

Delivering better services



School Transport

Operational review – Season tickets



Purpose

- Overview of progress to date reviewing school transport operations and season ticket allocations;
- Options for further consideration; and
- Potential timeframes for further activity.



Communications

Review information provided to prospective new pupils and their families to ensure it is very clear that, unless a child is eligible for transport assistance, it is the parents responsibility to get their children to school and that any transport provided on a non-statutory basis may be withdrawn at any time.

Education and Children's Service are working with Corporate Communications to emphasise this issue in "hotspot" areas.



This is a [short term](#) action that should help create better clarity and understanding of the current situation with regards to eligibility and responsibility ([September 2023](#))



Standees on buses

Enabling standees on buses is legally permitted allowing for additional season ticket sales at no additional cost of operation.

Overcrowding risks will be carefully mitigated and standing on coaches is not allowed.

Standard double deck bus capacity = 65*

Standees, lower deck only = 22 (33%) of total capacity*

*variable due to differing vehicle types



Short term action. This should be made available, where applicable and safe to do so to increase limited capacity from **September 2023**.



Online application and payments

A fully digital season ticket application process.

Some progress has been made and applications can be made digitally but there needs to be a paperless Direct Debit process implemented to be able to fully realise this.

This requires the portal enabling residents to set up accounts with LCC to be implemented which is to be developed.



Work is currently being undertaken on the first element of an online application process. More work will be required regarding a Direct Debit and payment process.

This will be a **short to medium term development starting 2023/24**

Online renewal Summer 23

Direct Debit and portal
early 2024

Online and DD Summer 24





Information gathering

- Information on day to day passenger loadings is very limited. We could require operators to install suitable ticket machines for those that haven't got them already. This would help us to better understand travel patterns and loadings. The cost would likely be passed to the authority via increased tender prices or the county council could supply to operators, requiring additional budget provision.
- Evidence suggests some statutory passholders don't travel frequently or at all and more reliable information would help us to procure transport more effectively and understand where additional capacity may lie.
- With Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL), this would allow DfT Bus Open Data Service (BODS) compatibility and would, potentially, allow students and parents to track school buses through an app.

Understanding the full extent of the market, travel patterns and loadings will require the use of technology. This will require procurement and installation processes along with revised back office solutions and systems.

However, this will give a better understanding of supply and demand for services and will enable better service monitoring, revenue protection and also improve information channels to students and parents, as well as providing more management information and data.

Medium Term 2023/24 for Sept 2024

Requirements development
October 2023

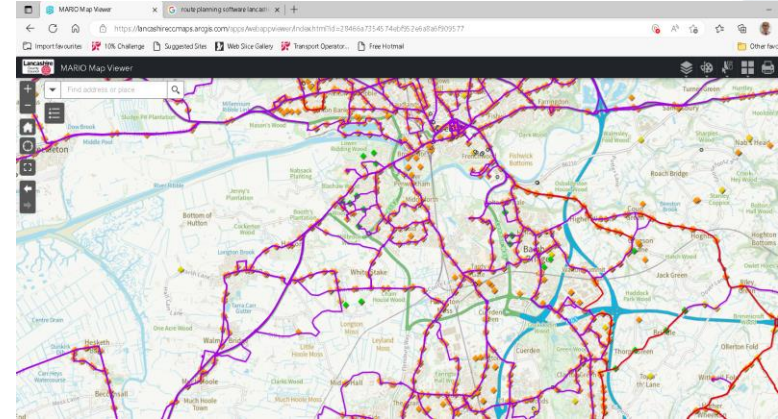
Market engagement and
procurement Jan 2024
subject to funding being
made available

Installation June 2024 Info
app mid 2025

Service and route planning

Introduce service and route planning software for more effective planning and allocation of students to routes.

Planning of routes is currently based on experience and previous demand requirements.



Assess route and service planning tools, including Q.Routes already in place in the wider service. Can the use of such tools improve routing of bus services to meet demands?

Will require ICT and procurement support.

Medium term - 2024

Assessment of Q.Routes for large school vehicles.
Oct 2023

Potential market engagement and procurement May 2024

System in place Summer 2024

Revised cost model

The existing arrangements may result in the withdrawal of (bus) services when there are no statutorily entitled students travelling.

This could be replaced, at additional cost, with a revenue to cost criterion.



Look at school services on an individual basis, along with what funding is available.

Changes would require a County Council decision and Policy change.

Medium term to long term 2024/2025

Assess any issues arising after Sept 23 uptake

Model funding requirements 2024

Potential policy change for Sept 2025 and Cabinet decision



Introduction of single flat fare

- Moving to a single flat fare rather than the current approach where charges relate to the distance travelled (currently in 3 bands). The advantage being that there would be no need to assess the appropriate band for each season ticket applicant, reducing administration and assisting with a digital application process. Disagreements at fare stage boundaries would also be eliminated.
- This would lead to some “winners” and “losers” in terms of payments

Further analysis of pricing is required to ascertain optimum fare levels, consultation with users is likely to be required.

Medium term - 2024

Analysis of pricing
December 2023

Consultation Spring 2024

Single fare from
September 2024



Walk up fares, on the day purchases

Withdrawal of the option of 'walk-up' fares wouldn't be popular but would help to reduce revenue protection issues.

The expectation is that season ticket sales would be greater than the loss in walk-ups revenue, taking into account revenue losses.

This would create an issue for those who are "unbanked" and less able to arrange a direct debit. (This suggestion is best considered alongside an option for ticket machines to be installed on all school buses in order to improve evidence.)

This is a **long term** option which will require consultation and the development of an Equality Impact Assessment as there may be an impact for those with protected characteristics.

This would need to follow any IT/ticketing solutions when it is anticipated more data would become available.



Assessment of
management information
May 2025

Decision on whether to
withdraw option late
2025

Introduction September
2026

School transport costs, income and passengers numbers

Costs

- Gross cost of providing 194 school contracts £7,735,000
- Commercial passes (for stats travelling on bus network) £1,145,000
- Miscellaneous expenditure £168,000

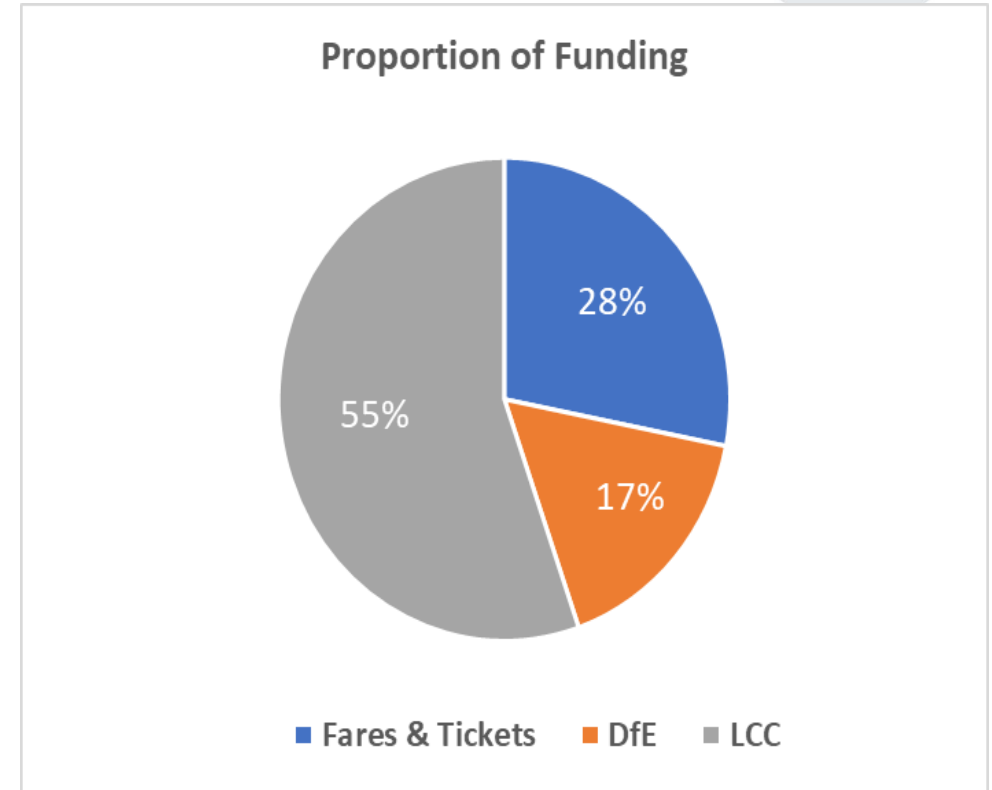
Income/grant

- Revenue from Season tickets and walk up fares £2,543,000
- DfE Extended rights to travel grant £1,498,800

- Net cost of providing school transport £5,007,000

Passenger numbers

- Students on statutory mainstream school transport 5785
- Season tickets on mainstream school transport 3406
- Students buying daily walk up fares on mainstream school transport 1500



Summary of potential options

Short term

- Improve information about eligibility
- Allow for appropriate standees on school buses

Medium term

- Online application followed by online direct debit payments.
- Develop options for ticketing systems that will provide more management information.
- Investigate service planning tools
- Option to move to single flat fare.

Medium to long term

- Consider other funding models to increase capacity, additional cost to the authority

Long term

- Remove walk up fares following more management information and data and consultation.

