



A SUSTAINABLE AND RENEWABLE SOCIETY

Policy 4:

Transport Scotland and public transport companies should ensure that public transport services are accessible and reliable for young people across Scotland, particularly those living in rural areas.

Endorsed by:



What's this all about?

Young people told us that the Scottish Government must invest in public transport to ensure better integration, better technology, and better access across Scotland. Despite free bus travel for under-22s, there are still barriers preventing every young person from having equal access to public transport, with disabled young people and those living in rural communities sharing many experiences about inconsistency and unreliability. Supported public transport is essential for young people to live their lives freely.

"Your postcode should not determine your success."

– Young person aged 14-17, Edinburgh

"These are our lifelines. It's utterly necessary."

– Young woman aged 18-21, Orkney

What are young people in Scotland calling for?

- Transport Scotland and public transport companies must take action to make public transport safe, accessible, and reliable, without compromising young people's ability to access and afford it.

"Free bus travel is great, for those who can benefit from it. Before expanding the scheme to 26 year olds, investment needs to be streamlined towards creating equality of opportunity of public transport. Rural areas within the Highlands simply don't have reliable bus timetables and the offer of free travel simply cannot be used."

– Young woman aged 18-21, Orkney

- Young people call for public transport to be available consistently across rural, island, and urban communities, with better connections and routes linked up across different public transport methods.

"I live in a rural area and there are only 2 buses per day, one at 9am and one at 8pm meaning I am very limited on my travel."

– Young woman aged 14-17, Dundee

- Decision makers should create improved resources to help all young people, especially young disabled people, to accurately plan their journeys and navigate public transport, and for young people to be included in planning decisions at local and national levels.

"Many of my friends are stuck out in rural areas due to a lack of public transport, and people in my college course regularly end up stuck in the city for hours because the bus is the only way they can get home and it got cancelled or didn't stop. Public transport is also awful for accessibility. I have had to have actual arguments with bus drivers for them to let me on a bus in my wheelchair or put the ramp down."

– Young woman aged 14-17, Dundee

- Decision makers should create a public transport system that creates equal access for all, reducing geographical inequalities and barriers for young people to access.

"Paying £14 for two people to travel along the West Highland Line for only 2 stops is not fair or justifiable."

– Young woman aged 14-17, West Dunbartonshire

Evidence and Support

- In [Together Scotland's State of Children's Rights Report 2024](#), children and young people emphasised the importance of reliable and accessible public transport for accessing hobbies, leisure activities, as well as time with friends and family. However, many children and young people expressed frustration with limited timetables and unreliability.
- In January 2025, [Shetland Youth Voice held a Transport Summit](#) to talk about young people's issues on public transport.

What has SYP done?

Previous [SYP consultations](#) includes [SYP's response to NZET Committee Inquiry into Ferries \(2022\)](#) and [Reducing Car Use - #WhatsYourTake survey report \(2022\)](#). The [SYP Policy Log](#) includes several policies on access to public transport, cost of public transport, safety and management of public transport.