Stoke-on-Trent
Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

October 2021

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City of Stoke-on-Trent

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1 Introduction

1.1 Powering Up Stoke-on-Trent

“Stoke-on-Trent is the national litmus test for the Government’s levelling-up ambitions.”

This is the focus of the City’s prospectus to secure partnership and investment, as set out in Powering Up Stoke-on-Trent, published in February 2021. Priority 1 in this prospectus is transport, which identifies four fundamental building blocks, including that “intracity public transport improvements are needed to connect the population to economic opportunities in a sustainable way”. This is reinforced by the fact that despite 30% of households in Stoke-on-Trent having no access to a car, bus use within the city has continued to decline and general traffic congestion is a widespread problem throughout the highway network. This poor local connectivity severely limits the ability to ‘level up’ access to skills and work opportunities.

“Powering Up” identifies that central to this ambition is “a radical upgrade in our local bus offer, with improvement to routes and provision of low and zero-carbon vehicles”.

In reporting progress in delivering this prospectus in early summer 2021, the City Council was able to point towards the development of a refreshed Transport Strategy being underway, informed by feedback from the City Forum. This will set out a full plan for an integrated, high performing transport system to connect residents and businesses to the many economic opportunities that the city is creating. In respect of buses, the first steps to improve the bus network include 50 vehicles being upgraded to high environmental standards.

Furthermore, in June 2021 the City Council published its commitment to create an Enhanced Bus Partnership[1] for the city that will allow improvement in the planning of routes and timetables, and plan for the continued upgrade of the vehicle fleet, including the potential introduction of zero emission technology to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality. Reflecting the importance of the bus network, the City’s successful Transforming Cities Fund bid includes significant investment to improve the bus network, and a large part of one of Stoke-on-Trent’s four Levelling Up bids, albeit unsuccessful, was dedicated to

[1] In response to a directive from the DfT following the release of the National Bus Strategy in March 2021, City of Stoke-on-Trent Council published a statutory notice in June 2021 that it intends to prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan for local buses. An Enhanced Partnership is a statutory partnership between one or more Local Transport Authorities and one or more of their local bus operators that sets out how they will work together to deliver strategic bus outcomes within the defined geographical area.

buses, including better access, digital information, and improved traffic flow to reduce journey times.

1.2 Bus Back Better, and the Bus Service Improvement Plan

The first step in moving towards an Enhanced Partnership is the development of this Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The BSIP for Stoke-on-Trent has been prepared in response to the DfT's National Bus Strategy "Bus Back Better", released in March 2021, and takes forward the City's programme to support buses. The National Bus Strategy seeks "to reverse the recent shift in journeys away from public transport and encourage passengers back to bus".

The National Bus Strategy seeks to grow bus patronage, both in the short term in building back after the pandemic, and through increasing patronage in the medium to long term. It also seeks to increase the modal share of bus, particularly in respect of mode shift from the private car. In the local delivery of the National Bus Strategy through its BSIP, the City Council is setting targets for journey times, reliability, passenger numbers, and passenger satisfaction.

As highlighted in Powering Up, the bus is a fundamental component in the delivery of a sustainable and inclusive transport network for Stoke-on-Trent, and each year people in Stoke-on-Trent make around 9 million journeys on local bus services[2], making buses the most highly used form of public transport in the city. Nevertheless, the national trends of falling patronage and declining services can be seen locally in Stoke-on-Trent. Over the decade to 2019, the number of bus passenger journeys in Stoke-on-Trent has declined by 41% which is the second largest decline out of all local authorities in England, behind only Warrington (48%)[3].

Hence Powering Up identifies that a radical upgrade of the local bus offer is needed. This need for radical upgrade reflects the Government's recognition in the National Bus Strategy that the combination of post-pandemic financial support and current bus passenger numbers provide local transport authorities and operators with a significant opportunity to reset service patterns and networks, simplify fares and ticketing, and address the many traffic bottlenecks that affect the reliability and punctuality of local bus services.

1.3 Response to the pandemic

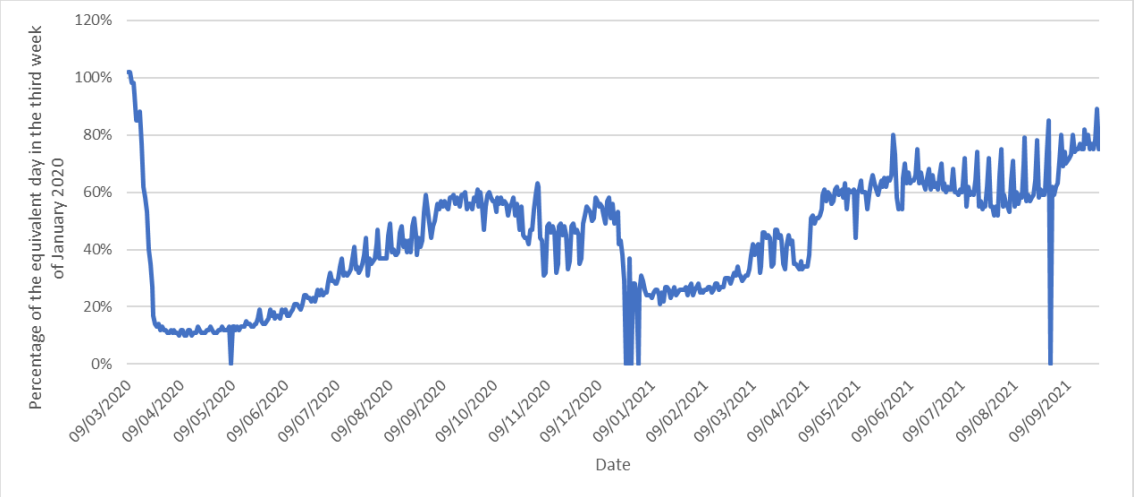
Bus network mileage across the North Staffordshire conurbation is currently reduced to about 90% of its pre-pandemic level. Passenger numbers are at approximately two-thirds of pre-COVID-19 levels. Figure 1.1 shows bus patronage levels for Great Britain (excepting London) during the pandemic as a percentage of bus patronage on the equivalent day in the third week of January

[2] Department for Transport dataset BUS109, Passenger journeys on local bus services by local authority, England, 2018/19

[3] Department for Transport dataset BUS109, Passenger journeys on local bus services by local authority, England, 2009/10 to 2018/19

2020. The rate of return of passengers in the City has been observed to be slower than the national trend.

Figure 1.1: Great Britain Bus Patronage During the Pandemic (Excluding London)



In response to falling passenger numbers during the first lockdown, the Government provided the discretionary COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) restart scheme and continued to pay out Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) at pre-COVID-19 levels. In July 2021 it was confirmed that further bus recovery funding was to run through to the end of financial year 2021/22. Consequently, until April 2022, bus operators will therefore receive financial support through the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) to enable levels of service to be maintained.

The ambition of the National Bus Strategy goes above and beyond getting bus use back to what it was before the pandemic; the aspiration of the Strategy is to reinvigorate bus provision across the country, increase patronage and raise buses' mode share. Yet, this can only be achieved through ensuring that buses become an attractive alternative to the car for far more people, shifting the perception of bus from being the 'mode of last resort' to the preferred mode of choice for a large proportion of the population.

Moving forward in Stoke-on-Trent there are therefore four coherent stages to improving the service level in line with this ambition:

- Maintain the current level of service once the BRG finishes in April 2022
- Increase the level of service to 2019 pre-pandemic level
- Further increase the level of service to meet the aims of the National Bus Strategy and grow patronage with turn up and go services on key corridors and regular services throughout the rest of the commercial network, including evenings and Sundays

- Addition of a supporting network that will provide services closer to where people live – essentially a reintroduction of and improvement to the previous Cityrider network.

This BSIP sets out Stoke-on-Trent City Council's approach to delivering this change as we recover from the pandemic.

1.4 Partnership and engagement

The BSIP has been prepared in collaboration with local bus operators across the North Staffordshire network, especially including First Potteries, D&G Bus, and Arriva. There has been engagement with local Elected Members, and with the City's three MPs, together with engagement with neighbouring Staffordshire County Council. There has also been engagement with the wider community, including questionnaires to seek views on buses, and targeted focus groups with key stakeholders. This wider engagement has sought to address the diverse needs of local communities, including business representatives, people with disabilities, and in-depth sessions addressing both the views of young people, and separately those of older communities. For instance, focus groups with students in the 16-18 age group at the Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College and a follow up questionnaire yielded around individual 300 responses, and a focus group with the North Staffordshire Pensioners Convention provided insight into the challenges for older people.

In summary, the list of organisations and individuals that took part comprises of the following:

The Quality Bus Partnership

- Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- First Potteries
- D&G Bus
- Arriva
- Stantons of Stoke
- Scraggs Coaches

Neighbouring Local Authorities

- Staffordshire County Council

Local politicians

- Members of Parliament for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton), Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon) and Stoke-on-Trent North (Jonathan Gullis)
- Councillor Daniel Jellyman (Deputy Leader of the Council, and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Infrastructure and Heritage))

Representatives of disabled people

- Stoke-on-Trent Area Network for Disability (STAND)

Business representatives

- Avanti West Coast
- Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce

Education

- City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College

Other organisations

- North Staffordshire Pensioners Convention
- Royal Stoke University Hospital

Letters and emails of support for the BSIP can be found in Appendix A.

Local communities consistently told us that the local bus service:

- Is slow and uncompetitive in comparison to the car, and can be unreliable (reliability is one of the top three reasons identified by young people who don't use the bus)
- Can be infrequent and doesn't have sufficient spread of services, especially in evenings and on Sundays when there are often no services in some areas, limiting travel choices (inconvenience of service is the second of the top three reasons for young people who don't use the bus)
- Lacks direct service to key destinations outside the city centre, and often requires the use of two buses to fulfil the journeys that people wish to take, including journeys to education and to work
- While there are some exceptions, typically the buses are old and unattractive. The buses are often perceived to be uncomfortable, dirty, and over-crowded at peak times, which can be a particular issue for people with physical and other disabilities
- Can be expensive and doesn't represent good value for money (the final of the top three reasons for young people who don't use the bus)

The top five actions that would encourage respondents to the Sixth Form College survey to use the bus more are:

- Journey times on bus services made quicker
- Delays on bus services reduced via increased bus priority at junctions and more bus lanes to make journey times more reliable
- Better information at bus stops and shelters e.g. Real Time Passenger Information screens (showing time until next buses)
- Improved cleanliness of buses
- Website with timetables, ticket information, Real Time Passenger Information, for all bus operators

On the positive side, existing customers told us that:

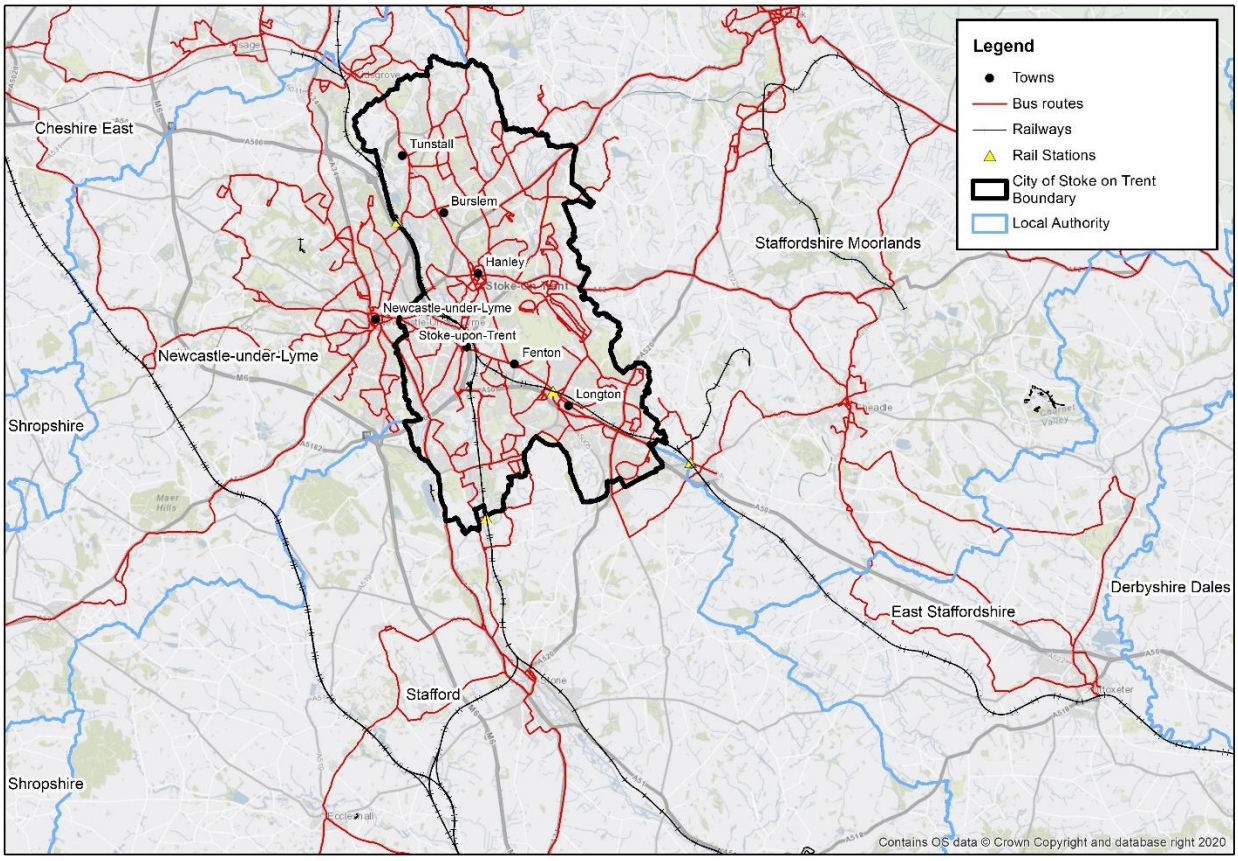
- Drivers are usually friendly and helpful
- Aspects of the ticketing such as a good multi-operator ticket, and tap-on tap-off, work well
- Aspects of information provision, including the First App, work well. Though some people, especially those who don't currently use the bus, find understanding of the offer difficult. The absence of real-time information and on-board messages can be problematic.

1.5 Coverage and content of the BSIP

Stoke-on-Trent will have a single Enhanced Partnership, and therefore this BSIP addresses the whole of the local authority area covered by Stoke-on-Trent City Council. We recognise, however, the permeable nature of the boundary within North Staffordshire and the consequent integration of the two areas in relation to travel patterns. Whilst both Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council wish to have ownership of their own BSIPs to enable timely and effective delivery, they will continue to work together to develop respective Enhanced Partnerships and Schemes which acknowledge and maintain the contiguous North Staffordshire bus network and ensure that the proposed improvements are consistent throughout the network where possible.

Figure 1.2 shows the coverage of this BSIP by illustrating the City of Stoke-on-Trent Boundary. The map shows the bus routes across North Staffordshire to illustrate the relationship of the city and its bus network with the wider conurbation. While the majority of services are heavily focused within the city, we will work closely with Staffordshire to ensure a consistent approach to the bus network.

Figure 1.2: Coverage of the Stoke-on-Trent BSIP



1.6 Duration of the BSIP, and next steps

The BSIP presents the strategic outline plan for improvements to the local bus offer and is intended to be followed by the formal establishment of an Enhanced Partnership scheme by April 2022 in accordance with the Bus Services Act 2017 and the National Bus Strategy. The BSIP has been prepared to cover in detail the period extending to the end of financial year 2024/25 but includes interventions that will necessarily extend beyond this timeframe in their scope and development.

Further relevant guidance on Enhanced Partnerships is expected from the Department for Transport in due course. A more detailed, Enhanced Partnership Plan which provides more information on the specific interventions and the role of each constituent member of the Enhanced Partnership will be developed to accompany the signing of the partnership agreement by April 2022.

The BSIP is intended to be an evolving plan, with regular reviews, and will form an integrated part of wider plans for transport and growth in the city, including the city's forthcoming Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan which will be incorporated into the emerging Local Plan. This will incorporate the contents of this BSIP as the core strategy for bus for the authority.

The document will therefore be reviewed on an annual basis ahead of each financial year, initially for a period of five years. At present we expect the first review to be in early 2023, although an update of this first issue may be required to better align with funding guidance expected before the establishment of the Enhanced Partnership. The Government also requires that progress against BSIP targets be reported every six months.

2 Local Transport Plan 3 (2011/12 to 2025/26)

2.1 Document summary

Stoke-on-Trent's Third Local Transport Plan (LTP3), published in 2011, reflects on some of the key transport achievements in the local authority under LTP2, such as the Cycle Stoke initiative, a new community rail partnership, a Bus Partnership initiative, and bus priority measures at the A34 Stone Road/Mayne Street junction. Key goals in LTP3 are:

1. Economy: improving the local economy through increasing productivity for existing businesses and encouraging new investment by making the area more attractive
2. Environment: improving the local environment through reducing the impact of traffic (air and noise) and moving towards more sustainable transport technology and modes, coupled with improving the appearance of local areas
3. Health: caring for local health through improving access to transport, transport safety and encouraging walking and cycling.

LTP3 highlights several issues and constraints that impact the provision of bus services in Stoke:

- The core bus network is based on services to and from the City Centre (Hanley) and Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre. This contrasts with the travel to work pattern, which is dispersed, leaving many people with no direct home to work bus service.
- The bus network has the appearance of an unconcentrated network with lots of bus services penetrating lots of discrete small residential locations.
- Post-16 education and hospital sites are generally outside the traditional centres.
- Some new residential areas are being built on brownfield sites and are often on the edge of town, requiring the diversion or extension of existing services, or new services.
- Poor physical access to services is a major barrier to using buses, particularly, pedestrian routes to and from the bus stop.
- Punctuality and reliability remain an issue, primarily caused by the interaction of services with traffic on major routes. There are currently limited lengths of bus priority in Stoke-on-Trent. The constrained nature of the local road network makes it very difficult to provide significant amounts of bus priority.
- Driver shortage is an issue.

- There is a need for easy to understand, clock-face timetables with the need to account for variable running times at different times of the day or week. The issue is complicated further by the requirements of punctuality imposed by Traffic Commissioners.
- The City has a number of congestion hot-spots.

LTP3 identifies several opportunities for the bus offer in Stoke-on-Trent, specifically in relation to integration with pedestrian and cycle journeys. LTP3 states several policies aimed at:

- Implementing a transport hierarchy that considers pedestrian needs first, cyclists and public transport second and car drivers third, recognising that there are likely to be compromises between users in some locations; and
- Providing information on journey times by walking, cycling, bus and rail to encourage choice and highlight journey times by mode to encourage more people to use these modes.

2.2 Implications for Stoke-on-Trent City Council BSIP

Stoke-on-Trent City Council recognises the need to bring about a variety of changes to the transport network to achieve its goals relating to the economy, the environment, and the health of the population.

Improvements to the bus network can be fundamental to this, especially given private vehicles negatively impact on the environment though noise and pollution. The BSIP will consider the gaps in the existing bus network, especially connecting to key destinations such as employment, education, and healthcare opportunities.

The BSIP presents an opportunity to influence bus routes to currently under-served areas, such as those where new residential developments are planned, or key destinations such as hospitals and employment sites.

There are few bus priority measures currently in place in Stoke-on-Trent, although a number of red routes have recently been provided. Implementing new bus priority measures could prove integral to improving bus services in Stoke-on-Trent, enabling buses to avoid congestion and thus reduce journey times and improve journey time reliability – key factors influencing people's decision-making.

The BSIP can be used to bring about a uniformity to the bus network, with better marketing and timetabling to help customers access services.

The bus network offers clear scope for contributing towards the achievement of policy ambitions. The BSIP can help to sharpen the bus network service level to better support these policy aims.

The BSIP presents an opportunity to improve integration with active modes, enabling improved access and safety for everyone through improved, safe, secure, fully accessible waiting facilities.

3 Current bus offer

3.1 Introduction

Guidance provided by the Department for Transport requires that the BSIP addresses the following topics, which in turn will reflect the focus for future investment in bus across Stoke-on-Trent:

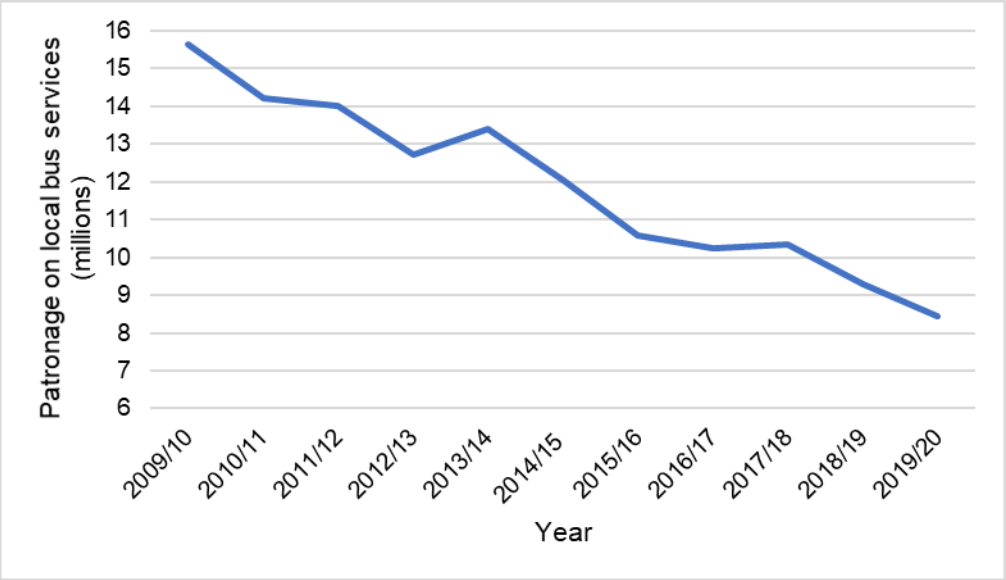
- Intensive services and investment on key corridors, with routes that are easier to understand
- Significant increases in bus priority
- Lower and simpler fares
- Seamless, integrated local ticketing between operators and all types of transport
- Service patterns that are integrated with other modes
- The local bus network presented as a single system, with clear passenger information
- Modern buses and decarbonisation
- Excellent customer service and a passenger charter
- Safe and accessible bus travel
- Demand-responsive and socially necessary transport
- Long-term transformation including Bus Rapid Transit.

This section therefore examines, in turn, the current offer in terms of each of these aspects, starting with bus networks and services.

3.2 Overall trends in bus use in Stoke-on-Trent

As highlighted in the introduction to the BSIP, over the decade to 2019 the number of bus passenger journeys in Stoke-on-Trent has declined by 41%, which is the second largest decline out of all local authorities in England. From 15.6m passengers in 2009/10 to a little over 9m a decade later, and finally to 8.4m in 2019/20, the decline in passenger numbers has been sharp, albeit exacerbated in 2019/20 by the pandemic. Figure 3.1 illustrates this decline, and as context to the targets for this BSIP the sections that follow amplify the evidence around the declining influence of bus in Stoke-on-Trent over several years.

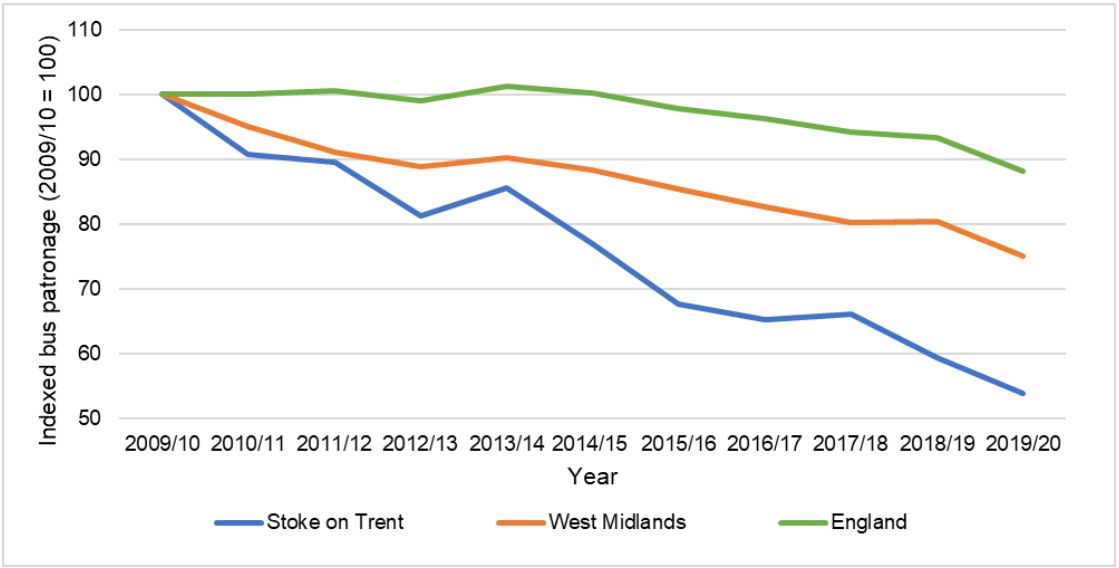
Figure 3.1: Patronage on Stoke-on-Trent local bus services (millions) 2009/10-2019/20



Source: DfT, BUS0109

Figure 3.2 provides a comparison of changes in patronage on local bus services in Stoke-on-Trent, the West Midlands and England. The rate of decline in Stoke-on-Trent is substantially greater than both the West Midlands and England.

Figure 3.2: Indexed bus patronage, 2009/10-2019/20



Source: DfT, BUS0119

For comparison, Table 3.1 shows the number of bus passenger journeys per head of population, prior to COVID-19, for a selection of comparable local

authorities (in size, and situation, including similar sized unitary authorities), and for the West Midlands region.

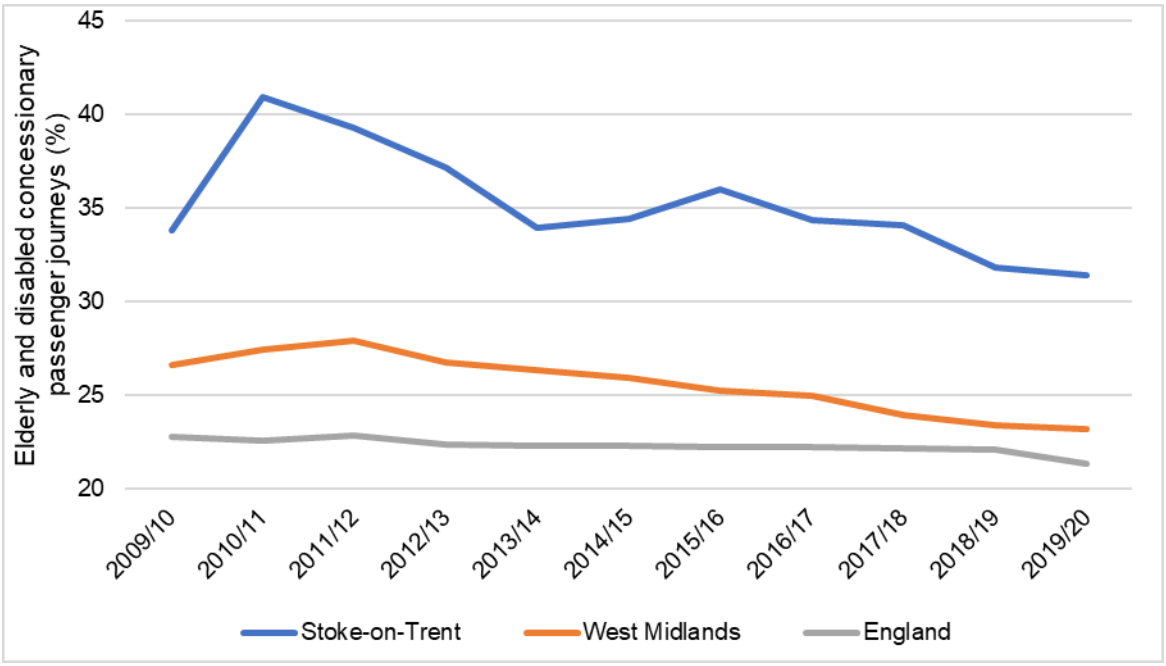
Table 3.1: Bus passenger journeys per head of population (2018/19)

Locality (selected comparators)	Bus journeys per head of population
Stoke-on-Trent	36.3
West Midlands	54.4
Derby	67.0
Leicester	74.6
Warrington	26.6
Luton	47.9
York	75.1

Stoke-on-Trent has the second lowest number of bus journeys per head of population of the local authorities shown in the table; only Warrington has a lower rate.

The proportion of Stoke-on-Trent bus journeys made by elderly and disabled concessions is high, illustrated in Figure 3.3, compared to the West Midlands and England as a whole.

Figure 3.3: Proportion of bus journeys made by elderly and disabled concessions



Source: DfT, BUS0113

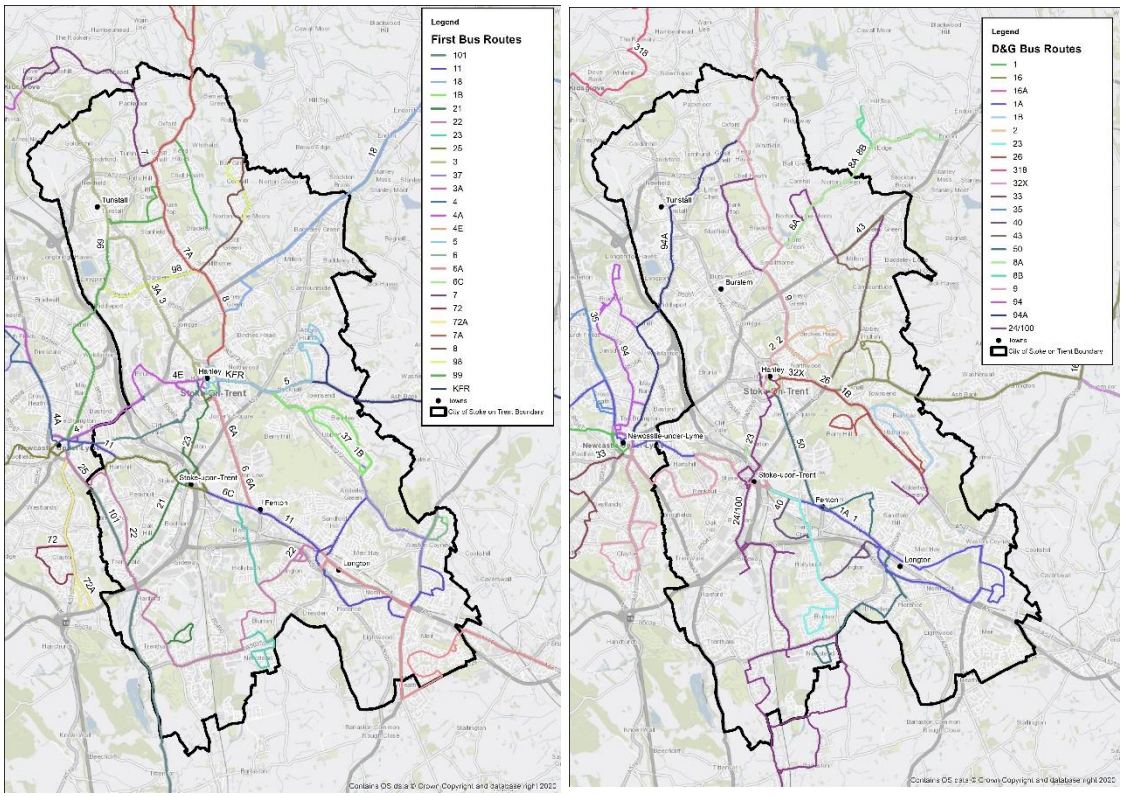
The analysis summarised above shows that there has been a significant decline in bus use in Stoke-on-Trent between 2009/2010 and 2019/20, and when compared to comparable areas bus use per head of population is low. This BSIP will seek to address these issues.

3.3 Current networks and services

There are currently 38 bus routes operating in Stoke-on-Trent. First Potteries operates the greatest number of routes – 17 in total representing more than 70% of the journeys operated on a typical weekday. D&G Bus operates 15 routes (representing roughly a quarter of daytime services), and several other operators run a small number of routes including national operator Arriva, which operates just one route – the 64 between the City Centre, Market Drayton and Shrewsbury.

Figure 3.4 shows the bus networks provided by the two main operators in Stoke-on-Trent, First Potteries and D&G Bus. This figure is provided in greater detail in Appendix B.

Figure 3.4: Current Bus Networks and Services – First Potteries and D&G Bus

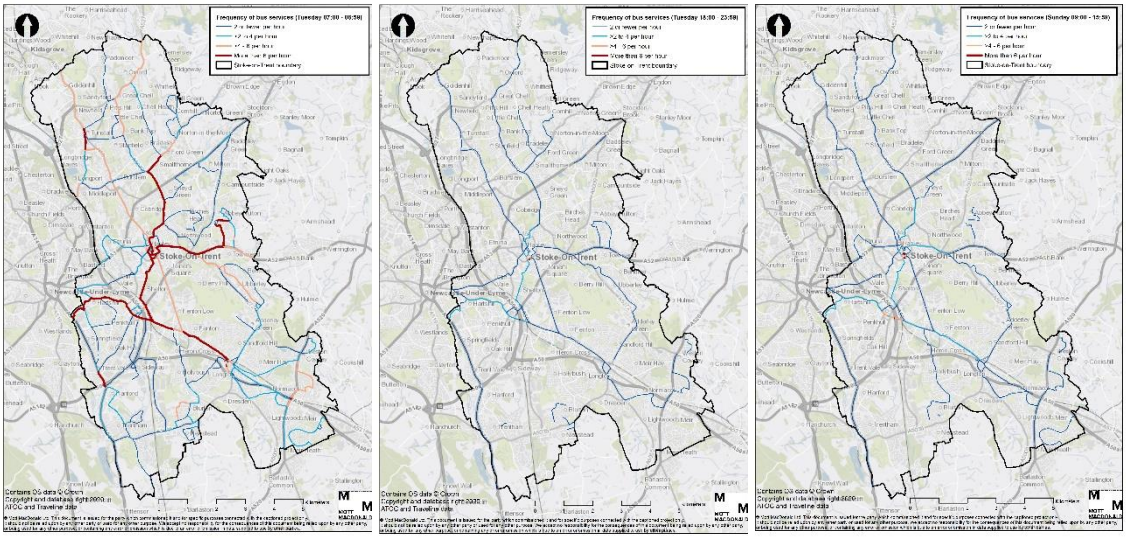


Source: Mott MacDonald

3.3.1 Frequency and accessibility of service

In combination, these services provide a frequency that is illustrated below for different time periods in Figure 3.5. This figure is provided in greater detail in Appendix C.

Figure 3.5: Bus Route Frequencies



Source: Mott MacDonald

This shows that in the weekday morning peak hour there are frequent bus routes in central areas of the city connecting the city centre with Fenton and Longton, Stoke-upon-Trent (and the rail station), Newcastle-under-Lyme, Burslem, and Bucknall. However, there are some parts of the city, especially to the south west, south east and north east of the city, where even in the morning peak, service frequency and choice is more limited.

At other times, the frequencies can become more limited, especially from early evening onwards, and on Sundays. This is illustrated above in the maps showing evening and Sunday frequencies, with a distinct absence of frequent, or any, bus services in many areas of the city after 6pm or on Sundays. This limits travel choices for many people at these times. This was a particular point of emphasis in feedback from stakeholders (see below in the next section on access to services). In addition, train operator Avanti West Coast emphasised the importance of connections with first and last trains in promoting a more integrated service offer.

3.3.2 Access to bus services

These limited services and frequencies results in some areas having poor access to bus services. Table 3.2 below identifies the proportion of residents in the city living within 400m of bus stops with service.

Table 3.2: Percentage of population within 'a short walk away, approximately 400m for most people, of a bus stop with services

Buses per hour	Tuesday AM Peak (07:00-09:00)	Tuesday Off Peak (19:00-20:00)	Sunday Daytime (09:00-16:00)
>6	25%	1.2%	1%
4-6	33%	18%	5%
2-3	29%	47%	28%
<2	3%	15%	30%
Not within 400m of bus stop or stop with services running during time period	10%	19%	36%

These data illustrate that there are significant numbers of people in the city that live beyond 400m walk of regular service, especially in evenings and on Sundays. More than a third of the population doesn't have access to any bus services on Sundays and only 6% has access to regular service of four buses or more an hour. Around one fifth of the population has no access on weekday evenings, with only a fifth having access to regular service of four buses or more an hour. Even in the weekday peak, around one in ten of the population lives more than 400m from any bus service, and around 40% don't have access to services of four or more buses an hour.

This is reinforced by stakeholders, from older people highlighting the absence of evening and Sunday services as one of their biggest barriers to travel with the alternative being much more expensive options such as taxis, to local employers at key locations such as the Royal Stoke University Hospital emphasising how poor services in the evenings limits travel choices for staff working on a variety of shift patterns. For those with bus options, infrequent off-peak service exacerbates the issue of long commute times for hospital staff working unsociable hours. In an economy that is heavily dependent on sectors with shift working, this is a major barrier.

3.4 Reliability, punctuality, and journey times

The National Bus Strategy highlights the need for more bus priorities, to help make buses faster and more reliable. In this section we examine the current performance of bus services in respect of punctuality, journey times, and congestion that leads to delays.

The reliance on car is evident, with around three-quarters of people who live and/or work in Stoke-on-Trent using a car to commute in 2011. Approximately 10% of people who live in Stoke-on-Trent trave to work by bus (based on 2011 Census data). The average distance travel to work by a Stoke-on-Trent resident (excluding those who work from home) was 7.9km in 2011. For those who travel

by car (either as driver or passenger), the average distance is 10.7km, whereas for bus it is 7.8km. This suggests that bus is seen as a less viable or attractive option over longer commuting distances.

3.4.1 Current bus service performance

Bus punctuality in Stoke-on-Trent has been examined using First Potteries data and evidence from the DfT (data set BUS902). These data indicate that in 2019 only 77% of bus services in Stoke-on-Trent ran on time. While this is the highest level of punctuality Stoke-on-Trent bus services have experienced since 2013, this remains below the West Midlands regional average of 81.5% and the national average of 83%.

More detailed examination of bus stop timing evidence illustrates that there are significant punctuality issues on some services. Examination of individual "stop events" occurring on time during the weekday evening peak in 2019 indicates that the 6A, 22 and 32 (now known as the "Kingfisher" service) services each failed to reach more than half the bus stops on time. Notably, the 6A is one of the 10 highest frequency services in the city, but also it is within the top 10 poorest performing services in terms of punctuality. The problem of unpunctuality, especially in peak traffic conditions, is severe.

3.4.2 Bus journey times

The journey times of bus services in comparison to equivalent car journey times when travelling between locations in Stoke-on-Trent are illustrated in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Average midweek daytime period journey times to Stoke-on-Trent city centre from selected locations**

Location	Journey time by car	Journey time by bus
Newcastle under Lyme	11 minutes	17 minutes
Trentham	13 minutes	18 minutes
Longton	16 minutes	20 minutes
Wolstanton	10 minutes	36 minutes (1 change)
Silverdale	16 minutes	46 minutes (1 change)
Keele	17 minutes	37 minutes (1 change)
Kidsgrove	15 minutes	30 minutes*
Tunstall	12 minutes	23 minutes
Stone	22 minutes	44 minutes*
Cheadle	20 minutes	33 minutes
Alsager	17 minutes	43 minutes *

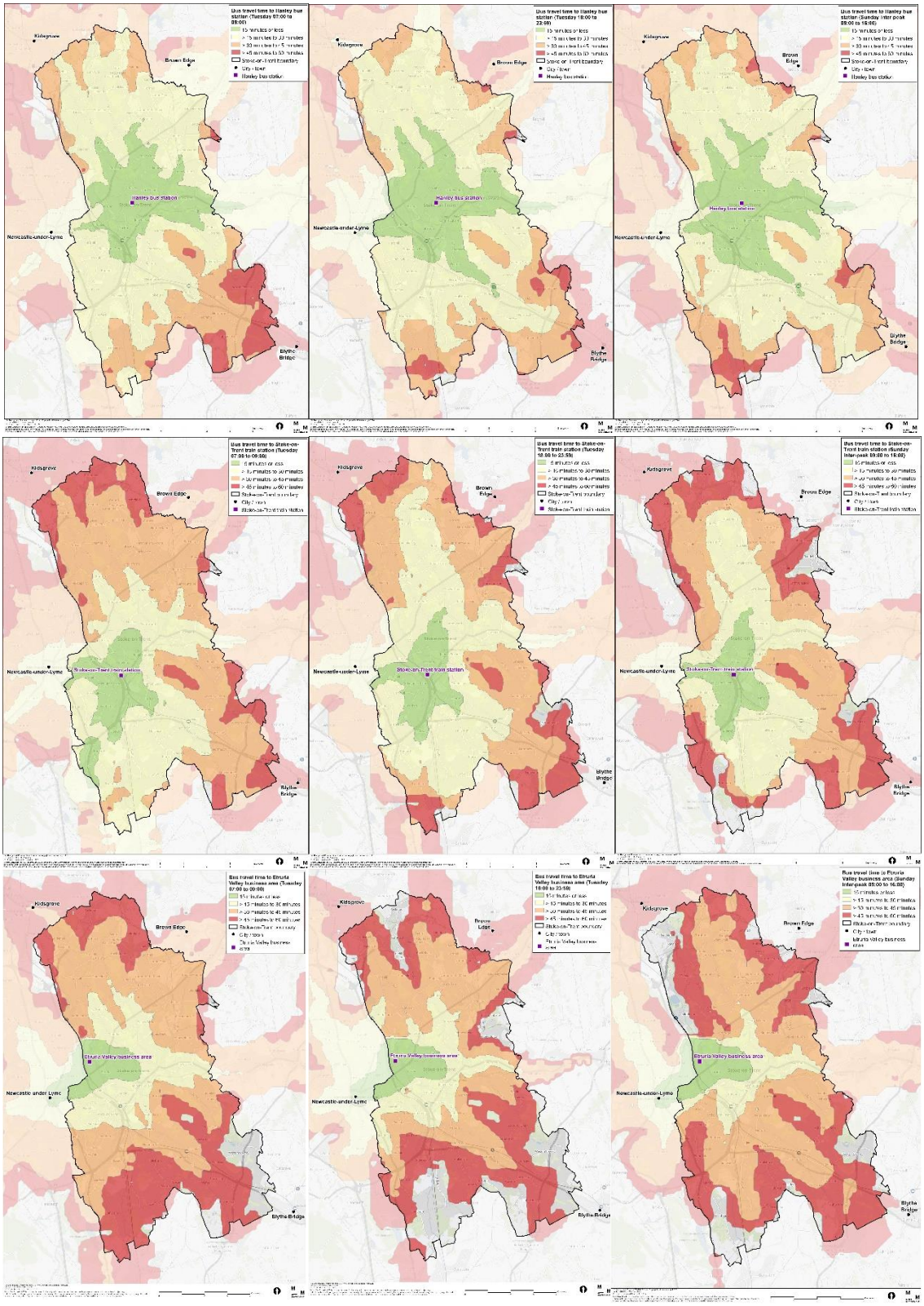
Note: * indicates where use of train for all or part of the journey is quicker than by bus alone. ** City Centre Bus station used as a point for Stoke-on-Trent city centre

More detailed analysis of bus journey times has been undertaken using TRACC software for three key destinations in Stoke-on-Trent to illustrate some of the issues in respect of bus journey times from communities across the city. TRACC software displays the longest journey time calculated in each time period. The key destinations for which this additional analysis has been undertaken are:

- City Centre Bus Station
- Stoke-on-Trent Rail Station
- Etruria Valley Enterprise Zone.

Bus travel times to these destinations have been calculated for several time periods, the results of which can been seen in Figure 3.6 below. This figure is shown in greater detail in Appendix D.

Figure 3.6: Bus Journey Times



Source: Mott MacDonald

This analysis shows that while bus travel times to the City Centre Bus Station are under 30 minutes for most of the city, as depicted by the green and cream colours in the maps, travel times to other locations can be much longer, including important destinations such as the city rail station in Stoke-upon-Trent (which is also near to several places of education including Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent College, and the Sixth Form College) and important employment areas.

There are some parts of the city, including for example the south-east of the city, where there are long journey times, even above an hour, to the city centre. These longer journey times are influenced by congestion in the peak. During off-peak and weekend periods this can be attributed to the absence of regular service in some areas, meaning that passengers must travel further to access an active bus stop in these periods. Travel times to and from the furthest points both north and south become much longer in the off-peak and weekend periods which is also likely to be because of the absence of frequent service.

The problems for areas outside the city centre are illustrated at Stoke-on-Trent Station. There are areas relatively close to the Station which have long bus journey times, including in the east of the city. For example, residential areas of Bentilee and Ubberley have journey times to Stoke-on-Trent Train Station of up to 45 minutes in all time periods. The same journey can be done in approximately 10 minutes by car. These longer journey times are likely to be caused by passengers having to travel into the City Centre Bus Station on one bus service before changing buses to get to the Train Station. This issue was highlighted by students from several parts of the city who attend Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College (which is adjacent to Stoke-on-Trent Train Station) as being a common problem that leads to unattractive and unreliable bus services. Similar issues exist at employment sites such as Etruria Valley.

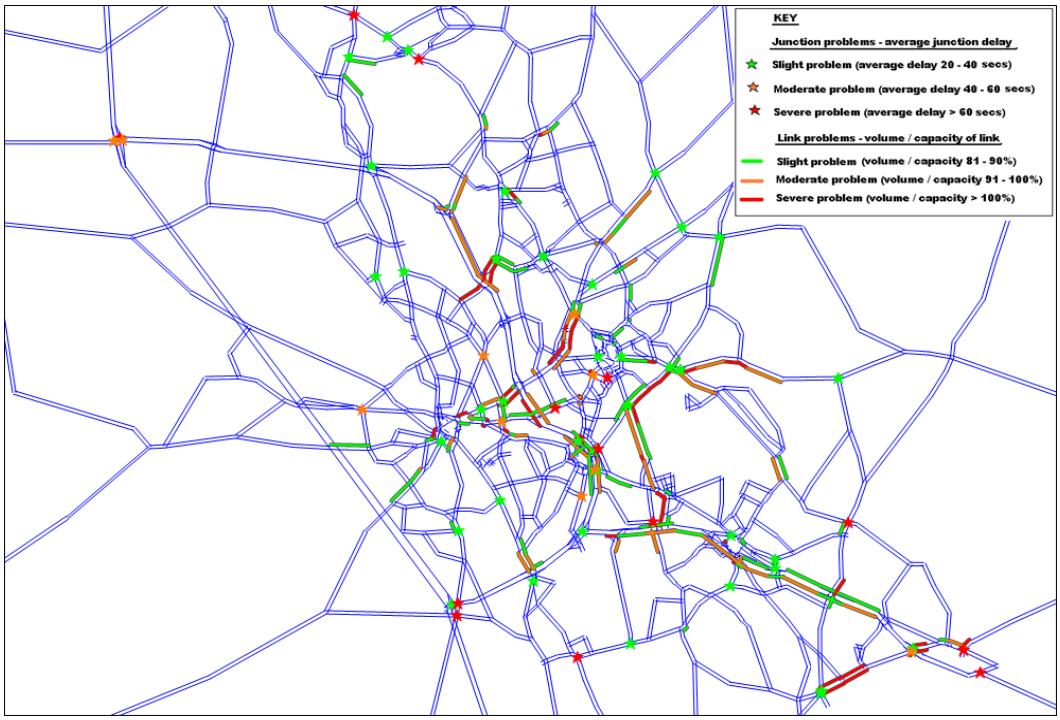
3.4.3 Congestion and delay affecting bus services

Stoke-on-Trent's Local Transport Plan[4] highlights that congestion is likely to become serious enough to further impact demand by 2026. This is further illustrated by the fact that Stoke-on-Trent has been identified as the 15th most congested city in the United Kingdom, based on 2019 pre-pandemic traffic conditions[5]. An illustration of the roads that are forecast to be most affected by congestion in 2033 can be seen in Figure 3.7 and Figure 3.8 for the AM and PM peak respectively.

[4] Stoke-on-Trent LTP3

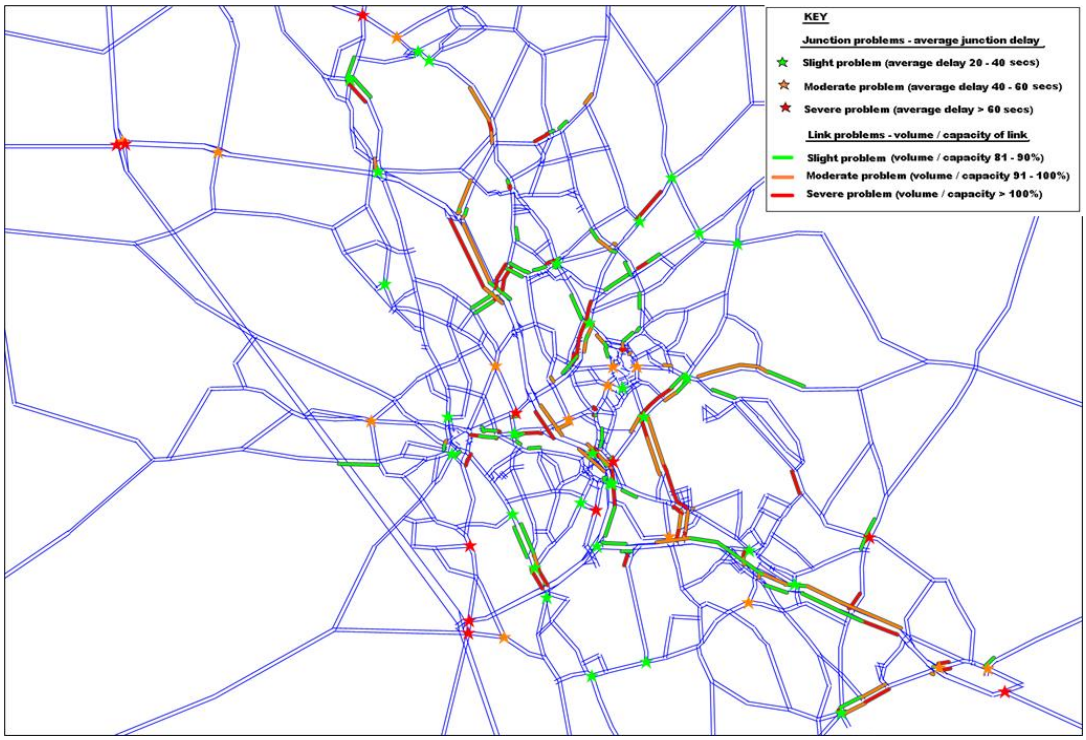
[5] TomTom traffic index, 2019 https://www.tomtom.com/en_gb/traffic-index/ranking/?country=UK

Figure 3.7: Predicted AM Peak Congestion Problems in Stoke-on-Trent 2033



Source: STCC

Figure 3.8: Predicted PM Peak Congestion Problems in Stoke-on-Trent 2033

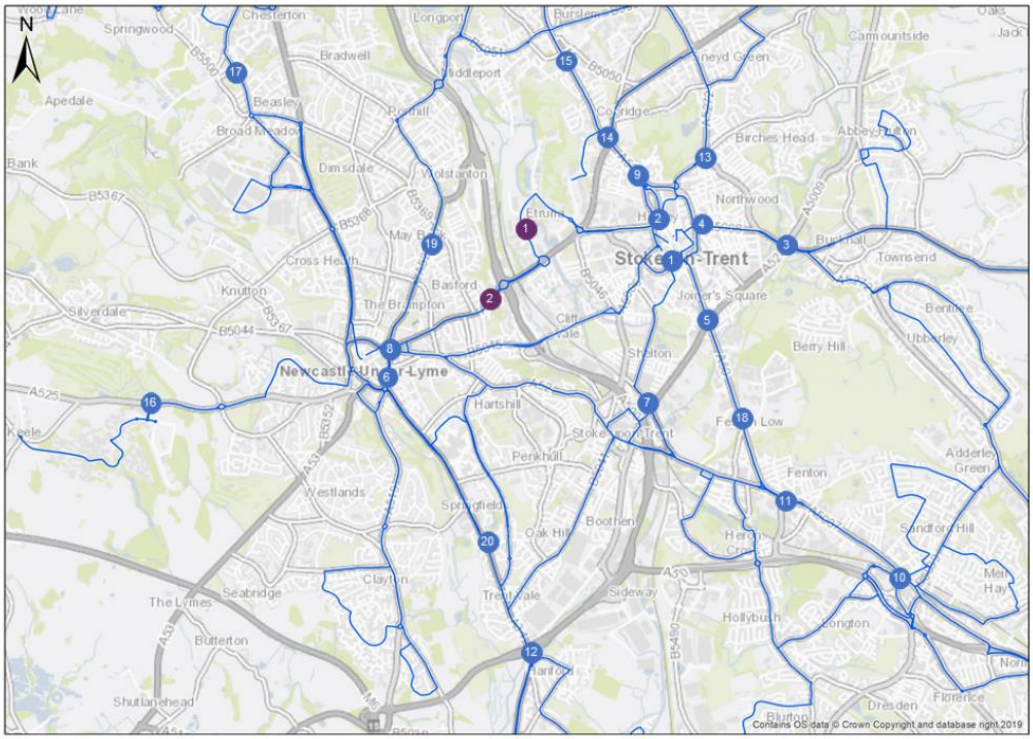


Source: STCC

The problems caused by this congestion have already become evident in respect of bus service in the city. A 2019 study by Mott MacDonald for First Group identifies the 20 most significant delay hotspots on the First Potteries network. These are highlighted in Figure 3.9 in blue. They were identified using real-time First Potteries data, with bus occupancy rates incorporated to identify the locations most affected by delay weighted by passenger numbers. The two areas (Forge Lane and Basford Bank, respectively) highlighted by black dots were additional locations indicated as problematic by the First Potteries operations team. The priority locations where congestion issues affect bus services in the city are summarised in Table 3.4.

The challenges experienced in regularly running bus services to time due to congestion has resulted in operators shortening routes to terminate at the city centre bus station where recovery time can be taken. This has increased the number of journeys that now require interchange.

Figure 3.9: Top 20 Identified Delays for the Potteries Area



Source: First Potteries

Table 3.4: Delay Hot Spot Locations

Hot Spot Number	Location
1	Core City Centre – John Street
2	Marsh Street South / Trinity Street
3	Bucknall Road / Leek Road
4	Bucknall New Road / Potteries Way / Old Hall Street
5	Joiners Square Roundabout
6	Barracks Road (South) / A34 Junction
7	Station Road
8	Barracks Road (North) / A52 / A53 Junction
9	Waterloo Road / York Street at Waterloo Roundabout
10	The Strand / Market Street / King Street
11	King Street / A50 Roundabout
12	Hanford Interchange
13	Town Road south of junction with Birches Head Road
14	Waterloo Road (South) / A53 Junction
15	Waterloo Road (North) / Swan Square
16	Keele Road / University Avenue Roundabout
17	London Road by Chesterton Park
18	Victoria Road by Fenton Industrial Estate
19	Brampton Road / High Street (May Bank)
20	A34 Newcastle Road (Trent Vale)

Source: Mott MacDonald

The issues identified in this 2019 report have already informed funding bids for improvements to several of these locations. Multiple schemes have been awarded funding under the Transforming Cities Fund programme and are the subject of development programmes and ongoing delivery. Further details can be found within the Delivery section of the BSIP.

Poor reliability and slow journey times are consistently amongst the strongest messages from stakeholders around reasons for not using the bus, or not using buses as often as they might do. This was a consistent theme from employers such as the Royal Stoke University Hospital, older people in a focus group, and from the survey of students and the college community at the Stoke Sixth Form College. The top two reasons cited from respondents to this survey on what would encourage them to use the bus more often related to slow journey times, and the reliability of service.

In addition, bus operators acknowledge that highway works can also have a significant impact on bus punctuality. Therefore, there will be a review of the current management of roadworks that will enable an agreed procedure to be included in the Enhanced Partnership.

3.5 Fares

Current (Autumn 2021) fares specified by each operator providing services within Stoke-on-Trent can be found in Appendix E, with First Potteries detailed in Table E.1; D&G Bus fares available are detailed in Table E.2. Arriva operates one service in Stoke-on-Trent, which is the 64 between the city centre and Shrewsbury. This falls within Arriva's West Midlands zone. Table E.3 contains the prices of different fares available for this service.

These tables in Appendix E serve to illustrate the variety of fares currently available across Stoke-on-Trent. Furthermore, adding to the complexity, child fares are not harmonised, with different conditions applying to different ages for the different bus operators. Arriva and First Potteries each sell child tickets for 5-15-year-olds, whereas D&G Bus child tickets are for 5-18-year-olds.

Transport Focus undertakes regular surveys of public transport users. In its 2010 *Bus Priorities for Improvement* report, it identified that value for money is ranked as the second most important factor for fare paying passenger's satisfaction. Furthermore, the most recent bus passenger survey undertaken by Transport Focus in 2017 shows that passenger satisfaction for "value for money" for First Potteries is 65%, on a par with both Staffordshire and the national average. Feedback from local stakeholders includes that value for money is a concern, with the cost of fares regarded as high. The cost of bus use was the third most quoted reason from non-user respondents to the Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College survey when asked about reasons for not using the bus, behind only convenience and reliability.

3.6 Ticketing

3.6.1 Ticketing types

In addition to each operator providing its own range of tickets, there are several multi-operator tickets available for Stoke-on-Trent's bus network. The most successful is SMART, a multi-operator ticket, valid in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme. SMART can be used on First, D&G Bus, Scraggs, and Arriva buses. Tickets are available for several different time periods.

The SMART ticket is popular and relatively well used, with ticket sales data indicating that around 16% of sales are of SMART. It is particularly popular with college students, to whom it is well promoted.

Table 3.5: Summary of Multi-operator SMART Fares

Ticket	Adult	Child (5-16 years)
Day	£5.90	£4.40
Week	£21.00	£15.75
Month	£75.00	£56.00
3 Month	£194.00	£139.00
Annual	£580.00	N/A

Another multi-operator option, though less commonly used in Stoke-on-Trent, is the Knot ticket - a day ticket which costs £7 and allows unlimited travel all day any bus, anytime, anywhere within Staffordshire. Additionally, Keele University staff and students have exclusive access to the Keele Key ticket, which is available to buy when boarding First Potteries or D&G Bus bus services in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent. The Keele Key also provides unlimited travel as far as Crewe and Stafford.

A partnership between First Bus, Ticketer and Littlepay has led to the implementation in the summer of 2021 of one of the largest Tap On/ Tap Off (TOTO) capped fare zones in England. First Potteries has introduced 105 readers across its fleet. This new payment system brings substantial benefits for First Potteries passengers with TOTO contactless payments, combined with daily and weekly fare capping, enabling customers to travel freely and to be automatically charged only for the travel that they undertake. If passengers make several trips in one day, their fare will be capped at the daily ticket price; and those who travel several days per week pay a fare capped at the weekly ticket price. In addition, minimal driver interaction will significantly reduce boarding times for passengers, ensuring that buses leave stops on time and maintain punctuality[6].

3.6.2 Ticket sales

Data from Arriva and First Potteries within Stoke-on-Trent indicates that approximately half (50%) of all ticket sales are adult tickets, with single tickets accounting for approximately one quarter (28%) of those adult ticket sales. More than half of sales are for weekly or longer periods, whether on SMART or single operator tickets, illustrating the market for regular users. Concessionary pass holders account for approximately one third of passengers (32%).

3.7 Integration with other modes

Rail travel has the potential to be more significant for local journeys. Longton and Longport stations lie towards the south and north of the City, either side of

[6] First Potteries introduces Tap On/ Tap Off contactless payment scheme (intelligenttransport.com) 5 August 2021

Stoke-on-Trent Station. Along with commuter stations just outside the city boundary, such as Blythe Bridge and Kidsgrove, they provide a corridor through the heart of the urban area. The City Council is working hard with partners including Transport for the North, Midlands Connect and train operators to increase frequency of services. During our stakeholder engagement, train operator Avanti West Coast emphasised the importance of integrated service patterns, information, and ticketing in delivering a high-quality seamless offer to customers that wish to use both bus and rail.

It is also relevant that the BSIP is complementary to the 'Restoring Your Railways Ideas Fund' bids for Meir, Etruria and to restore the Stoke-on-Trent to Leek line, as well as the ambitions to reopen the rail station at Trentham. For example, the widening of Bucknall New Road on the Homer Road to Ivy Road stretch would optimise the bus route for fast services into the city centre from a proposed station at Bucknall, which would be realised under the 'Restoring Your Railways Ideas Fund' bid (Stoke-on-Trent to Leek) and would ensure that train-bus journeys could compete with car journey times (for example, between Milton and the city centre or Endon and the city centre), even with a change from train to bus at Bucknall.

One of the principal challenges to achieving more multi-modal bus-rail journeys is the limitation on the PlusBus ticket, which is not available from local stations. So, for example a customer couldn't travel by rail from Kidsgrove to Stoke and use a PlusBus ticket as an add-on to travel onward by bus. It's only a valid offer from places outside Stoke on long distance journeys. Therefore, this BSIP includes a proposal for integrated bus-rail tickets, though delivery will be subject to further work in establishing the legal framework for delivery.

The main city station is an important interchange point for bus services for onwards travel across the City, with frequent bus services to the city centre, Keele, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Trentham, and Newstead. Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) investments from the initial tranche 1 allocation in 2018 onwards will improve access around the 'Station Hub', not only for bus users but also for active travel modes and will deliver improved interchange for all users once the second phase of TCF investment has been delivered.

Interchange with bus services at Longton Station is complex, with some bus services stopping on-street (King Street, The Strand and Market Street) while others serve Longton Bus Station. Direct bus services to Meir, Stoke-on-Trent Rail Station, the city centre, and Newcastle-under-Lyme all run from Longton. The main interchange point for bus services to Longport Station is on Porthill Road/Longport Road, with services to several residential areas, the nearby town centres of Burslem and Tunstall, and Newcastle-under-Lyme.

3.8 Network Identity

The National Bus Strategy highlights the importance of making local bus networks easier to understand. Consistent, easily recognisable branding and marketing strategies are integral to delivery of this. In turn, the National Bus Strategy advocates the prescription of universal branding for local areas which reflects the identity of local communities. Deregulation has limited the effectiveness of this in the past, with bus company branding being more reflective of the operator rather than the locality. This is illustrated below in Figure 3.10, Figure 3.11, Figure 3.12, and Figure 3.13.

Figure 3.10: First Potteries newer fleet Bus Branding

Source: Mott MacDonald

Figure 3.11: First Potteries older fleet Bus Branding

Source: Mott MacDonald

Figure 3.12: Arriva Bus Branding

Source: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Figure 3.13: D&G Bus Branding

Source: Mott MacDonald

Establishing consistent integrated bus service operator branding has the capacity to promote and market bus use across the city and familiarise non-bus users with the local bus network. In a digital age, it is now critical for website interfaces to offer the most convenient, integrated experience for the bus user to ease journey planning with features such as real-time service updates and alerts and integrated multi-service operator mapping. Features of this nature have begun to be rolled out successfully on local authority websites across the

country (e.g. Brighton and Hove). Stakeholders have indicated the importance of consistent information that covers the whole network, with respondents to the Sixth Form College survey indicating that a website with timetables, ticket information, and Real Time Passenger Information, for all bus operators was amongst the top five improvements that would encourage more bus use.

Despite this, it is not currently easy to find the bus travel planning page on the Stoke-on-Trent City Council website, and once it has been located, there is information on SMART and concessionary ticketing, but no information on bus services or timetables. However, there is a link to the Traveline journey planner. A new travel website is being developed by the city council, which will incorporate future bus network branding

3.9 Size and Age of Bus Fleet

First Bus has provided historic fleet lists that indicate that in early 2021 the average age of the fleet was over 12 years, and between a third and half of the fleet didn't meet EURO VI standards. This is pertinent in view of the city being an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and is under a Ministerial Direction to reduce NO_2 levels at key locations. The city's Local Air Quality Management Air Quality Action Plan (April 2009) identifies that road traffic, and specifically high areas of congestion, are a major source of Nitrogen Dioxide emissions.

Through the Ministerial Direction on air quality 50 buses are being retrofitted to Euro VI standard, which will significantly improve both the average age of the fleet, and fundamentally, delivers improvements to the environmental quality of the fleet. First is also improving its fleet through a committed programme of newer cascaded buses from other parts of the Group.

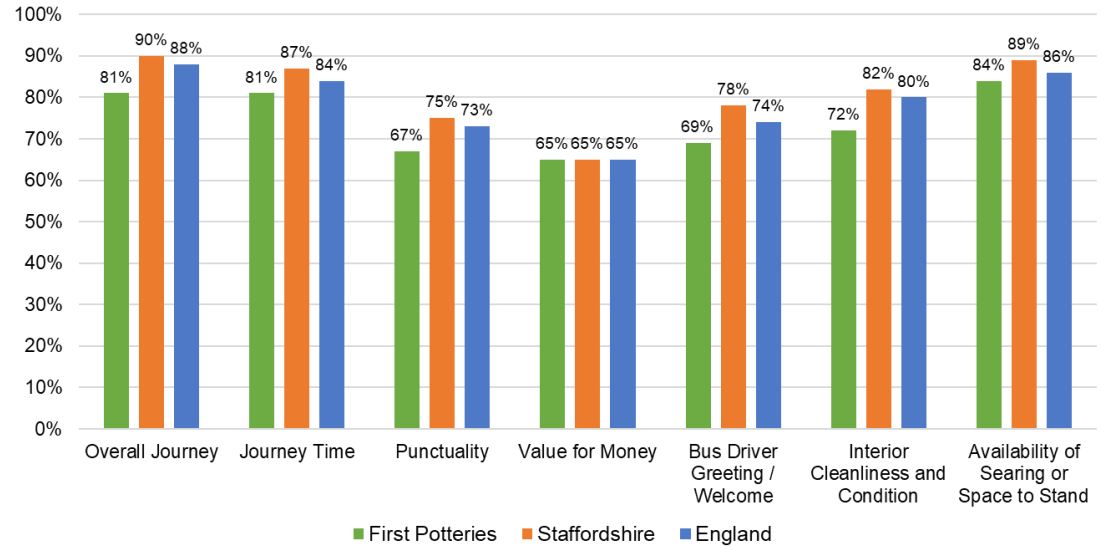
Stakeholders have indicated some concerns about the quality of buses. Organisations as diverse as the Chambers of Commerce and the North Staffordshire Pensioners' Convention have noted that many buses in the city appear old and dirty, and several stakeholders indicate a desire for the introduction of an environmentally cleaner, greener, fleet.

3.10 Customer experience including information

3.10.1 Passenger Satisfaction

Transport Focus undertakes regular surveys of public transport users, to record satisfaction across a range of topics. The most recent bus passenger survey that allows for focus upon Stoke-on-Trent's primary bus operator (First Potteries) was undertaken in 2017 (more recent data was collected in Staffordshire in 2019, but First Potteries and hence bus services in Stoke-on-Trent were not part of this survey). Figure 3.14 illustrates passenger satisfaction levels for First Potteries with satisfaction levels in Staffordshire and England in 2017.

Figure 3.14: First Potteries, Staffordshire and National Bus Passenger Satisfaction, 2017



Source: Transport Focus

Figure 3.14 shows that bus passenger satisfaction on First Potteries services trails satisfaction levels for Staffordshire and England by a significant margin; with satisfaction most notably 7% lower for overall journey satisfaction and 8% lower for interior cleanliness and condition than the national averages respectively. The only category where First Potteries scores in line with Staffordshire and National averages is Value for Money (65%).

Local engagement in preparing the BSIP has included extensive work to understand how young people view the service, including focus groups and an online engagement survey with students and the wider community at the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College. This quantitative work sought to gather the views of both bus users and non-users on the current bus network and what would encourage them to use bus more. The survey was completed by 298 respondents of which 84% were students whilst a further 12% were parents of students.

When considering factors that could encourage people to use buses more often, the survey provided 24 different responses to choose from. Respondents were able to select multiple responses; thus, producing over 1,600 total selections from respondents. Those improvements that are likely to encourage use that were selected by at least 25% of respondents are:

- Journey times on bus services made quicker
- Delays on bus services reduced via increased bus priority at junctions and more bus lanes to make journey times more reliable
- Better information at bus stops and shelters e.g. Real Time Passenger Information screens (showing time until next buses)

- Improved cleanliness of buses
- Website with timetables, ticket information, Real Time Passenger Information, for all bus operators
- Extend hours of operation later into the evening
- More buses with onboard Wi-Fi and mobile phone charging points
- Better on-bus information such as ‘next stop’ announcements.

3.10.2 Information Availability

Evidence from stakeholders during the preparation of the BSIP indicates that aspects of information are positively regarded, though there are some aspects that could benefit from improvement and investment. For instance, while each operator has a comprehensive and informative website, and the feedback on the First Potteries App includes much that is positive (though there are sometimes technical issues with the function of the App) as it enables tracking of the bus and purchase of tickets, there is little cohesion between these information sources. As noted above in addressing network identity stakeholders have indicated the importance of consistent information that covers the whole network, and the need for a ‘one stop hub’ for bus information relating to all operators has been highlighted.

Most commonly, however, stakeholders have identified – both in focus groups and in written feedback – the absence of effective and comprehensive real-time information is a problem. Better information at stops including real-time displays is the third most identified factor that will encourage the Sixth Form College community to use the bus more often, after only journey times and reliability of service. Better on-bus information such as ‘next stop’ announcements is also desirable.

There is investment in the TCF delivery programme which will uplift the quality of information provision across the city. This includes:

- Bus stop real time information at 18 bus stops
- Bus Station Real Time Passenger Information improvements to include 22 small screens at bays, 6 x 65” departure board screens, and 2 Information totems.

3.11 Safety and accessibility

In developing the BSIP, focus groups with a range of users and non-users, from younger people at the Sixth Form College to older people at the Pensioners Convention, has provided some rich perspectives on experiences of safety, accessibility, and comfort.

Passenger experience of drivers on the network is generally good (though there is acknowledgment of the odd bad day!). More concerning amongst both young

and old is anti-social behaviour by other passengers, which can lead to concerns around personal safety and wellbeing.

A particular concern that consistently arose amongst students at the Sixth Form College (in every one of five focus groups) is peak time overcrowding. This is particularly concerning to students with both physical and other disabilities and emphasised by a focus group with students with learning support requirements. This can lead to issues of anxiety and stress while travelling independently. Physical issues around access include the limited space available for wheelchairs and prams, which can lead to people being unable to board a bus when the space is already in use. Another common issue raised by students is the "next stop" buttons, with many comments about there being too few, that they often don't work, which causes anxiety around missing stops, and implications for personal safety. There is a sense that interior cleanliness can be a problem too.

Whilst many bus stops have level boarding kerbs, a significant number do not, which is a literal barrier to many potential users with limited mobility. There is investment in the TCF delivery programme which will uplift the quality of stop access on specific corridors. This includes level boarding platforms at 10 stops. However, it is acknowledged that a city-wide programme of accessible bus stops is required, and that this is included within this BSIP.

3.12 Socially necessary services

The majority of the network in Stoke-on-Trent is currently operated commercially, apart from D&G Bus service 50 (the total distance supported on this service annually is 2,233.93 km) which is funded through the Bus Services Operators Grant.

3.13 Longer term transformation

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has pursued an ambitious programme of investment and partnership in respect of buses with successful Transforming Cities Fund bids which have brought in funding through the two tranches totalling £34.6m to invest in the improvement of Stoke-on-Trent's transport network. Earlier in 2021 the focus on investment in the bus network continued with further investment proposals in an application to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF). The genesis of the 2020 tranche 2 Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) bid for investment to improve the bus network in Stoke-on-Trent was in a pre-pandemic proposal in 2019 to develop a Superbus network. More information on this transformational ambition can be found in Chapter 4.

3.14 Barriers to Growth and other factors that affect the use of local bus services

3.14.1 Car ownership and accessibility

A barrier to the growth of bus service usage is the ease and flexibility of car travel. Most households in Stoke-on-Trent do have access to a car, with 70% of households owning at least one car and 26% of households owning two or more cars (Census, 2011). This was, and remains today, below the national average, but is still a significant increase from a very low base. As noted in the Levelling Up Fund application "as those who can afford to have increasingly accessed the private car, the impact on congestion, air quality, land use planning and bus patronage has had a direct impact on many who rely on walking, cycling and public transport."

3.14.2 Car Parking

Part of the challenge in addressing car use is the availability and pricing of car parking in the city and town centres across the City. Publicly owned car parks are found in all the main centres of Stoke-on-Trent. There is a mixture of on street and off-street parking in Fenton, the city centre, Longton, Stoke, Burslem and Tunstall, most of which have charges. All car park information can be found on the City Council website. Table 3.6 shows the car parking prices for 2 hours and all day for a selection of publicly owned car parks across Stoke-on-Trent, taken from the Council website. There are also privately-owned car parks, not detailed below, which add to the challenge of competing with the car, including supermarket car parks in some town and city centres offering freely accessible parking without charge for up to 3 hours.

Table 3.6: Car Parking Prices

Car park (locality)	Number of spaces	2 hours	All day
Jackson Street (Burslem)	Not specified	£2.00	Not available
Navigation Road (Burslem)	94	£1.60	£3.20
City Road (Fenton)	93	£1.50	£2.00
Charles Street (city centre)	94	£3.40	£9.80
John Street (city centre)	492	£2.80	£4.00-6.00
Hinde Street (city centre)	374	£2.00	£5.00

Car park (locality)	Number of spaces	2 hours	All day
Kingscross Street (Longton)	Not specified	£2.00	Not available
Chancery Lane (Longton)	31	£1.30	£5.00
Elenora Street (Stoke)	30	£2.00	£4.60
Kingsway (Stoke)	195	£2.00	£5.20
Hide Street (Stoke)	72	£2.00	£3.80
Woodland Street (Tunstall)	39	£1.60	£3.20

Several car parks in the city centre are limited to short stay only, with 3 hours being the typical maximum stay permitted. There is also a significant supply of on-street parking around the city centre, with stays limited to 3 hours and costing between £3.20 and £8 for three hours.

Across the City charges vary between car parks, but several large car parks have all-day parking available for around £4.00-£6.00, even in the city centre. Many of these are cheaper than an adult Smart day bus ticket (£5.90).

3.14.3 Taxi offer

The affordability and convenience of the taxi is a barrier to growth for bus service usage in Stoke-on-Trent. The 2019 Retail and Leisure Study in Stoke-on-Trent found that the taxi was the 4th most used mode of transport into Stoke-on-Trent's key centres, with 3% of all trips into the city centre being made by Taxi in 2018.

Taxis provide value for money when travelling as a group, with a five-mile taxi journey for three people to the city centre costing approximately the same as a group day ticket for the First Potteries network (£15). Furthermore, taxis offer flexibility and a door-to-door service and are available throughout the day.

This convenience and flexibility are important to customers, and is specifically a factor in Stoke-on-Trent, as there are presently limited bus services to many areas of the city in early mornings, evenings and on Sundays. This is especially important in Stoke-on-Trent with significant shift working and casual employment on zero hours contracts, often in locations away from central areas and the core bus routes. The flexibility and convenience provided by taxis for such dispersed journey patterns throughout the day provides a strong alternative to buses at present.

3.14.4 Dispersed economic geography

The Levelling Up Fund application identifies that “the barriers and challenges to travel around the city to access education and employment are based primarily on geographic and demographic reasons”. This reflects the challenges to delivering comprehensive and successful bus networks given the city’s economic geography, with a polycentric urban area based around the six traditional centres of Burslem, Fenton, Hanley (the city centre), Longton, Stoke, and Tunstall, together with many other smaller communities each with a distinct identity often related to traditional industries.

The pattern of employment, retail and social activity remains dispersed even though the decline of traditional pottery, coal and steel industries has led to new employment opportunities developing. As the Levelling Up Fund application notes, the “redevelopment of former industrial sites, such as Etruria Valley, has been successful with the opportunity to create more jobs than were provided in the sites’ past uses. These sites, often former coal mines and steel works, however, had few existing public transport links to adjacent communities. Thus, there is the concern that neighbouring communities may not share the benefits of the success of these sites unless transport access to them is improved.” However, the consequent complexity of demand across the City means that it remains challenging to deliver attractive, affordable bus services that provide for the diversity of journeys and the flexibility that other competing alternatives such as cars and taxis can provide.

3.15 Summary of key problems and opportunities

Problems and opportunities to address within the BSIP include:

- **Bus service for many communities in the city is below ‘turn up and go’ frequency for much of the day**
- **Poor evening and Sunday provision predominates, with significant parts of the city having no or limited service at these times**
- **Traffic congestion adversely affects bus services across the city inducing delays and creating slow and unreliable journey times**
- **Poor punctuality is widespread across bus services in the city, with punctuality poorer than the regional and national average**
- **The absence of direct service to key locations outside the city centre, often requiring two buses to be taken for journeys, make services unattractive**
- **The cost of fares is regarded by customers as being too high, with fares seen to be expensive and representing poor value for money**
- **There is inconsistency in child fare policies between the principal operators in the city**

- **Multi-operator ticketing is more expensive than single operator equivalent ticketing**
- **There is no consistency in identifying the local network, information, and fares**
- **The bus fleet has historically been old comparing poorly to an average age nationally of less than 8 years[7], and until early in 2021 less than half of the fleet met EURO VI environmental standards. While planned retrofit combined with cascade of buses from other parts of the UK significantly improves this situation, the image of bus quality is poor in the views of passengers**
- **Real-time information is limited, but is a key determinant for many people in encouraging use**

[7] Average age of local buses England 2005-2018 Statistic | Statista

4 Vision and targets

4.1 Vision

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has a vision for an attractive, efficient, and affordable bus network which will form the basis of our local public transport network.

High frequency bus services will operate on a network of cross-city routes, creating a bus based urban transport system with significant priority for buses. End to end journey times will be competitive with the car, and travel costs will be attractive.

Our vision is that the bus network will have a significant step change in quality such that it will be the backbone of our transport plans to facilitate the continued growth in our economy. It will provide an attractive option to move people around the city and its surrounding areas, providing improved air quality and economic mobility, reducing transport poverty, and helping to address the climate emergency.

And yet, against the four key indicators within BSIP guidance, of passenger numbers, journey times, punctuality and reliability, and passenger satisfaction the reality is that the current bus provision falls short of achieving that vision. With the right investment, we are confident that our BSIP and the subsequent Enhanced Partnership will engender the changes desired.

4.2 Targets

BSIP guidance identifies four key metrics which are to be used to monitor the impact of the BSIP in Stoke-on-Trent. As illustrated in section 2 above, the first of those - the challenge of growing passenger numbers -will require a significant turnaround of the downward trend of many years. The delivery plan outlined in chapter 4 seeks to promote this change, but any ambitions must first reflect the challenging period for the bus sector that has resulted from the pandemic and its associated lockdowns, and the associated reduction in service levels and further decline in patronage which set the starting point for recovery.

As identified in Section 3.3, presently patronage is at around 70% of pre-pandemic levels, indicating that patronage may be below 6 million journeys per year at present. Coupled with the decline of more than 40% in patronage over the previous decade, the targets below represent a plan that is ambitious, and linked to funding support through BSIP, aims for an increase of around 65-70% on passenger numbers by the end of the plan from the starting position in autumn 2021.

4.2.1 Passenger Numbers

Measure	Total passenger journeys per year
Means of Monitoring	This measure is for the total passenger journeys made on the local network. This measure will be a continuation of the operator returns made on annual basis to the local authority and reported nationally through DfT statistic BUS0109a. The metric includes all fare paying and pass travel journeys for journeys in the local area.
Proposed Performance Target	2018/19: 9.3m (reported) 2019/20: 8.4m (reported) 2020/21: no target set 2021/22: no target set 2022/23: 7.6m 2023/24: 8.4m 2024/25: 9.9m
Target rationale	Ambitions regarding the rate of return to pre-COVID patronage levels over the coming years, if delivered purely on a commercial basis without any BSIP funding to promote additional growth, are tempered by evidence on the current slow recovery towards pre-pandemic levels of patronage. In October 2021, patronage levels are at about 70% of pre-pandemic numbers across Stoke-on-Trent. Our proposed performance target therefore reflects this, and sets an ambition for long-term growth, tempered with realism in the immediate short-term as post-pandemic recovery begins.

4.2.2 Journey Times

In respect of journey times, the investment in bus priorities combined with improvements to ticketing to improve boarding times, is expected to yield benefits to journey times across the City. Our target below is therefore identified in terms of a 5% improvement by the end of the BSIP.

Measure	Annual change in aggregate journey times on eight selected routes with a frequency of at least 2 buses per hour
Means of Monitoring	This measure will take the timetabled end-to-end journey time for morning and evening peak periods. 2018/19 will be used as the baseline year with an indexed value of 100, against which future years' journey times will be compared to monitor the time operators require to operate each route based on local traffic conditions.
Proposed Performance Target	2018/19: 100 (Index value) 2024/25: 95 (Index value)
Target rationale	With the implementation of bus priority measures, particularly on the cross-city routes where congestion is most problematic, we expect to see a reduction in overall journey times.

4.2.3 Reliability

In respect of reliability and punctuality, the investment in bus priority aims to bring performance up to national levels, and our target reflects these targets.

Measure	Proportion of bus services running on time
Means of Monitoring	This measure will use the long-established bus punctuality metric reported nationally by the DfT as "BUS0902: Non-frequent bus services running on time by local authority". The measure assesses bus punctuality, defined for this measure as the percentage of non-frequent buses (those with frequencies of less than 6 per hour) on time. This includes all scheduled services and is measured by whether the bus departs within its "on-time" window of 1 minute 0 seconds early to 5 minutes 59 seconds late. Buses that fail to run are treated as "late" and not ignored in the calculations. The calculation of the indicator incorporates measurement of "on time" along the route, whilst the final calculation made is weighted according to the relative volume of passengers on each route/operator.
Proposed Performance Target	2018/19: 77% 2024/25: 95%
Target rationale	The national target for bus punctuality is 95%, and we want bus services in Stoke-on-Trent to meet this national target. We regard this as an excellent benchmark to aim for during the first BSIP period up to 2024/25.

4.2.4 Passenger Satisfaction

Passenger satisfaction targets are being set with respect to national surveys of satisfaction undertaken by Transport Focus.

Measure	Overall Bus Journey Satisfaction
Means of Monitoring	This measure is of overall satisfaction with the local bus journey as measured by the national programme of surveys undertaken by Transport Focus in Stoke-on-Trent (based on First Potteries data from 2016/17). The recorded metric relates to the question: "Overall, taking everything into account from start to end of the bus journey, how satisfied were you with your bus journey?" with responses "very satisfied" and "fairly satisfied" measured in this overall percentage satisfaction metric.
Proposed Performance Target	2016/17: 81% (2017 result) 2024/25: 94% (2025 result)
Target rationale	Stoke-on-Trent is currently below the national average of 89% of bus passenger satisfaction. We want to be within the top 25% nationally, and therefore see a rise to 94% (based on 2019 data provided by Transport Focus) satisfaction as a realistic ambition. Passengers' satisfaction with bus services reflects the wider quality of the service, such as journey times, punctuality, and fares. Therefore, a rise to 94% would be evidence of improvements across the board.

4.3 Monitoring of performance against BSIP targets

All targets are currently based on an assumption of full delivery of this plan, and at identified investment levels.

The performance of the delivery plan will be assessed on a six-monthly basis against the BSIP targets in a report. A 'working group' will be set up and will meet regularly to coordinate the production of the six-monthly reports.

These reports will be available for viewing on Stoke-on-Trent City Council's website (www.stoke.gov.uk/busserviceimprovementplan), the operators' respective websites, and on key locations such as a performance board at bus stations and key stops.

5 Delivery

5.1 Continuity in delivery

5.1.1 Introduction

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has pursued an ambitious programme of investment and partnership to support the delivery of its economic and social objectives for the City. In respect of buses, this includes its successful Transforming Cities Fund bids, which have brought in funding through the two tranches totalling £34.6m to invest in the transformation of Stoke-on-Trent's transport network. Earlier in 2021 the focus on investment in the bus network has continued with further investment proposals in an application to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF). This BSIP delivery programme takes these ambitions a step forward in meeting the ambitions of the City Council and operators to provide a radical upgrade in the local bus offer.

5.1.2 Superbus proposals and the Transforming Cities Programme

The genesis of the 2020 tranche 2 Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) bid for investment to improve the bus networks in Stoke-on-Trent was in a pre-pandemic proposal in 2019 to develop a Superbus network. This proposal sought to provide conditions which enabled a financially robust commercial bus network to thrive. The Superbus proposals were intended to build patronage through a programme of major interventions, creating a virtuous cycle of investment and income.

At the heart of Superbus was a recognition that bus journey time and reliability needed to be improved significantly by removing the worst pinch points and providing new bus priority measures. In addition to giving passengers new confidence of reliable journey times, this action on bus priorities will in turn reduce costs to bus operators. It was intended that Superbus would provide operators with the confidence to create new cross-city links which will significantly reduce the time and financial penalties of interchange, giving further passenger benefits. This ambition to deliver bus priorities in combination with improved, more attractive service, lies at the heart of subsequent TCF and LUF bids, and forms the backbone of this BSIP delivery programme.

The intention of Superbus was that ultimately, in partnership with local bus operators, savings and additional fares income will be invested into ensuring all main corridors will be served by a 'turn up and go' service, with a minimum ten-minute frequency. This would be complemented by attractive fares which are competitive compared to travel by car. Significant increases in patronage will enable lower fares to be charged, and the existing multi-operator SMART ticket range will be a key part of the offer, to create a true network offer to users.

While the impact of the pandemic on demand for local bus services through 2020 and into 2021, and the consequent challenges to the short-term viability of the sector has delayed the opportunity to act on service levels, action has been taken to move forward investment in the infrastructure required to provide bus priorities across the city. Work was undertaken as part of developing the TCF bid to identify the main causes of bus passenger delays on the highway network. Twenty locations which have the most severe delays to bus passengers were identified using on-bus data (see Figure 3.9 and Table 3.4 above). Together, these accounted for 35% of all bus passenger delays on the network.

Tackling congestion on key bus corridors through the city that has a major impact on bus journey times and punctuality was therefore a fundamental element of the TCF bid in 2020 that resulted in an award of £29 million from government in July 2021. This programme will deliver bus priority measures that will tackle the unreliable journey times that lead to poor overall customer satisfaction. One consequence of the impacts of congestion on bus services is that presently the main bus operator, First, does not have the confidence to operate significant numbers of cross-city services. This limits access to employment and educational opportunities due to the absence of direct service, and results in the need to take two buses for many journeys within the city. This leads to a service that can be inconvenient, wastes time, and increases cost, resulting in an unattractive offer to customers on some journeys.

The TCF programme plans to deliver bus corridor improvement projects as follows to address some of the top 20 pinch points identified in the 2019 First Potteries analysis, in addition to measures in other critical and complementary parts of the bus network:

- A50 King Street/Bath Road/Wood Street (Times Square), Longton. Conversion of Times Square signalised junction to roundabout with closure of Wood Street. Caroline Street/Railway Passage made one-way northeast bound. (Location 10 from Figure 2.5 and Table 2.4)
- High Street/James Brindley Way, Sandyford. Give priority to bus by creating a southbound bus lane to prevent bus being caught in congestion and an easy transition onto A50 High Street/James Brindley Way roundabout
- Potteries Way/Town Road, the city centre. Free left slip from Potteries Way to reduce congestion from traffic entering multi-storey car park, keep clear box, new Pelican crossing, carriageway widening, convert zebra crossing to Pelican crossing to reduce delay to traffic. (Related to location 4)
- Providence Square/Town Road, the city centre. Introduction/extension of bus lanes on Town Road (Location 13)
- A34 Stone Road/B5041 London Road, Hanford. Introduction of Selective Vehicle Detection on A34 Stone Road (South) and B5041 London Road (Location 20)

- Waterloo Road/Elder Road/Connecting Roads, Cobridge. Remove as much right turning traffic off A50 as possible by revised Traffic Management scheme to access via Elder Road without creating rat run opportunities
- A52 Werrington Road/Dividy Road, Bucknall. Implement a bus gate on the Werrington Road approach with prioritised signals to allow the bus to flow from the stop through to Bucknall Road. The right turn from Dividy Road to Werrington Road will be banned. Capacity on the Dividy Road approach to the signals will be increased through road widening and traffic signals removed on Bucknall Road approach
- Improvements to the bus station to cater for through services and passenger interchange. The proposed scope includes a selected number of Cross City Bus Services will enter the bus station through Lidice Way/ Lichfield Street. (Related to Location 1)
- New 'Super' bus stops adjacent to the Bus Station to facilitate new cross city 'through' services
- A 'Super' stop in the vicinity of Smithfield/ Potteries Museum & Art Gallery
- A further 2 'Super' stops in vicinity of Quadrant Road in both directions
- Highway infrastructure works in the City Centre to support cross-city bus connectivity detail covered off above but in addition changes to Marsh Street to give bus priority - Selective Vehicle Mitigation. Change road designation Marsh Street North to one way northbound. Enable access for New Hall Street to Black Horse Lane & Marsh Street North. (Location 2).

These investments made possible through TCF complement other City Council projects that help to improve bus journey times, including the recently completed roundabout at Joiners Square.

5.1.3 Levelling Up Fund

Building on the improvements being made through TCF and locally funded investments, the City Council sought additional investment through one of its Levelling Up Fund (LUF) applications, in the summer of 2021. However, Stoke-on-Trent Council found out on 27 October 2021 that the LUF Transport submission was not awarded funding. Therefore, this BSIP package accounts for and includes the LUF schemes as an integrated package.

The LUF Transport Package included further investment in improved bus stops to reduce barriers to physical access, and to information provision for the local bus network. This would have helped create the user-friendly waiting environment that people expect. The bus stop accessibility improvements consisted of 167 level boarding kerbs, 90 real time information screens, 461 QR codes to access real time information, and 69 CCTV installations. Bus stops were selected based on usage and the routes chosen were those that will form the new cross city routes being made possible through the TCF investments.

Additionally, the LUF proposal included a Traffic Management System upgrade, which would help improve bus punctuality through more intelligent traffic signals that would learn and adapt to traffic conditions, providing bus priority at signalised junctions throughout the highway network, addressing congestion challenges by reducing delays, and providing roadside information to help road users make informed travel decisions.

Less than a third of signalised junctions in the city are currently on a UTC (SCOOT) system, which severely limits our ability to manage capacity at junctions and specifically to give priority to buses. In a city with limited opportunity to allocate road space for bus lanes due to constrained road layout, and where operators have demonstrated that delays are predominantly at signalised junctions, moving most of the signalised junctions to a cloud-based UTC system will provide the best opportunity to provide bus priority. A more intelligent and linked system which learns from historical and live traffic data will create the most efficient and flexible signal phasing possible and provide the best opportunity for us to embed bus priority. Dependent on each site's particular circumstances, this can be extended green times or green hurry calls. We are currently piloting this with TRL at one multi-junction, with very good results being produced. This proposal builds on an element of our Levelling Up Fund transport submission.

Together, these measures which were identified in the LUF application are now identified as requirements for BSIP, and will contribute to improving the customer experience as described in Section 3.10 (including more punctual and reliable services, better real time information), and provide more safe and accessible bus stops in response to the issues identified in Section 3.11.

5.2 The BSIP Investment Programme

Building on the investments facilitated by TCF, including the LUF proposals now included in BSIP, and complementary local investment, the principal areas for delivery within the BSIP for Stoke-on-Trent are as follows:

- Significant increases in bus priority
- Intensive services and investment on key corridors, with routes that are easier to understand, alongside socially necessary transport, and integrated service patterns with other modes
- Lower and simpler fares
- Seamless, integrated local ticketing between operators and modes
- Local bus network presented as a single system, with clear passenger information
- Modern buses and decarbonisation
- Excellent customer service and passenger charter
- Safe and accessible bus travel.

This chapter includes the total support requirement identified to meet our ambitions. The breakdown by year and the split between Resource/Revenue support and Capital investment is provided in the BSIP Outline funding template which can be found in Appendix F.

5.3 Significant increases in bus priority

The bus priority measures being delivered through TCF will improve journey times and reliability for services operated by First, D&G Bus, and Arriva, and will enable the first step towards the aim of the re-introduction by First Potteries of cross-city transit links to the benefit of existing passengers and future users. The programme identified below within this BSIP will provide further investment to tackle pinch points. Working closely together with First Potteries to deliver the 'turn up and go' cross-city services, this will represent a step-change in the bus offer in Stoke-on-Trent, with the shared aim of reversing a decade of patronage decline in the Potteries bus market and will significantly help all operators in the City in improving reliability and journey times on both 'turn up and go' and the wider city networks.

5.3.1 BSIP Investment

The BSIP therefore seeks to deliver bus corridor improvement projects building on the measures that have been delivered or are planned through TCF and other investment. The BSIP bus priority investment will focus on improving existing corridors where journey times and punctuality are underperforming. We will continue to work with bus operators to identify traffic management opportunities to support bus services. This will be facilitated by the proposals outlined in Section 5.8.

This investment will focus on the following types of measures:

- Upgrading of the Traffic Management System from SCOOT to the cloud based SCOOT7 system
- Bus priority through existing signalised junctions, such as bus gates (where space permits) or by vehicle detection to extend green times for buses, skipping a signal stage or shortening green time for other traffic
- Reducing barriers for pedestrian access to bus facilities
- Where appropriate, converting existing priority junctions along these corridors into signalised junctions incorporating bus priority measures
- Managing the effect of on street parking on bus operations, including parking enforcement and red routes.

This investment will be focussed on the following proposals:

Urban Traffic Control upgrade

As part of the BSIP package, a key focus for the timely delivery of bus priority on core routes is our proposal to introduce a new cloud based SCOOT7 system

is proposed to maximise the efficiency of signal timings including prioritising bus services that travel on the road network. Priority for buses can be provided by extending green times when buses are detected, or by providing a hurry call green whereby a signal stage that provides bus priority will be called as quickly as possible.

- BSIP requirement for a new cloud based SCOOT7 Traffic Management System: **£3,000,000.**

Completing the north west quadrant of Potteries Way

A scheme is proposed to complete the north west quadrant of Potteries Way, by linking Etruria Road to A50 Waterloo Road. The main aim of this scheme would be to improve bus journey times for those services that operate on Etruria Road and Waterloo Road by diverting traffic away from the city centre. This scheme would include the provision of an enhanced junction at the existing Etruria Road / Potteries Way junction, and a new junction onto Waterloo Road, all of which would have bus priority measures included in their designs. The design will also incorporate improved access and movement for pedestrians and cyclists. This also aligns with the Cobridge Road/Waterloo Road junction improvements which is a scheme that has been approved by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

- North west quadrant of Potteries Way: **£16,000,000**

Waterloo Road corridor (between Cobridge Road and Potteries Way)

The 2019 First Potteries analysis had identified that the Waterloo Road / York Street junction experienced high levels of general traffic that had an impact on bus journey times to and from the city centre. In particularly, buses experience difficulties in exiting the York Street roundabout bypass because of heavy traffic on Waterloo Road.

It is therefore proposed to undertake widening of the corridor between the Cobridge Road/Waterloo Road junction to the Waterloo Road/Potteries Way junction. This would provide an opportunity to incorporate dedicated bus priority measures on this section, and therefore, improving bus journey times on this section. It will also provide an opportunity to provide improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

- Waterloo Road corridor (between Cobridge Road and Potteries Way): **£8,000,000**

Waterloo Road Corridor (between Cobridge Road and north of the centre of Burslem) improvements

The 2019 First Potteries analysis identified that the Waterloo Road (North) / Swan Square area in Burslem experienced delays along this corridor due to high general traffic levels, poor parking discipline that creates pinch points that lead to additional delays, and observations that the offside bus lane provided in a northbound direction north of the A53 was not used as intended by bus drivers.

It is therefore proposed to improve journey times for bus services operating along this corridor between the Cobridge Road/A53 junction and the north of the centre of Burslem. This will be achieved through improvements to bus priority at junctions on this corridor, new measures to reduce the effect of on street parking from creating delay pinch points on Waterloo Road, a review of and improvements to the existing bus lane on Waterloo Road, and wider measures to improve pedestrian and cyclist connectivity.

- Waterloo Road corridor (between Cobridge Road and north of the centre of Burslem): **£8,500,000**

Bucknall New Road Widening

The 2019 First Potteries analysis identified that high levels of general traffic on this section of the network impact bus journeys. Therefore, to improve journey times for bus services operating on Bucknall New Road, a scheme is being proposed to widen the corridor between the Potteries Way/Bucknall New Road and the Keelings Road/Bucknall Road junctions. By widening the corridor, a dedicated bus lane would be provided in one direction.

- Bucknall New Road Widening: **£3,500,000**

Newport Lane (Etruria Valley) Link

As part of the LUF transport package (not funded) a new pedestrian and cycle link was proposed. However, as part of the BSIP it is proposed to upgrade this to a bus link, alongside associated highway improvements to provide an opportunity for bus services to better link the major employment site at Etruria Valley with communities to the north of the city. The option to provide an all-traffic link would remove congestion from existing, parallel bus routes where alternative bus priority opportunities are restricted.

- Newport Lane (Etruria Valley) Link: **£7,500,000**

Victoria Road corridor

Victoria Road is a corridor linking the city centre (via Potteries Way), Joiner's Square and Fenton (length of corridor 2.8 km). This corridor includes the Victoria Road by Fenton Industrial Estate (Dewsbury Road) location which was identified in the 2019 First Potteries analysis as having issues such as delays caused by general traffic, and a high number of uncontrolled access points to industrial and commercial properties creating delays to buses.

It is therefore proposed to improve journey times for buses through this corridor by changing junction control at several locations from priority to signalised. This will provide bus priority through these junctions and aims to minimise delays to bus services.

The level of investment required has been estimated based on the College Road improvements between Stoke-on-Trent Train Station and the city centre which was included within TCF at a total scheme cost of £9.887m. A rate of scheme cost per km has then been estimated and applied to the length of the corridors that have been identified for BSIP investment.

- Victoria Road corridor: **£14,700,000**

5.3.2 Summary of Bus Priority Measures

Table 5.1 provides a summary of the BSIP investment required for each of the bus priority measures outlined above.

Table 5.1: Summary of Bus Priority Measures

Bus Priority Measures	BSIP Investment Package
SCOOT7 Traffic Management System	£3,000,000
Completing the north west quadrant of Potteries Way	£16,000,000
Waterloo Road corridor (between Cobridge Road and Potteries Way)	£8,000,000
Waterloo Road Corridor (between Cobridge Road and north of the centre of Burslem) improvements	£8,500,000
Bucknall New Road Widening	£3,500,000
Newport Lane (Etruria Valley) Link	£7,500,000
Victoria Road corridor	£14,700,000
Total	**£61,200,000**

5.4 Intensive services and investment on key corridors, with routes that are easier to understand, alongside socially necessary services

The vision for bus identified earlier of an attractive, efficient, and affordable bus network which will form the basis of Stoke-on-Trent's local public transport network is predicated on high frequency bus services operating on a network of cross-city routes. The National Bus Strategy and the measures within this BSIP provide the opportunity to realise the benefits of the Superbus concept developed in 2019 and facilitated by the City's TCF bus priority investment programme, ultimately enabling the introduction of new cross-city corridors served by a 'turn up and go' frequent service, with a minimum ten-minute headway.

However, the reality of post-pandemic recovery means that the starting point will be to initially consolidate the service offer, before seeking to enhance frequencies from April 2023 once TCF priority measures are in place. To kickstart early enhancement to frequencies above and beyond what's possible commercially will require financial support. In full, funding support will be required to deliver the following programme of service development and improvement:

- to enhance core 'turn up and go' networks from April 2022
- to create a turn up and go cross-city service on core corridors to utilise bus priority measures delivered through TCF– from April 2023
- to enhance frequencies on most secondary services to a 20-minute headway
- introduce service every 20 minutes for core services on evenings and Sundays, and hourly on secondary city services on evening and Sundays – commencing from April 2023
- to create a 'local link' network of supporting services - commencing from April 2023.

5.4.1 A turn up and go network of cross city services

The 'turn up and go' core network, made up of the key routes connecting the main centres across the city, with improvements to Sunday and morning and evening frequencies, forms the central pillar of this proposal. Initially identified in 2019, and developed in the TCF bid of 2020, this 'turn up and go' core network will ultimately consist of several new cross-city routes.

The City's principal operator First Potteries has confirmed post-pandemic proposals for the development of some core routes on a commercial basis, to be implemented from April 2022. This will initially be in the form of ten-minute frequency 'turn up and go' services on three service routes:

- serving the north of the city, from the city centre to Burslem and Tunstall, and onwards to Kidsgrove

- serving the south of the city, from the city centre to Bentilee, Longton, Fenton, Stoke, and Newcastle-under-Lyme
- serving the station and south-west of the city, from the city centre to Stoke-on-Trent Station, and onward to Newcastle-under-Lyme and Keele University

First will also operate two further core routes on 15-minute frequencies through the day, with the ultimate intention that once bus priority measures are delivered, these services can be increased in frequency and form part of future cross-city services in combination with some of the existing core 'turn up and go' routes. These are:

- serving the south of the city, from the city centre to Fenton and Longton
- serving the north of the city, from the city centre to Chell and beyond

One further core route will operate from April 2022 on a 15-minute frequency:

serving the west and north-west of the city including key employment locations from the city centre to Festival Park, Etruria Valley Enterprise Zone, and Newcastle-under-Lyme

Services operated by D&G Bus further enhance some of these core routes, and already there is effective coordination that provides 15-minute and 'turn up and go' frequencies on some of these corridors, and on routes into the north-east of the City.

The core routes will be the focus of First Potteries' commercial investment from April 2022, with refurbished buses and distinctive branding being introduced on key corridors.

As the TCF programme of bus priority improvements delivers improved journey times and reliability over the next few years, the re-introduction of cross-city routes that will provide more direct service, in line with passenger aspirations, will be possible. The exact format of cross-city routes is to be determined based on observed demand, latent demand, the performance of individual services and the effectiveness of priority measures. Options for core 'turn up and go' cross-city services include linking the northern route from Kidsgrove with the southern route to Fenton and Longton; and the western route from Keele and Newcastle-under-Lyme, via the station, with the northern route to Chell.

As a first step, BSIP support will be required to enable an uplift in service frequencies to ensure that all these core routes can be provided at 10-minute turn up and go frequencies. This will provide the basis for financially sustainable 'turn up and go' frequency cross-city routes in the longer term. The intention is for the programme of TCF measures to be completed to enable

cross-city services to be re-introduced from the spring of 2023, but in the short-term financial support will be needed to deliver every core radial route at 10-minute frequency.

5.4.2 Creating a regular network of secondary services

To complement the 'turn up and go' network, a secondary network of 20-minute headway (or better) services on other existing city routes, which are currently operating at a mix of frequencies ranging from hourly to every 20-minutes, will be developed. Some of these secondary city routes form multi-operator routes that already coordinate to provide regular service across the city.

The City Council has an ambition, supported by evidence from stakeholders, that both 'turn up and go' and secondary network services will start earlier in the morning, and continue into the evenings and operate on Sundays, an aspect of the current network that is currently very limited.

In summary, the delivery of the secondary network will initially focus on the maintenance and improvement of regular service on important city routes, with an ambition to improve frequencies and extend operations in evenings and on Sundays from April 2023. The detail of which services will ultimately form the secondary network that complements the core services will be subject to development within the Enhanced Partnership. Services across the city that will be considered for enhancement to every 20-minutes (some in combination with other services, and some that are already at 20-minute frequency) include:

- First Potteries city services 5, 8, 18, 21, 22, 23, 98 and 99, and Kingfisher;
- D&G Bus services 1/1A, 8A/8B, 9, 16, and 32X.

First Potteries, D&G Bus, and Arriva (which operates service 64, an inter-urban service from Shrewsbury and Market Drayton to the city centre) each operate some lower frequency and inter-urban services that, in the short-term, are not likely to feature in a network of 20-minute headway secondary services.

5.4.3 Supporting socially necessary services

To achieve the City Council's ambition that access to bus services is widened across the whole city, areas not currently served will see the re-introduction of economically and socially necessary services through BSIP support. Detailed analysis will inform a network of new supporting services to the local centres of Longton and Tunstall, at hourly frequencies to connect with the core network, as part of the development of the Enhanced Partnership, for introduction later in the BSIP implementation programme.

5.4.4 BSIP outline requirement for Bus Service Support

Costs for improving the existing 15-minute frequency services to 10-minute 'turn up and go' services are based on an expected requirement to increase the Peak Vehicle Requirement (PVR) by an additional 12 buses, at an estimated supported cost of £2m per year. It is intended that this full network of 'turn up and go' service operates through the daytime from April 2022, but this can only be delivered as early as 2022 through additional BSIP support.

Similarly, estimated costs for extending the secondary services to operate at 20-minute intervals through the day are also based on an expected requirement to increase the PVR by up to an additional 15 buses, at an estimated supported cost of £2.5m per year. To ensure resources and capacity to deliver this additional improvement of service, it is proposed that this commences from April 2023, and is delivered in phases through to 2025.

The marginal cost of extending services across the city to provide evening and Sunday services, which are presently limited, will be significant. For the core network to run every 20-minutes and the secondary network at 1 per hour in evenings, at an estimated operational cost of £45 per hour, this will require support of up to £3.5m a year (assuming 313 days of operation).

On Sundays, to operate the core network every 20-minutes and the secondary network hourly, assuming 52 days a year, this will initially require support of £2m per year.

It is estimated that local feeder services based on providing connections at Longton and Tunstall, which could potentially be operated as Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services, will require support of up to £1m per annum.

The requirement for service support to deliver this level of ambition is summarised as follows. The breakdown by year of this Resource/Revenue support is provided in the BSIP Outline funding template which can be found in Appendix F.

- Increase of core services to ten-minute headway 'turn up and go' service frequencies –support commencing in 2022/23, and reducing through the BSIP programme as bus priority measures coupled with higher frequencies support rising patronage
- Secondary network to 20-minute frequencies: support commencing in 2023/24, and implemented in phases across the BSIP programme
- Re-introduction of evening services: support commencing in 2023/24, and implemented in phases across the BSIP programme
- Re-introduction of Sunday services: support commencing in 2023/24, and implemented in phases across the BSIP programme

- Development of socially and economically necessary feeder services: support commencing in 2024/25
- Continuation of the support beyond 2025 for a further two years to support a secondary network to 20-minute frequencies, support to evening and Sunday services, and feeder services.

Resources, including vehicles and drivers, will be a potential barrier to the re-introduction of such widespread improvement of the network. It is therefore proposed to deliver the secondary network frequency uplifts and the re-introduction of evening and Sunday services over several years.

In each case, as passenger numbers grow and the service moves towards financial sustainability, the resource support requirement is likely to reduce year-on-year beyond the BSIP programme. The total **service support required through the initial three-year programme is £16m, with a further £18m for a two-year period beyond 2025**.

A summary of required resource support is shown in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Summary of resource support

	2022/23 (£'000)	2023/24 (£'000)	2024/25 (£'000)	Beyond 2025 (£'000)
Support to turn up and go	2,000	1,000	0	0
Support to 20-minute frequency secondary network	0	1,250	2,500	5,000
Support to evening service	0	1,750	3,500	7,000
Support to Sunday service	0	1,000	2,000	4,000
Support to feeder service	0		1,000	2,000
Total support	2,000	5,000	9,000	18,000

5.5 Lower and simpler fares

5.5.1 A commitment from partners

The City's two principal operators First Potteries and D&G Bus are committed to working with the City Council and partner authorities in developing a more attractive customer offer on fares as part of an Enhanced Partnership. The operators are supportive of targeting fares offers on actions that can build patronage in the long-term in a financially sustainable way.

This encompasses providing a better offer for 18–25-year-olds, including both operators being supportive of developing an offer for young people in employment to help make their travel more affordable through the transition from education to employment.

The Council will also work with operators within the Enhanced Partnership to explore other options that may be acceptable, including:

- A broader range of discounted fares over the three years of the BSIP to help tackle affordability and stimulate growth
- Maintaining a flexible package of multi-operator options by offering a choice of on-bus fares, prepaid period tickets and 'Tap & Cap' pay-as-you-go
- Innovations to respond to post-pandemic changes in working patterns that provide flexibility to commuters

Further to this, the City Council is committed to pursuing options that:

- Harmonise child fares across all operators within the Stoke city boundary at 5-18 years inclusive
- Develop integrated bus-rail fares for local trips within the North Staffordshire conurbation.

5.5.2 Lower and simpler fares

For regular travel, our proposal is to work with operators in developing the Enhanced Partnership to make the existing and already well-used and successful SMART multi-operator pass the primary ticket brand, reducing its current prices to ensure there is no premium compared to the equivalent single operator pass price or potentially by removal of individual operator passes, and to ultimately through BSIP introduce a reduced-price fare cap for daily and weekly travel. This would make it much easier for the customer to understand which ticket is best for them.

The principal operators, First Potteries, D&G Bus, and Arriva can all now accept a contactless payment card (bank card) as payment for fares, and First Potteries offers best value capping for customers that just use their services (see earlier description of the tap-on tap-off programme). This already ensures

that the cost of multiple single trips does not exceed the cost of a day or week ticket for First customers taking this option.

However, customers who wish to use their contactless card to pay for journeys on more than one operator or another mode can pay up to double the fare as there is no interoperability between ticket machines. The City Council will work with the other operators to bring in contactless payment card facilities building on the work that the industry is currently undertaking so that price capping can be applied across the network.

The City Council will also work with operators to develop an attractive proposal on ticketing, based on the SMART platform, for young people's tickets. Both principal operators are supportive of developing attractive ticket options in this market to stimulate long-term sustainable growth.

5.5.3 BSIP outline support requirement for Fares Support

Operators are keen to support financially sustainable approaches to fares that will support patronage growth within the Enhanced Partnership. However, network-wide fare reductions will require considerable financial support in the short-term.

Costing of an indicative daily fare cap of £3 was identified within the Superbus proposals of 2019, from which an indicative revenue gap of up to £9m was identified over three years, when applied across the whole North Staffordshire network and to account for the services of all operators. This provides an indication of the scale of support needed to enable offers on discounted fares to effectively stimulate use and future growth in patronage. Indications from the same Superbus proposals on the cost of targeted ticketing improvements, illustrated by a proposal for bus and rail ticket integration within Stoke (a proposal to provide PlusBus support on journeys from Longport, Longton, Kidsgrove and Blythe Bridge), showed a requirement for £300k over a three-year programme.

Support from BSIP of up to **£9m** of revenue support across the initial three-year programme is therefore identified, with the likelihood that further support will be required at a similar level for at least two years beyond 2025 to develop and support appropriate interventions. It is intended that offers will initially focus on young people and on offers that grow patronage sustainably in the long-term.

All support is revenue:

- Introduction of ticketing options to stimulate demand and support affordability: **£15m**

A summary of expected resource support is shown in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3: Summary of resource support

	2022/23 (£'000)	2023/24 (£'000)	2024/25 (£'000)	Beyond 2025 (£'000)
Fares support	3,000	3,000	3,000	6,000
Total support	3,000	3,000	3,000	6,000

5.6 Local bus network presented as a single system, with clear passenger information

5.6.1 Network Identity and Branding

Discussions with operators indicate a positive commitment to the adoption of an overall network identity that develops a coherent image for the local North Staffordshire network in respect of information and infrastructure. Such an identity would be used on all online and printed information, tickets, vehicles, and infrastructure including bus stops and stations. Within this identity, bus operators will maintain and develop their own unique identities for their services and for key routes including the proposed 'turn up and go' services and supporting networks. This could include colour coding or other appropriate identity.

5.6.2 Passenger information and On-bus audio visual displays

The proposal is to seek support to roll out a network wide Real Time Information system with screens at the busiest bus stops and compatibility with the website http://www.cartogold.co.uk/stoke/map.html.

Subsequent to the Levelling Up Fund Transport submission not being awarded funding, the bus package measures have been reviewed and included as an integrated part of the BSIP package to progressively deliver investment that complements real time information at the busiest stops (the LUF proposed to provide Real Time information screens at 90 bus stops and real time QR codes at 461 bus stops), until all bus stops are provided with either printed or low energy e-ink timetable displays and provided with an overall bus network information panel. Real time information will be rolled out that will enable expected arrival times to be displayed at bus stops and on web and app-based information services. Our ambition is to include provision of e-ink timetable displays at all stops, using solar power where required, which will enable remote updating of information.

Alongside this, investment through BSIP will be required to support the installation of audio-visual information provision in each bus operating across North Staffordshire.

Alongside this investment, we will work with operators through the Enhanced Partnership to reduce and coordinate the number of timetable changes per

annum, with the aim being that changes are made no more frequently than four times a year.

5.6.3 BSIP outline support requirement for Information and Network Identity

It is proposed to deliver the following projects through BSIP:

- Information, network identity and brand development: **£250,000**
- Real time information roll-out: **£2,300,000**
- On-bus audio visual displays: **£1,700,000**

Table 5.4 provides a summary of the BSIP investment and support package for each of the measures outlined above.

Table 5.4: Summary of Passenger Information Measures

Passenger Information Measures	BSIP Investment Package
Information, network identity and brand development	£250,000
Real time information roll-out	£2,300,000
On-bus audio visual displays	£1,700,000
Total	**£4,250,000**

5.7 Modern buses and decarbonisation

The Transforming Cities Fund bid includes a commitment from principal operator First Potteries that savings delivered through improved journey times and reliability on the new cross-city routes will be reinvested in new buses, with “at least 15 new double decker Euro VI vehicles”. This represents a £3.5m contribution to the TCF programme.

In the short term ongoing and planned introduction of refurbished vehicles as part of planned internal cascade within First Group will deliver a significant modernisation of the current fleet. Taken together with recent JAQU funded retrofits as part of delivering improvements in air quality, this significantly improves the proportion of Euro VI buses in the First Potteries fleet. In the short-term First is pressing ahead with these plans to for a cleaner, newer diesel fleet to enable the bus to be at the heart of delivering Clean Air targets, and by the end of 2022, more than 80% of the First Potteries fleet is expected to be Euro VI compliant.

First has committed to achieving a 100% zero emission bus fleet by 2035, and is therefore committed to collaborating with the City Council and partners in

Staffordshire County Council to lay the groundwork for converting the local Potteries fleet to electric as part of future ZEBRA bidding opportunities in England. First is supportive of developing a pathfinder project on Route 25 (which serves the city centre, Stoke-on-Trent Rail station, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and Keele University) to be delivered with new zero emission buses, electric initially with opportunity to move to hydrogen fuel cell should this become more cost effective. The City Council is keen to pursue the opportunity to investigate hydrogen as an option for decarbonising the bus fleet.

Operators are committed to offering advice and assistance in providing technical expertise and experience in the technologies and infrastructure requirements, and in supporting the development of business cases for future ZEBRA funding applications.

5.8 Excellent customer service and passenger charter

The BSIP aims to give passengers a stronger voice. A new Bus Passenger Charter (BPC) will be produced jointly between the city council, bus operators and bus user groups. It will provide a comprehensible outline of the standards that both customers and providers should expect and will provide mechanisms for redress to ensure standards are upheld. We will endeavour to develop the passenger charter in collaboration with Staffordshire County Council to ensure there is a network-wide charter.

A draft outline Customer Charter can be found in Appendix G.

5.8.1 BSIP outline support requirement for customer service

To assist with delivering physical schemes, as well as other ongoing matters such as information provision, customer charter support, monitoring of performance and responding to general maintenance issues, this BSIP includes a request to put in place a delivery team incorporating posts for the initial three-year period (also including for the hire of a van over the same period), and for two years beyond 2025. This team will help to redress the disparity in current resources, with the local authority currently having only two officers with roles engaged in supporting bus service policy and operations in Stoke-on-Trent plus two staff providing support at the city centre bus station. These officers also have responsibilities for other aspects of transport policy and planning.

This delivery team will include a role for a highway works supervisor, whose brief will be to respond to the issues related to the impact of road works on bus performance as identified in Section 3.4.3 above. Additionally, this team will also respond to issues related to the enforcement of parking restrictions, particularly along existing and proposed red routes, as well as review and update the BSIP on an annual basis.

It is anticipated that the delivery team would comprise of an overall Programme Manager, a dedicated Project Manager who would prioritise infrastructure

delivery, and three further officers whose roles would cover bus service improvement, bus service information, and bus infrastructure.

- Enhanced Partnership Team to support the delivery of a BSIP: **£1,500,000**

5.9 Safe and accessible bus travel

The infrastructure that supports bus services needs to be accessible to all, including those with physical and learning disabilities. In addition, security is a barrier that prevents many people from considering bus travel. Our key deliverables through this part of the BSIP will be:

- Raised (level boarding) kerbs at more stops
- CCTV on every bus
- CCTV at more stops
- Improved lighting at all bus stops currently not meeting the required lux level
- A small, dedicated bus safety team to be deployed to hotspots around the network.

The LUF funding request included for the provision of low-level kerbs for 167 bus stops to improve access for those with mobility impairments, as well as providing CCTV at 69 of the most used stops. This investment will now require support through BSIP.

5.9.1 BSIP outline investment and support requirement for Safe and Accessible Bus Travel

The funding for these elements will be capital.

- Accessible bus stops roll out: **£3,600,000**
  - This is based 240 sites (to be determined)
- CCTV on every bus**: £1,275,000**
- CCTV at shelters: **£600,000**
  - This is based on the 69 originally proposed in LUF and 100 further sites to be determined
- Improved lighting (this is based on a full review of lighting levels at all stops, with 100 sites to be improved: **£250,000**
- Safety team (see Customer Charter section in Section 5.8).

Table 5.5 provides a summary of the BSIP funding requirement for each of the measures outlined above.

Table 5.5: Summary of Safe and Accessible Bus Travel Measures

Passenger Information Measures	BSIP Investment Package
Accessible bus stops roll out	£3,600,000
CCTV on every bus	£1,275,000
CCTV at shelters	£600,000
Improved lighting	£250,000
Total	**£5,725,000**

6 Reporting and overview

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/No	**Explanation** (max 50 words)
Make improvements to bus services and planning		
More frequent and reliable services		
Review service frequency	Yes	Stoke-on-Trent's vision for bus of an attractive, efficient, and affordable bus network as the basis of the public transport network is predicated on a core network of bus services with a turn-up-and-go frequency, supported by a network of secondary services operating every 20-minutes and increased Sunday and evening services.
Increase bus priority measures	Yes	Stoke-on-Trent has pursued an ambitious programme of investment in bus priorities targeting the worst delay hot spots – identified by operators – including through its successful Transforming Cities Fund bids, which have brought in £34.6m. BSIP includes further bus priorities to support bus service reliability and to improve journey times.
Increase demand responsive services	Yes	The Council's ambition that access to bus services is widened across the whole city will see the re-introduction of economically and socially necessary services through BSIP support. New supporting services to the local centres to connect with the core network could potentially be operated as Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services.
Consideration of bus rapid transport networks	Yes	The re-introduction of cross-city services offers the long-term potential for operation as a BRT network.

Improvements to planning / integration with other modes		
Integrate services with other transport modes	Yes	BSIP includes a proposal for integrated bus-rail tickets for journeys within the city and local area, though delivery will be subject to further work in establishing the legal framework for delivery. The council is already investing in significant improvements to rail-bus integration at Stoke Station and station access through TCF.
Simplify services	Yes	The introduction of new cross-city corridors served by a 'turn up and go' frequent service, with a minimum ten-minute headway, will reduce the need for interchange and provide more direct bus services to and from key destinations across Stoke-on-Trent. The network will be presented as a single, simple network.
Review socially necessary services	Yes	The Council's ambition that access to bus services is widened across the whole city will see the re-introduction of economically and socially necessary services through BSIP support. The network will be reviewed, and services developed to provide socially necessary links across the city, especially to new employment and residential locations.
Invest in Superbus networks	Yes	We believe there is potential for the cross-city services as a Superbus network; to include a full package of vehicle, priority, fares, timetable, information, and branding improvements. Further guidance will be required to understand the merits of using the Superbus brand to progress proposals.
Improvements to fares and ticketing		
Lower fares	Yes	Fare-capping for daily and weekly tickets will make for a simpler understanding of the different ticket options available and ensure customers do not pay more than they need. The BSIP includes proposals for a reduced maximum fare subject to funding support, and for development of targeted products to stimulate growth.

Simplify fares	Yes	For regular travel, our proposal is to work with operators in developing the Enhanced Partnership to make the existing and already well-used and successful SMART multi-operator pass the primary ticket brand, reducing its current prices to ensure there is no premium and providing clarity to customers.
Integrate ticketing between operators and transport	Yes	Our existing SMART card is already well used and will be better promoted through measures within the BSIP. In the longer term, an integrated bus-rail ticket is an ambition for use on shorter distance rail journeys within the conurbation to promote multi-modal travel.
Make improvements to bus passenger experience		
Higher spec buses		
Invest in improved bus specifications	Yes	BSIP will enable investment in on-board improvements such as audio-visual information announcements and more CCTV on buses. The “cascade in” of newer vehicles will improve passenger experience.
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services	Yes	Investment through BSIP will provide socially necessary services to underserved areas, resulting in greater accessibility to services, employment, and educational opportunities. Upgrades to bus stops will include raised kerbs for boarding, along with audio-visual announcements on buses.
Protect personal safety of bus passengers	Yes	We recognise that personal safety can be a key deterrent from using bus services, especially late at night. Upgrades to bus stops, including CCTV and lighting, and CCTV on every bus, will bring about improved passenger safety. A dedicated safety team will be deployed around the network.
Improve buses for tourists	No	We have not included any measures specifically aimed at tourists within our proposals, although all improvements to the local network will benefit tourists and visitors.

Invest in decarbonisation	Yes	The “cascade in” of newer vehicles will improve the proportion of Euro VI buses. Principal operator First is committed to collaborating on introducing electric vehicles as part of future ZEBRA bids and to pilot projects with zero emission buses. The Council is keen to pursue hydrogen as an option for decarbonising the bus fleet.
Improvements to passenger engagement		
Passenger charter	Yes	The BSIP aims to give passengers a stronger voice. A new Bus Passenger Charter will be produced in partnership with operators and bus user groups. It will provide a comprehensible outline of the standards that both customers and providers should expect and will provide mechanisms to ensure standards are upheld.
Strengthen network identity	Yes	There is positive commitment to the adoption of an overall network identity that develops a coherent image for the local North Staffordshire network in respect of information and infrastructure. Such an identity would be used on all online and printed information, tickets, vehicles, and infrastructure including bus stops and stations.
Improve bus information	Yes	Rolling out real time information across the network, maintaining accurate online information on the new website and on-board audio-visual announcements are key priorities which will bring about substantial benefits for bus passengers and make using the bus network a simpler and more pleasant experience.
Other		
Other		

A. Letters of Support from Bus Operators

28 October 2021

First Potteries
Dividy Road
Adderley Green
Stoke on Trent
ST3 5YY
www.firstus.co.uk

Brian Edwards
Team Manager, Safe & Sustainable Transport
Civic Centre
Glebe Street
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 1HH

Dear Brian

Stoke City Bus Service Improvement Plan

I am very pleased to support the submission of the Stoke City Bus Service Improvement Plan.

The Stoke City market is an important part of the wider First Bus operation. First Potteries is an active member of the Local Partnership established in many years ago. Local partners have worked closely together to ensure services operated for key workers throughout the pandemic.

We have locally been working for some time on the delivery of many of the elements which were subsequently contained within the Government's National Bus Strategy. We have worked closely with Stoke City Authority to develop this Plan participating in workshops, reviewing content and endorsing proposals. The Bus Service Improvement Plan is therefore a product of close collaboration with Stoke City Authority.

This is a very strong, customer focused plan and First Potteries will play its part in delivering a transformation for bus passengers in our region.

The Plan represents a healthy level of ambition. We support the proposals in the plan for

- Financial support in 2022-23 as we transition out of the effects of the pandemic to a bus service for the future.
- Additional bus priority building upon the successful Transforming Cities initiatives:
- Network substantial changes to the local bus network introducing cross city and express services.
- Accelerating the move to multi-operator capping to kick start the market.

cpt member
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH Action for Children
ARMED FORCES COVENANT PROUDLY SUPPORTING THOSE WHO SERVE.

First Bus are nationally and locally implementing a range of successful schemes to enhance the bus offer for passengers:

- We have committed to achieve a 100% zero emission bus fleet by 2035, buying our last diesel buses in 2022.

- We have partnered Stoke City Local Authority in delivering their ambitious Transforming Cities Fund programme.

- We have transformed our emissions performance, with over 80% of our local fleet now Euro VI or better.

- We are embracing the rollout of multi-operator capped ticketing nationally and are playing a key role in delivering of England-leading schemes.

- We will be leveraging our proven digital capabilities to partner our local authorities as they develop App, DRT and MaaS solutions.

We therefore commend this BSIP to the Department and look forward to continuing to work in partnership to ensure its delivery.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Eggleton
Managing Director First South Yorkshire and Midlands

Mossfield Road
Adderley Green
Stoke-on-Trent
ST3 5BW

D&G Bus

Phone: 01782 332337 **Web: www.dgbus.co.uk** **E-mail: info@dgbus.co.uk**

Brian Edwards
Team Manager, Transport Policy and Planning
Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Civic Centre
Glebe Street
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 1HH

28th October 2021

Dear Mr Edwards,

BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – STOKE-ON-TRENT CITY COUNCIL

The Bus Service Improvement Plan prepared for Stoke-on-Trent provides a basis for securing the local bus network in the long term. We believe that a focus on developing and growing those core routes which meet the needs of many local, regular users should be the top priority for the plan.

The plan has been prepared with input from the commercial bus industry and we would wish to see this engagement extend to consider the strategic issues of shared importance to both operators and the council.

The BSIP will be valuable as we move into the preparation of Enhanced Partnerships and Schemes to delivery local bus improvements for customers. Of course, achieving our ambition relies on the funding requirements set out in our Bus Service Improvement Plans so we must be optimistic that these funding requirements will be met.

I confirm that the BSIP for Stoke-on-Trent reflects our ambitions for the future and D&G look forward to working with you in developing and delivering these projects.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Crawford,
Operations Director.

City of Stoke on Trent Council
Civic Centre
Glebe Street
Stoke on Trent
ST4 1HH

25th October 2021

Dear Sir,

City of Stoke on Trent Council – Bus Service Improvement Plan

In response to *Bus Back Better*, the National Bus Strategy for England, City of Stoke on Trent Council has consulted with us in developing a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

We believe that the BSIP document created in partnership between the Council, ourselves, and other operators creates an exciting opportunity to deliver an integrated and inclusive transport network across Stoke on Trent, sustaining the existing level of service, and better connecting places, communities and economic assets within the region and beyond.

A focus on public transport will prioritise investment in a sustainable future, supporting a green recovery from Covid-19 and tackling the climate emergency through the decarbonisation of the transport sector.

Arriva fully support the City of Stoke on Trent Council's BSIP and the measures contained within it. As a major bus operator we are making every effort to regrow customer demand following the pandemic, and we welcome the future funding from DfT to help support that recovery and build upon it to deliver the BSIP's ambitious targets on patronage growth, reliability, punctuality, journey times and overall passenger satisfaction.

Kind regards

Andrew Godley
Commercial Director

Arriva Midlands
Westmoreland Avenue
Thurmaston
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LE4 8PH

Tel 0116 264 0400
Fax 0116 260 8620

www.arrivabus.co.uk

"Arriva Midlands" is the trading name of the following companies, each of which has its registered office address at 1 Admiral Way, Doxford International Business Park, Sunderland SR3 3XP: Arriva Midlands Limited (02141078), Arriva Midlands North Limited (01556305), Arriva The Shires Limited (02116519) and Centrebus Holdings Limited (06544272).

a DB company

From: dave@stantonsofstoke.co.uk
Sent: 22 October 2021 14:31
To: Brian Edwards
Subject: RE: Stoke-on-Trent Bus Service Improvement Plan

This message was received from outside the council

STOP. Were you expecting this email? Does it look genuine?

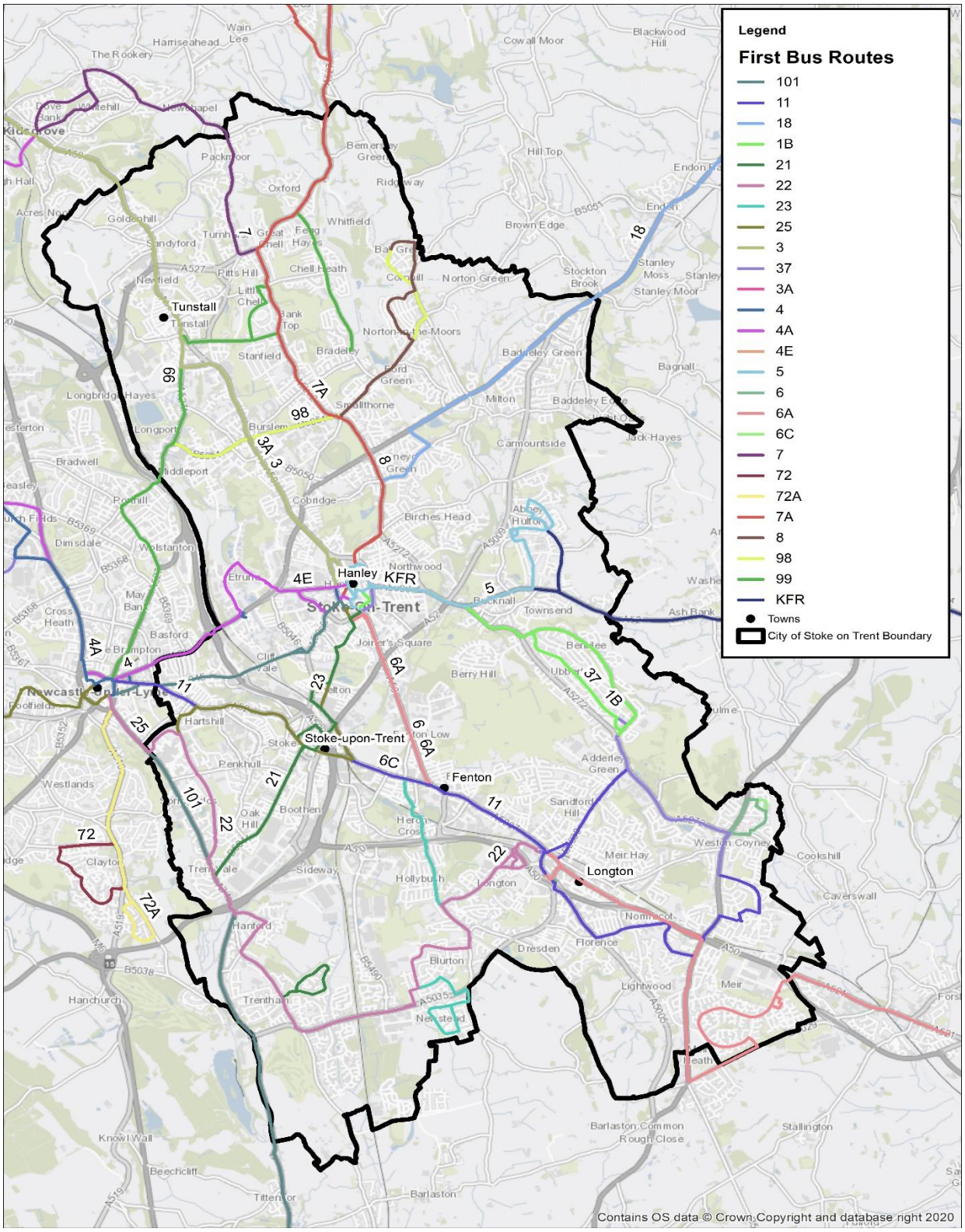
THINK. Before you CLICK on links or OPEN any attachments

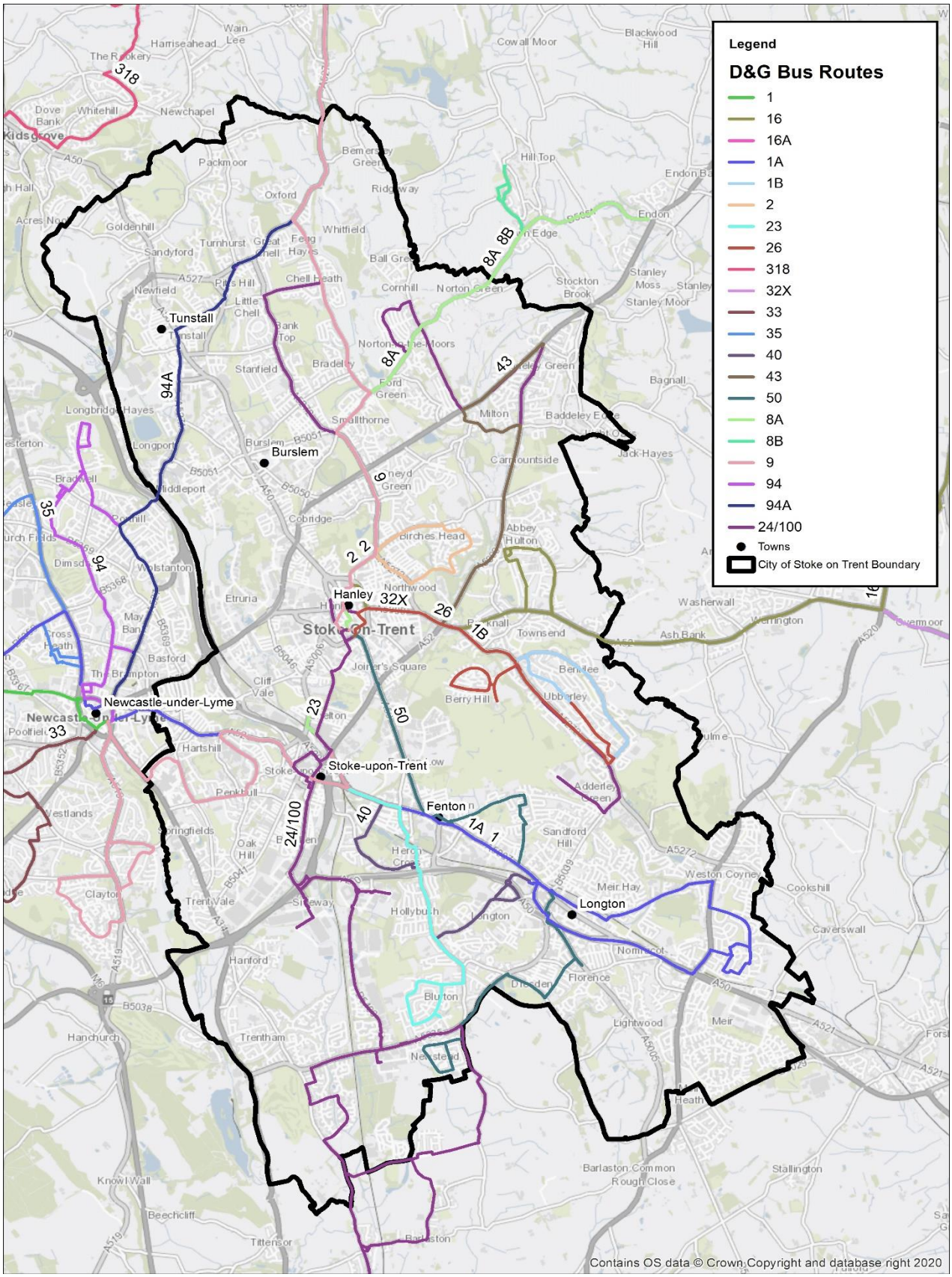
Hi Brian

I have spoken to Keith and we are happy to work with the partnership and the draft proposal

Regards
Dave Machin
Operations Manager
Stantons of Stoke

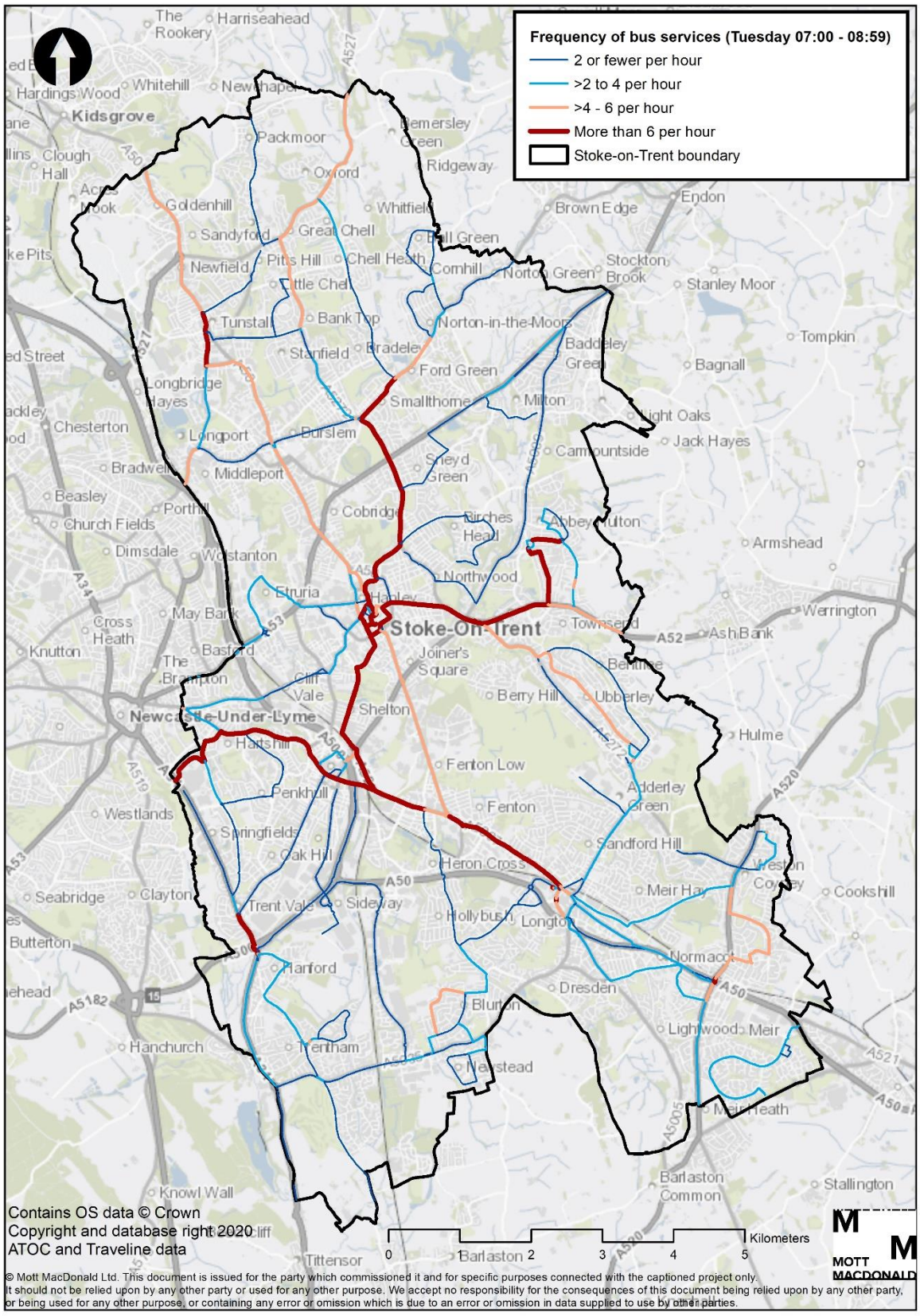
B. Current Bus Networks and Services First Potteries and D&G Bus[8]





[8] KFR is the Kingfisher service

C. Bus Route Frequency



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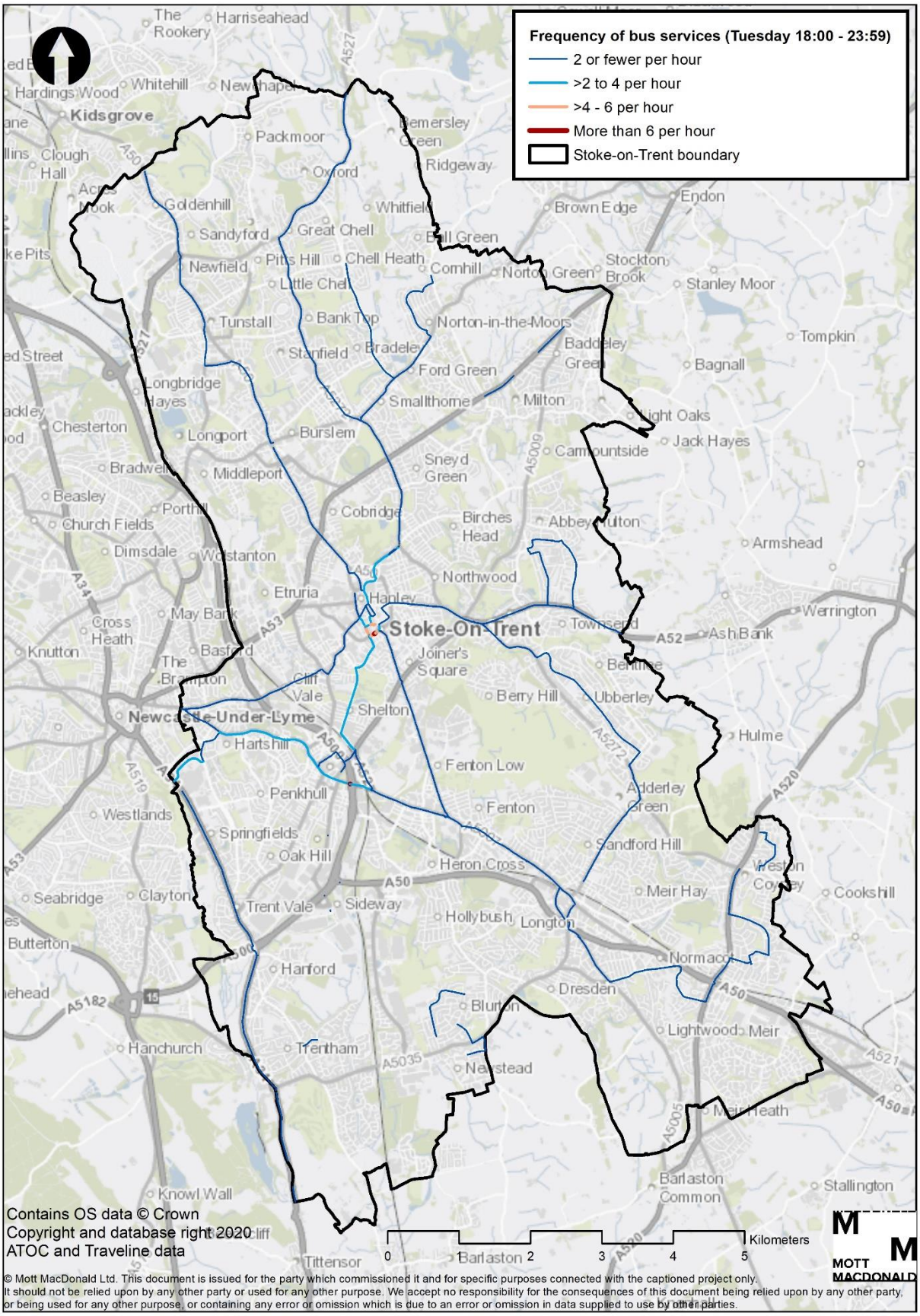

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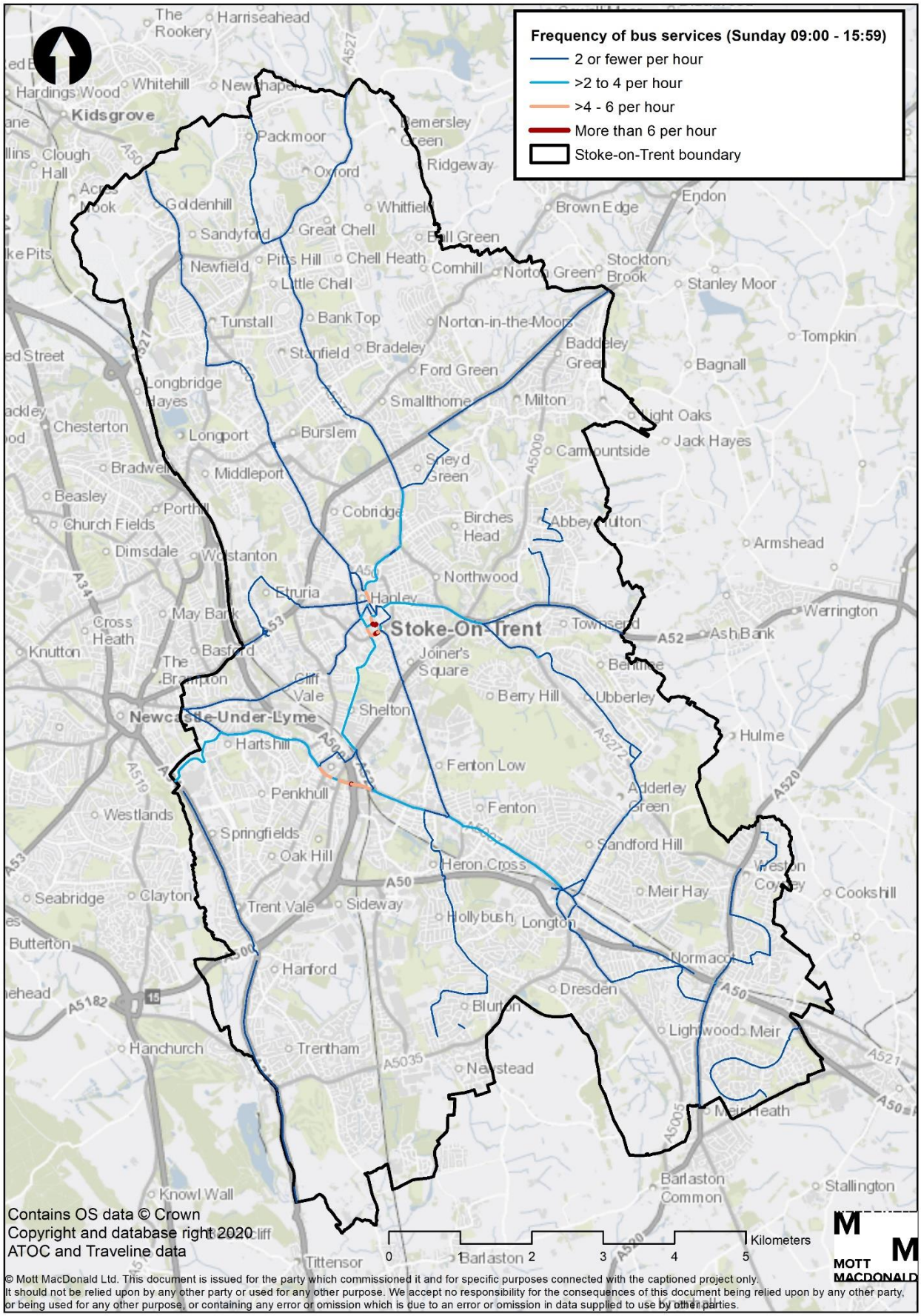

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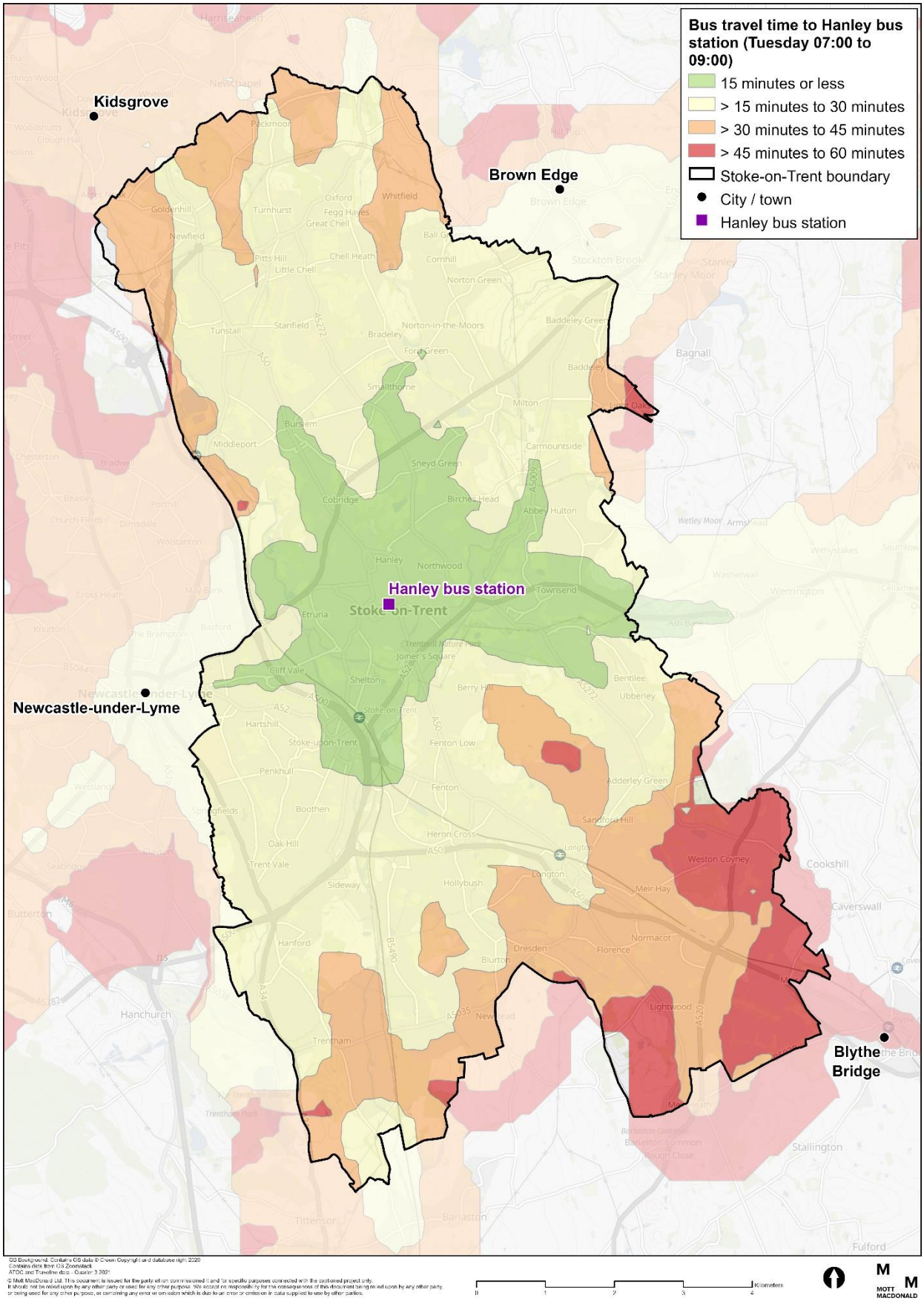
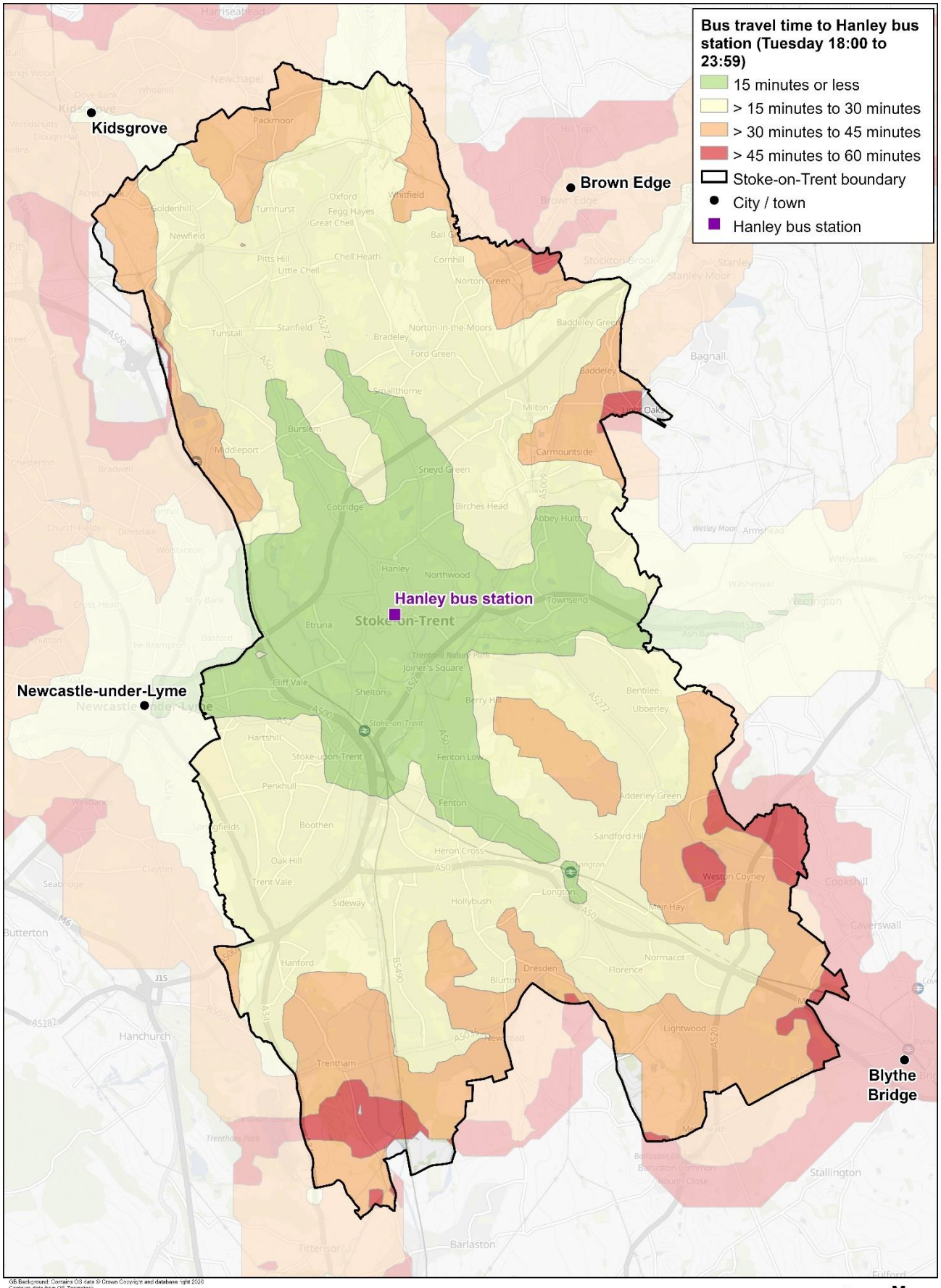
D. Bus Journey Times




Bus travel time to Hanley bus station (Tuesday 18:00 to 23:59)
15 minutes or less
> 15 minutes to 30 minutes
> 30 minutes to 45 minutes
> 45 minutes to 60 minutes
Stoke-on-Trent boundary
City / town
Hanley bus station
Kidsgrove
Brown Edge
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Hanley bus station
Stoke-on-Trent
Blythe Bridge
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Kilometers
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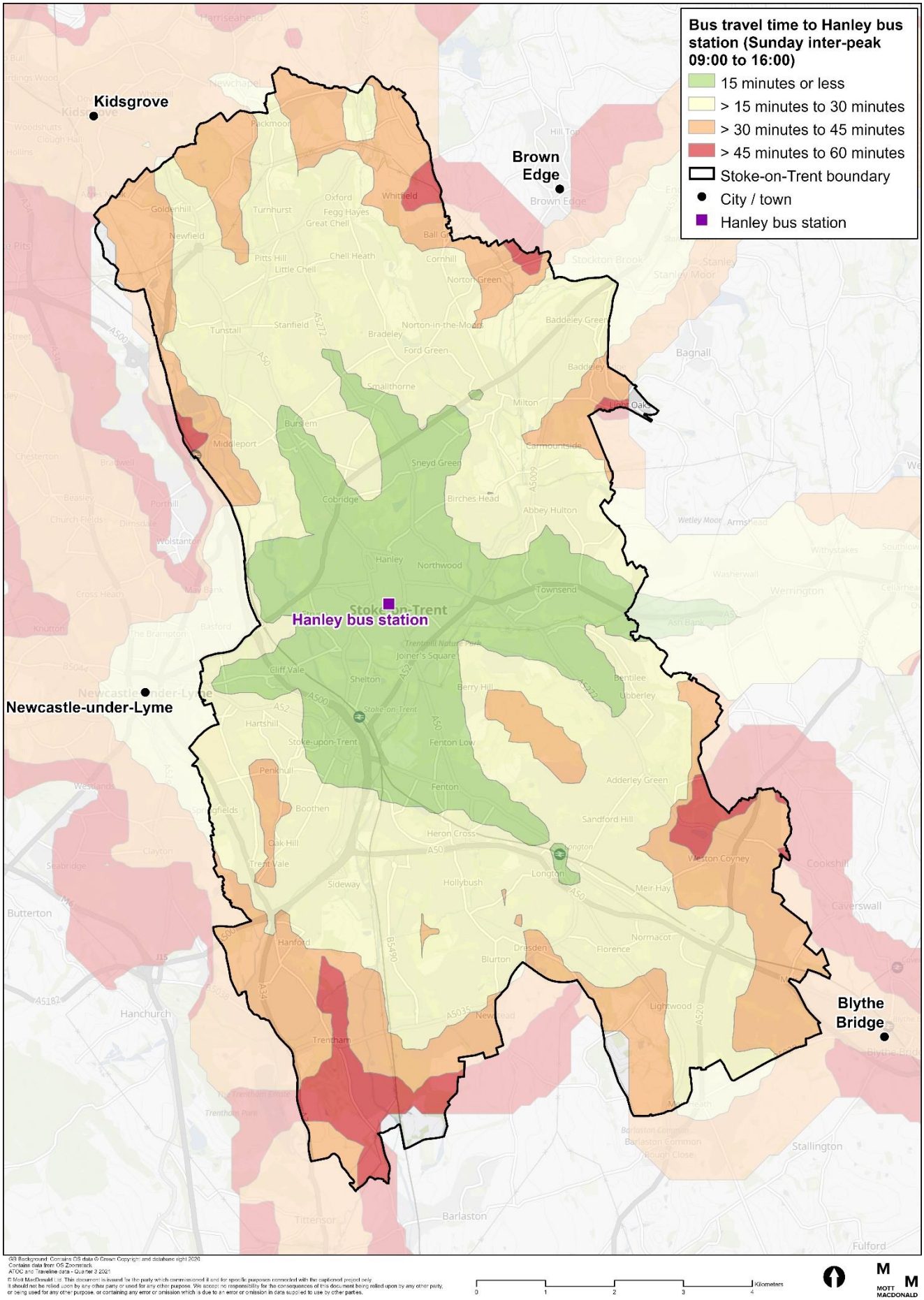

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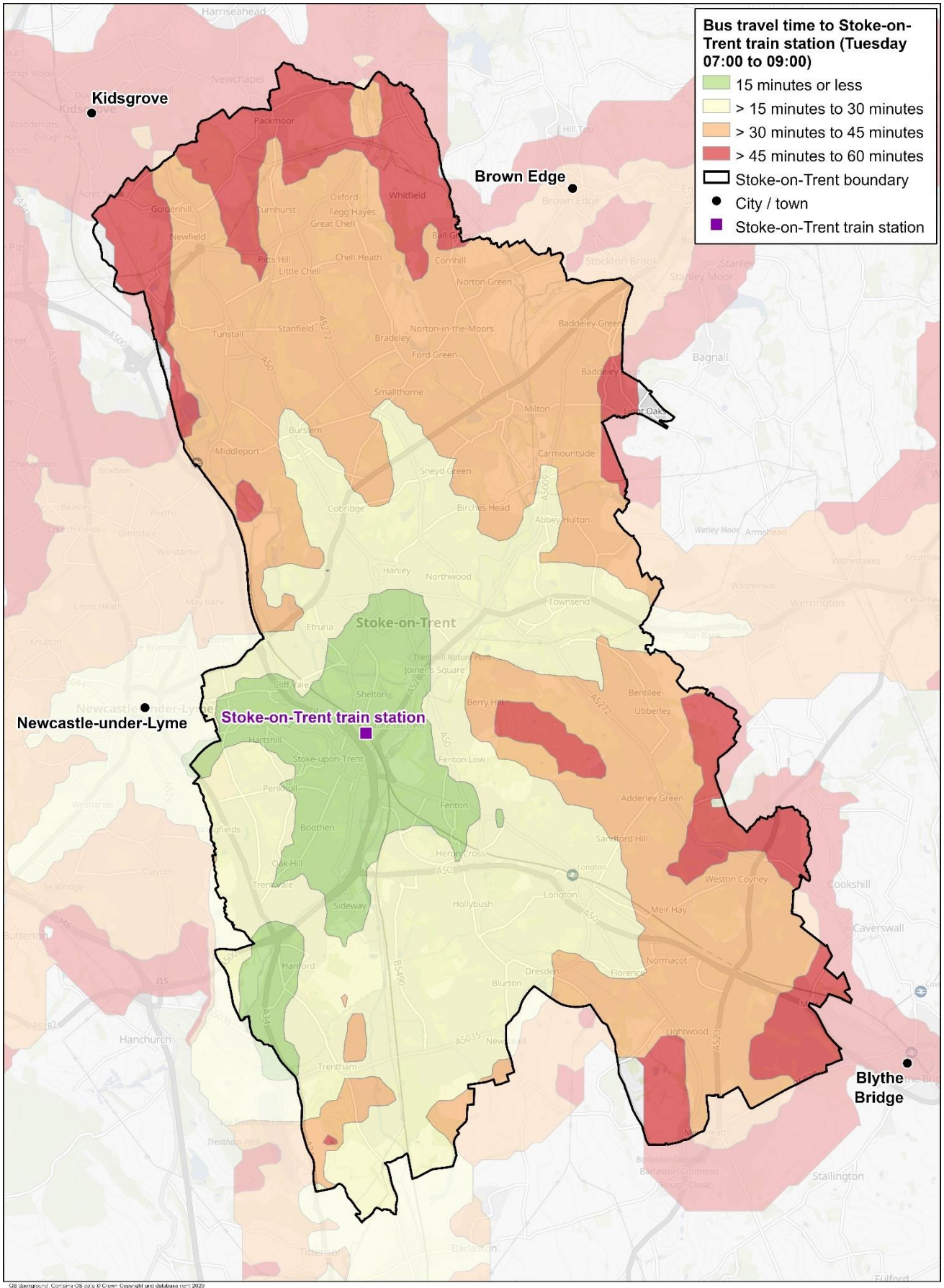
October 2021



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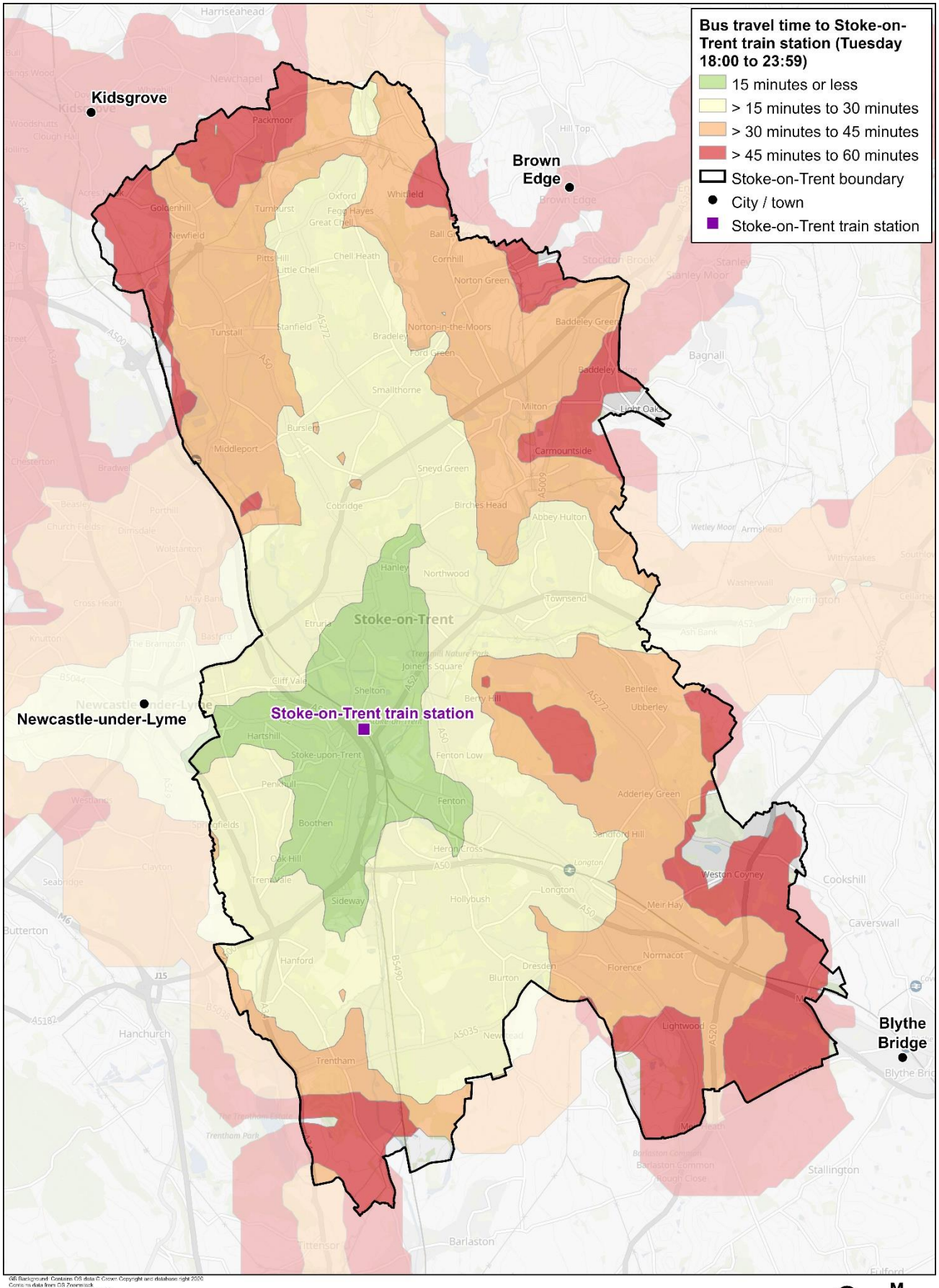
Bus travel time to Stoke-on-Trent train station (Tuesday 18:00 to 23:59)
15 minutes or less
> 15 minutes to 30 minutes
> 30 minutes to 45 minutes
> 45 minutes to 60 minutes
Stoke-on-Trent boundary
City / town
Stoke-on-Trent train station
Kidsgrove
Brown Edge
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Stoke-on-Trent train station
Blythe Bridge
Stoke-on-Trent
Harriseahead
Newchapel
Packmoor
Goldenhill
Tunstall
Chell Heath
Cornhill
Norton Green
Norton-in-the-Moors
Baddeley Green
Bagnall
Milton
Carmountside
Middleport
Sneyd Green
Birches Head
Abbey Hulton
Hanley
Northwood
Townsend
Etruria
Shelton
Hartshill
Stoke-upon-Trent
Fenton Low
Fenton
Boothen
Adderley Green
Bentilee
Ubberley
Weston Coyney
Longton
Meir Hay
Normacot
Florence
Dresden
Blurton
Hollybush
Sideway
Trentham
Hanchurch
Barlaston
Stallington
Cookshill
Caverswall
Lightwood
Meir Heath
Ash Bank
Washerwall
Werrington
Wetley Moor
Armshead
Withystakes
Bradwell
Chesterton
Wolstanton
Dimsdale
Porthill
Cross Heath
Knutton
Clayton
Seabridge
Butterton
Westlands
Oak Hill
Trent Vale
Hanford
Heron Cross
Sandford Hill
Cliff Vale
Berry Hill
Joiners Square
Trentham Park
Barlaston Common
Burslem
Smallthorne
Ford Green
Stanfield
Tunstall
Pitts Hill
Little Chell
Whitfield
Oxford
Fegg Hayes
Great Chell
Ball Green
Hill Top
Stanley
Stanley Moor
Stockton Brook
Light Oaks
Baddeley
Bradeley
Chesterton
Beasley
Church Fields
Dimsdale
Porthill
Wolstanton
Knutton
Cross Heath
May Bank
The Brampton
Basford
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Westlands
Clayton
Seabridge
Butterton
Oak Hill
Trent Vale
Hanford
Trentham
Hanchurch
Barlaston
Stallington
Fulford
Meir Heath
Lightwood
Normacot
Florence
Dresden
Blurton
Hollybush
Sideway
Longton
Meir Hay
Weston Coyney
Cookshill
Caverswall
Adderley Green
Bentilee
Ubberley
Sandford Hill
Heron Cross
Fenton
Fenton Low
Stoke-upon-Trent
Hartshill
Shelton
Cliff Vale
Berry Hill
Joiners Square
Trentham Nature Park
Etruria
Townsend
Northwood
Hanley
Abbey Hulton
Wetley Moor
Armshead
Withystakes
Washerwall
Werrington
Ash Bank
Bentilee
Ubberley
Adderley Green
Weston Coyney
Cookshill
Caverswall
Meir Hay
Longton
Normacot
Florence
Dresden
Blurton
Hollybush
Sideway
Trentham
Hanchurch
Barlaston
Stallington
Fulford
Meir Heath
Lightwood
Barlaston Common
Borough Close
Trentham Park
Trentham Estate
Bradeley
Ford Green
Smallthorne
Milton
Light Oaks
Baddeley
Baddeley Green
Norton-in-the-Moors
Norton Green
Cornhill
Chell Heath
Pitts Hill
Little Chell
Whitfield
Oxford
Fegg Hayes
Great Chell
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Hill Top
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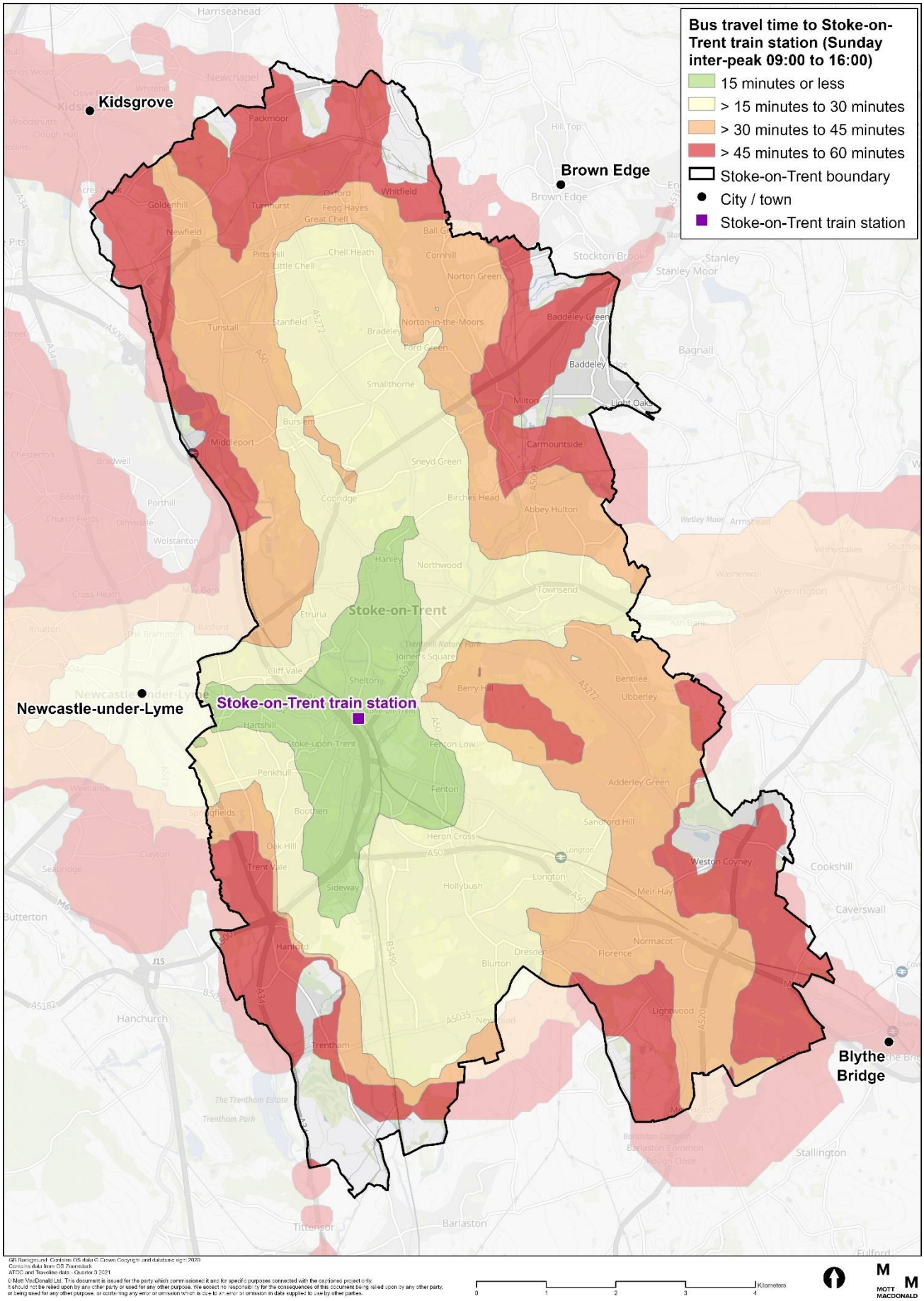
Stanley Moor
Stockton Brook
Bagnall
Carmountside
Middleport
Sneyd Green
Birches Head



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Kilometers 0 1 2 3 4

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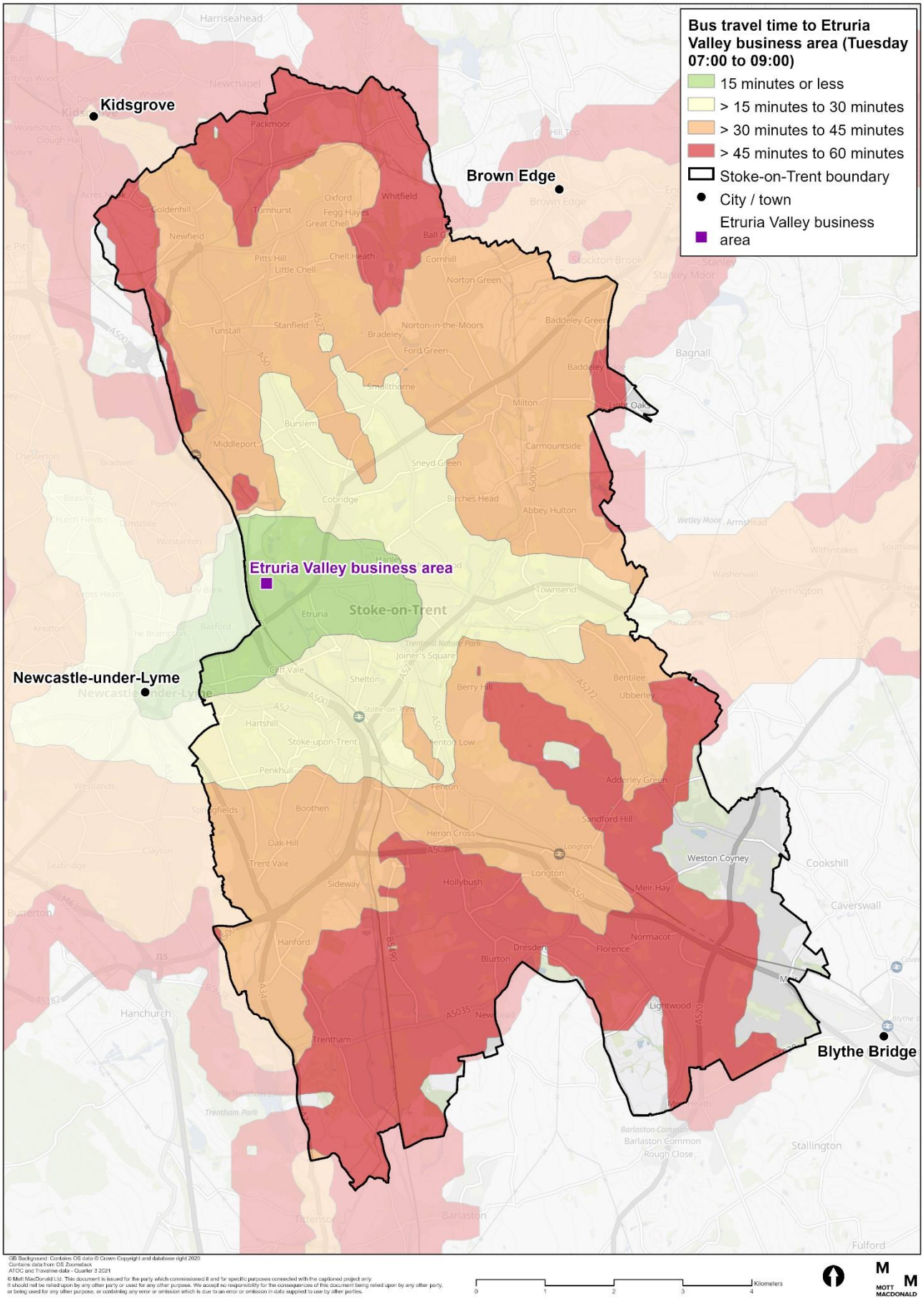
Bus travel time to Etruria Valley business area (Tuesday 07:00 to 09:00)
15 minutes or less
> 15 minutes to 30 minutes
> 30 minutes to 45 minutes
> 45 minutes to 60 minutes
Stoke-on-Trent boundary
City / town
Etruria Valley business area
Kidsgrove
Brown Edge
Etruria Valley business area
Stoke-on-Trent
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Blythe Bridge
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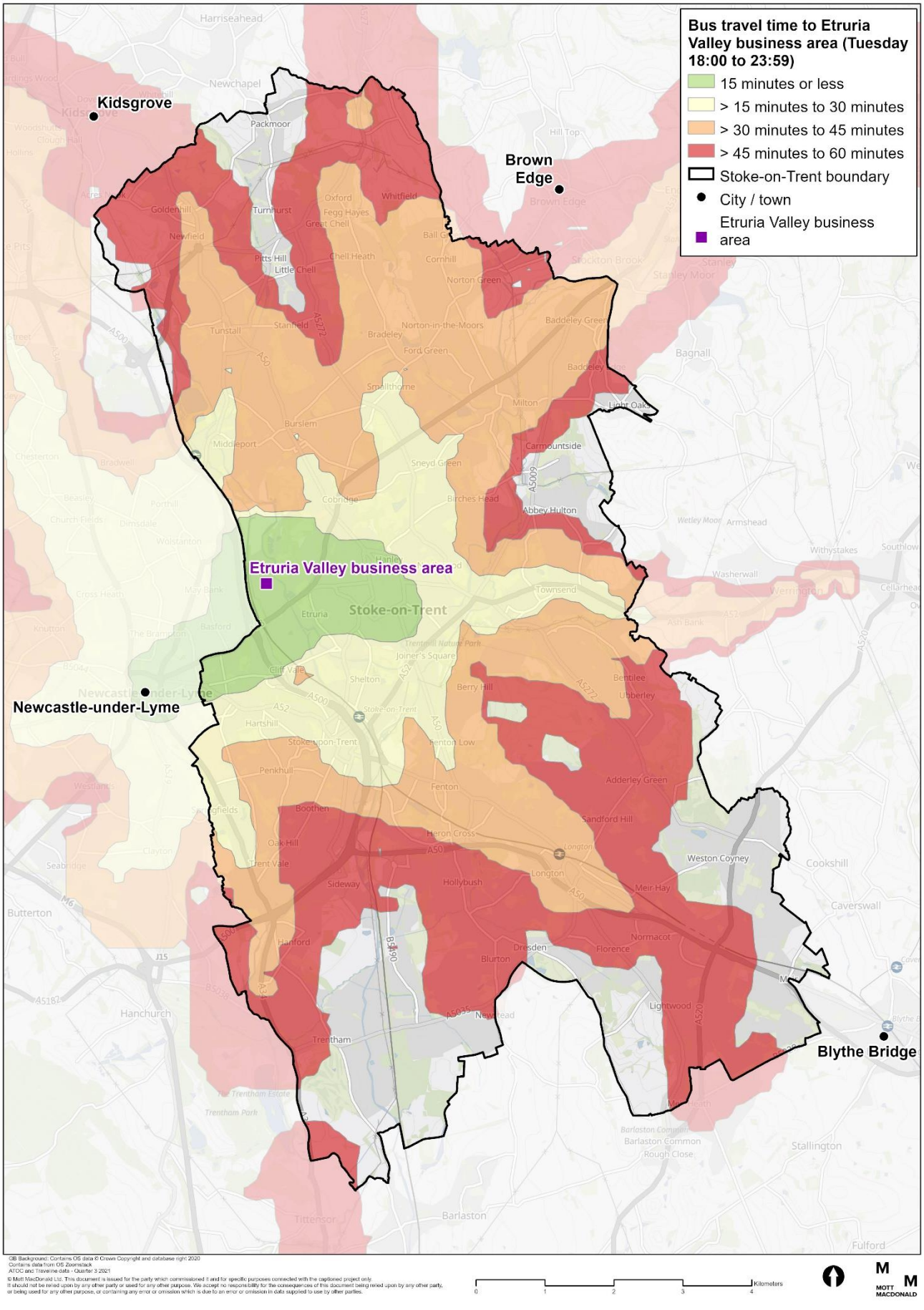

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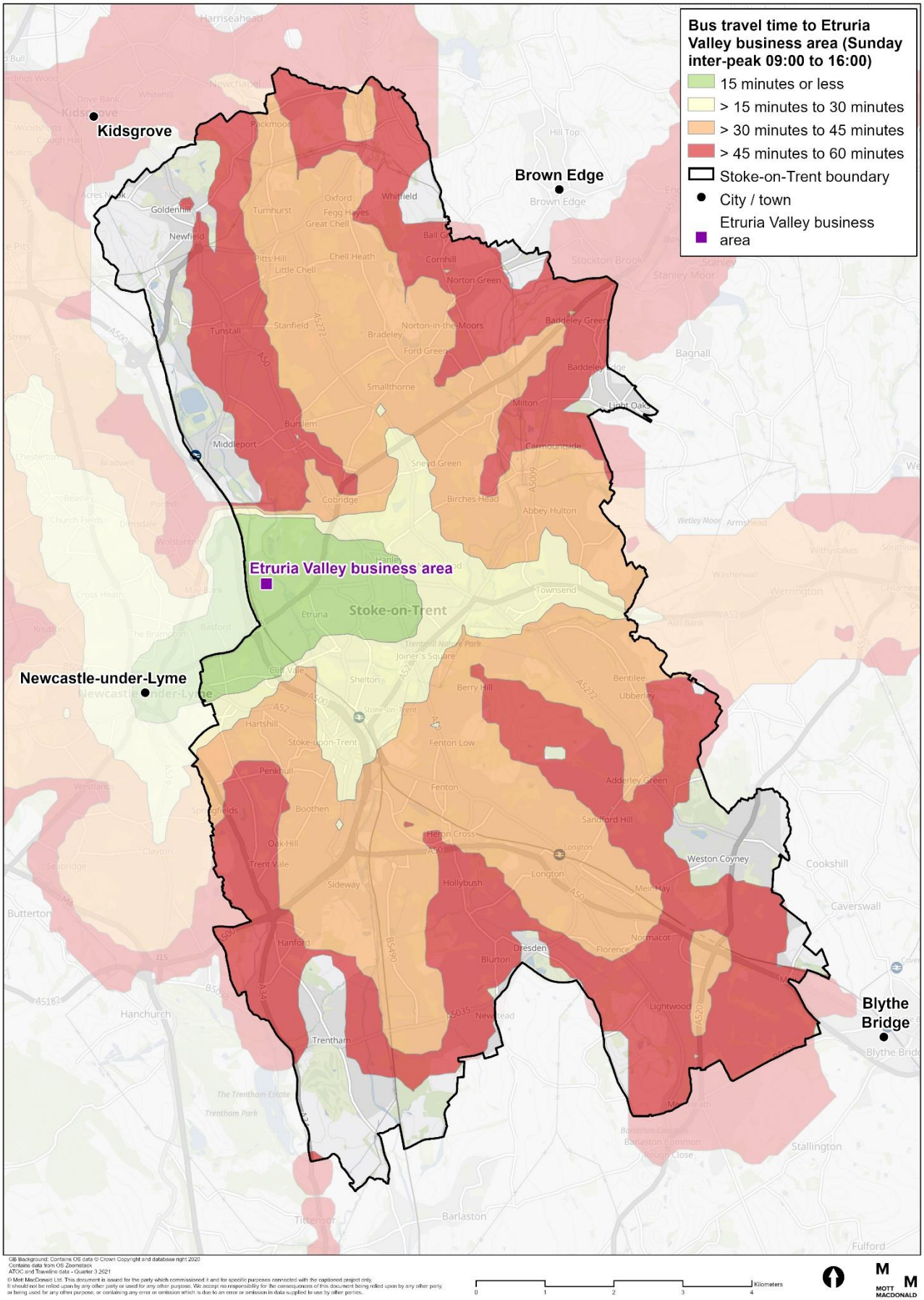

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E. Bus fares

Table E.1: Summary of First Potteries bus fares by zone

Age Group	Ticket	Potteries Area	Network Area
Adult	Single	From £1.50	From £1.80
	Return	£4.00	N/A
	Day	£5.00	£7.50
	5 Trip Pack	£11.00	N/A
	10 Trip Pack	£20.00	N/A
	Week	£18.00	£24.00
	Monthly	£60.00	N/A
	3 Month	£195.00	N/A
	Annual	£715.00	N/A
Child (5-15 years old)	Single	From £1.10	From £1.50
	Return	£3.00	N/A
	Day (unlimited travel for day)	£3.80	£5.60
	Week	£13.50	£18.00
	Month	£48.80	N/A
	3 Month	£143.30	N/A
	Annual	£536.30	N/A
Family/Group	Day (Group of 5 Adults)	£11.00	£16.00
	Weekend	£8.00	£15.00

Source: First Potteries

Table E.2: Summary of D&G Bus fares

Age Group	Ticket	Potteries area	Network area	PeakPlusXtra
Adult	Single	£2.20	N/A	N/A
	Early bird return (first journey before 09:30)	£3.00	N/A	N/A
	Return	£4.50	£5.50	N/A
	Day	N/A	N/A	£12.50
	Week	N/A	£16.00	N/A
Child (5 to 18 years old)	Single	£1.50	N/A	N/A
	Return	£3.00	£3.50	N/A
	Day	N/A	N/A	£8.00
	Week	N/A	£14.00	N/A
	Month (Students)	£45.00	N/A	N/A
	Annual (Students)	£450.00	N/A	N/A
Group (up to 5)	Day	£8.00	N/A	£23.00

Source: D&G Bus website

Table E.3: Summary of Arriva (West Midlands) bus fares

Ticket	Adult	Child (5-15 years old)	Family
Day	£6.30	£4.10	£13.00
Duo Day	£12.50	N/A	N/A
3 Day Flexi	£17.50	N/A	N/A
Week	£25.00	£18.00	N/A
4 Week	£83.00	£72.00	N/A
Annual	£830.00	£545.00	N/A

Source: Arriva Bus

Table E.4: Summary of Smart fares

Type of ticket	Adult	Child
Day	£5.90	£4.40
Weekly	£21	£15.75
Monthly	£75	£56
Three-month	£194	£139
Annual	£580	N/A

F. BSIP Outline funding template

Outline funding template for BSIP

** Within each category, please use multiple lines to show details of different projects or proposals where you can. For example, on bus priority, you should aim to include detail on specific corridors; or on bus service support, you may have a split between scheduled services and demand-responsive services to flag. This is particularly important where you wish to attach a different priority ranking to different parts of your proposals.*
*** Please rank each line with a number showing your view of priority to your BSIP outcomes: 1 being the highest priority, and every line receiving a different number thereafter.*
**** Totals will automatically be calculated. Do not amend calculations in row 34 or columns Q and R.*

Q1. Please complete the table below. All figures should be nominal (actual prices, unadjusted for inflation). Please delete guidance in [blue] when completing the template.

	Title of scheme	Detail on aspiration [e.g. 'additional bus priority on X corridor', 'flat fares of Y across operators']*	Priority Ranking**	Source of Funding		2022/23 (£ nominal)		2023/24 (£ nominal)		2024/25 (£ nominal)		Beyond 2025 (£ nominal)		Total cost of project or proposal (£ nominal) ***	
						Resource	Capital	Resource	Capital	Resource	Capital	Resource	Capital	Resource	Capital
Bus priority infrastructure	Urban Traffic Control upgrade	Install a new cloud based SCOOT7 system is proposed to maximise the efficiency of signal timings including prioritising bus services that travel on the road network. Priority for buses can be provided by extending green times or a hurry call green when buses are detected.		**DfT - £3bn**		1,500,000		1,500,000						-	3,000,000
				DfT other (Levelling Up Fund)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	Completing the north west quadrant of Potteries Way	A scheme is proposed to complete the north west quadrant of Potteries Way, by linking Etruria Road to A50 Waterloo Road. The main aim of this scheme would be to improve bus journey times for those services that operate on Etruria Road and Waterloo Road by diverting traffic away from the centre of Hanley.		**DfT - £3bn**		-		1,500,000		7,500,000		7,000,000		-	16,000,000
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	Waterloo Road corridor (between Cobridge Road and Potteries Way)	It is proposed to undertake widening of the corridor between the Cobridge Road/Waterloo Road junction to the Waterloo Road/Potteries Way junction. This would provide an opportunity to incorporate dedicated bus priority measures on this section, and therefore, improving bus journey times on this section.		**DfT - £3bn**				1,000,000		5,000,000		2,000,000		-	8,000,000
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	Waterloo Road Corridor (between Cobridge Road and north of the centre of Burslem) improvements	It is proposed to improve journey times for bus services operating along this corridor between the Cobridge Road/A53 junction and the north of the centre of Burslem. This will be achieved through improvements to bus priority at junctions on this corridor, a review and new measures to reduce the effect of on street parking from creating delay pinch points on Waterloo Road.		**DfT - £3bn**		-		-		1,500,000		7,000,000		-	8,500,000
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	Bucknall New Road Widening	A scheme is being proposed to widen the corridor between the Potteries Way/Bucknall New Road and the Keelings Road/Bucknall Road junctions. By widening the corridor, a dedicated bus lane would be provided in one direction.		**DfT - £3bn**		-		500,000		3,000,000				-	3,500,000
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	Newport Lane (Eturia Valley) Link	As part of the LUF transport package, which is not now coming forward, an application for a new pedestrian and cycle link was proposed. However, as part of the BSIP proposals to upgrade to a bus link , highway improvements are required that would be generated as part of the Link. The optional provision of an all traffic link would remove congestion from existing, parallel bus routes where alternative bus priority opportunities are restricted.		**DfT - £3bn**		-		500,000		4,500,000		2,500,000		-	7,500,000
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	Victoria Road corridor	It is proposed to improve journey times for buses through this corridor by changing junction control at several locations from priority to signalised. This will provide bus priority through these junctions and aim to minimise delays to bus services.		**DfT - £3bn**		-		1,500,000		5,000,000		8,200,000		-	14,700,000
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
Other Infrastructure	Real time information roll-out	The proposal is to seek funding to roll out a network wide Real Time Information system with screens at the busiest bus stops and compatibility with the website http://www.cartogold.co.uk/stoke/map.html to progressively deliver investment that complements real time information at the busiest stops. The requirement is to provide Real Time information screens at 190 bus stops and real time QR codes at 461 bus stops), until all bus stops are provided with either printed or low energy e-ink timetable displays and provided with an overall bus network information panel.		**DfT - £3bn**		750,000		1,000,000		550,000				-	2,300,000
				DfT other (please specify)		-								-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	On-bus audio visual displays	Alongside the real time information roll our (see above), we are seeking funding through BSIP to support the installation of audio-visual information provision in each bus operating across North Staffordshire.		**DfT - £3bn**		600,000		600,000		500,000				-	1,700,000
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	Accessible bus stops roll out	Due to the LUF funding request not coming forward, seeking to make accessible 240 bus stops with the provision of low level kerbs, etc.		**DfT - £3bn**		1,200,000		1,200,000		1,200,000				-	3,600,000
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	CCTV on every bus	To provide CCTV facilities in every bus that operates within Stoke-on-Trent.		**DfT - £3bn**		600,000		675,000						-	1,275,000
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	CCTV at shelters	To provide CCTV at shelters within Stoke-on-Trent.		**DfT - £3bn**		250,000		250,000		100,000				-	600,000
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	Improved lighting	Will undertake a full review of lighting levels at all stops, with 100 sites to be improved.		**DfT - £3bn**		125,000		125,000		-		-		-	250,000
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
Fares Support	Introduction of ticketing options to stimulate demand and support affordability	Operators are keen to support financially sustainable approaches to fares that will support patronage growth within the Enhanced Partnership. Network-wide fare reductions will require considerable financial support in the short-term.		**DfT - £3bn**		3,000,000		3,000,000		3,000,000		6,000,000		15,000,000	-
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
Ticketing reform														-	-
														-	-
Bus service support	A turn up and go network of cross city services	Increase of core services to ten-minute headway 'turn up and go' service frequencies – support commencing in 2022/23, and reducing through the BSIP programme as bus priority measures coupled with higher frequencies support rising patronage.		**DfT - £3bn**		2,000,000		1,000,000		-				3,000,000	-
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	Support to 20-minute frequency secondary network	Secondary network to 20-minute frequencies: support commencing in 2023/24, and implemented in phases across the BSIP programme.		**Support to 20-minute**				1,250,000		2,500,000		5,000,000		8,750,000	-
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	Support to evening service	Re-introduction of evening services: support commencing in 2023/24, and implemented in phases across the BSIP programme		**DfT - £3bn**				1,750,000		3,500,000		7,000,000		12,250,000	-
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	Support to Sunday service	Re-introduction of Sunday services: support commencing in 2023/24, and implemented in phases across the BSIP programme		**DfT - £3bn**				1,000,000		2,000,000		4,000,000		7,000,000	-
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
	Support to feeder service	Development of socially and economically necessary feeder services: initial support commencing in 2024/25		**DfT - £3bn**						1,000,000		2,000,000		3,000,000	-
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
Marketing	Information, network identity and brand development	Discussions with operators indicate a positive commitment to the adoption of an overall network identity that develops a coherent image for the local North Staffordshire network in respect of information and infrastructure. Such an identity would be used on all online and printed information, tickets, vehicles, and infrastructure including bus stops and stations.		**DfT - £3bn**		100,000		100,000		20,000		30,000		250,000	-
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
EP/franchising delivery: LTA costs	Customer service and general delivery team BSIP support	To assist with delivering physical schemes, as well as other ongoing matters such as information provision, customer charter support, monitoring of performance and responding to general maintenance issues, this BSIP includes a request to put in place a delivery team incorporating posts for a three-year period (also including for the hire of a van over the same period). This delivery team will also include a role for a highway works supervisor, who's brief will be to respond to the issues related to the impact of road works on bus performance.		**DfT - £3bn**		300,000		300,000		300,000		600,000		1,500,000	-
				DfT other (please specify)										-	-
				Other Government (please specify)										-	-
				Private										-	-
														-	-
														-	
TOTALS* **						5,400,000	5,025,000	8,400,000	10,350,000	12,320,000	28,850,000	24,630,000	26,700,000	50,750,000	70,925,000

Q2. [optional] Please provide any additional notes to explain the other funding sources outside of the £3bn for buses (150 words maximum).

G. Draft Customer Charter

This Bus Passenger Charter (BPC) sets out what passengers can expect from bus operators delivering local bus services across the administrative area of Stoke-on-Trent City Council as part of the Enhanced Partnership agreed between Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Staffordshire County Council, local bus operators First Potteries, Arriva, D&G Bus, Scraggs Coaches and Stanton's of Stoke, and passenger representative groups. It will apply to all current and future operators who will be part of the Enhanced Partnership. Local bus services that the BPC applies to includes:

[to be detailed]

The following commitments have been made between the local authority and bus operator and passengers to ensure certain standards are met for each journey. Whilst the charter does not create any new legal relationship with passengers, bus passengers do have legal rights when travelling by bus which are unaffected by this charter. When travelling, bus passengers can expect the following every time they travel:

- A safe, comfortable journey on a well-maintained bus
- A consistently high standard of cleanliness on all buses
- The route number and destination will be clearly displayed on buses at all times
- A bus driver who is helpful and treats people with respect and empathy
- A range of ticket options so that you can select the most suitable ticket for your journey with confidence
- Arrangements for you to tell us what you like or don't like about bus services
- Buses that arrive on time with 95% of journeys on time (no more than one minute early or five minutes late). Where factors outside our control such as traffic congestion, roadworks or extreme weather affect your journey, we will keep you informed as soon as possible so that the impact on your journey is minimised
- A bus service that generates an overall customer satisfaction rating of at least 94%
- Additional services in the summer period to meet demand in view of the large the number of visitors
- A minimum quality standard for bus stops including high kerbing for full accessibility, shelters where space is available, comprehensive static and real time service information, lighting and clear walking routes
- Up-to-date timetable information for all bus services in a single, clear, readable format

- In-vehicle customer audio and visual information
- Space on bus services for wheelchairs and buggies.

Passengers will be able to comment on bus services to the City Council and bus operators in different ways to make sure that expectations are being met and standards maintained. Online form: Our web form can be found at [to be confirmed]. All issues raised will be responded to as soon as possible but within two weeks:

- Phone: Our customer services team can be contacted on [to be confirmed] between [to be confirmed].
- Social media: Our social media team will aim to respond to tweets within X minutes during normal office hours.

Each complaint will be handled accordingly by appropriate organisation and escalated to the Customer Services Manager if necessary.

In addition to complaints, we also invite comments or suggestions as to how to improve our bus services.

[Reporting frequency and process to be detailed]

The charter will be reviewed annually alongside the Bus Service Improvement Plan and revised versions will require consultation.

City of
Stoke-on-Trent