



# Information and infrastructure barriers to bus use in Wales

– the passenger view  
April 2024

# Foreword

**W**e are pleased to have undertaken this research with passengers in conjunction with Transport for Wales (TfW). Buses should be made as easy as possible to use, and it's important to address the factors that put people off. This report looks at perceptions of bus and travel information, the bus stop environment, and the barriers these present.

While the work was carried out in Wales, we are sure that the findings will be relevant in both urban and rural areas across Great Britain. It should be no surprise that good, clear information is key in getting people on board. They may be aware of the location of their local bus stop simply from going past it but may not know where they can get to by bus, what route it follows, which side of the road to wait, or how much it will cost.

Awareness of the possible journey they can take means that passengers need to know departure times and return times, so they can be confident of getting home. Paper timetables at bus stops are still popular but there is a fear that these may be out of date – or contain unclear information about routes or timings. Electronic displays are welcome, but passengers realise that these often just show

the timetable data rather than real-time bus running times which are preferable.

People have realistic expectations about bus stops with those in rural areas used by few passengers not expected to offer the same features as a city centre stop or interchange. The basic requirement is for a sign and that it is somewhere safe to board and has space to wait. Shelters, up-to-date timetable information, lighting and seating are all preferred and bus users thought a litter bin would help to keep the area tidy.

Personal safety rates highly with passengers and poorly maintained bus stops with evidence of anti-social behaviour including graffiti, broken windows and litter can put people off using the stop or using the bus at all.

We welcome Transport for Wales's plans to standardise and develop a priority list of features and improvements for bus stops in different locations. With better information online and at bus stops, these initiatives can only improve the passenger experience and encourage bus use.

**David Sidebottom**

Director, Transport Focus

# Background

This piece of work looks into the perceived barriers for passengers and non-users in relation to information provision, and the physical infrastructure at bus stops and interchanges when making bus journeys in Wales. It looks at the opinions and needs of both urban and rural residents, from the larger cities through to more isolated locations, in the North, Mid and South of Wales including those with a variety of disabilities.

Transport for Wales (TfW) needed to understand the barriers that exist both in advance of a journey as well as at the stops themselves.

The findings of this initial qualitative research will be used to:

- support Transport for Wales in determining the information needs of passengers together with their expectations of infrastructure at different bus stops
- ensure that passengers' views are taken into account in setting minimum standards
- provide the basis for any future quantitative assessment of potential standards for different types of stops and interchanges.

Our assessment includes interviews with passengers and potential passengers carried out online between May and June 2023.



# Key findings

## Why people don't take the bus versus other modes

For all passengers in this research, buses were seen as having both advantages and disadvantages when compared with other forms of transport. Buses were generally seen as the best public transport for short journeys and connecting towns and villages that have few other options. However, they are also potentially slow, do not always take the most direct route, and there was a perception that they do not always stick to timetables in rural areas.

Trains are seen as the fastest means of transport and have advantages in terms of taking cars off the roads. They are also seen as much better than buses in their information provision and service updates.

*“Depends on the end destination – what’s more convenient. The bus might get you closer, but the train is faster.”*

Male, 47, user, metro urban, South Wales

Private cars and taxis offer the freedom to travel when and where wanted or needed. However, the difficulty of parking in busy locations was mentioned as a disadvantage, and taxis are seen as expensive when there are acceptable alternatives.

*“I always go shopping and when my husband’s working and I’m off I hop on to the bus to go to Chester because you’re paying £7 for parking charges, it’s more leisurely, you’re not rushing.”*

Female, 57, user, rural, North Wales

*“We will always take a bus into town as a family because it’s easier for parking. Because you’re not bound by work or school there’s the degree of flexibility if it doesn’t turn up.”*

Female, 39, user, metro urban, South Wales

For the bus to be chosen there has to be a sense that it is the best option for the journey.

## The importance of bus information and bus stop infrastructure

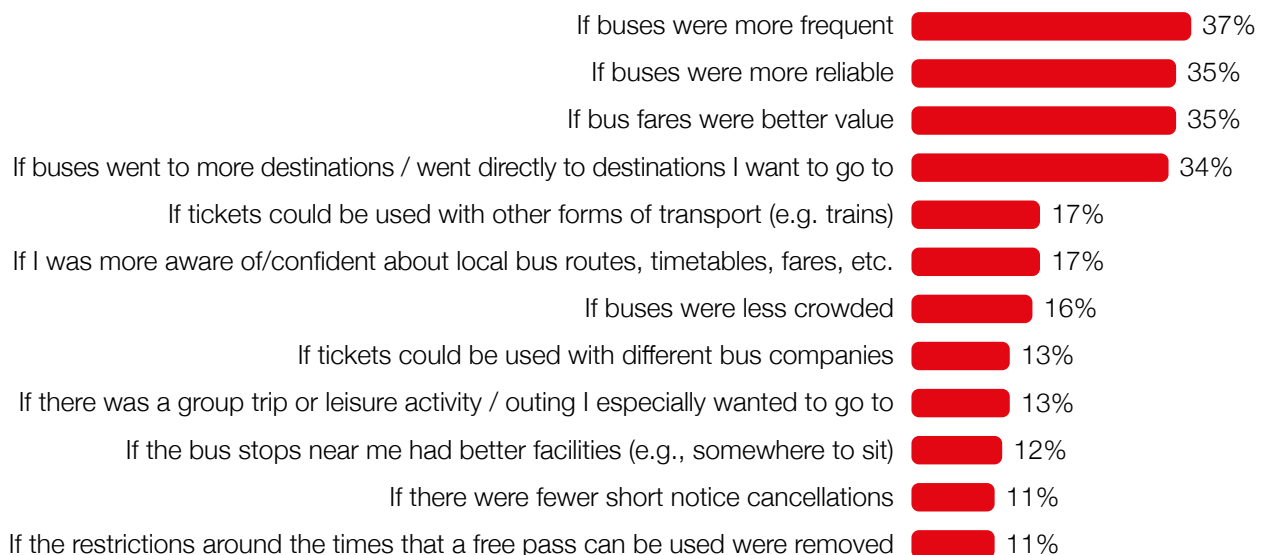
The research suggests that the primary consideration for bus usage is the level of service being provided by the buses themselves. This is assessed in terms of the times that they run, and the comfort of the vehicles. This finding has been seen before in Transport Focus’s work across Britain, most recently in the *Motivations and barriers to bus usage report*<sup>1</sup> from June 2023

(Figure 1), which again put considerations around the service ahead of those related to information and infrastructure.

However, our qualitative work in Wales found that although information and infrastructure are less top of mind considerations, these do influence the choice of the bus as a mode of transport.

**Figure 1: Motivations and barriers to bus usage report (June 2023)**

Improved frequency, reliability and value for money would encourage those using the bus less frequently to do so more, along with going to more places



Q: Which five reasons would most encourage you to use buses more in future? (Top 12)

Base: All those who are currently using buses less frequently than they did a year ago (341)

<sup>1</sup> Please see: <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/publication/motivations-and-barriers-to-bus-usage/>

## Experiences and expectations vary by type of location

Type of location (for example whether rural or urban) has a substantial influence on what people expect and experience from bus stop information and infrastructure.

In the rural areas there was some sense of gratitude that there was a service running at all. However, people then tended to divide between two attitudes: those who are resigned to the service levels that they have; and those who feel that rural areas are entitled to as good a bus service as urban areas and would ideally have improvements.

*“I remember when they did the Quadrant in Swansea, and everything was so much better, so much clearly signposted – and we haven’t had that here [Tal-y-bont – Ceredigion area]. The bus station in town is the bare minimum.”*

Male, 36, rural, Mid Wales

*“As people living in rural areas, we’re not the priority. The investment is in big cities because that’s where the profits are, so I feel like we’re on the bottom of a long list of priorities and they don’t care whether I use the bus or not.”*

Male, 58, user, rural, North Wales

Other urban and small town residents’ opinions depended on their specific location. In places such as Carmarthen, Wrexham and Machynlleth there were good experiences of infrastructure, whereas other areas such as Ebbw Vale (and other South Wales valleys) are having a poorer experience of infrastructure that is setting lower expectations.

*“If you’re in the middle of a city centre, then it’s more likely to have better facilities. But I can’t see why all these places can’t have a shelter, lights and information.”*

Female, 37, user, rural, North Wales

*“The main depot (Carmarthen) has been redesigned – there’s actual shelter and information, still not real-time, but it looks more modern.”*

Male, 34, user, other urban and small town, South Wales

*“I think in Mid Wales we’re not getting the same service and everything as in Cardiff, the same level of modernity and facilities. It’s not really fair.”*

Female, 32, infrequent user, rural, Mid Wales

*“They’ve been allowed to go to rack and ruin, there’s no investment, they don’t clean it, they don’t have up to date information. Apart from the town centre, all the bus stops in Ebbw Vale are shocking.”*

Male, 71, user, other urban and small town, South Wales



Residents of metro urban areas tended to have the highest expectations of bus information and infrastructure. They also had the most experience of being able to turn up and catch a bus without having to plan, because services run more frequently. While they can have experience of poor bus stops, they also have more choice – many can walk to another stop if they don't like their closest one.

*“The infrastructure has improved significantly recently in Swansea.”*

Male, 47, user, metro urban, South Wales

## Key barriers by stage of the journey

### Journey planning

At the journey planning stage there are barriers for some around not being able to find the right information, in terms of both locating it and understanding what it means for them and their journey choices or planning.

Current users in this sample tended to have a good idea of when services would run, but some want to know where to look for any service changes. Infrequent and potential users had less experience of looking for or working with bus information. Some reported that they struggle to understand how to read timetables. Small print or seasonal variations to service schedules can be confusing for both regular and infrequent/potential users.

*“Changes in the bus times depending on Saturday or Sunday – I’ve also been caught out by it not being a term time day. That really does catch you out if you’re not in touch with people who have children. A lot of the bits of information on the timetable are really small.”*

Male, 66, user, other urban and small town, Mid Wales

*“I know very little, that’s why it’s important to have the timetable at the bus stop. If that isn’t there, I have to rely on Google Maps to find out how the public transport options work for that journey.”*

Female, 30, non-user, other urban and small town, mental health condition, South Wales

In this research the people we spoke to were increasingly expecting to search online and did so to plan their bus journeys. However, online sources were not always easy to use, with people finding it hard to locate the relevant information.

*“I use the bus operator website (Tanat Valley) and that’s not that great for finding information. It gives route number, but you have to click on it and download the timetable to see if you’re covered on that route.”*

Female, 38, non-user, rural, North Wales

## Barriers on the way to the bus stop

Barriers on the way to the stop relate to safety and ease of access. Bus stops that require people to cross busy roads, step up or down kerbs, or walk on rough ground do not encourage bus usage. The need to walk down busy roads or roads with no pavement in rural areas can be particularly off-putting.

*“In the city centre I’ve got to get off at one bus stop, then cross a 6-lane road to get to another bus stop to get out to the north of the city.”*

Male, 63, user, metro urban, mobility issues, South Wales

*“When I think about where I have to walk to get to the stop on my own in the evening, that has an impact.”*

Female, 41, user, metro urban, South Wales

*“Some of the bus stops in the rural areas are just stops along the road, so safety there is paramount.”*

Female, 32, infrequent user, rural, Mid Wales

## Barriers at the stop

Barriers to bus use at the stop, station or interchange are connected to the safety and comfort of the waiting environment, as well as what information is available. A lack of comfort or being cut off from up-to-date information can make users feel alone, isolated, and uncertain as to what is happening.

In some locations there are issues with no mobile signal which prevents some people from getting online at bus stops. In these circumstances a traditional timetable is very helpful, if it is up to date.

Poor or no lighting makes bus stops, stations and interchanges feel like unsafe places to wait whatever the location.

*“The lighting is poor and when I’ve waited there in the night, I feel very unsafe which is why I’ve not really gone out in the evenings again.”*

Male, 38, user, other urban and small town, mobility issues, South Wales

*“Anti-social behaviour and Friday/Saturday time, there can be so many drunk people around that I don’t feel safe.”*

Female, 36, user, metro urban, South Wales

Lack of comfort tends to be thought of in terms of lack of shelter or seats and is a deterrent to bus travel. Shelter is particularly key at wet and windy locations.

*“Standing around at a bus stop that is a wind tunnel and is dirty and uncomfortable, without any proper seating is not exactly an incentive.”*

Female, 57, user, rural, Mid Wales

Anti-social behaviour came up more frequently in the larger towns and cities, making it undesirable to wait at some stops, stations or interchanges.

## Information needs before going to the stop

Information needs when planning a bus journey were largely consistent. Before going to the stop passengers want to know what bus options they have, when buses go, how long the journey takes, when the last one back is, and what the cost will be.

Within that, some want to know how close the stop they will get off at is to their final destination. Route maps would be very helpful at stations and interchanges. The expectation is that buses should ideally integrate their timetables with other routes, and with train services.

*“I want to know times and prices – because prices vary so much on peak/off peak, single, return, weekly, you’re bombarded with options as to which is the best for you.”*

Female, 57, user, rural, North Wales

*“How long it’s going to possibly take? How many stops there’s going to be? Where it’s going to end. Just so if it’s convenient, which stop to get off towards the end? I think that information is probably important to me.”*

Male, 38, user, other urban and small town, North Wales

*“The one to my parents, I know the times and I do obviously check on my phone, making sure that they haven’t changed, so it’s knowing the time.”*

Female, 26, user, other urban and small town, North Wales

*“If we’re going out and I know we’re going to be out late I’m looking for the time of the last bus that will take me back.”*

Female, 36, user, metro urban, South Wales

Who people are travelling with can create additional needs and barriers, especially when this includes small children and needing to know if there is space for a pushchair.

*“I’ve got an 11-month-old and if I was to catch the bus now, I’d need to have a plan in place, making sure I’ve got everything, everything has to be running smoothly or we have tantrums.”*

Female, 32, infrequent user, rural, Mid Wales

The urgency or importance of the journey can also impact on information needs, as where this is higher there is a need to feel confident that the bus is going to arrive at its destination on time. This applies especially to those travelling for work or school, and those attending medical appointments. Although those travelling for leisure can be more relaxed about timings, most still want to feel that they are getting a good service and not subject to significant delays.





*“Basically, what time the buses are going to be, whether there are any delays.”*

Female, 31, infrequent user, rural, South Wales

Among the people we spoke to, the default expectation for where to look for information was increasingly online. However, for some people online options would not work, especially the elderly, or those without internet access. Once online there were a number of key sources used. Those who had used Traveline Cymru typically had a good experience and found the information up to date.

*“I use Traveline Cymru, because you can get all modes of transport and it’ll give you the times, the connections, the wait times in between. I find it more straightforward and reliable than going to each transport company’s own website.”*

Female, 57, user, rural, Mid Wales

Individual company websites were seen by some as most likely to be up to date for an individual route. However, people also frequently mentioned Google Maps. This is seen as easy to navigate to and use and thought to provide last minute variations on timings and congestion.

*“Google Maps is quite good – you can go on that and select the public transport option. It tells you what bus to get on at what time and for how many stops.”*

Female, 22, infrequent user, rural, North Wales

The research also found older people in particular looking on social media, including joining groups that have bus drivers in them. There was a belief that they were getting more up to date information from these groups that isn’t available anywhere else, because of direct access to the drivers themselves.

*“I look at Cardiff Bus Facebook page because quite often our buses are cancelled and they do update it, so I find that quite useful.”*

Female, 39, user, metro urban, South Wales

Most felt that they would be able to find the information they wanted relatively easily, but there were some areas for improvement. When asked to consider how they would research a journey in an area of Wales they were unfamiliar with, rather than their own normal journey, there was less confidence. There is a sense that websites can be overly complicated, though this can be solved by bookmarking specific parts of sites, and familiarity developing over repeated use.



## Information needs at the stop

Offline information is still crucial, with some people more reliant on the information displayed at stops or information they can get by speaking to someone on the phone.

Many reported that there is no information displayed at all at bus stops, and what is there may be out of date. This makes it difficult for people to understand what their options for travel are. In particular, they are unable to judge whether the bus is late, has been already (early), or is not running at all.

*“I don’t think there’s anyone stood at a bus stop that 100% believes what the timetable on the bus stop tells you. You just stand around and hope one turns up eventually. What makes the wait more intolerable is the not knowing if it’s coming, when it’s coming, if it’s late, why is it late? We have the technology to relay that information... If you know you’re more relaxed.”*

Male, 68, user, rural, North Wales

When information is displayed at stops, consistency is something that all would value. At the moment there is a feeling that local knowledge is needed to interpret the names of bus stops (for example ‘Post Office’ where there has not been a post office for many years). A lack of consistency across fonts and information formats also means that key facts cannot be seen at a glance.

At bus stops the key information needs are what route (number) the stop is on, where the bus runs from or to and at what times or frequency. There was also interest in any information or support that can help them interpret what is happening when a scheduled service does not arrive. Experiences at railway stations set the standard for most, who have become used to seeing departure boards that show when trains are expected to arrive/depart and how late they are running.

*“With the trains. They let you know if they’re on time, or late, I think that would be useful for buses as well.”*

Female, 22, user, rural, North Wales

*“A more up to date, modern signage that covers satellite coverage, like in a train station – more modern timetable system maybe.”*

Female, 51, user, rural, mobility issues, North Wales

Digital display screens were valued where they provide real-time information but are frustrating when they simply show the timetable and do not explain why a scheduled service is running late or has not turned up. More advanced displays had been seen at bus stops in other parts of the UK, or at railway stations, that show how busy the next service is and set a benchmark for what ought to be possible at a stop. There was also some interest in using QR codes at stops to navigate to further information online, though this would not benefit those without smartphones or in locations with no mobile signal.

*“Real-time information – so comparing with Leeds you can see how full the bus is, how many seats are available, the actual time it’s turning up.”*

Female, 27, infrequent user, rural, North Wales

*“Ultimately, it’s the live information that you need, anything aesthetics is a bonus.”*

Female, 20, user, metro urban, South Wales

*“The digital billboard outside the station only shows the time they’re meant to call – it’s not a live service like what you have on trains, so you don’t know if they’re delayed or anything, it’s just the timetabled buses.”*

Male, 47, user, metro urban, South Wales

*“Where I live is quite an elderly community and a lot of people don’t have phones, so it would be quite difficult for them to use QRs. It’s alright for us, we’re used to the phones, but they’re not.”*

Female, 57, user, rural, North Wales

## Impressions of current infrastructure: bus stops

At present, perceptions of bus stops vary by location. Those in rural areas tended to have the most negative perceptions, driven by the poor condition of bus stops, lack of information and shelter, and potentially unsuitable/unsafe sites. Low opinion is further fed by a perception of lack of investment in many rural areas.

*“In the darker winter nights maybe slightly better lighting in the bus shelter itself.”*

Female, 51, user, rural, mobility issues, North Wales

*“There are electronic signs in some, but they don’t work the majority of the time. Even if they do work, they only show where the bus is going, not whether the bus is coming or not.”*

Female, 29, user, rural, North Wales

Other urban and small town passengers’ views were more mixed, depending on where they lived. In some towns, stops were perceived as better with shelters, seating and timetables. However, others had stops with simply a post and no information. People from the South Wales valleys that we spoke to tended to have particularly negative perceptions, referencing poor condition and lack of up-to-date information.

*“The sheltered bus stops near me are battered up, there’s a bench to sit on and it looked ok, but the glass was smashed, it’s not a pretty thing to want to sit on. That’s off-putting, and it can make you anxious sitting there on your own and you’re more exposed to the road and bad weather.”*

Female, 30, non-user, other urban and small town, mental health condition, South Wales





Residents of the metro urban areas tended to have the most positive perceptions of their current bus stops. In addition, the more frequent the service, the less time they had to spend waiting at bus stops. Recent investment in Swansea and Cardiff was mentioned as having improved bus stops, though as with the other urban and small town residents, more issues emerged the further out from the centre a passenger lived. Anti-social behaviour at the stops was also mentioned in metro urban areas.

*“The new ones are a lot better, and they’ve started to put what you’d expect on there. The old ones were really out of date, half of them were broken, so they have improved recently. They look a lot newer, they’re cleaner, there are a few seats on the inside, there’s bins on the outside, they’re being cleaned a lot better recently as well.”*

Male, 47, user, metro urban, South Wales

*“The bus stop near me is quite good. It has all the mod cons – glass windows rather than plastic windows, it’s well used, it’s well lit, it has a display, a bench and you have good visibility. I know a lot of people worry about safety as well, so it does quite well.”*

Male, 39, infrequent user, metro urban, South Wales

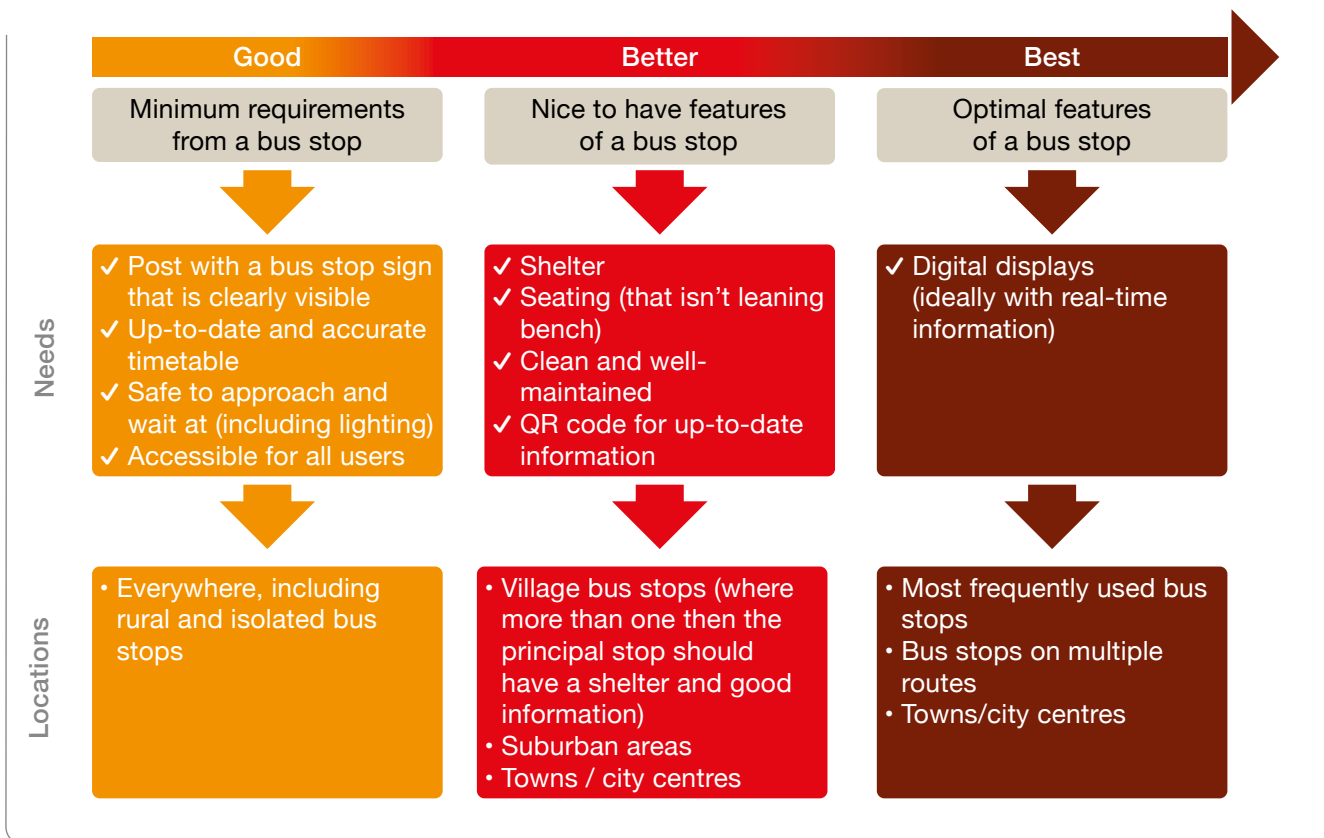
*“There are some bus stops in town that I would avoid after a certain time. There’s a road just off Queen Street and it gets quite busy, there’s a lot of pubs and bars so it’s not somewhere I’d be comfortable. I’d rather walk up to Newport Road and take a bus from out of the activity a little bit.”*

Female, 39, user, metro urban, South Wales

Needs from bus stops in this research vary by location and how much a bus stop is used (Figure 2). This suggests that it might be possible to identify a priority list of desired features through further quantitative research.



Figure 2: Passenger needs from bus stops



## Impressions of current infrastructure: bus stations and interchanges

Impressions of bus stations and interchanges were mixed across the research, depending on the facilities available and whether they had received investment.

Some rural residents have positive impressions of their local bus stations and interchanges, especially those that have been recently updated and provide good links to other modes of transport or where there were sufficient facilities nearby.

Other people in rural areas were frustrated by interchanges that are not clearly signposted to help users navigate the different stops or those that do not have shelter or up-to-date facilities.

*“Llantwit Major – It’s quite nice now. It’s got parking, so you can park and ride, it’s got a bus terminus and train station next door.”*

Male, 60, non-user, rural, South Wales

*“At Aberaeron,... they have labelled the shelters 1, 2 and 3 but not marked that in any way on the shelter, so the 1, 2 and 3 are totally superfluous – then the bus drivers pull into the front bay regardless of where they’re going anyway.”*

Female, 68, user, rural, Mid Wales

For other urban and small town locations a good interchange or station depends on being located conveniently for other amenities/transport links and displaying clear information. Overall expectations are lower than for the large cities, but negative impressions are driven by lack of facilities, being poorly designed, or not feeling safe.

*“Llandrindod Wells – It’s right next to the train station, it’s very clean, the location is good and it’s well-lit.”*

Female, 67, user, other urban and small town, Mid Wales

*“Caernarfon, because it has been newly renovated is a lot better now, clearer which stop to go to thanks to the electronic thing.”*

Female, 22, infrequent user, rural, North Wales

*“There are four bus stops in a row in Ebbw Vale – they have timetables and shelters, but not closed off shelters, open front so if it’s raining, you’re going to get soaked.”*

Male, 71, user, other urban and small town, South Wales

*“They all use a really small space – you have to cross the road to get to some of the stands...with traffic flying around the corner. It is absolutely appalling.”*

Female, 68, user, rural, Mid Wales

Impressions of bus stations and interchanges at metro urban locations vary by their location. While the lack of a bus station in Cardiff was criticised, central and updated bus stations had created positive impressions of local bus infrastructure elsewhere.

*“The Swansea one is really good. It is undercover and because it joins on to the shopping centre, it’s easy for everyone to get from town to wherever they want to go.”*

Female, 31, infrequent user, rural, South Wales



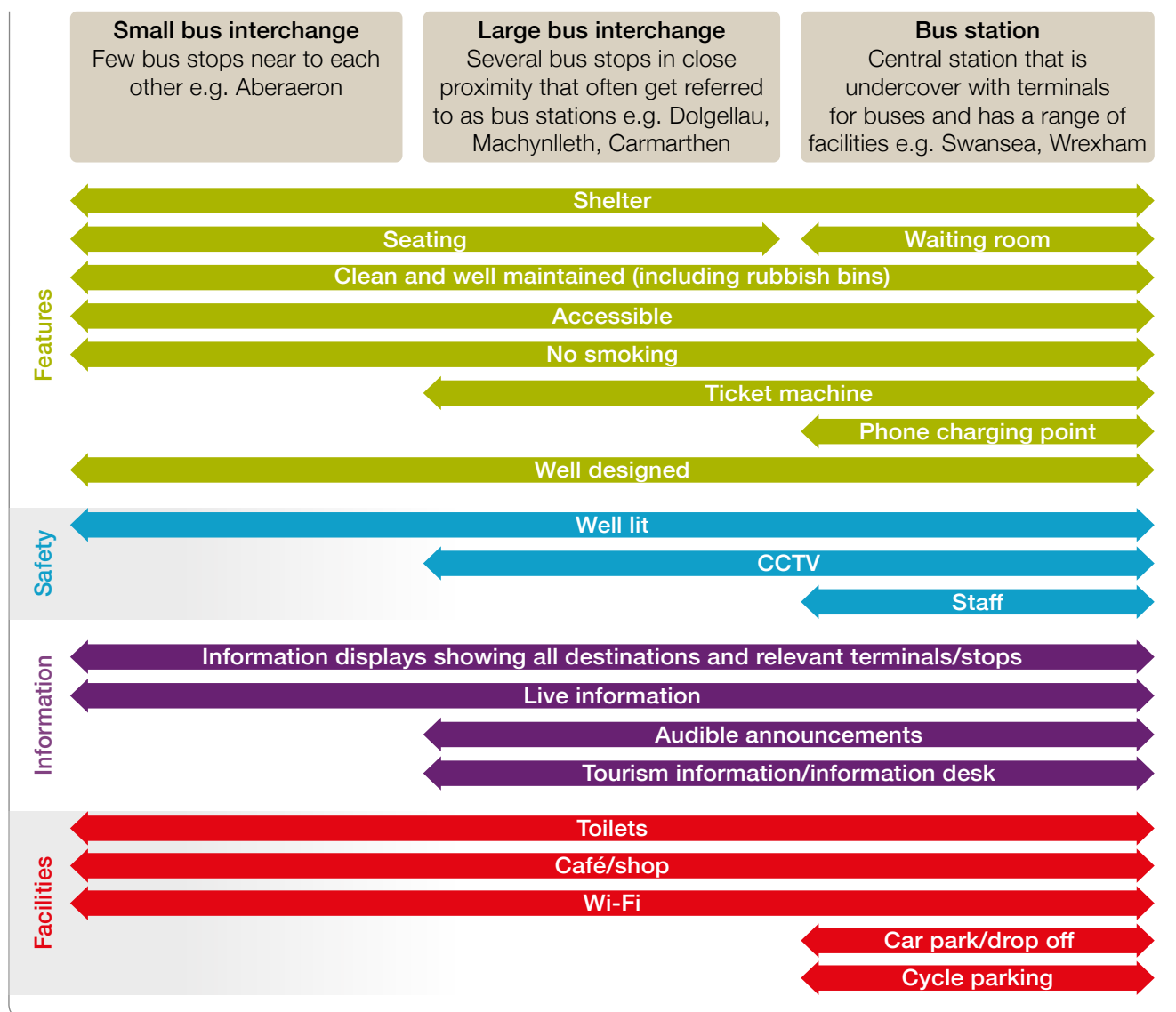


Expectations of bus stations and interchanges were different from bus stops in this research. Because they tend to be busier than individual stops, this influences what features they are expected to have. Expectations are further affected by the busyness of the wider location itself, so a large city station or interchange is expected to have more facilities than one in a smaller town. Consequently, the current situation of no central bus station in Cardiff was frequently mentioned as providing a substandard experience.

A set of needs emerged across the research for bus stations and interchanges in different areas and of different sizes (Figure 3).



**Figure 3: Needs from bus stations and interchanges**



## Passengers and potential passengers with disabilities

Across the research we spoke to people with a range of disabilities and accessibility needs. Many of their opinions and needs were the same as the wider sample, however there were both nuances and additional factors that this group raised when considering bus stop information and infrastructure.

Information displays should ideally be made as readable as possible, with clear fonts, and plain English/Welsh so that they are easy to understand. Those with some visual disabilities drew attention to the colours used and the size of the fonts, especially for ‘small print’ and notes about variations of service level. Those with learning disabilities need simple and easy to understand timetables, potentially using signs or symbols to make it easier to understand.

*“I know there are standards for it, but I know for myself I find it very difficult when people like to be trendy and do backgrounds, and it’s very difficult to discern the lettering because there’s either things moving around or things competing with it colourwise. Things that are black and white for me tend to work well but the contrast needs to be stark. If you’re going to use colour then there needs to be good contrast.”*

Female, 62, non-user, rural, mobility, vision and hearing issues, South Wales

*“You could simplify that (bus literature) and use symbols and signs and make it easier for people to read. Make it larger print. Not just having general bus timetables but ones that are user friendly for people with particular needs.”*

Carer of female with learning disabilities, rural, Mid Wales

*“I always use a computer – I had cataracts, and it affected my vision. I can’t use a phone anymore so I’m entirely reliant on my computer.”*

Male, 66, user, other urban and small town, Mid Wales

Those in the disability sample also found it extremely important to know what services are running when and whether/where they need to change buses so that they can plan accordingly. People with mobility issues need to know if there will be seating at the stop, or room for a wheelchair/mobility scooter.

*“Whether the bus is direct, for me that’s a big one because it’s a lot easier to get buses to stay on, than to swap and change. And to know if the bus is going to be on time that’s a big thing as well.”*

Male, 38, other urban and small town, vision issues, Mid Wales

*“I turn up at the stop and hope there’s space for my mobility aid. If lots of other people are there, with suitcases, then that can be a bit of a barrier for me.”*

Female, 30, user, other urban and small town, mobility issues, North Wales

The approach to the stop can be off-putting where there is no pavement, or a busy road crossing, especially for those with physical or mobility disabilities.

*“Condition of the paths would influence me because I have a mobility aid. It would make it more difficult for me – I think I’m so used to navigating things though and where I am is quite flat.”*

Female, 31, user, other urban and small town, mobility issues, North Wales

*“Maybe a ramp put in place for the more infirm or the elderly to carry on their shopping.”*

Female, 51, user, rural mobility issues, North Wales

*“The buses are too uncomfortable. I’ve got spinal issues, and I can’t sit with my back straight. Mobility is a challenge in getting to the bus stop – pavements are narrow to walk with two crutches, unsafe at night when lights get turned off.”*

Male, 38, user, other urban and small town, mobility issues, South Wales

*“Sometimes I find getting off the bus difficult, because the bus is so high you’ve got to jump off on to the pavement. So, if that was remedied that would be a good thing.”*

Female, 67, user, metro urban, mobility issues, South Wales

*“Slopes, when you’re approaching the bus stop. You’ve got the raised pavement for the bus, but having slopes coming on to where the bus stop is for wheelchairs and pushchairs.”*

Male, 63, user, metro urban, mobility issues, South Wales

Arriving at the stop, a dropped kerb is helpful for wheelchair users, as well as space for them to wait at the stop, and ease of boarding and leaving the vehicle.



## Conclusions and recommendations

As we have seen in previous research, frequent, reliable and value for money services are the most important factors in making buses feel like a realistic transport option for those with a choice.

However, other significant barriers exist in terms of not being able to find or understand information about a journey, and not being comfortable using a bus stop. The provision of information at the stop along with seating, shelter and feeling safe are particularly important, especially if the stop is in an exposed position or when passengers may have some time to wait.

This research has identified clear pointers as to how these barriers might be addressed.

### Overcoming information barriers

- **At the journey planning stage:**
  - raising awareness of where to find information about bus travel
  - making it easy to use online information sources to find out where people can get to by bus and what the cost will be.
- **At bus stops:**
  - display an up-to-date timetable (ideally with real-time information, but a traditional timetable is a minimum requirement)
  - display information about the bus route itself.
- **At bus stations/interchanges:**
  - provide detailed information to help users navigate the stations and interchanges (especially where buses are going from each stop or bay)
  - have a single information board displaying all bus routes from the station or interchange to help make passengers feel at ease using them.

### Overcoming infrastructure barriers

- **Getting to the bus stop:**
  - safe approaches that are well-lit help build confidence that the service and passenger needs have been considered
  - paved surfaces that are wide and flat would benefit many and help passengers feel safe.
- **At the bus stop:**
  - being easily accessible, well-lit, and being clearly signposted/visible are the key needs
  - shelter and seating, as well as being clean and well maintained are likely to increase user comfort
  - space for wheelchairs/mobility scooters/pushchairs is important, as is drivers' assistance, so users don't feel like an inconvenience or afterthought.
- **At the bus station/interchange:**
  - clean, well-lit with CCTV and staff to deter anti-social behaviour may help make potential users feel better about spending time there
  - toilets, and a café or shop at bus stations/interchanges are expected given that passengers may have a time to wait.







## Research method

This research was jointly funded by Transport for Wales (TfW) and Transport Focus Wales. We commissioned Define Insight & Strategy to carry out the research.

Interviewing was carried out remotely, primarily via video link, which meant the interviewer was able to show stimulus materials such as examples of various bus stops. This did result in a degree of online literacy which needs to be borne in mind when working with the findings.

The fieldwork team recruited users and potential users across Wales. Interviewing took place from 16 May to 26 June 2023. In total we interviewed 60 people across a mix of different size of groups. All chose to be interviewed in English although Welsh was offered.

Respondents were interviewed in locations across North, Mid and South Wales, in a mix of area types including metro-urban, other urban and small town, and more rural (with each defined by a mixture of

population size, respondent self-identification, overall transport connectivity, proximity to other settlements, etc.). Examples of locations included:

- Metro urban – larger urban areas: Cardiff, Swansea
- Other urban and small town – smaller urban areas for example Wrexham, Bangor, Caernarfon, Carmarthen, various locations in the South Wales valleys (Ebbw Vale and Blackwood), and small towns acting as centres in very rural areas including Machynlleth, Llandrindod Wells
- Rural – other smaller market towns, villages, hamlets and isolated areas outside other settlements Borth, Newbridge on Wye, Rhyd-uchaf, Cefneithin, Tal-y-bont (Ceredigion).

Within the sample Define completed twelve depth interviews (by video link) with users and potential users with disabilities across a spread of different disability types.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar  
gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

### Contact Transport Focus

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