



**The Essex County Council Bus Service Improvement Plan
- 6 month Report 2023**

Welcome to Essex County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan – 6 month Report 2023.

The Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP) are a key part of the UK Governments national bus strategy 'Bus Back Better' published in March 2021. The BSIP set out local issues relating to bus networks and how local authorities can tackle them. You can find previous documents relating to Essex County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan here <https://www.essexhighways.org/getting-around/bus/bus-strategy>

This Bus Service Improvement Report covers the following areas:

- Background.
- Journey Time (Reliability).
- Passenger Recovery.
- Passenger Satisfaction.

Background

The key targets as identified in previous BSIP documents are strongly focused on continuing the recovery from the impacts of Covid. The three main targets for Essex County Council Bus Services are:

- Reliability
- Passenger Recovery
- Customer Satisfaction

This report is highlighting our progress on these key targets, October 2022 – March 2023, using data from April 2022 – September 2022.

Following on from the previous 6-month report published in 2022 and the BSIP annual review published on 3rd January 2023.

In January 2023, Essex County Council also published detailed District Network Reviews for each of the district areas in Essex. A copy of each of the 12 area networks reviews is published on ECC's website here: <https://www.essexhighways.org/bus-strategy>

Target One: Journey Time (Reliability)

Punctuality and Reliability Performances

Reliability is the measure of the Bus Networks ability to deliver services in line with its scheduled timetables and meeting the statutory operating window of departing from stops between 1 minute earlier than time tabled and no later than 5:59 minutes late. Reliability measures are impacted by multiple factors such as availability of drivers and vehicles as well as congestion and road works. Reliability is measured by the proportion of 'scheduled journeys or milage' lost and by journeys departing within the designated window of 'on time' from stops along routes.

Between 2018 and 2020, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, 92% of Bus Services in Essex operated on time. During the 2020/2021 financial year, most significantly affected by national and localised Lockdowns, Essex Bus services improved in punctuality measures to 94% due to the lack of other traffic on the roads and reduced services to meet the essential demand. However, in the following year 2021/2022 the punctuality measure for Essex Bus Network reduced to 88.4% this reduction in punctuality has been reflected nationally, as economic activity re-opening but the threat of the Covid-19 virus still very present, many people chose to avoid public transport and travel in private vehicles, increasing congestion on roads which contributed to bus services being delayed. This shift away from public transport during the Covid 19 pandemic is also reflected in the data for Passenger Numbers (see figure 2).

Despite the setbacks experienced by the Bus Networks, figures for the six months between April 2022 and September 2022 show that the punctuality and reliability of bus services are improving. The 6-month figures for Essex Bus Network show 91.2% of services are running as timetabled.

Year	Journey Time / Reliability %
2014 – 2015	83 %
2015 – 2016	89 %
2016 – 2017	88 %
2017 – 2018	91 %
2018 – 2019	92 %
2019 – 2020	92 %
2020 – 2021	94.1 %
2021 – 2022	88.4 %
6 months: April – September 2022	91.2%

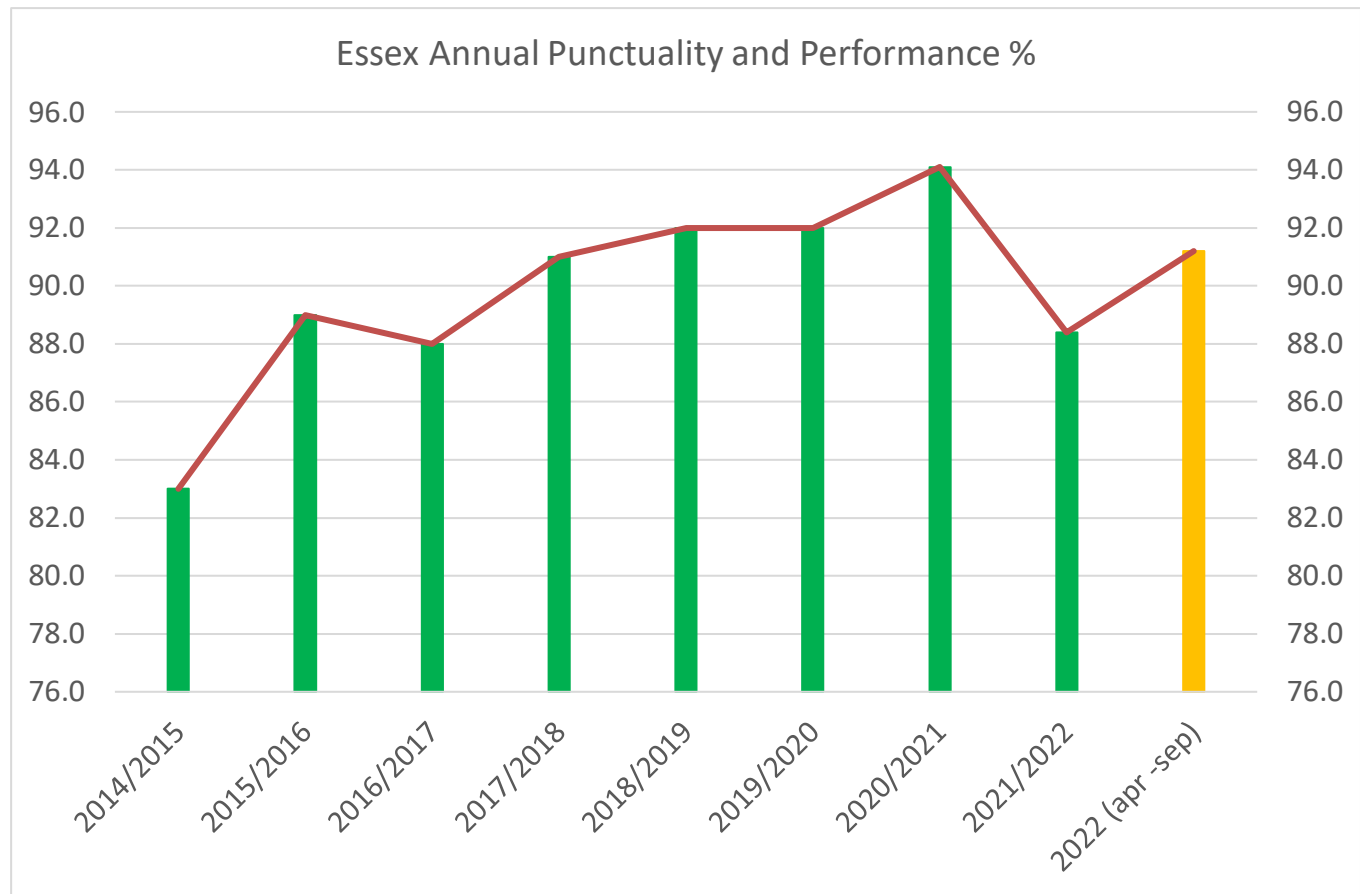


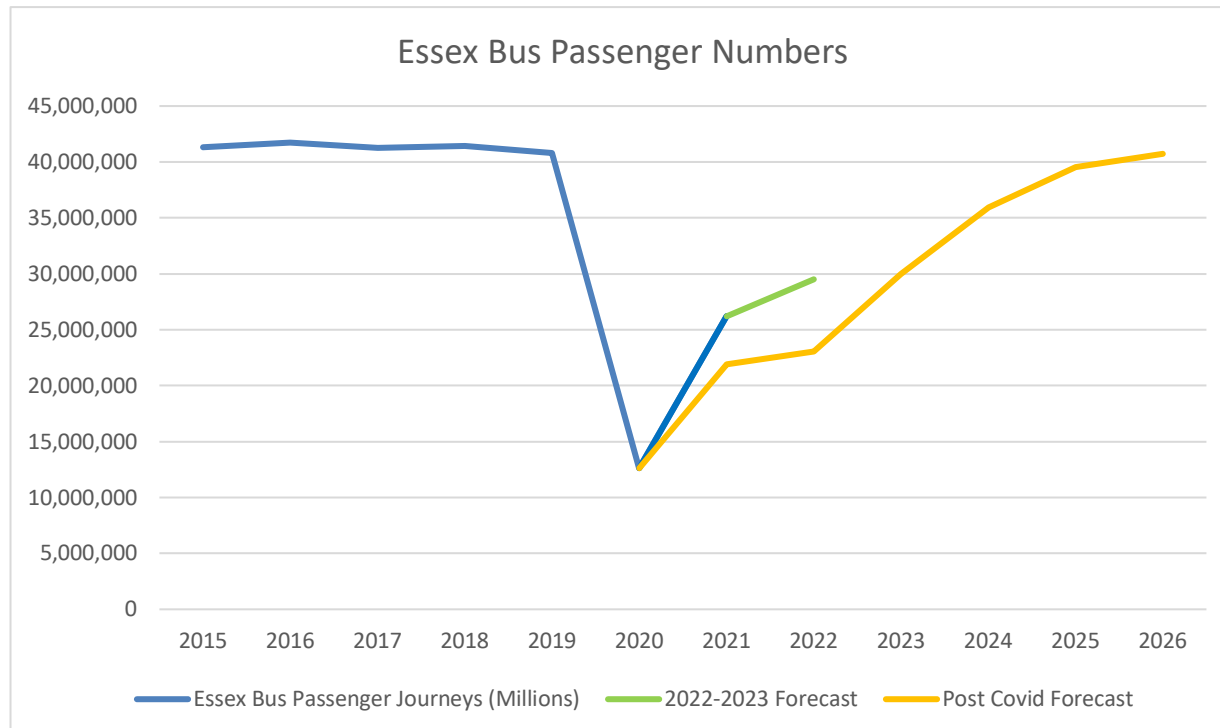
Figure 1 – Essex Annual Punctuality Figures 2014 – 2022, as a percentage of the number of services operating on-time.

Target Two: Passenger Recovery

Due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, passenger numbers in the year 2020/2021 were 69.05% lower than they had been in 2019/2020. This has created a huge challenge to operators to maintain services for post-Covid recovery.

While passenger numbers for 2021-22 were still 35.74% lower than they had been prior to the impacts of Covid in 2019-2020, the latest passenger figures have exceeded the forecasted recovery, as shown in Figure 2.

The Passenger Numbers for the 6 months between 1st April 2022 – 30th September 2022, as received so far are 14,753,790. The forecasted annual figure for 2022-2023 based on the 6-month numbers received so far is 29,507,580.



Financial Year	Essex Passenger Journeys (millions)	Forecast Passenger Growth (Post-Covid)
2016	41,342,995	41,342,995
2017	41,731,831	41,731,831
2018	41,239,583	41,239,583
2019	41,420,643	41,420,643
2020	40,774,681	40,774,681
2021	12,621,495	12,621,495
2022	26,209,054	21,892,082
2023	29,507,580 (annual forecast)	23,042,624
2024		29,955,411
2025		35,946,493
2026		39,541,143
2027		40,727,377

Figure 2 – Annual Passenger Numbers in Essex and forecasted Covid-19 Passenger Recovery.

Target Three: Passenger Satisfaction

The last Customer Satisfaction statistic for the Essex Bus Network was gathered by Transport Focus on 2019 which reported 86% overall journey satisfaction which was roughly in line with the National Average. As shown in figure 3.

In March 2023 TravelEssex have commissioned a trial survey to understand customer satisfaction of bus services in Essex and identify areas that could be improved to increase passenger satisfaction and encourage greater bus use. The results of this survey will be published in the annual BSIP report.

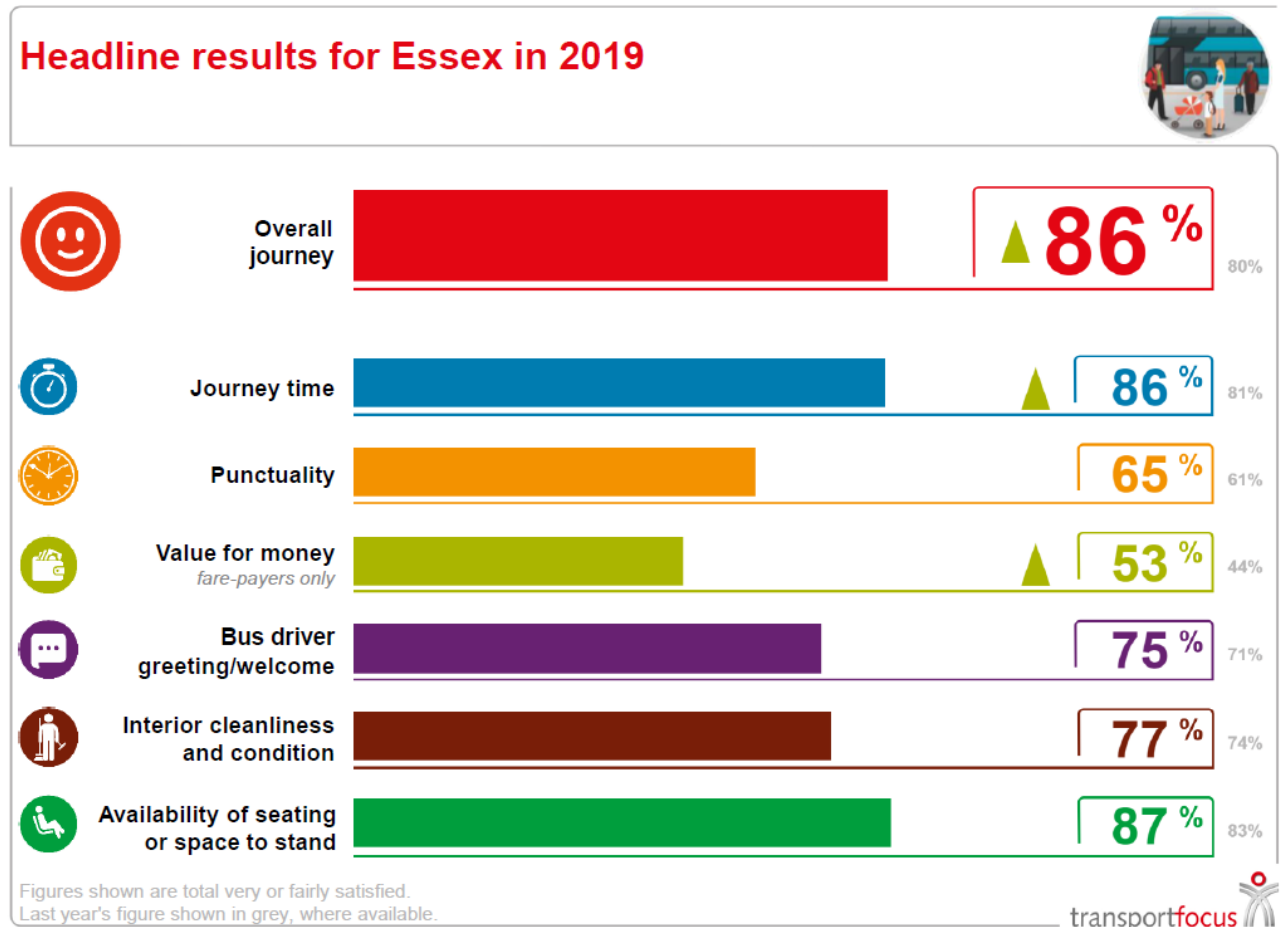


Figure 3 – Essex Bus User Satisfaction results from 2019 Transport Focus Survey.