

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

BUS STRATEGY

2011- 2031

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Environment & Commercial Services
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Executive Summary

Hertfordshire is a complex area in which to provide viable and sustainable bus services. It has high car ownership and use, leading to congestion on some roads and local “hot spots”. It has many small towns surrounded by green belt which do not create natural conditions for commercial bus operation. Furthermore, the current transport legislation offers limited powers/controls for the county to fundamentally change the commercial bus provision. Yet, expectations and aspirations are high for an integrated, high quality bus and rail network.

The County Council has developed this Bus Strategy at a time of financial restraint, as part of a national spending review, and also at a time of uncertainty for the bus industry. Whilst the strategic policies and aspirations cover a 20 year timescale, the Strategy sets out a realistic and achievable vision for the shorter/medium term.

The document sets out the framework of strategic and detailed policies for passenger transport, the current situation and the challenges facing Hertfordshire. This provides the basis for the development of the network and infrastructure, and in particular the corridors on which action will be focussed to achieve greatest benefit. Not every local issue and aspiration for each bus service can be covered here, but the County Council hopes that the Strategy provides the basis for local solutions within a countywide context.

The remainder of the Strategy sets out the detail on the required standards for services, facilities, bus stops etc. The accompanying Intalink Strategy sets out the standards for passenger transport information and marketing for the next five years.

As such, the overall Strategy supports the key challenges facing Hertfordshire County Council in terms of economic growth and carbon reduction through transport provision. In order to achieve this, the authority will be concentrating its available resources on the following key areas:

- Working with all partners to maintain and improve the key commercial bus corridors as outlined in Section 9 of the Strategy.
- Using the ‘Value for Money’ criteria, outlined in Appendix A, in order to evaluate the benefits to the bus network of individual routes that the County Council may wish to subsidise in order to both maintain and improve the current bus network.
- Maintaining and improving the current standards of infrastructure (Section 13) and passenger information systems (see Intalink Strategy).
- Reviewing the role of Community Transport provision (Section 17) across the county and identify where more local solutions could enhance/replace the network.
- Developing more innovative ways of attracting extra funding streams to help deliver both the current and future service provision (Section 5).

With all public sector services across the country gearing up for the effects of an uncertain economic period, emphasis has been placed on working with all stakeholders in order to provide cost-effective solutions across the lifetime of this Bus Strategy.

BUS STRATEGY

Background

The County Council's Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP) sets out the high level policies, strategies and actions to maintain and manage the transport network and address the identified challenges. It gives a lead to bus and rail operators in delivering parts of the network as a business. It also sets the scene for more detailed plans and strategies for areas of the County against the background of ongoing pressure on public service budgets.

The next LTP will run from April 2011 until April 2031 although reviews are planned to take place as and when considered appropriate.

Why have a bus strategy?

Hertfordshire is both a complex and a difficult area in which to provide viable and sustainable bus services. Although 1 in 10 households do not have access to a car, Hertfordshire still has high car ownership and use, leading to congestion on some roads and local "hot spots". It has many small towns with surrounding green belts which do not create natural conditions for commercial bus operation. Yet, expectations and aspirations are high for an integrated, high quality bus and rail network.

The County Council needs to be able to facilitate the development of the bus network further by giving a clear policy lead and identifying those strategies which it believes will address the problem. This will help operators shape their businesses to meet shared objectives and also improve the dialogue for operators to influence actions by the public sector.

The County Council believes that the Bus Strategy helps residents understand what it is aiming to do with public money. It is also of use to potential developers to establish how their proposals fit in with our aspirations and the steps they need to take to make development more sustainable.

1. Strategic Policies

For our purpose passenger transport is defined as all modes where passengers do not rely on their own transport - bus, coach and rail services, and other forms of transport such as private coaches, school buses, taxis and Dial a Ride. The promotion and support of passenger transport is an essential part of the county's transport policies as it looks to manage congestion through reducing dependency on the car and increase the use of sustainable modes.

Within the constraints of its available resources the County Council's strategic policies relevant to buses are to:

Promote and support passenger transport across the county to provide access to important services and to encourage increased use of modes of travel other than by car.

In order to optimise bus operations the County Council will seek to:

- A. Support, promote and improve a network of efficient and attractive bus services which are responsive to existing and potential passenger needs, including the special accessibility requirements of the elderly and disabled.
- B. Procure a range of bus provision which provides maximum benefit to the travelling public in the most cost effective way.
- C. Develop a passenger transport network as a viable alternative to the use of the private car to contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- D. Encourage parents and school aged children to make maximum use of the available public transport network.
- E. Recognise that customers need attractive and affordable fares to use the system to its full potential and that car users need to be encouraged to choose sustainable modes.
- F. Continue to support and develop the bus transport provision that allows maximum accessibility - particularly for non car users and the disadvantaged (disabled, elderly etc).
- G. Promote and publicise the passenger transport network through the Intalink partnership using a variety of media.
- H. Provide and maintain all bus stops, and other bus related highway infrastructure, to consistent quality and standard across the county.
- I. Seek to give greater priority to buses on the road network to improve punctuality and minimise bus service disruption from road congestion and the effects of road works.
- J. Continue to develop partnerships with other parties to achieve improvements in service provision and other facilities for specific aspects, corridors or geographical areas.

2. Operational Policies

In order to achieve the strategic policies, the County Council has operational policies. The County Council will seek to:

2.1 Service Provision

Linked to Hertfordshire LTP3 Challenges 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1 and 4.2

A

Support, promote and improve a network of efficient and attractive bus services which are responsive to existing and potential passenger needs including the special accessibility needs of the elderly and disabled.

In support of this the County Council will use its available resources to seek to:

1. work with bus operators, district/borough councils and other neighbouring local authorities to sustain and improve the services available and communities served.
2. contract, in conjunction with district, borough and adjacent County or Unitary Councils, services to meet needs which are not met on a commercial basis by operators.
3. use the value for money criteria and cost benefit techniques to assess costs, benefits to passengers and needs.
4. take account of future patterns of demand and any wider environmental benefits from providing contract services.
5. review contract services each year to take account of changes in demand and need, the level of financial resources available, the availability of commercial bus provision, any operational issues and the development of transport policies and strategies.
6. contribute to the contracts of neighbouring authorities/Transport For London (TfL) where the service is of value to Hertfordshire residents and meets the value for money criteria.
7. seek contributions, where appropriate, from other authorities, including district and borough councils, for contract services operating in their areas. The level of service provided will reflect the ability of these authorities to contribute to the cost.
8. seek to set out the financial and administrative arrangements with other local authorities in a management agreement, so that the best overall value can be achieved in procurement and contract management to supplement the network that can be funded from both the commercial sector and contract services funded by the County Council
9. assess the passenger transport implications of new development and recommend to planning authorities what is required to make those developments capable of being effectively served by improvements in services or infrastructure.
10. plan passenger and education transport in an integrated approach to achieve best overall value for the authority.

11. continue to improve the quality of the vehicles in terms of ease of access, DDA compliance and lower emissions.
12. ensure adequate services to and from major traffic generators including shopping centres, business parks, rail stations, education centres, hospitals and airports.

2.2 Procurement

Linked to Hertfordshire LTP3 Challenges 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 3.1

B	Procure a range of bus provision which provides maximum benefit to the travelling public in the most cost effective way
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In support of this the County Council will use its available resources to seek to:

1. integrate its procurement of bus, education, special needs, adult care and community transport to achieve best overall value for the authority while respecting the different needs of client groups and budget holders.
2. secure the provision of contracted services by competitive tender in accordance with national legislation and regulations and its own policies and regulations.
3. use the powers to enter into de-minimis agreements with operators where this is likely to be best value, taking into account administrative and procurement costs and the integration of services and fares.
4. set out the standards of service, vehicles, staff and procedures it expects as part of its contract terms and conditions.
5. monitor the performance of contractors and take appropriate enforcement, financial and contractual action where standards are not being maintained.
6. liaise with and support the roles of the Traffic Commissioner and other industry regulators in achieving high standards of safety and compliance with legal requirements relevant to operator licensing, vehicles, drivers and bus service punctuality.

2.3 Environmental Issues

Linked to Hertfordshire LTP3 Challenges 2.3 and 5.1

C	Develop a passenger transport network as a viable alternative to the use of the private car to contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
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In support of this the County Council will use its available resources to seek to:

1. take account of the contribution that bus services make to reducing car use and emissions by supporting contract bus services and its policies to assist commercial provision.

2. encourage operators to invest in vehicles with lower emissions, systems that assist bus drivers to be more fuel efficient and adopt developing technologies, if this is suitable for Hertfordshire conditions.
3. work with operators to secure grant funding for bus programmes/projects

2.4 Education Transport

Linked to Hertfordshire LTP 3 Challenges 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1 and 4.2

D	Encourage parents and school aged children to make maximum use of the available public transport network
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In support of this the County Council will use its available resources to seek to:

1. use the general passenger transport network as far as possible for the transport of children and students for whom it has a statutory obligation to provide transport, or for whom transport is provided to fulfil the Education transport policies of the Council.
2. make provision for discretionary travel to school or college where it supports Hertfordshire County Council admissions policies and provides value for money.
3. bring together its Education and Transport policies so that there is a common approach to vehicle specifications, fares and charges and other procedures.

2.5 Fares, tickets and concessionary fares

Linked to Hertfordshire LTP3 Challenges 2.1, 2.2 ,2.3 and 3.1

E	Recognise that customers need attractive and affordable fares to use the system to its full potential and that car users need to be encouraged to choose sustainable modes.
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In support of this the County Council will use its available resources to seek to:

1. agree a common approach from bus operators, through the Intalink partnership, to fares and conditions.
2. bring forward proposals for statutory multi-operator ticketing schemes for implementation across the county to provide an integrated ticket offer for regular adult users.
3. support the continued development of multi-modal ticket schemes, such as PlusBus, with the rail industry to promote the integration of transport in the London and Eastern regions.
4. promote the development and availability of smartcard systems to encourage integrated ticketing.
5. have regard to the general level of commercial fares in the area and its own costs of provision in specifying and reviewing fares and tickets on contract bus services.

6. strike a balance between the inter-available acceptance of tickets by different operators in the interests of the passenger and the operation of a simple and transparent fares regime.
7. provide the statutory elderly and disabled concessionary fares scheme in a similar way to the previous countywide district scheme, including the discretionary arrangements for travel at all times and by companions.
8. adopt a standard approach to disability assessment and pass issuing arrangements. The reimbursement of operators will continue to be contracted to external consultants, recognising the specialised nature of this activity.
9. provide a statutory concessionary scheme for children and students (SaverCard), providing for half fare travel to and from school or college and also at other times. Eligibility above the age of 16 is dependent on being a Hertfordshire resident and being in full time education.
10. review its provision of a discounted rail season scheme for students (Traincard).
11. work in partnership with neighbouring authorities, including TfL, to develop a transport policy on fares and ticketing where appropriate.

2.6 The elderly and disabled

Linked to Hertfordshire LTP3 Challenges. 1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1 and 4.2

F	Continue to support and develop the bus transport provision that allows maximum accessibility - particular for non car users and the disadvantaged (disabled, elderly etc).
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In support of this the County Council will use its available resources to seek to:

1. use fully accessible vehicles on its main contract bus services, other than those providing only home to school journeys, to ensure easy access.
2. encourage commercial bus operators to invest in modern vehicles to this standard and to plan for a fully accessible system by 2020 as required under current DDA legislation.
3. manage its infrastructure responsibilities to coordinate vehicle and bus stop/shelter provision to best effect.
4. provide the best and simplest to use concessionary fares scheme it can across the county and plan effective bus services with operators using data on usage patterns.
5. continue to provide a Dial-a-Ride service on a countywide basis for those who have mobility difficulty or are unable to use general bus services.
6. support the provision, promotion and coordination of community transport schemes that provide residents with local/district based door-to-door transport that cannot be provided by conventional passenger transport.

7. encourage commercial bus operators to invest in appropriate training in customer care for all passengers, particularly elderly and disabled customers, to ensure that they are treated with respect and understanding.

2.7 Information, promotion and publicity

Linked to Hertfordshire LTP3 Challenges 2.2, 2.3, 3.1 and 4.2

G

Promote and publicise the passenger transport network through the Intalink partnership using a variety of media.

In support of this the County Council will use its available resources to seek to:

1. create an integrated approach for delivery of passenger transport information based on the Intalink Partnership, as set out in the accompanying Intalink Strategy.
2. actively encourage an increase in the level of patronage using targeted marketing campaigns.
3. continue to develop and extend Intelligent Transport Systems including Real Time Passenger Information and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) across the county with links to cross boundary services.
4. develop further joint working with transport providers in the production of publicity.
5. develop web based media and smartcard ticketing systems.
6. develop and extend stop-specific timetables across the network.
7. continue to display up to date timetables at bus stops.
8. develop ticket points of sale at key interchange and key bus stops across the county.

2.8 Infrastructure

Linked to Hertfordshire LTP3 Challenges 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 4.2 and 5.2

H

Provide and maintain all bus stops, and other bus related highway infrastructure, to a consistent quality and standard across the county.

In support of this the County Council will use its available resources to seek to:

1. employ cost-effective contractors to maintain, clean and improve the provision of bus infrastructure including co-operating with District Councils who are responsible for litter and other environmental services.
2. in conjunction with operators and, where appropriate, traffic management police, review the location of existing bus stops as necessary to meet the requirements of safety for all road users, the needs of passengers including the disabled and for operational reasons.

3. manage the bus shelter agreement covering 8 out of the 10 district and borough areas and liaise with both Welwyn Hatfield and Watford on their separate contracts to maintain and improve provision for bus passengers.
4. investigate requests for additional bus stop locations and promote facilities at new development sites.
5. provide a grant scheme to assist district, town and parish councils to improve the availability of bus shelters
6. seek developer funding to provide new shelters at locations relevant to their developments.
7. manage bus stations, in its ownership or leased to it, in order to provide a safe and secure environment and an improved journey experience for passengers.
8. liaise with the owners of other bus stations and interchanges to improve facilities, capacity and operational layout and, where appropriate, provide funding contributions and seek external sources of funding.
9. establish new bus stations or interchanges where existing facilities do not meet current requirements or standards.
10. develop a hierarchy of stops as part of its strategies to identify areas where hubs or improved connections between services can be provided.
11. improve the availability of accessible bus stops for all service users by replacing kerbs, installing other features that help bus entrances and exits align with the kerb and using clearway and other parking or waiting restrictions to enforce a clear area for buses at the stop.
12. develop criteria for the replacement of hail and ride sections of bus routes with fixed stops and also for the provision of new bus shelters.
13. seek to enhance the streetscape by avoiding clutter and unnecessary signage and respect areas of historical or architectural merit by using suitable materials or surface colours on bus stop poles and bus shelters.

2.9 Highway issues

Linked to Hertfordshire LTP3 Challenges 2.2,2.3 and 3.1.

I	Seek to give greater priority to buses on the road network to improve punctuality and minimise bus service disruption from road congestion and the effects of road works.
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In support of this the County Council will use its available resources to seek to:

1. identify enforceable measures to give greater priority to buses and consider the effects on buses of other highway or traffic management schemes through Urban Transport Plans and other transport studies.
2. develop a programme of automatic vehicle location (AVL) to assist operators manage service provision and identify areas where buses need more priority.

3. work with District and Borough Councils and bus, coach and rail operators to identify and develop alternative proposals, e.g. for park and ride schemes, where these will contribute to reduce congestion in town centres or on the main highway network.
4. give high priority to interventions that help to reduce bus journey times.

2.10 Partnerships

Linked to Hertfordshire LTP3 Challenges 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1 and 4.2

J	Continue to develop partnerships with other parties to achieve improvements in service provision and other facilities for specific aspects, corridors or geographical areas
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In support of this the County Council will use its available resources to seek to:

1. consider new partnerships if the other partners have a real role to play in an aspect of service improvement and the scheme is likely to deliver its objective, providing that the administrative burden is proportionate to the benefits and shared between the partners.
2. support Bus and Coach working groups at airports and businesses to enable passenger transport needs and aspirations to be included in future strategies.
3. engage with the work of Passenger Focus (<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/>), London Travel Watch (<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/home/>) and other properly constituted user groups to understand the customer perspective and progress passenger transport improvements.
4. ensure that operators of long distance coach services consider local needs in the planning of services, including access to and from Stansted and Luton airports.
5. liaise with District and Borough Councils and with tourism organisations or attractions to provide suitable arrangements for group travel requirements.
6. have regard to the licensing powers and standards of District and Borough Councils when contracting services for special needs transport using taxis and hire cars.
7. assist and advise taxi operators who want to provide registered bus services.
8. Continue the partnership with health agencies and the voluntary sector in the county via the Hertfordshire Integrated Transport Partnership (HiTP)
9. further develop the partnership with community transport providers in the voluntary sector
10. work with the District and Borough Councils on their Parking Strategies to ensure relevant enforcement of illegal parking in bus lay-bys or stops

3. Links to other Strategies

Within the LTP framework, the Bus Strategy links to other transport strategies:

1. **Intalink Strategy** – this sets out the way in which the County Council expects all public transport information to be made available in partnership with key stakeholders (See attached document).
2. **Rail Strategy** – this sets out the County Council’s aspirations for the rail industry in the county, and in particular the contribution to aspects that are under more local influence, such as interchange schemes at stations, through bus/rail ticketing, the co-ordination of timetables and other major schemes that can be integrated with other transport initiatives.
3. **Surface access to airports strategies** – these are the Stansted, Luton and Heathrow Airport surface access strategies produced by the airports.
4. **Home to school transport policy and strategy (SMoTS)** – the County Council defines the entitlement and assistance given to students to travel to school or college, the fares and charging arrangements and the procedures to manage ticket issue and operations.
5. **Rural Strategy** – a new rural transport strategy will be produced in 2011.

4. Challenges and Objectives

Corporate Challenges

HCC's Corporate themes are:

1. Support economic wellbeing
2. Maximise independent living
3. Ensure a positive childhood
4. Secure a good education for all
5. Reduce carbon emissions
6. Ensure safe neighbourhoods
7. Be a leading council

These challenges also contain local transport goals directly relevant to transport and the provision of passenger transport. Consideration of national guidance and county issues has enabled the County Council to set 5 goals for the local transport strategy as follows:

- Support economic development and planned dwelling growth
- Improve transport opportunities for all and achieve behavioural change in mode choice
- Enhance quality of life, health and the natural, built and historic environment for all Hertfordshire residents
- Improve the safety and security of residents and other road users
- Reduce transport's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and improve its resilience

Specific bus strategy objectives and challenges

There are a number of objectives behind the Bus Strategy which address both Corporate and local transport challenges:

- To support effective bus transport for many passenger demands, particularly over relatively short distances
- To facilitate good quality and reliable journeys as advertised
- To increase the number of bus passengers and provide a genuine alternative for many car journeys to reduce congestion and improve air quality.
- To improve the infrastructure and passenger environment at the points of system access and interchange

- To encourage/enable the commercial sector to be able to sustain service viability and investment in the future
- To work with operators to maintain the network whilst having regard for commercial pressures, for example, increasing fuel prices and reduction of concessionary fare budget etc.

To achieve these goals and objectives, the County Council faces significant pressures and challenges, some of which are outlined below:

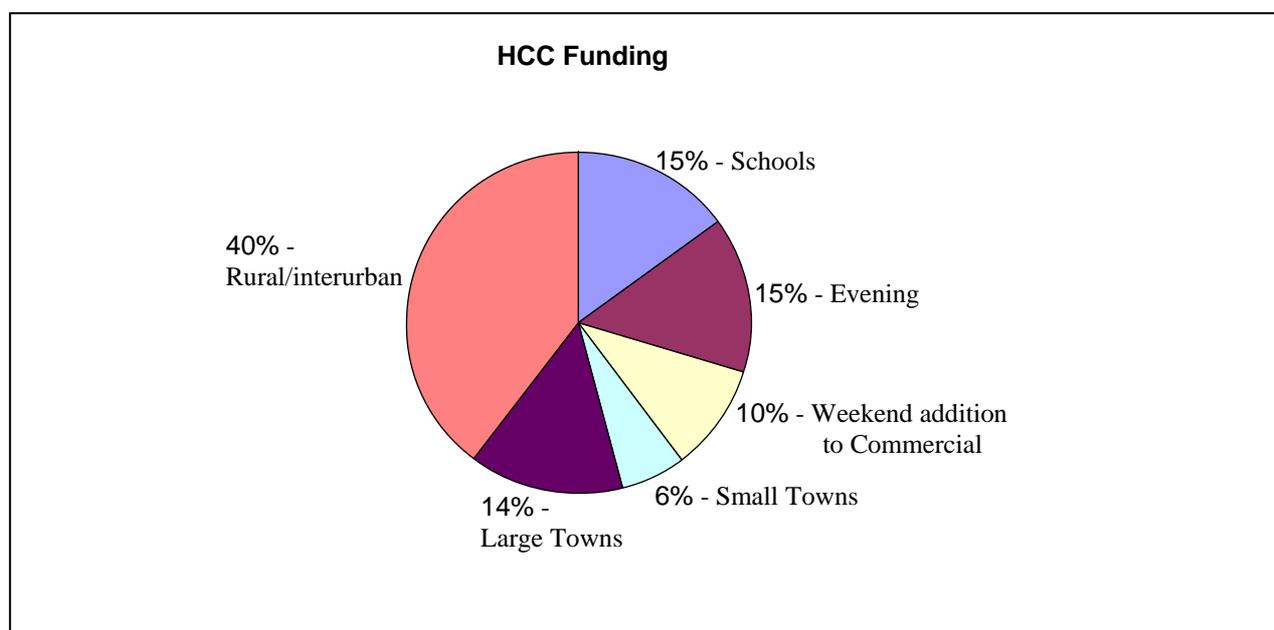
- Pressures on the County Council budget will affect the services that can be provided and on the delivery of major schemes.
- The transfer of statutory concessionary fares responsibilities from districts to county, together with the current changes in Government reimbursement guidance, creates financial uncertainty for both the County Council and bus operators and may therefore have an effect on service provision.
- The countywide bus network is heavily dependent on the commercial sector, who are accountable to their shareholders or owners.
- Bus networks can suffer from instability and frequent change and not all competition between services is beneficial, in the longer term, to the wider public.
- Bus networks are subject to highway congestion, which can lead to unreliable and unpredictable service delivery.
- As the county's strategic development continues to grow, the increased demand for services may be difficult for passenger transport to deliver and may itself have detrimental impacts on the County's infrastructure.
- Where the County Council supports services, prices may rise at a rate higher than inflation when industry costs are passed on in tender prices.
- Multi operator integrated ticketing can be challenging in a deregulated market with competition legislation.
- Aspirations for improved environmental and air quality standards may be difficult to deliver as service budgets are constrained.

5. Funding Sources and Risks

HCC currently funds different types of services which for diagrammatic purposes have been grouped below as follows:

- 1 - schools services, mainly for students without free travel entitlement
- 2 - evening services after about 1900 hours, mainly to extend the commercial network
- 3 - weekend services mainly to extend the commercial network
- 4 - services in small towns
- 5 - services in large towns
- 6 - rural and interurban services, where there is no commercial network

There will always be problems of defining these groups accurately but it indicates the broad approach of current County Council spending on services.



However, funding to maintain and improve bus service provision, facilities and quality comes from the following sources:

1. The County Council's own revenue budgets
2. Contributions from District Councils and adjacent authorities
3. Government grants including general revenue grants and LTP funding
4. Developer contributions
5. Bus operator investment
6. Other external parties, such as airports
7. Bidding sources such as Kickstart, Sustainable Transport Fund etc.

8. Bidding from sources including Regional Development and European Union funds.

The County Council may also use any additional fund during the year within the Intalink Partnership in order to pump prime commercial services of Intalink members for one or more of the following:

- frequency improvements
- quality improvements
- accessibility improvements
- information improvements

It is likely that over the first 5 years of this Strategy that funding from most sources will be severely reduced. While this is particularly relevant to all public sector funding sources, there is a risk of operator funding also reducing because of market or cost pressures (for example reductions in Bus Service Operators Grant, concessionary fares funding changes and the cost of DDA compliance).

If operators reduce services or increase fares in real terms, this puts more pressure on County Council service and concessions budgets at a time when there is likely to be reduced levels of funding for contract services. The County Council may not be able to replace commercial withdrawals and the timescales to switch funding between existing contracts and meeting new pressures may be too short to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

There is the added risk of increasing car use and congestion further undermining bus running times and reliability, leading to reductions in use, service decline and loss of passenger confidence.

In short, the resulting network is more likely to be volatile than in previous years and not wholly within the County Council's control. In responding to this challenge and risk, the County Council will follow the principles and value for money criteria in the Strategy (Appendix A)

6. Current Situation

6.1 Scale of Hertfordshire's bus business

Every year about 35m passenger journeys are made on Hertfordshire's buses. The annual turnover is around £45m. The national concessionary fares scheme accounts for some third of journeys and a quarter of operator income. Travel by children and students is around a fifth of total journeys but this excludes University demand. The remaining half of bus journeys is by adults, but average journey length is comparatively short, at less than 3 miles.

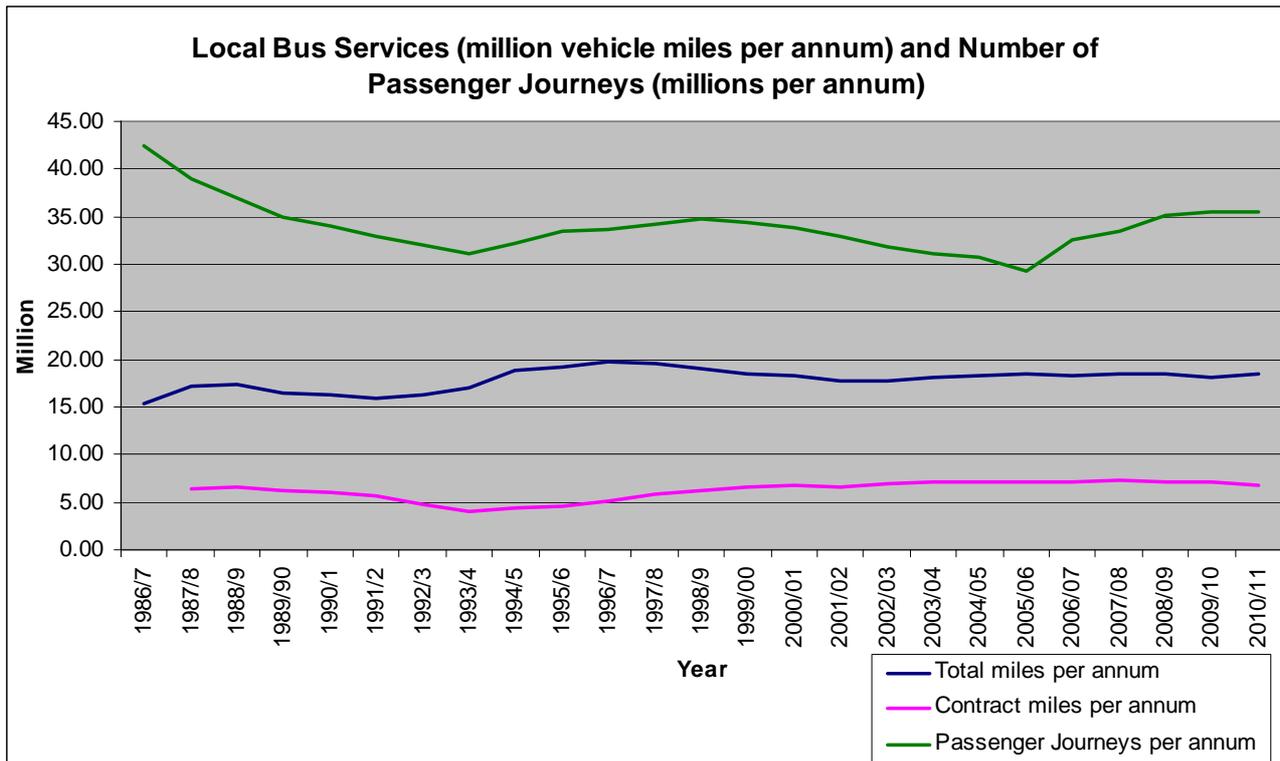
6.2 What has been achieved in the last 5 year strategy?

- Investment in new vehicles on commercial and contract services, improving the quality and accessibility of vehicles
- Improvements in interchanges at Potters Bar, Hitchin, Watford Junction, St Albans, Hatfield Business Park and University
- Maintenance of the bus network and implementation of service improvements on key corridors
- Upgrade of roadside infrastructure and publicity through Intalink
- Continuous improvement in terms of performance
- Creation of the St .Albans Quality Network Partnership group (QNP)
- Development for the Abbey Line project

6.3 The bus network

The current level of bus use is high and is now similar to the levels 20 years ago immediately after deregulation in 1986. The deregulation of the industry did not arrest previous decline; indeed the instability and significant fare increases increased the decline for some years until there was more stability in the mid 1990's. The development of a bus network by the University of Hertfordshire helped overall demand increase. A further decline until about 2005 was turned round by a combination of the introduction of free concessions for the elderly and disabled and a number of other local measures to improve the network. These trends are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1



The level of service provided has been more stable (including the proportion of service provided as contracts for the County Council) but this can hide changes in the size of vehicles and efficiencies in operation. Nevertheless one of Hertfordshire’s achievements has been to avoid excessive market instability which affects passenger confidence and ultimately use of the system. The County Council has also been able to maintain a highly competitive and cost effective tender market.

The main operator is Arriva, who operates just over half of the bus mileage. The most notable trend over the last 5 years has been the growth of the share of Uno, by service improvement and operator acquisition. These are reflected in tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2

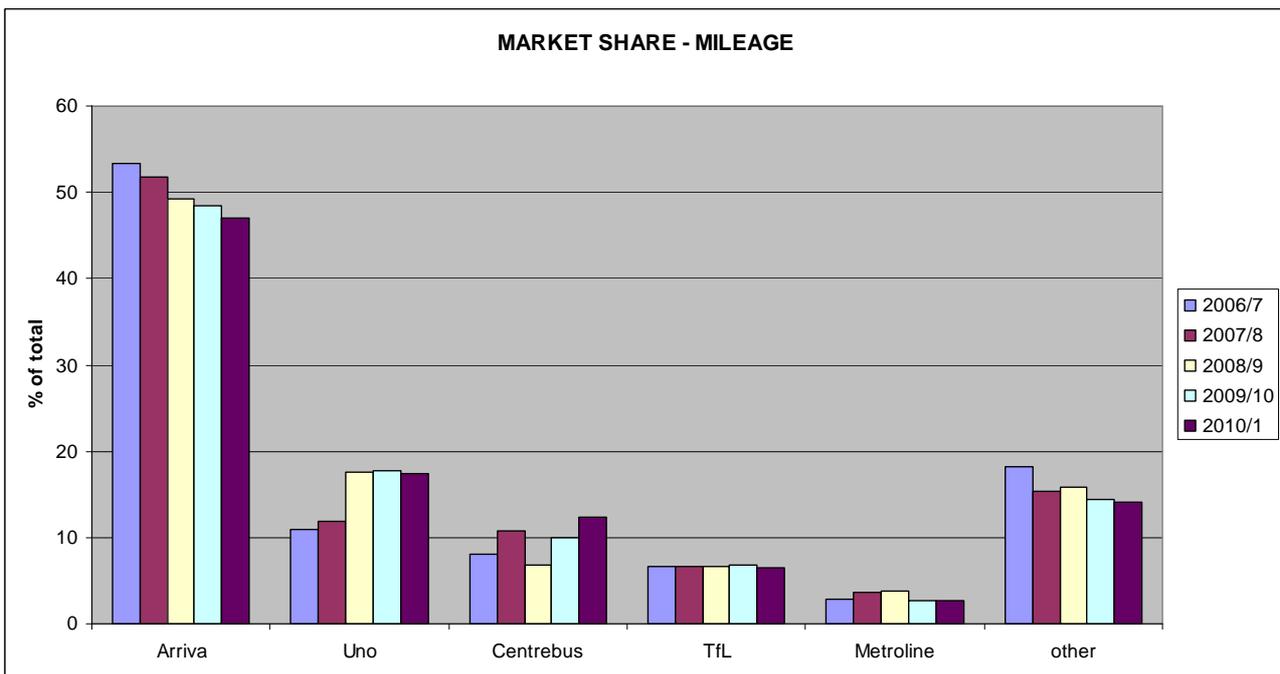
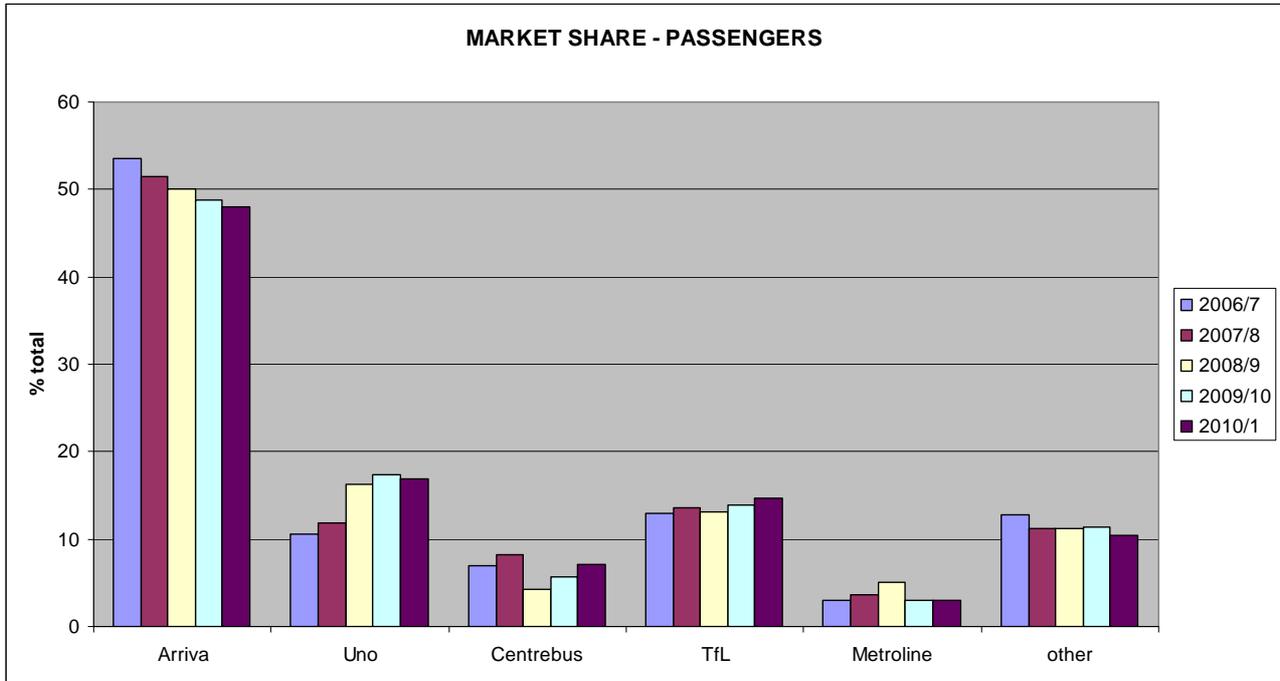
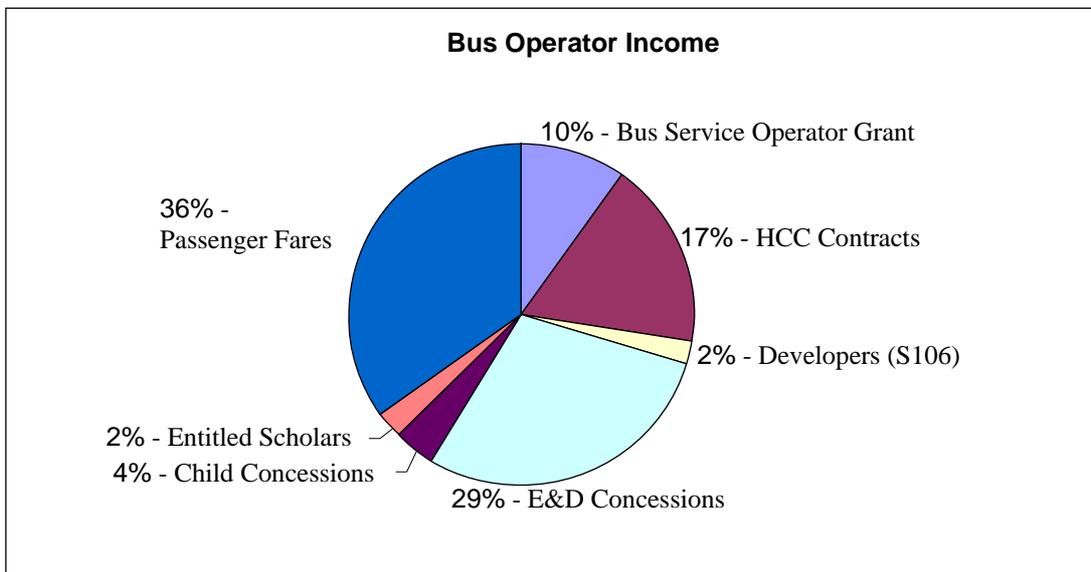


Table 3



Source: HCC data for service mileage from registrations; Operator returns for passenger numbers originating in Hertfordshire

Bus operators' deliver services on behalf of the public sector which, directly or indirectly, account for more than half of their income. This puts pressure on concessionary schemes because they are significant budget items for both operators and the County Council (from 2011). There are also uncertainties around many income streams for operators if public funding needs to be reduced.



6.4 Satisfaction

Passenger satisfaction with services and information is monitored regularly. Figures for 2009 show a continuing trend of improvement. Satisfaction with services increased in 2008 from 76% to 78% and in satisfaction with information from 64% to 84%. These figures are collected annually from surveys of residents (Tracker Bus Booster Survey) carried out by the County Council.

Hertfordshire County Travel Survey (2009) also identifies improving passenger transport as being second in importance after maintaining existing roads.

7. Key Schemes and Initiatives

The list of generic schemes and initiative activity that will contribute to meeting these County Council challenges and delivering the strategy are shown below. These ongoing programmes are also reflected in the LTP3 Implementation Plan.

- a. **Joint working with operators**
Developing corridors to improve quality, frequency and reliability where a sound and sustainable business case can deliver increased passenger use without significant public funding.
- b. **Developing information systems**
The Intalink Partnership will continue to work to improve information systems, and the Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system will be rolled out to give passengers more accurate and up to date information on the network.
- c. **Quality Partnership Schemes**
In addition to partnership work on bus provision within the “corridor” framework, area network partnerships, such as in St Albans, will continue to be developed to co-ordinate activity between operators, local authorities and other stakeholders.
- d. **Developing the network**
The strategy requires a comprehensive network of commercial and contract bus services to be maintained to meet needs, reflecting the inter-relationship of different parts of the network for both operations and for passengers.
- e. **New development**
To avoid increasing pressure on both existing infrastructure and public funding, this needs to be accessible either by channelling it to key passenger transport corridors or ensuring that funding is available to support improved transport provision.
- f. **Improving town centres**
Bus services play an important role in the viability of town centres and this should be supported and improved by taking opportunities in redevelopment and by priority measures.
- g. **Infrastructure**
The maintenance of existing infrastructure (bus stops, hubs, interchanges and bus stations) and continuous improvement of its quality and accessibility to make the travelling experience more pleasant for existing passengers in order to encourage potential growth.
- h. **Fares and Ticketing**
Developing ticket schemes such as travelcards and smartcards will create an affordable and easy to use transport system.
- i. **Concessionary Fares**
Maintaining coordinated concessionary fares schemes using discretionary provisions, where relevant, will be part of an integrated approach to network planning and maintenance, including home to school transport.
- j. **Abbey Line**
Complete the conversion of the Abbey Line to light rail with improved frequency.

8. Developing the Network

The Bus Strategy provides the framework for how the network should develop, in terms of service coverage, quality, infrastructure, interchange, fares and funding.

In the 5 year period from 2011 there are many challenges for both the County Council and operators as indicated in Section 4. There will be restricted scope within public expenditure guidelines (at least in the early years) for service enhancement and it may be difficult in all areas to maintain current networks as they are. Operators may also find their business environment challenges their ability to retain viable services everywhere or to invest in vehicles and facilities. The funding for infrastructure improvement through the Local Transport Plan may not keep pace with need, and the timing and location of any funding through new development might also not be suitable.

Given this scenario, the County Council's strategy will be to channel available investment into the most important bus services, previously identified on a corridor basis. This is more likely to achieve passenger growth overall and address the other transport challenges in those areas. Investment would take the form of;

- encouraging quality improvements in vehicles and roadside infrastructure
- Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and Real Time Passenger Information systems to improve information to the passengers
- support for services outside the hours of commercial operation
- the most appropriate bus priority measures

8.1 Making the commercial network more successful

The County Council has the ability to influence features which can make bus services more productive and efficient. It can help to improve the passenger environment on the street and at interchanges. It can feed transport strategies into wider policies to make Hertfordshire's economy better and, working with the district and borough councils, locate new development in places that the passenger transport network can serve effectively.

A strong commercial network is an essential feature of the strategy and is of importance at times of restraint in public expenditure. A successful commercial business is unlikely to be one that keeps changing its service or increasing fares above general inflation.

The County Council's success is currently monitored against indicators, which are influenced by commercial bus operators as much as by the County Council's own actions. These indicators are:

- Bus passenger numbers
- Bus punctuality
- Passenger satisfaction with services
- Passenger satisfaction with information

Specific measures, both large and small, that can help to make the commercial network more successful include:

- **Management of the highway network** to ensure that bus operations are protected from the severe disruption at times of maintenance and emergency. The County Council will continue to develop the concept of "bus sensitive roads" to be

considered equally with “traffic sensitive roads” when road closures, roadworks and winter maintenance plans are developed.

- **Planning and encouraging new development** to take place on corridors and in areas that can be served effectively by the existing or an extended passenger transport network. This will be particularly relevant for substantial new housing growth to ensure that, at the end of the development period, service improvements can be sustained without significant County Council funding.
- **Developing the Intalink Partnership** to improve information and marketing of services at a countywide level with a strong brand identity. This provides a framework for individual operators to promote their own identity to their customers at a local or route level as well as county-wide multi-operable ticketing products.
- **Support the development of new technology** for information and ticketing systems at a strategic level to ensure that they can be integrated into a countywide network approach and provide the economies of scale for each operator within the system. Examples of work which will be undertaken are automatic vehicle location, real time information and smartcards.
- **Co-ordinate the provision of home to school transport** so that the general bus and rail network can be used effectively without unnecessary duplication by additional school routes.
- **Maintain concessionary fares schemes** for students and the elderly and disabled to increase travel opportunities and a passenger transport culture. A fairly funded concessions scheme can provide the basis on which operators can improve service levels and quality for other groups.
- **Improve the passenger environment** where passengers wait, board and alight services and make these points on the network integrated with other pedestrian, cycle and vehicle access so that the system is easy and welcoming to use and is seen as part of an attractive streetscape.
- **Help operators improve the quality of their vehicles** through contract specifications, bidding and use of external funding sources and consideration of grants. This will improve vehicle access, passenger comfort and service image to deliver revenue growth.
- **Assist operators** in understanding their markets and businesses and encourage two way discussion and dialogue on service planning.
- **Encourage/Support operators** who want to train and motivate their staff to improve customer service, particularly to young passengers and those with disabilities.
- **Partnership working** on corridors or in town wide areas or to address specific issues.

8.2 Planning the network and Contract Services

While many decisions on where and when the network is provided are taken by commercial bus operators, the County Council influences these decisions by working with operators. It also provides contract services itself or works with adjacent authorities to fill gaps in the commercial network.

The planning of any bus network would take as its starting point the existing links and level of service. A commercial bus operator should balance the financial viability in both short and medium term against the level of financial return that it seeks, but it would also act more strategically as a potential competitor and an operator whom others would seek to compete against.

While the County Council does not normally make a profit on providing a contract bus service, it needs to have clear criteria on where provision will be made to achieve overall value for money from its budget. The County Council's current criteria for contract bus service and the tendering and procurement processes are given in Appendices A and B.

These criteria are more complex than simply a given amount of subsidy per passenger, recognising that Hertfordshire has a complex transport system and geography. It would be normal to expect a higher amount per passenger to be justified on a long rural route compared to a short urban route, and the cost benefit approach reflects the alternatives available to the passenger as well as the fares contribution being made by passenger.

The County Council's system also takes account of the relative value for money on services which are high and low cost. This can lead to equity issues – some villages might get better services than others of similar size because of their location and the real costs of provision – but overall the approach is closer to that of the commercial world and is more likely to give an overall network that is cohesive and sustainable.

It is a passenger based approach and allows for a network that gives choice of destination if there is effective demand for this. One of Hertfordshire's problems in maintaining a network that meets demand is that there are a wide range of destinations, often with similar facilities, and it may be difficult or expensive to provide a full range of destination choices.

However any network that only looks at current demand is unlikely to meet Hertfordshire's future needs. Predicting future demands can be challenging, even where there is significant new development. Most bus operators in Hertfordshire are risk averse because a commercial network is difficult to sustain in an area of high car ownership, no dominant centre and a congested environment.

Information for planning a future network comes from a variety of sources:

- Applications for new development and transport assessments that form the framework for considering measures to mitigate the impact of the development and funding through s106 and levies to provide for future needs
- Market research from passenger and resident comments, structured surveys and more informal processes such as bus surgeries or public meetings
- Review of recent trends on service usage to identify strong and weak routes and discussion with operators to help identify reasons

9. Development Corridors

The County Council will focus its development work on a corridor basis. This helps joint working with operators and avoids the duplication of an area approach. The 20 corridors (major routes and urban services) are shown below and they have been identified on the following criteria:

- There is a significant level of business for improvement to yield meaningful contribution to increasing LTP passengers
- There is a sufficient flow of buses to justify highway measures and improvements in passenger facilities
- There should be a commitment by the operator or an external partner to improve vehicle quality and service marketing

	Corridor description	Main aspirations and priorities
1	Watford – Kings Langley - Hemel Hempstead – Berkhamsted – Tring (- Aylesbury)	Consistent vehicle allocations. Addressing congestion in Watford/Hemel town centre and approaches
2	Hemel Hempstead – St Albans – Hatfield – Welwyn Garden City - Stevenage	St Albans QNP addressing issues in city centre and approaches. Other town centre issues
3	Watford – Bushey - Radlett – St Albans - Hatfield	Balancing long distance and local needs. Resolving St Albans QNP issues and other interchanges along route
4	Heathrow Airport – Rickmansworth - Watford – St Albans – Hatfield – Welwyn Garden City – Hertford (- Harlow)	Frequency enhancements across County and to Heathrow Airport. Resolving St Albans QNP and congestion issues along route. Long term vehicle replacement requirements
5	Hemel Hempstead – Abbots Langley – Watford – Rickmansworth – Maple Cross	Addressing congestion in Watford town centre and approaches. Consistent vehicle allocations
6	Watford – St Albans – Harpenden (-Luton)	Addressing congestion
7	Watford – Bushey - Borehamwood	Addressing congestion
8	North Watford – Watford – Holywell	Congestion management and access to hospitals through partnership eg. Watford General Hospital
9	Abbots Langley – North Watford – Watford – South Oxhey (- Northwood)	Improve vehicle access for Arriva services serving new development at Leavesden
10	Hemel Hempstead (Woodhall Farm – town – Chaulden)	Improve infrastructure in Hemel Hempstead town centre
11	Hemel Hempstead (Grove Hill – town – Bennetts End)	Commercial sustainability and infrastructure improvements
12	St Albans – Potters Bar (- Barnet)	St Albans QNP issues
13	St Albans local network	St Albans QNP issues including city centre access
14	Stevenage – Hitchin (- Luton)	Improved east west access

	Corridor description	Main aspirations and priorities
15	Stevenage (Town – Chells – Poplars)	Developing partnership approach. Town centre redevelopment and bus facilities
16	Stevenage (St Nicholas – Pin Green – town – Broadwater – Shephall)	Town centre redevelopment and bus facilities
17	Hitchin – Letchworth – Baldock or Stotfold	Commercial sustainability
18	Hertford – Ware – Hoddesdon – Cheshunt – Waltham Cross	Balancing commercial competition with a desire for a stable network
19	(Harlow -) Bishops Stortford – Stansted Airport	Joint working with Essex and Stansted airport
20	Bishops Stortford – Stansted Airport	Joint working with Essex and BAA, particularly to improve frequency

The County Council will continue to work with bus operators on more detailed corridor plans and review them on a regular basis as funding becomes available. This is particularly important in supporting the Local Transport Plan 3 in a strategic approach to both east-west transport and the Surface Access Strategy to key airports (see section 19).

10. Service Standards

10.1 Principles

The County Council will adopt the following objectives and principles in influencing the development of the bus network:

- The County Council has a statutory duty to consider passenger needs and service provision appropriate to meet those needs.
- The County Council has to balance this duty against commercial service provision by operators and not take action which would have a disproportionate damaging effect on their businesses.
- Bus networks should be subject to regular review by both operators and the County Council, capable of response to change, but stable enough over time to establish passenger confidence.
- When the County Council undertakes a major review of area networks, it will provide an opportunity for District and Borough Councils, funding partners, bus passenger representatives, stakeholders and the wider public to comment.

10.2 Planning

- Changes may be necessary to reflect variances in the pattern of demand, a need to address financial or budget issues (for both operator and County Council) and to meet changes in operational conditions or other circumstances (e.g. award of new contracts). Where possible these should be co-ordinated at selected times during the year, promoted through the Intalink Partnership.
- The network should minimise walking distances from homes or key travel attractions and be as comprehensive as possible. Maximum walking distances of 200m in town centres, 400m in residential areas and 800m in rural residential areas will be used to determine the comprehensiveness and accessibility of the network.
- Guidance will be published and updated as necessary to assist developers in designing new developments that can be effectively served by passenger transport in a way that can be sustained and meet the needs of the area in the future.
- Many new developments will require additional measures to be implemented to mitigate the transport effects, particularly in the development period, including additional services and the upgrade of facilities for passengers, the safe and effective operation of vehicles and modal interchange.
- Service patterns should be as simple as possible to operate, understand and use, with common terminals for most of the day and regular frequencies between peak periods. Where evening and Sunday services are provided, the aim should be to follow daytime patterns or routings and route number as far as practical. Last journeys should run at the same times on each day.

10.3 Operational

- Route numbers should not be changed unless there is a completely different pattern of service. Related routes should have numbers near to each other to help passenger understanding and timetable presentation. Duplication of route numbers within a 20 mile radius should be avoided.
- Regular frequencies (hourly or better) should operate at “clockface” intervals (60, 30, 20, 15, 12, 10, 6 or 5 minutes) to assist passenger understanding and minimise timetable presentation. Where more than one service runs along the same section, then inter-working should be as regular as possible.
- In rural areas with low frequencies, it may not be possible to provide consistent routes or regular frequencies. However simplicity of approach is desirable, for example the same times on different days of the week.
- Services should be as direct as possible, balancing the local and longer distance areas of demand. They should avoid unnecessary or complicated diversions or deviations to route, unless there is a clear positive passenger benefit to those additionally served compared to the disadvantage to those passengers already on the bus.
- Frequencies should be as high as is justified either by commercial viability, value for money criteria or financial resources available. Where these criteria cannot be met, the views of stakeholders and local members will be sought to help assess whether the service should be provided.
- Choice of vehicle will be a compromise between providing sufficient capacity for peak demand (which is often at school times), operating costs and the suitability of vehicles for the physical aspects of each route. Standardisation of vehicles may be an important consideration for the operator in minimising spare vehicle cover and engineering costs, and the most efficient outcome may be the standard use of one vehicle throughout the day regardless of whether the full capacity is needed or not.

10.4 Reliability

- Services that are provided should meet the guidelines set by the Traffic Commissioner as industry regulator and take account of the type of service and the operational conditions in the area.
- Achieving reliable operation may require timetables with either non standard running times at peak periods or on congested corridors and/or additional recovery time at the end of the route. Both traffic conditions and levels of use on schooldays and school holidays may be sufficiently varied to warrant different running times. In such situations the requirements for simplicity and reliability may not be compatible. The need to meet the Traffic Commissioner’s guidelines should take precedence. However, there is a need to explain this in an effective way to passengers. AVL systems will provide operators with the opportunity to deliver improved service reliability and schedules which are reflective of actual travel times and conditions.
- The bus network needs to make connections between bus services and with the rail network. While this is important, it can constrain the ability of services to meet other demands. Operators and the County Council (on contract services) need to consider the competing needs and maximise overall passenger benefits.

10.5 Other issues

Effective planning of the network also has to take account of other issues such as:

- Is it accessible to those who want to use it?
- Do existing and potential passengers know what is provided or what is changing?
- When you get to the bus stop, is the waiting environment attractive and fit for purpose?
- When the bus comes, is the vehicle accessible and comfortable?
- Is it punctual?
- Is the driver well trained?
- Are fares affordable?
- Are ticket arrangements suitable?
- Does the route go where the majority of passengers want?
- Are there links to other modes if necessary?
- Is there appropriate alternative transport available for those who cannot get to, or onto, a bus or where no suitable bus route operates?
- Appropriate bus priority measures

11. School Transport

11.1 Current provision

11. School Transport

11.1 Current provision

All of the current provision outlined below is part of School Transport review and the public consultation programme which is due to report back to County Council members in September 2011. Any subsequent changes to the provision of school transport would then be implemented from September 2012.

For pupils entitled to free home to school transport under the revised HCC statutory home to school transport policy, the County Council is required to arrange suitable and cost effective transport either by running a dedicated route specifically for statutory entitled pupils and students or by issuing a pass available on local bus services or rail services, or purchasing seats through third party suppliers, for example schools who run their transport own arrangements.

In determining the most suitable mode of transport the County Council will take into account:

- Whether there is a suitable bus or rail service (a combination of route, timing and capacity). If there is, there will be a presumption that it will be used as this will ensure a wider network is available to the wider public.
- Cost of provision. The County Council will generally use the cheapest mode of travel taking into account all its expenditure on transport.
- Speed and efficiency for the customer. The County Council will take into account convenience and journey times where there is a marginal decision between modes on cost grounds.

Where a dedicated route is provided, any surplus capacity will be made available on a “cost neutral” basis to assist accessibility to schools or colleges for those who do not qualify for statutory entitlement. The County Council publishes criteria for the allocation of places where demand exceeds available space.

For pupils and students who are not entitled to free home to school or college transport, the County Council currently offers a “SaverCard” concessionary scheme for local bus services and a “TrainCard” for rail services. Both schemes give discounts on travel (at all times on buses) and are funded by the County Council. The “TrainCard” scheme is specifically for those aged 16-19 in full time education/learning.

12. Accessing the Network

Accessibility to the network includes 3 separate but integrated concepts:

1. The network needs to provide geographical coverage so that most reasonable demands can be met without excessive walking distances. The County Council plans on a maximum walk distance in residential areas of 400m. For main town centre shopping, employment areas or residential areas with a high proportion of elderly residents, this is a distance of 200m. There will however always be pockets of need which cannot be met using these criteria or areas where there is insufficient effective demand for passenger transport. The County Council supports a range of community and voluntary transport schemes that contribute to maintaining local residents' mobility and independence.
2. The network needs to have well designed access points, particularly for the elderly and disabled. Even within the time period designated for Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant vehicle access, only a proportion of stops on the bus network will be upgraded to the standards necessary to guarantee access for all groups. These standards do not just include kerb heights but also need consideration of measures to ensure other vehicles do not park at stops (clearways or other design measures such as build outs).
3. Vehicles used on local bus services will need to meet DDA regulations for full accessibility. From 1 January 2015 all standard size single deck buses will need to be fully accessible. From 1 January 2016, 1 January 2017 and 1 January 2020 respectively the regulations will be extended to large single deck buses, double deck buses and coaches. These requirements do not apply to vehicles with fewer than 23 seats. These requirements cover vehicles being used on local bus services or other scheduled services, but there is no requirement for operators to continue to provide services if they are unable to comply. Part of Hertfordshire's Bus Strategy is to ensure that good progress is being made towards compliance, that compliant vehicles are retained in the county and there is no sudden loss of service at these key compliance dates.

The challenges in accessibility for the County Council are to:

- a) Work with operators to plan bus services so that give effective coverage by area, time period and destination to meet as many needs as possible within defined budget and commercial limits.
- b) Choice of destinations may have to be limited to provide an acceptable level of service to main facilities.
- c) Ensure through the planning system that new developments meet the accessibility criteria and that adequate funding is available from development to mitigate the additional transport pressures.
- d) Designate and implement a hierarchy of accessibility points on the network to reflect both geographical coverage and usage of stops.
- e) Provide effective enforcement for those points against parking by other vehicles.
- f) Work with operators to ensure that compliance with DDA on vehicles is planned effectively with no sudden loss of service at key dates.

13. Infrastructure and passenger facilities

Infrastructure includes the physical features that buses require to operate safely and effectively and include bus stops, shelters, bus stations and interchanges and measures on the highway to assist buses.

The County Council recognises that it should provide reasonable facilities as part of both its transport authority and highway authority duties and powers.

Having accessed the network, the bus passenger expects good quality facilities at the bus stop or bus station. These include:

- Signage to show it is the right bus stop (the bus stop flag). This would include a name, possibly service information and a stop lettering or numbering scheme in areas where the network is complex
- A well maintained boarding and alighting area, well integrated to the local footway system, and, at key stops, modifications to kerbing to make service access easier
- Information on times and routes of services at the stop and the National Traveline number for further information
- Access to real time passenger information either through roadside displays or via mobile phones
- A bus shelter at the more important boarding points to make waiting times more convenient
- Other facilities at bus stations and interchange points recognising the higher passenger volumes
- The ability to access ticketing points of sale at key interchanges and key stops.

A hierarchy of infrastructure provision has been developed to prioritise the appropriate development of facilities and their maintenance, as follows:

Hierarchy level	Description	Expected facilities include	Examples
1 – Regional interchange centre	Major bus station or interchange having a role to link with long distance rail, bus or coach to places outside the County	Passenger facilities within interchange, fully enclosed if possible, bus layover bays, other facilities as level 2	Watford Junction, Watford town centre, Stevenage Bus Station/rail station, St Albans City Station
2 – County interchange centre	Bus Station, interchange or town centre stop cluster of strategic importance for travel within the County and to places immediately outside	Allocated bus bays and management system, other passenger facilities nearby, provision for coaches, cycles and car drop off, other facilities as level 3	St Albans St Peters Street, Hemel Hempstead town centre/Bus Station, Welwyn Garden City Bus Station

Hierarchy level	Description	Expected facilities include	Examples
3 – Local interchange centre	Smaller bus station, interchange or stop cluster of local importance within a town and for its immediate catchment	Stops defined and map of locations, real time information screens, other facilities as level 4	Ware Station/College, Royston Bus Station, Stevenage Lister Hospital, London Colney superstores
4 – Local hub	Pair or cluster of bus stops at a local shopping, hospital, smaller station, education, leisure or employment attractor	Timetables, improved access kerbs, bus shelters, seating	Fleetville, North Watford ASDA
5 – Bus stop	Standard local bus stop serving immediate surrounding area	Timetable, improved access kerbs and bus shelters at more important sites	Most bus stops
6 – unmarked stop	Unmarked facility	None	Rural areas and estates with hail and ride bus services

The County Council owns all bus stops and manages the infrastructure together with the display of service information. The objectives are to maintain high standards of presentation which will encourage more use of the system, develop the countywide passenger transport brand by a consistent approach, maintain the County Council's asset base and ensure that the street scene is enhanced without clutter.

The requirements for bus stops and bus stations and interchanges are set out in Appendix C together with those for bus shelters.

14. Fares and Tickets

There are no regulatory controls on the level of fares, fares increases or the notice to passengers or local authorities of any changes. There is no requirement for one operator to accept tickets of another operator on the same or similar route, and indeed there is a presumption in competition law that agreements on fares or tickets that involve discussions of prices are anti competitive and illegal.

The County Council has to work within these current legislative and business constraints and a public expectation that different parts of the passenger transport system will co-operate with each other. It might be thought that co-operation and the development of inter-operable would have a mutual benefit, but in a competitive situation, operators will have to determine their service and pricing structure and the acceptability of inter-operable ticketing products.

The County Council's view is that it should operate a transparent policy on fares and tickets when it contracts for services, as follows:

- a) Contract service fares should be broadly similar to the level of commercial fares in the area, acknowledging that there are variations across the county. This will help reach agreements with operators on inter-availability of tickets.
- b) If a commercial operator increases fares beyond the level that the County Council considers reasonable, contract fares should not automatically follow the commercial norm. This should discourage commercial operators from increasing fares significantly in the expectation that most other routes in the area will come into line.
- c) If a commercial operator reduces fares beyond the level that the County Council considers economic, contract fares should not automatically follow the commercial norm. This should discourage commercial operators from reducing fares significantly, for example to respond to competition, in the expectation that County Council contract routes in the area will come into line.
- d) The County Council will respect the passengers' contract with an operator and any contract run by the same company will accept common tickets. This will assist integration of ticketing and be understandable to the passenger.
- e) The County Council recognises that passengers want joined up ticketing and it will aim to accept on its contract journeys (particularly evenings) tickets issued earlier in the day on the same route.
- f) The County Council will not extend this principle to completely separate days when the commercial operator does not run (for example Sundays) or in situations where the commercial operator has been very selective in the parts of the day when it runs. This applies particularly to operator network tickets with validity of more than one day.
- g) The County Council seeks to avoid the criticism that a commercial operator is in a significantly better commercial position because of the Council's ticketing policy.
- h) Within these constraints the County Council will seek to arrange joint ticketing for the benefit of passengers where this does not contravene competition law and where its financial income is reasonably safeguarded.

The County Council is also a key member of the Intalink Partnership which develops and promotes a range of ticket schemes between bus and rail operators, for example:

- the “Explorer” ticket which gives unlimited travel across the county and to selected points outside on Intalink members’ services at £8 adult, £12 group (as at August 2010)
- “PlusBus” tickets giving zonal add-on bus travel to rail tickets at most Hertfordshire stations
- “Bus Net” tickets for some areas for specific student or employment areas, providing multi-operator bus travel within zones.
- Other specific offers

The County Council proposes to advertise a statutory scheme to implement a range of zonal Travelcard tickets for adults through the Intalink Partnership and emerging partnerships within areas of the County. These have been held back because of concerns about competition law and potential conflict with transport legislation and also the lack of a suitable mechanism to reimburse operators fairly. Current schemes are either based on the revenue staying with the issuing operator (Explorer) or a scheduled service based assessment (PlusBus).

14.1 Smartcards

Smartcards offer a potential solution to revenue distribution problems for statutory and multi-operator ticket schemes and provide an auditable trail for functions such as concessionary fares schemes. In the past the funding to develop ITSO compliant schemes has not been available but this is now being taken forward with the main operators as an integrated part of vehicle location and real time passenger information development.

This will require not only on-vehicle equipment, but back office systems to provide a secure basis for managing and accounting for transactions.

14.2 Concessionary fares

In April 2011 the responsibility for managing and funding the concessionary scheme for the elderly and disabled was transferred to the County Council. To undertake this:

- the scheme continues with the existing discretions to provide a scheme at all times (instead of the statutory minimum off peak scheme) and include companions for specified disabled pass holders
- the issuing of passes and maintaining a database is provided centrally through the HCC Customer Service Centre
- the administration of the scheme (including the criteria to be applied to assess disability) and operator reimbursement is centralised through the County Council, who follow Government guidelines

Should the tram option for the St Albans Abbey branch line be successfully implemented, the County Council will consider whether a half fare or flat fare concession should be introduced during the statutory hours (i.e. not before 0930 Mondays to Fridays)

The County Council also provides a consistent half fare concession for young people at all times for journeys starting or finishing in the county, covering everyone under 16 and those between 16 and 18 in full time education. This “SaverCard” scheme is popular, with over 20,000 cards in circulation. However, it costs about £1.6m a year to run. The County Council intends to retain this scheme but may consider changing the administration towards a usage based scheme comparable with the elderly and disabled scheme. The cost of the SaverCard is also part of the current Home to School review outlined in Section 11.

Note: where community based transport schemes are introduced to replace commercial/contracted services, the Council will look to reimburse the voluntary scheme for those users who would be entitled to travel using the countywide concessionary scheme for the elderly and disabled.

15. Journey and the Passenger Experience

National and local research shows that passengers have many requirements, not all of them deliverable all the time at acceptable cost:

- a service that turns up and runs to time
- a clean waiting area with information and a shelter
- a driver who gives a positive impression and is trained to deliver good service and a safe journey
- a clean modern bus with good access and reasonable comfort
- good information on the system and the journey, including notice of planned and unplanned delays
- a direct journey whose arrival is predictable
- a comprehensive network
- affordable fares and integrated ticketing

Passenger satisfaction with both services and information in Hertfordshire is high at 78% and 84% respectively, and this is a key indicator to measure performance. Furthermore, Hertfordshire County Travel Survey (2009) identifies improving Passenger Transport as the second factor after maintaining existing roads.

Bus services can be made reliable at the expense of journey times to meet operator, County Council and regulator targets. However, extending journey times does not make services more attractive to passengers and in general will detract from service use, revenue and profitability.

A relatively small sample of bus journey observations suggests that Hertfordshire's buses are reliable. In 2008/9, 91% of buses were recorded as punctual in terms of leaving the terminal. However the County Council's strategy is to roll out automatic vehicle location (AVL) technology to enable bus operators to monitor and plan services more effectively and allow joint discussions on where action should be taken to improve reliability without worsening journey times.

Phase 1 of this programme is equipping Uno (Hatfield) and Arriva (Watford) during 2010/11 for AVL and converting this to real time information during 2011/12. Other operators and garages will be added during the strategy.

The consideration of bus priority measures is part of the function of Highway Network Management to take account of the relative importance of different users of the highway to reach an optimal solution.

Safety and security

While Hertfordshire's bus network has a good record of safety, the County Council works with operators and other agencies to maintain this. Crime, or the perception that it might exist, is a factor which can lead to localised disruption of services, suspension or

withdrawal of services and reduced use of the network in the evenings. It can also deter potential passengers from using services.

Schemes may include the use of CCTV systems, anti-assault screens, the improved deployment of police and enforcement resources, free travel for such staff, joint working with community representatives and communication systems. These need to be coordinated with wider strategies to deal with antisocial behaviour issues.

On home to school transport, the County Council will work with schools, operators and parents to promote a safe travelling environment by regularly reviewing its procedures and code of conduct, revising its contract conditions to make the responsibilities clear and improving the availability of training courses for operators and drivers.

Customer Service

Customer service standards and the Council's complaint procedure are set out in Appendix D.

16. Partnerships

The County Council recognises that it can only deliver significant improvements through partnership with bus operators, other tiers of Government (local and national) and with external partners.

The County Council will support three types of partnership:

1. Topic based

This type of partnership is brought together to tackle an identified subject area, an example being the Intalink Partnership between county and district councils and bus and rail operators to deliver an information, publicity, marketing, ticketing and branding strategy. The advantage is that partners can share and develop their expertise for a common goal while the output is presented to the public in a unified way without any partner being dominant.

During the Bus Strategy period, the County Council will consider establishing a partnership to take forward smartcard development, whether to widen the role of Intalink or to improve infrastructure.

2. Corridor based

This type of partnership develops a route or related group of services. It will involve County Council(s) and operator but may also include district councils and other external parties, providing they have a meaningful contribution for the main partners. This could be funding, expertise or the ability to extend their normal role to benefit the partnership.

The County Council has partnership agreements for services 10, 308, 510 and 724. It will consider other agreements but will balance the benefits with the additional administration needed.

3. Area based

This type of partnership seeks to coordinate a range of activities within a defined area and may involve activities outside normal passenger transport planning but which improve the environment in which bus services operate. The County Council would seek to have such arrangements chaired and administered independently to balance the interests of operators, local authorities and others.

The County Council supports the St Albans Quality Network Partnership which was established in 2009 to develop bus services, interchange, infrastructure and passenger/resident satisfaction within the city area. It has been successful in obtaining external funding to improve travel planning and ticket technology (Smiles).

The County Council will also continue to work with Transport for London and adjacent County and Unitary Councils to deliver cross boundary contract services at best value and to promote wider policies across the boundaries.

17. Community Transport

The County Council supports community and voluntary transport schemes to complement and augment the conventional bus network. It does this by contribution funding towards co-ordinators on a district wide basis and by selective support for individual projects and vehicles. As the conventional commercial bus network reduces, so the role of Community Transport will need to be re-assessed in order to maintain reasonable levels of accessibility into some specific areas of the county eg. rural areas.

The County Council provides a Dial-a-Ride service through its own County Transport Services fleet. This provides one vehicle per district area and allows each district or borough to top up provision through either additional dial-a-ride vehicles or other community schemes. The County Council is committed to retaining this service on a consistent basis to meet needs for individuals with mobility problems, but will continue to look at the best way of delivering this at local level.

The County Council also supports a range of community based transport schemes by funding co-ordinators posts who are tasked with 'making it easy for the volunteers to volunteer'

The schemes are flexible enough to provide transport to urban, market town & rural populations and can cover a wide range of mobilities, providing residents with a range of local door to door transport options:-

- timed GP/ hospital appts,
- shopping trips
- rural services
- social/group trips
- visit friends/family
- accessible vehicles
- voluntary car or Shuttle scheme
- shopper service
- scheduled rural services
- minibus scheme
- car scheme
- MPVs, DaR, minibuses and Herts Action on Disability (HAD)

In determining which projects will be supported in the future, the County Council will need to take account of:

- Whether the scheme complements the main passenger transport network by providing access to areas where conventional service provision is not cost effective or meets needs which would be difficult or impossible by the main network
- The types of need and journeys with priority to medical and hospital needs
- Supporting strategies that deliver on a district wide basis and involve the whole community
- Whether the scheme provides value for money and is likely to be sustainable and deliverable, including taking into consideration the likely availability of volunteers
- The County Council budget and the access of the scheme to other funding sources or in kind contributions

18. Coach Services

The coach industry plays an important role in providing home to school transport and in providing group travel services for both Hertfordshire residents and visitors. It also plays a role in providing alternative road transport when there is planned or unplanned disruption to rail services.

The County Council will work with the coach industry and with tourism organisations and attractions to develop Hertfordshire's network. In particular it will:

- Review bus and coach stopping arrangements in town centres with the aim of developing appropriate points for coach set down, pick up and standing where there is demand
- Assist in the promotion of those arrangements to the coach industry
- Work with the rail industry to improve rail replacement signage and incorporate the need for rail replacement services in the design of stations
- Work with the airports and coach operators to improve cross county access to those airports (Heathrow, Stansted and Luton)

19. Surface Access to Airports

The County Council will work with airport providers, bus and coach operators and adjacent local authorities to produce and implement effective surface access strategies. These will include the improvement of service levels, new services where demand is justified, improvements in vehicle quality, marketing and fares initiatives for airport workers.

The County Council expects airport providers to use funding streams available to them to support both the surface access strategy and Hertfordshire's Bus Strategy. This recognises that airports are not just national or international transport hubs and locations of employment, but a transport interchange for local needs.

The main aspirations agreed with the relevant airport authorities are to:

- Create a new service from Central Hertfordshire (St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield) to Stansted. This may have options to extend to Watford or serve parts of East Hertfordshire
- Increase in frequency of the existing 724 to Heathrow from Central and South West Hertfordshire
- Increase the frequency and coverage of local bus services between Bishops Stortford and Stansted airport

20. Environment

Bus services play a critical part in providing a transport system that can be less dependent on the private car, reduce carbon emissions and alleviate areas of poor air quality and excessive noise.

The County Council will encourage bus operators to provide services that are likely to meet this objective and on its own contract services it will take into account the environmental contribution in assessing value for money.

The County Council will also encourage operators to reduce their own emissions through new vehicle investment and the operation of green fuel vehicles, if other funding streams can be found. However this issue is complex as new (and heavier) vehicles often use more fuel in delivering lower emissions.

APPENDIX A VALUE FOR MONEY CRITERIA

Many counties use simple cost per passenger criteria to assess value for money for contract bus services. The disadvantage of this is that it tends to give higher priority to short urban services which may be less valuable than longer rural services. This is because it does not take into account either passenger journey length or the benefit that passengers obtain over the alternatives that might be available.

The proposed system for Hertfordshire seeks to overcome these deficiencies, while retaining a system that is simple and understandable.

The system combines:
Cost per passenger and
Passenger need/benefit

Both elements have 5 bands as follows:

		Passenger need/ benefit				
		Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Cost per passenger	Definition	Reasonable alternatives available	Shorter distance town services	Inter urban type services	Rural services	Remote rural services
Very high	£4+					
High	£3-3.99					
Medium	£2-2.99					
Low	£1-1.99					
Very low	Up to £0.99					

Key

	services not proposed to be provided or provided in a modified form to meet criteria
	Services provided subject to funding
	Second highest priority services
	Highest priority services

Services in whole or part which do not meet the above criteria are subject to a second phase evaluation, based on the following stages:

1. Does the service meet significant statutory entitled home to school movements which could not be provided in a more cost effective way?
2. Is the service in a development phase and is it likely to meet the criteria within 2 years?
3. Are there other community transport schemes in the area which could meet some needs or provide feeder services to core bus services, where any decisions should be co-ordinated?

Notes:

De-minimis contracts and contracts of small value often provide additional days to a commercial service (eg Saturday service added to Mondays to Fridays) – in assessing value for money HCC will consider the additional value given by the commercial service at similar times on other days of the week and the effect that any contract withdrawals may have on the commercial service. Completely self contained evening and Sunday operations will be assessed on their merits using the appraisal system above.

APPENDIX B

Tendering and procurement

Services are procured and grouped to achieve best value in efficient operation and in attracting competition. Tenders are invited on a dual basis with the revenue risk either with the operator (a subsidy bid) or with the County Council (a cost based bid). The tender process encourages innovation.

In securing services under contract, the County Council will normally be required by national and European legislation to seek open competitive tenders. The County Council has some flexibility under national legislation to make “de-minimis” agreements. These agreements can be made without the requirement to tender up to a limit of 25% of County Council total spending on local bus services. The County Council will use these powers where:

- a) the route of a commercial service needs to be diverted or extended and this is best secured by negotiation
- b) the extent of coverage of the day or week of a commercial service needs to be expanded, and the benefits of an agreement with the commercial provider (common vehicles, integrated ticketing and consistency of image) outweigh any risks through competitive tender of fragmentation
- c) the administration cost of tendering is disproportionate to the value of the agreement

Contracts are awarded on a cost and quality basis and consideration is given to the wider advantages to the network that another operator could bring and the value of an improved vehicle or service.

The County Council keeps its contract conditions under review and discusses issues with operators. It will continue to operate a maximum vehicle age and/or accessibility policy on contract local bus and education services as follows:

- a) Bus service contracts – vehicle to be fully wheelchair accessible
- b) Schools only contract – maximum age of vehicle 15 years

The subsequent performance of operators is monitored by a small team of enforcement officers. The performance regime is designed to achieve compliance, with financial deductions for non operation or excessive late running. The ultimate sanction is contract termination if other disciplinary action does not address the performance issue.

APPENDIX C: INFRASTRUCTURE - REQUIREMENTS FOR BUS STOPS AND BUS SHELTERS

Bus Stops

Bus stop “flags” are located on separate poles, on other highway poles, on lighting columns or on bus shelters. The flags are to a consistent design across the county showing – the legal traffic sign, the stop name, the Intalink traveline for more information and supplementary information for passengers (for example buses stop in both directions) or on services (usually limited stop services). In town centre or bus station locations, there is often a stop lettering or numbering scheme to help passengers find their bus.

As a principle, the County Council does not consider that it can show all service information on stop flags and guarantee to keep it updated at current rates of bus service changes. However in exceptional and complex town centre locations, route numbers will be shown. The first scheme is being piloted in Watford in 2010. Most bus stops have full information on services which will be kept up to date. Increasingly stop specific information will be provided where this can explain service provision more clearly.

The County Council will minimise street clutter by using other infrastructure as far as possible, especially bus shelters and lighting columns. This does require additional customising of flag and information provision to each site, but there are benefits to the street scene in doing this.

Many bus stops have been at their current location without problem for many years and continue to meet needs. Where new bus stops are required to meet changing circumstances, the County Council will inform any frontages directly affected, even though there are no legal rights on the part of the frontage to object. Any issues will be considered by the relevant parties involved in making a safety assessment of the site (traffic management police, Herts Highways, bus operators, Passenger Transport Unit).

Most routes have fixed stops. This is necessary for road safety and allows investment in passenger facilities and information to be concentrated at specified points. It also regulates the access points to the network so that accessibility improvements can be implemented with confidence. The County Council will convert routes (with frequencies of hourly or better) to fixed stops where there are passenger or safety benefits. It will also review individual sites for additional stops on the same basis.

The maintenance and management of bus stops in Hertfordshire is currently carried out through a private contract. The elements of this contract are:

- a. To inspect and clean stops and timetable displays on a routine quarterly cycle with some high profile stops covered more frequently
- b. To post roadside bus service information before changes are made with a system of recharge to operators through the Intalink Partnership
- c. To maintain and improve the County Council’s roadside infrastructure assets as required to meet service needs and passenger expectations.

Unmarked Stops

There is a role for sections of routes to have unmarked stops or be designated as hail and ride areas. The circumstances for this are:

- a. where routes are very infrequent
- b. where the level of demand is very low and formal bus stops are not cost effective
- c. where there are no safety implications of a demand responsive approach

Bus stations and interchanges

Bus stations and interchanges are provided by various organisations with sub leases for management in some cases:

District/Borough Council	–	Hemel Hempstead, Stevenage, Hertford, Royston
Developer	–	Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield Parkhouse
University of Hertfordshire	–	Hatfield UH Forum
Network Rail	–	Watford Junction, Hatfield Station, Hitchin Station, Potters Bar Station, Hemel Hempstead Station, St Albans Station, Elstree & Borehamwood Station and others
Transport for London	–	Waltham Cross

The County Council manages some sites and is involved in developing schemes at others but the ownership, management and maintenance of bus stations lacks a countywide cohesion. It will be difficult to address this in the short term, but the County Council will consider managing any new bus station with the owners to assess whether this can be integrated with its other infrastructure activities to give a more cost effective solution. The County Council does not support the principle of bus station charges because this is likely to increase bus fares and requires administration. However, it also recognises that there needs to be more effective management of capacity and stand allocation, and a departure charge may be the only way of funding this.

Bus stations and interchanges require additional facilities to normal bus stops, including:

- Control over the access to the facility, preferably with the separation of buses from other modes, such as taxis, short wait car use and “kiss and ride” car set- down
- Improved signage for passengers to and from the station and information to find where buses board
- Interchange arrangements, between bus services, between bus and rail and provision for cyclists
- Bus station design to ensure that each stop can be accessed effectively in either a through operation or a drive in/reverse off design and that there is reasonable layover provision
- Higher quality passenger facilities such as shelters and real time information together with features such as CCTV and improved lighting to reduce the fear of crime

- Vandal proof shelter options in vulnerable areas
- High standards for cleaning, maintenance and litter picking
- Provision for staffing and supervision in large interchanges

Bus shelters

Bus shelters are owned by many different organisations. There are currently over 1300 shelters in Hertfordshire (about 30% of marked stops) and this is increasing by about 1% each year.

These are provided by shelter suppliers, with a significant proportion containing advertising which in turn produces a revenue stream to maintain them. In 8 out of the 10 district areas of Hertfordshire, HCC manages an agreement with Clear Channel on behalf of the districts. In Welwyn Hatfield and Watford, the districts manage their own agreements with Adspace 2000 and J C Decaux respectively.

The Clear Channel agreement is due to expire in 2016 and the County Council has awarded the roadside maintenance contract in such a way that there is the opportunity to integrate all of these activities at the next re-tender. The County Council will need to decide how to package this in the best interests of efficiency and competition and it will consult the two districts outside the countywide agreement at the appropriate time, dependent on the situation at the time of the re-tender.

In rural and small towns, many shelters are owned and maintained by parish and town councils. Some district and borough councils provide shelters to supplement those maintained by advertising, and the County Council provides some shelters where there has been specific funding either through the LTP or by new development.

The County Council will consider grants to parish, town and district authorities for the provision of new shelters or for the substantial renovation of existing shelters, if it is satisfied that this will meet passenger needs and the site is suitable.

The owner of the shelter is normally responsible for maintenance. A sound cleaning and repair regime is necessary to prolong the useful life of the shelter and provide passengers with an attractive waiting environment. Addressing graffiti and damage at an early stage is essential to protecting shelter condition and in itself should discourage the problem at source. Vandal proof options have been successfully trialled at selected sites to minimise the effects of anti social behaviour. The County Council has procedures for reporting damage and regular shelter inspection/cleaning regimes for sites it owns, or manages, in order to identify issues for early rectification.

A bus shelter must meet safety standards in terms of sight lines for vehicles, particularly near junctions, minimum widths for footpaths and adequate space for bus boarding and lighting. In some cases there needs to be careful integration of shelter location with bus stop location, the general footway system and road crossing points. The size and configuration of shelter will reflect passenger demand and bus operating characteristics. In practice each site needs to be considered on its own merits and the shelter provider would also consider access to power supply for advertising or lighting and the effective display of advertising content.

In environmentally sensitive areas such as historic towns and villages, consideration will also be given to the type, colour and construction material to ensure that bus shelters enhance, rather than detract from, the street scene. This would normally be done in conjunction with the planning authority on an informal basis.

Many stops are being improved to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, including accessible kerbs and clearway enforcement. This can affect the detailed design of the shelter to allow wheelchairs to turn and provide a safe distance between the shelter and the kerb. The County Council provides technical advice in this process.

Bus shelters need to provide a safe waiting area and effective lighting can be important to achieve this. Where there is no immediate source of power supply, solar power is being used increasingly to provide lighting. In some cases where there is repeated damage, more secure anti vandal panel systems are being used to replace glass with tougher material that still offers outward visibility for passengers.

Many shelters provide advertising which gives a revenue stream to support ongoing maintenance. These are subject to normal planning procedures through the district and borough councils. There is sensitivity to advertising in some areas, but districts advise shelter providers of planning requirements.

The location of a shelter does involve consultation with frontage residents who may require existing or future access to their property. It can be difficult to reconcile the needs of both bus user and resident, but the County Council's process will ensure a fair discussion and hopefully a suitable solution. However the County Council will not consider objections solely based on environment factors.

Some points on the bus network, such as interchanges, bus stations and hubs, need enhanced and higher profile treatment to reflect their importance to the network and the greater volumes of use. Shelter dimensions, access, design and appearance need particular thought at these locations to provide the conditions to encourage the use of these facilities. These locations are likely to be those where additional information is needed in both conventional and electronic form and these need to be incorporated at the design stage.

APPENDIX D: CUSTOMER SERVICE AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The standards of service delivered to customers can be influenced by commercial approaches, the County Council's conditions of contract and Intalink partner standards. These need not be the same across the whole network and high profile or premium branded routes may have higher standards, but there should be minimum standards to be achieved by all operators. These are:

- Services operating reliably and to the national punctuality standards
- Route and destination displays being clear and legible (including illumination at night) for intending passengers on approach to bus stops and at bus stations
- Competent, well trained, polite and helpful drivers and supervisory staff
- Clean buses, inside and out
- High standards of publicity and marketing material following Intalink guidelines
- Clarity on fares and tickets offered

Complaints should also be handled and investigated effectively. The County Council's minimum requirements are:

- Operators and the County Council should be able to receive comments and complaints in written form, by e mail and during reasonable office hours by telephone and these arrangements should be published
- Complaints should be logged and acknowledged or replied to within 5 working days. If a full reply is required, this should be sent within 20 working days.
- Complaints referring to commercial services will be directed to the operator. If they cover issues which cannot be resolved, the customer should be advised of other relevant options, which may include Passenger Focus (<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/>), Bus Users UK (<http://www.bususers.org/>), the Bus Appeals Body (<http://www.busappealsbody.co.uk/>), the Traffic Commissioner (0300 123 9000), London Travel Watch (<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/home/>) or the County Council.

The County Council will continue to work with Passenger Focus and any properly constituted Bus Users Group to review passenger satisfaction with services and information and any local issues of mutual concern. This may require joint commissioning of research, passenger interviews and mystery traveller surveys to ascertain facts and passenger opinions.

This will provide the basis to obtaining views for policy development, service option proposals, both major and local issue resolution together with the views of transport operators and community representatives at all levels.