



Enhanced Partnership Board Meeting
Tuesday 11th November 2025, 14:00 – 16:00
Agenda, Actions and Notable Points

Attendees:

CHAIR: Cllr Lulu Bowerman (HCC)	Natalie Wigman (HCC)	Andrew Wilson (HCC)
Caroline Mekky (HCC)	Martina Olley (HCC)	Geoff Hobbs (HCC)
Mike Griffin Thorn (HCC)	Holly Brogden (HCC)	Simon Goff (First Bus)
Tim Houghton (Community First)	Ben Murray (Go South Coast)	George Cooper (Stagecoach South)
David Garney (SCC)	Richard Tyldsley (Go South Coast)	
Robert Williams (Reading buses – representing other operators)		

Apologies:

Cllr Nick Adams-King (HCC)	Cllr Kirsty North (HCC)	Frank Baxter (HCC)
Marc Reddy (Stagecoach South)	James O’Neill (Stagecoach South)	

Agenda:

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Review of Actions from the last EP Board meeting (15 May 2025)
3. Round the table updates (operators and CTOs) - to include update on current passenger demand patterns and discussion on potential responses/ HCC support
4. EP/BSIP 2025/26 Work Programme and projects updates
 - 4.1. Service enhancements and commercial support
 - 4.2. Bus Route Investment Plans progress update
 - 4.3. Bus Station and Hub Audits
 - 4.4. Bus priority measures & studies update
 - 4.5. Northern Test Valley ‘Connect Transport on Demand’ update
 - 4.6. Vandalism and ASB on Eclipse busway & Gosport Travelsafe Partnership
 - 4.7. Transport Focus ‘Your Bus Journey’ 2025 – results so far
 - 4.8. Community-Led Transport Grant & Parish Council Bus Shelter Grant Scheme
 - 4.9. Driver Training Practices – operators are requested to provide an overview of each operator’s approach to driver training, with a particular focus on how drivers are trained to support passengers with learning disabilities
5. HCC update
 - 5.1. Devolution & LGR update – Public Transport topic paper
 - 5.2. OneNetwork update – roadworks/utilities
6. DfT Bus announcements
 - 6.1. Multi-year BSIP allocations for LTAs announcement expected by end of November
 - 6.2. Requirement to produce an updated Hampshire BSIP to unlock multi-year BSIP funds
 - 6.3. EP Plan and Scheme annual review/update
 - 6.4. BSIP DfT funding reconciliation exercise
 - 6.5. Operator views on key themes and priorities for inclusion in 26/27-28/29 work programme
7. Summary of key points discussed at Hampshire EP Forum meeting (22 October)
8. AOB

Actions

	Action	Responsibility
1	HB to share Hampshire's Transport Focus 'Your Bus Journey' interim report with Hampshire EP Board	HCC
2	AW to share photos of the completed new BRT shelters with EP Board members (similar to TCF "Superstops" with additional edge lighting)	HCC
3	HCC to follow up with attendees of the Community Transport engagement session held on 23 October to offer assistance and encourage applications	HCC
4	HCC to arrange a site visit with Cllr Bowerman to see traffic signal bus priority at work on Bluestar 2 corridor	HCC
5	Community First will keep HCC updated on their collaboration with the Advanced Driving Institute and their D1 minibs driver training course	Community First

Notable points

	Notable Points
i.	<p>Round the table updates were given from bus operators, CT operators and Other Local Authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stagecoach South – A generally positive picture. Passenger growth trends showing degree of levelling off in some bus market areas, likely due to the January increase in the single fare cap from £2 to £3. Marginal routes remain challenging and are being monitored. 22 EVs for Service 1 and 20 in Rushmoor and western Surrey area have been delivered. The depot cabling work for charging equipment at Aldershot is underway, with rollout expected early next year. Driver training packs are in development. Newer Euro 6 vehicles from other operating companies will allow cascading of older double-deckers. Roadworks and utility projects with tight deadlines continue to adversely impact reliability of affected bus services. Managing these more effectively will help contribute to patronage growth. Other challenges include increased incidences of vandalism in Leigh Park as evenings darken. Recent Passenger Transport and EP forums have been effective, with strong Q&A and engagement. Stagecoach have followed up with NHS hospital points of contact and have held bus roadshows at Basingstoke and Winchester hospitals. Go South Coast – Patronage trends mirror those of other operators, with slight declines on a number of interurban routes but modest growth on urban corridors and inter-urban routes where BSIP improvements have been implemented (e.g. Bluestar 1 & 9). Concessionary travel is growing (over 5%). The five additional new double decker buses needed for the Bluestar 1 timetable enhancement have arrived and will be on the road in the next couple of weeks after livery and system fitting. The age of the Bluestar bus fleet now averages just under seven years and is fully Euro 6 compliant. Driver recruitment remains strong, with training enhancements regularly introduced to improve inclusivity. Improvements to ticket machines, card readers, and printers are being explored to speed up boarding times. Roadworks in Otterbourne and Southampton have impacted the first 4–6 weeks of B*1 enhancements; clearer picture expected after Christmas. HCC confirmed all significant issues raised by operators are escalated to contractors via HCC Highways colleagues, though resources on the ground are limited. First Bus – Network trends mirror Stagecoach and GSC, with a 6–7% decline in fare-paying passengers in some other operating companies, though the Portsmouth and SE Hampshire area is bucking the trend. In these other areas, passenger volumes using interurban routes account for most of the decline, while concessionary travel is up 5% year-on-year - a positive outcome that is good to see. First now operate 64 Electric Buses across Fareham, Gosport, and Portsmouth, performing well with strong battery range and reliability. Some units are 18 months into service. Staff recruitment and retention remain strong. P&R in Portsmouth is performing strongly with significant growth. Recent spate of anti-social behaviour (ASB) on the Eclipse busway between Fareham and Gosport at the Rowner end has caused concern among staff and saw damage to a number of buses that resulted in hefty repair bills. First appreciate the efforts of HCC, Highways, and police for their collaborative response to the problem, including foliage clearance, CCTV plans

	<p>and safety officers to act as visible deterrence. The recent Quality Bus Conference in Portsmouth showcased strong partnership working and was well attended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Buses – Some routes show 4–6% growth, and concessionary travel is up, meaning overall passenger numbers have risen but with a different mix. Patronage on shorter distance urban routes has seen some decline with the shift from a £2 to £3 fare cap perceived as poor value. New ticket machines from a faster, more intuitive supplier will roll out in December across their three operating companies. EVs are in use within Reading itself but are not operating into Hampshire. Questions were raised about whether EVs drive urban passenger growth due to a smoother, quieter ride. HCC and First agreed it’s difficult to attribute growth to one improvement in isolation as often bus improvements are delivered as a wider package (shelters, bus priority, new buses). First noted EV rollout in Somerset generated excitement, but quantifying how this has impacted on passenger numbers is not yet clear. • Community First (CF) - Following HCC’s SP25 changes, Community First has been able to help to ameliorate some connectivity gaps. Creative partnerships have kept key routes running, such as Route 44 (Eastleigh - Chandlers Ford - North/South Millers Dale), though funding is short-term. New Connect service contracts launched in September have boosted patronage - up to 70% growth in Fareham, Gosport, and Winchester, supported by improved booking systems and local marketing. A new CT-designed booking system is replacing PADAM for smarter routing. School transport routes integrated into CT contracts are operating smoothly and have not affected regular passenger access. The Northern Test Valley DDRT pilot is performing strongly with over 950 registered users, 30% shared journeys, and 98% positive feedback. Parish councils are requesting Community Transport support for gaps in local bus routes, and CF is keen to collaborate with commercial operators to maintain essential links. AW noted the BSIP Community-Led Transport grant could help support delivery of community-led solutions. CF is also working with CTA and the Advanced Driving Institute on new MIDAS and D1 training offers. MiDAS training is currently delivered in Havant and Fareham, with plans to expand north and southwest Hampshire. Key challenges for the CT sector include vandalism, particularly in Test Valley, and the resulting increase in insurance premiums.
<p>ii.</p>	<p>HCC gave an update on the EP/BSIP 2025/26 Work Programme and associated projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service enhancements and commercial support – All the service enhancements on 14 different bus routes are now live across the county, with the last set implemented at the beginning of September. This includes improvements to the inter-urban network such as routes serving Alton, Bordon and between Andover and Winchester rather than focusing solely on the busy main urban corridors. • Bus Route Investment Plans progress update - Of 47 plans, 35 are completed, in draft, or awaiting operator input; 12 remain to start. Full completion by year-end is unlikely due to 2025/26 bus grant priorities, but we expect to finish the drafting in the early part of 2026 and will update at the February meeting. • Bus Station and Hub Audits - All 7 bus stations (bar one) and all 16 bus hub locations have been audited; data and photos are being collated. The intention is to use the audits to produce a costed improvement plan for key interchanges (e.g., seating, shelters, lighting/CCTV, RTI, accessibility, signage). Operator depot meetings to review findings will be scheduled between late November and January. Aim is to adopt the plan as a supporting strategy of the Hampshire Local Transport Plan 4 and the Hampshire BSIP. • Bus priority measures & studies update - Installation of a bus gate with rising bollard at Fitzwygram Way (Havant) by April 2026. Bus priority now live at several signals on B*2 and B*8/9 routes (Eastleigh, Fair Oak, Marchwood, Langley) via Southampton TCF funding. Similar technology being calibrated at four junctions on Stagecoach route 1 (Farnborough–Aldershot) during Nov/Dec. Further rollout planned at 23 additional signal sites (Winchester, Chandler’s Ford, Basingstoke, Fareham) over the next nine months.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Test Valley ‘Connect Transport on Demand’ update – update provided by Community First during bus and CT operator update. • Vandalism and ASB on Eclipse busway & Gosport Travelsafe Partnership – Due to a rise in anti-social behaviour, First suspended E1 and E2 services during evening hours (7pm-11pm) for safety reasons. Police involvement has helped improve the situation and boost driver confidence. Additional safety measures have been introduced, including private security patrols and vegetation clearance in partnership with HCC and PCC. Moving forward, the Gosport TravelSafe Partnership will deliver further improvements along the Eclipse corridor, including replacing 28 shelters with brand new “Mono Neighbourhood” ones (similar to the “superstops” introduced in 2023 in the Waterside and Eastleigh/Fair Oak area) featuring better illumination, upgrading CCTV and lighting with real-time monitoring, and introducing uniformed evening patrols next spring (4 PM–11 PM) by CSAS-accredited TravelSafe Officers. HCC will share images of the new shelters. If successful in reducing ASB and improving passenger safety, this model could be expanded more widely. • Transport Focus ‘Your Bus Journey’ 2025 – results so far - Fieldwork began in February and will run until year-end; around 420 responses so far, with a minimum of 1,000 expected. The interim report shows overall satisfaction up 1–2% compared to 2024. HB shared key findings with Board members, and the full interim report will be circulated. HCC has agreed in principle to join the 2026 survey, subject to cost confirmation. • Community-Led Transport Grant - Parishes and community groups are encouraged to collaborate, explore local opportunities, and consider new or extended public transport provision to meet an unmet local need where viable. At the time of the EP Board, no applications had been received (post meeting update – these are now beginning to come through). An update on applications and awards will be provided at the next board meeting. CF queried whether there is an upper funding limit; HCC confirmed none has been set deliberately, as sustainability plans are required and flexibility is needed to support viable options that may require larger funding. HCC is mindful this is the first round and demand is uncertain. If uptake is high and quality of project proposals is good, a second phase utilising 26/27 BSIP funding is possible. Cllr Bowerman expressed strong support and noted good attendance at the launch event; CM confirmed attendance records exist and follow-up with parishes will be arranged to offer assistance and encourage applications. • Parish Council Bus Shelter Grant Scheme - The HCC team will ensure that bus services operate at stops where bus shelter funding is applied for, to ensure that an ongoing need is met. • Driver Training Practices – operators are requested to provide an overview of each operator’s approach to driver training, with a particular focus on how drivers are trained to support passengers with learning disabilities – <i>item deferred to November EP Working Group meeting.</i>
<p>iii.</p>	<p>HCC gave an update on the following governance initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolution & LGR update – Public Transport topic paper - Cllr Bowerman noted significant progress over the past 9–12 months, including complex negotiations with PCC, SCC, and IOW, culminating in sign-off at the end of October. The team is awaiting confirmation of the date for the statutory instrument to go before Parliament and details on funding. Mayoral elections are planned for Thursday 7 May 2026, with candidates from multiple parties already announced and seeking to raise their profile. Natalie advised that for the first year, transport functions will be exercised jointly by upper and lower tier councils, with full powers transferring to the mayor thereafter. This transition period will allow time to understand priorities and delivery mechanisms, though detailed planning cannot progress until the mayor is in post. The statutory instrument remains confidential, but members are encouraged to review the Devolution Bill. GSC queried when decisions on the geographical extents of the new unitary councils will be made by the Government; Cllr Bowerman confirmed that as soon as information can be released, it will be shared widely. The importance of clarity for the transport sector was acknowledged.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OneNetwork update – roadworks/utilities - Plans are underway to set up dashboards for bus operators to monitor roadworks and services. Collaboration with HCC Streetworks will help identify and manage potential clashes. A rollout is planned for January 2026. Operational teams will be briefed on system functionality. This initiative is funded for one year through BSIP and, while not an immediate solution, is expected to deliver long-term benefits and support ongoing discussions within EP working groups. HCC confirmed the system can also be extended to Community Transport operators.
<p>iv.</p>	<p>The EP Board members discussed the recent DfT Bus announcements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP Plan and Scheme annual review/update - The EP Plan and Scheme was last updated in October 2024. For this year, we do not propose any fundamental changes other than adding a hyperlink to the 2025/26 work programme and a reference to the new requirements on LTAs in Bus Services Act. A full review and replacement will follow next spring/summer once the Hampshire BSIP has been rewritten, which will follow any guidance to be produced by the DfT. The Board formally agreed to roll forward the October 2024 EP Plan and Scheme, update the year, and include the hyperlink to the delivery plan, and reference to the Bus Services Act 2025 with a more comprehensive update planned for the next calendar year. • Bus Services Act 2025 - The Bus Services Act 2025, which received Royal Assent on 27 October, introduces key requirements including the choice between a franchising or Enhanced Partnership governance model, defining a socially necessary bus network by October 2026, improving safety and accessibility at stopping places, expanding safeguarding duties to include drivers for FE services, mandatory driver training on crime and anti-social behaviour, and maintaining disability training records for five years. Work to define the socially necessary network in Hampshire will be undertaken with operators through the Hampshire Enhanced Partnership working group and Board. • Operator views on key themes and priorities for inclusion in 26/27-28/29 work programme - The Board was asked to consider future funding options i.e. EV support, tech upgrades, and improved marketing. The operators made the following comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ First - encouraged exploring further investment in EVs, noting land availability for a new depot in Portsmouth and that Hoeford depot is already 80% electric. The next step could be contributions toward infrastructure or vehicles. CM asked how BSIP funding could enhance operators’ existing EV investment plans; SG confirmed it accelerates delivery and attracts investment to Hampshire. First highlighted that customer priorities include feeling safe, especially at night. SG also encouraged exploring fare initiatives with a focus on young people under 22 and weekend travel. AW noted the visible impact of fare increases. Cllr Bowerman suggested exploring Surrey’s ‘Link Card’ model, which offers discounted fares for young people. ○ Community First - expressed interest in exploring a hub-and-spoke model to improve connections between commercial operators and community transport, suggesting a pilot to demonstrate its impact. CF supported First’s focus on young people and highlighted the need to change perceptions that community transport is only for older users. CF also emphasised continuing innovation grants and providing support for CT operators in adopting EVs and electrification. ○ GSC – RT expressed a need for further investment in bus shelters and improving passenger experience at stops, with electrification also to be considered. RT encouraged monitoring patronage trends over the next year to assess whether some services funded in 2025/26 require longer-term support, alongside continued focus on fare initiatives and marketing. BM agreed that a young persons’ fare initiative would be beneficial, supported EV investment noting that the £2–£3 fare cap has negatively impacted passenger growth, and echoed CF’s view on adopting a hub-and-spoke approach to improve rural mobility.
<p>v.</p>	<p>HCC gave an update on other topics including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of key points discussed at Hampshire EP Forum meeting (22 October) Post meeting update: The forum saw broader representation, including Hampshire Sight Loss Council, HCC Staff

	<p><i>disability network, NHS Hospitals trust, neighbouring LA's and additional bus users, leading to richer discussion. Key themes included positive feedback on First network performance, low awareness of available bus services among parents, opportunities to better promote the Concessionary Pass, and the need for greater marketing investment to support BSIP improvements. Other points raised were early engagement on service changes, better ticketing and information for families, bus-rail timetable integration, and addressing rural service gaps. Members have been invited to submit ideas for future funding allocations over the coming weeks/months to support 26/27 -28/29 planning.</i></p>
vi.	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
vii.	<p>The next meeting will take on place on Tuesday 3rd February 2026, 10:00 – 12:00 (via. MS Teams)</p>