Leicester Buses

Enhanced Partnership Plan

2026-2030

1 September 2026 – 31 March 2030

Contents

Leicester Buses

Enhanced Partnership Plan 2026-30

Executive Summary

This Enhanced Partnership Plan updates the previous one of 2022 to reflect significant changes over the past 5 years. It has been given an early cut-off date of 2030 as the current local government review is likely to alter boundaries, responsibilities and the delivery process beyond this date.

The overall aim remains to make buses:

electric, frequent, reliable, easy & great value.

The objective is to have a bus network that is a viable alternative to the car. One that allows the conurbation to grow in a sustainable, equitable and accessible way.

The main target of this EP Plan is to increase bus patronage by 10% by 2030 and user satisfaction from 88% to 90%.

This will be achieved by further developing and integrating a network of 50 integrated high quality bus routes.

These will each have electric buses, frequent reliable timetables, enforced bus priority, contactless ticketing, fare capping, real time information, quality waiting facilities and targeted fare discounts.

There will be significant additional emphasis on stronger integrated delivery standards - across timetables, routes, fares, ticketing, bus specification, branding, infrastructure, enforcement, information and promotion.

We are now well on the way and have already achieved **75%** of this transformation. Nearly three quarters of the network is now electric, the free Hop! service, easier better value ticketing, more bus lanes and red routes, information displays, a new bus station and stop facilities covering all bus routes.

Up to March 2025 passenger use was recovering well and had surpassed pre-pandemic levels, despite concessionary travel still being significantly lower. Fare paying trips then dropped by over 13% with the removal of the national £2 single fare cap but are still 1% above 2019 levels. The recent reinstatement of the £2 single fare from January 2027 is very welcome. In addition, concessionary travel is now starting to increase at speed.

User satisfaction has risen consistently to 88%, with measures for each area of bus travel being higher than national average, except for value for money. This strongly indicates that the quality of the bus network is improving, but increasing cost of travel has slowed passenger growth.

Significant ongoing support, capital investment and further integration is still required to complete this network transformation. Resources are particularly required to radically improve the orbital bus service, to complete the electrification of the network, improve journey times and to target lower fares for key movements.

This EP Plan sets out a further ambitious yet deliverable programme of change through to 2030, requiring around £75m investment and £10m pa support. The City Council has now approved the spend of around £50m of allocated government grant funding over this period. This includes around £5m pa of revenue grant funds, over half of which is being used to keep existing commitments going. Operators have indicated their commitment to a further £25m of electric bus investment, together with significant integration commitments.

It is the intention of the partnership to agree an enhanced partnership scheme for 2026-30 with advanced binding network delivery commitments and integration standards. This could achieve the main benefits of franchising but without the major costs, risks, delays and turbulence.

It is estimated that this will complete **90%** of the transformation plan.

It will be promoted under the new banner:

One Network electric, frequent, reliable, easy & great value

There is a strong need for additional grant revenue funds of over £5m pa to match this investment, complete the transformation and fully achieve our passenger growth and satisfaction targets by 2030.

In addition, it is the City Council's view that effective local partnership governance also requires devolved responsibility for the bus service registration process, bus service operator grants and the national fare cap. These are key current asks to Government.

Introduction

Previous plan process

1. In late 2021, the City Council produced a Bus Services Improvement Plan for 2022–2030, following consultation with a broad range of bus users, bus operators and other stakeholders including neighbouring Leicestershire County Council. This process was also aligned with the City Council's broader local transport planning process.

2. By May 2022, the Leicester Buses Partnership approved this plan to be legally established in its entirety as the Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan 2022-30, together with an Enhanced Bus Partnership Scheme 2022-25 of over 100 funded and binding commitments.

3. This formal partnership comprised all local bus operators serving Leicester – Arriva, Firstbus, Centrebus, Stagecoach, Kinchbus, Roberts Travel Group, and Central Connect – together with Leicester City Council.

4. Full details of this partnership work, together with user-friendly summaries, progress updates and videos can be found on the dedicated partnership website www.leicesterbuses.co.uk.

5. The Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan 2022-30 details the provision for bus users in 2021, together with the main issues and priorities moving forward. Travel demand across the expanding conurbation is varied and widely spread. It requires good connectivity to the city centre, district centres and many non-central employment, health and educational facilities.

6. It concluded that the prevailing comprehensive bus network had a strong inherent base to recover from the impact of covid. It could quickly and efficiently provide essential accessible and sustainable connectivity to enable the city to grow without congestion and pollution.

7. However, for it to be an attractive alternative to car travel, a complete range of transformative improvements are required over several years across a network of

50 main bus routes (30 bus corridors) into the City Centre from main suburban areas.

8. This could be achieved through a package of investment and action delivered through a formal partnership approach. These include improved routes and timetables, more bus priority, a greener fleet, better passenger facilities, improved ticketing, better information and discounted fares.

9. The Partnership formed an overriding aim to make bus travel: **electric**, **frequent**, **reliable**, **easy and great value.**

10. The overarching objective is to grow bus patronage and modal share, enabling the equitable sustainable growth of the Leicester conurbation.

11. Although Leicester was not awarded any original national BSIP funding, it was successful in gaining around £100m through the Transforming Cities Fund, Getting Building and ZEBRA funding streams, matched by significant operator investment. This formed the basis of the investment required for the Partnership to agree to deliver a range of 100 commitments in its Enhanced Partnership Scheme 2022-25.

12. The Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan 2022-30 and Enhanced Partnership Scheme 2022-25 covers work across the whole of the City Council administrative area. In addition, due to the cross-boundary nature of many urban bus routes, some work (particularly in relation to bus services, bus investment and ticketing) covers the whole of the Leicester conurbation, requiring plan and delivery co-ordination with the County Council.

Updated rationale

13. Although we are only part-way through the Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan 2022-30, it is considered that there is a need for a refresh given the significant changes that have taken place over the past five years:
    - the impact of covid on the bus market, particularly in relation to reducing commuting and concessionary travel;
    - the cost-of-living crisis and rising operational costs;

- changing national funding streams and interventions within the Department for Transport's National Bus Strategy;
- the new Bus Services Act 2025 and its associated changes to governance options and minimum standards;
- swift speed of delivery of the current Enhanced Partnership Scheme 2022-25 commitments, particularly in addressing previous priority areas;
- changing local housing development priorities and locations
- emphasis on the sustainable growth of the central Leicester Royal Infirmary in the south of the City Centre and Glenfield Hospital to the west;
- continued growth of commercial developments on the edge of the conurbation based on the major orbital and trunk road network.

14. It is for these reasons that we are now setting out a revised Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan 2026-2030 (EP Plan 2026-30). This integrates with the wider purpose local transport and spatial plans of the Council.

15. The EP Plan 2026-30 is also required by the Department of Transport to access further funds and guide future national funding and intervention as part of the National Bus Strategy.

16. It should be noted that the EP Plan 2026-30 is relatively streamlined due to:
    - the comprehensive nature of the existing Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan 2022-30, the majority of which remains unchanged in terms of the broad issues, priorities and overall approach required;
    - the partnership agreement to maintain the same vision and objectives and to continue to deliver a comprehensive package of bus improvements across a similar range of areas
    - the local political decision to continue a formal partnership approach to bus transformation for the City area as long as it remains an effective tool for delivering significant improvement.

17. It is the intention for the Leicester Buses Partnership to approve this EP Plan 2026–30 and its associated EP Scheme 2026–30 by Summer 2026. It follows on from the early delivery of the current EP Scheme 2022-25 and the availability of additional funding

and investment from 2026 -2030 from central government and operators.

Updated approach

18. Discussions with operators and other key stakeholders have taken place regularly over the past 4 years, together with full monitoring of the previous enhanced partnership scheme commitments and its impact on key performance targets related to passenger growth, operational performance and user satisfaction.

19. This is summarised in more detail within the next section of this Plan, with the conclusion across all partners that the existing aims, objectives and overall approach is delivering effective change and should be retained for the new plan.

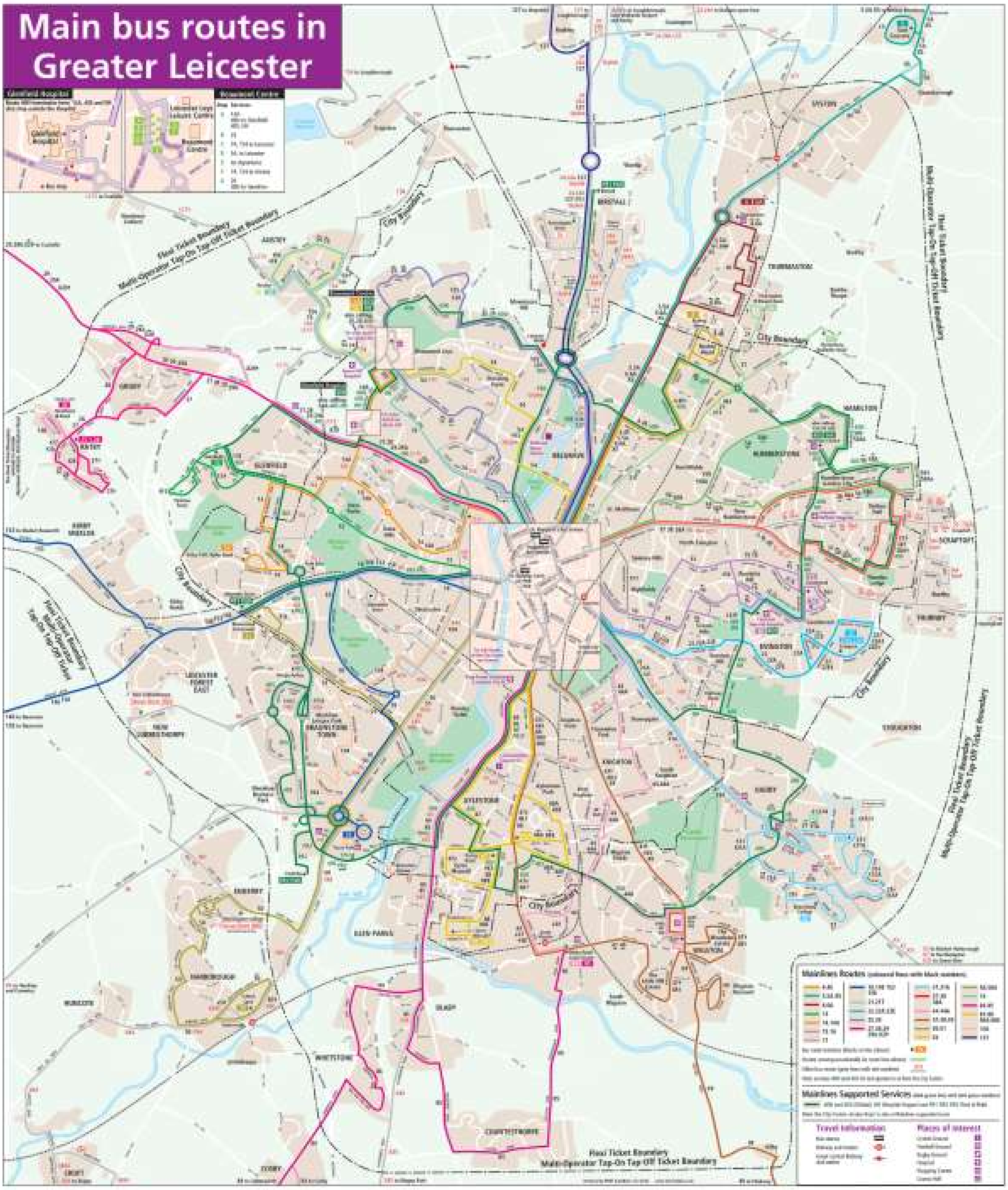
20. This EP Plan 2026-30 covers the whole of the Leicester City Council administrative area, but none of the neighbouring council areas. The City Council is a unitary authority and therefore has full responsibility for all areas of public transport, together with other related areas such as highways, parking, education, planning, tourism and regeneration. Most trip generators across the conurbation lie within the City Council area.

21. This is a sensible and effective geographic area to deliver key City Council-led intervention measures that can significantly influence bus travel, including:
    - road space reallocation and bus priority measures;
    - signalling, junction and road redesign;
    - traffic management policies and projects;
    - infrastructure projects – bus stations, real time information, shelters etc;
    - new housing and business developments;
    - car parking provision and pricing, including road/workplace parking charge;
    - tendered bus service provision;
    - council's own investment in electric buses for tendered services;
    - discounted fares policies, including school and college travel.

22. However, it is fully recognised that some specific issues relating to commercial urban bus routes and ticketing do not fit wholly within the City boundary. In general, these aspects are better aligned within the Greater Leicester built-up area. This includes small parts of several neighbouring district councils – Blaby, Charnwood,

NW Leicester and Hinckley, Oadby and Wigston – all within Leicestershire County Council as the local transport authority. These areas do not fall within the area of the EP Plan 2026-30 but may benefit from its implementation through the EP Scheme 2026-30.

23. Below is a map showing both boundaries, with the Greater Leicester boundary shown as the Flexi boundary – the boundary used for integrated all-operator urban bus tickets. This map also shows the colour-coded main bus routes.



24. In addition, some other specific aspects – such as park and ride and inter-urban commercial bus routes – focus more on the wider journey-to-work area. However, in these instances the bus interventions required relate to aspects within Greater Leicester (eg P&R sites and services).

25. This EP Plan 2026-30 has been drawn up in consultation with these neighbouring authorities and is aligned with the prevailing Leicestershire County Council EP Plan.

26. Consideration was given to establishing a formal joint Greater Leicester Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme by Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council, but this has not proceeded due to current dynamics related to local government review.

27. This EP Plan 2026-30 has been given an early cut-off date of 2030. This is because the imminent local government review is likely to significantly alter delivery boundaries and responsibilities, necessitating a different bus planning and delivery process beyond 2030.

28. It is anticipated that the EP Plan 2026-30 will be reviewed and adjusted if required by the Partnership on an annual basis due to the significant dynamism within the local bus market post-covid, together with the evolving nature of securing capital and revenue funding support.

29. The Partnership will continue with its aim to make bus travel:
electric frequent reliable easy great value.

30. This will be achieved through the further continued delivery of the following key transformations:

A 'Mainlines' urban network

- 24 route groups aimed at connecting each main area of Leicester to the City Centre
- 3 express routes, each with free park and ride sites at their termini.
- inner and outer orbital bus routes
- limited stopping cross-city route linking all three hospitals.

Each 'Mainline' will have a fully branded package of significant improvements

- electric buses with audio-visual displays and enhanced access features
- additional enforced bus priority and parking management measures
- further developed automated 'best fare' digital ticketing
- completion of on-street real time information and new bus shelters at all boarding stops

Each 'Mainline' will have cross-operator timetabling to a minimum frequency standard within the urban area

- every 15 mins for the shared commons section of each Mainline group.
- every 30 mins or better daytime Monday – Saturday for each Mainline
- every 60 mins evenings Monday-Saturday
- every 60 minutes Sundays daytime

A small number of 'Localines' - infrequent routes giving daytime access to the few areas of the conurbation that are remote from the Mainlines bus network.

A continued package of measures to integrate all bus services

- joined up timetables, fares and ticketing, information systems, website and promotions
- a common, clearly understood 'Leicester Buses' integration brand shown on all buses, bus stops, bus stations and park and ride sites

A range of policies designed to improve the value of bus travel in relation to car travel

- targeted discretionary fare discounts for elderly, disabled, unemployed, young persons and families
- city centre council parking charges set above bus fares

31. It is the intention to agree a further jointly funded work package for 2026-2030, with the aim to provide financially sustainable conditions for all operators to convert the whole Leicester fleet to zero emission buses by 2028 at the latest.

32. This approach broadly aligns with the set of objectives recommended under the DfT's National Bus strategy:

Electric – greening the fleet

- Greener, zero emission buses to reduce local air pollution and cut carbon emissions.

Frequent – network development

- More frequent, with turn-up-and-go services on major routes and feeder or demand-responsive services to lower-density places.
- More comprehensive, with overprovision on a few corridors reduced to boost provision elsewhere and better services in the evenings and weekends, not necessarily with conventional buses.
- Better integrated with other modes and each other, including more bus-rail interchange and integration and inter-bus transfers.

Reliable – more bus priorities

- Faster and more reliable, with bus priority wherever necessary and where there is room.

Easy – a better passenger experience

- Easier to understand, with simpler routes, common numbering, coordinated timetable change dates, good publicity, and comprehensive, accurate information online.
- Accessible, comfortable and inclusive network, by design, not only bus vehicles but bus stations, bus stops, and access routes to bus stops.
- Better to ride in, with comfortable, high-specification, modern buses.
- Innovative, harnessing entrepreneurship to constantly strive for a better product.
- A safe mode of transport which is seen as safe, addressing issues of personal safety and security on board and at stops as well as driver and vehicle safety standards.

Great Value – improved ticketing and discounted fares

- Cheaper, with more low, flat fares in towns and cities, lower point-to-point fares elsewhere, and more daily price capping everywhere.
- Easier to use, with common tickets, passes and daily capping across all operators, simpler fares, contactless payment and protection of bus stations.

33. Our goal is to get bus use back to what it was before the pandemic. Then we want to increase patronage and raise modal share. The main targets will be to:

- increase bus use by 10% to 2030
- increase bus passenger satisfaction from 88% to 90% by 2030

- make 100% of Leicester’s buses electric by 2028

34. It is planned to deliver these improvements through the EP Scheme 2026-30. This will impose requirements on both the City Council and operators to deliver the proposals set out in this EP Plan 2026-30, subject to the necessary financial resources being in place.

Progress since 2021

35. The Enhanced Partnership Scheme 2022-25, formed following the adoption of the previous enhanced partnership plan, legally commits the Partnership to delivering 100 goals over a 3-year period up to March 2025.

36. By March 2025, we have already delivered 95 of the original 100 goals. Our dedicated website www.leicesterbuses.co.uk details this progress.

37. A summary of this delivery progress is shown below:.

Electric

Greenlines electric network – Centrebus and Roberts Travel

- 24 electric buses on six subsidised services
- Includes three Park and Ride services, an inner (Hop!) and outer orbital (Orbital), and the Hospital Hopper
- Operating from 2 new charging depots at Roberts Travel Group and Centrebus

FirstBus electric bus network

- Fully converted depot to electric operation, including 462 solar panels
- All 68 single deckers in operation by September 2023
- All 18 double deckers in operation by May 2024

Arriva electric buses

- Charging facility for over 50 buses commissioned
- 24 double decker buses in service by February 2024
- 25 double decker buses in service by December 2024

Stagecoach Buses East Midlands

- 21 new electric buses in service by June 2025

Frequent

Optimised network

- Co-ordinated timetables and routes between operators
- Removing inefficient duplication and simplifying for customers

- Formal legal partnerships on 9 shared bus corridors

Mainlines commercial network

- Joint funding to maintain frequency standard of the majority (21 out of 24) Mainline commercial route groups to at least every 15 mins Monday-Saturday daytime
- Joint funding to maintain frequency standard of 14 out of 24 Mainline route groups to at least every 60 mins Monday-Saturday evening and every 30 mins Sunday daytime

Mainlines subsidised network - Hop !

- New City Centre service
- Free, every 10 mins
- 8am – 6pm Monday to Saturday
- Connecting all central areas to bus and rail stations.

Mainlines subsidised network – maintaining existing frequencies

- Funding to maintain every 15mins on three Park & Ride services
- Every 30mins on Hospital Hopper, hourly weekends
- Hourly on Orbital

Reliable

Significant New Bus Priorities

- Abbey Park Road (both ways)
- Braunstone Gate
- Anstey Lane
- Groby Road
- Abbey Lane/Exploration Drive junction
- Melton Road
- Fosse Road North
- London Road (permanent red route)
- Abbey Rd A6 (permanent red route)

New bus City Centre Savoy Street bus link

- Improving central area journey times and reliability
- Removing car parking

Burleys Way direct bus station link

- New direct link from St Margaret's Bus Station to inner ring road

Camera enforcement

- In house camera enforcement system for existing and new bus lanes
- New cameras on all new bus priorities
- Camera enforced Haymarket Bus Station stop for Dial-A-Ride and Hop!

Easy

New St Margaret's Bus & Coach Station

- 24 covered bays with full electronic passenger information
- Customer services, café, newsagents, toilets, cycle storage
- Solar powered, first carbon neutral bus station in UK

Totems at all City Councils 1200 bus stops

- Real time information displays at all main boarding stops
- Text-to-speech audio facility for those with visual difficulties
- Printed integrated timetables and ticket information posters

New Bus Shelters at 500 stops

- With full glazing, lighting, seating and information panels
- Some with 'living' roofs

Unified 'Leicester Buses' network branding

- At bus stations, bus stops, shelters and park and ride sites
- All printed information maps, timetables and guides
- Operator's fleet – outside and inside

Integrated website

- Partnership scheme updates
- Full information – mapping and journey planning
- Contactless personal ticketing portal

Great Value

Contactless tap-on tap-off ticketing with capping

- First of its kind in UK
- Single operator and multi-operator, day and weekly 'best fare' capping
- Flexible, easy, best value travel, regardless of which bus operator/s used

Multi-Operator Flexi Tickets

- Significantly expanded range of multi-operator 'flexi' tickets
- Reduced the fares 'premium' over single operator tickets to around 10%
- Increase range of payment method, including mobile and contactless ticketing
- Flexi discounted add-on ticket from outside Flexi zone

Discount ticketing

- Flexi all-year tickets for eligible scholars
- Discounted fares for unemployed and health workers
- Enhanced discounts for elderly and disabled residents
- Full participation in DfT single fare initiative

Outcomes - progress against original targets

38. The table below overall progress against both pre-covid key indicators and targets.

Leicester Buses Partnership : Main Outcome measures against Targets

Apr-26									
		Actual	Actual	Actual	Change	Target	Progress	Progress	
Aim	Measure	2019/20	2024/5	2025/6	on last yr	2029/30	Status	Notes	Method
All	Trips - All	25.63	25.68	23.30	-9.3%	*28.19*	Poor	National minimum fare increased from £2 to £3 in April 2025	Directly from operators
All	Trips - Fare payers	17.13	19.94	17.32	-13.2%	*18.84*	Poor	National minimum fare increased from £2 to £3 in April 2026	Directly from operators
All	Trips - Elderly & Disabled	8.50	5.74	5.98	4.3%	*9.35*	Good	Still below pre-covid levels	Directly from operators
All	Satisfaction - Overall	86%	87%	88%	1.0%	*90%*	Good	Showing good progress	Transport Focus surveys

Comparison against others (% satisfied)

	Leicester			England	
	2024/5	2025/6	Direction	2024/5	2025/6
Overall	87%	88%	↑	84%	85%
Time on Bus	85%	86%	↑	84%	83%
Wait at Stop	81%	79%	↓	74%	74%
Punctuality	83%	81%	↓	76%	77%
Bus Stop	84%	84%	↔	81%	81%
Driver	89%	89%	↔	87%	87%
Value for Money	76%	63%	↓↓	64%	63%

39. In summary, this shows the following progress against the five key aims:

Progress towards EP Aims

Aim	Ranking 2021	Ranking 2024/5	Ranking 2025/6	Progress Direction on last year (*)
Electric	Poor	Very Good	Very Good	Slight Rise
Frequent	Good	Good	Good	Slight Reduction
Reliable	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Slight Reduction
Easy	Good	Very Good	Very Good	No change
Great Value	Poor	Satisfactory	Poor	Significantly down

* based on Transport Focus satisfaction scores

40. The overall conclusion is that the quality of the bus network has improved since 2021 on all fronts – buses, ticketing, drivers, waiting infrastructure, information etc. However, there has been a significant reduction in passenger value for money, following significant fare rises. From April 2025 the national single fare cap rose from £2 to £3, resulting in the reduction in fare paying patronage in 2025/26 of 13%.

41. This reduction is not replicated in the concessionary market, where passengers are protected from these fare rises. This market has seen a significant increase in use last year, strongly indicating (together the rising satisfaction scores) that the bus network is improving.

42. The overall results also reflect the relative difference in funding levels to date between capital and revenue-based interventions. The partnership has been successful in getting funding and delivering capital-based projects. However, the rising costs of delivery, coupled with reducing income streams has made it far more difficult to have an impact in areas that require significant ongoing funding, particularly for network support or discounted fares.

Priorities for 2026-2030

Recent changes

43. In April 2025, the £2 national single fare cap moved to £3. For many travellers in Leicester, this represented a sudden 50% increase in fares. For day and period tickets, the rise in fares over the past 5 years has been 41% and 29% respectively.

44. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that since April 2025 there has been a significant dip in fare-paying patronage, averaging at 13% on the previous 12 months. In addition, it would seem that this reduction is greater for leisure-based trips, particularly in the evenings and weekends.

45. The recent government announcement to return the fare cap to £2 from January 2027 is therefore very welcome news.

46. All other bus network performance metrics are positive – accessibility and frequency levels, punctuality, reliability and user satisfaction – strongly indicating that this reduction is due to fares increases coupled with the general cost of living issues.

47. There has also been a reduction in the modal share for bus use to non-central locations. These account for over 80% of employment locations across the city. This is resulting in increased congestion at key junctions, delaying radial bus routes and reducing contra-flow bus occupancy and efficiency.

48. In addition, the Bus Services Act 2025 amends the Transport Act 2000 in two specific areas : socially necessary local services and a requirement to consider the needs of disabled persons.

49. Moving forward, it is concluded that greater emphasis should be placed on:
    - Bus fares, particularly amongst price sensitive groups
    - Getting greater efficiencies across the network through further significant integration measures
    - Further improvements to orbital bus movements and to encourage integration in order to improve accessibility to non-central locations

- Capital investment in bus priorities, parking management and electric bus operation to reduce operational costs
- More explicit rationale and commitment to address socially necessary local bus services and the needs of disabled persons.

Main priorities - unchanged

50. The overall approach and issues remain the same and requires continuous investment and project work across the five main themes. This includes continuing existing commitments AND prioritising any additional new funding and other resources in the following areas:

Electric

- increased investment from Arriva & Centrebus - backed by additional local grant assistance - on routes to the east and south east – in line with upcoming growth
- further investment in the Council's own electric fleet for tendered services
- increased investment on Orbital in line with increased frequency

Frequent

- increased frequency and integration on remaining commercial Mainlines to give a network daytime Monday-Saturday standard of every 15 mins or better on shared urban sections.
- Connectivity to the new and expanding Ashton Green housing development.
- extension of Meynells and Birstall P&R to the growing Leicester Royal Infirmary
- increased frequency on Orbital to reflect the fact that over 80% of jobs are outside the City Centre
- ensuring minimum levels of accessibility are maintained from all areas of the city to the city centre (hourly or better daytime service Monday – Saturday.)

Reliable

- further expansion of bus lane and red route enforcement
- further bus priority and parking management on Eastern bus corridors
- work to address key pinch points on Orbital 40

- automated signal priority for late running buses

Easy

- a further developed website with network real time and online ticketing portal
- swifter roll out of onboard passenger information screens and announcement
- further roll out of at stop real time displays and text to speech facility

Great Value

- discounted Flexi fares – to increase 'available frequency' for everyone and assist interchange journeys to outer-lying workplaces and other facilities
- discounts for family travel that directly competes with car parking
- lobbying for £3 national single fare to be changed to a targeted £5 per day for younger persons

Other specific priorities

Integration

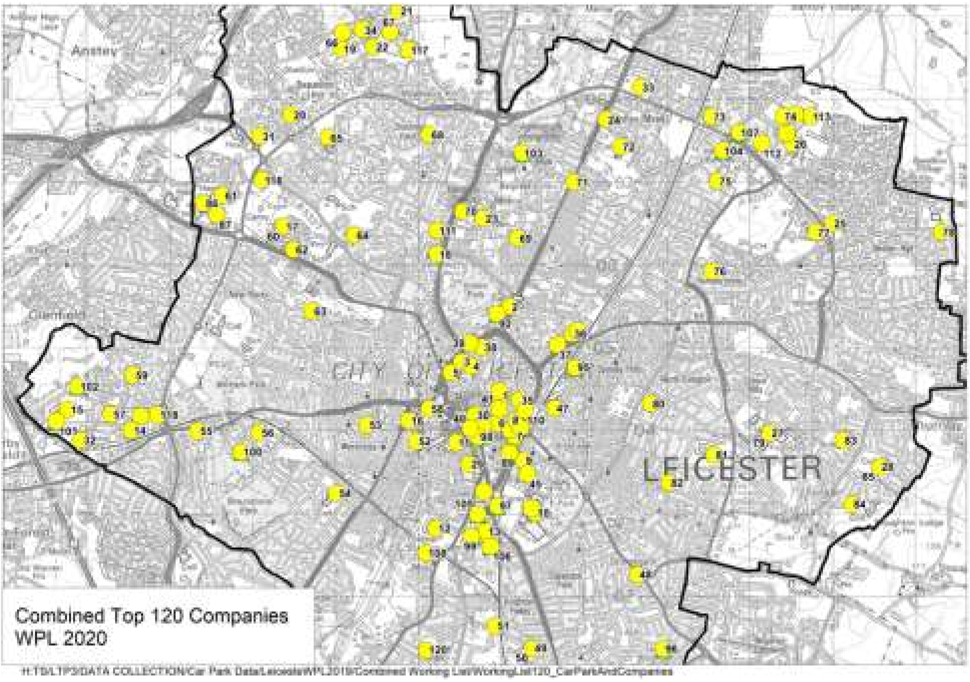
51. Under a de-regulated regime, it is difficult to ensure that the bus network is fully integrated across operators and to a set operational standard in relation to routes, timetables, fares, ticketing, information, bus standards, promotions and network branding.

52. There is a particular need for integration in Leicester because:
    - there are eight commercial operators in Leicester, none of which have a significant standalone network, each delivering to different commercial standards;
    - there are 10 bus 'corridors' served by route by more than one operator;
    - around 60% of Leicester's residents are within walking distance of bus routes operated by more than one operator;
    - all commercial bus routes terminate in the City Centre. There are no cross-city routes, meaning interchange is required to access non-central locations;
    - over 80% of employment lies outside the City Centre but there is only 5% bus modal share to these locations;
    - city centre footfall is currently declining and there is increasing activity outside the city centre;

- congestion at radial/orbital junctions is increasing and is the main cause for delay of radial routes;
- buses leaving the city centre are largely empty in the morning peak; those going into the city centre in the evening peak are also under-utilised;
- outer orbital bus routes are geographically limited, unreliable and only every hour.

Employment in the Leicester City Area - top 100 data

	Sites	Employers	Parking	Staff
City Centre (LE1 postcode)	41	21	3,616	5,724
Outside Centre (all other postcodes)	274	79	28,108	52,613
	315	100	31,724	58,337
City Centre (LE1 postcode)	13%	21%	11%	10%
Outside Centre (all other postcodes)	87%	79%	89%	90%



53. Under a commercial partnership governance model, integration relies on each operator accepting a dilution of its commercial freedoms and agreeing to deliver to a given standard for routes, timetables, fares, ticketing, information, electric bus standard, promotions and network branding.

54. These are the planned coordination, integration and standardisation aspects required to develop a more efficient and effective bus system over a sustained period of time.

55. Under a franchise governance model – such as London and Manchester - all these integration standards are set out at the outset within the franchising process and each operator is legally contracted to meet them.

56. Previous partnership negotiations have shown that operators view the commercial benefits of *full* integration as being long term, but the required restrictions impact on short term commerciality. Similarly, the City Council's proposed investment in infrastructure and bus priorities are not sufficiently attractive to incentivize operators to fully integrate.

57. Full integration agreement will only be reached under a de-regulated partnership model if there is a sufficient shorter term commercial incentive for operators to accept such restrictions. Therefore, it is accepted that the City Council has to provide additional short term revenue funding to de-risk the required restrictions in commercial freedoms.

58. The proposed City Council and operator commitments are set out in its EP Scheme 2026-30, planned for joint approval in summer 2026. Current indications are that that these will be sufficient for full integration measures to be delivered over the next 3 years, with the majority completed by March 2027.

59. If successfully delivered, this integration project will provide the following across the whole Leicester Buses Network:
    - One electric bus standard;
    - One optimised timetable - with co-ordinated timetables and agreed frequency standards;
    - One ticket and fare range for all operators – with no penalty for operator interchange;
    - One brand - promoting a quality standard across the whole network;
    - One website – with complete dynamic real time information and ticket retail;
    - One information and promotional system – both printed and electronic.

60. It is viewed that an enhanced bus partnership that can deliver integration is significantly different to the many other partnerships that are simply focussed on

independent investment and revenue spend by each party. It is for this reason that Leicester is calling its new EP partnership 'One Network'.

One Network electric, frequent, reliable, easy & great value

61. The other reported benefits of franchising (such as cheaper fares, better frequencies and wider network coverage) are to do with funding, not the governance model employed. These can still be procured and delivered under an EP as long as the City Council has sufficient resources.

Socially Necessary Local Services (SNLS)

62. The Transport Act 2025 defines socially necessary local services as follows. Each enables passengers to access essential goods and services, economic opportunities (including employment) or social activities. If any are cancelled or significantly varied, it is likely to have a materially adverse effect on the ability of passengers to access those goods, services, opportunities or activities.

63. An enhanced partnership scheme must specify requirements that apply where the operator of a socially necessary local service proposes:
    - to cancel a registration in relation to an SNLS service or
    - to vary the registration in such a way as is likely to have a material adverse effect on the ability of passengers to access the goods, services, opportunities or activities
    - The City Council, having been notified of a proposed cancellation or a proposed variation which is likely to have such an effect, is required to consider whether any alternative arrangements may be made so as to mitigate that effect.

64. All qualifying EP locally registered bus services are deemed to be socially necessary since their usage figures show they are regularly used by City residents for socially necessary trips.

65. The Partnership also considers that the frequency and hours of operation of qualifying EP services registered at 1 August 2026 to be deemed socially necessary. This will vary by route type.

66. It is considered that any proposal to change the *existing* frequency *below* the following *minimum* frequency levels will be considered to have a materially adverse effect, based on current usage and frequencies.

	Daytime (m-s)	Evening (m-s)	Sundays
Mainlines Commercial	below every 30 mins	To no service	To no service
Mainlines Subsidised	below every 60 mins	To no service	To no service
Localines	below every 120 mins	To no service	To no service

67. It is recommended that any operator proposing to cancel any SNLS or change their frequency below these defined minimum frequency standards should be subject to the following additional consultation process:

- Give at least 98 days notice to the Council before the service change is affected. This is 28 days more than the current legal minimum of 70 days. This will give additional time for the City Council to consider options, consult and seeking funding streams for alternative provision.
- Work with City Council to find alternative ways to maintain the current SNLS levels.

Consideration of the travel needs of people with disabilities

68. The Bus Services Act 2025 creates a new duty on the City Council to produce a bus network accessibility plan (NAP) by April 2027 and refresh every three years. This should assess:

- the existing accessibility of Leicester’s local bus network
- any action required to improve this accessibility

69. This plan is being drafted and currently requires more consultation and research. It will build on the previous review done for the 2022 EP Pan and is anticipated to be completed by December 2026.

70. Following previous research, discussions and correspondence from disabled travellers since the previous EP, a draft set of conclusions has been drawn up:

- Most disabled bus travellers are reliant on the bus for all essential travel. Unlike able-bodied travellers they often have no alternatives available to them – such as to walk, cycle or drive.

- Disabled travellers are similar to other travellers in their need for network improvements in each of the key areas that have been progressed over the past 5 years: electric, frequent, reliable, easy-to-use and good value.

- There are certain aspects within each of these core areas that need to address the specific travel issues of disabled travellers. These are currently being audited but initial indicators show reasonable progress over the past 5 years, particularly compared to other areas across the Country.

- Further improvements in each of these areas is still required in order for there to be *common network delivery standards* across the board. This will give the necessary ability and confidence to travel freely at all times across the conurbation.

- With the current resources available, a range of specific commitments can feasibly be delivered that prioritise certain needs of disabled travellers.

- Further funding and action is required to progress other areas at a faster rate, particularly in relation to orbital travel which avoids the need to difficult interchange.

71. The Council proposes to affect those actions that can currently be resourced through their inclusion within its EP Scheme and its associated set of commitments and work programme. This will be done jointly with all local bus operators in

consultation with disabled local travellers and their representative organisations.

72. As with the approach taken since 2022, each major initiative within the EP work programme will be subject to an individual Equality Impact Assessment.

Funding the Plan

73. The table below shows the main areas of annual spend that the City Council currently provides to support and improve the Leicester Buses Network. As can be seen, since covid, an increasing financial gap has arisen, due largely to increased costs and reduced revenue streams.

City Council - Revenue Bus Budgets 2026/27

Expenditure Area (£m pa)	Base Budget Cost	Base Budget Income	Net Budget Base	Predicted Net costs	Over/Under Budget
Statutory:					
Concessionary Fares	8.18	0.80	8.98	8.98	0.00
Discretionary:					
Printed information	0.06	0.00	0.06	0.06	0.00
Supported services exc P&R	0.38	0.00	0.38	2.56	2.19
Bus Shelter advertising	0.00	-0.16	-0.16	-0.16	0.00
Real time information	0.18	-0.12	0.06	0.21	0.15
Smart ticketing	0.09	-0.06	0.28	0.35	0.07
Bus Lane Enforcement	0.58	-1.40	-0.82	-0.82	0.00
Bus Stops	0.04	0.00	0.04	0.04	0.00
Staff	0.36	-0.22	0.14	0.23	0.09
Flexi Ticketing Scheme	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Margarets Bus Station	0.17	-0.15	0.02	0.02	0.00
Haymarket Bus Station	0.39	-0.19	0.20	0.20	0.00
Bus Stations General	0.48	0.00	0.48	0.86	0.38
Park and Ride - operation and sites	0.39	-0.25	0.14	0.47	0.33
Discretionary Total	3.12	-2.55	0.82	4.03	3.21
To finance from External Grant Funds				3.21	

74. Previously this gap was met by a combination of one-off grants and savings within the concessionary fares budget (due to usage levels not recovering since covid). However, from April 2026 this will be met in full by an external government bus grant, currently secured until 31 March 2029.

75. The total grant funds confirmed by Government for Leicester City Council are shown below.

Council Bus Grant Confirmed	**2025/26 original**	**2025/26**	**2026/7**	**2027/8**	**2028/9**	**2029/30** *italics indicative*
Revenue						
External Bus Revenue Grant	**£ 4.99**	**£ 2.86**	**£ 5.72**	**£ 5.36**	**£ 5.36**	***£ 5.36***
Recharge from base revenue budget	**-£ 1.51**	**-£ 1.51**	**-£ 3.21**	**-£ 3.21**	**-£ 3.21**	***-£ 3.21***
Available External Bus revenue	**£ 3.48**	**£ 1.35**	**£ 2.51**	**£ 2.15**	**£ 2.15**	***£ 2.15***
* revenue predicted for this year						
Capital						
External Bus Capital Grant	**£ 5.17**	**£ 8.00**	**£ 6.22**	**£ 6.34**	**£ 6.47**	**£ 6.59**
Recharge from base revenue budget for staff	**£ -**	**£ -**	**-£ 0.58**	**-£ 0.58**	**-£ 0.58**	**-£ 0.58**
Available External Bus Capital	**£ 5.17**	**£ 8.00**	**£ 5.64**	**£ 5.77**	**£ 5.89**	**£ 6.02**
Total External Bus Grants	**£ 10.15**	**£ 10.85**	**£ 11.94**	**£ 11.70**	**£ 11.83**	**£ 11.95**
Total Recharges from Base Budget	**-£ 1.51**	**-£ 1.51**	**-£ 3.79**	**-£ 3.79**	**-£ 3.79**	**-£ 3.79**
Total Available Resources	**£ 8.64**	**£ 9.34**	**£ 8.16**	**£ 7.92**	**£ 8.04**	**£ 8.17**

76. This shows that significant revenue grant funds are required to maintain current commitments.

77. The remaining grant funding is assigned for new Council projects aligned to the EP Plan. It is currently proposed to be supplemented by additional investment funds from the bus operators. This gives an overall proposed spend of around £75m over this period.

Enhanced Partnership Plan 2026-30

78. The plan of activity for 2025/26 – 2029/30 can be broken down into four main areas of intervention:
    - Keeping existing statutory revenue-funded areas going;
    - Keeping existing discretionary revenue-funded areas going;
    - New discretionary projects – revenue and capital funded;
    - New partnership integration commitments.

Statutory ongoing functions

79. The areas of spend that are statutory relate to:
    - administering concessionary fares passes for elderly and disabled;
    - reimbursement to bus operators for giving free concessionary bus travel
    - provision of free bus travel on commercial services for those eligible scholars.

80. Their statutory nature means that:
    - they must receive priority on City Council revenue spend
    - they are unlikely to be eligible for support through specific government grants
    - overspend is usually funded through a reduction in spend in discretionary areas
    - any underspend is usually prioritised to fund other non-transport statutory areas

81. Concessionary reimbursement to bus operators is a significant area of statutory spend. It is dependent on concessionary usage, prevailing fares and the reimbursement rate determined by the Department for Transport. None of these are within the control of the City Council, yet the City Council bears full budget responsibility.

82. Pre-covid this cost around £9.0m pa. In 2026-27 this is predicted to cost around £9.0m despite usage only being at 75% of pre-covid levels. The reason for this is the increased fares over the past 6 years, together with the change in reimbursement rules set by Government.

83. This means that there are no longer any savings from this budget to fund the additional costs of supported bus services and other transport budgetary pressures

that have arisen since covid.

84. The City Council must therefore be extremely cautious on all *new r*evenue spend so that it continues to meet its statutory commitments from 2026 onwards. The focus will be on undertaking discretionary areas of spend which can be financed by one-off grants and which can be readily pared back should these grants not continue.

Discretionary ongoing functions

85. All councils are experiencing significant revenue budget problems due to inflation and rising demand for statutory functions, particularly children and adult services. Leicester City Council is no exception.

86. The table in section 72 above shows the main current areas of bus revenue-spend. These all relate to areas that impact on the locally registered bus network. They exclude support for specialist transport.

87. The only areas of statutory spend relate to the costs of the national concessionary fares scheme and certain school travel obligations.

88. All other areas shown above relate to discretionary City Council spend and so will inevitably be subject to continuous review of the coming years, given current predictions for wider corporate budgetary pressures.

89. Direct support towards specific services in the bus network for 2026 onwards will be as follows:

Supported Bus Services (exc P&R)		
Apr-26		
Service	**Route**	**Times**
Orbital 40N and 40S	General Hospital - Eyres Monsell - Fosse Park - Thorpe Astley - Glenfield Hospital - Beaumont Leys - Thurmaston - Netherhall	Monday - Saturday
Hospital Hopper	Beaumont Centre - Glenfield Hospital - Leicester Royal Infirmary - Glenfield Hospital - Hamilton	Monday - Saturday
81	City Centre - Evington Highway Rd	Monday - Saturday
83/83A	City Centre - Fosse Rd South or Aylestone Gilmorton Av	Monday - Saturday
162	City Centre - New Parks - Tatlow Rd	Monday - Saturday
20	City Centre - Leicester Royal Infirmary - Westcotes - Braunstone Blackmore Drive	Monday - Saturday
Hop!	City Centre free circular	Monday - Saturday
16	City Centre - Gamel Rd loop	Monday - Saturday
20	City Centre - Leicester Royal Infirmary - Westcotes - Braunstone Blackmore Drive	Monday - Saturday
87	Leicester - Eyres Monsal via Sturdee Rd	Monday - Saturday
13	Leicester - Glenfield Rd - Glenfield	Monday - Saturday
74	Leicester - Anstey Lane - Anstey	Monday - Saturday

Network connectivity standards – coverage and frequency

90. The rationale for ongoing financial route support is based on agreed partnership network connectivity standards on:
    - Overall bus connectivity across all City households – all routes
    - Network frequencies for the 30 Mainlines

91. Overall connectivity of the current Leicester Buses network is estimated as 98% of City Councils households Leicester being within 500m walking distance of a direct daytime service (Monday – Saturday) to the City Centre. The remaining 2% is inaccessible to conventional bus services due to parking or road configurations.

92. The Mainlines *minimum* frequency standards are:
    A. Every 30 minutes daytime Monday to Saturday
    B. Every 60 minutes evening Monday to Saturday
    C. Every 60 minutes daytime Sunday

93. The table below shows the frequencies for each Mainline route in April 2026.

Leicester Buses Network						
Frequency by Mainline route						
Company	**Route**	**Terminus**	**Mainline Route Group**	**Mon-Sat Daytime Frequency**	**Mon-Sat Eve Frequency**	**Sunday daytime Frequency**
FirstBus	4	Rushey Mead	**1**	10	60	20
Arriva	5/5A/X5	Melton Mowbray	**2**	15	60	30
Arriva	6/6A	Thurmaston	**2**	15	0	0
Centrebus	24	Birstall and Barrow	**3**	30	0	0
FirstBus	13	Glenfield	**4**	15	60	60
FirstBus	14	Braunstone Frith	**5**	15	60	30
FirstBus	14A	Beaumont Leys	**5**	15	60	30
FirstBus	15/16	Goodwood	**6**	7	30	15
FirstBus	17	Highfields	**7**	12	0	30
Centrebus	21T	Thorpebury	**8**	30	60	60
FirstBus	21	Thurmaston	**8**	30	0	0
Centrebus	22	Evington	**9**	10	60	30
FirstBus	25/26	Mowmacre Hill	**10**	15	50	30
Arriva	27/28	Ratby	**11**	30	60	60
Arriva	29/29A	Swadlincote	**11**	30	60	60
Arriva	31/31A	Oadby	**12**	15	30	30
Arriva	53	Thurnby Lodge	**13**	15	30	30
FirstBus/Arriva	37/38/38a	Thurnby Lodge	**13**	7.5	50	30
Arriva	44/44A	Knighton - Wigston	**14**	15	60	60
Arriva	47/48	South Wigston	**15**	12	30	30
Arriva	158	Nuneaton	**16**	30	0	60
Central Connect	Novus Direct	New Lubbesthorpe	**16**	30	60	30
FirstBus	18	Braunstone	**16**	20	0	60
Stagecoach	148	Nuneaton/Coventry	**16**	30	60	60
Arriva	50	Narborough	**17**	20	30	30
Arriva	51	Braunstone	**17**	20	30	30
Centrebus/CC	20	Blackmore Dr	**17**	30	0	60
FirstBus	54	Beaumont Centre/Goodwood	**18**	12	50	15
Arriva	58/58A	Hamilton	**19**	15	60	30
FirstBus	74	Anstey	**20**	15	60	60
Arriva	84	Lutterworth	**21**	30	60	60
Arriva	85	Blaby - South Wigston	**21**	30	60	60
FirstBus	88/88E	Eyres Monsell	**22**	15	60	60
FirstBus	88A	Saffron Cross Roads	**22**	15	0	60
Arriva	104	Fosse Park - Thorpe Astley	**23**	15	60	30
Arriva	126/127	Shepshed	**24**	15	60	30
Centrebus	Hop!	City Centre Orbital	**25**	10	0	0
Centrebus	Hopper	Hospitals via City Centre	**26**	30	60	60
Centrebus	Orbital 40N	Outer Orbital North	**27**	30-60	0	0
Centrebus	Orbital 40S	Outer Orbital South	**27**	30-60	0	0
Roberts	PR1	Meynalls Gorse P&R	**28**	15	0	0
Roberts	PR2	Enderby P&R	**29**	15	0	0
Roberts	PR3	Birstall P&R	**30**	15	0	0

94.Those Mainline routes shown in yellow above currently fall below the relevant frequency standard for all residents across the Flexi area.

95. In addition, the partnership has a key frequency standard for the core shared urban sections of each Mainline. This is applied to the 25 Mainline which regularly stop and serve the City Centre. (ie excludes limited stopping services such as Park & Ride). These are the services used by the majority of City residents.

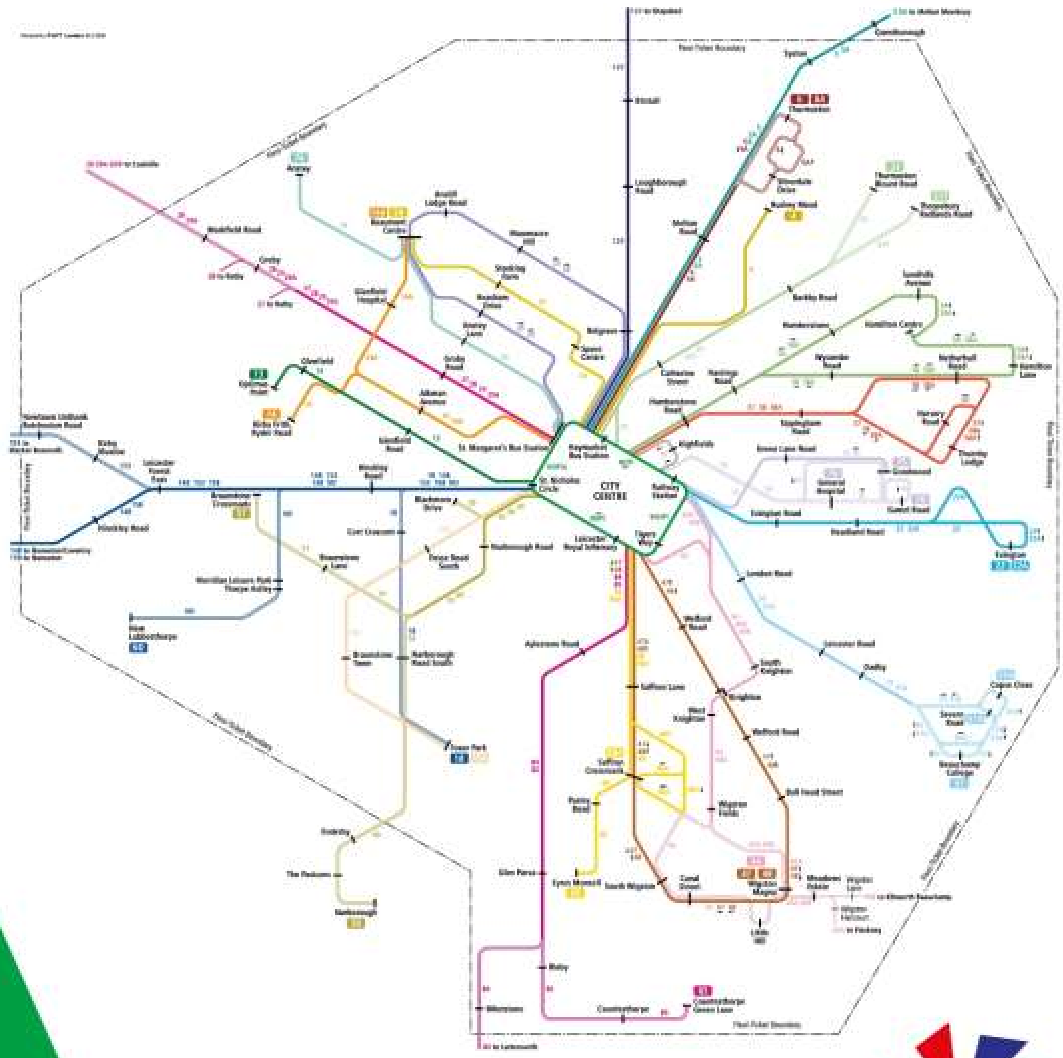
96.The simplified map below shows combined frequencies on Mainline shared sections - now improved by integrated timetabling, fares and ticketing. These have the following standards:

- Monday-Saturday daytime frequency of every 15 minutes or better
- Monday-Saturday evening frequency of every hour or better
- Sunday daytime frequency of every hour or better

97. For 2026/27, there is a trial to increase the frequency of the 13 and 74 services, to give the following network position for these 25 mainlines.

leicester frequent bus routes

	Monday to Saturday		Sunday
Frequency	Daytime	Evening	Daytime
(single line)	Every 15 mins or better	Hourly or better	Hourly or better
(double line)	Every 20-30 mins	See timetable	See timetable



one network

electric frequent reliable
easy great value

leicester buses
www.leicesterbuses.co.uk

New projects proposed

98. Below is a summary of the proposed new projects planned using grant funding received for the period 2025/6 – 2029/30.

2026 -30 Scheme Period - Summary Work Packages	
Work Package	**Aim**
60 electric buses on Arriva and Centrebus routes	**Electric**
28 electric buses on remaining commercial routes	**Electric**
12 buses on expanded supported routes	**Electric**
Frequency enhancements to achieve minimum network standards	**Frequent**
Park and ride extensions - evening weekdays and to LRI	**Frequent**
Further timetable integration - commercial routes	**Frequent**
Eastern corridors bus priority and parking management	**Reliable**
Signal priority for late running buses	**Reliable**
Orbital pinchpoints - north and south Orbital routes (40S and 40N)	**Reliable**
New website - to inc Flexi retail and real time	**Easy**
Integrated printed stop information and frequencies	**Easy**
Real time expansion - remaining stops	**Easy**
No Flexi fare rise 2026 - thereafter just inflation	**Great Value**
Further Flexi fare discounts - child/student/adult	**Great Value**
Discounted Family Flexi day ticket scheme	**Great Value**

99. More detail on each area, together with an indication of the timing and the budget of DfT bus grant, is shown below. For some projects additional funding from other sources – such as operator investment or developers - is proposed.

100. Those items marked TBD are currently unfunded but are included should further funding become available.

Electric – greening the fleet

Leicester Enhanced Partnership Plan 2026-30				
Agreed Programme for Grant Spend				
No.	**Area**	**Plan Period**	**Revenue Est pa**	**Capital Est**
1	**Electric buses x56 - on Arriva 37,104,6,58,84,85,87,44,49,31,153,X3**	**2025-26**	**0.00**	**7.3**
2	**Electric buses x4 - on Centrebus route 22**	**2025-26**	**0.00**	**0.7**
3	**Train Station - multi-line real time bus information display in ticket foyer**	**2025-26**	**0.00**	**0.0**
4	**Electric buses x6 - on remaining subsidised routes : 81,83,162,20**	**2026-27**	**0.00**	**2.4**
5	**Electric buses x4 - expansion Orbital subsidised routes**	**2026-27**	**0.00**	**1.6**
6	**Real time stop information displays and totems - further x150 stops**	**2026-27**	**0.00**	**1.0**
7	**Real time stop information displays and totems - further x150 stops**	**2027-30**	**0.00**	**0.9**
8	**Passenger information systems - on bus and stop/station renewals**	**2027-30**	**0.00**	**1.4**
9	**Electric buses x2 - for Park and Ride expansion**	**2027-30**	**0.00**	**1.1**
10	**Electric buses x8 - spare buses Thurmaston Depot**	**2027-30**	**0.00**	**1.8**
11	**Electric buses x12 - remaining other Arriva depot routes**	**2027-30**	**0.00**	**2.1**
12	**Electric buses x4 - remaining commercial Centrebus routes**	**2027-30**	**0.00**	**0.7**
13	**Electric buses x4 - for Central Connect Novus Direct**	**2027-30**	**0.00**	**0.7**
14	***Electric buses x4 - for Hospital Hopper frequency enhancement***	***TBD***	***0.00***	***2.1***
15	***Autonomous buses trial - Hop! (own)***	***TBD***	***0.00***	***3.0***

101. The continued priority is to convert the existing network to electric. This will be done through:

- grant funding to complement commercial bus operators' investment in electric buses;
- the purchase of a council fleet of electric buses for use on financially supported bus services.

102. Thereafter, funding will be used to complement the planned expansion of the network in relation to the Orbital and Park and Ride.

103. Should further funding become available, coupled with additional operational revenue funding, additional buses will be purchased for the Hospital Hopper routes. In addition, it is possible that there may also be an opportunity for funds to trial the automation of the Hop! service.

Frequent – network development

No.	Area	Plan Period	Revenue Est pa	Capital Est
Leicester Enhanced Partnership Plan 2026-30				
Agreed Programme for Grant Spend				
No.	**Area**	**Plan Period**	**Revenue Est pa**	**Capital Est**
16	**First 21/Centrebus 21T frequency enhancement through joint timetable**	**2025-26**	**0.00**	**0.0**
17	**First 13 and/or First 74 frequency enhancement**	**2026-27**	**0.40**	**0.0**
18	**PR1 and PR3 route extension to Leicester Royal Infirmary**	**2026-27**	**0.20**	**0.0**
19	**PR2 timetable evening extension to 9pm weekdays**	**2026-27**	**0.14**	**0.0**
20	**Ashton Green connectivity trial**	**2026-27**	**0.20**	**0.0**
21	*Orbital 40 frequency enhancement to every 30 mins (40N or 40S)*	*TBD*	*0.40*	*0.0*
22	*Evening and Sunday frequency enhancements - 10 remaining Mainlines*	*TBD*	*1.50*	*0.0*
23	*Orbital 40 route/timetable enhancement to every 15 mins*	*TBD*	*1.00*	*0.0*
24	*Hospital Hopper frequency to every 15mins*	*TBD*	*0.85*	*0.0*
25	*Hop! timetable Sunday extension*	*TBD*	*0.20*	*0.0*

104. The development of the network will fall into the following workstreams:
- Increase frequencies on routes 13, 74 to the Monday -Saturday daytime frequency standard of every 15 minutes. This is in line with strategic growth in the conurbation.
- Continuation of route integration across operators on all Mainlines, including the existing 9 corridors already integrated via the use of legal partnership agreements.
- Extending Meynells Gorse and Birstall P&R services to serve the LRI and assist in its planned expansion;
- Trialling P&R services to provide evening weekday service for LRI staff and sporting events;
- Provide new bus provision for Ashton Green in line with the growth of this new housing development to the north-west of the conurbation;

105. If any further revenue funds are forthcoming, these will be focussed at:
- Increasing Orbital frequency from every hour to every half hour. This requires both significant ongoing revenue support and additional capital investment in

more electric buses. Following covid there is now a stronger business case for this intervention support:
  - the outer ring road bus modal share has fallen from 7% to 4.9% since 2019;
  - over 85% of employment is now outside the City Centre;
  - continued growth of Glenfield Hospital and Fosse Park;
  - ring road traffic congestion is rising and spreading between the peaks;
  - orbital traffic growth is impacting on radial bus movements at unsegregated junctions.
- improving provision on Sundays (to every 60 mins) and weekday evenings (every hour) on Mainlines currently falling below this standard.
- increasing the Orbital frequency to every 15 minutes;
- extending operations of Hop! to Sundays;

106. Ongoing and additional revenue expenditure to support the network will be subject to regular 'best value' review, the support level per trip together with the strategic impact on assisting access to key facilities and sustainable development.

Reliable – more bus priority and traffic management

Leicester Enhanced Partnership Plan 2026-30				
Agreed Programme for Grant Spend				

No.	Area	Plan Period	Revenue Est pa	Capital Est
26	Evington Road - bus stop enforcement cameras, new parking restrictions	2025-26	0.00	0.0
27	Abbey Lane (A6) - Camera enforced red route	2025-26	0.00	0.0
28	Gleneagles Avenue / Nicklaus Road - Re-balanced signal timings for buses	2025-26	0.00	0.0
29	Vaughan Way / Highcross Street - Signals adjustment for left turning buses	2025-26	0.00	0.0
30	Freemens Common Rd/Counting House Rd - Signals works to aid buses	2025-26	0.00	0.0
31	Melbourne Rd/ Needham St (route 17)	2026-27	0.00	0.1
32	Swain Street/St Georges Way junction - yellow box	2026-27	0.00	0.0
33	Bus Lane enforcement – network wide with camera enforcement car	2026-27	0.00	0.0
34	Queens Rd/Clarendon Park Rd- Upgrade signals to extend bus green time	2026-27	0.00	0.0
35	Evington Rd/Evington Dr (route 22)	2026-27	0.00	0.1
36	Orbital Pinchpoints - phase 1 South/East (route 40S)	2027-30	0.0	1.5
37	Orbital pinchpoints - phase 2 North/West (route 40N)	2027-30	0.0	1.5
38	Humberstone Rd/Uppingham Rd corridor (routes 38/56)	2027-30	0.0	1.5
39	North East Leicester transport corridor phase 2 (route 54)	2027-30	0.0	1.0
40	Sparkenhoe Rd/St Peters Rd & Saviours Rd (route 16)	2027-30	0.0	0.5
41	Glenfield Hospital Area/Groby Rd (routes HH, 14, 26-29)	2027-30	0.0	1.0
42	Smart signalisation - network phase 1	2027-30	0.0	1.0
43	Bus lane enforcement cameras - expansion of estate	2027-30	0.0	0.1
44	*Soar Valley Way (routes PR2 and 40S)*	*TBD*	*0.0*	*3.0*
45	*East Park Road/Green Lane Rd (route 15)*	*TBD*	*0.0*	*2.0*
46	*Aikman Avenue (route 14)*	*TBD*	*0.0*	*2.0*
47	*Smart signalisation - network phase 2*	*TBD*	*0.0*	*1.0*
48	*Bus priority review - Melton Rd, Narborough Rd, Welford Rd and Saffron Lane*	*TBD*	*0.0*	*2.0*

107. As already noted in the existing EP Plan, there is already an extensive network of locally enforced bus priority across the City, which has been further enhanced over the past three years.

108. Punctuality results are improving but still have some way to go to get to their target of 95% of all journeys being on time.

109. It is for this reason that further capital expenditure will be prioritised to the following areas:

- Orbital pinch points to the south and east of the City;
- Parking rationalisation and bus assistance review on most eastern bus corridors;
- Bus priority review on Humberstone Rd/Uppingham Rd;
- Bus priority review – Glenfield Hospital area;
- Automated signal priority for late running buses, concentrating on the eastern bus corridors.

Easy – a better passenger experience

Leicester Enhanced Partnership Plan 2026-30

Agreed Programme for Grant Spend

No.	Area	Plan Period	Revenue Est pa	Capital Est
49	**Co-ordinated printed stop timetables at all stops across the network**	**2026-27**	**0.10**	**0.0**
50	**Leicester Buses branding and targetted promotional programme phase 1**	**2026-27**	**0.00**	**0.2**
51	**Leicester Buses Website - expansion to include ticket sale and real time phase 1**	**2026-27**	**0.00**	**0.2**
52	**Accessible stops - complete network and remaining 40**	**2027-30**	**0.00**	**0.0**
53	**Leicester Buses branding and targetted promotional programme phase 2**	**2027-30**	**0.00**	**0.4**
54	**Leicester Buses Website - expansion to include ticket sale and real time phase 2**	**2027-30**	**0.20**	**0.5**
55	*Safety, stop accessibility and security programme*	*TBD*	*0.1*	*1.0*
56	*Racecourse P&R site*	*TBD*	*0.1*	*4.0*
57	*Update onboard ticketing and real time and display systems*	*TBD*	*0.0*	*2.0*
58	*New citywide real time information system renewal - bus stations*	*TBD*	*0.0*	*4.0*

110. As already noted above there have already been significant improvements in a range of measures aimed at improving the passenger experience over the last three years.

111. The main areas left to address over the next 4 years are:

- Completing provision of real time information all boarding stops
- Improved website with comprehensive ticket sales function and real time information to stop level;

- Delivering a range of promotions under the collective Leicester Buses branding focussing on plan deliverables;
- Completion of accessible bus stops with raised platform at all boarding stops

Great Value – improved ticketing and discounted fares

Leicester Enhanced Partnership Plan 2026-30				
Agreed Programme for Grant Spend				
No.	**Area**	**Plan Period**	**Revenue Est pa**	**Capital Est**
59	**Discounted Flexi Scheme - freeze at 2025 prices**	**2026-27**	**0.45**	**0.0**
60	**Discounted Flexi Add-on Scheme from outside Flexi area**	**2025-26**	**0.00**	**0.0**
61	**Discounted Flexi Scheme - remove premium and single operator products**	**2026-27**	**0.55**	**0.0**
62	**Contactless ticketing systems expansion and development**	**2026-27**	**0.00**	**0.0**
63	**Discounted Flexi Scheme - targetted discount scheme**	**2026-27**	**0.70**	**0.0**
64	**Smartcard Pass issuing system - concessions, scholars, others**	**2026-27**	**0.00**	**0.0**
65	*Discounted Fares Scheme - Non central businesses*	*TBD*	*0.40*	*0.0*
66	*Discounted Flexi Scheme - discount stage 2*	*TBD*	*1.20*	*0.0*

112. Intervention to support certain fares is proposed to address the following aspects:

- Unlimited travel adult day and week tickets have risen 41% and 29% respectively since covid due to rising operational costs.
- The adult single fare cap has risen in April 2025 by 50% from £2 to £3.
- There is a commercial premium averaging 10% for interchange between bus operators, allied with a reduction in bus modal share to outer-lying workplaces where access by bus requires interchange from 7% to 5%. This premium also makes it very difficult to integrate bus services and to efficiently increase available frequency across the network.
- Family or group fares remain uncompetitive compared with car park charges in the City Centre for visits of less than 6 hours. It is this market that has seen significant decline since April 2025.

- There has been erosion of the commercial discount for young persons over time, with the day fare now being over 80% of the adult equivalent.

113. Subsidising any of the above comes at a considerable expense, particularly as the City Council already pays for free travel for the elderly, disabled, unemployed and eligible school children, costing around £9.5m pa.

114. With the current funding available it is therefore proposed to:
    - Discount the full range of Flexi all-operator day and period tickets to below their single operator equivalent level. This will simplify the offer and increase available frequency across the network for all relevant ticket holders. It will include an expanded range of Flexi Student tickets;
    - Targeted Flexi Family fare reductions.

115. If further revenue funds become available it is proposed to support:
    - discounted Student Flexi fares;
    - further discounted Flexi Family tickets
    - discounted Adult Flexi fares to non-central workplaces;

Integration measures

116. It is proposed that there will be a joint change programme in each integration area to ensure all partners move to full network integration by 2030:
    - One electric bus standard - including advanced accessibility standards;
    - One optimised network - with co-ordinated timetables and agreed minimum frequency standards across the day;
    - One ticket range – with common definitions of fare and ticket types for all operators;
    - One brand - promoting a quality standard across the whole network;
    - One website – with complete dynamic real time information and ticket retail;
    - One information and promotional system – both printed and electronic.

Governance

117. As already noted, this EP Plan 2026-30 has been given an early cut-off date of 2030. This is because the imminent local government review is likely to significantly alter delivery boundaries and responsibilities, necessitating a different bus planning and delivery process beyond 2030.

118. This also explains why this EP Plan 2026-30 is not a joint one with the County Council to enable it formally cover the whole conurbation.

Partnership legislative tools – Enhanced Partnership Agreements

119. Given the significant progress made with the previous EP Scheme 2022-25, it has been decided to continue with a similar governance regime for until 2030, as long as this momentum is maintained. This uses the enhanced partnership scheme model, backed up by a series of voluntary partnership schemes relating to network integration and ticketing.

120. Under an enhanced partnership scheme, the commercial network remains de-regulated and operators set fares, timetable and route and take all commercial risk. However, there is a collective agreement across operators and the City Council, that sets a level joint investment and a set of quality and integration standards across all areas. Once agreed, no operator is able register a service which does not adhere to these standards and level of investment.

121. The proposed new EP Scheme 2026-30 will set out to deliver an agreed set of commitments – by both operators and Leicester City Council over the period 2026-30 covering these main areas of intervention:
   - maintaining all existing commitments in relation to supported bus services, bus lane and parking enforcement, bus stop infrastructure, bus stations, park and ride sites, real time systems and discounted fares;
   - significant additional investment in all areas of the bus travel – more electric buses, improved frequencies, enforced bus priority and traffic management

measures, improved real time information at bus stop and new targeted discounted ticketing;

- further integration measures. Operators will be expected to relinquish various individual commercial freedoms in order to push forward on significant network integration in – bus routes/timetables, fares and ticketing, branding, information, websites and bus specification. It is this aspect that makes the partnership an EP Scheme.

122. A summary of the proposed EP Scheme 2026-30 commitments are shown below.

TABLE 1

City Council Commitments

No	Desciption	Date sta	Date End	Scope	Min Revenue Cost PA	Min Capital Cost
1	Zebra Local Grant Scheme round 1	01/08/2026	31/03/2027	60 buses	£ -	£ 7,950,000
2	Zebra Local Grant Scheme round 2	01/04/2027	31/03/2029	25 buses	£ -	£ 6,000,000
3	Electric Buses on Tendered Services - existing	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	24 buses	£ -	£ -
4	Electric Buses on Tendered Services - new	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	12 buses	£ -	£ 4,500,000
5	Financial support to commercial network	01/08/2026	31/03/2029	upto 10 services	£ 400,000	£ -
6	Tendered services financial support	01/08/2026	31/03/2029	upto 10 services	£ 150,000	£ -
7	Network integration management support	01/08/2026	31/03/2029	1 process	£ -	£ -
8	Bus Lanes and Gates -retain	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	70 bus lane/gate TROs	£ -	£ -
9	Bus priority schemes, traffic management scheme	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	5 new schemes	£ -	£ 6,000,000
10	Bus lane and bus gate enforcement system	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	70 bus lane/gate TROs	£ -	£ 100,000
11	Red Routes - keep, enforce and review for new measu	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	6 red route TROs	£ -	£ -
12	Smart signalling to assist bus operations	01/04/2027	31/03/2030	1 system	£ -	£ 1,000,000
13	Roadworks mangement system support	01/08/2026	31/03/2029	1 process	£ -	£ -
14	Car park pricing policy	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	1 policy	£ -	£ -
15	Bus shelters - existing	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	500 shelters	£ -	£ -
16	Bus shelters - new	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	40 shelters	£ -	£ 400,000
17	Bus Stop totems	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	1000 totems	£ -	£ -
18	Bus Stop totems	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	200 totems	£ -	£ 600,000
19	Accessible bus stops	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	1300 stops	£ -	£ -
20	Accessible bus stops	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	50 stops	£ -	£ 200,000
21	Bus stop cages and TROs	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	250 stops	£ -	£ 50,000
22	Bus stations facilities and staffing	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	2 stations	£ -	£ -
23	Park and Ride Sites - lighting,rates and maintain	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	3 p&r sites	£ -	£ -
24	Real time information system	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	1 system	£ -	£ -
25	RTI stop displays and text to speech facility	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	500 boarding stops	£ -	£ -
26	RTI stop displays and text to speech facility	01/04/2027	31/03/2030	200 boarding stops	£ -	£ 2,000,000
27	Leicester Buses Website	01/04/2027	31/03/2030	1 system	£ -	£ 900,000
28	Printed information at bus stops	01/04/2027	31/03/2029	1000 stops	£ -	£ 100,000
29	Leicester buses branding and promotions	01/04/2027	31/03/2030	various	£ -	£ 600,000
30	ENCTS discretionary fares scheme	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	1 scheme	£ -	£ -
31	Unemployed discretionary fares scheme	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	1 scheme	£ -	£ -
32	Flexi One Ticket discretionary fares scheme trial	01/08/2026	31/03/2027	1 scheme	£ 1,000,000	£ -
33	Flexi Child/Student/Family discount scheme trials	01/04/2027	31/03/2029	upto 3 schemes	£ 600,000	£ -
				TOTAL	£ 2,150,000	£ 30,400,000
				Revenue grant to maintain existing areas /Capital contingency	£ 3,210,000	£ 1,000,000

TABLE 2

Operators Commitments

No	Desciption	Date start	Date End	Scope
1	Minimum Euro 6 standard inc spares	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	Network
2	Enhanced accessibility standards	01/04/2028	31/03/2030	Mainline services
3	Electric bus operation on all Mainline services	01/04/2028	31/03/2030	Mainline services
4	Network unique route numbering	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	Network
5	Network co-ordination across all operators timetabl	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	Network
6	Socially necessary local services - additional notific	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	Network
7	Registration change dates - four times	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	Network
8	Yearly delay audit by route by delay type	01/04/2027	31/03/2030	Network
9	Yearly feasibility assessment of each pinchpoint	01/04/2027	31/03/2030	Network
10	Yearly progress report on operational delays	01/04/2027	31/03/2030	Network
11	Network branding on all channels specified	01/09/2026	31/03/2030	Network
12	Information at bus stops	01/04/2027	31/03/2030	Network
13	Websites - networks and ticketing	01/09/2026	31/03/2030	Large operators
14	Network promotion exclusivity -LB branding toolkit	01/09/2026	31/03/2030	Network
15	Bus Stations departure fees	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	Network
16	Passenger Charter participation	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	Network
17	Ticket definition standardisation	01/04/2027	31/03/2030	Network
18	Participate in Flexi Scheme	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	Network
19	Drop single operator day and period tickets	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	Network
20	Participate in all discretionary ticketing schemes	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	Network
21	Contactless ticketing	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	Network
22	Single &All-operator adult day/weekly fare capping	01/08/2026	31/03/2030	Network

123. It is planned that such a scheme can be fully agreed and approved to run from August 2026 to March 2030. This is subject to:

- discussions and progress between all parties in relation to all proposed interventions;
- a fully legally compliant enhanced partnership scheme agreement being drawn up and signed off by all parties.

Franchising governance option

124. An alternative governance method using the franchising model has been given some initial consideration and will be kept under review as a possible option for the

future should this be necessary. Under such a model the City Council specifies all aspects of the network, including routes, timetables, fares and branding. It then tenders franchises for batches of routes which can then only be operated by the chosen operator under the conditions set in the franchise. As such, all aspects of integration are specified and controlled from the outset.

125. There are several options related to risk sharing that can be taken with the franchise, but all involve considerable additional risk and management costs to the City Council – on top of that it already takes for discounted fares, supported services and maintenance of infrastructure.

126. In addition, the process of specifying the franchising lots and then ensuring continual adherence to specification will require considerable expansion to City Council staffing levels.

127. There is the possibility that franchising might free up some additional savings from the existing profits made by each current commercial operator. However, it is currently felt that the profit margins built into each franchise bid, together with the additional ongoing management costs of a franchising system could outweigh such potential savings.

128. It is therefore viewed that the enhanced partnership scheme approach could deliver all the benefits that an alternative franchising model can achieve, but more quickly, with shared risk, joint ownership and for less cost. However, this will depend on the scale and detail of each of the integration measures that will get overall operator approval for inclusion in the EP Scheme 2026-30.

Additional devolved local powers – City Council view only

129. It is also viewed by the City Council that for the EP Scheme 2026-30 to be as effective as the franchising model - in terms of local determination and ownership - then the following additional local powers are required:

- The bus registration process needs to be devolved from the nationally run Traffic Commission to locally run Leicester City Council;

- The Bus Service Operators Grant needs devolving from the Department for Transport to Leicester City Council;
- Reimbursement funds for the £3 fare cap needs devolving from the Department for Transport to Leicester City Council.

130. This additional devolution will give Leicester City Council a stronger ability to:

- ensure that all agreed commitments are delivered and continually adhered to in a fair and consistent way across all operators. Funds can be released to operators by the City Council at the same level as present as long as the EP Max Scheme 2026-30 standards are met;
- discount and integrate the complete inter-linked range of integrated tickets, including single fares. Currently it can only effectively discount day and period tickets, with day ticket price discounts constrained to being set above the national return fare cap (currently £6);
- give full clarity to local passengers, residents, councillors and stakeholders on how their bus needs can be met on a local level. Currently there are too many key direct national processes with the operator which bypass the City Council and therefore the whole Leicester Partnership.

131. It is proposed that during 2026/27 discussions are held with the Department for Transport to progress the devolution of all of these areas. It is accepted that this might take some time to establish but early indications are that it might be possible to effect these changes by April 2027 at the earliest.

132. It should also be noted that all such additional powers would be devolved within a Franchising model. Therefore, devolving them as part of an EP Scheme 2026-30 would enable the performance of this governance model to be properly compared to the option of Franchising model within any future governance review process.

Targets and evaluation

133. The Partnership has agreed stretched but achievable targets for 2030 covering the key performance metric as follows:

EP Plan				
Monitoring Key Indicators				
	2019/20	**2025/26**	**Target 2030**	**Definition**
Passengers (m)	25.63	23.3	28.19	Trips boarding in City Council area
Satisfaction	86%	88%	90%	Transfort Focus Independent surveys
Electric	0	190	274	Electric buses on EP defined Leicester Network
Frequent	28	29	30	Mainlines to minimum 30-minute frequency Mon-Sat daytime
Reliable	84%	85%	90%	Within registation standard of 1minute early, 5 mins late
Easy	76%	84%	90%	Transport Focus satisfaction figures - bus stops
Great Value	57%	63%	75%	Transport Focus satisfaction figures - value for money

134. Reporting on all progress will continue to take place along the following lines:

- Quarterly EP Panel and EP Board meetings – to operators, key stakeholders and lead members and officers;
- Leicester Buses website and social media updates;
- Transport Focus continuous satisfaction surveys;
- Department for Transport annual monitoring work, including Bus Connectivity Assessments;
- Annual Enhanced Bus Partnership Mayoral updates.