

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 13th April 2015

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WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Cllr Sohail Munawar (Commissioner for Social and Economic Inclusion)

PART I **NON-KEY DECISION**

REAL TIME PASSENGER INFORMATION

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to examine information on the effectiveness of the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system in Slough and to seek ways to improve it.

March Cabinet requested that officers identify an acceptable detection rate that would reflect the level of investment made to date. This report identifies the reasons for the low detection rates and provides actions to increase the effectiveness of the system by reviewing the following:

- To examine why only approx 30% of buses were detected by the RTPI system, and what can be done to improve upon this current level,
- To enquire what improvements have been made to the RTPI detection rates since the start of the project,
- To implement the real time links for London Buses, Arriva and other bus companies so their information can be displayed via our system and to provide full route coverage (including any first bus routes not yet covered),
- To examine Future Plans for RTPI in Slough; The routes not yet covered by bus stop displays, and which areas to be enabled next.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

That Cabinet is request to resolve that an initial detection rate target of 75% be approved as the minimum and that a further review every three months be undertaken to deliver staged increases to 80% and then to 90% and ultimately to 100% detection.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Provision of Real Time Information and Improvements to this service will contribute to the following Priorities:

- Health: Providing transport facilities that ensure residents can access the health services they need.
- Economy and Skills – Continue to provide residents with access to essential services by improving connections and journey times between work, home, leisure, school and making alternatives to the car more attractive.
- Regeneration and Environment; Improving facilities and access to bus services to increase the use of sustainable form of transport.

Cross-Cutting themes:

Improving the image of the town: By enhancing the sustainable transport links to Heathrow Airport and beyond, with the reduction in journey times of local bus services better information and reliability for all users.

3b **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

- Slough will be the premier location in the south east for businesses of all sizes to locate, start, grow, and stay. By improving access to Heathrow Airport from Slough Trading Estate through alternative forms of sustainable transport in this instance buses, with the journey times reduced to appeal to more commuters. Improving reliability in the services that we run and confidence to use them.

4 **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

There are no financial implications with the proposed action

(b) **Risk Management**

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal	None	
Property	None	
Human Rights	None	
Health and Safety	None	
Employment Issues	None	
Equalities Issues	None	
Community Support	None	
Communications	None	
Community Safety	None	
Financial	None	
Timetable for delivery	None	
Project Capacity	None	
Other	None	

(c) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

There are no legal or Human Rights Act implications relating to the content of this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for the completion of EIA relating to this report.

(e) Workforce

There are no workforce implications.

(f) Property

There are no property implications.

(g) Carbon Emissions and Energy Costs

There are no NET increases in Carbon Emissions as a result of this report.

5 Supporting Information

5.1 Detection Rates

There are a total of 64 buses including the services operating through Slough to Bracknell. At present 82% of the fleet (53 buses) have On Vehicle Units (OVUs) fully installed and an additional 11 buses are due to be fitted. This will provide full coverage of First buses in the town and will increase detection rates to a minimum of 75%.

We have already improved the detection rate from 30% to 60% in the past two to three months, but need to increase this to a minimum of 70% to provide reliability for all users. Historic data where detection rates were recorded as low as 20% were as a result of a small number of vehicles being fitted with RTPI equipment.

- 5.2 The Better Bus Fund concentrated on increasing RTPI units at bus stops but not the bus fleet. This has meant more stops providing scheduled (timetable) information rather than real time. Officers have now moved to providing more on bus detection equipment which has now started to improve real time at a number of stops.

Site visits have been undertaken following concerns raised by the public and councillors including our regular spot checks via the InfoRoute system. These checks have concluded that some of the services have low detection rates. These include:

- 75 – 29%,
- 76 – 36%,
- 78 – 40%.

With an improvement (W/E 23/3/2015) on these routes to:

- 75 – 57%
- 76 – 62%
- 78 – 67%

- 5.3 There have been a number of on-going checks together with further dialogue with First and JMW that has resulted in some detection rates rising to as high as 100%. This increase has been as a direct result of increasing vehicles in Slough with RTPI equipment.

The data outputs submitted to date have shown fluctuating detection, much of this is due to various buses being taken out for routine maintenance or repairs which do not have RTPI equipment and are then replaced for that day('s) with buses with no equipment. In providing transparent reports, officers have been identifying any of the Slough services which are being tracked, this has led to some services such as the No 6, X74 and 58 having low and then high detection. To reduce the fluctuation, officers will now only report on bus services which have an assigned fleet with RTPI equipment. As more buses are fitted, detection of additional services will then be reported.

5.4 What has been done since the start of the project?

Problems have been dealt with as they have arisen, through internal council management systems. In addition to this, we have made a number of improvements to detection rates over the past year:

- i) Software Upgrade: Each bus fitted with RTPI equipment that can be monitored by Council officers through the RTPI system. Daily monitoring detection and observation is undertaken and reported at RTPI meetings.
- ii) Electronic Ticketing Machine Replacements (ETM), were exchanged between vehicles to ensure that the low detection rates were not a result of faulty installation. ETM's were then upgraded which in itself resulted in a delay in achieving acceptable detection rates. There are still additional works required to the ETM's which will be carried out by First Buses in June 2015, again this will improve the detection rates by having a continuous power supply enabling the ETM to have a permanent connection to the OVU. At present when the machine is switched off at the end of the day, the connection is broken, drivers are expected in the morning to re-establish the link as part of their setup procedures. This often results in a manual error and means that the bus is not detected for the entire day. The new supply will remove this element of human error and improve detection rates.
- iii) To bridge the next few months, First have introduced a policy to ensure drivers follow the setup protocols. This will mean that drivers are monitored for compliance and those who are consistently not performing are managed by the First's General Manager. This is a step forward in the co-operation between First, JMW and Slough as part of the new Service Level Agreement.
- iv) Bus Fleet Replacement: Since December 2013 First Buses in Berkshire have replaced a number of bus vehicles in their fleet which had affected the overall detection. We are now in the process of fitting the RTPI equipment onto the last few buses.
- v) New Fleet due to arrive in 2015: There is a further fleet update planned for April/May 2015 with a programme of works agreed with both First Buses and JMW for a fluid transition of fitting of equipment onto the new vehicles to try and ensure detection rates do not drop. This will reduce the interruption to real-time information presented to the public via bus stop shelter and flag displays.

5.5 Can London Buses, Arriva and other bus companies operating in Slough join the system, to provide wider RTPI coverage?

Slough Borough Council's Transport Team are in the process of establishing a SIRI link feed with Bucks County Council and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead that will enable us to detect their services that operate through Slough.

At present Bucks County Council and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead use a different RTPI system (Vix and Nimbus). In October 2014 both Local Authorities agreed to enable the sharing of RTPI data, we expect this to be complete over the coming months. We have also made plans to include the TfL 81 bus service into the complete coverage.

5.6 Which Routes not yet well covered by bus stop shelter and flag displays, and which routes can be enabled next?

Slough Borough Council has a programme for the next phase of RTPI bus shelter and flag display installations in Slough. Parts of these plans are due to be amended due to the proposed Slough Mass Rapid Transit scheme which would require the location and positioning of some bus shelters to be changed. These are to be confirmed following the outcome of the consultation.

5.7 What are the future plans for RTPI in Slough?

For the Authority and it's partners JMW and First Buses to achieve a constant minimum detection rate of 75% and to then review this every three months setting higher targets of 80% rising to 100% compliance.

Quick Response (QR) Codes are available at a number of bus stops in Slough. These are installed in the form of a square barcode on the inside of a bus stop shelter and are managed by Clear Channel.

The Transport team at Slough Borough Council have plans to produce a dedicated mobile phone native app that will offer real time information for Public Transport in the borough. This will be highly useful for commuters with disabilities in Slough who are reliant on public transport.

We are in the process of trialling audio-visual equipment on a small number of vehicles in the borough which is similar to in the equipment utilised in London, Nottingham, Reading and other parts of the country. This feature will enable bus vehicles to audibly announce the oncoming stops of which will be great benefit to visitors to Slough and all those with sensory impairment disabilities.

6 **Comments of Other Committees**

Neighbourhood and Communities Scrutiny Panel put forward recommendations to Cabinet to consider with regard to Real Time Passenger Information. The recommendations were as follows:

- That the Panel recommend Cabinet reviews the current level of accuracy of RTPI in order to set a target for RTPI accuracy and a suitable timeframe.
- That, subsequent to this, the responsible Cabinet member is recommended to report back to the NCS Scrutiny Panel in six months.

- That the Panel recommends that no further capital expenditure on RTPI be made until the Cabinet is satisfied that worthwhile levels of RTPI will be achieved.

7 **Conclusion**

In conclusion it is recommended that Cabinet approve the process for officers continuing to monitor and improve detection rates for all bus services and that six monthly reviews are undertaken with all partners to stretch the targets.

8 **Appendices Attached**

‘A’ - First Buses response relating to ETM upgrade

9 **Background Papers**

‘1’ - NCS Scrutiny Panel Committee Report 2/12/2014

‘2’ - Detection Rate Spreadsheet