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Transport policy

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Introduction

As a mixed economy with a strong tourism sector, Blackpool is dependent upon its transport links to the wider economy and its local transport networks, the highway and vehicles and pedestrians using it. To enable transport efficiency and to improve the town's public realm, supporting the economy, is an ongoing challenge.

In line with its planning, transport and climate emergency policies, the council is keen to promote sustainable travel modes (public transport, cycling and walking) with the public realm improvement, de-congestion and air quality benefits this has. The government's £2 flat bus fare scheme will continue to the end of December 2024, supporting existing bus users over a time of rising cost of living and encouraging new passengers. Nevertheless motor vehicle mobility is an important part of the Blackpool economy and a well maintained and functioning road network is a key aim.

The overall objective is to ensure that both visitors and residents can get to and move around Blackpool easily, using a variety of transport modes. A modal shift to sustainable modes will assist the council in achieving its net zero goal and controlling traffic congestion, together with public realm and road safety benefits.

Supporting Blackpool's economy

Blackpool Council aims to control congestion, improve the public realm, reduce pollution and decrease accidents on the town's roads by managing traffic effectively. This means working with local transport operators and agencies, making Blackpool better for residents and businesses. Effective transport systems are essential to the resort's economy and vital to its regeneration, particularly as new developments including the [Talbot Gateway](#), a new civil service building accommodating 3,000 workers and a town centre Multiversity development and the [Blackpool Central](#) project, come on stream. These town centre developments are at the heart of the bus and tramway network and convenient for Blackpool North railway station, reducing the need for people to drive and park for work.

Up to 20 million visits per year are made to enjoy Blackpool's attractions, coming from all over the country and beyond, for which reason the resort needs high quality access to national transport networks, road and rail. On arrival, visitors must have excellent gateways to encourage repeat visits and investment.

A [local transport plan implementation strategy document \[PDF 292 KB\]](#) outlines the council's transport policies. The current plan came into force in 2018 and will continue to apply until a new Local Transport Plan (LTP) is developed during 2024. The strategy addresses the needs of all transport modes and their users. Also, the council has worked with Lancashire County Council to develop a

[Fylde coast transport masterplan \[PDF 2.08MB\]](#). The new LTP will address the considerable development that has occurred since its predecessor was written and the transport consequences of that development.

It is challenging to fit all the facilities that are needed - bus stops, taxi ranks, on-street parking, cycle parking, loading bays, pedestrian crossings etc - into what is a densely built-up place.

Maintaining highways assets

The Local Transport Plan programme includes schemes to repair roads, footpaths and bridges to the value of resources available of currently around £ 1.78 million per annum. Similar funding levels have been insufficient to prevent road condition decline in recent years. The council continues to look for extra money to pay for repairs and reverse this situation. A successful bid for additional government monies resulted in the [Project Amber](#) programme, using innovative technology to secure Blackpool's roads, in line with a highways asset management plan.

Traffic lights and street lighting are managed under the Community Lighting Partnership. [Any faults with traffic lights or pedestrian/cycle crossings can be reported here](#). The Local Transport Plan programme apportions resources to upgrade road junctions and traffic control systems as need and opportunity is identified.

Government makes additional funding available for specific purposes such as repairing pot holes or responding to the damage that severe winter weather can cause. £866k has been made available to repair potholes during the financial year 2023/2024.

The council has worked with Lancashire County Council to develop a [Rights of Way Improvement Plan \[PDF 880KB\]](#) . This runs between 2015 and 2025.

Encouraging sustainable development

Good transport links with the national economy are crucial to encouraging inward investment into Blackpool. Residents and businesses need good access to workplaces, shops, schools, education, health care and roads or public transport services to neighbouring towns. When any large developments are proposed in Blackpool, the council assesses what transport arrangements will be made throughout the work's duration and after they have finished, as part of the planning process.

Public realm improvement

Funding opportunities to further improve public realm will be sought, most recently from the government's Levelling Up programme, which has resulted in support for the Multiversity and former Post Office hotel projects, which will improve public realm to the town centre's east, while providing employment and increasing town centre footfall.

The Local Transport Plan programme includes provision for public realm improvements. Without external funding, such improvements might be small-scale, but opportunities for additional funding for more comprehensive schemes will be pursued.

Supporting transport innovation

The council full business case submission to the government's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme, in partnership with Blackpool Transport Services, was successful, allowing electrification of the local bus fleet to proceed. This success means that a new state of the art electric bus fleet will be provided, together with a depot rebuild and refurbishment. The first electric buses are scheduled to arrive in Spring 2025. These will replace the current Palladium fleet of very high standard Euro VI DERV engined vehicles.

Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council have worked together to renew the [tramway](#) from Blackpool to nearby town Fleetwood, enabling a fleet of 18 modern 'Flexity 2' trams to help people travel between Fylde coast destinations. The renewed system had its 10th anniversary in April 2022. Tramway ridership has grown and remains robust. It is intended that the tramway extension to Blackpool North railway station opens during 2024, as the adjacent new Holiday Inn hotel is completed, part of the Central Business District 2 regeneration scheme.

The extension will improve public transport access to Blackpool's seafront hotels and attractions, particularly the [Pleasure Beach](#), and connect the North Fylde to the national rail network. It provides a public transport link between the Blackpool Central Business District and the wider area, including the main council office, Topping Street/Dickson Road shopping, [Grundy Art Gallery](#) and Central Library, restaurants and bars, and Sainsbury's supermarket. The tramway extension will provide a valuable light rail complement to the bus network and can help reduce congestion and parking pressures on the town centre. The same [ticket products](#) as for bus are available for the tram.

[Heritage trams](#) continue to use the system, providing a service for tourists and enthusiasts and making a fine sight as they ply the

promenade.

Concerning road traffic, traffic flow management technology can help to reduce congestion, pollution and accommodate the traffic growth that is likely to follow from economic regeneration, including growing town centre employment. Traffic control systems are reviewed for ongoing improvements. The network benefits from Variable Message Signage, a car park management system and Bluetooth technology, which monitors traffic flow.

Supporting local public transport

In its [Bus Back Better](#) document, the government presented a national bus strategy intended to force the pace of improvement in bus services and increase people’s use of this congestion busting and ‘green’ transport mode. At a local level, Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) now set out councils' vision of how this might be achieved. Blackpool's first plan was submitted to government in October 2021 and will be renewed annually, although no plan was required in 2023.

Blackpool residents can view the 2022 plan using the link below. The plan forms the foundation for the [enhanced bus partnership](#) that is now place. This is a formal agreement with operators to improve local bus services. On the basis of the BSIP plans, the council has been awarded government funding of £506,488 for each of the financial years 23/24 and 24/25, with a further £802,000 for 24/25, to support the bus network. Proposals to use this money are being brought forward. The council will also continue to use Local Transport Plan resources to support buses, including replacing [bus shelters](#).

[Blackpool Council's bus service improvement plan \[PDF 798KB\]](#)

Blackpool benefits from a high-quality bus network. Blackpool Transport Services Ltd restructured its bus network early in January 2024 to improve its efficiency. The council wishes to see increased numbers of residents and visitors using the bus, in line with the Local Transport Plan and the BSIP. Services are provided by [Blackpool Transport Services](#), [Stagecoach Bus](#), [Preston Bus](#) and [Transpora North West](#). Timetables, information on smartphone apps and other information can be found on these companies' websites, including journey planning and bus service real time information. Stagecoach Bus and Blackpool Transport Services Ltd are operating contactless card payments on their vehicles, removing the need for cash change. Using season and flexible bus fare products reduce bus travel's costs significantly in comparison to walk up fares and many products can be purchased using the smartphone app. The government supported £2 fare cap scheme is to remain in place until the end of December 2024.

A real time information (RTI) screen has been installed in the former Blackpool Transport Services shop on Market Street, Blackpool, providing information for transport hub located services.

If travelling into Blackpool, the PlusBus system offers seamless interchange between rail and bus/tram services. Simply ask for the [Plus Bus](#) add on when you purchase your train ticket, or take up the prompt if buying on line or via an operator's app. For Blackpool visitors, this offer is for both bus and tram. Soon the tramway will come right to the railway station's door and with Plus Bus the passenger will be able to transfer smoothly from train to tram for their onward journey.

Additionally, Northern Railway now offers through ticketing from train to Blackpool Transport Services Ltd bus and tram services. Ask for this when you buy your train ticket for seamless public transport into and around the resort.

More people commuting by public transport means less congestion, less air pollution and an improved environment, including for cyclists and pedestrians. The vehicles, services and payment options are in place to make this happen. Together with more people cycling, this is becoming more important to achieve net zero, particularly when electric buses are introduced.

The council always keeps town centre bus stop arrangements under review. A transport hub focused on Market Street, Corporation Street, Clifton Street and Abingdon Street has been established. A town centre [bus map](#) can be found on the Blackpool Transport Services site. Operators' smartphone apps have interactive maps with journey planning.

The council recognises the important role taxis and private hire vehicles play in supporting the visitor and night-time economies. The role landaus play in providing promenade pleasure trips is also acknowledged. Regular dialogue occurs between representatives of the trade and council officers concerning network and ranking issues, ensuring that appropriate ranks are available. Taxis and private hire vehicles reduce the need for car ownership for the occasional car user. They provide an essential link between transport hubs, hotels and attractions.

During the Covid pandemic period, the government supported the council's Rideability community transport service. As requested by government, the table below shows the amount of this support:

Rideability Covid bus service support grant award £

Tranche	From	To	Award	Mileage

Tranche	From	To	Award	Mileage
0	17 March 2020	13 April 2020	9,960.00	408.00
0	14 April 2020	11 May 2020	9,960.00	572.00
0	12 May 2020	8 June 2020	9,960.00	805.00
1	9 June 2020	3 August 2020	21,882.00	463.00
2	4 August 2020	28 September 2020	6,325.01	971.00
3	29 September 2020	23 November 2020	7,083.32	3,221.00
4	24 November 2020	18 January 2020	4,617.42	2,984.00
5	19 January 2021	15 March 2021	6,924.30	4,262.00
6	16 March 2021	10 May 2021	5,849.94	5,066.00
7	11 May 2021	5 July 2021	5,838.12	6,255.00
8	6 July 2021	31 August 2021	4,802.40	5,093.00
Total			93,202.51	30,100.00

Supporting coach

The coach industry continues to bring many people to the resort and this is valued. The [Central car park site](#) provides for year round scheduled [National Express](#) services and scheduled seasonal services.

Coach parking locations are identified in the [parking services section of this site](#). This also provides information on the paybyphone app that enables 72 hours free parking for coach vehicles. Foxhall Village, Seaside and South facilities are all marked for coach. For a more town centre location, Banks Street is also so marked and is signed.

The need for new and better coach facilities is kept under ongoing review and is being addressed within the Blackpool Central project. Coach can provide an alternative arrival mode for visitors who do not drive and seek value for money travel to Blackpool's attractions.

The [VisitBlackpool](#) website provides advice to coach passengers and coach operators.

Supporting cycling

Blackpool has several cycle routes. Cycling on the Promenade is a popular activity, particularly using the Jubilee Cycleway to the North. This route and others are intended for leisure and commuting cycling at low speeds and not racing, training or other fast riding, particularly as pedestrians including children are also using this space. With recent sea wall works at Anchorsholme now complete, it is possible to cycle with care all the way between Starr Gate and Fleetwood on the Promenade.

Cycling is permitted in all town centre areas, with care and indicated by cycle symbol 'flags' let into the ground.

Minor works for cycling can be funded from the Local Transport Plan programme, including cycle parking. The council is working with Lancashire councils to establish a [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#) (LCWIP) in line with government policy.

The council has worked with Northern Trains to provide cycle parking at Layton station. Northern Trains has provided excellent covered [cycle storage](#) at Blackpool North railway station.

Supporting rail

Around a million visitors arrive by train each year and summer services can be crowded. Electric trains provide three of the four regular hourly services - two to Manchester Airport via Piccadilly and one to Liverpool. The York service now benefits from the class 195 diesel train with its far superior facilities compared with its predecessors. These trains are more spacious than previous units and peak-time overcrowding has been eased. Another hourly Preston/Colne service runs from Blackpool South railway station.

[Northern Trains](#) provides services at Blackpool North and Blackpool South stations. This company's website provides all journey planning, ticket purchase and timetable information.

The [Avanti West Coast](#) company assumed the West Coast Partnership franchise from December 2019 and continued the three direct London services and early morning service that the former franchise holder had undertaken. This company has moved to develop its services, providing greater access to Birmingham and Milton Keynes, as well as maintaining access to London.

Access to London, Scotland, the West Midlands and other large conurbations is recognised as a key consideration for those who might invest in Blackpool. The council is keen to see improvements to the Preston hub railway station, as so many people change trains there to come to the resort. It would also like to see direct trains to Scotland, which the resort has lost and would be very likely to make a significant contribution to the resort's economy.

The council is a member of the [West Coast Rail 250](#) group, which has supported the improvement of the vital West Coast Main-line, which brings visitors from Scotland, the south and connects the resort's businesses to London and Birmingham.

The council is also a stakeholder in the [Transport for the North](#) organisation, which is looking at new strategic transport links for the entire north, together with technology based transport solutions. Following the High Speed 2 rail line's northern leg's cancellation, this work will be even more important.

The council supports the [South Fylde Line Community Rail Partnership](#). With support from local MPs, a strategic outline business case proposal to make improvements to enable the line's frequency to be increased to two trains per hour, has been submitted to the government's [Restoring Your Railway Fund](#) and is now being considered. Although it is not in Blackpool, the council also supports the [Poulton and Fleetwood line reopening project](#), which has received money from the Restoring Your Railway fund for feasibility appraisal work.

Supporting equality

Transport policy promotes equality and helps people to participate in society. An LTP strategy equalities impact assessment has been prepared and is available to view on request.

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