



Leicestershire County Council

Passenger Transport Policy

December 2023

Foreword

Leicestershire County Council recognises the important role that passenger transport services have to play in keeping people and places connected, especially in a rural county such as Leicestershire. Use of such services rather than private car travel also helps reduce congestion and limit emissions.

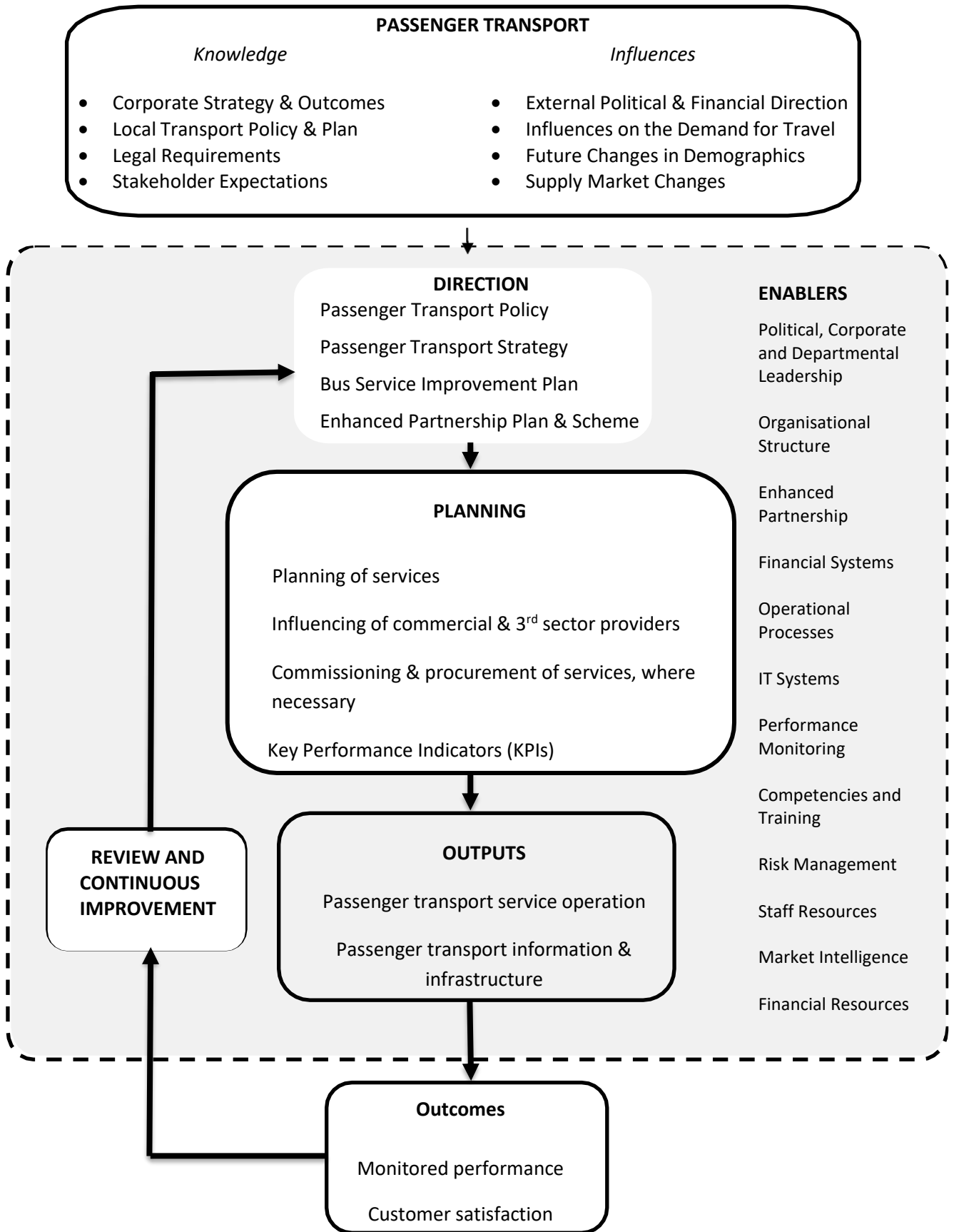
Facilitating and supporting an appropriate mix of services, working with communities and commercial and 3rd sector operators, is a key aim for the Council, against a backdrop of a challenging funding situation. These will meet statutory requirements, help Leicestershire County Council deliver on its strategic priorities and outcomes, and support the people of Leicestershire in accessing key services.

Our Passenger Transport Policy and the associated Passenger Transport Strategy have been developed to help us to take account of these needs and challenges.

1. The Passenger Transport Framework

- 1.1 The framework shown in Figure 1.1 places our approach to supporting passenger transport in Leicestershire in context. The Passenger Transport Policy and Strategy sets the context against which service delivery and performance will be monitored on an ongoing basis. The framework reflects current Government thinking on service development, delivery and performance.

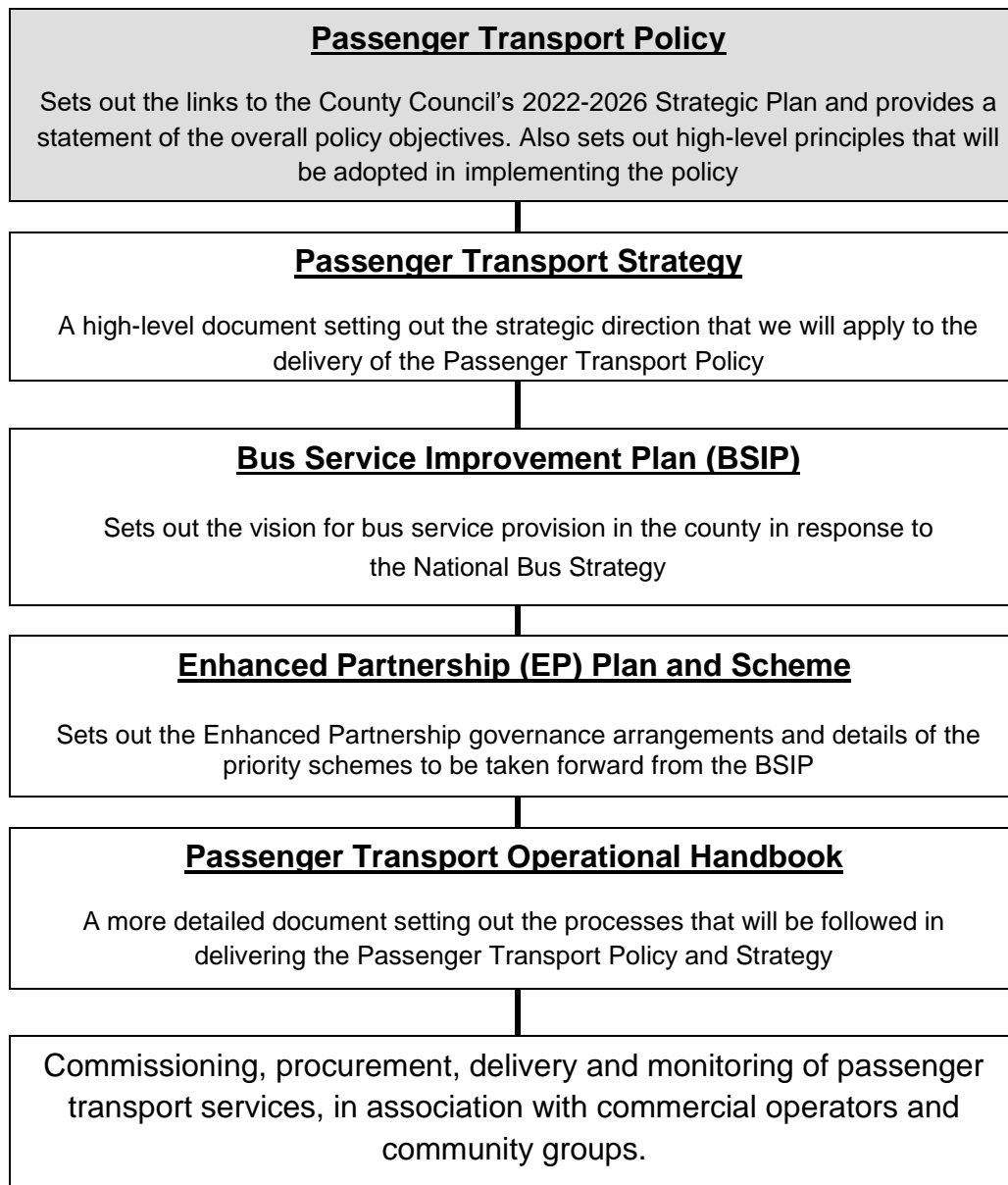
Figure 1.1: Passenger Transport Framework



2. The Document Framework

- 2.1. This Policy and the associated Passenger Transport Strategy document sit within a document framework that is similar to those used in other areas of responsibility covered by the Council's Environment and Transport Department. Figure 2.1 below shows the framework within which these documents sit.

Figure 2.1: Document Framework



Passenger Transport Policy

3. Purpose

- 3.1. This document sets out the policy objectives and key supporting principles that guide the County Council's support for road-based passenger transport services across Leicestershire. It supersedes the County Council's 2018 Passenger Transport Policy.
- 3.2. The policy is intended to meet the statutory duties placed on the authority and address priority needs within budget constraints. The relevant statutory duties and powers of the County Council can be summarised as follows:
 - Outside London, operation of local bus services was largely opened to commercial market forces by the Transport Act 1985, making bus service operation a profit-driven business. However, Section 63(1)(a) of the Act explains that local transport authorities must "secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the council considers it appropriate to secure to meet any public transport requirements within the county which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose." Leicestershire County Council is a local transport authority within the meaning of the 1985 Act.
 - The County Council, in common with other transport authorities, is required to formulate, from time to time, general policies on the type of services it proposes to secure under the above duty – as covered in this document and the associated Passenger Transport Strategy document.
 - As a local transport authority, the County Council is provided with powers by the 1985 Act to:
 - Enter into an agreement providing for service subsidies for the purpose of securing any service.
 - Take any measures that appear to be appropriate for the purpose of, or in connection with, promoting the availability and operation of public passenger transport.
 - The Transport Act 1985 also requires an authority in exercising its power to promote the availability of public passenger transport services, to have regard to the needs of older or disabled people.
 - The Transport Act 2000 (amended in 2008) introduced the means for local authorities and bus operators to enter into bus quality partnerships. It also required authorities to consult on, and determine, what local bus information should be made available to the public and the way in which

it should be made available. Where satisfactory arrangements for information provision cannot be made with operators, authorities are required to make information available.

- The Bus Services Act 2017 provides local transport authorities with a wider set of tools to use to address 'inefficiencies' in their local bus markets and to work with commercial bus operators to provide better local bus services for passengers. It includes provision for improving local bus quality partnerships, making franchising (the London model of bus operation) easier, and improving information provision.

3.3. In March 2021, the Government published its National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better'. The Strategy recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic had caused a significant shift away from public transport to the private car. The Strategy proposed radical improvements to local public transport as a 'quick, easy and cheap' way to avoid a car-led recovery from Covid.

3.4. In response to the Government's National Bus Strategy published in March 2021, the Leicestershire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) was published in October 2021 by Leicestershire County Council and its partners. The BSIP set out the vision for bus service delivery in the county:

Our future bus network will seamlessly connect people with employment locations, education and training opportunities, key services, other transport modes, leisure destinations and, of course, each other; in a way that is reliable, affordable, environmentally friendly, easy-to-use, safe and inclusive.

3.5. The overall aim of the BSIP is:

To increase bus usage (compared with pre-pandemic levels) across the county through improved, financially sustainable, higher standard services that better meet the needs of Leicestershire residents, employees and visitors – making bus travel a preferred choice for travel around the county and travel into the City of Leicester. This will enable long term clean growth, supporting delivery of the Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan.

3.6. Following submission of the BSIP, an Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan and Scheme were 'made' on 31st March 2022. The EP Plan details governance arrangements for the Enhanced Partnership which will deliver the BSIP, whilst the EP Scheme highlights the priority projects to be implemented by the Partnership. The EP Plan and Scheme documents can be viewed [here](#). This Passenger Transport Policy has been amended to reflect the new priorities in the BSIP.

4. Scope

- 4.1. This policy is applicable to road-based general passenger transport services within Leicestershire. This covers a broader spectrum than just conventional 'big bus' services and includes passenger transport solutions using a range of appropriate smaller vehicles. Rail travel, commercial taxi and private hire services, and specialist transport services for education and social care purposes, are not included as these are dealt with in other policy documents.

5. The Passenger Transport Policy and Supporting Principles

- 5.1. Implementation of the policy and supporting principles set out below and the associated Passenger Transport Strategy will be evidence-based. The Council will work through the Enhanced Partnership as appropriate to achieve beneficial outcomes for passengers. Objective data and information will be sought to underpin decisions made.

Policy

PTP1	<i>Leicestershire County Council will continue to encourage residents, workers and visitors to use passenger transport services in preference to the private car wherever possible, because of the environmental and decongestion benefits of doing so.</i>
PTP2	<i>Leicestershire County Council will encourage commercial transport operators to meet as many of the access needs of Leicestershire residents, workers and visitors as possible through provision of commercial transport services.</i>
PTP3	<i>Leicestershire County Council will encourage community organisations to provide transport services for their communities that address access needs that are not covered by commercial passenger transport services. The aim will be for such services to be self-financing; however, the Council will provide some level of grant support (within affordability constraints) to help facilitate the establishment and operation of such services where necessary.</i>

PTP4	<i>In the planning of new development in Leicestershire, the County Council will work with district and borough councils (planning authorities) to ensure that viable, long term accessibility by passenger transport is properly considered and, where appropriate, contributions are secured to facilitate such accessibility.</i>
PTP5	<i>Where commercial, development-supported or community passenger transport services do not meet high priority needs for some residents, the County Council may consider intervening by offering organisational, operational or financial support for alternative passenger transport services. Leicestershire County Council is not a major passenger transport provider to the general public and will generally only consider intervening where there is demonstrable and significant unmet demand¹ for transport services that serve the high priority journey purposes of employment and training, food shopping and primary healthcare. Financial support will only be offered subject to affordability, value-for-money and other criteria defined within the Passenger Transport Strategy.</i>
PTP6	<i>The County Council will ensure all eligible elderly and disabled people are able to travel at concessionary rates on registered local bus in accordance with statutory requirements.</i>
PTP7	<i>The County Council will work with commercial and community service providers to ensure that up-to-date, clear and accurate information is available to the public on passenger transport services through a range of appropriate information channels.</i>

Supporting Principles

SP1	Leicestershire County Council will engage with local communities that approach us, to identify any demonstrable and significant unmet demand for travel for the high priority purposes identified in PTP5. The Council will also work with these local communities to discuss ways of shaping passenger transport services to best meet local needs.
SP2	Leicestershire County Council will engage with commercial passenger transport service operators to explore ways of shaping their services to

¹ The level of passenger demand meeting this test will depend on the nature and cost of the particular potential service or part-service under consideration.

	meet local needs, and maximising use of those services.
SP3	Leicestershire County Council will engage with community organisations to explore ways of shaping community transport services to meet local needs, and of maximising use of those services.
SP4	The County Council will work with operators and neighbouring authorities to seek to encourage use of low emission technologies on passenger transport vehicles operated in Leicestershire.
SP5	The County Council will work with operators and neighbouring authorities to seek to promote passenger transport use over the private car through behavioural change initiatives. This will help passenger transport services remain or become commercially viable.
SP6	The County Council will seek additional funding for operating or promoting passenger transport through competitive bids to appropriate specific funds established by Government from time to time.
SP7	The County Council will seek user and non-user feedback on passenger transport services that are supported financially, in line with customer satisfaction monitoring proposals outlined in the BSIP.
SP8	The County Council will require operators of financially supported services to provide accurate monthly data on use of the services, in order to ensure that they still represent value for money.
SP9	Commercial transport service providers and community transport service providers will be expected to take the lead role in providing public information on services that they operate.
SP10	Where the Council supports passenger transport services financially, it will seek to maximise value from those services, including looking at their potential to carry school and college attendees.

6. How this Policy Supports the County Council's Strategic Aims

- 6.1. Our corporate vision is set out in the County Council's Strategic Plan, which highlights five strategic outcomes for the County over the four-year period from 2022 to 2026.
- 6.2. The Passenger Transport Policy is intended to help deliver the five priority outcomes that guide all activities of the County Council. The five priority outcomes which essentially give a target vision for the future of Leicestershire are:
 1. Clean and Green: the need to protect and enhance the environment and tackle climate change
 2. Great Communities: Leicestershire to have active and inclusive communities in which people support each other and participate in service design and delivery
 3. Improved Opportunities: all children and young people get the best start for life and have the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential, regardless of their circumstances
 4. Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure: use local innovation and skills to build a productive, inclusive and sustainable economy at the cutting edge of science, technology and engineering
 5. Safe and Well: ensuring that people are safe and protected from harm, live in a healthy environment and have the opportunities and support they need to live active, independent and fulfilling lives
- 6.3. The ways that the Passenger Transport Policy can help deliver these outcomes are set out below:

Clean and Green

The Passenger Transport Policy will help to minimise the negative environmental impact of transport on the environment by:

- Continuing to support public transport services
- Supporting public transport services in a way which best meets the level of need to avoid operating under-used 'big bus' services where appropriate
- Encouraging commercial operators to invest in zero emission vehicles and preparing bids for funding of such vehicles and supporting infrastructure

Great Communities

The Passenger Transport Policy will contribute to good quality, thriving neighbourhoods by helping to ensure that local communities are encouraged and supported in contributing to their own passenger transport solutions.

Improved Opportunities

The policy will contribute to good life chances for all by:

- Helping people in Leicestershire who don't have access to a private car reach key services and facilities by passenger transport, where that is possible within affordability and value-for-money criteria
- Contributing to accessibility of workplaces and training / education centres that help deliver good life chances
- Helping to ensure that people are aware of the passenger transport opportunities available to them by working with commercial and community partners to make information readily available

Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure

The Passenger Transport Policy will help to deliver the right conditions for a thriving local economy that can attract inward investment. In particular, it will help:

- Minimise congestion on Leicestershire's roads (since passenger transport vehicles generally take up less space per person than private cars) with the consequent delays and journey time variability that hinder business operations
- Help to ensure accessibility of workplaces and other economic centres for all, particularly those without access to a private car
- Support commercial bus operators, with consequent direct local employment benefits

Safe and Well

The Passenger Transport Policy will seek to ensure that, where finance allows, local public transport services are provided in areas where commercial services are not viable, to ensure that people are able to access the facilities and services they need to lead fulfilling, independent lives.

7. Supporting Delivery of the County Council Local Transport Plan

- 7.3. The County Council recognises the very important role that buses and other passenger transport services have to play in keeping people and places connected, especially in a largely rural county such as Leicestershire. The County Council has declared a Climate Emergency with the target of achieving 'net zero' across the county. Enabling our communities to use sustainable buses and other passenger transport services helps improve air quality in Leicestershire's towns and villages, limits carbon emissions and helps reduce congestion.
- 7.4. The County Council also recognises the significant challenge that it faces in delivering services against a background of reduced local government funding and uncertainties around long term funding specifically for passenger transport services. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out this challenge and identifies where the County Council intends to deliver efficiencies and savings in the medium term.
- 7.5. The County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP), alongside the Leicestershire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and associated Enhanced Partnership (EP) Scheme, sets out the Council's aims and ambitions to support Leicestershire communities to access and use buses and other passenger transport services.
- 7.6. The implementation of the Passenger Transport Policy underpinned by the Passenger Transport Strategy will support the delivery of the LTP and its goals by setting out the County Council's approach to supporting passenger transport in Leicestershire. The current LTP will be assessed and reviewed where appropriate to ensure that it remains fit-for purpose in light of Government guidance and legislation and as part of the development of specific plans and strategies that support it.

8. Policy Review

- 8.3. This policy is closely aligned to other developing policy documents across Environment and Transport services. It will be subject to regular review and sense-checking while these documents are in development.
- 8.4. Following this revision, the policy will be considered for review within 5 years or earlier if there are significant changes in local circumstances, national policy or guidance that affects passenger transport.