

Consultation response

Welsh Government: One network, one timetable, one ticket: planning buses as a public service for Wales

June 2022

Q1: Do you agree that change is required in how we deliver bus services to meet the needs of Wales' citizens and respond to the climate emergency? Please score from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Comments:

In order to encourage people to use public transport in efforts to respond to the climate emergency, reliable, accessible and sustainable public transport services need to be available, with good connections and ease of connection between the different forms of transport. Key issues relating to public transport raised in Age Cymru's Community Calculator survey¹ (pre-pandemic) were problems with physical accessibility to public transport, cuts to bus services, and a lack of public transport in rural areas. The need for more direct bus routes to health services was also raised. Concerns were also raised over the frequency and reliability of bus services and the lack of bus and community transport in the evenings.

In a recent survey with 1200 older people carried out by Age Cymru working in partnership with Cymru Older People's Alliance (COPA), Welsh Senate of Older People, Active Wales, National Pensioners Convention Wales, and Pensioners Forum Wales, which was carried out during March and April 2022 focusing on older people's experiences in the past three months during the pandemic, older

¹ Age Cymru (2020) Key findings of the Community Calculator [Age Cymru | Community Calculator \(ageuk.org.uk\)](https://www.ageuk.org.uk)

people told us about a general lack of public transport. They highlighted that public transport services were infrequent and hadn't returned to pre-pandemic levels. This was particularly problematic for those living in rural communities and those that don't drive.

'Other than using my own car, no public transport nearby'.
(Female aged 70-74, Carmarthenshire)

'Bus number 460. It does not go through our village as it is, we depend on the Bwcabus service to meet the 460 service in a nearby village along the A484. The 460 service has been reduced and does not run as often. So, it is a dilemma now for many people. It also means that when we use the service, the bus is busier than usual'.
(Female aged 65-69, Carmarthenshire)

'Public transport was cut during the pandemic and despite being promised by the LA that it would return to old frequency when things eased, it hasn't'.
(Female aged 65-69, Isle of Anglesey)

'Public transport has not returned to pre Covid timetables. Buses are every 2 - 3 hours and stop at 6pm'.
(Female aged 65-69, Conwy)

'Public transport was reduced during pandemic and hasn't returned fully'.
(Female aged 50-54, Newport).

The impact of poor public transport on the lives of older people increases isolation and loneliness, and reduces opportunities to socialise or re-join groups or activities, which is particularly pertinent after the isolation of Covid-19 which disproportionately affected older people.

With reference to what would help people to have confidence to get back out and about into the local community, in terms of public transport, survey respondents felt that this should be clean and safe with regular, reliable and accessible services:

'Regular and frequent transportation would help me in feeling more confident to go out and about'.
(Female aged 80-84, Cardiff).

People also told us about the issues they are having with affording petrol, and reduced public transport has also meant some people can no longer get to the theatre or other social activities.

Poor public transport can impact people accessing healthcare appointments. This was an issue pre-pandemic² and our recent survey reflects that this is an even worse issue now. Some older people told us that a lack of appropriate public

² Age Cymru (2020) Key findings of the Community Calculator [Age Cymru | Community Calculator](https://ageuk.org.uk)
(ageuk.org.uk)

transport meant that they were unable to access healthcare appointments.

‘Had to cancel a hospital appointment because I couldn’t get there in time using public transport. The appointment was at St Joseph’s in Newport I live in Rhymney. Hopefully a new appointment will be made nearer home.’

Many of the issues around public transport were present before the pandemic and have just been made worse in the last two years.

Q5: Do you agree that there is a need for regional consideration and coordination of bus network plans by Corporate Joint Committees, before combining them at a national level? Please score from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Comments:

With reference to proposals regarding ‘Embedding local knowledge to identify the services which are critical to communities [...]’ we believe that transport providers must engage with older people in the preparation of their plans, and in decisions about the location and destinations of bus services. We would suggest the development of a consultative/oversight board inclusive of key service users and community and third sector organisations. It’s also important that such engagement includes non-users of bus services to help to ascertain if there are any barriers that may deter people from using bus services.

As highlighted in Question 1, travel to hospital is widely recognised to be difficult for older people. Age UK’s ‘Painful Journeys’ campaign³ highlights the struggle that many older people endure when travelling to hospital appointments. We believe that the Welsh Government, transport providers and health boards across Wales must seek to develop effective, co-ordinated transport links to enable older people to access vital health services. Older people have also highlighted that public transport should also be co-ordinated with hospital visiting times.

³ Age UK (2017) Painful Journeys <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/campaigning/painful-journeys/>

An issue that has been raised with us regarding bus services is that people may be required to travel into town or city centres to access a bus transport hub, and they then have to travel back out of the city/town centres to reach their destination, whereas in some cases a circular route, avoiding the city/town centres would be more efficient. It's important that public transport services are designed around the journeys that people need, and that older people are consulted about the journeys that they make, including travel to hospitals, healthcare, key services, and the need for bus services in the evenings and on Sundays.

With reference to the strategic objective 'integration of bus system investment with land use planning and economic and development investment, [...]' - we believe there should be better integration between transport and key services, and public transport provisions must be taken into account in housing development schemes for older people, so that people can access communities.

Q10: Do you agree with the benefits of establishing a mechanism to allow a public service operator of last resort to ensure services keep running if a franchise fails? Please score from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Comments:

We believe it's important that any such franchises are monitored in terms of the level and quality of service standards delivered. In the event of franchise failure, we believe that contingency plans should be in place to deliver good quality services for customers.

Q21: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

With reference to proposals for 'One network, one timetable, one ticket':

- We would support the development of a fully integrated sustainable transport network, with trains and buses linked to other forms of transport including community transport and pedestrian and cycle routes, with better integration between transport and key services.
- We would support integrated timetables between various services and modes of transport to enable people to plan their journeys with confidence.

It's essential that older people can easily access information about public transport services. We believe that the provision of information about transport services and timetables should be accessible in various formats. Many older people are not able to use, or do not have access to the internet, or have smartphones, and therefore may not be able to access such information if it's provided online only. Services provided online need to be high quality and easy to use, whilst offline services should be of equal quality and fully accessible. Service providers must ensure that the provision of online information is not to the detriment of the provision of information in other formats.

- We deem that a combined ticket for public transport in Wales would facilitate the smooth transition from one mode of transport to another and could potentially reduce time spent standing in queues. It's important that tickets are easily accessible using both cash and card options to ensure that buses don't move over to cashless systems. There would be the need to consider how the concessionary bus pass could be integrated into such a system, whereby travel by bus would be free, but other elements of the journey (rail travel) may incur fares. The concessionary bus travel scheme has been invaluable in helping older people in Wales to retain their independence and remain active.⁴ Given its importance to older people, we believe that the Welsh Government must continue to support the free bus travel scheme for all older and disabled people.

Accessibility

Many problems exist for older people wishing to access public transport, which can mean that it is often not a realistic or safe option. For older people with limited mobility, getting to and from the bus stop, and on and off the bus can be an issue, especially if carrying shopping, which is compounded by a lack of facilities at bus stops. Some older people are able to walk short distances and stand for short periods only, so more bus stops and shelters with seating would help to make public transport more accessible. Our research⁵ highlighted concerns over the absence of seating at bus stops, with many rural bus stops having no effective shelter from adverse weather. To encourage more people to use buses it's important that the supporting infrastructure is in place at bus stops and transport hubs to ensure that bus services are accessible. Accessible toilets should also be available at bus stations.

We would also draw attention to what may be a localised issue relating to Cardiff – we believe there needs to be better planning for road closures and public transport accessibility especially when there are events on in the city. Bus stops are often moved, and further away from the main hubs and links which is not appropriate for people with mobility issues.

With reference to the objective regarding 'passenger-friendly drivers, trained and supported to be front-line ambassadors providing a day-to-day public face for the bus service that helps attract users' - we would highlight the importance of driver

⁴ Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2010) Concessionary Bus Pass Research.

⁵ Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales.

training for providers of public transport. Safe and accessible buses are important for older people who are sometimes put off using services because of experiences where buses move off before passengers were seated.⁶ Many older people are afraid of falling and sudden movement of the bus could make them do so. One of the objectives in the Welsh Government's policy statement – accessible and inclusive public transport objectives⁷ includes a reference to 'Work with providers of public transport to raise awareness of the risk of trips and falls for older people and people with restricted mobility when vehicles move away from stops before passengers are seated', and it's important that these objectives are implemented.

Fflecsi pilots

It's important that the findings of the pilot Fflecsi services are publicised, and that successful good practice models of demand responsive transport are replicated and supported to ensure their sustainability.

Age Cymru is a registered charity 1128436. Company limited by guarantee and registered in Wales and England 6837284. Registered office address Ground Floor, Mariners House, Trident Court, East Moors Road, Cardiff CF24 5TD. ©Age Cymru 2022.

⁶ Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales.

⁷ Welsh Government (2017) Policy Statement – Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives.

