

Agenda Item	9
Report No	ECI/30/26

The Highland Council

Committee: **Economy and Infrastructure**

Date: **20 August 2026**

Report Title: **Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive - Place**

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report updates Members on progress made in developing the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) since the previous update to Economy and Infrastructure Committee in February 2023 (ECI/13/2023). It also seeks agreement to proceed to a 12-week consultation on the draft BSIP documentation.
- 1.2 The Highland BSIP is a statutory partnership mechanism under Part 3 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. It is intended to provide a formal framework for The Highland Council, HITRANS and bus operators to work together to improve the operational performance, attractiveness, accessibility and consistency of bus services across Highland.
- 1.3 The draft BSIP documentation comprises a Partnership Plan, a Bus Service Improvement Plan and supporting Scheme Area documentation, together with technical annexes covering definitions, governance, funding, objectives, joint obligations, scheme area obligations and annual monitoring. The initial proposed Scheme Areas are the Inner Moray Firth and Fort William and Lochaber, with further areas able to be considered in future where evidence, funding and local priorities support this.
- 1.4 This report does not ask Members to approve the final making of the BSIP or to approve any legally binding scheme obligations at this stage. It seeks agreement to continue progressing the partnership and to proceed to consultation. A further report is expected to be brought back to Committee following consultation, further Transport Scotland guidance, further legal review and operator engagement before any final decision is taken to make the BSIP or associated Scheme(s).

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. **Note** the progress made in developing the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership since the previous report to Committee in February 2023;
- ii. **Endorse** the continued progression of the draft Highland BSIP Partnership Plan, Bus Service Improvement Plan and supporting Scheme Area documentation;
- iii. **Agree** that officers proceed to a 12-week consultation on the draft BSIP; and
- iv. **Note** that a further report is expected to be brought back to Committee following consultation, further legal review and operator engagement before any final decision is taken to make the BSIP or associated Scheme(s).

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - The progression of the BSIP is being managed within existing Integrated Transport Team resources, supported by specialist consultant input where required. This report does not seek approval for any new financial commitment. Delivery of future facilities, measures or service improvements will be subject to available Council budgets, external funding, approved programmes and, where relevant, partner contributions.
- 3.2 **Legal** - BSIPs are statutory partnership arrangements under Part 3 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. The draft BSIP documentation has been shared with Highland Council Legal, and no concerns have been raised at this stage. Further legal review will be required before any final decision is sought to make the BSIP or associated Scheme(s). Consultation requirements and any updated Transport Scotland guidance will also need to be considered before the consultation process begins. This report seeks agreement to progress to consultation only.
- 3.3 **Risk** - The main risks are operator support changes, or expectations are raised around measures that remain dependent on funding. These risks will be managed through continued operator engagement, clear consultation material and a staged approval process before any final decision is sought.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no direct health and safety implications arising from this update report. Any future infrastructure, operational or service changes taken forward through the BSIP will be subject to the Council's normal design, road safety, procurement, construction and operational risk processes.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no direct Gaelic implications arising from this report. Future public-facing information and consultation material will consider Gaelic requirements where appropriate and in line with Council policy.

4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is a monitoring and update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Background

- 5.1 Bus services are central to access, inclusion and sustainable transport across Highland. The Highland BSIP has been developed to provide a formal partnership framework for improving bus services through joint working between The Highland Council, HITRANS and bus operators. The overall aim is to increase bus and coach patronage by improving the attractiveness, awareness, simplicity and level of provision of services.
- 5.2 The previous Committee report in February 2023 updated Members on the Bus Partnership Fund projects and the development of the BSIP. At that stage, the BSIP was still in preparation, and work was continuing the Plan, Scheme Areas, objectives, facilities, measures, route and operational service standards, reporting, monitoring and public consultation.
- 5.3 Since then, the documentation has been developed into a fuller draft framework comprising the Partnership Plan, Bus Service Improvement Plan and supporting documents as detailed within **Appendices 1-10**.

These documents set out proposed governance arrangements, initial Scheme Areas, objectives, funding history, partner obligations, scheme area obligations and an annual monitoring approach.

6 Progress

- 6.1 Since the BSIP was last reported to Committee, work has moved from the general concept of partnership working to a more developed draft framework. The latest documentation sets out the proposed structure of the Highland BSIP, the initial Scheme Areas, operator and local authority obligations, governance arrangements, funding history, objectives and monitoring approach.
- 6.2 The initial proposed Scheme Areas are the Inner Moray Firth and Fort William and Lochaber. These areas reflect where scheme development, bus priority work, operator engagement and transport pressures have created a practical basis for early partnership delivery. Further Scheme Areas will be considered in due course, subject to funding and local priorities.
- 6.3 The draft documents also set out a more detailed approach to public transport information, passenger information standards, route and service standards, vehicle quality, driver standards, operator registration changes, bus stop infrastructure, parking enforcement, shelter maintenance and monitoring of performance.
- 6.4 Since the previous report, relevant Bus Partnership Fund (BPF) and Bus Infrastructure Fund (BIF) workstreams have continued to inform the development of the draft BSIP, particularly in relation to the initial Scheme Areas in the Inner Moray Firth and Fort William and Lochaber.

7 Objectives and Monitoring

- 7.1 The BSIP objectives provide a framework for accountability and delivery. The objectives are to improve the operational performance of bus services, improve the bus service offer within the Highland BSIP and improve the passenger experience for bus users within the Highland BSIP.
- 7.2 The Annual Monitoring Report template provides a proposed evidence base for tracking progress against the BSIP objectives. The current approach uses corridor-based monitoring to provide consistency as bus services change over time. Initial measures include on-time performance, late arrivals, early departures, service reliability and average journey time, with Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) data used to inform the analysis.
- 7.3 This approach is intended to create a clear route from partnership objectives to measurable outcomes. It will also help demonstrate whether investment in facilities, measures and service standards is improving the passenger experience and supporting more reliable bus operations.

8 Governance and Partnership Arrangements

- 8.1 The proposed governance structure includes a Partnership Group, which will be the primary decision-making body for the Highland BSIP, and a Partnership Board, which will act as the final decision-making body in exceptional circumstances or where matters are referred for a casting view. The Partnership Group is proposed to include Council representatives, an independent Chair, qualifying operators and HITRANS.
- 8.2 Scheme Area Bus Forums are proposed as consultative and advisory platforms. They are intended to support local information sharing, stakeholder collaboration and public feedback on service standards, facilities and measures. The forums will not have statutory or executive decision-making powers, with recommendations being submitted to the Partnership Group for consideration.
- 8.3 The governance model is intended to balance partnership working with safeguards for public interest, legal compliance and competition considerations. Further legal review will be completed before any final decision is sought from Members.

9 Consultation

- 9.1 Consultation is required to ensure that the partnership is informed by passengers, communities, operators and relevant stakeholders before any final decision is sought.
- 9.2 Consultation will be carried out in accordance with Transport Scotland BSIP guidance.

10 Funding

- 10.1 The BSIP is closely linked to Transport Scotland's Bus Infrastructure Fund (BIF) programme, which supports the development and delivery of bus priority, passenger infrastructure and associated measures. The BSIP provides the partnership framework within which current and future bus infrastructure investment can be aligned with agreed objectives, scheme areas and monitoring arrangements. Any future BIF-funded projects or other infrastructure commitments will remain subject to funding availability, procurement, and the Council's normal approval processes.
- 10.2 The Summary of Funding annex records previous Scottish Government BPF awards and BIF development work. This includes completed measures such as Raigmore Bus Gate, Rose Street Enforcement Camera and City Centre Traffic Light Priority, as well as further development work on corridors and bus links in the Inner Moray Firth and Lochaber areas.
- 10.3 Any future commitment to deliver specific facilities, measures or service enhancements will require confirmation of funding before approval is sought.

11 Next Steps

11.1 Subject to Members' agreement, and in accordance with Transport Scotland's BSIP guidance, the next steps are to:-

- finalise the draft consultation material and consultation plan;
- continue engagement with participating operators and HITRANS;
- complete any further legal review required before final approval;
- undertake the 12-week consultation and review the feedback received;
- make any necessary amendments to the BSIP documentation; and
- bring a further report back to Committee before any final decision is taken to make the BSIP or associated Scheme(s)

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 2 July 2026

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Background Papers: E&I Committee Report 5 May 2021
E&I Bulletin Item 2 December 2021
E&I Committee Report February 2023 ECI/13/2023

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Highland BSIP Plan 2026
Appendix 2 - Annex 1 Scottish BSIP Guidance
Appendix 3 - Annex 2 Highland BSIP Definitions
Appendix 4 - Annex 3 Highland BSIP ToR
Appendix 5 - Annex 4 Highland BSIP Summary of Funding
Appendix 6 - Annex 5 Highland BSIP Objectives
Appendix 7 - Annex 6 Highland BSIP Joint Obligations
Appendix 8 - Annex 7 Highland BSIP Inner Moray Firth Scheme Area Details
Appendix 9 - Annex 8 Highland BSIP Fort William and Lochaber Scheme Area Details
Appendix 10 - Annex 9 Highland BSIP Annual Monitoring Report Template

HIGHLAND BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP (BSIP)



Partnership Plan and Bus Service Improvement Plan 2026



Foreword

Public transport forms the backbone of urban and rural mobility, enabling people to access essential services, employment, and opportunities for social interaction. At the heart of this system is bus transport – a reliable, affordable, and flexible mode of travel that serves thousands of people across the Highlands every day. However, as our towns, villages and cities grow and evolve, so must our transport networks. It is with this goal in mind that we present the Bus Service Improvement Partnership Plan (BSIPP) – a comprehensive strategy to enhance the efficiency, accessibility, and sustainability of our bus services. The underlying objective of the Plan is to increase bus and coach patronage by increasing attractiveness, awareness, simplicity and level of provision.

This plan reflects our collective ambition to create a bus network that not only meets the current needs of passengers but anticipates and responds to the challenges of the future. By addressing long-standing issues such as congestion, outdated infrastructure, and accessibility gaps, we aim to create a bus network that is faster, cleaner, available to all and more reliable. Importantly, this plan is designed with the passenger in mind, placing convenience, affordability, and equity at the forefront of its recommendations.

The BSIP also supports broader environmental and economic goals. As we work toward reducing carbon emissions and tackling climate change, investing in high-quality public transportation is essential. A robust bus service can reduce the number of private vehicles on the road, cutting pollution and easing traffic congestion. In turn, this helps improve air quality and make our towns and cities more liveable for everyone.

This Plan is the result of extensive collaboration between The Highland Council, HiTRANS and bus operators.

Key to the BSIP is the commitment of partners to carry out improvements within their own sphere of influence. An example is that electric vehicles were introduced to the Inverness City network and A96 corridor since February 2023.

Scottish Citylink and Ember coach services operate without public subsidy, as do the majority of Stagecoach services within the Inverness and the Inner Moray Firth area. Otherwise, the majority of services are funded by The Highland Council who invite tenders from operators to provide them.

Our work does not end here. The Plan is a living document, one that will evolve with continued input from partners and wider stakeholders. Together, we can build a bus network that is accessible to all, serves as a vital part of our transport network. On behalf of all those involved in this endeavour, I extend my thanks to the team behind the Highland Bus Service Improvement Plan. Together, let us embark on this journey toward better, smarter, and more sustainable urban and rural mobility.



Robert Andrew

Independent Chair, Bus Service Improvement Partnership



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Introduction

The Highland Council has committed to the formation of a Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP), as defined in Part 3 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, to be open to all Operators of relevant services in The Highland Council area and giving recognition that working together is key to a successful partnership.

In summary, the Highland BSIP comprises three parts:

- **A Partnership Plan** that sets out the governance arrangements between the partners for managing the BSIP and making, varying, and revoking obligations;
- **A Bus Service Improvement Plan** which provides a clear vision of the improvements to bus services the partners are aiming to deliver; and
- **Schemes** with an accompanying document setting out the requirements to be met by local services in a defined geographical area, to achieve the BSIP objectives.

The Highland Council, as the Local Transport Authority, has formal responsibility for making the Partnership Plan, Improvement Plan and Scheme(s). The Council will work closely with all local bus operators to realise the objectives of the partners through the delivery of the Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan and associated initial schemes.

The formation and activities of the Highland BSIP is being undertaken in line with the BSIP Guidance published by Transport Scotland. A copy of this guidance is enclosed in [Annex 1](#).

This Partnership Plan and Bus Service Improvement Plan has been jointly and collaboratively developed by The Highland Council, HITRANS and bus operators who provide qualifying local bus services in the Partnership Plan area. It aims to support improvements to bus services across the Highlands. It sets out the objectives of the BSIP and its associated Schemes, detailing why they have been chosen as relevant to the Partnership's work, how their delivery and impact will be measured, and the expected timetables for their implementation and achievement of the actions to be implemented.

This Partnership Plan and Bus Service Improvement Plan will support the delivery of relevant adopted policy, including but not limited to the Council's Investment Programme, Local Transport Strategy and Corporate Plan and National Transport Strategy of the Scottish Government. It also provides the framework for developing the bus offer across the Highlands, working collaboratively and in partnership with communities and stakeholders.

The remaining sections set out the Partnership Plan and Bus Service Improvement Plan of the Highland BSIP, supported by a series of Annexes. Key terms relating to the Highland BSIP and referenced in both plans that follow are detailed in [Annex 2](#).



Our Partnership Plan



The Partnership Plan

The Policy Context

National Context

In Scotland, bus passenger numbers have seen a long-term decline, with journeys falling significantly over the last decade. The unprecedented challenges posed by the Coronavirus pandemic exacerbated this trend, leading to a profound impact on the bus industry and a dramatic reduction in travel. While recovery continues, with recent increases in passenger numbers, figures remain below pre-pandemic levels. This is illustrated by the national picture presented in the National Transport Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Report (2024), which reported that overall people are still travelling less on public transport than in 2019, with the number of local bus journeys in Scotland 18% lower in 2022-23 than in 2019-20. Compounding this challenge, the operational environment for bus services has become increasingly difficult. The Network Support Grant (NSG) has remained frozen since 2022, effectively representing a real-terms reduction in vital support. Furthermore, the annual review process has seen cuts to Concessionary Reimbursement, a crucial subsidy to passengers that directly impacts operator revenue. Operators also face significant upward pressure on wage costs, with recent figures from the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) indicating that bus driver wages have increased by a staggering 30% since the post-Covid recovery began, outpacing other sectors.

These financial pressures are set against a backdrop of altered travel patterns, as the rise of hybrid and remote working has led to fewer commuter trips, and the retail offering in many Scottish towns and cities has shrunk. It is now crucial that every effort is made to accelerate this recovery and drive future growth. There is an urgent need to deliver improvements that will both encourage existing users to return to bus services and facilitate a modal shift to attract new users.

National Policy and Legislation

The national policy context for BSIPs can be summarised as covering three areas:

- **The National Transport Strategy (NTS2)** which sets out the overarching vision for transport in Scotland over the next 20 years. Its four strategic priorities of reducing inequalities, taking climate action, helping deliver inclusive economic growth, and improving health and wellbeing directly shape bus policy in Scotland, underpinned by the Sustainable Travel and Sustainable Investment Hierarchies detailed in NTS2;
- **Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2)**¹ details 42 recommendations to inform future investment decisions by Scottish Ministers over the 20-year period to 2042. Several recommendations relate to the future bus offer, including investment in bus priority, integration with other modes and a low emission fleet; and
- **The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019** provides the legal framework for reforming bus services in Scotland, providing local authorities with new powers to take a more active role in the planning and delivery of bus services. The 2019 Act included specific provision for a new type of statutory partnership in the form of BSIPs.

¹ <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/strategic-transport-projects-review-2/>



Highland Context

Highland's economy is growing, particularly in sectors such as tourism, renewable energy, and sustainable technology. Transport is an enabler and to create an efficient and inclusive transport system, delivering a step-change in the bus offer will play a crucial role to ensure that:

- Everyone, no matter where they live in the Highlands, is connected to opportunities as well as to services; and
- Businesses can grow with ready access to a local labour market and the region is able to continue attracting new businesses and inward investment.

Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Highland bus network faced long-term challenges with declining patronage, a pattern of decline also evident in the extent of services available. This is particularly problematic for the Highlands because lower patronage results in a negative pattern of further decline.

While passengers have been returning in recent years, and patronage has typically returned to the level of the pre-Covid trend line, the 2022 Census reported that in the Highland area, bus, minibus, or coach accounted for just 3.1% of journeys to work, a fall from 5% in the 2011 Census². This is lower than the national figure of 5.7% (10% in 2011). Furthermore, the Scottish Household Survey (2022) reported that 82% of Highland respondents had not used a local bus service in the past month compared to a national rate of 63%³.

The decline in public transport use has significant implications for the region's economy and its climate goals. The transport sector is a major employer, with over 90,000 people in Scotland working⁴ in the 'Transport and Storage' sector in 2023. Furthermore, tourism, a vital part of the Highland economy, relies on a robust transport network. In 2024, the Highlands saw 1.79 million overnight tourism visits, generating £756 million⁵ in total spend. An efficient public transport system, including additional coach services and better infrastructure for visiting vehicles, is crucial for bringing visitors to key destinations while also helping to reduce carbon emissions and congestion.

The vast, dispersed, and rural nature of the Highlands creates a distinct geography with more urban areas and surrounding suburbs alongside scattered towns, villages, residential areas, and employment sites spanning the largest land mass by Council area in Scotland. This in turn creates unique challenges around public transport accessibility to employment, education, and key services, particularly in relation to our most remote and fragile communities with an ageing and falling population.

The importance of public transport, and specifically bus infrastructure and services, to the fabric of the region is clear and significant progress has been made with an ambitious programme of transport improvements funded through various sources, including Transport Scotland and other devolved funds.

Building on this momentum, The Highland Council and its partners have formed a collaborative partnership to deliver the actions set out in this Partnership Plan.

In addition, members of BSIP are also working closely with Transport Scotland to deliver major transport projects within Highland. This includes targeted trunk road network investment and enhancement of the public

² Scotland's Census <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

³ Scottish Transport Statistics 2022 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/statistics/#61738>

⁴ Scottish Government. (2023). Labour Market Statistics Scotland

⁵ VisitScotland. (2024). Highlands Tourism Economic Impact Report



transport network across all modes, and to secure vital future funding to progress smaller scale projects within communities to collectively deliver a low-carbon transport system that is sustainable, inclusive, safe, resilient and accessible.

Highland Policy

The Highland Regional Economic Strategy⁶ sets out the region's aspiration to build a strong, sustainable, and inclusive economy, with a particular focus on the green economy. Highland's strategic vision is to be a leader in renewable energy, circular economy, and sustainable tourism. The region aims to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2045, with a focus on creating high-quality, long-term jobs for local people.

Key to this economic transition is the development of several strategic sites, including ports and industrial clusters, which are a cornerstone of the economic transformation of the Highlands. These developments will generate jobs and contribute significantly to the regional economy. However, there are significant connectivity challenges associated with these dispersed sites and ongoing fragmentation of employment areas and so, improved bus service provision is a priority to ensure a skilled local workforce can access these opportunities.

This is complemented by the Council's Highland Administration Programme 2022-2027⁷ which has five key priorities – A Fair and Caring Highland, Resilient and Sustainable Communities, Accessible and Sustainable Highland Homes, A sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy and A Resilient and Sustainable Council.

The Highland Local Transport Strategy (LTS) 2025-2035⁸ provides the framework for transport investment, outlining how the region will deliver a sustainable, low-carbon transport system that improves choices for all. Without strategic investment now, there is a real risk that the region's growth potential will be constrained alongside a potential widening of inequalities. As already noted, this challenge is further exacerbated by the legacy impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic on public transport patronage and sustainability in terms of maintaining a sufficient level of demand for the continued viability of services in some areas.

The LTS comprises a suite of policies to increase public transport choice across the Highlands. This includes a policy to continue to develop the Highland BSIP and as part of this for partners to progress bringing forward a minimum acceptable standard for bus services to support getting the basics right to complement investment in service expansion and measures to improve the reliability of operations.

Key Issues and Opportunities in Highland

Transport Decarbonisation

The Highland Council is committed to achieving Net Zero by 2045 and potentially sooner, aligning with the national ambition of the Scottish Government. In a transport context, this is underpinned by the Sustainable Travel and Sustainable Investment Hierarchies of NTS2 as summarised below.

⁶ Regional Economic Strategy 2025-2035 https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/16590/hirep_unveils_ten-year_strategy_for_regional_growth

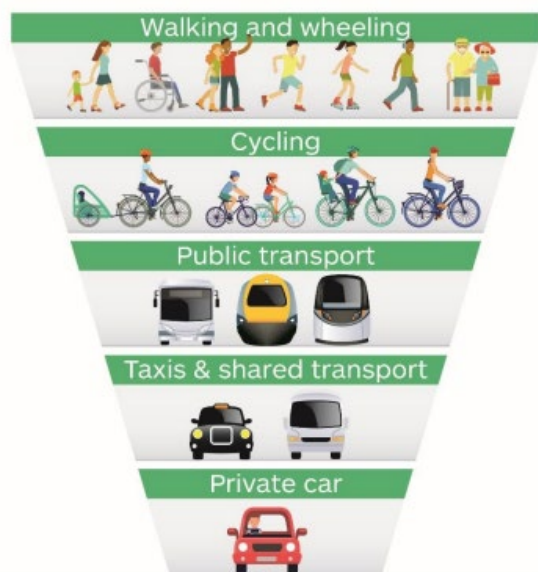
⁷ The Highland Council Performance Plan 2022-2027
www.highland.gov.uk/info/695/council_information_performance_and_statistics/381/our_priorities

⁸ The Highland Local Transport Strategy (LTS) 2025-2035
https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1523/transport_and_streets/1140/local_transport_strategy



While car travel is at the foot of the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy, it accounts for the largest proportion of journeys in Highland and the transport sector is a key contributor to emissions accounting for over 25% nationally. As already noted, the 2022 Census reported that in Highland bus, minibus or coach accounted for 3.1% of journeys to work, a fall from 5% in the 2011 Census⁹. Car-based travel (driver or passenger) accounted for over 75% of journeys and was up by around 8% compared to 2011. The predominance of car travel is reflective of a lack of available alternative options leading to dependence on and forced car ownership for some.

Sustainable Travel Hierarchy



Promotes walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and public transport and shared transport (i.e. sustainable modes) over single occupancy private cars.

Sustainable Investment Hierarchy



Transport options focus on reducing inequalities and the need to travel unsustainably are prioritised.

Travel Choice and Availability

Bus services, both local and long-distance, operate within the region¹⁰. The bus network covers almost all strategic routes and a significant number of settlements in Highland. Stagecoach operates local and medium-distance bus services commercially, and several companies, including Stagecoach, operate other services under contract to the Council. Notably, the Council has also operated a growing number of local services since 2023, previously operated by others. Some operators, including Citylink and recently Ember and FlixBus, provide longer distance services commercially to other Scottish towns and cities where connections are available for onward travel to other destinations including the wider UK.

On the main inter-urban routes around the Inner Moray Firth, services tend to be hourly (or more frequent within Inverness), but many in the remoter areas have a limited timetable which can impact on accessibility. In certain areas the timetabled network is supplemented by demand responsive transport services.

⁹ Scotland's Census 2022 <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/about/2022-census/>

¹⁰ Highland Wide Local Development Plan - Transport Evidence Chapter



The ability of bus operators to meet different needs is challenging, for example fulfilling school bus contracts can impact service availability at certain times of the day. This is compounded by the early school closing on Fridays, resulting in many Friday timetables differing from the rest of the week. The size of the bus network is constrained by financial pressures, affecting both the level of service which can be provided by operators on a commercial basis and the extent of contracts which can be funded from Council budgets. Most Council bus contracts are built around home to school transport provision as the peak use, with additional journeys provided by the same vehicles in the off-peak¹¹.

The region's vast geography and dispersed population also pose a unique challenge. According to Scottish Transport Statistics 2024, bus use is significantly higher in urban areas of Scotland with 56% of respondents in large urban areas having used the bus in the last month compared to just 17% in remote rural areas¹². The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the number of buses in operators' fleets in Scotland decreased by 17% between 2017-18 and 2023-24, while the number of staff employed in the industry fell by 13% over the same period¹³. The contraction in the sector's capacity with the number of Public Service Vehicles declining from 4,200 to 3,500 over this period, makes it harder to serve remote and less profitable routes.

Congestion in more urban areas affects the reliability of bus services, as reported in the Connecting Inverness, Millburn Corridor and Lochaber Area appraisals¹⁴, and can also lead to real and perceived safety concerns for those who walk, wheel and cycle to access bus services. The availability and quality of active travel routes also has an impact for some on accessing bus services.

In some areas the **scheduled bus network** is complemented by **community transport** schemes, providing a lifeline for some who are unable to drive or don't have access to a car and live more rurally or who wish not to drive for health or other reasons¹⁵. The services help provide people with access to essential services as well as to other transport modes, including scheduled bus services. The Highland Council currently supports 28 community transport projects with grant funding. Each project uniquely serves the needs of their communities, through for example the delivery of community car schemes, minibus hire, minibus projects or a combination of these. Increasingly, the Council is looking to community transport to provide transport contracts on behalf of the Council, typically, these are home-to-school transport contracts. Although the perception of community transport is that it focusses mainly on the needs of older people, a broad range and diversity of community needs are served by existing schemes in the Highlands with demand exceeding available capacity in some locations. There is therefore a need by all stakeholders to improve the image of Community Transport, given its potential to support the future demand in the rural Highlands.

Modal Integration

Highland is served by five **rail lines**, including the Far North Line (Wick / Thurso – Inverness), Kyle Line (Kyle of Lochalsh to Inverness), Inverness to Aberdeen line, West Highland Line (Glasgow to Fort William / Mallaig) and Highland Main Line (Inverness to Perth). The rail network enables the movement of goods and people within and to / from Highland with services provided by different operators. ScotRail operate passenger services for shorter-distance journeys within Highland for commuting and to access education, health and other services

¹¹ Highland Wide Local Development Plan - Transport Evidence Chapter

¹² Scottish Transport Statistics 2024 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/scottish-transport-statistics-2024/>

¹³ Transport Scotland. (2024). Scottish Transport Statistics, Bus & Coach Chapter

¹⁴ The Highland Council Bus Partnership Fund Projects

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1523/transport_and_streets/1013/bus_partnership_fund_projects

¹⁵ Highland Wide Local Development Plan – Transport Evidence Chapter



as well as to visit other areas of the region and operate longer distance services to wider Scotland. LNER and Caledonian Sleeper services provide UK-wide connectivity from Highland as far south as London. There are a total of 60 passenger stations in Highland.

Within Highland there is both international **air connectivity** to / from the region and regional connectivity to more remote and rural parts of Highland and the rest of Scotland as well as to other UK airports. There are two airports from which commercial flights operate in Highland - Inverness and Wick John O’Groats. Other airfields operate within Highland, including at Ashaig, Dornoch and Plockton that are owned and operated by The Highland Council. These operate as unlicensed, unstaffed aerodromes and have no Air Traffic Control / Flight Information Service or Rescue / Fire Fighting services available.

Ferry services are a key part of the transport network in Highland. The principal services include those operated by Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac) from the Highland mainland and Skye to the Western Isles, Mull, the Small Isles and Raasay, and from Mallaig to Skye. The Highland Council operates the Corran Ferry and has contracts for ferries on the Cromarty – Nigg, Camusnagaul – Fort William and Mallaig – Inverie – Tarbet routes. Pentland Ferries and John O’Groats Ferries operate other ferries to Orkney.

The physical constraints of the **rail network** impact the service offer that can be provided and can pose challenges to seamless integration with other travel modes at specific times, including local and longer-distance bus services. While the principle of integrated connections is valuable, it is crucial to ensure that efforts to align different transport options do not inadvertently disrupt the reliability of regular services. For instance, bus services, particularly late-night routes, must primarily cater to the needs of their consistent user base, avoiding regular delays caused by late-arriving trains that could deter frequent passengers. Similarly, while lifeline ferry and air services are undeniably vital to the region, and connections with onward travel are a key factor in their utility, it is acknowledged that many key ferry routes already benefit from strong connections with bus and coach services where rail is not an option. Notable examples include robust connections at Uig and Ullapool for all ferries, with good connectivity also observed at other ports such as Scrabster, Sconser, and Armadale during the summer season.

Travel Behaviour Change

Within Highland, the LTS and mode specific delivery proposals, such as this Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan, are about improving travel choices for more people so they are not being forced into their car / to purchase a car and so non-drivers have greater transport independence.

In terms of transport expenditure, the rural nature of the region and longer travel distances mean that transport costs can account for a larger proportion of expenditure for residents. Analysis undertaken as part of STPR2¹⁶ identified that most people in Highland spend between 17% to 18% of their budget on transport, compared to the national average of 14%. The Fair Fares Review, published in 2024, is part of a broader package of work referred to as the Future of Public Transport being undertaken by Transport Scotland. Aspects of the review consider affordability and make several related recommendations¹⁷.

¹⁶ STPR2: Case for Change Highlands and Islands Region

www.transport.gov.scot/media/49100/initial-appraisal-case-for-change-highlands-and-islands-report.pdf

¹⁷ Fair Fares Review <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/fair-fares-review/>



The increased expenditure on transport is compounded in using public transport which involves different modes / operators and multiple ticket purchases which can add to the overall cost and difference compared to private car for those who have this option.

The availability and attractiveness of alternative public transport options, collectively impacts how people across Highland travel. Encouraging and ultimately achieving travel behaviour change towards more sustainable travel choices, including bus for all or part of a journey, will require committed and sustained investment across infrastructure and services to provide a competitive offer that meets the needs of those who live in, work in and visit Highland.

Opportunities

Alongside these challenges, there are several opportunities including:

- 80% of Highland respondents to the Scottish Household Survey (2023) had not used a bus service in the last month, compared to the Scottish average of 62%, reflecting the market potential to increase bus usage in Highland¹⁸;
- The Highland area is characterised by a strong community spirit. This is reflected in the breadth of the volunteer run community transport services currently on offer, as well as the activities of groups to take forward developing Local Place Plans to help shape and improve their communities;
- Linked to this, a further opportunity to build on is the existing partnership working across the region. This includes national, regional and local Government as well as locally through partnerships such as the Highland BSIP; and
- While Highland serves a third of the land area of Scotland, including the most remote and sparsely populated parts of the UK, this masks the fact that most people live in some form of settlement. Linked to this national, regional and local planning policy reflects a local living focus whereby people can access many of their daily needs within a reasonable distance, thereby providing a spatial context supportive of sustainable transport.

¹⁸ Transport and Travel in Scotland 2023 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/transport-and-travel-in-scotland-2023/>



Area Overview

The bus network in the Highlands is a vital, yet complex, system defined by the region's vast and sparsely populated landscape. It is not a single, unified service but rather a blend of different types of operations, each serving a distinct purpose. The two main categories of services are commercial services and tendered services, which together form a network designed to meet the diverse needs of residents and visitors.

Commercial services are operated by private bus companies, like Stagecoach and Scottish Citylink, who determine their own routes and timetables based on passenger demand. These services are concentrated in more densely populated areas and on key inter-city routes. For example, the Scottish Citylink 919 provides a crucial link between Inverness and Fort William, passing through popular tourist areas like Loch Ness. Operators of commercial services also set their own fares.

In contrast, **tendered services** also known as subsidised services, are routes that are not commercially viable but are considered socially necessary. The Highland Council pays private operators to run these services to ensure that rural and remote communities still have access to essential amenities. These routes are especially important in areas with low population density, such as Wester Ross, Sutherland, and on the Isle of Skye. The council's own in-house bus fleet also operates some of these routes to ensure continued connectivity. The routes, timetables and fares are set out in the tender specifications prepared by The Highland Council.

Municipal services are operated directly by The Highland Council's in-house bus fleet to serve specific local needs, distinct from the tendered contracts. These services are typically used to maintain connectivity on routes. This approach allows the council to have direct control over essential services, acting as a provider of last resort.

Community transport is a key part of the rural network, relying on local groups and volunteers. These services use smaller vehicles, including minibuses, cars, and taxis, and often operate on a non-profit basis. Examples include Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) schemes, such as 'Dial-a-bus,' where passengers book in advance for a flexible service. These are lifelines in remote areas like Kinlochbervie and the Dornoch Firth where fixed bus routes are not feasible, providing essential access where commercial and tendered services cannot operate. Crucially, community transport services can also serve as vital feeder links into the commercial and tendered local and trunk bus networks, thereby helping to reduce reliance on private cars by offering viable connections for onward journeys. Furthermore, community transport includes dedicated schemes for specific purposes, such as taking people to medical appointments, and often fills gaps left by both commercial and tendered services which cannot be addressed by municipal provisions.

Current Offer to Bus Passengers

The current bus service offer for passengers in the Highlands is primarily centred around a number of national and local schemes designed to improve affordability and access. The different schemes are summarised below.

Free Bus Travel for Young People: One of the most significant offers is free bus travel for all young people aged 5 to 21 who live in Scotland. This is accessed via a National Entitlement Card (NEC) or Young Scot NEC. This scheme allows young people to travel for free on almost all bus services throughout Scotland, including those in the Highlands, making bus travel a highly affordable option for education, work and leisure purposes.



Free Bus Travel for Over 60s and Disabled

People: The well-established National Concessionary Travel Scheme provides free bus travel for all residents of Scotland aged 60 and over, as well as for people with disabilities. This is also accessed through a NEC. This scheme is a vital lifeline for many people in the Highlands, enabling them to travel for free to access essential services and to combat social isolation.

£2 Bus Fare Cap Pilot: Operating in Highland from 23 March 2026, this 12-month pilot provides a capped £2 fare for bus travel across the Highlands and Islands. The pilot aims to make bus travel more affordable, easier to use, more appealing and more resilient and its end therefore requiring careful management between national Government and local partners, including members of the Highland BSIP.



Operator-Specific Deals: Commercial operators, like Stagecoach and Scottish Citylink, offer their own range of ticketing options. These include:

- **Day and Multi-Journey Tickets:** "DayRider" tickets offer unlimited travel for a single day within a specific zone (e.g. Inverness). "FlexiRider" tickets, and similar products, provide a set number of journeys for a discounted price, offering flexibility for less frequent travellers.
- **Weekly, 4-Weekly and Annual Tickets:** These tickets offer competitive discounts for regular travellers compared to purchasing standard single or day return tickets.
- **Student and Young Person Discounts:** Both Stagecoach and Citylink offer specific discounts for students and young people, often in the form of discounted day tickets, weekly passes or percentage savings on single and return fares.

Integrated Ticketing: Efforts are being made through the BSIP to make ticketing simpler and more integrated. While there isn't a widespread integrated ticket across all operators in the Highlands yet, a range of initiatives have taken place which are a step towards a more unified system. PlusBus also provides the option of adding on a bus day ticket for travel in Fort William and Inverness to a train ticket.

Operators and the Market

Stagecoach is the largest commercial operator in the region and holds a significant majority of the market share. They operate many of the local city services in Inverness and most of the major routes connecting Inverness to other key towns like Tain.

Shiel Buses is a well-established and significant private operator in the Highlands, particularly in the Lochaber area. They provide a range of services, including school contracts, tendered public services for The Highland Council, and private coach hire.

The Highland Council has a growing share through its in-house bus fleet, which operates services either previously tendered to other companies or that commercial operators are unwilling to take on.

The remaining market share is made up of a number of smaller, independent operators who hold contracts for specific tendered routes, as well as various community transport and demand responsive schemes. While these services are vital for connecting remote



communities, their collective market share is relatively small compared to that of Stagecoach, Shiel and the council's direct provisions.

The total fleet for the main operators across the Highland area extends to over 200 vehicles with the breakdown of this presented overleaf.

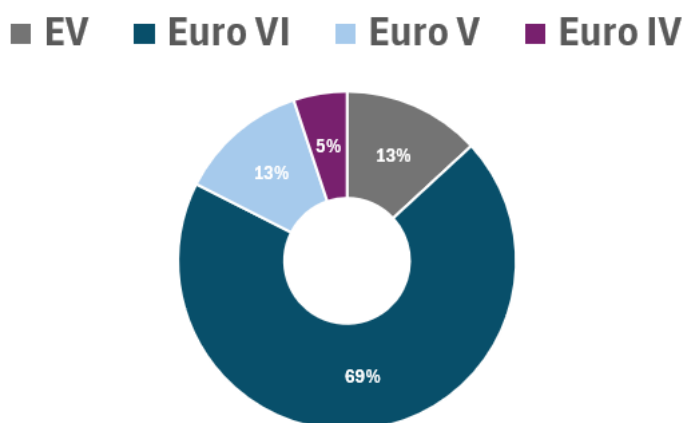
Operator	Fleet Size
Stagecoach	137
Highland Council	22
Sheil Buses	52
Citylink	6
D & E Coaches	63
Ember	14

Fleet Composition and Patronage

The composition of the bus fleet for the main bus operators in Highland is a mix between Euro VI, Euro V, Euro VI and Electric Vehicles (EVs) with the breakdown shown within the graphic to the right. Stagecoach is currently the primary operator of EVs with over 30 such vehicles.

The three largest operators jointly deliver services covering over 6.2 million kilometres per annum.

The main bus fleet serving the Highland area that is operated by the three largest operators sees approximately 5.4 million passengers carried annually. This excludes the extensive network of community transport and other demand responsive services.



Scope of the Partnership Plan

The Partnership Plan sets out the governance arrangements between the partners for managing the BSIP and making, varying, and revoking obligations. **The Partnership covers the whole Highland Council area.**

Operators of qualifying local bus services and stakeholders shall be able to participate in the Partnership in line with the Terms of Reference. Any formal variations or revocations to the Plan or accompanying Schemes will be subject to the mandatory statutory Objections Mechanism tests as set out in the Terms of Reference under **Annex 3**.

While the statutory legal service standards established under this document apply strictly to operations within the defined boundaries of each respective Scheme Area, priority corridor baseline performance tracking will capture full route lengths. This comprehensive tracking methodology is implemented to properly evaluate and account for adjacent, cross-boundary transport impacts on corridor operations in accordance with national guidance.

The process for formalising the BSIP and associated Partnership Schemes is set out within **Figure 1** (with a larger version available in **Annex 1**).

Commencement and Competition

The Partnership, whilst operating on a voluntary basis, shall formally commence, and fully enact the powers offered by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 on the same date as the first associated Scheme is made. A Scheme shall have no specific end date but will be subject to a review by the Partnership annually (with further details provided in **Annex 3**). The Highland Council has undertaken an assessment of the impacts of the Partnership Plan and Bus Service Improvement Plan on competition and believes it will not or is unlikely to have a significantly adverse effect on competition as set out in Section 37 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001.

In accordance with Section 13D(4) of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 (as amended), notice is hereby given that if The Highland Council decides to progress and implement a local bus franchising framework within its area at any point in the future, any overlapping or affected statutory BSIP plan or accompanying scheme obligations will automatically vary or cease to apply as necessary to accommodate the franchising framework. Such variations or revocations will take effect directly under the transition provisions of the Act from the specified commencement date of the franchising framework, without triggering or requiring a standard operator objections process.

Funding to support the delivery of the Partnership activities and associated Partnership Schemes shall take many forms. As a consequence, the range of funding sources secured and sought alongside any gaps is provided within **Annex 4**.

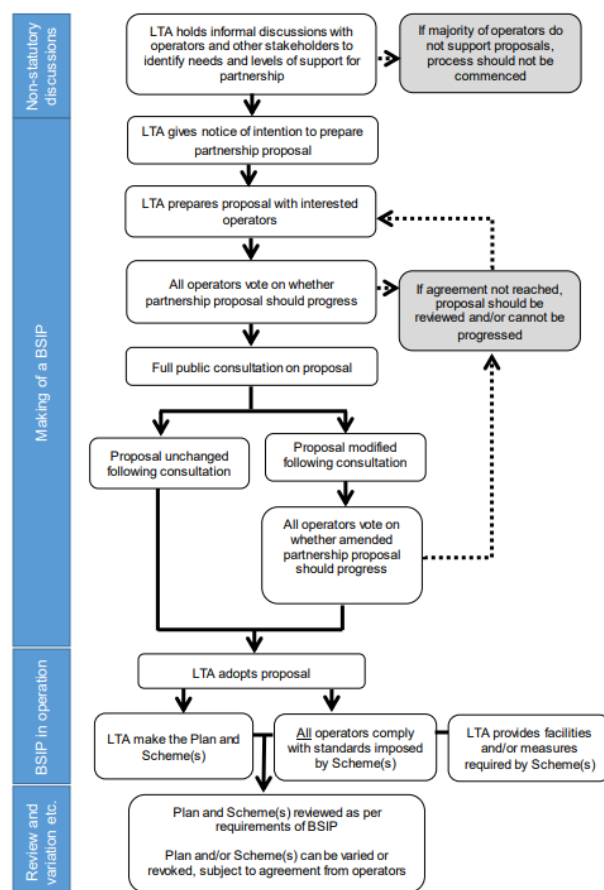


Figure 1 – BSIP Outline Process

Source: Transport Scotland BSIP Note

Partnership Objectives and Funding

The Partnership's objectives go beyond just infrastructure and extend to improving bus services themselves through increasing frequency, the quality of buses and creating simpler ticketing systems. The underpinning Highland BSIP works to bring forward investment in bus infrastructure and services alongside positively contributing more widely to create a more integrated transport network in the Highlands that encourages people to choose bus over private cars. This collaborative approach is essential for addressing the unique challenges of the Highlands, from congestion in centres like Inverness to network coverage in the more isolated communities that rely on bus services for essential travel.

The Partnership seeks to deliver on a series of objectives, developed collaboratively with stakeholders, and informed through a series of technical studies undertaken independently in recent years. These objectives are:

- Objective 1** Improve the operational performance of bus services
- Objective 2** Improve the bus service offer within the Highland BSIP
- Objective 3** Improve the passenger experience for bus users within the Highland BSIP

Further detail about the objectives, including how performance against each is measured, can be found within **Annex 5**.

Partnership Governance

For decision-making purposes, the Highland BSIP shall be governed by the structure shown in **Figure 2** overleaf. Further details about the membership requirements can be found within **Annex 3**.





Figure 2 – Highland BSIP Governance Structure



Our Bus Service Improvement Plan





area. It seeks to define the area specific actions for delivering against the objectives of the Highland BSIP. The Scheme actions relate to the facilities, measures and obligations on operators and The Highland Council that will be committed to, pursued, provided or implemented in Fort William and Lochaber to contribute towards achieving the objectives of the Highland BSIP. .

An Overview of the Scheme Area Obligations

As noted, the improvements within the Scheme area are centred around three fundamental parts of a successful bus network, including Service and Route Standards, Facilities and Measures. A high-level outline is provided below:

Service and Route Standards

- Bus services frequencies;
- Seeking opportunities to make services more direct for passengers;
- Seeking opportunities to make timetables more efficient for passenger needs; and
- Vehicle quality specifications relating to comfort, provision of route/stop information, ticketing options and accessibility.

Facilities

- Eight bus priority schemes completed. This included implementation of bus lanes, bus gates and traffic signal priority primarily focused on the centre of Inverness; and
- Progressing further bus priority schemes, subject to available funding.

Measures

- Repair and maintenance of on-street bus infrastructure (e.g. shelters, flag pole, information boards), including a minimum standard and turnaround time to address issues;
- Bus stop information provision and upkeep;
- Bi-annual cleaning of all bus shelters; and
- Availability of ticketing options, including multi-operator travel and pricing.

For further details relating to the designated Service and Route Standards, Facilities and Measures obligations on the Operators and The Highland Council specific to the Scheme area please refer to [Annex 7](#). Joint obligations also relevant to the Scheme area are detailed in [Annex 6](#).

Scheme Area 2: Fort William and Lochaber

The Highland Council (of Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX) made a Scheme on **DATE**, as defined in Part 3 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, to implement improvements to local bus services in the Fort William and Lochaber area. The Scheme shall commence on **DATE** (i.e. 70 days from when the Scheme was made).

The coverage of the Scheme extends to the Fort William and Lochaber area within the blue boundary in [Figure 4](#).



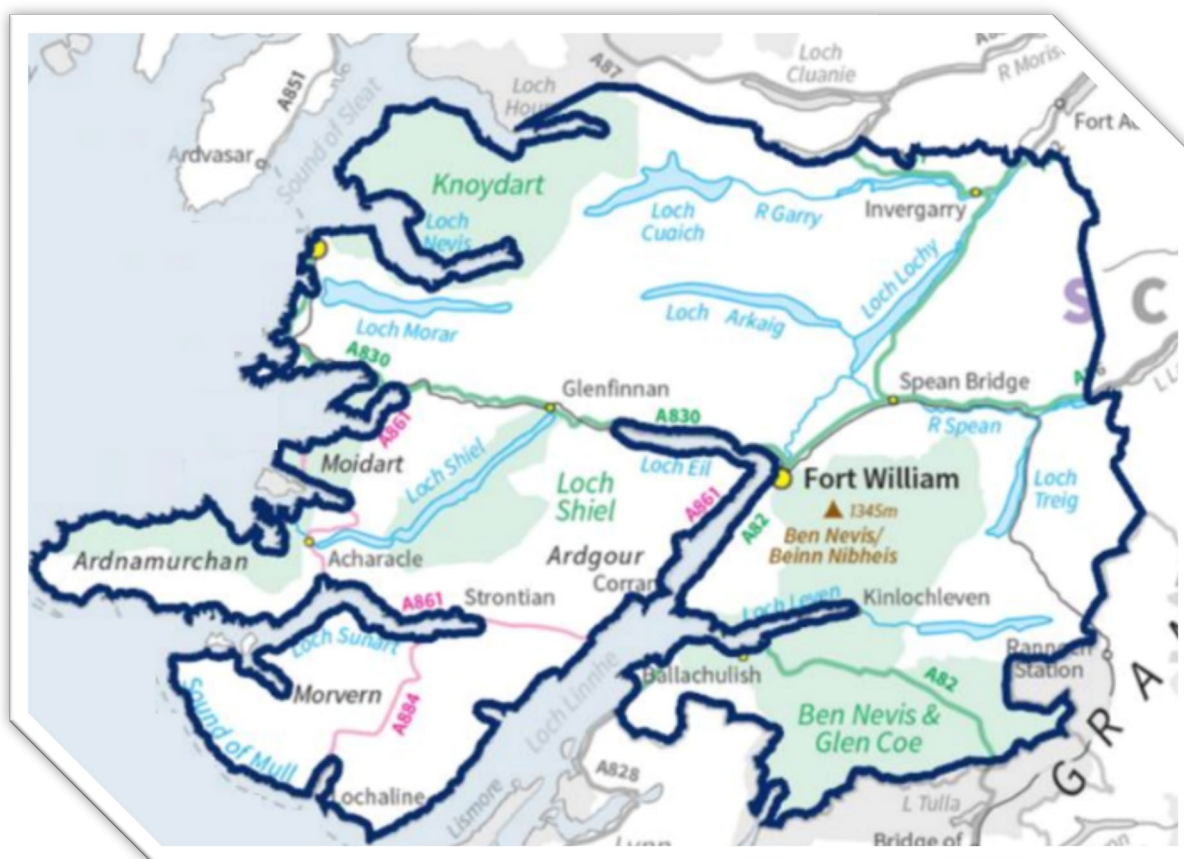


Figure 4 – Fort William and Lochaber Scheme Area

The Fort William and Lochaber Scheme has been jointly developed by the Highland Council, HITRANS and bus operators who provide qualifying local bus services in the Scheme area. It seeks to define the area specific actions for delivering against the objectives of the Highland BSIP. The Scheme actions relate to the facilities, measures and obligations on operators and The Highland Council that will be committed to, pursued, provided or implemented in Fort William and Lochaber to contribute towards achieving the objectives of the Highland BSIP .

An Overview of the Scheme Area Obligations

As noted, the improvements within the Scheme area are centred around three fundamental parts of a successful bus network, including Service and Route Standards, Facilities and Measures. A high-level outline is provided below:

Service and Route Standards

- Bus services frequencies;
- Seeking opportunities to make services more direct for passengers;
- Seeking opportunities to make timetables more efficient for passenger needs; and
- Vehicle quality specifications relating to comfort, provision of route/stop information, ticketing options and accessibility.

Facilities

- Progressing bus priority schemes, subject to available funding, with a focus on Fort William and to mitigate the impact of future development. This includes bus gates and



works to improve access for buses as well as passengers connecting between local and longer distance bus services and other between local services and rail.

Measures

- Repair and maintenance of on-street bus infrastructure (e.g. shelters, flap pole, information boards), including a minimum standard and turnaround time to address issues;
- Bus stop information provision and upkeep;
- Bi-annual cleaning of all bus shelters; and
- Availability of ticketing options, including multi-operator travel and pricing.

For details relating to the designated Service and Route Standards, Facilities and Measures obligations on the Operators and The Highland Council specific to the Scheme area please refer to [Annex 8](#). Joint obligations also relevant to the Scheme area are detailed in [Annex 6](#).





Annex 1 – Scottish BSIP Guidance

Annex 2 – Highland BSIP Definitions

Annex 3 – Highland BSIP Terms of Reference

Annex 4 – Highland BSIP Summary of Funding

Annex 5 – Highland BSIP Objectives

Annex 6 – Highland BSIP Joint Obligations

Annex 7 – Highland BSIP Inner Moray Firth Scheme Area Details

Annex 8 – Highland BSIP Fort William and Lochaber Scheme Area Details

Annex 9 – Highland BSIP Annual Monitoring Report Template



ANNEX 1: Scottish Bus Service Improvement Partnership Guidance

Bus Service Improvement Partnerships (BSIPs)

1. Introduction

BSIPs are designed to be collaborative partnerships which will have analysed the existing service provision in the area and the policies to be implemented, in order to make substantive improvements and achieve those policies.

The development of any BSIP proposal will be led by the Local Transport Authority (LTA). They must give notice of their intention to persons in their area and consult on their proposals¹.

The LTA must also invite local bus operators to participate and have the opportunity to help shape the proposal from the start.

2. Local Transport Authorities

2.1 BSIP Partnership Plan

An LTA may make a BSIP plan in relation to the whole or part of their area. A plan must:

- Specify the area covered and time period to which it relates
- Provide an analysis of local services
- Specify policies relating to local services
- Set out objectives on quality and effectiveness of local services
- Set out how the scheme will meet these objectives
- Describe the intended effect of any partnership scheme on adjacent areas
- Specify how the views of users are to be obtained on the effectiveness of plan and scheme
- Specify how to review the partnership plan.

2.2 BSIP Partnership Scheme

At the same time as making a BSIP Plan, an LTA **must** make one or more BSIP schemes relating to the whole or part of the area to which the Plan relates. A scheme:

- Will specify the area covered by the scheme and period of time
- Will impose one or more service standards (see below) for services having one or more stopping places in the area
- Will specify one or more facilities to be provided or measures to be taken by the LTA². A facility can be classed as infrastructure and a measure as another improvement, such as parking policy to incentivise bus use. Any specified facility must be provided at specific locations along routes (proposed to be) served by local services

¹ The procedure for making, varying, postponing and revoking plans and schemes is set out at Schedule A1 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 as inserted by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.

² Section 3M(2)(c) of the Act makes provision for regulations to be made on what may constitute a facility or measure. However, it is likely that the difference between the two will be set out in guidance.



- Will specify how the scheme will be reviewed and when
- Will prepare and publish a report on the effectiveness of the scheme annually for each year the scheme is in effect. The report will consider all representations made to the LTA and the Traffic Commissioner must be consulted
- May provide for exemption of services and conditions in which such exemptions are to apply
- May specify actions to facilitate the operation of the scheme
- Can only be made:
 - If the LTA is satisfied it will contribute to implementation of the policies set out in the plan or relevant general policies **and**
 - It will bring benefits to users or reduce or limit congestion, noise or air pollution
- May provide for circumstances where the scheme can be varied or revoked.

2.3 Service Standards in a Partnership Scheme

In the partnership scheme, the LTA can set out service standards to be followed for local services having one or more stopping places in the area covered by the scheme. The following list gives an indication of what service standards may include, but is by no means exhaustive:

- Route service standards: requirements on the frequency or timing of a local service, by reference only to that service or by reference to that service and other local services, taken together.
- Operational service standards: any other matter relating to standard of service, including (but not limited to):
 - Vehicle quality specifications
 - Minimum frequency of services
 - Maximum frequency of services
 - Maximum fares
 - Ticketing requirements
 - Multi-operator travel card pricing
 - Provision of information for the public
 - Dates of registration changes.

Once a BSIP is in operation, the Traffic Commissioner may investigate the actions of a LTA in relation to compliance with the BSIP. If this happens, the Traffic Commissioner must then publish a report setting out whether they are satisfied with the LTA's compliance and, if not, make recommendations as to remedy.

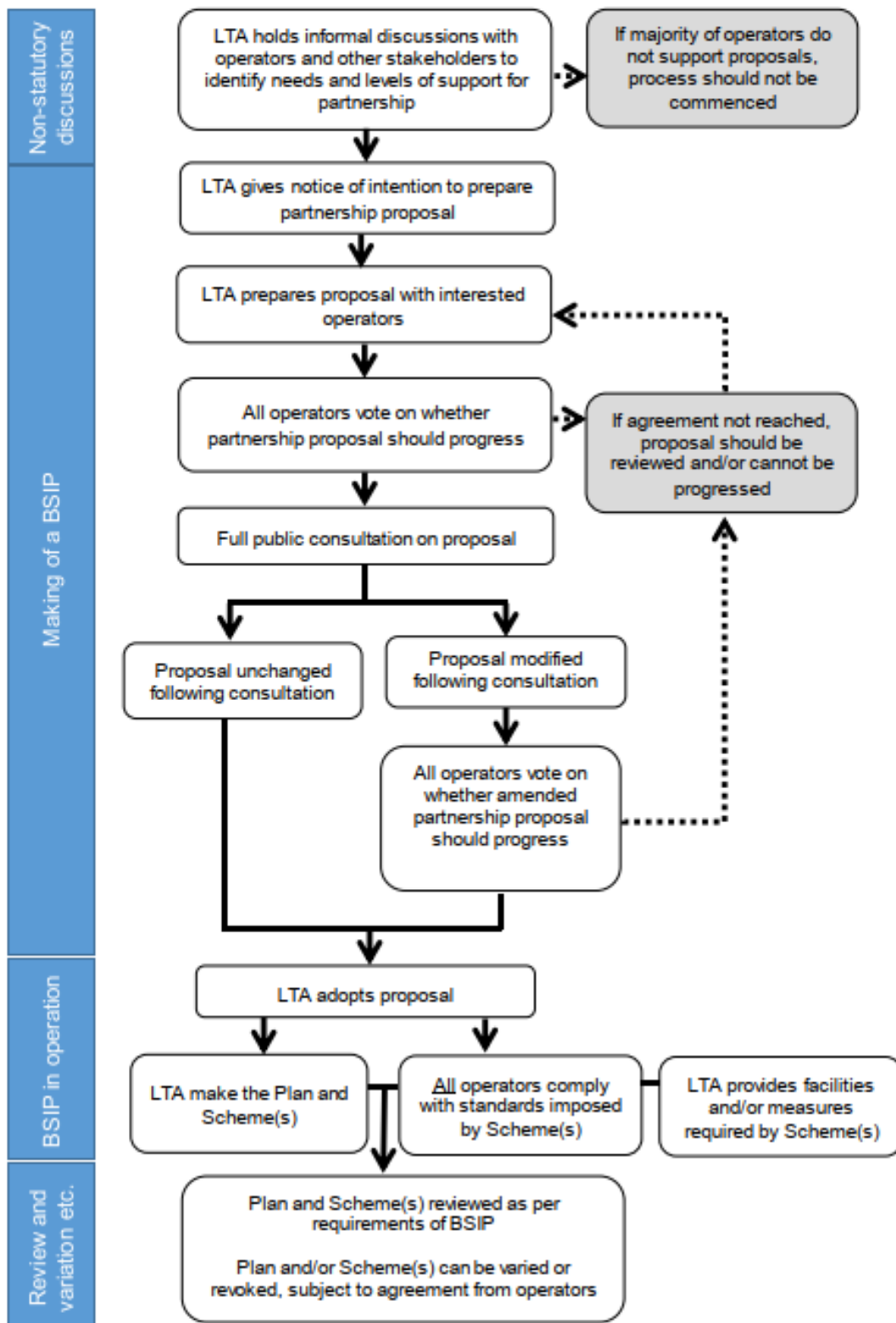
2.4 Consultation on BSIPs

A LTA considering making a BSIP must consult widely on its proposals at various stages in the BSIP process, including representatives of users of local services.

- The first stage is where the LTA gives notice of its intention to prepare a plan or scheme or to vary or revoke a plan or scheme
- The second is where the LTA gives notice of a draft plan or scheme or draft variation or revocation of a plan or scheme to stakeholders, prior to consultation.
- Finally, following consultation, there is the 14-day notice given after the making, variation or revocation of a plan or scheme.



5. BSIP – Outline Process



2.5 Annual Report on a BSIP

An LTA must prepare and publish a report on the effectiveness of the scheme annually for each year the scheme is in effect. In preparing this report, the LTA must consider all representations made to it in relation to the effectiveness or otherwise of the scheme. This enables the general public to provide valuable feedback on the success or otherwise of the BSIP to bus users and potential bus users and, ultimately, to help improve a scheme.

3. Bus Operators

3.1 Ability to Influence a BSIP

If a sufficient number of bus operators in the area object to a partnership proposal to make a plan and scheme, it cannot go ahead. What constitutes a sufficient number will be set out in regulations.

An LTA may require a bus operator to provide relevant information in support of preparing, making, reviewing, varying or revoking a BSIP plan or scheme. The operator must provide this information timeously and in any form they should reasonably be expected to provide.

Where there is an increase in the number of bus operators in an area of a scheme, such that the service cannot be provided in accordance with a specified route service standard, the LTA must modify that standard to continue to be able to provide the service agreed in the scheme.

3.2 Requirement to Meet BSIP Service Standards

Once a BSIP is in operation, a Traffic Commissioner must refuse an application for registration from a bus operator if it is unlikely to be able to comply with the service standards in that BSIP. Additionally, the Traffic Commissioner may cancel a registration where that service is not being provided in accordance with the service standard in an existing BSIP.

Accordingly, if a bus operator wishes to continue running services in an area covered by a BSIP, they run the risk of losing this ability if they do not meet the service standards in the BSIP.

4. Bus Users

The BSIP provisions in the Act offer increased transparency and accountability for bus users (and potential bus users), with consultation and reporting requirements included at various stages in the process as set out above.

4.1 Accessibility of Services in a BSIP

Scottish Ministers may make regulations on the standards and requirements a BSIP plan or scheme specifies in respect of accessibility for disabled and people with limited mobility of bus services operating under the BSIP.



ANNEX 2: Highland BSIP Definitions

Item	Description
Bus Service Improvement Partnership or BSIP	Statutory partnership as defined by Part 3 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, and collectively representing the Partnership Plan, Bus Service Improvement Plan and associated Scheme(s).
Partnership Plan	The Highland Partnership Plan, defining the governance and working arrangements of the BSIP.
Bus Service Improvement Plan	The Highland Bus Service Improvement Plan, setting out the background context and the objectives at a strategic level for improvement to bus services.
Scheme Area	Defined geographic areas where delivery will be targeted to bring forward improvements to local bus services to contribute towards the BSIP objectives. The improvements within the Scheme area are centred around three fundamental parts of a successful bus network, including Service and Route Standards, Facilities and Measures.
BSIP Objectives	Objectives provide focus to the BSIP and guide the direction of actions within Scheme areas. They also help foster accountability between partners towards achieving tangible outputs that work towards delivering on the ambition of the partnership underpinned by the objectives.
Variation	A formal variation of the Partnership Plan, Bus Service Improvement Plan or associated Scheme(s) following the governance mechanism set out by the Partnership Plan.
Partners	Organisations participating in the BSIP and who are represented on the Partnership Group with associated decision making powers held by this group.
Partnership Board	Established to make decisions in exceptional circumstances, including exercising a veto over Partnership Group decisions which it may reasonably believe or suspect as having anti-competition implications or being otherwise significantly against the public interest.
Partnership Group	Established to include bus operators, The Highland Council and HITRANS to fulfil several crucial functions, including strategic oversight and direction, partnership and collaboration and project governance, problem solving and decision making as well as reporting and communication. The group is the primary decision-making body of the Highland BSIP, responsible for considering recommendations put forward by Scheme Area Bus Forum(s) and making decisions including specific variations.
Scheme Area Bus Forum	The Scheme Area Bus Forum operates strictly as a consultative and advisory platform to inform local partnership working. It provides a mechanism for local information sharing, stakeholder collaboration, and public feedback regarding service standards, facilities, and measures. The Forum holds no independent statutory or executive decision-making powers. All local feedback and operational recommendations developed by the Forum will be formally submitted to the Partnership Group, which serves as the primary body responsible for reviewing proposals and enacting any official scheme variations. The forum comprises a committee of Operators, The Highland Council, HITRANS and other nominated representatives responsible for considering all issues affecting a Scheme area and making recommendations to the Partnership Group in line with the Partnership Plan governance arrangements.



Item	Description
Bus Operators (or Operators)	All Large, Medium and Small Operators running Qualifying Bus Services in the Scheme area.
Large, Medium or Small Bus Operator	Any single Bus Operator with registered mileage representing the following proportions of total registered mileage for Qualifying Bus Services: • Large: equal to or greater than 10%. • Medium: equal to or greater than 2.5%, but less than 10%. • Small: less than 2.5%.
Qualifying Bus Service	A registered local bus service (inclusive of Community Transport Services) with one or more stopping place within the Scheme area and that does not meet the definition of a Non-qualifying Bus Service.
Non-qualifying Bus Service	Services excluded from classification as Qualifying Bus Services, include: • Registered local services that are excursions or tours. • Services that have 10% or less of their overall distance registered as local bus services highland wide. • Services that only operate on less than 30 days per calendar year.
On-Time (or Punctuality Window)	A service is considered to be running "On-Time" if it departs a timing point within the Traffic Commissioner's official window of tolerance: no more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late.
Facilities	Infrastructure such as bus lanes or traffic signal priorities listed as being provided in the relevant Scheme area.
Measures	Initiatives other than infrastructure, designed to promote bus use listed as being undertaken in the relevant Scheme area. Potential measures include another improvement, such as parking policy or incentivisation of bus use.
Services and Route Standards	In the partnership Scheme area, the Local Transport Authority (i.e. the Local Authority) can set out service and route standards to be followed for local bus services having one or more stopping places in the area covered by the Scheme area. The following list gives an indication of what service standards may include, but is by no means exhaustive: • Route service standards: requirements on the frequency or timing of a local service, by reference only to that service or by reference to that service and other local services, taken together. • Operational service standards : any other matter relating to standard of service, including (but not limited to): ○ Vehicle quality specifications. ○ Minimum frequency of services. ○ Maximum frequency of services. ○ Maximum fares. ○ Ticketing requirements. ○ Multi-operator travel-card pricing. ○ Provision of information for the public. ○ Dates of registration changes. Once a BSIP is in operation, the Traffic Commissioner may investigate the actions of a Local Transport Authority (i.e. the Local Authority) in relation to compliance with the BSIP. If this happens, the Traffic Commissioner must then publish a report setting out whether they are satisfied with the LTA's compliance and, if not, make recommendations as to remedy.



Date of last update: July 2026



ANNEX 3: Highland BSIP Terms of Reference

Overview

This annex sets out the Terms of Reference for the Highland Bus Service Improvement partnership and related governance structure.

Partnership Board

Purpose

The **Partnership Board** will be the final decision-making body of the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership. Involvement by the **Partnership Board** is not anticipated to be a regular occurrence, however the Board is in place to provide a casting view in circumstances whereby consensus is not achieved by the Partnership Group and / or a matter is referred to the Board by a member of the Group.

Membership

Membership consists of Senior Executive Staff from The Highland Council, who can choose to take matters of contention to the relevant Council Committee in line with the standard meeting cycle of the respective Committee.

Partnership Group

Purpose

The **Partnership Group** will be the primary decision-making body of the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership. Certain decisions of the Group may constitute a Partnership or Scheme area variation. The Group will formally endorse related documentation of the Highland BSIP, including the Partnership Plan, Bus Service Improvement Plan and Scheme(s) area details.

Membership

Membership of the **Partnership Group** will comprise the following representatives:

- Two The Highland Council representatives (Excluding those representing the In-House Bus Service);
- One independent Chair appointed by The Highland Council;
- Individual Operators who have at least one qualifying local bus service with more than 10% of its route length within the boundary of an associated Scheme; and
- Two representatives of HITRANS as the Regional Transport Partnership.

If at any time more than six operators meet the minimum requirements to join the Partnership Group, representative categories will be set up with two representatives from larger operators and two representatives from medium / smaller operators invited to the **Partnership Group**.

Operators representing each of the categories of Operator membership will be invited to self-nominate or nominate other willing Operators in writing to The Highland Council. Where there is more than one nominee for any single category, all Bus Operators in the same category will be given the opportunity to vote by secret ballot. Voting will be based on one vote per Operating Company. Operator representatives will be reselected on an annual basis. The voting procedure for membership selection will be a simple majority and be administered by The Highland Council. Where there is a tie, a run-off vote will take place between the leading tied Operators.



In the event a ballot fails to select Operating Company representatives for one or more Operator category, The operator themselves would determine the most suitable Operator representative for the affected category/categories.

Representatives will be responsible for ensuring:

- Attendance at a minimum of 80% of **Partnership Group** meetings in that year;
- That they have fully reviewed and understood all meeting papers in advance of attendance; and
- Have the required mandate from the Operators they represent.

Partnership Group Governance

Decision Making

Decisions of the **Partnership Group** will be made by way of a vote through a show of hands in-person or virtually at the respective meeting. Members of the Group who are unable to attend a meeting where a vote is to be tabled shall have the opportunity to submit their vote in advance to the BSIP Chair. Unless stated otherwise in this document, decisions will be passed by way of a simple majority with all members of the Partnership Group entitled to vote. Each company will be entitled to one vote.

The BSIP Independent Chair is a non-voting position. Therefore this member of the Partnership Group will not be entitled to vote on matters.

Operator representatives, HITRANS and THC not exercising their vote will be deemed to be votes in favour of the proposal.

Operators will be entitled to make known their concerns in writing to the Partnership Board if they object to a particular vote of the Partnership Group. The Board will review the circumstances and consider whether these are such that use of its veto is required as provided for below.

Partnership Board Veto

These controls ensure the voting system does not allow an individual Operator to influence the **Partnership Group** to its own commercial benefit or to harm competitors. Through this mechanism there is no opportunity for a group of Operators to vote in a co-ordinated manner for mutual benefit on a sustained basis, there is no discrimination between Operators and actual or potential competition, entry of new services by existing or new Operators or innovation, is not inhibited.

The Highland Council representatives of the **Partnership Group** may, in exceptional circumstances, refer matters to the **Partnership Board** who may choose to exercise a veto over **Partnership Group** decisions. It is considered this would occur in exceptional cases where the Board may reasonably believe or suspect decisions risk having anti-competitive implications or being otherwise significantly against the public interest.

Examples of scenarios where this may arise are included at the end of this Annex. The overriding intention is though for decisions to be consensual and so the need for a Veto process avoided.

Meeting Arrangements

Partnership Group meetings will take monthly. Additional meetings may be held as required to take decisions which in the opinion of the Chair cannot be deferred to a scheduled meeting and provided a quorum can be achieved with not less than one week's notice of the meeting being given. Meetings will be arranged and minutes taken by The Highland Council.



A rolling actions log will be circulated to all **Partnership Group** members no less than two working days in advance of each meeting date. The rolling actions log will be maintained by The Highland Council with all members of the Group to proactively provide accurate and timely updates on actions within their responsibility.

Any other bus operator, The Highland Council officials and HITRANS officials in addition to those nominated as **Partnership Group** members will be able to attend the **Partnership Group** meetings as observers but will not have the right to vote. The BSIP Chair should be advised in advance of any non-members attending a particular meeting.

Observers may be invited to make comments or ask questions of the **Partnership Group** at the Chair's discretion.

Scheme Area Bus Forums

Purpose

To inform the decisions of the **Partnership Group** and give the public a platform in which they can voice their concerns, questions and suggestions regarding bus services, each designated Scheme area, shall have a dedicated **Scheme Area Bus Forum**.

Membership

Membership of a **Scheme Area Bus Forum** shall comprise the following (so far as each organisation is relevant to a particular Scheme Area):

- All Operators running qualifying bus services in the Scheme area;
- Community Transport operators in the Scheme area;
- The Highland Council designated Officer;
- The Highland Council Elected Members for the Scheme area;
- Train Operating Companies calling at stations within Scheme areas;
- Air and ferry Operators;
- University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI);
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE);
- NHS Highland;
- Up to 10 Community Representatives from the Scheme area including those with young persons', 60+ and disabled concessionary travel passes; and
- Plus other representatives specific to a Scheme area whose membership of a specific Forum is agreed with the Partnership Group.

The Scheme Area Bus Forum operates strictly as a consultative and advisory platform to inform local partnership working. It provides a mechanism for local information sharing, stakeholder collaboration, and public feedback regarding service standards, facilities, and measures. The Forum holds no independent statutory or executive decision-making powers. All local feedback and operational recommendations developed by the Forum will be formally submitted to the Partnership Group, which serves as the primary body responsible for reviewing proposals and enacting any official scheme variations.

In addition, from time-to-time other external organisations may be invited to join a Scheme Area Bus Forum on an advisory basis for a fixed period to provide specialist expertise.



In addition, from time-to-time other external organisations may be invited to join a Scheme Area Bus Forum on an advisory basis for a fixed period to provide specialist expertise.

Meeting Arrangements

Bus Forum meetings will take place at intervals commensurate with the rate of investment and change desired and/or pursued within the Scheme area but no less than once annually. Forum meetings will be arranged and chaired by The Highland Council.

Governance

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Partnership Plan and Scheme(s)

The BSIP shall be reviewed annually, commencing no later than the anniversary of the first Scheme area commencement date. The Highland Council will initiate each review, and it will take no longer than eight weeks to complete.

As part of the review process, at least every second year, consideration will be given to the appropriateness of the Facilities and Measure requirements within each Scheme area, taking account of available funding, latest technology trends and changes in national guidance and policy. Any changes to the future target dates for implementation of Facilities and Measures will be agreed, as required, between The Highland Council and bus operators of qualifying local bus services, without the need to follow the variation process set out in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.

Variations to the Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan or Scheme(s)

Consideration will be given to potential Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan or Scheme variations proposed either by one of the organisations represented on the **Partnership Group** or by any operator of qualifying local bus services in The Highland Council area. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan. Such requests should be set out in writing and submitted to The Highland Council in their capacity as the local transport authority.

On receipt of a valid request for a variation, The Highland Council will defer this to the next scheduled meeting or convene an extraordinary meeting of the Partnership Group, giving at least one week's notice, to consider the proposed variation. If the proposed variation is agreed by all representatives present, The Council will make the variation. Members of the Group who are unable to attend the meeting shall have the opportunity to submit their vote in advance to the BSIP Chair. Members who do not provide their vote at the meeting or in advance will be deemed to vote in favour.

If there is not full agreement of all partners present and any votes submitted in advance, then the proposed variation will be advertised on The Highland Council's website and e-mailed to operators of qualifying local services in the **Partnership Plan** area, or in the case of a proposed variation to only a single Scheme, the affected **Scheme area**. Operators shall have 28 days to lodge an objection to the proposed variation.

The proposed variation will fail if the statutory Objections Mechanism tests show a sufficient level of opposition from operators. Under this framework, the proposal will be blocked if either of the following two tests is met during the 28-day objection period:

- **Test 1:** At least two operators who together account for 20% or more of the registered mileage of qualifying bus services object.



- **Test 2:** Operators representing 50% or more of the total number of qualifying operators, who together account for 10% or more of the registered mileage, object.

If neither of these objection thresholds is met, the proposed variation passes. The Highland Council will then make the Partnership Plan or Scheme area variation following the process outlined in Section 3K of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.

Revocation of the Partnership Plan or Scheme(s)

A Scheme can only exist if a Partnership Plan is in place. If, for any reason, the Partnership Plan is revoked, the associated Scheme(s) would automatically cease. Equally, if all Schemes ceased, the Partnership Plan would be revoked.

If, for some reason, it becomes necessary for the Partnership Plan or a Scheme to be revoked, the **Partnership Group** will be convened and follow the same process as outlined in paragraphs 1 to 3 of section 3I of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 (noting that the agreement will be for revocation and not variation).

If at any point in the future, a Scheme area is included in a Bus Franchising framework, the Scheme will cease to apply from the commencement date of the Franchising Scheme.

Partnership Board Veto Examples

In practice, a Partnership Board Veto would involve one or two senior individuals within The Highland Council, forming a 'Partnership Board' who can, if necessary, step in or be brought in to help with arbitration. This offers a clear demonstrable back-stop to avoid a breakdown within the Partnership Group.

Examples of instances where installing such governance could assist are provided below. It is though highly unlikely that this would ever be required, given the strong history of collaboration between group members.

Anti-Competition

Scenario: The Partnership Group, dominated by Highland's largest bus operators, proposes a scheduling change that effectively makes it impossible for a smaller, niche community transport provider to operate their existing route.

Why Veto? This could be viewed as exclusionary behaviour under the Competition Act 1998. The Senior Officers within THC must veto this to protect the market from becoming a monopoly, which could eventually drive-up prices for Highland residents.

Public Interest

Scenario: To save costs across the network, the Partnership Group decides to cut all "low-performing" evening services in a remote area, even though these are the only links for shift workers at a local hospital.

Why Veto? While the decision might make commercial sense for the operators, it fails the "Public Interest" test. The Senior Officers within The Highland Council would veto this because it violates the social objectives of the Improvement Plan and worsens rural isolation.

Legal Liability

Scenario: The Partnership Group proposes a branding and marketing campaign that requires a level of data-sharing between operators that the Council's Legal team deems a breach of GDPR or a risk to the Council's own procurement rules.

Why Veto? The Board must exercise a veto to protect THC from legal litigation or financial penalties that the Partnership Group itself might not be legally liable for.



Date of last update: July 2026



ANNEX 4: Highland BSIP Summary of Funding

Schemes highlighted in bold relate to funding awards for scheme implementation. All other funding received is for scheme development.

Fund Name	Funder	Details of Funding Received	Status
2021-22/2022-23 Bus Partnership Fund	Scottish Government	£2.9m for projects in the Inner Moray Firth & Lochaber (awarded to The Highland Council):	
		Raigmore Bus Gate.	Completed in March 2024.
		Barn Church Road Bus Priority.	Completed.
		Rose Street Enforcement Camera.	Completed in 2021.
		City Centre Traffic Light Priority.	Completed in March 2024.
		Connecting Inverness Appraisal.	Completed. Elements being further developed through individual workstreams.
		B9006 Bus Priority Appraisal.	Completed. Elements being further developed through individual workstreams.
		Millburn Corridor Bus Priority & Active Travel Appraisal.	Next stage (Outline Business Case) further progressed through 2025-26 BIF Tier 2 Funding.
		Blar Mhor Bus Gate.	In progress - next stage further progressed through 2025-26 BIF Tier 2 Funding.
		Upper Achintore Bus Gate.	In progress - next stage further progressed through 2025-26 BIF Tier 2 Funding.
		Lochaber Appraisal.	Study completed in April 2023. Elements being further developed through individual workstreams, including the Fort William Integrated Transport Plan.
2023-24 Bus Partnership Fund	Scottish Government	Black Isle Mobility Hub Study (awarded to the Highland Council) - £100,000+ (including Tore Roundabout review).	Study completed in 2024. Any further progress would be via private sector investment/development opportunity.
2025-26 Bus Infrastructure Fund Tier 1	Scottish Government	£1,155,000	???



Fund Name	Funder	Details of Funding Received	Status
2025-26 Bus Infrastructure Fund Tier 2	Scottish Government	£937,000 awarded to Highland BSIP:	
		Millburn Road Corridor - £200,000.	Outline Business Case and Preliminary Design completed in ?.
		Blar Mhor Bus Only Link - £50,000.	In progress - further works completed in 2025-26 to enable the project to be construction ready in 2026-27.
		Upper Achintore Bus only Link - £100,000.	In progress - further works completed in 2025-26 to enable the project to be construction ready in 2026-27.
		A82 / Nevis Terrace / Middle Street Junction Reconfiguration (incl. signalisation with bus priority) - £200,000.	Further design development and testing completed in 2025-26.
		Fort William Relocation / Reimagination of the Bus Station - £45,000.	Feasibility study completed in 2025-26.
		Inverness Bus Station Relocation/integration - £85,000.	Inverness Interchange study in progress.
		Mobility Hub Implementation Plan - £200,000.	Feasibility study completed in ?
		Project Management - £57,000.	Project management support for Highland projects.

Date of last update: June 2026



ANNEX 5: Highland BSIP Objectives

Objective 1: Improve the operational performance of bus services

How is this specific?	Operational performance of bus services within the Highland BSIP relates to: 1) Punctuality is a measure by which how many buses run to the times advertised in timetables to the travelling public. A service is considered as having departed on time if it is within the Traffic Commissioner's 'six-minute window' of tolerance: no more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late. 2) Reliability refers to how many advertised journeys run. Lost mileage can be caused by a multitude of internal and external factors, such as vehicle breakdowns, driver shortages, congestion, and adverse weather. Bus operators are responsible for recording lost mileage. 3) Total Bus Journey Time is a measure of how long it takes to travel by bus between two points and is a product of run time + dwell time (i.e. pick up/drop-off passengers) + feature delays, such as junctions.
How will achievement of this objective be measured?	1) Target of 96% punctuality on services in each Scheme area, running within corridors or through locations where specific bus priority Facilities detailed in the Scheme area are introduced. Punctuality data from AVL (Automated Vehicle Location) monitoring systems records instances of Early, On Time and Late running on the majority of bus services in Highland. This represents an ambitious elevation in punctuality in the Scheme areas. 2) Target of 99.6% reliability in each Scheme area, with the only exceptions being weather or road closures, and for lost mileage attributed to congestion to be eliminated, on services running within corridors or through locations where specific bus priority Facilities detailed in the Scheme area are introduced. Bus operators record reliability key performance indicators for journeys which fail to operate, required for audit purposes for payment of contract rates and Transport Scotland grants. Before the UK-wide driver shortage impacts that started in 2022, reliability in Highland was already very high at 99.6% (for Stagecoach Highland services). Recognising that the bus industry remains in a period of recovery, the BSIP's aim is to restore this level of reliability and then maintain it through eliminating lost mileage attributed to congestion in the Scheme areas on services benefiting from new Facilities. 3) Target of reducing peak bus journey times by 20% and off-peak bus journey times by 10% in each Scheme area on services within corridors or through locations where specific bus priority Facilities detailed in the Scheme area are introduced. Scheduled and actual bus journey times before and after any bus priority interventions can be gathered from timetables and AVL data to form a baseline, then monitored following scheme implementation. 4) Target of increasing bus passenger satisfaction with operational performance in each Scheme area with a focus on users of services within corridors or through locations where specific Facilities introduced.



Objective 1: Improve the operational performance of bus services

Is the objective achievable?	By taking a place-based approach through the proposed Schemes, factors negatively impacting bus service punctuality, reliability and journey time can be tackled with locally appropriate solutions, recognising Highland's vast geography and differing traffic conditions between larger and smaller settlements. This objective will be achieved through targeted bus priority and infrastructure improvements. It will also be complemented by wider measures to improve the passengers experience, such as integrated ticketing and the availability and communication of information about services, fares, payment options etc to the travelling passenger. These changes collectively align with the central purpose of the Highland LTS Policy 2.2 in relation to the continuation of the Highland BSIP to support improvements in bus services by partnership working as well as a number of other policies, such as those relating to integrated ticketing and wider service integration. The objective also aligns with the Sustainable Travel and Investment Hierarchies set out in the National Transport Strategy.
Is the objective relevant?	Nationally, bus journey times have increased by 50% over the last 50 years. A 10% reduction in bus speed (and therefore increase in bus journey time) is estimated to result in a loss of bus patronage by between 9 to 14%. Punctuality and reliability are in turn impacted by bus journey time and are key factors in modal choice as documented within KPMG (2023) <i>The Value of Bus Passenger Journeys</i>, commissioned by Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT). By making bus journey times more dependable, residents and visitors will have a greater incentive to choose public transport over the car, helping contribute towards Net Zero targets. More punctual and reliable bus services will also support broader integration between different local and longer-distance bus services as well as between bus and other modes, such as rail and ferry services. Improved performance of Highland bus services through better timekeeping can unlock additional benefits and investment into the network through improved bus operator confidence as well as deliver operational efficiencies that can be re-invested for the betterment of the passenger. Implementation of specific Facilities as listed for the individual Scheme areas forming the Highland BSIP is expected to improve service punctuality, reliability, and bus journey time through targeted interventions. Other infrastructure changes as well as wider developments, such as in relation to progressing integrated ticketing within Highland, are also expected to have a positive impact.



Objective 1: Improve the operational performance of bus services

What is the timescale for achieving the objective?

Baseline punctuality, reliability, journey times and patronage to be established on services in each Scheme area prior to implementation of any bus priority measures. Baseline passenger satisfaction with bus operations to also be established prior to implementation.

Annual review of progress towards the objective at Partnership level, in line with BSIP requirements.

Measurement of punctuality performance, with reviews annually after implementation, from AVL data on services in each Scheme area, running within corridors or through locations where specific bus priority Facilities detailed in the Scheme area are introduced.

Measurement of reliability performance, with reviews annually after implementation, from operator records of lost mileage for services in each Scheme area running within corridors or through locations where specific bus priority infrastructure detailed for the Scheme is introduced.

Measurement of total bus journey times, with reviews annually after implementation, from timetables and AVL data on services in each Scheme area running within corridors or through locations where specific bus priority infrastructure detailed for the Scheme is introduced.

Measurement of passenger satisfaction, including from an operational point of view, with reviews annually after implementation. Obtained through passenger surveys in the Scheme areas.



Objective 2: Improve the bus service offer within the Highland BSIP

How is this specific?	This objective is targeted to the Scheme areas of the Highland BSIP with a focus to align existing coverage to an understanding of user needs to then identify gaps in provision and provide a basis for forward decision making and investment. This is centred on the existing bus offer, access this provides and opportunities to refine this through making the best use of existing services as well as available resource (vehicles / drivers).
How will achievement of this objective be measured?	• Service coverage by bus operators of qualifying bus services within each Scheme area at the time the Scheme was made compared to each review period. • Bus passenger engagement to inform understanding of existing usage, needs and perceptions, establishing a baseline against which the impact of improvements / changes can be monitored. • Bus patronage change within each Scheme area, comparing levels before the Scheme was made with numbers in each review period. • Improved opportunities for travel, comparing bus accessibility levels before the Scheme was made with the level in each review period.
Is the objective achievable?	This objective is achievable with bus service and route standards as well as facilities within the remit of Highland BSIP partners plus members of each Scheme Area Bus Forum at a focused local level.
Is the objective relevant?	The ability of bus operators to meet different needs is challenging, for example fulfilling school bus contracts can impact service availability at certain times of the day. The size of the bus network is constrained by financial pressures, affecting both the level of service which can be provided by operators on a commercial basis and the extent of contracts which can be funded from Council budgets. As a result, bus is potentially not an option or where available is not an attractive option. This can lead to falling patronage on services that do operate leading to rising costs and fare increases, in turn making services less attractive.
What is the timescale for achieving the objective?	Annual review of progress towards the objective at Partnership level, in line with BSIP requirements. Target of increasing bus patronage by 20% on services within each Scheme area, over a three-year period following each Scheme being made.



Objective 3: Improve the passenger experience for bus users within the Highland BSIP

How is this specific?	This objective is targeted to the Scheme areas of the Highland BSIP with a focus to improve the user experience by other Measures such as information, ticketing and integration.
How will achievement of this objective be measured?	• Vehicle quality specifications within a Scheme area at the time the Scheme was made compared to each review period. • Bus passenger engagement to inform understanding of existing usage, needs and perceptions, establishing a baseline against which the impact of improvements / changes can be monitored. • Bus patronage change within each Scheme area, comparing levels before the Scheme was made with numbers in each review period. • Utilisation of GO-HI transport accessibility app, comparing downloads and monthly active users before the Scheme was made with numbers in each review period. • Progress in bringing forward a multi-operator ticketing scheme. • Improving the availability and quality of waiting facilities / bus stop infrastructure and information. • Integrated ticket sales (for example PlusBus). • Multi-bus (local-long distance) and bus-other public transport modes. • Rail passenger surveys undertaken by Scotland's Railway assessing mode of access to/from all rail stations within scheme areas. • Ferry and community transport patronage data on services with an established interchanges by bus.
Is the objective achievable?	This objective is achievable with bus Service and Route standards as well as Measures within the remit of Highland BSIP partners plus members of each Scheme Area Bus Forum at a focused local level. Actions through this objective also support match-in-kind activities. For example, the improved provision, dissemination and availability of information to support people in making sustainable travel choices is one Measure that the Highland BSIP partners can take as a match-in-kind initiative to complement the investment in Facilities.
Is the objective relevant?	Passenger experience is critical to retaining and attracting new bus passengers and reversing the cycle of bus decline. Accurate and up to date information (including digital) is a basic requirement of any public transport system. Provision of bus information varies across Highland and can be fragmented in terms of availability and level of information provided. Along with investment in Facilities, making quality information easily available can have an important contribution to retaining existing as well as attracting new bus passengers. The co-ordination of bus services with each other as well as with other public transport modes it also a key area, allowing people to make a single mode journey with multiple changes or multi-modal journey with confidence and minimal interchange penalty through services aligning.



Objective 3: Improve the passenger experience for bus users within the Highland BSIP

What is the timescale for achieving the objective?

Annual review of progress towards the objective at Partnership level, in line with BSIP requirements.

Target that 100% of bus stops within each Scheme area displaying stop-specific scheduled departure times, with the exception of terminus stops used only for alighting, subject to available funding.

Target 100% of bus services within each Scheme area have publicly available real-time passenger Information showing live bus times for passengers to access online or through mobile devices.

Date of last update: March 2026



ANNEX 6: Highland BSIP Joint Obligations

Joint Obligations

Contained within this Annex is the detailed Joint Obligations on the partners of the Highland Bus Service Improvements Partnership, including the Local Authority (The Highland Council), Regional Transport Partnerships (RTP – HITRANS) and Qualifying Bus Operators.

Provision of Public Transport Information

On-street information (paper timetable and real-time displays) will comply as a minimum with the emerging Transport Information Strategy (TIS) which The Highland Council's Public Transport Team will have completed prior to any scheme being made under this BSIP. The TIS will, as a minimum, include the following provisions:

a) Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's Electronic Bus Service Registration (EBSR) Registrations and XML Format Files

At the point of formation of the formal BSIP all operators must supply their registration information in EBSR format. If operators do not have the facilities to supply their registration in an EBSR format, then they must arrange with the local authority/RTP to have access to the public transport database system to input their manual registration to provide a xml file to submit their registration to the Traffic Commissioner in EBSR format. This will also allow the local authority/RTP to provide onward transmission of information to Traveline Scotland and to provide xml files to the current service provider for real-time street information to ensure accurate and available public transport information for the public .

Alternatively, operators can still submit their registrations in manual format to the Traffic Commissioner should they wish to do so, however operators that choose to do this would need to contact the local authority/RTP to arrange and pay a fee (currently £80 per service change) to have the manual information input into the current transport information database. This will ensure downstream data can be passed on in xml format to Traveline Scotland and the service provider for real-time on street information to ensure accurate and available public transport information for the public.

It should be noted that the EBSR requirement will form part of any future contract renewals for bus service provision within The Highland Council area.

b) Distribution of On-street Public Transport Information

A partnership approach is being developed between The Highland Council, HITRANS and respective Operators to improve the quality and distribution of public transport information in the BSIP area, including but not limited to:

HITRANS

- Employment new full-time resource responsible for maintaining wayside information and supporting assets (i.e. display cases and other bus stop infrastructure where possible) in good working order;
- Provision of member of staff with van and cover transport costs;
- Provision of IT, workshop and materials for printing wayside display etc; and
- Member of staff working alongside HITRANS officer currently responsible for managing and producing timetable information across the HITRANS area.



The Highland Council

- Provide all new / spare parts required by HITRANS employed officer to maintain at stop assets;
- Contribution from general staff resource where any repairs may require a Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) model to assist; and
- Pro-rata funding contribution towards HITRANS post, factoring in the provision of information for the Council's own in-house Highland Bus Service operations and Operators of supported services within the geography of the pilot.

BSIP Bus Operators

- Pro-rata financial contribution, based on scale of services within the BSIP area, to meet salary costs of HITRANS provided resource; and
- Provision of timetable information via EBSR on all their registered services (or if they are unable to provide information using EBSR then follow one of two alternative ways to submit their details as set out above).

Joint Initiatives to Promote Bus Use

The Highland Council's Sustainable Transport Team and Operators will together explore joint initiatives to encourage bus use and identify potential match funding sources. A key upfront activity will be to identify a working list of initiatives which could be taken forward within the first year of the Highland BSIP formation. Potential examples include no-car weeks, B2B (Back 2 Bus) initiatives with bulk buying of tickets, roll out of the NHS ticket price scheme with Stagecoach to other operators etc. It is recognised that the details of any initiatives may be governed by a confidentiality clause between the operator and private/public sector organisation, and therefore restrictions on what information can be shared.

Involvement of the Scheme Area Bus Forums in this element would be extremely beneficial.

Date of last update: June 2026



ANNEX 7: Highland BSIP Inner Moray Firth Scheme Area Details

Overview

Contained within this Annex are the Obligations on Bus Operators and The Highland Council specific to the Inner Moray Firth Scheme area. The obligations set out here should also be read in conjunction with the Joint Obligations detailed in [Annex 6](#).

Obligations on the Bus Operators

Exempt Services

Services which are a Non-qualifying Bus Service of the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) are exempt from the requirements for the Inner Moray Firth Scheme. In addition, any other services exempt by local agreement of the Highland BSIP are listed here:

- NO OTHER SERVICES EXEMPT.

Route Standards

There are currently no specific instances within the Inner Moray Firth Scheme area where there are standards required from a route perspective i.e. there are two or more Operators on the same route.

Operational Service Standards

The following items detail the operational service standards applied to all services within the Inner Moray Firth Scheme area that meet the Qualifying Bus Service criteria as detailed in the Definitions table found within [Annex 2](#).

Minimum Frequencies of Services

Operators will maintain the baseline minimum service frequencies for qualifying bus services as of the date the scheme is made.

In corridors where new commercial competition or additional market entrants introduce duplicate or overlapping services from 2025 onwards, the minimum frequency standard will be assessed on a *collective network basis* rather than on an individual operator.

For compliance and annual reporting purposes, the base service standard will be taken as the total frequency in place immediately before the introduction of the competitive service. The standard is satisfied if the combined frequency of all operators running on the corridor matches or exceeds that baseline.

Operators should work through the Scheme Area Bus Forums to identify opportunities to increase service frequency as new infrastructure Facilities and Measures are implemented by the local authority.

Increase of Direct Services and Timetable Efficiency

Operators will look to identify routes that can be introduced which will be more direct thus contributing to making bus travel more or equally attractive to taking the car. Operators will look to identify where, if possible, timetables can be made more efficient for passenger needs. These elements should be explored further through the Scheme Area Bus Forum and recommendations provided to the Partnership Group for consideration. Where recommendations are agreed to by the Partnership Group they should be incorporated as a variation in line with the governance process set out in [Annex 3](#), with specific services and target achievement dates identified.



Passenger Surveys

Operators should conduct annual surveys using a format agreed to by the Partnership Group to gather views from passengers about existing services and ideas for improvement. The Bus Scheme Area Forum will review the feedback received to inform recommendations to the Partnership Group on where improvements / changes are identified as being necessary. Recommendations that are approved will trigger variations to be incorporated into the Inner Moray Firth Scheme area in line with the process set out in [Annex 1](#). Consideration will be given to using Transport Focus Surveys, potentially enhanced with increased local coverage through additional funding.

Vehicle Quality Specifications

The fleet operated must, wherever possible, be:

- a) Vehicles operating within the designated Scheme Areas should ideally be under 10 years of age from the date of first registration. However, to recognise high standards of fleet maintenance, vehicles exceeding 10 years of age will be permitted to operate under the following conditions:
 - a. The vehicle complies as a minimum with the designated emission standards (e.g., Euro V) or transport decarbonisation targets set out in the plan;
 - b. The vehicle has undergone a documented internal and external mid-life cosmetic refurbishment; and
 - c. The vehicle passes the Highland Council's periodic spot-check audits regarding passenger comfort, paintwork, and overall exceptional standard of presentation.
- b) A minimum of Euro V emissions rating for existing fleet and thereafter a minimum of Euro 6 for newly purchased fleet;
- c) Fitted with USB Charging Points on newly purchased fleet from the date at which the scheme is made;
- d) Vehicles must be cleaned internally and externally to a high standard at the end of each operational day (or during the operational day for any out-stationed vehicles) to ensure compliance with the quality objectives of the scheme area. Rather than requiring daily crib sheet paperwork for every vehicle, compliance will be managed via the operator's existing internal quality control systems. The Highland Council reserves the right to conduct periodic spot-check audits of vehicles in service to ensure standards are being maintained consistently across the network;
- e) Equipped with a working heater when operational and a return to base journey is permitted should a fault arise;
- f) Equipped with destination screens in good working order and clearly visible as determined by PSVAR 2000 requirements and by Traffic Commissioner guidance regarding the format and layout of service numbers and destinations;
- g) Equipped with "Next Stop" announcements as a minimum in line with PSVAIR requirements;
- h) Equipped with low floor access, lift or ramp access in accordance with PSVAR 2000 requirements; and
- i) Able to accept contactless payment capability.

Driver Standards

Driver standards should, include the following key points:

- a) Driver of vehicle to be wearing their company uniform;
- b) Driver of vehicle should undergo a minimum of one customer training session per year. This requirement may be met either via an accredited, non-duplicative Driver CPC module (e.g., rotating topics such as customer care, disability awareness, or conflict management over the 5-year cycle) or through localised, non-CPC internal briefings and toolbox talks focusing on passenger experience and accessibility standards; and



- c) Driver must undergo route training as part of the initial training syllabus as well as further route training where route changes apply.

Multi-Operator Ticketing

The Partnership group is investigating approaches to integrated ticketing, engaging with Transport Scotland and others to consider approaches adopted elsewhere and implement from lessons learned. The working target is to have this available for the end of the 12-month £2 fare cap pilot covering Highland in March 2027.

Ticketing Requirements

Online ticketing will be made available by all Operators on or before scheme commencement date either by an Operator app or via the GO-HI App. There is also a need to ensure that contactless is permitted on vehicles and flexibility retained to respond to future changes such as eventual 'tap on tap off' ticketing options to allow the Operator to further simplify the customer experience.

Multi-Operator Travel Pricing

Partners will work collaboratively via the Partnership Group to investigate options for a multi-operator ticket scheme, ensuring that any final pricing model does not undermine the viability of commercial operator offerings.

To prevent product duplication and unnecessary administrative overhead, the partnership will prioritise the promotion and utilisation of established schemes, such as PlusBus, while localised or national flat-fare pilots remain active.

The development of any expanded multi-operator fare structure will be deferred during the current pilot period.

To safeguard the long-term survival of commercial services in the region, the Council, HITRANS, and operators commit to collectively designing a sensible next step and transition strategy prior to the conclusion of the current fare scheme. This exit plan must balance long-term network stability with passenger affordability.

Maximum Operator Registration Changes

Operators will ensure a maximum of two sets of scheduled registration changes per annum, targeted to coincide with summer and winter seasonal adjustments.

To protect commercial sensitivity and allow for ongoing operational adjustments, operators are not required to pre-confirm the specific routing or timetable details of these seasonal revisions by a fixed spring deadline.

Caveats to this maximum bi-annual change limit will include issues arising with air, ferry, and rail connections, government interventions, road closures or openings, changes in school hours, or other urgent commercial or operational movements outwith the operator's control.

The Highland Council will comply with the same limitations on registration changes when varying or allowing variations to tendered services, as well as to their own in-house operated Highland Council Buses services.

Obligations on the Local Authority

Facilities

Within the Inner Moray Firth Scheme area there are eight complete and four planned bus priority facilities as defined within the following table.



Name	Description	Status	Funding Source
Eastgate Bus Priority	Bus priority installed at the signalised junction of Millburn Road and Crown Road. Buses can now access this short lane and are given priority.	Completed 2023	The Highland Council
Bank Street Bus Lane	Bus lane installed along a section of Bank Street (B862). The section, measuring approximately 63m, leads up to the junction of Fraser Street and gives buses and taxis a priority route along Fraser Street and Queensgate. Buses benefit from this quicker access to bus stops along Queensgate as well as Farraline Park Bus Station.	Completed 2023	The Highland Council
Foundry Way Bus Link	Bus services departing from Farraline Park Bus Station have historically had to exit via Margaret Street, followed by either a left or right tight turn on to Academy Street. Margaret Street was also used by private cars and Taxis, causing a bottleneck and delays for departing bus services. This bus link gives a more direct and dedicated route for buses.	Completed 2021	SG Bus Priority Route Rapid Deployment Fund
Rose Street Enforcement Camera	Enforcement camera installed to deter private car drivers accessing Foundry Way bus lane.	Completed 2021	SG Bus Partnership Fund
Millburn Road / Raigmore Estate bus lane	This bus lane enables buses to turn right into Raigmore Estate, avoiding a detour of up to five minutes. In conjunction with Raigmore Bus Gate, it enables a more efficient bus service on a main corridor between the city centre and the south-eastern suburbs.	Completed 2023	The Highland Council
Millburn Road Bus Priorities	Different options identified to develop active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) and bus options for the Millburn Road Corridor in Inverness.	Appraisal completed Further design, development and OBC work to be progressed in 2025-26.	SG Bus Partnership Fund SG Bus Infrastructure Fund
B9006 Bus Priorities	Different options identified to enhance bus priority along the B9006 corridor to improve bus journey times and journey time reliability.	Appraisal completed	SG Bus Partnership Fund
Connecting Inverness	Different options identified to prioritise buses on key corridors to / from Inverness and make multi-modal journeys easier.	Appraisal completed Elements of work further progressed, including Black Isle Mobility Hub Appraisal in 2023-24 (completed	SG Bus Partnership Fund SG Bus Infrastructure Fund



Name	Description	Status	Funding Source
		March 2024), Highland Mobility Hub Implementation Plan (being undertaken in 2025-26).	
Adaptive Traffic Light Bus Priorities	Traffic signal priority introduced at 26 locations across the centre of Inverness. The priority is currently available to all Stagecoach Highland Services that operate within Inverness city centre, however this can be extended to other Qualifying Bus Operators.	Completed February 2023	SG Bus Infrastructure Fund
Seafield Retail Park / UHI Inverness Campus Bus and Active Travel Bridge	Completion of the North Bridge link allows bus companies to provide a direct link from the A96 corridor and serve the east side of the Campus.	Completed June 2020	Highlands and Islands Enterprise Sustrans
Raigmore Bus Gate	Bus gate introduced through the grounds of Raigmore Hospital, linking the B9006 (Old Perth Road) and Ashton Road (Raigmore Estate) to alleviate the already substantial congestion at the only existing entrance / exit on Old Perth Road suitable for buses. The resulting increase in service reliability has supported a significant increase to bus provision within the Raigmore Estate.	Completed March 2024	SG Bus Infrastructure Fund

In addition to retention of the existing bus priority Facilities and delivery of the proposed bus priority Facilities set out in the above table, The Highland Council shall endeavour to also provide the following Facilities subject to the availability of capital funding:

- Enhanced bus stop infrastructure, including new / renewed Real-Time Passenger Information signs where the most benefit to users will be achieved;
- Improved wayfinding between Inverness Bus Station and Inverness Rail Station;
- New / renewed bus shelters and bus stop flags to achieve a common quality standard, design and appearance; and
- Active travel connectivity, along the North Kessock to Rose Street corridor, through complementary improvements identified through the Connecting Inverness study.

Measures

The Highland Council will endeavour to undertake the following, subject to the availability of funding.

Parking Policy

As part of the actions forming the Highland Council's Local Transport Strategy 2025-2035 Delivery Plan, the Council proposes to undertake a review of parking policy. This directly links to progressing the policy within the LTS for the Council to *"continue to keep under review the approach to parking to support the efficient operation of the road network within Highland, including in both urban and*



more rural areas, as well as contribute to wider policies to support sustainable travel by all users of the transport network in Highland including visitors and to reduce emissions from the transport sector”.

To support these strategic goals and ensure immediate network reliability within the active scheme areas, this policy will be backed by a dynamic enforcement and operator-reporting model:

- a) The Council will deploy parking enforcement resources to systematically target priority bus corridors, problematic junctions, and bus stop clearways experiencing high frequencies of illegal obstruction.
- b) Operators will be provided with a direct, real-time communication contact within the Council's parking enforcement team, completely bypassing the standard 42-day website reporting cycle. Where operational resources and geographic location permit, the Council will actively redirect on-duty wardens to respond in a prompt manner to acute, operator-reported obstructions blocking bus stops or interfering with safe vehicle movements.

Repair and Maintenance of On-Street Bus Infrastructure

In relation to the repair and maintenance of on-street bus infrastructure, The Highland Council will:

- a) Ensure a robust repair and maintenance scheme for on-street infrastructure, to include a robust tracking and monitoring system implemented by the Council's Public Transport team in advance of the scheme being made;
- b) Guarantee specific operational turnaround timeframes for infrastructure resolution following a formal report, classified as follows:
 - a) **Category 1 (Safety-Critical / Broken Glass):** Must be made safe or resolved within 24 hours of receiving a report.
 - b) **Category 2 (Standard Infrastructure Defects):** Must be fully resolved within 14 business days.
- c) Provide a regular performance report to the Partnership Group on a quarterly basis, detailing all logged repairs, actual turnaround timeframes achieved, and associated cost data;
- d) Set a minimum shelter cleaning contract provision; and
- e) Build in a minimum requirement of bi-annual cleaning of all bus shelters into the existing shelter cleaning contract operated by The Highland Council. This is to be actioned by the Council's Public Transport team in advance of the scheme being made.

Date of last update: June 2026



ANNEX 8: Highland BSIP Fort William and Lochaber Scheme Area Details

Overview

Contained within this Annex are the Obligations on Bus Operators and The Highland Council specific to the Fort William and Lochaber Scheme area. The obligations set out here should also be read in conjunction with the Joint Obligations detailed in [Annex 6](#).

Obligations on the Bus Operators

Exempt Services

Services which are a Non-qualifying Bus Service of the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) are exempt from the requirements for the Fort William and Lochaber Scheme area. In addition, any other services exempt by local agreement of the Highland BSIP are listed here:

- NO OTHER SERVICES EXEMPT.

Route Standards

There are currently no specific instances within the Fort William and Lochaber Scheme area where there are standards required from a route perspective i.e. there are two or more Operators on the same route.

Operational Service Standards

The following items detail the operational service standards applied to all services within the Fort William and Lochaber Scheme area that meet the Qualifying Bus Service criteria as detailed in the Definitions table found within [Annex 2](#).

Minimum Frequencies of Services

Operators will maintain the baseline minimum service frequencies for qualifying bus services as of the date the scheme is made.

In corridors where new commercial competition or additional market entrants introduce duplicate or overlapping services from 2025 onwards, the minimum frequency standard will be assessed on a *collective network basis* rather than on an individual operator.

For compliance and annual reporting purposes, the base service standard will be taken as the total frequency in place immediately before the introduction of the competitive service. The standard is satisfied if the combined frequency of all operators running on the corridor matches or exceeds that baseline.

Operators should work through the Scheme Area Bus Forums to identify opportunities to increase service frequency as new infrastructure Facilities and Measures are implemented by the local authority.

Increase of Direct Services and Timetable Efficiency

Operators will look to identify routes that can be introduced which will be more direct thus contributing to making bus travel more or equally attractive to taking the car. Operators will look to identify where, if possible, timetables can be made more efficient for passenger needs. These elements should be explored further through the Scheme Area Bus Forum and recommendations provided to the Partnership Group for consideration. Where recommendations are agreed to by the Partnership Group they



should be incorporated as a variation in line with the governance process set out in [Annex 3](#), with specific services and target achievement dates identified.

Passenger Surveys

Operators should conduct annual surveys using a format agreed to by the Partnership Group to gather views from passengers about existing services and ideas for improvement. The Bus Scheme Area Forum will review the feedback received to inform recommendations to the Partnership Group on where improvements / changes are identified as being necessary. Recommendations that are approved will trigger variations to be incorporated into the Fort William and Lochaber Scheme area in line with the process set out in [Annex 1](#). Consideration will be given to using Transport Focus Surveys, potentially enhanced with increased local coverage through additional funding.

Vehicle Quality Specifications

The fleet operated must, wherever possible, be:

- a) Vehicles operating within the designated Scheme Areas should ideally be under 10 years of age from the date of first registration. However, to recognise high standards of fleet maintenance, vehicles exceeding 10 years of age will be permitted to operate under the following conditions:
 - i. The vehicle complies as a minimum with the designated emission standards (e.g., Euro V) or transport decarbonisation targets set out in the plan;
 - ii. The vehicle has undergone a documented internal and external mid-life cosmetic refurbishment; and
 - iii. The vehicle passes the Highland Council's periodic spot-check audits regarding passenger comfort, paintwork, and overall exceptional standard of presentation.
- b) A minimum of Euro V emissions rating for existing fleet and thereafter a minimum of Euro 6 for newly purchased fleet;
- c) Fitted with USB Charging Points on newly purchased fleet from the date at which the scheme is made;
- d) Vehicles must be cleaned internally and externally to a high standard at the end of each operational day (or during the operational day for any out-stationed vehicles) to ensure compliance with the quality objectives of the scheme area. Rather than requiring daily crib sheet paperwork for every vehicle, compliance will be managed via the operator's existing internal quality control systems. The Highland Council reserves the right to conduct periodic spot-check audits of vehicles in service to ensure standards are being maintained consistently across the network;
- e) Equipped with a working heater when operational and a return to base journey is permitted should a fault arise;
- f) Equipped with destination screens in good working order and clearly visible as determined by PSVAR 2000 requirements and by Traffic Commissioner guidance regarding the format and layout of service numbers and destinations;
- g) Equipped with "Next Stop" announcements as a minimum in line with PSVAIR requirements;
- h) Equipped with low floor access, lift or ramp access in accordance with PSVAR 2000 requirements; and
- i) Able to accept contactless payment capability.

Driver Standards

Driver standards should, include the following key points:

- a) Driver of vehicle to be wearing their company uniform;
- b) Driver of vehicle should undergo a minimum of one customer training session per year. This requirement may be met either via an accredited, non-duplicative Driver CPC module (e.g., rotating topics such as customer care, disability awareness, or conflict management over the 5-year



- cycle) or through localised, non-CPC internal briefings and toolbox talks focusing on passenger experience and accessibility standards; and
- c) Driver must undergo route training as part of the initial training syllabus as well as further route training where route changes apply.

Multi-Operator Ticketing

The Partnership group is investigating approaches to integrated ticketing, engaging with Transport Scotland and others to consider approaches adopted elsewhere and implement from lessons learned. The working target is to have this available for the end of the 12-month £2 fare cap pilot covering Highland in March 2027.

Ticketing Requirements

Online ticketing will be made available by all Operators at the point the scheme is made either by an Operator app or via the GO-HI App. There is also a need to ensure that contactless is permitted on vehicles and flexibility retained to respond to future changes such as eventual 'tap on tap off' ticketing options to allow the Operator to further simplify the customer experience.

Multi-Operator Travel Pricing

Partners will work collaboratively via the Partnership Group to investigate options for a multi-operator ticket scheme, ensuring that any final pricing model does not undermine the viability of commercial operator offerings.

To prevent product duplication and unnecessary administrative overhead, the partnership will prioritise the promotion and utilisation of established schemes, such as PlusBus, while localised or national flat-fare pilots remain active.

The development of any expanded multi-operator fare structure will be deferred during the current pilot period.

To safeguard the long-term survival of commercial services in the region, the Council, HITRANS, and operators commit to collectively designing a sensible next step and transition strategy prior to the conclusion of the current fare scheme. This exit plan must balance long-term network stability with passenger affordability.

Maximum Operator Registration Changes

Operators will ensure a maximum of two sets of scheduled registration changes per annum, targeted to coincide with summer and winter seasonal adjustments.

To protect commercial sensitivity and allow for ongoing operational adjustments, operators are not required to pre-confirm the specific routing or timetable details of these seasonal revisions by a fixed spring deadline.

Caveats to this maximum bi-annual change limit will include issues arising with air, ferry, and rail connections, government interventions, road closures or openings, changes in school hours, or other urgent commercial or operational movements outwith the operator's control.

The Highland Council will comply with the same limitations on registration changes when varying or allowing variations to tendered services, as well as to their own in-house operated Highland Council Buses services.



Obligations on the Local Authority

Facilities

Within the Lochaber and Fort William Scheme area there are three planned bus priority facilities. These are detailed in the table below alongside two other studies.

Name	Description	Status	Source Funding
Blar Mhor Bus Only Link	Bus only link between the Fort William Health Centre and new residential development.	In progress - finalisation of planning, legal and design to enable the project to be construction ready in 2026-27.	SG Bus Infrastructure Fund
Upper Achintore Bus Only Link	New bus only link between new residential development and Lochaber Road enabling both areas to be served by the same service thus removing the need for an additional bus and improved connectivity between the two residential areas and Fort William town centre.	In progress - finalisation of planning, legal and design to enable the project to be construction ready in 2026-27.	SG Bus Infrastructure Fund
A82 / Nevis Terrace / Middle Street Junction Reconfiguration	Reconfiguration of the junction between the A82 / Nevis Terrace / Middle Street to improve access for buses. The junction would also be signalised to provide priority for bus movements.	In progress - further design and development.	SG Bus Infrastructure Fund
Fort William Bus Station	Upgrade or potential relocation of the Fort William Bus Station, including improved integration with the rail station and opportunities to improve access arrangements for buses.	In progress - feasibility study to establish a preferred option.	SG Bus Infrastructure Fund
Lochaber Area Appraisal	Options identified to improve the operation of bus services in and around Fort William.	Completed April 2023	SG Bus Partnership Fund

Measures

The Highland Council will endeavour to undertake the following, subject to the availability of funding.

Parking Policy

As part of the actions forming the Highland Council's Local Transport Strategy 2025-2035 Delivery Plan, the Council proposes to undertake a review of parking policy. This directly links to progressing the policy within the LTS for the Council to *"continue to keep under review the approach to parking to support the efficient operation of the road network within Highland, including in both urban and more rural areas, as well as contribute to wider policies to support sustainable travel by all users of the transport network in Highland including visitors and to reduce emissions from the transport sector"*.

To support these strategic goals and ensure immediate network reliability within the active scheme areas, this policy will be backed by a dynamic enforcement and operator-reporting model:



- a) The Council will deploy parking enforcement resources to systematically target priority bus corridors, problematic junctions, and bus stop clearways experiencing high frequencies of illegal obstruction.
- b) Operators will be provided with a direct, real-time communication contact within the Council's parking enforcement team, completely bypassing the standard 42-day website reporting cycle. Where operational resources and geographic location permit, the Council will actively redivert on-duty wardens to respond in a prompt manner to acute, operator-reported obstructions blocking bus stops or interfering with safe vehicle movements.

Repair and Maintenance of On-Street Bus Infrastructure

In relation to the repair and maintenance of on-street bus infrastructure, The Highland Council will:

- a) Ensure a robust repair and maintenance scheme for on-street infrastructure, to include a robust tracking and monitoring system implemented by the Council's Public Transport team in advance of the scheme being made;
- b) Guarantee specific operational turnaround timeframes for infrastructure resolution following a formal report, classified as follows:
 - a) **Category 1 (Safety-Critical / Broken Glass):** Must be made safe or resolved within 24 hours of receiving a report.
 - b) **Category 2 (Standard Infrastructure Defects):** Must be fully resolved within 14 business days.
- c) Provide a regular performance report to the Partnership Group on a quarterly basis, detailing all logged repairs, actual turnaround timeframes achieved, and associated cost data;
- d) Set a minimum shelter cleaning contract provision; and
- e) Build in a minimum requirement of bi-annual cleaning of all bus shelters into the existing shelter cleaning contract operated by The Highland Council. This is to be actioned by the Council's Public Transport team in advance of the scheme being made.

Date of last update: June 2026



ANNEX 9: Highland BSIP Annual Monitoring Report Template

Overview

This Technical Annex presents a record of bus performance within the BSIP Scheme Areas. As operated services can change, the performance of buses has been measured on a corridor basis offering consistency for monitoring purposes.

This Technical Annex shall be subject to update during annual monitoring against the BSIP Objectives and will form the basis of evidence to support the measurement of Scheme Area Performance. It is expected that further corridors shall be included to support ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the BSIP. The following table presents the current list of corridors spread between each proposed Scheme Area.

Corridor Ref.	Name	Scheme Area*	Service Analysed				
			2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
A	A835 North West	IMF	Citylink 961				
B	A81 Great Glen	IMF	Citylink 919				
C	Inverness City	IMF	Highland Council 7				
D	The Low Road	IMF	Highland Council 253				
E	A96 East	IMF	Stagecoach 10				
F	A9 North	IMF	Stagecoach 25				
G	The Black Isle	IMF	Stagecoach 26				
H	Inverness, Beaulieu, Muir of Ord	IMF	Stagecoach 28				
I	Inverness Culloden	IMF	Stagecoach 1				
J	Fort William Town	FWL	Shiel 46				
K	A82 North	FWL	Shiel 41				
L	A82 South	FWL	Shiel 44				
M	The Road to the Isles	FWL	Shiel 500				
N	Ardnarmurchan Peninsula	FWL	Shiel 506				

*IMF – Inner Moray Firth Scheme Area

FWL – Fort William & Lochaber Scheme Area

Structure of Analysis, Reporting

To protect proprietary market information and commercial sensitivity, all operator Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and patronage data utilised for annual reporting will be processed and published on an aggregated, corridor-wide basis.

Keeping in line with the collaborative partnership principles emphasized in national guidance, performance metrics will not isolate individual operators or disclose competitive commercial tracking. All raw data logs supplied by participating operators are handled strictly within this secure, aggregated framework to maintain market neutrality while ensuring a transparent, evidence-based review of corridor performance.

The analysis is structured to reflect the metrics necessary on which to monitor the performance against the BSIP Objectives, namely Objective 1: Improve the operational performance of bus services. This means that punctuality, reliability and journey time feature as the key metrics to monitor performance. This Technical Annex shall therefore be updated annually to include the performance of services on each corridor, providing the following for each corridor:

- On time performance (%);
- Late Arrivals > 5 minutes (%);
- Early Departures > 1 minute (%);



- Service reliability (%)
- Average Journey Time

In order to derive the above noted performance metrics, bus operators have provided Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL), data logs initially for the month of February 2026. The analysis has then focused on the weekday off-peak; the weekday AM and PM peak periods as well as the weekend.

A series of assumptions were made during the processing of the AVL data, including:

- The on-time metric assumes a window of 1 minute early to 5 minutes late. Anything outside this range is categorised as early or late respectively.
- All results are based on Stop-Level (Timing Point) analysis. This means every scheduled arrival was treated as an individual data point.
- For weekend reporting, on-time performance uses the Total Scheduled Points as the denominator. Any scheduled stop that did not produce a valid GPS on-time ping (due to cancellation, tracking loss, or delay) has been counted as not on time.
- The AM Peak is strictly defined as all journeys with a scheduled start time between 07:00 and 10:00 on weekdays.
- The PM Peak is strictly defined as all journeys with a scheduled start time between 15:00 and 18:00 on weekdays.
- Average Journey Time was calculated as the mean duration between the first and last recorded GPS pings for all journeys within that specific time period.
- Service Reliability was calculated based on stage completion, meaning it measures if the bus ran, regardless of whether it was late.
- Weekday off-peak results exclude the specific AM (07:00–10:00) and PM (15:00–18:00) windows to provide a clean free-flow baseline for comparison.



Annual Monitoring

Weekday Off-Peak

Corridor Ref	Service	2026				2027				2028			
		Total Journeys Analysed	Service Reliability (%)	On-Time Performance (%)	Avg. Journey Time (Min)	Total Journeys Analysed	Service Reliability (%)	On-Time Performance (%)	Avg. Journey Time	Total Journeys Analysed	Service Reliability (%)	On-Time Performance (%)	Avg. Journey Time
A:	961	50	96.10%	85.20%	84.8								
B:	919	812	94.20%	81.60%	118.5								
C:													
D:													
E:	10	2,419	98.20%	79.40%	48.5								
F:	25	473	97.40%	82.10%	62.4								
G:	26	1,296	97.10%	80.50%	54.2								
H:	28	1,531	97.80%	81.40%	42.5								
I:	1	883	98.60%	78.60%	28.4								
J:	46	812	98.40%	78.20%	24.5								
K:	41	736	98.10%	77.20%	18.5								
L:	44	768	98.70%	79.80%	21.4								
M:	500	256	96.20%	82.40%	88.4								
N:	506	864	98.80%	78.40%	17.2								

*Off-Peak Journeys refers strictly to weekday services operating outside the 07:00–10:00 and 15:00–18:00 peak windows.



Weekday Peak

Corridor Ref	Service	2026				2027				2028			
		Total Journeys Analysed	Service Reliability (%)	On-Time Performance (%)	Avg. Journey Time (Min)	Total Journeys Analysed	Service Reliability (%)	On-Time Performance (%)	Avg. Journey Time	Total Journeys Analysed	Service Reliability (%)	On-Time Performance (%)	Avg. Journey Time
A:	961	25	95.80%	76.90%	94.7								
B:	919	64	95.50%	74.80%	126.9								
C:													
D:													
E:	10	212	98.10%	68.90%	58.1								
F:	25	188	97.80%	71.30%	73.9								
G:	26	204	96.50%	69.20%	64.9								
H:	28	216	96.20%	65.80%	53.9								
I:	1	208	98.40%	67.40%	38.1								
J:	46	216	98.20%	64.80%	35.4								
K:	41	204	97.90%	64.90%	26.8								
L:	44	196	98.20%	66.20%	30.5								
M:	500	64	95.80%	70.80%	101.5								
N:	506	240	98.40%	65.10%	24.9								

*Peak Journeys refers strictly to weekday services operating during 07:00–10:00 and 15:00–18:00 peak windows.



Corridor A A835 North West

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance	85.2%	78.4%	76.9%	58.2%
Late Arrivals (>5m)	10.2%	16.2%	18.7%	35.1%
Early Departures (>1m)	4.6%	5.4%	4.4%	6.7%
Service Reliability	96.1%	94.2%	95.8%	91.4%
Avg. Journey Time	84.8 min	92.4 min	94.7 min	86.5 min

Performance Summary

A total of 100 journeys were analysed for services on this corridor. This corridor maintains the highest AM peak performance across the corridors analysed (as of March 2026), yet it still faces a 10-minute journey stretch in the afternoon. The weekend drop to 58.2% on time performance is driven largely by data-tracking inconsistencies on the remote sections of the route.



Corridor B A81 Great Glen

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance	81.6%	76.4%	74.8%	55.1%
Late Arrivals (>5m)	13.2%	18.4%	20.4%	38.5%
Early Departures (>1m)	5.2%	5.2%	4.8%	6.4%
Service Reliability	94.2%	92.1%	95.5%	93.1%
Avg. Journey Time	118.5 min	124.2 min	126.9 min	116.5 min

Performance Summary

A total of 1,270 journeys were analysed for services on this corridor. This long-distance link is a model of off-peak consistency but appears strained by commuter traffic, with PM peak punctuality dropping to 74.8%. The weekend score of 55.1% reflects the penalty during analysis where tracking dead zones on the A82 have been accounted as performance failures for the purposes of analysis.



Corridor C Inverness City

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

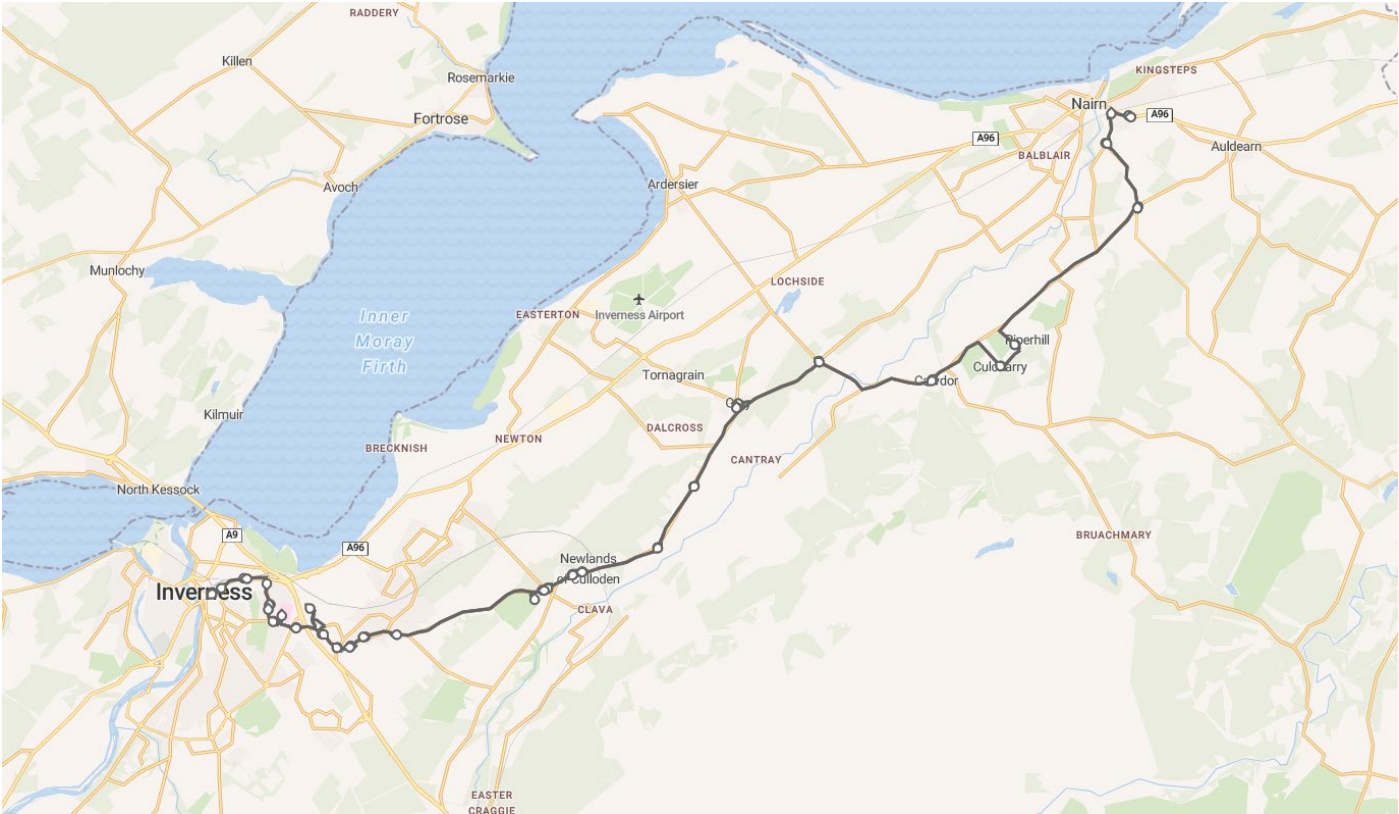
Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance				
Late Arrivals (>5m)				
Early Departures (>1m)				
Service Reliability				
Avg. Journey Time				

Performance Summary



Corridor D The Low Road

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

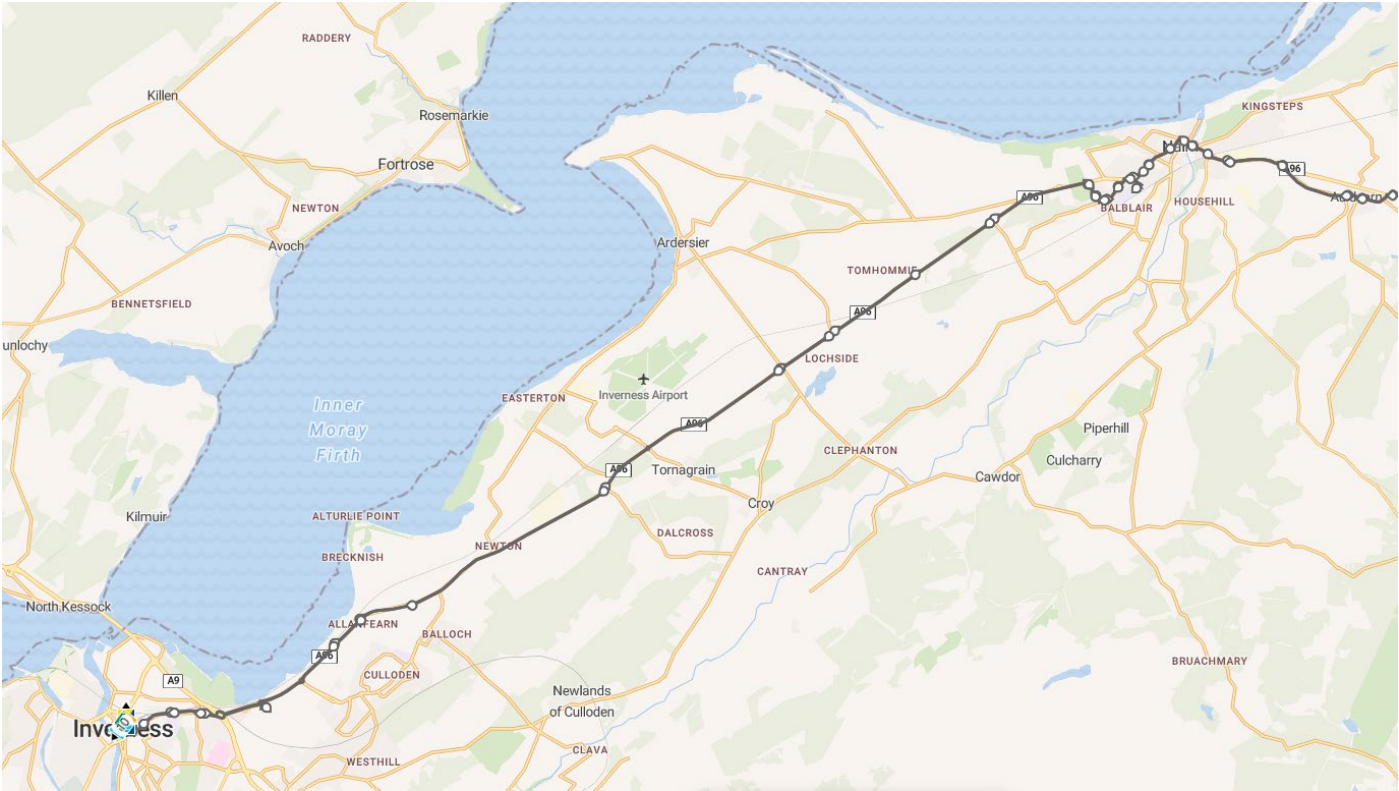
Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance				
Late Arrivals (>5m)				
Early Departures (>1m)				
Service Reliability				
Avg. Journey Time				

Performance Summary



Corridor E A96 East

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

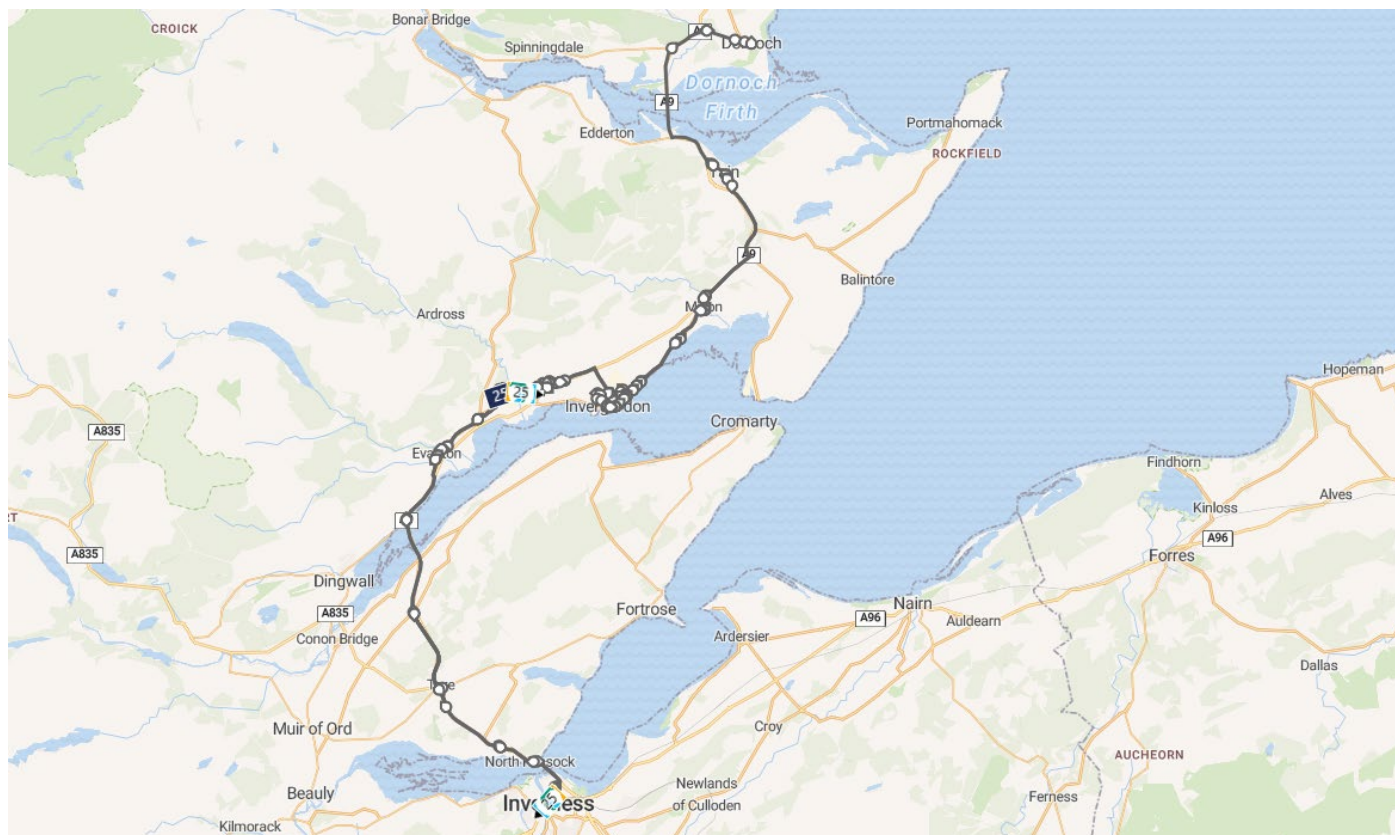
Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance	79.4%	71.2%	68.9%	48.2%
Late Arrivals (>5m)	14.8%	22.4%	26.0%	44.5%
Early Departures (>1m)	5.8%	6.4%	5.1%	7.3%
Service Reliability	98.2%	97.4%	98.1%	94.5%
Avg. Journey Time	48.5 min	56.2 min	58.1 min	47.9 min

Performance Summary

A total of 3,780 journeys were analysed for services on this corridor. Service on the corridor demonstrate strong reliability, however, is impacted at Longman Interchange. PM peak punctuality falls to 68.9%, and weekend performance is severely compromised (48.2% On-time performance), indicating that current timetable padding may be insufficient for weekend traffic volumes.



Corridor Map



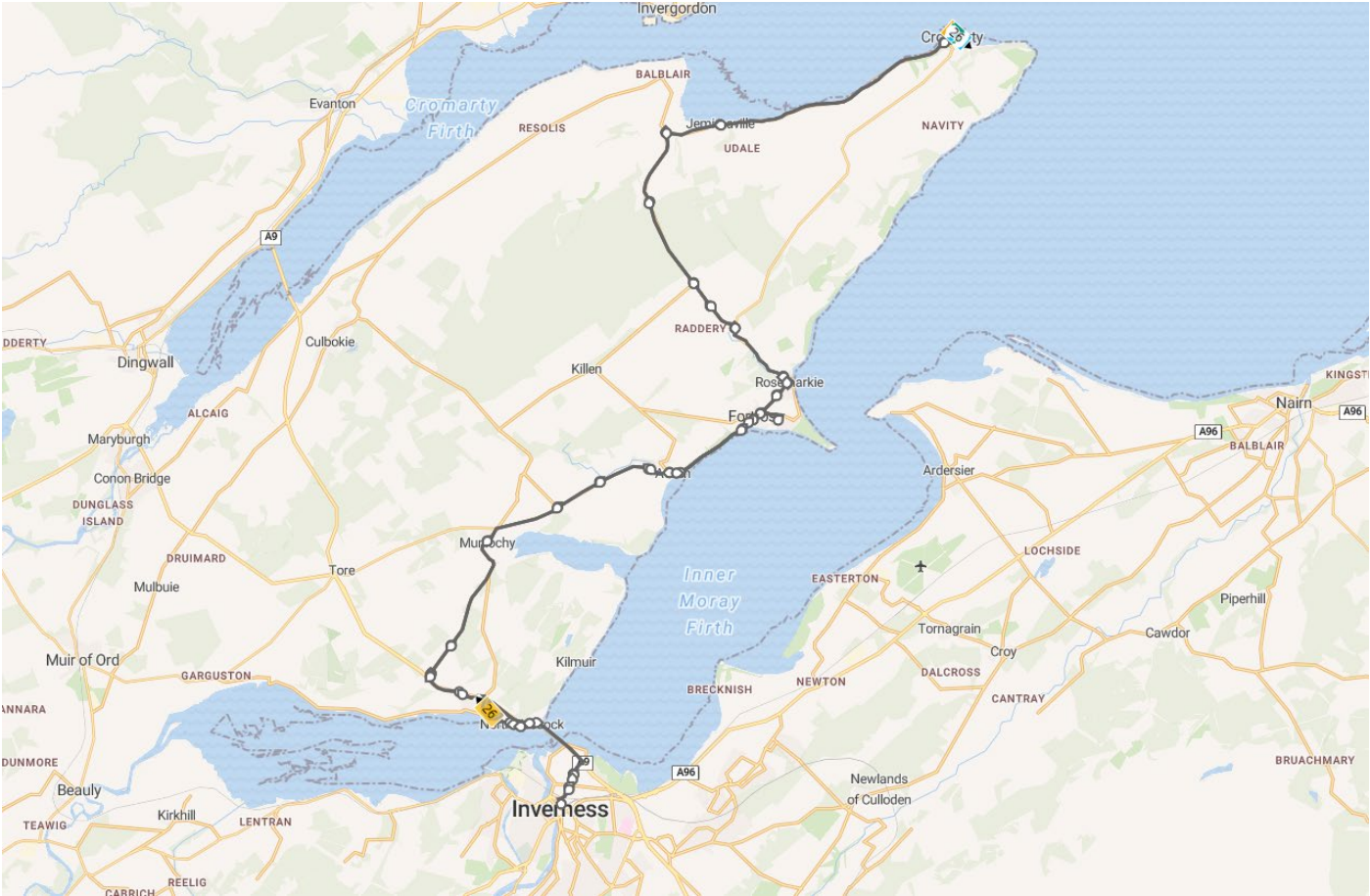
Analysis Metric	Weekday	Weekday	Weekday	Weekend
	Off-Peak	AM Peak (0700-1000)	PM Peak (1500-1800)	
On-Time Performance	82.1%	73.5%	71.3%	51.4%
Late Arrivals (>5m)	12.4%	20.8%	23.9%	42.1%
Early Departures (>1m)	5.5%	5.7%	4.8%	6.5%
Service Reliability	97.4%	96.2%	97.8%	92.6%
Avg. Journey Time	62.4 min	71.8 min	73.9 min	61.5 min

A total of 1053 journeys were analysed for services on this corridor. The corridor exhibits a resilient off-peak profile (82.1% On time performance) but appears vulnerable to A9 congestion. The 11.5-minute peak penalty during the afternoon commute results in nearly a quarter of all stops being served late, emphasising the need for priority measures on the corridor.



Corridor G The Black Isle

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance	80.5%	72.8%	69.2%	49.8%
Late Arrivals (>5m)	14.2%	21.5%	26.4%	42.9%
Early Departures (>1m)	5.3%	5.7%	4.4%	7.3%
Service Reliability	97.1%	95.8%	96.5%	91.2%
Avg. Journey Time	54.2 min	62.8 min	64.9 min	53.8 min

Performance Summary

A total of 2,025 journeys were analysed for services on this corridor. This Black Isle link appears to face slow traffic during the PM peak, where punctuality drops to 69.2%. The high rate of late arrivals (26.4%) during the 15:00–18:00 window confirms that outbound congestion from the Kessock Bridge is a likely barrier to service quality.



Corridor H Inverness, Beauly, Muir of Ord

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance	81.4%	68.5%	65.8%	46.5%
Late Arrivals (>5m)	13.1%	25.4%	30.5%	46.8%
Early Departures (>1m)	5.5%	6.1%	3.7%	6.7%
Service Reliability	97.8%	95.1%	96.2%	90.8%
Avg. Journey Time	42.5 min	51.8 min	53.9 min	41.9 min

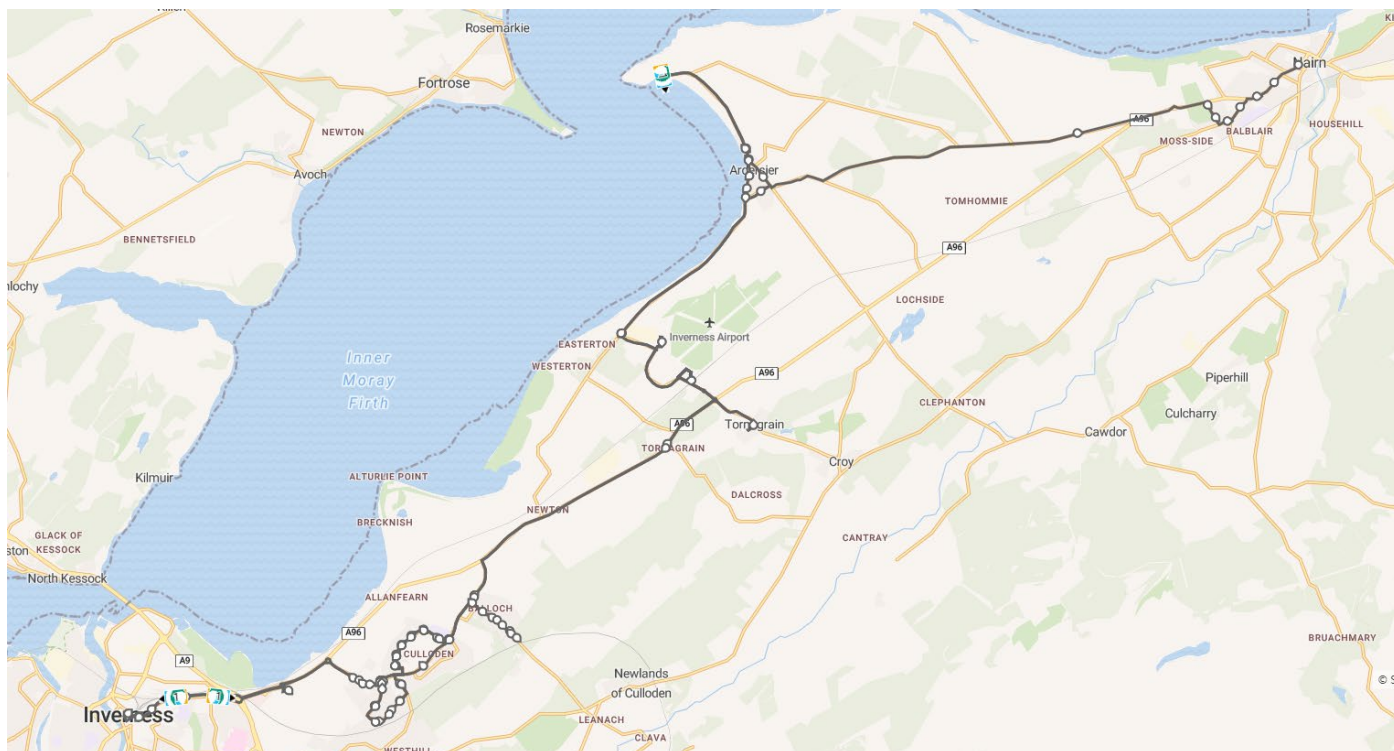
Performance Summary

A total of 2,392 journeys were analysed for services on this corridor. This corridor represents the most delayed arterial route analysed during peak hours, with on-time performance falling to 65.8%. The 11.4-minute increase in journey time during the afternoon highlights the pressure experienced on the A9 corridor between Tore and the Longman Interchange.



Corridor I Inverness Culloden

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance	78.6%	69.8%	67.4%	45.8%
Late Arrivals (>5m)	15.1%	24.5%	28.6%	47.5%
Early Departures (>1m)	6.3%	5.7%	4.0%	6.7%
Service Reliability	98.6%	97.2%	98.4%	95.1%
Avg. Journey Time	28.4 min	35.6 min	38.1 min	27.9 min

Performance Summary

A total of 1,380 journeys were analysed for services on this corridor. This urban artery demonstrates high physical reliability (98.6%) but suffers from significant peak period pressures, with for instance journey times increasing by 34% during the PM peak (15:00–18:00). The dramatic drop to 45.8% on-time performance at the weekend appears to be data-capture issue (missing GPS pings) rather than a service failure.



Corridor J Fort William Town

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance	78.20%	69.50%	64.80%	46.20%
Late Arrivals (>5m)	14.40%	24.80%	30.50%	47.40%
Early Departures (>1m)	7.40%	5.70%	4.70%	6.40%
Service Reliability	98.40%	97.10%	98.20%	94.60%
Avg. Journey Time	24.5 min	31.8 min	35.4 min	23.9 min

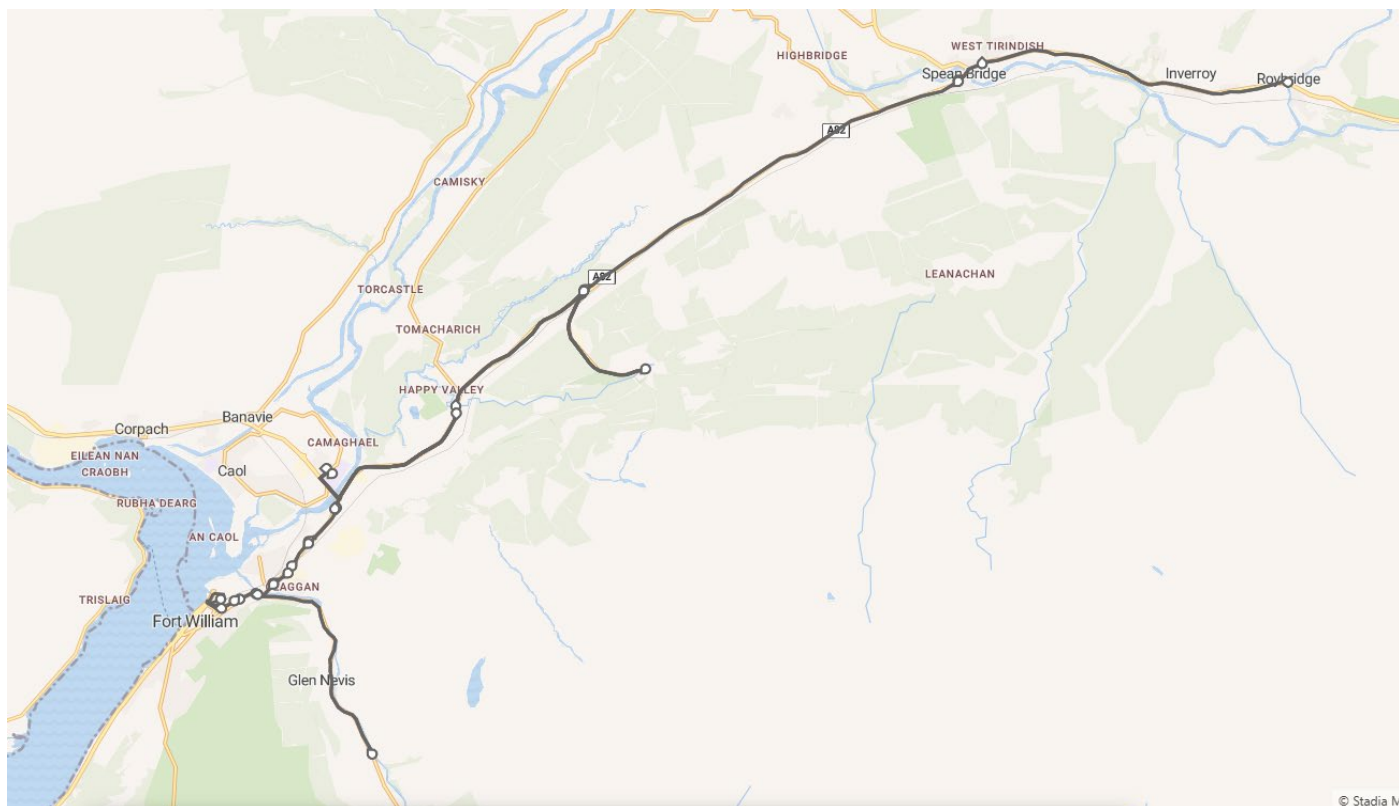
Performance Summary

A total of 1,418 journeys were analysed for services on this corridor. As the primary high-frequency urban corridor for Fort William, there is high reliability (98.4%) but this is severely impacted by the localised traffic bottlenecks between the town centre and Corpach. During the PM Peak (15:00–18:00), the journey time stretches by 44% compared to off-peak, largely due to the congestion on the A82 corridor. The weekend performance drop to 46.2% on-time performance which appears to be data-capture issue (missing GPS pings) rather than a service failure.



Corridor K A82 North

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance	77.20%	68.40%	64.90%	44.20%
Late Arrivals (>5m)	16.50%	25.10%	31.40%	48.90%
Early Departures (>1m)	6.30%	6.50%	3.70%	6.90%
Service Reliability	98.10%	96.80%	97.90%	94.20%
Avg. Journey Time	18.5 min	24.2 min	26.8 min	17.9 min

Performance Summary

A total of 1,288 journeys were analysed for services on this corridor. Serving the steep residential gradients of Upper Achintore, Service 41 maintains high physical reliability (98.1%) but faces significant punctuality challenges during peak periods. In the PM Peak (15:00–18:00), journey times increase by 45% compared to off-peak, driven by congestion at the middle-school finishing times and town-centre bottlenecks. The weekend performance drop to 44.2% on-time performance which appears to be data-capture issue (missing GPS pings) rather than a service failure.



Corridor L A82 South

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance	79.80%	71.40%	66.20%	48.40%
Late Arrivals (>5m)	13.50%	23.20%	29.80%	44.10%
Early Departures (>1m)	6.70%	5.40%	4.00%	7.50%
Service Reliability	98.70%	97.40%	98.20%	95.30%
Avg. Journey Time	21.4 min	27.8 min	30.5 min	20.8 min

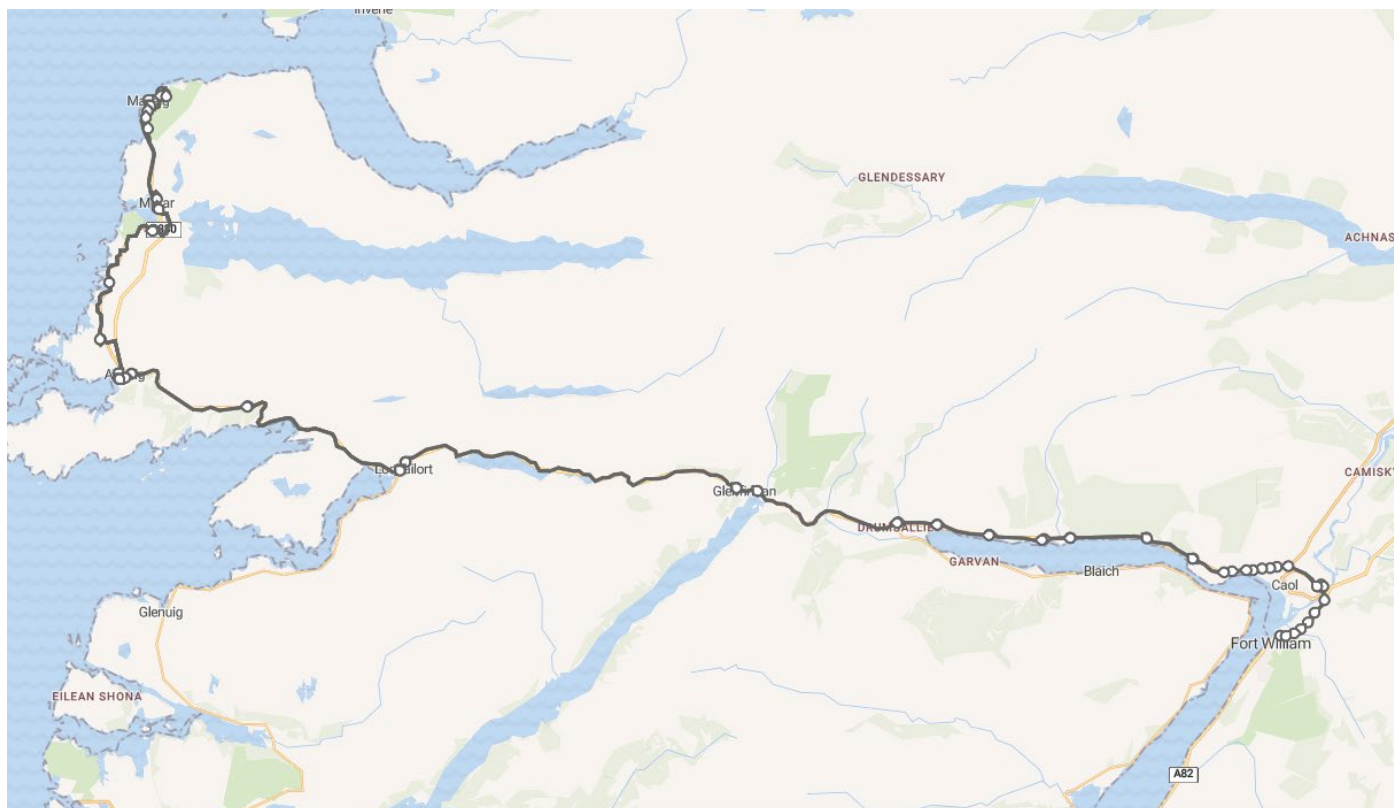
Performance Summary

A total of 1,342 journeys were analysed for services on this corridor. Serving the core residential and industrial corridor of Inverlochy and Claggan, this corridor exhibits strong reliability (98.7%). However, it is highly susceptible to peak stretching, with average journey times increasing by 42% during the PM peak (15:00–18:00) likely due to traffic levels on the A82 bypass. The weekend drop to 48.4% on-time performance which appears to be data-capture issue (missing GPS pings) rather than a service failure.



Corridor M – The Road to the Isles

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance	82.40%	74.10%	70.80%	56.20%
Late Arrivals (>5m)	12.10%	19.80%	24.50%	37.10%
Early Departures (>1m)	5.50%	6.10%	4.70%	6.70%
Service Reliability	96.20%	94.50%	95.80%	91.40%
Avg. Journey Time	88.4 min	96.2 min	101.5 min	87.9 min

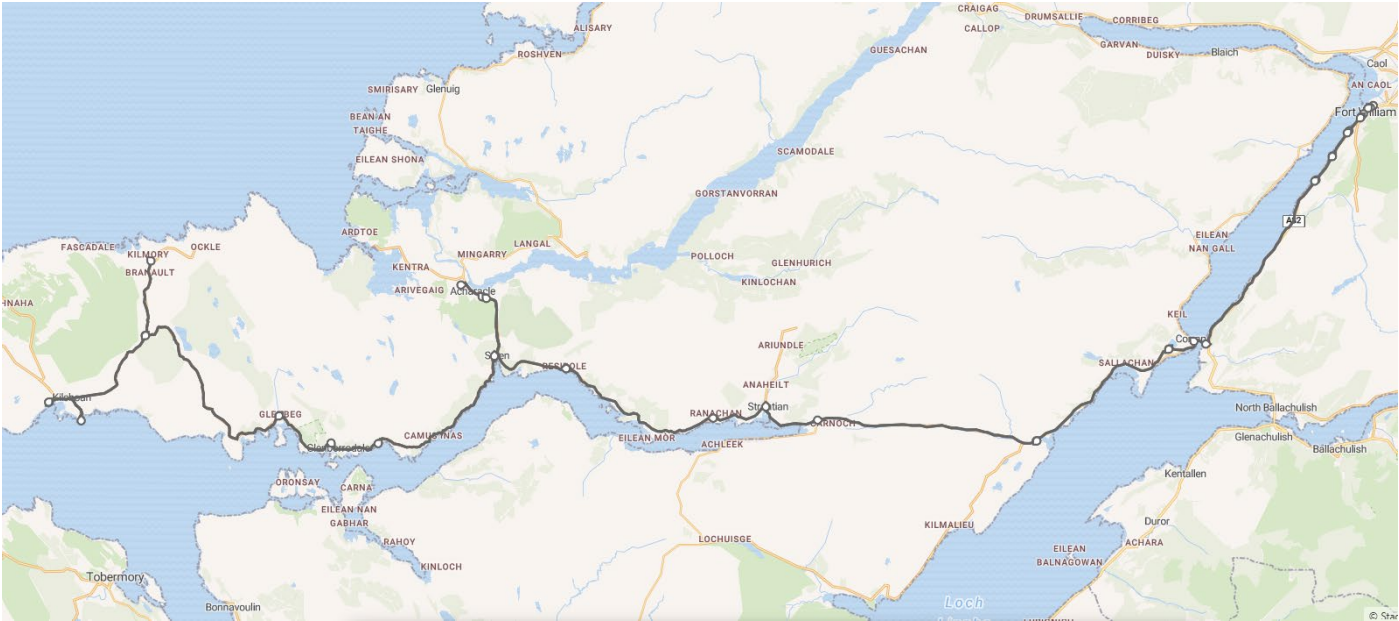
Performance Summary

A total of 448 journeys were analysed for services on this corridor. This corridor connects the West Highland ferry terminal at Mallaig to Fort William. The data shows a high off-peak efficiency (88.4 min average), but the route appears to be impacted by the PM Peak (15:00–18:00), where journey times increase by 13.1 minutes. This delay is primarily concentrated at the Fort William approaches (A82/A830 junction) and through the Glenfinnan corridor. The weekend drop to 56.2% on-time performance which appears to be data-capture issue (missing GPS pings) rather than a service failure.



Corridor N Ardnamurchan Peninsula

Corridor Map



Corridor Performance (February 2026)

Analysis Metric	Weekday Off-Peak	Weekday AM Peak (0700-1000)	Weekday PM Peak (1500-1800)	Weekend
On-Time Performance	78.40%	69.20%	65.10%	46.40%
Late Arrivals (>5m)	14.20%	23.50%	28.90%	47.10%
Early Departures (>1m)	7.40%	7.30%	6.00%	6.50%
Service Reliability	98.80%	97.50%	98.40%	95.20%
Avg. Journey Time	17.2 min	22.4 min	24.9 min	16.8 min

Performance Summary

A total of 1,512 journeys were analysed for services on this corridor. The corridor suffers from peak expansion during the PM Peak (15:00–18:00), where journey times increase by 45% (from 17.2 to 24.9 minutes) compared to off-peak. This delay is almost entirely localised at the town centre. The weekend performance of 46.4% on time performance is an outlier, potentially impacted by Saturday traffic volumes in Fort William Town Centre.

