

BUS STRATEGY REVIEW GROUP - FINAL REPORT (DECEMBER 2002)
ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND LOCALITIES COMMITTEE

Progress on Recommendations

The **Bus Strategy Review Group** in its **Final Report (December 2002)** set out 47 recommendations grouped under the key issues of infrastructure, routes, quality, information, accessibility, ticketing and fares and the role of the council, with issues addressed within each of these areas.

Infrastructure

Recommendation 1 Named Bus Stops

- a) Bus stops and shelters should be named and that the naming process should be undertaken through consultation with local people, Parish Councils and the bus companies.
- b) Bus stop names should be prominently displayed on bus shelters and shown on maps and other information.
- c) Bus stop names and numbering should also be displayed on both ends of the shelter.
- d) The process of naming stops should be incremental starting with the most obvious and most commonly used locations.

Progress:

(a)(d) all bus stops are now named in accordance with the national standard developed to underpin Traveline
 (b)(c) bus stop names are included on flags, but not on the council produced bus map due to lack of space

Recommendation 2 Hail and Ride

- a) Where possible hail and ride sections should be equipped with fixed bus shelters, to encourage passengers to congregate in designated areas.
- b) Where fixed bus shelters are not possible, stops with timetable information but without shelters should be provided to encourage passengers to congregate at an appropriate location.

Progress:

There has been some progress in this area in equipping hail and ride sections with fixed bus shelters.
 The new Bus Strategy will recommend moving away from hail & ride in order to remove the confusion over where a bus might stop, allow for better publicity to be given to the service, enable easier access onto the buses and facilitate the provision of audio "next stop" announcements

Recommendation 3 Bus Shelter Design and Location

- a) Bus shelters should have adequate shelter, seating, lighting and information. Minimum standards should be developed.
- b) At key locations, such as interchange points (see recommendation 4 below), intercom-speaking facilities should be introduced.

- c) A survey of bus stops and shelters in Milton Keynes should be undertaken, in consultation with local people and Parish Councils, to identify poorly located stops, where both passengers and drivers do not have a good line of sight. An action plan should be developed to address problems identified, and minimum standards should be considered.

Progress:

- a) a minimum standard has been devised, and is being introduced subject to funding.
b) no progress
c) no progress - with many stops located in laybys, repositioning stops would be very expensive.

Recommendation 4 Interchange Points

- a) A full review of existing interchange points should be undertaken with the objective of providing better and faster routes throughout the city, better centres for information and better waiting facilities.
b) The following locations should be designated as key interchange points: Bletchley, the Hospital, Wolverton, CMK, CMK Rail Station, Westcroft and Kingston. Similar facilities in the North of the new City and the Open University should also be considered.

Progress:

- a) b) current policies take on board these ideas, with all these named points being considered as key interchange points.

Recommendation 5 Infrastructural changes

- a) One of the features of Milton Keynes bus services is that buses travel East/West through the City Centre and then often North South on their main route. This produces a number of anomalies. For example at CMK it is possible to catch buses to Bletchley from stops opposite each other. This mitigates against signing such as 'buses for Bletchley'. The group notes that the CMK Structure Plan should address issues around integrated transport and recommends that solutions to these anomalies are explored.
b) At the Hospital/Netherfield interchange a solution should be found that will enable all buses to converge on one side of the road. For most passengers at this busy location such a facility would double the frequencies of the buses they could catch.

Progress:

- a) No progress - this is one issue that is not easily resolved
b) No progress - funding has not been available to deliver this ideal solution.

Recommendation 6 Traffic Management (traffic calming)

A policy of removing or altering vertical and non-bus friendly traffic calming to other non-vertical schemes or safety cushions is needed. A programme to remove at least 80% of all such obstacles within 5 years is recommended, starting immediately with those that affect a number of bus services and affect the most passengers.

Progress:

No progress on this point.

Recommendation 7 Bus Priority Measures

The council should seriously consider developing more bus priority measures; these should include bus lanes, designated lanes and priority lanes. The possibility of the traffic light system in Central Milton Keynes being responsive to oncoming buses should also be explored.

Progress:

No progress on this point, delivery of traffic light priority would require an upgrade to the traffic signal system

Recommendation 8 Low floor buses and raised kerbs

The policy of introducing low floor buses with raised kerbs to facilitate entry and exits from and onto buses is to be welcomed and the majority of the group (five members) felt that these improvements should be phased in at the earliest opportunity. However two group members also felt that such a combination should be available at 30% of all stops within a year and 90% of all stops within 5 years.

Progress:

Good progress - all buses used on urban services are low floor, and all cross boundary services are wheelchair accessible. Progress on upgrading stops has been slow but is continuing.

Recommendation 9 Bletchley Bus Station

Bletchley Bus Station should be upgraded with improved passenger and driver facilities as well as a travel information centre, possibly as part of the Bletchley regeneration scheme.

Progress:

Little progress - the Bletchley regeneration scheme has not been delivered but improvements are planned later in the current financial year.

Recommendation 10 Planning policy and the development of bus services

- a) Newly developing areas should be provided with a level of bus service that is consistent with the level that would be reasonable once they are fully developed. We recommend that planning policies be amended and developed to ensure that development occurs sequentially and in a less fragmented way.
- b) All new developments should take into account bus travel and install appropriate traffic calming measures that do not have a negative impact on bus services.

Progress:

There has been some progress on these points, but it is still inconsistent.

Routes

Recommendation 11 Key Corridor Routes

Key corridor routes should be identified and developed and this should be a high priority.

Progress:

Key corridor routes have been identified (currently the 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 300).

Recommendation 12 Fast Routes and Local Services

- a) A dual approach to fast routes whereby both fast and local services are developed. The policy described above (recommendation 4) of making enhanced use of interchange points may provide an opportunity to address both needs.
- b) Fast Direct Links should generally use grid roads between destinations. There are some obvious exceptions such as Newport Road (New Bradwell), Jonathans (Coffee Hall), and Whaddon Way (Bletchley). Other routes are more likely to use roads through housing estates.
- c) In order to satisfy local demand a range of services, possibly circular in nature should be developed that will service local estates with CMK and at least one other principal interchange facility.

Progress:

There has been little progress on this point, most routes serve a mix of estate and grid roads.

Recommendation 13 Accessing Employment and Industrial Areas

- a) Evening bus services should be developed to ensure that major industrial and employment areas where shift working is undertaken are served
- b) The main industrial estates, employment centres and educational campuses should also be adequately serviced either by careful route planning alongside the recommendations above or by other routes if necessary.
- c) Direct services linking towns to the north of central Milton Keynes (Newport Pagnell, New Bradwell, Wolverton and Stony Stratford) nearby industrial areas and educational facilities should be considered for improvement.

Progress:

There has been little progress on this point, and in fact recent cuts to council budgets have reduced provision of evening services

Recommendation 14 Accessing Education

- a) A strategy should be developed to ensure that the main educational campuses are well served. Routing opportunities should be considered at all campuses, such as Woughton, working alongside students and the educational establishments concerned.
- b) Consideration should be given to how school bus services and ordinary bus services could co-operate better together.
- c) The possibility of linking the concessionary fares for children and young people alongside the provision of free home to school transport, for those entitled to this should be explored. There are particular opportunities here for the 16 to 18 age group.

Progress:

- a) b) There has been no progress on this point, although recent developments to bus services around St Pauls may provide a model for other schools/colleges.
- c) No progress, and in recent years provision of free transport for post 16 students has been withdrawn.

Recommendation 15 Accessing the Hospital

A review of routes should be undertaken to ensure that all areas have good direct links to the Hospital.

Progress:

Some areas have improved/new links to the hospital, other areas have lost out in the commercial service changes.

Recommendation 16 Park and Ride Services

- a) The 210 service should be developed as a model, integrating park and ride facilities with other services. A strategy should be developed to support this.
- b) The 210 service should run to Kingston at weekends.
- c) The potential of developing a similar service that includes Park and Ride from the MK Bowl site should also be explored.
- d) The 210 should be developed and times extended to ensure that it better covers employment needs.

In addition a minority of the group (2 members) felt that:

- e) 210 frequencies should be improved.

Progress:

Service 300 serving Coachway, integrates park and ride facilities with other services.

Service 210 no longer exists so other points are no longer relevant.

Recommendation 17 Regional Links

- a) A strategy to ensure that Milton Keynes is well linked with other towns and cities in the sub region (Luton, Bedford, Oxford, Northampton and Cambridge for example) should be developed, alongside and to compliment rail travel.
- b) Long distance coach services should also form an important part of a regional strategy.

Progress:

A separate strategy has not been developed, but working with neighbouring authorities to improve services is a part of current LTP and Bus Strategy policies.

4.2.3 Quality

Recommendation 18 Quality Bus Partnerships

The current approach to developing Quality Bus Partnerships should be retained and enhanced.

Progress:

It is not clear what this means - the council has a QBP agreement with Arriva.

Recommendation 19 Service Frequency

- a) Using existing routes the group recommends that the Council and the bus company seek to find a way to increase the frequency on the following routes 5, 14, 23, and 4 to at least 4 or possibly 5 an hour during the day. We believe that this objective should be achieved within 3 years commencing with the No 5 service.

- b) Saturday timetables should reflect different travel patterns compared to weekday services, however they should not generally offer a reduced bus service.

Progress:

There have been frequency improvements but these have been diluted by the effects of the recession. Saturday services are now more consistent with Monday to Friday.

Recommendation 20 Evening, Sunday and Night Time Services

- a) We recommend that the Council uses its powers to commission bus services to considerably improve evening and Sunday services, to complement shopping, leisure and employment needs.
- b) A reasonably comprehensive network of services should be available up to at least 11pm in the evening. Consideration should also be given to ensuring that at least key employment areas can be reached by 6am in the morning.
- c) The group acknowledges that larger towns have been able to develop all night services in a way that is perhaps beyond the reach of MK at the moment. However the group does recommend that further attempts and experiments aimed at this market up to and including at least 2am be investigated.
- d) The safety of both passengers and staff should be considered on any services that might either go through potential trouble spots or at certain times of day, especially with evening and late night services.

Progress:

On this point, there had been considerable progress but unfortunately the value for money considerations and need to make budget savings have reduced the evening and Sunday coverage. There is a commercial night service on the 5 route.

Recommendation 21 Customer Comments

- a) It should be made easier for passengers to complain or comment about services, with freepost complaint/comment forms available on buses.
- b) The council should consider setting up bus user forums.

Progress:

- a) The development of web and social media has fulfilled this objective
- b) A bus user group has been set up.

Recommendation 22 Minimum Service Standards

Milton Keynes Council should develop a coherent service standard as part of a single document and this should be made available to members of the public and bus users. In addition a minority of the group (3 members) made a further recommendation detailing the level of service standard.

Access to services

- a) That in the urban area of Milton Keynes (including Newport Pagnell) that bus shelters along bus routes are provided within 500 metres of all houses to at least to at least 95% of the population.
- b) That at least 75% of the population in the urban area live within 300 metres of such a bus shelter.
- c) That at least 75% of the population in rural areas live within 500 metres of a bus shelter on a bus route.

- d) That direct services connecting to Central Milton Keynes be available for all parts of the urban area and at least the principal towns in the rural area including Lavendon, Olney, Sherington, Hanslope and Woburn Sands.
- e) That in the Urban area 95% of the population live within 500 metres of a bus shelter that provides services direct to Central Milton Keynes on at least the following basis
 - 1) Daytime Half Hourly. Early morning and evening until 11.30pm and Sundays Hourly
 - 2) Similar frequencies to at least one other major interchange point (*previously described*)
- f) That the major towns and principal villages in the rural area enjoy a service frequency of at least hourly during the daytime and two hourly in the evenings until 11pm to Central Milton Keynes and at least one other major interchange point.
- g) That fast direct routes be provided from and to the following destinations on at least a 5 per hour day time basis
 - 1) Newport Pagnell to CMK
 - 2) Bletchley to CMK
 - 3) Bletchley to CMK via West Bletchley
 - 4) Lakes Estate to CMK via Bletchley
 - 5) Hospital to CMK
 - 6) Hospital to Bletchley
 - 7) Wolverton to CMK
- h) That fast direct routes be provided from and to the following destinations on at least a twenty minute day time basis
 - 1) Kingston to CMK
 - 2) Kingston to Bletchley
 - 3) Westcroft to CMK
 - 4) Westcroft to Bletchley
 - 5) Stony Stratford to Wolverton/CMK

Punctuality

- i) The group recommends minimum service acceptability levels, as on trains e.g. 95% of services should reach their destination within say 5 mins of time and 98% of services should run.

Cleanliness

- j) The council should adopt minimum cleaning standards and frequencies for bus shelters.

Lighting and visibility standards

- k) The council should adopt minimum lighting requirements for bus shelters.

Progress:

A “coherent service standard as part of a single document” has not been developed. On the access to services points, some of this has been achieved, but within the commercial services provided and other budgets available it would not be possible to deliver the minimum frequency standards set out above.

Punctuality standards are set by the Traffic Commissioner.

There is a contract in place for bus shelter maintenance which sets cleaning standards.

The standard specification for new bus shelters includes lighting standards.

Recommendation 23 Travel Information Centre Strategy

A Travel Information Centre strategy should be developed in line with emerging development plans for CMK. This should include consideration of a centre close to the main bus stops in CMK where information as well as tickets and passes would be available. It should also consider smaller stations in other centres and interchange points. The strategy should also consider the use of unstaffed electronic information points. Information available on websites should also be developed to complement this recommendation.

Progress:

Arriva provide a staffed information centre in CMK.

The information on the council and other websites has been improved.

Recommendation 24 Bus Route Maps

- a) A new bus route map should be designed with simplicity, clarity and accessibility in mind.
- b) Simplified bus route maps covering key routes and interchanges should also be developed.

Progress:

Some progress has been made on these points.

Recommendation 25 Bus Timetable

- a) Timetable updates should be produced on a regular basis (at least 3 times a year).
- b) The distribution of the timetable should be reviewed and improved.
- c) Pocket timetables produced by rail companies are a good example to follow.
- d) Efforts should be made to produce timetable information at route or area level, which is far easier to use.

Progress:

Some progress has been made on these points, but the key is providing information in a variety of formats.

Recommendation 26 Co-ordination of Timetable Changes

Bus companies should be encouraged to make timetable changes less often and on co-ordinated, pre arranged dates.

Progress:

Within the borough timetable changes are limited, but cross boundary services are less easy to influence.

Recommendation 27 Information in Community Languages

The Council should investigate providing transport information in a variety of community languages.

Progress:

Council publicity includes the “other languages” statement.

Recommendation 28 Marketing and Publicity

- a) A major marketing strategy should be developed to promote bus usage within Milton Keynes.
- b) The group also recommends that a major publicity drive should be associated with this strategy.

Progress:

Little progress, until the recent “Get on Board” campaign.

Recommendation 29 Information at Bus Stops

- a) Services and routes available from stops should be marked on both ends of shelters.
- b) The main destinations and interchange points that can be reached from the stop should be listed.
- c) All shelters should include details of where to get more information, such as phone numbers and web sites.
- d) First and last bus times on each route using that stop should be highlighted as on the Tube.
- e) If zones were introduced, zoning signs or colours should be clearly marked on the stops and shelters.
- f) Real-time information should be introduced on a rolling programme beginning with some of the key routes and locations.
- g) Where the 24-hour clock system is being used, a conversion table should be shown.

Progress:

Almost 100% of stops have a timetable display.

Some progress on other points, but there is a need to balance start up costs and ongoing maintenance.

RTPI displays are in place at 50 stops, and in other key locations.

Recommendation 30 Information on Buses

A selection of timetables and route maps should be available on all buses.

Progress:

Some progress on this point, but unfortunately still quite patchy.

Recommendation 31 Signage in the Shopping Centre

Directional signage should be deployed at the main shopping and entertainment centres (particularly at CMK) to direct people towards buses.

Progress:

Some progress on this point, with the linkage between the wayfinding strategy and work being done through the Get on Board campaign.

4.2.5 Accessibility

Recommendation 32 Better Access for People with Disabilities

- a) Better availability of large print information
- b) Audible announcements of approaching stops
- c) Enhanced driver training
- d) Progressive introduction of vehicles to full DIPTAC standards
- e) Measures to improve lighting, remove dark vegetation cover and other community safety measures from grid road bus stops into the main housing estates
- f) Larger number and service information on the front of bus vehicles.
- g) Similar information on the side of vehicles
- h) Adequate storage (pushchairs and luggage) facilities in the buses
- i) Better facilities inside buses for the disabled

Progress:

- a) large print information is available on request
- b) this is being progressed, subject to costs/funding, in this financial year
- c) driver training has been enhanced in recent years with the driver CPC regulations
- d) f) g) h) i) Good progress - all buses used on urban services are low floor, and all cross boundary services are wheelchair accessible.
- e) Little progress

Recommendation 33 Addressing the Needs of Certain Wards

We recommend that the specific needs of estates and wards with low car ownership, high unemployment, low incomes and a high level of dependency on public transport be investigated and addressed.

Progress:

Little progress on this point, although LTP2 did include an accessibility strategy.

Recommendation 34 Bus Users from Black and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds

The review group recommends that further work is undertaken to investigate and ascertain the particular needs of bus users from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Progress:

Little progress on this point.

Recommendation 35 Concessionary fares for the elderly and disabled

- a) The group recommends concessionary fares for the elderly and disabled should be incrementally reduced with the objective of achieving free transport for these groups within 3 years.
- b) The group also recommends that concessionary fares are made available to both men and women at the age of 60.

Progress:

Achieved, due to provision of national scheme.

Recommendation 36 Reciprocal agreements for concessionary fares when journeys cross local boundaries

The Council should investigate the possibility of instituting reciprocal concessionary fares arrangements for passholders where their journey goes across neighbouring authorities.

Progress:

Achieved, due to provision of national scheme.

Recommendation 37 Concessionary fares for young people

- a) It is recommended that the concessionary fares scheme for children and young people (under 19 if still in full time education) should be better promoted.
- b) The charge for issuing the pass should be dropped (in line with the arrangements for the elderly and disabled).
- c) Schools and colleges should be used as information dissemination points, and schools enabled and encouraged to issue such passes.
- d) In addition a minority of the group (3 members) made a further recommendation:
- e) It is also recommended that journey costs be reduced from the current 50p to 35p.

Progress:

Progress on all these points, but recent centralisation of card production has been necessary due to change to "All-in-One MK" card.

The 35p fares was introduced but has recently been increased.

Recommendation 38 Concessionary fares for the blind

If the Council is unable to accept Recommendation 35 (free concessionary travel for the elderly and disabled), then the group recommends that it be applied to certain disabled groups, in particular the blind.

Progress:

Achieved, due to provision of national scheme.

Recommendation 39 Family Tickets

Family ticketing arrangements should be reviewed to ensure that buses are an economical method for family travel.

Progress:

Arriva have a group day ticket.

Recommendation 40 Ticketing Incentives

Ticketing incentives should be considered as a way of encouraging greater usage of buses, for example:

- Linking tickets to discount schemes, e.g. sponsorship by fast food companies or local attractions.
- Linking bus tickets to train journeys as in the London rover tickets.
- Council discounts such as leisure centre activities.

Progress:

Some progress on these points by local operators.

Recommendation 41 Through Ticketing

The group recommends that an investigation of through ticketing schemes be undertaken. This should include developing and promoting a number of schemes that facilitate this including daily, weekly and monthly passes. It should also include a consideration of alternative arrangements such as time valid tickets and zonal fare structure.

Progress:

There has been considerable simplification of fares in Milton Keynes, and there is a range of daily, weekly and monthly passes

Recommendation 44 The Cost of Bus Fares

The group has examined attitudes to bus fares and has generally found bus users reasonably content with the level of fares in Milton Keynes. However the group recommends that fares must not become a disincentive to travel on the buses and that any increases should be kept consistent with the rate of inflation.

Progress:

The general level of fares is determined by the operators, it is true however that bus fares have generally risen faster than inflation, while motoring costs have not increased as much.

Recommendation 43 A Simplified Fare Structure

A simplified fare structure should be considered, either a single fare throughout Milton Keynes or a simple zone system; the grid layout of the city could provide zonal boundaries. The group believes that a simplified fares structure would considerably enhance marketing and promotional opportunities.

Progress:

There has been considerable simplification of fares in Milton Keynes, and there is a range of daily, weekly and monthly passes

Recommendation 44 Setting a clear, long term vision

The Council should set clear and unambiguous long and medium term objectives. These should aim to make bus services in Milton Keynes an example of excellence to all comparably sized towns and cities throughout the UK.

Progress:

The council has a clear transport strategy (currently LTP3) and an underlying bus strategy (currently being revised).

Recommendation 45 The Passenger Transport Section

- a) The sections limited resources should be targeted at monitoring reliability and punctuality both of contract services and commercially registered services as well as ensuring that publicity and information is of a high standard.
- b) The section should work co-operatively with the bus companies to implement the bus strategy.
- c) The section should develop methods and techniques of both collating and disseminating information not just about ridership, but also about journey patterns and modal use, alongside other colleagues in the Environment Directorate and elsewhere in the Council.

- d) Consideration should be given to frequent passenger and non-passenger surveys and census.

Progress:

- a) b) This is what we do at present
- c) Not such good progress
- d) Surveys take place through the NHT survey, by the main bus companies, and in conjunction with Passenger Focus.

Recommendation 46 Travel Plans for Companies within Milton Keynes

- a) The work of the Sustainable Transport Co-ordinator should be supported by a number of measures including pro-active planning policies. The Council should develop a strategy to work with schools on travel plans to minimise the use of cars.
- b) In addition the Council should lead by example and implement their own green travel to work plan.

Progress:

There has been some progress on these points - travel plans are required for new developments.

Recommendation 47 Key Workers

- a) Bus staff should be considered as key workers for housing purposes.
- b) Any strategy that is developed to meet the needs of key workers should include bus drivers within its remit.

Progress:

No progress on these points.