North East
Bus Service Improvement Plan

Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving North East

Transport North East

NEbus
North East bus operators working together

neca
North East Combined Authority

NORTH OF TYNE COMBINED AUTHORITY

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Foreword

I am delighted to present the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), setting out how – with the right amount of government funding behind us – we plan to make it easy for more people to use buses more often.

Buses are essential to our region and help us to achieve many of our objectives: carbon reduction, improving air quality, and getting people around sustainably to jobs, education and other opportunities. But too many people just don't see the bus as a viable option. We plan to change that – we are prepared to be bold and through this BSIP we aim to deliver a truly integrated, sustainable public transport system for the people of the North East.

The seven North East local authorities and bus operators have created this plan together in partnership, to revitalise the bus network and drive sustainable passenger growth. It aligns with our North East Transport Plan objectives and offers lower fares, faster buses, better timetables, and clear and simple information.

I'm pleased that Government has acknowledged the bold ambition of this plan and we are awaiting confirmation of an initial £163.5m in indicative funding to put some of our initiatives into action. We are confident that delivery will encourage more people to choose to travel by bus wherever they can.

There's no denying that our transport network has been hit hard by the pandemic and there is much to do to bring passengers back and indeed attract new passengers to drive growth. Our BSIP outlines a series of initiatives and infrastructure improvements we would make to ensure this happens without delay.

This is a once in a generation chance to change the game; let's deliver something phenomenal for local people and drive real change.

Cllr Martin Gannon, Chair, North East Joint Transport Committee

Foreword

Across the region there have been over 154 million bus journeys each year. Most journeys are someone travelling to work, or education or for leisure, so it is clear to see that our bus network is a huge part of everyday life for many people in the North East.

Bus operators' heavy investment in fleet and passenger improvements were successful in increasing passenger levels for the first time in a decade prior to the pandemic. Travel habits have of course been impacted as a direct result since, but operators have been working hard to bring passengers back, providing a safe, reliable and sustainable way for the public to travel and finding new ways of working, including on smart and integrated ticketing.

We're proud to be working in partnership with the local authorities to deliver the region's Bus Service Improvement Plan, with a true alignment between bus services and highways matters that can deliver even better journeys for more passengers. I am happy that the Government has chosen to invest in the true potential of the North East's buses, helping us to shift travel habits to be more focused around sustainable public transport which will be good news for us all. I hope to see future funding pots become available to allow us to deliver our BSIP in full.

Martijn Gilbert,
Chair, NEbus – bus operators association

1. Executive Summary

Our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) set out a wide range of significant proposed improvements to every aspect of bus services, to be delivered through a formal partnership of bus operators, the NEJTC, Local Authorities and Nexus.

Our BSIP Refresh highlights the progress that has been made by this partnership since the publication of the BSIP, but also challenges the sector has faced. Overall, this refresh sets out the heightened need to unlock funding and deliver on our BSIP objectives, driving real change for sustainable transport in the region.

We were pleased that our level of ambition for buses in the North East was recognised by the Department of Transport in our indicative allocation of £163.5 million to improve our bus services.

In making our BSIP, we responded to the Government's National Bus Strategy, and the NEJTC's Transport Plan, both of which require that improvements to bus services are planned and delivered in order to achieve national and local objectives. These objectives include the reduction of carbon emissions, improvements in air quality, the growth of our economy and the advancement of the health and wellbeing of local people through the increased use of sustainable forms of transport.

Since the publication of the BSIP in October 2021, we have been developing our Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan and Scheme that will make delivery commitments binding.

Given the amount of funding that has since been indicatively awarded is less than our £804m BSIP ask, we have conducted a prioritisation process with members of the partnership to establish which of the proposals in the BSIP are the most cost-effective and impactful to drive our KPIs.

The content of our BSIP proposals remain unchanged, and serves as a statement of ambition if further funding were to become available.

As highlighted in our Achievements of the Year One of the BSIP, the partnership has made substantial progress in the first year of BSIP delivery, despite not being in receipt of funds as yet. While progress has been made, this has taken place against a challenging backdrop for the bus industry.

Recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic has been delayed by the Omicron wave and so far in the 2021/2022 financial year patronage has only recovered to around 77% of pre-pandemic levels. The national bus driver shortage has also severely damaged bus reliability and is likely to impact upon the reputation of bus travel nationally.

The makeup of the bus network has also changed since our BSIP was submitted, with network cuts and with far more routes operating as secured secures by local authorities than had previously been the case. However, this is not a long-term solution, meaning the future of many bus services in the region cannot be guaranteed until improvements are brought forward through much needed BSIP investment.

Inflation and the cost of living crisis has added to the urgency to deliver our initiatives for bus. With increasing pressure on household budgets, it is now more important than ever that communities can take advantage of reliable and affordable bus services. This means our schemes must be delivered as soon as possible, and we have taken steps to ensure that many schemes are good to go, as soon as we receive funding.

To reflect the interval without funding, our KPIs timelines have been slightly delayed, because of this urgent need they do however remain highly ambitious. The partnerships focus is to go beyond securing our current network, something which unfortunately has preoccupied the sector since BSIP publication, and to permanently transform bus services going forward.

Key Performance Indicators

The more that people choose to use the bus network in the North East, the more successful we will be in delivering our strategic objectives such as reducing carbon emissions and responding to climate change, helping our economy to grow, and making sure that everyone in our region can access employment, education and other opportunities.

Furthermore, the more people that use the bus network, the more financially successful and sustainable it will become, opening the door to future growth and investment, and reducing reliance on public subsidy. We have updated our KPIs to reflect the previous year with no funding unlocked, these are still stretching targets however and set the context for the improvements we need to make:

- Covid-19 recovery: We will repair the damage caused by Covid-19 to bus ridership in our region by returning to the pre-pandemic level of 154.4 million trips by March 2024.
- Grow bus patronage: Once that has been achieved we will significantly grow bus patronage, targeting 10% growth on the 2019 baseline by March 2025 and a further 10% growth on 2019 figures by March 20 26. We want to make sure this growth comes from all parts of the region and so the same target will apply for boardings at rural bus stops, and for patronage among young people.
- Grow bus modal share: We will increase the modal share of bus by 1 percentage point by March 2024, and by another 1 percentage point by March 2025. This target will apply both overall, and for journeys to work and education.
- Grow bus passenger satisfaction: In order to attract new bus use we need improved customer satisfaction which is already relatively high at 91%. Our target is for this to grow to 92% by March 2024 and 93% by March 2025.
- Make buses faster, punctual and reliable: Our investments in bus priority will speed buses up relative to general traffic. We want buses to be punctual both at their point of origin (95% in 2022/23, 96% in 2023/24 and 97% in 2024/25) and along their entire route (90% in 2023/24, 95% in 2024/25 and 95% in 2025/26). We also need buses to be reliable with a fixed target of 99.5% throughout the period of the BSIP.
- Make buses greener: We need to improve the environmental performance of our bus fleet and so we will target higher levels of investment each year so that all buses are Euro 6 or better by March 2025.

Delivery

The following improvements have been identified by the Partnership as necessary to deliver our strategic objectives and to achieve our targets. However, the delivery of these proposals will depend entirely on the amount of funding that is ultimately provided by the Government.

Customer Experience
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.
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.
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.
We will provide clear printed information at stops and stations, including in rural areas, and maintain it.
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.
We will provide seamless service information to customers, offering a single source of truth, feeding to any connected systems for passenger information.
All vehicles will be fitted with enhanced next-stop audio-visual equipment, charging points and Wi-Fi as standard.
We will develop a consistent training module to be delivered to all our colleagues who fulfil a direct customer experience role.
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.
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.

Customer Experience continued

All interchanges and rail stations will be supported with multi-modal passenger information, showing real-time information about connecting journeys.

Transport ambassadors will be available at key interchanges throughout the network to guide passengers and help them make the right travel choices.

Improvements will be made to wayfinding in major stations and interchanges through new posters showing where to catch your bus.

Fares and ticketing

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.

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

*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.

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

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.

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.

Fares and ticketing continued

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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 and therefore this BSIP for legal reasons, we believe that bus operators will consider it under their own decision-making processes.

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

Network

We will work with operators to ensure that sufficient funding is available to maintain their current networks once Bus Recovery Grant ceases.

We will similarly work with local authorities and Nexus to ensure that they have sufficient funding to maintain their 'socially necessary' (secured) services.

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

Superbus will have two variants:

- 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. 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.
- Superbus services will made more attractive by the investment in bus priority provided for in the BSIP.

Network continued

We will build on the success of our existing night buses by introducing them on Superbus Routes where there is established demand.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

We will launch two pilot rural Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) operations in the second year of our BSIP.

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.

We will accelerate operators' existing bus replacement programmes so that all vehicles are Euro 6 standard or Zero-emission by March 2025.

We will trial hydrogen vehicles and install hydrogen refuelling stations to support them.

Highways and infrastructure

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:

- 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.

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.

Major highways interventions improvements will be delivered in two tranches:

- We are already developing business cases to deliver Tranche 1 schemes once rigorous public consultation has taken place and design work is complete;
- Tranche 2 schemes are deliverable in the BSIP time frame, but not yet at Business Case so require further development and consultation.

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.

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.

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.

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.

We plan to bring a consistent standard throughout the region's bus shelters and stops:

- 1350 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;
- 240 shelters and stops with particularly high usage will have an additional high specification applied;
- 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.

Highways and infrastructure continued

We will replace all our bus stop 'flags' to ensure consistent standards throughout the region.

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).

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. These will benefit from the major highways infrastructure investments along our 17 busiest bus corridors.

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 Bus Network subsection and buses on our major corridors.

Bringing the BSIP to life

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.

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.

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:

- a fund to allow volunteers to train as 'Community Bus Ambassadors' or 'Bus Buddies';
- 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;
- 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;
- an 'Adopt a Bus' scheme with organisations such as schools to foster community engagement.

Bringing the BSIP to life

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.

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.

We will create a North East Bus Partnerships team to manage the programme of investments and activities set out in this BSIP, and to oversee the performance of the bus network, to manage the partnership agreement.

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.

Reporting

A Bus Passenger Charter will apply on all bus services in our region to build customer confidence, and to improve consistency and transparency.

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.

Fully funded, our BSIP will ensure a strong bounce-back from the Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring buses are sustainable, and serving more places and more people at more times. Without a strong BSIP allocation, bus use will continue to decline, with severe social, economic and air quality consequences.

Achievements of the first year of the BSIP

The first year of the BSIP has seen bus operators and local authorities come together to form the foundation of our Enhanced Partnership, ahead of the EP Plan and Scheme being made.

Building on positive partnership work throughout the coronavirus pandemic and the writing of the BSIP, various schemes have been launched to improve bus services in the North East and help us to achieve our shared BSIP KPIs.

To refresh the BSIP we have added an update at the end of each section to reflect developments and progress that have taken place since original publication.

Kids go Free

In April 2022, Bus operators in the North East rolled out the 'Kids go Free' offer during the school holidays, where up to three children under 11 could be taken on a bus for free if accompanying a fare paying adult.

The scheme was successful in welcoming families on board bus in the region, providing a boost to ridership, which is one of the BSIPs major KPIs. The scheme matched The Tyne and Wear Metro and Shields Ferry offer and is one of the first deliverable benefits of our bus partnership.

Travel for care experienced young people

The partnership has already made progress towards delivering a key BSIP fares initiative by providing free travel passes for those who are leaving local authority care. A pilot scheme has been introduced in Newcastle and Gateshead to give free travel on local bus and Metro. This scheme is helping to tackle transport poverty, offering the best start to adult life among young people who are new to living independently.

This scheme was achieved through partnership working between Newcastle City Council, Gateshead Council, Nexus, and bus operators, with funding from the NHS's North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board. We will be rolling this intervention out to cover the other local authority areas in the region once our BSIP funding is received.

The formation of the North East Bus Partnership Board and supporting management team

Members of the Partnership Board celebrate Catch the Bus Month

The North East Regional Bus Partnership Board has been formed to provide governance to the North East Bus Partnership. The Board will be the forum for discussion on the future of the EP scheme and fulfil a vital monitoring and evaluation function for the North East BSIP.

So far, the board has provided updates to the JTC on issues such as the North East bus partnership logo, the partnership app and website, fares initiatives, the Bus Passenger Charter (BPC), the Code of Conduct and EP resourcing.

At the time of writing the BSIP, TNE had no dedicated bus resource to support the Board and the progress of the EP. Since the publication of the BSIP, a permanent bus team has been appointed whose goal it is to deliver the BSIP and EP. This team will continue to grow as and when capacity demands to support the Partnership Board and its strategic activity once the Partnership goes live.

Decarbonisation

Since the publication of the BSIP, substantial progress has been made to decarbonise the North East bus fleet. Nine new high specification electric 'Voltra' buses have been added to Go North East's fully electric bus fleet which operate in Newcastle and Gateshead. The buses are the result of a £2 million investment with top-up funding from the Government's Ultra-Low Emission Bus Fund.

All of the region's large operators have also joined together to produce a region wide Levelling Up Fund bid for 52 zero-emission buses for the region. If awarded this funding will help to improve air quality in the region and making more bus journeys carbon neutral and helping to target our KPIs to encourage bus ridership and modal share.

Protecting a sustainable network

As bus ridership levels have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels, both regionally and nationally, many operators have made the difficult decision to propose bus service cuts in the period since the publication of the BSIP. This is an unfortunate state of play despite the extension of the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG), and it is possible that more bus cuts will be announced if further funding isn't made available before substantial improvements can be brought forward with BSIP funding.

The partnership has worked together to reduce the impact of these cuts on communities who rely on bus. Many routes that would otherwise have been cut were secured through local authority budgets.

Operators and local authorities have also worked together to produce a sustainable network review with a view to minimising the negative impact on passengers, and for operators and local authorities to use their expertise to develop a plan to boost ridership. By capitalising on areas of market growth provision can be improved in communities from the pre pandemic baseline, this is expected to be increased as BSIP interventions come into effect.

The partnership has since taken the initiative to build on this improved communication and formalise a Code of Conduct for network changes, which will formalise will a management process for making changes to or on the bus network.

1. Overview

Area covered

This Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) covers seven local authority areas in the North East, consisting of two combined authorities.

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

Although 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.

Transport North East is the name of the officer group that supports the NEJTC in developing and delivering transport and strategy across the region.

Nexus is the trading name of the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive, responsible for delivering passenger transport in Tyne and Wear which is a largely urban sub-section of our area covering the local authority areas of Gateshead Council, Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council, South Tyneside Council and Sunderland City Council.

NEbus is the name of the local bus operators' association encompassing the providers of services across the North East. NEbus and the NEJTC work together collaboratively through an informal partnership ('The Partnership').

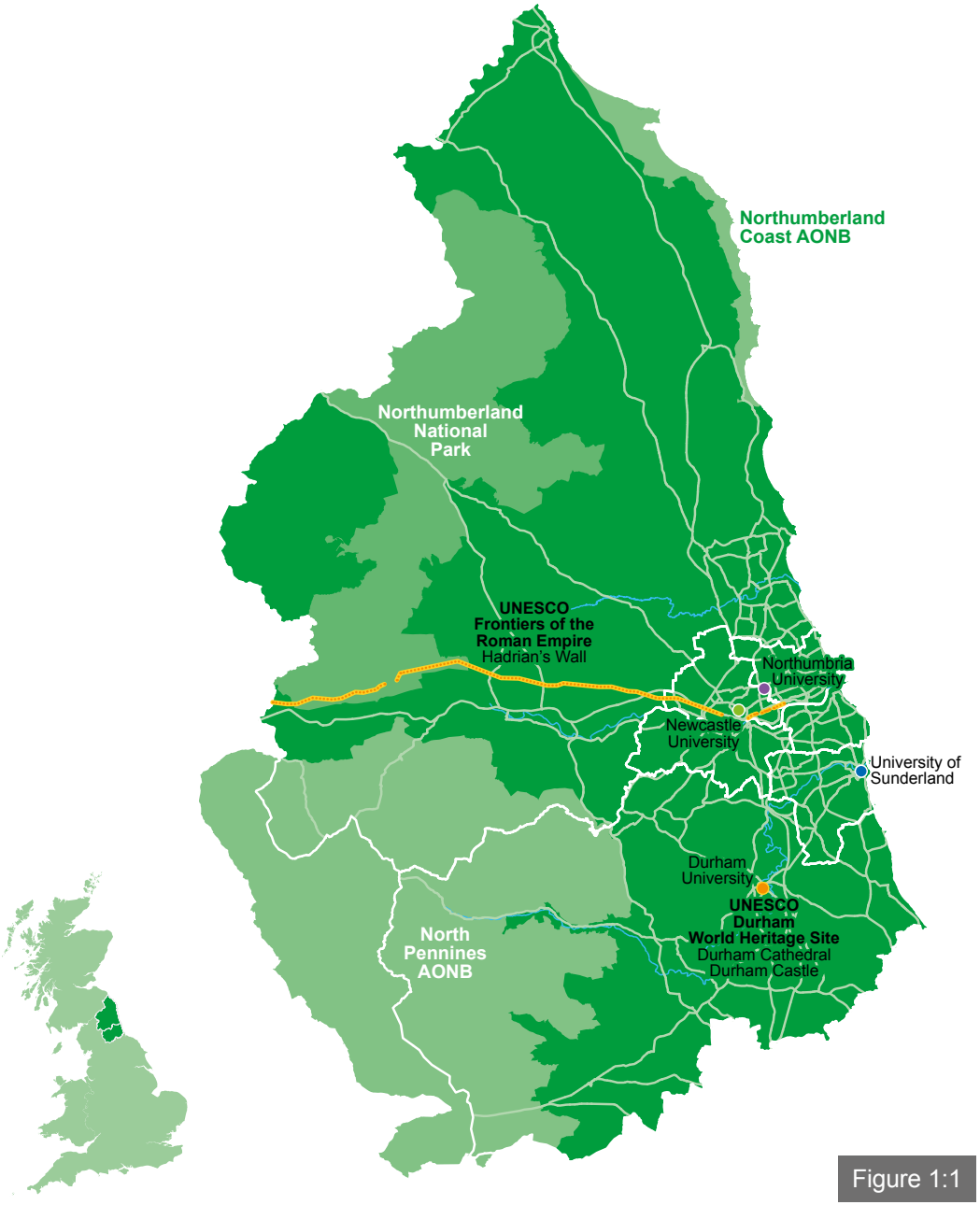


Figure 1:1

Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme(s)

For many years the NEJTC has been working informally with the local bus operators individually and through their local association NEbus.

On 28 June 2021, the NEJTC gave notice of its intention to proceed with the development of an Enhanced Partnership Plan and accompanying Enhanced Partnership Schemes, as required by section 138F of the Transport Act 2000. The notice is displayed on the Transport North East website.

The proposed Scheme as currently envisaged, will cover the local government administrative areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

Our region is distinct and diverse. Our three vibrant City Centres of Durham, Newcastle and Sunderland are surrounded by lively towns and villages set in some of the most beautiful and least populated countryside in the UK, with miles of unspoilt coastline and Northumberland National Park AONB. Our wide range of leisure, cultural, sporting and historical attractions includes UNESCO World Heritage sites Hadrian's Wall and Durham Cathedral and Castle. Our manufacturing base, five national catapult centres, three national innovation centres and growing tech and fintech industries attract significant inward investment, helping address the unequal life outcomes of our 2m population.

Duration

The BSIP covers a three year period starting 1 April 2022 and ending in March 2025, although it does refer to investment plans in the years that follow.

BSIP annual review

The BSIP will be reviewed annually, with a summary of changes published following the meeting of the NEJTC each year from 2023/24 onwards.

Alignment

The North East Transport Plan ('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.

The Transport Plan builds on 'Connected North East: Our Blueprint' (Blueprint), published in October 2020 as a collaborative project brought together by a number of North East partners. The Blueprint sets out how a connected North East can increase the prosperity, quality of life and health of the region by uniting the potential of digital and transport.

This BSIP is closely aligned with the Transport Plan and the Blueprint, as well as all relevant policies and plans of the NEJTC, the region's two Combined Authorities, seven Local Authorities and Nexus (the Passenger Transport Executive for Tyne and Wear).

In the remainder of this section, we explain the overarching links between this BSIP and our region's Transport Plan, including:

- An introduction to the Transport Plan's vision and objectives.
- Our 'Making the Right Travel Choice' policy statement which encourages people to choose active travel or public transport whenever it is possible for them to do so.
- Our region's document 'Your Vision for Buses' which sets out the high-level interventions or solutions required from our bus network to deliver our Transport Plan's vision and objectives.

Introduction to the Transport Plan's vision and objectives

The vision statement for our 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. They are reflective of the critical strategic issues such as the Climate Emergency declared by each of our Local Authorities and Combined Authorities, our ambition for a clean and green recovery from the pandemic and the need to address the health of our region. Within the Transport Plan we explain why these objectives have been selected.

Our Transport Plan contains a live programme of planned interventions and is reviewed and updated regularly. The NEJTC receives a report updating on the actions we are taking to deliver the Transport Plan at each of their meetings.

"We consider the delivery of this BSIP and the NEJTC's commitment to enter into an Enhanced Partnership (EP) to be a crucial step in the delivery of our Transport Plan. Every proposal we make within the BSIP and the decisions we will take within the EP will support progress towards these objectives".

Carbon-neutral North East

We will initiate actions to make travel in the North East net carbon zero, addressing our air quality challenges and helping to tackle the climate emergency.

Overcome inequality and grow our economy

We will return the region to pre COVID-19 levels of employment and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), then move forward in pursuit of the ambitions set out in the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).

Healthier North East

We will encourage active and sustainable travel to help our region attain health levels that are at least equal to other parts of the UK.

Appealing, sustainable transport choices

We will introduce measures that make sustainable modes of transport more attractive and an easy alternative for getting around the North East.

Safe, secure network

We will ensure that people are confident about their safety and security when travelling around the North East.

Figure 1:2

Making the Right Travel Choice – the policy at the heart of our Transport Plan

Central to our Transport Plan is a policy named: “Making the Right Travel Choice”. This policy sets out the actions we need to enable, through interventions on our transport system, to drive progress against our objectives.

We understand in North East England that we should do more than just provide a sustainable transport network – we should make it attractive, so people want to use it.

Central to this Plan is our ambition to provide solutions to help people make greener travel choices where it is appropriate to do so and at a price they can afford.

In our region, with 56% of commuting trips under 10km and 37% under 5km, there is a significant opportunity to encourage shifts to active, sustainable and public transport types across the region, particularly in urban areas.

In 2018/19 there were 1,016 trips per person per year made in the North East. Of these, 442 were car journeys. (NUTS1 region)

Over the coming years, we have a significant opportunity to influence how people access public and sustainable transport across the region with better quality links.

We want to get more people in the North East to use sustainable travel types, such as walking, cycling and public transport, and encourage more sustainable travel patterns to achieve all of the Plan’s objectives. People want public and sustainable transport infrastructure and services to be good enough that they offer a credible alternative to the use of their cars for some trips.

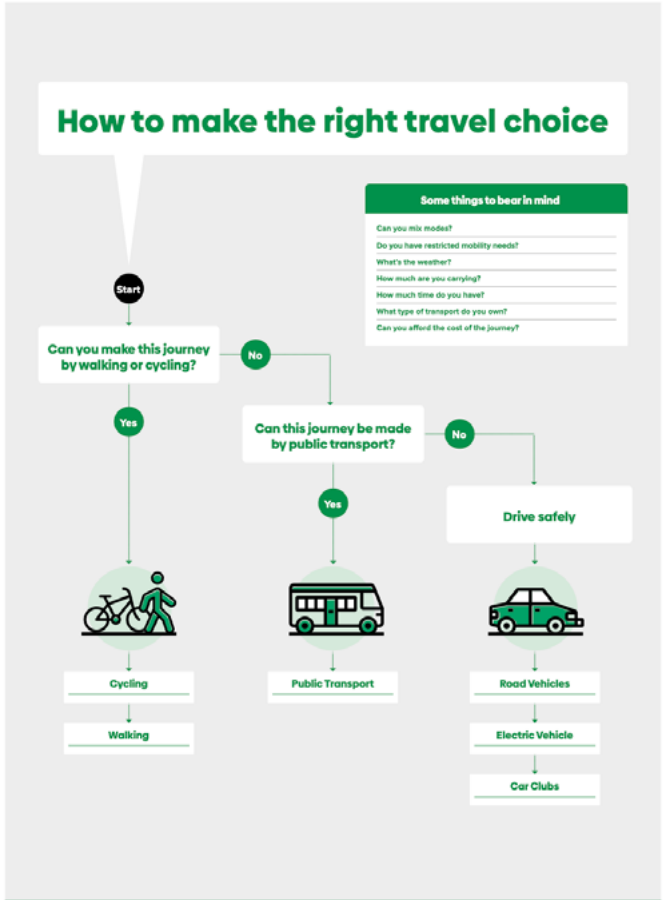
Why?

The reason behind why we want to do this is a simple one. If we can effectively help people make the most sustainable transport choice when it is viable, it will be the most cost-effective way of achieving the North East Transport Plan’s vision and objectives. Transitioning the number of journeys people make onto more sustainable and public transport types will drive our economy and improve our environment.

Transport underpins our daily lives and we specifically want to encourage people to make trips around the North East. Travelling to school, to work, to shops, to care for others and to socialise with friends improves our prospects, health and wellbeing, as well as benefiting the communities and local economies that make up our region.

Helping people to make the right travel choice – Decision tree

We want as many journeys in the region as possible to be made in a sustainable way; this means people in our region stopping to thing about their travel choices before a journey gets underway. It is a “hearts and minds” exercise which encourages people to use alternatives to the car and enjoy the benefits of doing so, whilst essential road journeys for which there is no alternative can be improved as there will be fewer cars on the road.



How to travel during Covid-19 diagram

Work is the catalyst to many journeys; and therefore we must work with businesses in our region to help them consider how they move employees around where alternatives to road journeys exist and as they newly come online during the currency of this Plan. We say more about this later in this section.

Background

The reasons why people make the travel and transport choices they do is often complicated and dependent on several factors and circumstances, which can change on a journey-by-journey basis. People’s travel choices are also repetitive and often undertaken out of habit rather than journeys being thought through on a regular basis to take differing circumstances into account. It is also important to recognise that people’s needs and experiences vary between the type of area they live in, for example urban or rural. We are aware that there are a variety of factors that influence a person’s travel choice. For example, a person may be making a journey of under two miles but is required to carry several heavy items of shopping and therefore needs to use a car. The same person may make the same journey to the shop the following day, but as they are only buying a few items which can be easily carried, they decide to walk. For some journeys, people may be travelling alone or with others. People may or may not have a disability. Our decisions are influenced by what mode is available (or what we believe is available) and how it suits our circumstances.

Figure 1:3 Page from North East Transport Plan

‘Your Vision for Buses’: How we have aligned our BSIP with the Transport Plan

Our policy of ‘Making the Right Travel Choices’, leaves no doubt: our region is committed to positioning buses as an appealing and sustainable transport choice which people should choose ahead of a car whenever possible.

In June 2021, the NEJTC published a high-level strategic vision document called ‘Your Vision for Buses’. This document was developed in partnership with our region’s bus operators and considers the role that buses can play in delivering our 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’.

We then talked to the people and businesses in the North East through an informal engagement campaign called ‘the Big Bus Conversation’. We wanted to understand what people think we need to do to encourage bus use in circumstances where it is “the right travel choice”. Participants were asked to say how they would spend £10 across the Ten Solutions; this exercise gives us a broad understanding of people’s priorities.

Through ‘the Big Bus Conversation’ around 2,400 people confirmed that they thought the Ten Solutions we had already set out were the right ones to make buses an appealing and sustainable transport alternative, and attract more people towards using the bus. Our BSIP therefore proposes initiatives covering all ten of these solutions.

We 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 events confirmed the Ten Solutions as the right priorities, and 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.

- An enhanced network that is simple and easy to understand
- Faster and more reliable journey times
- A simple and flexible fares structure
- Better integration between modes
- More early morning and evening services
- Clear and consistent information that is easy to access
- Improved safety and security
- Cleaner and greener vehicles
- Improved connectivity beyond our boundaries
- A first-class customer experience

Figure 1:4 ‘Your Vision for Buses’ was an enabler to our region’s ‘Big Bus Conversation’ which gathered the region’s views on bus travel and our proposed Ten Solutions.

The Big Bus Conversation toured our seven local authority areas in August 2021.

The Transport Plan, Blueprint, and Your Vision for Buses are available on the Transport North East website: www.transportnortheast.gov.uk

The following logic map confirms the alignment between our region's Transport Plan and this BSIP.

Our region's Transport Plan has five objectives.

To achieve these objectives, we need people "to make the right travel choice" - including where possible, choosing the bus before the car.

'Your Vision for Buses' sets out ten solutions, which our region confirms are needed to persuade people to choose buses.

This BSIP proposes initiatives which deliver against all of these ten solutions.

2. Current bus offer to passengers

This section sets out the current North East bus offer, examining the factors that combine to influence bus provision in the North East.

Services are inevitably tailored to geography, demographics and markets, with frequent services in the metropolitan and urban areas and more targeted services connecting our 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.

Analysis of existing local bus services compared to BSIP outcomes

In this section we provide analysis and data to show how the current network measures up against our BSIP targets as set out in Section 3 (‘Headline Targets’). We also explain the factors that affect the use of local bus services. Examples of our sources are outlined in figure 2:1.

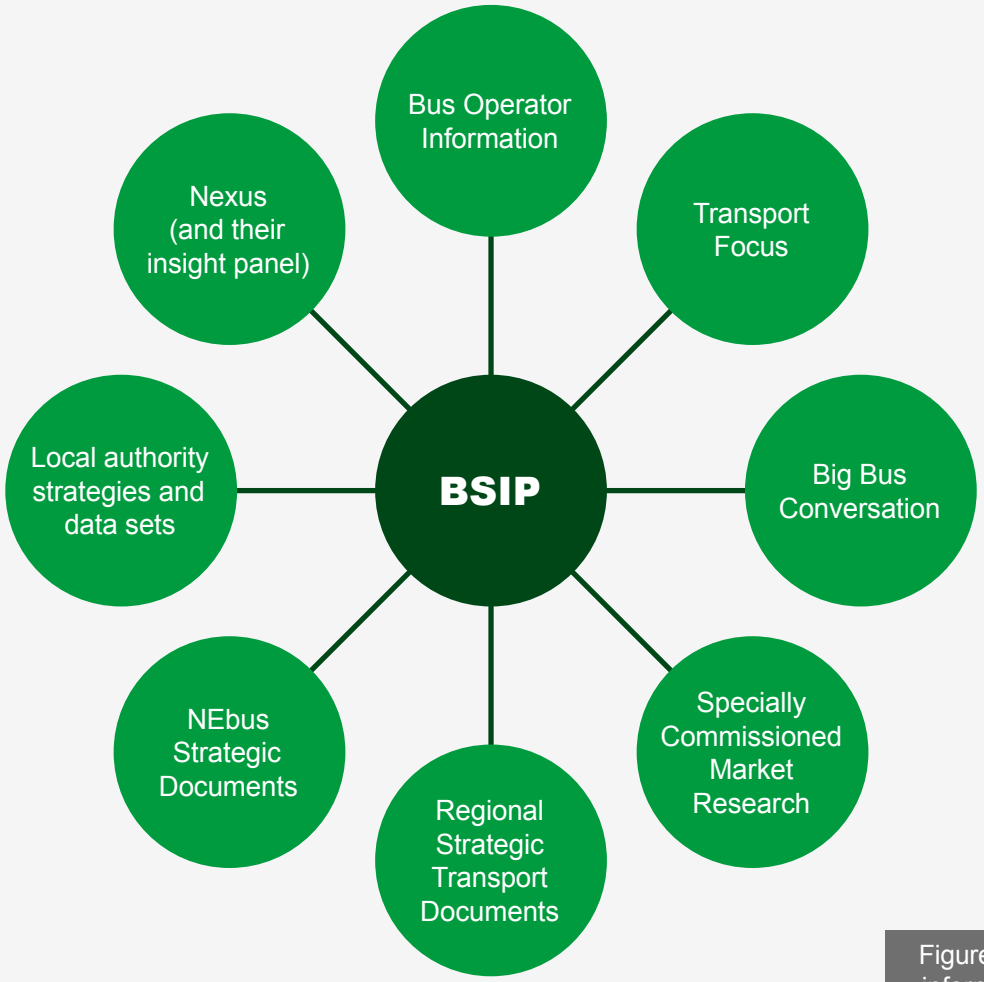


Figure 2:1 Data and information sources informing our BSIP

Data and information in this section is presented at a strategic level. In Section 4 ('Delivery'), we deploy data and information at a more granular level to inform the case around each of the interventions we propose making to our network.

We have set a number of Key Performance Indicators to measure the success of this BSIP. Firstly we want to **repair the damage caused by Covid-19** to bus ridership in our region. We then want to progress to a position were a higher proportion of people choose the bus to travel, leading to a **significantly increased modal share for bus** – especially for **journeys to work and education and in rural areas**. This will lead to **growth in bus patronage**. We know that this will only happen when people see tangible improvements made to bus services, which we will measure through **improved customer satisfaction**. Of course if we want passengers to be satisfied, buses must be **punctual and reliable**, and **buses need to be faster** and not caught in congestion.

Although getting more people on the bus and growing its modal share will of itself improve our environmental performance, we want to target a continuous improvement in the emission standards of our bus fleet.

Reliability

We found that reliability was a concern for many during our 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.

"Bus reliability needs to be better. Cancellations need to be communicated quicker. Breakdowns are too common. Buses are overcrowded [and there are] people being left waiting for the next bus on commuter routes."
(Big Bus Conversation)

"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)

"Worst service in Chopwell there has ever been in terms of reliability issues. I want the present to work before we talk about the future."
(Big Bus Conversation)

"Better reliability and better info in advance of changes. More accurate Real-Time Information, tracking on the app."
(Big Bus Conversation)

When asked about what changes people would like to see to the network, Maureen on Facebook answered: "Turning up would be good. Always missing when I've gone for my bus from town."
(Big Bus Conversation)

Punctuality at the start of a journey

“Buses are unreliable” Stated by 37%

Punctual bus services are essential in providing a reliable passenger experience. Punctuality in our region is better than the average for England but we need to do better to reach the target of 95%

(Punctual = between 1 minute early and 5:59 late)

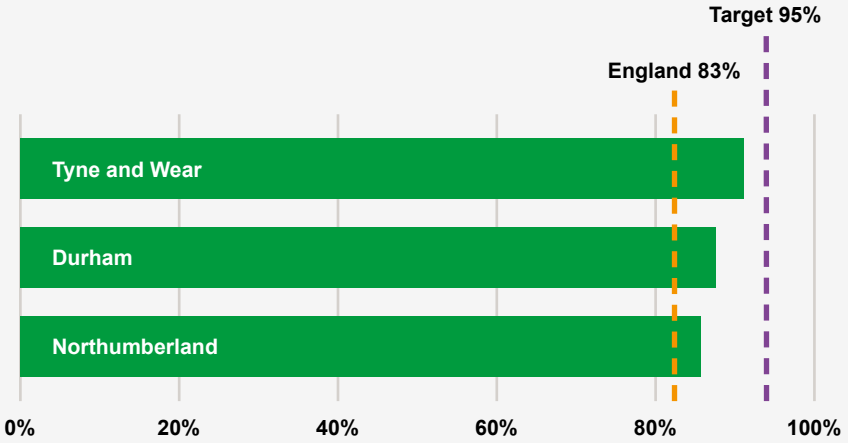


Figure 2:2 DfT data – bus punctuality against targets in 2018/19

Our buses are better than average for England, however they are falling short of the 95% punctuality target, as is shown in the graph to the left, which is broken down by different parts of our region (from Your Vision for Buses).

We know that punctuality is intrinsic to efficient bus travel and the continued use by the public of our bus network. We heard during the Big Bus Conversation that “buses are late often” and that there are “buses that constantly don’t turn up” which some felt should lead to penalties for bus operators, especially when late or cancelled services are scheduled at key travel times, as this falls below the expected standard of service.

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, and may bring with it, social and economic repercussions for the traveller, for instance if this makes them late for work or a social engagement.

Punctuality at timing points

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 reached 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.

> "It takes me two hours door to door [to get from] from Castleside to Newcastle for my work (including walking at either end – it is about one hour 25 minutes on buses and 10- to 15- minutes waiting)… make the bus to Newcastle direct so that it gets there before you've fallen asleep (that journey alone is more than an hour because all bus choices go round everywhere en route). Castleside even has a direct bus to Durham, but it is actually quicker to change in Consett because it is so slow to do that journey! There are basically too few bus routes, so every bus goes to every possible town and village en route, dragging the journey out."
> (Big Bus Conversation)

Average bus speeds

The speed of a bus journey can be an off-putting factor when making a travel choice. We therefore need bus services to be as quick and efficient in terms of journey time as possible, to respond to feedback from the Big Bus Conversation that included: "Conductors on buses needed to speed up journeys"; "An Oyster card system would speed up bus boarding"; "More BUS ONLY lanes and traffic light priority for buses, and an end to speed humps or chicanes on bus routes" and the need for "shorter journey times with better links between Durham, Washington, Sunderland and Newcastle".

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 for us.

We have listened and responded to feedback like this, and you will see this reflected in our section on highways and infrastructure where we outline plans for major investment in busy bus routes to speed up journeys and make the service as a whole more reliable.

Bus modal share

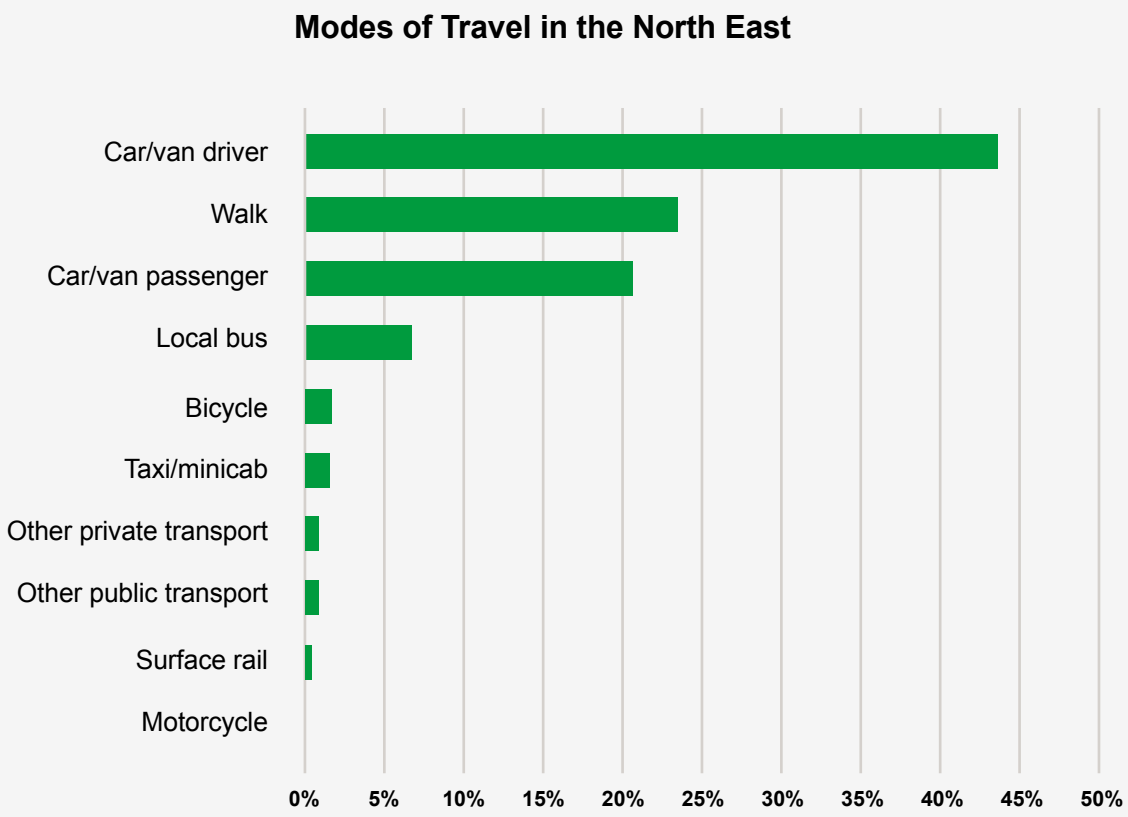


Figure 2:3 DfT data showing percentage share by mode of transport

The graph to the left 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 - at the EP stage, more granular data will be sourced in order to set a baseline for our region).

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. However, this potential will only be realised if the measures set out in the BSIP are funded, supported and well received by current car users.

Patronage

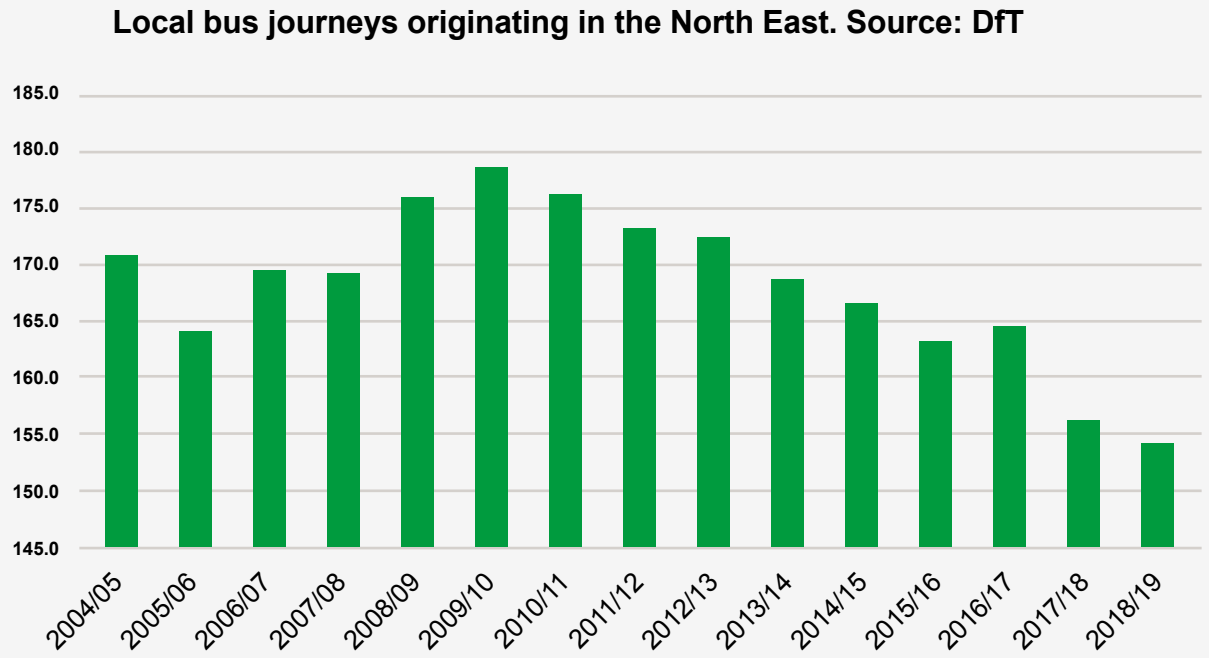


Figure 2:4 DfT data showing number of bus journeys originating in the North East

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 tells us that a quarter of those aged 75+ feel that 'bus times don't fit their needs'. This is especially important as we know people in this age bracket are most at risk of social isolation, with many seeing the bus as a lifeline to human connection.

Market research showed that 75% of our minority communities 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.

The picture builds as we explore 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 our market research.

Customer satisfaction

This 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 our 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.

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. We know that improving customer satisfaction will be key to maintaining existing customers and keeping the patronage of those who make the change from car to bus.

Currently, 54% of the region's bus fleet is not at the engine emission standard of Euro 6 or higher.

Figure 2:5

When we consulted the public as part of the Big Bus Conversation we heard that many people are also mindful of unnecessary carbon emissions coming from bus engines. Chris, via Facebook, said: "All drivers should switch off their engines when not picking up passengers. I'm sick and tired of fumes from bus engines". Another person made the suggestion of "making buses electric to cut carbon emissions" when asked what solutions could be made to the bus network.

These are changes we need to make throughout the lifetime of the BSIP, otherwise we will continue to trail behind other regions in bringing about positive environmental change.

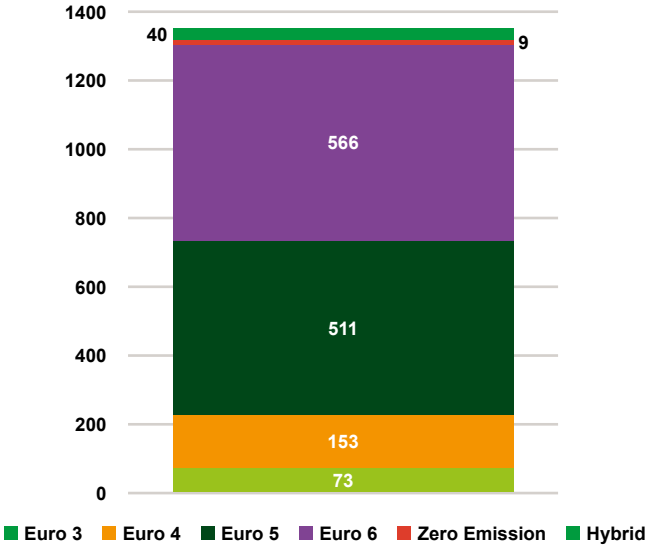


Figure 2:6 North East bus fleet by engine standard (Source: Operator figures)

Financial support for bus services

In the financial year (2021/22) a total of £74.858 million of local public funding has been used to support the bus network. This breaks down as follows:

	Durham £000	Northumberland £000	Tyne and Wear £000	Total £000
Subsidised Bus Services	3,375	1,380	11,206	**15,961**
ENCTS	10,993	4,650	33,222	**48,865**
Bus Stations/Infrastructure	196	26	1,955	**2,177**
Public Transport Information	88	25	982	**1,095**
				68,098

Figure 2:7 Public funding of the bus network in 2021/22 (Source: Durham County Council, Northumberland County Council, Nexus)

In terms of subsidy of routes and mileage, the breakdown is as follows:

	Durham	Northumberland	Tyne and Wear	Total
Routes fully secured by public subsidy	44	45	69	**159**
Routes partly secured by public subsidy (e.g. evening and weekend services)	57	7	95	**159**
Other operations funded publicly (e.g. home to school)	219	774	247	**1,240**
Number of route miles supported	2,429,500	3,826,003	129,783.28	**6,385,286.28**
% of bus network supported (Note: subject to refinement)				**10.31%**

Figure 2:8 Subsidy of routes by LTA/PTE area (Source: Durham County Council, Northumberland County Council, Nexus)

Other factors that affect the use of local bus services

In this section we set out information and data about factors which affect the use of bus services in our region including:

- Identified barriers to bus use.
- Perceptions and attitudes toward buses.
- 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 our region on parking enforcement.
- Other competing and complimentary factors to the bus network in the North East.

To inform the action we need to take in our BSIP, we commissioned independent market research which amongst other outputs, is designed to offer insight into the perceptions and attitudes toward buses in our region.

The project methodology was quantitative, with a survey conducted online with a panel of respondents who were resident in the North East.

The work was undertaken between August and September 2021, with a survey of 712 interviews, spanning the whole region, and an online research panel used to source independent and reliable samples. Quotas and weighting were used to deliver a representative sample of the North East region in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and geography.

The key findings of the research follow:

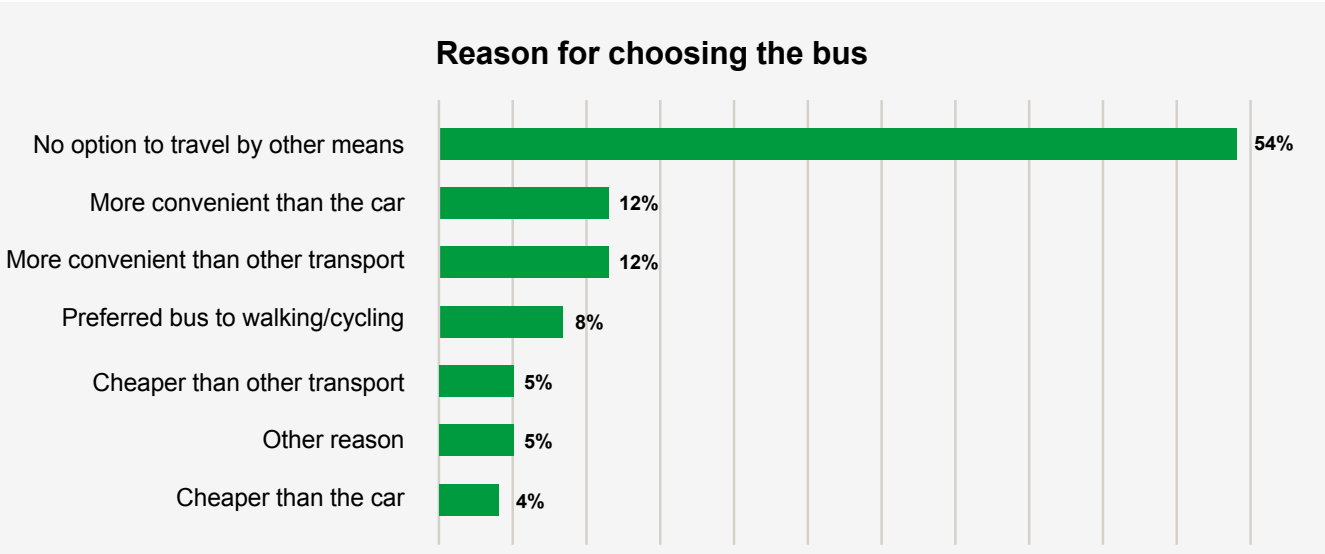


Figure 2:9 Reason for choosing the bus (Source: Transport Focus 2019)

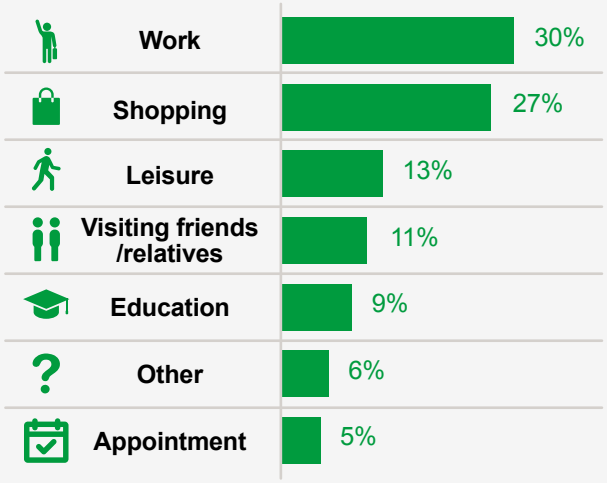
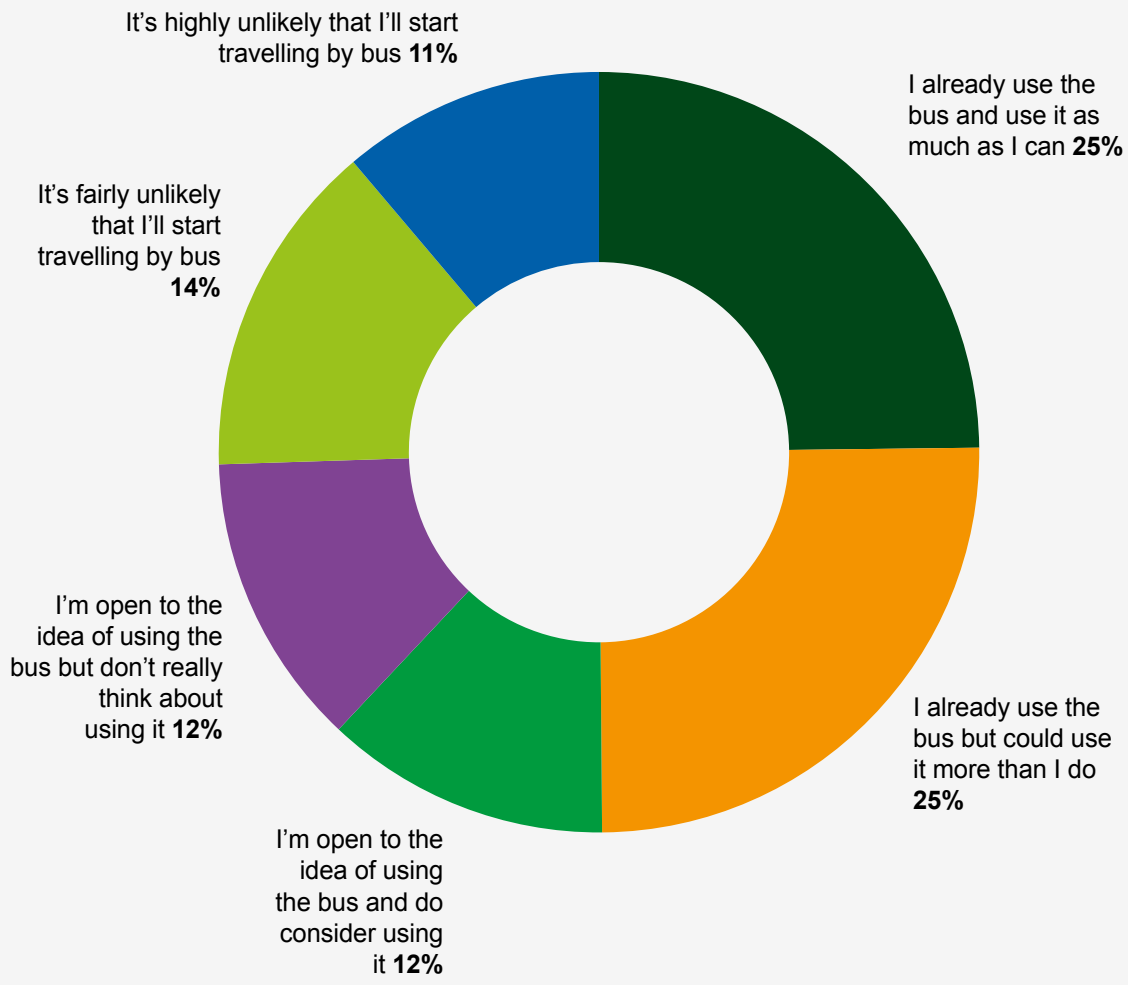


Figure 2:10
Purpose of bus journey
(source: North East Transport Plan)

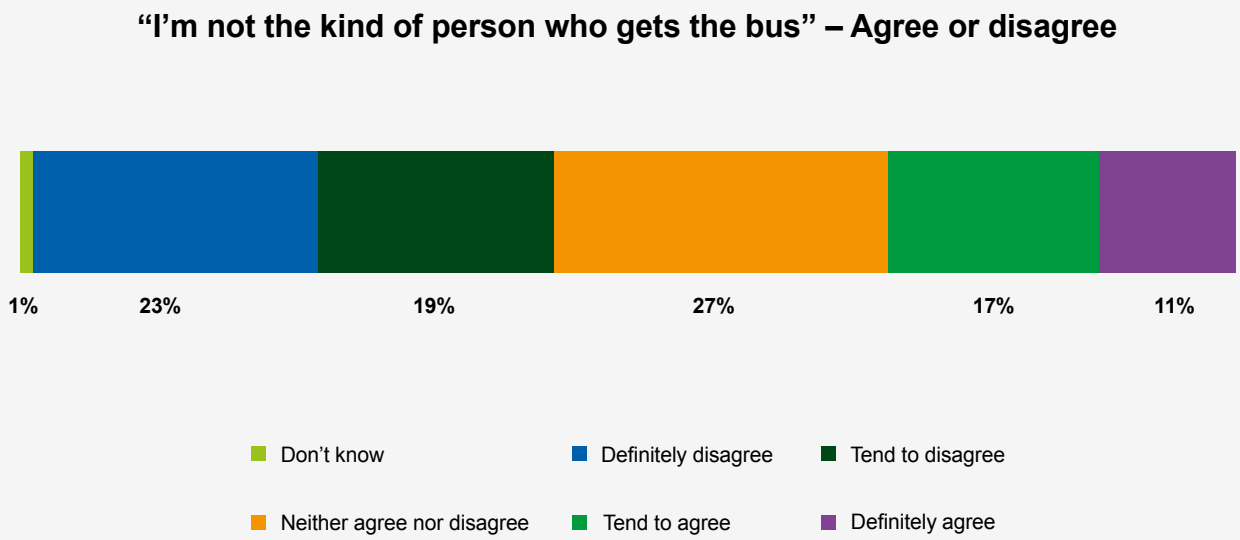
Current behaviour – attitudes towards using the bus

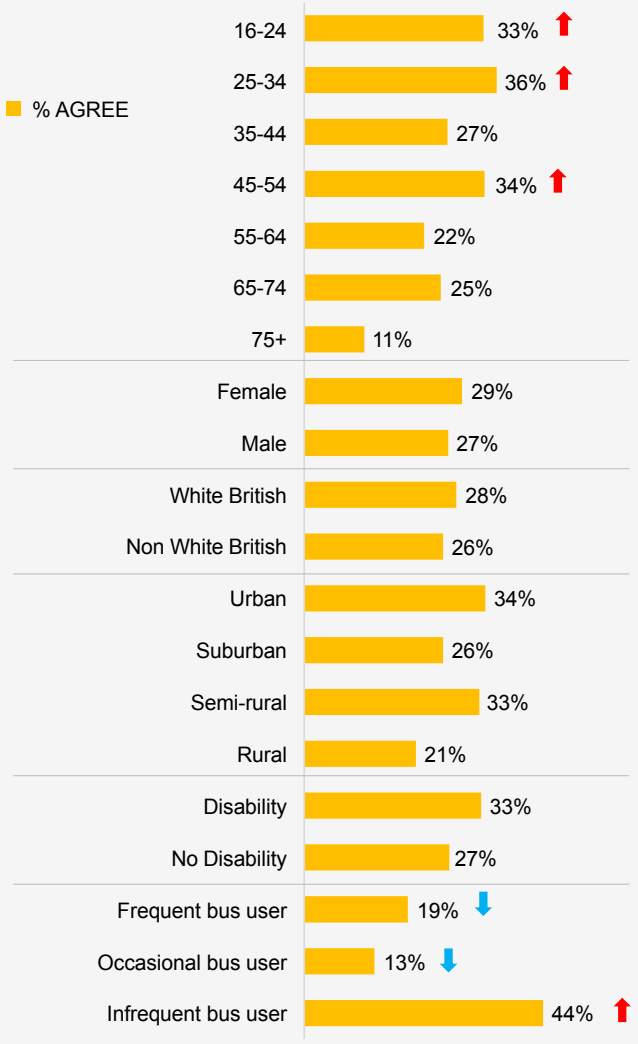


One in two say they already use the bus, and are evenly split as to whether or not they could use it more. Similarly, one in four are open to the idea, and these residents are equally split as to whether or not they actively consider using bus. A further quarter feel it's unlikely they will start travelling by bus.

Figure 2:11 Findings from market research (Source: Bluegrass research 2021)

The market research also asked residents to say whether they agreed with the statement:





Overall, a minority (just over a quarter) feel they are not the kind of person who gets the bus. And generally, opinions are similar across profiles.

Despite being more regular users, younger people are more likely to feel this way, and only one in ten of the oldest in the community would agree. Interestingly, a fifth of the most frequent users feel they're not the kind of people who get the bus, rising to over two in five of infrequent users.

Figure 2:12 Findings from market research (Source: Bluegrass research 2021)

Key insight – One in six people in the North East feel it is unlikely they will start travelling bus and a further one in four is open to the idea, but people in this group are split as to whether or not they will actively consider choosing the bus.

Our Big Bus Conversation campaign was a large exercise aimed at involving local people in discussions about buses. It asked residents to tell us, **"What three words spring to mind when you think about buses?"**

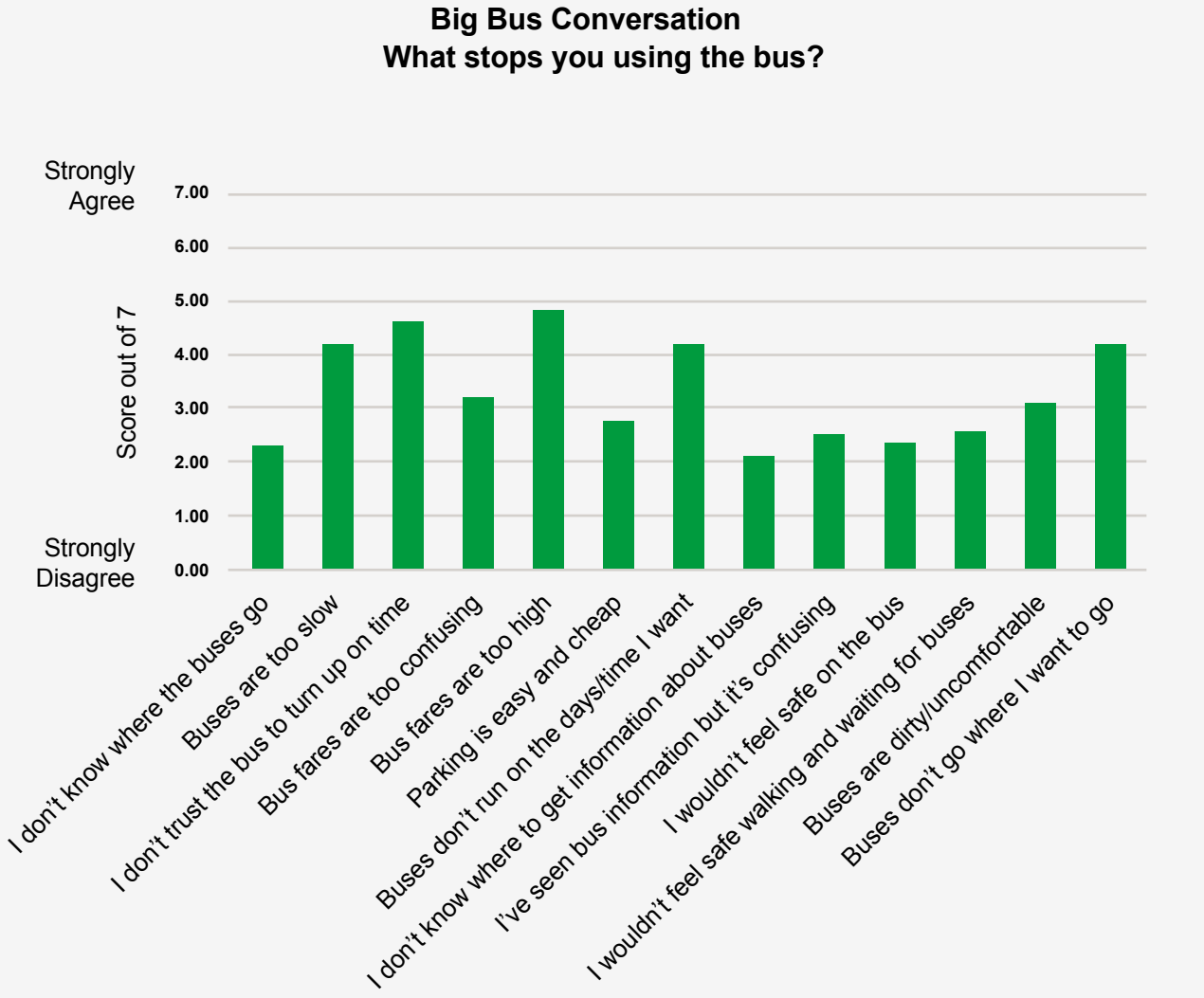


Figure 2:13 Data from online survey (Big Bus Conversation)

Frequently used words included: expensive, slow, late, unreliable, old, dirty, crowded, stuffy, polluting, inaccessible, unsafe, indirect, confusing, noisy, poorly ventilated. Some positive words were also submitted, such as safe and punctual, but as the word cloud on the previous shows, these were not as commonly used as negative ones.

During discussions at our four stakeholder events, we picked up on discussions as to why people may not use the bus and heard some very negative feedback and perceptions including, “buses smell”.

As part of the Big Bus Conversation survey we also asked respondents to rate from 0 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) how much they agreed with a number of potential barriers to using the bus. Scoring highest was bus fares being too high, followed by not trusting the bus to turn up on time, buses being slow and buses not going where people want them to go.

This supports the 2019 Nexus Insight Panel Survey findings which found these were the top three barriers to using buses:

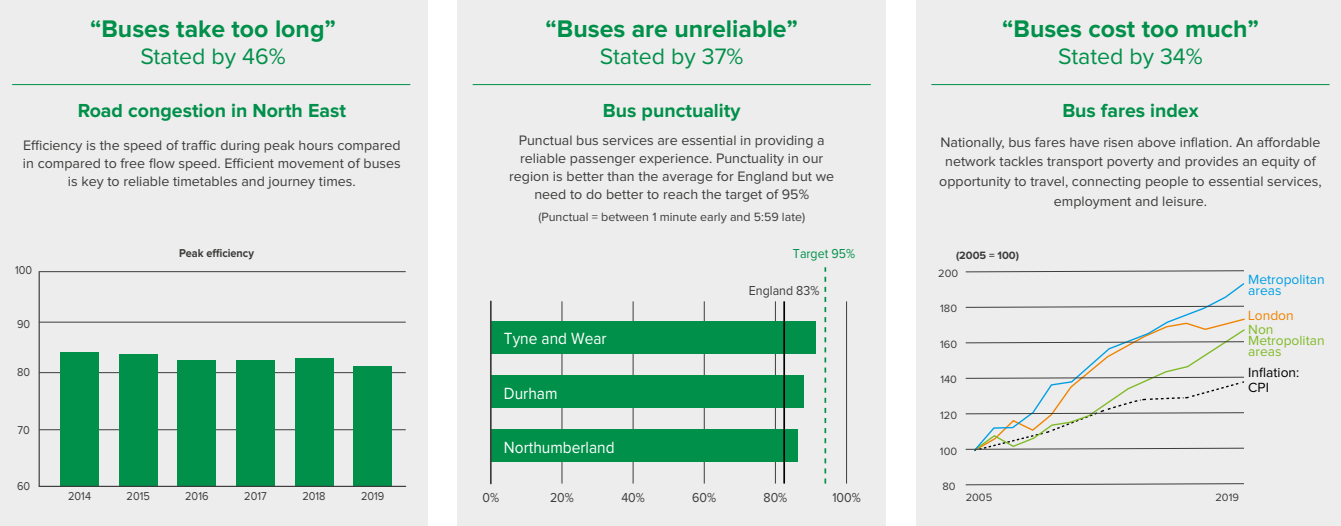


Figure 2:14

Covid-19

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.

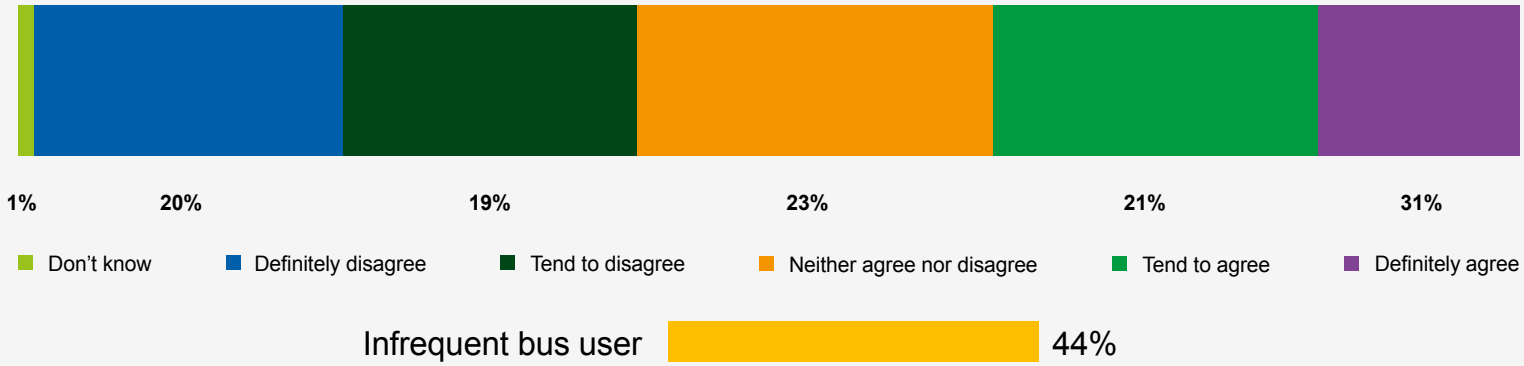
Transport Focus - Travel during Covid-19

Figure 2:15

We also know that cleanliness and maintenance are issues which are all the more important to bus users and non-bus users in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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.

“I’m not all that familiar with the local bus service like how much a journey would cost or which bus stop to use”.



“The places I travel to aren’t easily reachable by bus”.

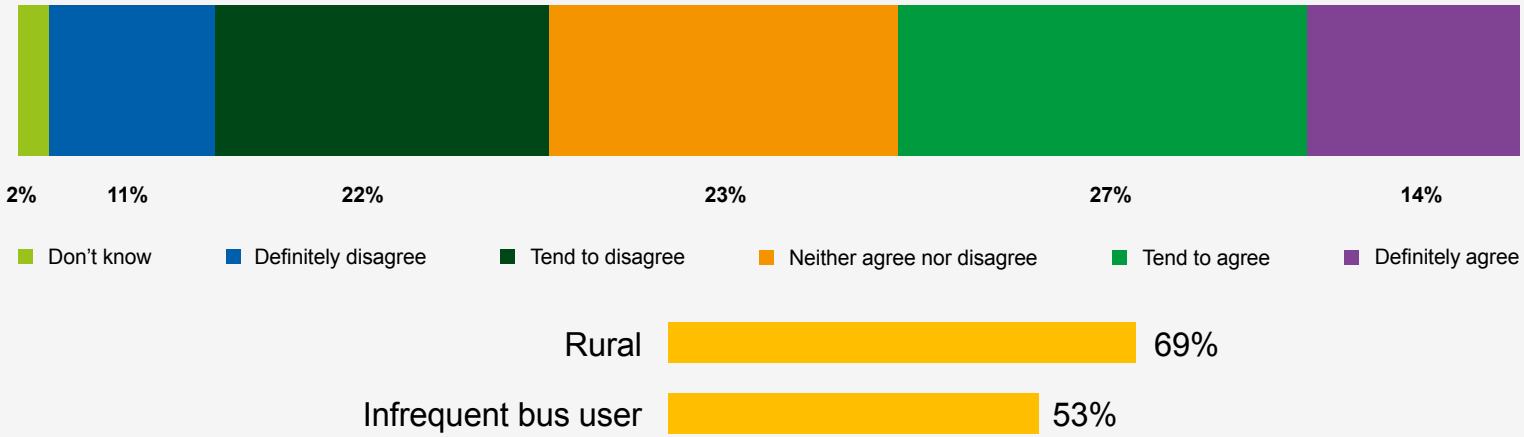


Figure 2:16 Independent market research results 2021

14% of tourists who did not use public transport identified ‘not knowing what was available’ as a reason for not using public transport.

We know that in order to increase bus use for tourism in the North East we need to overcome these barriers to using buses, as well addressing some of the negative perceptions of the bus that are held by non-bus users. This is why we have built a number of initiatives into the delivery section of this BSIP, so that with the correct level of funding we can bring about meaningful and long-lasting change.

A preference for alternative modes of transport (car and walking) are leading reasons for not using public transport to get around the North East during their visit.

Approximately 3 in 10 non-users felt that they had no need to use public transport.

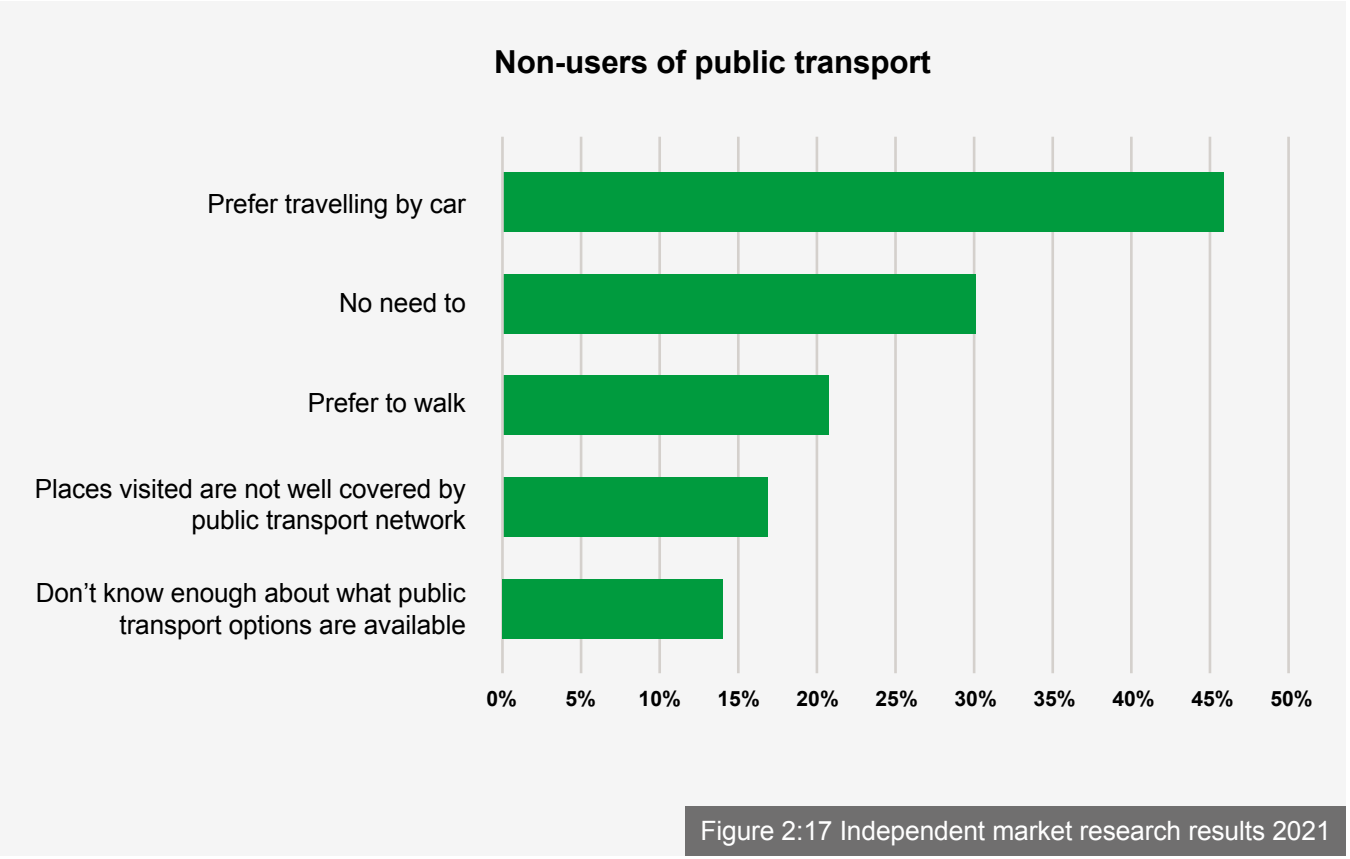


Figure 2:17 Independent market research results 2021

Car parking

The cost of car parking, especially in relation to getting the bus, often influences travel choices. The following table offers a summary of parking provision in each of the seven local authority areas which make up the North East.

	Estimated number of LA operated spaces	Average hourly rate to park	Estimated number of private sector operated spaces*	Average hourly rate
Durham	3,500	43p	2000	69p
Gateshead	2,123	£1.04	756	92p
Newcastle	6,004	£1.44	3743	£3.20
North Tyneside	2,544	95p	Unknown	N/A
Northumberland	11,821	0	0	N/A
South Tyneside	2,477	75p	270	Varies
Sunderland	2,958	£1.15	941	£1.47

*Defined by operators of car parks, excluding parking sites operated by employers, entertainment venues etc.

Figure 2:18

Local authorities in the North East, spend the following amounts on parking enforcement annually:

Local authority	Budget allocated to parking enforcement
Durham	£650,000
Gateshead	£799,000
Newcastle	£2.2m
North Tyneside	Part of a contract
Northumberland	£2m
South Tyneside	£1.1m
Sunderland	£950,000

Figure 2:19 Parking enforcement spending (annual)

Northumberland's charges are targeted towards reducing tourist traffic pressures, and discouraging long stay parking. For most residents and regular visitors, a disc can be bought which allows regular parking.

Other factors which may influence competition between car and bus

Here we consider the overall transport market in which the bus operates in the North East. As our region's Transport Plan promotes "appealing sustainable transport choices", we must also consider sustainable transport modes such as rail, our Metro system and active travel and how these can be complementary to our bus network.

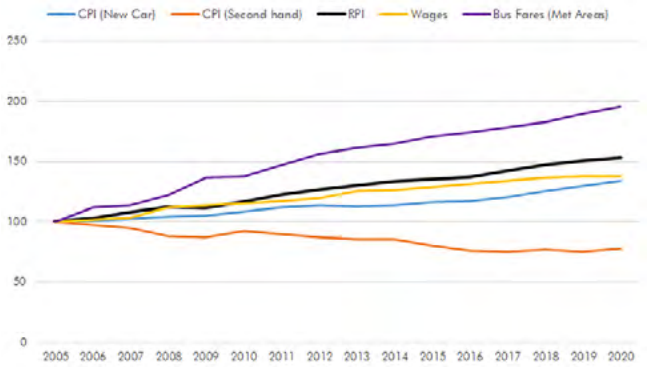
Relative affordability of bus and car travel

The first of the following charts sets out the cumulative gap between wages and the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for cars, and the Retail Price Index (RPI) for overall inflation, relative to growth in the cost of bus fares. It can be seen that wages have not kept pace with the RPI nor with the price of bus fares.

The second graph 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. This makes using the bus less appealing than purchasing a secondhand car.

The relative price of bus and car has become increasingly unfavourable to bus.

Index values (2005 = 100)



Wage index gap (2005 = base)

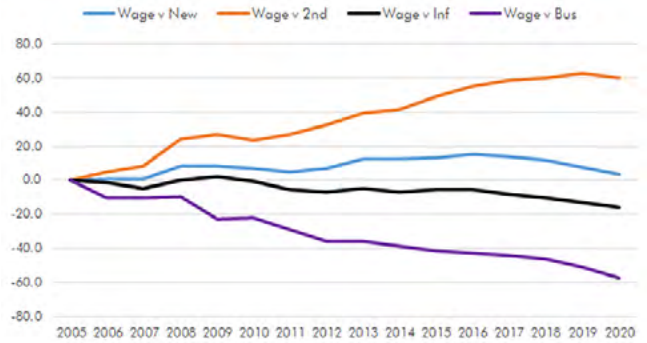
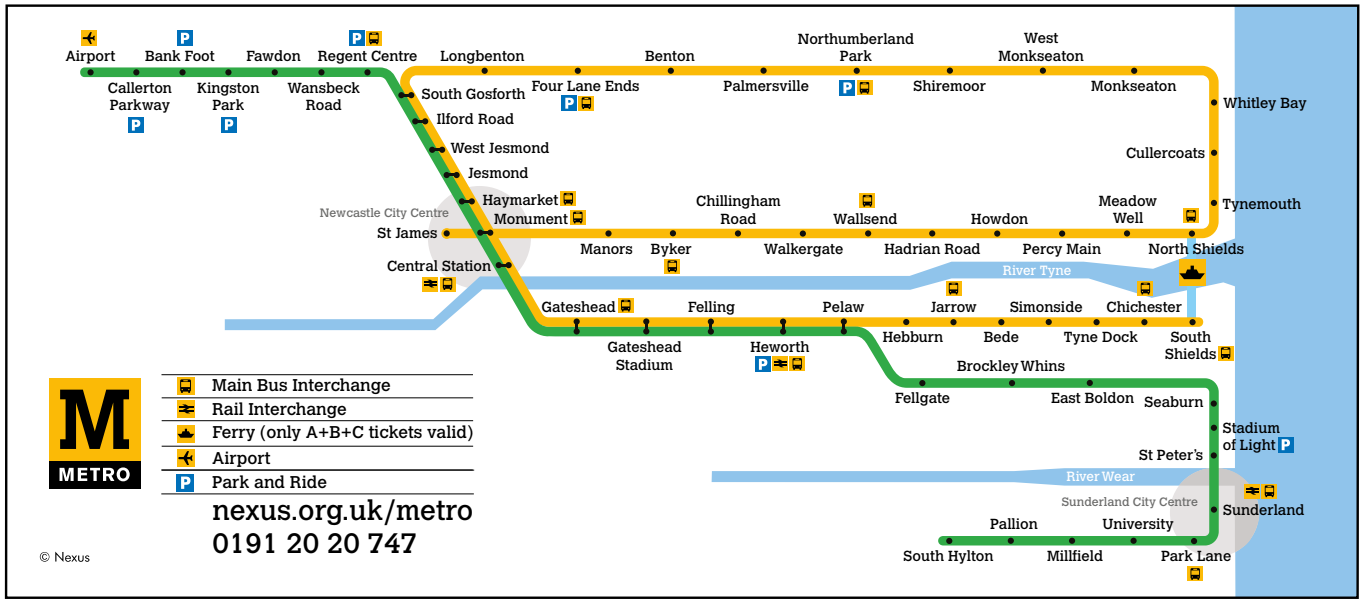


Figure 2:20

The Tyne and Wear Metro system

The Tyne and Wear Metro system, which opened in 1980, was designed and constructed as the central feature of a fully integrated public transport system. A number of major interchange locations were built at the core of its infrastructure to make transition from bus to Metro simple. These three interchanges are highlighted on the Metro network map and during 2019, a new interchange was opened at South Shields.



Interchange between bus and Metro is aided by Network One multi-operator ticketing in Tyne and Wear, which we discuss in greater detail in Section 4 ‘Delivery’ of our BSIP.

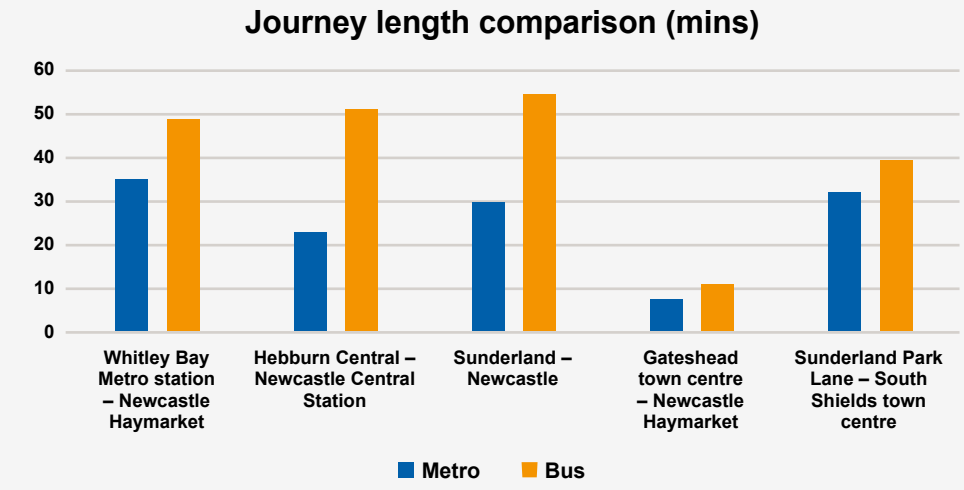
In 2019/20 9.6m Network One journeys took place, of which 5.8m included interchange. Of the 9.6m journeys, 2.8m were carried on Metro and 6.8m on bus representing 8% of Metro journeys in the region and 6% of bus journeys.

Metro Gold Cards

In addition to Network One tickets, Tyne and Wear residents with an entitlement to English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) ‘bus passes’ can upgrade their ENCTS card by loading a Metro Gold Card product on to it for a payment of £12 each year, and residents of Northumberland can do this for £24. 164,000 Tyne and Wear residents have taken this opportunity, affording them access to bus and Metro. Metro Gold Card journeys account for 13% of all journeys on the Metro system, which in 2019/20 was 4.3m journeys.

Integration between Metro and bus

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. 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.



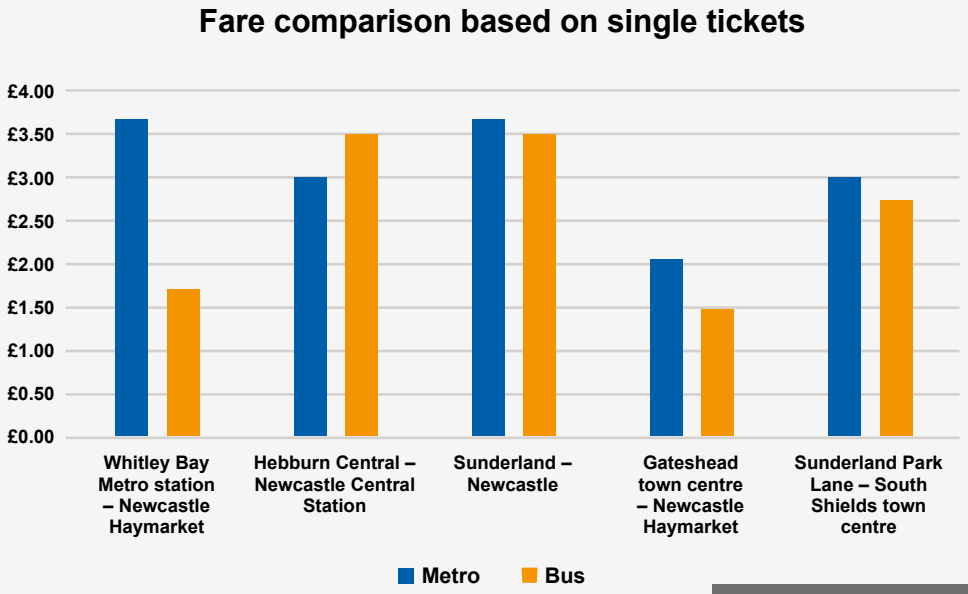


Figure 2:21 Metro/Bus comparisons

The first graph shows that for a sample of journeys that can be completed by either bus or Metro, the bus takes longer for every journey.

The second graph shows that for fare cost based on single tickets, buses compare favorably 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.

Nevertheless the basic structure for integrated public transport continues to exist in our 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.

Through this BSIP we propose to grow the levels of public transport integration significantly to enhance connectivity across the region offering an attractive journey time at an affordable price, encouraging more people to choose public transport over private car journeys.

Integration between bus and the national rail network

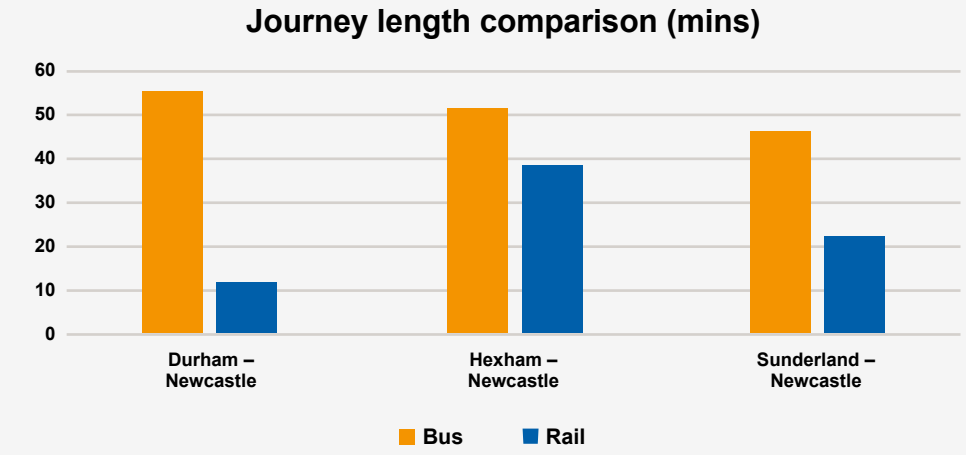
The geographic size of our region means that key centres are linked by rail, including 'Intercity' long distance trains. These service co-exist alongside well-used bus services, because buses serve more local places along the way and more 'first and last mile' origins and destinations.

The graphs below show some sample journey times and fare comparisons between rail and bus.

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. This is a key driver behind some of the initiatives we have outlined within the Fares and Ticketing section of this BSIP.

Integration between bus and active travel

We set out the modal share of active travel alongside other modes early in this section; and in Section One we have provided our travel hierarchy called "Making the Right Travel Choice", which states that active travel should be the transport mode of choice wherever possible.



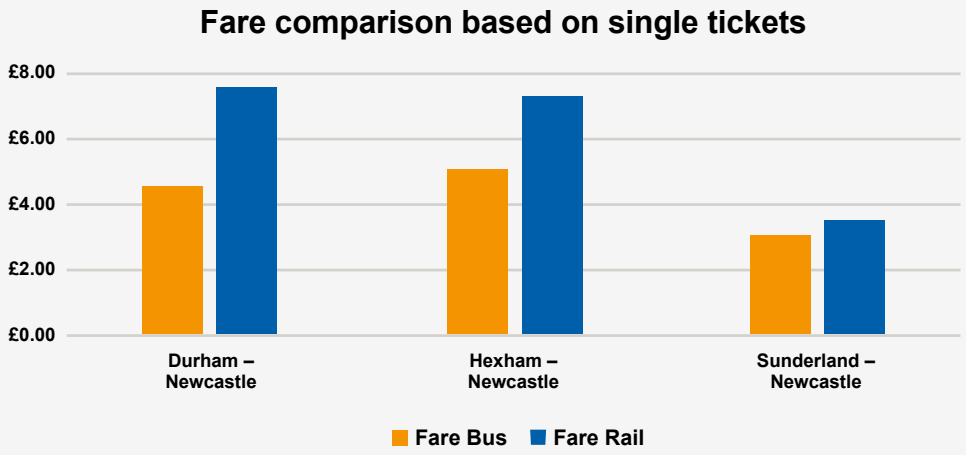


Figure 2:22

Fares are based on 'Anytime' tickets. They are weighted averages where more than one operator serves a route. Journey times are averages for all Monday to Friday trips, including all direct trains and express buses between the points shown.

Active travel is wholly complementary to the bus network, especially as every bus journey starts and ends with an element of active travel.

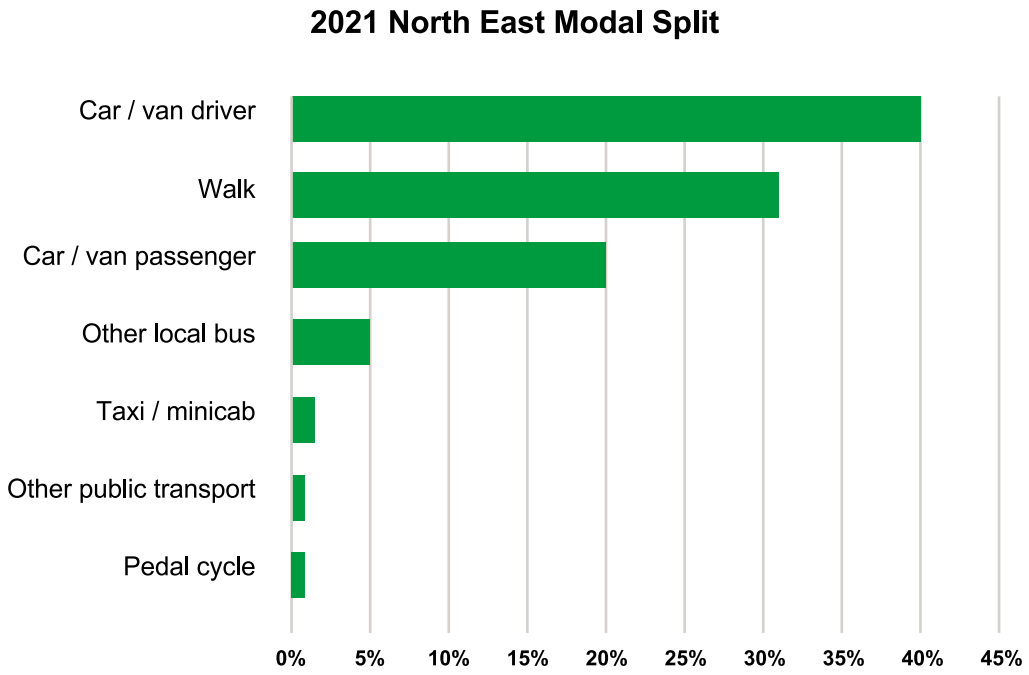
Already, early measures are in place to promote the opportunity for multi-modal trips including bike and bus. For example, six Go North East routes have capacity to carry two unfolded bikes, and stations across the Tyne and Wear Metro system are fitted out with approximately 750 places for cycles, much of which takes the form of digitally operated cycle lockers.

BSIP Refresh

As detailed earlier, bus ridership is substantially lower than the pre pandemic period. Bus modal share has also slightly decreased as can be seen in the graph.

Bus reliability and punctuality have been damaged both by the post pandemic rise in traffic and the national bus driver shortage. For the period leading up to Autumn 2022, bus punctuality at all timing points stood at 83% for the three largest operators in the region.

This is based on the measure of buses arriving at stops more than 5 minutes late or 1 minute early.



Performance before the pandemic was better, although still fell short of the traffic commissioner's target.

Potentially because of poor reliability, data from Transport Focus shows that 89% of people using bus in the North East were satisfied with their journey in 2021, and so far in 2022 87% of people said they were satisfied with journeys from surveys collected so far. This is compared with a 91% satisfaction rate in 2019, although a slightly different methodology has been used to calculate satisfaction.

The partnership has created a bus satisfaction survey to allow us to collect more in-depth data, the results of which will be brought to the Partnership Board on a six-monthly basis.

There has been progress in the decarbonisation of the bus fleet ahead of the introduction of Newcastle/ Gateshead's Clean Air Zone in 2023. Grants for bus operators to upgrade their vehicles have become available, new electric buses have been introduced and a North East bid for new electric buses has been submitted to the Levelling up fund.

3. Headline targets

This section shows our ambition to improve the North East bus offer and explains the Key Performance Indicators ('KPIs') by which we will measure progress.

The KPIs have been developed jointly through The Partnership and link to our Transport Plan objectives. Please see Section 5 for information on how we will report on a six-monthly basis.

In most cases we have chosen a baseline year of 2018/19 for our 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.

Firstly we want to **repair the damage caused by Covid-19** to bus ridership in our region.

We then want 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**.

We know that this will only happen when people see tangible improvements made to bus services, which we will measure through **improved customer satisfaction**. Of course if we want passengers to be happy buses must be **punctual and reliable**, and **buses need to be faster** and not caught in congestion.

Although getting more people on the bus and growing its modal share will of itself improve our environmental performance, we want to target a continuous improvement in the emission standards of our bus fleet.

Since the publication of the BSIP, these KPIs have been updated to reflect the year that has passed without funding.

Recovering from Covid-19

KPI 1: Bus ridership to achieve 154.4m trips during the year 2023/24, returning us to the baseline level of 2018/19.

This is our most urgent target, and in many respects our most important one. If we do not achieve it our bus network will be financially unsustainable in the long-term and as a result either services are likely to need to be cut back, or a larger share of public subsidy provided on an on-going basis. Neither scenario is appealing given that public finances are already under severe pressure, and road traffic levels throughout our region are already higher at most times of day than before the pandemic.

Modal share

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.

In 2018/19, the modal share of cars and light vans (as a passenger or a driver) in our region was 64%. Whilst this is lower than in most places in England outside central London, nevertheless it gives an idea of the scale of car dependency affecting many people and communities in the region. In considering this however we must recognise that our region is very large and diverse as described earlier with some of the most isolated rural communities in the country, and that for many people using a private car for travel is the only viable option.

However, that is not the case for everyone and certainly not for every trip. Through the interventions that we plan in this BSIP we intend not only to make buses faster, cheaper, more widely available and more reliable, but also to make them seen to be easier to use and access. As shown by our customer research, 30% of people simply don't see buses as a viable alternative for work and recreation journeys, rising to 37% when their family is in the car. More positively, 67% of current non-users said that they would consider using the bus if it was better, and 25% of existing bus users said they would consider travelling more frequently.

As we described in section 1, our Transport Plan's key policy is for people to make the right travel choice. Where people can travel by bus, they should do so rather than driving. We are therefore targeting a switch in mode share from private car use to buses.

A high proportion of daily trips are on journeys to work and education. Inevitably most of these trips are taken when most people start or finish work, school or college, and that is what leads to 'peak hours' on our transport network.

Although many people's work patterns have changed as a result of different ways of working during the pandemic, there is still a discernible and pronounced morning and evening peak on our transport network. This is only likely to grow as more workplaces reopen and people settle into a new pattern of working – whether it involves flexible working or not.

The increase in traffic on our road network during peak hours causes congestion, leading to slower journey times and traffic queues where there is restricted road space and on the approach to busy junctions.

This road traffic itself impacts on bus services, creating slow and unpredictable journey times and bunching.

Not only does road-based congestion cause frustration and delay – with a negative effect on economic productivity through lost time – but it also contributes to poor air quality at the busiest points of the road network and higher carbon emissions.

We therefore want to specifically target an increase in modal share of buses for journeys to work and education, to tackle these problems.

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.

All members of The Partnership have an important role to play in delivering modal share targets. Highway Authorities and bus operators are equally accountable for delivering it and for revising the Plan and Schemes to have greater effect if the target is not being met.

Methodology for modal share:
Modal share will be measured for each of our main centres, and on key corridors. Measurement will be taken annually following the methodology for the DfT traffic counts (Road traffic statistics - North East region (dft.gov.uk)), supplemented by ANPR and cordon counts as necessary. The counts will be calibrated against our Customer Survey and the survey will be used to estimate six monthly updates which will be published in our Bus Passenger Charter report.

Patronage

KPI 4: Bus patronage to grow by 10% in 2024/25, and then by a further 10% in 2025/26.

In 2018/19, bus patronage in our region was 154m trips. Bus patronage in our region has been declining for many years, although in the period immediately before the Covid-19 pandemic the declines had started to show some signs of levelling off, and in some areas was even starting to grow.

We set out in the North East Transport Plan and in Your Vision for Buses just how important bus ridership is to our region, and how beneficial it is to many of our strategic objectives.

Clearly we need bus patronage to start to grow strongly and on a sustained basis in order to have a financially sustainable bus network that meets the objectives of our Transport Plan.

We have already set out how we need bus ridership to recover from Covid-19 by achieving 154.4m trips during the year 2023/24. From that point onwards, we want the major investments that are outlined in this BSIP to grow bus ridership significantly. This goes hand-in-hand with the shift in modal share from private car use that is set out in previous paragraphs.

KPI 5: Bus patronage from people under the age of 22 to grow by 10% in 2023/24 and then by a further 10% in 2024/25.

Although we want to target growth in the use of buses from all travelers – and of course many new trips will arise from the modal shift of people travelling to work and education – we want to specifically target growth in two sections of the North East community: young people, and people who live in rural areas.

Young people need to travel frequently – they travel to school, college, apprenticeships and jobs, and for social, sporting and retail purposes. They also tend to have relatively low incomes, whether being supported by their families, educational loans, or by having low-paid jobs. If they are old enough to drive a car, insurance and ownership costs can be prohibitive and so young people rely on public transport more heavily than many other groups.

In this BSIP we are looking to improve outcomes for young people, for example through the introduction of an affordable fare for under 19s throughout the region, simpler and cheaper multi-modal fares for students, better information provision embracing new technology, better integration between buses and with the Metro, and later evening services on many routes.

We therefore want to specifically target growth in bus use by young people.

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

As described earlier many of the communities in our region are rural and semi-rural, including some of the most isolated parts of the country. Bus services in these areas can be thin on the ground because demand is low and costs are high. Nevertheless, some people in rural areas rely wholly on public transport to get around – particularly older and younger people.

In this BSIP we are planning a number of improvements for rural communities in order to grow bus use. There are improvements to some bus routes, an increased use of DRT, cheaper fares in many cases, and seasonal tourist bus pilots. We will also be working with town and village councils to help engender a sense of community ownership of rural bus services.

Methodology for patronage:
Patronage is measured by the bus operators and reported to us confidentially. Our systems provide a blended figure to avoid risk of breaching commercial confidentiality. We will publish the blended figure in our Bus Passenger Charter report six monthly. Our Charter Survey will explore whether people are making new journeys they did not make before.

Customer satisfaction

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

Where people do not already use buses often, we want them to see buses as a viable choice for travel. We also want people who already use buses, to use them more often. This is the only way that we can meet our targets for modal share and patronage growth.

Bus services in our region, when scored by existing users in surveys carried out by Transport Focus, tend to be scored relatively highly – 91%. This score is one of the highest in the country.

We need bus user satisfaction not only to remain this high, but to grow in order to retain existing users and encourage them to travel more often, and also to attract new users. This BSIP sets out a wide range of improvements to the bus network that will be reflected in growing satisfaction.

We will need to capitalise on high levels of passenger satisfaction by promoting scores to people who wrongly assume that travelling by bus offers a poor experience, and by promoting the high quality of service that already exists alongside the major improvements we will make through this BSIP.

Customer satisfaction scores are the responsibility of The Partnership, not the bus operators alone. Accountability for the component parts of ‘satisfaction’ will be agreed during the negotiation of the EP – for example, if walking and waiting scores bring down the overall score, the responsibility lies with the Highway Authority; if on-bus journey experience, the responsibility lies with the Operator.

Methodology for customer satisfaction: The Customer Satisfaction score will be that measured by Transport Focus. This gives an objective measure of overall Customer Satisfaction, and also a degree of granularity into the elements of the whole journey experience about which customers feel most and least satisfied. This leads into our action plan for annual revision of the BSIP.

Bus performance

KPI 8: KPI 8: Average speed of buses to grow, relative to the average speed of general traffic, each year starting in 2023/24.

Our Transport Plan calls for appealing, sustainable transport choices. If buses are seen to be fast and reliable, and – particularly during peak hour traffic congestion – faster and more reliable than private cars, we will be able to encourage more people to use them.

This BSIP contains extensive proposals to give buses priority at key points on the road network, particularly on the approaches to town and City Centres.

This includes bus lanes – in some cases fully segregated from all other traffic, 'red routes' to remove parked cars from arterial bus corridors, and priority for buses at busy junctions.

By putting these measures in place we want bus journey times to become faster and more consistent, no matter what is happening to overall traffic levels. Whilst we would like to see the modal share of buses grow as well as the number of people using them, external economic factors may lead to road traffic ebbing and flowing out of our control.

Whatever happens to road traffic levels, we want buses to be getting faster.

Methodology for bus average speed relative to general traffic speed: Before and after scheme measurements of point-to-point journey times for buses and cars on the same corridor / stretch of route. Highway Authorities to provide ANPR or other measurement of point-to-point run times for car and bus.

KPI 9: Bus reliability to be 99.5% throughout the period of the BSIP.

The Partnership will monitor performance at the following locations, and also agree further locations to monitor.

Place	KPI 8: Average speed	KPI 10: Punctionality at point of origin	KPI 11: Punctionality at all timing points
Gateshead	TBD	TBD	TBD
Newcastle	TBD	TBD	TBD
Sunderland	TBD	TBD	TBD
Durham City	TBD	TBD	TBD

Punctuality and reliability play a critical role in attracting passengers to the bus network. If a service is perceived as unreliable it will deter people from using it. Although private cars also have unreliable journey times because they too get caught in congestion, people are generally more forgiving because with a bus system there is a belief that others – whether the bus company, the highway authority, or both – should have intervened to resolve the problem.

Bus operators themselves have an important role to play in how buses are perceived by travellers. Buses need to be reliable, in that when people are waiting at a bus stop at the appointed time, they need to have confidence that the bus will arrive in the first place.

Methodology for bus reliability:
This is a standard report, which operators produce today for the Traffic Commissioner based on the percentage of scheduled mileage that is actually operated.

KPI 10: Bus punctuality at point of origin to be 95% in 2023/24, 96% in 2024/25 and 97% in 2025/26.

Punctuality is of course a key challenge because of road traffic as previously discussed. However, bus operators have far more control over the punctuality of the bus as it leaves its origin point. As the bus progresses through its route the responsibility is shared between highways authorities and the bus operator.

The major scale of interventions and investments proposed by the BSIP will contribute to far more reliable bus journey times, and far better punctuality. We are therefore proposing to target an improvement that goes beyond the statutory requirement set out in the Traffic Commissioners' targets for the origin point of buses.

As the Partnership develops, we will implement geographic specific monitoring to identify where on the network, improvements are most needed.

KPI 11: Bus punctuality at all timing points to be 90% in 2023/24, 95% in 2024/25 and 95% in 2025/26.

Although the Traffic Commissioners' targets require buses to be on time at least 95% of the time at all timing points, in practice road traffic congestion prevents this from being the case. We also expect a degree of disruption to our highways in the early years of this BSIP because of the installation of new highways infrastructure along a significant number of key bus routes.

We therefore propose to start by getting punctuality across all timing points up to the statutory target, and then to maintain it.

Methodology for bus punctuality:
This is a standard report, which operators produce today for the Traffic Commissioner based on the percentage of scheduled mileage that is actually operated. This uses the standard definition of 'Not more than 5 minutes late, not more than 1 minute early'.

Environmental performance

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.

The Transport Plan commits to a Carbon Neutral North East. All seven North East Local Authorities have declared a climate emergency and the City of Newcastle is planning to introduce a Clean Air Zone. We therefore need buses to play their part by having the lowest possible emissions, both for climate change and air quality purposes.

Furthermore 60% of people in our recent survey said that they would be encouraged to use the bus more if there were more electric buses and buses with the latest low-emission engines. In the Big Bus Conversation, 'Cleaner and Greener vehicles' was ranked fourth in the list of Ten Solutions from Your Vision for Buses. Clearly there is an opportunity to drive modal share and patronage growth through investment in low emission buses.

Our region already has a fleet of 9 fully electric buses in Gateshead, a fleet of natural gas-powered buses in Sunderland, and numerous hybrid buses. We are currently bidding into the Government's 'Zebra' fund for 73 additional fully electric buses, and this BSIP is proposing funding to accelerate the introduction and retro-fitting to Euro-6 standard, and the introduction of more electric vehicles.

Methodology for bus environmental performance: The age and type of every vehicle in the North East bus fleet of the three main operators and most of the independent smaller operators has been recorded and analysed. A transition plan will be agreed for retrofitting some Euro 5 vehicles to become Euro 6, and for the retirement of older vehicles and replacement with Euro 6 or Zero-Emission vehicles.

BSIP Refresh

To reflect the time that has passed since the publication of the BSIP with no funding unlocked and limited initiatives delivered, a number of our KPI's have been updated with new timescales.

4. Delivery

This section sets out the schemes, initiatives and policies we intend to introduce to meet the objectives of our Transport Plan, the National Bus Strategy, and to advance performance against the targets set out in our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). Most importantly, it is 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.

Within this section are five main subsections:

- **Customer Experience**
- **Fares and Ticketing**
- **The Network**
- **Highways and Infrastructure**
- **Bringing the BSIP to Life**

Each of these subsections is set out as follows, after introductory text boxes setting out what we will achieve and how it aligns with BSIP guidance:

- **Today's World** – here we will give a strategic overview and share data about issues relevant to the subsection from our current perspective.
- **Our opportunity** – here will set out what we believe can be achieved through making interventions relevant to this subsection.
- **Initiative description** – here we give details of each initiative broken down as:
  - ***Current situation*** – how we currently perform relative to this initiative.
  - ***Potential*** – what we believe can be achieved by acting in this area.
  - ***Initiative description*** – the detail of what we propose to deliver.

4. Delivery Customer experience

This subsection introduces our plans to:

- Increase bus patronage through improvements at every touch point of the customer's experience.
- Simplify and make the bus network easier to understand through enhanced and simplified information provision both on and off bus.
- Present bus services as one, united, North East brand which is committed to delivering a first-class customer experience.
- Make every customer feel valued, by a consistent customer-focused approach, with a special focus on empathy with people who have extra needs.
- Introduce a Bus Passenger Charter which makes clear what every customer should expect and what to do if they feel let down.

This subsection responds to the following requirements of BSIP guidance:

- Accurate and comprehensive information available at all points throughout the journey on and off bus.
- Presenting a network identity to passengers that feels like a coherent, consistent and strongly branded operation which gives people confidence in using it.
- Plans for the heavy promotion and marketing of the newly branded network.
- Customer safety has been considered at all points throughout their journey.
- Measures which facilitate end to end accessibility for passengers with mobility difficulties.
- Provide a high-quality staff service through consistent training.
- Steps to make sure the bus is an appealing transport option.
- A Charter that standardises how operators respond to passengers' concerns and complaints.

Our customer experience section is set out in the order of touch points customers pass through during the journey.

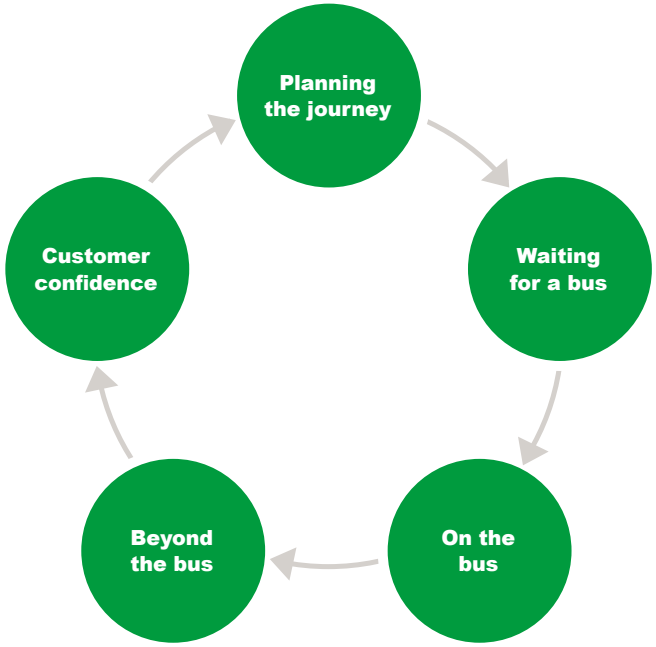


Figure 4:1 Touch points throughout the journey

Today's world

The customer experience encompasses all stages of a journey: planning your route, waiting for the bus, the time spent on board, lighting from the vehicle at a stop or station, and contacting the bus operator after the journey.

There is a 91% overall satisfaction rate with buses in the North East. (Transport Focus)

Through our independent market research we know that there is a multitude of factors capable of impacting the overall customer experience. These range from the design and condition of buses, to interaction with the bus driver.

In addition, the stop, on board amenities, cleanliness, real-time information at stops and online, wheelchair and buggy provision, information about routes and passenger behaviour were all improvements suggested by people responding to the Big Bus Conversation (our engagement campaign which ran from 29 July – 10 September 2021).

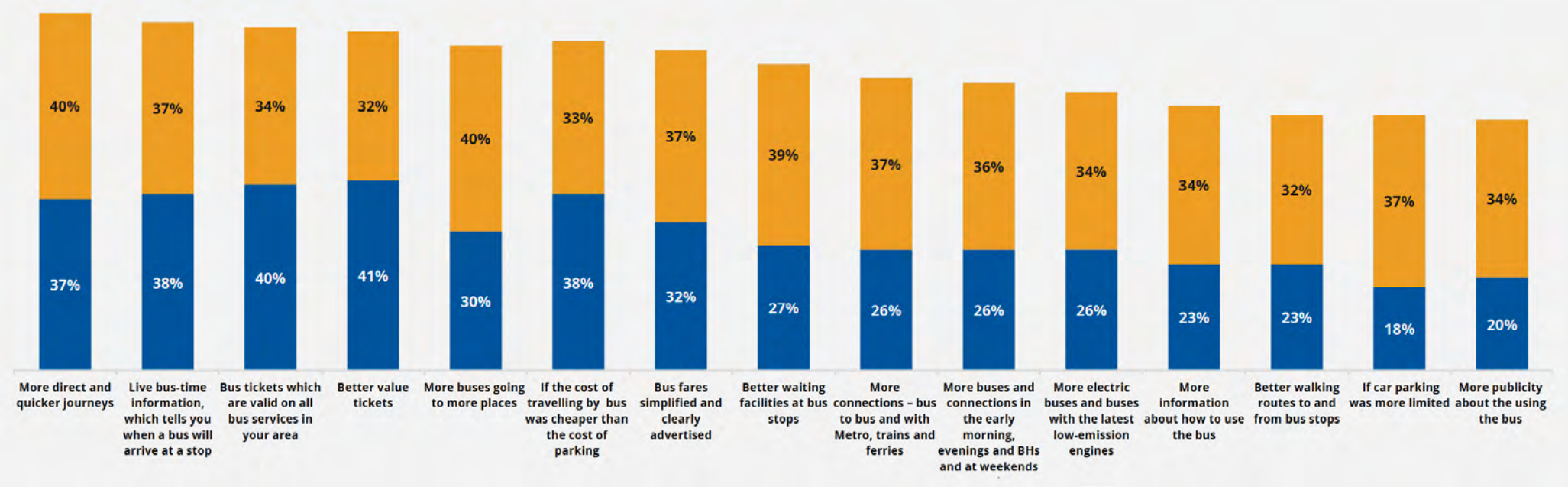


Figure 4:2 Encouragement to use bus more

Planning the journey

Several online journey planners are available through Nexus, individual operators and third parties such as Citymapper. Our region also benefits from its own impartial, comprehensive journey planner in Traveline which covers multi-modal travel, however, this is a nationwide service which isn't tailored to the North East or responsive to short term changes in the area.

Provision of 'Where to catch your bus' posters at stations or in shopping and employment centres is infrequent and inconsistent. Off-system printed information is very limited.

> One in three North East residents that we surveyed told us that they are unfamiliar with where and how to use local buses. (Big Bus Conversation)

Information on service disruption can be accessed through a variety of individual operator social media channels and operator apps.

Our Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) centres monitor traffic levels but do not play an active role in managing bus services on the ground. A 'single source of truth' is being developed to feed all off-system and on-system information sources, and at the same time to feed traffic signal priorities.

Two Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) schemes have been awarded in the region by the Transforming Cities Fund. Both aim at 'Public Transport Reliability' and provide back office and front end delivery systems. One scheme does this for traffic signal priority, and the other for Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI). The benefit of developing the two programmes in concert is that they provide a common source of information to manage the bus signal priorities and to send information to customers, based on Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL). The technology is the first of its kind in the UK and AVL data can be used in combination with data from Metro and Rail to feed all related RTPI infrastructure in our integrated transport system.

Waiting for a bus

Customer facilities and features

Information provision varies widely throughout the network. All bus stops in Tyne and Wear have a printed timetable, though this does not include details of fares. The timetables are large print and clear. They have a small QR code in the bottom corner intended to provide real time information on when the next bus is coming, but the codes are sometimes obscured by the poster frame when the timetable is put up, and often fail to provide the necessary information.

A smaller number of stops in Durham and Northumberland have printed timetables, and many of the stops where no information is present are in rural locations, where bus services can be very infrequent.

RTPI can be found at key stops and interchanges, but it isn't widely available – and when RTPI is available, it has been known to be unreliable at times.

The modernity and quality of waiting facilities range widely from high-quality interchanges in both rural and urban areas, to bus stops with no timetable, signpost or road markings. South Shields Interchange is a modern, fully enclosed and staffed bus and Metro interchange with facilities including real-time information at stands, CCTV, food and drink shops and full accessibility by the highest modern standards. 'Where to catch your bus' posters are also rare at bus stations and interchanges. There are staff at some interchanges, but not all.

On a smaller scale, Blaydon Bus Station is a smaller interchange in a local town centre. Facilities here include large, covered shelters with perch seats, raised kerbs and real-time information.

Northumberland has bus stations in most towns, and around 3,000 stops of which fewer than 1,000 have posted timetables. An example of this is the rural bus service in the Allendale Valley, which is South of Hexham. Most stops on this route are on lane corners and have no pole/flag and none have timetables. The bus will stop on demand when flagged by a waiting passenger.

CCTV provision at bus stops is minimal across the network, with most limited to City Centre coverage. Lighting at bus stops is also inconsistent, particularly in rural bus stops, which can be poorly lit.

On the bus

In recent years investment by bus operators has seen new vehicles enter the fleet that feature onboard audio-visual displays, USB charging points and free Wi-Fi. Roughly 40% of buses in the region are fitted with audio-visual technology, but certain operators are further ahead with the roll out of this technology than others.

Safety

A 2019, Nexus Insight Panel survey found that 17% of people surveyed said that the behaviour of other passengers on bus was a barrier to bus travel.

To increase the safety of the network and combat attitudes like the above, all major operators' vehicles are fitted with internal and external CCTV.

Cleanliness

Recent research from Transport Focus has found that in 2021, cleanliness and maintenance is now much more important for both bus users and non-users as a result of Covid-19. All of our regions operators have implemented rigorous cleaning regimes which are inspected using fourteen touch points which are swabbed for traces of Covid-19 and no traces have been found. Once the vehicles are in service, however, the sheer volume of passengers using them can make them untidy at times.

'Buses are dirty, noisy and uncomfortable' (Big Bus Conversation)

Branding & marketing

Branding is strong on the individual level for operators, Nexus, Traveline and Network One (regional ticketing product), with specific route branding on key corridors.

Current branding works well on an individual level, but from a customer perspective, there is no common unified bus brand that encompasses the whole network and ties all of the groups in the region together under one identity.

The vast majority of marketing also takes place on an individual operator or authority level, other than occasional communications from NEbus, there is no coordinated network branding.

Operator marketing on-bus is very effective both at promoting the bus offer and at building customer confidence that they are in a high-quality environment. Where buses in some parts of England display adverts for anything from colleges to dating sites, customers in the North East will typically see banners about bus ticket offers, the customer phone line to get help or give feedback, maps of the route the bus serves and tips on how to use the free Wi-Fi.

Beyond the bus

To help customers get to their destination, wayfinding and signposts for their onward journeys are of a high standard in our network's key interchanges, but information to facilitate multi-modal journeys through the network is lacking. All Metro interchanges and a few key rail interchanges supply bus information, but the information falls far below what is needed to properly facilitate an integrated transport system. The real-time information about bus connections that is available is displayed on dated screens and is often not accurate.

All bus major operators and most small operators are on social media, but there is no common sentiment monitoring in place.

Customer confidence

Each of our main operators has its own customer charter and complaints processes, which are broadly similar in their basic terms. The smaller operators do not typically have customer charters. There is currently no co-ordination between the different operators when it comes to charters. None of the operators publish information about the complaints it receives and how it has responded, and some do not respond to complaints made on social media.

Staff

All bus drivers undertake a minimum 35 hours' refresher training in a five year period. There is not, however, a customer service standard across the operators in the North East, nor a common approach to customer service.

At bus interchanges, there are roaming staff who can help customers with queries.

Customers with extra needs

All the operators have dedicated policies for customers with extra needs, especially customers with disabilities. Staff have disability awareness training and customers are offered sunflower lanyards and / or journey assistance cards.

Our opportunity

With appropriate funding for our BSIP, our EP will be positioned to deliver regional initiatives which improve the safety, security and reliability of the network and provide an enhanced customer experience for all.

> There is significant opportunity to reach the 28% of people from the independent market research that said they were not the kind of person who gets the bus.

We know from our exploration of the barriers to bus use, that we can change this perception through the delivery of initiatives, specifically initiatives that focus on: the provision of seamless service information both on and off the bus; the creation of a unified brand; having a consistent approach to customer service at every point in the journey; enhanced safety measures; the roll out of better audio-visual facilities and improved accessibility for all; and a binding Bus Passenger Charter. These initiatives will be bolstered by targeted marketing aimed at encouraging a modal shift to buses. This will be focused on showing that buses are a great option for everyone and that they are the future of affordable, sustainable and convenient travel. Further details of plans for marketing are outlined in the 'Bringing the BSIP to Life' subsection.

According to Greener Journeys, every £1 invested in bus infrastructure measures, such as improved bus shelters with CCTV and real time information, can generate more than £8 of economic benefit. With these initiatives and strong partnership working in place, we have a real opportunity to secure this level of economic gain for the North East.

Initiatives

Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI)

Current situation

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 customer is incorrect.

The potential

Enhancements to information provision has the potential to encourage 67% of people to return to the bus who have previously been discouraged by a confusing network.

By making real-time journey information easily available to passengers, we can improve the level of confidence passengers have in the bus network. This will encourage more passengers to use the bus and to make more journeys by bus.

Initiative description

Through the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF), regionwide improvements are already planned to increase traffic prioritisation for buses and to provide second-by-second Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL). In addition, this funding covers the costs needed to set up a new back-office system hosted within Nexus to support these measures. The technology currently being trialled as part of this scheme, is the first of its kind in the UK and AVL data can be used in combination with data from Metro and Rail to feed all related RTPI infrastructure outlined in this section of the BSIP.

We will provide seamless service information to customers, offering a single source of truth, feeding to any connected systems for passenger information.

The data provided through the TCF improvements will feed into journey planning apps and information at stops and stations.

Information off-bus

Current situation

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.

We currently provide printed timetables at selected stops throughout our region and leaflets are available in a limited number of places.

The UTMC currently monitors 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.

The potential

Any action that simplifies the customer experience and offers them an easy way to plan their journey, purchase their tickets and find out live information about service disruption, has the potential to increase ridership from the cohort of 67% who struggle with finding network information.

It is important that initiatives aimed at improving information provision do not solely utilise technology as a means of delivery, as Age UK found there are over 800,000 lapsed internet users in the UK who no longer use the internet, as well as a significant number who have never used it. Of the lapsed users, 19% are aged 55-64, 25% are aged 65-74 and 40% are over 75. This is particularly significant as the North East has an ageing population.

Initiative description

Network-wide ticketing and journey planning will be made available to passengers through a single dedicated website and accompanying app.

The website and app will take into account the entire journey from starting at home, where the nearest stop is, what time the bus is, real-time journey information, details of integration with other modes for interchange, and the ability to purchase and get details of tickets.

Information on service disruption to minimise the impact on passengers, will be provided as part of the website, facilitated through a new dedicated bus post located in the UTMC. Five staff will be employed, three to mirror the current traffic-based roles in the UTMC and a further two to manage the massive increase in data that needs to be processed. These roles will provide coverage over both UTMCs to ensure that our whole region is accounted for.

There will be route-specific information showing interactive descriptions, as well as integration to other modes of public and active transport.

We will continue to provide leaflets and printed materials covering journey information and ticketing details, noting that some of our customers are either unable to access the internet, or simply prefer to access information in this form.

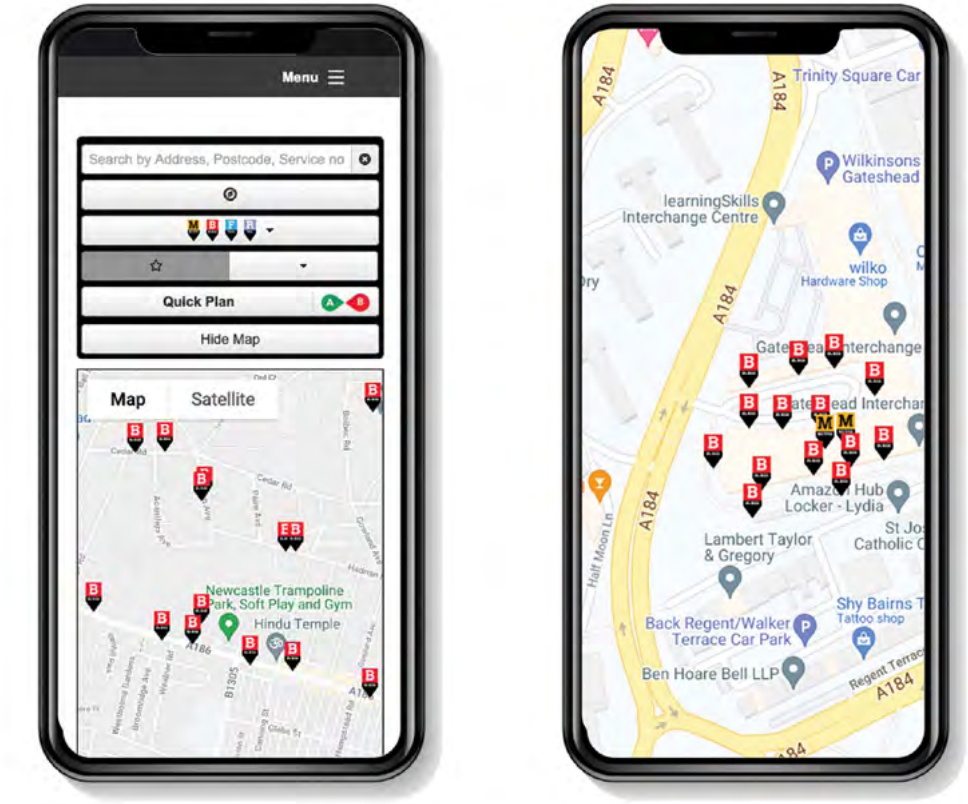


Figure 4:3 Mockup of a journey planning app

Network branding

Current situation

The North East has multi-operator individual branding, along with that of Nexus, the seven Local Authorities, Traveline and Network One.

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.

Arriva X18 Northumberland Coast and Castles sightseeing bus. Photo credit: Gavin Duthie

Case Study:

Boosting leisure travel along the North Northumberland Coast

Northumberland County Council has worked with Arriva, Travelsure and other stakeholders for several years to encourage more leisure travel by bus along the North Northumberland Coast.

The work is part of a drive towards more sustainable tourism and has delivered simple and easy to understand routes, co-ordinated schedules for both the summer and winter seasons, joint marketing using a common 'Coast and Castles' brand and a unique multi-operator Travelcard scheme covering a dedicated range of tickets. There is also regular liaison with customers, tourism groups and representatives from the North Northumberland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to ensure that services continue to meet local needs.

Before the organisations started working together, services and tickets were very complicated and passenger numbers were in long-term decline. However, pre-Covid the bus operators were consistently recording growth of 1-2% per annum, allowing investment in new or refurbished vehicles and more journeys to be added to timetables (especially on Sundays and Bank Holidays).

Experience here shows that people will leave their cars behind for leisure trips if the product is right, and this type of partnership can be used as a blueprint for other parts of our region.

The potential

A strong and consistent network brand can restore passenger's faith in the bus and reassure them that whatever bus or route they choose to take in our region, they will receive the same experience and quality of customer service.

A strong brand identity can make buses easier to understand for new customers and act as a signpost for people unfamiliar with the area network.

Initiative description

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. This brand will be complementary to existing operator branding and will be visible on buses and multi-modal ticketing.

This brand will be applied consistently across infrastructure and passenger information. The brand will be used as the centre piece for the strategic marketing campaigns outlined in the subsection 'Bringing our BSIP to Life'.

Information at bus stops

Current situation

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. 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 subsection.

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.

> "Would be amazing to have real times at more bus stops for people to check when this bus is coming and if there is any issues. Not everyone can check Facebook to see if a bus is running late or running at all." (Big Bus Conversation)

> "An accurate online service that tracks buses in real time and actually works." (Big Bus Conversation)

Real-time information can also be acquired on a mobile phone through the NextBuses service provided by Traveline, the Nexus website and operator apps. This service is free for internet enabled devices and 25 pence per message for an SMS service. It relies, however, on the same information as the local RTPI.

> 75% satisfaction rating with information provision at the bus stop. (Transport Focus)

The potential

Through upgrades to information provision at bus stops, we can offer passengers in the North East a clearer and more consistent customer experience.

Bus stops are also the 'shop window' to the network as non-bus users walk by. Eye catching and simple information outlining the possible journeys from a local stop and fare information will ensure that bus is an option which should be considered.

Confusing information is one of the barriers to bus travel that is currently preventing increased patronage throughout the network. By simplifying information provision, we can expect to see an increase in new users.

Our Big Bus Conversation told us that unreliable information and inconsistent provision are fundamental problems, and when asked to allocate a £10 value against the proposed 'Ten Solutions' for our bus network, those who took part allocated an average of £0.95 against 'clear and consistent information that is easy to access'.

Initiative description

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 RTPI. The data supply feeding this system will be provided by up-to-date AVL. These bus stops are located throughout our region at key locations including City, town, and village centres and near to important infrastructure such as train stations.

A further 100 stops will be updated with the chosen system at locations that are deemed to be most appropriate to install the technology.

We will aim to provide clear printed information at all stops and stations including the most rural, and maintain it.

The information will bear our consistent brand image. Between BSIP and EP, we will commission information design, consulting our customers and people who do not use bus services to establish the best way to convey the most important information – route numbers, times, intervals, fares etc.

Customer safety

Current situation

80% satisfaction rating of personal safety at the bus stop. (Transport Focus)

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.

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.

The potential

Fear of crime has been identified as a possible limiting factor to public transport use, and reducing this fear could increase patronage by 3% at peak times and 10% at off-peak times.

In real terms this could mean 2.4 million more passengers on our buses at peak times and 8 million more at off-peak times.

Most people who have had a bad experience on public transport don't report it but on average they tell eight other people about it. Improving safety and perception of safety on public transport is a benefit to all users, especially those with protected characteristics whom the research shows are more vulnerable.

There is a need to tackle the number of unreported incidents that go unreported, to make sure passengers feel comfortable reporting the crime, and that they feel their reports are taken seriously and are properly addressed.

Walking to and waiting at the bus stop is also a deterrent to bus use, especially in a region which has long dark hours in the winter months. See Highways & Infrastructure sub-section for investment plans.

Initiative description

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.

Improvements to lighting at stops will come through the planned refurbishments to a number of stops outlined in the highways and infrastructure section of the document.

Kim McGuinness, Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, recently launched the 'Safer Metros, Safer Buses, Safer Parks' initiative. Around £400,000, plus a £40,000 bus operators and Nexus partnership contribution, will be focused on improving the safety of women and girls on public transport and their perceptions of safety. Elements of the scheme include a new reporting app for crime and anti-social behaviour, body worn cameras for transport staff, street pastor style volunteers onboard buses and extra CCTV. TNE is part of the working group for the programme, and has already contributed case studies and proposals. Improving safety for women and girls will also improve the safety of public transport for all users, especially people with equalities protected characteristics.

A further £400,000 has been provided for improvements to parks, which has the potential to facilitate more journeys by bus by those people who previously would have avoided travel at night or through parks to reach their bus stops. Measures that improve the safety of active travel increase the likelihood that people will leave the car at home in favour of the bus.

The money that has been made available for these schemes needs to be spent by March 2022 so it aligns with the start of the EP, and will lay the groundwork for safety improvements across our network.

Information on the bus

Current situation

71% satisfaction rating of information on bus. (Transport Focus)

Approximately 40% of the fleet of the main operators is currently fitted with next-stop audio-visual (AV) technology.

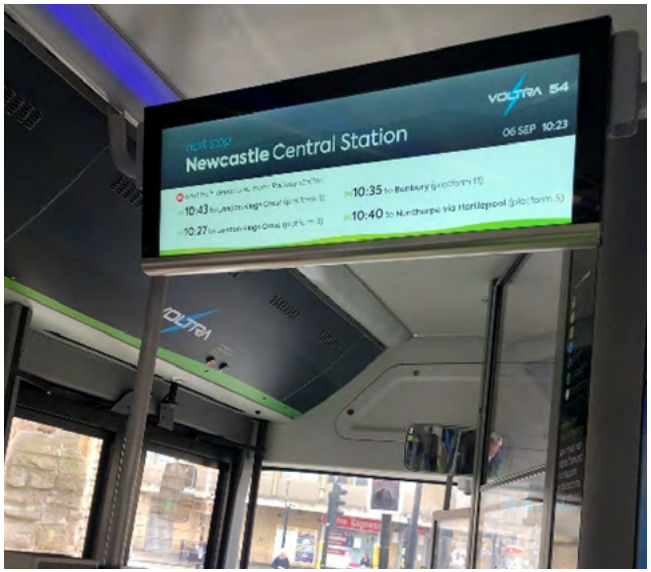
Large operators are committed to purchasing audio-visual equipment as part of the standard specification for new buses, but small operators are led by contractual agreements. An enhanced specification for equipment is not standard.

65% agree that AV systems are for all passengers, not just those with hearing and/or vision impairments.

97% agree AV systems are beneficial to passengers who are unfamiliar with a bus route. (Nexus Insight Panel)

The potential

Providing AV technology on buses makes them far more accessible for those passengers who have visual or hearing impairments, and can encourage a return to bus for a large number of passengers.



AV technology also simplifies the journey experience for passengers, reducing anxieties around missed stops. A simplified journey experience can encourage passengers to get out and explore the North East and make the most of an improved network.

Initiative description

All vehicles to be fitted with enhanced next-stop AV equipment within year 1 or as soon as is practical, to assist all passengers with their journey and enhance the customer experience. This will make public transport more accessible for all and inclusive for those with disabilities.

Service disruption information will be displayed on the onboard screens and integrated with other technologies. This BSIP initiative aims to deliver an enhanced system over and above the minimum standards set out in legislation by the DfT to include accessibility features such as induction loops and connecting onward journey information.

Customer-facing colleagues

Current situation

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.

83% satisfaction rating for 'the helpfulness and attitude of the driver' (Transport Focus).

The potential

Additional customer service training can ensure consistency in the Bus skills of customer-facing colleagues across the network and act as encouragement for people to get back on buses in the knowledge that they are in good hands.

Our team having a better understanding of the local area, its attractions, and the network means they can promote the available offers to a wide range of new and existing customers and grow passenger numbers on services. Empathy for people with extra needs is a critical part of giving equalities act protected groups confidence to travel by bus.

Initiative description

Customer experience colleagues include a wide range of employees from drivers to cleaners who meet passengers on their journeys.

We will develop a consistent training module to be delivered to all front-line bus staff in the North East in years one to two.

This module will be focused on local information, tourist information, enhanced customer service and equalities empathy, to help provide one consistent and friendly voice for the North East's bus services.

As part of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioners' 'Safer Metros, Safer Buses, Safer Parks' initiative, a module on safety and security will be developed and delivered to bus staff.

Ride experience

Current situation

81% satisfaction score for interior cleanliness and condition (Transport Focus).

The quality of ride experience on buses throughout the UK has been transformed in recent decades. 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.

All buses used on our 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.

The potential

By setting out provisions to make the bus ride more appealing, comfortable, and accessible, there is the potential to open ridership back up to a large number of customers who had previously written the bus off as unappealing or unpleasant.

Customer perceptions of bus services are as important as their reality. Improving the on-bus experience for passengers is key to shifting dated perceptions of what bus travel is and encouraging the modal shift back to using the bus.

Cleanliness of buses is a fundamental requirement to encourage people back, particularly in the wake of Covid-19. A large number of potential passengers are still avoiding public transport, a fear that needs to be addressed in order to allow for modal shift.

Initiative description

To ensure a consistent and first-class journey experience for all passengers on our network, over time we will level up our fleet to include AV displays; charging points; comfortable seating and Wi-Fi as standard.

Buses in our region come with individual wheelchair and buggy spaces as standard, a practice which will continue unchanged. A taxi guarantee will be put in our Bus Passenger Charter, giving 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. This information will be widely advertised including on the bus and at bus stops.

We will take the necessary measures to ensure our network is accessible to all people, further details on waiting facilities and dropped curbs can be found in the Highways and Infrastructure sub-section of this BSIP.

Turnaround cleaners will be employed at bus stations throughout our network. They will be available to quickly clean any bus to ensure a clean and pleasant journey on any vehicle.

Information at stations and interchanges

Current situation

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.

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.

The potential

Through improving information provision across the whole public transport network, we can help to form the basis of a fully integrated transport system which offers a better alternative to personal car use.

Integration of modes allows passengers to make sustainable travel choices across the whole of the North East.

Access to bus information at key rail and Metro interchanges can attract a new set of customers, who previously hadn't considered using the bus and vice versa for rail and Metro, potentially growing the patronage system wide.

Initiative description

All interchanges and rail stations will be supported with multi-modal passenger information, showing real-time information about connecting journeys.

The data that feeds these new displays will also come through the new AVL system that is being delivered as part of TCF.

Transport ambassadors will be available at key interchanges throughout the network to guide passengers and help them make the right travel choices.

Transport ambassadors will also function as an extra passenger safety measure as a way to report any concerns or problems.

Improvements will be made to wayfinding in major stations and interchanges through new posters showing where to catch your bus.

Customer charter (beyond the bus)

Current situation

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.

The potential

The introduction of a network-wide passenger charter allows for accountability of services. The customer is given the confidence that their voice is heard and that their feedback and complaints will be taken seriously.

A charter sets out what passengers can expect and can create confidence in the network. This can encourage potential users who are tentative about the quality of the bus experience back onto the bus.

A successful charter will facilitate an improved feedback and complaints process, which in turn can be used to inform further decisions about the network to continually improve the customer experience.

Initiative description

A key initiative of our BSIP and the following EP is our Bus Passenger Charter which will be consistent across our operators and Local Authorities.

Our Bus Passenger Charter is outlined in further detail in the Reporting section of this document.

Delivery of initiatives in this subsection will help us realise our objectives:

Customer Experience
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.
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.
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.
We will provide clear printed information at stops and stations, including in rural areas, and maintain it.
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.
We will provide seamless service information to customers, offering a single source of truth, feeding to any connected systems for passenger information.
All vehicles will be fitted with enhanced next-stop audio-visual equipment, charging points and Wi-Fi as standard.
We will develop a consistent training module to be delivered to all our colleagues who fulfil a direct customer experience role.
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.
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.
All interchanges and rail stations will be supported with multi-modal passenger information, showing real-time information about connecting journeys.
Transport ambassadors will be available at key interchanges throughout the network to guide passengers and help them make the right travel choices.
Improvements will be made to wayfinding in major stations and interchanges through new posters showing where to catch your bus.

BSIP Refresh

In 2022 operators partnered with the DfT's 'it's everyone's journey' campaign, a project that brings together all those committed to improving public transport for disabled people. As part of this project, operators have joined together to sign the Royal National Institute of Blind People's (RNIB) Bus Charter, committing to further improving services for blind and partially sighted people.

The partnership has also identified initiatives that have been brought forward ahead of BSIP funding. The partnership has collaborated on the design of a regionwide public transport logo and name, has come together to agree on a universally applicable Bus Passenger Charter for bus services and has approved a change management Code of Conduct. The details of this work are as follows:

- The Bus Passenger Charter brings together an agreed set of standards for bus services from operators to guarantee a level of service customers can expect when travelling on any bus in our network.
- The Code of Conduct similarly outlines a process that should be followed to ensure any network changes are made in an agreeable and consistent manner and that communities and bus users are adequately consulted with as part of any proposed changes.
- The partnership logo will serve as a 'Kite Mark' of quality across the network, simplifying the network for current and new public transport users.

All of these initiatives aim to improve the customer experience, working towards our KPI to boost customer satisfaction in the region.

4. Delivery Fares and ticketing

This subsection introduces our plans to:

- Simplify the structure of the multi-modal ticketing offer with a clear and consistent zone structure.
- Grow bus patronage through more affordable multi-modal and multi-operator daily caps.
- Intensify our focus on patronage growth amongst young people and families with a 'Kids go free' trial, £1.20 singles for under 19s, and a multi-modal £2.50 fare cap for under 19s.
- Further enhance the multi-modal offer through the inclusion of more rail routes.

This subsection responds to the following requirements of BSIP guidance:

- Targeted fare reductions and identified fares that are in need of reform.
- A commitment to delivering a multi-modal offer.
- Plans to make buses cheaper through low, flat fares and better value day tickets.
- Simplification of the ticketing offer across the network.

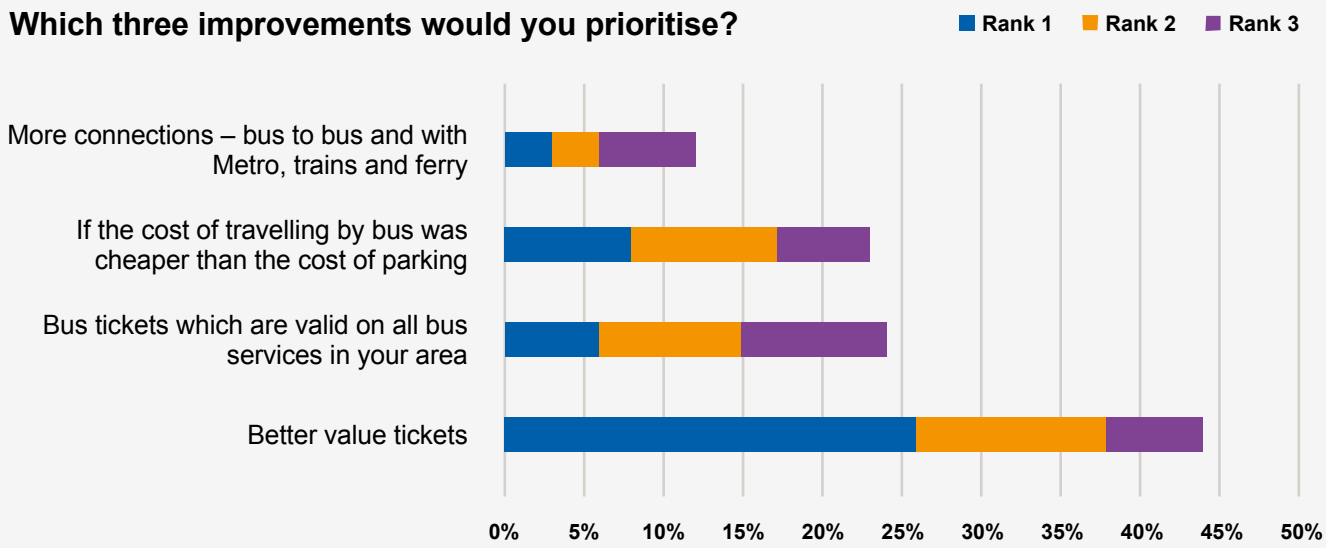


Figure 4:4 What 3 improvements would make people use the bus more

Today's world

Our region operates an integrated public transport network, and our ticketing contains products that allow interchange between different operators and types of transport, including buses, Ferries, Metro and some local rail services. The introduction of an Enhanced Partnership will allow us to build on these foundations and implement enhancements which aim to improve the lives of people working, living and visiting North East England.

We benefit, as a region, from an organisation called NTL (Network One Ticketing Limited), the board of which is comprised of Bus operators and Nexus. Trading as Network One , Bus, Ferry, Train & Metro Tickets in the North East | Network One (networkonetickets.co.uk), NTL describe themselves as 'A Partnership of bus, Metro train and Ferry companies in Tyne and Wear'. As a legal entity, NTL has been the vehicle delivering multi-modal and multi-operator ticketing in the North East since bus deregulation in the 1980s.

Tickets available through Network One can allow travel on bus, rail, Metro and Ferry across Tyne and Wear and on buses in Northumberland and County Durham, we outlined more information about Network One earlier in the document in Section 2.

Nexus also offers a number of different season ticket options through their Pop Cards which allow travel on Ferry, Metro, rail and bus. Pop is an ITSO-compatible system that allows for the purchase of tickets and production of a paperless token for travel across all Metro and most bus services in the North East, the card can also be used to access cycle lockers at Metro stations.

Network One 'All Zones' tickets can now be purchased on a Pop smartcard which means that people can use one smartcard for multi-modal travel across the region, regardless of which operator they are travelling with.

Contactless payment is available on most buses in the region, tap-on-and-tap-off payment is present at points throughout the network but not widely available.

Despite the promising progress that has recently been made in terms of multi-operator and multi-modal forms of ticketing, all operators continue to make the majority of their sales through their own range of fares and products. Consequently, there is still a complex range of brands, fare offers and a lack of standardised tickets for particular demographics such as young people. The following table shows a summary of the types of tickets available on our region's three main operators and tendered services.

Type of ticket	Options available
Adult single	Seven different types of tickets ranging in price from £1 to £7.70 based on a variety of different zonal and graduated distance-based systems. Smart ticketing is available throughout the network whereas tap-on-and-tap-off payment is available on a select few services.
Adult day	Four different ticket offers ranging from £3.90 to £8.50 available in paper and mobile form. Pay as you go day capping available on a limited number of services.
Week	Five options based on local areas and zones in some cases and region-wide options. Price ranges from £12 to £30.
4 week	Three options starting at £52 up to £100. Available in smart and mobile formats.
Annual	Three options available along with three accompanying corporate annual tickets. Prices range from £535 to £1,045.
Flexi-tickets	Only one option available.
Youth single	Five different options offered at a price range between £0.60 and £1.20 available in several formats including paper and smart. Under 16s can travel for £0.60 with a Pop Card in Tyne and Wear. Definitions of young people vary between operators and secured services.
Youth day	Three options at the cheapest £2.90, at the most expensive £5.50. Under 16s can travel for £1.10 with a Pop Card on all modes in Tyne and Wear.
Youth annual	15 week and annual youth tickets available on one of the three main operators.
Student	Limited number of options available in 4 week and annual versions.
Elderly people	ENCTS schemes are organised by the three Local Authorities and are broadly similar in their offers but have slight differences in start times, what is offered and other details. Further details of the ENCTS schemes are covered later on in this section.
Family offer	Operators take part in the Network One family offer.

Figure 4:5 A summary of bus operator ticket offers

Our opportunity

Our research indicates that simpler fares and ticketing will be a key factor in attracting people to use the bus more often noting that our region currently only has a 65% satisfaction score for value for money. In our market research, 73% of frequent car users said that fares & ticketing changes would be needed to make them use the bus more. At the same time, successful fares offers can serve as a way of supporting the economy of the North East by allowing equity of opportunity to travel, connecting people to essential services, to places of employment and to tourist and leisure destinations. Fares that offer the best value for money are fundamental to helping our region, particularly in todays challenging economic landscape; and noting the large areas of multiple deprivation in the North East (outlined in our Transport Plan) and associated transport poverty.

Improved fares also offer a strong product for marketing campaigns, especially as many people attending our stakeholder sessions observed that people 'do not consider the true cost of running cars when comparing the price to bus tickets'.

As a result of the strong foundations in place because of NTL and Network One ticketing, our region is well placed to act quickly and within competition law through existing mechanisms to introduce new multi-modal and multi-operator ticketing products. Furthermore, thanks to Government investment in the Metro Flow project and other areas, which are highly complementary to our bus network and which are scheduled to go live during the currency of this BSIP, the strength of our multi-modal offer will increase further. With great value fares bringing together buses, Metro, Ferries and a new rail route, our region will have a highly attractive and appealing sustainable alternative to the car which is accessible to the majority of our population.

Initiatives

All day multi-modal ticket

Current situation

We have previously described that our 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 we know from our research that people find the offer difficult to understand, especially amongst non-users, 69% of whom stated this to be the case through the 2019 Nexus Insight Panel.

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 our region into North Yorkshire. It is scarcely marketed beyond the Network One website.

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.

Our region's 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.

'Buses cost too much' stated by 34% of people. (Nexus Insight Panel)

The potential

Simple to understand, well marketed multi-modal tickets with attractive 'Headline fares', such as a multi-modal day cap, have the potential to persuade the 73% of non-bus users who could be influenced to switch by a simplified fares structure. Furthermore, the research we commissioned revealed that 'Where you live makes a difference – the further from the urban centres you are, the less practical bus is seen', from which we take multi-modal as a key opportunity. If bus's ability to bridge the 'last mile' from the railway station, Metro station or Ferry landing, to a destination can be better celebrated through an improved multi-modal ticketing offer, then it will be easier to break into the third of people contacted in our market research who stated that 'the places I travelled to aren't easily reached by bus.' Furthermore, multi-modal may entice rail and Metro users who do not usually use the bus to try it out for journeys which they may usually choose the car for.

There is also opportunity to maximise benefits from current and recent investment in our region's rail network. If a means can be found to increase the scope of Network One's activities to heavy rail in County Durham and Northumberland, then stations such as the new Horden Peterlee station in County Durham could truly become part of a multi-modal ticketing offer.

Put simply, we believe **better multi-modal and multi-operator ticketing will increase the simplicity of the overall offer**, streamlining interchange between transport modes and different bus operators' services.

Finally, with tickets which are interchangeable between operators, customers will no longer be constrained to only use one operator on key corridors, meaning that they would experience an increase in frequency too.

Initiative description

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.

Figure 4:6 Proposed zones for multi-modal ticketing

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

Zone	*Multi-modal / Multi-operator target daily cap fare – adult
County Durham	£4
Northumberland	£5
Tyne and Wear	£5
All zone	£6.80

Figure 4:7 Proposed multi-modal ticket prices

*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.

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.

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.

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

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

£1.20 single tickets for under 19s and target £2.50 region wide Under – 19 multi-modal fare cap

Current situation

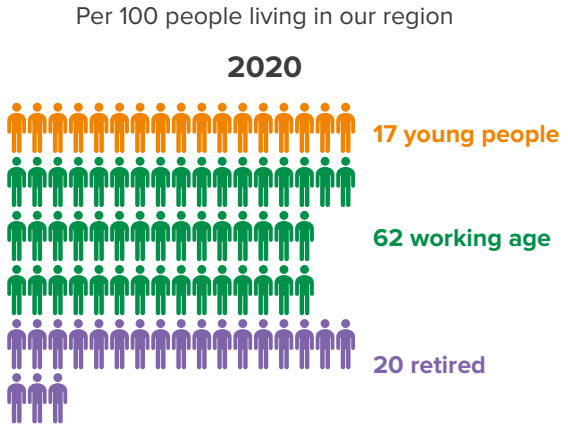


Figure 4:8 The age makeup of North East residents

Nearly half of young residents not in education, employment or training use the bus more than once a week. (Stratified Sample Survey)

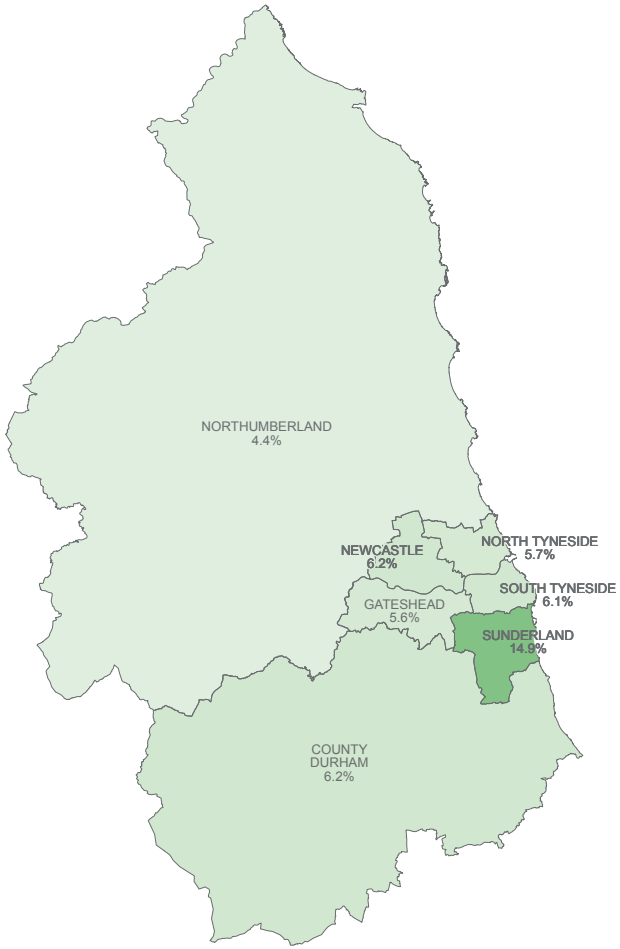


Figure 4:9 NEETS map of the North East

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. We also know that young people seeking less skilled work have a lower pay range.

This issue is particularly prevalent in the North East given our lower-than-average wages and employment levels.

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.

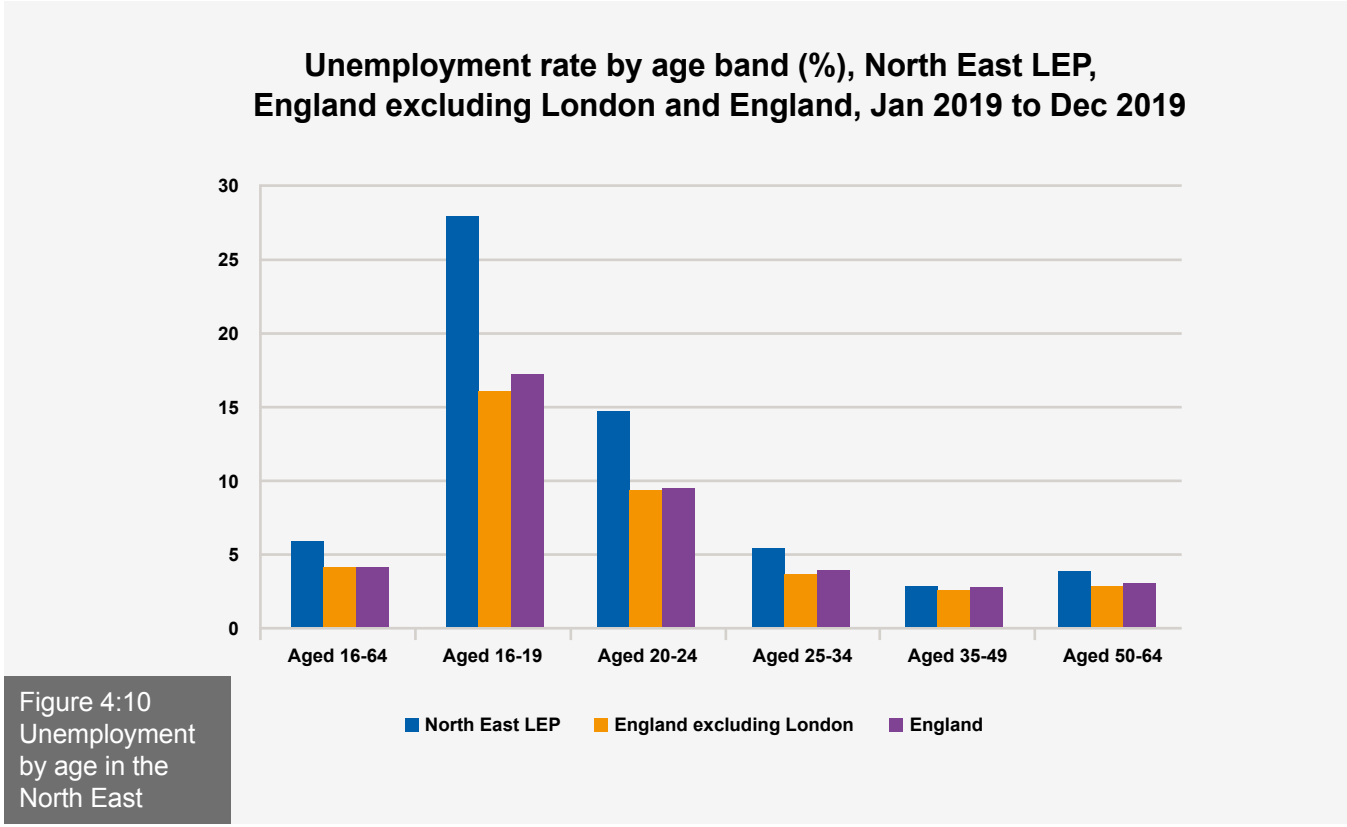


Figure 4:10 Unemployment by age in the North East

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 our 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.

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.

As part of our 'Big Bus Conversation' we asked people what improvements they would make to bus services, here are some of their responses:

'Access, especially for young people 16-25 cheaper or free travel'.

'Make fares for younger people lower'.

'Free or very cheap fares that can be used across all bus and Metro services to encourage people to use buses rather than cars'.

The potential

A well-placed offer aimed at Under-19s can work as a way of delaying young people applying for a driving license and buying a car which is often seen as a 'rite of passage'.

This issue is less prevalent in our urban areas, but still common in rural places, which is particularly relevant for the North East as 45% and 46% of County Durham and Northumberland respectively are classified as rural.

An all-encompassing Under-19 offer also functions as a way of increasing social and economic equality and inclusion, through improving access to education, training and work. This offer has the potential to help level the playing field for young people in our region by offering them equal access to opportunities.

Initiative description

Through this BSIP we intend to kickstart the market in the Under-19 sector in areas where the cheapest fares are not yet available.

Subject to the level of BSIP funding being received, Under-19 single tickets will be introduced region wide at a target fare of £1.20. We will review the options to achieve this, including the introduction of a region wide concessionary scheme if required.

We also intend to offer a capped daily fare for Under-19s with a target price of £2.50. The final price will be subject to modelling and the level of BSIP funding available.

Take the kids for free

Current situation

Only one of our 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.

The potential

The car for many families is the go-to form of transport for everyday activities like shopping, visiting attractions and playing sport. By offering an attractive ticket for families in conjunction with an enhanced network and other improvements to the bus service, the bus could become a viable replacement to the car for families in our region.

At the same time, this form of ticket would have a specific focus on helping to grow the leisure and retail market, supporting shopping centres like the Metrocentre and tourist venues such as the Beamish Museum.

Initiative description

We would like to be able to build upon the success of Metro's 'Take the Kids for Free' offer by extending this to all bus operators in the area.

Case Study:

Metro's 'Take the Kids for Free' offer

In early 2020, Nexus introduced a new offer for passengers called 'Take the Kids for Free'. This initiative allows up to three children (aged 11 and under) to travel for free with a fare paying adult. A fare paying adult was defined as anyone with a valid adult ticket, including season ticket holders and Gold Card holders.

The offer was initially introduced on weekends and proved to be successful before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. With restrictions lifted over summer 2021, Metro expanded the scheme to a daily offer. Over the period of summer 2021, 'Take the Kids for Free' generated an additional 74,000 passenger journeys on Metro and resulted in an overall 2% uplift in revenue taken on the system. Additional ticket purchases by adults taking children for a day out on Metro for free exceeded the loss in revenue for allowing children to travel for free.

The 'Take the Kids for Free' scheme required no capital investment or major changes to ticket ranges in order for it to be introduced.

Through a ‘Take the kids for free’ offer, up to three children aged 11 and under would be able to travel for free with a fare paying adult on any bus in the North East.

This offer will be trailed in the summer of 2022 to test its viability and passenger uplift.

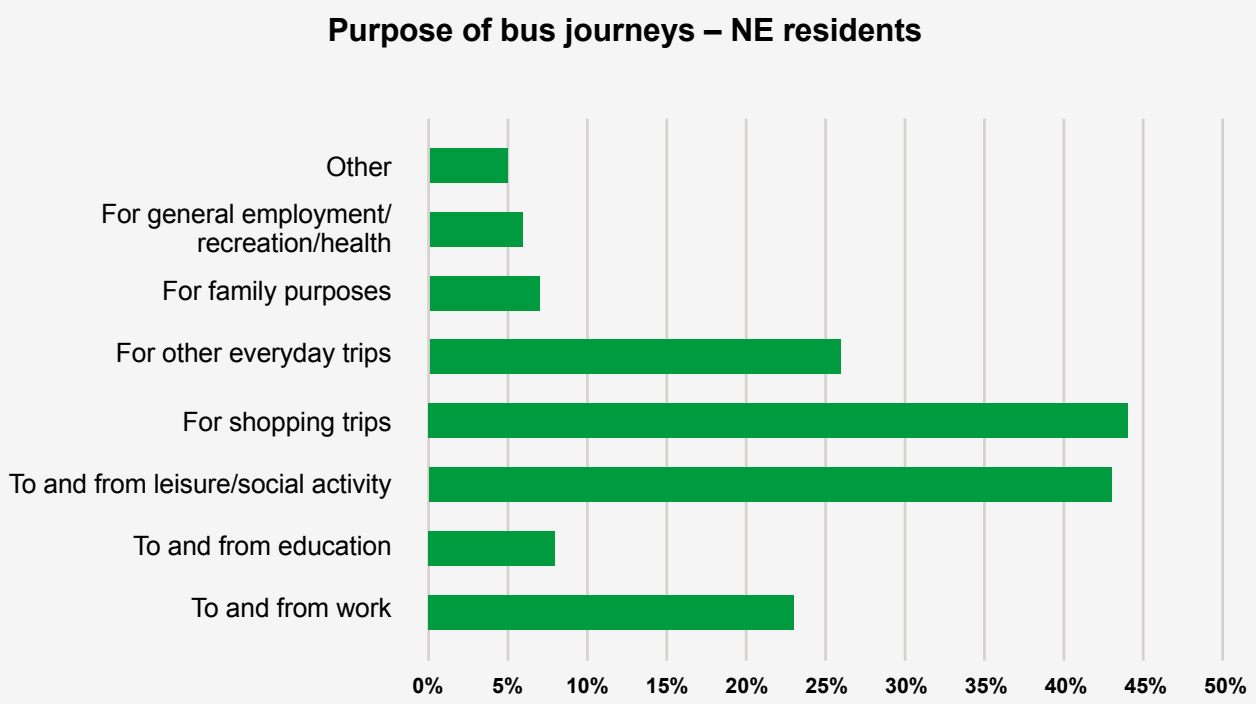


Figure 4:11 Purpose of bus journey

ENCTS

Current situation

The ‘English National Concessionary Travel Scheme’ (ENCTS) 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.

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.

- Nexus (the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive)
- Durham County Council
- Northumberland County Council

Although all 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.

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.

ENCTS payments for the 2021/22 year totaled £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.

Element	Tyne and Wear	Durham	Northumberland
Scheme for general free bus travel	09.30 – 23.00 (M-F) All day at weekends and public holidays	09.30 – 23.00 (M-F) All day at weekends and public holidays	09.30 – 23.00 (M-F) All day at weekends and public holidays
Scheme start time	09.30	09.30	09.00
Scheme end time	None	None	None
Travel prior to 'free' start time?	Free for hospital appointment	50p for any journey	Free for hospital appointment
Local rail inclusion?	Discounted fare on Northern Rail services between Newcastle and Metrocentre/ Blaydon	Half fare on certain: Chester-le-Street or Seaham to/from Newcastle or Middlesbrough (and any station inbetween) Bishop Auckland, Shildon, Newton Aycliffe or Heighington to/from Middlesbrough (and any station inbetween)	No
Companion card allowing someone to travel free with ENCTS holder who requires assistance	Yes	Yes	Yes
Disabled pass eligibility enhancements	24 hours (if in education or employment for at least 15 hours per week)	No enhancements	24 hours
Metro Gold Card – free travel on Metro, Shields Ferry and on Northern Rail services between Newcastle and Sunderland after 9.30am	Yes, £12 annual fee	Yes, £24 annual fee	Yes, £24 annual fee
Under-16 scheme	60p single, £1.10 all day multi-operator	No	No
Taxi scheme for disabled persons	Yes, Taxicard (£225 credit for £10 fee)	No	No
Other	Discounted fares on Shields Ferry for those without Gold Card	Durham Park & Ride, Link2 DRT	Some cross border services to Scotland (mutual cross border acceptance)
Acceptance of other authorities' ENCTS passes regardless of issuing authority			

Figure 4:12 Different ENCTS schemes by TCA

Our opportunity

The bus network across the region saw an unprecedented and sustained reduction in passenger numbers as a result of the pandemic, especially the government instruction to avoid public transport, leaving it in imminent danger of collapse. The Government responded by providing grant funding direct to commercial bus operators and Local Transport Authorities (LTAs), and also asked TCAs to continue making payments for concessionary fares at pre-Covid budgeted levels.

In the North East, payments have continued at pre-pandemic levels.

Given ENCTS patronage has recovered to just over 60% of pre-pandemic levels with an expectation that it will grow further by the end of March 2022, this has resulted in an estimated payment of £10.9m across the three TCAs higher than would have been the case if reimbursement was based on the volume of ENCTS passengers carried.

Initiative description

The Government hopes that the worst effects of the pandemic will have passed by the end of the 2021/22 financial year, such that at that time the requirement to reimburse operators on a 'no better or no worse off' basis will be reinstated, with a phased approach, or 'sliding scale', for the transition back down to pay based on actual concessionary patronage levels in 2022/23.

For the purposes of the BSIP, we have assumed a risk that ENCTS passenger numbers reach an average of 80% of pre pandemic levels, which would represent a risk to bus revenues of £10.9m. This risk is included as a provision in the Finance Form, which may not be drawn down.

Given the broad similarities in ENCTS offers between the three TCAs, in year one of the Enhanced Partnership a study has been defined to propose rationalising between the authorities, to provide a simpler and more consistent set of schemes.

Care leavers' Concession

Current situation

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.

The potential

For a small but very important group of young people in the region, we can transform their opportunities by making bus access easier.

Initiative description

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

Delivery of initiatives in this subsection will help us realise our objectives:

Fares and ticketing

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.

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

*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.

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

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.

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.

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

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

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.

Fares and ticketing continued
We will introduce tickets for under 19s across the region, with a target £1.20 fare for single tickets and £2.50 region wide multi-modal fare cap. The mechanism for delivering this will be further explored.
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.
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.
A care leavers' concession will be available throughout the region. The fare to be set will be agreed through the Care Leavers' Covenant.
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.
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 and therefore this BSIP for legal reasons, we believe that bus operators will consider it under their own decision-making processes.
We anticipate that if all of the investments are funded and delivered, bus patronage will grow by 20% in our region.

BSIP Refresh

As mentioned in the achievements of year one section, we have welcomed progress towards our Fares and Ticketing initiatives through the 'Kids go Free' offer and the pilot travel pass scheme for care experienced young people.

The partnership has also progressed our fares initiatives through extensive modelling work and legal advice on appropriate delivery mechanisms. This has been conducted ahead of any funding being unlocked and we are primed to deliver this as soon as possible once funding is made available.

4. Delivery The network

This subsection introduces our plans to:

- Grow bus patronage above its 2019 baseline, by providing an enhanced network that is simple and easy to understand and offers a safe, reliable and cost-efficient transport alternative to the car.
- Protect the bus network in the North East by providing support to services where this is required to assist recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Optimise alignment of 'capacity and demand' by standing ready to consolidate services on parts of the network, if the market indicates duplication.
- Grow bus patronage by 6.7% by increasing network coverage and enhancing routes where there is potential for sustainable growth.
- Increase accessibility to the integrated transport system for people in rural areas through new on-demand services focused on connections with main bus routes and railway stations.
- Build customer confidence by creating 'standard pattern timetables' with no variations of frequency or length of operating day.
- Support the green recovery and improve the health of our communities by investing in new vehicles and modifications to existing ones.
- Modally shift an estimated 2% of home to school journeys each year in traffic congested parts of our region by introducing a pilot technologically enabled scholars bus offer.

This subsection responds to the following requirements of BSIP guidance:

- More demand responsive and socially necessary services.
- The local network is presented as a single system that works together with clear passenger information.
- Service patterns must be integrated with other modes.

Today's world

The North East's bus network reflects the nature of the area in which it operates, with infrequent services in remote rural areas and high frequencies in dense, urban areas. The North East bus network in 2019/2020 covered approximately 62 million miles with approximately 1,352 buses operating. The four busiest bus stations are located in Tyne and Wear where the density of the network is greatest.

Busiest bus stations in the North East:

- Eldon Square Bus station – Newcastle
- Haymarket Bus station – Newcastle
- Gateshead Interchange – Gateshead
- Park Lane – Sunderland

Combined total of 11 million passengers per annum.

Outside the urban core, there is a strong network of interurban services along main transport corridors. There is lesser provision in rural/peri-rural areas, and often, a lack of transport between towns and rural communities areas with the focus being on flows into the main urban hubs. In rural areas, service provision is dependent on the availability of subsidy and budgetary pressures have often resulted in this being reduced. Some links have been lost entirely, on others, frequency reduced or evening and Sunday services, in many cases, have ceased.

Answers provided to the question "Are there any solutions you would have liked to see, which are missing? If so, what are they?" during Big Bus Conversation:

- "More logical local links between towns and villages i.e. buses that go where locals want to go"
- "Connecting up more rural villages"
- "Shuttle services to and from village locations to main trunk routes for direct access to the City".

Of all the bus routes in our region, 39% offer evening and early morning services but their frequency varies. Some half-hourly or better services run until nearly midnight, but in other cases, a frequent daytime service drops to hourly or lower and in some cases the evening service ceases by around 2100.

Cross-boundary services extend into the Scottish borders from Berwick in North Northumberland, from Western Northumberland and Country Durham to Cumbria and from Newton Aycliffe and South West Durham and Darlington and East Durham into Hartlepool. There are also services linking us to destinations in the Tees Valley such as Middlesbrough.

Our opportunity

The opportunity presented to us in the BSIP is to tackle barriers to bus use, in order to meet the targets set out in Section 3 of this BSIP. Actions that we take to maintain and grow our network in terms of frequency and geographic coverage on the network, are crucial to this. Our vision encompasses the whole of our diverse region, from the predominantly urban centre of Tyne and Wear to the most rural and remote parts of County Durham and Northumberland.

If we fail to take action, bus patronage may not recover to pre-pandemic levels.

This would lead to reduction of less commercially viable network routes and lead to a private car dominated recovery from the pandemic. Fewer bus services would also leave many people in our region stranded, noting that 28% of households do not own a car – the highest proportion outside of London. In short, if the coverage of our bus network were diminished, people would not be able to reach work or education.

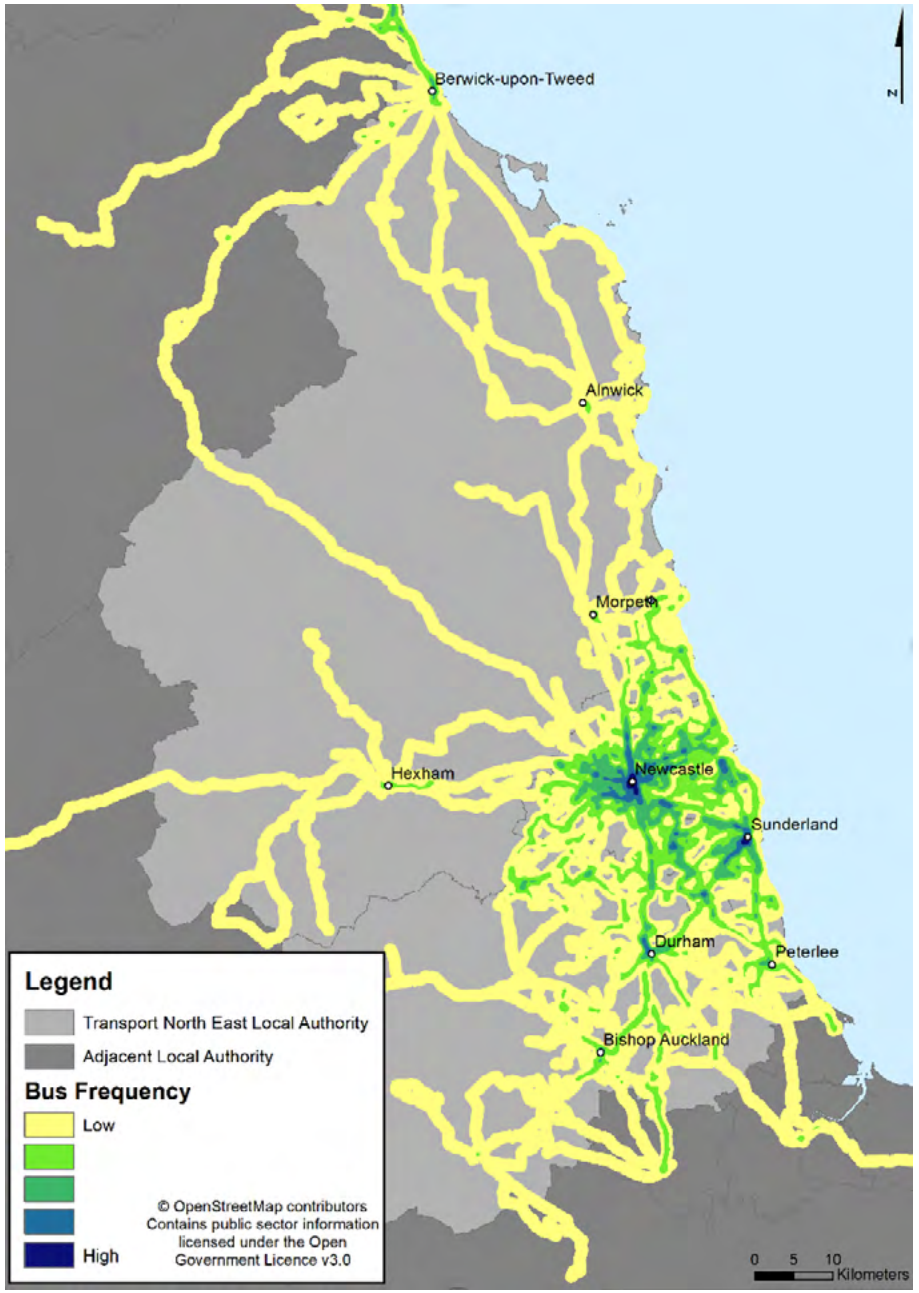


Figure 4:13 Heat map of the current bus network

Initiatives

Maintaining a sustainable network

Current situation

Our goal is to use our current network as a foundation, so that we can maintain our strong base of bus patronage in the North East and then grow from it, ultimately safeguarding and increasing patronage levels.

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. Our 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.

The potential

It is vital that we protect the current bus network, so that the BSIP and EP do not begin with a weakened market base. A strong network base is the starting point for our Transport Plan objective of offering appealing, sustainable transport choices. As people return to their pre-covid activities, they need to find in place the bus service they knew. By contrast, if the network is cut and people have to shift to using a car, there is a risk that they will not return.

Naturally, the number of passengers will increase as more people return to the office and places of education (leisure passengers have already rebounded), but the shape of the future market is uncertain with some research reporting that only 70% of people believe that they will travel in the same way as before.

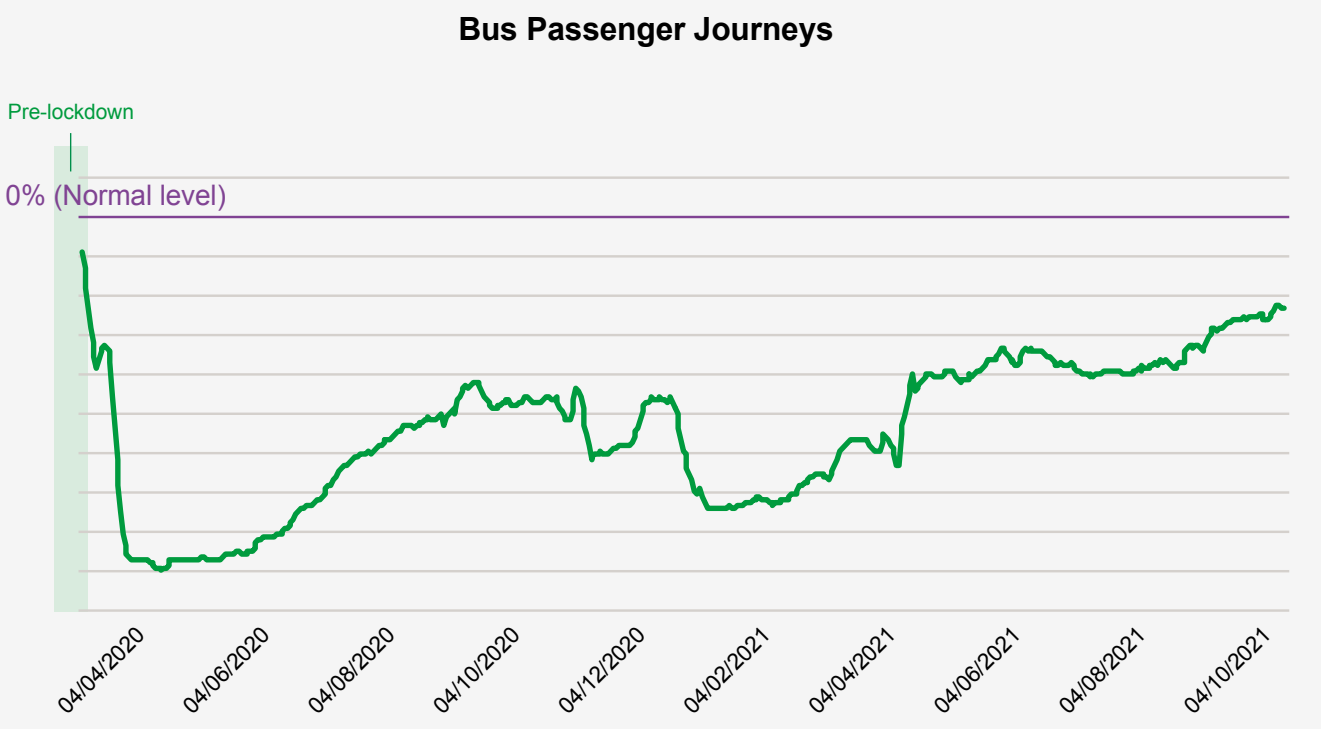
The partnership will work to preserve the bus network, ensuring adverse impacts from bus cuts are minimised and that the initiatives in the BSIP are brought to life in the form of the EP Plan and Schemes, so that we can grow the market for bus. The progression of the BSIP and EP will reverse the trend of bus ridership decline, reaching more people who would like to travel by bus now and attracting people away from using cars.

Initiative description

We will work with operators to ensure that sufficient funding is available to maintain their current networks once the Bus Recovery Grant ceases. We will similarly work with local authorities to ensure that they have sufficient funding to maintain their ‘socially necessary’ (secured) services, to ensure that any requirements are correctly funded.

In 2018/19, revenue from bus services in our region was £230 million, including £160 million from fares, £52 million from local authority concession re-imbursement and £18 million from contract payments (for example, from local authorities or other stakeholders).

We have worked with bus operators and local authorities to forecast how revenue from the current network is likely to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, based on performance since we started to move out of lockdown during 2021. We estimate that recovery will be 80% in April 2022, increasing by five percentage points per annum and returning to pre-pandemic levels after four years. However, our data shows that OAP/ Disabled concession passengers are not returning to the network at the same rate as fare-paying customers, which may mean that local authorities have to reduce concession re-imbursement.



Bus passenger numbers took a significant hit during the initial lockdown period. Passenger numbers have seen some recovery, but there is more to be done to encourage passengers back onto our buses to reach pre-covid levels.

Figure 4:14 Bus passenger journeys

Consolidation to reduce duplication and over-provision

Current situation

We acknowledge that 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 the Enhanced Partnership. Transport North East has independently reviewed the current network in detail in order to identify what they might be.

The potential

Where there is duplication in a network, a more coordinated and integrated service has the potential to increase efficiency. For example, if eight buses per hour currently provide four buses from each operator at 3- and 12- minute intervals, with no ticket inter-availability, a coordinated service can offer an even six buses per hour at 10-minute intervals with inter-available ticketing. Whilst the number of buses per hour reduces by two, passengers have a bus every ten minutes instead of every 12.

Case Study: **Newcastle – Metrocentre Service 100**

Since it opened in 1986 Stagecoach (and its predecessors) have provided a dedicated shuttle service 100 linking Newcastle City Centre with the Metrocentre shopping complex, operating six times per hour with single deck buses. This has operated in addition to Go North East's longer distance services which also link Newcastle City Centre and Metrocentre, with a similar route and journey time, providing 14 mostly double deck operated departures each hour.

Each operator has its own range of tickets that are only accepted on its buses, meaning that Stagecoach ticket holders only have a choice of a bus every 10 minutes, whilst Go North East ticket holders have a choice of 14 departures each hour.

The independent review of services commissioned by Transport North East has identified this overlap in services as one area in which duplication can be reduced, and the resources saved, redeployed to either support the current network or to be reinvested in improved services.

Service 100 has now been temporarily withdrawn, releasing four buses and drivers. Passengers who previously used the 100 service are easily accommodated on the Go North East services, which will still provide 14 buses per hour (roughly a bus every 5 minutes) between Newcastle and Metrocentre and with Stagecoach tickets being accepted on the Go North East buses, these ticket holders have an improved choice of journey opportunities with more than double the number of buses available to use.

The previous ‘Newcastle – Metro Service 100’ case study gives an example of what has been achieved in the North East under this initiative even whilst developing the Enhanced Partnership.

Initiative description

Independent analysis undertaken by Transport North East suggested locations on the network where currently there is some duplication and there may be more capacity than is needed. A collaborative exercise was subsequently carried out, with Transport North East as an independent ‘broker’, first engaging each large and smaller operator in 1:1 discussion and then airing a blended solution in joint discussions.

However, as the bus market is constantly changing and recovering, we will take a flexible approach, under frequent review, which crucially will be based on market conditions.

We consider market conditions to be factors such as patronage, commercial situation, demand, as well as possible demand generated by other initiatives set out elsewhere in this plan.

Bus network improvements

Current situation

Our vision to improve the bus network starts from a relatively strong position. More trips per capita are made by bus in our area than in most other English regions because we have a good network supported by well-developed bus priority measures.

We have many corridors with high-frequency services, and we have an excellent and well-used network of interurban express routes running into our 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 our own research, especially in the Tyne and Wear area. We need to take this into account, as it indicates there may be potential to grow already frequent services.

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 our stakeholder engagement told us that people want more and better connections between local places, not only the radial routes to the cities.

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 from our region and elsewhere suggests that innovative measures like Demand Responsive Transport and brokerage can be successful in filling gaps in the network.

Our 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.

The potential

The North East is a vibrant region, with large-scale employment opportunities, an excellent student offer, world heritage visitor sites and an evening economy that attracts tourists from neighbouring regions as well as the wider UK and overseas.

The BSIP presents an opportunity to invest in our bus network, including new or expanded routes where there is unmet demand or potential for sustainable growth.

The interurban corridors have pockets of high population, some of which are former mining villages where families have suffered inter-generational deprivation and for whom the bus is a link to economic, educational and social opportunities. These corridors link population centres to economic centres, and the excellent bus stations in Hexham, Morpeth, Consett and our City Centres can act as hubs.

Enhancing this network would not only increase the size of the bus market but would contribute greatly to the region's social and economic growth.

Improving bus links between our local, sub-regional and regional centres would have a similar impact, especially where effective connections can be made with trunk services to/from our City Centres. This would encourage local economic and social activity.

In rural areas, frequent services are not necessarily required, but regular ones can be a lifeline by offering access to employment, education and social opportunities. We know from our experience on the North Northumberland Coast that investing in rural services encourages people to make new journeys and substitute car trips for bus trips.

More early morning, late evening and overnight buses can build patronage by giving people greater access to employment and allowing them to enjoy the nighttime economy. Our limited overnight services are already well-used, but targeted investment could make them into an effective network. Research by the Department for Transport showed that between 2018 and 2020 a total of 188 pedestrians, 93 car drivers and 97 car passengers were killed in dark light. Moving early morning, late evening and nighttime journeys to buses could help to reduce this.

Initiative description

We will create an enhanced bus network that is simple and easy to understand and capable of taking everyone where they need to go for work, education, healthcare, shopping and leisure activities.

This will be based on minimum standards of service and length of operating day, as set out in the table above, so customers always know what to expect. Buses will run to 'standard pattern timetables' with no variations to routes at any time of the day (for example, in the evening or on Sundays).

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

Figure 4:15 An enhanced bus network for the North East

Buses will work alongside Tyne and Wear Metro, National Rail and ferry services to create a truly integrated system where people can transfer easily between modes. There will be more early morning, evening and overnight services as well as better connections beyond our boundaries, reflecting recent and expected changes in work and leisure travel patterns. Cleaner and greener vehicles will help achieve our target for net-zero emission transport by 2035 and tackle the Climate Emergency declared by our two combined authorities as well as all seven Local Authorities.

Superbus will be the heart of the network offering high-frequency services in our urban areas that allow customers to simply ‘turn up and go’. There will be two types of Superbus services – Red Routes and Green Routes.

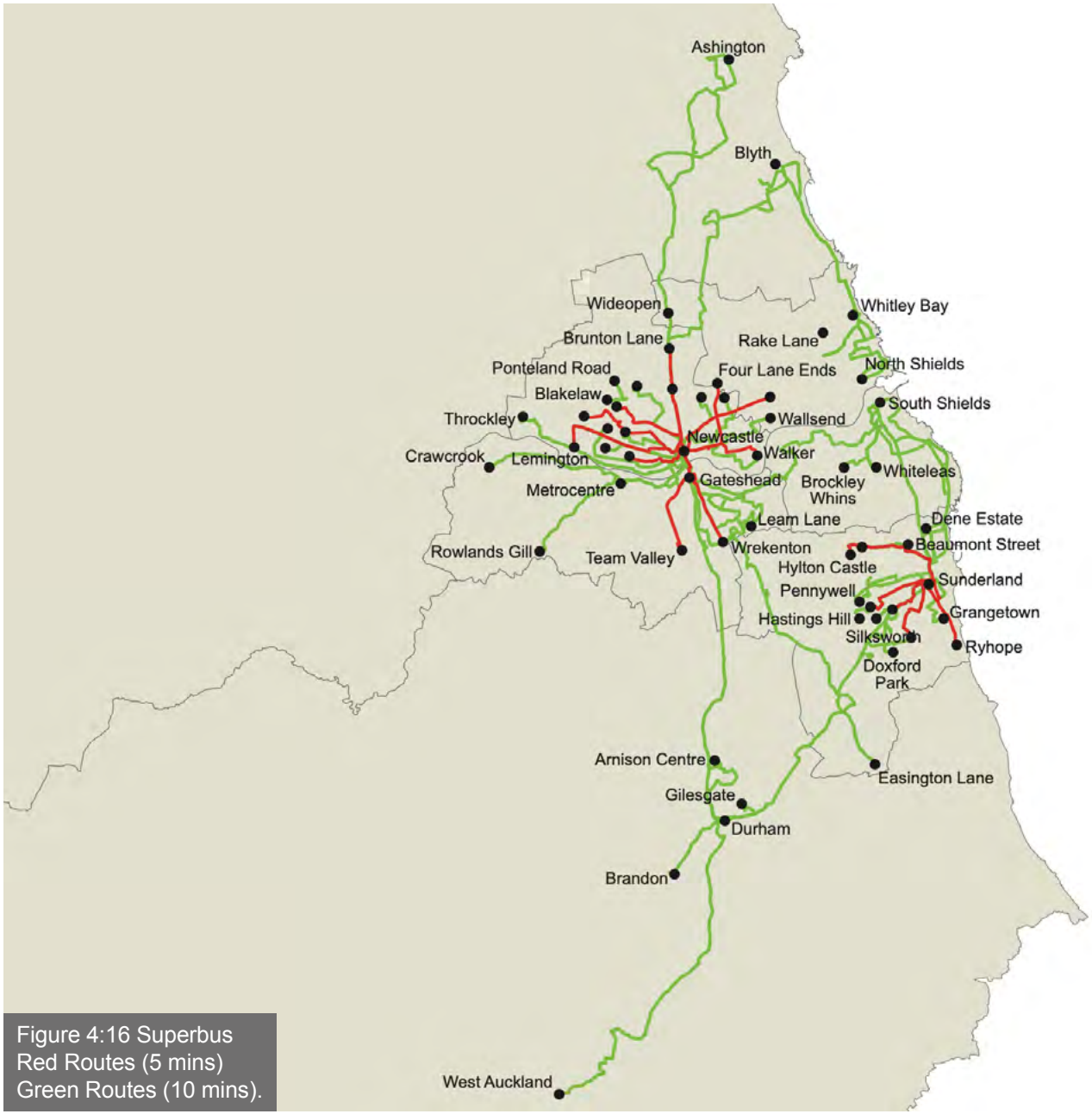


Figure 4:16 Superbus Red Routes (5 mins) Green Routes (10 mins).

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 and routes serving Newcastle will run at least hourly overnight (see Night Network on page 102).

The network of Red Routes will consist of 13 easy to understand services (or groups of services) and will be a true 'round the clock' operation reflecting the diverse range of transport needs across our region. Although primarily aimed at linking people with the main centres of Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland, buses will also connect with the Tyne and Wear Metro and National Rail services at key hubs (for example, Four Lane Ends, Regent Centre and Newcastle Central Station).

Delivering them will require an investment of 28 extra vehicles incurring operating costs of £4.2 million per annum. However, supported by our fares, highways and marketing initiatives, we expect the network to generate an additional three million passenger journeys per annum by 2025 making it commercially viable.

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. Some will also run overnight where there is established demand (see Night Network on page 102).

The network of Green Routes will cover a much wider area than the Red Routes, including towns and cities across our region. For example, service 6 will provide a 'trunk' link between Durham, Spennymoor, Bishop Auckland and West Auckland with buses continuing less frequently to Cockfield and Barnard Castle. It will connect people with the railway in Durham and Bishop Auckland and will be fed by other buses and Demand Responsive Transport at several local hubs along the route.

Superbus services will be made more attractive by the investment in bus priority provided for in the BSIP.

Buses operating every five and 10 minutes are widely regarded as 'turn up and go', but we will consider whether customer information requirements are higher at 10-minute frequencies than five.

Figure 4:17 Superbus Durham to Barnard Castle

Some existing high-frequency corridors have several overlapping services and we will simplify these to better meet customers' needs. Any operational efficiencies will be re-deployed to other parts of the network or used to meet growth in demand, as our regular review of market conditions determines.

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.

We will make major investments in the links from Consett, Stanley and Morpeth to Newcastle, where our analysis shows potential to generate demand by running services of this standard. We will also increase early morning and evening services on several routes, benefitting communities across the region.

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.

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. In some places, we will provide a better level of service, for example where there is seasonal demand or an innovative way of delivering enhancements.

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. 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. We will also ensure services are fully integrated with other bus routes and modes of transport, as we know the importance of effective connections in rural areas.

South Northumberland Connect Example

The National Bus Strategy identified South Northumberland as an area where the bus network could be developed because of its demographics and its patchwork of small industrial towns and large villages including Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth, Cramlington and Morpeth.

The area already has good bus links, as many of the towns and villages lie on frequent interurban express routes to/from Newcastle. Our plan will ensure they are all linked by services that run every 30 minutes on Monday to Saturday daytimes and hourly in the evening and Sundays.

This will be a big improvement in some places, not least between Cramlington and Morpeth where buses only run hourly on Monday to Saturday daytimes and there is no service at all on evenings or Sundays. The enhanced network will complement existing National Rail services at Morpeth as well as the proposed Northumberland Line and will improve access to work, education and leisure facilities across the area.

We will build on the success of our existing night buses by introducing them on all Superbus Red Routes and Superbus Green Routes where there is established demand.

Branded as Night Network, buses will run at least hourly and will mirror daytime services, using the same route numbers and following the same routes to assist marketing and customer confidence. Buses will also use the same stops, and the times will be co-ordinated to allow passengers to interchange between them easily.

Figure 4:18 Night Network

Buses meet trains in Alnmouth – Integration in a rural area

In 2015, Arriva worked with Northumberland County Council to improve the bus service between Able, Warkworth, Alnmouth and Alnwick from hourly to half-hourly on Monday to Saturday daytimes. Adding an hourly X20 to the already hourly X18 created a dedicated link for Alnmouth railway station and allowed buses to be timed to meet trains. Since then, the number of people using buses to access the station has more than trebled, reducing traffic congestion at the station and helping to make the enhanced bus service more sustainable.

We will build on this in two ways. Firstly, we will work with bus and train operators to ensure that buses continue to connect with trains after the major review of the East Coast Main Line (ECML) timetable in 2023. Secondly, we will transfer this good practice to other rural places on our network, including Berwick-upon-Tweed on the ECML as well as Hexham and Haltwhistle on the Tyne Valley line.

Demand Responsive Transport

Current situation

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 one of our 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.

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

Our region has some of the most rural communities in England with 21% of our population living in rural towns and villages. Analysis for Northumberland alone, tells us 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.

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 below.

The potential

An estimated 560 million car trips take place in rural areas within our region each year based on the National Transport Survey published by the Department for Transport. Modal share for bus is also lower in Northumberland and Country Durham than in Tyne and Wear, demonstrating there is a balance to address and also market to break into if we are to achieve the targets of this BSIP.

Commuting to work trends in the region also indicate that journeys on congested arteries on the approaches to Newcastle and Durham may well originate in rural areas. For example, 19,289 people cross the boundary from Northumberland into Newcastle each day. The Transport Plan sets out a clear policy for on-demand transport: “We must help more people to reach the sustainable transport network with more ‘on demand’ solutions”. When delivered to its full extent, our vision would be to provide a DRT solution linking every part of our network that established and future bus and rail routes are unable reach.

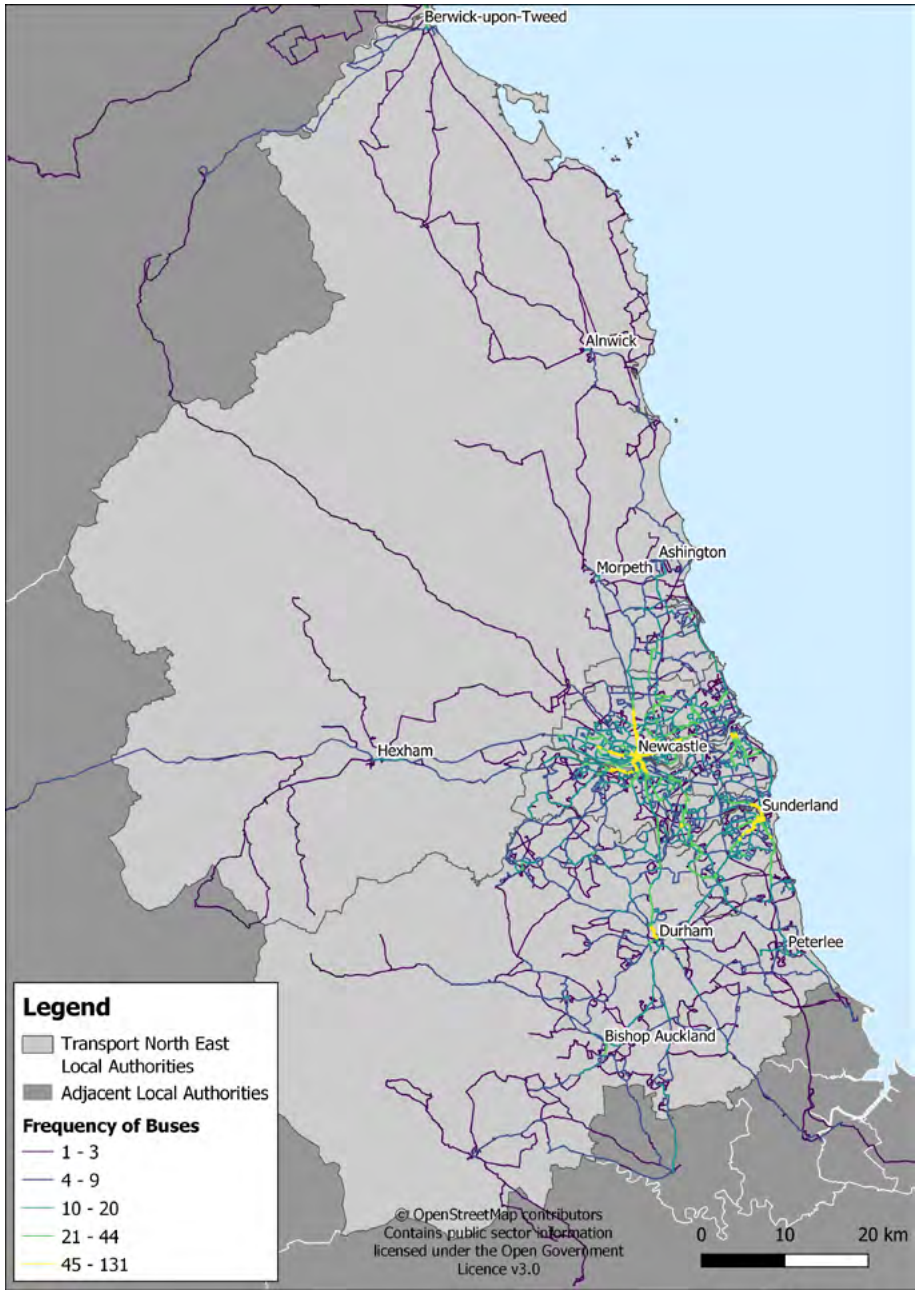


Figure 4:19 shows current network bus frequency with disparity to the West of the region

Throughout our Big Bus Conversation and stakeholder events, the people of our region have expressed enthusiasm for improved rural connectivity.

Initiative description

In the first phases of the delivery of our DRT policy statement set out in the Transport Plan, which is intended, ultimately to provide a region-wide reach, we will launch two pilot operations in the second year of our BSIP. The first year will be dedicated to procurement and implementation ahead of the 'go live date' in 2023. The scale of the pilot will be 6 vehicles based in locations across the rural areas of Northumberland and 6 in County Durham.

In Country Durham, our pilot will further develop the Link2 operation to enhance its capacity to link diffused or hard to serve demands with the broader travel network. The scope could include serving focused markets at different times as day, such as school transport, commuters and other community needs.

In Northumberland, our pilot DRT operations will focus on proving a concept designed to expand and complement the reach of the existing sustainable network.

In Northumberland, vehicles will be geographically located so communities that don't have any other form of public transport can make local trips and connect into the trunk 685, 808, X14, X15 and X18 bus routes, all of which this BSIP proposes investment both in terms of frequency, hours of operation and infrastructure. Our DRT operation will also provide connections to trains serving rural stations on the East Coast Mainline and Tyne Valley Line, which are scheduled to increase during the currency of the BSIP. We will take a similar approach in County Durham, allowing residents to make new local journeys as well as connecting with trunk bus services and the National Rail network. The full geographic area will be defined during the EP discussions.

Rather than an unstructured 'book to go anywhere, anytime' with characteristics similar to a taxi, our DRT service will have a regimented operational day which could include:

- Offering local journeys where there is no alternative public transport available.
- Providing time-specific connections from communities to trunk route bus stops and railway stations to meet connecting services.
- Providing time-specific connections into routes serving schools or to GP surgeries or other essential services based on the operating times of that service.

We will take measures to ensure that our DRT offer to customers is a wholly integrated feature of our region's transport network:

- Advertised bus connections will be held, with either the trunk route bus or DRT service being required to wait. At railway stations, connection times will be planned to be reliable.
- Waiting amenities at connecting locations will be well lit with real-time information and where possible, these will be focused on the Pocket Park & Ride locations mentioned in our infrastructure subsection.
- Through-ticketing will be a key feature with fares initiatives set out elsewhere in this section being valid for use on the services and operators fares also being accepted subject to agreement of terms and conditions.
- Information, including real-time information will be a feature of our new app and website. Assuming it is technically possible, this will also be the route to booking, with voice-assisted technology solutions and telephone numbers also provided.

- The service will be branded as part of the network with staff required to undertake similar levels of training as their colleagues on the scheduled bus network.

The DRT solution will be procured under the Enhanced Partnership; and whilst not all of our KPIs will apply because of the nature of the service, it will be subject to review by the partnership board.

A new technologically enabled offer for home to school transport

Current situation

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 tells us that many parents drive children to school and that children return by public transport.

The data is backed up by verbatim feedback gathered in our 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.

Our 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.

The potential

During the school summer holidays, the volume of traffic on the road network in the North East decreases by 15% in the morning peak, even the removal of a third of car journeys to and from school would save an estimated 44m car journeys in the region each year, reducing the negative effect of the associated economic and emission impacts.

Crucially, a reduction in journeys at this time would also make our roads safer. During 2019, 111 accidents occurred involving children during the peak commuting time in our region. DfT research suggests that up to 30% of incidents in which children are killed or seriously injured are caused by parked cars obscuring view of the road they are about to cross.

Any initiative which transitions younger people to public transport has potential for their long-term independence, eventually reducing the number of people in our region who see connectivity as a barrier to reaching employment or opportunity.

An increase in revenue in home-to-school transport would also be welcomed, diminishing the reliance on subsidies for these vital services.

Initiative description

We have identified 12 candidate schools in the region whose travel-to-school area impacts some of the most congested parts of our road network for inclusion in a pilot project, the aim of which is to transition the school run from car to bus.

We will partner with the successful schools in advance of each new school year to market the 'solution' of 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.

The need to inspire the confidence of parents in the refreshed service will be central to its offer:

- Child fares will be capped at a maximum daily rate and parents will be able to pay with direct debit or other means through a plan to suit their needs, safe in the knowledge that their children won't lose (or spend) their bus fare.
- Parents will be able to download an app which tells them the precise location of the bus, and 'pings' them to indicate that their child's Pop card has been used to board the bus and that the bus has arrived at school, or the drop off point on the way home.

We will procure the IT infrastructure through an established supplier and customise the interface to work with the Pop card system. Project management resources will be provided and additional staffing resource will be required to manage liaisons with schools in the pilot project.

Cleaner and greener vehicles

Current situation

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 eight years.

> Big Bus Conversation data showed 23% of passengers surveyed were concerned about the condition and cleanliness of the bus used for their journey.

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 our lower.

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.

Figure 4:20 Existing North East Fleet

NE Fleet	Euro 2	Euro 3	Euro 4	Euro 5	Euro 6	Zero Emission	Hybrid
Midi	0	12	19	144	51	0	0
Single	0	32	78	253	245	9	0
Double	0	29	56	114	270	0	40
Total	0	73	153	511	566	9	40
% Total	0%	5.4%	11.32%	37.8%	41.86%	0.67%	2.96%

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.

The potential

The North East Transport Plan sets targets for Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles: all buses to meet the Euro 6 emissions standard by 2025; all buses zero emissions by 2035. These targets put focus on the level of support that will be required, not only for the smaller operators, but also for the larger operators as this renewal will fall out of the standard commercial environment.

Despite the size of this task there is optimism on the basis that the costs of zero-emission buses will continue to decrease and range increases. Through NEbus, there is a direction of travel with investment in cleaner fleets, we can however go further and there is ambition to do so.

As part of this improvement of the fleet, there should be a focus on the older buses in the fleet, because a bus of Euro 5 standard, is still more environmentally friendly than multiple cars being on the road. Then the comparatively newer buses will increase patronage as cleaner and greener vehicles attract more passengers.

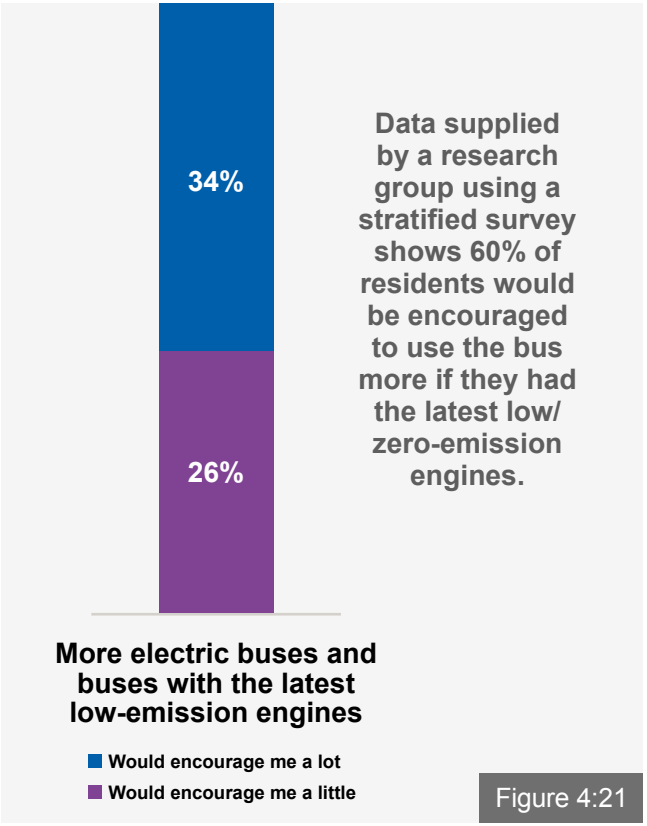


Figure 4:21

These greener vehicles will improve the air quality of the region (especially the denser urban areas) and contribute to the betterment of the health of the North East.

Initiative description

Bus operators in the North East have committed to renew their fleets or retrofit them with emission reducing-technology. However, as previous government funded retrofitting has fitted many of the newer pre Euro 6 buses with exhaust equipment to bring them up to Euro 6 standard, retrofitting can now only be implemented on around 200 of the fleet due to vehicle age. Bus replacement will be the key driver of change. With 737 pre Euro 6 buses, and 20 Euro 6 buses that will reach the end of their life by 2025, some 557 will need to be replaced over the next four years in order to meet the 2025 deadline for a minimum of Euro 6 emissions, an average of 139 per year. We are seeking funding to upgrade the remaining 200 buses, at £18k each, a total of £3.6m.

With a fleet of 1,352 buses, and a standard vehicle life of 15 years, operators would normally purchase an average of 95 new buses every year in order to maintain average fleet age.

However, we have only 14 years to replace almost the entire fleet, as we have only nine modern zero emission vehicles in the fleet, which increases the annual rate to 101 buses per year, 6 higher than the operators would normally invest in.

The operators have so far committed to buying 215 new vehicles over the life of the Enhanced Partnership (54 per year), With the need to speed up the replacement program over the four years 2022-2025 to achieve Euro 6 compliance, 139 vehicles will need to be purchased each year for four years, representing an increase of 44 per annum above the normal level. Through the partnership discussions will take place with the operators to understand how they will increase their purchasing of new vehicles to achieve the normal renewal rate that they need. As our plans require vehicle replacement to be speeded up by 44 vehicles per annum, we are seeking funding to purchase these zero emission buses per year for each of four years, at £480k per vehicle. From 2026 onwards, replacement would revert to the normal level of 95 vehicles per year.

We have already been accepted through the first stage of the ZEBRA bid, the final bid to be submitted in January 2022. If successful, a new fleet of 73 electric vehicles will be operating across the region. These vehicles would then join the fleet and replace a bus on a route of Euro 5 or lower. We would seek further funding through ZEBRA and the BSIP to replace more of the fleet with zero-emission buses.

There is desire amongst operators to trial hydrogen fuelled buses, as this is an emerging technology that offers a greater mileage range than electric buses. The 44 vehicles per year that we are bidding for will be part of this trial, and the cost of hydrogen refuelling stations is included in our bid.

The larger proportion of the fleet would then grow to be zero emission buses. To meet our goal set for 2035 we would not seek to bring any further Euro 6 buses onto the fleet, as these would then need to be replaced in less than 10 years from introduction.

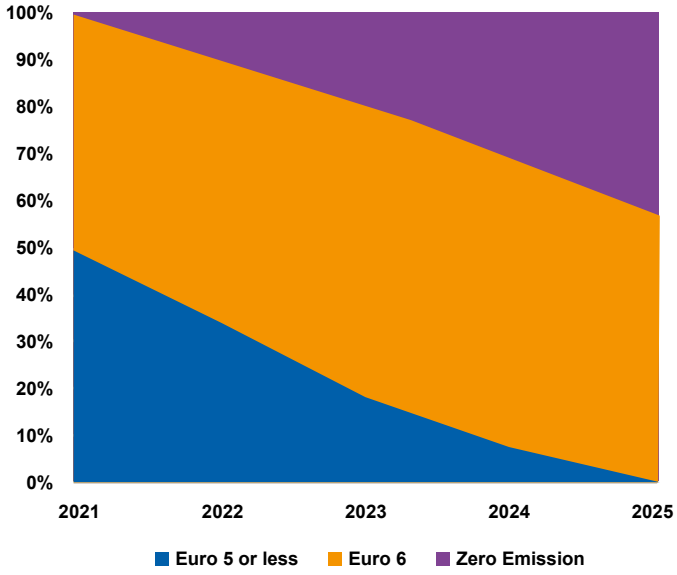


Figure 4:22 Indicative profile of vehicle emission standards

Delivery of initiatives in this subsection will help us realise our objectives:

Network

We will work with operators to ensure that sufficient funding is available to maintain their current networks once Bus Recovery Grant ceases.

We will similarly work with local authorities and Nexus to ensure that they have sufficient funding to maintain their 'socially necessary' (secured) services.

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

Superbus will have two variants:

- 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. 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.
- Superbus services will made more attractive by the investment in bus priority provided for in the BSIP.

Network continued

We will build on the success of our existing night buses by introducing them on Superbus Routes where there is established demand.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

We will launch two pilot rural DRT operations in the second year of our BSIP.

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.

We will accelerate operators' existing bus replacement programmes so that all vehicles are Euro 6 standard or Zero-emission by March 2025.

We will trial hydrogen vehicles and install hydrogen refuelling stations to support them.

BSIP refresh

The recovery of the bus network has been slower than we'd have hoped for at the time of writing the BSIP. Certain market trends, such as young people travelling by bus, have recovered well, although other groups such as travel by concessionary groups remains low. The 'Omicron wave' of Covid- 19 and the subsequent work from home advice slowed growth and there is a continued trend of at home working, with 22.4% of the region still working from home in 2022 (although this is the lowest percentage in England).

It is hoped that BSIP funding can avoid a cliff edge in service levels, once BRG funding comes to an end and that further BSIP investments will turn the tide to boost bus ridership in the region.

4. Delivery Highways and infrastructure

This subsection introduces our plans to:

- Accelerate bus journey times and improve reliability and punctuality for over 115 million current and future bus users each year with a programme of highways interventions.
- Improve the 'walking and waiting' experience at and around bus stations with a package of investment in new and updated facilities.
- Address congestion in City Centres through new Park & Ride facilities.
- Transform the experience of bus travel in our region by coordinating infrastructure role out with the enhanced frequencies and customer offer set out throughout this BSIP.

This chapter responds to the following requirements of BSIP guidance:

- Use of operators' data to understand the problems.
- Focus on key corridors for bus prioritisation, with a wide array of interventions.
- Faster and more reliable, with bus priority wherever necessary and possible.
- Complement walking, cycling and other public transport, as well as accessibility and customer experience through upgrading our walking and waiting provisions.
- Consider the need to reduce congestion in key urban centres.

Today's world

The North East has a comprehensive and extensive road network comprising over 12,000 miles, linking major urban centres and rural communities. The network acts as a key artery for the region, linking businesses with markets, people with jobs, family and recreation, and enabling goods to reach businesses and the consumer. However, this network carries increasing levels of congestion, with high proportions of car usage in urban centres including Newcastle, Durham, Gateshead and Sunderland. This congestion imposes costs on our society, to the economy, where it is estimated to cost £400 per driver each year and is leading to increasing journey times; and to our communities, with 2,104 people killed or seriously injured on our roads between 2018 and 2020.

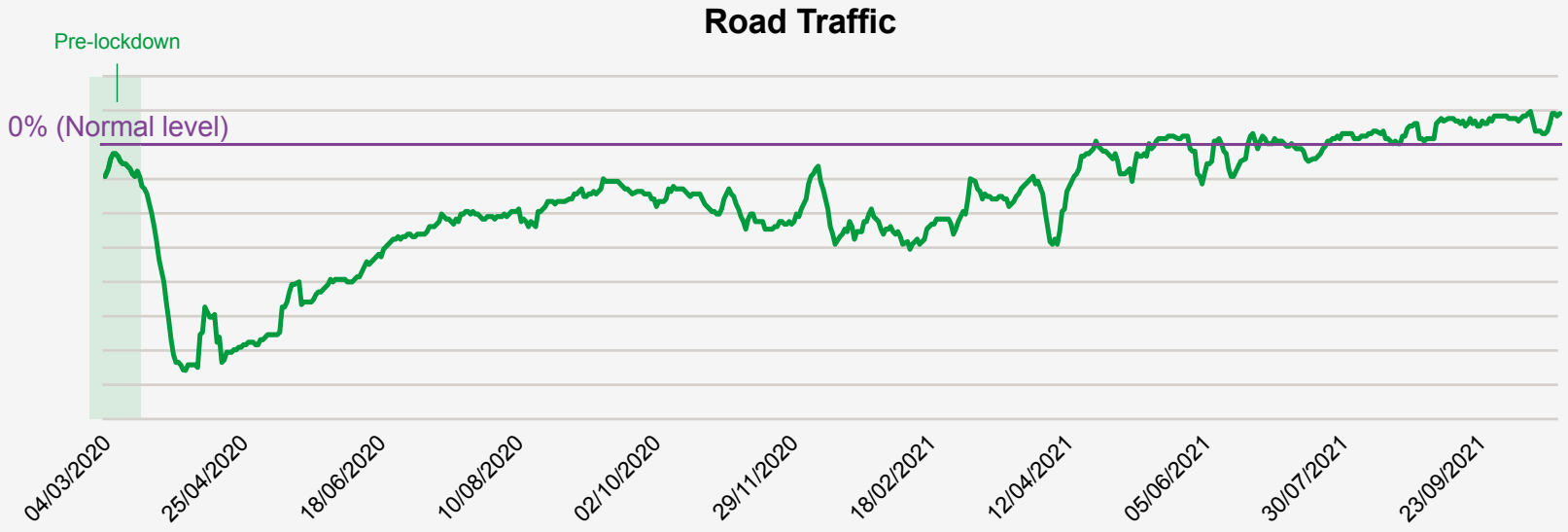


Figure 4:23 Road traffic levels

Traffic congestion is hugely damaging to our environment. Although research suggests that 71% of the UK see climate change as a serious threat, car use continues to grow. The average vehicle per household rate in the North East rose from 0.86 to 1.18 from 2002/03 to 2020, reflecting the trend of multi-vehicle car ownership.

We have made impressive progress in reducing overall emissions in the region, reflecting our commitment to carbon neutrality, but emissions from transport are significantly lagging behind wider reductions, with transport emissions rising from 24% of total emissions in 2009, to 35% in 2019.

The dramatic drop in traffic levels over the pandemic proved to be short-lived; with ongoing public concern about social distancing and travelling on potentially crowded public transport, as a result, road traffic levels reached pre-covid levels from mid-May and have remained high ever since.

In 2020, Gateshead and Newcastle Councils approved proposals to introduce a Clean Air Plan and submitted it to the Government for approval. This is intended to meet the legal obligation placed on both councils by the Government. The measures contained in the proposal include the introduction of a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) in Newcastle and Gateshead.

Our region already has a significant amount of dedicated bus infrastructure. Over 22 miles of bus lane exist in our region and many bus-only roads including the iconic High Level Bridge over the River Tyne, Gateshead Quayside with the internationally renowned Sage Gateshead and the A1114 dedicated bus-only road to the Metrocentre, the region's 2 million sq.ft shopping mall. Newcastle is a compact City, with many bus-only roads serving the City Centre.

Many of our urban centres have led the way in recognising the importance of buses. For example, the City of Sunderland has, over recent years developed comprehensive bus priority infrastructure. The historic UNESCO World Heritage City Centre of Durham already meets the BSIP aim of having a bus lane on every road wide enough to take one.

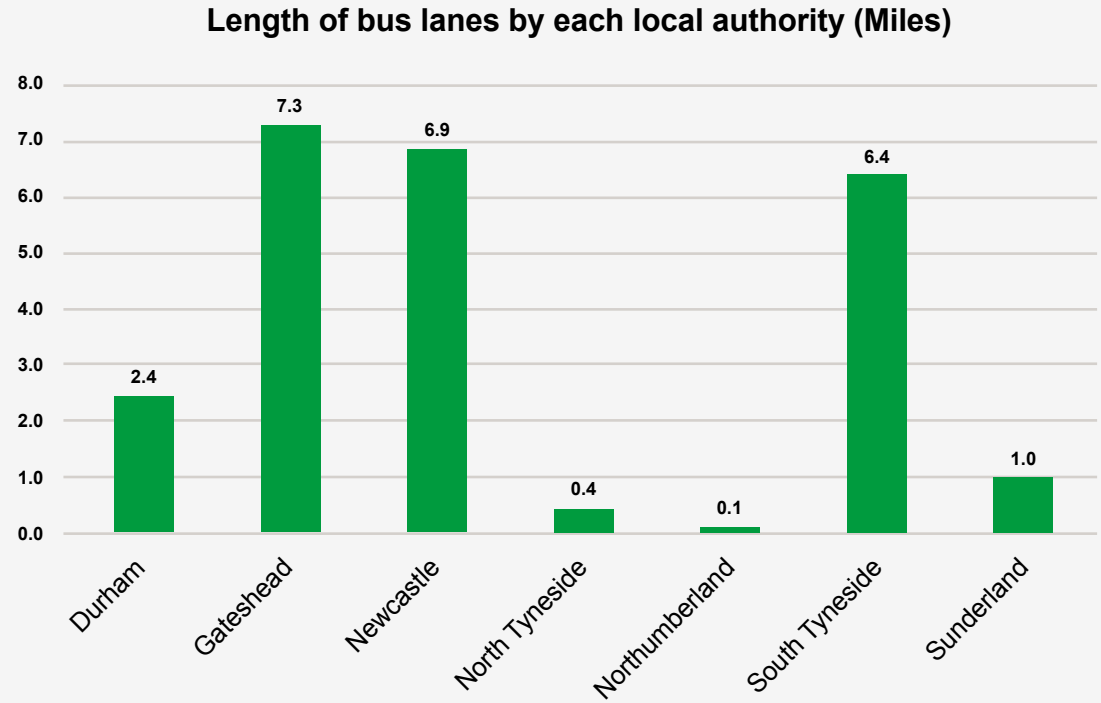


Figure 4:24 Bus lanes across the local authority areas

The region currently benefits from established Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) centres and systems which provide real-time active management in response to congestion and accidents. These facilities are an asset to the region because of the interventions they are capable of making during disruption and also because of the data they generate. With additional resources they could do more, especially if capacity can be created within the centre for a greater focus on bus movements. Intelligent Traffic Systems (ITS) link into the centres, and function on two key arteries. A further package of bus-focused ITS investment across the region worth £19 million is imminent through our Transforming Cities Fund programme.

To date, whilst investment in bus infrastructure has followed established government guidance on producing business cases to prove its value, this has taken place without access to local data as rich as that has been generated through the Big Bus Conversation and our accompanying independent market research. As a consequence of this, aims have often been focused on dealing with how buses can overcome traffic congestion, or the fact that shelters need renewing in isolation, rather than considering a whole package of interventions, including customer facing initiatives which look at the bus experience as a whole.

Our region has a variable quality of bus shelters and waiting facilities, some of which are old stone or brick shelters which encourage antisocial behaviour. Some are in locations which can be difficult to reach as they are 'cut off' by the road system, or feel threatening to approach because they are poorly lit or unkempt.

Finally, whilst our region has a small network of dedicated bus-based Park & Ride sites such as three very successful sites serving the City of Durham, Great Park to the North of Newcastle, and a substantial parking estate at many of our combined bus/Metro interchanges, these have not wholly been strategically linked into our network of bus infrastructure. It is also the case that we have yet to fully capitalise on the potential of existing bus infrastructure schemes with the introduction of more Park & Ride sites adjacent to roads which offer bus priority measures.

Our opportunity

Perceptions of the reliability and punctuality of buses in our region, as well as their actual performance, are a barrier to bus use. The opportunity to make significant capital investment in bus infrastructure will address this by accelerating bus journey times, and ensuring that buses run to time and are less susceptible to being turned around earlier in their journey because of late running.

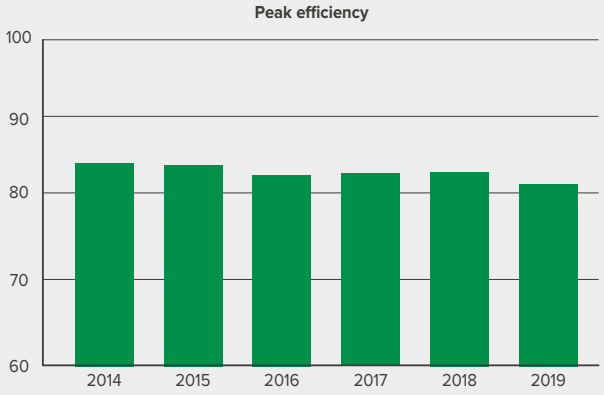
'More direct and quicker journeys' was identified as the most significant factor encouraging bus use in our market research, with 'better waiting facilities at bus stops' also identified as important.

In the Big Bus Conversation, when asked to distribute a £10 value against our proposed 10 Solutions, described in section 2 of this BSIP, an average of £2.70 was attributed to 'faster and more reliable journey times'. This was the highest figure of the 10 solutions made available to participants. We learned from our market research that 62% of infrequent users would be more likely to use the bus if there were more direct and quicker journeys.

"Buses take too long"
Stated by 46%

Road congestion in North East

Efficiency is the speed of traffic during peak hours compared in compared to free flow speed. Efficient movement of buses is key to reliable timetables and journey times.



"Buses are unreliable"
Stated by 37%

Bus punctuality

Punctual bus services are essential in providing a reliable passenger experience. Punctuality in our region is better than the average for England but we need to do better to reach the target of 95%

(Punctual = between 1 minute early and 5:59 late)

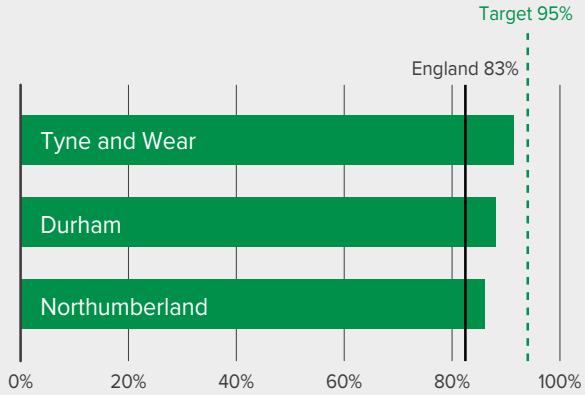


Figure 4:25

Buses take up less road space, per person, than cars. If less space is required for a functioning and efficient road network, this presents significant opportunity to redefine how space is used in town, cities and villages. The Blueprint defines a 'Healthy and Vibrant Places' work programme. If the amount of required road space for traffic is reduced, permanent options for regeneration are wider; and opportunities are opened up for seasonal activities such as economy boosting arts, cultural and sporting events.

There is a clear operational benefit to the transport system of migration to bus by car users as road capacity will be freed up for essential trips, making junctions and pinch points flow better and reducing other impacts on the strategic road network.

Crucially, emissions associated with car engines idling in congestion will be reduced. There are eight Air Quality Management Areas across the region with a Clean Air Plan covering Newcastle and Gateshead.

All seven Local Authorities have also declared a Climate Emergency and have set ambitious, individual targets to cut carbon emissions by 2030.

With improved bus infrastructure capable of accelerating journey times, and improving punctuality and performance, we intend to attract people to bus from the 62% of infrequent users who our research tells us would be motivated to switch if journeys were quicker and more direct.

A double decker bus can take 75 cars off the road

(Greener Journeys)

Wrapping together infrastructure investment with other plans in our BSIP

Our BSIP also gives us the opportunity to address previous investment packages that have resulted from separate government funding streams, and deploy a corridor focussed approach which does not consider any single factor in isolation.

In the subsection of this document entitled 'Bus Network', we set out plans to drive patronage increases through enhanced frequencies. We believe that there is significant potential in aligning infrastructure enhancement with these operational plans, as well as other customer facing investments such as real-time information, better waiting facilities and better walking routes to and from stops.

Addressing each of these things together, when combined with our ambitious marketing plans, will send a strong statement to the target cohorts of infrequent bus users that our bus network is being transformed.

Investment in our highways network for accelerated bus journey times, improved reliability and increased punctuality

Current situation

Earlier in this subsection, we provided information about the bus infrastructure which already exists in our region, including bus only roads, bus lanes and ITS corridors.

There are still, however, busy arterial routes into our cities and major towns which do not have infrastructure installed to a standard which meets their potential.

The Coast Road and The West of Newcastle Corridor are examples of this. Both play a key role in connecting people in our 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.

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.

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.

These are just two examples of corridors in the region, where priority infrastructure could be improved.

The potential

Staying with the example of the Coast Road, we know that the number of vehicles per day on that route alone is projected to increase from 45,000 in 2015 to 51,000 by 2029. Capturing these new journeys as bus ridership growth, rather than car use, will contribute to our ridership targets and assist in delivering our more strategic objectives such as a Carbon Neutral North East.

Initiative description

Subject to adequate levels of BSIP funding, we will act on our highways network to make interventions which accelerate bus journey times and improve punctuality and reliability for millions of current and new bus users every year.

This means that 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.

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, again which will be subject to rigorous public consultation.

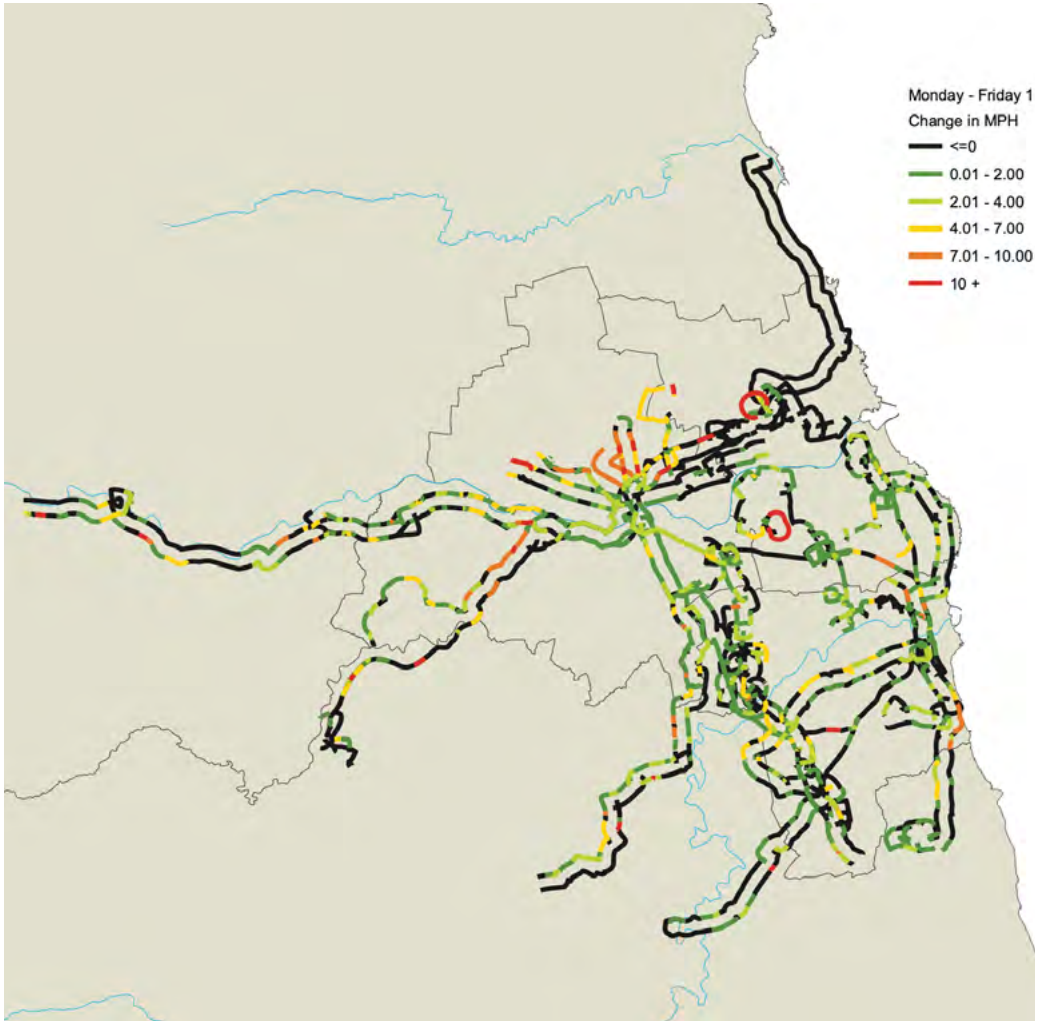


Figure 4:26 Showing peak to off-peak bus speed variation

Figure 4:27 Showing our 17 proposed corridors for investment

We are clear that the development of such schemes to achieve maximum benefits should be subject to several design iterations and that rigorous and meaningful public consultation must be undertaken with all road users including local businesses and residents prior to final design and delivery.

Our ultimate ambition is to spread the highest possible grade of bus infrastructure region-wide for maximum benefit.

Figure 4:24 shows variations in bus speeds, using AVL data supplied by operators.

During the currency of this BSIP, there are actions we can take to address this variation by working in 17 of the most congested of these corridors as seen in Figure 4:25.

These busy bus corridors require investment and are spread throughout the region focused around the highest rates of congestion in order to achieve our objective of reducing journey times and increasing reliability. Areas of congestion and delay that are not covered by our 17 identified corridors will provide the foundations for further development of our corridor network.

We have identified two tranches of works we can undertake, implementing the type of changes we have set out earlier in this initiative description.

Tranche 1 is a programme of interventions, chiefly taken from a study commissioned in 2018 known as the North East Bus Priority Study. Those taken forward from the study for inclusion in this tranche have been recognised as being potentially deliverable by local authorities.

Tranche 1 includes the initial elements of what will be our first 'Bus Rapid Transit' corridor in the region; set on an East – West corridor through Newcastle City Centre, using the Coast Roast and West of Newcastle corridors described earlier in this sub section.

Using funding secured from the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, we are advancing proposals from the study through the business case process so that we can be ready to commence delivery of Tranche 1 schemes as soon as possible after rigorous public consultation has taken place and design work is complete.

Tranche 2 schemes are based on operator and other traffic data and require further development with a greater extent of modelling and studies being required than Tranche 1. Many of these Tranche 2 schemes follow the identified congested corridors for investment in Tranche 1. A further 3 corridors from the initial 17 have also been identified as potential BRT routes in Trance 2: Seaton Burn, Durham A167 and a Sunderland focused route.

Our final infrastructure interventions on highways will be 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. Where these interventions are clustered along a particular road they will be developed into a 'whole corridor approach' in order to extend our current network of 17 corridors. Examples of clusters of 'spot fix' interventions exist in Northern South Tyneside, central Durham, Bishop Auckland, West Gateshead and Northern North Tyneside.

These highways improvements will also be bolstered by TCF investment in the ITS project, as well as the Real Time Information advantages discussed earlier in the customer experience sub-section, this project will deliver 300 signals enabled to communicate with late running buses and provide them with a hurry signal. We have an opportunity to maintain these systems through investing in effective data processing and hardware for passenger facing real time information systems. We will also invest in two coordinator roles based in the UTMC control room: one 'Roadworks Tzar' to monitor and coordinate roadworks to minimise effects on buses and one bus focused team member to broker bus prioritisation in the ITS project.

Interventions are aligned with the proposed service enhancements set out in the "Bus Network" subsection of this BSIP; and so, over time, customers should experience a full package of investments together, which on the busiest corridors will include:

Improvement for customers	Further details in this BSIP
Bus priority measures designed to accelerate journey times and increase punctuality and reliability	In this section
Improved waiting facilities with better walking routes to and from stops (further details are set out later in this subsection)	In the Walking and Waiting initiative of this subsection
Increased service frequencies and operating hours	In the Bus Network subsection
Real time passenger information	In the Customer Experience subsection
New vehicles	In the Bus Network subsection
Branded stops with enhanced information	In the Customer Experience subsection
Marketing initiatives to celebrate transformational changes to the bus network	In the Bringing our BSIP to Life Subsection

The corridors identified for investment are:

Proposed investment	Corridor Name	Outcome
£ 19.8 million	West of Newcastle BRT	Bus Rapid Transit for over 11.5 million bus passengers each year travelling from Cumbria, West Northumberland, Newcastle International Airport and living and working along the route.
£700,000	Wallsend	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 1 million bus passengers each year from residential and development zones to education and employment sites.
£27 million	Coast Road BRT	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 13 million bus passengers each year to and from central Newcastle and North Tyneside as part of a BRT link.
£4 million	A188 / A189	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 4 million bus passengers each year between communities, education and employment sites in North Tyneside.
£3 million	Dunston	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 7 million bus passengers each year between communities, education, employment, retail and leisure destinations in Gateshead.
£4.5 million	Bensham Road	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 7 million bus passengers each year between, education and employment sites in Gateshead.
£2 million	Leam Lane	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over half a million bus passengers each year between communities, education and employment sites in Gateshead.
£900,000	Old Durham Road	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 6 million bus passengers each year between communities, education and employment sites in Gateshead.

Proposed investment	Corridor Name	Outcome
£15.2 million	Chester Road, Sunderland	Faster, more reliable, and greener journeys for over 7 million bus passengers each year to and from central Sunderland from rural Sunderland and County Durham and towards towns such as Chester-le-Street.
£2 million	A690, Sunderland	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 12 million bus passengers each year to and from central Sunderland's employment, education and leisure destinations from Houghton le Spring and Durham.
£59.5 million	South Shields to Sunderland	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 13.9 million bus passengers each year between South Shields and Sunderland, as well as the many communities along the route.
£10 million	South Shields to Newcastle	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 13 million bus passengers each year between communities, education and employment sites across Gateshead and South Tyneside with enhanced links to central Newcastle.
£1.6 million	Blyth, Cowpen Road	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 4 million bus passengers each year between communities, education and employment sites across Northumberland.
£6 million	Cramlington	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 9 million bus passengers each year between communities, education and employment sites across Northumberland, as well as for Cramlington Hospital and visitor journeys.
£255,000	Morpeth	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 6 million bus passengers each year between communities, education and employment sites across Northumberland.
£500,000	Seaton Burn	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 8 million bus passengers each year between communities, education and employment sites across Northumberland and faster links to Newcastle City Centre.
£4 million	Durham, A167	Faster, more reliable and greener journeys for over 12 million bus passengers each year to and from Durham City through to Gateshead over the Tyne Bridge into Newcastle.

Upgrade of our facilities for walking to and waiting for buses

Current situation

As outlined in customer experience, stops and stations in our 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.

People reporting experiences of low-quality waiting provision at stops and interchanges is a serious problem for our 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. We also believe that 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 our stakeholder groups helped us to appreciate the differing dimensions of accessibility when walking and waiting for the bus, as well as the creativity and variation possible in these facilities.

We also know that, whilst two-thirds of our 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.

The potential

Upgrades to bus waiting facilities can hugely improve the experience for bus users and can help us break into the 66% of residents who stated, through our market research, that better waiting facilities at stops, would encourage them to take the bus.

As explained in the Customer Experience subsection, encouraging more people to use bus services will require the adoption of a whole journey approach, that considers the perception and quality of a journey from the point that someone decides to make a trip, to the point that they reach their destination. This will include the provision of high-quality waiting facilities that complement the surrounding urban realm, that provide up-do-date information on services and arrivals, and that provide a safe and secure environment at all times of the day, but particularly during the evening and through the hours of darkness.

Excitingly, the potential is there for our BSIP to complement other local and regional plans for regeneration and investment in our communities by integrating attractive and comfortable bus waiting facilities into high-quality urban realm. Attention will be paid to improving access to stops from homes and destinations, through enhancements to the surrounding walking and cycling networks.

This, alongside the delivery of bus priority corridors will provide a strong focus on quality, reliability, and punctuality, and which it is intended will lead to a change in the perception of bus services, leading to an increase in patronage.

Initiative description

As we have described earlier in this subsection, we will integrate our programme of stops and shelter upgrades with that of highways work on key corridors.

That said, we must address our region's most outdated stops and shelters wherever they are, so we plan a region-wide bus shelter and stop renewal programme, which will bring a consistent standard throughout the region's bus shelters and stops.

700 locations have been identified for renewal in Tyne and Wear, 500 in Durham and 150 in Northumberland. These improvements focus on outdated, often stone or brick, shelters which are unwelcoming and poorly used by customers. They will be replaced by modern facilities which will include lighting, CCTV and high-quality pedestrian access to increase safety and standards. We also will replace all our most simple bus stop 'flags' to ensure standards throughout the region. We will also build new 'flag' stops where they do not exist, for example in the Allendale Valley.

We have also identified 240 shelters and stops with established high usage, or those targeted for specific growth, for which a high specification with be applied - such as the one illustrated below. As set out earlier in this section, in order to provide the best possible customer experience, these will include: reliable real time information, with one source of truth, CCTV, lighting and high-quality pedestrian access.

Furthermore, 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 schemes, which will be described in the following initiative.

Figure 4:26 shows bus stations and interchanges have been identified as in need of investment to renew facilities in order to attract new users to the bus. These upgrades will be subject to rigorous design and consultation, to ensure they meet specifications outlined in customer experience.

We also have plans for new bus stations in Alnwick, Durham City Centre, Bishop Auckland and an additional Newcastle City Centre bus station. There are further plans to improve bus access to North Shields Fish Quay, especially given the proposed new ferry interchange, and the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP). This project will enable over £400 million in private sector investment and the creation of over 7,000 new jobs by 2026/27 – meaning bus connectivity will be hugely important.

Many of our existing bus stations and interchanges are outdated and in need of major refurbishment. We will undertake a programme of investment at these locations to enhance and upgrade these facilities.

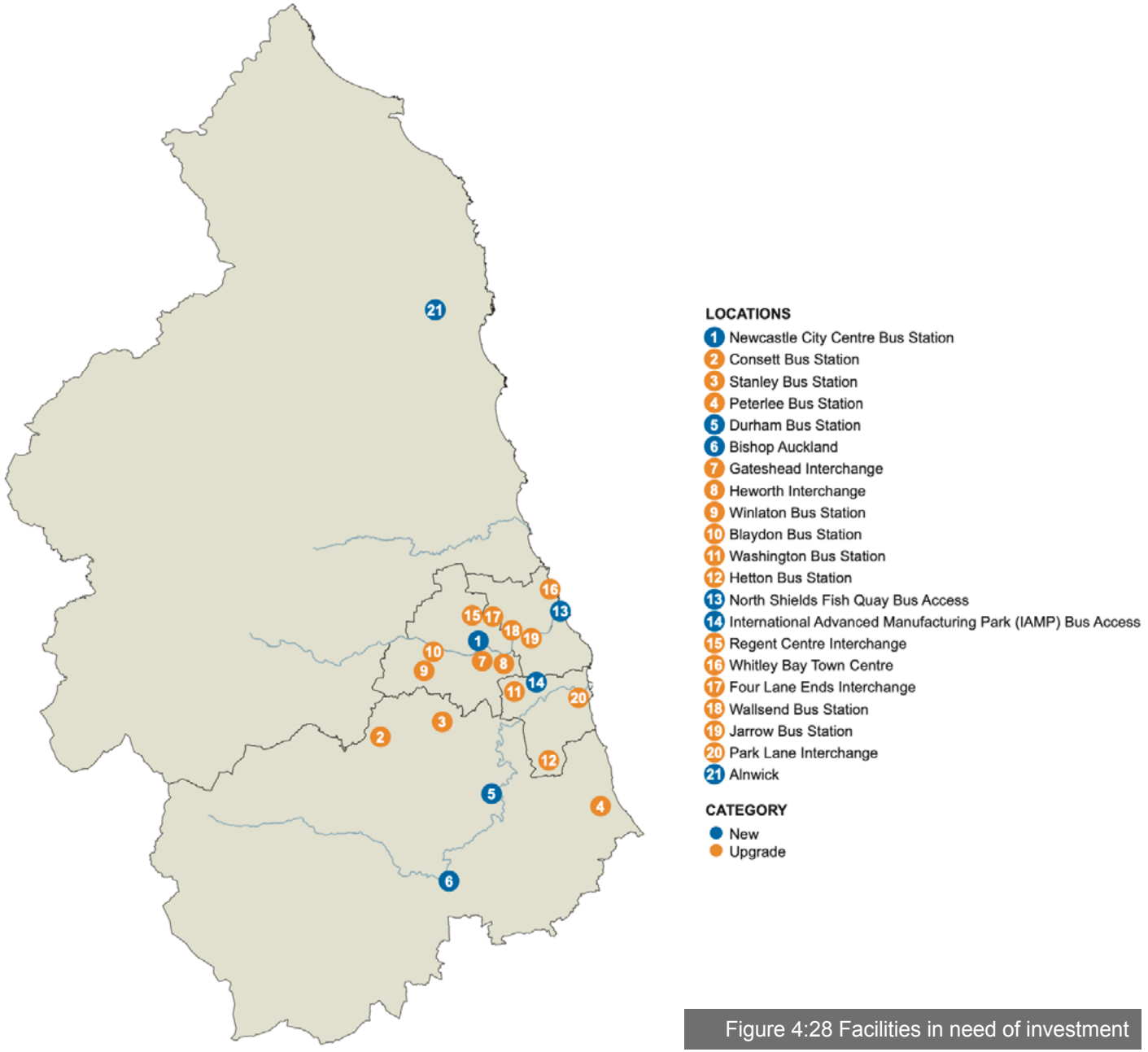


Figure 4:28 Facilities in need of investment

Increasing our Park & Ride provision

Current situation

Across all modes, our region has an established Park & Ride offer with our current sites providing over 4,300 spaces at:

- Tyne and Wear Metro stations and bus interchange;
- Three bus-based sites with dedicated bus links serving Durham City Centre;
- Newcastle's bus based Great Park site;
- 19 National Rail stations across the region.

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.

The potential

Case studies across the UK and Europe, show that Park & Ride provision, when implemented to an appropriate standard, removes car traffic from town and City Centres and residential areas where congestion and pollution are highest.

It also enables removal of both on-and off-street parking provision in our town and City Centres, improving traffic flow, reducing conflict between cars and buses, and allowing land previously allocated as car parks to be put to more economically productive uses. Park & Ride has the added benefit of introducing more people to bus travel, and we believe that with a comprehensive network of Park & Ride sites, providing regular, reliable journeys from high-quality stops and on high-quality buses, we can begin to change some of the pre-conceptions about travel on buses in the minds of people that rarely use them.

We want to upgrade and improve our Park & Ride offer and increase the use of existing facilities in our region to encourage more people to continue their journeys by bus.

Smaller 'Pocket Park & Ride' sites could also increase connectivity for rural residents in our region, increasing the commercial viability of rural bus services but establishing hubs for bus services, meaning fewer stops on rural roads, which will attract passengers, improve reliability and increase the competitiveness of journey times in comparison to the private car.

Initiative description

We plan to introduce five new major Park & Ride sites in the region, all of which will be aligned with the highways infrastructure investments set out earlier in this subsection.

One of the new sites would be at Stonebridge in Durham, increasing the number of Park & Ride sites in the City from three to four. We would also extend the existing Sniperley Park & Ride site by adding 312 additional spaces.

This well used Park & Ride is served by independent small as well as major operators and connects many communities and tourists to UNESCO World Heritage City Centre of Durham.

Four other sites will be chosen from 16 candidate sites including Follingsby, North of Newcastle and West of Newcastle, with the final sites being selected following optioneering and business case work. These candidate sites all sit on the corridors set out earlier in this subsection.

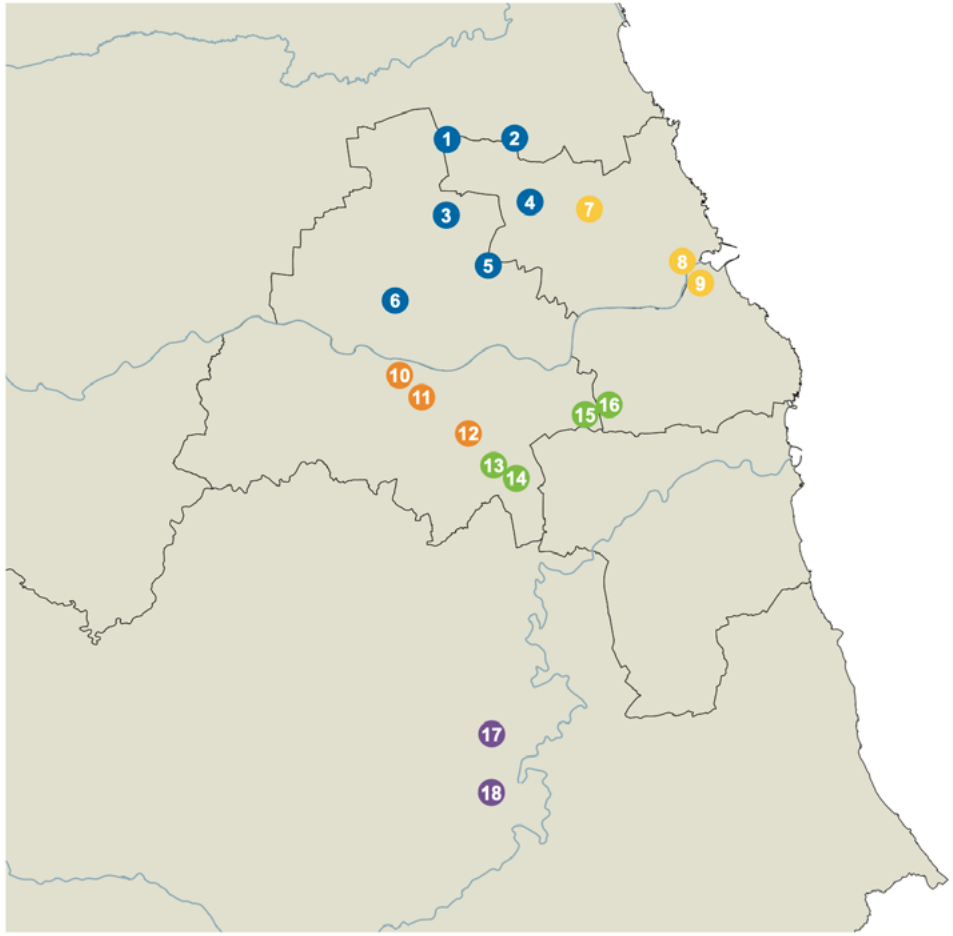


Figure 4:29 Park & Ride proposed sites

Our Park & Ride sites will be built to a minimum standard which includes:

- A zero carbon operational footprint;
- High specification articulated vehicles running a dedicated service for Park & Ride customers;
- Simple, prioritised access and egress from the road network into the Park & Ride site;
- High specification waiting areas with toilet facilities and commercial space for retail such as food outlets, dry cleaners and other services;
- Similar, high-quality waiting facilities at the City Centre end of the route, and;
- Prominent, variable message signing towards Park & Ride sites and intensive marketing of the site.

Further Park & Ride interventions will include the establishment of 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 Bus Network subsection and buses on our major corridors.

Delivery of initiatives in this subsection will help us realise our objectives:

Highways and infrastructure

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:

- 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.

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.

Major highways interventions improvements will be delivered in two tranches:

- We are already developing business cases to deliver Tranche 1 schemes once rigorous public consultation has taken place and design work is complete;
- Tranche 2 schemes are deliverable in the BSIP time frame, but not yet at Business Case so require further development and consultation.

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.

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.

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.

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.

We plan to bring a consistent standard throughout the region's bus shelters and stops:

- 1350 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;
- 240 shelters and stops with particularly high usage will have an additional high specification applied;
- 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.

Highways and infrastructure continued
We will replace all our bus stop ‘flags’ to ensure consistent standards throughout the region.
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).
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. These will benefit from the major highways infrastructure investments along our 17 busiest bus corridors.
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 Bus Network subsection and buses on our major corridors.

BSIP refresh

The partnership remain committed to delivering capital projects that will drive bus use, both while we wait for BSIP funding to be released and once we are in receipt of it. Since the publication of the BSIP, we have developed the North East Bus Priority Study to an Outline Business Case stage and have launched an Options Assessment Report to access the most advantageous location for a major Park and Ride site. Both of these work streams will ensure that projects can be delivered as quickly as possible once funding is unlocked.

4. Delivery Bringing the BSIP to life

This chapter introduces our plans to:

- Deliver strong performance against our KPIs through effective **governance** of the Enhanced Partnership and adequate management resource.
- Drive increased modal share, bus patronage and revenue through data-driven strategic and tactical **marketing** campaigns.
- Empower communities and businesses to facilitate the move to augmented modal share and bus patronage through **community** bus and business partnerships.
- Meet the BSIP requirement to review the relationship between bus fares and car parking charges and to engage in dialogue with North East businesses about workplace car park levy.

This chapter responds to the following requirements of BSIP guidance:

- Give bus passengers more of a voice and say.
- Joint working with stakeholders.
- Review the relationship between bus fares and car parking charges.

Today's world

Prior to the publication of National Bus Strategy, bus operators and political leaders in the North East had already come together in a regular forum to discuss joint plans for the evolution of our region's bus network. This was inspired by both visioning work undertaken by NEbus, and the NEJTC's new Transport Plan. Both groups signalled their desire to work together to make buses work better for our region.

The NEJTC/NEbus forum requested that each local authority in the North East established a fully functioning Bus Board, at which elected members, bus operators, and local authority officers (including Nexus in Tyne and Wear) could discuss local issues of significance and work through solutions to them. This includes local operational issues, proposed route changes, waiting facilities, congestion hotspots, and strategies to deal with anti-social behaviour. The Bus Board model needs to be strengthened further, so that a real sense of shared ownership of the bus network is developed on behalf of communities.

The local bus operators frequently run their own marketing campaigns, often based around new initiatives such as a relaunched route or new buses. Equally Nexus promotes use of the Tyne and Wear Metro. There has not however been any co-ordinated strategic campaign of significance, to promote the benefits and use of public transport for many years.

Some great work is already being done in the region by local authorities, employers and business parks to encourage the use of public transport to travel to work. However this is not consistent across the sector, and there is limited, if any co-ordination from the centre which can lead to inconsistent messages.

Bus Boards are a useful tool to build shared understanding between bus operators and elected members who represent their communities. However, our stakeholder workshops demonstrated an appetite to empower communities more widely, to act as catalysts to bus ridership growth.

Our joint working with stakeholders has been successful in shaping the Transport Plan and the BSIP. The Transport Plan set out a number of areas for supporting strategies. For example, a Bus Strategy was due in 2021, which the BSIP fulfils. Parking is among the family of strategies to be prepared.

Our opportunity

Our Enhanced Partnership and the National Bus Strategy will allow us to build on the established relationship between the Joint Transport Committee and the operators. We will form a North East Bus Partnership Board which provides effective and strategic governance to drive sound performance against our KPIs set out in Section 3 of this BSIP.

The North East Bus Partnership Board also allows us to position, support and resource communities and businesses to enable growth in modal share and patronage on our network.

To enable success, it is essential that we provide adequate resources to underpin and deliver the aspirations of the North East Bus Partnership Board.

If we fail to do so, the follow consequences may occur:

- Our North East Bus Partnership Board will not be fully positioned, supported or resourced to drive real change, and results orientated performance on our bus network.
- The capability of the North East Bus Partnership Board to actively collect data and other information about the performance of the network or the needs of stakeholders will be diminished.
- We will fail to take advantage of the opportunity for communities and other organisations to support us in our aims to transform bus patronage and modal share.

Initiatives

The formation of the North East Bus Partnership Board and supporting management team

Current situation

The political and bus operating geography of the North East make it particularly complex to coordinate strategic actions across the bus network given the large number of operators, seven Local Authorities, two Combined Authorities and Nexus (the Passenger Transport Executive for Tyne and Wear).

Whilst bus network planning and contract management capabilities exist within Nexus and the County Councils of Durham and Northumberland, these departments already function at capacity. Existing team members' time is fully deployed on designing and managing secured service contracts, and engaging with elected members and communities over localised issues.

Transport North East, the transport team which acts on behalf of the NEJTC, does have existing programme management capability, but has no dedicated bus resource. The £1.3m capability funding provided to our region has been allocated to a temporary team whose goal is to produce this BSIP and deliver an Enhanced Partnership by March 2022. Currently there is neither funding nor resource to provide a centralised capacity to support the Partnership Board and its strategic activity once the Partnership goes live.

The potential

If adequate resources can be put in place, the North East Bus Partnership Board will be strongly positioned to drive solid performance against its KPIs through activities including:

- Effective deployment of both financial resources, including the programme of capital schemes included in this BSIP.
- Effective performance management and analysis to understand and communicate how the partnership is performing against its targets, and also to identify strategic actions which will enhance or correct performance.
- Collaboration and communication with stakeholders.
- Oversight and delivery of the strategic bus network marketing and supporting communications.

Initiative description

This initiative outlines the management capacity which is required to support strategic activities overseen by the North East Bus Partnership Board.

To deliver activities outlined in the "Potential" section of this initiative, the partnership will require £1m subsidy each year for staffing and support, comprising of:

- A North East Bus Partnerships team, expected to be housed within Transport North East, to oversee performance, the management of the partnership agreement and the marketing and stakeholder activities designed to drive growth in bus patronage.
- Additional capacity within Transport North East for the programme management of additional capital schemes driven by the EP.
- Access to bus performance software and other resources including independent evaluation and business case support.

The introduction of a formal Change Management Process

Current situation

The current system for planning and communicating changes to the bus network, whether by commercial bus operators or by local authorities, is un-coordinated and variable in nature. Although there are examples of very good practice in our region, it can be the case that first-time bus users hear of an upcoming change is when their bus driver tells them.

Whilst changes are sometimes inevitable, all too often the message from businesses and local communities is one of disempowerment – that they have not been engaged with and something has been "done to them", without their knowledge and without obtaining their input.

Our re-launched bus network is intended to be stable and sustainable; however it is inevitable that from time to time we will need to make changes to it. That could be for positive reasons, to respond to growing ridership or improved services covering more of the region's geography; or it could be to respond to road congestion or financial pressures.

The potential

We want The Partnership to empower our businesses and local communities to persuade people to switch to using bus. Only by working closely with them will they feel the sense of ownership that will see them embrace bus use as the best way to travel.

We have a unique opportunity to address this through the creation of the North East Bus Partnership Board, supported by Local Bus Boards in each local authority, a business-focused Bus Advisory Board and a renewed mission of community and business engagement.

Initiative description

This initiative outlines the structure of a formalised Change Management Process 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.

When a change to the route network or the partnership fares and ticketing structure is proposed (whether by operators or the Bus Partnership team), it will be designed and set out in a consistent and structured format. If the proposal is local in nature, it will be accompanied by a plan both for engagement with the communities and businesses affected (whether local or region-wide), and for the communication of the change should it go ahead.

There will then be a pre-agreed period during which consultation over the change takes place. Where this is a local change to a route, the consultation process will be overseen by the Local Bus Board. Where the change is regional in nature, it will be overseen by the North East Bus Partnership Board.

The North East Bus Partnerships team will co-ordinate and arrange activities, although in many cases, the actual consultation materials are likely to need to be delivered by the organisation proposing the change.

When the consultation is complete and all feedback considered, the change proposal will be notified formally to the North East Bus Partnership Board along with a timescale for its implementation. It is not intended that the North East Bus Partnership Board has a "right of veto" over commercially-driven changes, although some proposals will have a financial implication which may require consideration.

It is recognised that some changes may need to be made at short notice, including changes responding to unexpected highways conditions (e.g. emergency roadworks) or are the result of external pressures (e.g. an urgent requirement in order to comply with license conditions). In these cases, it may be appropriate for the consultation step to be shortened or missed altogether. However, the need to communicate clearly and transparently with bus users, Local Bus Boards and the North East Bus Partnership Board will remain a key principle.

Patronage growth focused collaboration with businesses

Current situation

Earlier in this document we discuss the modal share for bus in the North East.

We learned during consultation for the North East Transport Plan in 2020, that employers often influence the travel choices of their staff. Anecdotally, consultees reported that: "it is easier to claim for car mileage than to submit expenses claims for public travel use". Feedback from our business stakeholder forum also revealed a widespread belief that "people at senior levels don't use the bus", and "I use my car because buses aren't reliable or if I have many meetings, it means multiple trips".

Collaboration with businesses across the region about sustainable transport modes is inconsistent; however, organisations represented at our stakeholder events stated that they would be willing to take steps to encourage employees to switch to the bus.

As an example, we learned about Durham University's approach with their 'Greenspace' campaign which sees staff and students able to travel for £1 per day on Arriva bus services within the Durham District Zone. Staff who travel to the University by bus are able to take advantage of Annual Corporate Discount Schemes for Arriva and Go North East services. We learned that staff who have moved to using the bus found it less stressful than driving and could use the time to read or catch up on emails. The fact remains that initiatives such as these are rarer than we aspire to in our region.

Bus operators in the region and Transport North East have established productive links with business representatives in the region. We have set up a Bus Advisory Board, contributing to the BSIP, which is chaired by Sarah Glendinning, the North East Regional Director of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and attended by representatives from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and North East Chamber of Commerce. Our assessment is that we can put these strategic relationships to greater use by using them to pave the way to collaboration with businesses to drive buses modal share.

The potential

Case Study:

Quorum Business Park

Buses have been key to Quorum Business Park's growth. The Park entrance is served by frequent buses to places in Tyne and Wear and South Northumberland. The Park has a dedicated Tenant and Travel Advisor who works in partnership with Arriva, Go North East and Stagecoach to provide free travel planning services, a central hub for ticket sales and discounts. Over the last ten years, Quorum has seen up to 25% of people using buses to travel to/from work.

In 2019 an estimated 297m journeys were made for commuting purposes, yet only 8% of these were made by bus. Conversely, with 76% made by car, commuters are a target market for transition to using the bus.

Results of an initiative driven by Quorum Business Park in North Tyneside demonstrate the positive outcome which can be achieved through consistent promotion of bus as a solution for employees.

Initiative description

This initiative outlines our intention to collaborate with North East businesses to promote modal shift to bus.

Our North East Bus Partnerships team will collaborate with organisations including industrial estates and sites, large public sector employees and hospitals, with the objective of encouraging employees to switch to the bus.

> "Please include all outlying hospitals within your rescheduling operation. We don't all have cars and healthcare facilities are more frequently being moved out of town to more remote locations. Thank you." Facebook response to the Big Bus Conversation

The team will proactively promote sustainable transport and active travel schemes; and they will support employers in accessing best value bus fares for employees. They will also showcase travel planning tools to produce tailored travel plans for employees to help them transition to using the bus.

Some larger employers already offer the ability to buy an annual season ticket and repay it in monthly instalments, deducted from their wage. However this is not universally offered by all employers, and rules around tax incentives through "salary sacrifice" can be complex. Furthermore, the stereotype of senior people using cars is often reinforced by access to a company car scheme at certain grades. Where possible, the team will work with employers to find ways to improve incentives for the use of public transport.

Patronage growth-focused collaboration with communities

Current situation

Attendees at our stakeholder events, including those from Parish Councils in rural communities, told us that a major challenge to growth in the bus market is the reluctance of car drivers to try the bus because of a poor perception of the service.

However, 68% of respondents in our market research say they will switch at least some journeys to bus if we deliver on the Ten Solutions. We need to work with communities to increase awareness of the improvements that have been made to bus services in recent years, and in particular to ensure that communities can visibly see the progress that we will make in delivering the BSIP.

Stakeholder representatives, including parish councils, explained in discussion groups that they could take steps to enable people to transition by bus, by showing local leadership to give people the confidence to switch, if they could access a resource and information to support them.

Whilst Parish councils are currently empowered to take decisions over issues associated with bus infrastructure such as bus stops and shelters, they are not resourced to lead community-led initiatives to drive increases in bus patronage.

Furthermore, despite the best efforts of bus operators to engage with communities, our region doesn't currently offer resource or routes to enable community organisations or institutions such as schools, to collaborate with the bus industry or take advantage of positive media coverage which can be generated by such collaboration.

The potential

Our region has witnessed the benefits that improved links between transport operators and communities have the potential to yield through Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) on our Tyne Valley and Bishop Line routes.

The Community Rail Network explains that: “Community rail partnerships are the backbone of the community rail movement, bringing together local groups and partners along railway lines to work with industry, and delivering a range of community engagement and promotional activities. They promote understanding of the importance of local railways, in terms of improving mobility and sustainable travel, community cohesion and wellbeing, and social and economic development.”

Statistics compiled by the Office of Rail and Road, with help from the Rail Delivery Group, show that passenger numbers on community rail lines rose by 42% between 2008/09 and 2017/18, higher than the overall increase of 35%.

Initiative description

This initiative outlines how we intend to grow passenger numbers through greater ‘grass roots’ level collaboration with communities along bus routes.

We will provide a fund to allow volunteers to train as ‘Community Bus Ambassadors’ or ‘Bus Buddies’ to encourage people to switch to using the bus, prioritising rural communities in our region.

We will also target 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 within communities and increase the confidence of communities in the bus network.

Village, parish and town councils will be provided with marketing collateral for them to use in their own initiatives, which could include posters on noticeboards or raffle prizes of free bus passes. Wherever possible community groups and local councils will be encouraged to mark all of their printed, online and social media event materials with a “come by bus” message. We will back this up where possible with promotional event ticketing offering discounted or free bus travel to community events.

Furthermore, we will explore the concept of an ‘Adopt a Bus’ scheme with organisations such as schools, to foster community engagement and take the opportunity to build rich narratives around certain bus routes to engage and inspire local children and their parents and carers to transition to the bus.

This initiative will be resourced through two Community Bus Partnership officers within the North East Bus Partnership team, who will oversee a dedicated budget each year. The budget will be used to train bus buddies and ambassadors; and provide funding pots which can be spent on specific community initiatives which could include artwork at bus stops, and specially liveried buses with designs by children on routes passing by their schools.

If the concept is proven and patronage is grown as a consequence of this initiative, further financial resource will be considered for this initiative by the Bus Partnership Board.

Strategic, target-driven marketing campaigns

Current situation

Data on the attitudes of infrequent bus users and people who never use the bus at all has never been as rich as it is at this moment in time, as a consequence of our up-to-date Big Bus Conversation and targeted market research, topping up data held by organisations such as Nexus.

As a consequence of this recent work, we are positioned with key insights, many of which are shared in Section 2 of this BSIP, which can be deployed by marketing specialists to support strong performance against the targets we outline in this BSIP.

Despite the insights gathered from the Big Bus Conversation, there is still scope to further the research into the attitudes of people who never use the bus at all, so that we have an enhanced body of research at a regional, strategic level to drive patronage growth and modal share.

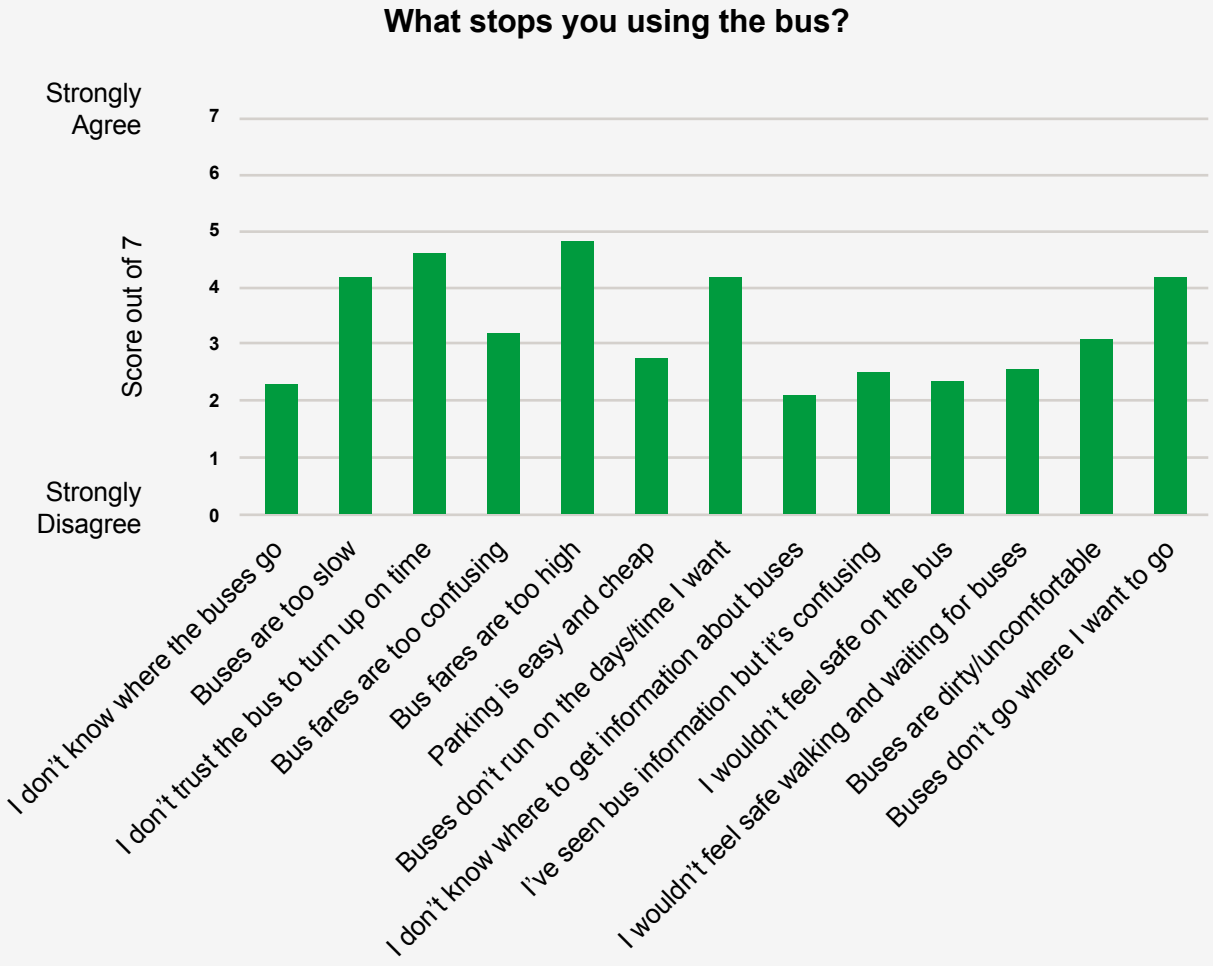


Figure 4:30 Data from the Big Bus Conversation and market research

The potential

As well as the marketing of the new unified brand, as outlined earlier in this chapter, there is enormous potential to deploy strategic marketing campaigns to grow bus use from the 67.25% of people who said they were regular car users as part of the Big Bus Conversation survey.

We will build impactful campaigns centred around what we know from the Big Bus Conversation and market research, to be the primary concerns about buses for local people. The main concerns were that bus fares are too high, people don't trust the bus to turn up on time and that services don't run when they need them to.

With carefully-curated strategic network marketing, we can alleviate these concerns to show car users that the bus is an attractive, reliable and cost-effective solution to make the modal switch.

We will use learnings from Nexus' recent campaigns to encourage car users to switch to the bus and also former bus users to get back on the bus after the Covid-19 lockdown period. Their 'Rediscover Metro' and 'We're Ready When You Are' campaigns are particularly helpful for inspiration.

Case Study:

Nexus – Rediscover Metro

Metro recently ran a similar campaign using video content to appeal to audiences in the hope of encouraging them to let Metro help them rediscover the all the things they'd missed over the last year and places they loved to visit.

They positioned Metro as the perfect vehicle for connecting people and places. This campaign is ongoing but to date, the film has received over 250K views and has resulted in an 11% increase in positive feelings towards the Metro for those that saw the advertising versus those who didn't.

Nexus – We're Ready When You Are

Nexus ran a campaign recently to instill confidence in the travelling public post lockdown. Their 'We're Ready When You Are' campaign used social media advertising to deliver key messages about the Metro being a covid- safe way of travelling, with content being viewed over 1 million times.

Initiative description

This initiative outlines how we intend to commission impactful marketing campaigns around the newly relaunched bus network and how we will position marketing to speak to the hearts and minds of North East people with the objective of increasing modal share and patronage. Strategic messaging and marketing will also be critical to promote the benefits of investment in bus infrastructure discussed in the Highways and Infrastructure subsection of this BSIP.

We require a significant marketing budget, with the objective of driving solid performance against the targets of this BSIP.

The Call to Action (CTA) for the people of the North East will be simple: to make travelling by public transport your first choice.

We will ensure we segment our audiences and tap into the types of media that they are most receptive to. We will use modelling from an audience insight tool to help with this categorisation and we will build audience personas for our different bus users to deepen our understanding of their evolving wants and needs, so we can respond appropriately.

Key messages in marketing collateral will include:

- Value for money ticketing.
- The positive customer experience on board.
- How fully integrated ticketing will work.
- The positive environmental impact of switching to bus travel.
- How the bus can bring people together.
- The safety and security of the bus network.
- The efficiency and sustainability of using bus.
- Cleanliness and hygiene of buses.

> "There is a perceived notion that being on a bus means you are lesser than someone in a private car."

Strategic marketing and advertising will be coordinated by the North East Bus Partnerships team on behalf of the Bus Partnership Board. 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.

Review of North East parking policies

Current situation

Current car parking policy in our region is described earlier in this document in section 2. 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.

Potential

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.

Initiative description

Our Transport Plan commits the NEJTC to publishing an Engagement Strategy this financial year to consider how we engage with communities and businesses in the region. One of the key factors for discussion in this process is considering how we encourage our region to consider the “Making the Right Travel Choice” policy we describe in section 1 of this BSIP.

We will commit to exploring and engaging 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 the region can adopt across our geography to encourage a switch to attractive, sustainable transport options such as buses. 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.

Bringing the BSIP to life

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.

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.

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:

- a fund to allow volunteers to train as 'Community Bus Ambassadors' or 'Bus Buddies'
- 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
- 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
- an 'Adopt a Bus' scheme with organisations such as schools to foster community engagement.

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.

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.

We will create a North East Bus Partnerships team to manage the programme of investments and activities set out in this BSIP, and to oversee the performance of the bus network, to manage the partnership agreement.

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.

BSIP refresh

At the time of writing the BSIP, TNE had no dedicated bus resource. Since the publication of the BSIP, a permanent bus team has been appointed, whose goal it is to deliver the BSIP and EP. This team will continue to grow alongside capacity demands to support the Bus Partnership Board and its strategic activity once the Partnership goes live.

5. Reporting

This chapter introduces our plans to:

- **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.
- Offer a **Bus Passenger Charter** (BPC – Appendix A) that applies on all bus services in our region to build customer confidence, to improve consistency and transparency.

This chapter responds to the following requirements of Bus Service Improvement Plan guidance:

- Enable passengers to hold local authorities and operators to account for delivering against the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).
- Set out the arrangements for publishing six-monthly performance, against BSIP targets.

Today's world

At present there is neither a standard way of describing to passengers what they can expect from bus services in the region, nor a way of reporting on them.

The DfT produces national bus statistics on a periodic basis, some of which are broken down into regional level. Whilst these can be useful for understanding long-term trends, they are less helpful for ensuring that management takes action.

Individual bus companies produce detailed information and data internally to support both operational and strategic management; these however are commercially confidential and are only shared with local authorities under specific conditions, to achieve a common objective such as to calculate concessionary reimbursement or to build a business case for investment.

Local authorities and Nexus have access to a range of datasets including Nexus' 'Continuous Monitoring' data (ridership information to calculate concessionary reimbursement and to help calculate revenue shares for multi-modal tickets); market research; and data relating to the performance of highways.

However, this information is all produced for specific purposes and is not bound together and presented to the public through the lens of the performance of bus services as a whole for the region.

Transport Focus produces a Bus Passenger Survey to test satisfaction with bus services both generally and in a number of specific areas. The Transport Focus report, reports on satisfaction for Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and County Durham.

Passengers may have a certain level of expectation of performance or standard of service based on their relationship with their regular bus route. However, there is no consistent approach or a central source of information for passengers to determine what they are entitled to or whether that standard is being delivered upon. Customer Charters are widespread in the rail industry as a requirement under franchise contracts, and Nexus produces a Customer Charter for the Tyne and Wear Metro. In the bus industry in the North East, some operators have their own passenger charters such as Arriva and Stagecoach, but there is a no standardised or unified bus charter that applies across the board and binds all operators to the same promises and commitments.

Our opportunity

The Partnership has agreed shared objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). We will review progress towards our KPIs on a regular basis to assess whether the actions we are taking are leading us to success or whether we need to take corrective action.

The Partnership 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. We will do this on a consistent basis, regardless of which operator customers are travelling with. We will achieve a far greater sense of community ownership over our bus network. We want local people to 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.

We will set out a Bus Passenger Charter (BPC) that describes 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 BSIPs.

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 the BSIP.

Initiatives

Reporting to the Bus Partnership Board and to Department for Transport

Current situation

The NEJTC receives a regular report, updating on activities to deliver the Transport Plan, and its Tyne and Wear Sub-Committee receives regular reports from Nexus regarding its activities, in particular in relation to the operation of the Metro.

Whilst occasional specific reports are produced in relation to the bus network in the region, no single report is regularly produced for the NEJTC or indeed for any other body. Whilst there are numerous individual sources of data and information that could be considered relevant to the performance of the bus network, these are not collated and brought together to provide a strategic overview.

The potential

By working together, The Partnership has an opportunity to bring together all relevant sources of data and information relating to the bus network, to aid decision-making and to increase transparency for national and local government as well as for bus users and the general public.

The primary focus will be on reporting progress against our KPIs – as set out in section 3 of this BSIP. However, there is an opportunity to collate and combine other sources of information to help analyse and establish trends, to benchmark against other regions and other sectors, and to help identify potential areas for improvement and new investment.

Initiative description

We will produce a six-monthly report to the North East Bus Partnership Board. It will set out the latest available data by which to measure the partnership's performance against its KPIs.

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.

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.

As well as focusing and reporting on 'hard' data in the shape of KPI performance, we will also include qualitative data in the report, so that we can 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. We will make every effort to record and analyse in-person customer feedback, as well as providing analysis of social media comments. This routine exercise will help us to set the KPIs within the context of the bus user and the narrative around the new network.

Local Bus Boards and the business and services-focused Bus Advisory Board 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.

Bus Passenger Charter

Current situation

Although some operators in the region have their own charters, there is no unified region-wide BPC which would be simple for the customer to use and understand, to ensure transparency of the measurements and targets set out in our BSIP and subsequent EP.

The potential

We want to empower existing bus passengers and attract new passengers by setting out clear and consistent standards and KPIs, and by being transparent in our achievement of these. Where KPIs are not being met and standards are falling short, we want to show how we intend to act to put right the situation, and a BPC is how we intend to do this.

Initiative description

Our BPC will ensure performance information is accessible and easy to understand. The BPC does not create any new legal relationship with passengers, it sets out our commitments to:

- 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.
- Update on performance on a six-monthly basis relative to the KPIs for the Bus Partnership that are shown in section 3 of this BSIP.
- Make available six-monthly reports on our website, supplemented by communication channels appropriate to our audiences.
- Identify where KPIs are not being met and describe the measures we are taking to ensure we meet them in future.
- Advise customers on how to obtain local travel and general public transport information, and how to travel safely.
- 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.
- Inform customers on how to offer improvement suggestions.
- Advise customers on who to contact and provide appropriate channels.
- Publicise upcoming planned improvements and changes and advise customers how they can play a part in future proposals.

6. Overview table

Name of authority or authorities:	North East Joint Transport Committee
Franchising or Enhanced Partnership (or both):	Enhanced Partnership
Date of Publication:	26th October, 2021
Date of next annual update:	October 2022
URL of published report:	www.transportnortheast.gov.uk

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Journey time	13.86 miles per hour in 2018	– 13.86 miles per hour in 2019	Target to be agreed through the partnership, will be a differential between journey speeds with growth in speeds for bus compared to general traffic	Existing bus journey times are measured and supplied by operators with little difficulty. Targets are set by modelling the impacts of each plan and scheme during the design phase.
Reliability: existing % scheduled mileage % on time at origin % on time at timing points	TBD	TBD	99.5 97 95	This is a standard report which operators produce today for the Traffic Commissioner.
Passenger numbers	154m	TBD	196.5m	DfT patronage data reported as standard by bus operators.
Average passenger satisfaction	91%	91%	93%	Transport Focus surveys, increased to 6-monthly reporting.

Delivery – Does the BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/ No	Explanation (max 50 words)
Make improvements to bus services and planning		
More frequent and reliable services		
Review service frequency	Y	Review twice each year on a rolling programme around the region, with a blended corridors and centres approach. Consultation approach on route changes in the Charter promise.
Increase bus priority measures	Y	Bus gates, lanes, red routes, signal priorities, turning priorities, dedicated bus only roads. £250m capital programme to build upon the high level of bus priority already in the region.
Increase demand responsive services	Y	DRT local routes and feeder routes to Express services in Durham and Northumberland; Schools 'DRT' home-to-school pilot scheme.
Consideration of bus rapid transport networks	Y	Bus Rapid Transit network aspiration for the whole region. 5 routes identified, with 2 in Tranche 1 of the BSIP, building on existing priorities which facilitate frequent, high demand bus services.
Improvements to planning / integration with other modes		
Integrate services with other transport modes	Y	Integration with Metro, rail, also other buses and coaches. Local access focus with 'hubs' for bike-to-bus; walking and waiting programme of works to increase customer confidence and complement Active Travel. Park and Ride for 5 major corridors, plus 'pocket park and ride' particularly for Express bus services.
Simplify services	Y	The first action in the delivery programme is rationalisation of services to create an easy to understand turn-up-and-go network, and a review of route numbering to remove confusion where similarly numbered routes operate different services.

Review socially necessary services	Y	The revised network encompasses socially necessary services and enhances them significantly.
Invest in Superbus networks	Y	The Guidance 'Superbus' concept is, here, 'Connect', through upgrading and bolstering our already strong small towns & villages networks. Superbus here has been used to describe the turn-up-and-go network.
Improvements to fares and ticketing		
Lower fares	Y	Lower all day ticket prices in all areas, with a £4 to £5 day cap for bus travel, and discounts for young people.
Simplify fares	Y	A simple 3 zone system replacing the current complexity of many offers; standardisation of operators' tickets periods (e.g. start the week on the same day); clear marketing and a single source App.
Integrate ticketing between operators and transport	Y	£6.80 all day, all zone, all modes, all operators ticket, covering bus, ferry, metro and some rail; reduced from £10.90. The £4 and £5 cap day tickets are also all-operator.
Make improvements to bus passenger experience		
Higher spec buses		
Invest in improved bus specifications	Y	Fleet replacement plan. Also AV and WiFi to be fitted to all buses in the region.
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services	Y	Walking and waiting plan; fleet replacement plan (all low floor, easy access, high comfort); engagement with community groups and advocacy bodies to identify initiatives to promote bus travel for people with protected characteristics and extra needs.
Protect personal safety of bus passengers	Y	Increase CCTV coverage in-vehicle, with a radical uplift at stops. Walking and waiting plan to improve confidence. Joint work with the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner's programme to enhance the Safety of Women and Girls on Public Transport.

Higher spec buses continued		
Improve buses for tourists	Y	Active liaison with tourism stakeholders. Substantial funding for pilots to encourage sustainable tourism.
Invest in decarbonisation	Y	Car mode shift of 2% will make the biggest impact on the carbon footprint and the health of the region. Fleet renewal to Euro 6 and Zero Emission vehicles will transform the image and impact of bus.
Improvements to passenger engagement		
Passenger Charter	Y	Promises to customers across the region on reliability, delivery, and the means to give feedback on great service and to complain and see action taken on complaints.
Strengthen network identity	Y	Simplify the network; enhance it; single source of truth for real time information; unified branding of vehicles, bus stops and information; marketing campaigns and region-wide behaviour change programme.
Improve bus information	Y	Rural stop information significant upgrade; next generation Real Time Passenger Information at stops; single source of truth for RTPI and Apps; single App for customers with all information; printed information both at stop and off-system.
Other		
Increase mode share of bus	Y	Annually: DfT data, supplemented by ANPR and cordon counts as necessary.

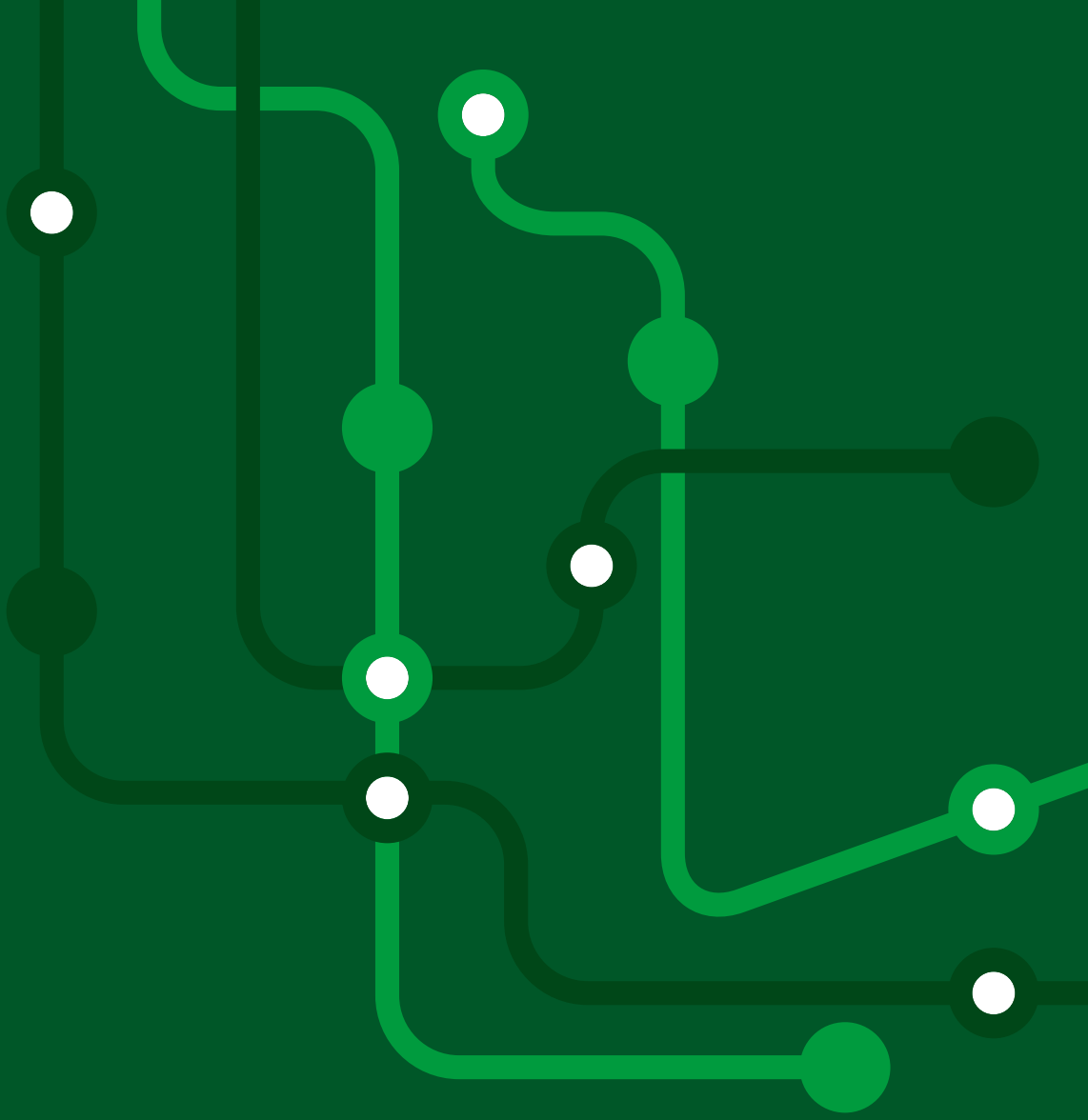
Glossary of Terms

- **ANPR** = Automatic Number Plate Recognition, technology that uses optical character recognition on images to read vehicle registration plates to create vehicle location data.
- **AONB** = Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a designated exceptional landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are precious enough to be protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act).
- **ATF** = Active Travel Fund, grant funding that supports local transport authorities with producing cycling and walking facilities.
- **AV technology** = Audio/ Visual Technology, the 'next stop' announcements on buses.
- **AVL** = Automatic Vehicle Location, is a means for automatically determining and transmitting the geographic location of a vehicle.
- **BPC** = Bus Passenger Charter, a document designed to advise you of the standard of service you can expect when using bus services within the North East. It also sets out methods of redress should the standard fall below what is promised.
- **BRT** = Bus Rapid Transit, also called a busway or transitway, is a bus-based public transport system designed to have better capacity and reliability than a conventional bus system.
- **BSIP** = Bus Service Improvement Plan, a document in which the LTA, working closely with local bus operators and local communities, sets out a vision for delivering a step-change in bus services that is required by the Government's National Bus Strategy.
- **CAZ** = Clear Air Zone, a defined area where targeted action is taken to improve air quality, in particular by discouraging the most polluting vehicles from entering a particular zone.
- **CBI** = Confederation of British Industry, an influential business organisation that speaks on behalf of 190,000 businesses and its members.
- **CPC** = Certificate of Professional Competence, a qualification required by professional bus, coach and lorry drivers.
- **CPI** = Consumer Price Index, a measure that examines the weighted average of prices of a range of consumer goods and services, including transport.
- **DfT** = Department for Transport, a ministerial department, supported by 24 agencies and public bodies that is responsible for planning and investing in transport infrastructure.
- **DRT** = Demand Responsive Transport, refers to flexible transportation solutions that are based on particular transport demand without using a fixed route or timetabled journeys.
- **ENCTS** = English National Concessionary Travel Scheme.
- **EP** = Enhanced Partnership. An EP is a statutory arrangement under the 2017 Bus Services Act which can specify, for example, timetables and multi-operator ticketing, and allows LTAs to take over the role of registering bus services from the Traffic Commissioners.

- **EURO 6 Standard** = Emissions standards for buses.
- **IAMP** =International Adanced Manufacturing Park.
- **ITS** = Intelligent Transport Systems, a combination of Information Technology and telecommunications, enabling many innovations in traffic control and in the provision of on-line information.
- **ITSO** = Integrated Transport Smartcard Organisation.
- **JTC/ NEJTC** = Joint Transport Committee/ North East Joint Transport Commitee.
- **KPI** = Key Performance Indicator.
- **LA7** = 7 North East local authorities, comprising Durham County Council, Gateshead Council, Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council, Northumberland County Council, Sunderland City Council and South Tyneside Council.
- **LEP** = Local Enterprise Partnership, a public, private and education sector partnership, responsible for promoting and developing economic growth in the local authority areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland.
- **LTA** = Local Transport Authority.
- **NEbus** = the North East Bus Operators' Association, encompassing the providers of bus services across the North East.
- **NECA/ North East Combined Authority** = Comprising Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside, Sunderland.
- **NETP** = North East Transport Plan, 'the Transport Plan', a document setting out our region's transport aspirations up to 2035.
- **Nexus** = the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive that administers funds on behalf of the Joint Transport Committee of the North East Combined Authority and the North of Tyne Combined Authority.
- **NTCA/ North of Tyne Combined Authority** = Comprising Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland.
- **NTL/ Network One Ticketing Limited** = A partnership of bus, metro, train and ferry companies in the North East, which provides a range of tickets.
- **OSC** = Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- **RPI** = Retail Price Index, a measure of inflation published monthly by the Office for National Statistics. It measures the change in the cost of a representative sample of retail goods and services.
- **RTPI** = Real Time Passenger Information, a means of providing electronic travel information to the users of public transport in "real time" via a range of sources, such as at bus stops, stations, on vehicles and via phone or internet.
- **The Strategy** = The UK National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better'.

- **TCA** = Travel Concession Authorities. TCAs are responsible for administering concessionary travel schemes.
- **TCF** = Transforming Cities Fund, a £2.45 billion capital grant transport fund aimed at driving up productivity through investments in public and sustainable transport infrastructure in some of England's largest city regions.
- **TfN** = Transport for the North, England's first Sub-national Transport Body responsible for bringing the North's local transport authorities and business leaders together with Network Rail, Highways England, and HS2 Ltd, while working closely with Central Government to bring strategic value to decisions about transport in the North.
- **ULEBS** = Ultra-Low Emission Bus Scheme is the latest round of Government funding to local authorities and bus operators to support the purchase of new buses from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) and the Department for Transport (DfT).
- **UTMC** = Urban Traffic Management Control, the main initiative in the UK for the development of a more open approach to Inteligent Transport Systems in urban areas.
- **ZEBRA** = Zero Emission Bus Regional Area. The ZEBRA scheme will provide up to £120 million for local transport authorities (LTAs), outside London, to support the introduction of zero-emission buses and the infrastructure needed to support them.

Appendix A – Bus Passenger Charter



Bus Passenger Charter

(of new unified network bus brand)

Transport North East

NEbus
North East bus operators
working together

neca
North East Combined Authority

NORTH OF TYNE COMBINED AUTHORITY

Publication date: XXXXXXXX

Valid until: XXXXXXXX (at which time the Charter is reviewed in consultation with operators and passengers)

This Charter sets out what you can expect when using local bus services under the NEW NETWORK NAME brand. These include all scheduled bus services operated by The Partnership (www.xxx.xxx provides a list of operators) as well as bus stops and interchanges provided by Local Authorities. Scheduled bus services means the routes and times that the operators publish they will run local buses.

It sets out what passengers can expect from the bus experience across the area, and how you can make a complaint in the event your expectations are not met.

Passengers have legal rights when travelling by bus, and these are not affected by the entitlements set out in this charter. Find out more about conditions of carriage and your legal rights here: XXXXXXXX

If you require this charter in an alternative format, please contact us at XXXXXXXX

DRAFT

Our promise to bus passengers

We promise to operate a safe and reliable service

We will always prioritise your safety

We will always put your safety and security first when travelling in the North East. With this in mind we will have CCTV onboard all of our buses and at bus stations and shelters, as well as improved lighting at bus stops. We pledge to design all new buses that join the fleet and any new stops and shelters that we build, with passenger safety in mind. We will also work continually with the police to tackle anti-social behaviour.

We will operate a reliable bus service you can trust

We endeavour to run all services to time and your bus will normally arrive within 5 minutes of the scheduled arrival. We cannot offer a guarantee of better than within 5 minutes, because buses run in live traffic situations and are held up in unpredictable ways by cars, pedestrians and even passengers sometimes!

What success looks like

We have set some stretching targets to set the context for the improvements we need to make:

- **Covid-19 recovery:** We will repair the damage caused by Covid-19 to bus ridership in our region by returning to the pre-pandemic level of 154.4 million trips by March 2024.

- **Grow bus patronage:** Once that has been achieved we will significantly grow bus patronage, targeting 10% growth on the 2019 baseline by March 2025 and a further 10% growth on 2019 figures by March 20 26. We want to make sure this growth comes from all parts of the region and so the same target will apply for boardings at rural bus stops, and for patronage among young people.

- **Grow bus modal share:** We will increase the modal share of bus by 1 percentage point by March 2024, and by another 1 percentage point by March 2025. This target will apply both overall, and for journeys to work and education.

DRAFT

- **Grow bus passenger satisfaction:** In order to attract new bus use we need improved customer satisfaction which is already relatively high at 91%. Our target is for this to grow to 92% by March 2024 and 93% by March 2025.

- **Make buses faster, punctual and reliable:** Our investments in bus priority will speed buses up relative to general traffic. We want buses to be punctual both at their point of origin (95% in 2022/23, 96% in 2023/24 and 97% in 2024/25) and along their entire route (90% in 2023/24, 95% in 2024/25 and 95% in 2025/26). We also need buses to be reliable with a fixed target of 99.5% throughout the period of the BSIP.

- **Make buses greener:** We need to improve the environmental performance of our bus fleet and so we will target higher levels of investment each year so that all buses are Euro 6 or better by March 2025.

We will treat all passengers equally and operate a zero tolerance hate policy

We promise to always be courteous and respectful. All of our passengers are equals regardless of disability, gender, age, race, ethnic origin, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

We have a zero tolerance policy towards hate crime of any kind. Please help us in reporting any hate crimes you witness onboard to XX or by calling 101.

We will provide a consistently pleasant, clean and comfortable bus service

We aim to reach a customer satisfaction target of 93% and we know a large part of this is dependent upon how well we look after North East's buses, bus stations and stops, keeping them clean, tidy, and presentable so that your bus journeys are always comfortable.

We will adhere to enhanced cleaning regimes throughout the day to ensure our buses are clean and covid-secure. We also commit to high cleaning and maintenance standards for our bus shelters and interchanges, and we promise to regularly remove graffiti so that your waiting experience is as pleasant as your experience onboard.

DRAFT

We promise to always keep you informed

We will provide easy to understand service information to help you plan your journey

We will provide up-to-date and accurate information about North East buses, through a central source of information (the new network website, App etc.), and in a printable format. The App will allow you to track the bus in real time and on the go. We will ensure that digital screens showing real-time timetable information, along with next bus displays, key stops along the route and multi-modal fare information are available in all interchanges, stops and shelters. Each operator will also have details of their day, week and longer period tickets on their websites.

If we are experiencing disruption to services, we will add this to a live feed on our website and also tweet about it, as will individual operators on their channels. Drivers will also be kept up-to-date with details of network disruption to support passengers without access to the internet.

We will provide supplemental/linked information online and in bus stops for other transport services, such as Metro, ferry, and rail to aid those making multi-modal journeys.

We promise to keep you updated with planned changes and improvements to the network

We will publicise upcoming planned improvements and changes on the network website and publicise how you can play a part helping us to develop future proposals to the network. A formal consultation will take place before route and service changes are introduced.

We promise to make your journey as easy as possible

We will keep our services accessible to all

Everyone is welcome to travel with us and we pledge to help anyone with extra needs to use our services. Our vehicles are equipped to carry wheelchairs and mobility scooters of an appropriate size. All North East bus drivers are trained to recognise Journey Assistance Cards which help customers with extra needs to discreetly alert our drivers to their individual needs.

Our drivers try to spot people who will be helped by kneeling the bus or lowering the ramp to reduce the stepping distance from the kerbside to the bus, and will always do so on request. If a bus is full and there is no available space or any unforeseen circumstances where a wheelchair user would have to wait for the next bus, we will arrange a taxi to transport you to your destination and we will cover the cost.

We will install audio-visual systems so that everyone on board has next stop information.

DRAFT

This is all part of our commitment to responding to the requirements of people with protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act.

We will operate our network with friendly and helpful team members to deliver an excellent customer service

We pride ourselves on providing a warm and friendly welcome to all. Our bus drivers and bus staff are knowledgeable and always happy to help, whether that be to advise on the correct ticket for your journey, or to supply route information. If you want to contact the individual operator running your service, each operator's contact details are provided at the bottom of this Charter.

We value all feedback because it gives us an opportunity to listen and improve. We will usually answer your enquiry within XX hours/days but if our investigation into your issue takes longer, we will let you know. Your feedback is reported to our monthly Project Board and fed into our regular customer service training so that we can continue to provide a high-quality service.

We will continue to grow greener

We already operate a lot of low emission buses, and even Zero Emission buses. We will invest in our fleet, reduce carbon emissions, and work with local authorities to improve the air quality of the areas we serve.

As part of the North East Transport Plan, there is an ongoing commitment to become carbon neutral in the North East. We have set an ambitious target to ensure our bus fleet meets the Euro 6 emission standard or better by 2025.

We promise to help if things go wrong

We hope that you will have a great journey with us, but we know that sometimes things do go wrong. During disruption, we will endeavour to keep our customers informed and to provide alternative services, where possible. If you are dissatisfied, please do contact us and we will do our best to put things right for you. Where appropriate, we will find a means of redress for the problem you have encountered. All your comments, positive and negative, will be reported to our monthly Bus Board so that we can prioritise improvements to respond to your feedback.

Tell us whether you're delighted or dissatisfied

Your customer experience sits at the heart of the new unified bus network, which is why we are always keen to hear feedback about our services so that we can continually improve our offering.

DRAFT

You can find us online at XX, and also on social media at XX. Alternatively, you can email XX or call XX. We know how important it is that your issues are heard and acted upon, which is why we will acknowledge all queries within 24 hours, and will provide a full response within five working days. If a response is not possible within this timeframe, you will receive an update within to advise you of this.

If your issue relates to a specific operator service, we suggest you contact the individual operator in the first instance on XXXXXXXX.

We are committed to resolving customer issues quickly, however if your query has not been resolved to your satisfaction, you can contact Bus Users UK, who review cases independently for compliance.

[LIST NETWORK ADDRESS, OPENING HOURS AND SOCIAL CHANNELS AS WELL AS SOCIAL ICONOGRAPHY]

[Placeholder for Operators' contact details – all operators in the EP, large or small]

DRAFT

We have a unified ambition to grow bus patronage across our region

Email: buses@transportnortheast.gov.uk

Visit: www.transportnortheast.gov.uk

Transport North East

NEbus
North East bus operators
working together

neca
North East Combined Authority

NORTH OF TYNE COMBINED AUTHORITY

Appendix B – Letters of support

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Transport North East
C/O Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

c/o buses@transportnortheast.gov.uk

25th October 2021

Letter of Support: Transport North East BSIP

We believe that the BSIP document created in partnership between ourselves, other operators, and local authorities creates an exciting opportunity for Transport North East and partners to create the region we want to be part of.

The plans outlined in the BSIP offer an opportunity to deliver an integrated and inclusive transport network across the North East, sustaining the existing level of service, levelling up and better connecting places, communities and economic assets within the region and beyond.

A focus on public transport, will prioritise investment in a sustainable future, supporting a green recovery from COVID-19 and tackling the climate emergency through the decarbonisation of the transport sector. This funding will enable the local authorities to work with operators and invest in the bus network with a modern, integrated transport system essential for the region's economy to flourish and communities to thrive.

We are supportive of Transport North East's BSIP submission to the DFT which will deliver a range of improvements and we are delighted to offer our support for this proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Kim Purcell
Commercial Director
Arriva Yorkshire & North East

Arriva North East
1 Admiral Way
Doxford International
Business Park
Sunderland SR3 3XP

Tel +44 (0)191 520 4000
Fax +44 (0)191 520 4001
DX 68754 Sunderland 3

www.arriva.co.uk

Arriva North East is a trading name of Arriva Northumbria Limited, Registered in England 237558, and Arriva Durham County Limited, Registered in England 2404350. Registered Office: Admiral Way, Doxford International Business Park, Sunderland, SR3 3XP A subsidiary of Arriva Plc

a DB company

22nd October 2021

117 Queen Street
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE8 2UA

Transport North East

C/O Gateshead Civic Centre

Regent Terrace

Gateshead

NE8 1HH

Re: Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

To whom it may concern,

I write in my role as Managing Director for Go North East and confirm ongoing discussions with Transport North East regarding our regions' Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Transport North East have consulted us on the BSIP and we continue to have constructive and meaningful dialogue as this develops, and wish to work together in the future.

We hope to continue to build a strong partnership between our organisations and look forward to doing so through the BSIP.

Your sincerely

Martijn Gilbert
Managing Director

Our Ref: SW/ME

18 October 2021

Transport North East
c/o Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

Dear Tobyn

LETTER OF SUPPORT REF BSIP AND EP

Busways Travel Limited, trading as Stagecoach North East ("Stagecoach") is pleased to formally record its support for the North East's BSIP and the ensuing EP.

We are particularly thankful for the positive and collaborative way in which the BSIP has been formulated. We believe that the combined investment from all partners coupled with the requested funding from UK Government will lead to transformational changes for bus passengers across the North East Combined Authority area whilst also encouraging modal shift to further improve the air quality in the area.

We hope the bid is looked on favourably and look forward to continuing to work in partnership together.

Yours sincerely

STEVE WALKER
MANAGING DIRECTOR

22 October 2021

Transport North East

C/O Gateshead Civic Centre

Regent Terrace

Gateshead

NE8 1HH

Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

The CBI is the UK's premier business organisation providing a voice for firms at a regional, national and international level to policymakers. Our purpose is helping business create a more prosperous society and we represent businesses of all sizes and across all sectors with strong regional representation.

I am writing to you on behalf of CBI Membership in the region to express our support for the work of Transport North East in the development of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan. As Regional Director for the CBI I can confirm ongoing discussions with Philip and indeed I was delighted to be asked to chair a stakeholder consultation group. The last discussion was incredibly open and informative.

Ensuring a just transition to Net Zero and employing all available means to do so is an incredibly important issue our members – businesses across the UK – are grappling with. We are supportive of ways to improve productivity and opportunity in our region and transport is a key component of this.

Collaboration is key to achieving this and we look forward to ongoing meaningful and constructive discussions.

Yours sincerely

S. Glendinning

Regional Director, North East, CBI
(sarah.glendinning@cbi.org.uk **/** 07768 401039**)**

Tobyn Hughes
Transport North East
c/o Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

26th October 2021

Dear Tobyn,

I am writing on behalf of CPT (Confederation of Passenger Transport) and NE Bus (The North East Bus operators association) to express our support for the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan.

The partnership approach with operators has been very positive and collaborative, we also note the specific work with CPT and NE Bus to ensure operators of all sizes were equally engaged in the overall process.

We believe the BSIP and funding requirement if supported, can be truly transformative for the region, its economy and people.

I look forward to continue working in partnership with you to deliver the BSIP through the Enhanced Partnership.

Yours sincerely

Andrew McGuinness

Andrew McGuinness
CPT Regional Manager (North of England)

Confederation of Passenger Transport UK
22 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1PR
T: 020 7240 3131 **E**: admin@cpt-uk.org **W**: www.cpt-uk.org
A company limited by guarantee No. 1182437 England. Registered office as above.

National Highways
Great North House
20 Allington Way
Darlington
DL1 4QB

Tel: 07760 990450

Transport North East
C/O Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

21 October 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

I write in my role as Route Manager for National Highways, and confirm ongoing discussions with Transport North East regarding their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Transport North East have consulted us on their BSIP and we continue to have constructive and meaningful dialogue as this develops, and wish to work together in the future.

We hope to continue to build a strong partnership between our organisations and look forward to doing so through the BSIP.

Yours faithfully

Mark Goodwill
Route Manager (North East)
Yorkshire & North East
Email: mark.goodwill@highwaysengland.co.uk

Registered office Bridge House, 1 Walnut Tree Close, Guildford GU1 4LZ
National Highways Limited registered in England and Wales number 09346363

disability confident COMMITTED

Transport North East

C/O Gateshead Civic Centre

Regent Terrace

Gateshead

NE8 1HH

18/10/2021

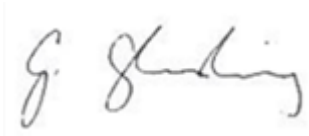
Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

I write in my role as Executive Principal for Newcastle College, NCG, and confirm ongoing discussions with Transport North East regarding their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Transport North East have consulted us on their BSIP and we continue to have constructive and meaningful dialogue as this develops, and wish to work together in the future.

We hope to continue to build a strong partnership between our organisations and look forward to doing so through the BSIP.

Your sincerely,



Grant Glendinning
Executive Principal (North)
NCG

Philip Meikle
Transport Strategy Director
Transport North East
c/o Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Street
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE8 1HH

Our ref: MK/lr/tjh/adams
Your ref:

Direct Line: 07972 622 642
Facsimile: 0191 203 3181
Email: martin.kearney@nexus.org.uk

20 October 2021

By email: buses@transportnortheast.gov.uk

Dear Philip

Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

I am writing on behalf of Nexus in support of the North East Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP). Nexus is the Passenger Transport Executive for Tyne and Wear and the owner/operator of the Tyne and Wear Metro system.

As part of our remit Nexus secures socially necessary bus services, manages concessionary fares for the region, provides public transport information, bus stops and stations as well as promoting public transport.

Nexus is keen to see an integrated and effective public transport network for the North East, which achieves the vision for transport set out in the North East Transport Plan.

Nexus has been consulted by Transport North East on the BSIP and, funding permitting, look forward to working closely with partners across the region to deliver the ambitions set out in the plan.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kearney
Chief Operating Officer

North East England
Chamber of Commerce

Transport North East

C/O Gateshead Civic Centre

Regent Terrace

Gateshead

NE8 1HH

20/10/21

Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

I write in my role as Policy Director for the North East England Chamber of Commerce, and confirm ongoing discussions with Transport North East regarding their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Transport North East have consulted us on their BSIP and we continue to have constructive and meaningful dialogue as this develops, and wish to work together in the future.

We hope to continue to build a strong partnership between our organisations and look forward to doing so through the BSIP.

Your sincerely

Jonathan Walker, Policy Director, North East England Chamber of Commerce

Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Andrew Battarbee
Area Director
CLGU Yorkshire & North East
1 City Walk
Leeds
LS11 9DA
Mob: 07771 988652

Andrew.battarbee@beis.gov.uk

Transport North East
c/o Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

19 October 2021

Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

I write in my role as Area Lead, Yorkshire & North East for the joint Departments of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy & Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, and confirm ongoing discussions with Transport North East regarding their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Transport North East have consulted us on their BSIP and we continue to have constructive and meaningful dialogue as this develops, and wish to work together in the future.

We hope to build a collaborative relationship between our organisations and look forward to doing so through the BSIP.

Andrew Battarbee
Area Director
Cities & Local Growth, Yorkshire & North East

Education Partnership NorthEast

Transport North East
C/O Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

19 October 2021

Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

I write in my role as Vice Principal Partnerships & Commercial – Group for Education Partnership North East, and confirm ongoing discussions with Transport North East regarding their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Transport North East have consulted us on their BSIP and we continue to have constructive and meaningful dialogue as this develops, and wish to work together in the future.

We hope to continue to build a strong partnership between our organisations and look forward to doing so through the BSIP.

Your sincerely

Iain Nixon
Vice Principal Partnerships & Commercial - Group
Education Partnership North East

Transport North East

C/O Gateshead Civic Centre

Regent Terrace

Gateshead

NE8 1HH

Professor Jane Robinson
Dean of Engagement and Place

Newcastle University
King's Gate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU
United Kingdom

20 October 2021

Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

I write in my role as Pro-Vice Chancellor, Engagement & Place at Newcastle University, and confirm ongoing discussions with Transport North East regarding their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Transport North East have consulted the University on the BSIP and we continue to have constructive and meaningful dialogue as this develops, and wish to work together in the future.

A modern, accessible and efficient regional bus network is of great importance for our 6,600 colleagues and 30,000 students, and for the commitment the University has made to net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2030. We also recognise the positive impact of public transport towards economic, social and cultural wellbeing in the region, and our hope that our world-leading research can continue to support innovation in sustainable transport.

We believe establishing a strong partnership between our organisations through proactive engagement will bring a positive impact to the North East and we look forward to doing so through the BSIP.

Yours sincerely

Professor Jane Robinson
Dean of Engagement and Place

tel: +44 (0) 191 208 0820
jane.robinson@ncl.ac.uk
www.ncl.ac.uk

The University of Newcastle upon Tyne trading as Newcastle University

18th October 2021

Philip Meikle
Transport Strategy Director
Transport North East
C/O Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

Dear Philip

Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

I write in my role as Managing Director for Visit County Durham, and confirm ongoing discussions with Transport North East regarding their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Transport North East have consulted us on their BSIP and we continue to have constructive and meaningful dialogue as this develops, and wish to work together in the future.

We hope to continue to build a strong partnership between our organisations and look forward to doing so through the BSIP.

Your sincerely

Michelle Gorman
Managing Director
Visit County Durham

Kerry Peters
Room 36
Central Station Offices
Neville Street
Newcastle
NE1 5DL

Kerry.peters@northernrailway.co.uk

Transport North East
C/O Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Terrace
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

18th October 2021

Support of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

I write in my role as Director North East for Northern Trains Ltd, and confirm ongoing discussions with Transport North East regarding their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).
Transport North East have consulted us on their BSIP and we continue to have constructive and meaningful dialogue as this develops, and wish to work together in the future.

We hope to continue to build a strong partnership between our organisations and look forward to doing so through the BSIP.

Yours sincerely,

Kerry Peters
Director – North East Region

We have a unified ambition to grow bus patronage across our region

Email: buses@transportnortheast.gov.uk

Visit: www.transportnortheast.gov.uk

Transport North East

NEbus
North East bus operators
working together

neca
North East Combined Authority
DURHAM • GATESHEAD • SOUTH TYNESIDE • SUNDERLAND

NORTH OF TYNE
COMBINED AUTHORITY