

Public Transport Strategy Document

The following notes refer primarily to the Public Transport Strategy Document, as published at: https://ask.warwickshire.gov.uk/insights-service/local-transport-plan/supporting_documents/03%20Public%20Transport%20Strategy%201.pdf

General comments

Positives

- It is good to see the acknowledgement of various barriers to public transport, including inadequate bus shelters and – in particular – cost of fares (*page three*).
- It is also good to see an acknowledgement that the growth in private motor traffic is having a negative impact on the provision and attractiveness of bus services (*page four*).

Could be improved

- Similar to comments elsewhere, the opening page to this strategy talks about “encouraging additional use of public transport”. This must first be enabled so that people *want* to use public transport, where it is seen as an easy, affordable way to travel. Encouragement always comes after enablement and this must be emphasised throughout the LTP.
- Further to the acknowledgement of the rise in private motor traffic which is causing a negative impact on bus services (*page four*), this would be an opportunity to again emphasise that the continued upward trend in private vehicles registered in the county is unsustainable and this trend cannot continue.
- Page five refers to public transport becoming a “*first choice travel option*”, but this does not match the Travel Hierarchy. Public transport should be the third choice travel option behind walking and cycling, but ahead of car share and private car use. The paragraph should be worded to reflect this hierarchy.

Negatives

- On page five, under the ambitions, the first point talks about “*economic, social and environmental benefits*”. This must be re-ordered to “*environmental, social and economic benefits*” – environmental considerations **must** come before everything else.

The third bullet point in this section speaks about new developments being “*less dependent on car usage*”. This must be changed to read, “*new developments are not dependent on car usage*”. The former sentence, as published, suggests that even in new developments going forward, people will be negatively impacted by not having (or having access to) a private car. This must not be the case.

- Page six has a positive sounding statement about WCC’s role in supporting and investing in bus initiatives to make public transport more attractive. This is phrased in the current tense, not as an ambition. However, the included chart does not match the statement. There is a clear downward trend in passenger numbers and council expenditure from 2015.

- The primary focus of this strategy appears to be bus services. While these are important, rail is also essential to enable public transport on longer journeys within and beyond the county borders. Rail is only given proper mention in PT2.
- There is no mention of increasing the electrification of rail services such as on the NUCKLE line, to reduce the number of diesel multiple units on the network.

Focus on: Public Transport Policies

- The numbered Public Transport policies suggest these may be in a particular order of preference or priority e.g., that PT1 is more important than PT3. It should be clarified whether this is or is not the case.
- As above, this section talks about encouraging people to use public transport. This will fail unless it is *enabled*, to be seen and experienced as affordable, safe, accessible and convenient. Enablement must be the key focus of this strategy, in so far as it is within the remit and influence of the County Council to do so.

Also in the opening paragraph to this section is the phrase “*we will strive to exploit opportunities...*” – similar to the above comments about the use of the “seek” in other parts of the Local Transport Plan, this waters down commitments to be near meaningless. This must be reworded to “*we will exploit opportunities...*”.

- **PT2** – This policy position makes reference to improved connections but with a focus on bus transport. Instead, focus on improved multi-modal transport interchange, working to ensure that buses AND trains have good geographical and service connections. Linking in with the Active Travel Strategy, not only should high quality inclusive, secure, and covered cycle parking be provided (as noted), but access to a well-developed, high quality, safe cycle network.

There is also reference to electric vehicle charging points at stations. It does not define this but the assumption may be that this is specifically related to electric car charging. This should be clarified and broadened out to include electric cycle charging. Care also needs to be taken with regard to the accommodation of cars at stations. The focus must be on travel to stations by active travel, public transport, car share, or taxi. Long-term car parking requires substantial facilities often in key town centre locations. Beyond limited accommodation, especially for disabled people, this is not an appropriate use of space and resources.

- **PT3** – Cost is a significant barrier to public transport, especially when travelling as a group. While convenience and flexibility of ticketing options and payment methods is important, a focus needs to be made on bringing costs down. Accepting there is perhaps limited impact the County Council can have here, it must be acknowledged that public transport is currently more expensive than driving (especially where people already have committed costs to an existing vehicle) and can offer less convenience. This is a fundamental problem with public transport in the UK and must be addressed to enable a shift from private cars to buses and

trains. The County Council must use whatever means it has to help bring about change in this area.