

Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs)

A 10 Point Guide

BSIPs are a requirement under the Government's new National Bus Strategy. A blueprint for service improvement, they should reflect a "high level vision" as well as the "key interventions" for delivery.

We have mapped 10 key points to help develop effective BSIPs.

1. Community-centred

The needs and concerns of the people who live, work and visit an area should be the driving force behind transport planning and bus service delivery. BSIPs must be developed "in collaboration" with all key stakeholders.

2. Transport landscape

LTAs should outline the challenges and opportunities facing bus services in their BSIPs. They should assess current provision, including community transport and shared transport options, the barriers to travel, whether bus use is in growth or decline, and the wider social, economic and environmental benefits of improving services.

3. Accessible

Every stage of a bus journey should be accessible, from planning a trip and buying a ticket to the infrastructure, vehicle and overall experience. Community engagement, particularly with disability groups and passengers is critical in identifying and overcoming barriers to travel.

4. Inclusive

There are millions of people in the UK without access to a bank account, mobile device or internet access, and many more who are old, vulnerable, or have poor mental health. Transport poverty is particularly challenging for these groups and leads to loneliness and isolation. No one should be excluded from travelling by bus.

5. Affordable

Buses give people access to life's opportunities through education, training and work. They improve health and wellbeing and are a green and sustainable transport option. Bus travel needs to be attractive enough that people choose to use it, and affordable enough that everyone can use it.

6. Available

BSIPs are expected to address the under and overprovision of bus services as well as integration with other modes. Using bus passenger data alone will ignore everyone not currently using the bus, as well as all those services where passenger data is not available. For services to be

effective, they need to meet people's needs and this can only be achieved through proper community engagement.

7. Prioritise buses

Delivering improvements to services and growing bus use are a fundamental requirement of BSIPs. Bus priority measures will ensure services are reliable and punctual, as well as faster and more convenient than travelling by private car, not only improving services but encouraging modal shift.

8. Air quality and zero emissions

LTAs will need to demonstrate how air quality will be improved and zero emissions achieved. Greener cars are not the solution given that pollution from tyre and brake wear is greater than exhaust emissions. A bus, however, can take up to 75 cars off the road so getting more people on board is the way to a greener, more sustainable future.

9. Monitoring

To make sure the aims of the BSIP are achieved, LTAs will need to set targets for customer satisfaction, passenger growth, journey times and reliability. Provision for monitoring services, at the very least annually, will also need to be set out to ensure the BSIP is effective.

10. Living document

BSIPs are not intended to be fixed, long-term transport plans. They should be revisited and updated regularly, to reflect changes in the transport landscape and the evolving needs of the community.

For support and guidance on developing effective BSIPs, contact Bus Users at NBShelp@bususers.org

About Bus Users

Bus Users campaigns for inclusive, accessible transport. We are the only approved Alternative Dispute Resolution Body for the bus and coach industry and the designated body for handling complaints under the Passenger Rights in Bus and Coach Legislation. We are also part of a Sustainable Transport Alliance, a group working to promote the benefits of public, shared and active travel.

Alongside our complaints work we investigate and monitor services and work with operators and transport providers to improve services for everyone. We run events, carry out research, respond to consultations, speak at government select committees and take part in industry events to make sure the voice of the passenger is heard.

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