

National Transport Strategy Review – Call for Evidence Response from Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS)



July 2017

1. *Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS), our 61 member Citizen Advice Bureaux (CAB), the Citizen Advice consumer helpline, and the Extra Help Unit, form Scotland's largest independent advice network. Advice provided by our service is free, independent, confidential, impartial and available to everyone. Our self-help website Advice for Scotland provides information on rights and helps people solve their problems.*
2. *In 2015/16 the Citizens Advice network in Scotland helped over 310,000 clients in Scotland alone and dealt with over one million advice issues. With support from the network clients had financial gains of over £120 million and our Scottish self-help website Advice for Scotland received over 4 million unique page views.*

Introduction and context of response

3. Citizens Advice Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. Public transport plays an important role in people's lives. In particular, buses have a key role to play in ensuring Scotland has high quality, integrated public transport. The need for high quality public transport was a frequently raised issue in responses to the National Transport Strategy Early Engagement Consultation Survey¹. Also highlighted in this consultation was the need to protect and preserve existing bus services.
4. Bus transport has the potential to contribute to the Scottish Government Strategic Objectives in a number of ways. Firstly, it can help create a Wealthier and Fairer Scotland by ensuring employees can travel to and from work. It can also contribute to this Strategic Objective by ensuring bus transport is responsive to the needs of local people. Secondly, bus transport can contribute to the Scottish Government Strategic Objective of creating a Healthier Scotland by ensuring people are able to access local health care services. Thirdly, it can contribute to the Scottish Government Strategic Objective of creating a Safer and Stronger Scotland by helping create and maintain strong communities.
5. In June 2016 Citizens Advice Scotland published a review of local bus provision entitled 'Round the Bend'². The report forms the basis of this

¹ National Transport Strategy Review – Early Engagement Consultation Survey- Analysis of Responses, to the Public Consultation exercise – Transport Scotland, June 2017

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/39243/ntsearlyengagementconsultationsurvey-june-2017.pdf>

² Round the Bend – Citizens Advice Scotland, June 2016

http://www.cas.org.uk/system/files/publications/round_the_bend_0.pdf

response and can be read in full at this link:
<http://www.cas.org.uk/publications/round-bend>

6. This report looked at what was happening with bus transport across Scotland and explored issues facing consumers in accessing essential services, such as healthcare and work opportunities, using the bus network. This research was carried out by 16 Citizens Advice Bureaux and covered the experience of 113 local communities. Among the many issues it raised were differences in the experiences of urban and rural consumers using bus transport. Key findings in the research included:
 - 38% of locations surveyed had no Sunday service that connected them with local hospitals
 - In remote rural areas the median cost of a return ticket to the nearest Job Centre was £9.00
 - Consumers in the rural areas surveyed face an average 40 minute round trip to access the nearest bank branch
 - Residents of rural areas were on average 5 miles from the nearest GP surgery
 - College students in remote areas on average face journey times of over an hour and at a median cost of £10 return
7. Following the 'Round the Bend' report Citizens Advice Scotland invited policy experts in public transport, consumer organisations, government officials and community representatives to attend a rural bus summit to discuss the issues facing rural communities and public transport. Citizens Advice Scotland then produced a paper which summarised the presentations and discussions as well as collating ideas from attendees and presented these as potential discussion points for future work on rural transport policy.³
8. At this rural bus summit issues and challenges which were highlighted included the problems in serving dispersed populations over large distances; a lack of consideration of public transport in planning decisions; a need for better co-ordination of bus times in order to ensure there is less overlap of services; the negative impact of a lack of connectivity, including reduced access to employment opportunities and reduced access to health care; and reduced access to social contact and support which could result in isolation and poorer mental and physical health; and how good practice, such as live departure times, could be highlighted.⁴
9. The important role public transport can play is highlighted in this experience of an elderly consumer visiting a CAB in the West of Scotland:

³ Rural Bus Summit Summary – Citizens Advice Scotland, August 2016

http://www.cas.org.uk/system/files/publications/bus_summit_summary.pdf

⁴ *Ibid*

A 73 year old client reported that due to a bridge repair public transport in her area had stopped. The repair is expected to take 19 months to complete. In order to be in a position to catch a bus she would have to walk approximately two miles. She reported that she lives on her own and having no bus service could impact on her wellbeing. The advisor commented that the client is currently relying on her son for lifts but he is not always available.

Call for evidence questions

Economic growth and inclusive growth

What does evidence say about the ways in which transport can best support economic growth and do so in a cost-effective way? What are the implications of this in terms of inclusive economic growth (economic growth that distributes its benefits fairly across society)?

10. Bus provision makes an important contribution to the Scottish economy. Evidence of this is that around one in ten people use the bus to travel to work on a daily basis.⁵
11. The responses to the National Transport Strategy Early Engagement Consultation Survey highlighted that age, disability or poor health can be barriers to using public transport, for example, these groups may have difficulty getting on and off public transport⁶. This demonstrates that at present access to public transport is not inclusive and we would recommend tackling these barriers to ensure that groups, such as elderly people, are not negatively impacted by becoming socially isolated due to a lack of access to public transport.

The 'Round the Bend' report found that college students and jobseekers were two other groups who can struggle to access affordable bus transport. CAS found that of all the essential services reviewed in 'Round the Bend', colleges had the longest journey times (a median bus travel time of 44 minutes) and were the most expensive to travel to (the median cost for a return journey was £6.00). This poor access to public transport could mean potential college students cannot access the course they want or result in their opting not to take a college course. This in turn will reduce the skills pool that contributes to the economy and supports economic growth. CAS would recommend that access to college courses is taken into account when planning local public transport.

⁵ National Transport Strategy Refresh – Transport Statistics, 2015
<https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/10217/nts-refresh-2015-supporting-document-transport-statistics-1-dec-2015.pdf>

⁶ National Transport Strategy Review – Early Engagement Consultation Survey- Analysis of Responses, to the Public Consultation exercise – Transport Scotland, June 2017

12. The difficulties faced by consumers using buses to travel to and from Jobcentres or work was highlighted in 'Round the Bend' which found that the median bus travel time to a Jobcentre in the research conducted was 40 minutes with a median cost for a return journey of £5.80. The longest travel times collated by CAB undertaking the research were seen in the Scottish Borders, with the journey from the rural village of Yetholm to the nearest Jobcentre in Galashiels taking 96 minutes.⁸ In order to ensure that public transport supports economic growth, jobseekers need to be able to use public transport to travel to and from Jobcentres or work and CAS would recommend that these issues are considered in all future transport strategies.

13. This particular case in 'Round the Bend' illustrates some of the barriers faced by jobseekers in accessing both employment opportunities and college courses:

"Mr B is single, 27 and living with his parents. He is unemployed and receives income based Job Seekers Allowance, £146 every fortnight (£73/week). Mr B worried about the impact of travelling expenses on his ability to find and remain in employment, as he is most likely to find work either in Airdrie town centre or in Glasgow city. He has experienced delays using his local bus service which at times is a barrier to him successfully travelling as and where needed.

He is also considering going to college in August to do a full time course but has heard from friends that travelling expenses from the college do not cover the true total cost that is incurred. He has similar concerns for the cost of travelling should he find employment in Glasgow. Whilst the research focused per the instructions on nearby towns for work, where an individual finds employment further away in North Lanarkshire or a neighbouring local authority, the cost and accessibility of travel do present as barriers."⁹

14. In a similar area, CAS research demonstrated that some jobseekers are unable to reach work locations before 9am or on a Sunday. In 'Round the Bend', concerns were raised that for individuals in some parts of Scotland Sunday services were not a viable option, with 27% of the locations surveyed not running buses to designated work locations. Some areas could also not be reached by public transport before 9am.¹⁰ This could prevent them from taking up potential offers of employment and we would recommend that the National Transport Strategy aims to ensure that public transport is available to work locations at suitable times.

Transport mode choice and demand

⁸ Round the Bend – Citizens Advice Scotland, June 2016

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ *Ibid*

To what degree are travel behaviours such as mode choice (including freight transport) and demand amenable to intervention? Which policy interventions change behaviours or demand and why? What does research tell us about the types of interventions that fail to change behaviours, particularly over the long term?

15. CAS would recommend using interventions to address the difficulties faced in accessing public transport in particular parts of Scotland in order to encourage its use. For example, issues around affordability of public transport fares, particularly to and from the Northern Isles were raised in the National Transport Strategy Early Engagement Consultation Survey.¹¹
16. CAS would recommend further investigation into and potential action taken to deal with the wide variety in the pricing of bus transportation in Scotland. 'Round the Bend' found that there was a wide variety of pricing across Scotland, from 7p per mile to £1.80 per mile.¹² This disparity leads to a variation in access to bus transportation in Scotland and may be a factor in preventing economic growth being distributed evenly across Scotland.
17. We would recommend that the increase in the cost of bus fares is considered when trying to change travel behaviours. This could be a barrier preventing people using buses and could affect demand for these services. Scottish Transport statistics show that there has been an increase of 19% in the cost of bus fares between 2011-2016.¹³
18. Additionally, at the CAS rural bus summit some policy intervention options for making fares more affordable were advocated. These included:
 - increased national funding;
 - making fares more transparent;
 - rolling out best practice examples;
 - making it simpler to understand fares;
 - a cap on fare increases;
 - standardisation of fares; and
 - more smart ticketing.¹⁴
19. CAS would support further investigation of these potential policy interventions be undertaken, with a view to introducing all or some of these suggestions in order to change public behaviour and increase the use of public transport.

¹¹ National Transport Strategy Early Engagement Consultation Survey, Transport Scotland, 2016
<https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/39243/ntsearlyengagementconsultationsurvey-june-2017.pdf>

¹² Round the Bend – Citizens Advice Scotland, June 2016

¹³ Scottish Transport Statistics No 3, 2016 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/33814/sct01171871341.pdf>

¹⁴ Rural Bus Summit Summary – Citizens Advice Scotland, August 2016

20. Improvements to the integration of and links/connections in multi-stage public transport journeys could change travel behaviour and has the potential to increase the use of public transport. Responses to the National Transport Strategy Early Engagement Consultation Survey suggested that making improvements and ensuring there was reliable public transport was necessary to encourage people to make changes to their travel behaviours.¹⁵

21. Rolling out some of the best practice highlighted at the CAS rural bus summit would lead to improvements in the experience of using public transport and subsequently change travel behaviours. The best practice highlighted included:

- flat rate tickets;
- interagency working;
- integration of car sharing and community transport smart tickets;
- wifi on buses and at bus stops to help access e-ticketing; and
- rural community hubs for delivering services.¹⁶

22. CAS would recommend that the options put forward at the rural bus summit for providing more local services rurally be researched and considered as viable options for increasing the use of public transport. These suggested policy interventions included:

- more community hubs;
- more mobile services to service larger areas;
- valuing public transport with investment, such as through the new National Transport Strategy;
- championing the use of public transport to tourists.¹⁷

23. CAS has concerns that at present public transport may not support the Scottish Government's intention for the NHS to deliver 'seven day services'¹⁸. In order for 'seven day services' to be delivered public transport must be accessible in all areas in Scotland. Some consumers, particularly rural consumers, currently face issues accessing these services using public transport. 'Round the Bend' found that the median time to travel by transport to a hospital in the areas covered in the research was 37 minutes and 38% of remote rural areas did not have a Sunday service. It was also particularly problematic to attend morning appointments for those living in rural areas.¹⁹ It was also highlighted in 'Round the Bend' that those with mobility issues may struggle to attend medical appointments using public transport.

¹⁵ National Transport Strategy Early Engagement Consultation Survey, Transport Scotland, 2016

¹⁶ Rural Bus Summit Summary – Citizens Advice Scotland, August 2016

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ Sustainable 24/7 NHS Update, 2015, Scottish Government <https://news.gov.scot/news/sustainable-247-nhs-update>

¹⁹ Round the Bend – Citizens Advice Scotland, June 2016

24. One case study which highlights this issue is:

'Mrs M is an 85 year old lady who lives with her daughter in North East Glasgow. She was referred to the Healthy Journeys project in May 2014 by her GP surgery.'

Mrs M has many health problems that make walking difficult. She has osteoarthritis in both knees and qualifies for knee replacement surgery. However, a heart condition means the risk of the operation is too high. She also has leukaemia and receives blood transfusions every fortnight. This involves a visit to the Royal Infirmary to have blood tests done and then, if everything is satisfactory, she goes to Stobhill Hospital the following day for the blood transfusion.

It is an uphill walk to the nearest bus stop, which means it is impossible for Mrs M to use public transport. She had tried to use the Scottish Ambulance transport but said it took her two days to recover because she was exhausted, having been out all day and it was too much for her. Before the patient transport service came along, Mrs M was using taxis but the costs of this were becoming unmanageable. Although she never missed an appointment, she says she put off going to the GP lots of times as it was such a struggle to get there.²⁰

²⁰ *Ibid*