

North East Bus Franchising Consultation

Easy Read summary

July 2026

Have your say about the future of buses in the North East.

- 1. This document uses short sentences and clear headings.**
- 2. You can ask someone you trust to help you read it.**

About this consultation

We want to know what you think.

A consultation is a way for people to give their views.

The North East Mayoral Strategic Authority is called the North East MSA in this document.

The North East MSA wants to know what people think about plans for bus services.

Your views will help the North East MSA make a decision.

Buses in the North East today

Buses are the most used form of public transport in the North East.

In 2024/ 2025, people made more than 115 million bus journeys.

People use buses to:

- get to work
- go to school or college
- go to health appointments
- go shopping
- enjoy leisure activities and tourism

What has changed?

Bus passenger journeys have fallen by 31% over 15 years.

The miles run by bus companies have fallen by 32%.

This can mean:

- fewer buses
- buses running less often
- some routes disappearing

Who makes decisions now?

Private bus companies make many of the main decisions.

Bus companies generally decide:

- bus routes
- timetables
- fares
- service standards

The North East MSA, councils and bus companies work together to deliver agreed improvements.

Bus companies still control important decisions, including many timetables and fares.

Problems with bus services

Only 87% of buses run on time. The target is 95%.

Some people do not feel safe on buses or at bus stops.

There are about 370 types of bus ticket. This can be confusing.

Journey information is not always joined up.

Why buses matter

47% of North East bus users say the bus is their only travel option.

If bus services get worse, some people may find it harder to reach:

- jobs
- education
- healthcare
- other important services

Local and national public funding provides about 51% of bus company income.

However, the public sector has limited control over the bus network.

Our vision for the future

The North East MSA has 6 main goals for buses.

- 1. Put buses at the heart of a joined-up transport network called the Angel Network.
- 2. Make buses accessible and inclusive for everyone.
- 3. Make buses more punctual and reliable.
- 4. Help everyone feel safe, especially women and girls.
- 5. Make the bus network strong and able to cope with change.
- 6. Create pride in North East buses.

What is bus franchising?

The North East MSA would plan the bus network.

The North East MSA would decide:

- routes
- timetables
- fares and tickets
- service standards

Bus companies would bid for contracts to run services.

They would have to meet the standards in their contracts.

Bus companies would still run the buses. The North East MSA would have more control.

Fares and tickets

Tickets should be simpler and better value.

Under bus franchising, the North East MSA could set fares and choose the tickets that work best for people.

The proposal says fares would not rise above inflation for 10 years from the first day of franchising.

Routes and timetables

Routes and timetables would be planned more consistently.

The North East MSA would decide routes and timetables for the franchised network.

This could help buses connect better with:

- other buses
- Metro
- rail
- Ferry
- walking, wheeling and cycling

The proposal says the size of the bus network would be kept for 10 years from the first day of franchising.

Safety and information

The North East MSA would lead passenger safety across the network.

The aim is to have consistent and improved safety measures.

There would be one website and app for passenger information.

This should make journey planning easier across different types of transport.

A clear bus identity

The bus network would have one identity called the Angel Network.

The shared identity would be used on buses, at stops and at stations.

This should make the network easier to recognise.

More say for local people

Communities would have more influence over the bus network.

Local people and elected representatives would have more opportunity to:

- influence network planning
- comment on changes
- hold bus operators to account

Money and responsibility

The North East MSA would take financial responsibility for the bus network.

The North East MSA would need to pay bus operators' costs.

These costs are about £230 million each year..

The North East MSA would also need to manage fare income and provide funding to improve services.

This is a big responsibility and would need to be managed carefully.

What the assessment says

The assessment supports bus franchising.

The assessment says franchising is:

- the best way to meet the 6 goals and improve buses
- good value for money
- affordable
- commercially viable
- deliverable

The assessment also says bus franchising would be a large undertaking for the North East MSA.

Have your say

Tell us what you think about the proposal.

Complete the public consultation survey.

You can fill out the survey online at www.northeast-ca.gov.uk/haveyoursay. You can ask somebody else to help you.

If you prefer, you can email your views at haveyoursay@northeast-ca.gov.uk or call us on 0191 277 4223 to request a paper copy of the questionnaire.

Your views are important.

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