



Local Transport Plan for **Kent** 2006-11

Appendix 5: Bus Strategy for Kent 2006-11

Bus Strategy for Kent 2006 – 2011

Final Version March 2006

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Introduction

Kent County Council recognises that efficient and integrated public transport services form an important part of the wider transport system although sustained investment is needed to encourage modal shift, reduce congestion and contribute to wider objectives. Kent has a comprehensive network of local bus services and significant progress has been made in partnership with operators in recent years to implement a range of improvements which has resulted in better services and increasing patronage.

The Bus Strategy replaces the earlier version produced in 2001 and forms part of the Local Transport Plan 2006-2011. The Strategy provides:

- an overview of the operation and organisation of local bus services in the County in the context of wider policy and legislative issues.
- a review of progress and achievements in recent years
- the County Council's approach for promoting and developing the network in co-operation with partner organisations in future years.

Section 1 - Legislative and policy context

The Bus Strategy for Kent has been produced in line with legislative requirements and reflects a range of national, regional and local influences and emerging issues over recent years.

1.1 National context

Under the Transport Act 1985, local bus services in the United Kingdom (apart from Greater London and Northern Ireland) are operated in a deregulated environment where the majority of routes are run on a commercial basis by a range of operators who determine frequencies and fare levels. Where services are not commercially viable, under the Act, local authorities have a power to:

"secure the provision of such public transport requirements within the County which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose".

Most local bus services in Kent are operated commercially but the County Council has an important role in providing financial support for routes which are considered to be socially necessary but do not carry enough passengers to be profitable.

The Transport Act 2000 requires authorities to produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP) which provides an overarching policy framework and outlines priorities for spending over a five year period. The LTP is supported by a series of statutory documents including the Bus Strategy for Kent and Public Transport Information Strategy which has recently been reviewed by the County Council. The Act also gave local transport authorities powers to develop Quality Contracts and Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs) to encourage joint investment from the public and private sectors in local bus networks.

From a development planning perspective, Ashford and the Thames Gateway are identified by the Government as key growth areas where significant employment and housing expansion is planned. The 'Sustainable Communities' programme was published in 2003 and, amongst other key requirements, recognises the importance of:

"Good public transport and other transport infrastructure both within the community and linking it to urban, rural and regional centres".

However, it is also recognised that the significant development planned in the growth areas has implications for other parts of Kent and a strategic approach to transport planning is needed to mitigate these effects.

1.2 Regional context

Increasing emphasis is being given to the development of integrated planning and transport policy on a regional level which will inform the activities of individual transport authorities. The Regional Transport Strategy was published in July 2004 and Policy T9 identifies the need for LTPs to:

"include policies and proposals that foster an improved and integrated network of public transport services that give priority to:

- 1. delivering better local bus services in partnership with operators by making more use of Quality Bus Partnerships;***
- 2. rapid transit systems in larger urban areas***
- 3. increasing the opportunities for interchange between the public transport network and all other modes of transport;***
- 4. promoting demand responsive transport services to sectors and areas with low accessibility."***

The Regional Transport Strategy identifies a series of transport hubs in Kent at which economic activity should be concentrated. Within Kent, Ebbsfleet, Maidstone, Ashford, Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells and Canterbury form transport hubs and the County Council's policies and scheme programmes must reflect this.

1.3 Local context

The Bus Strategy forms a key element of the second LTP for Kent which covers the period from 2006 to 2011 and includes the County Council's vision for transport:

"To provide good, safe accessibility to jobs and services for all sections of the community in Kent, and to improve the environment and health of the community by reducing congestion and pollution, widening the choice of transport available and by developing public transport, walking and cycling"

The LTP is based upon a series of ten objectives which recognise the Government's shared priorities for transport but also reflect local issues across the County:

- **Accessibility** - Kent County Council will support independence and reduce social exclusion by improving transport links to key destinations and bringing services closer to communities.
- **Demand Management** - Kent County Council will seek to reduce the demand for transport both within and through Kent.
- **Environment, Heritage and Communities** - Kent County Council will stabilise and, where possible, reverse the adverse effect of transport and its infrastructure on the natural and built environment and on local communities.

- **Health** - Kent County Council will improve the health of Kent residents by reducing the impact of transport, encouraging increased physical activity and enhancing access to key health facilities
- **Integration** - Kent County Council will encourage integration to maximise the use of sustainable modes and therefore widen choice for Kent residents.
- **Keep Kent Moving** - Kent County Council will manage and maintain the local highway network to maximise the safe and efficient use of road space and provide reliable journey times.
- **Road Safety** - Kent County Council will strive to provide a safe and secure transport system for all users throughout the County.
- **Sustainable Regeneration** - Kent County Council will promote development that reduces the need to travel while supporting the local economy.
- **UK Connections** - Kent County Council will press for more efficient, sustainable transport links with London and the rest of the UK.
- **UK Gateway** - Kent County Council will ensure that international traffic covers its costs, minimises the impact on Kent and its residents and maximises the use of rail.

Local bus services are essential to delivering the County Council's vision for transport. Although bus services in some parts of Kent are not currently used to their full potential, investment in the network and partnership working between the public and private sectors can achieve a range of benefits including:

- Better accessibility to employment, key services and life opportunities
- Reduced congestion and more reliable journey times
- Improved air quality and healthier communities

The County Council's commitment to the promotion and development of the local bus network is summarised in LTP Policy DM5 and the Bus Strategy for Kent outlines the County Council's approach for delivering this policy through specific actions, activities and expenditure.

Local Transport Plan Policy DM5: Local Bus

KCC will work with partners to improve local bus services

As part of the LTP process, the County Council is required to undertake accessibility planning and has produced the Accessibility Strategy for Kent (ASK) through which strategic and local audits of the County have been undertaken. From this information, a series of actions have been identified which aim to improve access to employment and key services either through specific schemes or incorporating accessibility planning considerations into wider activities such as development planning.

The Bus Strategy is also linked to other elements of the LTP including:

- Transport Asset Management Plan
- Network Management Plan
- Intelligent Transport Systems Strategy
- Road Safety Plan

1.4 Wider influences

The County Council's approach to developing local bus services also accounts for wider issues which affect the nature and level of transport demand and the range of issues. Key issues include:

- Economic Development Strategies
- Development planning (Structure Plan and Local Development Frameworks)
- Community Planning
- Strategic proposals by key service providers (e.g health authority)
- Transport policies of neighbouring authorities including LTPs and the Mayor's Transport Strategy.

Section 2: Overview of the local bus network

2.1 Introduction

Kent has an extensive and varied network of local bus and coach routes which includes high frequency services within the built up areas, interurban links between the principal towns, rural services and express or commuter services to London. The coverage and density of longer distance services varies but these are generally most established where frequent parallel rail services do not exist.

Bus services in the County are largely provided by Stagecoach East Kent and Arriva Southern Counties which operate extensive networks in the east and west of Kent respectively although smaller operators are active in many areas of the County and perform an important role. In addition, there are a number of cross border services including routes run on behalf of Transport for London which provide links to key south-east London towns including Woolwich and Eltham. Long distance coach services are operated by National Express whilst commuter routes are provided by a number of local coach companies.

2.2 Commercial bus services

The majority of Kent's bus network is provided commercially without financial support. Commercial bus services are provided where there is significant passenger demand for travel within or between urban areas, particularly where links are provided to town and district centres where a range of facilities are located close together and central bus stops are well sited for convenient access.

2.3 Financially supported bus services

The County Council aims to promote Kent's bus network as a whole to maximise the proportion of services provided commercially. However, in some areas or at certain times of the day, there is insufficient patronage to support commercial routes and the County Council provides financial support for socially necessary services. Although many of the services receiving financial support are rural in nature, some subsidised services or journeys are also operated within the urban areas of Kent.

A high proportion of the County Council's revenue support budget is used to provide rural bus services. Additional services are provided using the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant (RBSG) provided by Government whilst demand responsive transport schemes have been established, some with Rural Bus Challenge funding. RBSG currently provides £2 million towards the support of rural bus services but is only confirmed to the end of the financial year 2006/07. Some district councils in Kent also provide revenue support funding for local bus services and Kent Karrier schemes including Maidstone Borough Council and Canterbury City Council.

In addition to conventional bus services, the County Council also provides funding for demand responsive services. These include '**Kent Karrier**' services which have

been successfully developed over recent years throughout the County whilst other demand responsive schemes have been introduced using specific Government funding sources. Community transport services also perform an important role in some parts of the County.

2.4 School transport and other sectors

Local authorities have a statutory duty under legislation to provide transport assistance (free transport to School) to children deemed 'entitled'. Those entitled are generally attending their nearest appropriate school and live more than two or three miles from it depending upon their age. Transport for children with a statement of Special Educational Needs is provided on a different basis.

To discharge this duty, the County Council's Transport Integration Unit procures transport for 24,000 entitled children. Where available and appropriate, existing public transport is used to convey children and currently 13,000 travel on a mixture of commercial and subsidised bus services. In some cases (particularly on rural routes), peak flows effectively justify the provision of a vehicle and driver for the service and result in the operation of an off peak service where one would not necessarily exist otherwise. However, where school children dominate a peak flow on a route, issues of behaviour and presentation can arise which, if not carefully handled may dissuade other passengers therefore limiting the potential of bus services to encourage modal shift.

In addition to its statutory duty, Kent County Council also provides 'travel assistance' for 16 – 19 year olds meeting the 'entitled criteria'. This transport is subject to a post statutory charge and effectively offers subsidised transport to post 16's wishing to access further education.

In some parts of the United Kingdom, new approaches have been taken to the operation of school transport including the introduction of 'yellow school buses'. Currently, the County Council has not taken this approach but, through its Commercial Services operation has invested in new vehicles for school contract operations.

Section 3: Promoting good practice

The County Council's involvement in the development and support of local bus services is not consistent across Kent. This results from variations in population distribution, relative affluence, car ownership, the nature of the commercial local bus network, opportunities to access additional funding in specific areas and the evolution of the network. Accordingly, the County Council faces different challenges across Kent but, irrespective of these variations, there are a number of key principles which define good practice and contribute to the development of a network which is comprehensive, integrated and sustainable.

3.1 Integration

This principle has a number of applications including the co-ordinated planning of transport services, modal interchange and integration between land use and transport planning.

In recent years, the County Council has developed a co-ordinated approach for the planning of local bus services, school transport and social services transport which has been effective in achieving network cohesion and improved efficiency whilst contributing to the wider objectives of tackling social exclusion and improving accessibility. Nevertheless, further opportunities exist for greater integration to improve the viability of peak and off peak local bus services.

Modal integration is a key means for promoting modal shift towards passenger transport services and the County Council recognises the need for improved interchange between local bus and rail services.

Integration between transport planning and land use planning is particularly important in Kent due to the level of development planned and it is widely recognised that a high quality and sustainable public transport system is needed to maximise the growth and regeneration benefits. It is therefore important that the planning of local bus services is a key consideration at an early stage in the development planning process.

3.2 Partnership working

Partnership working is needed to achieve a co-ordinated approach to public transport planning and the County Council regularly liaises with a number of organisations including parish councils, district councils, neighbouring transport authorities and Transport for London. This approach is essential in ensuring that local issues are fully accounted for in the planning process, cross boundary movements are understood and additional sources of funding accessed.

Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs) have evolved from effective partnership working between the County Council, district councils and the commercial bus operators and have resulted in significant inward investment and patronage increases. Whilst

QBP's will generally be led by the services of the dominant operator in a given area, the County Council recognises the contribution made by commercial services run by smaller operators who will be included in the Partnership and encouraged to actively participate. However, it is acknowledged that, in general, small operators will not be able to provide the same level of capital investment as the larger companies.

The effectiveness of QBP's is also dependent upon involvement and commitment from other organisations including key employers which can encourage staff to use local bus services through travel planning initiatives. The accessibility planning process provides an opportunity to identify gaps in existing service provision but also to ensure that residents are able to reach key services, particularly where these have been relocated.

The contribution made by improved local bus services to wider transportation objectives must also be emphasised and, in particular, the County Council recognises the need to reflect issues raised in key local documents such as the Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy.

3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Transport demand, the location of key destinations and travel patterns are subject to significant change over time and a system of monitoring and evaluation is needed to ensure that the local bus network can be adjusted accordingly. In part this can be achieved through monitoring work carried out through the LTP process local study work or examination of statistical material to identify specific trends. In addition, the development of accessibility planning as part of the LTP provides a new approach which will further inform the future planning of local bus services.

3.4 Maximising funding potential

In recent years a number of additional funding sources have been made available for investment in local bus services including Rural Bus Subsidy Grant, Rural Bus Challenge, Urban Bus Challenge and Kickstart. More generalised transport funding is provided by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to provide investment in the growth areas. Periodically, funding is also made available through other organisations including the Countryside Agency and European Community sources. The County Council will endeavour to procure funding from all appropriate sources to complement its own investment in the local bus network.

3.5 Responding to legislation

The legislative framework influencing the provision of local bus services has been subject to significant change in recent decades. The Transport Act 1985 which governs the industry was supplemented by the Transport Act 2000 although wider legislation has had some impact including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Traffic Management Act 2004. The County Council will ensure that the planning and development of local bus services fully reflects – and makes use of – changes in

legislation and, in particular will explore opportunities to improve the performance of local bus services through the Traffic Management Act.

The Government's 'Education White Paper' aims to provide a greater availability of places at desirable schools by enabling the formation of self governing state schools. Potentially this allows both the expansion of existing, successful schools and the creation of new ones irrespective of any surplus of places at existing schools. In addition, private and denominational schools will be encouraged to join the state system to increase parental choice. As part of the wider changes, free school transport will be extended to provide journeys of up to 6 miles for children from families of low income. The potential for these measures to create new demand and alter travel patterns needs to be fully understood and with any new 'flows' catered for by sustainable means.

Kent County Council has already made significant progress in promoting sustainable transport for journeys to school and has developed over 100 travel plans, started many walking bus schemes and introduced initiatives to improve behaviour on school buses.

3.6 Innovation

The County Council's future investment in the local bus service network must have regard to new approaches in service provision and technological advances. In recent years, demand responsive transport has been increasingly promoted by the Government as a means of improving accessibility to key services, particularly for disadvantaged members of the community. The County Council has developed schemes of this type in a number of areas and, subject to funding availability and the nature of the demand, will promote similar schemes in future years. Similarly, the County Council will explore other approaches to providing public transport services including shared taxis, community transport or 'inter-connect' type feeder and hub schemes.

The County Council has made advances in the use of modern technology for improving local bus services, mainly through the Kent Bus System which provides real time information and bus priority at traffic signals in a number of Kent's urban areas. In future years, the County Council will expand this technology and consider investing in other areas such as electronic ticketing and close circuit television to improve security on the transport network.

Section 4: Overview of recent progress and future actions

This section outlines the County Council's approach for developing the local bus network and describes the main activities whilst providing an overview of progress made through the first LTP and Bus Strategy.

4.1 Recent trends on the local bus network

During the period covered by the first LTP, the activities of the County Council and others in promoting and developing the Kent local bus network have resulted in significant patronage increases which have been reported to Government annually through indicator BVPI102. Figure 4.1 shows annual Countywide bus patronage which has increased from 38.3 million to 44.8 million between 2000/01 and 2004/05 and exceeds the annual 2% growth target. Over future years, the County Council will work in partnership with operators and others to continue this trend and achieve the target of 46 million bus passenger journeys by 2011.

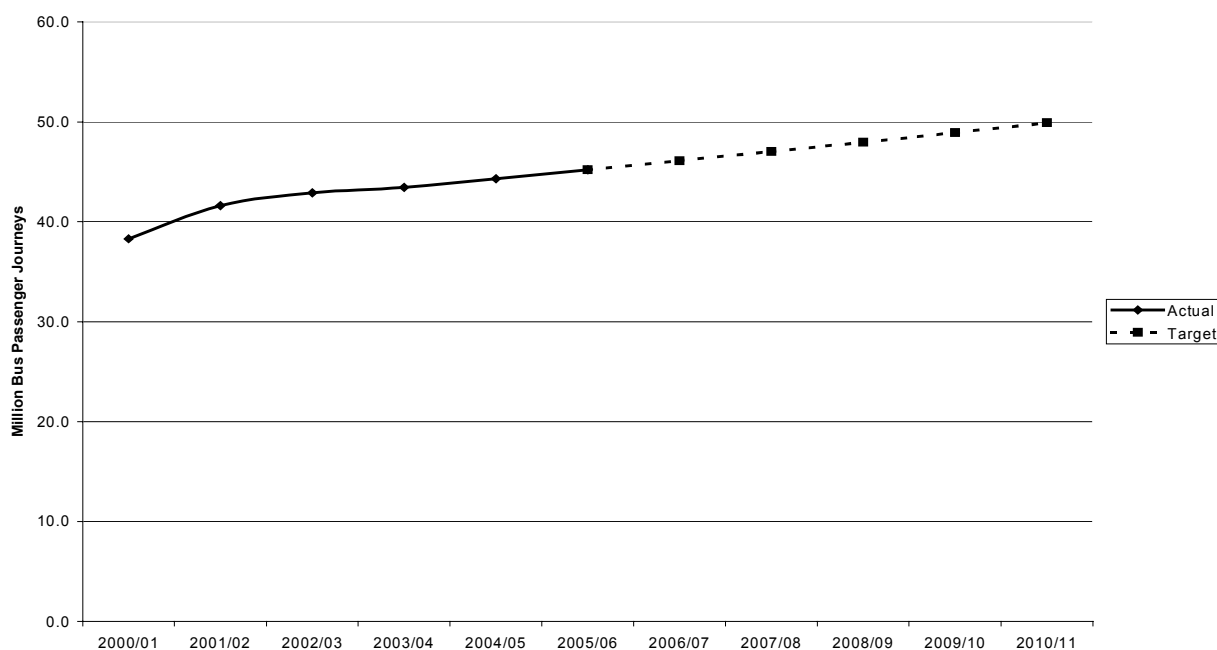


Figure 4.1: Countywide Bus Patronage: 2000-2011

4.2 Revenue support for socially necessary bus services

Kent County Council commits £5m each year to the support of socially necessary bus services whilst an additional £2m is received in Rural Bus Subsidy Grant (RBSG) specifically for the support of rural bus services. In recent years, the County Council has experienced significant increases in supported local bus service contract costs which caused budgetary pressure despite some significant increases in the amounts allocated and effective use of the RBSG funding.

In November 2003, the County Council revised its criteria for the financial support of local bus services to reflect the findings of the Social Exclusion Unit 'Making the Connections' report which considered the role of transport in tackling social exclusion. Under the revised criteria, the County Council will consider providing support for a bus service that is not commercially viable if it provides one or more of:

- Access to work
- Access to learning
- Access to healthcare
- Access to foodshops

Services that address all criteria have greater priority than those addressing fewer and, to assist in the consideration of these priorities, services are also ranked in the following order:

- Monday to Friday daytime services
- Saturday daytime services
- Evening and Sunday services

However, it is also recognised that travel patterns are evolving due to a number of factors including different working patterns, Sunday trading and the relocation of key services and facilities. Therefore, over future years, adjustments may be needed to reflect emerging trends. Similarly, the County Council will explore opportunities to review services, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that timetables and routes have a minimum of variation and can be easily understood by residents.

Case Study: Bus Service 123

Bus service 123 was established in January 1999 and further enhanced during the period of the last LTP using Rural Bus Subsidy Grant (RBSG) funding. The service operates between West Malling Railway Station, West Malling centre and the Kings Hill housing and employment development some two miles away. West Malling railway station is on the Ashford to London line and patronage levels have increased over recent years due to commuters travelling into London. As a result, the two car parks at the station are now used to capacity.

Kings Hill is a large, mixed-use development with consent for 2,600 homes and is the location of over 100 businesses. This has increased demand for connections to the railway station and also in the opposite direction for those travelling to Kings Hill for employment from Maidstone and further afield.

The use of RBSG enabled the service to be upgraded to meet growing passenger demand and provide rail connections with most arrivals and departures, including journeys to and from London Bridge, Charing Cross and Waterloo. These enhancements have resulted in patronage growth from 89,000 passenger journeys in 2002/03 to 98,000 in the following year.

From September 2003, a further review of the service was carried out and additional resource allocated in order to provide a third vehicle at peak times whilst the poorly patronised rural extensions beyond Kings Hill were removed. This enabled the service to penetrate fully the residential areas of Kings Hill that were previously only partially served. Three new low floor buses were funded from capital sources and provided as part of the new contract for the service which also received new route branding.

Significant improvements have also been made to the infrastructure along the route including new shelters, real time information displays and raised kerbs. At West Malling railway station, Network Rail has allocated a layover area which has given operational and passenger benefits whilst further marketing of the service has also been carried out.

Action

The County Council will:

- Maintain financial support for existing bus services
- Explore the funding of additional services subject to the support criteria and funding availability.

4.3 Accessibility Planning

In addition to the support criteria, the County Council will use Accessibility Planning to inform its approach local bus service planning over future years. Accessibility is amongst the Government's shared priorities for transport and the County Council has produced the **Accessibility Strategy for Kent (ASK)** which forms **Appendix 2 of the LTP**. The ASK has been developed in conjunction with other organisations including the Local Education Authority and Kent Police and a range of initiatives and actions have identified which improve access to employment and key destinations such as local hospitals.

Local transport authorities are also expected to increase the emphasis given to accessibility considerations in existing processes such as development control or public transport planning. In particular, it is expected that outputs from the 'Accession' software will be used to inform and improve the planning of supported bus services by highlighting gaps in the existing network, and allowing scenario testing to be undertaken. The County Council will also encourage commercial operators to use accessibility planning techniques to inform changes proposed to commercial services, particularly within current and future Quality Bus Partnership areas. Figure 4.2 provides an Accession output for Ashford and the surrounding area and shows journey times to the town centre whilst similar outputs can be produced to inform the future expansion of the network as new housing and employment developments are built. In this instance the scenario testing of enhancements to services 1 and 2 maybe useful in informing a possible 'Kickstart' bid. It is hoped that this approach will promote a co-ordinated approach to planning local bus services

which provide fast and direct links to key destinations therefore contributing to wider objectives including reduced congestion, better quality and sustainable development.

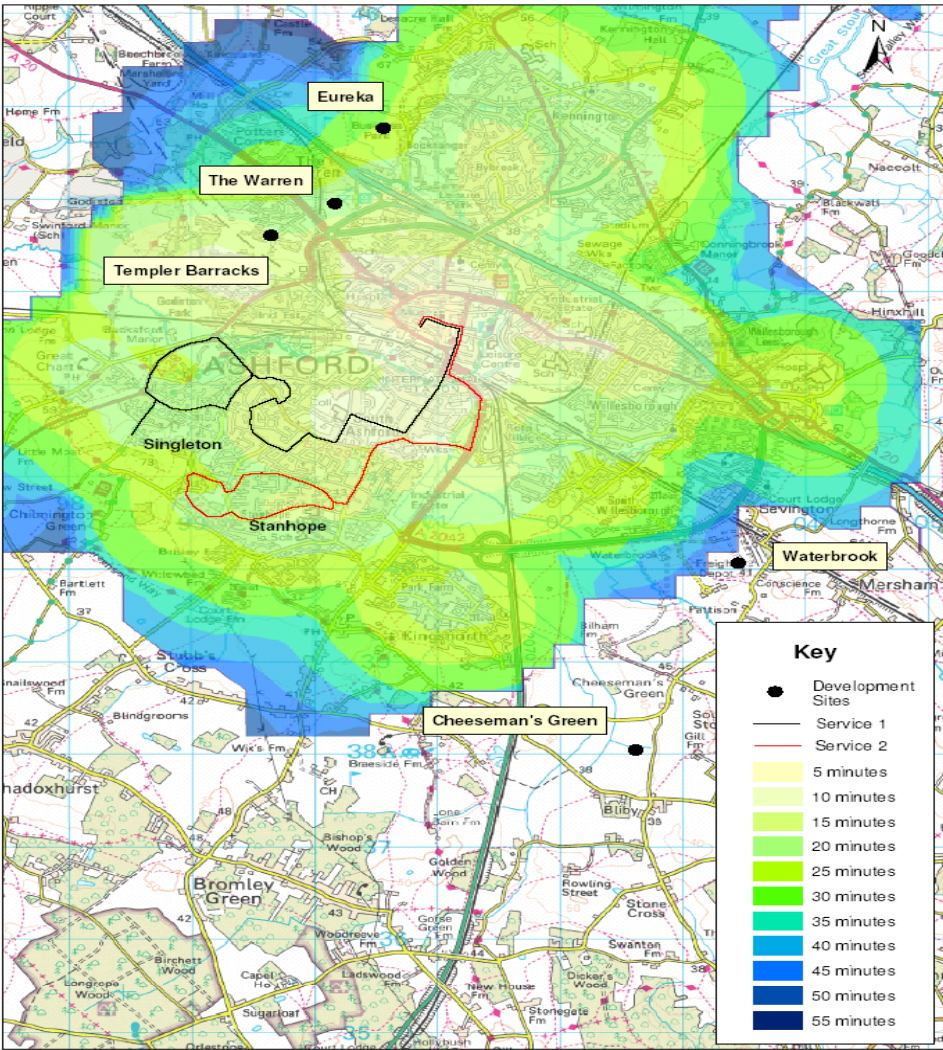


Figure 4.2: Network accessibility to Ashford town centre by public transport and walking, March 2006.

Action

The County Council will

- Use the accessibility planning process to inform the planning of commercial and financially supported bus services

4.4 Demand responsive services

Kent County Council has successfully bid for additional funding made available by the Government through the 'Rural Bus Challenge' initiative for innovative transport schemes. The 'SUN', 'DART' and 'Shepway Kent Karrier' projects introduced new or revised demand responsive services linking rural areas around Swale, Deal and Shepway to key local destinations. These schemes have been successful in addressing accessibility problems and have generated significant increases in

passenger numbers. The County Council will also explore opportunities to develop community transport services where appropriate.

Case Study: Canterbury 'Kent Karrier'

Previously operating as Canterbury Dial-a-Bus, and administered by Canterbury City Council, this scheme has been operated under contract to Kent County Council since June 2002. The scheme was re-branded under the corporate 'Kent Karrier' banner, which is the recognised name for KCC dial-a-ride schemes, and two new, fully accessible Rohill vehicles were purchased to operate the service. These replaced the existing vehicle and enabled a higher level of service to be provided.

As with all Kent Karrier schemes, Canterbury Kent Karrier is membership based and available to residents of the district who, either due to mobility impairment or because of their location, do not have access to or are unable to use conventional public transport. Canterbury City Council has maintained a very active role and, in addition to a significant financial contribution also administers the membership, which is free in this instance in comparison to schemes in other districts where a £5 fee typically applies.

Canterbury Kent Karrier operates on Mondays to Fridays and will collect members from their homes and take them to a number of key locations within their nearest local town - Canterbury, Herne Bay or Whistable. The service provides members with 2–3 hours in the town centre and gives access to key services and facilities.

Since 2002 Canterbury Kent Karrier has shown significant membership and patronage growth and 7,432 passenger journeys were made before the end of 2005/06 compared with 2,506 journeys in 2002/03. A third Rohill vehicle will be added in April which will enable the service to be upgraded and additional destinations served.

Action

The County Council will:

- Develop existing demand responsive services
- Explore opportunities to develop additional services subject to funding availability.
- Develop community transport services where appropriate.
- Ensure all appropriate funding sources are used.

4.5 Quality Bus Partnerships and Punctuality Improvement Partnerships

Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs) were introduced through the Transport Act 2000 and through the first Bus Strategy, the County Council implemented QBPs in Maidstone, Thanet, Canterbury and Kent Thameside in conjunction with the local operators and district councils.

The QBPs have provided a structured approach which has enabled all organisations to successfully work together towards the objective of increasing local bus patronage.

This has resulted in significant investment in the QBP areas on real time information, bus priority measures and other highway infrastructure by the County Council while the bus operators have introduced new accessible vehicles and more frequent services.

Case study: Thanet Quality Bus Partnership

The district of Thanet, in the North East of Kent, covers the three towns of Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs. On 27th June 2000 a Quality Bus Partnership was signed between Kent County Council, Stagecoach East Kent and Thanet District Council with the aim of improving the quality and availability of bus services and facilities in the area. The QBP aimed to improve dialogue between the bus operators and local authorities to promote the development of the area's bus services. The agreement set an ambitious target of 3% patronage growth per year and included a programme of action for the three partners.

The Quality Bus Partnership provided the context in which a successful bid was submitted by the County Council to the Department for Transport's Kickstart fund in 2003.

The key partner contributions outlined in the bid were:

- Stagecoach agreeing to invest in a fleet of 18 brand new low floor Dennis Dart buses, costing £1.6 million, in exchange for revenue funding that would pump-prime the service.
- Stagecoach running a new, simplified circular route around the urban area called the Thanet Loop, serving the main towns and the district hospital every 10 minutes during the day and half hourly in the evenings and on Sundays.
- Kent County Council committing £150,000 to improve facilities at bus stops such as raised kerbs, bus boarders and shelters and to providing essential highway and bus priority measures to allow the new service to run quickly and efficiently.
- Kent County Council contributing £100,000 revenue support to Stagecoach for pump-priming the service.
- Thanet District Council committing £10,000 and helping to identify locations for bus stop clearways for enforcement by parking attendants.
- The DfT bridging the remaining revenue gap with £447,000 of Kickstart funding.

Patronage figures and passenger feedback demonstrate that the Loop has been very successful and will meet the growth targets set by Stagecoach after three years, when the Kickstart funding ends:

- The level of passenger journeys across the whole Stagecoach network in Thanet has increased by over 10% since the Loop came into service in October 2004.
- A recent passenger survey found that 88% of those interviewed felt the service had "improved" with 63% considering it was "much improved".
- The high frequency service was the most popular feature with 65% of passengers.

- According to a recent Kent Tracker survey, Thanet has the highest ratings for ease of public transport use in the County with 67% of respondents.

Since the service changes in Oct 2004 and the opening of the Westwood Cross shopping centre in June 2005, the partners have further enhanced local bus services by:

- launching nine new Optare Solo midibuses on local routes 32 and 34, the “Thanet Stars”, which demonstrated Stagecoach’s increased confidence in the local bus network. The County Council will match the new buses with a programme of bus stop measures to improve access to the new buses for the elderly, disabled and parents with buggies.
- increasing the evening and Sunday Loop frequencies to every 20 minutes.
- investing in a further four Loop buses which will increase the off-peak daytime headway to every 8 minutes.

Future plans include upgrading the Thanet to Canterbury corridors with new low floor single-deckers which would give the district a completely accessible bus fleet on mainstream Stagecoach operated services. This would mark a significant achievement for the Thanet Quality Bus Partnership.

Punctuality Improvement Partnerships (PIPs) have been developed as a national initiative by the Bus Partnership Forum, to promote a joint approach between local transport authorities, bus operators and other organisations in improving the punctuality and reliability of bus services. It is recognised that the performance of bus services is affected by a complex range of factors and PIPs will provide a co-ordinated approach through which issues and problems can be addressed. The County Council will introduce PIPs in partnership with other organisations to improve the reliability and punctuality of bus services.

Action:

The County Council will:

- Develop existing Quality Bus Partnerships and identify new opportunities for develop the local bus network in these areas.
- Establish new Quality Bus Partnerships in other areas of the County including Tunbridge Wells, Dover and Ashford.
- Introduce PIPs where appropriate in conjunction with operators and other organisations.

4.6 Kickstart schemes

The concept of Kickstart was introduced by Government to pump prime improvements to bus services through the use of revenue funding for a period of up to three years. Along with Quality Bus Partnerships, Kickstart projects provide an

opportunity for local authorities and bus operators to work together to promote and improve the quality of commercial bus services.

Following consultation with the main bus operators, Kent County Council submitted two Kickstart bids in 2003 and four bids in 2005. Four bids were successful, two for each of the main bus operators. The Gravesend and Sittingbourne Kickstart projects involved enhancing Arriva town services in West and Mid Kent. In East Kent, the Thanet Loop and the Dover/Deal Diamond projects, in partnership with Stagecoach, were successfully awarded funding.

In each case, the bus operator has committed to invest in new low floor vehicles with the revenue gap met by the Government's Kickstart fund. A key assumption of Kickstart funding is that at the end of the three year period, the bus operator will take the commercial risk of operating the service using the timetable and vehicles introduced, without any external funding.

Kent County Council committed to funding any necessary highway or bus stop improvement measures identified by all parties to enable the services to develop commercially. The local councils (Thanet, Dover, Canterbury, Swale and Gravesham) have supported the new services through the use of decriminalised parking enforcement powers to keep bus routes and stops clear, allowing the services to operate efficiently.

Case study: Gravesend Kickstart project services 495/498

The Gravesend Kickstart project represented an £850,000 partnership investment by Arriva, Kent County Council and Gravesham Borough Council which was made possible by Kickstart funding awarded through the Urban Bus Challenge round in 2003.

The project brought about a number of improvements to the 495 and 498 bus services including:

- The delivery of 7 brand new, fully accessible buses with improved levels of comfort and new interior design to replace the existing minibuses.
- A digital CCTV system inside and outside the new vehicles & high visibility electronic displays.
- A simplified route network with through links from Kings Farm to Bluewater for the first time and a trial late evening service to allow workers and shoppers to return from Bluewater
- Better quality and clearer stop specific timetable displays at bus stops with new timetable cases provide at most stops
- Installation of higher kerbs and 'bus boarders' at stops to ease boarding and alighting

Since the launch of the service in March 2005, patronage figures have increased at a rate of about 5% and revenue has increased by about 19%. The new buses have proved popular with passengers and as a result, similar vehicles will also be used on the new Sittingbourne Kickstart service to be launched in September 2006.

The service is well on course to meet the targets outlined in the 2003 Kickstart bid and will link in well to other developments in the area including the opening of the Ebbsfleet International station, the launch of the Fastrack service and new residential and office developments in Kent Thameside.

4.7 Public Transport Information

The County Council produced its first Public Transport Information Strategy in 2002 which has recently been revised and re-issued. The Strategy aims to improve access to high quality public transport information through the different formats available including printed material, Traveline and the County Council's website. This includes a number of local public transport maps in electronic format. The range of public transport information produced has been expanded in recent years and now includes the Countywide map, area maps for most urban areas and the 'Travelling in Kent' guide to public transport. The Mobility Guide for mid Kent provides information and advice for residents with restricted mobility.

The standard of information provided at bus stops and bus stations has been significantly improved through partnership working between the County Council and the major operators who jointly fund the 'Roadside Infrastructure Unit'. The Unit is responsible for updating timetable displays throughout the County and maintaining key items on infrastructure such as bus stop flags which are now presented in a standard format which includes the location of the stop and the Traveline enquiry numbers. The County Council also summarises changes being made to local bus services on its public transport information website - **www.kentpublictransport.info**.

During the first LTP period, the County Council used Department for Education & Skills (DfES) funding to improve access to further education for students aged between 16 and 19. Three initiatives were introduced:

- A project providing travel mentors for students with disabilities to enable them to travel independently.
- Travel surveys targeting three deprived areas: Swale, Thanet and Shepway.
- A transport website which was initially targeted solely at colleges but in the last year has subsequently been expanded to take in all schools with sixth form provision in Kent and Medway.

The County Council recognises the value of Pathfinder projects in upgrading public transport information to improve accessibility to key services and employment and will work jointly with other organisations to develop new initiatives in future.

Action:

Through the revised Public Transport Information Strategy, the County Council will:

- Maintain and improve existing public transport information in co-operation with operators.

- Develop new approaches to providing public transport information in co-operation with operators and other organisations.
- Fund the Roadside Infrastructure Unit in partnership with operators.
- Develop existing and future initiatives to improve public transport information including Pathfinder projects.

4.8 Kent Bus System

The Kent Bus System has formed a key element of investment in the QBP areas in the form of priority for buses at traffic signals, real time information (RTI) screens for passengers and the facility for operators to monitor the performance of their services more effectively to improve reliability. During the first LTP period, new base stations have been installed to provide countywide coverage of the Kent Bus System whilst RTI screens and junction priority have been introduced in a number of urban areas. The second LTP includes an ongoing programme of investment in the Kent Bus System in conjunction with wider investment in Intelligent Transport Systems.

Action

The County Council will:

- Use funding secured through the LTP and other sources to extend coverage of the Kent Bus System as set out in the Intelligent Transport Systems Strategy.

4.9 Crime and Community Safety

The crime and fear of crime barrier to public transport has been targeted over the period of the current LTP. Kent County Council has worked with schools, local bus and coach operators, Kent Police and British Transport Police to develop a Code of Conduct governing standards expected to ensure safe home to school transport. In addition safe travel to school sessions have been co-ordinated, an award scheme for individual and collective behaviour introduced whilst the introduction of CCTV on buses has been of considerable benefit. The success of this work has led to the formation of an ongoing group of bus company directors, senior police officers, and senior representatives from Kent County Council which continuously monitors and develops policies for the safety of all passengers. Crime and the fear of crime is a PSA2 target for Kent County Council and this high profile topic is shared as a cross directorate initiative.

Vandalism of public transport infrastructure is a major problem in some parts of Kent and includes the breakage of glass panels in bus shelters and graffiti. Partnership working between the Police, Community Safety Units, bus shelter providers and bus operators was undertaken in Maidstone during 2005 and successfully reduced the incidence of vandalism in the area.

Crime and the fear of crime will be addressed the new Local Transport Plan and the County Council will work with the police forces and local operators to improve safety on the public transport network.

Case study: CCTV on buses in Kent Thameside

The County Council is providing significant investment in the Kent Thameside public transport network to support the future development of the area by reducing car dependency and encouraging modal shift. Crime and the fear of crime have been highlighted as important factors deterring the use of local bus and rail services which makes it more difficult for residents to reach employment and key services and compounds social exclusion. In 2006/07, the County Council will be providing funding received from the Dartford River Crossing revenue to install CCTV on local buses in Kent Thameside as part of a wider initiative being undertaken by Arriva to refurbish its fleet in the area. CCTV is also being installed at specific bus shelters around Dartford where vandalism and anti-social behaviour are prevalent

Action:

Kent County Council will improve safety on the public transport network through:

- Ongoing initiatives with partner organisations to improve safety on home to school transport.
- Developing new schemes and initiatives in partnership with other organisations in areas of Kent where there is a high incidence of crime and vandalism on public transport services.

4.10 Integration and Interchange

a) Integration between modes

The County Council recognises the important of interchange and integration between modes in the future growth and development of the public transport network. Through the first LTP, new interchanges for local buses and taxis have been constructed at Greenhithe and Ramsgate station and similar improvements will be made at Dover Priory Station and West Malling station through the second LTP. Opportunities also exist to improve local bus infrastructure near other key stations such as Gravesend, Tonbridge, Sevenoaks and Maidstone East which will be developed in conjunction with rail industry partners and wider initiatives.

In future years, the pattern of rail services in Kent is expected to change significantly due to the introduction of a new operating franchise, completion of Thameslink 2000 and introduction of domestic services on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. The County Council will work in partnership with rail industry partners to ensure that opportunities are explored to develop new interchanges at key locations on the network.

Case study: Ramsgate station interchange project

Approximately 650,000 passenger journeys are made from Ramsgate Station each year. However, because the station is over one mile from the town centre it is important to provide integration with other transport modes to connecting journeys to be made.

The Ramsgate Interchange Project was funded by the rail industry and Kent County Council, following a successful bid to the Rail Passenger Partnership (RPP) fund in 2002. The implementation of the project was managed by Kent County Council with support from the partners Railtrack, Connex South East, Stagecoach and Thanet District Council. The Kent RPP study identified a number of barriers to integrated travel at the station which the project aimed to overcome:

- Ramsgate station had a large forecourt, which was a poorly used resource with conflicting traffic movements creating safety hazards for pedestrians.
- Bus stops were randomly sited with limited information for passengers seeking to connect with services. Although the frequency of services was good, with a bus every 15 minutes, this was not matched by passenger's perceptions.
- Taxi bays and car parking were poorly marked out and the quality of the forecourt surface was poor.

The project overcame these barriers to integrated travel through:

- The purchase of two new, high quality Adshel Landmark bay bus shelters and the provision of raised kerbing to provide level access to local Stagecoach and Eastonways bus services as well as Guide Friday tourist buses.
- Resurfacing the car park for more efficient and safer use, with disabled parking, short stay and drop off areas
- Improved information on bus services and community facilities through better quality timetabling, the provision of I-Plus touchscreen kiosks in the station building and the option of bus real time information signs.

As a result of the project, which was completed in March 2004, Ramsgate rail station has been upgraded to provide travellers with an easy interchange with bus services and taxis making onward travel attractive for rail passengers. Shortly after the project was completed, the Westwood Cross shopping centre opened to the public providing a greater demand to travel to and through Ramsgate station. The launch of the Thanet Loop service in November 2004 improved connections from Ramsgate station with easy access to Westwood Cross, Ramsgate Harbour and the rest of Thanet making the station a key interchange for local public transport users.

b) Integration between bus services

Bus stations are provided in several towns in Kent including Maidstone, Canterbury, Folkestone and Sevenoaks. The Canterbury facilities were recently re-built as part of a wider development whilst Folkestone bus station is being upgraded in 2007 as part of the Bouverie Place Shopping Centre. In addition, LTP funding is being used to improve pedestrian links with Folkestone Central Station. The County Council will

continue to work in partnership with public transport operators and district councils to ensure ongoing investment is made in bus stations to provide a secure and comfortable environment for passengers.

c) Integration between car and bus travel

The integration of car and bus travel can be achieved through Park & Ride schemes which comprise car parks on the edge of urban areas from which users travel into town centres on dedicated bus services. Currently, Park & Ride schemes are operated in Maidstone and Canterbury and the respective district councils and both schemes are used extensively and provide significant relief on the local highway network, particularly during the peak periods. The County Council supports the principal of Park & Ride and will work in partnership with the district councils on the development of existing or new initiatives including proposals for Tunbridge Wells and Ashford.

Case Study: Maidstone Park & Ride

Maidstone Park & Ride was developed from the late 1980s and provides several car parks on the edge of the town which are linked to the centre by frequent bus services. The Park & Ride aims to offer a genuine alternative to town centre parking and reduce traffic volumes on the key routes, particularly during the peak periods.

Maidstone's first Park & Ride site was opened in 1989 at Willington Street to the east of the town and was later followed by Coombe Quarry to the south (1990), London Road to the west (1991) and finally Sittingbourne Road to the north (1998). The four sites provide over 1,600 parking spaces in total and operate six days per week with buses provided at between twelve to fifteen minute frequencies. In addition at Christmas a seasonal Park and Sail service is also offered from a 5th location to the north-west of the Town.

Maidstone Park & Ride is supported financially by the Borough Council and forms one element of the Quality Bus Partnership. Kent County Council has assisted with the development of Maidstone Park and Ride through the provision of access onto the highway network and bus priority measures along the key corridors. Arriva retained the contract to operate Maidstone Park & Ride in 2004 and new vehicles were introduced to all services.

Currently, an average of 1,500 cars and over 2,000 fare paying passengers use Maidstone Park & Ride each day and the service has twice been awarded the Government 'Chartermark'. Further development of the scheme is anticipated with new, larger sites being sought to replace those at Sittingbourne Road and Coombe Quarry. KCC will help to facilitate these moves, which will also provide improved facilities.

d) Integration between buses, taxis, cycling and walking

Integration between buses and taxis is not widespread in Kent although in some areas, including Maidstone, hackney carriages are able to use bus priority measures which has improved co-operation between operators. Few examples of integration

between buses and cycling exist in Kent and, whilst cycle stands have been provided near bus stations in some urban areas, this approach is less suited to rural areas due to security issues. The County Council has considered the potential to include cycle carrying equipment on buses and the vehicles used on SUN services in Swale are fitted with bike racks.

Access to local bus services can be improved by ensuring that stops are conveniently placed near to key destinations and have good levels of pedestrian access. This can be achieved by reviewing stop locations to reflect changes in the built environment and also by ensuring that walking routes are direct and secure with crossing points provided.

e) Integrated Ticketing

The expansion of integrated ticketing is more challenging due to commercial confidentiality and non compliance of technology. However, bus/rail ticketing schemes are now available in most Kent towns although the marketing of the RailBus tickets has not been particularly effective. During 2004, the County Council commissioned a study to re-evaluate the feasibility of introducing public transport smartcards in Kent Thameside which follows an initial pilot trial held in Folkestone during the mid 1990s. Whilst smartcards offer some advantages in terms of boarding time and security, the study demonstrated that, at present, the benefits are not sufficiently great to justify the level of investment needed.

Action:

The County Council will:

- Work with bus and rail operators to develop new interchanges at Dover and West Malling stations and explore opportunities for similar schemes.
- Work in partnership with bus operators and district councils to develop bus stations where these are provided
- Work with bus operators to ensure that stops are conveniently located to provide access to key destinations and residential areas
- Support the ongoing operation of the existing Park & Ride schemes in Maidstone and Canterbury and work in partnership with other organisations to develop new schemes as part of wider transport strategies.
- Explore opportunities for improving integration between local buses and cycling.
- Review the development of integrated ticketing as appropriate and develop RailBus tickets in locations where these do not already exist including Maidstone.

4.11 Highway infrastructure

In its role as transport authority, the County Council has a key role to play in re-allocating road space to promote the role of bus services in tackling congestion, encouraging modal shift and contributing to wider objectives including economic development and social inclusion.

The Integrated Transport Programme in the first LTP provided a range of infrastructure investment which has benefited local bus services including bus lanes, new shelters and revised kerbing for low floor buses. The scheme programmes for the second LTP have been developed following discussions with operators and include further improvements designed to assist the movement of buses on the highway network. Priority corridors are being developed through Quality Bus Partnerships and the County Council has established bus lane implementation criteria which are detailed in Annex 1. The County Council is developing a methodology for appraising and prioritising its Integrated Transport Programmes. This reflects national, regional and local transport objectives and will assess the impact that individual schemes will have upon delivering Kent's LTP objectives.

Bus priority measures are needed in some parts of Kent to improve the reliability of bus services, encourage modal shift, increase patronage and encourage operator investment in vehicles and service frequencies. The County Council will work with operators to identify key corridors for improvement and identify opportunities for reviewing town centre traffic systems to improve access for local buses.

Illegal and inconsiderate parking delays the operation of bus services and the blocking of stops prevents vehicles reaching the kerb which causes inconvenience, particularly for wheelchair users and parents with pushchairs. The County Council will work in partnership with district councils to improve the enforcement of parking restrictions including the introduction of bus stop clearways.

In future years, it is anticipated that the County Council's approach to managing the highway infrastructure will be informed and guided by the Network Management Plan (NMP) whilst Punctuality Improvement Partnerships (PIPs) provide a further mechanism for improving service quality and reliability and further information is given in section 4.4.

The County Council has worked in partnership with other organisations to reduce the disruption caused by roadworks to bus services and a protocol has been developed for liaison between Kent Highway Services and bus operators. Feedback from operators indicates that communication has been significantly improved which has resulted in reduced delays and better reliability.

Action:

The County Council will:

- Implement an ongoing programme of bus infrastructure improvements and bus priority measures where appropriate to improve the reliability of bus services and encourage operator investment
- Maintain communication between Kent Highways Services, the main utilities and bus operators to improve co-ordination and reduce the impact of road works upon local bus services.
- Use its powers through the NMP and PIPs to improve assist in improving the reliability of local bus services.
- Improve the enforcement of parking restrictions in conjunction with district councils.

4.12 Concessionary fares

The County Council co-ordinates the Kent Countywide concessionary fares scheme for elderly and disabled people in partnership with the district councils and will continue to administer these arrangements in future years. The funding for reimbursing the bus operators is paid to the district councils and Medway Council from Central Government. The County Council has no statutory duty to contribute to the scheme but contributes towards the overall costs of administration. This reflects the benefits of a countywide scheme and the County Council's role in the overall provision of services on which the passes are valid.

Individual district councils also provide funding for additional concessionary travel schemes such as Maidstone Borough Council which supports travel vouchers and child concession cars which address social exclusion and accessibility objectives.

From 1 April 2006, concessionary travel will become free to passholders and the County Council has already been very active in assisting the districts in working towards such a scheme. It is the County Council's aspiration that a countywide scheme will continue as this will bring the greatest benefit to Kent residents as well as being a continuation of the current scheme.

The move to free travel is likely to be the single largest development in the use of buses since de-regulation in the mid-1980s and this is a significant opportunity which the County Council welcomes. Given the very substantial change to travel patterns which is expected to develop as a result of free travel, bus operators are concerned about the overall funding available and capacity pressures, both by route and by time of day. Many of these issues will however only become apparent after 1 April and the County Council will work with operators to assess the nature and scale of this, both on tendered and commercial services, in order that the overall network is attractive to accommodate and generate further growth.

The funding made available to the districts is based on a formula and therefore the risk exists that while some districts may have sufficient funds to meet all claims, other districts may not, which ultimately could threaten the existence of a countywide scheme. The County Council considers that the total sum being paid from Government to fund the scheme could be paid at a county level in order to avoid this unnecessary risk.

Action:

The County Council will:

- Continue to co-ordinate the concessionary fares scheme across Kent and Medway
- Promote the availability and use of passes for eligible residents
- Work with bus operators to ensure capacity for both pass holders and fare-paying bus users
- Work with other county councils to lobby central government for these funds to be provided at County level for as long as a Countywide scheme exists

4.13 Investment in vehicles

In recent years, the County Council has provided funding to upgrade the quality of vehicles used on supported bus services which has resulted in a more attractive environment and better accessibility for passengers including wheelchair users and parents with pushchairs. The County Council will continue to explore opportunities for further investment which will be complemented by upgraded roadside infrastructure such as raised kerbs funded through the LTP.

Action

The County Council will:

- Identify opportunities to improve the standard of vehicles operated on supported services.

4.14 Major schemes

Fastrack Phase 1 was funded by the County Council through the first LTP and was completed in March 2006 when the operation of services by Arriva Kent Thameside commenced. Fastrack will provide a high quality bus based public transport system for Kent Thameside and future phases of the network will be added to serve the planned developments in this key growth area. The County Council will work with the local district councils and Kent Thameside Delivery Board on the future development of Fastrack.

The County Council will also explore the potential for further investment in public transport infrastructure in the growth areas including the Smartlink proposals in Ashford.



Case study: Fastrack Bus Rapid Transit

Fastrack brings together the best of public/private sector joint working and bus and ITS technology to deliver an innovative, UK standard setting Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) solution to the challenges of local transport demand within a major growth area at the heart of the Thames Gateway.

Fastrack has been designed as a flexible system since an area experiencing significant growth over a relatively long period of time requires a transport network that can grow and adapt. The use of rubber-tyred vehicles that run on a normal road surface means that routes can be readily adjusted to suit the progress of construction, always providing the optimum service patterns to serve both new and existing communities.

A core *Fastrack* network of some 40km is planned. Overall, half of all *Fastrack* routes will operate on dedicated busway 'track' with a further 25% on specially reserved lanes alongside traffic on existing roads.

An innovative *Fastrack* Delivery Executive, comprising the three local authorities, London and Continental Railways and Land Securities, is overseeing development and implementation of stage 1. Once the full network is substantially in place, the Delivery Executive will lead the project through stage 2 at which point a concession may be let for the *Fastrack* system.

The first *Fastrack* services, Route B, opened in March 2006 and features:

- 5.5km of new dedicated busway and priority lanes.
- High quality infrastructure with real time information and interactive services provided at stops.
- 14 State of the art *Fastrack* vehicles reflecting the highest quality available from conventional bus technology; and
- a unique operating arrangement designed to integrate *Fastrack* alongside the existing bus network, whilst minimising adverse impacts.

Route B was funded as a major scheme through the LTP by Kent County Council. Further sections of wholly developer-funded dedicated infrastructure will open in 2007, with remaining sections being delivered by the private sector to suit the progress of developments in the area.

Action:

The County Council will:

- Work with district councils, the principal bus operators and other organisations on the future development of Fastrack.
- Develop further public transport infrastructure schemes in the growth areas including the Smartlink scheme in Ashford.

Section 5: Challenges and barriers

The County Council acknowledges the contribution made by local bus services to the transport system or wider objectives and the need for investment between partner organisations to ensure that Kent has an efficient and comprehensive local bus network. In recent years, Quality Bus Partnerships and other initiatives have produced significant achievements and the County Council will continue to work with operators and other organisations to ensure that progress is sustained through the second LTP.

However, there are a number of challenges and barriers which may impede progress or cause priorities to be re-visited and these issues must be understood to ensure that proposals or initiatives developed through the Bus Strategy are realistic and deliverable.

5.1 Revenue support funding

In recent years, local bus service contract prices have increased at well beyond general inflation levels which has placed pressure on the County Council's budget and the amount of funding provided has been significantly increased to maintain service levels. The County Council is committed to the support of local bus services but has finite financial resources for which there are competing demands throughout the authority's different activities. Significant contract price increases over future years would be more difficult to absorb and consideration would need to be given to the way in which funding is used and alternative approaches for supporting services. Additionally, a proportion of the revenue support budget is provided directly by Government as Rural Bus Subsidy Grant (RBSG) and the long term future of this funding source is not guaranteed. The County Council will therefore consider innovative ways to fund services using external resources and capital funding to purchase vehicles for Kent contracts.

5.2 Capital funding

The LTP provides the County Council with capital funding for transport investment ranging from small improvements to major schemes such as Fastrack. The level of funding provided by Government can vary significantly which directly affects the ability of County Councils to implement infrastructure schemes.

5.3 Changes to commercial services

The County Council's success in improving local bus services across Kent is dependent upon effective partnership working with operators. However, 80% of services in the County are provided on a commercial basis and are run by individual companies to generate a profit. Escalating costs and staffing shortages in recent years have resulted in rapid service changes which has unfortunately been to the detriment of network stability and coverage in some parts of Kent.

5.4 Regulatory changes

In some areas of the United Kingdom, local authorities and Passenger Transport Executives are lobbying for a greater role in the planning and co-ordination of local bus services. At present, the County Council does not in general support changes to the existing regulatory and operational framework and recognises that effective partnership working with commercial operators provides the best approach for the future development of the local bus network in Kent.

However, the creation of sustainable communities within the growth areas presents a new magnitude of challenges, as outlined in paragraph 2.30 of the LTP. Bus-based systems are seen as offering an appropriate way of achieving the necessary step change in public transport use, but will need to be of a much higher quality than anything currently operating in Kent. Furthermore, an appropriate mechanism is required to instil confidence that a cohesive long-term plan exists for developing an area wide network; accommodate capital investment from a variety of funding sources; ensure provision of new, high quality services in advance of significant new patronage; and, prevent the operational viability of newly provided high quality services from being undermined. It is clear that the scale and scope of the task is beyond the existing regulatory and operational framework and partnership working referred to above. In summary, delivering sustainable communities built around major public transport use can not be guaranteed if left to the vagaries of a commercial bus market.

This conclusion is supported by work undertaken in planning for the development over the next thirty years of the Fastrack network in Kent Thameside. Detailed exploratory work has concluded that the only practicable way to develop Fastrack is through the two-stage approach detailed in LTP paragraph 9.30. Stage 1 will utilise conventional regulatory and operational frameworks, but stage 2 requires a more robust and proactive regulatory approach that can grant exclusive operating rights and therefore provide the certainty of service delivery. KCC will explore and develop the necessary Stage 2 framework through a quality contract scheme under the Transport Act 2000 or through any similar new regulatory mechanisms that might become available.

5.5 Reallocating road space

The reallocation of road space to improve the performance of local bus services presents a major challenge to the County Council. Whilst the benefits of efficient and reliable services are clear, there are also competing demands for space on the highway network. Particular issues include residents' parking which can obstruct the passage of buses within housing areas whilst the pedestrianisation of town centres can result in lengthy diversions to bus routes and lower accessibility to key destinations.

Section 6: Measuring Success

The Bus Strategy for Kent specifies a series of targets and actions which the County Council has identified to inform the development of high quality bus services and provide a framework through which progress can be evaluated.

6.1 Monitoring

The Bus Strategy for Kent outlines activities and initiatives throughout the County which, it is hoped, will improve the quality and perception of bus services together with accessibility to both urban and rural communities. This will be monitored using market research and through the Accessibility Strategy for Kent (ASK).

The principle of joint working with private sector operators has been established through the development of Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs) which aims to improve service quality and promote integration. The success of the existing QBPs has been measured in co-operation with the private sector and this approach will be replicated for new Partnerships.

6.2 Performance Indicators and Targets

Performance indicators and targets form a key element of the LTP process and cover all aspects of the County Council's transport activities.

A range of outcomes can be linked to improved bus services including better access, reduced congestion, more reliable journey times or healthier communities. The County Council's progress will be measured against the following mandatory and local indicators and targets during the LTP period of 2006 to 2011. Further detail on the County Council's indicators and targets is provided in **Appendix 1** (Performance Indicators and Targets) of the LTP.

Mandatory indicators/targets:

Indicator Number	Indicator Description	LTP Target
BVPI102	Number of annual bus passenger journeys in Kent	2% inc. per annum
BVPI104	Satisfaction with the local bus network	10% inc.
LTP1a	Access to Hospitals (Countywide) within 30 mins	10% inc.
LTP1b	Access to GP Surgeries (Countywide) within 15 mins	5% inc.
LTP2	Change in Area Wide Traffic	Less than 2% inc. per annum

LTP4	Mode Share of Journeys to School	10% inc. for Primary 5% inc. for Secondary
LTP5	Bus Punctuality	6% increase
LTP6	Changes in Peak Period Traffic Flows to Urban Centres - Thanet	Less than 2% inc. per annum
LTP8	Air Quality	Reduction to 40µg/m ³

Local indicators/targets:

Indicator Number	Indicator Description	LTP Target
KLTP3	Bus User Satisfaction (Information)	10% inc.
KLTP4	Bus Patronage in QBP areas	3% inc. per annum
KLTP5	Proportion of low floor buses in QBP areas	35% inc.

Annex 1: Bus lane implementation criteria

- The bus lane should be part of a route corridor strategy and must increase the number of people moved along that corridor
- A bus lane should only be promoted if it is the most cost effective way to achieve the required benefit, having considered alternative methods of bus priority or traffic management
- There must be a minimum bus frequency of 6 journeys per hour during peak periods and peak period only operation should be considered
- There must be at least an informal partnership between the Transport Authority, the District Council and the operator(s). For example, where a bus lane is provided, the operator(s) should commit to specified frequencies, improved services and quality over a period of at least three years to ensure good use is made of the facility. Alternatively, the operator may part or fully fund the bus lane.
- The bus lane must provide a measurable benefit in terms of:
 - Total number of people movements (bus and car) increased per hour
 - Time saving per person using the bus lane
 - Reliability of service journey time designed to lead to an increase in bus usage
 - Any disbenefit to other road users should be evaluated, minimised and clearly explained in any proposal
- The bus lane will also be used by taxis and cycles where appropriate, and consideration should be given to other users such as goods vehicles and high occupancy vehicles
- There must be no detriment to safety for any category of highway user
- There must be a commitment from the operator to monitor patronage and reliability and from the Transport Authority to monitor journey times
- The need for enforcement should be considered in any proposal.

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