APPENDIX B – SRBS POLICY DEVELOPMENT NOTE

SRBS TECHNICAL REPORT

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IDENTIFICATION TABLE	
Client/Project owner	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
Project	SRBS Technical Report
Study	Appendix B – SRBS Policy Development Note
Type of document	Technical Appendix
Date	March 2024
File name	SRBS Technical Report Appendix B - SRBS Policy Development Note.docx
Reference number	GB01T23C77
Number of pages	59

APPROVAL

Version	Name		Position	Date	Modifications
1	Author	RA LV	Associate Associate	February 2024	Draft
	Checked by	NB	Director	February 2024	
	Approved by	RA	Associate	February 2024	
2	Author	RA LV	Associate Associate	March 2024	Final
	Checked by	NB	Director	March 2024	
	Approved by	RA	Associate	March 2024	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

1. INTRODUCTION

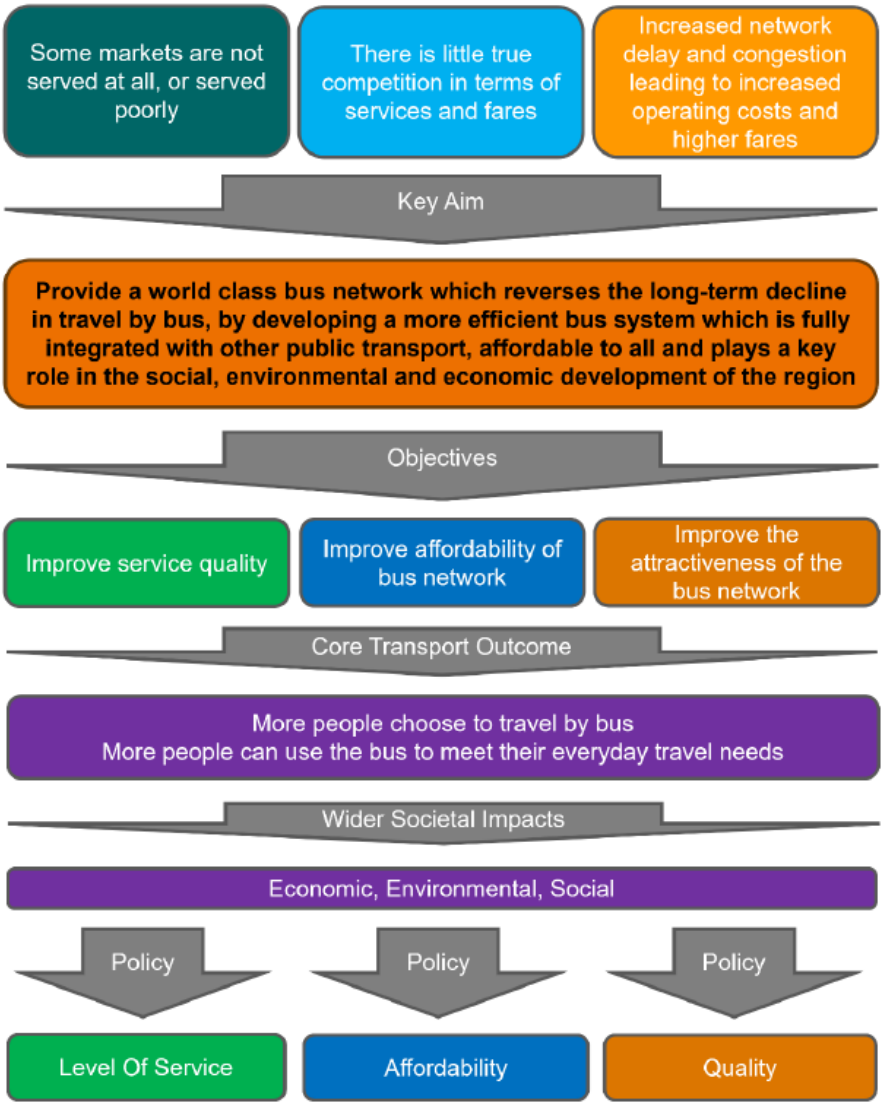
1.1.1 This information note sets out the outputs of the following tasks in WP2 Options Appraisal of the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS) study for Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT):

- Development of SRBS policies and measures.

2. POLICY AREAS FROM THE SRBS CASE FOR CHANGE

2.1.1 The SRBS Case for Change report set out the key problems to be tackled, along with the key aims, objectives and desired transport outcomes for the SRBS, in addition to three core policy areas to consider, as summarised in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. SRBS Case for Change framework



2.1.2 The three **core policy areas** are:

- **Improve Level of Service** – how, where and when the bus network operates.
- **Improve Affordability** – affordability of travel by bus across the region, including factors such as the structure, legibility, and integration of fares.

- **Improve Service Quality** – the service quality factors including quality of interchanges and bus stops, information, ticketing, vehicle and driver standards, and service reliability and punctuality.

2.1.3 This section sets out the core policy areas, including key considerations related to their delivery.

3. CORE POLICY AREA: IMPROVE LEVEL OF SERVICE

3.1 SRBS Policies to Improve Level of Service

The following high-level guiding policies have been developed under the **Improve Level of Service** core policy area:

- Improve the **coverage** and **periods of operation** of the bus network, helping to ensure that people have access to bus services when and where they are needed, supporting socially and economically important trips, and reducing the reliance on private modes of transport, such as car.
- Improve the **frequency** of bus services, in order to improve the attractiveness of services, support better integration of services and modes, and enhance the resilience of the bus network.
- Improve the **operational effectiveness** and **efficiency** of the bus network, delivering an attractive bus network that creates a virtuous cycle of growth and improvement for sustainable travel.

3.2 Measures to Deliver the Policies

3.2.1 In order to demonstrate measures to delivery of these policies some level of service improvement proposals have been set out below.

3.2.2 Categories of bus services include:

- Regional Express - Limited Stop Service between main urban centres;
- Inter-urban - Service between main urban centres;
- Core – Simplified urban routes on high volume corridors;
- Principal – Typical routes in urban areas, regional towns and villages, which may be less direct than core services;
- Rural Connectors – Provides accessibility from rural areas to local urban centre or hub;
- DRT – demand responsive services, connecting to local urban centres or transport hubs, which may be provided as an alternative to fixed routes, in particular where providing appropriate coverage by fixed routes isn't feasible.
- Community Transport – Service provision for community organisations in both urban and rural settings. Eligibility can sometimes be restricted by eligibility criteria.

3.2.3 Table 1 and Table 2 combine to set out 'ambitious' ***Service Category Principles*** to determine the how these services would be deployed to best achieve the policies. These are related to the policies above, and include capacity, service frequency for full and reduced operation periods, and which periods operate full or reduced frequencies for each service category. The hours of each period vary by the day of the week and it is assumed that night services and very early services would be bespoke.

3.2.4 Table 3 and Table 4 provide similar principles for minimum ***Service Category Principles*** which reflect a set of minimum standards that all services in the region should meet.

Table 1. 'Ambitious' Service Category Principles – Frequency and Capacity

SERVICE CATEGORY	CAPACITY	ASPIRATIONAL FREQUENCY	MINIMUM FREQUENCY	ASPIRATIONAL OR MINIMUM FREQUENCY IN EACH PERIOD
1. Regional Express	High	~30 min	~60 min	Early Morning – Reduced Peaks – Full Daytime Interpeak – Full Evening (Early) – Full Evening (Late) – Reduced
2. Inter-urban	High	15 - 30 min	30 - 60 min	Early Morning – Reduced Peaks – Full Daytime Interpeak – Full Evening (Early) – Reduced (Full on Fridays and Saturdays) Evening (Late) – Reduced
3. Core	High	10 min or better	~20 min	Early Morning – Reduced Peaks – Full Daytime Interpeak – Full Evening (Early) – Full Evening (Late) – Reduced Night - Hourly
4. Principal	Medium	15 - 30 min	30 - 60 min	Early Morning – Reduced Peaks – Full Daytime Interpeak – Full Evening (Early) – Reduced (Full on Fridays and Saturdays) Evening (Late) – Reduced
5. Rural Connectors	Medium and Low	30 - 60 min	60 - 120 min	Early Morning – Reduced Peaks – Full Daytime Interpeak – Reduced Evening (Early) – Reduced Evening (Late) – Reduced
6. DRT	Low	-	-	On demand – varying operational requirements
7. Community Transport	Low	-	-	On demand – varying operational requirements

Table 2. 'Ambitious' Service Category Principles – Hours of operation in each period by Day of Week

	MONDAY- FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Early Morning	5:30am to 7:30am	5:30am to 9:30am	7:30am to 12:00pm
AM Peak	7:30am to 9:30am	n/a	n/a
Daytime Interpeak	9:30am to 3:30pm	9:30am to 6:30pm	12:00pm to 6:30pm
PM Peak	3:30pm to 6:30pm	4:30pm to 6:30pm	n/a
Early Evenings	6:30pm to 9:00pm	6:30pm to 9:00pm	6:30pm to 9:00pm
Late Evenings	9:00pm to 11:00pm	9:00pm to 11:00pm	Demand dependent
Night services	11:00pm to 3:00am (Thursday and Friday only)	11:00pm to 3:00am	n/a

Table 3. 'Minimum' Service Category Principles – Frequency and Capacity

SERVICE CATEGORY	CAPACITY	ASPIRATIONAL FREQUENCY	MINIMUM FREQUENCY	ASPIRATIONAL OR MINIMUM FREQUENCY IN EACH PERIOD
1. Regional Express	High	~30 min	~60 min	Early Morning – Reduced Peaks – Full Daytime Interpeak – Reduced Evening (Early) – Reduced Evening (Late) – Reduced
2. Inter-urban	High	30 min	60 min	Early Morning – Reduced Peaks – Full Daytime Interpeak – Reduced Evening (Early) – Reduced Evening (Late) – Reduced
3. Core	High	15 min	30 min	Early Morning – Reduced Peaks – Full Daytime Interpeak – Reduced Evening (Early) – Reduced Evening (Late) – Reduced
4. Principal	Medium	30 min	60 min	Early Morning – Reduced Peaks – Full Daytime Interpeak – Reduced Evening (Early) – Reduced Evening (Late) – Reduced
5. Rural Connectors	Medium and Low	30 - 60 min	60 - 120 min	Early Morning – Reduced Peaks – Full Daytime Interpeak – Reduced Evening (Early) – Reduced Evening (Late) – Reduced
6. DRT	Low	-	-	On demand – varying operational requirements
7. Community Transport	Low	-	-	On demand – varying operational requirements

Table 4. 'Minimum' Service Category Principles – Hours of operation in each period by Day of Week

	MONDAY-FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Early Morning	5:30am to 7:30am	5:30am to 9:30am	7:30am to 12:00pm
AM Peak	7:30am to 9:30am	n/a	n/a
Daytime Interpeak	9:30am to 3:30pm	9:30am to 6:30pm	12:00pm to 6:30pm
PM Peak	3:30pm to 6:30pm	4:30pm to 6:30pm	n/a
Early Evenings	6:30pm to 9:00pm	6:30pm to 9:00pm	6:30pm to 9:00pm
Late Evenings	9:00pm to 11:00pm	9:00pm to 11:00pm	Demand dependent

3.2.5 The development of the service principles has built upon the approach of the work presented in the Glasgow and Strathclyde Strategic Bus Network Plan (GSSBNP) – as presented in Table 5-3 of the *GSSBNP Task C: Spatial Network Plan & Approach to Service Delivery* report produced by Jacobs. It has done so while aiming to rationalise the number of the network components proposed and accommodate situations of over or under provision, as identified as an issue in that study, by providing ranges for the frequency service principle. Additionally, network quality factors are not defined in the Level of Service principles below. Quality factors are set out under the 'Improve Service Quality' core policy area in Section 5 and are not, in this study, considered to necessarily be tied to bus service categories.

3.2.6 Network coverage and connectivity are defined separately, as these relate more to geographical, demographic and land-use considerations than the types of bus services defined in the bus service categories. These are defined together under a set of ***Level of Connectivity Principles.*** As for the service category principles, these are presented as 'ambitious' and 'minimum', dependent on funding, level of ambition and deliverability.

3.2.7 The Level of Connectivity principles define the minimum level of daytime (7:30am to 6:30pm) service that different types of area will have to key services and destinations. These types of area are based on urban-rural classifications, as described later in this section, and applied to settlements/localities in each authority area.

3.2.8 This approach encompasses, at a spatial level, both levels of bus service and walk distance or onward connections. Coverage may be delivered by fixed route services and/or demand responsive services.

SYSTRA

Table 5. 'Ambitious' Level of Connectivity Principles – maximum daytime headways to/from key services

URBAN-RURAL CLASSIFICATION	EMPLOYMENT CENTRES	TERTIARY EDUCATION	REGIONAL HOSPITAL	TOWN OR CITY CENTRE	PUBLIC TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE/HUB	GLASGOW AIRPORT
Large urban	20 minutes ***Core services***	20 minutes ***Core services***	20 minutes ***Core services***	20 minutes ***Core services***	20 minutes ***Core services***	30 minutes ***Core, inter-urban or regional express services***
Other urban	30 minutes ***Core, inter-urban or regional express services***	30 minutes ***Core, inter-urban or regional express services***	30 minutes ***Core, inter-urban or regional express services***	30 minutes ***Core, inter-urban or regional express services***	30 minutes ***Core services***	30 minutes ***Core, inter-urban or regional express services***
Accessible small town	30 minutes ***Inter-urban or principal services***	30 minutes ***Inter-urban or principal services***	30 minutes ***Inter-urban or principal services***	30 minutes ***Inter-urban or principal services***	30 minutes ***Inter-urban or principal services***	30 minutes ***Inter-urban or principal services (may require interchange)***
Remote small town	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services (may require interchange***
Accessible rural area	30 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	30 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	30 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	30 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	30 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	30 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services (may require interchange)***
Remote rural area	60 minutes, or on-demand ***Rural connector or DRT services***	60 minutes, or on-demand ***Rural connector or DRT services***	60 minutes, or on-demand ***Rural connector or DRT services***	60 minutes, or on-demand ***Rural connector or DRT services***	60 minutes, or on-demand ***Rural connector or DRT services***	60 minutes, or on-demand ***Rural connector or DRT services (may require interchange)***

Table 6. 'Minimum' Level of Connectivity Principles – maximum daytime headways to/from key services

URBAN-RURAL CLASSIFICATION	EMPLOYMENT CENTRES	TERTIARY EDUCATION	REGIONAL HOSPITAL	TOWN OR CITY CENTRE	PUBLIC TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE/HUB	GLASGOW AIRPORT
Large urban	30 minutes ***Core services***	30 minutes ***Core services***	30 minutes ***Core services***	30 minutes ***Core services***	30 minutes ***Core services***	60 minutes ***Core, inter-urban or regional express services***
Other urban	60 minutes ***Core, inter-urban or regional express services***	60 minutes ***Core, inter-urban or regional express services***	60 minutes ***Core, inter-urban or regional express services***	60 minutes ***Core, inter-urban or regional express services***	60 minutes ***Core services***	60 minutes ***Core, inter-urban or regional express services***
Accessible small town	60 minutes ***Inter-urban or principal services***	60 minutes ***Inter-urban or principal services***	60 minutes ***Inter-urban or principal services***	60 minutes ***Inter-urban or principal services***	60 minutes ***Inter-urban or principal services***	60 minutes ***Inter-urban or principal services (may require interchange)***
Remote small town	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services (may require interchange***
Accessible rural area	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services***	60 minutes ***Principal or rural connector services (may require interchange)***
Remote rural area	60 – 120 minutes, or on-demand ***Rural connector or DRT services***	60 – 120 minutes, or on-demand ***Rural connector or DRT services***	60 – 120 minutes, or on-demand ***Rural connector or DRT services***	60 – 120 minutes, or on-demand ***Rural connector or DRT services***	60 – 120 minutes, or on-demand ***Rural connector or DRT services***	60 – 120 minutes, or on-demand ***Rural connector or DRT services (may require interchange)***

3.2.9 Together the *Service Category Principles* and *Level of Connectivity Principles* have been developed to enable the bus network to work towards becoming a world-class system, while recognising that there are different operating contexts across the Strathclyde region that require flexibility for bus operations planning. They aim to deliver an attractive bus network, while ensuring that it remains effective and efficient, and that there is some realism regarding the operational viability of ambitions.

3.2.10 These principles also aim to support delivery of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), which states the following in relation to Network Coverage:

- ***RTS Policy 3. Availability and Coverage of Transport:*** *Ensure active travel and public transport networks meet the needs of all for access to key locations, particularly town/city centres, employment centres, colleges and universities, hospitals and key sustainable transport hubs/interchanges. Ensure transport networks reflect the needs of all communities, particularly groups and communities who are more likely to depend upon active travel or public transport for every day travel. Improve the availability and stability of public transport services in rural, remote and island communities and socio-economically disadvantaged communities. Develop the role of local bus, Community Transport, taxis and other Demand Responsive Transport services, shared transport and shared mobility to ensure public transport is available to all communities.*

3.2.11 The principles also aim to contribute towards the delivery of the Connecting Places policies in the RTS, which relate to the connectivity of neighbourhoods and local areas to services, town centres and transport hubs:

- ***RTS Policy 46. International connections***
- ***RTS Policy 47. Connections between Strathclyde and other Scottish regions***
- ***RTS Policy 48. Connections within Strathclyde***
- ***RTS Policy 49. Connections to town centres***
- ***RTS Policy 50. Connections for rural, remote and island communities***
- ***RTS Policy 51. Connections to regional hospitals and tertiary education***
- ***RTS Policy 52. Connections to housing development locations***

Urban – Rural Classifications

3.2.12 The Scottish Government's Urban Rural Classification provides a consistent way of defining types of area across Scotland. The classification aids policy development and the understanding of issues facing urban, rural and remote communities.[1] It is based upon two main criteria:

- Population as defined by National Records of Scotland; and
- Accessibility based on drive time analysis to differentiate between accessible and remote areas in Scotland.

3.2.13 The six classifications considered include:

- Large Urban Areas – Settlements of 125,000 people or more;
- Other Urban Areas – Settlements of 10,000 to 124,999 people;
- Accessible Small Towns – Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and within a 30-minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more;
- Remote Small Towns – Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more;
- Accessible Rural Areas – Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a 30-minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more; and

- Remote Rural Areas – Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.

3.2.14 By utilising these classifications, approximate levels of connectivity from these settlements to key services can take into account the size and wider accessibility of the settlement, including for car. For those settlements with an available rail service, or equivalent, it may be appropriate to use target frequencies at the lower end of each range.

4. CORE POLICY AREA: IMPROVE AFFORDABILITY

4.1.1 The SRBS Case for Change highlighted that the relative cost of travel by bus has risen more than other modes and the cost has risen significantly more than the Retail Price Index over a more than 20-year period. This can act as a major barrier to travel.

4.1.2 The Glasgow & Strathclyde Transport Act Scoping Study (Affordability of Public Transport Report) highlighted that for people and households in Strathclyde with lower incomes, the cost of public transport represents a very significant proportion of their income, especially when it is recognised that affordable housing is often located in peripheral locations generating a need to travel significant distances to access services and employment. This is compounded by the fact that low-income individuals and households cannot access the cheapest form of transport (car) because they are often unable to meet the upfront purchase costs.

4.1.3 In addition to the level of fares and the points above, the following considerations are important when looking at policy related to affordability:

- Are fares zonal, route or distance based?
- How do fares vary between operators?
- How do prices compare to other modes, including rail, car and elements such as parking?
- How do prices compare to other areas of the country?
- How often and by how much do fares vary?
- How complex is the fares structure?
- How significant are the cost differences between single- and multi-use products?
- What discounted fares are there, how big are the discounts and who are these for?
- What payment options are available and are there automatic 'best value' measures in place, such as automatic fares capping?
- Are there integrated fares with other modes and do these offer discounts over individual purchases?
- How are non-commercial, e.g. tendered and community bus services, integrated into fares options?
- How do prices compare between operators and different parts of the network (e.g. urban, rural, cross-boundary)?

4.1.4 The RTS also highlights the following in relation to affordability of transport:

- ***2. Affordable Transport:*** *Deliver affordable public transport for all particularly for people living in poverty, in socio-disadvantaged communities and in rural and remote areas. Public transport fares should be affordable and should reflect a range of circumstances including people's ability to pay, the length of the journey, time of day and the relative cost of other modes. Facilitate more affordable fares through opportunities provided by legislation (Transport (Scotland) Act 2019) and other governance arrangements. Ensure public transport passengers find it easy to choose and access the best value ticket for their journey. Facilitate public transport ticketing to be more flexible, affordable and integrated and to better reflect the way people need to travel, particularly people who have insecure, part time or shift work or unpaid care work. Ensure affordability is a core objective in developments and enhancements related to smart and integrated ticketing, Mobility as a Service and other relevant transport innovations including fare capping policies and technologies….*

4.2 SRBS Policies to Improve Affordability

The following high-level guiding policies have been developed under the **Improve Affordability** core policy area:

- Improve the affordability of fares, especially for those that need it the most.
- Improve the competitiveness of bus fares with those of other modes and parking charges.
- Ensure that fares are easy to understand, provide flexibility, and help to ensure users can access the best value fare for their journey.

4.3 Measures to Deliver the Policies

4.3.1 The Affordability of Public Transport Report suggested a number of scenarios for fares to improve affordability. Adding to these, the following measures have the potential to help deliver the policy, and will inform the options to be appraised:

- Targeted zero or lower fares, e.g. to specific groups of the population and/or areas, and for organisations such as major employers;
- Lower fares for all;
- A simplified fare structure, such as zone expansion / flat fares / reduced single operator products;
- Best-value auto-capping options, e.g. day, week for contactless payments, across the region and operators; [1]
- Multi-operator, multi-mode, multi-area fares options, which don't penalise users on price for flexibility;
- Ensure that ticket prices are more competitive with other modes and parking charges in urban centres, e.g. discounts/fare caps at P&R and mobility hubs;
- Consider limiting price rises across a time period (e.g. once a year) and to a control metric (operating costs/inflation).

4.3.2 While there exists the potential for targeted zero or lower fares reductions to form part of an overall affordability policy, the findings of the Affordability of Public Transport Report around policies relating to universal fare reductions and very low or free public transport fares found that universal reductions were less successful. The evidence of the benefits of these policies is mixed and uncertain, with the added unintended consequences of reduced opportunity for capital investment in the network.

4.3.3 Cost modelling will provide insight into fare options potential and it may be possible to rationalise / better determine the scale of options that are deliverable. For targeted products modelling can apply fare reductions to a subset of the population, for example based on local demographic data.

[1] For Brighton and Hove Buses, 'tap and cap' is used for around 85% of bus fare payments and is now enabled across multiple operators.

5. CORE POLICY AREA: IMPROVE SERVICE QUALITY

5.1.1 The SRBS Case for Change clearly points towards the need to improve the quality of the bus network, both in terms of consistency across the region and in terms of making travel bus more attractive in all areas and for more groups people. This is backed up by a number of the key policies outlined in the RTS, in particular:

- ***RTS Policy 21. Bus quality and integration:*** *Facilitate and enable development of an enhanced and fully integrated bus network for the region. Ensure the bus network provides reliable and punctual services, offers good value for money and high levels of passenger satisfaction. Ensure bus is perceived to be an attractive, convenient and desirable mode of transport that attracts users away from less sustainable ways of travelling. Facilitate and support development of an enhanced regional bus network to ensure excellent bus connectivity for the region and ensure integration with other sustainable transport modes including rail, ferry, Subway and Clyde Metro. Investigate and implement the bus provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, where appropriate, including Bus Service Improvement Partnerships, Franchising and Municipal Bus Companies.*

5.1.2 When looking to improve service quality, the categories presented in Figure 2 are considered to be key.

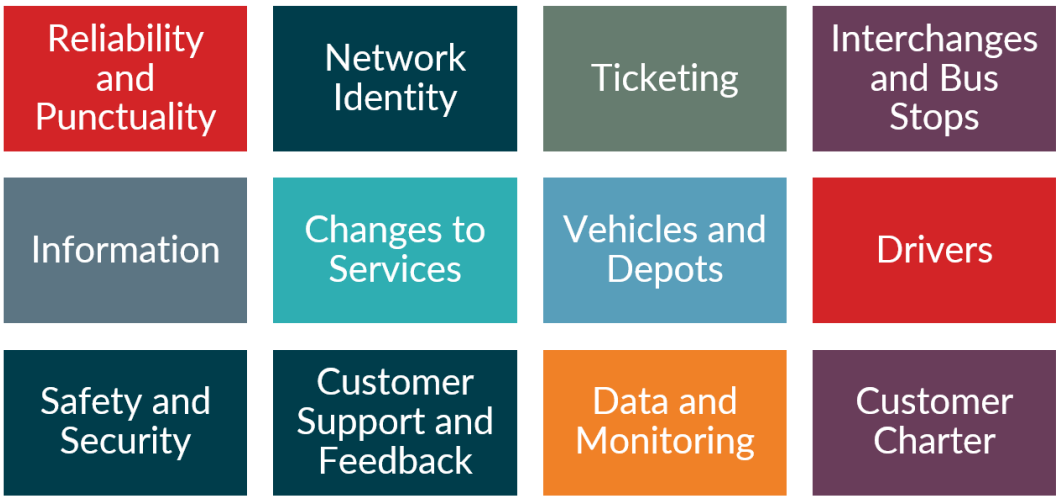


Figure 2. Key Quality Categories

5.1.3 While most of the above categories are quality elements in their own right, many of these also relate to the overall theme of improving integration of transport services, e.g. interchanges, bus stops and ticketing. Additionally, however, there is also a need for the SRBS to consider the integration of these elements themselves across the region, e.g. better integration of data collection and monitoring across authority areas and organisations, better integrated information and coordination of changes to services.

5.2 Reliability and Punctuality

5.2.1 Reliability and punctuality are fundamental performance elements of any bus network. If bus services regularly fail to operate as timetabled, customer confidence can soon be lost, and people find other means by which to travel or decide not to travel. There can also be impacts in relation to safety and equality for those that are at greater risk when travelling or are reliant on bus for important journeys.

Key Considerations

5.2.2 **Punctuality** (timetable adherence) is generally measured against adherence to scheduled timetables and is normally measured using automatic vehicle location (AVL) or manually, via observations.

5.2.3 **Reliability**, generally measured through 'lost mileage', consists of what is referred to as 'controllable' and 'non-controllable' lost mileage from a bus operator's perspective:

- *Controllable lost mileage* refers to mileage lost for reasons which are directly within the operators' control. This includes mileage lost to issues such as insufficient numbers of buses to deliver service, vehicle breakdowns and insufficient numbers of drivers.
- *Uncontrollable lost mileage* refers to mileage lost due to factors outside the operators' control. This may include unexpected traffic congestion (caused by an accident for example), roadworks or an on-bus incident (such as a passenger becoming ill).

5.2.4 The majority of operators set an internal KPI for performance in this area. The industry standard for such a KPI is for no more than 0.5% of scheduled mileage to be 'lost'.

Operator Obligations

5.2.5 For punctuality, The Traffic Commissioners' standards are defined as per below.

Table 7. Traffic Commissioners' Punctuality Standards

STOP TYPE	FREQUENT SERVICES	TIMETABLED SERVICES
First stop	On at least 95% of occasions: • Six or more buses will depart in any 60-minute period; and • No more than 15 minutes between any two consecutive buses	95% of buses to depart no more than 1 minute early and no more than 5 minutes late
Other timing point	Excess Wait Time (i.e. actual average wait time minus scheduled average wait time) should not exceed 1.25 minutes.	An absolute minimum of 70% of services should depart no more than 1 minute early and no more than 5 minutes late. Services which do not meet a 95% target may be penalised.
Last stop	95% of services to arrive no more than 5 minutes late.	95% of services to arrive no more than 5 minutes late.

5.2.6 The Traffic Commissioner requires that operators nominate timing points, to keep services on schedule, which are generally not more than 15 minutes apart (except where consecutive stops are this far apart).

5.2.7 Primarily, bus operators are responsible for ensuring that they operate scheduled mileage and punctual services. Not doing so will jeopardise their standing with the Office of the Traffic Commissioner, potentially resulting in sanctions which could range from fines to a reduction in the number of buses they are allowed to operate. Repeat offences may ultimately lead to the loss of an operator's Operating Licence.

Improving Reliability and Punctuality

5.2.8 Reliability and punctuality problems can typically be addressed through the following actions:

- **Improve vehicle reliability** – helped through a robust preventative maintenance schedule to ensure vehicles are maintained to the highest standards and defects are rectified quickly and effectively.
- **Improve vehicle availability** – ensuring that there are enough vehicles available to meet the peak vehicle requirement (PVR) of a route with enough spare vehicles (normally around 10% of PVR) to allow for maintenance and other issues such as breakdowns.
- **Improve driver availability** – it is the operators' responsibility to ensure that they have enough drivers to provide their scheduled services and to cover for eventualities such as sickness, lateness etc.
- **Reduce traffic & prioritise / provide more predictable journey times for buses** – delay to bus movements, caused by other traffic, can result in services being delayed, cancelled or not operating to their timetable. This situation requires a review of timetables (which can negatively affect journey times) and measures to reduce the impact of congestion on bus running, such as bus priority measures, removal of pinch points caused by parking etc. Preventative measures, such as policies to support modal shift and reduce overall traffic volumes, are also key. Inconsistency in journey times can also cause buses to run early, where time has been built in to deal with congestion that has not occurred on that occasion. Running early can be as much of a problem from a user perspective as running late.
- **Incidents and road regulation infringements** – incidents such as breakdowns of other vehicles can cause traffic problems and blockages, as can illegally parked vehicles in bus lanes, bus boxes, on double yellow lines, etc. Where possible contingency plans should be put in place e.g. there should be the ability to monitor and affect service delivery through the use of operator control rooms and active monitoring and enforcement of road regulations on key routes.
- **Improving network resilience** – more frequent and better integration of services can help to manage issues from the passenger perspective by ensuring alternative travel options are available. A further element that can improve the impact of reliability issues is a last bus guarantee to users which ensures that last bus cancellations do not leave users unable to travel.

SRBS Policy for Reliability and Punctuality

The following policy has been developed under the **Improve Service Quality** core policy area for **reliability** and **punctuality**:

- Improve the performance of bus services in meeting standards related to reliability and punctuality in order to improve the quality of travel in terms of attractiveness, safety, security, and equity of service across the populations and areas served. This will be achieved by enhancing vehicle reliability, vehicle and driver availability, improving the resilience of the bus network, and by prioritising consistent bus journey times alongside other sustainable modes.
- Improve the performance and attractiveness of bus journey times and service reliability compared to car journeys in order to achieve mode shift.

Measures to Deliver the Policy

5.2.9 The following measures have the potential to help deliver the policy, and will inform the options to be appraised:

- Traffic reduction and the mitigation of congestion impacts on bus services, through bus priority measures, incident response planning/actions, traffic infringement enforcement, and wider modal shift and demand management measures;
- Vehicle maintenance standards and maintenance staffing;
- Robust and ambitious fleet renewal plans and reducing the average age of the fleet;
- Driver recruitment, retention and level of standby drivers; and
- Monitoring and mitigation of failures to meet reliability and punctuality targets.

5.2.10 The prioritisation of bus services (alongside active modes) is supported by the following policy from the RTS:

- ***RTS Policy 8. Road space reallocation:*** *Encourage and support reallocation of road space to walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport, where possible, to increase and enhance capacity for active and public transport modes and tackle car-centric road systems.*

5.3 Network Identity

5.3.1 A strong identity can help deliver a bus/public transport network which is more recognisable, legible and attractive to potential users. It can also help users to know what to expect from the service that has consistent quality standards.

5.3.2 Network identity is often referred to synonymously with the 'branding' of the network; however, in reality it captures more than the use of a specific branding, colour schemes, logos etc. Building a strong identity is one of the main ways in which a bus network can be made to feel coherent and consistent from the user perspective. When coupled with the application of strong quality of service standards, that lead to positive experiences for users, confidence and trust can be built and lead to an increased likelihood of people using the service.

Key Considerations

5.3.3 There are varying degrees to which network identity can be implemented. In the most extreme case, all public transport offerings in the area would carry common branding and in some cases this extends to modes such as cycle hire and car clubs etc, in particular where Mobility as a Service (MaaS) is being considered.

5.3.4 Typically for bus, this would cover all aspects from vehicle livery and staff uniforms, to ticketing and customer information at stops, on vehicle, online, and on any related customer facing technology such as a smartphone application. This is the approach taken by TfL in London and is common practice in many cities with world-class bus networks.

5.3.5 One of the typical challenges is in the adoption of unified branding of vehicles liveries. Common reasons for this are that the cost may be prohibitive, or operators may not wish to lose their individual identity. Other challenges include:

- Agreeing on, funding, and implementing a single brand where multiple partners are involved;
- Physical branding of vehicles:
  - Typically, operators will have a repaint schedule for their fleet, working through all vehicles over a cycle of a number of years. This can make implementation of vehicle rebranding difficult as it interrupts the usual cycle. To deliver this successfully, agreement would have to be reached as to the best way to rebrand all vehicles, especially if a brand 'launch' is being considered;
  - Branding may be difficult to implement on a consistent basis where services are operating across local boundaries. Discussion with operators and with neighbouring transport authorities would be required to reach a suitable agreement on how to brand these services under a commercial network. Operators may see value in being associated with a neighbouring commonly branded network where there is cross-boundary service, if that network is seen positively by users.
- Delivering on the promised standards for the new network identity is fundamental, but often difficult to achieve – one of the main ways in which a positive identity can be built, is through positive customer experience. Likewise, failure to deliver a positive experience can quickly erode trust with the customer and be negatively reinforcing for network identity association;
- Considering a multi-modal identity may also be of benefit – in the SPT area, this could incorporate the proposed Clyde Metro and changes to how this would be branded to integrate it with a future area-wide bus brand.

Improving Network Identity

5.3.6 A number of approaches to building network identity can be taken:

- An overall identity for journey planning and customer information, with a unified recognisable network map with a consistent presentation styles for associated timetables. This works best when there is a one-stop-shop approach to information (see section 5.6), such as a single website, app and call centre, source facilitating journey planning and other aspects of information across all operated service. This identity and associated branding would then filter through to physical information channels and the areas discussed below;

- Consistent branding across all customer-facing infrastructure, such as interchanges, bus shelters, stop post and flags, and other wayfinding and signage;
- Fully consistent branding and liveries of all vehicles and routes; or
  - Partial branding of vehicles, where operators keep their main liveries but include some common branding for the overall network; and
  - Branding of individual routes, or a grouping of routes which fall under a specific part of the network or which meet a particular quality standard, e.g. high frequency network, park and ride services, or feeder services (including DRT).
- A unified brand for area wide ticketing options;
  - The impact of this can be enhanced further where branding and livery of vehicles can help to make it explicit which buses, trains, etc can be used with multi-operator/multi-modal tickets. Care is needed, as a mixture of brands and liveries can create confusion.
- Raising awareness of what the brand/network identity stands for and what users can expect from services captured under this identity is key – a well-publicised Customer Charter (see Section 5.13) can aid this, backed up by strong advertising of its key elements.

Building in Accessibility and Inclusivity

5.3.7 As with other potential users, a positive network identity can help to build trust with groups of users that either have specific mobility needs, such as disabled users, or with those who have low confidence of using bus.

5.3.8 This can be achieved by **associating the network identity with measures that help meet those users' needs**, for example by making it clear that high standards of driver training, cleanliness, and measures to enhance accessibility are in place on all services under that network identity.

5.3.9 Simplifying the provision of information to users is something which is also highly important for inclusivity. A **single recognisable brand for all stages of information** provision may offer benefits for this simplification.

SRBS Policies for Network Identity

The following policies have been developed under the **Improve Service Quality** core policy area for **Network Identity**:

- Develop a positive, recognisable and trusted bus network identity across the region, delivering consistency across information, ticketing, interchanges and stops, vehicles, and other key network assets.
- Explore opportunities to strengthen this network identity with other sustainable transport modes.

Measures to Deliver the Policy

5.3.10 The following measures (building on existing measures by SPT in this field) have the potential to help deliver the policy, and will inform the options to be appraised:

- Enhance the network identity, including branding and consistency for the following elements;
  - Information (journey planning, timetabling, website and apps etc);
  - Ticketing (e.g. enhancing ZoneCard);
  - Interchanges and stops;
  - Vehicles;
  - Other key network assets;
- Delivery of awareness raising related to wider service quality elements etc, that foster a positive, recognisable and trusted identity.

5.4 Ticketing

5.4.1 Ticketing is one of the most important topic areas in bus service delivery and is often cited by users when talking about their decision to travel by bus or not. In fact, ticketing matters (including fares aspects) accounted for approximately 38%[2] of all complaints in 2020/21 which were processed by Bus Users UK, the designated body for handling complaints under the Passenger Rights Regulation.

5.4.2 The SRBS Case for Change highlighted that with a sizeable number of operators providing services across the region, the structure of fare products is complex with users needing to select from single and multi-operator products covering a range of different geographical areas as defined by individual operators. This array of ticketing and zoning creates a highly complex structure for the bus user to navigate adding difficulty to determining the best value for money for their trip.

5.4.3 As such, this policy area should aim to provide simpler and more accessible ticketing options to users, building in other attractive elements such as flexibility and integration.

5.4.4 The RTS highlights the following in relation to ticketing (and its links with information):

- ***19. Ticketing and information:*** *Develop and facilitate enhanced integration of public transport systems for ticketing, travel information, booking and payment activities across all public transport modes in the region including inter-regional connections where appropriate. Deliver a single, integrated system, providing users with a high quality, simple and accessible experience for planning, booking and paying for travel on public transport. Integrate and align developments in ticketing and information with wider developments in Mobility as a Service, new technologies and innovation whilst ensuring that public transport tickets and travel information is also available in non-digital formats.*

5.4.5 As noted in the above policy, ticketing is also one of the areas which is seen as most critical for the delivery of new mobility concepts, such as MaaS, which has a specific RTS policy:

- ***RTS Policy 20. Mobility as a Service:*** *Develop and facilitate Mobility as a Service in the region, building upon existing opportunities including ZoneCard where appropriate. Ensure MaaS platforms are inter-operable with cross-regional and national MaaS solutions where appropriate.*

Key Considerations

5.4.6 Some of the key considerations in the area of ticketing, include:

[2] Bus Users UK, Annual Impact Report 2020/21, 2021

- Are tickets zonal, route or distance based?
- Are tickets and fares single- or multi-operator?
- How many ticketing products exist and how many of these are single-operator, multi-operator and multi-modal?
- Who owns/sets the single- and multi-operator ticketing products?
- Are there cross-boundary ticketing options available?
- Are there integrated tickets with other modes and are the priced equivalently or discounted over individual ticket purchases?
- How are non-commercial, e.g. tendered and community bus services, integrated into ticketing options?

Typical Challenges

5.4.7 Some of the main challenges related to making ticketing simplified, integrated, and other changes include:

- Balancing multi-operator tickets prices with individual operator prices. Some bus operators may wish to maximise revenue via their own fare initiatives, rather than through multi-operator options, resulting in a significant premium for multi-operator products;
- Agreements on revenue sharing are required between operators in order to facilitate a full suite of multi-operator tickets; and
- Delivering a consistent and comprehensive implementation of smart ticketing technology to allow for the advancement of modern ticketing solutions, e.g. compatible card readers, app, and back-office processing to implement a contactless ticketing system with auto-fare capping.

Improving Ticketing

5.4.8 In terms of how fares and ticketing are expected to move forward, transport services in the UK and beyond are undergoing significant change away from traditional single-operator, single-mode and cash-based ticketing options. The majority of world-class bus systems include the incorporation of mobile and other forms of cashless ticketing, allow flat fares in urban areas, automatic price capping, and tickets being valid between operators, intermodally, and for onward journeys.

5.4.9 Where opportunities for the simplification of ticketing products (and fares) is limited, some improvements can be made from the user perspective through a combination of enhanced back-office systems (e.g. brokerage systems) and front-of-house facilities (such as point of service terminals, websites, mobile applications etc.) so that they can be used to improve the offering from the users' perspective by presenting them with the most appropriate products for their intended journey.

Examples of Successful Implementation

5.4.10 Fares and ticketing options have increased in recent years, with other examples of different elements of good practice including:

- Combined ticketing schemes:
  - Combined Authorities such as West Midlands and Greater Manchester offer area-wide tickets, smartcards and travel cards. These are not only valid on the bus network, but across the tram and rail networks across the area.
  - In the Liverpool City Region, the Bus Alliance has worked in partnership between the region's combined authority and operators Arriva and Stagecoach to provide integrated ticketing, including adoption of the

Merseytravel Smart Ticket (*MetroCard*) on all buses and the ability to store operators own ticketing products on this platform.

- "Best value" capping and simplicity for the user:
  - Transport for London (TfL) offers a number of features which greatly simplify the ticketing system. By using electronic ticketing, either with the network *Oyster* cards or using personal debit cards, decisions can be taken automatically by the back-office system about the fares to be applied. This takes the pressure off the customer to know exact details of their journey or the ticketing option.
  - For bus specifically, TfL fares are flat, with the *Hopper* fare also allowing multiple journeys to be undertaken if they start within an hour of the initial 'touch in'. In addition, the daily cost is capped at the price of three "Hopper" tickets, meaning several multi-leg journeys can be made in a day and the customer can be confident of the maximum cost.
  - The West Midlands' *Swift* smart ticketing is the largest contactless system outside London. The *Swift Go* system offers daily, 3-day and weekly capping.

Mobility as a Service (MaaS)

5.4.11 Related to fares and ticketing, but incorporating other elements of transport, MaaS has a potential major role in pulling together the various improvements in fares, ticketing, and wider transport integration in order to provide users with an easy to use one-stop-shop offering for transport.

5.4.12 MaaS, which arose as a concept almost two decades ago, has gained wider popularity over the past few years. The concept integrates various forms of transport into a single mobility service, generally integration journey planning, payment and ticketing for different modes and operators in to a single application and account.

5.4.13 The movement towards MaaS is fuelled by a movement away from reliance on car ownership in favour of attractive public transport and a variety of new mobility services such as ride-hailing, ridesharing, carsharing, micromobility, as well as on-demand bus services. While the MaaS market is still in its infancy, some industry analysts predict that one out of four urban mobility trips will be booked on a Mobility platform by 2035.[3]

5.4.14 A successful MaaS service enables entirely new business models and ways to organise transport options. The advantages include improved user and demand information, and new opportunities to serve unmet demand. A number of areas in the UK and beyond are developing, or have developed, MaaS platforms in recent years.

Building in Accessibility and Inclusivity

5.4.15 Simplified ticketing options would help promote the inclusivity of the bus services by benefitting the disabled, BAME groups, young adults, and infrequent or non-users in particular.

5.4.16 While concessionary ticketing options are available to a number of user groups already, ensuring that their validity is easily understood is important to ensure maximum inclusivity on eligible services. This includes integration with onward connections from fixed route services, such as setting out clear eligibility for DRT services.

5.4.17 Whilst the increase in contactless payment and app-based ticketing as improved boarding times and flexibility for most users, maintaining cash payment on board for tickets will

[3] Boston Consulting Group, The Leaders in Urban Mobility Will Be Regional, Not Global, 2018

also help promote the inclusivity of bus services to users who are not confident using electronic payment.

SRBS Policy for Ticketing

The following policies have been developed under the **Improve Service Quality** core policy area for **Ticketing**:

- Ensure ticketing is easy to understand and use, provides flexibility, and helps to guarantee that users can access the best ticketing product for their needs.
- *To be consistent with the MaaS policy in the RTS:* Develop and facilitate MaaS in the region, building upon existing opportunities including ZoneCard where appropriate. Ensure MaaS platforms are inter-operable, incorporate regional bus services as part of a multi-modal offer, with cross-regional and national MaaS solutions where appropriate.

Measures to Deliver the Policy

5.4.18 The following measures (building on existing measures by SPT in this field) have the potential to help deliver the policy, and will inform the options to be appraised:

- Enhance smart and cashless ticketing options;
- Simplified product offer from a user perspective;[4]
- Multi-operator and multi-mode tickets;
- Cross-boundary travel in the SPT area; and
- Ticketing solutions that offer auto-fares capping;
- Increase the availability of off-bus retail outlets.[5]

5.5 Interchanges and Bus Stops

5.5.1 The quality of interchange and bus stop environments can affect how users perceive and experience using bus services and can have an impact on willingness to use bus services, and their ability to access buses easily, e.g. being able to board safely and quickly.

5.5.2 Operationally, effectively designed interchanges can improve factors such as journey time, punctuality, commercial efficiency, and the ability to provide connectivity with other services. This includes larger interchanges such as bus stations, Park & Rides and multi-modal hubs.

5.5.3 The Case for Change highlighted that a total of the 11,441 bus stops in the region:

- 46% have a shelter
- 39% have seating
- 21% have shelter lighting
- 7% have Real Time Information

5.5.4 Relevant policies from the RTS include:

[4] Related to fares, this should not penalise affordability for users.
[5] This can also speed up bus boarding, helping punctuality/journey time consistency.

- ***RTS Policy 1. Accessible Transport:*** *Ensure the transport system is accessible to all. Support delivery of the Scottish Accessible Travel Framework (SATF) and Annual Delivery Plans within the region. Improve the convenience, comfort and certainty of experience for people when travelling by active travel or public transport, particularly people who have a disability including non-visible disability. Ensure accessibility is considered in the application of the sustainable travel hierarchy and is a core objective in transport innovations and new forms of transport services and infrastructure….*
- ***RTS Policy 26. Integration of public transport with other sustainable modes:*** *Facilitate and support development and enhancement of public transport interchanges. Support development of the national Mobility Hub Delivery Framework. Ensure that best use is made of existing public transport facilities and integration with all sustainable modes including active travel, shared modes and Community Transport.*
- ***RTS Policy 27. Park and Ride:*** *Increase and enhance Park & Ride facilities and systems in locations where walking, wheeling or cycling connections to the public transport network are likely to be unfeasible due to location or proximity to development. Ensure Park & Ride projects are designed to minimise generation of new, shorter car trips and to encourage the use of active travel.*
- ***RTS Policy 28. Interchanges and sustainable mobility hubs:*** *Improve and enhance integration of Community Transport, demand responsive transport services, active travel and shared transport with the current and future public transport network.*
- ***RTS Policy 45. Built environment and high-quality places:*** *Protect and enhance the built environment. Support placemaking and the creation of high quality, people-centred places that prioritise the movement of people over vehicles.*

Key Considerations

5.5.5 Interchange and bus stop environments can have different design requirements, based upon factors such as their usage levels, their location in different environments and their intended roles – city centres, bus stations and other transport interchanges, shopping centres, community service hubs, residential streets, etc. As such, it is important to recognise these differences when considering bus stop environment design and the facilities provided.

5.5.6 Typically, considerations for improving interchange and bus stop environments includes:

- The accessibility of stops and boarding and alighting of vehicles, e.g. kerb types and height;
- Waiting facilities, such as a shelter and seating;
- Information and communication channels, such as:
  - Posts and flags for visibility and quick reference information;
  - Maps and timetables for more detailed information;
  - Fare information;
  - Real Time Information (RTI) panels;
  - Information about upcoming and recent services changes; and
  - Pointers to external data sources – call centres, websites, apps, via printed details, NFC tags, QR codes etc.
- Security elements such as lighting, information and emergency communications, CCTV;
- Point of Sales (POS) / Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) options for ticketing;

- Access to the stop for vehicles – e.g. bus boxes and surface markings, approach and exit paths, bus boarder buildouts;
- The siting of bus stops to enable smooth vehicle flow;
- The number of bus stops, at both a corridor and network level, to optimise journey times and overall quality of facilities;
- Maintenance and cleaning, and the resourcing and delivery of this; and
- Engineering aspects around utilities access, drainage, etc.

5.5.7 Access to other modes is also key, e.g. cycle parking facilities at main interchanges.

5.5.8 Typical challenges in the implementation of quality improvements include:

- Space to provide-high quality facilities;
- Funding of more costly stop elements, such as real time information, ticketing POS terminals;
- Funding of frequent maintenance and cleaning, and dealing with issues such as vandalism;
- Collating information on bus services and presenting this in user friendly formats;
- Ensuring that the information which is provided at stops is up to date and accurate; and
- Making stops feel safe and comfortable.

Improving Interchanges and Bus Stops

5.5.9 Design guidance related to individual elements of standard bus stop components is readily available across the UK. In relation improving quality across a whole network, however, it is worth considering the example of the method used in London to ensure network-wide consistency.

5.5.10 TfL have published standards on various aspects of bus stop design.[6] [7] This design guidance highlights the need to consider the likely usage of a stop in order to develop suitable layouts and facilities provided. For TfL, this is informed by the *type of location* and the *type of movement* which the bus stop must serve. This is set out in their Street Types for London matrix (see TfL Streetscape guidance[8]).

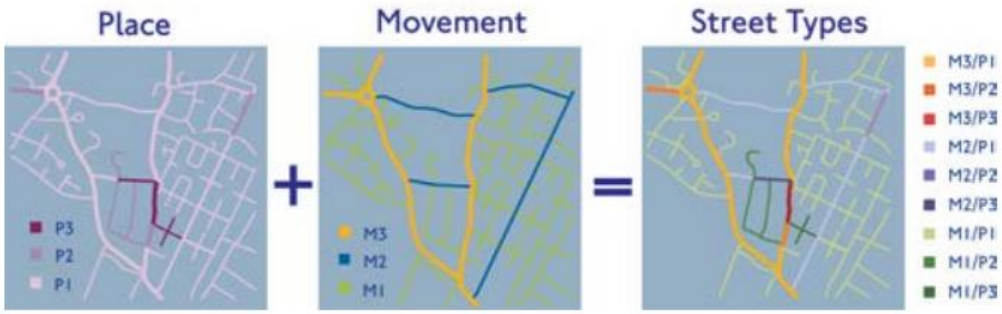


Figure 3. TfL's Street Types for London Concept

5.5.11 In relation to bus stops, this is applied through a design matrix, which defines the standards for bus stops based on the Street Type served. This means that those stops with a higher strategic significance for movement and place (e.g. a city hub) would have different quality standards (e.g. related to provision of a shelter, information, space) than

[6] TfL, Accessible Bus Stop Design Guidance, 2017
[7] TfL, Bus Stop Graphics Standard, 2021
[8] TfL, Streetscape Guidance – Fourth Edition, 2019 Revision 1

a street with local significance for movement and place (e.g. a residential street with limited through-travel).

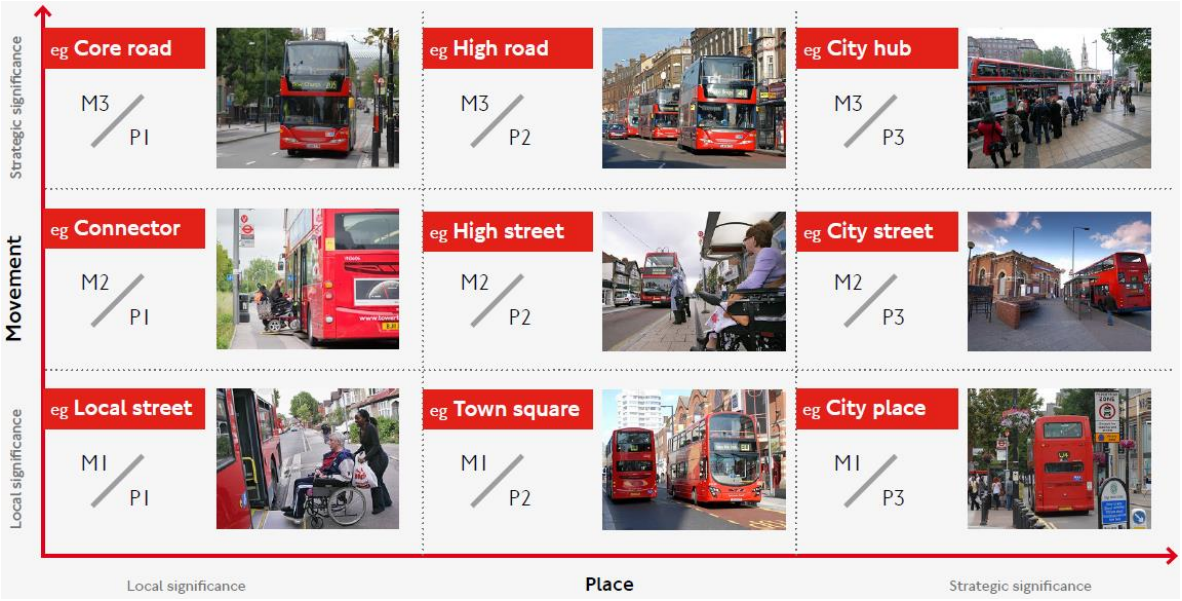


Figure 4. TfL's Street Type Matrix Applied to Bus Stops

5.5.12 The TfL design standards also include targets for ensuring stops are accessible for vehicles approaching the stop, for deployment of ramps and access for users.

SRBS Policy for Interchanges and Bus Stops

The following policies have been developed under the **Improve Service Quality** core policy area for **Interchanges and Bus Stops**:

- Enhance the quality and consistency of interchanges and bus stop facilities to increase the attractiveness of travel by bus and ensure that bus services are accessible to all.
- Explore new and improved locations for interchange and mobility hubs alongside bus stop rationalisation, to enhance interchange options while ensuring the delivery of a bus network that is efficient, and easy to understand and use.

Measures to Deliver the Policy

5.5.13 The following measures have the potential to help deliver the policy, and will inform the options to be appraised:

- Develop and implement a design hierarchy methodology across the region to enable the targeting of appropriate bus stop facilities and design standards; and
- Increase the provision of shelters, seating, shelter and stop lighting, and real time information;
- Develop an improved interchange and mobility hub offering, including at new locations and with other modes to enhance network integration.

- Explore the rationalisation and siting of bus stops to enhance bus network efficiency[9] and improve the legibility of the bus network. [10]

5.6 Information

5.6.1 As well as the other elements presented in this note, such as building network identity and having legible fares and ticketing options, the provision of information to potential users is key to attractive and encourage more people to travel by bus.

5.6.2 For some, being unable to access useful information about bus services will be an inconvenience; however, for others it could mean the difference between making a journey by bus, making the journey by another mode, or not making that journey at all, for example:

- For users with mobility problems, not knowing whether a service is accessible or not could be a major barrier to use or confidence to travel;
- For those where affordability is an issue, not being able to access information on fares could have a similarly negative effect;
- For time critical travellers or those in areas without frequent services, information about whether a service is disrupted (late or not running) will be key.

5.6.3 "De-mystifying" the bus is also important for attracting more non-users and increasing passenger numbers.

Key Considerations

5.6.4 A combination of different factors will determine the type of information required by users and the most appropriate channel or touchpoint through which to deliver that information, including any specific formats needed.

5.6.5 One way in which to consider these different information requirements is to look at potential user needs across the different stages of customer journey for using bus:

- Before starting the journey;
- Before boarding the bus and at the stop;
- During the bus journey; and
- After the journey.

5.6.6 Typical information needs, touchpoints and channel priorities throughout the customer journey for using the bus are summarised in Figure 5.

[9] Fewer stops for some services while maintaining overall coverage.
[10] i.e. remove stop confusion

Figure 5. Information to Users as Part of the Customer Journey

	Before Starting the Journey		Before Boarding the Bus		During the Bus Journey			After Journey
	Deciding to travel	Planning and checking options	Getting to the Stop	Experience at Stop	Boarding Bus	On-bus Experience	Onward Journeys/ Connections	Satisfaction, Feedback, Customer Support

Typical Information Needs	• Overall awareness and perception of bus compared to other modes;
	• Journey planning:
	  • Proximity of stops, routes, timetable/frequency, journey time; fares and ticketing options, live disruptions; and
	  • Different options.
	• Specific user needs:
	  • Accessibility of stops and vehicles;
	  • Pass acceptance – e.g. concessions
			• Directions / wayfinding to the stop;
			• At-stop information:
			  • Network overview;
			  • Stop specific routes & changes;
			  • Stop specific timetable / frequency;
			  • Fares and ticketing options;
			  • Live arrivals and disruptions;
			  • Vehicle accessibility;
			  • Cleaning information; and
			  • Contact information – e.g. customer support and feedback.
					• Route/location/vehicle specific information:
					  • Network overview / mapping, fares and ticketing;
					  • Stopping information:
					  • Notifying users of their location, next stop, and arrival at stop / interchange, destinations at stop, and onward connections;
					  • Live disruptions;
					  • Cleaning information;
					  • Health, safety and security information; and
					  • Contact information – e.g. customer support, feedback.
								• Ways to provide feedback on elements such as:
								  • Journey experience, e.g. driver interaction;
								  • Safety and security issues, including anti-social behaviour; and
								  • Complaints and customer support issues;
								  • Potential improvements.

Typical Touchpoints & Channel Priorities	• Online – website
	• Mobile device – website or app
	• Person to person – call/ information centre or station, word of mouth / forums;
	• Printed materials;
	• Media – news sources.
	• Customer charters.
			• Journey planners & signage;
			• Shelter information board, poles and flag, branding;
			• Real-time Information Panel
			• Pointers to other information sources:
			  • Stop reference number;
			  • NFC tag or and QR
			  • Call centre numbers and website addresses.
					• Driver interaction;
					• Externally on the bus– running boards, service numbers, liveries;
					• Internally on the bus:
					  • Printed materials, posters, stickers, etc;
					  • Live audio announcements and visual queues, e.g. digital information panels;
					• Pointers to other information sources:
					  • Call centre numbers and Website addresses.
								• How to access customer support and feedback methods, including:
								  • Online, mobile, app,
								  • Person to person – call centre or kiosk;
								  • Postal address;
								• Access information for ongoing surveys and survey outcomes.

Improving Information

5.6.7 By considering the needs of different types of users, such as by customer segments, specific user needs or preferences can be established and catered for, e.g. accessible content for visually impaired users, or paper content for those without smart phones.

5.6.8 Typical challenges and opportunities for improvement for the provision of information include:

- Providing accurate content and managing changes to information. While for some channels, such as online data, information can be updated relatively easily, for other sources, such as paper timetables and maps at bus stops or bus stations, this can be more difficult or resource intensive to control;
- Ensuring information content is consistent across all channels and sources – including through different information providers:
  - Where content is distributed directly, such as through operators and local/regional authorities, this can include strict processes for reviewing and updating content;
  - For third party providers, this may be through agreement for authorities and operators to issue update notices to these parties, or through the development of suitable APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) for digital content or information widgets which can be used on external websites;
- Providing consistent presentation, or identity and branding, of content can also be a challenge, as noted in Section 5.3 on Network Identity. This includes gaining agreement on areas of common identity/branding;
- Moving to a single-source or 'one-stop-shop' for information has major benefits from the user perspective but requires significant integration, partnership working and/or enforcement of standards, e.g.:
  - The removal or streamlining of alternative content channels, such as bus operators' own mobile applications, can be difficult to agree on; and
  - Similarly, the relationship between operators' own customer management systems, call centres and marketing channels etc. can be hard to manage and resource intensive.

Building in Accessibility and Inclusivity

5.6.9 Members of BAME groups can sometimes face challenges in terms of language. Such barriers can occasionally make navigation of a public transport system extremely difficult, with timetables, signage, notifications, origin and destination information and fares hard to understand. DfT studies have revealed that small sections of different BAME groups also experience problems understanding and being understood by the driver, related both to language barriers, but also to local dialects and pronunciation difficulties.

5.6.10 Information should be easy to understand, using simple language and visual representation of changes where possible. This will help with language barriers and general understanding across a broad spectrum of users. Information should also be available in accessible formats, for example included in audio and visual announcements.

5.6.11 Considering the most appropriate channels and locations of information is key to building in inclusivity.

SRBS Policy for Information

The following policies have been developed under the **Improve Service Quality** core policy area for **Information**:

- Deliver consistently high-quality, accurate and accessible information to bus users across the region, before during and after travel.
- Ensure that all users have access to the information they need to confidently and safely travel on the bus network.
- Integrate information across region on the bus network, between operators, and with other modes, to provide users with a one-stop-shop experience.

Measures to Deliver the Policy

5.6.12 The following measures have the potential to help deliver the policy, and will inform the options to be appraised:

- Develop consistent quality standards for information across the region, operators, and areas. Work with other modes to determine points where information can be shared in particular to make journey by sustainable modes more attractive and safer.
- Consider information alongside the network identity quality measures to provide users with clear understanding of service usage, fares, ticketing and payment options etc.

5.6.13 It is noted that the Glasgow Bus Alliance have outlined a Pledge to deliver reliable, up to date and consistent information, including some of the elements outlined above, and working with local authorities, SPT and Transport Scotland on elements such as a multi-operator branded app, audio-visual next stop announcements, upgrading information at busy stops, and providing better timetables, maps and fares information.

5.7 Changes to Services

5.7.1 The changing context of transport demand, along with other operational requirements such as road network changes and temporary road closures, means that the need to change bus services is inevitable. However, from a customer perspective, there needs to be some level of stability in the bus network. Existing customers with established travel patterns are often reluctant to see timetable changes, while those who do not use the bus may see ever-changing routes and networks as an additional layer of complexity and a barrier to using the bus.

5.7.2 Changes to bus services often mean reductions in service, but improvements to services have the same issues in terms of network stability, customer confidence and the communication of changes – if a current non-user does not know the service has improved, or is unsure of the permanence of the change, they may be less likely to change their behaviour and start using the service.

Key Considerations

5.7.3 To some extent, changes to services can be realised through long-term network strategies and plans. These are often objective-led and will typically consider forecasts for transport demand, often derived from operators' own internal systems and from surveys, but also through planning data available to transport authorities, such as overarching transport plans, land use plans, traffic demand forecasts, and economic forecasts.

5.7.4 However, alongside long-term planning of the overall 'shape of the network', changes can arise for the following reasons:

- Routes can be changed to deliver journey time efficiencies;
- Service levels can be updated in relation to change in demand, or to make services more attractive;
- Routes are reviewed regularly by operators and authorities for supported services to assess commercial viability; and
- Short term emergency changes to timetables can result from issues such as roadworks and road closures.

5.7.5 The real-world process of making service changes, therefore, comes down to a combination of:

- Operators submitting proposed changes to their commercial networks, sometimes within a framework of statutory and other agreed quality standards;
- Engagement with local / regional transport authorities to consult on where and when changes to the wider transport context could impact on commercial services; and
- Negotiation on the provision of supported services.

Improving Changes to Service

Frequency of Changes

5.7.6 There is the potential that timetable changes can be minimised and co-ordinated across operators, so they happen at the same time. In many world-class bus networks, service changes have set change dates throughout the year. While there is mixed evidence in respect of set change dates, those areas with set change dates often highlight the following benefits:

- Improved communication with customers, allowing them to plan ahead for changes;
- Network stability that reassures bus users;
- Helps to manage the workloads of those involved in delivering network changes and communicating changes; and
- Provides the local authority with the time to react to network changes, such as assessing the need to replace removed journeys with tenders.

Communication of Service Changes to Users

5.7.7 Guidance released in 2020, as part of a Government support package for bus operators through the COVID-19 Bus Operators Support Grant, was provided for the communication of service changes to users. This includes useful advice beyond the pandemic, including[11]:

[11] Transport Focus, Guidance: communicating changes to local bus services COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG), 2020

- Targeting the relevant audience;
- Recognising the different impacts on different users;
- Using appropriate communication channels for target audience, including accessible content as standard, real time screens, apps and audio-visual notifications where possible;
- Providing clear information on the change, including:
  - Changes to route/stopping patterns
  - Changes to timetables, including first/last buses;
  - Changes to journey times;
  - Impacts on connections to other modes
  - Why changes have taken place;
  - Alternatives and journey planner options;
  - Options for checking live travel status information;
  - Season ticket refund options if applicable.
- Timing communication well and set out the next review date;
- Share data with other parties to ensure consistency of information – e.g. TransXchange to Traveline.

Building in Accessibility and Inclusivity

5.7.8 Those who are most reliant on buses are most vulnerable to service changes, particularly those who are without access to a private vehicle, or disabled passengers.

5.7.9 The impact of any changes should be consulted on with a representative sample of users. Careful consideration should be taken to ensure disabled and other vulnerable users are represented.

5.7.10 Any changes that effect accessibility should be clearly communicated, highlighting the change and the potential impacts.

5.7.11 Information related to the changes should be easy to understand, using simple language and visual representation of changes where possible. This will help with language barriers and general understanding across a broad spectrum of users. Information should also be available in accessible formats, for example included in audio-visual announcements.

SRBS Policy for Changes to Services

The following policy has been developed under the **Improve Service Quality** core policy area for **Changes to Services**:

- Improve the stability of the bus network by establishing minimum standards and protocols relating to scale, communication and frequency for any changes to bus services, to reduce impact on users, and to ensure users and key stakeholders are suitably informed.

Measures to Deliver the Policy

5.7.12 The following measures have the potential to help deliver the policy, and will inform the options to be appraised:

- Establish set dates for service changes;

- Establish protocols for communicating changes to authorities and users, including for planned and emergency roadworks, and other disruptors such as events; and
- Set caps on the number and scale of changes to the network throughout the year.

5.8 Vehicles and Depots

5.8.1 A good onboard experience for passengers is fundamental to the decision to choose the bus as the mode of travel. Uncomfortable, cramped or dirty vehicles will make the journey a less pleasant experience and lead customers to consider other alternatives. It is therefore important that a certain quality standard is maintained and provided consistently across the network.

5.8.2 Similarly, the customer will also consider whether the bus will meet their needs on more practical terms. Being easily accessible for those with impaired mobility, having space for pushchairs or wheelchairs, or having sufficient luggage storage, are all important factors. Being able to guarantee a minimum standard of these factors can encourage customers to choose the bus as their mode of transport and make the quality of their experience more comparable to that on rail and be more competitive with the car.

5.8.3 From an operational perspective vehicles and suitable depots are required to support the delivery of the Level of Service policies set out in this document.

5.8.4 Furthermore, vehicles and depots play a key role in supporting the following policies from the RTS around decarbonisation, emissions and air quality:

- ***RTS Policy 31. Road transport vehicle decarbonisation:*** *…..Support and encourage bus operators to take up opportunities to decarbonise fleets, upgrade depots and develop partnerships with energy providers. Support and facilitate decarbonisation of the community transport sector in the region. Facilitate development of public charging infrastructure for bus and community transport particularly at SPT bus stations, and integrate with sustainable mobility hubs as appropriate……*
- ***RTS Policy 37. Low Emission Zones:*** *Support implementation and promotion of the Glasgow Low Emission Zone. Support investigation and implementation of additional Low Emission Zones in the region where the relevant criteria are met.*
- ***RTS Policy Air Quality Management Areas:*** *Support the delivery of Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) Action Plans and measures to improve air quality within AQMAs in the region. Aim to reduce the number of AQMAs in the region.*

Key Considerations

5.8.5 Quality standards for vehicles typically fall into the following categories:

- On-board facilities for customers:
  - Capacity levels – seated, standing, and priority seating;
  - On board space for space for wheelchairs, luggage, push-chairs and prams;
  - The provision of elements such as USB, Wi-Fi, etc.
  - Information on relevant topics, such as: service route; Real Time Information on location, including audio-visual cues; customer support and feedback contacts; cleaning confirmation; health and safety procedures;
- Accessibility standards around low-floor access, wheelchair space and access, ramps, ability to kneel, grab rails, audio-visual information etc.
- Ticketing machine compatibility;

- Communication systems, dispatch systems and tracking technology, such as AVL and transponders for bus priority systems;
- Branding – inside and outside;
- Safety and security measures, including CCTV and driver partitions;
- Ventilation and heating systems;
- Practical delivery of elements such as cleaning and maintenance, and the impact vehicle design and specification can have on these; and
- Environmental credentials and compatibility for shared charging or refuelling needs.

5.8.6 Some of the main challenges around delivering consistent and viable vehicle quality standards include:

- Ensuring standards meet the operating context of routes, including:
  - Capacity requirements;
  - Vehicle range, fuelling and charging requirements;
  - Size and the ability to negotiate physical features in certain areas, such as limited road space and low bridges, etc.;
  - The need for elements such as more luggage space on certain routes, more seating vs standing space on longer routes etc.;
  - Flexibility in standards and design to allow for vehicle redeployments;
- Managing the accuracy and accessibility of information to customers;
- Agreeing on elements of compatibility of shared systems and processes with operators' individual systems – e.g. driver communications, ticketing machines, etc.;
- Agreeing reasonable timescales for the implementation of vehicle improvements and ensuring these can be worked into fleet replacement and refurbishment schedules;
- The scale of costs required to upgrade vehicles and the need to recognise affordability over a vehicles' lifetime. This is particularly true for low- and zero-emission vehicles and related charging and infrastructure, which tend to be more expensive at the outset, but may offer cost savings in the longer-term;
- Viability of common on-vehicle branding and liveries, including use on cross-border services and the need to fit in with re-paint schedules;
- Ensuring that the accessibility standards for vehicles are aligned with on-street infrastructure standards, e.g. kerb height and ramp deployment, kneeling, etc;
- Delivering consistent quality of standards across fixed route and other models of delivery, such as DRT and community transport.

Building in Accessibility and Inclusivity

5.8.7 Buses designed to carry over 22 passengers on local and scheduled routes must comply with the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR)[12]. Coaches have also been required to comply with these Regulations from 2020. Following the introduction of the Public Service Vehicles (Accessible Information) Regulations 2023 (the Accessible Information Regulations), between 2024 and 2026 it will become mandatory for the majority of local bus and coach services to incorporate accessible information provision, improving the journey experience for all passengers, including passengers who are disabled.

5.8.8 One specific example of on-board improvements includes audio-visual cues for bus users regarding location and stops. Quantitative research with bus passengers with sensory impairments has indicated that a high proportion of individuals who are blind or partially

[12] Available at legislation.gov.uk, accessed on 06/09/21

sighted have missed their bus stop due to bus drivers and other passengers forgetting or refusing to inform them once they had reached it, or because they were too worried to ask for help. [13] [14]

5.8.9 Cleanliness of vehicles became more important issue during the COVID-19 pandemic and it is important to ensure there are strict cleaning regimes in place to help protect vulnerable users. This is particularly important for attracting back customers – research has shown that those with clinical vulnerabilities, a disability, or with children under five, were more likely to say they would never feel completely comfortable on public transport in the wake of COVID-19. Younger people (aged 18-35) were more likely to report being happy getting back to using public transport for regular activities (around 55%)[15].

[13] Guide Dogs Road to Nowhere: An investigation into the problems faced by bus passengers who are blind or partially sighted and the isolation caused, 2013

[14] Guide Dogs, Destination Unknown: An investigation into bus passenger experiences, 2014

[15] Marsden, Anable, Docherty and Brown, Report: At a crossroads – Travel adaptations during Covid-19 restrictions and where next?, March 2021

SRBS Policy for Vehicles

The following policies have been developed under the **Improve Service Quality** core policy area for **Vehicles and Depots**:

- Drive the decarbonisation of the bus fleet, to support ambitions for the region to reduce emissions, improve air quality and minimise climate change impacts.
- Develop a consistent minimum standard of engine and age of vehicle to deliver decarbonisation, air quality and reliability benefits across the network.
- Ensure the number and capacity of vehicles capacity is managed across the network, to ensure demand can met for both fixed-route and on-demand forms of passenger transport and that there is resilience to deliver services. This includes to deliver an improved level of service for the network.
- Ensure consistently high-quality vehicles are operating in the region, to deliver attractive and accessible services for users.
- Ensure that vehicles are well maintained, to minimise reliability issues for the delivery of services.
- Make best use of existing assets and consider delivery models that facilitate making best use of vehicles across areas such as healthcare, education and community transport.
- Ensure the scale, facilities and management of depots support ambitions for the vehicle fleet in the region, including decarbonisation needs, and the effective and efficient provision of bus services across the network.

Measures to Deliver the Policy

5.8.10 The following measures have the potential to help deliver the policy, and will inform the options to be appraised:

- Consider the vehicle and depot requirements for a world-class bus network, including quality, accessibly, decarbonisation and emissions aspects;
- Set out ambitious targets to deliver this fleet across the region, along with the depot and staffing requirements to support this;
- Consider funding and delivery models to deliver on these targets for a high-quality and low-and zero-carbon bus fleet; and
- Explore concepts such as total transport, which consider the sharing of vehicles across different purposes for community benefit, e.g. education, health and social care, community transport.

5.9 Drivers

5.9.1 Driver quality is integral to the success of any bus company. Being the focal point of the majority of personal interactions between bus operators and passengers, they are the main representatives of the bus network on the road. Additionally, their interaction with other members of the public, such as other road users, local residents, and visitors are

also important for the public impression of the bus operator and the bus network identity as a whole.

5.9.2 From a financial point of view, drivers have responsibility for the key physical assets of the company, i.e. the vehicles themselves. It is important that they drive in a safe, responsible and efficient manner. This can help keep repair, maintenance and fuel costs to a reasonable level.

5.9.3 Data from Bus Users UK shows that 22% of all issues and complaints processed for Scotland were regarding driver/staff attitudes[16]. This was the second highest topic area for complaints, behind only service reliability. As such, drivers can have an important impact on customer satisfaction.

Key Considerations

5.9.4 Typically, the key areas for consideration in relation to drivers include:

- The types and frequency of driver training which are required, such as for:
  - Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC);
  - Customer service and around knowledge of information such as fares and ticketing products;
  - Disability and equalities;
  - Internal company policies and code of conduct;
  - Driving skills, including eco-driving;
  - Specific requirements for the local area in relation to usage of interchange spaces, stops etc.
  - Health and safety; and
  - Refresher training course on the above.
- Driver appearance, i.e. a uniform, dress code or similar within the code of conduct;
- Absenteeism and driver cover standards to ensure services can operate in the event of a driver being absent;
- Driving and stopping standards, such as:
  - Maximum distance to kerb and alignment at stops;
  - Safety protocols, including elements such as waiting for passengers to be seated before pulling away from a stop; and
  - Eco-driving.
- Usage policies of interchange spaces, shared stops, charging and fuelling infrastructure, depots, etc; and
- Other specific responsibilities of drivers, such as:
  - To passengers and others in the event of a breakdown;
  - Dealing with complaints, issuing refunds, etc; and
  - Support to disabled users and other specific groups.

5.9.5 Typical challenges for improving quality and meeting standards include:

- Attracting and retaining good drivers;
- Efficiently delivering a consistent level of driver training;
- Enforcing driver conduct in a consistent manner; and
- Rebuilding confidence in potential users after negative experiences.

[16] Bus Users UK, Annual Impact Report 2020/21, 2021

Improving Driver Quality Factors

5.9.6 Ways to improve driver quality include resolving issues around recruitment, retention and levels of standby drivers.

5.9.7 Driver training is hugely important to improving driver interactions with different user groups and, in particular, ensuring quality standards related to this are known and upheld. The types of training are listed in the section above. One particularly strong example has been developed by Guide Dogs and successfully adapted for bus travel and deployed in Brighton and Hove, called 'My Guide'[17]. This practical training equips bus staff with the knowledge, skills and confidence to safely guide people with sight loss and includes such elements as drivers being blindfolded and then asked to try and board the bus. The training received positive feedback from drivers themselves.

5.9.8 Consistency of the above is also key for improving quality related to drivers.

SRBS Policy for Drivers

The following policy has been developed under the **Improve Service Quality** core policy area for **drivers**:

- Improve and standardise driver training regimes and the quality standards of existing drivers to ensure a more positive customer interaction experience.
- Review policies related to wider driver responsibilities, to ensure the bus service and network as a whole is being suitably represented.

Measures to Deliver the Policy

5.9.9 The following measures have the potential to help deliver the policy, and will inform the options to be appraised:

- Develop measures to encourage high quality training for bus drivers; and
- Develop measures to encourage driver recruitment and retention.

5.10 Safety and Security

5.10.1 Ensuring that the bus network is safe and secure for all is a key tenet of the RTS and national to local level transport policy, in particular ensuring everyone is able to travel free from fear of harassment and discrimination based upon ethnicity, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or age. Impact assessment scoping exercises for: EqIA; Islands Community; Fairer Scotland Duty; and Child Rights and Welfare. Reporting for those scoping exercises has highlighted areas of consideration for safety and security, including some of these groups.

[17] DfT, The Inclusive Transport Strategy: Achieving Equal Access for Disabled People, July 2018

Key Considerations

5.10.2 SPT has identified that people can be deterred from using public transport over real or perceived safety fears (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, 2021). Safety and security problems are more likely to affect some groups of people, such as women, older people, younger people, LGBT+ people and black and ethnic minority people.

5.10.3 Key evidence identified in the Impact Assessment Scoping, includes:

- Only three in five people (62%) feel safe and secure on bus services in the evening – one of the lowest levels among Scottish regions - and three in four people (74%) feel safe and secure on rail services in the evening.
- Safety and security problems are more likely to affect women, older people, younger people, LGBT+ people and black and ethnic minority people.
- Experience of racism or harassment and/or having been the victim of hate crimes in the past prevents some people from using public transport.
- A perceived lack of safety also deters people from using public transport.
- Other safety identified problems related to public transport usage include travelling to and waiting for services at transport stops or stations particularly in the evening, at unstaffed or isolated locations and where there are low levels of lighting. 58% of disabled people agreed that they 'Feel safe and secure on the bus at night' compared to 73% of non-disabled people (Transport Scotland, 2021).
- Quality and maintenance of pavements and footpaths including routes to public transport is a problem especially for older and disabled people and for people travelling with children in prams and buggies.
- Older people also face say they are less likely to find public transport safe and secure in the evening compared to young adults.
- Pregnant women may also have safety concerns about travelling at night or during isolated times of day. They may also find it difficult to travel safely during peak hours (Transport Scotland, 2021).
- Safety and feelings of safety have a significant impact on women's travel choices. In the UK, 72% of women were worried about experiencing sexual harassment on public transport, compared to 40% of men. This has led to a higher proportion of women (62% compared to 35% of men) who would change their behaviour to in relation to public transport to avoid sexual harassment (UK Government Equalities Office, 2020); and
- Women feel less safe than men when travelling at night. Survey data from 2022 shows that females and those who identified as either trans, non-binary or in another way were less likely to indicate that they felt safe using the bus at night either always or often, and were more likely to state that they never felt safe using the bus at night compared to males (Transport Scotland 2022).

5.10.4 Recent incidences relating to the safety of drivers in the region have led to some services being temporarily withdrawn / restricting hours of operation. Driver importance is also as important as that of users.

Improving Safety and Security

5.10.5 This study will continue to consider safety and security as part of the impact assessment process and aim to promote safe and secure measures and design for all, while engaging with relevant equality groups.

SRBS Policy for Safety and Security

The following policy has been developed under the **Improve Service Quality** core policy area for **safety and security**:

- To improve the perceptions of personal safety and security related to using buses:

  - Ensure that safety by design is promoted at all stages of the development, maintenance or improvement of new and existing bus services, networks and facilities
  - Ensure that consultation with equality and welfare groups is made at all stages of the design and operational process and is maintained at regular intervals.

Measures to Deliver the Policy

5.10.6 Measures will continue to be explored through the impact assessment process. Some examples of measures with the potential to help deliver the policy include:

- Training for bus drivers to deal with issues;
- Physical safety and security measures, such as CCTV, lighting, enclosed driver booths, emergency contact stations, etc;
- Information and awareness measures;
- Measures such as a "Safe Places" scheme, where key interchanges, stops and on-board buses operate as places for those feeling vulnerable and are looking for safe place to get help.
  - An example of this is the *Sheffield Safe Places* scheme, which includes public transport interchanges across the bus network, with proposals to expand to stops and on-board vehicles.

5.11 Customer Support and Feedback

5.11.1 The relationship between any business and its customers is important. This is particularly the case in a public transport sector which is trying to reverse a cycle of decline in passenger numbers in many areas.

5.11.2 In order to maintain a good relationship with customers, it is important that users have input to decisions related to the services that are delivered, that they feel that they are valued, and that they feel their concerns are being listened to.

5.11.3 It is important, therefore, that the customer feel their feedback is welcomed and that they know what kind of response they can expect when they contact a bus operator or authority. Consequently, appropriate processes and standards around customer support and feedback are vital.

Key Considerations

5.11.4 There are generally two main elements to this topic which can be distinguished as follows:

- **Customer support**, in which the customer requires assistance in dealing with an active issue; and
- **Feedback and complaints**, which tend to relate to events which have passed, or which do not require an urgent response for an active issue.

5.11.5 One caveat to this distinction, is that an effective feedback process, in particular with the use of social media and digital feedback channels, can highlight 'live' issues which need to be resolved, such as delays to services, or a malfunctioning ticket machine. Vice versa, customer support can help to identify recurring issues which, if resolved, could positively impact on feedback and complaints. The process for dealing with these two elements does need to be well integrated.

Improving Customer Support and Feedback

5.11.6 Similarly to information, customer support can benefit from a centralised 'network level' approach, to help improve ease of understanding and use by customers. This can also benefit operations by bringing together feedback from right across the bus/transport network and helping to understand common areas of 'pain and gain' for users, and the measures that might address these.

Customer Support

5.11.7 Customer support services need to be readily accessible to all customers and have a process in place which allows it to respond accurately and quickly to customer needs across a large range of topics, such as:

- Information about services;
- Fares and ticketing queries and issues;
- Information about accessibility options, support and assistance;
- Safety and security;
- Technology assistance for any systems in place; and
- Practical elements, such as lost property.

Feedback and Complaints

5.11.8 This process also needs to be readily accessible to all users and must be seen to be well promoted and not 'hidden' or giving the impression that negative feedback or complaints are being avoided. Customers will expect to know how their feedback is being dealt with, including timescales within which they can expect a response, and what recourse they have if they are not satisfied with this initial response.

5.11.9 This allows customers to have a level of expectation for the response, set within a framework that is deliverable by the operator/authority dealing with this.

5.11.10 It is also common for operators or authorities to proactively seek feedback, rather than waiting for the customer to contact them. This generally takes the form of a customer satisfaction survey, which would be carried out periodically (usually annually/biannually). If the results of these are publicised alongside a notification of actions which are being taken in response to issues raised, it can help to show customers that their input is valued.

5.11.11 Independent satisfaction surveys are also undertaken across the region and country by bodies such as Transport Focus. Another key resource for customer complaints insight is Bus Users UK, the designated body for handling complaints under the Passenger Rights Regulation. They are often the point of call for complaints which are not resolved directly by the processes which are in place locally.

5.11.12 Typical challenges in setting out consistent processes and standards for customer support and feedback include:

- Coordinating processes between operators and with local authority procedures;
- Ensuring that the customer knows what to expect across their whole journey, that they are presented with a consistent commitment and are offered a quick, easy and accessible point of contact. Delivering this becomes more complex for multi-leg, potentially multi-operator and multi-modal journeys, unless a single point-of-contact is provided;
- Managing complex transport networks and systems, e.g. fares and ticketing, timetables, variation in fleets, changes to services, etc. This becomes less complex when effective quality standards are in place across all operators, modes and areas.

Building in Accessibility and Inclusivity

5.11.13 Users are also likely to have differing levels of knowledge and confidence with the transport network and with using customer support and providing feedback. Some will have specific accessibility needs.

5.11.14 It is important that accessible means of communication are provided for users. At a basic level, this should include options for written communication, verbal communication, and online accessibility. Increasing accessibility may also include the provision of the customer support information in braille and/or audio formats for those with sight difficulties. For those with hearing difficulties, assistance could be provided for example by having staff trained in sign language who would be available for face-to-face meeting or video call. For customers who may feel more comfortable communicating in a language other than English, provision can be made (and advertised) for translating either written or verbal communication.

5.11.15 Any bus user groups in the area should also ensure that they are open and accessible to all types of bus users and make every effort to represent users from disabled and other groups, including those with protected characteristics.

5.11.16 Some groups of users and potential users will be more comfortable, or able, to engage with customer support and feedback processes than others. Therefore, feedback received can become weighted towards representation of those groups. It is important, therefore, to undertake proactive and targeted engagement – this should take particular care to include those groups which are typically hard to reach, or which are not commonly represented in standard feedback processes.

SRBS Policy for Customer Support and Feedback

The following policy has been developed under the **Improve Service Quality** core policy area for **Customer Support and Feedback**:

- Develop a common customer support and feedback process for users across the region, delivering a consistent, accessible and inclusive level of service to bus users.

Measures to Deliver the Policy

5.11.17 The following measures have the potential to help deliver the policy, and will inform the options to be appraised:

- Develop a one-stop-shop for customer support and feedback across the region, from the user perspective; and
- Consider a region-wide refund dissatisfaction guarantee in the event that bus services do not meet passengers' satisfaction;
- Commit to actively engaging with users, setting out performance targets and regularly publishing progress towards these to promote accountability.

5.11.18 It is noted that the Glasgow Bus Alliance includes the following measures in its Pledge around customer service:

- Excellent customer service delivered by all operators with friendly and responsive customer service teams.
- Accurate and up to date timetable information across all platforms.
- Responsive, accurate and reliable social media.
- A commitment to regular engagement with local communities to seek feedback to help maintain a world class bus service.
- SPT and operators providing "bus ambassadors" at busy bus spots to provide useful advice and information.
- Creating a welcome pack for new residents to the city region.

5.12 Data and Monitoring

5.12.1 The collection, monitoring and analysis of data can be key to achieving improvements in quality across many aspects of a bus network. From punctuality and reliability, to travel patterns and customer satisfaction, effective data gathering and analysis can:

- Be used to identify where problems are arising;
- Consider how to improve the service to better meet user needs and to grow bus patronage;
- Help monitor performance to ensure that agreed targets are being met.

Key Considerations

5.12.2 There are a number of data types which can typically be collected by operators and transport authorities.

Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) Data

5.12.3 AVL data is gathered as a matter of routine by most operators and can be used to monitor and improve a number of aspects of the service, not least by monitoring adherence to the punctuality standards set. The data can also be used to improve information provision to the customer, by giving real time updates on service locations and expected arrival times via apps and at-stop displays.

5.12.4 Over a longer period, data can be used to monitor punctuality trends. This analysis can identify bottlenecks in the network where services are regularly delayed, providing evidence to consider the justification of infrastructure changes, such as additional bus priority measures. Where changes to the road system are not possible, at least in the shorter term, the data can be used to inform changes to bus timetables to make these more realistic to traffic conditions.

Ticketing Data

5.12.5 Ticketing data is also gathered as a matter of routine by operators in order to monitor revenue and for audit purposes. The data, however, has further use as a means of monitoring travel patterns and assessing demand across an area. At a more basic level,

the data can be used to assess passenger numbers on particular services and corridors, indicating where increases (or decreases) in frequency or vehicle capacity may be required. At a more detailed level, ticket data can be used to analyse the origins and destinations of trips, with this being used to inform possible service changes such as the introduction of a direct service on a popular journey which currently involves interchange.

5.12.6 The analysis of origin-destination data may be a particular task which is useful for a transport authority to carry out, using data collated from a number of operators. As well as having the necessary data sharing agreements in place to achieve this, consideration should also be given to how data from different systems (and therefore potentially in different formats) might be processed to be used together.

Survey Data

5.12.7 It is common for operators or transport authorities to commission customer surveys. These are a useful means to monitor customer satisfaction with various aspects of services, from frequencies and journey times to vehicle cleanliness or staff attitude. Presenting the customer with the opportunity to provide feedback is also a means in itself to improve customer satisfaction, especially if it is seen that issues raised through the surveys are taken into consideration by the operators.

5.12.8 In addition to this, it is not uncommon to commission 'mystery passenger' trips on services, in order to specifically check various aspects of the service quality. As customer feedback will often be biased towards extremes (in that passengers will be most likely to respond if they are particularly happy or unhappy with something), these mystery passenger surveys may provide a more objective picture of how services are performing in terms of quality.

App Data

5.12.9 Subject to data protection legislation, data entered by users of operator or authority apps may be collected and used to improve services. For example, origin-destination intentions can be inferred from journey planner usage.

5.12.10 In addition, apps may prove a useful way to gather customer satisfaction information.

Other Operator Data

5.12.11 Operators will keep a variety of records, such as vehicle maintenance and driver training data.

Improving Data and Monitoring

5.12.12 Improving collection, management, and use of data and monitoring can include the following areas:

- Have agreements in place to facilitate data sharing, allowing an authority, such as SPT, to collate and analyse data from numerous operators to achieve better insights related to network performance and potential improvements;[18]
- Setting standards around data collection, formats and sharing to aid this process and make the most of the data which is available through modern transport systems; and

[18] Such agreements are more commonly in place in England, with some data being shared as standard nationally, and other data sharing agreements forming part of BSIPs and other Partnership arrangements.

- Especially where data relates to quality targets, it may be desirable for an authority, such as SPT, to ask the operators to share these records (either in full, or as a summary report) with the authority in order to ensure these targets are being met.

5.12.13 Looking at cities with world-class bus networks, some authorities publish reports to the public containing the data they collect from operators. TfL, for example, publishes an annual report[19] detailing passenger numbers, network capacity, key performance measures of lost kilometres (i.e. reliability), and estimated wait time and on-time percentages (i.e. punctuality for high and low frequency services respectively). Opening up these performance measures to public scrutiny can be an incentive to operators and authorities to maintain a level of performance.

SRBS Policy for Data and Monitoring

The following policy has been developed under the **Improve Service Quality** core policy area, for **data and monitoring**:

- Work with key stakeholders to identify the key areas of benefit related to data, collection, sharing, analysis, and monitoring, in order to improve the performance of the bus network and the quality of the sustainable transport offering to users in the region.

Measures to Deliver the Policy

5.12.14 The following measures have the potential to help deliver the policy, and will inform the options to be appraised:

- Explore data needs and potential benefits related to the bus network, and integration with other modes;
- Develop ways to collect, share, analyse, and monitor data to the benefit of the bus network and users, including integration with other modes, where relevant.
- Develop a method for actioning improvements based on this information, including considering the potential for making some metrics around performance public.

5.13 Customer Charter

5.13.1 A common theme across many of the quality areas discussed in the sections above is that of presenting potential users with a consistent, deliverable and attractive offer for bus travel. While setting out effective quality improvements can enhance bus network performance and the experience for users, it is important to make users aware of these improvements.

5.13.2 A Customer Charter is one way of setting out these benefits and articulating these as a 'customer offer' in a clear and concise way. It allows customers to know what to expect from their use of bus services which fall under the charter. Additionally, and critically, it holds those signed up to the charter, i.e. operators and authorities, accountable to the standard set out to customers in the charter.

5.13.3 A Customer Charter for bus services sets out the quality of service standards a customer can expect, often including:

[19] Transport for London, Travel in London – Report 13, 2020

- Purpose of the charter, passenger rights, and who/where the charter covers;
- Commitments to the customers around
  - Safety and security measures, e.g. CCTV;
  - Information – where, when updated, accuracy, available formats (e.g. accessible, audio-visual), what is covered in terms of timetables, fares, tickets etc;
  - Fare and ticketing – sometimes including caps on price rises and providing offers to specific groups of users;
  - Reliability, punctuality and contingency measures for issues with services and breakdowns, such as a replacement or last bus guarantee;
  - Vehicle, stop and interchange standards – including topics such as facilities, mobility and access, and cleaning;
  - Staff and Driver standards – training, appearance and support available for customers, e.g. boarding assistance;
- Conditions of carriage / policies around
  - Passenger conduct;
  - Health, environment, e.g. smoking, alcohol and drugs
  - Bicycle carriage, luggage, carriage of dogs and other animals;
  - Photography and CCTV.
- Complaints, refunds, mediation and appeals channels and procedures;
- Customer support and feedback contact details and commitments, e.g. response times; and
- Lost property contacts and procedures information;
- Performance targets and a commitment to review/publish these; and
- A user guide for travel in the region.

5.13.4 The items above are typical, but any commitment that is of importance to customers can be included within the Customer Charter. Typically, these documents identify specific offers to users with additional needs, such as disabled users.

5.13.5 It is noted that the Glasgow Bus Alliance has a Pledge and related manifesto setting out ambitions for some of these topic areas and other quality and network improvements. SPT and individual operators also have their own charters, although some of these are focused around complaints services or conditions of carriage only.

5.13.6 The challenges around setting out and delivering a Customer Charter include:

- Agreement amongst partners signed up to the Customer Charter, on what commitments can be included – this is a particular issue where there is large variation between partners in elements of quality of service, or in the ability to commit resources to delivering commitments;
- Putting the standards in place which uphold the commitments set out in the Customer Charter, and complying with these. Commitments need to be achievable but ambitious in order to deliver benefit to customers while also building trust;
- Where commitments go above and beyond a universal (minimum) standard for some elements of service (e.g. core corridors), these need to be articulated in a clear way that leaves no room for interpretation and does not raise expectations of customers across the whole network in error. Often it is wise to avoid offering different levels of service within the Customer Charter altogether; and
- Monitoring, evaluation and enforcement of quality standards underpinning the Customer Charter commitments and embedding accountability of partners into this process.

SRBS Policy for Customer Charter

The following policy has been developed under the **Improve Service Quality** core policy area for **Customer Charter**:

- Develop a region-wide Customer Charter, outlining the quality that can be expected by users of the bus network.

Measures to Deliver the Policy

5.13.7 The following measures have the potential to help deliver the policy, and will inform the options to be appraised:

- A region wide customer charter presenting a consistent offer to users[20].

[20] Most major operators will have their own Customer Charters, with different contents and offers to users.

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6. SUMMARY OF POLICIES AND MEASURES

6.1.1 The policies under Level of Service, Affordability and Quality are set out in Table 8, 0, and 0 below.

Table 8. Summary of Level of Service Policies

POLICIES	MEASURES
Level of Service	
• Improve the coverage and periods of operation of the bus network, helping to ensure that people have access to bus services when and where they are needed, supporting socially and economically important trips, and reducing the reliance on private modes of transport, such as car. • Improve the frequency of bus services, in order to improve the attractiveness of services, support better integration of services and modes, and enhance the resilience of the bus network. • Improve the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the bus network, delivering an attractive bus network that creates a virtuous cycle of growth and improvement for sustainable travel.	• *Service Category Principles* related to frequency, capacity and periods of operation. • *Level of Connectivity Principles* related to coverage of the network and frequencies between settlements and destinations.

Table 9. Summary of Affordability Policies

POLICIES	MEASURES
Affordability	
• Improve the affordability of fares, especially for those that need it the most. • Improve the competitiveness of bus fares with those of other modes and parking charges. • Ensure that fares are easy to understand, provide flexibility, and help to ensure users can access the best value fare for their journey.	• Targeted zero or lower fares, e.g. to specific groups of the population and/or areas, and for organisations such as major employers; • Lower fares for all; • A simplified fare structure, such as zone expansion / flat fares / reduced single operator products; • Best-value auto-capping options, e.g. day, week for contactless payments, across the region and operators; • Multi-operator, multi-mode, multi-area fares options, which don't penalise users on price for flexibility; • Ensure that ticket prices are more competitive with other modes and parking charges in urban centres, e.g. discounts/fare caps at P&R and mobility hubs; • Consider limiting price rises across a time period (e.g. once a year) and to a control metric (operating costs/inflation). Cost modelling will provide insight into fare options potential and it may be possible to rationalise / better determine the scale of options that are deliverable. For targeted products modelling can apply fare reductions to a subset of the population, for example based on local demographic data.

Table 10. Summary of Quality Policies

POLICIES	MEASURES
Reliability and Punctuality	
• Improve the performance of bus services in meeting standards related to reliability and punctuality in order to improve the quality of travel in terms of attractiveness, safety, security, and equity of service across the populations and areas served. This will be achieved by enhancing vehicle reliability, vehicle and driver availability, improving the resilience of the bus network, and by prioritising consistent bus journey times alongside other sustainable modes. • Improve the performance and attractiveness of bus journey times and service reliability compared to car journeys in order to achieve mode shift.	• Traffic reduction and the mitigation of congestion impacts on bus services, through bus priority measures, incident response planning/actions, traffic infringement enforcement, and wider modal shift and demand management measures; • Vehicle maintenance standards and maintenance staffing; • Robust and ambitious fleet renewal plans and reducing the average age of the fleet; • Driver recruitment, retention and level of standby drivers; and • Monitoring and mitigation of failures to meet reliability and punctuality targets.
Network Identity	

• Develop a positive, recognisable and trusted bus network identity across the region, delivering consistency across information, ticketing, interchanges and stops, vehicles, and other key network assets.
• Explore opportunities to strengthen this network identity with other sustainable transport modes.
	• Enhance the network identity, including branding and consistency for the following elements;
	  ◦ Information (journey planning, timetabling, website and apps etc);
	  ◦ Ticketing (e.g. enhancing ZoneCard);
	  ◦ Interchanges and stops;
	  ◦ Vehicles;
	  ◦ Other key network assets;
	• Delivery of awareness raising related to wider service quality elements etc, that foster a positive, recognisable and trusted identity.

Ticketing	
• Ensure ticketing is easy to understand and use, provides flexibility, and helps to guarantee that users can access the best ticketing product for their needs.	• Enhance smart and cashless ticketing options; • Simplified product offer from a user perspective; • Multi-operator and multi-mode tickets; • Cross-boundary travel in the SPT area; and

POLICIES	MEASURES
• *To be consistent with the MaaS policy in the RTS:* Develop and facilitate MaaS in the region, building upon existing opportunities including ZoneCard where appropriate. Ensure MaaS platforms are inter-operable, incorporate regional bus services as part of a multi-modal offer, with cross-regional and national MaaS solutions where appropriate.	• Ticketing solutions that offer auto-fares capping; • Increase the availability of off-bus retail outlets. [21]
Interchanges and Bus Stops	
• Enhance the quality and consistency of interchanges and bus stop facilities to increase the attractiveness of travel by bus and ensure that bus services are accessible to all. • Explore new and improved locations for interchange and mobility hubs alongside bus stop rationalisation, to enhance interchange options while ensuring the delivery of a bus network that is efficient, and easy to understand and use.	• Develop and implement a design hierarchy methodology across the region to enable the targeting of appropriate bus stop facilities and design standards; and • Increase the provision of shelters, seating, shelter and stop lighting, and real time information; • Develop an improved interchange and mobility hub offering, including at new locations and with other modes to enhance network integration. • Explore the rationalisation and siting of bus stops to enhance bus network efficiency and improve the legibility of the bus network. [22]
Information	
• Deliver consistently high-quality, accurate and accessible information to bus users across the region, before during and after travel. • Ensure that all users have access to the information they need to confidently and safely travel on the bus network. • Integrate information across region on the bus network, between operators, and with other modes, to provide users with a one-stop-shop experience.	• Develop consistent quality standards for information across the region, operators, and areas. Work with other modes to determine points where information can be shared in particular to make journey by sustainable modes more attractive and safer. • Consider information alongside the network identity quality measures to provide users with clear understanding of service usage, fares, ticketing and payment options etc.

[21] This can also speed up bus boarding, helping punctuality/journey time consistency.
[22] i.e. remove stop confusion

POLICIES	MEASURES
Changes to Services	
• Improve the stability of the bus network by establishing minimum standards and protocols relating to scale, communication and frequency for any changes to bus services , to reduce impact on users, and to ensure users and key stakeholders are suitably informed.	• Establish set dates for service changes; • Establish protocols for communicating changes to authorities and users, including for planned and emergency roadworks, and other disruptors such as events; and • Set caps on the number and scale of changes to the network throughout the year.
Vehicles and Depots	
• Drive the decarbonisation of the bus fleet, to support ambitions for the region to reduce emissions, improve air quality and minimise climate change impacts. • Develop a consistent minimum standard of engine and age of vehicle to deliver decarbonisation, air quality and reliability benefits across the network. • Ensure the number and capacity of vehicles capacity is managed across the network, to ensure demand can met for both fixed-route and on-demand forms of passenger transport and that there is resilience to deliver services. This includes to deliver an improved level of service for the network. • Ensure consistently high-quality vehicles are operating in the region, to deliver attractive and accessible services for users. • Ensure that vehicles are well maintained, to minimise reliability issues for the delivery of services. • Make best use of existing assets and consider delivery models that facilitate making best use of vehicles across areas such as healthcare, education and community transport. • Ensure the scale, facilities and management of depots support ambitions for the vehicle fleet in the region, including	• Consider the vehicle and depot requirements for a world-class bus network, including quality, accessibly, decarbonisation and emissions aspects; • Set out ambitious targets to deliver this fleet across the region, along with the depot and staffing requirements to support this; • Consider funding and delivery models to deliver on these targets for a high-quality and low-and zero-carbon bus fleet; and • Explore concepts such as total transport, which consider the sharing of vehicles across different purposes for community benefit, e.g. education, health and social care, community transport.

POLICIES	MEASURES
decarbonisation needs, and the effective and efficient provision of bus services across the network.	
Drivers	
○ Improve and standardise driver training regimes and the quality standards of existing drivers to ensure a more positive customer interaction experience. ○ Review policies related to wider driver responsibilities, to ensure the bus service and network as a whole is being suitably represented.	○ Develop measures to encourage high quality training for bus drivers; and ○ Develop measures to encourage driver recruitment and retention.
Safety and Security	
○ To improve the perceptions of personal safety and security related to using buses: ● Ensure that safety by design is promoted at all stages of the development, maintenance or improvement of new and existing bus services, networks and facilities ● Ensure that consultation with equality and welfare groups is made at all stages of the design and operational process and is maintained at regular intervals.	○ Training for bus drivers to deal with issues; ○ Physical safety and security measures, such as CCTV, lighting, enclosed driver booths, emergency contact stations, etc; ○ Information and awareness measures; ○ Measures such as a "Safe Places" scheme, where key interchanges, stops and on-board buses operate as places for those feeling vulnerable and are looking for safe place to get help. [23]
Customer Support and Feedback	
○ Develop a common customer support and feedback process for users across the region, delivering a consistent, accessible and inclusive level of service to bus users.	○ Develop a one-stop-shop for customer support and feedback across the region, from the user perspective; and ○ Consider a region-wide refund dissatisfaction guarantee in the event that bus services do not meet passengers' satisfaction; ○ Commit to actively engaging with users, setting out performance targets and regularly publishing progress towards these to promote accountability.

[23] An example of this is the Sheffield Safe Places scheme, which includes public transport interchanges across the bus network, with proposals to expand to stops and on-board vehicles.

POLICIES	MEASURES
Data and Monitoring	
○ Work with key stakeholders to identify the key areas of benefit related to data, collection, sharing, analysis, and monitoring, in order to improve the performance of the bus network and the quality of the sustainable transport offering to users in the region.	○ Explore data needs and potential benefits related to the bus network, and integration with other modes; ○ Develop ways to collect, share, analyse, and monitor data to the benefit of the bus network and users, including integration with other modes, where relevant. ○ Develop a method for actioning improvements based on this information, including considering the potential for making some metrics around performance public.
Customer Charter	
○ Develop a region-wide Customer Charter, outlining the quality that can be expected by users of the bus network.	○ A region wide customer charter presenting a consistent offer to users

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