

North East Bus Service Improvement Plan

Working Together for Better Transport



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Foreword

I am delighted to present my Bus Service Improvement Plan as the first step towards improving public transport across the North East and as part of my future ambitions for a bus network back under public control.

Bus services in the North East are vitally important and this bold plan sets out how we will make buses travel faster, more affordable and more attractive for passengers.

Buses are the most used form of public transport in our region, they carry millions of passengers every year, and the network therefore needs to work for everyone. My bus plan sets out steps for stabilising and enhancing our bus services, attracting new passengers and putting buses at the heart of our integrated transport network.

The region has been awarded £163.5 million in funding, one the largest settlements in the country, to deliver this plan in partnership with bus operators, and great work is already underway. In the long term, to truly transform our network, I want to bring buses back into public control so that buses work for people not for profit.

Successes to date include the £1 single fare for people aged 21 and the £3 day ticket giving young people unlimited travel on buses, Metro and Ferry across the whole region. This is a great step to helping lift young people in our region out of poverty by providing cheaper access to education and training. We are also investing significantly in bus priority measures through the region to speed up bus journeys, we are improving passenger information, and we have used funding to launch new bus services to sustain many parts of the bus network in the face of the industry's ongoing troubles following the pandemic.

My bus plan shows we can deliver better value for the people of the region, and I am looking forward to seeing more initiatives delivered to support us in creating an integrated, green transport network for the people of the North East.

**Kim McGuinness,
North East Mayor**



Section 1: Our bus vision

Area covered

This Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) covers seven local authority areas in the North East; Durham County Council, Gateshead Council, Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council, Northumberland County Council, South Tyneside Council, and Sunderland City Council, collectively making up the **North East Combined Authority (North East CA)**.

As of 7 May 2024, the North East CA reports to the North East Mayor and Cabinet. Prior to that, the Local Transport Authorities discharged their transport functions jointly through the North East Joint Transport Committee (NEJTC); a statutory body that was responsible for transport policy and delivery across the region.

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

Durham County Council and Northumberland County Council are responsible for providing passenger transport services in their own areas, including supporting bus services which may not be commercially viable, school services, and other vital services.

NEbus is the name of the local bus operators' association encompassing the providers of services across the North East.



Figure 1.1 North East Combined Authority area

Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme(s)

On 21 March 2023, the North East's Enhance Partnership (EP) Plan and Scheme was made; the full documents can be found on the North East CA's website, including the formal notice of making the EP Plan and Scheme. As a result of the EP, this BSIP was created to showcase our ambitions to make buses more attractive by making them an affordable and practical alternative to people using private cars and helping existing bus users to travel more frequently.

Our region

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. Our wide range of leisure, cultural, sporting, and historical attractions includes UNESCO World Heritage sites Hadrian's Wall and Durham Cathedral and Castle, alongside miles of unspoilt coastline, and the Northumberland National Park and the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Our manufacturing base includes five national catapult centres, three national innovation centres, and growing tech and fintech industries. These industries attract significant inward investment to the region.

Duration

The BSIP covers a three-year period starting 1 April 2022 and ending in March 2025, and includes longer term aspirations for 2025 to 2030.

BSIP annual review

In line with requirements, the BSIP will be reviewed every year.

Alignment

The North East Transport Plan adopted in March 2021 provides the strategic framework to support delivery of an improved, more seamless, coordinated and integrated transport system across the region. The Transport Plan is currently being updated following the formation of the North East CA, and will incorporate our BSIP when it is published in due course.

This BSIP is closely aligned with the North East Transport Plan, as well as all relevant policies and plans of North East CA, the seven local authorities and Nexus.

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 five objectives.
- Our 'Making the Right Travel Choice' strategy target which encourages car users to switch one journey a week to public transport, walking, wheeling, or cycling.
- Our region's document 'Your Vision for Buses' which sets out the high-level interventions and solutions required from our bus network to deliver our Transport Plan's vision and objectives.

Introduction to the North East Transport Plan's vision and objectives

The North East Transport Plan's vision 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, 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.

The delivery of the BSIP and the development of the Enhanced Partnership (EP) is a crucial step in the delivery of our Transport Plan. Every investment we make within the BSIP and EP will support progress towards these objectives.

Our Transport Plan contains a live programme of planned interventions and is reviewed and updated regularly.



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 North East Local Transport Plan objectives

Transport Plan

Our region's five objectives

Making the right travel choice

To achieve the objectives, we need people to 'make the right travel choice'

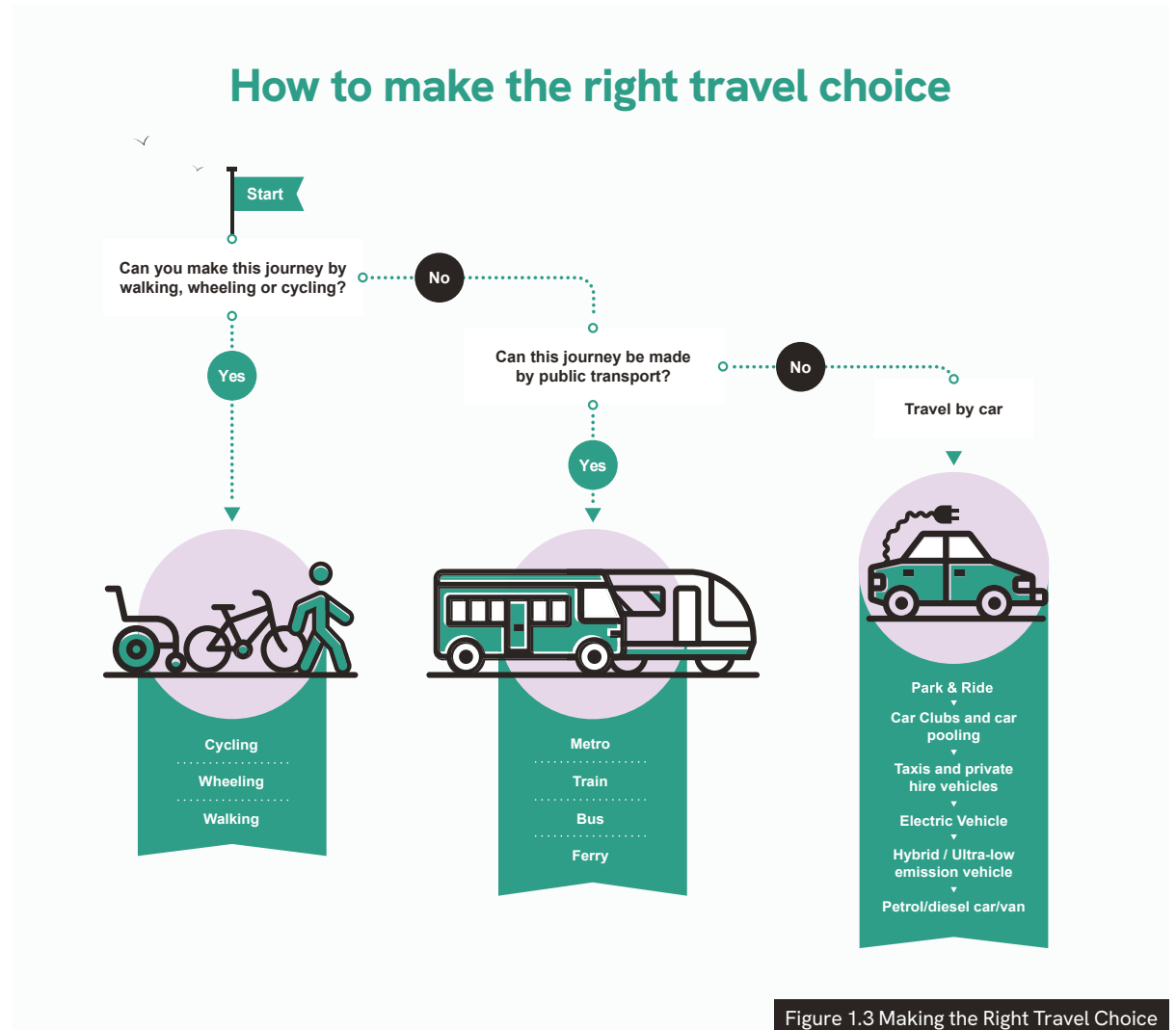
Our Bus Vision

'Your Vision for Buses' sets out ten solutions, which have been adopted by our BSIP

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

Central to our Transport Plan is our “Making the Right Travel Choice” strategy. This strategy leaves no doubt that our region is committed to positioning public transport as an appealing and sustainable transport choice, which people should choose ahead of a car whenever possible. It asks car users to switch one car journey a week to walking, wheeling, cycling, or public transport. To support this, the BSIP provides investment towards better fares and through the introduction of priority measures makes bus a more attractive option to help people to make the right travel choice.

We understand the importance of providing a sustainable transport network which is attractive and makes people want to use it.



Transport Plan

Our region's five objectives

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To achieve the objectives, we need people to 'make the right travel choice'

Our Bus Vision

'Your Vision for Buses' sets out ten solutions, which have been adopted by our BSIP

'Your Vision for Buses': How we have aligned our BSIP with the North East Transport Plan'

In June 2021, we 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' and form the basis of the interventions we have set out in this BSIP document.



Our vision: Ten solutions



An enhanced network that is simple and easy to understand



Clear and consistent information that is easy to access



Faster and more reliable journey times



Improved safety and security



A simple and flexible fares structure



Cleaner and greener vehicles



Better integration between modes



Improved connectivity beyond our boundaries



More early morning and evening services



A first-class customer experience

Figure 1.4 Your Vision for Bus ten solutions

Transport Plan

Our region's five objectives

Making the right travel choice

To achieve the objectives, we need people to 'make the right travel choice'

Our Bus Vision

'Your Vision for Buses' sets out ten solutions, which have been adopted by our BSIP

Figure 1.5 Public engagement events. Further information is available in Appendix A, Table 1.

Big Bus Conversation 2021	In summer 2021 we talked to people and businesses across the North East to understand what people think we need to do to encourage bus use. This included asking them to allocate £10 across our ten solutions to help us understand their priorities and therefore inform the creation of the BSIP.
Big Bus Conversation 2023	In summer 2023, we repeated the campaign to see if attitudes towards bus had changed at all. Around 2,200 people confirmed that they thought the ten solutions we had already set out were the right ones to make buses appealing and that we were on the right track.
Stakeholder forum	A stakeholder forum was established for stakeholders, such as health and education, advocates for equalities groups, and passenger and community representatives. Contributions were made by email and through attendance at four different events. The Department for Transport (DfT) presented and took part in the discussion with stakeholders along with NEbus. These forums have taken place annually to ensure views are aligned and re-confirm buy in for our wider stakeholders.
Moving Buses Forward 2024	In spring 2024 we ran our Moving Buses Forward engagement campaign across the region to gain further insight into attitudes towards the bus service. Refer to Appendix A, Figure 8 for the top priorities.
North East Travel Survey	Every year Nexus undertake the North East Travel Survey collecting views on all transport modes across the region. Data is available between 2022 and 2024 and feeds into the final BSIP.
Bluegrass market research	Bluegrass carried out independent market research of North East residents, visitors, and underserved audiences such as those living in rural areas, the elderly, and those from a minority background. As this research was weighted to be representative of the North East population, it has been used to benchmark the results we obtained through our non-targeted public engagement.

Engaging with the passengers and stakeholders through the events and surveys outlined in Figure 1.5 has confirmed that our regional bus vision is the right solution. The North East needs a network that is integrated, fast and reliable with simple fares, and takes people where they need to go safely, in clean green vehicles.

Transport Plan

Our region's five objectives

Making the right travel choice

To achieve the objectives, we need people to 'make the right travel choice'

Our Bus Vision

'Your Vision for Buses' sets out ten solutions, which have been adopted by our BSIP

Section 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. Bus operators tailor services to geography, demographics, and demand. They offer more frequent services in the metropolitan and urban areas, and more targeted services in rural areas, connecting to many other key locations.

“Secured services”, are bus services that are contracted by Durham, Nexus, and Northumberland to respond to a 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 are at the extremities of the day, such as late at night.



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 5: Targets, performance monitoring and reporting. We also explain the factors that affect the use of local bus services. Examples of our sources are outlined in Figure 2.1.

We present data and information at a strategic level, with further detail provided at a more granular level for each of the proposed interventions within section 4.

We have set 11 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the success of this BSIP, with the aim of increasing the proportion of people choosing to travel by bus (modal share), particularly for journeys to work and education, and in rural areas.

We know that **increased modal share** of bus will only happen when people see tangible improvements made to bus services, which we will measure through **improved customer satisfaction**. If we want passengers to be satisfied, buses must be **punctual and reliable, as well as faster** and not caught in congestion.

Although uptake of bus travel will itself improve our environmental performance, we also want to target a continuous improvement in the emission standards of our bus fleet.



Figure 2.1 Data and information sources informing our BSIP

Our current bus network

The bus market has changed significantly in recent years with the pandemic, resulting in lots of changes to people's travel patterns. As a result, there is increased number in people working from home, which means changes to the commuter market.

Against the backdrop of long-term bus patronage decline, this has resulted in significant commercial cuts by operators where services are increasingly no longer economically viable. In turn, to ensure network coverage is maintained Durham, Nexus, and Northumberland are supporting an increased proportion of the network.

In Section 4: The network, we provide more detail around how the reduction in commercial viability of a number of routes in the region has affected our BSIP service spend.

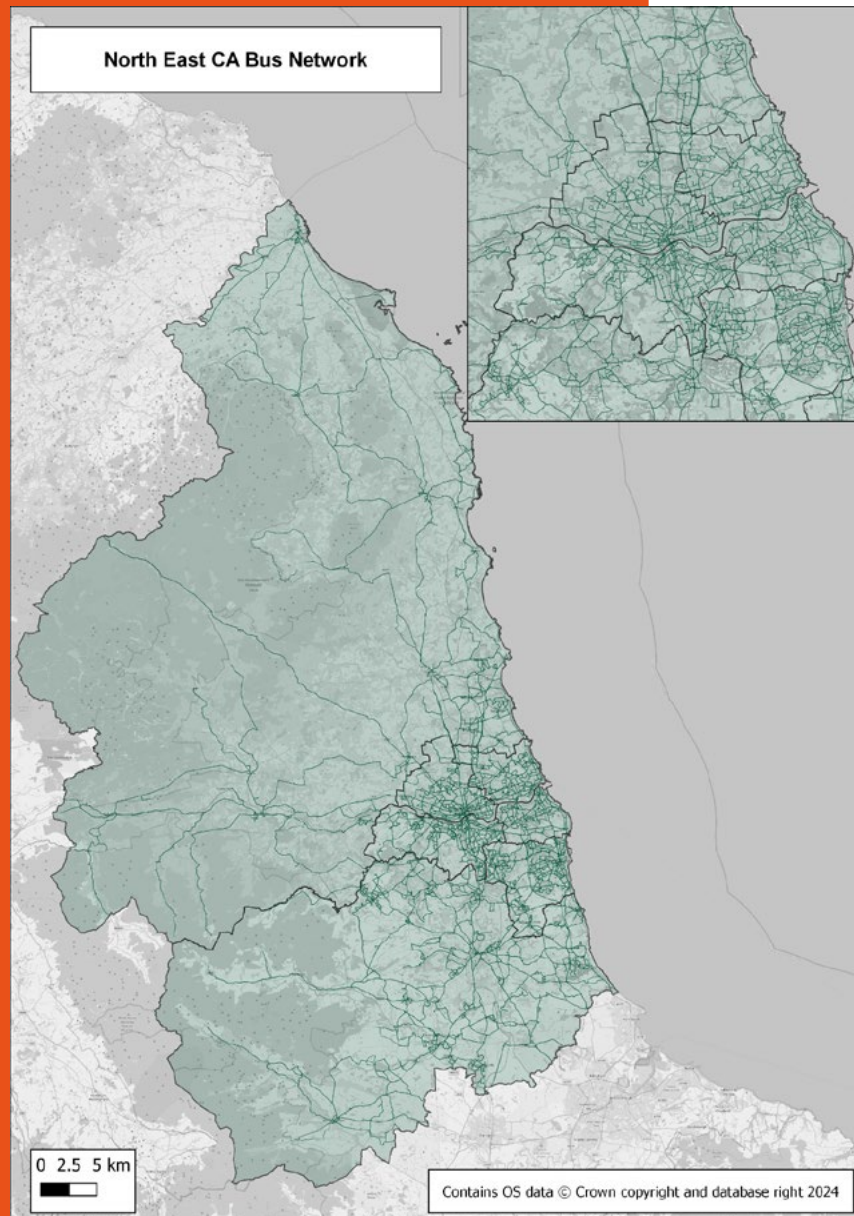


Figure 2.2 North East bus network map



1 in 4 people would
be open to using the bus

66 million bus
vehicle miles
in the North East
in 2022/23 – the
same as 2020/21

106.6 million
bus
passenger journeys in
2022/23 – compared
to 51.1 million in 2021

At the time of
the 2021 census,
28% of
households
did not have a car

86%
of bus services were
commercially operated
in 2022/23 compared
to 88% in 2020/21

11%
of bus journeys were
travelling to work in
2022, compared to 9%
on average in 2015-19

8%
of bus journeys were
travelling for leisure in
2022, compared to 10%
on average in 2015-19

Bus punctuality and reliability

Bus punctuality is the percentage of buses which arrive on time, defined as no more than five minutes late or one minute early. Bus reliability is the percentage of scheduled bus miles which are operated, the actual journeys that buses make.

We found that bus punctuality and reliability were concerns for many during our engagement events; Big Bus Conversation and Moving Buses Forward. The sentiments expressed demonstrate just how crucial it is that buses can be relied upon and the impact they have on passengers when they are let down.

"I find that after COVID-19, the reliability of buses has decreased. Over the past year there have been numerous occasions where I've been stuck at Newcastle Haymarket or Cramlington waiting up to an hour for a bus (they run every couple of minutes)."

Big Bus Conversation 2023

Between April 2023 and March 2024, bus punctuality in the North East has averaged 79.1% which indicates punctuality has got worse than in previous years of the BSIP. Similarly, reliability factors in the North East have averaged 97.4% compared to our target of 99.5%. A variety of factors have caused this decline including bus driver shortages, challenges with the bus fleet caused by age related deterioration, and an uplift in major roadworks including the recent Tyne Bridge repairs.

"Buses are my preferred transport but their reliability, and the believability of information about them is key to improving confidence."
Big Bus Conversation 2023

During the pandemic lockdown, bus performance on the traditionally least reliable services reached 96%, which demonstrates how well bus services can perform when there are fewer cars on the road.

More information about our punctuality and reliability targets can be found in section 5.

Opinions on punctuality and reliability from Moving Buses Forward (2024):

- "I use the bus all the time, I think reliability is the most important thing."
- "Would be a big help if they turned up, on time, or at all. I often wait well over 1 hour for a service that should run every 20 mins minimum."
- "Big issue is reliability (turning up on time, turning up at all). That they aren't does stop me using them more."
- "A reliable service, I have an hourly service where I live, in a semi-rural area. Frequently, services are withdrawn at short notice, leaving many people unable to travel."
- "It's really tricky to travel between neighbourhoods around the city centre - buses are not very frequent, they are often late, and the routes are really long which means it takes a long time to get from A to B. It would also be great if bikes could be taken on a bus."

Average bus speeds

As well as punctuality and reliability, the speed of a bus journey can be an important factor when making a travel choice. We therefore need bus services to be as quick and efficient as possible. During the Big Bus Conversation, 160 respondents listed 'slow' as a top three word that springs to mind when they think about buses.

Alongside giving priority to buses in congested areas, maintaining and enhancing bus services can also make bus travel quicker. Implementing direct routes ensures that more journeys can be made without the need to interchange, and higher service frequencies reduces wait times.

"Buses are not very frequent, they are often late, and the routes are really long which means it takes a long time to get from A to B."
Moving Buses Forward, 2024

Bus modal share

Car and van use, either as a driver or passenger, accounts for 59% of journeys made in the North East, in comparison to local buses which account for 6.8%. Modal share of bus has returned to pre-COVID-19 levels of 6.4% in 2019, however, compared to 5 years ago modal share continues to decrease. Bus made up 8.8% of all transport in 2017, which is where it peaked. Further information is provided in Appendix A.

6.8% of journeys in the North East are taken by bus.

In our independent market research carried out by Bluegrass in 2023, 93% of people told us they live within a five to ten minute walk of a bus stop and 51% indicated that they would be open to using buses more often. There is clearly strong potential for significant growth in bus modal share from the current position.

By delivering our ambitions for bus we hope to encourage more people to try their local services and enable current passengers to rely on buses for more trips.

"I would like to use car less given the current climate but bus services need investment and improvements."
Big Bus Conversation, 2023



Patronage

In the longer term, patronage has been declining for many decades. There are numerous reasons for this, including increasing costs and higher car ownership. This challenging background is reflected in the 54% of residents (Bluegrass market research), who told us they don't see the bus as practical for their daily routines.

As is indicated in Figure 2.3, bus ridership has not yet recovered to 2018/19 levels, with many reporting that their travel habits have changed in recent years. However, we have seen a slight increase on 2022 figures.

Despite this, our research also showed that North East residents recognise the advantages of bus travel with 49% and 69% respectively agreeing or strongly agreeing that increased bus use helps them to save money and benefits the environment.

Similarly, hundreds of positive testimonials through our public engagement campaigns have been collected regarding local services, with many reporting increased bus use in response to the national £2 fare cap and the local 21 and under £1 single. This is reinforced by increases in patronage, showing that positive investments can have a real impact on bus patronage.

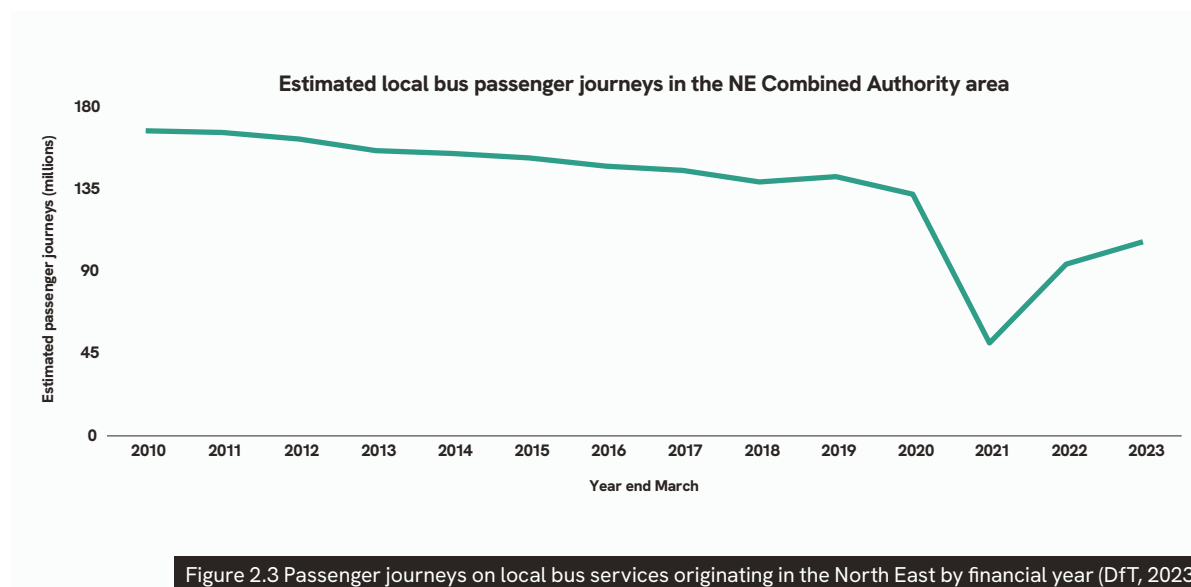
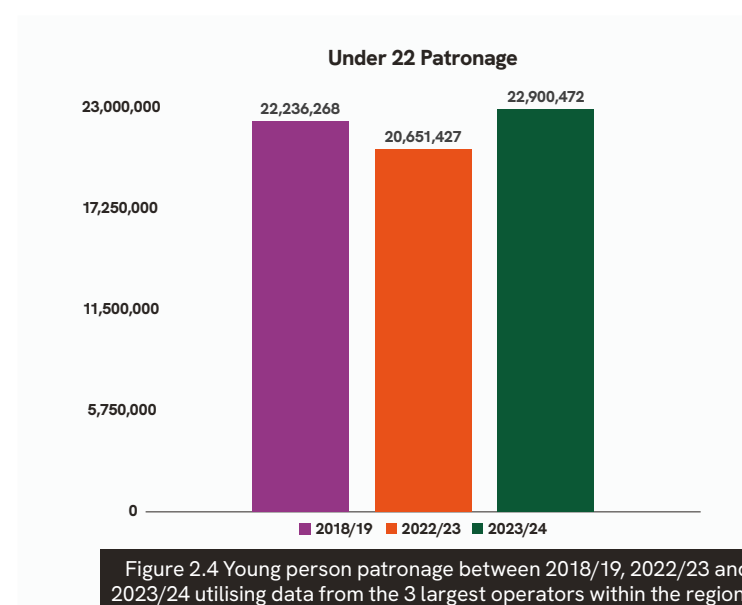


Figure 2.4 shows that the patronage of people under the age of 22 increased by around 11% in 2023/24 from 2022/23, surpassing our KPI to grow young person patronage by 10% in 2023/24.

Figure 2.4 Young person patronage between 2018/19, 2022/23 and 2023/24 utilising data from the 3 largest operators within the region.



Customer satisfaction

By utilising BSIP funding we commissioned Transport Focus, the independent watchdog for transport users, to undertake passenger satisfaction surveys across the region called 'Your Bus Journey'. In total, 34 locations nationally were surveyed, and they found that satisfaction varies across areas ranging from as high as 90% in some places, to 75% in others. In 2023, customer satisfaction in the North East CA region was found to be 81%.

Overall, customer satisfaction in the North East CA region was 81% in 2023.

Improving customer satisfaction will be key to maintaining existing customers whilst also encouraging more people to switch to bus.

"I like the electric buses. The reduced noise and cleaner buses make it much more pleasant."
Big Bus Conversation, 2023

While everyone will benefit from more attractive bus services, we know that this will have a larger impact on certain groups. Census data tells us that ethnic minorities in the North East are more than twice as likely to travel to work by bus than white respondents. During the Big Bus Conversation, we also heard directly from residents who are more likely to rely on bus services, such as those with certain disabilities, those with lower incomes, and young people.

Environmental performance

During our engagement events, many residents expressed concern about bus emissions. In addition to this, many others celebrated the introduction of new zero emission buses in the region.

Euro 6 is currently the engine classification with the lowest emissions. In 2021, 54% of the region's bus fleet were not at the engine emissions standard of Euro 6 or higher. Recently, 18 new high specification electric buses have entered the fleet, and the region has been successfully awarded funding for 52 new zero emission buses through the governments' Levelling Up Fund. An additional 43 buses have also been allocated funding by the governments' Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA 2) scheme, totalling to 113 zero emission vehicles in our fleet by December 2025.

By December 2025:

1 in 10
of the region's buses will
be zero emission buses

19 routes will
operate with
zero emission buses

Each of the ZEBRA 2 funded buses will incorporate enhanced accessibility features, including an additional space which can be used by a second wheelchair or parent with buggy and audio-visual next-stop passenger information, all of which were highlighted as issues during our Moving Buses Forward campaign.

New zero emission vehicles will also allow some of our older and more polluting vehicles to be withdrawn from service. However, there are still changes to be made, otherwise we will continue to trail behind other regions in bringing about positive environmental change.

"I really care about accessibility. I'm invisibly disabled and often travel with a family member who uses a wheelchair, but it can be difficult and inconvenient to use buses so sometimes we avoid leaving the house at all."
Moving Buses Forward, 2024



Financial support for bus services

Due to the importance of bus travel for our communities, millions of pounds of public funding are used to support the bus network.

Local authority spending on bus services is undergoing reprofiling following the end of the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) funding and Local Transport Fund (LTF). In replacement, BSIP funding is required to sustain secured services.

Since the publication of our first BSIP in 2021, a large number of routes have since been operated by supported services due to operator cuts in 2022 and 2023.

As BSIP investments are delivered it is hoped that the number of supported services will be reduced. Three routes which were supported through LTF and BSIP funding and have now returned to operate commercially, these are the 67 and 69 in Gateshead, and the 84 in Washington.



A breakdown of our subsidised services can be seen in Figures 2.6 and 2.7.

	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 2.6 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 2.7 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 factors which affect local bus service usage across the region:

- Identified barriers to bus use.
- Perceptions and attitudes toward buses.
- Car parking: the pricing of parking provisions in towns and cities, and the split between local authority and private sector provisions, including the amount spent by each local authority in our region on parking enforcement.
- Other competing and complementary factors to the bus network in the North East.

As part of our Bluegrass research, quantitative methodology was undertaken, involving online and in person surveys, 1,220 interviews spanning the region, and an online research panel with both residents and tourists. Quotas and weighting were applied to deliver a representative sample of the region in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and geography.

Some of these factors can be seen in Figure 2.8, which sets out what makes people choose the bus.

It can be intimidating travelling alone especially when rowdy abusive groups get on, so something to make you feel safer [would encourage me to use the bus more]."

Moving Buses Forward, 2024

Reason for choosing the bus

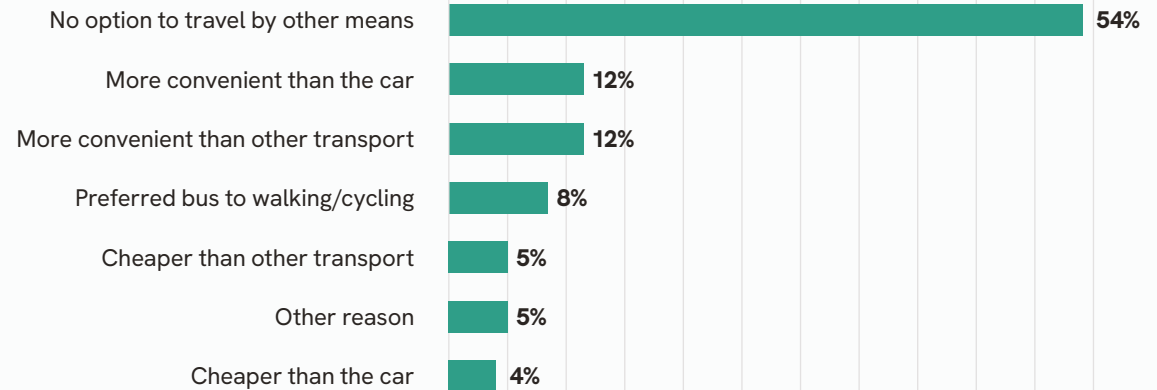


Figure 2.8 Reason for choosing the bus (Source: Transport Focus 2019)

58% use the bus already

3 in 10 feel they aren't the kind of person to use the bus

35% agree they had a lack of knowledge about service provisions and fares, rising to 51% for people who consider themselves infrequent users

41% agree that the places they travel to are not easy to reach by bus

1 in 4 would be open to using a bus

46% of non-bus users prefer to travel by car

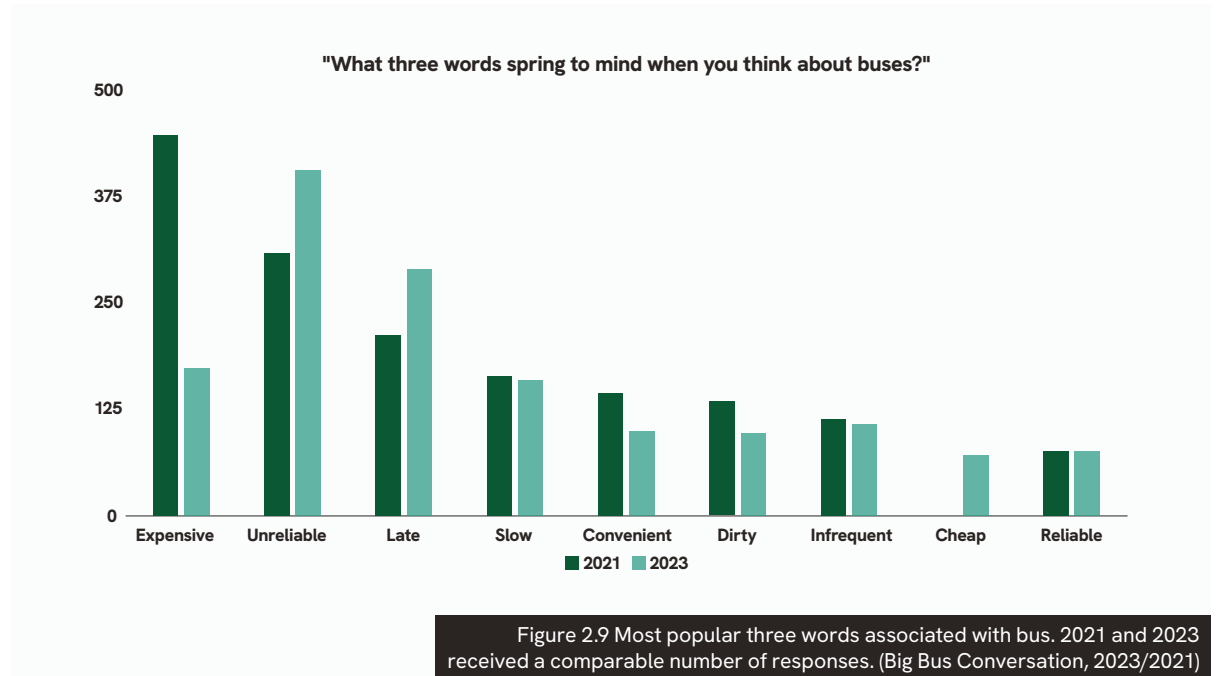
We ran our Big Bus Conversation campaign in 2021 and 2023 with the aim of involving local people in discussions about buses. In both years we asked residents to tell us, "What three words spring to mind when you think about buses?" Results can be seen in Figure 2.9. 'Unreliable', 'late', and 'slow' remain common words used by respondents to the survey.

The impact of new fare offer introductions can clearly be seen in the reduction of respondents who used the word 'Expensive.' Positive feedback about the governments' £2 fare cap and BSIP funded £1 single for those 21 and under was also repeatedly brought up at our stakeholder events.

Respondents to the Big Bus Conversation in 2023 were asked to rank, from very unlikely to very likely, how our ten solutions would "help them use the bus more". The highest scoring solutions with 92% positive scoring was "faster and more reliable journey times".

Another high scoring solution was "simple and flexible fares structures" with 81% positive scoring. This has been reflected in our Moving Buses Forward engagement event, as displayed by the direct quote to the right.

The all day anywhere tickets have been a game changer for me as my commute takes me across all the bus companies' boundary lines so I'm not able to buy discounted zone tickets from them. Being able to buy one ticket that I know I can use on any bus company & the Metro is so unbelievably helpful and gives so much flexibility getting around."
Moving Buses Forward, 2024



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 CA region.

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 2:16 Parking enforcement spending (annual)

In our previous BSIP, reviewing of car parking and the relationship with bus travel was explored in our Network chapter. This has been removed from this iteration as it now features as a wider-scale review about car parking in general in our regional Transport Plan which will be published in due course.

Parking provision charges by local authority (Local Authorities, 2023)

	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.
** 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.

Figure 2.15

Integration between bus and other sustainable modes

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.

Through the 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, and encouraging more people to choose public transport over private car journeys.

For further information where we compare journey lengths, please refer to Appendix A.

Metro

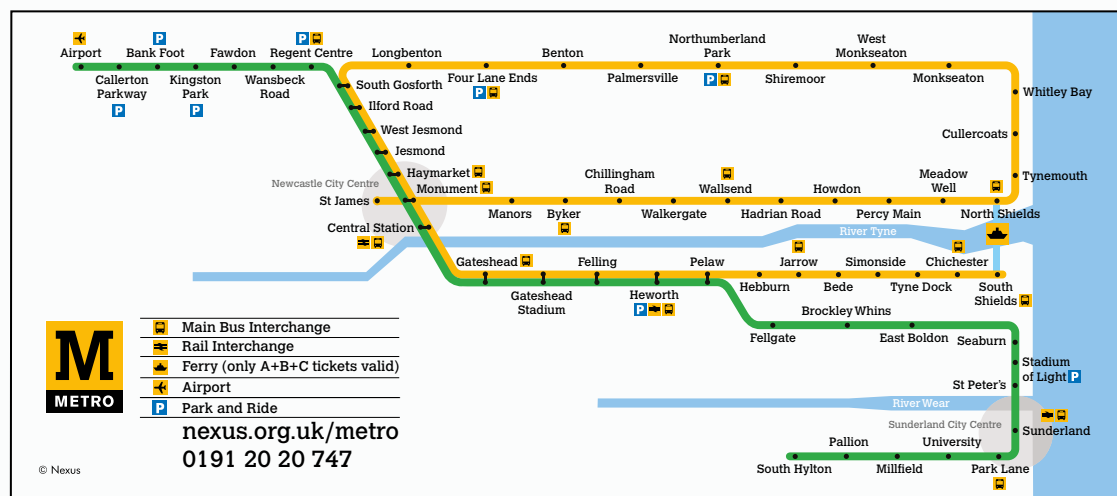
The Tyne and Wear Metro system, which opened in 1980, was designed and constructed as the central feature of a fully integrated public transport system. The system includes the Shields Ferry which operates between North and South Shields. Three major interchange locations with bus and national rail were built at the core of its infrastructure to make transition from Metro to other modes simple. There are also 13 bus and Metro interchanges on the rest of the network, further simplifying the transition between modes. These include new bus specific interchanges at South Shields and North Shields Interchange which were opened in 2019 and 2023 respectively.

The Metro and bus networks complement each other, and interchange is generally accessible and well signposted.

The Metro however appears as 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.

A sample of journeys that can be completed by either bus or Metro were compared and showed that the bus usually takes longer than Metro. This can be found within Appendix A. Exceptions to this typically include when Metro journeys require an interchange, but the bus service is direct, for example between Regent Centre and Haymarket. Bus fares tend to be lower, and due to the number of bus routes, there are also many 'door to door' journeys which are quicker by bus than Metro.

Tyne and Wear Metro map



Metro Gold Cards

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 and County Durham can do this for £24. 164,000 Tyne and Wear residents have taken this opportunity, affording them access to both bus and Metro.

National rail

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

I would use the bus more if buses were on time and punctual, and integrated into the rail network, so changes between buses, or bus and train, doesn't mean hanging about for ages".

Moving Buses Forward, 2024

An example comparing competing journey times between rail and bus would be between Newcastle upon Tyne and Durham, taking approximately 12 minutes by train, and 55 minutes by bus. For all the journeys we are aware of, it is slower to travel by bus, however it is almost always cheaper, even more so with the national £2 fare in place at the time of writing. There will therefore be a significant number of people who travel by bus instead of rail even though it takes longer.

As a result, this is a key driver behind some of the initiatives outlined within the fares and ticketing section of this BSIP.

Active Travel

Active travel (walking, wheeling, and cycling) is wholly complementary to the bus network, especially as every bus journey generally starts and ends with an element of active travel. Already, early measures are in place to promote the opportunity for multi-modal trips, including walking, wheeling, cycling, and bus.

For example, six Go North East routes have capacity to carry two unfolded bikes. Interchanges and stations across the Tyne and Wear Metro system are fitted out with approximately 750 places for cycles, with bikes allowed on sections of the network in line with Nexus restrictions.



Section 3: Improvements programme 2024/25

In this section we set out our delivery plans for the next year of our BSIP to help us achieve our ambitions for bus in each of our main delivery areas, customer experience, fares and ticketing, network and highways, and infrastructure.

1 in 3

residents reported that they are unfamiliar with the logistics of the local bus service (Bluegrass Research, 2023)



Customer experience

Journey planner website and app

Current offer

Bus operators, Nexus and Durham County Council all have their own journey planning tools which provide varying levels of information, they are either specific to one mode or don't cover the whole region. Websites such as Google or CityMapper can provide journey planning for the whole region however they don't always contain real time information.



Headline targets to 2025

We will introduce a single dedicated website and journey planner by March 2025. Based on feedback received this tool will provide a minimum of the following:

- A public transport journey planning tool including active travel options, highlighting time, cost, and convenience advantages.
- Real time public transport information, including planned and unplanned disruption.
- Retailing for bus and multi-modal ticket products.

Since our BSIP award we have been developing the technical specification and have appointed Nexus as the lead delivery partner.

For residents who cannot access journey information digitally, we remain committed to maintaining and improving printed information at bus stops across our network, ensuring we are providing accessible and convenient information for everyone.



On journey passenger information

Current offer

All stops in our cities, towns, and villages have printed information which is updated when timetables change.

400 stops have digital information screens showing timetable data, however the availability of real time information is limited because updates in technology have created a mismatch between the data feed from operators and the region's back-office systems. Stops with minimal use or in very rural areas of Northumberland do not have any information available, though their timetable can be downloaded from operator websites.



Headline targets to 2025

Schemes which are to be delivered on Investment in the back-office software system feeding at-stop screens will restore real time information to 400 locations. Investment in Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) will improve the accuracy and quality of this information and the screens will be upgraded to ensure this real time data can be displayed.

Provision of printed timetable information at bus stops and stations will continue, including an increase in the number of rural stops covered in Northumberland.

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



Enhanced customer service training for customer facing staff

Current offer

The Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) training for drivers is carried out by operators to maintain professional skills, but it is not coordinated between organisations.

Headline targets to 2025

A consistent training module will be developed by the partnership and delivered as part of CPC training. This will take advantage of existing structures and ensure a coordinated high standard of staff training throughout the region, including smaller operators.



Bus passenger charter

Current offer

The regional bus passenger charter is now in place which sets a consistent standard for customer experience across the region. This includes a taxi guarantee for wheelchair users. The Charter can be found in appendix X.

The bus passenger charter applies on all bus services in our region to build customer confidence and improve consistency and transparency. A taxi guarantee also gives 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, where the taxi will arrive before the next bus service.

Turnaround cleaners will be employed at bus stations throughout our network to quickly remove litter from any operators' buses to ensure a clean and pleasant journey for passengers.

All vehicles will be fitted with enhanced next stop audio-visual equipment and charging points.



Headline targets to 2025

We will benchmark passenger awareness of the charter and work to more widely display the charter at stations and on buses to increase that awareness.

Ten cleaners will be deployed as interchanges and bus stations across Tyne and Wear, Blyth bus station and Durham bus station.



Transport ambassadors

Current offer

Most major interchanges are staffed by customer service team members who already help thousands of passengers complete journeys in the region. Smaller bus stations generally do not have a customer service staff presence.

Headline targets to 2025

Transport ambassadors will be provided at additional stations which don't currently have a dedicated customer service staff presence, such as Durham Bus Station and North Shields Transport Hub, along with additional ambassadors who can be deployed flexibly at other stations and on the network according to need.

Due to operational and logistical issues the scale of provision will not meet what was originally anticipated in the 2021 BSIP. Following reviews, the resources for roles originally framed as “ambassadors” will be re-deployed to other new roles which it is now considered to be more impactful in enhancing passenger experience of the bus network.



Community bus partnerships

Current offer

A Community Bus Engagement Lead is in post to manage the rollout of the community bus partnerships across the region, and three further 'Bus Champion' roles have been funded to manage local engagement.

Nexus seconded an existing employee into a new champion role for Tyne and Wear in autumn 2023. The champion has focused on working with businesses, employers, and community groups to promote the use of bus, particularly in preparation for the Tyne Bridge works which started in April 2024 and were expected to increase congestion on an already busy and key transport corridor. The champion has also engaged with communities in East Newcastle and Wallsend to create sustainable local transport solutions.

Following initial delays to the recruitment of champions for Northumberland and Durham, approval was sought to extend the funding to permit the advertisement of a longer contract, with the aim of making the role more appealing and attracting a better quality of applicant. This permission was received on 20 March 2024 and the recruitment process for these posts is since underway.

Headline targets to 2025

We will continue to engage with communities, businesses, educational establishments, and employers to build a sense of community ownership of the bus network and reduce negative perceptions of using the bus by creating community bus partnerships.

Engagement has shown that while people have an opinion on issues which affect them personally, being part of a community group charged with improving bus services more widely has limited appeal. Therefore, the community bus partnerships are not being set up as specific groups. Instead, the engagement activities conducted by the champion will generate feedback, ideas for specific improvements, and potential new local initiatives.

The champion will raise these matters through the appropriate channels, where possible leading to improvements being implemented or initiatives being developed further with BSIP funding. As the 'single point of contact' the champion will be responsible for tracking and feeding back progress to the individuals and groups who initially raised the matter to make them feel confident they are being listened to and having an impact.

Where relevant, these local initiatives may be rolled out more widely across the region.

Those who are interested in getting involved in improving their local services more widely will be signposted to independent local transport user groups. Support has been provided to allow these groups to expand their reach across the region, and the aim is to have at least one group within each local authority area to champion the needs of passengers..



A simple unified identity for public transport.

Current Offer

The North East bus network continues to be branded according to individual operators, along with that of Nexus, the seven local authorities, Traveline and Network One. Although these brands are strong with good customer recognition, the lack of a unified identity adds complexity from a bus passenger perspective.

Headline targets to 2025

The unified public transport identity will be determined by the new North East Combined Authority following its establishment in May 2024.



Fares and ticketing

Multi-modal fares

Current Offer

Our BSIP set out ambitious proposals to introduce multi-operator, multi-modal capped tickets which would increase customer flexibility to travel around the network. Through a simplified fare structure at a reduced price point we aspired to attract new customers to use the bus network. This is a significant measure to attract new customers to use the bus, with 81% of respondents to our Big Bus Conversation (2023) identifying this as a big factor in encouraging them to use the bus more. The below is a summary of the BSIP funded ticket range introduced in 2023 and its performance to date:

Product name	Scope	Price	Launch date	Approximate weekly journeys
21 and under Single	Single ticket anywhere in the region for those aged 21 and under	£1	7 May 2023	246,912
21 and under Day	21 and under regionwide day ticket (multi-modal)	£3	3 September 2023	30,975
Durham Day Rover	County Durham adult day ticket (multi-operator)	£4	5 November 2023	10,889
Northumberland Day Rover	Northumberland County adult day ticket (multi-operator)	£5		2,509
Tyne and Wear Day Rover	Tyne and Wear adult day ticket (multi-modal)	£6		25,690
TNE Day Saver	Regionwide adult (multi-modal)	£6.80		14,906

Figure 3.1

The implementation of these products boosts connectivity and travel opportunity for people, where previously there were barriers to multi-operator and multi-modal travel. In addition, it represents a significant saving to customers, for example the TNE Day Saver saves customers £5.90 (46%) compared to its nearest equivalent, allowing more accessible regionwide travel than prior to the BSIP.

A year on from the introduction of our first capped ticket, over 15.8 million journeys have taken place on newly funded BSIP products, including over 14.45 million made by customers aged 21 and under. It is anticipated through this intervention alone, customers have saved over £10.6 million, and these journeys have generated a social and economic benefit estimated to be valued at £25.65 million. Bus operators receive reimbursement for the reduced ticket prices which are also accepted on Metro and the Shields Ferry services, with revenue risk accepted in existing budgets to allow greater connectivity and help to create a simple travel environment.

The extension of the DfT funded Bus Recovery Grant £2 fare cap, and changing travel patterns post the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact in reducing demand for longer period bus products, and in turn the initial demand of our adult day product range, as in most scenarios customers now only realise the benefit when undertaking three or more journeys. Despite this, significant growth has been experienced in this product range with a 394% increase in journeys undertaken between month one (November 2023) and month five (March 2024). This demonstrates the success of the “All Day, Anywhere” marketing campaign which in the first few months generated over 23 million impressions on social media.

The Enhanced Partnership conducted a review of the historic zone boundaries which applied to the day products we have introduced. The county boundaries provide a simple structure which makes the cost easy to understand. Where a service crosses multiple boundaries during a journey, the lowest fares is applied which ensures the customer gets the best value.





Over
15.6m
journeys



£11.4m
BSIP funding



£25.65m
social/economic
benefit to 21&U



2.8m
day ticket
journeys



Over 25m social
media impressions
of marketing
campaigns

Headline targets to 2025

All fares have been delivered, these will continue to be offered during 2024 and we will undertake specific evaluation of the scheme to understand which elements have had the most impact for passengers and travel behaviour.



Smart capping

Current offer

Our BSIP has set out plans to put in place the back-office system and fund upgrades of existing ticketing equipment that would automatically “cap” customers when using contactless, mobile phone, and Pay As You Go smart cards. The calculation of the best valued fare for the number of journeys taken will allow customers to benefit from the BSIP capped fares initiatives and remove the complexity of knowing your best value ticket pre-travel, which introduces a level of flexibility to how people travel regionwide.

Pop, is the brand name for the existing smart card system that can be used as a payment method for bus, Metro and ferry predominantly in Tyne and Wear but is accepted by our large bus operators region wide, Pop cards currently allow daily capping when used on the Metro only.



Headline targets to 2025

The first phase of this plan is to introduce an ‘Account Based Ticketing’ model which allows customers to tap their Pop card on different modes of transport and be capped at the best value price. Currently the region is undertaking a procurement process to appoint a supplier for the back office, and the launch of Pop 2.0 is now aiming for Spring/Summer 2025. In the subsequent years this scheme will be developed further, enabling the introduction of weekly price caps, a mobile solution across a range of wallets, and, subject to the establishment of an acceptable Business Case, acceptance of Bank Cards (cEMV) for the purposes of “tapping on and tapping off”.



Kids go free

Current offer

In our initial BSIP proposals we set out to extend the Metro 'Kids Go Free' offer onto bus services which enables up to three children aged 11 and under free travel when accompanied by an adult. All operators have participated in this offer in school holidays since 2022 and feedback has largely indicated the small uplift in journeys has had a revenue neutral impact. One operator has since withdrawn from the scheme as they experienced a negative commercial impact however others still offer Kids Go Free during school holidays.

Headline targets to 2025

To ensure there is alignment in the offer between the various operators, the Enhanced Partnership will work in collaboration to refine the terms of acceptance. Additionally, we will continue to closely monitor the scheme to gain a better understanding of commercial impact, with the aspiration of full participation by all operators.



English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) standardisation

Current offer

Owing to the change to travel patterns following the pandemic, English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) passenger numbers remain below the pre-pandemic baseline and have recovered at a slower rate than fare paying passengers. Efforts are being made across the region to encourage growth for these passengers, and one of the potential obstacles relates to variations in the offer between the different concessionary travel areas. There are some differences across the local authorities in relation to travel, particularly regarding slightly distinctive arrangements for travel before 09:30. The table below sets out the varying offers from Durham, Northumberland, and Nexus in relation to ENCTS eligibility.

Headline targets to 2025

Uncertainties generated by the changes in the new national guidance on reimbursement to operators, the continued challenging environments of council funding, and operator commercial viability have meant progress has not yet been possible on the project to align the ENCTS offer across the North East. However, this still remains an aspiration. Our initial BSIP committed to a study being undertaken to explore the viability and associated costs with standardising approaches across the North East CA travel area.



Concessionary Travel area	Free travel times	Other travel times	Other benefits
Durham County Council	After 09:30 Monday-Friday, all day on weekends and bank holidays.	50p for trips within boundary of Durham before 09:30 Monday-Friday.	Free travel on Durham City Park and Ride. Half price travel on some local train services.
Northumberland County Council	After 09:00 Monday-Friday, all day on weekends and bank holidays.	Free before 09:00 Monday-Friday for a hospital appointment.	Free travel on some cross border routes from Northumberland to Scotland.
Nexus (Tyne & Wear)	After 09:30 Monday-Friday, all day on weekends and bank holidays.	Free before 09:00 Monday-Friday for a hospital appointment.	60p for Shields Ferry of peak, 50p for Northern services between Newcastle and Metrocentre/ Blaydon of peak, unlimited of- peak travel on Metro for £12 per year

Figure 3.2

Care experienced passes

Current offer

To give care leavers aged 18-25 the potential of a better start to adult life we aspired in our BSIP to introduce the provision of free travel on bus, Metro, and the Shields Ferry to those eligible, allowing increased access to work opportunities, social connectivity, and ability to better travel around the region.

An initial trial indicated 75% of those issued a pass were using it six to seven days a week, which demonstrates the demand for this type of offer. In 2023, 1,500 passes were issued to 18-25 years olds across the region, with 21,600 trips undertaken. This offer has an estimated social value of £7.03 per trip.

Headline targets to 2025

Passes have been provided in all seven local authority areas and will be renewed on a cyclical basis throughout the year.



Network

Maintain the existing network

Current offer

For a long time the story in relation to the bus network nationally and regionally has been the decline in bus patronage and increasing financial pressures leading to cuts to service frequencies, as well as withdrawals of some services all together. Flexible working patterns mean the region is not experiencing the usual volume of commuting, this combined with changes to how people shop and travel for leisure results in persisting financial pressures on commercial bus services. The commercial network has declined from 64.82 million annual vehicles miles in 2010, to 45.02 million miles in 2023. Over 7 million vehicle miles on the existing network are supported by local funding and BSIP funding has been utilised to assist in maintaining the existing network with an increasing number of routes being assessed as no longer commercially viable by bus operators.

The variety of initiatives we are delivering with our funding including fares, services, and infrastructure improvements aim to attract more people to travel via bus, which in turn will improve long term financial viability, allowing operators to increase rather than reduce service provision. Around £X million has been spent to date on maintaining existing services in 2023/2024. The period of time in which BSIP funding can be used to support the existing network has been extended until March 2026.

Other interventions delivered by the EP include a new code of conduct in relation to network changes, operators now provide us with greater notice of planned network changes we aspire to utilise this time for increased collaboration on mitigations for network changes as well as improve communication to the public where changes are necessary. The creation of local bus boards in each local authority areas provides opportunity for input from all relevant partners, and discussion regarding local network changes, whilst also identifying ways of moderating changes to reduce disruption.

Headline targets to 2025

Maintaining the scale of the established bus services will continue to be a core foundation for our ambitions for a growing network. Some of the BSIP funding has therefore been used to secure continuation of key links as they remain the appropriate way to provide communities with the opportunity to travel by bus.

Continued funding will continue to be necessary after the expiry of BSIP funds in March 2026 in order to sustain this action, pending achievement of increased revenue from increases in patronage.



Enhanced network with improved connectivity

Current offer

Our initial BSIP set out aspirations of an integrated transport system with enhanced connectivity and interchange capability under the following categories:

Category	Description	Frequency				
		Core hours			Early mornings/ Evenings	Nights
		Monday - Friday (07:30-18:30)	Saturday (07:30-18:30)	Sunday (08:30-18:30)		
Superbus (Red Routes)	High frequency services in urban areas providing customers with turn up and go' style service	7 minutes		7-8 minutes	15 minutes	Yes
Superbus (Green Routes)		10 minutes		15 minutes	30 minutes	Yes
Interurban Express	Services connecting cities and major towns from surrounding towns and villages on a limited stop basis	15 minutes		30 minutes		-
Connect	Facilitating interchanges with Metro, National Rail and Interurban Express	30 minutes		1 hour		-
Rural communities	Tailored to specific requirements of each community	Up to every 2 hours				-

Figure 3.3

The region was awarded £163.5 million of our £804 million bid and therefore was significantly short of being able to fund the regions ambitious truly connected network outlined above. However, some new initiatives have been implemented in 2023/2024 including the following:

- A new 777 service which provides improved connectivity between parts of Northumberland and Newcastle Airport.
- The 787 service which is a 6 month trial of a new night bus service connecting Newcastle city centre and Newcastle Airport.
- A new 434 service which provides increased connectivity to the newly opening Northumberland Line.
- Enhanced service frequencies to a number of Northumberland services including X16, 43, 57, 57A, X74 and 418.
- An enhanced X2 service providing faster links between Langley Park, Durham and Sunderland.

Headline targets to 2025

Limited progress has been possible towards delivering enhanced frequencies as per the above table, however as issues associated with bus driver shortages reduces, the region now has improved capacity for these types of network initiatives, and we will be looking at exploring these opportunities further in 2024/2025.



Demand responsive transport

Current offer

Our initial BSIP proposals set out aspirations to launch pilots of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) schemes which enables areas without good public transport connectivity an opportunity to have mobility beyond private vehicle usage. 21% of the North East population live in rural towns or villages, and a significant proportion do not have a frequent bus service due to low passengers numbers, bus operators do not deem them as commercially viable, therefore many buses in rural areas operate as secured services.

County Durham's Link2 scheme has recently been expanded with 'Link2work', creating improved access to workplaces where previously a public transport option did not exist. This enhanced DRT scheme allows customers the opportunity to book a service with extended early morning and late evening operating hours, connecting some rural towns in Durham to employers in areas such as Newton Aycliffe Business Park and Team Valley.

Headline targets to 2025

The region is keen to explore improving connectivity for those who live in areas without a public transport option and has been examining the market through engaging with suppliers and attempting to learn lessons from DRT schemes across the country that have proven not to be sustainable. Therefore, where a pilot was initially proposed in Northumberland, a transport needs assessment is instead being undertaken to establish how best to enhance connectivity is a way that offers the best chance for sustainable success.



Cleaner and greener vehicles

Current offer

We will support the introduction of cleaner and greener vehicles through accelerating operators' bus replacement programmes and reviewing ways in which zero-emission vehicles can be utilised. The average age of the bus fleet in the North East is approximately ten years old in comparison to the UK average of eight years. 54% of the region's bus fleet is not at the engine emissions standard of Euro 6 or higher. Operators in the region have invested in upgrading their fleets, for example Go North East have invested £3.7 million in new fully electric zero emission buses operating in Newcastle and Gateshead, known as Voltra, which are powered by renewable energy sources.



Headline targets to 2025

The North East Transport Plan aims for all buses to meet Euro 6 emission standards by 2025, and all buses to be zero emission by 2035. This will require considerable investment at an increased rate to what has been experienced so far. The North East has secured £7.4 million grant from the DfT Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas round 2 scheme (ZEBRA 2) which will support the delivery of 43 brand new zero emissions buses in the region from December 2025. The regions Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid was also successful in receiving £16.28 million in funding to support the introduction of 53 electric buses. This will take the total number of zero emissions buses in the region to 113.

We will continue to work with operators to finalise the region zero emission bus roadmap to set out our plans for meeting our Transport Plan target.



Highways and infrastructure

Bus priority infrastructure

Our region continues to be 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.

Current offer

Since the publication of the refreshed BSIP in 2023, traffic levels have continued to rise in the region which has impacted bus performance. Significant progress has been made to advance schemes which were outlined in the 2023 refresh and are appended to this document.

This suite of bus priority infrastructure works are focused on speeding up buses and make them more punctual and reliable. This has largely followed plans set out in the 2021 BSIP, although there are deliverability concerns including a shortfall in funding and the shortened BSIP timeframe, which has resulted in some plans being reprofiled or removed from the programme.

Following approval at the NEJTC in July 2023, funds were released for the programme level full business case associated with the tranche one bus priority infrastructure programme. We will continue to progress business cases to deliver the priority schemes across our busiest 17 bus corridors once rigorous public consultation has taken place and design work is complete. The vast majority of bus routes in our network use these 17 corridors for all or part of their journey.

The second tranche of bus priority infrastructure schemes are currently being developed through the advancement of a programme business case which will unlock scheme funding. These schemes will complement the deliverables of tranche one.

For all schemes which will be delivered through the BSIP, we will work with key partners including network managers and the Urban Traffic Management Centre (UTMC), to mitigate disruption on the existing network whilst schemes are under construction.

Headline targets to 2025

Schemes which are to be delivered on the bus priority corridors outlined in the appendices and in the map above are focused on assisting in the following headline targets:



Stops and stations

Ensuring stops and shelters have appropriate, modern, and safe facilities, including lighting, real time information, and high-quality pedestrian access to increase safety is vital to increase bus patronage. Upgraded bus stations will be delivered at Alnwick, Consett, and Stanley, plus a super hub at Durham Millburngate.

A replacement programme aimed at ensuring our bus stops and shelters are safe, offer modern waiting facilities, and are accessible to users will be rolled out to prevent patronage decline.

Current offer

In collaboration with local authority partners and Nexus, work is underway to progress the delivery of the upgrading of those bus stations, and the bus stop replacement programme identified in the section above to provide better waiting facilities. A programme business case is nearing completion to finalise scheme details which will trigger the release of funding.

The EP is working in partnership to create a programme that will set out to deliver improvements to safety and accessibility at stops and shelters across the region.

Headline targets to 2025

Schemes which are to be delivered at bus stations, bus stops, and shelters are focused on the assisting in the following headline targets:



Intelligent transport system

We will contribute to the already planned investment through the Transforming Cities Fund in the region's highways via the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) project to ensure the potential for bus priority is maximised.

Current offer

BSIP funding provides the opportunity to complete the programme of signal upgrades on a further seven bus corridors, bringing maximum benefits to more bus routes throughout the region, and extending the benefits of ITS into Northumberland. The funding will allow for communication upgrades between the urban traffic control centre and the signals, providing the ability to improve traffic signal control for buses, improving service reliability. The July 2023 meeting of the NEJTC released funding for this work, which has been subject to a full business case and exhibits strong value for money. 18% of the BSIP corridor signals have been installed to date with the rest in the delivery pipeline.

Park and ride

We will continue to work with partners and interested parties to introduce new major 'Park and Ride' sites in the region, served by high-specification vehicles running a dedicated service for customers.

Current offer

An Options Assessment Report (OAR) which was commissioned by Transport North East (now part of the North East CA) identified five potential sites that could be locations which had clear merits, although potential limitations were flagged regarding land ownership and deliverability. These were:

- Eighton lodge, Gateshead
- Moor Farm, Northumberland
- Dunston Hill, Gateshead
- Follingsby Business Park
- Slatyford Depot

Headline targets to 2025

We continue to work with partners to determine if any of the sites are deliverable within the BSIP funding period, this will be agreed early in 2024, if these cannot be delivered with the BSIP timescales but partners still want to progress we will support them in seeking alternative funding sources.

Pocket park and ride

We will establish formal 'Pocket Park and Ride' locations around the network. Pocket Park and Ride sites have a small number of car parking spaces and will be located along existing bus routes, supported by high-quality information and waiting facilities.

Current offer

The EP continues to progress work following preliminary discussions with local authorities in relation Pocket Park and Ride sites. These are intended to reduce congestion and boost bus ridership, without affecting the existing bus network. Successful delivery of these sites will help to make more services viable in settings where a commercial route is difficult to sustain.

Funded through BSIP, the recent introduction of the Metrocentre Pocket Park and Ride aims to divert traffic travelling into Newcastle City Centre and encourage car users to park and use the existing bus services.

Headline targets to 2025

KPI 2: 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



Section 4: Delivery Post 2025

The Transport Plan and this BSIP outline are ambitions for a fully integrated public transport network that works seamlessly and simply for passengers across the North East. While the BSIP funding and EP have made great strides to delivering that goal, challenges are still faced under the de-regulated bus market. The North East Devolution Deal gives the Mayor access to bus franchising powers under the Transport Act 2000 which along with other devolved powers and funding streams available to the North East CA offers the potential to radically change the operating environment for buses in the region. The North East CA will look to review the options around bus franchising as the long term solution over the next five year period.

While these options are being explored, we will still look for opportunities and funding to deliver our ambitions for bus as set out in the rest of this section.



Customer experience

The 10 cleaners delivered through BSIP will inform whether a wider rollout of turnaround cleaners will be practical and achieve value for money. If successful ongoing funding will be sought to maintain these cleaners. If not, other options to improve cleanliness will be considered.

The Public Service Vehicles (Accessible Information) Regulations 2023 now mandate partial or full compliance by 1 October 2026.

This will give passengers the reassurance that audio-visual next stop announcements are available on every bus.

It is expected that as older buses are replaced most buses will have charging points as a minimum by the end of the decade. The provision of Wi-Fi is a decision for each operator, however it will be an expectation on routes where a passenger's journey is likely to be longer than 30 minutes, and still remains the regions aim.

Transport Ambassadors

The funding for additional roles has been extended to 31 March 2026. We intend to retain the customer service presence that is funded by BSIP beyond this and, as the North East Combined Authority, we would like to provide an additional staffing presence at a larger scale across the network which fulfils a variety of functions, including customer service and tackling anti-social behaviour.

Bus champions

The bus champion funding will continue until 31 March 2026. Beyond this, it is expected that the role of the bus champion will continue to be required and potentially expand, both in terms of their remit, the initiatives introduced, and the number of champions required. Future funding will be required after 2026.



Fares and ticketing

The Enhanced Partnership continue to collaborate on our fares schemes by refining and enhancing the offer where possible. This will be done through marketing and working with smaller operators to ensure they realise the full benefits of participation in the schemes. Currently the full cost of these initiatives will be paid for with BSIP funding until March 2025. In this year the products will be reviewed and may be revoked unless an alternative source of funding can be identified. However, the success of our 21 and Under product demonstrates there is an appetite to continue to incentivise young people to travel by bus by reducing the price point, and we would be keen to explore how this can be continued through 2025–2030.

The EP recognises the benefits the national £2 fare cap has delivered in attracting new customers to bus services through a simplified and cheaper fare structure, but we are concerned patronage may suffer when the scheme ends later this year. In the absence of the scheme being continued, we aspire to utilise BSIP funding, if possible, to continue the offer for as long as sustainable. Although we recognise there may need to be an increase of the cap for some of the longer journeys in the region, the aspiration to keep these as low as possible would still represent a significant saving for people compared to the pre fare cap environment.

Smart ticketing

Launch of the account based ticketing system is now scheduled for Spring/Summer 2025. This will bring significant benefit for bus passengers as currently there is no multi-modal, multi-operator smart card product which calculates their best valued fare. To fully deliver the benefit of this offer we would look to utilise future funding to enable installation of ‘tap off’ readers on all buses in the region.

Long term aspirations for the region around smart-capping include exploring the viability of integration with other modes such as heavy rail. Pop ‘Pay As You Go’ on mobile phones and smart cards will be usable on local Northern Rail services between Sunderland and Newcastle, and on the new Northumberland line between Newcastle and Ashington when the latter opens in 2024. Fares will also be integrated with Metro, and there may be further aspirations to roll this out onto other regional rail routes in future.

Kids go free

No BSIP funding is allocated to the offer due to the revenue neutral impact of the scheme. Our aspiration is to continue to monitor the viability of the scheme and look to standardise approaches to ensure messaging is clear and simple in relation to validities associated with the offer.

English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS)

We are yet to deliver on our ambition from our previous BSIP to undertake a study to examine standardisation of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme throughout the region. We still aspire to deliver this ambition and will be working to undertake this work in 2024/2025. Depending on the outcome of the study, we would then need to establish feasibility of standardisation and implement those measures which is likely to go beyond March 2025.

Care experienced travel

The scheme is currently funded to cover those eligible until 2026. A study of the scheme indicated for every £1 spent on delivery, £7 of social benefit is realised, and coupled with the positive impact this offer has had to date, we would continue to aspire to use future funding to cover the cost of implementation up to 2030.

Network

Maintain existing network

Following significant cuts by commercial operators in 2022 and 2023 in response to the changing post pandemic travel patterns, increasing proportions of the network are being supported by local authorities. BSIP funding has been required to ensure there are no further cuts to the network and to allow time for this network to grow and build patronage. Early indications the network is returning to commerciality are demonstrated through the 67, 69 and 84 routes Nexus took over operation in 2022 now mostly returning to commercial operation.

Enhanced services

Where there is demand and capacity, service enhancements including increased frequencies and new services will be delivered through BSIP funding up until March 2026. There are a host of proposals across the region for network improvements in the coming months.

DRT

We will continue to explore ways in which demand responsive transport may be able to be adopted further in the region. It is proposed a significant proportion of the initial funding allocation we were awarded in our BSIP for DRT be reallocated to other service initiatives.

Cleaner greener vehicles

There are 1,150 buses in the baseline fleet, of which only 18 (2%) are Zero Emission Buses (ZEBs). Funding is confirmed for a further 95 ZEBs (expected in 2025). The rate of vehicle upgrade required to meet our 2035 target would need to be ramped up significantly in comparison to progress made to date. We remain committed to this goal and will continue working with delivery partners to explore opportunities to upgrade more of the fleet to Zero Emissions Vehicles and exploring funding opportunities as they become available. We are looking to develop a roadmap that sets out how we can meet our 2035 target, however the graph below demonstrates the significant challenges regarding fleet replacement.

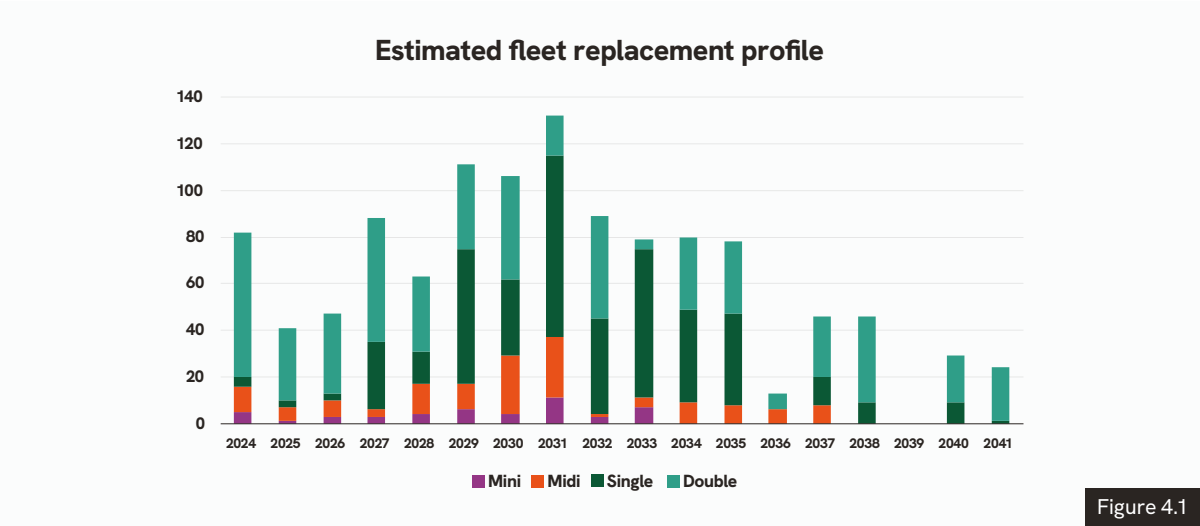


Figure 4.1

Highways and infrastructure

Following completion of the current programme, any schemes which are unable to be delivered through the BSIP timeframe, will need alternative funding sources investigated, including whether they align and are able to form part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) pipeline.

Bus priority

Bus priority infrastructure will continue to be a key component of our BSIP. Regional integration is crucial to transformational modal shift, and we will continue to ensure that bus priority is embedded into the wider network. Schemes may come forward in which bus priority is only one element, therefore funding will be allocated to those interventions in which bus gains the most benefits.

Bus stops and stations

Through partnership working, we will continue to ensure that waiting facilities across the region meet safe and accessibility standards, including next generation stations and that they are reflective of the overall standard of the network.

Intelligent transport system

The installation of the smart traffic signals provides the UTMC with a greater level of control and insight over the network, this capability will need to be expanded to cover more of the region in the future to support any potential bus reform options. A review of the current workings of the UTMC and how to transition this into a regional transport control room to better support the North East CA will be undertaken.

Park and Ride

If a bus based park and ride site is not able to be progressed during the BSIP funding window, we will continue to seek other funding opportunities to deliver these as a solution, especially for those who live in rural areas. These funding streams could include working with commercial partners to look at making the parking site a mini destination in its own right.



Section 5: Targets, Performance Monitoring and reporting

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. We will also cover the governance of our BSIP and EP and how we will report on our performance against our KPI's.



Modal share

KPI 1: Modal share of buses to grow by 1 percentage point in 2023/24 and a further 1 percentage point in 2024/25.

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 we described in Section 1, our Transport Plan's key strategy 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.

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

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 Scheme to have greater effect if the target is not being met.

KPI 2: 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.

Methodology for modal share: We will use the annually reported figure from DfT National Travel Survey – North East region ([dft.gov.uk](https://www.dft.gov.uk)), supplemented by local validation on our main corridors where counters are available.



Patronage

KPI 3: Bus patronage to grow by 10% in 2024/25, and then by a further 10% in 2025/26.

In 2022/23, bus patronage in our region was 103.8 million trips. This is a 17% increase on 2021/22 where the Covid-19 pandemic was still heavily affecting patronage levels. We will use the 2022/23 figure as our baseline.

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 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 4: 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 travellers – 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.

In this BSIP, we are looking to improve outcomes for young people, for example through the introduction of an affordable fare for those 21 and under across the region, better information provision embracing new technology, better integration between buses and the Metro and later evening services on many routes.

KPI 5: Bus boarding at rural bus stops to grow by 10% in 2023/24, and then by a further 10% in 2024/25.

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 instill 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 six monthly Monitoring report.

Customer satisfaction

KPI 6: Overall bus passenger satisfaction to grow from a baseline of 81% to 85% in 2024 and to 90% in 2025.

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.

Customer satisfaction scores are the responsibility of the partnership, not the bus operators alone. Accountability for the component parts of 'satisfaction' will be discussed at The Partnership Board – 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.

Due to the change in Transport Focus survey methodology we will use the 2023 "Your Bus Journey" result as our new baseline, this was 81%.

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 7: Average speed of buses to grow, relative to the average speed of general traffic, each year starting in 2024/25.

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, which are set out in Chapter 4.

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 Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) or other measurement of point-to-point run times for car and bus.

KPI 8: Bus reliability to be 99.5% throughout the period of the BSIP.

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.

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 for the Traffic Commissioner based on the percentage of scheduled mileage that is actually operated.

KPI 9: Bus punctuality at point of origin to be 95% in 2023/24, 96% in 2024/25 and 97% in 2025/26.

Punctuality is a key challenge because of road traffic. 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 10: 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 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 11: 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 has introduced 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.

Our region already has a fleet of 18 fully electric buses in Gateshead and Newcastle, a fleet of natural gas-powered buses in Sunderland and numerous hybrid buses. The region was successful in securing funding for an additional 52 zero-emission buses through the Levelling Up Fund bid.

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.



Our Governance

The North East Combined Authority is ultimately responsible for the delivery of the BSIP through decisions made by the Mayor and Cabinet. The Mayor and Cabinet meet formally 7 times a year and are responsible for approving any BSIP funding spend, this will be guided by the Combined Authorities Assurance Framework.

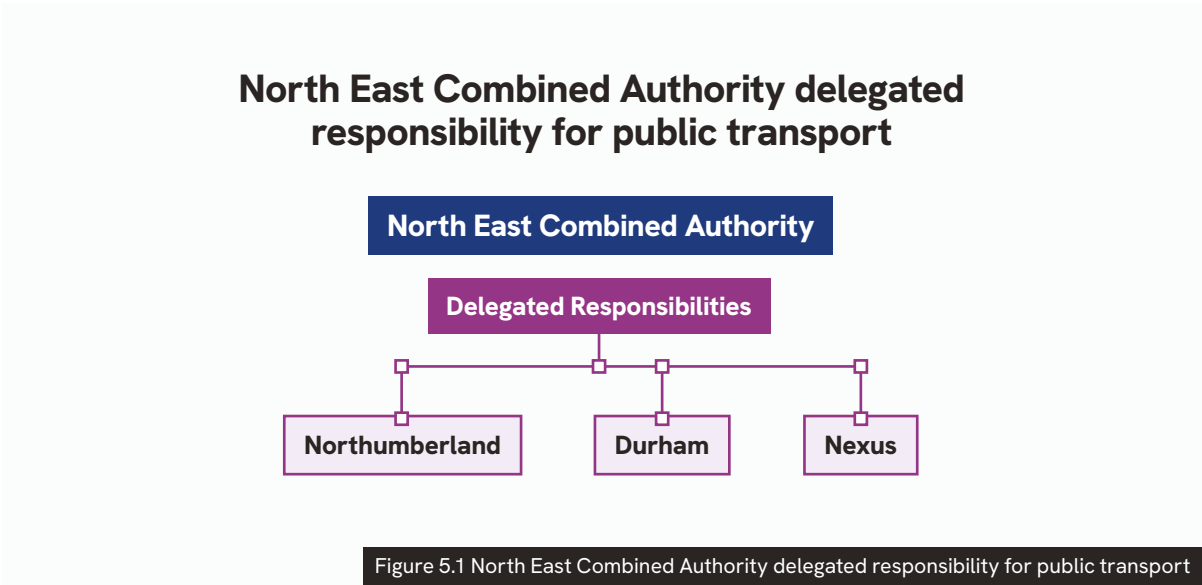
The political and bus operating geography of the North East make it particularly complex to coordinate strategic actions across the bus network given the large number of operators, seven local authorities, the combined authority and Nexus. To address this, we have formed a North East Bus Partnership Board (the partnership) which provides effective and strategic governance to drive sound performance against our KPIs set out above. Programme delivery updates are provided to the quarterly meetings, with risks and issues reported by exception.

A North East Bus Partnerships team has been created, including programme management capacity. This team is in place to deliver the plan, monitor performance of the management of the partnership agreement, and oversee marketing and stakeholder activities designed to drive growth in bus patronage. We have set up a Bus Advisory Board, which is 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 diagram below outlines the decision- making hierarchy for the BSIP.

Reporting

We report against our KPI’s on a six-monthly basis to our Bus Partnership Board, and onward to the Department for Transport (DfT) and other key stakeholders. We also publish the information on our website, and it is available in a non-digital format.

We have built on our reporting capability by investing in data software that has enabled us to analyse bus data more efficiently and provide bespoke reports. This allows us to interrogate the data to determine the impact of our interventions, enabling us to adapt our approach to ensure the best outcomes for the region.



Appendix A

1.1 Stakeholder and engagement events

Table 1 displays the engagement events held with stakeholders in order to gain invaluable insights into bus provision across the region.

Table 1: Stakeholder and engagement events

Stakeholder and engagement events	
Big Bus Conversation 2021	In summer 2021, we 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”. In summer 2023, we re-ran this informal engagement campaign to see if attitudes towards bus had changed at all. Participants were asked to say how likely, or unlikely, a solution was to help them use the bus more.
Big Bus Conversation 2023	Through ‘the Big Bus Conversation’ 2023, around 2,200 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.
Stakeholder forum	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.
Moving Buses Forward 2024	In spring 2024, we ran our Moving Buses Forward campaign across the region to build upon our existing research as part of the Big Bus Conversation (in 2021 and 2023). An informal engagement campaign enabled us to gain further insight into attitudes towards the bus service, with particular focus on bus user priorities. Focus groups were also undertaken to ensure we accessed a variety of bus users, this included understanding the concerns of vulnerable groups.
North East Travel Survey	Every year Nexus undertake the North East Travel Survey collecting views on all transport modes across the region. Data is available between 2022 and 2024.
Bluegrass market research	Bluegrass carried out independent market research of North East residents, visitors, and underserved audiences such as those living in rural areas, the elderly, and those from a minority background. As this research was weighted to be representative of the North East population, it has been used to benchmark the results we obtained through our non-targeted public engagement.

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.

1.2 Bus modal share

Figure 1 shows the modal share within the North East region (DfT, 2022). 6.8% of journeys in the North East are taken by bus, whilst 39.9% of journeys are undertaken by car or van drivers.

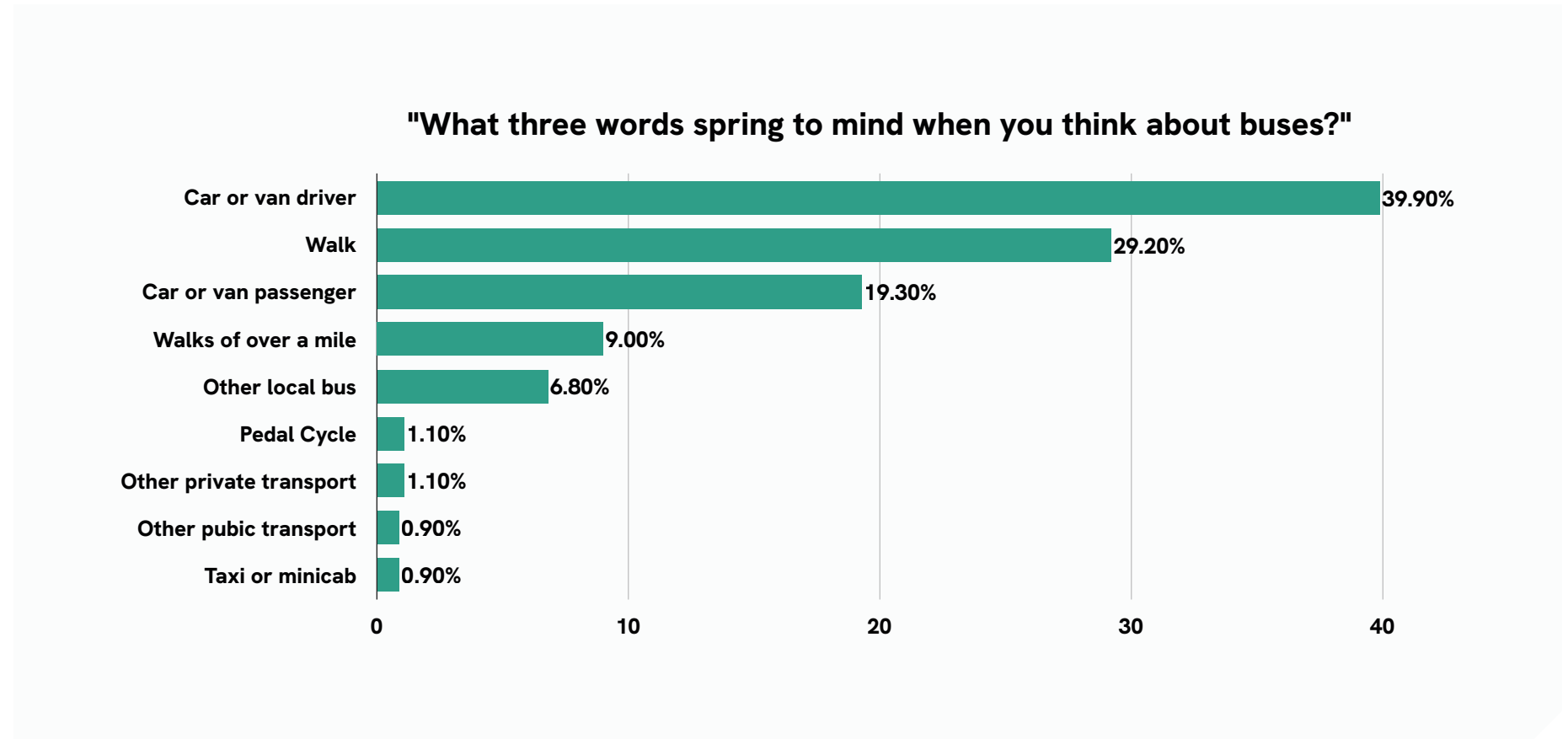


Figure 1: Modal share in the North East Region

Figure 2 shows the trend for modal share of bus between 2003 and 2022. While modal share of bus has returned to 2019 levels, it continues to be decrease since it peaked in 2017 with 8.8%.

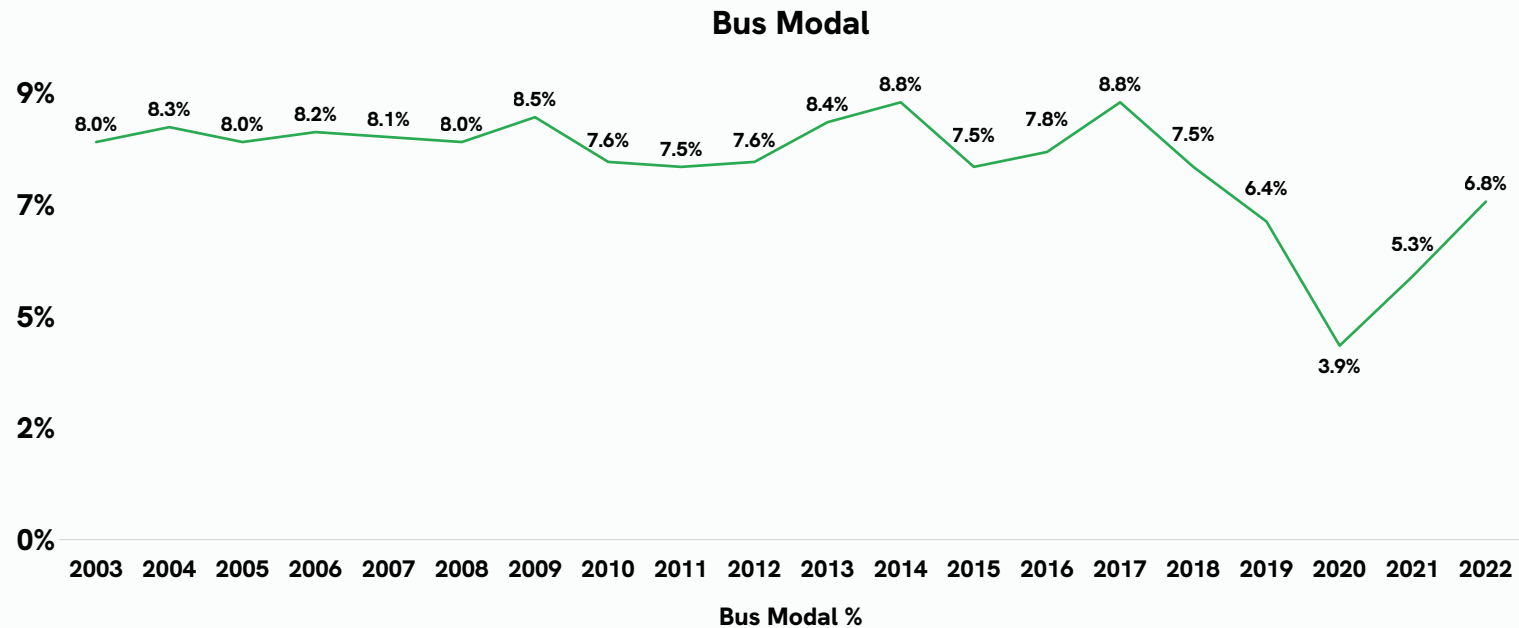


Figure 2: Bus modal share in the North East region (National Travel Survey NTS9903, 2022).

1.3 Attitudes towards bus (Bluegrass research)

In summer 2023, we commissioned Bluegrass to undertake independent market research to offer insight into the perceptions and attitudes toward buses in our region. Results from the research can be viewed within Figure 3 to Figure 5.

Figure 3: Attitudes towards frequency of using the bus (Bluegrass, 2023)

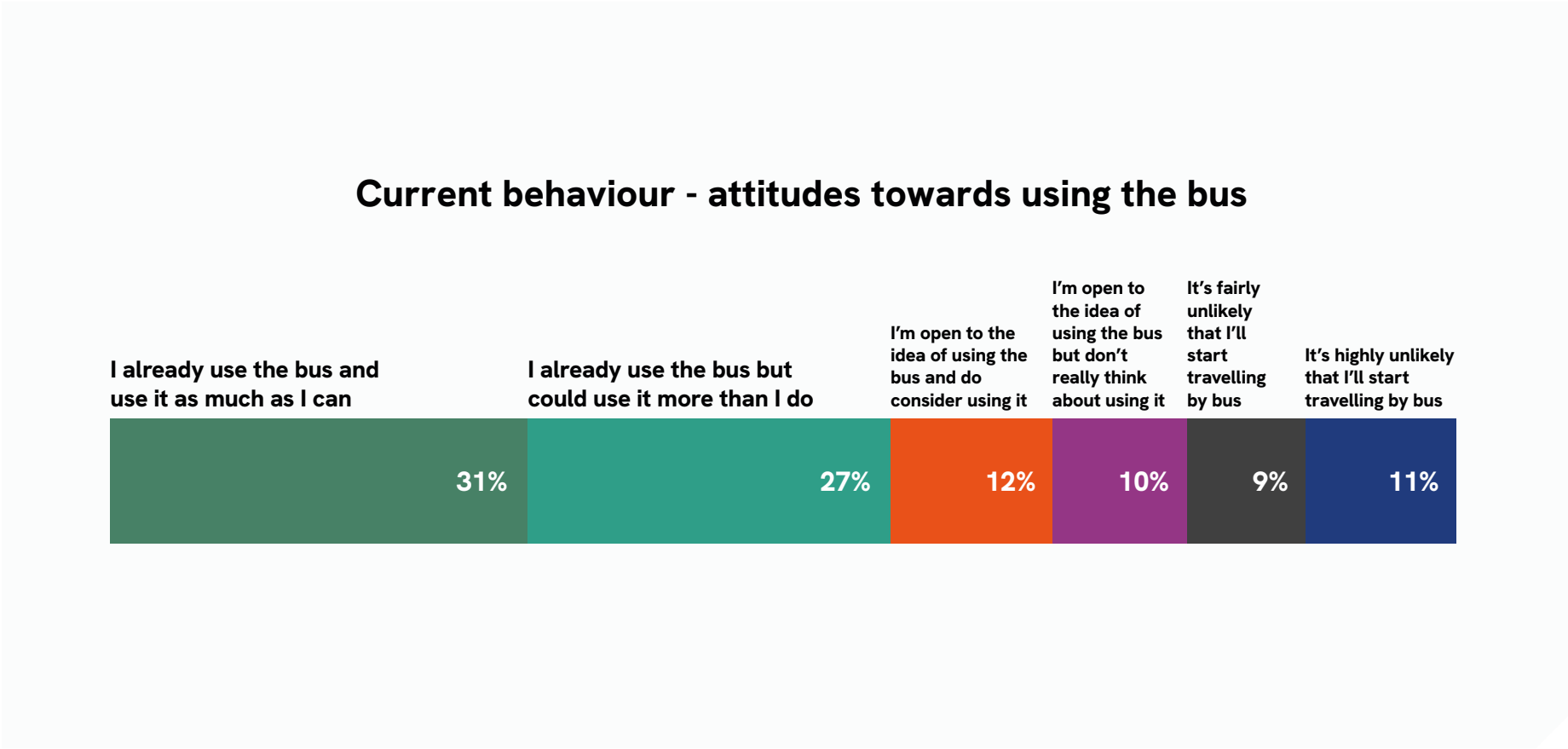


Figure 3 highlights that 58% of respondents use the bus already, whilst a further 22% are open to using the bus more than they do.

Figure 4: Attitudes towards using the bus, broken down by characteristic (Bluegrass, 2023)

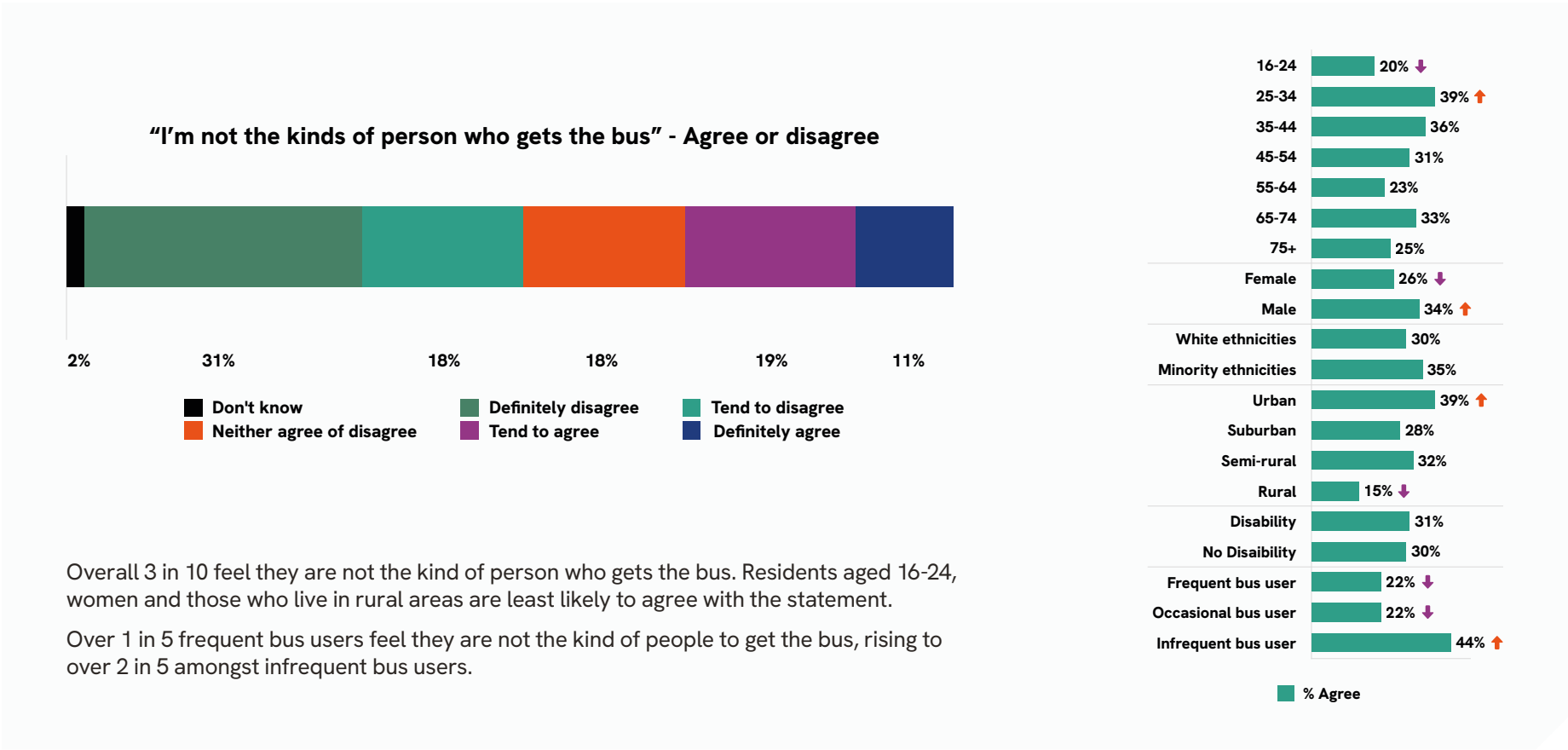
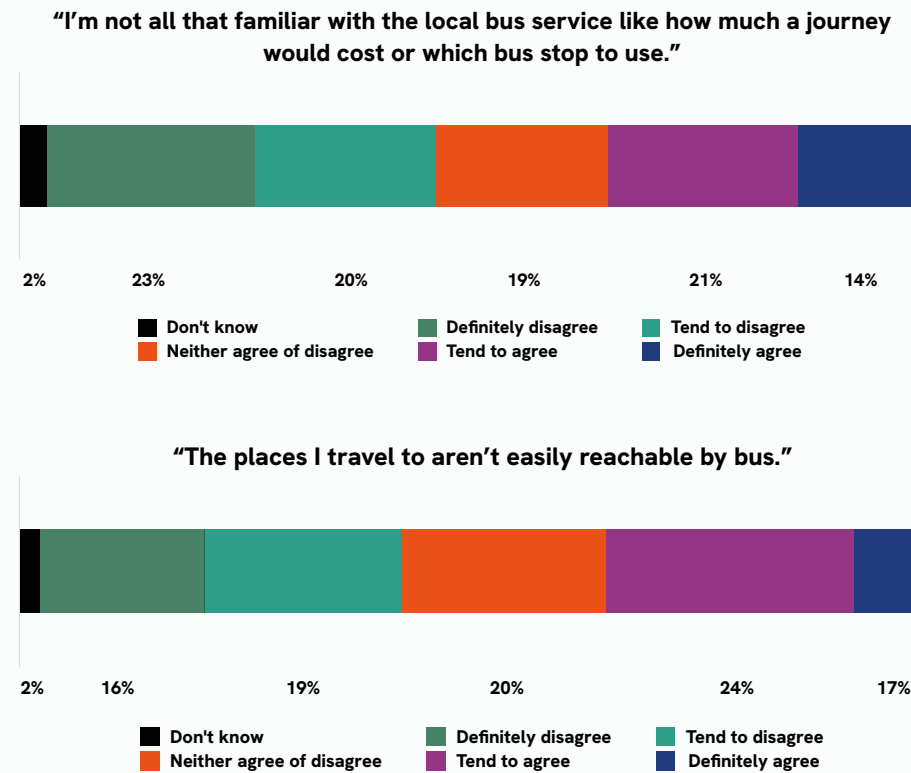
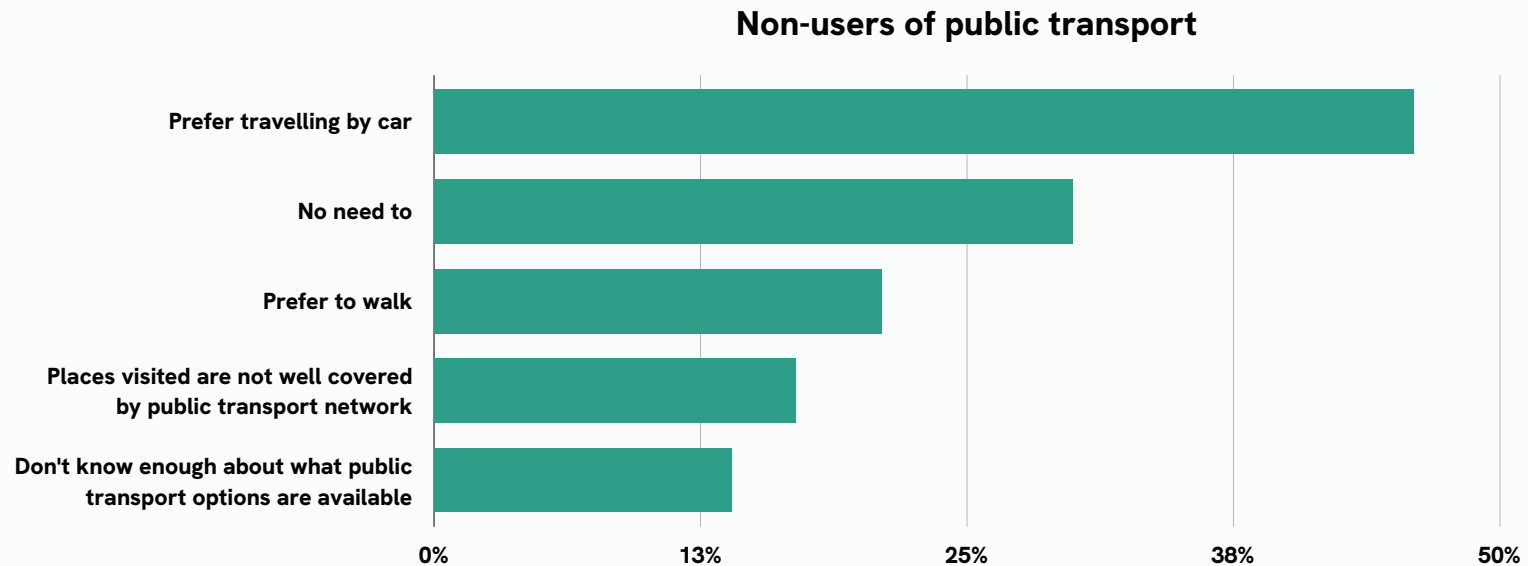


Figure 4 displays respondent's views into whether they consider themselves to be the 'kind of person who get the bus'. It shows that 30% agree they are the kind of person who uses the bus, whilst 49% disagree.

Figure 5: Attitudes towards practically using the bus (Bluegrass, 2023)

41% suggest that the places they want to travel to aren't easily reachable via bus, as shown in figure 5. Similarly, only 43% said they were familiar with their local bus service.

Figure 6: Why respondents are non-users of public transport (Bluegrass, 2023)

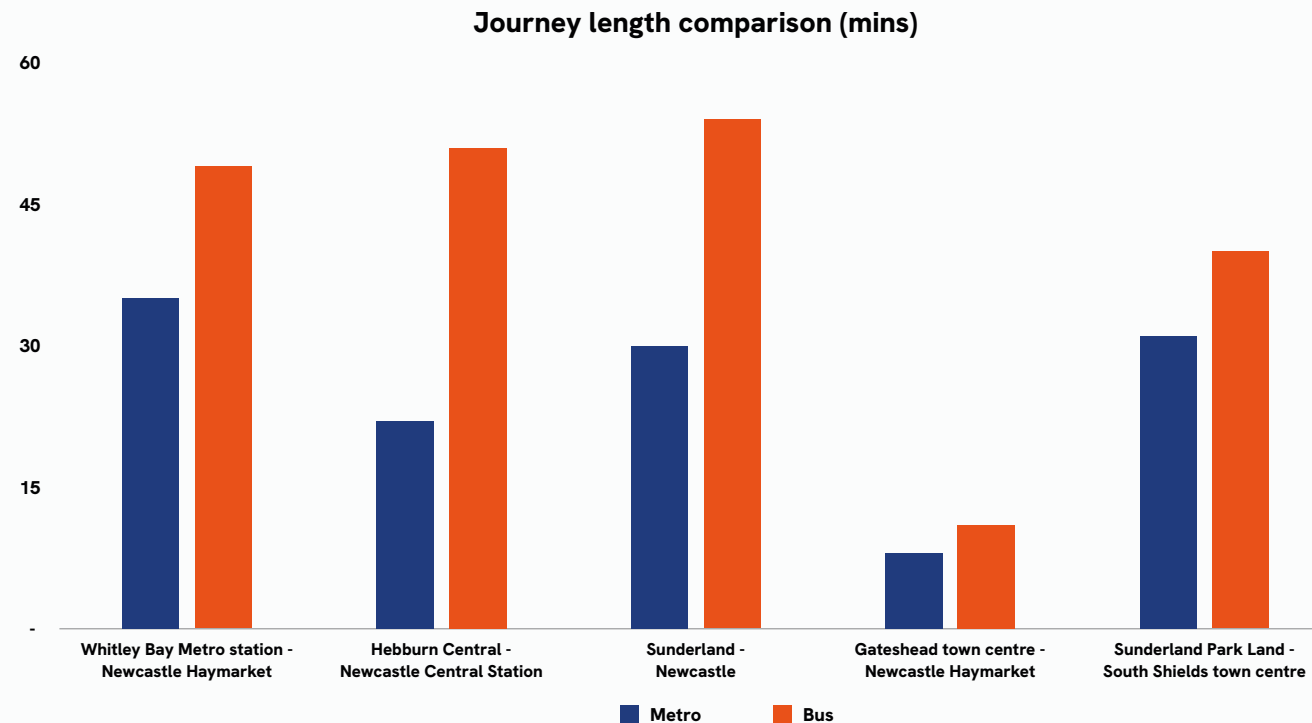
Of the people who choose not to travel via public transport, over 45% suggest this is because they prefer the car, whilst 30% said they have no need to use public transport.

However, in response to the question 'overall, how would you rate local bus services', the respondents who identified as current bus users voted 5 out of 10, while the non-bus user respondents voted 4 out of 10. This suggests that current bus users have a more positive perception of their local bus services than non-bus users.

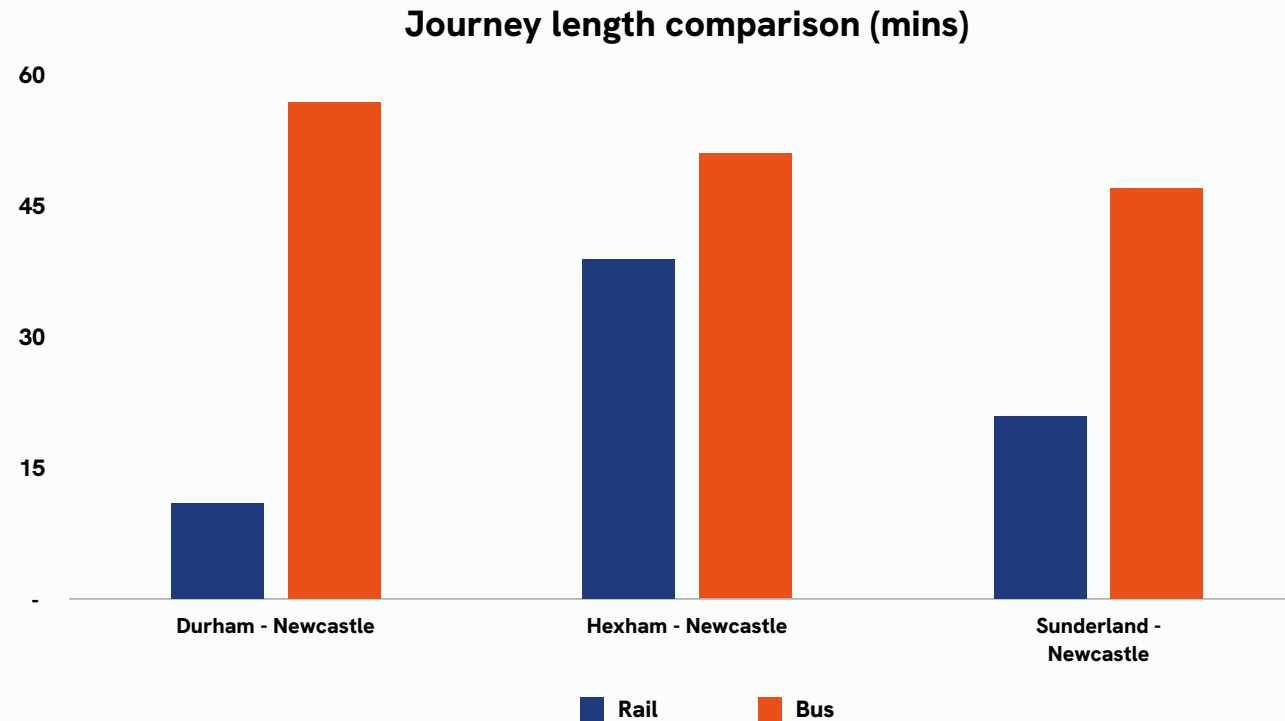
1.4 Bus and other modes

Figure 7 and 8 show the comparison between the journey times of bus and Metro, and bus and national rail respectively.

Figure 7: Comparison of journey times between the bus and the Metro.



Five journeys which can be completed using the local bus services, and the Tyne and Wear Metro were studied, and the journey times noted. Figure 6 highlights that the Metro was faster in every instance.

Figure 8: Comparison in journey times between the bus and national rail

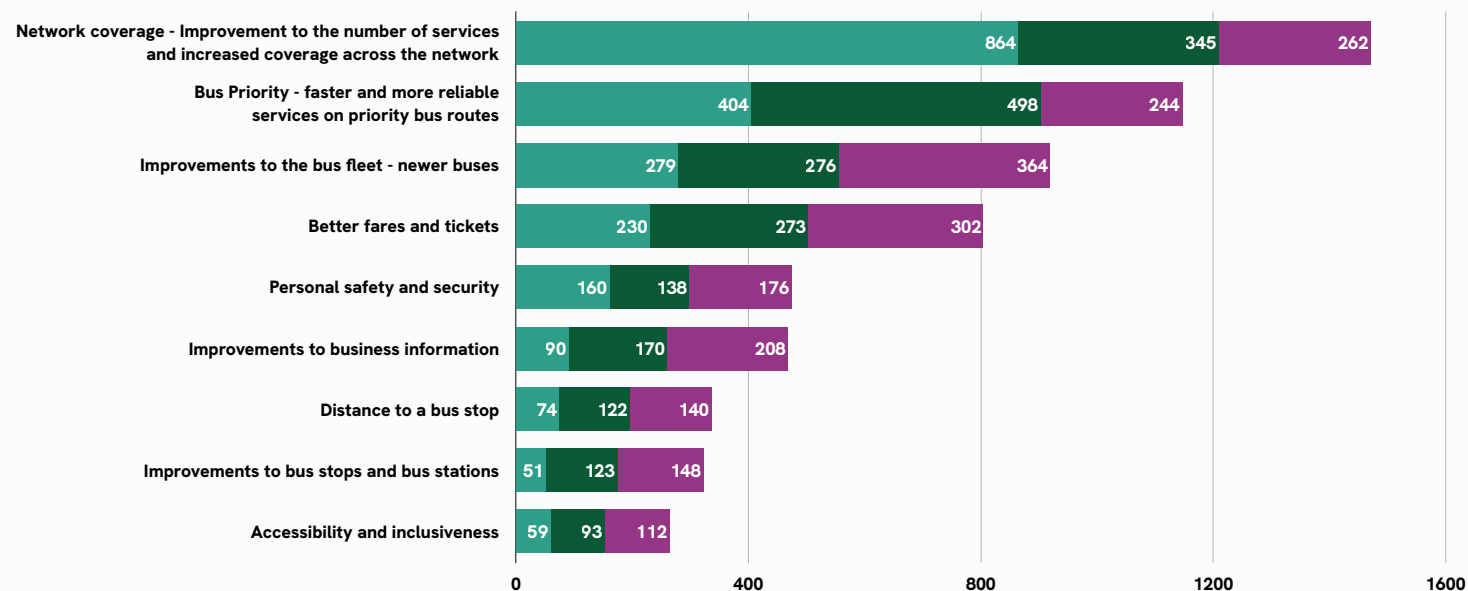
Moreover, a comparison between bus and national rail had the same outcomes, with rail being faster in all three cases. However, local bus services often provide accessible door-to-door services, due to a higher number of bus routes, and bus fares tend to be lower than the Metro and national rail services.

1.5 Moving Buses Forward

In Spring 2024 we held our Moving Buses Forward campaign, enabling us to gather further information into the priorities that our bus users want us to focus on in terms of service provision. A survey question asked the respondents to list the top three priorities from a list.

Figure 9 details what were perceived to be the highest priorities of our respondents (ranked 1-3 as indicated by colour).

Figure 9: Views on the top 3 priorities for our bus service (Moving Buses Forward, 2024)



The top three priorities for our bus users (across Durham, Tyne and Wear, and Northumberland) are: network coverage, bus priority and improvements to bus fleet.

It should be noted that at the time of data collection, the national £2 fares were in effect, alongside TNE £1 single and £3 day tickets for those under 22, which may have impacted the responses in regards to 'better fares and tickets'.

