

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP) 2021-2026



Chalkwell



OVERVIEW

The Department for Transport (DfT) published its National Bus Strategy in March 2021. The strategy changes the regulatory framework under which buses have operated for the past 35 years and will be supported by £3 billion of investment across England, along with a commitment to repurpose current funding. The main objective of the strategy is to provide passengers with more frequent, more reliable, easier to use, better coordinated and cheaper bus services. This new approach acknowledges the role the bus can play in achieving a net zero emission society and serves as a commitment to supporting bus and bus rapid transit schemes.

The National Bus Strategy expects all Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to set up an Enhanced Partnership (EP). An EP is a statutory arrangement under the 2017 Bus Services Act whereby the LTA and local bus operators work together to improve local bus services. It needs to include a clear vision of the improvements that the EP is aiming for and actions to achieve them.

By the end of October 2021, Government expects all LTAs to publish a local Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). This must set out how LTAs will use their EP to deliver an ambitious vision for bus travel, meeting the overarching goal of the National Bus Strategy to grow back patronage after the pandemic and then to increase it and raise the mode share of the bus.

The BSIP covers the whole of the Medway Council area, for which there will be a single Enhanced Partnership. This excludes services covered by the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme, even where these may be registered in the Medway area.

The following companies operate local registered bus services within Medway, including Arriva, ASD Coaches, Chalkwell Coaches, Farleigh Coaches, Nu-Venture and Redroute Buses. Additionally, the following companies operate longer distance commuter coach services, including Clarkes Coaches, The Kings Ferry and National Express.

Medway Council is working collaboratively with colleagues at Kent County Council, who are producing a BSIP for their own area. Our plans however remain separate for a number of reasons, including the small number of cross-boundary services, differences in area type, local government and political setup, socio-economic factors and area-wide policies

It is anticipated that this first BSIP will be in operation until 2026, which will dovetail with the Council's current Local Transport Plan (LTP). It will be reviewed every six months, and formal changes made annually, to feed into proposals contained within an Enhanced Partnership Plan with our local bus operators. Full details of governance will be included within the Enhanced Partnership Plan, as required by legislation.

PASSENGER SATISFACTION

Medway Council participates in the National Highway and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey (NHT Survey), which measures public satisfaction on various aspects of highways and transport. Currently 109 local transport authorities are surveyed, enabling benchmarking of individual authorities against national trends. Medway's figures are derived from 1,171 public responses.

Based on the latest figures available, the NHT Survey found that satisfaction with the bus service in Medway was average on the whole, and in a number of categories, substantially below national averages. The biggest identified gaps have been listed below.

Indicator No.	Satisfaction with:	Satisfaction Medway	Satisfaction nationally
PTIB07	Bus fares	40%	50%
PTIB04	Whether buses arrive on time	49%	56%
PTIB05	How easy buses are to get on/off	59%	63%
PTIB08	Quality and cleanliness of buses	69%	73%

In most categories, there has been a small improvement over the last 10 years, however current results show that Medway is slightly below national figures. The lowest level of satisfaction, both nationally and in Medway, is for fares.



Chatham Waterfront Bus Station

PROPOSED MEASURES

Medway Council is considering the measures outlined below within its BSIP. These will be finalised and published on the Council website by 31 October 2021. This information will then be submitted to the Department for Transport, after which the Council will await to see what available funding will be provided by Government to implement the measures alongside our local operators within our Enhanced Partnership.

- **More Frequent and reliable services:**

<u>Delivery</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
Review service frequency	Investigate frequency improvements on key routes, to operate every 10 minutes during the day and every 30 minutes at other times, subject to funding.
Increase bus priority measures	Consider traffic signal priority, improved and better enforced parking restrictions. To examine the scope for physical priority where appropriate, noting that it will take longer than other methods to come to fruition.
Increase demand responsive services	To be examined in conjunction with a new rural town on the Hoo Peninsula and Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) proposals.
Consideration of bus rapid transport networks	In conjunction with HIF development at Hoo, to consider a bus priority route into central Chatham.

- **Improvements to Planning/Integration with other modes:**

<u>Delivery</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
Integrate services with other transport modes	Allow for PlusBus tickets to continue being used on subsidised services and explore whether shorter connection times can be established in the evenings.
Simplify services	Review key routes to ensure that the bus service network is still meeting passengers' needs. For example, the Gillingham and Rainham area would benefit from a review following recent developments.
Review socially necessary services	Both commercial and socially necessary routes will be reviewed as post-Covid levels of demand stabilise. It is expected that some currently commercial routes may no longer be required.
Invest in Superbus networks	Our proposals meet the Superbus criteria detailed within the National Bus Strategy: "to provide higher frequency, lower fare services"

- **Improvements to Fares and Ticketing:**

<u>Delivery</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
Lower fares	Seek to reduce maximum fares, initially with an all-operator ticket at single operator prices, subject to funding.
Simplify fares	The majority of bus operators have indicated their acceptance of a zonal fare structure, to replace individual fare stages, again subject to funding.
Integrate ticketing between operators and transport	Seek agreement to introduce a localised version of the South East Discovery ticket, ahead of any technological developments to allow inter-modal inter-operator ticketing. This could include versions both for Medway, and for Medway and Kent combined.

- **Make Improvements to Bus Passenger Experience - High Spec Buses**

<u>Delivery</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
Invest in improved bus specifications	Add audio-visual next stop announcements to buses, in line with available funding in accordance with DfT regulations.
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services	Develop and maintain bus services and infrastructure, offering good access to public transport for all members of the community. For example, improvements to bus stops so that buses can stop close and parallel to the kerb, allowing easy access for all passengers.
Protect personal safety of bus passengers	Improve CCTV coverage at Chatham Waterfront Bus Station and on-board buses.
Improve buses for tourists	Most of Medway's tourist attractions can be reached easily on the key bus route network. There is further opportunity to work with tourism colleagues to improve awareness of public transport options.
Invest in decarbonisation	A progressive approach to replacing older buses and concentrating the low/zero emission alternatives on routes, particularly in conjunction with Air Quality Management Areas within Medway.

- **Improvements to Passenger Engagement:**

<u>Delivery</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
Passenger charter	Commit to a Bus Passenger Charter (BPC) that sets out what passengers can expect from bus operators delivering local bus services across their area. Awaiting further guidance from the DfT.
Strengthen network identity	To be considered when inter-operator ticketing is more widely available
Improve bus information	Format to be determined after public consultation.

Under the DfT guidance, these measures will be reported on annually, with targets updated every 6 months.

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

We are interested in your views on the proposed measures that have been outlined above, and what priority you would assign to these. If you would like to provide feedback on the BSIP, please feel free to contact Medway Council via the details below. Please note that any comments will need to be submitted by Monday 13th September 2021.

Email: [**public.transport@medway.gov.uk**](mailto:public.transport@medway.gov.uk)

Write to: **Senior Public Transport Planner,
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