

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: LOCAL BUS BRIEFING

Issue

1. Scrutiny Committee have asked to explore two issues:
 - a. Devolution and localities
 - b. Shaping the local bus network around usage

Consideration

Devolution and localities

Devolution

2. Devolution: at the core of devolution is a principle that services are best commissioned as closely as possible to users. The expectation is that proximity provides a better understanding of need, better transparency, improved accountability and ultimately better services and outcomes. Historically supported local bus services have been commissioned at a county level because the following sit at that level:
 - statutory responsibility for reviewing provision;
 - legislative, market and procurement knowledge;
 - responsibility for other similar services, such as concessionary travel scheme;
 - the cross-area nature of many services;
 - the relationship with the wider transport network.
3. However, there are many local services such as shopper buses, where responsibility for commissioning these services could be devolved to community groups. We already devolve the delivery of services to people who can't access mainstream public transport to our Community transport schemes, so a precedent already exists.
4. *Key Questions for Scrutiny:*
 - What types of services might be most appropriate for devolution?
 - Which local organisations might be most appropriate to devolve to?
 - What are the issues to be considered as part of devolution?
 - What would we need to put in place to ensure it worked well?

Localities

5. Essex is hugely diverse. Supporting a sustainable bus network means that we also need to reflect that diversity in our services. We already have a very diverse range of services across Essex, from high frequency commuter routes to demand responsive minibuses. We are keen in our planning to ensure

we're reflecting these different approaches as well as possible. We've developed a guide to helping us understand these services. This includes identifying broad areas for planning and also a way of understanding the different customer flows. This is illustrated at Appendix B

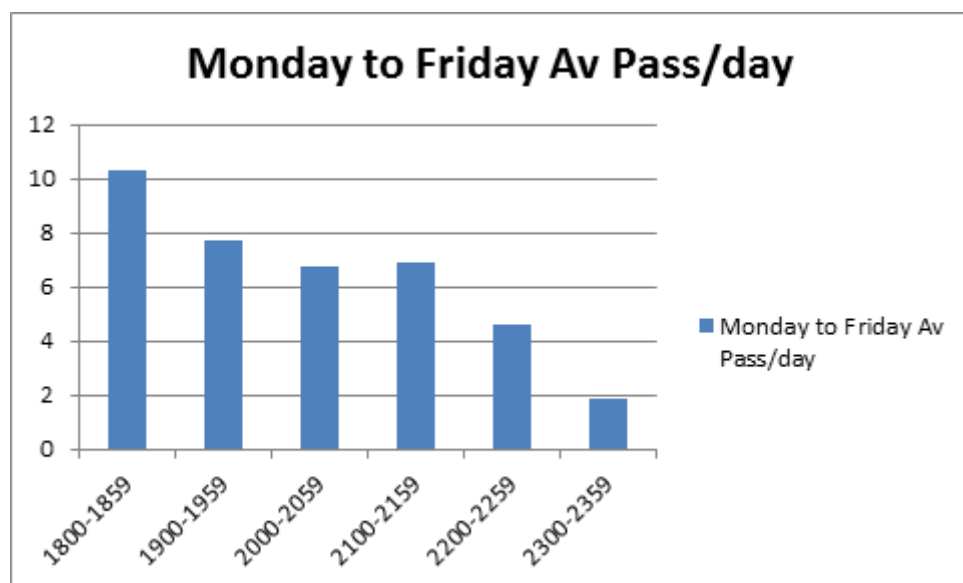
6. *Key Questions for Scrutiny*

- Are the geographical areas we're proposing valid?
- Are there other geographical approaches that would work better?
- Are our geographical lenses of urban, feeder routes and rural hinterland helpful in terms of thinking about the different types of service?
- What other issues should we consider?

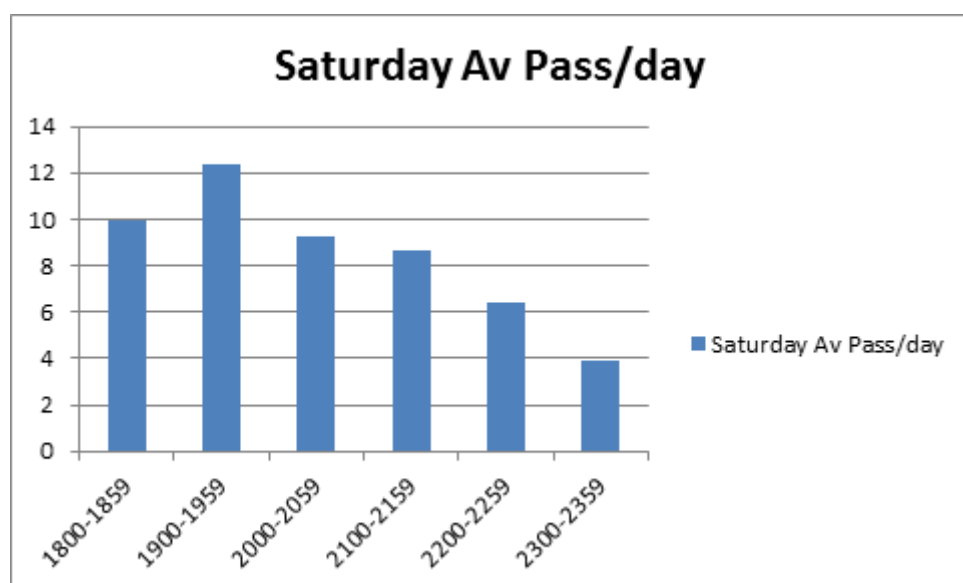
Shaping the local bus network around usage

7. Bus usage has been in steady decline nationally and across Essex, declining by 2.9% in England outside of London over the year to September 2018. Annual statistics for Essex are due shortly and we will ensure we circulate a copy to you when they are published. However we expect to see a fall in Essex too.
8. In order to use taxpayers money to deliver the best overall outcome possible, we seek to maximise the network within the resources available, focusing support on as many services and passengers as possible. Historically we have done so by using a £5 per passenger journey measure for a service. This remains valid as a whole service assessment and we are not proposing to change that long standing measure. However, with the advent of electronic ticket machines we are now more easily able to understand the specific journeys that people are making. This means that we can better target support – so far example by reducing individual low use journeys rather than by removing a whole service, which might have uneven usage.
9. We have looked first at the data for supported evening and Sunday services.

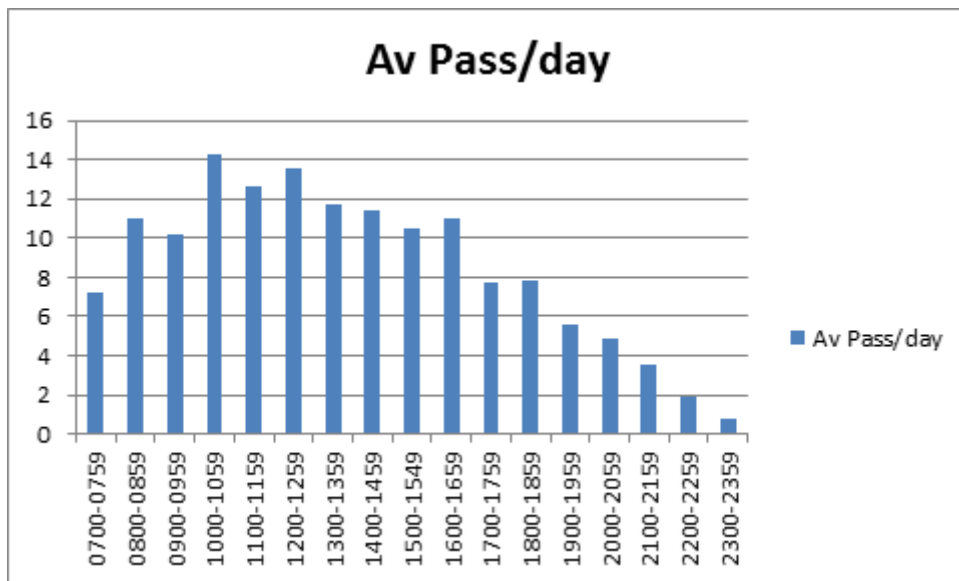
10. The following graph shows the average passenger numbers travelling by time band after 6pm by journey on Mondays to Fridays:



11. The following graph shows the average passenger numbers travelling by time band after 6pm by journey on Saturdays:



12. The following graph shows the average passenger numbers travelling by time band by journey on Sundays:



13. The data shows that there is a point for all supported services where passenger numbers drop below six on a journey. This is at 10pm on weekdays; 11pm on Saturdays; and 7pm on Sundays.
14. We are therefore consulting on a policy that shapes the network around usage on this basis. This is because support for a bus service is unlikely to be cost effective once passenger numbers are lower than 6; nor is it likely to be the best approach environmentally. Consultation is open until 22 March 2019.
15. This shaping approach will mean that:
- 92% of journeys on Monday to Friday evenings will continue to be able to be made.
 - 98% of journeys on Saturday evenings will continue to be able to be made.
 - 90% of passenger journeys on Sundays will continue to be able to be made – although passengers on some services that currently run at a higher frequency may need to re-time.
16. *Key Questions for Scrutiny:*
- What local measures might be possible to support those passengers travelling after these times – this will be five or less people?
 - What are the issues that will matter to people?
 - What are the key travel times on Sundays?
 - What other criteria might be considered for exceptions?