

Building Better Transport Links (BBTL)

Meeting Summary – 16 July 2026

Welcome and Previous Actions

Tom Main welcomed attendees and confirmed that meeting transcription and AI tools were being used to support minute-taking and action tracking. The action from the previous meeting to promote BBTL through Partnership Board newsletters was confirmed as completed. Partnership Boards were asked to provide future newsletter publication dates so that BBTL information can be shared and promoted through those channels

Stagecoach West Update

Matthew Breese provided an update on behalf of Stagecoach.

Key Updates

- Stagecoach is now operating approximately 99% of scheduled mileage, with performance improving following previous driver shortages.
- Punctuality currently stands at around 89%, with ongoing challenges caused by roadworks, including works associated with the Gloucestershire Cycle Spine, Hunts Grove Bridge and the Forest of Dean overbridge.
- New and refurbished vehicles are being introduced through fleet cascades linked to the electric bus rollout.
- A new journey planning system has been introduced, focusing on end-to-end journey planning rather than individual bus journeys.
- New bus tracking software ("UTrack") is expected to significantly improve live service information.
- Driver training has been refreshed, including disability awareness and inclusion training for new and existing drivers.
- New ticket machines are due to be introduced later in the year, enabling improved passenger data and more accurate fare calculation.
- Electric buses have been successfully introduced in Gloucester, with Cheltenham deployment expected shortly.
- Work continues on multi-operator ticketing and improved passenger information in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council.

Accessibility Discussion

Several attendees raised accessibility concerns:

- An attendee asked about disability awareness training. Stagecoach confirmed that new drivers receive dedicated inclusion and disability training and that refresher training is delivered to existing drivers.
 - A wheelchair user attending the meeting described an incident where they were incorrectly told they required a special pass to use a powered wheelchair on a bus. Stagecoach apologised and requested further details so the issue could be investigated.
 - Discussion took place around wheelchair spaces on buses, particularly on rural services where the next bus may be several hours away. A participant highlighted the impact of passengers being left behind when the wheelchair space was already occupied. Stagecoach acknowledged the concern and agreed to raise the issue internally and with wider industry contacts.
 - An attendee asked whether future vehicle tracking systems could indicate whether wheelchair spaces were already occupied. Stagecoach confirmed this is being explored but will depend on the capabilities of the new ticketing technology.
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Public Transport, BSIP and Network Updates

Tom Main provided an update on Gloucestershire County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) programme.

Key Updates

- Gloucestershire has secured a £28 million multi-year funding settlement, split between maintaining enhanced bus services and delivering infrastructure improvements.
- Existing network enhancements have been secured for the next three years.
- Procurement is underway for the next phase of the Robin demand-responsive transport service, including proposed service expansions and additional vehicle capacity.
- A recent Passenger Forum generated approximately 60 questions and comments from passengers. Responses are currently being prepared and will be shared with stakeholders.
- Bus network maps continue to be updated with accessibility and usability improvements, and feedback remains welcome.

Robin Service Accessibility Concern

A wheelchair user attending the meeting raised concerns after a Robin booking was cancelled shortly before travel because a replacement vehicle was reportedly unable to accommodate their powered wheelchair.

Tom Main confirmed that the issue would be investigated further, as accessibility should be maintained when replacement vehicles are used.

Partnership Working with Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations

Miranda Thomason introduced her Adult Social Care role, focused on prevention and strengthening links with the voluntary and community sector.

Key Messages

- Transport remains one of the most frequently raised issues by community organisations.
- The broader challenge is often access rather than transport alone, including support to leave home, access services and participate in community activities.
- Community transport, befriending and buddying schemes play an important role in preventing isolation and supporting independence.
- Miranda highlighted the importance of connecting existing services and avoiding duplication, while encouraging organisations to share evidence and examples of good practice.

Discussion

A useful discussion took place around improving links between public transport operators and community transport providers, particularly where people may be unable to travel due to accessibility barriers or capacity constraints.

Stagecoach agreed to explore whether stronger links with community transport providers could be incorporated into staff awareness and training.

Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership

Bee Clark provided an overview of the Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership.

Highlights

- The *Travelling with Confidence* programme has now engaged more than 260 disabled passengers through workshops and supported travel experiences.
- An accredited Travel Proficiency Certificate is being delivered with education providers to improve travel confidence and independence.

- The *All Aboard* disability arts exhibition has been viewed by approximately 60,000 visitors and may be displayed at Gloucestershire stations in future.
 - The CrossCountry Access Panel continues to provide lived-experience feedback and mystery shopper assessments to improve accessibility across the rail network.
 - Funding applications are being developed to extend the *Travelling with Confidence* programme, alongside potential new work focusing on the experiences of blind and visually impaired passengers.
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Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

Sarah Williams provided an update on Gloucestershire's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans.

Key Points

- The Cheltenham and Gloucester LCWIP network has been reviewed and expanded to connect with recently completed infrastructure, including sections of the Gloucestershire Cycle Spine.
- Walking and cycling plans have been reviewed alongside the bus network to ensure routes provide access to bus stops and support multi-modal journeys.
- Public consultation on the updated network has now closed.
- The updated network is expected to be published later in the summer.
- Work will next focus on reviewing the Stroud LCWIP.

Additional Question Raised

Q: Can the LCWIP survey be shared with the Partnership Boards once it is made public?

A: Absolutely. If you would like to see existing plans, they are available at:
www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/lcwip

Neurodivergence and Transport

Andrew Cotterill (Neurodivergence Partnership Board), supported by Sammy Roberts (Inclusion Gloucestershire), delivered a presentation exploring transport through a neurodivergent lens.

Key Themes

The presentation emphasised that travel forms part of a wider journey experience:

Leave → Travel → Arrive → Participate → Get Home → Recover

Common barriers identified included:

- Uncertainty, disruption and changes to plans.
- Sensory overload from noise, vibration, smells and crowding.
- Information-processing challenges.
- Communication barriers.
- Limited control over travel environments.
- Anxiety about asking for help or being stranded.

Examples highlighted included:

- Difficulty interpreting unclear service information.
- Anxiety caused by delays, cancellations and uncertainty.
- Challenges understanding unwritten social expectations on public transport.
- Sensory discomfort associated with noise, engine vibrations and crowded environments.
- Confusion caused by humour, unclear language or ambiguous communication from staff.

Travel Training Insights

Inclusion Gloucestershire's travel training programme reported that:

- Approximately 42% of referrals are from neurodivergent individuals.
- Confidence is built through familiarity, predictability and supported practice.
- Practical issues such as seating location, vibration levels and understanding social expectations can significantly affect whether a journey is manageable.
- Lived experience should be considered during transport planning, design and evaluation.

Stagecoach Response

Matthew Breese welcomed the discussion and noted that:

- Stagecoach has an internal neurodivergent staff network.
- New app and ticketing developments aim to provide clearer disruption information and more accurate real-time updates.
- There may be opportunities for depot visits or familiarisation sessions to help some passengers gain confidence before travelling independently.

Agreed Actions

Action	Lead
Investigate the reported Stagecoach incident involving a powered wheelchair user being incorrectly told a special pass was required.	Stagecoach
Review customer service contact arrangements following reports that voicemail systems were unavailable when attempting to report accessibility concerns.	Stagecoach
Consider concerns regarding wheelchair users being left behind on rural routes where only one wheelchair space is available and explore wider policy discussions.	Stagecoach
Investigate the Robin booking incident where a replacement vehicle was reportedly unable to accommodate a powered wheelchair.	GCC - ITU
Share responses from the recent Passenger Forum questions with BBTL members once completed.	GCC - ITU
Explore opportunities for stronger integration between community transport providers and public transport operators, particularly when passengers cannot be accommodated.	GCC / Community Transport Providers / Stagecoach
Explore whether awareness of community transport options can be incorporated into Stagecoach staff training and procedures.	Stagecoach
Continue dialogue between Stagecoach, Inclusion Gloucestershire and neurodivergence representatives regarding lived-experience input into staff training and service improvements.	Stagecoach / Inclusion Gloucestershire
Share the updated LCWIP network and associated consultation outputs when published.	GCC – Sarah Williams
Share future LCWIP consultations and surveys with Partnership Boards once publicly available.	GCC – Sarah Williams

Next Meeting

The next Building Better Transport Links meeting is planned for **October 2026**, with the exact date and time to be confirmed. Presentation slides and additional resources will be circulated to attendees.