

## Appendix A Blackpool Borough Council DRAFT Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan

### i. Introduction

This Plan seeks to provide a framework to enact the necessary actions and measures identified within Blackpool's Bus Service Improvement Plan ("BSIP"), together with its Enhanced Partnership ("EP") Scheme partner document, following the National Bus Strategy's publication.

An EP is a formal agreement between a local transport authority (LTA) to improve local bus services and thereby encourage ridership of them within the LTA area, based on shared objectives, agreed schemes and targets.

Blackpool Borough Council's ("the Council's") commitment to bus and aspirations to achieve modal shift to it are strong and provided resources are available, these proposals will be carried through.

### ii. Competition Test

Blackpool Borough Council ("the Council") has undertaken an assessment of the impacts on competition of the draft EP Plan and Scheme [made on XXXX 2022 (to be determined)] for the purposes of Part 1 of Schedule 10 of the Transport Act 2000. The Council believes it will or is likely to have only a limited adverse effect on bus to bus competition, if any, bearing in mind the true competition from the motor car. Subject to adequate funding, these effects will be:

- The introduction of a multi-operator ticket or tickets jointly with Lancashire County Council ("LCC") and other partner authorities, at a price to be set jointly by the councils. All operators will be invited to participate in the scheme on the same basis.
- Agreements to achieve coordinated frequencies on certain corridors. Each corridor involved will be subject to an appropriate Qualifying Agreement(s) in cooperation with the Council and, where appropriate, LCC, the neighbouring Local Transport Authority.
- Agreed standards for services operated within the area and for the vehicles used thereon.

However, The Council believes the EP Plan and Scheme is justified because it is with a view to achieving one or more of:

- improvements in the quality of vehicles or facilities used for or in connection with the provision of local services;
- other improvements in local services of benefit to users of local services; and
- reduction or limiting of traffic congestion, noise or air pollution.

Its effect on competition is, or is likely to be, proportionate to achieving any of these purposes.

At an appropriate time, the Competition and Markets Authority will be consulted on the EP proposals as required by section 138F(6)(g) of the Transport Act 2000.

DRAFT

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## Part 1 – EP Plan

**The DRAFT Blackpool Borough Council Enhanced Partnership Plan for buses is made in** accordance with Section 138G(i) of the Transport Act 2000 by:

The Council

### 1. Area and timescale to be covered by EP Plan

1.1. The EP Plan (“the Plan”) is valid from **XXXX** 2022 in draft form for a period of Five Years. The Plan will be reviewed annually and during the partnership duration when:

- New sources of funding are made available;
- Circumstances within Blackpool change;
- LCC proposes changes to its EP which will affect Blackpool;
- Or other circumstances the EP Board feel relevant.

1.2. The Plan focuses on the immediate Blackpool area and requires joint working with LCC on the wider Fylde Coast area.

1.3. The map below shows the services serving Blackpool within that boundary and is based on the Blackpool Transport Services (BTS) map. Several services extend beyond that boundary and into the Fylde Coast and on into Preston, but this Plan focuses on the services as they operate within the Blackpool boundary. There is regular liaison between the Council and LCC, ongoing and through membership of the Lancashire Area Public Transport Association (LAPTA) and ongoing, which enables any cross-boundary issues to be addressed.

Figure 1: The Blackpool bus network



Based on Blackpool Transport Services Network Map July 2021 © BTS

## **2. EP Plan review cycle and process**

2.1. As stated, the Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis starting from January 2023 or before if Government issues new guidance, so that any revisions can be in place for the financial year start. The EP Board will conduct and coordinate this, drawing in the maximum amount of performance information available plus stakeholder input. The Plan will be honed continually to maintain its effectiveness and focus on improving service quality and affordability for passengers.

2.2. The Council retains the right to undertake the procedures for introducing a franchise (set out in section 123 of the Transport Act 2000 as amended by the Bus Services Act 2017) for all or part of the Blackpool area where:

- The EP is deemed no longer able to deliver the Plan's desired outcomes within the specified area
- Operator(s) in the area are acting in a manner which is counter-productive to the EP's aims
- A network of services is deemed to be no longer commercially viable
- Elected members instruct council officers to do so.

2.3. If at any point in the future, any area covered by this EP Plan is included in a bus franchising scheme, the relevant requirements set out in the partner EP Scheme document will cease to apply to areas the franchising scheme covers.

### 3. The Blackpool Bus Market:

3.1. The table below shows the services currently operating within the Blackpool boundary and their operators and frequencies. Factors such as Covid and driver availability affect these frequencies and there may be ongoing variations.

3.2. This is recognised as a good quality network that has good frequency and coverage, providing the majority of the trips needed for the Blackpool economy. However, gaps and issues are identified and discussed elsewhere in this document, as job creating areas including the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone are under provided.

3.3. Higher frequencies improving the network's convenience would be likely to achieve modal shift, but in the first instance would be loss making therefore financial support for a considerable period to allow ridership to build would be required.

*Table 1: Bus Services in Blackpool, early September 2021*

Service	Description	Operator	Tendered	Cross-boundary	Daytime	Evening	Sunday
1	Fleetwood to Starr Gate via the Promenade	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	2bph	NA	2bph
2	Poulton to Blackpool Town Centre via Victoria Hospital	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	2bph	1bph	1bph
2C	Knott End to Blackpool via Poulton	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	2bph	1bph	Every 1.5hrs
3	Mereside Tesco to Cleveleys Park via Blackpool	Blackpool Transport Services	Part	Yes	3bph	1bph	1bph
4	Cleveleys to Mereside Tesco via Blackpool	Blackpool Transport Services	Part	Yes	3bph	1bph	1bph
5	Victoria Hospital to Halfway House via Town Centre	Blackpool Transport Services	No	No	4bph	2bph	2bph
6	Mereside to Grange Park via Blackpool Town Centre & Layton	Blackpool Transport Services	No	No	3bph	2bph	2bph
7	Cleveleys to St Anne's via Blackpool	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	3bph	1bph	2bph
9	Cleveleys to Blackpool via Bispham	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	4bph	2bph	2bph
11	Lytham to Blackpool Town Centre via St Anne's	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	3bph	2bph	2bph
14	Fleetwood to Blackpool via Layton	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	5bph	2bph	3bph

Service	Description	Operator	Tendered	Cross-boundary	Daytime	Evening	Sunday
17	Blackpool Town Centre to Lytham (Saltcotes Road)	Blackpool Transport Services	No	Yes	2bph	1bph	1bph
18	Blackpool Town Centre to Mereside Tesco via South Shore	Blackpool Transport Services	No	No	1bph	NA	1bph
20	Staining to Blackpool via Victoria Hospital	Blackpool Transport Services	No	No	Bus every 1.5 hrs, day only	NA	Every 1.5 hrs
21	St Anne's – Pleasure Beach – Tower – Gynn Square – Cabin – Norbreck - Cleveleys	Coastliner	No	Yes	2bph	NA	2bph
22	Marton Mere Holiday Village - Tower - Stanley Park – Blackpool Zoo	Coastliner	No	No	1bph	NA	1bph
24	Fleetwood – Cleveleys – Poulton – Victoria Hospital	Coastliner	No	Yes	2bph	Vic Hosp.	1bph
26	Marton Mere Holiday Village - Tower - Promenade - Pleasure Beach	Coastliner	No	No	1bph	NA	1bph
42	Lancaster – Garstang - Blackpool	Stagecoach	No	Yes	1bph	NA	1bph
61	Preston – Blackpool via Clifton, Kirkham, Wrea Green	Stagecoach	No	Yes	2bph	1bph	1bph
68	Preston – Blackpool via Freckleton, Warton, Lytham, St Anne's	Stagecoach	No	Yes	4bph	2bph	2bph
76	Blackpool (Abingdon St) – Poulton – Singleton – Weeton – Kirkham – Wrea Green – Warton – Lytham – St Anne's	Coastal Coaches	LCC tendered service	Yes	1bph	NA	NA
Rideability	Community Transport	Blackpool Council	NA	Yes	NA	NA	NA

### 3.4. Services

3.4.1. The municipally owned BTS provides most local services, penetrating into Wyre and Fylde boroughs, one service (BTS 7) crossing both boundaries. Blackpool's network has been run on mainly commercial lines, although some services have been loss making, particularly in the winter, and have been maintained to keep network integrity. Smaller operators Coastliner and Coastal Coaches also offer very useful, network complementary services, the latter as part of LCC's tendered bus network.

3.4.2. The Council would favour Saturday frequencies being maintained. The Sunday market needs to be researched to identify passenger growth opportunities. An incremental approach to frequencies needs to be adopted as demand emerges.



3.4.3. It is believed that improved frequencies together with competitive fares and effective promotion, can achieve modal shift.

*Patronage and Supply Trends*

3.4.4. Table 2 outlines the change over the past three years in patronage, proportion of concessions and km covered in Blackpool. This is an approximation due to the data not including all operators.

*Table 2: Patronage and km operated, by financial year*

Financial year	Est. patronage ('000,000)	Patronage Change	Est. Proportion Concessions	Est. KM Operated ('000,000)	KM Change
2018/19	8.40	-	33.4%	7.26	-
2019/20	8.24	-1.9%	32.8%	7.20	-0.8%
2020/21	3.27	-60.3%	25.8%	5.06	-29.7%

*Bus passengers*

3.4.5. Using a snapshot of October 2019 and May 2021 gives a reasonable before Covid and post lockdown picture of bus use. Concessionary pass holders are travelling less, with single fares increasing in sales – Figure 2 shows ticket type by sales, whilst Figure 3 translates this into likely use.

Figure 2: Proportion of sales by ticket type

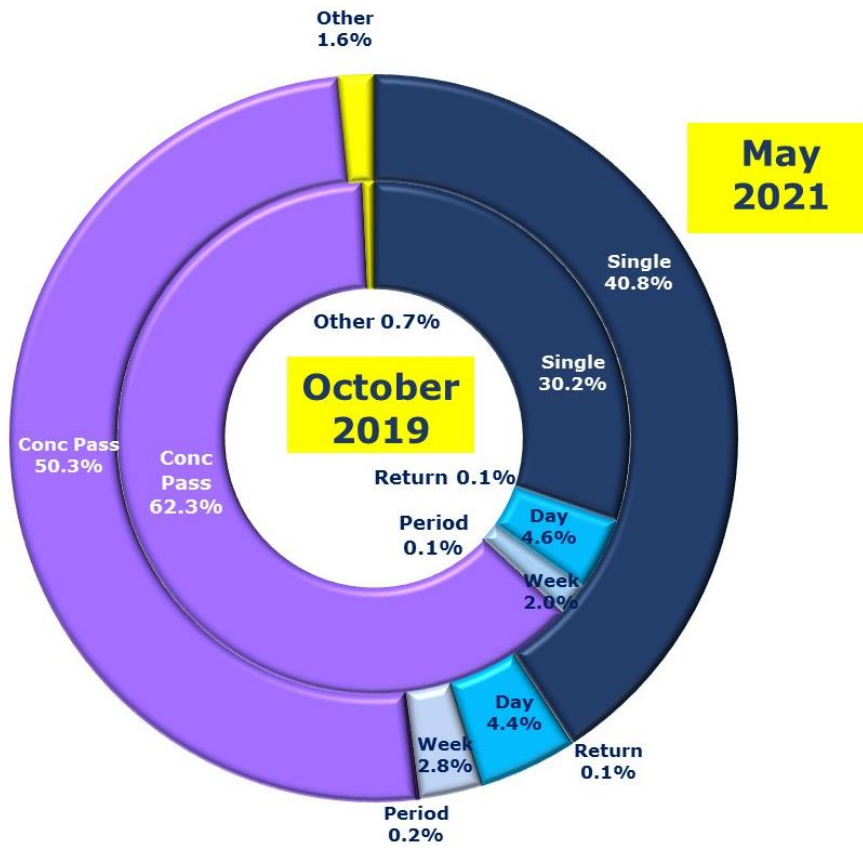
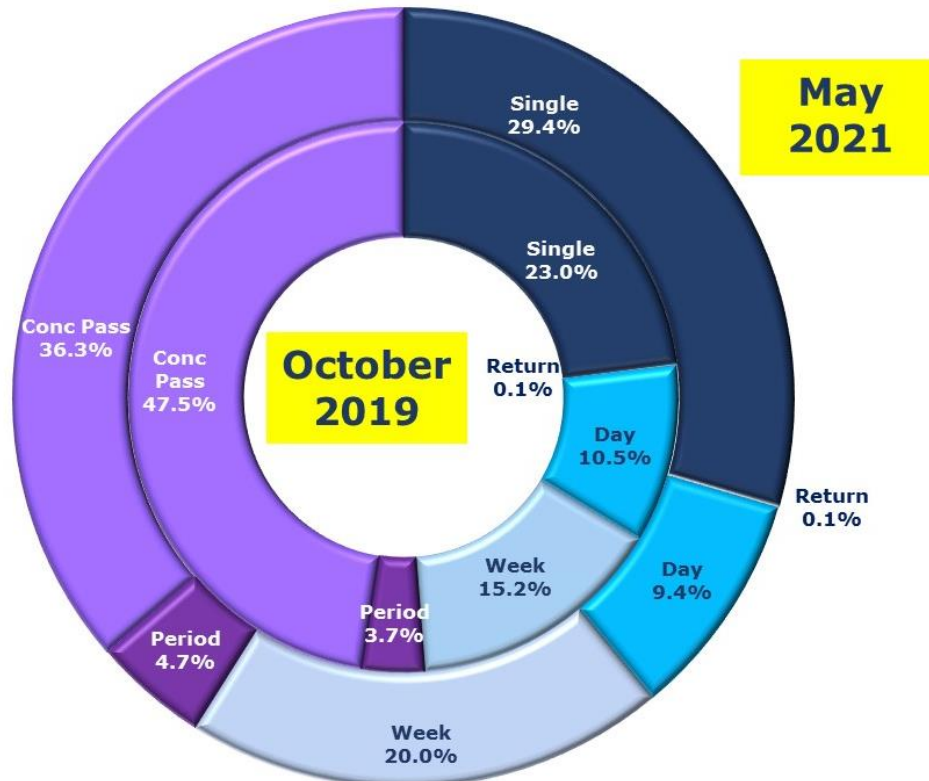
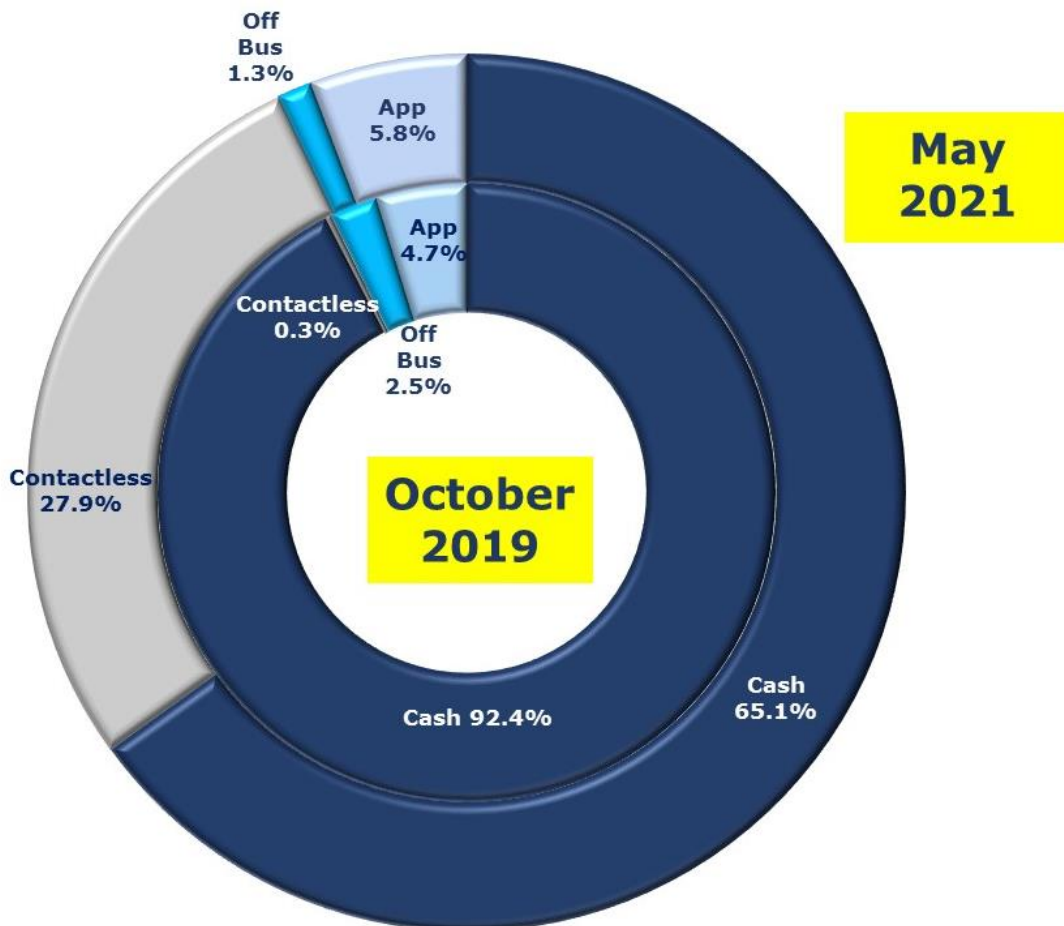


Figure 3: Proportion of likely journeys by ticket type



3.4.6. Covid had an impact on sales channels, with fewer sales via off bus sales channels and an increase in sales via Apps. A rough estimate is that around 30% of on bus sales are done via contactless bank card as Figure 4 below shows. A move to app and contactless sales may reduce stop dwell time and improve service efficiency and thereby reliability.

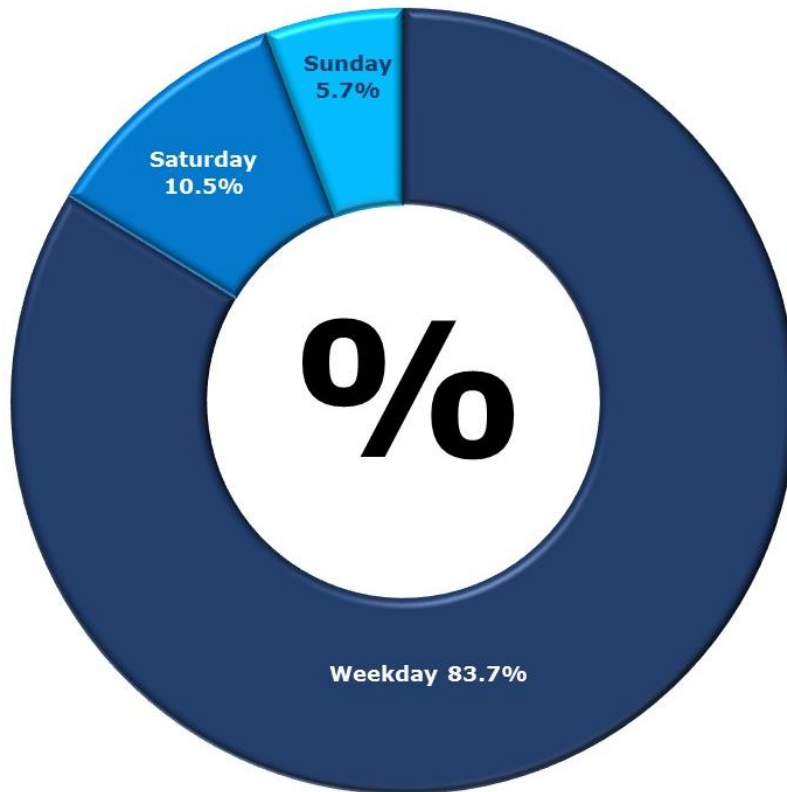
Figure 4: Sales by channel



*Travel profile – pre-Covid*

3.4.7. Well over three quarters of journeys by bus in Blackpool take place on a weekday as outlined in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Passengers by day



3.4.8. Figure 6 to Figure 8 show the profile of journeys by hour for weekdays, Saturdays and Sundays respectively. The peak on a weekday occurs around school finishing time followed by a rather rapid drop off into the evening. Saturdays see a rather rapid rise to the lunchtime peak followed by a gradual decline into the evening. Sundays see a much more even spread across the late morning and early afternoon before the decline into the evening.

Figure 6: Journeys per hour profile – weekdays

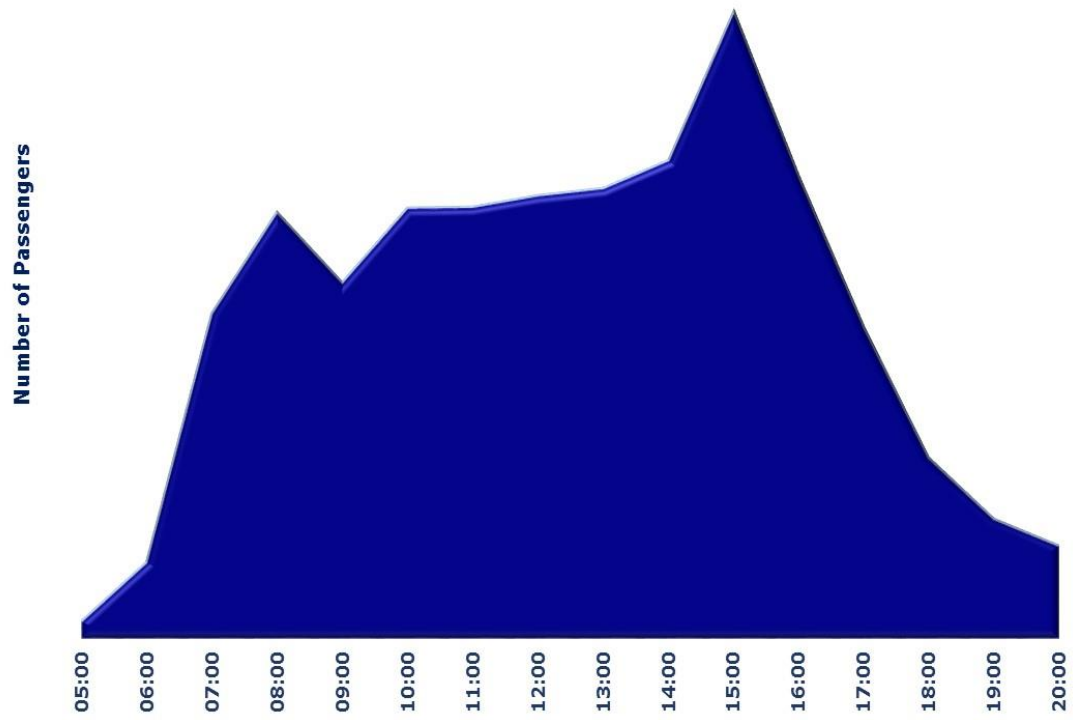


Figure 7: Journeys per hour profile – Saturday

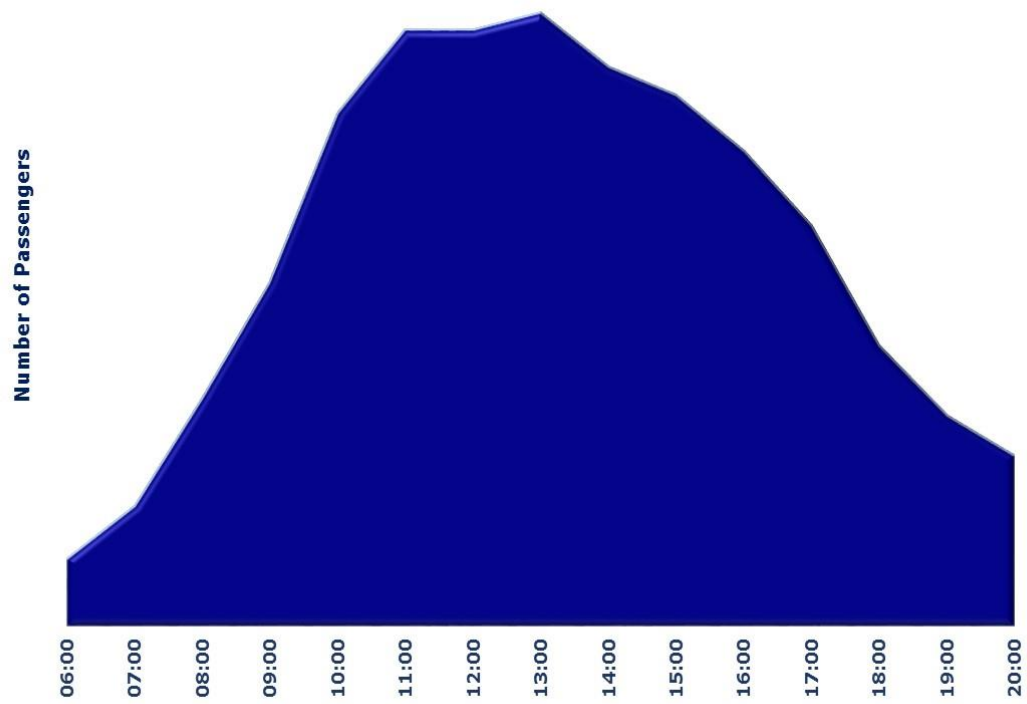
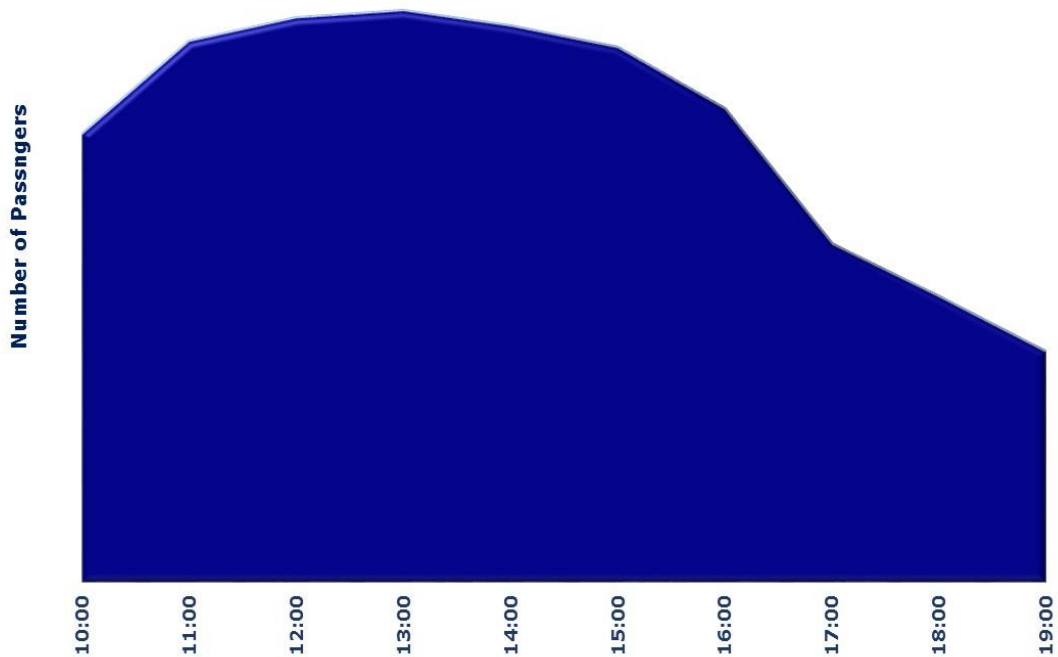


Figure 8: Journeys per hour profile – Sunday



### Bus Fleet

3.4.9. The Blackpool fleet size is 199, comprising 123 double decks, 39 full size single decks and 37 midi-buses (generally 21 – 36 seats). Figure 9 shows the fleet by Euro engine rating and Figure 10 by age. Nearly 90% of the fleet are Euro 5 or better, whilst just under half are less than five years old, as of September 2021.

3.4.10. Table 3 outlines the proportion of vehicles with various on board features, as of September 2021.

Table 3: Proportion of fleet with features

Feature	Charging Points	AV Next Stop	On Bus CCTV	Wi-Fi
Proportion	57.8%	57.8%	69.4%	67.3%

Figure 9: Fleet by Euro engine rating

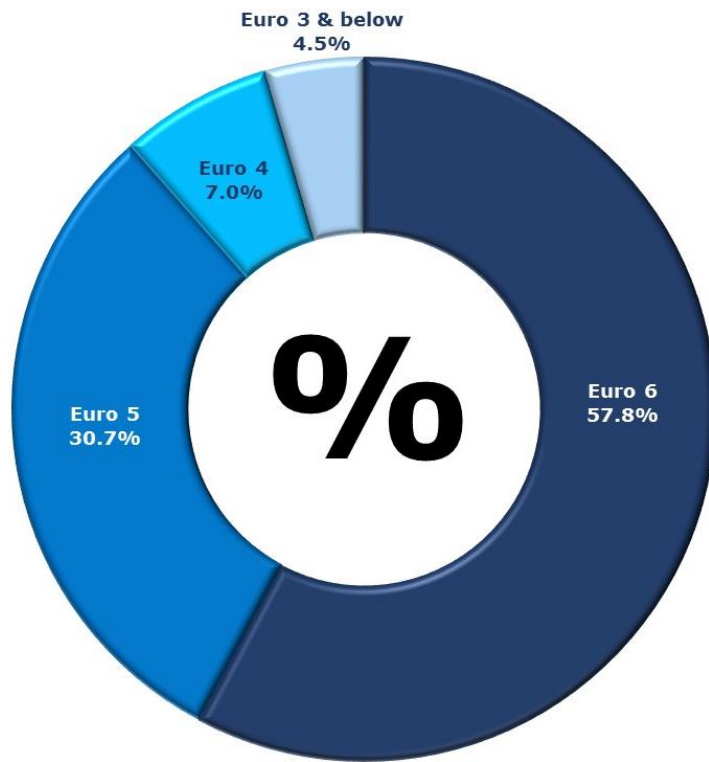
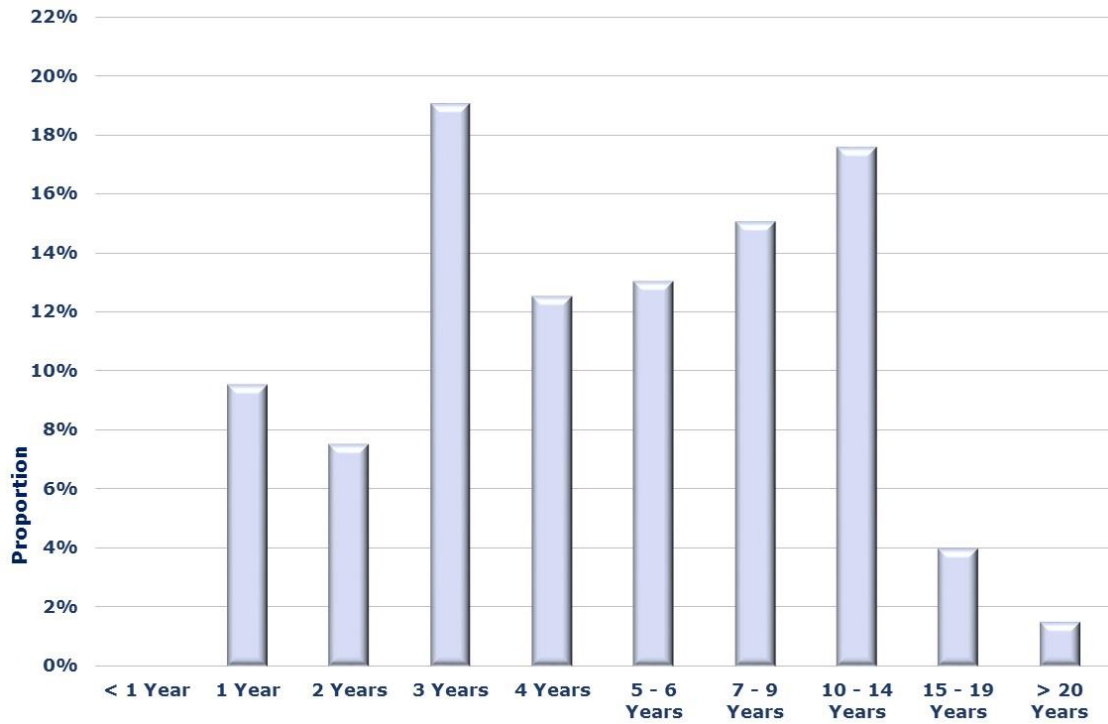


Figure 10: Fleet by age



### **3.5. Current infrastructure**

#### *Bus stop infrastructure*

3.5.1. The bus shelter estate requires refurbishment and action to remedy this situation has commenced using Local Transport Plan (LTP) resources and a management contract approach for a portion of the advertising shelters. Care is being taken to ensure installation of fully accessible bus stops equipped to standards following the principles and subsequent Statutory Instruments laid down by the Equality Act 2010.

### **3.6. Market influences**

3.6.1. The Council's LTP identifies bus as a primary Fylde Coast transport mode, proposing a long term strategy to achieve modal shift to it. Principal objectives are to:

- Manage congestion levels, especially where it reduces local economic performance.
- Improve transport to and within the resort, to enhance the visitor experience and support the local economy.
- Improve access to healthcare, education, employment, shops, social/leisure opportunities and resort attractions.

3.6.2. In this context, public transport needs to be frequent, good quality and convenient to be preferred over the car and needs to be more extensively promoted.

3.6.3. Pre-Covid, buses carried up to 10 million passengers annually in Blackpool, an alternative to the car for important journeys to work, education and healthcare. The Council will support socially-necessary services, if resources are available. Developer contributions to provide bus infrastructure will continue to be sought.

3.6.4. The Council's Core Strategy recognises bus transport's role, particularly within the following policies:

[Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy \(2012 – 2027\): Policy CS5: Connectivity 1.c](#)

“Working with bus operators and developers to provide enhanced bus services with efficient, comprehensive routing served by high quality infrastructure, providing bus priority measures where appropriate to enable services to operate efficiently.”

[Policy CS27: South Blackpool Transport and Connectivity](#)

“1.Development proposals in South Blackpool will be required to prioritise sustainable modes of transport between homes, jobs and supporting community facilities.



2. Convenient access to public transport and improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure are required to support major housing and employment growth in this area. This includes:

- linking to and extending the existing network of routes within and to/from the area;
- creating direct rapid transport connections with the town centre and employment areas; and
- preparing, implementing and monitoring Travel Plans.

Several bus routes already serve the south Blackpool area, but services to the main employment areas on the Blackpool / Fylde boundary need improving. The issue is primarily one of accessibility between deprived areas and employment opportunities. However, as across the network, more frequent, reliable and extended services are needed to maximise bus patronage.”

### **3.7. Factors affecting bus patronage**

3.7.1. Blackpool’s narrow north-south orientation and the town centre’s location against the sea makes it difficult to amend routes, resulting in some residential areas having low or no coverage. North-south running services must divert west to access the town centre. Filling network gaps would require long-term subsidy, which has not been available.

3.7.2. The presence of high unemployment and marginalised communities inevitably depresses the number of trips taken by any mode, including bus. Despite the town’s low car ownership level, car usage is high. People may not be aware of season or group travel products that could make bus competitive.

3.7.3. The need for network profitability has made minor route amendments and service losses inevitable with service frequencies decreasing. As noted, the network has been mainly commercial and the funding to support its expansion has not been available.

3.7.4. Covid has had a dire ridership effect that will take time to recover from. For the year ending March 2021, the number of local bus passenger journeys in England outside London decreased by 64%. General traffic levels are now back to pre-pandemic levels, so that buses can once more be stuck in congestion. It is not possible to further increase Blackpool’s road space, although improved traffic control might provide some relief.

3.7.5. Introducing very high quality vehicles and adopting new technology as it becomes available is likely to boost ridership, particularly electric vehicles.

### **3.8. Network design considerations**

- 3.8.1. There is a clear balance between network density and fleet efficiency, together with service frequency. As recognised above, reducing frequencies will lose existing ridership and discourage modal shift. Operators have undertaken to increase frequencies if supporting finance is made available.
- 3.8.2. The bus network has built up incrementally over years, managed by people who know the area and its economy well. As noted, without subsidy, there are network gaps.
- 3.8.3. The network needs to be amended as the requirement for certain trips changes. New industrial estates, including the Airport Enterprise Zone have been sited on the borough's margins where land has been available. Under-provided with bus services, inevitably car-based commuting patterns become established. Well-designed routes can counter this. An initial network review was established under the BSIP process.

### **3.9. Decarbonisation - local response**

- 3.9.1. The Enhanced Partnership (EP) Management Board will address this matter as a standing agenda item. The Council and operators recognise the contribution that modal shift to bus can make in combating the global warming threat. Promotion campaigns will stress transport sustainability. The Council has committed itself to a climate emergency response.
- 3.9.2. The EP Partnership recognises that simply transferring to electric cars is unlikely to be the climate change answer. It leaves congestion, particulate generation due to the recognised Oslo effect, effect on the public realm, road safety and public health issues still to be addressed.
- 3.9.3. Operators and the Council have worked on a bid to the DfT's Zero Emission Bus Area Fund (ZEBRA), a successful outcome of which would enable the entire Euro 6 fleet to be replaced with electric buses.

### **3.10. Likely effect of the Enhanced Partnership on neighbouring authorities:**

- 3.10.1. Given the cross-boundary nature of most Blackpool services, The Plan's effect thereon will be overwhelmingly positive. Good links between the four authorities involved are in place (LCC and The Council as Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) together with the district councils of Fylde and Wyre). The two LTAs attend each other's working groups and forums. The following Table 4 shows areas of relevance.

Table 4: Areas of joint interest between Fylde Coast authorities

Area	Issue	Mitigation
Service Change Dates	Service change dates might not align	Agree alignment of service change dates
Young Person Ticketing	Discount level and age range may not be the same as in Lancashire	Given all operators provide cross-boundary services agreement of age range will be needed. This might be phased in.
Multi-Operator Ticketing	County-wide is the logical multi-operator ticketing area	Set up a joint Scheme with LCC
Service Enhancements	Desired frequency of cross-boundary service might not be in line with LCC	Discuss with LCC and operator to agree new frequency and split of any funding needed
Vehicle Standards	Desired standard of vehicles (emission levels, age and interior features) may differ from LCC	Agree with LCC that cross boundary services comply with standards where highest mileage is.

3.10.2. There is consensus between the authorities concerning service frequency and punctuality targets. A similar approach will be taken to other matters that will arise.

3.10.3. The LTAs that are currently party to the NoWcard concessionary fares arrangement – LCC, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Cumbria LTAs - will work together to address the need and requirement for multi-operator ticketing.

### **3.11. Potential growth opportunities**

3.11.1. The relatively young and high quality BTS bus fleet (Palladium branded), together with those of other partner operators, has the potential to attract new ridership, if promoted effectively. Enhanced cross-organisation promotion is proposed.

3.11.2. Contactless card payment is now available on all Blackpool operators' services, with BTS offering tap on-tap off, removing the need for cash change, an oft-cited obstacle to bus use. The partnership will pursue further such opportunities to simplify bus use, including increased emphasis on journey planning apps.

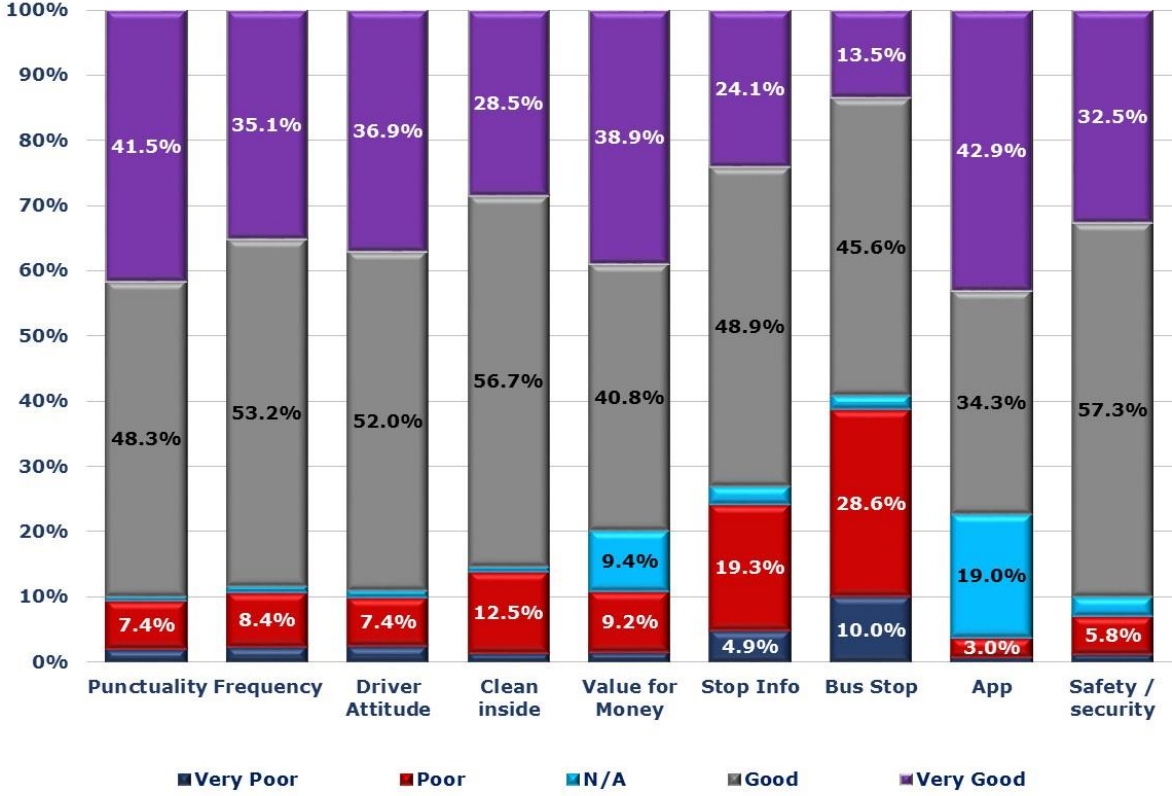
3.11.3. A possible new national motoring taxation system to replace fuel duty as the transition to zero emission vehicles proceeds might be a principal opportunity to promote bus use. However, if this is introduced, it is likely to be some years away. Reviewing local car parking arrangements would also assist, but this must consider economic pressures on the town centre.

- 3.11.4. Further urban densification would assist public transport, particularly if private car parking was restricted. This would form part of future town centre and urban development strategies.
- 3.11.5. New Blackpool town centre developments and the creation of the Talbot Gateway Central Business District (offices, superstore, retail, hotel, restaurant), creates a new public transport commuter market. On the visitor economy side, bus connections between the town centre, Stanley Park and Blackpool Zoo can be improved.
- 3.11.6. Blackpool's famous Illuminations extend its tourist season beyond most other coastal resorts. Of late that event has been extended into January with additional Christmas events and there is the possibility of this being repeated in future years. While tourism flows are mainly associated with the tramway (and the heritage trams still offer trips), tourists also use the buses. With increased staycation numbers, more seasonal services might be viable. BTS offers a range of day and season bus and tram products.
- 3.11.7. A national bus travel campaign would assist local efforts. In the Blackpool context, people need public transport information before they arrive by car, train or coach, an obvious challenge. Northern Trains is considering group travel products. Blackpool's buses and trams are on the PlusBus system. People can pre-load apps, if they are aware of them and this can be incorporated into promotion campaigns.
- 3.11.8. Operators could liaise with visitor attractions providing incentives to travel by bus. Heavy rail previously offered a voucher system. Operators could retail the Blackpool pass through their sites and such possibilities will be taken forward through the Partnership.

### **3.12. Satisfaction and user consultation**

- 3.12.1. The South Fylde Line Community Rail Partnership has a nominated bus liaison officer concerned with interchange between heavy rail and bus services. This officer has liaised successfully with BTS, an arrangement that will be built into the partnership.
- 3.12.2. BTS has administered a bus user group specific to its own services and this can be built into the partnership monitoring structure. As other operators have a small mileage in Blackpool, dedicated user groups are unlikely.
- 3.12.3. The TAS Partnership undertook a bus passenger survey on behalf of BTS in 2019. Figure 11 below shows its results. 93.3% of respondents rated the service provided Good or Very Good, whilst 84.6% of respondents were likely to recommend the operator. The Partnership will expand the passenger survey programme.

Figure 11: 2019 survey - satisfaction results



## **4. Action to be taken:**

### **4.1. Infrastructure improvements**

4.1.1. The Council has identified concepts for four initial bus lanes to be installed:

- The Promenade, Lytham Road – Chapel Street (northbound)
- Bispham Road, Salmesbury Avenue – Warbreck Hill Road (southbound)
- Talbot Road, Cecil Street – Devonshire Road (eastbound)
- Talbot Road, Mather Street – Devonshire Road (westbound)

4.1.2. An upgraded traffic control focused bus priority system to help improve journey times will be considered.

4.1.3. Operators have identified the following pinch points to be improved:

- The Promenade, Lytham Road to Talbot Square (A584)
- Approaches to Plymouth Road and Plymouth Road Roundabout (A586/A587)
- Approaches to Devonshire Square (A583/B5124/B5266)
- Approaches to Talbot Road/Devonshire Road junction (A586/B5124)
- Approaches to Starr Gate junction (A584/A5230)
- Warbeck Hill approach to Devonshire Road (B5265/B5124)
- Counce Street/Grosvenor Street (linking A586 with A583/B5390)

4.1.4. The proposals will be the core of the Partnership's efforts to encourage modal shift, contributing to improved reliability and journey time reductions in the future.

### **4.2. Targets and aspirations**

4.2.1. Table 5 tabulates the targets and aspirations that the Council and partner operators propose to achieve modal shift to bus in Blackpool, and the wider Fylde Coast.

Table 5: Summary table of targets and aspirations

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Description of how each will be measured
Journey time	N/A	18 minutes	17 minutes	DfT's average length of journey at BTS' average speed.
Reliability	87.6%	86.7%	90%	Operators' data
Passenger numbers	8.4 million	8.2 million	9 million	Operators' data
Average passenger satisfaction	90.3%	93.3%	96.0%	Satisfaction surveys

<b>Aspirations to make improvements to bus services and planning:</b>		
<i>More frequent and reliable services:</i>		
Review service frequency	Yes	Review of all services undertaken; low evening frequencies on all services, including intra-urban; also low frequencies on weekends, particularly Sundays.
Increase bus priority measures	Yes	Proposals for bus lanes and vehicle detection/traffic control systems at key junctions to improve punctuality and reliability.
Increase demand responsive services	Yes	Review the Rideability service and examine health and employment links, particularly to the Airport Enterprise Zone.
Consideration of bus rapid transport networks	Yes	Blackpool's coastal tramway complements the local bus network and is being extended to Blackpool North railway station. Any need for bus rapid transit on key corridors will be kept under review.
<i>Improvements to planning / integration with other modes:</i>		
Integrate services with other transport modes	Yes	Ensure bus - tram and bus - rail links are publicised.
Simplify services	Yes	Co-ordinating frequencies on multi-operator corridors.

Review socially necessary services	Yes	Create a new orbital service linking to Victoria Hospital and the Airport Enterprise Zone.
Invest in Superbus networks	Yes	Support LCC's development of a Superbus network for the inter-urban services that connect Blackpool to Lancaster and Blackpool to Preston.
<i>Improvements to fares and ticketing:</i>		
Lower fares	Yes	Co-ordinating young person fares, making group and corporate travel attractive. Focus on locking people in with easy to purchase and renew season products. Also do more in terms of advertising the good value bulk ticketing (weekly/monthly tickets).
Simplify fares	Yes	Multi-operator tickets, including co-ordinating fares for all, particularly young people.
Integrate ticketing between operators and transport	Yes	Develop multi-operator ticketing offer for the Fylde Coast in association with LCC.
<b>Make improvements to bus passenger experience:</b>		
<i>Higher spec buses:</i>		
Invest in improved bus specifications	Yes	To standardise the quality of vehicle offered and match what is already provided by Blackpool Transport.
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services	Yes	To provide more links to health and employment sites. Ensure information is easily accessible.
Protect personal safety of bus passengers	Yes	CCTV on vehicles and covering town centre bus stops. Ensure stops are well lit at night.
Improve buses for tourists	Yes	Bus routes connect to visitor attractions, but need to be more extensively promoted.
Invest in decarbonisation	Yes	Introduce ZE vehicles through ZEBRA fund. Support other operators upgrading to Euro 6 engine rating.
<i>Improvements to passenger engagement:</i>		
Passenger charter	Yes	To work with local operators and LCC to create an easy to understand Passengers' Charter.



Strengthen network identity	Yes	Upgrading Blackpool Transport's map to include other operators; create an information hub. New Real Time Information facilities will also be multi operator.
Improve bus information	Yes	Ensure all bus timetables and fares information (paper, online, on App and at stop, including RTI) are of a high and consistent standard.
<b>Other:</b>		
Other	Yes	Co-ordinate bus service change dates with LCC.

### **4.3. Journey times**

- 4.3.1. At peak times the general traffic flow speed in effect controls bus journey times. The Promenade in the summer costs considerable bus time, primarily due to tourism traffic; variable message signage to encourage early parking has been deployed. A bus lane proposed for part of this space subject to available funding and stakeholder engagement would allow journey time reductions to be considered.
- 4.3.2. Operators have included significant congestion time in their timetables, which has made identifying issues where action might be taken difficult. The timetables can be systematically reviewed to identify where this has happened and it might be possible to recover that time.
- 4.3.3. The four bus lanes proposed would be the start of a bus priority programme, in tandem with digital priority schemes. Cyclists also need to be accommodated to meet active travel commitments. It will be a challenge to meet all space re allocation aspirations. Road pricing or tight parking restrictions would accelerate the modal shift process but have economic consequences.
- 4.3.4. The network review has considered whether routes can be made more direct, reducing point to point journey times; however, this would result in bus stops being further from some peoples' homes. The main BTS core network offers high frequency direct routes in most cases so the scope for action is limited.
- 4.3.5. Reducing journey times would improve the chances of encouraging bus commuting, but options beyond the bus lanes and priority systems envisaged are limited. If modal shift becomes established and peak time congestion eases, there would be more options.

### **4.4. Reliability**

- 4.4.1. Measures implemented to allow reduced journey times would also improve service reliability. The network has been amended previously

when the former BTS 14 route was separated into the 14 and 17 and the BTS 11 was separated into the 9 and 11 to improve service reliability.

4.4.2. Bus service reliability will be prioritised within traffic flows and bus priority facilities provided where possible.

#### **4.5. Supporting projects**

##### *Real time information (RTI)*

4.5.1. Quick Response (QR) codes are part of a suite of RTI measures that are to be implemented, funded with LTP resources. Operators' smartphone apps provide RTI for their own services. QR codes will offer this multi-operator.

4.5.2. A trial timetable display screen mounted in a Market Street shop window, is providing real time information for the defined town centre bus hub area. A multi-modal RTI information totem will be provided at the new tram terminus (and is in situ). It is intended to roll out a programme of RTI screen installation throughout the town centre for which BSIP funding would be required.

##### *Network management*

4.5.3. The initial network review undertaken identified the following matters, which will be taken forward with operators:

- BTS 4 and Stagecoach 61 could coordinate on the Whitegate Drive/town centre corridor, although potential knock on effects for the route as it passes through the Lancashire area would need to be avoided
- BTS 1 and Coastliner 21 could coordinate between Squires Gate and Cleveleys
- Three operators run four services offering six buses per hour between Blackpool and Poulton le Fylde on four different routes, which could be reviewed.

4.5.4. The low-frequency services 18 and 20 offered by BTS might be considered for further support to increase their frequency.

4.5.5. There has been sufficient competition in the Blackpool bus market to ensure that any viable commercial opportunity will have been taken up therefore new, amended and increased service frequencies must be subsidised over at least a seven-year period, or innovation will not be possible.

4.5.6. A primary concern is the lack of a service connecting dense areas of housing, including deprived estates, with job opportunities, both current and emerging, including at the Airport Enterprise Zone. Either a dedicated service or a DRT service will be considered to fill this gap.

4.5.7. Consideration will be given to introducing a further seasonal park and ride using the former Jet2 car park at Blackpool Airport off Squires Gate Lane (A5230).

4.5.8. Service frequencies need to be increased to stand any chance of competing with car's convenience. Ideally no service would operate to a frequency below two buses per hour ("bph") and this is a long-term aspiration. Suggested aspirational frequencies, subject to available funding, are proposed in Table 6.

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Table 6: Proposed service frequencies (based on early September 2021)

Service number	Route	Frequency (day)	Target frequency (day)	Frequency (evening)	Target frequency (evening)
<b>BTS</b>					
1	Fleetwood to Starr Gate via Promenade	2bph	2bph	NA	NA
2	Poulton to Blackpool Town Centre via Victoria Hospital	2bph	3bph	1bph	1bph
2c	Knott End to Blackpool via Poulton	2bph	2bph	1bph	1bph
3	Mereside Tesco to Cleveleys Park via Blackpool	3bph	3bph	1bph	1bph
4	Cleveleys to Mereside Tesco via Blackpool	3bph	3bph	1bph	1bph
5	Victoria Hospital to Halfway House via Town Centre	4bph	5bph	2bph	3bph
6	Mereside to Grange Park via Blackpool Town Centre & Layton	3bph	4bph	2bph	2bph
7	Cleveleys to St Anne's via Blackpool	3bph	4bph	1bph	2bph
9	Cleveleys to Blackpool via Bispham	4bph	5bph	2bph	3bph
11	Lytham to Blackpool Town Centre via St Anne's	3bph	4bph	2bph	3bph
14	Fleetwood to Blackpool via Layton	5bph	6bph	2bph	3bph
17	Blackpool Town Centre to Lytham (Saltcotes Road)	2bph	2bph	1bph	1bph
18	Blackpool Town Centre to Mereside Tesco via South Shore	1bph	1bph	NA	1bph
20	Staining to Blackpool via Victoria Hospital	Bus every 1.5 hrs, day only	1bph	NA	NA
<b>Stagecoach</b>					
42	Lancaster – Garstang - Blackpool	1bph	2bph	NA	1bph
61	Preston – Blackpool via Clifton, Kirkham, Wrea Green	2bph	3bph	1bph	1bph
68	Preston – Blackpool via Freckleton, Warton, Lytham, St Anne's	4bph	4bph	2bph	2bph
<b>Coastliner</b>					
21	St Anne's – Pleasure Beach – Tower – Gynn Square – Cabin – Norbreck - Cleveleys	2bph	2bph	NA	NA
22	Marton Mere Holiday Village - Tower - Stanley Park – Blackpool Zoo	2bph (not standard pattern, late	2bph	NA	NA

		starting service)			
24	Fleetwood – Cleveleys – Poulton – Victoria Hospital	2bph	2bph	NA	1bph Vic Hosp.
26	Marton Mere Holiday Village - Tower - Promenade - Pleasure Beach	1bph	1bph	NA	NA
Coastal Coaches (for LCC)					
76	Blackpool (Abingdon St) – Poulton – Singleton – Weeton – Kirkham – Wrea Green – Warton – Lytham – St Anne’s	1bph	1bph	NA	NA

### *Accessibility*

4.5.9. The BSIP envisages a full estate review of bus stops and shelters and a rolling upgrade programme to improve the passenger waiting environment. This will ensure that stops are all fully DDA compliant.

### *Corridor improvements*

4.5.10. Key corridors should preferably have 6bph daytime frequencies, with 3bph evening frequencies. Key corridors have been defined as the A584, A586, A5099 and B5262 to be prioritised for bus priority measures.

### *Bus shelters*

4.5.11. A procurement framework has been established to provide shelters on a value for money basis, enabling a seventy unit a year shelter replacement and installation programme, subject to funding.

4.5.12. The shelters will be to a high specification and designed to fit the site available, ensuring that each stop and shelter is fully accessible (see above).

4.5.13. Stops also need to be reviewed. Stops with low service frequencies would benefit from basic shelters, which will be provided as resources allow.

4.5.14. Quick response (QR) codes will be applied to stops and shelters, giving people access to real time information (RTI).

### *Bus priority (including measures in neighbouring authorities)*

4.5.15. Measures in neighbouring authorities are not under the Council’s control. Agreement on prevailing cross-border frequencies will be necessary.

4.5.16. The four new bus lanes proposed would achieve great benefit for bus passengers in improving reliability. They would be first steps in transforming the Blackpool network to one that is bus performance focused. Cameras will provide enforcement capacity. Bus lane enforcement cameras have been deployed, excluding private vehicles from the Market Street/Corporation Street bus hub area.

4.5.17. Ticketer ticket machines now in use in Blackpool will assist in delivering a bus priority system based on using the machines' GPS tracking to interact with traffic light control devices.

#### *Rural cross-boundary network improvements*

4.5.18. Blackpool is a largely urban area, although there are lower densities towards the eastern boundary. BTS and Stagecoach vehicles serve the Fylde Coast hinterland, much of which is rural. Of most relevance are the Stagecoach services which serve rural areas accessed off the A586, A6, A583 and A584 corridors. For these key corridors, the Council supports LCC's Superbus enhanced network proposals.

4.5.19. A DRT pilot project to connect communities to the maturing Airport Enterprise Zone has been discussed and the Airport Enterprise Zone team is considering how this might be taken forward subject to available funding.

#### **4.6. Ticketing - multi-operator /fares initiatives/E-vouchers**

4.6.1. A good ticket product range is available, purchasable through the operator apps, which can cut bus travel costs dramatically. There is a need to market these effectively. Multi-operator tickets will be introduced following further discussion and agreement with LCC and operators. Key corridors or areas would need to be identified for a pilot.

4.6.2. Young persons, post-16, fares are required. Currently, operators have different age limits and discounts for young people and the aim is to develop a minimum standard compatible with Lancashire's, subject to available funding. A scholars' pass will also be maintained.

4.6.3. Blackpool has a digital strategy to promote greater social inclusion that complements operators' ability to issue discount e-vouchers. In this way people can be assisted to access work and education opportunities. E-voucher schemes will also enable first time users to encourage the car to be left at home as part of promotion programmes.

#### **4.7. Promotion**

4.7.1. There have been few resources for council bus promotion work and this has been left to operators to pursue. A long-term council promotional programme will now be established.

- 4.7.2. The Council website and VisitBlackpool, together with the Council's social media presence offers outlets for bus promotion information. The EP Board will decide whether joint campaigns with operators are delivered or the Council campaigns for public transport generally.
- 4.7.3. Bus stops and shelters have received council branding using the corporate colour palette. This will be reviewed and a new design approach taken if deemed necessary, using the Council's in house design team. Real time information screens and information totem for the new railway station tram terminus are new promotional opportunities.
- 4.7.4. The need to promote public transport travel urgently, particularly following the pandemic's ridership impacts, means that the Council needs to pursue this as part of its transport and its climate change policy plans, subject to available funding.
- 4.7.5. The climate change emergency has increased the need to promote sustainable transport directly. The Council will now support and integrate with operator partners' promotional efforts.

#### **4.8. Passengers' Charter – commitment and key provisions**

- 4.8.1. The consultation process will focus on the operators and an identified list of local stakeholders, principally business and civic groups. There has been no council bus user group and no activist push for such.
- 4.8.2. The Council will work with its operator partners and LCC to ensure consistency across boundaries, through the EP, to commit to a Passengers' Charter with clear definitions of:
- Responsibility
  - Channels for comments and complaints
  - Standards for information supply and
  - Targets for responding honestly and individually.

It will outline aims in relation to:

- Quality of service, infrastructure, information and vehicles
- Safety at bus stops and on vehicles
- Reliability
- Cleanliness and presentation of vehicles and bus stops
- Environmental targets; and
- Accessibility of the service and of information.

It will also include a refund promise or mechanism following failure to deliver and a 'get you home' promise if journeys fail to run.

## **5. Covid impacts – commercial viability/supported bus needs**

- 5.1. Covid-19 restrictions have reduced public transport use. The network has been supported by dedicated funding since April 2020; from September 2021 this has moved to a Bus Recovery Grant funding regime until the end of March 2022. With new virus variants emerging, it seems possible that continuing financial support will be needed, otherwise the network will not be sustainable.
- 5.2. From data supplied by the operators, ridership was around 60% of pre-Covid in May 2021 but varying between 52% and 69% for individual routes.
- 5.3. Recovery from the pandemic might be extended and eventual ridership cannot be predicted. Some home-working is likely to continue, the concessionary market is suppressed and travel habits have changed radically. Decisions as to what network can be maintained and how this can be supported are likely to be required.
- 5.4. The Partnership's aim is to increase bus ridership, albeit from a Covid compromised position. A core network that continues to be commercially viable and a non-commercial network that will require ongoing financial support will need to be established and agreed with operators. From this point the degree of financial support necessary can be determined. However, at this point The Council has no further resources to support the network.
- 5.5. Concessionary travel posits another issue to address. Payment arrangements during the Covid period have broken the link with actual usage and therefore the 'no better off / no worse off' principle, at the DfT's request. A joint approach to this matter is being taken within the NoWcard arrangement.



## **6. Conclusion:**

- 6.1. The Plan builds on the BSIP document working towards the binding commitment that is necessary to move forward. It further focuses on the actions that are necessary to achieve modal shift from private motoring to bus. This will now be taken forward into the EP Scheme partner document.
- 6.2. Progress must be made against a Covid backdrop, which has depressed bus ridership. People have become intimidated by sharing public transport space and some have bought cars, although in Blackpool this cannot be quantified. Traffic levels have returned to those pre-pandemic. The bus offer must be that much better to recover this lost ridership and must be price competitive.
- 6.3. The matter of concessionary fare levels remains to be resolved and the Partnership and NoWcard arrangement will consider this. The NoWcard arrangement will continue to administer concessionary fares.
- 6.4. Bus reliability must be enhanced and there is commitment to re allocate road space and deploy digital traffic light control technology to achieve this. Increased service frequency will increase the need for bus priority. It is hoped that journey time improvements can also be achieved.
- 6.5. Vehicle quality is already high and more environmentally friendly, but adopting zero emission buses and the design opportunity that would represent could be a step change towards attracting more people to bus, in the absence of new trolleybus or bus rapid transit systems.
- 6.6. Blackpool has a tourism economy and this must be borne in mind while delivering a bus promotion plan. The resort attracts large traffic flows that must be accommodated. Despite low car ownership, peak time car use is high and that must be managed, particularly as new town centre developments are brought forward.
- 6.7. Bus promotion needs to be enhanced and the Partnership will concentrate on this. Campaigns need to be tightly focused on bringing people to bus use, maybe for the first time as adults. Competition with the car for perceived convenience and cost will be fierce.
- 6.8. The Council has sound relations with its operator partners and neighbouring local authorities; there is strong commitment to bus as a transport mode. It can be anticipated that a well-resourced Partnership will work hard and effectively to achieve its goals.