

Derwentside Passenger Consultation Report

Objectives

A questionnaire was released to the public in Derwentside to gain an impression of public opinion regarding possible service changes, in order to inform the decision on the proposals. This would also provide a set of results for the company to refer back to should political opposition be encountered.

Method

The questionnaire was available to passengers for completion on the internet to submit electronically. It was also distributed as a two-fold colour leaflet with a space for comments. These were handed out to passengers in person, and some handed them back on the bus while others posted them. The leaflets were also made available at Stanley Bus Station during a Meet the Manager session. Leaflets were distributed mainly on the Red Kite services, as well as on the West Durham Swift, Lime, Venture and Diamond services.

Outputs

- Excel table showing responses as data
- Summary of results and charts with explanatory notes
- Summary of comments received
- Conclusion

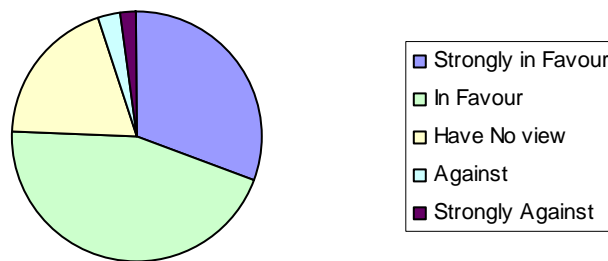
Questionnaire Results

The results to the questionnaire are shown graphically below, along with the corresponding question as worded to the respondent. The data for each chart is shown on the attached Excel worksheet. 535 responses were received, and of these approximately 150 contained additional comments.

- 1. Swalwell Roundabout is the biggest single cause of delays at peak times. We have spoken to Gateshead Council about this and a design has been agreed internally. However, the cost of the scheme has increased significantly, which will mean a delay to any noticeable improvements. Work will now not commence until 2009/10 at the earliest, so we may have to add extra minutes into our peak schedules so that we can operate at the times specified in the timetable. What do you think of this idea?**

The chart shows that the vast majority of passengers agree that extra minutes should be added to the timetables, as 76% are in favour or strongly in favour. A very small proportion of respondents are against or strongly against this idea (5%), so it is likely that introducing this change would have minimal negative impact on customer satisfaction and revenue.

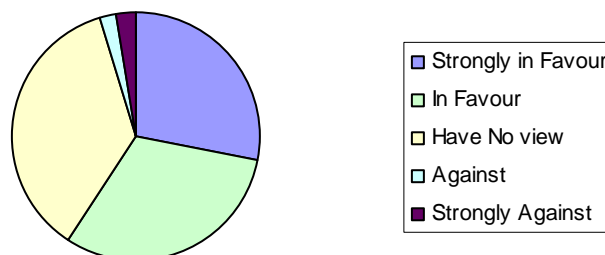
Question 1



- 2. We routed one bus an hour via Medomsley and the Dene but we have problems negotiating the narrow roads and parked cars in the Dene. It has been suggested that we go back to serving this area with a local mini bus link that would not have such problems with these roads. Medomsley itself could be given an alternative link to Newcastle by diverting and hourly 'West Durham Swift' service. What do you think about this idea?**

36% of respondents had no view to offer on this subject, but those that are in favour or strongly in favour of the change still represent the majority, totalling 59%. Again, a very small proportion is against or strongly against the change (5%), and the large amount of those who had no view suggests that many passengers are not affected by this change.

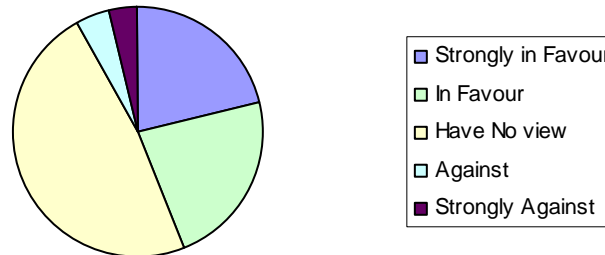
Question 2



3. Residents of Bridgehill have asked for a direct bus to Newcastle and the MetroCentre. What do you think of this idea?

The largest proportion of respondents had no view on this subject, which is likely to be representative of the relatively small number of residents of Bridgehill in comparison to the wider area surveyed. A slightly larger proportion is against or strongly against the idea compared with previous questions – they represent 8% of those surveyed.

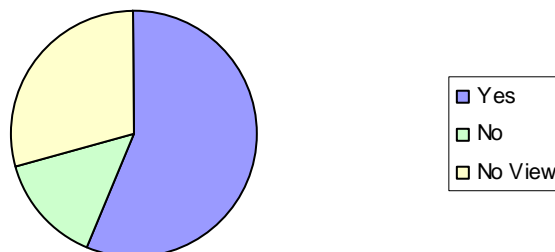
Question 3



4. We need to find a faster route for the Red Kite buses between Newcastle and the MetroCentre to help them keep to time. We used to operate via Handy Drive, Team Street and Askew Road because that was faster and more reliable, but some local residents had to walk a little further to stops. Should we return to the route via Handy Drive?

Most passengers agree that the Red Kites should use the Handy Drive route. Again, there are a notable proportion of passengers who have no opinion, but this is outweighed by the proportion in agreement with this which is 56%.

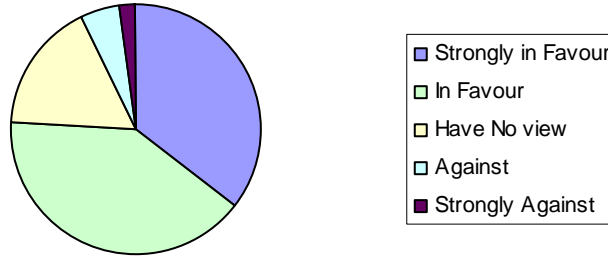
Question 4



4. (a) We have also recently completed tests to find out if the Red Kite buses could operate via the CentreLink busway, the Swing Bridge and Dean Street into Newcastle, avoiding the Swing Bridge when it is very busy at peak times. This would be faster and more reliable in the morning peak, but would set down some passengers at different stops in Newcastle. What do you think about this idea?

There was a notable amount of respondents that opposed this idea, with the total amount against or strongly against being 7%. However, the amount in favour or strongly in favour amounted to 76% of all respondents.

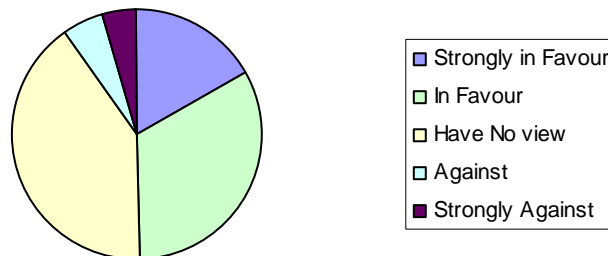
Question 4a



5. **Our X70 'West Durham Swift' link from Consett to Newcastle has proved popular with passengers. We have been asked about routing one journey per hour during the daytime on Monday to Saturday via Pont and Medomsley between Leadgate and Burnopfield. This would operate as service X71, replacing service 46A. The route would be otherwise unchanged. What do you think about this?**

Although this question provoked the most opposition, with those against or strongly against totalling 10%, significantly more people agreed with the proposal, with 50% in favour or strongly in favour.

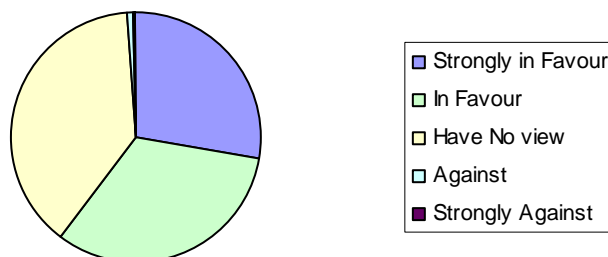
Question 5



6. **Our distinctive local 'Venture' services have provided improved links for many people in the Consett area. We have had requests to expand these services to further improve the links. We could provide a direct link to Shotley Bridge Hospital from Chopwell, Blackhall Mill and Ebchester by incorporating service 758 (759 evening and Sundays) into the 'V' network. What do you think about this idea?**

60% of passengers were either in favour or strongly in favour of this suggestion. Only 1% of respondents were against or strongly against, and 39% had no view on the subject.

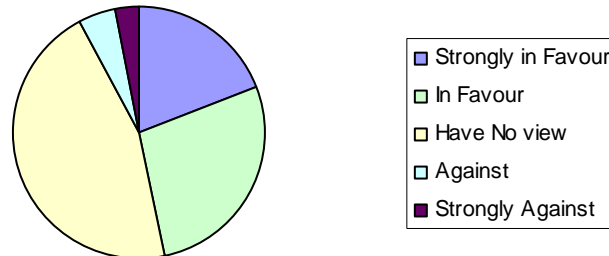
Question 6



6. (a) We could also extend our 'V' services to Medomsley, the Dene, Bradley bungalows, Pont and Leadgate to replace service 46A. What do you think about this?

There was a split in opinion here, between those who had no view (46%) and those in favour or strongly in favour (47%). 8% of respondents are against or strongly against this proposal.

Question 6a



Derwentside Comments received

Survey Specific

Red Kites

A total of 19 comments were received about the Red Kite services. The comments are summarised below:

- 7 passengers added comments to say they are in favour of a mini bus through the Dene, but are not in favour of replacing the 46A.
- 2 passengers think the times of the 45 and 46 should be spread out more evenly.
- 1 passenger requests the 46 runs later.
- 1 request for an express 45 and 46 at peak times from Newcastle to Consett.
- 1 request to run the 45/46 along Scotswood Road.
- Requests for higher frequency on the Red Kites.
- 1 request for the 46A to start earlier.
- One passenger comments that the 46 is a 'great bus service'.
- 2 passengers request the 46A returns to its old route.

Rowlands Gill

22 passengers request links for Rowlands Gill between: Burnopfield and Rowlands Gill (17), Blaydon and Rowlands Gill (2) and Stanley and Rowlands Gill (3).

X70

15 comments were received regarding the X70 service. The comments are summarised below:

- Requests for the service to run earlier.
- Request for the X70 to serve Leadgate to give residents more opportunities to catch a bus.
- Request for X70 to go through Stanley.
- Request for bigger buses at peak times.
- Increased frequency during the day and on Sundays.
- Concerns that buses leave Newcastle from the wrong stand.
- Request for the bus to go through Delves Lane.
- Two passengers complain about the 0622 departure from Consett as it is often late.

Shotley Bridge

10 passengers request the return of a link from Shotley Bridge to Durham via Bridgehill (replacement of the 765).

Shotley Bridge Hospital

12 passengers express that they need more links to Shotley Bridge Hospital, from Chopwell, Bridgehill, Blackhill and Ebchester. Many comment that this is especially important because of the new Queens Road Medical Centre opening at the end of March.

Fares

5 passengers commented that tickets are too expensive. One of these asked for Buzz Fare boundaries to be reviewed, and another stated that she was pleased with services in general, but it was cheaper for her and her 3 children to take a taxi from Shotley Bridge to Consett than take the bus. Another noted that the cost of a 16 week pass had increased by £30, which she feels is a big increase.

MetroCentre

7 passengers commented that they would like their services to bypass the MetroCentre. 5 were travelling from Rowlands Gill and 2 from Blackhill in Consett.

Service 15A

4 comments were received regarding this service. One passenger asks if this service could be diverted to create a direct link between Castleside and Newcastle and Durham. 2 passengers state that the reliability and punctuality is terrible. 2 passengers request that we continue to run the 15A beyond the trial period.

Scotswood Road

2 passengers suggest that buses run along Scotswood Road, in addition to the suggestion that the X70 runs along Scotswood Road (in section X70).

General

Bus Stops

Some comments were received about bus stops and they are summarised as follows:

Request to activate real time functionality on electronic displays in bus stations.

Return to the bus stops of one year ago.

3 passengers stated that a decent bus station is required at Consett, and one of these noted that it is lacking in security measures.

A resident of Fenwick Way, Consett states that a bus stop is needed nearer their residence as her son has to walk to Consett Bus Station each morning.

One passenger comments that he would like to see litter bins capable of disposing of cigarette ends at every bus stop.

Pushchairs

2 passengers suggest we charge for the carrying of unfolded pushchairs, and 1 passenger suggests we use that space better. An elderly passenger raises the concern that he has to vacate his seat to allow a young mother with a pushchair to have the space, even though she is more able bodied.

Windows

2 Passengers commented that drivers should be able to open windows in hot weather, and a couple of passengers state that graphics on the bus obstruct the view of scenery as they travel. From the post codes of these respondents it is likely that they are referring to the Red Kite brand.

Miscellaneous

Various comments were received requesting that we improve punctuality and reliability, and that we increase frequency on some routes. We also had a comment regarding numbering on the Lime services, as there are many variations. One elderly passenger also said not all drivers lower the deck when they pull into stops, making it difficult to alight.

Positive Comments

20 comments were received that either praised services in general or the suggested changes detailed in the leaflet. These comments are shown below:

"Good service, polite staff"

"I really appreciate the bus services in Newcastle and Gateshead, as compared to the places I lived before its fantastic and I would like to thank you for that"

"I am very happy with the service I get, thank you"

"I think the new buses are excellent...also agree we need improvements at Swalwell"

"I think the bus services are very good as they are" (passenger also agreed with all proposed changes)

"No real problems with the services I use"

"As a mainly 'off peak' user of public transport I find the services are more than adequate locally. The congestion in Newcastle and its approaches is the biggest problem, largely due to inadequate road systems"

"Red Kite buses – really great! Services from Consett – no complaints! Drivers very helpful (they must get fed up with the double parking on their routes, very difficult)"

"Everything covered"

"I hope you continue running the service 15A through Delves after the 6 month trial period, it was a wise decision to reinstate it, a positive improvement – well done!"

"It is a very good service"

"I'm very happy with the present bus timetables"

"We have a good bus service from Dipton to Newcastle, hope we keep it that way"

"I only travel to Consett to see friends but for the people living here I think you are doing a good job with the improvements"

"Any changes that make services more reliable are very welcome"

"All drivers are good in all the services"

"I strongly agree with the proposed new route for the Red Kite buses, as the 47 which makes a similar journey is a much quicker service"

"Generally quite good"

"I strongly agree there should be a direct bus route from Bridgehill to Newcastle due to the high number of elderly people living in the area"

"A V bus is a good idea, especially for Pont and Bradley Bungalows"

Conclusion

The Derwentside Passenger Consultation has been favourably received, with never more than 10% of respondents against or strongly against any of the proposals. There was a good response rate to the survey so a good sample size was achieved and this means we can assume a good level of reliability for the opinions gained. In addition to this, the method of distribution has secured a varied sample, due to availability on a range of services and on the internet.

Comments received did not give an impression of any strong opposition, and many were simply suggestions or general comments not specific to the changes this consultation seeks to address.

Based on the survey results alone, action should be taken as follows:

- Extra minutes should be added into peak schedules to account for delays at Swalwell roundabout

- The Red Kites should return to the Handy Drive route

- Arrangements should be made for the red Kites to run via the CentreLink busway into Newcastle

- Service 758 should be incorporated into the 'V' network

Further consideration should be given to alternative arrangements for passengers currently using service 46A to and from Medomsley, the Dene, Pont and Bradley Bungalows. This will include using the X71 and changing at Gateshead for the MetroCentre, and this should be communicated to passengers in passenger briefings.