

Date 11 / 09 /18
Our Ref: IPTU/Colchester

Essex County Council
Highways and Transportation
Integrated Passenger Transport Unit
County Hall
CHELMSFORD
Essex CM1 1QH

Dear Sir or Madam

In confidence: Information regarding up-coming changes to allocation of bus stop use around Colchester Town Centre.

Background

When the on-street bus station in Osborne Street and Stanwell Street was created, bus services were allocated to bus stops at the new interchange and around the Town Centre to regulate their use.

The bus network around Colchester has now developed and due to increased service frequency and the introduction of new routes the pressure on bus stops has increased. It has now become clear that this is making it difficult for both buses and the public to use them properly, reducing the attractiveness, reliability and economic viability of the town's bus services.

These problems were raised by the public and bus companies both directly with the County and Borough Councils and through the Colchester Bus Blueprint Group. The Colchester Bus Blueprint Group is a working group set up between Essex County Council, Colchester Borough Council and the major commercial bus operators (First Essex Buses, Arriva and Heddingham Omnibus). The group has the aim of supporting, improving and promoting bus use in Colchester.

Actions being taken

Following in depth consultation with the bus operators, it has therefore been agreed to alter the allocation of services to bus stops at the bus station and around the Town Centre. Key measures include:

- opening up the spare capacity on the current Park & Ride only stops
- grouping services that serve common corridors to use the same stops. This has the aim of reducing the pressure at key stops and minimising the confusion experienced by passengers.

As a result of the changes, the majority of bus stops will have fewer services calling at them. Those stops that are underused at present may have more services calling at them and are better suited to deal with the increased capacity than the current bus stop arrangements.

The reallocation gives the opportunity to improve information on bus stop flags and at bus stops. As part of the simplification process, instead of putting bus service numbers on the bus stop flags, a written descriptor for the corridor(s) which that stop serves will be used. This will normally

indicate the direction of travel of the services at the stop, although some will show ultimate destinations.

Next steps

The changes will come into effect from **21st October 2018**. The layout of the stops and proposed changes are shown in the attached **Town Centre map and spreadsheet** along with the new flag destination/route descriptors.

We recognise that it is likely that passengers may have to use a different bus stop to the one they use at present, and some customers will have differing views about the changes in flag descriptor and the grouping of services at particular stops.

The County Council has already taken into consideration several options and the potential issues/benefits that the changes will offer. As well as this, the option of “do nothing” was considered, although discounted due to both the impact on the environment and continued issues that both customers and bus operators face.

Key benefits to both customers and bus operations include:

- Reducing vehicle and passenger congestion around most bus stops, particularly around the bus station and High Street.
- Allowing buses to use their designated stop more easily,
- Allowing buses to reach the kerb to improve access to board
- Improving bus reliability by reducing boarding delays and ‘bus stacking’ at stops.
- Reducing the need to change bus stop flag wording resulting from service changes.

To help ease the transition these changes will be advertised widely and information made available in advance. We intend to make the information regarding the changes public from **5 October 2018**.

The information will be made available to the general public via:

- Colchester Park & Ride
- Social media,
- Press releases,
- ECC website
- Colchester Borough Council Website (link to ECC site)
- Bus operator websites
- On bus and at-stop notices (with links for more information)
- Through our electronic bus stop information system and I-Kiosk sites.
- FAQs will be made available through the ECC website and through the Customer Service Centre.

We recognise that access to and from Colchester Town Centre is an important matter and if you have any questions or comments, please contact us by emailing passenger.transport@essex.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

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