

# Notes of West Berkshire Enhanced Partnership Forum

Thursday 26 February 2026 - Forum No. 12

Present were representatives of:

- Bus operators (Reading Buses, Newbury & District, Thames Travel, Stagecoach, and West Berkshire Council).
- West Berkshire Council (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways; Network Management and Transport Services).
- Other local Authorities (Reading Borough, Oxfordshire).
- Community Transport Operators (VCWB).

Apologies were received from representatives of:

- Bus operators (Reading Buses).
- Other local Authorities (Reading Borough, Oxfordshire, Wokingham, Hampshire, Wiltshire)
- Community Transport Operators (Carebus).

Service Lead for Highways and Transport Innovation from WBC chaired the forum.

Notes from Forum No.11 in September 2025 were agreed.

## Matters arising from previous Forum, which are not covered in the agenda:

- **North Hampshire Villages Services** – taxi share service operated by Ashmansworth Taxishare now operating in the north Hampshire villages previously served by the 7/7a with connections to Newbury.
- **Community Transport services** – WBC to work with operators on publicity to recruit for volunteer drivers.

## Local Bus Grant Reporting:

- **Targets Report** – report due April 2026. Impacts of £3 fare cap showing in patronage especially on urban routes.
- **[NHT Survey](#)** – WB scored 62% in overall satisfaction above target set, this is positive considering the survey included non-bus users.
- **Bus Indicator Pilot** – to end after Q4 2026-27, WBC to request data from operators. Replaced by Outcomes Framework from April 2027. **ACTION: WBC**

## BSIP 2025-26 Scheme Progress:

- **BF2. Upgrade vehicle for zero emissions** – two electric minibuses delivered to WBC.
- **BF3. Carbon Neutral Facilities** – electric charging points at site in Thatcham in advance stage. One charging point will be available to public.
- **FS6. Multi-Operator Ticket Scheme** – final draft shared, feedback received.
- **BP3. Robin Hood & BP4. Bath Road Calcot** – majority of sites in Calcot operational. Calcot Sainsburys and Robinhood Roundabout progressing. Request for operators to provide feedback on punctuality. **ACTION: WBC & Ops**
- **BP5. Congestion Hotspots** – bus stop clearway markings phase 5/6 progressing. Phase 7 planned for 2026. Across 7 phases: 152 new clearway markings, 150 new signs, repainting 89 existing clearway markings. Operators to assess impact and to [notify WBC](#) of any sites that may need clearway markings. **ACTION: WBC & Ops**
- **OI1. Bus Shelters** – 24 of 25 planned bus shelters installed. WBC to send operators list to look at any impacts on patronage, request for operators to inform WBC of any sites they believe may benefit from a shelter. **ACTION: WBC & Ops**
- **OI5. Bus Gate Review** – bus gate at Kenneth Heath, Thatcham operational, additional cameras to be added for effectiveness, WBC to review signage. **ACTION: WBC**
- **OI2. RTPI Screens** – research in preparation for works in 2026-27. **ACTION: WBC**
- **OI6. Bus Stop Requests** – audit of bus stops in West Berkshire underway. Assessing infrastructure at stops including accessibility. **ACTION: WBC**

- **BS12. Introduction of Evening/Weekend services** – X34 Sunday service to progress in 2026-27. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BS14. Expanded DRT service** – Assessing feasibility of new eastern service around Pangbourne and Tidmarsh. **ACTION: WBC**
- **BS17. 1a/1c** – service operational from February 2026.
- **SS2. Independent Travel Training** – Progressing to procurement stage, to get more students confident using the bus/public transport. **ACTION: WBC**
- **FS1. Free/Reduced Travel** – Feedback on Christmas free bus days positive, coordination with other local authorities beneficial, look to maintain this. Request to consider free travel for evening journeys. **ACTION: WBC**
- **II1. Improved marketing of bus services** – [Visit Newbury by Bus](#). Bus shelter maps to be updated after works at Monks Lane conclude. **ACTION: WBC**

### Local Bus Grant Funding 2026-30

- **Consolidated Funding** – WBC allocated [Local Authority Bus Grant funding](#) to 2029-30. DfT introduced Consolidated Funding model with ITF (includes Highways, Active Travel, Electric Vehicle Infrastructure, Local Transport Grant and Capital LA Bus Grant) and BSF funding and BSF (Revenue LA Bus Grant). WBC to produce draft LTDP by 20 March 2026, final version by 18 September 2026. Bus element of draft delivery plan shared.
- **Your Bus Journey Survey** – LTA must take part in the annual [Transport Focus's Your Bus Journey](#) survey from 2026-27. Operators to ensure drivers are aware to permit surveyor's travel. **ACTION: Ops**
- **Outcomes Framework** – from April-2026 LTA's required to report variety of outcomes as part of consolidated funding project.

### Operators Updates:

- **Thames Travel** – minor timetable changes to improve punctuality of X34, introduction of congestion charge in Oxford positive.
- **Reading Buses/Newbury & District** – no significant changes to patronage, punctuality seen improvement because of the Monks Lane closure.
- **Stagecoach** – no significant change, replacing older buses with second-hand Euro VI vehicles, punctuality/reliability stable, evening economy looks to be picking up.
- **West Berkshire Transport Service Team** – 75% of Community Connect operated by electric minibuses, positive feedback for service.

### Other Issues:

- **Bus Service Act 2025** – became law in autumn 2025. Requirement for LTA to define Socially Necessary Services and produce a Bus Network Accessibility Plan, awaiting guidance.
- **EP Review** – DfT completed [EP Review](#) in January 2026, minimum standards for EP's, manual and guide to published Spring 2026.
- **Smoking at Newbury Wharf Bus Station** – Operators remind drivers should not be smoking at site. **ACTION: Ops**
- **RTPI Newbury Wharf Bus Station** – Request to add the 32 service to the RTPI display at Newbury Wharf. **ACTION: WBC & Ops**

**Any Other Business:** None.

### Future forum dates (subject to change)

- 13.30 on **Thursday 21 May 2026** at West Berkshire Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury, RG14 5LD.
- 13.30 on **Thursday 24 September 2026** at West Berkshire Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury, RG14 5LD.
- 13.30 on **Thursday 25 February 2027** at West Berkshire Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury, RG14 5LD.

**Abbreviations:**

BCA	Bus Connectivity Assessment	PAR	Project Adjustment Request
BSF	Bus Service Fund	PSVAR	Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations
BSF	Bus Services Fund	RB	Reading Buses
BSIP	Bus Service Improvement Plan	RTPI	Real-Time Passenger Information
BSOG	Bus Services Operators Grant	S106	Section 106
CT	Community Transport	SLA	Service Level Agreement
DfT	Department for Transport	TOTO	Tap-on/Tap-off
DRT	Demand Responsive Transport	VCWB	Volunteer Centre West Berkshire
EP	Enhanced Partnership	WBC	West Berkshire Council
GWR	Great Western Railway	WBCC	West Berkshire Community Connect
ITF	Integrated Transport Fund		
LTA	Local Transport Authorities		
LTDP	Local Transport Delivery Plan		
Ops	All Operators		