

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

Place Scrutiny Commission

17 October 2016

Report of: Peter Mann, Service Director - Transport

Title: **Draft Public Transport Information Strategy**

Ward: Citywide

Officer Presenting Report: Ed Plowden, Head of Sustainable Transport

Contact Telephone Number: 90-36568

RECOMMENDATION

To comment on and help to shape the development of the Bristol Public Transport Information Strategy.

Summary

The report contains elements that will form Bristol's Public Transport Information Strategy. The committee is asked to comment and provide guidance on the emerging contents and direction of travel prior to going out to consultation with stakeholders and a Cabinet decision in the New Year. This is still at the formative stage so that Scrutiny has a chance to influence at an early stage in the process, and the comments of a range of stakeholders will further shape the strategy.

The significant issues in the report are:

This report is part of the process of strategy development to maintain and develop our approach to Public Transport Information. It is a requirement under 2000 Transport Act for Local authorities to pay due regard to the local area's needs by having such a strategy.

It is vital to note that this is a strategy in development and in the partnership spirit in which we provide information it will be subject to evolution; Scrutiny Committee is asked to provide early feedback at a formative stage to ensure that the emerging approach is comprehensive, appropriate and in keeping with the approach that members would like to see Bristol developing.

The likely recommendations in the planned Cabinet Report are:

1. Agree to the Bus Information strategy along the lines proposed
2. Agree to re-procure the RTI system on behalf of the West of England

Scrutiny Commission may wish to consider:

3. *Is this strategy doing the right things?*
4. *Is there anything we have missed?*
5. *Any advice for how we might go about making the consultation as meaningful as possible?*

Policy

6. *Joint Local Transport Plan 2011-2026*

Consultation

7. Internal

As mentioned above this is the first draft, being shared with scrutiny at the earliest possible stage

8. External – some of this is determined by the 2000 Transport Act To Follow:

Bus operators

WEBOA (west of England Bus Operators Association)

Other Unitary Authorities

Traffic Commissioner (Western Area Office)

Equalities Groups

Bus users and non-users (online)

Neighbourhood Partnerships to signpost to online portal

Context

Achieving transport mode shift to public transport is a fundamental part of our transport plans, not least as with a growing population and number of jobs it is key to tackling congestion which acts as a barrier to economic growth and people's access to jobs and services. The strategy will propose to continue to provide information to enable people to plan and make (predominantly) bus journeys with confidence to make it easy and convenient for them to use public transport, and to allow for ongoing improvement and future-proofing.

Bus services in Bristol are largely operated on a commercial basis, and this is the case in every area in England outside London, which retains unique special powers. This means that a private bus operator chooses the route and frequency of the services it provides. The Council supplements this commercial network with services that it considers to be socially necessary. These include late night or Sunday journeys on services that are otherwise commercially provided, standalone orbital or shopper services, and Park & Ride.

The Council works with bus operators to create the environment where bus services can run punctually and attract more passengers, which is good for the City. This includes the provision and enforcement of bus lanes, a high quality waiting environment at bus stops, and (crucially for this report) the provision of information about the bus services in the city. Data from the Real Time information system is interrogated as part of our Punctuality Improvement Partnership with First Bus.

As this is a commercial market it is ruled by Competition Law, the Council has to ensure that any information provided is impartial (eg between operators) and accurate, particularly on infrastructure provided by the Council (such as stops and shelters).

The Council also works with the other 3 Unitary Authorities (UAs) across the West of England (WoE) to coordinate agreed bus information. This is because many journey are cross-boundary and also to ensure that timetable changes are coordinated and the RTI system is managed (by Bristol) across the sub-region, producing economies of scale and reduced duplication.

The data that Bristol manages is then distributed to South West Public Transport Information (SWPTI), which is a formal partnership owned and managed by all the South West Highways Authorities (County or Unitary) and principal bus operators. This then provides a coordinated data management service and journey planning service, which provides economies of scale, consistent information that meets national standards and feeds all the timetable and RTI information on other apps and websites available to the public

The Bus Services Bill and the formation of a Combined Authority in the West of England may mean that this strategy is further developed in due course but it is being brought forward now to ensure we have the ability to work with other organisations to share the costs of providing information and to enable the ongoing development of the Real Time Information system as the contract for the WoE system is due for renewal in September 2017.

The strategy also intends to support Council policies to encourage and develop

- **channel shift** to online information and interactions
- **open data**, as a way of improving transparency and enabling digital entrepreneurs to find ways to manipulate data to make them useful to the public. The proposed strategy looks at ways that this can apply to bus information

Some **Benchmarking** has also been undertaken to provide a summary of the core information provided by other Cities (**Appendix 1**), – it is worth again noting that London has its own powers to manage all public transport provision so is not part of the benchmarking except to say that TfL has not developed any apps of its own, instead relying on the market to provide by enabling easy access to open data.

Proposal

9. Proposed aims, objectives and scope for the strategy is at **Appendix 2**.

10. The strategy will continue to support the **stability** of bus services and reduce the transactional costs to the Council by continuing to specify agreed four “windows” per year in which bus operators can make changes to services across the WoE, and the strategy will now build in incentives for operators to stick to the windows. This then gives a statutory 56 days (as enforced by the Traffic Commissioner) before the timetables come into effect for the Council to verify the data and to ensure that the RTI system is reconfigured accordingly.

11. In practice this is usually two large scale changes in March/April and August/September. The proposed dates for the forthcoming 5 years are at **Appendix 3**, and these are to be confirmed with operators as part of the consultation.

12. **Data management** is a technical task that Bristol City Council undertakes in partnership with neighbouring authorities (a line diagram of the process is at **Appendix 4**). The Council is lead authority on RTI for the WoE and receives contributions from neighbouring authorities towards the management and operation of the system. There is currently no cost recovery from bus operators because they already contribute to the central system costs and maintenance costs of their own equipment. The Council’s RTI system current budget is approx. £60k but the total cost to the sub-region is approx. £400k (UAs and operators).

13. **Digital information** – There is a benefit to digitally based outputs via the web, apps and on-street (RTI displays). Bristol leads for the Woe on providing Digital information, which has the advantage that it can be kept up to date more easily and is less expensive per transaction (e.g. relative to a call centre interaction and printed information). It also enables the provision of ‘live’ information, focussed on individual customers needs. Digital information such as social media can also play a key role in providing customers with information on service disruption and delays, enabling them to make informed travel choices. The Travel West Bus checker app is now very widely used and the Travel West website is seeing growing patronage.

14. The strategy aspires to achieve a **channel shift** to digital information, building on the success of our “Bus Checker App” and to harness the power of **Open Data**. This is in line with Council policy and will enable digital entrepreneurs to access Real Time data so as to provide market-led solutions and improved access to information for the public. This will require a review of our data sharing agreement with operators.

15. There is a real opportunity to harness the power of digital data and the move to an integrated Control Room will over time enable us to align different but complementary data streams such as congestion and Bus RTI data, which in turn should improve our ability to warn operators and the travelling public of disruptions to the City’s highway network.

16. However, the channel shift needs to be managed over time as research and feedback from Bus operators and Users consistently shows that **timetables at bus**

stops remains a vital part in the satisfactory provision of information (**Appendix 5**), and that they are very well used, despite the availability of digital and handheld technology. In addition to this the Council will also work with Rail operators and Network Rail to improve interchange information at Temple Meads and other suburban railway stations.

17. The strategy takes in to consideration the customer journey, from planning a trip to alighting at their chosen destination and onward travel. The information provision available at each stage of the journey is highlighted at **Appendix 6**.

18. The Council now proposes in this strategy to

18.1. to make a charge to the relevant bus operators for providing information at bus stops on both a fixed and a variable basis and/or to investigate other ways of sharing the resources required to do this with commercial bus operators

18.2. be able to recover the costs of late or inaccurate data correction from operators and other UAs as appropriate.

18.3. Any registrations outside this window must have a reasonable explanation and the operators (or other cause of registration – for example roadworks) will pay the costs of RTI reconfiguration

18.4. Re-allocation of RTI infrastructure – from time to time following services revisions or withdrawals, bus stops equipped with RTI displays are no longer served. Where stops are left unserved following a change of a commercial bus service, the Council will consider charging operators for a contribution towards the cost of removing and re-installing the RTI display at another stop.

19. The strategy will also be future-proofed to allow us to make use of new powers, which the Bus Services Bill (currently before Parliament) is proposing, for example to make information about fares and multi-operator tickets more readily available, which currently Bus operators have little incentive to do despite their potential usefulness to the public.

20. Metrobus will require a high standard of information in order to deliver the ‘step change’ in public transport provision. The strategy will outline the provision of information on Metrobus services to ensure that it is cost effective and deliverable while meeting customer expectations.

21. Funding – the Transport Information Budget for timetables, maps, web info and leaflets has been significantly reduced and can no longer cover all the demands to deliver the quality and quantity of information customers expected in the past and is below the amount committed by other ‘core cities’ towards the provision of public transport information.

22. The strategy identifies opportunities to generate income for services provided by the Council (timetable information), but funding to promote the Council’s own ‘stand-alone’ services and the bus network as a whole does not exist. Therefore the

strategy highlights the need for the Council to commit ongoing resources to support bus patronage growth and the objectives of the JLTP through the continued enhancement of bus information across the city, for example by selling advertising on the new TFT RTI screens.

23. Bristol's Sustainable Transport Service provides, and shares the cost of the RTI system locally alongside Bus operators and other Councils. A Cabinet Report is required to authorise the re-procurement of this essential system by Bristol City Council and this will be included in the proposed Cabinet Report alongside the strategy.

Other Options Considered

24. Do Nothing – not an option as it is a requirement of the Transport Act and we believe that ours needs updating

25. Reduce the quality and volume of information – this is likely to have a detrimental effect on the continued success of growing patronage and delivering the Joint Local Transport Plan. It would be likely to have an adverse impact on Bristol's economy if bus patronage does not continue to grow and would mean that neither the Enterprise Zone Sustainable Urban Transport Strategy nor the Arena transport plan are deliverable

Risk Assessment

26. The risks of not doing this are as above, and this course of action will enable us to share the costs of information provision with operators according to an agreed approach.

Public Sector Equality Duties

27. An equalities impact assessment has not yet been undertaken but will form part of the consultation process

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Provision of Information – Benchmarking against UK 'Core Cities'.

Appendix 2: Overall aims and objectives of strategy

Appendix 3 – Service Change Dates 2016 – 2019

Appendix 4 – Bristol City Council Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey

Appendix 5 – Information provision throughout the journey.

Appendix 1 – Provision of Information – Benchmarking against UK ‘Core Cities’.

The majority of the UK ‘Core Cities’ are covered by the Passenger Transport Executives that have co-ordinated transport powers covering their areas of responsibility.

City/PTE	Journey Planner	RTI	Fares & Ticketing	Interchange information	Traveline Partner	Roadside Timetables	Printed Timetables & Maps
Cardiff	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Centro	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Glasgow (Strathclyde Partnership)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Merseytravel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
METRO (West Yorkshire)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nexus (Tyne & Wear)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SYPT (South Yorkshire)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
TfGM (Transport for Greater Manchester)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nottingham	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bristol	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

APPENDIX 2

Overall aim: Everyone that lives, works and visits Bristol should be able to use Public Transport with confidence.

Primary Objectives:

- Customers are able access high quality, accurate and impartial information that is simple to use and easy to access
- Information meets the needs of existing passengers and encourages new passengers to use bus services
- Customers should be able to access information anywhere and personalise it to meet their needs
- To provide dynamic systems that provide live information on services and alerts on disruption and service changes
- To use customer insight and information to improve performance and reliability of information systems and bus services
- To improve access to passenger transport information by making data openly available in formats that can be utilised by third parties.
- To develop more efficient and cost-effective data and information provision systems

Scope:

This Strategy covers all information relating to registered local bus services.

Other information will be covered in a broader Transport Information Strategy. Although this is a Bristol Strategy, many journeys cross boundaries and people should be able to make trips that start or end outside of the Bristol area without the need to access information from elsewhere. The strategy identifies where elements of transport information are delivered in partnership with neighbouring authorities and bus operators.

Appendix 3 – Service Change Dates 2016 – 2019

Type	Definition	2016	2017	2018	2019
Fixed 1	Mid-January	10 January	8 January	14 January	13 January
Fixed 2	Last Sunday in April	24 April	30 April	29 April	28 April
Fixed 3	Sunday before start of Term 1	⁴ <i>September</i>	<i>3 September</i>	<i>2 September</i>	<i>1 September</i>
Fixed 4	Mid-November	¹³ November	12 November	11 November	10 November
MetroBuses	Sunday before start of Term 1	⁴ <i>September</i>	<i>3 September</i>	<i>2 September</i>	<i>1 September</i>

Notes

- School Term dates are generally published eighteen months before the start of the academic year
- Dates in italics are provisional and will be determined when the School Term dates for the relevant academic year are published
- There will be a minimum of 8 weeks between Fixed Change Dates
- If the Sunday before the start of Term 1 falls on the day before the Late Summer Bank Holiday (as in 2015), then Fixed Date 3 shall be on the preceding Sunday
- Due to the January change date being close to the Christmas and New Year period, in order for the data to be uploaded it would be beneficial for all data to be received at least 7 days before Christmas Day to guarantee the data will be available on the real time system.

Virtual Change Dates 2016 to 2019

Type	Definition	2016	2017	2018	2019
Virtual Change Date	Christmas and New Year Period	1 December	1 December	3 December	2 December

Notes

- The virtual change date is for the re-configuration of the real time information system for the Christmas and New Year period only.
- The Christmas Matrix will be provided to the relevant authority by the above dates.

Appendix 4 – Bristol City Council Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey

Results of responses to information related questions taken from the Council's own survey on supported bus services during Spring/Summer 2015.

How do you currently obtain timetable, route and fares information for local bus services?

Timetable leaflet – 33
Website (bus company) – 86
Website (Travelwest) – 101
Website (other) – 8
Telephone (bus company) – 2
Telephone (Traveline) – 0
Mobile app (bus company) – 23
Mobile app (other) – 24
Email/text bus company – 1
Information point (Bristol Bus Station) – 9
Information point (TIC) – 2
At the bus stop – 189
Bus driver/on the bus – 16

How would you prefer to obtain information on local bus services in the future?

Timetable leaflet – 56
Website (bus company) – 95
Website (Travelwest) – 93
Website (other) – 7
Social media/live updates - 37
Telephone (bus company) – 5
Telephone (Traveline) – 3
Mobile app (bus company) – 78
Mobile app (other) – 29
Email bus company – 11
Email Travelwest – 12
Text bus company – 8
Text Travelwest - 8
Information point (Bristol Bus Station) – 9
Information point (TIC) – 5
Press release/article in local newspaper - 8
At the bus stop – 155
Bus driver/on the bus – 33

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the current provision of bus timetable, route and fares information?

Very satisfied – 16

Satisfied – 91
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied – 108
Dissatisfied – 47
Very dissatisfied – 31

How easy or difficult do you find it to access bus timetable, route and fares information?

Very easy – 31
Easy – 191
Difficult – 46
Very difficult - 16
Cannot find information – 9

Do you use the real time information system to check your journey?

Yes – before I leave for the bus stop – 33
Yes – using the display at the bus stop – 184
No – 86

Appendix 5 – Information provision throughout the journey.

A summary of the various types of information available to bus users before, during and at the end of the journey.

Pre-Journey (planning the journey)	Starting the Journey	During the Journey
<p>Timetable & Route information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey planner – Travelwest/Traveline • Operators website • Travelwest Buschecker/operators apps • Traveline telephone enquiry service • Operators telephone enquiry service • Bristol Bus Station staff • Rail station staff • TIC/library/Citizen Serving Points • Real time information (RTI) via web/apps • Web based timetables • Timetable leaflets/maps • Promotional information • iPoints/self-service kiosks • Bus stop maps at rail stations and identified interchanges across the bus network 	<p>Timetable and Route Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadside timetable displays • Bus stop flags • Real time information displays • iPoints/self-service kiosks • Real time information (RTI) via apps/web/SMS • Journey planner – Travelwest/Traveline • Bus operators website • Travelwest Buschecker/operators apps • Traveline telephone enquiry service • Operators telephone enquiry service • Bristol Bus Station staff • Rail station staff • Timetable leaflets/maps • Voice information service (stops equipped with RTI displays only) • Bus driver • On-bus destination information/route branding • Disruption information/travel updates via social media, operators website, Travelwest, RTI displays 	<p>Timetable and Route Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey planner – Travelwest/Traveline • Bus operators website • Travelwest Buschecker/operators apps • Traveline telephone enquiry service • Operators telephone enquiry service • Timetable leaflets/maps • On-bus next stop displays/ audio announcements • On-bus destination information • Bus driver • Bus stop maps at rail stations and identified interchanges across the bus network • Disruption information/travel updates via social media, operators website, Travelwest, RTI displays, on-bus media displays

<p>Fares/Ticketing Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey planner – Travelwest/Traveline • Operators website • SWPTI/operators telephone enquiry service • Operators telephone enquiry service • Bristol Bus Station staff • TIC/library/Citizen Serving Points • Promotional information • iPoints/self-service kiosks <p>Accessible Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey planner – Travelwest/Traveline • Bus operators website • Traveline/operators telephone enquiry service 	<p>Fares/Ticketing Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey planner – Travelwest/Traveline • Operators website • Traveline telephone enquiry service • Operators telephone enquiry service • Bristol Bus Station staff • Rail station staff • At-stop fares information • Bus driver • On the bus <p>Accessible Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey planner – Travelwest/Traveline • Bus operators website • Traveline telephone enquiry service • Operators telephone enquiry service 	<p>Fares/Ticketing Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey planner – Travelwest/Traveline • Operators website • Traveline telephone enquiry service • Operators telephone enquiry service • Bus driver • On the bus <p>Accessible Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey planner – Travelwest/Traveline • Bus operators website • Traveline telephone enquiry service • Operators telephone enquiry service • On-bus media
--	--	--