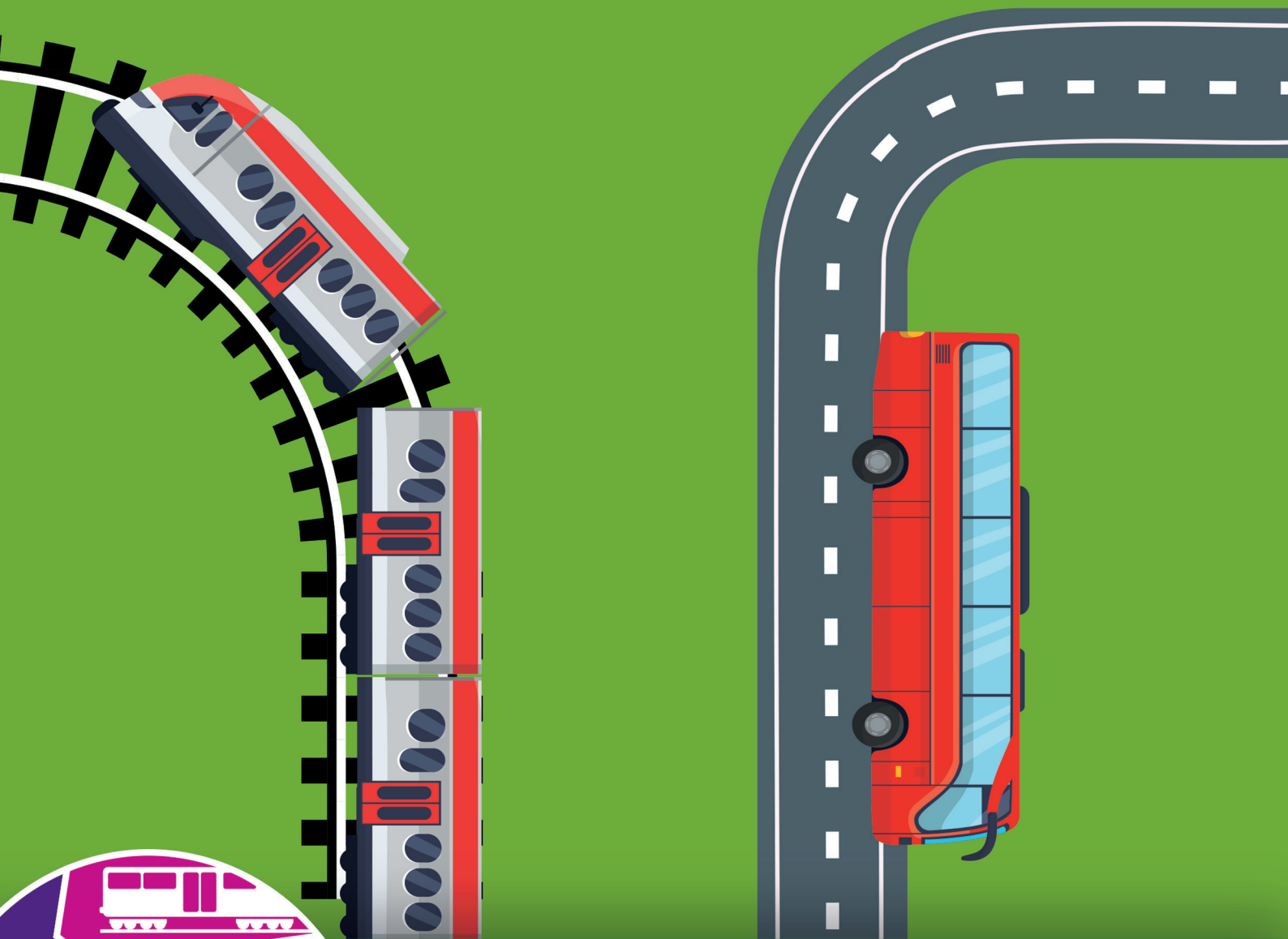


Public Transport Strategy



Warwickshire
County Council

Overview

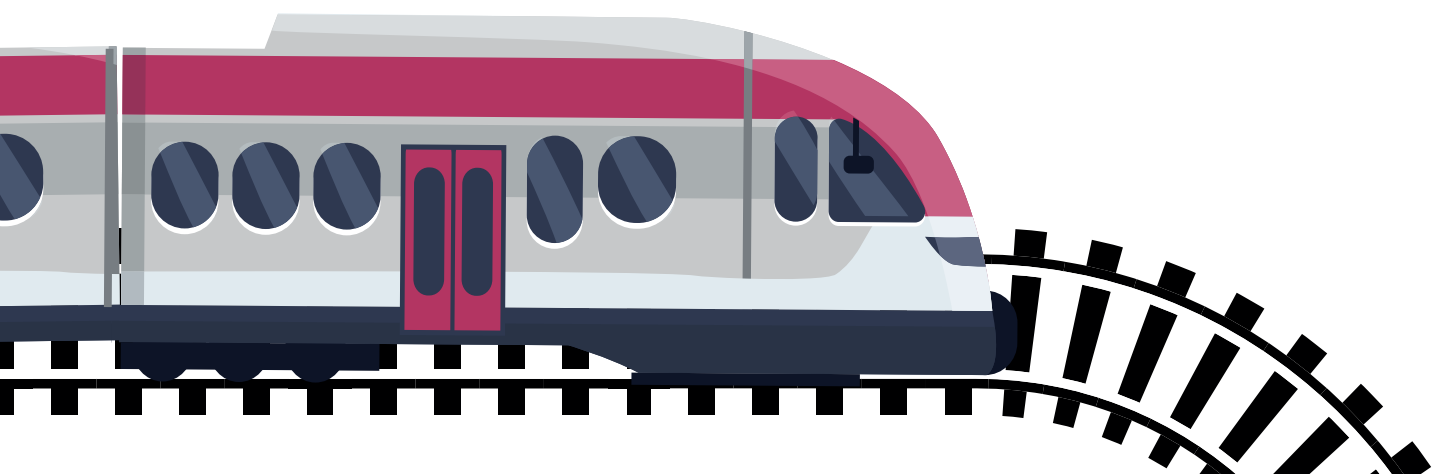
Public transport services in Warwickshire make significant contributions to the local economy, business and local community, making Warwickshire an attractive place to live, work and visit.

Investment over the last 20 years has delivered improvements to services and infrastructure which meet the Council's vision of making Warwickshire a better place.

Pre-pandemic, Warwickshire experienced sustained growth in passenger demand for rail, with approximately 10 million passenger journeys undertaken from Warwickshire stations per year. Passenger levels are currently around 70% of pre-pandemic levels, but are anticipated to recover and for growth to continue in the future.

Continued investment to deliver and maintain improved transport options will be necessary if Warwickshire is to accommodate the predicted growth in population. We want to encourage additional use of public transport to reduce road congestion, improve air quality and tackle climate change. As a council, we have limited ability to make improvements directly, as almost all public transport is provided solely by third party organisations. However, we can influence demand through our powers as highway authority (e.g. bus lanes, priority signal junctions) and promoting new rail infrastructure and services.

This Local Transport Plan (LTP) will focus on transport developments over the next five years and seek to address longer term trends where possible and appropriate.



Existing Transport Network

Warwickshire has an extensive public transport network which is used for a range of journey types, with commuting and business travel being of particular significance.

Bus use is dominated by the need for local trips, whereas rail trips are made between Warwickshire and the West Midlands conurbation, and there are good connections towards London and the south-east.

The semi-rural nature of Warwickshire means that the distribution of public transport options is not always equitable throughout the county. Factors which contribute to decisions by people to use other, often less sustainable forms of transport include gaps in the network, real and perceived barriers to access to public transport, such as inadequate or absent bus shelters, availability and reliability of services, cost of fares, safety concerns and a lack of direct connectivity.



In 2021 there were 418,000 vehicles licensed in Warwickshire, with approximately 80% being cars registered to residents of the county.

This figure has risen steadily over the preceding decade, with an annual average rise of just over 1.5%.

In comparison to neighbouring counties, Warwickshire has a relatively high level of vehicles registered per head of population.

This steady and sustained increase in the number of vehicles places heavy pressure on road space. Traffic congestion increases travel time and reduces the appeal of buses as a convenient alternative to car use.

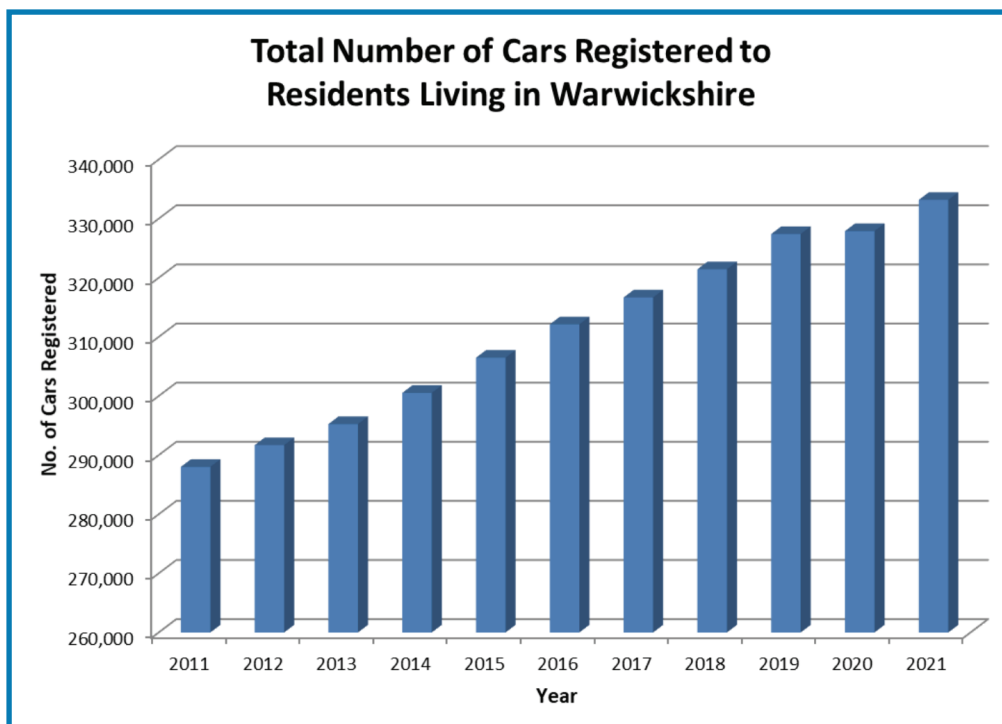
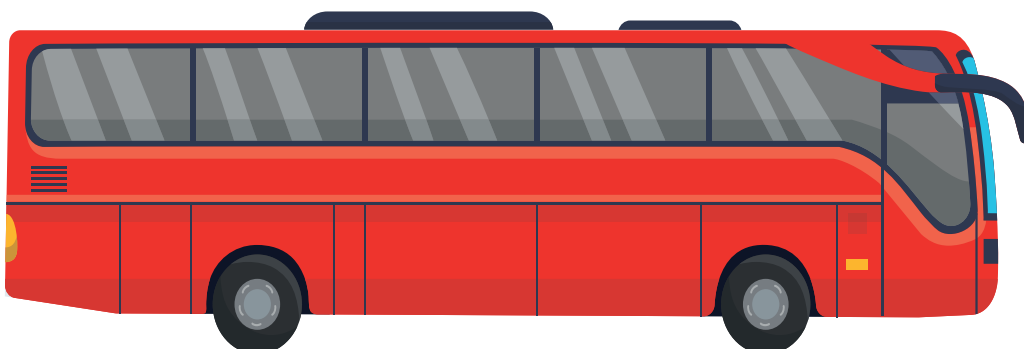


Figure 6. Increase in number of cars registered in Warwickshire 2011 to 2021.



A Public Transport Network for the future

Our consultation with the Warwickshire public has demonstrated that their priorities are for an environmentally sustainable public transport option which allows people to travel throughout Warwickshire from all parts of the county and beyond in safety, comfort and convenience.

For public transport to become a first choice travel option, its attractiveness relative to car use needs to improve. We recognise that accessibility, safety, convenience and cost play important parts in transport choices. Reliability of services and good connections throughout Warwickshire at convenient times are also critical. Our public transport network should build on the existing economic success of the area by improving connectivity between residential, leisure and business centres.

Safe and accessible public transport options can have additional benefits in improving social inclusion. For those without access to a car, good public transport connectivity reduces isolation within and between communities and improves wellbeing for groups which often suffer from social exclusion.

In line with Government best practice, we have formalised our partnership working with bus operators by jointly producing a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and entering a legally binding Enhanced Partnership which aims to deliver the aspirations set out in the National Bus Strategy.

Our ultimate ambition is for:

- Economic, social and environmental benefits to Warwickshire residents, visitors and businesses
- Opportunities to choose public transport ahead of private car use
- Use of planning legal agreements to ensure new developments are less dependent on car usage as a first choice form of transport

WCC role in supporting the bus network

The government's national bus strategy states that services cannot be planned on a purely commercial basis with little or no engagement with, or support from, local transport authorities.

Warwickshire's investment in the bus network supports many initiatives, including socially necessary services, school and special education needs (SEN) transport, concessionary passes, measures to reduce journey times and improvements to infrastructure such as bus shelters.

Our interventions help to make buses a more attractive transport choice. In turn, this delivers wider aims such as reduced congestion, increased social connection, mobility and wellbeing, and supporting the economy by providing shoppers and workers with affordable options to travel.

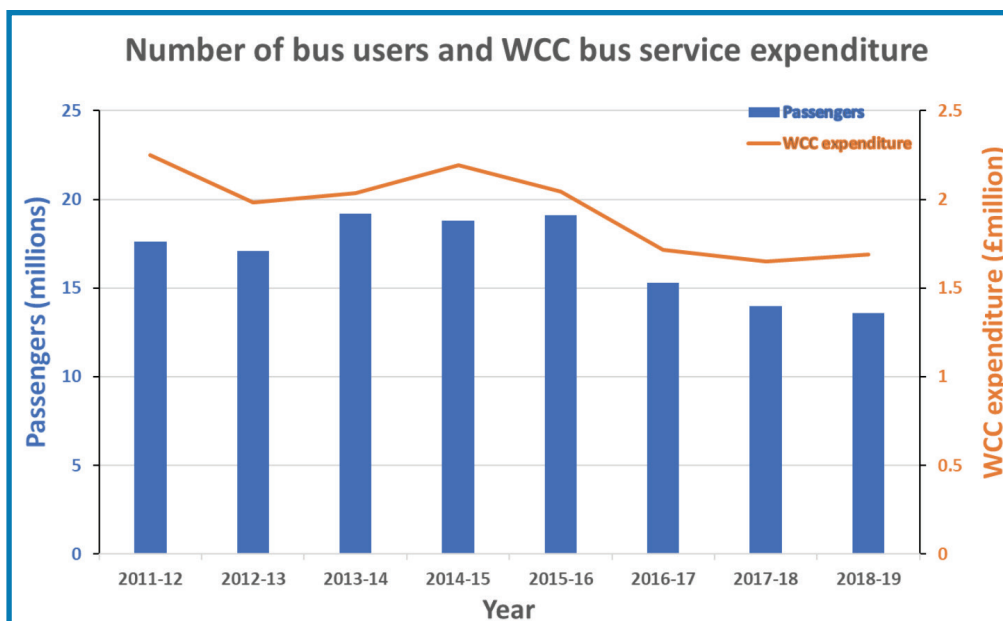


Figure 7. A comparison of bus patronage with Warwickshire County Council bus service expenditure.

Public Transport Policies

We want to achieve a connected public transport system which should provide a convenient alternative to car use.

Our policies will aim to deliver on this ambition. We will encourage people to choose sustainable travel options wherever possible and we will strive to exploit opportunities which improve services, facilities and infrastructure to make these options more attractive.

Policy Position PT1

Working with partner organisations to improve public transport

Delivery of a successful, integrated public transport network can only be the result of partnership work between the private companies which operate rail and bus services, the County Council and key industry organisations.

WCC will develop and strengthen relationships with Network Rail, DfT, West Midlands Rail Executive and Midlands Connect, including supporting delivery of the West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy. We will work with private rail companies and listen to the public transport needs of communities. Our BSIP has been produced jointly with bus operators and with them we have created an Enhanced Partnership that sets out how we will work together to deliver BSIP outcomes. We will maximise funding opportunities, wherever possible, to promote and improve existing public transport services. Any funding provided by the Council to private organisations is bound by legal agreements through which we monitor effectiveness and value for money.



Policy Position PT2

Improved accessibility and attractiveness of public transport as a travel choice

WCC will work with the bus and rail sector to develop proposals for new and improved services, stations and interchanges which allow connections from a range of other travel types to provide a truly integrated public transport network. We will work with partner organisations to ensure that vehicle fleets and facilities at rail and bus stations are improved to be the best they can be. Buses on demand, better bus connections, safe cycle parking and more electric vehicle charging points at stations are just some of the improvements we will want to see. Additionally, the County Council will also seek to retain the existing levels of passenger services and stations.

Policy Position PT3

Information and ticketing

Convenience and cost are hugely influential factors in determining which travel options the public chooses. We recognise that smart-ticketing, contactless payments and fares that are easier to understand will make public transport more attractive for people to use. WCC will work with its partners to review and develop new, simpler, more flexible ways of obtaining and paying for journeys, and ticketing that allows journeys to be made on different forms of transport. We will rely on our transport partners to provide accurate and up-to-date information accessible to all users.

Policy Position PT4

New developments and connectivity to public transport services

Population growth is likely to place strain on all areas of transport. WCC will work with colleagues in the local district and borough planning departments to ensure that new developments maximise their opportunities to provide excellent access to the public transport network, taking into account potential demand from new development.

We want to improve Warwickshire's places and the connections between them. Public transport infrastructure, waiting areas and interchange facilities should add to the quality of local centres and provide a focus for growth and investment.

Where possible and appropriate we will secure developer funding towards the cost of public transport improvements.

Policy Position PT5

Community Rail Partnership

A number of Community Rail Partnerships (CRP) have been established across the country, including the Heart of England CRP which was established in 2019 and covers part of Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull. CRPs engage communities and develop projects to help ensure the railway supports the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the areas they serve. The County Council will continue to support Community Rail initiatives, such as the Heart of England CRP.



