



in cooperation with



MILTON KEYNES BUS PASSENGER CHARTER

January 2016

This Bus Charter has been written from the passenger perspective and sets out to identify the minimum standards bus passengers should expect to ensure a safe and effective bus service in Milton Keynes. It also defines the responsibilities of bus passengers using those bus services.

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Glossary

ENCTS – English National Concessionary Travel Scheme

RTPI – Real Time Passenger Information

LCD - Liquid Crystal Display

CPT – Confederation of Passenger Transport. (in the case of disabled access to buses, a joint code agreed with bus companies and Department of Transport).

ITSO – Integrated Transport Smartcard Organisation – set up by Department of Transport and transport providers to establish standardisation and interoperability of electronic ticketing to ensure a national standard. (TfL Oyster Card is not ITSO compliant)

Pay Point – provides top up card payment solutions for consumers and retailers.

CCTV – Closed Circuit Television cameras placed in bus to record incidents.

(1) Milton Keynes Council has a responsibility and duty to ensure that:

- (a) where shelters are installed they are properly maintained with lighting that works to provide a safe passenger environment. Contact details should be displayed in the shelters to report damage or defects;
- (b) every effort is made to provide shelters in heavily used locations;
- (c) any placement of shelters provides adequate coverage from prevailing weather conditions;
- (d) all sheltered and non-sheltered bus stops have accurate timetables installed;
- (e) timetables are in an easy to understand format using a font and font size that takes into account the needs of partially-sighted users, and installed at a height so that wheelchair users can also access the information;
- (f) timetables include some form of route map display or at a minimum indicate main route destinations (e.g. The Central Shopping Area, Rail Stations and Hospital);
- (g) when timetables are revised they are updated at all bus stops within 48 hours of the new one coming into operation. New timetable Information should also be available through the Council website at least 1 week in advance;
- (h) when printed 'MK Travel Guides' are available they are distributed throughout the community with adequate supplies available at community sites including MKube, Council Offices, Centre and Intu shopping centres information Desks, Central Library, Parish offices, local leisure centres and other public buildings;
- (i) every attempt is made to publicise fare structures in travel guides, route pamphlets, web sites and ideally in bus shelters;
- (j) it will continue to participate in the Government ENTCS* between 0930 and 2300 Monday to Friday, and all day at weekends and public holidays;
- (k) where RTPi* displays are provided, that by working in co-operation with the Bus Operators, accurate bus service information is provided. The system should include the ability to inform passengers about delays, unscheduled changes, accidents, breakdowns and other reasons for missing buses;
- (l) it maintains road conditions that ensure the safe and comfortable passage of buses and their passengers;
- (m) it responds in a timely manner to Bus Operators' request for urgent repairs to road services including traffic lights, dropped drains, and potholes;
- (n) where details of delays, such as closed roads due to road works or community events are known, posters with information should be posted at the bus stops affected (and ideally on the bus route concerned) in a timely manner and updated as necessary;

- (o) every effort is made in both strategic transport planning and in practical terms to implement and improve bus priority schemes to ensure the free flow of bus routes;

(2) Bus Operators have a duty and responsibility to ensure that:

- (a) their drivers are adequately trained; are courteous, professional and speak and understand English;
- (b) drivers are easily identifiable and present a good company image by wearing a company uniform or at a minimum, an identity badge identifying the driver as representing the operator;
- (c) driver training includes the importance of waiting until passengers are seated before moving their vehicle. Drivers should understand the needs of passengers who may require a little more time to get on and off the vehicle, (less able-bodied passengers, limited sight passengers, parents with pushchairs or young children, pregnant women, passengers carrying children and passengers with luggage);
- (d) drivers drive at a safe speed that takes into account the welfare of all passengers (the speed of travel should not be governed by the need to catch up schedules);
- (e) when driver changeovers occur this is done in a timely manner;
- (f) drivers receive a briefing ahead of the introduction of new services and major changes to existing services; and when a driver is allocated a route, they know the route.
- (g) customers are advised of any service changes in a timely manner (operators should take customer feedback into consideration when route changes are planned.)

(3) Reliability and Punctuality of Service

Availability of vehicles is the responsibility of all Bus Operators. Punctuality is important on all bus routes, and is a shared responsibility of both MK Council, Bus Operators and the Highways Agency.

Vehicle Availability

Passengers should expect bus operators to have a fleet that is adequate to meet the needs of all the routes operated.

Bus Operators should ensure that every effort is made to have fault free vehicles available at the start of each day's operation. In the event of a breakdown, replacement vehicle, assistance or other such provision should be put into place once reported. Passengers may need to be allowed to remain on board in inclement weather (dependant on the fault identified and if it is safe to do so) when waiting for a replacement or following bus.

Punctuality

Passengers should expect that all efforts are made to keep bus services punctual by meeting the times printed in displayed timetables, however:

- (a) in the event of significant delays outside the bus companies control (including accidents, extreme weather, road works or other traffic issues), drivers should

advise on-board passengers of the reasons if known, or if two way radios or text based communication exist, to keep in touch with central control and advise passengers accordingly;

- (b) Ideally advance warnings through the RTPI* system should advise passengers of delays;(dependant on operator access to Milton Keynes RTPI* system);
- (c) in the event of delays within a bus company's control, (for example a vehicle unavailability or staff absences), contact information should be readily available to passengers through various sources including information points, Bus Operators' websites and smartphone 'apps' to advise of any compensation process;
- (d) every effort is made to achieve or maintain high standards of punctuality and reliability.

(4) Buying a Bus Ticket

Considerable timetable delays are caused when bus drivers issue weekly, or monthly paper tickets on-board (This delay can be 2-3 minutes per passenger.) Every effort to improve this processing time should be made. Online ticket purchase should be encouraged along with development of smart ticketing alternatives at external ticket purchase points to assist the smoother flow of services.

It is to be expected that:

- (a) dependant on operator, ideally fare structures should be indicated at information points, on Bus Operators' websites and on any smartphone 'apps'. If route leaflets contain fare information it is correct at time of print;
- (b) when price increases are proposed by Bus Operators' or for Milton Keynes Council subsidised services, the changes to fares should be displayed in good time and should be published on all sources of information including Milton Keynes Council and Bus Operators Websites.
- (c) bus operators' and Milton Keynes Council will work together for an early introduction of Electronic Smartcard' technology and/or mobile phone based ticketing. (When an electronic ticket scheme is introduced the scheme should be operated to the ITSO* standard).
- (d) the introduction of 'phone apps' to purchase tickets by debit or credit cards before boarding buses should be publicised more widely where available;
- (e) there are notices in each bus indicating the maximum permitted number of standing passengers:

(5) What all Bus Passengers should expect:

- (a) **comfort** - to feel comfortable and safe even on the shortest of journeys. Seats should not be torn nor worn out or dirty;
- (b) **clean** – that buses are internally swept and externally washed where practicable, before they go into service. Dependant on operator, posters inside the bus should remind passengers that they should refrain from discarding litter in the bus

- (c) **heating and ventilation** – that existing heating and ventilation systems should be in full working order and well-maintained;
- (d) **easy to identify** – that clear destination information is displayed with the route number on the front, side (and rear of buses where fitted). These displays should be cleaned regularly to ensure that this information can be read;
- (e) **safe environment** – that a zero-tolerance policy to anti-social or intimidating behaviour is in operation. Travelling by bus should be safe for everyone. All Bus Operators' should provide drivers with adequate two-way contact to reassure passengers that a fast response is possible when necessary. Drivers must have the authority to ask passengers to leave the vehicle when disruptive incidents occur or seek assistance from their depots where there is a risk of physical assault (Ideally CCTV* is installed to provide evidence of such incidents.);
- (f) **audio / visual** – Where possible, AV information for passengers who are partially-sighted, blind or deaf, about the location of the next bus stop should be made available. Preferably this would take the form of LCD* information panels and/or audio announcements. If AV doesn't exist, if requested by limited sight passengers, drivers should be expected to respond to a passenger's request for help with destinations;

(6) What disabled passengers should also expect.

Bus Operators are expected to ensure that:

- (a) drivers are vigilant to passengers who are waiting at a bus stop and do not indicate by putting their hand out to request them to stop, that they may have limited sight or impaired hearing and cannot discern the bus arriving. (If the passenger has a white stick, or is accompanied by a guide dog, drivers should stop);
- (b) drivers make every effort to position the bus at kerbs to ensure the safe mounting and descent by limited sight, elderly, disabled, and wheelchair passengers where possible. (Stopping the bus from the kerb edge can be detrimental and dangerous to these users). If an issue exists such as illegal parking by cars in bus bays, then drivers should warn the passengers concerned and report the matter to the operator, so that these problems can be raised with Milton Keynes Council;
- (c) buses in their fleet have operational ramps that can be extended for access by passengers in wheelchairs or those passengers who have serious mobility problems;
- (d) drivers have the authority to ask pushchairs / buggies to be folded so that wheelchair users can access the wheelchair space, and ask passengers occupying the space to move to alternative seats or stand;
- (e) when users of guide / medical service dogs are boarding the bus that drivers have the authority to ask other passengers to make room for the passenger and dog, and that the driver ensures that the passenger is seated safely;
- (f) drivers ensure the bus aisles are kept clear and safe. The criteria universally accepted by bus companies is that buggies should not block the aisles;

- (g) in line with the CPT* code which all bus operators have agreed to, the definition for acceptance of electric wheelchairs / mobility scooters is clearly published and includes the process for obtaining weight validation;

(7) Accessibility for all users.

Bus Operators should:

- (a) allow drivers the discretion as to what or whom is allowed to board their bus. Should disputes occur with any passenger who uses profanities and abuse, driver training should reinforce that drivers must take firm action, and exercise their authority to request or instruct those passengers to leave the vehicle or to seek assistance from their home depot if there is a risk of physical assault;
- (b) ensure drivers are sensitive to the needs of elderly passengers using walking frames, walkers and shopping trolleys which are used not only to carry goods, but also as an aid to walking.
- (c) ensure that drivers are also sensitive to the needs of heavily pregnant women and parents and carers carrying children and ensure they are seated before moving off;
- (d) ensure drivers have the authority to refuse passengers trying to board with excessively large or weighty luggage if the driver feels it would compromise the safety and comfort of other passengers.

(8) Complaints

It is the responsibility of Bus Operators Customer Services and Milton Keynes Council to ensure that:

- (a) the procedures, telephone number or email address for formal complaints is displayed clearly in shelters, route information guides, pamphlets, and Council and operator's websites;
- (b) complaints about bus company services are dealt with by knowledgeable staff with sufficient understanding to implement the company procedures. Complainants should feel that they have been answered in a calm, professional manner.

(9) Passenger Responsibilities

Bus Passengers travelling on Milton Keynes Public Transport have a responsibility;

- (a) to travel with a valid ticket or concessionary pass and have it ready before boarding the bus to present to the driver, and to show a valid ticket or concessionary pass when requested by staff;
- (b) to tender reasonable currency and not present large denomination notes or large quantities of small change to purchase a ticket;
- (c) when asked by passengers who are disabled, elderly, heavily pregnant, parents and carers carrying children to give priority to a seat;
- (d) not to speak to drivers while the bus is in motion or behave in a manner that is abusive, threatening or likely to cause offense to other passengers or staff;
- (e) to fold buggies if requested by drivers in a responsive and non-aggressive way; not to block aisles with shopping or luggage;
- (f) to request their required stop in a timely manner;
- (g) not to board a bus under the influence of alcohol and not to consume hot food or drink while travelling on the bus;
- (h) not to wilfully damage or misuse bus seats or fittings, and not travel with feet on seats;
- (i) not to operate any musical equipment or instrument in a manner which will cause annoyance to other passengers;
- (j) to allow passengers to disembark before attempting to board;
- (k) not to smoke while on board a bus or while in shelters (including e-cigarettes);
- (l) to report drivers that do not exhibit a professional or safe driving standard and to compliment those that do.

CHARTER PARTNERS



Milton Keynes Council
Transport Department
Civic Offices
1 Saxon Gate East
Central Milton Keynes
MK9 3HN



Arriva (Shires & Essex)
52 Colts Holm Road
Wolverton
Milton Keynes
MK12 5QD



Vale Travel
13 Vale Road
Aylesbury
HP20 1JA



Redline
8 Gatehouse Way
Aylesbury
HP19 8DB



Centrebus
102 Cannock Street
Leicester,
LE4 9HR



Milton Keynes Bus Users Group
c/o 19 Cumbria Close
Bletchley
Milton Keynes
MK3 7EL



Red Rose Travel
Blinking Owl Garage
Oxford Road
Dinton
Aylesbury, HP17 8TT



Stagecoach East
100 Cowley Road
Cambridge,
CB4 0DN



Stagecoach Midlands
Main Road
Far Cotton
Northampton, NN4 8ES



Uno Buses
Gypsy Moth Avenue
Hatfield
AL10 9BS



Z & S International
Unit 5, Chamberlain Road
Aylesbury
HP19 8DY

Milton Keynes Bus Users Group is grateful to the following groups for their contributions:



This Charter signed on behalf of

Milton Keynes Council

Name

Position

ARRIVA the Shires

Name

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Vale Travel

Name

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Centrebus

Name

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UNO Buses

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Stagecoach Midlands

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