
To: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Date: 5th February 2020

Subject: Bus Provision in Coventry

1 Purpose of the Note

1.1 This note provides a brief summary of existing bus service provision in Coventry. Specifically, the note focuses on the following areas:

- Coventry's current bus network;
- How services are managed;
- Commerciality;
- Contract services; and
- Core statistics in relation to bus service reliability, patronage and quality etc.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee are recommended to:

- (i) Note the contents of the report.
- (ii) Identify any recommendations for the Cabinet Members, representatives of Transport for the West Midlands or partner organisations.

3 Bus Services in Coventry

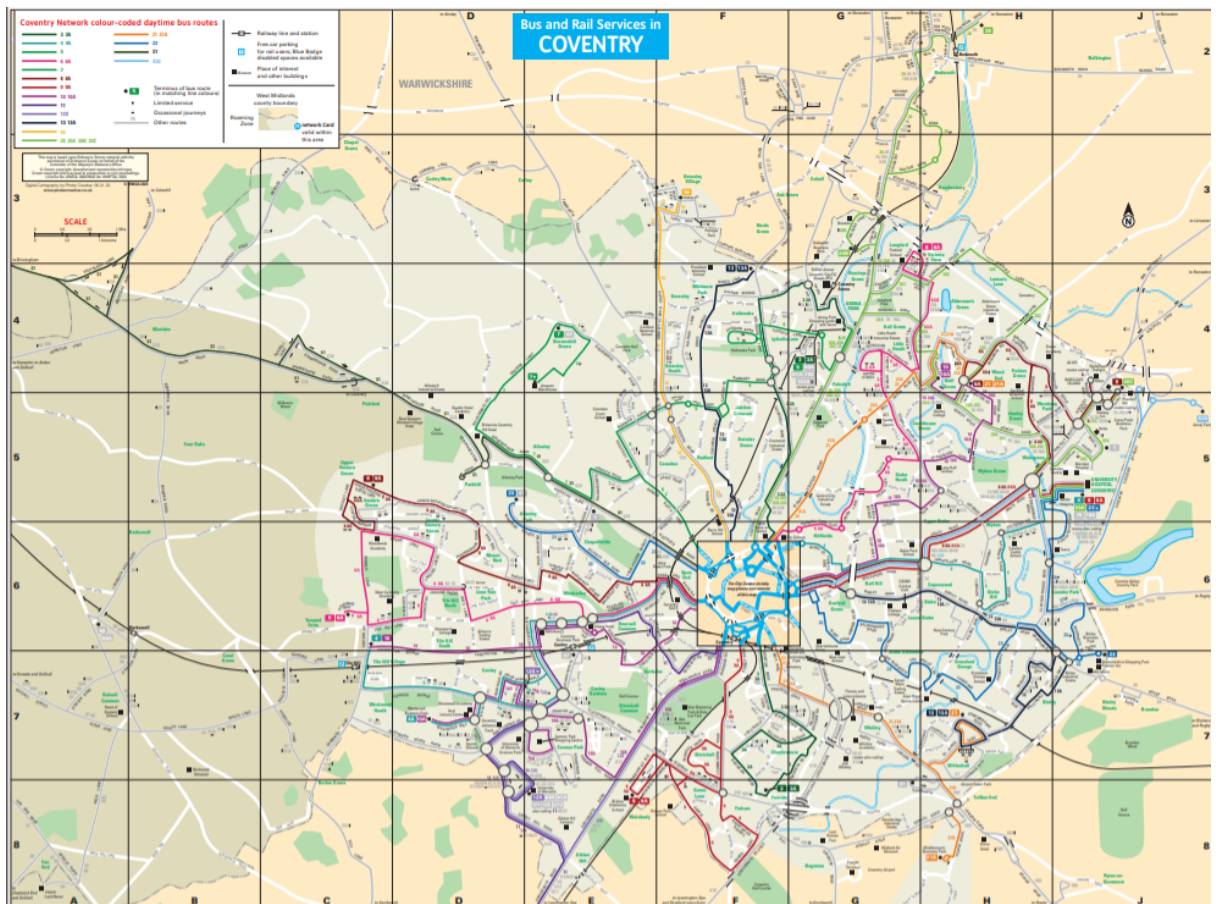
3.1 The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is the statutory Local Transport Authority for the West Midlands, including the Coventry City Council area. This means that the statutory responsibilities that relate to bus service provision rests with the WMCA rather than the City Council. The WMCA discharges these responsibilities through Transport for the West Midlands (TfWM). TfWM is responsible for management of bus stops and shelters, passenger information, and other bus related infrastructure such as the Pool Meadow Bus Station, as well as the management of contracted (non-commercial) bus services.

3.2 Overall bus usage within Coventry stands at around 28 million passenger journeys a year, which has remained fairly constant over the last few years. In Coventry, bus punctuality (the percentage of services operating no more than 1 minute early and 5 minutes late) was 82% in 2017/18 and 80% in 2018/19, which is slightly above the West Midlands average of 77% across both 2017/18 and 2018/19. Nationally 83% (2017 / 2018) of bus journeys operated on time and 83.1% in 2018 / 2019.

3.3 There are currently 8 bus operators with regular services within Coventry. However, over 90% of the mileage is operated by National Express Coventry who, excluding school routes, operate 19 distinct services within the area (although a number of these services also do have variations). Stagecoach operates seven services, De Courcey

operates four, Diamond, Johnsons and Community Transport each operate two, whilst Arriva and A&M Travel each operate one service.

- 3.4 Across the city, there are a total of 1,400 bus stops, 62 of which provide real-time service information to passengers.
- 3.5 A map of the National Express network is set out below. This was last reviewed in September 2019, following a consultation process with 1,500 customers, local community groups, staff and councillors. Significant changes introduced at that time included:
- A new 3 and 3A service along Eagle Street and Springfield Road
 - Running more buses at peak times on the 5 and 7 through Coundon
 - Changes to the 8 and 8A services, so that they now run along Corporation Street in both directions.
 - More frequent services on the 11, serving Warwick University, Kenilworth and Leamington.
- 3.6 The map below provides a picture of the level of service provision for journeys within the city.



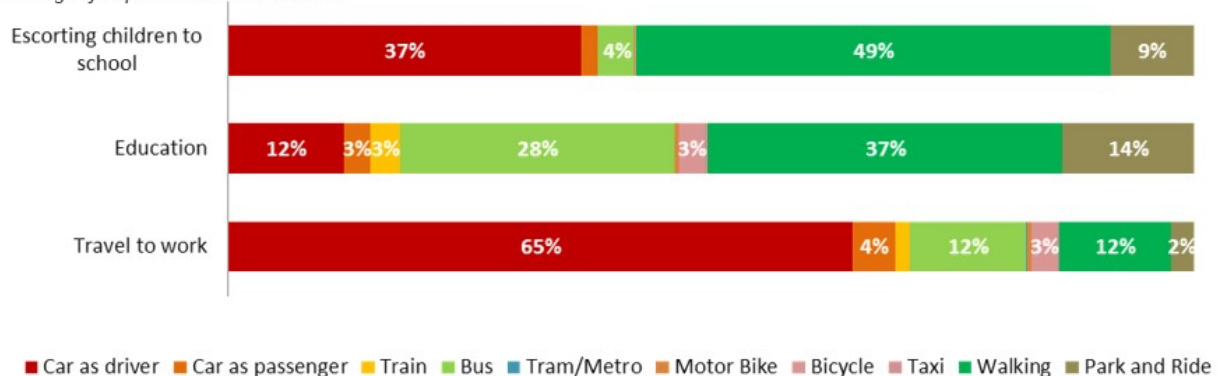
- 3.7 Coventry City Council does not have specific responsibilities in relation to bus services. However, the City Council works closely with TfWM and local bus companies to ensure that services reflect local needs as closely as possible, and to identify and pursue potential investment and funding opportunities for improvements to the bus network and associated facilities. Recent examples of successful funding bids include the Ultra-Low Emission Bus Scheme, with a funding bid led by the City Council with support from TfWM and National Express.

- 3.8 TfWM is preparing a series of Network Development Plans (NDPs) across the West Midlands setting out initial thoughts on how the bus network in each area needs to develop to support growth in the region. The NDP's are being developed in partnership with West Midlands Bus Alliance partners, which include bus companies, and are being rolled out across the region to ensure that the future bus network can accommodate current and future forecasted growth. The NDP for Coventry supports the City Council's Local Plan aspirations and will provide input to the emerging Strategic Transport Plan (STP) for Coventry. High quality bus infrastructure is vital to support economic growth and to support the wider network by combating congestion, enabling accessibility and mobility for all sectors of the community.
- 3.9 Bus services in Coventry are provided by private bus operators who are free to set their own routes, fares and timetables as part of a deregulated bus market. TfWM is responsible for installing new and maintaining existing bus infrastructure (excluding the buses themselves) including bus shelters, flags, timetables and the Pool Meadow bus station.
- 3.10 Where commercial operators do not provide a bus service link that is deemed to be socially necessary then it can be subsidised. In Coventry the obligation to provide subsidy and contract socially necessary bus services rests with TfWM. The decision on which bus services are eligible for subsidy is taken by TfWM using the policies set by the WMCA, which are in turn aligned with the constituent Authority policies of Coventry City Council.
- 3.11 Following the collapse of the previous operator, the Ring and Ride service commissioned by TfWM has also been taken on by National Express, under the banner National Express Accessible Transport. NEAT has undertaken a review of the service provision and has indicated a willingness to invest in the development of the service. The process of agreeing the precise details of the new operating model is currently ongoing between TfWM and National Express.

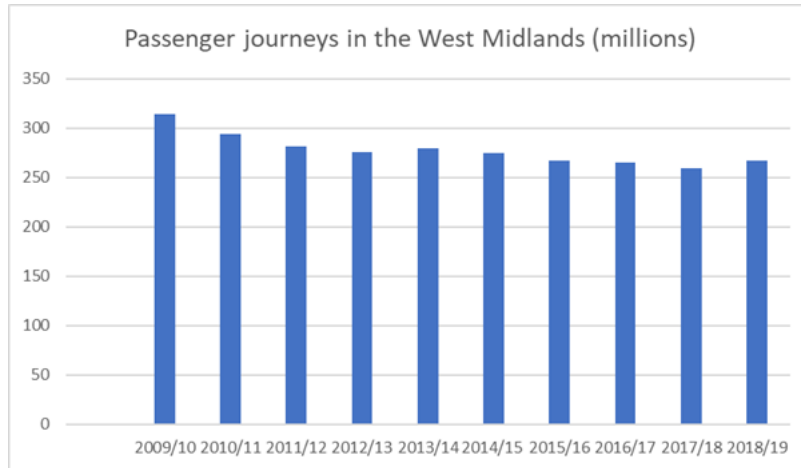
4 Bus Usage

- 4.1 Whilst there are over 28 million passengers on Coventry's bus network each year, figures taken from the city's most recent household survey (2018) show that the car remains the dominant mode of travel.

Percentage of respondents – base size 3007



- 4.2 The following graph provides time series data in terms of the number of bus passenger journeys in the West Midlands. There has been a steady decline in passenger journeys since 2009 / 2010 with a slight increase in 2018 / 2019.

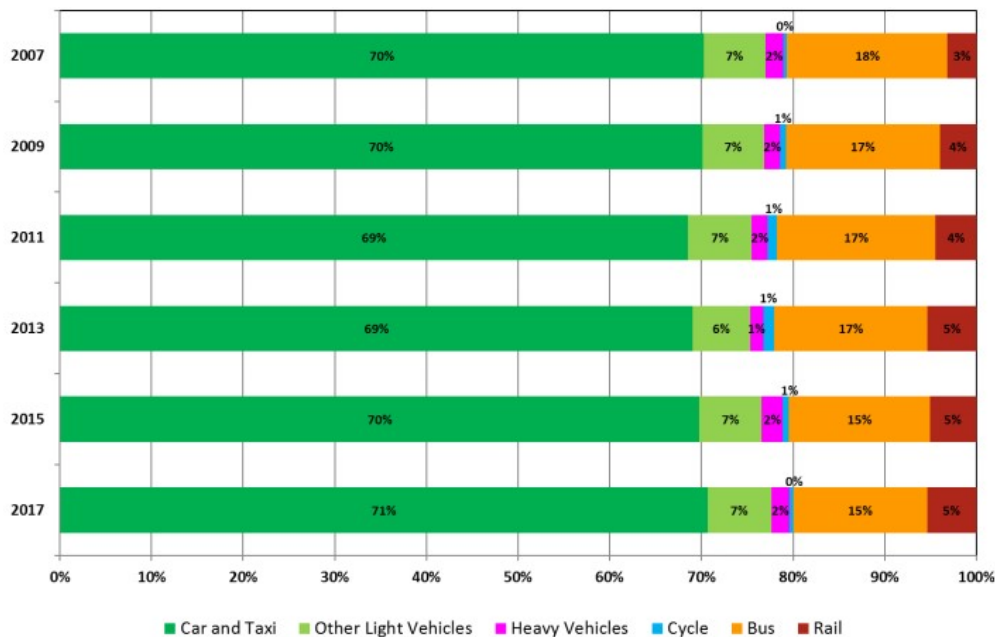


4.3 Using information gathered via our own traffic counts to discern levels of bus use in the city, show that the share of all journeys in and out of the city centre which are made by bus has declined only very slightly over the period 2007–2017.

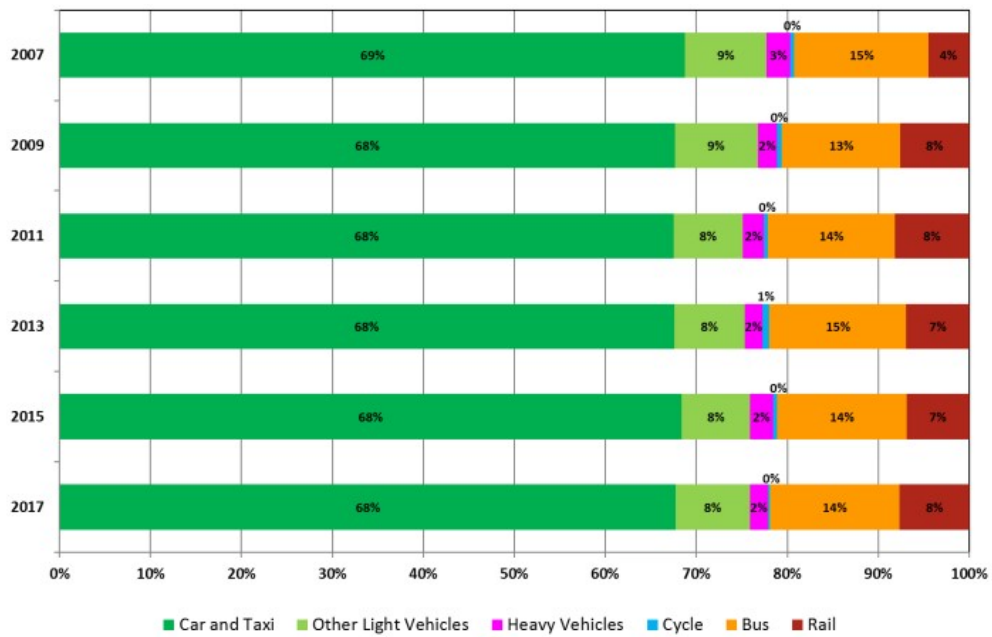
4.4 The level of boarding across the west Midlands is shown in the table below:

Local authority	Boarding (m)
Birmingham	120.0
Coventry	31.4
Dudley	26.2
Sandwell	26.1
Solihull	15.0
Walsall	25.4
Wolverhampton	22.8

Modal Share Inbound

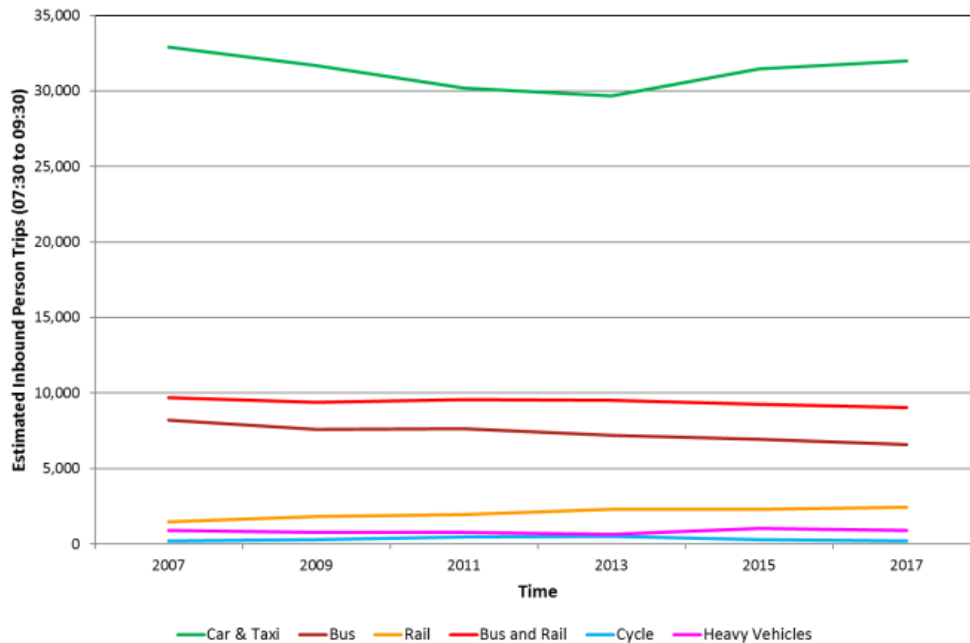


Modal Share - Outbound

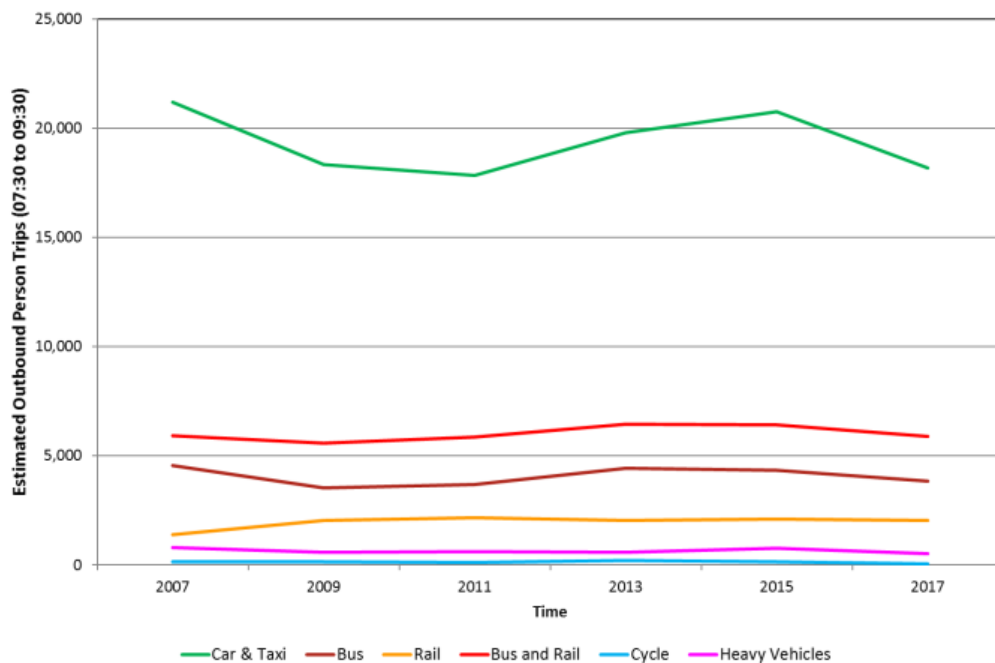


- 4.5 When expressed in terms of the overall number of person trips, these figures show that overall levels of bus patronage have remained fairly consistent over this period. These are bus users boarding and alighting within the cordon. Regionally and nationally (outside of Greater London), bus use has been declining at a much faster rate than in Coventry.

Inbound Person trip by bus



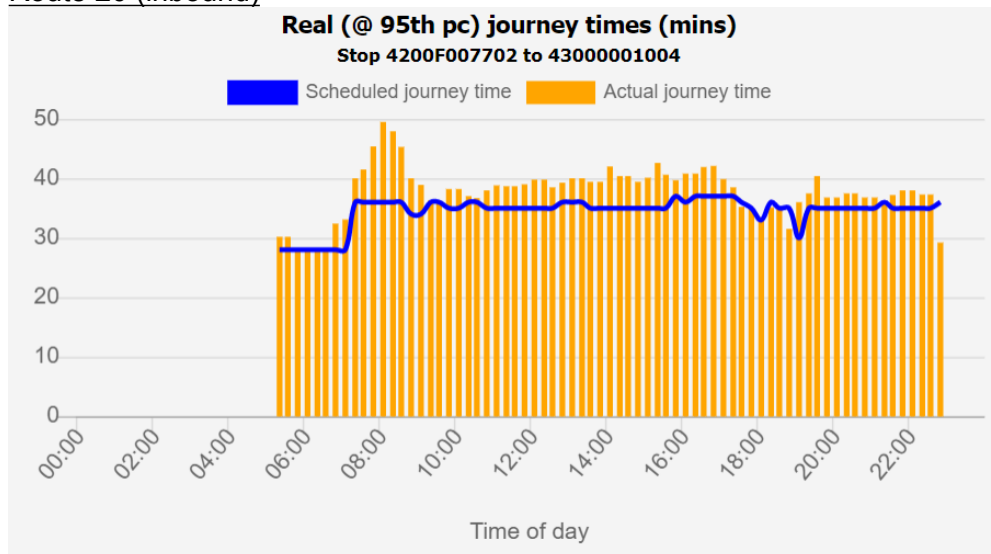
Outbound person trips by bus



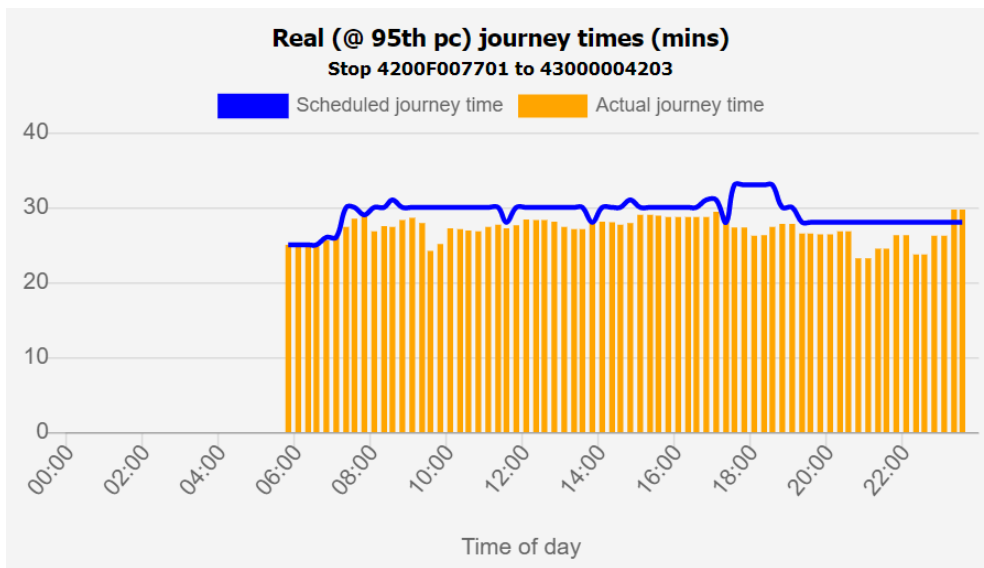
5 Bus service reliability

- 5.1 As services are provided by commercial operators, data on journey times is limited. The operators do not report figures on waiting or journey times across the network as whole.
- 5.2 However, it is possible for us to extract journey time information on some specific routes from TfWM's real journey time tracker. As an example of the kind of analysis that is possible, the graphs below compare scheduled timetable and actual journey times on routes 20 (Bedworth – Coventry City Centre) and 9 (Wainbody – University Hospital).
- 5.3 This analysis includes weekdays between March 2019 and the present day and compares journey times in the 95th percentile (i.e. only 5% of journeys take longer than the reported timings).

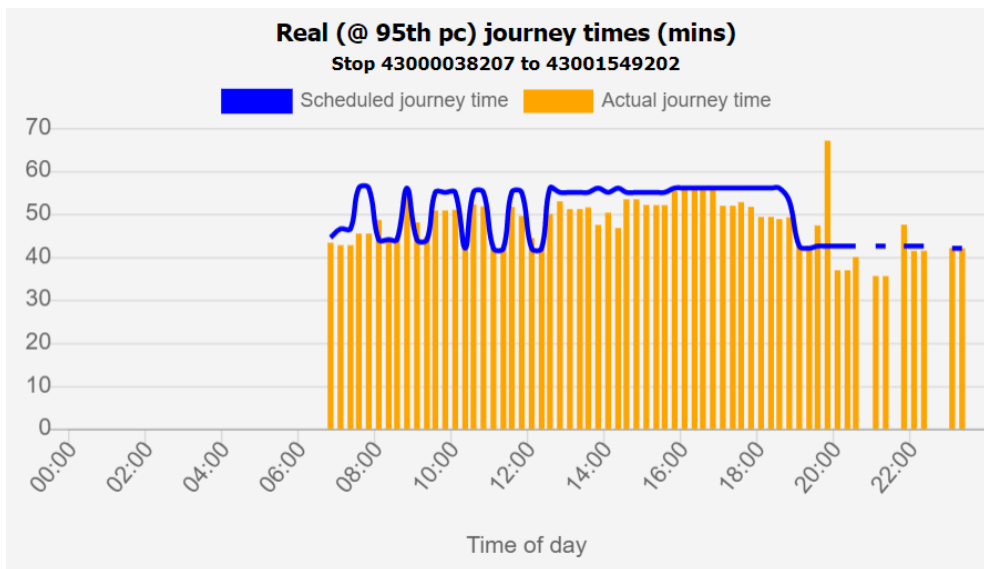
Route 20 (inbound)



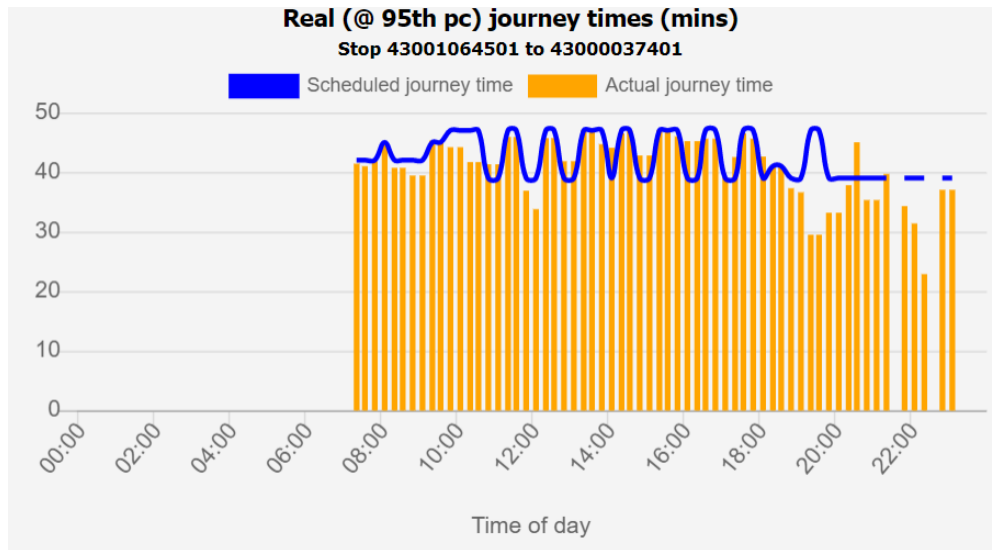
Route 20 (outbound)



Route 9 (towards the hospital)



Route 9 (away from the hospital)



In these examples, it can be seen that on the Bedworth to Coventry route the services heading into the city centre are generally taking longer to complete the journey than scheduled, indicating a lower reliability of service, but the reverse journey is generally performing to the timetable. On the Hospital to Coventry route, services are generally operating to timetable.

6 Private Operator Investment

- 6.1 National Express has invested heavily in renewing its bus fleet over the last few years, with the introduction of the Platinum branded buses on some core routes such as the X1 service to the Airport and Birmingham. Successful joint funding bids between the City Council, TfWM and National Express has also yielded the funding to allow all the current fleet to have the necessary modifications to improve bus engines to EuroVI, which is the best environmental standard for current diesel engines. The last review of services was undertaken several years ago. Since then there has been some significant investments and developments across the city which have led to travel patterns changing.
- 6.2 National Express has also launched a 'Platinum' service on the 900 service, offering passengers Wi-Fi, USB charging and leather seating. The other bus operators in Coventry have also invested in recent years with both Johnsons Coach and Bus and Central Buses introducing brand new buses onto Coventry bus routes. Stagecoach has taken delivery of a number of brand-new double decker buses for use on their bus routes to the University of Warwick. The bus engine retrofit programme has been extended to these other operators, meaning that by 2021 all buses operating public services within the city will be Euro VI or better in standard.
- 6.3 Punctuality and frequency of services remains a key focus for Coventry City Council, TfWM and the bus operators. New links are being considered to the University Hospital and Westwood Business Park as well as faith centres and health services. This will help with greater access to key services and reduce the reliance on the private car whilst addressing the climate change agenda on key parts of the network.

7 Subsidised Bus Contracts

- 7.1 The vast majority of bus services within Coventry are operated on a commercial basis, without a requirement for any form of public intervention. Such commercial services can be amended at 70 days notice through the bus company notifying the Traffic

Commissioner of any proposed changes. Neither TfWM nor the City Council can direct what commercial bus services should be provided – that is purely a commercial decision taken by the bus company.

- 7.2 However, where it is considered that a social need exists for a particular bus service connecting an area of the city to essential services, then the public sector can intervene in the market and directly specify and commission that bus service. Typically, this intervention would be to operate bus services at times of day when they are not commercially viable, such as early morning, late evening or Sunday services. It could also be to link communities with key facilities on routes not covered by the commercial bus network.
- 7.3 Within Coventry, the specification of such services is managed by TfWM using an agreed methodology for identifying need and prioritising budget allocation. In 2019 there were a number of services that were subsidised. The total value of this subsidy was £7.6m across the West Midlands.
- 7.4 Please see the table below. Please note that this includes both tendered and de minimis arrangements (i.e. fully tendered and part-funded contracts). Also, the Euro ratings below are current but, as mentioned above, we are aiming to get all subsidised services to a Euro VI rating by April 2021.

SERVICE NUMBER	FINISH DATE	ROUTE DESCRIPTION	Euro Rating
1	11-Apr-2020	Chaplefields to Brade Drive via City Centre & Uni Hosp.	III
60/61	25-Apr-2020	Coventry Circular	V
5	24-Oct-2020	Arena Park Retail to Tile Hill via City Centre	V
7	24-Oct-2020	Coventry City Centre to Brownhill Green	V
10	24-Oct-2020	Sewall Highway to Bell Green	V
20	24-Oct-2020	Coventry Circular (via Lentons Lane)	V
89	24-Oct-2020	Solihull to Coventry via Meriden and Balsall Common	V
16/A	24-Oct-2020	Warwickshire Shopping park to University Hosp. Walsgrave, via Dorchester Way.	V
20A	24-Oct-2020	Coventry City Centre to University Hospital	V
3/3A	24-Oct-2020	Coventry City Centre to Arena Retail Park	V
4/10A	24-Oct-2020	Cov. City Centre to Tile Hill Sth via Cannon Pk. Cov to Westwood Business Pk.	V
41/47	24-Oct-2020	Pool Meadow to Canley and Pool Meadow to Stonehouse Estate	VI
6/6A	24-Oct-2020	Stoke Heath to Little Heath/Victoria Farm	V
89 Feeder Bus	24-Oct-2020	Meriden to Coventry	III
9/9A	24-Oct-2020	Coventry Rail Station to Wainbody	VI
42	24-Apr-2021	Coventry to Brownhill Green	N/A
87/88/88A	24-Apr-2021	Solihull to Coventry via Balsall Common/Solihull to Balsall Common via Fen End	V
X20	24-Apr-2021	Solihull to Coventry via Meriden	VI

8 Funding / Levy

8.1 As part of the West Midlands Devolution Deal, HM Government agreed to devolve a consolidated local transport budget and provide a multi-year transport funding settlement, which came under the control of the West Midlands Combined Authority Elected Mayor. This devolved transport grant forms part of the single pot. The devolved transport element of the pot is made up of the following funding streams and paid to the Combined Authority, with a firm commitment for the period until 2020/21.

- Integrated Transport Block (ITB)
- Highways Maintenance Block (not including PFI)
- Highways Maintenance Incentive Funding

8.2 The multi-year devolved transport grant for bus services is set out below:

Fund	Status	2019 / 2020 £0000's	2020/2021 £000's
Bus services operating grant (BSOG) Revenue	Revenue for tendered bus services to WMCA / TfWM	1,800	1,800

9 Funding Bids

9.1 Several measures identified are already funded through previously successful bids for Government grant from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles and the Joint Air Quality Unit. This includes £4.5 million secured through two rounds of the Clean Bus Technology Fund for the retro-fitting of existing buses to comply with the relevant emissions standards, and £2.5 million secured from the Ultra-Low Emission Bus Scheme for the purchase and operation of ten new electric buses and the installation of associated charging infrastructure. These new buses are due to be delivered by June 2020 and will come into full operation in Autumn 2020. The charging infrastructure is being installed at the Bus Depot, with on-site energy generation in the form of roof-mounted solar panels and on-site battery storage.

9.2 In addition to the above, in September 2019 Government announced further plans to invest up to £50 million in establishing at least one electric bus town or city. This would see a town or city's entire bus fleet changed over to zero emission vehicles, with Government money supporting the purchase of new vehicles and the development of supporting infrastructure. The Government have said that they will shortly be seeking expressions of interest from local authorities, but further details of the scheme have yet to be published. Such publication is expected imminently.

9.3 Funding is also identified within the Coventry Station Masterplan programme for the provision of an improved Bus Interchange alongside the new railway station building, whilst TfWM and Coventry City Council have also identified funding towards the refurbishment of the Pool Meadow Bus Station in advance of the UK City of Culture 2021.

10 Climate Emergency

10.1 Improved bus services will reduce the reliance on the private car and by doing so will have environmental benefits promoting sustainable travel and a modal shift away from private car. It is envisaged that this in turn will provide support to the objectives set out

in the Council's Low Carbon Management Plan and the emerging Local Air Quality Action Plan.

11 UK City of Culture 2021

- 11.1 The Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 is forecast to generate around 2.5 million visits to the city and will see a significant increase in travel demand to and from the city, especially around the major events expected to attract larger audiences. A transport strategy is under development in partnership with the City of Culture Trust, and it is anticipated that the bus will play an important role in getting people to and from events within the city.
- 11.2 Bus based Park and Ride is being considered as part of the transport strategy alongside potential enhancement of existing public bus services and the role that longer-distance coach travel could also play in getting people to and from the city.
- 11.3 Investment in the improvement of Pool Meadow Bus Station has already been identified by TfWM and Coventry City Council as an important element of the UK City of Culture Transport Strategy, with areas of activity such as the refurbishment of facilities such as the public toilets, refreshment of the internal and external décor at Pool Meadow, and enhancement of passenger facilities to create a more welcoming arrival point all under active consideration.

12 Bus Innovation in Coventry

- 12.1 A further item on bus innovation in Coventry will be considered by Scruco at their meeting on 19th February. It is intended that this item will cover
- Opportunity to improve services - frequency/routes
 - Opportunity to reduce the environmental impact of buses
 - Opportunities to increase use of digital for improved customer service (stops, routes and length of wait for example) and links with 5G
 - Work being undertaken with City of Culture

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