

Somerset's Long-Term Transport Strategy Unveiled

July 27, 2025

— Categories: Economics



Download IPFS

Somerset Council has launched an ambitious Local Transport Plan (LTP), outlining a vision for reshaping transport across the county over the next two decades. The strategy, published this week, aims to deliver a more connected, safer, and environmentally conscious transport network, tailored to the county's diverse urban and rural landscapes. With public consultation open until 7 September, residents are urged to contribute their views to refine the plan.

The LTP is positioned as a critical tool to secure government funding for infrastructure projects, including enhanced bus services, new railway stations, safer cycling routes, and expanded electric vehicle (EV) charging networks. Cllr Richard Wilkins, Somerset Council's Lead Member for Transport and Waste Services, emphasised its importance in a recent statement: "A robust plan is essential to unlock the funding needed for an integrated transport system, whether for commuting, school runs, or local trips."

The strategy prioritises reducing reliance on cars, boosting public transport, and expanding active travel options like walking and cycling. It also addresses road safety, aiming to create secure environments for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers. The council has collaborated with Local Community Networks, cycling charities, and local groups to shape these proposals, ensuring they reflect community needs.

The LTP divides Somerset into eight distinct "place types," from urban centres like Taunton and Yeovil to smaller towns, coastal areas, and rural villages. Each area has a bespoke strategy to address its unique transport challenges. For rural communities, the plan focuses on improving bus services to ensure financially viable routes that connect isolated areas. In urban hubs, efforts centre on reducing congestion and improving air quality, particularly in known hotspots.

Rail improvements are a cornerstone of the plan, with proposals for new stations at Langport, Somerton, and Wellington, alongside upgrades to services on routes like Taunton to Minehead and enhancements at Castle Cary. The council is working with rail partners to secure sustained investment for these projects.

Environmental goals are woven throughout the LTP. Initiatives include introducing electric buses, promoting car-sharing schemes, and installing more EV charging points in car parks and community hubs. These measures aim to cut transport-related emissions and improve air quality, aligning with broader climate objectives.

Cllr Wilkins, in the plan's foreword, articulated the vision: "We aim to build a transport network that connects people to jobs, education, and services while preserving Somerset's unique character." The strategy also supports the county's tourism economy by improving access to key destinations, aiming to boost local businesses through sustainable travel options.

The LTP acknowledges Somerset's rural-urban divide, seeking to balance the needs of vibrant town centres with the preservation of rural charm. However, questions remain about the current Labour government's commitment to funding such regional initiatives, given their focus on centralised urban projects. Somerset's plan will need robust advocacy to secure the necessary investment.

The council is calling on residents to engage in the consultation process to shape the final LTP. "This is a strategy built for Somerset's people," Cllr Wilkins said. "We need your input to ensure it delivers for everyone."