

Reform Options Being Considered



We are considering **four model options** for the five geographies identified, as well as across the Cumbrian region as a whole. They have evolved from the typical bus reform options and will be scored against how well they may achieve outcomes for each area.

Model	Description
Model A Enhanced Partnership (EP) with negotiated outcome improvements	Description: Closest to the current delivery model (the majority of the bus network is run commercially by operators and some services supported by the council) and involves negotiating incremental upgrades to service standards, coordination and passenger outcomes, within the existing Enhanced Partnership framework. Feasibility: Minimal degree of market intervention and therefore can be implemented in a relatively short timeframe. Impact on Outcomes: Councils may be able to negotiate low-cost improvements aimed at enhancing the passenger experience, including things such as consistent fare structures, branding and service standards. This could improve coverage where rural links are bundled into wider corridor obligations, however gaps are expected to still need council support.
Model B Strengthened EP + operator-led (net cost) micro-franchises	Description: Builds on Model A by also introducing micro-franchises in specific underserved areas, with network operators retaining revenue risk. Feasibility: Represents greater market intervention and would therefore require additional negotiation, procurement and contract negotiation. Impact on Outcomes: The Local Transport Authority (LTA) may be able to specify minimum service levels in underserved areas which would ensure better access for these communities.
Model C Strengthened EP + LTA-led (gross cost) micro-franchises	Description: Evolution of Model B with an increased level of risk and responsibility assumed by the LTA in exchange for greater control over service outcomes. Feasibility: Substantial control over the network by the LTA would require procurement, contract management and network service design and performance oversight. Impact on Outcomes: The LTA could go further in directly defining the customer offer in priority areas by also specifying detailed service outcomes including routes, frequencies, fares and ticketing. This would enable a more tightly planned and consistent offer in underserved and socially important corridors.
Model D Area-wide LTA-led (net cost) franchise	Description: Replaces the EP with a comprehensive, county-wide net franchise across all services, with the network operators retaining revenue risk. Feasibility: This model represents the greatest control of the network and therefore the largest scale of market intervention and specialist network planning and procurement. Impact on Outcomes: Gives the LTA strong and consistent control over network design and standards across the region, including fare policy, minimum service levels, branding, and operational standards. However, because the network operators bear revenue risk, extending services into less commercially viable areas is likely to increase operator prices, creating a trade-off between achieving broad county-wide consistency and direct control over local interventions.