

Somerset County Council  
Silk Mills Park & Ride  
Silk Mills Road  
TAUNTON  
TA1 5AA

***please reply to:***  
23 James Way  
Hucclecote  
GLOUCESTER  
GL3 3TE

nigel.bray2@railfuture.org.uk

For the attention of Transport Department

[transport@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:transport@somerset.gov.uk)

22nd August 2021

Dear Sir or Madam,

### **Somerset Bus Service Improvement Plan consultation**

I must apologise for sending this response after your deadline but I was on holiday at the time. This response covers the need for better integration between bus and rail services in Somerset, rather than detailed comment on any specific bus route.

If anything in this response requires clarification, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

***Nigel Bray***

Nigel Bray  
Railfuture  
Secretary, Severnside Branch.

## 1. General principles

People who use, or might consider using, buses to reach railway stations need easy interchange between bus and train. Also, they do not want to miss their intended train because the bus has been delayed by traffic congestion. Railfuture believes that improvements to bus services should not be planned in isolation from the rail network. Road traffic management can be as important in improving a multi-modal journey as increases in bus frequencies or more attractive bus fares. For instance, road works which constrict capacity seem to affect bus journey times more than they affect trips by car, because of the frequent stops the bus will make. More bus lanes and priorities are needed on main roads which pass near railway stations. We hope the Plan will look at the totality of public transport and not just tinkering with bus timetables.

## 2. Specific locations

2.1 Taunton is the busiest railway station in Somerset and one of the main gateways into the county. It therefore needs better interchange with country bus routes to avoid a long walk into the town centre. We believe a transport hub could be created on the north side of the station to help achieve this goal.

2.2 Bridgwater railway station is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from the town centre and bus station. It had been hoped to re-route some bus services into the station but the turning circle built in 2019 cannot accommodate buses of normal length. Until this is rectified we would suggest extension of local bus routes to nearby Westonzoyland Road, with a view to improving connectivity from the national rail system to Bridgwater College and Hinkley Point in particular.

The attractive map of bus routes at Bridgwater bus station ought to be displayed at the railway station, subject to any necessary amendments to reflect route changes.

2.3 If the proposed Energy Park at the former ordnance factory site at Puriton becomes a reality, we would recommend the provision of a bus service from Highbridge & Burnham station.

2.4 Castle Cary station is the railhead for a large area of central Somerset and has direct trains to Bristol, London, Weymouth and the far South West. We understand that some buses to/from Shepton Mallet and Street pass the station but not necessarily at times convenient for train arrivals and departures. There needs to be a more clearly defined bus waiting area at the station, with weather protection.

2.5 There are now train services linking Yeovil's two stations but we also support the inter-station bus, which links both stations with the town centre.

2.6 At smaller rural stations such as Bruton and Crewkerne there is a case for demand responsive bus or shared taxi services to/from their catchments if a regular bus service is not considered viable.