Zone has been discussed and the Airport Enterprise Zone team is considering how this might be taken forward.

Covid impacts – commercial viability/supported bus needs

7.9 Covid-19 and its associated restrictions have had a significant impact on public transport use. Continuation of the network has been supported by dedicated funding since April 2020 and from September 2021 it moves into Recovery Funding until the end of March 2022.

7.10 Recovery will certainly take a long time and ultimately no-one knows what level of ridership will return post-pandemic. Many expect home-working or part time home-working to continue into the future, but over the long term no-one knows definitively. It is almost certain that from April 2022 a significant amount of BSIP funding will be needed simply to support the continuation of the existing network.

7.11 From data supplied by the operators, ridership is around 60% of pre-Covid in May 2021 but varying between 52% and 69% for individual routes.

7.12 In the community transport sector many or both its users and volunteers have shielded during the pandemic, causing difficulties for the sector.

7.13 BSIP funding will certainly need to support the existing network for some time to come. However, it is going to be difficult once the Covid emergency is over to decide at what point a local authority will cease to support a ‘commercial’ service in favour of it becoming a supported service like any other which fails to cover its costs and put it out to competitive tender.

7.14 There will undoubtedly be adjustments to services to reflect the ‘new normal’, but it would be unwise to allow too much reduction of service immediately prior to providing extra funding to improve services. The aims of the BSIP would not be met in this way. It is, therefore, quite likely that the supported network will grow significantly as a proportion in the short term at least. In other areas, it is clear that there is a resource shift with marginally commercial services becoming tendered services and core services being boosted with extra resource.

7.15 Concessionary travel posits another issue to address. The Government currently ‘suggests’ that local authorities continue to pay concessionary reimbursement at pre-Covid levels. This has naturally broken the link with actual usage and therefore the ‘no better off / no worse off’ principle.

7.16 While many concessionary passholders continue to limit or curtail their trip-making, a ‘correct’ reimbursement on past principles would be much lower. However, it could reasonably be argued that there is now a much higher proportion of ‘essential’ concessionary trips than there were previously and as such the generation level is much lower, therefore reimbursement ought to be much higher, i.e. the operator will receive a higher percentage of the fare forgone. The issue lies in quantifying ‘much higher’ and ‘much lower’.

Multi-operator tickets/fares initiatives/E-vouchers

7.17 It is proposed multi-operator tickets are introduced following further discussion and agreement with LCC and operators; key corridors would to be identified for a pilot.

7.18 The cost of group travel would be a challenge, given where fares stand against taxi tariffs. This has always been an issue. Family 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. The current offer (early September 2021) is shown in Table 11:

Table 11: Saver tickets available across the local area

Company	Age group	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Group ticket options
BTS (inc. tram)	Adult	£5.20	£14.50	£54.00	24 hr family (5 people) = £11.50
	Young person	£2.50	£7.50	£27.00	24 hour group (3 adults) = £12.50
Stagecoach	Adult	£4.40	£14.50	£54.99	Lancs group day rider (4 people) = £17.00
	Young person	£2.20	£7.30	N/A	
Coastliner	Adult	£5.50	£15.00	£45.00	N/A
	Young person	£2.70	£8.00	£23.00	

7.19 Young persons, post-16, fares would feature in an agreement. These need holding right down so that driving is less attractive. There would also be a road safety benefit from this. A scholars' pass needs to be maintained.

7.20 Products linked to company travel plans and switching from car 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. They would be modelled on BTS' existing loan scheme in partnership with the council.

7.21 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.

7.22 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 direct benefits to 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.

Evening and weekend services

7.23 Weekend traffic volumes have escalated over recent decades, particularly on a Sunday 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, the reality is reduced Sunday bus demand. 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. 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. 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, naturally particularly during the tourist season.

Route simplification

7.26 Work to ensure that it is providing the trips that are required has been undertaken. As noted, the Blackpool geography and road layout militates against major route amendments.

7.27 Constantly changing routes is likely to lose ridership as people's regular stops are moved, potentially to more inconvenient locations, and they become irritated as a result. People will walk a reasonable distance to a bus stop, although it is naturally preferable that a route run outside their home. It should not be assumed that the mobility impaired can walk increased distances to stops.

7.28 In general terms the council would like to see the network density increase and the known poor bus accessibility gaps filled. It is understood that there would be knock on consequences to doing this, including the need for more vehicles.

Easily accessible publicity and information

7.29 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.

7.30 The council website and VisitBlackpool, together with the council's considerable social media presence offers outlets for bus promotion information. There is a debate to be had as to whether joint campaigns with operators are delivered or the council campaigns for public transport generally.

7.31 RTI screens and the tram platform information totem 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.

7.32 Operators have conducted their own promotion campaigns and this will naturally continue. The council will support these as appropriate. 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 on products.

Integration with other modes

7.33 Blackpool has no control over its rail departures pattern. It would be easier to match bus and tram departure times to the rail services; however, there are no departures for notable periods, which means some clock face arriving buses/trams will not have rail passengers to pick up. However, passengers leaving the station will be signposted to the planned public transport interchange facility that is being provided in the Central Business District.

7.34 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. As noted, a more even rail arrival/departure pattern would benefit the tramway extension as its high frequency will coincide with times when there is no train arrival.

7.35 Rail passengers will pass through a refurbished, level access subway to reach the tram terminus platforms. For the majority of rail passengers their tram will be waiting. The Blackpool Tramway is already on the PlusBus system so through ticketing is available and can be promoted.

Total Transport

7.36 This concept – coordinating some public transport, non-emergency patient transport, community transport and social services transport – would be considered alongside the potential for DRT in meeting people’s particular transport needs. A new management team would need to put in place to implement any scheme, the cost of which is not currently available. With no rural areas to contend with and a good quality scheduled service network in place, Total Transport’s role needs careful definition.

7.37 The council has a substantial passenger carrying vehicle fleet, which might be incorporated with a Total Transport scheme, providing transport and using vehicles more efficiently. A scheme might provide trips that the scheduled service network cannot. Many vehicles are highly adapted, principally for those with mobility needs, and this would reduce their passenger carrying capacity. This applies to the Rideability fleet in particular. Those vehicles are designed specifically for the needs profile of the elderly and disabled persons that they serve.

7.38 Vehicle fleets have their peak demand periods and would not be available for Total Transport at these times. These include school start and finish times. The Rideability vehicles are employed throughout most of the day and have comparatively low downtime and therefore availability.

7.39 Blackpool has no community transport movement or organisations that might be integrated within a Total Transport initiative. It needs to be recognised that the scheduled network does provide the majority of the trips that are required, although network gaps are identified elsewhere in this document. As discussed there are no direct bus links to some employment generation areas and this needs to be remedied. A Total Transport scheme can be a useful complement to existing provision.

Passengers’ Charter – commitment and key provisions

7.40 Blackpool Council will work with its operator partners and LCC through the Enhanced Partnership, to commit to a Passengers’ Charter which will be easy for passengers to read and offer clear definitions of:

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

7.41 It will outline 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;
- Environmental targets; and
- Accessibility of the service and of information.

7.42 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.

Passenger safety and customer relations

7.43 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.

7.44 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

7.45 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. There has been no history of volunteer led community transport in Blackpool, principally because local bus operators are able to provide the majority of the trips required.

7.46 The Rideability service comprises:

- Five dedicated vehicles 08:30-17:00 Mon-Fri
- Two dedicated vehicles 08:30-17:00 Saturday
- Six drivers – (Five Mon-Fri plus one Saturday only) plus a casual fleet driver pool.

7.47 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.

Airport Enterprise Zone

7.48 As discussed above, 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. 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. A DRT pilot has also been considered to address this and could be delivered when the Zone's infrastructure development has advanced further, including providing a new access road.

Role of taxis

7.49 Normally there is adequate supply of both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles to meet market demand, but there have been issues (Summer 2021) as a consequence of the pandemic. Taxi's role in supporting bus and other more sustainable transport modes is recognised within the LTP process.

8. Reporting and Governance

Forums for ongoing discussion

8.1 The Blackpool Bus Operators' Forum will be formalised into an EP Management Board to meet monthly with 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. Blackpool Council will design the spreadsheets required and coordinate data collection and collation. The spreadsheets will be posted on the council's website.

9. Proposed calls on BSIP funding

9.1 In addition to needing BSIP funding to support the existing network, there are likely to be the following calls on new resources:

- Network improvements; new and enhanced services.
- Bus stop/shelter enhancements, by priority corridors.
- Promotion and Real Time Information.
- Ticketing reform and fares support.
- Bus priority, for better punctuality and reliability.
- Bus facility camera enforcement.
- Marketing and promotion.
- Staffing and support, to implement, promote and monitor the plan.

10. Overview Template

Name of authority:	Blackpool Council
Franchising or Enhanced Partnership:	Enhanced Partnership
Date of publication:	October 2021
Date of next annual update:	October 2022
URL of published report:	https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Parking-roads-and-transport/Transport/Transport-policy.aspx

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	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	8.4 million	8.2 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
Make improvements to bus services and planning:		
<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 weekends, particularly Sundays.
Increase bus priority measures	Yes	Proposals for bus lanes and vehicle detection/traffic control systems at key junctions to improve punctuality and reliability.
Increase demand responsive services	Yes	Review the Rideability service and examine health and employment links, particularly to the Airport Enterprise Zone.
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.

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/ No	Explanation
<i>Improvements to planning / integration with other modes:</i>		
Integrate services with other transport modes	Yes	Ensure bus- tram and bus- rail links are publicised.
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.
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	Multi-operator tickets, including co-ordinating fares for all, particularly young people.
Integrate ticketing between operators and transport	Yes	Develop multi-operator ticketing offer for the Fylde Coast in association with LCC.
Make improvements to bus passenger experience:		
<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.
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 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.

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/ No	Explanation
<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 facilities 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.
Other:		
Other	Yes	Co-ordinate bus service change dates with LCC.

