



ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 4 September 2023

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Contact: Abbie Hamilton (01438) 242587

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: R Broom (Chair), A Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), J Brown, B Facey, C McGrath, A McGuinness, S Mead, C Parris, E Plater, G Snell and Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, OBE

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - THURSDAY 6 JULY 2023

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 6 July 2023.

Pages 3 – 6

3. INTERVIEW WITH ARRIVA BUS COMPANY

Members are invited to interview receive the written response to questions and data requests and to carry out interviews with Michael Jennings, Area Head of Commercial, Arriva South.

Pages 7 – 18

4. INTERVIEW WITH BUS USER GROUP STEVENAGE (BUGS)

To receive written responses to questions prepared for BUGS and to interview David Martin, Secretary of Bus User Group Stevenage.

5. UPDATED MAPPING DOCUMENT FOR THE BUS SCRUTINY REVIEW

To consider the updated mapping document.

Pages 19 – 26

6. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

7. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

8. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 6 July 2023

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice Chair), Jim Brown, Bret Facey, Conor McGrath, Sarah Mead, Claire Parris, Ellie Plater, Graham Snell and Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, OBE.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.24pm

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Andy McGuinness.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 14 JUNE 2023**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on 14 June 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 **BUS SCRUTINY REVIEW - INTERVIEWS WITH HCC TRANSPORT UNIT & HCC EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS**

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Herts County Council Officers Simon Aries Director of Transport, Waste and Environment and Dan Tancock, Transport Unit along with Councillor Phil Bibby in his role as HCC Executive Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport.

The Chair opened the debate by expressing concern regarding the situation with the poor bus service in Stevenage, the ZEBRA Scheme not going ahead, inaccurate timing information, falling passenger numbers and the tired and worn-out bus fleet.

In response to several questions the following answers/comments were given by the representatives from HCC:

- The unreliability issues of the bus services were a concern. HCC were trying to encourage sustainability for the service but the combination of the issues of low passenger numbers/enhanced costs/lack of drivers and an ageing fleet were obstacles to this;
- It was agreed that the concerns were not limited to Stevenage as nationally

bus services were struggling, with passenger numbers not recovering post covid and combined with driver recruitment difficulties;

- The real time information displayed at bus stops around the Town was in the process of being upgraded. Members were of the view, however, that the extent of investment in screens to carry the information to do this by HCC was inadequate;
- The Committee was informed that if the bus operators were of the view that a route was not commercial there was nothing that the County Council could do to change their stance due to the funding model adopted;
- Franchising had been considered by HCC but the high costs involved had ruled it out and the partnership model was adopted instead. HCC advised that they might look at Franchising again to assess the viability;
- £18million had been invested by HCC across the County, much of this for concessionary travel;
- In relation to the failure of the Zero Emissions Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA), it was noted that the funding would only have been available if a willing partner had been in place and HCC advised that Arriva had declined for commercial reasons. ZEBRA Part 2 would be announced at some point but again a willing partner would be necessary for this to be applied for and Arriva had ruled themselves out for commercial reasons;
- The concern regarding the condition of some bus stops in the Town had been noted. HCC advised that a programme of improvements was in place and several had been completed but it was accepted that more work was needed on others, including the installation of real time information for bus times and which routes were running;
- A new 907 route had been launched between Stevenage and Cheshunt and the SB6 would be replaced by a more frequent SB7 route;
- The Committee was advised that unfortunately the County Council had no influence on Arriva running the bus service in Stevenage as it was a commercial operation although they were willing to work with Arriva and to support them in any way;
- Cllr Bibby would be attending an East of England Forum to discuss bus services across the region;
- Cllr Bibby stated that as part of Herts Rapid Transport Links, the County Council were looking into solutions such as guided buses which run on rubber wheels along a fixed guided track, for routes linking major towns in the region (A414 ST Albans – Hatfield – Hertford corridor);
- HCC Officers would investigate the reported practice of bus drivers encouraging passengers to not scan passes in order to speed up the boarding of the bus as the scanning of the passes was vital for recording the

use of subsidies;

- In relation to electric buses, officers advised that unless battery technology dramatically improved it would be more likely to see the larger vehicles replaced with hydrogen run technology in the future. The Chair advised that Members of the Committee would be carrying out a site visit to other Towns in Hertfordshire that already used the EV technology within their fleet (Potters Bar Metro Line).

The Chair thanked Cllr Phil Bibby, Simon Aries and Dan Tancock for attending the meeting and their helpful input.

4 **MAPPING EXERCISE DOCUMENT FOR BUS SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the mapping exercise for the Bus Services Scrutiny Review.

The Committee noted that at the next meeting a representative from Arriva Buses would be attending to be interviewed by Members along with a member of the Stevenage Bus Users Group.

Members also asked that the use of the new bus interchange particularly for people with disabilities be considered. It was agreed that a representative from one of the Disability Groups in the Town be asked to attend a meeting of the Committee.

Cllr Lloyd Briscoe Portfolio Holder for Economy and Transport would be at the October meeting along with Zayd Al Jawad, Assistant Director Planning and Regulatory and other SBC officers.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Mapping Document be noted.

5 **E&E SELECT COMMITTEE ACTION TRACKER**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Action Tracker for the Committee.

It was noted that reports on the Climate Emergency would be brought back to Committee in November 2023 and March 2024 to update on where the Council was on this issue.

In response to a question regarding recycling rates and the cost of recycling, the Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services confirmed that the Council received a substantial income from recycling and was continuously working on ways to increase the rates of recycling.

A Member raised the recent statement regarding Southern Rail's 21-day consultation on the closure of the ticket office at Stevenage Railway station.

The Committee were concerned about the possible loss of the ticket office citing the issues that this would raise for the disabled, visually impaired, people with learning

difficulties and dyslexia to use ticket machines and for the digitally excluded to book tickets remotely online.

The Committee asked that the matter be raised with appropriate officers and also Cllr Briscoe, as Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport as a matter of urgency to ask what representation and response to the consultation was being made corporately from SBC?

The Chair then suggested that current workload allowing, the Committee receive a presentation/update from officers regarding the current position with the Council's garage stock around the Town as far too many were not fit for purpose.

It was **RESOLVED** that with the suggestions raised above, the Action Tracker for the Committee be noted.

6 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

7 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

Data responses from Arriva

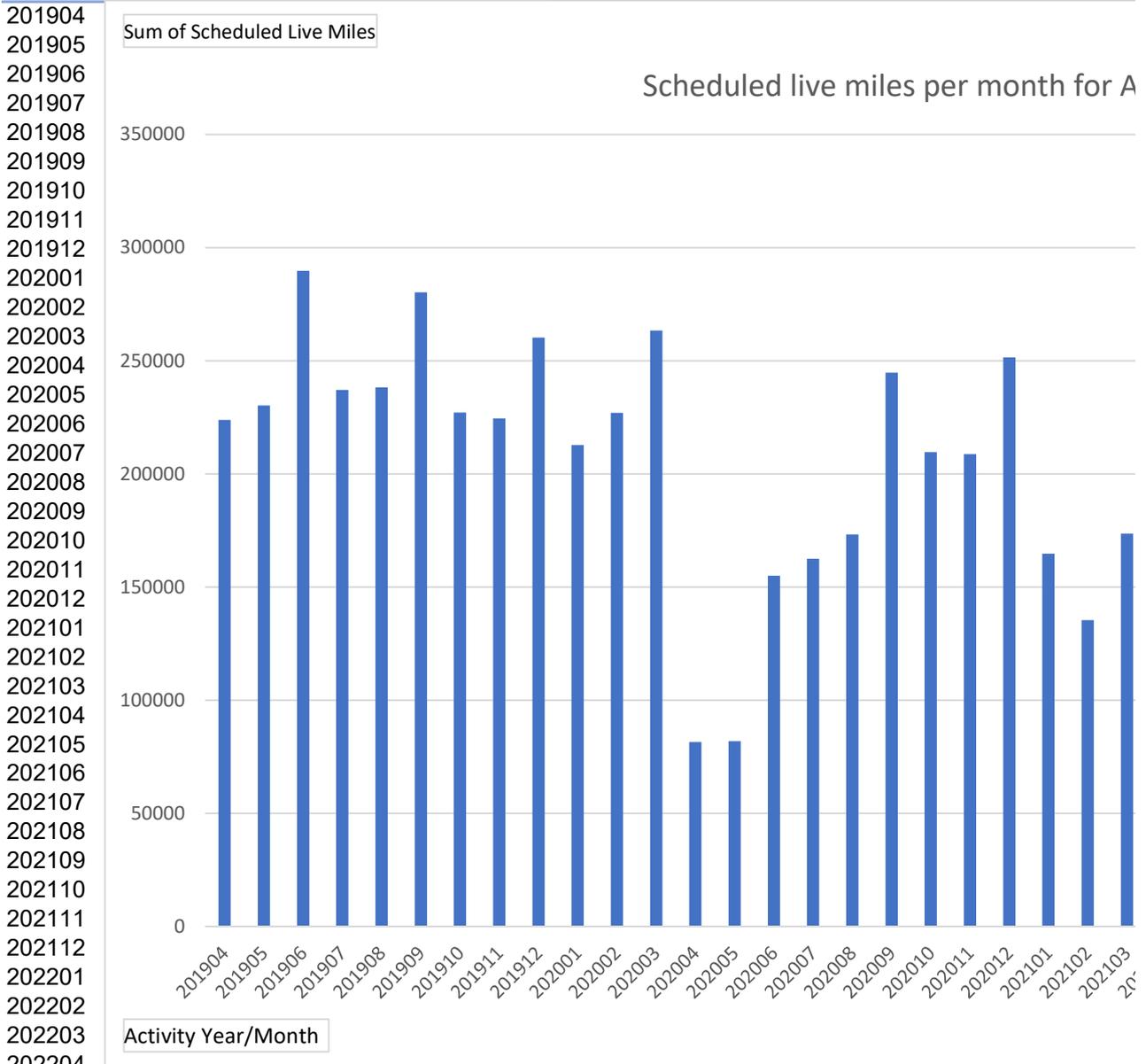
1. Arriva patronage by month on services operated by our Stevenage depot from April 2019 until 26th June 2023. We moved onto new ticket machines in early 2019, so the pulling the data together for before this period is a lot more difficult. However, I think the data from April 2019 should cover enough of a period before Covid to be useful.
2. Arriva scheduled live mileage by month on service operated by our Stevenage depots for the same period.
3. Arriva scheduled operated mileage % by month for the same period. We have struggled with driver numbers at Stevenage as is the case across much of Hertfordshire. The situation has gradually improved over the last 6 months but we are still very short of drivers at our Stevenage depot and this is reflected in this metric which whilst being much improved is still lower than we would like it to be. We are very focussed on recruitment and this combined with service alterations in September will improve the situation further.

In terms of fares per km, this is not a figure we measure. Our costs are driven primarily by journey time rather than journey length, so the speed of services plays a large factor in our costs and this is reflected in our fare structure. Our fares across Hertfordshire, Essex and Bedfordshire are fairly consistent. Adult day ticket prices for similar towns vary from £4.90 to £5.30, with Stevenage priced in the middle at £5.10.

We have no data on arrivals by bus, only departure data. However, because of recovery from covid, and the subsequent £2 fare cap, any data for the last 3 years is not clean enough to assess the impact of the closure and opening of the bus station. The variances due to Covid and the £2 fare cap far outweigh any impacts of the bus station move.

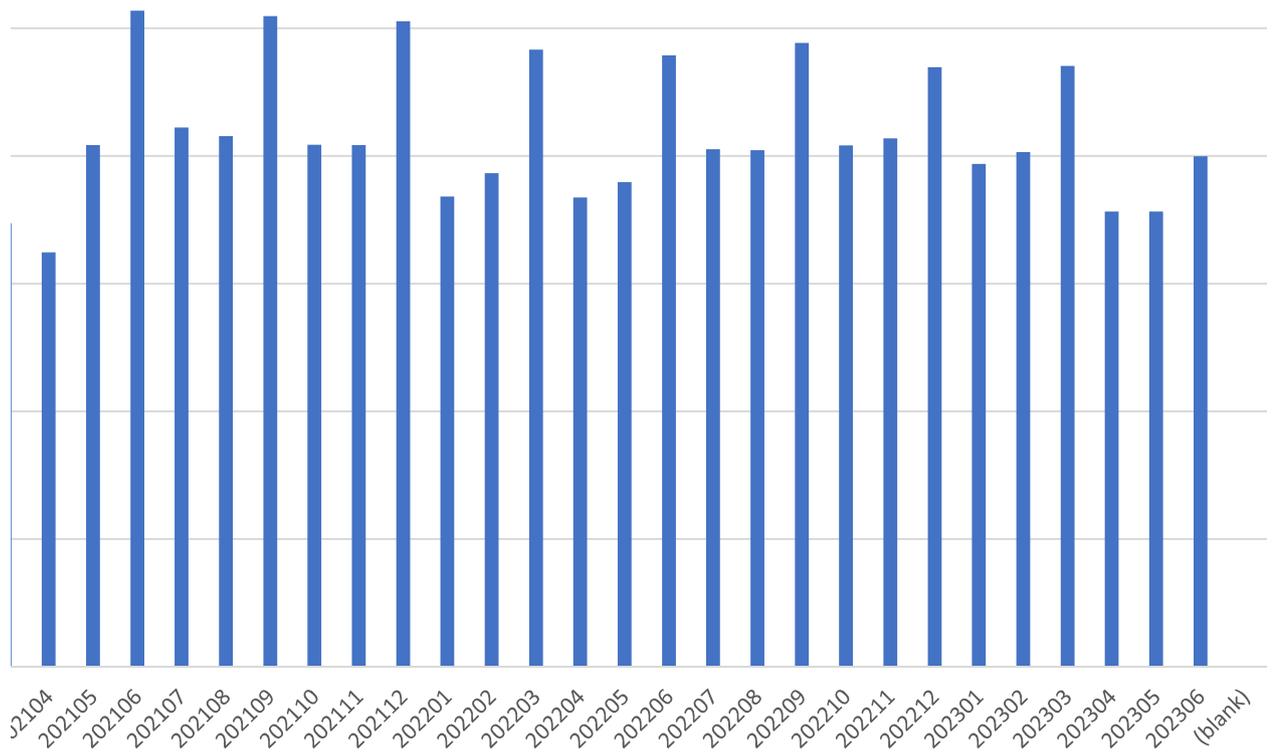
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Row Labels **Sum of Scheduled Live Miles**



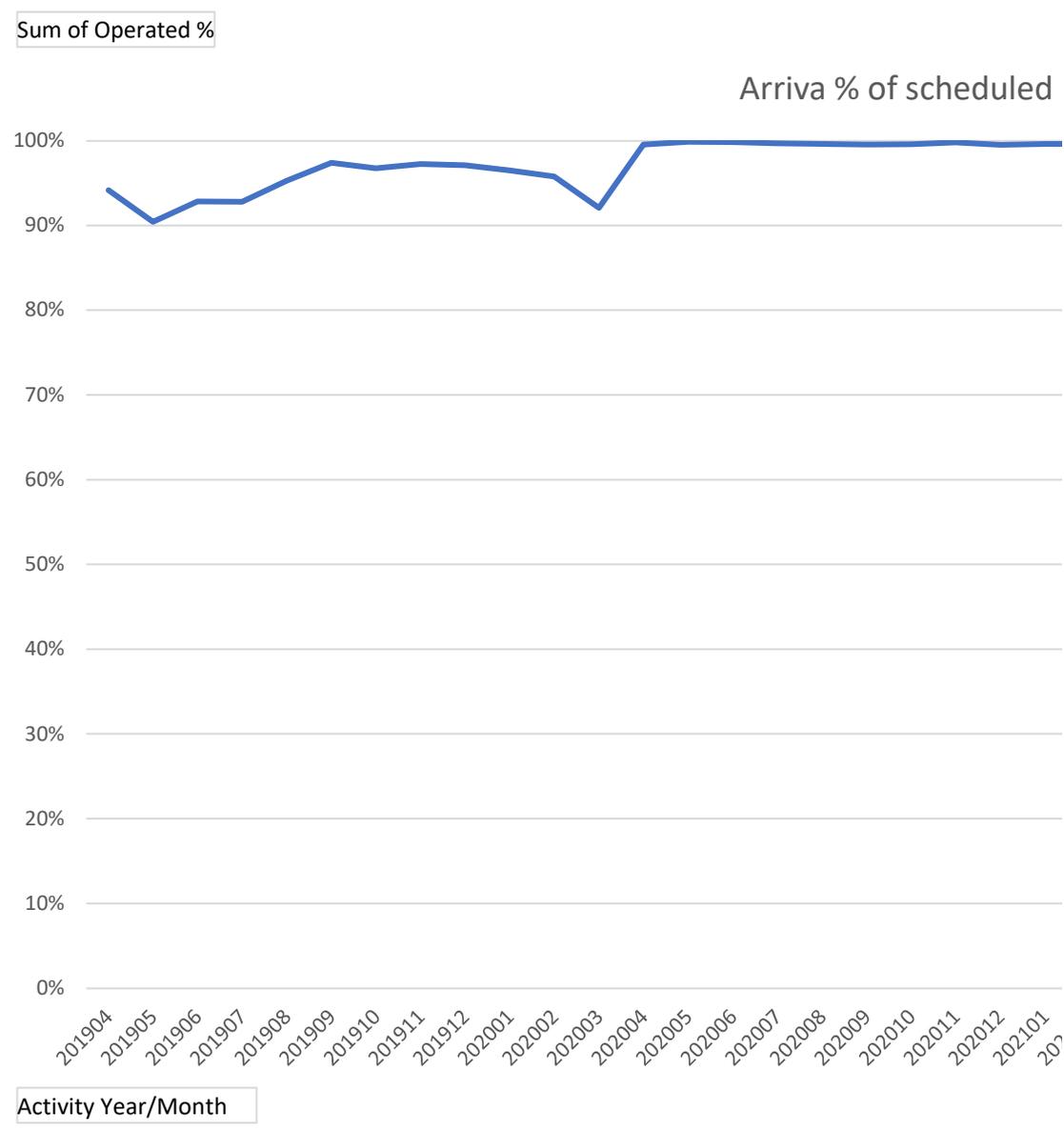
202203	
202204	18888.2771
202205	189742.4282
202206	239331.5858
202207	202641.4401
202208	202250.462
202209	244256.2948
202210	204141.3297
202211	206904.8369
202212	234737.2091
202301	196857.379
202302	201535.8651
202303	235236.0505
202304	178261.9109
202305	178271.062
202306	199868.3405
(blank)	
Grand Total	10631547.79

Arriva services operated by Stevenage depots

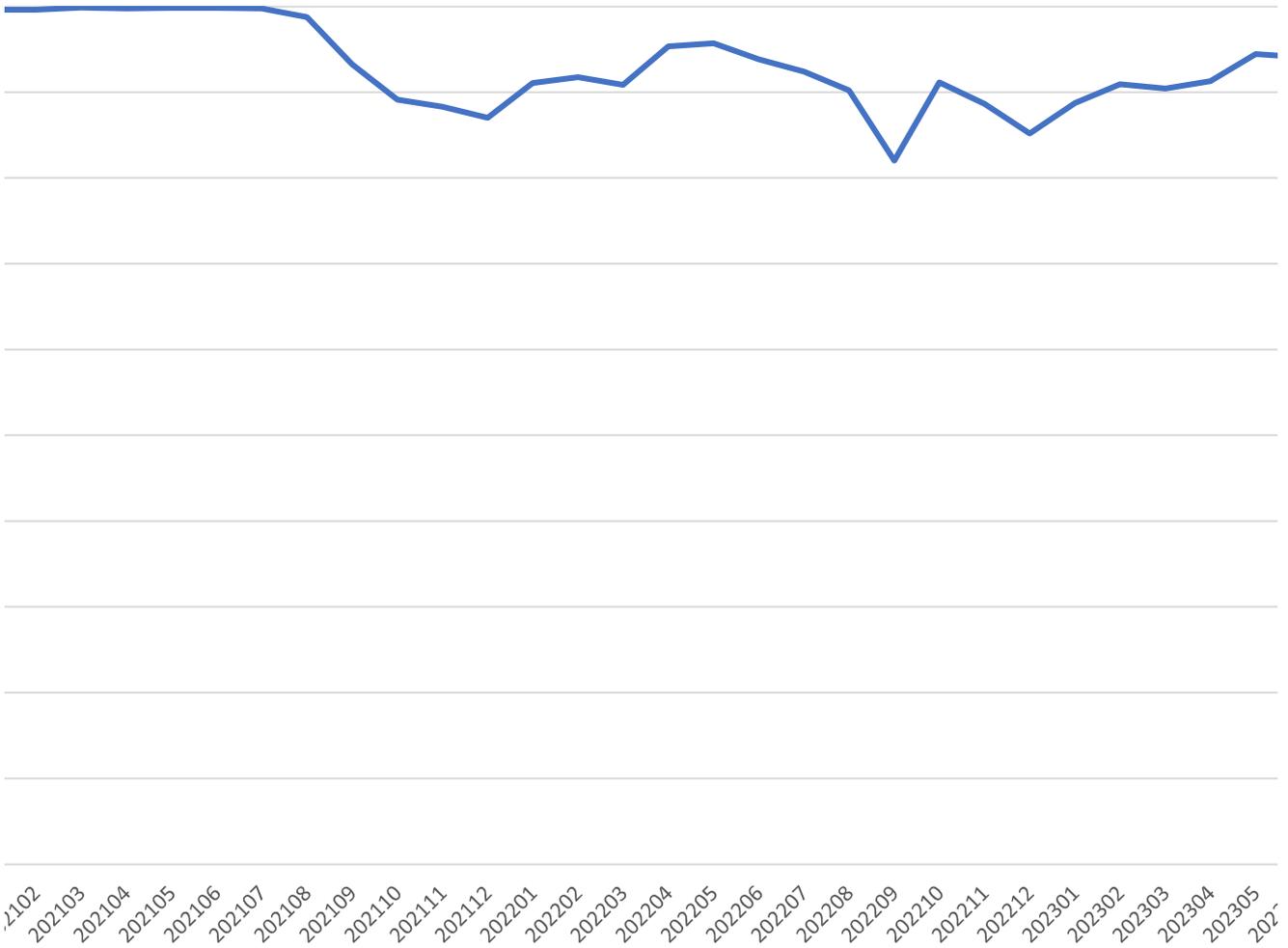


Row Labels **Sum of Operated %**

201904
201905
201906
201907
201908
201909
201910
201911
201912
202001
202002
202003
202004
202005
202006
202007
202008
202009
202010
202011
202012
202101
202102
202103
202104
202105
202106
202107
202108
202109
202110
202111
202112
202201
202202
202203
202204
202205
202206
202207
202208
202209
202210
202211
202212
202301
202302
202303
202304
202305
202306
Grand Total



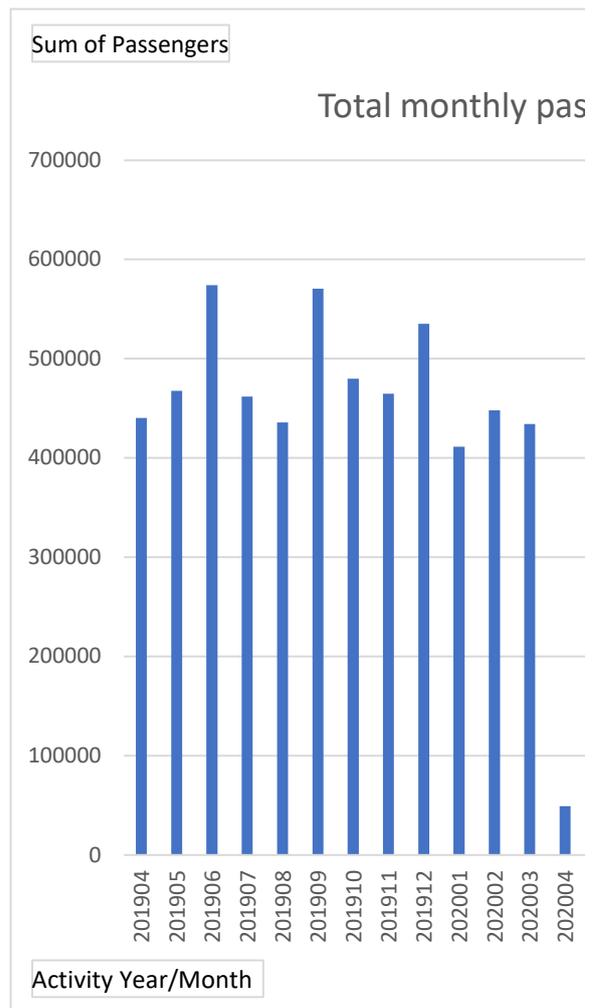
mileage operated from Stevenage depot



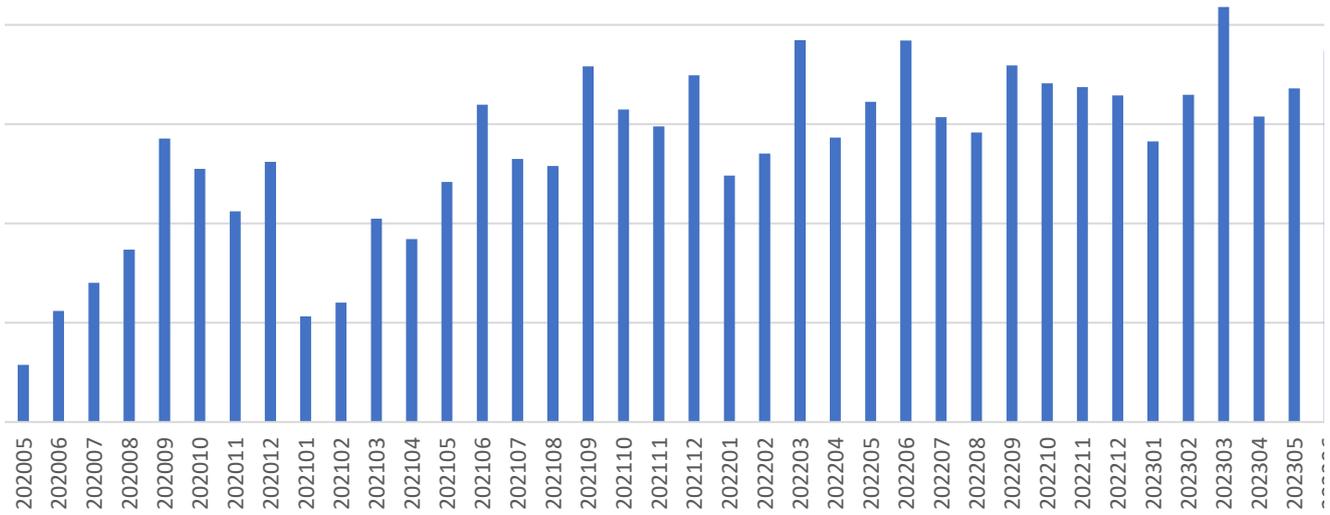


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Row Labels	Sum of Passengers
201904	440208
201905	467755
201906	573996
201907	461725
201908	435807
201909	570613
201910	479849
201911	464854
201912	535000
202001	411414
202002	448043
202003	434093
202004	49275
202005	57671
202006	112035
202007	140123
202008	173729
202009	285540
202010	254888
202011	212390
202012	262041
202101	106425
202102	120412
202103	204983
202104	184150
202105	241764
202106	319515
202107	264975
202108	257888
202109	358308
202110	314958
202111	297769
202112	349300
202201	248181
202202	270328
202203	384559
202204	286520
202205	322708
202206	384225
202207	307223
202208	291756
202209	359298
202210	341153
202211	337408
202212	329104
202301	282717
202302	329671
202303	418186
202304	307602
202305	336133
202306	374036
Grand Total	16202304



Passenger journeys carried by Arriva Stevenage depots operated services





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Mapping exercise for E&E Select Committee – Bus Service Scrutiny Review

Issue	Who identified to address this/provide data and interview? (whether they are internal SBC or external partner)	What evidence / data can they provide?	Meeting interview/ evidence received date: (Link to Committee meeting where evidence/interview was undertaken)	Meeting scheduled for date: How will the info be gathered? (i.e. formal meetings, informal sub-groups, written responses)	Action & date required If complete sign off in table:
Agree Scope for the review		N/A	Draft scope for the review was agreed at 14 June 2023 meeting	14 June 2023	Updated with Members comments at 14 June Meeting
Agree a form of words with the Chair for the questions for witnesses – Prioritise witnesses for 6 July 2023	Chair of E&E Select Committee and Scrutiny Officer.	N/A	6 July 2023	Included in agenda for 6 July 2023.	Deadline - Monday 26 June 2023 ✓
Interview the HCC Executive Portfolio Holder, Highways & Transport	Cllr Phil Bibby, HCC Executive Portfolio Holder, Highways & Transport	Will be linked to the HCC Transport Unit Officer response.		Interview at E&E Thursday, 6 July 2023 Spoken evidence at meeting.	Invite by Scrutiny Officer by Mid-June ✓ Written questions circulated 26/06/23 ✓
Interview a representative from HCC Passenger Transport Unit	Simon Aries, HCC Director, Transport, Waste & Environment. Dan Tancock HCC Transport Unit.	Expecting some written response to the data request & verbal response to the questions raised		Thursday, 6 July 2023 Written response to data request and questions &	Invite by Scrutiny Officer by Mid-June ✓ Data requested 21/06/23 ✓

Issue	Who identified to address this/provide data and interview? (whether they are internal SBC or external partner)	What evidence / data can they provide?	Meeting interview/ evidence received date: (Link to Committee meeting where evidence/interview was undertaken)	Meeting scheduled for date: How will the info be gathered? (i.e. formal meetings, informal sub-groups, written responses)	Action & date required If complete sign off in table:
		by the Chair – 06 07 23		spoken evidence at meeting.	Written questions circulated 26/06/23 ✓
Interview a representative from Arriva Bus, Centrebus and Uno Bus Company Page 20	Michael Jennings, Area Head of Commercial Arriva South Kent, Medway, Essex and Southend Hertfordshire, Luton and Bedfordshire.	Expecting some written response to the data request and to the questions raised by the Chair – 04 09 23		Monday, 4 September 2023	Invite by Scrutiny Officer to Arriva Bus Company by Mid-June ✓ Data requested 21/06/23 ✓ Written questions circulated 26/06/23 ✓ <i>Centrebus and Uno Bus approach still needed – requested contact details from HCC Transport Unit.</i>
Interview a representative from local bus user group BUGS	Representative from local bus user group BUGS			4 September 2023 Spoken evidence at meeting.	Invite by Scrutiny Officer by Mid-June ✓

Issue	Who identified to address this/provide data and interview? (whether they are internal SBC or external partner)	What evidence / data can they provide?	Meeting interview/ evidence received date: (Link to Committee meeting where evidence/interview was undertaken)	Meeting scheduled for date: How will the info be gathered? (i.e. formal meetings, informal sub-groups, written responses)	Action & date required If complete sign off in table:
Interview the SBC AD Planning and Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed.	SBC AD Planning and Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed.	Any planning policy related docs – links to be sent to Members.		10 October? Spoken evidence at meeting.	Invite by Scrutiny Officer by 31 Aug 2023.
Interview with Exec Portfolio Holder for Transport.	Cllr Lloyd Briscoe, SBC Executive Portfolio Holder for Transport.	Verbal input.		10 Oct or 1 Nov 2023 - Spoken input at meeting.	Invite by Scrutiny Officer by 31 Aug 2023.
Interview the SBC Climate Change Officer & SBC Head of Climate Change.	Veronica Chan, SBC Climate Change Officer & Fabian Oyarzun SBC Head of Climate Change	Any relevant docs that can be shared with Members re Sustainability and public transport.		10 Oct or 1 Nov 2023 - Spoken input at meeting and supporting documents.	Invite by Scrutiny Officer by 31 Aug 2023.
Interview HCC Executive Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Cllr Eric Buckmaster	Cllr Eric Buckmaster, Executive Portfolio Holder for Sustainability.	Will be linked to the HCC Sustainability Officer response.		10 Oct or 1 Nov 2023 Written response to questions. Oral evidence.	Invite by Scrutiny Officer by 30 June 2023. ✓ Lynne Ceeney, Director for

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Page 12					Sustainability passed on to a colleague, who passed on to another colleague who referred to the original HCC Transport Officer.
Interview HCC Director of Sustainability	Lynne Geeney, Director for Sustainability, HCC	Any relevant docs that can be shared with Members re Sustainability and public transport.		10 Oct or 1 Nov 2023 Written response to questions. Oral evidence	Invite by Scrutiny Officer by 30 June 2023. ✓ <u>Update Sep 2023</u> Following emails to HCC Sustainability the approach was passed around in HCC to the original Transport Unit officers, so is the end of the process.
Have a "critical friend" to help the review	Approach former Councillor Adrian Brown to provide some input as	N/A		To be either scheduled as a witness at an	Invite by Scrutiny Officer by Mid-June ✓ (follow up with an

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<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 23</p>	a current bus driver working in the industry in a “critical friend” capacity and also Cllr Michael Downing as a regular bus user.			E&E meeting or arrange separate session with the Chair – to be determined.	email – by 31 Aug 2023)
Interview Disabilities Groups.	Age Concern Invis-ability Herts Visionless	Verbal & written input.		To be scheduled.	The Scrutiny Officer has contacted Age Concern, Invis-ability and Herts Visionless in August, but has had no reply so far.
Issue for review to cover - Various data requests from partners – Bus Companies, and HCC Transport Unit.	HCC Transport Unit & various Bus Companies	As detailed elsewhere in this document.		Data request to HCC and Bus companies.	Send email request by Scrutiny Officer by 23 June ✓ (HCC & Arriva)
Issue for review to cover - Consider alternative options for zero emission buses in Stevenage. What lessons can be learned from the failed ZEBRA (Zero Emissions Bus Regional	Covered by session with HCC & Arriva 6 July and 4 Sep.	As detailed elsewhere in this document.	Will be covered at meetings on 6 July and 4 September.	Written questions to witnesses	To be agreed.

Issue	Who identified to address this/provide data and interview? (whether they are internal SBC or external partner)	What evidence / data can they provide?	Meeting interview/ evidence received date: (Link to Committee meeting where evidence/interview was undertaken)	Meeting scheduled for date: How will the info be gathered? (i.e. formal meetings, informal sub-groups, written responses)	Action & date required If complete sign off in table:
Area) scheme for Stevenage? Are there any other opportunities for future funding schemes?					
Issue for review to cover - Provide a focus on the state of the current bus services in Stevenage	Covered by session with HCC & Arriva 6 July and 4 Sep.	As detailed elsewhere in this document.	Will be covered at meetings on 6 July and 4 September.	Written questions to witnesses	To be agreed.
Issue for review to cover - Barriers to people using public transport and ways to encourage more bus use/modal shift	Covered initially by session with HCC & Arriva 6 July and 4 Sep & with HCC Sustainability 10 Oct or 1 Nov 2023	As detailed elsewhere in this document.	Will be covered at meetings on 6 July and 4 September.	Written questions to witnesses	Review to establish recommendations.
Issue for review to cover - Site visit to an authority that has an existing Electric Bus – possibly Oxford or Coventry				Site visit to Metroline Potters Bar arranged for 13 September 2023	Site visit arranged.
Issue for review to cover - E&E Members conduct bus journeys			To be arranged.	Member led activity.	To be agreed.

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around Stevenage to see ease of use and quality of service					
Issue for review to cover - <u>Equalities & Diversity Issues</u> Page 25	Various witnesses. The review could reach out to disabled umbrella group to canvass opinions.	The review should consider what equality issues there are for bus users in Stevenage such as access to bus services for disabled users, older people, young people as well as the impact on other people who are low income.	To be arranged.	N/A	Scrutiny Officer has attempted to make contact with three representative groups but has not yet received a reply. SO will follow up with same groups and reach out to other groups.

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