



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Draft Local Bus Service Assessment Framework 2022

September 2022



Introduction

This process is to assist the Combined Authority's officers to judge which bus services are the most important in a logical but passenger-focused way and make the appropriate recommendations to the Combined Authority Board.

With this in mind and following intensive discussions with other Transport Authorities, the Combined Authority officers have designed a Local Bus Service Assessment Framework (LBSAF) to aid this decision-making process.

This is a process for assessing changes to the market-defined bus network.

The Combined Authority has a responsibility to look at where market failure occurs in the local road passenger transport network, to determine whether in these instances a service is needed and if, in the Authority's opinion, it is then to provide one. This role is a direct result of the section 63(1)(a) of the Transport Act 1985, where all Transport Authorities are required: *"to secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the council consider it appropriate to secure to meet any public transport requirements within the county which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose"*.

Therefore, the Combined Authority has a statutory duty to act in accordance with the provisions under 63(1)(a), as not doing so could be subject to legal challenge. What this means in reality is that the Combined Authority needs to consider any changes and undertake a full Equality Impact Assessment.

In addition, the Combined Authority have developed a Vision for the future which states:

1. The bus is the mode of choice for journeys that are not feasible on foot, cycle or using micro mobility forms of travel.
2. The bus network supports sustainable growth.
3. The bus helps to protect and enhance the environment.
4. The bus network supports the health and wellbeing of the population.
5. The bus provides opportunity for all.

Under this guidance there may be opportunities to develop and expand parts of the bus network and such opportunities should be assessed in the same way.

Given the limited funding available it is imperative that the Combined Authority adopts a methodical approach to enable it to balance the differing potential transport needs of residents; and, to manage the network in the light of changes to the commercial bus network and public demand.

Aim of the Local Bus Service Assessment Framework

The proposed LBSAF has two functions. Firstly, given that it is not possible to fund every conceivable public transport need for service users in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, it will allow the Combined Authority to prioritise where their limited financial resources should be allocated. Secondly, once the revised supported bus network is put in place, it will allow the Combined Authority to respond to changes to the commercial bus network over which it has no control and assess the need for additional contracted services that result from commercial changes (or indeed to operators ceasing to provide a contracted service where a comparable commercial service is started), in a way that is structured, agreed, and transparent. This will enable the bus network to truly reflect the vision, aims and aspirations of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and associated Bus Strategy.

The LBSAF comprises the following 'gateway' assessments that will help the Authority to determine whether they need to consider buying a supported service in each circumstance.

Statement of strategic priority

The following sections of route define the strategic core network. These routes form the backbone of the bus network and create a basic bus map on to which non-core bus services can be mapped and assessed.

Core network links:

- Peterborough – Wisbech
- Peterborough – Whittlesey - Coates
- March – Chatteris – Ely
- March – Wisbech
- Cambridge – Gt Shelford – Sawston
- Cambridge – Cambourne – St Neots
- Cambridge – Addenbrookes
- Huntingdon – Cambourne
- Whittlesey – Ramsey – Huntingdon
- St Ives – Cambridge
- Cambridge – Waterbeach – Ely
- Ely – Littleport
- Ely – Fordham – Soham – Burwell

Local Bus Service Assessment Framework: Quantitative Assessment

To proceed to procurement, a proposed bus service will need to pass all the assessment gateways as follows:

Assessment Stage 1: Is there market failure?

The Authority will consider the following factors when determining whether a market failure has occurred.

- Are there reasonable alternative services on offer that will already allow residents to make the same journey?
- Are there broadly comparable journeys or suitable alternative destinations accessible without the need for an intervention by the CPCA?
- Will any CPCA service provision risk undermining the economic viability of a commercial service?

If there are reasonable alternative or broadly comparable services available or the provision of a contracted service would undermine the economic viability of a commercial bus service, then normally assessment will end here, and no contracted service will be provided.

Assessment Stage 2: Will the service intervention offer value for money?

A service will be assessed to determine whether it offers value for money for the taxpayer. This will be done by considering the nett cost to the taxpayer of carrying each passenger after all income for the service (from on-bus fares, concessionary travel and any season tickets or other pass arrangements) has been taken into account over a given period (usually one year) has been calculated and this will be divided by the number of passenger journeys (individual movements) of all types carried on the service over the same period. This is the cost per passenger journey (CPPJ).

The Combined Authority has set an upper limit to the cost per passenger journeys beyond which it will not normally continue to provide the service. This upper cost will initially set at £12.00 but may be reviewed periodically in light of changing circumstances.

If the cost is higher than the maximum CPPJ figure, then provision of a contracted service will not normally be considered.

Assessment Stage 3: Does the available transport for the area affected meet the Service Intervention Point (SIP) benchmark?

To this end the Combined Authority has developed a table setting out Service Intervention Points (SIPs) that indicate the level of service available to residents in an area beneath which it will consider the need to provide additional transport services.

The assessment will utilise the work carried out by the County Council through the Cambridgeshire Insight, Local Population Estimates and Forecasts. This provides very accurate population estimates that enable local agencies not to be solely reliant on the 2011 Census data.

Settlement Population*	Minimum service level
A. Less than 100	No service
B. 100 - 499	1 return journey during the day, 1 day per week
C. 500 - 999	1 return journey during the day, 5 days per week
D. 1000 - 1999	Peak return journey & one return journey during the day, 5 days per week
E. 2000 - 4999	4 return journeys per day, including one peak return journey, 6 days per week
F. 5000 - 9999	8 return journeys, including one peak return journey, 0800-1700, 6 days per week
G. 10000 - 19999	Hourly service 0700-1800, 6 days per week
H. 20000 - 39999	At least 2 services to different destinations hourly at frequency shown at G.

If the SIP level of service is met by existing services, then assessment will normally stop here, and no additional contracted service will be provided. Due consideration will be provided to the settlement hierarchy established in District's Local Plans, as this provides relevant estimations on core settlements and the importance of links between them.

If the SIP level is not met, then assessment proceeds to Assessment Stage 4.

Assessment Stage 4: What is the impact on current transport users?

This stage assesses the impact of a loss of service or decision to provide a service on current or potential future bus service users, particularly where the Combined Authority has a statutory duty to provide transport for specific groups.

Assessment Stage 5 – Conclusion

Once the assessment stage has been completed a decision will be made about whether a service is in principle required based on the process set out above. If the decision is that a service is, in principle, needed, then the process will proceed to the budget setting stage. If insufficient funding is available in the local bus budget to provide a new service, even if it has a high priority, then the following options would be explored:

- Not to provide the service at this time, but place it upon a reserve list, with priority for provision, should additional funding be made available at a future date.
- Allocate additional funding to provide the service identified from other sources.
- Provide the service and fund it by withdrawing services with the overall lowest priority (lowest priority category and highest cost per a passenger journey within that category) sufficient to provide the necessary funding.

In the short term it is proposed that this decision will be made by the Head of Transport and in liaison with the Authority as necessary. If funding is available, the service will be procured.

Further Changes to Bus Service Funding Priorities

Over time it is possible that circumstances will change and the level of financial support for local bus services may vary. In these circumstances, support for services will be altered in line with the priority allocated to them under the LBSAF. Each service affected will be considered in its own right and in the case of service reductions, impact and equality assessments will be undertaken before any changes are made and service users will be consulted where possible. In making any such changes, the Combined Authority will aim as far as possible to ameliorate the impact of any service loss through the use of alternative services, such as community transport.

Additional Qualitative Assessment

Problems with transport provision and the location of services can reinforce social exclusion. They prevent people from accessing key local services or activities, such as jobs, learning, healthcare, food shopping or leisure. Problems can vary by type of area (for example urban or rural) and for different groups of people, such as disabled people, older people, or families with children.

Therefore, an assessment will be undertaken to assess the criticality of the routes in relation to rural accessibility and social exclusion. This will include the links to:

- Employment;
- Learning; and
- Healthcare.

The separate appendix to this paper provides more detail around the informed qualitative assessment that will assist officers in providing recommendations to Members (entitled *Methodology for Prioritising Bus Routes for Investment*).