



Youth Select Committee Inquiry

Public transport

Statement of Evidence

May 2012

Rebecca Fuller

pteg Support Unit
Wellington House
40-50 Wellington Street
Leeds – LS1 2DE
0113 251 7445
info@pteg.net

Content

1. Introduction	1
2. Young people’s experience of public transport and their overall satisfaction with their current service including availability, feeling safe and cleanliness	1
Availability.....	1
Safety	3
Cleanliness	3
3. The affordability of fares for all young people regardless of where they live	4
4. The effectiveness of current concessionary fare schemes and local initiatives in the UK to enable young people to access services and opportunities	6
5. The accessibility and availability of transport services for disabled young people	6
6. The current training public transport staff receive in regards to young people and their needs as customers	7
7. Recommendations on a code of practice for youth using public transport	8
8. Which low carbon approaches are being used locally to enable young people to travel	9
9. Additional comments	9
Employing young people.....	9
Young people and transport strategy	9

1. Introduction

- 1.1. **pteg** represents the six Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) which between them serve more than eleven million people in Greater Manchester (Transport for Greater Manchester), 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, Transport for London and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport are associate members of **pteg** though this response does not represent their views.
- 1.2. The PTEs plan, procure, provide and promote public transport in some of Britain's largest city regions, with the aim of delivering integrated public transport networks accessible to all.
- 1.3. Our response primarily focuses on urban bus services as young people are amongst the most frequent bus users and are significantly more likely to travel by bus than by rail or another form of public transport¹.

2. Young people's experience of public transport and their overall satisfaction with their current service including availability, feeling safe and cleanliness

Availability

- 2.1. Research by the Department for Transport² as far back as 2006 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 and training, employment and leisure activities.
- 2.2. The problem has been exacerbated recently as evening, weekend and out of town bus services have been hit by spending cuts. These sorts of services are often not profitable enough for commercial operators to run. PTEs spend around £85 million funding over 80 million kilometres of non-commercial bus services, however, funding cuts mean that they, in common with other transport authorities, are becoming less able to fill the gaps.
- 2.3. Young people are particularly affected by these service cuts as the bus is frequently their primary means of independent travel. This is particularly true for young people from low income households who may have no, or limited, access to a car for lifts.
- 2.4. **pteg**, together with the Campaign for Better Transport has commissioned research to investigate the impact of bus service cuts on communities. Researchers heard from Anna, a young person living in Marchwood on the outskirts of Southampton, an area where evening and Sunday bus services have been withdrawn:

"I feel very annoyed. I think it's something that a lot of young people in Marchwood feel quite strongly about as we want to be able to go out and do things but if we don't have the buses we just don't really do anything. You just end up walking round Marchwood and then people get this idea that we're jobs but we're not really we just don't really have anywhere else to go."

¹ Department for Transport National Travel Survey, Table NTS0601 Average number of trips (trip rates) by age, gender and main mode

² Department for Transport (2006) Young People and Transport: Their needs and requirements.

- 2.5. Alternative options are needed to help retain or expand existing levels of service for young people and for passengers more widely. These options could include **looking at ways to make better use of existing transport resources, thinking outside the bus** and **improved land use planning**.

Making better use of existing transport resources

- 2.6. On making better use of existing transport resources, a 'Total Transport' approach could be investigated. This would see vehicles from a range of sources (e.g. school buses, taxis, patient transport) pooled together to be put to best use in the community throughout the day, avoiding the situation of vehicle fleets being underutilised for large parts of the day whilst elsewhere travel needs go unmet. School buses, for example, are often only used to take students to schools in the morning and home in the afternoon. The vehicles could be put to other uses between these times as well as in the evenings and at weekends.
- 2.7. There are many examples, both from the UK and abroad, where these kinds of approaches have been put into practice. The practical challenges of implementing them are significant but with money tight and essential services under threat, the potential of existing fleets and infrastructure should be maximised³.

Thinking outside the bus

- 2.8. In looking at the availability of transport, it is important to recognise that providing a bus is not always the answer, and is often not financially feasible. Other options for fulfilling transport needs could include:
- Improving walking and cycling routes to key destinations and other infrastructure to support this.
 - Community transport providers who can arrange affordable group travel if, for example, a group of young people all wanted to travel to the cinema and back.
 - Enabling buses and trains to carry bikes (or provide secure bike parking) to enable people to cycle to a main transport hub and catch a bus or train to continue their journey
 - Scooter commuter schemes, as operated in Merseyside and South Yorkshire, for example, which offer scooters to get to and from employment should public transport not be available. Such schemes are useful for 'older' young people working in the evenings and at weekends.

Improved land use planning

- 2.9. Many of the places young people would like to visit or work continue to be located in remote, out of town locations (for example, retail parks and cinema complexes). In deciding on a location, **developers should consider how people without a car will reach these facilities**, whether by public transport, on foot or by bike, involving transport authorities at the earliest stages. Town centre locations or places that connect to existing public transport networks should be favoured⁴.

³ More information on Total Transport can be found in **pteg** (2011) Total Transport: Working across sectors to achieve better outcomes'

⁴ More information on integrating land use and transport planning can be found in **pteg** (2011) Thriving Cities: Integrated land use and transport planning.

Safety

- 2.10. The safety concerns of young people using public transport tend to be the same as those of adults (large groups of people, antisocial behaviour, lonely bus stops⁵). A young person's unpleasant experience while travelling or waiting for public transport can have an impact on their choice of travel mode as an adult⁶. Indeed, many adults, as a result of their early negative experiences of using public transport, can in turn discourage their own children from using these services. **Any measures to improve perceptions of safety on public transport must therefore focus on parents, as well as on young people themselves.**
- 2.11. Centro, for example, is currently running a 'travel champion' pilot involving a group of Year 8 pupils becoming champions for promoting sustainable travel 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 starters to help them with their journeys. The initiative is aimed primarily at parents, helping to reduce their anxiety around letting their child use public transport.
- 2.12. PTEs continually strive to ensure that safety concerns do not deter people from using public transport or mean that people make less journeys than they would ideally like to, for example:
- Merseytravel is working with mySociety to explore the potential for an online antisocial behaviour reporting tool where reports could be submitted by passengers via smartphone and linked to particular transport routes or stops. This would allow antisocial behaviour 'hotspots' to be identified and targeted.
 - Centro, in partnership with National Express, recruited young people to be bus monitors on their trips to and from school. They were asked to observe and report back on behaviour on the bus, without having to intervene. The school could then decide how to deal with any problems identified.
 - Merseytravel, alongside public and private sector partners, run TravelSafe, an on-going project to support safety on the transport network. The project comprises a range of strands, including the presence of Police Officers and other security staff on the network, action to tackle hate crime and campaigns targeted at potential offenders, rather than potential victims.

Cleanliness

- 2.13. PTEs are responsible for ensuring that their vast network of over 57,000 bus interchanges, stops and shelters are clean, modern and properly maintained. They have invested in award winning, state of the art interchanges that make travel by public transport a pleasurable experience. Good examples include colourful, bright and modern interchanges at Barnsley, Wolverhampton and Liverpool South Parkway.
- 2.14. Across the Metropolitan areas, PTEs have provided high quality infrastructure in return for highway improvements from local authorities and high quality buses from operators.
- 2.15. Metro, in West Yorkshire, for example, worked in partnership with the bus operator First and Leeds City Council to deliver a £7 million fleet of brand new hybrid buses (complete with

⁵ Department for Transport (2010) Passengers' Perceptions of Personal Security on Public Transport – Qualitative Research Report.

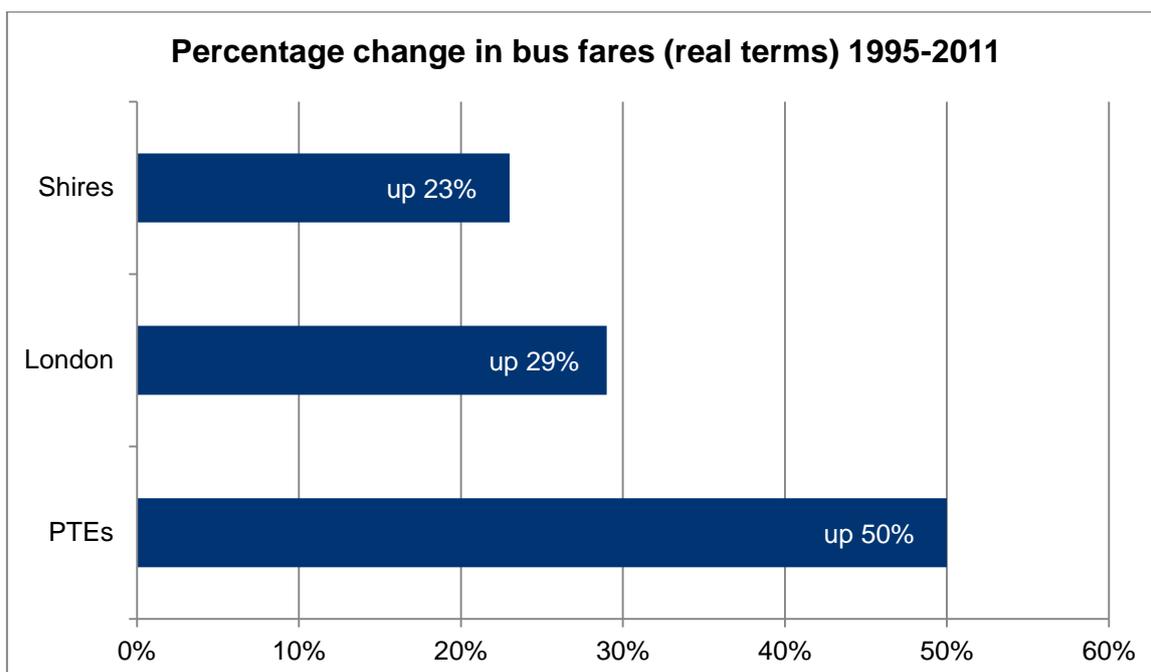
⁶ Department for Transport (2001) Young people and crime on public transport

comfortable leather seats), combined with intensively cleaned and refreshed waiting environments and improvements to the highway. Local school pupils were invited to name the buses after people who have put Leeds on the map.

3. The affordability of fares for all young people regardless of where they live

- 3.1. Affordable travel for young people brings considerable benefits, enabling them to meet friends, access further education, participate in sports and attend attainment boosting after school activities, for example. Cheaper travel also leaves families with more cash in their pockets.
- 3.2. Local councils are required to provide free home to school transport for 5 to 16 year olds attending their nearest suitable school that is further than walking distance away. Extra 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 problems. Students aged over 16 may also be able to get help with transport to education and training - the support available is set out in transport policy statements published by all local authorities by the end of May each year.
- 3.3. Outside of education transport, there is currently no national free or discounted fares scheme for young people. How much young people can expect to pay for their travel varies across the country.
- 3.4. In London, fares for young people are set by the Mayor. Young people living in London aged under 16 or 16-18 and in full time education get free bus and tram travel, provided they sign up and adhere to a behaviour code.
- 3.5. Outside of London, fares are set by individual bus companies and vary depending on the company used and, usually, the distance travelled. Bus companies may also have their own discounted fare schemes for young people.
- 3.6. In addition, transport authorities may run fare schemes to make transport more affordable for young people. These are discretionary schemes and funded via a limited pot of money that is also used to pay for other services required locally, such as buses to isolated rural areas, or transport help for jobseekers. Transport authorities must weigh up the relative importance of each of these services locally in deciding where to allocate limited funds.
- 3.7. All PTEs offer some form of discount or benefit for young people, and all work hard to keep non-commercial child fares low. However, due to the multiple demands on a limited funding pot, sometimes fare increases are unavoidable in order to protect wider services.
- 3.8. Where concessionary fares for young people do exist, these are often set at a fraction of adult fares, meaning that when adult fares go up, child fares rise accordingly. Metropolitan areas outside London have been particularly hard hit by fare rises, as the chart below illustrates⁷.

⁷ Department for Transport Bus Statistics Table BUS0405b Local bus fares index at 2010/11 prices



- 3.9. Whilst high fares are a cause for concern, research indicates that the complexity, inconsistency and unpredictability of bus fares for young people are equally frustrating⁸.
- 3.10. As a minimum, young people should be able to easily find out what fare they will need to pay for their journey. Currently, finding fares information can be difficult for all passengers. 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 bus journey is going to cost can only be done by getting on a bus and asking the driver. 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.
- 3.11. To help make things clearer, the **Government could introduce a licencing condition requiring operators of registered bus services to supply the relevant local transport authority with full details of the fares applicable to each service**. This, among other things would enable the transport authority (and Traveline services) to provide and publicise comprehensive information on services and fares to all passengers (not just young people). Targeted promotion of fares and ticketing options for young people would also be helpful.
- 3.12. Research has shown⁹ that **the most effective fare offers for young people are simple, flat and consistent** and that these features can be more important than the actual fare level:
- **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. 50p 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

⁸ See for example Scott Wilson Transport Consultancy (2010) Concessionary Fares for Young People

⁹ See for example Scott Wilson Transport Consultancy (2010) Concessionary Fares for Young People

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.

4. The effectiveness of current concessionary fare schemes and local initiatives in the UK to enable young people to access services and opportunities

- 4.1. As described above, flat, simple and consistent fare offers for young people can be particularly effective and have been shown to result in young people making more journeys.
- 4.2. In South Yorkshire, SYPTE's 40p cash child fare was frozen for eight years between 2003 and 2011. Over this time, child patronage steadily rose from 17 million passengers per year to around 18.5 million per year. This equates to a 9 per cent increase in child patronage, over a period when bus patronage overall in South Yorkshire was in decline.
- 4.3. In Tyne and Wear, the Nexus CAT (Child All-day Ticket) has also proved successful. Under 16s pay £1 for an all-day ticket (allowing unlimited journeys) and 50p for a single. The fare level has remained unchanged since September 2008. Children under 16 made almost a million extra bus and Metro journeys in the first six months alone, representing an 11 per cent increase in child patronage¹⁰. The capped daily fare means that families do not have to restrict journeys, making it more likely that children will be able to attend valuable activities outside of school hours. Families are also left with more money in their pockets. In 2009, Nexus calculated that CAT can save up to £36 per child compared to full commercial fares – more than enough to pay for a new school uniform, including shoes and spare shirts and trousers¹¹. The CAT offer is easily communicated, making it more likely that children and families will make full use of it.
- 4.4. PTEs have taken steps to try and encourage use of services and opportunities through fare offers for young people. 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 website contained a wealth of inspiring ideas for places to go using the £1 ticket, from 'a bit of culture' to free swimming at local pools.

5. The accessibility and availability of transport services for disabled young people

- 5.1. A key achievement in recent years has been the establishment of a legal framework for accessibility and progress in meeting its requirements. However, the transport network is still far from fully accessible, as young disabled campaigners such as Trailblazers have highlighted¹².
- 5.2. Until the transport network is fully accessible, there will always be the risk that disabled people will come across difficulties at some point in their journey. The PTEs have taken the view that 'forewarned is forearmed' and seek to provide disabled people with honest

¹⁰ Nexus press release *Children make a million more journeys by bus and Metro*, 15 June 2009.

¹¹ Nexus press release *Save for a school uniform with an Under 16 Card*, 24 August 2009.

¹² Trailblazers (2009) 'End of the line – the Trailblazers transport report' available from: http://www.mdctrailblazers.org/assets/0000/1411/End_of_the_line_Report_FINAL.pdf

information which allows them to make their own decision as to whether or not to travel on a particular route or use a particular service. Many PTEs publish Access Guides, for example, to help overcome physical access issues.

- 5.3. PTEs have also worked to put in place innovative design features and practical tools to facilitate access for all, such as tactile signage for people with visual impairments and tools to help people with communication difficulties to buy bus and rail tickets.
- 5.4. Ideally, conventional public transport should be suitable for most disabled people. However, all PTEs additionally provide specialist services (such as door to door bus services) to ensure that individuals who cannot use mainstream public transport are not left stranded.
- 5.5. In working towards improving the physical accessibility of the network, it is also important to consider the needs of people with learning disabilities, who can face just as many barriers in using public transport as people with physical disabilities. Many PTEs offer travel training and 'buddying' to support independent travel as well as working to develop accessible information. Nexus, for example, is working with a group of people with learning disabilities to transfer all of its documents into accessible information.

6. The current training public transport staff receive in regards to young people and their needs as customers

- 6.1. All passengers and public transport staff deserve respect. Training for public transport staff should reflect this, as should travel training and promotional activities aimed at young people. Evidence suggests that when young people come together with transport providers and drivers to discuss expectations, the two parties often reach agreement on what is acceptable. **The more dialogue that can be generated between young people and the transport sector, the better.**
- 6.2. In 2010, **pteg** as part of the 'Taking forward travel and transport for children and young people' group¹³ convened a workshop on young people and bus travel bringing together young people, transport operators, transport authorities, central government and voluntary sector organisations. A key aim of the event was to involve young people in a national level conversation about how bus travel could be made better.
- 6.3. As a result of the workshop, two guides have been produced to help promote understanding and dialogue between young people and the bus sector. One guide aims to give young people all the information they need to make buses better in their community¹⁴. The other, complementary guide, is aimed at people working in the bus sector and looks at how to work with young people to improve bus services¹⁵.
- 6.4. Other ways to promote dialogue could include:

¹³ Other group members include: Department for Transport, Department for Education, Local Government Association, British Youth Council, National Children's Bureau, UK Youth Parliament, Confederation of Passenger Transport and the Community Transport Association.

¹⁴ **pteg**/NCB/BYC (2012) 'How can I make buses better? A guide for young people' available from <http://www.pteg.net/NR/rdonlyres/32399446-3847-4383-B786-D3B1BCCA42CF/0/GuidetobusesforyoungpeopleFINAL.pdf>

¹⁵ **pteg**/NCB/BYC (2012) 'Working with young people to make buses better – A guide for the bus sector' <http://www.pteg.net/NR/rdonlyres/6489D9A3-5F02-400B-91E8-73F9291DE06B/0/TransportsectorguideFINAL.pdf>

- The involvement of young people in the training of bus drivers and other public transport staff.
- Visits to schools and youth groups by bus drivers and public transport staff. All PTEs take part in school liaison work, with staff meeting students to talk about travel, including routes, tickets and appropriate behaviour. Often these sessions are targeted around the point of transition to high school, when many young people experience independent travel for the first time.

Visits could also involve public transport staff talking to young people about their work. Nexus, for example, took part in a 'Breakfast with...' session at a local Academy. A staff member at Nexus talked to students informally over breakfast about their role, responsibilities, likes and dislikes and career path.

- Engaging with existing youth groups or setting up panels of young people who are asked for their opinions on transport matters, or can even help hold transport decision-makers to account through the scrutiny process.

Transport for Greater Manchester, for example, worked in partnership with the North West Regional Youth Work Unit to establish the Young Persons Transport Panel. The Panel of young people was involved in the design and evaluation of the annual Youth Strategy Action Plan, as well as being involved in the development of the IGO Travel Pass for 11 to 16 year olds.

- Making it easier for young people to take part in public consultations about transport services.

Centro, for example, worked in partnership with school councils to ensure young people could have their say in a review of the bus network, including via an online survey which any young person living in the area affected could complete.

7. Recommendations on a code of practice for youth using public transport

- 7.1. One option might be for young people and transport representative bodies to work together to draw up a code of practice, charter or kite mark scheme that transport operators could sign up to. It is essential that any such code has buy-in from all sides to avoid becoming merely a 'paper exercise'.
- 7.2. The charter could list, for example, the five key things that young people want from transport services. The 'asks' would need to be carefully formulated in order to be challenging for operators but also realistic. The asks would also need to be specific and measurable to enable operators to clearly demonstrate compliance and to ensure that young people experience a tangible impact.
- 7.3. Transport operators signing up to the charter would earn the right to display a kite mark, showing that their services were 'approved by young people'. Young people could then be involved in mystery shopping to test the extent to which the charter is adhered to by operators on the ground, reporting back on any areas for improvement.

8. Which low carbon approaches are being used locally to enable young people to travel

8.1. Examples of low carbon approaches being used within the PTE areas to enable young people to travel:

- Transport for Greater Manchester's Yellow School bus services are going green – around half the fleet is now low carbon helping to reduce vehicle emissions during the busy school-run period¹⁶.
- Merseytravel successfully bid to DfT for the continuation of the Merseyside Transport Partnership's Bikeability scheme meaning that schools across the region will be able to offer cycle training to a further 10,800 year 5 to 9 pupils this year, with 23,400 receiving training in the following two years¹⁷.
- Transport for Greater Manchester offer an urban orienteering¹⁸ challenge where two rival teams of young people find clues and solve puzzles to navigate between Greater Manchester's green spaces using public transport.
- Centro's letzgogreen website¹⁹ provides a wide selection of engaging resources to encourage young people to make greener travel choices. The website contains materials aimed at different age groups – 4 to 7 year olds (online storybooks); 7 to 11 year olds (comic strips) and 11 to 14 year olds (interactive resources exploring the future of travel). A journey planner specifically designed for young people will soon be added to the site.

9. Additional comments

Employing young people

9.1. Programmes to support the transport sector to realise the business benefits and potential of employing young people should be encouraged. This would enable candidates to develop their skills and talents through structured work-placement opportunities, with the aim of securing full time employment, or training that would benefit young people in the long-term.

Young people and transport strategy

9.2. Overall, there is a need for greater strategic direction and leadership from Government on the subject of young people and public transport. Public transport is clearly a matter of great concern and importance for many young people and, as such, the Government should set out a clear strategy for action. The strategy should be drawn up in close consultation with young people as well as with the transport sector and wider stakeholders.

¹⁶ For more information see

http://www.tfgm.com/tfgm_news.cfm?news_id=9008463?submenuheader=3

¹⁷ For more information see <http://www.letstravelwise.org/newsarticle.php?articleID=3536>

¹⁸ See <http://www.goto.org.uk/uo.php>

¹⁹ See <http://letzgogreen.org/>