

Bus Transport Select Committee Report



March 2017



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Foreword



Buses play an essential role in getting people to work, school, shops and essential services. However, bus transport is facing significant challenges, as the number of passengers is declining, bus fares are increasing and financial pressures on local authorities have resulted in a reduction of subsidised services.

These issues can have a negative impact on local communities, and can be particularly acute for our most vulnerable residents, who tend to rely more on bus transport.

The desire and ambition to improve and innovate local bus services has led the Select Committee to investigate the current delivery model of bus transport in Kent and explore alternative options.

The Committee found that the local authority is working hard, in collaboration with local bus operators and other organisations, to provide quality bus services for Kent residents. But the evidence suggests that we can and should do more.

We made a number of recommendations with the aim of improving bus transport within the current model of local service provision. But we are aware that, within current arrangements, the degree to which the Authority can intervene, and the difference that we can make, is limited.

The Bus Services Bill, and the Franchising model of bus service provision in particular, can offer a real opportunity to maximise the full benefits that buses offer and, as a result, to significantly improve the lives of many Kent residents – especially if the buses are of a size that is most suited to their route structures.

Bus services are essential; it is the sincere hope of this Committee that this report and its recommendations will contribute to improve the quality of life of the people of Kent.

Alan Marsh

Chairman of the Bus Transport Select Committee



1.Executive Summary

1.1.Committee Membership

1.1.1. The Committee consists of nine elected Members of Kent County Council (KCC): five members of the Conservative Party, two members of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), one member of the Labour Party and one member of the Liberal Democrat Party.



Mr Mike Baldock
UKIP
Swale West



Mr Andrew Bowles
Conservative
Swale East



Mr Colin Caller
Labour
Gravesham East



Mr Ian Chittenden
Liberal Democrat
Maidstone North East



Mr Mike Harrison
Conservative
Whitstable



Mr Geoff Lymer
Conservative
Dover West



Mr Brian MacDowall
UKIP
Herne Bay



Mr Alan Marsh
Conservative (Chair)
Herne and Sturry



Mrs Jenny Whittle
Conservative
Maidstone Rural East

1.2. Scene Setting

- 1.2.1. Bus services are key to providing a transport network that enables access to employment, education, retail, leisure and health services in the county. As the local transport authority for Kent, Kent County Council is responsible for promoting and improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area and for implementing local transport schemes that support these long-term objectives.
- 1.2.2. Although KCC does not directly influence the provision of commercial bus services, it does work closely with private bus operators to improve the quality of services and to ensure that the highway network is planned and managed effectively. For the last 30 years KCC has also subsidised a number of routes which, while not commercially viable, have been considered important to the needs of the communities and passengers they serve.
- 1.2.3. While KCC has endeavoured to protect these subsidies, significant budget pressures now require a careful consideration of the extent to which the Authority can afford to support local bus transport. This provides an opportunity for the Select Committee to examine the current delivery model of local bus transport, assess the extent to which KCC can afford to support this model, and explore the viability and effectiveness of alternative models.
- 1.2.4. The timing of the review is appropriate; the recent Bus Services Bill offers a number of tools to help local authorities and bus operators to unlock the potential of the bus industry to provide more efficient and effective services that meet the needs of the county.

1.3. Terms of Reference

- 1.3.1. To examine the current delivery model of local bus transport in Kent.
- 1.3.2. To assess the extent to which KCC can prioritise support of the current delivery model of local bus transport in Kent, while having due regard to the resource implications and the budget setting processes.
- 1.3.3. To explore whether alternative models of local bus transport delivery are available and, if so, to consider their viability and effectiveness.
- 1.3.4. To consider the implications of the recent Bus Services Bill for bus transport in Kent.
- 1.3.5. To make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

1.4. Scope

1.4.1. The complexity of this topic and the tight timetable for the review required a clear and focused approach. Key themes and aspects covered by the review are detailed below:

1. To examine the current delivery model of local bus transport in Kent.
 - a. To explore the structure and operation of the current model of local bus transport in Kent.
 - b. To consider the roles and responsibilities of KCC, local bus operators and partner organisations in relation to the delivery of this transport model.
 - c. The focus of the review, as agreed by the Scrutiny Committee, is on bus transport and its public subsidy. It was therefore agreed to include a consideration of the Kent Young Person's Travel Pass but to exclude an investigation of the general issue of school transport on the grounds that this is a commissioned service and, as such, entails additional complexities that are outside the review's remit.
2. To assess the extent to which KCC can prioritise support of the current delivery model of local bus transport in Kent, while having due regard to the resource implications and the budget setting processes.
3. To explore whether alternative models of local bus transport delivery are available and, if so, to consider their viability and effectiveness.
 - a. To explore whether alternative delivery models of local bus transport are available, including an investigation of the role of Community Transport.
 - b. To consider the viability and effectiveness of any models identified.
4. To consider the implications of the recent Bus Services Bill.
 - a. For bus transport in Kent.
 - b. To explore the opportunities that the Bus Services Bill offers to help local authorities and bus operators to provide more efficient and effective services in the current economic climate.
5. To make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

1.5.Recommendations

The recommendations are listed in priority order.

Recommendation 16

The Select Committee endorses the Bus Services Bill and strongly supports the franchising model of bus transport in particular. The Committee recommends a full investigation into the adoption, in Kent, of the most appropriate elements of the Bill. The adoption of any element of the Bill in Kent should reflect the features highlighted by the Committee.

Recommendation 17

The Committee believes that the Bus Services Bill should extend franchising powers to all local authorities in England and Wales and should allow the formation of municipal bus companies. The Committee recommends that KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport writes to the Secretary of State for Transport expressing these views.

Recommendation 1

Kent County Council should appoint a "bus panel", composed of a number of KCC Members, to review the current method of prioritising subsidisation of socially necessary bus routes, to make sure that it reflects the current needs of local communities more accurately.

Recommendation 2

KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport should write to the Secretary of State for Transport asking for a review of the calculation of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) funding to ensure that it is sufficient to cover the cost of the scheme in Kent.

Recommendation 3

The Select Committee urges KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport to protect the discretionary element of the ENCTS scheme offered by KCC.

Recommendation 4

KCC's Public Transport division should work with bus operators to assess the viability of introducing the opportunity of upgrading the Young Person's Travel Pass to include bus travel during evenings, weekends and holidays.

Recommendation 5

KCC should:

- **Promote the establishment of a number of bus transport forums. The remit of these forums should be to discuss local bus transport-related issues and to identify possible solutions, which are then referred to Quality Bus Partnerships (QBP) through formal communication channels.**
- **Ensure that at least one Kent County councillor is a member of each QBP, and that their attendance is formalised.**
- **Encourage all Kent QBPs to include all bus operators in their areas.**
- **Encourage all Kent QBPs to brief their respective Joint Transportation Boards on a regular basis on bus transport-related priorities, measures for intervention and achievements.**

Recommendation 6

KCC's Public Transport division should examine demand management measures, where feasible and appropriate, to ease traffic congestion and promote bus patronage in Kent.

Recommendation 7

KCC's Highways division should ensure clear lines of communication with bus operators to give them timely notification of roadworks and coordinate such programmes to minimise disruption to bus services. The Division should also investigate the feasibility of increasing the size of fines and using the income from utility companies that overrun roadworks programmes to improve the range of community bus provision for Kent residents.

Recommendation 8

KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport should lobby the Government, Network Rail and Train Operating Companies to include improved connectivity between bus and rail services in Kent as a key element of South Eastern's new franchise agreement in 2018.

Recommendation 9

KCC's Public Transport division should:

- **Seek greater financial contributions from local bus operators and businesses towards the provision and maintenance of local bus infrastructure.**
- **Encourage Kent districts to make greater use of the Community Infrastructure Levy to finance local bus infrastructure schemes.**

Recommendation 10

KCC's Public Transport division should strongly encourage local bus operators to:

- Extend the range of their discounted fares, particularly for those on lower incomes.
- Expand their network coverage and service frequency, especially in rural areas, to better meet the needs of local communities.

Recommendation 11

KCC's Public Transport division should identify and subsidise a number of bus services that would better serve selected rural communities and give them access to their nearest main towns on selected days.

Recommendation 12

KCC's Public Transport division should urge local bus operators to increase the deployment of smaller buses, particularly in congested Kent localities. In the case of KCC tendered services, the appropriate bus size should be specified within the commissioning process.

Recommendation 13

KCC's Public Transport division should make available an approved driving course to train a number of bus drivers to be employed by smaller bus operators in Kent.

Recommendation 14

KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport should reiterate to Arriva and Stagecoach the importance of the Connected Kent and Medway smartcard and should urge these companies to participate in the scheme.

Recommendation 15

KCC's Public Transport division should investigate:

- Extending coverage of Community Transport operations in the County.
- Acting as a single point of information for all local transport provision and developing a database which holds up-to-date information on all community transport schemes in the County.



2. Public Subsidy and Criteria

KCC's commitment to bus travel has meant that, until recently, it has been able to protect its bus subsidy budget. Over the past five years local authorities' budgets have come under increasing pressure as a result of continuing reductions in funding from central government. It is more important than ever to ensure that support is given where it is most needed, and that current provision is protected as far as possible.

2.1. Subsidies and the Kent Bus Network

2.1.1. Despite significant financial pressures, KCC's commitment to bus travel has meant that, until recently, it has been able to protect its bus subsidy budget.¹

2.1.2. The bus network in Kent is subsidised in a number of ways: directly, through the purchasing of season tickets and the funding to help bus operators to run non-commercially viable routes; indirectly, through discretionary support for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS), Kent's Young Person's Travel Pass, and capital investment in vehicles and bus stops.²

2.2. Subsidies and Non-Commercial Routes in Kent

2.2.1. Bus services in the UK were privatised and deregulated in 1985. Since then, the vast majority of bus routes in Kent have been run by commercial bus companies. For the last 30 years KCC has subsidised a number of routes which, though not commercially viable, have been considered important for the communities they serve.³

2.2.2. In 2015-16, the number of bus journeys in Kent exceeded 50 million. About 97% of bus services in Kent are operated on a wholly commercial basis. This corresponds to more than 600 services, which are delivered by over 50 private companies. The two main operators in the county are Arriva in the west and Stagecoach in the east.⁴

2.2.3. In 2015-16, KCC subsidised 2.3% of all bus services in Kent at an annual cost of £6.4 million. These services enable local communities to access education, employment, shops and healthcare. In 2015-16 the number of bus journeys made on subsidised routes was 4.1 million. The number of contracts covering these routes was 150.⁵

2.2.4. In order to establish which routes to subsidise, the Authority uses a set of criteria which have been approved by KCC Members. These criteria rank services on the basis of cost, usage, journey purpose, days and times of operation and the availability of alternative forms of transport (such as the rail network).⁶

¹ Kent County Council (2016) Review of KCC Funded Bus Services: Consultation Document and Questionnaire, Maidstone

² Ibid

³ Kent County Council (2016) Review of KCC Funded Bus Services: Consultation Document and Questionnaire, Maidstone

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

2.2.5. Using these criteria KCC will consider supporting a non-commercial bus route if its main purpose meets one or more of the following journey activities:

- access to work
- access to learning
- access to healthcare
- access to food shopping ⁷

2.2.6. The services are then ranked in priority order based on the days and times of operation and the cost per passenger journey (that is, the cost of the contract divided by the number of journeys made on it).⁸

2.2.7. Since 2011-12, as a result of reduced government funding, KCC has had to reduce its revenue expenditure by £433 million. The budget for 2016-17 requires an additional saving of over £80 million.⁹

2.2.8. In order to meet its savings targets KCC has already made over £1 million of savings on bus transport by working with bus operators to re-plan routes and by making more use of Community Transport operators. Recently the Authority has identified a further £250,000 worth of savings. However, it still needs to reduce its spending by about £500,000 in the next financial year.¹⁰

2.2.9. A recent KCC consultation - which ran from March 21st to May 15th 2016 - sought Kent residents' views on a proposal to reduce the provision of some local bus services. Feedback on the scoring method used to assess the impact of the changes was generally positive, as respondents were twice as likely to agree (41%) as to disagree (20%).¹¹

2.2.10. Nonetheless the Select Committee concluded that the current method of selecting bus services to subsidise could be improved.

2.2.11. The criteria are not used in isolation; they offer important financial guidance on how to prioritise service provision, but this is only one element of a thorough approach that also takes into account the impact on passengers, especially the most vulnerable groups in society.¹²

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Review of KCC Funded Bus Services: Consultation Document and Questionnaire, Maidstone

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Kent County Council (2016) Review of KCC Funded Bus Services: Consultation Responses – Spring-Summer 2016

¹² Ibid

- 2.2.12. This arrangement seems appropriate and understandable, given that it is these groups, such as those on lower incomes or younger people, who tend to rely on buses as their main form of transport.^{13 14}
- 2.2.13. However, the flexibility of this approach can sometimes lead to a less than optimal allocation of service provision. For instance, it was indicated to the Committee that a number of bus routes were subsidised because "historic" - that is, they had been provided for a long time. While support to some of these routes may be justified, it was pointed out that Kent's demography was changing rapidly - with an incoming population of more mobile families with children - making some older routes less socially necessary than others.^{15 16}
- 2.2.14. Statistical evidence supports this view; over the past 10 years the population of Kent has grown faster than the national average. Between 2005 and 2015 Kent's population grew by 10.9%, compared to 9.1% in the South East and 8.3% in England.¹⁷ The largest proportion of net migrants to Kent in the years mid-2014 to mid-2015 were aged 25-44 (48.9%). This group is likely to be particularly mobile because of its working age. It is also the main child bearing age-group; the analysis suggests that it is likely that the second largest net increase - 0-15 year olds (33.6%) - is linked to the net increase of 25-44 year olds.¹⁸
- 2.2.15. The Committee identified two solutions to improve the system of identifying local bus services to subsidise. The first one is to review the current method to make sure that it reflects the current needs of local communities more accurately.^{19 20}

¹³ Department for Transport (2012) Green Light for Better Buses, London

¹⁴ Kent County Council (2016) Review of KCC Funded Bus Services: Consultation Responses – Spring-Summer 2016

¹⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 27 September 2016

¹⁶ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 10 October 2016

¹⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Summary of Facts and Figures [online] <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/Facts-and-figures-about-Kent/summary-of-kent-facts-and-figures#tab-2>

¹⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Migration Indicators in Kent, 2015

¹⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 27 September 2016

²⁰ Ibid

2.2.16. The second involves the appointment of a "bus panel", composed of a number of KCC Members, to review on a regular basis the provision of subsidised bus services. Key tasks of the panel would include ensuring the optimal allocation of subsidised bus routes and monitoring the level of service provision.²¹

Recommendation 1

Kent County Council should appoint a "bus panel", composed of a number of KCC Members, to review the current method of prioritising subsidisation of socially necessary bus routes, to make sure that it reflects the current needs of local communities more accurately.

²¹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 10 October 2016

2.3. Concessionary and Discretionary Travel Schemes

- 2.3.1. As well as financial support for bus operators to run non-commercially viable routes, the bus network in Kent is also subsidised through the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS), the Kent 16+ Travel Card and the Kent's Young Person's Travel Pass.²²

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme

- 2.3.2. In April 2011 responsibility for the Concessionary Travel Scheme for Kent and Medway moved to KCC and Medway Council (the Travel Concession Authorities, or TCAs); prior to that the scheme was run jointly by Kent Districts, Boroughs and City Councils, Medway Council and Kent County Council.²³
- 2.3.3. The Scheme is established under the provisions of the Transport Act 1985 and is administered to fulfil the statutory requirements of the Transport Act 2000 and the Transport Act 2007.²⁴
- 2.3.4. Under this legislation, local authorities must ensure that the participating local transport operators are properly reimbursed for the revenue they forego from the free travel that is allowed to pass holders within the ENCTS.²⁵
- 2.3.5. The scheme provides for concessionary travel passes to be issued to people of pensionable age (tied to the pensionable age of women), disabled people and people who are not permitted to drive for medical reasons, and entitles the holders to travel free on registered local bus services throughout England.^{26 27}
- 2.3.6. The national bus concession in England is available at any time on a Saturday, Sunday or bank holiday, and from 9.30am to 11pm on any other day. TCAs are able to offer concessionary travel outside these hours on a discretionary basis.²⁸

²² Ibid

²³ MCL Transport Consultants (2016) The Concessionary Travel Scheme for Kent and Medway: Year End Report 2015-16

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Department for Transport (2010) Guidance for Travel Concession Authorities on the England National Concessionary Travel Scheme, London

²⁷ MCL Transport Consultants (2016) The Concessionary Travel Scheme for Kent and Medway: Year End Report 2015-16

²⁸ Department for Transport (2010) Guidance for Travel Concession Authorities on the England National Concessionary Travel Scheme, London

2.3.7. Under the terms of the scheme authorities can choose to offer discretionary enhancements. In 2015-16 the following additional support was offered in Kent and Medway:

- Travel from 09.00 to last bus within Medway for Medway residents.
- Kent-wide travel for holders of Kent and Medway companion passes.
- Travel on some locally agreed community transport services such as dial-a-ride.²⁹

2.3.8. In March 2016 there were 334,835 passes in circulation in Kent and Medway. In Kent this was an increase of 7,619 passes (2.64%) over the previous year. In 2015-16 171 million journeys were made in Kent using the ENCTS.^{30 31}

2.3.9. In 2015-16 KCC spent about £16.7 million on the provision of ENCTS concessions, of which only about £40,000 was spent on the discretionary element.³²

2.3.10. However, as the KCC submission to the Parliamentary Transport Committee pointed out, the funding allocated to the ENCTS remained insufficient to cover the cost of the scheme in Kent, which KCC is statutorily required to deliver, with a shortfall of about £7 million. Furthermore, since 2010, the scheme has not been ring-fenced, causing KCC to finance the shortfall by reducing the funding to subsidised services and other public transport projects.^{33 34}

2.3.11. The ENCTS scheme is very important to many older and disabled people and has encouraged greater bus usage. A study conducted by Transport Focus (then called Passenger Focus) into the impact of ENCTS in England found that, just one year after the introduction of the scheme, over a third (39%) of pass holders said that they had travelled more often by bus since they had the concessionary entitlement.³⁵

2.3.12. The study also found that 95% of respondents thought that it was right that older and disabled people should be entitled to free national off-peak bus travel. It concluded that not having to pay to use the bus was making it easier for older and disabled people to get out of the house to visit family and friends, go shopping and take part in recreational activities.³⁶

²⁹ MCL Transport Consultants (2016) The Concessionary Travel Scheme for Kent and Medway: Year End Report 2015-16

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 27 September 2016

³² MCL Transport Consultants (2016) Kent County Concessionary Travel Scheme

³³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

³⁴ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 27 September 2016

³⁵ Passenger Focus (2012) England-Wide Concessionary Bus Travel: The Passenger Perspective

³⁶ Ibid

2.3.13. This view is echoed by the DfT and by Kent residents who provided evidence to the Committee. In Green Light for Better Buses (2012) the DfT reported that the government was aware of how precious this benefit was to older and disabled people, giving them more freedom and independence. The report also said that popular tourist destinations were enjoying the benefits that the additional tourists were bringing to their economies.³⁷ Written evidence from Kent residents suggests that "the seniors' pass is one of the most appreciated bonuses of being retired. Most see it as a reward for a lifetime of work and a supplement to their pension...".³⁸

"The seniors' pass is one of the most appreciated bonuses of being retired. Most see it as a reward for a lifetime of work and a supplement to their pension..."

- Tunbridge Wells Over Fifties Forum

2.3.14. The Committee believes that the ENCTS scheme is a precious and deserved entitlement which needs to be protected and funded appropriately. It also believes that the benefits of the discretionary element of the ENCTS significantly exceed its cost, and that KCC should therefore continue to fund it.

Recommendation 2

KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport should write to the Secretary of State for Transport asking for a review of the calculation of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) funding to ensure that it is sufficient to cover the cost of the scheme in Kent.

Recommendation 3

The Select Committee urges KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport to protect the discretionary element of the ENCTS scheme offered by KCC.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

The Kent 16+ Travel Card

- 2.3.15. The Kent 16+ Travel Card (K16+TC) is part of KCC's post-16 education transport policy, which aims to meet the Authority's responsibility to ensure full participation in education and training for students up to the age of 18. This scheme is discretionary and is subsidised by KCC. It allows unlimited bus travel in Kent at any time including evenings, weekends and holidays.³⁹
- 2.3.16. The scheme was introduced in September 2012 after the removal of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and the introduction of the Government's 16-19 Bursary scheme, which is paid directly to schools and colleges. In the light of changes to legislation, which now requires all children to remain in some form of learning beyond Year 11, the scheme was revised and, from September 2014, the cost of the pass was reduced from £520 to £400. For young people living in low-income households the cost can be further reduced to £200. If purchased directly from a bus company, the cost of an annual ticket can be more than £750.⁴⁰
- 2.3.17. The scheme is open to all Kent residents in academic years 12-14 (16 to 18 year olds) at the time of application, who attend a participating school, college, work-based learning provider or apprenticeship provider.⁴¹
- 2.3.18. Currently there are about 7,100 K16+TCs in circulation, and in 2015 2.1 million journeys were made using the card. The net cost of the scheme in 2016 is around £0.6 million.⁴²

³⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Kent 16+ Travel Card: Must-Know Information for Parents and Students, for the Academic Year 2016-17

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² MCL Transport Consultants (2016) Kent County Concessionary Travel Scheme

The Kent's Young Person's Travel Pass

- 2.3.19. The Young Person's Travel Pass (YPTP) provides almost unlimited access to Kent's public bus network for young people who live in the KCC administrative area. However, unlike the Kent 16+ Travel Card, its usage is restricted from the start of the academic year until 31 July, and from Monday to Friday between 6am and 7pm.⁴³
- 2.3.20. This discretionary scheme has been developed by KCC to make bus travel to and from school easier and more affordable for young people. Apart from the application fee it is wholly funded by KCC.⁴⁴
- 2.3.21. The standard fee for an annual pass is currently £270. This is reduced to £100 for young people in receipt of free school meals, and is free for young carers and for young people in care or care leavers.⁴⁵
- 2.3.22. Although the cost of the pass has increased, and its offer restricted because of escalating costs to the Authority,⁴⁶ it still provides good value for money and is valued by young people and their families.
- 2.3.23. Evidence from local young people shows that they value the pass because it is still much cheaper than other fare offers; in one case it was reported that the cost of the pass for two siblings was one sixth of the cheapest alternative. Some young people said that without the pass they would not be able to afford the bus and would have to walk for one hour to and from school.^{47 48}
- 2.3.24. The view that the YPTP still provides good value for money is also reflected in KCC literature, which states that it continues to be one of the most generous travel passes of its kind outside London.⁴⁹ Local bus operators concur, adding that the financial benefits to the customer could be better communicated; at a cost of £1.42 a day, despite a 21% increase in operational costs in the last 5 years, the price of the YPTP represents a significant saving.^{50 51 52}

⁴³ Kent County Council (2016) Young Person's Travel Pass: Must-Know Information for Parents and Students, for the Academic Year 2016-17

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ MCL Transport Consultants (2016) Kent County Concessionary Travel Scheme

⁴⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 10 October 2016

⁴⁸ Kent Youth County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee Case Study Research

⁴⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Young Person's Travel Pass: Must-Know Information for Parents and Students, for the Academic Year 2016-17

⁵⁰ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

⁵¹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 10 October 2016

⁵² Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 25 October 2016

- 2.3.25. Given the above evidence, and KCC's current financial situation, the Committee believes that it is unrealistic to reduce the current cost of the YPTP. Nonetheless, the Committee also believes that the cost of the YPTP should not be subject to increases beyond those in line with operators' fares either. Rather, the Authority should offer the option of upgrading the pass, for an additional fee, to include unlimited bus travel in Kent at any time including evenings, weekends and holidays, matching the Kent 16+ Travel Card.
- 2.3.26. A similar option is already offered by Stagecoach; the Committee believes that this offer should be extended to cater for the whole county and for all the young people in Kent.⁵³
- 2.3.27. The young people who gave evidence to the Committee welcomed the option of upgrading the YPTP, pointing out that in some cases the current YPTP restricted the range of extra-curricular activities and social events that they could attend.⁵⁴
- 2.3.28. In light of the evidence the Committee recommends that KCC should work with local bus operators to assess the viability of introducing the option of upgrading the YPTP to include evening, weekend and holiday travel as is offered by the Kent 16+ Travel Card.

Recommendation 4

KCC's Public Transport division should work with bus operators to assess the viability of introducing the opportunity of upgrading the Young Person's Travel Pass to include bus travel during evenings, weekends and holidays.

⁵³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

⁵⁴ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 10 October 2016



3. Public Engagement and Collaboration

Local authorities have been working hard to mitigate the impact of funding pressures and to ensure that their residents are provided with effective bus services. Such measures include working in partnership with bus operators to find imaginative solutions to bus infrastructure and network issues, and engaging with the public and bus users to identify the best ways of minimising the impact of budget pressures.

3.1. Public Engagement and Quality Bus Partnerships

- 3.1.1. Local authorities view their relationships with bus operators as essential, both in delivering an effective bus network and in managing cuts. The provision of a high quality network generally requires collaboration between those who are mainly responsible for the infrastructure and road network - that is, Local Transport Authorities - and those who are responsible for operating bus services - that is, bus companies.⁵⁵
- 3.1.2. The lack of collaboration, and of formal or informal arrangements, can lead to a misalignment of incentives; bus companies have little incentive to invest unilaterally in a network that can also be used by their competitors, while local authorities may have limited motivation to invest in bus infrastructure without some reassurance by bus operators about the level of service provision. Where collaboration is weak or breaks down communities feel the impact.^{56 57}
- 3.1.3. Quality Bus Partnerships (QBP) are an important forum for promoting collaboration and engagement. Their main objective is to encourage better cooperation between local authorities and bus operators with the aim of increasing patronage and enhancing customer experience.⁵⁸
- 3.1.4. In Kent there are eight QBPs, in the districts of Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Maidstone, Shepway, Swale, Thanet and Tunbridge Wells. They are all administered by KCC as the lead partner. They are voluntary agreements; local authorities meet quarterly with the main bus operators in the respective areas to discuss and find solutions to a range of transport-related issues such as congestion, bus reliability and the implications of new housing developments.⁵⁹
- 3.1.5. There is evidence to suggest that Kent QBPs are generally effective in making bus transport more attractive and encouraging its usage. In Ashford, for example, the operator Stagecoach recently introduced the "Little and Often" service, operated by smaller and more frequent "Sprinter Buses", with the aim of easing traffic congestion, cutting the number of accidents and lowering carbon emissions.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ LGA (2016) Missing the Bus? Councils and the Future of the Bus in Non-Metropolitan Areas, London

⁵⁸ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

⁵⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

⁶⁰ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 18 October 2016

- 3.1.6. In Maidstone, recent achievements by its QBP include the purchase of 17 new buses (including 11 hybrid buses), the refurbishment of a bus station, and the placing of a Traffic Regulation Order to stop lorries parking illegally and blocking buses running through a particular area.^{61 62}
- 3.1.7. In Canterbury, since its inception in 2004, the Partnership has helped to improve bus facilities and services with the result that bus patronage more than doubled by 2016.⁶³
- 3.1.8. Although the QBPs are clearly promoting better bus service provision and infrastructure it appears that collaboration, and public engagement in particular, could be enhanced.
- 3.1.9. It was pointed out to the Committee that feedback from the public was crucial, because it could help local authorities and bus operators to better tailor bus service provision to local needs. Only by putting the needs of communities to the front is it possible to arrange bus services that fit them.^{64 65 66}
- 3.1.10. However, the evidence suggests that, currently, there is limited public involvement with QBPs and, generally, limited ability for Kent residents to have a say in the shape, size and affordability of bus networks.
- 3.1.11. QBPs are normally attended by Kent county and district councillors and officers, and by representatives of local bus operator companies.^{67 68 69}

⁶¹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

⁶² Maidstone Borough Council (2016) Quality Bus Partnership [online]

<http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/parking-and-streets/quality-bus-partnership>

⁶³ Canterbury City Council (2016) Joint Transportation Board, Quality Bus Partnership, 28 June 2016

⁶⁴ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

⁶⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 28 October 2016

⁶⁶ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

⁶⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 18 October 2016

⁶⁸ Maidstone Borough Council (2016) Quality Bus Partnership [online]

<http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/parking-and-streets/quality-bus-partnerships>

⁶⁹ Shepway District Council (2016) Quality Bus Partnership [online]

<http://www.shepway.gov.uk/parking/quality-bus-partnerships>

- 3.1.12. There is general agreement that engagement with the public could be improved. For instance, bus operators acknowledge the benefit of QBPs in providing forums for discussion between themselves, customers and elected representatives, and accept that QBPs can sometimes be distant from residents. Indeed, one company told the Committee that they were examining how to engage more effectively with different demographic groups to better understand their specific needs.^{70 71} Evidence from smaller bus operators suggests that they should also be enabled to become more involved in the activities of QBPs.⁷²
- 3.1.13. Any mechanism to ensure better engagement with the public has to be designed carefully. QBPs sometimes discuss, in private, sensitive commercial issues where the inclusion of wider public participation would be problematic.^{73 74}
- 3.1.14. The Committee therefore believes that it is appropriate to set up a number of local bus transport forums, with representation from bus users as well as from other people who have a stake in bus transport-related issues. The remit of these forums would be to discuss local bus transport-related issues and to identify possible solutions which would then be referred to QBPs. Formal channels of communication would need to be established between the forums and the respective QBPs in order to facilitate reciprocal feedback.
- 3.1.15. As well as public engagement, it was suggested that political engagement should also be strengthened. One way to achieve this would be by ensuring the involvement of county councillors in each of the QBPs, and by formalising their attendance.^{75 76}
- 3.1.16. Another way is through local Joint Transportation Boards (JTBs). The membership of these district-based bodies includes county councillors, borough councillors and representatives of the parish councils within the district. Their aim is to review local transport and highway issues.^{77 78} The Committee believes that the multi-layered composition of JTBs, and their remit, offer an excellent arena to promote political engagement with QBPs and effective targeting of local bus-related issues.

⁷⁰ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

⁷¹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 25 October 2016

⁷² Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 10 October 2016

⁷³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 25 October 2016

⁷⁴ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 18 October 2016

⁷⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 25 October 2016

⁷⁶ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 25 October 2016

⁷⁷ Maidstone Borough Council (2016) Maidstone Joint Transportation Board: Committee Details [online] <https://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=137>

⁷⁸ Swale Borough Council (2016) Swale Joint Transportation Board [online] <http://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=140&Year=0>

3.1.17. There are some local practices and initiatives that promote engagement between JTBs and QBPs.^{79 80} The Committee applauds these initiatives and recommends that all Kent QBPs regularly brief their respective JTBs on bus transport-related priorities, measures for intervention and achievements.

Recommendation 5

KCC should:

- **Promote the establishment of a number of bus transport forums. The remit of these forums should be to discuss local bus transport-related issues and to identify possible solutions, which are then referred to Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs) through formal communication channels.**
- **Ensure that at least one Kent County councillor is a member of each QBP, and that their attendance is formalised.**
- **Encourage all Kent QBPs to include all bus operators in their areas.**
- **Encourage all Kent QBPs to brief their respective Joint Transportation Boards on a regular basis on bus transport-related priorities, measures for intervention and achievements.**

3.2. Collaboration and Traffic Congestion

3.2.1. The UK has the most congested road network in Europe. Seven UK cities are amongst the thirty most congested cities in Europe and congestion in the UK's biggest cities is 14% worse than it was just 5 years ago. The DfT forecast that traffic will grow by between 19% and 55% between 2010 and 2040.^{81 82}

3.2.2. The report "The Impact of Congestion on Bus Passengers" (2016) states that the bus sector has been hit the hardest by congestion and that bus operators often identify congestion as a key cause for their failure to meet punctuality targets.⁸³

3.2.3. Local bus operators endorse this conclusion. All the bus companies that gave evidence to the Committee said that traffic congestion was a significant problem for them. Congestion extended bus journey times, contributed to the reduced reliability of services and meant that more buses were required to maintain the service at an acceptable level. This

⁷⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 2 November 2016

⁸⁰ Canterbury City Council (2016) Joint Transportation Board: Quality Bus Partnership

⁸¹ Greener Journeys (2016) The Impact of Congestion on Bus Passengers

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Ibid

resulted in increasing costs for operators and fares for customers.^{84 85 86}

3.2.4. Evidence from local bus passengers confirms that chronic congestion is a problem for bus services in Kent. The Bus Passenger Survey (2015), by Transport Focus, reported that Kent passengers identified congestion and traffic jams as undoubtedly the most significant factor affecting journey times (24% occurrence, followed by roadworks with 14% occurrence, and by bus drivers working too slowly and poor weather conditions, both with a 4% occurrence).⁸⁷

3.2.5. A survey of about 800 young people, conducted by the Kent Youth County Council, also found that the punctuality of buses and trains was a significant problem for them. Heavy traffic caused constant delays in their bus journeys to school.^{88 89}

3.2.6. Bus transport has been hit particularly hard by traffic congestion, yet buses can make an important contribution to easing this problem. If drivers switched just one car journey a month to bus or coach, it would mean one billion fewer car journeys and a saving of 2 million tonnes of CO₂.⁹⁰

3.2.7. The bus has also perhaps the greatest potential for short term environmental improvement; increasing the number of bus passengers can initiate a virtuous circle that leads to increased profits for bus operators, lower fares for passengers and reduced carbon emissions.⁹¹

3.2.8. Unfortunately, over the last 50 years, bus journey times have increased by almost 50% in the most congested urban areas of the country. It is estimated that, if bus passengers had been protected from the growth in congestion, there would now be between 49% and 68% more fare-paying bus passenger journeys.⁹²

3.2.9. Traffic congestion forces bus operators to respond by either maintaining or decreasing service frequency. If they try to maintain frequency, then every 10% decrease in operating speeds leads to an 8% increase in operating costs. If this extra cost is passed on to customers through higher fares, it results in a 5.6% fall in patronage. If bus companies decide instead to decrease service frequency, a 10% reduction in operating speeds leads to a 10% decrease in frequency and 5% fewer passengers. **In short, both scenarios result in a fall in patronage.**⁹³

⁸⁴ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

⁸⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 10 October 2016

⁸⁶ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 25 October 2016

⁸⁷ Transport Focus (2015) Bus Passenger Survey, London

⁸⁸ Kent Youth County Council (2016) Transportation Brief

⁸⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 10 October 2016

⁹⁰ PTEG (2014) Making the Connections: The Cross-Sector Benefits of Supporting Bus Services

⁹¹ Greener Journeys (2012) What Is the Environmental Value of Investment to Increase the Use of Buses? How the Bus Can Help to Deliver the Government's CO₂ Reduction Targets

⁹² Greener Journeys (2016) The Impact of Congestion on Bus Passengers

⁹³ Ibid

- 3.2.10. KCC, bus operators and other organisations are working to ease local traffic congestion through a number of initiatives and measures.
- 3.2.11. The report gave examples earlier of how Kent Quality Bus Partnerships have implemented initiatives that eased congestion and made bus transport more attractive.^{94 95}
- 3.2.12. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that more needs to be done to ease traffic congestion and increase bus patronage in Kent.
- 3.2.13. Professor Begg warns that traffic congestion, if left unchecked, will destroy the bus sector. In his report he recommends a number of solutions to ease traffic congestion, including demand management measures.⁹⁶
- 3.2.14. It is argued that people are not doing enough to change their travel habits – such as working flexible hours, avoiding peak commuting times and trying alternative travel modes. Without some form of demand management, from parking restraint to congestion charging, coupled with improved public transport, traffic volumes are regulated through congestion: road users with time flexibility adjust the time of day they travel. However, time and route flexibility does not apply to buses.⁹⁷
- 3.2.15. The London congestion charge, for instance, achieved its objective of cutting traffic volumes in the charging zone by 20%. The bus sector benefited most from congestion charging, not just from the revenue stream but from improved journey times and reliability. In the first year of congestion charging, bus speeds in the central zone improved by 7% and excess waiting time was cut by 30%. Speeds in the Congestion Charging Zone increased by 14.6% in the three months after the introduction compared to the three months beforehand.⁹⁸
- 3.2.16. The efficient management and coordination of roadworks can also help ease congestion and decrease bus journey times. As previously explained, roadworks are the second most significant factor affecting bus journey times. In order to support both commercial and community bus provision, the Committee recommends that KCC's Highways division ensures clear lines of communication with bus operators to give them timely notification of roadworks and coordinate such programmes to minimise disruption to bus services. The Division should also investigate the feasibility of increasing the size of fines and using the income from utility companies that overrun roadworks programmes to improve the range of community bus provision for Kent residents.

⁹⁴ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 18 October 2016

⁹⁵ Canterbury City Council (2016) Joint Transportation Board, Quality Bus Partnership, 28 June 2016

⁹⁶ Greener Journeys (2016) The Impact of Congestion on Bus Passengers

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Ibid

3.2.17. Local bus operators appear to support demand management measures, as evidence from local bus companies suggests that they would help ease congestion and improve bus reliability.^{99 100}

3.2.18. The Committee is persuaded that demand management measures are important ways of easing traffic congestion and promoting bus patronage, and therefore recommends the following.

Recommendation 6

KCC's Public Transport division should examine demand management measures, where feasible and appropriate, to ease traffic congestion and promote bus patronage in Kent.

Recommendation 7

KCC's Highways division should ensure clear lines of communication with bus operators to give them timely notification of roadworks and coordinate such programmes to minimise disruption to bus services. The Division should also investigate the feasibility of increasing the size of fines and using the income from utility companies that overrun roadworks programmes to improve the range of community bus provision for Kent residents.

3.3. Collaboration and Rail Services

3.3.1. The connectivity between bus and rail services is another area that requires more collaboration. Kent's domestic rail network is extensive; it covers 100 stations, five principal routes and five secondary routes. It consists of a series of radial east-west routes connecting the county with London, along with branch lines linking Ashford and Hastings, Paddock Wood and Strood, Tonbridge and Redhill, and Sittingbourne and Sheerness. Commuting to and from central London accounts for a significant proportion of rail trips.^{101 102}

3.3.2. Kent's domestic rail services are operated by private Train Operating Companies (TOCs) on the basis of franchise contracts specified and let by the DfT. The 'Integrated Kent Franchise', which covers most of the County's rail services (including High Speed services), is currently held by Southeastern*. Rail infrastructure - including all tracks, signals and stations - is owned, operated and maintained by Network Rail, a public sector body.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 25 October 2016

¹⁰⁰ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

¹⁰¹ Kent County Council (2011) Rail Action Plan for Kent

* Note: The name of the current operator is "Southeastern". When referring to a new franchise the correct wording is "South Eastern"

¹⁰² Kent County Council (2011) Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-16

¹⁰³ Kent County Council (2011) Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-16

- 3.3.3. Southeastern took over the Integrated Kent Franchise in April 2006. The franchise was let by the Department for Transport (DfT) for an initial six-year period, with an additional two years depending on service performance. In 2014 the franchise was renewed until 2018.^{104 105}
- 3.3.4. KCC is closely involved in the specification of DfT franchise contracts and Network Rail Route Utilisation Strategies and frequently lobbies the Government, Network Rail and TOCs for improvements to rail infrastructure and services. The County Council has already influenced the development of Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for Kent, covering infrastructure development between 2010 and 2020.^{106 107}
- 3.3.5. Despite KCC's close involvement in the franchising process and its frequent lobbying for improvements, evidence from Kent residents, representatives of QBPs and bus operators indicates bus and rail services could be better integrated.^{108 109 110}
- 3.3.6. While it is suggested that linking bus and rail services is not a logistically simple task, given the frequent daily changes in rail timings, the Committee believes that more efforts can be made to improve current integration.¹¹¹
- 3.3.7. Indeed, although Southeastern promised a number of improvements under its new franchise - such as better rail connections, extra evening and weekend rail services and train upgrading - improved connectivity between bus and rail did not appear to be a priority.¹¹²
- 3.3.8. It was suggested to the Committee that the renewal of rail franchises can offer an opportunity to review and improve connectivity and interaction between bus and rail services.^{113 114}
- 3.3.9. In light of the above issues the Committee recommends the following.

Recommendation 8

KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport should lobby the Government, Network Rail and Train Operating Companies to include improved connectivity between bus and rail services in Kent as a key element of South Eastern's new franchise agreement in 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Kent County

¹⁰⁵ BBC (2014) BBC News: Southeastern Rail Franchise Renewed Until 2018

¹⁰⁶ Kent County Council (2011) Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-16

¹⁰⁷ Kent County Council (2011) Rail Action Plan for Kent

¹⁰⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 28 October 2016

¹⁰⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 18 October 2016

¹¹⁰ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹² BBC (2014) BBC News: Southeastern Rail Franchise Renewed Until 2018

¹¹³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 27 September 2016

¹¹⁴ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

3.4. Total Transport

- 3.4.1. The absence of any additional funding for bus transport has led to a growing recognition that different publicly funded bus networks could be consolidated more effectively. The Total Transport initiative is an attempt to align these networks through local integration of public transport services run by different organisations, with the objective of ensuring that public funding is coordinated in order to better meet residents' needs and ensure the survival of essential bus routes.¹¹⁵
- 3.4.2. The Government began a trial of Total Transport Projects in 2015 with a £7.6 million fund. The Total Transport Pilot Fund competition was launched and 42 bids were received from local authorities in England. 37 local authorities - including KCC - were awarded funds for various projects. The pilots will run for a maximum of two years.^{116 117 118}
- 3.4.3. The Total Transport pilot proposed by KCC is called "Kent Karrier Plus". KCC was awarded £102,000 by the DfT to complete an initial feasibility study, and is seeking to deliver transport improvements and integration in the Kent districts of Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells.¹¹⁹
- 3.4.4. The proposal is to build on KCC's existing popular off-peak dial-a-ride scheme "Kent Karrier" and provide a new "Total Transport" solution involving integration with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) school transport services in the area.¹²⁰
- 3.4.5. KCC has already implemented the combination of SEND school transport with off-peak dial-a-ride transport provision for six of the eleven Kent Karrier schemes, including those in Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, north-west Kent, Swale and Thanet. This has ensured that 224 daily SEND student movements could be catered for on the Kent Karrier network, delivering efficiencies for KCC's Public Transport and Education departments, and reducing the number of vehicles on Kent's roads.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Institute for Public Policy Research (2015) Total Transport Authorities: A New Deal for Town and Rural Bus Services, London

¹¹⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 25 October 2016

¹¹⁸ Gov.UK (2015) £7.6 Million for Local Transport in Rural and Isolated Areas [online]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/76-million-for-local-transport-in-rural-and-isolated-areas>

¹¹⁹ Kent County Council (2015) Total Transport Pilot Fund Application Form, Application by Kent County Council

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Ibid

3.4.6. With Kent Karrier Plus, KCC seeks to integrate its dial-a-ride services with SEND transport across the county. In addition, the pilot scheme in the two districts is exploring how the Kent Karrier service can be integrated further with other transport services such as non-emergency patient transfers and local bus services. The aim is to offer a more integrated transport delivery model for easier access to healthcare, education, employment and other facilities. KCC has already had positive discussions with a local NHS Trust, bus operators (including Stagecoach, Arriva and Go-Coach) and internal partners, who all share the vision of “Kent Integrated Transport”. If the Kent Karrier Plus pilot proves successful, KCC will seek to roll out the model countywide.¹²²

3.4.7. The Committee believes that, in this difficult economic climate, it is particularly important that services are delivered in a collaborative and integrated manner. The Kent Karrier Plus model offers a cost-effective solution to making services and facilities accessible regardless of location, income, age or disability. The Committee endorses and commends the initiative.

¹²² Ibid



4. Commercial Bus Service Provision

Outside London, local government does not currently control local bus networks. While a deregulated bus market can bring about efficiencies, it is important to make sure that the wider social benefits that buses can bring about are fully realised. Only through closer collaboration and more closely aligned priorities can local authorities, bus operators and other organisations provide effective bus networks and quality bus transport.

4.1. Infrastructure

- 4.1.1. In the current model of bus transport in Kent, KCC is generally responsible for the infrastructure and bus operators for services. Despite the current, challenging financial climate, KCC manages and maintains over 7,000 bus stops and provides new infrastructure to meet the demand of new or adapted services. The Authority also provides funding for bus shelters through its rural shelter grant to parish and district councils.¹²³
- 4.1.2. As mentioned earlier, KCC also administers eight Quality Bus Partnerships whose main objectives are to deal with a range of transport-related issues such as congestion, bus reliability and the implications of new housing developments.¹²⁴
- 4.1.3. The role of bus companies focuses on bus operation and the provision and maintenance of bus fleets, bus depots and bus stations.¹²⁵
- 4.1.4. While it would be theoretically possible to transfer some responsibility for the infrastructure to bus operators and other organisations, it would be logistically and legally challenging. Any infrastructure interventions by third parties would need to be consistent across the county. Also, as the Highway Authority, KCC is responsible for safety on the highway and only by having control of the infrastructure is it felt that the needs of road users can be protected.¹²⁶
- 4.1.5. There are some examples in which bus operators contribute towards the development of bus infrastructure in the county. For instance, Stagecoach supplies some furniture for bus shelters and shares its depot in Canterbury with other bus companies. Also, there are local schemes where the advertising revenue from local businesses pays for the cost and maintenance of the shelter.¹²⁷

¹²³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Buses Select Committee: Is the Bus Market Working for Kent?

¹²⁶ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Stop Infrastructure: Briefing Note for the Select Committee

¹²⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

4.1.6. The Committee believes that the Authority should seek greater collaboration from local businesses. **The added benefits to businesses of investing in bus infrastructure can be significant.** As Greener Journeys indicates:

- Bus commuters generate £64 billion in output annually.
- 400,000 bus commuters are in more productive jobs as a direct result of bus services.
- 50% of students depend on bus services.
- 77% of jobseekers have no regular access to a car, van or motorbike and rely on using buses.
- Bus users make 1.4 billion shopping trips a year, spending £27 billion.
- 33% of city centre visitors made their most recent trip by bus, more than any other mode of transport including the car.
- Bus users make up 29% of expenditure, spending on average £54 per city centre trip.¹²⁸

4.1.7. The Committee also recommends that Kent district councils are encouraged to make greater use of the Community Infrastructure Levy to finance local bus infrastructure schemes. This Levy is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 to help local authorities deliver infrastructure to support the development of their areas. It came into force on 6 April 2010.¹²⁹

4.1.8. Local authorities are required to spend the Levy's funds on the infrastructure needed to support the development of their areas. The definition of the infrastructure that can be funded by the Levy includes transport.¹³⁰

Recommendation 9

KCC's Public Transport division should:

- **Seek greater financial contributions from local bus operators and businesses towards the provision and maintenance of local bus infrastructure.**
- **Encourage Kent districts to make greater use of the Community Infrastructure Levy to finance local bus infrastructure schemes.**

¹²⁸ Greener Journeys (2016) The Benefits to Business of Investing in Bus Infrastructure, LEP Transport Workshop, 22 January 2016

¹²⁹ Department for Communities and Local Government (2011) Community Infrastructure Levy: An Overview, London

¹³⁰ Ibid

4.2. Bus Fares

- 4.2.1. Bus users are facing significant fare increases. This is particularly concerning for the most vulnerable people in our communities because it is those on lower incomes who are most likely to rely on the bus as their main form of transport.¹³¹
- 4.2.2. Between March 2005 and March 2016 local bus fares in England increased, on average, by 63%. Since the Retail Prices Index rose by only 37% over the same period, bus fares have risen significantly in real terms.¹³²
- 4.2.3. The increase in bus fares is partly due to an increase in operating costs. Between 2004-05 and 2014-15, in England outside London, operator costs for local bus services increased from £2.19 billion to £3.08 billion. This represents an average annual increase of 1.3% in real terms.¹³³
- 4.2.4. However, operators' revenue has also increased. Between 2004-05 and 2014-15 the average revenue from passenger receipts increased each year by 1.2% in real terms. In 2014-15, the estimated operating revenue for local bus services in England was £5.61 billion. Passenger fare receipts made up the largest proportion of this revenue: £3.32 billion or 59%.¹³⁴
- 4.2.5. Bus users believe that bus fares are too high. A recent survey conducted by Transport Focus reports that the priority for improvement identified by bus passengers was "better value for money from bus journeys".¹³⁵
- 4.2.6. A previous survey by the same organisation found that, in Kent, only 54% of fare paying passengers thought that bus fares in the county were value for money. This view was echoed by Kent residents who gave evidence to the Committee; they reiterated that fares were too high.^{136 137 138}
- 4.2.7. Bus fare increases can lead to a decrease in patronage and can even prevent access to bus services. According to Transport Focus one of the main reasons given by people for not using the bus is cost.¹³⁹

¹³¹ Department for Transport (2012) Green Light for Better Buses, London

¹³² Department for Transport (2015) Annual Bus Statistics: England 2015-16

¹³³ Ibid

¹³⁴ Ibid

¹³⁵ Transport Focus (2016) Bus Passengers Have Their Say: Trust, What to Improve and Using Buses More, London

¹³⁶ Transport Focus (2015) Bus Passenger Survey, London

¹³⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 28 October 2016

¹³⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

¹³⁹ Transport Focus (2016) Bus Passengers Have Their Say: Trust, What to Improve and Using Buses More, London

- 4.2.8. Indeed research indicates that there is a direct correlation between bus fares and patronage. The Institute of Transport Studies found that the demand for public transport is affected by fare changes and that, in general, an increase in fares will reduce patronage while a decrease in fares will increase it.¹⁴⁰
- 4.2.9. There are examples of recent bus fare reductions by local bus operators. For example, Arriva has reduced the cost of several fare packages, in some instances significantly, in west Kent.¹⁴¹
- 4.2.10. The Committee appreciates that bus operators are businesses and that, in a deregulated market, they are free to set bus fares. However, the Committee believes that lower fares promote bus patronage and can help meet social needs. KCC should therefore strongly encourage local bus operators to expand the range of their discounted fares, particularly for those on lower incomes.

4.3. Network Coverage and Service Frequency

- 4.3.1. Together with rising fares, the quality of bus services is also impacting negatively on many people, who are experiencing problems from inadequate network coverage and service frequency.
- 4.3.2. According to a report commissioned by the DfT, levels of bus passenger satisfaction across the country are generally high, and there are signs that scores have improved recently (from an average of 85% in 2011 to 88% in 2014). Overall satisfaction levels in Kent are also high and are similar to the national average (87%). However, the report cautions that high satisfaction levels may be more a reflection of low passenger expectations than high service quality.¹⁴²
- 4.3.3. Also, these statistics may conceal the variation in service provision. Kent's bus transport provision is patchy, and there is a wide discrepancy in bus operators' quality of service and level of investment.¹⁴³
- 4.3.4. It is also suggested that passengers suffer more than they should from services with lower frequencies and higher fares because there is not enough competition in local bus markets. After a two-year investigation the Competition Commission concluded that, in rural transport authorities, over half (56%) of weekly services were run by a single company, and that the largest operators tended to stick to their own areas, rarely overlapping with each other.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Institute of Transport Studies (2016) Policy Instruments: A Policy Guidebook, Fare Levels, Institute of Transport Studies, University of Leeds [online] http://www.its.leeds.ac.uk/projects/konsult/private/level2/instruments/instrument028/I2_028b.htm

¹⁴¹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

¹⁴² KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

¹⁴³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 27 September 2016

¹⁴⁴ Department for Transport (2012) Green Light for Better Buses, London

- 4.3.5. There is a significant body of evidence to suggest that, especially in some rural areas of Kent, bus network coverage and service frequency are unsatisfactory. Older rural residents say that local bus services tend to be unreliable and infrequent, especially in the evenings and at weekends. This makes it difficult for them to maintain their independence and well-being because it limits their access to health and shopping facilities. It also leads to isolation, as many are unable to visit family and friends.¹⁴⁵
- 4.3.6. It is also reported that, in some instances, entire areas are not served by bus transport, leaving residents with no choice but to walk long distances to reach a bus stop.¹⁴⁶

"...buses would need to run late into the evening and on Sundays: it is pointless to go if you cannot get back."

- Written evidence from Kent residents

- 4.3.7. Inadequate coverage and frequency are not just a problem in Kent. AgeUK has expressed concern about the impact that bus services cuts in the country might have on the elderly. The rising cost of fares, coupled with a reduction in service frequency, is undermining the independence and security of older people.¹⁴⁷
- 4.3.8. Younger people are also particularly vulnerable to inadequate bus services because they are now less likely to have access to a car. The rising cost of driving has become unaffordable for many, making it critical for them to be able to access alternative means of transport. While in the early 1990s 48% of 17-20 year-olds held a driving licence, this figure has now fallen to 38%.¹⁴⁸
- 4.3.9. Access to public transport is also essential for the unemployed. Research shows that about 57% of unemployed people do not have a car or motorcycle driving licence, and 77% do not have access to a car, van or motorcycle. 23% of 18-24 year-olds said that the lack of suitable bus services was a barrier to getting a job. Shift work is particularly difficult to reach using public transport because of limited provision during evenings and weekends.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence from several sources

¹⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁷ AgeUK (2013) Missed Opportunities: The Impact On Older People of Cuts to Rural Bus Services

¹⁴⁸ Institute for Public Policy Research (2015) Total Transport Authorities: A New Deal for Town and Rural Bus Services, London

¹⁴⁹ Ibid

4.3.10. Finally, poor network coverage can have a profound effect on disabled people. Around 60% do not have a car and they use buses about 20% more often than those without disabilities.¹⁵⁰

"...there is no point in having a bus concession without a bus to get on"

- AgeUK

4.3.11. KCC may be able to intervene in some cases. Where bus services are subsidised by the Authority it may be possible to re-tender contracts with local bus operators and rearrange routes and their frequencies to make sure that they better target local demand. For instance, it may be possible to link a main town to different neighbouring villages on different days of the week to secure some service provision for all of them.¹⁵¹

4.3.12. However, the interventions that the Authority can make are somewhat limited. KCC subsidises only 2.3% of the county's bus network; 97% of bus services are operated on a wholly commercial basis. In this current model of deregulated bus transport, it is largely bus operators who determine bus network coverage and frequency, as well as fares and vehicle specifications.^{152 153}

4.3.13. The Committee is well aware that bus network coverage and service frequency do not always meet the needs of Kent residents, particularly those living in rural communities. KCC's intervention can only have a limited benefit without increased support from local bus operators. Only through greater collaboration and better alignment of commercial and social need priorities can this situation be improved.

Recommendation 10

KCC's Public Transport division should strongly encourage local bus operators to:

- **Extend the range of their discounted fares, particularly for those on lower incomes.**
- **Expand their network coverage and service frequency, especially in rural areas, to better meet the needs of local communities.**

¹⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁵¹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 27 September 2016

¹⁵² Kent County Council (2016) Review of KCC Funded Bus Services: Consultation Document and Questionnaire, Maidstone

¹⁵³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 27 September 2016

Recommendation 11

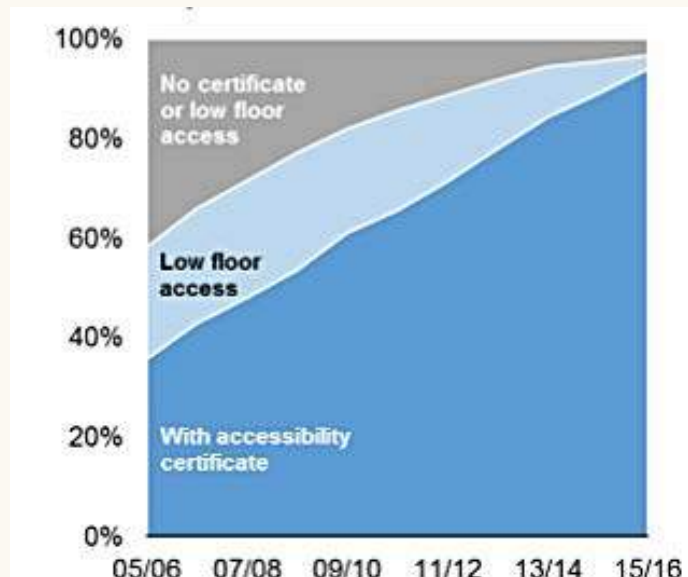
KCC's Public Transport division should identify and subsidise a number of bus services that would better serve selected rural communities and give them access to their nearest main towns on selected days.

4.4. Bus Specifications

4.4.1. There has been a rapid improvement in bus specifications in the last ten years. Buses have become more technologically advanced. For instance, the percentage of buses in England equipped with CCTV doubled from 44% in 2005-6 to 88% in 2015-16. Those enabled with ITSO smart technology - a national standard to ensure the compatibility of bus operators' ticketing systems - rose from only 25% in 2010-11 to 91% in 2015-16.^{154 155}

4.4.2. Bus accessibility for disabled people has also improved rapidly. The percentage of buses in England issued with an accessibility certificate increased steadily from 33% in 2005-6 to 94% in 2015-16 (Figure 1).¹⁵⁶ Under the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 all buses must be accessible by 1 January 2017 and all coaches by 2020.¹⁵⁷

Figure 1: Buses with low floor or accessibility certificate: England, 2005-6 to 2015-16



Source: Department for Transport, Annual Bus Statistics, England 2015-1

¹⁵⁴ Department for Transport (2015) Annual Bus Statistics: England 2015-16

¹⁵⁵ ITSO (2016) What ITSO Does [online] <https://www.itso.org.uk/about-us/what-itso-does/>

¹⁵⁶ Department for Transport (2015) Annual Bus Statistics: England 2015-16

¹⁵⁷ House of Commons Library (2016) Access to Transport for Disabled People

- 4.4.3. Kent's bus operators are also making significant investments to enhance the quality of their buses. For example, Stagecoach has recently spent £11 million on 55 double-deck buses that offer free WiFi technology and USB charging points. These buses are also equipped with the latest clean engine technology which reduces particle emissions by 99% compared to the manufacturer's previous design standard.^{158 159}
- 4.4.4. Arriva recently invested £1 million in a fleet of seven new single-deck buses in the Maidstone area that feature the latest "micro hybrid" technology as well as free on-board WiFi. The micro-hybrid technology allows more of the buses' systems to be operated electrically, significantly reducing carbon emissions compared to previous bus models.¹⁶⁰
- 4.4.5. Although the deployment of larger buses is prioritised by bus operators because their greater capacity generally enables more efficient service provision at peak times,^{161 162} local investments have also been made in smaller buses.
- 4.4.6. There are case studies that show, in some instances, the desirability and appropriateness of smaller buses, as well as the benefits that they can bring in terms of easing traffic congestion and providing a better service. For example, as part of a wider trial scheme, Stagecoach recently introduced in Ashford the "Little and Often" service operated with "Sprinter Buses" with the aim of reducing traffic congestion, cutting the number of accidents and lowering carbon emissions. Arriva is also considering the introduction of smaller demand-responsive buses in the future.^{163 164}
- 4.4.7. In Manchester, as a response to numerous complaints about the large double-deck buses in the city, the local bus company Trentbarton decided to replace them with single-deck buses run at a higher frequency. Although the buses were smaller, the higher frequency equated to the same capacity and improved the services considerably. As a result, patronage rose and the change proved to be a commercial success.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

¹⁵⁹ Stagecoach (2016) New Triangle Buses Go Straight to the Point [online] <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/news/south-east/2016/may/new-triangle-buses-go-straight-to-the-point>

¹⁶⁰ Arriva (2015) Arriva Invests £1 Million in More New Buses to Upgrade Local Maidstone Routes [online] <https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/partners-container-page/partners-home/press-releases/southern-counties-press-releases/arriva-invests-1-million-in-more-new-buses-to-upgrade-local-maidstone-routes>

¹⁶¹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 25 October 2016

¹⁶² Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 27 September 2016

¹⁶³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 18 October 2016

¹⁶⁴ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 25 October 2016

¹⁶⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

- 4.4.8. This successful initiative could be replicated in Canterbury. In 2013 Stagecoach rerouted its bus operations away from the Westgate Towers, in the city centre, because the company was concerned that its large double-deck buses would damage the 14th century monument when accessing the narrow archways. Evidence suggests that the diversion is having a negative impact on a large number of bus users, as an average of over 100 persons per hour now have to walk up to 0.4 miles further to access shopping and healthcare facilities. Local businesses have also been hit hard by the decrease in customers as a result of the rerouting. Local residents suggest that the introduction of smaller buses would solve the problem. The case study in Manchester shows that this proposal would be both effective and commercially viable.^{166 167}
- 4.4.9. Finally, it was reported that in Northfleet, the temporary deployment of double-deck buses to replace smaller vehicles in need of repair, led to changes in routes and to the omission of some bus stops because the roads were too narrow to accommodate larger buses.¹⁶⁸
- 4.4.10. The Committee is persuaded that the employment of smaller buses can help in easing traffic congestion, improving access to facilities and promoting speedier bus service provision. The Committee therefore believes that, with regard to tendered services, KCC should make sure that the appropriate bus size is specified within the commissioning process. With regard to commercial bus services, the Authority should urge local bus operators to increase their deployment of smaller buses, particularly in congested Kent localities.

Recommendation 12

KCC's Public Transport division should urge local bus operators to increase the deployment of smaller buses, particularly in congested Kent localities. In the case of KCC tendered services, the appropriate bus size should be specified within the commissioning process.

¹⁶⁶ Kent County Council (2017) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence from several sources

¹⁶⁷ KM (2013) Stagecoach Reroutes Buses Away from Westgate Towers in Canterbury [online] <http://www.kentonline.co.uk/canterbury/news/stagecoach-reroutes-buses-away-f-a55248/>

¹⁶⁸ KM (2016) Passengers Have been Waiting for Buses Which Don't Turn Up - Because They Are Too Big for the Roads, Kent Online, 16 August 2016 [online] <http://www.kentonline.co.uk/gravesend/news/waiting-for-buses-that-dont-100829/>

4.5. Bus Driver Shortage

- 4.5.1. Apart from traffic congestion, another key issue identified by bus operators is the shortage of bus drivers. The difficulty in recruiting bus drivers can have a significant impact on local bus operators, especially smaller companies.¹⁶⁹
- 4.5.2. There are several reasons for the difficulty in recruiting drivers in Kent. The local pool of available labour is limited because Kent is a relatively expensive county to live in and bus driving is generally a low paid job.¹⁷⁰
- 4.5.3. In addition, bus driving requires a variety of skills, such as the ability to carry a number of passengers of all ages in safety, good customer service and clear communication skills, simple arithmetic skills, good local geographical knowledge, and the ability to adjust one's body clock when doing shift work without compromising the safety and reliability of the service.^{171 172}
- 4.5.4. Importantly, current regulations require a strict driving test for a Passenger Carrying Vehicle licence and a Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (Driver CPC), as well as a number of practical courses and assessments.^{173 174} In a recent survey of recruitment agencies, three quarters of respondents claimed that the cost of the recently introduced Driver CPC (£2,000) was a key barrier to recruitment.¹⁷⁵
- 4.5.5. While larger bus operators - such as Arriva and Stagecoach - have the capacity to offer, in-house, all the training required to become a bus driver, smaller local operators are unable to do so.^{176 177}
- 4.5.6. The Committee heard that their inability to offer training, and uncertainty about the recruitment of sufficient drivers, has forced some smaller local operators to reduce their fleet size, terminate contracts early and refuse additional work.¹⁷⁸

¹⁶⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence, 25 October 2016

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

¹⁷¹ Ibid

¹⁷² National Careers Service (2016) Bus or Coach Driver [online]
<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/job-profiles/bus-or-coach-driver>

¹⁷³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence, 25 October 2016

¹⁷⁴ National Careers Service (2016) Bus or Coach Driver [online]
<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/job-profiles/bus-or-coach-driver>

¹⁷⁵ OnRec (2015) Shortage of UK Driving Staff Could Bring £74bn Transportation Industry to a Standstill [online] <http://www.onrec.com/news/statistics-and-trends/shortage-of-uk-driving-staff-could-bring-%C2%A374bn-transportation-industry>

¹⁷⁶ Arriva (2016) Careers in the Bus Industry [online] <https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/working-with-arriva/careers-in-the-bus-industry>

¹⁷⁷ Stagecoach (2016) Stagecoach Careers - Bus Drivers and More! [online]
<https://www.stagecoachbus.com/promos-and-offers/national/careers>

¹⁷⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence, 25 October 2016

- 4.5.7. A more secure supply of bus drivers is needed in order to support smaller bus companies and ensure reliable and sustained bus service provision in the county. The Committee therefore proposes that KCC makes available a bus driver course to train a number of drivers to be employed by smaller bus operators in Kent.

Recommendation 13

KCC's Public Transport division should make available an approved driving course to train a number of bus drivers to be employed by smaller bus operators in Kent.

4.6. The Connected Kent and Medway Smartcard

- 4.6.1. Smart ticketing is the name given to a system where an entitlement to travel - that is, a ticket - is stored electronically on a microchip rather than being printed on paper. In most smart ticketing schemes the microchip is embedded in a smart card. For this reason smart ticketing schemes are generally referred to as "smartcard" schemes.¹⁷⁹
- 4.6.2. Smart ticketing generally uses ITSO technology; as mentioned previously, this is a national specification to ensure the compatibility of bus operators' ticketing systems.¹⁸⁰
- 4.6.3. Smartcards can produce a number of benefits. For instance, they allow passengers to load tickets or credit in advance of travel, they are harder to replicate by fraudsters, and they allow operators to develop loyalty schemes.¹⁸¹
- 4.6.4. Importantly, smartcards can also decrease the duration of bus journeys and reduce environmental impact. According to one study of bus punctuality, one of the main causes for buses' delays is the time spent by customers boarding and alighting.¹⁸²
- 4.6.5. In bus operations with traditional ticketing, a significant part of buses' idling time is spent issuing tickets to customers. The use of smartcards speeds up passengers' boarding and reduces the emissions that occur with traditional ticketing.¹⁸³
- 4.6.6. In September 2016 KCC and Medway Council introduced the Connected Kent and Medway smartcard. The card resembles London's Oyster card, as it can be topped up online, at certain libraries or in

¹⁷⁹ Yorcard (2016) What is Smart Ticketing? [online] <http://www.yorcard.co.uk/what-is-smart-ticketing>

¹⁸⁰ ITSO (2016) What ITSO Does [online] <https://www.itso.org.uk/about-us/what-itso-does/>

¹⁸¹ Yorcard (2016) What Is Smart Ticketing? [online] <http://www.yorcard.co.uk/what-is-smart-ticketing>

¹⁸² Passenger Focus (2014) What's the Hold-up: Exploring Bus Service Punctuality

¹⁸³ Greener Journeys (2012) What Is the Environmental Value of Investment to Increase the Use of Buses? How the Bus Can Help to Deliver the Government's CO₂ Reduction Targets

person on the bus. The card also offers the facility to top up automatically.¹⁸⁴

4.6.7. So far six small and medium-sized local bus operators have joined the scheme. The smartcard is accepted by: ASD, Autocar, Chalkwell, Farleigh, Go-Coach and Nu-Venture.¹⁸⁵ The two largest bus companies in Kent - Arriva and Stagecoach - have not joined the initiative because they already run/are exploring their own smartcard schemes.^{186 187}

4.6.8. The smartcard can offer a range of other significant benefits. It can make it easy for people to travel on different bus routes and with different operators by using a single card. It is convenient, in that it offers the ability to access bus services as and when needed. It can encourage more people to travel by bus and can help reduce traffic congestion and emissions through speedier boarding.¹⁸⁸

4.6.9. At the moment the card is only available in west Kent, is accepted only by smaller operators and its features are limited. However, it is the ambition of KCC and Medway Council to grow its use by expanding the range of products on offer to include rail travel, bike hire, car hire and door-to-door journeys.^{189 190}

4.6.10. The potential advantages of the Connected Kent and Medway smartcard are considerable. Unfortunately, the lack of participation by the two largest bus operators significantly limits the scope and benefits of the initiative. The Committee recommends that KCC should reiterate to Arriva and Stagecoach the importance of the Connected Kent and Medway smartcard and should strongly encourage these companies to participate in the scheme.

Recommendation 14

KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport should reiterate to Arriva and Stagecoach the importance of the Connected Kent and Medway smartcard and should urge these companies to participate in the scheme.

¹⁸⁴ Kent County Council (2016) Media Hub, New Smartcard for Kent Launches Allowing Pay-As-You-Go Travel [online] <https://kccmediahub.net/new-smartcard-kent-launches-allowing-pay-go-travel745>

¹⁸⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence, 27 September 2016

¹⁸⁶ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

¹⁸⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

¹⁸⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Media Hub, New Smartcard for Kent Launches Allowing Pay-As-You-Go Travel [online] <https://kccmediahub.net/new-smartcard-kent-launches-allowing-pay-go-travel745>

¹⁸⁹ Ibid

¹⁹⁰ Kent County Council (2016) Media Hub, New Smartcard for Kent Launches Allowing Pay-As-You-Go Travel [online] <https://kccmediahub.net/new-smartcard-kent-launches-allowing-pay-go-travel745>



5. Community Transport

As local authorities face increasingly difficult decisions on spending priorities, it is particularly important to identify innovations that can help sustain existing bus service provision. Community transport, although often invisible, can be part of the solution.

5.1. What is Community Transport?

5.1.1. "Community transport" is a general term which can be applied to a very wide range of different transport services. These services may operate in both rural and urban areas and are usually set up to meet a specific transport need or to meet the needs of a particular group of people. They are typically run by voluntary sector organisations for the local community on a non-profit basis.¹⁹¹

5.1.2. Community transport schemes can be defined by four main key characteristics:

- **Accessible transport:** transport services for disabled people who find it difficult or impossible to use conventional passenger transport. These include dial-a-rides and social car schemes.
- **Social deprivation:** transport for people who may be characterised as socially deprived. For instance, minibus travel for people with low incomes, and Wheels to Work schemes for people without cars who would otherwise be excluded from the skills development or jobs market.
- **Geographical isolation:** transport services for communities that are not well served by the conventional transport network. These include community buses or social car schemes for rural areas, and services to areas without transport provision at evenings or weekends.
- **Community cohesion:** local community and voluntary groups offer transport services and respond to the needs of their communities.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ ECT Charity (2016) Why Community Transport Matters

¹⁹² Ibid

5.2. The Benefits of Community Transport

- 5.2.1. The benefits that community transport can offer are significant and wide-ranging. In many communities, particularly rural ones, traditional bus services are not a viable option. There are not enough people for them to be commercially viable and, unless they are subsidised by local authorities, services are either infrequent or not available.
- 5.2.2. For those on low incomes seeking employment or professional development, poor bus services can be a barrier. In such circumstances, community transport can be the solution. For instance, Wheels to Work schemes - which consist of loans of mopeds or bicycles - have helped many people, especially those aged under 25, to attend training and expand their career opportunities.¹⁹³
- 5.2.3. Although community transport caters for a wide range of people, those who benefit most are older people and those with restricted mobility. These groups account for 98% and 85% of total usage respectively.¹⁹⁴
- 5.2.4. Community transport can alleviate a number of negative consequences, particularly those resulting from cuts to rural bus services. As noted earlier, senior Kent residents living in rural communities said that poor conventional bus coverage can lead to **social isolation**. Without access to a bus their ability to meet family and friends, or to take part in social activities, is significantly reduced.¹⁹⁵

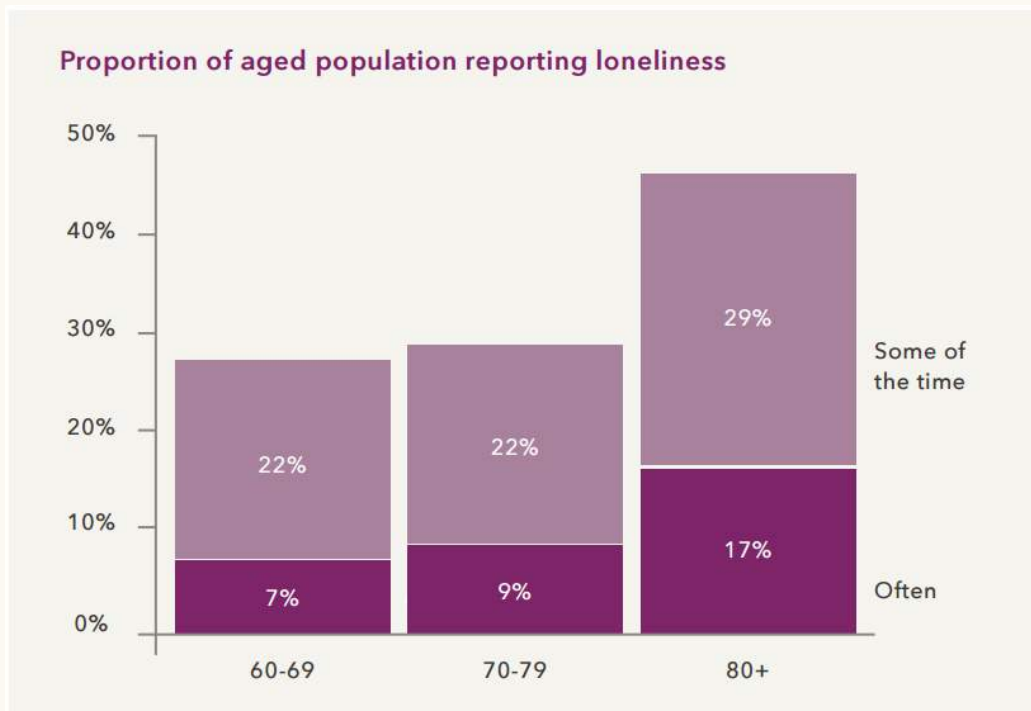
¹⁹³ Department for Transport (2011) Community Transport: Guidance for Local Authorities

¹⁹⁴ Community Transport Association (2014) A CTA State of the Sector Report

¹⁹⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

5.2.5. By preventing social isolation community transport can also help to mitigate **loneliness** and its costs. Research indicates that loneliness is a concern for many senior citizens in the country. Amongst those aged between 60 and 69, 22% reported being lonely some of the time and 7% often. Amongst those over 80, the rate reached 29% and 17% respectively (Figure 2).^{196 197}

Figure 2: Proportion of aged population reporting loneliness, Britain, 2013



Source: ECT Charity, Why Community Transport Matters, 2016

¹⁹⁶ ECT Charity (2016) Why Community Transport Matters

¹⁹⁷ Friends of the Elderly (2013) English Longitudinal Study of Ageing

5.2.6. Loneliness can lead to depression, anxiety and mental decline, as well as increased levels of drinking and smoking. Lonely and isolated people need more support from health and social care services, as well as from family members. It is estimated that the annual cost to the UK of these effects ranges between £1.3 billion and £2.9 billion and that, by mitigating them, community transport can produce annual savings of between £0.4 billion and £1.1 billion (Figure 3 and Figure 4).¹⁹⁸

Figure 3: Estimated annual cost of loneliness and isolation, UK, 2016

Estimates of the costs to society of loneliness and isolation		
Cost	Estimated annual financial cost to society	
	Best case	Worst case
Earlier admittance into residential or nursing care	£409m	£935m
Increased use of home care and day care service	£195m	£447m
Higher rate of non-elective hospital admission	£551m	£1,259m
Increased proportion of domicile GP visits	£84m	£148m
Increased number of A&E visits	£57m	£130m
Total	£1.3bn	£2.9bn

Source: ECT Charity, Why Community Transport Matters, 2016

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

Figure 4: Estimated annual benefits of community transport, UK, 2015

Estimated benefits of community transport in the UK		
Cost	Estimated annual benefits from community transport	
	Worst case	Best case
Earlier admittance into residential or nursing care	£113m	£337m
Increased use of home care and day care service	£54m	£161m
Higher rate of non-elective hospital admission	£176m	£503m
Increased proportion of domicile GP visits	£41m	£89m
Increased number of A&E visits	£18m	£52m
Total	£0.4bn	£1.1bn

Source: ECT Charity, Why Community Transport Matters, 2016

5.2.7. Poor transport provision can also make it difficult for the elderly to access **healthcare** facilities. Through a door-to-door service, and the use of minibuses with wheelchair access, community transport offers a low cost and high quality means of transport. This also allows people to live independently for longer, reducing the demand for expensive residential care.^{199 200}

5.2.8. Finally, food **shopping** has become more expensive as a result of cuts to bus services to large supermarkets. Without community transport, residents have to take a taxi or buy food from local shops which tend to be more expensive. Carrying food shopping home has also become more challenging because buses do not stop as close to home as previously.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

²⁰⁰ ECT Charity (2016) Why Community Transport Matters

²⁰¹ AgeUK (2013) Missed Opportunities: The Impact On Older People of Cuts to Rural Bus Services

5.3. Community Transport Coverage in Kent

- 5.3.1. There are several community transport schemes in Kent. The Kent Karrier scheme, which is provided and administered by KCC, is a fully accessible dial-a-ride, door-to-door service for disabled and elderly people. This popular scheme has been running for over twenty years and covers the entire county.²⁰²
- 5.3.2. Kent Karrier currently comprises 11 contracts across all Kent districts, which are delivered by a number of organisations: AgeUK, Thanet Community Transport Association and Compaid.^{203 204}
- 5.3.3. Seven of these contracts are delivered by Compaid. In the last financial year this not-for-profit organisation provided bus services that took more than 960 people with mobility issues to shops and leisure activities. A further 147 were taken to hospital and other medical appointments and 40 disabled children were taken to and from school.²⁰⁵
- 5.3.4. In addition to transport services, Compaid runs computer skills training through both a dedicated training centre in Paddock Wood and outreach into local communities. In the last year 86 disabled adults received training on, for example, use of Internet, social media and Microsoft Office applications.²⁰⁶
- 5.3.5. In 2015 Compaid was awarded the Community Transport Association's Quality Mark; only 15 organisations in the UK hold this highly-regarded award.²⁰⁷
- 5.3.6. As well as these major community transport schemes, there are several informal local initiatives. Although these schemes are usually small scale - they could be as simple as a willing volunteer in a village taking a neighbour to the hospital - they are valued as they fill an important gap in service provision.²⁰⁸

²⁰² Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

²⁰³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 28 October 2016

²⁰⁴ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

²⁰⁵ Compaid (2016) Trustees' Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2016

²⁰⁶ Ibid

²⁰⁷ Ibid

²⁰⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

- 5.3.7. In order to support community transport providers, KCC runs Community Transport Forums and offers advice on matters such as driving licence regulations, driver training and funding. Advice is also provided by the Community Transport Association (CTA), the national organisation that represents, leads and supports community transport in the country.^{209 210}
- 5.3.8. Although community transport's coverage in Kent is extensive, it could potentially play a bigger role in meeting transport needs in the county. As already pointed out, commercial bus network coverage and service frequency sometimes fail to meet the needs of Kent residents and KCC's intervention is limited by financial pressures.
- 5.3.9. In addition, the fact that there are about 40,000 disabled adults in Kent, only about 1,000 of whom use Kent Karrier services, suggests that there could be a latent, unmet demand.²¹¹
- 5.3.10. Indeed in a survey conducted by the CTA in 2014, 60% of community transport organisations reported an increase in passenger trips in the previous year, and 78% reported an increase in demand since 2010.²¹²
- 5.3.11. This increase is also reflected in Kent. In 2015-16, Compaid's fleet of 19 wheelchair adapted vehicles transported 1,250 people on more than 39,000 journeys, covering more than 340,000 miles. The figures for the previous year were: 1,003 people, 28,000 journeys and 280,000 miles.²¹³
- 5.3.12. Despite the potential for growing capacity, community transport has also been affected by the current financial climate, and identifying funding streams is a significant challenge.²¹⁴ Indeed it was reported to the Committee that it is now required to provide more services, to fill the gaps left by the commercial sector, with fewer resources.²¹⁵
- 5.3.13. One of the main concerns expressed by community transport organisations is that, with scarce resources comes the threat of being unable to replace ageing vehicle fleets, leading to higher running costs, vehicle unreliability and an uncomfortable travelling experience. A wheelchair-accessible minibus costs in excess of £40,000.^{216 217}

²⁰⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

²¹⁰ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

²¹¹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 28 October 2016

²¹² Community Transport Association (2014) A CTA State of the Sector Report

²¹³ Compaid (2016) Trustees' Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2016

²¹⁴ Community Transport Association (2014) A CTA State of the Sector Report

²¹⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

²¹⁶ Ibid

²¹⁷ Community Transport Association (2014) A CTA State of the Sector Report

5.3.14. While the Committee is aware of the financial challenges facing the Authority, it is also convinced that local community transport organisations deserve support for their efforts to meet the transport needs of a growing number of vulnerable people in Kent.

5.3.15. The Committee welcomes the suggestion that the potential of community transport to extend its operations in the county should be explored. The investigation might consider whether a percentage of KCC's bus subsidy could be invested in community transport initiatives, replacing or supporting currently subsidised services, and assess their impact.²¹⁸

5.4. Community Transport Awareness and Regulation

5.4.1. One idea that emerged during the review was that KCC should become more involved in acting as a central point of information on all bus transport in Kent, including community transport. Although the Authority, and other organisations, already offer advice and guidance on bus transport matters, there is no easily identifiable, central coordinator. It was suggested that KCC would be well placed to undertake this role.²¹⁹

5.4.2. There are a number of challenges, associated in particular with community transport, that would need to be considered and overcome. The largest local community transport schemes - such as Compaid, AgeUK and the Thanet Community Transport Association - are all formally recognised and regulated providers. For instance, they all hold Section 19 or 22 permits that exempt not-for-profit organisations from holding bus operator licences when providing transport for a charge.^{220 221}

5.4.3. As a central source of information, KCC could confidently refer customers to these organisations in the knowledge that they provide reliable, legal and safe services. However, there would need to be effective communication mechanisms between KCC and these organisations in order to maintain an up-to-date record of their services.²²²

5.4.4. A comprehensive information "hub" would also need to include the smaller, more localised community transport schemes which, as mentioned earlier, fill a vital gap in service provision. Given the less formal and more irregular nature of these services, capturing and maintaining up-to-date information about them could be even more challenging.²²³

²¹⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence, 18 October 2016

²¹⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence, 28 October 2016

²²⁰ Ibid

²²¹ Community Transport Association (2014) A CTA State of the Sector Report

²²² Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence, 28 October 2016

²²³ Ibid

- 5.4.5. Despite these obstacles, the successful setting up of a central information point, and of an up-to-date database which includes community transport schemes, could have several benefits.
- 5.4.6. It could raise greater awareness amongst residents of local transport services that are available. Also, its support could lead to the greater effectiveness of current schemes and to the emergence of new ones; these initiatives take time and effort to develop, and the advice and guidance that is available is important to their successful setting up and operation.²²⁴ Finally, it could promote a better regulated service, and ensure greater consistency in the quality, safety and legality of provision.

Recommendation 15

KCC's Public Transport division should investigate:

- **Extending coverage of Community Transport operations in the County.**
- **Acting as a single point of information for all local transport provision and developing a database which holds up-to-date information on all community transport schemes in the County.**

²²⁴ LGA (2016) Missing the Bus? Councils and the Future of the Bus in Non-Metropolitan Areas, London

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6.The Bus Services Bill

Kent County Council has demonstrated initiative and innovation, working hard with bus operators, communities and other organisations to maintain good bus transport in the current financial climate. However, it seems unlikely that, within the current model of local bus service provision, these initiatives alone can significantly mitigate bus funding pressures or, indeed, enhance the quality of provision. The Bus Services Bill offers both the tools and the opportunity to improve considerably both local bus transport and the lives of passengers and communities in Kent.

6.1. Why the Bill?

- 6.1.1. Buses are the most used form of public transport in England, accounting for more than 60% of all public transport trips.²²⁵
- 6.1.2. Since 2004-05, bus use in England outside London has increased by 2%. Over the same period bus use in London has increased dramatically, by 31%.²²⁶
- 6.1.3. Although there are several factors - such as population density and growth, and policy choices such as the congestion charge – that set London apart from other areas of the country, the example of London demonstrates that, where bus networks are extensive, services frequent, and passengers have easy access to information about fares and services, bus patronage can increase.²²⁷
- 6.1.4. The benefits of bus transport are outlined in Appendix 4. As the DfT points out, better bus services can prove the key to unlocking economic growth, decreasing congestion and reducing isolation by linking individuals and communities to other transport networks, work, education, shops and services.²²⁸
- 6.1.5. These arguments have led to a legislative proposal – the Bus Services Bill (2016) - that aims to improve bus service provision and to make bus usage more attractive. The need for the Bill was highlighted by discussions with local authority and bus industry representatives at a series of 'Bus Reform Workshops' held in the autumn of 2015.²²⁹

6.2. The Main Elements of the Bill

- 6.2.1. The aim of the Bus Services Bill, which was introduced in May 2016, is to expand the range of tools available to local authorities and bus operators by granting new powers and improving the approaches that are currently available.²³⁰
- 6.2.2. The Bill sets out five objectives for the transport network:
- grow bus passenger numbers
 - tackle air quality hot spots
 - improve bus services for passengers
 - enable a thriving and innovative commercial bus sector
 - help cities and regions unlock opportunities and grow their economies²³¹

²²⁵ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

²²⁶ Department for Transport (2015) Public Service Vehicle Survey, London

²²⁷ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

²²⁸ Ibid

²²⁹ Ibid

²³⁰ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

²³¹ Ibid

6.2.3. It is also argued that the Bill will support Devolution in England, as local authorities will be given more power to determine the best way of improving bus services for their local communities.²³²

6.2.4. The Bill is currently progressing through Parliament and it is expected to receive Royal Assent – and become the Bus Services Act – by spring 2017. It would come into force about two months later.²³³

6.2.5. The main measures in the Bill are the following:

- strengthening the arrangements for partnership working in the sector, by introducing Advanced Quality Partnerships and Enhanced Partnerships
- improving the information available to bus passengers
- introducing new franchising powers with greater decision-making at a local level²³⁴

Partnerships arrangements and ticketing

6.2.6. Existing legislation provides for voluntary partnership arrangements between Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and bus operators. Many areas in England have adopted these arrangements, which are not legally enforceable.²³⁵

6.2.7. As indicated earlier, in Kent there are eight voluntary Quality Partnerships schemes, in the districts of Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Maidstone, Shepway, Swale, Thanet and Tunbridge Wells.²³⁶

6.2.8. Current legislation also provides for Quality Partnership schemes which are legally enforceable and require local authorities to provide new infrastructure with the aim of improving bus services for passengers.²³⁷

6.2.9. The Bus Services Bill proposes changes to the existing Quality Partnership schemes in order to make them easier to use and more attractive to local authorities.^{238 239}

²³² Ibid

²³³ Ibid

²³⁴ Ibid

²³⁵ Department for Transport (2016) Partnerships and Ticketing: Bus Services Bill Information Sheet

²³⁶ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

²³⁷ Department for Transport (2016) Partnerships and Ticketing: Bus Services Bill Information Sheet

²³⁸ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

²³⁹ Department for Transport (2016) Partnerships and Ticketing: Bus Services Bill Information Sheet

6.2.10. It aims to improve existing Quality Partnerships by introducing **Advanced Quality Partnerships**. These remove the duty on LTAs to provide new infrastructure and allow them to build partnership schemes based on other bus-improvement measures, such as traffic management policies.²⁴⁰

6.2.11. The Bill also introduces **Enhanced Partnership (EP)** provisions. These allow LTAs to expand the remit that partnership measures can cover and to deliver – with the consent of bus operators - some of the outcomes that are only otherwise possible under a franchising model. In particular, these provisions include the following:

- LTAs, with the participation of bus operators, will set standards that all operators within a geographical area would need to meet. These can include vehicle standards, ticketing arrangements and the frequency and timing of services.
- The partnership proposals must receive majority support from the bus operators who would be affected by the proposals. Otherwise, the proposals cannot be taken forward.
- The requirement that particular payment methods for tickets must be accepted; that tickets must be promoted, accepted or sold in a particular way; and the setting of common rules for all tickets sold in the area – such as standard fare zones, validity periods for season tickets and eligibility for concessions. The provisions do not allow the setting of the price of single operator tickets.
- The bus market in the partnership area remains commercial. LTAs cannot dictate the price of bus operators' own tickets or compel them to run services against their wishes.^{241 242}

Open data

6.2.12. The Bill aims to ensure that the information on local bus services available to passengers across England is of the same standard as that available to bus users in London. Transport for London (TfL) is at the forefront of using open data to improve services, providing data feeds for more than 8,000 IT developers. There are nearly 500 smartphone applications that help people to find their nearest bus stop and check the status of their tube line or roads.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Ibid

²⁴¹ Department for Transport (2016) Partnerships and Ticketing: Bus Services Bill Information Sheet

²⁴² Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

²⁴³ Department for Transport (2016) Open Data and Registration: Bus Services Bill Information Sheet

6.2.13. The Bill includes powers to require the release of real time information and open data on routes, timetables, fares and punctuality, in order to help bus users to organise their journeys more effectively.^{244 245}

6.2.14. It is planned that the information about routes and timetables will be phased in by 2017, with fares and punctuality data being added in stages by 2020. This transitional approach is intended to make the process of releasing data easier for operators to manage and to account for the capabilities of smaller operators.²⁴⁶

Franchising powers

6.2.15. Franchising will allow LTAs to replace the current model of bus service provision in their area with a system whereby the authority has the power to specify the services to be provided and bus operators bid to deliver those services – a system similar to that currently operated in London by Transport for London.²⁴⁷

6.2.16. In the original version of the Bill only Mayoral Combined Authorities were granted automatic access to franchising powers, reflecting the single point of accountability that an elected Mayor offers.²⁴⁸

6.2.17. The House of Lords recently amended the Bill to allow all LTAs to apply for franchising powers. However, at the time of writing this amendment has not been agreed by the House of Commons.²⁴⁹

6.2.18. Nonetheless, the Government has recently signed devolution deals with a number of areas that include the potential for authorities to franchise their local bus services, although the power to franchise is still subject to discretion of the Secretary of State.²⁵⁰

6.2.19. When franchised services start to operate, the current deregulated bus market will be suspended in the franchise area. This will be an indefinite change; bus services will only be able to operate in that area if they are operated under contract to the authority or have been permitted to operate by the franchising authority.²⁵¹

6.2.20. The Bill provides arrangements to ensure that community transport operators are not prevented from running services and will be able to continue as they do currently.²⁵²

²⁴⁴ Ibid

²⁴⁵ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

²⁴⁶ Ibid

²⁴⁷ Department for Transport (2016) Franchising: Bus Services Bill Information Sheet

²⁴⁸ Ibid

²⁴⁹ House of Commons Transport Committee (2016) Bus Services Bill: Eight Report of Session 2016-

17

²⁵⁰ Ibid

²⁵¹ Ibid

²⁵² Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

6.2.21. The key provisions of the bus franchising policy include the following:

- Franchising will give the local authority the ability to take control of, and responsibility for, the local bus services in their area.
- In the original version of the Bill only Mayoral Combined Authorities were granted automatic access to franchising powers. A recent amendment by the House of Lords has recently extended this to all LTAs. However, at the time of writing the amendment has not been agreed by the House of Commons.
- A local decision needs to be taken on whether or not to adopt franchising powers. Local decisions to move to franchising need to be based on robust evidence, with a focus on the needs of passengers.
- The Bill was recently amended to remove the prohibition on local authorities from setting up their own municipal bus companies. However, at the time of writing this amendment has not been agreed by the Government.
- Plans to implement franchising must take account of the needs of small and medium-sized operators.
- Non-commercial community transport operators will not be affected by franchising and will not have to compete with the wider commercial market.^{253 254}

²⁵³ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

²⁵⁴ House of Commons Transport Committee (2016) Bus Services Bill: Eight Report of Session 2016-

Bus Services Bill Summary

Current	Proposed Changes in England	Passenger Benefits
Commercial provision of services – limited local authority input		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus operators decide the routes, fares and vehicles to provide. • Local authority can specify additional services not provided by operators commercially. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulations can be made to require open data on fares, timetables and real-time information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes to the operating model in areas where the local authority considers the bus market is effective and there is good passenger satisfaction. • Bus passengers across the country could get the same kind of information as those in London or rail passengers.
Partnerships – bus operators and local authorities work together to improve services		
Voluntary partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authority and bus operators agree on a package of measures to improve bus services. • Not legally enforceable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary partnerships can remain unchanged if both parties wish. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes to the operating model in areas where the local authority considers the bus market is effective and there is good passenger satisfaction.
Quality Partnership Scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal agreements made by local authority and bus operators. • Local authority provides infrastructure and can enforce service standards. • Only compliant operators can use the new facilities. 	New Advanced Quality Partnership Schemes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the requirement to always provide infrastructure. • Introduce new categories of service standards e.g. Requirements on information provision and marketing of joint products. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better marketing and promotion of bus services. • Joined up ticketing and smart card products make it easier for passengers to travel. • Faster journeys from quicker boarding.
	New Enhanced Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced Partnership plan – sets out how services should be improved. • Decisions on general standards must be agreed by a qualified majority of operators. • All operators in an EP area must comply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver better frequency and timing of services. • Impose maximum fares. • Mandate joint participation in ticketing schemes making it easier for passengers to travel.
Local authority takes responsibility for bus services in its area		
Quality Contract Scheme (QCS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five part public interest test has to be met. • Consultation and respond to the recommendations of an independent Board. • Quality Contract Scheme can last maximum 10yrs. • Has never been implemented in practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QCS legislation no longer applies in England. 	Local authority can control: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services provided – could increase coverage. • Fares – could offer simplified tickets that can be used across operators and transport modes. • Service quality. • Branding and marketing. • Buses uses – could set air quality requirements.
	New Franchising Powers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayoral Combined authorities - automatic access to powers. • There is no maximum time limit for a franchising model. • Other local authorities could in future access franchising powers if regulations made and Secretary of State gives consent. 	

Source: Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview

6.3. Implications for Future Bus Service Provision in Kent

- 6.3.1. As indicated earlier, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed if bus service provision in Kent is to be improved. Bus fares are increasing above inflation, with a negative impact on vulnerable people and those on lower incomes in particular. Conventional bus services in several rural communities are not satisfactory. The Authority, despite significant financial pressures, is spending a significant amount of money in subsidising services that are not commercially viable.
- 6.3.2. Within the current model the ability of KCC to intervene to improve bus service provision is limited. However, some elements of the Bus Services Bill - such as new partnership arrangements and franchising in particular - offer a real opportunity to shape service provision and improve the quality of life of Kent residents.

Open Data

- 6.3.3. Under the powers set out in the Bill, local bus operators will be required to release a cache of information about their services, including data on routes, timetables, punctuality and fares, regardless of the operating model.^{255 256} This could produce some benefits.
- 6.3.4. While there is no requirement in the registration process to provide information about fares, there is a requirement in the Public Service Vehicles Regulations (1986) for every vehicle in service to display, or have available on request, a fare table. Operators have traditionally been reluctant to release data about fares, citing issues of commercial confidentiality.²⁵⁷
- 6.3.5. A report in 2013 on bus passenger views' on value for money found a strong desire for more centralised sources of fares information, and indicated that the lack of fares information at bus stops was an important unmet expectation.²⁵⁸ There is some evidence to suggest that this is also an issue for some Kent residents.²⁵⁹
- 6.3.6. Readily available data on fares, such as that included in websites and applications like Traveline and Citymapper, can improve passengers' experience by helping them to find the best prices and plan their journeys more effectively.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

²⁵⁶ Department for Transport (2016) Impact Assessments: Bus Services Bill

²⁵⁷ Ibid

²⁵⁸ Passenger Focus (2013) Bus Passenger Views on Value for Money

²⁵⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

²⁶⁰ Department for Transport (2016) Impact Assessments: Bus Services Bill

- 6.3.7. KCC already provides access to local information on the Traveline Journey Planner website. In addition, the income from selling this service to five other local authorities ensures that it is self-sustaining. The Authority has supplied Traveline for a number of years and has a good reputation at the South East Local Transport Authorities (SELTA) for its work.²⁶¹
- 6.3.8. Even so, by making data more readily available, the Bill will encourage third parties to develop more journey planning websites and applications that make it easier for passengers to access information about their journey.^{262 263}
- 6.3.9. The Bill also requires bus operators to make punctuality data available to local authorities. This should encourage operators to maintain standards where they are good or improve them if they are not.²⁶⁴
- 6.3.10. Despite the endemic problems with traffic congestion, and some evidence of delays with school bus transport outlined in Chapter 3, bus service punctuality in Kent seems, in general, to be reasonable. The Bus Passenger Survey by Transport Focus shows a good degree of satisfaction with bus punctuality, with 73% of passengers feeling fairly or very satisfied. This result is corroborated by the DfT, which reported that in 2014-15 89% of non-frequent bus services in the county ran on time.²⁶⁵
- 6.3.11. Nonetheless, the sharing of punctuality data would clearly be beneficial, as it would allow local authorities to provide real-time information to passengers and inform them how their services are performing, as well as support the planning and development of bus services and contribute to the operation of traffic management systems.²⁶⁶

²⁶¹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

²⁶² Ibid

²⁶³ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

²⁶⁴ Department for Transport (2016) Impact Assessments: Bus Services Bill

²⁶⁵ Department for Transport (2015) Non-Frequent Bus Services Running on Time by Local Authority: England, Annual from 2004-05

²⁶⁶ Department for Transport (2016) Impact Assessments: Bus Services Bill

Quality Partnerships

- 6.3.12. There are several partnership options that KCC could consider for the delivery of local bus services. These are: Quality Partnerships, Advanced Quality Partnerships, Enhanced Partnership, and Franchising. The option of Quality Partnerships would mean maintaining the status quo.
- 6.3.13. Quality Partnerships are the simplest form of collaboration. They are most effective when an authority has a positive relationship with local bus operators and is able to deliver bus service improvements and increased passenger numbers.²⁶⁷
- 6.3.14. In this model the Local Transport Authority is usually responsible for the infrastructure and road network and bus companies are responsible for operating the services.²⁶⁸
- 6.3.15. As explained in Chapter 3, in Kent there are eight voluntary Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs). In these arrangements, local authorities meet local bus operators quarterly to discuss and find solutions to a range of transport-related issues such as congestion, bus reliability and the implications of new housing developments.²⁶⁹
- 6.3.16. The evidence suggests that KCC has a good working relationship with the local bus operators, and that the QBPs are generally effective in making bus transport more attractive and encouraging its usage. For instance, good collaboration has led to the introduction in Ashford of the "Little and Often" scheme operated by "Sprinter Buses", and to a doubling in bus patronage in Canterbury in the last 12 years.^{270 271}
- 6.3.17. Although Kent's QBPs appear to be based on positive relationships and to promote bus service improvements, the Committee identified some weaknesses. For instance, it found that public involvement - which could be key in helping local authorities and bus operators to tailor bus service provision better at a local level - was restricted.^{272 273 274 275 276}
- 6.3.18. It also found instances where the involvement of smaller bus operators in the activities of QBPs was somewhat limited.²⁷⁷

²⁶⁷ Department for Transport (2016) Impact Assessments: Bus Services Bill

²⁶⁸ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

²⁶⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

²⁷⁰ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 18 October 2016

²⁷¹ Canterbury City Council (2016) Joint Transportation Board, Quality Bus Partnership, 28 June 2016

²⁷² Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

²⁷³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 28 October 2016

²⁷⁴ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

²⁷⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 18 October 2016

²⁷⁶ Maidstone Borough Council (2016) Quality Bus Partnership [online]

<http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/parking-and-streets/quality-bus-partnership>

²⁷⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 10 October 2016

6.3.19. The DfT has also identified limitations with this model due to a number of factors.

- A lucrative market can lead to strong competition between individual operators and a reluctance to compromise because of the potential financial effect.
- The emergence of a lack of trust between the key players – particularly between the LTA and the bus operators – to deliver on their part of these voluntary agreements.
- The permanency of a voluntary partnership may depend on the strength of the relationships in the area; the inclusion of new entrants may disrupt the arrangement.
- A misalignment of incentives, in which bus companies have little incentive to invest unilaterally in a network that can also be used by their competitors, and local authorities may have limited motivation to invest in bus infrastructure without some reassurance by bus operators about the level of service provision.^{278 279}

6.3.20. Even Statutory Quality Partnership Schemes (SQPS), which are legally binding, have some limitations. In theory, under a SQPS, an authority can specify frequencies, timings and maximum fares. In practice, this is only possible if there are no admissible objections from the relevant bus operators.²⁸⁰

6.3.21. The post-legislative assessment of the Local Transport Act 2008 found that full use of the SQPS powers, such as setting maximum fares, has been limited. It also found that potentially complex statutory schemes, requiring additional resources to manage and a long-term financial commitment, do not necessarily represent the best option for all LTAs, and that the limited number of SQPS suggests that many LTAs believe their objectives can be met through less bureaucratic, non-statutory arrangements.²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ Department for Transport (2016) Impact Assessments: Bus Services Bill

²⁷⁹ LGA (2016) Missing the Bus? Councils and the Future of the Bus in Non-Metropolitan Areas, London

²⁸⁰ Department for Transport (2016) Impact Assessments: Bus Services Bill

²⁸¹ Ibid

Advanced Quality Partnerships

- 6.3.22. One of the changes introduced by the Bus Services Bill involves the introduction of Advanced Quality Partnerships, which are intended to make existing Quality Partnerships easier to use and more attractive to local authorities.^{282 283}
- 6.3.23. Although Quality Partnerships give LTAs more influence over local bus services, their stability is not guaranteed, even where SQPSs are used, because of the need for partnerships to accommodate competition and new entrants. Also, with statutory partnership arrangements, some local authorities may find it difficult - especially in the current financial climate - to meet the requirements to provide the agreed infrastructure.²⁸⁴
- 6.3.24. In order to address these issues, Advanced Quality Partnerships remove the requirement for a partnership to be built around the provision of infrastructure. Instead, they promote a partnership model around a commitment to a set of pro-bus policies, such as reducing the provision of free parking spaces in town centres, where such measures are considered to provide more benefit to passengers.²⁸⁵
- 6.3.25. In addition, they broaden the requirement placed on bus operators to market services and ticketing promotion themselves; currently LTAs can establish multi-operator ticketing schemes, but these products are not always clearly or widely marketed by all participating operators.²⁸⁶
- 6.3.26. Finally, they give LTAs the power to request certain information from participating operators, in order to help to provide a better range of services for passengers - with appropriate safeguards to ensure commercial confidentiality.²⁸⁷
- 6.3.27. Even though these proposals address some of the issues highlighted, and can make Advanced Quality Partnerships more appealing to LTAs, local authorities have argued that this legislation would not meet all their objectives.²⁸⁸
- 6.3.28. One reason is that LTAs still have limited influence over network planning. This means, for instance, that they cannot ensure that the bus network is integrated with other modes and the wider public transport system.²⁸⁹

²⁸² Department for Transport (2016) Impact Assessments: Bus Services Bill

²⁸³ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

²⁸⁴ Department for Transport (2016) Impact Assessments: Bus Services Bill

²⁸⁵ Ibid

²⁸⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁷ Ibid

²⁸⁸ Ibid

²⁸⁹ Ibid

6.3.29. Importantly, while the use of an amended partnership approach may help some LTAs to achieve their objectives, the lack of any enforcement mechanism means that the ability of these partnerships to bring about improvements may be limited.²⁹⁰

Enhanced Partnerships

6.3.30. The Enhanced Partnership option builds on that of Advanced Quality Partnerships. Under this arrangement, the LTA and local bus operators come together to form a statutory partnership. The partnership then collectively develops a bus strategy that sets out exactly the objectives to be achieved over a defined period of time. The strategy can include the option of developing a network plan that specifies the services and standards that are needed to achieve those outcomes, such as the emission standards of the buses.²⁹¹

6.3.31. With this model LTAs can be granted the bus service registration powers that currently rest with the Traffic Commissioner. With these powers they can add to any registration conditions that are consistent with the network plan. The LTA would also have the power to revoke or refuse registrations if there was evidence of non-compliance. All this should ensure that the Enhanced Partnership model would be locally managed and enforced.²⁹²

6.3.32. Enhanced Partnerships can also enable the application of joint sets of information provision and marketing standards across an area. For example, one condition of the Partnership could require all operators to provide area-wide plans of their services and ticketing products on their websites, and on their buses, to help improve passengers' understanding of the wider network.²⁹³

6.3.33. In addition, LTAs can be empowered to request information from operators, such as patronage and revenue data, to help develop the Partnership's proposals - subject to appropriate safeguards to ensure commercial confidentiality – so that the Partnership can ensure its plans remain up to date.²⁹⁴

6.3.34. By enabling it to contribute to the network planning process, and ensuring that operators run services in accordance with their registration, the Enhanced Partnership model would help KCC to improve local bus transport delivery and quality.

²⁹⁰ Ibid

²⁹¹ Department for Transport (2016) Impact Assessments: Bus Services Bill

²⁹² Ibid

²⁹³ Ibid

²⁹⁴ Ibid

- 6.3.35. There are examples of successful Enhanced Partnerships. For instance, the Liverpool City Region Bus Alliance represents an Enhanced Partnership agreement that will deliver more than £25 million worth of investment in bus services in just the first year. The agreement includes a commitment from operators to provide modern bus fleets with an average age of no more than seven years, and to be partners on a range of initiatives including marketing campaigns, on-bus cleaning and customer service training.²⁹⁵
- 6.3.36. Also, while, as part of its Devolution Deal, Cornwall had an opportunity to adopt a Franchising model of bus transport, it appears that the Authority is working closely with local bus operators to establish an Enhanced Partnership instead.²⁹⁶
- 6.3.37. Finally, local bus operators told the Committee that there was more merit in enhancing existing partnership arrangements than in adopting the Franchising option. A key explanation for this is that, in the Franchising model, it is likely that the contracting authority would take the commercial risk, making it more vulnerable to issues outside its control - such as fuel and labour cost increases - and disincentivising operators from taking initiatives.^{297 298 299}
- 6.3.38. Although it has several potential benefits, the Enhanced Partnership model of bus transport also has some limitations.
- 6.3.39. In this model the bus market remains deregulated and commercial. While partnership proposals can set the standards that bus services must meet, they cannot compel operators to run services and they cannot dictate the price of tickets. Also, the introduction of a single fare structure across different operators and transport modes - something that many authorities want - is difficult to achieve with this model.^{300 301}
- 6.3.40. Crucially, with these arrangements the LTA needs to get the agreement of the majority of operators before it can establish the partnership; without consensus an LTA would not be able to achieve its objectives.³⁰²
- 6.3.41. In summary, this option provides a useful tool for authorities to address inefficiencies in their local bus markets, but it does not meet the objectives of those that wish to have complete control over the planning and commissioning of bus services.

²⁹⁵ Merseytravel (2016) New Era for the Liverpool City Region as Bus Alliance Agreement Signed [online] <http://www.merseytravel.gov.uk/about-us/media-centre/news/Pages/New-era-for-the-Liverpool-City-Region-as-Bus-Alliance-agreement-signed-.aspx>

²⁹⁶ Commons Transport Select Committee (2016) Oral Evidence Session, 12 September 2016

²⁹⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 30 September 2016

²⁹⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 25 October 2016

²⁹⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence, 28 October 2016

³⁰⁰ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

³⁰¹ House of Lords (2016) Library Note: Bus Services Bill, 1 June 2016

³⁰² Department for Transport (2016) Impact Assessments: Bus Services Bill

6.3.42. Nonetheless, if KCC believes that local bus services should be provided through partnership arrangements, the Committee strongly recommends the following:

- The Enhanced Partnership model should be given particular consideration in view of the greater empowerment it offers to LTAs to manage and enforce local bus service provision.
- Partnership arrangements should include mechanisms to ensure public involvement and feedback, and should ensure the participation of all local bus operators.
- The development of any new partnership model should consider the role of the charity and not-for-profit sector from the outset. Too often community transport is asked to run a service as a last resort to fill the gaps left by other providers. A more resilient and integrated network should give more prominence to community transport and the voluntary sector from the planning stage.³⁰³

Franchising

6.3.43. As explained earlier, Franchising allows LTAs to replace the current deregulated model of bus service provision in their areas with a system whereby the authority specifies and procures the services to be provided, and bus operators bid to deliver those services – a system similar to that currently operated by Transport for London.³⁰⁴

6.3.44. Under this arrangement bus services can only operate in an area if they are run under contract to the authority or if the franchising authority has given them permission to do so.³⁰⁵

6.3.45. A key factor that led to the promotion of the franchising model was that, through the Government's devolution deal process, a number of LTAs maintained that the only way to genuinely improve bus service provision and address all related market inefficiencies in their areas was to suspend the deregulated bus market.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

³⁰⁴ Department for Transport (2016) Franchising: Bus Services Bill Information Sheet

³⁰⁵ Ibid

³⁰⁶ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

6.3.46. The "market imperfections" in a deregulated bus market include the following:

- Difficulty in coordinating and integrating bus networks. Where bus services are run by competing operators, the coordination of timetables, fares and ticketing schemes can be complex.
- Misaligned incentives between bus operators and LTAs. Operators may have limited incentive to invest unilaterally in the network where this can be used by their competitors. Likewise, LTAs may have limited incentive to invest in bus infrastructure where they cannot be sure that the investment will ultimately benefit passengers and the wider community.
- The inability of private bus companies to fully secure the economic, social and environmental benefits that bus transport can deliver.³⁰⁷

6.3.47. A more detailed analysis of why the Committee strongly supports the adoption of the Franchising model of bus service provision in Kent is set out in the following sections.

Franchising - fares

6.3.48. As explained earlier, partly because of an increase in operating costs, bus fares have risen faster than inflation since 2005. It was pointed out that this was particularly concerning for the most vulnerable people in our communities, such as the elderly and the unemployed, because it is these people who are most likely to rely on the bus as their main form of transport.³⁰⁸

6.3.49. It was also indicated that there was a direct correlation between bus fares and patronage; in general, an increase in bus patronage requires a decrease in fares.³⁰⁹

6.3.50. In the current de-regulated model, KCC has limited ability to influence the structure and level of fares. Also, bus operators may be deterred from collaborating on fares because it may harm their commercial interests and could be in breach of Competition Law. While competition in a deregulated market can incentivise operators to keep fares low, local markets are not always contested, especially when - as in Kent - they are dominated by a small number of companies.³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ Ibid

³⁰⁸ Department for Transport (2012) Green Light for Better Buses, London

³⁰⁹ Institute of Transport Studies (2016) Policy Instruments: A Policy Guidebook, Fare Levels, Institute of Transport Studies, University of Leeds [online] http://www.its.leeds.ac.uk/projects/konsult/private/level2/instruments/instrument028/l2_028b.htm

³¹⁰ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

6.3.51. While new partnership models provide the additional capacity for an LTA to influence local fares policy, this has to be achieved through negotiation with operators. Although partnership agreements can be based on strong relationships between operators and LTAs, they can also become unstable. Under Franchising KCC could have complete flexibility and control over setting fares and would be less constrained by Competition Law.³¹¹

Franchising - smart and integrated ticketing

6.3.52. The evidence suggests that, under the current model, KCC has limited ability to achieve ticketing integration. For instance, it was pointed out that the two largest bus operators in Kent had not joined the recent Connected Kent and Medway smartcard initiative because they preferred to use their own schemes.^{312 313}

6.3.53. While, in partnership arrangements, LTAs have some ability to influence the adoption of multi-operator ticketing schemes, this often requires negotiation and, as just illustrated, may only be agreed by some operators. One reason is that, in these models, operators have limited incentive to provide integrated ticketing outside their own services as it creates additional commercial complexity and may increase competition by removing a barrier to entry.³¹⁴

6.3.54. In a franchised system the LTA has full control of ticketing, can introduce different fare structures, and can fully integrate ticketing with other modes of transport. The LTA has the potential to achieve efficiencies through the introduction of a single unified ticketing system rather than multiple types, and can make the bus network simpler and easier to understand.³¹⁵

³¹¹ Ibid

³¹² Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

³¹³ House of Commons Transport Committee (2016) Bus Services Bill: Eight Report of Session 2016-17

³¹⁴ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

³¹⁵ Ibid

Franchising - network coverage and accessibility

- 6.3.55. Although the satisfaction levels of bus passengers in Kent are generally high, bus transport provision in the county is patchy, and there is a wide variation in bus operators' quality of service and levels of investment.^{316 317}
- 6.3.56. One reason given by the DfT for low service frequencies and high fares is that there is not enough competition in local bus markets.³¹⁸
- 6.3.57. There is a large body of evidence that, especially in rural areas, Kent's bus network coverage and service frequency are unsatisfactory. Older rural residents say that their local bus services tend to be unreliable and infrequent, especially in the evenings and weekends. This makes it difficult for them to maintain their independence and well-being, as access to health and shopping facilities is limited. It can also lead to isolation, as many are unable to visit family and friends.³¹⁹
- 6.3.58. It was also pointed out that poor network coverage and service frequency could be particularly harmful to other vulnerable people on low incomes - such as younger people, the unemployed and the disabled - because they were less likely to be able to use alternative means of transport.³²⁰
- 6.3.59. In the current model KCC's ability to intervene is limited because 97% of services are operated on a commercial basis and are generally determined by bus companies.^{321 322}
- 6.3.60. In the new partnership approaches the Authority might have more ability to influence the design of the commercial route network through negotiations with operators. However, operators' incentives with regard to the design of the bus network would remain primarily commercial.³²³

³¹⁶ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

³¹⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 27 September 2016

³¹⁸ Department for Transport (2012) Green Light for Better Buses, London

³¹⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence from several sources

³²⁰ Institute for Public Policy Research (2015) Total Transport Authorities: A New Deal for Town and Rural Bus Services, London

³²¹ Kent County Council (2016) Review of KCC Funded Bus Services: Consultation Document and Questionnaire, Maidstone

³²² Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 27 September 2016

³²³ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

6.3.61. Under franchising KCC could take full control of the design of the bus network and could influence levels of service frequency and accessibility. A bus franchise could create efficiencies through re-designing the bus network to spread bus services more evenly, reducing service duplication. It could also allow revenues from popular services to be used to support services for which there is less demand. Nonetheless, the network would need to be properly managed, as bus franchising could result in networks becoming over-reliant on cross-subsidy, leading to lower levels of efficiency over the longer term.³²⁴

Franchising - network integration

6.3.62. Currently LTAs have limited ability to achieve high levels of network integration because they have little control over the commercial bus sector.³²⁵

6.3.63. With partnership arrangements local authorities can achieve some service integration and coordination of service frequencies through negotiation with operators. However, in a market with several competitors, operators do not always have an incentive to provide network integration outside of their own commercial networks, or with other modes of transport such as rail services. The difficulty of improving local connectivity between bus and rail services in Kent illustrates the challenges of achieving local service integration within the current deregulated system.^{326 327 328}

6.3.64. Franchising offers LTAs full control of bus services, as well as the ability to plan and improve network integration by linking services with other modes of transport. The improvement and coordination of the network can also help LTAs to achieve a range of efficiency savings, for example by providing comprehensive information on timetables, and by integrating bus services with other transport modes.³²⁹

³²⁴ Ibid

³²⁵ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

³²⁶ Ibid

³²⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 28 October 2016

³²⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 18 October 2016

³²⁹ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

Franchising - fleet and service quality

- 6.3.65. In the current deregulated model LTAs can specify the quality of the fleet for the services they support, although operators are generally free to choose the type of bus and the equipment used based on commercial considerations. There has been a rapid improvement in bus specifications in the last ten years, and legislation has ensured full accessibility of all buses from January 2017. Nonetheless, decisions about fleet quality lie mainly with the operators, who face competition for passengers.^{330 331 332}
- 6.3.66. In this model the LTA also has limited ability to influence levels of service quality outside the tendered service market. Operators are generally able to determine levels of service quality – although service punctuality is currently regulated by the Traffic Commissioner who can impose fines and other penalties for services that run late and for low quality buses.³³³
- 6.3.67. In a franchised area the LTA can specify all aspects of fleet quality. Subject to funding and fleet availability, this can help to ensure consistent vehicle quality across the area. The LTA can also define service quality as part of its contract specifications. As with the specification of fleet quality, the quality of service is affected by market conditions and the availability of funding. Depending on the nature of the contract, the risk of incorrectly specifying service quality rests with the LTA.³³⁴

³³⁰ Department for Transport (2015) Annual Bus Statistics: England 2015-16

³³¹ House of Commons Library (2016) Access to Transport for Disabled People

³³² KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

³³³ Ibid

³³⁴ Ibid

Franchising - branding and marketing

- 6.3.68. Currently LTAs can undertake generic marketing of bus services to promote awareness, but this can be hampered by competition between operators, which may prevent common branding of services and timetable information. While bus companies have some incentives to undertake marketing activities, they tend to focus on their own services rather than on the network as a whole.³³⁵
- 6.3.69. Under the partnership approach, each operator sets its own branding and marketing policy which is distinct from those of other operators. Although the LTA may have some influence, through partnership agreements, this is often secondary to operators' own brands.³³⁶
- 6.3.70. With franchising the LTA can take full control of marketing and branding across the whole bus network. It can also adopt a unified marketing and branding strategy which has the potential to improve perceptions of bus services and increase patronage.³³⁷
-
- 6.3.71. In addition to this analysis, which shows how Franchising can help to improve specific aspects of bus transport, there is evidence that, where it exists, franchising is both effective and desirable.
- 6.3.72. In London, Transport for London - which is accountable to the Mayor - has franchised control over bus service provision in the city. While passenger demand elsewhere in the country fell almost continuously from deregulation to the mid-2000s, demand in London remained fairly stable between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s before increasing steadily until 2013. Since the mid-1980s, bus patronage in London has doubled and passenger mileage has increased by 74%.^{338 339 340 341}
- 6.3.73. In the States of Jersey, since the beginning of a franchised arrangement in 2013, passenger numbers have increased by 32% and the level of subsidy has been reduced by £800k per year. In addition, customer satisfaction has increased by 5%, five new routes have been introduced and bus frequencies have been improved.^{342 343}

³³⁵ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

³³⁶ Ibid

³³⁷ Ibid

³³⁸ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

³³⁹ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

³⁴⁰ Urban Transport Group (2016) Bus Services Bill: FAQs

³⁴¹ Department for Transport (2015) Annual Bus Statistics: England 2015-16

³⁴² Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 18 October 2016

³⁴³ HCT Group (2016) Practical Bus Franchising: The Jersey Model

- 6.3.74. Profit-share arrangements allow the Jersey LTA to invest in infrastructure for the bus network, including bus shelters and improved accessibility at bus stops, and allow the contracted operator - a social enterprise - to invest its profits back into the community.^{344 345 346}
- 6.3.75. In addition to these examples, a Parliamentary review conducted by the House of Commons Committee on the Bus Services Bill recently concluded that Franchising was at the heart of the Bill, and that it had the potential to deliver benefits that could not be achieved by partnerships.³⁴⁷
- 6.3.76. Before concluding the section, below are some issues that the Committee believes that need to be considered before adopting a franchised model.
- 6.3.77. When taking responsibility for franchised areas, LTAs need to consider the additional resources needed to manage the arrangement and the additional risks - such as the aforementioned risk of incorrectly specifying the service quality of a bus fleet.³⁴⁸
- 6.3.78. Some local bus operators have expressed concern that a franchised model could harm them by creating insecurity for staff and stagnation of investment. Smaller bus operators, in particular, are concerned that they might not be able to compete when bidding for contracts.^{349 350 351}
- 6.3.79. However, there is evidence that these concerns may be unfounded. LTAs that adopt a Franchising model will be able to decide how the franchise will operate and can protect smaller operators. The franchising package could be divided into lots to give smaller operators the opportunity to bid for them. A franchise could also be tendered as one main contract, with a requirement to sub-contract a given proportion of it to smaller operators.³⁵²
- 6.3.80. Finally, the Committee believes that, in order to achieve a truly accessible network, the integration of local community transport and the not-for-profit sector should be considered from the outset.³⁵³

³⁴⁴ Institute for Public Policy Research (2015) Total Transport Authorities: A New Deal for Town and Rural Bus Services, London

³⁴⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 18 October 2016

³⁴⁶ HCT Group (2016) Practical Bus Franchising: The Jersey Model

³⁴⁷ House of Commons Transport Committee (2016) Bus Services Bill: Eight Report of Session 2016-17

³⁴⁸ Ibid

³⁴⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 25 October 2016

³⁵⁰ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 10 October 2016

³⁵¹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

³⁵² Ibid

³⁵³ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, written evidence

6.3.81. In view of the above analysis, and based on the current elements and shape of the Bill, the Committee strongly supports the Franchising model of bus service provision. The Committee also recommends that this model should include the following:

- active and careful management of the network to mitigate risks
- protection of smaller local bus operators
- consideration of the integration of local community transport and the not-for-profit sector from the outset

Recommendation 16

The Select Committee endorses the Bus Services Bill and strongly supports the franchising model of bus transport in particular. The Committee recommends a full investigation into the adoption, in Kent, of the most appropriate elements of the Bill. The adoption of any element of the Bill in Kent should reflect the features highlighted by the Committee.

6.3.82. There are two final issues that the Committee considered in relation to the Bus Services Bill. The first is the restriction of the automatic entitlement to introduce Franchising to combined authorities with elected Mayors. The second is the prohibition on LTAs from setting up municipal bus companies.

Franchising and combined authorities with elected Mayors

6.3.83. The Bus Services Bill, as originally introduced, distinguished between mayoral combined authorities, that are automatically entitled to introduce a Franchising scheme, and other LTAs that must undertake a two-stage process requiring regulations and the consent of the Secretary of State.³⁵⁴

6.3.84. The explanation given for this clause was that only combined authorities with elected Mayors had a clear, directly accountable person to take the decision to franchise, and also had responsibility for transport across a relatively large area.³⁵⁵

³⁵⁴ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

³⁵⁵ House of Lords (2016) Bus Services Bill: A Bill to Make Provision About Bus Services; And for Connected Purposes, 19 May 2016

- 6.3.85. The House of Lords recently amended the Bill so that all LTAs can apply for franchising powers. However, at the time of writing, this amendment has not been agreed by the Government.³⁵⁶
- 6.3.86. The Parliamentary Transport Committee argues that many consider the provisions in the original Bill, which require a potentially long and cumbersome process, could hinder the benefits of franchising to rural areas, which are already bearing the brunt of local authority reductions to subsidised bus services.³⁵⁷
- 6.3.87. While it may be easier for metropolitan areas to achieve the Bill's aspiration for greater network integration, this can also be achieved in more rural authorities. The success of the franchised arrangement in the States of Jersey, outlined earlier, offers one clear illustration.
- 6.3.88. Kent also has clear potential for greater network integration, particularly with Transport for London. The new major development in the Thameside area is already served by both TfL and Kent's commercially operated services. Also, the adjacency of two Kent districts to the Transport for London area offers further opportunities for more integrated service provision.³⁵⁸
- 6.3.89. The Devolution Deal for Cornwall sets a precedent, as it includes proposals whereby this Council – subject to the Bill receiving Royal Assent - will become the first large, rural authority in the country to be given powers to franchise bus services.³⁵⁹
- 6.3.90. The Government's rationale in the original Bill for giving only Mayoral combined authorities automatic access to franchising powers because they have clear, centralised decision-making powers for transport can be disputed. For instance, Essex County Council and Cornwall Council already have similar accountability structures through elected councillors acting as executive Cabinet members. As a commissioning and councillor-led authority, KCC is also well placed to carry out rigorous assessments of the move to Franchising, as authorities with elected Mayors.³⁶⁰
- 6.3.91. In view of the above, the Committee recommends that KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport writes to the Secretary of State for Transport to reiterate support for the Lords' amendment.

³⁵⁶ House of Commons Transport Committee (2016) Bus Services Bill: Eight Report of Session 2016-17

³⁵⁷ Ibid

³⁵⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

³⁵⁹ KPMG (2016) Local Bus Market Study: Report to the Department of Transport

³⁶⁰ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Bill Inquiry: Written Evidence Submitted by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport for Kent County Council

Municipal bus companies

- 6.3.92. The prohibition on LTAs from setting up new bus operators is one of the more controversial aspects of the Bill. The Government's rationale for this prohibition is that a local authority that is specifying services should not also own a bus company which can bid for those services because of potential conflicts of interest.³⁶¹
- 6.3.93. Evidence from a number of bus operators reiterates the concern over potential conflicts of interest. However, the vast majority of evidence supports the removal of this clause from the Bill. A number of sources point to the particularly good performance of existing municipal bus operators, such as those in Reading, Nottingham and Edinburgh. It is also argued that municipal bus operators tend to be more accountable to local communities and passengers than those in the private sector.³⁶²
- 6.3.94. In some cases the setting up of a municipal company may be a necessity. For instance, Cornwall Council reported that the recent failure of a number of local bus companies required the Authority to run a service, as a last resort, to fill the gap in provision. This is a particularly concerning issue in rural areas, where bus services tend to be less commercially viable and there are fewer public transport alternatives.³⁶³
- 6.3.95. The Bill was recently amended to remove this prohibition. However, at the time of writing, this amendment has not been agreed by the House of Commons.³⁶⁴
- 6.3.96. The Committee understands operators' concerns about authorities' potential conflict of interests. However, the Committee believes that there are circumstances in which it would be appropriate, or even necessary, to set up a municipal bus company. The Committee therefore supports the removal of this prohibition and asks that the Government accepts the amendment.

Recommendation 17

The Committee believes that the Bus Services Bill should extend franchising powers to all local authorities in England and Wales and should allow the formation of municipal bus companies. The Committee recommends that KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport writes to the Secretary of State for Transport expressing these views.

³⁶¹ House of Commons Transport Committee (2016) Bus Services Bill: Eight Report of Session 2016-17

³⁶² Ibid

³⁶³ Ibid

³⁶⁴ Ibid



7. Conclusion

Buses are socially, economically and environmentally indispensable because they connect people to jobs, public services and leisure amenities, as well as helping to reduce carbon emissions. However, bus provision in England is currently under significant financial pressure, as subsidies for bus operators, and support for them by local authorities, have been severely curtailed.

The resulting reductions in bus services can have a negative impact on local communities, and can be particularly acute for the most vulnerable residents – such as the elderly, the disabled and the unemployed - who tend to rely more on bus transport. The reduction in bus services may also lead to an increase in car usage and, therefore, to more environmental pollution.

These challenging economic circumstances, and the desire to innovate and to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of bus services, have led the Select Committee to explore the current delivery model of bus transport in Kent, assess the extent to which KCC can afford to support this model, and explore alternative options.

The Committee found that the Authority is working hard, in collaboration with local bus operators and other organisations, to provide quality bus services for Kent residents. But the evidence suggests that more can and should be done.

The Bus Services Bill, and the Franchising model of bus service provision in particular, offer a real opportunity to maximise the full benefits that buses offer and, as a result, to significantly improve the lives of the people of Kent.



Appendix 1

Evidence

Oral Evidence

The list includes a summary of the key topics discussed in each session.

Tuesday 27 September 2016

- **Phil Lightowler, Head of Public Transport, Kent County Council**
 - Legislation and regulations in relation to bus transport in the UK
 - Overview of the structure and operation of the current model of bus transport in Kent
- **Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Kent County Council**
 - KCC's main responsibilities in relation to the delivery of bus transport in Kent
 - Discussion of the main achievements and challenges associated with local bus services

Friday 30 September 2016

- **Philip Norwell, Managing Director, Stagecoach South East**
 - Overview of the structure and operations of Stagecoach in Kent
 - Roles and responsibilities of Stagecoach in relation to the delivery of bus transport in Kent
 - Key opportunities and challenges facing Stagecoach
 - Views on the opportunities and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill
- **Mike Bartram, Bus Policy Advisor, Transport Focus**
 - Bus passengers' priorities for bus service improvement
 - Extent of passengers' engagement in decisions about bus service delivery
 - Views on the opportunities and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill

- **James Coe, Policy and Public Affairs Executive, Community Transport Association**
 - Main issues and opportunities associated with the provision and delivery of community transport
 - Role of access, inclusion and social value in bus transport delivery models
 - The Bus Services Bill and community consultation

Monday 10 October 2016

- **Phil Lightowler, Head of Public Transport, Kent County Council**
 - Main concessionary travel schemes supported by KCC
 - Criteria adopted by KCC to determine its bus services' support
- **Norman Kemp, Co-owner, Nu-Venture, and Chair of the Kent & Medway branch of the Confederation of Passenger Transport.**
 - Overview of the structure and operations of Nu-Venture in Kent
 - Main challenges and opportunities faced by smaller bus operators in Kent
 - The effects of the Bus Services Bill on smaller bus operators
- **Anne Clark, Managing Director, MCL Transport Consultants**
 - Operation of KCC concessionary travel schemes
 - Views on the opportunities and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill
- **Claude Evele, Joseph Horsnell, Arpana Rai and Charlotte Swaine, Kent Youth County Council Transport Committee**
 - Key local bus transport issues from young persons' perspectives
 - Opportunities and challenges associated with the Kent Young Person's Travel Pass

Tuesday 18 October 2016

- **Keith Harrison, Chief Executive of Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK)**
 - Bus service provision in rural Kent
 - Main issues and opportunities associated with the provision and delivery of community transport in Kent
 - Main benefits and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill
- **Dai Powell, Chief Executive, and Julia Meek, Head of Business Development, HCT Group**
 - Outline of the HCT Group in terms of its operations and objectives
 - Account of the States of Jersey's model of bus transport and of HCT Group's experience of the franchising process
 - Main benefits and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill
- **Cllr Bernard Heyes, and Chris Miller, Parking, Highways and Transportation Manager, Ashford Borough Council**
 - Outline of the structure and main operations of the Ashford Quality Bus Partnership
 - Key achievements of the Partnership
 - Key challenges facing the Partnership
 - Views on the Bus Services Bill

Tuesday 25 October 2016

- **Heath Williams, Regional Managing Director for Arriva Southern Counties**
 - Overview of the structure and operations of Arriva in Kent
 - Roles and responsibilities of Arriva in relation to the delivery of bus transport in Kent
 - Key opportunities and challenges facing Arriva
 - Main benefits and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill
- **Ruth Goudie, Senior Transportation Officer, Canterbury City Council**
 - Outline of the structure and main operations of the Canterbury Quality Bus Partnership
 - Key achievements of the Partnership
 - Key challenges facing the Partnership
 - Views on the Bus Services Bill

- **Stephen Joseph, Chief Executive, Campaign for Better Transport**
 - Bus passengers' priorities for bus service improvement
 - Extent of passengers' engagement in decisions about bus service delivery
 - Views on the opportunities and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill

Friday 28 October 2016

- **Stephen Elsdon, Chief Executive, Compaid, and Steve Pay, Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager, Kent County Council**
 - Outline of the main services provided by Kent Karrier and Compaid
 - Extent of KCC's involvement in the operation and delivery of local community transport schemes
 - Main issues and opportunities associated with the provision and delivery of local community transport
 - Local community transport and information sharing
- **Diana Beamish, Jean Bentley, Brian Gasson, Frank McConnell and Veronica McGannon, Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum**
 - Importance of bus transport and concessionary bus travel schemes to senior Kent residents
 - Views on the current quality of local bus service provision
 - Extent to which current bus service provision meets the needs of Kent communities
 - Extent of Kent residents' engagement in decisions about local bus service delivery
- **Councillor David Burton, Maidstone Borough Council**
 - Outline of the structure and main operations of the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership
 - Key achievements of the Partnership
 - Key challenges facing the Partnership
 - Views on the Bus Services Bill

Wednesday 2 November 2016

- **Phil Lightowler, Head of Public Transport, Steve Pay, Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager, and Dan Bruce, Infrastructure and Development Senior Officer, Kent County Council**
 - Session to discuss and clarify any final issues

Written Evidence

- **Mike Bartram, Bus Policy Adviser, Transport Focus**
- **James Coe, Policy and Public Affairs Executive, Community Transport Association**
- **East Kent Seniors Forum**
- **Roland Eglington, Commercial Director, Chalkwell**
- **Stephen Elsdon, Chief Executive, Compaid**
- **Ruth Goudie, Senior Transportation Officer, Canterbury City Council**
- **Keith Harrison, Chief Executive of Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK)**
- **Cllr Bernard Heyes, Ashford Borough Council**
- **Norman Kemp, Co-owner, Nu-Venture, and Chair of the Kent & Medway branch of the Confederation of Passenger Transport**
- **Kent Youth County Council (KYCC) Transport Committee**
- **Julia Meek, Head of Business Development, HCT Group**
- **Philip Norwell, Managing Director, Stagecoach South East**
- **Oxfordshire County Council**
- **Public Transport division, Kent County Council**
- **Senior Citizens Forum for the Towns and Villages of Dover District**
- **Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum**
- **States of Jersey**
- **Swale Seniors Forum**
- **Tunbridge Wells Over Fifties Forum**

Visits

Friday 28 October 2016

- **Stagecoach, newly built bus depot, Herne Bay**

Appendix 2

Glossary of Abbreviations

BSOG: Bus Service Operators Grant

DDA: Disability Discrimination Act

DfT: Department for Transport

DVSA: Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency

ENCTS: English National Concessionary Travel Scheme

EP: Enhanced Partnership

GIF: Growth Infrastructure Framework

K16+TC: Kent 16+ Travel Card

LEP: Local Enterprise Partnership

LTA: Local Transport Authority

LTP: Local Transport Plan

PSV: Public Service Vehicle

QBP: Quality Bus Partnership

QCS: Quality Contracts Scheme

RPI: Retail Price Index

SQPS: Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme

TCA: Travel Concession Authority

TfL: Transport for London

TOC: Train Operating Company

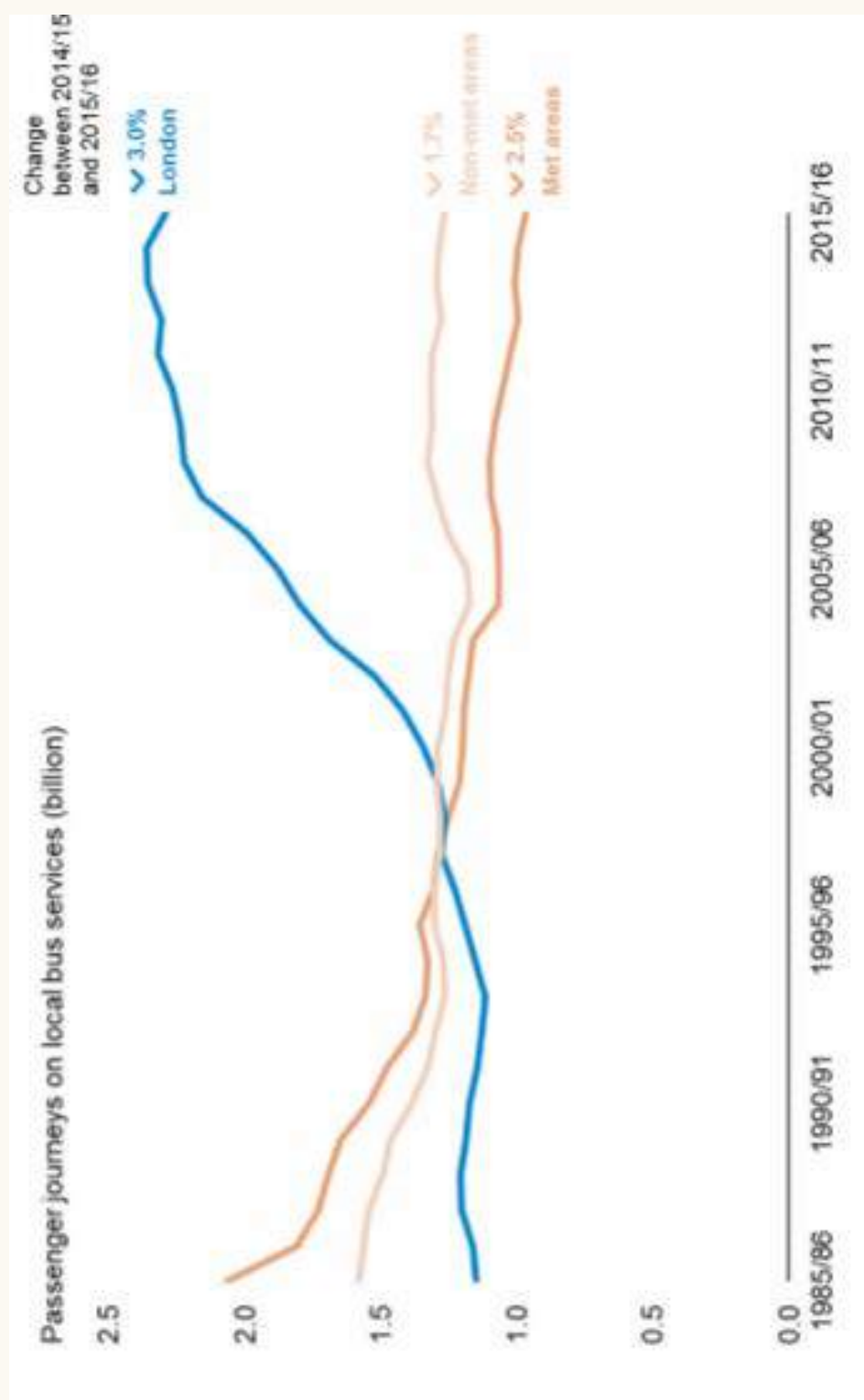
YPTP: Young Person's Travel Pass

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Appendix 3

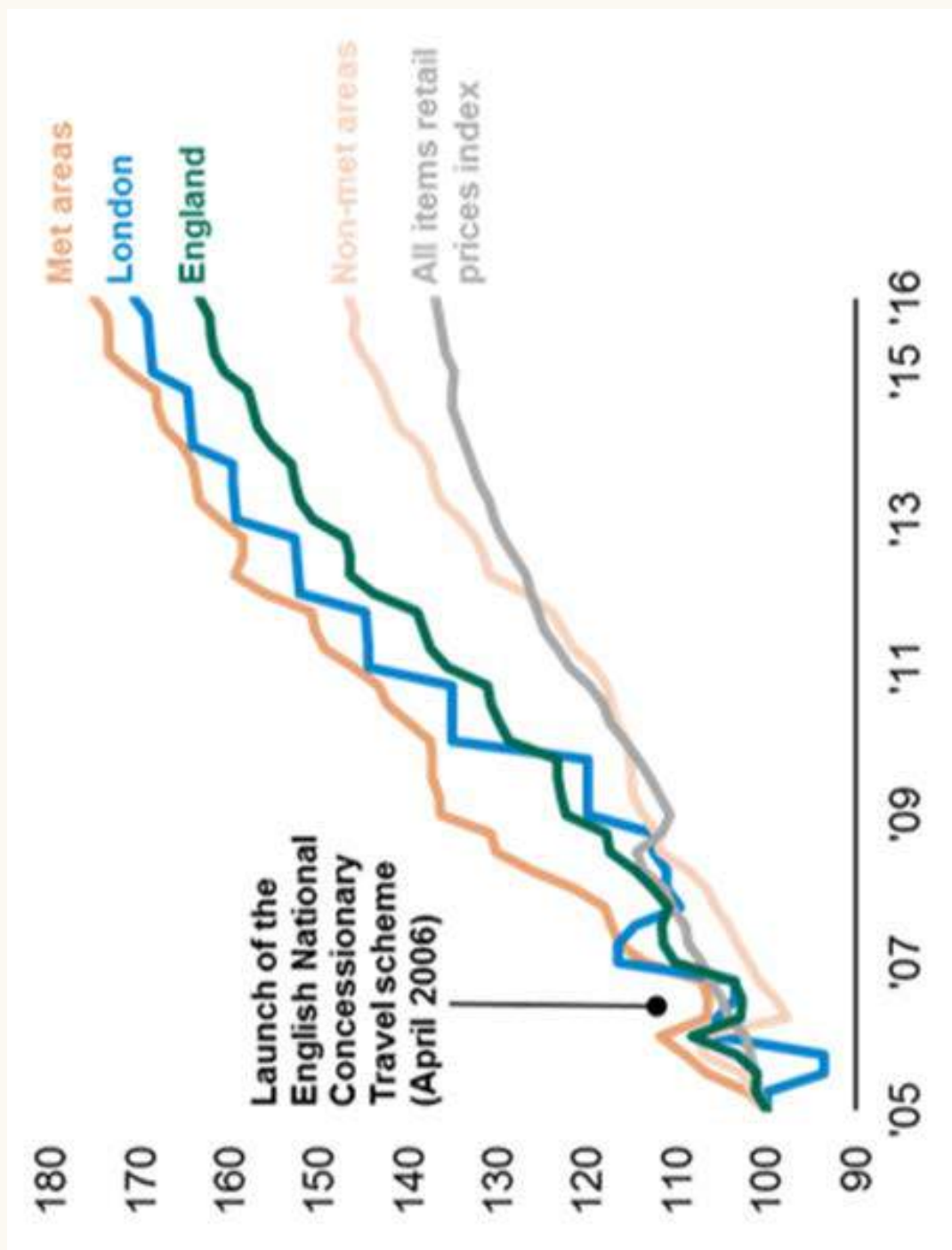
Tables and Charts

Figure 1: Local bus passenger journeys by area type: England, 1985-86 to 2015-16



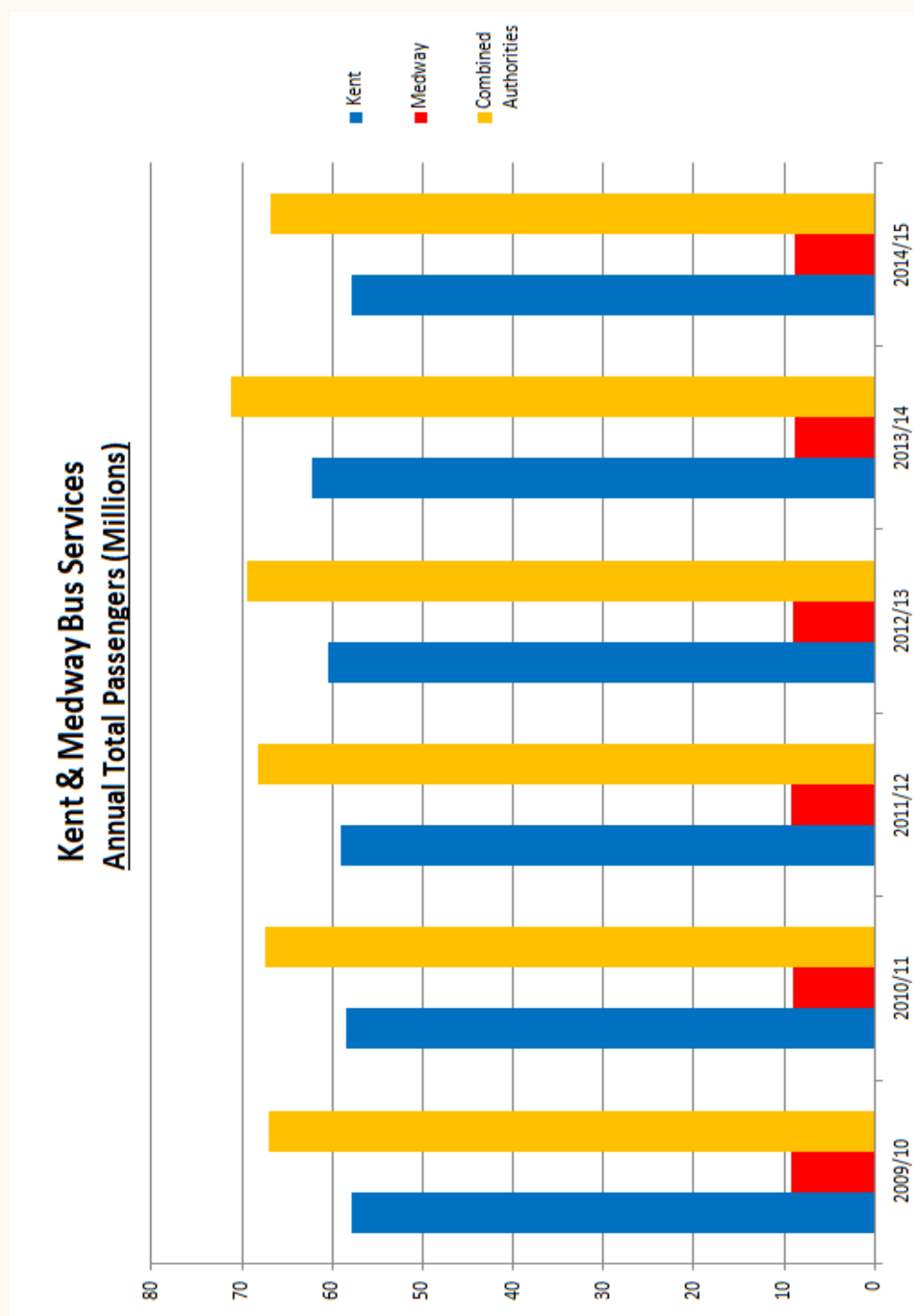
Source: Department for Transport, Annual Bus Statistics, England 2015-16

Figure 2: Local bus fares index by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly March 2005 to March 2016, current prices



Source: Department for Transport, Annual Bus Statistics, England 2015-16

Figure 3: Passenger journeys on local bus services, Kent and Medway, 2009-10 to 2015-16 (millions)



Source: Public Transport division, Kent County Council, 2016

Appendix 4

Background

The way in which bus services are supported and delivered in England is complex. This appendix provides some background information.

The appendix outlines the reasons for the current interest in bus transport, before supplying key data on current national and local bus service provision.

Finally, the appendix explores some of the key national and local policies and strategies that drive and govern this complex but vital service.

1.1. Why now?

- 1.1.1. Bus patronage outside London has been falling for many years. On the eve of deregulation in 1986, 3.65 billion bus journeys were made in England outside London. By 2014-5 this figure had fallen to 2.24 billion – the third successive year in which bus use was higher in London than in the rest of England combined.^{365 366}
- 1.1.2. The decline in bus use has been most acute in small towns and more dispersed rural areas. Cuts to key revenue streams, such as the 20% cut to the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG), and similar cuts to local authorities' current expenditure on local public transport (19.7%), seem to be amongst the key causes for this decline.^{367 368}
- 1.1.3. For the last 30 years KCC has subsidised some routes which, though not commercially viable, have been considered important to the needs of local communities. While the Authority has endeavoured to protect these subsidies, the reduction of central government funds has required a careful consideration of the extent to which KCC can afford to support local bus transport, and has encouraged fresh thinking about how effective bus services can continue to be provided with more limited resources.³⁶⁹
- 1.1.4. Concern about the decline of bus use outside London has sparked renewed political interest in bus transport. The recent Bus Services Bill offers a number of tools to help local authorities and bus operators to unlock the potential of the bus industry to provide more efficient and effective services that meet the needs of local communities.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁵ Department for Transport (2015) Annual Bus Statistics: England 2015-16

³⁶⁶ Institute for Public Policy Research (2015) Total Transport Authorities: A New Deal for Town and Rural Bus Services, London

³⁶⁷ HM Treasury (2014) Country and Regional Analyses: Interactive Tables [online]
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/country-and-regional-analysis-2014>

³⁶⁸ Institute for Public Policy Research (2015) Total Transport Authorities: A New Deal for Town and Rural Bus Services, London

³⁶⁹ Kent County Council (2016) Review of KCC Funded Bus Services: Consultation Document and Questionnaire, Maidstone

³⁷⁰ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

1.2. The Benefits of Buses

- 1.2.1. Buses are the most used form of public transport in England, accounting for more than 60% of all public transport trips. In 2014-15, the number of passenger journeys by bus was over 4.65 billion.³⁷¹
- 1.2.2. The networks of buses that serve communities in England are essential. Buses support local economies by linking workers with jobs and customers with shops and leisure opportunities. They provide critical services for those without access to a car, including many young people, pensioners, disabled people, those on low pay or who are out of work, and people who are disadvantaged in other ways.³⁷²
- 1.2.3. Buses have five major social and economic benefits. First, they support the **labour market**. More people travel to work by bus than by all other forms of public transport combined. About 2.5 million jobs are accessed by bus every day, and a further 1 million people use the bus as alternative transport if their primary method of transport fails.³⁷³ Combined, this accounts for about 12% of the working population and £64 billion of gross value added.³⁷⁴ Indeed, one in 10 bus commuters would be forced to look for another job if they were no longer able to commute by bus.³⁷⁵ 77% of jobseekers have no regular access to a car, van or motorbike and rely on using buses.³⁷⁶
- 1.2.4. Second, bus transport supports the **local economy**. The Institute for Transport Studies estimated that bus users make 1.4 billion shopping trips per year, spending a total of £27 billion; they also make 471 million trips for leisure annually, spending £6.2 billion.^{377 378}
- 1.2.5. Third, buses help to **link people with local services**. Buses play a vital role in enabling access to education, with 50% of students depending on bus services.³⁷⁹ Buses are also important in terms of allowing people to access hospitals because many people who need to do so tend to be less willing or able to use other means of transport.³⁸⁰

³⁷¹ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

³⁷² Institute for Public Policy Research (2015) Total Transport Authorities: A New Deal for Town and Rural Bus Services, London

³⁷³ Mackie, P., Laird, J. and Johnson, D. (2012) Buses and Economic Growth: Main Report, Institute for Transport Studies [online] <http://www.greenerjourneys.com/2012/07/buses-economic-growth-making-the-link-new-report/>

³⁷⁴ Ibid

³⁷⁵ Ibid

³⁷⁶ Greener Journeys (2016) The Benefits to Business of Investing in Bus Infrastructure, LEP Transport Workshop, 22 January 2016

³⁷⁷ Mackie, P., Laird, J. and Johnson, D. (2012) Buses and Economic Growth: Main Report, Institute for Transport Studies [online] <http://www.greenerjourneys.com/2012/07/buses-economic-growth-making-the-link-new-report/>

³⁷⁸ Greener Journeys (2016) The Benefits to Business of Investing in Bus Infrastructure, LEP Transport Workshop, 22 January 2016

³⁷⁹ Greener Journeys (2016) The Benefits to Business of Investing in Bus Infrastructure, LEP Transport Workshop, 22 January 2016

³⁸⁰ Department for Transport (2014b) Table ACS0204: Users with Reasonable Access to Key Services by Mode of Travel, by Rural and Urban Areas, England, from 2007 [online] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/acs02-availability-of-transport-to-key-services>

- 1.2.6. Fourth, **concessionary travel schemes** for older and disabled people have been very successful in terms of giving them the ability to travel freely: in 2013-14 alone, these schemes delivered more than 1 billion trips to 9.73 million pass-holders.³⁸¹ It is estimated that every £1 spent on concessionary bus travel generates at least £2.87 in benefits to bus-pass users and to the wider economy, in the form of reduced congestion, improvements in health and wellbeing, the encouragement of volunteering activities, and other positive impacts (Greener Journeys 2015).³⁸²
- 1.2.7. Finally, buses help to reduce both **congestion** on roads and carbon and other emissions, thereby improving the quality of life. Research has shown that congestion not only costs fuel and time but, through the emissions that it generates, also has significant public health impacts.³⁸³ More than a quarter of CO₂ emissions in the UK are due to road use,³⁸⁴ and traffic congestion is known to increase these emissions significantly.³⁸⁵

³⁸¹ Department for Transport (2014c) Bus Statistics: Concessionary Travel in England, 2013-14, [online] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/357055/concessionary-travel-statistics.pdf

³⁸² Greener Journeys (2015) Bus 2020: The Case for the Bus Pass [online] <http://www.greenerjourneys.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/GJ-Bus-2020-brochure-single-pages.pdf>

³⁸³ Levy, J., Buonocore, J. and von Stackelberg, K. (2010) Evaluation of the Public Health Impacts of Traffic Congestion: A Health Risk Assessment, *Environmental Health* 9 (65), [online] <http://www.ehjournal.net/content/9/1/65>

³⁸⁴ Department for Energy and Climate Change (2015) Provisional UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions National Statistics 2014 [online] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provisional-uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-2014>

³⁸⁵ Centre for Economics and Business Research (2014) The Future Economic and Environmental Costs of Gridlock in 2030 [online] http://inrix.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Whitepaper_Cebr-Cost-of-Congestion.pdf

1.3. Bus Transport in England

- 1.3.1. The majority of bus services in England are provided by private companies, following the deregulation of the industry in 1986. Services can be run on a purely commercial basis or with financial support from local authorities. London services are operated by private companies but regulated by Transport for London (TfL).³⁸⁶
- 1.3.2. There are two broad passenger types: concessionary and non-concessionary passengers. Concessionary passengers are either older or disabled people who have been able to travel free of charge anywhere in England since April 2008, or young people in local authorities where such discretionary travel schemes exist.³⁸⁷
- 1.3.3. Figure 1 shows the annual figures for bus passenger journeys and mileage for the 2015-16 financial year (figures are broken down into London, metropolitan areas and non-metropolitan areas).

Figure 1: Local bus passenger journeys and mileage by area type: England, 2014-15 to 2015-16

	Passenger journeys			Vehicle mileage		
2015/16 figures in billion / billion miles and change compared with 2014/15						
London	2.29	⬇️	-3.0%	0.30	⬆️	0.6%
English metropolitan areas	0.97	⬇️	-2.5%	0.32	⬇️	-2.9%
English non-metropolitan areas	1.27	⬇️	-1.7%	0.63	⬇️	-2.7%
England outside London	2.24	⬇️	-2.1%	0.95	⬇️	-2.8%
England	4.53	⬇️	-2.6%	1.25	⬇️	-2.0%

Source: Department for Transport, Annual Bus Statistics, England 2015-16

³⁸⁶ Department for Transport (2015) Annual Bus Statistics: England 2015-16

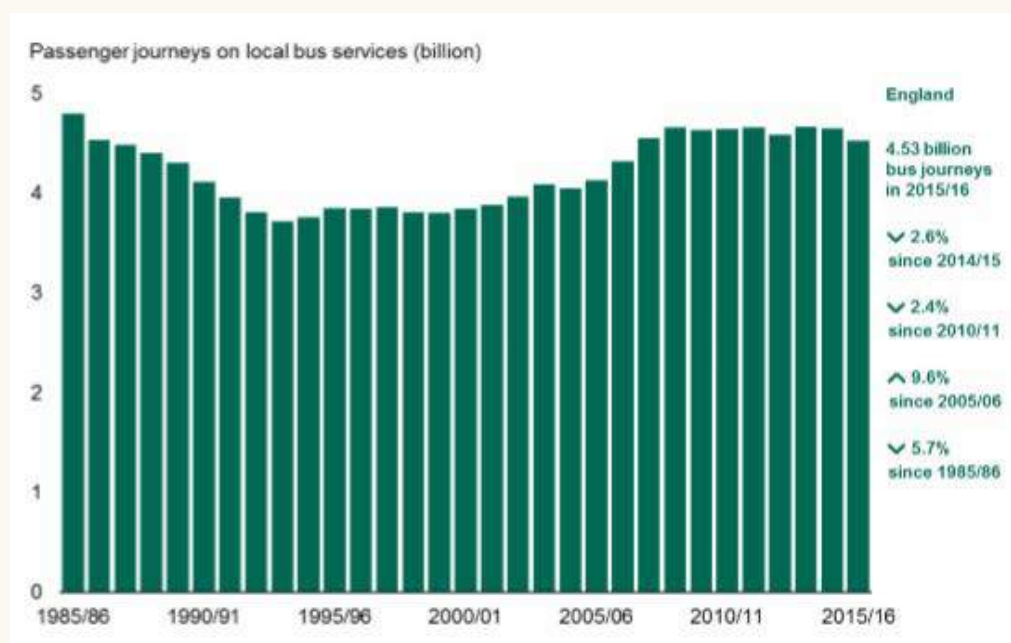
³⁸⁷ Ibid

Passenger journeys on local bus services

1.3.4. In 2015-16, 4.53 billion passenger journeys were made by bus in England; this is a decrease by 119 million journeys (2.6%) when compared with 2014-15.³⁸⁸

1.3.5. Figure 2 shows the trend in bus journeys between 1985-86 – the year before the deregulation of the bus market - and 2015-16. Bus use fell in the early 1990s before increasing again until 2010. Over the last five years it has gradually decreased by 2.4%. It is now 3.2% lower than in 1985-86.³⁸⁹

Figure 2: Local bus passenger journeys in England, 1985-86 to 2015-16



Department for Transport, Annual Bus Statistics, England 2015-16

1.3.6. In 2014-15 total concessionary journeys (elderly or disabled people, and young people's concessions) made up 34% (or 1.53 billion) of all bus passenger journeys in England. In England outside London 30% of journeys were elderly or disabled concessionary journeys, twice the proportion in London.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁸ Ibid

³⁸⁹ Ibid

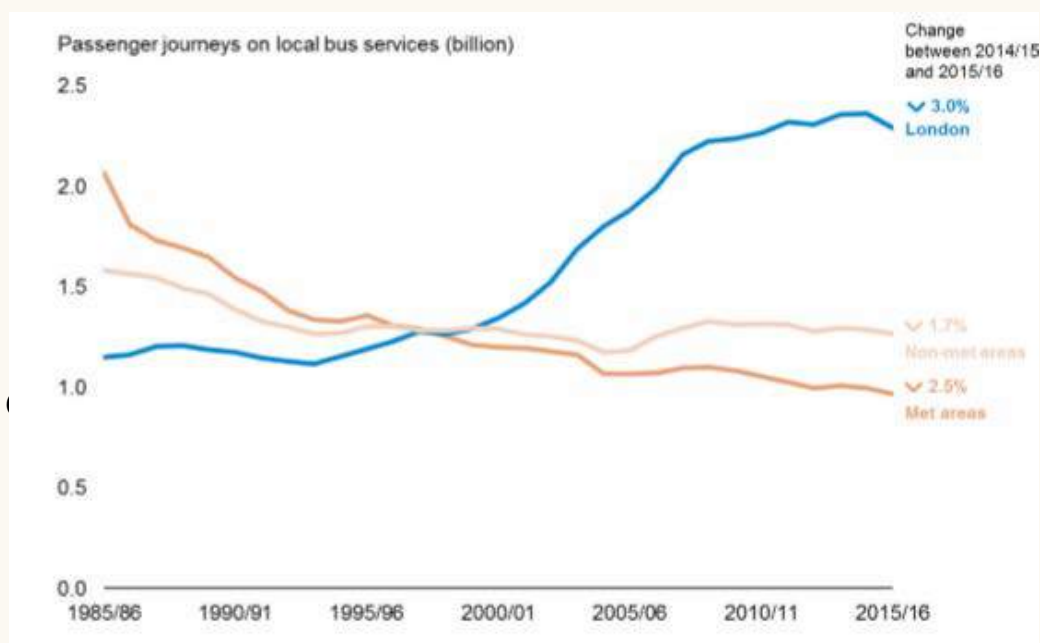
³⁹⁰ Ibid

Bus use in London and in England outside London

1.3.7. Since 2012-13 bus use in England outside London continued its steady decline, and bus use in London decreased for the first time. Local bus passenger journeys decreased in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in 2015-16. In metropolitan areas there were 0.97 billion passenger journeys, a decrease of 2.5% compared with 2014-15. In non-metropolitan areas there were 1.27 billion passenger journeys, a decrease of 1.7%. Bus use in England outside London has decreased since its recent peak in 2008-09 of 2.43 billion passenger journeys to 2.24 billion passenger journeys.³⁹¹

1.3.8. There were 2.29 billion passenger journeys in London in 2015-16, a decrease of 3.0% compared with 2014-15 and the first decrease since 2012-13. Before 2012-13, bus use in London increased every year from 1998-99. Transport for London identifies increased congestion and road works as likely factors that have affected bus performance including bus speeds. Bus use in London in 2015-16, however, was 21.9% higher than in 2005-06 and accounted for over half (50.6%) of all bus journeys in England (Figure 3).³⁹²

Figure 3: Local bus passenger journeys by area type: England, 1985-86 to 2015-16



Source: Department for Transport, Annual Bus Statistics, England 2015-16

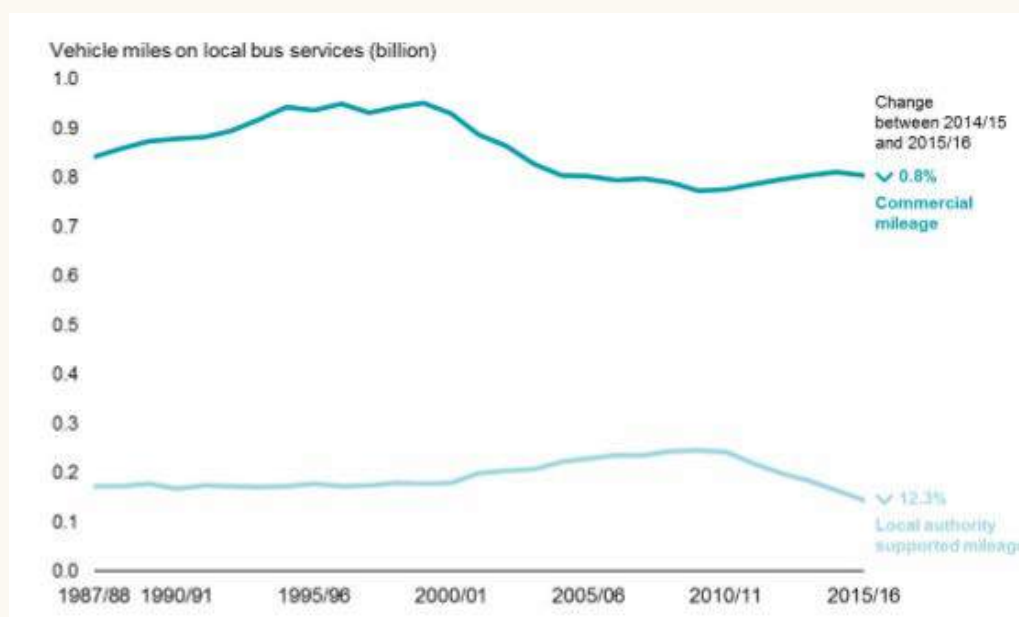
³⁹¹ Ibid

³⁹² Ibid

Commercial and local authority supported bus mileage

1.3.9. In England outside London bus mileage has declined by 7.9% since 2005-06. This has mainly been due to a decrease of 36.7% in local authority supported mileage, in particular in non-metropolitan areas. Supported mileage in England outside London as a percentage of total mileage was 17.0% in 1987-88. Supported mileage reached its highest proportion in 2009-10 at 24.2%. Figure 4 shows the decrease in supported mileage since then to 15.2%. The chart also shows that commercial mileage has grown since 2009-10 but at a slower rate than the rate of decrease in supported mileage.³⁹³

Figure 4: Vehicle miles on local bus services by service type, England outside London, 1987-88 to 2015-16



Source: Department for Transport, Annual Bus Statistics, England 2015-16

1.3.10. Overall, the decline in supported mileage has not been fully matched by an increase in commercial mileage. Another part of the public transport network in a local authority is flexible or demand responsive modes of transport, including community transport. These forms of transport are unlikely to be captured by these statistics because the annual bus survey is completed by operators holding a Public Service Vehicle (PSV) licence rather than the Section 19 and 22 permits that the majority of “community” transport organisations operate under.³⁹⁴

³⁹³ Ibid

³⁹⁴ Ibid

Bus fleet

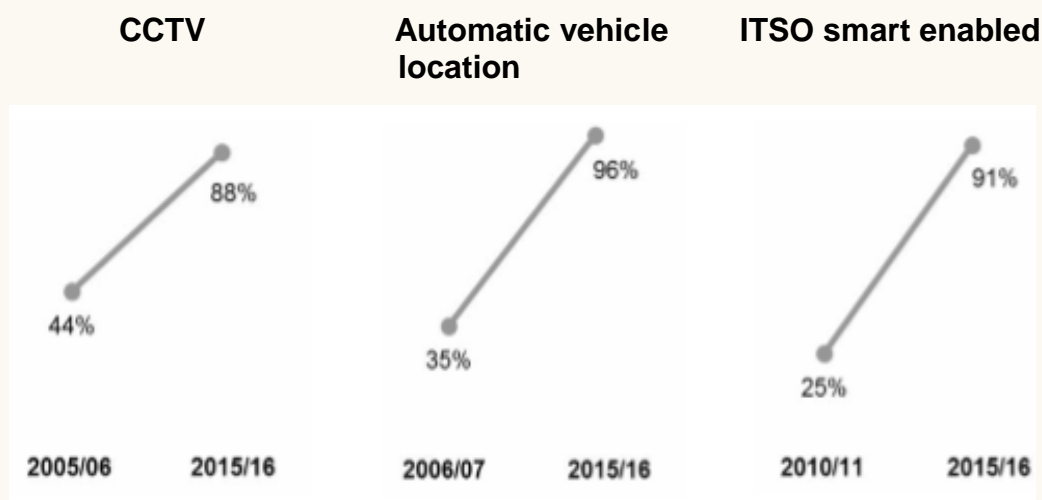
1.3.11. The number of buses used by local bus operators has remained at around 35,000 buses over the last 10 years. About a quarter of these buses are used in London. The average age of a bus in England in 2016 was 7.6 years.³⁹⁵

Bus accessibility

1.3.12. Bus accessibility has improved rapidly. In the last ten years the percentage of buses in England issued with an accessibility certificate has increased steadily from 33% (2005-6) to 94% (2015-16).³⁹⁶

1.3.13. Figure 5 below also shows a rapid increase in the amount of equipment on buses over the last decade.³⁹⁷

Figure 5: Equipment on buses, England, 2005-6 to 2015-16



Source: Department for Transport, Annual Bus Statistics, England 2015-16

³⁹⁵ Ibid

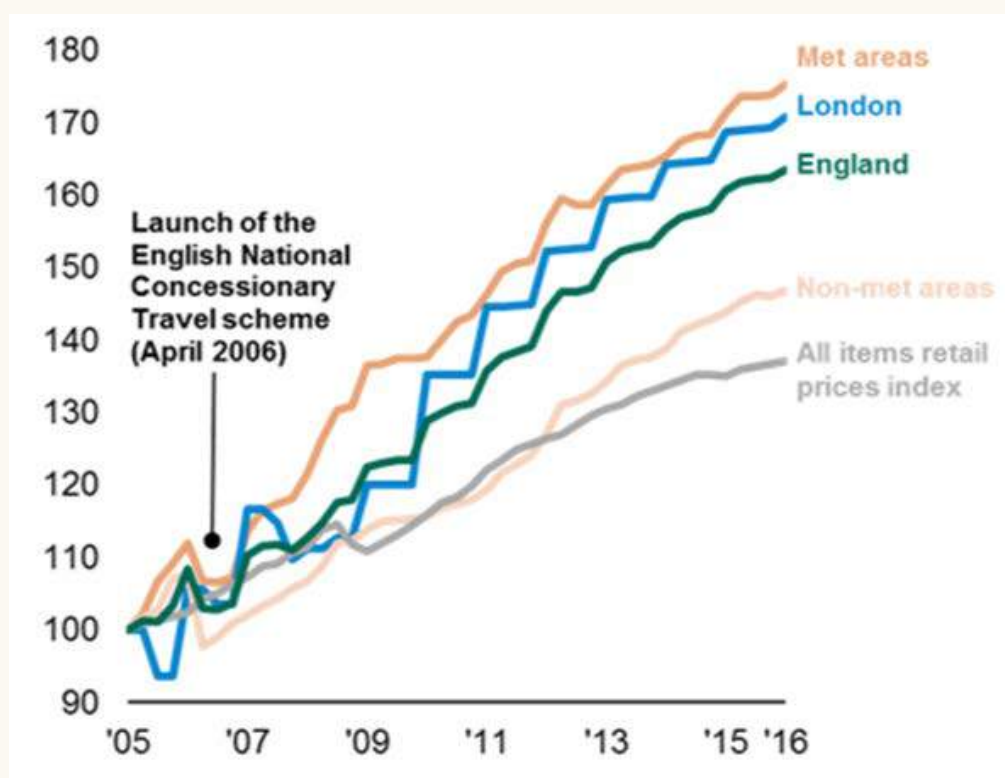
³⁹⁶ Ibid

³⁹⁷ Ibid

Bus fares

- 1.3.14. In the past year local bus fares in England have increased by 1.8%. This is similar to the annual all items Retail Price Index (RPI) rate of inflation (1.6%). However, between March 2011 and March 2016 the average annual increase in bus fares (3.8%) was higher than the average annual rate of inflation (2.3%).³⁹⁸
- 1.3.15. Local bus fares in England increased by 63% on average between March 2005 and March 2016. Bus fares have risen at a faster rate in metropolitan areas (75%) than in non-metropolitan areas (47%). The RPI has risen by 37% over the same period, which means that bus fares have risen significantly in real terms (Figure 6).³⁹⁹

Figure 6: Local bus fares index by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly March 2005 to March 2016, current prices



Source: Department for Transport, Annual Bus Statistics, England 2015-16

³⁹⁸ Ibid

³⁹⁹ Ibid

Bus funding

- 1.3.16. Central and local government support for local bus services consists of payments for supported services, Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) and concessionary travel reimbursement.⁴⁰⁰
- 1.3.17. In 2014-15 the estimated total net support paid in England was £2.21 billion, of which £1.04 billion (47%) was for concessionary travel.⁴⁰¹
- 1.3.18. However, both the level and the composition of this funding have changed dramatically in recent years. There has been a relatively large fall in public sector funding for buses since 2010. While almost all government departments have faced cuts, those applied to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have been particularly severe. Between 2009-10 and 2015-16, the DCLG's current budget fell by £22.7 billion (65%) and its capital budget by £6.6 billion (67%).⁴⁰²
- 1.3.19. Also, the 2010 spending review cut 20% from the BSOG, which provides a subsidy to all local bus operators to reimburse them for some of the cost of fuel duty. These measures have caused - directly and indirectly - cutbacks to bus services, especially those in remote and rural areas where many routes are not commercially viable for bus operators.^{403 404} According to the Campaign for Better Transport, in 2015-16 local authorities in England saw a net reduction of £20.5 million in supported bus services funding; this was an 8.4% decrease since 2014-15 and a reduction of 25% since 2010-11 (£73.8 million).⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid

⁴⁰¹ Department for Transport (2015) Annual Bus Statistics: England 2015-16

⁴⁰² Institute for Public Policy Research (2015) Total Transport Authorities: A New Deal for Town and Rural Bus Services, London

⁴⁰³ Ibid

⁴⁰⁴ Department for Transport (2015) Annual Bus Statistics: England 2015-16

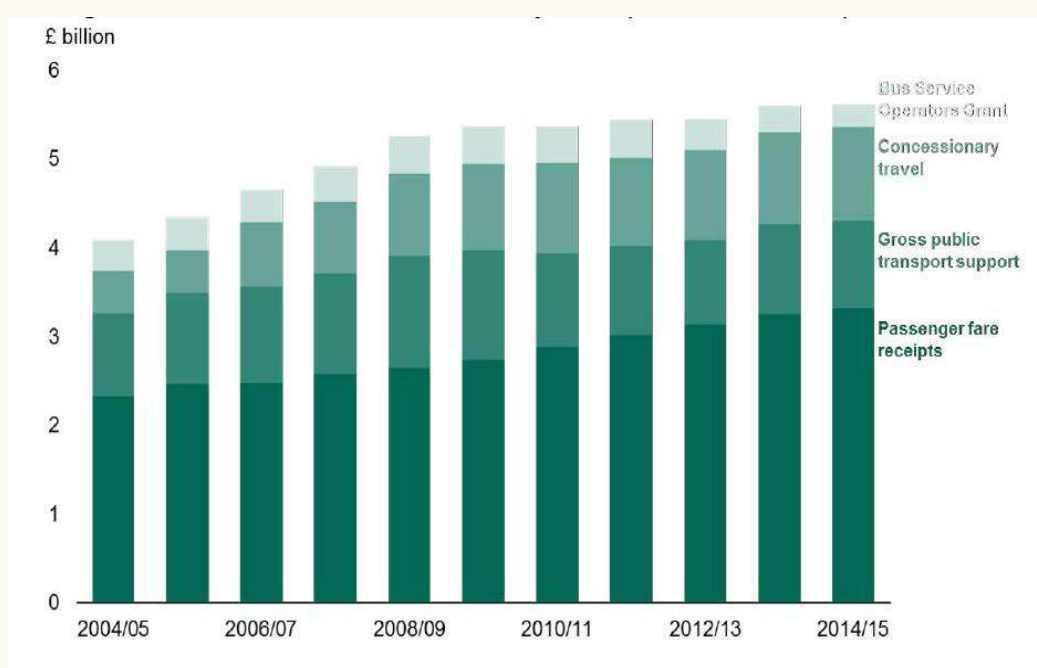
⁴⁰⁵ Campaign for Better Transport (2016) Buses in Crisis: A Report on Bus Funding Across England and Wales, 2010-2016

Operating revenues

1.3.20. In 2014-15, the total estimated operating revenue for local bus services in England was £5.61 billion. Passenger fare receipts made up the largest proportion: £3.32 billion (59%) (Figure 7). Between 2004-05 and 2014-15 the average revenue from passenger fares has increased each year by 1.2% in real terms.⁴⁰⁶

1.3.21. Operating revenue from concessionary fare reimbursement has more than doubled over the same period from £0.49 billion to £1.05 billion. This increase reflects the wider coverage of the concessionary travel scheme (moving from a local authority to a national scheme), increased eligibility and the growing proportion of elderly people in the wider population.⁴⁰⁷

Figure 7: Operating revenue for local bus services by revenue type: England, 2004-05 to 2014-15, current prices



Source: Department for Transport, Annual Bus Statistics, England 2014-15

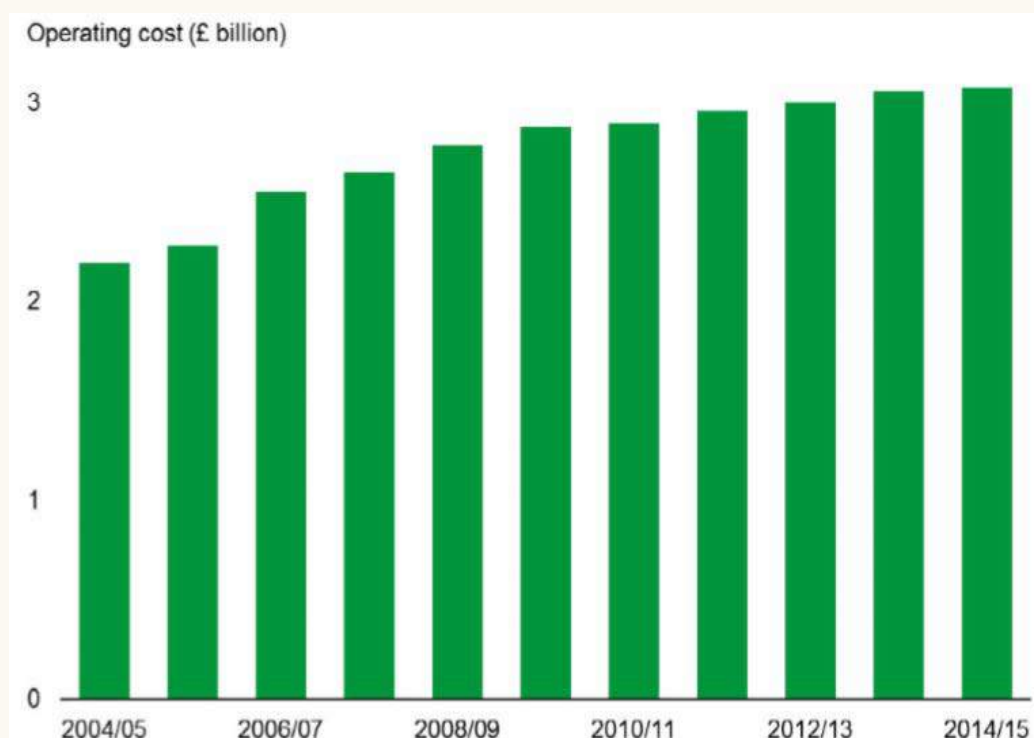
⁴⁰⁶ Ibid

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid

Operator costs

- 1.3.22. Between 2004-05 and 2014-15, in England outside London, operator costs for local bus services increased from £2.19 billion to £3.08 billion (Figure 8). This represents an average annual increase of 1.3% in real terms.⁴⁰⁸

Figure 8: Operating cost for local bus services: England outside London, 2004-05 to 2014-15, current prices



Source: Department for Transport, Annual Bus Statistics, England 2014-15

Bus service punctuality

- 1.3.23. In 2015-16, 82.6% of non-frequent services in England ran on time compared with 81.4% in 2010-11. 'On time' is defined as between 1 minute early and 5 minutes 59 seconds late. At regional level bus service punctuality varied between 80% and 87.2%. At local authority level there was greater variation ranging between 71% and 98%; in 2014-15 the figure for Kent was 89%.^{409 410}

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid

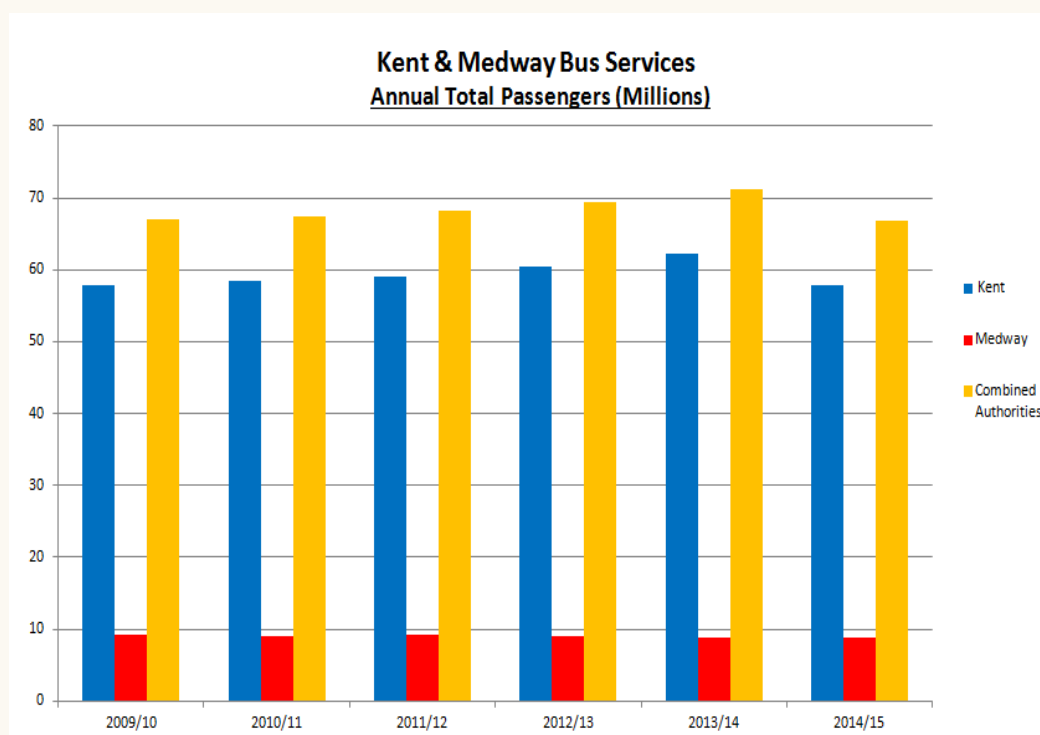
⁴⁰⁹ Ibid

⁴¹⁰ Department for Transport (2015) Non-Frequent Bus Services Running on Time by Local Authority: England, Annual from 2004-05

1.4. Bus Transport in Kent

1.4.1. The Kent bus network is extensive: when combined with the one in Medway, it is the most used network in the UK outside the Integrated Transport Authorities in large urban areas.⁴¹¹ The number of bus passenger journeys in Kent in 2015-16 was 55.6 million. This figure is similar to that in 2009-10 (57.8 million), although it has gradually decreased since 2013-14, where it peaked with 62.2 million journeys (Figure 9).⁴¹²

Figure 9: Passenger journeys on local bus services, Kent and Medway, 2009-10 to 2015-16 (millions)



Source: Public Transport division, Kent County Council, 2016

1.4.2. Approximately 97% of bus services in Kent are currently operated on a wholly commercial basis. KCC is not involved in decisions over routes, timetables and fares, as commercial services are licensed by the Department for Transport; the Authority only subsidises some routes which, though not commercially viable, have been considered important to the needs of local communities. More than 600 services are delivered on a commercial basis by over 50 private bus companies. The two main operators in the county are Arriva in the west and Stagecoach in the east.⁴¹³

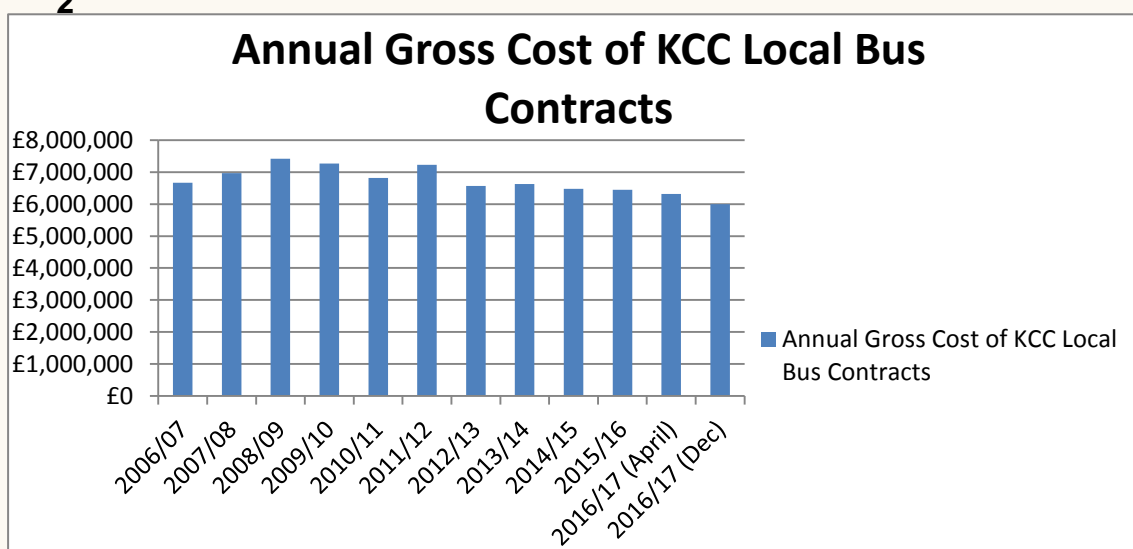
⁴¹¹ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Transport Select Committee, 27 September 2016

⁴¹² Department for Transport (2016) Passenger Journeys on Local Bus Services by Local Authority, England, from 2009-10

⁴¹³ Kent County Council (2016) Review of KCC Funded Bus Services: Consultation Document and Questionnaire, Maidstone

- 1.4.3. Local authorities can use their discretion to subsidise non-commercially viable routes to meet the needs of local communities. These services provide vital access to education, employment, shopping and healthcare, particularly for the households who do not have access to a car. They include many school and rural services, the local 'Kent Karrier' dial-a-ride schemes, and evening and weekend journeys on otherwise commercial routes.⁴¹⁴
- 1.4.4. In the last 10 years the amount of KCC subsidy increased from £6.6 million in 2006-7 to a peak of £7.4 million in 2008-9, before gradually decreasing to £6.4 million (or 2.3% of all bus services) in 2015-16 (Figure 10).^{415 416}

Figure 10: Annual gross cost of KCC local bus contracts, 2006-7 to 2



Source: Public Transport division, Kent County Council (2016)

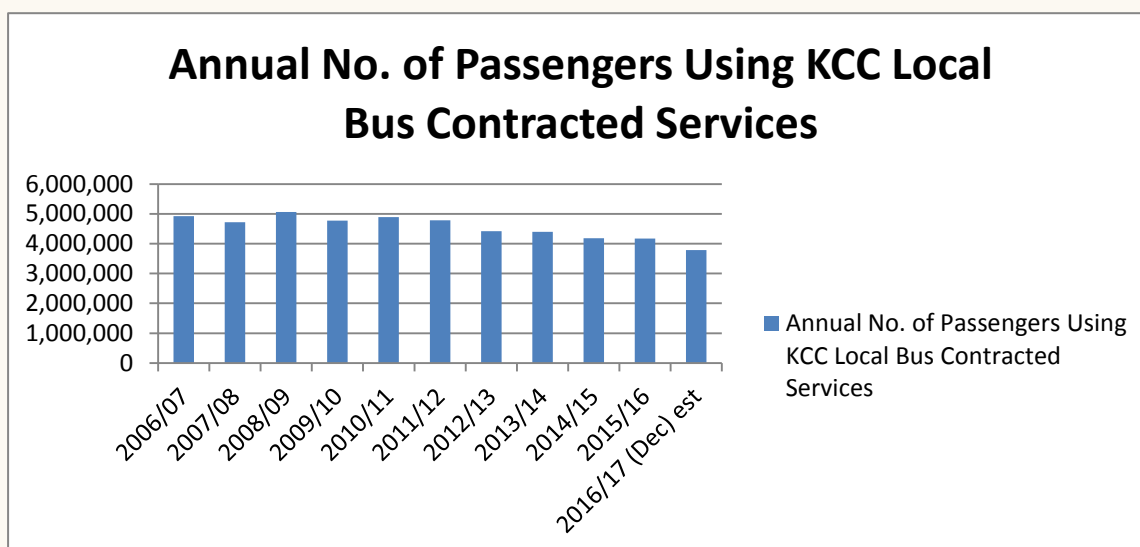
⁴¹⁴ Kent County Council (2011) Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-16, Maidstone

⁴¹⁵ Kent County Council (2016) Review of KCC Funded Bus Services: Consultation Document and Questionnaire, Maidstone

⁴¹⁶ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Select Committee, written evidence

1.4.5. The number of bus journeys made on subsidised routes in Kent has declined in the last 10 years, from 4.9 million in 2006-7 to 4.1 million in 2015-16 (Figure 11). The number of contracts covering subsidised routes has also gradually decreased from 191 in 2006-7 to 134 in 2015-16.⁴¹⁷

Figure 11: Annual number of passengers using KCC local contracted services, 2006-7 to 2016-17



Source: Public Transport division, Kent County Council (2016)

1.4.6. Although KCC does not directly influence the provision of commercial bus services, it does work closely with private bus operators to improve the quality of services and to ensure that the highway network facilitates the passage of buses. This relationship has been formalised through the signing of eight voluntary Quality Bus Partnership (QBP) agreements in Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Maidstone, Shepway, Swale, Thanet and Tunbridge Wells.⁴¹⁸

1.4.7. QBP agreements include commitments by the main bus companies, KCC and the relevant district council to collaborate to improve all aspects of bus travel and to increase passenger numbers.

⁴¹⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Bus Services Select Committee, written evidence

⁴¹⁸ Kent County Council (2011) Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-16, Maidstone

1.4.8. One of KCC's most successful public transport initiatives in recent years has been the planning and delivery of the Fastrack BRT scheme in Dartford and Gravesham. This scheme operates over an extensive network of bus priority measures in order to provide an attractive and sustainable alternative to car travel in the Thames Gateway Kent Growth Area. Patronage has exceeded expectations, with 1.75 million passenger journeys recorded in the first year of service. Fastrack has won a number of awards, including the 'Infrastructure' and 'Innovation' Award at the 2007 UK Bus Awards, and runner-up in the 'Outstanding Innovation in Public Transport' category at the 2010 International Transport Forum.⁴¹⁹

Key Points

- **There has been a significant fall in Government funding for buses in England since 2010.**
- **Passenger journeys on local bus services in England have decreased gradually over the last 5 years.**
- **The number of buses used by local bus operators in England has remained at similar levels over the last 10 years. Buses' equipment and accessibility have steadily improved.**
- **Operator costs in England have increased in real terms. Bus fares and operator revenue have also increased in real terms.**
- **The number of bus journeys in Kent is over 50 million but has gradually decreased since 2013.**
- **The number of bus journeys made on subsidised routes in Kent, and the amount of KCC subsidy, are decreasing.**

⁴¹⁹ Ibid

1.5. National Policies and Strategies

1.5.1. There are several national policies and strategies that govern bus transport in England. Some of the key ones are outlined below.

1.5.2. The **Transport Act 2000** made a number of reforms to local transport planning and delivery. These included the requirement for all local transport authorities in England, outside of London, to produce a local transport plan. It also granted new powers for local authorities to enter into quality partnerships with bus operators and to introduce road user charging schemes and workplace parking levies.⁴²⁰

1.5.3. The **Local Transport Act 2008** gives local authorities the power to take steps to meet local transport needs in the light of local circumstances. In particular, it:

- Gives local authorities some powers to improve the quality of local bus services.
- Allows for the appointment of an influential "bus passenger champion" to represent the interests of bus passengers.
- Gives local authorities the power to review and propose their own arrangements for local transport governance to support more coherent planning and delivery of local transport.
- Updates existing legal powers to allow local authorities to develop proposals for local road pricing schemes in a way that best meets local needs.⁴²¹

1.5.4. The **Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007**, through the England National Concessionary Travel Scheme, entitles all people resident in England who are either disabled or over the age of 60 to free travel on local buses at off-peak times anywhere in England.⁴²²

1.5.5. The **Better Bus Areas Fund** is aimed at local councils working in partnership with local bus operators. The objective of the fund is to increase bus use in busy urban areas, creating growth and cutting carbon emissions.⁴²³

⁴²⁰ Department for Transport (2016) 2010 to 2015 Government Policy: Local Transport [online] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-local-transport/2010-to-2015-government-policy-local-transport>

⁴²¹ Ibid

⁴²² Legislation.gov.uk (2016) Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007 [online] <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/13/introduction>

⁴²³ Department for Transport (2016) 2010 to 2015 Government Policy: Local Transport [online] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-local-transport/2010-to-2015-government-policy-local-transport>

- 1.5.6. The purpose of the **Green Bus Fund** is to help bus companies and local councils in England to buy new low-carbon buses.⁴²⁴
- 1.5.7. The **Bus Service Operators' Grant (BSOG)** is paid to operators of eligible local bus services, and community transport organisations, to help them recover some of their fuel costs. The amount each bus company receives is based on their annual fuel consumption. By helping operators to keep their fares down, the BSOG enables them to run services that might not otherwise be profitable and might be cancelled.⁴²⁵
- 1.5.8. The recent **Bus Services Bill (2016)** aims to give local authorities and bus operators the tools they need to improve local bus services and promote bus usage. The Bill introduces new powers, including the power for local authorities to franchise local services, and a requirement for bus operators to share routes, fare and schedule data.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ Ibid

⁴²⁵ Ibid

⁴²⁶ Department for Transport (2016) The Bus Services Bill: An Overview, London

1.6. Local Policies and Strategies

- 1.6.1. In addition to national legislation on bus transport, there are a number of local policies and strategies.
- 1.6.2. KCC has a statutory duty under the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008, to produce a **Local Transport Plan (LTP)**. This gives Kent's residents and local businesses a clear vision of transport priorities for the county.
- 1.6.3. The third **Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-2016** will soon be replaced by a new Plan - the **Local Transport Plan 4 (LPT4)** - which is currently being developed.⁴²⁷
- 1.6.4. The development of LPT4 presents an opportunity for the Plan to be integrated with Kent's transport delivery plan, **Growth without Gridlock (GwG)**. GwG was produced in December 2010, separately from LTP3, to set out the strategic aims for transport to support economic growth in Kent over a 20-year period. Many of those aims have been achieved and a review provides an opportunity to reaffirm KCC's strategic transport priorities.⁴²⁸
- 1.6.5. The **Growth Infrastructure Framework (GIF)** has been developed by KCC, Medway Council and the 12 district councils in Kent. It provides a strategic framework to help prioritise investment to create new jobs, homes and infrastructure.⁴²⁹
- 1.6.6. **Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes** is KCC's strategic statement for 2015-2020. It sets out the Authority's vision to deliver better outcomes for Kent residents, communities and businesses.⁴³⁰
- 1.6.7. The **Kent Environment Strategy** aims to support economic growth while protecting and enhancing Kent's natural and historical heritage, and sustaining vibrant and healthy communities.⁴³¹
- 1.6.8. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are voluntary partnerships between local authorities and businesses set up in 2011 by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth. The **South East LEP Strategic Economic Plan (2014)** is a key driver for economic growth in the region.⁴³²

⁴²⁷ Kent County Council (2016) Local Transport Plan [online] <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/transport-and-highways-policies/local-transport-plan>

⁴²⁸ Kent County Council (2016) Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock, Maidstone

⁴²⁹ Kent County Council (2015) Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework, Maidstone

⁴³⁰ Kent County Council (2016) Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes, Maidstone

⁴³¹ Kent County Council (2016) Kent Environment Strategy: A Strategy for Environment, Health and Economy, Maidstone

⁴³² South East Local Enterprise Partnerships (2014) South East LEP: Growth Deal and Strategic Economic Plan

1.7.Roles and Responsibilities

- 1.7.1. This section provides a brief overview (with a focus on KCC) of the main roles, responsibilities and activities with regard to bus transport. Most activities are conducted through KCC's Public Transport Department.

School Transport

- 1.7.2. The Education Act (1996) places a statutory duty on all Local Education Authorities to provide free transport to school for children who meet a number of criteria. School transport is delivered through buses, hired coaches, minibuses, taxis and rail. There are about 3,900 children with a statement of Special Educational Needs who are entitled to free school transport in Kent, and KCC is expected to spend approximately £21m in 2016-17 on this activity. The number of children in mainstream education who receive free transport is currently about 5,900; it is estimated that it will cost KCC approximately £7m in 2016-17.

English National Concessionary Travel Scheme

- 1.7.3. The **Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007** places a statutory duty on Travel Concession Authorities to provide - through the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) - free off-peak local bus travel to eligible older and disabled people anywhere in England.
- 1.7.4. The regulations also identify the mechanisms and formulas which should be used to reimburse bus operators so that they are "no better or worse off" because of the scheme. KCC is responsible for the provision of the scheme overall, the provision of passes and managing the financial aspects of it. There are currently around 250,000 pass holders in Kent, and the scheme is projected to cost £17m in 2016-17.

School Concessionary Travel Schemes

- 1.7.5. There is no statutory responsibility to provide any concessionary travel scheme beyond the ENCTS but KCC, on a discretionary basis, subsidises the Young Person's Travel Pass (YPTP) and the Kent 16+ Travel Card. There are currently approx. 24,500 YPTP holders and 6,500 16+Travel Card holders in Kent. In 2016-17, these schemes will cost about £10m in revenue reimbursement.

Socially Necessary Bus Services

- 1.7.6. The Transport Act (1985) deregulated the bus network and most services in the UK are now provided on a commercial basis. KCC has no regulatory control over these services and cannot control the operator market, the services provided, the routes, frequencies or fares.
- 1.7.7. KCC has a statutory responsibility under the Act to *consider* the provision of Socially Necessary Bus Services, that is, services which would not otherwise operate because they are considered not commercially viable by bus companies. The Authority is required to have a means of assessment but is not legally obliged to provide any services.
- 1.7.8. KCC has always provided a subsidy for these services. A set of criteria is used to determine which services to support. KCC currently has about 150 bus service contracts and spends over £6m per annum on this activity.

Operator and driver regulation and licensing

- 1.7.9. KCC has no statutory duty or regulatory control over any operator licensing. With respect to Public Service Vehicle Operation (Buses and Coaches), it is the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) that issues licenses to operators who are then able to run registered bus services. The DVSA also regulates the bus services themselves, including driver licensing.

Community Transport

- 1.7.10. KCC has no statutory responsibility for Community Transport or the regulation of this activity. However, the spirit of the 1985 Transport Act is to support the provision of a public transport network that meets the needs of local residents and Community Transport contributes to that aim. In recent years, KCC has made greater direct use of this sector for the provision of its own transport; all Kent Karrier schemes and a number of SEN contracts are provided by Community Transport Operators.

Quality Bus Partnerships

- 1.7.11. Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs) were introduced by the Transport Act (2000), which encouraged Local Transport Authorities to set them up in order to foster positive working relations with commercial bus operators and to enhance local bus service provision. There are eight voluntary QBP agreements in Kent: Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Maidstone, Shepway, Swale, Thanet and Tunbridge Wells.
- 1.7.12. The 3 primary partners in any QBP are KCC (as the Local Transport Authority), District Councils (as the planning and parking authorities) and local commercial bus operators.⁴³³

⁴³³ Kent County Council (2016) Written evidence, 28 October 2016

1.8. Methodology

- 1.8.1. The members of the Bus Transport Select Committee held several hearing sessions with a wide range of witnesses. The Committee gathered a wealth of information and oral evidence from a variety of sources, including representatives of local bus companies, representatives of national organisations dealing with transport matters, local action groups, as well as KCC officers and officers from other local authorities. The Committee also attended one visit and received substantial written evidence.

Appendix 5

Best Practice in Bus Transport

Buses have the potential to be the “glue” that holds society together; they link people to work and services, and they give many people the freedom to travel in their local communities. Bus usage also protects the environment and improves people’s quality of life.

This appendix explores a number of case studies in which local government or bus operators have innovated to improve and maximise the benefits of bus transport for consumers.

1.1. Best Practice in the UK

- 1.1.1. This section explores a range of approaches that local authorities and bus operators in the UK have adopted to deliver transport despite increasing pressures on their resources. These initiatives include new budgeting arrangements, new regulatory and business models, and new technology-led solutions.
- 1.1.2. These case studies demonstrate that there is potential for innovation in the public, private and voluntary sectors to maximise the benefits of bus transport.

Case study: North Yorkshire

- 1.1.3. North Yorkshire is one of the areas that has been hit hardest by cuts to bus services; the Council had to make significant savings, including therefore spending less on supported bus services. Across Yorkshire and Humberside, spending on buses has fallen from £8.88 per person in 2010 to £6.46 in 2015, resulting in the loss of 90 services in North Yorkshire alone.^{434 435}
- 1.1.4. The impacts of these cuts have been particularly felt by those groups of vulnerable people who are less likely to have access to other modes of transport, such as the elderly, the disabled and the unemployed.⁴³⁶
- 1.1.5. North Yorkshire County Council therefore decided to provide additional support to local, voluntary community transport schemes in an effort to provide transport links to particularly vulnerable communities that lost their local bus service. Nidderdale Plus has partnered with the County Council to deliver community transport in the Pateley Bridge area through a community car scheme which provides transport for those without access to public or private transport, and those who might need more assistance. The scheme uses volunteer drivers, and supports around 40 users in the area, running alongside a volunteer car scheme for hospital journeys which is funded by the local clinical commissioning group. The Council is now considering replicating this initiative in other areas.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ Campaign for Better Transport (2015) Buses in Crisis: A Report on Bus Funding Across England and Wales 2010–2015 [online] http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/Buses_In_Crisis_Report_2014_Final.pdf

⁴³⁵ Institute for Public Policy Research (2015) Total Transport Authorities: A New Deal for Town and Rural Bus Services, London

⁴³⁶ Ibid

⁴³⁷ Ibid

Case Study: Northamptonshire

- 1.1.6. The concept of 'total transport' involves the pooling of funding and resources of bus networks operated by public organisations within an area – including local authorities, schools, health centres, hospitals and job centres – to deliver more efficient and better-integrated transport services.⁴³⁸
- 1.1.7. In early 2015, the DfT announced a £4 million fund to support total transport pilot projects, with a particular focus on the integration of transport resources and funding in order to deliver more effective and efficient passenger services. The initial funding was targeted primarily at services in rural areas.⁴³⁹
- 1.1.8. Northamptonshire County Council received £750,000 – the largest grant awarded by the DfT's total transport pilot fund. The bid covered all council-supported transport services in the county – including home-to-school, SEN, and adult social care transport – as well as additional transport services provided by other organisations including universities, community transport providers and health transport.⁴⁴⁰
- 1.1.9. The Network Northamptonshire project aims to establish a social innovation company that will deliver integrated transport in the region. The plan is proceeding well, and the Council expects the initiative to deliver savings of as much as £1 million per annum.^{441 442}

⁴³⁸ Campaign for Better Transport (2014) Making Transport Local: Devolution of Transport in England Outside London [online] <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/14.10.making-transport-local.pdf>

⁴³⁹ Institute for Public Policy Research (2015) Total Transport Authorities: A New Deal for Town and Rural Bus Services, London

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴⁴¹ Ibid

⁴⁴² Browne, D. (2015) New "Total Transport" Model Off to Flying Start, Transport-Network, 14 July 2015, [online] <http://www.transport-network.co.uk/New-total-transport-model-off-to-flying-start/11933>

Case Study: Cornwall

- 1.1.10. Cornwall recently became the first rural authority in England to benefit from Devolution. Its deal with the Government will give the council the option to franchise bus services by 2018. By devolving decision-making and funding for buses, it is claimed that Cornwall's transport network can be better integrated without additional costs to the taxpayer.⁴⁴³
- 1.1.11. As part of the deal, Cornwall Council and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly local enterprise partnership (LEP) have committed to delivering integrated smart-ticketing and to the introduction of robust governance arrangements such as a bus committee.^{444 445}

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⁴⁴³ Cornwall Council, HM Government, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership and Kernow Clinical Commissioning Group (2015), Cornwall Devolution Deal [online] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447419/20150715_Cornwall_Devolution_Deal_-_FINAL_-_reformatted.pdf

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁴⁵ Institute for Public Policy Research (2015) Total Transport Authorities: A New Deal for Town and Rural Bus Services, London

Case study: Staffordshire

- 1.1.12. Moorlands Connect is a demand-responsive transport (DRT) service in Staffordshire that replaced a low-frequency scheduled service. It has been operating since 2010, and integrates transport to rural primary schools with other passenger transport. Its two minibuses are fully accessible to wheelchairs and pushchairs, and have racks for up to four bikes. The project represents a "total transport" approach, as it is delivered through a partnership of local stakeholders and pools funding from various sources.⁴⁴⁶
- 1.1.13. The rationale behind the creation of Moorlands Connect was an unmet demand for transport in the area, where accessibility was known to be a major concern for residents. The area is sparsely populated, and fixed routes had failed to provide residents with effective transport for commuting or access to healthcare. It was decided that DRT would be a more appropriate solution to the accessibility challenges in the area, and this has been demonstrated by the doubling of passenger numbers of the scheduled services that it replaced. The fare structure has minimised costs in order to keep travel affordable, and concessionary passes are accepted.⁴⁴⁷
- 1.1.14. Moorlands Connect's use of routing technology for a demand-responsive service is an innovative application of new technology. It uses a technology application that administers bookings on a first-come, first-served basis, outside of block bookings for school transport between 8–9am and 3–4pm. Passengers are offered a pick-up time within a 10-minute window, and a drop-off time within a 20 minute window; this flexibility allows the most effective routes to become established, and for dynamic re-routing.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid

Case Study: Jersey

- 1.1.15. Jersey is an interesting case study in profit sharing. It also demonstrates the impact that a franchising regulation regime can have on services. 'LibertyBus' is run by HCT Group - a community interest company - on contract to the Transport and Technical Services (TTS) department of the States of Jersey.⁴⁴⁹
- 1.1.16. LibertyBus has a partnership agreement with the tendering authority, including a profit-share arrangement. One of the key aspects of LibertyBus' success has been its partnership relationship with TTS, which allows problems to be resolved collaboratively and with public engagement. The profit-share arrangement allows TTS to invest in infrastructure for the bus network, including bus shelters and improved accessibility at bus stops, and allows LibertyBus - a social enterprise - to invest its share of the profits back into the community.⁴⁵⁰
- 1.1.17. In the States of Jersey, since the beginning of the franchised arrangement in 2013, passenger numbers have increased by 32% and the level of subsidy has been reduced by £800k per year. In addition, customer satisfaction has increased by 5%, five new routes have been introduced and bus frequencies have been improved.⁴⁵¹

Case Study: Jersey

In the States of Jersey, since the beginning of the franchised arrangement in 2013, passenger numbers have increased by 32% and the level of subsidy has been reduced by £800k per year. In addition, customer satisfaction has increased by 5%, five new routes have been introduced and bus frequencies have been improved.

The profit-share arrangement allows the Authority to invest in infrastructure for the bus network, including bus shelters and improved accessibility at bus stops, and allows the contracted operator - a social enterprise - to invest its profits back into the community.

Source: Institute for Public Policy Research (2015)

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid

⁴⁵¹ HCT Group (2016) Practical Bus Franchising: The Jersey Model

Appendix 6

Public Engagement Exercise Overview

Survey conducted between 10 November to 11 December 2016 – online and paper responses recorded: 445 received in total.

The Select Committee agreed in October 2016 to undertake a public engagement exercise. A short survey was developed by Democratic Services in consultation with the Committee and this was circulated by Members to interested stakeholder groups as well as all Parish Councils in Kent.

The purpose of the engagement was to provide an opportunity for members of the public and interested organisations across the county to provide feedback to KCC Members regarding their experiences and views on bus services in Kent. The feedback collected via the survey was intended to complement the formal research and evidence gathering activities of the Select Committee.

There was no stringent research methodology employed via agreed representative sample sizes. The survey was shared at Members' discretion and via Parish Councils. It was also shared with people who had responded to a KCC consultation conducted in early 2016 regarding changes to subsidised bus services.

Question analysis

Who responded?
445 answered

Respondent type	Number	Percentage
Regular bus user	261	58.6%
Occasional bus user	134	30.1%
Professional from Transport industry	7	1.5%
Organisation	17	3.8%
Other	24	5.3%
Not stated	2	0.4%

It is positive that the majority of respondents reported themselves as regular bus users, which gives greater relevance to their information and more benefit to the Committee's consideration of issues and challenges facing passengers.

What needed most improvement?

442 answered

Bus service element	Requiring most improvement (high score in survey)
Reliability	192 (43.4%)
Frequency	263 (59.5%)
Fare Price	157 (35.5%)
Value for Money	164 (37.1%)
Cleanliness	94 (21.2%)
Bus Quality (seating or ride smoothness)	106 (23.9%)

(% of respondents answering this question)

The findings in relation to respondents' views on which elements of bus services require most improvement support those already identified by the Committee in its evidence gathering work; that the key issues are **frequency & reliability**. There was variation across the County, with frequency and reliability issues noted in concentrated pockets, with numerous respondents in small geographic clusters all flagging a small number of services. **Fare price** and general **value for money** were highlighted as requiring improvement by a noticeable number of respondents; this had some correlation where there were issues relating to reliability and frequency, suggesting an understandable link where passengers resented the cost of infrequent or unreliable services. The key findings of this numerical data are supported by the general comments provided by respondents who highlighted numerous examples of insufficient frequency of services and localised reliability issues. Price, value for money, bus quality & cleanliness were not mentioned to any significant degree within the comments section.

Open questions

375 respondents provided comments as part of their survey answers. These varied significantly in relation to the specific local issues in terms of rural challenges or urban traffic concerns. However, the key concerns raised were as follows in order of times raised by respondents:

- Frequency should be improved (particularly in rural areas)
- Timetables allowing for non-commuter / rush hour needs and other travel links (improved frequency at appropriate times).
- More evening buses in urban areas
- Later last buses for rural areas
- Reliability must be improved (urban and rural)
- Better links with medical centres and hospitals needed (particularly for rural areas)
- Need for more early morning (not school run) and evening buses

It should be noted that the comments generally relate to each individual's particular bus service requirements and cannot be taken as a full impression of bus needs in their area. However, the trend across the comments, particularly in relation to the main issues raised, aligns closely with the information already considered by the Select Committee via its formal evidence gathering and research support.

Summary

The significant research undertaken by the Policy and Strategic Relationships Officer working with the Committee in developing the report, should be regarded as the firm foundation of supporting evidence for the report content and its recommendations. The engagement survey was designed to capture local opinions and views to add context and texture. The strong links between the public feedback and the evidence based issues identified already by the Committee support the considered approach within the report.

As with any Select Committee, a significant part of the benefit it brings to the Council is that it is a Member-led investigation into an area of interest for the people of Kent. This allows Members to use their own knowledge of the county as well as being a channel for information put forward by their constituents. All this community focused information may then be balanced with the detailed evidence-led work conducted by the Research Officer to produce a useful and informative report that represents Member views on how best to address identified issues and improve services for the people of Kent. This public engagement exercise has helped make the most of positive links between KCC Members and their communities, making sure the public voice can be considered within the Select Committee report.

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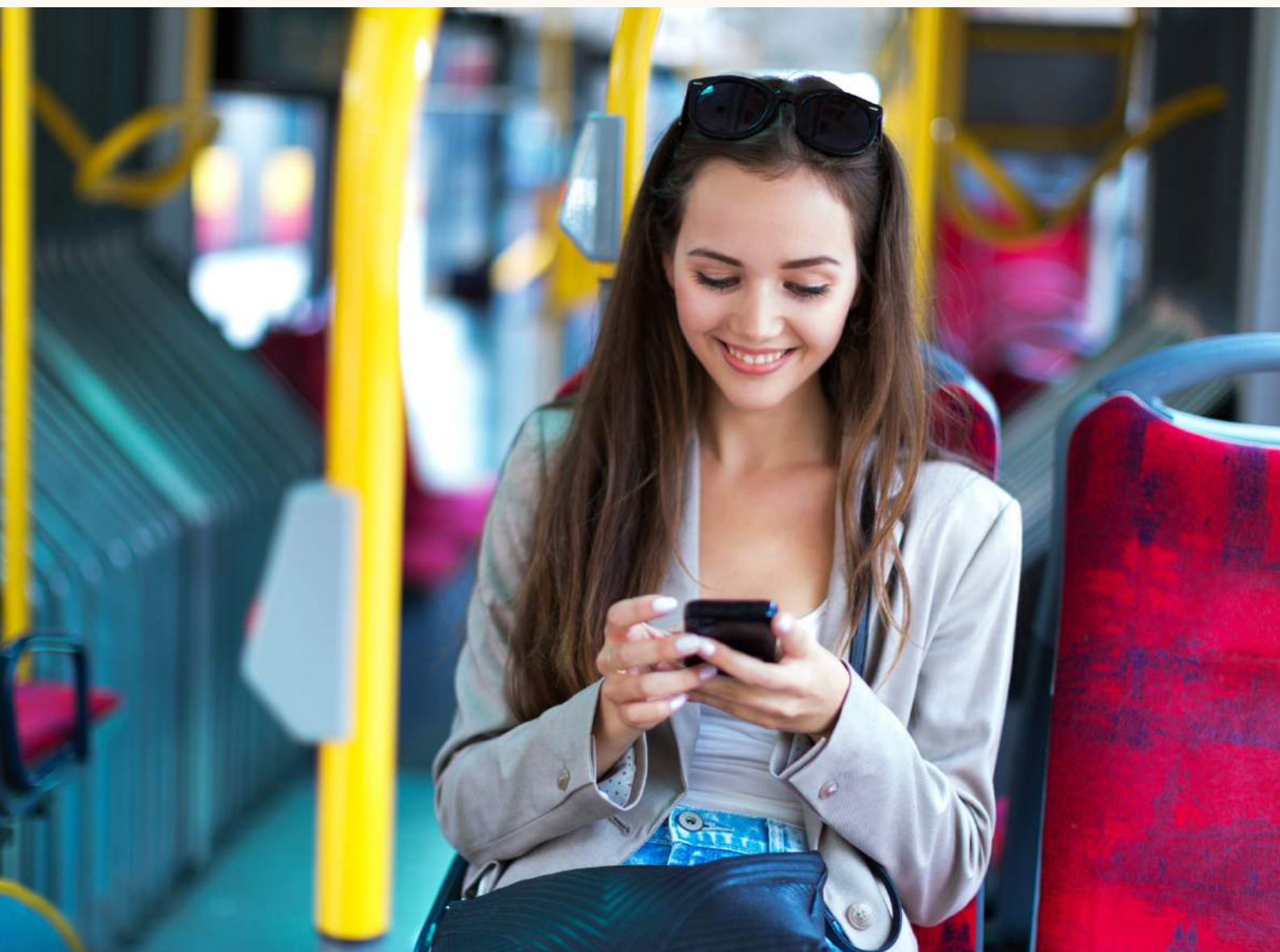
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The Bus Transport Select Committee

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