

Bus service changes

What passengers want

Independent national passenger watchdog September 2010

Passengerfocus
putting passengers first

In May 2010 Passenger Focus carried out a survey to understand passengers' views on how frequently services should change, and the best way of letting them know about new routes and timetables. The findings were used to inform our submission to the Department for Transport's consultation on Improving Bus Passenger Services through the Regulatory Framework. 518 passengers were surveyed in total: 359 who use buses in England (outside London) once a week or more, and a further 159 who use them at least once a month.

The research

- The survey was undertaken by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Passenger Focus
- Questions were asked in face-to-face interviews
- The survey was carried out between 7 and 13 May.

66%

of passengers did not find it acceptable to make changes to bus services more than twice a year

62%

Want at least four week's notice of major changes

76%

Would like to be informed about major changes by notice at the bus stop



Changes to bus routes and services

We asked bus passengers how acceptable it is to change a route or timetable:

- Three quarters of passengers (76%) find it acceptable for a bus company to change a route or timetable to respond to the opening of a major store, educational establishment, hospital, leisure facility, major place of employment or housing estate; one in ten (10%) find it unacceptable
- Slightly fewer passengers (but still a comfortable majority) (60%) find it acceptable for a bus company to change a route or timetable to respond to the closure of a major store, educational establishment, hospital, leisure facility, major place of employment or housing estate; just over a fifth (22%) find it unacceptable.

Importance of service stability

We asked bus passengers how frequently it was acceptable for a bus company to make changes to routes and timetables for these reasons. Two thirds did not find it acceptable to make changes more than twice a year.

Once a year	30%
Twice a year	36%
Three or four times a year	11%
More than four times	3%
As often as they need to	12%

Notice of changes

We asked bus passengers how much notice of changes they think a bus operator should provide to them. We asked the question both in respect of major and minor changes. A majority think they should give at least four weeks' notice: 55% in respect of minor changes (such as a slightly different route or timetable to which the passenger is used to), rising to 62% for major changes (such as key stops on the route/the end destination changed, a significant decrease in frequency or cancelled altogether).

	minor change	major change
Under two weeks	9%	7%
Two weeks	25%	20%
Three weeks	7%	7%
Four weeks	37%	36%
Five to eight weeks	7%	11%
More than eight weeks	11%	16%

Favoured communication methods

We asked bus passengers which methods should be used to communicate changes to the bus services they use. Three quarters think there should be a notice on the bus stop; six out of ten think there should be a notice inside the bus. There were varying degrees of support for other options.

	minor change	major change
Notice at the bus stop	75%	76%
Notice inside the bus	61%	61%
Local newspaper article	44%	46%
Notice on operator's website	24%	25%
Local radio announcement	19%	23%
Announcement by bus driver	15%	14%
Notice on Traveline website	14%	17%

We also asked them to nominate just one method which they would prefer. Half of the bus passengers we spoke to preferred a notice at the bus stop, with a fifth opting for a notice inside the bus.

Notice at the bus stop	50%	51%
Notice inside the bus	21%	20%
Local newspaper article	14%	14%
Notice on operator's website	4%	4%
Announcement by bus driver	4%	3%
Local radio announcement	2%	3%
Notice on Traveline website	2%	3%

Additional information passengers want

We also asked what additional information about any changes should be communicated to bus passengers. Their information needs are similar for both major and minor changes.



	minor change	major change
Date when the change comes into effect	82%	82%
Reasons why the change is taking place	54%	55%
Suggested alternative routes to use once the change comes into effect	49%	46%
Contact number for complaints or enquiries about the proposed change	30%	34%
None of these	4%	5%

Contact us

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