

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	15 March 2011
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Aberdeen City Bus Information Strategy
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/11/060

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 At its November 2010 meeting, the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee agreed to the release of a Draft Bus Information Strategy for public and stakeholder consultation. The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the outcomes of this consultation period and to seek Member approval for the launch of a final Aberdeen City Bus Information Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a) Note the progress that has been made to date on the development of a Bus Information Strategy for the City of Aberdeen, particularly the two rounds of public and stakeholder consultation that were undertaken during 2010 and early 2011;
 - b) Adopt the finalised Aberdeen City Bus Information Strategy; and
 - c) Instruct officers to continue working with local bus operators and other partners on implementing the various actions and commitments outlined within the adopted Strategy.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The resources necessary to finalise and launch the Bus Information Strategy can be met from current provision as only staff time will be required. Any financial implications resulting from the implementation of the Strategy will largely be met by public transport operators. Any actions attributed to the Council which may have financial implications will be met within existing public transport budgets. Should any actions that cannot be met within existing budgets fall upon the Council, external funding will be sought in the first instance. Aberdeen City Council will continue to work with bus operators, Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans on a shared approach to bus information provision in order to minimise costs to the Council.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no other implications associated with this report.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 Under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001, all local authorities have a statutory duty to determine what local bus information should be made available in their area and how this information should be made available. The adopted Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy 2008-2012 also identifies the need for a Public Transport Information Strategy.

- 5.2 Following a period of public engagement regarding the current standard of bus information available within the City, a draft Bus Information Strategy for Aberdeen was developed by Aberdeen City Council and was released for public and stakeholder engagement following instruction from the Council's Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee in November 2010.

- 5.3 The consultation period ran from 15 November 2010 to 14 January 2011. During this period, a total of six responses were received. Four of these were from stakeholders:

- Aberdeenshire Council
- Grampian Fire and Rescue Service
- Nestrans
- Old Aberdeen Community Council

The remaining two responses came from interested members of the public. A full breakdown of those comments relating to information that were received on the draft Strategy has been included in Appendix 1 of this report along with a response to each of the issues raised.

- 5.4 The comments received during this second round of consultation have been considered and the views expressed incorporated into the final draft Strategy where appropriate. The majority of comments related to very specific elements of the Strategy, where further detail or clarification was requested, or where additional actions were suggested as necessary. Some inaccuracies contained within the draft document were also drawn attention to. As a result, although some minor amendments have been made to the text of the draft Strategy, the overall tone, aims and objectives of the Strategy have not changed.

- 5.5 The purpose of the Strategy is to identify a series of actions to improve the quality and availability of bus information in the City which the Council and bus operators will work together to implement.

- 5.6 The Strategy calls, firstly, for a general improvement in the currency, accuracy and clarity of information on local bus services and, secondly, for this information to be accessible in as many locations and over as

broad a range of media as possible. The Strategy encompasses, but is not limited to:

- Improving information displays at bus stops
- Ensuring more information is available on board buses themselves
- Increasing the availability of paper timetable booklets
- Improving web-based information
- Raising awareness of other options for obtaining public transport information, such as over the telephone and via text message
- Improving information for those who are unfamiliar with using public transport
- Improving information for travelers with disabilities.

5.7 It is anticipated that, by improving public transport information in accordance with the Strategy, citizens of and visitors to Aberdeen will feel more confident and comfortable planning and executing a bus journey. Improving awareness of the available public transport options may also help combat social exclusion by increasing mobility amongst those without access to, or who chose not to use, the private car.

5.8 It is also hoped that by substantially improving the quality and availability of public transport information a number of journeys that would previously have been undertaken by private car can be transferred onto the bus, thus helping to limit the negative economic and environmental impacts of car use, in line with the objectives of the Local and Regional Transport Strategies.

5.9 A copy of the final draft Strategy has been included as Appendix 2 to this Report.

5.10 It is anticipated that the Strategy, if adopted, and subject to any further amendments by this Committee, will be visually enhanced and made available from the Council's website in PDF format. Copies can also be printed off and supplied upon request.

6. IMPACT

6.1 The Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy 2008-2012 has a vision to develop "A sustainable transport system that is fit for the 21st Century, accessible to all, supports a vibrant economy and minimises the impact on our environment". The five high level aims of the Strategy are:

1. Support and contribute to a thriving economy for Aberdeen City and its region.
2. Ensure a safe and secure transport system.
3. Minimise the environmental impact of transport on our community and the wider world.
4. Ensure that the transport system is integrated and accessible to all.

5. Ensure that our transport policies integrate with and support sustainable development, health and social inclusion policies.
- 6.2 Nestrans' Regional Transport Strategy 2021 outlines a series of measures to improve transport in the region, including four strategic objectives:
 1. Economy - To enhance and exploit the North East's competitive economic advantages, and reduce the impacts of peripherality.
 2. Accessibility, Safety and Social Inclusion - To enhance choice, accessibility and safety of transport, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society and those living in areas where transport options are limited.
 3. Environment - To conserve and enhance the north east's natural and built environment and heritage and reduce the effects of transport on climate and air quality.
 4. Spatial Planning - To support transport integration and a strong, vibrant and dynamic city centre and town centres across the north east.
- 6.3 A key aim of the Community Plan is to ensure that all citizens have access to a range of transport options that reflect differing needs of age, gender, disability and income. *Improve sustainable travel options* is identified as a priority.
- 6.4 The Single Outcome Agreement also prioritises improving sustainable transport options for the City, particularly item 14, *Minimise the environmental impact of transport on our community and the wider world*. Increasing public transport usage and decreasing private car usage are explicitly identified as the means necessary to achieve this.
- 6.5 Vibrant, Dynamic & Forward Looking sets out a commitment to work to improve public transport within and to our city and to improve access.
- 6.6 The Interim 5 Year Business Plan lists transport improvements as a priority under both the *Wealthier and Fairer* and *Greener* categories, and identifies the outcome, to *Reduce unnecessary carbon emissions and minimise the environmental impact of transport on our community and the wider world*.
- 6.7 This report may be of interest to the public as the citizens of Aberdeen have a vested interest in the public transport network and have been involved in the development of the Strategy via two periods of public consultation which took place during January and February 2010 and from November 2010 to January 2011.
- 6.8 The Local Transport Strategy and the Regional Transport Strategy, of which this project is an integral part, have been subject to an Equalities & Human Rights Impact Assessment.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Community Plan Update 2008

Aberdeen City Council Draft Bus Information Strategy - available on request

Aberdeen City Council Bus Information Strategy Consultation results – available on request, or via http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/web/files/PublicTransport/bus_information_strategy_consultation_results_may2010.pdf

Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy 2008-2012

Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy 2021

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Appendix 1: Comments received on the Draft Aberdeen City Bus Information Strategy

The following comments were received by Aberdeen City Council during the period of consultation undertaken on the Draft Aberdeen Bus Information Strategy (November 2010 – January 2011). A response to each of the issues raised has been provided.

	COMMENT	RESPONSE
1	Can you clarify whose responsibility it is to actually put the information in the display cases and to make sure that it is the correct information?	This issue has hopefully been clarified by the rewording of Section 4.13.
2	In Section 7.3, the phrase 'wherever practical and appropriate' is used to describe the fitting of bus stop flags. Should flags not be fitted and maintained at all stops? What exceptions to this might there be?	Noted. Section 7.3 has been rewritten to reflect this.
3	The Quality Partnership contains a target to "maintain the standard of cleaning bus shelters on an at least monthly basis" – does this include display cases?	Yes, the full shelter is cleaned monthly including the information panels.
4	A major weakness of your proposals is the lack of specification as to what information on fares should be made available. It is many years since First stopped publishing details of fare stages on their timetables or at bus stops. Where there is an 'exact fare only – no change given' system in operation, passengers need to have access to information about fare stages to be able to work out the amount of the exact fare they are required to tender on boarding the bus. At the moment this is impossible. Throughout the document there are various references to requirements for 'fare information' to be provided. In section 7 there is a statement that this should include information about fare stages. I would suggest that the strategy should include a requirement for lists of fare stages to be published in timetables, at bus stops and on bus companies' websites. An alternative would be for a grid to be	During the two consultation periods undertaken, a number of members of the public have expressed their dissatisfaction with the transparency of the fare stage system. The Bus Information Strategy states that fare information should be included on timetables, on operator's websites and at all boarding bus stops, and this includes information on single and return fares for all stages as well as season ticket prices. Aberdeen City Council welcomes the suggestion of a grid system for fare information and notes that First Aberdeen already has this information in grid format to aid drivers. Aberdeen City Council will therefore enter into discussions with bus operators regarding the possibility of adapting such a system for paper timetables and the web and the Strategy has been updated to reflect this. Such an approach may prove more problematic at bus stops however, as tailored information would be expensive to

	published showing the point to which travel is allowed from a particular stop for each single fare.	provide, particularly given the possibility of future fare changes which would necessarily result in the reprinting and reposting of tailored information at every boarding stop in the City which could prove prohibitively expensive and difficult to keep up to date. There may also be inadequate space at bus stops, especially those served by a large number of services, to make such an approach viable.
5	There are various points in the document where the language is too vague to be meaningful. Phrases such as 'consideration should be given...', 'it may be of benefit...' and 'can be useful to passengers' could usefully be replaced by more mandatory phrases.	Noted. The document has been updated accordingly.
6	I note the statement that bus stop information should be 'legible during the hours of darkness'. In many bus shelters, bus service information is positioned at the side of rather underneath the lighting, making it difficult to read in darkness.	ACC accepts that some information panels may be difficult to read during the hours of darkness. Every effort will be made to ensure that any new panels installed are positioned in such a way that they can take advantage of any available lighting opportunities. Due to necessary reductions in the available public transport budget, it is unlikely that existing panels can be relocated or bespoke lighting provided at bus stops in the foreseeable future, although this is something that could be considered by the Council in the longer term.
7	Passengers may be reluctant to use the Traveline information service as it involves the use of a premium rate 0871 phone number.	It is appreciated that certain methods of gaining information, such as the Traveline telephone service and text facility, involve a cost to the user and, as a result, their impact may be limited, especially given the volume of free information available. Nevertheless the Strategy aims to identify and improve all aspects of information provision. Figures from Traveline show relatively high use of the text message facility in Aberdeen City, suggesting that some users are willing to pay for public transport information.
8	We fully support the City Council strategy to improve the quality and	This is referred to in the Strategy. ACC realises that improved public transport

	<p>availability of bus information as part of a means of encouraging use of public transport but do note that this should be considered within the overall context where arguably cost and reliability of service are of primary importance for bus users.</p>	<p>information will not in itself encourage all potential users onto buses, but considers poor information to be a significant barrier to bus use. ACC works closely with bus operators and other stakeholders via the Local Authority and Bus Operator Forum (LABOF) to investigate measures to improve reliability and punctuality of buses, recognising this as another measure that has the potential to improve patronage. Cost of bus services is wholly in the control of individual operators, except where those services are subsidised by the local authority or other body.</p>
9	<p>We consider that the web and SMS based information systems show potential, but need further development if they are to be taken up by the public.</p>	<p>Section 7.9 lists a series of actions that will be undertaken to maintain and improve web-based information. As indicated above, SMS facilities are relatively well used in Aberdeen City, while the number of hits on the Real Time Bus website exceeded 30,000 in December 2010, but both would benefit from further promotion. Any development of the txt2traveline facility is the responsibility of Traveline.</p>
10	<p>We consider that the provision of current bus information at each bus stop should be the most important part of the bus information strategy. Our experience is that timetables are too often out of date or missing or obscured and that the responsibility for their maintenance and update is not properly managed between the bus companies and the Council. Example: A new time table placed within a graffiti infested case, obscuring most information. Example: Timetable not updated as personnel unable to open the case due to seized screws. In both cases, it would appear that the Council has not been informed, or if informed, has not acted. Example: Bus table a year out of date – First Bus informed - no action, until raised during face to face meeting with First Bus senior management.</p>	<p>ACC agrees that the improvement of at-stop information is one of the most important elements of the Strategy. ACC, Aberdeenshire Council, Nestrans and bus operators are in the process of entering into an agreement regarding joint production and erection of timetables, which should ensure that timetables are available at every stop used by boarding passengers, and are current, comprehensive and unobscured. The Council will aim to respond to issues of vandalism and graffiti in bus shelters as soon as possible.</p>

	Thus, the low rating given on page 27 for 'at stop' information ('Not useful - 6') can perhaps be largely attributed to insufficient management of this simplest of means for providing information.	
11	We can find no information on the ACC website as to how to report a broken or defaced timetable case or a missing timetable.	A contact for reporting vandalism in bus shelters is provided on the web site but users must follow a link entitled 'Bus stops and shelters – positioning' to access this which the Council accepts is a misleading title. Full details of the Council's Public Transport Unit are available on the web site, although it is recognised in the Strategy that the City Council's web pages are in need of an overhaul.
12	We are pleased with the introduction of timetable data specific to each stop and consider this a very useful development	Noted.
13	While realtime information is welcome and desirable, provided it is accurate and comprehensive, the key requirement is for the buses to reliably work to their timetables. To arrive at a stop in good time for your bus only to learn from the realtime board that the bus will not arrive for 20 minutes is better than waiting with no information, but is poor consolation.	Noted. See response to Comment 8.
14	SMS messaging could be developed to provide a good supplement to at-stop realtime data displays and we note that the majority of bus stop flags have now been revised to show this information. However, we comment as follows: * The information provided is not always realtime. To pay around 35p for timetable bus times is rather irritating and likely to lead to poor repeat use. Suggest there should not be a service charge if only timetable data is available (i.e. cost of phone call only). * The reply should show clearly whether the information provided is realtime or schedule data.	ACC accepts that the SMS facility may be of limited use if only timetable information is available, especially given the aim within the Strategy to have timetables displayed at all boarding stops. Traveline Scotland is currently looking into the feasibility of real time feeds. However, as mentioned previously, Aberdeen City has the highest usage of this facility in Scotland, possibly as a result of a number of bus stops not showing, or showing out of date, timetable information. This suggests that members of the public are willing to pay a small charge for information, although the Council agrees that having real time information available

	<p>* The information required - the phone number to call and the bus stop reference - are difficult to read, particularly at night. The use of green and white rather than black and white is a contributory factor, but we suggest that the key issue is that the Traveline Scotland logo wastes space, forcing too small a size of print to be used.</p>	<p>via SMS would be of greater benefit to the public and would undoubtedly increase usage of the facility. The Real Time website displays bus departure times in real time and is arguably of even more benefit in that there is no perceived cost to the public so is likely to be more popular. See the response to comment 6 regarding the issue of legibility of information when dark.</p>
15	<p>Aberdeen First Bus Interactive and Network maps - while these are helpful, we concur that they do not adequately identify the streets being traversed, thus significantly compromising their usability</p>	<p>The First Aberdeen network map is designed to provide an overview or summary of the network and, in order to ensure that the whole network can be viewed at a glance, is unable to go into the level of detail that would allow individual streets to be identified. Each First paper timetable, however, has a route map individual to that service, showing the full route traversed by the service down to the detail of individual streets. The Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide also shows this level of detail. The Strategy identifies actions to ensure that service-specific route maps are also available online and at bus stops where space permits.</p>
16	<p>The realtime bus information is potentially useful but needs some improvement. The most obvious issue is that the bus reference stop number printed on the stop flag, is not the same number as that used on the Realtime website. This is surely a complete nonsense. Example: No.20 route, Old Aberdeen High St – Flag code: 23235752, Realtime bus stop code: 639003691. Stop 639005462 is incorrectly identified as 'St Machar Cathedral' though it is adjacent to Kings College. Stop 639003162 is incorrectly identified as 'St Machar Cathedral' though it is adjacent to Dunbar St (map shows former location - bus stop moved during 2010).</p>	<p>Noted. The Strategy has been amended to include an action to look at ways in which the codes displayed on the website can match those displayed at bus stops and to ensure the site is updated to reflect any changes in the service network or the positioning of bus stop infrastructure.</p>
17	<p>There is no indication on the (Real Time Bus) site whether the bus time given is real time or default timetable.</p>	<p>When real time information is not available for a service, the scheduled departure time is provided in 24 hour</p>

	This should be stated.	clock format, rather than the display box counting down the time in minutes, as is the case for those buses which are linked into the real time system. It is accepted that this may be ambiguous, therefore the information on the site will seek to clarify this.
18	Presently (on the Real Time Bus website), all bus stops are identified on the map with a flag, but without clarity as to which side of the road they service. This could be readily achieved by organising the flags to point to left or right to suit bus direction.	Zooming into the map should provide clarity as to which side of the road the stop is located.
19	When viewing the map (on the Real Time Bus web site) at a large scale, a lot of little bus logos become evident, without any particular purpose or link to bus stops.	Noted. This comment will be passed to the website administrators.

Aberdeen City Council

Final Draft Bus Information Strategy

March 2011

Executive Summary

Aberdeen City Council's Bus Information Strategy outlines the Council's vision for improving the quality and availability of local bus information. It combines a best practice review with the outcomes of two rounds of public and stakeholder consultation and a thorough analysis of the state of existing information provision to formulate a series of actions that the Council and local bus operators will work towards the implementation of in order to improve and expand bus information in Aberdeen. Key to this is making such information as accessible and comprehensive as possible to all residents of and visitors to the City.

The Strategy commits the Council and bus operators to work in partnership to:

- Continue to promote the public transport options available in Aberdeen and to progress schemes to improve bus punctuality and reliability and to reduce journey times
- Ensure that all information on local bus services conforms to best practice guidelines and is easy to access and comprehend by all
- In particular, improve the quality and volume of information at the bus stop. The Council would like to see full and current timetable information at every boarding stop within the City, encompassing all bus services calling at that stop. We would also like to see increased availability of maps and fare and journey time information at stops
- Improve the information available on board buses themselves, in terms of clear and legible destination screens, knowledgeable drivers who can deliver information to passengers and an increased availability of fare information and timetables on board buses
- Ensure timetables, network guides and other relevant literature are of good quality, easy to use and understand, current and available in a variety of locations throughout the City
- Improve and expand public transport websites to make them easy to use by all and to ensure that timetables, maps, fare and journey time information are easily accessible to all computer users at the click of a button
- Continue to promote journey planning facilities, such as the Traveline Scotland and Real Time Bus websites, and to raise awareness of the various other forms of media, such as the telephone and text message, via which bus information can be obtained
- Raise awareness of interchange opportunities, both between bus services and between different modes of transport
- Look to limit the number of service changes and, when these and other changes to bus operations do occur, to ensure that the public is given adequate warning before such changes are introduced.

The Council believes that the actions articulated within this Strategy will not only significantly benefit current bus users, by making it easier for them to plan and execute a journey by public transport, but may also help to encourage non- or infrequent bus users to choose to travel by public transport more often. This can have a number of benefits for the City, both economic, in terms of reduced congestion on our roads and a more efficient movement of people and goods throughout the City, and environmental, namely a reduction in carbon dioxide and other harmful emissions and improved air quality, which is of particular concern to the City Centre. Improvements in information provision can also contribute to enhancing social inclusion, by increasing

awareness of the options available to the public for travel, thereby opening up opportunities to access jobs and services. This Strategy, therefore, will help the Council achieve a number of the aims and objectives of the Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy 2008-2012.

We are happy to say that this document has been developed in partnership with local bus operators and in close consultation with members of the public, as well as with Nestrans and Aberdeenshire Council via the Local Authority and Bus Operator Forum (LABOF). We will continue to investigate opportunities for partnership working to ensure that the best and most cost-effective solutions to the current problems or deficiencies with information provision can be achieved, thereby allowing current and future users of the Aberdeen bus network to fully realise the benefits of the Strategy.

The Strategy will be subject to regular monitoring and a thorough review after five years to assess the impact of the work completed to date and to set new goals and aspirations for the future.

Contents

1.	Introduction	6
2.	Policy Context	9
	2.1 Introduction	9
	2.2 Transport (Scotland) Act 2001	9
	2.3 Transport White Paper: Scotland's Transport Future	10
	2.4 National Transport Strategy	10
	2.5 Moving into the Future – An Action Plan for Buses in Scotland	11
	2.6 Single Outcome Agreement – National Outcomes	11
	2.7 Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy 2021	12
	2.8 Bus Action Plan for North East Scotland	12
	2.9 Quality Partnership	13
	2.10 Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy 2008-2012	14
	2.11 Aberdeen Community Plan Update 2008	15
	2.12 Single Outcome Agreement – Local Outcomes	15
3.	Geographic and Demographic Context	17
	3.1 About Aberdeen	17
	3.2 Aberdeen's current bus network	17
	3.3 Baseline mode share and trends	18
4.	Review of Best Practice	20
	4.1 Introduction	20
	4.2 General recommendations for information provision	20
	4.3 At the bus stop	21
	4.3.1 Flags and poles	21
	4.3.2 Display cases	21
	4.3.3 Timetable information	22
	4.4 Real Time Information	22
	4.5 Printed timetable leaflets	22
	4.6 On the bus	23
	4.6.1 Outside the bus	23
	4.6.2 Inside the bus	23
	4.7 Internet	23
	4.7.1 Site Content	23
	4.7.2 Technical Details	24
	4.8 Telephone	25
	4.9 Area-wide maps	25
	4.10 Ticket/Enquiry Offices	25
	4.11 Service changes	25
	4.12 Special needs	25
	4.13 Responsibilities	26
5.	Current Public Attitudes Towards Bus Information	27
	5.1 Recent Statistical Results	27
	5.2 Public Consultation on the Bus Information Strategy	28
	5.3 Key Results of the Public Consultation	28
	5.4 Summary of Comments Received	33
	5.5 Conclusions	36
6.	Review of Existing Information	37
	6.1 Introduction	37
	6.2 At bus stops	37

6.3	Individual timetable leaflets	37
	6.3.1 First timetables	37
	6.3.2 Stagecoach timetables	38
	6.3.3 Other Supported services timetables	39
6.4	On the buses	40
6.5	Internet	40
	6.5.1 Transport Direct	40
	6.5.2 Traveline Scotland	40
	6.5.3 First Aberdeen	41
	6.5.4 Stagecoach Bluebird	42
	6.5.5 Aberdeen City Council	42
	6.5.6 Getabout	43
	6.5.7 Real Time Travel	44
6.6	Telephone	44
	6.6.1 Traveline	44
	6.6.2 Operators	45
	6.6.3 Aberdeen City Council Public Transport Unit	45
6.7	SMS text messaging	45
6.8	Route maps and service guides	45
	6.8.1 The Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide	45
	6.8.2 Aberdeenshire and Moray Public Transport Guide	46
	6.8.3 First Aberdeen – your map and guide to bus services	46
	6.8.4 Maps in timetables and at the bus stops	47
6.9	First Travel Centre and Aberdeen Bus Station	47
6.10	Where else is information currently available?	47
7.	The Strategy	49
	7.1 Introduction	49
	7.2 General promotion	49
	7.3 Bus stop flags	52
	7.4 Display information at bus stops	52
	7.5 Real time information	56
	7.6 Interchanges	56
	7.7 On the bus	59
	7.8 Timetable leaflets	60
	7.9 Public transport websites	64
	7.10 The Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide	67
	7.11 Traveline / Telephone Enquiry Services	69
	7.12 Ticket Offices / Travel Centres	69
	7.13 Service changes	70
8.	Monitoring and Implementation	72
	8.1 Targets	72
	8.2 Performance Indicators and Sources	72
	8.3 Reporting and Review	72
9.	Bibliography	74

1. Introduction

Aberdeen City Council's Bus Information Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy 2008-2012.

It sets out the Council's aims and objectives for improving the quality and accessibility of local bus information in the City and how this is to be achieved. It specifies what information the Council believes should be available to members of the public and the way in which this information should be made available, identifying who is responsible for each element of provision.

With more than one-third of Aberdeen's residents without access to a private car and with an increasingly older population, Aberdeen City Council recognises that many of our citizens are, to a certain extent, reliant on public transport for travelling throughout the area, and that public transport is vital in enabling many citizens to live an independent and active life. Those dependant on public transport deserve robust and reliable information that lets them know if and when their journey can be made by bus, how long it will take and at what cost. We also recognise that the availability and accessibility of public transport information can be a major factor in encouraging those who do have access to a car to use public transport for certain journeys instead and to leave the car at home, thus helping to alleviate problems of traffic congestion, poor air quality and environmental pollution in Aberdeen City.

For the purposes of this Strategy, the definition of bus information is deliberately wide-ranging and encompasses information on:

- Planning a journey using public transport for all or part of the way;
- Finding out about routes and timetabling of local bus services to, from and within Aberdeen;
- Finding out the cost of a journey, the range of tickets on offer and how to make payment;
- Knowing which are the most appropriate bus stops to commence and terminate a journey;
- Identifying the required service, and signaling to the bus driver that you wish to board or alight;
- Finding out about facilities for people with special needs;
- Interchanging between services and between different modes of transport;
- Finding out about service changes and diversions;
- Commenting on, or making a complaint about, a bus journey;
- Any other information of value to current and potential passengers that may make a public transport journey simpler and more comfortable; and
- The various methods of obtaining the above information.

Providing information that is accurate and easily accessible can:

- Increase bus passenger numbers;
- Remove a number of private cars from the road, thus alleviating problems of congestion, poor air quality and pollution;
- Help combat social exclusion by enabling those without or unable to use a private car to access employment and education opportunities, shops and services and to play a full role in community life;

- Ease movement around the City, ensuring Aberdeen remains a popular destination with tourists and visitors; and
- Improve the perception of bus travel, in terms of frequency, accessibility and on-board facilities.

Through this Bus Information Strategy, Aberdeen City Council will seek to ensure that accurate and comprehensive public transport information is available to all of our citizens, both current bus users and non-users, and visitors, although it is appreciated that the information needs of these groups will differ and that the Strategy must recognise and seek to address these differing needs.

It is also appreciated that different sectors of the population (in terms of age, ability and socioeconomic status) may seek information in different ways and via different means. The Internet and mobile phone technology, for example, can be used to effectively disseminate information to younger citizens who have a greater propensity to use such technology than older citizens do. Conversely, the latter group may be more used to obtaining information in local libraries and appreciate the reassurance of face-to-face contact to confirm that the information they are receiving is valid and correct. It is therefore essential that public transport information is made accessible and available in a variety of locations and through many different media to reflect the diversity of bus passengers and their differing preferences and requirements.

Aberdeen City Council is also aware that it does not operate in isolation as a local authority. With a regional bus station and co-located railway station in the City Centre serving a number of towns and villages in Aberdeenshire and beyond, many public transport journeys commence or terminate outwith the City boundary, and travelers do not necessarily pay cognisance to regional boundary distinctions. With Aberdeenshire Council having recently adopted their own Bus Information Strategy, cohesion between the two documents is essential so that standards of information are consistent along public transport corridors and passengers experience the same level of information provision wherever in the region they are travelling.

The aim of Aberdeen City Council's Bus Information Strategy is therefore:

To ensure that high-quality and easily comprehensible information on all local bus services to, from and within Aberdeen is widely available throughout the City to all residents and visitors.

The Strategy also has the following objectives:

- To increase awareness of Aberdeen's public transport options, thus allowing people to adopt more sustainable travel habits.
- To ensure that information on routes, timetables, fares, etc. is available across a range of media and in a variety of locations to reflect the diversity of bus passengers in Aberdeen and their differing needs and preferences.
- To ensure that members of the public know how and where to access this information.
- To ensure that such information is accurate, comprehensive and up to date.
- To make public transport more accessible and ensure that a lack of information is not contributing to social exclusion.

- To promote the economic well being of the City, including improving travel facilities for visitors and tourists.
- To improve bus passenger satisfaction and the perception of bus travel amongst non- and irregular bus users.

The Strategy outlines the current position in terms of information provision and sets out aspirations and a framework for future delivery of bus information in the area. The Strategy takes the following structure:

- Chapter 2 outlines the legislative and policy context within which this Strategy has been developed, with reference to national, regional and local policy and guidance and how the Strategy conforms to or compliments this.
- Chapter 3 describes the geographic and demographic context within which the Strategy has been developed, describing the current bus network covering Aberdeen City and the baseline modal split for the area, while also considering other relevant factors such as car ownership and population trends within the City.
- Chapter 4 takes the form of a literature review, describing best practice in public transport information provision, while also reviewing a number of Bus Information Strategies adopted by other Scottish local authorities.
- Chapter 5 details the outcomes of a period of public consultation that was undertaken to gauge the public's views on the current state of information provision and what they felt could be done to improve this.
- Chapter 6 describes what information is already made available to members of the public by the local authority, bus operators and via other bodies and means.
- Using the information gathered during the processes described in Chapters 4 to 6, Chapter 7 sets out the Bus Information Strategy for Aberdeen City, identifying what actions are required, and outlining timescales and responsibilities.
- Finally, Chapter 8 outlines how the success of the Strategy will be monitored throughout its lifetime.

Throughout this Bus Information Strategy, the main emphasis is on those services operating commercially within the City and those services operated under contract to Aberdeen City Council and / or Nestrans. Aberdeen City Council recognises that there are a number of operators running bus services to and from the City under contract to Aberdeenshire Council and Moray Council, but accepts that these will be subject to separate Public Transport Information Strategies and / or Local Transport Strategies of the respective Councils, which Aberdeen City Council fully support.

2. Policy Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the current legislation and guidance on the preparation of Public Transport Information Strategies and sets the current Strategy in the context of relevant national, regional, and local plans and policies.

2.2 Transport (Scotland) Act 2001

The Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced a number of new powers and statutory duties relating to public transport and local bus services. One of these is the requirement for local authorities to develop and implement a Bus Information Strategy.

Sections 33 to 35 of the Act require local authorities to determine for their area:

- What local bus information should be made available; and
- The way in which it should be made available.

The Act defines the content of local bus information as:

- a. Information about routes and timetabling of local services to/from and within the authority's area;
- b. Information about fares for journeys on such local services; and
- c. Such other information about facilities for disabled persons, travel concessions, connections with other public passenger transport services or other matters of value to the public as the authority consider appropriate in relation to their area.

The Act dictates that the Strategy should identify who is responsible for providing the information required, whether this is the local authority or bus operators. If it is found that the required information is not being made available by operators, the local authority can make arrangements with an operator as to how they will make this information available. It is anticipated that voluntary agreement can be reached between the local authority and operators as to how best to provide the information identified. However, Section 34 of the Act states that, if the operator and local authority are unable to make satisfactory arrangements, the local authority can, as a last resort, make its own arrangements for the information to be provided and recoup costs from the operator. Nevertheless, authorities and operators should enter into a Bus Information Strategy voluntarily in the first instance to achieve the identified standards and this is the approach that will be pursued by Aberdeen City Council.

Guidance on Part 2 (Bus Services) of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 suggests that,

Should some operators provide information to the required standard and others not, the local authority should decide whether or not to take over the whole operation, depending on the scale of the missing information. If most operators provide the information then it might be more appropriate to work in partnership with them, and charge additional costs only to the operator who does not provide information; but if the majority of operators do not provide information, the local authority may find it more effective to take over the whole information provision operation.

It is expected that the determination of information provision will be in line with the general policy and Local Transport Strategy (LTS) objectives of the authority and that consultation is undertaken with the Traffic Commissioner, public transport users and

other stakeholders and that the results of these deliberations are published. The needs of all potential users, including those with special needs, should be taken into account.

The Act goes on to state that,

In carrying out their functions under sections 33 and 34 of the Act, local transport authorities-

- (a) shall act in a manner which is, in the opinion of the authority, most economic, efficient and effective; and*
- (b) shall not act in such a way as to discriminate (whether directly or indirectly) against any operator, or class of operator, of local services.*

Standards set out in the Bus Information Strategy should be reviewed periodically, preferably each time the LTS is reviewed.

2.3 Transport White Paper: Scotland's Transport Future

The then Scottish Executive published its transport white paper in June 2004. This has a vision for Scotland's transport future which is *"An accessible Scotland with safe, integrated and reliable transport that supports economic growth, provides opportunities for all and is easy to use."*

The Executive suggests in relation to the delivery of this vision, in Paragraph 4.43:

Bus priority measures are often very important in enabling buses to combat congestion. Initiatives by transport authorities include bus priority lanes, priority at traffic lights and junctions, new and improved bus stations, interchanges and shelters, raised kerbs to ease boarding, and park and ride facilities. Initiatives in response by bus operators include increased frequencies, increased numbers of low-emission and low-floor buses and improved ticketing and passenger information.

2.4 National Transport Strategy

Scotland's National Transport Strategy (NTS) was published in December 2006. This introduced three key strategic outcomes related to transport which support the purpose of the Scottish Government. One of these is to *"Improve quality, accessibility and affordability, to give people a choice of public transport, where availability means better quality transport services and value for money or an alternative to the car"*.

A number of policies set out in the NTS support the development of a Bus Information Strategy including:

- *Actively promote SMART measures such as travel plans, and high quality travel information to encourage more sustainable travel.*
- *Improving the quality of journey information.*
 - *We want to aim for the provision of a 24 hour/365 days a year integrated service which brings together all modes of transport so that users can use their preferred technology to access accurate information before and during their journey. This enhanced service will be of particular importance to visitors to Scotland both in pre-planning their journeys and using public transport to access visitor attractions and events. We want to explore adding*

cycling and walking into this information service and to extend the amount of real-time information that is available.

➤ Transport authorities are required by legislation to determine what local bus information (including information about routes and timetabling) should be made available. We will review the progress that has been made across Scotland ensuring that information is appropriate to the needs of different groups, including commuters and visitors.

- *Promoting Integrated ticketing and higher quality transport interchanges to enhance the passenger journey.*
- *Promote improvement of the overall accessibility of the transport network for older and disabled people and those with limited mobility.*

2.5 Moving Into the Future – An Action Plan for Buses in Scotland

A Bus Action Plan was published alongside the NTS which outlines a range of measures to improve bus services in Scotland. The Plan acknowledges that inadequate or poor information is of high concern to passengers. One of the actions set by the Scottish Government is therefore:

Working with transport authorities, conduct a nation-wide review of bus stop information.

Following the publication of the Bus Action Plan various guidance was issued, including the 'Buses for Scotland: Progress Through Partnership' document which further sets out recommended minimum standards for bus information provision and who is responsible for each element of this.

2.6 Single Outcome Agreement - National Outcomes

In November 2007, a Concordat was agreed between the Scottish Government and COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities), setting out the terms of a new relationship between national and local government, based on mutual respect and partnership. Fifteen National Outcomes have been derived which describe what the Government wants to achieve over the next ten years, articulating more fully the Government's purpose. This Strategy, directly or indirectly, contributes to the achievement of a number of those outcomes including:

- We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe.
- We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for people.
- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.
- We live in well-designed sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.
- Our public services are high in quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.
- We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.
- We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.

2.7 Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy 2021

In July 2008, Nestrans, the transport partnership for Aberdeen City and Shire, received ministerial approval for their Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) 2021, which proposes a series of measures to improve transport in the region by 2021. The RTS outlines four strategic objectives. These, along with the sub-objectives that the improvement of public transport information support and contribute to, are:

5. Economy - To enhance and exploit the North East's competitive economic advantages, and reduce the impacts of peripherality.

➤ To make the movement of goods and people within the north east and to/from the area more efficient and reliable.

➤ To improve the range and quality of transport to/from the north east to key business destinations.

➤ To improve connectivity within the north east, particularly between residential and employment areas.

6. Accessibility, Safety and Social Inclusion - To enhance choice, accessibility and safety of transport, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society and those living in areas where transport options are limited.

➤ To enhance travel opportunities and achieve sustained cost and quality advantages for public transport relative to the car.

7. Environment - To conserve and enhance the north east's natural and built environment and heritage and reduce the effects of transport on climate and air quality.

➤ To reduce the proportion of journeys made by cars and especially by single occupant cars.

➤ To reduce the environmental impacts of transport, in line with national targets.

➤ To reduce growth in vehicle kilometres travelled.

8. Spatial Planning - To support transport integration and a strong, vibrant and dynamic city centre and town centres across the north east.

➤ To encourage integration of transport and spatial planning and improve connections between transport modes and services.

➤ To enhance public transport opportunities and reduce barriers to use across the north east, especially rural areas.

The RTS also has 21 sub-strategy strands, which provide further detail on and description of how the Strategy will achieve its Objectives. One of these, IC3 – Bus Improvements, is particularly relevant to this Strategy: *Improve information provision including expanded real-time information systems across Aberdeen City and Shire.*

2.8 Bus Action Plan for North East Scotland

A Bus Action Plan to accompany the RTS was finalised in December 2009. One element of this is improved information, with the following actions:

- Undertake market research to identify the most beneficial ways of providing information.
- Introduction of airport service specific travel information including booklets and RTS (Real Time Systems).
- Work with ferry operator to improve information provision regarding options for bus/ferry interchange.

A number of 'Emerging Interventions' are identified, including, under 'Information, Fares and Ticketing':

- Targeted roll-out of improved information provision.
- Development of a regionally consistent range of fares and tickets, compliant with competition legislation, but also catering comprehensively for travel within the region.
- Continued support for investigation of smart card applications which may simplify the provision of seamless ticketing.

The Action Plan also outlines a series of 'optimal standards' that Nestrans will pursue throughout the region. In terms of information, these include:

- Information that is consistently identified across the whole region, with sufficient information to allow waiting passengers to confirm which services stop, at what times, and where additional information can be sought.
- Publicisation of the Traveline telephone number and website address at stop, along with a clear indication of NaPTAN (National Public Transport Access Node) number for use with the txt2traveline service.
- Provision of a regional 'real time' information system should be actively pursued.

Mention is also made of the necessity for joined-up polices between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire which would enable an agreement to be put in place between the local authorities and operators to determine how information is going to be updated and where the costs are going to fall.

2.9 Bus Quality Partnership

In 1998, Aberdeen City Council entered into a Quality Partnership for Public Transport with Aberdeenshire Council, Stagecoach Bluebird and First Group, with Nestrans joining in 2007. The principle aims of the Quality Partnership are to enhance the quality, image and availability of bus services in the north east of Scotland.

The Quality Partnership was re-launched in 2010, with the five signatories committing themselves to achieving a number of standards and targets. Those specifically relating to information are:

- Increase customer satisfaction with bus services to at least 75% in each category by 2015;
- 95% of bus stops to have up to date timetable information by 2015 and 100% of information provided at stops to comply with national guidance on comprehensive information by 2015;
- 100% of bus stops to carry location sign by 2012;
- Where Real Time Information is available, this will be at least 95% accurate;
- 100% of faults with Real Time Information displays to be addressed by the end of the next working day after being reported;
- On-board information to be provided on buses 21 days before a change – 100% by 2011;
- Timetables to be made available 14 days before a service change – 100% of service changes by 2011; and
- Traveline number and SMS code to be displayed at all boarding stops – 100% by 2012.

2.10 Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy 2008-2012

Aberdeen City Council's Local Transport Strategy (LTS) was approved in March 2008 and sets out the policies and interventions adopted by the Council to guide the operation and improvement of the local transport network over the coming years. The following aims, objectives, actions, indicators and targets all support the improvement of public transport information provision.

Aims:

- Support and contribute to a thriving economy for Aberdeen City and its region.
- Minimise the environmental impact of transport on our community and the wider world.
- Ensure that the transport system is integrated and accessible to all.
- Ensure that our transport policies integrate with and support sustainable development, health and social inclusion policies.

Objectives:

- To minimise and improve reliability of journey times for people and goods through Aberdeen's transport networks.
- To increase the share of travel by the most sustainable modes to promote economic growth without associated traffic growth.
- To reduce carbon emissions from road transport.
- To reduce levels of air pollution throughout the city.
- To reduce the levels of noise pollution, particularly in the City Centre and around the airport.
- To improve accessibility (network and cost) to jobs and services to support social inclusion.
- To improve the ease of use of the City's public transport system.

Actions:

- SUS TI3 – ACC will work with public transport operators to ensure that all bus stops across Aberdeen have up-to-date, reliable timetable information.
- SUS TI4 – ACC will seek to ensure that publicity materials are made available in suitable print for people with sight difficulties and in alternative languages wherever possible.
- SUS TI5 – ACC's website will be developed as the one-stop-shop for public transport information for the City, providing links to the websites of local public transport operators.
- SUS TI6 – ACC will promote the use of personalised travel planning websites and Traveline Scotland's batch journey planners.
- IMP BUS9 – ACC will work with bus operators to investigate barriers to the use of the existing Park and Ride sites within the city and will seek to implement measures to increase patronage levels.
- IMP BUS10 – Working with partners, ACC is committed to the development of a network of Park and Ride or Park and Choose sites across the North East and will seek to improve these through the development of a consistent brand.
- IMP BUS12 – ACC will liaise with Nestrans and bus operators to introduce a Public Transport Information Action Plan, as part of the Transport Information Action Plan.

Indicators:

- Employed adults (16+) not working from home, resident in Aberdeen City, usual method of travel to work.
- Pupils in full-time education at school, usual main method of travel to school.
- Traffic levels (million vehicle km) on all roads in Aberdeen City Council area.
- Bus reliability, punctuality and patronage.
- Petrol and diesel consumption of road vehicles driven within the boundaries of Aberdeen City Council, and the associated amount of CO2 production.
- Adults (16+) - those living in Aberdeen City, percentage who have used a local bus or rail service in the previous month.
- Adults (16+) who used a local bus service in the last month - Percentages who agreed with a range of statements relating to the quality and ease of use of the journey.
- Percentage of adults (16+) who considered public transport to be either 'very' or 'fairly' convenient.

Targets:

- By 2012, it is hoped that the percentage of employed adults living in Aberdeen driving to work in a car or a van is reduced by at least 5%.
- By 2012 it is hoped that the percentage of children driven to school is reduced by at least 10% (to 20.1%), compared to 2007 baseline.
- There is a statutory target to reduce Scottish emissions by 80% by 2050, which requires a 3% per annum reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.
- Increases in the frequency of use of local bus and rail services.
- Increasing public transport user satisfaction.
- Maintaining perceived levels of convenience in public transport greater than 95%.

2.11 Aberdeen Community Plan Update 2008

Aberdeen's Community Plan provides the strategic direction for Aberdeen City, as agreed by the North East Joint Public Sector Group. Under the 'Transport and Connections' theme, 'Improve sustainable transport options' is defined as a priority. This is essential to the economy from both a commercial perspective and as part of the "well being" agenda, making it easy to move around the area.

2.12 Single Outcome Agreement – Local Outcomes

The Concordat agreed in November 2007 between the Scottish Government and local government requires each local authority to prepare a Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) with the Scottish Government, based on the direction of policy expressed by the Government's National Outcomes. The purpose of this SOA is to identify priority outcomes for the people of Aberdeen and set out targets to maintain and improve those outcomes through specific commitments made by the Scottish Government and Aberdeen's Community Planning Partners. The outcomes relevant to the improvement of bus information are:

- Aberdeen is an even more attractive place in which to do business.
- Aberdeen will have high quality employment opportunities for citizens.
- Improve the quality of life in our most deprived areas.

- Every citizen is enabled to be more active in his or her community regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, where they live or disability to ensure everyone can contribute to 'active citizenship'.
- Aberdeen's natural and built environment is protected and the City plays its part in protecting the planet.
- Minimise the environmental impact of transport on our community and the wider world.

The various partnerships and legislative and policy documents described above can therefore be seen to support and encourage the development of a Bus Information Strategy for the City of Aberdeen. Such a Strategy can, in turn, help the Council, Nestrans, community planning, third sector and private sector partners, as well as the Scottish Government, to achieve many of the aims and targets identified in their strategy documents and partnership agreements.

3. Geographic and Demographic Context

3.1 About Aberdeen

Aberdeen is Scotland's third most populous City, with an estimated 213,810 inhabitants in 2009. Residents benefit from above-average earnings and a consistently low unemployment rate (2.3% in July 2010). Perhaps as a consequence of this, Aberdeen has the highest level of car ownership of all Scotland's major cities, with 69.1% of households owning at least one car, compared to 59.8% in Edinburgh, 53.3% in Dundee, and 49.7% in Glasgow. More than a fifth of Aberdeen's households have more than 2 cars in their possession (2007/8 Scottish Household Survey figures). The large number of motorists on Aberdeen's roads therefore suggests that public transport information will need to be of a high quality and disseminated widely if such people are to be tempted away from their cars.

Although these figures imply a relatively low level of public transport dependency in Aberdeen, there remain more than 30% of households in the City without access to a car who are therefore, to some extent, reliant on public transport. And, despite the perception of wealth within the City, 27 out of Aberdeen's 267 data zones were among the most deprived in Scotland in 2006 and it is reasonable to assume that car ownership is less prevalent in such areas and among low-income groups.

Aberdeen is also forecast to experience an ageing population in the coming years, with the number of people aged 65 and over living in the City set to increase from 32,384 in 2006 to 46,915 in 2031, an increase of almost 45%. An increasingly aged population obviously has different mobility needs. With many elderly citizens choosing to abandon driving due to ill health or impaired mobility, it is clear that public transport will become increasingly crucial in supporting such a large sector of society to remain mobile in the coming years. We must ensure, therefore, that any information provided takes into account the specific needs of this group.

Therefore, while the relative prosperity of much of Aberdeen's population results in high car ownership and low levels of public transport dependency, there remain areas of the City and certain population groups for whom public transport is crucial in facilitating access to employment, education, health, retail and leisure facilities, and this group is likely to increase substantially in the coming decades as a result of changing demographic trends.

3.2 Aberdeen's current bus network

Aberdeen City is currently served by two main bus operators, First Group and Stagecoach Bluebird.

First Group provides services to and from most areas of the City on a commercial basis throughout the day, with all services travelling through the City Centre, thus facilitating interchange between services. First also operates the City's current Park and Ride services from dedicated sites at Bridge of Don and Kingswells. The majority of key services operate on a 10-30 minute frequency at peak times of the day and penetrate into most of the main residential and employment areas of the City. First Aberdeen also operates weekend late night buses to key residential areas, as well as the Dyce Airlink, a service supported by BAA Aberdeen and Nestrans, linking Dyce railway station with the Airport and the surrounding industrial estates.

Stagecoach Bluebird operates services both commercially and under contract to Aberdeenshire Council and the Moray Council. A number of services pass through Aberdeen, terminating at and departing from the Union Square bus station, located at the heart of the City Centre. Stagecoach services tend to duplicate First services within the City, offering a degree of choice to customers and competition amongst operators on certain routes, but play a crucial role in linking Aberdeen City with numerous towns and villages throughout Aberdeenshire and beyond. Stagecoach also currently operates three services exclusively within the City, namely the number 59, linking Northfield and Balnagask via the City Centre, the Jet 727, linking the Union Square rail and bus station with Aberdeen Airport, and the number 93, connecting a number of residential areas along the Deeside corridor to the City Centre via Garthdee, a significant out-of-town centre shopping area and residential development. The latter service is operated under contract to Aberdeen City Council.

A handful of minor operators also run services to and from the City, under contract to Aberdeenshire Council or the Moray Council. These are intended to fill in any gaps in provision not covered by the commercial operators.

Five Demand Responsive bus services also operate within Aberdeen during the week, at off-peak times only, offering a door-to-door service for residents in most areas of the City who are unable to use conventional bus services. These can be booked up to seven days in advance.

Essentially, therefore, the City is well served by public transport, in terms of scheduled frequency and penetration of services. There exist a range of commercial daytime, Park and Ride, late night, supported and demand responsive services that residents and visitors can use to travel throughout Aberdeen and the wider region.

The majority of operators of both commercial and supported services offer a range of single, return and season tickets, with special discounts available for students and family groups, which can be bought from the driver, online or from operators' offices.

3.3 Baseline Mode Share and Trends

Aberdeen City Council regularly consults with the citizens of Aberdeen on a variety of topics through its Citizens Panel survey, City Voice. Once a year, City Voice gauges respondents' views on transportation matters, including local bus services.

Figures from the City Voice survey, as well as biennial Scottish Household Survey (SHS) data, can therefore be used to establish the baseline transport modal split for those travelling to work in Aberdeen and to identify any noticeable trends.

City Voice figures indicate that 58% of Aberdeen's citizens travelled to work by car in 2010, while only 11.3% travelled by bus, compared to 65.1% and 10.3% respectively the previous year, thus suggesting that car-based commuting is in decline while travelling to work by bus has experienced a slight increase (the largest observed increase was in the number of adults walking to work).

SHS figures, although subject to a lag period, reveal that 63.8% of Aberdeen's citizens travelled to work by car in 2007/8. This is roughly in line with the Scottish average

(67%), but far exceeds the corresponding figures for other cities, with Edinburgh at 40.7%, Glasgow at 49.6%, and Dundee at 57.3%.

SHS data for bus travel is more promising than the City Voice results would suggest, with 15.2% of the workforce commuting by bus in 2007/8, despite a fall from 17% in 2005/6. This is above the 2007/8 Scottish average of 12.4% but is again far lower than Scotland's other cities, with Edinburgh buses having a modal share of 27.9%, Glasgow with 22.5% and Dundee with 18.7%.

Regarding pupils in full-time education, results from Sustrans' 2010 'Hands Up' School Travel Survey reveal that 20% of children are transported to school by car (compared to 16% the previous year) and 11% travel by bus (compared to 12% in 2009). It should be borne in mind, however, that walking rates for Aberdeen City schoolchildren are amongst the highest in Scotland and a number of schools in Aberdeen have above-average cycling levels, therefore the relatively poor public transport patronage levels among schoolchildren are not necessarily cause for concern.

The following table presents the SHS figures for the percentage of respondents who have used a local bus service in the last month, comparing Aberdeen with other Scottish cities and the Scottish average.

Use of Local Bus Services	Aberdeen	Dundee	Edinburgh	Glasgow	Scotland
Every/almost every day	15	19	26	22	13
2-3 times a week	15	19	21	16	12
Once a week	10	12	15	8	8
Once a fortnight/month	19	9	18	15	14
Never	42	42	21	39	54

Table 3.1 Scottish Household Survey Results. Percentage of respondents who have used a local bus service in the last month – frequency of use.

It can be seen that bus use in Aberdeen is well above the Scottish average but lags behind that of other major Scottish cities.

It seems fair to conclude, therefore, that, for a City of the size and complexity of Aberdeen, regular bus patronage is disappointingly low although there are signs that this trend is beginning to reverse.

4. Review of Best Practice

4.1 Introduction

One of the first stages in the preparation of this Bus Information Strategy has been a thorough review of best practice guidelines in the preparation of Public Transport Information Strategies, as well as a review of the Bus Information Strategies of other Scottish local authorities.

In undertaking this review, the following documents have been consulted:

- Aberdeenshire Council, Bus Information Strategy 2010;
- Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO), Public Transport Information – Good Practice;
- City of Edinburgh Council, Bus Information Strategy;
- Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), Legibility of Bus Timetable Books and Leaflets: A Code of Good Practice;
- Falkirk Council, Public Transport Information Strategy;
- The Institute of Logistics and Transport (ILT), Public Transport Information Web Sites: How to Get it Right;
- Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS), Valuable for Anyone, Valuable for Everyone;
- Passenger Focus, Bus Passenger Priorities for Improvement;
- The Scottish Executive, Guidance on Part 2 (Bus Services) of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001;
- The Scottish Government, Buses for Scotland: Progress Through Partnership – A Guide for Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships and Bus Operators; and
- Transport Research Series, Understanding Why Some People Do Not Use Buses.

Particular attention has been paid to the Bus Information Strategy of our neighbouring Aberdeenshire Council as there are a number of cross-border services operating within the north-east region - it is therefore considered important to maintain a consistency of information provision throughout the area to ensure that passengers, who do not necessarily recognise local authority boundaries, experience the same quality of information throughout their journey.

4.2 Recommendations for Information Provision

Scottish Government guidance states that,

*the **minimum** level of provision should be a **paper-based timetable at every bus stop used by boarding passengers with some form of fares information, plus timetable and fares information available at community/public facilities such as libraries, information centres, community centres, hospitals/health establishments, education establishments and tourist information centres. The quality and accuracy of such information is also of great importance. In particular, where alterations are made which render the information provided out of date, then action should be taken to ensure that revised information is provided before or at the point the change takes place. In general terms, it is important to maintain as much consistency as possible over the range of media used for information dissemination to avoid confusion and ensure that all materials are presented in a***

coherent manner...In terms of information provided through other media, such as telephone, the Traveline Scotland standard should be used as a benchmark.

Aberdeen City Council will therefore adopt these recommended minimum standards of information provision but will also encourage the exceedance of these wherever it is economic, efficient and effective to do so.

The remainder of this section takes each method or location of information retrieval and describes what the above documents suggest should be the minimum standard of information provided by each.

4.3. At the bus stop

The bus stop itself is one of the main places people seek information about bus services. It is recommended that every stop that caters for boarding passengers should have the following in place.

4.3.1 Flags and poles:

- All bus stops should be fitted with a flag carrying the words 'Bus Stop' and a recognisable pictogram and should comply with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002.
- A letter/number/geographical name to identify the stop should be included on the flag. This should be the same name used in all other promotional and timetable material.
- Flags should be used to show which operators and service numbers use that particular stop, this being of benefit in urban areas where a number of services may be operating.
- The Traveline Scotland logo and phone number should be prominent.
- The stop-specific SMS number and instructions for use should also be highly visible.

4.3.2 Display cases:

- All bus stops should provide service information in a watertight case, either separately mounted or, where possible, as an integral part of a bus shelter.
- This information should be placed in a location where passengers can consult it without disturbing others and should be legible during the hours of darkness. Consideration should be given to positioning panels so that they can be consulted by passengers in wheelchairs.
- A broad indication of the destination or direction of the buses serving the stop is useful as are route details for each service, listing all the main points visited.
- A basic bus map, showing the core network of services is a useful addition. These can be operator-specific or area-wide.
- Providing information on fares (at the very minimum an indication of fares to main points or maximum fares) and payment methods is useful and could reduce bus boarding times. Where no change is given, this should be stated so that passengers can have the correct change ready. It will also benefit passengers if information is provided about the range of ticket types available.
- Instructions on using Short Message Service (SMS) and Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) devices should be provided.

- A telephone number for reporting damages or faults or making complaints should be visible.
- Consideration should be given to audio facilities for the visually-impaired at significant stops and stations.
- Display cases should be clean and graffiti-free.

4.3.3 Timetable information:

- Printed timetable information for all services calling at that stop should be available in display cases at every bus stop used by boarding passengers, with formal interchange locations and key stops listed.
- Timetables should be accurate and up-to-date. Effective from and/or to dates should be included so that passengers know that the information is current.
- Timetables should indicate which operator is running the service.
- Displays should be stop-specific, describing the departure and arrival times unique to that stop.
- An indication of typical journey times to destinations can also be useful for passengers.

4.4 Real Time Information

Guidance suggests that real-time passenger information (RTPI or RTI) displays should be encouraged at bus stops on as many routes as possible, although this is usually restricted to key strategic corridors. It should, however, augment, rather than replace, printed information at stops. As well as at-stop displays, RTPI should be available over as many media as possible including the internet, WAP phones, telephones and SMS messaging.

4.5 Printed timetable leaflets

Individual timetable leaflets are a useful source of information that can be consulted before setting out on a public transport journey. Guidance suggests that these should be printed on good-quality paper, easy to use in terms of clarity and presentation of information, and be readily accessible, both to carry away and to consult on the spot, in a variety of locations including libraries, tourist information centres and places people regularly travel to and from by bus such as hospitals, shopping centres, seaports, airports and railway stations.

The following technical and graphical details are also suggested to maximise usability:

- Text should obviously be clear and legible. Print colour should preferably be black or another colour that strongly contrasts with the background.
- It is preferable to place route numbers at the right hand corner of the page as this is likely to be the first thing the reader seeks.
- The name of the operator to which the timetable refers should be clearly displayed.
- The date of commencement or expiration of the information contained should be clearly visible.
- To ease comprehension of timetable information, a horizontal line should be provided across the timetable page to act as a guide.
- Vertical columns should always be clearly separated from adjacent times by 'white space'.
- It would be useful to include some form of fares information on timetables.

- A simple linear map to show the route followed is also useful, along with an indication of journey times between main points.
- Any codes or abbreviations used should be clearly explained.
- A contact telephone number for any enquiries should be included – this can be Traveline Scotland's or the bus operator's own number.
- Large print copies should be available for the visually impaired.

4.6 On the bus

Information present on buses themselves can be crucial in reassuring passengers that they are getting on the correct bus and that the journey is proceeding as expected. Information can be displayed both inside and outside of the bus.

4.6.1 Outside the bus:

- The operator of the service should be easily identifiable.
- A front-mounted display should clearly show the route number and the ultimate destination. It may also be useful to list key intermediate or 'via' points if space exists to do so.
- Side-mounted displays should also show the route number and destination.
- The route number should be visible from the rear.
- All external route information displays should be illuminated during the hours of darkness.
- It has been suggested that linear diagrams of all the places served on the route is useful, either inside the bus or displayed along the nearside of the vehicle.

4.6.2 Inside the bus:

- All vehicles should display fares information and printed timetable leaflets where practical, and these should be readily accessible.
- Drivers should be trained in customer care and able to provide information on timetables, fares and promotions.
- Any service changes must be displayed on board vehicles for a minimum of 21 days before implementation.
- Electronic displays and/or automatic announcements can help passengers know when they are nearing their destination points.

4.7 Websites

Increasingly, people are using the internet to gather information on public transport services. Bus operators usually have their own websites where timetables, fares and service information are available. A number of journey planning websites also exist which allow users to obtain information on all possible public transport journeys within the country.

To be successful, public transport websites must fulfill the needs of all users, especially those with disabilities and lower technical capabilities, and should be easy to use and navigate. Timetables in particular should be easily accessible and preferably printable. Generic sites should be impartial between operators.

4.7.1 Site content

The following has been identified as essential content for public transport websites, both generic and operator-specific:

- An attractive homepage which informs the user about the content of the site so that he or she can quickly assess the appropriateness of the site to their needs.
- A site description which will immediately convey information about the usability of the site and its tone.
- Accessible and printable timetables, both on-screen and in downloadable PDF format, with an indication of the currency of the information.
- Information in plain text or HTML formats. HTML should be offered as an alternative to PDF.
- Information on the accessibility of services for people with disabilities.
- Information about the necessity or possibility of interchanging between services or modes.
- Information on taking bicycles onto public transport and bicycle parking availability at stations and interchanges.
- A named contact for specific queries and details of how to contact relevant individuals.
- External sites should only be linked to if they will be relevant to the user and there should be a clear indication as to why the link is there.
- The site should encourage feedback from users, and contain a section of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and a 'Help' facility.

4.7.2 Technical details

The following technical details have also been identified to increase usability of public transport websites:

- Dark text on a light background will be easier to read than light text on a dark background.
- Light backgrounds make it easier to read, although white backgrounds can cause screen glare and eye strain.
- Bright colours are hard to read.
- Red and green text in particular should to be avoided.
- The eye is naturally drawn towards text that differs from other text on the site - changes in font size, style or colour, and italics or bold text suggests a contrast between information and aids effective scanning.
- Avoid underlining text as this usually indicates a hyperlink.
- Text and icon hyperlinks are more effective than text only or icon only.
- Alt tags should be provided to ensure links remain accessible to users who cannot access graphics.
- Excess graphics may reduce entry time to site. Download times will be minimised by small graphics or repeated use of the same graphics.
- Frames can be particularly problematic.
- As regards timetables, it may be helpful for users if a larger font is used for electronic timetables that would normally be used for their paper counterparts.
- The route number and details of the route traversed should be immediately apparent on any menu of timetables.
- Timetables should be characterised by horizontal lines and columnar shading.
- Horizontal shading with no vertical demarcation allows the eye to wander across fields.
- Flexible sites, which allow the user's browser to override the site provider's chosen design, are more usable than inflexible sites.

4.8 Telephone

It is generally accepted that Traveline Scotland provides a full and comprehensive telephone enquiry service for all public transport information and should be used as a benchmark.

Bus operators also have their own specific enquiry lines, which vary in the volume and quality of information on offer. At the very minimum, these should be able to offer fare and timetable information for all services, information on service delays, accessibility of vehicles for passengers with special needs, and how to claim lost property.

4.9 Area-Wide Maps

Area-wide maps are often published to show all the bus services operating in a particular area. These should be free from bias and contain details of all operator services, with a summary of routes, service frequencies and operation periods. Details of cross-boundary services should be included, as well as information on interchanging with other transport modes. It can also be beneficial to users to highlight key destinations on the map and to include details on which services can be used to access these. Relevant and up-to-date contact details of all operators, as well as the Traveline Scotland logo and information, should also be included.

4.10 One stop shops and ticket / enquiry offices

Independent or operator-specific travel centres and ticket offices can be a useful means for travelers to receive public transport information, obtain timetables and to purchase tickets. Face-to-face contact can be reassuring to new and infrequent travelers that the information they receive is accurate and current and allows them to ask questions that may not be covered elsewhere in printed or electronic material.

4.11 Service Changes

There is a statutory requirement in Scotland to place a notice of any proposed variation or cancellation on vehicles for a minimum period of 21 days. Updated route and timetable information should be displayed at appropriate stops and stations no later than the date of implementation, and outdated information removed on the day service changes are to take place. Traveline must be informed of any such changes as soon as possible and in any case no less than 21 days prior to the changes.

4.12 Special Needs

When issuing and reviewing guidelines for the provision of information, it should be borne in mind that roughly one in five of Scotland's population suffers from some form of disability. As a result, any printed information at bus stops or on paper leaflets should abide by the following recommendations:

- Typeface should be at least 12 point and preferably 14 point. In no case should this be less than 8.
- Large-print timetables should be considered for the visually impaired.
- A clear, preferably sans-serif, font should be used.
- Text should contrast clearly with the background.
- A clear and unfussy layout is preferred.
- Lower case letters are easier to read and should be used almost exclusively.

Audio facilities, either on the bus or at bus stops, are also an effective way of making information accessible to the visually-impaired.

4.13 Responsibilities

Current responsibility for the maintenance of all bus stop infrastructure, including, flags, poles, shelters, RTPI displays and information panels lies with the local transport authority. It is also the responsibility of the local authority to determine what information is contained within these panels. It is, however, the responsibility of the bus operators to post such information into the display cases and to ensure that it is up-to-date and correct.

Websites and telephone enquiry lines (excluding Traveline and other national journey planning sites) tend to be operator-specific so lie under the operator's control, along with enquiry offices, timetable leaflets and all on-vehicle infrastructure. Operators are responsible for informing passengers of any service, route or fare changes that are to take place and are also required to submit all appropriate information to Traveline.

5: Current Public Attitudes towards Bus Information

5.1 Recent Statistical Results

The results of the 2010 City Voice survey reveal that:

- 58.2% of respondents agreed with the statement 'It is simple finding out what type of ticket I need', while 16.7% disagreed;
- 43.4% of respondents agreed that 'finding out about routes and times is easy' with 30.6% disagreeing; and
- 22% of respondents agreed that 'it's easy changing from buses to other forms of transport', while 29.1% disagreed with this.

SHS results, however, present, for 2007/8, a more promising outlook for Aberdeen City with:

- 84.6% of those questioned agreeing that the range and price of tickets is simple and easy to understand;
- 80.2% agreeing that finding out about routes and times is easy; and
- 69.7% agreeing that it is easy changing to other forms of transport.

However, 2005/6 figures revealed that:

- Only 18.8% of those interviewed had heard of Traveline Scotland, with only 2.8% having used it; and
- Only 5.8% had heard of Transport Direct, with only 1% having used it.

Unfortunately, these questions were not repeated in the 2007/8 survey so it has not been possible to measure changes in awareness of these facilities in recent years.

During February and March 2010, consultants AECOM, on behalf of Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans, undertook a series of Bus Passenger Satisfaction Surveys. These revealed that:

- 80% of respondents said they found it 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' to understand the range and prices of the tickets;
- 71% found it 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' to find out about the routes and times of buses;
- 74% were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the information provided at the bus stop/ shelter; and
- 70% were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the information provided on the bus.

These figures suggest therefore that, on the whole, bus information provision in Aberdeen is perceived by members of the public to be quite good, but there obviously remains scope for improvement. Even if one chooses to believe the more optimistic SHS results, there are still significant sections of the population who experience difficulty finding out information about public transport and it is clear that tools such as Traveline and Transport Direct are still far from being mainstream.

The large number of 'Don't know' responses to questions in the City Voice also highlights the fact that many people see public transport information as irrelevant to them. These are likely to be regular users of other modes, particularly the private car. It is therefore important that the Strategy does not ignore this sector or treat them as a 'lost cause', as it could be that a lack of reliable information is one of the main barriers preventing such people travelling by public transport more often.

5.2 Public Consultation on the Bus Information Strategy

It was felt that, before commencing the preparation of this Strategy, further, and more meaningful, engagement with the public was required. Although the above sources are useful in identifying some current attitudes, the questions asked are limited and do not probe sufficiently deep to give us a fully comprehensive picture of residents' attitudes towards all aspects of bus information and the various means and media through which it is available.

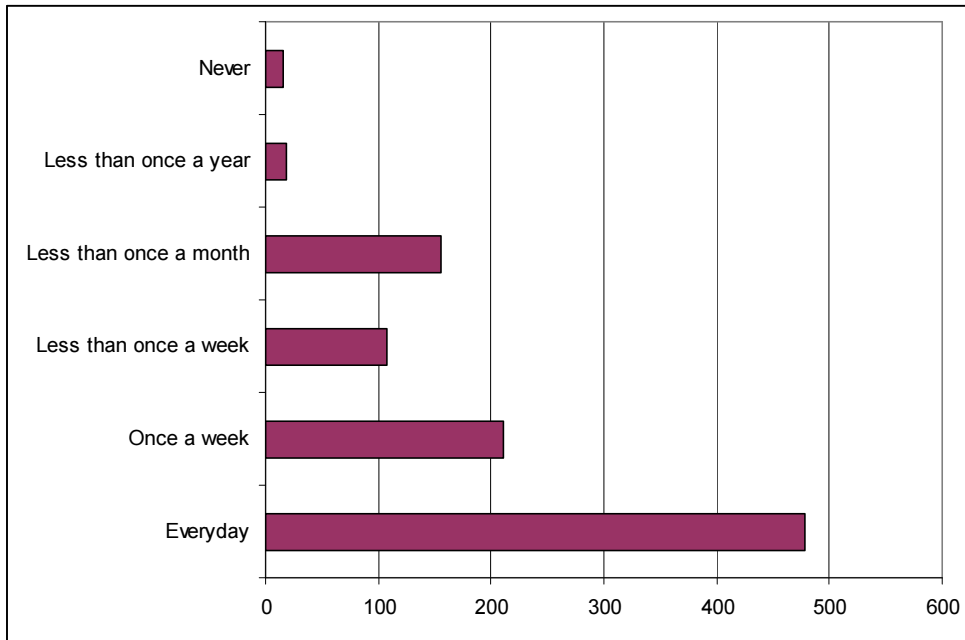
Aberdeen City Council therefore undertook a period of public consultation from January 11th to February 8th 2010. This took the form of a short questionnaire made available to the public and included questions on such matters as how respondents regularly access bus information, how useful they find this information, how easy it is to find the required information, and if there are any places they feel information should be provided where it is not at present. It was felt that this exercise would afford residents a platform to bring to the Council's attention specific aspects of information they find particularly useful or not useful, good or bad, and to provide in-depth comments on information quality and availability. This was an important step towards assessing what gaps currently exist and what is required for the future. The results of this consultation have been extensively drawn upon in the Strategy.

The questionnaire was available online via Survey Monkey, with a link to the survey from the Consultation page of Aberdeen City Council's website, and from the websites of Nestrans and Getabout, the regional travel planning partnership. Paper questionnaires were made available in a number of key locations including local libraries, community centres and Park and Ride sites. Posters advertising the consultation and informing members of the public how to make their views known were also displayed at key trip generators throughout the City such as further education institutes, NHS sites, the local Tourist Information Centre, at key bus stops, in the Union Square Bus Station and in the First Travel Centre.

Over the period of the consultation, a total of 988 people completed the questionnaire. The majority of respondents (64%) were female. 0.9% were aged 15 and under, 8.8% were aged 16-24, 23% were 25-34, 45% were 35-54, 14.2% were 55-64, 4.4% were 65-74 and 3.6% were aged 75 and over.

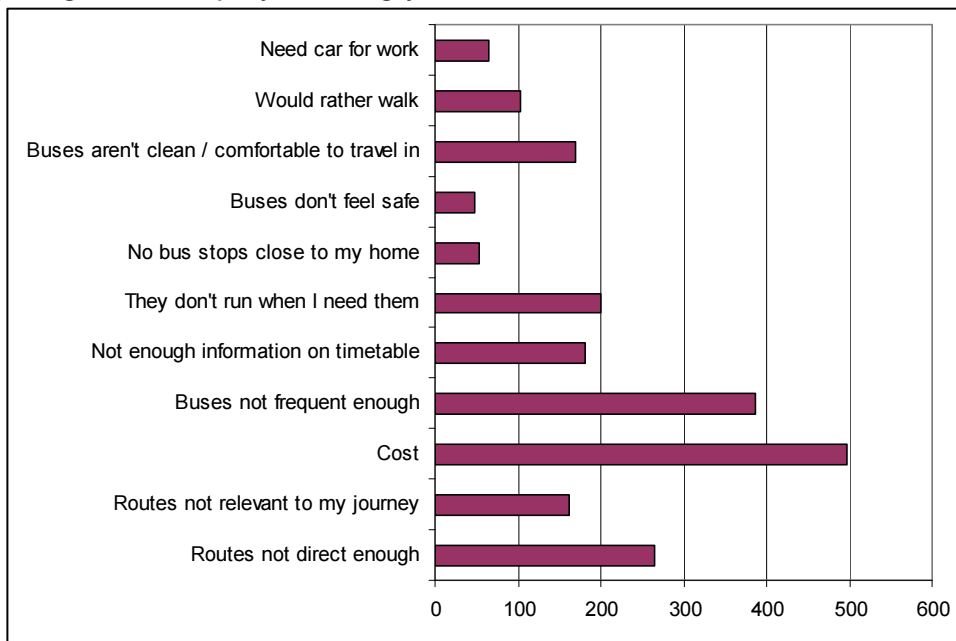
5.3 Key Results from the Public Consultation

Q1. How often do you use local bus services?



The majority of respondents were regular bus users, with only a small proportion stating that they never travel by bus.

Q2. If anything, what stops you using your local bus service?



22% cited not enough information on timetables as a barrier to regular bus travel. Whilst this may not be one of the highest contributing barriers to bus use, it is a significant one and is one which the Council can influence by the implementation of a Bus Information Strategy.

Q3. We want to find out how you access information on buses, and if you are aware of the services listed below.

	Aware of and use	Aware of but don't use	Not aware of but might use	Not aware of but wont use	TOTAL
Operators website	66.3%	24.0%	5.7%	3.9%	100%
Journey planning	24.8%	50.4%	16.5%	8.3%	100%

websites (e.g. Transport Direct, Traveline)					
Timetable information to your mobile phone by SMS text messaging	8.2%	50.4%	18.5%	23.0%	100%
Timetable information at bus stops	84.3%	12.5%	2.6%	0.7%	100%
Real time information at bus stops	75.6%	18.6%	4.4%	1.4%	100%
The Traveline telephone enquiry service	12.4%	52.9%	14.3%	20.4%	100%
Other telephone enquiry services (e.g. First, Stagecoach, Aberdeen City Council)	19.1%	52.1%	12.5%	16.3%	100%
Paper timetables /leaflets	70.8%	23.2%	4.6%	1.4%	100%
Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide	13.8%	32.2%	39.3%	14.8%	100%

It can be seen that the most commonly used method of gaining information is via timetables at bus stops. This suggests that the quality and maintenance of this is of paramount importance and is crucial in maintaining and facilitating further bus use.

Some methods are not well known among the general public, specifically the Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide, the Traveline telephone enquiry service and information via SMS messaging. Interestingly, however, figures from Traveline regarding usage of their SMS service show that Aberdeen City has, by a significant margin, the highest number of users of the facility of any area in Scotland, possibly as a result of the investment the Council and partners such as Nestrans have placed in the provision of detailed bus stop flags with SMS information.

Paper information and Real Time Passenger Information at bus stops are clearly important sources of information to users, albeit these will unlikely to be of use to non-bus users or those planning journeys.

Sources of information for planning journeys are more likely to be operators' websites or Traveline. Operators' websites are well used and over 90% of people are aware of them; the Traveline service is not felt to be as useful by respondents and 34% of people are unaware of its existence.

Operators' websites only provide information for their own services and bus users may not be aware of other operators' services; the Traveline website and telephone service does provide information on all services and would arguably provide more information to travelers.

The Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide provides information on all bus services in the area (although not detailed timetable information) similar to Traveline, however there is a clear requirement for increased promotion of its availability.

People are aware of but not keen to use telephone inquiry services (both Traveline and operators' own helplines) and there is a significant reliance upon web based information and at stop information.

There were frequent comments made that there is a lack of at-stop timetable information.

This reveals where deficiencies lie in current information dissemination and this can hopefully be addressed and resolved by the Strategy. A significant percentage of respondents are, however, aware of the existence of many sources of information, but choose not to use them. We need to investigate the barriers to use and try to overcome them via this Strategy, too.

Q4. On a scale of 1-10, how useful do you find the following methods of bus information provision, where 1 = very useful and 10 = not useful at all. Please only comment on the services you are aware of and use.

Useful:

1. Paper timetables/leaflets (78.8% with 24.8% very useful)
2. Operator's website (77.1% with 21.1% very useful)
3. Journey planning websites (70.2% with 12.3% very useful)
4. Timetable information at bus stops (66.6% with 21.8% very useful)
5. Real time information at bus stops (62.3% with 22.4% very useful)
6. Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide (60.9% with 12.7% very useful)
7. Other telephone enquiry services (54.8% with 10.9% very useful)
8. Traveline (53.6% with 11.3% very useful)
9. SMS messaging (50.1% with 8.8% very useful)

Not useful:

1. SMS messaging (49.9% with 20.6% not useful at all)
2. Traveline (45.9% with 13.3% not useful at all)
3. Other telephone enquiry services (45.1% with 12.4% not useful at all)
4. Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide (39.1% with 11.7% not useful at all)
5. Real time information at bus stops (37.8% with 12.4% not useful at all)
6. Timetable information at bus stops (33.4% with 9.2% not useful at all)
7. Journey planning websites (29.8% with 8.4% not useful at all)
8. Operator's website (22.8% with 8.4% not useful at all)
9. Paper timetables/leaflets (21.2% with 5.3% not useful at all)

The most useful methods of gaining information are paper timetables and operators' websites. Information via SMS messaging and the Traveline telephone enquiry service are considered the least useful. Again, this reveals those means of gathering information which are most popular with the public, so therefore must be maintained to a high standard, as well as revealing those which are not particularly well received and may require more intense investigation as to why this is the case, or more publicity or promotion of their benefits.

Q5. On a scale of 1-10 (where 1 = very easy and 10 = very difficult), how easy do you find it to access the following information?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1
Bus timetables	3	1	1	9	1	5	5	3	0	3
Fare information	1	8	1	1	1	7	9	8	4	1

Roughly 82% of respondents find it easy to access bus timetables (with 30% stating that it is 'very easy'). Less than 60%, however, find it easy to access fares information, with 15.3% finding it 'very easy' and 11.1% finding it 'very difficult'. This Strategy will aim, therefore, to increase the proportion of people finding it easy to access information on both.

Q6. If you needed to access information on bus timetables, fares etc, what source would you use?

	Telephone	Text message (SMS)	Internet	First travel Centre	Stagecoach / Bluebird ticket office	Other
Bus timetable	12.6	3.8	53.8	17.2	8.1	4.5
Fare information	12.1	1.9	46.6	19.2	9.4	10.9

The internet is the most commonly used method of finding timetable and fare information, with SMS messaging the least used. This reflects the results of previous questions and, again, reveals those areas which may require more promotion (such as the text2traveline facility), as well as particularly popular methods of information retrieval (particularly the Internet) that absolutely must be maintained and, if possible, improved.

7. What are the most important things you would expect to see at a bus stop (please pick 3)?

1. Timetable 28.9%
2. Bus stop sign post 21.7%
3. Route map 20.5%
4. Fare/ ticketing information 19.9%
5. Operator contact details 5.7%
6. Traveline contact details 3.2%

40% of what people expect to see is not provided at most bus stops – route maps and fares/ticketing information. The Strategy will seek to address this.

8. Is the following information provided at the bus stop you use most often?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Bus stop sign post	95.8%	2.4%	1.7%
Timetable	65.1%	33.3%	1.6%
Fare ticketing/ information	32.8%	56.1%	11.2%
Route map	38.5%	51.7%	9.8%
Operator contact details	27.4%	32.9%	39.7%
Traveline contact details	25.5%	29.6%	44.9%

Although a timetable is the most important thing respondents would expect to see at a bus stop, it would seem that there remain a large number of stops (roughly a third) without full timetable information. A significant percentage of stops also have no route

map or fares information, despite a large number of respondents wishing to see these in place.

This supports responses from earlier questions and was a clear steer for developing the Strategy.

9. Would improving any of the following encourage you to use buses more often?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Bus stop sign post	32.6%	57.9%	9.5%
Timetable	60.4%	34.8%	4.9%
Fare ticketing/ information	55.9%	38.3%	5.9%
Route map	55.9%	38.9%	5.2%
Operator contact details	25.7%	61.5%	12.8%
Traveline contact details	21.6%	64.4%	14.0%

The three things that would encourage respondents to use buses more often, if provided at bus stops, are a timetable, route map and fare and ticketing information. The results of this (and the preceding questions) were extremely important in informing the direction of the Strategy in terms of what information the public expects to see at a bus stop and which information would encourage them to travel more if provided.

10. On the bus you use most often, is the destination clearly marked on the front of the bus?

Yes	79.1%
No	1.4%
Sometimes	19.5%

11. Is the following information available on the bus you use most often?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Timetable	22.2%	54.9%	22.9%
Fare and ticket information	41.1%	37.6%	21.3%
Route map	32.8%	41.8%	25.4%
Operator information	44.9%	17.5%	37.6%
Traveline information	26.6%	24.1%	49.3%
Information about other services	14.3%	42.9%	42.8%

It can be seen that a significant percentage of buses do not have information for passengers available on board, especially timetables, information about other bus services, a route map and fare information.

5.4 Summary of Comments Received

The questionnaire allowed users to make specific comments on various aspects of bus information. These are summarised below.

Timetables

A recurring comment was that timetables are ineffective when buses do not meet the times specified. Concern was also raised that, as a result of route and timetable changes, timetables date very quickly and it can be difficult to know that the one you are consulting is the most recent. Some respondents would also like to see more

information on timetables with respect to the route travelled, tickets, fares and stops visited.

Specifically regarding timetables at bus stops, many respondents expressed dismay that timetables are not available at every stop or are incomplete or obscured. Some respondents find timetables difficult to read during the hours of darkness. Respondents also appreciate timetables with stop-specific arrival and departure times. Nevertheless, 84.3% of respondents use timetable information at bus stops, with almost a quarter of respondents finding them 'very useful'.

Regarding paper copies of timetables, a number of locations were identified where people would like to see these made available. The most commonly cited of these were libraries, shops, workplaces, Council buildings, community centres, post offices, schools, leisure/tourist facilities, hospitals/clinics, transport interchanges, colleges/universities and at bus stops themselves.

Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI)

The responses gave a clear indication that RTPI is well used and that many people would like to see the system expanded. However there were a significant number of comments regarding the poor quality and accuracy of information provided and, similar to at stop information, concern that they may not reflect the actual arrival times of buses.

Poor maintenance was raised as an issue, as was the inconsistency of a system that can switch from claiming a bus is five minutes away to 'due' in a matter of seconds and claiming a bus is 'due' when there is no bus in sight. Respondents stated that not all services (even all those operated by First) appear on the screens. There was also a desire that screens show when a service has been cancelled and the approximate length of any delay.

Bus stops

There was a general desire for better information at bus stops, with information placed at a reasonable height to aid reading. There was a consensus that clear, accurate and consistent information should be provided at every stop. Better lighting at bus stops was also requested to facilitate consulting information during the hours of darkness. There was concern that information boards are often vandalised and not repaired and that bus stop flags do not always accurately reflect all the services stopping at a particular stop.

Fare information

There were a number of comments that First Aberdeen's fare structure was difficult to understand. Respondents felt that there were ambiguities surrounding journey costs and that this made it difficult to have the exact fare ready when boarding. A small number of respondents also found the fare structure inconsistent, claiming they had been charged two different prices for the same journey on occasion.

Fare information is not always available at bus stops and some respondents stated that, when it is, it is often out of date. There was also a concern that fare increases are not adequately advertised.

On-bus information

A number of respondents commented on the poor customer service skills of drivers, finding them unhelpful or discourteous. Some respondents felt that the communication skills of drivers were poor, particularly when asking for fare, route or time information. Respondents would also like to see more paper copies of timetables available on buses.

Regarding destination screens on the front, sides and rear of buses, some people find these difficult to read, even close up, and there have been occasions where such information has been absent or incorrect.

Route maps and guides

A few comments were received regarding route maps and guides, stating that these were confusing and oversimplified, with intermediate stops on maps too far apart to deduce what route the bus follows between them.

Web-sites

Very few comments were received regarding information on websites, with only a handful of respondents finding them of limited use and stating that they should be improved. Nevertheless, 66.3% of respondents regularly use operators' websites, with more than a fifth of respondents finding them 'very useful'.

SMS

Very few comments were received on the SMS text facility. Those few comments encountered implied that no reply was received when using txt2Traveline.

Telephone Enquiry Lines

Some respondents found these useful, but were disappointed that the operators' helplines were only available during certain hours. Others claimed such lines (both Traveline and the operators' own) were always busy, and callers either received no reply or were put through to an answering machine, when they would prefer live information from a human being.

Enquiry Offices

A few comments were received regarding the operators' enquiry offices. Two respondents stated that the First Travel Centre is always busy and complained of the limited opening hours. There were also concerns that the Bus Station is poor, and was unmanned for long periods over the Christmas and New Year period.

Other Comments

Overwhelmingly, respondents stated that information is only useful if it actually reflects the reality of what is happening on the ground.

Some respondents claimed that as service numbers, fares, routes and timetables are often changing, this causes confusion and prevents people becoming familiar with timetables.

A few comments were received stating that information on Stagecoach services can be difficult to obtain in the City.

There were a few comments regarding the bus stops that Park and Ride service 40 stops at, with respondents claiming that sometimes the bus stops at a particular stop, other times it does not.

5.5 Conclusions

This survey was not intended as an analysis of all aspects of public transport, but was designed to focus on information provision to guide the Council in developing this Bus Information Strategy.

Analysis of this information and discussion with stakeholders suggested the following conclusions to assist with the development of the strategy:

- Web based information has to be developed. It is currently well used but restricted to only providing information on one operator at a time. Despite Traveline providing information on all services, it does not provide fare or ticketing information.
- The provision of information at bus stops should be increased throughout the City.
- The standard of information at bus stops should be improved as currently only time information is primarily available with some fare or route information.
- The SMS system is not well used.
- 40% of people did not find it easy to access fare information.
- 18% of people did not find it easy to access timetable information.
- Service changes are disruptive and management of information provision could be improved.
- There are out of date timetables on street.
- Sometimes simplifying the information is unhelpful.
- Contacting bus operators by telephone was either not desirable or when attempted, unsuccessful.
- Festive, bank holiday and special bus service information is difficult to find.
- Reliability / punctuality is the most significant concern and arguably is a higher priority than the information, as the information has to be accurate before being useful to bus users.

6. Review of Existing Information

6.1 Introduction

Another necessary step in the preparation of this Strategy has been to conduct a full assessment of the public transport information that currently exists within Aberdeen City. This, together with the results of the public consultation, has been crucial in determining where any gaps in information provision exist or where information is not up to the required standard. This is also helpful in establishing a baseline from which to measure the progress of the Strategy. This chapter presents the findings of the review and assesses the current state of information provision in light of the best practice guidelines outlined in Chapter 4.

It is appreciated that information, especially online information, is in an almost constant state of flux and any attempt to describe what is currently available can quickly date. The information contained in this Chapter is correct at the time of writing (January 2011).

Currently in Aberdeen, public transport information is available to the general public through the following means:

- At bus stops;
- From individual timetable leaflets;
- On the buses themselves;
- Via the Internet;
- Over the telephone;
- Via SMS text messaging;
- From the Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide and other route / service maps; and
- From the First Travel Centre or Stagecoach Bluebird ticket office.

6.2 At bus stops

A thorough review of every bus stop in the City was planned to assess the quality of information available at each stop. However, following recent discussions between Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and bus operators over the future format of, and responsibility for providing, bus stop information, it was not considered an efficient use of resources to undertake such a review at this time, given that the available information could change substantially in the short to medium term. The results of the public consultation give us, in any case, a good indication of the current state of information at stops and provides a baseline to build upon.

6.3 Individual timetable leaflets

First and Stagecoach both publish paper copies of timetables for the commercial services they operate, while supported service timetables are provided by Aberdeen City Council's Public Transport Unit.

A review of all available paper timetables confirms that they all largely conform to best practice guidelines.

6.3.1 First timetables:

- Service specific timetable booklets are available for all First services. These are pocket-sized so are easily transportable and fold out.

- The text is clear and legible, generally a dark print colour on a light background.
- Route numbers are displayed prominently on booklet covers and these are colour-coded according to First's route branding system.
- The origins and termini are also prominently displayed on the front, with some intermediate destinations listed.
- They are clearly identifiable as First timetables with the First Group logo displayed on the bottom right hand corner of booklets.
- The date of issue is also displayed on the front cover of booklets.
- Timetables follow the conventional 24-hour clock format, with individual journeys displayed in vertical columns and location-specific times running in horizontal rows.
- Times that each bus is due at key intermediate points on the route are given, thus allowing passengers to calculate roughly how long their journey will take.
- Columns are separated with alternating colours (the colours again reflecting the individual route brandings), with rows separated by a thin black line to ease comprehension.
- All codes and abbreviations used are clearly explained.
- Separate timetables are presented for weekdays, Saturday and Sundays.
- If timetables are seasonal (such as those serving the University), the dates of operation are provided.
- Each timetable includes an overall network map and an individual service route map, which shows the route that the service travels, down to the detail of individual streets that the bus passes along. These also highlight particular destinations, such as the university and the railway station, that the bus serves. Detailed city centre maps are also included, showing the individual stops in the city centre that the bus calls at.
- Reference is made to the range of tickets available, but no costs are provided. Passengers are referred to the website or the travel centre for more detailed information.
- There is no information provided on the accessibility of vehicles for those in wheelchairs.
- Contact details are given for the company's headquarters and the travel centre for feedback and comment.
- The telephone enquiry number and website details are also given.
- The Traveline number is provided for timetable enquiries, the URL for the Real Time Bus website is displayed and the National Rail Enquiries number is provided for those seeking onward travel by rail.

First also produce a Public Holiday timetable booklet. This contains full timetables for all services operating on public holidays with timetables following the same format as above. All relevant contact details are provided and the dates where such timetables will be operating are clearly marked on the front of the booklet. Normal timetable booklets do not, however, give details of which days the public holiday timetable will be in operation.

6.3.2 Stagecoach timetables:

- Timetable booklets are available for all Stagecoach services, either as individual services or as groups of services. These are pocket-sized so are easily transportable and fold out.

- They are clearly identifiable as timetables for Stagecoach services.
- The final destination and intermediate points are listed on the front cover and along the top of the timetables themselves. Where the services are identified by a recognisable brand, such as 'Inverurie Connect' or 'Buchan Link', these are also included on timetable covers.
- Route numbers to which the timetables refer are clearly visible on the front of timetable booklets and at the top right-hand corner of the timetables themselves.
- The date of commencement is visible on the front page of each booklet.
- Timetables are in conventional 24-hour clock format, running vertically down the page, with rows in alternating colours to ease reading, stating the times that buses are due at main intermediate points along the route, thus allowing journey times to be estimated.
- A key explains any abbreviations or codes used.
- All timetables provide contact details for Stagecoach (telephone number, website, postal address) as well as the number for Traveline.
- Some timetables state that vehicles are wheelchair-accessible or provide the telephone number for Stagecoach's disability helpdesk; others do not.
- Some have route maps; others do not.
- Timetables do not contain any information on fares or ticketing options.

6.3.3 Supported Service timetables – Dyce Airlink and Service 93:

- Timetables are available as pocket-sized fold-out leaflets.
- Text is clear and legible, with print colours conforming to recommendations. Text size on the Dyce Airlink timetable may, however, prevent it being legible to the visually impaired.
- Final destinations and service numbers are clearly marked on the front of booklets.
- Timetables are in conventional 24-hour clock format, running vertically down the page.
- Times for the Dyce Airlink are given in rows and columns separated by white space to facilitate reading and comprehension; the 93 timetable is in a comprehensive table format.
- Timetables list the intermediate points visited along the route and the time each bus is due to depart from these, thus allowing some degree of journey time estimation.
- The Dyce Airlink timetable also provides details of the trains arriving from and departing Dyce Station to facilitate bus/rail integration.
- Full fare information is provided.
- Route maps are provided, showing the individual streets that the bus travels down. Individual stops are marked on the Dyce Airlink booklet.
- The Service 93 timetable lists key places along the route that the bus serves, such as shops and leisure attractions.
- Full contact details of Aberdeen City Council and Traveline are provided.
- Information is given on how passengers can make comments and suggestions about the services.
- There is, however, no indication of the currency of the information provided on either timetable.
- Neither timetable contains any information on wheelchair accessibility.

6.4 On the buses

All buses operating within the City have a destination screen on the front of the vehicle at the top, displaying the route number and end destination of the service, with some also displaying details of key intermediate points. All vehicles have a blind at the back of the vehicle capable of displaying at least the route number, while some also have capacity to display destination details. Many of the newer vehicles also have destination screens at the sides, displaying the route number and end destination. If for any reason these blinds are not in operation, a piece of paper with the service number is usually attached to the front windscreen of the bus.

Each operator has a distinct livery with which their vehicles are decorated, making them easily recognisable as belonging to a particular operator. The majority of First bus routes have been allocated a specific colour, unique to that route. For example Route 1 from Danestone to Garthdee is 'The Red Line', and the majority of vehicles operating this service are therefore branded in red livery, thus easing recognition of a particular service, as the vehicle colour is often easier to spot from a distance than the destination screens are to read. Some of the newer First vehicles also contain information on the frequency of the service (for example, 'Something to shout about every 12 minutes!' branded onto Red Line vehicles) and intermediate points along the route painted on the outside of the buses. It has been observed, however, that, on occasion, vehicles branded for a specific route are used on an alternative route, with, for example, vehicles branded as the Red Line being used to operate the Park and Ride service (Service 40). This could lead to confusion and even passengers boarding the wrong bus if not paying sufficient attention. Some of the newer vehicles operated by First also display the contact details of Traveline on the outside of the bus.

Similarly, the outside of many Stagecoach vehicles are branded according to the route they traverse, such as 'The Buchan Link', 'Ellon Park and Ride', 'Inverurie Connect' and 'Discover Royal Deeside'. Again, however, it has been observed that vehicles are not always used in such a way that the liveries and the service numbers and routes correspond, which could cause passengers confusion.

Inside the vehicles, fare information is displayed on some services but not on all. Similarly, paper copies of timetables are only available on some buses. No vehicles operating in the City currently have any audio or visual information systems in place, other than on board visual signs indicating 'bus stopping'. Drivers are, of course, on hand to deliver any information that passengers seek.

6.5 Internet

6.5.1 Transport Direct (www.transportdirect.info)

Transport Direct is a web-based journey planner sponsored by the UK government. It covers the whole of the UK and allows 'door to door' journey planning for both car and public transport journeys, including local buses, coaches, trains and flights, allowing direct comparisons between modes. The site also contains live travel news, warning of delays, diversions and so on. No fare information is provided however, nor is any service-specific accessibility information.

6.5.2 Traveline Scotland (www.travelinescotland.com)

Traveline Scotland is a web-based journey planner, allowing the user to plan any public transport journey within Scotland. The site aims to provide accurate, impartial and current timetable information for all registered bus services in Scotland (as well as coach, rail, ferry, air and subway services). Users can:

- Find, customise and print timetables for any bus service in Scotland;
- Create a personal travel plan for a journey, by inputting mode, origin, destination and preferred arrival and departure times;
- Find next departure times for a specific bus stop by entering the stop's unique SMS code;
- Find out about services offering bicycle carriage facilities;
- Find instructions on using the txt2traveline service;
- Link to the websites of operators, tourist information services and local authorities;
- Create personal travel plans in bulk – for employees, visitors, students etc;
- Identify any traffic issues (delays, diversions) that may impact upon their journeys; and
- Find information on the Traveline telephone enquiry service.

No bus fare information is supplied, although it is believed that Traveline is currently working with operators to seek to provide this information, nor is there any information on vehicle accessibility.

6.5.3 First Aberdeen (<http://www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/scotland/nescot/home/>)

The section of First Group's website dedicated to First Aberdeen contains much information on travelling on First services within the City. Users of the site can find:

- Full timetables for all services, with an indication of those services which are wheelchair accessible. Timetables can be viewed onscreen, or downloaded in PDF format or large print PDF format and printed. Valid to and from dates are provided. Timetables follow the recommended presentation guidelines. They are accompanied by a guide to printing timetables;
- Network maps, both for the whole City and for the City Centre, the latter showing which bus services depart from each City Centre bus stop;
- Specific pages on places of interest in the City and which buses serve them, as well as pages on leisure services, hospital services, Airport services, late night services and Park and Ride services;
- A journey planner – by entering your origin destination or route number, a series of relevant timetables are generated;
- Information on the various ticket options and prices and where these can be purchased. Season tickets can be purchased directly from the website. Prices are only provided for multiple journey tickets however, not single tickets;
- A Paypoint locator map, showing the outlets in the City from where season tickets can be purchased;
- Information on the Concessionary Travel scheme;
- Specific information for student travelers, such as which services access the universities and the cost of student tickets;
- A page dedicated to the First Travel Centre;
- Information on Plusbus, a combined rail/bus ticket, with a link to the Plusbus website;
- A 'How to Use the Bus' Guide, explaining the various steps necessary to undertake a successful bus journey;

- The Conditions of Carriage;
- Information on First's Safe Journey Card and a link to a downloadable and printable version of this;
- Travel news and service updates;
- A facility to leave a message, as well as contact details of First's headquarters in Aberdeen; and
- A link to the Real Time Bus website.

In general terms, the site is colourful, attractive and easy to navigate, largely abiding by the recommended best practice guidelines, in terms of content and presentation.

6.5.4 Stagecoach Bluebird (<http://www.stagecoachbus.com/localdefault.aspx>)

From the main page of the Stagecoach Bluebird site, 'Find a Timetable' and 'Buy Your Tickets Online' facilities are available, while the most recent service updates are displayed and there is a link at the top of the page to a full list of service updates. There is also a link to 'Fares Information', which takes the user to page where they can select a ticket type (unirider, megarider, Plusbus, day and group tickets) to obtain a list of prices. There is no indication here of the price of standard single or return tickets, although 'A Guide to Fares and Tickets' can be downloaded, which suggests that 'Our single fares range from 40p to £10.50'. No specifics or typical examples are given, however, although it is accepted that the vast number of journeys that could be undertaken on Stagecoach services may preclude this.

Timetables are displayed in PDF format. If the required service number is unknown, users can input their origin and destination and a number of relevant services are displayed, which can then be selected to obtain timetables. These are downloadable and printable, with an 'effective from' date displayed for each timetable. They follow the recommended format of journeys presented in vertical columns with alternative colours used for each row. Some timetables contain information on wheelchair accessible vehicles, others do not.

Route maps are available for some services but not all. Users can also consult route maps of some of the main towns and villages that Stagecoach services travel through.

Full contact details for Stagecoach Bluebird are provided, as are the Conditions of Carriage and a set of Frequently Asked Questions about Stagecoach services. Links are provided to Traveline and Getabout.

In general, the site is user-friendly and the text is easy to read, largely conforming to the guidelines for best practice websites outlined above.

6.5.5 Aberdeen City Council (www.aberdeencity.gov.uk)

Best practice guidelines suggest that the website of the local authority should also be a source of public transport information. Although there is no mention of public transport on the home page of the City Council's website, there is an A-Z menu at the top of the screen. Under B can be found 'Buses' – clicking on this provides the user with a range of options to choose from.

From the Council's website, users can find information on:

- How to contact the City's Public Transport Unit;

- Reporting damage to stops and shelter and how to request a stop or shelter;
- Demand Responsive Transport services – operating hours, eligibility, fares and how to book, as well as a downloadable information sheet;
- Concessionary travel for the elderly and disabled, including information on conditions, how to apply, and FAQs;
- The supported Dyce Airlink service, with a link to a downloadable and printable PDF copy of the timetable;
- The Council's supported service, No. 93, with links to a downloadable and printable PDF copy of the timetable; and
- The Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide, where paper copies can be obtained and a link to a downloadable PDF copy.

The main page of the Council's PTU is accessible from a range of the pages described above, as well as from the main A-Z menu accessible from the home page. On the PTU home page there is information on the main responsibilities of the PTU and named contact details of relevant officers, as well as some information on Park and Ride in the City. From this page, the following information can also be accessed:

- Contact details for representatives of social work transport, schools transport, and fleet transport;
- Links to seasonal timetables;
- A link to the First Aberdeen site, but not to Stagecoach or Traveline Scotland;
- A link entitled 'Travel Information and Times' which takes the user to an external site www.travelline.co.uk. From here there is a link to Traveline Scotland;
- A link to information on the Scotland-wide concessionary card scheme; and
- Information on Scotland Explorer, a commercially-run bus tour of Aberdeen for visitors.

All of the above pages have a named point of contact, as well as contact information by mail, e-mail and telephone.

It is clear, however, that the Aberdeen City Council web site is not as user-friendly as it could be when it comes to finding public transport information. There is no information about services, other than a few of those supported by the Council and Nestrans, and First is the only operator's website linked to from this site. Many page titles are misleading, information is not always presented in a coherent manner and it is not easy for an inexperienced user to navigate around the site. Neither Traveline nor Transport Direct is well promoted within the site. The site currently falls far short of the aspirations outlined for it in the Council's LTS.

6.5.6 Getabout (www.get-about.com)

Getabout is the umbrella brand for a regional travel planning partnership, comprising representatives of Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Nestrans, NHS Grampian, The Energy Savings Scotland Advice Centre North East, the University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon's University and Aberdeen College. The aim of the partnership is to encourage active and sustainable travel throughout the North East of Scotland, with bus promotion obviously an important element of this. The accompanying website, although not specifically a public transport website, could be consulted by those seeking public transport information. There is, indeed, a page on

the website entitled 'Travel by Bus' which gives some information about bus travel throughout the region, providing links to the First and Stagecoach sites and the Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide, as well as links to the websites of long-distance coach operators and Traveline and Transport Direct. The site also contains a 'News and Updates' section, where information on, for example, seasonal timetables and timetable alterations can be found.

Although this site is less specific than those outlined above, it may act as a useful first port of call for those seeking public transport information.

Noticeable by its absence, however, is any information on Aberdeen Bus Station on any of the above sites. The station itself has no dedicated web-site and nothing of any value appears when conducting an online search, other than a mention on Visit Scotland's website. A quick internet search for bus stations in other Scottish cities reveals that the websites of the City Councils of Edinburgh and Stirling and of the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport contain pages dedicated to the City bus stations. Travelers may wish to know, for example, details of available services, what sort of facilities are present at the station and how to correctly locate the desired stance in order to catch a bus. This seems to be an omission that should be rectified as it currently acts as a major gap in information provision.

6.5.7 Real Time Travel (www.realtimebus.com)

The recently-launched Real Time Travel website is the result of partnership working between Nestrans, First Aberdeen and Aberdeen City Council. The site allows users to enter a bus stop reference number, their postcode or the service number they require in order to obtain real time information on the next available First Bus service from a specific stop. Where real time information is not available, the scheduled time for that bus is displayed instead. Users can bookmark the display in order to access it from their desktops at the click of a button on future occasions.

The site is colourful, easy to use and navigate around. A Help section is available from a horizontal menu (displayed on every page), providing the user with step-by-step instructions on using the site and obtaining meaningful information. Other links displayed at the top of the page include a link to all First Aberdeen's timetables, a FAQ section and a Contact Us page, where contact details of the City's Public Transport Unit are provided.

Although First Aberdeen is the only operator on the system at present, the software is capable of accommodating other operators in the future.

6.6 Telephone

6.6.1 Traveline (0871 200 22 33)

Aberdeen City Council is a member of the national travel timetable information service, Traveline Scotland. Bus service data is supplied to Traveline by Aberdeenshire Council on behalf of Aberdeen City Council. Traveline operates a 24-hour enquiry line seven days a week to accompany its multimodal journey planning website. Timetables for all bus services, information on accessibility, stop-specific departure times, and a wealth of other information is available to the public via the telephone enquiry line and accompanying website. Traveline is generally held up as a benchmark for public

transport telephone enquiry lines. It does not, however, currently give information on fares, although work is ongoing to address this omission.

6.6.2 Operators

All of the public transport operators in Aberdeen have telephone numbers displayed on their websites and in their promotional literature, thus allowing those seeking operator-specific information to call and speak to a member of staff about services, timetables, accessibility and so on during normal office hours. Stagecoach also has a specific disability helpdesk number than can be called for relevant enquires.

6.6.3 Aberdeen City Council Public Transport Unit

A contact telephone number for Aberdeen City Council's Public Transport Unit is displayed on the Council's website and on all its promotional material. Staff within the department can provide members of the public with information on all aspects of bus travel within the City during normal office hours.

6.7 SMS text messaging

Traveline Scotland operates a SMS-based service, txt2traveline. Customers with mobile phones can request bus timetable information at any time, any place, simply by texting the unique SMS code (displayed on each bus stop flag) for the bus stop they wish to travel from to the txt2traveline number (07776082608). They then receive sent to their phone the departure times and service numbers of the next few buses from that stop. Users must pay for this service however – the sent message is charged according to the standard network provider charge, while the returned message from Traveline costs 25p

6.8 Route Maps and Service Guides

Aberdeen City Council publishes a Public Transport Guide that contains details of all services travelling to, from and within Aberdeen. Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils also produce an Aberdeenshire and Moray Public Transport Guide, which contains details of all bus services operating within these areas, many of which also travel to and from Aberdeen City. First Aberdeen produce their own network guide, while service-specific route maps are often available in timetable booklets and at bus stop displays.

6.8.1 The Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide

In October 2009, Aberdeen City Council, with assistance from First and Stagecoach developed an Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide, which contains:

- Colour-coded maps of Aberdeen's daytime and night bus networks, showing places of interest and key destinations served;
- A map of services to and from the wider Aberdeenshire area;
- A City Centre plan showing all bus stops accompanied by a destination list. The ID number for each stop is provided as well as the SMS code specific to each stop;
- Full instructions on using the SMS facility;
- A guide to departure points in the City Centre for all destinations within the City;
- An index of places served and a list of services to these locations;
- An index of places of interest and a list of services to these locations;
- An indication of which services run at an hourly or better frequency and any restrictions on when services run; and

- Full timetables for night bus services.

Logos of the operators, the City Council and Traveline Scotland are visible, with contact telephone numbers and web addresses for each. The Quality Partnership logo is also prominent and the date of issue is visibly marked on the front. Telephone numbers and web addresses for coach, rail, ferry and air services are included in order to facilitate interchange between transport modes. All symbols and graphics used on any of the maps are clearly explained. The Guide does not, however, contain any information on fares, timetables or frequencies (other than an indication of those services which are 'hourly or better').

Copies are available in City libraries, the Tourist Information Centre, and the First Travel Centre and can be sent out by the Council on request.

An updated version of the Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide is currently in development.

6.8.2 Aberdeenshire and Moray Public Transport Guide

The 2010 Aberdeenshire and Moray Public Transport Guide contains:

- A large-scale map showing the routes of all bus services operating within the area;
- Town centre maps of major settlements in Aberdeenshire and Moray and where individual buses can be caught;
- Contact details of all bus operators within the area;
- A list of late night bus services;
- A guide to the days of operation for each bus service;
- A list of Demand Responsive services available;
- An index of places served and places of interest; and
- Instructions on using the SMS facility, and the bus stop SMS numbers of the key interchange points within the area

The Traveline Scotland logo and telephone number is prominently displayed, as are the contact details of Council offices and key interchange points. Information on onward travel by air, bus, rails and sea is also provided. The Quality Partnership logo is prominent and the date of issue is visibly marked on the front. All symbols and graphics used on any of the maps are clearly explained. The Guide does not, however, contain timetables for any services or detailed information on frequencies or fares. Given the volume and range of services available in the area, however, it is unlikely such information could be provided within the available space.

6.8.3 First Aberdeen – Your map and guide to bus services

First Aberdeen produces its own network map and service guide. This encompasses the full network map showing all First services that operate in the City, as well as the City Centre map which shows all services that serve individual bus stops in the City Centre area. Summary timetables for each service (including late night services) are also provided, showing the hours of operation and frequency of each service. Full contact details of the company are given, as is the Traveline number, and information is provided on the various ticketing options available, although no specific prices are given.

6.8.4 Maps in timetables and at the bus stops

The First network map is displayed at many stops in Aberdeen. Pearl bar style route diagrams are also displayed on all timetables at bus stops for individual First services, although the likely journey times between destinations is not provided. Each timetable booklet for First services contains the overall network map and individual route maps, which show the exact routes the buses travel along, naming the individual streets it passes through.

Route maps for Stagecoach services are available in some timetable booklets. These show a summary of the route travelled, with maps of individual towns or villages showing the streets the buses pass through.

6.9 The First Travel Centre and Aberdeen Bus Station

Open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 0845 to 1730, and on Thursday and Saturday from 0900 to 1530, the First Travel Centre, located on Union Street in the centre of Aberdeen, offers information on all First Aberdeen services, including information on routes, frequencies, timetables, public holidays and fares. Customers can purchase tickets and obtain timetables in-store. Leaflets are also available on topics such as travelling with wheelchairs and buggies and student bus travel.

Open seven days a week, Union Square Bus Station is the origin or terminus for the majority of services operating into and out of the City, as well as for longer distance coaches to other parts of the country. There is a staffed ticket office where passengers can acquire information on services and there is a stand holding timetables for the majority of Stagecoach's local services as well as other leaflets. On the forecourt of the station itself, bus stances are numbered and each holds relevant timetables, and there are information screens around the outdoor waiting area containing information on ticket prices and suchlike. In the indoor waiting area, there is a notice board showing which services depart from each of the stances and a separate poster listing those services that travel to the Airport. There is also a Real Time Passenger Information screen showing those local First services departing from Guild Street outside the Station, and a journey planning kiosk. The bus station links to the railway station via a covered walkway through the Union Square shopping centre.

6.10 Where else is information currently available?

Information on bus services is also available to members of the public from a number of other outlets in Aberdeen.

Libraries – the Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide is available to carry away from all libraries in Aberdeen and there are free Internet facilities at all libraries, where members of the public can access public transport information. Those unable to use or unfamiliar with the Internet can receive assistance from librarians. The main Central Library keeps copies of printed timetables for consultation.

Tourist Information Centre – The Visit Scotland Tourist Information Centre on Union Street stocks paper copies of all First Aberdeen timetables and the most popular Stagecoach timetables (Royal Deeside, Stonehaven, Peterhead, etc.), as well as the Aberdeen Public Transport Guide. When printed timetable information is unavailable, staff consult operators' websites to provide information to visitors.

NHS Grampian – Aberdeen Royal Infirmary offers public transport information at main entrances. A booklet is sent out to all patients with their appointment, letting them know how to access the hospital by public transport.

Shopping centres – Union Square is the largest shopping centre in Aberdeen and is located directly alongside the main bus and railway stations. Within the mall is an Information Point where customers can access transport information, including timetables for Stagecoach services (which arrive at and depart from the neighbouring bus station), live information for First services departing from outside the shopping centre, as well as an interactive travel map, showing how to access the development by all modes of transport. Access to both the rail and bus stations is well-signed throughout the shopping centre. Bus information is not provided at any of the other shopping centres or large supermarkets in the City at present.

Railway stations – The main Aberdeen railway station itself does not hold any bus information but its proximity to both Union Square and the Bus Station means that travelers do not have far to go to access the information they need. Information on the Dyce Airlink bus is available at Dyce Station.

Airport – Displayed at Aberdeen Airport terminal are full timetables for all services departing from the Airport, split into those travelling to the City Centre and those travelling onward towards Inverness, listing the service number and the operator of the service. The Dyce Airlink timetable is displayed, also showing the train departure times to facilitate integration. A route map of the region is displayed showing all services leaving the Airport and their ultimate destination and there is a separate map showing the route taken by the Dyce Airlink. Telephone numbers of all operators, Aberdeen City Council and Traveline are provided along with all appropriate logos.

Ferry terminal – The Northlink Ferry Terminal does not hold individual copies of bus timetables but staff regularly check bus routes and times for passengers' onward journeys via the websites of individual operators. When contacting the terminal to enquire about how staff deliver public transport information, the terminal manager requested some copies of the Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide. These have subsequently been delivered.

Aberdeenshire Council Public Transport Web pages – These contain comprehensive details of all services operating to and from Aberdeen City, with a link to Bus Timetables available from the site's home page.

Moray Council Transport Web pages – These contain details of all services operating to and from Aberdeen City from the Moray area, including timetable information.

RTPI Systems – a number of offices within Aberdeen, including Aberdeen City Council's offices at St. Nicholas House and the Town House and Aberdeenshire's headquarters at Woodhill House, have RTPI information displays within them.

7. The Strategy

7.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the Strategy for improving bus information in Aberdeen. It lists separately the various means and media by which information can be obtained and then under these headings lists the actions that the Council and bus operators will undertake in order to ensure the maintenance and/or improvement of information.

Taking Scottish Government guidance, all actions emanating from the Strategy are designed to be economic, efficient and effective.

Information for existing users will take the form of clear day-to-day variants relating to regular services and full information for other services. Information for potential users is more complex and will include information that will persuade them to use public transport and how to make the journey as simple as possible. It will be necessary to ensure that such information is made as accessible as possible, especially to non-frequent bus users.

Actions have been split into short, medium and long term. Short term actions will be completed within two years of the adoption of the Strategy. Medium term actions will be completed within four years of the adoption of the Strategy. Long term actions are those which will be investigated prior to the next review of the Strategy but may require more time and resources to be effectively implemented within the lifetime of the first Strategy.

7.2 General Improvements and Promotion

Action	Responsibility	Progress to date	Timescale
Aberdeen City Council will, via the Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy and associated projects, continue to investigate and implement schemes that aim to encourage a greater uptake of public transport and reduce the number of trips undertaken in the City by private car.	ACC	Ongoing.	Ongoing. Local Transport Strategy due to be reviewed in 2012.
Aberdeen City Council will continue to work with Aberdeenshire Council, Nestrans and bus operators via the Local Authority and Bus Operator Forum (LABOF) to look at ways of improving the region's bus network and services, including improvements to punctuality, reliability and information provision.	ACC	A revised Quality Partnership was signed by all LABOF partners in 2010, outlining a series of minimum standards to be achieved by 2015.	Ongoing.
Aberdeen City Council will continue to work with LABOF to	ACC	The BPIP was launched in	Ongoing.

improve reliability and punctuality of bus services via the Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership (BPIP).		2010. A number of schemes are currently being progressed for the first identified BPIP corridor, including a new section of bus lane on King Street. A second BPIP corridor has recently been identified.	
Aberdeen City Council, with our partners in the Getabout campaign group, will continue to participate in events and activities to promote the region's public transport options and will market the benefits of public transport throughout the region.	ACC/Getabout	Ongoing. An example of work undertaken to date includes a series of radio and billboard advertisements promoting the benefits of Park and Ride services for Christmas shoppers.	Ongoing.
Aberdeen City Council, as part of its Air Quality Action Plan and the work being undertaken as part of the CARE North carbon reduction project, will continue to promote the environmental benefits of public transport over car usage.	ACC	A promotional campaign stressing the links between transport and poor air quality is planned for Spring 2011.	Ongoing.
Aberdeen City Council will raise awareness of and actively promote the local bus network to individuals, schools and employers through both internal and City-wide travel planning activities.	ACC/Getabout	Ongoing. ACC recently participated in European Mobility Week, where staff members were encouraged to use sustainable modes of transport for their commute.	Ongoing.
Aberdeen City Council and partners will look to develop a guide to travelling by public transport for those who are new to public transport or who use it infrequently, containing detailed information on how to plan and execute	ACC/Aberdeenshire Council/Nestrans	Not yet commenced.	Medium term.

a successful bus journey.			
Aberdeen City Council will develop a guide to travelling by public transport for those with a disability.	ACC/Aberdeenshire Council/Nestrans	Not yet commenced.	Medium term.
Aberdeen City Council will work with Aberdeenshire Council, Nestrans and bus operators to develop a Park and Ride guide, containing detailed information on the region's Park and Ride services, including timetables, frequencies, routes, and site facilities.	ACC/Aberdeenshire Council/Nestrans/Bus operators	Initiated.	Due to be launched in 2011.
All public transport information will be available in large print and in alternative languages on request.	ACC/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
All bus information available in Aberdeen City will comply with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Disability Discrimination Act 2005. • The Scottish Government's guidance on information provision, as set out in 'Buses for Scotland – Progress through Partnership'. • The Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) report 'Valuable for Anyone, Valuable for Everyone'. • The DfT's 'Inclusive Mobility'. • The ATCO Public Transport Information Good Practice Guidance. 	ACC/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Aberdeen City Council will work with partners to promote the safe journey card as an aid for those travelling with disabilities and/or mobility difficulties.	ACC/Nestrans/First Aberdeen	The Safe Journey Card was launched in June 2010.	Ongoing.
Timetable information should be consistent across the range of different media through which it is available. For example, times stated on paper copies of timetables should match those stated on at-stop timetables, etc.	ACC/Bus operators	Some slight inconsistencies remain between at-stop, online and paper timetables.	Short term.

7.3 Bus Stop Flags

Action	Responsibility	Progress to date	Timescale
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A bus stop flag will be fitted to all bus stops. This will carry the words 'Bus Stop' and a recognisable pictogram, conforming to diagram 970 in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002.	ACC	Not currently monitored, although 100% of stops should have flags.	Medium term, and dependant on financial resources.
Budgetary issues dictate that Aberdeen City Council can only maintain the display of bus service numbers on Union Street bus stop flags. Flags will list all service numbers calling at that stop regardless of the operator. Only service numbers calling at that stop will be listed on the flag. Service numbers will be removed from flags outwith Union Street. Should the Council's financial position improve in future years, ACC will look to reinstate service numbers on all flags within the City.	ACC	Not yet commenced.	Long term and dependant on financial resources.
All flags will include a stop name. This will be a generally recognised local name, agreed with operators, reflecting the location of the stop. The name will reflect that lodged in the NAPTAN database and will be consistent across all promotional and timetable material.	ACC	Ongoing.	Medium term.
Flags will display a unique bus stop reference code with Traveline Scotland's txt2traveline phone number, thus allowing passengers to get next departure times from that stop sent to their mobile phone.	ACC	Ongoing.	Medium term.

7.4 Display Information at Bus Stops

Action	Responsibility	Progress to date	Timescale
Aberdeen City Council will provide and maintain information display cases at all appropriate stops where space permits.	ACC	An audit is to be undertaken to ascertain where it will be necessary to increase display case capacity in order to ensure minimal timetable information can be	The audit will be undertaken in the short term. Provision and maintenance of display cases will be an ongoing issue.

		provided at all appropriate stops.	
Display cases will be situated so that they can be easily consulted by all, including those in wheelchairs, and so that information is legible during the hour of darkness.	ACC	Ongoing. Due to budgetary constraints it is unlikely that bespoke lighting will be implemented at bus stops in the short or medium term, but this could be an issue for investigation in the longer term.	Ongoing.
Display cases should be clean and free from vandalism and graffiti. A contact telephone number for reporting faults and damages will be provided at all shelters. Stops and shelters will continue to be cleaned on a regular basis.	ACC	Ongoing, although budgetary issues may dictate that response times to issues of damage, vandalism and graffiti are necessarily lengthened.	Ongoing.
Aberdeen City Council will continue to work with Aberdeenshire Council and bus operators to identify the most efficient and economic method of erecting timetable information at stops.	ACC/Aberdeenshire Council/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Short term.
Aberdeen City Council expects high standards in the display and maintenance of bus stop information and will work with Aberdeenshire Council and operators to attain, and to strive to exceed, the Scottish Government's minimum standards for information provision.	ACC/Aberdeenshire Council/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Comprehensive and up to date timetables for each service calling at that stop will be provided at all boarding stops within the City.	ACC/Aberdeenshire Council/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Medium term.
Where space permits, a network map and individual service route map for each service calling at that stop will be provided at each appropriate stop. The latter will show the average timing points between stops.	ACC/Bus operators	Some bus shelters already display the First network map. Existing route maps in individual timetable	Medium term.

		booklets could perhaps be adapted for bus stops.	
<p>Fare information will be provided at all appropriate bus stops. This should, as a minimum, list the various single, return, day and season ticket options where it is possible to do so. It is accepted, for example, that to list all the various single ticket options for certain Stagecoach services would be untenable, therefore, in such instances, only displaying season ticket prices would be acceptable.</p> <p>Information will also be provided on methods of payment. Where the operator only accepts exact change, this will be stated.</p>	ACC/Bus operators	Fare information for First services is provided at some bus stops, but not all. Stagecoach fare information is currently not provided at any stops.	Medium term.
<p>Aberdeen City Council will work with First Aberdeen to look at ways in which the fare stage system could be simplified for passengers at the bus stop.</p>	ACC/First Aberdeen	<p>This is only possible if a method can be found that does not result in overwhelming costs. For example, providing typical fares from each stop to a range of key destinations would result in a situation whereby, should a fare change be introduced, the display information at every single bus stop in the City would have to be rewritten, reprinted and reposted, resulting in a huge financial burden to the Council and operators. A more sustainable and encompassing situation is therefore required.</p>	Medium term.

Timetables at bus stops will display specific departure times for that stop and give some indication of the route travelled by the service, preferably in the form of a pearl bar diagram or route map. Approximate journey times to key destinations and intermediate points will be provided. It will be clear from the information which operator is running the service.	ACC/Aberdeenshire Council/Bus operators	First and ACC timetables already give stop-specific departure times, while Stagecoach is developing this for its services. No timetables currently provide journey time estimations between stops, although this information can sometimes be extracted from timetables.	Medium term.
All timetables will give an indication of their currency via effective from or to dates. The latter is preferable, although the Council appreciates that this could lead to unnecessary printing and distribution costs when a timetable remains unchanged but must nevertheless be replaced come its advertised expiry date.	ACC/Bus operators	Completed, although must be ongoing. All posted timetables currently display a 'valid from' date.	Ongoing.
Timetable information will be updated for every registered service change. Revised information will be displayed at bus stops no earlier than three days before a change is due to take place and in all cases by the day of the change. Out-of-date information will not be displayed, but will be removed from display cases on the day of its expiration.	ACC/Aberdeenshire Council/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Contact details for each operator serving the stop and for Aberdeen City Council's Public Transport Unit will be provided at all stops where space permits.	ACC/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Short term.
The Traveline logo and contact telephone number, as well as instructions on the use of the txt2traveline facility and WAP devices, will be displayed at all bus stops where space permits.	ACC	Ongoing.	Medium term.

7.5 Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI)

In an attempt to achieve cost savings, Aberdeen City Council has recently decided not to renew the maintenance contract for the current RTPi displays, therefore it has not been considered appropriate to formulate any actions to improve or expand the operation of the system in this Strategy, even though results from the public consultation suggest that there are a number of problems with the existing system and the public would like to see these resolved and the system expanded. Depending on available financing, the next review of this Bus Information Strategy may set out actions and a programme for improvement and expansion of the system.

Action	Responsibility	Progress to date	Timescale
Real time electronic displays will continue to provide information on services calling at a number of bus stops throughout the City with an indication of when the next scheduled buses are due.	ACC / First Aberdeen	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Damaged real time information displays will, depending on available financing, be repaired or replaced on a priority basis.	ACC / First Aberdeen	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Aberdeen City Council will investigate funding streams that would allow a permanent maintenance contract for RTPi displays to be reinstated.	ACC	Ongoing.	Medium/Long term.
Aberdeen City Council will work with partners to investigate the potential for real time information to be provided across a range of different media, such as the internet, mobile telephones and information kiosks.	ACC/Aberdeenshire Council/Nestrans/Bus operators	Ongoing. Nestrans and First have recently worked together to launch a real time bus information web page for First services. A Traveline Scotland iphone app has also been launched recently and could be better promoted to the north east. Traveline Scotland is also looking into the feasibility of real time feeds.	Medium/Long term.
Aberdeen City Council will work in partnership with Nestrans and bus operators to promote the Real Time Web site for First bus services.	ACC/Nestrans/First Aberdeen	The web site was launched in September 2010.	Ongoing.

Aberdeen City Council will work with Nestrans and bus operators to open up the Real Time Web site to other operators within the City.	ACC/Nestrans/Bus operators	Discussions between Nestrans and Stagecoach have commenced regarding getting Stagecoach's services onto the system.	Short term.
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7.6 Interchanges

Action	Responsibility	Progress to date	Timescale
Aberdeen City Council will raise awareness of the King Street interchange for onward travel to/from Aberdeen Royal Infirmary.	ACC	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Aberdeen City Council will promote Union Square as a public transport interchange and will raise awareness of the opportunities available for interchange here, both between different public transport modes and between individual bus services.	ACC	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Union Square Bus Station will have clearly marked and consistent labeling of stances.	Stagecoach Bluebird	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Information will be made available in the Bus Station on which stance each bus service departs from.	Stagecoach Bluebird	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Each stance at the Bus Station will display comprehensive and up-to-date timetables (to the standard recommended above) for each of the services departing from that stance.	Stagecoach Bluebird	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Union Square Bus Station will have a staffed office where travelers can find information on bus services and purchase tickets.	Stagecoach Bluebird	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Where static or real time electronic information displays are provided at the bus station, the departure information displayed must include reference to stop/stance labels.	Stagecoach Bluebird	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
The journey planning kiosk at the bus station will be	Stagecoach Bluebird	Completed, although must	Ongoing.

maintained and will continue to provide information on bus travel in Aberdeen.		be ongoing.	
Aberdeen City Council will work with partners to establish and promote further public transport interchange points throughout the City.	ACC/Nestrans/Bus operators	Ongoing. Discussions are underway with NHS Grampian and other stakeholders on the creation of a 'Foresterhill Interchange' at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary.	Medium term.

7.7 On the bus

Action	Responsibility	Progress to date	Timescale
Vehicle design permitting, and where practically possible, all public service vehicles operating in Aberdeen will comply with Schedule 2 of the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations, which specifies that all vehicles shall be fitted with a route number display on the front, nearside and back of the vehicle, describes appropriate character heights and lettering types to be used on each, and requests that such text can be illuminated.	Bus operators	All vehicles in Aberdeen conform to minimum standards. Fleet vehicles are subject to a rolling renewal programme meaning that newer vehicles with greater capabilities are constantly coming into the fleet.	Ongoing.
Displays should show the route number as well as the ultimate destination of the service. Intermediate points may also be shown provided they do not compromise the clarity of the final destination. These displays should be clearly legible by day and night.	Bus operators	All vehicles in Aberdeen conform to minimum standards. Fleet vehicles are subject to a rolling renewal programme meaning that newer vehicles with greater capabilities are constantly coming into the fleet.	Ongoing.
All buses will be easily identifiable as belonging to a particular operator.	Bus operators	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.

Operators will make every effort to ensure that those vehicles with livery branded according to a specific route will only be used for that route, i.e. vehicles branded as 'Inverurie Connect' should only be used along the Inverurie corridor.	Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Where space permits, basic fare information will be displayed near the front entrance of the bus, visible to passengers upon boarding.	Bus operators	Some First Bus vehicles have fare information on display near the entrance to the bus; it is appreciated that the wide range of ticket prices available on Stagecoach services may make this action unrealistic (for example, it has been noted that there are 65 possible fare prices on the Aberdeen to Inverness route).	Ongoing.
Hard copies of timetables for the service being operated will be available on-board buses. Timetables for other services, information leaflets and route maps should also be made available where space permits.	Bus operators	Stagecoach has recently initiated a policy to ensure this happens as a matter of course. Some First vehicles hold timetables, others do not.	Ongoing.
All drivers will be trained in customer service and will make a reasonable endeavour to assist passengers in obtaining any information required to complete their journey.	Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
All drivers will be able to provide information to passengers on timetables, fares and special ticket promotions for the route being operated, as well as other routes and services operated by the company.	Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.

7.8 Timetable Leaflets

Action	Responsibility	Progress to date	Timescale
Printed timetable leaflets for each bus service or group of bus services will be available and will be provided free of charge.	It is the responsibility of the operator to provide timetables to the required standard for the commercial services they operate. ACC is responsible for printing supported service timetables.	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Timetables will be printed on good quality paper and be clear and comprehensible.	ACC/Bus operators	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Timetables should comply with the ATCO 'Printed Public Transport Information: A Code of Practice' and other best practice guidance.	ACC/Bus operators	Existing timetables largely comply with best practice guidelines.	Ongoing.
Timetables will be in conventional matrix format (for journey direction read downwards).	ACC/Bus operators	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing
Timetables will alert passengers to dates on which services will not run according to the standard timetables, such as local or bank holidays. Alternative timetables for such days will be provided.	ACC/Bus operators	First publish a Public Holiday timetable booklet, although there is no mention on individual timetables of which days normal services will not be operating. Stagecoach timetables mention when services will not be running on specific days e.g. 'non-college days'.	Short term.
Codes and abbreviations used to identify standard variations will be consistent across timetables and clearly explained.	ACC/Bus operators	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Timetables will show any sections of route which are non-stop or limited stop.	ACC/Bus operators	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.

Timetables will carry an effective from or to date.	ACC/Bus operators	Operators' timetables already include this information. ACC will ensure that all supported service timetables contain this information when reprinted.	Short term.
Timetable leaflets that are no longer current will not be given to the public. Bus operators will either recoup expired timetables from outlets or inform them that leaflets are no longer correct, and replace them with updated copies.	ACC/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Information on fares (including fare stages) and ticketing options will be included on timetables. This could take the form of a grid, specific to each route number, showing the cost of travel between each of the stops, or at least the major stops, along the route. Where available space or the fare structure does not permit such a detailed list of costs to be provided, timetables should inform passengers where such information can be found.	ACC/Bus operators	First timetables list the various ticket options available and direct passengers to the website or travel shop for further information. Stagecoach timetables suggest calling the local office for fares information. Fare information is currently provided on all supported service timetables.	Short / medium term.
Where practical, a route map or diagram will be provided in timetables, including journey time information between key stops.	ACC/Bus operators	First and Aberdeen City Council supported services timetables all include a route map. Some Stagecoach timetables do, some others do not. None of these currently provide time information.	Medium term.
Reference will be made in timetables to Traveline	ACC/Bus operators	Completed, although must	Ongoing.

Scotland as a one-stop-shop for bus timetable information and contact details of Traveline will be provided.		be ongoing.	
Contact details for the relevant operator will be included, as well as instructions on how complaints and comments about the service can be made.	ACC/Bus operators	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Operators should provide information on relevant DDA compliant vehicle operation and any other information that could be of relevance to those travelling with disabilities or pushchairs.	ACC/Bus operators	Stagecoach timetables contain the contact details of their disability helpdesk and some show an image on the front cover to indicate that buses are wheelchair accessible. No information is available on ACC or First timetables.	Short term.
Information should be provided on which services can accommodate bicycles if relevant.	ACC/Bus operators	Only Stagecoach's Deeside services currently permit bicycle carriage, although there is no mention of this on the timetable.	Short term.
Paper copies of timetables should be readily accessible in a variety of useful and relevant locations, both to consult and to carry away. These include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On buses themselves • The Bus Station • Park and ride sites • Council offices • Further and higher education establishments • The Tourist Information Centre • Public libraries • Healthcare facilities • Shopping centres. 	ACC/Bus operators	The Bus Station, libraries and the Tourist Information Centre do currently stock hard copies of timetables. Effort will be made to ensure timetables are more readily available, especially in those locations listed.	Short term.

7.9 Public transport websites

Action	Responsibility	Progress to date	Timescale
Aberdeen City Council will look to establish one centralised website containing full and impartial public transport information for all bus services operating within the City, including fare and timetable information, or will look to provide this information via the existing Getabout website.	ACC/Getabout	Not yet commenced.	Medium term.
All public transport websites will conform to best practice guidelines in relation to public transport websites. In particular, public transport websites will be easy to use and navigate around.	ACC/ Bus operators/Getabout	Operators' websites largely compliant. ACC website is in need of an overhaul.	Short/medium term
Aberdeen City Council's public transport web pages will be redeveloped and will include relevant links to operators' websites as well as a page dedicated to Union Square Bus Station.	ACC	Ongoing.	Short term.
Aberdeen City Council will promote online journey planning facilities on the transport pages of its website, including links to Traveline Scotland and Transport Direct.	ACC	Not currently promoted.	Short term.
Website providers will ensure that all public transport information contained on its web pages remains valid and up to date.	ACC/Bus operators/Getabout p	Complete, but must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
All operators' websites will contain full and easily accessible timetables for all the services they operate. These will be downloadable and printable and should be viewable by the visually impaired. Timetables for supported services will be easily accessible, downloadable and printable from the Council's website.	ACC/Bus operators	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Dates of forthcoming timetable changes will be available at least fourteen days before the date of implementation.	ACC / Bus operators	Operators currently display forthcoming timetables in	Ongoing.

Forthcoming timetables will be available online as soon as they are available and, in any case, no later than 3 days before the date of implementation.		advance of the day of implementation.	
Operators' websites will contain the Traveline Scotland logo with a direct hyperlink.	ACC/Bus operators	Currently on Stagecoach Bluebird's site, but not on ACC's or First Aberdeen's.	Short term.
Fare information will be provided on the websites of bus operators. Websites should provide service-specific information regarding single fare costs between stops, or at least main destinations, on each of their routes, wherever this is possible.	ACC/Bus operators	ACC's website contains full fare information for supported services. First and Stagecoach websites only contain prices of season tickets.	Short term.
Service specific route maps will be available for all services.	ACC/Bus operators	ACC provides route maps for each of the services it operate on the Council website. Stagecoach only provides maps for some routes on its website, while First Aberdeen's website only displays the overall network map. Full route maps for all services operating within Aberdeen can be found on the Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide and on the Aberdeenshire and Moray Public Transport Guide, both of which are available online via the respective Councils' websites.	Short term.
Information will be available on the accessibility of vehicles for those with disabilities.	ACC/Bus operators	Available for commercial services; currently no	Short term.

		information for supported services.	
Information will be available on services that can accommodate bicycles.	ACC/Bus operators	Only certain services along the Deeside corridor permit bicycle carriage but there is currently no information available on this via the operator's website.	Short term.
Service updates will be provided for all scheduled services, including information on disruptions, roadworks affecting services, etc.	ACC/Bus operators	First and Stagecoach services provide this information as a matter of course. ACC website contains information on road closures, planned and emergency roadworks etc, which may have a bearing on bus services.	Ongoing.
All public transport websites will have contact details and instructions for specific queries.	ACC/Bus operators/Getabout	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
The Real Time Bus website will be updated regularly to reflect any changes in the service network or the positioning of bus stop infrastructure.	ACC/Nestrans/First Aberdeen	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
On the Real Time Bus website, effort will be made to ensure that all codes and stop names match those displayed on bus stop flags.	ACC/Nestrans/First Aberdeen	Currently there is a disparity between the stop codes displayed on the flags and those on the website.	Short term.
The Real Time Bus website will make it clearer to users when real time or scheduled timetable information is being displayed.	ACC/Nestrans/First Aberdeen	When real time information is not available for a service, the scheduled departure time is provided in 24 hour clock format, although this may be	Short term.

		unclear to users unfamiliar with the site.	
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7.10 Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide

Action	Responsibility	Progress to date	Timescale
ACC will publish the Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide. This will be free from bias, containing information on all operators' services within Aberdeen City.	ACC	The guide is in the process of being updated and reprinted for 2011.	Short term.
The Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide will be updated regularly to reflect any changes in the local bus network.	ACC	The guide is in the process of being updated and reprinted for 2011.	Ongoing.
Where possible, an indication of service frequencies and operating times will be provided.	ACC	Currently, frequencies only listed as 'hourly or better'. This will be implemented in a future reprint.	Medium term
All major interchange opportunities will be highlighted. Maps will refer to integration with other modes of transport, access to major destinations and provide details of cross-boundary services to/from Aberdeen City.	ACC	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
An effective from or start date will be prominently displayed.	ACC	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Park and Ride opportunities with an indication of the number of parking spaces will be highlighted.	ACC	Sites are mentioned on the map but not the number of available spaces. This will be implemented in a future reprint.	Medium term.
The contact details for each operator will be included as well as the Traveline logo and contact details.	ACC	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Information on how to make queries or suggestions will be provided.	ACC	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Aberdeen City Council will continue to distribute the guide and will consider further locations for distribution to make	ACC	Currently available from First travel centre, city	Short term.

the guide as accessible as possible to members of the public.		libraries and the Tourist Information Centre, and online via the websites of ACC, First and Getabout.	
The Aberdeen City Public Transport Guide will be available online in downloadable PDF format via the Council's website. Links to this will be available on the websites of local bus operators and other transport providers.	ACC	Currently available via Council website; links from First and Getabout websites.	Short term.

7.11 Traveline / Telephone Enquiry Services

Action	Responsibility	Progress to date	Timescale
Aberdeen City Council will promote Traveline Scotland via its website, at bus stops and on all printed public transport information, as a one-stop shop for public transport information.	ACC	Currently promoted on all printed material and at some bus stops but not on the website.	Short term.
Aberdeen City Council will require all operators of supported and commercial services to be members of Traveline Scotland.	ACC/Bus operators	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Aberdeen City Council will provide, and will require operators to provide, information to Aberdeenshire Council for sending to Traveline Scotland.	ACC/Bus operators	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Aberdeen City Council will require operators to continue to promote Traveline Scotland on all operator timetable publicity material and via their websites.	Bus operators	Traveline is promoted on timetables and on the Stagecoach website but not on the First website.	Short term.
Aberdeen City Council's Public Transport Unit will respond to all public transport queries in a timely and professional manner. Information provided will be complete, impartial and current.	ACC	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Bus operators will continue to respond to telephone enquiries promptly and politely. Staff will be suitably	Bus operators	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.

equipped to answer all questions about their services, fares and timetables.			
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7.12 Ticket Offices / Travel Centres

Action	Responsibility	Progress to date	Timescale
The two dominant bus companies operating within the City will continue to provide offices where customers can have face to face contact with staff who can provide them with full and detailed information about services, routes, promotions, timetables and fares.	First Aberdeen/Stagecoach Bluebird	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.
Such offices will have a full range of timetables available to customers to take away, as well as any other printed material that may be of relevance to customers, such as holiday timetables and network maps.	First Aberdeen/Stagecoach Bluebird	Completed, although must be ongoing.	Ongoing.

7.13 Service Changes

Action	Responsibility	Progress to date	Timescale
Aberdeen City Council will actively seek operators to, wherever possible, limit timetable and/or service changes to twice a year, unless the Council considers such changes to be in the public interest or they are required for emergency purposes.	ACC/Bus operators	In discussion.	Medium term.
Service changes should be advertised on-board vehicles in accordance with Reg 6 (2) of the Public Service Vehicle Regulations 2001 (SSI 2002No219) whereby operators are required to display, for 21 days before any change to that service, in each vehicle provided for that particular service, a notice telling passengers that an application for change has been made and where they can obtain further information.	ACC/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
All service changes will be publicised at least one week in	ACC/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.

advance of their implementation date on websites and at bus stops.			
Where appropriate, local press must be used for advance notice of all significant schedule changes (minimum one week). Changes due to emergencies do not apply.	ACC/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Local radio must be advised of all significant scheduled changes and emergency changes.	ACC/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Traveline must be advised of all scheduled temporary changes 21 days before the date of implementation and of non-scheduled changes as soon as possible.	ACC/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Advance notice of temporary route diversions must be displayed at bus stops affected by the diversion, prior to the effective date and time.	ACC/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Whenever changes are made to the network that affects the timetabling of services, new timetables will be produced and distributed at least 14 days before implementation of any change.	ACC/Bus operators	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
Bus operators shall make any fare changes known to the Council at least two weeks before implementation, and shall make this known to the public at least one week before implementation.	Bus operators	First Aberdeen has committed to informing ACC of fare changes two weeks before the date of implementation.	Ongoing.

8. Monitoring and Implementation

8.1 Targets

Rather than duplicating the targets set out in the Quality Partnership, which have already been agreed upon by Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Nestrans and bus operators, these have been carried over and adopted as the targets for this Bus Information Strategy. These are:

- 95% of bus stops to have up to date timetable information by 2015;
- 100% of information provided at stops to comply with national guidance on comprehensive information by 2015;
- 100% of bus stops to carry location sign by 2012;
- Where Real Time Information is available, this will be at least 95% accurate;
- 100% of faults with Real Time Information displays to be addressed by the end of the next working day after being reported;
- On-board information to be provided on buses 21 days before a change – 100% by 2011;
- Timetables to be made available 14 days before a service change – 100% of service changes by 2011; and
- Traveline number and SMS code to be displayed at all boarding stops – 100% by 2012

8.2 Performance Indicators and Sources

Monitoring is essential to ensure that the delivery of the Bus Information Strategy is being carried out in an economic, efficient and effective manner and to ensure, ultimately, that it is achieving success. The effectiveness of the Strategy will be measured via two key performance indicators:

1. Bus patronage within the City; and
2. Customer satisfaction with the availability and quality of information on bus services.

These will be monitored via the following sources:

- Annual City Voice Questionnaire results;
- Biennial Scottish Household Survey (SHS) results;
- Annual Bus Passenger Satisfaction Surveys;
- Passenger usage trends;
- Future reviews of bus stop infrastructure and information displayed;
- Regular monitoring of all printed and web-based information; and
- Comments, complaints and feedback on bus services directed to Aberdeen City Council's Public Transport Unit and local transport operators.

8.3 Reporting and Review

A monitoring report will be prepared on an annual basis and will be published on Aberdeen City Council's website. This will describe the progress made in relation to the objectives and targets identified in the Strategy. An Action Plan will accompany each annual report, outlining progress to date, how any unmet requirements will be addressed in the coming year and setting out future aspirations to be taken forward.

The Strategy will be subject to a thorough review in future years, when it will likely be necessary to consult with operators and stakeholders once again in refreshing the Strategy, identifying new aspirations and setting new targets for improvements. It is likely also that advances in information technology will present new opportunities to local authorities and bus operators in the dissemination of public transport information.

9. Bibliography

The following documents were consulted during the preparation of this Bus Information Strategy:

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The following legislative Acts were also instrumental in helping shape and develop this Strategy:

- The Transport (Scotland) Act 2001
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2005