

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFORMATION STRATEGY
2004 - 2006**

July 2004

SECTION 1 – WHY WE NEED AN INFORMATION STRATEGY

- 1.1 For public transport information to be effective it must be trusted, valued and respected by current users, it should also market services to potential users in an innovative professional manner. This two-tiered approach to information provision is needed in order to give people a genuine choice between the private car and more sustainable means of travel. It is essential therefore that members of the public have easy access to information that is accurate, up-to-date and easily understood. Furthermore this information should market public transport as a range of real alternatives to travel in a private car, particularly in the case of single occupancy car use to destinations accessed by large numbers of people.
- 1.2 Good quality, user friendly bus information will:
- Make bus services more accessible
 - Encourage greater use of bus services
 - Encourage people to consider an alternative to the car
 - Combat lack of information contributing to social exclusion
 - Help achieve integrated local plan objectives, particularly through promoting switch to more sustainable modes
 - Ensure that the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act are better met in respect of information
 - Promote economic well-being of the local community, including improving travel arrangements for visitors and tourists
- 1.3 There is an implied requirement within sections 139 – 142 of the Transport Act 2000 for transport authorities in England and Wales to produce a Bus Information Strategy to publicise and promote local bus information. West Berkshire Council sees this as an opportunity to begin the work of including other modes of public transport in our information strategy. We also recognise that a journey will often involve changing between two or more modes of travel (e.g. cycling to the station, catching a train and walking from the station to a final destination) it is therefore important to provide high-quality information for a travellers whole journey.
- 1.4 Central Government is not prescriptive about specific aspects of information. Rather, each authority is required to determine what is needed locally and how best to deliver improvements to existing provision. The Act urges that at every opportunity the views of local people should be sought.
- 1.5 The Act states that complete information should be available for:
- All local routes, timetables and fares
 - Facilities for disabled passengers and details of concessionary fare schemes
 - Interchange and connection opportunities between modes of travel

The resulting Information Strategy:

- Should be formulated so that it can be used to determine compliance from bus operators.
- Should include procedures to deliver required information if operators are unable or unwilling to do so.

- Should include procedures for recovering costs from bus operators for providing information, where this is deemed necessary.
 - Must strike a balance between being economic, efficient and effective.
 - Must avoid discriminating between operators.
 - Should involve working together with other local authorities where relevant.
- 1.6 We aim to publicise services in the District as a network, rather than as a number of individual, isolated routes. Integration between modes of transport (walking, cycling, bus rail, coach, community transport, taxi and the private car) will be an important factor in achieving this aim, as seamless travel is only possible through the availability of high quality information. It is hoped that operators of public transport services will actively support the strategy and contribute financially where appropriate.
- 1.7 The strategy aims to meet the needs of those with mobility, hearing, visual or learning disabilities, and those not conversant with the English language. Catering for people's individual needs is fundamental to our corporate objective of social inclusion to services and facilities. This is in line with our Corporate Plan's Strategic Priority of 'Tackling all forms of social exclusion across the district.
- 1.8 We will consult the following parties on this information strategy:
1. Town and Parish Councillors
 2. West Berkshire Partnership Transport Action Group
 3. The Berkshire Unitaries and other adjoining transport authorities
 4. Public Transport Users
 5. Local representative bodies including trade associations
 6. Large employers
 7. Local residents through our Internet site and other marketing centres
 8. Local transport operators
 9. The Government Office for the South East
 10. Traffic Commissioner
- 1.9 Feedback from this consultation will help shape future products and services that stem from the information strategy.

SECTION 2 – OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

- 2.1 Information is needed for passengers and potential passengers at all stages of the process of making a bus journey. At the Pre-trip stage a knowledge of available services is needed to come to a decision as to whether firstly the trip can be taken, and secondly, by which mode (or modes). If good information is not available or easily accessed at this time then the probability is that opportunities to travel by public transport are missed and needless social exclusion may result. Information is then needed at the starting point of the journey (i.e. Am I at the right bus stop? Which is the right bus?), and at intermediate interchange points. There is also a need to know about service disruptions and cancelled services so that these factors can be taken into account.
- 2.2 There are numerous ways of providing information to the public – from basic paper timetables to intricate journey planners on the Internet. In most cases new innovations should not replace earlier methods – they should complement them. This is important, as it cannot be presumed that all public transport users will have access to mobile phones, the Internet or other technologies at the time that they require good information.
- 2.3 Different travellers require different information and have various means and skills of accessing this information. One style of information will not suit all customers or all locations. Electronic services can often be delivered on different media at marginal cost – for example real time information could be on street, in major venues, on the Internet and mobile phones and in call centres. However, too many different sources could be inefficient and unaffordable so a careful balance must be drawn.
- 2.4 Public Transport information, in various formats, needs to be easily accessed. It should be available:
1. At home
 2. In District, Town and Parish Council Offices
 3. In the workplace
 4. In schools and colleges
 5. In doctors surgeries and day centres
 6. At hospitals
 7. In shopping centres
 8. At tourist and other information centres
 9. In hotels
 10. At libraries, post offices and village shops
 11. At bus and rail stations; bus stops and other interchange points
 12. At any major activity centres
 13. On the move
- 2.5 West Berkshire recognises that it has a shared responsibility with operators to ensure that all information used is standardised and agreed upon.

Table One lists the main questions that may reasonably be asked about bus services in an area.

Question	I may need to know;
What bus services are available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information of what is available locally/ further afield. • Information to a specific destination, or an overview of the local network.
When do the buses run?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timetable Information.
Where do I catch my bus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is the nearest stop? • Can I hail the bus?
What routes does the bus take?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maps and route descriptions. Maps may be geographically accurate or stylised, and may be at village, town or regional level.
Who operates my service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operator Name/ address / telephone / fax / E-mail / WEB site.
How much will my bus trip cost? Will I need the exact fare? (Can I use it on other services?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the various tickets available – singles, returns, through tickets, multiple tickets, period tickets, season tickets, zonal tickets, network tickets, passes. • Concessionary Fares – eligibility / validity.
Where do I buy my ticket? (Can I use a credit card? Will I get change?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be from the driver, at the bus station office or from another off-bus ticket sales outlets. In the case of a rail and 'bus add on' ticket from the rail station only.
How do I make a complaint, comment or compliment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To whom do I write / speak to? (The bus operator / the Council / the Traffic Commissioner / The National Federation of Bus Users / The Bus Appeals Body)? • Knowledge of Customer Charters.
What facilities are available for disabled people?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of Community Transport Services. • Details of services may be in a dedicated publication for disabled people, or may be included in the general publication. This may be available in large print, Braille or on tape. • Details of services operated with low floor accessible vehicles. • On street information needs to be at a suitable reading level for wheel chair users.
I need more than one form of transport to make my journey. Is this feasible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on Taxi, Coach and Rail services. • Car, Cycle and Pedestrian access & facilities at Park-and-Ride sites, Bus Stations, Rail Stations etc.
Is my bus coming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I need real time information of where the bus is. Is it almost here or has it been cancelled? • What are the alternative arrangements to cover road closures and other service disruptions?

Table Two lists the main methods of communicating the required information.

Method	Detail
Announcement Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These may be on bus / at principal stops and interchange points. • May be audible and / or visual.
Bus Interior and Exterior Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interior includes fare information, network information, details of changes etc. • Exterior includes route number and destination that should be illuminated in darkness.
Face to Face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffed Information Offices and Travel Shops. • Customer focussed bus drivers, ground staff etc.
Kiosks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering look up / interrogation / journey planning facilities.
Paper Based Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timetables – showing individual / corridor / summary / consolidated services. • Timetables may be produced at leaflet, pamphlet or book level. May be stop specific at bus stops. • Public Transport Maps – geographically accurate or stylised. Village, town or regional level. May show bus stops.
Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local radio stations can give details of service changes and disruptions.
Road Side Publicity (Bus Stop Flags and Associated Displays)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flag should include place name, service numbers and telephone enquiry number. • Timetables and maps should be displayed at appropriate stops.
Screen Based Displays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real Time Information • Customer Information. • Available at principal stops / interchange points/ other major activity centres i.e. offices & hotels.
Telephone, Text Phone, E-mail and Fax Enquiry Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National enquiry service – Traveline. • Local enquiry offices
The Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WEB-based journey planning- timetables / fares/ maps. • Links to relevant sites.
Wireless Application Protocol (WAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering mobile phone users to easily access and interact with information and services instantly.
Written Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including Parish magazines / 'Bus Times' newspapers or inserts.

There is obviously some overlap some several of the methods listed in Table Two.

- 2.6 The 'required information' in table one needs to be provided by one or more of the methods identified in table two. All the information needs to be standardised. Although all bus services have to be registered with the Traffic Commissioner and Local Transport Authorities in which the service passes, the manner and style in which this is done is variable. Unfortunately, some operator's registrations do not even make the route of the service clear. Furthermore, the names of bus stops can vary between operators, and different operators use different timing points along common sections of route. This does not provide a solid foundation for building up a uniform, consistent standardised information system.

SECTION 3 – THE CURRENT PROVISION OF INFORMATION

3.1 From its inception as a unitary Authority **West Berkshire Council** has recognised the importance of public information on bus services and has been active in ensuring the provision and dissemination of consistent information. This has been done through the production of transport guides and maps and by playing its role in the delivery of the south-east component of PTI 2000, the National Public Transport Information System. Some **Bus Operators** also provide their own good quality information. For example, some produce excellent timetables and publicise their services on Internet sites. However, despite the quality of this information it does not address the Council's aim of publicising services as a complete network.

3.2 This strategy seeks to enhance and build upon good practices already being carried out in the District. The starting point of the strategy is therefore an audit of the scope and quality of information now being provided. This highlights successes and opportunities for improvement. It also identifies barriers and areas of duplication.

3.3 A review of each of the current methods of communicating bus information in West Berkshire is set out below:

3.4 **Announcement Systems**

The only announcement system evident in the District at the time of writing is a chalkboard at Newbury Bus Station on which the day's cancelled services are detailed. This is a stark contrast to the announcement systems at some bus and rail stations that, via electronic screens inform customers of, for example,

- Real time information.
- The next departure number, route detail, operator and bay departure number.
- Cancellations.
- Lost property.
- Associated Information – fares and ticket information, service changes etc.

3.5 **Screen Based Displays**

There are no screen based display systems in Newbury Bus Station, or at any other bus stop in the District. However, the West Berkshire Partnership, the local strategic partnership involving public, private and voluntary sector organisations has undertaken a public transport review, which has highlighted possible locations for real-time information displays. The West Berkshire Partnership is currently investigating further action in relation to this.

3.6 **Bus Interior and Exterior Information**

The quality of display information on buses in the District is generally good. It is a requirement of law that operators ensure that all vehicles in service display the correct service identification (usually a number or letter, sometimes a combination of both) and route destination at the front of the vehicle. The route number / letters should be approximately 200mm high and the destination letters approximately 125mm high. These should ideally be illuminated during the hours of darkness and periods of inclement weather. Side and rear displays, when provided, must be correctly set. Route number and destination are usually prominently shown and illuminated when necessary. The bigger companies tend to have electronic destination display equipment. Some of the

smaller companies have just a board in the front window declaring the route number and destination, which is sufficient albeit rudimentary.

3.7 **Face to Face**

The Newbury Bus Station information office provides a valuable and professional face to face service Monday to Friday 0900 to 1400. However it does not sell national coach tickets and the somewhat dark and uninviting environment is unlikely to induce potential travellers to enter.

The majority of bus drivers are seen to be helpful in answering questions from the public and giving general travel advice. However training in customer care skills for all 'front line' staff should be standard for all operators.

3.8 **Kiosks**

There are currently no public transport information kiosks in West Berkshire. Such kiosks have been long established in areas such as Surrey and, as a part of the ROMANSE project in Winchester, Hampshire. They tend to be located at bus and rail stations, tourist information centres and shopping centres. At these kiosks the public, using touch screen technology, can call up timetables they would like to see, or request 'A to B' public transport journey information.

All the information used in the LITES call centre is stored in databases and software has been developed enabling interrogation of all the information. This established system could be adapted for use in any future kiosks in West Berkshire.

3.9 **Paper Based Information**

The Council produces a series of 7 guides. The areas covered by the guides are;

- Burghfield, Mortimer & Tadley
- Hungerford & Kintbury
- Lambourn Valley & West Downlands
- Newbury to Reading
- Pangbourne & East Downlands
- South Newbury & North Hampshire
- Thatcham & North Newbury

The initial intention was to publish each guide twice a year. In practice this has not always been necessary because services have remained fairly unchanged. The guides therefore tend to be updated on a rolling programme dictated largely by timetable changes.

The style and content of the guides has been fairly experimental; pocket size, lots of colour, use of cartoon fillers and various styles of presenting timetable information (full timetables, village specific timetables, summary timetables, times from key stops to specific destinations). Each guide carried a questionnaire about preferences in style and content, but the response rate has been very low and no meaningful deductions are possible. A Good Practice for printed Timetable Information has been produced by the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO). Copies of this can be downloaded from the ATCO web site at www.atco.org.uk The Code of Practice sets out specifications (including layout, minimum standards of paper quality, standardisation of codes and use of the 24hour clock). Our travel guides do not comply with the Code of Practice in two notable areas;

- The code states that 'type should be set in the largest size that circumstances will allow, with a minimum of 8 point.' The point size generally used in our guides is 7 point, although it is smaller in a few cases.
- The Code states that 'Grey shading and coloured tints including background pictures, other than pale yellow, should be avoided.' There is extensive use of coloured tints in the guides because it is believed a more colourful publication is less officious and more inviting. It is acknowledged that care has to be taken to ensure all print is legible against tints, especially for people with colour blindness.

The format of the travel guides is being reviewed to bring them more in line with the Code. The Council has established a successful distribution network for its public transport publicity. This includes Newbury Bus Station, libraries, council offices, tourist information offices, sports centres and post offices. Operators should now receive a supply of each guide that their services are shown in so that they may be made available to their passengers. Parish Councils should also receive an appropriate stock so that they can distribute them effectively at a local level.

The first West Berkshire Public Transport Map and Guide was published in February 2002. The intention is to update this once a year, ideally near the start of each calendar year, resources allowing and if no significant changes to the network have occurred in the previous year the priority for this would be low.

Some operators produce good timetables and maps of their services. Other operators make little or no investments in timetables and maps. We will ensure that all operators contribute to the production of our centrally produced guides and maps.

3.10 **Radio**

Some use is made of local radio to inform the public of service changes. News of some changes usually those following major re-tendering exercises or large commercial de-registrations, make it to the radio. However, many changes go unregistered. At present there is no consistency of approach.

Newbury Buses have recently started to inform local station, Kick FM of service cancellations so they can be included in their regular public transport bulletins.

3.11 **Roadside Publicity**

Whilst roadside publicity is unlikely to encourage new bus users it is a vital area of information for those people already using services. Up-to-date, high-quality information can increase public confidence, whilst poor and out-of-date information could deter passengers from using future services.

In West Berkshire bus operators are required to provide bus stop poles and associated infrastructure (timetable cases, bus stop flags etc). Some operators more readily invest in this area than others. As a result roadside publicity in the District can be unreliable. Clearly this is inadequate. In some areas where there was no roadside publicity the Council has provided timetable cases, the operators are required to maintain information in these.

Some bus stops, particularly in the rural areas, appear to have fallen out of use and are not maintained by any operator. Ownership of these stops, frequently the old concrete type, is often unclear. Some bus stop flags contain a grid showing the service numbers that serve the stop, these too can drift out of date. The Council has a partnership agreement with Reading Transport Ltd in which the Council supplies the operator with bus stop poles in return for them being installed and maintained.

The responsibility for the provision and maintenance of bus shelters lies with the parish or town councils. Operators wishing to display their timetables in shelters therefore need to know which is the correct organisation to contact. Uncertainty of who to contact could pose an unnecessary barrier to the provision of information in shelters. A good quality bus shelter helps raise the profile of bus travel and provides a nicer waiting environment than the 'open road.' There is a backlog of stops needing upgrading from bus pole to bus shelter.

Roadside publicity needs to be managed properly, with changes to services updated promptly. Due to the lack of uniformity in the present approach West Berkshire Council will update all roadside information and share the cost of this commensurately between bus operators. West Berkshire Council will standardise names for all stops and inform operators of these names. As it becomes possible to provide Traveline SMS codes for each bus stop we will implement a rolling programme to ensure this happens, bus operators will be recharged for the cost of this programme.

3.12 Telephone, Text Phone E-Mail and Fax Enquiry Service

The original vision of the Government's PTI2000 scheme was for the set up of a national, impartial, multi-modal, multi-operator telephone enquiry service for public transport information. This system known as Traveline is available 7 days a week between the hours of 0700 and 2200. Since its inception, the delivery modes for the Traveline service has expanded to include the Internet, Interactive Digital TV, E-mail, Fax, Mobile Phone Text Messages and Mobile Internet.

All bus operators providing services in West Berkshire are expected to participate fully in Traveline. This national telephone enquiry service is organised on a collaborative basis within the South East region, in a partnership involving 25 transport authorities. Four local information partnerships have been formed to deliver the statutory requirements of PTI2000 in the South East. We have joined with Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham District Council, as well as two local Bus Companies – Reading Transport and First Beeline, to form the LITES consortium.

The information used to provide the service is taken from each authority's electronic database of public transport service and timetable information. Delivery of that information by phone (and by minicom or typetalk, and on the Internet) is organised within the South East region by PTI (South East) Ltd formed specifically for the purpose. The costs of information delivery are allocated to those operators whose services feature in the information provided to enquiries, and invoices are sent by PTI (South East) Ltd to recover these costs from the operators involved. Reading Transport currently operates the LITES call centre.

3.13 **The Internet**

Some operators, including National Express have sites displaying their timetables and other information. The Council's website has a Public Transport section with links to these sites.

Currently, information on the Traveline website is based on scheduled services, it is anticipated that this information will eventually include real-time information, however no date for implementation has been finalised.

3.14 **Mobile Phones**

Many mobile phones can interface with the internet or a control centre to give, for example, real time information, timetables and locations of nearest bus stops. Traveline will also be available

SMS text messaging for services to each bus stop will be possible in the very near future. The council will implement a programme (as outlined above) to convey this information to users at bus stops.

3.15 **Written Articles**

Some changes to the bus network are documented in local newspapers – at either the instigation of Council officers, operators or reporters. Other changes go unreported.

Parish newsletters are an excellent means of getting information out to target settlements. When the Council's Call-A-Bus service started Parish Councils were encouraged to give a detailed explanation of the demand responsive nature of the service to their parishioners. Council Officers drafted articles for local newsletters. Articles about West Berkshire services have also featured in local Ramblers' Association magazines and the publication Scenic Britain by Bus.

We will develop this method of information provision and look to establish better links with Parish magazines.

SECTION 4 – DELIVERING THE INFORMATION

- 4.1 This section sets out our vision for the provision of information that we consider necessary, and the appropriate way of presenting that information.
- 4.2 West Berkshire Council and the Bus Operators must work together in a partnership to ensure delivery of the required information. A clear and fair delineation of responsibilities is required so each party is clear of its role. The table below sets out a suggested division of labour and cost for the implementation of the Bus Information Strategy.

Method	Detail	Responsibility	Timescale
Announcement Systems	An electronic visual display system showing next departure and other appropriate information to be available at 3 sites; Calcot Savacentre / Newbury Bus Station / Thatcham Broadway	The Council to purchase the systems. Service details to be provided by Traveline. Who operates the system to be agreed. Who pays for running cost of the system to be agreed.	2004-5
Bus Interior and Exterior Information	Interior info to include fare information, network information, details of changes etc. Traveline and No smoking signs should be displayed. Exterior info to include route number and destination that should be illuminated in darkness. Accessible vehicles should be clearly marked.	The Bus Operators	On-going
Face to Face	Information Office at Newbury Bus Station to be open Monday – Saturday, 0830 – 1600. Consideration should be given to enhancing the appearance and welcome of the centre. All bus drivers to undergo customer care training.	Reading Transport to staff the office. West Berkshire Council to make a contribution towards the costs of the service. Operators to allow their staff to attendance at a one day training course with full pay. Cost of the course to be met by the Council.	2005-6 2004-5
Kiosks	The provision of Kiosks offering look up / interrogation / journey planning facilities. Kiosks to be available in the Kennet Shopping Centre, Newbury Bus Station, Thatcham Broadway and Calcot, Savacentre.	The Council to purchase the systems. Service details to be provided by Traveline. Investigate the possibility of ongoing costs being met by sponsors who may place adverts in the kiosks	2005
Paper-based Information	Area Wide Travel Guides and Public Transport Map. As guides are reprinted convergence with the ATCO good practice recommendations will be sought.	West Berkshire Council to publish guides. Operators to contribute to cost.	Ongoing

Method	Detail	Responsibility	Timescale
Roadside Publicity	A review of locations and names of bus stops to be carried out. Unused posts and flags to be removed. Where necessary new post and flags to be installed. Minimum standard includes place name, service numbers and telephone enquiry number. Timetables and maps should be displayed at appropriate stops.	The Council to purchase bus stop poles, flags and timetable cases. Operators to pay for installation of bus stop infrastructure. Relevant timetables must be shown in timetable cases along the line of each route.	Ongoing
Screen Based Displays	Real Time Information Customer Information. Available at principal stops / interchange points/ other major activity centres i.e. offices & hotels.	The Council is currently in talks with possible suppliers of Real Time Travel Information. Funding would need to be apportioned between the Council and Bus Operators	2004 – 05
Telephone, Text Phone and Fax Enquiry Service	National enquiry service – Traveline. Local enquiry offices	The Council to continue to support Traveline in developing this service. Bus operators to meet their costs of service. Newbury Bus Station enquiry office to offer information through all these means.	Ongoing 2004
The Internet	WEB-based journey planning-timetables / fares/ maps. Links to relevant sites.	The Council to support the development of the Traveline Web Site. Operators to be encouraged to develop their own Web sites showing their services.	Ongoing
Wireless Application Protocol (WAP)	Empowering mobile phone users to easily access and interact with information and services instantly.	The Council to explore the possibility of the Traveline Database being WAP compatible. Bus operators to have details of cancellations & service disruptions available on WAP.	2004 2005
Written Articles	Including Parish magazines / 'Bus Times' newspapers or inserts.	The Council to draft articles suitable for local newspapers and parish Council newsletters on service changes.	Ongoing

- 4.3 It is in both the Council's interests and the Bus Operator's that a successful partnership is forged to deliver the required information at an acceptable price and effort. As with matters related to Traveline, the Council has rights laid down in the Transport Act 2000 to take action if operators do not meet their commitments of an approved Bus Information Strategy.
- 4.4 This document is intended to provide a foundation strategy to act as a platform for the development of a multi-modal information strategy as part of the second local transport plan. While this document focuses principally on the provision of bus information at all stages in the production of information consideration will be given to the integration of existing information on other modes of transport.
- 4.5 As with all work conducted in West Berkshire we will work with our partners and adjacent local transport authorities to ensure that, wherever possible, information on cross boundary services and for people who move cross boundary is of a common format and standard.