Reducing the barriers to bus use

AGCC, First Group and NESTRANS

MAY 2015

Produced by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce Research Unit

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Executive Summary

Research undertaken in 2014 during North East Business Week (NEBW) highlighted there was a low level of bus usage in and around Aberdeen by business leaders.

In partnership with First Group and NESTRANS, the Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce set out to find out what the barriers to bus use are and how these could be overcome.

This research reviewed existing research, received survey responses from over 490 employees and met with both bus users and non-users in a focus group session.

Our employee research found that:

- 66% of respondents travel to work by car as their primary method of transport
- 12% travel by bus to work
- 40% classed themselves as a frequent bus user or someone who occasionally used the bus to get to work

Of the employee respondents:

- 15% are frequent bus users
- 25% are occasional bus users (a few times a month)
- 16% are an occasional user who would like to use the bus more, but don't have a strong desire to make this change
- 33% do not use the bus, but would like to do so more. There are substantial barriers to them doing so, but they understand the benefits of bus travel
- 12% do not use the bus and would never consider using the bus even if improvements were made

Journey times were mentioned as a major barrier to use. Many felt that the bus takes too long or that journey times were unreliable. Alongside this barrier respondents highlighted associated barriers including:

- there was no bus stop near them; or
- the bus did not go where they wanted, therefore adding to their journey time.

Improving journey times will require a variety of interventions by multiple stakeholders but it is critical if the volume of bus use is to increase.

Respondents reported bus travel as too expensive and believed it was a more expensive option than using their car. This is a major barrier to modal shift and is a perception which will need to be challenged with evidence and strong marketing campaigns.

The focus group participants reported that a further barrier is a lack of information. They highlighted that there is not enough information about how and where to get a bus. They found the timetabling system to be confusing and were unsure of the cost. They also pointed out that in comparison to other Scottish cities, bus use in Aberdeen is expensive.

Overall awareness levels of services provided (mainly) by First Group are high amongst bus users, but amongst non-bus users awareness levels differ and are generally lower.

The report concludes with a series of potential interventions designed to increase bus use.

Introduction

Background and Research Objectives

The Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) Research Unit was commissioned in December 2014 to undertake a study to understand the barriers to bus use in Aberdeen. The study also aims to identify how to remove (or mitigate) these barriers and encourage bus use in the future.

The study objectives were to:

1. Identify groups of bus users and non-users, and identify different types of non-users;
2. Understand the way bus services in Aberdeen are perceived through the eyes of non-bus users;
3. Assess the difference between perceived barriers and actual barriers to bus use;
4. Identify what can be done to remove these barriers and encourage increased bus use in the future.

Research Methods

Multiple methods were used during the study including surveys, focus groups and secondary desk research.

Primary research

The primary research was conducted over two phases. The first phase was an online survey, this was distributed to AGCC members and travel coordinators from various employers in the North-east. The survey was also promoted through the use of social media. In total, 493 people completed the survey.

For the second phase of data collection, a focus group was conducted with seven non-bus users who had previously completed the online survey. This was used to gather deeper insight and test the results of the survey. The fieldwork was conducted in March 2015.

Secondary research

Secondary research was deemed an important preparatory stage for the study. In the desk research we explored the influences of demand for, and use of, bus services.

The economic background of Aberdeen

Aberdeen is a vibrant city and is known as the 'oil capital of Europe'. The North-east has seen economic growth in times when the rest of the UK did not and this is largely due to the resilience of the economy, in particular in the energy sector.

Between 2001 and 2012 population growth was 6% in Aberdeen City and 13% in Aberdeenshire, this compares to a national increase of 4.9% across Scotland over the same period.

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire have significantly higher proportions of households with an income of over £40,000 in comparison to other Scottish cities. 2012 ASHE results show that full-time hourly earnings in Aberdeen City were £14.45, which is 15% higher than the Scottish average. While in Aberdeenshire the figure is £11.38, this is 9% lower than the Scottish average[1].

In the United Kingdom, buses are the most commonly used form of public transport[2]. Statistics show in the North-east, the number of bus passengers are increasing. In 2011/12 the number of bus users had grown to 33 million, an increase of 2 million from 2004/05 when the volume was 31 million[3].

Although bus use is increasing so are the number of cars on the road. In the North-east the number of households with access to a car is high. In Aberdeen around 77% of households have access to a car. In Aberdeenshire car ownership levels are the highest in Scotland with 85% of households having access to a car, this compares to the national figure of 69%[4]. In Edinburgh this figure is 60% and in Glasgow it is 49%.

Congestion is a major issue in the North-east. Each year the Scottish Transport Statistics publish congestion data. Data from 2012 shows that the percentage of driver journeys delayed due to congestion is 12% in Aberdeen City and 13% in Aberdeenshire, this compares to the national average of 10%. Research by the Scottish Chambers of Commerce found three in ten member businesses experienced an increase in costs due to congestion and seven in ten have experienced some kind of issue due to congestion[5]

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[1] Income and earnings in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire 2013
[2] Transport Research Series – Understanding why some people do not use buses
[3] Aberdeen City Transport Trends – Then, Now and the Future 2014
[4] Transport Statistics Scotland
[5] Supply Chain and Procurement Survey 2012 - Scottish Chambers of Commerce

Existing research on barriers to bus use

The Government has conducted many different surveys exploring the public's attitudes to bus travel. A common finding is that those who already use the bus as a way of travelling tend to be positive in their views.

In 2014 AECOM was commissioned to conduct a bus passenger satisfaction survey in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. In Aberdeen City 85% reported they were either 'very/fairly satisfied' with their most recent bus trip. They also found 85% were 'very/fairly satisfied' with the reliability of their journey and 72% were 'very/fairly satisfied' with the length of time they had to wait for the bus. A further 73% reported they were 'very/fairly satisfied' with the value for money of the bus fare. Similarly research conducted in 2014 on national rail satisfaction found 87% said they were overall satisfied with the train provided by Scotrail, 81% were satisfied with the frequency of the Scotrail trains on that route and 90% were satisfied with the length of the time the journey was scheduled to take on a Scotrail train[6].

However, those who identify themselves as non-bus users or use the bus infrequently tend to have a more negative view of bus travel. Research by Centro[7] highlighted that not using a bus because it is **unreliable** is common and one of the most significant barriers to use. This corresponds with a Scottish Government study which assessed why some people do not use the bus. This study found there was a widely held perception that travelling by bus took too long and that you could not rely on a bus to be punctual.

Cost is another issue which is frequently recognised as a barrier. An example of this is a study by Milton Keynes Council[8] on the barriers to bus use which found one of the reasons people do not use a bus is because of the cost. The Scottish Government study results supported this finding, although they found not everyone was clear about the precise cost of travel and when comparing costs only took in to account the cost of petrol and not the cost of buying, insuring and maintaining the car.

As part of the desk research we have compared bus costs across cities, below is a table which shows our findings.

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[6] National Rail Passenger Survey 2014
[7] 'Bus user, lapsed bus user and non-bus user - Public perceptions research' Centro, 2008
[8] Barriers to bus use in Milton Keynes 2010

Table 1: Comparison of bus prices

Bus prices	Single ticket	Day ticket	Weekly pass	Monthly pass	Season pass	Bus operator
Aberdeen City	£2.60 (6+ stages)	£4.00	£18.00	£64.00	£660.00	First Bus
Aberdeenshire (zone 1)	-	£3.60	£14.25	£54.00	£620.00	Stagecoach
Edinburgh	£1.50	£3.50	£17.00	£48.00	£576.00	Lothian Buses
Glasgow City	£1.95	£4.10	£16.50	£45.00	-	First Bus
Dundee	£2.30	£3.60	£12.50	£46.00	£495.00	National Express
Inverness	-	£3.70	-	£40.00	-	Stagecoach
Perth	-	£3.50	£10.00	£38.00	£452.00	Stagecoach
Stirling	-	£5.60	£22.30	£73.20	£732.80	First Bus
Newcastle	£1.15-£3.20	£3.80	£12.50	£48.00	£576.00	Stagecoach
Bristol	£1.50/£2.50	£4.40	£17.00	£66.00	£650.00	First Bus
Reading	£1.90	£4.30	£16.00	£55.00	£575.00	Reading buses

Research on solutions

Research by the Department for Transport found that when a combination of 'hard' and 'soft' measures are introduced a positive bus experience and patronage growth can be achieved. Hard measures can be defined as physical engineering measures for example improving journey times, reliability and the frequency and coverage of buses.

Soft measures are related to informing individuals or segments of society about the availability of public transport and providing a more desirable experience[9]. The DfT research found that the 'hard' measures such as cost, reliability and journey time need to be improved before the 'soft' measures such as cleanliness, customer service, awareness and passenger information will persuade non-bus users to use the bus in the future.

The Scottish Government believe it should be made easy as possible to use the bus. In practice their research states that everything from finding information about the bus times, costs and routes should be simple. This is a natural and in itself a simple conclusion but perhaps over simplifies the complexity of increasing bus usage.
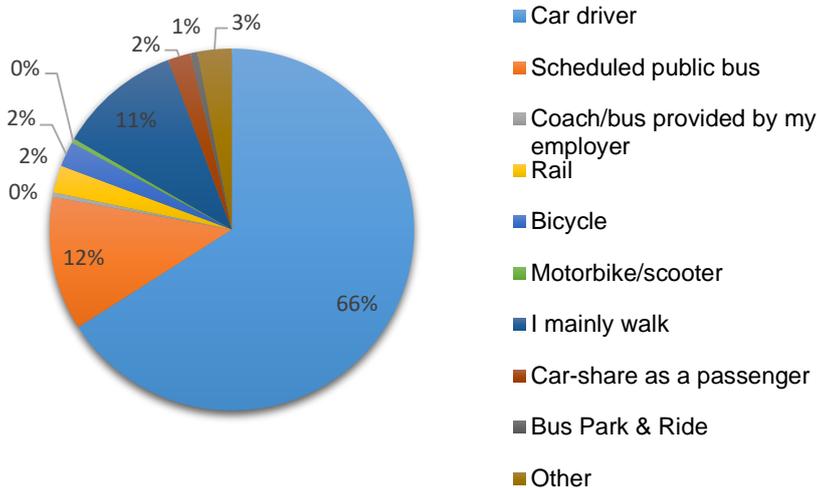
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[9] Department for Transport – The role of soft measures in influencing patronage growth and modal split in the bus market in England

How do people travel to work?

We asked all respondents what their primary method of transport of travel to work is, figure 1 displays the results.

Figure 1: Primary method of transport to work

- ■ Car driver
- ■ Scheduled public bus
- ■ Coach/bus provided by my employer
- ■ Rail
- ■ Bicycle
- ■ Motorbike/scooter
- ■ I mainly walk
- ■ Car-share as a passenger
- ■ Bus Park & Ride
- ■ Other

Unsurprisingly, given high car ownership in the region, the most common method of transport is travelling by car (**66%**). **Twelve percent** reported their primary method of transport as a scheduled public bus.

We also asked why this is this is their preferred method of transport.

For those who said they were a car driver, reasons included: their car was needed for other purposes, it was convenient, quicker and a flexible option for them. For those who said they use a scheduled public bus their reasons included: it was convenient, they could not drive and no parking was available at their place of work, it was their only available option or it is cheaper than owning a car.

Respondents were asked what other methods of transport are available to them. Figure 2 illustrates the results.
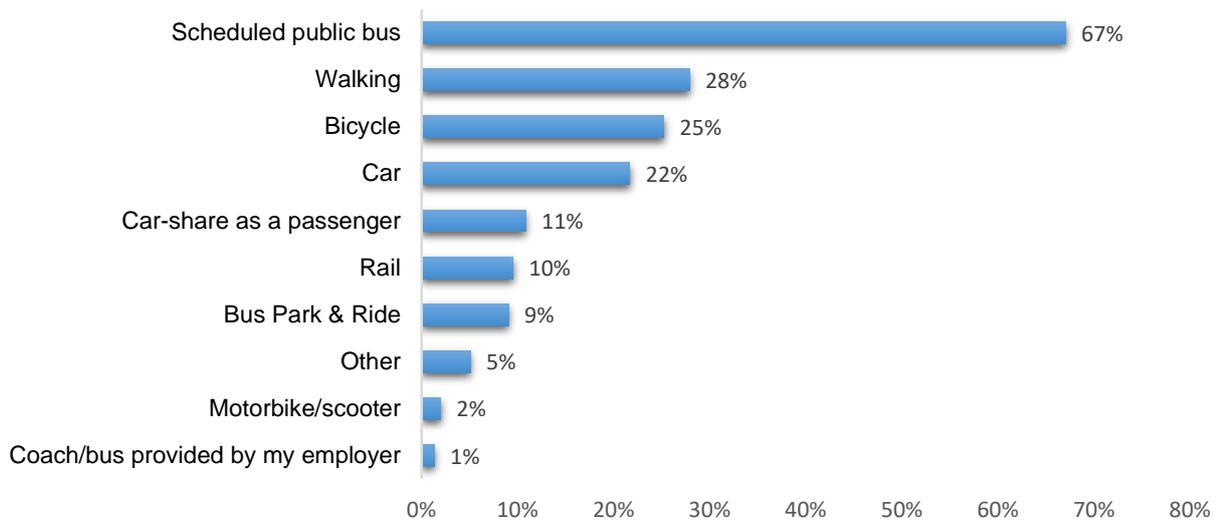
Figure 2: Other methods of transport available

We found that **67%** of respondents reported that using a bus is another method of transport available to them and **9%** reported the bus Park & Ride as another option available to them. This level of response would suggest that there is a significant 'potential' market for bus operators to attract i.e. two thirds of those in employment based on our survey findings.

Of the respondents who reported a scheduled public bus was available to them as another method of transport, **35%** of these people classed themselves as non-users who could become potential users in the future. This further supports our view that a significant group are keen to be attracted to the bus.

Bus users

Respondents were asked to identify their level of bus use. **Fifteen percent** of respondents classed themselves as a frequent bus user and one quarter **(25%)** classed themselves as an occasional user who used the bus a few times a month.

Why do people use the bus?

We wanted to know why employees use the bus and we asked respondents to select their top five reasons for using the bus. Understanding people's motivation behind bus usage helps us build a picture of the benefits of using this mode of transport. Figure 3 below shows reasons identified for using the bus. Respondents were allowed to select five reasons.

Figure 3: Reasons for using the bus
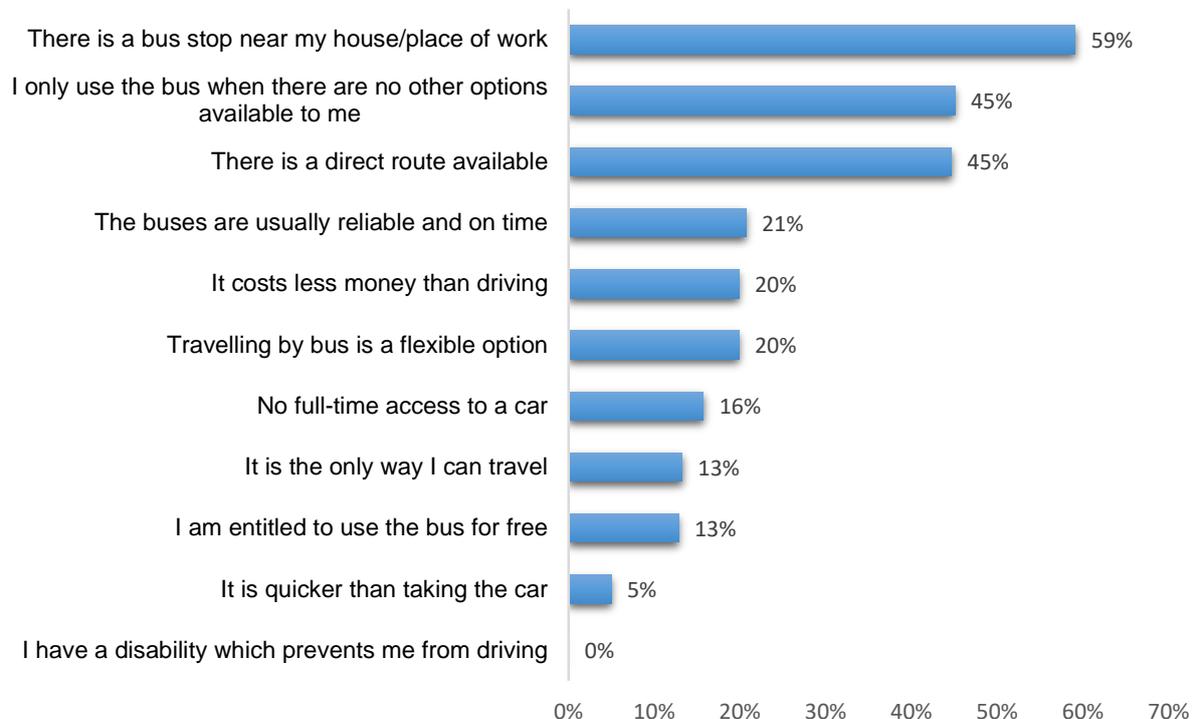
Over half **(59%)** of bus users reported they use the bus because there is a bus stop near their house or place of work. **Forty five percent** said they use the bus when there are no other options available to them and the same proportion **(45%)** said they use the bus when there is a direct route available to them.

Respondents were also asked to mention if there were any other reasons for using the bus which were not mentioned above. **Twenty six percent** of those who answered said they use the bus for social events where alcohol will be involved, **10%** said they use the bus due to limited parking in the city and **6%** say it is a greener way of travelling.

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Improving bus journeys

We asked bus users how their journey could be improved, table 2 highlights the results. These responses may not necessarily reflect fact but, are perceptions of the respondents.

Table 2: How could your bus journey be improved?

Improvement needed	Responses	Percentage of respondents
Cheaper fares	*"The bus fares are too high"* *"A lower price for monthly bus pass. It is by far the most expensive place to use the bus in the country."* *"I probably would use the bus more if it was cheaper. It is cheaper to park in town for 3 hours than take the bus so often take the car. I would prefer to support the buses but not when it costs me about £2.00 more."*	24%
Frequency	*"More frequent service."* *"If the service was more frequent that would be of benefit as the stop is only a short walk from home and Work."* *"More frequent buses early in the morning i.e. 0600 – 0700"*	18%
Reliability	*"Buses that run on time regularly."* *"Adherence to timetable"* *"Reliability and speed of service, the timetable is generally a work of fiction"*	16%
Direct/better bus routes	*"Better bus routes"* *"Direct route with no changes"* *"Alternative route for the bus stop closest to me"*	10%
Quicker journey times	*"Length of time the journey takes - often quicker to walk."* *"Ideally quicker than taking the car"*	6%
Better quality buses	*"More up to date comfortable buses"* *"I'd make the buses more comfortable and welcoming. They tend to be uncomfortable and often smelly or stuffy. I often feel queasy at the end of a short trip."*	6%

We can see the biggest improvement bus users request is cheaper fares. This theme occurs across all groups whether respondents use the bus or not. The other improvements bus users want to see have synergies which each other e.g. if there were more frequent services, and direct or better bus routes, journey times in theory would become shorter.

Potential bus users

The Scottish Government classifies infrequent and non-bus users into three categories:

- 'bus refusers' who are very attached to their cars and would never consider travelling by bus, even if substantial improvements were made;
- 'bus pessimists' are those who, if pushed, say they would like to use the bus more, but do not have a strong desire to make this change; and
- people who would classify themselves as a non-bus user, but would like to use the bus more, although there are substantial barriers to them increasing their usage. It is likely this group do understand the benefits of bus travel.

This last group are those who could be classed as 'potential users'. If any positive interventions were made, this is the group who should be targeted initially to encourage greater bus use.

Our research found that when respondents were asked to categorise themselves this group received the largest response with **33%** saying *'I do not use the bus but would like to do so more. There are substantial barriers to me doing this but I understand the benefits of bus travel'.*

Having to change buses is a major barrier, so we asked this group if they were to take the bus to work how many times would they need to change buses, figure 5 below highlights the results.

Figure 4: Number of changes if travelling by bus

- 0 changes (38%)
- 1 change (26%)
- 2 changes (17%)
- 3+ changes (5%)
- Don't know (15%)
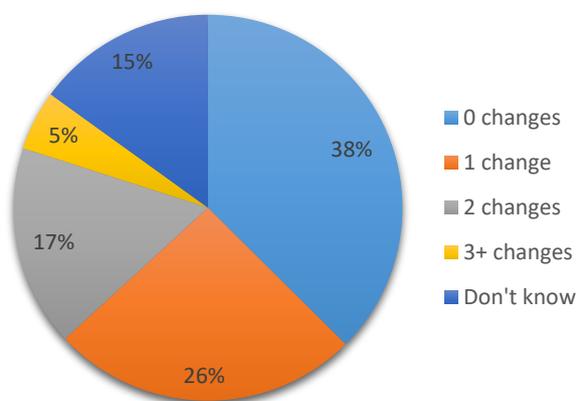
Thirty eight percent said they do not need to change bus while **48%** would need to make 1 or more changes.

A local study conducted in the North-east found that if there was more direct and frequent bus routes this would encourage increased usage of the bus in the future[10]. It would appear that a large proportion of this group (at least 38%) do not have 'changing busses' as a barriers to use.

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[10] Travel survey by local energy company in Aberdeen 2015

The barriers to bus use

To understand why people do not use the bus, we asked respondents what their main reason was for not using the bus as an open question. A substantial number of perceived barriers were mentioned, ranging from the cost of the journey, the bus takes too long and the bus is not reliable.

Respondents were also asked from a list of barriers to select why they do not use the bus. Below we can see the results and key themes that begin to emerge.

Cost

When prompted with a range of barriers to bus use, respondents were asked their top five reasons for not using the bus, **30%** of respondents said one of their reasons for not using the bus is *'the bus is more expensive than travelling by car'* and **24%** said *'the bus is too expensive generally'.*

"Bus fares in Aberdeen are too expensive"

Before prompting participants, we asked an open question about reasons for not using the bus. In this question **Twenty four percent** of respondents said (unprompted) their main reason for not using the bus was 'the cost of the bus'.

"Cost, very expensive, compared to the same journey in Glasgow or Edinburgh the cost of travel is significantly high in Aberdeen making it unaffordable."

This group of non-bus users also believe that compared to other Scottish cities, the cost of public transport is too high.

During the focus group, we asked respondents for their main reasons for not using the bus and while it was not the main barriers, the cost of a ticket compared to other modes of transport such as a taxi or driving was an issue.

Journey time

There is the perception amongst non-bus users that the length of the total journey time is too long. **22%** said their main reason (unprompted) for not using the bus is the 'bus takes too long'.

"Journey time is too long"

Sixty four percent of non-bus users said: *'my journey time would be longer if I travelled by bus'* as a reason for not using the bus when prompted with options.
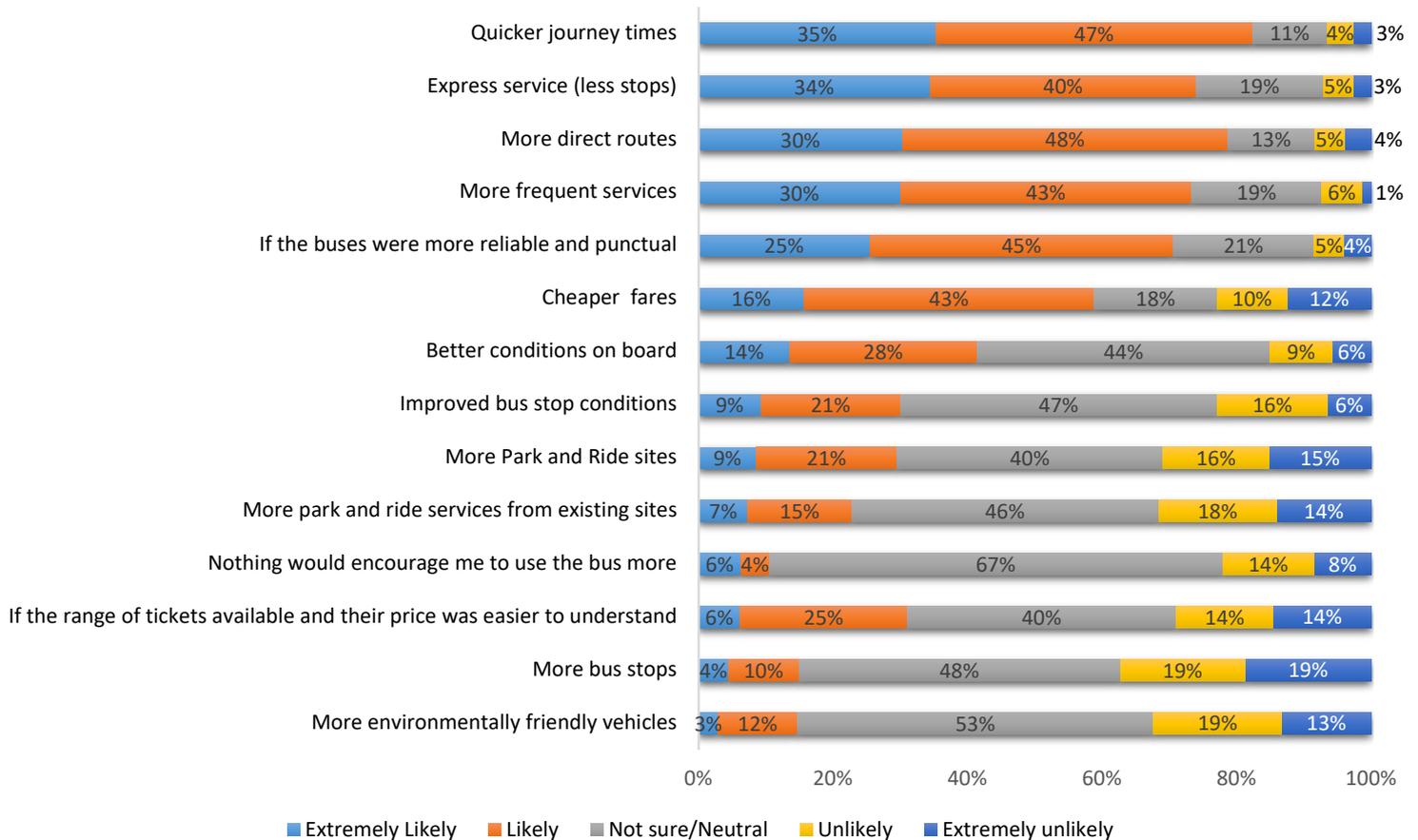
This barrier has a number of other factors associated with it. For example the total time spent on the bus will depend on a number of factors such as the number of stops made and where the bus travels to. **Eleven percent** of respondents said (unprompted) there was no

bus stop near their house, adding to the total journey time and **11%** said there was no direct route to where they wanted to go or they believe there is no suitable route for their journey.

What would encourage non-bus users to use the bus in the future?

Figure 5 below represents what non-bus users feel would encourage them to use the bus more in the future.

Figure 5: How likely would you be to take the bus in the future if the following changes were made

	Extremely Likely	Likely	Not sure/Neutral	Unlikely	Extremely unlikely
Quicker journey times	35%	47%	11%	4%	3%
Express service (less stops)	34%	40%	19%	5%	3%
More direct routes	30%	48%	13%	5%	4%
More frequent services	30%	43%	19%	6%	1%
If the buses were more reliable and punctual	25%	45%	21%	5%	4%
Cheaper fares	16%	43%	18%	10%	12%
Better conditions on board	14%	28%	44%	9%	6%
Improved bus stop conditions	9%	21%	47%	16%	6%
More Park and Ride sites	9%	21%	40%	16%	15%
More park and ride services from existing sites	7%	15%	46%	18%	14%
Nothing would encourage me to use the bus more	6%	4%	67%	14%	8%
If the range of tickets available and their price was easier to understand	6%	25%	40%	14%	14%
More bus stops	4%	10%	48%	19%	19%
More environmentally friendly vehicles	3%	12%	53%	19%	13%

Eight two percent would be likely or extremely likely to use the bus if their journey was quicker. **Seventy eight percent** would be likely or extremely likely to use the bus if there were more direct routes therefore making journey times quicker and **74%** would be likely or extremely likely to use the bus if there was an express service (less stops).

Awareness levels of services

Figure 7 highlights awareness levels and take up of services provided by bus operators for the 'potential users' group.
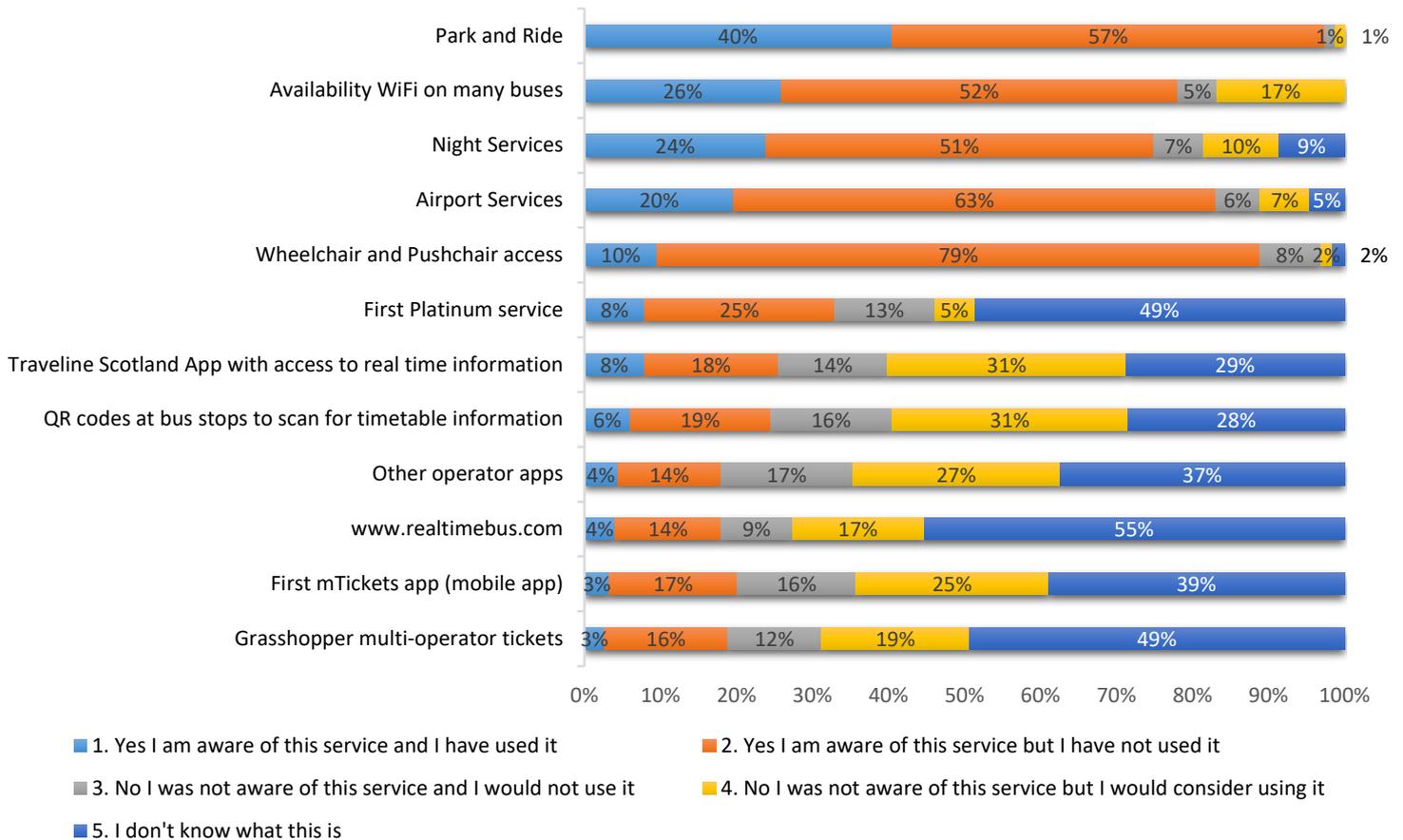
Figure 6: Awareness of services and if respondents have used these services

Results show many of services respondents would like to see are offered by First Aberdeen, but respondents do not recognise the service or are unaware of it. **Fifty five percent** of non-bus users do not know what www.realtimebus.com is and **39%** do know what First mTicket app is. Nearly half (**49%**) reported that they did not know what a Grasshopper multi-operator ticket was. The large volumes of dark blue and yellow in the bars in figure 7 suggest there are opportunities to better market existing services and encourage greater take up.

This view was reflected in the focus group where participants viewed that First Aberdeen do not market or publicise their services well enough. They considered that although it is positive to see changes being made e.g. WiFi on board certain buses and leather seats, if they do not know where to get

> *"It's all about information"*
> Focus Group quote

the bus or cannot find information on how to use the bus, these suggested changes will not achieve uplift in usage.

Non-bus users – unlikely to change

This section of the report looks at bus users who by the Scottish Government definition would be classified as *'bus pessimists'* and *'bus refusers'*. These are groups of people who if pushed would travel by bus, but have no strong desire to use the bus, they may be strongly attached to their car and even if improvements were made, would still not use the bus.

With this group, factors which cannot be controlled by First Aberdeen mean that many are unlikely to change their habits. In many cases factors such as geography or business needs mean the benefits of using their car outweighs the advantage of travelling by bus.

Barriers to bus use

Over one quarter **(26%)** of respondents from this group said (unprompted) the main reason they do not use the bus is because they need their car for other purposes such as childcare or for work.

"I need my car for business use and like the freedom of the car too"

"Too expensive for short journeys"

Cost is also an issue for this group with **25%** stating (unprompted) the main reason they do not use the bus is because of the cost of the bus.

Twenty one percent (unprompted) prefer to drive by car as they find their car more comfortable and when asked to select their top five reasons for not using the bus, over half **(59%)** of respondents said one of their reasons for not using the bus is because: *'I own a car so do not need to use the bus/I prefer to drive'.* This type of behaviour is one which is unlikely to change regardless of improvements put in place by the Local Authorities and bus operators.

"I prefer the convenience of getting in the car outside the house as and when required rather than checking timetables for bus times and the cost also is a factor as there are 2 adults and a child going out anywhere in the weekend"

Encouraging future bus use

When asked if there was one thing that would encourage them to use the bus more, one third **(33%)** said nothing would encourage them to use the bus more. Of those who said there were factors that may encourage them to use the bus incentives included: cheaper fares **(23%)** and quicker routes **(23%)**.

Key Themes

Throughout the research common barriers or themes emerged, these are summarised below.

Table 3: Common barriers or themes of barriers to bus use

Theme	Bus user	Non-bus user (potential to change)	Non-bus user (bus pessimist or bus refuser)
Journey times	✓	✓	✓
Frequency of the buses	✓	✓	✓
The number of bus stops	✓	✓	✓
Proximity of bus stop	✗	✓	✓
Cost	✓	✓	✓
Access to information	✗	✓	✓
The route of the bus	✓	✓	✓
Reliability	✓	✓	✓
Conditions on board the bus	✓	✓	✗

Across most themes all user groups hold similar views. One key factor is that existing bus users appear to be prepared to walk to their nearest bus stop, of course because they already use the bus, accessing information is also less of a barrier for them.

Challenging perceptions

The report aimed to identify the difference between 'actual' and 'perceived' barriers. We can see from the bus users the most popular reason for using the bus is there is a bus stop near their house or place of work. With non-bus users this is a perceived barrier with many stating they have to walk too far to their nearest bus stop. It may be that there is a further distance or individuals have differing perceptions of what is acceptable to walk.

Forty five percent of bus users said one of their reasons for using the bus is there is a direct route available. However the non-bus users when asked (unprompted) reported in **11%** of cases their main reason for not using the bus is there was no direct route available. Over three quarters **(78%)** of non-bus users said they would be extremely likely or likely to use the bus in the future if there were direct routes available. While it is impossible to have

bus routes to meet all individual's specific needs, there is scope for the Local Authorities and bus operators to work together to mitigate against this barrier in the future.

Survey participants were also asked to describe bus transport in and around Aberdeen in three words. The word cloud below illustrates the most common words. The size of the words reflects the number of times the word was mentioned.

Figure 7: Three words to describe bus transport in and around Aberdeen

We can see from the word cloud that while respondents describe bus transport as expensive, unreliable and inconvenient some respondents also said the bus was reliable or convenient.

This highlights the difference between reality and perception. Bus users find the bus reliable, but for non-bus users reliability is a perceived barrier.

Seventy percent of non-bus users said they would be more likely to use the bus in the future if buses were more reliable and punctual.

Participants from the focus group experienced buses being late or simply not turning up at all. This bad experience of a late bus can give the impression that travelling by bus is not a mode of transport you can rely on. However individuals from the focus group did understand that sometimes the punctuality of the bus is out with bus operators control due to factors such as road works and congestion.

In terms of bus transport being described as expensive, respondents consider the bus costs too much and many highlighted the differences between Aberdeen and Edinburgh (particularly in the focus group).

Recommendations

This report has identified a range of barriers to bus use. Some of these barriers are perceived and some are actual barriers. This final section of the report identifies recommendations and ideas on how to encourage future bus use and break down barriers to use.

It should be noted the recommendations and ideas have not been subject to financial / feasibility assessments.

1.0 Increased collaboration to support reduced journey times

Increasing the usage of buses is a shared responsibility between bus operators and Local Authorities. To improve journey times (and increase use) significant management control and infrastructure changes will be required. Actions for consideration include:

1.1 Bus lanes

Consideration should be given to the length of bus lanes in the city and the times which they are in operation. We recommend Local Authorities re-evaluate when bus lanes are operational and consider increasing the 'opening hours' and the number of bus lanes. In doing so, this could help improve current barriers reported such as journey time and reliability.

1.2 Car parking management

Bus users reported one of the reasons they use the bus is because there is no cark parking available at their place of work. Non-bus users may be more inclined to use the bus if parking controls existed, both at workplaces and on-street.

1.3 Traffic management and the associated opportunities to create express services

Traffic congestion in Aberdeen is an issue which all travellers face and as new transport capacity is added to the region it will be important to be aware of the need to maximise the impact of current development including the City Centre Regeneration and the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR). These developments may create opportunities to create express services which nearly three quarters **(74%)** of non-bus users would like to see to encourage them to use the bus more in the future.

1.4 The role of work placed parking

Employers have an opportunity to encourage increased bus usage. Possible solutions include:

- working with bus operators to create corporate discount schemes
- encouraging employees to enter into car pool schemes
- offering employees corporate membership of the City Car Club

Of course more extreme solutions are also available such as a Workplace Parking Levy (WPL). A WPL is a charge on employers who provide work place parking. An example of where this congestion charge was introduced successfully was in Nottingham[11]. Nottingham City Council introduced a WPL to tackle problems associated with traffic congestion. These types of disincentives are naturally more controversial.

1.5 Travel plans

Currently many businesses in the North-east have travel plans. In order for these to be effective, they need to be monitored, implemented and properly evaluated.

2.0 Park and Ride promotion

Seventy four percent of potential bus users would be extremely likely or likely to use the bus in the future if there was an express service (less stops), a Park and Ride service offers this to customers. Possible solutions could include:

- Promotional ticketing e.g. buy a week Park and Ride ticket and get three days free
- Increase the number of Park and Ride services

3.0 Increased marketing and promotion of the current services

Our research has shown that of the many services offered by First Group suffer from a lack of awareness in user and non-user groups. .These services need to be marketed and promoted even more across the city and shire. We would suggest:

- Increase of promotional activities both on and off board the bus
- Wider distribution of timetables e.g. to households
- Promotion of offers

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[11] http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/whatisaWPL

4.0 Highlighting the advantages of travelling by bus

We believe increased marketing and promotion of current services, focusing on the advantages of travelling by bus is necessary e.g. the idea that on a bus the journey is less stressful than driving, by travelling in a bus lane you are avoiding the heavy traffic, by travelling by bus there is no hassle of trying to find a parking space and the bus is cheaper (when assessing the full cost of car ownership).

Although some people will never travel by bus, this could encourage the group who understand the benefits of travelling by bus.

5.0 Cheaper fares (and promotion)

Respondents from the online survey noted cost as a significant barrier. Although it may be more expensive to own and run a car the advantages of travelling by car appears to outweigh the advantages of travelling by bus for many.

Non-bus users who are classed as 'bus pessimists' or 'bus refusers' will be unlikely to use the bus even if the fares were cheaper. However, there are a group of non-bus users who could be encouraged to use the bus if it was considerably cheaper. We would suggest:

- Piloting a free day of using the bus
- Increased advertising using real people who take the bus
- It may also be appropriate to create marketing materials focused on demonstrating the full costs of travelling by car to restate the competitive position of travelling by bus.

6.0 Information

We found one of the largest barriers to use is the lack of information or its lack of accessibility. May respondents did not know how much the bus costs and did not understand the pricing structure. Suggestions for operators in the city to improve this would be to:

- Have clearer information at the bus stop and the cost of tickets
- Introduce advanced purchase ticket machines at bus stops that give change and accept debit and credit cards
- Introduce an oyster card or tap and pay technology where travellers can top up the card in shops i.e. effectively moving away from the correct change only
- Provide a greater range of tickets on the First mTicket app

Some of these options may require collaboration across operators and stakeholders.

7.0 Making it as easy as possible to use the bus

There is merit in considering a significant marketing and promoting campaign for the bus as a reliable mode of transport this may include:

- A one stop website, where you can access real bus times whether you are in Aberdeen or Aberdeenshire
- On board information of where the next stop will be
- Training for drivers to increasing their knowledge of key destinations in and around the city.
- Easier to understand bus maps that highlight the stops between the start and end destination of the bus

8.0 Re-evaluation of routes

Respondents did recognise that although they may find the bus to be unreliable or late sometimes, they understand that sometimes this out with the drivers control due to congestion within the city. We suggest:

- Re-evaluation of current routes
  - This would include a re-evaluation of existing routes, assessing whether the current routes are appropriate, revising the number of stops and start and end destinations as we know non-bus users would be more likely to use the bus if there were less stops and more direct routes available.
- New routes are piloted which do not necessarily go through the city as not all users need to go to Union Street

9.0 Dealing with complaints

Participants in our focus group highlighted that they have been put off by using the bus because they are unfamiliar with using the bus, but also because they have had one bad experience of using the bus i.e. the bus was late, the driver was not friendly and the bus did not turn up, therefore putting them of using the bus again.

If they have heard a negative experience from a bus user this also may stop them from using the bus as people are more than likely to tell others of a bad experience of using a bus rather than a positive experience.

Summary of potential interventions

The table below summaries potential interventions, these are split into whether they are a hard or soft measures.

Hard or Soft measure	Action number	Action Title	Description
Hard	1	Increased collaboration and identification of interventions	Increased engagement between all stakeholders will be required to ascertain how to best maximise bus use and identify key infrastructure and management control changes.
Hard	1.1	Bus lanes	Local authorities to consider increasing the length and number of bus lanes and the times which they are operational
Hard	1.2	Car parking management	Employers charge employees to park and / or introduction of car parking controls both at workplaces and on-street
Hard	1.3	Traffic management and the associated opportunities to create express services	Local Authorities to keep in mind public transport when delivering developments such as the City Centre Masterplan and the AWPR
Hard	1.4	The role of work placed parking	Bus operators to offer employers a corporate discount Businesses encourage employees to use car pool schemes Businesses offer employees membership of the City Car Club Introduction of a Workplace Levy Charge (WPL)[12]
Hard	1.5	Travel plans	First Group, Local Authorities and the business community to work together to better understand business needs The business community should continually monitor and implement their travel plans
Hard	2	Park and ride promotion	E.g. offer 3 days free of using the Park and Ride service when buying a week's ticket

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[12] Power currently not available to Local Authorities in Scotland

Hard or Soft measure	Action number	Action Title	Description
			Increase the number of Park and Ride services
Soft	3	Increased marketing and promotion of the current services	Promotional material at bus stops both of and on board Wider distribution of timetables e.g. to households 'I use the bus' advertising campaign
Soft	4	Highlighting the advantages of travelling by bus	Promotional activities of the benefit of bus use.
Hard	5	Cheaper fares and promotion	Promotional activities to include car v bus to key destinations in and around the city centre Piloting a free bus day
Soft	6	Information	Ticket prices at bus stops Advanced purchase system at bus stops Greater range of tickets on First mTicket app
Soft	7	Making it as easy as possible to use the bus	On board information of where the next stop will be Easier to understand bus maps with a clear start and end destination Driver training to increase knowledge of key landmarks in and around the city.
Hard	8	Re-evaluation of routes	Pilot of new routes which do not go through the city centre
Soft	9	Dealing with complaints	Offering travellers a free ticket or refund when they have had a bad experience Promotion of bus users and why they use the bus