

Local Highway Panels  
Members' Guide

# 8 Passenger Transport Improvements



# 1. Introduction

## Bus Services

The bus services outside London were deregulated in October 1986 and in Essex about 85% of bus services are now wholly commercial and are fully independent of the local authority.

When a bus operator identifies that it intends to change or completely withdraw, a commercial bus service, the Local Authority has a duty under the Transport Act to consider whether a replacement service should be provided.

Although the authority works in partnership with the commercial operators it also represents the opinions of local residents and can express them with the aim of influencing bus routing and bus frequency. It can therefore attempt to persuade but it cannot control the commercial decisions.

Where a commercial service is withdrawn and the local authority identifies a need for a service it can contract for a replacement service. The contract may be for a small number of journeys such as late evenings or it may be for an entire route, for example on a Sunday.

In Essex, there is a combination of over 200 contracted services. None are commercially viable and are therefore funded by the authority.

While the authority controls the routes and times of its contracted services it is constrained in the extent to which it can act by the available budget for supporting bus services. The longer term viability of many subsidised services is not certain. Therefore any steps that can be taken to increase passenger numbers are to be welcomed – improving the passenger waiting environment and assisting the buses to operate punctually are very important factors here.

In addition such roadside infrastructure also acts as the gateway to services for potential passengers, so has an important impact on how the public view bus services. Poor infrastructure gives a bad impression of bus services' utility.



## 2. Typical Problems

Infrastructure issues are regularly raised with the County Council by passengers, bus operators, local councils and other interested parties. Some examples are given below:



Many of these issues are relatively straightforward to address, have a relatively low cost and have a significant positive impact if resolved. Funding for such works has to be obtained through the Local Highways Panel process.

## 3. Things to Consider

The public will raise some issues regarding bus services that are not the responsibility of the Local Authority and therefore cannot be funded from the LHP budget. Members will be informed if this is the case.

Bus stops, passenger shelters and raised kerbs are, in the main, the responsibility of the Authority and are likely to be the type of scheme requested via the LHP. It is also likely that representations will be made from time to time by those responsible for providing the bus services (either the bus operators themselves or issues identified by ECC's Passenger Transport team). There may also be other items important to the efficient operation of the service, but which do not constitute actual 'passenger infrastructure'. Such elements may include minor adjustments to kerb lines, or consideration of parking restrictions at junctions in order to enable buses to operate effectively.

The siting of a new stop will almost always be contentious, particularly if it is directly outside a resident's property. Often this includes the expectation that they will experience a loss of privacy, an increased level of anti-social behaviour and littering.

While such concerns are often perceived rather than a reality, it is important to accept that to the individuals concerned they are real concerns and there may be some impact on resident which will need handling sympathetically. In an organised and

well-structured way that allows residents voices to be heard. Nonetheless, there is a balance of benefits that has to be assessed and local objections can be outweighed by benefit to the public at large.

Not all locations can accommodate a bus stop. There may be difficulties with the road width or with access to the stop or safety issues.

It may be difficult to provide the required solution in rural location:

- There may be no footways or only a footway on one side of the carriageway.
- Illumination at the stop may also be difficult due to lack of a suitable power

## 4. Typical Measures

### Public Transport Infrastructure LHP Schemes

Within Essex, the Public Transport Infrastructure is mainly the responsibility of the Authority and is managed by Essex Highways, however, there are also Transport for London poles and flags in the south of the county. The sort of infrastructure that can be requested by the LHP includes:

- **Bus stops** – installation of new stops or changes to existing locations. The local residents will be informed and their comments and concerns are taken into account before a decision is made. Local representatives may want to consider the reaction of residents before requesting new or adapted bus services.
  - The poles and flags will be maintained by Essex Highways.
- **Bus shelters** (without advertising).
  - Public Transport shelters that do not have advertising are classified as permitted development and do not require planning consent, however, as noted best practice is for adjacent properties to be informed and concerns taken into account before any decision is made.
  - ECC has a standard suite of products for bus stop infrastructure improvements which should be used wherever possible to help maintain a consistent image across the County.
  - The varied ownership of passenger shelters means that while many Boroughs, Districts and Parishes do purchase shelters from the ECC standard suite there may be areas where the predominant type of shelter is not a standard ECC product, and under these circumstances it may be more appropriate to use the predominant model.



- In rural and village settings, residents can have a very keen interest in their local shelters. The Parish or Town Council may wish to:
  - Fund or part-fund a shelter.
  - Take responsibility for cleaning and general maintenance.
- Shelters should include bench seating and sufficient space for shelter by a wheelchair user.
- Consideration should also be given as to whether lighting is needed: solar power is sometimes an option if there is not a nearby power supply.
- **Bus stop clearways** (yellow bus cages painted on the carriageway)
  - Should only be installed when there is a persistent parking problem which prevents buses safely accessing the bus stop.
  - The installation of the markings creates the Traffic Regulations Order.
  - There is no requirement for formal consultation. However, consultation should be undertaken wherever there is likely to be an effect on local residents, especially if it removes kerbside parking in an area where there is limited off-street parking provision.
- **Real Time Passenger Information** (RTPI) or Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) at stops/shelters.
  - The RTPI/AVL systems are popular with passenger transport users and as more vehicles are equipped with trackers they give passengers accurate bus arrival times. They do require a power supply which may not be available in some rural locations.
    - It may be possible to install solar powered units
  - There is an additional ongoing maintenance cost that is not available through the ECC Revenue budget.
    - Future maintenance costs for new RTPI/AVL equipment should be agreed with the respective Town or Parish Council before the LHP approves the budget for the installation.
- **Raised kerbs** to allow access to the services for the mobility impaired, which typically includes the elderly as well as wheelchair/pushchair users.
- **Providing hard-standing** for a passenger waiting area – to prevent passengers getting muddy whilst waiting for their service.
- **Constructing a safe access route** to a bus stop, e.g. a footpath across a grass verge or dropped kerbs to provide a crossing point.



## 4. Typical Measures continued

Bus Shelters with advertising are provided through commercial providers such as JCDecaux and Clear Channel, whom pay District Councils for the privilege. These contracts are the responsibility of the Borough/City/District Councils and are often very long term – for example 15 years is a common contract term.

Other items that LHPs might be asked to consider include;

- **Introduction of parking restrictions** (either permanent or time restricted) in order to facilitate buses (and other large vehicles) exiting a junction,
- **Adaptations of kerb lines** typically at junctions, in order to facilitate smooth movement of a bus around a corner,
- **Adjusting the location of stop lines** can also assist buses in making particularly turns into junctions where either the angle is particularly sharp and/or space is limited on the highway.

It is also important to consider the potential for impact on local bus services, when considering other LHP schemes for approval. Whilst bus users may not be in the majority in some locations, a large number of people are dependent on bus services – therefore consideration should be given to ensuring that existing services are not likely to be adversely affected by changes to the highway infrastructure.


### Major Schemes

While frequency of a bus service and journey time are important to passengers, it is actually the reliability of the service that is the key factor to supporting or increasing ridership.


In these cases, Major Schemes will be required to implement bus priority measures and this is outside the scope of the LHP budget.

The use of Real Time Passenger Information can go a long way to improving passenger confidence in the bus network, but if the service is continuously unreliable then passengers will be deterred from using it and the service will become uneconomic and could be cut.

Concerns about bus reliability, frequency or journey time should be passed to the bus operator in the first instance. Where passengers feel that their issue has not been reasonably considered, this can be referred to the ECC passenger transport group, although their influence over commercially operated services is more limited, than for the services that it contracts for.



'My bus is never on time'



'My bus always gets stuck in traffic'

## 5. Scheme Investigation

### LHP Schemes

The successful implementation of any new infrastructure will depend on a number of unique factors to the scheme, including the location and any utility apparatus that may be present within the highway. An engineer will investigate the site before validating the proposal.



### Major Schemes

Schemes such as bus priority and congestion relief schemes are implemented to address the reliability and improve the journey time. These are generally identified through discussion with the operators.

The implementation of bus priority and congestion relief schemes would generally be major schemes and outside the remit of the LHP.

## 6. Costs and Timescales

The Essex County Council contract with Ringway Jacobs is a target cost contract and not a fixed price contract. This type of contract was chosen as the best type of contract to deliver savings and efficiencies and also to promote partnering between ECC and Ringway Jacobs.

An explanation of the process and indicative costs and timescales can be found in [Appendix 1](#)

## 7. Glossary of Terms

<b>AVL</b>	Automatic Vehicle Location (similar to RTPI)
<b>CMA</b>	Cabinet Member Action
<b>CMB</b>	Cabinet Member Briefing
<b>EA</b>	Environment Agency
<b>ECC</b>	Essex County Council
<b>EH</b>	Essex Highways
<b>LHP</b>	Local Highways Panel
<b>NEPP</b>	North Essex Parking Partnership
<b>PP</b>	Parking Partnership
<b>RTPI</b>	Real Time Passenger Information
<b>S106</b>	Section 106 (Money provided by a Developer to County Council to implement infrastructure as an obligation of the planning permission)
<b>S278</b>	Section 278 (Infrastructure required to be implemented by the Developer as an obligation of the planning permission)
<b>SERP</b>	Safer Essex Roads Partnership
<b>SID</b>	Speed Indicating Device
<b>SEPP</b>	South Essex Parking Partnership
<b>SLO</b>	Speed Limit Order
<b>SSSI</b>	Site of Special Scientific Interest
<b>TRO</b>	Traffic Regulation Order
<b>TSRGD</b>	Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions
<b>VAS</b>	Vehicle Activated Sign