



Norfolk County Council

Norfolk County Council (NCC)

Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) – progress report

April 2024



Introduction

Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) are a key part of improving bus services and rooted in the National Bus Strategy entitled 'Bus Back Better', which was published in March 2021.

Documents relating to Norfolk County Council's (NCC's) BSIP can be found here: [view Norfolk County Council's BSIP webpage](#).

Section 3.3 of NCC's BSIP sets out a number of targets to meet our aim of improving bus travel and this report provides evidence of progress against those targets. The relevant targets are as follows:

- 1) Grow annual bus patronage
- 2) Improve passenger satisfaction
- 3) Improve passenger satisfaction with value for money
- 4) More buses with next stop announcements and displays
- 5) More reliable bus services
- 6) More punctual bus services
- 7) Greener buses
- 8) Increase the number of accessible bus stops
- 9) Increase rural accessibility

This report sets out current progress against these targets as follows:

- Target number
- A description of the target
- The current outcome in the form of a table or graph
- Commentary putting the outcome into the wider context and bus travel environment

1) Bus patronage

Target

Grow annual bus patronage in Norfolk: return to 2019/20 patronage levels by March 2023, then grow bus patronage by 1% per annum between 2023 and 2027.

Outcome

Despite many downward pressures on bus patronage, passenger numbers have recovered well since the Covid pandemic. Monthly passenger journey numbers on Local Bus Services (LBS) have fluctuated since January 2022's 1.4 million, reaching around 2.3 million by March 2024. The overall trend shows steady growth. Between April 2023 and March 2024 these monthly totals were up to 2% higher than pre-pandemic levels. October 2019's total is used as the pre-pandemic level because it was 2019's highest passenger level month. Figure 1 presents this data as a graph and shows the return to pre-pandemic levels as well as continued growth.

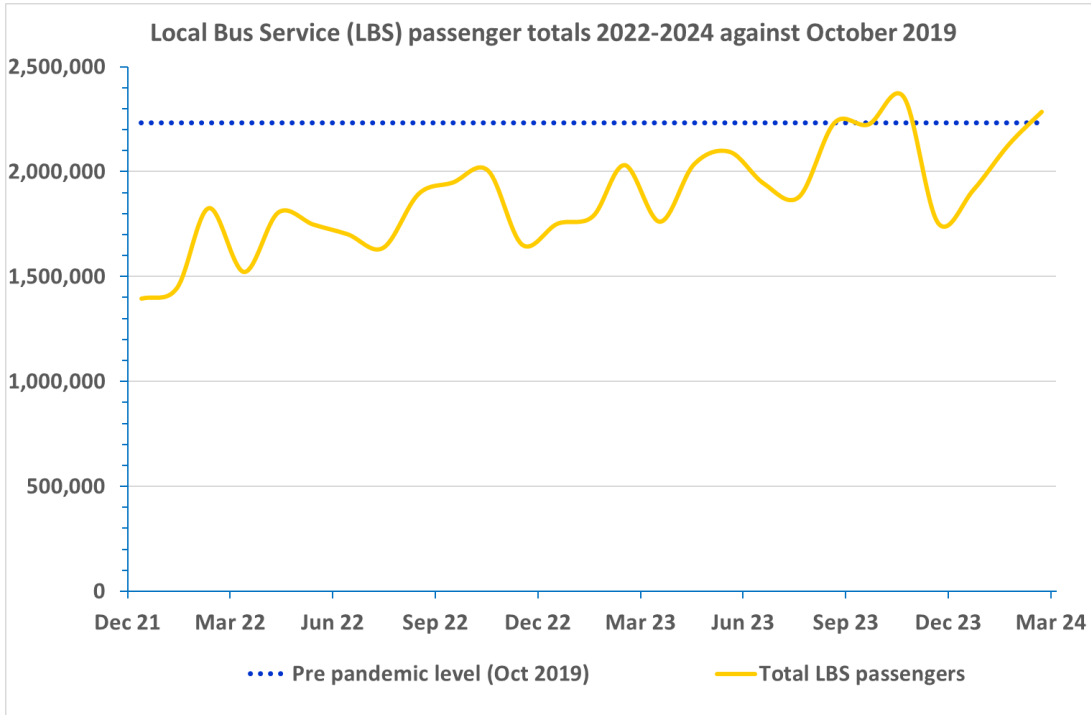


Figure 1: graph showing overall bus passenger levels since 2022 – and their steady increase

2) Customer Satisfaction

Target

Improve bus passenger satisfaction: grow bus passenger satisfaction with bus services in Norfolk to 95% by 2027

Outcome

Transport Focus – the voice of bus passengers – was commissioned to conduct independent customer surveys. The results are shown below.

Time Period	% Overall satisfied - Norfolk	% Overall satisfied - Rural England
Jan 2023 – Jun 2023	78%	81%
Jan 2023 – Jan 2024	81%	80%

Customer satisfaction improved in the second half of 2023 but is still some way from the target, which was based on pre-pandemic assumptions. Nevertheless it is in line with the rural average.

3) Improve customer satisfaction with value for money

Target

Increase bus passenger satisfaction with fares: grow bus passenger satisfaction with the value for money offered for bus services in Norfolk to 80% by 2027

Outcome

As with overall satisfaction, Transport Focus conducted independent customer surveys. The results are shown below.



Time Period	% Satisfied Norfolk	% Satisfied Rural England
Jan 2023 – Jun 2023	62%	69%
Jan 2023 – Jan 2024	67%	69%

Satisfaction has improved by 5% over the last 6 months with Norfolk now matching the national average. These satisfaction levels reflect cost of living impacts felt generally across households.

Other areas of satisfaction

Levels of satisfaction with other parts of the bus journey experience are shown below:

Indicator	% satisfied Norfolk	% satisfied rural England
Ease of getting to local amenities	85%	81%
Taking people to places they want to go to	84%	80%
Connections with other forms of public transport (eg trains)	77%	73%
Service frequency	64%	60%
Service reliability	59%	56%

Norfolk performs well when compared against other rural authorities.

4) Next stop announcements

Context

Installed on some buses are screens that show the name of the next stop. Often these are verbalised to assist customers unable to see the screen. They are useful to people unfamiliar with the bus route they are travelling on, particularly tourists, and also for those with hearing and sight difficulties.

Target

More buses with next stop announcements and displays: increase the number of buses that offer next stop announcements (visible and audible) to 70% by 2025.

Outcome

Time Period	Buses with displays installed (% total fleet)
Sept 2021	61 (13%)
Sept 2023	67 (14%)
Dec 2023	81 (16%)
March 2024	126 (23%)

Progress is being made towards this target and further progress is expected as newer buses replace older models and retrofitting gets underway in line with the DfT target.

5) Reliability

Context

Bus reliability is a measure of whether the bus actually runs and operates its full timetabled mileage.



Target

More reliable bus services: increase the reliability of bus services to 99.5% of all timetabled services starting their journeys, by 2027.

Outcome

Time Period	Bus journeys started (%)
Sept 2021	85%
Sept 2023	85%
Dec 2023	80%
March 2024	83%

Factors such as a shortage of bus drivers will have had an influence on this target, but as this improves it is hoped that this figure also improves.

6) Punctuality

Context

Bus punctuality is a measure of a bus turning up on time, the official definition for ‘on time’ being no more than 5 minutes and 59 seconds late or 1 minute and 59 seconds early, compared with timetabled departure times. We measure this at the start point of the bus service.

Target

More punctual bus services: increase the punctuality of bus services starting their journeys on time to 95%, by 2027

Outcome

Time Period	Bus journeys on time (%)
Sept 2021	81%
Sept 2023	70%
Dec 2023	70%
March 2024	73%

Poor weather, localised flooding and roadworks, some of which are associated to bus priority improvements, have hampered punctuality. This is substantiated by Oct 2022-Mar 2023 being officially England’s wettest 18-month period on record (since 1836).

7) Greener buses

Target

Greener buses: increase the proportion of buses operating registered bus services in Norfolk that are Euro VI or zero emission to 50% by 2027.

Outcome

Time Period	% Euro VI	% Zero Exhaust Emission	Total
Sept 2021	18%	0%	18%
Sept 2023	28%	0%	28%
Dec 2023	28%	4%	32%
March 2024	33%	12%	45%

Investment in new or newer vehicles, both commercially and via the Zebra project, has led to a much greener bus fleet. This is substantial progress towards the 2027 target and is expected to continue.

8) Accessible bus stops

Target

Increase the number of accessible bus stops: increase the number of accessible bus stops for people using wheelchairs and people with other mobility issues to 95% by 2027.

Outcome

Time Period	Bus stops upgraded	DDA compliant bus stops (%)	Total
Sept 2021	0	3,287 (82%)	3,987
Sept 2023	0	3,287 (82%)	3,987
Dec 2023	84	3,371 (82%)	4,118
March 2024	131	3,447 (84%)	4,118

Although not yet around the target, the proportion of DDA compliant stops has increased. This is partly a direct result of BSIP funded upgrades. More upgrades are planned and are due to be completed before April 2025. In some areas upgrading stops is more difficult due to spatial and other constraints.

9) Rural accessibility

Context

Access to key destinations and services is of key importance to rural counties like Norfolk. To this end, a parish-based target level of service index has been developed. It is a way of measuring access to services, with more populous parishes expecting broader transport provision and access. Specifically, the target level of service has been defined for each parish based on its population size, e.g. a parish with 1000-2000 people should be able to expect a journey to health services, a shopping service 5 days a week, a commuter journey at peak times and a Saturday service.

Target

Rural accessibility: using Norfolk's index of rural accessibility (see above), improve the measure to 85% by 2027.

Outcome

Time Period	Parishes meeting or exceeding target (%)
Sept 2021	74.4%
Sept 2023	72.2%
Dec 2023	72.9%
March 2024	82.7%

The fall in adequately served parishes between 2021 and 2023 is largely explained by revised parish population totals being available since 2022. These revisions also reflect where parishes experienced considerable growth. Service improvements, including those introduced using BSIP funding, introduced since Jan 2023 have directly led to parishes meeting or exceeding their target.