

October 2012



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Representing Britain's
Passenger Transport Executives

Moving on

**Working towards a
better public transport
offer for young people
in tough times**

This report forms part of **pteg's** wider role in stimulating debate around broader policy issues of relevance to transport. We hope that it will help to generate ideas, discussion and feedback and therefore welcome any comments you may have on the points it raises. You can find our contact details on the back cover of this report.

pteg represents the six Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) which between them serve more than eleven million people in Greater Manchester (TfGM), Merseyside (Merseytravel), South Yorkshire (SYPTe), Tyne and Wear (Nexus), the West Midlands (Centro) and West Yorkshire (Metro). Bristol and the West of England, Leicester and Nottingham City Councils, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) and Transport for London (TfL) are associate members. The PTEs plan, procure, provide and promote public transport in some of Britain's largest city regions with the aim of providing integrated public transport networks accessible to all.



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Moving on

Working towards a better public transport offer for young people in tough times

01 Introduction

Public transport is central to the lives of many young people and their families. When asked what issues affect them, public transport is frequently at the top of young people's list of concerns. They rely upon public transport, and the bus in particular, to reach a whole host of valuable opportunities, from attainment boosting after-school activities and weekend jobs to visiting friends and volunteering in the community. Access to these opportunities is crucial to their growth and development.

For transport authorities seeking to encourage more people to travel by bus, cultivating this young market is important. Positive experiences of using the bus from an early age make it more likely that young people will keep up the bus habit into adulthood and, in turn, pass this on to their own children.

Young people can be powerful advocates for bus travel when we get it right – or damning critics when we get it wrong. In the age of social media, their experiences – whether good or bad – have the potential to spread rapidly to their peers, their extended networks and beyond. It pays to have young people on side.

Despite the clear value of supporting young people's travel – both from a social inclusion and a market development point of view – provision for this group has been hard hit by spending cuts. In efforts to balance budgets concessionary fare schemes have been cut back, whilst the evening and weekend bus services that are highly valued by young people, are often the first to disappear when times are tough.

The concessionary fare offer for young people is under particular pressure because, unlike the national concession for older and disabled people, it is non-statutory. With tightening budgets, there is often a difficult choice to be made between cutting these non-statutory concessions or cutting wider 'supported' bus services (which are also non-statutory). These supported bus services are those that would not be profitable for bus companies to run, but which are considered 'socially necessary' (such as some evening services or buses to isolated housing estates or rural areas). Faced with this decision, transport authorities have often chosen to put service protection first in the interests of the wider community.

Whilst recognising that the current spending environment is difficult and that many of the key levers for change are in the hands of bus operators, this paper argues that there is still much that local transport authorities can do to develop a good transport offer on bus for young people. It aims to present ideas and generate discussion around what such an offer could include.

This paper is not intended to be an exhaustive account, or an attempt to set out definitive recommendations on what the offer might look like. Instead it aims to stimulate thinking on what strategies local transport authorities could adopt to provide young people with the best offer they can, bearing in mind wider funding constraints. It could also provide ideas on what might be included in longer term strategies that could be adopted as more funds become available.

Any strategies or projects that emerge should be developed in close consultation with young people themselves. This in itself can help save money by making sure that what is provided is what young people want.

Structure of this paper

This paper begins by looking at how important bus travel is to young people and how important young people are in growing the market for bus. These sections intend to briefly make the case for investing in provision for young people. The next section looks at the impact spending cuts have had on transport provision for young people and how this might affect their use of buses - and access to opportunities - now and in the future. The remainder of the paper looks at components of an offer for young people on bus and potential measures to support young people's bus travel in three broad areas – affordability, availability and acceptability – before drawing conclusions as to how local transport authorities can develop a sound offer on bus for young people in tough times.

A note on definitions and scope

The ideas in chapters seven to nine of this paper are presented in four age categories – under-5s, 5 to 11 year olds, 11 to 16 year olds and post 16 (up to the age of 20). This is in recognition of the fact that young people are not a homogenous group. The needs of 5 to 11 year olds, for example, will be different to those of 16 to 20 year olds – although there will, of course, be a significant degree of overlap.

More broadly, this approach reflects the fact that people's relationship with transport over the life-course is dynamic – as people move through childhood, youth and old age, their travel needs and experiences change along with their lifestyles¹.

It should also be noted that this paper focuses predominantly on urban areas outside of London.

Public transport is frequently at the top of young people's list of concerns

02 How important is bus travel to young people?

When asked what issues affect them, public transport is frequently at the top of young people's list of concerns.

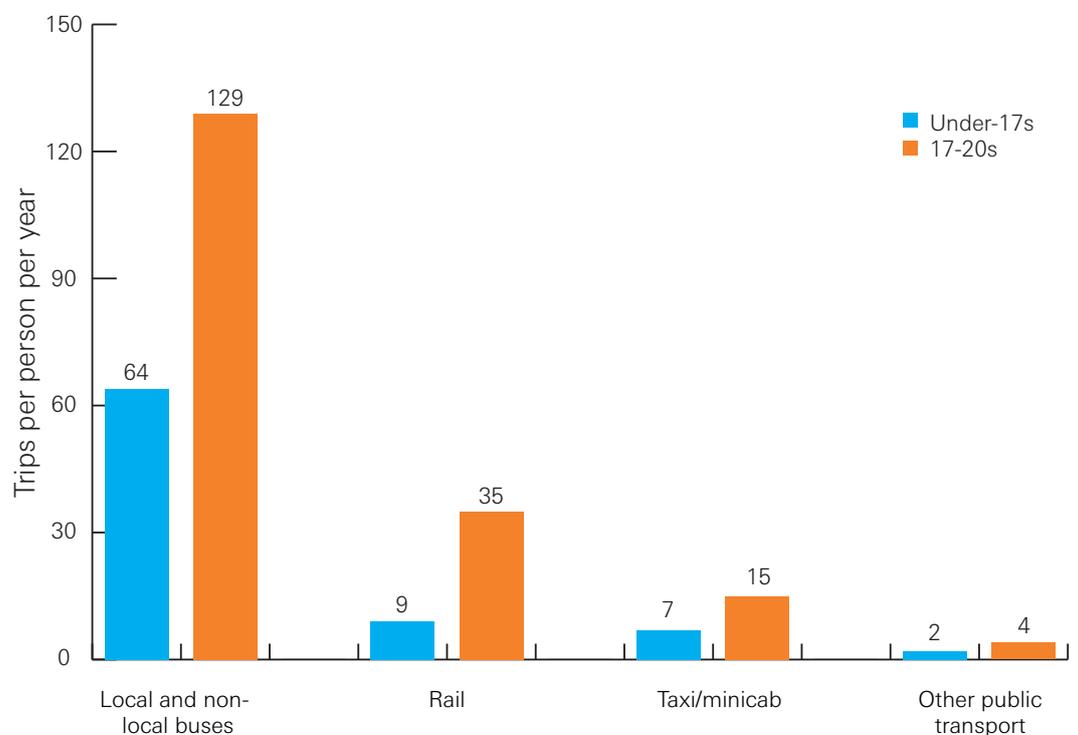
The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP), for example, voted to make 'Public Transport: Cheaper, Better, Accessible' their priority campaign for 2012². This emerged from a nationwide poll of 65,000 young people which identified the top five issues of concern for young people. Members of the UKYP, at their annual sitting in the House of Commons, voted on which of these issues should become the priority campaign for the year and public transport came out on top.

Furthermore, the Youth Select Committee (made up entirely of young people) chose public transport as their first topic for inquiry, issuing a call for written evidence³ and holding oral evidence sessions over two days in parliament.

What do we know about young people's public transport use?

For most young people, the bus (rather than the train or the tram) is public transport, as the chart below illustrates.

Young people's public transport trips - 2010



Source: DfT National Travel Survey, table NTS0601

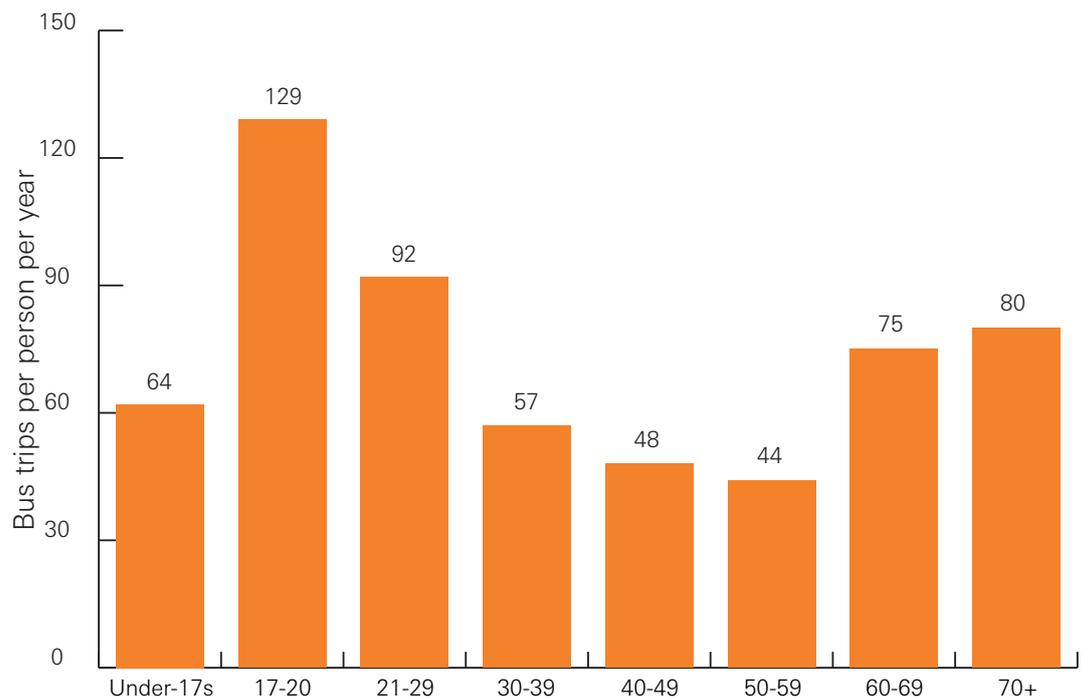
The bus is by far the dominant mode of public transport for young people

As can be seen from the chart, the bus is by far the dominant mode of public transport for young people. The bus appears to assume particular importance for 'older' young people – bus trip rates for 17 to 20 year olds are double those for under-17s. Indeed, at 129 bus trips per year, 17 to 20 year olds make considerably more bus journeys than the average person in Great Britain, who makes 68 bus trips per year.

These averages are likely to mask a great deal of variation between the journey patterns of young people of different ages. 11 to 16 year olds, for example, are likely to make more than 64 bus trips a year, as they grow in independence and are likely to need to travel further to education.

Young people are, therefore, an important market for bus travel. However, after the age of 20, bus trips reduce and, whilst numbers recover in older age, they never reach the levels observed among 17 to 20 year olds, as the chart below shows. This illustrates the importance of providing a good service for young travellers to ensure that, once they have the choice to opt out of public transport, they choose to continue using it.

Bus trips by age - 2010



Source: DfT National Travel Survey, table NTS0601

Why do young people travel?

It is also interesting to explore why young people travel. As can be seen below, journey purpose varies by age⁴.

Under 17s most likely to be travelling to...	17 to 20s most likely to be travelling to...
1. Education (242 trips per person, per year)	1. Visit friends (216 trips per person, per year)
2. No purpose of own (accompanying someone else) (184 trips)	2. Commute (148 trips)
3. Visit friends (148 trips)	3. Shop (147 trips)
4. Sport/entertainment (86 trips)	4. Education (140 trips)
5. Personal business (67 trips)	5. Personal business (69 trips) (closely followed by Sport/entertainment at 68 trips)

Again, these averages are likely to mask differences within these two broad age categories. However, we can see that education and escort journeys dominate for under-17s. Shopping is less important for this group compared to 17 to 20 year olds, but sport and entertainment is more important. Visiting friends is a key journey purpose for both age groups, with commuting coming to the fore for 'older' young people as they begin to enter employment.

Understanding why young people travel helps to determine the sorts of offers and incentives on bus that would work for young people of different ages and help them to access opportunities.

The bus can be an important tool in expanding young people's access to the activities they need to grow and develop. Around a quarter of families (and half of those on the lowest incomes)⁵ have no access to a car. Without available, affordable, accessible and acceptable bus services, young people from these families are at risk of being cut off from these essential opportunities, that often lie beyond walking or cycling distance.

More broadly, being able to travel independently is an important life skill in itself for all young people, building confidence and expanding horizons.

The drive of many young people to 'make buses better' is understandable, given the opportunities a good bus service can unlock. It is important to tap into their passion and desire for change in developing strategies that support young people's bus use.

The voice of young people has never been louder, or more influential

03 How important are young people in growing the market for bus?

The previous chapter has shown how young people are amongst the biggest users of bus services but that bus use tails off significantly from the age of around 20. Often young people will have no option but to use bus services before they learn to drive. We need to make sure that once they do have a choice, their previous positive experiences of bus travel encourage them to continue using the bus into adulthood, even if they learn to drive or buy a car. This also helps ensure that they pass the bus habit on to their own children.

Evidence suggests that among younger children, travelling by bus is seen as *'positive, exciting and adventurous'* but that dissatisfaction grows with age, with teenagers coming to see buses as *'an unavoidable necessity of life.'*⁶ It is through this process that *'some of the keenest users become some of the sharpest critics.'*⁷

Social media means the experiences and views of young people on bus travel – whether good or bad – have the potential to spread rapidly to their peers, their extended networks and beyond. This - combined with growing calls for increasing youth participation in decision-making (such as the Government's 'Positive for Youth' statement⁸) - means that the voice of young people has never been louder, or more influential.

At national level, we have seen these views expressed in the form of high profile, youth-led campaigning on public transport, from the Youth Select Committee inquiry into public transport to influential reports by young researchers, such as the Trailblazers' transport report, documenting an undercover investigation into the adequacy of public transport by more than 100 young disabled campaigners from across the UK⁹.

Getting young people on side can be the difference between having a powerful ally or a sworn enemy. It is more important than ever to involve young people in the transport decisions that affect them so that they understand the reasoning and have the opportunity to influence outcomes.

The Government's Positive for Youth statement notes:

*'The Government urges every local area to establish and maintain arrangements for ensuring that the voice of young people is heard in local decision making and that young people have a role in inspecting and reporting on the quality of service delivery.'*¹⁰

The difficult financial climate has contributed to the scaling back of some of the transport provision most valued by young people. On top of existing inconsistency, complexity and perceived unfairness in the system – for example, around child fares – this has led to many young people speaking out through the aforementioned campaigns and via other means, such as a video petition submitted to the Department for Education, calling for more to be done to support public transport options for young people¹¹.

The next section looks in more detail at the impact of transport spending cuts on young people.

04 Tough times for young people on the bus

Even before the recent transport spending cuts, young people have expressed dissatisfaction with the service they receive on the bus. This dissatisfaction grows as young people begin to travel more frequently and independently and have to pay for their own travel.

Research by DfT as far back as 2006, for example, found that young people identify lack of available bus services, especially in the evenings and at weekends, as a key barrier to participating in education, training, employment and leisure activities¹².

At the same time, young people have long campaigned for more affordable, equitable and consistent fares across the country. They have expressed frustration, for example, at the differing ages at which young people begin to pay adult fares and the fact that in many areas, there is no concessionary travel for young people at all. Where concessions do exist, these are often pegged at a fraction of adult fares, meaning they rise alongside adult fare levels, creating unpredictability, confusion and the risk of some young people being priced off the buses completely.

The lack of off-peak services and the patchwork of different fares offers are in large part due to the deregulated nature of bus services outside London. This system leaves bus operators largely free to decide what services they will run and what fares they will charge. As private companies, they have to ensure that they make a profit overall, meaning fares go up and unprofitable routes and services are cut where this is considered necessary.

Transport authorities are able to step in, for example, by funding extra 'socially necessary' (or 'supported') bus services or by introducing concessions for vulnerable groups, such as young people.

However, cuts to public spending have left transport authorities less able to fill the gaps in this way. Supported bus services and concessionary fares for young people (unlike those for older and disabled people) are non-statutory making them vulnerable to cuts as transport authorities seek to ensure they can continue to meet their core legal responsibilities. Faced with either scaling back concessions for particular groups or cutting supported bus services, transport authorities have often chosen to put service protection first, in the interests of the wider community.

Bus services outside London face this, and a number of other key challenges as a result of the cuts, as set out in the table opposite. These challenges are likely to have a particularly detrimental impact on young people, who, as described in chapter two, are amongst the biggest users of bus services.

Challenge	Impact on young people
<p>20% cut to bus service operators grant (BSOG) BSOG rebates bus operators for the fuel duty they pay in running local bus services. BSOG reduces the cost of providing a bus service and helps keep fares lower than they would otherwise be.</p>	<p>Bus operators may choose to increase fares or use the cut to BSOG to justify a fare rise that they would have implemented in any case.</p>
<p>Reductions in Department for Communities and Local Government funding for local government - this puts local authority budgets for supported bus services under pressure. These are bus services that would not be profitable to run on a commercial basis. The funding is also used to support other discretionary schemes, such as discounted travel for young people.</p>	<p>Supported bus services are often evening or weekend services that many young people rely on to access after school activities, visit friends or get to part-time jobs.</p> <p>The reduced funding pot could also mean that transport authorities have to cut back their discretionary child fare offers to ensure they have enough money to fulfil their statutory responsibilities.</p>
<p>Meeting the rising demand for concessionary travel for older and disabled people – local transport authorities are required by law to fund free off-peak bus travel for older and disabled people. The need to meet this growing demand from a reduced funding pot leaves less money for discretionary spending.</p>	<p>Meeting the demand may mean less money is left over to fund discretionary initiatives, such as child fare offers or support for jobseekers.</p>
<p>Abolition of the Rural Bus Grant – this grant was used to help fund non-commercial rural bus services.</p>	<p>Reduction in bus services for young people in rural areas who often have no other independent transport alternatives to access employment, activities and friends in the surrounding area.</p>

In addition to these challenges, young people aged 16 to 19 have been affected by the abolition in 2011 of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). The EMA was originally launched as an incentive to participation in education and training beyond school to age 18. Research has shown that the weekly payments were relied upon by the poorest students as a necessary means of support for their learning (including meeting transport costs)¹³.

Transport authorities will increasingly be held to account by young people

The EMA has since been replaced by the 16-19 Bursary Fund. The move saw funding cut from £560m a year to £180m and eligibility greatly curtailed.

Research by Barnardo's¹⁴ has found that the 16-19 Bursary Fund:

*'leaves too many without the financial backup they need to support their everyday expenses, leaving them out of pocket and seriously considering whether they can afford to stay the course.'*¹⁵

Young people surveyed for the Barnardo's research were finding it difficult to meet the costs of food, transport and equipment for their courses. Some had to spend their entire allowance on transport costs whilst others were forced to skip meals to make ends meet.

Cuts begin to bite

We are beginning to see the impact of cuts to transport spending on the ground. Research by Campaign for Better Transport found that over two-thirds of English local authorities had decided to make cutbacks to their supported bus services, whilst 77% could not rule out further cuts¹⁶. Meanwhile, many local authority and commercial led child fare offers have been scaled back

Transport authorities will increasingly be held to account by young people to explain why these decisions are being made. Young people need to be involved in transport decision making that affects their lives. In involving young people from the outset we can help them to understand the reasoning behind decision-making and to work together to develop initiatives that meet their needs but that are also informed by an understanding of the restricted spending environment.

The next chapter looks at how transport authorities might go about developing an offer on bus with, rather than for, young people.

Engaging with young people costs very little and can save money

05 Developing an offer with young people

Young people, in common with all passengers, want bus services that are available, accessible, affordable and acceptable. At the same time, we need to recognise that young people have specific transport needs and expectations which are dynamic - shifting as they move through early childhood, the school years and into adulthood.

The best way to understand these transitions is to consult directly with young people and their families and work with them to design realistic solutions that help them to get to the places they want to go.

The word 'realistic' is important. Young people often come to transport authorities and bus operators with demands that simply cannot be met, particularly in the current economic climate. Getting to realistic solutions means working with young people to tap into their enthusiasm and appetite for change whilst generating a dialogue about what can practically be achieved.

Asking for, and acting on, young people's views and experiences of transport can improve service planning, design and implementation and help to save money by making sure what is on offer is what young people want.¹⁷ It can give the young people involved a stake in their local transport, making them feel valued and listened to, and at the same time, making it more likely that they will use public transport.

The box below shows one of the ways in which Transport for Greater Manchester has sought to involve young people in decision-making.

TfGM: Greater Manchester Young Persons Transport Panel

TfGM worked in partnership with the North West Regional Youth Work Unit and, in doing so, was able to secure access to young people throughout Greater Manchester, resulting in the establishment of the Young Persons Transport Panel. The Panel was involved in the evaluation and design of the annual Youth Strategy Action Plan as well as in the development of the IGO Travel Pass for young people

Engaging with young people costs very little to do, particularly if use is made of existing networks of young people such as Youth Councils, or, in the example below, school councils.

Centro: Network Review consultation involving young people

As part of their most recent bus Network Review in the West Midlands, Centro worked in partnership with school councils in the Review area to gather young peoples' views on how they thought their public transport provision could be improved. Centro also ran an online survey for young people living in affected areas.

Young people need to understand transport decision making

Engagement in decision-making could take a number of forms – some young people may wish to come along to meetings or sit on scrutiny committees others may prefer to be involved in different ways, such as by carrying out research, inspecting services or by getting involved in peer-to-peer promotion of public transport. Even very young children can get involved, for example, in designing posters or talking about what they like or don't like about going on the bus.

Social media and online surveys are other good (usually free) ways of involving young people and opening lines of communication. Tools such as Survey Monkey¹⁸, for example, allow you to design and run surveys for up to 100 respondents for free.

Keeping the conversation going

Having sought the views of young people, it is crucial to report back on how these have been followed up (e.g. 'you said, we did') and ensure that two-way communication channels remain open.

Current budgetary constraints mean that, having engaged, transport authorities will not always be able to give young people what they want. This can leave all parties disillusioned.

Where young people's demands cannot be met, it is important to explain the reasons for this, suggest alternative ways forward and to keep constructive channels of communication open throughout.

We need to provide young people with the information they need to understand how decisions are made and the constraints that transport authorities and operators are faced with. Providing this information makes it more likely that young people will formulate realistic proposals and that they will come away satisfied, rather than disappointed.

pteg, National Children's Bureau and other partners have produced a guide for young people, explaining how the bus sector works and how they can most effectively work to make buses better in their community¹⁹. A complementary guide for the bus sector has also been produced, looking at how to effectively engage with young people²⁰.

It is hoped that some of the ideas presented in this paper will help to inform a dialogue between young people and transport authorities on what the offer for young people on bus should be and generate ideas for how young people's transport needs can be met in the context of the current financial climate.

06 Components of the offer

The offer for young people (or indeed, any passenger group) on bus should ideally be designed around the four key components of socially inclusive public transport – availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability²¹:

- **Availability:** the public transport network should be within easy reach of where people live and take them to and from the places they want to go at times and frequencies that correspond to lifestyle patterns.
- **Accessibility:** vehicles, stops and interchanges, and the walking routes to and from these, must be designed in such a way that, as far as possible, everyone is able to use them without unreasonable difficulty.
- **Affordability:** people should not be ‘priced out’ of using public transport because of high fares and should be able to easily find the right ticket for them.
- **Acceptability:** people should feel that public transport is something that is equipped to meet their needs as well as comfortable, safe and convenient.

The ideas set out in the remainder of this paper for developing an offer for young people on bus will focus on availability, affordability and acceptability. Accessibility is not covered in this paper as measures to improve accessibility generally benefit passengers of all ages and there is limited need to design accessibility measures specifically for young people²².

Within the broad categories of availability, affordability and acceptability, ideas are organised by age group in recognition that, whilst there is a great deal of overlap, young people’s needs vary according to their age. For example, as outlined in chapter two, young people of different ages often have very different reasons for travelling. It is important to be aware of these differences (as well as similarities) so that we can target measures effectively and understand who they are likely to benefit.

The table on the following page gives a broad overview of some of the variations between age groups.

Age	Level of independence	Priority journeys	Cost	Examples of measures that could help
Under 5s	None – accompanied travel only	Primarily escort journeys (i.e. the traveller has no purpose of their own).	Largely travel free	Initiatives targeted at parents and carers e.g. support for trip-chaining and sufficient space on board buses for buggies and shopping.
5 to 11 year olds	None – accompanied travel only	Escort journeys still important but education journeys likely to be main priority as well as visiting friends and sports/entertainment activity.	Reduced fares may be available	Still a role for initiatives targeted at parents and carers. Reduced fares when travelling with an adult. Special offers/marketing tied to leisure activities. Building parent/child confidence in preparation for independent travel at transition to secondary school.
11 to 16 year olds	Semi-independent – some accompanied travel remains	Education journeys a key priority, as well as visiting friends, sports and entertainment and shopping.	Reduced fares may be available, adult fares may start to kick in	Building parent/child confidence in public transport. Fares which support participation in after school and social activities – e.g. flat fares allowing multiple trips and longer distances. Special offers/marketing tied to leisure activities. Easy and accessible information to help with journey planning and understanding fares.
Post 16	Independent travel	As above, although commuting begins to rival education as a key priority. Shopping assumes greater importance whilst sports/entertainment trips decline to become more in line with the average for GB as a whole.	Reduced fares may be available, usually for those in full-time education or training, otherwise adult fares apply	Help to identify which education/training/employment opportunities can be reached by public transport. Fare offers that support young people to continue education and training or enter employment. Flat fares allowing multiple trips and longer distances – supports job search, social activities, travel between different locations in the same day (e.g. college, work placement, home, evening job). Special offers/marketing tied to discounts at retailers.

This paper will now consider in more detail measures that could support an affordable, available and acceptable bus service for young people of different ages.

07 Affordability

An affordable bus service means that people should not be 'priced out' of using public transport because of high fares and should be able to easily find the right ticket for them.

The affordability of bus travel for young people has been severely affected by restrictions on public spending and the economic climate more generally.

Public spending cuts have seen a scaling back of many transport authority discounted fare schemes for young people as difficult decisions are made between funding concessions for particular groups and protecting wider bus services for communities.

Meanwhile, bus operators have also in many cases sought to pare down their offers to young people. In Merseyside, for example, the major commercial operator has increased its child fare from half to two-thirds of the adult fare. However, it is worth noting that some operators have taken a commercial decision to actively target incentives at young people in order to cultivate the future market for bus travel.

The economic climate more generally means that many families have less money in their pockets to pay for what they might perceive as 'non-essential' travel, affecting the number of journeys young people are able to make outside of school hours.

Post 16, increasing numbers of young people are affected by unemployment, making it difficult for them to meet the costs of transport to interviews and to take up potential job opportunities.

Increasing fare levels and growing complexity in fare offers is compounded by the fact that young people can find it difficult to access information about how much their bus journey is likely to cost.

This section considers some of the measures that could be used to improve the affordability of bus travel for young people. Fundamentally, evidence points to the value of developing simple, flat and consistent fare offers for young people aged 5 and up.

Under-5s

Under-5s generally travel on the bus for free, and therefore to benefit this group, transport authorities would need to focus on making travel more affordable for their parents and carers, putting more money in their pockets and enabling them to make more trips with their young children. Low income families in particular, use the bus more than those on higher incomes, spend a higher proportion of their income on bus travel and are not always able to access the best deals on bus fares due to, for example, difficulties in meeting the upfront cost of purchasing a season ticket²³.

To benefit under 5s (and, indeed families with children of all ages), the needs of low income families should, therefore, be taken into account. For example, as smartcard schemes develop, these could include features to benefit this group. In London, Oyster's daily price capping helps ensure passengers are automatically paying the lowest fare, whilst the capacity to load on extra discounts means that jobseekers, for example, pay half the adult fare. The upfront cost of purchasing Oyster is also kept low to improve accessibility.

5 to 11 year olds

In the metropolitan areas, five is the age at which children tend to begin to be charged a (discounted) fare for travelling on the bus. The main journey purpose for this age group is likely to be to travel to education.

In this respect, affordability is perhaps less of a concern for most children as the local council must provide free home to school transport for young people aged 5 to 16 who are attending their nearest suitable school which is further than walking distance away (more than 2 miles away for children under 8 and more than 3 miles away for children aged 8 and over). Support is also available where there are no safe walking routes, for families on low incomes and for young people with special educational needs, disabilities or mobility problems²⁴.

The affordability challenge for this age group is to support journeys outside of the school run, for example to after-school activities, sports and leisure. A recent report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility found that participation in out of school activities was a key factor in breaking the cycle of social immobility²⁵. It recommended that policy makers explore ways of levelling the playing field on access to, and participation in, out of school activities.

Evidence suggests that high bus fares prevent parents from allowing their children to participate in such activities²⁶. This may be particularly challenging for families with children aged between 5 and 11, given the additional need to travel with the child (and possibly other siblings) and so pay for at least two tickets. The example below shows how one bus company is helping parents to meet these costs.

Brighton and Hove bus company: discounts for travel with an adult

Brighton and Hove bus company allows holders of their 5-19 'busID' card (issued free) to travel for 30p for any one-way journey, anytime, any day, when travelling with an adult.

Up to three young people can travel with each accompanying adult. This compares to a standard single child fare of £1.10. Therefore, an adult paying the standard single fare can travel with three children for £3.10 rather than the £5.50 it would otherwise have cost.

All PTEs work hard to keep non-commercial child fares low, however, sometimes an increase is unavoidable to protect wider services. When the child fare had to increase by 20p in Greater Manchester to cover the cost of free travel for older and disabled people, research conducted afterwards found that the fare increase was causing parents to restrict the journeys that their children made outside of school²⁷. These quotes from parents surveyed as part of the research help to illustrate this:

It reduces the activities she can participate in over weekends and evenings after school

I have had to refuse some activities because I just can't afford the cost and also pay for travel to school

Pocket money no longer stretches as far, limiting some activities

One way to prevent parents from having to 'ration' the journeys that their children make is to introduce capped daily fares, such as the Child All-day Ticket (CAT) introduced by Nexus in Tyne and Wear.

Nexus: Child All-day Ticket (CAT)

Introduced in 2008, the Nexus CAT simplified bus and Metro fares for 5-16 year olds in Tyne and Wear, offering flat fares of £1 for an all-day ticket (allowing unlimited journeys) and 50p for a single.

Fare levels stayed the same for four years until September 2012, when they rose by 10p. The increase was necessary to meet the rising costs of paying for the scheme through reimbursing operators for the difference between the concessionary and commercial fares, which rose earlier in the year. Changes to the concessionary fare level were avoided for as long as possible, retaining consistency. The new fares remain simple and flat.

The CAT has been a great success in terms of encouraging young people to make more trips. Journeys by under 16s in Tyne and Wear have risen by 15 per cent since the scheme was introduced. The capped daily fare gives young people the freedom to make more journeys to the places they want to go.

The Nexus CAT conforms to the flat, simple and consistent model that has been shown to be the most effective way of ensuring young people take-up and benefit from concessionary fares²⁸.

Flat – flat fares have been found to be more attractive than those based on a fraction of the adult fare. In almost all circumstances, operators choose to charge commercial fares that vary with distance, meaning a completely new set of fares for young people each time adult fares are raised. Flat fares (e.g. 40p for any single journey) are much easier to understand and communicate, and require no knowledge of what adults are paying for equivalent trips.

Simple – the best fares are those that are easy to grasp and have straightforward eligibility criteria (e.g. all under 16s pay £1 for unlimited travel all day). Combined with effective publicity, such fares can quickly become established in the minds of young people and their parents.

Consistent – consistency over time is an important feature of good practice – changes to child fare levels should take place as infrequently as funding policies allow. Too often, child fares are used as a kind of 'budget balancing' mechanism.

Rather than follow these principles, many good concessionary fare schemes have suffered as a result of the cuts, with previously simple offers becoming more complex. Take for example, two fare schemes highlighted as representing good practice²⁹ at their time of introduction, the Isle of Wight Student Rider Scheme and the b-line card (note that the b-line is aimed at older children).

The Isle of Wight Student Rider scheme began by offering a simple, flat fare of 50p for any single journey for all school pupils. The cost for this to the local authority in 2007/8 was estimated to be £150,000-£180,000 (for a subsidy of 15p per student rider ticket)³⁰. The fare for a single journey subsequently increased to £1 and then to £1.20³¹. The scheme has now been discontinued altogether³². 5 to 18 year olds now travel for half fare on the island's buses³³.

Meanwhile, the b-line card for 14 to 18 year olds in Derby and Derbyshire began in 2001 by offering half fares on bus and train travel³⁴. Cardholders are now entitled to 'up to a third off' adult bus fares³⁵, making it even harder for young people to identify the amount they will actually pay for their journey.

These changes run counter to what we know works in boosting child patronage, supporting social inclusion and creating future markets for bus travel. In these respects, research³⁶ and experience from schemes like the Nexus CAT show that simple, flat and consistent fares (combined with an effective marketing approach) represent good practice.

Adding value to fare offers

To maximise the benefits of flat, simple and consistent fare offers, transport authorities could consider marketing them in a way that alerts young people and their families to the positive activities they can reach using public transport so that they can make the most of the opportunities the fares open up, as was done in the example below.

Metro: Metro Active

In West Yorkshire, Metro ran a summer holiday scheme called Metro Active. The £1 a day ticket allowed off-peak travel throughout West Yorkshire for under 19s in August. The accompanying promotional website contained a wealth of inspiring ideas of places to go using the £1 ticket, from 'a bit of culture' to free swimming at local pools.

Encouraging young people to get to know their local area, through travel, may also help to foster a sense of citizenship and belonging. This branching out can also help broaden horizons, preventing the territoriality that sees some young people in later years reluctant to travel far beyond their immediate neighbourhood, something that in future can place unnecessary limits on education, employment and social opportunities.

However, it should be noted that providing affordable transport does not automatically open up positive activities to young people. Even where public transport is free, young people and their families may not be able to make full use of this because of difficulties meeting the costs of the activities they would like to access.

Transport authorities could investigate partnership opportunities with local retailers, leisure complexes and attractions which could offer discounts for bus ticket holders. As well as helping to broaden young people's access to opportunity, this would generate new customers for these services and help reduce congestion and parking problems around key destinations.

Nottingham City Council: Citycard³⁷

Nottingham's suite of Citycard smartcards include cards for under-11s and 11-18 year olds. The cards offer savings on travel for young people as well as discounts on local retail and leisure facilities. Children and young people friendly offers include a free introductory lesson and uniform at a martial arts school, discounted entry to the Heights of Abraham Cable Cars, Caverns and Hilltop Park and 5 per cent off most activities at city leisure centres.

Young people value simplicity in fare offers

11 to 16 year olds

From the age of around 11, the benefits of flat, simple and consistent fares are multiplied. 11 to 16 year olds are more independent, keen to get out and about on their own to visit friends, participate in sports and entertainment and - more so than for younger children - go shopping.

The example below shows how young people of this age group have independently campaigned for, and secured, a flat and simple fare offer that meets their need for flexible, affordable travel.

Staffordshire Youth Action Council/Staffordshire County Council: Your Staffordshire Card³⁸

The Your Staffordshire Card was developed following a sustained campaign by Staffordshire Youth Action Council (YAK). It allows 11 to 19 year olds to pay £1 to travel between any two points in the county, no matter how far the journey or how many changes of bus are required.

Staffordshire County Council earmarked £400,000 to fund the electronic card and calculates that the scheme will become cost neutral once 50,000 users are signed up. This looks likely to be achieved given that 25,000 cards were issued in the first seven months alone and that applications have continued to come in at a rate of 100 a day.

Bus companies are reported to have noticed a difference, with young people travelling more and changing their travel patterns – one company has even put on a new service to meet demand. The scheme won the Guardian Public Service Award for Transport and Mobility in 2011.

The example below serves to further illustrate the value young people themselves place on simplicity in fare offers.

Barnsley Youth Council/Barnsley Council: Alternatives to free travel in Barnsley³⁹

Until August 2012, Barnsley Council offered free travel for young people – the Mi Card scheme applied to under 18s between 9am and 9pm on weekdays and all day on Saturday and Sunday. The Council needed to reduce funding for the scheme by half (from £2 million to £1 million) due to budget cuts. They were, however, keen to retain the scheme in some form, and presented Barnsley Youth Council with three alternative options:

1. Charging a fare of 30p per journey - the price being the same every day, all day, even at weekends
2. Reducing Mi Card hours to 5 - 9pm on school days and weekends with a 60p fare at all other times.
3. A 20p fare between 9am - 9pm weekdays and anytime at weekends.

Youth Council members voted almost unanimously (22 out of 24 members) for option one. Explaining the Youth Council's decision, Emily Rogerson, elected to represent St Michael's Catholic and Church of England High School, said:

"This option is easiest to understand and means that young people won't have to travel between certain times of the day to get cheap fares."

This example helps to demonstrate the value young people place on simplicity (rather than absolute fare levels) when it comes to child fares.

Accessible information

Because 11 to 16 year olds make an increasing number of independent journeys, being able to easily access understandable information about fares becomes increasingly important. The existence of flat, simple and consistent fares makes this task more straightforward, as such offers are easily communicated, understood and remembered.

Where this is not the case, finding fares information can be more complex. Indeed, this can pose a challenge to all passengers, not just young people. Bus operators are inconsistent in what fares information they provide (if any) and the means by which they provide it. In many areas, finding out how much a journey will cost can only be done by getting on a bus and asking the driver.

The bus industry has recognised that lack of accessible information is a problem for young people. According to the DfT's 'A Green Light for Better Buses' policy document, published in March 2012, the industry is developing a web-based solution for young people to enable them to access details of bus services and fares relevant to them across the country.

Currently, where fares information is published, often this is not presented in a way that it easy to understand (for adults or young people). Frequently the language is unnecessarily technical and the descriptions longwinded. All of this makes it difficult to budget for transport costs in advance or to find out how much is likely to be needed to get to an unfamiliar place.

To make things clearer, operators of registered local bus services should be required to provide the relevant local transport authority with full details of the fares applicable to each service, as a licencing condition. In the absence of such a condition, transport authorities could specify this as a requirement in any partnership or contractual agreements with operators.

Where fares information is available, transport authorities could consider how they might promote this to young people and ensure that it is easily accessible to them. Transport authorities could involve young people in testing the fares information they provide – can they easily navigate to fares information relevant to them on the authority's website and, if so, do they understand the information provided? Can they use it to work out the fare best option for a given journey and how much that journey is likely to cost? How would they improve it?

Post 16

Post 16, the lives of young people often become increasingly complex, as they juggle study, work and social commitments. They may need to make multiple journeys in a day – to college in the morning, a work placement in the afternoon, a part-time job in the evening and a meeting with friends later on. Again flat, simple and consistent fares are likely to be of use in enabling this group to make multiple journeys affordably. Such fares could also help young people in their job search activity, enabling them to widen their job search area and attend interviews.

However, for many young people, adult fares kick in at the age of 16 (if not before) and transport authorities may wish to consider how they might ease this transition and avoid losing this valuable passenger group, particularly given the lure of the car. The bus operator Norfolk Green, for example, has chosen to actively target this market.

Norfolk Green: 16 to 19 discounted fares

Bus operator Norfolk Green has taken a commercial decision to offer discounted fares to everyone from 16 up until their 20th birthday, with no ID needed. The fares represent a saving of around 20 per cent compared to the full adult fare.

This age group now represents the fastest growing sector of the market, with some evidence that they retain the 'bus habit' well into their twenties⁴⁰.

Unlike the example above, many fare offers for over 16s are restricted to those who are in full-time education. This neglects young people who are not full-time students, and, taking into account the current economic climate, may not be earning a wage either. This group may find it very difficult to afford public transport and being unable to use it curtails their opportunities for work, training and education still further. WorkWise schemes, whilst not exclusively aimed at young people, could be considered to support this group to find and sustain employment.

Various PTEs: WorkWise schemes

These schemes have been delivered by PTE-led partnerships, often via Jobcentre Plus offices. WorkWise helps unemployed people into work by providing free or discounted tickets for travel to interviews and to meet the costs of travelling to a new job in the weeks before the first pay packet arrives. This financial support is combined with PTE expertise in providing personalised journey planning and travel advice to help jobseekers broaden their travel horizons and job search net.

WorkWise has been found to deliver excellent value for money, costing as little as £200 per job outcome⁴¹. Evaluation of one such scheme in the West Midlands found that more than 80 per cent of beneficiaries would have struggled to reach job opportunities without WorkWise⁴².

The Government is concerned to tackle the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training and are pursuing plans to raise the participation age, meaning that all young people will continue in education or training to 17 from 2013, then 18 from 2015.

Transport authorities will need to give consideration to how they will support this change through their fares policies. In the past, young people aged 16-19 from low income families would have been supported to meet transport costs to education and training through the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) (see page 8).

Nottingham City Council: free travel for 16 to 19s from low income families

In Nottingham, the City Council has chosen to provide free travel for 16 to 19s who previously qualified for the EMA. The scheme is funded 60 per cent by the council and 40 per cent by local colleges, using their 16-19 Bursary Fund allocation.

Summary of potential measures

Under 5s

- Explore measures to make transport more affordable for parents and carers (particularly those on a low income), for example, by considering their needs as smartcard schemes develop.

5 to 11 year olds

- Focus on enabling access to out-of-school activities.
- Consider ways of making escort journeys cheaper for parents and carers.
- Develop flat, simple and consistent fare offers.
- Market fare offers in a way that alerts young people and their families to the positive activities they can reach using public transport.
- Explore opportunities for partnerships with local retailers, leisure complexes and attractions to offer discounts for bus ticket holders.

11 to 16 year olds

- Develop flat, simple and consistent fare offers to support growing independence.
- Improve the accessibility of information on fares:
 - Include a requirement to provide full details on fares in partnership or contractual arrangements with operators.
 - Get young people involved in testing the accessibility of fares information.

Post 16

- Develop flat, simple and consistent fare offers to enable this group to meet work, study and social commitments.
- Consider how to ease the transition to adult fares and manage the rising participation age.
- Consider how young people not in education, employment or training can be supported.
- Support WorkWise schemes to help young people meet the transport costs of searching for, and entering, employment.

Cuts are affecting the bus services young people value most

08 Availability

To improve the availability of bus services, buses should run within easy reach of where people live and take them to and from the places they want to go at times and frequencies that correspond to lifestyle patterns. People also need to be kept informed of the services that are available.

The availability of bus services has been affected by the current economic climate, whether through bus operators cutting routes and services that are no longer profitable or through transport authorities having to restrict the number of 'socially necessary' bus services they support because of public spending cuts.

Often the bus services that are first to be affected are the ones that young people value the most – evening and weekend services.

Finding out about what services do exist can be difficult for young people as information is often not presented with their needs in mind.

This section considers some of the measures that could be used to improve the availability of bus services for young people.

Under-5s and 5 to 11 year olds

This group's journeys are largely dependent on where their parents or carers need to get to and whether bus services go to these places at times and frequencies that are convenient.

Parents or carers of under-5s will often be juggling work and childcare commitments so here concerns may include, for example, whether the timings of bus services allow them to drop off their child at nursery and arrive at work on time.

The timing and frequencies of buses are crucial to support the logistics of trip-chaining. Research has found that families with children increasingly report that they see a car as essential to meet a minimum acceptable standard of living:

*'Public transport was seen as being inflexible. For parents who had to take children to school or childcare and then get to work at a certain time, buses were not a realistic option as they could not accomplish the journey in the time available.'*⁴³

More research is needed into how transport services can effectively support working parents.

At the age of 11, young people will be preparing to make the transition to secondary school. At this point, they, together with their families, will need access to easily understandable information that helps them to plan their journey to their new school, whether this is by bus, on foot or by bike.

11 to 16 year olds

From the age of around 11, the availability of bus services becomes more of a direct concern for young people. They are beginning to strike out on their own, and will need to build the skills to be able to retrieve information about what bus services are available and to plan their journey accordingly. Transport authorities may wish to give some thought to how young people will find and access journey planning tools and how these can be made as user friendly as possible for this group. Again, young people could be invited to test and feedback on these tools.

Centro: journey planning tools for young people

Centro's website for young people, Letz Go Green⁴⁴ now incorporates a journey planner, specially designed to help young people familiarise themselves with journey planning tools.

Centro is also looking at how real time information on public transport can be provided in schools. They have, for example, installed a number of real time information (RTI) screens in school buildings so that pupils can see bus times for their local stop. However, Centro only have limited funding for these installations and have also identified a cheaper alternative – offering schools the software to integrate RTI onto any information screens they already use. Many schools and colleges, for example, have flat screen monitors in their reception that could be used for this purpose.

Much is made of young people's seeming addiction to social media and innovative communication methods. It is true that channels such as twitter and Facebook have a role to play in transmitting travel information to young people. However, research suggests that young people also like to receive targeted information through school and college.

For this age group, it is particularly important to provide this information at the point at which young people begin assessing their post-16 options, helping them to understand which colleges and training providers they can reach using public transport and how much this is likely to cost.

More broadly, it makes sense to bring together information on where to go (colleges, training providers, activities, events etc) and how to get there (transport information).

The statutory guidance on positive activities requires local authorities to provide a comprehensive information service for young people regarding things to do locally. This service is supposed to include travel information but in practice, this is not always displayed prominently or in an easy to use format. Often, 'how to get there' information is not provided at all.

A low cost way to raise young people's awareness of transport options would be to include a link or widget to a journey planner in a prominent place for each activity listing. The Transport Direct widget, for example, is easy to add and can be set to an organisation's location so that all the user needs to do is enter their own postcode to get step-by-step directions and a map⁴⁵. This kind of widget could also be applied to the websites of other key destinations for young people, such as colleges and training providers.

However, journey planning tools are of little use if buses do not take young people where they want to go, at the times they want to travel. Research by DfT⁴⁶ found that young people identify the lack of available bus services, especially in the evenings and weekends, as a key barrier to participating in education and training, employment and leisure activities.

The problem has been exacerbated recently as off-peak evening, weekend and out of town bus services have been badly hit by spending cuts. These sorts of services are often not profitable enough for commercial operators to run and transport authorities are becoming less able to fill the gaps.

Alternative options are needed to support transport availability

Alternative options are needed to help retain or expand existing levels of service. Options could include making better use of the existing transport fleet, thinking 'outside the bus' and seeking to exert more influence over the land-use planning process. Each of these ideas will now be dealt with in turn – all have the potential to benefit passengers more widely, not just young people.

Making better use of the existing transport fleet

Service levels for young people (and for passengers more widely) can potentially be improved through the pooling of transport resources, including vehicles and budgets.

In most areas, alongside the mainstream bus network, there are also multiple fleets of vehicles in service performing various functions for different agencies. There are social services, education and patient transport fleets, for example, all with their own separate budgets and policies. Often these services overlap and duplicate one another in terms of their specification, clientele and route. They can also generate significant inefficiencies, with certain vehicles underutilised in the garage for large parts of the day whilst elsewhere transport needs go unmet.

With money tight and essential services under threat, these inefficiencies cannot be allowed to continue. An alternative, 'Total Transport' approach would see these fleets brought together from across the various agencies and local authority departments into one shared pool under a single budget. The pool of vehicles would be coordinated and scheduled centrally, taking into account capacity on the mainstream network. Such a system would ensure the entire fleet is put to maximum use throughout the day and that the right vehicle is deployed for the right job. Experience from local authorities that have already moved towards an 'Integrated Transport Unit' (ITU) suggests that efficiency benefits can run into the hundreds of thousands of pounds⁴⁷.

The Yellow School Bus Commission⁴⁸ found that the best procurement mechanisms exist where socially necessary transport and education services are managed by the same authority, particularly within the same department in the form of an ITU (which could also draw in other transport services, such as patient transport and social services transport).

Where the same authority managed socially necessary and education transport, this offered opportunities for integrating secondary school and public bus services (where demand is insufficient to sustain both services) and to access school transport vehicles for use in other settings (e.g. social and youth services transport). Such an approach can help ensure existing resources are put to best use and that service levels are maintained or even enhanced.

Socially necessary transport and education services are managed by separate authorities in the Metropolitan areas (with the PTE managing socially necessary transport and the local authority managing education services). The Commission found that this works well where there is effective cooperation between the two agencies, especially where the PTE acts as an agent for the council in planning and procuring education transport (and thus effectively bringing it under the same roof as socially necessary transport). However, where such cooperation is absent, the Commission found instances of uncoordinated and conflicting arrangements. Ultimately, these are likely to result in duplication of effort, gaps in services and wasted resources.

Developing a Total Transport solution is by no means a straightforward task. Administrative difficulties, harmonisation of different working practices and systems and negotiation of contractual relationships are just some of the challenges that may be encountered.

However, there are a range of models already in operation, both here and abroad that can be drawn upon.

Furthermore, Total Transport solutions can start small – Metro, in West Yorkshire for example, used the same fleet of vehicles to provide home-to-school transport for children with Special Educational Needs and a broader community bus service at other times.

The *pteg* report 'Total Transport: Working across sectors to achieve better outcomes'⁴⁹ sets out in more detail the potential for agencies across sectors with a stake in transport get together to pool their resources and expertise to deliver desired outcomes as efficiently as possible.

Thinking outside the bus

Another way to tackle problems around availability of bus services is to reduce the need to travel by bus in the first place.

One way to do this is to promote and incentivise walking and cycling options where these are practical and safe. Young people may not realise that their chosen destination is accessible on foot or by bike, they may be unused to travelling this way, their parents may discourage walking and cycling or the journey itself maybe unattractive (for reasons of safety, for example).

To help identify and overcome barriers to walking and cycling, local authorities could involve young people in conducting 'audits' of walking and cycling routes to key destinations (including transport stops and interchanges), encouraging them to explain their reasons for selecting some paths and avoiding others as well as to photograph any particular problem areas to help identify hotspots to be tackled. Fixmystreet may be a good tool to support this work (see box on page 30). Children under the age of 11 could also get involved.

Community transport providers may also provide workable alternatives to mainstream bus services. Many offer opportunities for group travel, meaning a group of young people all wanting to reach the same destination could arrange to travel together at low cost. Transport authorities could look at how to raise awareness of these alternative options among young people and youth groups.

Improved land-use planning

The scope to reduce the need for bus travel is inextricably tied to the planning system. This relates to the longstanding disconnect between transport and land-use planning, as well as decision-making in other sectors, such as education.

Taking education as an example, long term trends towards bigger schools (with wider catchment areas) and the promotion of choice mean that young people are travelling further to reach their selected school. This brings costs to local authorities as they attempt to meet demand for school bus services and unravel the complex logistics of getting children from A to B. Whilst it is unlikely that we will see a reversal of these trends, it is easy to imagine how more good, neighbourhood-scale schools would see a reduced need for bus services (and car trips) and more children walking or cycling to their destination.

Indeed, a broader shift towards more 'local' living would be particularly beneficial to children and young people, enabling them to travel independently to shops and services without the need for a lift or even a bus. All too often, the places that young people would most like to visit – such as leisure, retail and cinema complexes - are poorly connected by public transport and difficult to access on foot. How people will reach the facilities without a car is often little more than an afterthought.

Transport authorities need to be involved in land-use planning decisions in their earliest stages to look at:

- locating developments so that they connect to existing public transport networks
- developing and improving walking and cycling routes to proposed developments
- encouraging the use of town centre locations where possible

Through better integrating transport infrastructure within the planning of development, these measures could pre-empt situations that are very difficult (and costly) to remedy retrospectively. More analysis of the importance of integrated land use and transport planning can be found in the *pteg* report, 'Thriving Cities', published in 2011⁵⁰.

Post 16

This group have additional transport needs, particularly in terms of entering employment.

Youth unemployment is at record levels, and as an industry, we need to consider what we can do to support young people to search for, secure and retain employment. Young people need the tools and advice to understand where they can get to using public transport to help them to widen their job search net. This is where PTE-led schemes like WorkWise come in, as described on page 20. Where public transport is not available, some WorkWise schemes include scooter or bike commuter programmes which provide low cost loan or purchase options to enable jobseekers to reach employment opportunities by alternative means.

Merseyside Transport Partnership: WorkWise Wheels

WorkWise Wheels provides bikes to jobseekers in Merseyside. Between October 2009 and March 2011, more than 349 bikes had been made available, along with equipment and cycle training in order to help jobseekers find and remain in employment. A sample of 205 clients who have received bicycles were contacted. From this sample, 85% of clients were found to have remained in employment after receiving a bike. The scheme achieved the desired outcomes for less than half of the cost of providing travel passes or scooters.

Upon gaining employment, and beginning to earn an adequate wage, car ownership becomes more of a viable and attractive option for young people. Transport authorities need to continue giving young people the information they need to be able to understand which journeys they can make using public transport and to be able to decide the best mode to use for any given journey.

Summary of potential measures

Under-5s and 5 to 11 year olds

- Conduct research with parents and carers to find out how the bus could better meet their need for flexibility.
- Ensure young people and their families have access to information on planning their journey to secondary school at the point of transition.

11 to 16 year olds

- Look at how information and journey planning tools could be made more accessible to young people and involve them in testing these tools.
- Ensure young people have the transport information they need to support them as they select their post 16 options.
- Bring together information on key destinations for young people with information about how to reach them.
- Consider how existing transport resources could be pooled to fill gaps in bus service provision.
- Promote and incentivise walking and cycling where these offer practical and safe alternatives to the bus.
- Involve young people in conducting audits of walking and cycling routes to key destinations.
- Raise awareness of community transport options among young people.
- Push to become involved in land-use planning decisions at their earliest stages to minimise the need for new bus services.

Post 16

- Look at ways of supporting young people to overcome transport barriers to employment, for example, through WorkWise schemes.
- Upon gaining employment, and as car use becomes an option, ensure that young people continue to receive the information they need to make smart and sustainable travel choices for any given journey.

09 Acceptability

People should feel that bus services are equipped to meet their needs, as well as welcoming, comfortable, safe and convenient.

Young people's perceptions of bus travel of the acceptability of bus travel are significantly influenced by those of their parents or carers. Parents or carers may have had negative experiences of travelling by bus in the past, or have concerns about how safe their children will be on board.

Research suggests that as young people get older, they are less likely to feel positive about bus travel and more likely to report that buses are uncomfortable and dirty⁵¹ and that they feel unsafe using them⁵². Young people also frequently report feeling unwelcome on the bus and unfairly treated by staff and passengers alike⁵³.

This section considers some of the measures that could be used to improve the acceptability of bus services for young people.

Under-5s

As in previous sections, the main targets for interventions aimed at benefiting this age group are parents and carers. If they can be encouraged to see bus travel as acceptable, it becomes more likely that their children will see it as a normal thing to do as they grow up.

Furthermore, the more experience parents and carers have of using bus services themselves, the more likely it is that they will allow their children to use the bus independently in the future.

Using the bus needs to be seen as convenient by families with small children. For example, this could mean low floor access and sufficient space for buggies and shopping.

Safety interventions are less of a concern for this age group, as they will always be accompanied by an adult when travelling.

5 to 11 year olds

Between 5 and 11, young people remain likely to be accompanied by an adult when using a bus and it will be the adult who has decided that the bus is the most appropriate mode for completing their journey. Again, measures to improve the acceptability of bus services for this age group should primarily be aimed at parents and carers.

At the age of 11, young people are preparing to make the transition to secondary school. If the school is further than walking or cycling distance away, young people, but also their parents or carers, need to feel reassured of the appropriateness of the bus for making this journey. Parents or carers need to feel that their children will be safe on the bus and that they have the skills needed to use it.

All PTEs currently run travel training for young people at this age to ensure they are equipped to use the bus. Some have found innovative ways of reducing the cost of delivering this service, without compromising on quality.

Parent and carer perceptions are important

SYPTE: The Lifewise centre

In South Yorkshire, the Lifewise centre provides a common base for the transport authority, emergency services and local authorities to deliver safety and citizenship education to children and young people. This partnership approach means that SYPTE save money by no longer having to take their bus out to schools for education outreach. Instead, the bus stays in one place as part of the fictional town of Kea Park, built at the centre⁵⁴.

The centre was originally established by South Yorkshire Police and Fire and Rescue, with the support of businesses, volunteers and trades people. SYPTE's use of this facility therefore helps ensure that maximum benefits are derived from an existing resource.

Metro: Metroville

Also maximising the use of existing resources, Metro has embedded a futuristic classroom ('Metroville') into Bradford's existing state-of-the-art youth facility Culture Fusion. The Metroville classroom will be used to deliver Metro's 'Junior SAFEMark' travel training programme to Year 6 pupils. Metroville means Metro is able to offer Junior SAFEMark to all Year 6 pupils in the Bradford district, whereas previously places have been restricted.

The project includes a partnership with Bradford YMCA which means student volunteers will deliver the training on Metro's behalf. This in turn frees up capacity for Metro staff to provide more sessions for schools in the other West Yorkshire districts. Additionally, the student volunteers benefit by gaining valuable teaching experience to add to their own course work⁵⁵.

An additional money-saving feature is that visiting Metroville is a mechanism for producing each young person's travel photocard, reducing marketing costs.

A focus on influencing the attitudes of parents of children in the run up to transition to secondary school, in parallel with interventions aimed at children themselves, is important in developing positive perceptions of bus travel.

Often parents have outdated attitudes about what it is like to travel on the bus. They may discourage bus use, thereby hampering children's independence and making it less likely that they will become regular bus users in the future.

Seeing is believing, and encouraging parents to sample bus use for themselves (perhaps in the build up to their child's transition to secondary school) may lead to them passing on more positive attitudes to their children. In the West Midlands, children themselves have become 'transport champions' to help build parents' confidence in public transport.

Centro: Transport champion pilot

This pilot project, run by Centro in the West Midlands, involves a group of Year 8 pupils becoming 'champions' promoting sustainable transport to school. They attend new starter parents' evenings, handing out information and providing advice on potential routes. They also 'buddy up' with new Year 7 pupils to help them with their journeys.

Whilst this pilot is likely to be very beneficial both to the 'champions' and their 'buddies', it is aimed primarily at parents, helping to reduce their anxiety around letting their child use public transport.

Safety concerns of young people are very similar to those of adults

11 to 16 year olds

For increasingly independent travellers from the age of 11 onwards, safety becomes more of a key concern as they find themselves travelling more frequently without an adult. Studies have shown that young people are more likely to rate personal security on public transport as 'poor'⁵⁶.

Partly this is a problem of perception as generally, public transport is a safe place to be. Transport authorities could look at ways in which to promote more positive messages about the safety of public transport.

The specific safety concerns of young people have been found to be very similar to those of adults. A survey conducted among under-18s by the National Children's Bureau and the British Youth Council found that waiting for transport after dark, drunk and rowdy fellow passengers and negative attitudes towards young people from drivers and other passengers were particular issues for respondents⁵⁷.

Waiting for transport after dark

From their mid to late teens onwards, young people can increasingly find themselves needing to use public transport after dark.

One way to help tackle young people's concerns around using transport after dark might be to encourage them to report and (where appropriate) photograph any particular issues they encounter (e.g. poorly lit shelters). This could be done making use of existing online tools rather than developing a new system from scratch.

FixMyStreet and FixMyTransport

www.fixmystreet.com allows users to pinpoint a location on a map, report the problem they have encountered (e.g. poor lighting, graffiti) and include a photograph. The problem is then automatically emailed to the appropriate local authority.

More recently, the same developers have launched **www.fixmytransport.com** allowing users to report problems with a stop or station or journey or route. Here, users can easily locate their route, stop or station on a map and report the problem they have encountered. The problem is automatically emailed to the relevant transport authority.

The status of the enquiry ('fixed' or 'current') is recorded on the site, along with replies and support received.

These services can also be used to report concerns around quality or suggestions for improvement (e.g. more seating at a particular bus stop).

It is essential to respond promptly to any issues that are reported and show how these have been resolved or invite dialogue on how they might be tackled.

Drunk or rowdy fellow passengers

Young people in their mid to late teens can be particularly vulnerable to assault and often report feeling intimidated by other passengers and let down when bus drivers do not step in. This is a difficult issue to tackle given that drivers must concentrate primarily on driving the bus and that providing bus wardens and conductors can be costly.

For school bus services, the rowdy passengers could be other pupils. One low cost way to tackle this might be to employ pupils as School Bus Monitors.

Centro/National Express: School Bus Monitors

Centro in the West Midlands, in partnership with bus operator National Express have recruited School Bus Monitors - fellow pupils appointed to observe and report back on behaviour on the bus, without having to intervene. The approach means that repeat offenders can be identified and dealt with.

Monitors can be rewarded for their work with certificates for their portfolio and/or free travel.

On mainstream buses, one option to help manage the issue and target resources more effectively might be to operate a text or web based system for reporting anti-social behaviour. This has the added advantage of making it particularly easy for young people to report their concerns quickly and discretely.

Centro: See Something Say Something

The 'See Something Say Something' campaign is run in the West Midlands. Here, passengers can report anti-social behaviour on public transport using a well-publicised text number. Incidents can also be reported by phone or on the web.

The information gathered through the system has helped Safer Travel (a partnership between West Midlands Police, the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership, National Express West Midlands and Centro) build a picture of hotspots and take appropriate action (e.g. by targeting patrols).

mySociety/Merseytravel: Web-based reporting of antisocial behaviour

mySociety, the developers behind FixMyTransport (see box on page 30) are now exploring the potential for an online antisocial behaviour reporting tool. The technology underpinning FixMyTransport (the linking of a location to a transport route or stop) could be reused for reporting of antisocial behaviour. Reports would not necessarily be made public, but would be sent to the appropriate authority. A proposal to carry out a pilot project has been drawn up in conjunction with Merseytravel.

Young people need to feel valued and respected as customers

Negative attitudes towards young people

As well as feeling safe, this age group also need to feel valued and respected as customers. Young people often report feeling unfairly treated by both bus drivers and other passengers. For example, over half of under-19s surveyed by the British Youth Council and the National Children's Bureau found bus drivers rude with 45 per cent saying that other adult passengers had also been rude⁵⁸.

Education and awareness-raising on both sides is important. Ideally, this should involve dialogue between young people, drivers and bus user groups to develop a common understanding of what is acceptable and to break down 'us and them' divides. Bus drivers could visit schools and youth clubs, whilst young people could get involved in delivering elements of training to drivers.

Young people can also get involved in delivering messages about safety and respect to their peers. Transport for London, for example, found that members of their Youth Panel helped to communicate messages to their peers on issues such as safer travel at night and considerate travel⁵⁹.

People in general are likely to be more receptive to messages if they are delivered by those they see as 'people like me'. It is therefore important to get young people involved in the design and production of campaigns aimed at their peers. Involving young people in this way also helps build a sense of ownership and can help in the development of key skills.

Centro/Walsall Council/ERDF: Think Outside the Metal Box

Year 10 Drama students from Walsall Academy in the West Midlands produced a suite of short films advertising the benefits of sustainable travel to young people, as part of a project funded by ERDF, Centro and Walsall Council⁶⁰. The overarching theme is 'Think Outside the Metal Box' with individual videos focusing on public transport, cycling, walking and car sharing from a young person's perspective.

Metro: Naming the bus fleet

Another example comes from West Yorkshire where Metro invited local school pupils to name a fleet of new buses for Leeds after people who have put the city on the map⁶¹.

Post 16

After 16, the car becomes the key competitor for meeting young people's independent travel needs. By laying the ground work early on, encouraging children from an early age to see bus travel as normal and to value it we can hope that young people may be persuaded to retain some loyalty to public transport and continue to use it into adulthood.

The emphasis should lie in continuing to promote the benefits of the bus to this group to encourage them to become lifelong bus users. We know that 17 to 20 year olds are the most frequent bus users according to DfT statistics and that bus use drops off significantly after this point, before recovering in later life (see chapter two). The challenge is in retaining them as passengers as they enter their 20s.

As well as getting the basics right – such as reliability and bus service timings that fit with patterns of life – we also need to look at how we can make bus travel a more pleasant, and even aspirational experience. The examples below provide some ideas.

Arriva: 110 things to do on the 110 bus

Bus operator Arriva put together a video showing 110 things you can do on the bus, using real bus passengers. The video helps to illustrate the diversity of people who use the bus as well as sell the benefits of having some time to yourself along the journey⁶².

Valley Metro: Valley Metro Notes

Meanwhile, in America, transport operator Valley Metro in their 'Valley Metro Notes' project invited local bands to record songs promoting public transport⁶³.

Trent Barton: Café style interiors

Back in the UK, bus operator Trent Barton has kitted out some of their fleet with 'café' style interiors, complete with leather seats and wooden floors.

There is increasing evidence internationally to suggest that young people are becoming less tied to the concept of learning to drive as a rite of passage and to the concept of ownership, including owning a car. In America, a certain segment of 16 to 34 year olds have been dubbed 'Generation Y'⁶⁴. These young people tend to ride bicycles, take public transport and rely on virtual media. Over a quarter of Generation Y do not have a driving licence.

Whilst the car is still seen as a key symbol of adulthood in this country, transport authorities need to be aware of, and build on, these kinds of trends and the potential they have for transforming the perceptions and use of public transport.

Summary of potential measures

Under 5s

- Focus on improving parent and carer perceptions of the bus, encouraging them to gain as much experience of using buses as possible.
- Ensure buses are comfortable and convenient for families, with low floor access and plenty of space for shopping and buggies.

5 to 11 year olds

- Continued focus on improving parent and carer perceptions of the bus, particularly at the point of transition to secondary school.
- Consider innovative options for delivering travel training at a lower cost (without compromising on quality) for example, use of existing infrastructure and student volunteers.

11 to 16 year olds

- Focus on young people feeling safe and respected when using the bus.
- Promote positive messages about the safety of public transport.
- Encourage young people to report issues they encounter on their journey and ensure reports are followed up on.
- Look at low cost ways to manage behaviour on the bus, such as School Bus Monitors or SMS/web-based reporting tools.
- Take steps to break down 'us and them' divides between young people, bus drivers and other bus user groups by encouraging dialogue.
- Involve young people in delivering messages to their peers on safety, respect and the good things about public transport.

Post 16

- Look at ways of encouraging young people to choose to continue using the bus, even after they learn to drive and purchase a car.
- As well as getting the basics right, explore ideas for making bus travel more pleasant and even aspirational.
- Consider the potential of 'Generation Y' trends to transform perceptions and use of public transport.

10 Conclusions

This paper has sought to stimulate thinking on what strategies local transport authorities could adopt to provide young people with the best offer they can on bus, in the context of the restricted public spending environment.

It has highlighted the importance of the bus to young people in accessing vital opportunities for growth and development, and also the importance of young people in building the market for bus.

The paper has noted that, despite this, young people have been particularly hard hit by the financial challenges facing bus services, resulting in difficult decisions which have seen fare offers compromised and valued evening and weekend services cut back. This has exacerbated young people's existing dissatisfactions around the perceived complexity, inconsistency and unfairness in the system.

In presenting a series of ideas for improving the affordability, availability and acceptability of bus services for young people, this paper has attempted to show that, even in difficult financial circumstances, there is still much that transport authorities can do to develop a good offer for young people on bus without breaking the bank. A summary of all the measures suggested can be found in Annex One.

In attempting to develop such an offer, this paper has attempted to convey three key messages.

01 The importance of actively engaging young people in the process

Throughout, this paper has sought to highlight the critical importance of developing an offer on bus services *with* young people, rather than *for* them.

Involving young people in this way does not have to be expensive or time-consuming and, ultimately is likely to save money by ensuring what is provided has the buy-in of those that it is aimed at. Furthermore, in respecting and valuing young passengers we are strengthening the future market for bus travel and developing sustainable travel habits for life.

It is hoped that the ideas presented in this paper can act as a catalyst for dialogue between young people and transport authorities on what the offer for young people should look like.

02 The need for a package of measures

There is no silver bullet for improving bus services for young people. Any offer that is developed for young people - or indeed for any passenger group - should address people's need for bus services that are available, affordable, accessible and acceptable. Only in addressing each of these areas can we hope to develop an offer that enables everybody to access the opportunities that will allow them to move forward in their lives.

This paper has focused on measures to improve affordability, availability and acceptability as these are the areas where interventions need to be targeted at young people in particular. Within these broad areas, it is important to recognise the differences and similarities in the needs of young people of different ages and that one-size does not fit all.

It is also important to note that the measures contained in this paper are intended as a starting point for discussion, rather than a definitive set of answers. The offer that is developed will need to be tailored to local circumstances and the priorities of young people in your area.

03 The need to maintain a focus on simplicity

Many of the measures outlined in this paper have simplicity at their heart. Simplicity in fares, networks and information benefit all passengers.

Young people are frequently left baffled at the intricacies of bus service delivery outside London – the fare offers that vary from place to place, the bus services that are not there when and where they need them. They may find it difficult to understand, for example, why transport for young people is free in one place and half fare in another. Why in some places young people are charged the full adult fare from 14, whilst in others, discounted fares apply until 19.

It is important to work with young people to help them get to grips with how the system works, but also to try and eliminate unnecessary complexity where we can.

For example, evidence presented in this paper shows that young people value flat, simple and consistent fare offers. Young people have campaigned independently to secure such offers in their areas and experience suggests that, once in place, these offers result in young people making more journeys.

More broadly, there is a need for greater strategic direction and leadership from local and national government on the subject of young people and public transport. Public transport, and bus services in particular, are matters of great concern for young people. Working with them to develop a sound offer on public transport at local, but also national level, is vitally important.

It is hoped that this paper will provide a foundation for developing these offers so that young people can be assured of a public transport service that meets their needs at each stage of their life.

Annex 01

Summary of potential measures

Across all age groups, ensure young people are involved in transport decision making that affects them:

- Provide them with the information they need to understand the decision-making process and develop realistic proposals for change.
- Make use of existing networks of young people.
- Provide a range of opportunities for young people to get involved, tailored to different age groups e.g. sitting on scrutiny committees, contributing to consultations, conducting research, designing initiatives, inspecting services and designing and delivering promotional campaigns.
- Keep communication channels open and dialogue flowing.

Component	Under 5s	5 to 11 year olds
Affordability	Explore measures to make transport more affordable for parents and carers (particularly those on a low income), for example, by considering their needs as smartcard schemes develop.	Focus on enabling access to out-of-school activities. Consider ways of making escort journeys cheaper for parents and carers. Develop flat, simple, consistent fare offers. Market fares offers in a way that alerts young people and their families to the positive activities they can reach using public transport. Explore opportunities for partnerships with local retailers, leisure complexes and attractions to offer discounts for bus ticket holders.
Availability	Conduct research with parents and carers to find out how the bus could better meet their need for flexibility.	Conduct research with parents and carers to find out how the bus could better meet their need for flexibility. Ensure young people and their families have access to information on planning their journey to secondary school at the point of transition.
Acceptability	Focus on improving parent and carer perceptions of the bus, encouraging them to gain as much experience of using buses as possible. Ensure buses are comfortable and convenient for families, with low floor access and plenty of space for shopping and buggies.	Continued focus on improving parent and carer perceptions of the bus, particularly at the point of transition to secondary school. Consider innovative options for delivering travel training at a lower cost (without compromising on quality) for example, use of existing infrastructure and student volunteers.

Component	11 to 16 year olds	Post 16
Affordability	<p>Develop flat, simple and consistent fare offers to support growing independence.</p> <p>Improve the accessibility of information on fares:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a requirement to provide full details on fares in partnership or contractual arrangements with operators. • Get young people involved in testing the accessibility of fares information 	<p>Develop flat, simple and consistent fare offers to enable this group to meet work, study and social commitments.</p> <p>Consider how to ease the transition to adult fares and manage the rising participation age.</p> <p>Consider how young people not in education, employment or training can be supported.</p> <p>Support WorkWise schemes to help meet the transport costs of searching for, and entering, employment.</p>
Availability	<p>Look at how information and journey planning tools could be made more accessible to young people and involve them in testing these tools.</p> <p>Ensure young people have the transport information they need to support them as they select their post 16 options.</p> <p>Bring together information on key destinations for young people with information about how to reach them.</p> <p>Consider how existing transport resources could be pooled to fill gaps in bus service provision.</p> <p>Promote and incentivise walking and cycling where these offer practical and safe alternatives to the bus.</p> <p>Involve young people in conducting audits of walking and cycling routes to key destinations.</p> <p>Raise awareness of community transport options among young people.</p> <p>Push for greater involvement in land-use planning decisions at their earliest stages to minimise the need for new bus services.</p>	<p>Look at ways of supporting young people to overcome transport barriers to employment, for example, through WorkWise schemes.</p> <p>Upon gaining employment, and as car use becomes an option, ensure young people continue to receive the information they need to make smart and sustainable travel choices for any given journey.</p>
Acceptability	<p>Focus on young people feeling safe and respected when using the bus.</p> <p>Promote positive messages about the safety of public transport.</p> <p>Encourage young people to report issues they encounter on their journey and ensure reports are followed up on.</p> <p>Look at low cost ways to manage behaviour on the bus, such as School Bus Monitors or SMS/web-based incident reporting tools.</p> <p>Take steps to break down 'us and them' divides between young people, bus drivers and other bus user groups by encouraging dialogue.</p> <p>Involve young people in delivering messages to their peers on safety, respect and the good things about public transport.</p>	<p>Look at ways of encouraging young people to choose to continue using the bus, even after they learn to drive and purchase a car.</p> <p>As well as getting the basics right, explore ideas for making bus travel more pleasant and even aspirational.</p> <p>Consider the potential of 'Generation Y' trends to transform perceptions and use of public transport.</p>

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