



West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan

June 2024

WEST

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Section One - Our Bus Vision	4
Section Two - Current Offer to Bus Passengers	7
Section Three - Improvement Programme to 2025	18
Section Four - Ambitions and Proposals for 2025 to 2035 and beyond	25
Section Five - Targets, Performance Monitoring and Reporting	48
Letters of Support	51
Appendix A - Our Bus Vision	55
Appendix B - Current Bus Offer to Passengers	59
Appendix C - Improvements Programme to 2024/25	93
Appendix D - Ambitions and Proposals for 2025-2035	110

Executive Summary

This document provides a refresh to the West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) originally published in October 2021, and later updated in December 2022, by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and North Somerset Council. The original Bus Service Improvement Plan built on the West of England Bus Strategy (2020) and formed part of a bid to government for funding. The Department for Transport (DfT) awarded £105m for the delivery of the West of England BSIP alongside City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) funding for bus infrastructure. The revenue funding in BSIP in particular has created the opportunity to make significant improvements to the bus network in the region.

This BSIP refresh sets out how we aim to achieve a well-connected sustainable bus network that works for more residents, businesses, and visitors across the region; a network that offers more reliable, affordable, and integrated travel options to encourage and help people switch from cars to bus travel. An improved transport network will help deliver economic growth and facilitate better access to education, employment, and services.

The Mayoral Combined Authority and all local authorities in the BSIP area have declared a climate emergency accompanied by climate action plans. To tackle the climate emergency, we need to support a sustainable transport network and encourage more low-carbon trips within the region. To achieve this, we need to provide an easy, affordable, convenient, and sustainable alternative to private cars.

Since the last update, BSIP initiatives have been revisited, developed, and evaluated. All the short- and long-term proposals in this document will also be reviewed when the next full BSIP is published as per the DfT guidance.

This BSIP refresh outlines our updated Bus Vision for the future and the seven objectives we have set to achieve this. Initiatives have been reviewed to reflect what can be delivered as a priority with the BSIP funding until March 2025 and up to March 2027 with CRSTS funding, as well as maintaining a vision for the longer term.



Section One
Our Bus Vision

Our Bus Vision

Buses in the West of England need to become the first choice for more people. We want to build a more reliable, more financially sustainable bus network, that integrates well with wider public transport so that catching the bus is easier, more convenient and a better experience for passengers.

Our Bus Vision, collectively shared by the West of England Enhanced Partnership and aligned to the regional Joint Local Transport Plan, is supported by seven high-level objectives that are fundamental to the delivery of our Bus Service Improvement Plan.

1. High mode share for buses of overall travel market
2. High quality bus service
3. High quality waiting environment
4. High vehicle standards
5. High level of passenger satisfaction
6. High quality information
7. Low fares, simple ticketing, and easy means of payment

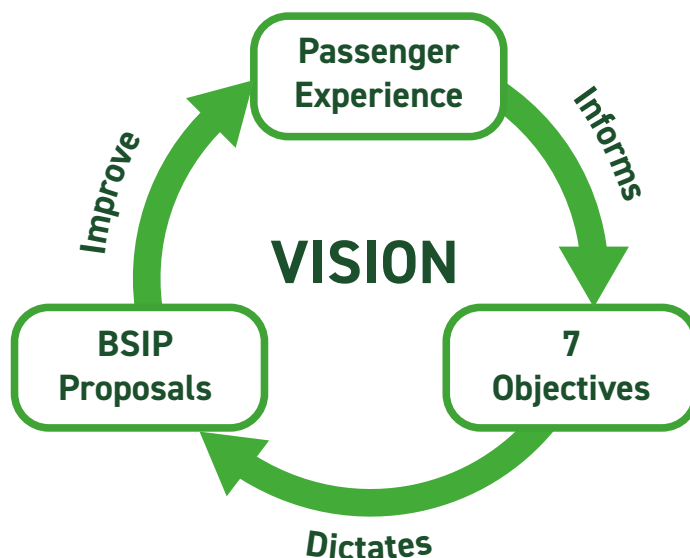
20%

bus passenger growth
from 2021/22

Each high-level objective has several attributes (set out in Appendix A), which together describe the bus network that we will aim to deliver for the region.

The objectives are focused on the passenger experience. They also reflect the outcomes we are currently delivering through the West of England Enhanced Partnership (EP). We are currently considering a range of options for future bus delivery, including franchising.

The passenger experience is focused on the passenger journey cycle, i.e. all the stages in making a bus journey (see Section 4). These are all improved through the actions in this Bus Service Improvement Plan.



Delivering Our Bus Vision & measuring success by 2035

Our Bus Service Improvement Plan sets out ambitious targets to measure success against Our Bus Vision by 2035 including: reducing bus journey times by 10%; ensuring 95% of services run on time; growing bus passenger trips by 24% from pre-pandemic levels; increasing passenger satisfaction to 95%; and requiring 100% of buses to be zero emission (by 2035). It is recognised that the levers to achieve these ambitions are held by a variety of different stakeholders, so the Enhanced Partnership is thus vital to ensure all are pulling together.

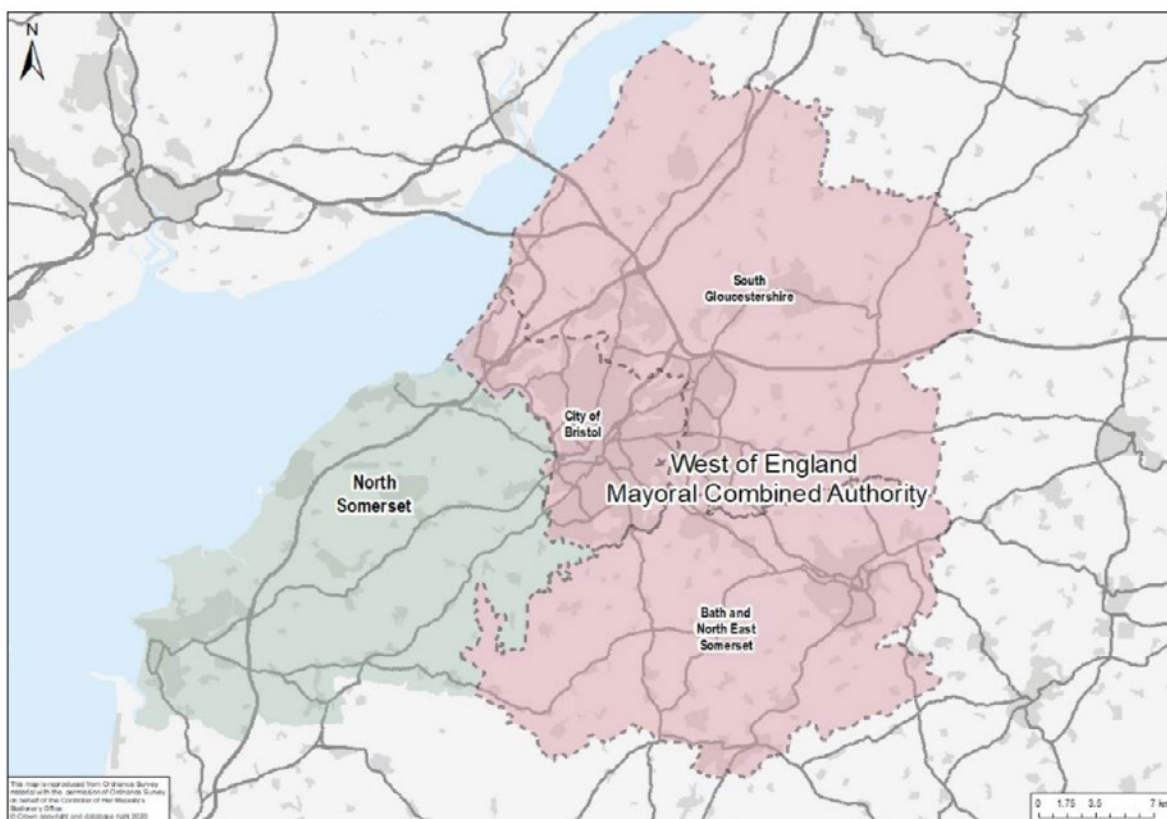
Our Region and the Delivery Partners

The current Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) investment programme has already generated passenger growth across our region of 20% from 2021/22 to 2022/23. Our plans will now look to accelerate this growth using a combination of approaches across, some tested and some innovative and new.

The BSIP area is a diverse region with over 1.1 million residents spread across several large urban and rural areas. It covers the areas of two local transport authorities, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA), and North Somerset Council (NSC). Within the MCA highway powers are held by Bristol City Council (BCC), South Gloucestershire Council (SGC), Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES), with NSC being a highway authority in its own right. Our BSIP brings together in one area the cities of Bristol and Bath, and towns including Chipping Sodbury, Clevedon, Keynsham, Saltford, Midsomer Norton, Nailsea, Portishead, Radstock, Thornbury, Weston-super-Mare, and Yate, as well as many other towns, villages, and hamlets.

Our BSIP area (shown in Figure 1) reflects the West of England Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP) area and is diverse and vibrant with an economy worth over £35bn each year. It exceeds average national growth levels and has the highest productivity of all city regions in England outside London.

Figure 1 Our BSIP Area



BCC, SGC, and B&NES are part of the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) which is the local transport authority (LTA). NSC is currently partnered with the MCA to deliver a joint BSIP.

This partnership, together with principal bus operators and representatives of smaller bus companies through the EP structure has prepared and agreed this BSIP in line with its existing regional partnership under the JLTP. However, this is a refresh of a previously agreed BSIP document and any wider decisions about funding, governance and partnership arrangements will be considered for a larger refresh likely to be due in 2025.

About Our BSIP and the JLTP

This BSIP demonstrates our progress to date and looks forward over a four-year period to 2028/29 to set short-term proposals in addition to setting out longer-term ambitions across a ten-year period to 2034/35. The proposals and ambitions set out are not predicated on any particular management and/or delivery mechanism (for example Enhanced Partnership or franchising).

Our BSIP will be refreshed in 2025 in line with DfT guidance. It will be reviewed and updated as needed and details reported to the West of England Planning, Housing & Transport Board (comprising the Mayor of the West of England and Members of BCC, SGC, B&NES Council, and NSC's Executive Member). The BSIP will be published on the MCA and NSC websites, with the monitoring and reporting being aligned with the DfT's recently announced annual Bus Connectivity Assessment (BCA) process.

An Enhanced Partnership (EP) covering our BSIP area commenced in February 2023. It has an EP Advisory Panel sat beneath an EP Board. This helps ensure wide buy-in on decisions through informed and constructive dialogue at both political and operational levels. The EP works with neighbouring local transport authorities to maintain, improve, and jointly administer cross-boundary bus services and links between important local centres, regardless of administrative boundaries.

The West of England BSIP sits under the overarching JLTP. It also sits alongside other policy and strategy documents, and specifically aligns with the Western Gateway's Strategic Transport Plan, Local Cycling & Walking Investment Programmes, the Bath Transport Delivery Action Plan and Journey to Net Zero, and the Bristol Transport Plan and each partner's rural strategy. Importantly, the BSIP complements the West of England Bus Strategy which remains an active strategy document for the region. However, we will look to rationalise these two documents in the future. A summary of relevant local policies and strategies is shown in Figure 1 in Appendix A.

The regional JLTP4 aims to ensure that transport is carbon neutral by 2030. To achieve this, we need to encourage a substantial shift towards cleaner and more sustainable methods of transport. This refreshed BSIP supplements JLTP4 by specifying the interventions that aim to encourage more users on the bus network.

The current National Bus Strategy sets out a clear vision for buses across England and goals for each local transport authority. Appendix A summarises the West of England BSIP partners' current and continued approach to meeting these goals.



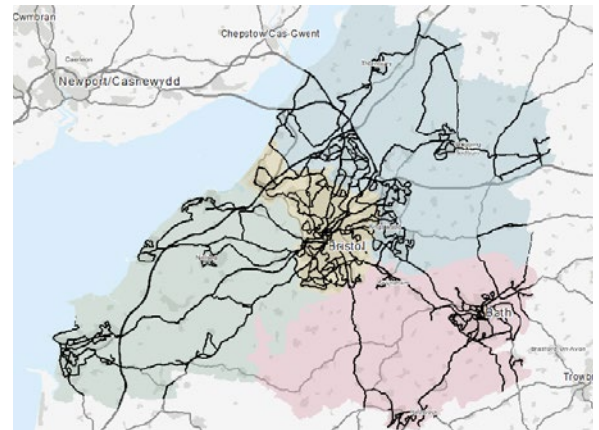
Section Two
Current Offer to
Bus Passengers

The Current Bus Network

Passengers want to see an improved bus network across the West of England and North Somerset. Starting from the current network we have a guiding principle, linked to Our Bus Vision, which will be used to drive our proposals and ambitions from 2025 onwards. Key to success will always be encouraging growth in the number of fare paying passengers.

A stronger core network

A stronger core network that is financially self-supporting with more reliable buses and passenger numbers that are continually growing is vital to contribute to the virtuous cycle of success. To encourage this growth, the MCA and NSC will continue to enhance commercial main routes to increase frequency of services creating more turn-up-and-go frequencies, and 15-minute frequencies in market towns.



Bringing new passengers to the network

WESTlink is our current DRT solution and allows passengers in more remote areas to pre-book minibus journeys from their nearest bus stop to connect onto key bus corridors and the rail network. WESTlink covers more remote areas previously not connected to the public transport network. Other public transport interventions, with the similar aims to increase bus use and linked trips across the region include WESTlocal and WESTbusstop+ (encouraging linked trips between buses, cycling and micromobility options).



metrobus is one of our most significant investments over the last decade

This is a high-quality Bus Rapid Transit network of four limited-stop routes focussed on Bristol city centre, covering nearly 50 miles of route. It features bus lanes and segregated busways, bus stops with high profile shelters and iPoints (to sell tickets and give real-time information) and very low emission biomethane buses.



Introduction - Bus use in the BSIP area

This section provides an overview of the current bus network against the objectives outlined in the 2021 BSIP and is supported by a technical appendix. The data presented here is an update on that included in the 2021 BSIP. The latest available data has been used, which in some cases is from 2022/2023.

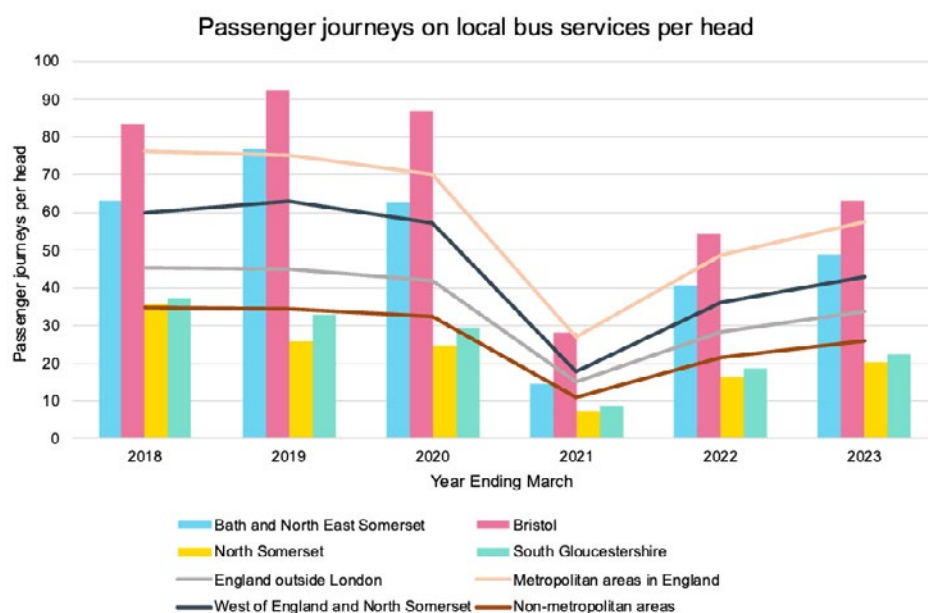
2021 Objective: High Mode Share for Buses of the Overall Travel Market

Bus use in the BSIP area grew consistently over the fifteen years prior to the pandemic, albeit from a relatively low base. Some of this growth was related to changes in population and economic performance, but a significant part followed from investment in infrastructure, vehicles, fares, and services. With the introduction of lockdown measures in March 2020, as elsewhere in the UK, passenger numbers fell dramatically, recovering gradually in response to the easing of social distancing and the re-opening of the economy. According to the latest data, passenger services nationally have recovered to 76% of pre-pandemic levels. In the West of England region bus use has gradually recovered since the pandemic, with passenger numbers returning to 85% of pre-pandemic levels in the second quarter of 2023/24.

Following the pandemic, passenger journeys per head in the area have increased at a rate of 20% year on year, as illustrated below. This increase is higher than the average for England, and North Somerset has seen an increase of 26% year on year, reflecting effective investment in supported services and 'kickstart' funding for enhancement to commercial services. This investment was enabled by BSIP funding awarded to the MCA and NSC.

With the changes to commuting and leisure activities, it is recognised that there is a limit to encouraging pre-pandemic passengers back to buses. Bus passenger figures now show that in the West of England the number of individual passengers making journeys has surpassed pre pandemic levels. However, passengers are making fewer journeys. This appears to be due to systemic societal changes such as a switch to hybrid working, greater on-line shopping, medical appointments etc. Reflecting this, it is therefore necessary to encourage new passengers onto the network and to encourage existing passengers to make different journeys (e.g. '3-day a week commuters' to make leisure trips).

Figure 3 - Passenger journeys per head per local authority in the last five years



2021 Objective: High Level of Passenger Satisfaction

Passenger satisfaction surveys run by Transport Focus, the consumer organisation for transport users in the UK, were paused after 2019 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. These surveys have been restarted in 2023 and the results are shown in Table 1.

Prior to 2019, the percentage of passengers in the BSIP area who were fully satisfied ('all satisfied' in the survey) had been relatively stable, ranging between 84% and 89%. This dropped substantially in 2023 with the reported level of overall satisfaction with bus journeys across the MCA and NSC areas falling by 12% compared to 2015. However, this trend is reflective of that seen across England.

Both locally and nationally this is in large part related to widespread driver shortages and reductions in commercial services. As outlined in section 3, we are making great progress against a range of themes including an increase of over 300 drivers.

Table 1- Bus passenger satisfaction in the Bus Passenger Survey (up to 2019) and Your Bus Journey survey run by Transport Focus.

Overall satisfaction	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2023
West of England + North Somerset	89%	85%	89%	85%	86%	77%
Metropolitan areas in England	86%	85%	85%	87%	87%	78%

2021 Objective: High quality bus service

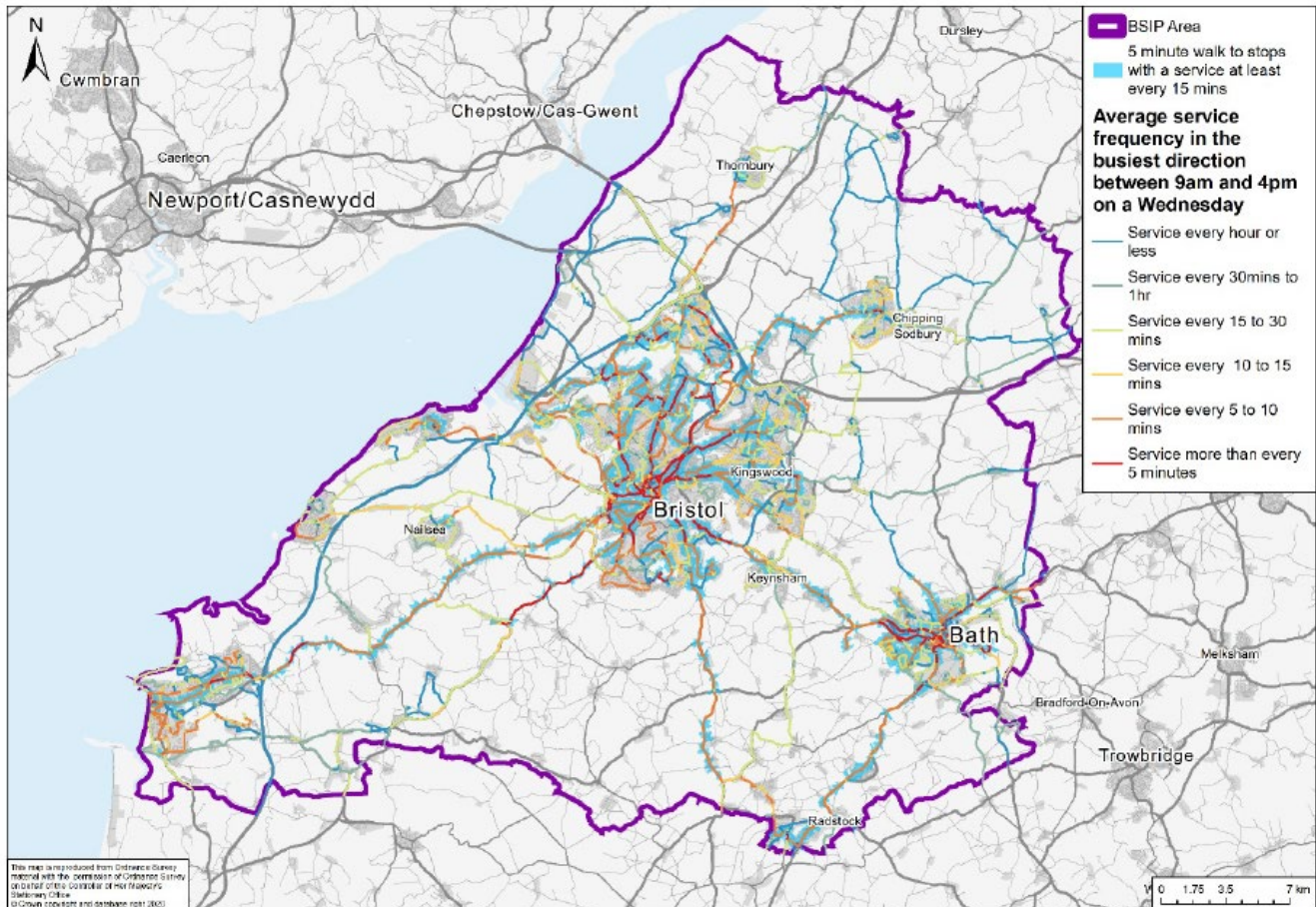
Bus services in the area are provided by 18 operators, with the majority provided by First Bus. Nearly 200 different services operate in the region, a mix between urban, inter-urban and rural services.

Frequency and accessibility

Bus services in the BSIP area are focussed on radial corridors in the urban areas of Bristol, Bath, and Weston- super-Mare. The figure below shows how service frequency is represented on a typical Wednesday between the AM and PM peak times. There are clear high frequency radial corridors in each urban area, with good frequency inter-urban corridors. This situation is however not consistent throughout the day and throughout the week, as shown in Appendix B.

Most urban services in Bath and Bristol terminate in a central location and do not operate across the city. While this can avoid transferring the impact of delays on one side of the route to the other side of the route (were buses to cross the centre), it does lead to a less connected and convenient network and is not yet aligned to BSIP objectives for cross centre radial routes. Frequency on orbital services (where these operate) is much lower than those on radial services and has historically not been prioritised. Inter-urban services operate at frequencies between 15 and 30 minutes but the journey times are typically much longer than those achievable by car. Many market towns now have 15-minute frequency between 7am and 7pm to the West's two cities. However, as elsewhere in the country, the rural network is much more dispersed, and has lower service frequencies with less coverage in the evenings and at weekends.

Figure 4 - Corridor frequency in the BSIP area



Journey times and Punctuality

Traffic is the biggest cause of delays. Punctuality and journey times were the third and fourth areas reporting the lowest satisfaction across the region from the latest Your Bus Journey survey. Engagement with operators also highlighted delays and punctuality issues as two of the biggest blockers to more efficient running of services. Indeed, delays from local traffic have led to increases in journey time of up to 13% year on year on some corridors.

Table 2 shows how punctuality in the region has varied over the last 5 years and is currently well below other areas in England and indeed below the targets set in 2021.

Table 2 - Non-frequent bus services running on time by local authority

Area	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22	2022/23
West of England + North Somerset	82%	77%	NA	NA	75%
Metropolitan areas in England	84%	84%	84%	87%	86%
Non-metropolitan areas in England	83%	83%	85%	85%	81%
England outside London	84%	84%	85%	84%	80%

Reliability

In addition to the points discussed above to do with punctuality, reliability is a key aspect of how bus services are perceived by passengers. One of the main causes of service cancellations has been driver shortages. This has hindered the ability of bus operators to run more services and to run them reliably. As discussed in later sections, this continues to be addressed by the MCA and NSC.

Bus lanes

The twin problems of traffic congestion and poor bus journey times are being tackled by the provision of bus priority infrastructure. The level of bus lane and other priority mileage excluding High Occupancy Vehicle lanes in 2021 and 2024 is shown in Table 3 below.

Our BSIP includes an ambitious programme to further expand the provision of bus priority in the region.

Table 3 – Miles of bus lane per local authority in 2021 and 2024

Local authority	Miles of Bus Lane (2021)	Miles of Bus Lane (2024)
Bath & North East Somerset	2.36	2.36
Bristol	21.19	21.19
South Gloucestershire	8.05	11.22
North Somerset	2.43	5.2
TOTAL	34.03	39.97

Investment and Spend

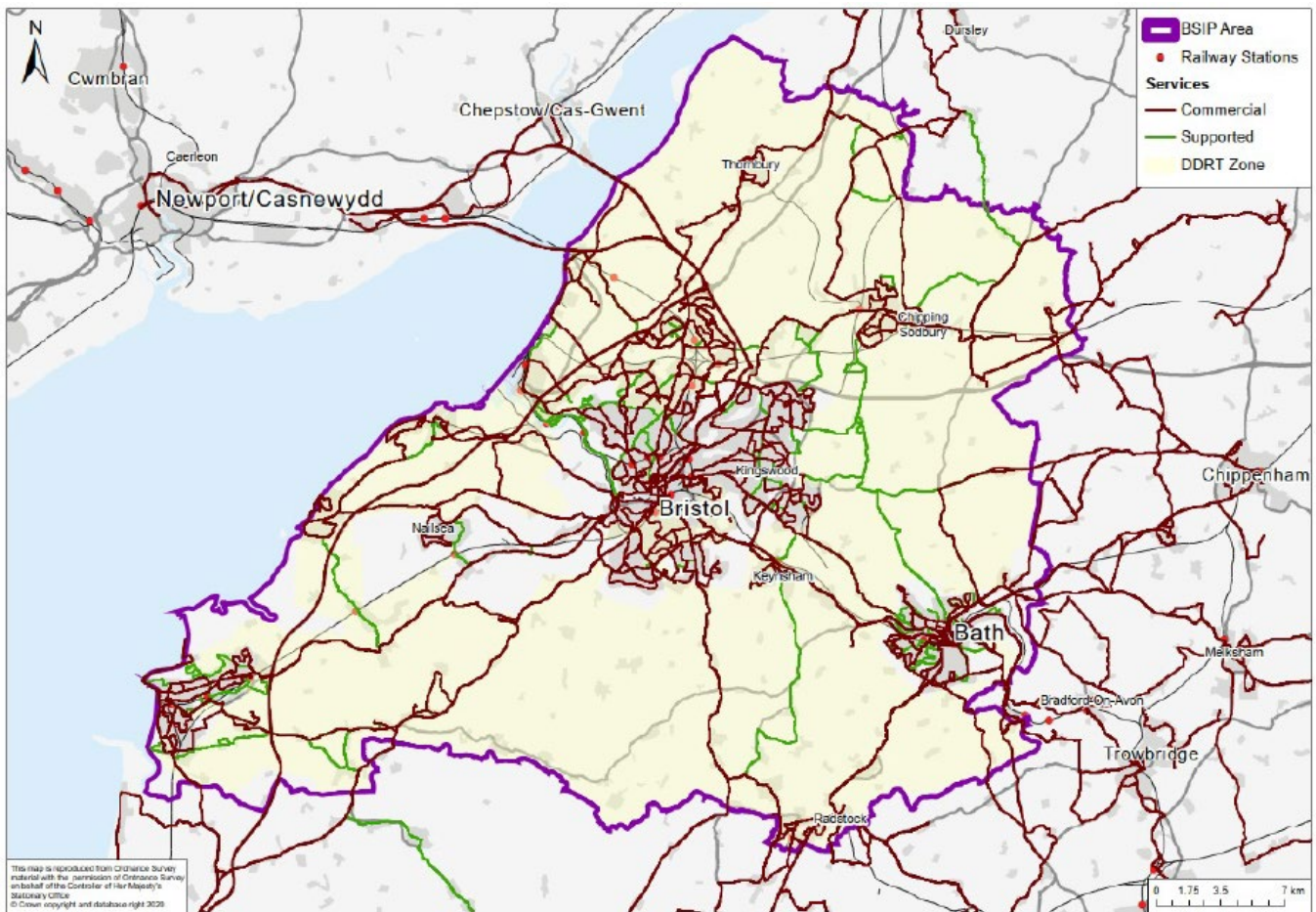
The MCA (via the transport levy provided by the highways authorities in the area) supports 32 bus services and NSC supports 13 non-commercial bus services. (see Appendix B). Over the last financial year, the authorities spent around £5 million in financial support for local bus services, excluding payments for concessionary travel.

WESTlink is a form of demand responsive transport (DRT) service that has been developed through the 2021 BSIP programme and introduced across the region with the primary purpose of linking passengers to key transport corridors. It is a bookable service through either app or telephone-based systems and is governed by a range of system rules that are regularly reviewed and adjusted to maximise the potential for increased passenger use and connection to the public transport network.

Commercial services have benefited from BSIP funding enhancements, aligned to our objective of more turn up and go services in cities and 15 min frequency in market towns. The enhanced services and the services which the commercial operators have enhanced, have to date seen strong patronage growth, demonstrating how effective targeted funding can be at increasing the number of passengers and in turn revenue.

The map below shows the coverage of the network between commercial and supported services. Detailed maps, showing the relationship to key destinations, are included in Appendix B. Not all commercial bus services operate all day, seven days a week. Much of the financial support provided by the local transport authorities is directed at evening and Sunday services.

Figure 6 - Coverage of commercial and supported services in the BSIP area



Tables 4 and 5 outline the spend in the region, both capital and revenue and the funding sources that have enabled this. More detail on spend to date is included in Section 3. Over the last two years BSIP funding has played a key role in enabling effective investment across a range of improvements.

Key investment in bus priority measures could help tackle the journey time and punctuality issues faced by the network.

How the bus network is supported

Table 4 - Expenditure on buses by West of England CA and North Somerset Council

Type	Expenditure category	2022-23	2023-24
Revenue	Supported services	£5,497,030	£4,912,141
Revenue	BSIP Enhanced Services and WESTlink	£0	£9,756,724
Revenue	Concessionary travel reimbursement	£14,308,924	£14,550,050
Revenue	Concessionary travel administration	£14,616	£17,949
Revenue	Fares support	£1,785,000	£4,936,000
Revenue	Bus stop maintenance	£408,797	£423,794
Revenue	Bus information	£491,146	£640,562
Revenue	Other	£3,042,000	£4,710,771
Revenue	Total Revenue Expenditure	£25,547,513	£39,947,991
Capital	Bus stop infrastructure	£9,150,163	£7,017,066
Capital	Bus priority measures	£1,418,886	£5,774,413
Capital	Other	-	£70,160
Capital	Total Capital Expenditure	£10,569,049	£12,861,639
Total	Total Expenditure	£36,116,562	£52,809,630

Table 5 - Sources of funding for expenditure on buses in the West of England

Source of funding	2022-23	2023-24
Local Government Finance Settlement	£1,220,130	£1,407,694
Planning Obligations (s106)	£832,590	£533,000
BSIP funding	£3,746,049	£23,080,639
Covid Bus Service Grant / Bus Recovery Grant	£131,572	£34,087
City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement	£0	£6,700,000
Devolved BSOG	£1,215,153	£1,215,153
Transforming Cities Fund	£9,100,000	£0
Bus shelter advertising	£4,000	£4,200
Other (including Transport Levy)	£19,867,068	£19,834,857
Total	£36,116,562	£52,809,630

2021 Objective: High quality waiting environment

There are nearly 6,000 bus stops in the region mostly owned by unitary councils and parish councils, of which 1,183 have Real Time Information (RTI) and approximately 5,000 have printed timetables. QR code information will be delivered over the next few months, as part of our BSIP ambitions, allowing quicker instant access to a wider range of information.

2021 Objective: High vehicle standards

Currently, 98.4% of the fleet in the region was Euro VI standard or higher (including several biomethane powered buses with very low emissions), showing good progress towards our decarbonisation targets.

In March 2024 both the MCA and NSC were successful in attracting £6.6 million and £2.1 million respectively of Government funding to support the introduction of 98 zero-emission electric buses through the second Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) programme. We will work with First Bus to support the roll-out of these buses across the local bus network.

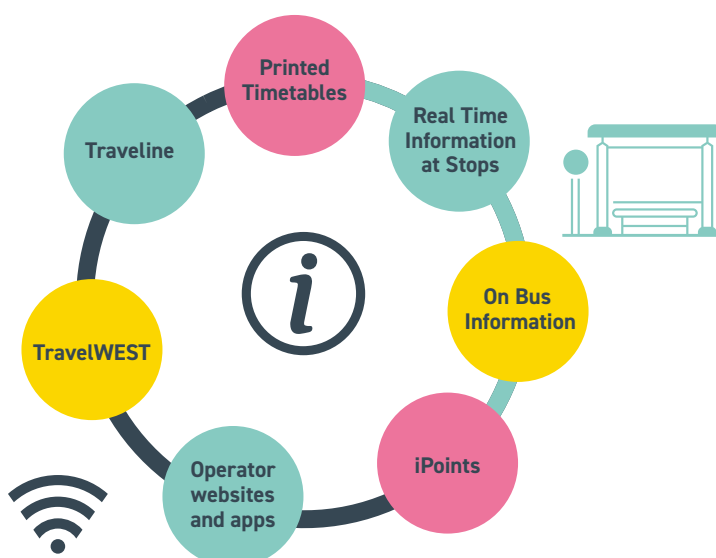
The funding awarded to each area will see 74 new electric buses operate in the MCA area and 24 buses launched in the NSC area (a rural area as defined by DfT). Government funding is providing up to 25% of the purchase costs for the vehicles, with First Bus investing over £50 million to support the purchase of these buses.

2021 Objective: High quality information

One of our core objectives remains to continually improve bus service information. This information is available in a variety of media, both physical and online, as shown below. As noted above, most bus stops have printed timetables and an increasing number have RTI, but this RTI needs to be fully integrated with all operators' systems.

TravelWEST was launched in 2012 to create a central information resource for all transport in the BSIP area. The website brings together information on all travel options, as well as providing an information resource for our wider transport network and the work that we do. The website provides information on fixed services as well as *WESTlink*; it can support journey planning across different travel options and has information on travel updates, fares, and many others. We have an ambition to overhaul and improve this website.

Figure 7 - Range of information sources available to passengers



2021 Objective: Low fares, simple ticketing, and easy means of payment

The region's first 'Tap On, Tap Off' system was introduced in 2022 on all services operated by First Bus, simplifying the use of buses for passengers. Tap On, Tap Off removes the need to buy a ticket for each journey, guaranteeing passengers will not pay more than the day or week ticket price, and will save more as weekly trips increase.

Our region also led the way on introducing a cap on single tickets at £2 for adults and £1 for children. We have also introduced other ideas such as 'Birthday Buses' to encourage new passengers in line with our key goal to increase patronage from fare paying passengers. Since its introduction in July 2023, the 'Birthday Pass' has led to over 850,000 journeys, with 47% of people who have benefitted from Birthday Buses saying they used the bus instead of driving for the trip they were making.

There are currently four multi-operator bus products in the MCA and NSC area:

- AvonRider: B&NES, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, and North Somerset
- BathRider: Bath urban area
- BristolRider: Bristol urban area
- WestonRider: Weston-super-Mare urban area.

These tickets give bus passengers greater flexibility to plan and make journeys than single-operator tickets.

The current multi-modal offer across the region is limited to PlusBus, a national scheme, and the Freedom Travelpass. PlusBus is an add-on to single and return train tickets as well as season tickets, which offer unlimited bus and rail travel around the region. There are Bristol, Bath, and Weston-super-Mare tickets.

The Freedom Travelpass provides unlimited travel on all train and most bus services in the four zones covering the region as set out in Appendix B. However, a photocard is required for the monthly Freedom Travelpass, and it can only be purchased from local railway and bus station booking offices, which provide additional barriers to passengers.

Summary

Operators and passengers are navigating a difficult environment of rising costs, changing travel patterns, and increased operational difficulties due to traffic levels and driver shortages. Year on year passenger growth of 20% since the pandemic reflects the investment being put in.

The table below summarises the current situation against the objectives set in our 2021 BSIP.

Objective	Commentary
High mode share for buses of the overall travel market	The pandemic has dramatically changed travel patterns, but our region is seeing a steady increase in year-on-year passenger numbers.
High level of passenger satisfaction	In line with trends elsewhere in the country, passenger satisfaction has decreased in the context of the challenges faced by the sector since the pandemic. Our proposals in the following sections look to address this across all stages of the passenger journey.
High quality bus services	The current network has strong radial frequencies in the main urban centres with a more dispersed rural network and the <i>WEST</i> link service, providing transport for people to access the core bus network. Punctuality and reliability continue to be obstacles to efficient operation but continued investment in bus priority infrastructure looks to address this. BSIP enhanced services are proving successful at generating patronage growth.
High quality waiting environment	An increased number of the 6,000 stops in the region have printed timetables and RTI information, which will be further improved by the rollout of QR information at stops.
High vehicle standards	Whilst the average fleet age across the region remains around 9.4 years, the use of new buses has been steadily increasing across our network. These have been a mix of Euro VI and very low emission (biomethane) buses and will soon be supplemented by 98 new electric buses (74 in the MCA area and 24 in the NSC area) which have been secured through funding from the second DfT ZEBRA programme.
High quality information	Travel <i>WEST</i> provides a consolidated point of information for travel in the region as well as strong trip planning capabilities. This is alongside a range of other physical and on-line information.
Low fares, simple ticketing, and easy means of payment	The range of ticketing options in the region has been simplified by the introduction of Tap On / Tap Off of all First Bus services. Our fare packages outlined in the following sections are contributing to growing passenger numbers and making buses more affordable and simpler to use.

The image features a large, stylized white letter 'E' graphic that spans across the right side of the page. The background is split into three main color zones: a light green area at the top, a dark green area at the bottom, and a white area that forms the central part of the 'E' shape. The text is positioned in the bottom-left corner, overlapping the dark green background.

**Section Three
Improvement
Programme to 2025**

First steps to improve our buses...

We have worked across all areas of the local bus network to improve services for local passengers. Since receiving our BSIP award in 2022 we have delivered significant improvements to our buses.

Turn up and go frequencies and 15 minutes frequencies on key routes...

We have added more buses to 19 core bus services across the region, increasing frequency and adding new routes – investing over £5 million already and up to a further £10 million over the next 2-years.

Simpler bus fares

It now only costs no more than £2 each time you travel across our region by bus following the introduction of a regional and national fare cap – and our young people now travel for £1.

150,000+ WESTlink journeys

Linking up passengers in more remote areas to the bus and train network across our region.

More information

Over 300 new information screens including 200 e-paper displays at bus stops using over £1.5 million of investment in digital information on our network will be in place by March 2025.

Getting buses through the traffic

Investing a BSIP allocation of up to £45m alongside CRSTS budget of £540m to add more bus lanes and other bus priority schemes to allow them to run faster across our region.

Encouraging new passengers

Birthday Buses has been used by over 65,000 people making more than 850,000 bus trips. 47% of residents who have benefitted from Birthday Buses say they used the bus instead of driving - helping to create long term behaviour change.

300+ more bus drivers

Everything is underpinned by having more bus drivers which is why we have invested in training and recruitments drives through Drive and Thrive.

£5m+

Bus service
'Kickstart'
investment

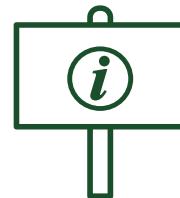


£2



Regional fare cap on all
our buses

...and job seekers go free...



Making buses reliable



By adding more bus lanes
and ways to allow our
buses to run faster across
our region.



Introduction

The West of England region was awarded £105.4 million in BSIP funding to be spent across a three-year period between 2022/23 to 2024/25.

This funding was divided between two streams, £57.5 million in revenue and £48 million in capital funding, the second highest award in England. The revenue fund was joint across both the MCA and NSC areas, and the capital funding allocation was provided to NSC.

The MCA also benefitted from capital investment through the West of England's CRSTS allocation (c£406 million total), of which c£89.7 million was assigned to be invested into bus priority schemes.

The BSIP funding allocation to 2025 is presented in Table 3-1 below, which breaks down the revenue funding and capital funding allocations by the MCA and NSC areas, and by each Delivery Plan.

Further detail on the Delivery Plans is available in Appendix C.

The table compares the allocated budget spend for each of the Delivery Plans against the percentage of budget already exhausted by March 2024. The status of each workstream is indicated based on a RAG classification (Red, Amber, Green), which highlights the progress towards completing the allocated spend by March 2025. This is further explained below.

Progress by March 2024

Since the initial programme was set out in the 2021 BSIP (Appendix C), we have worked closely with the DfT to deliver our allocation flexibly, and where advantageous we have moved and adjusted funding around to maximise the delivery of our schemes. Table 3-1 shows we have made good progress with projects under our delivery plans, with most on track. For instance, our Bus Driver Recruitment and Retention project (under Skills Training) was completed in April 2024. We are also halfway through our Fares Packages 1 and 2, with Package 3 due to start in the summer of 2024. Workstreams on track to complete allocated spend within the BSIP funding envelope have been classified as Green under the progress RAG rating.

However, workstream programmes which are expected to be extended outside of the BSIP funding envelope have been classified as Amber under the progress RAG rating. Workstreams under Intensive Services (such as Service Support) and Single Integrated System (*WESTlink*) will have their programme extended into 2026 following agreement with the DfT.

The delivery programme of workstreams under each Delivery Plan is presented in Table 3-2 below. Further detail and progress commentary for each of the Delivery Plans is available in Appendix C of this document. The spending allocation remains flexible and is likely to be adjusted continually until March 2025 and detail on the exact spend for each Delivery Plan has not been included.

Table 3-1 – Allocation of funding from the 2022 BSIP update

Delivery Plans		BSIP Funding Allocation to 2025			Spend to March 2024		March 2025 and Beyond
ID	Description	Total BSIP Revenue Budget (NSC & MCA)	Total BSIP Capital Budget (NSC)	% of Total Combined BSIP Allocation	% Complete	Progress RAG	Targeted Completion Date
A	Intensive Services	£13,338,667	-	13%	38%	Amber	March 2026
B	Bus priority	-	£35,830,000	34%	20%	Amber	Sept 2025
C	Fares	£14,619,338	-	14%	45%	Green	March 2025
D	Integrated ticketing	£110,000	£70,000	0.2%	39%	Green	March 2025
E	Integrated services	-	£12,083,000	11%	3%	Amber	Sept 2025
F	Single integrated system	£5,310,233	-	5%	7%	Green	March 2025
G	Modern buses	No BSIP Funding – Achieved with Bus Operators through EP				Green	Ongoing
H	Passenger voice	£80,000	-	0.1%	25%	Green	March 2025
I	Non-intensive services	£18,987,799	-	18%	25%	Amber	March 2026
J	Long-term					Green	March 2035+
-	Delivery (EP & Consultancy)	£4,568,752	-	4%	43%	Green	March 2025
-	Skills Training (drivers / engineers)	£190,710	-	0.2%	100%	Green	Completed
-	Monitoring and Evaluation	£300,000	-	0.3%	8%	Green	March 2026
-	Total	£57,505,499	£47,983,000	100%	35%	Green	(As Above)

Table 3-2 – Programme for workstreams under each Delivery Plan, 2021/22 to March 2025 and beyond

ID	Delivery Plan	2021/22	2022-23	2023-24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029-35
A	Intensive Services									
A1	High Frequency, Accessible Network									
B	Bus Priority									
B1	Bus Priority (NSC)									
C	Fares									
C1	Package 1 – Fare Capping, Reductions, Discounts									
C2	Package 2 – Birthday Bus, Care Leavers, Job Seekers									
C3	Package 3 – Targeted Offers									
D	Integrated ticketing									
D1	Multi-Operating Ticketing Support & Integration									
E	Integrated Services									
E1	Integrated Services (NSC)									
F	Single integrated system									
F1	Brand Identity (Single Network)									
F2	Programme Marketing and Communications									
F3	Travel Guides and Journey Planning									
F4	Within Journey Information									
H	Passenger Voice									
H1	Passenger Charter									
H2	Bus Passenger Safety Audit									
I	Non-intensive services									
I1	DRT (currently <i>WEST</i> link) to complement network									
I2	Additional BSIP Supported Services									
I3	<i>WEST</i> Local Community Initiative									
I4	Assess <i>WEST</i> – Network Re-design Programme									
	Additional									
	Delivery (All aspects of support to programme)									
	Skills Training (drivers / engineers)									

Bus Driver Recruitment

Successful bus driver recruitment and retention is crucial to running a reliable bus network, while understanding and addressing staff shortages across all roles in the bus market for the longer-term is fundamental to achieving a better and more trusted service for passengers.

Drive and Thrive

To recruit and retain more drivers a range of strategies have been employed working in partnership with local bus operators to reduce vacancy rates.

Reimagining the career

To attract new people into the career we spread the message that bus drivers are community heroes who get people to work, school or the shops every day.

Local Partnerships

We worked closely with community groups at workshops and careers fairs to educate and spread awareness of the roles and responsibilities bus drivers have and encourage individuals to join the profession. First Bus worked with Bath Spa University to encourage students to become bus drivers while studying. Stagecoach has worked with Ukrainian refugees.

Skills Connect - Digital Platform

We created digital adverts with links to wider training platforms through our partnership with Skills Connect. The series of videos presented a positive view of the bus market from existing employees who promoted the benefits of working in the industry.

Don't just wait for the bus - drive it!

Printed advertisements at bus stops, on buses, on billboards and in the local press. Campaign adverts boldly highlighted key messages to engage viewers, focussing on the message that bus drivers are community heroes while highlighting expected salary, and opportunities for flexible working and training.

Better work

The largest operator First Bus has become a Living Wage Employer and continue to engage positively with trade union colleagues. Bus Operators have been encouraged to engage with, and sign up to, the West of England Good Employment Charter so that they can access resources and support to improve their practises, plus benefit from the marketing activity around the West of England Good Employment Charter.

Training

In an innovative approach to funding, we have been able to fund bus driver training through the Mayoral Priority Skills Fund. A flexible funding stream was utilised to enable training for 50+ bus drivers in the region, with interviews offered upfront from local bus operators, increasing likelihood of a job after successful training.

Women drive too ...

Through the campaign, First Bus recruited more women drivers to address gender imbalances across their depots, with campaign messaging partly focusing on women.

2025 and beyond

We need continued work to recruit and retain drivers. This is important following the broader diversity of entrants into the sector. In partnership with our bus operators and other bodies such as the Department for Work and Pensions, we will seek to deliver:

Tailored support – flexible hours, pay, diversity & inclusion.

Community engagement – to make bus driving a more attractive career.

Unlocking future talent - Engage with schools to inspire careers in bus driving, inspiring the next generation.

Safety and Facilities – improve facilities for staff, such as diversity training and toilets

Support and Training – car driver license training prior to bus driving, childcare provision, English language training

Standardised training - across all our operators Sustainability – green skills training for all operator staff.

Pride in our drivers - celebrate our drivers and encourage everyone to be respectful through marketing campaigns, create a culture of pride in WEST.

Sustainability – green skills training for all operator staff.

Marketing campaign - improve attitudes towards drivers.



Section Four
Ambitions and Proposals
for 2025 to 2035 and beyond

Service Level and Network Coverage

Our Ambition

We want to achieve a balanced and financially sustainable regional bus network - ensuring more people can live without need of a private car in our denser areas and providing more access to the public transport network regardless of geography and ability in our lower density areas, which will help towards our climate ambitions.

Challenges and Opportunities

We have a diverse geography which creates challenges in delivering an efficient, equitable, and viable local bus service network. We also continue to face the dual headwinds of increasing congestion and continued staff vacancy gaps in all job roles across the bus operator market - combining to reduce regional bus speeds by up to 13% (2022 and 2023) due to these issues.

We have made a good start in addressing these challenges, delivering c£15 million of our allocated budget in areas such as bus service frequency, reliability, punctuality, staff retention, (seeing successful recruitment of over 300 new bus drivers and improved punctuality and reliability through the EP) and the roll-out of *WESTlink* DRT, a regional service designed to link people to core public transport options.

Total bus passenger journeys across the network have grown by 20% since 2021/22, with the highest growth occurring on commercial services which were further enhanced with BSIP funding, such as the X1 and X4 interurban routes. Due to the stability that BSIP funding has provided across the network, First Bus are setting new stretch standards for the important '8' bus service in Bristol and have already coordinated services to a much more consistent standard along the Gloucester Road corridor.

But the work needs to continue to better connect our local and regional communities. Advancing our plans for a revised regional network is a key opportunity to reshape how buses work for local people.

Our Approach

To rebalance the regional bus network and develop a comprehensive and connected public transport offer across the West of England, we have embarked on a programme of work – *AssessWEST*.

AssessWEST, is a long-term piece of work which spells out an ambition for a more comprehensive and more connected transport offer. Whilst some of the outputs may not be achievable under current financial constraints, it will also set out a longer-term aspiration for the region which will inform future decision making on bus services and infrastructure, and the way we plan and manage bus services through the current EP process or through a franchised model.

A key output of *AssessWEST* is to describe how the network should be developed in the longer-term to deliver more sustainable services at higher frequencies that focus on cross-centre radial routes connecting with new orbital style services at key interchange points (hubs) (as outlined in the West of England Bus Strategy) and to set foundations for change in the short-term. This will not only be bus to bus, but also bus to rail with the network focusing on transport integration at existing planned rail stations and ensuring bus services run every 30-minutes or less and connect to important rail services.

Whilst we do not currently directly control the planning and delivery of buses in our region, *AssessWEST* could allow BSIP partners to align their investment decision with different models of bus network administration and delivery. This allows the West of England to be flexible in its future stewardship of the region's bus network, making use of any new approaches that may come forward at a national level.

Our Short-Term Proposals

To give us the foundations to build our longer-term plans for a more sustainable network we will:

- Continuously review the current bus network and make changes to encourage new passengers onto our buses, working hard to then retain them through better fares and services.
- Steer commercial bus services changes to agreed *AssessWEST* outcomes so that the foundations could start to be laid for a longer-term improved regional bus network that also has a focus on rail integration.
- Continue to nurture growth of our core bus network, by seeking ways to make services more frequent and so more convenient for passengers. If future funding is received, it will continue to be used to enhance services to stretch standards for 15-minute, turn-up-and-go, frequencies.
- Match frequencies of important connecting services to those on the commercial bus network - encouraging a change of bus outside of the city centre to make suburban journeys.
- Explore regional night bus services, and pilot micro-networks using a mix of bus and DRT (such as *WESTlink*) focused on major transport interchanges to understand how a mixed approach to service provision can improve travel options for longer periods of the day.
- Develop specific location-based package improvements that focus on making travel easier between towns and cities across our region.
- Adopt an approach where each town bus service operates with four buses each hour, fostering better connections to longer-distance regional services.
- Recognise the continued need for a supported bus service network and work to solve the problems people face in areas with little or no public transport. Consider how DRT may be a tool for this, by mixing fully flexible, semi-timetabled and normal timetabled services.
- Continue to align our approaches with CRSTS programmes up to 2027 and beyond, the emerging JLTP5, spatial development, rural strategies, and our West of England Bus Strategy.
- Work with Unitary Authorities to embed buses into development planning policy to strengthen the link to public transport policy, making buses the primary travel option considered from first occupation by residents either through DRT or the protection of any bus corridor where significant planning is proposed within the next ten years – ensuring buses remain in place to be provide capacity from first occupation.
- Continue to work through the EP to continually review the local bus network, providing a structured approach to supported service funding and promoting the further development of innovative ways to reduce transport poverty through, but not limited to, DRT and *WESTlocal* style initiatives originating from the community or local bus operators.

With over 60% of the region is designated as rural, and smaller numbers of people living across wider areas, we know that it is important to provide different public transport options.

Our supported bus network remains important to us, but it needs to be more sustainable. Reshaping the rural network into more direct links to regional centres or interchanges and using DRT (e.g. *WESTlink*) or other community vehicles as either a fully flexible, semi-flexible, or fixed service at different times of the day will help us to unlock demand that will have an important contribution to making both our commercial and supported networks financially stable.

Our Longer-Term Ambition

Our longer-term ambition is to develop options for our local bus network through Assess*WEST*. These will be aligned with the region's JLTP and the CRSTS programme. The focus of our longer-term ambition to 2035 will be across two theme areas:

More buses that are easier to use

The Assess*WEST* programme will help to define our stretch standards. These will be based on area classification by population levels, and route type. We have defined typical areas and have separated single defined urban areas beyond Bristol and Bath from conurbations such as our two cities and have defined four route types. Potential stretch standards are below - as area populations grow so bus provision increases, strengthening the development planning relationship.

Population	Radial Route	Orbital Route	Inter-Urban	Inner-Circular
Conurbations Over 70,000	6-12 buses / hour (single or coordinated) 0500-2359 Daily		4-6 buses / hour 0600-2300 Daily	6-12 buses / hour 0500-2359 Daily
Urban areas Over 70,000	6 buses / hour 0500-2359 Daily	6 buses / hour 0500-2359 Daily	4 buses / hour 0600-2300 Daily	4 buses / hour 0700-2200 Daily
Urban areas 20,001 – 70,000	4 buses / hour 0600-2300 Daily	4 buses / hour 0600-2300 Daily	4 buses / hour 0600-2200 Daily	3 buses / hour 0700-2100 Mon-Sat*
Urban areas 10,001 – 20,000	3-4 buses / hour 0700-2230 Daily	N/A	3-4 buses / hour 0600-2100 Daily	N/A
Rural areas 3,001 – 10,000	2-3 buses / hour 0700-2230 Mon-Sat*	N/A	2-3 buses / hour 0600-2100 Mon-Sat*	N/A
Rural areas 501 – 3,000	1-2 buses / hour 0700-2230 Mon-Sat*	N/A	1-2 buses / hour 0600-2100 Mon-Sat*	N/A
Less than 500	Provision of DRT to Transport Hubs for small rural areas with less than 500 people			

Note: * Sunday operation remains an option decided on a case-by-case basis

A more sustainable network

We will continue to work towards a more sustainable bus network that is convenient and stable - building trust, pride, and loyalty in buses across our region's population. Through this we will continue to work hard to develop a stronger link between regional planning policy and the role of public transport.

Our approach includes:

- A more sustainable connected core network. We expect many routes will need continued financial support to operate at higher frequencies.
- Further development of innovative and demand led transport options and explore making public transport available from first occupation in new developments.
- Where we have areas of significant residential and industrial development, we will seek to deliver high-quality bus infrastructure so we can deliver segregated 'metrobus style' service performance, such as that now being delivered at the YTL Brabazon development to the north of Bristol.
- The safeguarding of bus routes aligned to our 10-year development plan (linked to our JLTP); continuing work already started under our short-term proposals – see [Appendix D].
- Funding sources remain aligned to deliver the greater benefits of combined infrastructure and operational improvements (e.g. BSIP, CRSTS, s106 working in tandem).

Bus Priority

Our Ambition

Delivering more reliable services across our region by tackling congestion and installing the right priority measures for the right locations - ensuring more buses operate on-time and as advertised, maximising the opportunity for buses to be sustainable.

Challenges and Opportunities

Across our network our largest operator has reported that bus journey times across the region are 13% slower (2022 to 2023) due to a combination of congestion and shortages in operational resources – impacting our target for 2025 to reduce average bus journey times by 2%. We are now seeing up to two in five bus services falling below the punctuality threshold of 82%, with punctuality and journey times identified as the two main areas for improvement by our passengers.

We know that bus priority has a transformative effect on buses. The metrobus system uses significant priority measures and has seen passenger growth of 30% since its introduction in 2019, and lower journey times.

However, there are significant challenges - single carriageway roads make bus lanes difficult and fragmented to install; delays impact lower frequency services and their passengers in our rural areas more significantly than bunching of very high frequency buses on urban corridors; and resolving local issues with simple measures can still evoke strong feelings amongst our communities.

Our Approach

We will continue to target BSIP (and CRSTS) investment on areas across our core network to improve reliability and work towards a financially sustainable network. Our EP will support this and ensure that capital investment delivers public benefits in improved services.

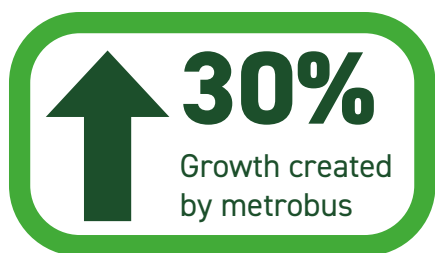
Consistent reliability and frequency of bus services is a key driver of growth, and the implementation of appropriate and simple priority measures is an important factor in generating trust in the bus network. There are significant opportunities to reduce bus delays in lower density areas which potentially have as big, or bigger, impact than in urban areas and are often cheaper to achieve using simple and cost-effective options (e.g. removing parking at highway pinch-points).

To ensure the effectiveness of bus priority measures we will use data to track the performance of buses across the network (monitoring average bus speeds, delays, and time between bus stops). We will report against past and expected performance, apply enforcement measures through mechanisms open to us in the EP (as the local transport authority in each of the MCA and NSC areas and alongside the Traffic Commissioner) and identify new bus priority opportunities by analysing delay 'hot spots'.

We will encourage Highway Authorities to apply stronger enforcement measures, including camera-based enforcement and towaway provision to remove delays caused by illegal parking and other obstructions on our bus network.

Through our existing EP, we have confirmed the use of an Operational Expenditure (OpEx) mechanism to capture and reinvest monetised operational savings seen by each bus operator where bus priorities result in vehicle and driver resource savings. This approach will directly benefit bus passengers through better bus services and a denser bus route network. This will grow bus use and attract new passengers, generating additional revenue to create a virtuous cycle.

Our Short-Term Proposals

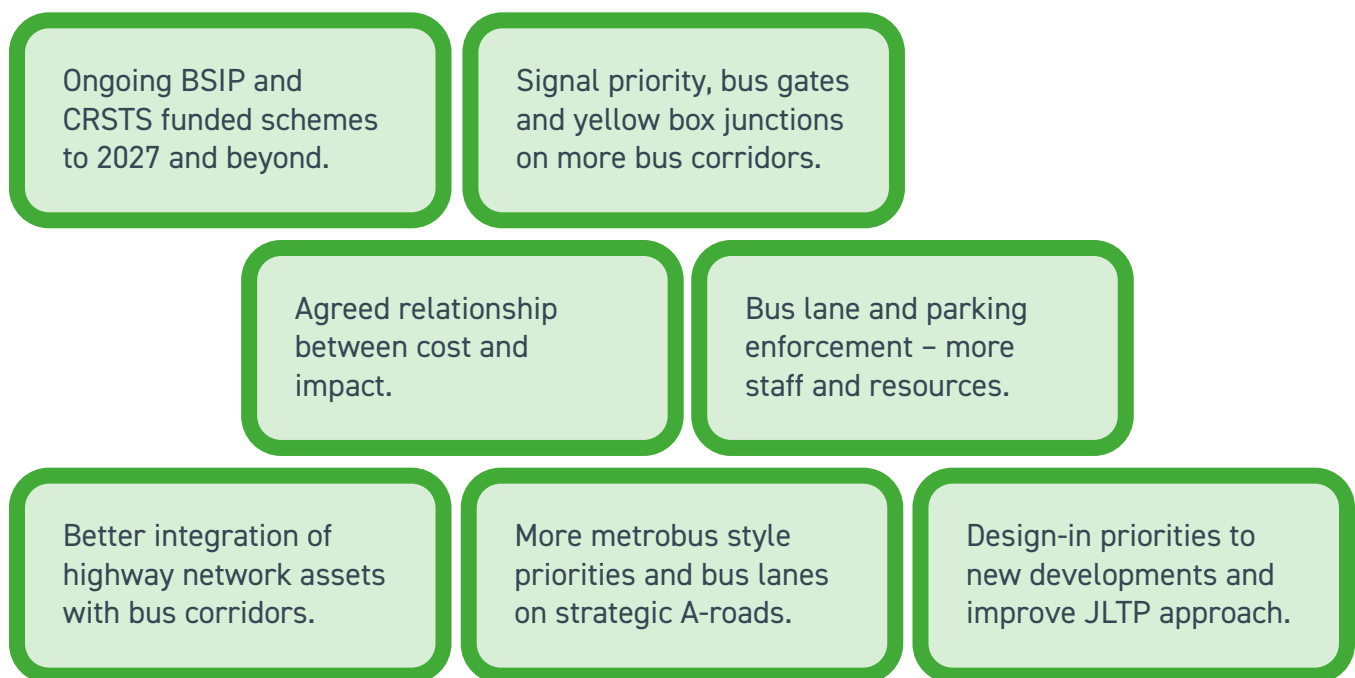


We will create the foundations for a more reliable bus network in the future and build on our success in linking capital and revenue funding streams to seek a more sustainable bus network.

To do this our general principles and policies will focus on:

- Continued driver recruitment and retention.
- An ongoing programme set up to understand simple, 'quick wins' and low-cost priority measures.
- A data led approach to target hot spots – applying the right measure for the right time and location.

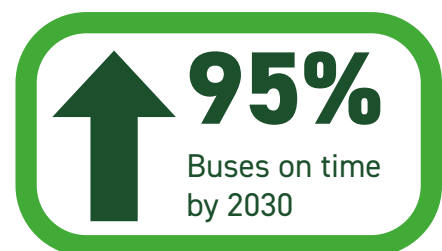
These help us to use the following building blocks for a reliable regional bus network:



...building to...

Our Longer-Term Ambitions

Building on the foundations laid in the short-term between 2025/26 and 2028/29 we will focus on our target to achieve at least 95% punctuality across our bus network by 2030. In the longer-term we will seek to implement infrastructure as set out below.



Ambition Category	Ambition Details
More continuous bus lanes and network integration	More continuous bus lanes where congestion persists and space allows, on routes where there are six or more buses per hour and continued integration of existing bus lanes with parallel infrastructure schemes to form a more complete network.
Future4WEST	<p>There are four corridors identified where the possibility of fully (or almost fully) segregated routes should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bath to Bristol City Centre • South Fringe to Bristol City Centre • East Fringe to Bristol City Centre • North Fringe to Bristol City Centre
Service enhancements	Develop a wider programme to improve bus journey speeds and tackle traffic congestion after 2028.
Wider policies	A review of the management and pricing policies for parking provisions in regional centres to consider how policy change may attract more people onto buses whilst keeping our regional centres accessible to everyone and commercially vibrant.

Simpler and More Affordable Fares

Our Ambition

We want fares that give better value and support a better experience for bus passengers across the region.

Challenges and Opportunities

Meeting our ambition is challenging in the current environment as the bus industry continues to face significant headwinds linked to rising operational costs and staff retention. This can lead to higher fares as operators seek to meet these costs. Declining passenger use can make the situation worse and lead to services being curtailed or cancelled to reduce costs further.

To meet these challenges, we introduced reduced fares in October 2022 which was augmented by a national cap of £2 from January 2023. This has been important in terms of passenger growth and confidence in using buses and has provided a significant opportunity to capture new bus users. However, uncertainty remains over the future with the national fare cap currently due to end in December 2024 and our own subsidies that end in March 2025. There is a big risk of a return to the downward spiral of higher fares leading to reduced ridership leading to reduced services unless further action is taken to lower fares in the longer-term.

A blunt fare cap has the benefit of simplicity. However, it prioritises passengers purchasing a single fare and does not specifically target return fares or groups (e.g. families). It also particularly benefits those making longer journeys as they receive a proportionally larger discount – when compared to distances travelled which may be unsustainable in the long-term and create difficult financial cliff-edges in the future.

Our Approach

Our approach acknowledges that simpler and more affordable fares are more than just a tool for increasing bus patronage but are also an investment, not just in transport but also in town centres, social inclusion, and a greener future.

We have combined the benefits of fare capping and technology, allowing us to have a daily fare cap set to £6 across the Bristol and Bath fare zones where many of our passengers make multiple short-distance bus trips and where passengers use 'tap-on / tap-off' (TOTO) facilities. Across the wider region we have introduced a £7 daily fare cap and we have also trialled differing daily fare caps in localised areas, for example a £3.70 cap in the Weston-super-Mare fare zone. Importantly, whilst technology has made this more attractive for many of our users, these fare caps are also available to passengers using the TravelWEST card and cash fares, with our drivers helping passengers to use the right fares when cash is used. However, one challenge remains – where a passenger uses two different commercial operator services the current fare capping approach does not apply, leaving the passenger paying a higher combined fare for their trip – we will seek to resolve this in the short-term.

We have used the fare cap approach as a stimulus for our wider BSIP fare strategies to allow some passengers and passenger groups to make further savings (e.g. through our EP we mandate £1 fares for young people aged up to 15-years old) and have a range of promotional fare offers that are made even easier when combined with TOTO use.

Our Short-Term Proposals

Our approach to simplifying and lowering the fares across our region has made a significant impact on how people travel by bus.



We will continue to work towards a maintaining a sustainable and simple fare structure.

Special Promotional Fares to drive growth



We will continue targeted offers following the success of earlier offers such as the Birthday Buses offer following its successful launch and take-up by over 65,000 people. We will extend our Job Seekers offer to include those on Job Seekers Allowance and we will expand the fare product range on our TravelWEST Card and increase regional top-up facilities.



Retain a regional Fare Cap

Young Person Fares

Free travel up to 11-years old and working towards a new young person fares package across our region – making bus travel simple, affordable, and better than the car.



Regional Zoning

We want to achieve geographic consistency and periods of availability across our fare products. Existing fare zones focus on urban centres with all non-urban areas grouped into wider and inconsistent regional zones.

To provide the simplest and most equitable fares across the West of England the region will be divided into smaller areas with a single fare structure balancing fare and distance travelled where we cannot maintain a fare cap.



Promotional Fares

Initiatives will be targeted at encouraging new passenger growth and to get more people using buses instead of their car.

Group Travel Offers



We recognise that a regional fare cap for single trip travel is not a one-size fits all approach, so in addition to our fare cap proposals including affordable 'Tap-on / Tap-off' daily caps, we will seek to introduce more ticket bundle offers aimed at families and other travelling groups so that everyone gets the best value fare for their journey across our region.

Increase cross-ticketing between bus and rail across the region (linked to better bus/rail timetable coordination).



Care Leavers

We will continue ensuring we focus travel incentives on important groups across our communities such as our Care Leavers.

Our Longer-Term Ambitions

Our longer-term ambition to 2034/35 builds on the foundations laid between 2025/26 and 2028/29 to maintain simple and affordable regional bus fares. In the longer-term we will seek to implement the following strategies.

Ambition Category	Ambition Details
Continuation of a regional fare cap	The national fare cap providing £2 single journey travel with the opportunity to cap daily travel when linked to TOTO systems is critical to the long-term health of our bus network. We would like to see the existing policy remain in place for as long as possible but will also take steps to ensure increases are fairly managed. In this event we will work closely with operators to manage a transition that balances financially sustainable fares levels with the passenger growth and shift away from private car use trajectory that we are achieving.
Consideration of reduced travel for young people	We would welcome the opportunity to work with Government to develop a more comprehensive national nationally funded approach to providing lower travel costs by bus for young people of various age groups – providing benefits most applicable to their use of the public transport network.
Additional fare promotions and target groups	We want to maintain a regional flat fare for single travel and align this to ongoing reductions for target groups, in particular job seekers, care leavers and new groups such as veterans and people leaving prison. In the longer-term we would seek to build on the success of our 2021 BSIP and 2024 short-term proposals and provide a range of targeted fare schemes that, when used in combination with our headline ambitions above and supported by a digital ticketing system, will provide everyone with the lowest and best bus fare option each time they travel, whether alone or as a group.

Ticketing

Our Ambition

We want to provide a consistent ticketing offer to passengers using the *WEST* network which seeks to achieve a seamless, integrated approach between all our bus operators and across our different forms of public transport.

Challenges and Opportunities

The growth in use of smart phones and contactless payment has transformed fare collection on local bus networks. This presents a significant opportunity to make fares simpler and through our EP we have already ensured regionally that all local bus operators are able to accept cashless payment.

Our largest local bus operator with 90% of the market records 67% of ticket sales by app but there is no consistent ticket available electronically across all our operators. Less than 1% of journeys are made using tickets accepted by all operators, compared to over 10% in other parts of the country. Smaller operators who are not able to invest in smart ticketing technology continue to use cash and paper-based products instead of apps and QR codes.

The opportunity here is the creation of a single offer to passengers across the region with contactless Pay-As-You-Go and digital (smartphone) ticketing and development of the TravelWEST Card to allow all ticket products to be housed in one location, the best fare to be applied to the journey made, and a comprehensive and attractive offer for target groups including commuters and young travellers.

Our Approach

We have set out three initiatives to support journey planning and ticketing on buses and all other forms of public transport. The first two initiatives are being realised through the development of the *WEST* app. The app seeks to provide a door-to-door, journey planning service that will bring all information about forms of public transport into one place. It will seek to further integrate and digitise ticketing for First Bus services, with the aim of extending this to all other bus operators, and then rail. The *WEST* app will support the continued approach to digitalise public transport fare payments and ticketing across our region with buses being at the start of this process.

Our approach is to continue to develop fares to make bus travel more accessible and convenient for residents across the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and North Somerset Council areas.

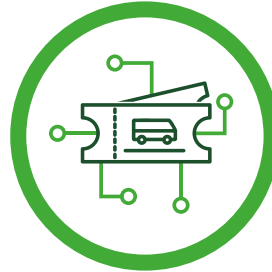
Our approach also benefits from the introduction of the national fare cap and use of the TravelWEST Card which have ensured that passengers without access to the *WEST* app benefit from low fares and fare product options through various methods. However, the current lack of a single platform (such as *WEST* app) and widespread availability of supporting technology continues to hamper progress in this area where we know strong potential exists with First Bus alone stating that 40% of adult passengers now use TOTO and 67% of tickets are sold digitally.

Our Short-Term Proposals

We will seek to develop the *WESTapp* to allow journey planning and ticketing to be in one place and will integrate the *WESTapp* with DfT's Project Coral once this is rolled out nationally.



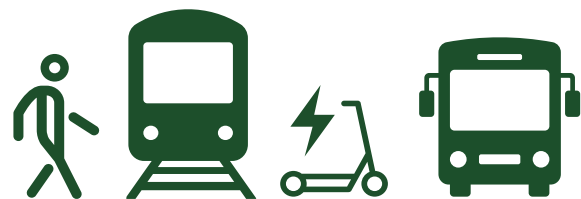
We will explore adding *WESTlink* services and our regional 'Rider' tickets to the *WESTapp* to make bus to bus travel much easier across the region.



We will work with the DfT to deliver bus to bus ticketing through Project Coral – the system that will allow fare payments for trips across different buses to be paid to the right bus operators.



We will seek continued funding to develop the *WESTapp* through future funding opportunities and this will help us to develop full rail integration.



We will seek to bring all forms of public transport into the *WESTapp* to allow people to make journeys using different transport methods as part of one door to door trip.

Our Longer-Term Ambitions

Beyond 2028/29 our long-term vision remains for a seamless and simple ticketing system that allows more people across our region to benefit from cashless technology systems on all forms of public transport.

We will continue to explore how we may develop the *WESTapp* and *TravelWEST* products, expand facilities for people who are not able to use or access *WESTapp* to ensure an equitable ticketing offer, and fully integrate parallel approaches such as Project Coral to ensure that all our public transport providers can offer the lowest fare and the simplest ticket product range to the benefit of everyone living in, working in, and visiting our region.

Improved Bus Stops, Bus Stations, and Interchanges

Feedback shows that bus stop and waiting facilities need to be improved in terms of cleanliness, safety, and information provision. It is also important to consider how different places have different needs. For example, in rural areas where services tend to be less frequent, the time spent at the bus stop is likely to be longer and so facilities such as RTI and seating are more heavily relied upon.

There is opportunity to improve passenger confidence and comfort through better physical infrastructure and the availability of information - building a consistent bus stop, station and interchange offer across the region, whilst ensuring that information is tailored and bespoke to the needs of communities.

Our Short-Term Proposals

Waiting for buses

We will use our Bus Stop Guidance document to set a consistent standard across all bus stops in the region but remain sensitive to rural and historical bus stop locations. We will review our current maintenance arrangements for bus stops and shelters and look to move to a regional approach to owning and managing our bus stops. We will consider access to bus stops by other forms of shared and sustainable transport, the provision of cycle parking, and wayfinding to aid pedestrians following our significant success in delivering micromobility schemes (e.g. e-scooters) and improve their integration with buses further to improve first and last mile movements.

Roadworks Coordination

We will work towards making it a requirement that all road works are submitted to and reflected within the disruptions management tool that has been developed since the previous BSIP, with disruptions being communicated to passengers.

Changing buses

The places for people to change between transport forms will create a single network approach. We will enhance the waiting environment for passengers with information that is easy to understand and access and with better wayfinding piloting a combined approach of infrastructure and information improvements on selected routes. Trained staff at principal interchanges will provide help to users on services that are available to them. We will continue to deliver both smaller rural and major interchanges and Park & Ride sites. We will provide opportunities for connections to be made via *WESTbike* and *WESTscoot*, reflecting the goals set by the region for walking and cycling to become the preferred choice for short journeys.

Connections to other transport

The facilities to allow passengers to change between buses and other transport will increase provision of cycle parking and connect to off-road segregated walking and cycling routes to make walking, wheeling, and cycling more attractive, and a viable onward option after the use of the bus network. These plans build on the aspirations within our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and will improve network access for all these forms, including micromobility options.

Our Longer-Term Ambitions

- We will review the location of all bus stops and work with local people to move some to more appropriate places, closer to homes and amenities, to better serve our communities.
- We want more bus stops in our region to have a branded flag, shelter, and good pedestrian access, to be well-lit, monitored by CCTV if appropriate, and give information to passengers using RTI or e-ink options.
- Interchange Hubs will be in urban areas where key radial and orbital bus services intersect and on inter-urban corridors where rural feeder/DRT services connect - each informed by *WEST*app data.

Improved bus information and network identity

The mix of geographies across our region can mean that it is challenging to provide real-time bus information due to issues with localised power connections and mobile technology signal strength. Printed information is also a challenge due to the spread of our c6,000 bus stops. As we develop a single unified network, all information will adopt the *WEST* brand - this will take time to roll-out at all bus stops.

In the meantime, TravelWEST has already been upgraded to deliver real time information including live location data and following a successful trial of e-paper displays, we are in a good position to roll these out widely. The *WEST* brand is strong and is being introduced on *WEST*link and our promotional fares.

Our Short-Term Proposals

WEST branding – one network

We will seek to extend the *WEST* brand across our network to fully brand our buses as *WEST*bus. Initially, this will focus on buses placed on frequent and highly used bus corridors which could benefit from strong brand recognition and the unified travel experience that this could encompass.

Through our EP, every bus will have *WEST*bus branding as a minimum on the front, side, rear, and internally on the driver cab door so all our operators can maintain their own locally significant branding whilst providing the single *WEST*bus network identity.

We will seek to update all bus stops with *WEST*bus branding and look to name bus stops consistently across operator information as reflected in the National Public Transport Access Nodes (NaPTAN). We also work hard to maintain the value and character of historical bus stops within the *WEST* brand approach.

We will also seek to ensure consistency of predictions between apps and websites such as TravelWEST and the *WEST*app, through a single data source and prediction approach.

We will work towards ensuring all bus stops get new route maps, walking maps, flags, and information on the local area in *WEST*bus branding and that train stations will display *WEST*bus information on digital displays.

We will seek the ability to place e-paper displays across half of our bus stops to provide up to date timetables, real-time passenger notices, fare information, and promotional offers.

We will explore further development of the *WEST* app to include:

- Fares information for local buses
- Direct marketing, including tailored push notifications
- Ticket sales, with an enhanced Travel *WEST* Card
- Online chat function

We will seek to create new interactive travel guides to support journey planning, alongside local area guides digitally and in printed format. We are working with local highway authorities to adopt and implement a Bus Information Strategy by 2025.

These proposals will ensure we have an integrated travel brand that becomes more recognisable and reliable. The *WEST* app may help facilitate this and make booking quicker, more accessible, and seamless across the whole *WEST* network, between buses and other transport options.

Our Longer-Term Ambitions

Our ambition is that all entry points onto the public transport network – bus stops, railway stations, and interchanges – and all vehicles are easily identifiable as part of a common network and brand with co-ordinated services, integrated ticketing, and comprehensive information.

Bus Passenger Safety and Security

Our Ambition

To provide a safe and secure environment at all stages of a passenger's journey, including at bus stops, on-board and walking to and from stops.

Challenges and Opportunities

Perceptions of feeling unsafe or the fear of crime are experienced differently between individuals based on a range of factors (age, gender, race etc), as well as previous experiences. It is imperative to actively engage with local end users who abstain from bus travel to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives.

Our approach

The Bus Passenger Safety Audit has been established, with bus stop and walking route audits undertaken at identified sites, and we will implement its recommendations.

We will work with local highway authorities, transport operators, the West of England Women's Commission, and the police to improve safety and the security of the bus network through training and education and awareness campaigns.

Our Short-Term Proposals

Through our short-term proposals:

- We will work with the public to better understand concerns and fears that may deter them from using the bus.
- We will seek to undertake safety Bus Passenger Safety Audit of all bus stops and walking routes in the BSIP area and produce design guidance tailored to different geographical contexts. Improvements will be sought to wayfinding, lighting, and CCTV.
- We will look to enhance collaboration between the transport operators and the Police, potentially through a Safer Travel Partnership approach.
- We will work towards standardising training programmes for all staff across the bus network and establishing consistent response procedures.
- We will work towards producing education and awareness campaigns for staff and passengers to inform individuals on how to handle incidents and how to safely intervene or report concerning behaviour.

These early approaches have the potential to further empower users and encourage a safer and more respectful environment on our buses and will be supported by our regional 'last bus guarantee' approach – a key part of our West of England Bus Passenger Charter.

Our longer-term ambitions

In the longer term, we will seek to ensure consistent training is implemented and delivered across the *WEST* network and will look to set up bus driver support programmes to safeguard their well-being.

We will also consider a centralised system for collecting and sharing incident data. Part of this may involve making reporting incident convenient and accessible for passengers through better use of technology.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Our Ambition

We want to ensure that the bus network offers end to end safety and accessibility for all users; on the journey to a bus stop or station, at bus stops and on buses themselves. Establishing an accessible, inclusive, and safe transport system will ensure that everybody has the ability and the confidence to use our network.

Challenges and Opportunities

The BSIP refresh allows us to further tailor our Bus Passenger Safety Audit to consider accessibility and inclusion needs, and to consider developing new ambitions where necessary. We will look to improve physical, digital, and financial accessibility to our network as well as our bus fleet and bus stops to ensure that they can align with legal requirements and best practices, including kerb height and crossing placement.

Our approach

We will ensure that staff across the network receive training modules focusing on accessibility, inclusivity, and diversity so that these issues are properly considered across the *WEST* network. We will also look to fund an equality officer who would be employed to ensure accessibility and inclusion are properly considered across the *WEST* network.

Our Short-Term Proposals

Consider introduction of free travel all day for holders of disabled English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) passes and any companions.

All buses across our mix of local bus services (including DRT) will be wheelchair accessible and we will seek to ensure all buses have audio visual equipment fitted for next-stop information. All newly built buses will require both features from October 2024 through our EP process. We will also seek to fit as many buses as possible with USB charging points, WiFi, and internal and external CCTV.

We will work towards a regional training standard for all our bus drivers and operational staff that focuses on disability awareness (with a particular focus on hidden disabilities such as neurodiversity), care for passengers with special needs, first aid, health and safety, vulnerable passenger protection, and emergency procedures.

Our staff at interchanges will look to support passengers with a range of needs, including parents with pushchairs, and our bus operators will be encouraged to offer an inclusive and accessible work environment, with equal opportunities for all.

Our longer-term ambitions

We have developed a bus passenger safety audit template to consider accessibility at each bus stop. Post audit, we would like to upgrade our bus stops to reflect the DfT guidance on Inclusive Mobility and may consider the following points:

- Provision of Help Points at bus stops where waiting passengers may feel particularly vulnerable.
- Use of a disruptions management tool, ensuring communication of any changes to bus routes for visually impaired and guide dog users who rely on known, learnt routes.
- Investigate providing quiet areas to minimise disorientation, anxiety, and stress.

A Passenger Voice

The West of England Bus Passenger Charter seeks to empower passengers by clearly setting out what they can expect when travelling by bus in the region and gives them a voice to feedback when expectations are not met.

The current charter has been approved and adopted into our EP and will be published on each of our regional local transport authority websites in the summer of 2024 in plain English.

We will promote the charter as part of a wider BSIP Communications and Marketing package later in 2024 and ensuring that the charter is visible.

The Bus Passenger Charter will be reviewed annually against latest guidance from the DfT and strengthened by our community consultation approach.

Through the charter we will consider setting up a single bus passenger contact point to ensure passengers can raise issues about their experiences of using local buses across our region and receive a reply, with the issue fully tracked by us at each stage of its journey.

The proposals in Appendix D will be considered by the EP as part of the 2024 review of the Bus Passenger Charter.



Improvements to our bus fleet

Our Ambition

Our region will be served by a cutting-edge fleet of zero-emission buses designed to minimise bus stop dwell time, and each with a class leading internal environment focusing on accessibility, information and safety with audio-visual next stop information, USB charging, and two wheelchair spaces on every bus.

Challenges and Opportunities

Currently, 15% of our bus fleet is over 15 years old and there are low satisfaction levels with on-board conditions. The age of some of our buses presents opportunities for replacement with lower emission vehicle, and First Bus and Stagecoach have committed to fully convert their fleets to zero-emission vehicles by 2035 and purchase no new diesel vehicles from 2023.

In March 2024 our region was successful in attracting Government funding support the introduction of zero-emission electric buses through the second Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) programme. The MCA was successful in winning £6.6 million for 74 buses and NSC (a rural area as defined by DfT) was awarded £2.1 million for 24 buses.

Government funding will provide 25% of the purchase costs for the vehicles, with First Bus providing over £50 million of investment to support the purchase of the buses. We will work closely with First Bus to support the roll-out of these buses across our regional network through 2024 and beyond.

Our Short-Term Proposals

To support our plans to re-optimize our local bus network our approach for the short-term we will:

- Seek funding to cover the difference between Euro VI diesel bus and zero-emission electric bus purchase costs for further new buses.
- Explore ways of further implementing audio-visual equipment and agreeing minimum cleaning standards with all our local bus operators on the *WEST* network.
- Start to explore how we will fully decarbonise our bus fleet by engaging with energy providers and technology manufacturers to understand the scale of work required and its cost and time impact.

Our Longer-Term Ambitions

In the longer-term we will seek to ensure all buses in the region will be zero emission by 2035 or earlier and look to support this transition by considering the installation of twenty ultra-fast 500amp electric vehicle chargers at interchanges, layovers, and park and ride sites.

Continue the work to decarbonise our buses with energy providers and move to a delivery phase where opportunities and funding were identified in the short-term period. In addition, we will also start work with partner operators and the wider fuel distribution network to investigate the ability to operate hydrogen fuel-cell buses.

Transformational Network

Our Ambition

We want to lead a greener recovery, reflecting a long-term reduction in car dependency and an increase in the use of alternative, sustainable transport forms, including bus travel. This will support our aim of fulfilling our carbon-neutral pledge by 2030 and in delivering a financially viable bus network.

Our regional GDP contribution to the national economy is significant, and the growth and economic impact we want will require a change in the transport network we rely on.

As we look towards the future, and our aspiration to deliver the *WEST* network, two challenges remain in the form of continued need for passenger growth to financially underpin the improvements we want to see to services across our network and continued levels of car dependency, which remains high and particularly impacts orbital trips and journeys outside the Bristol urban area.

This BSIP will maintain the momentum gained in the last two years for passenger growth that outpaces the national average and we are on course to exceed 100 million passenger journeys per year by 2036. The Bristol Low Emission Zone and Bath Clean Air Zone have already had an impact on how people travel, helping move people towards the bus network has been supported by more innovative ways of personal movement including e-scooters and *WEST*bike.

Our Short-Term Proposals

Our short-term approach to a transformational network will see the partnership work towards policies and measures that will follow the overarching themes set out below:

Ambition	Outcomes
Continued focus on quality	Getting the basics right, finding and delivering 'quick wins' and growing passenger use further.
Continued focus on core buses	Nurturing the core bus network using our already successful formula of enhanced funding support.
High quality interchange	Establish a network of high-quality interchanges as a first step to realising <i>AssessWEST</i> outcomes.
Toolkit approach	Continue to combine funding streams to maximise the benefits that joint working can deliver.
Consider different delivery models	Understand how we may better achieve our vision for a revitalised network through alternative delivery models such as our own EP+ style, or franchising.

Our Longer-Term Ambitions

WEST as a brand will evolve until it becomes synonymous with public transport across the West of England. We will look at any opportunities provided in the future to go further in establishing a world-class integrated public transport network.

We aspire to have a fully devolved transport authority acting as the MCA's transport body. This will allow for more powerful, centralised, and ambitious decision making. This approach may also be followed by NSC, individually or jointly with the MCA. With the powers afforded to *WEST* – like those in London, the West Midlands, or Greater Manchester – we will deliver further improvements on top of our existing BSIP programme by re-evaluating and increasing our ambitions across the region.

Future network delivery options under consideration

Across our region we would like to have a greater say in how our network is delivered and greater control of the passenger experiences. This may include the power to specify routes, frequencies, and ticketing arrangements or create even more productive partnerships with our existing local bus operators.

Emerging legislation may provide opportunities and powers to establish a 'Transport for London' style body under the joint ownership of the LTAs. This approach could be underpinned by the following tenets:

Tenet	Outcomes
'Best Passenger Experience'	Continued project coordination, quicker decision making, and continued linkage with JLTP.
A single unified network	Development of segregated corridor approaches under a single brand and delivery model- future for <i>WEST</i> .
Network consolidation	Comprehensive, connected and regionally equitable network that removes transport poverty.
Simple and cost effective	TOTO network wide and integration on all forms underpinned by simple, low, and capped fares.
Innovation in technology	A national testbed for practical and more advanced technology including autonomous vehicles.

There are two approaches that we will explore as we look to deliver *WEST*:

An EP with greater powers

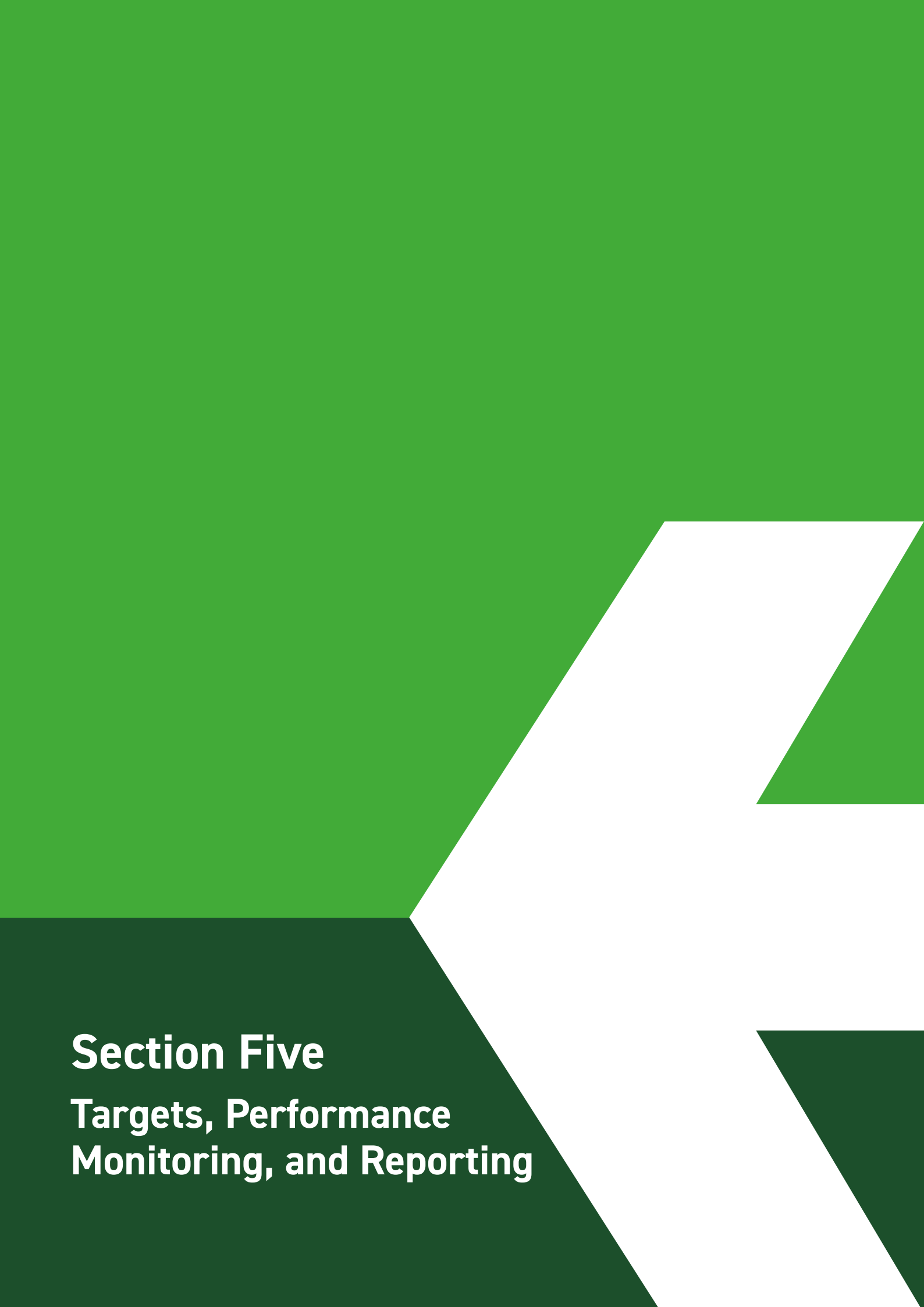
We already have a well-functioning EP in place that has seen all partners work together to make gains in the areas of passenger growth and network uniformity. We know there is more work to do to gain and retain trust in the local bus network across our region and feel that an even stronger EP approach could achieve this.

Although EP+ is not a recognised term, this is an approach we will explore with our local bus operating partners. We will consider how we can deliver greater success through approaches that allow local bus operators to financially contribute more significantly to the network in return for longer-term commercial security and the benefits that centralising some functions, such as marketing and fares by the *WEST* body may bring. This evolution of our current EP may be considered a partial step towards franchising but would seek to retain commercial freedoms for local bus operators, exploring how a financial contribution model could work.

Franchising of the regional bus network

Through this BSIP, subject to funding and resources being available, both the MCA and NSC will consider undertaking the preliminary work to explore if an alternative network delivery model, such as franchising, may be of more benefit to each partner, or the region if our present EP is unable to deliver the substantial progress towards the high-level objectives in the BSIP and EP Plan.

We will look closely at any emerging legislation in respect of the bus industry and take full advantage of any opportunity to better deliver bus services to more people across our region, making use of any funding or policy changes to deliver a revitalised, efficient, and balanced *WEST* bus network.



Section Five
Targets, Performance
Monitoring, and Reporting

Introduction

This section sets out the targets made in the last BSIP, and the progress which has been made since. In the 2021 BSIP, no targets were set for network coverage and service hours.

This section should be considered alongside the relevant BCAs where available. Whilst this BSIP – and these targets – cover the entire West of England BSIP area, two BCAs are to be published separately by the MCA and NSC.

Bus journey times

Designated corridors have seen a journey time reduction above the targets for 2025. Further work is needed to reach the target 10% journey time reduction by 2030.

Bus punctuality

As discussed in previous chapters, punctuality in the region has not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels. This is due to a range of factors from delays caused by traffic to issues relating to staff shortages. The past year has seen an increase in punctuality, from 71% in the first half to 73% in the second half and continuing that trend will see us reach our 2030 target.

Passenger growth

Our region has seen strong patronage growth over the last two years, and we are on track to meet the targets set.

Passenger satisfaction

As elsewhere in the country, passenger satisfaction has seen a decline since pre-pandemic levels. While we can see that trend reversing, more work is needed to meet the targets set. Our proposals and ambitions are targeted at all stages of the passenger journey and would contribute to increasing satisfaction.

Bus fleet de-carbonisation

We have made strong progress against our bus fleet de-carbonisation targets, with nearly all buses in our region now meeting the Euro VI emission standards and strong year on year progress on zero-emission buses (ZEBs). Progress is expected to improve further as the ZEBs being procured through the recent regional Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) fund success are rolled out. Through this fund, the MCA was successful in being awarded £6.6 million for new electric 74 buses and NSC was awarded £2.2 million for 24 new electric buses, with Government funding 25% of the vehicle purchase costs and First Bus investing £50 million to support the purchase of these buses.

Table 5-1 – BSIP Target Progress (*indicates baseline)

Category	Target	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Target by 2025
Bus journey times	Reduce average bus journey times (minutes) on designated corridors by 2% by 2025 and by 10% by 2030	61	*63	No data	55	56	61	62
Bus punctuality	Achieve 95% of services running on time, defined as being no more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late, by 2030. Target for 2024/25 is 82%	*77%	N/A	74%	71%	67%	72%	82%
Passenger growth	Return to pre-pandemic patronage levels by 2025 and grow patronage by at least 24% from that level by 2030	-	*70.2m	22.5m	46.8m	55.3m	63.7m	70m
Bus Passenger satisfaction	Increase bus passenger satisfaction to 89% for 2025 and 95% for 2030	85%	*86%	No data	No data	78%	79%	89%
Bus fleet de-carbonisation	By the end of 2023 all buses operating in the BSIP area will meet the Euro VI emission standard	No data	No data	48.2%	88.6%	96%	98%	100%
Bus fleet de-carbonisation	By 2030, at least 75% of the local fleet will be either zero-emission or ultra-low emission and by 2035 all buses will be zero-emission buses (ZEBs).	No data	No data	0%	0%	3.6%	6.6%	N/A

The image features a background split into two shades of green: a lighter green on top and a darker green on the bottom. A large, white, stylized geometric shape, resembling a large letter 'E' or a series of parallel lines, is positioned on the right side, extending across both green sections. In the bottom-left corner, the text "Letters of Support" is written in a white, sans-serif font.

**Letters of
Support**

31st May 2024

To whom it may concern.

BSIP Refresh

I am writing to give First West of England's support to the proposals and ambitions set out by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and North Somerset Council in their BSIP refresh documentation.

Through strong partnership working, First West of England, the MCA and North Somerset Council have achieved significant growth in patronage and customer numbers through investment in networks, fares and ticketing, innovations such as Tap On, Tap Off ticketing across all our services, and joint marketing campaigns to position the bus as an affordable, sustainable and convenient travel option.

We look forward to continuing this partnership working to build on the progress made to date and accelerate the growth in bus use in the region

Yours sincerely,



Rob Pymm
Commercial Director
First West of England

11th June 2024

Bob Scowen
Head of Integrated Transport Solutions
West of England Combined Authority

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

Dear Bob

I'm writing to confirm that Stagecoach West has been engaged in the preparation of the updated 2024 West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and is fully supportive of its content and ambition.

Stagecoach has been consulted over various parts of the bid via the Enhanced Partnership Advisory Panel and looks forward to engaging further with West of England Combined Authority in the future, to work together to achieve the ambitions set out in the BSIP.

West of England Combined Authority has remained supportive of bus operators in recognising the challenges faced.

Stagecoach West is fully committed to supporting the BSIP's implementation and looks forward to full engagement the future to support the plan and make a positive impact on our community in the West of England.

Sincerely



Chris Hanson
Managing Director, Stagecoach West

The Big Lemon

Protran House, Boundary Road, Black Rock, Brighton BN2 STJ
Tel 01273 681 681, Email colin@thebiglemon.com

29th June 2024

To whom it may concern

Re: BSIP Update


I have read over the updates to the BSIP and at this stage I have no comments to add and therefore The Big Lemon CIC will endorse the programme going forward.

Yours sincerely



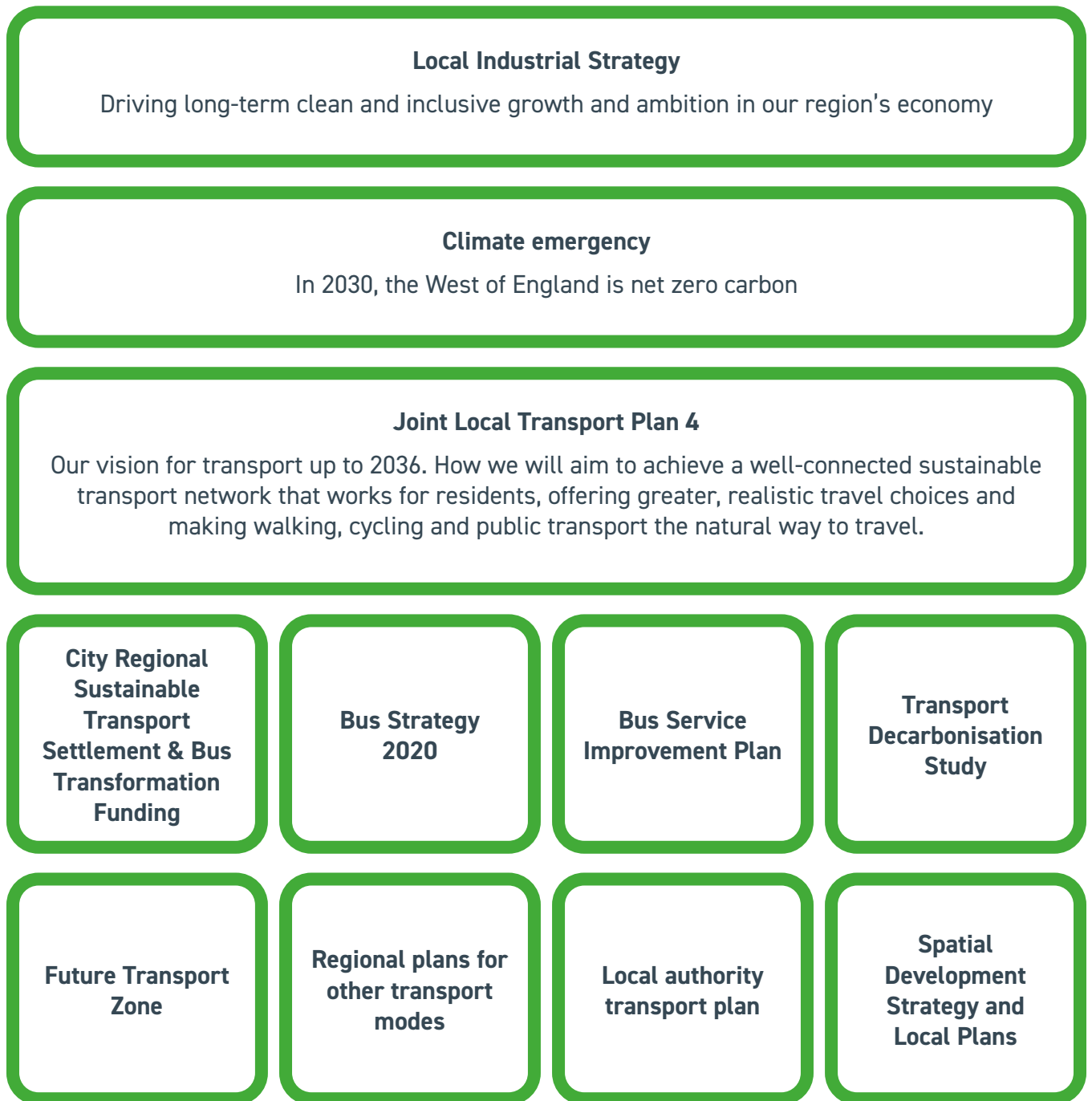
Colin Morris
General Manager
The Big lemon CIC,
registered in England and Wales, number 6045786.

Web www.thebiglemon.com
Facebook www.facebook.com/thebiglemon
Twitter @thebiglemon



Appendix A
Our Bus Vision

Figure 1- BSIP in context of regional policies and strategies



NBS Goal	West of England Approach
More frequent	The West of England Bus Strategy sets out our plans for a high frequency radial and orbital bus network. This is currently being considered through the AssessWEST programme (funded by BSIP 2021) and furthered through this BSIP.
Faster & more reliable	We have already invested in bus priority to make buses faster and more reliable. Our ambition is for more metroBus style infrastructure, and we propose to work with operators to increase dual door / faster flow buses on our network.
Cheaper	We have introduced three fare packages through the BSIP 2021 (fare caps, free travel during birthday months, and free fares for care leavers / job seekers). We want to continue the National £2 Fare Cap and relate distance and fares equitably across the region.
More comprehensive	Our regional bus strategy sets out our ambition for a more comprehensive bus network using high frequency radial and orbital services with increased interchange. WESTLink has ensured that underserved areas have improved levels of access.
Easier to understand	AssessWEST will define a comprehensive and easy to use service network connected at high quality hubs. To further increase information access, we will roll out e-paper displays, over £1m of RTI technology, and QR codes at every bus for next bus times.
Easier to use	We will refine the current multi-operator ticket approach, introduce the MaaS platform (West App), maintain daily and weekly fare capping with Tap On, Tap Off, make information more widely available, and improve core network frequencies.
Better to ride in	metroBus routes in Bristol are equipped with dual-door buses to speed up boarding and alighting, as well as WiFi and USB charging ports. Our ambition is to replicate this model through the emerging AssessWEST regional bus network on radial and orbital routes.
Better integration with other services & modes	The West of England Bus Strategy has been written with an interchange-based system in mind. This will create better connections between bus services and by design the rail network, consistent WEST branding, and better information sharing between the modes.
Greener	The regional bus fleet uses a combination of Euro 6 diesel and biogas buses, both of which help improve air quality. The West of England has also been successful in a Zebra (2) bid and delivery of [XX] electric vehicles will kick start a wider fleet rejuvenation.
Accessible & inclusive network	To support passengers with hearing and sight difficulties as well as those unfamiliar to the area, almost 60% of buses have been fitted with audio and visual announcements. Our proposals will create a single accessibility training standard for drivers in the region.

NBS Goal	West of England Approach
Innovative	We will further develop WESTlink DRT to close transport gaps rural areas and connect to the core network. WESTlocal will continue to allow local communities to develop and initiate their own transport solutions in response to the specific needs of their community.
Safe mode of transport – ‘seen as safe’	Our bus passenger safety audit evaluates and records the safety of bus stops and walking routes. Our proposals now focus on developing a safer travel partnership and combining this with accessibility proposals, to ensure safety is consistently designed in.

Level 2
100 Wharfside Street
Birmingham
B1 1RT

wsp.com

WSP UK Limited makes no warranties or guarantees, actual or implied, in relation to this report, or the ultimate commercial, technical, economic, or financial effect on the project to which it relates, and bears no responsibility or liability related to its use other than as set out in the contract under which it was supplied.



Appendix B
Current Bus Offer
to Passengers

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Bus use in the BSIP area	4
2.1. 2021 Objective: High Mode Share For Buses Of Overall Travel Market	4
2.2. 2021 Objective: High Level Of Passenger Satisfaction	4
3. Bus services in the BSIP area	6
3.1 2021 Objective: High quality bus service	6
Frequency and accessibility	6
Journey time, Punctuality and Reliability	6
Bus Lanes	6
Investment and Spend	7
4. Service Frequency Maps	15
5. Bus Stop Frequency and walking times	23
6. Commerical, Supported and Enhanced Services	31

1 Introduction

This appendix is in support of Section 2 of the 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Refresh and presents the data used in the analysis as well as the full set of maps.

The data presented in this section is an update to that included in the 2021 BSIP and has been obtained from:

- Local bus operators
- Customer surveys
- DfT bus statistics
- National Travel Survey statistics
- Census data

The Bus Connectivity Assessment developed in support of this BSIP Refresh also addresses data themes discussed in the BSIP.

2 Bus use in the BSIP area

2.1 2021 Objective: High Mode Share For Buses Of Overall Travel Market

Table 2-1 is based on Department for Transport (2024) Bus Statistics, Local bus passenger journeys (BUS01e).

Table 2-1 - Passenger journeys on local bus services by local authority services (millions)

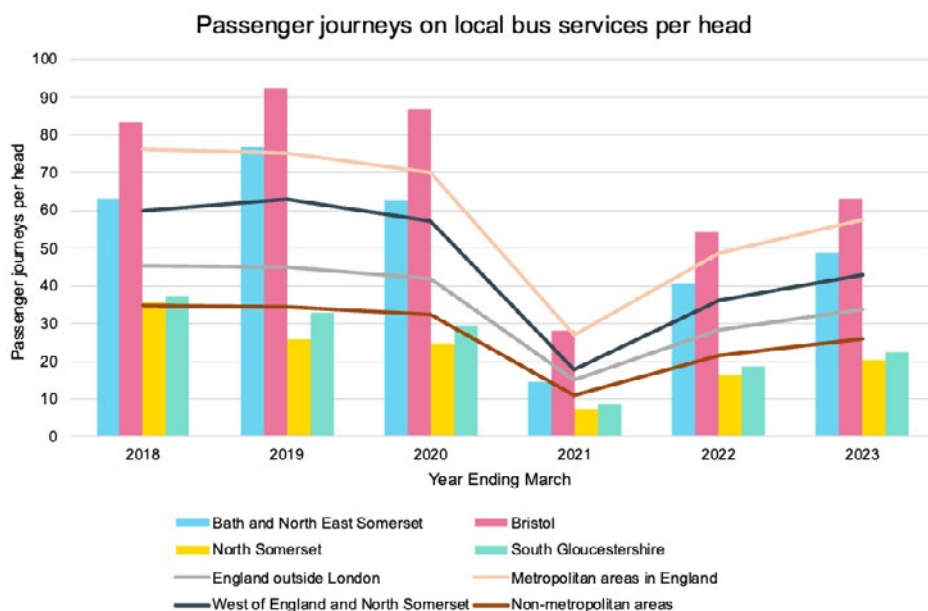
Authority	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Bath & North East Somerset	11.9	14.7	12.1	2.9	7.9	9.4
Bristol	38.4	42.8	40.3	13.1	25.6	29.7
North Somerset	7.6	5.5	5.3	1.6	3.5	4.5
South Gloucestershire	10.4	9.3	8.4	2.6	5.5	6.6
Total	68.3	72.3	66.1	20.1	42.4	50.2

Table 2-2 and Figure 2-1 are based on Department for Transport (2024) Bus Statistics, Passenger journeys on local bus services per head by local authority (BUS01f).

Table 2-2 - Passenger journeys on local bus services per head by local authority

Authority	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Bath & North East Somerset	63.1	76.7	62.6	14.6	40.9	49.0
Bristol	83.6	92.3	86.9	28.1	54.3	63.1
South Gloucestershire	37.3	32.9	29.5	9.0	18.8	22.5
North Somerset	35.7	25.9	24.6	7.4	16.2	20.5
West of England MCA and North Somerset	60.0	62.8	57.1	17.9	36.2	42.8
England outside London	45.3	44.9	41.9	15.2	28.5	33.9
Metropolitan areas in England	76.1	75.2	69.9	27.1	48.6	57.5
Non-metropolitan areas	35	34	32	11	22	26

Figure 2-1 - Passenger journeys per head per local authority in the last five years



2.2 2021 Objective: High Level Of Passenger Satisfaction

Table 2-4 is based on results from the surveys run by Transport Focus. This was known as the 'Bus Passenger Journey' up to and including 2019, and 'Your Bus Journey' since restarting in 2023.

Table 2-3 - Bus passenger satisfaction in the Bus Journey survey run by Transport Focus

Overall satisfaction	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2023
West of England + North Somerset	89%	85%	89%	85%	86%	77%
Metropolitan areas in England	86%	85%	85%	87%	87%	78%

3 Bus services in the BSIP area

3.1 2021 Objective: High quality bus service

Frequency and accessibility

Chapter 4 Contains a full set of maps showing the average service frequency at different time of the day and week. These were created based on General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data covering Q1 2024.

Chapter 5 presents a series of maps showing all the bus stops in the BSIP area, their average service frequency as well as a 5-min walking area to the stops.

Journey time, Punctuality and Reliability

Table 3-5 is based on Department for Transport (2024) Bus Statistics, Bus Reliability and Punctuality (BUS09).

Table 3-1 - Non-frequent bus services running on time by local authority

Area	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22	2022/23
West of England+ North Somerset	82%	77%	NA	NA	75%
Metropolitan areas in England	84%	84%	84%	87%	86%
Non-metropolitan areas in England	83%	83%	85%	85%	81%
England outside London	84%	84%	85%	84%	80%

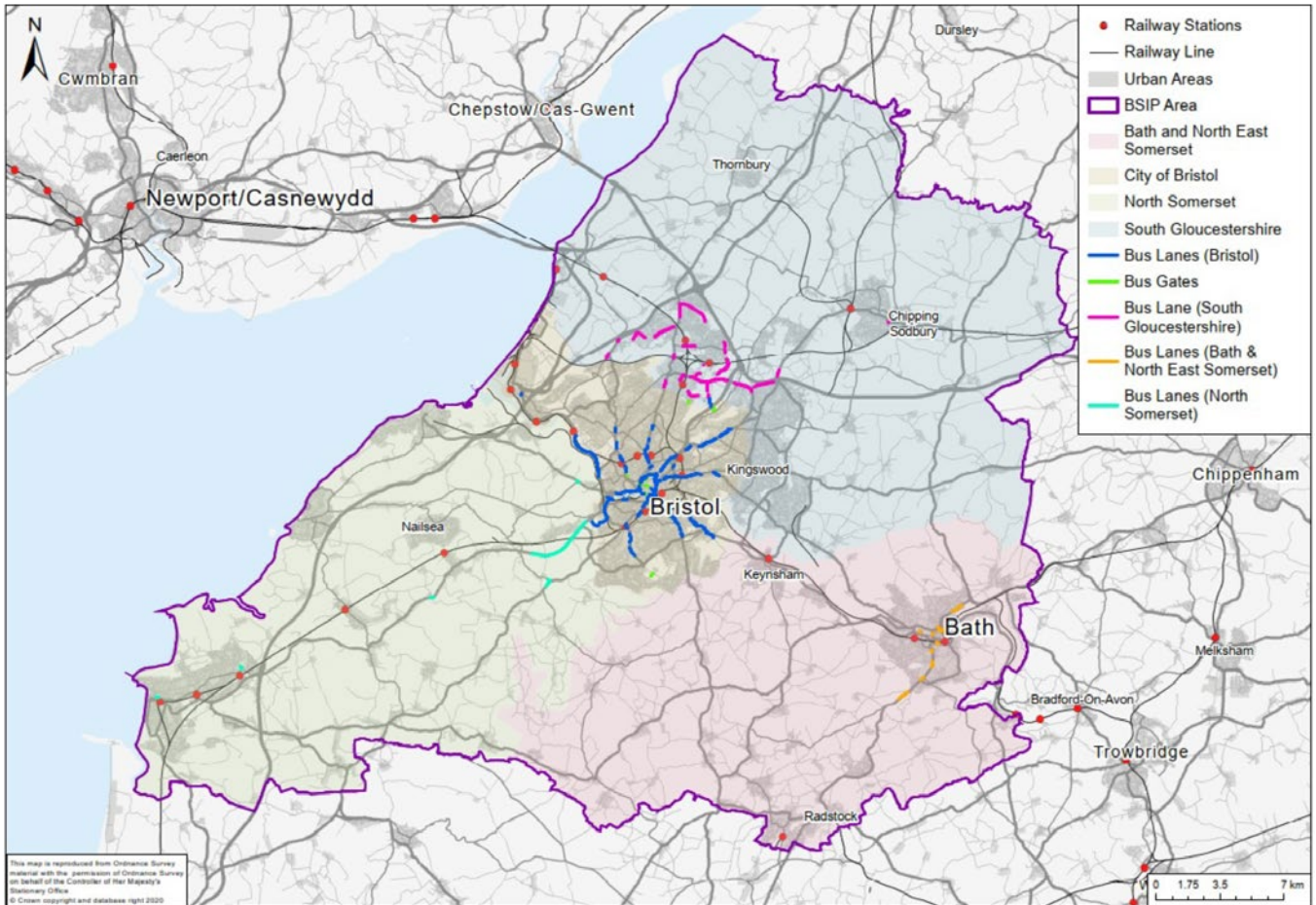
Bus Lanes

Table 3-3 and Figure 3-1 are based on internal information provided by each Authority. Section 3 and Appendix C outlines the progress made in terms of bus infrastructure.

Table 3-2 - Miles of bus lane per local authority in 2021 and 2024

Local authority	Miles of Bus Lane (2021)	Miles of Bus Lane (2024)
Bath & North East Somerset	2.36	2.36
Bristol	21.19	21.19
South Gloucestershire	8.05	11.22
North Somerset	2.43	5.2
TOTAL	34.03	39.97

Figure 3-1 - Location of bus lanes in the BSIP area



Investment and Spend

Figure 3-3 is based on Department for Transport (2024) Local bus vehicle distance travelled (BUS02_mi).

Figure 3-2 - Supported and Commercial vehicle miles on local bus services

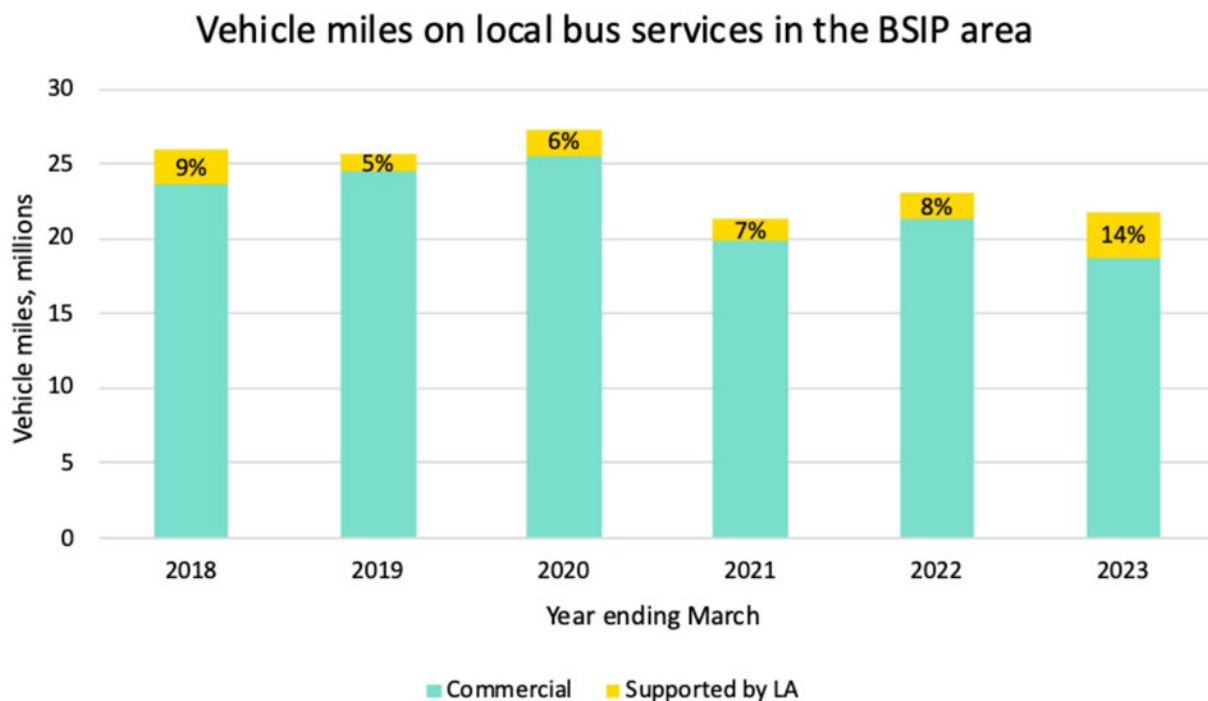


Figure 3-4 and Table 3-3 are based on internal information obtained from the Mayoral Combined Authority and North Somerset. Chapter 6 contains maps at Unitary Authority level showing the different types of services overlaid with key destinations. These maps show the distinction between Commercial Services, Supported Services (i.e. socially necessary services) and BSIP Enhanced services, where operating hours or service frequencies of a commercial service were increased.

Figure 3-3 - Coverage of commercial and supported services in the BSIP area

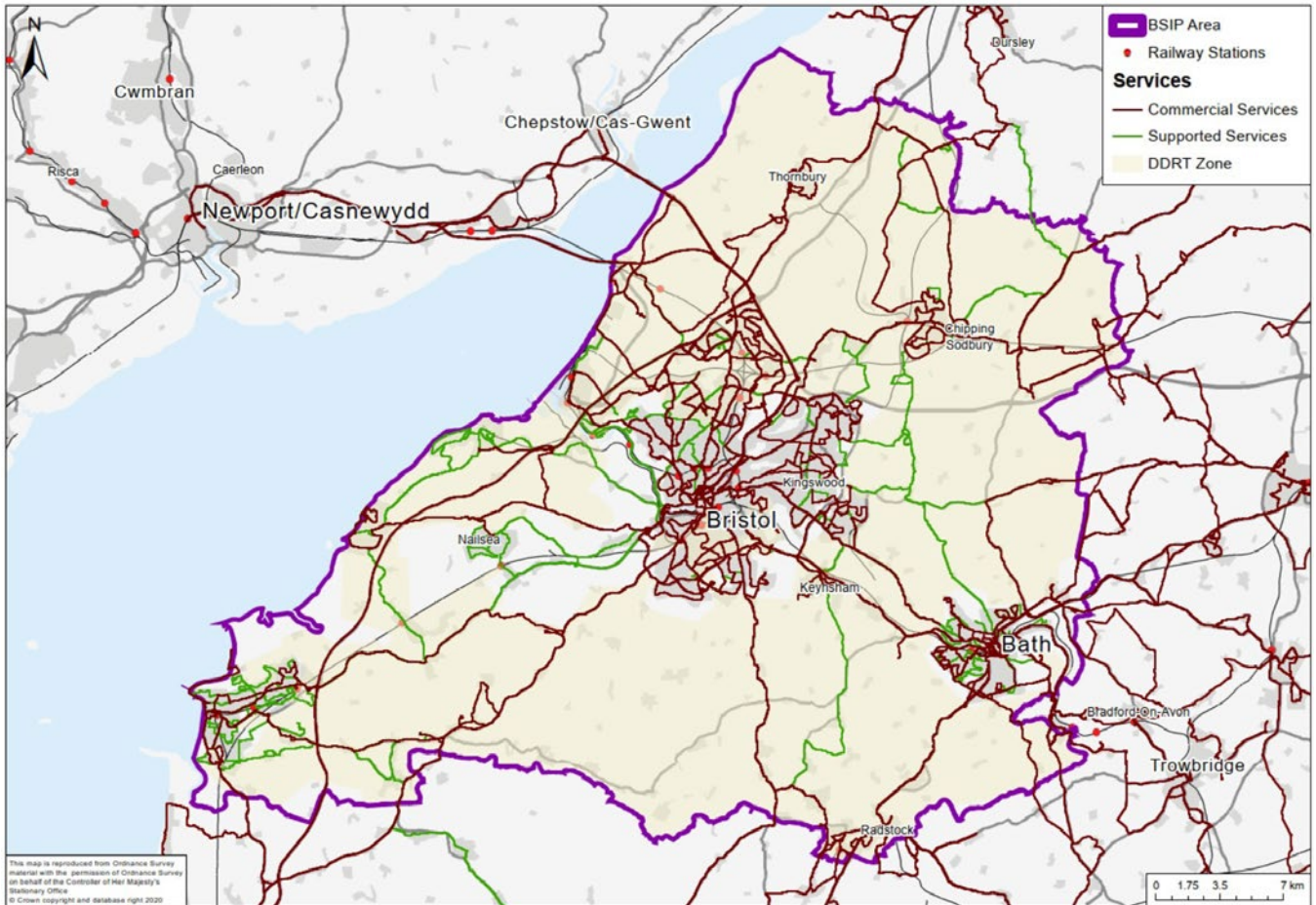


Table 3-3 – Supported or enhanced services in the West of England

Service Number	Route	Days and hours of operation (all rounded to the nearest 15 mins)	Contract or de minimis arrangement	Area	Comments
10	Avonmouth – Lawrence Weston – Westbury-on-Trym – Southmead Hospital	Mon – Sun 0430 to 2100	Contract	Bristol	Interworks with Service 11
11	Avonmouth – Shirehampton – Westbury-on-Trym – Southmead Hospital	Mon – Sun 0430 to 2100	Contract	Bristol	Interworks with Service 10
11	Bath City Centre – Bathampton	Mon – Sat 0845- to 1730	Contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a
12	Bath City Centre – Haycombe	Mon – Sat 0800 to 1800	Contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a
12	Severn Beach – Cribbs Causeway – Bristol	Mon – Fri 0545 to 2300 Sat 0800 to 2000	Contract	South Glos/ Bristol	n/a
13	Shirehampton – Bristol City Centre	Mon – Fri 0615 to 1930 Sat 0830 to 1930 Sun 1000 to 1900	Contract	Bristol	n/a
17	Keynsham – Southmead	Mon – Sat 0700 to 2200 Sun 0800 to 2100	Contract Keynsham to Kingswood. Commercial Kingswood- Southmead	South Glos/ B&NES	n/a
19	Bath – Cribbs Causeway	Mon – Fri 0530 to 2130 Sat 0745 to 2115 Sun 0745 to 1815	Contract Sunday only. Commercial rest of time	South Glos	n/a
2	Bath City Centre – Mulberry Park	Mon – Fri 0600 to 0000 Sat 0800 to 0000 Sun 0900 to 1900	Contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a
20	Twerton – Bath City Centre – University of Bath	Mon – Sat 0730 to 1930	Contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a
21	Newbridge P&R – Bath City Centre	Mon – Sat 0615 to 2030 Sun 0930-1800	Contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a

Service Number	Route	Days and hours of operation (all rounded to the nearest 15 mins)	Contract or de minimis arrangement	Area	Comments
31	Lansdown P&R – Bath City Centre	Mon – Sat 0615 to 2030 Sun 0930-1800	Contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a
35	Marshfield – Kingswood	Mon – Sat 0700 to 1745	Contract	South Glos	n/a
41	Odd Down P&R – Bath City Centre	Mon – Sat 0615 to 2030 Sun 0930-1800	Contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a
505	Long Ashton P & R – Southmead Hospital	Mon – Sat 0600 to 2300 Sun 1000 to 1900	Contract	Bristol	n/a
515	Stockwood – Hartcliffe	Mon – Sat 0600 to 1830	Contract	Bristol	n/a
522	Bristol – Midsomer Norton – Bath	Mon – Sat 0500 to 2200 Sun 0700 to 2000	BSIP funded contract Brislington – Bristol city centre commercial and Odd Down P&R to Bath city centre commercial	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a
525	Emersons Green – Yate	Mon – Sat 0700 to 2000 Sun 0800 to 2000	BSIP funded contract	South Glos	n/a
620	Old Sodbury – Bath	Mon – Fri 0615 to 1630 Sat 0715 to 1630	Contract	South Glos	n/a
6A	Bath City Centre – Larkhall – Bath City Centre	Mon –Fri 0630 and 1900 to 2345 Sat 0830 to 1030 and 1900 to 2345 Sun 0915 to 1915	Some contracted journeys	Bath and North East Somerset	In addition to daytime operating services 6 and 7
700	Bath City Centre – Sion Hill	Mon – Sat 0845 to 1715	contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a
716	Bath City Centre – Newbridge	Mon – Sat 0830 to 1615	contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a
734	Bath City Centre – Bathwick	Mon – Sat 0930 to 1500	contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a

Service Number	Route	Days and hours of operation (all rounded to the nearest 15 mins)	Contract or de minimis arrangement	Area	Comments
779	Bath City Centre – Gloucester Road	Mon – Sat 1045 to 1700	contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a
8	Bath City Centre – Kingsway	Mon – Fri 0715 to 2330 Sat 0845 to 2330	contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a
84	Yate – Chipping Sodbury – Wotton-Under-Edge	Mon – Sat 0900 to 1800	contract	South Glos	n/a
85	Yate – Chipping Sodbury – Wotton-Under-Edge	Mon – Sat 0700-1800	contract	South Glos	n/a
86	Yate – Kingswood	Mon – Sat 0800 to 1900	contract	South Glos	n/a
9	Portway P&R – Bristol City Centre – Brislington P&R	Mon – Sat 0615 to 2125 Sun 0930 to 1830	contract	Bristol	n/a
R3	Southdown – Ralph Allen School	School days Start & finish times	contract	Bath and North East Somerset	n/a
Y6	Yate – Southmead Hospital	Mon – Fri 0610 to 2230 Sat 0610 to 2145 Sun 0800 to 1930	De minimis	South Glos	n/a
Y1/Y2	Chipping Sodbury - Yate - Winterbourne - Bristol City Centre	Mon – Fri 0530 to 0030 Sat 0630 to 0030 Sun 0845 to 2345	BSIP Enhanced commercial service	Bristol	Y1 Increased to every 30 mins Monday to Saturday and hourly Sunday and Public Holidays. Y2 new service operating every 30 mins Monday to Saturday and hourly on Sunday and Public Holidays
T1	Thornbury - Almondsbury - Bradley Stoke - Bristol City Centre	Mon – Fri 0615 to 0030 Sat 0715 to 0030 Sun 0730 to 0015	BSIP Enhanced commercial service	Bristol	Increased to every 20 minutes Monday to Friday

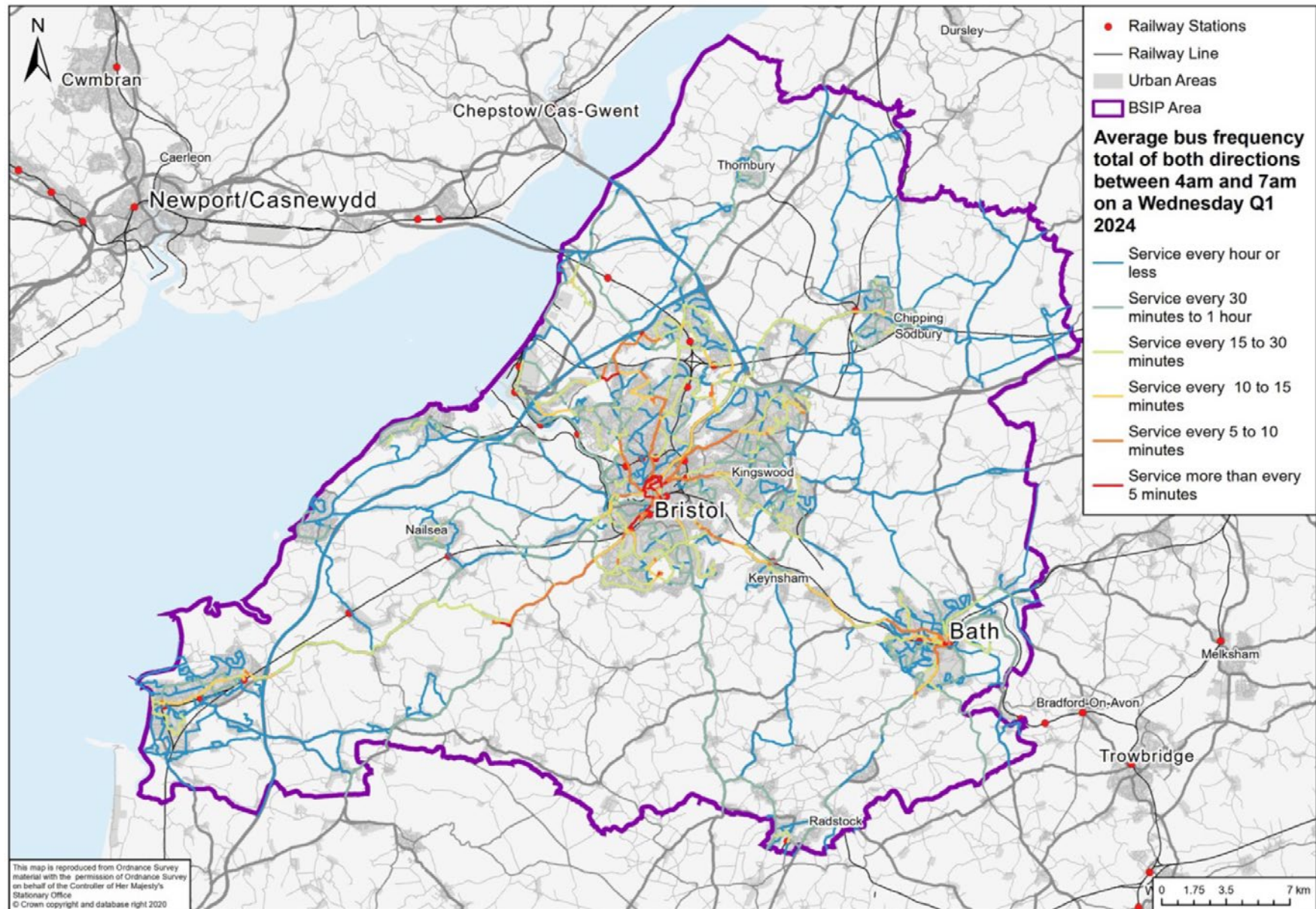
Service Number	Route	Days and hours of operation (all rounded to the nearest 15 mins)	Contract or de minimis arrangement	Area	Comments
172	Bath - Peasedown St. John - Midsomer Norton - Paulton - Bristol	Mon – Sat 0715 to 2300	BSIP Enhanced commercial service	Bath and North East Somerset	Revised route linking Bath and Bristol via the Somer Valley, increasing service frequency to every 12 minutes between Midsomer Norton and Bath combined with services 173/174 and 522 Monday to Friday.
m2	Long Ashton P&R - Bristol City Centre - Long Ashton P&R	Mon – Fri 0600 to 2130 Sat 0700 to 2130	BSIP Enhanced commercial service	Bristol	Increased to every 12 mins Monday to Friday and 15 mins Saturday
5	Weston-super-Mare Interchange – Grove Park circular	Mon – Sat 0700 to 1900	Contract	North Somerset	Cross-linked to service X5 (below).
6	Weston-super-Mare - Worle	Mon – Sat 1930 to 2230	BSIP Enhanced commercial service	North Somerset	BSIP-funded addition to daytime commercial service
7	Locking Parklands - Worle	Mon – Sat 2000 to 2330	BSIP Enhanced commercial service	North Somerset	BSIP-funded addition to daytime commercial service
9	Weston-super-Mare - West Wick	Mon – Fri 1030 to 1430	Contract	North Somerset	n/a
51s	Winscombe - Churchill Academy	School days Start & finish times	Contract	North Somerset	n/a
125	Weston-super-Mare - Wrington	Mon – Sat 0730 to 1800	Contract	North Somerset	n/a

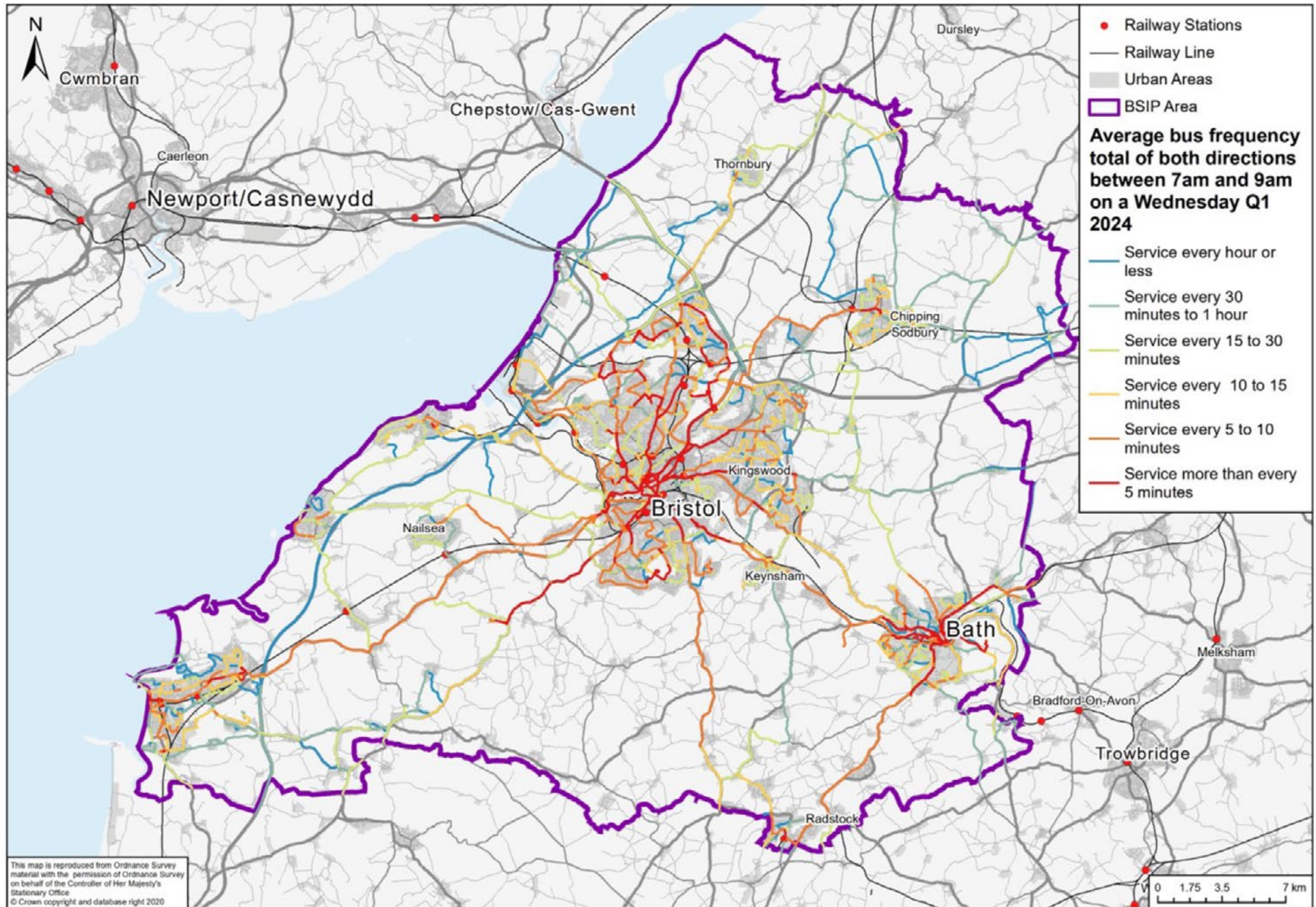
Service Number	Route	Days and hours of operation (all rounded to the nearest 15 mins)	Contract or de minimis arrangement	Area	Comments
126	Weston-super-Mare - Wells	Mon - Sat 0700 to 1900	Contract held by Somerset Council	North Somerset	BSIP-funded jointly with Somerset Council
X1	Weston-super-Mare – Bristol via Backwell	Mon – Fri 0830 to 1630	BSIP Enhanced commercial service	North Somerset	BSIP-funded enhancement to commercial service, increasing frequency from 3 to 4 buses per hour
X4	Portishead – Bristol via Pill	Mon – Fri 0830 to 1900	BSIP Enhanced commercial service	North Somerset	BSIP-funded enhancement to commercial service, increasing frequency from 2 to 3 buses per hour
X5	Weston-super-Mare – Portishead via Clevedon	Mon – Fri 0630 to 1900 Sat 0800 to 1830	Contract	North Somerset	Cross-linked to service 5 (above).
X6	Clevedon – Bristol via Nailsea and Backwell	Mon – Sat 2030 to 2330	BSIP Enhanced commercial service	North Somerset	BSIP-funded addition to daytime commercial service
X7	Clevedon – Bristol via Nailsea and Backwell	Sun 0800 to 2230	Contract	North Somerset	n/a
X8	Nailsea – Bristol via Backwell	Mon – Sat 0700 to 1900	Contract	North Somerset	n/a
X9	Nailsea – Bristol via Wraxall	Mon – Sat 2100 to 2400	BSIP Enhanced commercial service	North Somerset	BSIP-funded addition to daytime commercial service

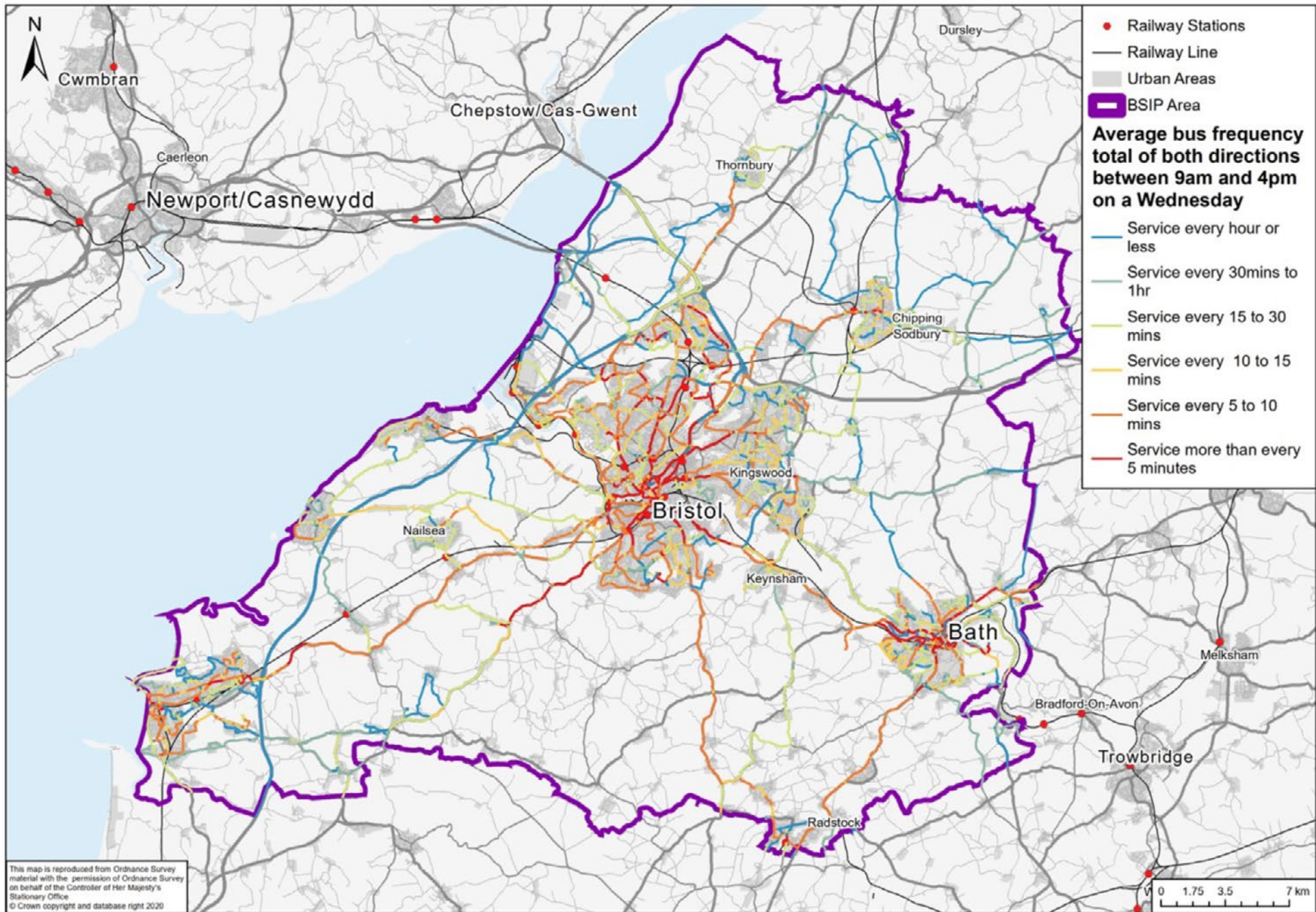
Service Number	Route	Days and hours of operation (all rounded to the nearest 15 mins)	Contract or de minimis arrangement	Area	Comments
X10	Portishead – Cribbs Causeway	Mon – Sat 0900 to 1500	Enhanced (De minimis)	North Somerset	BSIP-funded addition to commercial service which operates M-F peak hours between Portishead and Southmead Hospital.

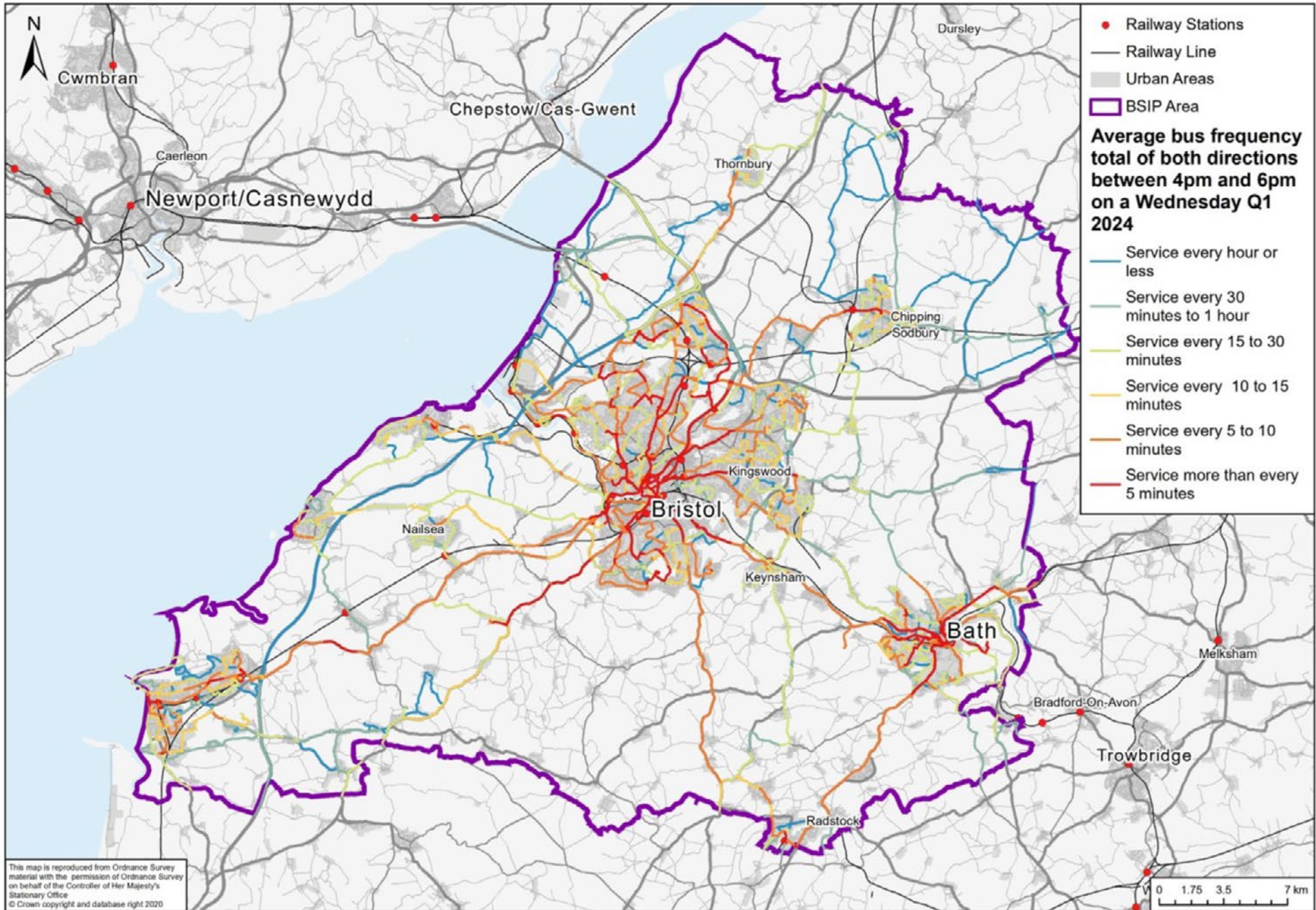
Further to the above, there are the 9 core *WESTlink* DRT zones and 12 shared zones operating in the BSIP area. These can be seen on an interactive zone map here: <https://journeyplanner.travelwest.info/?poi=wesTlink>. All of the zones operate Mon – Sat 0700 to 1900. *WESTlink* is jointly funded by the MCA and NSC from the BSIP allocation.

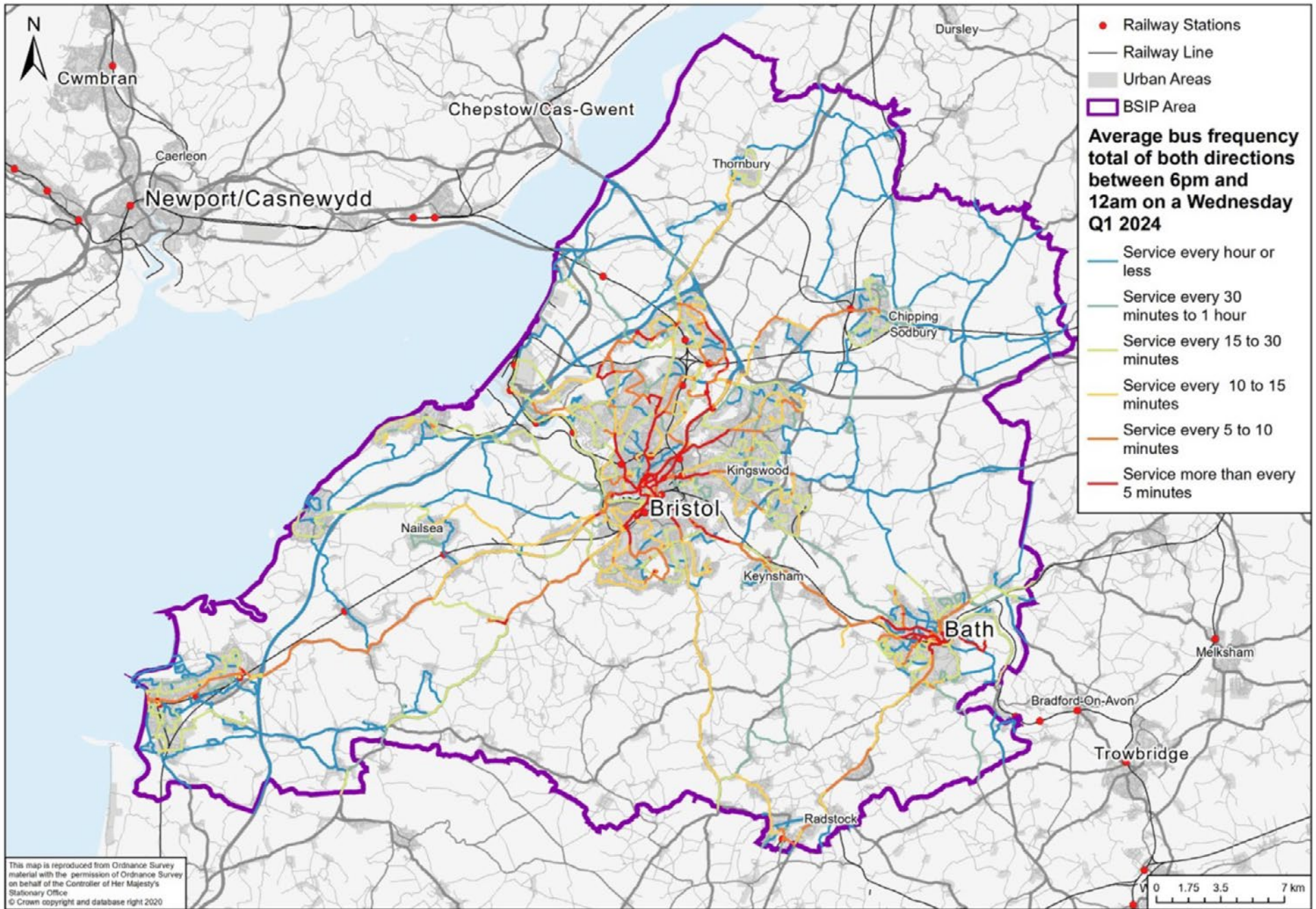
4 Service Frequency Maps

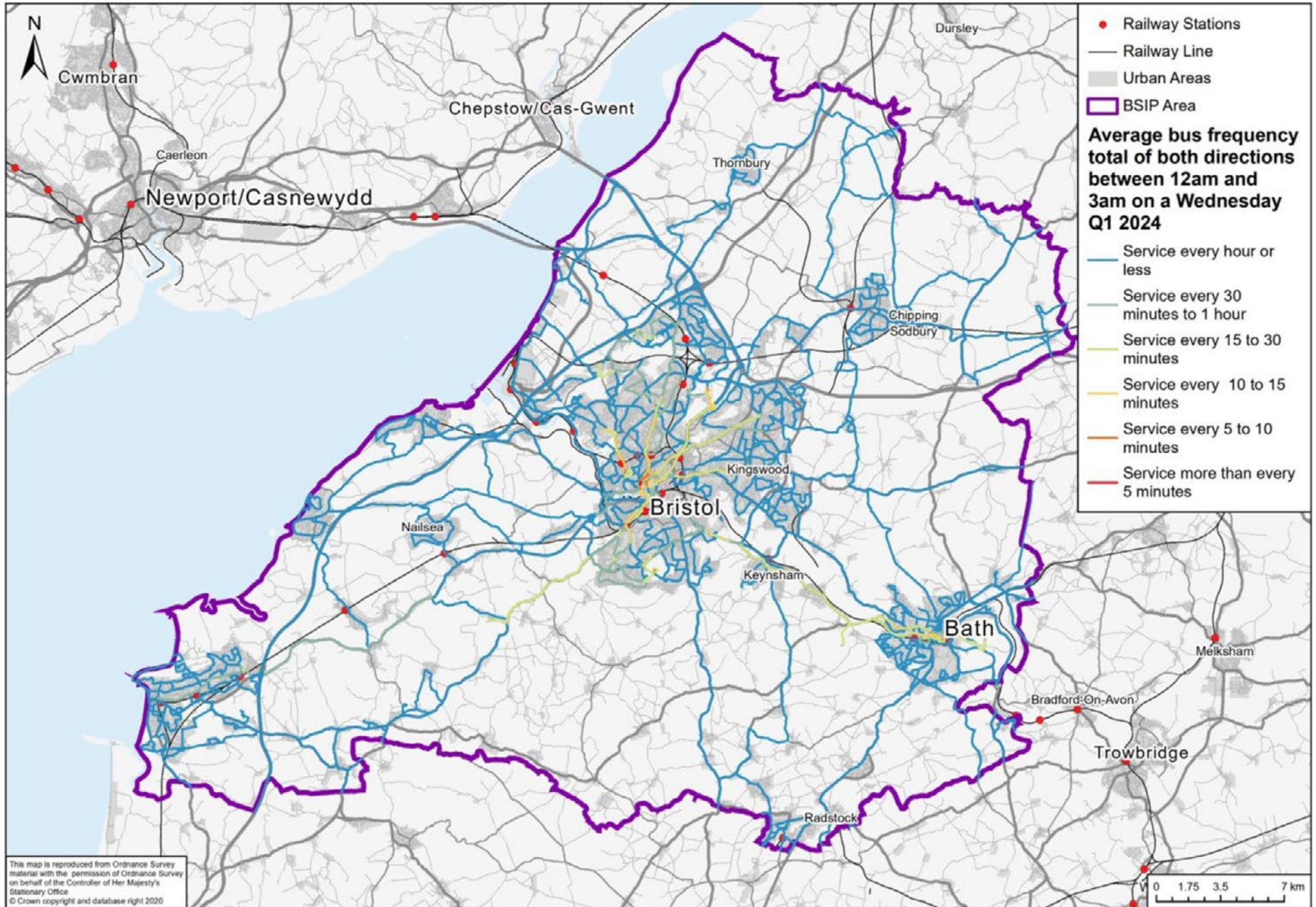


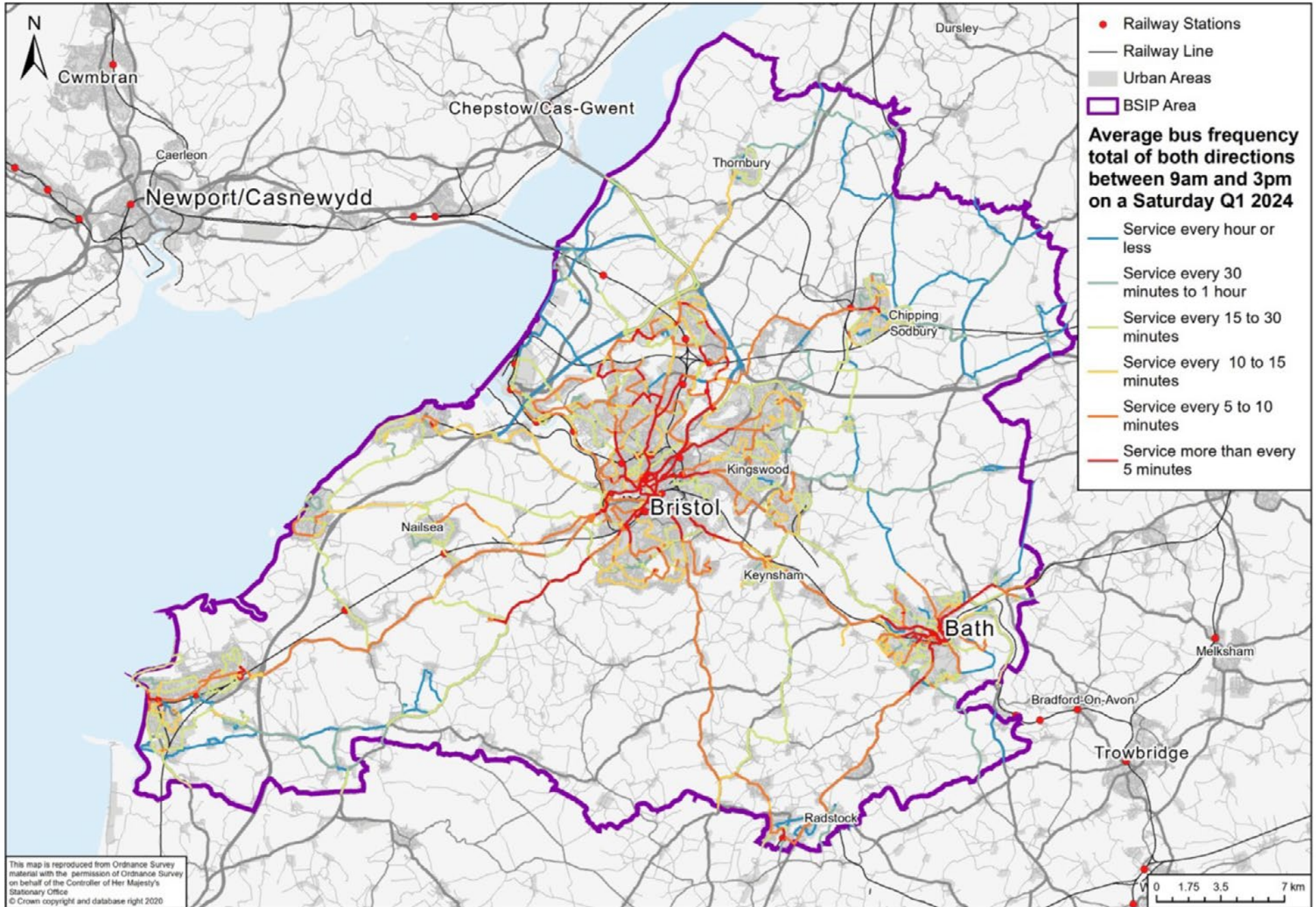


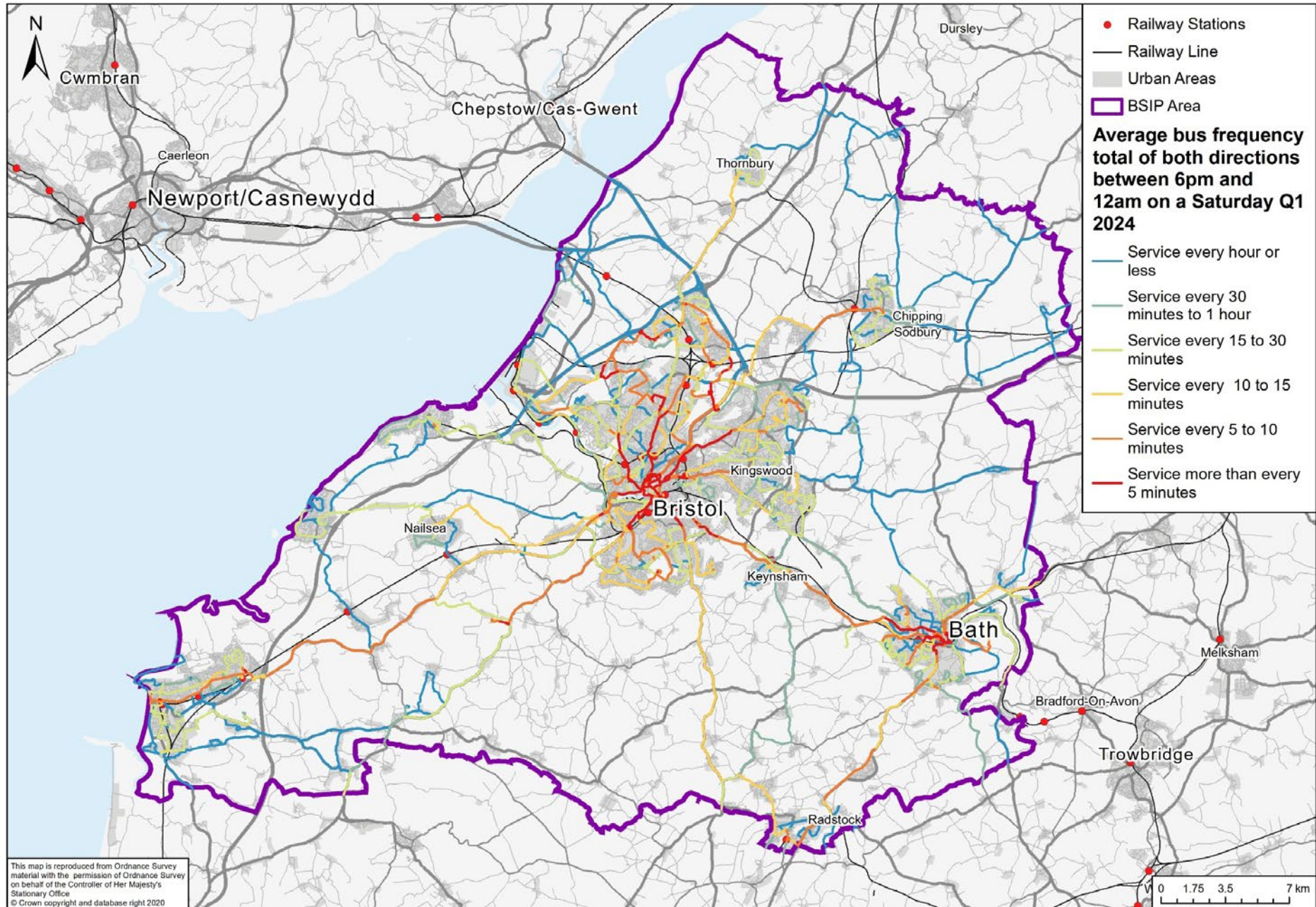




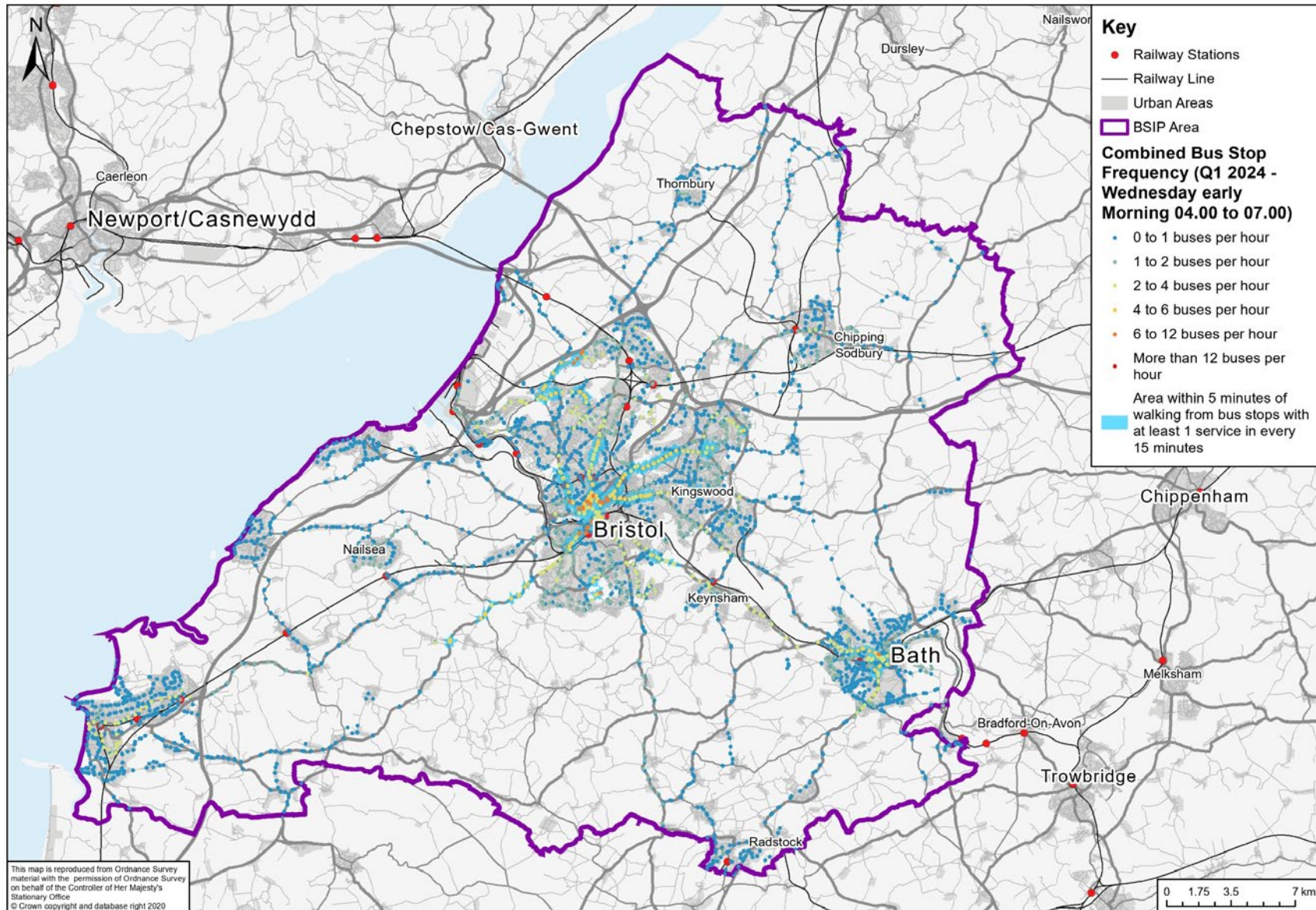


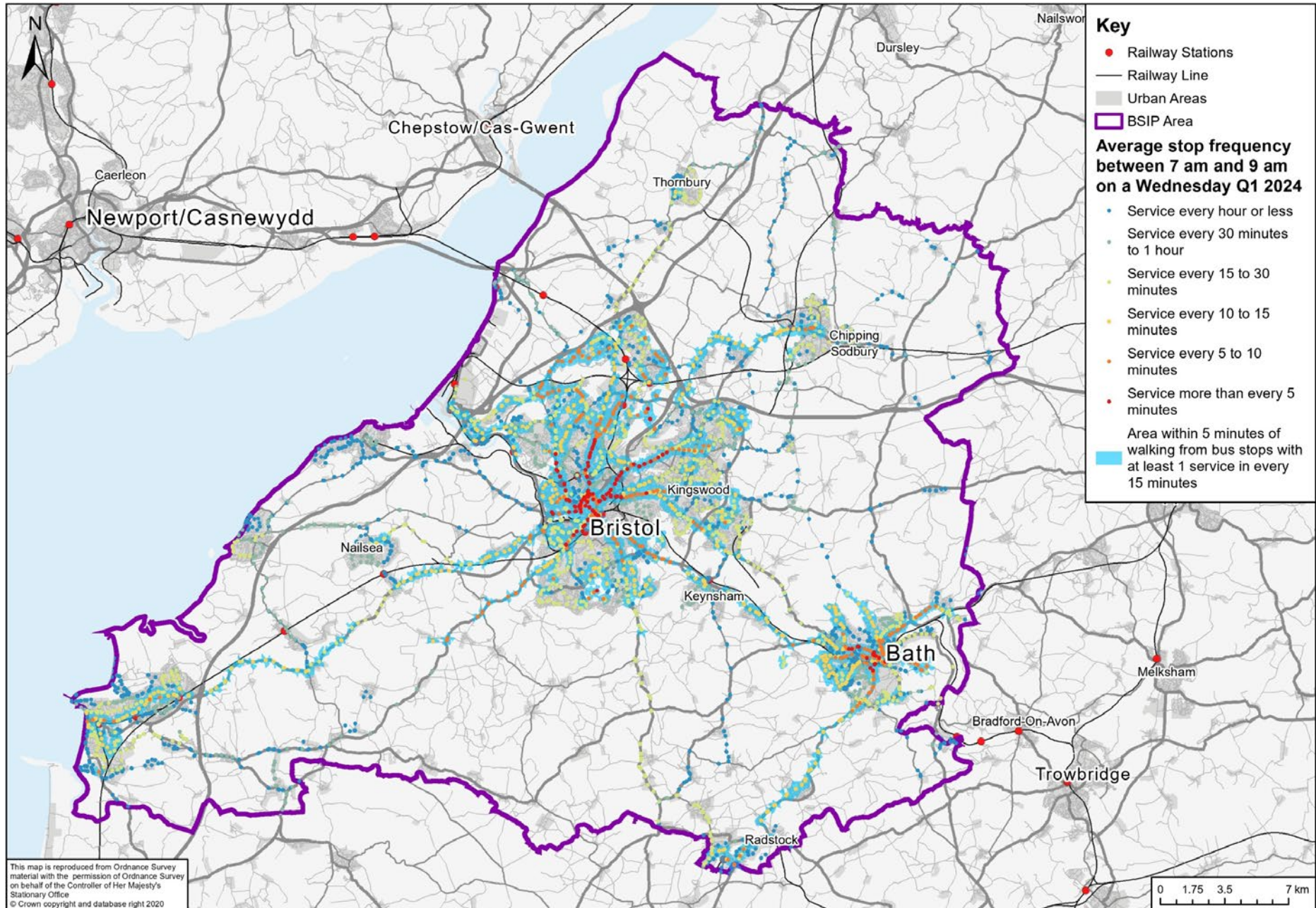


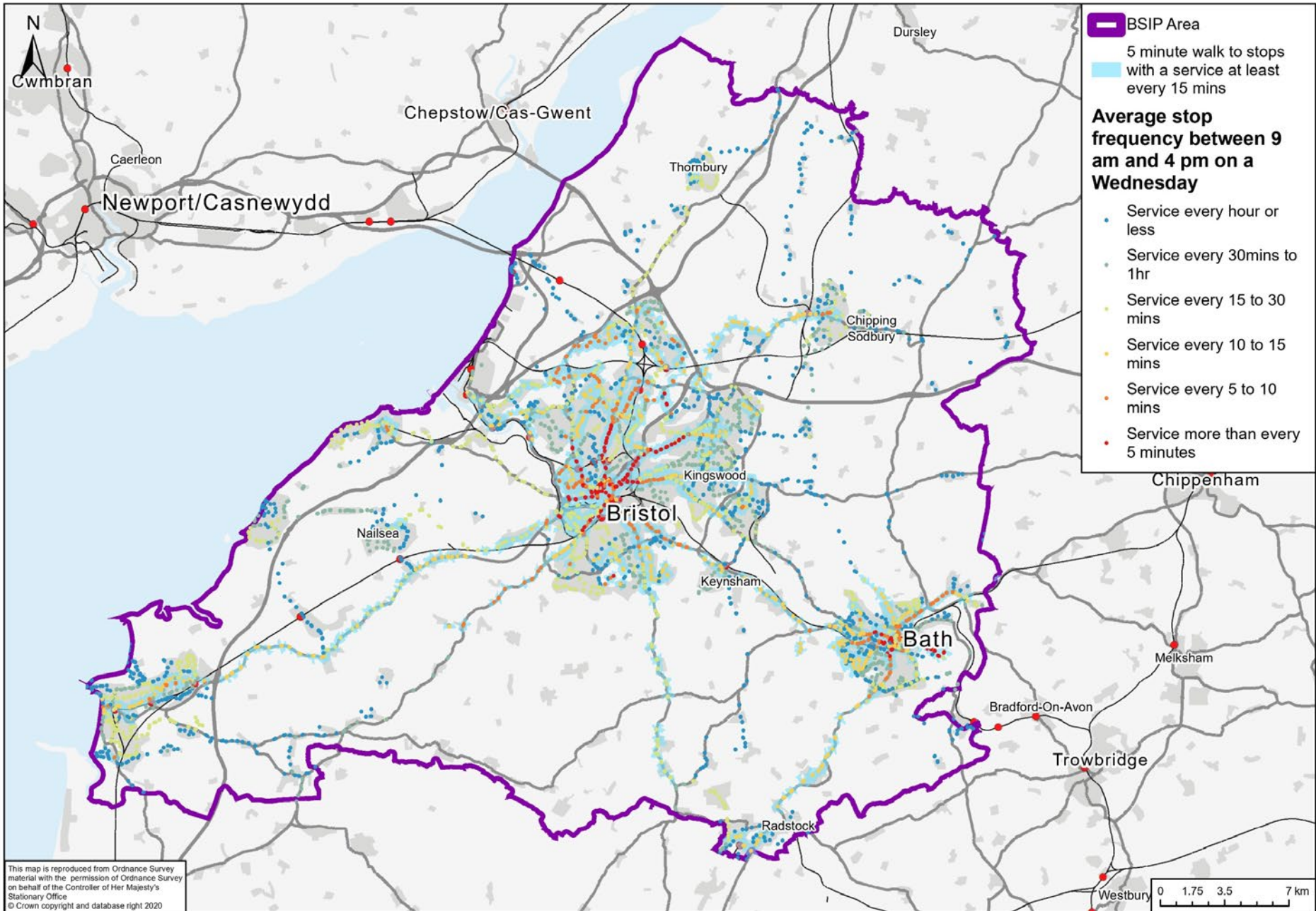


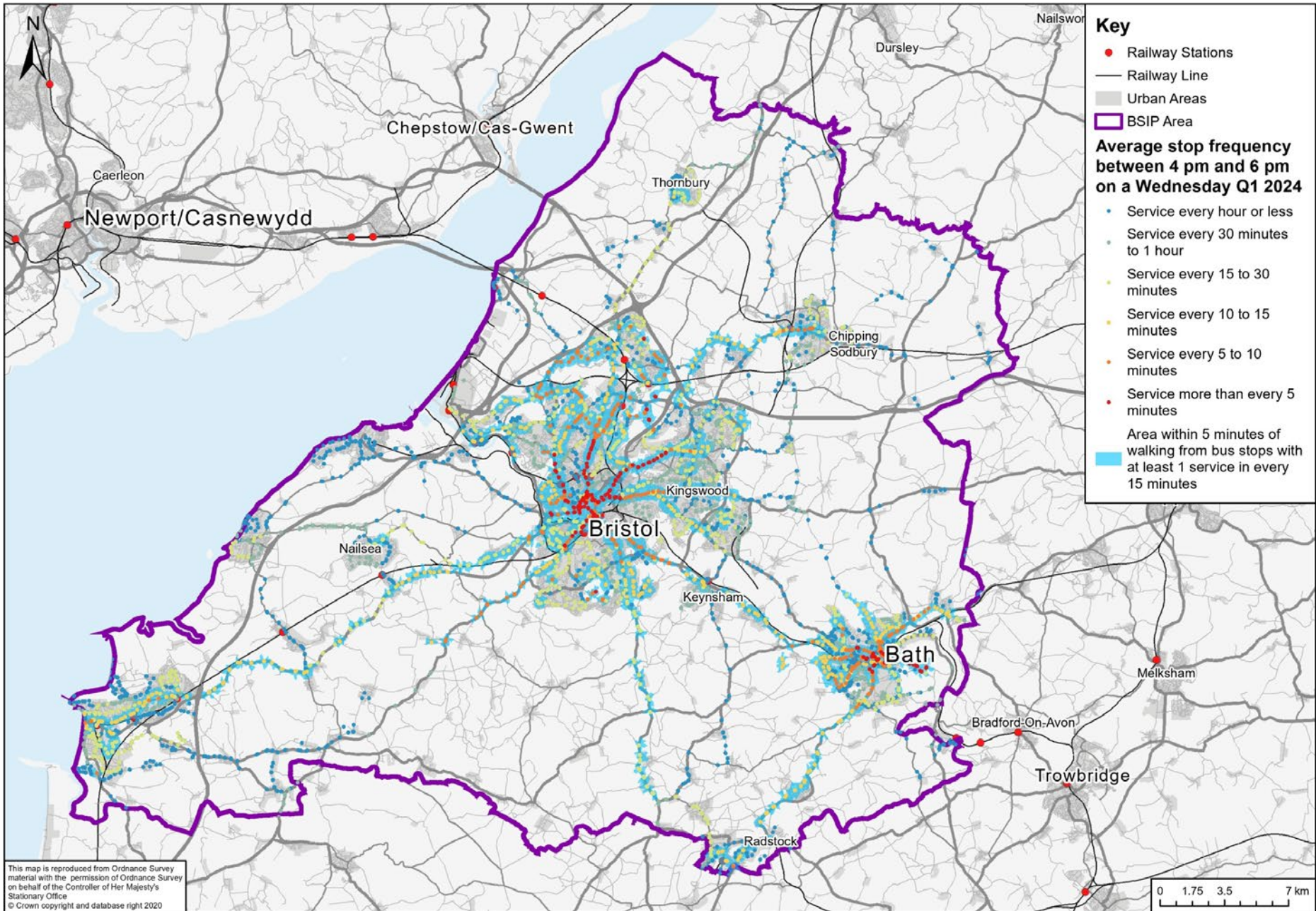


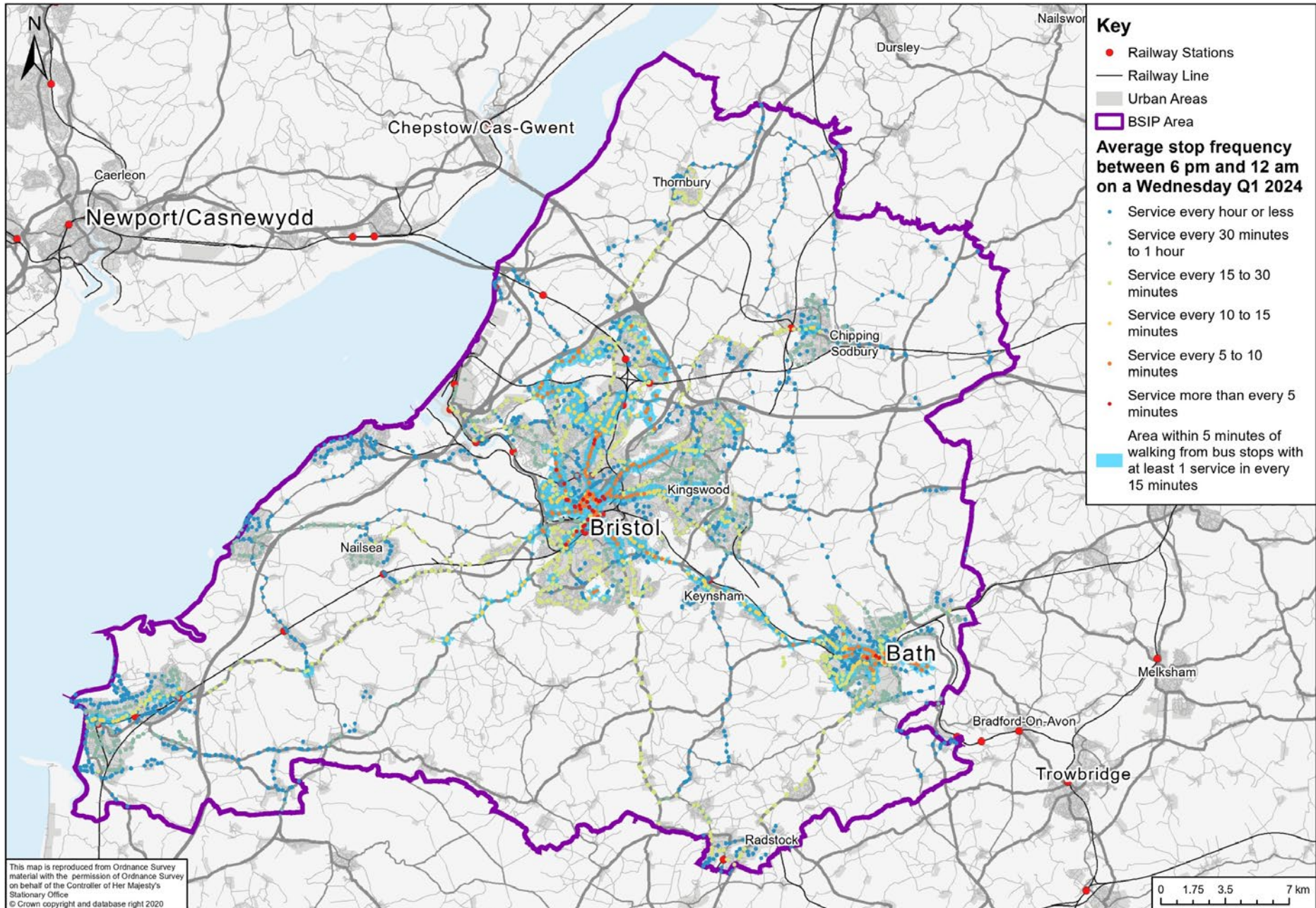
5 Bus Stop Frequency and walking times

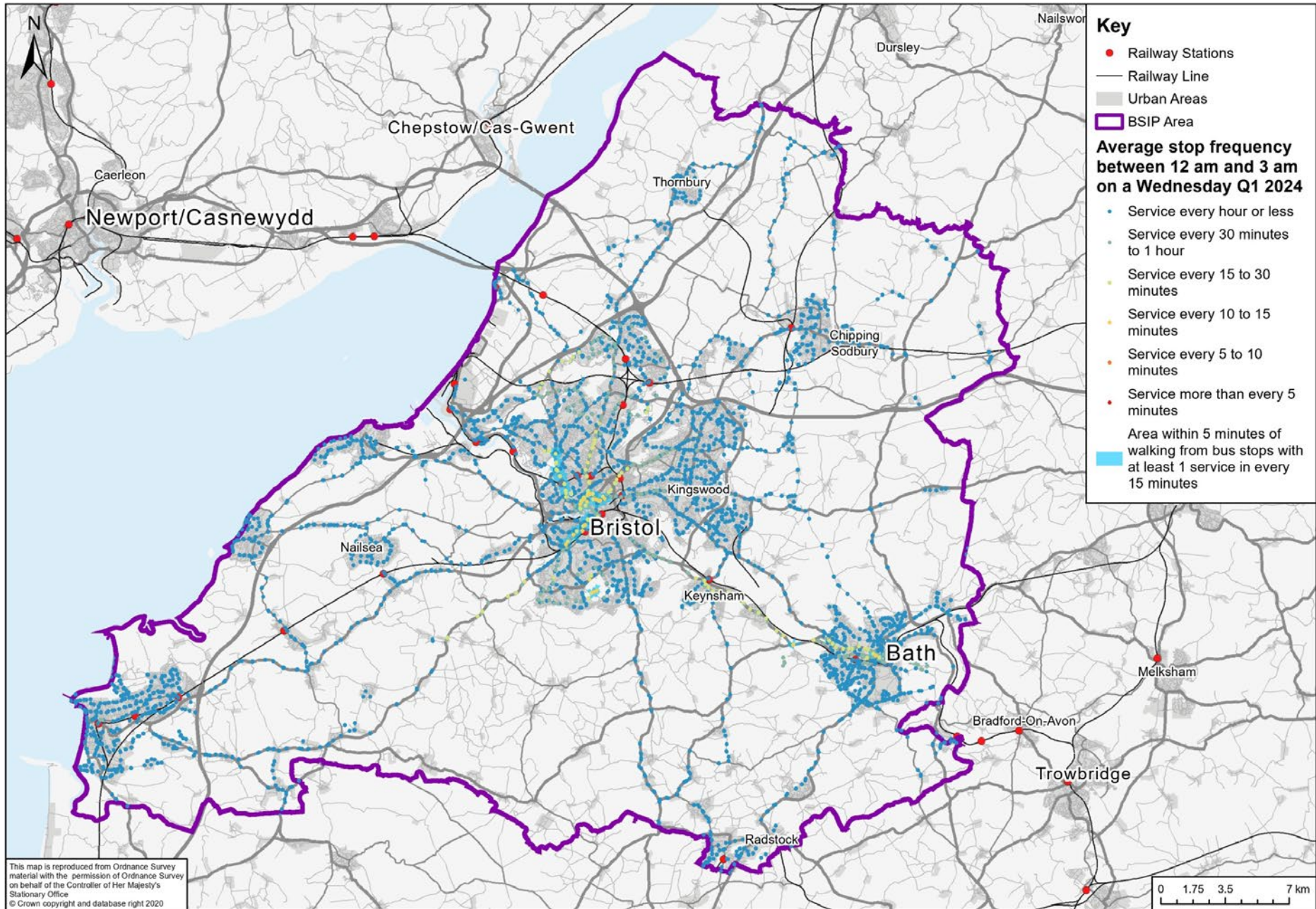


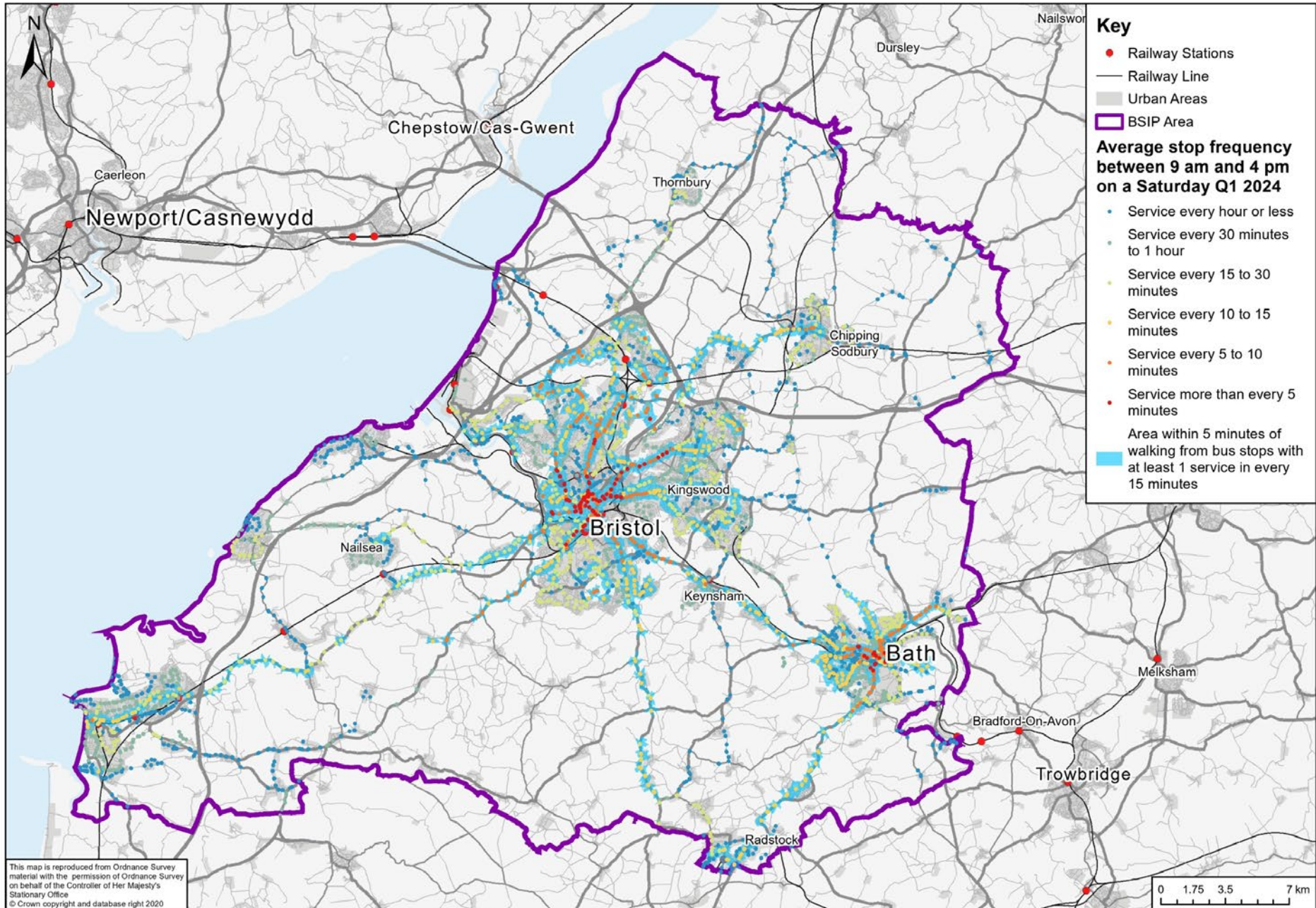


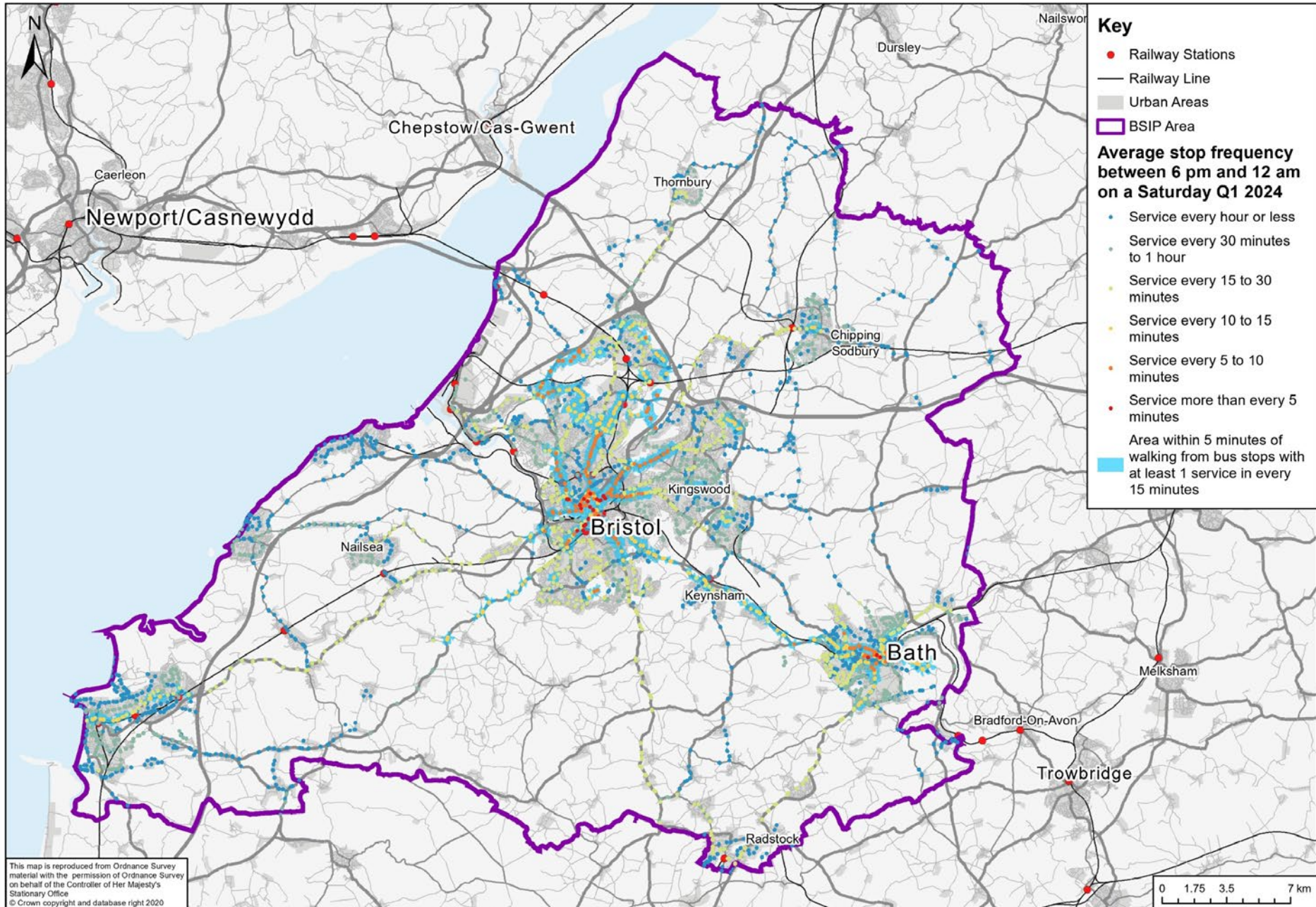




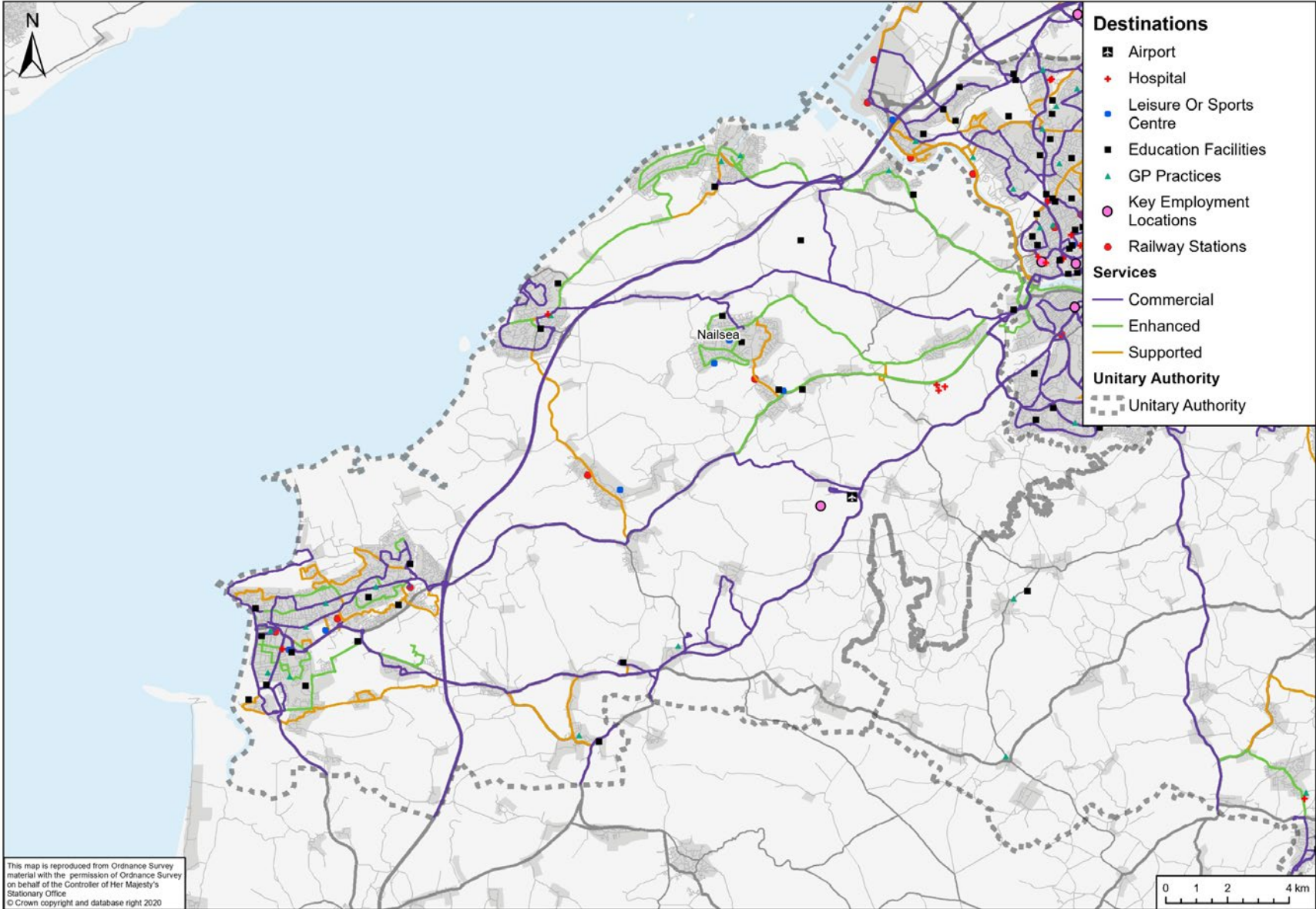


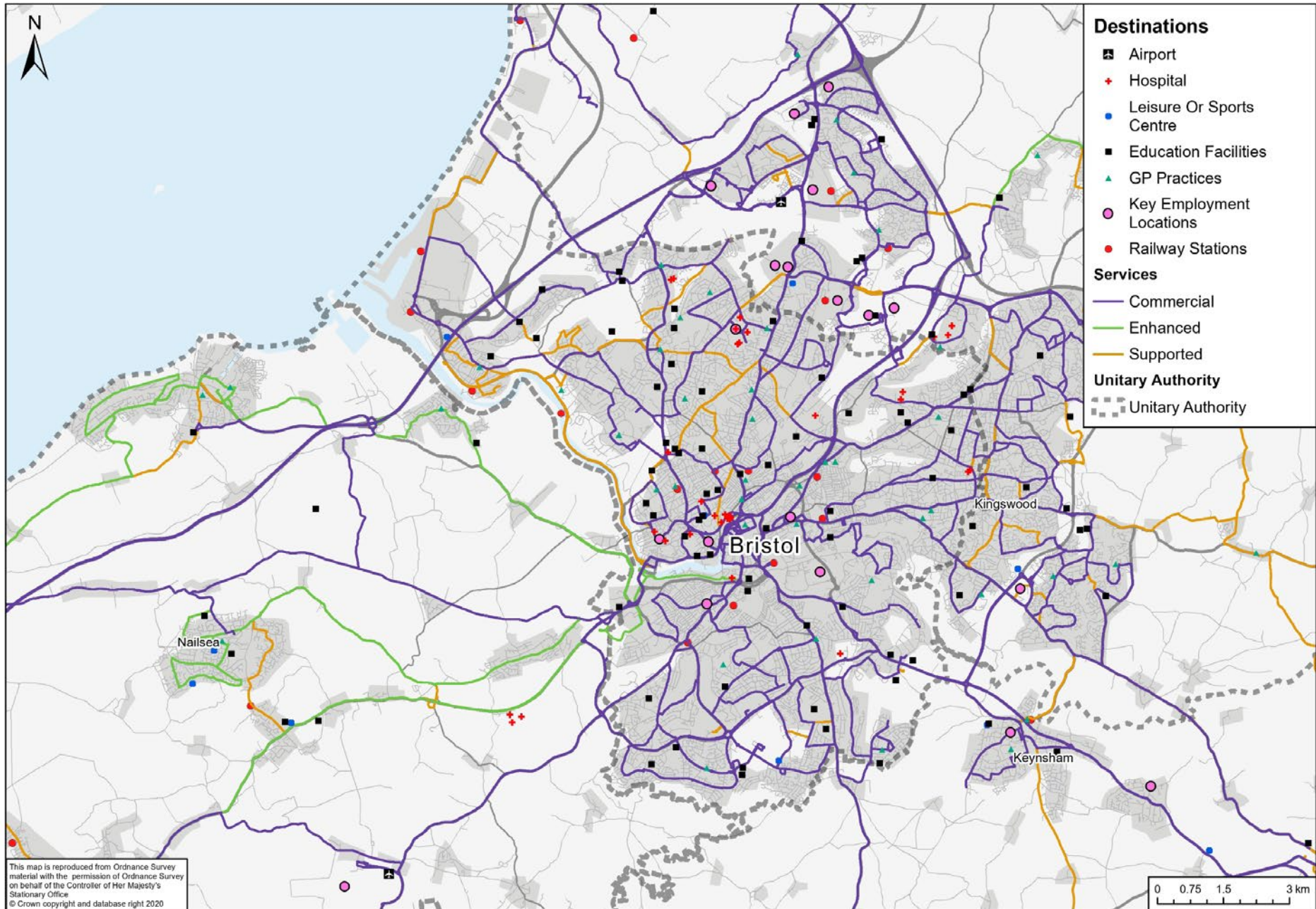


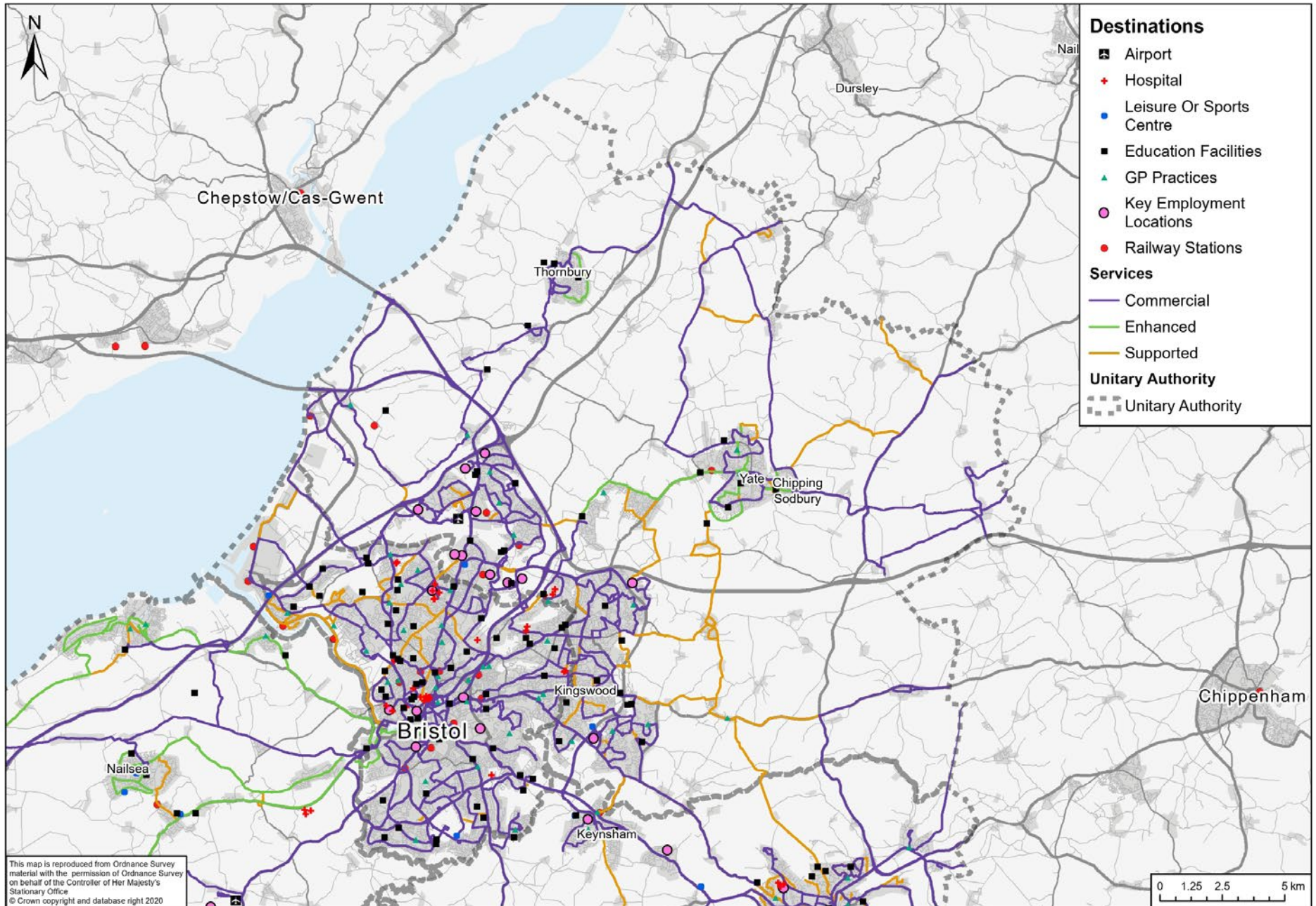


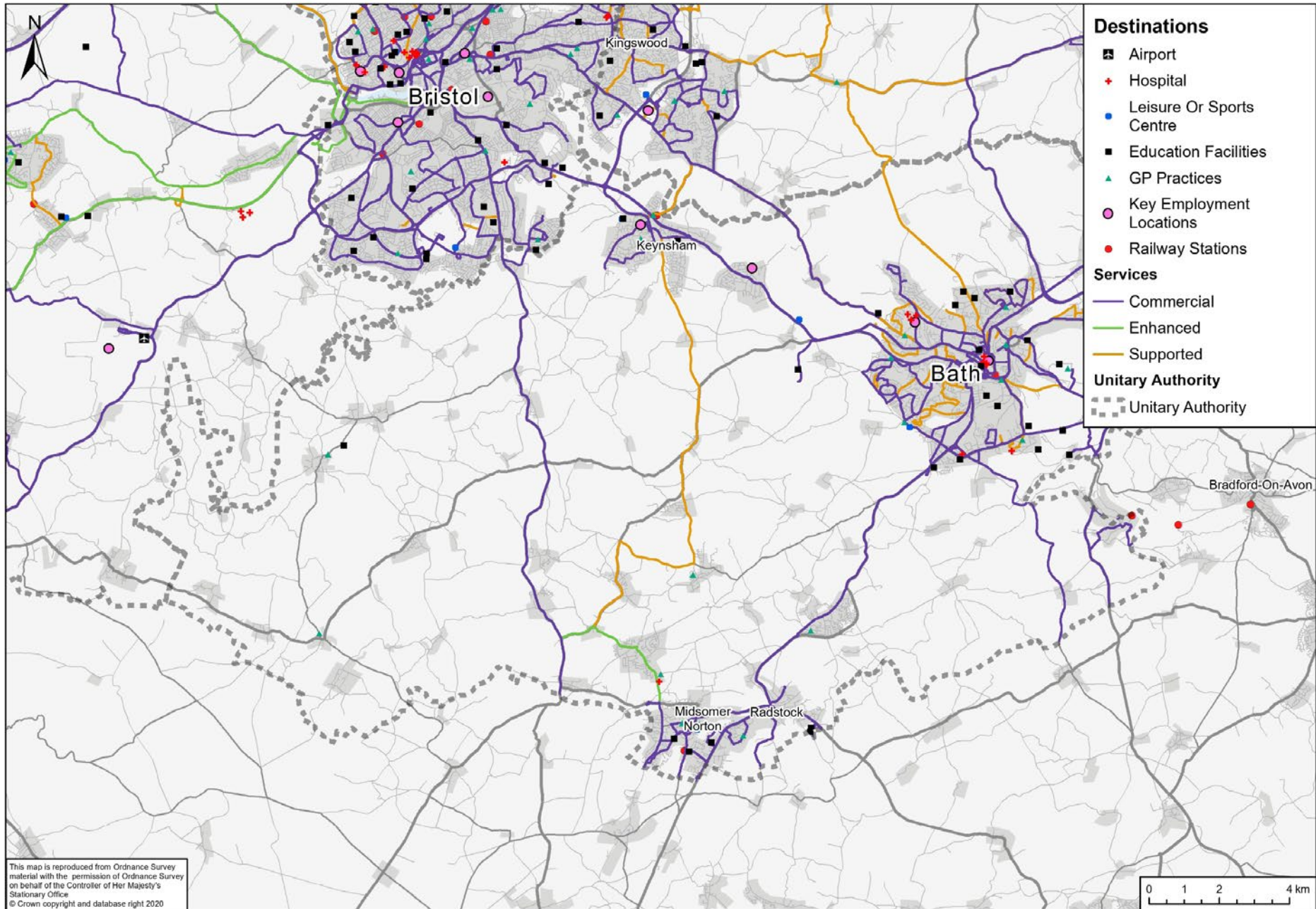



6 Commerical, Supported and Enhanced Services











**Appendix C
Improvements
Programme to
2024/25**

Contents

Introduction	5
1.1 What we have achieved	5
Improved Services	5
Fares	6
WESTlink Journeys	8
Real-time Information	9
Priority Bus Lanes	9
Additional - Skills Training	10
1.2 Delivery Plans	12
1.3 Bus Driver Recruitment and Retention	19
What we've done so far	19

1.1 Introduction

This appendix provides additional context and detail on the BSIP progress and achievements highlighted in Section 3 of the 2024 BSIP refresh document.

This appendix provides supplementary detail on our BSIP achievements, the changes in funding allocation since the 2021 BSIP and the marketing campaign underpinning the success of the bus driver recruitment campaign.

1.2 What we have achieved

Since the 2021 BSIP funding award, our partners across the BSIP area have made significant progress in improving the local bus network and achieving significant passenger growth.

This has been a direct result of the additional funding allocated through BSIP and targeted at distinct elements of the bus service network through our Delivery Plan approach.

Further detail on our achievements so far as presented in the Section 3 infographic is provided below.

Improved Services

We have made a good start in improving our bus service frequency, reliability, punctuality, staff retention, and the roll-out of Europe's largest single DRT network (WESTLink).

To date, we have invested more than £5 million across 19 core services across the region and plan to invest a further £10 million over the next two years. These services are summarised in Table C-1 below.

Table C-1 – Enhanced and Supported bus services across the MCA and NSC areas

Authority	Enhanced Services	Supported Services
MCA	- Y1/Y2 - T1 - 172 - m2	- 522 - 525
NSC	- X1 - X4 - X5 - X6/X7 - X8 - W3/W7	- 9 - 126 - X10

Patronage

Table C-2 below presents the passenger journeys on local bus services per head from 2018 to 2023 with % change between years.

This success is attributed to the enhanced services gaining commerciality within 6 months, a lot faster rate than initially forecast which subsequently resulted in a program underspend.

The program underspend is advantageous, and allows remaining spend to be reallocated to further services. These routes are currently being reviewed with communications for their launch planned for September 2024.

Bus Frequency

Because of the enhanced service funding, we have been able to add further Turn-up-and-go services to achieve 15-minute frequencies along the enhanced services outline in Table C-1.

Fares

On the 22th Sept 2022, First Bus commercially implemented a £2 fare cap on all bus journeys across Bristol and Bath and £3.70 on journeys to surrounding areas. Children and young people also benefitted from a £1 fare cap across all areas.

In January 2023, the £2 fare cap was extended nationally with the support of the Department for Transport under the 'Get Around for £2' scheme which capped the cost of travel selected routes across operators. Since its launch, the fare cap has nationally increased bus use by 37% (CPT, 2024).

Through collaboration with bus operators across the region, we have introduced three fare packages which have supported our increase in bus patronage against our baseline through making the option to travel by bus more affordable.

In January and July 2023, we successfully launched Fare Packages 1 and 2, and Package 3 is due to go live early summer 2024. A summary of the Fares Packages is detailed in Table C-3 below.

Table C-3 – Fares Packages

Package	Detail
Package 1 - Fare Capping, Reductions, Discounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £2 cap on adult single, two-journey and single-operator day fares • £2 cap on AvonRider Day multi-operator fare • £1 cap fare for persons aged 5 to 15 inclusive
Package 2 - Birthday Offer, Care Leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free travel during birthday month • Free travel for care experienced persons aged 18 -21
Package 3 - Targeted Offers - Scheduled for launch Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free travel days and weeks on targeted bus routes • Discounts on targeted bus routes • Free travel month for up to 12,000 Job Seekers aged 16-24 after receiving a valid job offer

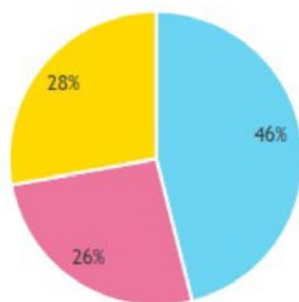
Across the BSIP area, overall ticket sales have risen by 38% relative to the baseline with the support of the £2 fare cap aligning to the national statistics. As expected, the largest proportion of ticket sales was received by adults with a 78% increase and secondly by children at 76%. Student tickets are in decline however by -36%, which is likely due to the £2 cap offering a lower fare resulting in students purchasing an adult fare instead.

Birthday Bus

Birthday Bus is a promotional offer allowing citizens living within the MCA and NSC areas to benefit for a month of free bus travel throughout the whole month which their birthday falls. The scheme launched on Tuesday 1st August 2023, and so far has received over 60,000 applications and almost 820,000 journeys¹.

The birthday offer post-survey reveals that 72% of participants chose to use the bus for new trips which they otherwise would not have taken, of which 47% of participants switched from the private car!² The scheme not only has assisted in increasing bus patronage across the BSIP area, but also incentivised sustainable transport in encouraging almost 50% of users to switch from their private car.

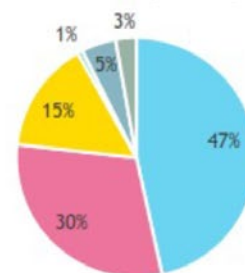
Did you take the bus using the Birthday Bus pass offer for a journey that you otherwise would not have taken?



Yes, for some of the time Yes, most of the time No, I did not

72% made new trips that they otherwise would not have taken

Did you make fewer car journeys because of the Birthday Bus pass?



Yes, I used the bus instead of driving
No, I only used the bus pass to save money on my normal bus journeys
No, I used the bus instead of walking
No, I used the bus instead of e-scooter
No, I used the bus instead of cycling
No, I used the bus instead of the train

47% used the bus instead of driving!

Care Givers

Between July 2023 and April 2024, Free Travel for Care Givers received 475 applications and over 49,000 journeys.

WESTlink Journeys

Since its launch in April 2023, the WESTLink Demand Responsive Travel (DRT) service has achieved over 150,000+ journeys. WESTLink supplies a network of on-demand mini-bus services to connect passengers in more remote areas to key services, and the wider bus and train network to improve regional accessibility. The service is benefitted by the regional fare cap, with a single adult journey costing only £2.

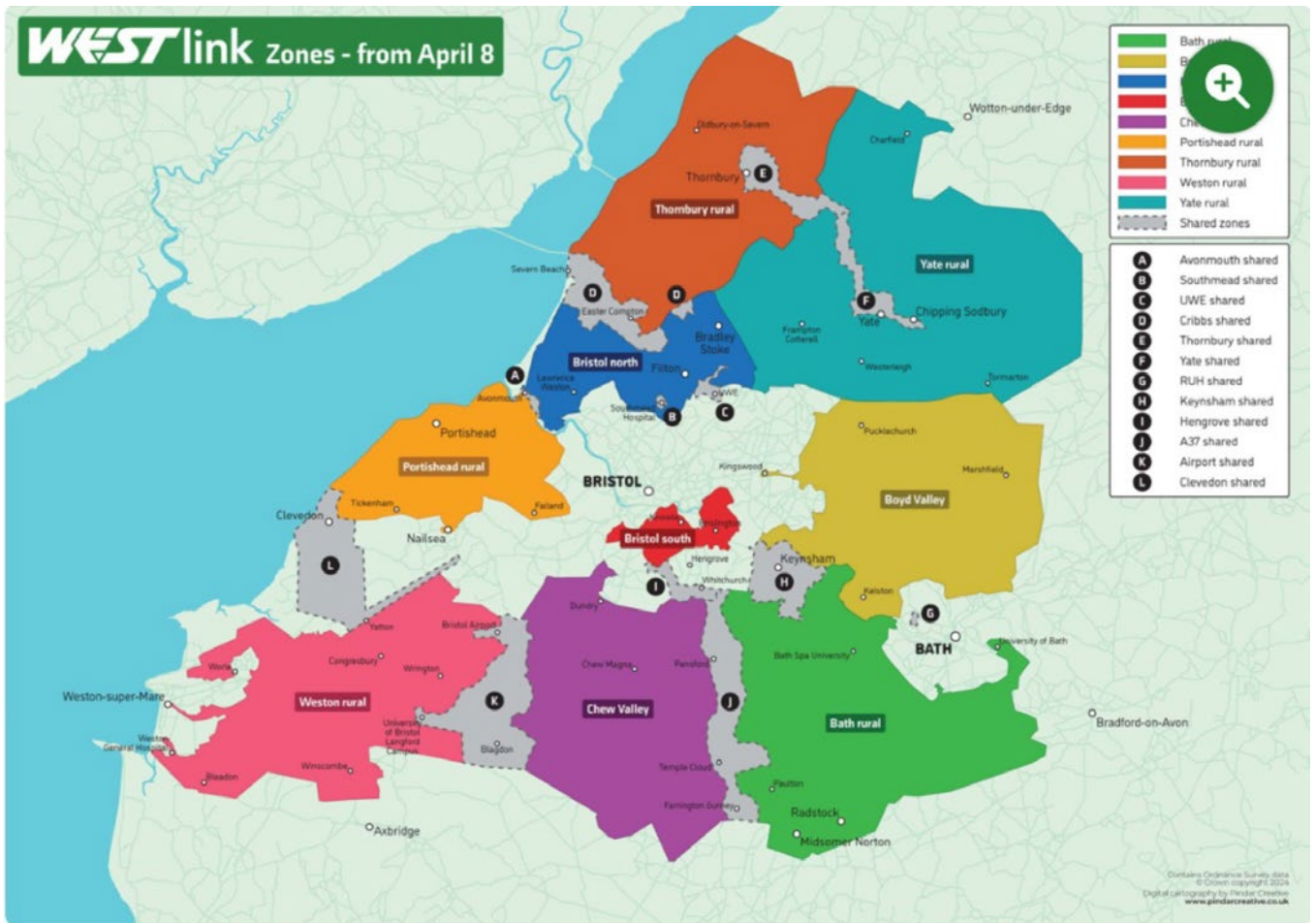
In April 2024, WESTLink underwent significant changes, including making the zones smaller and booking systems more accessible. The benefits of the upgraded service are summarised as follows:

- The service has partnered with Avon Rider tickets to introduce a fair cap to make it easier for people to travel across multiple service and to make sure they don't pay twice!
- Anti-cannibalistic, avoiding overlap with timetabled bus services and instead feeds people to the network instead of duplicating
- Smaller zones mean vehicles travel shorter distances and are available to more people

¹Recorded between August 2023 and April 2024

²From August 2023 to April 2024

Figure C-2 – Westlink Map



Real-time Information

We have invested over £500k into improving access to real-time digital information across our network to install over 300 new information screens including 200 e-paper displays at bus stops.

Installation of new and replacement Real Time Information Units

We are currently working to upgrade 194 bus stops with LED displays, and the MCA is working with the Unitary Authorities to begin a programme of display upgrades based on date of install and priority of high passenger boarding at each stop.

At least 40 new RTI units are also being installed based on the highest passenger boardings at bus stops without RTI units currently across the MCA region.

Install new 4G modems into 241 RTI displays currently on-street and remove existing 3G modems.

In early 2024, the programme to upgrade all RTI units to 4G roaming to improve data connectivity and information to passengers begun and is estimated to be completed by winter 2025.

Priority Bus Lanes

In the 2021 BSIP programme, we set out an ambitious target to significantly increase the length of the bus priority corridors across the region by delivering 100 miles of new dedicated bus infrastructure by 2027³. NSC was directly awarded £35,160,000 to improve bus lanes across the North Somerset region which was increased with reallocated funds to 2024 and supplemented with fundings from CRSTS.

The BSIP funded schemes are estimated to be delivered by December 2025 followed by CRSTS funded schemes in 2027.

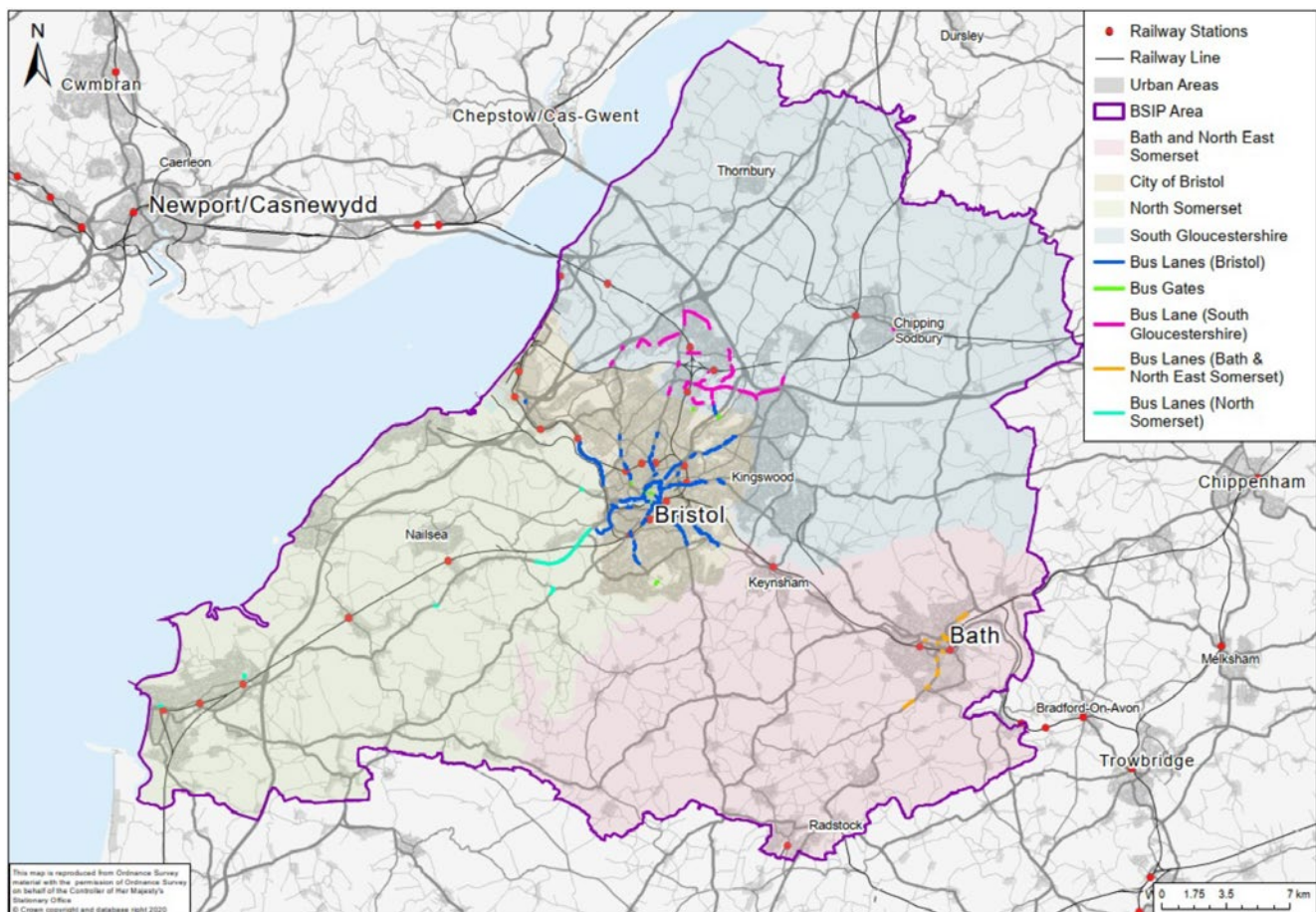
In combination, planned bus lanes across both funding avenues are expected to expand the bus priority network to 159 miles in total, beyond the initial target and scope of the BSIP and improving the reliability of bus services to a much wider proportion of the network.

To date, we have made good progress with our plans and have invested up to £45m in bus lane interventions with over 17% of our plans at delivery status and the remaining 83% still progressing at planning status.

Of the delivered plans, the bus lanes opened since 2021 are as follows:

- Long Ashton: 2.30 miles
 - Barrow Gurney: 0.33 miles
 - Beggar Bush Lane: 0.03 miles
 - Brockley Combe: 0.11
- Total new infrastructure: 2.77 miles

Figure C-2 - Location of bus lanes in BSIP area



* Note DfT have agreed to extend program of delivery for workstreams under this Delivery plan to 2025/26.

Additional - Skills Training

The success of the bus network is underpinned by the staff supporting it. In order to ensure our services continually improve to provide a strong and reliable service, we have invested £190,710 in training and recruitment activities across the region.

Since October 2022, we have successfully employed 300+ more bus drivers within local operators across the MCA and NSC areas using this funding.

Additional information around bus driver recruitment is available in Section 1.3 of this appendix.

1.3 Delivery Plans

To meet the priorities of the National Bus Strategy (NBS) and to reflect the views of partners and stakeholders following engagement for the 2021 BSIP programme, Delivery Plans for 10 areas were established in the 2021 BSIP for the West of England. These plans were developed to address the current and future challenges across the BSIP area (as set out in Section 2) and identify opportunities where we can make the most significant impact, meet our targets, and prioritise investments. The Delivery Plans categorised by letters A-J are defined in Table C-4 below and align with the ambitions of the NBS for bus improvements across the UK.

Table C-4 - Delivery Plans.

ID	Delivery Plans	Descriptions
A	Intensive Services	Intensive services and investment on key corridors, and with routes that are easier to understand.
B	Bus priority	There must be significant increases in bus priority.
C	Fares	Fares must be lower and simpler.
D	Integrated ticketing	There must be seamless, integrated local ticketing between operators and this should be across all types of transport.
E	Integrated services	Service patterns must be integrated with other modes.
F	Single integrated system	The local bus network is presented as a single system that works together, with clear passenger information.
G	Modern buses	Modern buses and decarbonisation.
H	Passenger voice	Give bus passengers more of a voice and a say.
I	Non-intensive services	More demand-responsive services and 'socially necessary' transport.
J	Long-term	Longer term transformation of networks through Bus Rapid Transit and other measures.

Allocation of Funding Adjustment

Since the initial programme was set out (Table 3-2), we have worked closely with the DfT to deliver our allocation flexibly. Where advantageous, we have moved funding between Delivery Plans to maximise the benefits of some programmes and drive passenger growth within the BSIP funding envelope.

Table C-5 below presents the BSIP funding allocation laid out in the 2021 BSIP against the updated funding allocation towards March 2025.

Table C-6 summarises the progress on the delivery programme for each workstream under the Delivery Plans, with commentary on the position of each to the by March 2024.

Please note the spending allocation remains flexible and is likely to be adjusted continually until March 2025 and detail on the exact spend for each Delivery Plan has not been included.

Table C-5 – Allocation of funding from the 2021 BSIP

Delivery Plans		2021 Funding Allocation			Updated Funding Allocation to 2025/26		
ID	Description	Total Revenue Funding (NSC & MCA)	Total Capital (NSC)	% overall BSIP allocation	Total Revenue Funding (NSC & MCA)	Total Capital (NSC)	% overall BSIP allocation
A	Intensive Services	£7,500,000	-	7%	£13,338,667	-	13%
B	Bus priority	-	£35,160,000	33%	-	£35,830,000	34%
C	Fares	£21,466,857	-	20%	£14,619,338	-	14%
D	Integrated ticketing	£110,000	£70,000	0.2%	£110,000	£70,000	0.2%
E	Integrated services	-	£12,753,000	12%	-	£12,083,000	11%
F	Single integrated system	£5,700,000	-	5%	£5,310,233	-	5%
G	Modern buses	No BSIP Funding – Achieved with Bus Operators through EP			No BSIP Funding – Achieved with Bus Operators through EP		
H	Passenger voice	£80,000	-	0.1%	£80,000	-	0.1%
I	Non-intensive services	£19,848,641	-	19%	£18,987,799	-	18%
J	Long-term	No BSIP Funding – Achieved with Bus Operators through EP			No BSIP Funding – Achieved with Bus Operators through EP		
Additional	Delivery (EP & Consultancy)	£2,700,000	-	3%	£4,568,752	-	4%
Additional	Skills Training (drivers / engineers)	£100,000	-	1%	£190,710	-	0.2%
Additional	Monitoring and Evaluation	-	-	-	£300,000	-	0.3%
	Total	£57,505,498	£47,983,000	100%	£57,505,499	£47,983,000	100%
	Total Combined	£105,388,498		100%	£105,388,498		100%

Table C-63 Delivery Programme (by March 2025 and beyond) – Progress Commentary

Delivery Plans		to March 2024		Forecast to March 2025 and Beyond	
ID	Description	% Complete (March 2024)	Progress RAG	Targeted completion date	Progress Commentary
A	Intensive Services				
A1	High Frequency, Accessible Network	38%	Amber	March 2026	Total spend to 2025 is dependent on the level of patronage along existing routes. The remaining spend will be extended to March 2026 with the potential to link the program with future funding, expanding the benefits from service improvements.
B	Bus Priority				
B1	Bus Priority (NSC)	20%	Amber	September 2025	Some individual schemes have been completed. Funding for remaining scheme were granted an extension to Sept 2025 by the DfT. Further extension to March 2026 may be requested to ensure completion of full programme.
C	Fares				
C1	Package 1 – Fare Capping, Reductions, Discounts	59%	Green	March 2025	The subsidised £2 fare offer has been live across the CA and NSC area for 18 months and will continue until programme end.
C2	Package 2 – Birthday Offer, Care Leavers	43%	Green	March 2025	The Birthday Bus Offer has been live across the CA and NSC since July 2023, and the Care Leavers offer since October 2023. Fares Package 2 will continue until programme end
C3	Package 3 – Targeted Offer	0%	Green	March 2025	Package 3 is scheduled to go live early summer 2024. Once live, the allocated funding will be spent by programme end.

Delivery Plans		to March 2024		Forecast to March 2025 and Beyond	
ID	Description	% Complete (March 2024)	Progress RAG	Targeted completion date	Progress Commentary
D	Integrated ticketing				
D1	Multi-Operating Ticketing Support & Integration	0%	Green	March 2025	Funding part of a wider package of work being led by CRSTS.
E	Integrated Services				
E1	Integrated Services (NSC)	3%	Amber	September 2025	Extension to this workstream has been granted by the DfT for completion by September 2025, in order to prioritise progress with workstream B1. Further extension to March 2026 may be requested to ensure completion of full programme.
F	Single integrated system				
F1	Brand Identity (Single Network)	1%	Green	March 2025	Workstream has experience programme delays from sign-off. However, once approved the projects will be completed by March 2025 within allocated budget.
F2	Programme Marketing and Communications	15%	Green	March 2025	Workstream has experience programme delays from sign-off. The Marketing & Communications programme has supported BSIP initiatives, including Fare packages and WESTLink. Any remaining spend will be used for widespread marketing of bus travel and an outreach programme.
F3	Travel Guides and Journey Planning	17%	Green	March 2025	New paper travel guides and maps have been produced and distributed throughout the region. The WEST Journey Planning website has been updated with an improved user experience for fares, service disruptions and updates to customers. Continuing to work on improving maps and travel guides (paper & online), providing information boards at key public transport locations (hospitals, train stations etc)

Delivery Plans		to March 2024		Forecast to March 2025 and Beyond	
ID	Description	% Complete (March 2024)	Progress RAG	Targeted completion date	Progress Commentary
F4	Within Journey Information	2%	Green	March 2025	Currently procuring a large contract for the majority of the spend to provide new real time information displays. Expected to award a contract in summer 2024 to deliver new TFT and Digital Timetable Displays (E-paper) throughout the region.
H	Passenger voice				
H1	Passenger Charter	0%	Green	March 2025	Charter has been adopted by the EP Board and is in place and in use. Budget is allocated for the design and promotion of charter, which is taking place imminently.
H2	Bus Passenger Safety Audit	67%	Green	March 2025	The Bus Passenger Safety Audit report was completed for the BSIP area in March 2024, and will be published online soon. Of the remaining budget, a small amount will be used to ensure the published document is fully accessible.
I	Non-intensive services				
I1	DRT (WESTLink) to complement network	29%	Amber	March 2026	Changes made to service in April to ensure improved financial viability and improved service delivery.
I2	Additional BSIP Supported Services	24%	Amber	March 2026	In the process of going out to tender for a 'South Orbital' bus service linking South Bristol Hospital to Long Ashton Park & Ride to launch in September 2024 running until the end of March 2026. The existing BSIP Supported Services 522 and 525 have been operational since April 2023
I3	WESTLocal Community Initiative	0%	Green	March 2025	Two contracted services were launched in early 2024 under Tranche 1 and applications for future services under Tranche 2 opened in May 2024. Finalised costs and programme are TBC.

Delivery Plans		to March 2024		Forecast to March 2025 and Beyond	
ID	Description	% Complete (March 2024)	Progress RAG	Targeted completion date	Progress Commentary
I4	AssessWEST – Network Re-design Programme	46%	Green	March 2025	Research is being led and supported by external consultants and due to report and conclude in the second half of 2024.
	Additional				
	Delivery (All aspects of support to programme)	43%	Green	March 2025	Overspend on staff support is being reviewed at SRO and at programme level
	Skills Training (drivers / engineers)	100%	Green	Completed	The driver recruitment and retention programme closed in April 2024 after 18 months.

1.4 Bus Driver Recruitment and Retention

We recognise the importance staff recruitment and retention plays in safeguarding the success bus network across the BSIP area. A well-functioning bus network relies on having enough drivers to operate the scheduled routes and maintain reliable services. Addressing staff shortages is therefore fundamental in reaching wider goals for the bus network, in improving passenger satisfaction, supporting economic activity and productivity, advocating sustainable transport, equity and accessibility, reducing traffic congestion, safety and cost efficiency.

What we've done so far

In the 2022 BSIP Update, we outlined aspirations for a Driver Recruitment and Retention Project with the aim to employ and train 140 new bus drivers across the BSIP area.

The project began in October 2022 and ran over an 18-month period, ending in April 2024. The project was awarded £190,710 (see Table 3-1 in the BSIP document), which was spent developing a marketing and stakeholder engagement campaign across the MCA and NSC areas.

During the project lifetime, over 300 driver vacancies were filled within the local operators.

The Marketing Campaign

The marketing campaign for the Driver Recruitment and Retention Programme was released in October 2022 and was communicated in both digital and printed media forms. Adverts for both campaigns boldly highlighted key messages to engage viewers, highlighting expected salary, and opportunities for flexible working, training, and benefits of free bus travel. The campaigns targeted both existing bus license holders and newcomers, emphasising the training and support they would receive upon entering the profession. A focus of the campaign was to improve perception of the career to the public and highlight the community hero aspect. Not only was this felt productive to increase applicant numbers, but also to reposition the role and improve passenger attitudes to bus drivers.

Digital platform

The wider Skills Connect online platform has been used to digitally advertise 'Become a bus driver in the West of England'. The page includes a series of videos from existing employees at different operators to promote the benefits of working in the industry, including the ability to work flexibly to accommodate individual needs, the support and training received and opportunities to travel further afield to tourist destinations.

The page links users to training platforms available, which can be filtered by location, operator, and vehicle type. The page also highlights the range of support available to individuals looking for roles, including with Unitary Authority and the Combined Authority's skills support services.

The website is advertised widely through a comprehensive marketing campaign including collaborative working with the Unitary Authorities and partners. The website, and its' support, are publicly available and free to access, subject to eligibility criteria.

Printed Communications

Printed forms of media included bus stop advertisements and local press. The bus operators were also encouraged to carry out their own marketing activity, which included wrapping their buses.

Local Partnerships

Working closely with LTAs and bus operators, the CA facilitated the engagement with local community groups to educate and spread awareness of the roles and responsibilities bus drivers have and encourage individuals to join the profession.

Our stakeholder engagement programme included partnering with educational institutions to promote bus driving as a career option by attending careers fairs and workshops. For example, there were specific engagement events with First Bus where they hosted a bus on campus with Bath Spa University in collaboration with their Students Union to highlight the job alongside their studies. This picked up on the increasing cohort of student bus drivers, highlighted through the video on the Skills Connect page with Callum.

Other Incentives

Alongside the Driver Recruitment and Retention Programme, wider intervention packages within the MCA have supported recruitment campaigns and funding initiatives.

Good Employment Charter

The Good Employment Charter is a free tool developed by the MCA designed to support organisations boost productivity and achieve higher growth. The tool aims to improve working conditions in the region and focuses on seven key characteristics including Flexible Work, Recruitment and Pay.

Bus Operators have been encouraged to engage with, and sign up to, the Good Employment Charter so that they can access resources and support to improve their practises, plus benefit from the marketing activity around the Good Employment Charter. As well as the learnings to improve support and engagement with existing staff, this also helps the operators with positioning in the region to aid recruitment.

We will continue to work with the industry to better improve practises and share knowledge and support.


Bootcamp Training

In an innovative approach to funding, the MCA have been able to fund bus driver training through the Mayoral Priority Skills Fund. A flexible funding stream was utilised to enable training for 50+ Passenger Carrying Vehicle (PCV) Drivers in the region, with interviews offered upfront from local bus operators, increasing likelihood of a job following successful training.

What we will continue to do

Currently there is no further allocation of funds to continue, or enhance, the driver recruitment and retention initiatives. Whilst the delivery to date has aided recruitment and retention in the region, we would benefit from continued activity to de-risk future investment. This is heightened in importance following the broader diversity of entrants into the sector as a result of the engagement activity from the CA, operators and training providers. This could be delivered through ambitions such as:

- Tailored support to bus operators – support to improve practises including flexible work, pay, inclusion etc. This will link with our regional Good Employment Charter and can be enhanced with a tailored business support provision.
- Community engagement – building on the success of the previous activity, enhance the community engagement offer by working collaboratively with Unitary Authorities and local partners to highlight bus driving as a career and establish pathways.
- Unlocking future talent pathways - Engagement with schools to inspire careers in bus driving. This will include highlighting the innovation in the sector and inspiring the next generation.
- Safety and facilities – improve facilities for staff, such as diversity training and toilets
- Testing and training – increased regional capacity which could include addressing regional priorities such as customer service, safety and other requirements not currently met through standard training activities.
- Sustainability – including green skills training for all operator staff. Support for new entrants – including car driver license training prior to PCV driving, childcare provision, English language training, workplace support etc.
- Pride in our drivers - celebrate our drivers and encourage everyone to be respectful through marketing campaigns, create a culture of pride in WEST.



**Appendix D
Ambitions and
Proposals for
2025-2035**

Contents

1 Our Detailed Proposals and Ambitions	3
1.1 Service Level and Network Coverage	4
1.2 Bus Priority	7
1.3 Simpler and more affordable fares	9
1.4 Ticketing	10
1.5 Improved Waiting and Interchange	12
1.6 Improved bus information and network identity	14
1.7 Accessibility and Inclusion	15
1.8 Bus Safety	16
1.9 Bus Passenger Charter Proposals (Ongoing)	19
1.10 Improvements to our bus fleet	20
1.11 Transformational Network	21

1 Our Detailed Proposals and Ambitions

The following section contains the detailed proposals and ambitions under each improvement category as outlined in Section 4 of the West of England 2024 BSIP refresh. All proposals and ambitions listed represent our proposed outputs were further funding beyond the existing BSIP (1) allocation to be made available to the partnership between the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) and North Somerset Council (NSC) in respect of the West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Short-term proposals from 2025/26 to 2028/29 represent schemes and approaches that we feel could be delivered quickly by our partnership and through the current Enhanced Partnership (EP) process. Some schemes and approaches are a continuation of initiatives delivered through the BSIP (1) programme which have already achieved great success whilst others are new ideas that we have developed in preparing our BSIP 2024 document. All short-term proposals will need new funding through a future BSIP funding round to deliver and therefore still represent a set of aspirational outputs.

Longer-term ambitions that extend out from 2025/26 to 2035 and beyond represent our aspirations for the long term regarding local buses, the services operated, and the network provided. Most longer-term ambitions will require our outlined short-term proposals to be delivered by 2028/29 (or no later than 2030) as these will form the foundations for our longer-term ambitions, in particular their financial stability and success. As with short-term proposals, there is no current funding to provide the ambitions set out under longer-term ambitions and as such the information below represents an aspirational outcome. Funding would be needed through future BSIP funding rounds or any other identified funding sources.

One issue that became evident early on in delivery of the 2021 BSIP programme was the mismatch between the three-year funding period for the 2021 BSIP capital award to NSC and the five-year funding period for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) to the MCA. The bus network in our region covers both local transport authority areas and joint working between them is well-established. BSIP capital awards for five-year periods in future will enable the benefits of a joint approach to be fully realised. Although both areas have a track record of quick and efficient delivery, it is inevitable that schemes involving land acquisition may take longer than the funding period allowed.

1.1 Service Level and Network Coverage

Table 1-1 – Short Term Proposals to 2028/29

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Commercial Service Stretch Standards	Consolidate 2021 BSIP-funded enhancements to core bus routes by expanding their provision outside of core hours and on Sundays to build on earlier BSIP progress with additional BSIP funding.	Replicate the commercial success of core hours enhancements by stretching standards (daily span) and seeking long-term commitment from operators to these maintain service levels.
Higher Frequency Inter-Urban Links	Improve frequency on inter-urban and Bristol Airport services to a minimum of two buses per hour during daytime Mondays to Saturdays.	To attract new bus use from private car by offering better direct services (e.g. from Clevedon to Bristol and Weston-super-Mare).
Regional Night Buses	Explore and trial extended evening and night bus services across the Bristol City network and key satellite towns across the region.	A foundation step for AssessWEST outcomes and could include a trial of 24/7 local bus services across key commercial corridors.
More Evening and Sunday Buses	Pilot more evening / Sunday buses on local town services and core service corridors radiating from Bristol across the BSIP area.	Use commercial midweek / Saturday pattern and commercial partnerships with operators to kick-start future self-funding routes.
Bristol urban corridors package	Seek to strengthen connections for urban communities with fewer connections and improve services on key radial routes as a pilot.	Invest in new and enhanced services for the Stapleton, Whitchurch, Hartcliffe, Brislington and St Annes areas and on the A38, A37, A4018 and A420 corridors.
Rural service innovation package	Measures to redesign remaining rural services into bus or DRT feeder services using fixed, semi-fixed, and full DRT in eight pilot areas across the region.	This will work in tandem with outputs from AssessWEST and will feed the core network.
North Somerset service improvement package	Services to link regional towns with employment areas at Avonmouth with more buses on faster services.	Services to link Clevedon / Portishead with Avonmouth and Portway P&R site, faster Weston-super-Mare / Bristol services and more buses on services between Weston-super-Mare, Cheddar & Wells.
Regional town improvement package	Review all regional town bus provision and enhance with new 'town services' connecting residents with town centres, employment areas, and rail stations.	Maximising rail interchange and providing connections between residential areas and the inter-urban bus network.

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
New DRT Models	Improve viability of DRT and provide additional resource through PSV and PHV provision as appropriate to improve performance. Consider moving to a hybrid semi-fixed DRT model.	Scope for providing additional resource to improve operational efficiency using an integrated approach.
School Bus Routes	Provide subsidised school bus services for young people not entitled to free home-to-school transport where direct travel on existing bus services is not possible and where there is a good level of demand.	To reduce car traffic on the school run, in line with JLTP. Bus operators find commercial school services unviable unless higher child fares are charged. One benefit of this proposal would be to reduce off-peak bus service cost, but it needs clear policy framework and a long-term funding commitment.
Severn Beach Line package	Improve cross-ticketing between bus and rail and coordinate existing and new bus services to rail times along with wayfinding for onward travel.	Consider how existing or new bus-based services could connect Severn Beach station to Severnside job opportunities through coordinated times and fares.

Table 1-2 - Longer-Term Ambitions to 2034/35

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
A New Regional Bus Network	Step-change in bus network coverage towards the ultimate long-term ambition – including improved frequencies and daily span.	AssessWEST will inform the developing network. Aligned with each local transport authority's policies, strategies, and plans.
metrobus to Bristol Airport	'metrobus' service between Bristol Airport and Bristol City Centre and new links between the airport and regional towns in its catchment area.	Aligns with regional JLTP plans. Supported by First Bus. Study to be undertaken by Bristol Airport. Some key town links could be bus, DRT, or combination of both.
metrobus expansion corridors	Develop additional 'metrobus' service extensions from Bristol City Centre and feeder links between extension terminals and the wider area.	Explore opportunities set out in JLTP4 (and subsequent JLTP5) including potential metrobus extensions to Avonmouth/Severnside, Yate, Thornbury and an orbital service expanding on the short-term orbital pilot.

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Service Level and Population	<p>Communities with 500+ people to have at least hourly bus or DRT services (0700-1900, Mon to Sat).</p> <p>Better than hourly services (0700-1900, daily) for communities and smaller satellite urban networks serving up to 3,000 people.</p> <p>Better than two buses an hour (for communities up to 10,000 people) and more than 4 buses an hour for communities over 10,000 people.</p>	<p>A hierarchy of population levels will be linked to minimum bus frequency standards and days / periods of operation across various service types (urban radial, urban orbital, inter-urban, inner-circular) – this will be guided by the AssessWEST network outcomes.</p> <p>All route types and networks could be complemented by DRT to act as a feeder service or provide coverage during non-core hours.</p> <p>For conurbations we will aim for 12 buses an hour using either individual or coordination or bus routes.</p>
A supported service package	Enhanced network coverage (including supported services).	New/restored fixed and innovative services (such as DRT) set by development patterns.
Bus friendly developments	A stronger link between bus network planning and delivery and local plans to ensure bus/DRT is embedded in new developments from first occupation.	Developer contributions to be sought via s106. New developments to be designed as 'bus-friendly with DRT coverage considered as a first step in bus provision from 1-100 units.
Integrated corridors	High frequency, 15-minute turn-up-and-go frequencies fed by strategic services and DRT.	Require investment in infrastructure (see Table 1-4).
New core bus service corridor from Weston-super-Mare to Bristol	High frequency (ultimately four buses per hour) service from Weston-super-Mare to Bristol via Churchill, Bristol Airport and A38 with DRT links from adjacent villages to interchange hubs.	

1.2 Bus Priority

Table 1-3 - Short Term Proposals to 2028/29

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Continued jointly funded corridor approach	Completion of schemes funded jointly by BSIP and CRSTS streams.	Ongoing BSIP and CRSTS funded schemes to be completed by c2027 and new schemes delivered from 2027. Further BSIP funding will be ringfenced to support bus service improvements in tandem with CRSTS (1 and 2) corridor improvements from 2027.
Network 'bus priority quick wins' study	Review the whole network and develop a programme of Delivery Packages for network improvements to be delivered from 2028/29 or sooner (funding dependent).	A package of simple / 'quick wins' on the network, rural bus priority measures on lower frequency routes, and major schemes to tackle traffic congestion and improve bus journey times at key locations.
Longer-term bus priority package	Feasibility Packages for longer-term network improvements, especially those involving land acquisition.	A series of feasibility studies spread across the region to understand the impacts of simple / 'quick wins' on the network, impacts of rural bus priority measures on lower frequency routes, and major schemes to tackle traffic congestion and improve bus journey times at key locations (e.g. M5 Junction 19 and Uphill roundabout).
Bus Stop Infrastructure Package	An approach to place all bus stops across the region into a hierarchy based on either bus or passenger throughput.	Funding then targeted to provide appropriate standards for each bus stop tier.
Network systems integration	Traffic signal priority and network systems integration across the region, focusing on principal junctions and town / urban centres.	Traffic signal priority on all bus corridors together where possible, with bus gates and a roll-out / extension of yellow box junction enforcement. (e.g. complete the Scoot system in Bath & North East Somerset). Integration of the bus lanes and traffic signal priorities with softer measures to form a holistic approach (e.g. parking control and enforcement (see below)).

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Enforcement package	Bus lane and parking enforcement.	Investment in staff resources to improve enforcement of bus stop clearways and parking restrictions on bus routes. Review of on-street parking impacts on the bus network. Seek powers and implement measures to enforce moving traffic offences where not held already by local highway authorities.
Network package	Traffic management.	Assess and mitigate the impact of loading and parking provision on the network.

Table 1-4 - Longer-Term Ambitions to 2034/35

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Bus reliability on the trunk road network	Joint working with agencies across our Trunk Road Network (TRN) to improve bus reliability.	Work with National Highways to tackle congestion and improve bus journey times.
High frequency service infrastructure	Infrastructure to support new core bus service corridors (e.g. Weston-super-Mare to Bristol via Churchill, Bristol Airport and A38).	Linked to service proposal above under Network and Services and to include development and delivery of interchange hubs.
Network 'bus priority quick wins'	Delivery Packages for network improvements to be delivered from 2028/29.	A package of simple / 'quick wins' on the network, rural bus priority measures on lower frequency routes, and major schemes to tackle traffic congestion and improve bus journey times at key locations (e.g. M5 Junction 19, Uphill roundabout, and Stone-edge Batch).
Interchange hub package	Interchange Hubs and AssessWEST delivery.	Delivery of mobility hubs across the bus route network linked to AssessWEST outputs and including bus interchanges at railway stations.
Bus lanes package	Continuous bus lanes and network integration Package.	Continuous bus lanes where space allows, and congestion persists where there are six or more buses per hour. Continued integration of existing bus lanes with parallel infrastructure schemes to form complete network.
Future4WEST Package	Future4WEST encompasses the approaches commonly found under mass transit.	Consider the feasibility for: Bath to Bristol; South Fringe to Bristol; East Fringe to Bristol; Borth Fringe to Bristol.

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Parking Charge Alignment	To harmonise parking policies across the BSIP area.	Management and pricing policies to encourage increased bus use from car for both local and regional journeys.

1.3 Simpler and more affordable fares

Table 1-5 - Short Term Proposals to 2028/29

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Regional Fare Cap	Fare Capping.	Package to replace the national £2 fare cap if it ceases with an approach better to or equal to the earlier urban and regional fare caps (in place before January 2023), to avoid a sharp jump to commercial fare levels.
Targeted Fares Package	Targeted fares offer package (works with or instead of caps).	<p>Free travel days used to promote specific bus services and linked to regional and local events.</p> <p>Free travel weeks – used to boost bus use on target corridors and linked with some seasonal events.</p> <p>Targeted Discounts –To support use of new/improved services or seasonal events (e.g. University start).</p> <p>Bundle offers – create digital bundles for young people, families, and 3-stop-hop style offers.</p>
Promotional Fares Package	Promotional Offers.	<p>For example, Birthday Buses and provide a larger promotion budget to ensure this is well-understood.</p> <p>Extend the job seekers offer to all those across the region in receipt of a job offer and in receipt of job seekers allowance. Include a programme to educate job seekers in how to use the bus and understand bus fares.</p>

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Regional Zoning Approach	Regional Zoning.	A package of support to level-up fare / distance differences seen across the network and not otherwise captured by fare capping. This will include a review of existing zones for multi-operator fares, aiming for more equitable pricing.

Table 1-6 - Longer-Term Ambitions to 2034/35

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Long-Term Fare Capping	Continued Fare Capping.	We know that continued low and simple fares provide long-term confidence in the bus network and encourage people to make using the bus a natural choice for travel. We will work with bus operators to develop a long-term fare capping programme that will grow patronage at fare pricing that is commercially sustainable.

1.4 Ticketing

Table 1-7 - Short Term Proposals to 2028/29

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
TravelWEST Improvements	TravelWEST Card.	Develop the TravelWEST card as a system to assist people who are not technology literate and/or not able to use e-ticketing or app-based systems. TravelWEST charging points using cash to be expanded across the region and product options to be added to this platform (including rail in the longer-term) in addition to the WESTapp.
Regional Ticket Integration	Integrate Rider and Freedom Travelpass tickets to create a family of multi-operator, multi-modal tickets.	Potential quick win. Initial scoping work carried out by Great Western Railway and Rider scheme in 2017 but not continued. Would be paper/card tickets until digital versions available when Project Coral completed.

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
DRT Through Ticketing	Through ticketing between DRT and the bus network.	Key aspect of delivering our regional rural strategies across all partners.
Multi-Operator / Multi-Product Acceptance	Resolve ticket interoperability issues.	Set out a programme to resolve issues where different ticketing systems cause barriers to the universal acceptance of tickets and ticket products in smartcard or e-ticket / app format. Identify issues and use joint-funding solutions to mitigate issues. Include Project Coral outputs in this work.
Targeted Bus/Rail Ticketing	Through tickets from rail network onto specific bus services where appropriate.	Existing example is the through ticket to Bristol Airport via Bristol Temple Meads. Other possibilities exist across our region (e.g. Clevedon from Yatton, and to Cheddar and Wells from Weston-super-Mare).
Tickets onto WESTapp	Add all ticket products to e-ticket / app.	Once WESTapp is launched, quickly add DRT functionality to allow journey planning and payment in addition to area 'Rider' based ticket products and any other ticket or fare promotion. This will include funding to continue the development of WESTapp from 2025/26 to 2028/29 – a key aspect of delivering regional rural strategies.

Table 1-8 - Longer-Term Ambitions to 2034/35

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
WESTapp Development (next phases)	WESTapp.	Continue development of the WESTapp from 2028/29 to include all public transport forms, including rail, all bus operators and DRT (where not achieved before) and sustainable travel and active travel options such as e-scooters, e-bikes, and car-club vehicles.
Regional (all-mode) Fare Capping	Implement multi-modal, multi-operator capping.	Requires output of Project Coral and co-operation of train operating companies.

1.5 Improved Waiting and Interchange

Table 1-9 - Short Term Proposals to 2028/29

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Bus Stop Standards	Consistent bus stop standards for all bus stops across the region and a comprehensive review of bus stop locations.	A package for the implementation of bus stop design guidance and standards, building on CRSTS and BSIP funded corridors, making allowances for parish / town council owned assets and working with advertising concessions across the region. We will tailor facilities according to a bus stop hierarchy.
A Better Bus Stop Environment	Consistent standard of cleaning and maintenance for bus stops and shelters and improved facilities and wayfinding.	Potential funding from bus lane enforcement and advertising income, we will improve and maintain to consistent standards the bus stop environment with better cleaning, maintenance, facilities, wayfinding, and safe walking routes.
Local Bus Hubs	Local Bus Hub Upgrade Package.	We will identify up to 16 locations across our region where improvements to current facilities can be made (e.g. provision of toilets, information kiosks, facilities for bus drivers and improved walking routes to rail stations) – one such location will be Weston-super-Mare interchange.
Interchange corridor pilots	Improve infrastructure and information as a combination of measures on selected routes to monitor the impact of this approach.	Improve infrastructure, wayfinding, branding, and linked fare promotions and provide travel training initiatives on routes such as Thornbury to The Mall, SGS, and Southmead.
Routes to Bus Stops	Improve routes to bus stops by walking and wheeling.	Measures may include 20mph limits, first/last mile improvements and rural lanes schemes. Aligned with our regional rural strategies and active travel strategies with associated action plans.

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Regional Mobility Hub Upgrades	North Somerset New Bus Mobility Hub Package. MCA New Bus Hub package (part 2).	New mobility hubs are planned for Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead, with upgrades to Worle hub. Smaller hubs are under consideration for select villages. Following the delivery of 11 trial mobility hubs by 2025, we will use the lessons learnt to help us design, implement and operate mobility hubs in the future, using a standard 'blueprint'.

Table 1-10 - Longer-Term Ambitions to 2034/35

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Bus Stop Review	Continued review locations of all bus stops.	Continue to implement bus stop standards and review/ remove stops if no longer used or move to other locations if appropriate.
Bus Stop Shelter Policy	Install shelters at all bus stops where physically possible except those that function as alighting points only.	1,600 more shelters needed. New shelter to have green roofs and solar power if possible. Engage with highway authorities, Town and Parish Councils on location, specification, cleaning, and maintenance issues.
Core Route Interchange Hubs	Interchange Hubs on the core bus network (existing and proposed).	For interchange between DRT and the core bus service (e.g. on A38 South corridor). Uses output of AssessWEST.

1.6 Improved bus information and network identity

Table 1-11 - Short Term Proposals to 2028/29

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Guides and Maps	Continued delivery of comprehensive travel guides and maps.	Printed information is still highly relevant. We will assess the impact of the range of material that is being produced with BSIP Phase 1 funding.
TravelWEST Content Improvements	Further develop TravelWEST, the region's online information and journey planning website.	TravelWEST provides comprehensive public transport information. Bus fares information will be added to TravelWEST.
A Regional RTI Approach (part 1)	Expand RTI across the network, including a pilot across rural locations.	Ongoing introduction of new RTI displays which will cascade old RTI displays to more corridors in urban and suburban areas. Ensure consistency between TravelWEST and other RTI by using a single data source and prediction process. Pilot RTI in rural areas across the region to understand its impact on passenger confidence in respect of lower frequency bus services.
E-Paper Roll-Out	Expansion of e-paper displays.	After a successful trial of e-paper in Thornbury we will expand the use of these units to 50% of all remaining bus stops where RTI is not installed. In rural areas, e-paper displays will be solar powered where possible.
Basic Bus Stop Information	Upgrading of non-digital bus stop information, including more display cases and smart information plates.	Development of smart information plates will continue and cover all stops not treated with RTI or e-paper displays. These plates will use QR codes linked to TravelWEST departure board lists, supported by paper displays.
Prioritised Bus Stop Information	Increased bespoke information provision at identified bus stops.	Bus information at railway stations. Signposting at interchange/central locations. and to locally relevant sites.
Regional Bus Fare Information	Fares information at bus stops and online.	Through-fare capping, commitments by operators to limit fare changes to specific dates and retain simplified fares.

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
WEST Brand (part 1)	Complete rollout of the WESTbus brand on the bus network. Deliver a new standard of physical and aesthetic design for bus shelters in the region.	Lighter touch branding for most buses, with full liveries on key corridors (c50% of buses by 2028/29). To be rolled out as and when shelters reach the end of their service life, with vinyl stickers being applied elsewhere.
Fare offers to promote leisure travel	Work with leisure destinations to improve bus access and develop joint ticketing options.	This will be done alongside existing fare packages and offers.

Table 1-12 - Longer-Term Ambitions to 2034/35

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
WEST Brand (part 2)	Deliver the WEST branding across all forms of public transport.	All buses, DRT vehicles and related infrastructure in full WEST branding. Brand extended to local rail services and stations.
A Regional RTI approach (part 2)	Sustainable Regional RTI.	Electrically powered information at bus stops powered by solar energy wherever possible.

1.7 Accessibility and Inclusion

Table 1-13 Short Term Proposals to 2028/29

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Free Travel for those with disabilities	Free Concessionary Travel for disabled holders of ENCTS passes.	Free travel at all times for holders of disabled ENCTS passes and any companions to ensure that disabled persons can access employment opportunities.
100% Raised Kerbs	Improve accessibility to buses by creating level boarding and easy bus docking.	Ensure that every bus stop across the region has a raised kerb to enable step-free access between the waiting area and the bus.

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
All Buses with Audio/Digital Equipment	Bus Fleet Upgrades.	Focus on ensuring that all buses across our regional bus fleet have audio-visual next stop and information announcements – in line with the national approach.
Bus Driver Regional Training Standard – Disability Awareness	Staff Training Package.	Work with bus operators to establish a regional standard for accessibility and inclusion training, focusing not only on physical accessibility needs and wheelchair handling but also on hidden disabilities.
Traveller Training	Independent traveller training and buddy schemes.	Create a programme to better enable independent travel, or travel with a bus buddy, for passengers who find using the bus complex and challenging.

Table 1-14 Longer-Term Ambitions to 2034/35

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Networkwide accessibility	Consistency of bus stop, interchange, and bus station facilities.	A package to ensure that by 2034/35 all bus network assets have consistent levels of accessibility and facilities to support people with a range of needs.
Bikes on Buses	Trial of cycle carriage on rural buses.	To encourage active travel and leisure travel.

1.8 Bus Safety

Table 1-15 Short Term Proposals to 2028/29

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Bus Passenger Safety	Implement recommendations of Bus Passenger Safety Audit across the region and work with the public to better understand their concerns and fears on using the bus.	Embed recommendations from the Bus Passenger Safety Audit into the EP Scheme. This would make the completion of bus stop and walking route audits a requirement for highway authorities to carry out across their areas.

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Bus Stop Safety Audits	Undertake safety audits at all bus stops across the BSIP area during daylight & darkness.	All bus stops in the BSIP area to be assessed, including during the hours of darkness where appropriate, to assess safety issues, including walking routes to stops. Aligned with regional rural strategies and active travel strategies with associated action plans.
Safer Bus Stop Design	Produce design guidance tailored to different geographical contexts.	Provide tailored approaches specific to the region and tackle discrepancies in bus stop and station infrastructure throughout the bus network (linked to bus stop design standards).
Regional Help Points	Introduce Help Points at bus stops in city and isolated suburban/rural areas.	The installation of Help Points with 24-hour access which provide both 'Information' and 'Emergency' functions to benefit both tourists and locals in case of emergency.
Bus Stop Wayfinding	Better distribution of wayfinding signage and use of backlit illumination.	Clear and illuminated signage enhances the overall experience for pedestrians and commuters, making it easier and more enjoyable to navigate the area.
A Safer Travel Partnership	Enhance collaboration across the bus network between the local transport authorities, local highway authorities, bus operators, the West of England Women's Commission, and the police.	Clearly establish clear roles and the duties of each stakeholder in ensuring the safety and security of the bus network and outline protocols for collaboration and information sharing. Address discrepancies in defining sexual harassment ranging from low-level to severe incidents to ensure cohesive responses and support systems. Set up a safer travel partnership modelled on other successful partnerships across England.
Bus Driver Regional Training Standard – Passenger and Driver Safety	Standardise training programmes for all staff across the bus network and implement bus driver support programmes to help safeguard their well-being.	Train staff to ensure they are equipped with skills to handle incidents involving passengers with sensitivity and empathy, in aim of achieving greater confidence for staff and sense of security for passengers. Provide training to staff responsible for managing incident reporting to ensure the procedure is more streamlined. Provide post event support.

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Security Alert and Response	Establish consistent response procedures and classifications.	This will provide uniform response procedures and facilitate a clear understanding of when police involvement is necessary and will include the utilisation of "blue code" and "red code".
Passenger Safety Education	Roll out an education and awareness campaign with easily understandable materials outlining how passengers can report incidents and safety concerns.	Passengers will be well-equipped to report incidents. These materials should be available in various languages and formats, such as posters, brochures, and digital platforms. Also set up a single number or short text code to allow anonymous reporting of violent, anti-social, or sexual harassment by passengers.

Table 1-16 - Longer-Term Ambitions to 2034/35

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Bus Stop Security	CCTV and adequate lighting to be installed at bus stations, bus stops (where appropriate) and on all operators' buses.	Currently, operators have only commitment to consider fitting CCTV to new buses.
Incident Log	Establish a centralised system for collecting and sharing incident data.	This will enable comprehensive analysis, proactive decision-making, and evidence-led interventions.
Incident Reporting	Make reporting incidents convenient and accessible for passengers via digital platforms, such as WESTapp and ensure they are user-friendly.	This will be built into wider longer-term WESTapp development already noted.

1.9 Bus Passenger Charter Proposals (Ongoing)

Table 1-17 Proposals from 2025/26

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Bus Passenger Charter Update	Place a greater emphasis on PSED (public sector equality duty) and accessibility.	Duty to take reasonable measures to make wheelchair spaces accessible to wheelchair users, and the right for passengers to bring an assistance dog on board. This is in line with updated BSIP guidance.
	Make the path to achieving 95% punctuality clearer.	Yearly targets are provided in the Enhanced Partnership, to be included in the Charter.
	Include WESTlink DRT services in the Charter and make expectations clear.	This is in line with updated BSIP guidance, which requires a 20-minute window for buses to arrive on a flexible service.
	Make fare information available on all buses and offer the best possible fare.	Also ensure this information is at bus stops and stations.
	Use the Charter to establish a single point of contact for complaints.	Ensure any complaint or comment is tracked through the chain and the passenger receives a response.
	Use the Charter to ensure early consultation on network/bus changes.	Ensure bus operators consult with affected communities (including citizen panels and bus champions) prior to the start of the 70-day notice period for service changes through the Traffic Commissioner.

1.10 Improvements to our bus fleet

Table 1-18 - Short Term Proposals to 2028/29

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Rolling Out Electric Buses	Support ZEBRA 2 implementation.	Support the implementation of electric buses across the region through funding awarded to us by the DfT ZEBRA (2) funding programme, working closely with First Bus and energy providers to manage the programme.
Delivery More Zero-Emission Buses	Actively seek further investment for transition to zero-emission bus fleet.	Provides a foundation for us to continue to aim for a stretch target of 2030 for fully zero-emission fleet. This is aligned with regional local transport authority Climate Emergency Action Plans.

Table 1-19- Longer Term Ambitions to 2034/35

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Long-Term Bus Fleet Investment	Continued fleet investment.	By 2035 or earlier, 100% of vehicles will be zero emission. We will install 20 ultra-fast 500amp electric vehicle chargers at strategic locations throughout the region including interchanges, layovers, and park and ride sites.
Hydrogen Fuel Exploration	Use of other ZEV fuel types.	Working with partner operators and the wider fuel distribution network, we will investigate the ability to operate hydrogen fuel-cell buses across our network.

1.11 Transformational Network

Table 1-20 - Short Term Proposals to 2028/29

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
Our EP+ option and/or Franchising – a future option?	The MCA and NSC to carry out preliminary work to consider alternative network planning, management and delivery options that may include our version of EP+ or an assessment of the franchising process, costs, and potential outcomes.	The MCA and NSC remain committed to the enhanced partnership (EP) process but want to be prepared to follow up an alternative if the EP is unable to deliver substantial progress towards the high-level objectives in the BSIP and EP Plan. Under current legislation, would need approval from Secretary of State to make franchising powers available to NSC, or both NSC and the MCA acting jointly. It is noted that the MCA already has powers to progress itself with franchising.
Formula for Success – building the foundations for longer-term ambitions	Continued focus on quality.	Getting the basics right, finding and delivering ‘quick wins’ and growing passenger use further.
	Continued focus on core buses.	Nurturing the core bus network using our already successful formula of enhanced service support funding.
	High Quality Interchange.	Establish a network of high-quality interchanges as a first step to realising AssessWEST outcomes.
	Toolkit Approach.	Continue to combine funding streams to maximise the benefits that joint working can deliver.

Table 1-21- Longer Term Ambitions to 2034/35

SCHEME TITLE	PROPOSAL	COMMENT
The Best Bus Network	'Best Passenger Experience'.	Continued project coordination, quicker decision making, and continued policy linkage with JLTP (4 & 5).
	A single unified network.	Development of mass transit approaches under a single brand and delivery model.
	Network consolidation and capacity.	Comprehensive, connected and regionally equitable network that removes transport poverty and provides sufficient bus depot capacity to enable growth to be met.
	Simple and cost effective.	TOTO network wide and integration on all forms underpinned by simple, low, and capped fares.
	Innovation in technology.	A national testbed for practical and more advanced technology including autonomous vehicles.
Demand Management Measures	Consider introduction of demand management measures (e.g. workplace parking levy) to encourage a move to bus from private transport forms and fund improvements to bus services.	Consistent with policy approach in JLTP5 to tackle climate emergency.