Bus Users UK response to the Lancashire Local Transport Plan 2025 to 2045 Consultation

Introduction

Bus Users UK welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Lancashire Combined County Authority's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

We recognise the significant work that has gone into developing this plan, alongside the progress already made since 2022. The scale of investment, and the clear commitment to improving bus services across Lancashire, is evident throughout.

As the independent voice for bus passengers, our role is to reflect lived passenger experience. We hope this response supports the next stage of delivery by highlighting where the plan is already making a difference - and where a continued focus on consistency, clarity and reliability will be key to success.

Overall reflections

This BSIP sets out a strong and coherent vision, underpinned by clear priorities and a practical delivery programme. We particularly welcome:

- The clarity of the ten vision principles rooted in the passenger experience
- Continued investment in services, infrastructure and information
- A clear commitment to partnership working with operators and stakeholders
- The inclusion of a Passenger Charter and customer standards

There is a clear sense that the foundations for improvement are in place. The opportunity now is to ensure that these improvements are experienced by passengers as a network that feels reliable, easy to use and consistent.

What is working well for passengers

Improved services and connectivity

Passengers will benefit from:

- Increased frequencies across a number of routes
- New and extended services linking communities with hospitals, education, employment and town centres

These are meaningful improvements, particularly where they open up new journey opportunities.

From a passenger perspective, this progress is especially valuable where it supports:

- Access to healthcare, education and employment
- Journeys outside traditional commuting hours
- Previously underserved areas

A commitment to accessibility

The programme of bus stop upgrades, alongside commitments to the following represent meaningful improvements in accessible travel:

- Audio-visual next stop announcements by October 2026
- Improved station environments and wayfinding
- Continued support for community transport

This aligns closely with what we hear from passengers, particularly disabled people, who consistently highlight the importance of:

- Confidence when boarding and alighting
- Clear information throughout the journey
- A network that works as a whole, not in parts

Better information and growing transparency

The investment in the following represents a step forward for LCCA:

- Real-time information
- Network mapping
- Digital platforms alongside printed information

Passengers increasingly expect to be able to plan and adapt their journeys easily, and these improvements support that.

Importantly, the continued recognition of the role of printed information is also welcome to ensure that improvements remain inclusive.

Progress towards simpler ticketing

The development of the following is encouraging and reflects a move towards a more joined-up network:

- Multi-operator ticketing (Anybus)
- Tap-on/tap-off fare capping
- Future integration through national systems

Passengers consistently tell us that simplicity is as important as price, so this emphasis on improved ticketing options is strongly supported.

Focus on safety and the waiting environment

Measures including the following are important in building both actual and perceived safety:

- Public Transport Safety Officers (PTSOs)
- CCTV and lighting improvements
- Investment in shelters and facilities

Feeling safe is fundamental to whether people choose to use the bus, particularly in the evening and at quieter stops.

Opportunities to strengthen the passenger experience

There are a number of areas where continued focus will help ensure the plan delivers consistently for passengers.

Reliability

The BSIP clearly recognises the importance of reliability and sets out a range of measures to address it, including bus priority and operational support.

From a passenger perspective, this remains the single biggest issue. Reliability is what shapes confidence in the network regarding whether people choose or are able to travel, whether they have to allow extra time, and whether they continue to rely on the bus.

A continued focus on reducing delays, improving punctuality, and clearly communicating disruptions or issues will have the greatest impact on overall satisfaction.

Consistency across the network

While improvements are evident, the passenger experience still varies depending on where you live, the time of day, and the type of service. This is a nationwide issue and not specific to LCCA. This is most noticeable in rural areas, on evening and Sunday services, and with access to key destinations outside of core corridors.

This reflects both the current network and stakeholder feedback within the plan.

A continued focus on reducing these gaps over time will help ensure that all communities benefit more equally.

Affordability and clarity of fares

The introduction of £1 fare initiatives and the intention to develop new concessions is welcome. Passengers value certainty around fares, and this includes consistency across operators and simple, easy-to-understand pricing.

Clarity around the longer-term approach to affordability will help maintain passenger confidence. We do understand that clarity surrounding the national fare cap is required for LCCA to make certain choices.

Making integration work

The ambition for a fully integrated network is clear and positive. From a passenger perspective, the key test will be how this feels in practice:

- Can journeys be planned easily across operators?
- Is ticketing seamless?
- Is information consistent?

Progress is clearly underway, and continued momentum here will make a significant difference to how the network is experienced.

Communication during disruption

The planned improvements to disruption messaging are particularly encouraging.

Passengers recognise that some disruptions are unavoidable, but view poor communication as both avoidable and frustrating.

Clear, timely and consistent information across all channels can significantly improve the passenger experience, even when services are disrupted.

Targets and delivering outcomes for passengers

The targets set out for reliability, satisfaction and journey experience are welcome, particularly the ambition to reach 90% overall satisfaction by 2030.

From a passenger perspective, what matters most is that progress is visible and communicated, and that improvements are felt in everyday journeys

Maintaining that clear link between investment, delivery and passenger outcomes will be key.

Conclusion

This BSIP represents a positive and well-developed plan with clear ambition and a strong foundation already in place.

As delivery continues, the focus naturally shifts to ensuring that these improvements come together to create a network that feels reliable and predictable, simple to understand and use, available when and where it is needed, and consistent across the whole of LCCA.

At its core, this is about ensuring that the system works not just in principle, but in practice for all.

Bus Users UK looks forward to continuing to work with Lancashire Combined County Authority and partners to ensure that the passenger voice remains central as the plan moves into delivery.

About Bus Users UK

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 the 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.

Bus Users UK Charitable Trust Ltd is a registered charity (1178677 and SC049144) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (04635458).

Bus Users UK
22 Greencoat Place
London SW1P 1PR

Tel: 03000 111 0001
enquiries@bususers.org
www.bususers.org