

TRANSPORT NORTH EAST
ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN

THE NORTH EAST JOINT TRANSPORT COMMITTEE ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN FOR BUSES IS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 138G(1) OF THE TRANSPORT ACT 2000 BY:

The Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland Combined Authority known as the North East Combined Authority ("NECA") (comprising of the local authority areas of Durham County Council, Gateshead Council, South Tyneside Council and Sunderland City Council).

The Newcastle Upon Tyne, North Tyneside and Northumberland Combined Authority known as the North of Tyne Combined Authority ("NTCA") (comprising of the local authority areas of Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council and Northumberland County Council).

Tyne & Wear Passenger Transport Executive ("Nexus") of Nexus House, 33 St James' Boulevard, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4AX;

The County Council of Durham of County Hall, Aykley Heads, Durham, DH1 5UZ. (**Durham**);

The Borough Council of Gateshead, Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, NE8 1HH. (**Gateshead**);

Newcastle City Council, Newcastle Civic Centre, Barras Bridge, Haymarket, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8QH (**Newcastle**);

The Council of the Borough of North Tyneside, The Quadrant, The Silverlink North, Cobalt Business Park, North Tyneside, NE27 0BY (**North Tyneside**);

Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF (**Northumberland**);

The Council of the Borough of South Tyneside, Town Hall & Civic Offices, Westoe Road, South Shields, NE33, 2RL (**South Tyneside**); and

Sunderland City Council, Civic Centre, Burdon Road, Sunderland, SR2 7DN (**Sunderland**).

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Over 154 million journeys a year were made by bus in the North East before the Covid pandemic. Buses provided essential services during the pandemic, and bus ridership is making a rapid recovery as things open up again. TNE want the bus network to play an even greater role in bringing healthy and fair economic growth across the region.
- 1.2. Buses are essential to delivering the vision set out in the North East Transport Plan 2021-2035 (the "**Transport Plan**"): a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East. Increasing the share of travel by bus will support the Strategic Economic Plan for a growing and decarbonised economy. Buses are uniquely well placed to give access to work and training opportunities for everyone, and they can help with the health of our region too through lower carbon emissions and they are easy to integrate with walking, cycling or other active travel for part of the journey.
- 1.3. The below table gives an overview of the key objectives of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (the "**BSIP**") and how it will work together with the EP Plan and EP Scheme to deliver better bus services for local people and wider local transport plan objectives.

BSIP Objectives	EP Approach
1. Repair the damage caused by Covid-19 to bus ridership numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and promote good standards of hygiene and cleanliness across bus fleets and public transport infrastructure. • Ensure that sufficient funding is available to maintain the current network and secure ‘socially necessary’ services once the Bus Recovery Grant ceases.
2. Grow bus patronage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve facilities and information provision onboard buses, in stations and at stops, and online. • Develop and introduce a new, regionwide brand for public transport complementary to existing operator brands. • Introduce more attractive and relevant ticketing options. • Expand and improve routes and services within the network as well as better connections beyond our boundaries.
3. Grow bus modal share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand and improve routes and services within the network as well as better connections beyond our boundaries. • Introduce more attractive and relevant ticketing options. • Commit to and consult on infrastructure improvements which prioritise and promote the bus network. • Develop and implement a marketing campaign to provide the bus network with increased public exposure.
4. Increase customer satisfaction amongst users of the bus network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve facilities and information provision onboard buses, in stations and at stops, and online. • Introduce more attractive and relevant ticketing options. • Expand and improve routes and services within the network as well as better connections beyond our boundaries. • Ensure staff have adequate training to assist with journey planning and maintain high standard, as well as creating new roles in order to facilitate the rollout of improvements. • Develop and implement a Bus Passenger Charter and network change processes with a view to establishing community engagement, accountability, and review at the heart of all improvements.
5. Make buses faster, more punctual and more reliable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand and improve routes and services within the network as well as better connections beyond our boundaries. • Commit to and consult on infrastructure improvements which prioritise and promote the bus network. • Commit to targeted infrastructure interventions on particularly salient corridors / pinch points.
6. Make buses greener	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement changes to vehicles and supporting infrastructure pursuant to the regions green vision.

1.4. This document fulfils the statutory requirements set out by the Bus Services Act 2017 of an Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan. Initially, this will facilitate the introduction of a single EP Scheme covering the whole area covered by this EP Plan. Over the Plan period, other potential EP Schemes may be proposed by Transport North East (TNE), constituent authorities or bus operators. The EP Scheme will place binding commitments on partner organisations to provide enhancements, and ensure on-going provision of high-quality bus services.

1.5. The EP Plan initially covers a three (3) year period from April 2022. The EP Plan will be reviewed by 31 March 2023 and at least annually thereafter.

1.6. Any variation to this EP Plan shall be made in accordance with section 138L Transport Act 2000.

- 1.7. If it is determined to revoke this EP Plan this shall be done in accordance with section 138O Transport Act 2000.
- 1.8. In accordance with statutory requirements for an EP Plan, this document includes:
 - 1.8.1. Details of the area covered
 - 1.8.2. Factors affecting the local bus market
 - 1.8.3. A summary of passengers' experiences of using bus services and the priorities of users and non-users for improvements
 - 1.8.4. Trends in bus journey speeds and the impact of congestion on bus services
 - 1.8.5. Objectives that are sought for bus service provision
 - 1.8.6. Interventions needed to achieve the desired outcomes

2. COMPETITION TEST

The making of the Enhanced Partnership has been subject to the Competition Test set out in Part 1 of Schedule 10 of the Transport Act 2000. The assessment, undertaken by NECA and NTCA concludes that the scheme does not have and is not likely to have a significantly adverse effect on competition and any effects on competition are proportionate to the achievement of those purposes.

3. AREA COVERED BY THE ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN

- 3.1. North East England is a diverse region encompassing large and densely-populated conurbations, a surrounding geography of commuter towns and semi-urban villages and a much larger hinterland of former mining villages and beyond them sparsely populated rural and coastal communities.
- 3.2. As such, this EP Plan covers seven local authority areas in the North East, consisting of two combined authorities:
 - 3.2.1. The NECA (comprising of the local authority areas of Durham County Council, Gateshead Council, South Tyneside Council and Sunderland City Council).
 - 3.2.2. The NTCA (comprising of the local authority areas of Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council and Northumberland County Council).
- 3.3. These Combined Authorities are Local Transport Authorities in their own right. They discharge their transport functions jointly through the North East Joint Transport Committee ('NEJTC'), which is a statutory body responsible for transport policy and delivery across the region.
- 3.4. Transport North East ("TNE") is the name of the officer group that supports the NEJTC in developing and delivering transport and strategy across the region.
- 3.5. "Nexus" is the trading name of the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive, responsible for delivering passenger transport in Tyne and Wear which



Figure 1.1

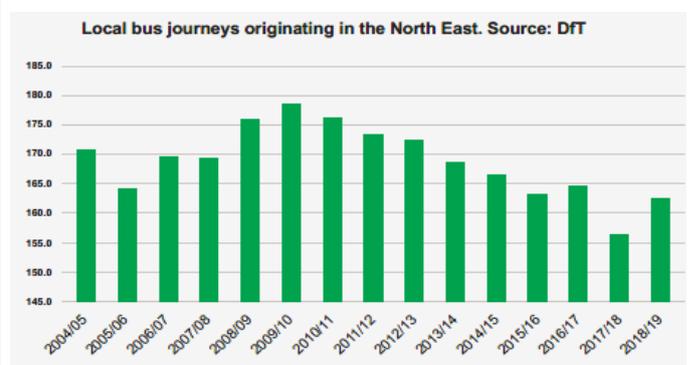
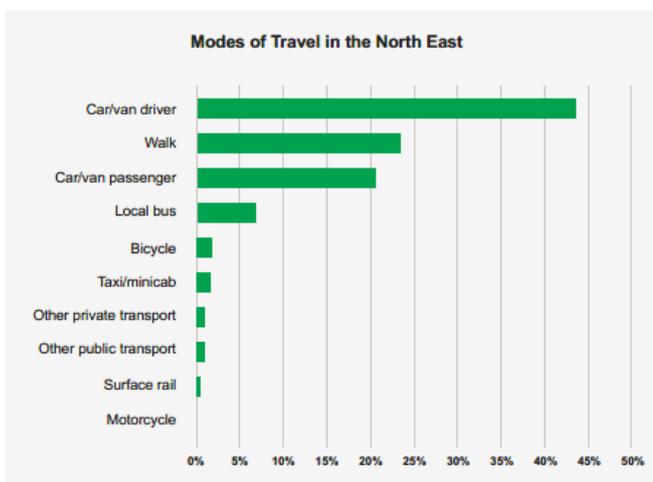
is a largely urban sub-section of the region covering the local authority areas of Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

4. A SUMMARY OF ANY AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON PASSENGERS' EXPERIENCES OF USING BUS SERVICES IN THE AREA AND THE PRIORITIES OF USERS FOR IMPROVING THEM

- 4.1. TNE talked to the people and businesses in the North East through an informal engagement campaign called ‘the Big Bus Conversation’, to understand what people think needed to be done to encourage bus use.
- 4.2. TNE established a Stakeholder Forum for businesses, services such as health and education, advocates for equalities groups and passenger and community representatives. Stakeholders contributed by email and through attendance at four multi-media events, which were well attended, both online and in person. The most rural parish councillors welcomed the ability to participate virtually, since ‘more buses to more places’ is their primary need. The DfT presented to the Stakeholders and took part in discussion, as did "NEbus", the name of the local bus operators’ association encompassing the providers of services across the North East. The events gave insights into the planning and delivery of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT), customer service for people with extra needs, and ways to support businesses and services to increase the use of bus by their staff and customers.
- 4.3. Before the pandemic, local buses accounted for 6.4%] of journeys made in the North East (a measurement called “modal share”), in comparison to 64.1% by car and van. However, 49% of people told TNE that they would be open to using buses more often. This shows a strong potential for significant growth in bus use.
- 4.4. However, just over a quarter of people told TNE that they’re “not the kind of people who get the bus”, highlighting a problem with the perception of bus services. This does not match people’s experience on the ground; bus user satisfaction in our area is 91% according to Transport Focus.
- 4.5. When TNE asked about the barriers to using the bus more often, people said that bus fares are too high, they don’t trust buses to turn up on time, buses are slow and they don’t always go where people need them to. Cleanliness and maintenance are also important to people in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.6. Bus Modal Share

- 4.7. The below graph shows the percentage of trips by head in the North East according to DfT data (note that this currently includes journeys in the Tees Valley). Car and van use, either as a driver or passenger, accounts for 64.1% of journeys made in the North East, in comparison to local buses which account for 6.4%. With 49% of people in our market research indicating that they would be open to using buses more often, there is a strong potential for significant growth in bus modal share from the current position.

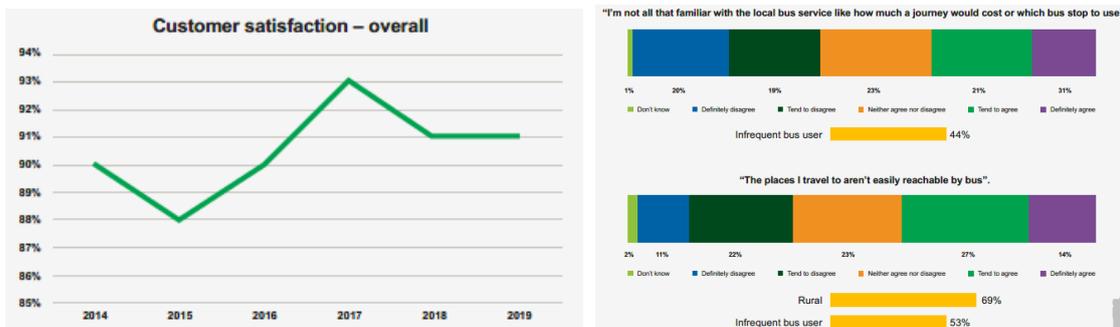


4.8. Patronage

- 4.9. Bus patronage has been declining for many decades although in recent years the picture has been more varied. There are a number of reasons for this, and qualitative market research data shows that a quarter of those aged 75+ feel that ‘bus times don’t fit their needs’. This is especially important as people in this age bracket are most at risk of social isolation, with many seeing the bus as a lifeline to human connection.
- 4.10. Market research showed that 75% of our minority communities who are car users say they would consider switching to the bus for some journeys. There is therefore a real opportunity to grow patronage in our minority communities if barriers are removed.
- 4.11. The picture builds as TNE explored the data relating to those living in rural areas. 28% of people living in rural parts of the North East said that ‘the places [they] travel to aren’t easily reached by bus’ according to market research.

4.12. Customer Satisfaction

- 4.13. The below graph, based on data from Transport Focus, shows that 91% of people using bus in the North East were satisfied with their journey. While this is higher than the national figure of 89%, there is still room for improvement. 69% of respondents to market research rated local bus services as excellent or good. However, for people in rural locations only 22% were positive about local bus services, compared to 30% who shared negative responses.



- 4.14. Many people who use buses in our region do not have another means of transport available to them. In Tyne and Wear alone 89% of bus users have no car available to make the journey and therefore they need the bus to be on time, clean and have the necessary facilities they need for comfort and convenience. Improving customer satisfaction will be key to maintaining existing customers and keeping the patronage of those who make the change from car to bus.
- 4.15. Currently, 54% of the region’s bus fleet is not at the engine emission standard of Euro 6 or higher.
- 4.16. When TNE consulted the public as part of the Big Bus Conversation many people were also mindful of unnecessary carbon emissions coming from bus engines.
- 4.17. Additionally, the independent market research report provides further insight into barriers to bus use. One of the barriers identified was a lack of knowledge about service provision and fares: 34% of people who responded agreed with this, rising to 52% of those who class themselves as infrequent users.

5. A SUMMARY OF ANY AVAILABLE DATA ON TRENDS IN BUS JOURNEY SPEEDS AND THE IMPACT OF CONGESTION ON LOCAL BUS SERVICES

- 5.1. Services are inevitably tailored to geography, demographics and markets, with frequent services in the metropolitan and urban areas and more targeted services connecting many other key locations. “Secured services”, which are bus services that are tendered and contracted by the local authorities and Nexus, respond to social need where commercially operated services are not viable, often in rural or remote areas, places that are hard to serve as part of an existing bus route, or at the extremities of the day.

5.2. **Reliability**

5.3. Reliability was a concern for many during independent research for the Big Bus Conversation. The sentiments expressed below demonstrate just how crucial it is that buses run on time. Buses connect people to work, education, healthcare and social events – all of which are essential when it comes to living a healthy and well-balanced lifestyle, which is something we want for the people of the North East. When buses fail to arrive on time it has a knock-on effect on each of these things, which undoubtedly puts people off using the bus service again.

5.3.1. “We need real-time digital information on street bus stops as not everyone has internet, and there are problems in winter with reliability.” (Big Bus Conversation)

5.4. **Punctuality At The Start Of A Journey**

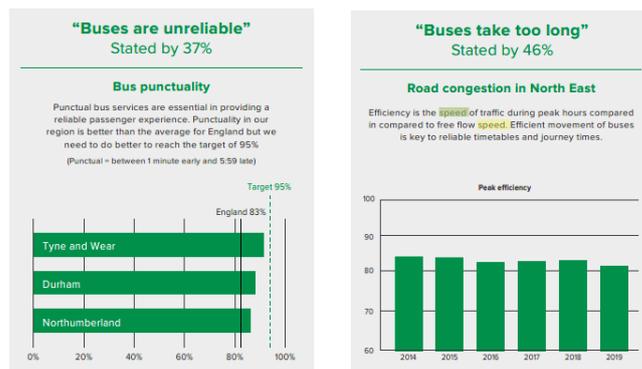
5.5. The buses in the EP Plan area have better punctuality than average for England, however they fall short of the 95% punctuality target.

5.6. Punctuality is intrinsic to efficient bus travel and the continued use by the public of the bus network.

5.7. A lot of people, especially those from low-income households without cars, rely on the bus to make connecting journeys on different modes of public transport in order to get from A to B. When the start time of a bus journey is delayed, this has the consequence of halting someone’s planned multi-modal journey, and again will most likely result in a lack of trust and confidence in the bus network. It may bring with it social and economic repercussions for the traveller, for instance if this makes them late for work or a social engagement.

5.8. **Punctuality At Timing Points**

5.9. Punctuality in the region has suffered from the rise in traffic post pandemic. In autumn 2021, a blended figure of operator data showed almost 20% of buses arriving at stops more than 5 minutes late or 1 minute early. During lockdown, performance on the least reliable routes increased to 96%, showing what can be achieved if buses have a clear run. Travelling by bus usually takes longer than travelling by car and one of the reasons for this is because of the amount of times buses are required to stop along routes. There is still scope to provide more direct services, especially at peak times, to further reduce journey times and address passenger feedback like the following:



5.10. **Average Bus Speeds**

5.11. The speed of a bus journey can be an off-putting factor when making a travel choice. Bus services need to be as quick and efficient in terms of journey time as possible, to respond to feedback from the Big Bus Conversation that included:

- 5.11.1. “Conductors on buses needed to speed up journeys”;
- 5.11.2. “An Oyster card system would speed up bus boarding”;
- 5.11.3. “More BUS ONLY lanes and traffic light priority for buses, and an end to speed humps or chicanes on bus routes”, and

5.11.4. the need for “shorter journey times with better links between Durham, Washington, Sunderland and Newcastle”.

5.12. Others think there is work to be done to introduce more express shuttle services to key locations from small villages that have minimal stoppage along the route (Big Bus Conversation), and this is backed up by the market research carried out.

6. AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT LOCAL BUS SERVICES

6.1. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

6.1.1. Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI)

6.1.1.1. RTPI systems are limited throughout the North East and where they do exist, they can be unreliable and function poorly. The information that is available is not always real-time, as the systems work from scheduled data where they cannot match a vehicle to a trip. This means in many cases, the information provided to customers is incorrect.

6.1.2. Information Off-Bus

6.1.2.1. There is currently no single source of pre-journey information available across the North East. Each of the large operators, some smaller operators, Nexus and the Local Authorities have their own websites and digital platforms which present information relevant to their organisation in inconsistent styles and to varying degrees of timelines. Interactive network maps are available through some Local Authorities which have the scope to be expanded to be regionwide. In addition, third-party apps such as CityMapper can be used to display transport options between any two locations, usually with live timing.

6.1.2.2. Printed timetables are currently provided at selected stops throughout the region and leaflets are available in a limited number of places.

6.1.2.3. The Urban Traffic Management Control ("UTMC") centres currently monitor traffic flow without specific attention to bus, meaning that messaging about disruption on the road network is at a general level to inform motorists and not, necessarily, made relevant to bus users. Some bus operators also use their social media channels to notify customers of delays and changes in real-time.

6.1.3. Network Branding

6.1.3.1. The North East has multi-operator individual branding, along with that of Nexus, the seven Local Authorities, Traveline and Network One. Network One is the trading name of Network One Ticketing Ltd, a partnership of bus, metro, train and ferry companies in the North East, which provides a range of tickets. The existing branding is strong on an operator basis and there is extensive route-specific branding along key corridors. However, from a customer perspective, the complex range of brands, different fare offers, and complex timetables have significant limitations and are not tied together through a unified bus network brand.

6.1.4. Information At Bus Stops

6.1.4.1. The quality of information provision at bus stops varies widely throughout the region. The majority of stops have impartial, customised printed timetables, provided entirely by Nexus and the local authorities.

6.1.4.2. A limited few have real-time information and some stops across the region lack any kind of passenger information. Shelter provision is discussed in detail in the Highways and Infrastructure section (see subsection 10.6.7). Real-time information is currently installed at 400 stops across the region, but where it is present, it can be unreliable and functions poorly. This means in many cases, the information provided to customers is incorrect.

6.1.5. Customer Safety

- 6.1.5.1. All major North East bus operators, including nearly all independent operators' fleets are fitted with CCTV cameras inside and out, to provide a safe and secure environment. Operators continue to invest as technology evolves. The majority have invested in additional safety measures including a vehicle location system, using mobile technology which immediately pinpoints the location of any bus or incident in real-time, improving response times and passenger support.
- 6.1.5.2. It became a statutory requirement for all buses to be fitted with AVL on 7 January 2021, so all buses' live locations will be available. Bus stop CCTV is limited to City Centre coverage, with very little coverage outside of central locations. Lighting is also inconsistent, with rural areas in particular often having very little lighting at bus stops.

6.1.6. Information On The Bus

- 6.1.6.1. Approximately 40% of the fleet of the main operators is currently fitted with next-stop audio-visual (AV) technology.
- 6.1.6.2. Large operators are committed to purchasing audio-visual equipment as part of the standard specification for new buses, but small operators are led by contractual agreements. An enhanced specification for equipment is not standard.

6.1.7. Customer-Facing Colleagues

- 6.1.7.1. Customer feedback varies between groups with elderly and disabled passengers complimenting customer-facing colleagues on very high standards of empathy and care, whereas teenagers are less complimentary. Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) staff training is carried out on an annual basis by operators; however, this is designed to maintain professional skills and meet the needs of the individual organisation, and customer service elements are not co-ordinated in terms of content across the board.

6.1.8. Ride Experience

- 6.1.8.1. All buses are wheelchair accessible, which makes boarding, alighting and moving through the bus easier. Other improvements targeted at people with extra needs also make the journey better for everyone else such as 'Stop' buttons which can be palm-operated, within the reach of every seat; voice and screen information about the next stop. Where buses in other parts of the country carry advertisements for shopping, dating, colleges, etc., NEbus operators recognise that there is a greater commercial return from building customer confidence. On buses in the North East, the advertising vinyls show the bus journey map, how to contact customer service, how to access the Wi-Fi, and other messages that make the customer feel they are in a cared for and high-quality environment.
- 6.1.8.2. All buses used on the network have wheelchair access and around 40% have AV technology installed. Many buses on flagship routes come with Wi-Fi and charging points as standard.

6.1.9. Information At Stations And Interchanges

- 6.1.9.1. Digital real-time bus information displays already exist in some key rail and Metro interchanges in the region but need upgrading from dated screens, and updating in line with the introduction of a new information system.
- 6.1.9.2. Signage directing customers who are interchanging between bus towards their next bus stop location is also limited. There are few 'Where to catch your bus' posters.

6.1.10. Customer Charter (Beyond The Bus)

- 6.1.10.1. Each of the region's main operators have their own customer charters. They broadly align on common themes including safety; information provision; fares and reliability of services. They also outline the complaints procedure and the rights of customers. Smaller operators typically don't have customer charters.

6.2. FARES AND TICKETING

6.2.1. All Day Multi-Modal Ticket

- 6.2.1.1. The region has some of the base characteristics of a fully integrated multi-modal public transport network, such as smart card ticketing and multi-modal tickets, yet people find the offer difficult to understand, especially non-users, 69% of whom stated this to be the case through the 2019 Nexus Insight Panel.
- 6.2.1.2. The closest product to a regionwide multi-modal capped ticket currently is offered through Network One as an Explorer ticket at a current price point of £10.90 for an adult, £5.70 for a child (under 15) and £20.60 for a family of up to two adults and three children for one day. The ticket does offer some extensions beyond the region into North Yorkshire. It is scarcely marketed beyond the Network One website.
- 6.2.1.3. Other multi-modal tickets are offered by Network One as weekly, four week and annual tickets. The price is based on a Network One zonal model which consists of 5 zones and the NTL 'plus' area which covers Northumberland and County Durham. Network One Zones are inconsistent with those which have been established by bus operators and Nexus for their own ticketing.
- 6.2.1.4. The Transport Plan explains that the majority of people who live in County Durham and Northumberland also work within their local authority area, with Newcastle the next largest work destination. No daily capped fares exist in Northumberland or Durham for travel exclusively within those counties using multi-operator or multi-modal tickets. Noting that Nexus Metro and Ferry services do not operate within Durham or Northumberland and that as mainline rail operators do not currently participate in Network One, the current focus is on the lack of multi-operator rather than multi-modal products.

6.2.2. Tickets Options For Under-19s And Region Wide Under – 19 Multi-Modal Fare Cap

- 6.2.2.1. Bus fares represent a heavy cut of the disposable income of some groups. This disproportionately affects young people; even those in professional careers are on relatively low incomes when they start their career. For young people in apprenticeships, again their career prospects may be strong, but their starting salaries are lower. Young people seeking less skilled work have a lower pay range.
- 6.2.2.2. This issue is particularly prevalent in the North East given the lower-than-average wages and employment levels.
- 6.2.2.3. Additionally, pockets of health and income inequalities are seen across the North East, with deprivation largely concentrated in urban areas. There are large disparities in levels of youth unemployment throughout our region.
- 6.2.2.4. Some places like Blyth in Northumberland and deprived electoral wards like Byker have youth unemployment levels of 15% and 16% respectively. By contrast, affluent areas such as Gosforth and Corbridge both have levels of 1%. This demonstrates that levels of opportunity for young people in the North East are highly uneven depending on geography. Single fares are available for Under-19s at a price point of £1.20 in some locations in the region; however, on longer distance services, for example those reaching into Northumberland, fares at this price cannot currently be achieved without subsidy to the operators.

6.2.2.5. Network One currently offers a ticket aimed at the Under-19 and student market but this product is only available in one and four week iterations. There are various other tickets by different operators that are designed for young people and students but there are few similarities between these.

6.2.3. Family and Children Tickets

6.2.3.1. Only one of the region's main bus operators offers a family ticket. There are no other family specific offers available to bus passengers, however, the Tyne and Wear Metro recently ran a successful trial offer where you can 'Take the Kids for Free'. This offer is now a permanent ticket option on Metro.

6.2.4. ENCTS

6.2.4.1. Under the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) which is a national scheme bus operators are required to carry pass holders during the core times of 09:30-23:00 Monday to Friday, and at all times on weekends and Bank Holidays.

6.2.4.2. Three slightly different versions of the scheme, as allowed by the Transport Act 1985 and the Travel Concession Schemes Regulations 1986 apply, as there are three separate Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs) in the North East:

6.2.4.2.1. Nexus;

6.2.4.2.2. Durham County Council; and

6.2.4.2.3. Northumberland County Council.

6.2.4.3. Although all schemes allow travel until the end of service, rather than 23:00, each has varying discretionary arrangements covering, for example, the treatment of the travel allowed with the pass pre-09:30.

6.2.4.4. Bus operators are reimbursed by each TCA using the general principle that operators should be 'no better or no worse off' as a result of carrying concessionary passengers and are therefore reimbursed for 'revenue foregone' or the sums of money that they would have received if the concession did not exist. The basis for the calculation of revenue foregone is the DfT calculator, using passenger volumes and average fares, although there are annual discussions between each TCA and each operator to agree the payments.

6.2.4.5. ENCTS payments for the 2021/22 year totalled £52.5 million. Nexus was responsible for £35.7 million of this money whilst Northumberland and Durham paid £4.9 million and £11.9 million respectively.

6.2.5. Care Leavers' Concession

6.2.5.1. Care leavers often find it more difficult than other young people to access and stay in education, training and work. Lacking the family support that other young people have, travel makes up a large proportion of their disposable income.

6.3. THE NETWORK

6.3.1. Maintaining Our Current Levels Of Bus Services As A Minimum

6.3.1.1. The goal is to use the current network as a foundation, so that the strong base of bus patronage in the North East is maintained and can then grow, ultimately safeguarding and increasing patronage levels.

6.3.1.2. The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a significant reduction in bus passenger numbers. Patronage is still currently between 20% and 30% lower than the same period in 2019, although we are beginning to see slow growth. Stakeholders told us that the strong "avoid

public transport” messaging of the early phases of the pandemic caused many people to choose other options instead of the bus, increasingly relying on private cars. Stakeholders felt that to an extent, people are using that as an excuse to drive in spite of knowing now that bus travel is safe.

6.3.2. Consolidation To Reduce Duplication and Over-Provision

6.3.2.1. There are particular locations across the network where there may be overprovision of bus services, and therefore, there is scope on the network for consolidation opportunities under Enhanced Partnership Schemes. Transport North East has reviewed the current network in detail in order to identify what they might be.

6.3.3. Bus Network Improvements

6.3.3.1. The vision to improve the bus network starts from a relatively strong position. More trips per capita are made by bus in the region than in most other English regions because there is a good network supported by well-developed bus priority measures.

6.3.3.2. Many corridors have high-frequency services, and there is an excellent and well-used network of interurban express routes running into the region's cities, which are assisted by traffic priorities to maintain high performance. In September 2020, a national survey by Transport Focus found that the biggest priority for bus passengers is more frequent services. This was fairly consistent across age groups and journey purpose and corresponds with research undertaken by TNE, especially in the Tyne and Wear area. This needs to be taken into account, as it indicates there may be potential to grow already frequent services.

6.3.3.3. However, the polycentric nature of the region means there are several towns that serve as local, sub-regional and regional centres, and many have poor links between them. Feedback from the Big Bus Conversation and stakeholder engagement confirmed that people want more and better connections between local places, not only the radial routes to the cities.

6.3.3.4. There are also many places that have few or no bus services at all. These are mainly rural areas that have very few local facilities, so people need to travel to take part in society. Low population densities have traditionally made rural areas difficult to serve viably by buses (even on a secured basis), but experience in the region and elsewhere suggests that innovative measures like Demand Responsive Transport and brokerage can be successful in filling gaps in the network.

6.3.3.5. The region already has 24-hour services on three routes from Newcastle to Chester-le-Street, Durham, Washington and Sunderland, and from Sunderland to Ryhope and Seaham. They have been very successful, improving access to jobs and supporting the night time economy by giving people a safe way of getting home after work or going out with friends.

6.3.4. Demand Responsive Transport

6.3.4.1. Currently County Durham is the only part of the region that has a comprehensive scheme of DRT that aims to complement the conventional bus service network. The Link2 service is open to everyone and aims to cater for people who do not have a suitable bus service or are unable to access regular bus services due to mobility issues. It can be used for any local journey, connecting with the bus network to travel further afield. Tyne and Wear has a taxi card system to help people with mobility difficulties travel independently. It allows them to travel with approved taxi companies at a discounted price. Members get issued with a card that is credited with a set amount of money every year - they use the money on their card to help pay towards each journey they make.

6.3.4.2. Both of these services are focused as a service for specific users for whom they are a lifeline; but they do not seek to grow modal share or bus patronage for the general population.

6.3.4.3. The region has some of the most rural communities in England with 21% of the population living in rural towns and villages. Analysis for Northumberland alone, shows that 37,000

residents of West Northumberland do not benefit from a bus service that allows for access to: key employment centres; significant further education sites; major shopping locations or evening recreation. Likewise, in County Durham, significant numbers of people live away from bus routes. In communities such as these, the car is the obvious transport mode, and there is no attractive sustainable alternative. Tyne and Wear also has rural communities in which the walking route to the main bus route may be too long for some, or the terrain may be challenging, again forcing groups of residents to the car.

- 6.3.4.4. Markets such as these are historically unattractive to bus operators because areas of low population density inevitably yield low passenger loadings and revenue over a higher operating distance and therefore cost. The value for money consideration of local authorities providing services is also likely to be low.

6.3.5. A New Technologically Enabled Offer For Home To School Transport

- 6.3.5.1. In our region, 17.3% of the population are of school age, attending a total of 912 schools. School start times coincide with the busiest period on our road network each day with an estimated 132m car journeys for education being made in the North East each year. Data from Pop Blue, the smart card ticketing product for school-age young people in Tyne and Wear shows that many parents drive children to school and that children return by public transport.
- 6.3.5.2. The data is backed up by verbatim feedback gathered in the Big Bus Conversation campaign and at stakeholder events, where parents reported that their need to drive to work is driven by their need to drop children at school.
- 6.3.5.3. The Big Bus Conversation suggests a series of barriers to bus use for home-to-school journeys, with common themes such as difficulty accessing information and the perception of safety, security and reliability of bus services being potential reasons why many don't consider the bus a viable option.

6.3.6. Cleaner And Greener Vehicles

- 6.3.6.1. The North East bus fleet is made up of 1,352 vehicles of varying ages and emissions standards. The average age of the fleet is approximately 8.9 years, which is substantially higher than the UK average of 8 years.
- 6.3.6.2. Big Bus Conversation data showed 23% of passengers surveyed were concerned about the condition and cleanliness of the bus used for their journey.
- 6.3.6.3. The emissions standards of the vehicles that operate in the area vary from Euro 3 to full electric (zero-emission). Over 40% of the fleet meets the Euro 6 standard, while 38% are Euro 5 and 17% are Euro 4 or lower.
- 6.3.6.4. There has been some investment in new, modern low emission vehicles across multiple providers over the last decade. For example, in 2013, Stagecoach deployed a fleet of bio-methane powered buses in Sunderland with a devoted gas refuelling facility at its depot in the City. More recently, in 2020, Go North East invested £3.7 million in new fully electric zero emission buses, which were partly funded by the Ultra-Low Emission Bus Scheme (ULEBS). Branded Voltra, the buses are powered by electricity that is sourced from zero-emission supplies such as solar, wind and hydro. They operate services 53 and 54 between Newcastle, Gateshead, Bensham and Saltwell Park.
- 6.3.6.5. However, Covid-19 has reduced investment below normal fleet replacement levels, as operators are concerned about the post-pandemic market, which means the average age of the fleet is increasing and there has been little progress to reduce emissions standards. The only confirmed vehicle orders are a further batch of nine zero emission electric buses for Go North East, which are due to be introduced in mid-2022.

6.4. HIGHWAYS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

6.4.1. Highways Network

- 6.4.1.1. There are busy arterial routes into cities and major towns which do not have infrastructure installed to a standard which meets their potential.
- 6.4.1.2. The Coast Road and The West of Newcastle Corridor are examples of this. Both play a key role in connecting people in the region to school, work and leisure, but are too often sites of congestion and pollution. The current bus routes, while frequent, do not offer the high-quality, uninterrupted experience the challenge demands.
- 6.4.1.3. The Coast Road (A1058) runs from Newcastle City Centre through densely populated North Tyneside to the Coast. Although the Metro does provide an alternative to private cars for many in North Tyneside, along the Coast Road itself many residents and key sites are not within a walkable distance of the nearest Metro stop. Traffic generated by Silverlink Retail Park, Cobalt Business Park, North Wallsend and other parts of North Tyneside and East Newcastle all come together on this key artery often resulting in significant traffic congestion.
- 6.4.1.4. The even more densely populated and heavily residential area of the West end of Newcastle is currently underserved by the higher speed public transport available elsewhere in the region (the Metro). Westgate Road is the direct route into the City from the A69, the main strategic road from the West of Northumberland and Cumbria into Newcastle which carries 38,000 vehicles a day. The A167 serves as the main artery into the centre of Newcastle from the A1 and the A696, the trunk route coming from Newcastle International Airport, carrying 27,000 vehicles a day. Together, this means that they are some of the busiest routes into the City.
- 6.4.1.5. These are just two examples of corridors in the region, where priority infrastructure could be improved.

6.4.2. Facilities For Walking To And Waiting For Buses

- 6.4.2.1. Stops and stations in the region range widely from high-quality interchanges in both rural and urban areas such as Hexham bus station and South Shields interchange, to stops with no timetable, signpost, or road markings.
- 6.4.2.2. People reporting experiences of low-quality waiting provision at stops and interchanges is a serious problem for the region, with 51% of residents saying waiting at a stop is their main dislike about traveling by bus, rising to 60% for those with a mobility difficulty. Poor waiting facilities at stops acts as a deterrent to people who rarely or never use the bus, and as a barrier to those people considering changing modes. Engagement with stakeholder groups showed the differing dimensions of accessibility when walking and waiting for the bus, as well as the creativity and variation possible in these facilities.
- 6.4.2.3. Whilst two-thirds of the region's residents live within a 5-minute walk of a stop or station, many live much further away. The experience of that walk, and the wait for a bus needs to compete with the convenience of car travel.

6.4.3. Our Park & Ride Provisions

- 6.4.3.1. Across all modes, the region has an established Park & Ride offer with current sites providing over 4,300 spaces at:
 - 6.4.3.1.1. Tyne and Wear Metro stations and bus interchanges;
 - 6.4.3.1.2. Three bus-based sites with dedicated bus links serving Durham City Centre;
 - 6.4.3.1.3. Newcastle's bus based Great Park site; and

6.4.3.1.4. 19 National Rail stations across the region.

6.4.3.2. There are frequent examples of instances where people will park on roads, and in some cases, adjacent roads in housing estates to main bus routes, especially longer distance, express routes, to travel by bus.

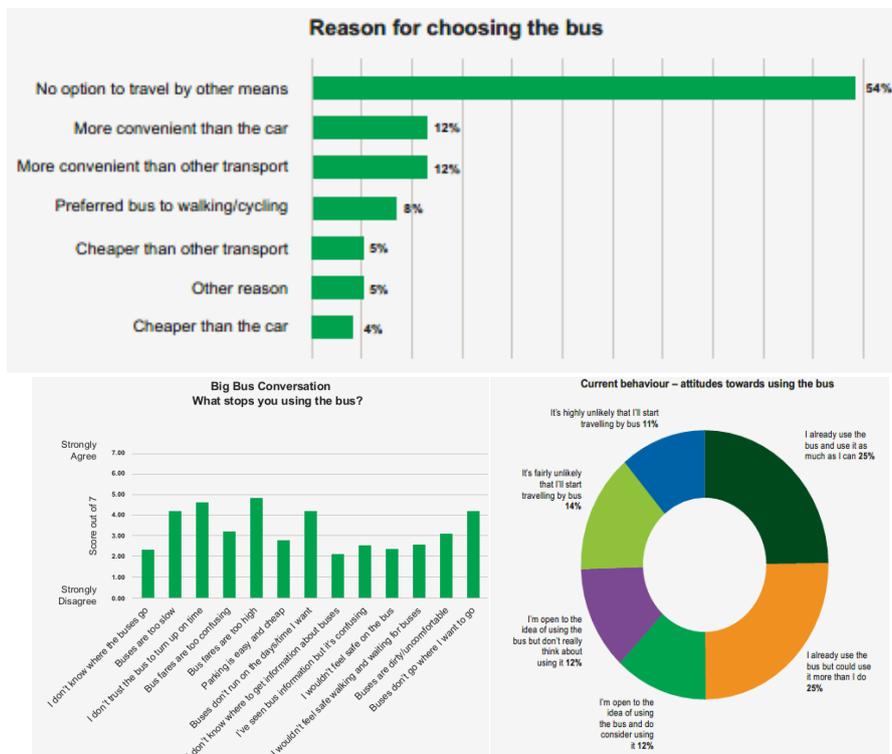
7. ALL THE RELEVANT FACTORS THAT THE PARTIES CONSIDER WILL AFFECT, OR HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO AFFECT, THE LOCAL BUS MARKET OVER THE LIFE OF THE EP PLAN

7.1. This section sets out information and data about factors which affect the use of bus services in the region including:

- 7.1.1. Identified barriers to bus use;
- 7.1.2. Perceptions and attitudes toward buses;
- 7.1.3. Car parking: the extent and pricing of parking provisions in towns and cities and the split between local authority and private sector provision. Also, the amount spent by each local authority in the region on parking enforcement; and
- 7.1.4. Other competing and complimentary factors to the bus network in the North East.

7.2. Identified Barriers To Bus Use

7.2.1. 1 in 5 people who are avoiding public transport are doing so because they don't feel safe to use it at the moment. Cleanliness and maintenance are much more important now and are likely to be legacies of Covid with increased user expectations in these areas



7.3. Car Parking

7.3.1. Decisions on car parking policy sit with each of the individual local authorities and are dependent on a range of factors, such as economic policy, rurality and the range of public transport options available.

- 7.3.2. The relationship between car parking charges and public transport fares can influence how people choose to travel, because of cost and time sensitivities which drive travel behaviours. Adaptations to parking policy, carefully linked to the introduction of an improved public transport offer, can be a means of gradually switching demand towards public transport in a sustainable manner. Instruments such as workplace parking levies can also act as a funding stream to assist with attractive, sustainable alternatives to the car.
- 7.3.3. The cost of car parking, especially in relation to getting the bus, often influences travel choices.
- 7.3.4. The following tables offers a summary of parking provision and spending on parking enforcement in each of the seven local authority areas in the region.

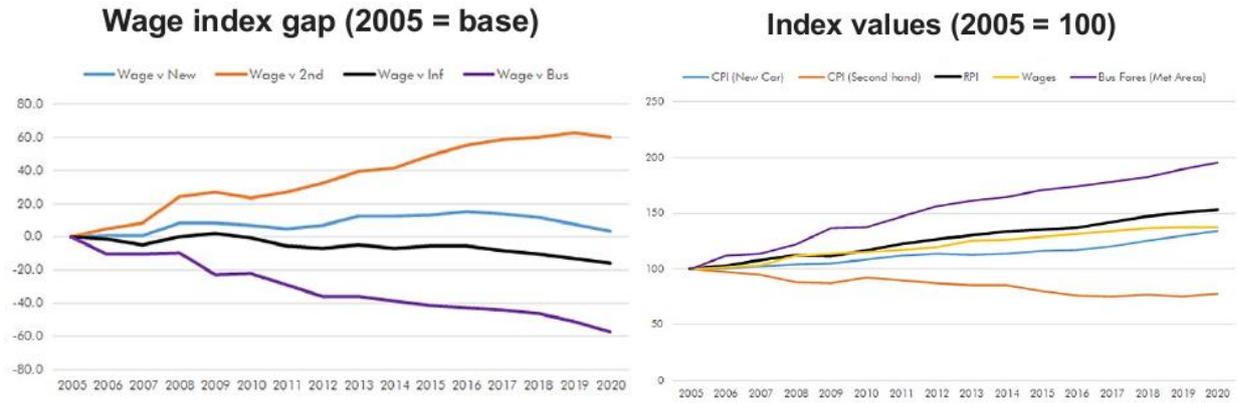
	Estimated number of LA operated spaces	Average hourly rate to park	Estimated number of private sector operated spaces*	Average hourly rate	Local authority	Budget allocated to parking enforcement
Durham	3,500	43p	2000	69p	Durham	£650,000
Gateshead	2,123	£1.04	756	92p	Gateshead	£799,000
Newcastle	6,004	£1.44	3743	£3.20	Newcastle	£2.2m
North Tyneside	2,544	95p	Unknown	N/A	North Tyneside	Part of a contract
Northumberland	11,821	0	0	N/A	Northumberland	£2m
South Tyneside	2,477	75p	270	Varies	South Tyneside	£1.1m
Sunderland	2,958	£1.15	941	£1.47	Sunderland	£950,000

- 7.3.5. TNE will explore and engage with people and businesses in the region over issues of car parking supply and potential deployment of workplace parking levies, congestion charging, and strategic reduction in parking spaces to see if these can be effective tools which can be adopted across the region to encourage a switch to attractive, sustainable transport options such as buses, including considering the introduction of a relationship between the cost of car parking in major centres of retail and employment and the cost of travel on public transport, where it makes economic and strategic sense to do so.

7.4. Other Factors Which May Influence Competition Between Car And Bus:

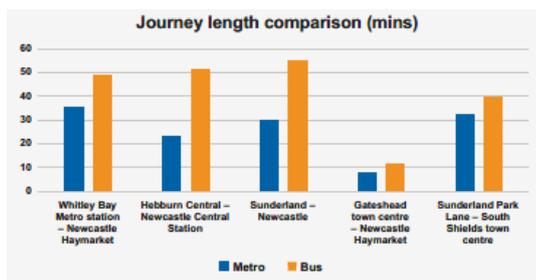
7.5. Relative Affordability Of Bus And Car Travel

- 7.5.1. The relative price of bus and car has become increasingly unfavourable to bus. It can be seen from the graph on the left below that wages have not kept pace with inflation nor with the price of bus fares. The graph on the right compares wages to the cost of these transport modes. For example, the cost of a secondhand car has decreased when compared to wage growth, whereas the cost of bus fares has increased when compared to wage growth.

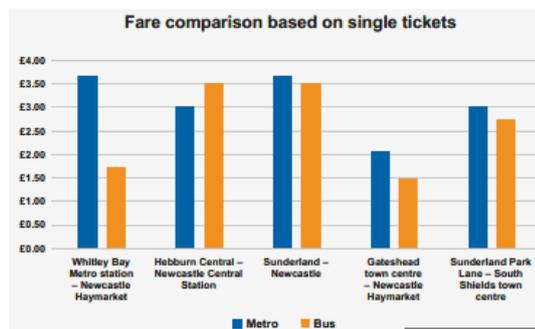


The Tyne and Wear Metro system

- 7.5.2. The Metro and bus networks complement each other and interchange is generally accessible and well signposted. Many people transfer from bus to Metro, whilst those who perceive interchange as a high penalty take through journeys on the bus.
- 7.5.3. The Metro appears a competitor to bus for some journeys, but it also brings people to the bus for the first leg of a journey they might otherwise make by car.
- 7.5.4. The below graph shows that for a sample of journeys that can be completed by either bus or Metro, the bus takes longer for every journey.



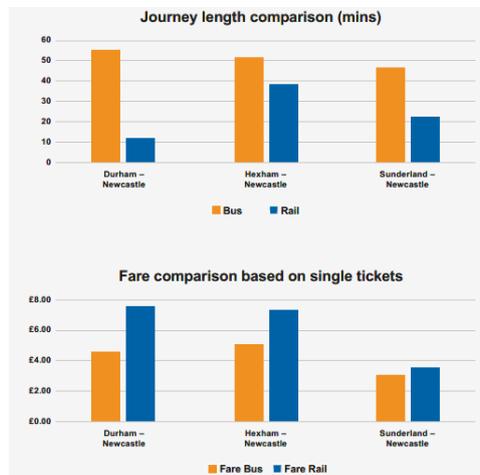
- 7.5.5. The below graph shows that for fare cost based on single tickets, buses compare favourably to Metro for some of the journeys, however Metro prices can also be cheaper, or near to the same cost. This means that the customer has a choice of transport which can depend on the customer's priorities of a faster or cheaper journey.



- 7.5.6. Nevertheless the basic structure for integrated public transport continues to exist in the region. Network One provides integrated multi-modal tickets, transport interchanges continue to see many thousands of interchange journeys each day between bus and Metro, and peoples' travel habits – often the same since childhood – continue to see a combined bus and Metro journey on many trips. Indeed for some trips a combined bus and Metro journey is the only viable public transport combination.

7.6. The National Rail Network

- 7.6.1. The geographic size of the region means that key centres are linked by rail, including ‘Intercity’ long distance trains. These services co-exist alongside well-used bus services, because buses serve more local places along the way and more ‘first and last mile’ origins and destinations.
- 7.6.2. The graphs below show some sample journey times and fare comparisons between rail and bus.



- 7.6.3. For all of the journeys we are aware of, it is slower to travel by bus, however it is almost always cheaper. There will therefore be a significant number of people who travel by bus instead of rail even though it takes longer.

7.7. Integration Between Bus and Active Travel

- 7.7.1. Active travel is wholly complementary to the bus network, especially as every bus journey starts and ends with an element of active travel.
- 7.7.2. Already, early measures are in place to promote the opportunity for multi-modal trips including bike and bus. For example, six Go North East routes have capacity to carry two unfolded bikes, and stations across the Tyne and Wear Metro system are fitted out with approximately 750 places for cycles, much of which takes the form of digitally operated cycle lockers.

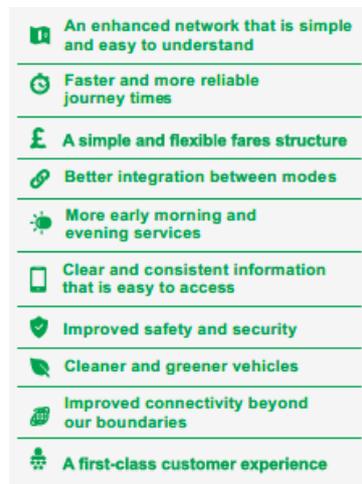
8. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE EP PLAN – IN TERMS OF HOW IT WILL IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF LOCAL BUS SERVICES IN THE CORRESPONDING EP SCHEME AREA

- 8.1. The Transport Plan adopted by the NEJTC in March 2021 provides the strategic framework to support delivery of an improved, more seamless, coordinated and integrated transport system across the region. It sets out how transport can help support the wider goals of creating and sustaining more and better jobs in a growing and decarbonised economy, where social and health inequalities are greatly reduced.
- 8.2. The vision statement for the Transport Plan is: “Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East”. This vision is supported by five strategic objectives for transport in our region:
 - 8.2.1. Carbon-neutral North East;
 - 8.2.2. Overcome inequality and grow our economy;
 - 8.2.3. Healthier North East;
 - 8.2.4. Appealing, sustainable transport choices; and
 - 8.2.5. Safe, secure network.

- 8.3. They are reflective of the critical strategic issues such as the Climate Emergency declared by each of the region's Local Authorities and Combined Authorities, the ambition for a clean and green recovery from the pandemic and the need to address the health of the region.
- 8.4. Central to the Transport Plan is a policy named: “Making the Right Travel Choice”. This policy sets out the actions that need to be enabled, through interventions on the transport system, to drive progress against the objectives.
- 8.5. The policy of ‘Making the Right Travel Choices’, leaves no doubt: the region is committed to positioning buses as an appealing and sustainable transport choice which people should choose ahead of a car whenever possible.
- 8.6. The goal in North East England is to do more than just provide a sustainable transport network – it should be made attractive, so people want to use it.

9. WHAT OUTCOMES NEED TO BE DELIVERED TO IMPROVE LOCAL BUS SERVICES IN THE EP PLAN AREA

9.1. In June 2021, the NEJTC published a high-level strategic vision document called ‘Your Vision for Buses’. This document was developed in partnership with the region’s bus operators and considers the role that buses can play in delivering the Transport Plan. In doing so, it sets out Ten Solutions for the bus network – and asks the region to consider and test these solutions. These Ten Solutions are aligned with the Government’s ‘National Bus Strategy’.



9.2. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been developed jointly by NEbus and the NEJTC and link to the Transport Plan objectives.

9.3. In most cases a baseline year of 2018/19 has been chosen for the KPIs, because that was the last full financial and reporting year where bus ridership and road traffic levels were not affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 9.4. Firstly it is necessary to repair the damage caused by Covid-19 to bus ridership in the region.
- 9.5. Then the intention is to progress to a position where a higher proportion of people choose the bus to travel, leading to a significantly higher number people using buses – especially for journeys to work and education and in rural areas. This will lead to growth in bus patronage.
- 9.6. This will only happen when people see tangible improvements made to bus services, which will be measured through improved customer satisfaction. For passengers to be happy buses must be punctual and reliable, and buses need to be faster and not caught in congestion.
- 9.7. Although getting more people on the bus and growing its modal share will of itself improve environmental performance, a continuous improvement in the emission standards of the bus fleet will also be targeted.

9.8. KPIs that will need to be delivered to improve local bus services in the EP Plan area

9.8.1. Recovering from Covid-19

9.8.1.1. **KPI 1:** Bus ridership to achieve 154.4m trips during the year 2022/23, returning us to the baseline level of 2018/19.

9.8.2. Modal Share

9.8.2.1. **KPI 2:** Modal share of buses to grow by 1 percentage point in 2023/24 from the baseline of 6.4%, and a further 1 percentage point in 2024/25.

9.8.2.2. **KPI 3:** Modal share of bus use for journeys to work and education to grow by 1 percentage point in 2023/24, and a further 1 percentage point in 2024/25.

9.8.3. Patronage

9.8.3.1. **KPI 4:** Bus patronage to grow by 10% in 2023/24, and then by a further 10% in 2024/25.

9.8.3.2. **KPI 5:** Bus patronage from people under the age of 25 to grow by 10% in 2023/24, and then by a further 10% in 2024/25.

9.8.3.3. **KPI 6:** Bus boarding at rural bus stops to grow by 10% in 2023/24, and then by a further 10% in 2024/25.

9.8.4. Customer Satisfaction

9.8.4.1. **KPI 7:** Overall bus passenger satisfaction to grow from a baseline of 91% to 92% in 2023/24 and to 93% in 2024/25.

9.8.5. Bus Performance

9.8.5.1. **KPI 8:** Average speed of buses to grow, relative to the average speed of general traffic, in each year of the EP Plan.

9.8.5.2. **KPI 9:** Bus reliability to be 99.5% throughout the period of the EP Plan.

9.8.5.3. **KPI 10:** Bus punctuality at point of origin to be 95% in 2022/23, 96% in 2023/24 and 97% in 2024/25.

9.8.5.4. **KPI 11:** Bus punctuality at all timing points point of origin to be 90% in 2022/23, 95% in 2023/24 and 95% in 2024/25.

9.8.6. Environmental Performance

9.8.6.1. **KPI 12:** Bus fleet emission standard to Euro 6 or better to be 63.2% in 2022/23, 80.8% in 2023/24 and 91.1% in 2024/25 and to be 100% at the start of 2025/26.

10. WHAT OVERALL INTERVENTIONS NEED TO BE TAKEN TO DELIVER THOSE OUTCOMES

10.1. The following improvements have been identified as necessary to deliver the strategic objectives and to achieve the targets. These measures which will enhance the experience of current bus users; and make bus use a more attractive proposition to those who don't currently use the bus.

10.2. Within this section are five main subsections:

10.2.1. Customer Experience;

10.2.2. Fares and Ticketing;

10.2.3. The Network;

10.2.4. Highways and Infrastructure; and

10.2.5. Delivering the BSIP through the Enhanced Partnership.

10.3. Customer Experience

- 10.3.1. Network-wide ticketing and journey planning will be made available to passengers through a single dedicated website and accompanying app. We will also continue to provide leaflets and printed information.
- 10.3.2. We will develop a new and consistent brand for The Partnership that will be applied across the network, so that it becomes a recognisable symbol of public transport for the North East.
- 10.3.3. The 400 bus stops with existing real-time information will be updated to a next generation system such as “E-Ink” which shows up-to-date real-time passenger information. A further 100 stops will be updated with the technology.
- 10.3.4. We will provide clear printed information at stops and stations, including in rural areas, and maintain it.
- 10.3.5. We will improve CCTV provision throughout our entire network, ensuring coverage of every major station and stop across the region. 700 moveable CCTV cameras will be available to be deployed across the region, in areas where there is demand for them or areas where there is deemed to be a safety risk. The cameras will be remotely accessible and information from them can be accessed on an on-demand basis.
- 10.3.6. We will provide seamless service information to customers, offering a single source of truth, feeding to any connected systems for passenger information.
- 10.3.7. All vehicles will be fitted with enhanced next-stop audio-visual equipment, charging points and Wi-Fi as standard.
- 10.3.8. We will develop a consistent training module to be delivered to all our colleagues who fulfil a direct customer experience role.
- 10.3.9. A taxi guarantee will give disabled passengers the peace of mind that if there isn't room for their wheelchair on board, a taxi replacement will be provided for them at no extra cost.
- 10.3.10. Turnaround cleaners will be employed at bus stations throughout our network. They will be available to quickly clean any operators bus to ensure a clean and pleasant journey on any bus.
- 10.3.11. All interchanges and rail stations will be supported with multi-modal passenger information, showing real-time information about connecting journeys.
- 10.3.12. Transport ambassadors will be available at key interchanges throughout the network to guide passengers and help them make the right travel choices.
- 10.3.13. Improvements will be made to wayfinding in major stations and interchanges through new posters showing where to catch your bus.

10.4. Fares and Ticketing

- 10.4.1. Network One and its tickets will be valid for travel on all bus, Metro and Ferry services across the North East, as well as on rail services between Sunderland, Newcastle, Metrocentre and Blaydon. It will also cover Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services provided through our partnership. Network One, which is the trading name of Network One Ticketing Ltd, will re-brand itself as part of the launch of the new product range.

10.4.2. Network One will simplify its zonal structure and price multi-modal tickets more attractively:

<i>Zone</i>	<i>Multi-modal / Multi-operator target daily cap fare – adult</i>	<i>Existing price</i>
<i>Country Durham</i>	<i>£4*</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Northumberland</i>	<i>£5*</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Tyne and Wear</i>	<i>£5*</i>	<i>£7.80</i>
<i>All zone</i>	<i>£6.80*</i>	<i>£10.90</i>

*All proposed fares are undergoing modelling at the time of writing, and ultimate pricing will be subject to the level of subsidy available to each bus operator and Nexus (for the Metro), and the approval of the Board of Network One Ticketing Ltd. It is expected that all prices will be reviewed from time to time and may be increased to reflect inflationary pressures.

10.4.3. A complete pricing structure will be developed using the daily fare as the starting point. The range of products will include weekly, monthly, annual, flexi (for commuters who travel regularly but not every day), and student discount.

10.4.4. To further improve the offer, additional low cost, multi modal, multi operator fares will be developed to make pricing more affordable in areas that are a short distance from a zone boundary.

10.4.5. Our multi-modal fares will be available in two forms:

10.4.5.1. a ticket purchased before travel begins (from a bus driver, at a Metro ticket machine, online, or through a new app);

10.4.5.2. a price “cap” that is automatically calculated and applied when a customer uses a contactless bank card, mobile phone payment app, or Pay As You Go smartcard to pay for travel. Through the BSIP we intend to put in place the back-office system and upgrade existing ticketing equipment to allow this to happen.

10.4.6. Our simplified multi-modal products will be displayed and advertised clearly throughout the region and will also feature in electronic and printed bus and Metro information, and in specific marketing campaigns.

10.4.7. We will introduce tickets for under-19s across the region, with a target £1.20 fare for single tickets and target £2.50 region wide multi-modal fare cap. The mechanism for delivering this will be further explored.

10.4.8. The current Metro ‘Take the Kids for Free’ offer will be extended to cover all bus services in the region for a trial period in summer 2022.

10.4.9. We will carry out a study to examine whether local additions to the English National Concessionary Bus Pass scheme can be standardised throughout the region.

10.4.10. A care leavers’ concession will be available throughout the region. The fare to be set will be agreed through the Care Leavers’ Covenant.

10.4.11. The fares package we propose by its nature deals with integrated, multi-modal ticketing. Bus operators will continue to offer their own bespoke range of tickets which in many cases will still be the cheapest way to travel by bus.

10.4.12. Some fares already on offer are very attractive. For example, some operators offer a £1 evening flat fare for travel. We encourage all bus operators to adopt simple and affordable pricing structures and to simplify zonal pricing so that there is a common approach region-wide. Although this is out of scope for the EP, we believe that bus operators will consider it under their own decision-making processes.

10.4.13. We anticipate that if all of the investments are funded and delivered, bus patronage will grow by 20% in our region.

10.5. Network

- 10.5.1. We will work with operators to ensure that sufficient funding is available to maintain their current networks once Bus Recovery Grant ceases.
- 10.5.2. We will similarly work with local authorities and Nexus to ensure that they have sufficient funding to maintain their ‘socially necessary’ (secured) services.
- 10.5.3. There will be more early morning, evening and overnight services as well as better connections beyond our boundaries.

Category	Monday to Saturday Daytime	Sunday Daytime	Daily Evening	Overnight
Superbus	5-10	7-15	15-30	
Interurban Express	15	30	30	
Connect	30	60	60	
Rural	60-120	120		
Remote Rural and targeted groups	DRT, Special	DRT, Special		
Night network				60

10.5.4. **Superbus** will have two variants:

- 10.5.4.1. Superbus Red Routes will run at least every five minutes from 0630 until 1830 on Mondays to Fridays and from 0730 until 1830 on Saturdays. There will be buses every 7-8 minutes from 0830 until 1830 on Sundays, every 15 minutes during the early morning and evening.
 - 10.5.4.2. Superbus Green Routes will run at least every 10 minutes from 0630 until 1830 on Mondays to Fridays and from 0730 until 1830 on Saturdays. There will be buses every 15 minutes from 0830 until 1830 on Sundays and every 30 minutes during the early morning and evening.
 - 10.5.4.3. Superbus services will be made more attractive by the investment in bus priority provided for in the BSIP.
 - 10.5.4.4. We will build on the success of our existing night buses by introducing them on Superbus Routes where there is established demand.
- 10.5.5. **Interurban Express** services will knit our region together better, providing fast links into our cities and major towns from the surrounding towns and villages. Buses will run up to every 15 minutes on Monday to Saturday daytimes and every 30 minutes in the evening and on Sundays. They will operate on a ‘limited stop’ basis within cities to minimise journey times, complementing the Tyne and Wear Metro and National Rail network. Buses will provide high standards of comfort and on-board service.
- 10.5.6. **Connect** will be the network of socially and economically necessary links between the local, sub-regional and regional centres in our region, complementing the Tyne and Wear Metro, National Rail and interurban express services. Buses will run at least every 30 minutes on Monday to Saturday daytimes, hourly in the evening and on Sundays.
- 10.5.7. **Rural routes** will be tailored to the specific requirements of the communities they serve, with buses running at least every two hours on Monday to Saturday daytimes.
- 10.5.8. We will deliver a range of improvements in the rural areas of South West Durham and West Northumberland, including better Monday to Saturday daytime services and new Sunday journeys where there is potential demand. In particular, we will introduce a new service to

Kielder in the Northumberland National Park and ensure that buses run all year round to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Hadrian's Wall.

- 10.5.9. We will also ensure that rural services are fully integrated with other bus routes and modes of transport, as we know the importance of effective connections in rural areas.
- 10.5.10. We will launch two pilot rural Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) operations in the second year of our BSIP.
- 10.5.11. We will partner with schools in a pilot scheme to market our new home-to-school offer and, using centrally-procured route planning technology, plan efficient bus routes to the school considering the postcodes of subscribing families.
- 10.5.12. We will accelerate operators' existing bus replacement programmes so that all vehicles are Euro VI standard or Zero-emission by March 2025.
- 10.5.13. We will trial hydrogen vehicles and install hydrogen refuelling stations to support them.

10.6. Highways and Infrastructure

- 10.6.1. We will deliver major highways interventions to accelerate bus journey times and increase punctuality and reliability on 17 of our busiest corridors in the region:
 - 10.6.1.1. West of Newcastle (BRT), Wallsend, Coast Road (BRT), A188 / A189 North Tyneside, Dunston, Bensham Road, Leam Lane, Old Durham Road, Chester Road, Sunderland, A690 Sunderland, South Shields to Sunderland, South Shields to Newcastle, Blyth Cowpen Road, Cramlington, Morpeth, Seaton Burn, Durham A167.
 - 10.6.1.2. The vast majority of bus routes in our network use these 17 corridors for all or part of their journey. As a result, the investment we are planning to deliver will have a major benefit for bus journey time, reliability and punctuality across the entire bus network in the North East.
- 10.6.2. Major highways interventions improvements will be delivered in two tranches:
 - 10.6.2.1. We are already developing business cases to deliver Tranche 1 schemes once rigorous public consultation has taken place and design work is complete; and
 - 10.6.2.2. Tranche 2 schemes are deliverable in the EP Plan time frame, but not yet at Business Case so require further development and consultation.
- 10.6.3. We will also deliver a series of 'spot fix' interventions which will tackle isolated pinch-points which may not necessarily be situated along a high frequency corridor, but will contribute to better bus performance throughout the region. Examples include Northern South Tyneside, central Durham, Bishop Auckland, West Gateshead and Northern North Tyneside.
- 10.6.4. Our region is committed to investment in highways infrastructure which could include road space reallocation, junction redesign, traffic signal re-prioritisation, bus gates and other measures designed to improve bus services.
- 10.6.5. We will contribute to already planned investment in the regions highways in the Intelligent Traffic Systems (ITS) project to ensure the potential for bus priority in this project is maximised.
- 10.6.6. Our local authorities are also willing to consider changes to on-street parking and moving traffic enforcement on these and other corridors, to the extent that red routes could be introduced, subject to public consultation.
- 10.6.7. We plan to bring a consistent standard throughout the region's bus shelters and stops:

- 10.6.7.1. 1,350 shelters which are unwelcoming and poorly used will be replaced by modern facilities which will include lighting, CCTV and high-quality pedestrian access to increase safety;
 - 10.6.7.2. 240 shelters and stops with particularly high usage will have an additional high specification applied; and
 - 10.6.7.3. a strategic plan will be developed to select ‘hub’ shelters that can serve as a community focus for interchange opportunities, between bus routes, with cycling and walking, with National Rail, ferry, Metro and our Pocket Park & Ride and Kiss & Ride.
- 10.6.8. We will replace all our bus stop ‘flags’ to ensure consistent standards throughout the region.
- 10.6.9. New bus stations will be delivered in Durham, Alnwick, Bishop Auckland and an additional Newcastle City Centre bus station. There are further plans to improve bus access to North Shields Fish Quay and the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP).
- 10.6.10. We will introduce five new major Park & Ride sites in the region, served by high-specification articulated vehicles running a dedicated service for Park & Ride customers.
- 10.6.11. These will benefit from the major highways infrastructure investments along our 17 busiest bus corridors.
- 10.6.12. We will establish formal ‘Pocket Park & Ride’ locations around the network, with a modest number of car parking spaces, supported by high-quality information and waiting facilities. These sites will be situated along major express bus routes and some will also serve as likely interchange sites between the DRT proposal set out in our BSIP.
- 10.6.13. Network subsection and buses on our major corridors.

10.7. Delivering the BSIP through the Enhanced Partnership

- 10.7.1. A significant marketing budget will be used to drive growth in bus patronage and to highlight key improvements and initiatives. Activities will be delivered on the ground by a range of partners (including bus operators, Nexus and Local Authorities), augmented by partnership-level campaigns through contracts procured by Transport North East.
- 10.7.2. We will use dedicated team members to collaborate with businesses including industrial estates and sites, large public sector employees and hospitals, with the objective of encouraging employees to switch to the bus.
- 10.7.3. We will provide a dedicated team and budget to work with communities, especially those who currently feel excluded from public transport, to encourage greater bus use:
 - 10.7.3.1. a fund to allow volunteers to train as ‘Community Bus Ambassadors’ or ‘Bus Buddies’,
 - 10.7.3.2. work with groups in minority and harder to reach communities, including people with Equality Act protected characteristics or other extra needs so that they can promote ideas to make buses more accessible for them and increase confidence in using the bus,
 - 10.7.3.3. Village, parish and town councils will be provided with marketing collateral backed up with promotional event ticketing offering discounted or free bus travel to community events, and
 - 10.7.3.4. an ‘Adopt a Bus’ scheme with organisations such as schools to foster community engagement.
- 10.7.4. We commit to exploring and engaging with people and businesses in the region over issues of car parking supply and potential deployment of work place parking levies, congestion

charging, and strategic reduction in parking spaces to see if these can be effective tools which the region can adopt across our geography to encourage a switch to attractive, sustainable transport options such as buses.

- 10.7.5. We will also discuss the introduction of a relationship between the cost of car parking in major centres of retail and employment and the cost of travel on public transport, where it makes economic and strategic sense to do so.
- 10.7.6. We will create a North East Bus Partnerships team to manage the programme of investments and activities set out in the BSIP, and to oversee the performance of the bus network, to manage the partnership agreement.
- 10.7.7. We will put in place a formalised Change Management Process with community engagement at its heart, that will see all major changes that are proposed for our bus network to be clearly set out, consulted upon, and following the consideration of feedback, introduced in a structured and well-communicated manner.

10.8. Reporting

- 10.8.1. A Bus Passenger Charter will apply on all bus services in our region to build customer confidence, and to improve consistency and transparency.
- 10.8.2. We will report on progress towards our KPIs on a six-monthly basis to our Bus Partnership Board, and onward to Department for Transport (DfT) and other key stakeholders, and publish the information on our website and in a non-digital format.

11. PLANS FOR CONSULTING OPERATORS AND PASSENGER GROUPS ON HOW WELL THE EP PLAN AND EP SCHEME(S) ARE WORKING

- 11.1. NEBus and the NEJTC have agreed shared objectives and KPIs. Progress towards our KPIs will be reviewed on a regular basis to assess whether the actions being taking are leading to success or whether corrective action needs to be taken.
- 11.2. The partnership between NEBus and the NEJTC provides an opportunity to reset many aspects of the North East's bus network, including addressing how bus passengers feel about the standard of service on offer and whether it meets their expectations. This will be done on a consistent basis, regardless of which operator customers are travelling with. The goal will be to achieve a far greater sense of community ownership over the bus network, so that local people feel that the bus is a community asset that responds to their needs and helps them to achieve their goals and objectives. Once this happens, it is far more likely that people in the community will feel inclined to use the service on a regular basis.
- 11.3. A Bus Passenger Charter (BPC) will describe what passengers can expect from bus services in the North East. Having a charter in place will enable passengers to hold bus operators and local authorities to account for delivering against this EP Plan. The BPC will signpost passengers to routes for recourse, enabling them to provide feedback on how authorities and operators are performing in meeting their commitments in this EP Plan.

11.4. Reporting to the Regional Enhanced Bus Partnership Board and to the Department for Transport

- 11.4.1. TNE will produce a six-monthly report to the Regional Bus Enhanced Partnership Board. It will set out the latest available data by which to measure the partnership's performance against its KPIs.
- 11.4.2. The report will contain commentary to explain why targets are being met, not met, or exceeded, and will include supplementary information such as long-term trends, social and economic trends that may help to understand performance and benchmarking information.
- 11.4.3. The report will set out the actions that have been taken by the partnership in the previous six-month period, and the actions that are planned for the following six-month period.

11.4.4. As well as focusing and reporting on ‘hard’ data in the shape of KPI performance, qualitative data will also be included in the report, to evidence how users actually feel about the network, and what has been said in relation to the new service provision. First-hand feedback like this cannot be underestimated, as it provides a true insight into the minds of the consumer. Effort will be made to record and analyse in-person customer feedback, as well as providing analysis of social media comments. This routine exercise will help to set the KPIs within the context of the bus user and the narrative around the new network.

11.4.5. Local Bus Boards and the business and services-focused North East Bus Advisory Panel will be consulted over the report. The report will be sent to the NEJTC and may also be provided to other stakeholders with an interest, such as individual local authorities and Nexus.

11.5. Bus Passenger Charter (BPC)

11.5.1. The BPC will ensure performance information is accessible and easy to understand.

11.5.2. The BPC does not create any new legal relationship with passengers, it sets out commitments to:

11.5.2.1. Outline the standards of service customers can expect from buses in the North East, such as punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, proportion of services operated, accessibility of buses and related infrastructure to groups with protected characteristics.

11.5.2.2. Update on performance on a six-monthly basis relative to the KPIs for the partnership that are shown in section 9.8 of this EP Plan.

11.5.2.3. Make available six-monthly reports on the TNE website, supplemented by communication channels appropriate to the relevant audiences.

11.5.2.4. Identify where KPIs are not being met and describe the measures being taking to ensure these are met in future.

11.5.2.5. Advise customers on how to obtain local travel and general public transport information, and how to travel safely.

11.5.2.6. Inform customers of the complaints process to follow if something goes wrong or the service falls below the expected standard, as well as providing routes to gather other feedback.

11.5.2.7. Inform customers on how to offer improvement suggestions.

11.5.2.8. Advise customers on who to contact and provide appropriate channels.

11.5.2.9. Publicise upcoming planned improvements and changes and advise customers how they can play a part in future proposals.

12. HOW THE RELATED EP SCHEME(S) ARE INTENDED TO ASSIST IN IMPLEMENTING THE POLICIES AND ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES SET OUT IN THE EP PLAN

The initial EP Scheme provides both a framework for implementation of the EP Plan through the governance arrangements set out in section 8 of the EP Scheme, and also implements a number of measures and requirements which start implementation of the EP Plan. In particular:”

12.1. Measures set out in the EP Scheme start to implement many of the customer experience objectives with clear, consistent information provision being introduced over the period of the EP Scheme, including a common approach to real time information, multi-modal passenger information, and provision at bus-stops;

12.2. Ticketing measures introduced in the initial EP Scheme include a common pay-as-you-go ITSO compliant smartcard, and all-day multi-operator adult and under 19 fares across the region;

- 12.3. New buses will be expected to meet the Euro VI standard and incorporate next-stop audio visual equipment;
- 12.4. A number of major highway interventions will be delivered on some of the busiest corridors with traffic signal upgrades on six key corridors being delivered through the initial EP Scheme to allow full traffic control interventions;
- 12.5. The EP Scheme provides a framework for reporting on KPIs, and a mechanism to introduce further measures as they are agreed between the Authorities and Operators.

13. **THE INTENDED EFFECT OF THE EP SCHEME(S) ON NEIGHBOURING AREAS THAT ARE OUTSIDE THE EP PLAN AND EP SCHEME(S) AREA**

The EP Scheme specifically exempts services which have over 50% of their route outside the EP Plan Area, so is not intended to apply requirements to services which operate predominantly in neighbouring areas, and therefore it is expected that the effect of the EP Scheme on neighbouring areas will be limited. Whilst the EP Scheme does impose some requirements on new vehicles these are not deemed onerous for new vehicles, and the initial EP Scheme does not require operators to upgrade their vehicles to meet new standards. To the extent any cross boundary operators are not exempt and have to comply with the ticketing standards specified in the EP Scheme, the initial EP Scheme does not seek to cap the required multi-operator fares, and therefore these will be set by the operators on a commercial basis initially. As a result the EP Scheme is not expected to materially affect neighbouring areas.