

Colchester Bus Allocation (October 2018)

Frequently Asked Questions

When are these changes coming into effect?

Sunday 21 October 2018.

What bus stops are affected by the changes?

All stops within Osborne Street, Stanwell Street, St. John's Street, Head Street, High Street & Queen Street (stops A-J) have been included in the review. Stopping arrangements at other stops are not affected by these changes.

Why are these changes being made?

As the Local Transport Authority, Essex County Council (ECC) has listened to customers, bus user groups and bus operators who have expressed a view that the current stop allocation to bus stops in the Town Centre was in need of review. It is expected that these measures will help customers to quickly locate their bus stop, improve bus punctuality and build greater trust in public transport for residents/visitors of Colchester.

The changes take into consideration the operational requirements of the bus services and the physical size of individual stops.

How has the stop that will be used by my bus service been decided?

Over the last few years, ECC has received comments, concerns & suggestions with regards to how buses should operate in the Town Centre.

The County Council worked closely with bus operators to identify where there were issues and how best to address them. Based on this, the review has grouped services on specific stops (as well as adjacent stops) to help minimise inconvenience to the bulk of passengers.

Services have been grouped together based on the corridor they use to leave the Town Centre area. To help with this, bus service numbers will no longer appear on the stop flags (although there will still be timetable cases with service information as now).

Will my bus still stop at the same places as before?

For the most part, services will still serve each side of the Town Centre block, which comprises of the High Street, Queen Street, Osborne Street, St John's Street and Head Street. However individual stop allocations will have changed. In a small number of cases stops will no longer be served by certain services, however there are alternative stops within 400m that can be used instead. As a general rule:

- Buses will stop once in the High Street, to help reduce over use at stops outside The George Hotel (G Group).
- Buses will only stop in Queen Street if they are not stopping at Osborne Street. Alternative stops are available either in the High Street or at Greyfriars.
- Some Inter-Urban bus services will no longer stop at St John's Street to aid punctuality. There are alternative stops available within 300m.

Has the Colchester Park & Ride changed its stopping arrangements?

Colchester Park & Ride will still serve the same stops.

When coming into town, can I still get off my bus where I do now?

In general, despite the changes, you will still be able to get off your bus in the vicinity of your existing bus stop. For Head Street in particular almost all buses (arriving and departing) will use the same stops as now, with a few using the next stop along. Passengers for the High Street will still be able to get off the bus at one of the existing 8 bus stops along the road – however this may differ from where you get off the bus at present. Elsewhere, such as in Queen Street, the number of services using these stops has been reduced, therefore passengers of some services will have the choice of using stops in either High Street or Greyfriars plus at the bus interchange. Meanwhile stopping arrangements for Crouch Street, Greyfriars, St Botolphs Roundabout and Colchester Town Station remain unchanged. If you are still unclear about the arrangements for your particular service, please clarify with your local bus operator or check Traveline.

Will bus times be changing?

There are no timetable changes as a direct consequence of the stop reallocation, however some commercial bus operators may take the opportunity to make adjustments to their services.

If bus timetables are not changing how will these changes improve the current situation?

Over time some stops have been overused, with more buses stopping at the same time. This has happened as the bus network has changed on a route by route basis. Equally some stops became underused and this review restores the balance at individual stops.

Where do we need to go to catch our bus?

We are providing information at the bus stops affected to help you find out if your bus stop has changed and where buses are stopping.

Essex County Council, Colchester Borough Council, individual bus operators and the Traveline websites will all have the updated information available. In addition to this, leaflets and posters will be produced which contain 'Where to Catch Your Bus' information (large print and alternative copies are available on request).

Other sources include:

- at affected bus stops, including timetable boards and electronic information screens,
- i-kiosks on the street
- Twitter & Facebook feeds
- Local Transport Representatives.

Why have the route numbers been removed from Town Centre bus stop flags?

The revised bus stop allocations are based on grouping services together which share the same physical journey corridor. We believe this is a more logical approach and it has enabled us to simplify the wording on the bus stop flags.

Instead bus stop flags will now show the destination areas of the town or corridors served by the buses using a particular bus stop, (for example, a bus stop might show “North Station, Bergholt Road and Mile End Road Services” or “Greenstead”).

We have not removed the route numbers from bus stops altogether. Route numbers will still be shown on the timetables in the timetable frames at individual stops and can be seen on the electronic bus information signs and I kiosks. Where to catch your bus notices will also be put up at stops, with number shown for each stop. This method of service allocation will help us manage changes in the future, as route numbers can change more frequently (but corridors generally do not).

Why was there no formal public consultation about these changes?

A public consultation was not considered appropriate in this instance as the changes largely affect the operation of commercial local bus services. Commercial bus operators are prevented from liaising directly over operational matters due to competition legislation. However, as a Local Transport Authority, ECC is able to act as an impartial intermediary to facilitate the agreed changes. This also allowed it to incorporate the views expressed over time from service users.

What if I am unhappy with the changes?

We recognise that the changes may not suit everyone; we have carefully evaluated the positive and negative effects to ensure that for the most part, the changes will be a positive move for passengers, bus operators and other interested parties. You can make your views felt through the contact process set out below and they will be considered once we have had the opportunity to evaluate the revised system in action.

There is the same number of buses using the stops as now - won't this just move the problem?

The problem has been reduced in two ways.

We have revised the way services are grouped using the corridor approach as set out above reallocating services which travel in the same direction to the same bus stops. This has reduced pressure on some stops.

We have also changed the rules to allow other buses to use the Park & Ride stops in the town centre, (which are currently restricted to Park & Ride buses only). The new arrangements will reduce the number of buses calling at most stops.

In a few cases the number of buses using a stop has risen, but these stops are the ones felt to be best placed to cope with the higher level of use. The numbers at these stops are lower than the stops most heavily used at present.

What happens now?

In the week leading up to the 21st October 2018, work will be undertaken to alter the flags at each stop and maintenance will be carried out on the timetable cases. As work at each stop is completed, the flag will be covered to prevent people being given the wrong information. **NB The buses will still stop at their current bus stops and you will be able to catch your bus from your usual stop during this period.** Before bus service operations start on 21st October 2018 new timetables will be placed in the town centre cases and the covers will be removed. From 21st October 2018 the new system will come into effect.

If I have a comment regarding these changes, who shall I contact?

Please contact passenger.transport@essex.gov.uk