

Somerset Bus Partnership - Zoom Meeting 3rd November 2021 - Notes taken by BC

The Service Improvement Plan

Main hosts -

Tony Reece (South Somerset) Glen Burras (Sedgemoor)

John Hassall (SW&T) Peter Travis (Mendip)

There were 58 representatives present for this excellent presentation by the Bus Partnership Group and the subsequent discussion.

The main topic was the Bus Back Better funding and the Somerset Improvement Plan. "Boris puts buses centre stage" we were told and certainly he brought in changes with London buses when he was Mayor but not all of them worked well.

Somerset County Council commissioned a document to make the case for a Bus Service Improvement Plan for Somerset - the 'BSIP'. It was published in October 2021. Available online.

In Somerset, we were told, 44.1% of CO2 emissions are from transport - which is much higher than the total UK average of 27%. This is a key factor when aiming to achieve net zero levels by 2030.

Only 1% of all commuter journeys in Somerset are by bus.

Cars account for 84% of commuter journeys. **We have the 2nd lowest bus use per population of any local authority area in the country.** In the 5 years before Covid hit, the usage rate was decelerating rapidly.

Councillor John Woodman has requested £163 million for bus service improvement with a plan for the implementation of change. Somerset CC has insisted that there will be no supporting funding from Somerset Residents to support their ambitious plans for buses. It is a "breathtakingly ambitious bid" and we might not get it all. The Somerset CC Bus Improvement Plan makes very interesting reading but there's not much there for Corfe ! (see below)

- The target is that by 2030, all buses in Somerset will be replaced by Zero Emission Buses.
- The cost of a new electric bus is currently between £400,000 and £500,000 and for a smaller electric midi or minibus it is about £225,000. No mention was made about what will happen to the existing fleet.
- There will be a county-wide Network of main bus routes where buses will run every 60 minutes from 7am to 7 pm by 2023.
- There is a recognised need for night time buses for service industry areas in Taunton and Bristol.
- There will be a £1 flat rate for urban dwellers to get around town without using their cars.
- The development of a discounted fare for 16 - 25 year olds (33%?) with a reduction for all operators.
- The use of a digital DRT network (live digital update as South Somerset is trialling) across the county. It's a very ambitious target.

How would targets be measured? Here's some of the Key Performance Indicators:

KP1 - Single Passenger Growth. By 2025 7 million, by 2030 8.9 million. (In 2018/19 it was 6.3 m)

KP1 T4 - Customer Satisfaction Level. By 2025 70% satisfaction, 80% by 2030, (2018 was 47%)

KP1 T7 - Youth Fare for 16 - 25 year olds who would hopefully use the buses by discounted rate and then continue to use them once they had become a lifestyle choice - As a % volume of all ticket sales in 2018/2019 they were 15% of users.

KP1 T10 - That there would be a modal shift from car to bus. In 2018/2019 1.8%. By 2025 3 - 5% and by 2030 7 - 10%

Key website for further information - search 'Somerset Bus Partnership'

On our local issues in Corfe :

- Representation is requested from each Parish to the Bus Partnership to report every 3 months on progress (or not) and problems/issues on the routes.
- There is a Park & Ride on the East and on the West side of Taunton but none on the Southern approach and South Road from Mountfields to Billetfield is very congested at certain times of the day with commuters and severe pollution from slow traffic. Could we have a mini Park and Ride between the M5 bridge on the B3170 and the turning to Staple Fitzpaine? Lobby our MP.
- Young people are unable to access any services in Taunton or at Hankridge without the use of a car or motorbike. Cycling on the B3170 into and out of Taunton is on a very dangerous, unlit road.
- **Slinky bus is available to Corfe Residents Mondays and Thursdays - Booking number 01823 331266** open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm. Search 'Jiffy Bus Taunton' for more details. 5-16 year olds will be entitled to a 50% reduction in the cost of the fare. Children under 5 travel free.

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/transport-strategy/?fbclid=IwAR0dptLdd4BJ_w0qajbc4mF-1BbSf82BHf6nwFC_T6P6zCOUzN1pAXG7s#The-National-Bus-Strategy-2021:-Bus-Back-Better

<https://www.somersetbuspartnership.co.uk>