

All Aboard: Young people's views and experience of public transport in Scotland

Report Background and Context



January 2019

Between October and December 2018, Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) from across Scotland consulted with 1,329 young people to find out their views and experiences of public transport in Scotland. This consultation formed the first phase of the Scottish Youth Parliament's (SYP) *All Aboard* national campaign, which aims to improve young people's experiences of public transport in Scotland.

In the development of the *All Aboard* campaign, a literature review was carried out by the SYP Conveners Group and SYP staff. The group identified key questions relating to each campaign theme (Reducing Fares, Accessibility, and Bus Standards) which they felt needed to be answered to fully understand young people's experiences of public transport in Scotland. This literature review informed the development of the consultation questions, and a summary is outlined in this document.

- More information about the All Aboard campaign is available at: https://www.syp.org.uk/public_transport_campaign.
- The All Aboard consultation report, which was informed by this document, is available at https://www.syp.org.uk/public_transport_campaign (large print version also available).

Public Transport in Scotland

After walking and cycling, public transport is the most commonly used method of transport in Scotland. Buses are the third largest mode of transport (and the largest mode of public transport)¹. In 2016-17, Transport Scotland reports that 524 million journeys were made using public transport, of which 75% were by bus, 18% by rail, 5% by air, and 2% by ferry².

Public transport is overseen by Transport Scotland, the national transport agency for Scotland, but the majority of public transport services are delivered by private companies³. Additionally, seven Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) exist in Scotland, to '...strengthen the planning and delivery of regional transport so that it better serves the needs of people and businesses.'⁴ RTPs are made up of local authority representatives and other key stakeholders to ensure the effective

¹ Transport Scotland (2018), presentation to the Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on Cycling, Walking and Buses. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2tVhdQS>.

² Transport Scotland (2018), Scottish Transport Statistics No.36, 2017 Edition. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2Lln90o>.

³ Transport Scotland (2018), Bus Policy and Guidance. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2K75La0>.

⁴ Transport Scotland (2018), Regional Transport Partnerships. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2onmnSC>.

coordination of public transport within and between regions.⁵

Reducing Fares

A 2017 Young Scot and Stagecoach report found that one of the main reasons young people use the bus is that it is a 'cheap mode of transport'⁶, although when asked about their level of satisfaction with factors relating to bus journeys, young people were least satisfied with the cost of bus travel⁷. This reflects the discussions between MSYPs when they were voting on SYP's 2018-19 national campaign, and it is for this reason *Reducing Fares* was identified as one of the main *All Aboard* campaign themes.

There are two main ways in which young people can receive discounts on public transport in Scotland. The Scottish Government offers a concessionary discount on public transport to 16-18 year olds, or full time volunteers under the age of 26, which is facilitated through the Young Scot National Entitlement Card. This includes discounts on single bus fares, and most rail fares, although there is a minimum spend of £12 for some journeys. Scottish islanders are also entitled to two free return ferry journeys to the mainland each year⁸. In 2017, approximately 150,000 young people were eligible to receive this travel concession⁹.

This concessionary discount was introduced in January 2007¹⁰, and the terms and conditions have not been fully reviewed during that time, although in 2017 the Scottish Government carried out a consultation with young people to explore options to offer free travel to modern apprentices aged 16-20¹¹. Two-thirds of respondents to this consultation concluded that young Modern Apprentices should receive free travel, but responses were divided on whether this should be limited to those aged under 21 so the Scottish Government decided not to implement any changes and to carry out further research on this issue¹².

There is also a 16-25 Railcard (£30 per year), giving 1/3 off all fares¹³, and in early 2018 Network Rail trialled the introduction of a 26-30 Railcard in England with similar benefits to the 16-25 Railcard¹⁴. In addition, many public transport companies also offer child fares, and some offer student tickets for young people at university or in full time education¹⁵. However, there is a wide variability in the

⁵ Transport Scotland (2018), Regional Transport Partnerships. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2onmnSC>.

⁶ Young Scot and Stagecoach (2017), What do young people think about bus travel in Scotland? Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ojqclD>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Transport Scotland (2018), Young Scot National Entitlement Card. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2OsUR1O>.

⁹ Transport Scotland (2018), Scottish Transport Statistics No.36, 2017 Edition. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2Lln90o>.

¹⁰ Scottish Government (2007), Ticket to ride for young Scots. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2v2NFRT>.

¹¹ Scottish Government (2017), Round table held on concessionary travel scheme options. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2NWSyY7>.

¹² Transport Scotland (2018), Concessionary travel consultation. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2LehCnt>.

¹³ National Rail (2018), 16-25 Railcard. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2i9gdjo>.

¹⁴ National Rail (2018), 26-30 Railcard. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2mZ4fOt>.

¹⁵ British Youth Council Youth Select Committee (2012), Transport and Young People. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2r75ay4>.

extent of any concessionary rates across the country, and in the age at which young people stop being eligible for these concessionary rates, ranging from 14 to 18 years old, which means some young people still in education or training are often expected to pay a full adult fare, despite not being in full-time (or, often, any) employment¹⁶. Furthermore, while young people are generally more aware of the 'traditional' ticket options (ie, singles, day tickets, and return tickets), the less traditional options such as season passes are less well known. As a result, many young people do not know if they are getting the best value ticket¹⁷.

Despite existing concessionary travel fare schemes, there are still financial and physical barriers for many young people to accessing public transport. For example, a 2018 Scottish Rural Action (SRA) report found that transport costs in rural Scotland stopped 48% of young people from accessing employment, and 33% of young people from accessing education and training¹⁸. Furthermore, in a 2014 UK-wide study by the National Society of Apprentices, 47% apprentices surveyed said the cost of public transport had influenced their decision on where to do their apprenticeship, and a further 20% said poor transport infrastructure (eg, a lack of public transport at the required times or locations) had impacted their choice of apprenticeship¹⁹. This suggests that public transport has a wider impact on young people's education and work, and therefore their future prospects.

Accessibility

Barriers to using public transport also exist for some young people with disabilities and other access requirements, which is why MSYPs chose to focus on the accessibility of public transport as one of the *All Aboard* campaign themes.

For example, young people with disabilities report feeling less confident and less safe using public transport, and therefore travel less than people who do not have a disability²⁰. One of the biggest physical barriers for disabled passengers is the accessibility of the mode of transport, although the frequency of services, and the infrastructure between home and the nearest bus stop or station, can also make it difficult for passengers with a disability to use public transport²¹. For blind or partially sighted passengers, a further barrier is their reliance on verbal communication. Nine out of ten blind or partially sighted passengers cannot see a bus number in time to flag it down, and many don't feel they can trust the driver to wait for them to find a seat before driving off or to give them the right information²².

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Young Scot and Stagecoach (2017), What do young people think about bus travel in Scotland? Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ojqclD>.

¹⁸ Scottish Rural Action (2018), #FareEnough?. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2OsWwEM>.

¹⁹ National Society of Apprentices (2014), Travel Research. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2FL03xQ>.

²⁰ British Youth Council Youth Select Committee (2012), Transport and Young People. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2r75ay4>.

²¹ Disability Equality Scotland and Transport Scotland (2018), Accessible Travel Hub - National Baseline Results, May 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2NsISBO>.

²² RNIB (2014), We're on board - Making bus travel better for blind and partially sighted people. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2v1laEt>.

A 2017 survey by Disability Equality Scotland and Transport Scotland found that 72% disabled travellers said they rely on public transport to help maintain a level of independence²³. However, greater reliance on forward planning often makes it difficult for young people with a disability to be spontaneous with travel, thus making it more challenging for them to (for example) spend time with friends or take part in other leisure activities²⁴. Furthermore, many people with autism avoid public places, including public transport, because they are worried about how others will respond to their autism, and as a result, nearly 80% people with autism feel socially isolated²⁵.

Information about accessibility guidance for public transport in Scotland is available on the Transport Scotland and Disability Equality Scotland Accessible Travel Hub, which provides information about the accessibility and passenger assistance offered by transport providers across Scotland²⁶. Transport Scotland also has a ten year Accessible Travel Framework, which was launched in 2016²⁷. The purpose of this framework is to ‘...support disabled people’s rights by removing barriers and improving access to travel; and ensure disabled people are fully involved in work to improve all aspects of travel.’²⁸

Additionally, a number of third-sector organisations are also campaigning to improve the accessibility of public transport in Scotland. For example, the RNIB’s *We’re on Board* bus charter was launched in 2014 to improve bus travel for blind and partially sighted people²⁹. To date, nine bus companies in Scotland have signed up, covering over 80% bus routes in Scotland³⁰. Another example is The National Autistic Society’s *Too Much Information* campaign, which aims ‘...to increase public understanding of the five core features of autism and to give people an understanding of what actions they can take to help autistic people.’³¹ This campaign offers advice and guidance on how to help a person with autism on public transport.

Bus Standards

As previously mentioned, buses are the most common form of public transport in Scotland. One third of people in Scotland use a bus at least once a week, with between 16%³² and 21% people relying on buses to get to school, and one in ten to

²³ Disability Equality Scotland and Transport Scotland (2018), Accessible Travel Hub - National Baseline Results, May 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2NsISBO>.

²⁴ British Youth Council Youth Select Committee (2012), Transport and Young People. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2r75ay4>.

²⁵ The National Autistic Society (2016), Too Much Information. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2P5Cdfs>.

²⁶ Transport Scotland and Disability Equality Scotland (2018), Accessible Travel Hub. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2y6HSyf>.

²⁷ Transport Scotland (2016), Going Further – Scotland’s Accessible Travel Framework. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2OuNdnB>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ RNIB (2014), We’re on board - Making bus travel better for blind and partially sighted people. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2v1laEt>.

³⁰ SYP (2018), Young People’s Rights Review – Claire Forde MSYP, Disability and Independence. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2v3tYJK>.

³¹ The National Autistic Society (2016), Too Much Information. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2P5Cdfs>.

³² Sustrans (2018), Hands Up Scotland Survey 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2IGUcea>.

get to work³³. It is for this reason MSYPs chose to focus on *Bus Standards* as one of the *All Aboard* campaign themes. In particular, the key areas the group has identified to focus on within this theme are bus information and reliability, and young people's overall experience of travelling by bus.

Young people in Scotland rank buses as the second most popular mode of transport (after cars), primarily because it is 'a cheap mode of transport'³⁴. However, for many, it may be the only mode of transport available to them³⁵. There is evidence to suggest that the number of young people who hold a driving license and/or who own a car is decreasing, and is expected to continue in this direction, which may influence the number of young people relying on buses in the future^{36,37}.

The bus system in the UK is currently deregulated, which means the private sector specifies routes and prices, etc, with very little regulation³⁸. Over 200 bus companies operate in Scotland³⁹.

Bus information and reliability

There is limited research into young people's views and experiences of bus information and reliability. However, a 2017 Young Scot and Stagecoach report identified young people who check bus timetables in advance of travelling prefer to do this online rather than using other channels, although many do not check bus times in advance⁴⁰.

Young people's overall experience of travelling by bus

A 2018 report by Citizens Advice Scotland found 76% respondents (of all ages) said they feel safe on buses, although some concerns were raised in relation to the way the bus was being driven; where bus stops/shelters were situated; being able to move around the bus before it moved off; the speed of the vehicle; and safety in relation to other passengers⁴¹. However, compared to other groups, young people report less overall satisfaction with public transport, find services to be of lower value for money, and feel less safe using public transport⁴².

Furthermore, some specific groups of young people may feel less safe using public

³³ Confederation of Passenger Transport UK – Scotland (2018), Get on Board with Bus. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2NqgaQK>.

³⁴ Young Scot and Stagecoach (2017), What do young people think about bus travel in Scotland? Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ojqcID>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ KPMG (2017), Trends in Scottish Bus Patronage. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2onzS4B>.

³⁷ Chatterjee, K. et al (2018), Young People's Travel - What's Changed and Why? Review and Analysis. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2LW8PIJ>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Traveline Scotland (2018), Bus and coach services in Scotland. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2zwn9ma>.

⁴⁰ Young Scot and Stagecoach (2017), What do young people think about bus travel in Scotland? Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ojqcID>.

⁴¹ Citizens Advice Scotland (2018), Your Bus, Your Say: Creating Better Journeys. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2BC21wn>.

⁴² British Youth Council Youth Select Committee (2012), Transport and Young People. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2r75ay4>.

transport than others. For example, nearly one in three LGBT young people do not feel safe on public transport, with transgender young people least likely to feel safe⁴³. Between 2012 and 2017, the number of LGBT young people overall who said they feel safe on public transport declined, from 79% to 67%⁴⁴. Young people with disabilities also identified the way public transport staff related to them as one of the main issues they face when using public transport, resulting in many young people being afraid to use public transport⁴⁵.

Youth Participation

SYP is a fundamentally rights-based organisation, and our mission, vision, and values are grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In particular, our purpose embodies Article 12: that young people have the right to express their views freely and have their opinions listened to in all matters affecting them. Although youth participation is not one of the *All Aboard* campaign themes, it underpins all SYP activities, and is therefore essential to consider throughout the campaign.

A 2018 report from Citizen's Advice Scotland found that the highest level of passenger dissatisfaction related to the ease of providing feedback to bus companies (72%) and getting help if something goes wrong (67%). Respondents to this survey said they would like public transport companies to make more effort to listen to customers and to take their views more seriously⁴⁶. Whilst this report did not focus specifically on young people's views, the British Youth Council's 2012 Youth Select Committee identified that there are hugely different levels of engagement from transport companies across the UK to identify young people's needs⁴⁷. Although some positive examples were identified, such as Transport for London's youth panel, the group recommended that young people should be included in all decisions which affect them in relation to public transport, regardless of where they are in the UK⁴⁸.

Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework and the Accessible Travel Hub outline that people with disabilities need to be involved throughout the design, development, and improvement process⁴⁹, and that, overall, disabled people just want the chance for genuine discussion and consultation with transport providers about their needs and experiences of travelling on existing services⁵⁰.

⁴³ LGBT Youth Scotland (2018), Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2lpcZpR>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ British Youth Council Youth Select Committee (2012), Transport and Young People. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2r75ay4>.

⁴⁶ Citizens Advice Scotland (2018), Your Bus, Your Say: Creating Better Journeys. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2BC21wn>.

⁴⁷ British Youth Council Youth Select Committee (2012), Transport and Young People. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2r75ay4>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Transport Scotland (2016), Going Further – Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2OuNdnB>.

⁵⁰ Disability Equality Scotland and Transport Scotland (2018), Accessible Travel Hub - National Baseline Results, May 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2NsISBO>.