

Bus Users Cymru is funded by the Welsh Government to represent the bus passenger in Wales.

Our job is to

- handle complaints;
- improve bus services across Wales by monitoring and reporting on bus operations;
- educate transport providers and enforce compliance where necessary;
- gather the views of users and accurately reflect them to the industry and legislators;
- improve transport providers' attitude towards their passengers;
- provide guidance and support for bus users;
- help passengers to have their say and get complaints resolved;
- provide advice on proposed transport policy;
- input passengers' views before policy is written ;
- facilitate opportunities for the public to meet local authorities and the operators that provide the services;

Further to the Rail Franchise Consultation page on the National Assembly for Wales website and our attendance in Shrewsbury on 9 March 2017, Bus Users Cymru offers the following comments in the same order as shown on the Survey Monkey questionnaire (numbers 1 to 11) with some additional comments. It will be understood that Bus Users Cymru looks at all the issues from a passenger perspective.

Survey Monkey questionnaire

1. Timetable information for passengers

Information must be provided not just for rail but also for relevant bus services. If seamless integration is to be achieved, then sufficient information in many forms needs to be easily available.

2. Handling delays and disruption

Staff must be trained to be highly visible at times of disruption and also be empowered to assist passengers with their onward journey. Staff must be knowledgeable about their company's processes and much greater confidence and trust can be engendered simply by being visible. Rail replacement plans should be integrated into any new franchise agreement.

3. Staff availability on trains and at stations

Again, staff must be available and visible. It is easy to assume that everyone is local and they know where they are going. This is not so, as an hour or so on Cardiff Central Railway Station would demonstrate.

4. Knowledge and attitude of staff on trains and at stations

Staff attitude is key to improving the passenger experience and thereby increasing passenger numbers. Apart from being visible, staff should have full knowledge of their own as well as other Train Operating Companies' services and it is essential that they look as though they want to help.

5. Journey times and frequency of services

Journey times must be faster so that public transport is clearly faster than the private car and frequency of services must be such that they encourage people out of their cars and on to the railway network.

6. Punctuality and reliability

Punctuality and reliability are both essential in building passenger confidence and trust.

7. Connections with other train services

8. Connections with other modes of transport

Connection with other services is a basic requirement. Connections with other modes of transport are increasingly important and due consideration should be given to the Active Travel (Wales) Act and bear in mind that every journey starts in the home, not at the railway station.

9. Tickets that can also be used on other train services and other modes of transport

A multi modal ticket would encourage more people to use public transport, both rail and bus.

10. Smart ticketing (mobile/smart card etc)

It is essential that different means of ticketing be explored. These days most young people go out with just a phone and a card. In many cases, they go out with just a phone. Due regard must be given to this and ticketing must be developed to keep up with this behaviour trend.

11. The price of fares to use services

The competition comes from the motor car so it's important to pitch fares at the right level to encourage passenger growth and to demonstrate that public transport can be cheaper than using the private car. In addition, fares and methods of purchase must be advertised as widely as possible because potential passengers can lose confidence if they don't know the fare and lack of information discourages new passengers. In many cases a season ticket or carnet ticket can reduce the uncertainty.

12. South East Wales Metro

The S E Wales Metro covers an area containing approximately two thirds of the population of Wales and has the potential to achieve modal shift. Indeed, if congestion is not to strangle movement and the economy modal shift must be achieved. However, if modal shift is to be achieved then the rail franchise must offer high quality frequent trains with sufficient capacity in peak times and bus / rail must be integrated so as to provide the maximum reliable travel opportunities. Bus stops and railway stations must be accessible and safe. Local authorities must provide priority measures and the journey to and from the railway station must be included in the overall planning.

13. TrawsCymru pan Wales long distance bus network

If the TrawsCymru network is to fulfil its role of linking key settlements not served by rail we would like to see a requirement to work with the TrawsCymru network manager in order to provide a full network thus linking all key settlements in Wales.

14. Passenger Satisfaction

Targets should be set for improved passenger satisfaction levels

15. Provision of Information

Information must be provided in as many formats as possible, not forgetting printed matter. Whilst the world might be moving towards being paperless, many people do not have access to technology and tourists particularly like to have a printed timetable they can keep for the whole journey.

16. Consultation with stakeholders

Consultation should take place before and after the franchise is awarded, especially with passenger representatives and groups representing people with protected characteristics. Customer panels should be set up to enable regular dialogue with passengers. Liaison must take place with bus operators to enable connections to be made.

Priorities as shown on the Survey Monkey questionnaire

1. Capacity and availability of seats when you travel
2. Access and facilities for older people and people with disabilities
3. Security at stations and on trains themselves
4. The quality and cleanliness of the trains used to provide services
5. Facilities at stations
6. Reduced CO₂ emissions from transport
7. Availability of Wifi and plug sockets in carriages

I hope the foregoing will be useful in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Everson MBE
Director, Bus Users Cymru
21st February 2017