



Bus Services in Northumberland
CAN Spring Conference
May 10th 2017

Why Buses Matter
Current Operations
Challenges
Council's Responsibilities
Current Delivery
Gaps
The Future

Why Buses Matter

- Buses support our economy and connect our communities to employment.
- Buses connect people to vital public services including education and health.
- In rural Northumberland buses help to maintain links between local service centres and remote communities that would otherwise be left isolated.
- Buses help to reduce congestion, with cleaner bus technologies also contributing to improving air quality
- Bus networks help to create a more equal society

Why Buses Matter

Buses have a vital role to play in the future success of Northumberland, to help build and maintain the three key pillars of economic growth, social equality and environmental protection.

Existing Operations

- Network
- Operators
- Passengers

The Network

- 12 million passengers in Northumberland 2015/16
- 83% of the network is operated commercially
- English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) accounted for just over 50% of passengers
- Commercial journeys are estimated to total 6.3 million vehicle miles network
- Supported bus journeys 1.3 million vehicle miles per annum in Northumberland

What it Costs

Current supported budget £1.3 million

Concessionary Scheme £4.5 million

Map of the Network

Fully Commercial bus services

Northumberland Public Bus Service Route Lines (Not subsidised by Northumberland County Council)



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Fully or partly subsidised bus services

Northumberland Public Bus Service Route Lines



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Operators

- 17 providers of registered bus services in Northumberland, these range from multi-nationals to community transport.
- Arriva is by far our biggest provider of bus services delivering 78% of passenger journey - predominantly North and South East Northumberland
- Go North East is the next biggest at 13% predominantly in the West of the County

Passenger Focus Results 2016

2

Authority results

Local transport authorities

Northumberland

Headline results



Overall satisfaction

92%



Value for money

56%



Punctuality

80%



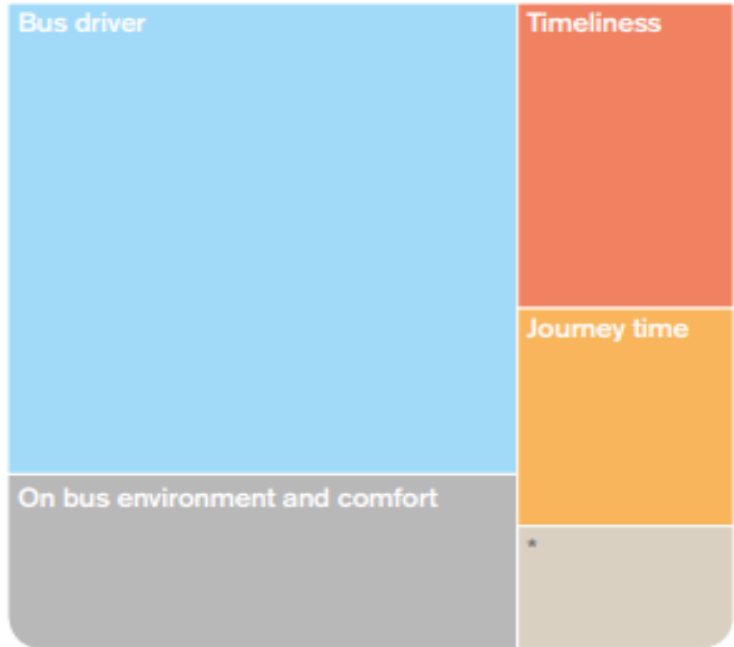
Journey time

88%



Which themes are affecting overall passenger satisfaction?

See page 170 for an explanation of how these themes were calculated



FARE-PAYERS ONLY

Challenges

- Bus use in long term decline - Bus passenger journeys in England decreased by 2.6% compared with the previous financial year.
- Bus mileage in England decreased by 2.0% when compared with the previous year. This was largely due to a 12.3% reduction in mileage on local authority supported services outside London.
- Unless we can arrest decline then in trouble. Fewer passengers then threatens commercial services, these then fall back onto the need for public sector support
- Financial Squeeze - Some councils have got rid of their supported bus services budget e.g. Cumbria

Reasons for Decline

Reasons are varied and have been the subject of much debate however

- Increased car ownership
- Increased car mileage
- Value for Money
- Congestion and Punctuality
- Perception of bus travel
- Sometimes a traditional bus service is not what is needed

- Focus on drivers of customer satisfaction.
- Joined up whole journey provision
- High Quality and consistent, readily available information
- Punctual and reliable services
- Removing barriers to travelling by bus

Council's Responsibilities

Transport Act 1985, Section 63(1)(a), explains that local transport authorities must:

“... secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the council consider it appropriate to secure to meet any public transport requirements within the county which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose.”

In practice this means local transport authorities had a duty to

- 1) to identify public transport requirements which would not otherwise be met and then
- 2) once identified, to secure what is appropriate. Also they are entitled to take into account the funds available.

What this means in Northumberland

- **Priority 1** – Supporting Economic activity, enabling residents and visitors to access key centres during peak times
- **Priority 2** – Supporting social activity, enabling remote rural residents to access essential services during the day, on a minimum of one day per week
- **Priority 3** – Enable children to travel to the nearest suitable school or college (this includes both those children eligible for free home to school transport and those who are not eligible for home to school transport)

Delivery mechanisms

- Traditional Bus services e.g. Arriva x14,
- Community Transport, NEED, ADAPT and Watbus deliver a range of services, inc. demand responsive, town hopper services
- Taxi Bus - North Seaton Colliery
- Getabout Access Scheme, working with and Adapt to provide **essential** one off trips - connecting people to what already exists or providing if nothing is available. Health features heavily.
- However leaves a gap - working to fill with CAN through Getabout

Mind the Gap

- The Council's provision provides a basic service to ensure priorities and absolutely essential trips can be made.
- However what about choice? What about regular journeys? What about those who need further assistance?
- NCC doing what we can with what we have got, but do not have the resources to deliver a bespoke service across the County

Making best use of the private car

- Link and support to existing volunteer schemes, Red Cross, County Blind Associations etc
- Encourage volunteer drivers and lift share at a local level - can new technology help? e.g. Blah Blah Car
- Taxi share schemes
- Involvement of Parish Councils

The Future?

- Challenges not going away
- Savings to be made
- Need to reverse the decline - essential to understand the user and the non user
- Bus Bill has just been given assent
- Partnership between local authorities and Bus Companies is critical
- Franchising as an alternative
- Bus Strategy for the North East Combined Authority (NECA) being developed - not alone in these challenges

- Information - <https://www.nexus.org.uk/livetravelmap>
- Increased partnership working
- Getabout
- Explore Northumberland by Bus - Bus Loads of Adventure!
- Joint services between operators - 685
- New technology - contactless payments

Thank you