

Building Better Transport Links (BBTL)

Meeting Summary – 28 April 2026

1. Welcome and meeting aims

Tom Main welcomed attendees and outlined the purpose of the session: to share updates on bus services and public transport improvements, review progress against previous actions, and gather feedback from partners and people with lived experience. The meeting was intended to remain informal and discussion-led.

ACTION: Promote BBTL meetings via Partnership Boards newsletter

- Recognising that **all five Partnership Boards regularly raise transport as a key issue**, ITU to:
 - Draft a **clear statement of purpose and aims** for the Building Better Transport Links (BBTL) group, highlighting the value of the meetings and how feedback influences transport planning and service delivery.
 - Provide **a short article (1–2 paragraphs)** for inclusion in the **quarterly Partnership Boards newsletter**, inviting wider engagement and encouraging people to attend future BBTL meetings.
 - Bus operators **Stagecoach West (James)** and **Pulhams (Luke)** to contribute short complementary paragraphs outlining:
 - How operator attendance supports service improvements
 - The importance of accessibility and lived-experience feedback
 - Content to be suitable for a general audience and reusable across multiple Partnership Boards.
 - **Please can the Partnership Boards contact megan.toomer@gloucestershire.gov.uk with notice of when this is required.**
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2. Actions from previous meeting (January 2026)

Transport disability focus working group

- A dedicated accessibility and disability working group has now been formally agreed through the Enhanced Partnership Board (March 2026).
- This was unanimously supported and will provide a clear route for accessibility issues into strategic decision-making.
- Action confirmed as completed.

Driver training summaries

- Bus operators provided summaries of driver training, as detailed below:
- Training covers:
 - Company induction
 - Emergency First Aid at Work
 - Fire Awareness
 - Fuel Efficient Driving
 - Rules of the Road
 - Drivers Hours and Tacho Awareness
 - Safeguarding
 - Road Traffic Collisions
 - Health & Safety
 - "Safe & Legal PCV Driver" - this covers dealing with other road users or enforcement officers, loading and unloading passengers safely at different types of stops, parking restrictions, using sat navs, weight limits of roads and vehicles, toll roads / low emission zones , driving licences, DQC cards and o-licences, and security / crime prevention.
 - Driver welfare - this covers fatigue, mental health / stress, alcohol, drugs and medication and licencing requirements for things like eyesight etc.
 - Disability Awareness
 - Regulations regarding accessibility and carriage of disabled passengers (Equality Act, PVSAR, PSVAIR, DVSA)
 - Understanding disability and diversity
 - Types of disabilities
 - Barriers faced by people with disabilities - attitudinal, communication and physical
 - Equity and Equality
 - Medical vs Social models of disability
 - Disability discrimination
 - Positive and negative terminology for disabilities
 - Disability hate crime
 - Importance of public transport to many people with disabilities
 - Etiquette when dealing with different impairment groups
 - Customer Service
 - Presentation
 - Time management
 - Legal responsibilities
 - Attitude and behaviour
 - Customer expectations
 - Positive and negative customer feedback and how to respond to this
 - Communication skills - empathy, body language, non-verbal communication
 - Poor customer service and its impacts
 - How to ensure we give good customer service
 - Resolving complaints - Listen, Empathise, Apologise, Problem Solve

- Escalating a complaint when appropriate
 - Prevention of Clandestine Entrants to the UK (this is for our International Coach Drivers specifically)
 - Operators highlighted forthcoming guidance linked to the Better Buses Bill (e.g. violence against women and girls).
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3. Update from bus operators

Stagecoach West

- **Performance**
 - Operated mileage: ~99.8%
 - On-time performance: ~85% (1 minute early to 5 minutes late)
 - Significant improvement in driver recruitment; Gloucester depot now almost fully staffed.
 - 13.5 million passenger journeys in Gloucestershire over the past year.
- **Challenges**
 - Roadworks and congestion continue to impact punctuality.
- **Service changes and enhancements**
 - New and improved services in Cheltenham and Gloucester, including:
 - New Service G (Hatherley & Warden Hill)
 - Faster journeys to Cheltenham Rail Station
 - Improved connectivity via Arle Court Park & Ride
 - Punctuality reviews undertaken on several evening and urban routes.
- **Electric vehicles**
 - Gloucester EV rollout complete; Cheltenham in progress.

Pulhams

- **Electric buses**
 - 15 EVs introduced (8 single deck, 7 double deck), with 10 already in service.
 - Remaining double decks expected shortly.
 - Enhanced accessibility features include:
 - Second wheelchair space
 - Hearing loops
 - Improved audio-visual announcements
 - A 16th EV has been ordered for 2027 using additional GCC funding.
- **Service enhancements**
 - X52 (Cheltenham–Oxford) reintroduced with timetable improvements and leisure-focused marketing.
 - Service 40 in Tewkesbury expanded to operate 7 days per week.
 - Improved 801 evening services from early May, strengthening rail connections at Moreton-in-Marsh.

- Services R and L combined into a new, more frequent cross-Cheltenham route (every 30 minutes).
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4. Public transport update – BSIP and LABG

- **Funding**
 - Confirmation of multi-year Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG) funding to 2030.
 - £14m revenue funding (for services) and £14m capital funding (infrastructure) agreed by Cabinet in March 2026.
 - Provides greater stability and allows longer-term planning with operators.
 - **Investment priorities**
 - Service reliability and frequency
 - Bus priority measures
 - Passenger experience and accessibility
 - Infrastructure such as shelters, real-time information and bus lanes
 - Support for smaller operators to meet accessibility standards (e.g. audiovisual equipment)
 - Members welcomed the move away from annual funding cycles and the improved ability to plan ahead.
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5. Concessionary bus passes (before 9:30am)

- Concerns were raised about the restriction on using concessionary passes before 9:30am, particularly for:
 - People with learning disabilities
 - People attending appointments or meetings
 - People in employment who cannot drive
 - GCC explained challenges linked to peak-time capacity and costs, and the risk of destabilising already saturated services.
 - It was acknowledged that the evidence base is limited and that more modelling and learning from other authorities is needed.
 - The issue will remain on the agenda and under review.
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6. Network maps

- New countywide and town bus network maps have been published (Cheltenham, Gloucester, Stroud, Tewkesbury, Cirencester).
- Designed with accessibility requirements in mind and developed with external specialists.
- Feedback welcomed; early comments included:
 - Minor errors to correct (e.g. route numbers missing from keys)

- Requests for greater involvement of sight-loss groups in future iterations
 - Maps are considered a “first version” and will be updated iteratively.
 - Future ambition includes interactive or app-based mapping, subject to feasibility and cost.
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7. Electric buses – community transport

- Gloucestershire is the only authority to secure national EV funding for a **community transport operator**.
 - Funding secured for an electric vehicle for Lydney Dial-A-Ride (Forest of Dean), in partnership with DfT and FoDDC.
 - Vehicle expected to enter service shortly.
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8. Coaches and airport links

- Discussion highlighted low public awareness of coach services (e.g. National Express, FlixBus) and “park and fly” options at Arle Court.
 - Members noted:
 - Coach services can be cheaper and more sustainable than car travel.
 - Information on routes and booking remains difficult to access.
 - GCC and operators agreed there is scope for wider, cross-border promotion and clearer information.
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9. Engagement, surveys and future work

- **Local Transport Plan (LTP):**
 - Issues and opportunities engagement to launch in May 2026.
 - Members encouraged to share views and promote engagement within networks.
 - Please send these to ltip@gloucestershire.gov.uk
 - **Passenger survey:**
 - Gloucestershire participating in the national *Your Bus Journey* survey run by Transport Focus.
 - Includes Gloucestershire-specific questions.
 - ITU will circulate Passenger survey information when available.
 - **Future agenda item:**
 - Andrew Cottrell (Autism and Neurodiversity Partnership Board) invited to a future meeting to discuss neurodiverse experiences of public transport.
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10. Date of next meeting

- Next meeting planned for **16th July 2026**