

## HRA Update on U1 Bus Route to Central Station

HonSec



I attended the Enhanced Bus Partnership Forum via Teams on 20 May to speak for the reinstatement of the U1 bus service to Central Station. HRA was very grateful that all 6 Ward Councillors (Portswood and Swaythling) had supported the HRA request.

The Forum mainly addressed updates from bus companies operating in Southampton and Hampshire. All of these reports were presented in a positive way.

<https://transport.southampton.gov.uk/media/3219/20240520-ep-forum-slides.pdf>

Item 5 on the Agenda, or 4 in the Notes of the meeting, Bus Users Feedback, offered invited members of the public or associations to make representation. Graham Cole, an HRA member, who had been vigorously campaigning to have the U1 bus stop at Central Station reinstated, was invited to speak first. I was invited to follow on. The SCC Officer running the forum, David Garney, Senior Transport Planner – Enhanced Bus Partnership, Transport & Planning Service, had been very helpful throughout and particular that both of us should speak, so that our comments could be included in the minutes.

Richard Tyldsley, the General Manager of Bluestar, gave the same explanation that he had made previously following our representations and dismissed the request.

There had been no representative from the University at the forum.

The blue highlighted rows in the tables below in Annex i (N.B. p.8 is blank) were the draft notes from the Forum meeting and indicated that the U1 request would be monitored by Bluestar (RT) and considered by SCC. Some progress.

David Garney had also informed me that the University managed unilink. I had been unable to obtain a direct contact this person for several months, so trawled back through past minutes of Enhanced Bus Partnership Meetings (Board and Forum) until I found two University-linked names, Adam Tewksbury and Elliott Prescott. I contacted Elliot Prescott. Elliot replied:

*With regards to Unilink, I manage the needs of the University and ensure that the service is fit for the University. Decisions to launch, alter, or cease certain routes must take into account the University's needs as per our contract with Go South Coast, along with the usage and revenue generated by the general public. I am able to advise on University matters, but Go South Coast have sight of everything else.*

*According to data from Go South Coast, the U1 is heavily reliant on the University community, particularly students. Typically, there's a drop off in ridership on board the U1 of approximately two thirds outside of the academic year, which shows that public usage on board is comparatively low. A majority of these students don't have the need to regularly travel to Southampton Central, so the Southampton Central loop wasn't useful for a majority of the U1's passengers. It also added several minutes onto journey times which incurred additional costs for Go South Coast to address, and drew complaints from the University community as a faster journey time between Highfield and NOC was desired, which we passed on to Go South Coast as feedback.*

*When the renovation works to Southampton Central began and forced the U1 to be re-routed, this improved journey times between Highfield and NOC, and led to a better experience on board amongst students - the U1's main customer base - which we again passed on to Go South Coast as feedback. Since Go South Coast kept in place this change, the demand from students and staff alike for the old route to be reinstated is very low. Go South Coast have actually reported a 15% increase in usage of the U1 after the route no longer included the loop of Southampton Central.*

*From my perspective, whilst the University takes great pride in its work with local residents and resident groups, I'm not able to support the reintroduction of the U1's Southampton Central loop given that its removal appears to have benefitted the most of the U1's passengers, a majority of whom are part of the University. Should alternative data be presented or usage patterns change, we will of course reassess our stance on this matter.*

*Until then, I would suggest that you speak with Go South Coast and Southampton City Council about any shortages or unmet demand in bus network provision for the general public.*

In the same week I received this reply from Jon Walsh:

*Hi Barbara, I have now had a detailed conversation with Bluestar about the changes to the U1 route and the changes to routes originating from the bus station.*

*Bluestar feel that their journey data is commercially sensitive and so do not wish to share it publicly but agreed that I could share the following.*

*There is a 9% increase on the U1 route year on year.*

*The data suggests a 15% increase on the route when comparing with data prior to the route change, so compared to when the route still had the route including the central station.*

*They have also pointed out to me that the U6 which now does stop at the central station, has 90 journeys a day that are initiated at the train station so is very well used.*

*Bluestar pointed out to me that the U1 does still stop at Asda and the Civic centre and that the U2 and U6 now serve the central station so wanted me to ask what journey you were trying to complete so they could make some suggestions for you as they think the current formatting gives the best service to the most people.*

*I hope that answers most of the questions.*

At this point I replied to the University to say that all would be reported to the next HRA Committee Meeting and a decision on next steps would be taken then.

Having discussed this with Roger, HRA Chair, it is suggested that HRA should write to both the University and Council Leader.

Barbara Claridge  
HRAHonSec  
09:06:24

**Annex i. Draft Notes from the Enhanced Bus Partnership Forum 20 May 2024 (David Garney)**

<b>Meeting Title:</b>	<b>Southampton Enhanced Partnership Forum</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>20 May 2024</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>16:00-18:00</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Room 121, Civic Centre, Southampton, and Microsoft Teams</b>
<p><b><u>Invitees:</u></b></p> <p>Cllr Eamonn Keogh, SCC Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Transport (Chair)  Cllr Katherine Barbour, Portswood Ward  Conrad Haigh, Solent Transport Manager, Solent Transport  Geoff Hobbs, Team Leader, Strategic Transport, Hampshire County Council  Richard Tyldsley, General Manager, Bluestar &amp; Unilink  Stuart Bailey, Interim Operations Manager, First Solent  Emma Baker, Strategic Transport Planner, Southampton City Council  David Garney, Senior Transport Planner, Southampton City Council  Ruth Magennis, Sustainable Transport Project Lead, Southampton City Council  Jason Light, Head of Sustainability and Energy, University Hospital Southampton  Barbara Hancock, Harefield Bus Campaign  Jen Davies, Harefield Bus Campaign  Barbara Claridge, Highfield Residents Association  Graham Cole, Highfield Residents Association  Lee Hudson, Red Funnel  Phil Dominey, South Western Railway  Richard Gibson, Cross Country Trains</p> <p><b><u>Apologies:</u></b></p> <p>Iain Steane, Sustainable Travel &amp; Transport Policy Manager, Southampton City Council  Andrew Wilson, Strategic Transport Manager, Hampshire County Council  Gareth Blair, Managing Director, Xelabus  Richard Soper, South Hampshire Bus Operators Association  Adam Tewkesbury, Associate Director, Environment &amp; Sustainability, University of Southampton</p>	

Ref	Agenda Items	Presenting
1	<b>Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>	<b>Cllr Keogh</b>
2	<b>Review of the year</b>	<b>EB/GH/ RT/CH/SB</b>
	<p>EB provided an update covering progress over the past year by SCC.</p> <p>The following discussion points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Action</b> - Cllr Keogh would like SCC to promote the Tap On Tap off weekly capping via the council's social media channels.</li> <li>• <b>Action</b> – It was felt by the group that not providing printed copies of the PT map may be viewed as excluding people who do not access technology. SCC to review and take a view on printing the PT Map in October following the City Centre changes for the new Albion Place bus hub.</li> <li>• <b>Action</b> – Communicare have a Travel Buddy scheme to make buses less anxious to use. They would also like to see additional printed copies of the next BSIP Survey made available for collection from the Civic Centre.</li> </ul> <p>GH provided an update covering progress over the past year by HCC.</p> <p>The following discussion points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Solent now have 40 out of the 62 battery electric buses now in service, and all X4 &amp; X5 journeys will be operated by battery electric buses.</li> <li>• Less young people are learning to drive, and therefore this is a good time to promote the bus. This has been supported by a joint marketing campaign between HCC and bus operators.</li> <li>• It was felt that customers do not have a good understanding of transport hubs and perhaps SCC could look at Station Travel Plans and the work HCC are progressing in this area.</li> <li>• It was felt essential by members of the group that new bus interchanges must have toilet facilities. Not providing toilet facilities can prevent people from using buses, especially for longer journeys.</li> </ul> <p>RT provided an update covering progress over the past year by Bluestar.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been good growth on service 13 since the introduction of the additional journeys funded by the SCC BSIP.</li> <li>• Fifteen of the sixteen new Enviro400 MMC buses for services 2 and 7 are now in service.</li> <li>• In two months, all buses will be in Bluestar livery and Euro 6. The average fleet age will reduce from 9 to 6 years.</li> <li>• SB introduced himself and provided an overview of First Solent. There has been a 10% punctuality improvement for services X4 &amp; X5 using the</li> </ul>	

	<p>Prospective scheduling software. From 26 May, both X4 &amp; X5's will run from Southampton, Fareham, and Portsmouth up to every 20 minutes Monday to Friday daytime.</p> <p>CH presented the Solent Transport update with the following additional note.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Breeze app is the biggest Mobility as a Service (MaaS) app in the UK with circa 25,000 users.</li> <li>• There was a discussion on how accessible the app is and whether particularly features are available (e.g. audio messaging).</li> </ul>	
<b>3</b>	<b>BSIP Update 2024 &amp; Bus Connectivity Assessment</b>	<b>EB</b>
	<p>EB discussed progress to date, including the following projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus priority and infrastructure</li> <li>• Fare offers &amp; campaigns</li> <li>• Highway schemes</li> <li>• The requirement for a refreshed BSIP document for 2024 and a bus connectivity assessment.</li> </ul>	<b>EB</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Session - Bus Users Feedback – what do you want to see from the BSIP?</b>	<b>All</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perhaps consideration could be given to areas with older residents, proving buses where older residents live and have closer access to bus stops.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> The SCC BSIP document is being updated to include population demographics which can be used in Bus Route Investment Plans to assess the transport needs of older (and disabled) people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Highfield Residents Association raised the decision for the U1 not reverting to Central Station following the completion of the station interchange facility. RT provided an explanation that the commercial business case does not currently warrant enough passengers to facilitate this, and punctuality improvements have been achieved by reinvesting the vehicle resource into the U1 timetable.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> SCC to consider this request and potential integration in future BSIP network enhancements. RT will continue to monitor usage and the potential for both the U1 and U6, which does serve the Station south interchange.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Harefield Bus Campaign commended the recent timetable improvements to service 13 which has been funded by the SCC BSIP allocation. DG also highlighted improvements to bus stop infrastructure to provide consistency around the Harefield loop, again funded by the SCC BSIP allocation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> Bluestar to consider the additional requests from the campaign to look at the punctuality of the 07:35 journey from Bentley Green and evening buses that currently return 'out of service' could perhaps call at Bitterne on their way back to depot.</p>	

<b>5</b>	<b>Bus Operator &amp; Stakeholder Update</b>	<b>RT/SB/PD</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Covered in section 2 – review of the year. Both Bluestar and First Solent provided an update to the group and SWR mentioned the development of Interchange Plans for HCC.</li> </ul>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Any other business</b>	<b>All</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None raised.</li> </ul>	
	Date of next meeting: November 2024, to be confirmed.	





## ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP FORUM ACTION LOG

MEETING DATE	ITEM	RESPONSIBLE	ACTION	STATUS
14/11/2023	2	SCC	Invite representative from the Port to the next Forum.	Completed
14/11/2023	2	SCC	Seek ways to increase the number of bus users attending the EP Forum from across the city.	Completed
14/11/2023	3	Bluestar	Bluestar to provide an update on how they respond to complaints raised from residents.	Completed
14/11/2023	3	SCC	Provide an update on bus stops and shelters at a future meeting.	OK on leave
14/11/2023	4	SCC	Continue engaging the football club on the BSIP and EP and potential service improvements.	Ongoing
14/11/2023	4	SCC	To contact UHS to discuss service issues around the hospital. Cllr Barbour also agreed to raise service issues with UHS via their Sustainability Board.	UHS rep at forum; action ongoing.
14/11/2023	4	SCC	SCC to present a case study regarding staff travel to UHS at the next meeting.	Ongoing
14/11/2023	5	Solent Transport	Provide an update on Digital Demand Responsive Transport, which is part of the Solent Future Transport Zone programme, at the next Forum.	Completed
20/05/2024	2	SCC	Cllr Keogh would like SCC to promote the Tap On Tap off weekly capping via the council's social media channels.	To be started
20/05/2024	2	SCC	SCC to print the PT Map in October following the City Centre changes for the new Albion Place bus hub.	To be started
20/05/2024	2	SCC	Additional printed copies of future BSIP Surveys to be made available from the Civic Centre.	To be started
20/05/2024	4	SCC	The SCC BSIP document is being updated to include population demographics which can be used in Bus Route Investment Plans to assess the transport needs of older (and disabled) people.	To be started
20/05/2024	4	SCC & Bluestar	SCC to consider the U1 request for future BSIP network enhancements and RT will continue to monitor usage and the potential for both the U1 and U6, which does serve the Station south interchange.	To be started
20/05/2024	4	Bluestar	Bluestar to consider the additional requests from the campaign to look at the punctuality of the 07:35 journey from Bentley Green and evening buses that currently return 'out of service' could perhaps call at Bitterne on their way back to depot.	To be started

