

Best Value Review of Public Transport Services

Position Audit

Introduction

This position audit provides summary information on each of the services included in the review. The format follows that given in 'Guidance on the conduct of reviews'.

Places where audit information is as yet incomplete are highlighted by a series of numbered *questions* printed in italics. The project plan will need to ensure that these questions are answered before a judgement on the state of the service can be made.

Places where the position audit shows up areas for investigation relating to objectives, performance or level of service are similarly highlighted by a series of numbered *issues*, again printed in italics.

The review will be complete when all the *questions* have been answered and the *issues* fully investigated.

1. Contract local bus services

Most bus services are provided on a commercial basis by the bus operators. They have freedom to run services where and when they wish in pursuit of commercial objectives. The County Council has two main roles:

- Buying in extra bus services where the network of commercially run buses is not adequate to meet needs (covered in this topic)*
- Working with bus companies in joint investment programmes to help ensure that commercially run services are more effective in meeting the needs of the county (covered in the Quality Bus Partnerships topic)*

The County Council buys in around 250 services in pursuit of its key policy objectives to:

- Provide access for those who do not have a car available*
- Help make the bus an attractive alternative to the car and hence contribute towards making transport more sustainable.*

Most services are focussed on the first of these two objectives.

Services purchased include all-day services in and between urban areas, evening and Sunday services, country shopping services and workers' and schools services. Most services are let to a bus operator by contract following open tender; some small services are let under negotiated 'de minimis' agreements. The network of commercially run services is not stable - there has been a slow decline over the years as well as numerous service revisions - which means that the Council has to respond by changing or adding to the network of subsidised services. Large cutbacks in commercial services over the last two years, coupled with an increase in the tender price for contracts, have produced a budgetary problem which the review will need to resolve.

The introduction of the government's Rural Bus Grant in 1998, giving extra funding of £560,000 a year for Leicestershire, has allowed a policy of minimum service standards for rural communities to be introduced, as well as support for the development of inter-urban services and experimental work on evening services focussed on the needs of young people. A bid for funding under the government's Rural Bus Challenge, submitted in October 2000, will if successful provide substantial extra funding for development of inter-urban services through rural areas and for new feeder services to those.

A recent development has been the work of the County Council's Rural Communities Transport Officer, who liaises closely with rural communities to assess local transport problems and develop appropriate solutions to them. The solutions are often themselves community based. Under the auspices of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership, this work is shortly to be enhanced by incorporation into a formal Rural Transport Partnership, which will give opportunities for further funding from the Countryside Commission.

Relevant statutory powers and duties	1985 Transport Act duty (section 63) to secure provision of appropriate services not provided by the market and to make policies to this end. No guidance on 'appropriate '
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<p>Current policy framework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy context is set out in full in the Local Transport Plan. The key objectives, which support those set down by government, are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure that those who do not have immediate access to a car have public transport services available to them so as to meet their access needs as far as possible - ensure that public transport provides an attractive alternative to the car, thus producing a shift towards a more sustainable form of transport. • Specific policies are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for existing subsidised services, or new ones replacing withdrawn commercial services, provided support cost is less than 48 pence per passenger mile (priority work, shopping, health, personal business and some school journeys not provided free under Education Act) or 24 pence per passenger mile (other purposes). - Experiments policy allows new services meeting priority needs to be tested and made permanent if they are within 48 pence per passenger mile support level after 6 months - Services supported (since 1998) under separate Rural Bus Grant provide, amongst other things, minimum standards of service for communities over 50 population (minimum is at least a weekly shopping service), over 250 (daily shopping) and over 500 (daily shopping with choice of time or destination plus daily commuting service). These services are not governed by the pence per passenger mile criteria above - Support for small-scale local transport schemes, often community based, developed through the work of the Rural Communities Transport Officer <p><i>Question 1: How do the County's policies compare with those of other authorities? (Preliminary benchmarking already carried out - which shows a high degree of consistency - needs to be extended into more detail)</i></p> <p><i>Issue 1: What would be the effect of withdrawing from this activity entirely, or of trying to meet the same objectives by other means?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 2: Are there other detailed policies which, if implemented, would allow the Council to meet its overall objectives in a more cost-effective fashion. What are the options for this and what would each cost?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 3: Would greater integration with policy in other areas, for example on home to school transport, improve overall cost-effectiveness and provide a better overall level of service?</i></p>
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Key stakeholders	Present and potential bus passengers, local bus service operators, district councils, community transport operators, parish councils, county council staff
Current objectives, targets and plans	<p>The transportation service plan sets out objectives to increase passenger journeys, develop the contract bus services network, promote the services and improve interchange. These are in pursuit of the over-riding objective to provide a reliable, frequent and good quality public transport service in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to everyday facilities, particularly for those without access to a car • Reduce the impact of traffic on people and on the natural and built environment • Improve integration within and between travel modes <p>Specific short-term objectives set out in the group service plan are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new rural services to promote increased usage • Contain growth in revenue support expenditure pending review • Continue efficiency reviews of contract services • Expand the rural transport development work
Service provides benefits for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approx 48,000 passengers a day travelling across the whole of Leicestershire, meeting a wide variety of access needs

<p>The service, its organisation and key processes</p>	<p>The basic activities are to manage and replace as necessary a portfolio of existing contract bus services, and to monitor changes to commercially run bus services so that new contract services can be provided to fill any gaps which appear, where this is justified by County Council policy. The Council has no control over the quantity and quality of commercially run bus services, though the quality bus partnerships (see later section) attempt to influence this. All activities other than bus operation are carried out by staff of the public transport group. In more detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 140 contracts and 73 negotiated 'de minimis' agreements, to be let, managed and periodically replaced • These provide 10,200 vehicle miles a day and carry approximately 13,900 passengers a day • Changes to commercially run services to be evaluated and replacement services provided as necessary • Contract management includes operational checks, following up complaints, providing service publicity, monitoring financial performance, checking and paying invoices • Service provided by one team of 7 staff with support from the group's 2 bus inspectors • Same staff provide the service for Leicester City Council under a trading agreement • Rural communities transport development carried out by another member of staff • Bus services provided by 39 companies, 37 of them operating some or all of their services under contract to the County Council. No operation of bus services by County Council-owned vehicles.
<p>Use of ICT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database for contract payments, tendering and financial monitoring • Spreadsheet for expenditure forecasting • Database of bus service timetables • Database of bus routes and bus stop positions • Requirement for new database to integrate contract payments and expenditure forecasting
<p>Service budget and other resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1.146m for County local bus services • £556,000 separate Rural Bus Grant from DETR • (£472,000 is spent by Leicester City Council on local bus services; this service is managed for the City Council by public transport group staff under a trading agreement)

Recent performance	<p>No benchmarking comparisons yet available but current performance against national indicators is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BV101, 13.98m local bus service vehicle kilometres in 1998/99 • BV102, 14.56m local bus service passenger journeys in 1998/99 • BV104, percentage of users satisfied with local bus services - first surveys will be carried out in autumn 2000. • BV194, 52 pence subsidy per passenger journey on subsidised services • Audit Commission P7, £6.66 net spending per head of population on public transport. (£3.18 per head net of spending on concessionary travel, placing Leicestershire in the lowest 25% nationally) <p>Targets for these indicators will be set next year once a trend is established. It should be noted, however, that the information in BV101 and 102 is supplied from national records for fuel tax rebate and is of uncertain accuracy; also that none of the four provides a direct measure of the cost-effectiveness of the service.</p> <p>8 out of 10 targets in the 1999/2000 group service plan were fully or nearly achieved</p> <p><i>Question 2: Can the data used to support the national P.I.s be made more robust?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 4: Work on benchmarking with other authorities is already under way. Can this be used to provide better measures of recent performance?</i></p>
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<p>Competitiveness of the service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus services are contracted in under open competition rules laid down by 1985 Transport Act • Service is managed by County Council staff; externalisation has not been tested • Process benchmarking on a regional basis has shown close similarity of process • Analysis of value for money has been carried out on a regional basis, without so far producing a valid basis for inter-county comparison • Joint regional work is being carried out on making the market of bus service contractors work more effectively <p><i>Question 3: contract prices have been increasing fast. How effectively is competition working to hold prices down?</i></p> <p><i>Question 4: is it possible to make valid inter-county comparisons on the value for money achieved by subsidising local bus services?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 5: the County Council does not operate its own vehicles for local bus services. Would this be legally possible and might it be used to reduce total expenditure?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 6: might an expansion of transport provided by the voluntary sector contribute to controlling total expenditure and improving the service on offer?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 7: might externalising the management of the service help in controlling costs, or might integrating management with the management of other County Council transport services?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 8: Is it in the County Council's interests to maintain the trading agreement with Leicester City Council?</i></p>
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<p>Trends in expenditure and performance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing policy, cost is governed by the market price for contracts and the rate at which the commercially run bus network shrinks • Over the last 10 years, changes in both have been modest, leading to a slow real-terms increase in expenditure. (Leicestershire remains in the lowest 25% nationally for spend per head, excluding concessionary travel) • Generally, services have been successfully maintained within the pence per passenger mile subsidy limits, with only the occasional need to reduce or withdraw routes • the standards for minimum levels of service, introduced with the rural bus grant in 1998, have been maintained • over the last two years, a shortage of bus drivers and desire for higher margins in the large bus groups has led to a fast increase in the market price for contracts and considerable cutbacks in commercial services. This reflects also the national experience. (Between July 1999 and July 2000 32 commercially run bus services in the county were reduced in scope or withdrawn entirely) • this has caused a sharp increase in expenditure, illustrated by outturn expenditure of £0.8m in 1998/99, £1.1m in 1999/2000 and (predicted) £1.3m in 2000/01. • There are some signs that the market price is stabilising, but not that the trend of commercial service cutbacks has ended • Council staff have diverted more efforts to improving the quality of contract bus services in the past couple of years; there are indications, mainly anecdotal so far, that this is having some impact on vehicle quality and standards or operation. It may also have contributed to some extent towards the increase in contract prices. <p><i>Question 5: Is it possible to measure service quality objectively?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 9: How might service quality best be improved and what would be the cost of doing so?</i></p>
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<p>Issues from sustainability assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a few contract services, e.g. the Meynells Gorse park and ride, remove substantial numbers of cars from busy urban roads and contribute significantly to sustainability objectives • most services operate to meet social need and, being often lightly loaded, may be only neutral in their effect on the environment compared to alternatives; this is particularly so for older vehicles • the gradual introduction of a requirement for newer buses on contract services will help reduce exhaust pollution, but at a cost • the increased use of taxis and minibuses will help reduce the effect of using inappropriately large vehicles, but the problem of using large vehicles for small numbers of passengers remains inherent, particularly in the rural areas <p><i>Issue 10: to what extent can County Council action help to improve the sustainability performance of contract local bus services?</i></p>
<p>The supply market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are 194 companies on the tender list for local bus services, of which 37 currently hold contracts • contracts are for a maximum of 5 years (dictated by 1985 Transport Act) • the current average number of tenders received per contract is 8 • high proportion of contracts are held by local subsidiaries of national groups - Arriva Fox and First Leicester - companies with 200+ vehicles • almost no intermediate sized companies, a few in the 10 - 30 vehicle range, the remainder less than 10 • standards vary widely: large companies generally satisfactory; a few small companies excellent but many barely acceptable <p><i>Issue 11: some work has already been done on different ways of presenting contracts to the market in order to control prices better. Is it possible to draw general conclusions about the effect of different ways of packaging, or contract lengths, or contract conditions?</i></p>

<p>Results of consultation exercises</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuous programme of local consultation on planned service changes with detailed views taken into account in design of new changes • on-bus inspection programme provides some opportunities for feedback on existing services • general and specific feedback provided by the Leicester and Leicestershire Bus Users' Panel • other feedback from village appraisals and from consultation on LTP and Structure Plan • concerns that much comment on bus services is unrealistic aspiration from people who would not use the service if provided • main themes arising from consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited scope of services in rural areas - general problems arising from lack of evening and Sunday services - difficulty of access to medical facilities - unreliability, particularly in urban areas - other aspects of quality, including standard of vehicles and behaviour of drivers <p><i>Question 6: what do stakeholders think should be the priority journey purposes for which subsidy should be provided?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 12: is it possible to involve bus users, parish councils and others in more sensitive continuous feedback on the scope and quality of local bus services?</i></p>
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<p>Trends and changes in the service and its environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gradual retrenchment of commercial operators, noted above • recent increase in market prices, noted above • slow continuing decline in market of people who are bus-dependent, unlikely to be significantly affected by increase in elderly population • signs of a reversal of long-term decline in patronage where there has been investment in new vehicles and bus priorities • rising consumer expectations of service quality and availability may be outstripping operators' ability to deliver • rising fuel price, car park charging and congestion, with other policies to enhance the attractiveness of the bus, may help to counter-balance the trend of long-term decline. • On the other hand, fares have risen well above general inflation in last ten years • Increased recognition of role of the bus in national policy, reinforced in Transport Bill now going through parliament • Increased national funding, first through Rural Bus Grant and Rural Bus Challenge; extension of RBG to small towns and introduction of Urban Bus Challenge expected to follow soon; though this extra funding has constraints on how it may be spent • Legislation requires provision of accessibility for disabled people in all new buses <p><i>Question 7: is it possible to predict with any accuracy the medium-term trend in the provision of commercial bus services in the county? If so, what does that imply for the likely future demand on subsidy expenditure under different policy options?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 13: Is it possible to influence the shape of the future commercial bus networks, or their rate of decline, so that County Council revenue support expenditure can be more readily controlled?</i></p>
<p>Results of other reviews and studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal officer review in 1999 examined ways of making budget savings in response to budget overspend. These focussed on ways of making structured service cuts to bring expenditure back into line; in the event no action was taken pending this review • Numerous national research reports and reviews but no specific local ones

Key issues facing the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the effectiveness of local bus services in meeting Council objectives • Controlling expenditure within what is currently a demand-led policy • Ensuring policy fits with a changing network of commercially run bus services • Improving the quality of the product • Is it in the Council's best interests to continue the trading agreement with Leicester City Council? • Developing a wider range of cost-effective solutions to small-scale rural transport problems
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2. Development of the Local Rail Network

There is no duty on local authorities to be involved in the development of local rail networks but trains are seen as one of the more sustainable alternatives to private car use. Government therefore expects constructive policies for partnerships in improving local rail services to be included in Local Transport Plans.

Local train services are provided by private sector train companies operating under franchises awarded by the Strategic Rail Authority. Local authorities can intervene in the process by:

- *Using their influence to argue for services to be provided to meet LTP objectives*
- *Investing in station improvements and new stations, in partnership with the rail industry, to improve service coverage and service delivery*
- *Providing revenue funding for new and improved rail services.*

Leicestershire has used all three mechanisms, most notably in the funding of South Wigston station in 1986, the introduction of the Ivanhoe Stage 1 service to three new stations in the Soar Valley in 1994, and the long-running work on the Ivanhoe Stage 2 service. The Ivanhoe stage 1 service is subsidised jointly by the County and City Councils under an operating agreement with Central Trains.

Relevant statutory powers and duties	No duty. Power under Local Govt Act 1972 section 137. <i>Issue 1: if this review shows support for local rail services is not a best value option, can continuing support for the Ivanhoe stage 1 service be justified and what would be the consequences of withdrawing?</i>
Current policy framework	Government plans for a major expansion in the scope and quality of rail services over the next ten years and has promised a large increase in investment. County Council policy, in line with government policy, is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work towards a target of 4 trains an hour on the four main lines radiating from Leicester

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the re-opening of stations at Blaby, Kibworth and East Goscote, to ensure there is a network of local rail stations in the county appropriate to provide the necessary access to services • In the short term, apply for Rail Passenger Partnership funding for an enhanced service on the Loughborough and Leicester to Nuneaton line, in order to help move towards the 4 trains an hour target • Negotiate with the SRA and others to find a way to progress the Ivanhoe stage 2 service, in pursuit of sustainability, economic regeneration and tourism objectives • Maintain the Ivanhoe stage 1 service as part of the 4 trains an hour total on the Loughborough line <p><i>Issue 2: how cost-effective is support for rail services, compared to alternatives, and is this the right policy framework for delivering LTP objectives?</i></p>
Key stakeholders	Present and potential rail passengers, Central Trains Ltd, Midland Mainline Ltd, Railtrack, Shadow Strategic Rail Authority, Leicester City Council, district councils, county council staff
Current objectives, targets and plans	<p>Objectives are contained within the overall transportation service plan objective to increase passenger journeys by rail as a contribution to making transport more sustainable.</p> <p>At the strategic level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to influence railway re-franchising process to ensure new franchisees work towards County Council objectives • Secure funding for enhanced Nuneaton service • Resolve the future of the Ivanhoe stage 2 project <p>At the more detailed level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% year on year reduction of support cost per passenger trip on Ivanhoe stage 1 from current £1.46 • use continued promotional work and service quality monitoring/remedial action with contractor to help achieve this <p><i>Issue 3: is there anything that can be done to bring about a more pronounced improvement in the financial performance of the Ivanhoe stage 1 service, for example by introducing an element of competition into the supply or re-negotiating the terms of the agreement?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 4: are there alternative ways of taking forward a local rail development strategy which would be more cost-effective?</i></p>
Service provides benefits for	Approx 18,000 passengers a day using train services in Leicester and Leicestershire, of whom 800 use the service from Syston, Sileby and Barrow on the Ivanhoe stage 1 service. Motorists generally, through approximately 5000 car trips a day being transferred to the train.

<p>The service, its organisation and key processes</p>	<p>At the strategic level, the process is mainly one of negotiation with organisations within the railway industry, carried out both locally and in partnership with other local authorities in the East Midlands.</p> <p>For the one County Council subsidised service, Ivanhoe stage 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one-train shuttle service between Leicester and Loughborough, providing approximately hourly service through main daytime period • operated by Central Trains under a negotiated agreement which rolls forward year by year • County Council staff monitor by station inspections and quarterly on-train census, plus following up any complaints • County Council is client on behalf of County and City Councils • Service managed for County and City Councils by local bus services team - 0.2 f.t.e.
<p>Use of ICT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database for contract payments • Spreadsheets for analysis of passenger usage and expenditure forecasting
<p>Service budget and other resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £210,000 County base budget (City Council pays an additional £150,000 - 41% of total) • capital funds from LTP block allocation potentially available
<p>Recent performance</p>	<p>Generally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local train operating companies perform above average in the national league table but this is outside the Council's control <p>For the Ivanhoe stage 1 service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slow continued increase in patronage • service reliability generally compares favourably with national standards • little promotional effort recently because of lack of staff time • heavy concentration of passengers onto peak-hour trains, which are usually nearly full, with off-peak trains lightly loaded • Ivanhoe support cost of 23 pence per passenger mile compares with 19.1 pence for Central Trains as a whole. <p><i>Question 1: is it possible to compare the cost-effectiveness and quality of the Ivanhoe service more specifically with comparable local rail services elsewhere?</i></p>
<p>Competitiveness of the service</p>	<p>Generally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • train franchises are controlled by the SRA, over which organisation the Council has no influence • most capital spending on the railway is carried out by Railtrack, a private sector organisation subject to regulatory control. Railtrack tenders for capital works in

	<p>a way broadly similar to that used by local government</p> <p>For the Ivanhoe stage 1 service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questionable whether there is a real market for train operators, since potential competitors would have to establish a local base • operating agreement negotiated in 1994 appeared to offer acceptable value for money but no benchmarking comparisons available • quality assessed as broadly similar to that available from potential competitors <p><i>(see questions 1 and 4)</i></p>
Trends in expenditure and performance	<p>Generally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most train franchises are locked into reducing subsidy requirements year by year, brought about mainly through passenger growth • continued concerns nationally about the investment performance of Railtrack <p>For the Ivanhoe stage 1 service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cost increases annually under terms of agreement, at r.p.i. or slightly less • patronage and revenue increasing slowly • extended station car park for Syston to be constructed this year, at a cost of £70,000; expected to increase patronage from that station • outturn expenditure: 1998/99 - £187,000, 1999/2000 - £202,000, 2000/01 (predicted) - £216,000 • operational performance stable bar a period in late 1999/early 2000 when new trains were being used and were initially unreliable <p><i>Issue 5: are there cost-effective steps that could be taken to improve service reliability further?</i></p>
Issues from sustainability assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around 30% of Ivanhoe users used to travel by car, and figures for other local rail services probably similar, so these trips removed from the road. • On the other hand trains add exhaust pollution which may well, overall, equal benefits from removal of cars <p><i>Question 2: is it possible to judge more clearly at what level of patronage a rail service such as Ivanhoe begins to contribute significantly to improving transport sustainability?</i></p>
The supply market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around a dozen companies hold the necessary train operating licences but franchise holders already based in the area - Central Trains and Midland Mainline at present - have a great advantage in any competition
Results of consultation exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LTP and Structure Plan consultation shows strong desire to enhance the local rail service network • Concerns also to improve the range of train services on offer and opportunities for connections • Continued concerns about service reliability, particularly on Central Trains

	<p>For Ivanhoe stage 1 service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-train surveys solicit passenger views • Regular dialogue with parish councils and some correspondence by post • Some feedback through LTP and similar consultation exercises • Main issues raised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access problems at Barrow station - trains not turning up (mainly during recent period of unreliability) and lack of warning from public address system - vandalism on stations - lack of evening/Sunday services and poor overall frequency <p><i>Question 3: is it possible to be sure that the widespread public support for rail development is informed opinion based on a knowledge of the cost consequences?</i></p> <p><i>Question 4: what are the views of users and non-users on the current quality and scope of the Ivanhoe stage 1 service?</i></p>
Trends and changes in the service and its environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid increase in national rail patronage since privatisation, though more focused on longer distance than local services; this is linked to performance of the economy and is predicted to continue • SRA, through re-franchising process currently under way, is encouraging train companies to improve quality and be more innovative in service development, though no strong focus on local rail services. This should bring local benefits • Traffic growth should increase the relative attractiveness of rail for trips into urban areas • Uncertainty as to the effect of the current re-franchising process on the service price
Results of other reviews and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None recently carried out but Caltrans study in Central Leicestershire in 1997 led to adoption of present policy
Key issues facing the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect of external changes, for example increasing costs of motoring and increasing road congestion • Resolving future of the Ivanhoe stage 2 project • Finding ways to secure rail services to proposed new rail stations • Influencing the national organisations to deliver the rail services required by Leicestershire policy • Cost-effectiveness and scope for developing patronage of Ivanhoe stage 1 service • Longer-term funding for Ivanhoe stage 1 service

3. Quality Bus Partnerships

Quality bus partnerships are recognised nationally as an effective means of working to make buses a more attractive alternative to the car in areas where most bus services are commercially operated. The basis is that, to make buses more attractive, all the disincentives to travel must be overcome. Thus it is not good enough just to improve journey times through introduction of bus priorities, or to improve comfort with the use of new buses; these and other improvements must all be combined if people are to be attracted from cars.

Since some elements are mainly in the control of the bus companies (vehicle quality, operating standards and timetable) and others mainly under the control of the local authorities (bus lanes and other bus priorities, bus terminals and stops, some aspects of passenger information provision), this calls for partnership working. The purpose of a QBP is therefore to draw up and carry out linked programmes of investment with the objective of persuading more people to travel by bus rather than car.

There are three QBPs in Leicestershire. The Central Leicestershire QBP was started about six years ago and involves partnership with Leicester City Council, First Leicester and Arriva Fox County. The Loughborough QBP was started about four years ago and involves partnership with Charnwood Borough, Kinchbus and Arriva Fox. The Hinckley QBP was started in 2000 and involves partnership with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough and Arriva Fox.

Relevant statutory powers and duties	No duty. Informal quality bus partnerships have been supported by DETR for some time. New Transport Bill will give powers to put QBPs on a statutory footing. Councils have powers to carry out the appropriate highway works. <i>Issue 1: Is the County Council's participation in QBPs a cost-effective way of contributing towards LTP objectives? What would be the consequences of withdrawing from involvement in QBPs?</i> <i>Issue 2: The Transport Bill provides a mechanism for putting QBPs onto a statutory footing and, if this proves ineffective, introducing 'quality contracts': is there a case for pursuing either or both of these options in Leicestershire?</i>
Current policy framework	QBPs supported through LTP policy as an effective device for improving bus services in urban areas
Key stakeholders	Bus passengers and potential passengers, local bus service operators, Leicester City Council, district councils, county council staff
Current objectives, targets and plans	At the strategic level, the LTP requires QBPs to be effective mechanisms for planning and carrying out linked programmes of investment so as to produce a significant improvement in the quality of bus services, resulting in a transfer of car journeys to the bus. More specific objectives are:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure bus companies commit to greater investment alongside local authorities • Ensure works programmes are effectively carried out • Improve measurement and monitoring of results of QBP activity <p><i>Issue 3: Could the mix of investment measures used by QBPs be improved to make them more cost-effective?</i></p>
Service provides benefits for	Bus passengers in Central Leicestershire, Loughborough and Hinckley urban areas
The service, its organisation and key processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships between County, City, appropriate Districts and bus operators • Analysis of bus service problems and deficiencies • Produce joint investment programmes (e.g. bus shelters/bus priorities/new vehicles) to remove these deficiencies • Bid for funds and carry out investment • Monitor • Each partner contributes staff time appropriately; current County Council input equivalent to approximately 0.5 of a person in total
Use of ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of bus service timetables • Database of bus routes and bus stop positions • Star-trak real-time information system
Service budget and other resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although there is some revenue support expenditure in these areas, QBP investment is almost entirely capital • 2000/01 allocations are: Central Leics £111,000, rest of county £88,000
Recent performance	<p>No benchmarking comparisons yet available. Key LTP performance measure will be of number of corridor partnership schemes in place, monitored and effective.</p> <p><i>Question 1: is it possible to measure how effective Leicestershire QBPs are compared to those operating elsewhere and, if there are differences, why?</i></p>
Competitiveness of the service	<p>As yet, the question cannot be assessed, either in respect of the general (are QBPs a cost-effective way of persuading people out of cars compared to alternatives) or the specific (are our QBPs cost-effective compared to others elsewhere). There is at present no clear link between what bus companies contribute to QBPs and the benefits they obtain.</p> <p><i>(see Issue 1 and Question 1)</i></p>
Trends in expenditure and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital expenditure outside Leicester City has hitherto been low (outturn £32,000 in 1998/99 and £77,000 in 1999/2000). Most major bus priority expenditure has been within Leicester. • The LTP submitted in July 2000 contains a bid for £179,000 of QBP-related capital work in 2001/02, rising to £319,000 in 2005/6.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Central Leicestershire QBP was the first established. There was a long initial period when the commitment from bus operators was minimal. The level of commitment has been rising, driven on by the central management of the bus groups and by the DETR • Although the local authorities have continued to invest, it is still hard to point to specific bus company investments of any significance which they would not have made in any case • There is as yet no objective information on whether QBPs have been successful in attracting people from cars <p><i>Issue 4: the LTPs set out systems for monitoring the work of QBPs; what is necessary to ensure that these are effective?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 5: How could the QBPs be made more effective in service delivery, particularly in terms of securing greater commitment from the bus companies? Are there alternative service delivery mechanisms?</i></p>
Issues from sustainability assessment	<p>QBPs exist to provide an attractive alternative to the car and hence improve sustainability. However, this will only be achieved if buses run well loaded.</p> <p><i>Question 2: is it possible to establish more clearly the level of sustainability benefits produced by bus services running at different levels of loading in different circumstances?</i></p>
The supply market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QBPs are partnership activities with the operators of commercial bus services, so there is no market • Companies chiefly involved are First Leicester in Central Leicestershire, Arriva Fox County in all three areas, and Kinchbus in Loughborough
Results of consultation exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As for contract local bus services • Main themes emerging: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service reliability - Service quality (vehicle standards, driver behaviour etc) - Passenger information deficiencies - Lack of evening and Sunday services - Frequent service changes - Need for improved shelter at bus stops <p><i>Question 3: knowledge of what will attract new passengers to buses, based on local and national consultation, is good; but what do the bus company partners think of the process and what do they believe will make the QBPs more effective?</i></p>
Trends and changes in the service and its environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leicestershire were pioneers of the approach in mid 1990s; QBPs now recognised nationally as good practice; LTP guidance from DETR sets out detailed requirements • General concerns about the difficulty of persuading bus companies to invest are one reason for the provisions in

	<p>the current Transport Bill; though some consider the new provisions will not help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong central lead by main bus groups means that level of co-operation likely to improve in future
Results of other reviews and studies	None relevant, although there has been a considerable amount of work on good practice carried out nationally.
Key issues facing the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving effectiveness and co-ordination of joint investment programmes • Improving service promotion • Improving measurement and monitoring

4. Bus Passenger Information

Bus companies have a commercial incentive to provide information about their own services. Local authorities have a similar incentive in respect of subsidised services for which they take the revenue risk. Local authorities also have a power to provide general information so as to give potential passengers a comprehensive picture of the services on offer.

Practice has varied widely across the country but there has been criticism, both nationally and locally, that bus passenger information is inadequate. In Leicestershire, the bus operators and the County Council have provided leaflet timetables for individual bus services and some roadside displays; the County Council has also supported the 'Busline' telephone enquiry service jointly with the bus companies and has until recently produced twice a year a plan guide to services. It has also joint-funded with the bus companies and the districts comprehensive timetable booklets for the Loughborough and Hinckley QBP areas.

Two recent government-led changes will affect future provision of the service. Firstly a government initiative has led to the introduction of the new 'Traveline' telephone enquiry service, locally delivered but using a single national phone number. This requires a comprehensive county database, linked regionally and nationally, which is currently at an advanced stage of development. The database is intended also to allow internet access to journey planning as well as the easier production of printed timetables and roadside information displays.

The second change is a requirement in the Transport Bill for local authorities to draw up 'bus information strategies', in consultation with bus operators and others. These will cover all sources of information - printed, by telephone or via the internet and including 'real time' information. Implementation of the strategy will be by partnership between bus operators and the local authority, with the local authority having power to carry out the work and re-charge the operators if co-operation is not forthcoming. This BV review should set out the basis for the information strategy for Leicestershire.

<p>Relevant statutory powers and duties</p>	<p>1985 Transport Act (section 63(6)) gives powers to provide passenger information for both commercially run and contract services, provided the council does not act anti-competitively. The Transport Bill proposes making it a duty of county councils to determine after consultation what local bus information is provided and ensure it is provided, either by the commercial bus companies direct or, failing that, by the local authority but recharged as appropriate to the bus companies.</p> <p><i>Question 1: What is the minimum level of information service which will be demanded of local authorities by the new Transport Act?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 1: What will be the consequences for meeting LTP objectives if the County Council delivers this service at the minimum level?</i></p>
<p>Current policy framework</p>	<p>The LTP sets out an overall policy which provides an initial response to the requirements of the Transport Bill and aims to secure comprehensive information provision through a variety of media. This is done in support of the overall objectives of improving the effectiveness of buses in both meeting the needs of those without access to a car and providing an attractive alternative to car use.</p> <p>At the more specific level, current policy involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of leaflets and roadside displays for contract local bus services • Contribution as partner to the 'Traveline' telephone enquiry service • Contribution as partner to publication of area timetable booklets for Loughborough and Hinckley • Publication twice-yearly of county bus routes plan (but not published since February 1999 because of budgetary problems) • Maintenance of bus stops countywide <p><i>Issue 2: is the current mix of information sources the most cost-effective one and, if not, how should it be changed?</i></p> <p><i>What are the options for information provision in partnership with the bus companies and others, and which will be most cost-effective?</i></p>
<p>Key stakeholders</p>	<p>Present and potential bus passengers, local bus service operators, Leicester City Council, district councils, county council staff</p>
<p>Current objectives, targets and plans</p>	<p>The overall objective is to produce and implement a new information strategy as required by the Transport Bill. Shorter term local targets are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the new Traveline service, with its associated database, is successfully established • Produce a new standard format for council timetable leaflets

Service provides benefits for	All Leicestershire bus users
The service, its organisation and key processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and have printed timetable leaflets and some roadside displays for contract local bus services (approx 70 separate publications a year and a total print run of 170,000) • Develop and maintain a computer database of all bus services, for use by Traveline and other outlets • Design and have produced county bus map (twice yearly prior to suspension in 1999; print run 60,000 per edition) • Database management, artwork design and service management is done within local bus services team, committing 1.5 full time equivalents • Service also provided for Leicester City Council under a trading agreement although city centre and central bus stations not covered. <p><i>Issue 3: the service is currently managed by County Council staff with some design work done in-house but printing carried out externally. Is this the most cost-effective means of service delivery and are there alternatives? Are there lessons to be learned from how other authorities manage this service?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 4: the County Council supplies and maintains bus stop poles and flags at its own cost. Is it appropriate to continue this activity or are there alternatives?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 5: Is it in the County Council's interests to continue the present trading agreement with Leicester City Council for this service?</i></p>
Use of ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of bus service timetables • Database of bus routes and bus stop positions • Specialist design software
Service budget and other resources	£60,000 a year (2001/02), revenue <i>Question 2: How much do the bus companies spend on this activity?</i>
Recent performance	<p>No performance indicators available yet but BV103 - percentage of users satisfied with local provision of public transport information - will be measured in autumn 2000. Current expenditure is 10p per head of population per year. Development of new timetable format and booklet for Hinckley recently completed. New Traveline service established to required timescale as part of national initiative. Database for Traveline slower in introduction than planned because of supply difficulties. Traveline operates to nationally established performance targets; the County Council, as a minor partner in the regional controlling group, will have relatively little influence over its performance.</p> <p><i>Question 3: can measures be established to show how easy</i></p>

	<i>it is to access up-to-date timetable information through different media in Leicestershire, compared to elsewhere?</i>
Competitiveness of the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printing is subject to competitive tender • Timetable layout currently done in-house - potential for testing external suppliers • Traveline service supplied by Arriva Fox on negotiated basis but new regional management of Traveline (bus companies + local authorities) may move to competitive tender <p>(see Issue 3 above)</p>
Trends in expenditure and performance	<p>Expenditure has been controlled within constant budget allocation. Transport Bill requirements may require a higher level of expenditure though this is not yet clear.</p> <p>Expenditure by bus companies has for many years been at a low level but in the last two years there has been a considerable improvement in the production of both timetable leaflets and booklets and roadside displays.</p>
Issues from sustainability assessment	None significant other than use of recycled paper for timetables.
The supply market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large local market of print and production companies • Small specialist national market of companies specialising in timetable production • Similarly small national market of suppliers of I.T. timetable databases
Results of consultation exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation feedback has come from LTP participation, Bus Users' Panel, letters and telephone calls, and one specific exercise carried out in West Leicestershire in 1998. There is also a considerable amount of publicised 'good practice' from elsewhere. • Main themes have been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness of bus services is low even where considerable publicity efforts have been made - Multiple sources of information are required (in the home, by telephone, at the stop) - Service changes, commercial or contract, are generally not well publicised • User satisfaction survey in autumn 2000 will provide data for BV103 (see above) <p><i>Question 4: What further local consultation will clarify views of users and non-users on public transport information provision and what are these views?</i></p>
Trends and changes in the service and its environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisions in new Transport Bill, mentioned above, will make an impact • Major bus companies are spending more on publicising their own services • Traveline will be a higher profile service than the previous Busline and will also provide internet access • As part of improved marketing, presentation of

	information will have to improve to match increasing sophistication with which other information is presented to potential consumers
Results of other reviews and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Leicestershire consultant's report in 1998 recommended adoption of minimum standards for passenger information.
Key issues facing the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing up an information strategy, as required by the Transport Bill, with bus company commitment • Ensuring that contract bus service publicity is more cost-effective and its message more effectively delivered • Ensuring that Traveline provides the service required of it. • Is the trading agreement, under which the service is also provided on behalf of Leicester City Council, in the County Council's best interests?

5. Support for Accessible Transport Schemes

Many people with mobility impairments cannot use conventional public transport. The County Council therefore supports a variety of special transport schemes to help meet the access needs of these people. In the market towns and the rural areas most schemes are locally based and rely on volunteer car drivers to provide transport, being paid a mileage rate. There are also a few schemes which use small minibuses. The service is inevitably relatively expensive and provides a limited number of journeys, but gives a substantial benefit to customers.

In Central Leicestershire and Loughborough, similar needs are met through the operation of the Access bus, which operates on fixed routes as a normal bus but has a wheelchair lift and an attendant to help passengers board and alight. A dial-a-ride service also operates in Central Leicestershire, offering a similar service on a pre-booked basis. Both are operated under contract to the Council. Both operate mainly in Leicester and are mainly funded by Leicester City Council. The County Council supplies the service under a trading agreement with the City Council. The City Council is about to carry out its own review of the Access and dial-a-ride services, and this may affect the future availability of these to the County Council.

An increasing number of conventional bus services are now being operated by low-floor buses which are wheelchair accessible. These will help many people with mobility impairments and may reduce the requirement for special accessible services. However, there are many disabled people who will still require the personal support offered by community transport schemes.

Relevant statutory powers and	1985 Transport Act gives powers to support community transport schemes (sections 19 and 22). Other services supported under 1985 Transport Act local bus service
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duties	provisions. <i>Issue 1: What would be the effect, in terms of meeting County Council objectives, of withdrawing from this activity?</i>
Current policy framework	The service responds to LTP objective to help meet the travel needs of those who are unable to use conventional public transport. This is done specifically through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for a network of social car and minibus schemes. General policy is to extend coverage of such schemes across the county, though progress is limited by availability of funds. • Support for commercially run 'Access' and Dial a Ride schemes in Central Leicestershire and Loughborough, supplying services using wheelchair-accessible buses and minibuses <i>Issue 2: is the current mix of services for providing transport for mobility impaired passengers the most cost-effective one? Are there alternatives and if so how much would they cost compared to the present policy?</i>
Key stakeholders	Mobility impaired passengers, community transport and local bus service operators, Leicester City Council, district councils, disability groups, county council staff, health authorities
Current objectives, targets and plans	These services come within the Council's overall objectives for building a healthier community, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing economic and social well-being • Working in partnership to provide integrated care services for the most vulnerable members of our society. The service has a policy objective of improving the effectiveness and the coverage of schemes for mobility impaired people. This also contributes to the transportation service plan objective to provide cost-effective community transport services for people who do not have a car available. Specific targets are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Access service to improve usage • Develop partnership with health authorities over transport to health facilities • Complete introduction of new evaluation system for community transport schemes • Contain growth in cost per vehicle kilometre and per passenger for community transport services to less than general rate of inflation <i>Question 1: How does the level and type of service provided in Leicestershire compare with that in other areas?</i> <i>Issue 3: other agencies are involved in providing transport for disabled people; have opportunities for policy integration been properly explored?</i> <i>Issue 4: similarly, have opportunities for integrating the supply of transport with other agencies been properly explored?</i>

Service provides benefits for	Approx 250 passengers a day across Leicestershire
The service, its organisation and key processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for 50 transport services for mobility impaired people, both commercial and voluntary sector, using volunteer car drivers, 8 voluntary sector minibuses, 1 Access bus, 1 dial-a-ride bus with back-up from City Social Services minibuses. • Advice and co-ordination • Service operated by 1.75 staff in the public transport group <p><i>Question 2: how do other similar local authorities manage the service?</i></p>
Use of ICT	Spreadsheet for expenditure forecasting and performance analysis
Service budget and other resources	£190,000 revenue (£58,000 revenue for Leicester City Council under a trading agreement)
Recent performance	<p>No benchmarking comparisons yet available. 7 out of 9 targets in 1999/2000 group service plan fully or nearly achieved. 1999/2000 performance measures are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support cost per vehicle kilometre for social car schemes - £0.17 • Ditto for community minibus schemes - £0.66 • Ditto for Access and Dial-a-Ride - £1.10 • Support cost per passenger journey for social car schemes - £2.27 • Ditto for community minibus schemes - £2.09 • Ditto for Access and Dial-a-Ride - £3.63 <p><i>Question 3: is it possible to produce benchmark comparisons on cost-effectiveness with other local authorities?</i></p>
Competitiveness of the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bus services are contracted in under open competition rules laid down by 1985 Transport Act • service is managed by County Council staff, including Dial-a-Ride bookings; no test of externalisation has been carried out • community transport schemes are operated under negotiated service level agreements • no testing of alternative supply mechanisms has been carried out <p><i>Issue 5: would any alternative way of managing the service improve cost-effectiveness?</i></p>
Trends in expenditure and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditure on community transport was £132,000 in 1998/99, £134,000 in 1999/2000 and (predicted) £147,000 in 2000/01. Expenditure on the commercially run Access and Dial-a-Ride services was £21,000 in 1998/99, £18,000 in 1999/2000 and (predicted) £16,000

	<p>in 2000/01. The decreasing expenditure on Access/Dial a Ride is due to an increasing proportion of the contract costs falling on the City Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total number of journeys provided by the service has grown slowly. • a long process of encouraging the sharing of good practice between community transport schemes has contributed towards what is perceived to be a gradual increase in service quality <p><i>Question 4: What will be the predicted expenditure in future years if there is no change in policy?</i></p> <p><i>Question 5: Is it possible to produce more objective measures of service quality?</i></p>
Issues from sustainability assessment	Sustainability issues for this service are marginal
The supply market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The professionally operated services are provided by contract following open tender from the market, as described in the audit statement on contract local bus services • Community transport services are not provided from a market. A key task is supporting the establishment of new c.t. schemes. Obtaining volunteer drivers is also a significant constraint on the level of service that can be offered <p><i>Issue 6: is there any way to work in partnership with community transport schemes and others to increase the number of volunteer drivers coming forward?</i></p>
Results of consultation exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some feedback from disability groups, community transport schemes and passengers, LTP consultation and other sources. • Main themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - difficulty of access to medical facilities - general issue of mobility restrictions for disabled people <p><i>Question 6: there is very little structured feedback on the quality or types of services offered; can this gap in knowledge be filled?</i></p>
Trends and changes in the service and its environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slow increase in availability of community transport schemes, delayed by limits on funding • increasing difficulty in recruiting volunteer drivers for community transport schemes leads to more reliance on paid drivers. • gradual introduction of low-floor buses means that, in more populated areas, conventional buses will be of more use to people with mobility impairments
Results of other reviews and	None relevant

studies	
Key issues facing the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can community transport be integrated better with health authority transport to provide a more cost-effective service overall? • Are the commercially-run Access and Dial-a-ride services the most cost-effective way of meeting these access needs? • Can comprehensive countywide coverage be achieved?

6. Provision of Concessionary Travel

The County Council provides a comprehensive countywide scheme of concessionary travel for elderly, disabled and unemployed people. Elderly and disabled people are offered the choice of a travel pass (half fare, though free or flat-fare for some disabled users) or £22 of tokens; unemployed people pay £1 for a half fare pass lasting four weeks. Elderly and disabled people's concessions are renewed annually, with some issues from County Hall but elderly people renewing their concessions at post offices. Concessions are available for use on local buses and trains; tokens can also be used on taxis. They can be used for travel throughout Leicestershire and Leicester and to main towns in adjacent counties. An issue charge of £2.50 is made.

The County Council is one of only two counties which fully funds a concessionary travel scheme. The Transport Bill now before parliament will make it a duty of district councils to fund concessions, to a defined minimum level which is significantly below that currently offered by the County Council scheme. The Cabinet has determined that it is prepared to top-up a district funded scheme so as to maintain the present comprehensive countywide coverage. Negotiations with the district councils are under way to agree the funding split and the details of a future scheme. This BV review will be expected to inform decision-making on the shape of any revised scheme to be introduced from 2002/03.

Relevant statutory powers and duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No duty; power under 1985 Transport Act, section 93 • Scheme for unemployed people provided under Local Government Act 1972 section 137. • New Transport Bill proposes making it a duty of district councils to fund concessions to a defined minimum level
Current policy framework	<p>Help to achieve corporate objectives of improving economic wellbeing and building a healthier community by helping to make access to facilities by public transport more affordable for elderly, disabled and unemployed people</p> <p><i>Issue 1: is it possible to evaluate the true benefit produced by the concessionary travel scheme, and the effects, in terms of meeting County Council objectives, of reducing to individual district schemes at the new national minimum level</i></p> <p><i>Issue 2: What alternative types and mixes of concessions</i></p>

	<p><i>are available; could any of these be better targeted to meet County Council (and District Council) objectives; how much would the alternatives cost?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 3: What links are there to other County Council policies affecting elderly and disabled people and is there any scope for improved policy integration?</i></p>
Key stakeholders	Elderly, disabled and unemployed people in the county, bus, rail and taxi operators, Leicester City Council, district councils, county council staff
Current objectives, targets and plans	<p>Overall objectives are determined by the policy framework. Specific short-term objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate revised scheme systems in advance of expected changes following Transport Bill's enactment • Improve some aspects of administration and security
Service provides benefits for	<p>72,000 pensioners, 2,500 disabled and 400 unemployed people who currently hold concessions.</p> <p><i>Question 1: is the take-up comparable with that for other schemes elsewhere; if not, why not?</i></p>
The service, its organisation and key processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pensioners and disabled people have choice of half fare pass or £22 of tokens; some disabled people have flat fare or free passes • Pensioner concessions issued annually through post offices • Pensioner first issues and all disabled issues from County Hall; unemployed scheme 4-weekly passes from local outlets • Reimbursement for pass use is calculated from ticket machine statistics • Tokens reimbursed at County Hall • Service managed by team of 6 in public transport group (who also operate scheme for Leicester City Council under a trading agreement) <p><i>Issue 4: are the management and issue systems the most cost-effective available; how do they compare with systems used elsewhere; what do service users think of them; is there a better alternative?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 5: is the trading agreement with Leicester City Council of benefit to the County Council?</i></p>
Use of ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of concession-holders
Service budget and other resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £2.0m net of £200,000 income from issue charge (expenditure £950,000 on tokens, £1.15m on passes and £100,000 on administration) • (additional £1.5m budget managed for Leicester City Council)
Recent performance	<p>No benchmarking comparisons available. 7 out of 9 action plan targets in 1999/2000 group service plan fully or partly met. Targets for turn-round time on concession issue and payments to operators consistently achieved.</p> <p><i>Question 2: is it possible to set benchmarking measures for</i></p>

	<i>the management of the service?</i>
Competitiveness of the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reimbursement is necessarily negotiated with operators, based on a 'generation' percentage; informal view is that the negotiated deal in Leicestershire is as good as elsewhere • Token reimbursement is at face value plus 2.5% handling fee; Leicestershire scheme of payment only on reimbursement gives cash flow advantages compared to National Travel Tokens system of payment in advance • Negotiated fee with Post Office Counters for issue; no alternative offering same access to service obviously available • Administration by County Council staff not yet tested against external alternatives • Tokens, passes and leaflets purchased by competitive tender <p><i>Issue 6: how do the reimbursement arrangements for bus and train operators and taxi companies compare with those used elsewhere; could they be made more cost-effective?</i></p> <p><i>Issue 7: is there any realistic alternative to using post offices for concession issue?</i></p> <p><i>(see also Issue 4)</i></p>
Trends in expenditure and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow real-terms increase in expenditure caused by growing number of concession-holders and increasing propensity to travel (outturn was £1.76m in 1998/99, £1.83m in 1999/2000; predicted £1.98m in 2000/01) • Introduction of issue charge in 1996 caused one-year 4% recession in take-up but growth then re-established • Demographic trends indicate this slow growth likely to continue • Service quality assessed as high and stable <p><i>Question 3: there is a complex picture of usage of tokens and passes, producing the overall total; is this sufficiently understood?</i></p> <p><i>Question 4: What will the service cost in the future if unchanged other than for the abolition of the issue charge?</i></p> <p><i>Question 5: are there more objective measures of service quality available?</i></p>
Issues from sustainability assessment	None of any significance, although some of the journey generation from the scheme replaces trips previously made by car.
The supply market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concession use is on existing train, bus and taxi services, therefore no market considerations • Market for concession issue restricted by necessity for easy access by pensioners - post offices a clear first choice • Scheme materials purchased from adequate market <p><i>(see issue 7)</i></p>
Results of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some feedback through LTP and other consultation

consultation exercises	<p>exercises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other feedback from on-bus surveys and occasional correspondence • No main issues arising other than occasional problems with acceptance of concessions on some services <p><i>Question 6: is it possible to obtain more precise feedback on what customers think about the quality of different aspects of the service?</i></p>
Trends and changes in the service and its environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing expected growth in mobile elderly population noted above. • Expected widespread introduction of smart-cards over next few years may affect concession issue and reimbursement arrangements • Passage of Transport Bill will require review of County Council's role compared to that of district councils
Results of other reviews and studies	None recently carried out
Key issues facing the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the passage of the current Transport Bill affect the future provision of travel concessions in Leicestershire? • Is the scheme as presently operated meeting County Council objectives as effectively as it might do? • Does it make sense to continue the trading agreement with Leicester City Council for this service?

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