

Basingstoke Transport Strategy

Mass Rapid Transit for Basingstoke

July 2019



Mass Rapid Transit for Basingstoke

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The Benefits

The Basingstoke Transport Strategy has been developed jointly by Hampshire County Council and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. A key component of the Strategy is the need to provide attractive, realistic alternatives to the car.

Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) could provide a step change improvement in the public transport experience – a new, distinctive travel choice for Basingstoke blending the qualities of light rail with the flexibility of bus technology.

MRT would need to work with other parts of the Strategy, including changes to the layout of the town centre and other complementary measures to facilitate MRT.



The Glider service in Belfast

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The challenge

With Basingstoke's population expected to increase by approximately 21,000 people (18%) over the next 25 years, traffic congestion is expected to get worse. We believe that journey times across Basingstoke's highway network will increase by more than 25% over the same period if nothing is done to the transport network.¹ Significant investment has been made in recent times in the road network, but more needs to be done. The Transport Strategy identifies a need to improve the range and quality of different transport choices available to people, including travel by public transport within the town.

Basingstoke's core bus network provides some high frequencies, but it is held back by slow speeds. For example, the current journey time from Hatch Warren Sainsbury's to Festival Place Car Park in the centre of Basingstoke is between 10 and 20 minutes by car on average in the morning peak², but the bus schedule is about twice the car journey time at 30 minutes.

If nothing is done, buses can be expected to get slower in the same way as car journey times. To maintain the current frequency of service, more buses and drivers will be needed. So if nothing else changes, then either fares will have to increase, or buses made less frequent. Either way, it will become even harder for the bus to provide an attractive alternative to car, and fewer people will use the bus. So as the bus becomes less attractive congestion will continue to increase, while those people who currently rely on the bus can expect services to worsen.

Not everyone has a car. One in five households in Basingstoke do not have access to a car.³ If we do nothing, people in those households will find it increasingly hard to get to jobs, education and health. And in those households that do have access to a car, good public transport enables members of that household to travel independently. This can benefit young people in particular.

Bus journey times in Basingstoke are typically 2 to 3 times longer than the car



A 10% increase in bus journey times leads to:

an 8% increase in the cost of running buses



at least a 10% reduction in passengers



One in five households in Basingstoke do not have access to a car



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The role of public transport in Basingstoke

Through helping to address Basingstoke's transport issues now and in the future, a step change in public transport within the town could have an important role in helping to meet the Transport Strategy key priorities for: supporting economic growth and vibrancy; supporting a high quality of life; and supporting accessible and inclusive communities.

Improving public transport would make it more attractive and convenient for car users to consider other means of travelling. Reducing congestion would help Basingstoke provide more jobs to more people, and more jobs in Basingstoke could mean less need to travel outside Basingstoke for work. Modern, efficient public transport systems can stimulate new business investment and also help to deliver well-planned and attractive new developments – so this could apply to Manydown and Basing View for instance. And as modern public transport provides a greener way to travel and encourages less car use, it can help to ensure that good standards of air quality in Basingstoke are maintained.

We've considered the alternatives for an enhanced public transport system in Basingstoke. In the short to medium term at least, it is likely that a bus based MRT system would be the most appropriate solution for Basingstoke. This can deliver higher speeds and more punctual services, just like light rail, but at much less cost and with a greater degree of flexibility to adapt to changing needs and circumstances. Basingstoke is fortunate to benefit from some key transport corridors with space to provide improvements. We would only need to put priority measures in on the road network where they are needed. And we could get much closer to people's front doors, and adapt services to changing demand, much more easily than we could with light rail. Most importantly, MRT can attract people out of their cars.

New technology, such as electric and driverless vehicles, may change the current concept of fixed route services. But infrastructure measures implemented to support MRT could also be usable by these services in the future.



Supporting economic growth and vibrancy



Supporting a high quality of life



Supporting accessible and inclusive communities

64% of Basingstoke residents surveyed stated that if public transport was good enough they would travel to the town centre without using a car.

Horizon 2050 consultation, BDBC (2018)

83% of respondents were concerned that public transport is less attractive than travelling by car.

A majority of respondents felt that a more reliable bus service and / or implementing a Mass Rapid Transit system would provide a realistic alternative to using their car.

Basingstoke Transport Strategy Consultation (2018)

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Many places in the UK are now seeing the benefits of investment in MRT. In Hampshire, Gosport has had the 'Eclipse' Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) linking it to Fareham since 2012. Economic evaluation shows that the scheme has delivered an economic return on investment at up to £6.94 for each £1 spent.⁴

Bus Rapid Transit schemes are also in place in Crawley, Dartford, Cambridgeshire and Greater Manchester. In 2018 BRT services started in Belfast and Bristol, and BRT is planned for the West Midlands where it will play a key part in providing transport for the Commonwealth Games in 2022.



The 'Eclipse' service in Gosport



MetroBus in Bristol

Eclipse – Gosport
50% increase in bus passengers in two years



Passenger satisfaction up by 20%⁴

Cambridgeshire Busway
Three out of five passengers have a car available for their journey⁵



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What could MRT look like in Basingstoke?

A MRT network for Basingstoke could provide fast links between residential areas, the town centre and key locations such as Basing View, the Leisure Park, the Hospital and Chineham business parks. But we would also expect that local bus services would be able to use the priority measures provided, so MRT could also benefit all bus users in Basingstoke.

There are a number of options for the types of vehicles used, from more conventional buses to 'tram-bus' type vehicles offering high levels of comfort and convenience. Services would have a strong and distinctive branding. Facilities would provide easy boarding and simple onward connections, supported by high quality shelters and passenger information.

Other potential features

- Cross-town connections
- Mix of segregated / dedicated lanes, priority at junctions and running with general traffic
- High spec, accessible, low emission vehicles
- Scope for integration with future technological changes, such as autonomous vehicles
- Speedy boarding with convenient payment options
- 'Turn up and go' – services running at least every 10 mins
- Serving new developments



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What are the potential MRT corridors?



A western corridor could connect the town centre with the Leisure Park and Manydown (Phase 1) - with potential future extension to the wider Manydown site. The proposals to redevelop the Leisure Park could provide opportunities to support an MRT route.



A northern corridor could provide a connection to the Hospital, and also serve the Houndmills industrial area. The existing service 2 operates along this corridor, extending onwards to Tadley.



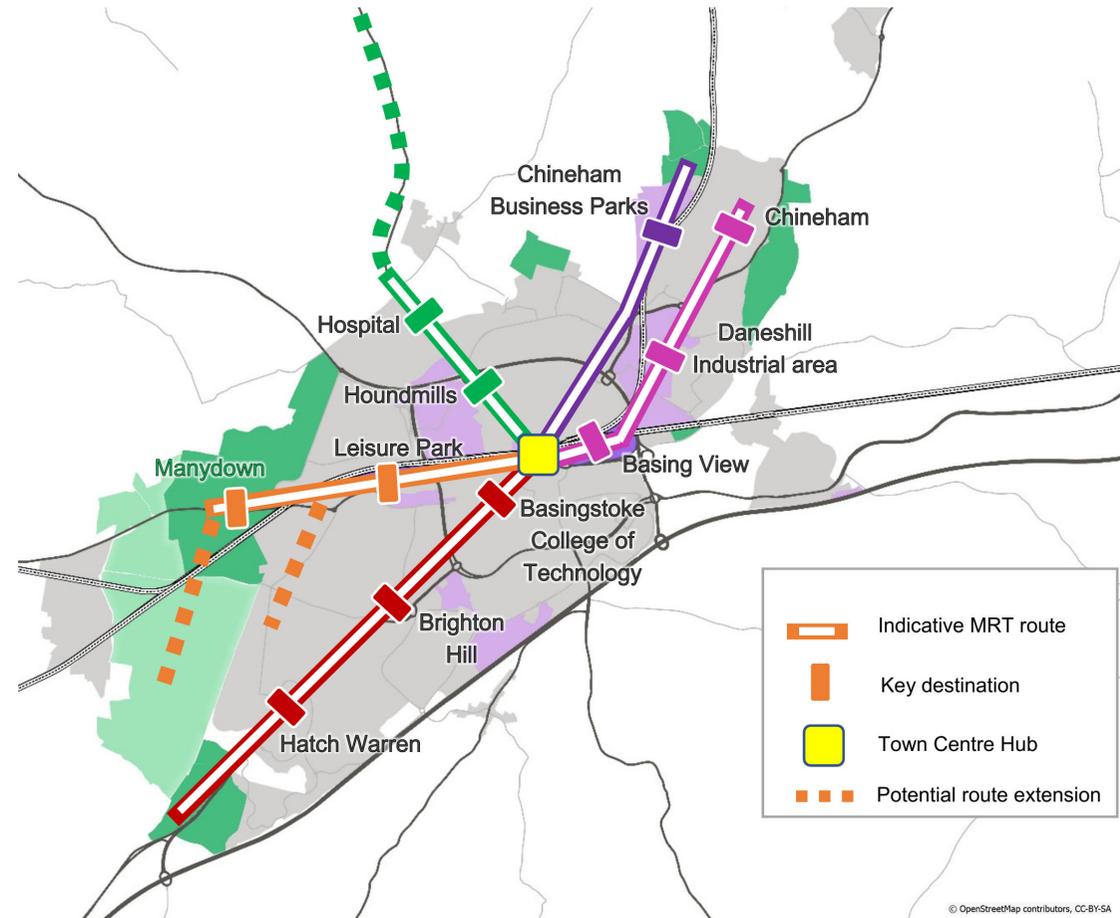
A north east corridor could connect the town centre with the Chineham Business Park and Hampshire Industrial Business Park and could support onward journeys from the station by public transport.



A further north east corridor could connect the key employment area of Basing View (where there are plans to significantly increase jobs), with the further employment area at Daneshill and the residential area of Chineham.



A south west corridor could connect the town centre and residential areas such as Brighton Hill and Hatch Warren, as well as planned development towards M3 Junction 7 and the wider Manydown site.



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What could MRT mean for you?

Without intervention, car journey times in Basingstoke will get longer and less reliable. Bus journey times, already uncompetitive with car, will continue to get longer. We think MRT could successfully address Basingstoke's challenges in the future by providing a genuine, attractive alternative to the car. This will encourage people to re-think the way they travel within, to and from Basingstoke.

The benefits of MRT could be widespread - from individuals, to communities, and to the town as a whole:



MRT could provide a range of potential benefits:

- Quicker and more reliable journeys by public transport
- Managing congestion and delays
- Improving access to jobs, healthcare and education
- Providing better value to passengers
- Less need to be reliant on the car for day to day travel
- Unlocking new housing sites and supporting regeneration
- Tackling air quality issues
- Fast, direct connections with rail services
- Raising Basingstoke's profile and attracting new businesses

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What next?

Mass Rapid Transit would represent a significant investment and commitment. We would need to undertake further work to assess the feasibility and value for money of investment. This would also help to access potential funding opportunities.

The development of a MRT network would be phased over time and would grow and expand with the town.

Initial phases of MRT development might focus on the town centre, including interchange at the rail station, and connecting some of our key development opportunities such as Basing View, the Leisure Park and Manydown.

As proposals progress, consultation will be undertaken to provide opportunities to help to shape the project.

Feasibility work in the shorter-term will help us to identify the potential type and scale of infrastructure, and also any key dependencies, such as land requirements. We may seek to safeguard land to ensure that it remains available to support potential longer-term implementation of MRT. This could be achieved through the update of the Local Plan.

Sources

This document was created by Hampshire County Council and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council with reference to:

Images:

- Bristol metrobus
- Department for Infrastructure

Data Sources:

1. North Hampshire Transport Model – Reference Case traffic forecasts
2. Google Maps journey data based on Wed 10 Oct 2018, leave at 08:30)
3. 2011 Census - QS416EW Car or Van availability
4. An Economic Evaluation of Local Bus Infrastructure Schemes, KPMG, September 2015
5. Cambridgeshire Guided Busway Post-Opening User Research, Atkins, 2012