



## York Civic Trust

# A Strategy for Enhancing Public Transport in York April 2021

[Missing data is highlighted.]

### 1 The need for a holistic strategy

York's current Local Transport Plan was drafted in 2011 and sets out a long term strategy for the city's transport system for the period from 2011 to 2031, and a more detailed programme over the period to 2016. There is broad agreement that a new Local Transport Plan is needed, and that work should start soon in the context of the draft Local Plan, which is currently being examined.

We have already prepared a document with recommendations for an overall transport strategy for York, and this is one of seven reports offering proposals for individual modes and policies. Our vision is of a city which respects its environment while enhancing quality of life, social justice and economic vitality. York's new Local Transport Plan should be designed to contribute to that vision. It needs to address the city's needs over the next two decades, while identifying steps which can be taken now. For this to happen, political consensus will be essential to ensure that policies are not reversed each time the Council's political control changes.

In achieving our vision, the new Local Transport Plan should be designed to meet a number of interconnected objectives for the city. Of these, the most important are ensuring that the transport system is efficient, generates substantially less pollution and results in far lower levels of carbon emissions.

At the same time the Plan must be designed to achieve the objectives of ensuring safety, supporting public health, increasing equality of access, increasing liveability, and protecting public space and heritage. A Plan which successfully addresses all of these will also help to strengthen the sustainability and economy of the city.

In meeting these objectives, the Plan needs to adopt a holistic, bold and visionary strategy which achieves significant changes in travel behaviour in the immediate future. The transport strategy should be designed to make effective use of the full range of potential policy measures and to combine them to ensure that the strategy is acceptable, affordable and effective. In doing so it should seek to emulate the best examples in the UK and continental Europe of integrated, sustainable transport planning.

Since population growth is likely to exacerbate York's transport problems, the key elements of the strategy will be measures to enhance public transport, walking and cycling and, at the

same time, to reduce car travel, especially in congested and sensitive areas of the City, and to reduce the need to travel longer distances, particularly through the design of sustainable communities. This combination of “carrots” and “sticks” will help make the strategy both more effective and more acceptable to the public and the business community. It should be reinforced by adopting a “hearts and minds” approach, in which incentives are designed to encourage users to change their travel habits and to respect the needs of others.

To reinforce this core strategy, action is needed to improve the operation of the road network, by reallocating road space and using it more efficiently and to improve freight and delivery operations.

## **2 The focus of this report**

This document is one of seven reports offering proposals for individual modes and policies. In this report we consider the role of, and needs for, public transport. Currently in York this mainly means buses, but we also consider the role of rail, light rail, and taxis. This paper draws on a paper prepared for the York Bus Forum in 2018 (University of Leeds, Institute for Transport Studies, *Towards a Public Transport Strategy for York*, Tony May and Greg Marsden) and a fuller report on public transport prepared for York Civic Trust in 2019 (*Public Transport Considerations - Proposals for Action*, Martin Higginson), both of which are available from York Civic Trust. The overall objectives of those papers remain largely unchanged, but priorities and conditions for their implementation have been fundamentally affected by the national response to Covid-19. For the short period during Spring and early Summer 2020, traffic declined to a small proportion of its former level and congestion disappeared, only to return as the economy reopened. The continuing requirement for social distancing and discouragement from using public transport face public transport operators, users and policy makers with a huge dilemma. Road and rail public transport services remained fairly comprehensive, albeit with some severe frequency and network reductions, even at the height of the lock-down, and have subsequently moved closer to pre-Covid service levels. Patronage remains severely depleted, due to uncertainty as to the safety of public transport, emphasised by the requirement to wear a face mask, and capacity reduction brought about by the need for social distancing. We consider both the immediate needs for patronage recovery and the longer term directions of public transport strategy in this report.

In compiling this report on public transport strategy, we have worked alongside York Bus Forum (YBF). We support YBF’s strategic aims of improving bus reliability by reducing congestion, improving traffic management, extending the scope of Park & Ride services, reviewing service patterns to reflect population and demographic changes, restructuring fares and improving, marketing, information and passenger waiting and interchange facilities. YBF’s report<sup>1</sup> provides details of how it sees these aims being achieved. The Government’s strategy *Bus Back Better*<sup>2</sup> (referred to below as BBB) was published shortly before YCT’s public transport policy document was ready for submission. There is a fundamental similarity between our own recommendations and those of the Department

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<sup>1</sup> York Bus Forum (2020), *It’s better by bus*

<sup>2</sup> Department for Transport (2021), *Bus Back Better*

for Transport. Our principal concern, therefore, is that the Council needs to rise to the challenge of satisfying the Government's requirements. Not least among the logistical challenges is the very welcome requirement for local transport authorities to prepare Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP) by October 2021 and to deliver Enhanced Partnerships by April 2022.<sup>3</sup> It will be of the utmost importance for the Council to meet this tight timetable, not least because Government funding will be discretionary and conditional on progress with Enhanced Partnership and franchising schemes. We offer this report as a basis for the Council's new public transport strategy and as a source of proposals for inclusion in the BSIP. We have indicated below those proposals which are reflected in Bus Back Better.

We welcome the proposal for a national Bus Centre for Excellence, with representation from local government, bus operators and professional institutes. We acknowledge the government's determination to help the bus industry recover from Covid, including its continuing commitment to funding concessionary fares and the wider concept of the Covid Bus Services Support Grant and trust that these obligations will be met in full.<sup>4</sup>

The remaining sections of this report consider in turn:

3. How public transport contributes to our objectives in Section 1
4. Current trends in public transport use and the problems to be addressed
5. Proposed targets for improving public transport
6. The range of policy measures we propose
7. The ways in which we propose that they should be applied
8. Our recommendations for different areas of York
9. Our recommendations for different groups of users
10. The barriers to implementing these measures, and ways in which they might be overcome
11. The implications for each of our other six modal strategies.

### **3 How public transport contributes to our objectives**

Support for public transport contributes to our objectives both directly through the benefits which it offers and indirectly by offering an alternative to the car. Directly, public transport offers **equality of access**, provided that services offer appropriate coverage both throughout the city and at different times of day and fares are affordable. Increased public transport use also promotes **liveability** and the protection of **public space and heritage**, by enabling communities to be developed which are not dependent on the car. Public transport also supports the **economy**, by enhancing access stimulating and adding value to new developments. Public transport is not only relevant to York's residents and commuters, but also to meeting the different needs of the city's seven million annual visitors.

Indirectly, public transport offers a higher capacity alternative to car use. Nationally, 40% of urban car journeys are under two miles. 45% of all journeys in Yorkshire and the Humber are under 2 miles, and 72% of all journeys in Yorkshire and the Humber are under 5 miles, and thus well able to be provided for by a dense public transport network. In our

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<sup>3</sup> *Bus Back Better* pp 41, 39

<sup>4</sup> *Bus Back Better* pp 81, 79

companion report on managing car use, we have advocated a target of a reduction in car use of 20% below 2019 levels by 2027 and by 35% by 2037. This level of reduction is necessary to achieve the City of York Council's commitment to being **carbon neutral** by 2030 and sustaining it thereafter. Provided that these reductions are experienced throughout the network, they would result in the removal of most congestion, thus making the transport system more **efficient** and buses themselves more reliable. It would also contribute to a **reduction in air pollution**, thus contributing further to improved **public health**. The aim of reducing private car use is consistent with BBB (p.13).

## **4 Current trends in public transport use and the problems to be addressed**

### 4.1 Modal shares

When compared with six other historic cities, York had the highest sustainable mode share for journeys to work in the 2011 census, at 43%. However, most of this was explained by a higher cycling share; bus and rail only accounted for 11% of all journeys. But York compares poorly with many continental cities. Freiburg in Germany, for example, had a 79% sustainable mode share in 2016. We are unaware of any more recent data on modal shares. We endorse BBB's call for modal shift from the car.<sup>5</sup>

### 4.2 Trends in patronage

The most recent data we have been given is for 2017/18, when York had 16.3m bus journeys by bus, or 86.4 per capita, a 16% increase on 2012/13. This compares with the whole of the Yorkshire and Humber region, where journeys fell 7% over that period to 58.5 per capita. Ridership has fallen dramatically during the pandemic, and now stands at **[check]** % of pre-lockdown levels.

### 4.3 Network coverage

The Council commissioned a review of gaps in the coverage of York's bus network in 2014.<sup>6</sup> This showed a ring of wards part way between the inner and outer ring roads which were least well served, many of which are low income areas; these include Tang Hall, Yearsley, Clifton, Carr Hill and Westfield. Reductions in network coverage and in evening and Sunday services since will have added to these gaps. Meanwhile, the growth of the evening leisure economy has left many more low-paid employees and their customers in need of evening bus services. Poor network coverage is addressed in BBB, which calls for more frequent, reliable, cheaper, more comprehensive, easier to understand, more accessible, easier to use, more comfortable, 'greener' and better integrated bus services.<sup>7</sup>

### 4.4 Delays and unreliability

A report by the York Quality Bus Partnership in 2015<sup>8</sup> identified 32 locations where buses experienced significant delays. Of these, seven primarily involved boarding delays, while 25 were caused by traffic congestion. An assessment identified relatively few simple solutions to the latter. For a typical 30-minute off-peak journey time to the city centre, peak journey

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<sup>5</sup> *Bus Back Better* p13

<sup>6</sup> Steer Davies and Gleave (2014), *York Bus Network Review*

<sup>7</sup> *Bus Back Better* pp 20. 30-32, 58ff

<sup>8</sup> York Quality Bus Partnership (2015), *Developing the bus network in York*, York, CoYC

times are between 15% and 80% longer. The Council records reliability using the national indicators. In 2011/12, 97% of buses were on time; this had fallen to 85% by 2017/18.

#### 4.5 Users' concerns

Council data show 89% of bus users as satisfied by the service in 2018, compared with 83% in 2012. However, our surveys of residents and commuters in 2019 indicated widespread concerns with current public transport provision. Among residents, 39% experienced difficulties with public transport frequencies, 32% with service availability and 32% with the cost of travel; of those using public transport frequently, 62% found frequencies inadequate. When asked about the seriousness of problems experienced, 61% thought bus delays were serious, 57% bus schedules and 53% lack of a direct bus. Among commuters, 40% had problems with frequency, 39% with cost and 28% with availability; 57% thought bus schedules presented a serious problem, 52% delays and 51% lack of a direct bus.<sup>9</sup>

In the Council's 2019 survey,<sup>10</sup> 47% were satisfied with bus services, 27% dissatisfied and 26% neutral. The most frequently mentioned concerns were with frequency (75 comments), information (71), routes (65), stops (61) and reliability (51). The most frequent specific proposals were for real time information and seating at more bus stops, and for more orbital journeys to destinations including Monk's Cross, Clifton Moor and the Hospital. The 2020 York Disability Rights Forum survey of members<sup>11</sup> also highlighted the need for real time information, shelter and seating at more bus stops, as well as ensuring that they are accessible. It also identified problems with boarding, alighting and manoeuvring within buses, and the need for buses to have audible and visual information on next stops. It raised a limited number of concerns over taxis.

#### 4.6 Vehicle technology and standards

First York's bus fleet includes 33 electric buses, around 30% of their fleet. The Transdev and East Yorkshire buses serving York are almost all of recent manufacture and all meet Euro6 standards. 95% of First York's fleet (with the remainder to be modified imminently) and all those of Arriva, Reliance and Connexions meet Euro6 emission standards, despite including buses up to 15 years old. Thus York's bus fleet is already contributing to the necessary reduction in local air pollution. However, even electric buses are only low rather than zero emission vehicles, if tyre and brake dust pollution is included in the equation.

The Council submitted a proposal for funding to create an All Electric Bus Town, which had the support of all operators. It was unsuccessful, but would form the basis for a future proposal. BBB advocates planning for fully Net Zero bus services including ZEBRA (Zero (Carbon) Emission Bus Regional Areas).<sup>12</sup> We recommend that the Council responds to this challenge. Older vehicles must anyway be replaced to ensure that the whole fleet achieves the modern standards necessary to attract and retain passengers, including ride quality, heating, ventilation, interior and exterior noise levels, comfort and overall ambience.

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<sup>9</sup> York Civic Trust, [York Transport Consultation – Key Findings Report \(Residents and Commuters\)](#), Nov 2019

<sup>10</sup> CoYC (2020), Age Friendly York, *Getting out and about – your journey – key findings*

<sup>11</sup> York Disability Rights Forum (2020) Initial survey of members

<sup>12</sup> *Bus Back Better* pp70-73

#### 4.7 The immediate future

Future trends in public transport ridership remain very uncertain, and will depend in part on perceived health risks and in part on future levels of working and shopping from home. We discuss the latter in our report on Reducing Travel, where we anticipate that online activity will continue at high levels. BBB recognises that resolution of this uncertainty as recovery from Covid takes place will require joined-up planning involving all stakeholders, the recognition of barriers to better bus services that must be overcome and targets to be set for improving bus services.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.8 Users' aspirations

Our 2019 surveys indicated that, of residents, 34% expect to use buses more in the next five years, 19% trains and 11% park and ride; however, when asked whether they would prefer their usage to increase, 48% would for buses, 32% for trains and 21% for park and ride. Among commuters, only 13% expected their use of any of these to increase, while 34% would prefer to increase their use of buses and 24% trains and park and ride.<sup>14</sup> There is thus a readiness to travel sustainably, which the Local Transport Plan should aim to satisfy.

#### 4.9 New developments

The draft Local Plan envisages a 20% increase in population in the next 15 years, largely based on new developments in outer York. Only four of the larger sites have any targets for public transport use, and in these cases the target is for only 15% of trips by bus. As a result, the Transport Topic Paper for the Local Plan predicts travel times on the road network rising by 36% and delays by 66%, with serious implications for bus services. There are also proposals for new settlements, population increases and business expansion in localities outside the CYC boundary, such as Escrick, Pocklington and Green Hammerton, whose travel and transport needs will affect public transport demand to/from and within York, via enhanced P&R hubs as well as directly.

#### 4.10 Problems

On this basis, the main problems to be tackled by the new Local Transport Plan are:

- a) The low market share of public transport in York compared to other European cities. Unless more than compensated for by increases in cycling and walking this will need to rise post-Covid to enable York's economy to return to anything like its pre-Covid level without being accompanied by a significant increase in traffic congestion and the associated pollution and danger.
- b) Disparate and incomplete spatial coverage: areas with poor public transport, including the outer villages. Lack of direct orbital services between outer areas especially to outer York's major centres such as Monk's Cross and Clifton Moor. The requirement for improved public transport will continue post-Covid, although better provision for cycling and walking will also be necessary.

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<sup>13</sup> *Bus Back Better* pp 49, 20, 41

<sup>14</sup> York Civic Trust, [York Transport Consultation – Key Findings Report \(Residents and Commuters\)](#), Nov 2019

- c) Incomplete temporal coverage: times of day (e.g. evenings) and days of the week (most notably Sundays) with reduced or no bus services.
- d) Excessive delays to bus services and poor reliability caused by traffic congestion, inappropriate parking and insufficient bus priority.
- e) Elongated journey times due to circuitous routes and to slow schedules designed to allow for unpredictable extent of congestion.
- f) Meeting the underlying demand to improve bus services and enable frustrated non-users to patronise public transport.
- g) Relatively high fare levels, which are unaffordable for some low income households, but could be held in check if services were better patronised. This will be a particular challenge while social distancing constrains public transport capacity; or in the absence of significant and enduring public contributions to the cost of providing public transport.
- h) Poor interchange between buses, incomplete interchange between buses and trains at the station, and lack of timetable integration for cross city journeys.
- i) The need for new public transport provision for new developments in inner and outer York.

BBB’s requirement for local authorities to produce Plans and set and report on the achievement of targets for improving bus services is consistent with our own objectives for resolving these problems.<sup>15</sup>

## 5 Proposed targets for improving public transport

BBB requires local authorities to set targets in their Bus Service Improvement Plans.<sup>16</sup> We propose five targets. The first relates to public transport mode share, the second and third to service provision, the fourth to reliability and the final one to scheduled bus journey times. We have used target dates of 2027, which is five years after the start of the new Local Transport Plan, and by which time the outer ring road should have been upgraded, and 2037, by which time the planned development in the draft Local Plan should be complete. Our proposed targets are justified below.

Target	Baseline	Survey
<b>Increase public transport use:</b> 30% increase by 2027; 50% by 2037	Local bus journeys: 2009 10.8m, 2018/9 11.9m. Park & Ride journeys: 2009 3.9m, 2018/9 4.2m.	Regular recording by QBP.
<b>Improve daytime access to bus services:</b> Under 10% of Census Output Areas to have a weekday TGI Index < -0.1 by 2027, 5% in 2037	17% of Census Output Areas had a weekday Transport Gap Index <sup>a</sup> of less than -0.1 in 2014. We recommend that the analysis be updated for 2019	SDG Transport Gap Index <sup>a</sup> methodology. Ideally we would like to see Transport for London’s methodology adopted.

<sup>15</sup> *Bus Back Better* pp11, 41

<sup>16</sup> *Bus Back Better* p41

<b>Improve Sunday and evening access to bus services:</b> average Public Transport Provision Index no less than half weekday level by 2027; sustained to 2037	No data available. We recommend that the 2014 analysis be updated for 2019	SDG Public Transport Provision Index <sup>b</sup> methodology
<b>Improve bus service reliability:</b> 95% of buses running on time by 2027; 100% by 2037	2017/18: 85%, for buses on services with fewer than six per hour	We propose using the same indicator for all bus services
<b>Improve Journey Times:</b> scheduled journey times, averaged across all major city routes, to be reduced by 5% by 2027 and 10% by 2037	A base level needs to be determined from timetables for 2014	Data to come from operators' current schedules

- a. A measure of the difference between need and provision, defined below.
- b. A measure of the level of provision, defined below.

### 5.1 Bus patronage and modal shares

As the recent International Transport Federation report on reversing car dependency<sup>17</sup> notes, “providing quality public transport options at affordable prices is central to encouraging modal shift. Improving quality of service has a stronger influence on demand than lowering ticket prices. Reducing crowding, increasing comfort and enhancing reliability are particularly effective.” Our analysis of the requirements for making York carbon neutral by 2030<sup>18</sup> suggests that public transport journeys need to increase by between 20% and 40% by 2027, and by between 30% and 50% by 2037. We have used the mid-range level for 2027 and the higher level for 2037. The Quality Bus Partnership regularly records bus patronage. Ideally it would also help to have modal share data. Our analysis suggests that the public transport mode share needs to increase by similar percentages. The most recent data [check] is for the 2011 census, when 8% of journeys to work were by public transport. It will be important for the Council to develop a means of obtaining mode share data.

### 5.2 Weekday access to bus services

The Council’s 2014 review of the bus network<sup>19</sup> used the consultant (SDG)’s Transport Gap Index (TGI) analysis. TGI is calculated as the difference between the level of provision and the level of need, with a negative value representing under-provision. The Public Transport Provision Index (PTPI), which measures provision, is determined by the number of buses serving a given Output Area per week. The Transport Needs Index (TNI), which measures need, is determined by household income, car availability and population density in a given Census Output Area. 17% of Census Output Areas were identified as having under-provision, with a TGI of less than -0.1 in 2014. We have suggested targets of no more than

<sup>17</sup> International Transport Forum (2021), *Reversing car dependency*, Paris, OECD

<sup>18</sup> York Civic Trust Transport Advisory Group, *Carbon reduction requirements*, March 2020

<sup>19</sup> Steer Davies and Gleave (2014), *York Bus Network Review*

10% in 2027 and 5% in 2037, thus gradually reducing the number of less well served areas. Steer's Transport Gap Index has a number of weaknesses, in that it does not consider walking time to stops, waiting time at stops, number of services available or reliability, and it overlooks the needs of those who are unable to use a car. Ideally we would prefer to use Transport for London's Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) analysis which, describes service availability more fully and, as the International Transport Forum notes, "is a highly influential metric used by Transport for London to link urban development and transport".<sup>20</sup> This would require a new baseline survey.

### 5.3 Sunday and evening access to services

The 2014 Bus Network Review<sup>21</sup> calculates provision, using its Public Transport Provision Index, (see above) for weekdays, Saturdays and Sundays, and we propose to use the same approach, unless the Council decides to adopt Transport for London's analysis. We propose that weekend and evening levels should be no less than half those on weekdays, with the weekday levels being improved over time.

### 5.4 Reliability

The Council uses two national indicators of bus reliability: one for services with fewer than six buses per hour, which covers all but the park and ride and university services in York. We propose using the same indicator, of the percentage of buses on time, for all services, since it is easy to comprehend. This stood, for less frequent buses, at 85% in 2017/18, and there appears to be no more recent data. Our proposals for congestion targets in our companion report on Managing the Road Network suggest that it should be feasible to increase this, across all services, to 95% by 2027 and 100% by 2037.

### 5.5 Bus journey times

There is a tendency for operators to lengthen schedules to allow for unreliability, and then simply to retain them when reliability has been increased. This target is designed to ensure that bus users benefit from reduced overall journey times as well as from better reliability; it could also be used to tackle problems with indirect routing. We propose a simple measure for end to end journey time averaged over all major within-city bus services, which can be readily determined from timetables. We suggest that it should be possible to achieve a 5% reduction by 2027 and 10% by 2037, though this needs to be reviewed once we have defined targets for reliability.

## **6 The range of policy measures**

We have identified the following measures as potentially relevant to York:

### 6.1 Network design

- a) Spatial coverage
- b) Orbital links
- c) Service frequencies
- d) Temporal coverage
- e) Overall journey times

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<sup>20</sup> International Transport Forum (2021), *Reversing car dependency*, Paris, OECD

<sup>21</sup> Steer Davies and Gleave (2014). York Bus Network Review.

- f) Bus stops
- g) Interchange
- h) Park and ride
- 6.2 Reliability
  - a) Bus priorities
  - b) Cashless boarding
- 6.3 Vehicle design and technology
  - a) Electric and other zero and low emission buses
  - b) Demand responsive services
  - c) Provision for disabled users and parents with prams
- 6.4 Other modes
  - a) Rail
  - b) Light rail and bus rapid transit
  - c) Taxis
  - d) Ride sourcing
- 6.5 Fares
  - a) Fare structures
  - b) Multi-ride tickets
  - c) Fare levels, discounts and free travel
- 6.6 Information and marketing
  - a) Schedule information
  - b) Real time information
  - c) On-board information
  - d) Marketing
  - e) Mobility as a Service

## **7 The ways in which each policy measure might be used**

### **7.1 Network design**

There is a need for a full review of the current bus network to ensure it meets current needs, including serving out of town shopping and leisure destinations and new developments.

**7.1.1 Spatial coverage** York has a reasonably comprehensive urban, predominantly radial, bus network and is also served by a selection of rural and interurban routes. Some routes are very circuitous: e.g. 6, 19, 20 and routes 4, 12 and 16 in the Acomb, Foxwood and Woodthorpe area. Opportunities should be sought to simplify these routes without disadvantaging any of the communities served, with the aim of improving and speeding up services. The 2014 bus network review identified gaps in provision in Tang Hall, Yearsley, Clifton, Carr Hill and Westfields.<sup>22</sup> This analysis should be updated, and steps taken to provide additional services. Some of these areas could provide opportunities for new mobility services to provide for lower density movements. We also recommend extending those services which currently terminate as they reach the city centre, so that they serve both the centre and the station.

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<sup>22</sup> Steer Davies and Gleave (2014), *York Bus Network Review*

7.1.2 Orbital routes There is a case for improving orbital connectivity, particularly to serve the Hospital, the University of York and the Monk's Cross and Clifton Moor centres. Some of these routes might be served by demand-responsive services. Opportunities for improving connectivity by creating new bus-only links should be explored.

7.1.3 Service frequencies Although the principal routes, including the P&R network, are typically served by 6 to 8 buses an hour, the frequency of some routes is below the level required for urban 'walk-on' services, with a maximum interval of 15 minutes. Many of York's lower frequency services only run every 30 minutes. We recommend that these be increased to walk-on levels. BBB advocates high, walk-on bus frequencies on key networks and corridors, including regional 'superbus' routes and Bus Rapid Transit.<sup>23</sup>

7.1.4 Temporal coverage Many low frequency services do not operate at all in the evenings or on Sundays, and this is a particular concern in the villages. Wider integration between commercial and supported services should enable operating hours to be extended, without offending against requirements for separation into commercial and tendered supported services. Among extra-urban services, examples of locations with only limited services include Skelton, Shipton, Easingwold, Cawood, Elvington, Wheldrake, Tockwith and Rufforth. Options include on-demand feeder services, possibly radiating from P&R hubs.

7.1.5 Overall journey times The most significant impacts on journey times will come from reductions in congestion, as demonstrated by experience during lockdown. We discuss measures to achieve this in our report in Managing the Road Network. In addition to specifying the faster schedules made feasible by congestion relief, it may be feasible to make some routes more direct. More frequent direct services would involve longer access links for some, but might achieve higher demand overall. Our suggested targets above, average across all routes, are a 5% reduction in journey times by 2027 and 10% by 2037.

7.1.6 Bus stops The bus stop is the potential passenger's introduction to bus travel and as such it is vital for stops to be clearly marked, welcoming, lit after dark, highly visible, safe and perceived to be safe, comfortable (with a shelter and seating wherever possible) and well-provided with scheduled timetables, real-time information and guidance on where to find other routes/connections. 'Comfort' also requires pavements to be wide enough to avoid disruption of passing pedestrians, and for pavements and adjacent carriageways to be properly maintained. All bus stops need adjacent protected road crossings, suitable for disabled users. We are aware that numerous bus stops in York are deficient in many of the factors enumerated above and recommend an audit of all stops be carried out, to enable these defects to be identified and a schedule to be compiled for their rectification.

7.1.7 Interchange Improved bus-rail and bus-bus interchange is needed to cater for anticipated higher rail and bus ridership, to simplify cross-city, inter-urban and regional bus travel and to encourage modal shift to public transport. All city centre bus services should be routed to serve the station. Changes will be required to improve walking routes to, from and within the station and to bus stop locations on both sides of the station, including

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<sup>23</sup> *Bus Back Better* pp47, 66, 67

facilities to serve York Central. The bus interchange points within the city centre should be retained and enhanced, with improved information on interchange opportunities and shorter distances and better signing between stops.

7.1.8 Park and ride We recommend that the park and ride routes be included in the network review to clarify their role in relation to local services, to improved city centre penetration and remove the confusion over the range of city centre stops. The proposal for an additional service at Wigginton should be reviewed, in association with the new Hospital service and the needs of the Clifton Gate development. The role of park and ride sites should be reconsidered, with the potential for them to be hubs for orbital services and demand-responsive links to the villages, and with overnight parking for visitors and rail travellers. Park and ride should be promoted as a preferable alternative to station parking.

## 7.2 Reliability

7.2.1 Bus priorities We consider bus priorities in detail in our report on Managing the Road Network. BBB's recommendation for more ambitious bus priority schemes<sup>24</sup> aligns with our own thinking. Priority may be afforded at traffic signals, through the provision of bus gates, bus lanes and bus only streets. We propose reallocating road space to buses where they experience most delay, for example using a comprehensive set of bus gates at strategic locations to constrain the amount of traffic entering inner York, and by adding bus gates in and adjacent to the city centre to divert through traffic away from the centre.

7.2.2 Cashless boarding The 2015 report by the York Quality Bus Partnership identified seven locations where time spent boarding delayed buses<sup>25</sup>. The use of smart cards for cashless payment reduces average boarding times by 80%<sup>26</sup> and should be introduced as standard, while assessing the implications for disadvantaged sectors of the population.

## 7.3 Vehicle design and technology

7.3.1 Electric and other zero and low emission buses York already has electric buses on Park & Ride services and intermittently on some other routes. All other services, including those of operators other than First, use diesel vehicles, which from February 2021 the Clean Air Zone requires to be of Euro 6 standard. Nationally and internationally the use of hybrids, gas propulsion, electrically powered and hydrogen-fuelled buses is growing rapidly, and the Council should keep these developments under review. York should aim to position itself as one of the first fully zero emission bus cities.

7.3.2 Demand responsive services We recommend trialling the concept of new mobility services using small demand-responsive vehicles for orbital services to major suburban destinations, and for onward travel from Park and Ride sites. We support the recommendation in BBB for demand-responsive transport to be considered for evenings and Sundays.<sup>27</sup> The concept of Park and Ride sites as hubs for such services could readily be

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<sup>24</sup> *Bus Back Better* p13

<sup>25</sup> York Quality Bus Partnership (2015), *Developing the bus network in York*, York, CYC

<sup>26</sup> May A D and Marsden G (2019), *The contribution of new mobility services to public transport policy: a case study of York*, Proc 15<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Transport Research, Mumbai

<sup>27</sup> *Bus Back Better* pp13, 65.

extended to include taxis (see 7. ) and ride-hailing (c) services. Such hubs are becoming more widespread in the UK, and CoMoUK now offers an accreditation scheme for them, which is designed to optimise their contribution.<sup>28</sup>

7.3.3 Provision for disabled users Bus operators are legally required to provide access for disabled people, and all York buses are low floor with level boarding. But the York Disability Rights Forum survey indicates that problems remain, such as manoeuvrability within the bus and the lack of audible and visual indicators. There is a need for training to ensure that disabled passengers are given long enough to board and alight in safety. Operators should provide sufficient space for both a pram and a wheelchair, to avoid conflicts.

#### 7.4 Other modes

7.4.1 Rail York station offers both long distance and regional travel and, as noted above, needs improved interchange with local buses. Enhanced provision for disabled access, within the station and between platforms and trains, is also needed. Planned regional service enhancements include improved TransPennine services and half hourly trains on the Scarborough and Harrogate lines. A new station is proposed for Haxby, and there are dormant proposals for stations at Strensall, York Hospital, York Central and Askham Bar. New stations are very expensive, and can only be justified if they attract significant ridership, which requires frequent stopping services, without slowing regional trains. If the Council proposes to open more stations or in the long term new routes, a tram-train service might be more appropriate. Potential station sites and routes should be safeguarded, notably where new developments are proposed.

7.4.2 Light rail and Bus Rapid Transit In other countries the construction of value-for-money light rail or bus rapid transit networks in cities no larger than York has been successful, while light rail schemes in the UK have often been over-designed and then dismissed as unaffordable. The pilot Very Light Rail programme in Coventry, with 50 passenger vehicles and battery propulsion may offer an affordable model for York.<sup>29</sup> Once new developments are in place, some York corridors may be found to have sufficient demand to justify light rail, for example to serve Elvington, the University of York, the city centre, York Central, York Hospital, Clifton Moor and Monks Cross; all potentially linked to park and ride sites. We recommend that the Council monitors the scheme in Coventry and assesses the potential for York. Passive provision should be made for light rail when planning new developments by outline safeguarding of potential alignments.

7.4.3 Taxis York regulates the number of taxis and their fares, but has no control over the number of private hire vehicles or their fares. The Council requires that all taxis 'plying for hire' must return to approved cab ranks between 7am and 7pm. Taxis and private hire vehicles are allowed in bus lanes and in the bus gates in Coppergate, Piccadilly and Stonebow, though only Coppergate is effectively enforced. We do not see an immediate need to change the licensing arrangements for taxis, though there would be merit in

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<sup>28</sup> Dilks R (2021), *Hub of the matter*, Local Transport Today 815, p25

<sup>29</sup> Small N and Mallinson N (2020). VLR: *Coventry's Vision for future mobility*, Tramways & Urban Transit, No.993, September 2020, 340-343

reviewing the provision of ranks to ensure that they meet needs and are not disruptive to other users or the environment. We recommend that taxis continue to be permitted in all bus lanes and the new bus gates which we propose. Subject to the action which can be taken on private hire vehicles which are operated by ride sourcing companies, we recommend reviewing whether private hire vehicles should be barred from using bus gates.

7.4.4 Ride sourcing Ride sourcing companies such as Uber have changed the nature of the private hire vehicle industry, competed with public transport, and raised questions over driver licensing and employment. Evidence from New York City and London indicates that such services may have added 15% to traffic flows, and that 60% of users do so in preference to buses, walking and cycling.<sup>30</sup> While this has not yet happened in York, a growth in Uber vehicles registered elsewhere is adding to traffic flows. The Council decided in 2017 not to renew Uber's licence, but has had difficulty controlling access by Uber where the driver, vehicle and operator have all been registered by another authority. Recent police enforcement suggests that action can be taken, and we support doing so. The government, in 2019, proposed new legislation to require that that all private hire vehicle journeys should begin or end in the area in which the driver, vehicle and operator are licensed. We recommend that the Council offer support for such legislation, so that it is able to control the future scale of operation of such vehicles. However, while the expansion of Uber services at peak times and in busy areas would threaten travel by more sustainable modes, such services may well be the best solution to access at night and on lower density, outer urban and rural journeys.<sup>31</sup> In deciding how to license Uber services, the Council should consider whether to license them specifically to fill these gaps in public transport coverage.

## 7.5 Fares

7.5.1 Fare structures There is a complex range of public transport fare scales and ticket types in York, with fares and terms of use varying according to supplying company, person type and where the ticket is bought. Fares are generally cheaper when validity is limited to a single operator's services. It is known that simplified fare structures, common across all operators, increase patronage. We recommend a review of the fare structure to achieve simplified, multi-operator, fares which avoid constraining users to a single operator and with a daily cap on the maximum fare paid. This proposal is endorsed by BBB's aspiration to make buses easier to understand, with common tickets between operators.<sup>32</sup>

7.5.2 Multi-ride tickets All operators offer season tickets, which are again less expensive than multi-operator ones. Except on the University of York services, there are no carnet-style options to meet the needs of the newly expanded cohort of workers and others travelling frequently but less than daily, and we recommend that these be introduced to support those now working from home on a part time basis.

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<sup>30</sup> May A D and Marsden G (2019), *The contribution of new mobility services to public transport policy: a case study of York*, Proc 15<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Transport Research, Mumbai

<sup>31</sup> May A D and Marsden G (2019), *The contribution of new mobility services to public transport policy: a case study of York*, Proc 15<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Transport Research, Mumbai

<sup>32</sup> *Bus Back Better* pp20, 32

7.5.3 Fare levels, discounts and free travel Fares in York are relatively high, and surveys indicate that for many low-income households they are a deterrent to travelling. We would hope that with the levels of increase in patronage which we target, fare levels can be frozen, or even reduced. The possibility of targeted discounts for those in particular need should be explored, in association with Social Services and the Job Centre. We would also like to see discounted fares for those in the 18 to 25 age group, as introduced elsewhere, to encourage students and young people to continue using the bus.

## 7.6 Information and marketing

7.6.1 Schedule information Information on bus services in York is patchy and must be enhanced to achieve consistently high quality throughout the city for all operators, as recommended by BBB (p62) in its call for comprehensive 'one system' information, both to attract new users to public transport and to encourage users to return. Information dissemination must follow best practice, including the use of social media, mobile phone apps, and messaging. Compatible static and real-time information is needed at bus stops, inside the railway station, at the Visit York Tourist Office, on external displays on buses, and on interior displays, which should include audio and visual 'next stops' information.

7.6.2 Real time information Real time bus arrival information, now available on mobile phones, should be provided at all bus stops with significant patronage, and on board.

7.6.3 On-board and on-bus information All buses should, at the least, be equipped with audible and visual next stop information. Ideally real time information on journey times to key stopping points should also be provided, together with interchange opportunities. This is important for visitors as well as residents and will soon become a legal requirement. They should also have decent size legible displays, sufficient to be seen at a distance day or night and when the bus is moving, showing route numbers and destinations.

7.6.4 Marketing We recommend that the Council review best practice in other UK cities, and seek opportunities for attracting additional patronage by greatly strengthening marketing, including via the internet and on social media. Brighton has already demonstrated the potential of partnerships with businesses and leisure attractions, including discounts for bus ticket holders, sponsorship opportunities and local branding.

7.6.5 Mobility as a Service Mobility as a Service combines information, booking and payment for all potential public transport services, including bus, rail, taxi and bike share. It has had mixed success in the UK, but may offer the opportunity to integrate the provision of alternatives to the car. The Council should keep open the possibility of adopting it.

## 7.7 Timing of interventions

Our 2019 paper<sup>33</sup> proposed a timescale for implementation, including quick wins, medium-term and long-term measures. Quick wins should by definition have been implemented by the time the new Local Transport Plan is adopted, but could form an initial element of the Bus Service Improvement Plan. The medium-term programme should be informed by the proposed network review, and linked to the upgrade of the northern outer ring road. Other

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<sup>33</sup> Higginson M (2019), *Public transport proposals*, York Civic Trust Transport Advisory Group

medium-term measures include revisions to the bus network, the development of demand responsive services, upgraded information provision, updated fleets and stronger marketing. Again, these medium-term measures should be reflected in the Bus Service Improvement Plan, which suggests that the network review is needed within the next few months. Longer term proposals might include orbital bus services, park and ride sites as hubs for local access, a single comprehensive and legible network with wider integration between commercial and supported services and work towards a possible light rail network.

## **8 Our recommendations for different areas of York**

### **8.1 Network-wide measures**

As advocated in *Bus Back Better*, the Council should conduct a full review of the present bus network to ensure that it meets current needs. Given the requirement to produce a Bus Service Improvement Plan by October 2021, this review is required urgently. It needs also to conduct an audit of all bus stops to ensure that they meet the requirements outlined on 7.1.6 above. Throughout the network, steps need to be taken to expand real-time information at bus stops and, using audio and video, in buses. Action is also needed to ensure that stops offer seating and shelter, and to permit easy interchange between the wider range of services advocated in this report. The fare structure needs to be amended in the light of the review proposed above, and promotional and marketing measures need to be sustained to provide encouragement to use public transport.

### **8.2 City centre**

In reviewing bus routes serving the city centre, we would like in particular to see all city centre services directed to the station and a larger bus interchange constructed there. This would in turn provide a means for interchange between all bus services, while retaining opportunities for interchanges between selected services elsewhere in the centre. We recommend a review of the potential for a small electric bus running from the station to the new car park at St George's Field through appropriate parts of the foot-street area, to provide access for those who are unable to walk from blue badge parking spaces. As part of our recommendations to remove non-essential traffic from the city centre we propose bus gates on George Hudson Street and Ouse Bridge, and effective enforcement of the existing bus gates on Piccadilly and Stonebow. These should permit access by taxis and, provided that operations by Uber can be effectively licensed, private hire vehicles.

### **8.3 Inner city**

The principal needs in the inner city are to improve access to those areas identified in the 2014 study as poorly served, and to provide orbital access to York Hospital. This requires a reconfiguration of the current conventional bus services. Our proposed set of bus gates on all radial roads is designed to protect bus services, and the inner city more generally, from congestion. To maximise its use the Hospital Service Bus route should be extended, integrated into the bus network and fare system and scheduled to run every day.

### **8.4 Out of Town Centres**

Clifton Moor, Monks Cross and Naburn have inadequate public transport links, having been originally entirely designed as car-based developments. The Council's co-located Park and Ride sites at Naburn and Monks Cross have helped, but access from adjacent areas is also

needed, and could be provided by an orbital bus service. A similar Park and Ride site and service should be provided for Clifton Moor and integrated with the Hospital bus service.

#### 8.5 Suburban York and the outer villages

Many areas of outer York, and particularly the villages, suffer from an infrequent service during the day, and little or no service in the evenings and weekends. To overcome this, the principal existing services should be rescheduled to operate every 20 or 30 minutes during weekdays, and at least hourly in the evenings and on Sundays. This may in some cases require negotiation with adjacent authorities. Additional orbital services should be provided to link park and ride sites to the larger villages, and to major destinations such as Clifton Moor, Monk's Cross, the University of York and York Hospital. Some villages will be too small to justify a conventional evening and weekend service. Potentially they could be served by demand-responsive micro-transit services or licensed ride-sourcing operations.

#### 8.6 New developments

All new developments should be designed to achieve at least a 15% modal share for public transport, and part of an overall share of 60% by sustainable modes. Public transport should be given a greater priority of access than the private car, and the potential for high capacity public transport to serve the larger sites should be assessed. York Central is the only large inner city new development, and should be designed to achieve a higher level of sustainable access by foot, cycle and public transport. In particular it is essential that the 2,500 residential units are served by a walk-on service of at least four buses per hour, which could be achieved, subject to checking on capacity, by having the Park & Ride services and buses from the A19 north stopping in the residential area in both directions

#### 8.7 The wider catchment area

The main problem for surrounding towns and villages is the lack of an evening and weekend service. Some corridors, such as those served by Coastliner, East Yorkshire's Hull route and Arriva's Selby services, have much better provision than others. For less well-served localities we recommend that the Council discuss with adjacent authorities the potential for providing demand responsive micro-transit services at these times to the nearest park and ride site, which would then serve as a hub for onward access. Again, subject to licensing, some services could be offered by Uber and its equivalents.

### **9 Our recommendations for different groups of users**

Public transport provides essential access for many who have no car available, and on journeys for which walking is not an option, though fare levels are a barrier to those on the lowest incomes. While cycling is an alternative for many journeys within York, public transport will be the only suitable option for many longer journeys and for those unable or unwilling to cycle. The public transport strategy needs to focus particularly on these user groups and should be affordable, and based on an updated assessment of need. Particular target groups will include low income families, young people, the elderly and those with disabilities. Services should meet all their travel needs, including work, education, retail and leisure and, ideally, at all times of the day and week. Another group to be considered is visitors who arrive without a car. Other than our 2019 survey, little is known about their travel needs, and an assessment should be made to inform the strategy. At the same time, public transport must be designed to attract people currently travelling by car. Our

estimates suggest that, by 2027, car use needs to fall by 25% to meet carbon reduction targets; much of this will need to switch to public transport, resulting in a 30% increase in public transport trips. The strategy therefore needs to ensure that buses and trains are designed to provide for all users, and particularly for those travelling by car for over two miles. This will require a focus on those commuting into and out of York for work or college and those making longer journeys within York.

## **10 The barriers to be overcome, and ways in which they might be overcome**

### **10.1 Political acceptability**

While many of the measures which we recommend in this report are likely to attract cross-party support, the constraints of funding and of negotiation with private operators can lead to lack of political commitment, and changes in direction. The public transport strategy, in particular, will need consistent cross-party political commitment, to enable proposals to be planned and implemented over the life of more than one administration.

### **10.2 Public acceptability**

As our surveys and the work of our Citizens' Transport Forum show, the public are strongly supportive of improvements to public transport, with such measures ranking highest in respondents' priority lists. Opposition arises most frequently where support for buses is seen to be at the expense of others, and particularly when road space is reallocated to buses. It will be important for the Council to demonstrate clearly the case for such actions, in terms of access and of reductions in carbon and pollution. More people may be encouraged to use public transport instead of the car if they are given the right signals. Early research<sup>34</sup> divided survey participants into regular and occasional bus users, non-rejecters (prepared to use buses in principle) and rejecters (non users unlikely to be swayed). It indicated that fare level and reliability were the main factors influencing mode choice. Of regular users, 40% were over 60, 47% female and 72% had no car in the household; 28% of respondents used buses more than once a week, but 22% never used them. Recent research (National Centre for Social Research for DfT, 2020) found more evidence for mode switching from cars to cycling and walking than to public transport; but the study had concentrated on large-scale interventions, and paid less attention to regular buses.<sup>35</sup>

### **10.3 Governance**

Governance of public transport is complex, with bus services provided by six main private companies and rail services by a further five. The management of buses is overseen by York's Quality Bus Partnership, but we are concerned that this body is somewhat opaque, with little opportunity for input by politicians or the public and does not necessarily reflect the best practice found in West Yorkshire's Enhanced Bus Partnership. We note that it is the role of the Council to determine transport strategy and the Quality Bus Partnership and operators to deliver services, and we recommend that this distinction be maintained. BBB requires local authorities to develop Enhanced Partnerships. It also calls for stronger passenger representation, including the establishment of local Bus Advisory Boards. We

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<sup>34</sup> MORI (1995), *Buspower 2000*, London, CPT

<sup>35</sup> Kantar (2020), *Public opinion survey on traffic and road use*, Department for Transport

support these proposals, and BBB's call for joined up planning involving all stakeholders.<sup>36</sup> There is a case also for broadening the coverage of an Enhanced Partnership to include providers of intermediate public transport such as taxis, private hire vehicles and ride-sourcing companies and, perhaps, the local rail operators. We recommend the establishment of an expanded Enhanced Quality Access Partnership to interact closely with politicians, York Bus Forum, York Disability Rights Forum and the Civic Trust's Citizens' Transport Forum. In the longer term, BBB offers the potential for introducing franchising,<sup>37</sup> which would enable the Council to specify which services are run, which areas they serve, and what fares are charged. We recommend that the Council monitor carefully the development of franchising elsewhere and be prepared to advocate its adoption if our proposed Enhanced Quality Access Partnership is judged to be under-performing.

#### 10.4 Finance

While 85% of bus services in York are operated commercially, the remainder are supported by the Council. The requirement to separate commercial and supported services makes such support inefficient. We are therefore pleased to observe BBB's acknowledgement of the possibility of once again permitting cross subsidy between profitable and unprofitable services.<sup>38</sup> There is also a significant financial cost in supporting concessionary fares and permits. Inevitably the budget cuts over the last decade have borne particularly severely on the supported services, resulting in many locations now having no evening or Sunday services. It will be essential, if public transport is to be enhanced, to move from an approach where services are provided within the (declining) resources available, to one which identifies need and then seeks the funding necessary to support it. In doing so, the Council needs to negotiate with operators to seek a more balanced approach to funding, and to consider novel approaches to third party funding, such as those adopted in Brighton and Harrogate. In support of this, we note BBB's statement that bus schemes typically have a high ratio of benefits to costs, which should help justify investment in them.<sup>39</sup> More expensive projects such as new stations, light rail lines and bus rapid transit are likely to require specific bids to government. Opportunities for funding often arise with limited notice, and are subject to competition. It will therefore be sensible for the Council to have outline proposals and evaluations for its preferred alignments prepared and ready to submit. One source of additional funding for such schemes is the use of Land Value Capture, for which new protocols are now available.<sup>40</sup>

#### 10.5 Enforcement

Enforcement can be an issue with bus priorities. Where possible, bus priorities should be self-enforcing, by making contravention counter-intuitive and readily apparent. We expect ANPR cameras to be used to enforce bus gates and bus lanes. We consider wider enforcement requirements in our report on Managing the Road Network.

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<sup>36</sup> *Bus Back Better* pp 11, 64, 49

<sup>37</sup> *Bus Back Better* pp39-40

<sup>38</sup> *Bus Back Better* p19

<sup>39</sup> *Bus Back Better* p18

<sup>40</sup> Hazel G (2021), *Railway reopening breaks new ground for land value capture*, Local Transport Today 816 pp16-17

## **11 The implications for each of our other six modal strategies**

### **11.1 Reducing travel**

The measures we propose for reducing travel are intended in particular to reduce car use, and thus relieve bus services from traffic congestion. Reducing journey lengths may also help in making bus provision more viable, by concentrating demand on the main corridors.

### **11.2 Managing car use**

Reductions in car use will also help to relieve buses from traffic congestion, but the main interaction here is the role of public transport in providing an alternative to the car, and hence contributing to carbon and air quality targets. As noted above, it is essential that the public transport strategy is developed to provide an effective alternative to car use.

### **11.3 Improving Cycling**

Cycling is an alternative to bus travel within the urban area, and the two strategies need to be compatible and consistent. Policies for bus travel and cycling should avoid competing for the same market of car users. Conversely, cycling can complement longer distance public transport, by extending its range at both the start and the end of the journey. Most train services make at least limited provision for cycles to be carried as now do some East Yorkshire buses. We recommend that this provision be expanded and promoted.

### **11.4 Improving Walking**

Bus users and most train users will need to walk at both ends of their journey, and safe and convenient provision is needed to enable them to do so. Inbound and outbound bus stops need to be as close to one another as possible, to reduce walking distances. Safe crossings are needed at all bus stops, since all passengers will need to cross the road either to reach or return from the bus stop. Bus stops need to be designed so that they and their queues do not impede passing pedestrians, and to provide shelter and seating for those who need it. Distances between bus stops at city centre interchanges, and between bus stops and station platforms need to be as short as possible, on unimpeded routes. Above all, the Council needs to provide a high quality, continuous, priority route between the station and the city centre, reflecting its hierarchy which puts pedestrians first.

### **11.5 Managing the road network**

Buses are important users of the road network and, on many radial corridors, account for the largest share of person-hours lost to congestion. It is thus essential that the road network is managed to protect buses from congestion, by reallocating road space to them. However, it cannot be assumed that doing so will be sufficient to divert car users to the bus; active action to reduce car use is also needed. To a limited extent bus operation practices can help by reducing dwell time at stops and layover points. A move to cashless fares, which substantially reduces boarding delays, will be of particular help.

### **11.6 Improving freight**

There are only limited interactions between public transport and freight strategies. The most important concerns the impact of loading and unloading on bus services. The freight strategy should be designed to minimise these impacts, by limiting loading to times when buses can readily overtake lorries and vans, banning loading in bus lanes and bus gates, and ensuring that these measures are effectively enforced.