

National
BUS
Strategy
for England


Department
for Transport

**Bus
Back
Better**



 **Shropshire**
Council



**PROSPECTUS FOR SHROPSHIRE'S
BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

2021/22

Issued 31st October 2021



NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY
BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN
SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL



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FOREWORD

Members of Parliament



I am delighted to support Shropshire Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan, following the Government's pledge to launch a revolution in bus services with a £3bn fund. This will deliver a better deal for bus users, transforming public transport and providing a more sustainable transport network for everyone in Shropshire.

Bus use has been in decline for many years and this fund offers an opportunity to build a transport system locally which better serves people living in rural areas. This is an ambitious plan and I look forward to seeing it result in higher quality services across the network.

THE RT HON. OWEN PATERSON
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR NORTH SHROPSHIRE

National Bus Strategy funding would truly transform public transport in Shropshire and provide a more sustainable transport network for all residents.

Travelling sustainably shouldn't just be reserved for town centres, and this funding gives an opportunity for our rural residents.

MR DANIEL KAWCZYNSKI
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR SHREWSBURY & ATCHAM



I am pleased to support Shropshire Council's submission for funding through the new National Bus Strategy. My constituents will benefit from bus services which connect the county's rural and urban areas, strengthening communities and sustaining town centres.

As well as offering environmental benefits, providing more frequent, affordable and reliable bus services will boost the local economy and tackle social isolation by enabling those without cars to travel more easily to work, to the shops, or to visit family and friends.

THE RT HON. MARK PRITCHARD
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR THE WREKIN



This is an ambitious but deliverable plan for public transport in Shropshire, which takes into account the unique challenges facing rural areas in the south of the county.

I am especially pleased this makes use of hybrid and electric buses, with regular routes and sensible connections for major travel hubs.

This will be of real benefit to my constituents, so I encourage the government to back this plan with appropriate funding.

THE RT HON. PHILIP DUNNE
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR
LUDLOW, BRIDGNORTH & SOUTH SHROPSHIRE



FOREWORD

Shropshire Council

By its very nature as a beautiful, predominantly rural county, Shropshire has somewhat suffered when it comes to public transport services.

That is why we are submitting what we believe to be a hugely transformative bid to provide a huge change in our bus services. This impressive and engaging prospectus shows that we want to deliver a service that bus users in Shropshire deserve.

We have asked our residents what they want and they have told us they want to see better service frequencies on important routes, longer operating hours, the return of Sunday services, more affordable fares and real time information.

But even more importantly, they want modern buses, with green technology to the fore and technology such as Wi-Fi and USB charge points. We believe we can deliver a truly innovative and modern service and invite you to study our case in detail.

LEZLEY PICTON
SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL



As a councillor for a rural area in Shropshire I know only too well of the struggles some residents have with our bus network.

I believe that this bid will truly bring massive benefits to our county – and reduce our carbon footprint in Shropshire – by enabling residents to leave their cars at home because they know they have a reliable county-wide public transport service which can at last reduce rural dependence on motor vehicles.

We asked residents to have their say in a county wide survey and we received over 2,500 responses. Shropshire residents spent an average of 14 minutes telling us their experiences – that is equivalent to more than 25 days' worth of real time experience and knowledge of what improvements they wanted to see.

We want public transport to be a legitimate choice for the public in rural areas and in our larger towns and urban areas and this bid sets out a bold vision for how we can achieve it.

CECILIA MOTLEY
SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR TRANSPORT



We very much welcome the Government's National Bus Strategy and the platform that it provides to ensure that public transport becomes an option for people across our County and especially those in rural areas who can have little access to services at the current time.

We are extremely ambitious and committed to realise the vision of the Government's National Bus Strategy here in Shropshire and I do hope that our passion to really bring about positive change comes through in this document, which has been created with the people of Shropshire at the centre of it.

JAMES WILLOCKS
SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL,
PASSENGER TRANSPORT GROUP MANAGER





INTRODUCTION

This prospectus sets out Shropshire Council's proposed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) programme of bus investment, delivered through ourselves and our local bus operators and community transport consortium. This programme is designed to meet the ambitions we collectively see as significant progress for Shropshire's future in public transport, providing a greener, more active, fairer and economically successful network. Ultimately encouraging new users to utilise the service, whilst ensuring rural residents and visitors have access to services normally reserved only for those living in a more urban setting.

With Government support we can transform public transport in a largely rural county. In comparison to our urban counterpart the Shropshire bus network is considerably under resourced and offering a much reduced service. We strongly believe our BSIP will address this imbalance.

The benefits from BSIP investment in Shropshire will provide a unique opportunity for us to stabilise the current network, level it up to a standard reflective of the requirements of a rural area and ultimately building back a network that truly achieves modal shift and acts as a first choice of travel for rural residents.

Our focus is to ensure rural residents receive similar investment to those living in urban areas with lower and simpler fares, faster movement between our harder to reach towns and network enhancements encouraging new patronage and modernisation of the fleet.

Our public transport engagement survey has provided us with the principles and priorities that the public need to see in our public transport system and are at the heart of our BSIP submission.

A strengthened network will be able to support new ambitions and new innovations not previously achievable. This will allow Shropshire's public transport network to compete on a national level in providing service excellence for its passengers.



Shropshire
Council



ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP

Shropshire Local Bus Operators

This BSIP has been developed in collaboration with local bus operators, local community transport groups and other stakeholders including Bus Users Shropshire.

The ambitions set out reflect the struggles local operators face to deliver a progressive public transport network within a rural authority and how moderate change can provide a greater impact to a county that has a smaller scale network than more urban neighbours.

The partnership has met monthly and individually with Shropshire Council over the past 6 months to discuss collaboratively and openly regarding the future of bus travel in Shropshire.

The following operators have contributed to this plan;



MEMBERS OF THE SHROPSHIRE COMMUNITY TRANSPORT CONSORTIUM

ALBRIGHTON FLYER

BISHOP'S CASTLE & DISTRICT DIAL-A-RIDE

BRIDGNORTH COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

NORTH SALOP WHEELERS

OSWESTRY COMMUNITY ACTION (QUBE)

SHREWSBURY DIAL-A-RIDE

THE FRIENDLY BUS SERVICE

THE STRETTON MAYFAIR TRUST

SHROPSHIRE; THE RURAL CHALLENGE



Shropshire is the second largest inland County in England, bordering Wales, with a population of 330,000 across a landmass of 1250 square miles.

Shropshire's bus network has an indisputable, but often undervalued, role in our transport system, providing an essential access to employment, education, leisure, health and other key facilities. As you can see from figure 4 on page 9, a substantial number of residents in rural areas do not have access to a car and those that do have access to a car do not have a suitable public transport network as an alternative.

As we recover from the pandemic, public transport will play a key role in supporting access to jobs, promoting inclusive economic growth and helping to achieve national goals and strategies.

Unfortunately, our public transport network, including bus services and their passengers, currently face numerous external challenges (i.e. cost of travel and availability of services) that we must tackle if we wish to increase patronage and provide support for the long term sustainability of services.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has also exacerbated many issues and caused uncertainty on how our transport system will recover.

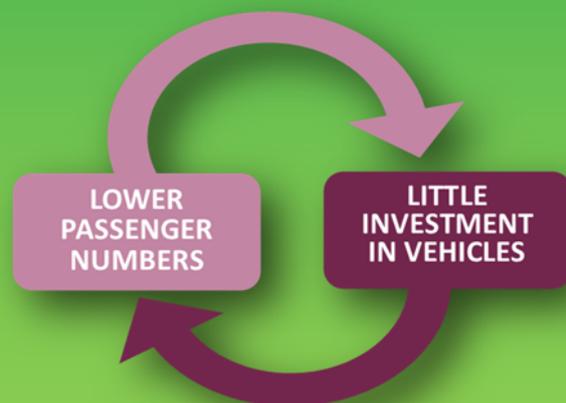
Many rural local authorities have understandably reduced their funding for public transport over the last few years, in Shropshire we have largely maintained our existing public transport funding commitments, but with the decline in passenger numbers there has been little scope for investment in the network through the Council or indeed the bus operators themselves.

Almost 70% of "Socially Necessary Services" within Shropshire are subsidised by the Local Authority, which is very different to the National average outside of London, which the department has calculated at 13% (Bus Back Better – March 2021), which is perhaps more attributable to the more densely populated urban areas outside of London, which have significant commercially operated public transport networks.

In more urban communities people rely on high quality transport provision, in rural areas, transport is key to helping maintain access to vital amenities and services, but with increasingly limited budgets to ensure our transport systems serves even those in the most remote areas. It is often rural communities that are disproportionately more likely to experience transport isolation and in particular access to essential services.

The same can be attributed to those people looking to gain access to employment, with the barriers to employment are compounded by whether or not there is suitable public transport at the necessary times, as well as the cost of travel. With poor public transport meaning that many rural households rely on private vehicles to access services.

The bus strategy provides us with the potential to attract that transformational investment that can revitalise transport in rural areas and shift people's travel behaviours to more sustainable modes, without this investment we fear a much greater decline in rural services and passenger numbers and will have missed an opportunity to bring about positive change.



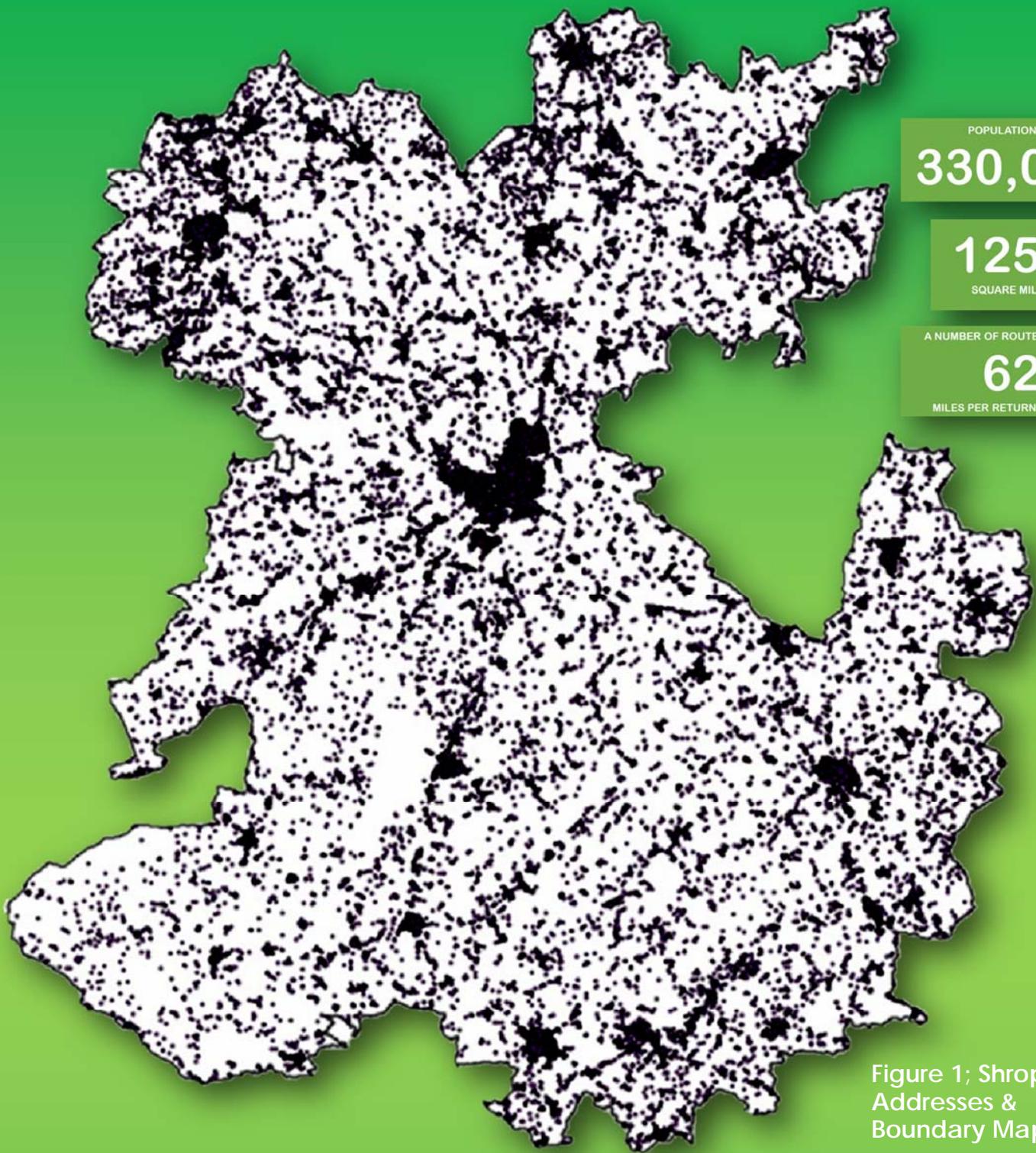


Figure 1; Shropshire
Addresses &
Boundary Map



Population

Current population estimates indicate 329,830 as the current total for 2021. Data suggests that over the next 20 years this will increase by 14.5% until 2041. The majority of the increase will occur in the 65+ age bracket. Currently over 65's make up 83,429 with that increasing by 50.2% in 2041 to 125.309 people. As the map shows a higher density of the population live in more urban areas with significant areas across the county sparsely occupied. Shropshire is dotted with a significant amount of rural and agricultural communities between the urban hubs. New developments have risen significantly over recent years in towns such as Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Ludlow and Market Drayton. With interest in development in rural areas also being considered and applied for.

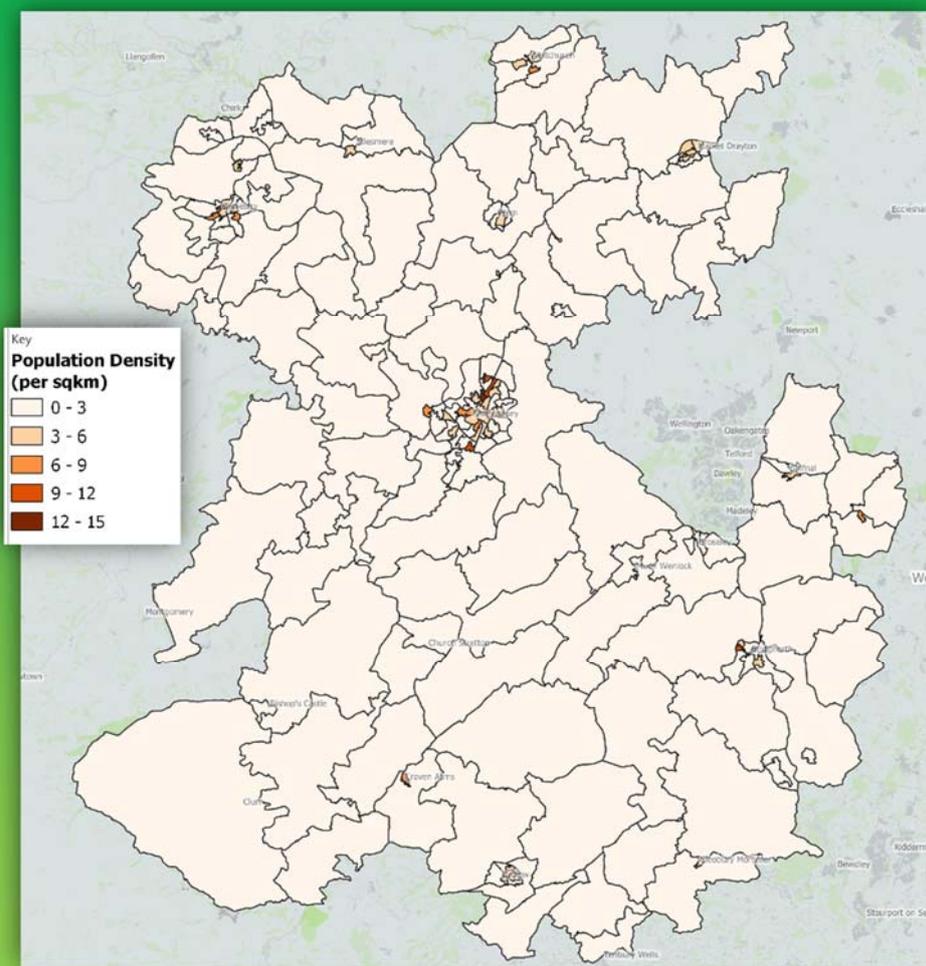


Figure 2; Population Density (2019) (per square kilometre)

TRANSPORT CHALLENGE

With only limited centres of population density this highlights why we have the limited commercial bus network.

Employment

Shropshire is home to a number of big employers, with Shrewsbury centring around local government and industrial labouring. Significant employment can also be found in the North West and North East for more agricultural industrial labouring such as creameries and animal feed factories. The majority of residents will need to find ways to access employment at these sites, with a large proportion currently using their own transport to access. Outside of Shropshire is the Telford & Wrekin local authority which currently occupies a significant amount of local employment.

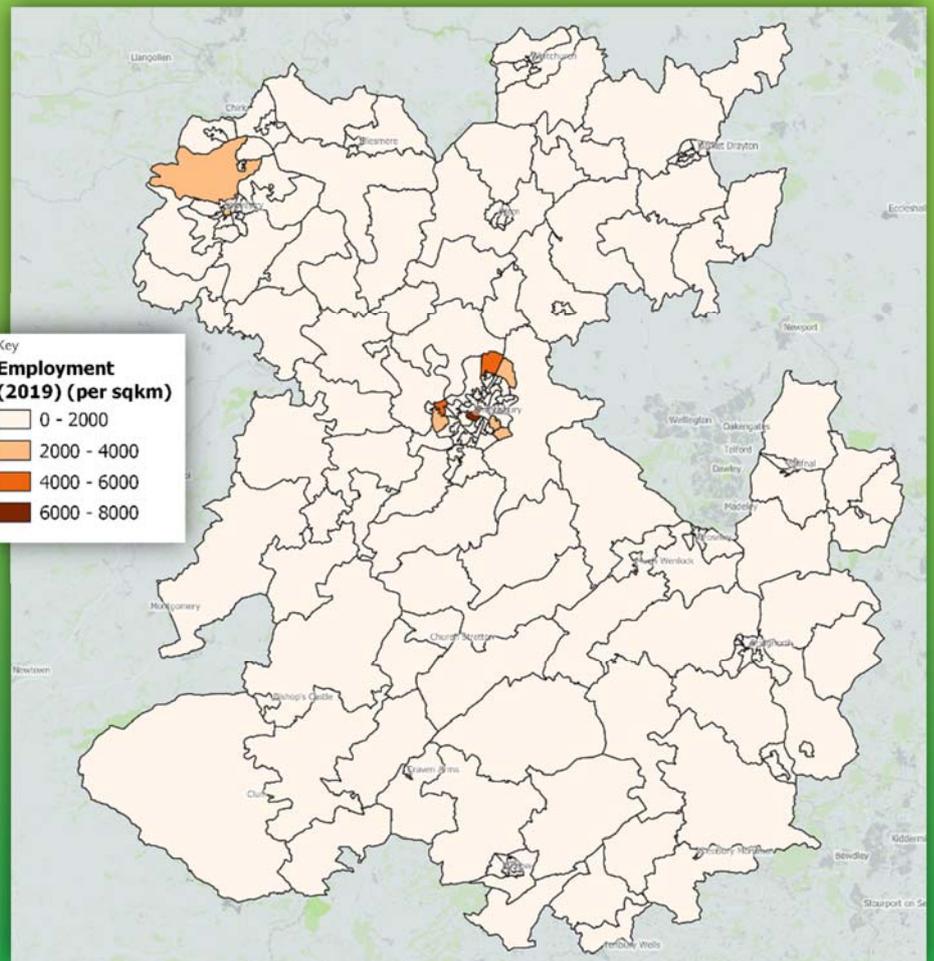


Figure 3; Employment (2019) (per square kilometre)

TRANSPORT CHALLENGE

The current bus network does not support movement countywide to centres of employment. Home working will now have made this challenge greater, centres of employment are spread around the county.

Households without a car

In more rural areas across the county it is currently imperative that residents have access to their own vehicle. Public transport is slim to non-existent. The majority of non-car ownership is in the more urban areas to which larger employers are located. The majority of Shropshire residents living rurally will have to factor in car ownership to continue to access local amenities. Healthcare is located centrally in urban environments such as Royal Shrewsbury Hospital located to the west of Shrewsbury and the Orthopaedic Hospital in the North West in Gobowen. Access to these sites is only really possible for many residents with use of their own vehicle.

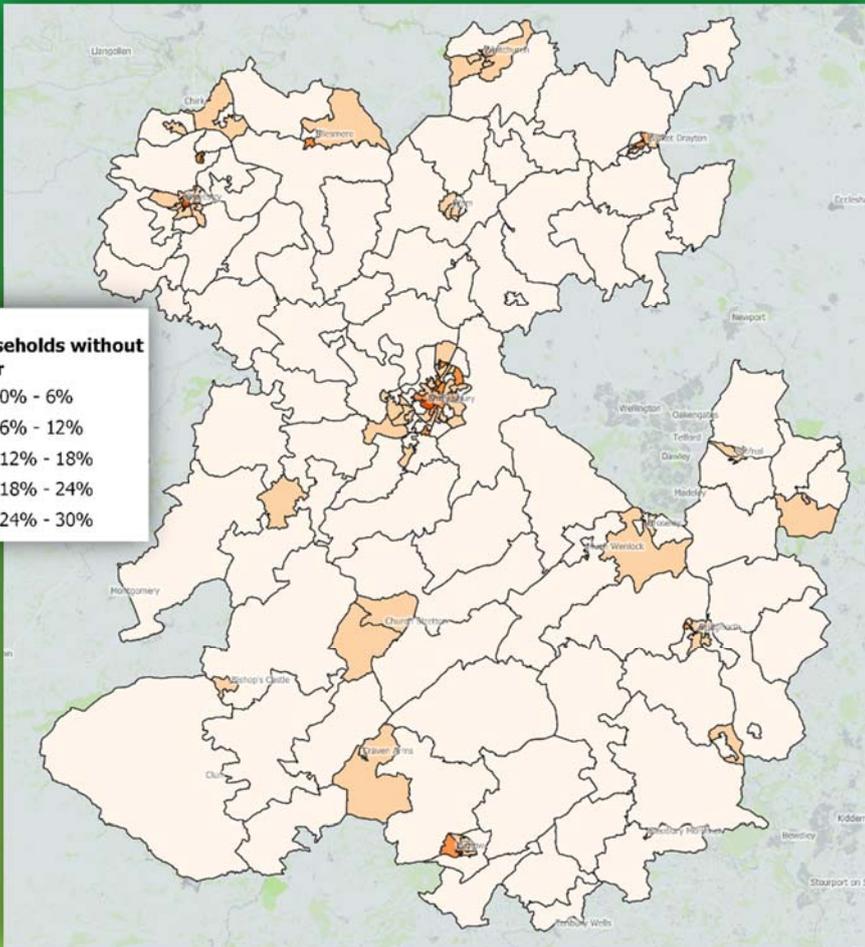
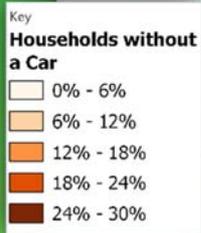


Figure 4; Households Without a Car (%)

TRANSPORT CHALLENGE

Whilst this map highlights those areas without a car, considering this through a different lens it highlights how many households in Shropshire rely on a car for travel.

Bus Stops

As indicated by the heatmap, the majority of stops currently registered are located in more Urban areas. These are maintained by the local town councils and updated as and when service changes occur. There are a significant amount of rural stops, however as services have declined over the years these are either served intermittently or not at all.. Maintenance sits with Shropshire Council for bus stops and shelters are owned and maintained by the individual Parish Councils. There are 6000 registered stops in Shropshire, however, a full scale audit of these is now well over due. The majority of stops in the county are left needing either a full replacement or review as to whether they are still required.

TRANSPORT CHALLENGE

6000 bus stops represent a near impossible challenge to keep manually updated. Digital solutions will be key to delivering accurate passenger information.

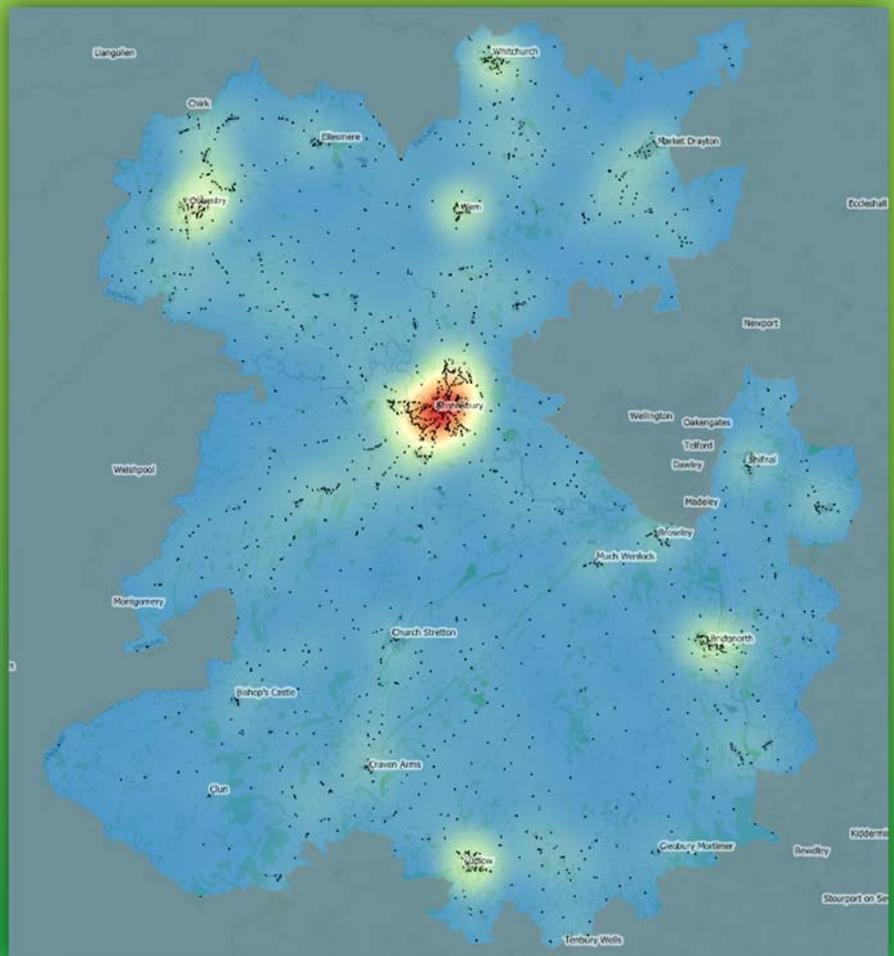


Figure 5; Heatmap of Bus Stops in Shropshire

OUR CURRENT BUS OFFER



Local Bus Services are vital to our community, connecting rural areas to urban centres and enabling residents access to health services, shopping, leisure and the ability to commute to and from work.

Shropshire's public transport network has historically operated unaltered for a large number of years with little investment to market services and increase patronage. This has resulted in the majority of these services being heavily subsidised by the Council (68%) with poor coverage especially in the more rural areas of the county. Where services do operate in these rural areas, the timetabling of these services tends to be infrequent and doesn't tend to meet the needs of the passenger who are looking for a fast, efficient, punctual and frequent service but are generally left with a service which in some cases can be slow, less punctual, and infrequent with long gaps (between 1 & 2 hours) for each bus.

The major dominant bus operator is Arriva with only 2 smaller independent bus companies currently located within the county and the remaining operators located in neighbouring Authorities. The vehicle fleets are generally old and fares can be extraordinarily high which discourages residents and visitors using public transport, which doesn't help to ensure we reduce our carbon footprint and address the climate change agenda.

As a rural county it is not financially viable for many commercial operators to provide certain routes commercially. As a local authority we subsidise these 'socially necessary' routes for residents that would otherwise be stranded.

The Council currently spends over £3million per year on the reimbursement of concessionary travel, which is a national statutory scheme. However our ambition is to create a network that accepts fare payers rather than concessionary pass payers and an example of this is to target the younger generation of traveller who we see as the present and future bus passengers to ensure these services remain sustainable and eventually go commercial thereby reducing the subsidy for the tax payer.



PRE-COVID 19
PANDEMIC

TOTAL PASSENGER
TRIPS FOR
2019/20

1,255,827



DURING COVID 19
PANDEMIC

TOTAL PASSENGER
TRIPS FOR
2020/21

366,537



45

**SUBSIDISED
SERVICES**

22



**COMMERCIAL
SERVICES**

68% of bus services are subsidised in Shropshire

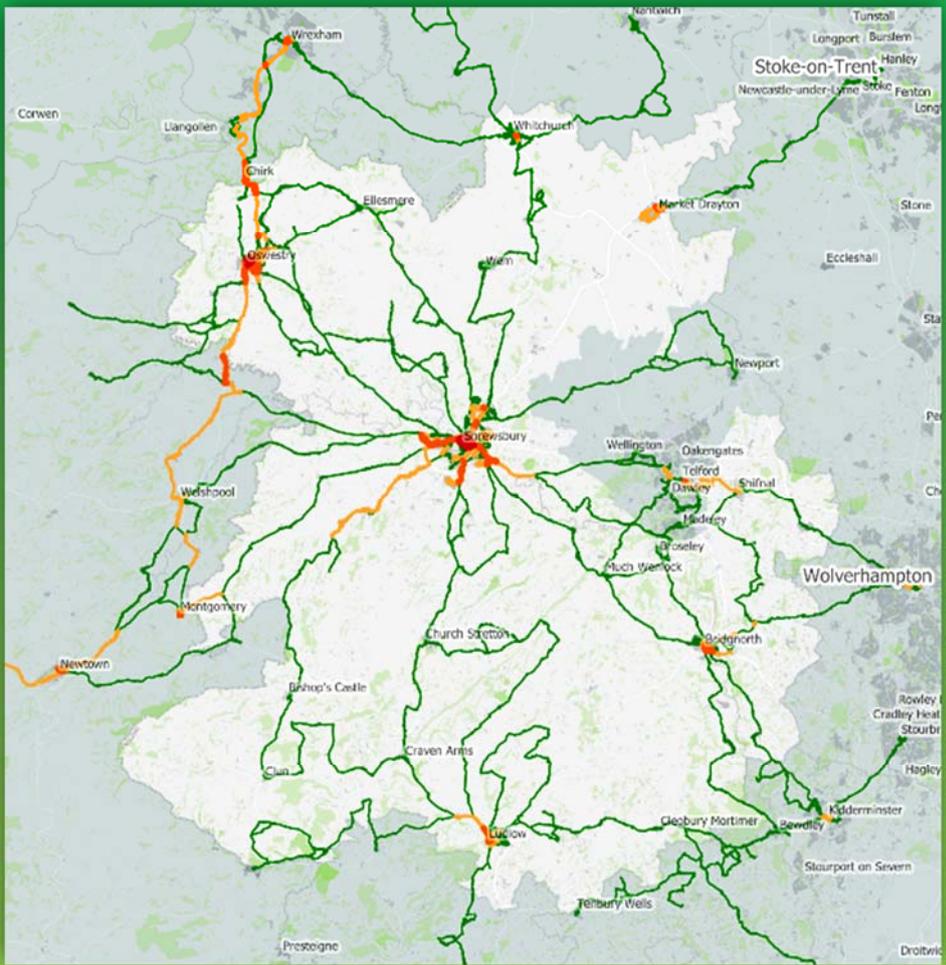
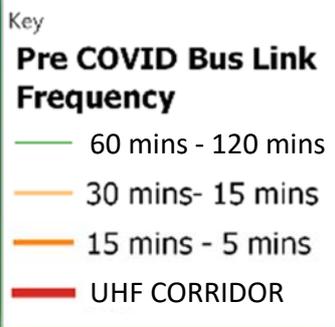


Figure 6; Pre-COVID Bus Link Frequencies
 This highlights that the vast majority of rural Shropshire routes are between a frequency of 60-120 minutes (if there is one).

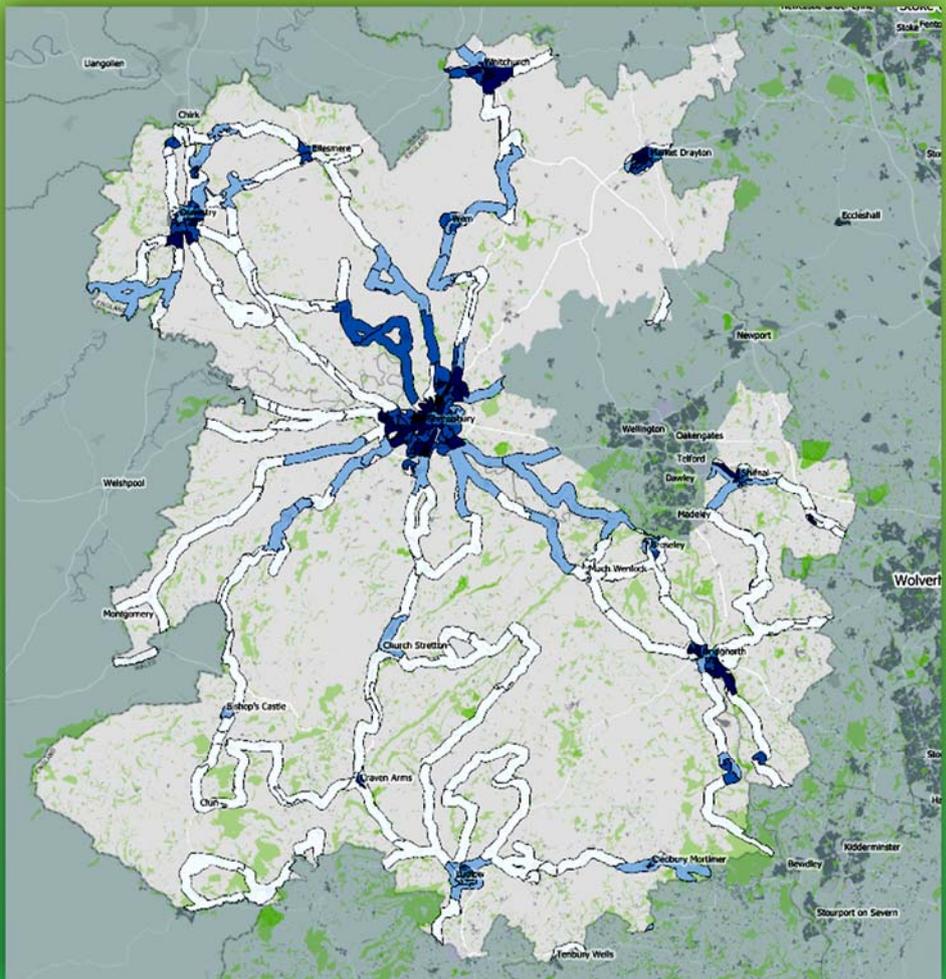


Figure 7; Population within 400m of Bus Routes



EXPLORING SHROPSHIRE

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

RESULTS OF OUR SHROPSHIRE BUS SURVEY 2021



Integral to our BSIP was to gain an understanding of what the people of Shropshire felt about the current Public Transport network, what improvements they wanted to see and the priority order in which they wanted to see these improvements delivered, whether they be current passengers or prospective passengers.

We were absolutely thrilled to have achieved 2555 responses and the time commitment this represented, bearing in mind the average completion time for the survey was over 14 minutes.

We have summarised below all of the main points and we do hope that this provides not only a helpful insight into the challenges and ambitions for rural transport, but also why the results of this consultation is at the very heart of our BSIP principles.

2555

RESPONSES

14:16

MINUTES ON AVERAGE TO COMPLETE

What is your current age range?

| | |
|-----|----------|
| 46 | Under 18 |
| 106 | 18 – 24 |
| 208 | 25 – 34 |
| 329 | 35 – 44 |
| 454 | 45 – 54 |
| 520 | 55 – 64 |
| 633 | 65 – 74 |
| 194 | 75 – 84 |
| 19 | 85+ |

Which of the following best describes you?

| | |
|-----|--|
| 788 | Employed full-time (30 or more hours per week) |
| 341 | Employed part-time (less than 30 hours per week) |
| 178 | Self-employed |
| 119 | Currently not in employment |
| 934 | Retired |
| 84 | Full-time education (school / college / university) |
| 66 | Prefer not to say |

Do you have a concessionary bus pass entitling you to free travel?

| | |
|------|-----|
| 738 | Yes |
| 1771 | No |



What is your current postcode?

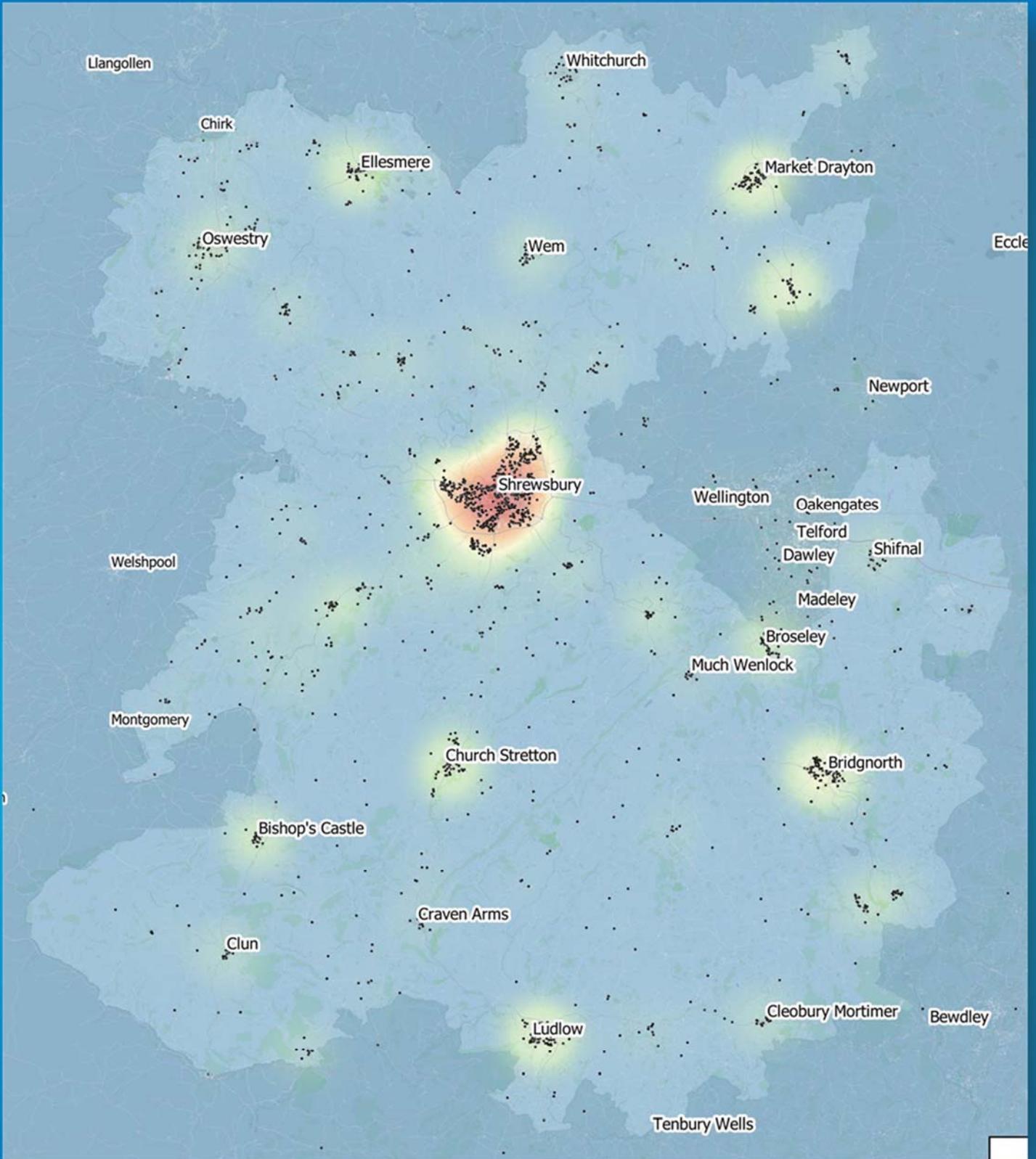
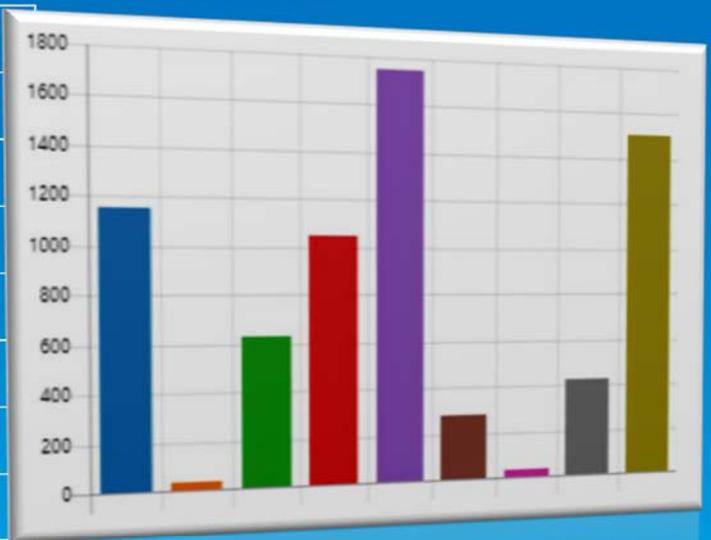


Figure 8; Heat map shows where significant responses have been received. Each black dot represents an address of a respondent to this survey.

Which modes of transport do you use regularly?

| | | |
|--|------|----------------------|
| | 1150 | Bus |
| | 34 | Community Transport |
| | 629 | Train |
| | 1048 | Car (as a passenger) |
| | 1749 | Car (as a driver) |
| | 276 | Taxi |
| | 35 | Motorbike/moped |
| | 426 | Bicycle |
| | 1509 | Walk |



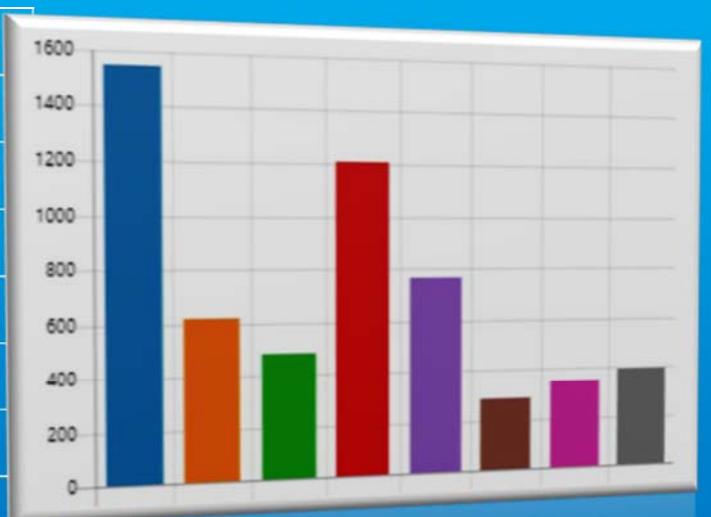
Do you have access to a car, van or motorcycle?

| | | |
|--|------|-----------|
| | 1654 | Always |
| | 482 | Sometimes |
| | 373 | Never |



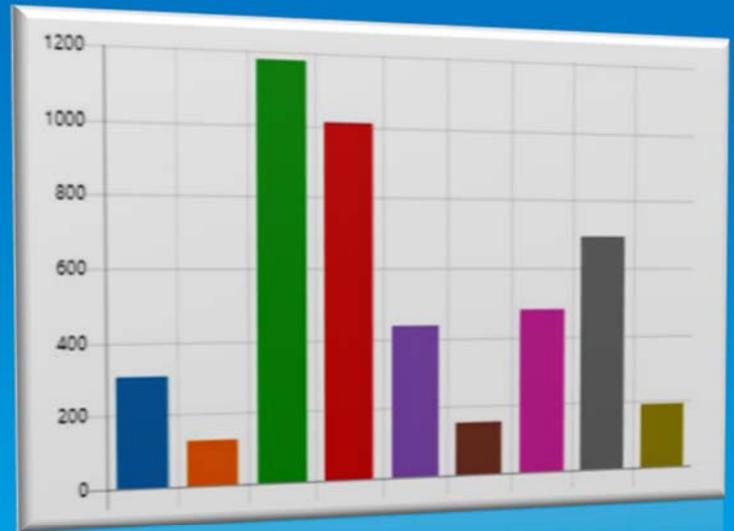
If you currently prefer to access a car, van or motorcycle rather than bus services, what are the main reasons for your choice?

| | | |
|--|------|-------------------------|
| | 1550 | Convenience |
| | 616 | Cheaper than bus |
| | 481 | Comfort |
| | 1209 | I choose when to travel |
| | 765 | Faster journeys |
| | 286 | Parking/fuel cheaper |
| | 352 | Not applicable |
| | 396 | Other |



Before the COVID-19 pandemic, what were your usual / most frequent reason(s) for travelling by bus in Shropshire?

| | | |
|--|------|----------------------|
| | 304 | Commuting |
| | 126 | Employment reasons |
| | 1179 | Shopping |
| | 1008 | Social |
| | 438 | Exercise or leisure |
| | 152 | Education |
| | 482 | Medical appointment |
| | 694 | Didn't use local bus |
| | 189 | Other |



Before the COVID-19 pandemic, how often, if at all, did you use a bus service in Shropshire?

| | | |
|--|-----|------------------------|
| | 173 | 5 or more days a week |
| | 413 | 2 - 4 days a week |
| | 407 | Once a week |
| | 351 | Once a month |
| | 520 | Less than once a month |
| | 645 | Never |



Following the COVID-19 pandemic, how do you expect your use of bus services will change?

| | | |
|--|------|---|
| | 1109 | To remain about the same as before |
| | 229 | To use the bus for fewer journeys than before |
| | 415 | To use the bus for more journeys than before |
| | 290 | I did not use before and do not anticipate using it in the future |
| | 467 | Undecided or unsure |



How would you rate the current provision of bus services in Shropshire?

| | | |
|--|------|-----------|
| | 1435 | POOR |
| | 785 | FAIR |
| | 264 | GOOD |
| | 56 | VERY GOOD |
| | 15 | EXCELLENT |



If you were to use a local bus service in Shropshire, how would you prefer to pay?

| | | |
|--|------|--------------------|
| | 258 | CASH |
| | 1481 | CARD (CONTACTLESS) |
| | 65 | PREPAID TICKETS |
| | 671 | CONCESSIONARY PASS |
| | 80 | OTHER |

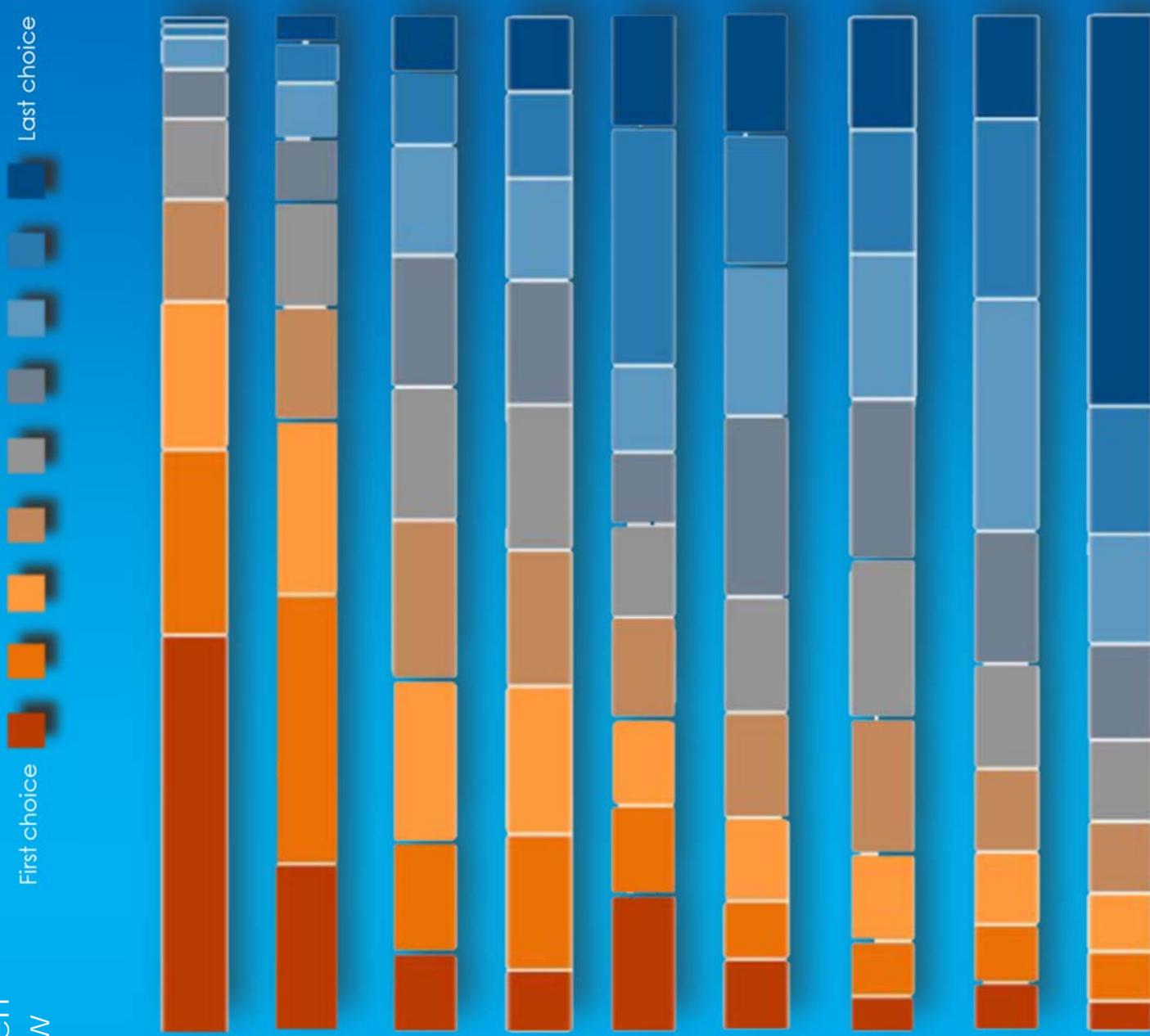


What are the main concerns regarding bus services in Shropshire?

| | | |
|--|------|---------------------------------------|
| | 918 | Fare Prices (too expensive) |
| | 1184 | No bus service available |
| | 1733 | Bus doesn't run at suitable times |
| | 389 | Journey takes too long |
| | 656 | Information not easily available |
| | 1367 | Buses not frequent enough |
| | 138 | Congestion |
| | 518 | Bus not reliable |
| | 271 | Bus stop too far from home |
| | 71 | Image of bus travel |
| | 314 | Anxiety relating to Covid-19 pandemic |
| | 231 | Other |



The following statements have been put in to order of priority, the below shows the overall outcome;



Rate the current availability of bus timetables / information across Shropshire

2555

RESPONSES RECEIVED



2.44
Average Rating

How would you rate the current condition of bus stops and shelters around Shropshire?

2304

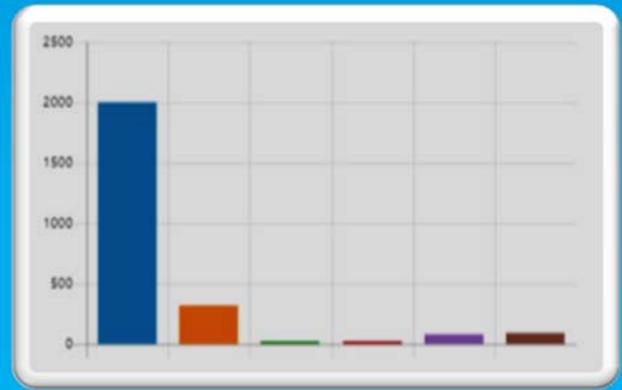
RESPONSES RECEIVED



2.24
Average Rating

If you were trying to find out information regarding bus services, where would you prefer to go?

| | |
|------|----------------------|
| 2003 | ONLINE |
| 323 | AT THE BUS STOP |
| 27 | CALLING THE OPERATOR |
| 28 | CALLING TRAVELINE |
| 79 | DON'T KNOW |
| 95 | OTHER |



How would you rate the quality of Bus Stations in Shropshire?

1661

RESPONSES RECEIVED



2.14
Average Rating

Rate the current frequency of bus services in Shropshire

2555

RESPONSES RECEIVED



2.22
Average Rating

Rate the reliability of bus services in Shropshire

2555

RESPONSES RECEIVED



2.71
Average Rating

Rate the current cost of fares on bus services across Shropshire

2555



2.35
Average Rating

RESPONSES RECEIVED

Rate the time bus services finish at night in Shropshire

2555



1.70
Average Rating

RESPONSES RECEIVED

How would you rate the current **SHREWSBURY PARK & RIDE?**

1197



3.11
Average Rating

RESPONSES RECEIVED

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Doesn't run regularly enough | Good service but has to compete with town traffic | No knowledge of it | Too long queuing to get on in peak times and no Sunday service when people are off work to eat out and drink and enjoy the town |
| Often see buses arrive in town nearly empty, not sure why they can't pick up other passengers on the way? | No quicker now the town is always snarled up with traffic | Actually useful but takes far too long to get into town still | Unreliability at peak times and lack of stop in Smithfield Road |
| | Finish too early in the evening | Its average. Could be better | |

How would you rate the current **LUDLOW PARK & RIDE?**

248



2.03
Average Rating

RESPONSES RECEIVED

| | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| Buses are on time, much cheaper and easier than parking in town | Frequency is inadequate needs to be 15 mins max | Tried to use it, couldn't find it | Bus service isn't direct. Last bus from town is 5.30pm, so no good for most workers. Infrequent buses. |
| The Ludlow park and ride sites needs to be turned in to a bus station. At present it is a neglected eyesore and a mess | Should run on Sundays and Bank Holidays in the summer months | Not frequent enough | Infrequent and unsafe |
| | Two buses following nose to tail, when they turn up | Journey time long and low frequency | |

The 2555 respondents were asked to put the following statements in order of priority to them. The list below is the final average overall.

To what extent, if at all, would the following statements improve bus services in Shropshire for you?



Single website for information about all buses in Shropshire



Sunday services being provided



Bus services near you operating more frequently



Better on-bus information such as 'next stop' displays or announcements



Electronic real time information displays at bus stops



Multi-operator tickets (that can be used on more than one Operator's buses)



Bus services operating later in the evening



Measures giving buses priority over traffic, helping to run faster and more reliably



More affordable fares



Services operated with electric or zero-emission vehicles.

The findings of the public survey concluded the main principles of what members of the public wanted to see to improve public transport in Shropshire. This also correlates to the national principles conducted by the Department for Transport.

Using this as a basis, we have developed our BSIP using the priorities identified by the general public and ambitions of the local authority and its bus operators to create a truly transformative public transport system for the county.



BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Based on the public survey & operator feedback for Shropshire



Recovery

A continuation of the fare support that the DfT has provided throughout the pandemic, ensuring that we have the foundations of a bus network to build upon, to meet the ambitions of the National Bus Strategy;

- Funding from the DfT to continue tapered support for bus services as they recover, and passenger numbers remain depressed
- Should the above fare support be made available, we would also need to maintain concessionary fare payments at pre-covid levels.



Levelling Up

Funding to improve the Public Transport Offer to passengers that reflects the needs of a rural area, this is not an expectation that we simply replicate service levels of metropolitan areas, but a fair reflection of a minimum that bus users in rural areas should expect;

- 30 minute service frequencies on key inter-urban routes
- Improved service frequencies in our towns
- Longer operating hours
- Monday to Sunday bus operations on key services
- More affordable fares
- Bus priority
- Real time passenger information
- Staffing costs to implement and administer the BSIP



Building Back Better

This reflects the ambition and innovation required to truly transform the public transport offer in Shropshire and ensure public transport becomes a legitimate choice of travel in a rural county, realising the positive additional benefits that come with that (the economy of our towns, transport decarbonisation, social and rural isolation, access to health and essential services to name a few).

- Rural Connect (DRT)
- Green Buses
- Additional Services
- Shrewsbury Connect (operational costs)
- Multi operator ticketing
- Passenger information improvements (website, app & branding)
- Greater integration with the Rail Network.
- Passenger Hub Improvements

Whilst funding submission details are still being finalised, the total bid will be in excess of £90 million and reflect the ambition to impact positively other key strategic workstreams, on a local and national level.

The BSIP submission is a live working document and there is the opportunity to revise/refine the elements within the submission as we move through the process.



RECOVERY



RECOVERY FUNDING

The funding that the Department for Transport provided for public transport has ensured that we had bus services once we came through the early days of the pandemic. In rural areas such as Shropshire, people have not returned to public transport in the same numbers as they have in more urban areas.

Our BSIP will set out Shropshire's ambitions to improve customer experience and address key barriers to bus travel. However, there are currently considerable additional pressures on the bus market and due to Covid-19, particularly around maintaining the existing network.

Operators have been supported financially by a package of measures from both the Department for Transport and from the Council, including the continued support through Concessionary payments whereby operators are currently being paid at assumed levels as if Covid had not occurred, rather than on actual patronage.

If, as anticipated by our operators, bus patronage does not recover to pre-Covid levels by April of 2022, we will need financial support to ensure that we retain the foundations of our commercial and supported bus network, to meet the ambitions of the National Bus Strategy.

Within our funding submission we are requesting that tapered fare support remains in place, as we move through the 3 years of our Bus Service Improvement Plan.

- Funding from the DfT to continue tapered support for bus services as they recover, and passenger numbers remain depressed below pre pandemic levels
- Should the above fare support be made available, the LTA would maintain concessionary fare payments at pre-covid levels.



DRIVER RECRUITMENT & OPERATOR RESILIENCE

Whilst we have ambitious plans for Public Transport in Shropshire, we also appreciate from our partners in the Enhanced Partnership that our operators are finding it incredibly difficult to recruit and retain drivers to the industry and whilst the workforce gets older, their succession plans are limited. To help address this we propose to;



- Launch a campaign for Driver Recruitment & training.
- Fully funded training costs (unless the individual leaves the Shropshire EP area within 3 years of completing their training).
- We will work in partnership with our local training PSV providers and operators to source this training.
- A Marketing campaign and strategy will be developed with our enhanced partnership members.



LEVELLING UP



INTRODUCTION

In the Recovery section we talked about ensuring that we kept the foundations of the bus network to build upon. This section describes those principles that will be required (levelling up our services) to reflect what people in Shropshire should expect to see as a minimum level of service.

We don't believe that we should simply be replicating frequencies and services that occur in urban areas, but reflect what we need to do as a minimum to ensure people can use public transport to access the services that they need, including education, employment, health and shopping (to name but a few).

When asking Shropshire residents, stakeholders and visitors for their views, it was clear from our comprehensive survey that an improvement in frequency and the other elements we have included below were crucial in ensuring public transport was a viable option for Shropshire.

Restoring access to services for many disadvantaged rural residents is a key priority.

- 30 minute service frequencies on key inter-urban routes
- Improved service frequencies in our towns
- Longer operating hours
- Monday to Sunday bus operations on key services
- More affordable fares
- Bus priority
- Real time passenger information
- Capacity costs to implement and administer the BSIP

PASSENGER CHARTER

The EP will develop in partnership with stakeholders including Shropshire's bus user group a passenger charter setting out the minimum standards and experience customers should expect when using the Shropshire network.



IMPROVED SERVICE FREQUENCIES IN OUR TOWNS



One of the key priorities from our public engagement was that passengers would like to see an improved frequency on a number of key services. Amongst that was the service frequencies within our towns, currently this is very inconsistent and we would like to use some of the funding from the BSIP to ensure that there is a minimum level of frequency in each of our market towns.

This is more important when you consider that a member of the public may wish to use a town service to then connect with either the rail network or one of our core bus services and poor connection frequencies would only detract people from using multi modal options.

LONGER OPERATING HOURS



Shropshire's public transport bus network operates throughout the day up until early evening when the vast majority of Shropshire bus services cease operation.

This can of course be a significant barrier to people adopting public transport as their chosen method of movement whether that be for work, socially or to access essential services with the passenger having to make arrangements to return on a bus that departs well before the time they want to return, so understandably they will look to other modes of travel for solutions.

We intend to extend the operational hours of our key services to 10pm. We believe this will not only address these challenges but also help promote the night time economy in our towns.

SUNDAY BUS OPERATIONS ON KEY SERVICES



The Shropshire bus network mainly operates 6 days a week with no public buses generally operating on a Sunday.

As with the section above relating to longer operating hours, not having Sunday bus operations can have a similar negative impact on the use of public transport with those passengers who need to travel on a Sunday looking at alternative modes such as the car as a solution and then using it for the rest of the weekly journeys as well.

We are proposing to return to Sunday operations on key services to ensure the public transport becomes a complete solution for travel and of course again this will have a positive impact on the economies of our towns as well as decarbonising the current way that we move.



30 MINUTE FREQUENCY ON KEY INTER-URBAN ROUTES

One of the key priorities identified in our public transport survey was that frequencies of buses was so low that it acted as a barrier to using public transport.

This is particularly pertinent in rural areas where people tend to compare car travel to bus travel and whilst this is always a challenge if service frequencies remain so low it almost detracts from any other enhancements such as new buses that we may introduce. Within our Bus Service Improvement Plan and funding submission we have proposed a 30 minutes frequency on key inter-urban routes.

We and most importantly the passenger believe that this is one of the single most important drivers to making public transport a viable option in rural areas.

MORE AFFORDABLE FARES



A key part of the feedback resulting from the survey was more affordable fares and as part of the work undertaken with bus operators, we've identified that every operator has different fare tables which vary considerably and is not helpful for existing passengers or new bus passengers that we are looking to convince to use the bus.

We feel that taking a more consistent approach to fares would help provide for a more understandable fare structure that becomes a positive to using bus travel rather than a negative as it is at the moment. As you can see below, fare levels themselves are a barrier for many people wishing to use public transport and we aim to address this through our BSIP.



SHROPSHIRE FARES CASE STUDY

West Shrewsbury > Shrewsbury Town Centre Passenger point-of-view 2 Adults & 2 Children

- Two parent family with two children
- First child aged 6 years old
- Second child aged 3 years old
- Lives in West Shrewsbury
- Currently drives
- Looking to go for a day out in Shrewsbury Town Centre for 2 hours.
- Car journey would take 13 minutes each way

PARK & RIDE

- 3-4 MINUTE DRIVE
- 36P RETURN IN FUEL
- £2.00 RETURN FARE PER ADULT
- CHILDREN UNDER 16 TRAVEL FREE

TOTAL COST
£4.36

LOCAL BUS

- 9 MINUTE WALK TO STOP
- 46 MINUTE ROUND TRIP
- £9.00 SHREWSBURY TOWN SERVICE FAMILY TICKET
- CHILDREN UNDER 5 TRAVEL FREE

TOTAL COST
£9.00

West Shrewsbury > Ludlow Town Centre Passenger point-of-view 2 Adults & 2 Children

- Two parent family with two children
- First child aged 6 years old
- Second child aged 3 years old
- Lives in West Shrewsbury
- Currently drives
- Looking to go for a day out in Ludlow Town Centre for 2 hours.
- Car journey would take 48 minutes each way

PARK & RIDE

- 48 MINUTE DRIVE
- £7.98 RETURN IN FUEL
- £5.00 FAMILY TICKET

TOTAL COST
£12.98

LOCAL BUS

- 9 MINUTE WALK TO STOP
- 4 HRS 20 MIN ROUND TRIP
- £9.00 SHREWSBURY TOWN SERVICE FAMILY TICKET
- £10.60 SHREWSBURY TO LUDLOW SERVICE ADULT RETURN
- £7.80 SHREWSBURY TO LUDLOW SERVICE CHILD RETURN
- CHILDREN UNDER 4 TRAVEL FREE

TOTAL COST
£38.00

A consistent approach in respect of daily, weekly, monthly, termly and annual charges will need to be reviewed to ensure these charges are affordable. This will help with social inclusion and provide a greener future.





REAL TIME PASSENGER INFORMATION

With over 6,000 stops within Shropshire, the survey has revealed that improvements need to be made to this area in order to gain passengers confidence in the arrival and journey times of the local bus operations.

Shropshire Council would look to provide 'Real Time' information at the main hubs throughout the county. Railway interchanges with bus will also be an important location for real time information to enable greater connectivity.



BUS PRIORITY

Effective bus priority measures can be an effective tool in ensuring journey punctuality and reducing journey travel times.

Clearly in a rural county such as Shropshire and in its beautiful market towns and villages we need to balance bus priority with the aesthetics of the towns and to not impact negatively on the public realm. Within our BSIP submission we have therefore focussed more on priority signalling than bus lanes with the challenge of limited public realm space when compared to perhaps our urban neighbours.

Bus priority and punctuality was a key concern for our operators and this is an area that will evolve as we move through the various stages of our enhanced partnership.



CAPACITY COSTS TO ADMINISTER THE BSIP

In Shropshire we have a small integrated transport team, dealing with all of the different modes of passenger transport and currently do not have a dedicated public transport resource.

With that in mind, we are grateful that the Department for Transport helped us with funding for the initial Enhanced Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan Processes. We used this funding to appoint a specialist to guide us through the processes to ensure we adhered to the criteria and utilised members of our current transport team.

From the outset we wanted to ensure that our EP & BSIP was not only built for the people of Shropshire, representing their needs and ambitions, but that it was also co-ordinated by our own staff and whilst their dedication and energy has ensured we are where we are today, for the 3 years of the BSIP and beyond we will need more permanent additional resources to realise the full potential of our ambitions.



BUILDING BACK BETTER

This section reflects the ambition and innovation required to truly transform the public transport offer in Shropshire and create the environment to ensure public transport becomes a legitimate choice of travel in a rural county, realising the positive additional benefits that come in hand with that.

- The positive economic impact on our towns
- Transport decarbonisation
- Addressing social and rural isolation
- Improving access to health and essential services

Whilst individual elements within these three sections can have in isolation a positive impact on the use of public transport, to truly create a platform for modal shift, we believe that all of these elements need to be in place, especially in a rural area such as Shropshire where car usage is proportionately much higher than in more urban areas.

We have given a lot of consideration to not simply replicating a network that is sustainable in an urban area (frequencies, numbers and size of buses etc) but to provide a network that is ambitious but also realistic in its nature for a more rural setting.

- Rural Connect (DRT)
- Green Buses
- Additional Services
- Shrewsbury Connect (operational costs)
- Multi operator ticketing
- Passenger information improvements (website, app & branding).
- Greater integration with the Rail Network.
- Passenger Hub Improvements



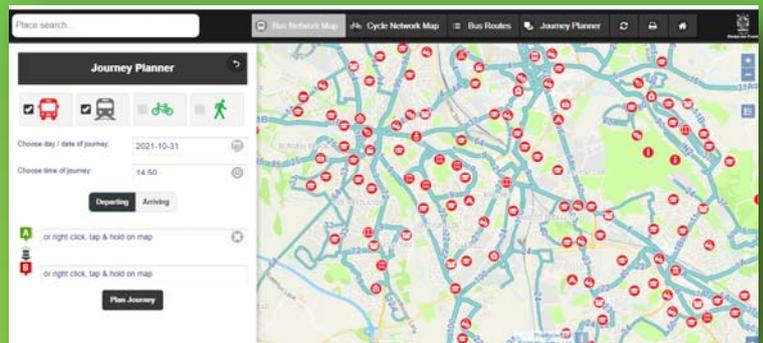
PASSENGER INFORMATION IMPROVEMENTS

A top priority from the public survey was improvements to digital information provided to the public. Currently passengers would need to either contact the operator, check the National Traveline website or locate their nearest bus stop to understand provision within their local area.

Shropshire would look to provide a one-stop-shop passenger information website, fully interactive mapping detailing routes, times and fares for current and potential passengers. As well as journey planning across the Shropshire transport network we would look to include cycle and walking routes to complement the travel experience.

Further to this we feel it would be of great benefit to the public to provide the same information for the Telford & Wrekin authority and would look to include all information relating to public transport for better journey planning to the shared hospital trusts of Royal Shrewsbury Hospital and Princess Royal Hospital in Telford. As well ensuring up to date onwards travel through the rail network is included as well.

Example; City of Stoke-on-Trent www.stokebus.info



HUB, STOP & SHELTER IMPROVEMENTS

High quality, modern, attractive, well designed bus shelter infrastructure is vital in encouraging 'modal shift'. The 'shop window' for the bus service, bus shelters are a key marketing platform from which to 'attract and retain passengers'. The 'customer experience' begins and ends at the bus shelter.

Shropshire on the whole has received very little in the way of investment in relation to stops, shelters and hubs. The majority feel considerably dated and 'worn out'. Investment would be placed on all regularly used stops and shelters, replacing with modern and informative waiting areas. Town centres regularly used as interchanges such as Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Ludlow would receive totem displays informing users of next buses and up to date travel information vital for their daily journey, as well as fully installed RTI displays.

Further to this, all rural stops currently served by inter-urban services would receive pole mounted E-Ink solar powered paperless bus stop displays. These would ensure up-to-date information is provided at all times, reducing the need for printing and updating manually.



GREEN BUSES



Introducing buses using electric battery or hydrogen fuel cell technologies involves significant investment, both in new vehicles and depot fuelling facilities. In a rural area such as Shropshire where passenger numbers have been falling for some time and remain depressed following the pandemic, this investment is less likely to come from the operators through on bus revenues.



We have several independent local operators and larger national organisations and whilst they strive to provide the best buses they can, inevitably we are quite a way down the food chain when it comes to the trickledown effect.

So, in the context of the more expensive Zero Emission Buses we will have to wait even longer with the lease and or purchase costs of ZEB's considerably more than their traditionally fuelled counterparts.

With the rural nature and topography of Shropshire, there is very much the thinking in Shropshire that there will need to be more than one fuel solution, electric for the shorter distance town routes and hybrid or hydrogen for those longer distance journeys.

Through our funding request for buses we can utilise the national bus strategy as a platform to develop services and increase patronage, the business case for buses becomes much clearer, but they will need that initial support and with LTA's help to create that environment for services to prosper, based upon what the prospective and current passenger wants to see.

At this time it means that we don't have a single Zero Emission Bus in our commercial or supported Shropshire network and should we receive funding to provide the "Green" vehicles that we have asked for within the BSIP, it will be completely transformational for our residents and visitors.

SHROPSHIRE TRANSPORT CHALLENGE

Without the funding that we have asked for within the BSIP you can see that it would be very unlikely that we would have Green Buses in Shropshire for many years.

To this date we do not even have a single vehicle.





NETWORK ENHANCEMENTS

One of the priorities that came through very clearly from our consultation and survey that is summarised in the earlier sections of this prospectus, highlighted to us that not only did people wish to see improvements to existing bus services but there were significant gaps in the current bus network provision which are highlighted in the map (Figure 9) of current bus service provision.

People want to see better links to our health facilities, greater integration with rail and bus service operations that are frequent and critically serve more communities. We therefore have a number of proposals to enhance our network, utilising existing resources (current services) to create a bus network that serves more people and giving them access to the communities and services that they desire.

Figure 10 below (South West Shropshire Orbital route) is a proposed amalgamation of three existing commercial and council supported bus services that along with additional funding through the BSIP can provide an orbital network that serves multiple communities but also key bus and rail interchanges. For the more rurally isolated elements in the centre of this orbital route we will provide a demand responsive service that facilitates short and frequent journeys to an interchange/connection hub on the orbital route. There is also within our BSIP proposals to replicate similar orbital routes incorporating existing services as well as additional resources from the BSIP for a number of areas in the county which will provide frequent affordable travel between our major towns and villages.

In Figure 11 this proposed service would facilitate a frequent direct connection between the two main hospital sites incorporating two of the Shrewsbury Park & Ride hubs to enable those people who would normally travel by car from outlying areas to park at those sites. These Park & Rides sites would serve as additional stops on our key rural networks including those out of county passengers who want to transfer to the hospital connect service, who would otherwise have experienced significant journey times to travel to our two main hospital sites and these journeys would probably have been undertaken by car which would then exacerbate the already challenging parking issues at our two main hospitals.



Figure 9; Shropshire Boundary Map with Bus Routes

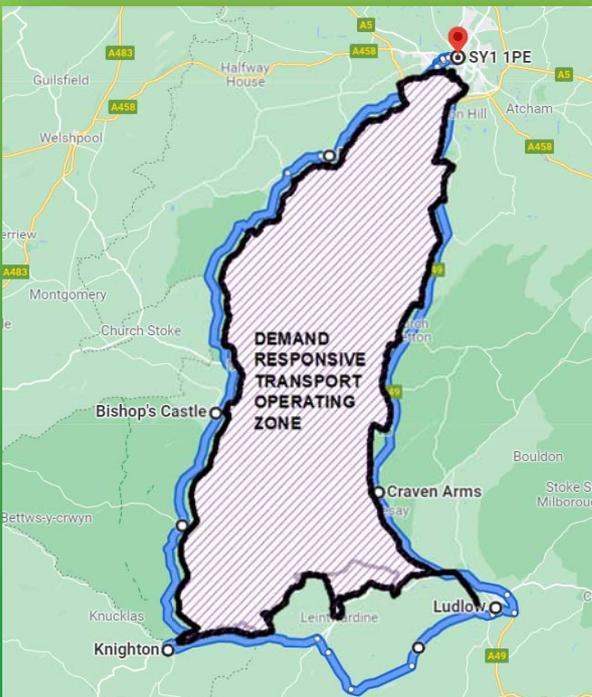


Figure 10; Proposed South West Shropshire Orbital Route

The recent reorganisation of hospital services at these two sites has meant that many Shropshire and Welsh residents have to be able to access either for services they need. Throughout the first 12 months of the pandemic whilst our Park & Ride services were stood down, we provided a shuttle services for hospital staff between the two sites and this service, although now suspended as the Park & Ride services came back online, we know that staff would also welcome the return of this link to enable their movement between the two sites which are some 17 miles apart.

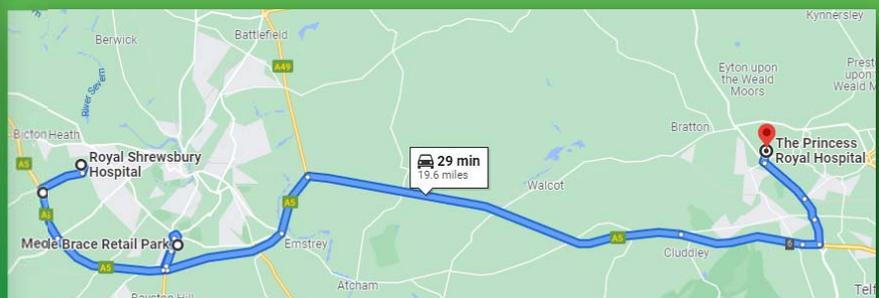


Figure 11; Proposed Hospital Shuttle between Royal Shrewsbury Hospital and Princess Royal Hospital, Telford

MULTI-OPERATOR TICKETING



Multi-operator ticketing is recognised as a means of making bus travel more flexible, convenient and cost-effective; where passengers are able to use the same ticket on services provided by different operators. For Shropshire this might mean buying one ticket to cover a journey that will involve changing from one bus operator’s service to another (where routes do not overlap); but it can also refer to situations where more than one operator runs services on a particular route.

This kind of flexibility doesn't just make bus travel more flexible for those that already rely on bus services: it also makes it a much more appealing option for those who currently prefer other modes of transport.

Where multi-operator ticketing schemes have been introduced in towns and districts around the Country, the number of passenger journeys made has increased and evidence indicates that this isn't just from existing users making more journeys, but also from a wider audience choosing bus travel.

Surveys into other schemes operating in the Country, have also recorded higher levels of passenger satisfaction and increased confidence in the public transport system as a whole.

IS MULTI-TICKETING RIGHT FOR SHROPSHIRE?



Following the feedback from our Shropshire Bus Survey 2021, this was seen as a high priority by respondents.



GREATER INTEGRATION WITH THE RAIL NETWORK

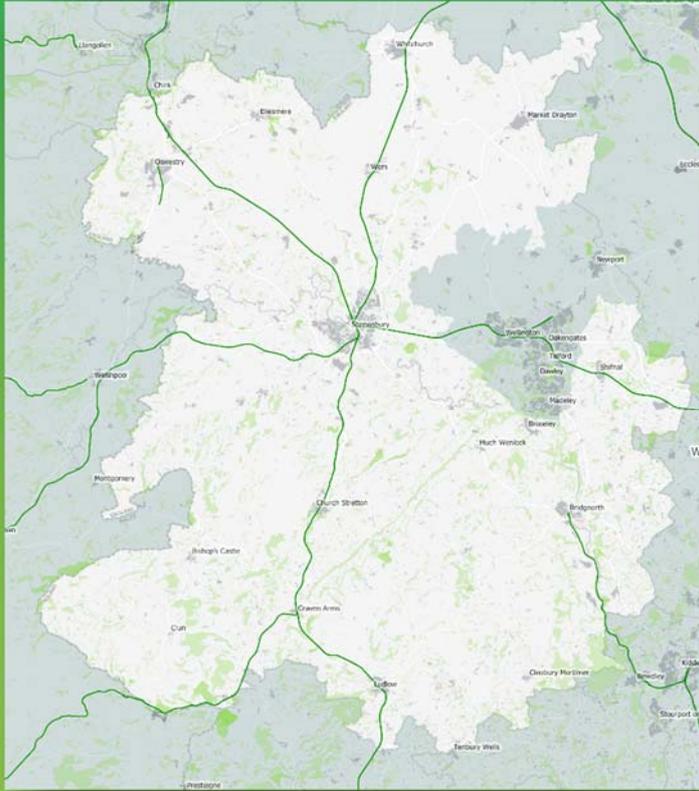


Figure 12; Shropshire Rail Routes

The rail network runs from all four points of the compass in our County, connecting a number of our Market Towns and allowing the transporting of residents on an efficient, fast and environmental mode of transport. However, the ongoing success for the rail network is dependent on its connection to other modes of transport. Passengers need to get to and from the stations and so why not by bus or a DRT solution.

Good interchanges can greatly influence the travel choices people make and our aim is to take advantage of co-located transport networks. By opening up discussions with the rail service providers, we hope to exploit the networks full potential of ensuring door to door journeys are not only possible but are the easy option.

The aim of this integration is simple:

Better integration of bus and rail services, with all rail stations becoming a series of transport hubs for onward travel

Smartphone journey planning giving journey options

Development of contactless multi-modal ticketing across all forms of travel networks

Rail integration can play a huge part on our transport solution within the BSIP.





Shropshire

**RURAL
CONNECT**



Passengers can book the service in advance, up to 24 hours before intended departure.



Nearest stop to their listed Medical Practice arriving at allocated times throughout the day.



Nearest stop on their chosen inter-urban service, arriving in time for their relevant departure.



RURAL CONNECT - DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT

For many residents in Shropshire’s vast rural areas there are no local transport services to get them to work, leisure activities, medical appointments or education. This service strives to change that and provide a crucial link for residents requiring affordable access to essential services.

The Rural Connect service works in sync with existing local bus services providing a demand responsive service from their residential area to a stop on an existing timetabled service.

In deciding areas that would benefit from Rural-Connect we looked at a number of different factors;

POPULATION NUMBERS

AGES, POTENTIAL CONCESSIONS ETC..

INTER-URBAN LOCAL BUS SERVICES

OPERATING CLOSE TO THE AREA

LOCAL SERVICES AVAILABILITY

MEDICAL PRACTICES, HOSPITALS ETC..

POSSIBLE INCLUSION TO A WIDER ‘CONNECT SERVICE’ PROVIDING MORE OPTIONS AND DESTINATIONS

The majority of rural areas in Shropshire have limited services and existing services in their respective areas are in need of modernisation to fit the requirement of express travel for commuting, leisure and shopping.

Residents in these areas have to travel out of area to access medical practices and would need to access local market towns for onward connections for more far afield journeys.

EXAMPLE ONE;

SMALL COMMUNITIES link

Many villages are served by irregular services operating two or three days a week, with very low passenger numbers.

We want to provide a more regular frequency service that will serve the main towns in the area.

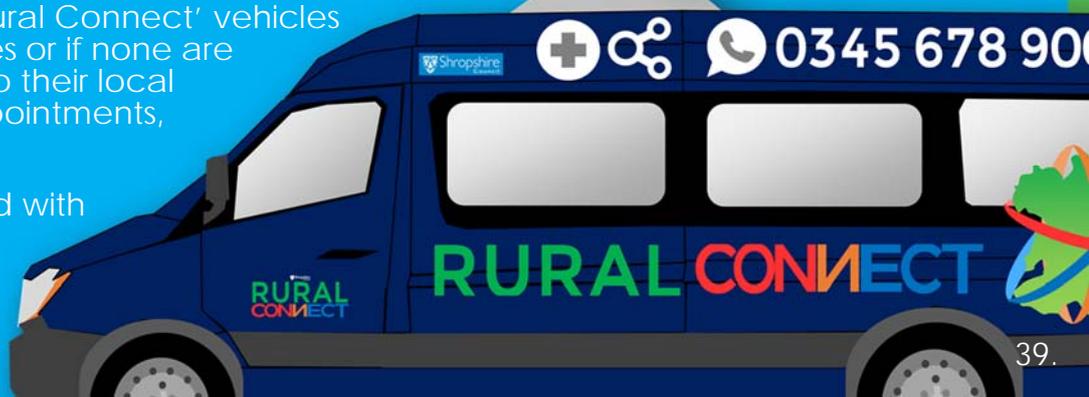
Residents living in the area marked in green would be able to catch the ‘Rural Connect’ service for connection to existing bus services operating between two urban hubs.

Residents can utilise the ‘Rural Connect’ vehicles to meet the existing services or if none are available travel directly into their local urban hub for medical appointments, leisure and shopping.

Journeys to be coordinated with rail departures and arrivals.



Figure 13; Example of a rural community utilising DRT





Shrewsbury
CONNECT



Operating
Monday to
Saturday
6.30am to 10pm



Express service
every 10 minutes
throughout
the day



Enable passengers to
connect to all routes
for access to the
complete Shrewsbury
network

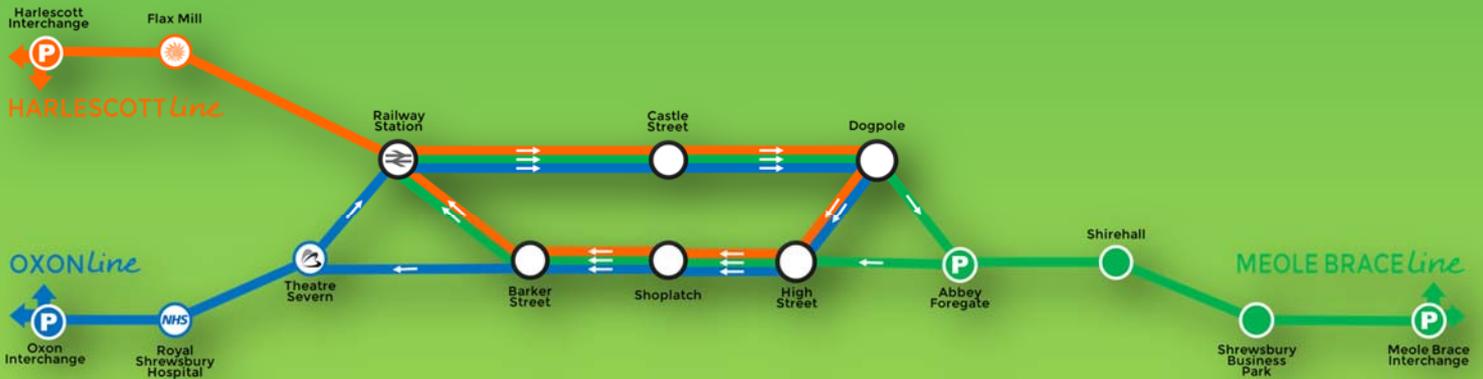


SHREWSBURY CONNECT

'Shrewsbury Connect' is a reimagining of the tried and tested park and ride formula.

The current service provides passengers with a semi-express link from three strategically placed sites across the outskirts of Shrewsbury to the town centre. Ultimately giving passengers one choice in destination, and whilst there is plenty for Shrewsbury Town Centre to offer, a changing population requires more choice and potentially access to more destinations across the entire town, outside of the river loop.

Passengers boarding at one site can now access every stop along the whole network and continue to access the service as a 'hop-on-hop-off', Monday to Saturday, 6.30am to 10pm.



To improve upon this, additional stops have been added along all three routes, stops that have long been requested to be added to the existing park and ride. These include;



This new service can be marketed at tourism, visitors, residents and commuters alike.

BRANDING

To make connections easily, it is proposed that all vehicles in the Shrewsbury Connect fleet be colour coded in their own specific route colour





WEST SHREWSBURY *Connect*

Oxon Park and Ride site is planned to be relocated to a new location in West Shrewsbury to make a model and modern P&R site and to provide Royal Shrewsbury Hospital (RSH) with additional parking and access.

Any new site should be close enough to RSH to be incorporated into the revised 'Shrewsbury Connect' service.

RSH staff, patients and visitors could park at the new site and travel by bus to and from it. The one-way bus journey could take around 2 to 3 minutes.

This site proposal has 1227 spaces plus 82 disabled bays. It has an amenity hub at the site including a café and waiting facilities, and an area set aside for further 'added value' such as play area or civic space. It has a dedicated bus route with capability to continue south, separate car access routes and ability for landscaping at the edges. Importantly from a bus perspective there is the ability for 'through routes' or for services to terminate and return back using a simple loop. This would apply for both park and ride and local services.

The development will be undertaken by Shropshire Council over the next 3 years and will be a crucial edition to the rebranding and launch of Shrewsbury Connect.

10 MINUTES

PAY ONCE A DAY (PRICE PER PERSON)
CONNECT BETWEEN ANY STOP
TRAVEL BETWEEN ALL 3 LINES!

- ROYAL SHREWSBURY HOSPITAL
- THEATRE SEVERN
- SHREWSBURY TOWN CENTRE
- SHREWSBURY RAILWAY STATION

TIMESCALES & PHASES OF CHANGE

PHASE ONE

Times & Service Frequency

2022



PHASE TWO

Vehicle Upgrades & Fuelling

2023



PHASE THREE

Sites & Infrastructure

2024





BSIP TIMESCALES

The ambitions described commence from April 2022 with a phased approach of implementation over the next 3 years. This will of course be dependant on a number of outside factors, including but not limited to the manufacture of the buses, recruitment of staff and local consultation.



FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

TOTAL TRANSPORT

With a greater co-ordination of services during the pandemic between ourselves and the health sector, providing transport solutions for both testing and vaccination services, there is a real opportunity for us to build upon this and look holistically at all the transport resources and networks whether they be health, public transport, school, adult services or community led.

Developing a transport eco system that meets the requirements of all these service areas but actually means that we can do more by utilising all those resources in a more coordinated way.

This is something we have been considering for some time and would like the opportunity later in the BSIP process to work with the Department for Transport to understand if there would be some initial funding to help us develop this for Shropshire which then could be replicated in other areas.

FRANCHISING

Franchising is perhaps seen as more of a solution for urban areas with high levels of commercial services and by adopting franchising there is a significant benefit in the coordination of those commercial networks.

Whilst Shropshire is of course looking to achieve all of its ambitions through its enhanced partnership we are mindful that the network in Shropshire is predominantly supported by Council funding and with further support through the BSIP, there may be a case for franchising to ensure the customer/passenger experience is streamlined and the service offer is consistent across the county.

We are hopeful that the Shropshire EP can realise these benefits for the passenger but would be interested in exploring the benefits of a franchise network in Shropshire should there be an advantage in doing so.

CONCLUSION



The Shropshire Public Transport network is predominantly supported through Shropshire Council funding and in contrast to more urban areas, it is very unlikely that any of the ambitions within the Governments National Bus Strategy could be achieved in Shropshire, without the funding we have applied for.

When the Government launched the National Bus Strategy under the banner of "Bus Back Better" the Prime Minister, in his forward highlighted that bus usage and the number of bus services on offer (especially in rural areas) had been in decline for many years and this strategy was the opportunity to not only arrest that decline, but to build back a far better transport system, that better reflected the needs of today's society.

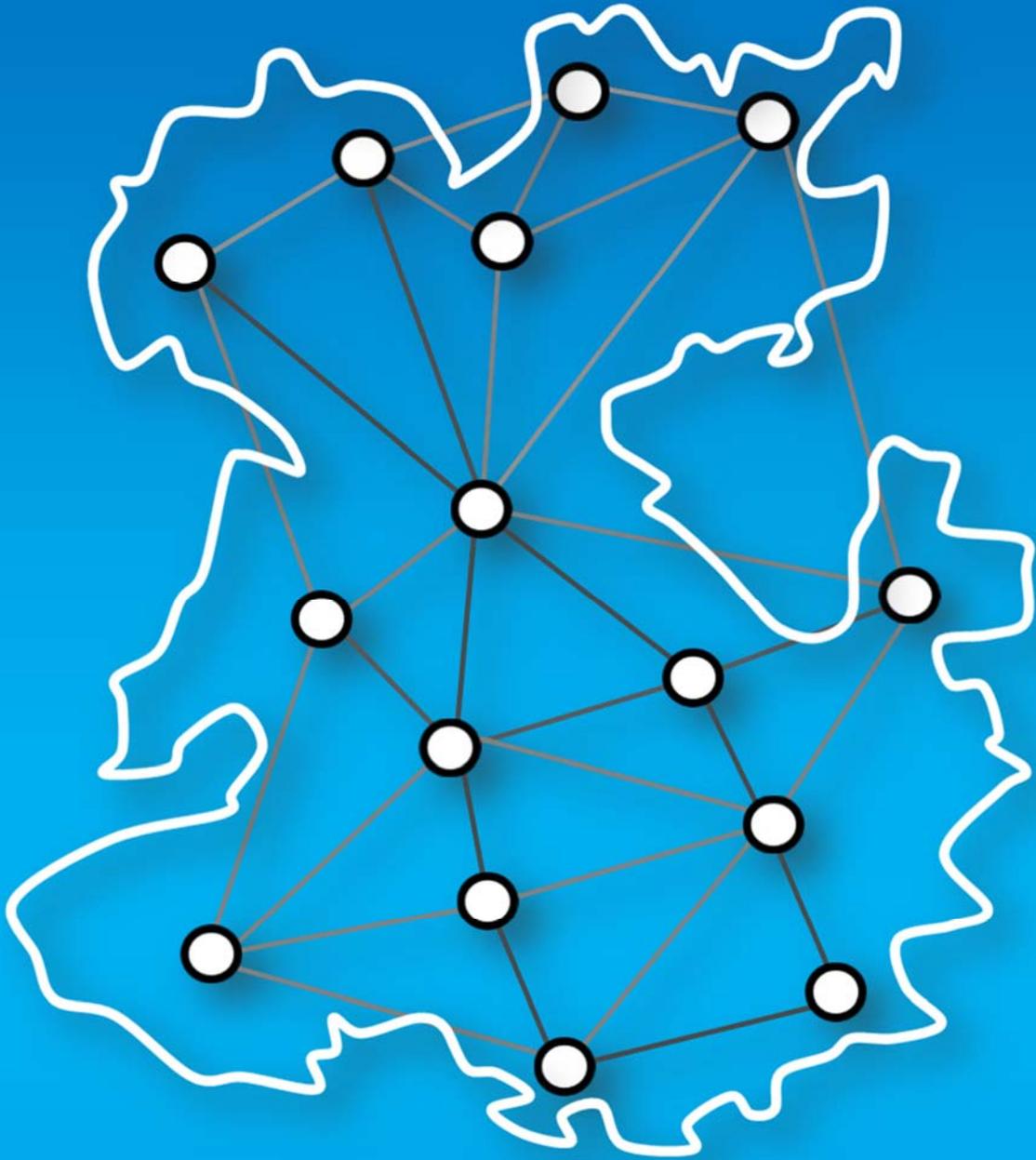
The Shropshire Bus Service Improvement Plan is ambitious and has the potential to transform the use of public transport in Shropshire. Without the level of support, we are seeking, public transport in rural areas will continue to decline and there will be an even greater disparity and reliance on car usage between how people move in urban and rural settings.

The investment we are seeking is truly transformational, ensuring rural transport is something we are proud to use, not just settle for, providing sustainable travel options that are rarely seen in rural areas.

When considering our BSIP and the principles within it, we recognise that treated individually these principles will help deliver some change, but bring them all together into a transformational package of improvements as we have laid out, then that will create the platform to encourage modal shift in rural areas and all of the benefits that come with that, for our economy, addressing social isolation, access to employment and healthcare and the decarbonisation of our transport system.

We sincerely hope that having read our submission that like ourselves, you are excited for the next stage and can provide us with the opportunity to develop and bring into reality our ambitions for a new and much improved public transport offer in Shropshire.

NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY
BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN
SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL



Passenger
Transport
Group