

**WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE
& WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE**

ITEM 17

19 JUNE 2020

REPORT SUMMARY SHEET

WEST OF ENGLAND BUS STRATEGY

Purpose

To present a West of England Bus Strategy for adoption.

Summary

The Bus Strategy is a key document that builds on public transport delivery options to meet the aims of the Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (JLTP4). The Bus Strategy work-stream has been in progress over the last 18 months and was the subject of public consultation between February and March 2020.

Given the changing landscape within which bus services operate at present and in the foreseeable future, it is proposed to review the adopted strategy within 18 months in order to ensure its alignment with the expected current and future operating landscape at that stage.

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The Combined Authority has actively reviewed its key activities and work programme to reflect changing priorities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Specific issues relating to the Covid-19 situation that impact on or are addressed through this report are as follows:

Covid-19 has created a fundamental change in the landscape associated with bus and public transport operations nationally. Significant work is being progressed across the West of England authorities to assess and manage the impact and continue to provide a critical bus network for essential journeys and key workers.

A separate report on this agenda considers the need to jointly develop a Bus Recovery Plan to support the recovery of the network and tackle legacy issues as the country emerges from lockdown and more is understood about levels of usage. The Bus Strategy needs to take account of the Bus Recovery Plan and the interim environment within which bus services are operating, and reflect the opportunities presented by the current situation in encouraging more sustainable travel patterns upon emergence from lockdown.

It is expected that recovery back to pre-lockdown levels is likely to be measured in years rather than months. This is in part due to the ongoing need for social distancing and staff and passenger protection, and its impact on network capacity including on vehicles and at stops. Much is still uncertain but passenger growth, and network expansion, is likely to take place in a phased manner through gradual relaxation of restrictions and service restoration facilitated by dialogue between the authorities, operators and the Department for Transport. As demand rises, more vehicles and drivers will be required against the backdrop of social distancing constraining network capacity, requiring a carefully managed, iterative approach to ensure network capacity is aligned with passenger demand.

However, it is considered that the key, longer term principles of the Bus Strategy remain irrespective of the current extent of the network and current level of journeys. Up to 2036, the authorities will be aiming to deliver a significant reduction in car dependency as part of their key, complementary commitments to achieve carbon neutrality in the transport sector, and growing bus passenger numbers will have a major role to play in realizing this vision.

Given the changing landscape within which bus services operate at present and in the foreseeable future, it is proposed to review the adopted strategy within 18 months in order to ensure its alignment with the expected current and future operating landscape at that stage.

Recommendations

The **Joint Committee** is asked:

1. To agree the West of England Bus Strategy for adoption.
2. To note the summary of feedback from public consultation.
3. To note linkages with the programme of bus infrastructure (see separate report on the agenda).
4. To note linkages with, and impacts of, the COVID-19 lockdown on bus operations and strategy delivery and alignment to the bus recovery report (see separate report on the agenda).
5. To delegate the agreement of any subsequent minor changes to the adopted Bus Strategy to WECA Director of Infrastructure.

The **Combined Authority Committee** is asked to note the report.

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**REPORT TO: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE**

DATE: 19 JUNE 2020

REPORT TITLE: WEST OF ENGLAND BUS STRATEGY

DIRECTOR: DAVID CARTER – DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE

AUTHOR: JASON HUMM – HEAD OF TRANSPORT

Purpose of Report

1. To present a West of England Bus Strategy for adoption, including supporting consultation report.

Recommendations

The **Joint Committee** is asked:

- To agree the West of England Bus Strategy for adoption
- To note the summary of feedback from public consultation
- To note linkages with the programme of bus infrastructure (see separate report on the agenda)
- To note linkages with, and impacts of, the COVID-19 lockdown on bus operations and strategy delivery and alignment to the bus recovery report (see separate report on the agenda)
- To delegate the agreement of any subsequent minor changes to the adopted Bus Strategy to WECA Director of Infrastructure.

The **Combined Authority Committee** is asked to note the report.

Background / Issues for Consideration

- 1.1. The Bus Strategy is a key document that builds on public transport delivery options to meet the aims of the Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (JLTP4). The Bus Strategy work-stream has been in progress over the last 18 months and was the subject of public consultation between February and March 2020. The consultation document set out

a number of key themes including the following:

- A target to double bus passenger journeys by 2036 (from a 2011 baseline), delivered by:
 - A shift towards an interchange-based network to open new journey opportunities for bus passengers, including the reintroduction of cross-city, orbital services new interchanges and the promotion of an integrated network; and
 - A further, significant reallocation in road-space to enable faster and more reliable bus services, using new bus lanes and other bus priority infrastructure; and
- 1.2. It is recognised that to deliver our objectives we will need to invest in and deliver both infrastructure (including new bus lanes and other priority measures) and behavioral change programmes, using our investments to leverage complementary fleet investment, progressively incorporate network interchange principles and increase service frequency from regional bus operators, alongside the delivery of our ticketing strategy.
- 1.3. Given the changing landscape within which bus services operate at present and in the foreseeable future, it is proposed to review the adopted strategy within 18 months in order to ensure its alignment with the expected current and future operating landscape at that stage.

2. Covid-19

- 2.1. Covid-19 has created a fundamental change in the landscape associated with bus and public transport operations nationally. Joint Committee members will be aware that significant work is being progressed across the West of England authorities to assess and manage the impact and continue to provide a critical bus network for essential journeys and key workers.
- 2.2. The Bus Recovery Report (see separate report on the agenda) sets out the steps to support the recovery of the network and tackle legacy issues as the country emerges from lockdown and more is understood about levels of usage. The Bus Strategy needs to take account of the Bus Recovery Report and the interim environment within which bus services are operating, and reflect the opportunities presented by the current situation in encouraging more sustainable travel patterns upon emergence from lockdown.
- 2.3. Bus passenger numbers in the West of England in April 2020 were approximately 10% of those levels before the Covid 19 lockdown. An emergency network has been structured to better reflect usage, social distancing and essential users and is currently around 80% of its pre-lockdown level (in terms of routes and frequencies). Whilst social distancing on vehicles has also severely restricted vehicle capacity (to around 30%), operating costs remain substantially in excess of farebox revenues and central government has underwritten the cost of the reduced network, a situation which is likely to remain for a considerable time, and investment for matters such as fleet renewal is not available.

- 2.4. It is expected that recovery back to pre-lockdown levels is likely to be measured in years rather than months. This is in part due to the ongoing need for social distancing and staff and passenger protection, and its impact on network capacity including on vehicle and at stops. Much is still uncertain but passenger growth, and network expansion, is likely to take place in a phased manner through gradual relaxation of restrictions and service restoration facilitated by dialogue between the authorities, operators and the Department for Transport. As demand rises, more vehicles and drivers will be required against the backdrop of social distancing constraining network capacity, requiring a carefully managed, iterative approach to ensure network capacity is aligned with passenger demand.
- 2.5. A further challenge will be passengers' likely reluctance to use public transport for fear of infection and the current guidance to wear face masks, as such there will be a need for the authorities and operators to offer reassurance to passengers, alongside complementary policy interventions to ensure that car dependency is minimized as demand to travel begins to grow again. As things stand, public transport patronage will take a long time to recover as people continue to work from home or choose to travel by car. A mass return to public transport will not be possible for as long as social distancing is in place.
- 2.6. Inevitably it is difficult to speculate the levels of usage of public transport; the constraints that networks and usage will be operated under as emergence progresses; and the impact that this will have on people's perception regarding using (or re-establishing their use of) public transport. The timings for how quickly usage re-establishes over time and to what level this re-establishes to (or plateaus at) in the medium term, as a comparator to pre-Covid-19 levels, are similarly subject to a multitude of variables.
- 2.7. A number of surveys have suggested that the number of people using public transport in Britain's cities could be 20% lower than previously after the end of lockdown. It may therefore be reasonable to assume that the area will recover around 80% of original boarding levels over a one to two year period assuming social distancing is sufficiently relaxed by then (it should be borne in mind that this is still significantly higher than boarding numbers were in 2012).
- 2.8. However, it is considered that the key, longer term principles of the Bus Strategy remain irrespective of the current extent of the network and current level of journeys. Up to 2036, the authorities will be aiming to deliver a significant reduction in car dependency as part of their key, complementary commitments to achieve carbon neutrality in the transport sector, and growing bus passenger numbers will have a major role to play in realizing this vision.
- 2.9. In addition the key principles for investment in bus priority corridors and Park & Ride also remain sound as the provision of this infrastructure will continue to underpin the delivery of the Bus Strategy's network principles and the region's wider transport objectives, irrespective of the baseline starting point that bus operations and bus patronage will be in as we emerge from Covid-19. As such whilst legacy and recovery issues associated with Covid-19 need to be considered alongside these plans it is still

critical that investment in our bus infrastructure is continued.

- 2.10. The Bus Recovery Plan may also provide some opportunity to adjust the focus of bus operations to help develop a future network better aligned with the radial, orbital and interchange model that is proposed in the Bus Strategy document.

3. Bus Strategy Key Principles

- 3.1. The bus strategy is a supporting document to JLTP4 adopted in March 2020. A bus strategy consultation document was published in early February for a six-week consultation period and was focused around a number of key themes intended to substantially increase bus passenger numbers. These themes included:

- The opportunities provided by a shift in the structure of the network to promote the role of interchange between different services, including the reintroduction of cross-city routes, stronger orbital services and the promotion of the network as an integrated entity to boost bus trips for a wider range of journeys currently undertaken by car. The assessment supporting the strategy has concluded that the operating cost of such a network would be broadly similar to the pre-Covid level but would itself raise passenger trips by potentially up to 25%.
- A substantial increase in the extent of road space allocated to bus priority measures, alongside reductions in through traffic movements on key public transport corridors, to deliver significant improvements in bus network reliability.
- The exploration of alternative means of providing rural services whereby infrequent direct services could be replaced by more frequent shuttle services to interchange hubs.

- 3.2. A Bus Strategy for adoption is attached as Appendix 1, and a supporting Consultation Key Findings Report is attached at Appendix 2. Around 1,900 responses were received as part of the public consultation on the draft strategy across the wide extent of the West of England area. This is considered to be very encouraging, and the strategy for adoption has taken account of these responses. Specifically:

- There was clear, majority support for the key themes in the strategy around an interchange-based network and reallocation of road space;
- There was clear, majority support for opportunities for a more flexible approach to the provision of rural services;
- Respondents were strongly supportive of the need for new, high quality vehicles and integrated ticketing; but
- Respondents were, overall, not supportive of the proposal that passengers could walk further to access a higher frequency service. As the interchange-based network is progressively delivered over the next few years, walking distances will need to be considered carefully and network proposals adapted to reflect this concern.

- 3.3. The strategy for adoption also includes contextual commentary on the current Covid-19 situation, as well in commentary on how elements of the strategy will be delivered and indicative timescales. Delivery will need to be considered carefully against a

backdrop of legal framework opportunities. The authorities currently envisage that an Enhanced Partnership Scheme (EPS) is the most appropriate delivery framework, locking in operator commitments around investment, radial and orbital service provision and integration. Should dialogue with operators demonstrate that an EPS framework will not deliver these commitments, alternative framework options will be considered. Of course, timings for this remain subject to a commercially operational network being re-established in the region post Covid-19.

- 3.4. The consultants supporting the bus strategy workstream have produced a range of technical notes. These are referred to in the Bus Strategy and it is intended to place these in the public domain as supporting documents to the strategy. It should be emphasized that the remodeling of the network will be reliant on significant, additional bus priority infrastructure (which would also be a key component of the EPS) to justify the operator investment.
- 3.5. Delivery of route changes will go hand in hand with infrastructure, in a carefully phased manner, to provide reliable journey times, particularly on key radials to ensure that cross-city corridors can be delivered. This is likely to require challenging decisions around road space allocation, and investment covered within the Bus Infrastructure Investment paper (elsewhere on the agenda). This considers the corridors and their phasing and funding in more detail. Next steps will also include refinement of the network suggestions and modelling undertaken to date, as described in more detail in the supporting technical notes to be published alongside the adopted strategy.

4. Priority Corridors

- 4.1. To support a regional delivery plan, it was agreed by the West of England Committee in July 2019 for bus infrastructure to be centrally co-ordinated. This allows infrastructure schemes to better complement each other across authority boundaries and for the infrastructure to better align with the bus strategy and integrated ticketing programme. The Bus Infrastructure Working Group, made up of nominated officers from each UA and WECA, has undertaken a prioritisation exercise based on:
 - Alignment with JLTP / bus strategy
 - Readiness (deliverability) of schemes
 - Data availability.
- 4.2. As part of the route assessment, Officers reviewed corridors, making assessments against the above criteria; as well as evidence from Operator feedback; passenger numbers; alignment with other investment and Park and Ride sites; and UA priorities for interventions. This has identified the corridors as detailed in the Bus Infrastructure investment paper (elsewhere on this agenda).

5. Operator Agreements

- 5.1. In principle, this significant opportunity for investment in bus infrastructure across the region provides a basis for discussion and subsequent agreement with Bus Operators within the region through the provisions set out in the Bus Services Act 2017, to work

together to deliver our objectives through providing:

- Vehicles that support our clean air and low carbon aspirations
- Increased frequencies to support our modal shift, and target for increased passenger numbers.
- A commitment to operate enhanced services to promote patronage growth.

5.2. Clearly operator agreements would need to take account of the legacy and recovery issues currently and post Covid-19. At present it is not feasible for operators to commit to a level of commercial services when the bus network is likely to remain uncommercial for some time and any recovery to a pre-Covid level remains in question. Next steps in relation to operator agreements are proposed in the Bus Infrastructure Investment report (elsewhere on this agenda).

5.3. As such detailed individual agreements could not be progressed under the current circumstances. However, whilst any overarching agreement (or Memorandum of Understanding) is not able to be specific on what operators can provide commercially, there may be some principles and objectives that may remain consistent and could be explored to progress agreements in a more phased approach.

6. Next Steps

6.1 Next steps are heavily reliant upon the recovery of the wider network and on the range of issues detailed in the Bus Recovery Report. It is critical that bus recovery elements; route and network assessments; and infrastructure investment are closely aligned going forward and complement ongoing operator engagement. This will need to feature significantly not only in relation to recovery but also as their views will need to be considered around issues such as route reliability and funding sources. In addition, interchanges to enable the route suggestions to be progressed will need to be better understood in the light of recovery and to consider any future design and marketing aspects that would be needed in the future.

7. Consultation

7.1 A full public consultation exercise was undertaken during February and March 2020 and the results are summarised in Appendix 2 'Consultation Key Findings Report'.

7.2 In addition feedback from specific key stakeholders has been analysed and follow up meetings undertaken, after the consultation process with both First Group and Stagecoach to discuss their feedback, consultation findings and the draft strategy.

8. Risk Management/Assessment

8.1 Not adopting a Bus Strategy would be contrary to commitments within JLTP4; contrary to devolution requirements placed on the Combined Authority; and restricts the ability for an established strategy to help guide longer-term recovery and investment issues.

8.2 Not having an adopted strategy document puts the region at a disadvantage as DfT funding potentially comes forward as part of any public transport recovery and investment package in support of Covid-19 recovery issues. This would also be the case in relation to DfT's previous (pre-Covid) announcements regarding wider public transport investment nationally.

9. Public Sector Equality Duties

9.1 The public sector equality duty created under the Equality Act 2010 means that public authorities must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

9.2 The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

9.3 The general equality duty therefore requires organisations to consider how they could positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations. It requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of policies and the delivery of services, including policies, and for these issues to be kept under review.

9.4 It is vital that our plans for Bus Infrastructure, and Operator agreements/schemes, consider our vision to create a bus network that is accessible for all. Our equality duty will always be considered with designing and delivering our services, and accessibility across our proposed network enhancements and development will be continually reviewed.

10. Finance Implications, including economic impact assessment where appropriate:

10.1 There are no financial implications as part of the adoption of the bus strategy. The strategy does link to the priority associated with the delivery of bus infrastructure, detailed elsewhere on the agenda.

11. Legal Implications:

- 11.1 The creation of a bus strategy is a devolution requirement on the Combined Authority.
- 11.2 As transport authority WECA has powers to enter into a formalised partnership agreement with bus operators, consistent with 2017 Bus Services Act legislation. Any agreement would also require commitment from Constituent Council's as Highway Authorities, with responsibility for the implementation of infrastructure changes to the highway network.

Advice given by: Shahzia Daya

12. Climate Change Implications

- 12.1 On 19 July 2019, the West of England Combined Authority declared a climate emergency, recognising the huge significance of climate change and its impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of the region's residents. The Combined Authority is committed to taking climate change considerations fully into account as an integral part of its governance and decision-making process.
- 12.2 Supporting a modal shift away from private cars is a global imperative to deliver low carbon transport in the future. Our Bus Strategy and Bus Infrastructure Delivery Planning is important in supporting modal shift to public transport.
- 12.3 Managing car dependency and shifting people from the car to more sustainable modes such public transport, cycling and walking is expected to represent a significant contribution to the region's climate initiatives.
- 12.4 The shift away from private vehicles to more sustainable modes will have direct significant positive impacts on air quality as public transport generates significantly less particulate matter or NOx per passenger journey than private vehicle travel and modes such as cycling, and walking have no emissions.
- 12.5 The active travel element associated with any modal shift to public transport (where typically active travel becomes part of the total journey) supports the local and national health agendas.
- 12.6 Particular projects will also be subject to more detailed environmental assessment/consideration as necessary as part of their detailed project-specific management arrangements.
- 12.7 All interventions will take into account support of walking and cycling infrastructure.
- 12.8 All designs will consider implications for embodied carbon, with improvements that can be made without new infrastructure being preferred, where possible. Resilience of the infrastructure to climate change will also be considered, with implications for

infrastructure and users associated with: higher summer temperatures including the Urban Heat Island effect, and more extreme weather events, including drainage. The most applicable guidance from the Environment Agency, and DfT (including updated DMRB guidance in relation to sustainability) will be built into our design requirements.

13. Land/property Implications

13.1 None. Individual impact from any proposed schemes will be dealt with as part of the scheme design process.

14. Human Resources Implications:

14.1 Recruitment is underway for a Public Transport Programme Manager (Bus Infrastructure) to drive the efficient and effective delivery of the Bus Infrastructure Delivery Plans.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Bus Strategy for adoption

Appendix 2 – Consultation key findings report

Background papers:

Bus Infrastructure Investment report (elsewhere on this agenda). Bus Recovery Report (elsewhere on this agenda).

West of England Combined Authority Contact:

Any person seeking background information relating to this item should seek the assistance of the contact officer for the meeting who is Ian Hird / Tim Milgate on 07436 600313; or by writing to West of England Combined Authority, 3 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6EW; email: democratic.services@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

West of England Bus Strategy

Adopted June 2020



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Buses matter

The West of England is one of the UK's most successful, innovative and desirable places to live and work. But our successes bring challenges. Our population is growing at a faster rate than other city-regions, and so the strain on our transport network is growing. And some of our residents and communities are disconnected from the broader success of the region.

We undertook a public consultation on this bus strategy in February and March 2020.

Since the Bus Strategy consultation, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed how people move around the region and think about public transport. We will consider how travel patterns have changed as a result of Covid-19, what that means for the future, and how to reflect this in the final Bus Strategy.

We are also facing a climate change emergency, and we need to urgently reduce carbon emissions, tackle traffic congestion and improve air quality. But, over time, our dependency on the private car to make many of our journeys has grown substantially and, whilst the real cost of driving has remained broadly the same, the cost of catching the bus has increased.

The transport sector is the largest single source of carbon emissions contributing to climate change in the south

west. All four local authorities and WECA have now declared climate emergencies. We need to work towards ensuring that transport is carbon neutral by 2030. To do this vehicle use has to fall substantially. The answer therefore involves all of us using more sustainable, types of transport in the future, by walking and cycling more and using public transport.

Promoting zero carbon transport will mean rethinking how we use our existing transport corridors including reallocating road space to buses, pedestrians and cyclists.

We need to transform public transport by making it more user friendly, affordable, convenient, safe and attractive, linking key destinations to make sure that everyone can use it.

We want the West of England to be a leader in public transport provision. Buses carry more people with less demand on road space. To ensure buses are not caught in congestion we need to provide new infrastructure. It is essential that we make progress in the reallocation of road space to more efficient travel choices, ensuring that people can travel around the network safely, efficiently and sustainably.

The West of England Bus Strategy has been prepared by the West of England Combined Authority, working with its constituent councils of Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and

South Gloucestershire, as well as neighbouring North Somerset Council. It looks at how bus services could help us to tackle traffic congestion and reduce carbon emissions at a regional level.

We want to create a bus network that people want, and are able to use, so that, as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, we see a doubling of bus passenger journeys by 2036.

Based on passenger research, we propose to do this by improving the quality and reliability of bus services, so that people can get to more destinations quickly and comfortably.

This strategy sets out some principles that can help us increase passenger numbers; as well as a headline programme for how we plan to achieve it.

Implementing this strategy will require some difficult choices to be made, both in terms of where investment is made and changes to how roads are used. It will also require additional funding, from both central government and through our councils to make the vision a reality. We also need to work closely with operators to make this happen.

The Strategy will be reviewed every 18 months years, to reflect changing circumstances and ensure that objectives and targets remain appropriate and ambitious.

Setting the scene

Since 1986, bus operators choose which services to run and how frequently they operate (Transport Act 1985). Local Authorities can pay bus operators to run additional services on routes that are not commercially viable but are considered a priority for public funding.

In 2017, the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) was formed to champion the region and drive clean and inclusive economic growth.

In the West of England, bus services are provided by operators on a commercial basis. The councils provide infrastructure such as bus stops and shelters, timetable displays, bus priority measures and real time information screens. Services that are not commercially viable, but socially necessary, can be funded by the councils.

WECA now has a number of transport functions including information on bus services, the administration of the English national concessionary travel scheme, co-ordination of community transport and paying bus operators to provide non-commercial bus services (this duty is shared with its constituent councils).

The West of England Mayor has additional powers, including stronger operator partnership arrangements and the ability

to assume control of the bus network, under certain conditions, through a franchising scheme.

WECA in partnership with North Somerset Council has already consulted on a new Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4). This Bus Strategy is a supporting document to JLTP4 and reflects a shared ambition to reduce carbon emissions and provide a sustainable transport network.

We've already taken some very positive steps to support bus services in the West of England. Over £300m in the last 10 years has been invested in bus infrastructure; our councils launched the high quality, highly successful metrobus service; our councils reallocated road space on some of our key routes to buses; we've introduced wider residents' parking zones to encourage commuters out of their cars, and we've worked with the bus operators to ensure that they are investing in the quality and environmental aspects of their services.

In the West of England, prior to the Covid-19 travel restrictions, we bucked the national trend of decline in the use of buses. They are the most used form of public transport and over 70 million bus passenger journeys were made in the West of England in 2018/19.

This was an increase of nearly 40% since 2011/12, compared to equivalent city regions and represents a significant achievement and a growing market. However, before travel restrictions were imposed, only about 9% of workers commute by bus in our area which is still significantly lower than other core city regions. In addition, whilst passenger numbers have grown, operating costs have also increased.

On 25 March the Coronavirus Act 2020 led to travel restrictions that have dramatically reduced bus passenger journeys. The ensuing travel restrictions have dramatically reduced bus passenger journeys and reduced the size of the network, and the government has effectively underwritten the cost of operating a core network.

The West of England authorities are working with bus operators to formulate a recovery plan for the bus network once travel restrictions and social distancing are relaxed. At the time of writing (May 2020), the recovery plan is work in progress, but is likely to feature a phased re-introduction of services as passenger levels start to grow again. However, the longer term vision, objectives and themes in the bus strategy are considered to remain valid, particularly in the context of the need to achieve carbon neutrality in the transport sector and the critical part that bus services will play in reducing car dependency.

We still need to improve our bus network and address some key challenges if we are going to make taking the bus a more practical option get more people onto the bus:

- Bus services do not provide a practical option for many journeys within the region, either because the destination is not served by bus, services have a low frequency and hence are unattractive, different services are not co-ordinated and hence transfer between services is not practical, or that services are slow and unreliable, and are perceived as not providing value for money.
- The attractiveness of bus travel is also undermined in many cases by poor information, difficult-to-understand networks (with services from different operators not always shown on maps and timetable information), complex ticket 'offers' which passengers generally cannot use on all buses in their area, and variable standard of the quality of buses and bus stop/ waiting facilities.

Passenger satisfaction, which is measured independently by Transport Focus has varied year to year. Delivering sustained improvement, based on passenger priorities is therefore central to our bus strategy. In the West of England passengers priorities for improvement include; punctuality, improving the frequency and routes served, and the design, comfort and condition of the buses. 86% of bus users answering the survey were satisfied with bus services in the region. This is in contrast with the 2019 JLTP4 consultation, where residents overall felt that bus services were not reliable, easy to plan or good value for money.

What is WECA?

The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) works to drive clean economic growth that benefits all residents. This means supporting our residents to have better skills, more job opportunities and a better standard of living. As a result of devolution, significant powers and funding have been transferred to our region through WECA and the West of England Mayor. Working with our councils, Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol City and South Gloucestershire, we are making decisions about transport, homes, jobs and skills here in our region, decisions previously made by central Government. Although not part of WECA, North Somerset Council is recognised as a key partner in meeting the West of England's transport and housing challenges and is also included in this plan. By working together as a region, we can achieve so much more.

Our Vision

Our vision is for bus services people can depend on, are quick and reliable, combine to form a simple to understand and easy to use network, are accessible for everyone, are safe and comfortable, and offer value for money to passengers and to the public purse.

We aim to create a connected region, fit for the future, which will promote active and sustainable travel, improve community health and reduce private vehicle journeys.

Success in delivering this vision will mean more travel by bus, less reliance on car travel, which is essential to achieving the West of England's economic, environmental and quality of life ambitions.

To realise our vision this Strategy seeks to achieve the following:

- A comprehensive and joined-up bus network which maximises the range of journeys able to be made by bus, thereby improving access to key employment, health and leisure destinations for everyone.
- A doubling in bus passenger numbers by 2036.

- For rural areas, whilst the bus mode share will remain relatively low, an improved and easy-to-understand network will provide a practical alternative to the car for many journeys and a reliable means to accessing services for those without access to a car.
- To maximise bus service reliability and reduce journey times.
- To provide simplified ticketing which allows all bus users to travel on a single ticket (on one or more buses), with fares capped to a daily maximum.
- Accessible passenger waiting facilities and vehicles, and better integration with other modes.
- Address congestion and delays due to car travel by attracting car users to use buses for some or all of their journeys.
- Continue to improve passengers satisfaction with bus services and their value for money.

85.2%

agreed with
our strategy
objectives

76%
agreed with the
concept of an
interchange-based
network

- Reduce overall emissions due to general road traffic by persuading car drivers to travel by bus, and by improving the bus fleet to low or zero emission buses. Maximise service quality, in terms of vehicle comfort and ease of boarding and alighting, reliable and real-time information, and an attractive, safe and accessible bus stop environment.
- Improve the public domain through the reduction in car traffic and transfer of highway space to buses, bicycles and pedestrians.
- Better access to places for public transport, and better design for bus services in new developments.
- To increase the proportion of bus passengers satisfied or very satisfied with bus services overall.

Achieving these outcomes will require the delivery of some key improvements, many of which will require challenging decisions.

Bus Strategy

A well-designed network that is simple, coherent and efficient across the region

Autumn 2019

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic the West of England bus network covered a wide area with urban, inter-urban and rural services. Many of the main bus routes in the urban areas had service frequencies of at least every ten minutes throughout the day. The key inter-urban corridors generally had service frequencies of at least every half-hour in the daytime. However, there are gaps in the coverage of the network, which can make it difficult to travel by bus to more outlying employment and retail centres. Also, bus services to rural areas tend to be infrequent and indirect because of the need to serve a dispersed population.

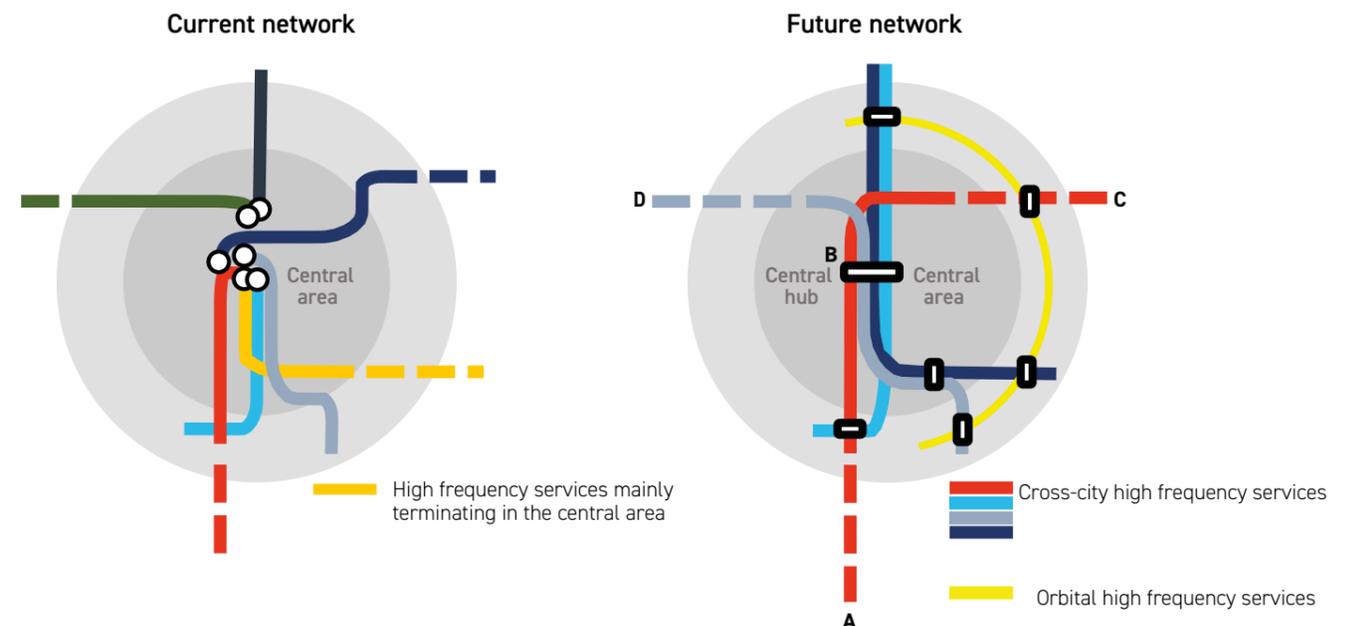
A high proportion of travellers use the bus on our core corridors, comparable with other equivalent city regions.

However, journey times and reliability are severely affected by traffic congestion, and as a consequence most routes in Bristol and Bath terminate in the city centres rather than cross the city, to mitigate the impact of traffic congestion on either side of the centres. Despite recent progress, bus lanes can be discontinuous or not practical in some places where they are needed. Also, there are competing demands for limited road space on many key radial roads (such as parking and loading for adjacent shops). Bus priorities and parking restrictions also require effective enforcement.

Future network design

There is potential to change how the network is provided to enable new journey opportunities for passengers and make the

network more efficient. Core urban routes would reduce in number but could operate at high frequencies of every 5-6 minutes, and where possible run as cross-city services to increase the range of direct destinations. Establishing a small number of frequent orbital services (by rationalising and combining existing services) would effectively provide a better integrated network of radial and orbital routes. Well-designed neighbourhood bus interchanges would then provide safe and easy-to-use transfer locations for journeys which require use of more than one bus. Rationalising the number of services could result in some passengers needing to walk further to their nearest stop. The scale and impact will need to be carefully considered in any network redesign.



48%
would be prepared to walk further to a better, more reliable bus service

Better interchange

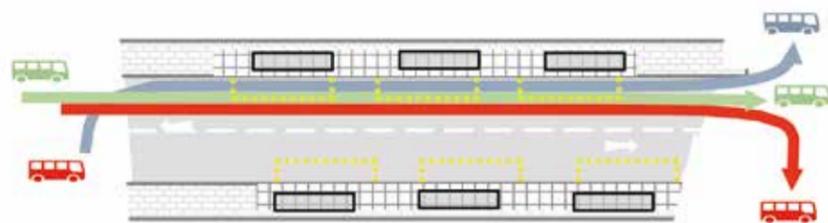
A co-ordinated and unified bus network would significantly increase the range of different places which people could travel to by bus.

This principle has been followed in a number of European cities and particular features of a network structured around interchange could include:

- The co-ordination of services to function together as a network - including the reintroduction of cross-city service operation and a 'cross-subsidised' network approach (where routes that cover their costs would help support those that don't).
- Upgrade to the quality of the facilities, information and branding.
- The new network to be used by passengers as a network, via interchange.
- Careful consideration of city centre's bus routes and bus stopping arrangements.

Most interchanges would be accommodated on existing roads, by moving bus stops closer together, providing good walking routes between them and better signing and information.

An interchange-based approach will require a major improvement in bus service reliability for cross-city services to function effectively. At present, bus operators strike a balance between the operational efficiency of cross-city operation (which removes the need for layover and use of road space for bus stands) and the risk of transferring delays occurring on one side of a city centre to bus routes on the other side. Effective operation of an efficient cross-city bus network will be reliant on new bus lanes and other bus priority measures along the route corridors and in the city centres. This is likely to require further, substantial transfer of road space to bus services with some sensitive decisions to be made around parking/loading provision and general traffic access on key radial routes.



Central area or interchange

Park & Ride

New and existing Park & Ride services will be reviewed in the context of their role in the wider network, considering low frequency stopping patterns on route, similar to the rapid transit principles adopted by the metrobus network. Providing Park & Ride services remain a key element of the transport strategy for the region, closely linked to the management and pricing of parking spaces within our key centres. Bus based Park & Ride will be the core of this provision, with a high frequency offer on key radial routes into our towns and cities. Existing sites will be expanded and new sites provided. These sites will be designed to fit the emerging strategic network, and operate as transfer locations for connecting bus services and key interchanges between other transport modes. Historically, bus based Park & Ride has provided non-stop journeys from the sites to the City Centres.

School services

The strategy will include the investigation of the opportunity to extend concessionary travel to those in education or training. A comprehensive network needs to ensure that it considers the requirements of travel to education and training. An interchange based network will by its nature provide increased opportunity for travel but it should be designed to reflect the

importance of access for school age people, whose options may be otherwise limited. The long terms benefits of getting young people familiar with the bus network is both good for building independence and a society where sustainable travel options are the norm.

Longer distance bus and coach travel

The strategy is to improve the connectivity of these services as part of our wider network. The growth of scheduled inter urban bus and coach travel has seen significant growth in the last 10 years, and they play an important role in reducing longer car journeys, as well as making connections to other major transport hubs, such as Bristol Airport. These services require their own stopping facilities, that have good connections with the local bus networks to ensure that coherent and simple end to end journeys can be provided.

metrobus

Through the JLTP4 we propose to expand the metrobus network. Metrobus will continue to be promoted as a separate arm of the bus network, but will be closely integrated with background bus services including shared ticketing and dual use of certain stops and interchanges. In 2019, as part of a £235 million infrastructure investment, the West of England authorities completed the first

stages of a bus-based rapid transit network, known as metrobus. Metrobus offers faster, limited stop journeys, with an emphasis on quality and reliability including where possible the provision of segregated operation.

Mass transit

The West of England Combined Authority has also commenced the assessment of a proposed Mass Transit network for the city region. Covering four corridors from Bristol city centre to Bath, Bristol Airport, and Bristol's North and East Fringes, the routes will feature a high capacity, limited stop, and physically-segregated public transport mode, of a bus-based, tram or metro specification, for completion over the next twenty years. The network will integrate with the background bus network which will be adjusted to fully integrate with the new network.

Bath

Bus passenger journeys in Bath grew rapidly from 2012 to 2019 and per capita bus use in Bath and North East Somerset is in the top ten of places in the UK.

However, the combination of limited radial corridors, narrow roads and pinch points means that relatively minor incidents on the highway can give rise

to significant traffic congestion and so bus services are prone to unpredictable and lengthy delays. Bus punctuality in Bath remains stubbornly below the target set by the Traffic Commissioner – despite the introduction of various bus priority measures and access controls. More bus priority measures will be needed on the radial corridors and in Bath city centre to recreate the conditions under which bus operators can meet the punctuality target consistently and re-establish cross-city links with confidence. Installing new bus priority measures may not be easy or uncontroversial though.

Bath Bus Station, and Dorchester Street alongside it, are the focus of the majority of bus services in Bath and interchange with train services at Bath Spa station is very good. Where we have intensive operation of bus services, such as in Dorchester Street, we need to ensure that these spaces are well designed to cater for larger numbers of pedestrian movement to and through the areas between the Bus and Rail Stations to the city centre and shopping areas. There is scope for creating interchanges at termini on the end of the city centre.

Transformational Opportunities

Funding for bus operation has historically been limited, coming largely from ticket sales revenue.

To meet our targets for bus use and provide services which are a more practical “turn up and go” travel option would require significant extra funding from the West of England authorities.

If funding were to be available, this would enable a more transformational network to be provided, combining principles around interchange and integration with higher frequencies. It would also enable a more comprehensive route network to be provided in those urban areas away from the main roads and in rural areas. WECA and its constituent Councils will investigate the funding opportunities and sources that could support a more transformational network.



Delivery

The changes to the network will be delivered over the coming years, to ensure that it continues to deliver for existing passengers. The effectiveness of the network will depend on the delivery of measures that can promote service punctuality. Bus Priority measures, as well as other policy decisions will be delivered along public transport corridors through a jointly managed infrastructure programme.

Stages for delivery are:

- Discuss and refine network design with operators
- Complementary policy implementation
- Identify and design bus priority measures
- Identify and upgrade a phased hierarchy of interchange locations
- Production of operating framework documentation
- Engagement and consultation
- Phased construction
- Phased introduction of new network

Bus Strategy

Better services for people in rural areas

Accessibility for rural communities is critical, including the provision of bus services to enable access to jobs and education, as well as leisure and retail destinations.

Consistent with the national picture, services to rural areas have been reliant on funding from councils because operators are generally unable to operate them on a commercial basis.

Pressure on council budgets continues to increase which affects their ability to keep these services going with taxpayers' money.

Rural and inter-urban services will inevitably have much less frequency than urban services and hence attracting passengers to use these services will require measures which rely less on frequency and more on providing an easy-to-understand and consistent network. We need to get rural services to operate more effectively, whilst increasing the number of destinations available to passengers. Options include:

- Some rationalisation of services to provide more consistent routes, consistent start and end points, and easy-to-understand clock-face departure time - to aid passenger understanding i.e. a service always operates the same route and leaves a bus stop at the same time past each hour (or every half

hour, or every 2 or 3 hours – according to the service demand).

- Build interchange into the way the inter-urban bus services are arranged: The number of destinations available via inter-urban bus services will be significantly increased if interchange opportunities with other bus services and rail services are encouraged. The timetables of services should thus be specifically designed to ensure that passengers are able to transfer to other services.

- ‘Transfer Hubs’: inter-urban services should connect with a small number of key interchanges/transfer hubs en-route to the central areas of Bristol and Bath – such as peripheral shopping centres, Park & Ride sites, and other major public destination points. Peripheral transfer hubs will also serve as locations where low-frequency rural services can operate as feeders into longer-distance inter-urban services.
- Inter-urban and other rural services should aim for operating hours which align well with other urban services they connect to – to ensure that, for example, passengers are not left ‘high and dry’ at a transfer hub in late evening.

80%
agreed that rural communities could be better served by connections to transfer hubs

82%
agreed that we should explore other transport solutions to serve rural communities rather than conventional bus services

Bus Strategy

Giving passengers more reliable and faster buses through priority infrastructure and wider policy

With a network of inter-urban services between peripheral towns and Bristol or Bath, and with well-defined transfer hubs, it will be feasible to operate lower frequency rural services which meet with other services at these hubs – to allow rural services to maximise their frequency without needing to enter congested central areas. A rural/inter-urban network with a small number of ‘hubs’ in towns and other destination points, could also be connected by demand responsive and community transport services (discussed further on in this document). These transfer trips would offer a means for rural and village inhabitants to reach key services such as hospitals and shopping centres by bus.

Inter-urban services could be operated as a mix of ‘express’ and ‘local stop’ services along similar routes. Local stop services would divert from main roads into local communities, and selected local services could operate to and from Park and Ride sites on the edge of Bristol or Bath – allowing these services to operate at higher frequency than they could if they travelled into the central area, and also allowing passengers to be able to take advantage of frequent ‘bus priority’ Park & Ride services into the city centre.



The availability of transfer opportunities should be highlighted through improved information/mapping e.g. on- shelter signage, on-board automated announcements, and waiting facilities (e.g. shelter) should be provided at all interchange points, to maximise the convenience and comfort of transferring passengers.

The network options need to include a detailed assessment of their impact on rural communities. This may include recommendations on more rural services and funding opportunities.

Delivery

Changes to the rural bus network will need to be undertaken carefully and, due to the interdependencies with the wider network, this will need to be brought forward as relevant changes are made to radial or inter urban services. Any potential changes will involve local community engagement.

Identify suitable locations for transfer hubs and discuss the concept further with bus operators over the next two years.

Existing rural bus services already funded by the authorities will also be reviewed as part of this approach to improve their accessibility for passengers and value for money.

Delivering punctual bus services that make the bus an option that passengers can rely on is at the heart of this strategy. Improved bus priority measures, such as bus lanes and bus-only roads, will play a critical role in the successful remodelling of the network and improving reliability. In particular, the provision of cross-city services will be dependent on a package of new, effective and well-enforced bus priorities to operate punctually.

We plan to invest heavily in such measures. In some places this will require challenging decisions around parking, loading and through traffic movement (such as reserving part of a corridor for buses and cyclists, and diverting through-traffic onto an alternative route).

Delivery of schemes on the highway can impact on bus operation during their construction. These works, and any other highway works, need to be carefully managed by the local authorities to ensure that bus services are not negatively impacted during the construction period.

Wider transport and planning policies will continue to have a significant influence on bus passenger numbers. In particular, the management and pricing of parking provision will directly impact on people's tendency to use the bus and our ability to grow passenger

numbers. Our councils will review policies on car parks and on-street parking, to encourage use of alternative modes to the car as well as improving bus service reliability.

Going further, our JLTP has already highlighted that the delivery of traffic restraint mechanisms such as congestion charging and a workplace parking levy would increase the number of people taking the bus or train, or cycling as well as greatly assisting in the funding of more frequent services and bus priority infrastructure.

New housing estates also need to be carefully designed to ensure that bus routes are fully accessible and prioritised over general traffic. Key routes need to be wide enough for two buses to pass without disruption and unencumbered by parked vehicles. Public transport information should be promoted to maximise bus mode share, and where possible routes provided at an early stage of the development to encourage sustainable travel habits.

The adoption of this Bus Strategy containing key principles and our vision for the region, helps to support the role of the local planning authorities in challenging developers to bring forward these types of solutions.

84%
agree with the re-allocation of road space in favour of buses to ensure services run punctually

76%
agree with diverting traffic away from certain public transport corridors

The provision of a comprehensive network, and the infrastructure required to support its operation will still require significant financial support from the West of England authorities. Raising additional local income will involve some joined up thinking and maybe a change in priorities in some parts of the West of England in terms of the way that we view our highway and public transport networks.

Our Joint Local Transport Plan provides more detail about potential local funding options and steps that could help to support and encourage public transport usage.

Delivery

The delivery of bus priority infrastructure will be undertaken in a phased manner, with initial identification and design to be undertaken over the next two years. This will include systematic review of each bus corridor to identify existing congestion hot spots, and refine measures for segregation or priority of buses.

This will be followed by the identification and allocation of funding for the delivery of bus priority schemes and their phased rollout of infrastructure packages up to 2026/27.

Alongside this, the authorities will review parking policy across the area to clarify its impacts on bus passenger numbers and where appropriate amend restrictions to encourage sustainable travel patterns. The planning authorities will also further embed good working practices and standards in the outline design of new housing and employment developments to improve public transport accessibility and reliability to and through these areas.

The Joint Local Transport Plan also highlights the need to consider traffic constraint measures that could generate funding for investment into bus services and other sustainable transport interventions.

81%
agreed that buses should have extra 'green time' at traffic signals to help services run punctually

Bus Strategy

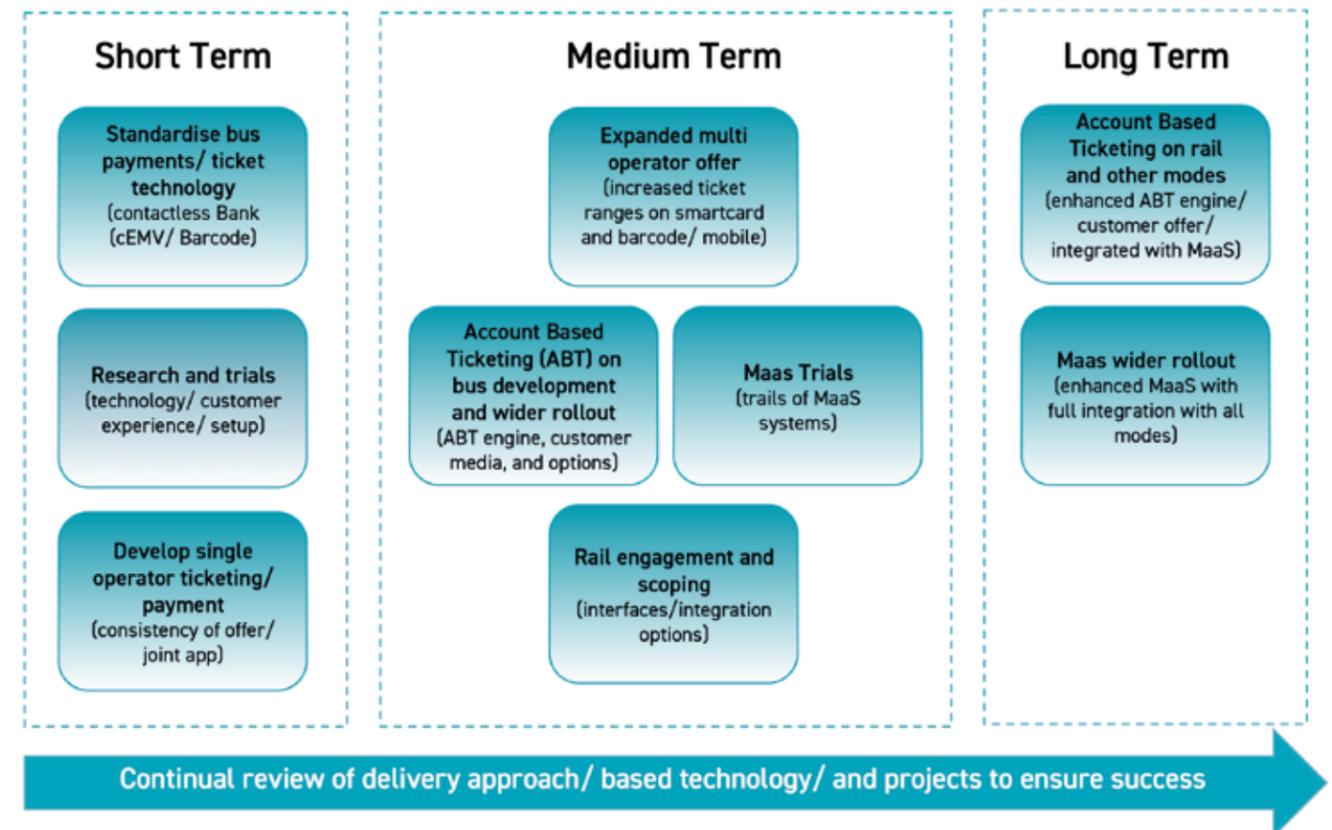
Simple, smart and convenient ticketing

Improving value for money is key for both passengers and those that don't currently choose to use the bus. Smart payments and ticketing that can automatically choose the best value fare will play a crucial role in improving the passenger experience and growing bus passenger numbers. Convenient ticketing arrangements can reduce bus boarding times, speed up journeys and increase access to public transport in the area and is already the norm in many urban areas.

The large growth in the availability of smart phones and development of contactless payments has transformed the wider retail sector and are driving changes in fare payments. Whilst this has already begun to move the sector away from on-bus cash payments there is no consistent cashless payment or mobile ticket offer across bus operators resulting in the continued need for cash and different apps for different bus operators.

Integration of payments and ticketing across bus operators will be essential to ensure the seamless operation of the network. Whilst there are some integrated tickets, they are limited in both their range and attractiveness. The strategy is to develop smarter payments and ticketing options. This will provide a consistent customer offer across all buses. that is easily available and well promoted. It could also ensure that passengers are not unfairly impacted by using the proposed 'interchange' network.

Smarter payments and ticketing roadmap



The simplicity of ticketing and payments in areas such as London, where customers do not need to purchase a ticket before travel and are charged the best value fare based on the journeys they are made, are often viewed as the ideal that should be aspired to.

While the London model would be challenging to replicate in a deregulated bus market, the West of England will work with other city regions to learn from and share best practice.

The West of England's aspiration for ticketing and payments is to provide a consistent, high quality, and coherent offer where customers have convenient purchasing opportunities and and it is trusted to charge the best value fares.

As a principle smart payments and ticketing should include:

- Tickets and payments using the latest contactless technology.
- The same experience on all buses.
- A Pay-As-You-Go system automatically charging the best fare available with daily and weekly caps.

82%
agree with our
ticketing principles

- Customers only needing 1 account/1 app for bus tickets, payment, journey planning, and real time information across the area.
- The ability for customers without contactless bank cards or smart phones to be able to access the same benefits (e.g. children and people without a bank account).
- Integrated with public transport modes (e.g. Rail/ Ferry) to enable seamless travel.

Bus Strategy

High quality, consistent and easily understood information

People need clear and accessible service information to give them confidence in using bus services.

Providing a single accessible place for clear, comprehensive and reliable information on travel options is essential for achieving seamless door-to-door journeys. It provides people with the confidence to travel by public transport and active travel modes, particularly for journeys made less regularly. It will also help to overcome misconceptions relating to service frequency, fares and journey times by public transport, bicycle or foot. We will further use our existing Travelwest website as the foundation for public transport information across the West of England.

Information needs to be available in advance of the journey, as well as being updated regularly 'on the move'.

We will prepare a Bus Information Strategy to develop proposals in more detail but will be based on the following principles:

- Customers are able to easily access high quality, accurate and impartial information which is simple to use.
- Bus information meets the needs of existing passengers as well as encouraging new passengers to use bus services.

- Customers should be able to access information anywhere and personalise it to meet their needs.
- To provide real-time information on services and alerts on disruption and service changes.
- To use customer insight and information to improve performance and reliability of information systems and bus services.
- To improve access to passenger transport information by making data openly available in formats that can be utilised by third parties.
- To develop with bus operators the value and scope of social media in public transport information

Delivery

The authorities will develop a specific Bus Information strategy for the West of England and continue to maintain and develop Travelwest as the foundation for public transport information.

Bus Strategy

A safe, pleasant and comfortable customer experience

We have worked closely with Transport Focus, the independent passenger group, on this strategy.

The group's annual survey looks at passenger satisfaction and priorities, comparing bus services across the country.

The 2019 survey shows that 86% of current bus users are satisfied with services, as illustrated below. The key areas for improvement in the West of England are: bus service punctuality; journey time and value for money.

The survey also shows that other factors such as on-bus environment and comfort; the bus driver, and the timeliness of the journey, are important to passengers in our region.

In some cases, the perception of bus travel is poor. Of those who don't currently use buses, particularly young adults, issues around feeling uncomfortable in a possibly unwelcoming environment may put them off.

Improving trust with the bus companies, value for money and offering facilities such as WiFi can greatly improve young people's perception and capture a future market that will use buses in years to come.

In some parts of our region, the survey reports a lower standard of passenger experience than others, due to varying facilities at bus stops and the quality of the buses on some routes.

We recognise the views of passengers represented in this annual survey and we have been working hard with bus operators to make changes. This has led to some significant improvements, raising standards and expectations.

We know that there is still room for improvement, and will continue to work with operators on ways of improving a passenger's whole journey.

The strategy will aim to focus on improving various aspects of the end to end passenger journey, including the following:

- Passenger safety both at the bus stop and on bus through provision of CCTV.
- Driver training – we recognise from Transport Focus surveys that a good bus journey can significantly affect overall passenger satisfaction. We propose to work with operators to build on the quality and success we've seen from schemes like metrobus and look to develop a gold standard for drivers in the West of England.
- Enhanced facilities such as Wi- Fi and USB charging.
- Accessibility to and from bus stops - improving the direct walking routes.
- Well laid out stopping facilities with generous weather protection, lighting and information.

The continuing development and delivery of the strategy will seek to reflect the ongoing results and passenger priorities evidenced

in the Transport Focus Bus Passenger Survey.

Delivery

- Upgrade of bus stop infrastructure
- Develop a gold standard for drivers in the West of England with all bus operators
- Identify and develop plans for improved accessibility to bus stops
- Annual review of Transport Focus Bus Passenger Survey to identify areas for improvement



Bus Strategy

Modern, clean and accessible buses that contribute to reducing transport’s harmful emissions

Buses can carry many more people than a single car reducing the number of cars being used to go into city centres and polluted urban areas. But it is important to reinforce their role as part of the solution to air quality issues by ensuring buses have as near as possible zero tailpipe emissions in the West of England.

Investment in high quality buses will play a crucial role in the successful delivery of the Bus Strategy. Modern, clean vehicles help increase passenger numbers through a more pleasant and comfortable journey experience, as well as the provision of on board facilities like WiFi and USB charging points. Although there is significant upfront investment, they can also reduce operator costs through better fuel efficiency, and assist with the promotion of the network.

The changes to the West of England bus network being considered as part of this strategy may require an increase in the overall fleet size, driver numbers and depot capacity. It will be important to make this change a positive one for air quality in the West of England and to provide a positive contribution to the strategy objectives.

Increased passenger numbers, bus lanes and other infrastructure will play a key role in supporting the commercial

case for bringing forward fleet investment.

It should be emphasised that buses, by their very nature, are part of the solution in tackling congestion and reducing car dependency, thereby improving air quality.

Also, new buses emit far lower tailpipe emissions than those they replace. In the West of England we have made significant progress in reducing vehicle emissions, such as through the use of biofuel for the metrobus and East Bristol fleets and hybrid vehicles on Bath Park & Ride services.

Fleet investment will therefore play a significant role in improving air quality and meeting the air quality thresholds with in Bath and Bristol city centres as part of the Clean Air Zones.



61%
feel that modern vehicles are important to the passenger experience

Delivery

Operators will progressively bring forward fleet investment alongside the infrastructure investment which will help support the commercial case for the new vehicles. The authorities will also work with operators to clarify funding opportunities to further reduce tailpipe emissions and progress bio-gas and electric fleet investment.

The councils are separately progressing Clean Air Zones in Bath and Bristol. Depot capacity will be increased with the councils assessing potential new locations for depots, including potential new facilities at park and ride sites.

However, it should be noted that vehicle investment will be very much dependent on the speed of recovery from the current Covid-19 crisis.

Bus Strategy

A network complemented by Community and Demand Responsive Transport

Community transport encompasses a range of transport services - such as 'Dial-a-Ride', community-owned buses, group minibus hire schemes and voluntary car schemes – that supplement commercial public transport services. Most community transport is demand-responsive and offers door-to-door transport for people who have signed up to be members of the schemes. It relies heavily on volunteers and is predominantly focused on local communities. Most schemes were set up as local initiatives to meet local transport needs.

There is no legal duty on local authorities to support community transport, but it is widely recognised that the sector plays a vital role in helping people to live independently and play an active part in community life – particularly those who find it difficult to access mainstream public transport. Local authorities provide guidance, assistance and funding to schemes, but administration and service delivery are carried out by the schemes themselves. Local and central government can also make grants available occasionally for new vehicles.

In addition, community-owned buses can operate scheduled bus services within the scope of regulations that protect commercial operations.

Community transport operations in rural areas are faced with the same dilemma that rural bus operators face, i.e. the sparsity of population and dispersed nature of settlements give rise to higher operating costs and lower revenue than urban operations.

Another well-established form of demand-responsive transport is a shared taxi scheme, under which travel in specific areas can be co-ordinated and tailored more to specific needs than is possible with a fixed bus route. The growth in app-based taxi booking creates tremendous opportunities for expanding the role of shared taxi services in urban and rural areas - although trials so far have not generated the volume necessary for a sustainable commercial operation.

We will continue to support and encourage community and demand-responsive transport schemes, working with providers and the voluntary sector to improve information and facilities, and to co-ordinate service provision. Subject to funding, we will support new initiatives that make use of emerging technologies to develop community and demand-responsive transport.

66%
are open to using a shared taxi/mini bus to connect to the wider network

Delivery

The authorities will develop a specific Community and Demand Responsive transport strategy. This will explore innovation in delivery of Demand Responsive Transport and develop the role of this sector to complement the bus network. The authorities will work with providers to develop and coordinate services, and identify funding opportunities to develop access to transfer hubs and interchanges.

Operational framework

Bus services in the West of England, as for the rest of Great Britain outside London, are largely provided by operators on a commercial basis. To date, we have used existing legislation to improve the quality of bus services, through formal and informal partnership approaches. Initiatives such as the metrobus Quality Partnership Scheme (QPS) where maximum fares and minimum frequencies can be specified by the councils, and where a very high quality bar was set for the vehicle specification.

Subsequent legislation (the 2017 Bus Services Act) has provided further opportunities to increase the Councils' influence on local bus service operation standards.

An area-based, statutory partnership, where the councils would invest in improved facilities along bus routes, as well as other measures such as increasing parking charges. The scope of required operator contribution can increase further to include (for example) smart ticketing. An AQPS would last for at least five years.

An Enhanced Partnership Scheme goes further by not requiring local authorities to provide further facilities. Councils can also prescribe further requirements around information, branding and ticketing.

The West of England Mayor and North Somerset Council have new powers to franchise local bus services. Franchising effectively means that the authorities would specify routes, frequencies and ticketing arrangements, and invite tenders from operators to provide them. Franchising can take a number of forms in relation to bus and could be used to address specific issues or focus on particular areas. The experience to date of some authorities considering franchising is that it presents a number of challenges including cost which would have to be evaluated before initiating this strategy.

This would be similar to the way bus services are provided in London, and would have to be subject to an appraisal, and a consultation, demonstrating that this would be the best way to deliver improvements to the network.

It is important to emphasise that franchising, of itself, will not generate new services, lower fares or greater reliability. These issues are delivered through investment in the bus network. Franchising could, however, lead to greater network stability, although this may require more subsidy and the need to raise additional funding. In other words, it is important to be clear what the problem is that we are trying to solve before deciding that franchising is the best way to solve it.

The highest ranked priorities for supported bus services are access to employment, hospitals and education.

But with or without franchising a network, the need to subsidise some bus services will remain. These are services which don't make a profit but are considered socially necessary.

We are considering what services need to be provided in the future, against a backdrop of limited funding. This has historically included a mix of the following:

- Park and Ride services; which have the ability to intercept large numbers of car journeys.
- Demand Responsive and Community Transport; which have the ability to support accessibility issues for individuals at comparatively lower costs.
- Local shopping services; which can support local communities and help individuals to support themselves in their homes.
- Rural services; which improve accessibility and reduce rural isolation.
- Access to education; reducing the need to travel by car or providing support to younger adults who would otherwise struggle to access higher education.
- Evening and Sunday services; which increase access to entertainment and leisure opportunities or can support weekend or shift workers.

Delivery and prioritisation

Delivery

Since the Bus Strategy consultation, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed how people move around the region and think about public transport. We will consider how travel patterns have changed as a result of Covid-19, what that means for the future, and how to reflect this in the final Bus Strategy.

In determining which services to financially support we will consider we will prioritise services based on a range of criteria including:

- Supports new and existing employment, especially in Enterprise Areas
- Supports new housing (occupied in the last 3 years), especially affordable housing
- Seek to maintain a core strategic public transport network linking residential areas with employment sites and local services
- Enable disadvantage groups and communities to access employment sites and key local services.

- Reduction in traffic congestion
- Offers significant interchange opportunities onto bus and/or rail network including major transport hubs
- No, or little, alternative to travel by sustainable means
- Access for disabled persons

Prioritisation

Respond to the emerging circumstances of bus travel arising from Covid 19, and utilising public funding to achieve the sustained recovery of the bus industry:

- Review and retender supported services
- Develop prioritisation methodology
- Shape supported network to complement phased network review
- Further investigation into additional funding sources
- Develop partnership approach for furthering strategy aims and objectives
- Access to employment opportunities; which can help particularly in areas of high unemployment or where travel is highlighted as a particular barrier to employment.
- Services to Hospitals; which help improve access to healthcare and reduce the need for supported hospital transport.

Delivery Programme

The delivery of the themes set out in this strategy will be undertaken in a carefully phased manner, integrating the delivery of infrastructure with progressive and complementary changes to routes and frequencies. A strategic programme is shown below.

Close engagement with, and investment by, bus operators will be a key feature of the programme, alongside an initial recovery plan to get back to passenger levels experienced before the Covid-19 lockdown, which itself may take some time.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Recovery Plan and achieve pre-lockdown passenger levels				----->				
Discuss and refine network designs with operators, for both urban and rural areas								
Complementary policy development and implementation								
Identify and design bus priority measures								
Identify and upgrade a phased hierarchy of Interchange locations								
Production of operating framework documentation								
Phased construction								
Confirm and prioritise revenue funding sources and revenue raising opportunities								
Vehicle investment by operators								
Identify new / expanded depot capacity								
Community and Demand Responsive Transport Strategy								
Phased introduction of new network								



WEST OF ENGLAND BUS STRATEGY



CONSULTATION REPORT
9 JUNE
2020

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Introduction

Welcome to the consultation report on the West of England Bus Strategy consultation. We published the draft Bus Strategy as part of a public consultation between 3 February and 15 March 2020 - receiving nearly 2,000 responses from across the region. This document looks at the feedback we received, sets out what people in the region think, and looks at next steps.

Thank you to everyone who responded. We appreciate the time people took to respond, and the wide range of views expressed. Your views will help ensure that a stronger and more collaborative Bus Strategy emerges as a result.

Since the Bus Strategy consultation, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed how people move around the region and think about public transport. We will consider how travel patterns have changed as a result of Covid-19, what that means for the future, and how to reflect this in the final Bus Strategy.

What is the Bus Strategy?

The West of England Bus Strategy has been prepared by the West of England Combined Authority, working with its constituent councils of Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire, as well as neighbouring North Somerset Council. It looks at how bus services can help us to tackle traffic congestion and reduce carbon emissions at a regional level. We want to create a bus network that people want, and are able, to use.

Based on passenger research, we propose to do this by improving the quality and reliability of bus services, so that people can get to more destinations quickly and comfortably. This strategy sets out some principles that can help us increase passenger numbers; it will be followed by more detailed delivery plans from 2020.

In order to help inform the emerging document, a six-week public consultation was held earlier this year.

This document is the consultation report, which summarises the survey results and will accompany the final Bus Strategy to be considered by our West of England Joint Committee later in the year.

What you said

The objectives set out in the strategy include: developing a comprehensive and joined-up bus network; maximising bus service reliability and reducing journey times; providing simplified ticketing; addressing congestion; developing accessible passenger waiting facilities and continuing to improve passenger satisfaction.

Over 85% of respondents agreed with these objectives, and two thirds said our target to double passenger numbers is sufficiently ambitious (p.7-8).

You agreed with the concept of an interchange-based network, as well as exploring other transport solutions to serve rural communities other than conventional bus services (p.10).

There's clear support for providing buses extra "green time" at traffic signals (p.12). Alongside the support for road space reallocation and diverting traffic away from public transport corridors.

We also asked you to rank what type of services and facilities served should be provided through the supported bus network to help us gauge people's priorities (p.18). The top priorities for supported bus services were access to employment, hospitals and education facilities (in order of preference).

All your feedback will be considered within the final Bus Strategy – further details are in the 'Next steps' chapter (p.23). The final Bus Strategy will need to consider responses in the context of the region, post COVID-19, as well as any changes since the draft strategy.

Methodology

A total of 1,920 responses were received over the consultation period, of which 1,855 were through the online questionnaire tool, with 65 written responses also received.

The online questionnaire, available on the Travelwest website, allowed for people to view the document and then provide comments via a structured questionnaire.

The questionnaire was structured as follows:

- Name, postcode, email address, and contact preferences if individuals wanted to be informed of future consultations.
- 16 questions on the bus strategy itself, with an additional "further comments" section at the end of the survey.
- A section to capture demographic & equalities data at the end of the survey.

The next section provides a breakdown of the core questions regarding the bus consultation.

For most of the questions, the following has been provided:

- A headline summary of the question findings.
- Summary of how the question was presented in the survey.
- A bar chart or pie chart of the results, plus accompanying table with percentage figures.
- Summary of the findings.
- How this will impact on the final bus strategy document.

Note: Where percentages have been provided throughout the report, these have been provided to the nearest tenth-decimal place, and therefore rounding errors may occur within percentages.

Summary of the key headlines

	Question Text (in order of survey)	Result Headline
Ref.	Text	Text
1	How often do you travel by bus in the West of England? (Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire)	15% of people travelled on a bus at least once a day. 60% of people travelled on a bus at least once a week.
2	How far do you agree with our objectives?	85% of people either strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed with the objectives.
3	Do you think our target to double passenger numbers is sufficiently ambitious?	Over two-thirds of responses agreed with the proposed target.
3a	If no, please explain why	Mode share was viewed as a better target by people who responded "no" to this question.
4	Would you be prepared to walk further to a better, more reliable bus service?	There was a clear split of views on this question, with marginally more people not prepared to walk further to a bus stop for a more reliable service.
4a	If no, please explain why	Current accessibility and walking distance to bus services were viewed as being too far by "no" responses.
5	How far do you agree with the concept of an interchange-based network?	76% of people strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed with the concept of an interchange-based network for the West of England.
6	Do you agree that rural communities could be better served by connections to transfer hubs?	Nearly four out of five (79.8%) people either strongly agreed or agreed that rural communities would be better served by connections to transfer hubs.
7	Do you think that we should explore other transport solutions to serve rural communities rather than conventional bus services?	Over four out of five (82%) people agreed that other transport solutions should be explored to serve rural areas instead of conventional buses.
7a	If no, please explain why	Bus services were preferred by "no" respondents instead of other transport solutions within rural areas.
8	How far do you agree with the re-allocation of road space in favour of buses to ensure bus services run punctually?	A significant majority (84.3%) agreed to the re-allocation of road space to prioritise buses, with over half of all people "strongly agreeing".
9	How far do you agree with diverting traffic away from certain public transport corridors?	Just over three-quarters (76.4%) of responses strongly agreed or agreed in diverting general traffic away from public transport corridors.

10	Do you agree with buses having extra 'green time' at traffic signal to help services run punctually?	A significant majority (81.2%) strongly agreed or agreed that buses should have extra "green time" at traffic signals.
11	How far do you agree with our ticketing principles?	A significant majority of responses (82.2%) strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed with the ticketing principles.
12	Are there any other improvements to the provision of bus information that would you like to see?	Improvements in Real Time Information was wanted for bus services.
13	How important are modern vehicles to your passenger experience?	Whilst viewed as important, there was an even split in terms of level of importance weighted by people.
14	Would you be open to using a shared taxi/mini bus to connect to the wider bus network?	Two-thirds of people stated they would use a shared taxi/minibus.
14a	If no, please explain why	Concerns over bus priority, cost and ticketing were the main issues from people who responded "no" to this question.
15a	How do you think councils should spend their budget for supported bus services? (Park and Ride services)	The highest ranked priorities for supported bus services were access to employment, hospitals and education facilities.
15b	How do you think councils should spend their budget for supported bus services? (Demand responsive and Community Transport (supports accessibility issues for individuals at lower costs))	The highest ranked priorities for supported bus services were access to employment, hospitals and education facilities.
15c	How do you think councils should spend their budget for supported bus services? (Local shopping services (helps individuals to support themselves in their homes))	The highest ranked priorities for supported bus services were access to employment, hospitals and education facilities.
15d	How do you think councils should spend their budget for supported bus services? (Rural services)	The highest ranked priorities for supported bus services were access to employment, hospitals and education facilities.
15e	How do you think councils should spend their budget for supported bus services? (Access to education)	The highest ranked priorities for supported bus services were access to employment, hospitals and education facilities.
15f	How do you think councils should spend their budget for supported bus services? (Evening and Sunday services)	The highest ranked priorities for supported bus services were access to employment, hospitals and education facilities.
15g	How do you think councils should spend their budget for supported bus services? (Services to hospitals)	The highest ranked priorities for supported bus services were access to employment, hospitals and education facilities.

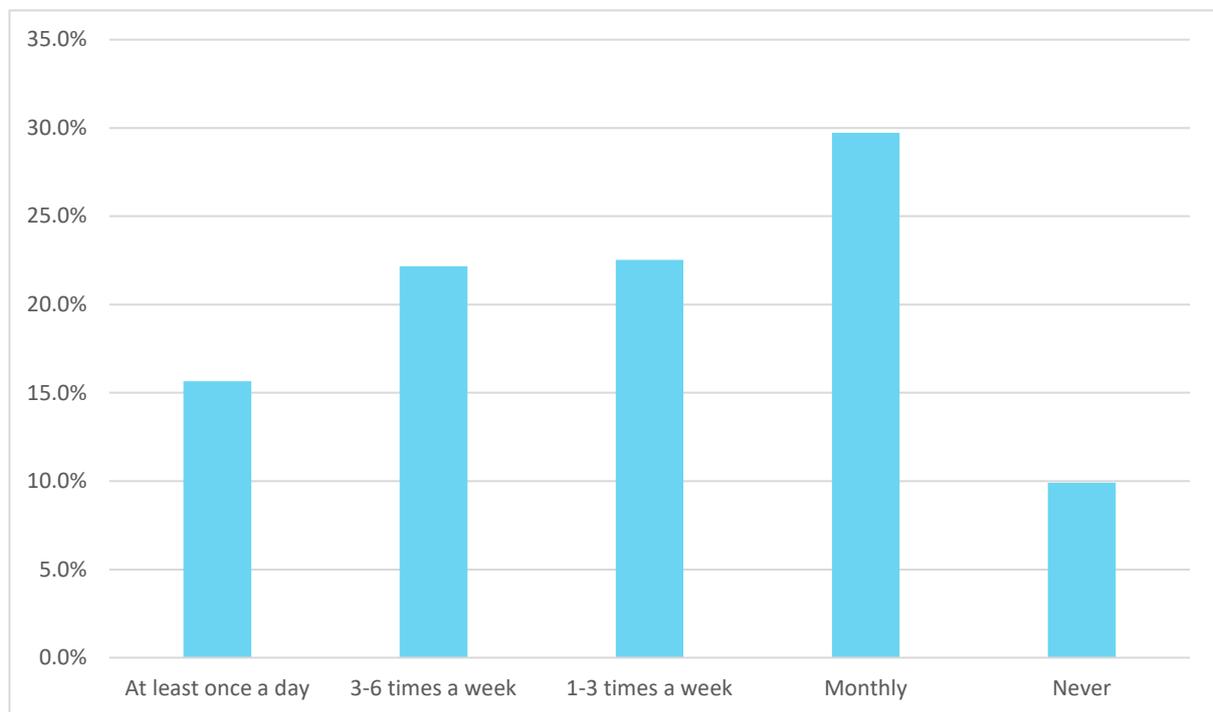
15h	How do you think councils should spend their budget for supported bus services? (Access to employment)	The highest ranked priorities for supported bus services were access to employment, hospitals and education facilities.
16a	Which of the Bus Strategy's themes would you prioritise? (A well-designed network that is simple, coherent and efficient across the region)	The highest ranked bus strategy themes were a well-designed bus network, reliable and faster bus services and modern, clean accessible buses.
16b	Which of the Bus Strategy's themes would you prioritise? (Better services for people in rural areas)	The highest ranked bus strategy themes were a well-designed bus network, reliable and faster bus services and modern, clean accessible buses.
16c	Which of the Bus Strategy's themes would you prioritise? (Giving passengers more reliable and faster buses through priority infrastructure and wider policy)	The highest ranked bus strategy themes were a well-designed bus network, reliable and faster bus services and modern, clean accessible buses.
16d	Which of the Bus Strategy's themes would you prioritise? (Simple, smart and convenient ticketing)	The highest ranked bus strategy themes were a well-designed bus network, reliable and faster bus services and modern, clean accessible buses.
16e	Which of the Bus Strategy's themes would you prioritise? (High quality, consistent and easily understood information)	The highest ranked bus strategy themes were a well-designed bus network, reliable and faster bus services and modern, clean accessible buses.
16f	Which of the Bus Strategy's themes would you prioritise? (A safe, pleasant and comfortable customer experience)	The highest ranked bus strategy themes were a well-designed bus network, reliable and faster bus services and modern, clean accessible buses.
16g	Which of the Bus Strategy's themes would you prioritise? (Modern, clean and accessible buses that contribute to reducing transport's harmful emissions)	The highest ranked bus strategy themes were a well-designed bus network, reliable and faster bus services and modern, clean accessible buses.
16h	Which of the Bus Strategy's themes would you prioritise? (A network complemented by Community and Demand Responsive Transport)	The highest ranked bus strategy themes were a well-designed bus network, reliable and faster bus services and modern, clean accessible buses.
17	Do you have additional comments on the Bus Strategy?	There was a overall positive response towards changes to the bus network infrastructure, with bus cost (being too expensive) being a concern.

Results

1: How often do you travel by bus in the West of England? (Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire)

Headline:	15% of people travelled on a bus at least once a day. 60% of people travelled on a bus at least once a week.
------------------	--

This question was a context question, to gauge how often individuals responding to the consultation used bus services within the region.



Response rate: 77.8%

	At least once a day	3-6 times a week	1-3 times a week	Monthly	Never
%	15.6%	22.2%	22.5%	29.7%	9.9%
Grouped	60.4%			39.6%	

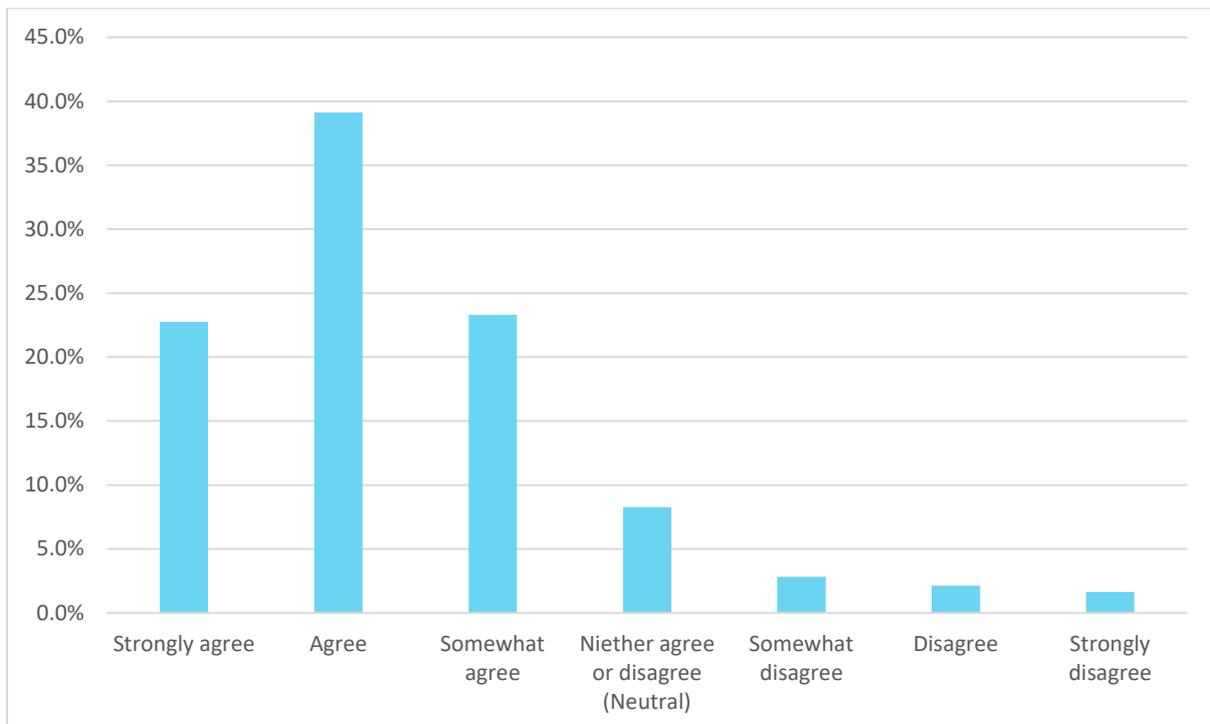
Whilst the highest number of individual responses indicated that they used buses relatively infrequently, the majority of people (60%) used the bus services at least once per week. A total of 10% indicated that they did not use the bus at all.

2: How far do you agree with our objectives?

Headline:	85% of people either strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed with the objectives.
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This question was presented as a drop-down menu across seven categories. The question asked to what extent individuals agreed with the following objectives:

- A comprehensive and joined up bus network.
- Doubling passenger numbers by 2036.
- An improved and easy to understand rural network.
- Maximise bus service reliability and reduce journey times
- To provide simplified ticketing.
- Accessible passenger waiting facilities.
- Address congestion and delays.
- Continue to improve passenger satisfaction.



Response rate: 76.3%

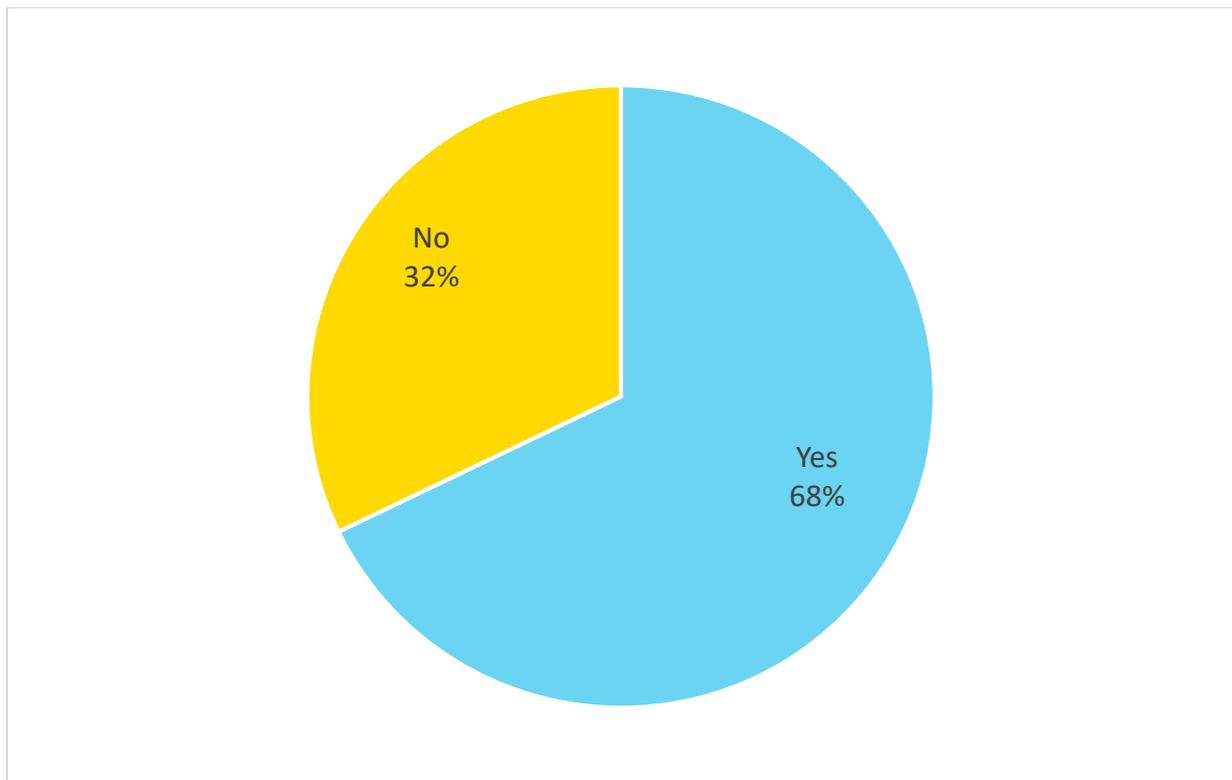
	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
%	22.7%	39.1%	23.3%	8.3%	2.8%	2.1%	1.6%
Grouped	85.2%			8.3%	6.5%		

Most people either strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed with the objectives, with only a small number of people disagreeing. The most popular response was “agree” with nearly 40% of people selecting this category.

3: Do you think our target to double passenger numbers is sufficiently ambitious?

Headline:	<p>Over two-thirds of responses agreed with the proposed target.</p> <p>Mode share was viewed as a better target by people who responded “no” to this question.</p>
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This question was presented as a simple yes/no question to the headline target of doubling bus passenger numbers by 2036. A text box was provided if they disagreed with the proposed target.

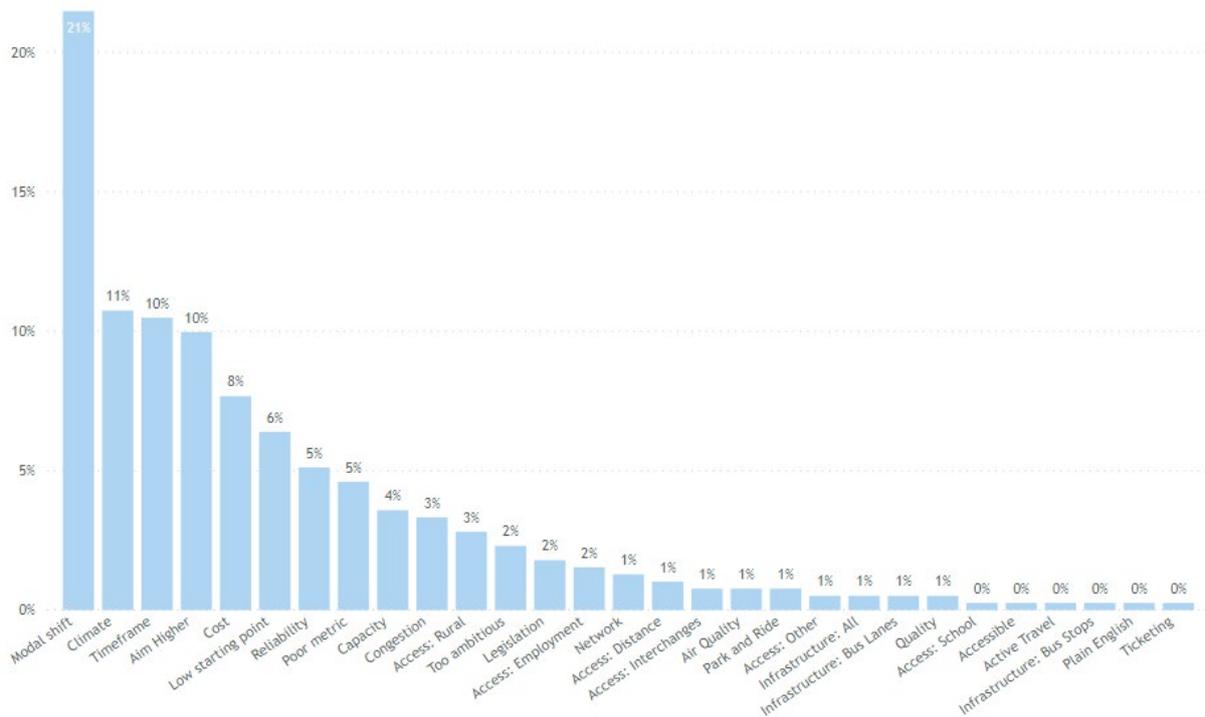


Response rate: 76.1%

	Yes	No
%	67.8%	32.2%

Over two-thirds of all responses agreed with the target of doubling bus passenger numbers by 2036. One third of people disagreed with this target.

A total of 431 text responses were received. The below chart summarises the text responses received after being grouped together by main reason.



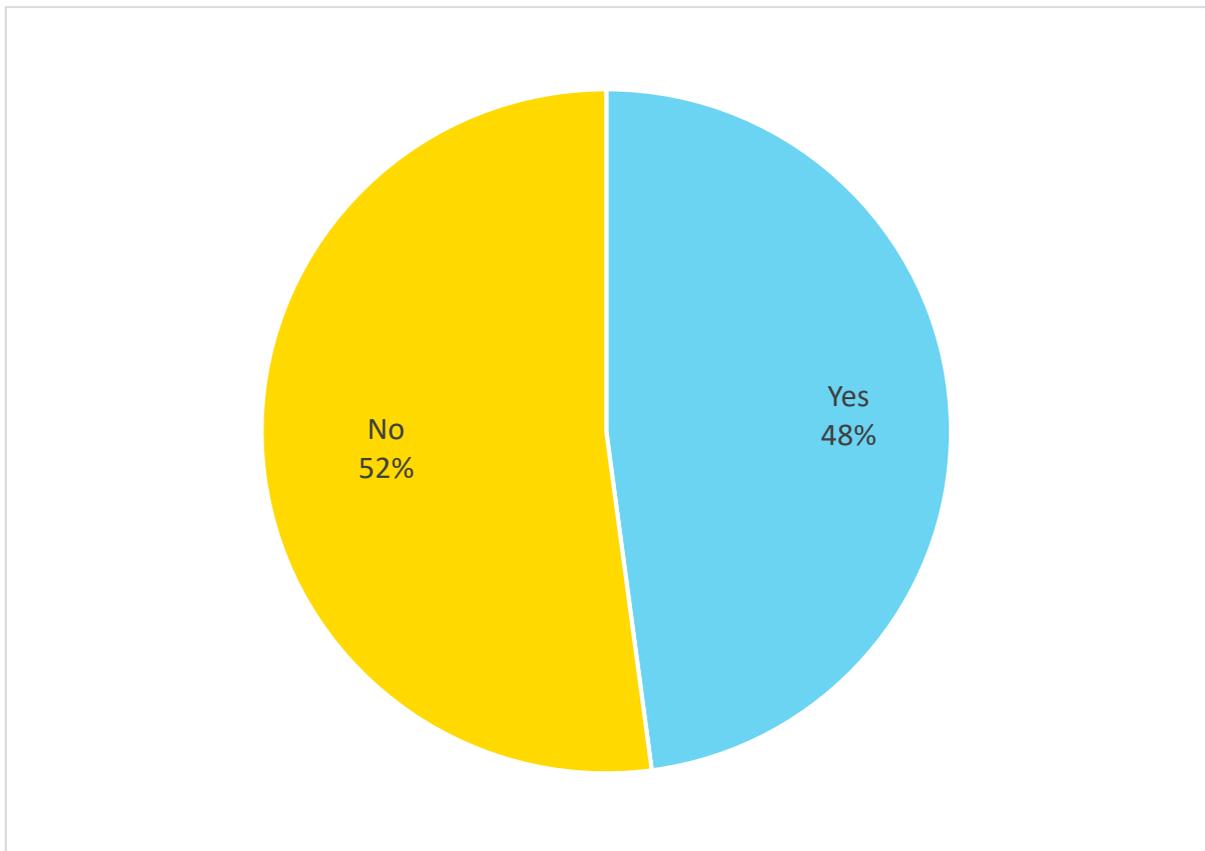
(Percentages rounded to nearest whole number)

The main reason that responses answered “no” to this question related to mode share as a target being preferred, instead of the proposed target. This response was twice that of the next common responses of the Climate Emergency, the timeframe that the document covers, or aspirations for the document to aim higher.

4: Would you be prepared to walk further to a better, more reliable bus service?

Headline:	<p>There was a clear split of views on this question, with marginally more people not prepared to walk further to a bus stop for a more reliable service.</p> <p>Current accessibility and walking distances to bus services were viewed as being too far by “no” responses.</p>
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This question was presented as a simple yes/no question. However, individuals were also provided with a text box inviting them to provide comments if they disagreed with this statement.

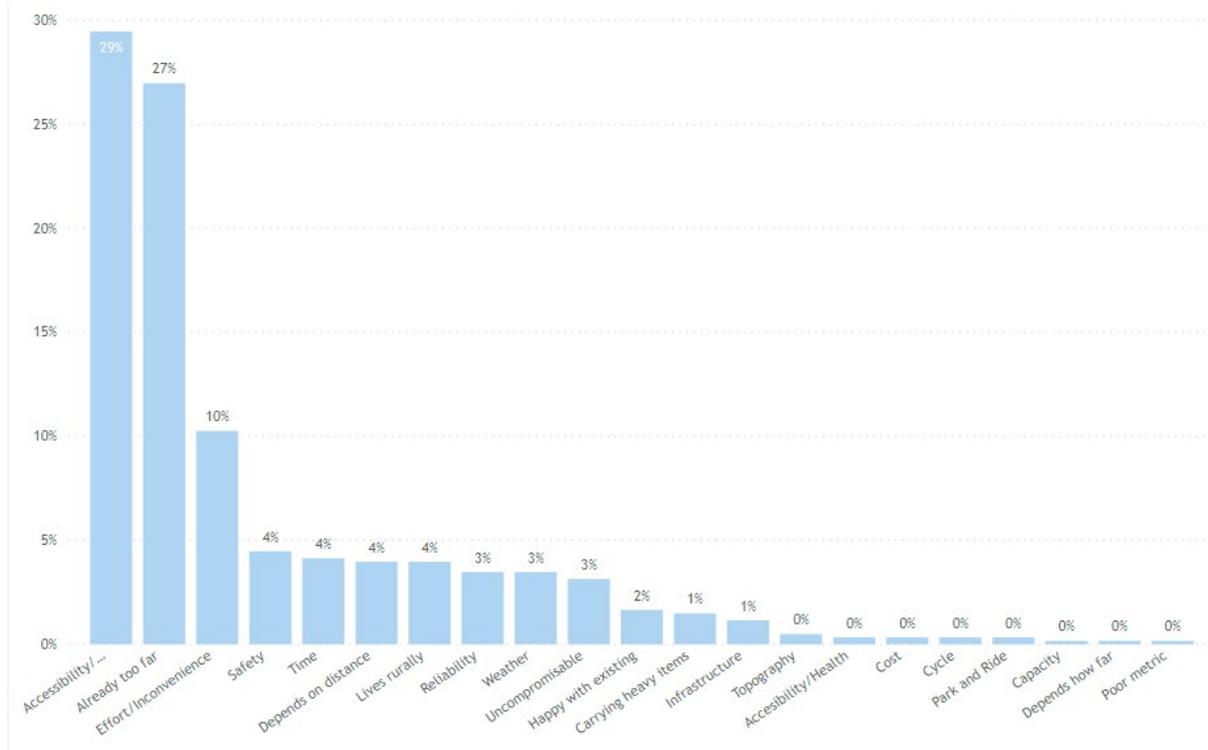


Response rate: 76.6%

	Yes	No
%	47.9%	52.1%

There was a very clear split on responses to this question, with slightly more individuals stating that they would not be prepared to walk further to a bus stop for a more reliable service.

A total of 666 text responses were received. The below chart summarises the text responses received after being grouped together by main reason.



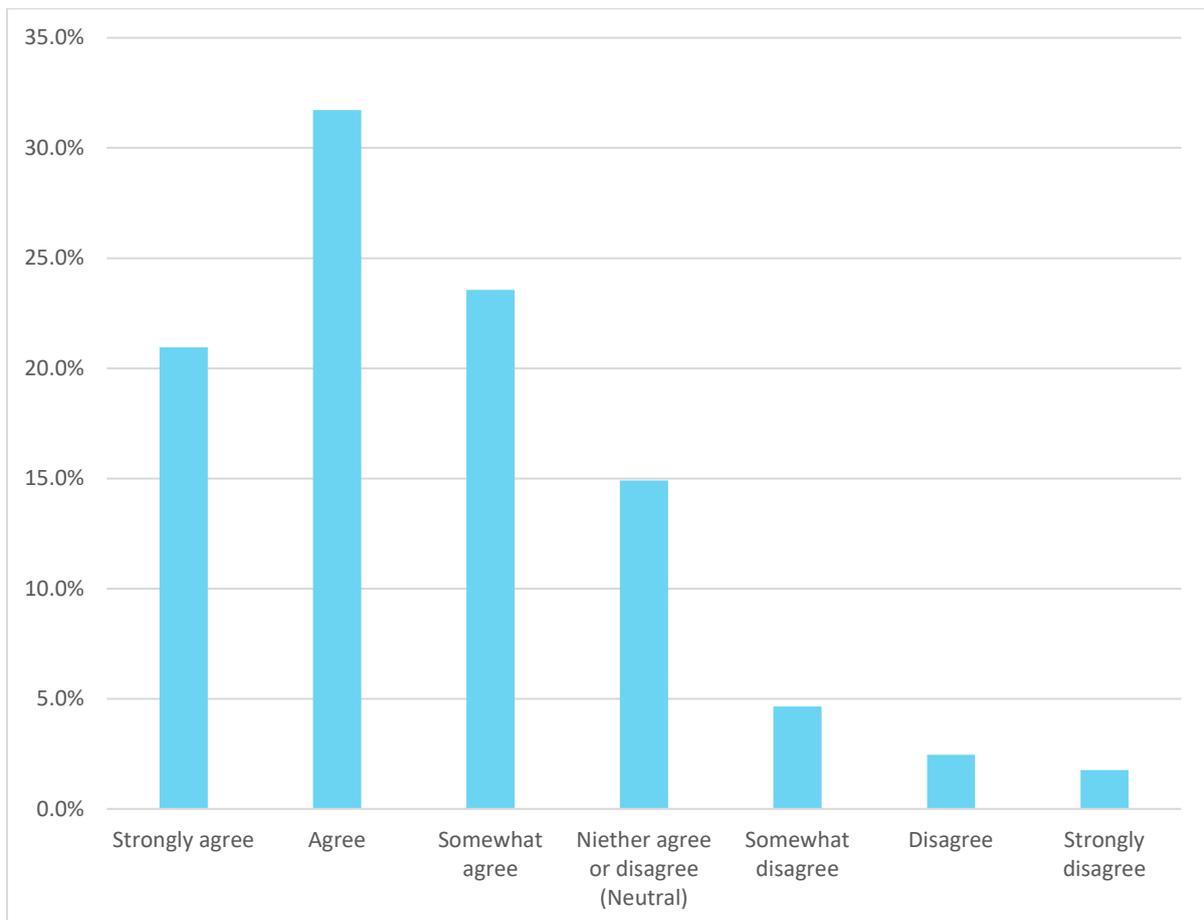
(Percentages rounded to nearest whole number)

The main reason that responses answered no to this question related to accessibility to the current network, or that walking distances were already too far to access services.

5: How far do you agree with the concept of an interchange-based network?

Headline:	76% of people strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed with the concept of an interchange-based network for the West of England.
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This question was presented as a drop-down menu across seven categories. The question proposed the principles of revising the bus network into an interchange-based network across the West of England, with cross city and orbital routes with interchange/transfer facilities between these routes.



Response rate: 76.6%

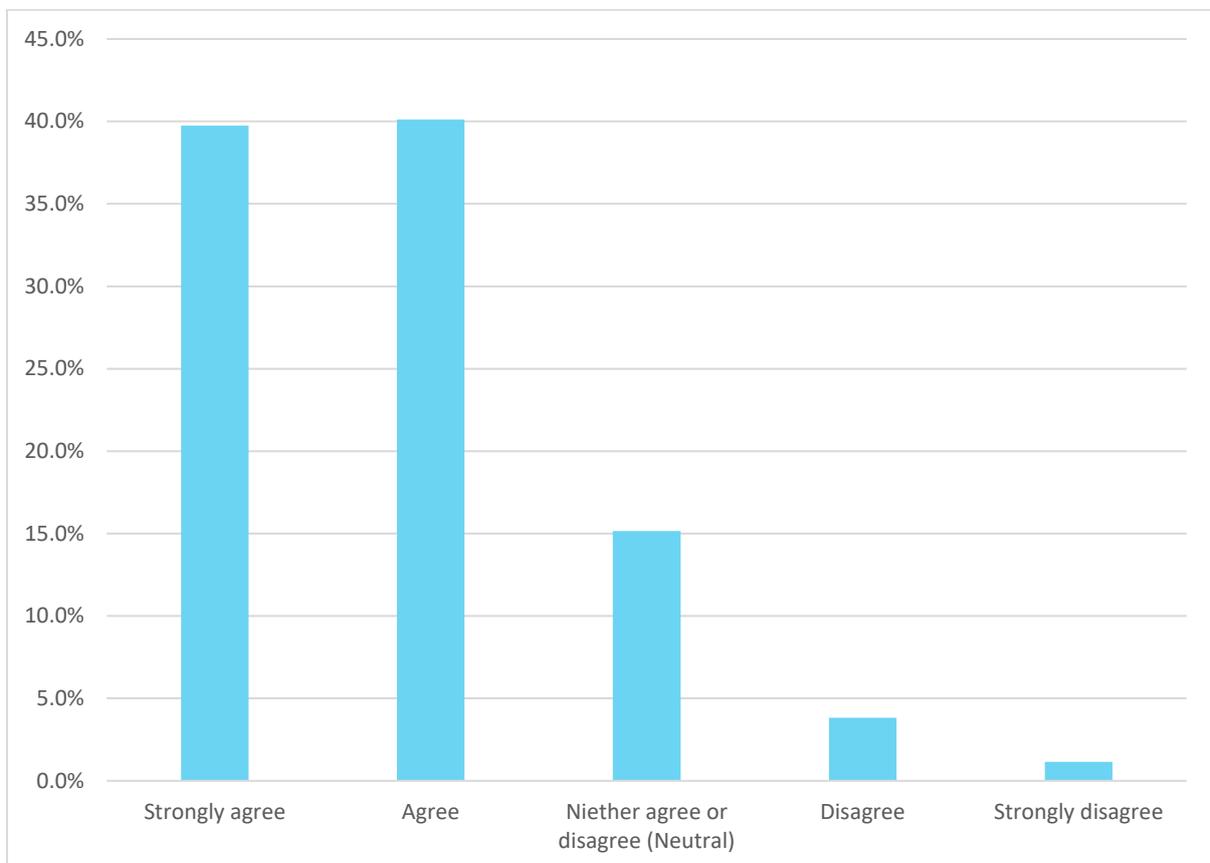
	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
%	21%	31.7%	23.6%	14.9%	4.6%	2.5%	1.8%
Grouped	76.3%			14.9%	8.9%		

Most people either strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed with the objectives, with only a small number of people disagreeing. The spread across categories was broadly similar to the question regarding objectives, but with a higher proportion of the “neither agree or disagree” category. The most popular response was “agree” with nearly 31.7% of people selecting this category.

6: Do you agree that rural communities could be better served by connections to transfer hubs?

Headline:	Nearly four out of five (79.8%) people either strongly agreed or agreed that rural communities would be better served by connections to transfer hubs.
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This question was presented as a drop-down menu across five categories. The question was specific in how to best serve rural areas, and whether rural areas would be better served by rural services connecting to transfer hubs.



Response rate: 74.7%

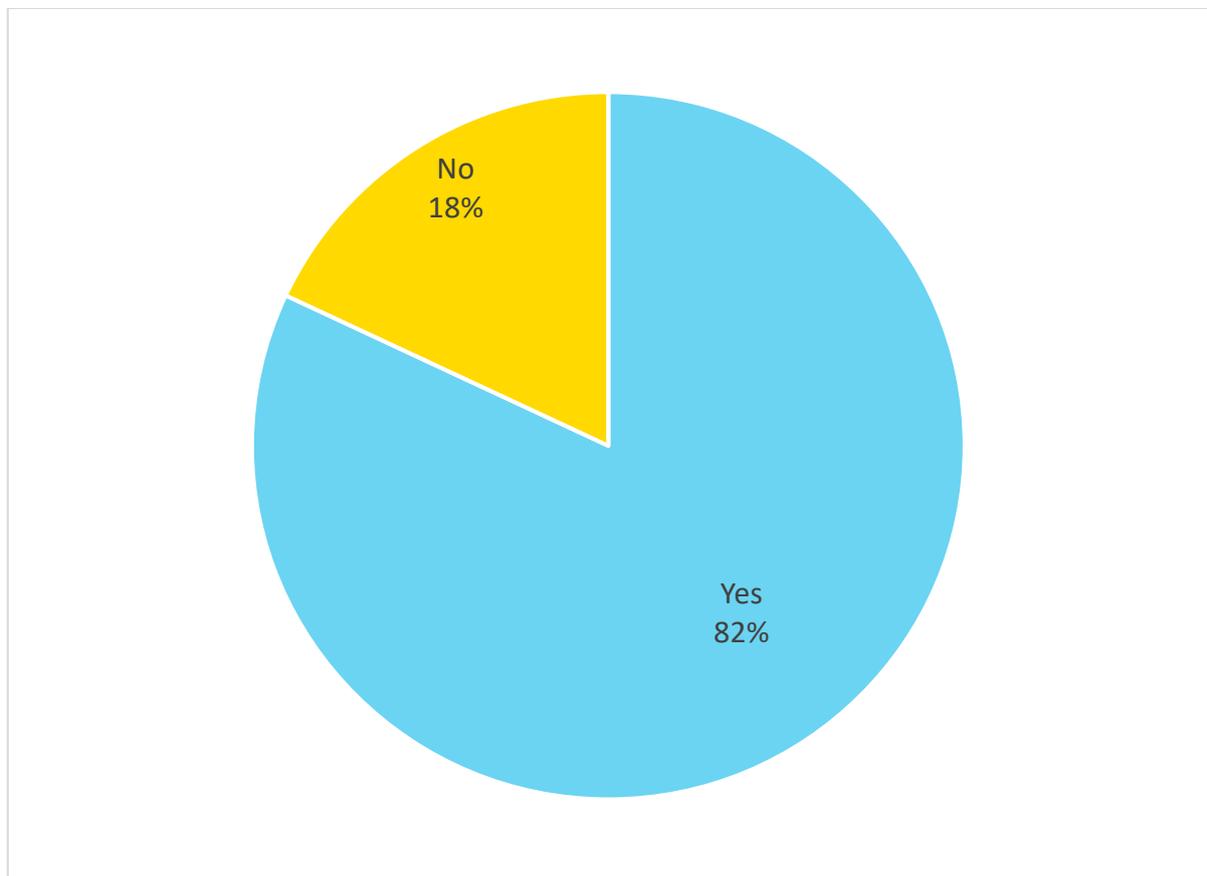
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
%	39.8%	40.1%	15.2%	3.8%	1.2%
Grouped	79.8%		15.2%	5%	

The vast majority (79.8%) either strongly agreed or agreed with this question, with only a small number (5%) of people disagreeing. Both the “strongly agree” and “agree” selections had similar response rates

7: Do you think that we should explore other transport solutions to serve rural communities rather than conventional bus services?

Headline:	<p>Over four out of five (82%) people agreed that other transport solutions should be explored to serve rural areas instead of conventional buses.</p> <p>Bus services were preferred by “no” respondents instead of other transport solutions within rural areas.</p>
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This question was presented as a simple yes/no question. However, individuals were also provided with a text box inviting them to provide comments if they disagreed with this statement.

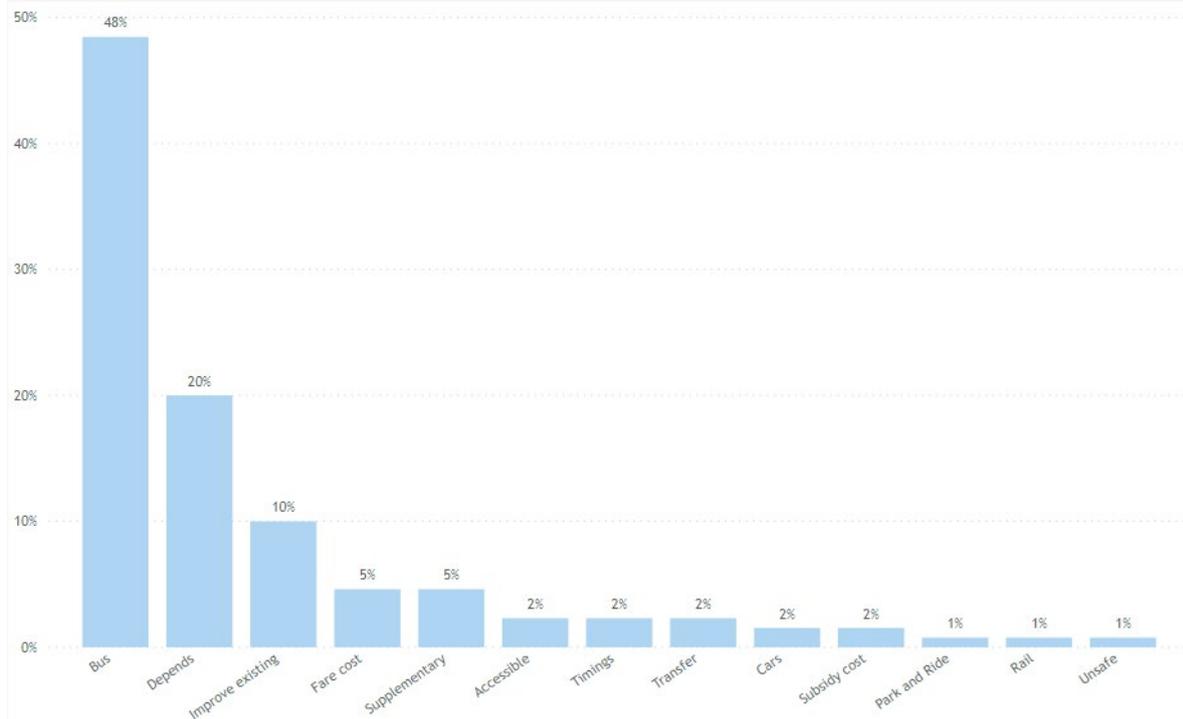


Response rate: 73.3%

	Yes	No
%	82%	18%

The vast majority (82%) agreed with this question, with a small number of people (18%) disagreeing.

A total of 258 text responses were received. The below chart summarises the text responses received after being grouped together by main reason.



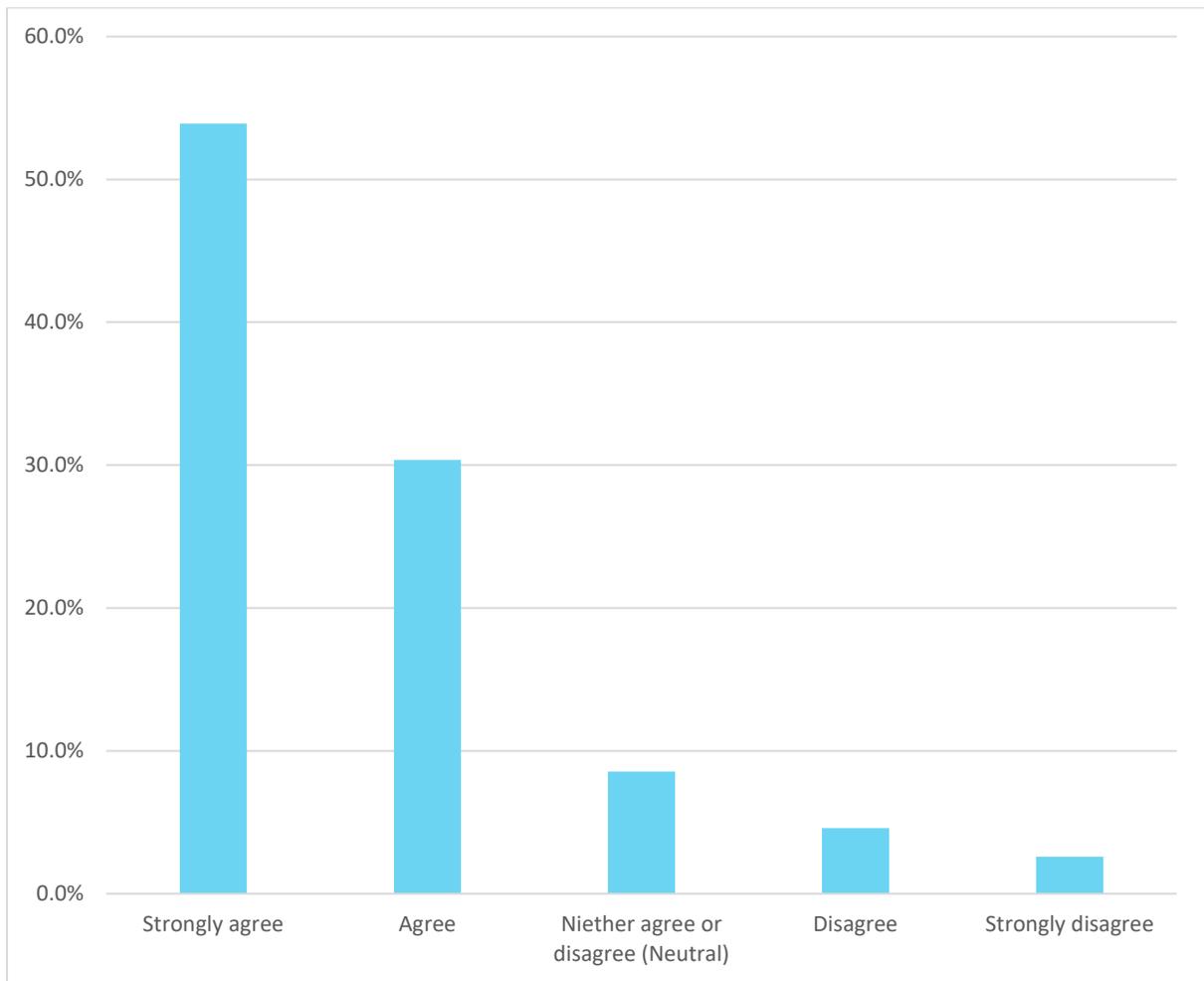
(Percentages rounded to nearest whole number)

The main reason that responses answered no to this question was that respondents preferred buses over other types of transport solutions in rural areas. There was also a significant response indicating that it would depend on the type of transport solution provided.

8: How far do you agree with the re-allocation of road space in favour of buses to ensure bus services run punctually?

Headline:	A significant majority (84.3%) agreed to the reallocation of road space to prioritise buses, with over half of all people “strongly agreeing”.
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This question was presented as a drop-down menu across five categories. The question considered the principal of reallocation of road space to favour buses in order to improve punctuality.



Response rate: 75.1%

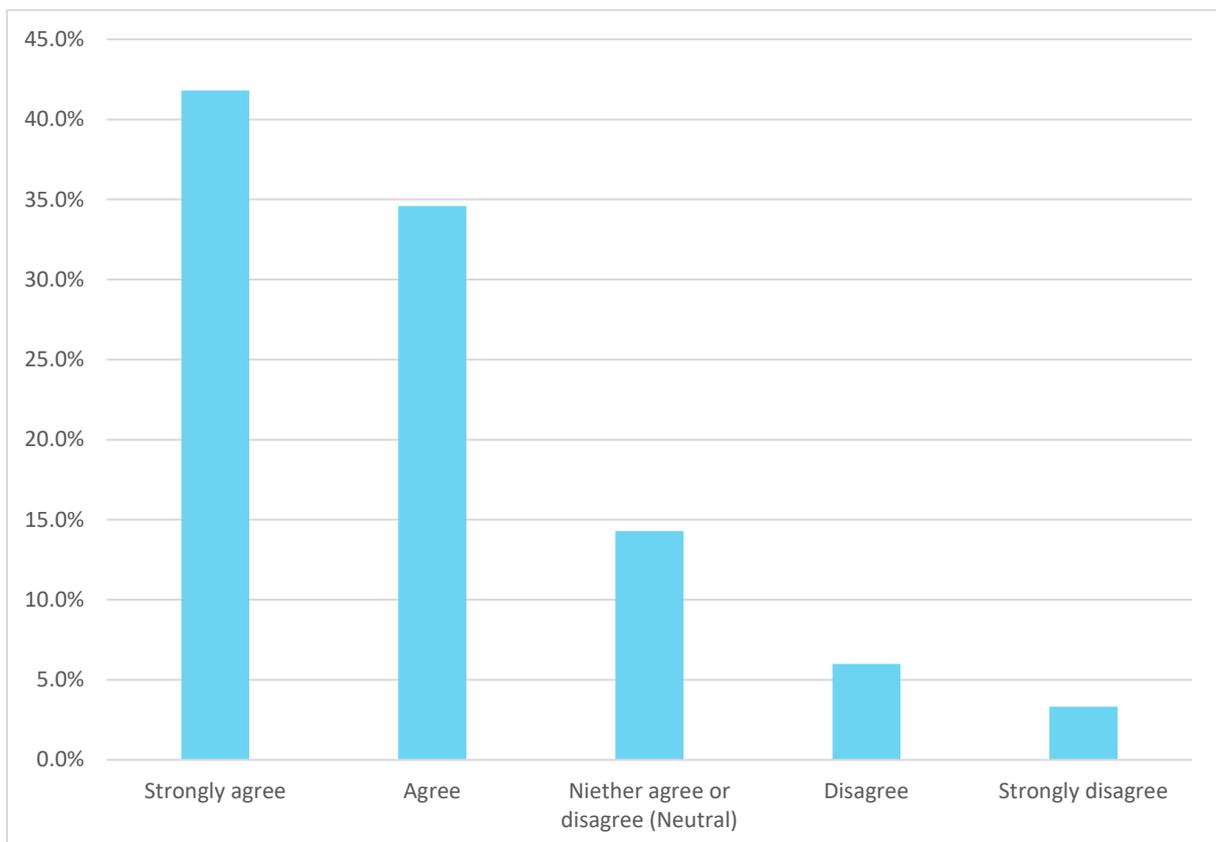
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
%	53.9%	30.4%	8.5%	4.6%	2.6%
Grouped	84.3%		8.5%	7.2%	

The vast majority (84.3%) either strongly agreed or agreed with this question, with only a small number (7.2%) of people disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The highest response to this question was the “strongly agree” category, with over half of people selecting this category. This is the highest single response to a category within the bus consultation survey.

9: How far do you agree with diverting traffic away from certain public transport corridors?

Headline:	Just over three-quarters (76.4%) of responses strongly agreed or agreed in diverting general traffic away from public transport corridors.
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This question was presented as a drop-down menu across five categories. The question considered the principal of diverting general road traffic away from certain public transport corridors in order to improve bus reliability.



Response rate: 74.7%

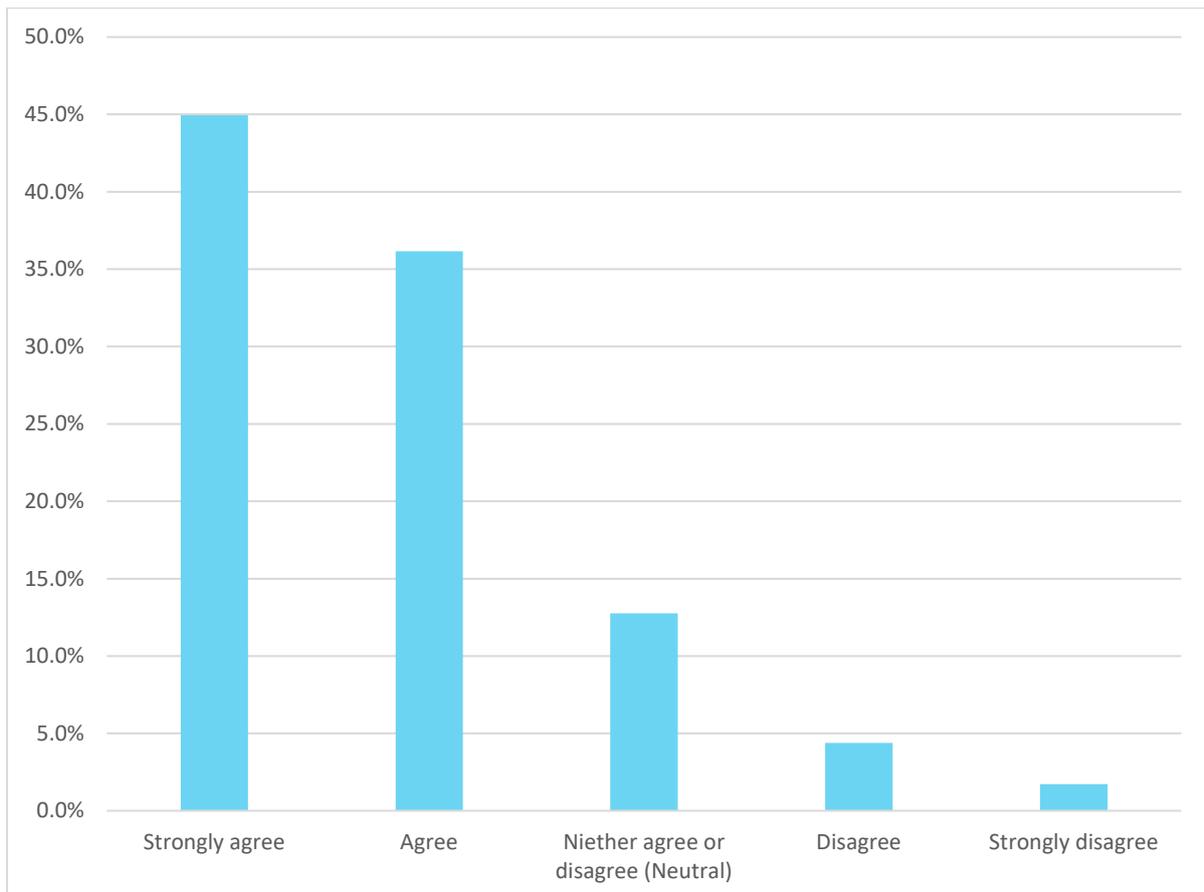
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
%	41.8%	34.6%	14.3%	6%	3.3%
Grouped	76.4%		14.3%	9.3%	

Just over three-quarters (76.4%) either strongly agreed or agreed with this question, with only a small number (9.3%) of people disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The highest response to this question was the “strongly agree” category, with 41.8% people selecting this category. The response to this question is similar in terms of response as the road space reallocation question.

10: Do you agree with buses having extra 'green time' at traffic signal to help services run punctually?

Headline:	A significant majority (81.2%) strongly agreed or agreed that buses should have extra “green time” at traffic signals.
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This question was presented as a drop-down menu across five categories. The question considered “green time” (bus priority) at traffic signalled junctions.



Response rate: 74.8%

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
%	45%	36.2%	12.8%	4.4%	1.7%
Grouped	81.2%		12.8%	6.1%	

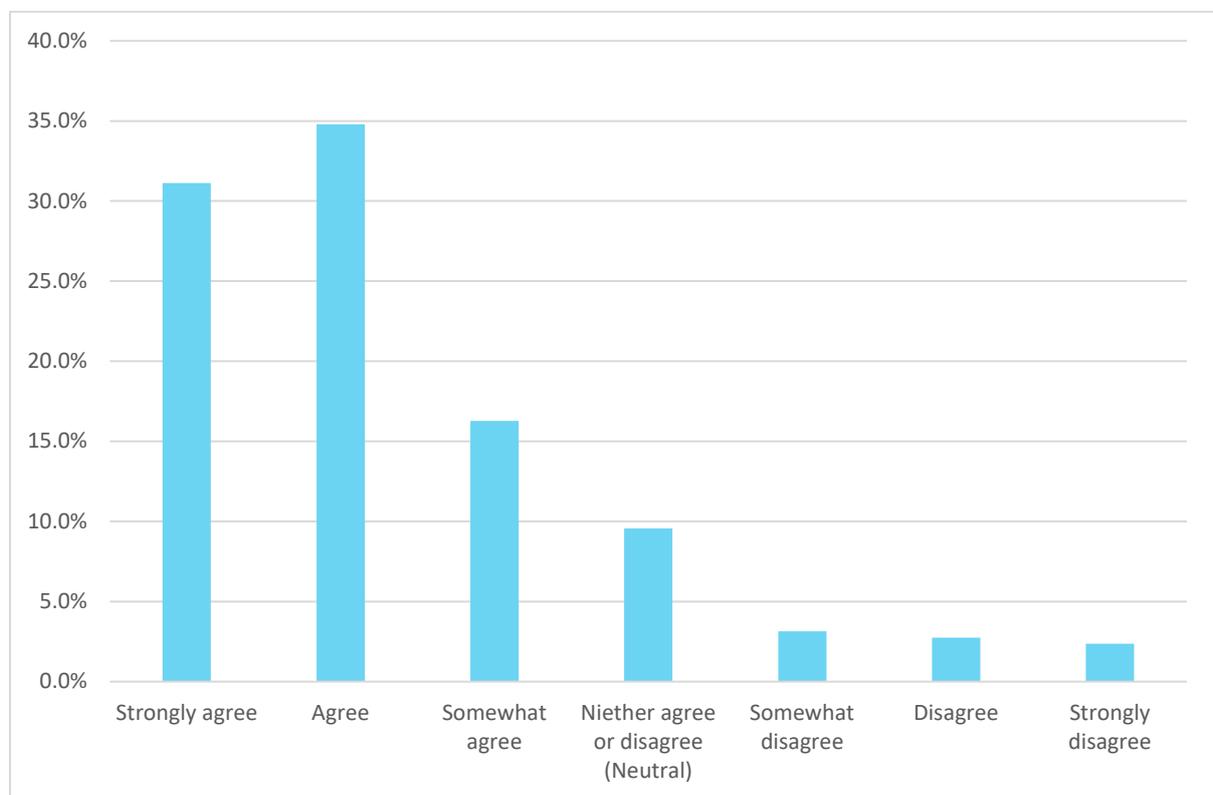
The vast majority (81.2%) either strongly agreed or agreed with this question, with only a small number (6.1%) of people disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The highest response to this question was the “strongly agree” category, with 45% of people selecting this category. The response to this question is similar in terms of response as the road space reallocation and traffic diversion questions.

11: How far do you agree with our ticketing principles?

Headline:	A significant majority of responses (82.2%) strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed with the ticketing principles.
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This question was presented as a drop-down menu across seven categories. The question proposed the following ticketing principles:

- Tickets and payments using the latest contactless payments
- Same experience on all buses
- A Pay-as-you-go system with daily and weekly capping
- Customers requiring one account/app for tickets, payment journey planning and information.
- Those without contactless bank cards being able to access the same benefits
- Integrated with other transport modes.



Response rate: 70.5%

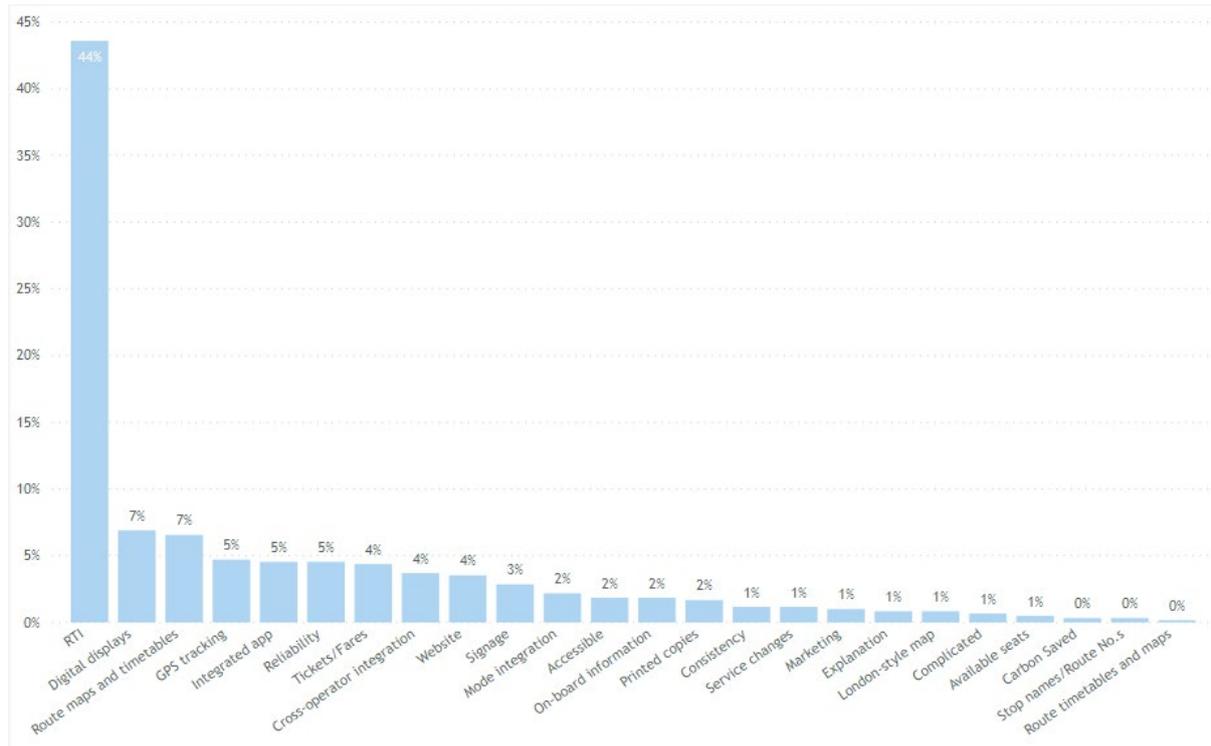
	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
%	31.1%	34.8%	16.3%	9.6%	3.1%	2.8%	2.4%
Grouped	82.2%			9.6%	8.3%		

The vast majority (82.2%) either strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed with the ticketing principles, with only a small number (8.3%) of people somewhat disagreeing, disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The highest response to this question was the “agree” category, although this was only by 3.7% ahead of the second highest category; “strongly agree”.

12: Are there any other improvements to the provision of bus information that would you like to see?

Headline:	Improvements in Real Time Information was wanted for bus services.
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A total of 762 text responses were received. The below chart summarises the text responses received after being grouped together by main reason.



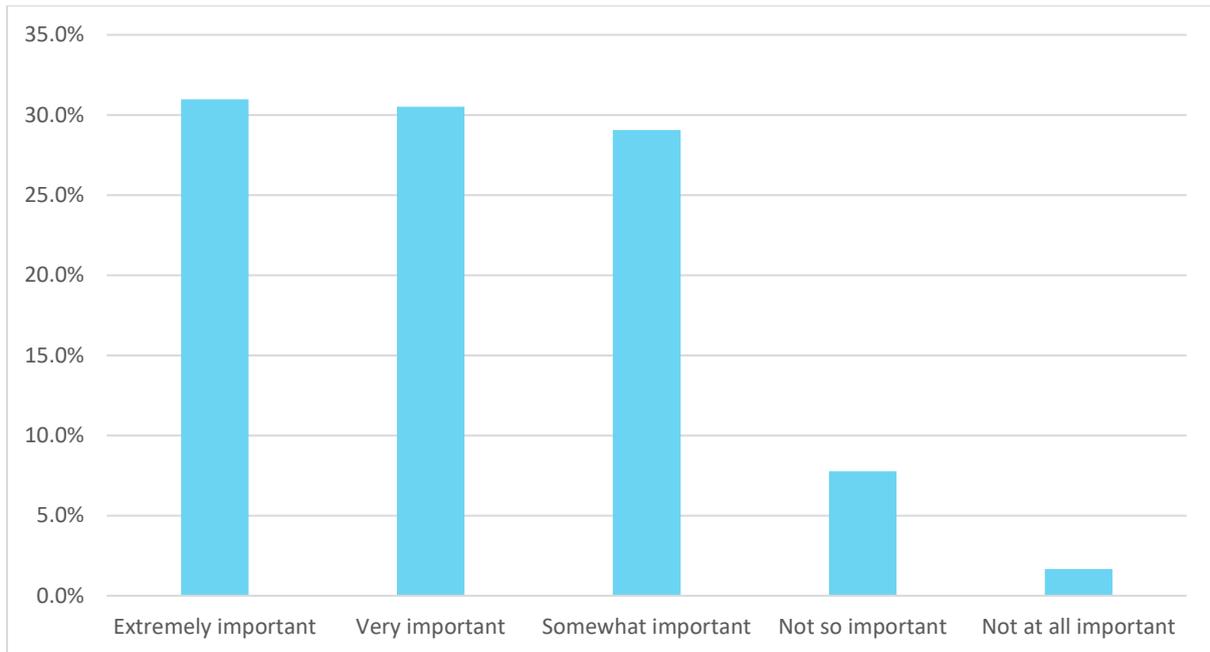
(Percentages rounded to nearest whole number)

A very large proportion of responses to this question wanted to see further Real Time Information (RTI) being provided, with the next largest response being similar, being digital displays being provided at key interchanges/on buses.

13: How important are modern vehicles to your passenger experience?

Headline:	Whilst viewed as important, there was an even split in terms of level of importance weighted by people.
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This question was presented as a ranking of importance across five categories. The question gauged the level of importance people had for modern bus vehicles being provided.



Response rate: 70.8%

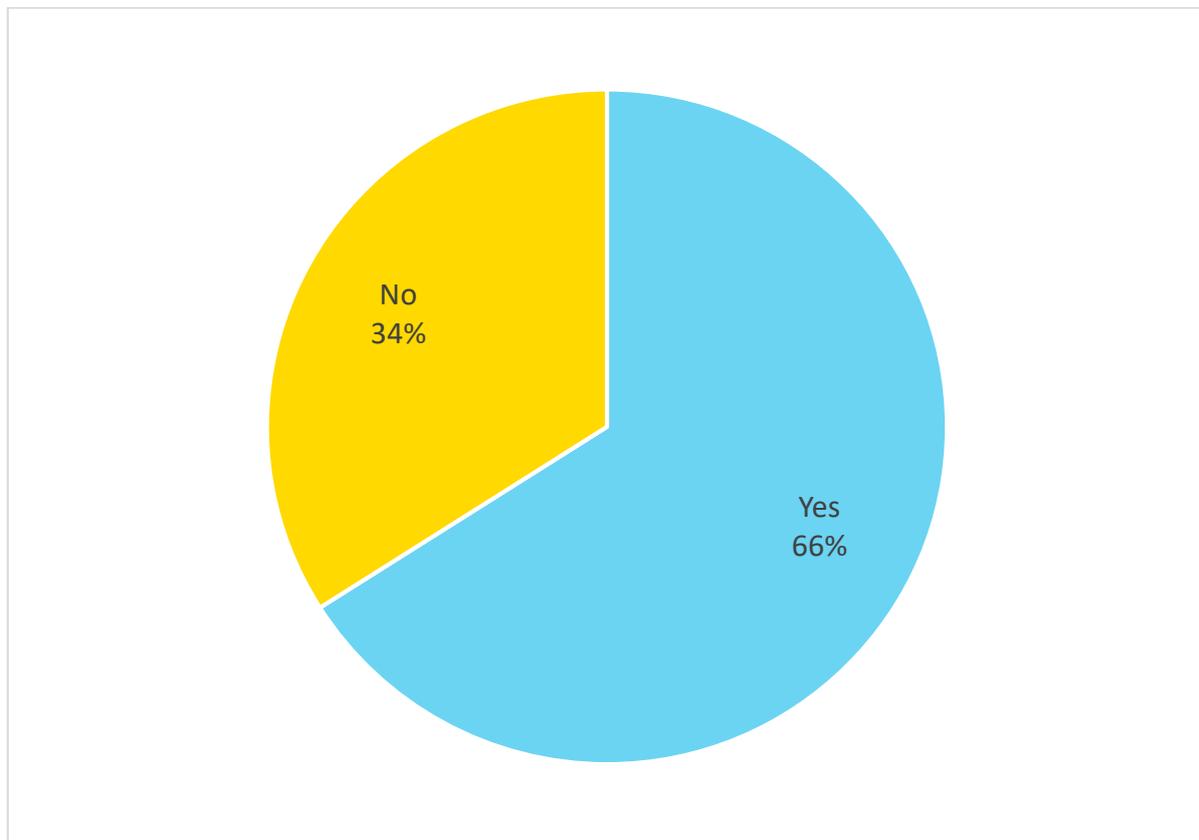
	Extremely important	Very important	Somewhat important	Not so important	Not at all important
%	31%	30.5%	29.1%	7.8%	1.7%
Grouped	61.5%		29.1%	9.5%	

Option was split relatively evenly across the “Extremely important”, “Very important” and “Somewhat important” categories, each attracting approximately 30% of responses, with 10% towards the not as important categories.

14: Would you be open to using a shared taxi/mini bus to connect to the wider bus network?

Headline:	<p>Two-thirds of people stated they would use a shared taxi/minibus.</p> <p>Concerns over bus priority, cost and ticketing were the main issues from people who responded “no” to this question.</p>
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This question was presented as a simple yes/no question. A text box was provided so individuals could explain their reasons for not wanting to use a shared taxi/minibus.

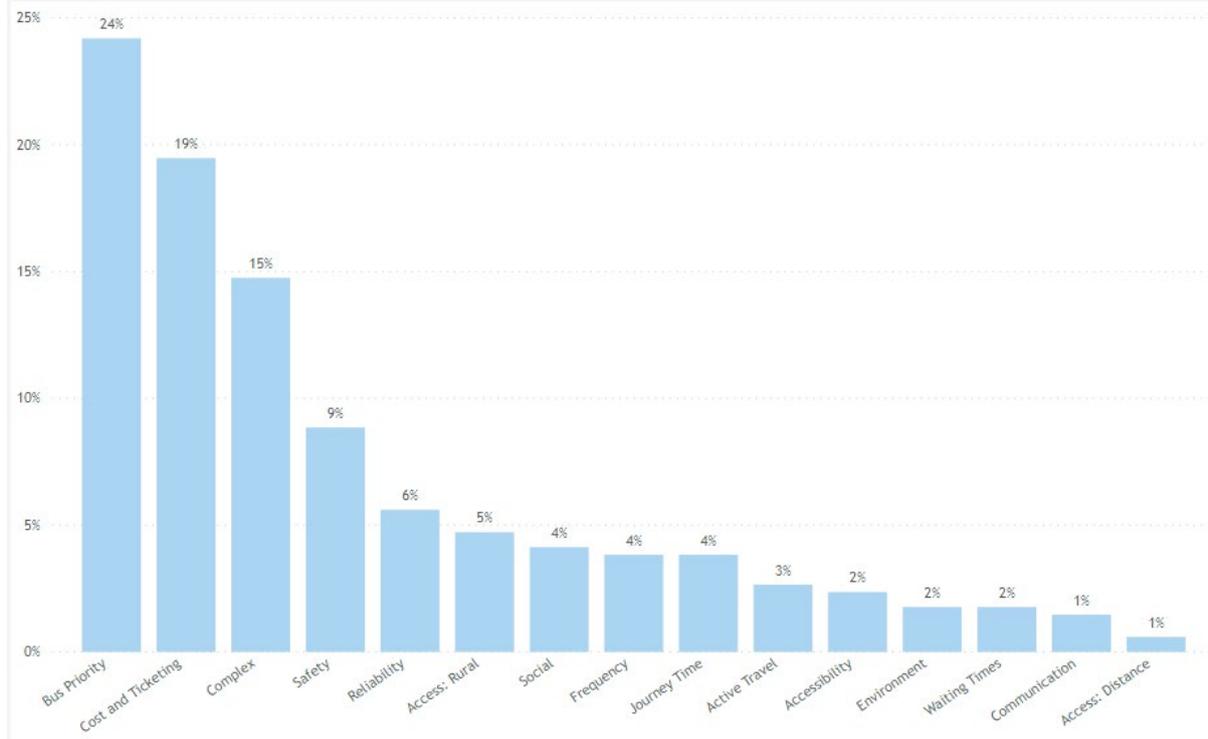


Response rate: 69.7%

	Yes	No
%	66%	34%

Two thirds of responses indicated that they would use a shared taxi or minibus in order to connect to the wider bus network. However, one third of people stated they would not.

A total of 368 text responses were received. The below chart summarises the text responses received after being grouped together by main reason for not wanting to use a shared taxi/minibus.



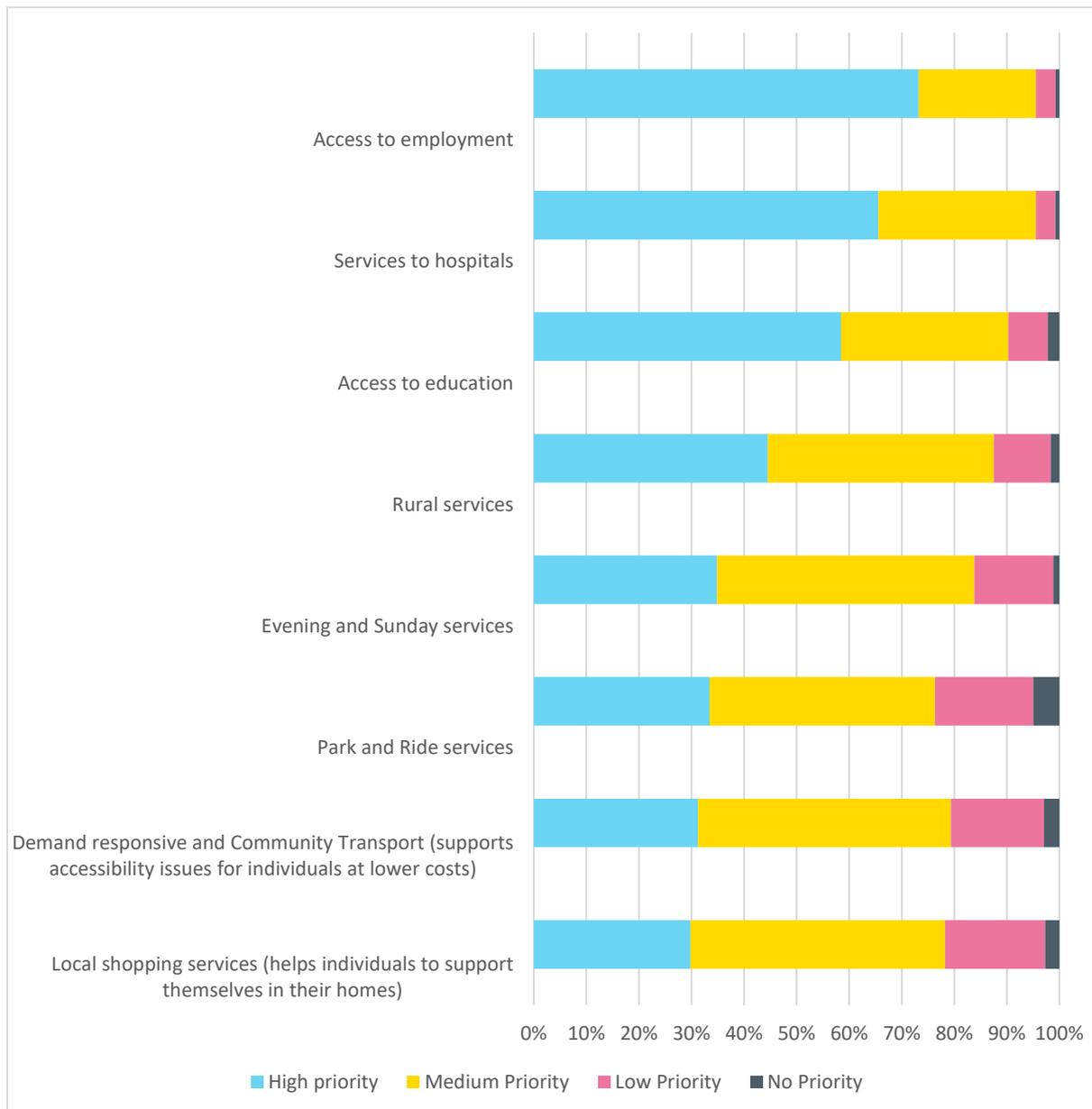
(Percentages rounded to nearest whole number)

The main concerns raised were bus priority, followed by the cost and ticketing, and that the system would be too complex. Safety and reliability were also significant concerns.

15: How do you think councils should spend their budget for supported bus services?

Headline:	The highest ranked priorities for supported bus services were access to employment, hospitals and education facilities.
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This question was presented as a ranking of each of eight themes, based on the types of services/access to facilities across four levels of priority. Individuals were not restricted in ranking these themes in order of importance. The question gauged what type of services and facilities served should be provided through the supported bus network.



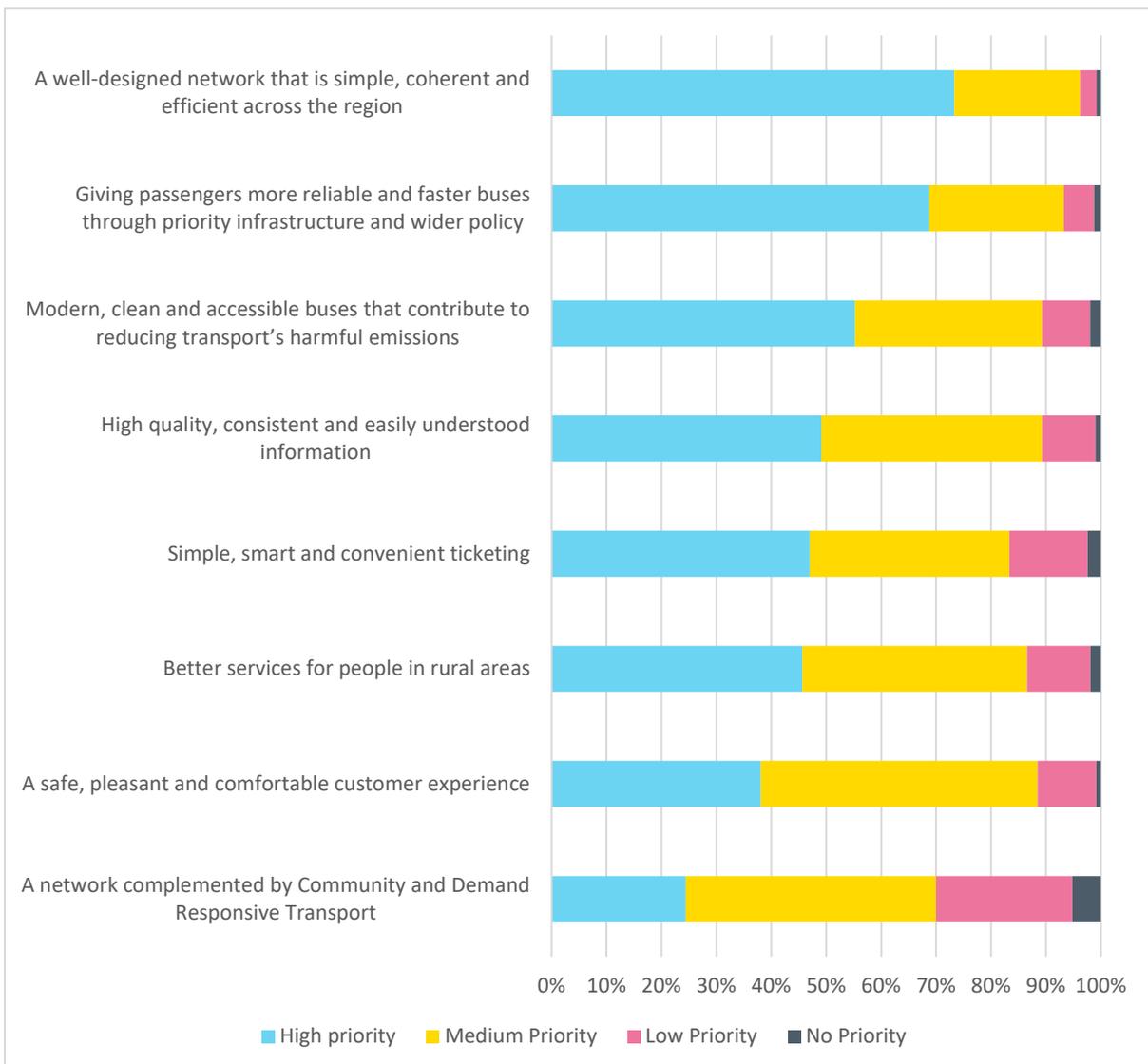
Theme	High priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	No Priority
Access to employment	73.3%	22.3%	3.8%	0.7%
Services to hospitals	65.6%	30.0%	3.7%	0.8%
Access to education	58.5%	31.8%	7.5%	2.2%
Rural services	44.5%	43.0%	10.8%	1.7%
Evening and Sunday services	34.9%	48.9%	15.0%	1.2%
Park and Ride services	33.4%	42.9%	18.7%	5.0%
Demand responsive and Community Transport	31.2%	48.1%	17.7%	2.9%
Local shopping services	29.8%	48.5%	19.0%	2.7%

Two thirds of responses indicated that they would use a shared taxi or minibus in order to connect to the wider bus network. However, one third of people stated they would not.

16: Which of the Bus Strategy’s themes would you prioritise?

Headline:	The highest ranked bus strategy themes were a well-designed bus network, reliable and faster bus services and modern, clean accessible buses.
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This question was presented as a ranking of each of eight themes across four levels of priority. Individuals were not restricted in ranking these themes in order of importance. The question asked people what level of prioritisation each of the Bus Strategy themes should have.



	High priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	No Priority
A well-designed network that is simple, coherent and efficient across the region	73.3%	22.9%	3.0%	0.8%
Giving passengers more reliable and faster buses through priority infrastructure and wider policy	68.7%	24.5%	5.5%	1.2%
Modern, clean and accessible buses that contribute to reducing transport's harmful emissions	55.2%	34.1%	8.8%	2.0%
High quality, consistent and easily understood information	49.1%	40.2%	9.7%	1.0%
Simple, smart and convenient ticketing	47.0%	36.3%	14.2%	2.4%
Better services for people in rural areas	45.7%	40.9%	11.5%	1.9%
A safe, pleasant and comfortable customer experience	38.1%	50.4%	10.7%	0.9%
A network complemented by Community and Demand Responsive Transport	24.4%	45.6%	24.8%	5.2%

Out of the themes ranked high priority; Access to employment opportunities, Access to hospitals, and Access to education was considered the most important in terms of supported bus services.

The themes that attracted lower levels of high priority included Access to local shopping facilities, Demand responsive transport and Park and ride services. These three themes also attracted higher responses to the "low priority" or "no priority" categories compared with other responses.

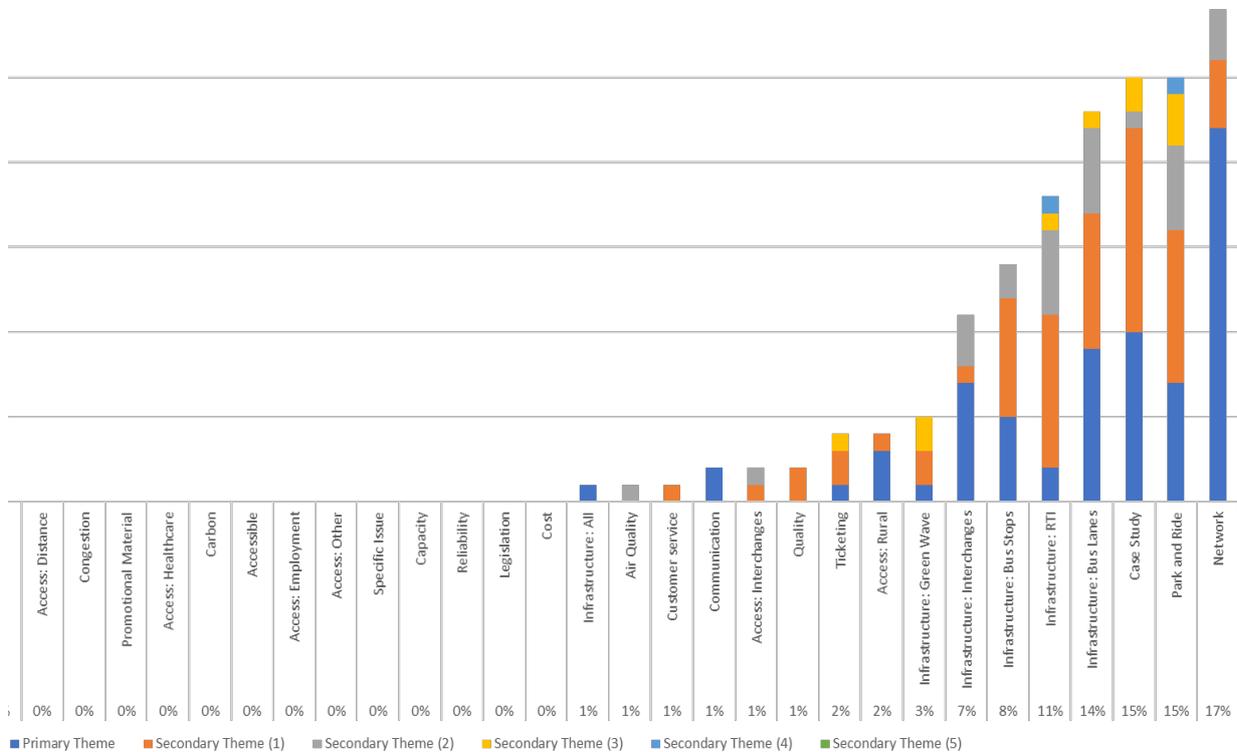
17: Do you have additional comments on the Bus Strategy?

Headline:	There was an overall positive response towards changes to the bus network infrastructure, with bus cost (being too expensive) being a concern.
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A total of 768 text responses were received through the e-questionnaire, along with the 65 text responses. The comments in this section was wide ranging, with respondents covering multiple topics within their response. Responses were broken down into the main primary theme, alongside secondary themes that were raised. Each theme was also classified as either a positive, neutral or negative response.

Positive Responses

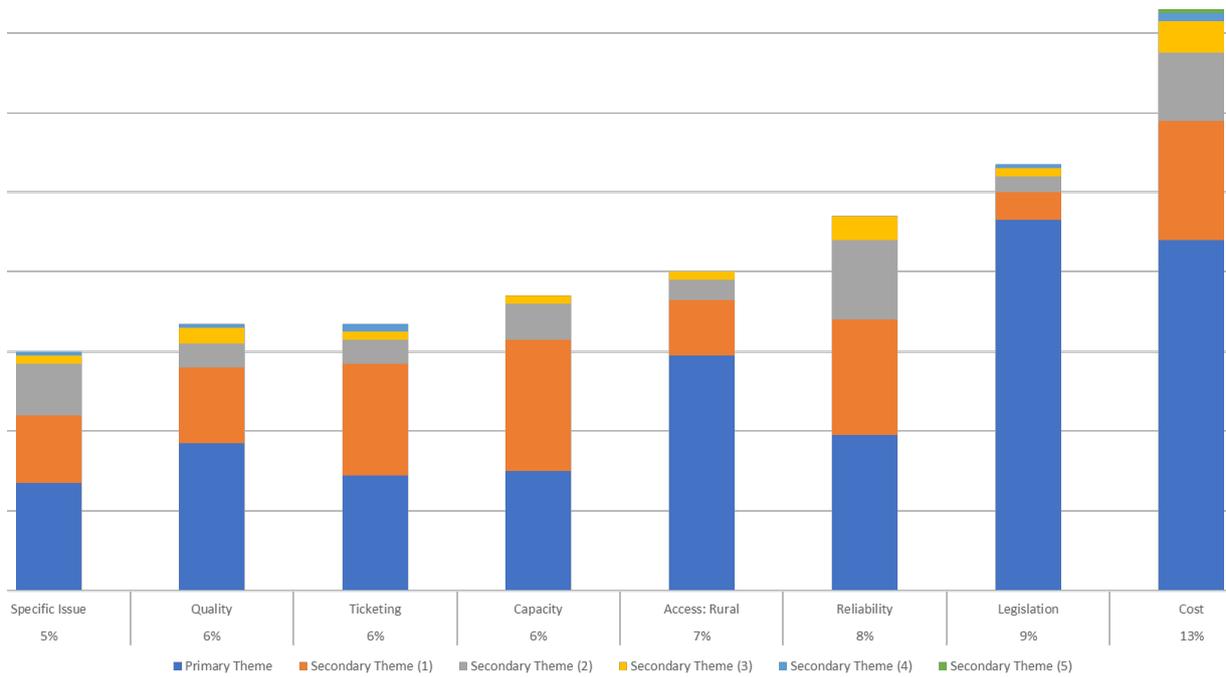
These responses were broadly supportive of the strategy or encouraging specific issues.



Out of this collection of responses, the main these was were support for network changes and more park and ride sites. There were several responses also referring to case studies of other locations and cities which should be replicated within the West of England area. There was also strong support for more infrastructure for buses, including bus lanes and real time information.

Neutral Responses

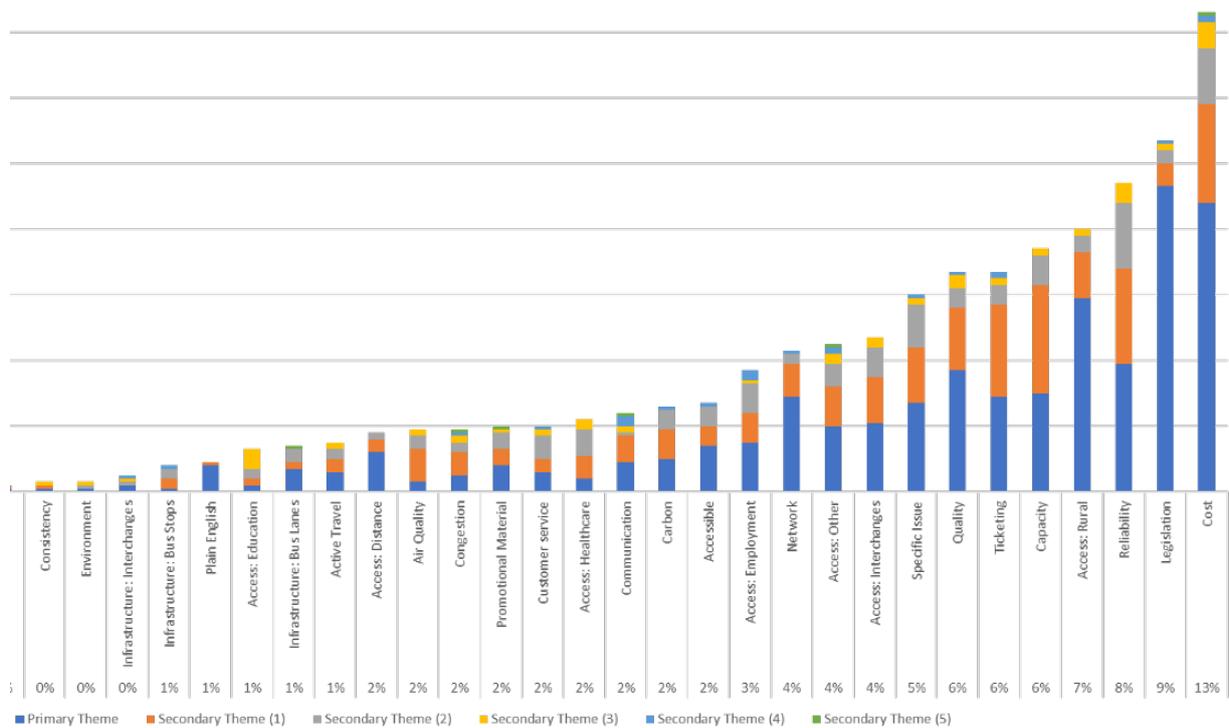
These responses were statements or changes to that specific topic or issue, but with no preference in either a positive or negative way towards that topic.



Out of this collection of responses, references to cost of travelling were highlighted, as well as a view that changes to legislation would be needed.

Negative responses

These responses were negative towards the topic or issue.



Out of this collection of responses, references to cost (being too expensive) of travelling by bus was the largest response. Issues relating to legislation, reliability of bus services, access to rural areas, and capacity (overcrowding) of bus services were also raised as main issues.

Next steps

We wish to thank all people for taking the time to respond to the consultation. These findings will now be reviewed and considered for incorporation into the final version of the Bus Strategy.

Following on from what you told us:

- We will consider the inclusion of the objectives within the final bus strategy. *85.2% of people agree with the objectives.*
- Whilst a significant proportion of people felt the target to double passenger numbers is sufficiently ambitious, it is noted that around 450 responses did not agree with this target. Further analysis will be undertaken within the final consultation report, along with any changes or additional targets recommended.
- Along with further consultation with bus operators, we will consider the development of an interchange-based network. *76.3% agree with the concept of an interchange-based network*
- As part of the consultation questionnaire you provided postcode data. This will allow us to have a better understanding of any differences in views across both rural and urban areas and carefully consider the responses across the region. These will be evaluated in the final consultation report.
- There is a very clear positive response to providing buses extra “green time” at signals. Alongside the support for road space reallocation, and diverting traffic away from public transport corridors, we will consider measures within the final bus strategy. *74.8% of people agree with buses having extra 'green time' at traffic signal to help services run punctually.*
- We will further consider the level of priority given to modern vehicles improving the passenger experience within the final Bus Strategy. *Opinion was split on whether modern vehicles are somewhat, very, or extremely important to their passenger experiences.*
- We recognise that there may be differing views on the type of ticketing offer that is finally provided, and we will need to consider this further as part of developing the ticket officer for passengers. *82.2% agree with our ticketing principles.*
- It's clear that most people are not prepared to walk further to a better, more reliable bus service. We will consider making changes to the bus strategy to consider travel distance to bus stops based on the text responses received. *52.2% of people would not walk further to a better, more reliable bus service.*
- We are keen to understand the main barriers that may put people off from using shared taxi or minibuses and other demand responsive style services, to ensure maximum benefit. We will review the free text responses to understand the potential barriers for using other transport solutions and we will carefully consider these in developing such services.
- We will use the outputs from the consultation of this data, including using postcode data to provide a breakdown into local areas to work out whether use of buses is affected by location.

For further details regarding the survey results, please contact: info@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

Appendices:

Demographic & equalities data

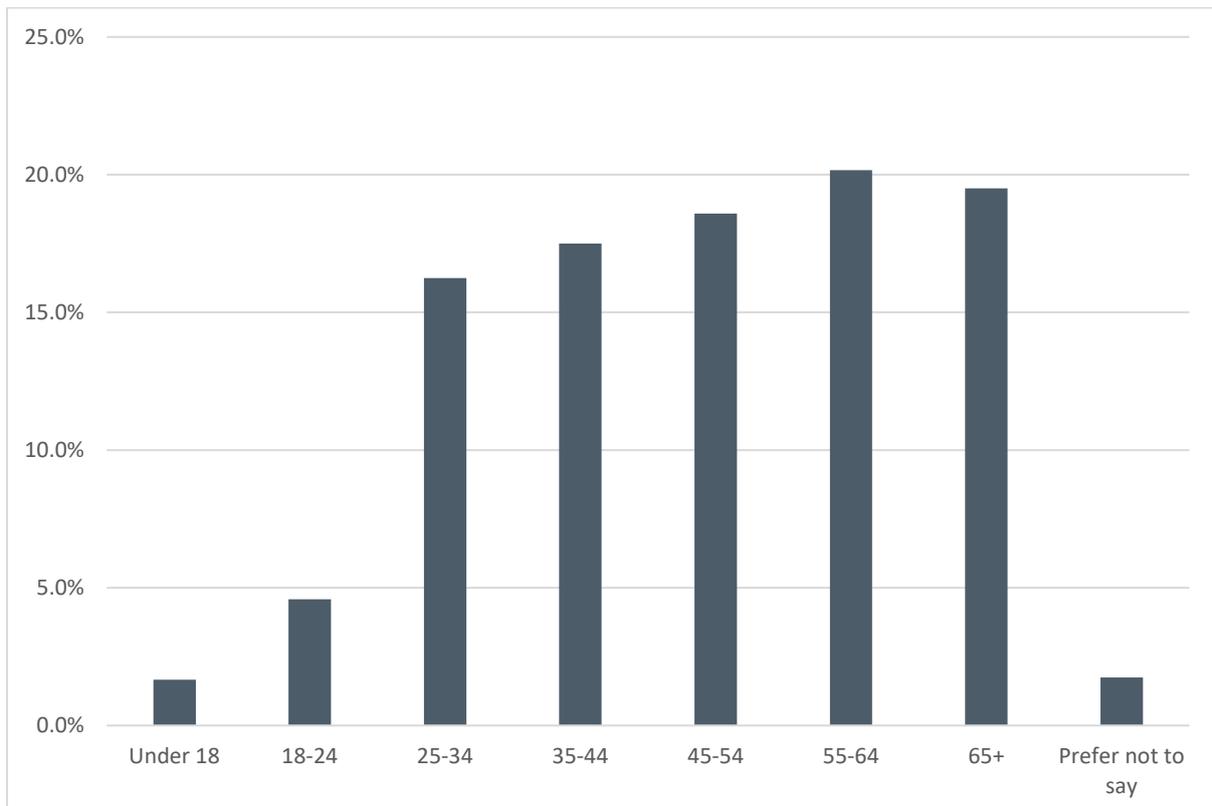
Demographic & equalities Questions:

- What is your age?
- What is your gender?
- What is your ethnicity?
- What is your religion?
- What is your sexual orientation?
- Do you have a disability?

These questions were asked as part of requirements to ensure that the survey has been responded to by a representative sample of the population. This data will also be used in conjunction with some of the other survey data to identify any trends on the types of responses.

Age

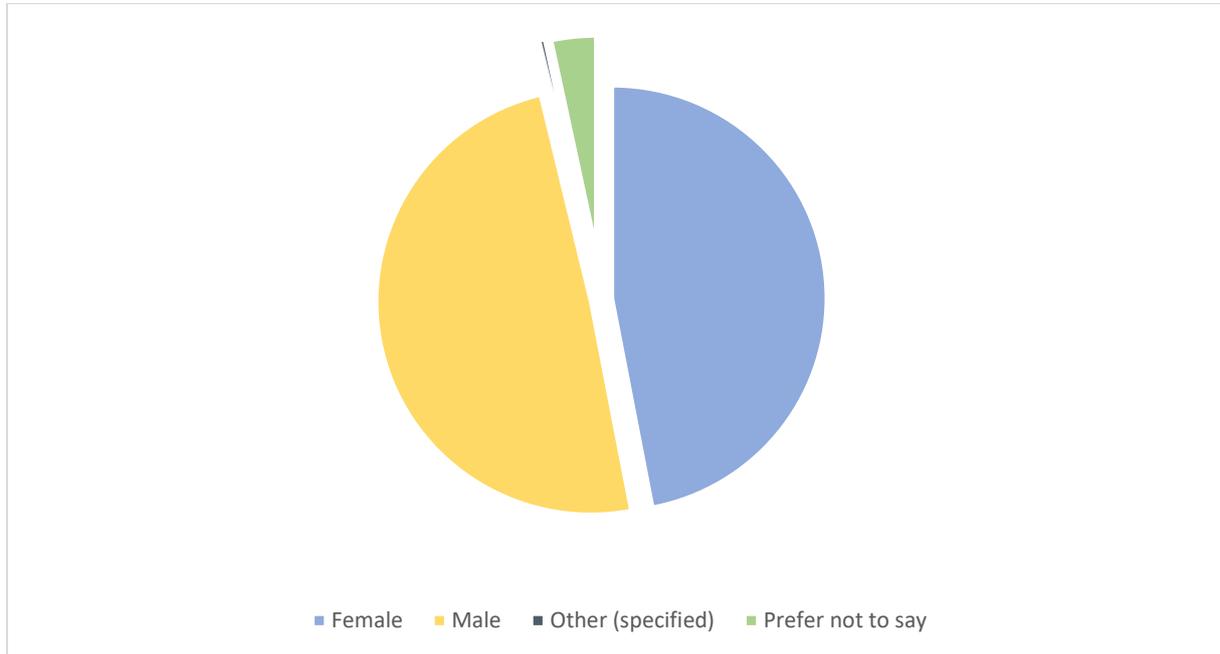
This asked individuals to specify an age range. Individuals could select a “prefer not to say” if they did not wish to disclose this.



Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Prefer not to say
1.7%	4.6%	16.2%	17.5%	18.6%	20.2%	19.5%	1.7%

Gender

This asked individuals to specify gender. A drop-down list, plus a text box was provided. Individuals could select a “prefer not to say” if they did not wish to disclose this.

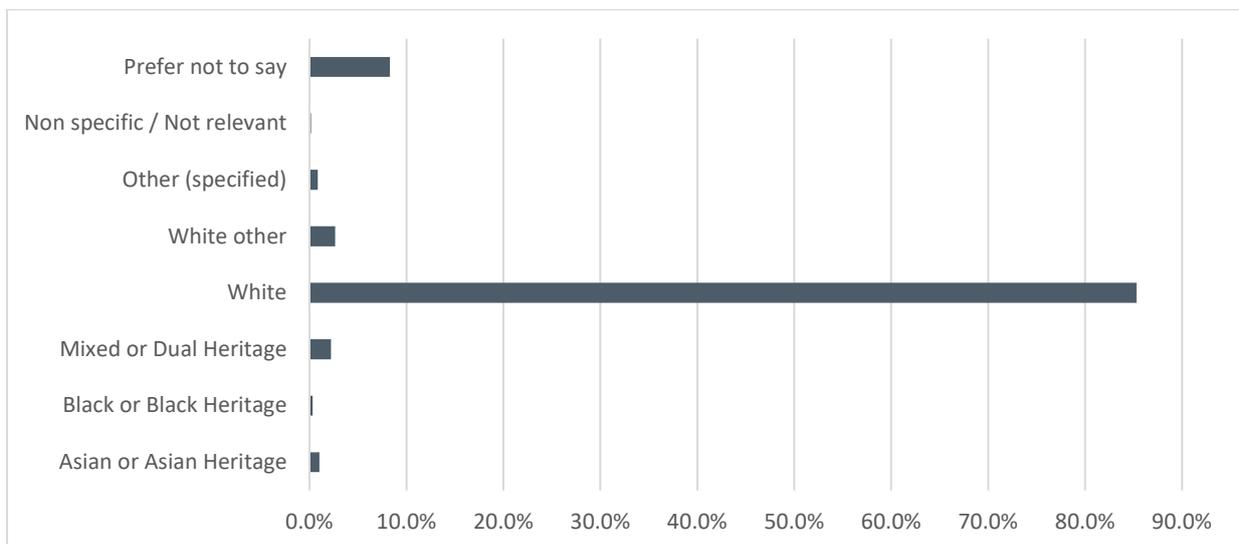


	%
Male	47.0%
Female	49.2%
Other (specified)*	0.4%
Prefer not to say	3.4%

*Multiple responses have been grouped together

Ethnicity

This asked individuals to specify ethnicity. A drop-down list, plus a text box was provided. Individuals could select a “prefer not to say” if they did not wish to disclose this.

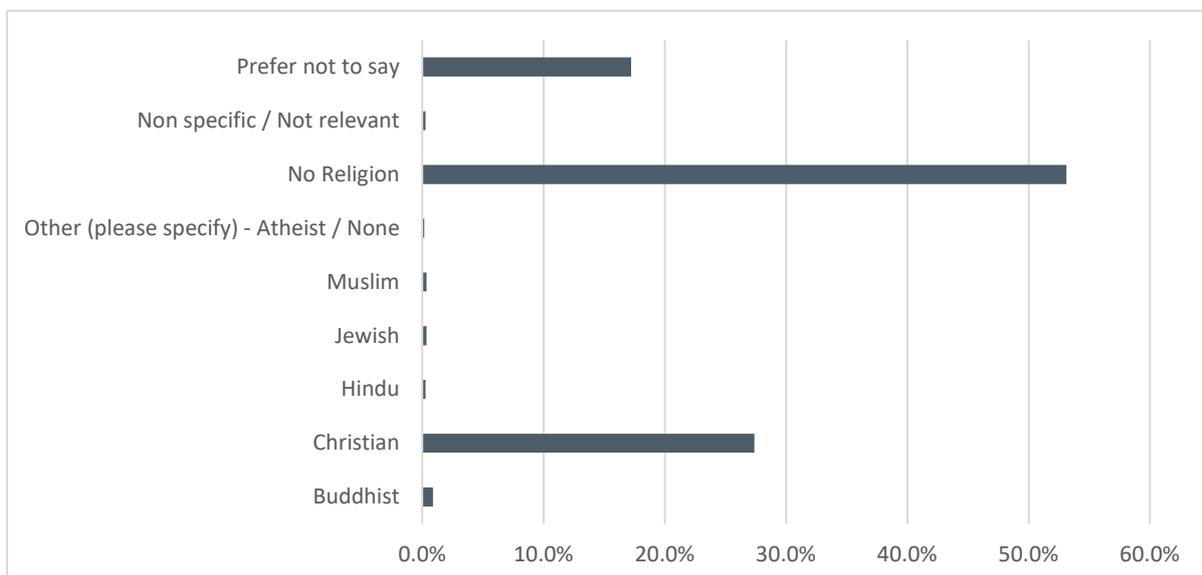


Ethnicity	%
Asian or Asian Heritage	1%
Black or Black Heritage	0.3%
Mixed or Dual Heritage	2.2%
White	84.6%
White other	3.1%
Other (specified)*	0.3%
Prefer not to say*	8.4%

*Multiple responses have been grouped together

Religion

This asked individuals to specify religious beliefs. A drop-down list, plus a text box was provided. Individuals could select a “prefer not to say” if they did not wish to disclose this.

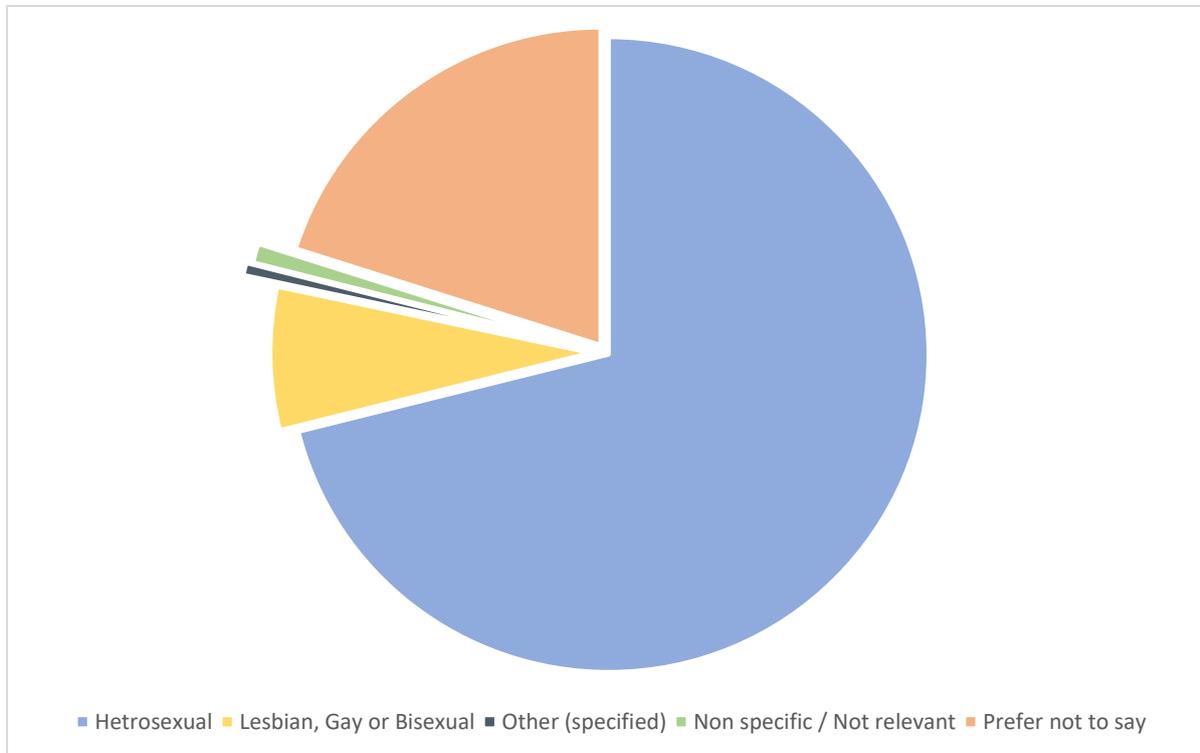


	%
Buddhist	0.7%
Christian	27%
Hindu	0.4%
Jewish	0.4%
Muslim	0.4%
Other (specified)*	1.4%
No Religion	52.4%
Prefer not to say*	17.3%

*Multiple responses have been grouped together

Sexual Orientation

This asked individuals to specify their sexual orientation. A drop-down list, plus a text box was provided. Individuals could select a “prefer not to say” if they did not wish to disclose this.

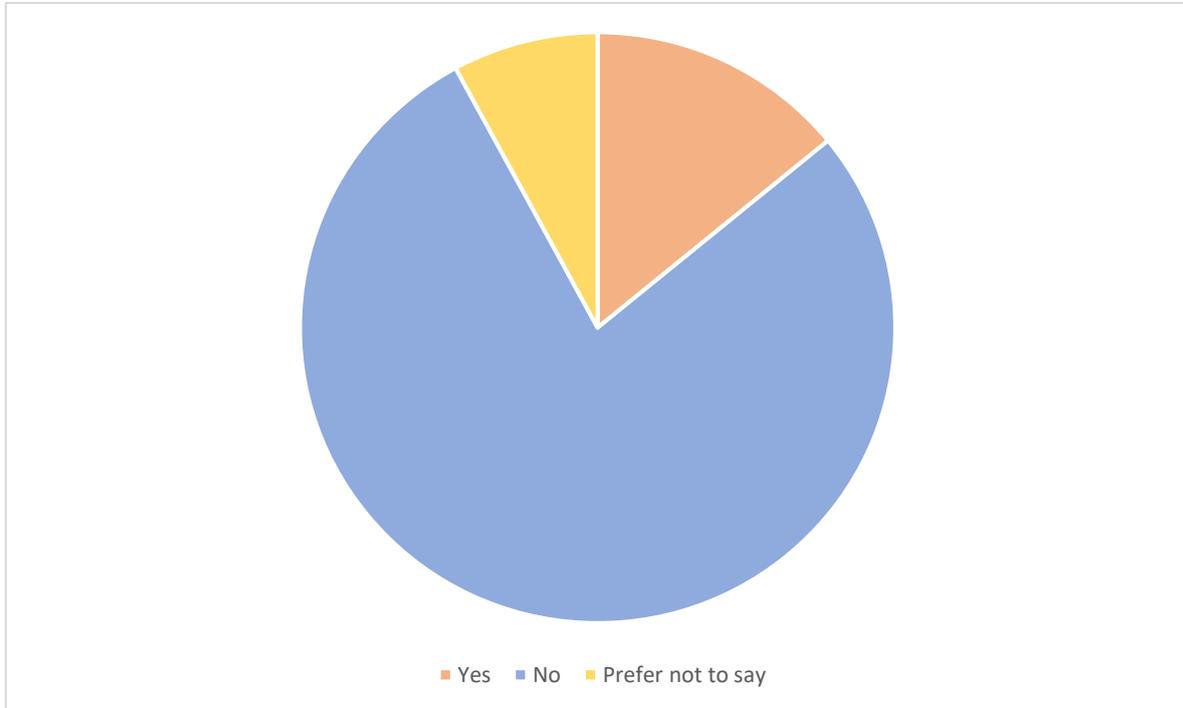


	%
Heterosexual	71.1%
Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual	7.2%
Other (specified)*	0.6%
Prefer not to say	21.1%

*Multiple responses have been grouped together

Disability

This asked individuals to specify whether they consider themselves having a disability or not. This was on the form of a “yes/no/prefer not to say” response only.



Disability	%
Yes	14%
No	78%
Prefer not to say	8%