

23. Bus Strategy

23.1 Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this Strategy is to set out what is needed in Warwickshire over the next five years to ensure excellent bus services that will address the needs of both current and potential passengers in Warwickshire and deliver the transport objectives of the Government and the County Council.

The Bus Strategy has been prepared in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including user groups, other local authorities, operators, other interest groups and potential partners.

This strategy deals specifically with the contribution bus services make in providing an effective transport network. However, the term 'bus' should be read to include scheduled coaches as these play an important role in providing a more direct, express-type, service which can be appropriate for some local travel demands.

The vision of Warwickshire County Council's Bus Strategy is:

'An affordable, accessible, safe, convenient, environmentally friendly and integrated network of bus services, capable of attracting an increasing market share for buses thereby contributing to the achievement of the objectives in the Warwickshire's Local Transport Plan 2011'

The aim of the Bus Strategy is to grow the market for public transport in general and bus services in particular by making the product attractive both to existing and potential users. It will achieve significant improvement in the provision of bus services and facilities to the people of Warwickshire by following a customer focused approach designed to identify and overcome barriers to the use of public transport.

The Bus Strategy seeks to provide a range of measures and proposals, which will result in the growth of the market for bus services.

The Bus Strategy will contribute to achieving the objectives of the LTP by promoting a bus network, which:

- Offers accessibility through the public transport system, both in terms of physical access to transport and its availability, to the widest cross section of the population;
- Gives people (including those who do not have access to cars) more travel choices to access work, services and leisure activities;
- Offers affordable fares to passengers;
- Provides an attractive and sustainable travel alternative to the car thereby helping to reduce traffic congestion and pollution levels and improving air quality and the environment; and,
- Encourages integration with other modes of transport.

23.2 The Policy Context

The overall national, regional and local policy context of public transport in Warwickshire is set out in the Public Transport Strategy.

In addition, there are a number of specifically bus-related structural, statutory and policy contexts which are referred to below.

23.2.1 Statutory Requirement

Warwickshire County Council is required under the 1985 Transport Act to “...secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the council consider it appropriate to secure to meet any public transport requirements within the county which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose”, and “...to formulate from time to time general policies as to the descriptions of services they propose to secure..” (Source: Transport Act 1985, Paragraph 63 (1) (a) and (b)).

23.3 Overview of the Current Situation

The overall review of the current situation relating to the provision of public transport in Warwickshire is set out in the Public Transport Strategy.

In addition, there are a number of specifically bus-related characteristics which are referred to below.

23.3.1 The Existing Bus Network

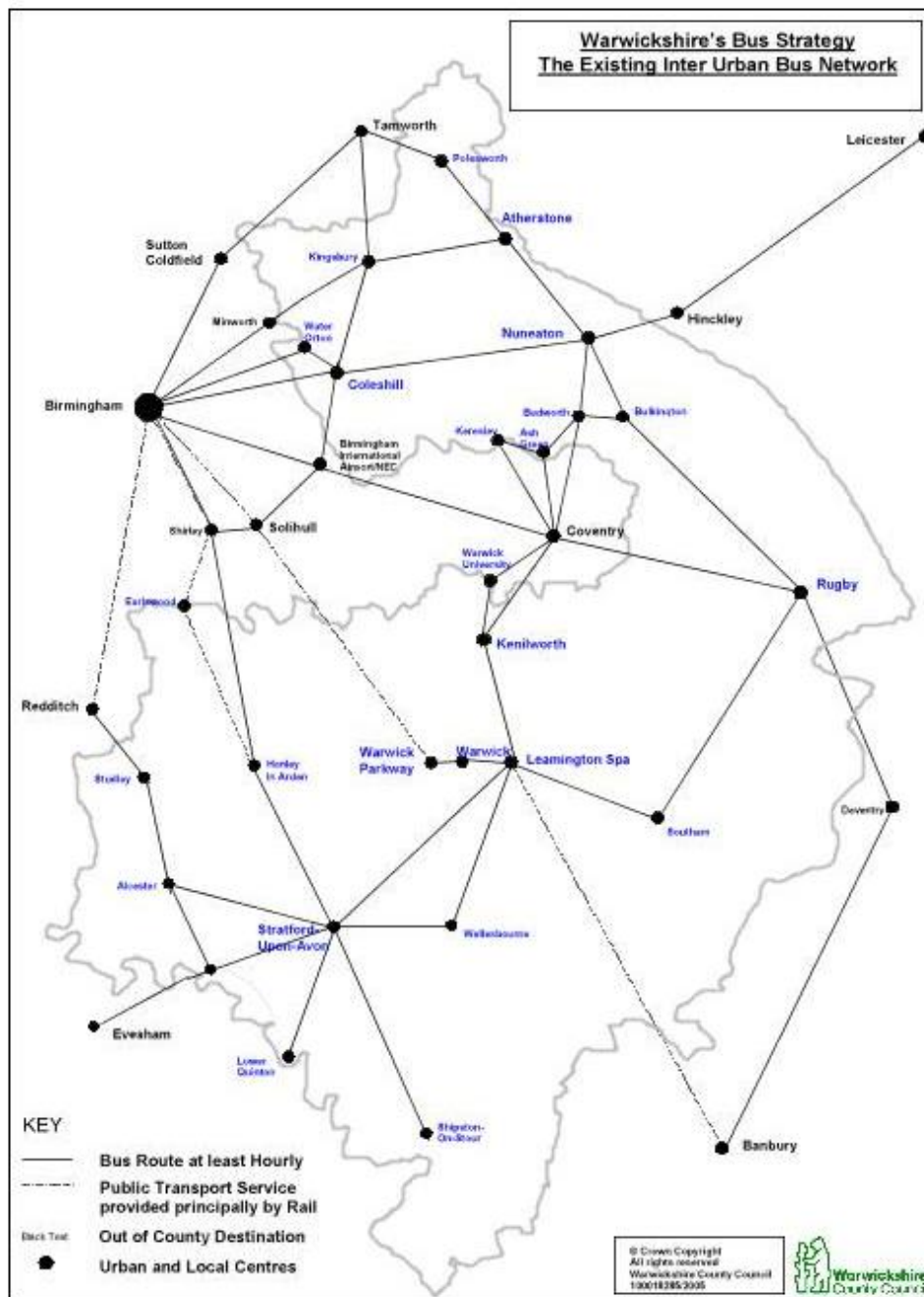
The bus network is focused on the major urban centres of Coventry, Leamington Spa, Warwick, Rugby, Nuneaton, Bedworth, Kenilworth and Stratford-upon-Avon. These centres have local bus networks.

Linking these urban centres is the inter-urban bus network. Less frequent bus services connect the main villages and smaller settlements with the urban and local centres.

In addition to the urban and local centres, there are a number of major attractors, both in and outside the county that are served by the bus network including Walsgrave Hospital, Warwick Hospital, George Eliot Hospital, Queen Alexandra Hospital, Hams Hall, Birmingham International Airport, The National Exhibition Centre, Warwick University and Coventry University.

The urban centres and the inter-urban bus network are shown below:

Figure PTB1: Warwickshire’s Bus Strategy: The Existing Inter Urban Bus Network.



23.3.2 Bus Operators

The majority of the bus services in Warwickshire are operated on a 'for profit' (i.e. commercial, non-subsidised) basis by private companies. Commercial bus services form the core of the bus network. Approximately 89% of bus passenger journeys are made on these services.

To ensure that bus services are provided to other parts of Warwickshire, not served by the commercial bus network, Warwickshire County Council procures additional bus services through competitive tender. These additional, subsidised, bus services account for the remaining 11% of bus passenger journeys.

The council is also responsible for providing daily transport to and from schools and colleges for approximately 9,500 entitled scholars and students. All school transport services are reviewed at least once every four years.

23.3.4 Coaches

Specific stops for coaches operating express services exist in the main towns and villages.

23.3.5 Current Demand for Bus Services

Parts of Warwickshire such as Nuneaton and Bedworth are characterised by being areas of relatively high bus use, whilst others, such as Stratford have lower levels of bus use. Bus services carry the majority of public transport users in Warwickshire, typically over a distance of two to three miles.

Bus patronage has risen in response to the development of Quality Bus Corridors in Warwickshire. Significant growth in patronage has been occurred on a number of Quality Bus Corridors and on routes where Quality Bus Initiatives have been introduced. The increases vary substantially between corridors, but overall an average increase of 30% in passenger numbers has been achieved.

23.3.6 The Need for a Better Bus Network

The current level of bus use is determined by the bus services on offer and the County Council is convinced that a greater need exists than is being provided for by the existing bus network.

An improved bus network will be essential if the objectives of the Bus Strategy to enable people without access to a car to easily reach a wide range of education, training, employment, shopping and leisure opportunities and to reduce congestion are to be achieved.

In considering the need for a better bus network, it is important to identify the potential problems that will need to be addressed and the opportunities that will create increased demand for bus travel:-

23.3.7 Problems

- The adverse impact of road congestion on bus service reliability, on passengers views of bus travel and on operators' costs
- The bus network in the County, in terms of coverage, frequency, journey times and hours of operation, is not closely matched with existing and potential future demand for travel by bus;
- The bus network is not always effective in meeting the existing and future needs of dispersed and hard-to-reach communities;
- Whilst the need for small scale revisions to services to react to changes in demand is appreciated, at a strategic level the bus network is not sufficiently stable for people to make longer term 'life-style' decisions - such as where to live and where to work;
- The bus network does not respond to new sources of potential demand sufficiently early to influence travel patterns;
- Bus services are often expected to meet conflicting travel demands which can lead to a view that services are unsatisfactory;
- Lack of integration between bus and rail services;
- Lack of effective multi-mode through ticketing.
- Lack of awareness of benefits of using public transport or motivation to use bus services where they exist as a real alternative to car journeys amongst some members of the public;
- Lack of knowledge of local bus services amongst some members of the public.

23.3.8 Opportunities

- Congestion is projected to increase and this will encourage travellers currently using cars to investigate alternative transport modes if these meet their needs more effectively;
- The use of 'smartcards' and other modern technology can remove barriers to using public transport;
- New residential developments will generate increased demand for bus services, in particular the substantial housing allocations in Stratford, Warwick & Leamington, Coventry, Nuneaton & Bedworth and Rugby under the Regional Spatial Strategy;
- Employment initiatives, such as the Hams Hall Business Park, the Solihull-Warwick Technology Corridor and the Coventry – Nuneaton Regeneration Zone will generate additional demand and will need to be served effectively;
- The large number of tourists visiting destinations in the county e.g. Stratford on Avon and Warwick;
- Increasingly flexible working hours will help support improvements to the bus network in terms of coverage and hours of operation;
- Development of '24 Hour / 7 Day' lifestyle will generate demand for earlier and later bus services – not only for people enjoying the extended facilities but also for those employed in providing them - serving cities such as Coventry and Birmingham and also larger towns such as Leamington Spa and Nuneaton; and,
- The very close proximity to Warwickshire of Birmingham International Airport, the National Exhibition Centre and several expanding universities will continue to drive the demand for bus travel both in terms of frequency, new routes and hours of operation.

23.4 The Strategy

Policy PTB1: Partnership

The County Council will work with the Department for Transport, Bus Operators, Centro, local authorities, users and other stakeholders to progress the delivery of the policies set out in the Public Transport Strategy, the Bus Strategy and the other subsidiary public transport strategies.

Policy PTB2: Quality of Service

To meet the overall aim of the Bus Strategy, the County Council will encourage the provision of bus services, which are:

- a. Affordable
- b. Accessible
- c. Available
- d. Acceptable
- e. Simple to use

a. Affordable

- The fare should be less than the full cost of the equivalent journey by car, as estimated by leading motoring organisations. The exception would be that the fare is justified as a premium fare due to providing a significantly faster journey time or enhanced facilities.

b. Accessible

- The design of bus stops, bus stations and vehicles must enable passengers to board or alight from the vehicle unaided or with a reasonable level of assistance;
- Interchange infrastructure should provide for 'seamless' changes between transport modes. This should be assisted by good signage, information and appropriately designed infrastructure;
- Public transport services should be co-ordinated to encourage interchange consistent with the aims of the Public Transport Interchange Strategy, the Passenger Rail Strategy and the Community Transport Strategy with the object of increasing the range of travel opportunities and options for travellers; and
- Pedestrian and cycling routes to bus stops and interchanges should accord with the standards set out in the Walking Strategy and the Cycling Strategy. The access to bus stops and interchanges, particularly by people who have difficulties because of health, physical or sensory difficulties should be addressed.

c. Available

- The bus network should provide a coverage and a level of service which meets the existing and potential passenger demand. The access time to this level of bus service from the users point of origin should not exceed seven minutes.

d. Acceptable

- Bus services should be of sufficient quality, particularly in terms of reliability and punctuality that a potential passenger would be confident in relying on them;
- Buses, bus stops, bus stations and interchanges should provide reasonable shelter, comfort, suitable heating (where appropriate) and ventilation for the season of the year and both a perception and reality of personal safety and security;
- Staff should be helpful and courteous and have received both appropriate driver and customer service training; and
- The journey time by bus should be similar to the equivalent journey by car unless this can be justified by a significantly reduced fare.

e. Simple to Use

- Timetables, routes and fares should be readily available, easy to understand and be simple to use;
- Information systems should enable passengers to plan their journeys and provide increased public confidence as to the availability and reliability of bus services consistent with the Bus Information Strategy;
- Full and timely information should be provided or be easily available to customers in case of disruption to services;
- Integrated ticketing between modes including rail, bus and community transport services should be available, where it is necessary to use different modes to complete a journey.

Policy PTB3: Step-Change Initiatives

The County Council will develop proposals for a 'step change' in the quality of public transport on the key corridors. Buses and bus-based rapid transit will be considered together with other public transport options.

Policy PTB4: New Developments

The County Council will encourage measures to enable good accessibility by bus services to and from new developments and, where appropriate, secure funding from developers towards the costs, consistent with the Land Use & Transportation Strategy.

23.5 Action Plan

Policy	Action	Schemes and Measures	Timescale
PTB1 Partnership	The County Council will work with the Department for Transport, bus operators, regulatory bodies, Centro, local authorities, users and other stakeholders.	Progress the delivery the policies set out in the Public Transport Strategy, the Bus Strategy and the other subsidiary public transport strategies.	Ongoing
PTB2 Quality of Service: 'Affordable'	Examine opportunities for revisions to fare structures and levels	Work in partnership with bus operators	Short
	Develop an improved county-wide concessionary travel scheme, possibly through a free-issue county-wide pass for travel on bus and community transport services	Work in partnership with District/Borough Councils	Short
	Investigate opportunities to develop a concessionary travel scheme for cross-boundary bus, rail and community transport services	Work in partnership with bus operators, District/Borough Councils, Centro and other local authorities	Short
	Examine opportunities provided for within the relevant transport legislation to implement through ticketing availability between rail, bus and community transport services	Work in partnership with train and bus operators	Short
	Promote awareness of the real cost of motoring in comparison to the cost of bus travel	Work in partnership with bus operators, District/Borough Councils, Centro and other local authorities to develop appropriate Green Travel and other marketing initiatives	Short
PTB2 Quality of Service: 'Accessible'	Encourage an increase in the provision of low-floor accessible buses on commercial bus services	Work in partnership with bus operators to improve the quality of the bus fleet	Ongoing
	Develop further Urban	Warwick – Millers Road – Coten End -	Short

	Quality Bus Corridors (see Statement 1 below)	Leamington	
		Kenilworth – Abbey Hill - Coventry	Short
		Lillington - Leamington	Short/Medium
		Sydenham - Leamington	Short/Medium
	Develop further Inter-Urban Quality Bus Corridors (see Statement 1 below)	Nuneaton-Atherstone - Tamworth	Short/Medium
		Leamington – Kenilworth – Leyes Lane - Coventry	Short
		Stratford – Blackhill - Warwick	Short/Medium
		Stratford – Bidford - Evesham	Short/Medium
		Warwick – Kenilworth – Albion Street - Coventry	Short/Medium
	Enhance facilities at bus stops and public transport interchanges consistent with the aims set out in the Public Transport Interchange Strategy.	Stratford-upon-Avon Rail Station	Short
		Leamington Spa Rail Station	Short/Medium
		Rugby Station	Short/Medium
		Warwick Rail Station	Short/Medium
		Henley in Arden Station	Short/Medium
		Nuneaton Bus Station	Short/Medium
		Nuneaton Rail Station	Short/Medium
		Atherstone Rail Station	Short/Medium
Maintain maintenance arrangements for bus shelters funded through advertising revenue	Continue to integrate the Warwickshire County Council tendered bus services with rail services and community bus services	Short	
	Complete county-wide agreement with contractors	Short	
Seek to safeguard sites with the potential for improved public transport facilities	Work in partnership with Local Planning Authorities and developers	Ongoing	
PTB2 Quality of Service: 'Available'	Undertake an assessment of locations where the current bus network fails to meet the level of service standards set out in the policy	Continue liaison arrangements with operators and to work in partnership with bus operators, District/Borough Councils, Centro and other local authorities to co-ordinate changes and development of the network (including cross-boundary services) in order to optimise passenger benefits	Ongoing
		Use 'Criteria for the Provision and Financial Support of Essential Transport Links' where the level of service standards are not provided by the current network	Ongoing
		Seek to optimise third party funding of bus network enhancements, but only if (i) these will contribute to the objectives of the Bus Strategy and (ii) arrangements are proposed which are satisfactory to the County Council providing for the long term financial subsidy and/or maintenance of the enhancement	Ongoing
PTB2 Quality of Service: 'Acceptable'	Seek to promote, and where feasible, to provide bus services which meet the needs of existing and potential bus passengers	Work with passenger groups and communities to identify passenger needs	Ongoing
	Promote improvements in the punctuality and reliability of bus services	Work with bus operators and key stakeholders to identify where bus services are subject to delay which leads to unreliability and low levels of punctuality	Ongoing
	Improve the image and attractiveness of bus	Work in partnership with bus operators to develop a single high quality brand/identity	Short

	travel in Warwickshire	for the Warwickshire bus network which is readily understood and promotes the network to a wider audience. Due consideration will need to be given to the relationship with network brands elsewhere in the region.	
		Promote bus travel through Smarter Choices initiatives.	Short
	Enhance the safety of bus travel both in reality and in the perceptions of customers	Encourage bus operators to specify on-vehicle CCTV or other appropriate safety measures on new orders of vehicles	Short
	Develop 'intelligent' traffic management systems and priority measures, traffic management and on-highway priority which increase bus service reliability and punctuality.	Implement a real-time passenger information system on selected urban and inter-urban routes.	Short/Medium
		Implement bus priority at critical traffic signal junctions for suitably equipped buses.	Short/Medium
		Investigate extension of Punctuality Improvement Partnerships to include additional routes	Short/Medium
PTB2 Quality of Service: 'Simple to use'	Provide information which should be readily available, easy to understand and be simple to use.	Continue to support the production of accurate, comprehensive, impartial public transport timetable information	Ongoing
		Continue to maintain the public transport information pages on the County Council's website	Ongoing
		Continue to promote the national 'Traveline' telephone inquiry line service	Ongoing
		Identify opportunities to work with operators and other transport authorities to ensure the best use of publicity and marketing resources and to avoid duplication	Ongoing
	Work in partnership with bus operators, Centro, other local authorities and suppliers to deliver real time information accessible by mobile phones	Countywide Short Messaging System	Short/Medium
	Investigate opportunities of real time information displays on Quality Bus Corridors and at key interchanges	Work in partnership with bus operators, train operators, Centro, other local authorities and suppliers	Short/Medium
	Raise public awareness about the bus network and the travel choices that it provides	Carry out Travel Awareness campaigns and targeted promotional initiatives through the Smarter Choices strategy	Ongoing
		Increase route-specific promotion where infrastructure improvements have been made	Short
		Promote bus travel to employees through Workplace Travel Plans and other Smarter Choices initiatives	Ongoing
		Promote bus travel through Personalised Travel Planning at new residential developments as part of Smarter Choices strategy.	Medium
	Provide 'Bus	Dunchurch	Short

	Information Points' in town centres, bus stations, main railway stations and larger villages	Attleborough	Short
		Henley-in-Arden	Short
		Bidford-on-Avon	Short
		Southam	Short
		Studley	Short
		Bulkington	Short
		Warwick Hospital	Short
		Rugby St. Cross Hospital	Short
		Nuneaton George Eliot Hospital	Short
		Chapel End	Short
		Shire's Retail Park Leamington	Short
		Bedworth Rail Station	Short
		Stratford-upon-Avon Rail Station	Short
		Water Orton Rail Station	Short
		Nuneaton Rail Station	Short
		Rugby Rail Station	Short
		Kenilworth Rail Station	Short/Medium
Stratford-upon-Avon Parkway Rail Station	Short/Medium		
Encourage fare structures and levels which are easy to understand and simple to use	Work in partnership with bus operators	Short	
Examine opportunities to promote the use of 'smartcards' and other modern technology	Work in partnership with bus operators, train operators, Centro, other local authorities and suppliers	Short/Medium	
Examine opportunities provided for within the relevant transport legislation to implement through ticketing opportunities between bus and services	Work in partnership with bus and train operators	Short	
PTB3 Step-Change Initiatives	Develop proposals for a 'step-change' in public transport provision on key corridors based on integrated planning and co-ordination of all public transport modes. Where appropriate, a combination of public transport modes will be considered.	Work in partnership with the Department for Transport, the Office of the Rail Regulator, Network Rail, Bus & Train Operators, Passengers, District Councils, Coventry City Council, Centro and other local authorities	Ongoing
		North-South Corridor Step-Change Initiative: Nuneaton - Bedworth - Coventry - Kenilworth – Warwick/Leamington Spa (see Statement 3 below)	Short/Medium
PTB4 New Developments	Secure, where appropriate, funding from developers towards the costs of providing appropriate bus services to serve the development, consistent with the Land Use & Transportation Strategy.	Work in partnership with developers & Local Planning Authorities	Ongoing

URBAN QUALITY BUS CORRIDORS.....

..... are a partnership between the County Council and Bus Operators to deliver a total up-grade of bus travel on selected corridors.

The Bus Operators provide high quality low-floor accessible buses, more frequent services and drivers specially trained in customer care.

The County Council invests in roadside infrastructure at all bus stops - installing raised kerbs to make access to buses easier, improved waiting facilities including bus shelters where feasible and better passenger information.

INTER-URBAN QUALITY BUS CORRIDORS

..... are aimed at extending the 'Quality Bus Corridor' benefits to inter-urban services.

The Bus Operators provide improved vehicles and the County Council invests in improvements to bus stops and shelters at key locations.

CRITERIA FOR THE PROVISION AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF ESSENTIAL TRANSPORT LINKS.....

.....deals with the contribution which bus and rail services and community transport schemes will make to improving accessibility and how the County Council will provide and financially support essential transport links.

For people without access to a car, the lack of appropriate transport links restricts the possibilities of benefiting from a wide range of facilities, including work, education and training, healthcare, shopping, social activities and leisure.

The key principles behind the criteria are:-

- A minimum level of accessibility should be provided for all the residents of Warwickshire. The criteria does not seek to constrain higher service levels, but establishes the provision of the minimum level of service for all as a first priority;
- The new criteria is not designed to be prescriptive and is envisaged as a first step in developing criteria which are more finely attuned to peoples' needs for essential transport links;
- Accessibility levels will consider levels of transport need at a local level. There is a wide range of complicated factors which give rise to transport need including age, income and health. With the object of producing a simple easily understood criteria, the level of car availability has been used to reflect these various factors.

The most effective option or a mix of options will be used to provide essential transport links, including conventional bus and rail services, voluntary and community transport schemes, flexible transport services, demand responsive systems and other innovative transport schemes.

STEP-CHANGE IN NORTH-SOUTH CORRIDOR

The North-South Corridor from Nuneaton in the north through Bedworth, Coventry, Kenilworth and Leamington Spa in the south is a densely developed corridor. It contains principal travel destinations including the city of Coventry and a number of major town centres, Warwick University, Coventry University, the Coventry Arena and a number of key regeneration sites.

Future travel patterns on the corridor will respond to a number of factors, including:

- *New residential, employment, retail and leisure facilities in all the main centres in the corridor, including major regeneration initiatives in the Coventry-Nuneaton Regeneration Zone;*
- *Major redevelopments in the centres of Nuneaton and Bedworth*
- *Changes in work patterns;*
- *Changes in personal lifestyle choices with the development of a '24 Hour / 7 Day ' lifestyle not only for people enjoying the extended facilities but also for those employed in providing them.*

The corridor suffers from the most severe congestion because of large movements of people throughout the day and offers significant opportunities to improve accessibility, reduce congestion and aid economic regeneration.

The density of the population and the level of activity in the corridor are set to grow substantially and will create increasing demand for transport. These demands will increase car use and congestion unless a good quality public transport network is available.

The Centro Integrated Transport Prospectus is proposing a rapid transit network centred on Coventry linking key origins and destinations in the corridor with the aim of increasing public transport use and reducing congestion.

The County Council will continue to seek to secure a 'through' bus service between Nuneaton-Bedworth-Coventry-Kenilworth-Warwick/Leamington to address the lack of such a service between the north and south of the County without the current requirement to change within Coventry. A through service would enable a free-flow between where people live and the opportunities for work and leisure without increasing congestion.

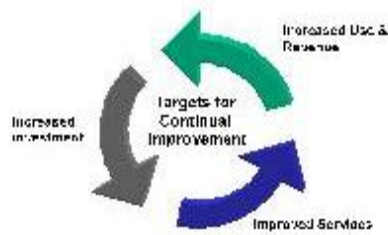
.It is anticipated that the DaSTS Improving Connectivity in the Coventry North-South Corridor Study referred to in the Public Transport Strategy will recommended further transport measures from 2014 onwards (subject to funding being available to complete the second stage of the study).

23.6 Targets, Indicators and Monitoring

The Bus Strategy has established a range of desired standards, indicators and implementation targets for enhancements to the bus network. Monitoring the delivery of the actions outlined in the Bus Strategy will be an important part of the management and control process. Progress against the identified actions and standards will be reviewed on a regular basis to make certain that the Strategy is achieving the desired outcome.

All monitoring, benchmarking and measuring will allow changes to be identified, incorporated and updated.

The aim of bus targets is to create a virtuous circle of continued improvement as illustrated below.



23.6.1 National Indicators

Local bus passenger journeys originating in the Local Authority area (NI177)

-Target to be determined

Bus services running on time (NI 178)

- % of buses on time (all points)
- % of buses starting route on time
- % of buses on time at intermediate turning points
- % of buses on time at non-timing points

-Target to be determined

23.6.2 Local Indicators

Patronage on Quality Bus Corridors (WL10)

- Target to be determined