



Enhanced Partnership Forum Meeting

Wednesday 22nd October, 15:00 – 17:00

Agenda, Actions and Notable Points

Attendees:

Andrew Wilson (HCC), Caroline Mekky (HCC), Geoff Hobbs (HCC), Holly Brogden (HCC), Richard Tyldsley (Go South Coast), James O’Neill (Stagecoach), David Airey (Bus User), Kevin Brolan (BCP Council), Andrew Broster (Gosport Borough Council), Mapenzi Ciurtin (Test Valley Borough Council), Phil Dominey (South Western Railway), David Garney (Southampton City Council), Phil Gagg (Winchester Action on Climate Change), Stuart Jones (Bus User), Rebecca Lockwood Norris (Wiltshire Council), Louise Martin (West Berkshire Council), Andy McFarlane (HCC Disability Network / Bus User), Mark Miller (Hampshire Community Rail), Peter Moody (Hampshire SLC), Izaaz Munshi (Dorset County Council), Cali Sparks (Eastleigh Borough Council), Andy Whincup (Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust), John Woodson (Bus User), Nicola Waight (Bus User)

Apologies:

Peter Matthews (First Bus), Matt Griffith (First Bus), George Cooper (Stagecoach), Ben Eyres (Hover Travel), Dan Massey (Xela Bus), Sara Davies (Winchester City Council), Mark Cohen (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council), Emma Gover (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council), Lucy Maggs Krebs (HCC Disability Network), Chris Paterson (East Hampshire District Council), Katie Rasdall Lawes (Test Valley Borough Council), Adam Tewkesbury (Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust), Caroline Tucker (HCC Womens Network)

Location: Chute, First Floor South, Hampshire County Council (Queen Elizabeth II), Winchester, SO23 8BH with stakeholders unable to attend in person joining the meeting on MS Teams

Agenda:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Actions from the last meeting (8 May 2025)
3. Operator bus fleet investment updates (Bus Operators)
4. Hampshire EP update on improvements delivered & current issues
5. Round the Table Discussion & stakeholder feedback (All)
In preparation for this session, we kindly ask each group, organisation, or bus user representative to come ready to share:
 - a) a positive experience you’ve had using the Hampshire bus network
 - b) a negative experience you’ve encountered
 - c) what action could be taken to address or resolve the issue you faced
6. Any Other Business and date of next EP Forum meeting (2026)

Actions

	Action	Responsibility
1.	HCC to send meeting invitation to participants ahead of the next EP Forum meeting	HCC
2.	HCC to keep lines of communication open with Network Rail and South Western Railway to ensure onward travel information maps at Winchester station and other key hubs are accurate and up to date	HCC
3.	EP Forum members are encouraged to email hampshire.bus.strategy@hants.gov.uk with details of any bus routes where onboard audio announcements are unreliable or not functioning. HCC will raise these issues with the relevant operator at upcoming EP Working Group meetings	EP Forum attendees

4.	HCC to consider trialling new RTI units at high footfall stops serving visually impaired passengers, e.g., major hospitals and busy town centre stops in Alton, Basingstoke, and Winchester Broadway.	HCC
5.	HCC to arrange a meeting between Stagecoach and SJ (representing Winchester Southern Parishes) to discuss recent changes to Route 69 and review passenger numbers	HCC
6.	Forum attendees are invited to email hampshire.bus.strategy@hants.gov.uk with suggestions for HCC and local bus operators to consider when shaping how future BSIP revenue and capital funding is used. Ideas may include bus stop upgrades, personal safety initiatives, service enhancements, improved marketing, accessibility improvements, or other innovations to be discussed at the next Enhanced Partnership Forum meeting	EP Forum attendees
7.	Neighbouring local authorities are invited to email hampshire.bus.strategy@hants.gov.uk if they would like to arrange separate meetings with HCC to discuss local plans or priorities or district/borough matters that cannot be raised at the EP Forum. HCC is happy to meet and engage on these matters	Neighbouring LA's

Notable points

Notable Points	
i.	<p>The following operator bus fleet and passenger rail investment updates were given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stagecoach – Stagecoach reported continued growth in passenger numbers, with steady increases overall and strong recovery among concessionary pass holders. Fare-paying passenger growth has become more challenging, especially since the £2 fare cap rose to £3 in January 2025. While 2023/24 saw strong growth, particularly on inter-urban routes, this has slowed following the increase. HCC BSIP funded enhancements to routes 64 and 69 included additional peak and Sunday journeys, with new Sunday services on routes 10 from Fleet-Farnborough and 13 from Basingstoke to Bordon via Alton launched with free travel for the first few weeks to attract new users - retaining around two-thirds of passengers once fares resumed. In Bordon, a focused marketing campaign supported the doubling of service on route 18 from hourly to half hourly, including door drops and free ticketing, though traffic disruption in Farnham town centre has affected reliability. Downing Street in Farnham is expected to reopen in early November with works moving to another road. In Andover, the BSIP-funded £1 single fare promotion helped kickstart passenger growth on routes 1–4, generating good volumes. A year on from the Andover network review, passenger use patterns are being reassessed. The first Yutong electric bus for Service 20 (Aldershot-Guildford) has been received, with 22 expected (part-funded by Surrey CC). Aldershot depot electrification is underway, with new electric buses due to enter service in early 2026, including on route 1 (Old Dean-Aldershot). PG asked whether Siemens' power enhancement schemes had been explored. Stagecoach explained that the only viable method to supply sufficient electricity to the depot is by connecting directly to the grid, which requires roadworks. While Siemens suggests upgrades may not be necessary, Stagecoach noted that a similar model used elsewhere has proven suboptimal. A direct network connection is preferred to ensure long-term efficiency and reliability. Go South Coast - GSC continue to work closely with HCC and SCC on a range of projects to improve service frequency, fares, and ticketing. Notable initiatives include the enhanced frequency on the B*1 and B*2 corridors, introduced at beginning of September 2025. BSIP funding towards service enhancements from SCC and HCC has enabled GSC to invest in new vehicles, with two-thirds of the new fleet now in service. The fleet remains modern, with an average age under seven years. Exploratory work is looking at introduction of zero-emission vehicles, though progress will be affected by power supply and grid capacity

	<p>constraints in Southampton. Significant efforts are underway to address these infrastructure challenges. RT confirmed that 23 brand-new electric buses are due to arrive at Salisbury Reds' depot in early 2026. These will serve the core city centre network and parts of the rural network to the north and west of Salisbury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus operators were asked whether they could provide detailed passenger number data to support the case for enhanced frequencies on bus routes. GSC responded that the B*1 corridor saw a 20% year-on-year increase last year. Stagecoach noted that while operators aim to be transparent, competition rules and the commercial sensitivity of passenger data limit what can be shared. Using percentages or approximate figures allows them to provide useful insights without disclosing confidential information.
<p>ii.</p>	<p>An update on the actions from the last meeting (8 May 2025):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP Forum members raised concerns about outdated and inaccurate onward travel materials at Winchester station, with calls for clearer coordination and defined responsibilities. AW agreed to raise this at the upcoming SWR conference. HCC acknowledged that resource constraints remain a challenge. • Political sensitivities around recent tendered route changes have delayed HCC sharing planned bus priority and service improvements with Eastleigh Borough Council, though EBC confirmed this information remains useful. • Members reiterated the importance of timing when communicating good news, especially alongside service reductions - acknowledging challenges can help frame positive developments.
<p>iii.</p>	<p>Hampshire EP update on improvements delivered & current issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 14 remaining service enhancements have commenced since June, alongside completion of traffic signal bus priority at junctions and crossings on B*2, B*8 and B*9 routes, delivering journey time savings. Bus shelter upgrades were completed on the 7 and 8 corridor, and internal approvals for most of the 2025/26 Work Programme are now secured. Promotional fares in Andover boosted ridership, and public engagement on a proposed Basingstoke bus lane showed majority support. New grant schemes launched in October, two Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) studies for the Portsmouth and Southampton areas have begun, and design work for Barton Peverill College bus laybys is underway. Bus station audits are 50% complete. Notable issues include vandalism on the Eclipse busway and preparations for a public transport topic paper for mayoral candidates. • HCC confirmed DfT BSIP multi-year funding requirements should remain unchanged, with a multi-year settlement expected by the end of November, at which point further details regarding the funding amount and associated conditions will be available.
<p>iv.</p>	<p>Round the Table Discussion & stakeholder feedback (All) In preparation for this session, we kindly ask each group, organisation, or bus user representative to come ready to share: a positive experience you've had using the Hampshire bus network, a negative experience you've encountered & what action could be taken to address or resolve the issue you faced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Fareham resident and new parent, shared positive experiences of journeys made using First Bus during maternity leave, highlighting reliable services. However they noted low awareness of available bus services among other parents locally and nationally, suggesting targeted outreach to new families to build long-term bus habits. • Another Forum attendee added that receiving a bus pass presents a key opportunity for engagement, encouraging use at moments of change. AW emphasised the need for greater investment in marketing to support and promote the extensive capital and revenue BSIP investments. • A Portsmouth area resident shared his positive experience using his concessionary bus pass as a disabled passenger to access work but raised concerns about low public awareness of service frequency. CM noted that HCC has recently withdrawn enhancements to concessionary travel, such as free travel before 9:30am. HCC is now providing only the

statutory minimum entitlement, and no further changes are anticipated this year due to the current devolution arrangements. HCC are preparing papers on future operating models, ticketing, and concessionary travel, with a position statement to be reviewed by the mayor and strategic authority in Spring 2026. There is public expectation that concessionary travel will be levelled up across areas.

- A Forum attendee shared feedback from a visually impaired passenger who found it difficult to identify the correct bus for the return journey from Winchester Hospital due to multiple similar-looking services departing from the same stop. He suggested exploring technology such as bus stop audio announcements to support visually impaired users. AW noted that RNIB fobs were previously used and that a new RTI unit with braille and audio features is being considered. HCC to consider trialling these new RTI units at high-footfall bus stop locations that are likely to see regular use by visually impaired people - such as stops serving large hospitals and busy bus stops in town centres like Alton, Basingstoke, and Winchester Broadway. It was noted that two bus routes that ran directly to Winchester Hospital saw changes at the end of August (part of the 4 commercial route was removed, and the 61 supported service ceased to run). Bus users were only informed around two weeks prior via signage at bus stops. It was suggested earlier engagement with communities would be helpful for similar changes in the future to help reduce negative sentiment and improve communication around service changes.
- A Forum attendee with visual impairments from the Hampshire Sight Loss Council, highlighted that unreliable audio systems on Stagecoach buses can deter blind and partially sighted passengers. Stagecoach confirmed they are upgrading systems installed in 2014/15, with newer buses offering more reliable on-board announcements. They are aware of the issue and invited feedback on specific locations. Suggestions for any Hampshire bus route can be emailed to hampshire.bus.strategy@hants.gov.uk and will be passed on to the relevant operator.
- DA noted that families are often overlooked in bus promotion, with limited ticketing and discount options available. First Bus were praised for their improved offer, but there remains a need for better publicity and clearer information, particularly as some operators no longer produce network maps.
- MM welcomed the BSIP-funded service enhancements on the commercial network, particularly the B*1 and B*5 routes but questioned what comes next. He suggested focusing on underserved suburban areas, fare initiatives, travel training, and short-term opportunities linked to tourism, such as school holidays. He raised concerns about sustainability in new developments like Welborne, where bus services are delayed until housing occupancy increases. He also highlighted a sector-wide issue with ageing populations i.e. many former car users now seek bus services that aren't available in areas like Valley Park.
- PD, representing SWR, responded that a Section 106 agreement is in place to fund train services stopping at Longcross as housing development begins. He added that SWR is looking to establish this as a broader principle, introducing or enhancing services in response to housing growth at locations adjacent to rail stations. JoN shared the jointly developed Stagecoach and Go-Ahead [Urban Design Guide Second Edition 2025](#) as a useful reference.
- A representative from EBC reported an increase in vehicles parking in Eastleigh bus station's layover spaces, primarily by Xelabus vehicles. EBC has raised the issue multiple times, requesting that these spaces be kept clear for regular bus services. A review of the TRO was suggested as the situation is increasingly affecting operations in the town centre.
- A representative from WinACC highlighted that when bus services are well-timed with rail arrivals, (such as the 10-minute rail connection of an evening train from London Waterloo to the No. 5 bus to Badger Farm), passengers are more likely to use them. He suggested better planning of bus-rail integration to increase ridership, noting that route 69 could benefit from improved links for those travelling from Bishop's Waltham to Waterloo.

<p>v.</p>	<p>Any Other Business and date of next EP Forum meeting (2026)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although not in Hampshire, concerns were raised about poor accessibility and wayfinding to the bus stops in the vicinity of Cosham train station, particularly for disabled users, and the lack of bus information from SWR. PD noted discussions with Portsmouth City Council about installing a screen to improve clarity. A resident of Portchester highlighted issues with lift availability at several stations, including Portsmouth & Southsea, Portchester, and Fratton, and requested faster repairs and clearer messaging. PD confirmed he is following up. SJ, representing Winchester Southern Parishes, acknowledged that BSIP funding has improved the bus experience for some passengers in Hampshire. However, he highlighted a disparity in service provision, noting that market towns and rural areas have experienced significant reductions or complete loss of services over the last 8 or so years compared to urban areas. He argued that this imbalance does not align with the outcomes and policies of Hampshire’s Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) or the Transport for the South East (TfSE) Strategy. Stuart provided a comparison of bus service levels between the pre-BSIP period (2017–2019) and the current BSIP implementation revealing a significant decline in provision for several communities. For example, Knowle Village near Fareham and Valley Park near Chandler’s Ford have lost all bus services, reflecting a broader trend of service elimination in rural areas. Bus connectivity to local rail stations has also deteriorated sharply. Journey times have increased substantially, with Bishop’s Waltham to Southampton Bargate doubling from 43 to 86 minutes following the withdrawal of the X10 a number of years ago. SJ raised concerns about the impact of changes to Route 69, specifically the removal of stops at Fareham Station and the supermarket, which he felt had been detrimental to some passengers in favour of journey time savings. JW expressed support for the changes which offered improved journey times into Winchester. Stuart requested that Stagecoach provide feedback prior to implementing future changes. Jo’N and SJ to discuss further in separate meeting; Hampshire County Council invited to join. Jo’N explained that the changes to Route 69 were driven by goal to avoid buses being caught up in traffic congestion at both ends, particularly in the city centre around the one-way system. He noted that the route is now carrying more passengers than it did a year ago. AW noted that BSIP funding targets commercial routes with growing passenger numbers, where fare revenue can eventually cover costs, making service enhancements financially sustainable without ongoing support. SJ expressed concern that the current approach seems overly focused on areas far removed from some communities’ experiences and services and suggested a more balanced strategy. AW responded that there is scope to work with operators on routes that will see longer-term more gradual growth as a result of new housing developments, citing Routes 13 and 18 as examples of long-term collaboration with Stagecoach and pointed to Route 69 as evidence of successful targeted investment because of EP Forum feedback. Community-Led Transport Grant – CM advised that this went live on 1st October and is seeking to test the demand for bottom-up initiatives where communities identify and fill a public transport connectivity need. This grant stream has strong political support. The aspiration is that once Hampshire’s three-year BSIP settlement is confirmed for 2026/27 onwards, strong interest and oversubscription in the grant stream could lead to further funding rounds. If early outcomes are positive, the programme may be expanded. SJ noted that a small increase in the funding could have a big impact. The current allocation across Hampshire is relatively small, especially when compared to the more substantial funding provided to localised BSIP-supported schemes.
<p>vi.</p>	<p>The next Hampshire EP Forum meeting is scheduled for Monday 19th January 2026, 14:00 – 16:00 in advance of the next Hampshire EP Board (3rd February 2026).</p>