

NTA Bid 2011: Improvements to Bus Services

Buckinghamshire County Council has long been recognised for its partnership working with bus operators to improve bus services and buck the trend of falling bus passenger numbers that have plagued shire counties across the country. However, since 2008, the economic downturn has made continuing this growth particularly challenging, with increasing costs and decreasing local authority budgets.

Despite this, we have continued to develop and improve local bus services. By working smarter and ever more closely with operators, including Arriva the Shires, the largest local operator, we have risen to the challenge and maintained a steady course through the stormy seas of the economic downturn.

By working closely with Arriva, on key routes such as Green **route** 31 and the Park and Ride in High Wycombe, we have achieved real economies of operation, greatly reducing the burden on the tax payer by maximizing efficiency of operation whilst maintaining service levels. Working closely with our Development Control team, we have maximised benefits from developers, with new developments expected to provide high quality infrastructure and dedicated or enhanced services.

The main elements of our partnership working that have contributed to our success in improving both our urban and inter-urban bus networks include:

- The launch and promotion of both commercial and contracted routes to build on the success of our **Rainbowroutes** branded services such as **Waterrider** and **Silverrider**. In Aylesbury, **Orangeroute** 3 in partnership with Star Travel and **Purpleroute** 7, funded through developer contributions and supported by Chiltern Railways were launched alongside **Purpleroute** 35 in High Wycombe. The success of the **Silverrider** service has been so great that since May 2010, the service has been operated commercially.
- Building on the success of the Aylesbury **Rainbowroutes** brand, the Wycombe **Rainbowroutes** network was launched in 2008 with an innovative and effective targeted marketing campaign.
- The successful bid for funding from central government for £18.5million for the Aylesbury Public Transport hub delivered tangible bus infrastructure improvements with high quality interchange at the rail station and state of the art Travel Information Centre that won the 2008 INFORM Innovation award, and high quality stops with electronic real time displays.
- Major investment in our “nextBus” Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system countywide with targeted marketing, giving users greater confidence as well as allowing operators to identify problem locations and establish more robust schedules.

“the RTPI system is extremely beneficial to bus users, the company and its staff and gives me the ability to accurately schedule routes pin-point accuracy and minimal man-power.” Neil Roughton, Commercial Manager, Arriva

- The development of a Punctuality Improvement Partnership in October 2009. Working group meetings in 2010 and into 2011 have delivered tangible benefits, including using RTPI data to address early running and road works, with relevant colleagues attending meetings to understand the issues better.
- Implementation of the “Route Improvement Project” in High Wycombe. A partnership with Wycombe District Council, this project has seen targeted investment of developer contributions across the Wycombe **Rainbowroutes** network. Schemes have included investment in RTPI units at key stops, upgrading bus hurry calls to the RTPI system and parking restrictions to improve the flow of buses at problem locations.

“By working together we’ve made make real strides in improving the reliability of services in High Wycombe. Passengers have seen improved reliability in their services and the project is ongoing with a lot more to deliver in the future”. Michael Jennings, Arriva Depot Manager, High Wycombe.

- Significant operator investment in buses, including brand new ones on inter-urban Lines 280 and 300. Line 280 was re-launched in September 2010 to run every 20 mins, with an amended route to improve reliability, helped by pump-prime funding from Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB) and Oxfordshire County Council.
- In March 2010 a partnership with Wycombe District Council and the Chilterns AONB Board saw thirty "Ibis" RTPI units installed in rural locations along the Line 300 route.

"Line 300 is a reliable service that meets my everyday needs to get to and from work. I would recommend it to anyone who needs to travel between Aylesbury and High Wycombe" Wycombe resident, March 2010
- Improvements to our website in 2010 through the TfB Service Information centre, including map based RTPI and regular updates during the recent extreme weather.

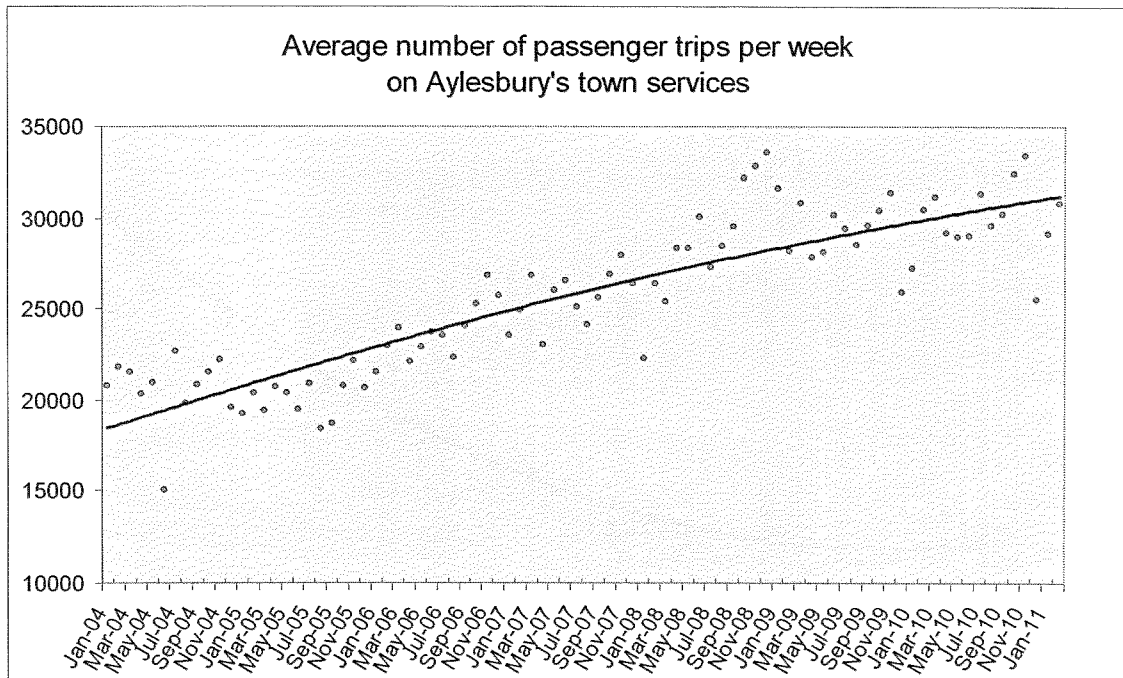
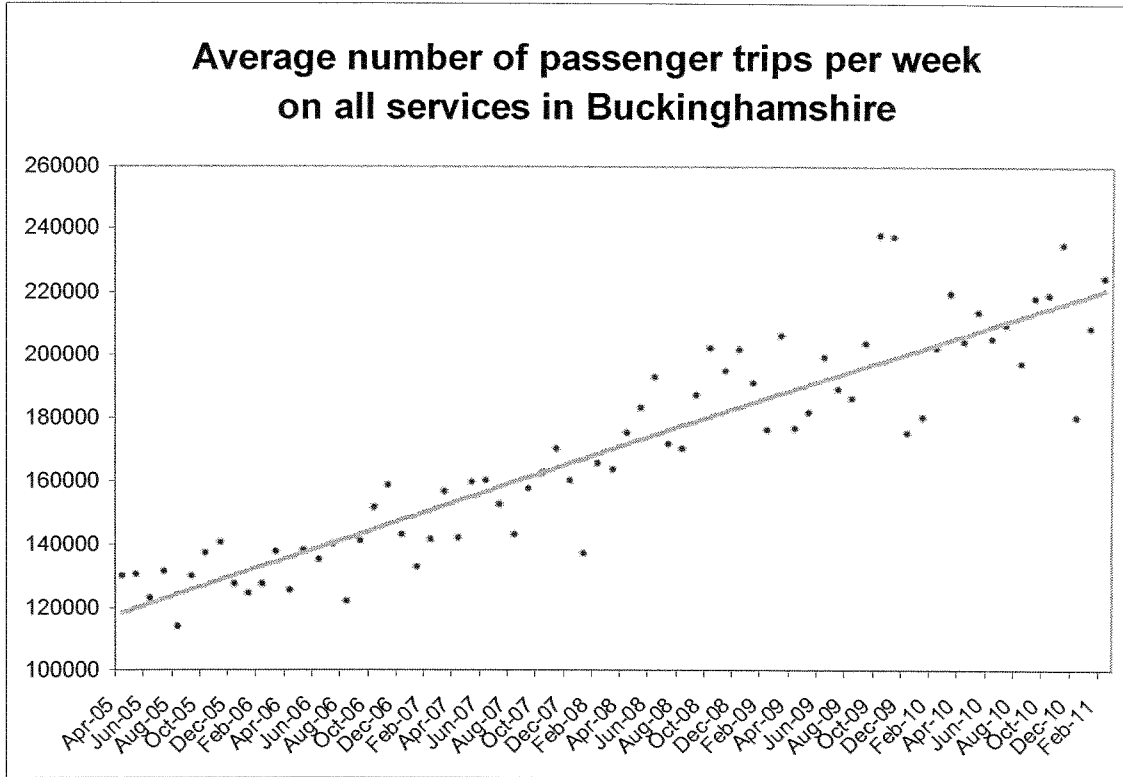
"I would just like to say how easy to find and print your bus timetables were. Thank you. I can plan ahead now when I visit my sister and need to travel from Gerrard's Cross station to Chalfont St Peter" Mary Briggs, Leamington Spa, Feb 2010
- Continued production of high quality, comprehensive printed guides. Reducing these from three areas to two has given significant savings and is now supported by sold advertising to offset some of the cost.
- A regular programme of meetings with the Arriva promotions team has ensured cost effective and complimentary marketing.

All these elements together have resulted in some very impressive statistics. Between 1st January 2008 and end of February 2011:

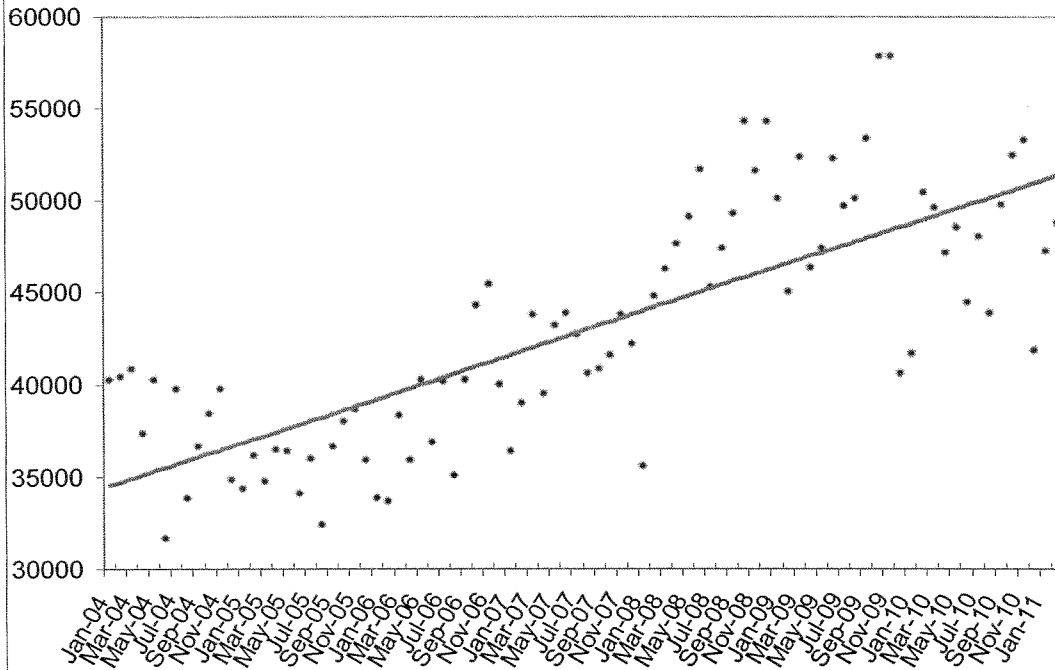
- Overall bus trips in Buckinghamshire increased by around 10%¹, with
- Ridership on the rainbow **routes** network has increased by almost 9%
- Trips on key inter-urban routes have increased by almost 81% and these continue to grow strongly.
- Line 300 passenger numbers continue to grow strongly, with 6% (which is impressive considering this service saw a staggering 40% increase prior to 2008 since the change to every 20mins from half hourly in 2006).
- Line 280 has seen an increase in trips of 26% since its re-launch just 6 months ago, with an increase in punctuality of 9%.
- Orangeroute 3 has seen a fantastic increase of 78% since its re-launch with low-floor vehicles and re-branding in April 2008.
- Purpleroute 7 is now carrying around 2000 passengers per week after just 16 months in service.
- Our "nextBus" real time information system gets over 5000 hits per week
- Overall bus punctuality has increased by 10%.

¹ Based on Arriva monthly ridership figures

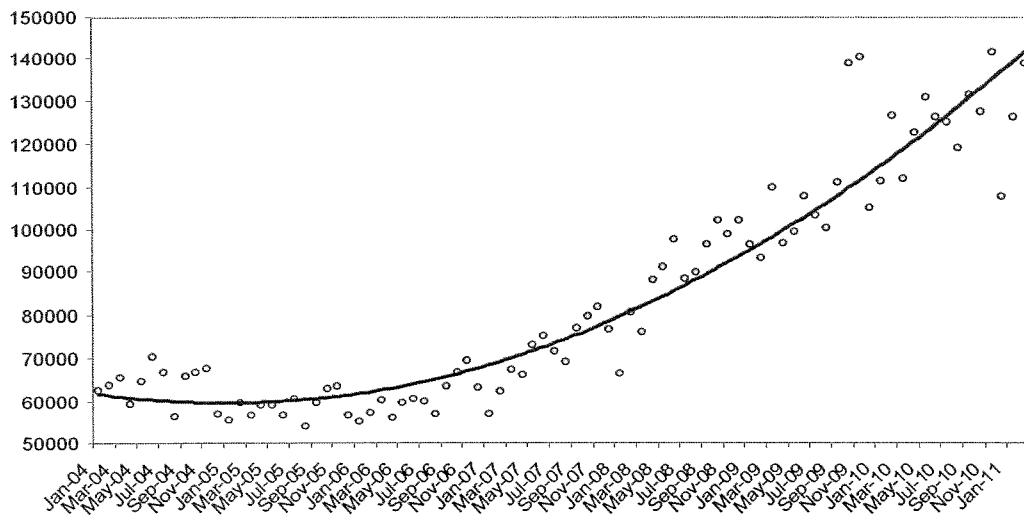
Graphs Showing increases on bus services in Buckinghamshire (based on returns from the largest operator, Arriva)



Average number of passenger trips per week
on High Wycombe's town services



Average number of passenger trips per week
on inter-urban services



Average number of passengers per week on Wycombe Park & Ride

