



Milton Keynes Bus Partnership: Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme

December 2021

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Appendix A – Terms of Reference for Milton Keynes Bus Partnership

Definitions

In this document, the following capitalised terms shall have the meanings ascribed to them below:

1985 Act	Transport Act 1985
2000 Act	Transport Act 2000
2017 Act	Bus Services Act 2017
Bus Operators (or Operators)	All providers of Qualifying Bus Services
The Council, Milton Keynes Council or MKC	Milton Keynes Council
Enhanced Partnership Administrator	That person appointed by Milton Keynes Council to be responsible for the administration of Bus Partnership meetings, including the formulation of agendas and distribution of papers and meeting notes, as set out in the Terms of Reference for the Milton Keynes Bus Partnership.
Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation	A formal variation of the relevant Enhanced Partnership Scheme(s) as a result of the mechanism set out in section 4, which will then constitute a formal variation of the relevant scheme for the purposes of s.138E(1) of the 2000 Act.
Facilities	Those facilities referred to in Part B which shall be deemed such for the purposes of s.138D(1) of the 2000 Act.
Milton Keynes Bus Service Improvement Plan (or Milton Keynes BSIP, or BSIP)	The Bus Service Improvement Plan published by Milton Keynes Council.
Milton Keynes Bus Partnership	The committee of Milton Keynes Bus Operator representatives, County Council representatives and stakeholders responsible for considering recommendations put forward for inclusion in Enhanced Partnership Plans, Schemes or Scheme Variations using the mechanisms set out in the various sections of this document.
Milton Keynes Enhanced Partnership (or Enhanced Partnership or EP)	The Enhanced Partnership covering the geographic extent of the administrative boundary of the Borough of Milton Keynes, shown for identification purposes in Figure 3-1.

Milton Keynes Bus Partnership Stakeholder Group	The committee of identified stakeholders, providing external insight and challenge on priorities included with any EP Plan or Scheme, and making proposals to the Milton Keynes Bus Partnership.
Measures	Those measures referred to in Part B which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of s.138D(2) of the 2000 Act.
Non-qualifying Bus Service	Services excluded from classification as Qualifying Bus Services.
Qualifying Bus Service	<p>A registered local bus service with one or more stopping place within the geographical area of the Enhanced Partnership, except for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools or works registered local bus service not eligible for Bus Service Operators Grant • Cross-boundary registered local bus service with less than 10% of its registered mileage within the Enhanced Partnership area • Services operated under section 22 of the 1985 Act • A registered local bus service which is an excursion or tour • Services run under sections 89-91 of the Transport Act 1985 where the local authority retains all the revenue from that service. • Any other registered local bus service that the Milton Keynes Bus Partnership decides should be excluded from all or specific requirements of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme. <p>For the avoidance of doubt, a list of Qualifying Bus Services will be published at the start of each Council financial year.</p>
Requirements	Those requirements placed upon Bus Operators identified as such within Part B, which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of s.138C 2017 Act.
Terms of Reference for Milton Keynes Bus Partnership	The document that sets out how the Bus Partnership is constituted and the way it conducts its business (as included in Appendix A).

1. Part A - Enhanced Partnership Plan

The Milton Keynes Enhanced Partnership for Buses is made in accordance with Section 138G(1) of the Transport Act 2000 by Milton Keynes Council.

The Plan comes into effect on 1 April 2022 and will remain valid until revoked.

Introduction

- 1.1 The Milton Keynes Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), published in October 2021, set out the ambitions of Milton Keynes Council (MKC), bus operators and other partners to deliver an excellent, green and inclusive public transport system across the Milton Keynes area, both for urban and rural users. Considering the challenges and opportunities, it set out a plan to ensure that public transport achieves its full potential in supporting the growth of the area and the extensive planned development and renaissance of the City, including the delivery of a mass rapid transit system as part of the 2050 Strategy.
- 1.2 Milton Keynes is a unique place and needs its own bold solutions. In 2021, MK Connect was launched across the entire area, offering demand responsive transport where bus services do not exist. This was the first step in building up public transport usage and will establish demands for new conventional bus services. The Bus Service Improvement Plan sets out further substantial service developments and aims to accelerate programmes of infrastructure replacement and improvement.
- 1.3 The BSIP represents an ambitious approach to revitalising the Milton Keynes bus network. With external funding, it will deliver a brighter future for bus use that will play a vital role in achieving Milton Keynes' aspirations to be a low-carbon, clean, growth area.
- 1.4 Drawing on the BSIP, this document fulfils the statutory requirements set out by the Bus Services Act 2017 of an Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan for Milton Keynes. Initially, this will facilitate the introduction of an EP Scheme aimed at supporting and developing bus services across Milton Keynes, with the aim of starting to achieve the objectives set out in the BSIP.
- 1.5 In accordance with the statutory requirements for an EP Plan, this document includes:
 - Overview and map of the geographical area covered
 - Factors affecting the local bus market

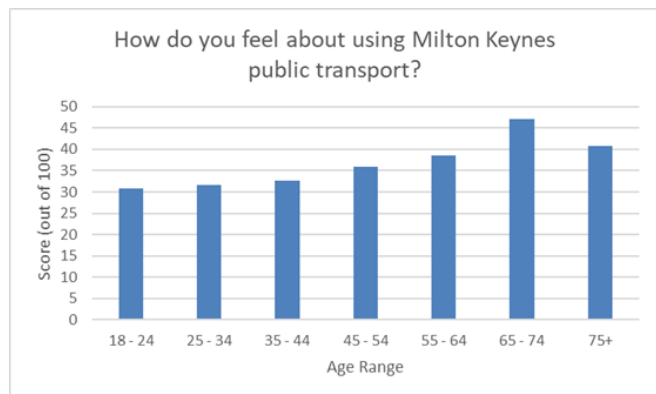
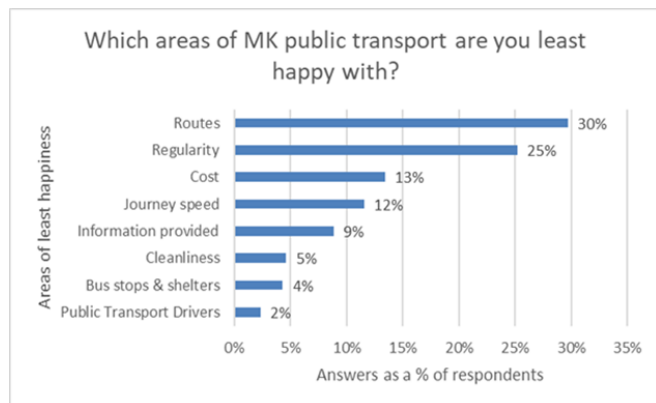
- Summary of passengers' experiences in using bus services and the priorities of users and non-users for improvements
- Trends in bus journey speeds and the impact of congestion on bus services
- Objectives that are sought for bus service provision
- Interventions needed to achieve the desired outcomes
- Governance arrangements
- Competition considerations

2. Bus travel in Milton Keynes

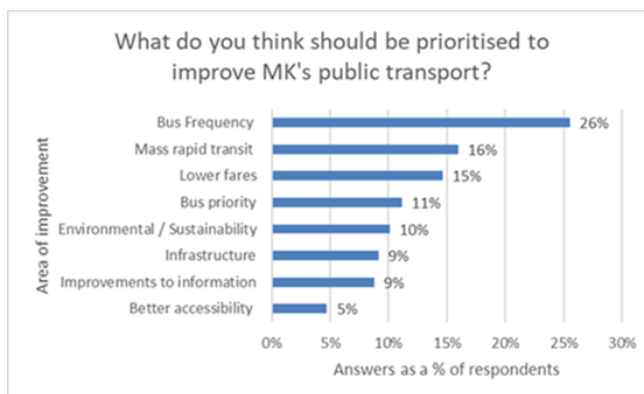
What do people think?

Public views

- 2.1 Transport Focus' Bus Passenger Survey (2019) highlighted relatively low levels of satisfaction with bus services in Milton Keynes, compared with elsewhere. Overall satisfaction was just 76%, significantly lower than any other area surveyed (with Nottingham – best in class- at 95%) and much lower than the next nearest at 85%. This was a drop of 8% on the previous year. Indeed, satisfaction levels for all aspects of bus travel were between 7 and 10% lower than previously. Factors most affecting the satisfaction score were, in descending order, waiting time and punctuality, bus driver, value for money and on-bus environment and comfort. Satisfaction with value for money was just 52%, punctuality 53% and journey time 73%. Of different groups of passengers, free bus holders were more satisfied than others (85%).
- 2.2 In June 2021, a flyer was posted to all 110,000 households, highlighting the new Get Around MK website and inviting people to have their say on public transport in Milton Keynes, both in respect of current provision and what sorts of improvements should be made. A total of 1806 responses were received from people across the Borough and of all age groups. 57% of responses were from non-bus users.
- 2.3 People were least happy with bus routes and the regularity of services. The priority for improvement was the provision of more frequent services, followed by better interchange and bus stops.
- 2.4 Older age groups showed higher levels of satisfaction than younger ones, probably reflecting the benefit of free concessionary travel.



2.5 With regard to the top priority for improvement, respondents highlighted more frequent services (26%), followed by mass rapid transit (16%), lower fares (15%) and bus priority (11%).



2.6 The MK Bus User Group has on-going engagement with MKC, with opportunities to comment and make suggestions on services. Furthermore, the Group is involved in the Partnership working groups.

2.7 As part of being more transparent and actively engaging with users, data is now provided on the MKC website regarding performance levels. This dashboard will continue to be refined and developed.

Stakeholder engagement

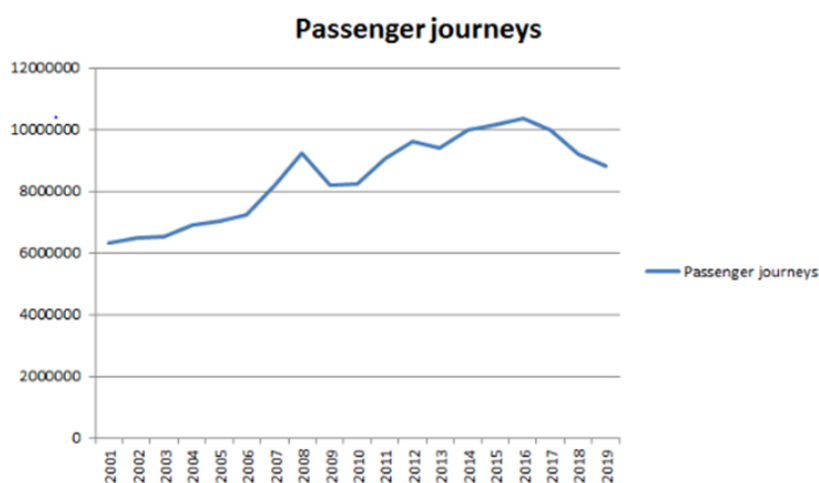
2.8 A Stakeholder Group was established in 2021 specifically to inform the development of the BSIP. This brings together many different interested parties, including cross party councillor representation, urban and rural parishes, businesses, residents, the bus user group, disability and accessibility groups, along with other council departments and transport providers who will not be signatories to the EP, such as rail operators and e-bike providers.

2.9 Business representatives have highlighted the importance of ensuring that major employment areas are well served by bus services, pointing to the importance of frequency and journey time to employees, along with cost. Furthermore, the need to ensure that times of operation fit with shifts and flexible working arrangements. Employers would welcome more information, in order that they can promote public transport use to their staff or potential employees when recruiting.

Patronage

2.10 Bus patronage grew significantly from 2001 and between 2009/10 and 2015/16 grew by a further 25%. This may have been partly due to the growth of the city's population and new employment opportunities created by the opening of distribution hubs. However, given that usage per head of population also rose by over 13% during the same latter period, it suggests that there was generally increased usage.

- 2.11 Since then, patronage has declined, with a fall of 1.3 million journeys between 2015/16 and 2018/19. Indeed, total passenger journeys in 2019 were lower than in 2010. Along with the recent decline in overall use there has been a fall in the average number of passenger journeys per head. The general decline in recent years has been similar to that in many parts of the country, reflecting rising car usage, moves to greater use of online services and shopping, and continued erosion of bus services. Unlike some local authorities, MKC continued to support a substantial number of bus services through this period, including evening and Sunday provision, until their replacement by MK Connect in 2021.



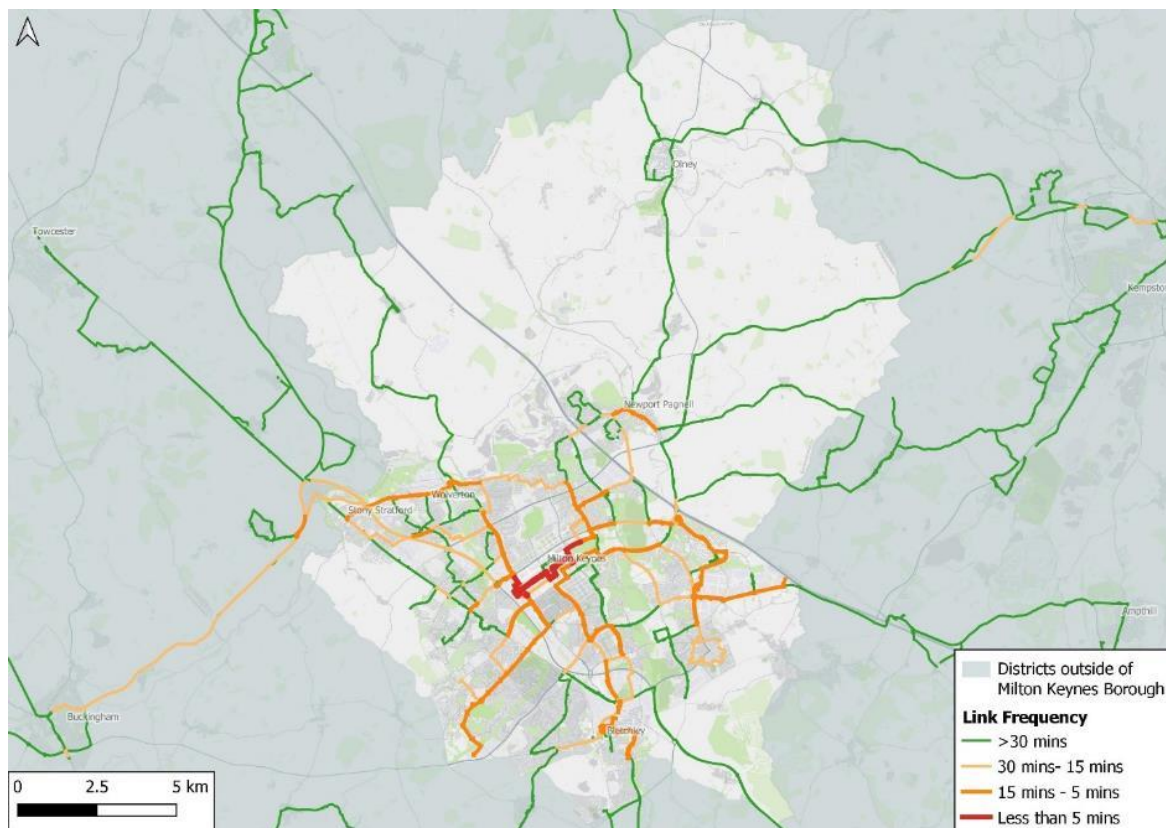
- 2.12 In 2018/19, there were 32 passenger journeys per head of population. Whilst this is significantly higher than more rural authorities (which it should be given that much of its area is urban), it is below the average for the South East (38) and well behind levels of use seen in traditional urban areas, such as Leicester (75) and Nottingham (147). Equally, it is lower than other expanding urban areas, such as Peterborough (47) and Swindon (54). This reflects the high car ownership and use in Milton Keynes and the difficulties for bus to perform well where population densities are lower than traditional centres.
- 2.13 Residents have above average levels of car ownership in Milton Keynes at 81%, compared with 74% for the rest of England (2011 Census), with above average car use for the journey to work at 62%, against 54% for England.
- 2.14 Bus accounted for just 5.5% of journeys to work in 2011, which is beneath the average for England (7.2%) and significantly lower than traditional cities, such as Nottingham (10.5%).

Bus network

- 2.15 The primary providers of passenger transport services in Milton Keynes are operators that run services on a commercial basis. It is generally in the interests of the people of Milton Keynes for commercial bus services to be attractive, efficient, and stable. Furthermore, commercial services require no subsidy and so there is no cost to the taxpayer. Such networks can meet the needs of many people in providing a means of collective transport that reduces congestion on our roads, limits vehicular emissions and provides access to work and life opportunities.
- 2.16 At the point of developing the EP, the bus network consists of 26 fixed route bus services, of which 3 have some level of MKC subsidy, supplemented by authority-wide demand responsive transport provision.
- 2.17 Arriva operates the majority of services and carries about 85% of passengers. The key north-south and east-west service corridors account for about 50% of overall passengers. There are several cross-boundary services offering links with surrounding places, along with several infrequent services that focus on Milton Keynes as a destination.
- 2.18 Arriva provides most of the Milton Keynes city network commercially, along with other services to Aylesbury and a supported service to Northampton. Stagecoach operates interurban services, such as the X5 to Oxford and Bedford and 99 to Luton. Uno, a bus company owned by University of Hertfordshire, provides services on the Milton Keynes to Bedford corridor, centred on Cranfield University. Other operators provide less frequent commercial or supported services.
- 2.19 Several community transport providers run shopper services from neighbouring areas to Central Milton Keynes.
- 2.20 The network carried around 8.7 million passengers per year pre-COVID. Without intervention, it is expected that patronage will recover to around 6.9 million trips by the end of 2022, 80% of pre-pandemic levels. At the end of September 2021, usage stood at 68% of pre-COVID levels.
- 2.21 The bus network is largely historic, with routes changing little in the last decade, apart from adjustments to cater for recently developed areas. Until recently, potential new commercial services were undermined by subsidised bus services that had been introduced over time to meet specific requests or to fill gaps. These had low usage and, in some areas, abstracted patronage from commercial services. There is an opportunity with recent changes to truly review network requirements as patronage recovers.

- 2.22 A Park & Ride facility is available at MK Coachway, offering free parking and the ability to use service 3 to and from Central Milton Keynes (CMK). This is provided on a commercial basis and the operator has identified an opportunity to develop Park & Ride further in partnership with MKC.
- 2.23 Most bus services operate at intervals of 15 to 60 minutes during the daytime (excluding occasional or peak only services). In some parts of the city, services come together to provide higher combined frequencies as shown below:

Figure 2-1 Link Frequency of the Milton Keynes Network



- 2.24 There is a lack of consistency in service levels to different parts of the Borough. Some areas enjoy daytime frequencies of a bus every 10 minutes, whilst others have a bus every 30 minutes or more. Whilst this is dictated by what operators consider viable, based on levels of demand, the lower frequency services are an unattractive alternative to the car.
- 2.25 In April 2021, most subsidised services, which had frequencies of 30 minutes or longer, ended and borough-wide demand responsive transport (DRT), branded as MK Connect, was introduced. MK Connect is integrated with the commercial network to ensure a reasonable transport offer for the area, directing users to a local bus where

one is available for the journey requested. It provides greater travel choice and flexibility, closing gaps in connectivity, particularly in rural areas. The Council has committed funding over the next five years to develop MK Connect, ensuring full coverage of the east and west expansion areas.

Density of bus services

- 2.26 Over two thirds of the population are within 400m of bus services that provide at least a half-hourly service. 39% of the total population is served by the two key North-South and East-West corridors. This level of potential demand provides good justification for targeting these routes for improvement.

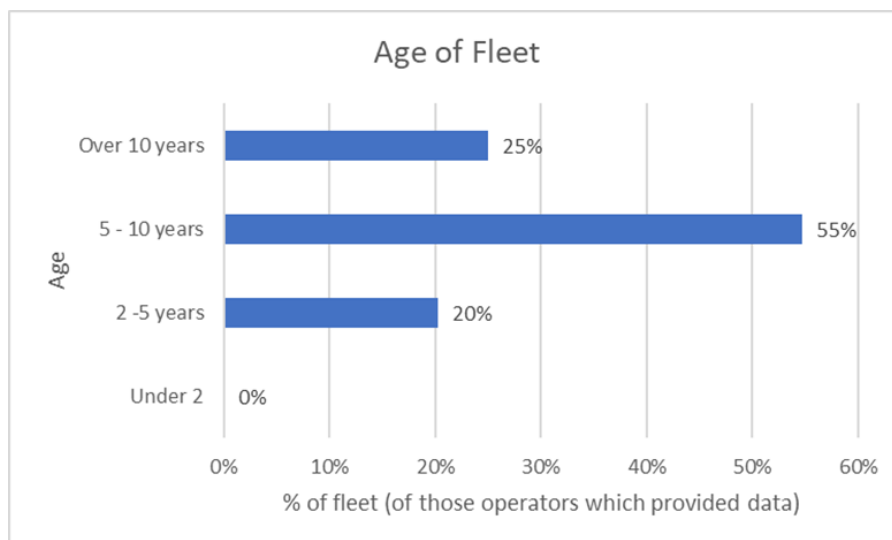
Table 2-1 Population within 400m of different service frequencies

Service type	% of population within 400m
Key North-South/East-West corridors	39%
Half hourly or better bus services	69%
All regular services	79%

Bus fleet

- 2.27 In October 2021, 86% of the bus fleet was over 5 years old, with a quarter of vehicles more than 10 years old. 81% of vehicles had Euro V or poorer emission standards.
- 2.28 As well as seeking to convert the bus fleet to electric, such as through the ZEBRA scheme, MKC has an ambition for taxi and private hire vehicle fleets to move to electric.

Figure 2-2 Average age of fleet



Traffic levels and congestion

- 2.29 Whilst the grid road system provides significant capacity and alternative routing for vehicles, levels of traffic have been steadily growing and various junctions see congestion. Between 2009 and 2015, annual average traffic flow increased by 6% and average journey times in the morning peak increased by 12%.
- 2.30 The grid roads have fast moving traffic along them, which makes it difficult for buses to turn out onto them or pull away from bus stops and laybys. This causes further variability in bus journey times.
- 2.31 Milton Keynes Bus User Group suggests that bus patronage may have declined in 2016/17 because people lost confidence in services due to perceived punctuality and reliability issues. Equally, the real time information system was viewed as being unreliable at that time. Pre-pandemic there were times when buses suffered from congestion on the approach to Station Square, outside Milton Keynes Station, which is served by virtually all bus services. Delays were caused by cars and taxis dropping off and picking up at the station.
- 2.32 With lower train use during the pandemic, the amount of traffic around the station has been significantly reduced. As such, there have been no delays to bus services and

reliability has been very good. Furthermore, the real time information system has since been replaced and is performing much better than the previous one.

Fares and ticketing

- 2.33 Within the city there is a relatively coarse fare structure, with three main adult single fare bands. Depending on distance, the average fare per km ranges from £0.69 to £1.69. For the most typical journeys within the city, such as trips to the city centre from Wolverton, Newport Pagnell, Kingston, Bletchley and Westcroft, the average cost is between £0.97 and £1.13 per km.

Ticketing and coordination arrangements

- 2.34 Operators each provide a range of ticket options, including area-wide day, week, 4-week and annual season tickets. Flexible ticket bundles are also available, such as Uno's five 1-day bundle for use on non-consecutive days and Arriva's 12-day bundle to use within a 30-days.
- 2.35 Arriva offers a Milton Keynes day ticket, along with a version for 2 people travelling together.
- 2.36 Most operators participate in a multi-operator ticketing agreement, MK Move. This offers both an electronic pay-as-you-go purse and multi-operator period tickets (one day; one week; and 4-weekly). The day ticket costs £5.20. Some operators also offer their own commercial add-ons to this to extend journey opportunities beyond the Milton Keynes boundary.
- 2.37 The 'All in 1' card for under 19s, allows travel for £1 single, with further options for period tickets of either 1 or 4 weeks. This operates as a concessionary travel scheme, funded by MKC. Work is underway to make the card smart and to offer return tickets.
- 2.38 For those making journeys by bus and rail, Bletchley and Milton Keynes PlusBus is available, offering unlimited bus travel within the urban area. gain, virtually all operators participate in this.
- 2.39 MK Connect costs £3.50 per journey at peak times and £2.50 at other times. Concessionary travel passes and All in 1 cards can be used on the service.

Timetables and information

- 2.40 Recognising the importance of good information, MKC introduced a dedicated website 'Get Around MK' in 2021. This provides a single point for all travel information,

including details of all public transport services, timetables, and fares. Development of this site is ongoing.

- 2.41 Operators also provide service and timetable information, with details of day and season tickets on their own websites.
- 2.42 MKC provides and maintains bus information panels at all bus stops. This information has always been of a reasonable quality and kept up to date. However, with an intention to improve on this, a review, of what and how it is presented, is being undertaken. New timetable cases are being procured and information at city centre stops has been moved so that it is all inside shelters.
- 2.43 There are just over 100 real time LED signs and 12 larger multi-line LED signs. The Council is also trialling 15 battery powered and 2 solar e-ink displays. The battery displays include an audio announcement facility and there are other screens for which best use is being explored.

Availability of information

- 2.44 Timetable information is available via the websites of operators and MKC, along with the 'GetAroundMK' website. Fares information is also available on operators' websites. Day and season tickets are widely promoted, although only some operators show single fares.

Barriers and opportunities

Land use patterns

- 2.45 Reliability has historically been poor, at times dropping below 80%. Given the dominance of the car in Milton Keynes, and the relative ease of motoring with relatively uncongested and fast grid roads and plentiful parking, it is easy to see why the bus seems unattractive and not the mode of choice.
- 2.46 The greatest challenges for the bus is its ability to compete with the convenience offered by a private vehicle. Dispersed rural communities, low density neighbourhoods in the city and the complexity of urban estate networks make it difficult to provide fast and effective bus services, therefore reinforcing car ownership and use. Furthermore, bus operators tailor their services to existing levels of use, rather than taking a risk of enhancing service levels to try and attract users.

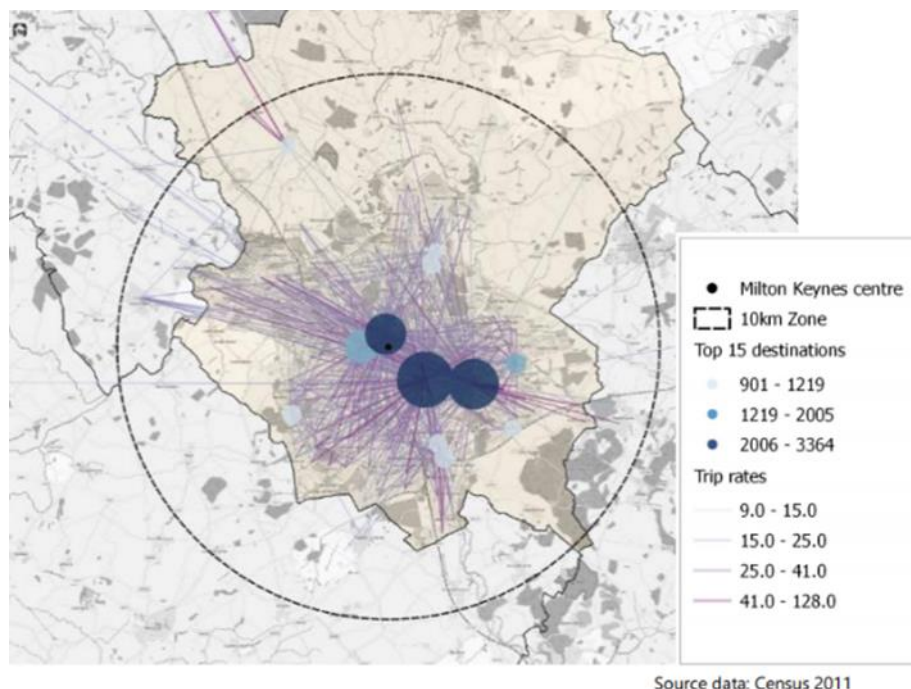
- 2.47 Bus use is low for the journey to work, at just 5.5% of all commuting trips. 50% of bus users indicate that they have no other transport choice. This suggests a lack of options and bus use by necessity, not through choice. For the 19% of households in the Borough who do not have access to a private vehicle, the availability of low-cost transport options to access education, training and employment opportunities is critical to ensure these residents are able to participate in the economic growth of the city.
- 2.48 All homes located in the city can access Central Milton Keynes by car within 20 minutes. However, only 23% of the population can do this by alternative travel mode. For such reasons, there are significant mobility inequalities for those residents who do not own or have access to a car.
- 2.49 Comparisons of journey times by bus and car on the key north-south bus corridor highlight some of the differences. Bus times are significantly slower than car, with some journeys taking almost three times as long. This links to the findings of the residents' survey, where 12% of respondents suggested they were least happy with bus journeys times.

Table 2-2 Journey times by car compared to bus

Origin	Destination	Journey time (mins)				Off-peak journey time ratio bus/car
		Bus 08:30	Car 08:30	Bus 13:00	Car 13:00	
CMK The Point	Wolverton	33	12	33	14	2.36
Wolverton	CMK The Point	37	12	32	14	2.29
CMK The Point	Bletchley Bus Station	27	14	27	14	1.93
Bletchley Bus Station	CMK The Point	24	16	24	14	1.71
CMK The Point	Stony Stratford	35	14	35	14	2.50
Stony Stratford	CMK The Point	41	14	37	14	2.64
CMK Railway Station	Milton Keynes Hospital	20	9	20	9	2.22
Milton Keynes Hospital	CMK Railway Station	26	14	26	14	1.86
Wolverton	Bletchley	64	18	59	20	2.95
Bletchley	Wolverton	57	20	57	20	2.85

- 2.50 Unlike traditional towns and cities, Milton Keynes was established as a “poly-centric” post-war New Town. The 1967 Master Plan for Milton Keynes called for a great grid of roads to maximise choice of routes and ease of access, thereby reducing journey times and the risk of congestion. Activities were purposefully dispersed: employment areas were distributed throughout the city, and local centres built in almost every grid square. This creates challenging travel demands for bus services, which tend to work best where there are significant aligned demands.
- 2.51 The dispersed nature of travel demand is highlighted by the map of journey to work trips.

Figure 2-3 Journey to work (2011)



- 2.52 The lessons from the past are being addressed and the intention of new development policies will be to encourage the establishment of housing and business areas that better facilitate efficient bus operation.

Car parking

- 2.53 Central Milton Keynes has a large supply of over 20,000 car parking spaces. Some spaces have premium rate charges of £2 per hour, but the majority are available at a standard rate of 50p per hour. This makes parking costs significantly less than a number of other town and city centres, as shown below:

Table 2-3 Comparison of car parking charges

Location	2 hours daytime parking	All day parking 8hours
Milton Keynes	£1.00	£4.00
Bedford	£1.20 - £2.20	£4.00 - £8.00
Luton	£1.30 - £1.90	£8.00
Peterborough	£2.50 - £3.50	£5.00 - £10.50
Cambridge	£4.80	£8.20 - £17.50
Oxford	£4.00	£18.00

Source: Local Authority Websites

- 2.54 The large amount of car parking in CMK is reflected in comparisons of parking spaces per job:

Table 2-4 Parking spaces per job

Location	Parking spaces per job
Milton Keynes	0.13
Peterborough	0.07
Luton	0.05
Northampton	0.03
Cambridge	0.03
Oxford	0.02

Areas of opportunity and unserved markets

- 2.55 Given the anticipated growth of both housing and employment in Milton Keynes there will be significant opportunities for the public transport network.
- 2.56 Over 25,000 new houses are expected to be constructed within the city by 2031. Strategic Development Sites have been allocated within the Local Plan as sites where large numbers of housing and other mixed-use development can be placed. These new communities pose a significant opportunity for the public transport network, with the possibility to provide many thousands of new passengers if the network is designed to service these new communities.

- 2.57 Although some of the Strategic Development Sites are expected to be mixed-use, the density of employment is likely to remain highest within Central Milton Keynes. Currently the highest employment density is in the LSOA encompassing Milton Keynes Railway Station where there are 2100 jobs per km². Employment density is also greater than 700 jobs per km² in the LSOA encompassing 'the centre' shopping centre and Milton Keynes Hospital.

Risks

- 2.58 Whilst the National Bus Strategy asks local authorities and bus operators to be ambitious for the development of bus services, there are risks that may impact the ability to achieve the aspirations. In particular, the rate of patronage recovery post-pandemic. If patronage has not recovered by 2022/23, the bus network in Milton Keynes may have a £1m p.a. revenue shortfall, which may result in services being cutback by operators. This could undermine a number of the initiatives included in the BSIP, particularly around network development and service enhancement, but also around the justification for investment in bus priority measures.
- 2.59 There is much uncertainty about the long-term impact of the pandemic on travel behaviour. Surveys indicate that 36% of bus users are travelling less by bus and only 14% are travelling more. Whilst 46% of bus users expect their use of bus to return to pre-pandemic levels, 41% of bus users do not know.
- 2.60 It is possible that some of the negative impacts of the pandemic could be countered by policy changes (both nationally and locally) introduced in response to the climate emergency, whereby emphasis is given to modal shift to sustainable travel. However, the likelihood and extent of this is yet unknown.
- 2.61 The current shortage of bus drivers is an issue across the country. It is unknown how long this problem is likely to go on for and when enough newly qualified drivers will be available. Furthermore, the difficulties in recruiting drivers will result in higher wage costs, which will increase the cost of bus operations. These two factors could impact on both the ability to deliver bus service enhancements and the cost of introducing them.

Policy context

- 2.62 Milton Keynes is a vibrant and dynamic place – a great place for business, living and leisure. It is known for its uniqueness and innovation.
- 2.63 Milton Keynes is growing faster than other places. It has a younger age profile, with 27.4% of its population under 19 (compared with 23.7% for England as a whole). 13.1%

of the population are 65+ (compared with 17.9% for England). 26% of the population is made up of black and minority ethnic groups.

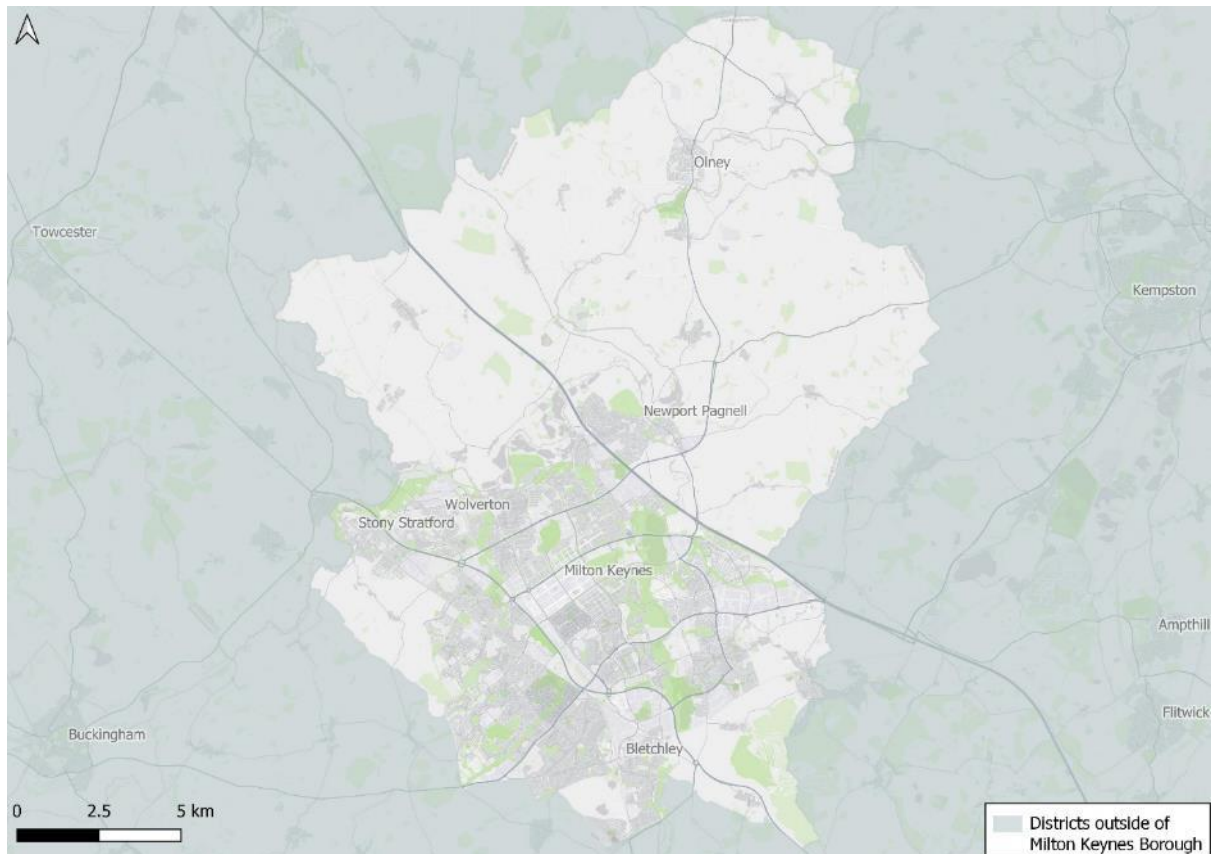
- 2.64 Its growth and development mean that significant opportunities exist across Milton Keynes. The dispersed pattern of development and network of grid roads means that many people choose to use a car. Milton Keynes is an especially challenging place to plan and provide public transport, meaning that bold and different ways of doing this are needed.
- 2.65 Recognising the detrimental effect of rising traffic levels and the need to ensure good access to opportunities for all, Milton Keynes Council (MKC) is committed to developing an effective public transport system. This will support further growth, protect the environment and enhance the health and wellbeing of residents. Indeed, this process has commenced with the introduction of Borough-wide demand responsive transport (MK Connect) and plans for a mass rapid transit (MRT) system.
- 2.66 The Mobility Strategy 2018-2036 (or most recent Local Transport Plan, LTP4) seeks to ensure a transport system that will:
- Support growth and provide mobility for all
 - Provide an effective network
 - Maximise travel choice
 - Protect transport users and the environment
- 2.67 The Strategy includes plans to improve public transport in various ways, including the development of a partnership between the Council and bus operators, in order to reduce journey times by public transport and achieve greater satisfaction with bus services. The overall intention being to increase patronage on the bus network and to help reduce the mode share of the private car.
- 2.68 Supportive policies for public transport are promoted through Plan: MK, the Local Plan for Milton Keynes adopted in 2019. One highlights the possibility that **some areas will be designating for higher densities, with a different relationship to grid roads and public transport corridors.**
- 2.69 In December 2020, the desire for public transport enhancement was further supported by the MK Strategy for 2050, which planned for long term growth to a population of 500,000. One of its seven big ambitions is **to make it easier for everyone to travel on foot, by bike and with better public transport.** Central to this is the development of a road-based (rubber-tyred) mass rapid transit (MRT) system, with a network of services operational by 2050. The Strategy highlights the use of an Enhanced Partnership to help facilitate the delivery of MRT.

- 2.70 The greater focus on more sustainable travel options supports the MK Sustainability Strategy (2019), which commits to achieving a carbon neutral position by 2030.

3. Enhanced Partnership Plan

3.1 The Milton Keynes Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan covers the whole of Milton Keynes.

Figure 3-1: Milton Keynes EP area



Vision, goals and objectives

BSIP Vision

The vision for Milton Keynes is that it will have an excellent, green and inclusive public transport system used by all.

BSIP Goals

The main goal is to significantly increase the relevance of public transport in the lives of the people of Milton Keynes, reducing the dominance of the car, supporting growth, creating inclusivity of movement and helping to improve health and wellbeing for all.

The aim is to see the public transport system in Milton Keynes acknowledged for excellence – used out of choice by all. Success will be driven by innovation and determination to achieve the best quality of service and lowest environmental impact.

BSIP Objectives

The vision will be achieved by addressing a number of objectives:

- ❖ Based on a service hierarchy, provide an attractive, coordinated public transport network, offering high quality services and infrastructure, supporting the potential for the development of rapid transit services.
- ❖ Enhance bus service frequencies and operating times on key routes and across the borough to significantly increase patronage.
- ❖ Provide measures to support bus reliability and improve journey times.
- ❖ Offer integrated ticketing that makes bus travel easier and fares that offer good value.
- ❖ Protect and improve passenger infrastructure and facilitate multi-modal interchange.
- ❖ Ensure that planning policies fully support public transport delivery and prioritise more sustainable transport modes.
- ❖ Work with bus operators to help achieve the Council's 'carbon neutral by 2030 ambition' by improving fleet, introducing alternatively fuelled vehicles and trailing innovative technologies.

- 3.2 The Plan provides the backdrop for specific EP Schemes that will detail actions and developments to be taken jointly by partners to deliver a significant improvement in bus services in Milton Keynes that will help meet the above objectives.

- 3.3 The first EP Scheme seeks to outline and commit partners to measures that will help provide a stable and consistent network for users in Milton Keynes and outlines a commitment to the development of other schemes on approval of funding.
- 3.4 Within the Milton Keynes BSIP, a range of interventions have been identified that address the aim and objectives set out above. As funding availability allows, these will be brought forward and implemented (either singly or in combination) in future Schemes made under the Enhanced Partnership Plan.
- 3.5 An EP Plan can only exist if there is at least one associated EP Scheme in place. Therefore, for as long as an EP Scheme is in place, a Plan must also be in place. ion, goals and objectives.

Funding sources

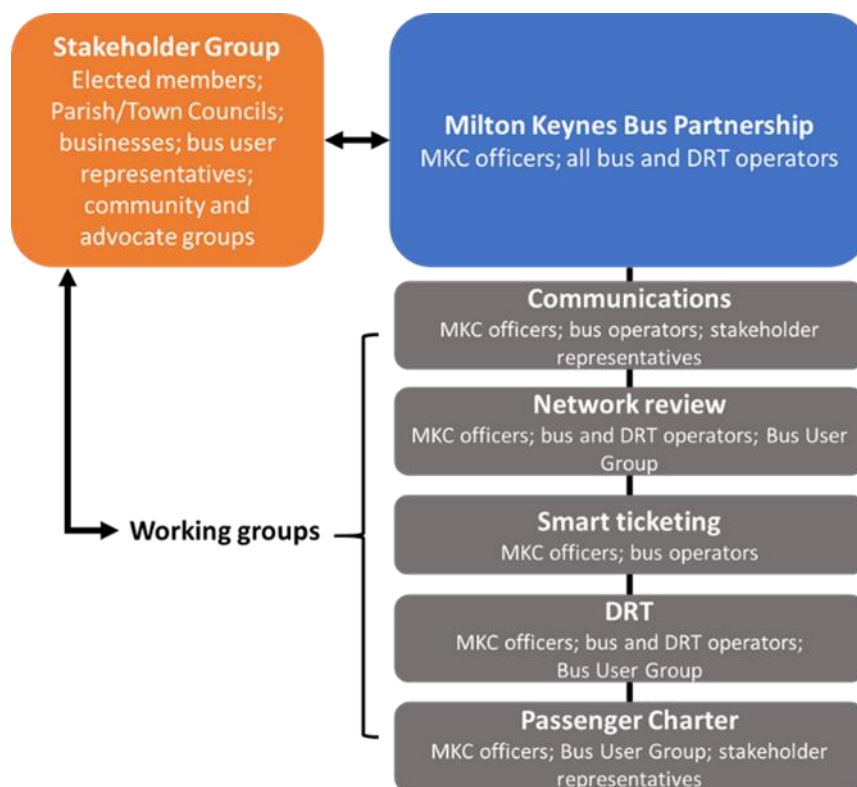
- 3.6 The Enhanced Partnership will draw on multiple funding sources to deliver the desired outcomes of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme(s), as appropriate. This includes, but is not limited to:
- Funding provided by Central Government
 - Council capital funding
 - Council revenue funding
 - Developer contributions
 - Operator investment
 - Reinvestment of operator revenue generated by schemes
 - Other external funding opportunities

Management and governance

- 3.7 With the launch of the National Bus Strategy in March 2021, MKC was in a strong position to respond immediately and transfer the focus of its Bus Partnership towards the development of an Enhanced Partnership (EP). The Council published its notice of intent to develop an EP on 23 March 2021. The Partnership met monthly, under its already established terms of reference, to both work towards the establishment of an EP and to oversee the development of the BSIP. The signatories to an Enhanced Partnership are members of the Partnership.
- 3.8 The operation of the Partnership is set out in the Terms of Reference, a copy of which is included in Appendix A.

- 3.9 Given the significant ambition to achieve public transport improvements, steps have been taken to draw in the support and resources of many interested parties. These are channelled through a Stakeholder Group, and the Partnership is supported by a number of working groups.
- 3.10 The Stakeholder Group meets to be informed of developments and to help shape the way forward and determine priorities. The working groups meet as required to pursue their individual areas of interest. The Communications Group has a particularly wide remit, considering the stakeholder involvement, communications and messaging around the development of the BSIP and EP, as well as issues concerning the general promotion and marketing of the bus network. It is looking to address the gap between perceptions and reality of the current bus network.
- 3.11 The Network Review Group is considering how the overall network should develop in the future. It has established the hierarchy of services and collated details of potential bus priority measures. It is examining ways that the network can be supplemented with new links for deprived communities and dedicated services direct to main areas of employment.
- 3.12 The Smart Ticketing Group has been in place for some time, being responsible for the MK Move multi-operator ticketing scheme already in place. It is leading on further fares and ticketing initiatives.
- 3.13 The DRT Group oversees the performance of the MK Connect service. It will support ongoing work to consider how DRT may adapt to network changes and to ensure opportunities for the network are taken.
- 3.14 The Passenger Charter Group is a small task and finish group responsible for the development of a new Charter to set out what people can expect from the bus network in Milton Keynes. The Group will review the charter annually.
- 3.15 In addition to the formal organisational framework, MKC officers have engaged with neighbouring authorities, ensuring that all are aware of one another's plans. There has been agreement that each cross-boundary service will be assigned a lead authority, in order to avoid conflicting requirements on those services.
- 3.16 The relationship between these different groups is shown in Figure 3-2.

Figure 3-2 Milton Keynes Enhanced Partnership governance structure



3.17 The Milton Keynes Bus Partnership has overseen the development of the EP Plan. The following have been consulted following in the development of the Plan and associated EP Scheme (1):

- Transport Focus
- Traffic Commissioner
- Chief Officer of Police
- Competition and Markets Authority
- Neighbouring authorities
- Local MPs

Small and medium sized operators

3.18 Given the variety of bus operators involved (in terms of market share, fleet size, company turnover and structure), it is important to ensure that the effects of the Enhanced Partnership do not unduly negatively impact smaller operators' ability to engage or to comply with requirements.

- 3.19 As such, the needs of small and medium-sized operators (SMOs) have been considered in the development of the Enhanced Partnership, with opportunities for all bus operators to participate throughout, either through individual discussions or through attendance at the Partnership meetings. The Plan seeks to support improvements in all aspects of bus provision, regardless of the size of operators providing services. Within the Enhanced Partnership Schemes, smaller operators may be given extended periods to comply with certain standards.

Competition

- 3.20 The Enhanced Partnership has been subject to the Competition Test as set out in Part 1 of Schedule 10 of the Transport Act 2000. The assessment, undertaken by Milton Keynes Council concluded that there will be no adverse impact on competition. The implementation of an Enhanced Partnership Plan and associated Scheme is aimed at delivering improvements to bus services for passengers in a deregulated environment. The Enhanced Partnership will not impact on competition, as operators will be free to amend and introduce services in the area, provided that the standards that apply to all operators are met.

Reviewing the EP Plan

- 3.21 Once the EP Plan is made, it will be reviewed by the Milton Keynes Bus Partnership annually, following the review of the BSIP. MKC will initiate each review and it will take no longer than 2 months to complete.
- 3.22 The review will include consideration of:
- The arrangements for consulting passenger representatives on the effectiveness of the EP
 - The objectives set for improving the quality and effectiveness of bus services
- 3.23 The Stakeholder Group, which involves many different interested parties including representatives of the Milton Keynes Bus User Group, will meet at least twice per year. This will provide the basis for consultation and feedback on the effectiveness of the EP in driving improvements in the bus network. The Bus User Group will in turn seek wider views from its membership about actual experience in using bus services across the area.
- 3.24 Monitoring reports for the BSIP will be produced every 6 months to demonstrate progress towards the objectives and targets set. These will be made available on the

dedicated area of MKC's website. Visitors to these pages will also be invited to provide comments and other feedback.

- 3.25 Feedback from all sources will be collated and considered at each meeting of the Bus Partnership.

Variations to the EP Plan

- 3.26 Consideration will be given to potential EP Plan variations highlighted either by one of the organisations represented on the Milton Keynes Bus Partnership or by any operator of a qualifying bus service. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the EP Plan and current local transport policies. Such requests should be set out in writing and submitted to the EP Administrator.
- 3.27 On receipt of a valid request for a variation, MKC will reconvene the Milton Keynes Bus Partnership, giving at least 14 days' notice for the meeting, to consider the proposed variation. Any proposal to proceed with the variation will lead to the Council notifying stakeholders and operators of the intention to vary the EP Plan. The planned variation will then be subject to the operator objection process and consultation process as set out in s138L of the Transport Act 2000. Having passed through these, MKC will make the EP Plan variation, subject to the approval of the Council.

Revocation of the EP Plan

- 3.28 If, for some reason, it becomes necessary for the EP Plan to be revoked, the Milton Keynes Bus Partnership will be reconvened and follow the same process as outlined in the section 'Variations to the EP Plan' (noting that the agreement will be for revocation and not variation).
- 3.29 If the EP Plan is revoked, then any associated EP Schemes will be automatically revoked, as a Scheme cannot exist without a Plan being in place.
- 3.30 Similarly, if all associated EP Schemes are revoked, then the EP Plan would be automatically revoked, as it cannot be in place without at least one associated EP Scheme.
- 3.31 If at any point in the future the EP Plan area is included in a Bus Franchising Area, the relevant requirements set out in this EP Plan document will cease to apply from the commencement date of the Franchising Scheme.

4. Part B – Enhanced Partnership Scheme (1)

The Enhanced Partnership Scheme (1) for Buses is made in accordance with Section 138G(1) of the Transport Act 2000 by Milton Keynes Council.

The Scheme comes into effect on 1 April 2022 and will remain valid until revoked.

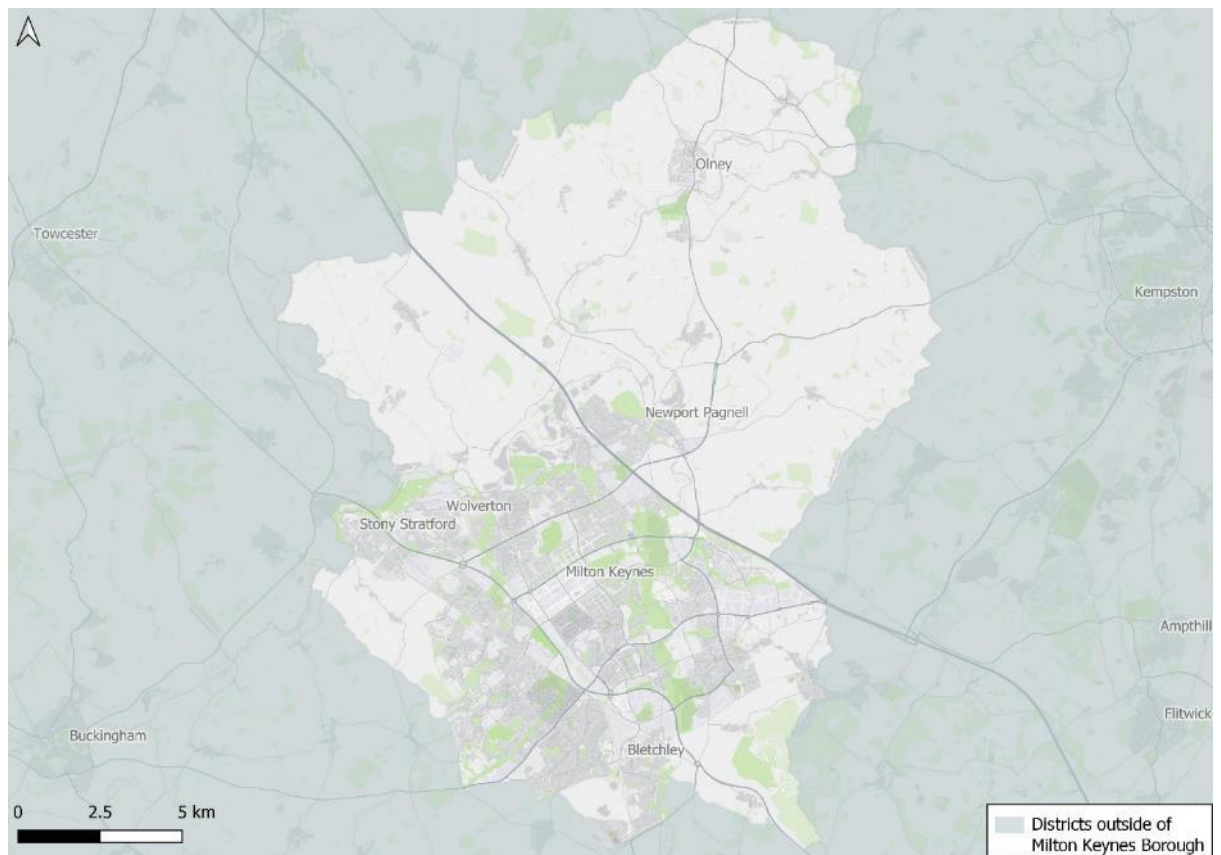
EP Scheme content

- 4.1 This document fulfils the statutory requirements for an EP Scheme as set out in s138 of the Transport Act 2000. It includes sections on:
- Scope of the EP Scheme and commencement date
 - Requirements on the local authority
 - Requirements in respect of qualifying local bus services
 - Details of EP Scheme management
- 4.2 The EP Scheme can only be put in place if an associated EP Plan has been made. Therefore, this document should be considered alongside the associated Milton Keynes EP Plan.
- 4.3 The EP Scheme has been jointly developed by Milton Keynes Council and bus operators that provide local bus services in the EP Scheme area. It sets out obligations and requirements on both the Local Transport Authority and operators of local bus services in order to achieve the intended improvements, with the aim of delivering the objectives of the associated EP Plan and Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Scope of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme (1)

- 4.4 The EP Scheme will facilitate the improvement of local bus services operating in Milton Keynes.
- 4.5 The EP Scheme covers the same area as the Milton Keynes EP Plan, namely the entire administrative area of Milton Keynes Council (MKC). The Scheme includes all qualifying local bus services, which are those registered local bus services operating within the Milton Keynes boundary, except those that are exempt as indicated below.
- 4.6 For the avoidance of doubt, a list of qualifying local bus services will be published at the start of each Council financial year.

Figure 4-1 Milton Keynes Enhanced Partnership Scheme (1) Area



EP Scheme duration

- 4.7 The EP Scheme will commence 1 April 2022. It will have no specific end date, but will be reviewed at least annually.

Exempt services

- 4.8 The following services are exempt from the requirements of the EP Scheme:
- Schools or works registered local bus service not eligible for Bus Service Operators Grant
 - Cross-boundary registered local bus service with less than 10% of its registered mileage within the Enhanced Partnership area
 - Services operated under section 22 of the 1985 Act
 - A registered local bus service which is an excursion or tour
 - Services run under sections 89-91 of the Transport Act 1985 where the local authority retains all the revenue from that service.

- Any other registered local bus service that the Milton Keynes Bus Partnership decides should be excluded from all or specific requirements of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme.

Requirements of Milton Keynes Council

- 4.9 Milton Keynes Council will provide various facilities and measures set out in Column B of Table 4-1.

Requirements in respect of qualifying local bus services

- 4.10 Operators of qualifying local bus services will be required to meet the requirements set out in Column C of Table 4-1.

Table 4-1 Milton Keynes Enhanced Partnership Scheme requirements

Column A	Column B	Column C
Facilities	Local authority requirements	Bus operator requirements
Bus stop and shelter improvement programme	Assess the priority and desirable improvements to all bus stops within the MK urban area by October 2022, and within the rural area by December 2022. Once BSIP funding is confirmed for this, develop a programme of improvements for implementation starting January 2023.	Provide boarding data to enable prioritisation of bus stop upgrades.
Bus stop and shelter maintenance	Maintain bus stops and shelters in accordance with the agreed standards and procedures, including provision of up-to-date timetable information and real time passenger information (RTPI) at those stops currently equipped.	Provide draft registration in any format with 70 days' notice of it taking effect. Provide TransXChange files with at least 42 days' notice for publicity purposes. Provide SIRI feed to facilitate RTPI. Report damage to bus stops and shelters.
Measures	Local authority requirements	Bus operator requirements
Subject to external or new funding sources. Gap-analysis study to identify potential bus service enhancements and new services.	Undertake or commission a gap-analysis study of the bus network to identify opportunities for new services to be trialled. Commence this within 3 months of any funding award, working with bus operators and sharing MK Connect patronage data as appropriate. Study to be completed within 3 months.	Provide boarding/alighting data and operational insights, where available, to support gap-analysis, within the 3-month study period. Work with MKC to identify opportunities for new services to be trialled,
Subject to external or new funding sources. Bus network hierarchy and standards.	Develop and define with operators appropriate standards for each level of the network hierarchy, within 3 months of any funding award. Procure service improvements to extend hours of operation, increase frequency or secure improved vehicle standards as	At least 90% of 'key route' mileage to be operated by vehicles meeting the agreed standard by 1 September 2023.

	appropriate by 1 September 2023.	
Study of potential actions to address pinchpoints and identify potential priority measures on key routes, including locations for traffic signal priority.	Undertake or commission the study by June 2022, with a requirement to report findings and recommendations by end of September 2022.	Within the study timeframe, provide punctuality data and operational insight to support the study and help develop potential priority measures.
Bus Passenger Charter	Lead and coordinate the development of a new Bus Passenger Charter, introducing it on 1 April 2022. Lead an annual review of the Charter.	Support the development of the Bus Passenger Charter. Adopt and actively promote the Charter from 1 April 2022, adhering to its requirements. Report, as required, on any public feedback resulting from the Charter. Participate in the annual review and updating of the Charter, led by MKC.
Bus routing study to determine the optimal routes for services within CMK, based on the network hierarchy.	Commission, manage and oversee the routing study, to be undertaken in early 2022. Agree routing proposals with operators.	Provide punctuality data, boarding data, and operational insight to support the study and help develop potential routing options. Agree routing proposals with MKC.
Strategy for achieving centralised comprehensive provision of public transport information through digital channels and print.	Coordinate the development of the information strategy, completing it by 31 March 2023. Commence the implementation of the strategy by 30 September 2023.	Participate in the development of the information strategy. Participate in the implementation of the strategy by 30 September 2023. Provide draft registration in any format with 70 days' notice of it taking effect. Provide TransXChange files with at least 42 days' notice for publicity purposes. Provide SIRI feed to facilitate RTPI.
Subject to external or new funding sources. Feasibility study and business case for a multi-operator travel information centre.	Define, commission, fund and manage the feasibility study, to start by the end of October 2022, with findings reported by end of March 2023.	Help define the requirements of the feasibility study. Contribute insights, views and ideas to the study.

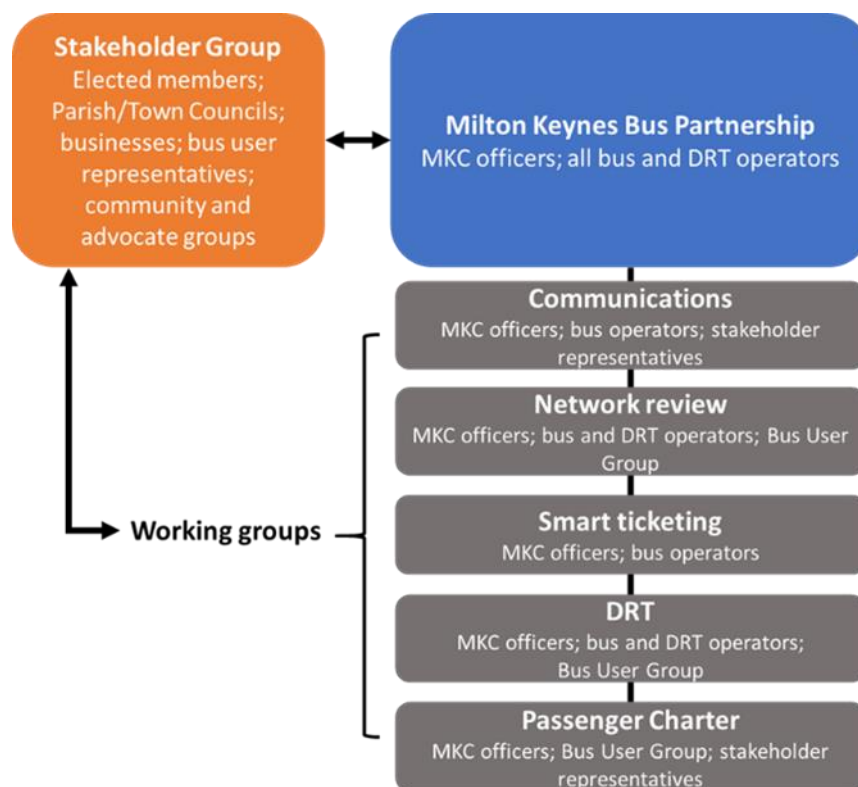
<p>'Get Around MK' brand will be a uniting thread to support multi-operator, multi-modal journeys. This will complement, not replace, operators' own identities, but will reinforce the idea of a single integrated travel network.</p>	<p>Lead on the development and rollout of the 'Get Around MK' brand.</p> <p>Define and agree brand guidelines with operators by the end of July 2022.</p> <p>Introduce and rollout the brand, as set out in the guidelines, from 1 October 2022.</p>	<p>Work with MKC and other operators to define and agree brand guidelines and application requirements by the end of July 2022.</p> <p>Start to apply the 'Get Around MK' brand (as agreed with MKC and other operators), in accordance with the agreed brand guidelines, from 1 October 2022.</p>
<p>Subject to external or new funding sources. Park & Ride feasibility and development study.</p> <p>Embed Coachway P&R as a viable alternative to city centre parking.</p> <p>Undertake a feasibility study to identify further opportunities for P&R opportunities subject to appropriate funding</p>	<p>Review, develop and promote role of MK Coachway for Park & Ride.</p> <p>Commission, manage and oversee a feasibility study to identify further Park & Ride opportunities within 6 months of funding award, for completion with 4 months.</p>	<p>Work with MKC to develop P&R offer from MK Coachway and provide attractive fares structure for Park & Ride customers.</p>
<p>Subject to external or new funding sources. Programme of discounted travel promotions.</p>	<p>Lead on the development of discounted travel schemes and modelling of the revenue forgone vs demand elasticity.</p>	<p>Support the development of discounted travel schemes and modelling of the revenue forgone vs demand elasticity.</p>
<p>Subject to external or new funding sources. Feasibility study to improve bus connectivity at MK Hospital.</p>	<p>Undertake or commission the feasibility study within 3 months of funding award.</p>	<p>Provide punctuality data, boarding data, and operational insight to support the study and help develop potential routings.</p>
<p>Procedures and processes for roadworks coordination and traffic management liaison.</p>	<p>By 30 September 2022, have in place revised procedures and processes for roadworks coordination and traffic management liaison, and agree notification timeline with highways and works promoters.</p> <p>From 1 October 2022, provide notification of roadworks to bus operators within agreed timeline; pro-actively manage the highway network to</p>	<p>Support MKC in the development of revised procedures and processes.</p> <p>From 1 October 2022, support MKC in developing diversions and mitigations to minimise the impact of roadworks on bus services; use available customer communications channels to inform customers of forthcoming roadworks in accordance with 'Get Around MK' brand.</p>

	coordinate roadworks and minimise disruption of bus services; seek funding for mitigation actions from works promoters as appropriate.	
Agree three primary and three secondary network changes dates per year. Agree exception criteria for urgent or exceptional passenger needs.	Ensure all changes to tendered bus services are aligned to the agreed network change dates.	Coordinate service changes to agreed network stability dates wherever possible.
Ensure provision of bus services is prioritised from an early stage in all development proposals	Liaise with bus operators pre- and post-application to ensure bus services are prioritised in new housing or commercial developments; ensure suitable conditions are attached to planning permissions to deliver bus infrastructure (including through routes) prior to occupation; ensure s106/tariff funds are sufficient to cover the cost of operation for a minimum 12 months after build-out completes.	Actively engage with local authority and developers on development and redevelopment proposals.
MK Move multi-operator travel card and All-In-One young persons' concession scheme to be available and valid on those services designated in the network hierarchy as 'key' or 'core', along with any other local bus services operating wholly within Milton Keynes.	Ensure continued availability of MK Move and All-In-One products; develop further off-bus sales channels as appropriate; continue to fund the MTC and YP scheme, ensuring operators are no better and no worse off in respect of fares revenue as a result of participation.	Acceptance on all required bus services within the MKC area.
Reimbursement mechanisms for concessionary travel schemes.	Carry out a study to explore and assess the potential impact of concessionary travel arrangements and reimbursement mechanisms on wider bus service provision and development.	Co-operate with, and provide insights into, the study.

EP Scheme management

Governance

Figure 4-2 Milton Keynes Enhanced Partnership governance structure



- 4.11 The Milton Keynes Bus Partnership, consisting MKC officers and bus and DRT operators, has overseen the development of the EP Scheme. The Partnership is supported by a number of working groups and the Stakeholder Group, which acts as a sounding board for proposals, provides challenge and ideas, and feedback from a wide range of interested parties.
- 4.12 The Milton Keynes Bus Partnership operates in accordance with the Terms of Reference shown in Appendix A, including processes for decision-making.

Review of the EP Scheme

- 4.13 Once the EP Scheme is made, it will be reviewed by the Milton Keynes Bus Partnership annually, following the review of the BSIP. MKC will initiate each review and it will take no longer than 2 months to complete.
- 4.14 The review will include consideration of:

- The arrangements for consulting passenger representatives on the effectiveness of the EP
 - The objectives set for improving the quality and effectiveness of bus services
- 4.15 The Stakeholder Group, which involves many different interested parties including representatives of the Milton Keynes Bus User Group, will meet at least twice per year. This will provide the basis for consultation and feedback on the effectiveness of the EP in driving improvements in the bus network. The Bus User Group will in turn seek wider views from its membership about actual experience in using bus services across the area.
- 4.16 Monitoring reports for the BSIP will be produced every 6 months to demonstrate progress towards the objectives and targets set. These will be made available on the dedicated area of MKC's website. Visitors to these pages will also be invited to provide comments and other feedback.
- 4.17 Feedback from all sources will be collated and considered at each meeting of the Bus Partnership.

Variations to the EP Scheme

- 4.18 Consideration will be given to potential EP Scheme variations raised by one or more of the representatives on the Milton Keynes Bus Partnership. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the EP Plan and current local transport policies. Such requests should be set out in writing and submitted to the Administrator of the Milton Keynes Bus Partnership.
- 4.19 On receipt of a valid request for a variation, the Council will reconvene the Bus Partnership, giving at least 14 days' notice for the meeting, to consider the proposed variation. If the proposed variation is agreed by all representatives of the local authority and operators of qualifying bus services present, the Council will make the EP Scheme variation. Stakeholders not represented at the meeting will be deemed to be abstaining from the decision.
- 4.20 If there is not unanimous agreement amongst the local authority and bus operators present, then the proposed variation will be put to the operator objection mechanism, but with a reduced objection period of 14 days, replacing Part 2 of the Transport Act 2000 section 138L (2) (c). The proposed variation will be advertised on the Council's website and emailed to operators of qualifying local services in the EP Scheme area. If the proposed variation passes the operator objection mechanism, the Council will make the EP Scheme variation, subject to the approval of the Council.

Revocation of EP Scheme

- 4.21 If, for some reason, it becomes necessary for the EP Scheme to be revoked, the MK Bus Partnership will be reconvened and follow the same process as described in the section 'Variations to the Scheme' (noting that the agreement will be for revocation and not variation).
- 4.22 If, for some reason, the Milton Keynes EP Plan is revoked at any time, the EP Scheme would automatically be revoked, as it cannot exist without an associated EP Plan in place. Equally, if this EP Scheme is revoked (and in the absence of any other Scheme), then the EP Plan would automatically be revoked, as it cannot exist without an associated Scheme.
- 4.23 If at any point in the future the EP Scheme area is included in a Bus Franchising Area, the relevant requirements set out in this EP Scheme document will cease to apply from the commencement date of the Franchising Scheme.

Temporary suspension of EP Scheme

If, in exceptional circumstances, due to unforeseen or external factors, it might not be possible to pursue or deliver the EP Scheme commitments and obligations, a temporary suspension of the EP Scheme can be sought. Consideration of this would follow the same process as described in the section 'Variations to the Scheme' (noting that the agreement will be for temporary suspension and not variation). If approved, some or all the requirements of the Scheme would be temporarily suspended for a period of up to 6 months, following which the Scheme requirements would resume, with any delivery or deadline dates automatically delayed by the same period as the period of suspension.

Appendix A: Terms of Reference for Milton Keynes Bus Partnership

Details still being finalised.

Note - the Terms of Reference will be included as an Appendix, but remain as a separate document from The Enhanced Partnership, with the ability to amend the terms outside of the processes for variations to the EP Plan/Scheme.

Signatories



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**David Boden, Business Development Director
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**Ed Cameron, Commercial Manager
Uno**



**Umar Zaman, Managing Director
Z&S Transport Ltd.**



Stuart Proffitt, Director Environment and Property



**Councillor Jennifer Wilson-Marklew, Cabinet member for
Transport, Climate Action and Sustainability**