



# **Essex County Council Bus Service Improvement Plan 2024**

September 2024

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Cllr Tom Cunningham

## Introduction

**Cllr Tom Cunningham**, Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport

Welcome to this revised 2024 Essex Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). In Essex we are proud of our long-term commitment to buses across the county, not just in urban centres but for our rural areas and market towns too. We recognise that there also remain huge challenges to delivering bus services, both nationally and in Essex and that the economic environment for the bus industry remains difficult.

Nonetheless, the Essex BSIP process continues to offer an opportunity to deliver a transformative approach, promoting inward investment in Essex that will have a halo effect, extending more broadly across the county and nationally, beyond the immediate benefits delivered by the programmes the BSIP sets out. The four defining elements set out in the BSIP that governed our approach remain the same. These are:

**Passion:** The BSIP review was undertaken by the people who have lived and breathed the challenges of delivering a bus network in Essex, who have met and engaged with the people who use it and those who cannot access it.

**Ambition:** we do not want only to make a series of geographically based, worthy, but evolutionary improvements, we also want to create a new paradigm for how bus services are delivered in Essex, to transform sustainable travel opportunities for all. To this end we have identified five model projects to give us a way of delivering transformation across that diversity and since the BSIP was published have identified further opportunities. These aim to deliver high quality rapid transit for our urban and garden community populations; swift and reliable journeys for our urban centres; and link our less well-off areas with jobs,

training, and stronger local economies. We also want to transform travel opportunities for our rural villages, hamlets, and market towns.

**Renewal:** Buses helped deliver a golden age of travel and economic opportunity in the early to mid-twentieth century but have suffered a significant decline over the last few decades. We believe that to improve outcomes, help address environmental impacts including climate change and increase access to key services, we need new paradigms to revive those opportunities. The BSIP proposes the use of new technologies and approaches to provide services that offer the convenience of the car and a less stressful journey.

**Equality:** A journey for everyone. Many BSIPs focused on improving existing bus services. That is important, but it is not enough in Essex. In Essex most of our population cannot access a bus because they do not live close enough to a bus route. We did not want to produce a plan where those with bus services see improvements and those who have nothing still have nothing. That is a big challenge because we cannot run environmentally or financially sustainable bus routes with only a handful of people using them. We are developing new models that can create journeys that are attractive, convenient and earn their keep. Anyone watching the increasingly visible impacts of climate change will recognise the urgent need for such options.

# Section 1 – Our Bus Vision:

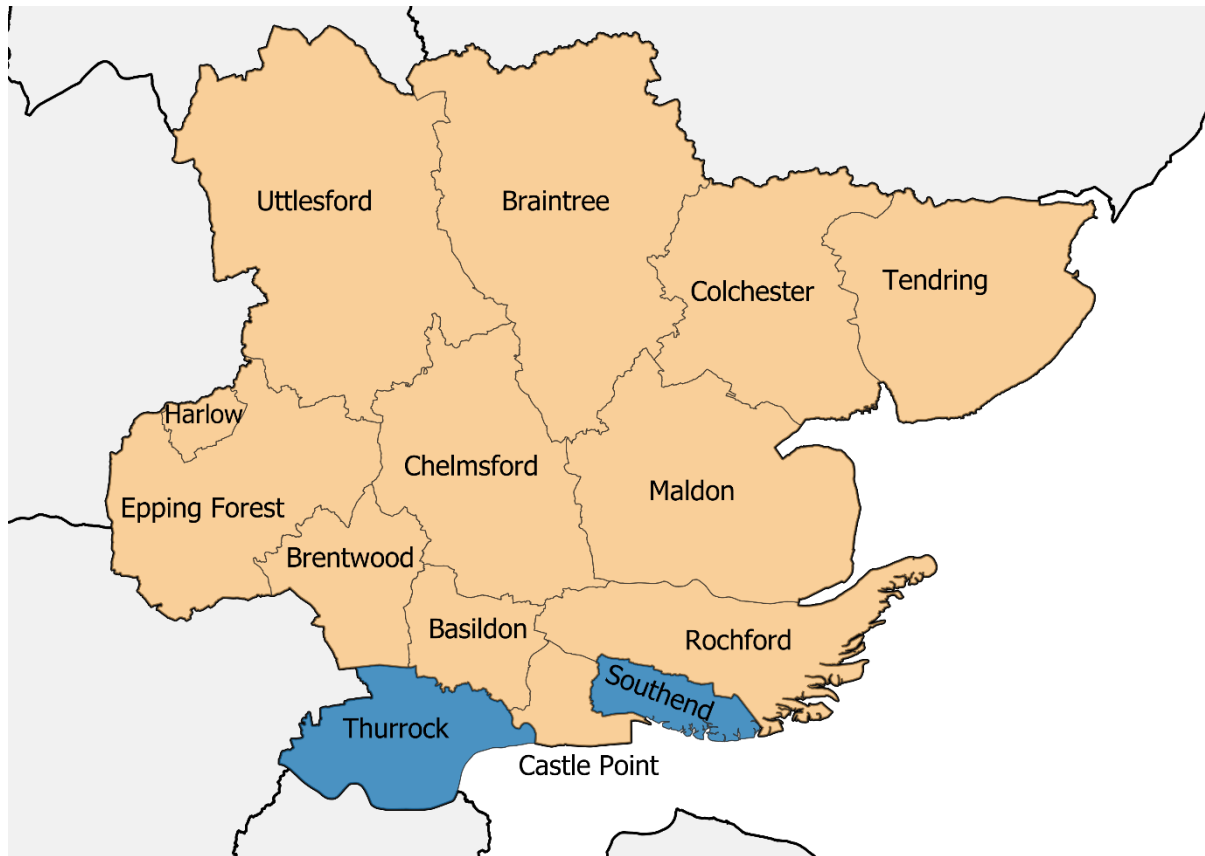
## How the BSIP relates to the wider Essex County Council (ECC) Strategic Objectives.

1. Safer, Greener, Healthier (SGH) is Essex County Council's vision for travel across Essex. It is aimed to deliver a shift towards sustainable travel by encouraging Essex residents to rethink their journeys. The SGH vision is to make it easy for residents to travel more sustainably.
2. Bus travel is safer, greener, and healthier than travel by car, both for individuals and for communities. If you travel by bus, rather than car, everyone benefits.
3. Buses also help deliver the four key objectives in Everyone's Essex: A Plan for Essex:
4. A strong, inclusive, and sustainable economy. Buses support economic growth by:
  - Providing access to education and training to help people develop their skills.
  - Providing employment opportunities and getting people to work.
  - They are disproportionately used by those on lower incomes and can be critical in linking job seekers with employment.
  - Linking people with shops and leisure and supporting vibrant night-time economies.
  - Allowing urban shopping centres to be green, attractive, and feel safe.
  - Generating economic growth without the costs of congestion (which is still a factor even with zero emission vehicles), road traffic incidents, and air pollution.
5. **A high-quality environment.** Moving longer journeys from car to bus helps improve air quality and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The greatest single climate change mitigation measure for the transport sector in Essex is to transfer journeys from car to bus, bike, or walking. That is true even given a diesel bus fleet. Establishing bus, bike and walking as the predominant modes for urban areas would enable the creation of a more attractive environment than one dominated by cars and parking infrastructure.
6. **Health, wellbeing, and independence for all ages.** Buses are used by older and younger people and those with disabilities. They provide independence and an ability to access healthcare, education, training, and other services. For many, they are a key part of being able to live independently.
7. **A good place for children and families to grow.** By using buses, you are investing in your community. You are supporting access to services, improving health outcomes, and ensuring that communities are not just a good place to live for those with cars. Bus journeys are often a social occasion for regular passengers, allowing them to build friendships to combat loneliness.

## Geographic Boundary of the Essex BSIP

8. The geographic boundary for the Essex BSIP is shown in Figure 1 below. It excludes the unitary authorities of Southend on Sea City and Thurrock District shown in blue:

**Figure 1: The geographic boundary of the Essex BSIP as of June 2024**



**Our Vision for developing bus services in Essex.**

9. ECC considers that the BSIP for 2022 to 2027 issued in November 2022, set out a solid foundation for improving Essex's bus services over that timescale and ECC does not consider that the overall vision needs significant revision this point.
10. This is because the fundamental aspects of the bus network in Essex are unchanged, the analysis of strengths and weaknesses still apply and the remedies set out in the original BSIP are still relevant.
11. This does not mean that the situation has remained static. The bus network has largely stabilised and some of our targets are or are on the point of being met (for example our 'Basildon Volt' Transformational Scheme is being fulfilled through our successful bid to the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area 2 programme). We have met the goals set out in our County wide EP. In other areas, such as the development of City/Borough/District Based Enhanced Partnerships have made a start of delivering, what are long term aims.
12. We have therefore updated the original vision statement for our BSIP to take these factors into account and will continue to work closely with the bus industry and other partners to deliver improvements.

### **The Essex BSIP Vision:**

1. Improve service quality, reliability and connectivity of the bus network by identifying both hard (infrastructure) and soft (policy) measures that will promote bus use and seeking funding to implement them.
2. Work to reverse the long-term decline in passenger numbers, in absolute terms and as a modal share of all journeys using both traditional and innovative approaches as appropriate across Essex's diverse geography.
3. Working to develop a bus network that is:
  - accessible to more people,
  - easy to understand,
  - attractive to both existing and prospective new passengers
  - more affordable for everyone offering a real alternative to car use for as many people as possible.
4. Improving public health and addressing climate change by reducing pollutants such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, produced by cars in Essex.

## Section 2. Current offer to bus passengers 2024/25.

### Background.

13. The Government launched its National Bus Strategy (NBS), '**Bus Back Better**,' in March 2021. This aims to:
  - Recast the bus sector to allow it to recover from the impact of COVID-19.
  - Reverse the long-term decline in passenger numbers.
  - Help meet national emission, pollution, and health goals.
  - Help meet economic regeneration goals by reducing congestion.
14. This strategy redefines the market settlement established after the deregulation of bus services in 1985. It strengthens the role and powers of Local Transport Authorities (LTAs), giving them new responsibilities for:
  - The shape, functionality, connectivity and accessibility of the bus network.
  - The quality, accessibility, and integration of bus infrastructure.
  - Meeting the goals set out above.
15. The delivery of these objectives is to be achieved through:
  - Developing and Publishing a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), setting out the authority's strategic approach and targets for improving bus services.
  - An Enhanced Partnership (EP) between the LTA and bus operators. An EP has two parts the strategic EP plan and/or:
  - A county-wide Bus Franchising approach. This required development of an EP as a first step.
16. Following the requirements of the National Bus Strategy (NBS), ECC:
  - In June 2021, issued a statutory note to the Department for Transport indicating that it was following the Enhanced Partnership route.
  - In October 2021, issued a BSIP detailing the County Council's approach toward delivering a revised bus network, setting out high level objectives and performance indicators.
  - In April 2022, agreed, issued and formally enacted an EP with operators.
17. An initial review of the Essex BSIP was undertaken for November 2022 this noted the changes in the bus market since the BSIP's initial publication and reported on the creation of the County Wide Enhanced Bus Partnership. The 2022 review can be found here:  
<https://www.essexhighways.org/uploads/downloads/essex%20bsip%20annual%20review%202022.pdf>
18. The BSIP Review scheduled for November 2023 was suspended by the DfT to allow time for them to issue revised guidance in January 2024. The revised DfT Guidance can be found

here: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a6becf96a5ec000d731aa9/bus-service-improvement-plans-guidance-to-local-authorities-and-bus-operators-2024.pdf>

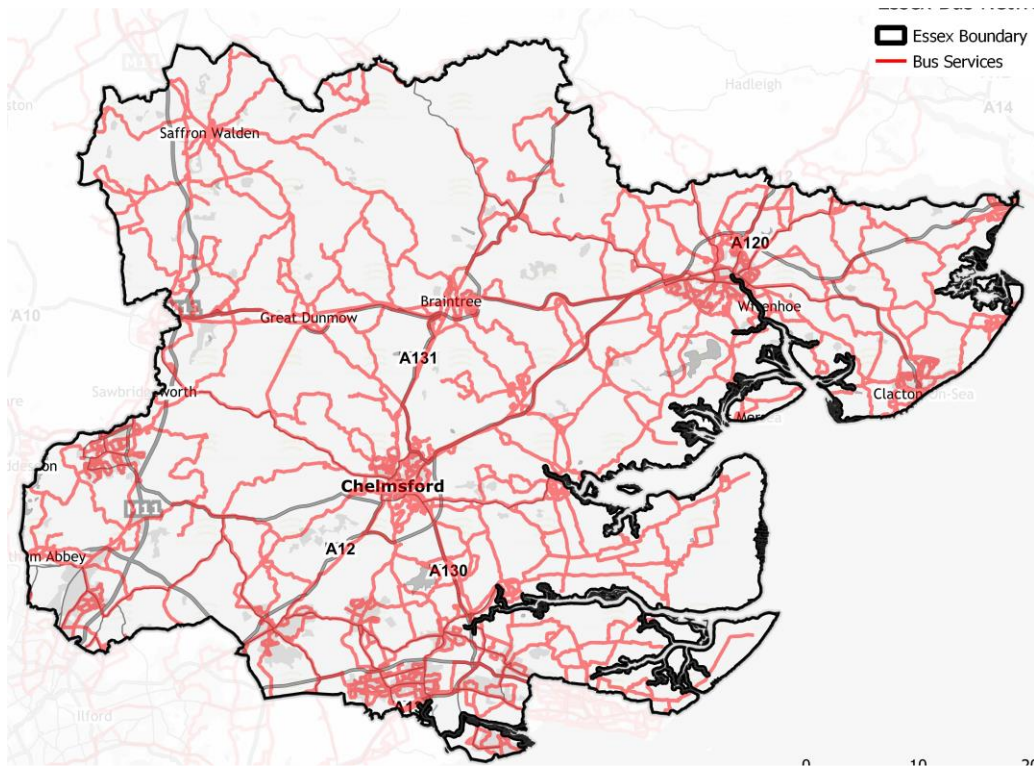
19. In line with the BSIP commitment this revision of our original BSIP has been conducted by ECC IPTU Officers. It includes consideration of:
- The strategic aims of the BSIP and suggesting any revision needed to best align them with national and ECC policies, including the LTP.
  - The impacts of changes to the bus network and commercial market over the year, to understand their impact on the network and considering what measures need to be taken as a result.
  - Analysis of which elements of the BSIP have worked, which have not, which need improvement and how it could be revised to reflect this.
  - Progress on KPIs, aims and objectives.
  - Suggesting potential any alterations to KPIs, aims or objectives that the BSIP may need.
  - Assessing how external factors such as housing development or the availability of central government funding may be affecting the delivery of the policy.
  - Reporting on passenger views using annual surveys, paid for by ECC but conducted by an independent surveyor, to understand passenger and non-passenger attitudes.

### **Identification of Key Urban and Interurban Bus Corridors in Essex.**

#### **The Essex Bus Network.**

20. The overall Essex bus network is illustrated in **Figure 1** below. This includes all bus services in Essex on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024, but does not distinguish the levels of service. As might be expected services are heavily concentrated around the major urban settlements with solid interurban connections and a more distributed rural network (often funded by ECC):

**Figure 1: The Overall Essex Bus Network**



The bus network for the four largest cities and towns in Essex, (Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester and Harlow) are shown below as **Figures 2 to 5**.

**Figure 2 The Basildon Bus Network 2024**

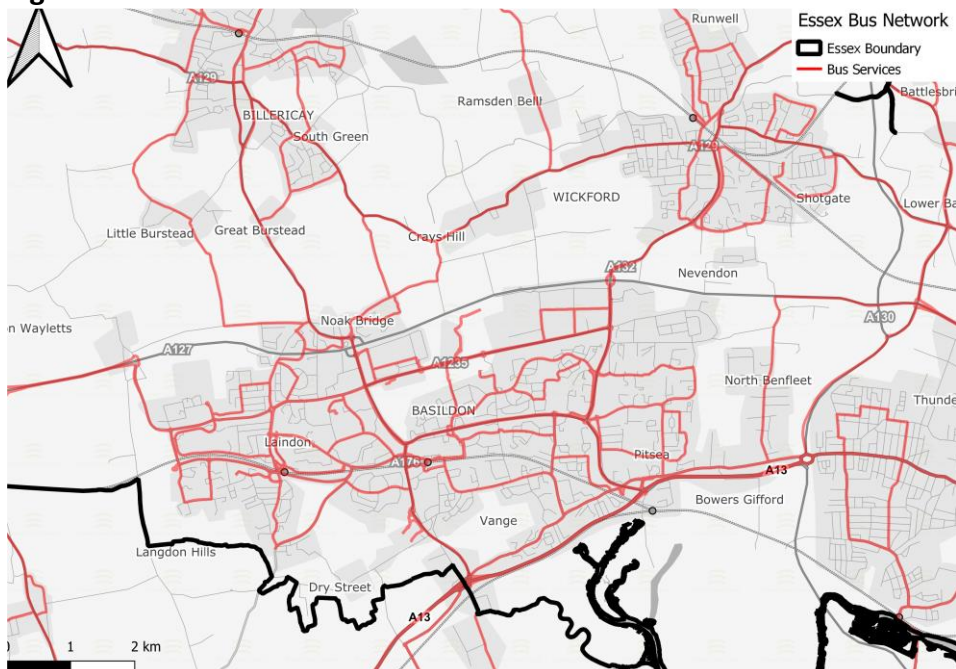


Figure 3 The Chelmsford Bus Network 2024

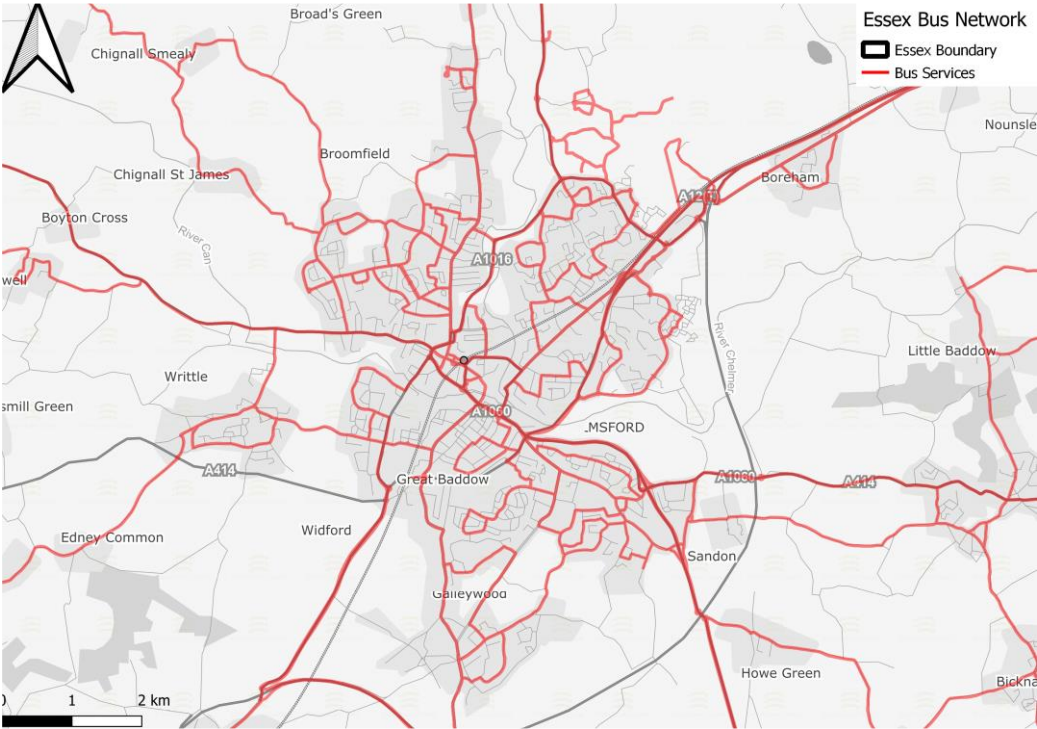
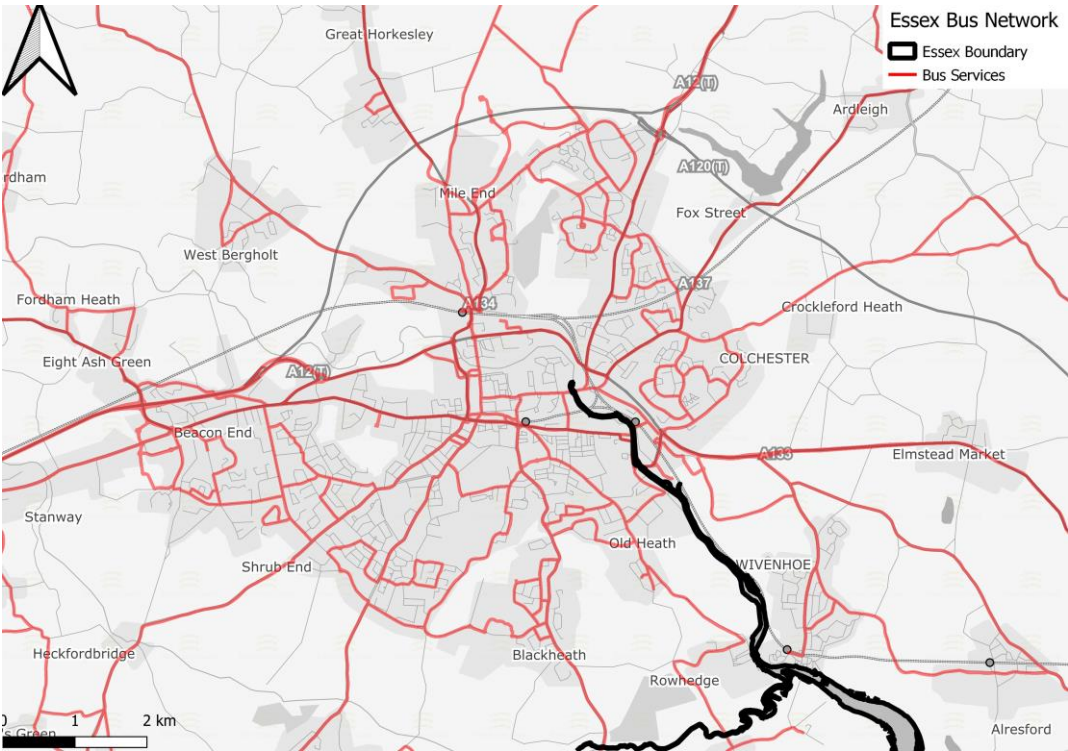
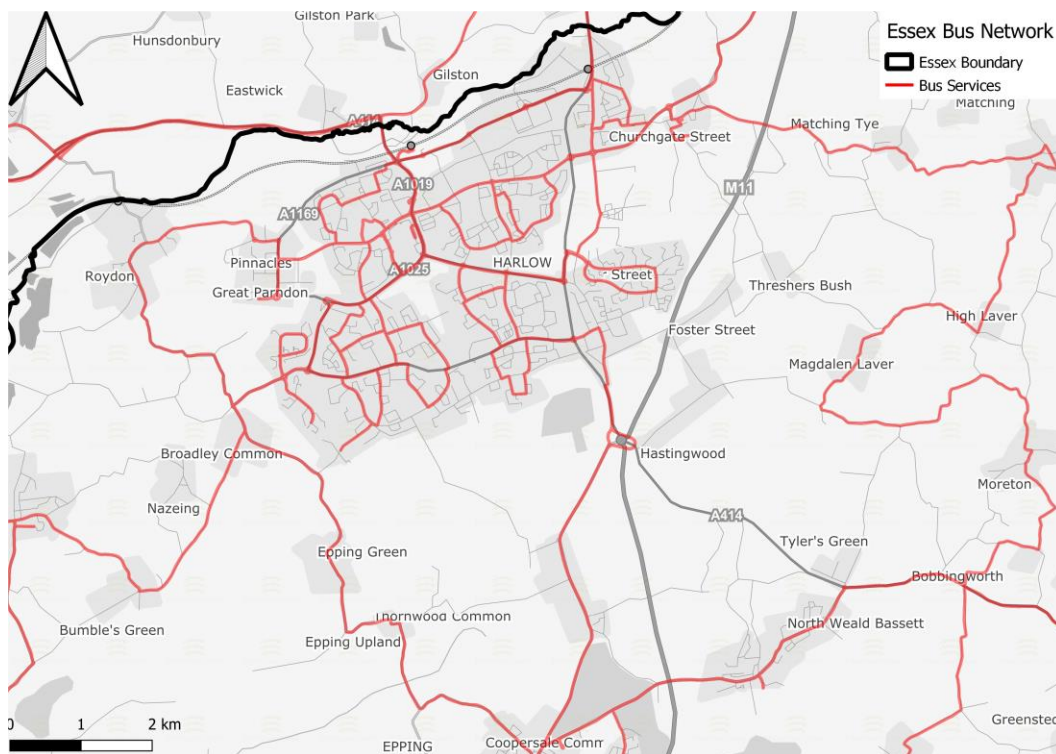


Figure 4: The Colchester Bus Network 2024



**Figure 5: The Harlow Bus Network 2024**

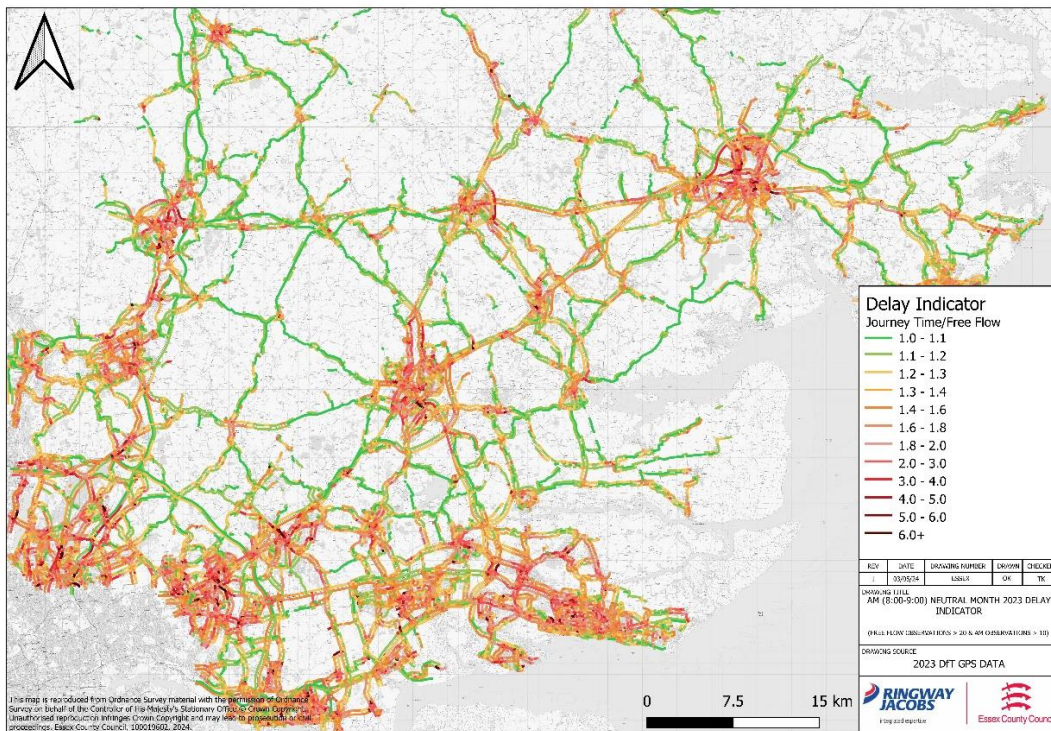


21. Essex's key urban and interurban bus corridors remain unchanged from the position set out in our original BSIP in 2021. These are shown in Tabular form in **Appendix A** below.
22. We have retained our decision to identify as general corridors rather than as individual bus services or roads. This is because while individual service routes and roads used can and do vary significantly over time the broad desire lines and destinations for travel by passengers remain unchanged.
23. As set out in our Local Bus Service Support Strategy we do set out the minimum expected level of service for these corridors, below which, the County Council would consider intervention to supply additional bus services of frequencies. While there have been changes to the level and density of service along these routes, none has fallen below our support criteria for each route also set out in the tables. Our bus support policy can be found here: <https://www.travelessex.co.uk/about-bus-services/getting-around-in-essex-strategy>
24. Extra weight will be given to these corridors when considering additional bus priority measures along them as shown in **Table 20: Proposed larger scale projects for 2024 to 2026 below**. While this policy was initially set to run from 2015 to 2020, it was initially extended to 2022 and then taken up as part of our BSIP strategy and will therefore run with it until 2027, or until otherwise formally determined.

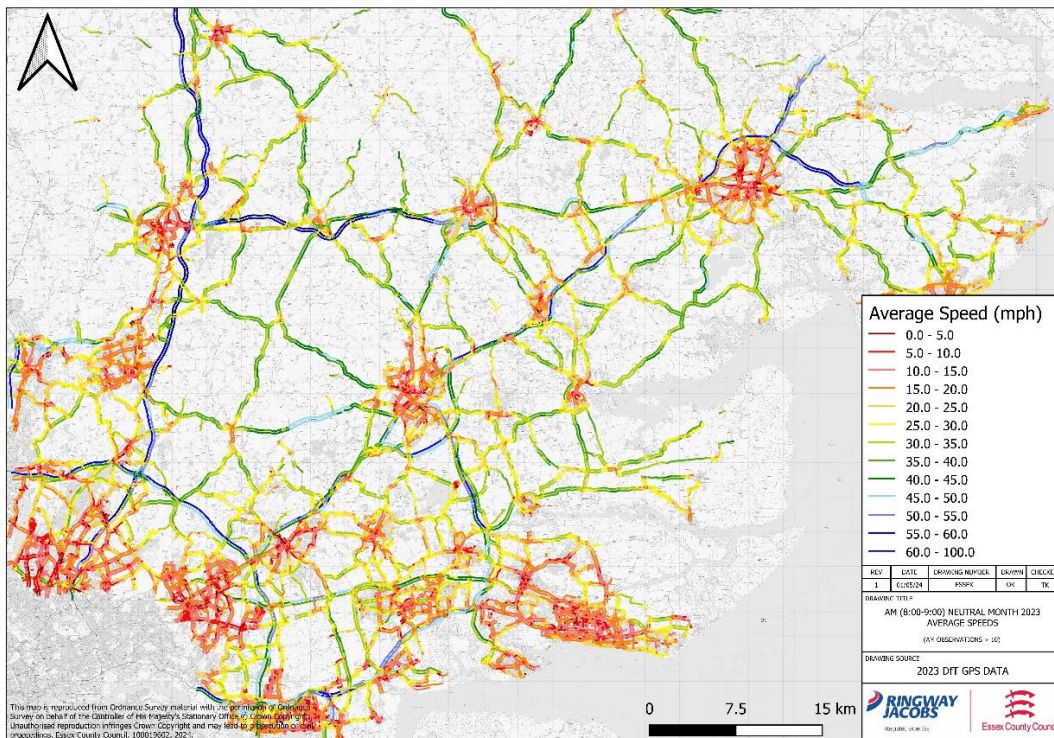
## Congestion and reliability of the Essex Road Network.

25. The pictograms below show how the Essex road network is impacted by congestion and journey reliability and average traffic speeds.

**Figure 6 Essex AM 08:00/09:00 delay indicator.**



**Figure 7, Average Traffic Speeds, 08:00 to 09:00.**



26. As might be expected both figures show the greatest level of delay occurs in the most heavily populated urban areas, which also have the densest bus networks.
27. As noted in our original BSIP some of these towns are 'new towns' with a road structure that is suitable for bus priority. For example Harlow already has significant bus priority measures in place.
28. Others (such as Britain's 'oldest and newest city,' Colchester) have limited road space for traditional large scale bus priority measures (such as bus lanes) due to historic townscapes and unavoidable choke points which has led to a loss of bus reliability in some areas.
29. In addition, bus priority also faces competition for road space from other sustainable modes, particularly cycling with significant cycling infrastructure being installed in towns across Essex over the last four years using Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) grants and in some cases developer funding.
30. As a result pro bus measures highways measures have focused on cumulative small-scale improvements to the network as set out in **Table 17** below, with potential future small-scale projects identified in **Table 19** below.
31. This does not mean that larger scale bus priority measures are not being addressed. A set of larger scale schemes that supported bus service operations and improve reliability are set out in **Table 20** below, but require significant additional external funding to realise.

## Overview of Developments in the Commercial Bus Market since November 2022

### Economic factors.

32. As set out in our BSIP Review in 2022, Essex is a challenging territory in which to run bus services. Higher rates of commercial return tend to be seen in areas with higher population densities making simple and direct journeys. Essex's large geographic footprint with dispersed settlements and often lengthy and complex journeys means higher operational costs and lower revenues.
33. Even prior to 2020 commercial bus operations in Essex were not particularly profitable and there were reductions in commercial mileage across the county, with some of those operations being partly or wholly replaced by ECC contracted services and others significantly reduced or lost entirely. This trend in reduction of service by commercial operators was in part driven by declining patronage, but also by the challenges of delivering efficient and rapid services in the face of severe traffic congestion in town and city centres and around the major arterial roads. In conjunction with this the slow decline in passenger numbers reduced revenues. This meant that an increasing number of routes became commercially unviable.
34. In addition the industry has faced a series of national level systemic issues over the recruitment and retention of drivers, mechanics and other key staff. This is a long-term issue, reflecting the high skill level required and low levels of pay in comparisons to similarly skilled jobs for example drivers of heavy goods vehicles or fuel tankers and home delivery drivers.

35. On top of this the two-year period between 2022 and 2023 experienced a three decade high level of inflation driven by a mixture of the inflationary impact of the significant increase in public expenditure during Covid 19 Pandemic and both the direct and indirect impacts on fuel and other raw material costs of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This result is reflected in higher costs of operation than might be expected based even on overall inflation levels.
36. As an example the average UK inflation rate over 2022 was 11.6% and for 2023 it was 9.7%. (Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/374890/rpi-rate-forecast-uk/>)
37. By contrast bus industry inflation over 2019-2022 for the Eastern Region of England is estimated to have been 18.6% by the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) (<https://www.cpt-uk.org/media/iqed0pno/cpt-report-2022-costs.pdf> ) and similarly as being 12.8% in 2023 (CPT: “Bus Industry Costs in 2023” August 2023 <https://www.cpt-uk.org/media/ao4ob5rm/cpt-report-2023-costs-public-version.pdf> ).
38. This suggests that bus operating costs rose by around 57% over these two years, around four times the average inflation over the same period.
39. There have also been marked changes to the travel habits and choices of concessionary bus pass (ENCTS) holders ENCTS passenger numbers fell to less than 20% of pre pandemic use, although it has now risen to around 62%.

## Changes to Bus Passenger Use.

40. A detailed breakdown of bus passenger use in Essex is given in **Section 5, “Targets, performance monitoring and reporting”** below. In summary overall bus passenger use has fallen by around 18% from 2019/20 and although the last two years have shown a reasonably strong recovery (by around 30% from the low point), bus use overall is still well below that for 2019/20 as shown in **Table 1** below. ECC has had to estimate passenger use from some smaller bus operators who have not submitted data.

**Table 1 Summary of Changes in Essex Bus Passenger Use 2019 to 2024**

Summary of changes in Essex Bus Passenger Numbers 2019 to 2024			
Year	2019/20	2023/24	Change
<b>Overall Bus Passenger Numbers</b>	41,420,643	33,656,963 (estimated)	-7,763,680
<b>Concessionary Bus Passenger Numbers</b>	12,709,516	8,257,336	-4,452,180

## Changing Travel Habits

Peak period travel - changes to office working patterns.

41. There is some evidence to support the idea that people’s travel habits have altered. Car use data suggested that traffic has already exceeded 2019/20 levels in some areas. However, while this is the case for overall travel, peak travel in towns did not recover as quickly. This suggested that people may have changed their travel patterns or mode choice. There was some evidence that second hand car sales rose during this period so people, who have invested in a car may have decided to keep using it.
42. The data indicates that the recorded reduction in peak period travel is particularly strong in locations where office-based commuters made up a substantial proportion of the peak travel passenger use in 2019/20. So, for example, in Chelmsford, where a substantial number of passengers were headed to London and where there is a strong office-based economy services faced a steeper drop in peak period bus use and recovered more slowly than in Basildon, which has a more retail and manufacturing-based economy. There is some evidence of passenger growth outside the traditional peak, possibly by younger people or mid-day shopping by remote workers.
43. There could be several reasons for this, but it seems likely that the well-recognised trend for organisations to adopt a longer term ‘remote and flexible working’ strategy for employees, following their experience with the use of remote working tools (such as Zoom and Teams) is having an impact. Essex County Council is one such organisation (with large footprint in Chelmsford). Even if bus using employees only spend one day per week working away from the office this could lower their demand for bus travel by 20%. This may be demonstrated by the experience of Essex’s Park and Ride schemes – two in Chelmsford and one in Colchester. The Chelmsford schemes were up to 2019/20, heavily used by London commuters, local office workers and Anglia Ruskin University students & staff. While the University has reopened, passenger numbers at both Chelmsford sites remain down on

2019/20 – significantly so at the Chelmer Valley site which was particularly attractive to commuters and appears to have plateaued. In comparison, in Colchester there is a strong link (by location and special arrangements) with the large regional hospital, where employees, by the nature of the work are physically present and passenger numbers have recovered more strongly. See **Table 2 below**.

**Table 2 ECC combined site Park and Ride site use 2019/20 and 2023/24**

Year	2019/20	2023/24
Chelmsford- Sandon Site	803,488	418,040
Chelmsford - Chelmer Valley Site	399,169	199,614
Colchester Site	257,524	160,093
	1,460,181	777,747

44. As seen In **Table 1** above, concessionary bus pass has shown significant and sustained drop since 2019/20 and although it has recovered over 2022 to 2024, use still remains over one third down on 2019/20 levels. The reasons for this remain unclear, however, studies by Transport Focus in July 2023 which can be found in full here:

<https://d3cez36w5wymxj.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/18182119/Getting-free-pass-holders-back-on-buses.pdf> in suggested that passengers often had multiple reasons for changing:

- 69 per cent say that this is because they made fewer journeys for days out or for leisure trips.
- 49 per cent say that they felt less safe using bus than using other forms of transport.
- 44 per cent made fewer shopping trips.

45. In addition those who did use the bus regularly also had more than one reason for changing use:

- 41 per cent se whose use of bus reduced during the pandemic, but then has not increased over the last year say that this is because they are still making few, or making fewer, trips for days out for leisure reasons.
- 27 per cent say that they are still making few, or are making fewer, shopping trips.
- 32 per cent and 31 per cent respectively say that their use of bus has not increased in the last year because bus services in their local area has been reduced in the last year, or that the reliability of buses in their local area has worsened in the last year.
- 30 per cent of those who say that their use of bus has not returned to pre-pandemic levels due to still making few, or making fewer trips for days out of for leisure reasons say that they have less money to spend.
- 16 per cent say that the places that they would want to visit are closed. Many give various other reasons for not making leisure trips which includes simply not feeling inclined to make these trips any more or feeling less happy to do so due to the pandemic.

- 56 per cent of those who say that their use of bus has not returned to pre-pandemic levels due to still making few, or making fewer shopping trips say that this is because they are getting shopping deliveries.

46. While ECC has not conducted its own detailed survey this does correlate with anecdotal data proved by operators and some bus users. If this is the case it suggests a long term and semi-permanent habit change that will take significant effort to reverse at the national as well as local level.

### **Reliability, Service Availability and Service rationalisation.**

47. The bus industry in common with the wider transport sector has been subject to a concatenation of impacts that have adversely affected its attractiveness to the public.
48. Some of these impacts are the result of longstanding systemic issues within the industry. For example, there is a national shortage of qualified bus drivers (exacerbated by the hiatus in test and licencing issue for a long period over the pandemic) where pay and conditions are competing with the HGV sector, who in turn have been able to offer incredibly attractive recruiting packages. While the bus industry has responded by increasing training and raising wages, this has had an impact on both their ability to run services and on the commercial viability of services.
49. There have also been other proximate impacts - outbreaks of staff absence over 2019/20 to 2021/22 could spread rapidly though a depot and across a business, leading to services having to be curtailed at short notice. The long recovery periods and serial nature of infectious outbreaks led to temporary but longer duration service reductions to allow those driver and other resources available to be focused on key services.
50. It is well known and demonstrated through many studies that unreliability is a major influence on the decisions people make on how to travel. Prolonged periods of service unreliability or withdrawal will break settled travel patterns forcing customers onto alternative modes and making it less likely that they will return to bus once the situation normalises.

### **Staff Shortages and Recruitment.**

51. Staffing proved a major issue through the pandemic and these problems persisted afterwards, compounded by the national (and indeed international) shortage of bus drivers. This was compounded by competition for the available staff which forced bus operators to increase wages to attract and importantly retain staff, with some companies offering 'golden handshakes' in the form of significant joining bonuses for staff to switch employers. This was compounded by the high rate of inflation over 2022/23 and 2023/24 and by Essex's proximity to the London bus market which has long functioned as an attractor for staff, with comparatively higher wage rates. At some points, driver shortages were a leading factor in reliability falling off.

Some bus operators were better able to address these issues better than others. Larger national companies had greater capacity to invest in long-term solutions, such as restructuring their driver training programmes and increasing wages to promote retention than SME's who had perforce to focus on immediate solutions.

52. In addition, as part of its marketing programme Essex County is in the process of completing several videos designed to showcase the importance of the Essex bus driver as a role, with the hope of encouraging more people to consider this as a potential career. These will be on the TravelEssex website, shared in the TravelEssex newsletter and across social media. See **Section 5, Functional Area 5** below.

**Essex Bus Service Kilometres Run**

53. As shown in **Table 3** below, there have been significant reduction in bus kilometres run between 2019/20 and 2023/24 of some -38.8%. The trend has slowed significantly between 2022/23 and 2023/4, but still reduced year on year.
54. Despite this the level of access to a service at some level has largely been maintained as the operators have tended to “thin’ networks through service consolidation, reduced frequencies, days, and times of operation rather than adopt complete service withdrawals which have, so far, been minimised.

**Table 3: Bus service Kilometres run, 2019/20, 2022/23 compared to 2023/24.**

Year	2019-20	2022-23	2023-24
Total Number live bus Km run in Essex	51.6m	32.3m	31.6m
Variation	-	-19.3m	-0.74m
% Variation	-	-37.4%	-2.3%
Total change	-	-	-38.8%

55. Where such ‘thinning’ has occurred most service frequencies have reduced by one step (so, for example, 15-minute frequencies reduced to 20 minute frequencies, 20 minutes frequency to 30 minutes frequencies, 30 minutes frequencies to 60 minutes), although this has been carefully managed over the more heavily used services. However, in many cases this approach has reached its natural limit and if further service reductions are required service withdrawals may be the only option.
56. Similarly, the return to higher levels of basal car use has resulted in increased congestion. To address this some urban services that previously travelled cross-town have been split at central locations to allow the second half of the leg (now using a different bus) to start on time, even if the arriving bus is late.
57. There has also been some increase in commercial activity with limited number of new services starting in 2024 often in direct competition with existing services. Nonetheless it is likely that some at lower use services will be withdrawn over the coming year.
58. The COVID-Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) funding, followed by the COVID-19 Bus Service Support Grant Restart (CBSSGR) and now the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) funding from Government saved many operators from serious financial problems and potential closure. However, the cessation of this grant March 2023 has led to concerns over there being the risk of a serious reduction in bus services at this point as operators reassess the commercial viability in the light of the current level of demand. ECC has been working with bus operators to address this for example by continuing to base its ENCTS reimbursement to bus operators

at pre-Covid levels of payment, while reserving the right to review these levels if service reductions lead to significant number of people unable to make the journeys they need. So far this has resulted in 'service thinning' – that is frequency reductions and service route revisions, but not wholesale withdrawals. Whether this approach can survive the withdrawal of central funding and the normalisation of concessionary fare reimbursement remains to be seen and poses a real risk of further service withdrawals.

59. The DfT also offers a fuel duty rebate to commercial bus operators, called Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) which returns a proportion of fuel duty to commercial bus operators. Operators are not allowed to claim for most contracted service, with ECC instead receiving a grant (fixed since 2013) of £1.1m, which is ringfenced to be used on local bus services. Both Bus Back Better and more recent communications from DfT have indicated their intention of reviewing the process and application of BSOG, however, as at time of printing no details of this proposed review have been issued.
60. Many semi-rural and small-town networks remain dependent upon school peak movements to cover the fixed costs of the route or are operated at marginal cost in combination with batches of either school contracts or local bus tenders. As legislation protects consumers from monopolies by forbidding operators to cross fund (support one route with funds obtained from another), changes in these travel patterns (for example home to school journeys) can therefore have a knock-on effect on services.
61. The bus industry is working proactively to encourage passengers to return using advertising and marketing particularly off the back of the £2.00 national fare cap and appears to have had some success in attract new passengers, including young people. These passengers continue to see reliability, journey times and punctuality as key barriers to bus use.
62. Bus Service Improvement Plans, Enhanced Partnerships and joint investment will therefore remain key to the recovery and growth of commercial services. However, the current state of the bus market both in Essex and nationally has exercised a severe dampening effect on their appetite and ability to make large scale capital investment or take revenue risks without guarantees or external intervention.
63. Similarly, ECC in common with most other LTAs face their own funding gap – ECC has a growing funding gap for 2025/26 onwards, so is unlikely to be able to make a commitment to the levels of investment needed from its own internal resources.
64. This leaves three remaining sources of potential funding:
  - Central Government funding such as a second tranche of BSIP funding or another Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) grant bid. However, this relies on the government having funding available at a time when it is itself facing a funding challenge.
  - Developer funding through section 106 and similar planning backed arrangements. Given the level of development planned for Essex this should, in theory offer a significant source of funding for public transport investment. However, in practice the limits around the uses to which such funding can be put including a strict focus on the immediate area of the development, a lack of clear central government guidance over what a developer's reasonable expectations of funding for bus services should be, the severe difficulties encountered by planning authorities in developing and passing acceptable Local Plans, the long build times for larger

developments and the developers ability to appeal funding claims on grounds of viability, serve to restrict the quantity, certainty and flexibility of such funding.

- More radical measures to rebuild the current transport paradigm, in the form of road user charging (such as the low emission or congestion zones as championed by London, Nottingham, Oxford and others) and/or workplace parking charges. In principle, these measures can offer the opportunity to generate sufficient funding to both build a new and effective bus network and support it until, it becomes commercially sustainable. They are however politically difficult and require the building of a wide consensus approach to enable their adoption, all of which take time and significant long-term commitment.

65. As a result, there are significant obstacles to generating the level of investment needed to make major improvements to the bus network and those that are potentially available require a time scale that limits the opportunities to make an immediate impact. As a result, while it is still possible to identify and plan for longer term measures, in the short term, smaller scale and incremental improvements may offer the most realistic way forward.

## The Essex Commercial Bus Fleet

66. The size and composition of the Essex Bus fleet has altered significantly since 2020. Although the network has shrunk, the number of buses operational across the network has increased, suggesting a smaller but more densely served network.
67. The reduction in route kilometres operated has allowed some operators to reduce the number of vehicles in their fleet, while others have increased fleet size. Some have also taken the opportunity to retire some older vehicles and replace them with newer cascaded and refurbished buses from outside Essex. For example, the introduction of the city and town shuttle services by First in Basildon, Chelmsford and Colchester led to the replacement of the buses running them by newer refurbished vehicles.
68. **Table 4** below show a comparison of the Essex Bus Fleet's composition between 2020 and 2024.

**Table 4 Essex Bus Fleet Composition comparison, 2019/20 to 2023/24**

Bus Euro Emission Category	2019/20	2023/24
Battery Electric	0	0
CNG / Biomethane	0	0
Diesel-Hybrid Euro VI	0	0
Diesel-Hybrid Other	0	0
Euro I/II	11	0
Euro III	166	62
Euro IV	169	141
Euro V	212	509
Euro VI	135	184
Euro VI Retrofit	0	171

Hydrogen Fuel Cell	0	0
Other	0	18
Unknown	0	3
<b>Total number of buses</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>1088</b>

69. The figures for 2024 include a small number of vehicles owned by community travel schemes running bus services under Section 22 permits.
70. For the future the largest expected future change in the bus fleet will however be through the success of Essex County Council and First Essex Buses Ltd bidding for £4.9m of grant funding through the Governments Zero Emission Bus Regional Area 2 (ZEBRA2) bid and £25.8m of private investment from First group PLC to introduce 55 new battery electric buses (34 single deck and 21 double deck) and associated charging infrastructure to Basildon in pursuit of its 'Basildon Volt' major transformational project.

### Summary

71. The commercial bus market in Essex has now somewhat stabilised albeit at the cost of a significant reduction to the network and with some remaining structural instability. This is reflected by:
- Bus kilometres run falling by 20.4m km or 38%.
  - The number of passengers falling since 2020 by 7,763,680 journeys
  - Vehicle fleet numbers rising from 693 to 1088, an increase of 395 vehicles.
  - Euro V or Euro VI emission level of buses rising from 50% in 2020 to 80% in 2024.
  - Breakdowns for these figures are shown in Tables 3, 1 and 4 respectively.
72. However, there remains a risk of significant instability due to the following factors.
- Costs driven by general inflation, increased fuel prices and the strong competition for qualified labour, particularly drivers and mechanics/engineers.
  - Staff shortages leading to unreliability or shrinking networks.
  - The stalling of passenger recovery, particularly amongst concessionary travel pass holders.
  - The impact of congestion in urban areas and the impact of roadworks in key locations effecting reliability.
  - The withdrawal of significant bus recovery grant government support funding over 2022/23 has led to most operators undertaking network reviews.
  - Uncertainty over the future of the £2 national fare cap.
73. These impacts, combined with structural factors within the industry have as a result stymied the appetite for investment without external intervention.

74. The sale of Arriva to I Squared Capital by Deutsche- Bahn reflects the state of uncertainty over the UK bus market in general opens up both opportunities and risks for the future of those parts of the Essex bus network that Arriva operates, which will need to be addressed as the consequential effects emerge.
75. ECC has limited ability to respond to these impacts from its own resources due to ongoing financial pressures. While ECC has had significant success in identifying developer funding, this has its limitations for the wider bus network.
76. However, several factors suggest that there is some confidence in Essex as a viable target for long term investment and that with the right incentive, step changes in service quality are possible. These include:
  - First's willingness to invest £25.8m of private capital investment on top of the Zebra 2 grant of £4.9m to bring electric buses to Basildon.
  - The quality improvements introduced as part of the 2022 fleet improvements to First's networks in Chelmsford, Basildon and Colchester
  - Independent SME Vectare Ltd entering the Essex bus market and acquiring several existing SME businesses.

## Overview of Contracted Services since November 2021

### Overview

77. As set out in the Essex BSIP, ECC has a strong history over many years of supporting non-commercial local bus services across the county by contracting services so that they are in effect supported by taxpayers. In 2022/23 this entails a net budget of £10.7m, with a net outturn of £8.9m investment including the £1.1m Bus Subsidy grant (in place of BSOG) which is both in actual and proportionate terms much higher than the level of support offered by comparable regional authorities (and this is on top of concessionary travel reimbursement).
78. As noted above, ECC receives a £1.1m in annual ring-fenced grant from DfT replacing BSOG claims, which cannot be made for contracted services. Both the BSOG for commercial operators and the grant to ECC are an integral part of the business model for delivering bus services, reducing running costs and affecting the commercial viability of bus services across the county. Indeed, some services that are currently viable would cease to be so if BSOG was no longer provided. ECC will therefore need to look carefully at any proposals to assess their impact.
79. However, the general impacts set out above for the commercial network also influence the contracted network. Some of these effects are more pronounced when looking at ECC supported networks. By their nature these are not commercially viable, and many serve rural areas with low population densities. Many are particularly reliant on concessionary pass holders, whose use has recovered far more slowly than paying passengers. This led to some services failing ECC's Cost Per Passenger Journey (CPPJ) criteria of a maximum unit cost of £5 per passenger. ECC's strategy post covid has been to allow contracted services time to recover and many have done so. However, some services continue to struggle to attract passengers or there have been significant increases in cost that mean they will struggle to deliver value for money for taxpayers. To address these factors the County conducted a contracted network review over 2023/24 which, following a full public consultation led to

some significant changes which came into effect from August 2024. There will be a further review and consultation in 2025.

### **Reliability and availability**

80. ECC's contracted services have faced the same reliability and availability issues as the commercial market, with staff shortages (both industry structural and temporary illness based), congestion and the large number of road works being conducted across Essex, all contributing to sub optimal reliability and punctuality over 2023/24. In a few cases, mobilisation times for operators following contract tenders have also posed a challenge. Overall ECC service reliability closely follows commercial reliability.

81. ECC has worked hard with bus operators to address these issues and throughout 2023/24 many, though not all, of the most pressing (such as structural driver shortages) have been addressed.

However there remain some serious concerns with several services, mainly in rural areas, where contracted operators are for various reason unable to maintain service reliability and as a result there have been some service de-registrations, requiring short notice action to address. This has caused significant disruption to passengers and reduced the opportunity to grow the passenger base significantly. While these issues were addressed by obtaining alternate operators, there was a cost to both passengers (in terms of service quality) and ECC (financially and reputationally) in doing so.

### **Service Rationalisation.**

82. A full review of ECC's contracted services was carried out over 2023/24. This made use of the criteria set out in the Essex Local Bus Service Priority Policy (ELBSPP), which has been include in our bus service improvement plan. The ELBSPP can be found here:

<https://www.essexhighways.org/bus-strategy>. This sets out a protocol for withdrawing services if there is insufficient funding and passenger demand to meet all needs, based on services categories and cost per passenger journey.

As part of the tender review, a full public consultation was undertaken. The outcome of the consultation can be found here: <https://www.travelessex.co.uk/about-bus-services/consultations-supported-services> .

83. These included 161 contracts and were broken down into the following categories:
- 103 successful and well used services, inside our maximum £5.00 cost per passenger Journey (CPPJ) value for money support criterion, with a value of £5.6m per year.
  - 34 services deemed to be 'at risk' but which are above our £5.00 CPPJ value for money support criterion, but which are either new services needing more time to fully develop and/or where passenger recovery suggests that they may in time meet the limit. They have a value of £3.9m per year.
  - A group of 24 services that fail the £5.00 CPPJ the value for money support criterion with a value of £1.1m.

84. Overall, as of July 2024, ECC will support some seven fewer services as a result of the withdrawal of the following services as they were lightly used and failed our value for money criteria.
- 552 Ramsden Heath to Billericay Station, Monday to Friday
  - 256 Basildon/Ramsden Heath to Billericay, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday
  - 84B Colchester to Gt Horkesley/Little Horkesley, Thursday
  - 94 South Woodham to South Woodham, Sunday and Public Holidays
  - 99 Clacton to Walton, Monday to Saturday Evenings
  - 804 Debden to Chigwell, Schooldays
  - C56 Chelmsford to Galleywood, Sunday and Public Holidays
85. This has allowed ECC to confirm the current level of service support until 2026, with a majority of services confirmed to 2028.
86. The financial sustainability of ECC, in common with all local authorities, remains challenging as a result of growing demand for services and market price inflation and there is likely to be increased pressure on continued support for discretionary local bus services at existing funding levels in coming years. This means that external funding, such as that from government through BSIP+ or from developer funding will remain key elements for further service provision. It will also be essential to grow patronage so that the costs of providing services are increasingly met from the revenue provided by fare paying passengers.
87. BSIP+ funding is already scheduled to be used to support the district level enhanced partnership in for Tendring which will help deliver one of our five transformational projects (see Section 5 below).

## **Summary**

88. ECC has maintained and grown its financial and non-financial support for local bus services over a difficult period where falling passenger numbers and poor service reliability has significantly impacted the council's supported bus network and through a period of sustained price rises and increased demand for statutory services across ECC. We have continued to look for alternative sources of funding and taken difficult decisions to manage the costs and risks to the network.
89. Overall this has allowed ECC to stabilise the supported network and give some medium term certainty for continued service provision and connectivity across the network. However, the situation remains fragile and a major proximate outbreak or a recession) along with the continued financial strain on ECC could destabilise it again.

## **Essex Bus Stations and Key Nodes**

90. Bus stations and key interchange nodes in Essex are listed in Appendix B. They have been divided into:
- Major Interchanges (MI) acting as foci for local urban/rural networks, cross Essex inter-urban and long-distance networks, including coach services.

- Local Interchanges (LI), acting as foci for town and Essex inter-urban networks.
- Local Bus Stations (LBS), smaller stations acting largely as foci for the local bus network.

91. Notes on known issues, capacity and facility quality are given in Appendix D

- Major issues with Essex bus stations include:
- Aging infrastructure
- Lack of capacity for existing and forecast services and passenger levels.
- Poor passenger facilities
- Poor location for town centre services and amenities
- Passenger and vehicle access issues.

92. 211. ECC will develop plans to improve these sites through the EP Schemes and has identified a set of preparatory schemes measures (subject to identifying funding) set out in Section 4 Functional Area 4, Larger scale bus priority measures - work proposed for 2025 onwards.

## Connectivity to Key Services and Amenities

93. In June 2024, ECC undertook a connectivity analysis of the bus network in Essex, using the Podaris mapping tool to assess the connectivity (ability to access) key services by public transport.

94. In line with the requirements of the DfT Bus Connectivity Assessment, this looked at connectivity across three different geo-demographic types – Urban, Semi-Urban and Rural, at national census Super-Output Area (SOA) level.

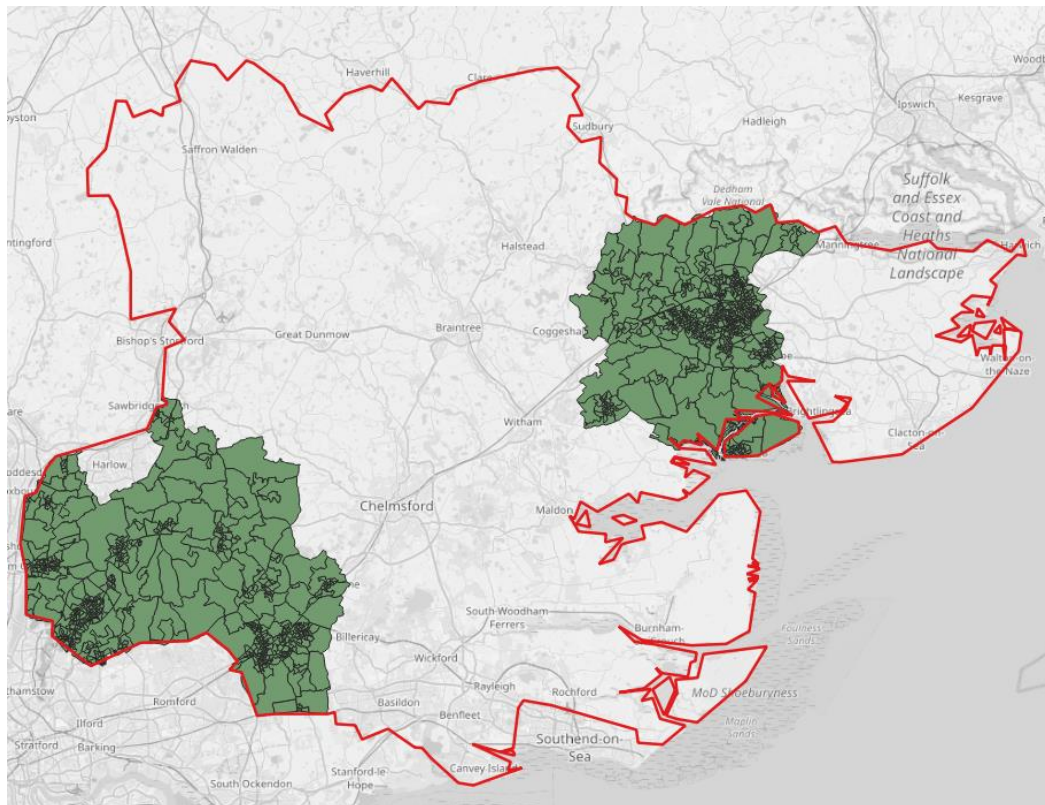
95. The classification of each SOA was as determined as shown in **Table 5** below:

**Table 5 Geo-demographic categorisation of Essex SOA's**

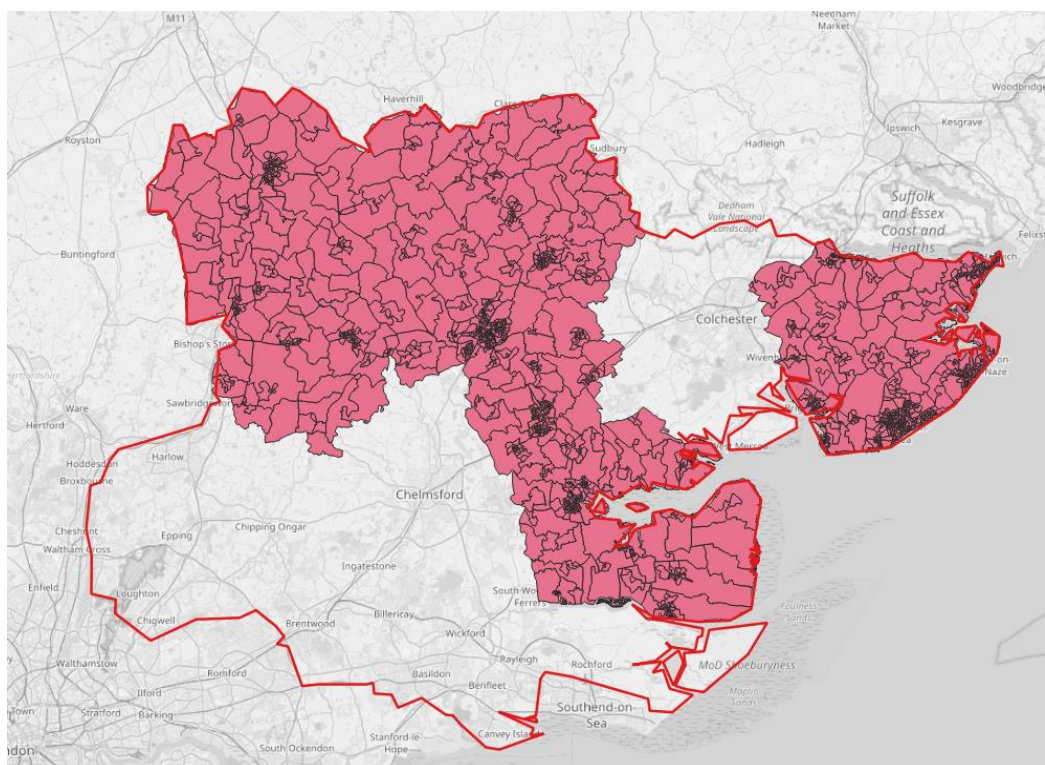
Rural		Semi Urban	Urban		
Predominantly Rural >50% of the residents population lives in rural areas or rural-related hub towns			Predominantly urban >74% of the resident population lives in urban areas		
Mainly rural Population >80% rural including hub towns	Largely rural Population 50 to 79% rural including hub towns	Urban with Significant rural Population 26 to 49% rural including hub towns	Urban with city and Town Population <26% rural including hub towns	Urban with minor conurbation Population <26% rural including hub towns	Urban with major conurbation Population <26% rural including hub towns
Maldon Uttlesford	Braintree Tendring	Brentwood Colchester Epping Forest	Basildon Castle Point Chelmsford Harlow Rochford		

96. From the analysis the Semi Urban, Urban and Rural areas are:

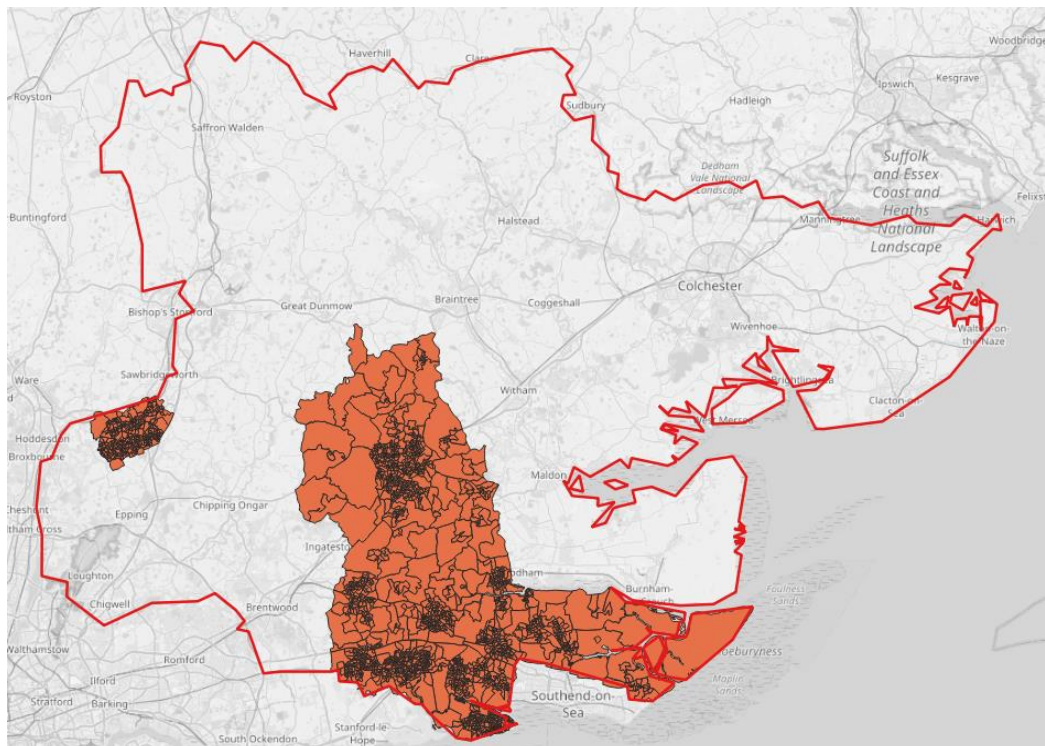
### Figure 8 Semi-Urban Essex



### Figure 9 Rural Essex



**Figure 10 Urban Essex.**



97. The assessment of connectivity considered a range of factors to measure how easily a different type of services and amenities could be accessed over different time and spatial factors. The services included access to Business Parks, Health, Work (employment centres) Education, Retail, Leisure and Transport Interchange nodes. The interaction of these across the temporo-spatial factors are set out on the three tables shown below:

**Table 6 Urban Bus Connectivity In Essex**

Essex LTA BCA Analysis															
Urban															
BCA Ref	Description	Business		Healthcare		Work		Education		Retail		Leisure		Other Transport Modes	
		Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores
B1	Percentage of population within 30min journey time of destination	65.4	7	61.28	7	45.30	5	46.95	5	67.1	7	61.18	7	54.2	6
B2	Number of high frequency bus services to destination, defined as service offering more than 6 buses per hour during peak hours.	5	8	5	8	4	8	2	5	7	10	5	8	3	6
B3	Off-peak service levels to destination, based on the number of buses per hour.	43	10	39	10	36	10	24	10	43	10	39	10	38	10
B4	Journey time per passenger journey to destination, relative to the average bus journey in your LTA area.	19.1	10	19.0	10	27.5	6	16.6	10	17.3	10	18.7	10	23.4	8
B5	Percentage of the population within 500m of a bus stop connecting to the destination.	71.1	8	70.7	8	66.1	7	55.6	6	72.6	8	69.2	7	71.9	8
	FINAL SCORES	Business:	9	Healthcare:	9	Work:	7	Education:	7	Retail:	9	Leisure:	8	Transport:	8

**Table 7 Semi-Urban Bus Connectivity in Essex**

3CA Ref	Description	Semi-Urban													
		Business		Healthcare		Work		Education		Retail		Leisure		Other Transport	
		Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores
B1	Percentage of population within 30min journey time of destination	61.4	7	52.88	6	46.93	5	43.00	5	58.1	6	55.06	6	46.8	5
B2	Number of high frequency bus services to destination, defined as service offering more than 6 buses per hour during peak hours.	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4
B3	Off-peak service levels to destination, based on the number of buses per hour.	30	10	28	10	25	10	17	10	31	10	27	10	27	10
B4	Journey time per passenger journey to destination, relative to the average bus journey in your LTA area.	20.2	10	22.43	8	27.3	6	22.6	8	20.8	10	21.5	10	27.4	6
B5	Percentage of the population within 500m of a bus stop connecting to the destination.	67.8	7	66.9	7	67.1	7	54.0	6	68.2	7	64.34	7	68.3	7
FINAL SCORES		Business:	8	Healthcare:	7	Work:	6	Education:	7	Retail:	7	Leisure:	7	Other Transport:	6

**Table 8 Rural Bus Connectivity in Essex**

3CA Ref	Description	Rural													
		Business		Healthcare		Work		Education		Retail		Leisure		Other Transport	
		Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores	Metrics	Scores
B1	Percentage of population within 30min journey time of destination	44.1	5	32.78	4	27.03	3	21.33	3	38	4	39.36	4	22.5	3
B2	Number of high frequency bus services to destination, defined as service offering more than 6 buses per hour during peak hours.	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2
B3	Off-peak service levels to destination, based on the number of buses per hour.	29	10	27	10	24	10	16	10	29	10	26	10	26	10
B4	Journey time per passenger journey to destination, relative to the average bus journey in your LTA area.	18.6	10	21.6	10	24.1	8	23.7	8	20.3	10	19.3	10	24.6	8
B5	Percentage of the population within 500m of a bus stop connecting to the destination.	49.7	5	48.8	5	48.9	5	38.1	4	50.3	6	49.14	5	49.5	5
FINAL SCORES		Business:	6	Healthcare:	6	Work:	6	Education:	5	Retail:	6	Leisure:	6	Transport:	6

98. The scoring system used to calculate these scores is set out in **Table 9** below and is the system set out by the DfT for its connectivity analysis.

**Table 9 DfT Connectivity Guidance Overview.**

## Guidance Overview

### Rating Metrics - Quantitative

Ref	Description	Score:	1/2	3/4	5/6	7/8	9/10
B1	Percentage of population within 30min journey time of destination		Less than 20% within 30mins	Between 20% and 40% within 30mins	Between 40% and 60% within 30mins	Between 60% and 80% within 30mins	More than 80% within 30mins
B2	Number of high frequency bus services to destination, defined as service offering more than 6 buses per hour during peak hours.		No high frequency services	1 high frequency service	2/3 high frequency services	4/5 high frequency services	More than 5 high frequency services
B3	Off-peak service levels to destination, based on the number of buses per hour.		No off peak services	1 off peak service per hour	2 off peak services per hour	3 off peak services per hour	4 or more off peak services per hour
B4	Journey time per passenger journey to destination, relative to the average bus journey in your LTA area.		Journey time 15mins or higher than average	Journey time 10-15mins higher than average	Journey time 5-10mins higher than average	Journey time less than 5mins above average	Journey time equal to average journey times
B5	Percentage of the population within 500m of a bus stop connecting to the destination.		Less than 20% of population within 500m	20%-40% of population within 500m	40%-60% of population within 500m	60%-80% of population within 500m	More than 80% of population within 500m

## Initial summary of connectivity analysis

99. From the above a number of basic factors are clear;

- Overall connectivity in Essex ranges between poor and good for most services but with significant geographic variations.
- Connectivity is better in urban areas rather than semi-urban and rural areas, with rural areas having the worst connectivity. There is also considerable difference between access to different services.
- Some of these differences can be quite marked. For example, In both urban areas around 61% of people live within 30 minutes of a frequent bus service to a health provider, this falls to 53% in Semi urban areas and to 32% for rural areas.
- Similarly access to high frequency services varies across geographies with rural areas having the worst access and urban areas the best.
- Connectivity is significantly worse across all services in over off-peak times than in the peak.
- Journey time per passenger, is however, fairly consistent, across all geographies and categories with most people having access for a bus stop within 500m that gives them access to a required destination.
- Looking at the overall scoring level, there is a reasonable level of access to all the measured services across all areas, ranging between 6/10 in rural areas to 9 out 10 in urban areas.

100. This type of analysis is relatively new and while it does supply a significant additional data about connectivity by bus across Essex it will take some time to fully understand the implications for future policy direction.

# Section 3 Improvements programme to 2024/25

## BSIP+ Funding project delivery.

### Summary of BSIP Commitments, Funding and Delivery

#### The BSIP strategic approach.

101. As set out on p528 of the original 2021 to 2025 Essex BSIP our strategic approach adopted **6 Functional Areas** for developing better cooperation with bus operators. These are:
1. Transformational change
  2. Delivering innovative service solutions
  3. Transforming Policy
  4. Network reviews (Revised to Developing and Implementing Enhanced Partnerships with bus operators)
  5. Better Information
  6. Customer Experience
102. As noted above, given the completion of the area reviews and the requirement set on LTAs to produce Enhanced Partnership with bus operators, we have subsequently amended Functional Area 4 to cover “**Developing and Implementing Enhanced Partnerships with bus operators**” which was an inherent element in the area review proposals, but makes our commitment to this element more explicit. The Area Reviews can be found on-line here: <https://www.travelsessex.co.uk/about-bus-services/getting-around-in-essex-strategy>.
103. Since 2022, given its limited resources, ECC has focused on developing and delivering four of the **Functional Areas** main themes from its BSIP. These are:
- Continuing to develop six Major Transformational Projects:
  - Delivering its first, countywide Enhanced Bus Partnership with operators. This was a complex task requiring working closely with bus operators and public consultation within a tight legal framework.
  - Developing district based Enhanced Partnerships, based on the Network Reviews, conducted in 2022/23, to identify key infrastructure, connectivity and service requirements and opportunities at a district level and developing these into **District Level Enhanced Partnerships**.
  - Developing new approaches to ECC policy and practice to support the bus network.
104. ECC has also allocated £100,000 of its own resources to fund the provision of small scale bus infrastructure improvements for the EP in 2024/25.

## **BSIP Funding from external sources allocations to 2024/25.**

105. Before looking at the plans for each Functional Area proposed for 2024/25, it is useful to consider how the external funding made available to help achieve the goals has been allocated by ECC. These choices were made based on the priorities set out in the BSIP document.
106. As noted, in common with most local authorities in our region (and nationally), while ECC bid for over £476m of BSIP funding it did not receive any funding through the BSIP in 2021/22. However, ECC did receive a £100,000 allocation in May 2021 and another £776,000 in August 2021 in bus capacity grant funding to help build the authority's capacity to deliver the BSIP and deliver its EP requirements. This was used to fund an Enhanced Partnership Lead to deliver the EP (NB to be clear, because delivery is a long term and ongoing process, this post is a permanent ECC post and not fixed to the length of the Capacity funding), to support commercially withdrawn bus services and to develop some of the EP programmes looked at below.
107. In 2022/23 ECC received an award of £9.8m from the second tranche of BSIP funding (BSIP+) by the DfT, offered in two tranches £4.9m of revenue, for 2023/24 and 2024/25 to improve bus services across the county. This award was contingent on the County Council (in common with other recipients) maintaining their own financial commitment to expenditure on buses (including local bus contract and concessionary fares expenditures) at 2021/22 levels.
108. The BSIP+ funding has been allocated as follows:

**Table 11 Allocation of BSIP+ (BSIP2) funding by Essex County Council.**

<b>Scheme title or intervention</b>	<b>Status</b>		<b>Link to ECC Priorities</b>
Replacement of commercial withdrawals resulting from the end of BRG	In Progress		Ongoing Local Bus Support to maintain connectivity
Extension of Travel Essex App including DigiGo digital demand responsive service	In Progress		Reach Project
Tendering Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme	In Progress		Clacton Connect
Identifying cost effective measures for delivering patronage growth on at risk services	In Progress		Thrive Project
Extension of DigiGo Braintree for 2 years ending 31 March 2026	In Progress		Countywide Enhanced Partnership

**Non-BSIP capital funding from external sources allocated to BSIP and EP scheme commitments.**

109. As detailed in the sections below, ECC has committed capital funding from a range of sources to support its BSIP objectives as shown in **Table 12** below. These include:

**Table 12 Non BSIP capital funding allocated to support the Essex BSIP and EP objectives;**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Amount (£m)</b>
Small Scale Bus Infrastructure projects 2024/25	ECC	0.10
Bus Shelter Transformation Programme Started 2024/5	ECC	2.998
Zebra 2 funding 2024-2026	DfT grant	4.90
Zebra 2 funding 2024-2026	Private Sector	25.80
Total		<b>33.48</b>

## **Progress and Proposed scheme delivery for all 6 functional areas, to 2025.**

### **Functional Area 1 Progress on the Major Transformational Projects.**

#### **What the Transformational Projects are:**

110. In the 2021 BSIP ECC set out proposals and bid for Department for Transport BSIP grant funding to progress five major Transformational Schemes that offer the chance to deliver a step change in the scope and quality of public transport in Essex. In 2022/23 ECC identified a sixth major Transformational Project. These are:

- **The Basildon Volt Project,**
- **The Clacton Connect Project**
- **The Harlow Falcon Project**
- **The Thrive Market Towns Project**
- **The Reach Rural Connectivity Project**
- **The Colchester and Tendring Bus Rapid Transit Scheme (CTBRTS).**

## **Transformational Project progress since 2022/23.**

### **1 The Basildon Volt Project**

111. Basildon Volt is a town centre transformation project that is investing in one of our strongest bus networks to showcase what a gold standard service can look like, delivering a zero emission at roadside public transport network to drive green growth, improve passenger satisfaction to establish a model for other Essex towns.
112. The Basildon Volt project is Essex County Council's highest priority transformational BSIP outcome. Therefore, when in late summer 2023, the DfT announced a new Zero Emission Bus Regional Area 2 (ZEBRA 2) programme to support the introduction of zero emission buses across the UK, ECC made the decision to focus available resources on developing and delivering a bid.
113. ECC then collaborated closely with its chosen commercial partner organisation, First Essex Buses Ltd to develop and submit a bid to the DfT, proposing the conversion of First Essex Buses' entire Basildon town operation and some interurban routes, to battery electric operation. This included the introduction of 55 new battery electric buses (31 single deck buses and 24 double deck buses) and installation of 19 triple headed chargers at the Basildon depot. This had an overall value of c. £30m with £4.9m being asked for as grant funding and £25.8m being funded from commercial resources by First Essex Buses and First group PLC.
114. As part of the agreed bid submission terms, ECC is not responsible for any financial shortfall or overspend from the scheme's implementation, with First Essex Buses and their parent companies agreeing to accept the risk and absorb any shortfall.
115. In March 2024, the DfT announced the success of the Basildon bid, with (following some technical adjustments) a grant of £4.9m being offered. First Essex Buses agreed to meet the shortfall and the County Council accepted the grant offer in April 2024.
116. Since then, ECC and First have been working to agree the details of the grant payment arrangement between them to ensure that public investment is protected and that key project delivery targets are met before payments are made. As of May 2024, this process was broadly on track with an expected operational commencement date for the First's new Basildon Electric bus fleet of November 2025.
117. This represents a significant achievement for the Essex BSIP, which will meet its highest priority transformational project, bring some £30m of private and public investment into the town and which should help guarantee the future of the bus network in Basildon for some years.

### **2 The Clacton Connect Project.**

118. Clacton Connect, is an urban levelling up project, to transform access to education, skills, and jobs for residents. Bringing better connectivity to a coastal community to help residents improve their opportunities. Improving the availability and quality of bus services in a settlement with high levels of deprivation. This will improve bus facilities, priority, and integration across the town, offer better modal interchange, and service information, combined with service branding measures. Operators will invest savings from reduced journey times and reliability to improve the age quality and comfort of the bus fleet, improve

frequencies and times of operation, and offer better value fares and a long-term marketing approach.

119. The adoption of the scheme into the BSIP was instrumental in identifying Tendring District as the target for its first District Based EP Scheme area (see below). To this end work began on identifying core projects for inclusion in the scheme based on the outcome of the Tendring Areas Review and on initial consultation with the bus operators over their ideas and ambitions for the area network.
120. In the event work on the Tendring EP had to be delayed allowing staff resources to be employed to undertake the successful ZEBRA2 bid. This was acceptable because the lack of funding available for major bus schemes (ECC not receiving any initial BSIP funding) and the potential value of the success of the ZEBRA scheme in meeting our primary BSIP transformational goals made applying to Zebra a higher priority.
121. During the intervening period, the County Council received BSIP+ funding from the DfT, of some £9.8m in two tranches of £4.9m between 2023 and 2026, to improve bus services across the county. Of this £2.0m has been allocated from the first tranche to improve bus services through the Tendring partnership and this will be worked up into a 'Clacton Connect Package'.

### **3 The Harlow Falcon Project**

122. Harlow Falcon, is a BRT scheme aimed at improving connectivity between the Harlow and Gilston Garden village and Harlow town centre, running into a newly developed bus station..
123. Given its size and scale at an estimated investment cost of c. £300m (in 2020/21 process) this is the single largest bid in the original BSIP programme and as it requires capital funding for infrastructure (£200m) and revenue funding (£100m), the one on which least progress has been possible.
124. Further information on the progress of this project is set out in Section 4 below.

### **4. The Thrive Project.**

125. **Thrive** is a Market Town viability project. For public transport in Essex one of the major issues is the commercial viability of bus networks in smaller market towns. Many of these services were operating on the edge of commercial viability prior to 2019/20, with a strong reliance on concessionary bus pass users. There is significant risk of these services being withdrawn as government support is phased out.
126. The Thrive project was slowed due to the need to fund the improvements. The availability of BSIP+ funding has allowed ECC to develop a suite of measures to be brought forward.
127. Further information on this project is set out in Section 4 below.

### **5 The Reach Project**

128. The Reach project looks to expand our Digital Transport Service to offer everyone a journey. The reach project contains two elements – continued support for the innovative DigiGo

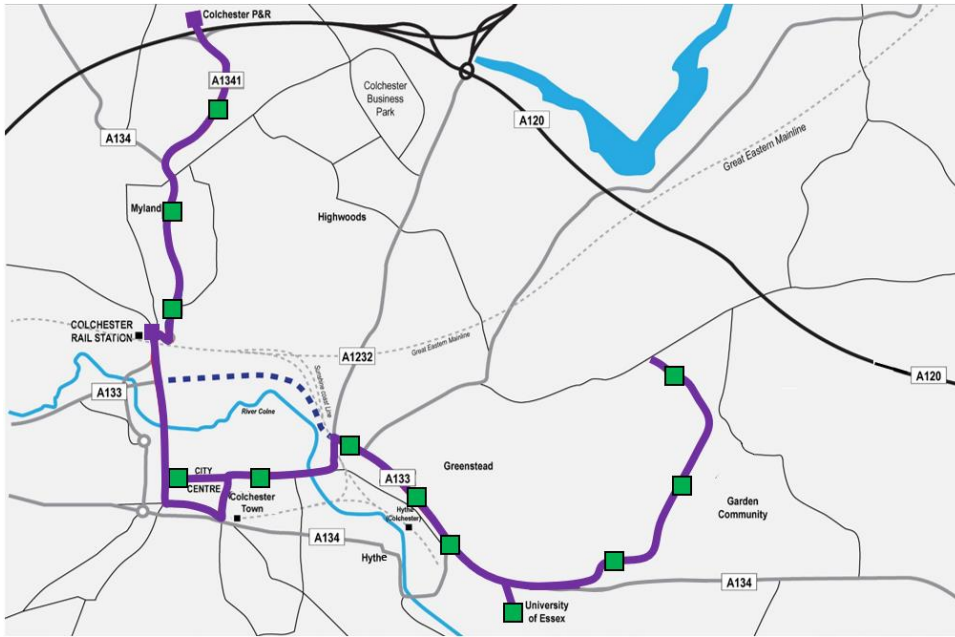
digital DRT project and its supporting digital architecture and the parallel and supporting development of a one stop shop travel app for all bus passengers.

129. Further information on this project is set out in Section 4 below.

## 6 The Colchester and Tendring Bus Rapid Transit Scheme

130. The Colchester and Tendring Bus Rapid Transit Scheme (CTBRTS) project aims to link the proposed new Tendring and Colchester Borders Garden Community and the eastern quadrant of the city with the city centre, the university, the hospital and other key attractors such as the northern Park and Ride site and the city's football club and recreation facilities. Like the Harlow Falcon it will look to include bus priority measures, improved on street infrastructure, integration with other sustainable travel modes, improved information, ultra-low or zero emission vehicles, affordable fares and frequent, high speed cross city journeys, aimed at mitigating the impact of the development and encouraging the use of public transport as the travel mode of choice for journeys along its arc.
131. This major housing development planned immediately to the east of the city of Colchester, crossing the boundary with the neighbouring district of Tendring. This will comprise of some 7,500 dwellings plus commercial space and is intended to follow the sustainability principles for a garden Community. This proposal is currently being reviewed by the Planning Inspectorate.
132. As with the Harlow/Gilston Garden Town development that underlies the Harlow Falcon project outlined above, development of this scale presents transport planners with both risks – from additional generated car traffic, congestion, pollution and network capacity problems, and opportunities, in the form of the funding required to mitigate these impacts on the environment and to meet the proposed community's garden settlement credentials.
133. The proposals for the settlement currently under review have adopted the target of having 50% of generated journeys undertaken by sustainable means (Bus, Cycling and Walking). Although the intention is that cycling and walking to destinations (such as schools and medical facilities) will provide a significant proportion of these journeys, the location next to Colchester (which will make the city a key destination for many services and amenities including employment, health, education and shopping needs) will make the city a major destination and mean that the proposed level of sustainable travel a robust public transport connection is needed.
134. This is intended to be met by a Bus Rapid Transit Scheme, linking the community to the University of Essex, the city centre, the railway station, the General Hospital and allowing connections to the wider transport network. It would run at a 'turn-up and go' frequency, using modern high quality (potentially electric) buses.
135. The service would be expected to move toward commercial viability over the lifetime of the development (economic modelling is currently being undertaken), aided by an extension of the service up to the current Colchester City Park and Ride route to serve additional developments to the north-east of the city. The proposed completed route is shown in the map below. ***Note the details of route and locations of stops have not yet been finalised so the route and stops shown below should be seen as indicative only.***

**Map 1 – The proposed Colchester/Tendring Bus Rapid Transit Service route at full completion.**



136. Some of the preparatory infrastructure work is currently being conducted (along the northern arm of the route, currently used by the Park and Ride Service) making use of a government Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) grant. More details of this grant can be found here: <https://www.essexhighways.org/highway-schemes-and-developments/bids-and-funding/housing-infrastructure-fund>
137. As part of the scheme development its impact of the wider city bus network and the opportunity this offers to revise and improve it will need to be fully explored and agreed with bus operators and offer one potential basis for a Colchester based Enhanced Partnership Scheme.
138. The future of this project beyond the preparatory works is dependent on agreeing developer funding from the Colchester and Tendring Border Garden Community Development, so future progress on this transformational project will be closely tied to the progress of the development, since without external funding ECC cannot afford to implement it.

## Functional Area 2 Delivering Innovative Solutions

139. The Essex BSIP set our intention to look at four sub-areas under this heading. These were:
  - Rural Mobility, focusing on Digital DRT Services.
  - Park and Choose through our park and ride sites.
  - The Stop Swap Go! Bus pilot scheme.
  - The Bus Shelter Transformation Project.

## **Rural Mobility**

140. As set out in our BSIP Essex County Council has commissioned several DRT services in rural Essex, working in partnership with a local operator, over the last 10 years, However a major issue with our DRT experience was identified as their reliance on manual booking via telephone and the need for a significant back-office operation to support this, increasing operating costs.
141. These issues are being addressed through the 'Reach' Transformational project as set out above, essentially an expansion of the system used to manage its innovative DigiGo digital DRT service, funded by a grant of £2.575m from the DfT in 2021 to run until April 2024 and now extended to run until July 2026.
- Over this period DigiGo has demonstrated how to set up and grow a wholly new model for public transport. In 2023/24 c. 41,373 passengers were carried.
142. DigiGo operates a fleet of electric minibuses, which are booked, paid for and tracked digitally through the TravelEssex app in real time. Passengers cover a wide range including school children, older people and pub-goers as well as to older people visiting hospital and those travelling to work.
143. Passengers highly value the service, with a 96% 5-star score from thousands of ratings given after the completion of a journey. This is higher than average satisfaction results for bus services across the industry. Passengers have provided the Council with excellent feedback on the impact of the service. This feedback demonstrates improvements in access to education, employment and social opportunities, including reduced social isolation and reduced car use, aiding a reduction in carbon emissions.
144. DigiGo took up the option to participate in the Government's £2 single fare cap in January 2023. This offered passengers and residents even more affordable public transport in the rural and sub-urban areas served. Following adoption of the £2 fare cap, DigiGo has seen growth in longer journeys being taken since January 2023 and has recently confirmed participation in the extension of the fare cap until 31 December 2024.
145. Given these positive outcomes and impacts, in September 2023 ECC agreed to allocate £1.24m of the £2.4m of BSIP+ funding allocated to the Reach Transformational Project to extend funding for the provision of the DigiGo service for two years with the opportunity to consider extending the service beyond this, subject to a future decision, based on performance during 2024/25 and 2025/26. This approach puts the service on an equal footing with other new local bus services that the Council funds. The service would have up to 4 years to continue growing passenger numbers and income, with the aim to reduce the Cost Per Passenger Journey (CPPJ) to below £5 CPPJ by the end of 2027/28; which it is currently forecast to achieve.

## **Service Provision Devolution**

146. The principle of devolution is that services are best commissioned and delivered close to the communities they serve, so they can reflect the needs of that community, and are as cost effective as possible.

147. As set out in the BSIP ECC is keen to explore this approach to see how we can enable communities, parishes, districts and local groups to lead the commissioning and delivery of their own services.
148. If we can tailor our support more effectively, we can deliver a better value service for passengers, communities, and taxpayers. In our December 2018 Consultation on Evening and Sunday services, ECC also consulted over devolution policy.
149. ECC has therefore been considering how devolution might work in practice. One area where we provide funding that is spent locally is through our support for 13 community transport schemes across Essex. These 'not for profit' third sector organisations provide transport at a local level based on their member's needs, using a mixture of Section 22 and Section 19 operator permits to deliver demand responsive transport to people who are unable for various reasons to access the traditional public transport network.
150. ECC has therefore been engaging with the Essex CT sector to advance a Devolution demonstration project and is currently working with one partner Epping Forest Community Transport (EFCT) to develop proposals for such as scheme.
151. The proposals centre on three routes serving in the Epping Forest District. These are small scale services offering access to particular settlements that would not otherwise have bus connectivity and are currently funded by ECC. They were selected based on their very locally focused service delivery, being close to particular communities and in one case because it was in addition at risk of withdrawal as it was not meeting the County Council's cost per passenger journey criteria. However, the pilot is intending to evaluate whether the services can be made sustainable by a mixture of a longer term funding commitment and local engagement.
- The three services under consideration are:
- Service 211/212
  - Service SB12
  - Dart 7 (SB10/11/13)
152. The current total annual cost of these gross cost contracts is **£60,823 per year** and the pilot scheme would see a reducing but guaranteed funding commitment for three years, with a net 10% reduction in support across that period for a total cost of **£164,830**.
153. The contract will be a net cost contract (meaning EFCT will retain any revenue). To ensure EFCT and the pilot are not unduly impacted by the risk of revenue changing as we move to the new ENCTS scheme for 2024/2025 for the first year of the pilot, ECC committed to make up any shortfall in revenue between the estimated and actual revenue.
154. During this three-year period, EFCT will engage with local parish councils and ECC to promote the services across the district to encourage growth in passenger journeys.
155. ECC will work with EFCT to promote the services to seek passenger increase, which would in turn benefit, ECC, EFCT and the end user.
156. EFCT in return must ensure the current journey frequency is maintained along with reliability and agree to provide monthly data to show how these services are performing.

157. EFCT can consult with Herts County Council to provide journeys outside of Essex for example onto Waltham Cross and beyond.
158. EFCT and ECC will continue to ensure journeys are not duplicated onto other commercial routes, although there will be some common sections of routes.

#### **Park and Choose through our park and ride sites.**

159. In its BSIP, ECC set out its intention to change the use of the P&R sites so that in future the sites will not just provide a bus service into the town or city, they will become Transport Hubs where residents can choose from a range of sustainable options to complete the last part of the journey into urban centres. The aim is to provide bike storage, rental e-scooters, e-bikes, and be supported by safe, dedicated walking and cycle routes. They will target new passenger groups by providing additional shuttle bus services to new destinations, schools, business parks and hospitals.
160. In the event slow passenger recovery and the resultant fall in revenue, lack of funding to develop the necessary infrastructure and lack of staff resources has led to this programme being de prioritised.
161. However, ECC is continuing to collaborate with developers, local authorities and bus operators, along with our sustainable travel colleagues to identify opportunities to develop projects. An example of this is the proposal for a park and choose site to be part of the Bus Rapid Transit proposal for the new Colchester and Tendring Garden Community.

#### **The Stop Swap Go! Bus pilot scheme.**

162. Stop.Swap.GO! (SSG) is a behaviour change campaign that aims to improve the long-term modal shift towards sustainable travel. Working across Essex with local businesses, schools, and health organisations it targets car-users to persuade them to switch to sustainable travel options.
163. This social media campaign uses behavioural science, real stories, incentives, 'gamification,' and other intervention techniques to actively disrupt the way residents travel.
164. Launched in 2019, the impact of the pandemic meant the bus pilots were postponed, but an opportunity to encourage sustainable travel emerged with the Government recovery plan.
165. In July 2020, the council was able to use DfT support to bolster its existing SSG campaign, through the launch of Getting to School (G2S). Aimed at families and young people, G2S delivered targeted messaging across social media encouraging travellers to walk, cycle, scoot or use Park & Ride, with an early focus on the most congested areas. The campaign produced walking and cycling maps, and a 60 Day Challenge which awarded prizes to residents for walking and cycling. The campaigns reached over 1 million users across social media, attracting almost 40,000 hits on their dedicated website within a three-month period.
166. Following this a second phase was intended to be launched to target car drivers and help promote modal shift from car to bus. This would work with four of our leading operators, (First Essex Buses, Stephensons, Arriva, and Go Ahead) and a local healthcare commissioning group, participants to offer two months free travel, as well as travel planning tips, signposting to key apps and aids.
167. In the event limited resources required the County Council to focus its effort in different areas – principally the development of the Travel Essex Digital Platform and the Bus Shelter

Transformation Project set out below. The County Council has not given up on further developments of the Swap, Swap Go! Initiative and intends to pick up this programme when the resources allow.

### **The Bus Shelter Transformation Project.**

168. In its 2021 BSIP ECC set out its intention to work with all districts, borough and city councils in Essex to improve, maintain and future-proof around 1,300 bus shelters across Essex.
169. The project has established a 10-year contract to create a better bus shelter estate, incorporating all maintenance, cleaning, replacement, and supply of shelters. It will be paid for from the generation of income through advertising and deliver a sustainable and quality bus infrastructure network that provides consistency of experience and commercially focussed.
170. The expected benefits, included.
  - A modernisation of the estate to bring shelter provision into the 21st century, improving customer experience for residents, and increase bus patronage.
  - Ability to expand the bus shelter network through commercial income, resulting in residents being more likely to benefit from their use and protection from the weather.
  - A planned cleaning programme offering a better bus stop experience to increase sustainable transport journeys.
  - Estate rationalisation and reduced street clutter, giving an improved street scene environment and improved accessibility.
  - Income leveraged from advertising to replace taxpayer funding with commercial funding.
  - By coordinating all councils' c. 1,300 bus shelters (NB not including town and parish councils) into one contract, good-quality shelters could be efficiently maintained and repaired, with income from advertising invested back into roadside bus infrastructure.
171. The project started in February 2020, however while some progress was made, over 2020/21 there was a major fall in the revenue streams which would have made the project viable. As a result, ECC was forced to delay the project until the revenue stream had stabilised. It also had to work through the unprecedented pressure on local authority finances since 2022. Only once these issues had been resolved was further progress possible.
172. Over 2023/24 ECC was able to progress the project and tender for a single source provider for advertising shelters across the county. Prior to issuing the tender, the Council entered into a Collaboration Agreement (approved the Cabinet) with ten of the twelve districts, city and borough councils (our Local Authority partners) across the County to bring the estate together and create a cohesive and attractive proposition for the market.
173. Under this Collaboration Agreement and together with the arrangements within the new Contract ECC is the Lead Party and will own and manage the contract and becomes the owner of the majority of formerly district council owned shelters in Essex.

174. Partner local authorities will not create or procure similar contracts and only purchase shelters through this Contract. This ensures a larger estate, properly maintained and leveraging the best commercially focussed opportunity from the market.
175. Shelters owned by outgoing suppliers will be removed by the supplier at the end of the contract. ECC Council will invest the necessary upfront capital expenditure to achieve this. This is costed at **£2.998m, identified from ECC's own resources.**
176. A tender for the new shelter provision contract was run over 2023 and a new bus shelter provider **CCUK** was successful. CCUK will maintain all shelters within the Contract on ECC's behalf and install and sell advertising at locations mutually agreed with ECC.
177. All advertising will be in adherence to the Council's Advertising Policy.
178. ECC will receive a minimum guaranteed income and a profit-share from the advertising under the Contract, the latter income being split between the Council and CCUK.
179. The net income generated will be ring-fenced and used to repay ECCs initial investment and then for the benefit of Shelters and the Bus Infrastructure Network.
180. During the Implementation Period (Year 1 of the Contract), there will be a programme of works that will ensure that outgoing supplier shelters are replaced, priority upgrades to enable income generation to occur and key locations that have had a request for a shelter on hold fulfilled. Details of the programme will be publicised once the Contract commences.
181. Beyond the Implementation Period, the income generated by the Contract will be used to replace, maintain, upgrade or install new bus roadside infrastructure. The process for requesting shelters and how the spending of income will be prioritised, has been agreed, and will be communicated with relevant parties as part of mobilisation.
182. In addition, there will be a route for Parish Councils, Developers and others to purchase shelters through the Contract that ensure a consistent bus shelter estate across the County.
183. Key benefits for users of the bus shelters the Council expects are:
- Improved more consistent look and feel to the bus shelter estate; through a standard specification as sites are replaced.
  - Increased shelter provision across the County; by generating income to fund future purchases and refurbishing, where possible, replaced shelters for use at current bus stops without shelter provision.
  - An excellent user experience, including key areas such as accessibility, by having a consistent and standard specification.
184. The districts not currently covered by the new contract will be invited to join the Countywide Scheme as their current arrangements expire.
185. The new advertising shelter contract is major step forward for improving roadside bus infrastructure in Essex and is a major achievement in the face of external factors that have delayed delivery of the scheme well beyond what might have been expected at its inception.
186. Details can be found here: <https://www.travelessex.co.uk/about-timetables-maps/essex-bus-shelters>

### Functional Area 3 Transforming Policy.

187. In its 2022 BSIP ECC set out its ambitions to review a range of its own policies that impact the way bus services are run, operated and perform across the highway network and the priorities given to the different modes of transport that make use of it.
188. The historical pressures referred to above has led to priority being given to moving vehicles around the network. The principal transportation policy tool for the County Council is the Local Transport Plan

#### The Current Essex Local Transport Plan

189. Bus Back Better requires the BSIP to be reflected in the authority's Local Transport Plan (LTP).
190. Currently this requirement is addressed by the Essex Transport Strategy, adopted by ECC in 2011 (as updated). This is ECC's third Local Transport Plan, it promotes bus and other sustainable travel modes and included the Essex Passenger Transport Strategy 2011 (now superseded by our original BSIP) as a 'daughter document'. The 2011 strategy was itself superseded by our 2016 Bus Strategy and Local Bus Service Support Policy and then these in turn by our BSIP, which included elements of both.
191. Given this background while it does include policies for the promotion of safe, integrated, efficient passenger transport facilities and services to, from and within their area aimed at meeting the needs of people living or working in the authority's area, visiting, or travelling through Essex, the current LTP document does not fully reflect the principles of either Bus Back Better or the aims as set out in Essex BSIP.
192. Our approach to developing the Essex LTP 4 is set out in **Section 3 Functional Area 3** below.

#### Other Policy Approaches.

193. These include a range of issues for both highways and bus support policy. Areas where ECC has been able to progress policy changes include:
- The priority given to bus infrastructure in ECC Highways and Transportation investment strategy, and ringfencing an agreed annual sum for bus related infrastructure and improvements.
    - i. As noted above, ECC has agreed a budget of £100,000 ringfenced for small scale bus infrastructure improvements for 2024/25 and passenger transport infrastructure projects have been added to the main Highways and Transportation capital project design processes to open up the opportunity for further funding as part of the internal bidding process.
  - Agree a revised policy on the scale, range and use of developer funding from major housing, business, and commercial developments, to more clearly and consistently set out what developers can expect to provide through S106, CIL or any replacement funding system and strengthen advice to local planning authorities.
    - i. ECC has commissioned its term consultants Ringway Jacobs (though Jacobs) to undertake a review of LTA developer funding approaches policy across England, identify best practice and develop proposals for a revised ECC policy.

- Review and revise processes for dealing with the impact of roadworks on bus operations, requiring sufficient advance notice of and consultation over measures to minimise their impact on bus services.
  - i. ECC has introduced a revised process to dealing with the impact of roadworks. This involves committing additional officer resources to manage the routes, funded by a bus stop closure charge.
  - ii. The Highways Permit application process has therefore been altered so that if a road closure impacts a bus service the closer must contact the Integrated Passenger Transport Unit (IPTU) to agree with them how bus services are managed during the closure.
  - iii. Notes on what the road closer needs to consider are provided online ( see below) and ECC's team will work closely with road closers to develop responses where major and/or long term impacts are expected.
  - iv. There is also a fee payable for each instance affecting a bus stop (one fee per closure) to cover the cost of the management of the road closure. ECC Highways also must pay into the scheme through an agreed internal reimbursement mechanism.
  - v. More information on how the new scheme operates can be found here: <https://www.essexhighways.org/road-closures-making-good-provision-for-bus-services>
- Revising our transport modelling tools to ensure we have a better understanding of bus travel.
  - i. In 2023 the IPTU adopted the 'Podaris' transport network modelling tool to improve its ability to understand and model the Essex public and sustainable travel networks. Podaris enables the simultaneous modelling of multiple transport modes, including bus, rail, DRT, active travel infrastructure, personal rapid transit, and more. Each transport layer inherits both the physical and operational aspects of their respective types of infrastructure, ensuring accurate right-of-way and travel-time calculations.
  - ii. Sophisticated parametric modelling accurately creates velocity profiles for each network which can be used for travel time and isochrone (time to destination mapping) calculations.
  - iii. Several team members have received training in Podaris use and superusers have been identified to help other team members make further use of it.
  - iv. An example of how it will be used is to help ECC complete the DfT's Bus Connectivity Survey by reporting on how accessible a range of services and amenities such as health employment, education are by bus.
  - v. ECC has also volunteered to take part in the pilot scheme for the DfT's own connectivity tool, being beta tested over 2024 and which aims to allow the connectivity for residents of both existing and new developments to be measured,

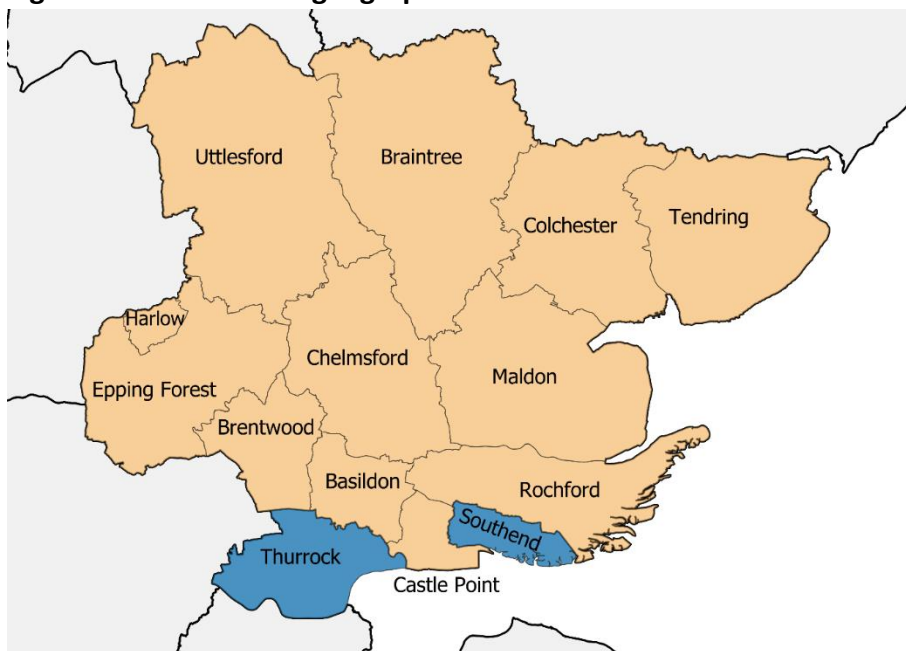
the impact of accessibility for proposed improvements to be assessed and used to inform both strategic and transportation planning.

## Functional Area 4 - Developing and Implementing Enhanced Partnerships.

### The Essex Approach to Developing Enhanced Partnerships with Bus Operators

194. In its original BSIP, ECC set out its intention to follow the Enhanced Partnership (EP) route for developing the bus network in Essex and that it would pursue a dual strategy of agreeing single countywide EP to cover strategic objectives and then use the area review process set out in the original BSIP to design a series of district based reviews, which would focus on local measures to improve bus services.
195. Following a significant period of negotiation and discussion, ECC and the Commercial bus operators in Essex agreed a final form for the Countywide Enhanced partnership for 2022 to 2027, that was duly published in March 2022.
196. This is the area covered by the countywide EP, it is contiguous with that of BSIP and does not cover the Southend or Thurrock Unitary Authorities (shown in blue – but also see the ‘TravelEssex’ brand below):

**Figure 12 The Essex EP geographic area.**



197. The EP Plan set out how the BSIP objectives would be linked to the EP, this is set out in **Table 12** below:

**Table 12: How the Essex EP links to ECC’s BSIP Objectives**

<i>BSIP Objectives</i>	<i>EP Approach</i>
1. Rebuilding the Essex bus network to recover from the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic	To improve customer information and make bus travel more accessible and attractive. To develop a clear Essex identity for bus travel To develop a single portal for information and advice.
2. Developing an attractive, sustainable, affordable, bus network offering a realistic	To invest in schemes that deliver bus network and service improvements. To seek funding for transformational projects, delivering a step change in service delivery and a zero carbon fleet; to provide better access to jobs, training and

alternative to car use for as many people as possible.	education; to provide a high quality rapid transit service; to rejuvenate market town services; and to offer digital demand responsive services to those who currently have no access to services. To make improvements to ticketing.
3. Reversing the long term decline in passengers both in absolute terms and as a modal share of all journeys	To undertake twelve wholesale reviews of the commercial and supported network on a district geography basis and identify opportunities for improvement. To include in those reviews the network (e.g. routes and service frequencies); the supporting infrastructure (e.g. bus priority); ticketing and vehicle standards
4. Improving public health and helping address climate change by reducing carbon emissions and pollutants such as particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, ozone and sulphur dioxide produced by people travelling to and around Essex.	To identify opportunities for improved vehicle technology and modal shift

198. It also identified the following barriers to improving and increasing bus travel as set out in **Table 13** below:

**Table 13: Barriers to using buses identified by ECC residents.**

<p><b>Planning a journey</b></p> <p>Unfamiliarity and effort of planning a bus journey for the first time – finding, understanding and working out door-to-door journey times, bus routes, timetables, tickets, payment, etc. adds cognitive load.</p> <p>Hassle of timekeeping and getting up earlier to factor in walking time + waiting time + journey time.</p> <p>Unaware of journey planning aids such as mobile bus journey planning apps, bus stop search, walking routes, live bus times, next bus, m-tickets, contactless payment</p>
<p><b>Accessibility and experience at bus stop</b></p> <p>Lack of easily understandable and real-time information at bus stops – adds anxiety and stress of not knowing if the bus will arrive on time.</p> <p>Confusion about bus numbers and finding the right stop/stand.</p> <p>Unaware of journey planning apps with live maps, times, next bus, etc.</p> <p>Unreliable arrival times and lost times waiting with the risk of being late and sense of not being “in control.”</p> <p>Uncomfortable experiences at bus stops with no seating, shelter and lighting, particularly when waiting in the cold, rain and dark.</p> <p>Worries about personal safety and security on walking routes and at bus stops – heightened at night-time and for younger women.</p> <p>All amplified when compared with the “home comforts” and convenience of commuting by car</p>
<p><b>Bus Journey Experience</b></p> <p>Uncertainty and variability of journey times makes commuting by bus a stressful and emotionally effortful experience – car commuters crave certainty and control.</p> <p>Time is of the essence – being late for work/study despite getting up earlier compounds the perceived loss of switching from car to bus.</p> <p>Overcrowding at peak times and lack of available seats makes for a tiring and off-putting experience, particularly on school routes.</p>

Lack of information inside the bus - not knowing the next bus stop and when to get off adds to the uncertainty for car commuters trialling bus for the first time

199. To help address the factors, the EP Scheme (the legally enforceable part of the EP) set out a series of commitments from ECC and the commercial bus operators. The Countywide EP adopted a set of achievable yet challenging measures that could be applied across the County at a relatively low cost to both ECC and the operators, given the absence of BSIP funding. The commitments undertaken by Essex County Council are set out in **Tables 14 and 15** below:

**Table 14: ECC Maintenance of Pre Existing infrastructure EP Obligation.**

Facility	Responsibility	Action	Delivery date	Target met
Maintain a set of pre-existing facilities as set out in Annex A to the Essex Enhanced partnership. See Annex A to the EP Plan and Scheme here: <a href="https://www.essexhighways.org/getting-around/bus/bus-strategy">https://www.essexhighways.org/getting-around/bus/bus-strategy</a>	Essex County Council	The continued provision and maintenance of the bus facilities and infrastructure listed in Annex A to the EP	From April 2023 ongoing	Met: ECC continues to provide and maintain the facilities named.

**Table 15: Essex County Council Obligations under the Enhanced Partnership.**

Measure	Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date	Target Progress
A set of proposals to start to deliver Essex's Bus Service Improvement Plan	Essex County Council	ECC in partnership with operators to develop the five transformation proposals set out in part two of the investment strategy in the Bus Service Improvement Plan. ECC to seek investment from DfT. Delivery is dependent on funding from DfT.	Ongoing	Met -Progress on the 5 transformation projects is dependent on external funding and have progressed as far as possible given time and funding available. 6th Transformational project added.
Improvements to customer information and the accessibility and attractiveness of bus travel	Essex County Council	To develop a single Essex brand for the bus network and to use it on ECC digital and physical assets	July 2022	Met - buses in Essex currently carry the TravelEssex brand mark
		To develop a single branded website /portal which includes links to bus information, journey planning tools, maps, bus stop information	October 2022	Met late. Delay was incurred due to technical issues, but single information web site launched October 2023 with agreement from partners. Section 5 Area 1 project 5 above for progress -
		To develop and launch a joint marketing campaign with operators	October 2022	Met, albeit later than hoped. An ongoing marketing group has been established and a campaign to support bus use using social media advertising is underway. See below for details...
To progress improvements to the supported local bus network in Essex	Essex County Council	Develop proposals relating to the supported bus network in Uttlesford. These proposals will need to	July 2022	Met: New Uttlesford services introduced with S016 funding in on time July 2023.

Measure	Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date	Target Progress
		be subject to consultation.		
A wholesale review of the commercial and supported networks, including ticketing and fares and vehicle standards.	Essex County Council	The diversity of the Essex networks means that not all the following will be applicable, however the reviews will consider the following and propose district level plans:	December 2022	Met: 12 area network reviews were completed on time in 2022 and are being used to shape the proposed area based Enhanced Partnerships
Sub-Objectives		Simple flat or zonal fares within towns and cities	December 2022	
		Bus priority measures	December 2022	
		Control of roadworks	December 2022	
		Bus lanes on roads with space where there are frequent bus services and congestion	December 2022	
		Traffic signal priority	December 2022	
		Bus gates	December 2022	
		Signage	December 2022	
		Sustainable travel corridors	December 2022	
		Bus stations	December 2022	
		Park and Ride	December 2022	
		Turn up and go services on urban routes, running at frequencies at which no timetable is required, plus evening/Sunday provision		
		Solutions for rural areas		
		Hub models		
		Linkage to railway stations, schools, health, social care and employment, isolated housing, out of town industrial estates, factories, estates		
		Hub and spoke and feeder service models		
		Route simplification		
		Demand responsive models		
		Options for improving punctuality and reliability		
		Setting daytime, evening and Sunday service levels		
		Consistency of routes into evenings and weekends		
		Vehicle standards		
		Fully meeting latest accessibility standards		

Measure	Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date	Target Progress
		Provision of visible and audible information		
		Wi-fi and charging on key routes		
		Parking provision		

200. The concomitant obligations to be undertaken by the commercial bus operators and a summary of their outcomes is shown in **Table 16** below:

**Table 16: Obligations Undertaken by Commercial Bus Operators.**

Measures	Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date	Outcome
To improve customer information and make bus travel more accessible and attractive	Operators	To engage with the development of the single Essex brand	July 2022	Met. New Essex 'TravelEssex brand mark adopted
	Operators	To use the brand on digital and physical assets (e.g. buses) in a light touch way e.g. vinyls not wholesale re-livery and at a suitable and agreed scale	April 2023	Met - buses in Essex currently carry the TravelEssex brand mark
	Operators	To provide suitable material and links as agreed to populate the Essex information portal	October 2022	Completion was delayed due to technical issues, but operators have now provided as of April 2024
	Operators	To develop and launch a joint marketing campaign with ECC	October 2022	Met - See outcome for ECC obligation above.
	Operators	To develop and implement a Bus Passenger Charter	July 2022	Met. Essex Bus Passenger Charter issued. This is available online through bus operators websites. An example can be found here: <a href="https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/herts-and-essex/essex-bus-passenger-charter">https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/herts-and-essex/essex-bus-passenger-charter</a>
	Operators	To agree a set of common network/timetable/registration change dates per year. Where cross boundary services also form most services in a neighbouring local transport authority the aim would be to align these common dates. Where a neighbouring local transport authority has differing common dates exceptions would be made for cross boundary services if necessary although alignment would be preferred.	July 2022	Met. Seven fixed dates ( with allowances for emergencies and unavoidable short notice registrations have been agreed for each year. For 2024 dates are as follows: Sunday 31 December 2023, Sunday 25 February 2024, Sunday 14 April 2024, Sunday 02 June 2024, Sunday 28 July 2024, Sunday 01 September 2024, Sunday 27 October 2024.
	Operators	When making registration changes to use a common name for bus stops ensuring the ECC database reflects that name and any naming conflict between the two is resolved	Ongoing	Largely met. This is an ongoing process, but all operators have agreed to use the BODs names for new registrations.
	Operators	To remove duplicate numbering on any services that run in the same district	October 2022	Met. Duplicate numbering in the same geographic location has now been ended.
To work jointly with ECC on the network, ticketing and vehicle standards review	Operators	To work jointly on the network reviews as set out in the authority obligations summary in section above	December 2022	Met. Operators co-operate closely with ECC over area reviews.
To make improvements to ticketing options and information	Operators	To make All Essex Saver and All Essex Sunday Saver readily available on all ticketing platforms and to publicise the	July 2022	Met . Essex Saver and Sunday Saver ticket offers are now available via Phone App from all Essex based

Measures	Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date	Outcome
		ticket (with a review of operation and apportionment by July 2023)		operators and information can be found on their websites.
	Operators	To standardise the child fare at 16 years as of 31 August in a year (to allow older year 11s to qualify) where a separate child fare is charged	July 2022	Met: All Essex operators now offer concession fares (where available for that service) to people under the age of 16.
Reinvesting in an improved network	Operators	Where highway network changes are made that result in resource savings because of faster journey times operators will reinvest a proportion of the benefits in more frequent services, or new buses, or other improvements of mutually agreed value in conjunction with local network reviews	Ongoing	Partially Met. In principle, all Essex bus operators have signed agreed to this approach. However, in practice the scale of measures undertaken (with no BSIP funding being offered by DfT) have not been sufficiently large to produce have a significant impact on Essex bus operations.
Introducing cleaner vehicles	Operators	All new buses are built to a minimum Euro VI emission standard. Where brand new vehicles are introduced within the County, their allocation will be cognisant of local air quality concerns as one of the factors considered within the operator's business case.	Ongoing	Met. All new buses introduced or local bus operators in Essex have met the Euro VI criterion. Over the next 2 years the Zebra 2 bid success means that new buses in Basildon will be electric.

## Headline Achievements of the Essex Enhanced Partnership.

### Completing the 12 area reviews and choosing the First District level EP.

201. As part of the BSIP, ECC commissioned twelve wholesale reviews of the commercial and supported network on a district geography basis to identify opportunities for improvement. These reviews included discussions with the local district, bus operators and consultations with residents. Each network review sets out:

- An overview of local characteristics, including geography, demographics and an overview of the local transport network and policies
- An overview of the current bus network, with consultation responses and an overview of the existing infrastructure
- Network usage figures.
- The current operation of the network, including operational hours.
- Public transport interchanges
- An assessment of the existing bus network, including journey time and corridor analysis
- Identified issues and opportunities for improving the bus network.
- Developing an aspirational future bus network, with proposed future interchanges and proposals including new routes and infrastructure

202. The full area reviews can be found here: <https://www.essexhighways.org/getting-around/bus/bus-strategy>

203. Using the area reviews as a basis, ECC officers undertook a Strength/ Weakness/ Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis to help determine which district is the

potentially most promising to pick up as the first area of a localised EP. ECC has actively engaged with bus operators regarding the location of the next District-level EP.

204. The analysis identified four Districts which mix opportunities for improvement, socio-economic need and potential operator involvement. These four were:
- Tendring,
  - Maldon,
  - Chelmsford, and
  - Rochford.
205. Having considered the various factors involved this analysis suggested that the best overall opportunity was Tendring District.
206. This was based on a balance of operator interest, changes in the network including long term weaknesses potential socio- economic benefits for one of the most deprived areas not only in Essex but nationally and potential development opportunities, (including the proposed Freeport/Bathside Bay development, large scale housing development on the Colchester boundary ( linked to a potential Bus Rapid Transit Scheme) and opportunities for developing Demand Responsive Transport.
207. As a result of this process, ECC was then able to allocate £2m of the new BSIP+ funding to developing the Tendring EP.

#### **Providing Improved Bus Infrastructure Delivery.**

208. Despite not receiving BSIP1 funding, Essex has continued to provide support to improve bus infrastructure in line with the Enhanced Partnership Scheme's principles by undertaking a programme of minor works aimed at producing incremental improvements to the bus network at a local level and by identifying larger infrastructure projects and undertaking feasibility studies and early planning for scheme to be undertaken once funding has been identified. Some of this is linked to S106 funding from developers.
209. These schemes were identified in consultation with bus operators and were conducted by Essex Highways.
210. The smaller scale schemes completed Schemes are set out in Error! Reference source not found. 17 below:

**Table 17: – Completed Small Scale Bus Infrastructure Schemes 2022 to 2025.**

Scheme Number	Location	Issue	Intervention
1	Barnston, Chelmsford Road	Buses find angle of approach difficult	Kerbing works to improve bus swept path
2	Basildon, Endeavour Drive	Car parking hinders bus access.	Circa 350m of parking restrictions introduced
3	Boxted, Straight Road	No marked bus stops in village.	4 new DDA accessible marked bus stop pairs installed.
4	Braintree, London Rd / Claire Rd Bus Stop	Cars park across stop	New bus stop cage and parking restrictions installed
5	Braintree, Manor Street Bus Stop	Poor bus stop layout and no DDA kerbing	Infrastructure replaced and DDA kerb programmed
6	Braintree, Victoria Street	Car parking hindered bus egress from bus station	Revised parking restrictions introduced
7	Brentwood, Kings Road	Extended length of car parking bays hindered northbound bus access	Parking bays halved, improving northbound bus access

Scheme Number	Location	Issue	Intervention
8	Brightlingsea, Hurst Green	Bus access hindered by car parking	New bus cage installed
9	Brightlingsea, Regent Road	Bus access hindered by car parking	New bus cage installed
10	Canvey, Leigh Beck	Cars parking around bus turning point hindered bus movement	Parking restrictions installed all around turning point to facilitate bus access
11	Chelmsford, New London Rd / Parkway	Cars wait across 'Keep Clear' box, hindering bus access from side road	Yellow box junction markings installed
12	Chelmsford, Wood Street Roundabout	Lane markings on roundabout confuse motorists and delay bus services	Roundabout markings altered to make through paths clearer for all users
13	Clacton, Skelmersdale Road	Cars park across 2 bus stops	2 new bus cages installed
14	Colchester, Harwich Rd	Bus access through double mini roundabout difficult - hindering reliability	Junction rebuilt to include single larger roundabout to improve throughflow
15	Colchester, Head Street	Insufficient bus boarding capacity for number of services	Extended run of DDA height kerbing installed
16	Colchester, Ipswich Road	Bus access through double mini roundabout difficult - hindering reliability	Junction rebuilt to include single larger roundabout to improve throughflow
17	Colchester, St John Street	Cars using unenforced bus gate	ANPR cameras installed for enforcement
18	Great Baddow, Foxholes Road	Resident car parking hindered bus access	Parking restrictions installed
19	Great Baddow, Maltings Road	Resident car parking hindered bus access	Parking restrictions installed
20	Great Chesterford, High Street	Car parking hindered bus access	Parking restrictions installed
21	Hadleigh, London Rd, Victoria House Corner	Roundabout lane markings unsupportive of bus movements	Roundabout markings altered to make through paths clearer for all users
22	Halstead, High Street	Bus stop too small / cars park in bus cage	Bus cage extended and parking removed
23	Halstead, Trinity Gardens	Car parking hinders bus access due to pinch-point	Parking restrictions installed
24	Harlow, Tracyes Road	Bus access through area difficult due to indiscriminate parking	Red Route installed
25	Maldon, Mill Rd/High Street	Bus gate being abused by general traffic	ANPR cameras installed for enforcement
26	Maldon, Milton Road	Cars park across bus stop	Bus cage and parking restrictions installed
27	Pilgrims Hatch, Elizabeth Road	Resident car parking hindered bus access	Bus stop cages, junction protection markings and parking restrictions implemented
28	Stroud Green, Aviation Way	Bus access between 2 adjacent employment areas needed for buses	Bus gate implemented
29	Thorpe-le-Soken, Landermere Road	Bus stop required at Tendring Technical College	Bus stop pair installed
30	Waltham Abbey, Broomstickhall Road	Resident car parking hindered bus access	Parking restrictions implemented
31	Wivenhoe, High Street	Southbound bus access is difficult due to extended run of car parking.	23m pull in area within parking run provided to ease bus through access

211. While these schemes may appear relatively small scale, each has made a definite contribution to enabling bus operators delivering services for the public on the routes they affect and helped to improve the reliability and accessibility of services. Other similar schemes are planned for 2023/24.

### Improving Bus Services Review of Bus Services in Uttlesford

212. As set out in our EP one of our initial goals was to improve bus services in the very rural district of Uttlesford in the north-west of Essex, using funding obtained from developers to mitigate the impact of their developments on the road network.

213. As a very rural area, the bus network in Uttlesford, setting aside the main interurban routes from Braintree to Stansted Airport/Bishop's Stortford and Chelmsford and a small commercial school bus network around Saffron Walden, have long been provided under contract to ECC as they are not economically viable.

214. Over a long period of time as pressure on local government funding has increased and services have lost passengers, the network has reduced, largely in terms of frequency and spread across the day. This created a spiral of decline.
215. However, despite its rural nature Uttlesford has been the site of significant levels of development and in close co-operation with Uttlesford District Council, ECC obtained sufficient developer funding to improve bus services around the area.
216. The approach adopted was to combine the ECC funding for a range of existing services with the S106 funding to develop enhanced routes that both directly met the S106 requirement to mitigate the site impacts and improved service.
217. The services improved in this was were :
1. Service 305 – Bishops Stortford to Stansted Airport
  2. Service 315 – Bishops Stortford to Great Hallingbury
  3. Service 325 – Bishop’s Stortford to Little Hallingbury
  4. Services 316/318 – Stansted Airport to Saffron Walden
  5. Services 319/320/321 – Newport/Audley End to Haverhill
  6. Service 301 – Bishop’s Stortford to Saffron Walden
  7. Service 322/323/324 Bishops Stortford - Great Dunmow/Stebbing/Lindsell
  8. Service 313/314 Great Dunmow - Saffron Walden
218. The improvements introduced by these services included:
1. Consistent routing on each trip, all service 305 journeys to operate via Essex & Herts Hospital, increased to hourly frequency with an earlier and later journey into Bishops Stortford, and connecting several currently unserved communities, plus earlier and later journey in each direction, on 301/316/318 operating via Saffron Walden County High School.
  2. Services 319 to 321 increased to operate Monday to Saturday with between an hourly or two hourly service, improved Saturday and commuter journeys to Audley End, Saffron Walden, and Haverhill
  3. Minor rerouting of 301 in Saffron Walden to serve new housing development, with consistent departure times, earlier and later journey to/from Bishop’s Stortford and Saffron Walden County High School.
  4. Route 313/314 increased to provide an hourly service Monday to Saturday between Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden, operating 2 hourly.
  5. Routes 315/325 provide new 2 hourly service to previously unserved parishes.
  6. Routes 322-4 provide new hourly service between Great Dunmow and Bishops Stortford , with additional Great Dunmow Town service trips and Stebbing and Lindsell (Tuesday only).

## Functional Area 5 Better Information

### Development of the TravelEssex Brand.

219. Findings from Essex County Council's own behavioural change analysis show that the cognitive load required to switch from car to bus is high and access to information was a major factor. A clear bus identity for Essex was determined to be the first step to improving the information and this has been completed.
220. In 2022 a brand name for bus services in Essex '*TravelEssex*' was adopted through the Enhanced Partnership with the bus operators. Following a survey based public consultation the brand image shown in Figure 1 below was chosen:



Figure 1 - Travel Essex Logo

221. This single brand identity for the Essex bus network was introduced on all buses running in Essex (with the exceptions of some services run by Transport for London) which now display a small window placed vinyl.
222. Roadside infrastructure is also being updated to carry the logo as shown in Figure 2 below over a 5 year roll out programme:



Figure 2 - Bus Stop Flag with the new Travel Essex Logo

It has also been added to all roadside printed timetables and features on our website, Travel Application and other publicity materials.

### **The ECC Travel Planning Application.**

223. As part of its EP approach to making information about bus services and sustainable modes in general more easily accessible to the public, in 2023/4 Essex County Council has developed a bespoke, multi-modal, journey planning application that allows you to search for sustainable travel options throughout Essex in a single location.
224. You can plan journeys by walking, cycling and public transport, including train, bus and DigiGo. (our Digital Demand Responsive Transport Service using electric minibuses) TravelEssex Journey planning app.
225. This has proved successful as demonstrated by the use analytic set out data below:
- Total number of users – 68,490
  - Average number of monthly active users – 7,284
226. ECC has also continued to develop its TravelEssex Information Portal. This user-friendly webpage acts as a front end, bringing together data that is stored at different physical locations and on servers distributed across Essex's diverse Operator and Central/Local government information sites. An ongoing part of the project is the introduction of a secure data transfer area, specifically designed to improve security and speed of communication between ECC operational teams and transport service suppliers, particularly for sensitive data required for education and social care transport while reducing officer time spent sending information manually.
227. This has attracted considerable attention, with the use analytic data set out below:
- Total number of views since launch – 320,000
  - Number of views in the last recorded month – 44,000
  - Average engagement time – 1minute 12 seconds
228. You can sign up to the Essex bus map via the ECC TravelEssex portal site here: <https://www.travelessex.co.uk/> or via commercial bus operator websites.

### **The ECC led Bus Marketing Campaign**

229. As part of their EP commitment, ECC and Bus Operators agreed to co-operate to develop a joint marketing scheme to promote bus use. Several actions were taken to help deliver this. These included:
- ECC used part of the £876,000 enabling grant from the DfT to employ a full time marketings specialist role focused on supporting the promoting the bus network.
  - The establishment of a joint marketing group, comprising representatives from commercial bus operators marketing specialists and ECC's own in house team to develop marketing proposals and ideas for Essex.

- A paid social media campaign – promoting bus the £2 single fare part of which can be seen here: <https://www.travelessex.co.uk/news/two-pounds-single-fare-extension>
- A Joint marketing campaign with SERP regarding drink driving whilst the Euro 2024 is on. Campaign was live from the 14th of June 2024. Campaign includes a video with David James and Joe Thomas which were shared on social media. A range of posters was placed on real time display screens across Essex encouraging people to download the TravelEssex and or arrange alternative modes of Transport to get home. See here: <https://www.travelessex.co.uk/news/stars-align-to-give-drink-driving-the-red-card-in-essex>
- As noted above showcasing the importance of the Essex bus driver.

### **TravelEssex Information Assets Performance overview**

230. There has been encouraging use of the ECC TravelEssex Assets which are set out below:

- TravelEssex Journey planning app
  - Total number of users – 68,490
  - Average number of monthly active users – 7,284
- TravelEssex website
  - Total number of views since launch – 320,000
  - Number of views in the last recorded month – 44,000
  - Average engagement time – 1minute 12 seconds
  - Highest performing webpages
    1. Homepage
    2. Older or Disabled persons bus pass
    3. Chelmer valley park and ride

231. These use figure suggest that there is a need for such a single point of information and that its use is likely to grow over the coming years.

## **Functional Area 6 Customer Experience.**

### **The Annual Essex Bus Survey**

232. For 2023 and 2024 Essex County Council has commissioned an annual Essex Bus Survey conducted on its behalf by **Lake Market Research** to get a better understanding of how passengers view bus service operations cross the county and the views of non-bus users, including why they did not use the bus.
233. As well as an online survey, we commissioned Face-to-Face interviews that were conducted in Basildon, Chelmsford, Clacton, Colchester, Harlow and Harwich.
234. Overall, some 3,133 responses were received There were 845 responses to the Face to Face surveys, 689 bus users and 156 non-bus users. With 2,288 responses received from the online survey, 1,824 of those were bus users and 464 non-bus users.
235. The key findings from the survey where:
- Overall satisfaction rose from 54% in 2023 to 66% in 2024.

- The top three reasons for using a bus were (1) shopping, (2) commuting to and from work and (3) for leisure trips.
- 80% of passengers were aware of the £2 bus fare cap.
- Punctuality satisfaction increased from 45% in 2023 to 57% in 2024.
- Satisfaction with the length of time of the bus journey increased by 3% from 74% in 2023 to 77% in 2024.
- Satisfaction with the bus journeys increased from 54% in 2023 to 66% in 2024.
- Satisfaction with value for money increased from 65% in 2023 to 80% in 2024.
- Regarding frequency, connections and reliability of service: frequency moved up 4% to 28%. For “very good service and connections with other transport” approval moved up 6% to 41%, whilst reliability of services moved down 11% to 29%.
- Good affordability of services increased from 25% to 57%.
- When checking bus timetables, operator apps were the most used, followed by printed timetables at bus stops.
- When asked by non-bus users why they do not use the bus the top three reasons were:
  - more convenient to drive,
  - lack of services in my area and
  - buses not being reliable enough.
- The overall satisfaction levels were 80% for value for money, 57% for punctuality, 66% for overall journey and 77% for journey time.

236. See the full results from the survey here: <https://travelessex-production-bucket.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/cms-assets/pages/essex-bus-passenger-survey-2024.pdf>

237. ECC will use the data gathered from the survey to help shape its policies, approaches and programmes over the next year.

## Section 4 Ambitions and proposals for The Essex Bus Network, 2024 to 2034.

### Priorities 2024 to 2034

238. The County Council's underlying ambitions and proposals for the period from 2024 onwards remain broadly unchanged from those set out in the Essex BSIP in 2021.
239. Our vision remains one of partnership, working with the bus industry and other partners and organisations to deliver safer, greener, and healthier travel by working to fulfil the ambitions set out in Our Vision as shown in **Section 1** above. These are:
- Improve service quality, reliability and connectivity of the bus network by identifying both hard (infrastructure) and soft (policy) measures that will promote bus use and seeking funding to implement them.
  - Work to reverse the long-term decline in passenger numbers, in absolute terms and as a modal share of all journeys using both traditional and innovative approaches as appropriate across Essex's diverse geography.
  - Working to develop a bus network that is:
    - accessible to more people,
    - easy to understand,
    - attractive to both existing and prospective new passengers
    - more affordable for everyone offering a real alternative to car use for as many people as possible.
240. ECC intends to continue to focus on delivery of its vision through the functional areas set out below:

- **Transformational change**
- **Delivering innovative service solutions**
- **Transforming Policy**
- **Network reviews (Revised to Developing and Implementing Enhanced Partnerships with bus operators)**
- **Better Information**
- **Customer Experience**

### Functional Area 1 Progress on the Major Transformational Projects.

#### Overview

241. As set out in our original BSIP (p135-136 "Investment strategy part two: Transformation projects) the original five major transformational programmes represent an estimated £476m worth of investment both capital and revenue funding in the Essex bus network.

While the Basildon Volt project has been funded through our successful Zebra 2 bid, the addition of the sixth Transformational Project, the Tendring Colchester RTS, means that the overall investment requirement remains broadly unchanged. While some of this funding will be found from a mixture of existing government grants (such as future Zebra bids or the limited funding available from BSIP+ grants), funding from major housing developments and commercial investments by bus operators in economically viable network improvements, the size and ambition of some of the projects (such as the Harlow Falcon) remains outside the ability of either of these sources or the County Council to fund in full.

- 242. Each of these projects has, to a greater or lesser degree the potential to transform the bus network in their area. But without full funding this potential will not be realised. It will take a concerted and sustained investment by central government to allow Essex to meet the goals the government set out in the National Bus Strategy.
- 243. ECC will therefore continue to press the government to fund these programmes while working with available resources to deliver what can be achieved without it.

## **1 Basildon Volt**

- 244. As noted above, in March 2024, the DfT announced the success of the 'Basildon Zero Emission Bus Regional Area' (ZEBRA2) bid by ECC and First Essex Buses Ltd, securing some £4.9m in Government grant funding, with First Essex making an additional £25.8m investment from their own funds.
- 245. During 2024/25, Essex will work with First to deliver the scheme designed bring 55 battery electric buses (31 single deck buses and 24 double deck buses) and installation of 19 triple headed chargers at First's the Basildon depot. With an expected operational commencement date for First's new Basildon Electric bus fleet of November 2025.
- 246. This upgrade will mean that all of First's Basildon town network, including operations in Wickford and Billericay, plus some interurban routes to Southend on Sea will be run by brand new zero emission at roadside battery electric buses, replacing their current diesel fleet, with concomitant reduction in carbon emissions, pollutants including particulates and noise pollution.
- 247. The success of the ZEBRA2 bid, lined to the proposals set out for Basildon will essentially meet the Basildon Volt Scheme delivery and represents an important development in Essex's ability to use new technology to support the county council's net zero ambitions."

## **2 Clacton Connect**

- 248. With the adoption of Tendring District as the target for ECC's first District Based EP Scheme area Essex County Council, has allocated £2m of BSIP+ funding to support bus services within the District (See; **Functional Area 4, Developing and Implementing the Tendring District Enhanced Partnership** below).
- 249. One of the main foci of the Tendring EP will be to review and improve the Clacton town bus network, working with bus operators to create better connectivity across the town and on interurban routes and identifying potential bus priority measures.
- 250. As noted above, ECC has received an indicative award of £200,000 from the Levelling Up Fund Bid for bus roadside infrastructure improvements in Clacton and Jaywick (subject to Treasury final approval). This will include work on 15 stops in Jaywick and 17 stops in

Clacton, covering a range of measures, including the installation of raised kerbs, new shelters, bus stop pole and flags, improved hardstanding, new timetable cases and better road markings. Once the Treasury have confirmed funding this programme is expected to be implemented in 2024/25.

251. Clacton has also been awarded £20m from the Governments Long Term Plan for Towns fund. which is an endowment fund set over a 10 year period. The funding will comprise of both capital and revenue spend, with the majority (approx. 75%) assigned for capital projects. As part of this programme Tendring District Council on behalf of the newly formed Clacton Town Board will be required to develop an Investment Plan which sets out their 10-year vision, as well as an investment plan focussed on initiatives to be delivered over the next 3 years. The plan will focus on 3 key themes:

- Safety and Security
- High Street, Heritage and Regeneration.
- Transport and Connectivity.

252. Essex County Council is working with Tendring District and Clacton Town on developing a range of schemes to meet these requirements. For the Transport and Connectivity strand we are looking at options to develop schemes set out in **Table 18** below:

**Table 18 Proposed Long Term Plan for Towns Projects**

Long Term Plan for Towns Project	Proposed project idea	Funding required (and any match funding that is available) Note these are high level estimates and should be seen as indicatory only.	Timescales and delivery capabilities from ECC or partners
Transport and Connectivity	A reduced fare scheme to support younger people getting into work in Clacton	Up to £2m (Revenue) – offered until funding runs out	Estimate 1 year design, 2 -5 year operation
Transport and Connectivity	Upgrading up to 100 bus stops around Clacton	Up £2m (Capital)	Up to 3 years
Transport and Connectivity	Roll out a replacement and improvement of real-time passenger information displays at 30 heavily used stops and up to 36 more.	Up to £1m capital (assuming £15,000 per stop - with capitalised maintenance costs and up to 66 stops)	Up to 3 years
Transport and Connectivity	Better Buses for Clacton	Up to £3m (revenue) to increase bus frequencies, vehicle quality and times of operation in Clacton	3 years + programme to improve bus services in Clacton

253. While there is absolutely no guarantee that any, let alone all the schemes will in the end be taken forward, this does offer a clear opportunity to support the bus network in Clacton and any of them would make a significant contribution to the outcome for Clacton Connect.

### 3. Harlow Falcon

254. Given its size and scale at an estimated total investment cost of c.£300m (in 2020/21 process) this is the single largest bid in the original BSIP programme and as it requires capital funding for infrastructure (£200m) and revenue funding for operational costs (£100m), the one on which least progress has been possible. Without BSIP funding development of the Falcon project relies on funding from the major developments occurring around Harlow (including the 10,000 house Harlow/Gilston Garden Village, which sits just across the County boundary in Hertfordshire and significant developments to the east, west and south of the town.
255. ECC continue to work with both Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), planning authorities and the developers for the various sites around Harlow to develop the Sustainable Travel Corridors (STCs) that underly the Falcon concept and is looking to develop the initial northern arm of the route co-incident with the initial occupation of the Gilston Garden Village settlement.

### 4. Thrive

256. During 2024/25 Essex has allocated some £2m of BSIP+ funding to let it undertake the two initial strands of the 'Thrive' Market Town Bus Network support project, testing initiatives to promote customer growth.
257. These are intended to be conducted on selected commercial and supported bus. The commercial element will be launched as soon as ECC is able to reach agreement with commercial operators, with the second strand aimed at being launched after July 2024 when the new supported service contracts for the current tender round come into effect.
258. The five proposed initiatives are:
- Route Specific Marketing: A targeted, route specific traditional marketing campaign, including route specific advertising, leaflet dropping and involvement of local councils to assist promotion (e.g. assist with promotion at transport hubs, tourist centres, etc).
  - Digital Only Promotion: Digital and social media only promotion / marketing
  - Simplification of bus fares, for example a £1 child fare for 18s and under; £4 for a day ticket; £6 day ticket for a group of 2; £10 day ticket for up to 5
  - Better Information: better information at every bus stop along the route and advertised through parishes, bus user groups, businesses, schools, clubs and communities.
  - Increasing service frequency, such as running the service every 30 minutes instead of hourly.
259. To help with the monitoring and evaluation process, operators will be asked to:
- Choose two routes, one will have the initiatives introduced and the other is a control route that has similar characteristics. Guidance on how to choose an appropriate control route will be provided by IPTU and included in the tender documents.

- Provide operational data for the test and control route for the following:
- 12 months prior to the initiatives being introduced,
- 12 months during the test period,
- 6 months after the initiative ends.

260. The outcome of these pilot projects will then feed into plans for further development of the projects and for developing a wider approach to marketing and publicity, potentially through ECCs Enhanced Partnership programmes.

## 5 Reach

261. The reach project contains two elements – continued support for the innovative DigiGo digital DRT project and its supporting digital architecture and the parallel and supporting development of a one stop shop travel app for all bus passengers.

### Extending support for DigiGo

262. DigiGo operates a fleet of electric minibuses, which are booked, paid for and tracked digitally through the TravelEssex app in real time. Passengers cover a wide range including school children, older people and pub-goers as well as to older people visiting hospital and those travelling to work.
263. In September 2023 ECC agreed to allocate £1.24m of the £2.4m of BSIP+ funding allocated to the Reach Transformational Project to extend funding for the provision of the DigiGo service for two years with the opportunity to consider extending the service beyond this, subject to a future decision, based on performance during 2024/25 and 2025/26.
264. This approach puts the service on an equal footing with other new local bus services that the Council funds. The service would have up to 4 years to continue growing passenger numbers and income, with the aim to reduce the Cost Per Passenger Journey (CPPJ) to below £5 CPPJ by the end of 2027/28; which it is currently forecast to achieve.

### Developing the Travel Essex Digital Platform

265. The second part of the project addresses the Travel Essex Digital Platform. This sets out to develop an enhanced travel planning and Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) platform to replace the current TravelEssex app and enable the wider modernisation of passenger information for all bus passengers through improved customer service, network planning and information.
266. The TravelEssex APP programme consists of three phases:
- **Phase 1 (2024/25 – 2027/28):** Replace current app and enhance travel planning and Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) functionality to enable a national journey planner and underpin the digitalisation of other flexible transport services within Essex.
  - **Phase 2 (2027/28 – 2029/30):** Widen the digital offering to allow for the digitalisation of Adult Social Care (ASC) and Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) transport services.
  - **Phase 3 (2029/30 – onwards):** Gradual digitalisation of mainstream home to school transport.

267. Phases 2 and 3 are dependent only if their potential is supported by data from a feasibility pilot project and an assessment against the success measures set out below:
- performance of the travel planning function;
  - performance of DigiGo in terms of overall patronage and passenger diversification;
  - identified demand and funding from other services;
  - identified opportunities for automation of management and contractual information, including journey tracing, reliability and loading;
  - identification of customer and service benefits including reduced operator contacts and customer dissatisfaction.
  - A critical success measure will also include the value for money performance of DigiGo as a supported local bus service in comparison with the £5 per passenger journey measure and other supported local bus services, in other words it should not attract significantly more subsidy than ECC would pay for a conventional subsidised service.

## 6 The Colchester and Tendring Bus Rapid Transit Scheme

268. Given the scale of the Colchester and Tendring Garden Community development on the Colchester/Tendring border - some 7,500 dwellings plus commercial space – and the high expectations for sustainable travel share for the site (50% of generated journeys a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme is being developed for the site linking the community to the University of Essex, the city centre, the railway station, the main Hospital and allowing connections to the wider transport network. It would run at a ‘turn-up and go’ frequency, use modern high quality buses (potentially electric) buses.
269. As with the Harlow/Gilston Garden Town development that underlies the Harlow Falcon project outlined above, development of this scale presents transport planners with both risks – from additional generated car traffic, congestion, pollution and network capacity problems, and opportunities, in the form of the funding required to mitigate these impacts on the environment and to meet the proposed communities garden settlement credentials.
270. The service would be expected to move toward economic viability over the lifetime of the development (economic modelling is currently being undertaken), aided by an extension of the service via the current Colchester City Park and Ride route to additional developments to the north-east of the city. The proposed completed route is shown in the map below. **Note the details of route and locations of stops have not yet been finalised.**
271. Some of the preparatory infrastructure work is currently being conducted (along the northern arm of the route, currently used by the Park and Ride Service) making use of a government Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) grant. More details of this grant can be found here: <https://www.essexhighways.org/highway-schemes-and-developments/bids-and-funding/housing-infrastructure-fund>
272. These works will continue during 2024/25 as will negotiation with the developers.

## Functional Area 2 Developing Innovative Transport Solutions

273. The Essex BSIP set our intention to look at four sub-areas under this heading. These were:

- Rural Mobility, focusing on Digital DRT Services.
- Park and Choose through our park and ride sites.
- The Stop Swap Go! Bus pilot scheme.
- The Bus Shelter Transformation Project.

274. The progress and plans for the future of these projects is set out, in Section 2 but will be achieved to differing degrees dependent on resources available to pursue them.

275. The focus will be on delivering the Bus Shelter Transformation and DigiGo rural mobility projects.

### Service Provision Devolution.

276. ECC will also be pursuing its **Service Provision Devolution** pilot, engaging with the Epping Forest Community Transport (EFCT) on the demonstration project set out in Section 2 above looking to devolve responsibility for provision of three routes serving in the Epping Forest District.

The three services under consideration are:

- Service 211/212
- Service SB12
- Dart 7 (SB10/11/13)

277. The current total annual cost of these gross cost contracts is **£60,823 year** and the pilot scheme would see a reducing but guaranteed funding commitment for three years, with a net 10% reduction in support across that period for a total ECC investment of **£164,830 over 3 years.**

278. During this three-year period, EFCT will engage with local parish councils and ECC to promote the services across the district to encourage growth in passenger journeys and work with EFCT to promote the services.

279. EFCT in return must ensure the current journey frequency is maintained along with reliability and agree to provide monthly data to show how these services are performing.

## Functional Area 3 Transforming Policy and BSIP Governance Revision

### Changes to ECC Policy.

#### The Emerging Essex Local Transport Plan 4

280. ECC is starting the revision of its Local Transport Plan over 2024/25. This aims to fully integrate the BSIP into the LTP at all levels, based on a strategic approach that will incorporate a “vision for buses to help shape policies on accessing services, developing and promoting sustainable transport choice, integrating strategic planning with connectivity and accessibility to key services and prioritising bus services appropriately across the road network.”
281. Essex County Council is therefore currently preparing its new (4<sup>th</sup>) LTP. Options have been examined to develop a revised LTP in stages, starting with a ‘Strategic Framework’ for transport that creates a vision, outcomes, and strategic approach.
282. ECC has identified three key themes for the LTP .
- Connecting people,
  - Supporting places and,
  - Sustainable places.
283. Bus services will be looked at to contribute to all three themes by improving connectivity to key service and amenities such as employment, education, health and shopping/leisure activities. Connecting people will be the key theme for the delivery of bus service improvements, with a focus on enabling people to access key services and amenities rather than focusing on vehicle movements per se.
284. To inform these themes ECC has identified five systematic challenges to its economy:

**Figure 12: Five systematic challenges to the Essex economy**



285. It has also identified four geographic zones for Essex, each of which has their own unique geographic, demographic and connectivity challenges. These are:

- Haven Gateway: Colchester, Tendring, Braintree
- West Essex: Epping Forest, Harlow, Uttlesford
- Heart of Essex: Brentwood, Maldon, Chelmsford
- Thames Gateway: Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford

286. An analysis of these zones, based on the CBI report 'Reviving Regions' that compares Essex social economic status across a range of factors to national averages is shown in **Figure 13** below:

**Figure 13 Comparing Essex to national average factors.**

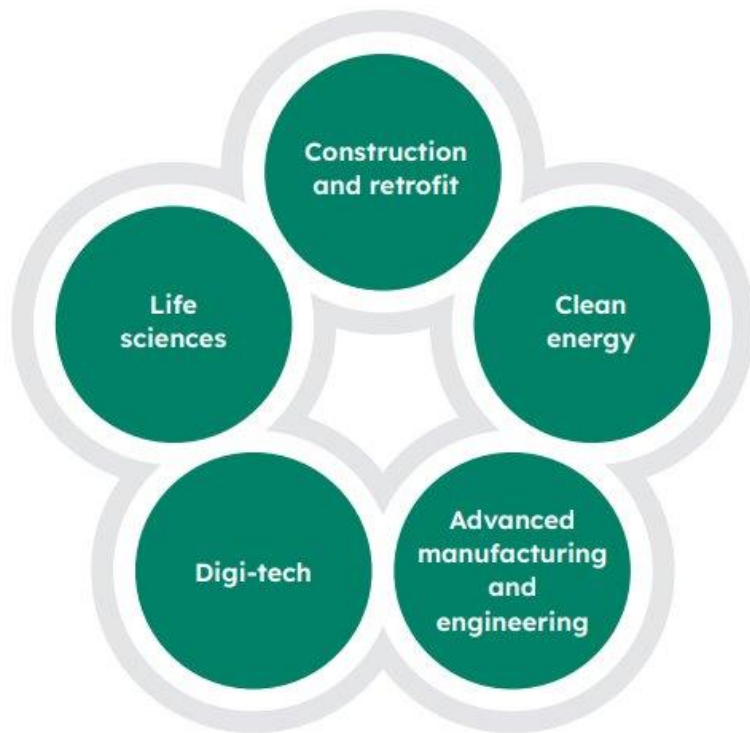
Districts	Haven Gateway	West Essex	Heart of Essex	Essex Thames Gateway
Household income <sup>1</sup>	Orange	Green	Green	Green
Employment rate <sup>2</sup>	Red	Green	Orange	Green
Deprivation index (lower = better) <sup>3</sup>	Orange	Green	Green	Green
Life satisfaction index <sup>4</sup>	Red	Green	Green	Green
Productivity <sup>5</sup>	Orange	Green	Green	Green
Schools above standard <sup>6</sup>	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
Graduates in workforce <sup>7</sup>	Red	Green	Orange	Red
In-work training <sup>8</sup>	Red	Red	Red	Red
Broadband speed <sup>9</sup>	Red	Green	Red	Red
Commute time (lower = better) <sup>10</sup>	Red	Red	Red	Red
Home working index <sup>11</sup>	Red	Green	Green	Orange
Median house prices (higher = better) <sup>12</sup>	Orange	Green	Green	Green
R&D per head (Essex) <sup>13</sup>	Red	Red	Red	Red
Innovation activity (East of England) <sup>14</sup>	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
High growth firms <sup>15</sup>	Red	Green	Red	Green
Export intensity <sup>16</sup>	Red	Green	Red	Green

- Better than national average
- Level with the national average
- Worse than the national average

**Table 1: Analysis of the CBI report 'Reviving Regions' comparing Essex to national averages.**

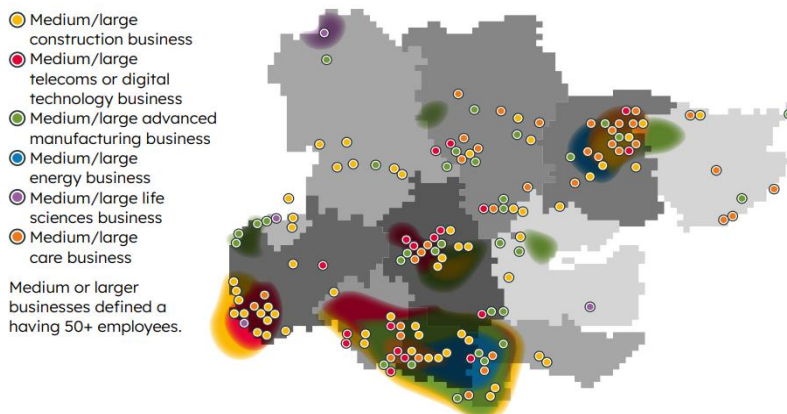
ECC has also identified five key economic growth sectors as set out in **Fig 14** below:

**Fig 14: Five key business sectors for economic growth in Essex.**



287. The LTP approach then maps these growth sectors areas of Essex that have businesses capable of exploiting them at present.

**Figure 15 Distribution of Businesses.**

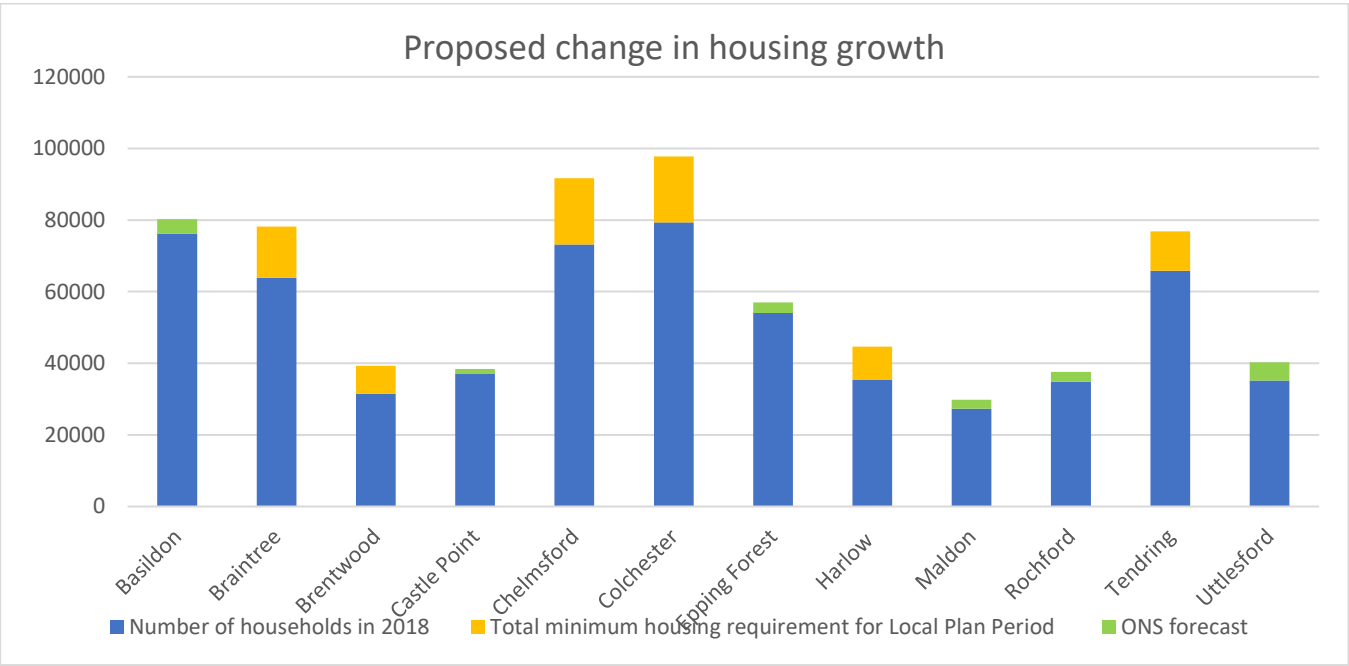


**Figure 2: Map of Essex showing distribution of businesses who could take advantage of growth sectors.**

288. Following on from this, the LTP approach has considered the benefits to be derived from transportation investment. Research commissioned by the DfT through Venables et al (2014), discussed the relationship between transport investment and economic performance. It estimates that if all other drivers of economic growth were to increase by 10% and transport infrastructure were to stay constant, realised growth in income would be just 9%, i.e. 1% point less than it otherwise would have been.

289. Transport investment also helps with productivity gains accruing to firms and workers, arising because of how it impacts the economic benefits of scale and density. High quality transport is necessary to secure these benefits in the following ways:
- Economic interactions between firms: firms can reach wider markets, enabling them to expand, gain scale economies and develop specialist skills;
  - Transport enables cities to specialise and develop sector specific advantages, if better transport or communications enables ancillary activity to be outsourced to another city, it reduces costs and creates space for high value activities.
  - Transport is necessary to get workers into concentrated and productive centres of activity.
290. The LTP process also recognises the threat to both economic growth and quality of life from environmental factors, including:
- Flooding risks
  - The impact of extreme weather conditions on highways and related infrastructure
  - The impact of higher temperatures on health and other costs to the economy
  - The health risks posed by poor air quality caused by environmental pollution, including all types of emission from road traffic, exacerbated by congestion.
291. These factors map to the pattern of proposed housing growth across Essex as shown in **Figures 16 and 17** below:

**Figure 16: Proposed changes in housing growth across Essex, by district:**



**Figure 17: Minimum Housing requirement over plan period by District**

	Total minimum housing requirement for the Plan Period	Local Plan Period
Brentwood Local Plan, 2022	7,752	2016-2033
Chelmsford Local Plan, 2020	18,515	2013-2033
Harlow Local Development Plan, 2020	9,200	2011-2033
Colchester Local Plan S1, 2021	18,400	2013-2033
Tendring Local Plan S1, 2021	11,000	2013-2033
Braintree Local Plan S1, 2021	14,320	2013-2033

292. Together these factors will be used to develop the LTP, weaving bus policies as set out in the BSIP into wider policy goals rather than have them sit as an individual modal approach.
293. The strategic approach will include the incorporation of a “vision for buses “ in the LTP to help shape policies on accessing services, developing and promoting sustainable transport choice, integrating strategic planning with connectivity and accessibility to key services and prioritising bus services appropriately across the road network.

### Changes to BSIP Governance

294. In our BSIP ECC set out the governance framework for creating a BSIP as a living document and helping stakeholders have a clear say in and view of its development.
295. The structure was as follows divide into a high level strategy consultative forum – the Essex Bus Strategy Forum (**ESBF**) and an executive board the Essex Bus Strategy Board (**EBSB**)
296. The **EBSF** was intended to bring together stakeholders annually to review progress of the BSIP and to the EBSB about priorities for improving the bus network that it should consider for the following year. The membership of the EBSF includes;

- Chair: ECC's Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport.
- Deputy Chair: ECC Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport.
- Representatives from ECCs governing and opposition political groups.
- ECC officers from Highways and Transportation, Education and Finance.
- All commercial bus service operators.
- All voluntary sector transport providers.
- All Essex District, Borough and City Councils.
- Representatives from the business sector in Essex, including Chambers of Trade, Commerce and Business Improvement Districts.
- Passenger representative bodies including Essex Transportation. Representatives, Bus User Groups, Transport Focus and Bus Users UK.
- Representatives from the NHS.
- Observers from neighbouring transport authorities.

297. The **EBSB** was designed to;

- Set future BSIP strategic aims and targets for improving services.
- Develop policy and recommendations to steer ECC and wider planning around the shape of the Essex bus network.
- Make policy recommendations for climate change, health, environment, development, and parking policy from a bus network perspective.
- Be embedded as a consultee into wider ECC policy and planning processes, including the revised Local Transport Plan.

298. The EBSB has the following membership:

- Chair: ECC Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport.
- Deputy Chair: ECC Deputy Cabinet member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport.
- Three ECC council members representing opposition groups.
- Four members from the commercial bus industry. One from each of the three leading bus operating companies, by the number of registered local bus service Km's run, and one nominated by small and medium operators.
- Three members nominated by District, Borough and City Councils.
- One member nominated by Essex's CT providers.
- One member from Transport Focus to represent passenger interests.

299. Our experience, based on the November 2022 review of the BSIP indicates that while the **ESPB** process worked well, the **ESBF** was less effective for identifying public concerns and aspiration for the bus network for the following reasons.
- It proved difficult to establish contacts with some of the consultative groups who have a less regular contact with Essex County Council or for larger multi entity bodies such as the NHS, ensure that ensure that a representative sample of views from across their interests was represented.
  - It proved difficult, to organise a location that was accessible to stakeholders from across the county and beyond at a convenient time, restricting attendance.
  - The approach of a single day forum, with a fixed agenda limited the number of stakeholder groups who could attend and express a view.
  - The limited time available from a one day event made it difficult for stakeholders to air concerns beyond those on the pre-decided agenda and limited their opportunity to fully consider the often complex strategic issues that were being addressed.
  - The view of the customer – the general public was not directly represented. While the view and experience of the stakeholder groups was they were inevitably filtered through individual groups interests.
300. Given these issues and given the opportunity offered by the BSIP review to alter our approach to address these issues, an alternative approach has been developed.
301. This is that instead of a single day, limited **ESBF** Bus Forum a wider, public consultation will be undertaken to ascertain the view of both the public and stakeholder groups, with special provision being made to ensure that the view of the stakeholders include in the ESBF can be taken into account. This will be called the Essex Bus Strategy Survey (**EBSS**). The outcome of the EBSS will then be fed into the EBSB in the same way as the outcome of the EBSF has been.
302. The proposal is that a new BSIP Strategy Survey will be held every 2 years, to allow for the result to be processed, analysed and allow enough time for those recommendations adopted by the EBSB to be put into effect and assessed, before the next survey is undertaken.
303. We feel that this approach offers a reasonable compromise between the need to involve actively in the development of the BSIP, the interests of the stakeholder groups and the time needed to undertake the process effectively.

## **Functional Area 4 Proposals for the Countywide and District Enhanced Bus Partnership Schemes**

### **Developing the Countywide EP Scheme.**

304. ECC will continue to work with bus operators to deliver the ongoing commitments of the Essex Countywide Enhanced Partnership.
305. To this end ECC has committed its own funding to developing and implementing a programme of series of smaller scale projects to make incremental improvements to the bus network and then maintain the resulting infrastructure:

### New Small Scale Bus Infrastructure Schemes proposed for 2024/25 onwards.

306. ECC's Integrated Passenger Transport Unit (IPTU) has worked with ECC Highways colleagues, bus operators, local councils and bus user groups to identify a range of issues which are having an adverse effect on bus operations across Essex and where available funding, or new funding sourced from grants, developer funding or other sources could be used to improve the bus network.
307. The 'projects set out in **Table 19** below are ones that will with relatively small scale actions that ECC is looking to progress during 2024/25. Many are already agreed and can be funded from the £100,000 set aside for such capital projects. Others require further consultation and -or funding to allow them to proceed.

**Table 19 New Smaller Scale Bus Infrastructure schemes.**

Scheme Number	Location	Issue	Current Position
1	Basildon, Linkway	Signals unresponsive to bus services	Investigating SCOOT control of signals to prioritise buses
2	Basildon, Roundacre / Fodderwick Junction	Signal phasing seems disproportionate.	Signal phasing review to prioritise bus movements
3	Basildon, The Knares	Currently a no right turn TRO prevents buses from West Basildon accessing the Hospital	Feasibility study into provision of right turn bus priority
4	Canvey . Long Rd, Thorneybay Rd	Junction is difficult for bus turning movements	Junction redesign undertaken - await budget to implement
5	Canvey, Knightswick Road	Kerb line is sharp for large vehicles such as buses	Design prepared and costed - awaiting budget to implement
16	Colchester, Drury Road	Perception of disproportionate signal phasing at 2 signal sets	Signal phasing review to prioritise bus movements
7	Colchester, Head Street / North Hill Junction	Signal phasing hinders main bus movement	Signal phasing review to prioritise bus movements
8	Colchester, Hickory Avenue	Cars park across bus stop	Bus cage installation programmed for 2024
9	Colchester, Nayland Road	Cars park across bus stop	Changes to TRO and bus cage installation planned for 2024
10	Dovercourt, High Street	Main town centre bus stop does not have raised access kerbs	Design and installation of DDA kerbing planned for 2024
11	Great Totham, Catchpole Lane, Walden House Road	Car parking around school creates gridlock in village affecting bus reliability	Extended restricted parking scheme due to be implemented in 2024
12	Halstead, Colchester Road	Car parking hinders bus access	Scheme planned for 2024 to design parking restrictions scheme
13	Harlow Velizey Avenue	Bus access to bus station restricted at junction	Left slip ahead of signalised junction being installed 2024
14	Harlow Velizey Avenue	Congestion hinders bus services	Northbound bus lane being installed in 2024
15	Harlow, Maddox Road	Neighbourhood lost bus service due to poor bus accessibility	Design being undertaken to introduce parking restrictions, junction protection markings, bus cages and passing places
16	Harlow, Minchin Road	Neighbourhood lost bus service due to poor bus accessibility	Design being undertaken to introduce parking restrictions, junction protection markings, bus cages and passing places

Scheme Number	Location	Issue	Current Position
17	Lexden, London Rd/Straight Rd junction	Signal phasing considered inappropriate	Signal phasing review scheduled for 2025
18	Maldon, Washington Rd area	Car parking hinders bus access	Phase 1 of parking review to be installed 2024
19	Noak Bridge, Washfield Road	Nearside kerb line difficult to manoeuvre with larger vehicles.	Design prepared and costed - awaiting budget to implement
20	Ramsden Heath, Church Rd junction	Offside kerb alignment difficult to manoeuvre for right turning buses	Design prepared and costed - awaiting budget to implement
21	Rayleigh, High Road	Buses towards Hadleigh must do complete town circuit as no alternative central stop	Design underway in 2024 to provide new bus stop, repurpose highway TROs and enable buses to avoid Town centre congestion
22	Springfield, Pump Lane	Bus manoeuvre from bus stop to roundabout difficult with current alignment	Design underway to realign kerbing and review highway lines/signs for 2024
23	Thundersley, Kents Hill Rd	Signal phasing unsupportive of main bus movement	Signal phasing review scheduled for 2025
24	Waltham Abbey, Upshire Road	Existing bus stand too small for number of vehicles using it	Expansion of facility scheduled for 2024
25	Wickford, High Street / Nevendon Road	Buses have 3 minute dogleg diversion as not able to go straight across junction.	Design underway to provide straight ahead bus gate in 2024
26	Wickford, Southend Road	Eastbound buses have 2km gap between stops	Design underway to introduce new bus stop to improve passenger access to services
27	Writtle, Lordship Road	No bus stops near main doctor's surgery	New stop pair being installed in 2024 to improve passenger access.

### Larger scale bus priority measures - work proposed for 20024 to 2034.

308. ECC has also identified a set of larger longer term projects, which it proposes to allocate funding to develop to feasibility or preparatory stage over 2024/25. These require the identification further funding to progress beyond this stage and while some are related to our transformational projects and are being funded out of them, others rely on finding from third parties such as Network Rail to allow them to go forward. These include the schemes set out in **Table 20** below.

**Table 20 Proposed larger scale projects for 2024 to 2026.**

Scheme Number	Location	Issue	Current Position
1	Basildon, Nethermayne	Congestion delays bus services - also major developments planned in neighbouring LA area	Feasibility study under way for introduction of circa 2.5km of 2 way bus lanes. Preparatory investigative stage, will require further funding to progress
2	Benfleet, Tarpots Corner	Buses use all approaches, but signals struggle to prioritise movements appropriately	Investigation into remodelling of junction to improve through routing of buses. <b>Preparatory investigative stage, will require further funding to progress</b>

Scheme Number	Location	Issue	Current Position
3	Brentwood Town Centre	Bus reliability hindered by town centre congestion.	Feasibility study for a gyratory with contraflow bus lanes undertaken - phase two scheme development. <b>Preparatory, investigative stage, which will require further funding to progress. Major Further consultation required.</b>
4	Chelmsford Bus Interchange	Current facility is capacity for the number of services using it	Feasibility study undertaken to increase capacity, short term (small scale relief) measures to be introduced 2024, medium and long term phases being developed an awaiting funding. <b>Requires further funding to progress</b>
5	Chelmsford, New London Road	Bus access along key route into city centre suffers delays.	Feasibility study underway looking at 24/7 bus lane, removal of parking, junction improvements and bus gate introduction. <b>Preparatory investigative stage will require further funding to progress. Further consultation required.</b>
6	Colchester Bus Interchange	Facility unable to cope with volume of buses	Feasibility study looking at alternative locations to build suitable bus station facility. <b>Preparatory investigative stage, will require further funding to progress</b>
7	Colchester, Via Urbis Romanae	Congestion hinders bus services	2 way busway being installed 2024. <b>Funded through Transformation Project 6, Colchester RTS</b>
8	Colchester, Clingoe Hill	Congestion hinders bus services	Westbound bus lanes being installed 2024.
9	Harlow 5th Avenue	Congestion hinders bus services	North and southbound bus lanes being installed 2024. <b>Linked to Transformation Project 3 Harlow Falcon, funded by HIG</b>
10	Harlow, Edinburgh Way	Congestion levels hinder bus access and have left area devoid of services	Feasibility study for 2 way bus lanes undertaken, <b>Preparatory investigative stage, will require consultation and further funding to progress</b>
11	Harlow, Second Avenue	Existing bus lanes are insufficient to improve bus access	Initial feasibility work undertaken, <b>Preparatory investigative stage, will require consultation and further funding to progress.</b>
12	Harlow, Town Rail Station	Poor quality facility, unattractive to passengers	Initial study undertaken to improve forecourt design. Stage 2 of study being undertaken in 2024. <b>Network Rail led project.</b>
13	Rayleigh, Weir Roundabout	Through access for buses is difficult	Feasibility study in 2024 to consider north/south 2 way bus lanes. <b>Preparatory investigative stage, will require significant consultation and identification of funding to progress</b>
14	Harlow Mill Station	Buses unable to access station forecourt	Initial study undertaken to improve forecourt design. Stage 2 of study being undertaken in 2024. <b>Network Rail lead project</b>

309. Together these infrastructure projects show the range and depth of ECC commitment to undertaking physical measures to improve the bus network across Essex, despite the lack of significant capital funding offered through the BSIP process.

### **The Essex Bus Passenger Charter**

310. In its Countywide EP, ECC set out its intent to adopt a passenger charter, setting out a range of measures to given bus users expectations to certain standards of service, including punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, proportion of services operated, information and redress. This has been completed and the charter is in place – see the link below for an example here: <https://www.firstbus.co.uk/essex/about-us/essex-bus-passenger-charter> .
311. While the Essex Passenger Charter is closely aligned with those of its neighbouring peer authorities it was developed at short notice from elements acceptable to all parties and there remains potential for revising the Charter to include a more comprehensive offer. ECC will therefore continue to explore the opportunity for doing so with bus operators and passenger groups.

### **The Tendring Enhanced Partnership.**

312. As set out in Section 2 above, in line with the policy process set out in our BSIP, ECC has competed the 12-district based area transport reviews that identify the key public transport issues and opportunities in each area and identified Tendring as the location for its first district Enhanced Partnership.
313. ECC had to delay starting work on the Tendring EP due to its decision to divert resources to its successful ZEBRA1 bid for Basildon – its number one priority for delivering its BSIP transformational project aims. While this was a risk, in the event paid off. There were also staffing issues which meant that for a period there was not an EP Lead in post for Essex until May 2024.
314. However, these issues have now been resolved and we intend to move ahead with the Tendring EP as soon as possible, with an initial aim of putting the EP in place for April 2024, although this is a preliminary target and may be subject to change.
315. To this end ECC has already begun contacting bus operators in the area, with the intention of setting up an EP delivery board over the summer 2024 and undertaking the public and operator consultations over proposals in the winter of 2024/25 and introduction from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.
316. Proposals being considered for inclusion include:
- Improvements to the commercial bus network in Clacton aimed at improving connectivity to key attractor sites across the town.
  - Improvements to the contracted town bus network in Harwich, looking to improve connectivity to key attractors across the town and access to the Parkstone Quay International Station/Port

- Improved interurban connections between Harwich, Clacton, Walton and Colchester
- Extending PlusBus multi modal ticketing to more areas of the district,
- Minor infrastructure improvement works as set out above.
- Extensions to real time passenger information
- Improved interurban connections between including later and early morning buses and improved Sunday buses.
- Developing mobility hubs in areas with poor connectivity and potential DRT/DDRT development.
- Development of pocket park and ride schemes
- Improved integration for ticketing and potential for developing an area wide ticketing scheme.

317. These elements are not comprehensive, settled, or exclusive and it is likely that other proposals and issues will emerge during discussions and consultation.

318. These proposals are preliminary, and any decisions will be subject to governance, approval by ECC's Cabinet Member and bus operators.

### **Developing and Implementing further District Level Enhanced Partnerships**

319. Following the area reviews, and the adoption of Tendring as the area for the first EP, the County Council has revised its approach for rolling further EP Schemes out across Essex.

320. Our original plan was to have 12 individual District based EP schemes. Our experience from working through the 12 area review recommendations suggests that:

- There are significant differences in scale and benefit to be derived from each area scheme. Some are large and some are relatively small. Some are largely commercial, while in others ECC is de-facto the main network provider.
- There is a significant logistic burden in developing and setting up an EP and an ongoing administrative burden required to manage ongoing meetings and periodic reviews. For example, even if each district EP Board met only twice per year, some board members could be looking at an EP meeting every two weeks, due to the considerable overlap between operators in different areas. Given the limited resources available we consider that this is unsustainable.
- Given our limited ability to deliver EPs (due to the significant statutory requirements for consultation and governance and limited staff resources ECC can only look to deliver one per year) some area would have to wait up to 2032 or beyond years to see an EP put in place.

321. On this basis ECC intends to combine some of the 12 areas into joint Enhanced Partnerships, which will allow us to speed up delivery somewhat while reducing the administrative burden.
322. In looking at how to combine the areas for an EP we have considered population and geographic scale, network complexity and the relationships between the bus networks in each area.
323. The new EP areas proposed are:
- Basildon, Castlepoint and Rochford
  - Chelmsford and Maldon
  - Colchester
  - Harlow, Brentwood and Epping Forest
  - Uttlesford and Braintree
  - Tendring
324. The County Council will consult with stakeholders over the proposals before bringing them forward while continuing to develop both the ongoing Countywide and Tendring Partnerships. Any significant improvement to the bus services because of the EP will require external funding, which is not currently available (other than Tendring).

### **The Essex Bus Shelter Improvement Project**

325. As set out in noted in Section 3, Essex has begun its Countywide shelter improvement project.
326. In collaboration with Clear Channel UK (CCUK), Essex County Council has launched this scheme to upgrade, maintain, and expand bus shelter infrastructure across Essex.
327. This has been framed round a 10-year contract to create a sustainable, modern, and consistent bus shelter network that enhances the experience for all bus users. Through this partnership, we will provide better facilities, aim to increase the use of public transport, and support our goal of creating a Safer, Greener, Healthier Essex.
328. Essex County Council will invest £2.998m in the first year of the Contract to upgrade and install a range of new bus shelters across Essex that are fit for the future. This significant investment ensures that residents benefit from improved facilities, making public transport more comfortable and attractive.
329. The initiative is a collaboration with ten District, Borough, and City councils, ensuring a unified approach to bus shelter management and improvement across Essex. The Councils involved in this collaboration are Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow, Rochford and Tendring
330. By bringing together this collaboration, we aim to create a consistent look and feel for bus shelters throughout Essex, making public transport more appealing and accessible for everyone. Whether you are looking for bus routes, bus shelters, or bus timetables in Essex, TravelEssex is committed to providing the best possible service.
331. Locations for the new shelters can be found by visiting our interactive map to see plans for the upgrading a replacement of shelters and when they are due to occur. The interactive

map shows all bus shelters owned by Essex County Council within this Contract and can be found here: <https://www.travelessex.co.uk/about-timetables-maps/essex-bus-shelters> .

- 332. Our partner Clear Channel UK (CCUK) will maintain all shelters within the Contract on ECC's behalf and install and sell advertising at locations mutually agreed with ECC.
- 333. All advertising will be in adherence to the Council's Advertising Policy.
- 334. ECC will receive a minimum guaranteed income and a profit-share from the advertising under the Contract, the latter income being split between the Council and CCUK.
- 335. The net income generated will be ring-fenced and used to repay ECCs initial investment and then for the benefit of Shelters and the Bus Infrastructure Network.
- 336. During the Implementation Period (Year 1 of the Contract), there will be a programme of works that will ensure that outgoing supplier shelters are replaced, priority upgrades to enable income generation to occur and key locations that have had a request for a shelter on hold fulfilled. Details of the programme will be publicised once the Contract commences.
- 337. Beyond the Implementation Period, the income generated by the Contract will be used to replace, maintain, upgrade or install new bus roadside infrastructure. The process for requesting shelters and how the spending of income will be prioritised, has been agreed, and will be communicated with relevant parties as part of mobilisation.

## **Functional Area 5 Better Information.**

### **Expanding the TravelEssex Brand Proposed Partnership with Southend on Sea Council**

- 338. Southend-on-Sea City Council (SCC) is a unitary authority and Local Transport Authority and has both a BSIP and an EP. Within their EP they have also committed to have a brand for bus transport for Southend and SCC media material relating to public transport. SCC and their EP board have requested that they be allowed to join the *TravelEssex* brand and asked Essex to lead on implementing the brand on all bus services and marketing materials. The same bus operators that work in administrative Essex run services in Southend.
- 339. Agreeing this approach will mean that residents of Essex will see one brand: 'TravelEssex' for the whole of the Essex and Southend bus operation zone and that operators will only need to employ a single brand on buses operating in Essex or Southend, removing duplication of effort, confusion and differing quality standards in neighbouring areas receiving the same bus services.
- 340. The proposal will include the following elements:
  - TravelEssex Marketing Launch Campaign - launching the TravelEssex brand to the residents of Southend.
  - Annual TravelEssex Marketing Support - articles in the TravelEssex newsletter, monthly content on our social media pages, blogs on the website promoting specific services in Southend.
  - The TravelEssex website will include Southend updates for Go-Live on static webpages, Discover Buses, and Live Bus Map functionality, plus accessibility checks and Search Engine Optimisation (SEO).

- TravelEssex App updated to include Southend's authority area and all bus services in the area.
- Ad-hoc marketing campaigns (additional funding would be provided for each)

341. Within this same **Agency Agreement** ECC will formalise the other bus transport services it already provides for SCC:

- Data Management - administration and data handling of all Southend routes and timetables into Greater Essex dataset.
- Bus Stop Publicity - automated bus hub publicity produced for Southend stops.
- Bus Cartography- bespoke cartographical services towards Essex Central bus stop map and South Essex frequency map.
- National Public Transport Access Node (NaPTAN) database administration and data handling of all Southend NaPTAN data, including upload to the DfT's preferred NaPTAN system.

342. Successful implementation will require the agreement of both the bus operators, Southend on Sea City Council and ECC in principle and for the relevant funding from SoS CC to be agreed. While this is expected it cannot be guaranteed at this stage.

343. ECC is also willing to look at further extending the scheme to neighbouring authorities that could benefit from it.

#### **Working with the bus industry to improve driver recruitment.**

344. As set out in Section 2 "Staff Shortages and recruitment" above, driver recruitment was a major issue affecting the reliability of bus services in Essex over 2022 to 2023 and continues to be so for smaller bus operators, who are in competition not only with larger bus operators but also with the logistics industry.

345. While this is essentially a structural issue within the commercial bus industry (and indeed the wider transport sector as whole) and therefore one which can only reasonably be addressed by them or by central government policy, ECC has recognised that it is an issues and is working in conjunction with bus operators to help raise the profile of the sector as an career opportunity.

346. To this end ECC is:

- Developing a page on the TravelEssex website that will be dedicated to bus driver recruitment.
- Creating an associated a range of videos (also intended to be released on ECC's YouTube site and used by commercial bus companies). These will include interviews with bus drivers discussing why they like being a bus driver and their driving experiences.
- A "job board" on the ECC web portal site where we will link people with recruitment sites from participating bus operators for drivers and other staff in Essex.

## Functional Area 6 Customer Experience.

### Using data from the Annual Essex Bus Passenger Survey to inform decision making.

347. The information provided by the survey suggest that they key issues facing bus passenger and deterring people from using bus services are:

- Punctuality.
- Length of time spent on buses.
- Value for money
- Services not providing the journeys they needed/wanted.

348. While none of this information is new, it does help inform its decision making on aspects of service delivery in the Enhanced Partnership programme, particularly as the survey allows ECC to drill down to district level satisfaction and attitudinal data that can feed directly into the District level Partnership to identify clear issues.

349. An example of this, for Tendring. As the location for our First local based Enhanced Partnership we specifically included Clacton and Harwich the two main towns in the area in the survey.

An example of this data - why people in Tendring are not using the bus, is shown in **Figure 18** below:

#### **Figure 18: Why non-bus users do not use the bus.**

10

350. The top three reasons for people in Tendring give for not using the bus were:

- More convenient to use the car.
- Lack of appropriate bus journeys
- Not reliable enough

351. Other important factors affecting their decision were:
- Lack of information
  - Poor roadside accessibility
  - Lack of services at certain times of the day ( i.e. evenings)
352. Despite Tendring being one of the most deprived areas of Essex, cost was not considered to be a major factor preventing bus use, although that might also reflect that the people being asked – largely car or train users - are not those directly impacted by cost issues, with current bus users being more directly impacted. A comparison with a similar question for bus users in Tendring suggests that 89% of exiting users are satisfied or neutral on the cost of their bus journey, with 11% being dissatisfied. This possibly due to the high level of concessionary pass holders in the district and the £2 fare cap – this would need to be monitored as the position of the fare cap is resolved for the longer term.
353. As set out in our plans for the Tendring Area Enhanced partnership as set out above reflect these finding with plans to address the town networks, quality of roads side infrastructure and rea time information, although to do so will require significant external funding.

### **Fares and Ticketing**

354. In the 2021 BSIP ECC included a specific set of commitments to improve the Essex Saver and Essex Sunday Saver multi-operators, all day tickets scheme so that it was purchasable electronically. This policy was adopted by the Essex Countywide Enhanced Partnership Scheme and has duly been implemented.
355. Since 2022 the government has introduced the voluntary national £2 fare cap setting a ceiling for the cost of single journeys on participating bus operators and initiated the Project Coral scheme through Transport for the West Midlands (TfWM),to develop working together on a ticketing solution which will make multi-modal travel cheaper and easier for individuals using their smart phone or contactless bank card, capping payments at a daily or weekly limit.
356. ECC has encouraged bus operators to join the £2 national fare cap where it is economically justifiable for them to do and has itself adopted the cap for those contracted services where it controls fares (i.e. Gross Cost). Most local bus services (except for some mainly school days only commercial bus service operators focused on home to school journeys and where the ticket rates are generally fixed in advance) have participated.
357. While ECC was unable to join the first iteration of the Project Coral scheme due to resource issues, it remains interested in the ideas and proposed outcomes it embodies and would be willing to consider joining the scheme at the appropriate point should the opportunity occur.
358. In general, ECC's approach to adopting a seamless multi operator ticketing scheme is shaped by it the nature of the bus market in Essex. As set out in Section 2, this is complex with a diverse multi-operator landscape, but with a tendency to have one predominant operator in each area and significant differences in fare levels across the county. This was set out in detail our original 2021 BSIP and remains true to the present.
359. These factors combine with existing operator networks ticket offers by the predominant operators to make the utility of single Essex wide ticketing approach questionable.

360. Even in the limited areas where there is significant co-participation in the bus market (for example Colchester or the Southend Borders) the existing localised multi-operator ticketing arrangements such as the Essex Saver and the now digitally available Colchester Borough Card means that multi operator ticketing has limited utility to most residents of Essex.
361. In addition, large scale multi-operator, multi-journey journey ticket schemes require significant management and administration commitments and where prices are set below the economic level to boost passenger use compensation for bus operators for revenue foregone, at least in the short to medium term until and unless demand picks up.
362. Similarly ECC's ambition to achieve seamless, integrated local ticketing between operators and across different public transport modes is limited by funding and capacity. ECC is looking at working with PlusBus to extend its operational areas, but this requires PlusBus to be willing to do so and ECC does not have the authority to require them to co-operate with us, although early discussions have been positive.
363. Therefore, while ECC remains interested in the principle of developing zonal fares, flat fares and capped fares, beyond the current offer it lacks the resources and capacity to introduce them at this time, requiring significant external support and funding to do so.
364. Without direct central government funding therefore, Project Coral offers the best potential way forward and ECC will monitor the progress of the project and look at opportunities to join the programme as it develops.

#### **Aspirational Ambitions for the Bus network in Essex.**

365. ECC also has a set of wider ambitions, for the bus network for Essex, which are not funded and remain aspirational. These are set out in Section 6 below, but include:
- Developing further District based Enhanced Partnerships Across the remaining Essex Districts Essex
  - Revision of major city bus networks to introduce later evening and more frequent bus services based around enhanced partnerships.
  - Participation in any national shared ticketing scheme, i.e. via project Coral, subject to cost / resources. Possible extension of the Essex Saver Scheme.
  - Developing a revised Essex Saver multi operator ticketing scheme that makes it easier to use bus services across Essex.
  - Countywide improvement to RTPI at Key stops and interchanges.
  - Revise the Essex Bus Passenger Charter to develop a first class offer.
  - Network Electrification to introduce Zero Emission at roadside buses across the Essex Network in advance of the statutory timescale, including buses and charging facilities, based on ZEBRA2 costs for Basildon.
  - Introduction of Audio Visual announcements ahead of statutory requirements.
  - Phases 2 and 3 (2027/28 – 2029/30): Widen the digital offering to allow for the digitalisation of Adult Social Care (ASC) and Special Education Needs and Disability

(SEND) transport services and 29/30 – onwards): Gradual digitalisation of mainstream home to school transport.

- Larger Bus Infrastructure Schemes set out in **Table 20** linked to district level Enhanced Partnerships.

366. These therefore remain aspirational proposals and while ECC will continue to look for funding sources to commit to them, they are unlikely to be achievable without significant additional funding from Government or other sources.

## Section 5 Targets, performance monitoring and reporting.

367. In our BSIP we set out three targets. Our priority in 2021 was to return the network to pre-COVID-19 levels of service and patronage, reversing the significant fall, at one point of around 90% of pre pandemic levels. Bus Passenger use has still not reached this goal, so it remains our primary objective.
368. Our targets therefore remain focused on what bus passengers have said is most important to them:
- Reliability
  - Passenger recovery
  - Customer satisfaction
369. Further targets were related to passenger numbers.
370. These are:

- Target One: For reliability to meet the target of 95% of services operating within the Traffic Commissioners statutory 6-minute window of operations.
- Target Two: For passenger numbers to see a return to pre-COVID-19 levels of patronage of 40.7 million journeys.
- Target Three: For customer satisfaction to maintain an 86% (2019) overall journey satisfaction rating over what we expect to be a volatile time for the network.

### Target One: Bus Service Reliability.

371. Service punctuality levels for Essex are set out in **Table 21** below:

**Table 21 - Comparative bus service punctuality 2020/21 to 2021/22**

Year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Service punctuality with the Traffic Commissioners operational window of not more than one minutes early of five minutes late (95%)	94.5%	88.4%	88.0%

372. This is clearly disappointing however, there are some important factors that need to be taken into account to contextualise the raw reliability figures set out above:
- First that they are averages for Essex as a whole, and that performance will vary significantly between operator and different geographic areas across Essex.

- Second these figures are taken from national data held by DfT derived from the BODS (the Bus Open Data System), an analytical tool recording real journey information and comparing them to registered timetables. While this does offer a measure of service reliability it does not allow for reliability issues caused by factors outside bus operators control, such as road traffic incidents, poor weather, emergency or roadworks, variable congestion etc. As a result, bus operators consider it does not offer a full picture of service reliability in Essex.
- Third that many of the issues within the control of bus operators that reduced service reliability (driver shortages/availability) were still being felt in 2022/23, but have been addressed over 2023/24, for which national data is not yet available. This includes managing driver recruitment and adjusting timetables to reflect real journey times using AI analysis systems.

373. While ECC does not have the facility to compile its own reliability database, ongoing discussion with bus operators suggests that when factors not within the control of bus operators are allowed for, the reliability for services rises into the 90%+ range for most operators. This is comparable with the levels of reliability submitted by them prior to BODS becoming live.

374. Several factors influenced the operators view that reliability has improved over 2024. These include:

- The comprehensive network alterations conducted by Essex's larger operators over 2022/23.
- An aggressive driver recruitment, training and retention campaign undertaken by most operators.
- The adoption by some bus operators of advanced route and network planning through AI systems such as the "Prospective" AI system used by First Bus. Prospective's simulation engine can run thousands of simulated timetable scenarios making use of real time travel data to determine the best timetable for each service at a stop-by-stop level. This has allowed the identification of 'hot spots' for delays and variable delay times.
- While this has helped improve reliability, it has also resulted in an increase in small scale service changes which have potentially confused some bus users.

## **Target Two Bus Passenger Growth.**

375. As is demonstrated in Table 22 below, the passenger use trend from 2015 to 2019 of buses on Essex in 2019/20 was broadly stable, with small variations in use year on year, possibly due to weather or factors public events.

**Table 22 - Bus Passenger Numbers 2015/16 to 2022/23**

Financial Year	Essex passenger numbers 2015/16 to 23/24		
	Total Passenger Numbers for year (all operators)	Change in passenger numbers from prior year	Trend (% change) year on year
2015-16	41,342,995		
2016-17	41,731,831	388,836	0.94%
2017-18	41,239,583	-492,248	-1.18%
2018-19	41,420,643	181,060	0.44%
2019-20	40,774,681	-645,962	-1.56%
2020-21	12,431,915	-28,342,766	-69.51%
2021-22	26,209,054	13,777,139	110.82%
2022/23	32,700,441	6,491,387	24.77%
2023/24	33,656,963 (estimated)	956,522	2.93%
Total passenger change 2015/16 to 2023/24		7,686,032	-18.59%

376. The impact of Covid on bus use is immediately apparent from March 2020, with it alone accounting for over 80% of the fall that year.
377. 2020/21 experienced the main lock downs and hence the massive fall in bus use recorded to around 30% of 2019/20 levels.
378. 2021/22 saw continued restrictions, although these ended by spring 2022 and there was a significant recovery in passenger numbers over the year, though still well down potentially influenced by the changes in passenger travel habits, continued fear of infection and staff availability related unreliability.
379. 2022/23 saw a further strong recovery to around 75% of 2019/20 levels, reflecting better reliability, less fear of infection and the introduction of the £2 bus fare cap by the government in December 2022.
380. 2023/24 saw continued though less impressive growth of around 2.93%. Overall bus use in Essex remains 18% lower than 2019/20 levels.
381. Anecdotal data from larger bus operators suggests that 2024/25 has so far continued to see a small but steady rise in paying passenger use.

Much of this fall can be accounted for by a marked reduction in concessionary bus passenger use, which is considered below.

### Concessionary bus pass use.

382. A comparison of concessionary passenger numbers between 2018/19 and 2021/22 is set out in **Table 13** below.

**Table 13 - Comparison of concessionary passenger use 2019/20 to 2021/22.**

Total Passenger Journeys using ENCTS bus passes in Essex, 2018/19 to 2023/24					
Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Pax No.	12,709,516	3,583,064	6,836,632	7,828,961	8,257,336
Difference	0	-9,126,452	3,253,568	992,329	992,329
Overall change 2019/20 to 2023/24					-4,452,180

383. As might be expected a very steep drop on passenger numbers mirrors the fall in general bus use for 2020/21, but the recovery was markedly slower and even at the end of 2022/23 was still over one third down on 2019/20 Covid levels.
384. Given that concessionary pass use comprised around 30% of passengers in 2019/20, this means that the fall in concessionary passenger's accounts for around 10% of the overall fall in bus passengers.
385. While 2023/24 showed significant growth in passenger bus pass use – around 12.7%, the fall from 2019/20 still suggests a long-term alteration on the travel habits of pass holders (see 'Changing Travel Habits in Section 2 above), which is only being slowly reversed.
386. There has also been a small fall in the number of pass holders in Essex. In 2018/19 there were some 285,000 registered pass holders. As of June 2024, there are 279,633 registered pass holders, of whom, 262,376 were older people and 17,257 were people with qualifying disabilities, (6.17%). This is partially related to changes in the age criterion for qualification and may also be due to more people of the requisite age having and retaining a driving licence well into retirement than in earlier generations as well as choice.

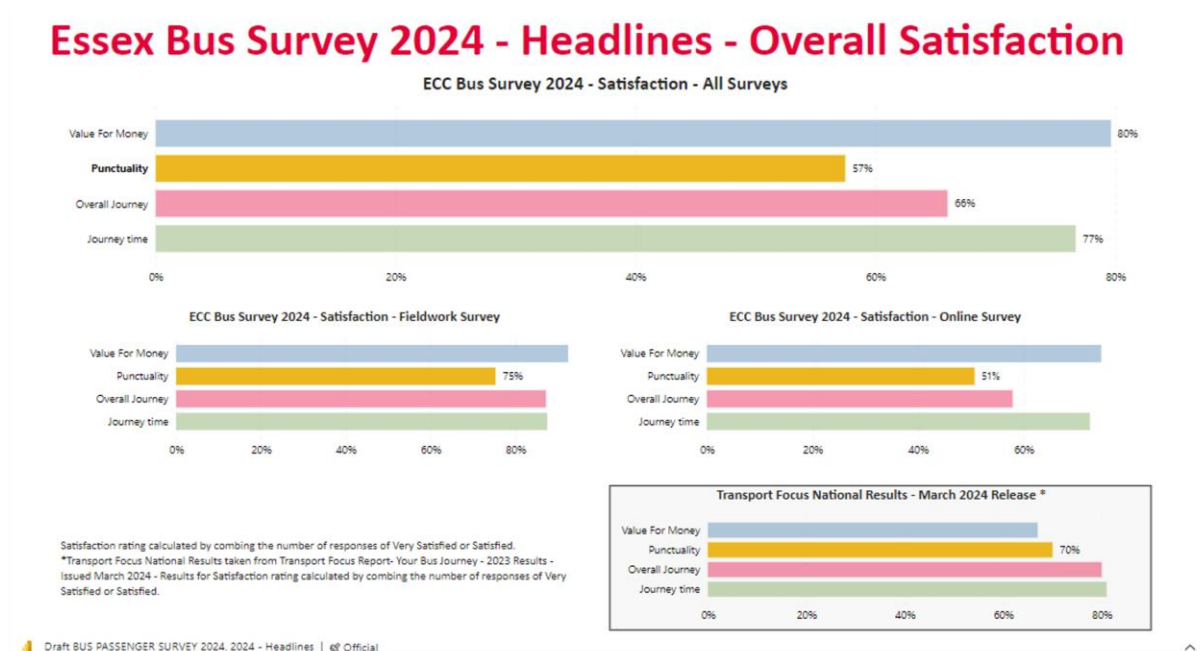
### Target Three Bus Passenger Satisfaction.

387. As noted in Section 4 above, Bus service satisfaction in Essex was measured for 2023 and 2024 through our annual Essex Bus Survey undertaken by **Lake Market Research**.
388. This was a change from our previous approach whereby we used the survey undertaken for ECC by Passenger Focus. As a result, some of the methodologies for data collection may have varied from those used in 2022 and may not be directly com
389. In 2024 People took part in Face-to-Face surveys at six locations across Essex: Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester, Harlow, Clacton, and Harwich, with a total of 845 responses

received during the 2-week survey period, 689 bus users and 156 non-bus users. Clacton and Harwich were included to link with our future Enhanced Partnership work in the district.

390. **The combined Journey Satisfaction with bus service across Essex rose from 54% in 2023 to 66% in 2024.**
391. This compares to an overall satisfaction of **86%** in 2019, so while a notable improvement year on year and even allowing for differences in sampling approaches between surveys, still falls short of our target for returning to 2019/20 satisfaction levels.
392. We also looked at three subsets of satisfaction. These were Value for Money, Punctuality and Journey times. **Table 24** below sets out the results for these factors and overall satisfaction.

**Table 24: Comparative measures of satisfaction with bus services in Essex.**



393. As can be seen from the above, satisfaction with Value for money stands at 80%, with Punctuality at 57%, and with journey times at 77%.
394. Satisfaction with value for money had improved, possibly driven by the national £2 fare cap.
395. The fall in satisfaction with punctuality undoubtedly reflects the fall in service reliability outlined above and suggests that a continued focus on improving reliability should remain a high priority, with the measures set out in Section 2 and through the plans for the development of local Enhanced Partnerships.
396. The fall in satisfaction with journey length year on year potentially reflects the network changes outlined in Section 2 above, with network thinning, route combination and timing adjustments in response to punctuality issues.

## Developing Additional Targets.

### Strategic Approach

397. In the 2021 BSIP, ECC set out some additional targets and measures that it was considering developing. These were:

- An Accessibility figure based on the percentage of the population with access to bus services/times of day/days of week.
- A Modal Share target for bus journeys as part of the overall travel.

398. While it has not been possible to develop these wider targets across Essex, the County Council has collaborated with partner planning authorities and housing developers to set such goals for new developments. Examples Include major new developments at Harlow, Chelmsford and Tendring (in the 6,000 to 10,000 house range) that have adopted 50-60% targets for sustainable travel (walking cycling and bus) for generated travel from the sites and the wider Harlow Gilston Garden Town approach that has adopted that figure for new developments and a 50% figure for the existing townscapes.

399. It is hoped that these issues can be further addressed through the development of the local enhanced partnerships that form the corner stone of our future strategy.

## Section 6 - BSIP schemes and proposals overview table.

Table 25 BSIP schemes and proposals overview table.

BSIP Overview table (required formats for all BSIPs)		
<b>Name of Local Authority</b>	Essex County Council	
<b>Enhanced Partnership Franchising Schemes covered by the BSIP</b>	Essex Countywide Enhanced Partnership (Current) District Level Partnerships (Planned)	
<b>Date of Publication</b>	12th August 2024	
<b>Web address (URL) of published BSIP</b>	<a href="https://www.essexhighways.org/getting-around/bus/bus-strategy">https://www.essexhighways.org/getting-around/bus/bus-strategy</a>	
<b>Improvements programme to 2025</b>	<b>List of named schemes and measures. Where appropriate provide location and cost.</b>	<b>Budget/est. Cost (£)</b>
<b>Bus priority infrastructure</b>	Small Scale bus support infrastructure projects across the County (See Table DFGHJ)	£100,000 ECC's capital funding
<b>Other bus infrastructure</b>	Basildon Volt project - Zebra 2 Funding to electrify the Basildon Bus Network	£4.9m (Zebra 2 Funding (committed £25.8m Commercial funding (committed)
	Tendring Levelling Up Fund: Proposed Infrastructure Improvements to 20+ bus stops across Clacton and Jaywick	£200,000 allocation of the Tendring Levelling Up Fund, subject to final Treasury approval.
	Bus service improvement programme (through Clacton's Long Term Plan for Town's bid) for Clacton potentially either long or short term, depending on funding <b>a)</b> A reduced fare scheme to support younger people getting into work in Clacton, <b>b)</b> Upgrading 100 bus stops in Clacton, <b>c)</b> Roll out replacement and improvement of Real Time Passenger Information at 30 sites around Clacton, <b>d)</b> Better Buses for Clacton grants to reduce age	Bids sought through the Long Term Plan for Towns fund for Clacton or alternative funding stream if this is not achieved) £2m revenue, b) £2m (capital) c) £1m (capital) d) £3m (revenue/grant)

	of bus fleet and work toward Euro 6 emissions levels	
<b>Bus service support</b>	Replacement of commercial withdrawals resulting from the end of BRG	Up to £2.4m, currently c. £460,000 year BSIP+ Funding over 2+ years
	Clacton Connect, first tranche - creation of the Tendring Enhanced Partnership and support for bus services	Up to £2m (BSIP+ funding allocation) over 2+ years
	Bus Shelter Transformation Programme Starting 2024/5	£2.998m (ECC funding and ongoing revenue from advertising)
	The Reach Transformational Project-extension of DigiGo digital demand responsive service.	up to £2.3m (BSIP+ funding) over 2+ years
	The Thrive Transformational pilot project identifying cost effective measures for delivering patronage growth on for several 'at risk' contracted local bus services.	£2.0m (BSIP+ funding)
<b>Fares support</b>	Look at potential for developing fares offers for younger people and job seekers.	Estimated £10m over 2 years, based on concessionary fare costs for the ENCTS scheme. No funding identified
<b>Other schemes &amp; measures</b>	TravelEssex multi-operator customer information, planning and journey booking system upgrades (extension of DigiGo to 31 March 2026).	£1.24m BSIP Capacity funding (for the Local Bus elements), future funding elements yet to be identified.
	The Tendring District Enhanced Partnership scheme to develop a district based Enhanced Bus Partnership in Tendring including service improvements, marketing and informational improvements	See Bus Support above.
	Developing further District based Enhanced Partnerships Across Essex	Estimated cost for full Implementation £12m (unfunded)

	Harlow Falcon Transitional Scheme. To develop and install a BRT scheme across Harlow allowing rapid, high quality and accessible public transport from the Gilston Development	Subject to negotiations with developers and bus operators. High level estimated cost as of 2019: Capital £300m, revenue of £25m over 30 years of development (unfunded).
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<b>Ambitions and proposals for 2025 and beyond</b>	<b>Description (60 words max) Description of proposals listing named schemes/measures with location, where appropriate</b>	<b>Estimated cost/order of cost (£)</b>
<b>Service level and network coverage</b>	Colchester and Tendring Rapid Transit Scheme High speed frequent service linking new developments on Colchester/Tendring Border to key attractor routes across the city with potential to link to the Park and Ride Service. Will include high quality vehicles and bus priority infrastructure on the development site and into the City.	Subject to negotiations with developers and bus operators. High level estimate of £25m including funding through Housing Infrastructure Fund. 20 year timescale There is no ECC funding available.
	Revision of major city bus networks to introduce later evening and more frequent bus services based around enhanced partnerships.	Estimated £8m revenue funding support over 4 years - There is no ECC funding available.
	BRT and bus priority measures associated with the Harlow Falcon Scheme as set out above	Part of the Scheme costs set out above 20 years build out
	Larger Bus Infrastructure Schemes set out in Table 20 linked to district level Enhanced Partnerships.	Estimate £100,000 revenue for design, Estimate £25m for capital funding (currently unsourced). There is no ECC funding available.
<b>Lower and simpler fares</b>	Participation in any national shared ticketing scheme, i.e. via project Coral, subject to cost / resources. Possible extension of the Essex Saver Scheme	Unknown costs and no funding identified.
<b>Ticketing</b>	Developing a revised Essex Saver multi operator ticketing scheme that makes it easier to use bus services across Essex	Estimate £50,000. There is no ECC funding available.

<b>Waiting and interchange facilities</b>	Essex Bus Shelter Transformation Project	TBD based on revenue from advertising yielded by project. Estimate to upgrade all stops £10m.
	Improvements to Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester and Harlow Bus Stations	Part of larger scheme package set out in Table 20 above.
<b>Bus information and network identity</b>	The Travel Essex Digital Platform Phases 2 and 3 (2027/28 – 2029/30): Widen the digital offering to allow for the digitalisation of Adult Social Care (ASC) and Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) transport services and 29/30 – onwards): Gradual digitalisation of mainstream home to school transport.	Dependent on Success of Phase 1 (see above). £3m high level estimate. There is no ECC funding available.
	Expanding the TravelEssex Brand to neighbouring Authorities	Expenses to be funded by partner authorities
	Countywide improvement to RTPI at Key stops and interchanges	High level estimated capital and revenue cost of £20m including an allowance for maintenance over 10 years. There is no ECC funding available.
<b>Bus passenger experience</b>	Revise the Essex Bus Passenger Charter to develop a first class offer	Estimated at £50,000 start and £50,000 annually revenue. There is no ECC funding available.
<b>Bus Fleet</b>	Network Electrification to introduce Zero Emission at roadside buses across the Essex Network in advance of the statutory timescale, including buses and charging facilities, based on ZEBRA2 costs for Basildon	Estimated £60m Public funding to leverage estimated £300m private sector funding. There is no ECC funding available.
<b>Accessibility and inclusion</b>	Introduction of Audio Visual announcements ahead of statutory requirements	High level estimate to retrofit bus network estimated at £20m. There is no ECC funding available.
<b>Longer term transformation of the network</b>	Continued sequential improvements to network through the roll out of Enhanced Partnerships	As set out under Enhanced Partnerships above. NB Funding for EP schemes beyond the current Tending project has yet to be identified.

## Appendix A: List of Key Urban and Interurban Bus corridor 2024

Key urban bus corridors and associated Service intervention points (SIPs) extracted from the Local Bus Service Priority Policy 2015-20

**Table 26: Key Urban Bus Corridors in Essex.**

	Town	Transport Corridor	Peak	Daytime	Evenings	Sundays
1	Basildon	Langdon Hills – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
2		Great Berry – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
3		King Edward Road – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
4		Laindon Centre – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
5		Lee Chapel North – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
6		Lee Chapel South – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
7		Basildon Hospital – Town Centre	20	60	60	60
8		Fryerns – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
9		Burnt Mills/Northlands -Town Centre	60	120	None	None
10		Felmores – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
11		Chalvedon – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
12		Long Riding – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
13		Pitsea Centre – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
14		Vange – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
15		Noak Bridge - Town Centre	60	120	None	None
16	Brentwood	Warley – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
17		Pilgrims Hatch – Rail Station	60	120	None	None
18		Bishops Hall – Rail Station	60	120	None	None
19		Three Arch – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
20		Hutton – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
21		Shenfield – Town Centre	30	120	None	None

22	Chelmsford	Newlands Spring – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
23		Melbourne – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
24		Chignall Estate – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
25		Woodhall Estate – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
26		Broomfield Hospital – Town Centre	20	120	60	60
27		Writtle – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
28		Westlands – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
29		North Springfield – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
30		Springfield – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
31		Chelmer Village – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
32		Springfield Park – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
33		Great Baddow – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
34		Meadgate – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
35		Moulsham Lodge – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
36		Tile Kiln – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
37		Galleywood – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
38	Clacton	Jaywick – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
39		Bockings Elm – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
40		Great Clacton – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
41		Burrsville – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
42		Holland – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
43	Colchester	Monkwick – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
44		St Michaels – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
45		Shrub End – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
46		Five Ways – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
47		Stanway – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
48		Lexden – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
49		West Bergholt – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
50		Mile End – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
51		General Hospital – Town Centre	20	60	60	60
52		North Station – Town Centre	20	60	60	60
53		Highwoods – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
54		Magdalen Wood – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
55		Parsons Heath – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
56		Greenstead – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
57		University – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
58		Rowhedge – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
59		Old Heath – Town Centre	30	120	None	None

60	Harlow	Latton Bush – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
61		Kingsmoor – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
62		Passmores – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
63		Sumners – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
64		Katherine’s – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
65		Great Parndon – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
66		Little Parndon – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
67		Mark Hall North – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
68		Mark Hall South – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
69		Old Harlow – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
70		Church Langley – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
71		Potter Street – Town Centre	30	120	None	None
72		Town Centre - Town Station	20	60	120	120
73	Braintree	Bocking – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
74		Black Notley – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
75		Mountbatten Road – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
76		Cressing Road – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
77		Great Notley – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
78	Rayleigh	Little Wheatleys – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
79		Eastwood – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
80		Hockley – Town Centre	60	120	None	None
81		Town Centre – Thundersley	60	120	None	None
82		Hullbridge – Town Centre	60	120	None	None

**Table 27: Key urban bus corridors and associated SIPs.**

Key Interurban Bus Corridors and associated Service intervention points (SIPs) extracted from the Local Bus Service Priority Policy 2015-20

Transport Corridor	Peak	Daytime	Evenings	Sundays
1. Harwich – Colchester	120	120	None	None
2. Clacton – Colchester	60	120	None	None
3. Ipswich – Colchester	120	120	None	None
4. Colchester – Halstead	120	120	None	None
5. Colchester – Braintree	60	120	None	None
6. Colchester – Maldon	120	120	None	None
7. Braintree – Halstead	120	120	None	None
8. Braintree – Chelmsford	60	120	None	None
14. Harlow – Chelmsford	60	120	None	None
15. Brentwood – Chelmsford	60	120	None	None

16. Basildon – Chelmsford	60	120	None	None
17. Southend – Chelmsford	120	120	None	None
18. S W Ferrers – Chelmsford	120	120	None	None
19. Maldon – Chelmsford	120	120	None	None
20. Basildon – Southend	60	120	None	None
21. Basildon – Billericay – Brentwood	60	120	None	None
22. Brentwood – Romford	60	120	None	None
23. Wickford – Southend	120	120	None	None
25. Bishops Stortford – Harlow	60	120	None	None
26. Saffron Walden – Bp’s Stortford	120	120	None	None
27. Canvey Island – Southend	120	120	None	None
28. Saffron Walden – Cambridge	120	120	None	None
29. Canvey Island - Chelmsford	120	120	None	None
30. Colchester - Chelmsford	60	120	None	None
31. Walton - Clacton	120	120	None	None
32. Harlow - Epping	120	120	None	None
33. Wickford - Basildon	120	120	None	None
34. Wickford - Chelmsford	120	120	None	None

## Appendix B: Bus Stations in Essex.

Bus Stations are divided onto **Major Interchanges (MI)** acting as foci for local urban/rural networks, cross Essex Inter-urban and long-distance networks (including coach services), **Local Interchanges (LI)**, acting as foci for town and Essex interurban networks and **Local Bus Stations (LBS)**, smaller stations acting as foci for the local bus network. Notes on known issues, site capacity and passenger facility quality are also attached.

**Table 28: Bus Stations and Interchanges in Essex.**

Location	Type	Notes
Chelmsford Bus Station	MI	Town centre site, modern design Fair to good passenger facilities. Co-located with Chelmsford Railway Station. Operating over service capacity and more demand expected Owned by ECC but technically leased to First. Only 3 layover bays – inadequate Scope to expand footprint and improve.
Basildon Bus Station	MI	Town centre site, Fair to poor passenger facilities. Located near Railway Station. Older design as part of town shopping centre. Operating over-service capacity more demand expected. Owned by a property management company and leased to First. No layover bays and recent on street provision removed by recent town centre scheme. Scope to improve through improved layout plus possible to expand footprint
Harlow Bus Station	MI	Town centre site, Fair to poor passenger facilities. Poor modal interchange options. Newer bespoke design but has aged poorly. Operating within current service capacity but more demand expected. Subject of Town Centre Renewal bid to government completely rebuild Also seen as terminus/interchange for new Harlow Sustainable Travel Corridor BRT service. Enclosed passenger waiting area is claustrophobic and uninviting. Air quality issue. Owned by Harlow District Council Limited layover bays Scope to expand footprint
Colchester 'Bus Station'	LI	On road bus terminus in Osborne/Stanwell Street. Design poor ad-hoc to fit pre-existing street scape. Passenger facilities poor. Located at bottom of a hill, so problematic for mobility impaired access to/from town centre. Modal interchange poor. Operating chronically above capacity. Long distance services use other locations across town. Vehicles frequently displaced from allocated stands -insufficient layover bays for key interurban bus station. Only scope for expansion is by use of land designated for neighbouring development. Air quality issues No room for expansion Close to Colchester Town Station

		Operated by CBC but on Highway's land
Braintree Bus Station	LI	<p>Town centre site bespoke bus station</p> <p>Modern design, - due to re-open November 2021</p> <p>Passenger facilities fair</p> <p>Modal interchange poor, some distance from Rail station, limited cycle storage.</p> <p>Low level of layover bays provided.</p> <p>Operating within capacity, some future proofing built into new layout, limited room for expansion ( which is expected)</p> <p>Wider town road layout makes access for buses complex.</p> <p>Owned by Braintree District Council</p> <p>Limited scope to expand</p>
Harwich Bus Station	LI	<p>Rail Interchange Site</p> <p>Non town centre location</p> <p>Passenger facilities poor</p> <p>Operating within capacity</p> <p>Owned by Greater Anglia</p> <p>Sufficient layover provision</p> <p>Scope to re plan, but not needed yet</p>
Clacton Pier Avenue Interchange	LI	<p>On road bus terminus - a town centre cluster of stops</p> <p>Passenger facilities poor</p> <p>Some distance from Rail Station-interchange poor</p> <p>Operating within capacity</p> <p>Located on public highway.</p> <p>Insufficient layover provision</p> <p>Expanded facilities could be provided – could be better to reuse former bus station site</p>
Colchester General Hospital Interchange	LBS	<p>Modern design</p> <p>Passenger facilities modernised but limited.</p> <p>Recently rebuilt.</p> <p>Operating over capacity – northbound services cannot serve the site.</p> <p>Entirely served by Colchester town services</p> <p>Owned by North Essex and Suffolk Hospital Trust</p> <p>No layover provision for buses or drivers.</p> <p>Low scope for expansion unless car park used</p>
Witham Rail Station	LI	<p>Rail Interchange Site</p> <p>Out of town location</p> <p>Good interchange with rail service</p> <p>Served by interurban and local services.</p> <p>Poor quality infrastructure</p> <p>Passenger facilities poor</p> <p>Small cluster of stops adjacent to station.</p> <p>On highway location</p> <p>No layover provision for buses or drivers</p> <p>Could expand on street provision</p>
Halstead, Butler Road	LBS	<p>Town edge town location</p> <p>Not served by any commercial bus services (services using it are ECC contracted services)</p> <p>Poor level of passenger facilities</p> <p>Commercial services serve High Street stops instead.</p> <p>Ownership unclear.</p> <p>Limited layover provision for buses and drivers</p> <p>Scope to make more useful facility.</p>
Broomfield Hospital Interchange	LBS	<p>Modern design but makes poor use of available space.</p> <p>Needs redesign to enable it to cope with growing needs.</p> <p>Some modal conflict with non-emergency ambulance services and patient drops off.</p> <p>Mainly served by Chelmsford City services, but also has interurban services to Stansted/Braintree/Colchester</p> <p>Owned by Mid and south Essex NHS trust.</p>

		<p>Limited layover provision</p> <p>No scope for expansion, but could improve layout on existing footprint.</p> <p>Passenger facilities ( inside hospital) fair to good.</p>
Stansted Airport	MI	<p>Rail/Air Interchange Site</p> <p>Was designated as a Regional Interchange Centre</p> <p>Extensive open bus area</p> <p>Bus turning area has been open concrete- unattractive for passengers.</p> <p>Limited capacity of undercover passenger facilities</p> <p>Large range of facilities available from main airport concourse</p> <p>Operating within capacity</p> <p>Major location for coach services and interurban bus services.</p> <p>Good connectivity with rail and air networks.</p> <p>Owned by MAG group.</p> <p>Sufficient layover provision</p> <p>Some scope for expansion, but needs better designed</p>
Brentwood Rail Station	LI	<p>Rail/bus interchange site</p> <p>Interchange point for the Crossrail rail line.</p> <p>But only 3 on-street stops, with limited passenger waiting facilities and congestion issues.</p> <p>Operating significantly over capacity and expected to get worse as demand grows due to housing and cross rail.</p> <p>Most Brentwood services operate to or past the station.</p> <p>No layover provision.</p> <p>Scope to build better facility adjacent to platform 4</p>
Epping LUL Station	LI	<p>Underground/Interchange Site</p> <p>TfL Owned interchange.</p> <p>Poor level of facilities</p> <p>Operating significantly over capacity</p> <p>Dated design.</p> <p>Significant modal conflict on forecourt area</p> <p>Vehicle access poor for larger buses that must shunt to get around turning point.</p> <p>Good access to TfL Central Line</p> <p>Served by both local and interurban services.</p> <p>No layover provision.</p> <p>Scope to expand within car park, should be requirement when TfL seek permission to sell some land</p>
Loughton LUL Station	LI	<p>Underground/Rail Interchange Site</p> <p>Good access to TfL Central Line</p> <p>Modern design</p> <p>Operating within capacity at present</p> <p>Local and interurban services operate on high frequencies.</p> <p>TfL Owned facility.</p> <p>Adequate layover provision</p> <p>Footprint sufficient</p> <p>Parking issues around site</p>
Billerica Rail Station	LI	<p>Rail Interchange Site</p> <p>Good access to rail network</p> <p>Cluster of stops on Rail Station forecourt.</p> <p>ECC are Working with Greater Anglia to provide modal separation and introduce safety features within station rebuild project.</p> <p>Located some distance from town centre.</p> <p>Likely to need increased capacity in future, satisfactory at present.</p> <p>Hub for several interurban services in all directions</p> <p>Greater Anglia have franchise for station.</p> <p>No Layover provision.</p> <p>No scope to expand footprint</p>

South Benfleet Station	LI	<p>Stops either side of wide road. Severe disruption caused by cars dropping off passengers. Busy location as located on entrance to Canvey Island and provides link to rail network. Poor level of passenger facilities Good interchange with Rail Network Services within Southend conurbation C2C have franchise for station. No layover provision. Could re purpose adjacent land / highway to provide better facility</p>
Wickford Rail Station/Wickford 'Swans' bus stop cluster	LI	<p>Rail Interchange Site Recently refurbished. Out of town location. Good interchange with rail network Low level of passenger facilities Most services in town do not serve station but use stop cluster at Wickford Swans due to bus access issues. Some passengers also a walk from town centre facilities Rail Station operating within capacity, Wickford Swans cluster operating over capacity. Greater Anglia have franchise for station. Limited layover provision No scope to expand</p>
Rayleigh Rail Station	LBS	<p>Rail Interchange Site Out of town location Operating over capacity Local and interurban services use the interchange. Forecourt requires redesign to incorporate modal separation and improve operational soundness. Low level of passenger facilities Greater Anglia have franchise for station. No layover provision. Limited scope to expand, but existing forecourt could be better designed</p>
Basildon Hospital Interchange (on Hospital grounds)	LI	<p>Old fashioned and tired design – due to be refurbished but with no extra capacity built in Serves local and interurban services. Poor level of passenger facilities Out of town location, but suitable for accessing edge of hospital building complex Operating over capacity Owned by Mid and south Essex NHS trust. Inadequate layover provision No scope to expand yet – but may be able to in future</p>
Chelmsford Retail Market	LBS	<p>Sub Station to Min Chelmsford station nearer town centre underneath multi storey car park. Operating over capacity Well located for access to Chelmsford Retail core. Poor facilities and design that provides issues related to personal safety. Only accommodates buses operating in one direction. Compact design under multi storey car park limits scope for expansion. Owned by Chelmsford City Council No layover provision. No scope to expand</p>
Audley End Station	LBS	<p>Rail Interchange Site Out of town site. On road stops serve main 'town' services Audley End is the rail station for Saffron Walden – good access to rail network. Low level passenger facilities</p>

		<p>Operating within capacity at present, but will need to expand for new network planned.</p> <p>Mostly interurban market town services</p> <p>Greater Anglia have franchise for station.</p> <p>Limited layover provision</p> <p>Scope to expand</p>
Harlow Town Rail Station	LBS	<p>Rail Interchange Site</p> <p>Good interchange with rail network</p> <p>Low level of passenger facilities</p> <p>Tired, old, unwelcoming structure,</p> <p>Poor layout</p> <p>Lightly served by local services throughout the day, some additional trips in peak times.</p> <p>Operating under capacity at present, but likely to struggle to cope with future expansion of HGGT and bus network.</p> <p>Greater Anglia have franchise for station.</p> <p>Layover provision as stands underutilised.</p> <p>Limited scope to expand, but better operational efficiency can come from redesign</p>
Colchester Mainline Station	LBS	<p>Rail Interchange Site</p> <p>Good access to rail network</p> <p>Outdated and tired looking passenger facilities, for rail users. Bus passenger facilities poor.</p> <p>Only served by 'terminating' services (ones that end at the station) due to congestion levels on station forecourt.</p> <p>Most other buses serve stops on North Station Road a short walk away, but poor signage and information.</p> <p>Station related stops as a whole operating over capacity and this will get worse as the town bus network grows.</p> <p>Some interurban services but mostly Colchester town bus services</p> <p>Greater Anglia have franchise for station.</p> <p>No layover provision.</p> <p>Scope to expand by removing other modes from forecourt</p>
Manningtree Rail Station	LI	<p>Rail Interchange Site</p> <p>Very compact station forecourt</p> <p>Inadequate bus turning facility made worse by modal conflict.</p> <p>Poor level of facilities</p> <p>Access road layout makes serving the station difficult.</p> <p>Excellent access to rail network</p> <p>Only currently served by 2 infrequent bus services</p> <p>Greater Anglia have franchise for station.</p> <p>No layover provisions.</p> <p>Limited scope to expand, but forecourt needs complete redesign.</p>

