

National Bus Strategy Priorities

Areas for development needed for Canterbury Bus Services:

The following proposed areas for development for Canterbury bus services were identified as a result of consultation with ACRA (Alliance of Canterbury Residents Associations) and members of St Stephens Residents Association. (latter no = 24)

1a. Bus services need to be made more **convenient** with access to **easier to understand** and **HIGH QUALITY INFORMATION AVAILABILITY** for everyone, that aids journey planning:

- With the bus station Travel Shop now closed, lack of availability of hard copies of timetables is a barrier for people whose access to the internet is constrained by cost or lack of connectivity. Increased availability of paper copies of timetables is needed that contain route maps and dates of issue and revision so that it is easier to judge whether they are current.
- Information available at bus stops in the Canterbury area is not always comprehensive and should be regularly reviewed and updated. i.e. Timetables showing buses that serve the university during vacation currently fail to mention that the 'Triangle' service calls at the University during vacations.
- It would be helpful to provide dates of University terms on timetables at bus stops on bus routes that operate term times only to ensure clarity over whether services are running or not.
- Residents would like to see route maps displayed at all bus stops to help with the planning of journeys.
- Clear signage is needed to inform passengers when a bus service route has been changed. This could include information on bus stops that are no longer served by a route listing the closest bus stops serving the new route. (i.e. the 3 bus service to Faversham no longer calls at St Dunstons, although this is not mentioned at the bus stop, on-line timetables or on buses, causing confusion)
- Signage and maps are needed on the bus shelter at Canterbury West station showing visitors where to access buses into the city via Canterbury East station, or to the University. A copy of the 'Onward Travel Information' displayed in the station ticket hall could provide this information if posted on the bus shelter. However, the poster needs to be amended and updated in the light of recent bus service changes mentioned above and the many additional notes it contains that are now incorrect.
- Up to date timetables for all buses using a bus stop should be provided even if run by different operators.
- Illuminated panels on bus stops would make it possible to see timetable information when it is dark.
- For people who don't /can't use the App/mobile phones, real time information displayed at bus stops, as used for bus services in London, Edinburgh and Brighton, should be available to let passengers know when buses will actually arrive, which can help decisions about whether it is worth waiting to catch a bus while improving people's confidence to use bus services. This could commence with the installation of electronic real time information at the bus station
- On the app an alert is needed when services are cancelled rather than having to scroll through Twitter to find notices.

1b Bus services need to be made more **inclusive** for all passengers, including those with disabilities, and to be seen as a **safe mode of transport**. Achievement of this aspect of an overall objective to improve information provision would require infrastructure improvements that would need further investment

- Lack of audible and visible information about routes and upcoming stops on board buses in the Canterbury district presents a barrier to bus users, especially people with disabilities, visitors who are unfamiliar with the area and those who do not regularly use buses. The DfT will introduce Regulations by summer 2022 to require bus companies to provide audible and visual announcements on board their services but meanwhile bus operators are encouraged to provide accessible information. (See 'National Disability Strategy') Provision of this service could act as an effective stimulus to improve people's confidence to use buses.
- Many bus operators elsewhere now have video cameras and screens fitted on buses which provide rolling surveillance of all parts of the vehicle. This facility can boost passengers' confidence that buses provide a safe environment in which to travel..

2. Bus services should offer **IMPROVED INTEGRATION** with other modes of public transport and each other

- Many respondents have mentioned the need for planning and delivery of public transport services in Canterbury to be brought together in a fully integrated fashion as is commonplace in Europe.
- The development of high quality interchange hubs at Canterbury stations and park and ride sites could facilitate easy and rapid passenger transfer to bus services and other onward modes. This would require a much improved bus service calling at Canterbury West station perhaps using small hopper buses that travel both ways round the city with timetables co-ordinated to meet trains. Residents currently see it as barrier to using bus services that it is difficult to catch a bus that stops directly outside Canterbury West station and is also available on the opposite side of the road for the return journey.
- CCC has previously suggested that the station car-park at Canterbury West station could be moved into the multi-story car park, releasing space for an integrated transport hub including a bus station complementing the existing one to provide links from the station to different parts of the city including the universities
- Bus operators and train services should liaise to produce 'Onward Travel Information' posters that are up to date and accurate.
- KCC should liaise with bus operators to roll out 'Mobility as a Service' which is being piloted at Ebbsfleet station before being extended to the whole of Kent by 2025. This offers integrated planning, booking and payment for onward travel across a wide variety of transport modes based on a user's travel needs. This could be located initially at Canterbury stations then perhaps extended to park and ride services.
- Personalised journey timetables can be difficult to access from the Stagecoach website and do not provide information about **integration** with other services and forms of transport. However, comprehensive information about timetables and routes covering all forms and types of transport is available on the Traveline website which provides an excellent example of how an enquiry line providing information about integrated services can operate. This

could be seen as a good model for a website providing information about all public transport services in Kent.

- Digital ticketing such as a new 'Kent Smartcard' should make it easier to offer integrated tickets across all stages of a journey using different transport modes.

3. Bus services should offer **BETTER VALUE for MONEY**

- Easy to understand information about journey cost and options for payment should be made available both on websites and in hard copy form.
- The cost of public transport can present a barrier to use of buses and it many respondents thought that more people would be likely to use bus services if fares were subsidised and cheaper
- Passengers can experience better value for money through the use of innovative technologies such as contactless payment. i.e. Using a 'Stagecoach Smartcard' for unlimited travel or a new 'Kent Smartcard' for integrated tickets.
- Use of reloadable electronic cards can make it easier for passengers to pay for all journeys without the necessity of buying extra tickets which could then include discounts for multiple use.
- Passengers could be offered concessionary travel for different zones at different prices.
- The biggest barrier to using buses is with regard to their perceived benefit or otherwise - cost, ease of use, ticket options, routes etc. All of these need to align otherwise people will not use public transport. If the cost is more than a car journey, especially for 2 or more people travelling together, then they will chose the car over the bus; tickets need to cater for various use cases: single journeys, return journeys, infrequent regular journeys, frequent regular journeys, season tickets and must be priced appealingly;
- Southeastern Rail should continue to promote PlusBus tickets as a way for passengers to save money when travelling by bus for an onward journey.
- Transport for London's 'Hopper' fare which allows unlimited journeys for £1.50 within one hour of first touching in, provides an example of a concessionary fare that can increase bus use.
- Some respondents thought that all bus travel should be free of charge for everyone. Free passes issued by schools for pupils' use during the summer holidays have been much appreciated.
- A respondent suggested that that it would be helpful to be able to purchase an integrated day ticket for both trains and buses in East Kent – like the old London Travelcard – so that when walking for example, it would be possible to travel one leg by train and one by bus without having to pay the single fare premiums.

4. Bus services should be **MORE FREQUENT, FASTER, MORE RELIABLE** and part of a **more comprehensive network**

- Access to reliable bus services in the Canterbury district is severely constrained by congestion and lack of availability of services in some parts of the city and surrounding district. There is a need to access development funding in order to pilot new services that would make bus services easier to access within ten minutes' walk from everyone's homes (i.e. A frequent two way 'Hopper' bus following a circular route between the two city

stations and the bus station serving the new Riverside cinema complex, Kingsmead Leisure Centre and Kings Recreation Centre, already mentioned under 'Improved integration').

- A view is held by many residents at the moment that bus services are not reliable and therefore not their preferred option for travel. Frequent waits of up to half an hour duration are often mentioned.
- Respondents have identified a robust need to provide a 'comprehensive, equitable 6am-11pm service for all parts of the wider city area' including Sundays. This will be essential to achieve modal shift and needs to be well advertised as residents will be more likely to consider using bus services as an option if these are frequent and reliable and if customers are informed and confident about their availability.
- Respondents thought that availability of frequent and reliable bus services would motivate them to use the shops in the centre of town. ('I would be happy to let my car go if there was a usable service') Existing high levels of traffic congestion and both expensive and scarce parking mean that residents need alternative ways to get to work and go shopping in Canterbury city centre.
- The provision of extra services during the evening and on Sundays to provide a reliable and consistent service at times when bus services are currently very poor could encourage residents to make more frequent use of bus services.
- In order to avoid confusion, weekend/ Sunday services should follow the same routes and use the same route numbers as buses that operate on week days.
- Extended routes are needed for villages that are currently poorly served by bus services. Some villages might be able to run their own community bus service on a voluntary basis. The Cuckmere Rambler bus in East Sussex provides a good example of a successful bus service of this type.
- There is potential, to tackle congestion in Canterbury City Centre in new ways through use of smart transport innovations such as camera enforced 'bus gates' similar to those being used in Cambridge that can improve reliability of services.
- Use of technology (i.e. Co-operative Intelligent Transport Systems) that allows buses and their drivers to be given road space as a priority through communicating with other vehicles, traffic signals and roadside infrastructure could prevent clustering of buses in groups that seriously affects bus-service frequency and reliability on many routes. (i.e. 'Triangle' services)
- Members of the public were keen to identify perceived gaps in services and convenient routes between key amenities such as local hospitals, train stations and the bus station where direct bus services are currently not operating. Respondents were in favour of smaller buses with higher frequency or differing routes that would attract more users. St Stephens Residents Association members mentioned the following services that they would like to see available:

a) A fast, direct number 5 service between Whitstable and Canterbury that doesn't travel round two housing estates

b) A smaller 'transit' type bus that travels from one side of Canterbury to the other, passing the two stations and running via St Stephens, St Dunstons and Wincheap to the hospital.

c) More dedicated services to key destinations in the summer months, eg Blean Woods, Wildwood and Reculver. Leaflets showing 'bus walks' with maps and routes all starting and finishing at bus stops, used to promote tourist routes by Brighton and Hove Bus Company provide an example that could be copied locally.

e) More frequent buses to Chartham that run in the evening, on Sundays and Bank holidays.

- f) A direct bus from Canterbury to The William Harvey Hospital.
- g) An express bus service connecting Dover and Hythe with fewer than the current 49 stops.
- h) Shuttle buses that run directly from the St Stephens district to Asda and the retail park adjacent to 'The Range' would be greatly appreciated, rather than being required to go into the bus station and then come out again.

5. Bus services should be GREENER and MORE COMFORTABLE TO RIDE IN , MORE ACCESSIBLE and EASIER to USE

- Investment in better bus-related facilities such as the provision of bus shelters at all bus stops and prioritisation of safe pedestrian access to those that are located on busy roads could improve the public's perception about the ease and desirability of using local bus services which at the moment offer a very poor alternative to the comfort and convenience of a car.
- Vandal-proof shelters should be situated at all bus-stops, where possible, to protect passengers waiting in the rain.
- Benches should be provided at bus-stops to make waiting less stressful, especially for the elderly, disabled, pregnant women or parents with young children. An elderly St Stephens resident specifically mentioned that she would like to see a seat and more shelter available at the St Dunstons' bus stop near to the Westgate Towers.
- Litter bins should be provided at more bus-stops to prevent the surrounding area from becoming litter-strewn.
- Safe pedestrian access to all bus stops should be provided i.e. at Kingsmead Road Leisure Centre where pedestrians have to cross an extremely busy road to reach the bus stop and Polo Farm where the bus stops are next to a fast road with only a step to stand on
- Dropped kerbs are needed at all access routes to bus stops to aid those with disabilities.
- Provision of cleaner, greener and more comfortable bus services through the purchase of electric or hydrogen fuelled buses has an important role to play in influencing modal shift.
- Bus operators such as Transport for London, Go-ahead and the Welsh group Newport Bus can provide examples of good practice around how their transition to electric buses is being achieved.

6 Bus services should be INNOVATIVE

- Transport for London operates hydrogen fuelled buses built by 'Wrightbus', a UK manufacturer owned by hydrogen technology specialist Ryse, who are currently building a hydrogen plant in Herne Bay. ZEBRA funding might provide an opportunity to purchase low emission hydrogen fuelled buses for use in the Canterbury area that would support this local industry.
- Residents would like to see a 'bus on demand' service operating locally that is similar to the 'bus on demand' initiative run by 'Go coach' in Sevenoaks.
- Reverting to the old East Kent Road Car Company livery would make vehicles instantly recognisable and eye catching for tourist handbooks and photographs that could help to reinvigorate our tourist economy

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