

# Cheshire East Bus Service Improvement Plan 2024



June 2024

Working for a **brighter future** together



OFFICIAL

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Final Draft

## Foreword

**Welcome to our Bus Service Improvement Plan for 2024-2035**

To be completed after Pre-Election Period (in final version).

Final Draft

# 1. Our Bus Vision

## Our Vision

Cheshire East has a rich natural environment, strong sense of community and successful economy, making Cheshire East one of the best places to live and work in the UK, with strong employment opportunities, attractive places to live and high standards of education.

The challenge is how we maintain our position, continuing to create sustainable growth that will support the wellbeing of our residents and the economy on which that depends, whilst protecting existing residents and green spaces.

Improving the bus network is critical to increasing sustainable access for all, to principal towns and key service centres, enabling residents and bus users alike to benefit from an established sense of community and successful economy.

*“Our vision will transform the bus network within Cheshire East to provide attractive, reliable and convenient connections that enable more residents and visitors to choose bus, make fewer car journeys, to contribute to our carbon reduction challenge and improve the health of our citizens”.*

Our vision for buses continues to align with National Bus Strategy for England (NBSfE) objectives and is linked to our strategic priorities included in our Corporate Plan, Local Transport Plan (LTP), Economic and Environment Strategies and Public Health Annual report and the Joint Needs Assessment.

Cheshire East’s Corporate Plan places an importance on the bus network in supporting key strategic objectives such as reducing carbon emissions, reducing health inequalities, enabling employment and housing growth and improving quality of place. The LTP outlines the role of the bus network in supporting the long-term goals to improve the economy, protect the environment, improve health and wellbeing and the quality of place.

The key overarching objectives of these strategies and plans provide the context within which our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) has been developed, its principles and what we are trying to achieve.

These BSIP principles (shown below) are our commitment to work together in partnership with our bus industry partners to improve local bus services for users and the residents of Cheshire East.

This BSIP outlines our ambitions for the bus network as well as our commitment to delivering improved services for existing bus passengers and growing passenger numbers by surpassing the expectations of non-bus users to encourage changes in travel behaviour. We have adopted a borough-wide approach, building on the 2021 BSIP, aligning with the NBSfE objectives and through continued engagement as part of our Enhanced Partnership (EP) processes, collaborative engagement with neighbouring authorities, as part of the ongoing bus service review and following the receipt of BSIP+ funding in 2023 and 2024.






- More frequent and comprehensive services, better integration with other modes
- Faster and more reliable journeys
- Cheaper fares
- Easier to use for passengers
- Easier to understand services



Figure 1-1: Cheshire East BSIP principles and overarching policy context

## Objectives and Ambitions

This document sets out our objectives and ambition for buses for the next 10+ years to 2035, building on our 2021 BSIP, focusing on three key phases across our town, inter-urban and rural bus networks:

Stabilise the network	Quality improvements	Network growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage passenger growth following the Covid-19 pandemic</li> <li>Build better relationships with local bus operators and passengers with our Enhanced Partnership &amp; Bus Passenger Charter</li> <li>Continue to support services to ensure access to employment, education and health</li> <li>Improve access to information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the bus fleet - newer, more modern vehicles</li> <li>Improve the town, inter-urban and rural networks, including flexible demand responsive transport</li> <li>Improve bus stop infrastructure and bus priority on core inter-urban corridors and town network routes</li> <li>Improve access to information and network identity</li> <li>Improve ticket offers and technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase frequencies of buses on our town networks, inter-urban routes and socially necessary services</li> <li>Provide more routes and route enhancements for access to services and jobs</li> <li>Expand flexible transport provision</li> <li>Improve bus priority and bus stop infrastructure</li> <li>Coordinate with new developments to capture s106 funding to encourage sustainable growth.</li> </ul>
<p>Continue</p> 	<p>In Progress</p> 	<p>Ambition</p> 

We have set out how we plan to improve our buses in our BSIP for 2024 and their alignment to NBSfE objectives. This BSIP sets out a realistic and attractive plan summarising what has been delivered up to now within Cheshire East, what we have programmed for delivery by 2025, as well as setting out our ambitions and proposals for the future up to 2035 (subject to funding). It also outlines our achievements against 2021 BSIP targets and our refreshed targets and arrangements for monitoring our performance.

**Table 1-1: Alignment of the National Bus Strategy objectives and Cheshire East's Ambitions for Bus**

National Bus Strategy Objectives	Cheshire East Ambitions for Bus
<b>More frequent and comprehensive services, better integration with other modes</b>	Improved frequencies on our town and inter-urban routes, with better access to health services, employment, education, transport hubs and leisure/retail. Continued support for socially necessary services, providing flexible and fixed-route services to link into the wider bus network.
<b>Faster and more reliable journeys</b>	Reduced pinch-points on the network to improve journey times and reliability. Collaboration with local bus operators to improve the quality of the bus fleet and reduce emissions.
<b>Cheaper fares</b>	More affordable journeys, within towns and for younger people. Improved integrated ticket offers between bus operators and modes.
<b>Easier to use for passengers</b>	Improvements to waiting environments and bus stops to provide a safe travel experience. Our draft Bus Passenger Charter ensures bus users know their rights to certain standards of bus services and that these standards are met.
<b>Easier to understand services</b>	Bus information readily available, easy to use and up-to-date. Improved journey planning and in-journey information.

## Progress since the 2021 BSIP

Considerable progress has been made since 2021 on stabilising the bus network in Cheshire East, notwithstanding the substantial local and national challenges that have impacted the bus network and its passengers. These challenges include the withdrawal of a major operator from the borough, bus driver shortages, the ongoing cost of living crisis and patronage recovery from the pandemic, in particular the limited return of concessionary fare passengers (around 70% of pre-Covid levels).

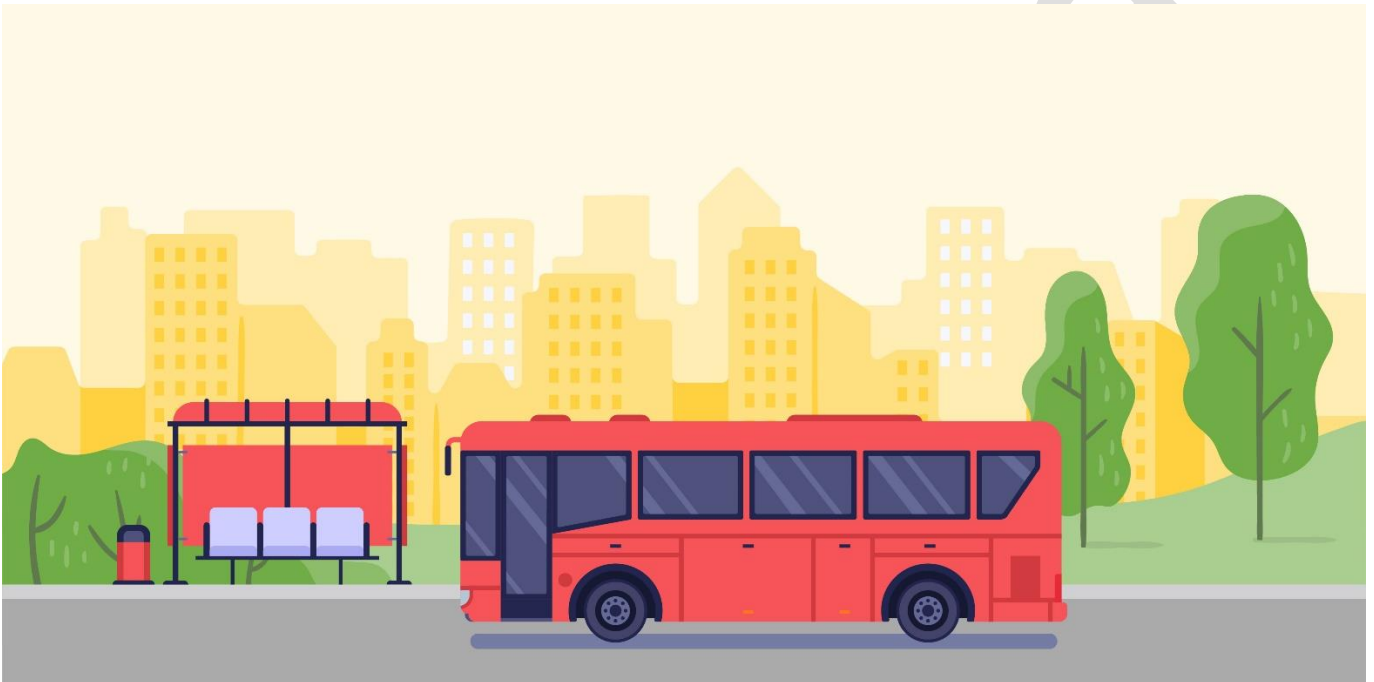
Given the recent changes to the commercial bus operating environment in Cheshire East in 2023, when a large operator withdrew from the borough, we have, through intensive discussions with our remaining local bus operators, secured and continue to maintain a consistent level of local bus service provision (at retained frequencies) for users and residents of Cheshire East. Additionally, changes to the cross-boundary bus network operations in Greater Manchester into the borough, following their franchising programme, continues to impact the network within Cheshire East (to the north) for service registration requirements and operations.

We continue to safeguard current network stability through our supported bus services, working with local bus operators and our neighbouring local authority partners as part of our Enhanced Partnership to ensure we continue to deliver a bus network that supports our urban and rural economies. Our ongoing mission is to rebuild patronage in the context of the 'cost-of-living' crisis and changes to working and shopping/leisure patterns

Our Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme were formed and published in 2022. We have developed a strong Enhanced Partnership with bus operators to collaborate on the development and delivery of our improvement programme, including bus stop and shelter upgrades, bus prioritisation feasibility study and the intelligent adaptive signals (Imflow) trial, developing the draft Bus Passenger Charter and working with local bus operators and neighbouring authorities to ensure the continued support for the bus network. Engagement and collaboration is a key part of our Enhanced Partnership, which includes:

- Quarterly operator working group meetings to discuss technical and operational issues.
- Six-monthly EP Forum meetings, in person, attracting a wide range of stakeholders, including operators, user groups, businesses and Councillors, to engage in the development of local bus services.
- Quarterly EP Board meetings, including all local bus operators with strategic oversight of the improvement programme.

Following the receipt of BSIP+ funding in 2023 and 2024, we are working with our local bus operators to implement a number of interventions to deliver on our BSIP principles and ambitions. These are outlined in more detail in section 3 3.



## 2. Current Offer to Bus Passengers

### Bus Network

The current network of local bus services operating across Cheshire East provide access between, and links within, the principal towns of Crewe and Macclesfield as well as to a number of smaller towns and parishes across the borough including Congleton, Wilmslow, Nantwich and Sandbach.

The local bus network comprises a mix of commercially operated and financially supported services, operated by eleven local operators. Cheshire East Council, as the Local Transport Authority, is responsible for the coordination of socially necessary routes, combined with the preparation and delivery of supporting information provision.



The local bus network operates:

- Principally between **Mondays** and **Saturdays**, with limited or no service on routes outside of urban centres on Sundays and bank holidays.
- During the AM peak (**07:00 to 09:00**), interpeak (**09:00 to 16:00**) and PM peak (**16:00 to 18:00**) periods, with a limited selection of bus routes operating during the post evening peak (**after 18:00**).

The flexible transport offer in Cheshire East is operated by ANSA and currently provides two services, Flexilink and 'Go-Too':

- Flexilink operates Monday to Friday in four areas between 09:30 and 14:30, providing a means of travel for residents within Cheshire East over the age of 80, with a disability, or living beyond the reach of other public transport.
- 'Go-Too' provides access to employment, education, healthcare and other services for people in the rural areas to the south and west of Nantwich. It operates Monday to Saturday between 07:00 and 21:00.



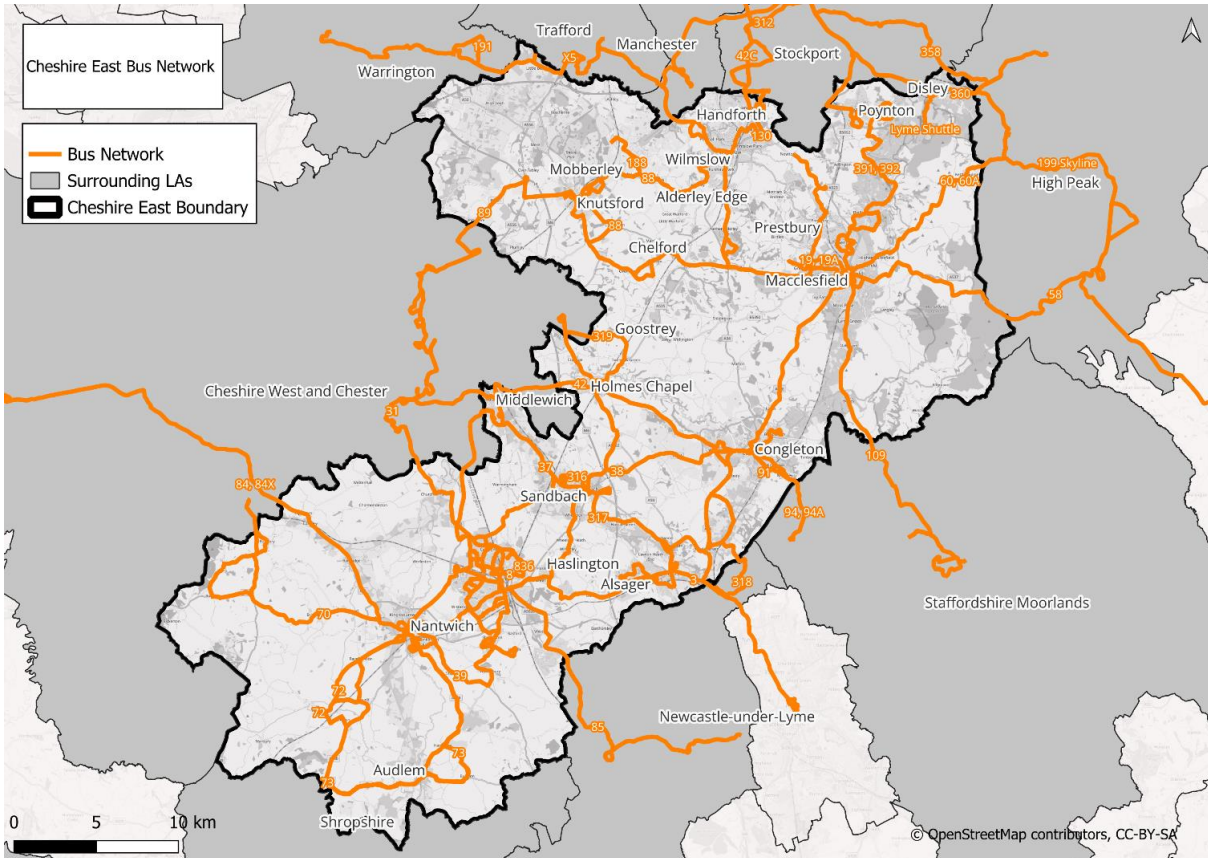
Buses across the borough play a critical role in linking passengers to rail hubs in Crewe and Macclesfield, where 'first and last mile' links only offer a limited alternative to private car use, which is invariably the sole transport option for many rail passengers to access and use key local services.

The cross-boundary services provide key links to neighbouring service centres and employment, such as Greater Manchester, Stoke-on-Trent, Chester and Warrington.



The current bus network for Cheshire East is illustrated in Figure 2-1.





**Figure 2-1: Current bus network within Cheshire East (April 2024)**

The bus network across Cheshire East comprises of three main types of service:

**Towns/urban:** predominantly routes serving the urban areas of Crewe, Macclesfield and Congleton. Town/urban services both on weekdays and Saturdays generally tend to provide at least a 30 to 60-minute headway in the AM and PM peaks, increasing to 30 minutes or more between the peaks. Frequencies and service provision reduce in the evening (after 18:00).

**Inter-urban:** routes that connect the principal towns and key service centres within Cheshire East, as well as key towns and service centres outside of the authority boundary (i.e. Greater Manchester, Stoke-on-Trent, Chester etc.). On average, inter-urban services are provided at least every 60 minutes throughout weekdays and on Saturdays. Frequencies and service provision reduce in the evening (after 18:00).

**Rural:** routes linking rural areas within Cheshire East to key service centres both within and outside of the authority boundary. Rural services are generally less frequent (two-hourly), providing connectivity from more rural areas in and beyond Cheshire East to principal towns and key service centres. Additionally, in the south of the borough, the current demand-responsive transport service 'Go-Too' operates to provide links between Nantwich and the rural areas to the west and south.



**Table 2-1: Average bus frequency by service type (April 2024)**

Type of Service	Weekdays (mins)				Saturday (mins)			
	AM Peak	Inter Peak	Evening Peak	Off Peak	AM Peak	Inter Peak	Evening Peak	Off Peak
Town/ Urban	30-60	30-60 <sup>1</sup>	15-30/ 30-60	60-120	30-60	15-30	15-30	60-120
Inter-Urban	60-120	30-60	60-120	60-120	30-60/ 60-120	30-60/ 60-120	30-60	60-120
Rural	60-120	60-120/ 120+	30-60	30-60/ 60-120	30-60	30-60/ 60-120	30-60/ 60-120	60-120

Currently, two out of the eleven operators deliver their services from an operating base or depot within the boundary of Cheshire East and the remainder from neighbouring cross-boundary locations in Cheshire West and Chester, Greater Manchester, Salford, Staffordshire and Warrington. This reflects the close relationships the Council has with its neighbouring authorities in order to deliver bus services throughout the borough.

**Table 2-2: Bus operators, number of routes, locations served and depot location**

Bus Company	Parent Operator/Owner	No. of Bus Routes	Principal Locations Served	Depot Location
D & G Coach & Bus	D & G Bus Ltd (Centrebus Ltd)	25	Boroughwide	Crewe, Adderley Green
Stagecoach Manchester	Stagecoach Group Ltd	2	Between Stockport/Cheadle & Handforth/Poynton	Manchester
Stagecoach Merseyside, Cheshire & South Lancs	Stagecoach Group Ltd	1	Between Chester, Tarporley, Nantwich and Crewe	Chester
High Peak Buses	High Peak Buses Ltd (The Wellglade Group and Centrebus Ltd)	6	Between Macclesfield & High Peak	Dove Holes
First Potteries	First Group plc	1	Stoke-on-Trent to Crewe	Stoke-on-Trent
Hollinshead Coaches	Hollinshead Coaches Ltd	3	Congleton	Biddulph
Belle Vue Coaches	Belle Vue (Manchester) Ltd	2	Stockport to Macclesfield	Stockport
Warrington's Own Buses	Warrington Borough Transport Ltd	2	Between Knutsford & Warrington	Warrington
Aimee's Travel	Aimee's Travel Ltd	1	Macclesfield	Leek
Mikro Coaches	Mikro Coaches Ltd	1	Crewe to Nantwich	Crewe
Direct Taxis Lymm Shopper	Warrington Borough Council & Cheshire East Council	1	Little Bollington, Agden, Broome Edge	Little Bollington

<sup>1</sup> Average of services that provide either 15-30 mins or 60-120 mins.

The local bus network is made up of 37 combined bus services<sup>2</sup>, of which 21 are fully supported (56.8%), a further eight are partially supported (21.6%), such as evening journeys and eight services (21.6%) operate on a fully commercial basis.



57% of Cheshire East bus services are fully supported and 22% are partially supported

The Council currently spends around £2.5 million, supporting bus services which are not commercially viable but are deemed important and socially necessary, this includes cross boundary expenditure and contributions (by neighbouring authorities), as well as section 106 contributions from new developments.

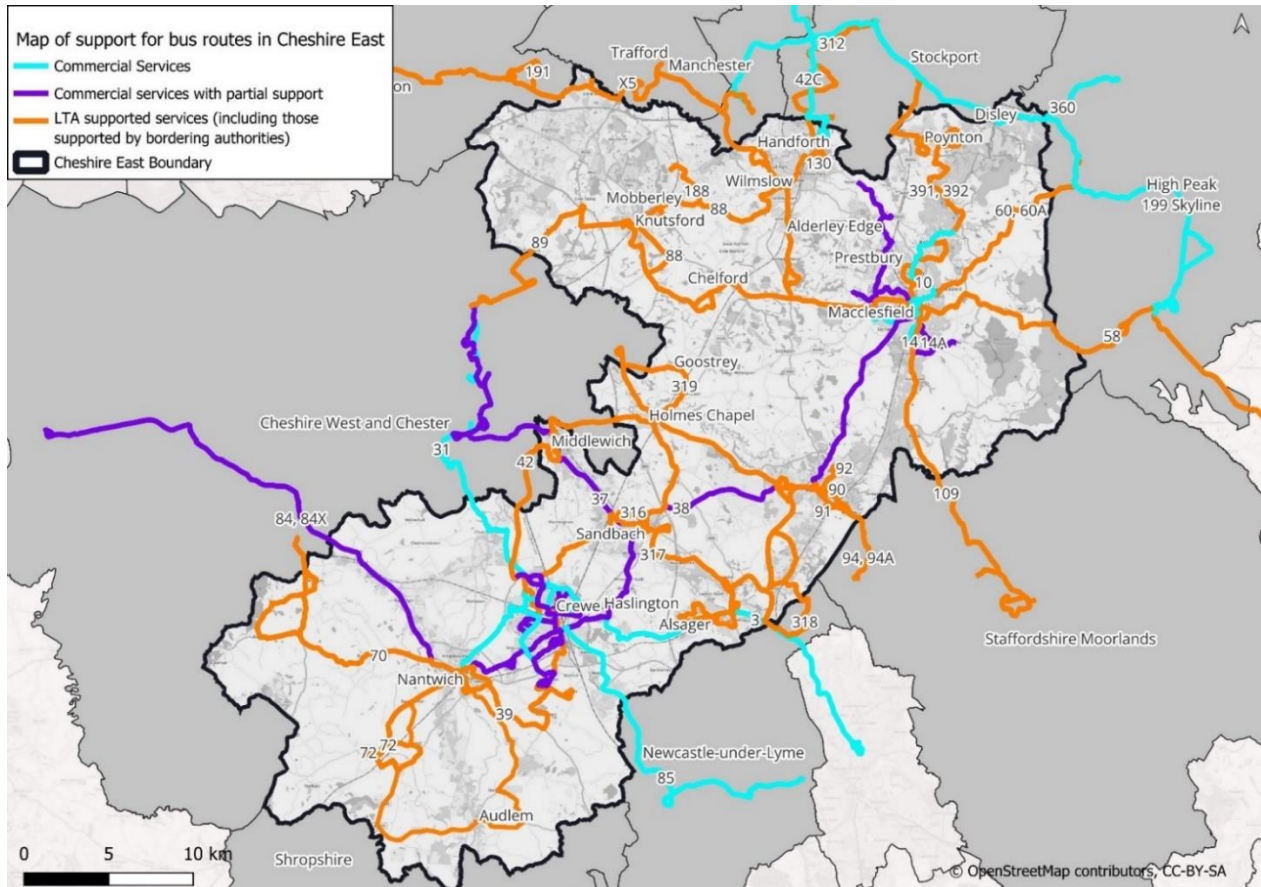



Figure 2-2: Map of supported and commercial routes within Cheshire East (April 2024)


### Accessibility

Cheshire East offers a range of attractive and vibrant towns that are strategically linked not only within the borough, but to neighbouring conurbations such as Greater Manchester, Chester, Stoke-on-Trent and Warrington for education, employment and wider services.

An average of 85% of the population of Cheshire East can reach a town or key service centre by bus within 40 minutes in the AM peak period (07:30-09:30). There is better accessibility around the towns and key service centres than in rural areas, as a result of more dense populations with concentrated demand and greater levels of service provision. A typical Saturday gives a similar level of service; however, the Sunday level of service provides the lowest access with just 25% having access within 40 minutes.

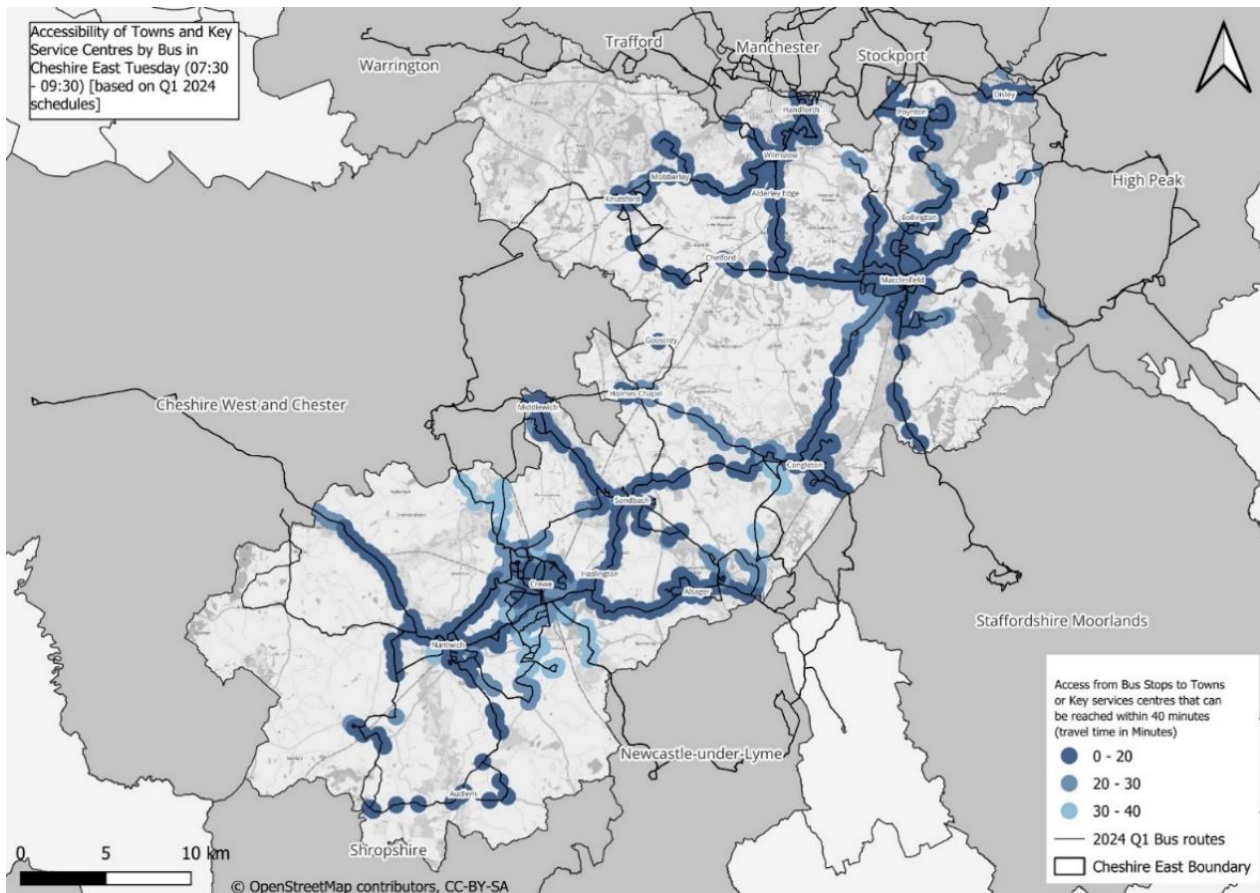


An average of **85%** of the population in the AM peak period (weekday) can reach a town or key service centre within 40 minutes by bus.



An average of **25%** of the population on Sundays can reach a town or key service centre within 40 minutes by bus.

<sup>2</sup> 50 individually numbered bus services, combined into 37 bus service groups.



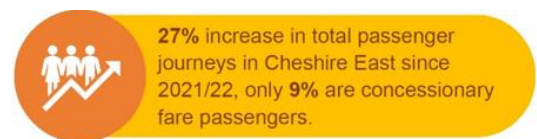
**Figure 2-3: Accessibility of towns and key service centres by bus in Cheshire East (AM peak)**

## Bus Usage

Since 2010/11, the total number of passenger journeys on local bus services per year has decreased from 5.6m (2010/11) to 3.8m in 2019/20, a decrease of 32.1% in ten years<sup>3</sup>. This decline has been substantially greater when compared to the decline in total number of passengers journeys on local bus services in the wider North West (19.43%) and England (11.8%) in the same time period, whilst recognising that the numbers for the North West and England are skewed by the inclusion of larger metropolitan areas.

This decrease in patronage continued into 2021/22 by a further 42.1% when compared to 2019/2020 figures, to a total of 2.2m passenger journeys. This was likely more acute due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the bus industry, as a similar pattern in decline of passenger journey numbers has been identified in the wider North West (29.4%) and England (30.3%) between 2019/20 and 2021/22.

Data from 2022/23 shows that passenger journeys have begun to recover (74% of 2019/2020 figures), however not to pre-Covid levels. This reflects a positive local, regional and national change in patronage, with Cheshire East's percentage increase (27%) greater than regional (18%) and national (19%) percentage increases, albeit from a lower total number of passenger journeys. Concessionary passengers have also seen a small recovery in patronage (67% of 2019/2020 figures), but proportionately lower when compared to the recovery fare-paying passengers (80% of 2019/2020 figures).



<sup>3</sup> DfT (2020) Bus statistics Table BUS0109a

**Table 2-3: Total number of passenger journeys on local bus services**

Passenger journeys	Cheshire East (Million)	North West (Million)	England (Million)
Total 2010/11	5.6	457.0	4618.4
Total 2019/20	3.8	368.2	4072.6
Total 2021/22	2.2	255.8	2835.3
Total 2022/23	2.8	301.7	3383.2
Change 10/11 - 19/20	-32.14%	-19.43%	-11.82%
Change 19/20 - 21/22	-42.11%	-30.53%	-30.38%
Change 21/22 - 22/23	+27.27%	+17.94	+19.32
Concessionary 2010/11	2.2	128.6	1044.0
Concessionary 2019/20	1.8	98.7	899.0
Concessionary 2021/22	1.1	63.4	554.2
Concessionary 2022/23	1.2	70.8	643.4
Change 10/11 - 19/20	-18.18%	-23.25%	-13.89%
Change 19/20 - 21/22	-38.89%	-35.76%	-38.35%
Change 21/22 - 22/23	+9.09%	+11.67	+16.09%

The number of passenger journeys per head of population in Cheshire East decreased by 44% from 2019/20 to 2021/22. By 2022/23 passenger journeys per head in Cheshire East, the North West and England have begun to recover, however not to the 2019/2020 (pre-Covid) levels. Again, this reflects a positive local, regional and national change in patronage. The passenger journeys per head in 2022/23 are at much lower levels in Cheshire East (6.9) than in the North West (40.6) and England (59.8). The latter two can be explained by the higher numbers of journeys per head in metropolitan areas, as well as in London, which disproportionately affect the national average.



Cheshire East recorded the fourth lowest number of bus journeys per head in 2019 out of all local authorities in England (outside London) and dropping to third lowest in 2023. This data reveals the scale of the challenge in growing patronage within Cheshire East, however starting from a low base means there is substantial potential for growth, which this BSIP is seeking to address.

**Table 2-4: Bus passenger journeys per head by geography**

Passenger journeys per head	Cheshire East	North West	England
Total 2010/11	15.2	65.1	87.7
Total 2019/20	10.0	50.2	72.4
Total 2020/21	2.7	19.3	27.9
Total 2021/22	5.6	34.5	50.2
Total 2022/23	6.9	40.6	59.8
Change 10/11 - 19/20	-34.21%	-22.89%	-17.45%
Change 19/20 - 21/22	-44.00%	-31.27%	-30.66%
Change 21/22 - 22/23	+23.21%	+17.68%	+19.12%

Patronage data received to date, provided by bus operators in Cheshire East, reflects a post-Covid recovery in passenger numbers with journeys returning to near pre-Covid levels. Concessionary fare passenger numbers have remained relatively consistent since May 2023, however, there has been a greater increase in fare paying passengers, likely following the introduction of the £2 bus fare cap.

## Fares and Ticketing

Bus fares in Cheshire East are currently varied between operators and locations, with limited multi-operator ticketing options. However the current £2 fare cap has been applied to all but one of the local bus operators: D&G, Stagecoach (Merseyside, Cheshire & South Lancs), Stagecoach (Manchester), High Peak, First Potteries, Belle Vue, Warrington's Own Buses, Mikro Coaches, Aimee's Travel and Direct Taxis. With Hollinshead Coaches not participating in the £2 fare cap scheme as their maximum fare is currently less than £2.

The Council (or its operators) does not currently have a multi-operator ticketing arrangement in place. In areas in the north of the borough, close to the Greater Manchester boundary (i.e., Poynton and Wilmslow), passengers are able to access the 'System One' range of tickets for adults, but this is limited to areas close to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority area boundary.

Cheshire East Council is keen to see rapid expansion of opportunities for smart, integrated ticketing on bus services and across different modes of public transport. It was further noted by the Council in the October 2021 BSIP that 'any scheme that can be extended and implemented to serve Cheshire East and our wider sub-region would be of particular benefit to passengers in the borough'.

## Bus Infrastructure and Information

Cheshire East currently has five bus stations. These bus stations are located in Crewe, Nantwich, Congleton, Macclesfield and Knutsford. A new bus station has recently opened in Crewe as part of the Royal Arcade development, which is a great new facility for passengers.



Cheshire East has over 1,800 bus stops, including a mixture of marked (with pole or shelter) and unmarked bus stops.

Following years of under-investment, the bus stop infrastructure in the borough is very poor, which has been highlighted by user groups as a key constraint to encouraging increased bus use.

Negative feedback on the state of the infrastructure from bus operators and user groups has also been captured as part of the Enhanced Partnership engagement to date. In addition, data collected by Transport Focus (2023) reveals the level of dissatisfaction with bus stop infrastructure in Cheshire East – approximately 20% of all respondents categorised the general condition of their bus stop as very or fairly poor, with the number who were satisfied being 10% lower than the national average.



Capital investment in bus stop infrastructure is exceptionally important in Cheshire East. The Council has allocated £350,000 from the Local Transport Plan (LTP) capital programme 2024/25 and this will be supplemented with £200,000 BSIP+ funds and s106 developer contributions to deliver a step change in the quality of infrastructure. There is a large body of research confirming that passengers expect a safe and suitable place to wait for bus services and the absence of this has a disproportionate impact on discouraging bus use. The need to improve facilities for passengers is a vital part of increasing bus use in Cheshire East.

The Council is initially focusing on the most strategic bus corridor (route 38), which connects the two principal towns (Crewe and Macclesfield) and several key service centres in the borough (Congleton, Sandbach) as part of BSIP+ funding interventions and to complement the introduction of new vehicles by the bus operator.



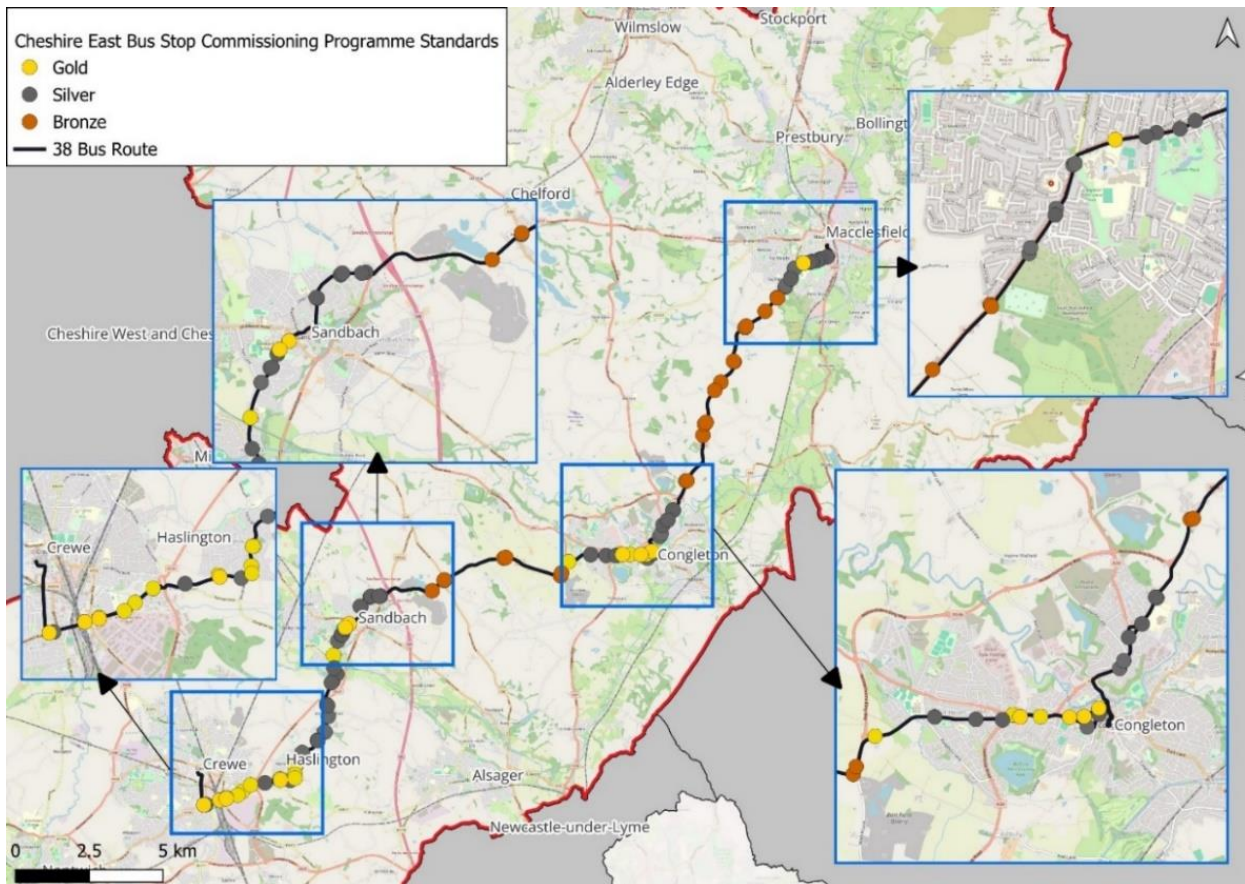
The Council has developed bus stop infrastructure standards to support the improvement of bus stops within the borough, which have been summarised in Table 2-5.

**Table 2-5: Bus Stop Infrastructure Standards**

Infrastructure	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Pole	✓	✓	✓
Bus stop flag	✓	✓	✓
Equalities Act 2010 compliant boarding point	✓	✓	✓
Printed stop-specific timetable	✓	✓	✓
Safe crossing and disabled access, including drop-kerbs	✓	✓	✓
QR code link to bus real time information	✓	✓	✓
Covered waiting area e.g., bus shelter	X	✓	✓
Bus box markings	X	X	✓
Cycling parking provision (at targeted locations)	X	X	✓
Real-time information displays (at targeted locations)	X	X	✓

The Council commissioned an audit of the infrastructure on the 38 corridor which has provided data on the poor condition and low-level specification of the existing facilities (e.g. rusty, dilapidated panels, loose glass, lack of safe crossing points, lack of shelters etc) and has resulted in a prioritised improvement programme. The map below (Figure 2-4) illustrates the hub stop locations prioritised for investment through the BSIP+ funding allocation, to complement the introduction of new vehicles by the bus operator with further details on these interventions in section 3.

Additionally the Council have been engaging with key stakeholders through the Operator Working Group and EP Forum meetings on bus stop flag and paper timetable designs, to try to improve the presentation of bus information for passengers. This work is ongoing will feed into future ambitions, proposals and initiatives identified in section 4 of this BSIP.



**Figure 2-4: Route 38 bus stop upgrade programme (BSIP+ Phase 2 funding)**

Currently, there is limited bus priority infrastructure in place within Cheshire East to support the reliability and punctuality of bus services.

A single bus lane (approx. 250m in length) is located in Crewe along the A534 Crewe Road, passing the retail park, between the Crewe Green Road junction and the junction with Nantwich Road and Weston Road.

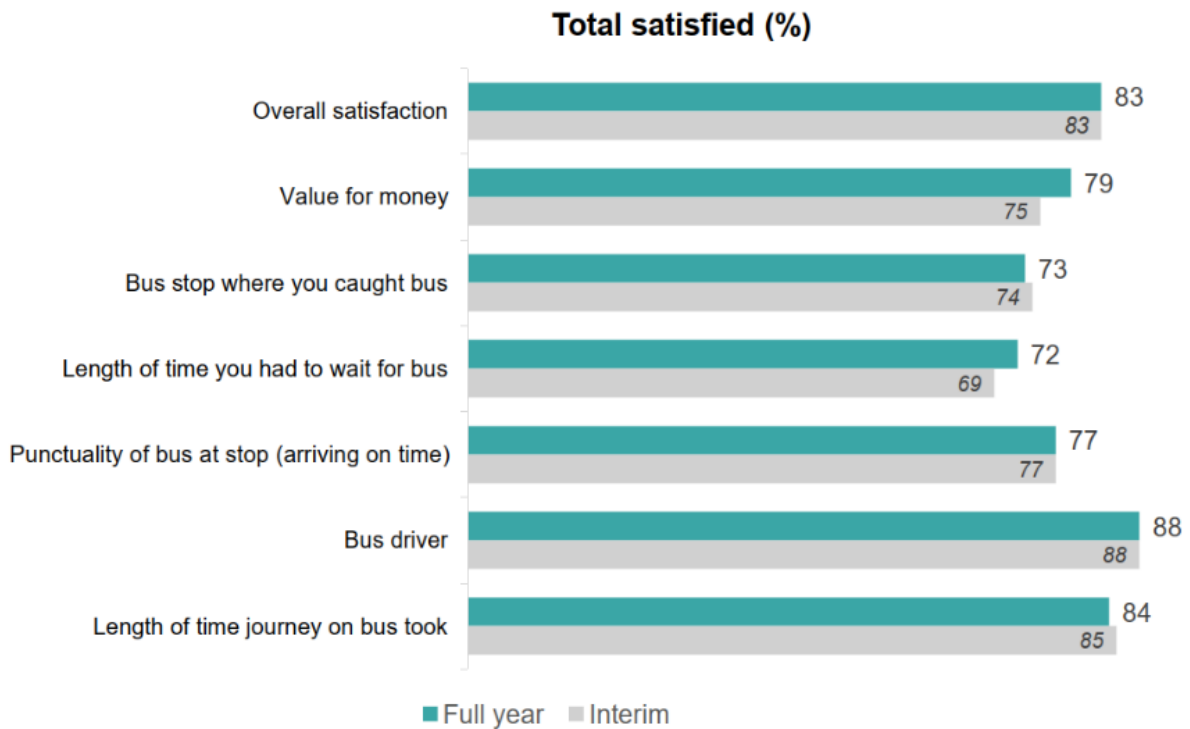
Cheshire East is also currently trialling intelligent adaptive signals pilot in Crewe, to address operational and performance issues at the specific signal junctions. This technology (Imflow) has been installed in May 2024 at the Edleston Road, Mill Street and Gresty Road junctions with the Nantwich Road. There are opportunities to further develop these schemes to facilitate bus priority, as well as the potential to roll out to other locations within Crewe and wider Cheshire East, if this trial proves successful. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of this technology and opportunities for expansion to include bus detection elsewhere within the borough.

### Passenger Satisfaction

Transport Focus survey data (annual report – March 2024) has been analysed to understand whether previous targets around passenger satisfaction have been met. Overall, respondents were satisfied with their bus journey, with 83% of respondents feeling very satisfied (51%) or fairly satisfied (32%). 79% of respondents were satisfied with the value for money of their journey, with 52% identifying that they were very satisfied with the value for money, and 27% were fairly satisfied.







**Figure 2-5: Summary of headline results for Cheshire East (Transport Focus March 2024)**

## Barriers to Bus Use

### Punctuality and Reliability

Bus journey time reliability and punctuality within Cheshire East has and continues to be impacted by congestion and delays, particularly for town/urban bus services during peak periods.

74% of bus services provided by all operators were on-time (between -1 min and +5 min in March 2024). Of the services that were not on time, they were more likely to be late than early.



Key locations of delay have predominately been identified in the principal towns of Crewe and Macclesfield as well as, to a lesser extent, other key service centres, such as Sandbach and Congleton. Data has then been used to validate early stakeholder feedback specifically relating to network congestion locations and pinch points.

The recent Imflow adaptive signal technology trial on the Edleston Road, Gresty Road and Mill Street junctions on the Nantwich Road in Crewe seeks to improve bus priority at signal junctions, the Council will continue to monitor the implementation of this pilot programme, as well as assessing the suitability for future applications within the borough.

## Population and Car Ownership

The population of Cheshire East is ageing faster than the regional and national average, although this also hides a rural-urban divide between towns and key service centres and rural parts of the borough. The average population density in Cheshire East is 392 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (Census 2021). However a number of the borough's more rural areas have fewer than 100 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>.

On average, from a socio-economic perspective, the local population of Cheshire East earns more, is more qualified and is more economically active than the regional and national averages. However there do still remain important disparities within the borough. Whilst Cheshire East is performing 'better' than regional and national averages, pockets of both health disparities and multiple deprivation exist, particularly in urban centres – notably Crewe, Sandbach, Congleton, Macclesfield, Wilmslow, and Knutsford which have neighbourhoods amongst the most deprived neighbourhoods nationally.

Cheshire East has significantly fewer households without the available use of a car or a van (15%) than the North West or England. Equally, Cheshire East has a higher proportion of households that have access to 2, 3 or more cars or vans (33%) in their household than in the North West region or England.

Therefore, it could be suggested that where these figures are combined, the lower number of households without a car and the higher share of households with multiple cars, could indicate a higher dependency on the car than in other areas within the region and across the UK. This can be partly explained by the rural nature of the borough and the higher average earnings, but also reflective of the current limitations in the delivery of the local bus network.

## Competitive Parking Charges

Previously across Cheshire East, bus fares in the borough were not deemed to be competitive with car parking provision and charges within villages, key service centres and principal towns.

Until recently, the Council-operated car parks were predominantly free within the smaller settlements and villages, as well as key service centres such as Alsager, Handforth, Middlewich, Poynton and Sandbach. In 2019, the Council approved a high-level parking strategy as part of its Local Transport Plan, as part of our commitment to encourage sustainable travel within the borough. The strategy established the need to introduce a consistent approach to car parking across the borough, based on the principle of the user pays. In January 2024 proposals were put forward for Committee approval to provide fair and consistent arrangements and to respond to the increasing costs of operating and maintaining car parks, these changes are to come into effect in 2024.

The Council continues to work to deliver town-based local transport strategies that will be multi-modal, taking full account of the potential for local bus improvements in each town alongside the demand and supply of pay-and-display and free parking spaces, both on- and off-street.

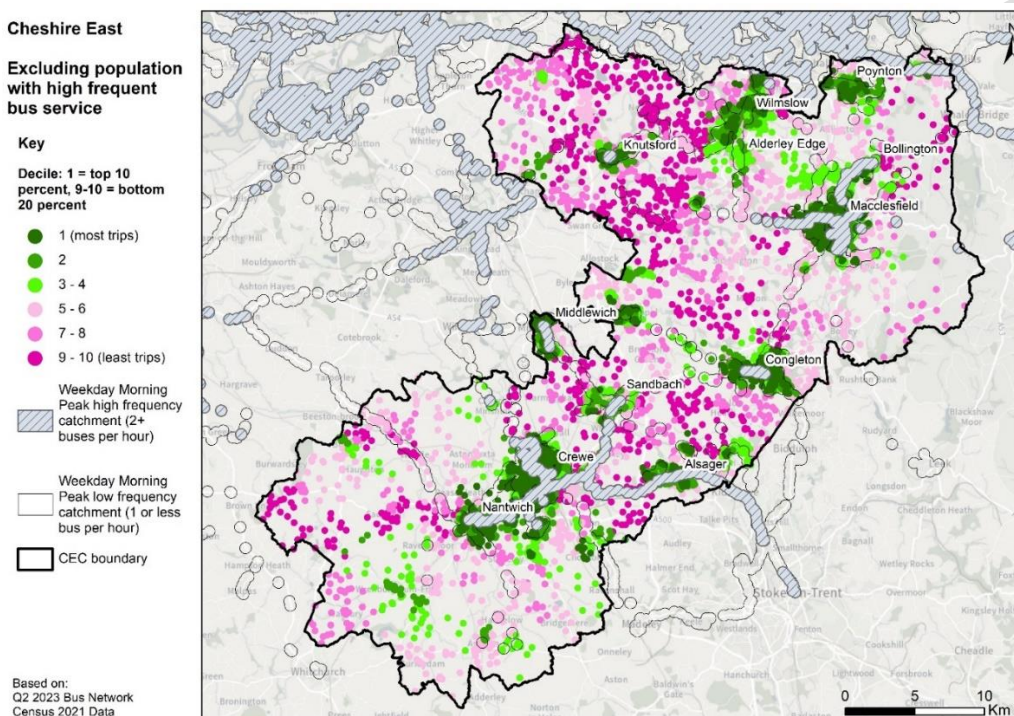
The Council will continue to work with bus operators and user-groups to seek better alignment and greater competitiveness between bus fares and the charges for car parking in our town centres – where applicable – as part of a broader demand management strategy that promotes the use of bus services.



## Potential Demand

Key outputs from the 2019/2020 study, which looked at the ‘propensity’ of people to use bus services in Cheshire East, have been refreshed with revised population data and key changes to the bus network in recent years. These outputs specifically focus on bus network coverage, how people use these services (National Travel Survey 2022), where services are predominantly used and, for those areas which presented under-use of buses (compared to the local and national average), if communities would use services which were improved beyond their existing services frequencies. This culminated in an assessment of ‘potential bus demand’, through locating areas where there is high potential demand (from socio-economic data) and where the bus network matches and where it doesn’t match this demand.

Most urban areas in Cheshire East have a bus service operating a variety of different frequency levels, whilst a number of rural areas do not have bus provision but current potential demand in these areas is calculated to be low.



**Figure 2-6: Potential Demand for Bus Use**

Some areas have potentially high demand but have limited or no bus supply. Most notably the areas with the most potential for trips are mainly the core urban areas of Alsager, Congleton, Crewe, Macclesfield and Poynton, but also clusters around Middlewich, Nantwich and Wilmslow. This leads to pockets of areas where potential demand to use the bus could be high.

This analysis shows an overarching need to improve local bus links to education, future housing growth, health, and leisure facilities. This would also support wider council objectives of improved access to health and wellbeing (hospitals, doctor surgeries and health centres), reducing socio-economic inequalities with greater access to jobs, improving urban daytime and early evening economies and by supporting in the further delivery of wider LTP objectives linked to environmental objectives. These outputs, along with the accessibility analysis and engagement with key stakeholders as part of the EP Forum has informed proposals for service enhancements identified for delivery in 2024/25 and beyond.



### 3.Improvements Programme to 2024/25

The Council has an ambitious improvement programme for local bus services, which is initially focused on quality improvements to encourage network growth in the future.

Recognising that improvements will need to be made to the network from a relatively low base, the Council see that incremental benefits, which are linked to a pragmatic phasing of improvements, can be achieved. These opportunities are also linked to the current socio-economic factors that have been developed through the Cheshire East ‘Tartan Rug’<sup>4</sup>, which alongside the likely impacts of improvements to bus services and wider public transport across the borough, has the potential to increase wider investment and growth within Cheshire East.

Our Enhanced Partnership was formed in 2022 and is pivotal to supporting the delivery of BSIP ambitions, improvements and schemes through collaboration with our local bus operators, key stakeholders and passenger representatives.

We recognise that improvements to bus services and increases in bus patronage are not a ‘silver bullet’ to reduce local inequalities. These improvements can, however, contribute to general improvements in accessibility and connectivity, which in turn will have direct and indirect benefits to passengers in supporting them in their travel patterns and getting where they want to go.

This BSIP is designed to improve the current delivery of bus services. Although we acknowledge that this process of improvement will not offer an overnight solution to what has been many years of decline in bus use and network coverage across the borough.

This section of the BSIP outlines a delivery programme for bus improvements in Cheshire East for the period up to the end of the 2024/25 financial year. This includes improvements and schemes progressed since the 2021 BSIP, which was unsuccessful in the first round of BSIP funding, but subsequently secured £4.64 million of Phase 2 and Phase 3 (Network North) funding from the Department for Transport.

#### 2021 BSIP and EP Schemes

Table 3-1 shows the progress that has been made against the 2021 Enhanced Partnership obligations and commitments.

**Table 3-1: Enhanced Partnership obligations and commitments status**

Interventions	Commitments	Status
<b>Facilities</b>		
Boroughwide bus shelter renewal programme	10 per annum	Ongoing
Boroughwide bus stop renewal programme	5 per annum	Ongoing
<b>Measures</b>		
Develop a Passenger Charter for Cheshire East	Establish a Passenger Charter	Final draft

<sup>4</sup> The health profile or ‘Tartan Rug’ shows how each ward within Cheshire East compares with all other wards in England across a range of health indicators and outcomes. The Tartan Rug provides an overview of local health need and a tool to guide discussions and local priorities.  
[https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council\\_and\\_democracy/council\\_information/jsna/overviews-of-health-and-wellbeing.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/jsna/overviews-of-health-and-wellbeing.aspx)

Interventions	Commitments	Status
Improved process for the management of roadworks in the EP Scheme area	Establish a mechanism to minimise disruption to local bus services	In progress
Evidence base study for bus priority measures in the EP Scheme area	Commission a bus priority feasibility study to support the introduction of quality corridors and priority measures.	Completed
Action Plan and delivery programme for retrofitting bus fleet to Euro VI standards	Develop an action plan.	In progress
Improved information provision	Enhance the dissemination of paper-based public transport information. Encourage operators to maintain or improve their electronic public transport provision.	In progress
<b>Ticketing &amp; Fares</b>		
Multi-operator/multi-modal ticketing	Work with bus operators to develop a feasibility study on the deliverability of multi-operator ticketing.	In progress
Simplification of fares	Work with bus operators to develop a feasibility study to identify fare simplification mechanisms and a plan for transition post £2 fare cap.	In progress

### Bus Passenger Charter

The final draft Passenger Charter 2024 provides bus users with their rights to certain standards of bus services and identifies obligations on operators, the Council and bus users to ensure that these standards are met. This was taken to the EP Forum in May 2024 for review and will be published following the August 2024 EP Board meeting.

### Bus Prioritisation Feasibility Study

Since 2021, in line with the Enhanced Partnership and 2021 BSIP commitments, we have undertaken a focused assessment of the potential for bus priority interventions within key towns and locations across the borough. This also builds on the initial adaptive signals pilot (Imflow) in Crewe which has recently been implemented by the Council.

The feasibility report identified an initial prioritised list of interventions at key locations on the network that aim to improve bus journey time reliability and make bus travel more attractive to residents and visitors. This initial list, for further scheme development, is shown in Table 3-2.

**Table 3-2: Bus prioritisation schemes**

Town	Junction/ Corridor Location	Option
Crewe	A534 Nantwich Road Corridor: between A5019 Mill Street/ South Street traffic signal junction and Crewe Arms Roundabout.	Rationalising pedestrian crossings outside Crewe railway station
Crewe	A532 West Street/ Frank Webb Avenue priority T junction	Implement double yellow lines on Frank Webb Avenue
Macclesfield	A523 London Road/ Byrons Lane traffic signal junction	Bus priority detection
Middlewich	A54 Kinderton Road/ Leadsmithy Street traffic signal junction	Bus priority detection

Town	Junction/ Corridor Location	Option
Nantwich	B5341 Waterlode/ Welsh Row/ High Street traffic signal junction	Bus priority detection
Crewe	Crewe Green Roundabout (priority junction)	Partial signalisation
Crewe	A532 West Street/ Frank Webb Avenue priority T-junction	Signalise junction with bus priority detection
Macclesfield	Flowerpot Junction (traffic signals)	Refer to proposed scheme already being promoted for this traffic signal junction. Bus priority detection to be added.
Middlewich	A54 Kinderton Road/ King Street priority junction	Yellow box
Alsager	B5077 Crewe Road/ B5078 Sandbach Road traffic signal junction	Bus priority detection
Crewe	West Street between Dunwoody Way and Underwood Lane	Extend double yellow lines from outside 261 West Street to Derby Street.
Macclesfield	A523 The Silk Road/ A537 Hibel Road/ Hurdsfield Road Priority Roundabout	Extension of right turn lane on A537 Hibel Road eastbound
Sandbach	A533 Middlewich Road/ Crewe Road/ Old Mill Road priority roundabout	Signalise junction

## BSIP+ Phase 2 Funding

We have been successful in securing £2.372 million across 2023/24 (£1.187m) and 2024/25 (£1.187m) from DfT as part of BSIP+ Phase 2 funding. This funding provides opportunities to begin to deliver on measures and interventions identified initially within the 2021 BSIP and which have been further developed through engagement with the Enhanced Partnership Board and Forum in the intervening years.

The delivery programme for 2023/2024 BSIP+ Phase 2 initiatives are outlined in Table 3-3. These initiatives link to the National Bus Strategy objectives and Cheshire East BSIP principles and our ambitions for the bus network.

**Table 3-3: Initiatives for BSIP+ Phase 2 (2023/24) Delivery Programme**

Initiative No.	Description	National Objective Alignment	Cheshire East BSIP Principles	Target launch date
P1	<b>Multi-operator ticket</b> Introduce a multi-operator ticket in Macclesfield and surrounding area, with the subsequent development of a similar Crewe-area product if the concept in Macclesfield proves to be successful.	Cheaper fares	Collaboration with operators, integration with ticketing, sustainability: quality improvements & network growth	Summer 2024
P2	<b>Young Person's (16 to 19) Concessionary Pass trial</b> Trial a young person's concessionary fare pass, providing cheaper bus fares for 16-19 year olds within Cheshire East. Also, develop a concessionary fare offers for	Cheaper fares	Collaboration with operators, integration with ticketing, sustainability: quality improvements & network growth	Summer 2024

Initiative No.	Description	National Objective Alignment	Cheshire East BSIP Principles	Target launch date
	Cheshire East Care-leavers (16-25 years) by working alongside officers in Childrens Social Care.			
<b>P3</b>	<b>Buses in Cheshire East Website</b> Develop a “Buses in Cheshire East” website, to provide a one-stop shop for bus service information.	Easier to use for passengers	Integration with other technologies, systems and ticketing	Summer 2024
<b>P4</b>	<b>Promotion of System One ticketing</b> Promote the Greater Manchester ‘System One’ ticketing options available to residents in the north of Cheshire East, enabling them the purchase access to local public transport services throughout Greater Manchester.	Cheaper fares	Collaboration with operators, integration with ticketing, sustainability: quality improvements & network growth	Spring 2024
<b>P5</b>	<b>Creation of ‘Hub Stops’ along the 38-bus route</b> Develop ‘hub stops’ along the service 38 route (Macclesfield – Crewe), to complement the introduction of new vehicles by the bus operator. This will demonstrate improved quality and a better bus passenger experience on a core inter-urban route within Cheshire East. The approach will provide a template for other key bus routes to be improved with funding in future years.	Easier to use for passengers	Accessibility (info provision & infrastructure)	Autumn 2024
<b>P6</b>	<b>Local bus service enhancements</b> Deliver minor service adjustments put forward by operators and elected representatives (Cheshire East Council and Town & Parish Councils) and prioritised in conjunction with the Enhanced Partnership Board.	More frequent, comprehensive services	Collaboration with operators, integration with ticketing, sustainability: quality improvements & network growth	Operating from June 8 <sup>th</sup> 2024

The delivery programme for the Phase 2 2024/2025 (£1.187m) consists of:

1. Continuation of BSIP+ service enhancements;
2. Continuation of BSIP+ Macclesfield multi-operator ticket;
3. Continuation of Young Person’s Pass; and
4. Further bus service enhancements.

These proposals will be shaped and refined by future Operator Working Groups, EP Forum meetings and EP Boards.

## BSIP+ Phase 3 (Network North funding)

The allocated funding for Phase 3 (Network North) totals £2.268m and the proposals consist of:

1. Bus Service Enhancements -
  - Improved frequency on existing services;
  - Extensions to routes on existing services;
  - Additional evening services; and
  - Additional Sunday services.
2. Multi-operator ticket south of Borough.
3. Uplift the quality of bus stop infrastructure on key strategic routes and improved information provision.
4. Modernisation of DRT provision will be reconfigured to complement the fixed route network and ensure an appropriate blend between fixed route and flexible services. The Rural Mobility Fund (RMF) pilot project (Go-Too) will be integrated with existing provision as part of this project. Reconfiguration will open new travel options for service users.
5. Providing bus priority interventions at five key junctions/corridors:
  - A534 Nantwich Road Corridor (Crewe);
  - A532 West Street/Frank Webb Avenue (Crewe);
  - A523 London Road/Byrons Lane (Macclesfield);
  - A54 Kinderton Road/Leadsmithy Street (Middlewich); and
  - B5341 Waterlode/Welsh Row/High Street (Nantwich).

These proposals will be shaped and refined in the forthcoming Operator Working Groups, EP Forum meetings and EP Boards within 2024.

## Bus Driver Recruitment and Retention

Bus driver recruitment and retention in Cheshire East is challenging, with both national and local factors impacting the ability of our local bus operators to encourage new drivers into the industry and retain existing drivers. There are general market and localised issues which are impacting recruitment and retention within Cheshire East, including:

General/National	Localised
The HGV driver shortage during the pandemic resulted in a number of people leaving the bus industry in favour of road haulage and their more competitive salaries.	Shortage within the pool of potential PSV licence-holders looking for work locally.
The length of time it is taking the DVLA to issue new drivers with a provisional Public Service Vehicle (PSV) licence and in some cases, the availability of various tests, which impacts on new applicants leaving the hiring process before completion to gain employment elsewhere.	The proximity of Cheshire East to Greater Manchester and the disproportionately higher wages caused by franchising.

Discussions with our local bus operators has identified that a funded scheme for driver recruitment and training would be welcome, especially one that focuses on getting drivers fully trained to drive a bus.



## 4. Ambitions and Proposals for 2025-2030

In the preceding chapters, we have identified where the gaps in the 2024 Cheshire East bus offer will be, as benchmarked against our vision for buses in Cheshire East:

*“Our vision will **transform the bus network** within Cheshire East to provide **attractive, reliable and convenient connections** that enable more residents and visitors to **choose bus, make fewer car journeys**, to contribute to our **carbon reduction challenge** and **improve the health of our citizens**”.*

By analysing these gaps we have identified specific aspirations to enhance the bus offer and to deliver on our vision:

- Improvements to bus services: service levels and network coverage.
- Improvements to fares and ticketing – simpler and more affordable fares.
- Improved bus information and network identity, including real-time information provision.
- Improved bus stops, bus stations and interchanges.
- Accessibility, inclusiveness, personal safety and security.
- Bus priority: delivering faster and more reliable services on priority routes/corridors.
- Collaboration with local bus operators to improve the quality of the bus fleet.
- Improvements to the bus passenger experience.
- Ongoing implementation of the Bus Passenger Charter.
- Longer term transformation of the network.

We have developed these ambitions into specific proposals for initiatives, to be delivered within a phased programme to progressively realise each ambition in line with realistic expectations for implementation.

Table 4-1 sets out the ambitions and initiatives needed to improve the current bus offer to deliver our vision for buses within Cheshire East. These initiatives have also been linked back to the objectives outlined in the National Bus Strategy. Each initiative has been considered in terms of short, medium and long-term ambitions, which are:

- Short term (2024-2025) – Ongoing stabilisation and enhancements to the network
- Medium term (2026-2030) – Quality improvements
- Long term (2030+) Network growth

The table also outlines the alignment of initiatives identified as part of the 2024/25 funding for BSIP+ Phases 2 and 3 delivery programme.



Table 4-1: Ambitions and initiatives

Initiative		Funding Ambition (2024-2035)	2024/2025 BSIP+ Funding Priority (BSIP+ Phases 2 & 3)
More frequent services, more comprehensive services, and better integration with other modes	<b>Town Networks:</b> service enhancements to provide better access to health services, employment, education, leisure/retail, transport hubs within principal towns and key service centres	Short term (2024-2025): Ongoing stabilisation and enhancements to the network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shoulder enhancements (first/last bus) on selected key bus routes, to provide access to employment, health and education.</li> <li>Continued support for socially necessary town services, as part of the wider bus network.</li> </ul>	Weekend service enhancements for service 12: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hourly Saturday evening service and hourly Sunday service for service 12.</li> </ul> Further service enhancements including additional evening/Sunday services & improved frequencies/extensions to routes are in development for Phase 3 funding, following engagement with the EP Forum and Operators.
		Medium term (2025-2030): Quality improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved frequencies of weekday and weekend (including Sundays) town services.</li> <li>Continued support for socially necessary town services, as part of the wider fixed-route bus network.</li> </ul>	
		Long term (2030+): Network growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased routes and improved frequencies within our towns bus network to serve key service centres.</li> <li>Identify minimum frequency standards for town services.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Inter-urban Network:</b> service enhancements to provide better access between principal towns, transport hubs and key service centres.	Short term (2024-2025): Ongoing stabilisation and enhancements to the network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shoulder enhancements (first/last bus) on selected key bus routes, to provide access to employment, health and education.</li> <li>Continued support for socially necessary inter-urban services, as part of the wider bus network.</li> </ul>	Weekend service enhancements for services 38 and 130, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90-minute Sunday service (Crewe, Sandbach, Congleton and Macclesfield) for service 38.</li> <li>90-minute Sunday service (Macclesfield to Handforth Dean) for service 130.</li> </ul> Further service enhancements including additional evening/Sunday services & improved frequencies to routes are in development for Phase 3 funding,
		Medium term (2026-2030): Quality improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved frequencies of weekday and weekend (including Sundays) inter-urban services.</li> <li>Continued support for socially necessary inter-urban services, providing expanded flexible services to link into the wider inter-urban network.</li> </ul>	
		Long term (2030+): Network growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased routes and improved frequencies on our inter-urban bus network to serve key service centres.</li> <li>Identify minimum frequency standards for inter-urban services.</li> </ul>	

Initiative		Funding Ambition (2024-2035)	2024/2025 BSIP+ Funding Priority (BSIP+ Phases 2 & 3)
			following engagement with the EP Forum and Operators.
	<b>Rural network:</b> service enhancements to maintain rural services and access to principal towns and key service centres.	Short term (2024-2025): Ongoing stabilisation and enhancements to the network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued support for socially necessary rural services, as part of the wider bus network.</li> <li>Identify opportunities to modernise flexible transport solutions to support rural connectivity to our towns and key service centres.</li> </ul>	DRT provision will be reconfigured to complement the fixed route network and ensure an appropriate blend between fixed route and flexible services. The RMF pilot project (Go-Too) will be integrated with existing provision as part of this project.  Reconfiguration will open new travel options for service users.
		Medium term (2026-2030): Quality improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand flexible transport solutions, including demand responsive transport to link to the wider fixed-route bus network.</li> </ul>	
Long-term (2030+): Network growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued support for socially necessary rural services, as part of the wider bus network</li> <li>Identify minimum frequency standards for rural services</li> </ul>			
<b>Faster and more reliable journeys</b>	<b>Bus priority measures:</b>  Traffic signal priority & network pinch points	Short term (2024-2025): Ongoing stabilisation and enhancements to the network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better enforcement of Traffic Regulation Orders on key routes</li> <li>Better management of roadworks and information sharing with operators as part of EP working group</li> <li>Develop the prioritised list of bus priority interventions into programme for delivery.</li> <li>Deliver top five prioritised interventions</li> </ul>	Providing bus priority interventions at five key junctions/corridors: A534 Nantwich Road Corridor, A532 West Street/Frank Webb Avenue, A523 London Road/Byrons Lane, A54 Kinderton Road/Leadsmithy Street, B5341 Waterlode/Welsh Row/High Street
		Medium term (2026-2030): Quality improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to develop the prioritised list of further bus priority interventions</li> <li>Deliver top 20 prioritised interventions</li> </ul>	
		Long term (2030+): Network growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further delivery of prioritised interventions</li> </ul>	

Initiative		Funding Ambition (2024-2035)	2024/2025 BSIP+ Funding Priority (BSIP+ Phases 2 & 3)
	<b>Bus fleet:</b> Collaboration with local bus operators to improve the quality of the bus fleet and reduce emissions	Short term (2024-2025): Ongoing stabilisation and enhancements to the network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The development of an Action Plan with Operators to deliver improved quality of vehicles, including improving Euro standards of buses operating in the CEC area.</li> </ul>	Delivery of new vehicles on 38 and 391/392 – operator led. Work with operators to identify opportunities for future vehicle upgrades.
		Medium term (2026-2030): Quality improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for the transition to low and zero-emission bus fleet within Cheshire East.</li> </ul>	
		Long-term (2030+): Network growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop minimum vehicle requirements for quality and emission standards</li> <li>Further support for the transition to low and zero-emission bus fleet within Cheshire East.</li> </ul>	
<b>Cheaper Fares</b>	<b>Lower fares for key groups</b>	Short term (2024-2025): Ongoing stabilisation and enhancements to the network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trial of the 16-19 young person's pass.</li> <li>Expansion of young persons' pass to care leavers (16-25).</li> </ul>	Borough wide discounted Travel Pass trial for 16-19 year olds and care leavers.
		Medium term (2026-2030): Quality improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation of 16-19 young person's and care leavers pass</li> <li>Consideration of other concessionary fares products</li> </ul>	
		Long-term (2030+): Network growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation of 16-19 young person's and care leavers pass</li> <li>Consideration of other concessionary fares products</li> </ul>	
	<b>Promotional fares</b>	Short term (2024-2025): Ongoing stabilisation and enhancements to the network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with bus operators to develop a feasibility study to identify fare simplification mechanisms following the end of the £2 fare cap.</li> <li>Promote cross-boundary multi-modal tickets, which are available for use within areas of Cheshire East (i.e. System One).</li> </ul>	System One ticket promotion on Cheshire East's online bus platform

Initiative		Funding Ambition (2024-2035)	2024/2025 BSIP+ Funding Priority (BSIP+ Phases 2 & 3)	
		Medium term (2026-2030): Quality improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fare caps for short journeys within towns (includes technology for tap-on/tap-off).</li> </ul>		
		Long-term (2030+): Network growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation of fare caps and consideration of zonal fares</li> </ul>		
	Multi-operator and multi-modal ticketing	Short term (2024-2025): Ongoing stabilisation and enhancements to the network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with bus operators to develop a feasibility study on the deliverability of multi-operator ticketing (using paper-based or smart-card ticketing solutions).</li> <li>Multi-operator ticket trial in Macclesfield.</li> </ul>		Multi-operator ticket trial for services within the greater Macclesfield area. Multi-operator ticket trial for services within the Crewe area and surrounding towns and key service centres.
		Medium term (2026-2030): Quality improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider further multi-operator ticket opportunities, including potential roll-out in Crewe.</li> </ul>		
		Long-term (2030+): Network growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider borough wide multi-operator and multi-modal ticket opportunities, linking with Project Coral.</li> </ul>		
	Easier to use for passengers	Bus Passenger Charter		Short term (2024-2025): Ongoing stabilisation and enhancements to the network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish a Bus Passenger Charter (to be adopted by EP Board in August 2024) to give bus users the right to a specified standard of service, covering punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, proportion of services operated, information and a system for redress.</li> </ul>
Medium term (2026-2030): Quality improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver on Bus Passenger Charter commitments</li> <li>Appoint a bus community champion</li> </ul>				
Long term (2030+): Network growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver on Bus Passenger Charter commitments</li> </ul>				

Initiative		Funding Ambition (2024-2035)	2024/2025 BSIP+ Funding Priority (BSIP+ Phases 2 & 3)
	<b>Bus Stop and Bus Shelter Provision</b>	Short term (2024-2025): Ongoing stabilisation and enhancements to the network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver a phased programme for bus stop upgrades in line with bus stop standards (gold, silver &amp; bronze).</li> <li>Improve the physical access to bus services for users through improved bus stop infrastructure for stops on 38 route.</li> </ul>	Improvements to 11 hub stops on service 38 inter-urban route, to complement the introduction of new vehicles by the bus operator.  Improvement of bus waiting facilities and information provision on key strategic corridors within Cheshire East.
		Medium term (2026-2030): Quality improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade bus stops on key inter-urban routes.</li> </ul>	
		Long term (2030+): Growth of the network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade bus stops along all key strategic corridors within Cheshire East.</li> </ul>	
<b>Easier to understand services</b>	<b>Public Transport Information</b>	Short term (2024-2025): Ongoing stabilisation and enhancements to the network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop the Cheshire East website to include journey planning capabilities</li> <li>Timetable changes to take place on four dates per year. Propose four times or amended timetable change dates as per previous BSIP and Enhanced Partnership Scheme.</li> <li>Deliver a programme of improved bus stop flags and timetable information across the borough as part of upgrade and refreshed information provision.</li> </ul>	Cheshire East Website – improved web-based information provision
		Medium term (2026-2030): Quality improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to encourage operators to maintain or improve their electronic public transport provision.</li> <li>Implementation of real-time information screens at key, strategic locations on the bus network – bus stations, railway stations, hospitals and town centres.</li> <li>Improve marketing and branding of services and ticketing, as part of public transport information offer.</li> </ul>	
		Long term (2030+): Network growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the development of a Cheshire East app to provide real-time public transport information</li> </ul>	

A high-level, costed summary table for the ambitions and interventions is set out in Table 4.2, it sets out the funding allocations for BSIP+ Phase 2 and Phase 3 up to 2025 and estimated costs for interventions post 2025, per annum, which are currently unfunded.

**Table 4-2: Ambitions and interventions – summary**

Ambition/Intervention	Programme up to 2025 BSIP+ Funding (Phases 2 & 3)	Proposals Post 2025 (estimated £ per annum) CURRENTLY UNFUNDED
Towns network – service enhancements	£928,300	£3,200,000
Inter-urban network – service enhancements	£935,800	£2,100,000
Rural network – DRT & service enhancements	£800,000	£800,000
Bus priority measures (20 key locations)	£200,000	£700,000
Bus fleet (roll out of low & zero-emission vehicles)	-	£2,385,000
Lower fares for key groups	£1,044,000	£522,000
Promotional fares (i.e. System One & future roll out)	£25,000	£206,650
Multi-operator and multi-modal ticketing	£185,000	£100,000
Bus Passenger Charter	-	-
Bus Stop and Bus Shelter Provision	£500,000 <sup>5</sup>	£500,000
Public Transport Information (includes RTI)	£25,000	£350,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£4.643 million</b>	<b>£10.864 million</b>

<sup>5</sup> Plus £350k of LTP funding.

## 5. Targets, performance monitoring and reporting

This section sets out the arrangements for publishing and monitoring the performance against BSIP targets.

### Summary of progress against 2021 BSIP targets

It is important to recognise that the pandemic and the subsequent cost of living crisis has changed how people choose to travel, their travel behaviours and patterns. These changes have a direct bearing on the position of the bus network and how it needs to evolve for future viability and sustainability. A summary of progress against 2021 BSIP targets is outlined in Table 5-1. Without the appropriate funding to meet our objectives, it was not possible to meet our local ambitions outlined in the 2021 BSIP.

**Table 5-1: Summary of progress against 2021 BSIP targets**

Targets		2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Achieved/Not Achieved (2024)
Journey Time		No data	No data	Direct Routes - no more than 50% greater than the equivalent car journey time (minutes) and, Routes requiring one interchange, to be no more than double the equivalent car journey time (in minutes) and to minimise time penalties for interchanging between services.	Given the 2021 BSIP was unsuccessful in Phase 1 BSIP funding, this was an unrealistic target.
Reliability <sup>6</sup>	DfT statistics on punctuality	85%	85%	95%	74%
	Reports to Traffic Commissioner	0	0	0	0
Passenger Numbers and Growth		Reverse the decline in bus patronage across the borough	Reverse the decline in bus patronage across the borough	Borough-wide - 10% increase on pre-pandemic levels, and by 20% by 2030. Areas with high propensity for bus use – double patronage from 2018/2019 baseline.	DfT data from 2022/23, shows that passenger journeys have begun to recover (+27% since 2021/22), however not to pre-Covid levels

<sup>6</sup> DfT Statistics – BUS0902 Non-frequent bus services running on time, by Local Authority



Targets		2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Achieved/Not Achieved (2024)
Passenger satisfaction <sup>7</sup>	Punctuality	74%	-	74%	77%
	Value for Money (VfM)	60%	-	64%	79%

Initial progress has been made against some targets, working towards a local bus network that not only meets the needs of users and manages the expectations of service delivery with our local bus operating partners, but is comparable to those areas of the country which are seen as 'best practice'. These areas have well connected and accessible local bus services and are able to deliver fast, frequent services to meet the needs of users at a fare level, which is affordable and comparable to the cost of using their cars for short journeys and parking.

### 2024 BSIP Targets

We have tried to adopt a pragmatic, yet ambitious approach which will see the bus network – in its widest sense – start to evolve within the current BSIP+ funding window and our vision for buses, including future aspirations to enable schemes to be brought forward as and when further funding is made available.

As such, we have outlined interim targets for up to 2029 and targets for 2030-2035, which are summarised in Table 5-2.

**Table 5-2: 2024 BSIP targets**

Targets		Baseline (2023/2024)	Interim target for 2029	Target for 2035
Journey time & accessibility	Weekdays and Saturdays	85%	Average of 87% of the population within Cheshire East can reach a town or key service centre within 40 minutes.	Average of 90% of the population within Cheshire East can reach a town or key service centre within 40 minutes.
	Sundays	25%	Average of 40% of the population within Cheshire East can reach a town or key service centre within 40 minutes.	Average of 60% of the population within Cheshire East can reach a town or key service centre within 40 minutes.
Reliability	DfT statistics on punctuality	74%	80%	85%
	Reports to Traffic Commissioner	0	Maintain 'zero' reliability reports to the North Western Traffic Commissioner	Maintain 'zero' reliability reports to the North Western Traffic Commissioner

<sup>7</sup> Values for 2018/2019 derived from 2016 Transport Focus survey. 2019/2020 – no local data available.

Targets		Baseline (2023/ 2024)	Interim target for 2029	Target for 2035
Passenger Numbers and Growth <sup>8</sup>		2.8 million (2022/ 2023)	Borough-wide - 40% growth on 2022/2023 total passenger journeys, to exceed 2019/20 levels (returning to over 3.8 million per annum).	Borough-wide - 10% increase on 2019/2020 levels by 2035 (over 100,000 extra bus journeys per annum).
Passenger satisfaction	Punctuality	77%	80%	85%
	Value for Money (VfM)	79%	80%	85%

## Monitoring

Aligned with statutory requirements and processes for monitoring the Cheshire East Local Transport Plan, in coordination with emerging BSIP guidance, this document will be supported with arrangements for the regular monitoring of the tendered local bus services to ensure best value, following the current Bus Service Review and alignment with the Enhanced Partnership governance and monitoring requirements.

This BSIP covers a period up to 2035 and will be reviewed on an annual basis in line with existing arrangements (i.e. officer reporting, committee processes, etc.) and the Local Transport Plan (LTP) Delivery Plan monitoring process. The monitoring of this BSIP will focus on metrics related to each of the schemes and targets and will be collated into an annual monitoring report, along with DfT bus connectivity assessment requirements.

<sup>8</sup> Total number of passenger journeys on local bus services (DfT Bus Statistics data)