

## Comments on MK Bus Strategy

Alan Francis for Milton Keynes Green Party

6 Spencer St, New Bradwell, Milton Keynes, MK13 0DW

### General

We welcome the MK Bus Strategy as far as it goes but it is not ambitious enough. It will not achieve the desired and necessary modal shift and will not achieve the necessary reductions in CO2 emissions from the transport sector. Bus usage per capita needs to treble and MK population is planned to increase by about two thirds. The combination of required modal shift and population growth mean that bus usage in MK needs to increase by a factor of at least 5, ie 400%. The strategy should set out ways in which this can be achieved.

### Climate Change

The Climate Change Bill originally proposed a reduction in CO2 emissions of 60% by 2050. This has recently been increased to 80% by 2050. To achieve that reduction by 2050 will require a reduction of about 50% by 2031, the end point of the MK growth strategy. The transport strategy should have policies to reduce CO2 emissions from the transport sector by 50%. Unfortunately the TSR will increase CO2 emissions in absolute terms. Even on a per capita basis the reduction is only likely to be about 10%, whereas 50% is required.

If MK is to be a genuinely Sustainable Community, where all citizens have good access to facilities, the economy is not damaged by traffic congestion and the global environment is not damaged by climate change and pollution, then we will need a much larger modal shift to sustainable transport modes than proposed in the TSR.

### Targets

The Sustainable Integrated Transport Strategy (SITS) was adopted as council policy in 1999. It is still council policy although it is largely forgotten. Its targets included 20% of journey to work travel should be by public transport by 2006 and 25% by 2011. However only about 9% was been achieved in 2006. The council now proposes to drop these targets because it has failed to meet the 2006 target. Instead of dropping the 2011 target the council should be striving harder to meet that target.

Table 1  
SITS Targets (1999)

MODE	1997	2001	2006	2011
	%	%	%	%
Car	77	71	62	55
Pub Tran	12	15	20	25
Cycle	3	6	10	12
Walk	7	7	7	7
M/cycle	1	1	1	1

The targets for bus/cycling/walking modal shares are pitifully low and the trend has been to lower the targets over recent years. Rather than adjusting the targets downwards to what is being achieved more ambitious targets should be set, eg reaching the UK average within 5 years, and steps taken to ensure that they are met.

#### Buses

The TSR notes that bus use in MK is much less than that in similar sized towns in the SE. This is highlighted in the table below. The TSR should advocate MK reaching at least the same level as these other towns. If MK is to be a Sustainable Community then the proportion of travel by bus should be above the average, not way below it.

The TSR notes that bus patronage in MK increased by 11% between 2001/2 and 2005/6. However the population increased by about 8% over that period so the increase per capita was only about 3%, ie less than 1% per annum.

The measures of bus use in the TSR are different to those in the Bus Strategy making it impossible to compare them to see if the two strategies are compatible with each other. One of them should be changed to express bus use, actual and predicted, in the same terms as the other so that a comparison can be made.

The aim should be that public transport, bus or train or a combination of the two, offers a convenient way to make most journeys for most people at most times. If this is not the case then people will have to own a car to make many of their journeys. Once they own a car then most journeys are made by car, in order to

spread out the fixed costs of car ownership over a larger number of miles. They are then largely lost to public transport.

About half the residents of MK do not have access to a car either at all times or at any time. They are therefore dependent upon public transport. Better public transport helps with social equity.

Table 2

	%
Travel To Work by Bus	
Milton Keynes	4.7
Reading	12
Southampton	12
Oxford	15

Bus services outside London were deregulated by the Transport Act 1985. This has led to a decline in bus use outside London. However bus services within London are still regulated and useage has increased. MKC should lobby government for bus services in MK to be re-regulated so that the council can ensure that the appropriate bus services are provided within MK.

Modal shift requires a 'carrot and stick' approach. Faber Maunsell confirmed this in the LTPTV. MKC seems to only be willing to consider carrots. Some sticks are needed too if modal shift is to be achieved.

The objectives need to be made more specific with targets that can be monitored; as they are it will be very difficult to know if the objectives are being met. They should be linked more directly to national objectives such as reducing CO2 emissions or social exclusion. There should also be clearer priorities such as pedestrians and cyclists followed by public transport and lastly cars. Public safety should also have preference over other issues such as time saving or reducing congestion.

Comments on specific paragraphs

2.5 This notes that bus patronage has increased by 40% between 2001/2 and 2007/8. This welcome but it is not all due to modal shift. At least 10% is due to population growth in MK and some more is due to free/reduced travel for pensioners being introduced during the period.

2.7 The figures for bus usage in comparable SE towns should be included, as in table 2 above.

2.22 should include another 2 aims

- increase bus modal share to the UK average within 5 years and exceed it longer term
- reduce transport impact on climate change

2.35 agree that bus and car parking are currently charged differently. There should be a policy to level the playing field.

Section 2 should have something about reducing transport impact on climate change

3.1

MKP uses a figure of 350,000, why does this strategy only use 300,000 for 2031 population?

Why does section 3 not refer to the Transport Strategy Review which includes recommendations for increased bus use both in absolute and per capita terms?

4.8 The high speeds on grid roads make it difficult for buses to pull out from bus stop laybys and estate roads and to turn right into estates. This delays buses causing longer journey times and contributing to unreliability. Grid road speed limits should be reduced from 60/70 mph to 50 mph to improve safety, improve bus reliability and reduce pollution and CO2 emissions.

4.20

targets in table 4.1 for 2011 need to be much higher – see above comment

We note that the row “to increase bus modal share” that was in the 2006 draft has been omitted. To aid transparency and monitoring it should be reinstated.

5.7 This section should include support for travel planning, particularly for travel to work, to school and to stations and for personal travel plans.

6.1 It notes that the 2 LTPTV studies recommended a package of measures. LTPTV1 stated that the whole package had to be implemented to be effective, not just cherry-picking. However the council has indeed cherry picked.

6.2 There are many different types of bus user with different requirements. These fall into two main groups. Some want a fast frequent service and are willing to walk some distance to catch those buses, eg to edge of grid square. Others want a service stopping very close to their home/destination and are not so concerned with journey time or frequency.

Currently many bus routes in MK try to satisfy both of these demands but fall between two stools and satisfy neither. While bus pax numbers are low this is inevitable. However as bus pax numbers rise different services can be introduced in the same corridor to satisfy these two different markets. So there could be an express bus on the grid roads and a local bus which meanders through the estates. The strategy should address this issue.

### 6.3

We fear that the indicative 8 core routes miss out or do not serve well a lot of key places. There may need to be more than 8 core routes to properly serve MK.

All residential and employment areas should have bus services. Currently some employment areas, such as Old Wolverton and Knowlhill, do not have bus services. They should.

### 8.19 Car Parking

The TSR notes that MK has more car parking in its town centre than in similar sized towns in the SE and the cost of that car parking is either free or much less. The table below, with figures from the TSR, shows that MK has about 4 times as much car parking as in similar sized towns in the SE and that the cost in MK for those with annual season tickets is less than a quarter of that in similar sized towns in the SE. We believe that the fact that MK has about one third of the bus usage than in similar sized towns in the SE is due to the fact that MK has 4 times as much parking at a quarter of the cost.

Table 3

City Centre Car Parking	Spaces	Daily	Annual
Milton Keynes	25000	£0/£4	£225
Northampton	5000	£5	£1140
Southampton	10000	£7	£1650
Reading	7000	£6	£935

Obviously if bus usage is to be increased then the surfeit and cheapness of car parking has to be addressed.

There should be no free car parking spaces. These distort people's travel expectations. People assume that because there are some free spaces they will be able to park in one. Consequently they drive to CMK. Even if there are no free spaces left and they have to pay they have already taken the decision about travel mode. If people know from the outset that they would have to pay to park in CMK they may make different travel choices.

All day car parking charges should be increased to at least the level of a day pass for the buses (currently £3.20, but less if purchased weekly, monthly or annually). Thus for anyone living within MK it would always be cheaper to travel to work in CMK by bus than by car.

Car parking charges of the order of just £1 per day (ie £225 per year) are so low that they do not even cover the cost of the provision of the space. This is typically at least £500 per year per space. The council is effectively subsidising those who drive into CMK and park there all day. Those who travel in by bus receive no subsidy, having to pay a commercial fare. It is absurd to subsidise car use but not bus use when both council and government policy is to encourage people to travel by bus rather than car.

The TSR notes that there are currently about 25000 parking spaces in CMK. This is already too many. Adding 8000 CP spaces, as is planned, will just make the situation worse.

We support the comments by MK Forum on parking in CMK. There is clearly a mismatch between the numbers of workers proposed to arrive in CMK by car and the number of parking spaces available to them.

Modal shift requires a 'carrot and stick' approach. Faber Maunsell confirmed this in the LTPTV. It said:

"Without measures to discourage car use, the public transport system would have to be of fantastic quality to persuade car users to leave their car at home."

"Restraint on parking and other measures can bring the quality requirement to within more reasonable limits."

MKC seems to only be willing to consider carrots. Some sticks are needed too if modal shift is to be achieved.

LTPTV1 stated clearly that to get modal shift on to buses parking charges had to apply to all sites in CMK and had to be higher.

9.3 Bus services outside London were deregulated by the Transport Act 1985. This has led to a decline in bus use outside London. However bus services within London are still regulated and usage has increased. MKC should lobby

government for bus services in MK to be re-regulated so that the council can ensure that the appropriate bus services are provided within MK.

9.5 The most important factors for passengers are routes, frequency, fares first/last bus times. These should be included in a voluntary QBP.

9.11 The MKTP also has groups covering Stations and Cycling.

Table 10.1

There are no paras 9.21, 9.15, 9.16. many others refer to incorrect para numbers.

Appendix C

4b Interchange Points

At the Hospital all buses should stop on the campus close to the Hospital main entrance, not some inside and some outside on H8 as now. A new bus-only link from the campus ring road to the Marina rdbt should be built so that buses can leave and enter the campus at both ends.

Stantonbury campus should be the northern bus Interchange Point. There should be a new link from Saxon St to Purbeck near the car park for the local centre shops. Purbeck would become one way, southbound only, between the two link roads with the nearside lane as a bus lane with bus stops.

5a

The layout of bus stops on MSBE should be all bus stops on an island with right-hand running, as recommended by Faber Maunsell in LTPTV1. That way passengers can get from any bus stop to any other bus stop without having to cross a road. The island can be equipped with high quality waiting areas and information systems. Station Square should also have all bus stops on an island with right-hand running.

6 Humps on MSBE, that are crumbling away, should be removed asap.

7 Bus priority

The Progress comment is incorrect. Bus priority measures are being taken away, with the downgrading of bus lanes from full time to peak only.

21 Bus Users.

Why have bus user forums not been set up? It's not difficult to do.

23 Travel Info Centre

The progress comment is incorrect. The CMK Shopping Centre development has been scrapped so there is no chance of a TIC coming out of it.

Other comments

There should be more investment in improving public transport in MK. We would propose:

An orbital bus services around the periphery of the city to allow some orbital journeys to be made without travelling into CMK and out again.

Free bus travel within CMK – MK Metro currently charge 1.10p for journeys within CMK. This is a significant disincentive to PT use. Even some US cities now offer free bus travel in downtown areas to discourage people from driving into and within the shopping/business districts.

Bus services on Silbury and Avebury blvds, possibly a loop around CMK.

More frequent early morning and evening bus services. The day time frequency should start by 7.00am and be maintained until at least 8.00pm, with those timings at CMK. Many rail commuters catch trains from MK Central about 7am and return at about 7pm. To reduce car use and car parking they should be able to get to and from the station by bus. Many shops now stay open well beyond 5.30pm and more people work flexible hours in offices. PT should accommodate these lifestyle changes.

All buses that run on MSB should be routed through Midsummer Place. They can be segregated vertically from pedestrians and emissions can be kept away from pedestrians by means of the buses running through a tube, either above or below ground level.

The first MK Bus strategy proposed a number of bus interchange hubs, outside CMK, at places such as the Hospital and Stantonbury Campus. These should be built and bus routes altered to serve them.

Bus services outside London were deregulated by the Transport Act 1985. This has led to a decline in bus use outside London. However bus services within London are still regulated and useage has increased. MKC should lobby government for bus services in MK to be re-regulated.

Bus services in MK should have transfer tickets. Many journeys require a change from one route to another, usually in CMK. A second ticket has to be bought. It should be possible to buy one through ticket from origin to destination. In many cities in other countries this is done by means of a transfer ticket. This should be introduced in MK. The day ticket does allow multiple trips/changes but may not suit all journeys.

There should be a more frequent service between CMK and Coachway and it should run at all times that long distance coaches are calling at Coachway.

The proposed redesign of Station Square to separate buses and cars should be completed in 2009.

Consideration should be given to a light rail/tram network for MK in the longer term. The grid road reserves and the wide boulevards in CMK mean that

construction costs in MK would be considerably lower than in conventional towns. A decision about light rail needs to be taken before any decision about building closer to grid roads as part of increasing density within the city.

#### Roads and cars

All car parking in CMK should be charged for. The amount of parking should be gradually reduced.

The Work Place Parking Levy should be introduced in MK to raise funds to improve public transport, cycling and walking.

Grid road speed limits should be reduced from 60/70 mph to 50 mph to improve safety and reduce pollution and CO2 emissions and improve bus service reliability.

Most estates and residential areas should have 20 mph speed limits to improve safety.

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