

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Name of policy	Leicestershire Bus Service Improvement Plan 2024 (LBSIP24)
Department	E&T
Who has been involved in completing the EIA?	Lee Quincey, Head of Service Network Management
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Who is completing the EIA?	Lee Quincey

<i>What is the proposal?</i>	<p>Publication of the Council's Leicestershire Bus Service Improvement Plan 2024 (LBSIP 24).</p> <p>The purpose of the plan is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to describe the bus network as it currently is, and the vision for the improved bus service that the Local Transport Authority (LTA) (in consultation with operators and others) wants to see in the BSIP area; • to set out how the LTA will achieve the objectives of the National Bus Strategy (NBS), including the key objective of growing bus patronage, in its specific local context; • to set out a detailed plan for delivery of the above that is aligned with the rest of the LTA's Local Transport Plan.
<i>What change and impact is intended by the proposal?</i>	<p>The LBSIP 24 aims to make the Council's passenger transport vision a reality as much as possible. The overall aim of the plan is to increase bus usage (compared with the pre-pandemic levels) across the County through improved, financially sustainable, higher standard services that better meet the needs of Leicestershire residents, employees, and visitors – making bus travel a preferred choice for travel around the County and travel into the City of Leicester. This will enable long-term clean growth, supporting delivery of the Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan.</p> <p>Through the combined BSIP+ and 'Network North' funding, the LBSIP 24 sets out an ambitious programme for delivery in 2024/25. This consists of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Complete refresh of the BSIP. • Assisting operators to stabilise and strengthen the commercial network. • Working with operators to review and reshape the passenger transport network (both commercial and supported) across Leicestershire and enhance access to opportunities for people. This would be based around existing commercial services and providing more direct, attractive routes by bus and making better use of Flexibus models and Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT), similar to Fox Connect, providing services to more communities. • Working with operators to trial discounted travel for younger people. • Working with operators to standardise youth fares. • Exploring and developing appropriate ticketing schemes, for example, multi-operator / tap on tap off with operators.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing rail interchange marketing and information. • Exploring the feasibility of using DDRT and to connect at more hubs across the County enabling greater connectivity and journey choice. • Developing scheme designs for identified pinch points for buses on Leicestershire highway network in preparation for potential award of capital grants in future years. • Working with operators to support the adoption of electric vehicles and other greener technologies. • Developing a Leicestershire buses branding. • Procuring a contract management system and introducing a data portal to increase efficiency and improve data accuracy. • Maintaining the current Park and Ride provision. • Considering the potential for enhancing existing commercial services where appropriate, such as longer operating hours to facilitate shift work at a major employment centres. • Carrying out travel accessibility audits. • Seeking appropriate specialist resource and advice where required including financial, procurement, and legal.
<p><i>What is the rationale for the proposal?</i></p>	<p>The BSIP is a requirement of the Department for Transport (DfT) as described in the NBS. The DfT requires annual reviews of this document. The latest version is due for sign-off in September 2024.</p> <p>The Council is using recent funding opportunities from BSIP+ and 'Network North' to review the passenger transport network, plus other specified improvements that will lead to a flexible and sustainable network that can operate within the prevailing financial situation. The LBSIP 24 describes the Council's vision and objectives for the future of passenger transport in Leicestershire to support local and national policy.</p>

What evidence about potential equality impacts is already available? This could come from research, service analysis, questionnaires, and engagement with protected characteristics groups.

<p><i>What equalities information or data has been gathered so far?</i></p>	<p>The Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment for the 2018 Cabinet report, which was informed by an extensive consultation to inform the adopted Passenger Transport Policy and Strategy (PTPS). The EIA has been refreshed each time a Cabinet decision is required on passenger transport provision. The latest update was on 19 December 2023.</p> <p>Intelligence gained in response to the continued management of impacts of changes to the commercial bus network.</p>
<p><i>What does it show?</i></p>	<p>As the proposal should sustain and potentially make services more fit-for-purpose in the short-term, there should be no additional negative impacts, but if services are reduced in line with reduced budgets in the future, it may more negatively impact people with the following protected characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Disability • Pregnancy & maternity • Rural communities • Areas of deprivation

<p><i>What engagement has been undertaken so far?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full public consultation in 2018 prior to the approval of the current PTPS. • Engagement with the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee. • Engagement with Leicestershire Enhanced Partnership with operators.
<p><i>What does it show?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A snapshot of needs and aspirations of individuals and communities, including purpose of journey, alternatives available to individuals, the impact on individuals if there was no bus service, and what is important to individuals and community groups. • Overall, there was broad backing for supporting operators to provide services commercially; core operating times; proposed priority groups and journey purposes; supporting Community Transport schemes; and encouraging and supporting communities to develop local transport solutions. • The only aspect listed which was less supported was providing Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) as an alternative solution where subsidised bus routes do not provide value for money.

*Please specify if any individuals or community groups who identify with any of the protected characteristics may **potentially** be affected by the policy and describe any benefits and concerns including any barriers.*

Use this section to demonstrate how risks would be mitigated for each affected group.

<p>AGE</p>	
<p><i>What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?</i></p>	<p><i>Older people</i></p> <p>Many passenger transport users are concessionary pass holders, which include senior citizens, so by the nature of improving the passenger transport network and bus services in general, this section of the community is supported.</p> <p>A more cohesive and flexible network, supported by commercial, the Council-supported and on-demand services, alongside clear, consistent branding and improvements to “interchange hubs” should make passenger transport a more attractive, safe and reliable travel method for older people. It would, therefore, help address issues some face with social isolation, access to primary healthcare and other essential or leisure activities. There are also benefits from encouraging commercial service operators to switch to more modernised and alternative-fuelled fleets, as vehicles such as electric buses are designed with the most up-to-date accessibility standards. These often include real-time on-bus tracking of the next stop, hearing loops, CCTV etc. All of these can make more vulnerable people feel safer and more confident on their journeys.</p> <p>DRT/DDRT services may make the use of passenger transport more appealing by allowing pick-up from nearer home.</p> <p><i>Young people</i></p> <p>Young people also use the services and will benefit from targeted initiatives to make passenger transport more accessible and appealing for them. Discussions are underway with operators to negotiate a standard eligibility age for young persons’ fares, making it simpler and more equitable across the County. One-off initiatives</p>

	<p>are also planned during the period of the funding, such as reduced or free travel for young people over school holidays, or whole family incentives/marketing to local attractions or events.</p>
<p><i>Are there any specific risks or concerns?</i></p>	<p>There are likely to be concerns about how older people can pre-book DDRT journeys. Journeys are generally booked and managed through an app. This requires both access to, and knowledge of how to use, a phone/ computer/tablet etc. Although this is becoming more prevalent amongst older people, there are still some for whom this would be a barrier. To mitigate this, the Council is procuring a call centre service which can manage bookings over the phone. People can, therefore, use the booking method they most feel comfortable with.</p> <p>Although the majority of elderly passengers are entitled to free travel, outside the free travel times, they will be unable to pay by cash on DDRT.</p> <p>Although future Government funding is anticipated post-2024/25, it is not guaranteed. In the event that funding reduces to the point where a reduction in service is needed, it may be more difficult for older people to access essential and leisure services and get around the County. This may lead to increased potential for isolation. Community transport services are expected to remain, however, for those who are eligible, for essential trips to a local centre.</p> <p>For young people, there may be some changes to school/college transport services. This would be where an almost-commercial service and an existing school transport service can combine.</p>
<p>DISABILITY</p>	
<p><i>What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?</i></p>	<p>The majority of users of supported services are concessionary pass holders, which include people with disabilities, so by the nature of supporting services that are not provided by commercial operators, this section of the community is supported.</p> <p>A more cohesive and flexible network, supported by commercial, the Council-supported and on-demand services, alongside clear, consistent branding and improvements to “interchange hubs” should make passenger transport a more attractive, safe, and reliable travel method for many more people with disabilities. It would, therefore, help address issues some face with social isolation, access to primary healthcare and other essential or leisure activities. There are also benefits from encouraging commercial service operators to switch to more modernised and alternative-fuelled fleets, as vehicles such as electric buses are designed with the most up-to-date accessibility standards. These include flat access, flexible spaces and seating reserved for people with mobility difficulties. They can often also provide real-time visual and audio on-bus tracking of the next stop, hearing loops, CCTV etc. All of these can make more vulnerable people feel safer and more confident on their journeys. Some operators provide training for drivers on supporting neurodivergent passengers. Where this is not the case, we could look to support/encourage this.</p> <p>DRT/DDRT services may make the use of passenger transport more appealing by allowing pick-up from nearer home. DDRT allows for accessibility requirements to be notified on booking so the passenger can feel confident that they can safely and comfortably use the service.</p>

<i>Are there any specific risks or concerns?</i>	<p>There are likely to be concerns about whether there are certain disabilities or conditions that prevent someone from pre-booking DDRT journeys. Journeys are generally booked and managed through an app. This requires both access to, and knowledge of how to use, a phone/ computer/tablet etc. In many circumstances this may be the most accessible and preferable option. App accessibility functions can be useful for many users. For those who cannot or prefer not to book online, the Council is procuring a call centre service which can manage bookings over the phone. People can, therefore, use the booking method they most feel comfortable with.</p> <p>Although the majority of passengers with assessed disabilities are entitled to free travel, outside the free travel times, they will be unable to pay by cash on DDRT.</p> <p>Although future Government funding is anticipated post-2024/25, it is not guaranteed. In the event that funding reduces to the point where a reduction in service is needed, it may be more difficult for people with disabilities to access essential and leisure services and get around the County. This may lead to increased potential for isolation. Community transport services are expected to remain, however, for those who are eligible, for essential trips to a local centre.</p>
RACE	
<i>What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?</i>	It is not anticipated that there will be any specific positive or negative impacts arising from race.
<i>Are there any specific risks or concerns?</i>	It is not anticipated that there will be any specific positive or negative impacts arising from race.
SEX	
<i>What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?</i>	Although more female passengers use passenger transport (approximately 65%), it is not anticipated that there will be any disproportionate negative or positive impacts based on sex.
<i>Are there any specific risks or concerns?</i>	It is not anticipated that there will be any specific positive or negative impacts arising from gender reassignment.
GENDER REASSIGNMENT	
<i>What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?</i>	It is not anticipated that there will be any specific positive or negative impacts arising from gender reassignment.

<i>Are there any specific risks or concerns?</i>	It is not anticipated that there will be any specific positive or negative impacts arising from gender reassignment.
MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	
<i>What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?</i>	It is not anticipated that there will be any specific positive or negative impacts arising from marriage and civil partnership.
<i>Are there any specific risks or concerns?</i>	It is not anticipated that there will be any specific positive or negative impacts arising from marriage and civil partnership.
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	
<i>What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?</i>	It is not anticipated that there will be any specific positive or negative impacts arising from sexual orientation.
<i>Are there any specific risks or concerns?</i>	It is not anticipated that there will be any specific positive or negative impacts arising from sexual orientation.
PREGNANCY & MATERNITY	
<i>What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?</i>	The move to more DDRT services and push to more modern vehicles, should improve the passenger experience during pregnancy and maternity. New buses are better designed for accessibility and flexible seating, prioritising those with limited mobility or who are pregnant.
<i>Are there any specific risks or concerns?</i>	It is not anticipated that there will be any specific positive or negative impacts arising from pregnancy and maternity.
RELIGION OR BELIEF	
<i>What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?</i>	It is not anticipated that there will be any specific positive or negative impacts arising from religion or belief.
<i>Are there any specific risks or concerns?</i>	It is not anticipated that there will be any specific positive or negative impacts arising from religion or belief.
OTHER GROUPS e.g. rural isolation, deprivation, health inequality, carers, asylum seeker and refugee communities, looked after children, deprived, armed forces, or disadvantaged communities.	

<p><i>What other groups/situations may be impacted?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rural isolation and new housing communities</i> • <i>Deprivation or disadvantaged communities</i> • <i>Health inequality</i>
<p><i>What are the benefits of the proposal for those from these groups?</i></p>	<p><i>Rural isolation and new housing communities</i> The introduction of DDRT in more areas will contribute to reducing rural isolation whilst providing a quality service that is appealing and easy to use. Instead of there being no service, or a very infrequent and unreliable one, passengers can be more confident that they can travel at the times supported by DDRT.</p> <p>The design of a flexible hub and spoke passenger transport network, supported by S106 funds, means that the needs of new communities can be accommodated more easily where a commercial route is not viable.</p> <p><i>Health inequality</i> The move towards alternative fuels will have a positive impact on air quality and emissions, especially in areas designated as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). The first example of this will be in the Loughborough area AQMAs where the majority of buses are being replaced with electric under the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) 2 scheme.</p> <p>The introduction of DDRT and working with operators to maximise the usefulness of routes by serving key facilities should make it easier for people to access primary healthcare and connect to routes to secondary health care.</p>
<p><i>Are there any specific risks or concerns?</i></p>	<p><i>Rural isolation; Deprivation or disadvantaged communities</i> There may be concerns about whether everyone can use DDRT introduced in these areas. As journeys have to be pre-booked either by app or phone, it assumes that everyone has access to these at the times needed. Phone credit or broadband and Wi-Fi availability/affordability may be a barrier due to network coverage or individual circumstances.</p> <p>Some people, who may not be able to pay in advance by card and would rely on paying in cash on board, could be prevented from using DDRT services.</p> <p><i>Longer-term</i> Although future Government funding is anticipated beyond 2024/25, it is not guaranteed. In the event that funding reduces to the point where a reduction in service is needed, it may have a negative impact on rural communities as they may have reduced access to services and find it more difficult to get around the County. There may also be a disproportionate impact on areas of deprivation, particularly in deprived rural areas, as those without access to other modes of transport may have their opportunities for travel reduced.</p> <p>There is a risk that potential service reduction could limit some individuals from accessing community services or getting out into their community.</p>

ACTION PLAN

<p><i>What concerns were identified?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility of DDRT bookings and ability to pay in cash. • Long-term funding issues: The significant sums of short-term revenue funding from the DfT have been tremendously welcomed and game-
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	<p>changing in how the Council can co-ordinate and support passenger transport in Leicestershire. Longer-term, if funding levels reduce, some services may no longer be supported and would, therefore, cease to operate or be reduced. As a result, individuals who use these services could be negatively impacted as they will no longer receive the services they currently use. As noted above, there is the potential for this to disproportionately impact older people, people with disabilities, and people who live in isolated or deprived areas.</p>
<p><i>What action is planned?</i></p>	<p><i>DDRT booking accessibility and payment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A call centre function will be available in addition to the app. • Potential to work with individuals to develop a personal travel plan. • There will be no provision for cash payments on DDRTs, but many passengers with a protected characteristic, already receive free travel within certain hours. <p><i>Longer-term sustainability of services</i></p> <p>The Council continues to take every opportunity to impress on the Government the need for equitable and sufficient revenue and capital funding, along with funding agreements for more than short periods within Highways & Transport. This would allow for longer-term planning, longer and better value contracts and more time to make services self-sustainable.</p> <p>If additional funding is not forthcoming, the Council has already taken steps to be adaptive to the prevailing financial situation. In December 2023, the Cabinet approved a new PTPS. This, in tandem with the passenger transport network redesign, allows prioritisation of service provision depending on the funding available at the time. This means that services would be removed or reinstated based on their priority. In this sense, it is impossible to say that an individual with certain protected characteristics will not be adversely impacted, but the process is as fair and rational as it can be under the circumstances. Community Transport would remain as a fall-back option for eligible people to access essential local services and facilities.</p> <p>The PTPS describes specifically the approach to priority groups:</p> <p><i>“As noted in our PTP document, to deliver the Council’s Strategic Plan priority outcomes there is emphasis on supporting a high level of health and wellbeing (including combating isolation), and on helping deliver the right conditions for a thriving local economy. We also have a statutory obligation to consider the needs of ‘elderly and disabled’ people in determining what to support and how to provide passenger information.”</i></p> <p><i>“Meeting some key needs of older, disabled or isolated people is therefore given higher priority than meeting needs of other sectors of the population. We also give higher priority to meeting the needs of people living in employment-deprived areas in order to help them access the job market. This prioritisation is in line with Leicestershire’s Third Local Transport Plan (LTP3), which emphasises ‘continuing to improve the connectivity and accessibility of our existing transport system for vulnerable individuals, groups and communities’.”</i></p>

	<p><i>Where commercial or supported services are not provided, there are Community Transport schemes across Leicestershire which are grant funded by the Council for use by priority groups where eligible.</i></p> <p><i>The revised PTPS should allow for more suitable or creative solutions within budget constraints. The changes to criteria for support are likely to result in more positive outcomes, such as more support for services that reach more opportunities in local centres, towns or city, rather than the current focus on meeting essential travel needs to the nearest local centre. If funding reduces, then the PTPS gives an evidence-based priority assessment to ensure that support is given to highest priority services.</i></p> <p><i>The Director of Environment and Transport, following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member, has existing delegated powers to implement the outcome of service reviews as previously agreed by the Cabinet on 16 October 2018.</i></p> <p><i>Before any changes are implemented to a service, local communities will be engaged with to ensure that the changes are clearly understood, and, where appropriate, work with the community to help shape suitable DRT/DDRT provision.</i></p> <p><i>There is also potential for targeted personal travel planning to take place in specific areas to support people in using services and making passenger transport the travel option of choice. This would be particularly valuable in areas to be served by non-traditional scheduled routes.</i></p>
<p><i>Who is responsible for the action?</i></p>	<p>Decisions on new network provision, whether traditional scheduled routes or DRT/DDRT/Flexibus are delegated to the Director of Environment & Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member.</p> <p>This provision will be implemented initially under the umbrella of the Passenger Transport Programme and BSIP+/Network North funding, through the Sustainable Travel Team and with support from the wider Network Management service teams and corporate support services where needed.</p>
<p><i>Timescale</i></p>	<p>The network review is being delivered in phases and aims to complete by April 2025.</p> <p>The DDRT back office/call centre is currently being procured and new DDRT services will be commissioned in line with the phases of the network review, all to be in place by April 2025.</p> <p>The LBSIP 24 sets out ambitions post-2025, but these are entirely dependent on future funding and are likely to need further consideration at the time funding is announced.</p>
<p><i>How will the action plan and recommendations of this assessment be built into</i></p>	<p>The PTPS is the mechanism by which services will be prioritised. For service changes, engagement with relevant communities would take place at an appropriate time. If beneficial, targeted personal travel plans could be carried out at a similar time.</p>

<p><i>decision making and implementation of the proposal?</i></p>	
<p><i>How would you monitor the impact of your proposal and keep the EIA refreshed?</i></p>	<p>The Council's BSIP recognises the rural transport challenges for Leicestershire and the Council will continue to explore innovative solutions to tackle these challenges and set aspirations within the BSIP as part of its annual review process.</p> <p>The Council's Enhanced Partnership will be key to the delivery of its BSIP through the EP Scheme and Plan, and views/feedback from users and operators will be fully considered to inform any future BSIP aspirations.</p> <p>The Council's PTPS aims to ensure that Leicestershire residents have access to important services such as food shopping and healthcare. Feedback and requests for passenger transport services received via established County Council communication channels will continue to be considered in relation to current service provision in line with the PTPS as part of business-as-usual operation.</p> <p>The appropriateness of the EIA will be reviewed accordingly as part of the above.</p>