

Designing the bus shelter of tomorrow

April 2025



Transport Focus Foreword

Bus shelters matter to passengers. A well-designed bus shelter offers more than just a place to wait for a bus – it can turn a journey into a pleasant, safe, and comfortable experience. Effective shelters protect passengers from adverse weather conditions, provide comfortable seating, good quality accurate information and ensure safety and accessibility for all users.

Transport Focus would like to thank Clear Channel for generously supporting this report. We were pleased to be able to work with Clear Channel to understand the needs of passengers on this joint piece of research, with the goal of establishing what design features and facilities passengers think bus shelters should incorporate to improve their experience.

Louise Collins

Director



Clear Channel Foreword

Clear Channel is one the UK's leading Out of Home media and infrastructure companies and has been providing street furniture in the UK for decades. At present, we operate more than 22,000 bus shelters around the country, in partnership with over 180 councils and transport authorities.

We recognise that many of our bus shelters are iterations based on legacy designs dating back many years and driven by the status quo or local design and tender requirements. In fact, the bus shelter has not had a ground-up rethink for 50 years. Our aim is to change that.

We have been consistently innovating to tackle both local and national challenges through purposeful product design. From enhancing the bus user experience to improving biodiversity, our infrastructure seeks to provide meaningful solutions that benefit local communities, with accessibility, safety, and sustainability at its heart.

Through various projects, including ongoing collaboration

with Central St Martins' product design students, our product design team has been getting closer to the needs of our communities and how differing needs impact street furniture.

Our next step is to understand this at scale so we can raise the bus user experience bar by creating the design changes they need, and importantly, implementing them. This comprehensive research with Transport Focus's nationally representative Transport User Panel is key to providing valuable insights to help identify the desired changes and inform what future infrastructure should look like, to the benefit of all bus users.

Neil Chapman

Product Design Director, UK & Europe



Recommendations

A well-designed bus shelter is an essential part of any successful bus network. However, what constitutes ‘well-designed’? We asked 3276 frequent bus passengers for their views on the priorities and improvements that must be considered in delivering a well-designed bus shelter.

This summary report and accompanying detailed survey findings provide context to these recommendations. However, the key recommendations are front and centre as they would assist in delivering a passenger centric and successful bus network.

- Co-design shelter design with users – make sure people are included with mobility and sensory impairments and people with prams/buggies. Ensure user views are involved in every stage of the design and build processes so models and options can be tested and choices made with user input.
- Review the design of shelters to ensure they protect bus users from wind and rain. Review the size of

shelters based on usage. Some shelters may need to be bigger, for example when they serve multiple routes in town centres and outside schools and colleges, hospitals and supermarkets.

- Comfortable seating should be provided.
- Retain paper timetables. Consider adding information about other connecting modes and services.
- Real-time next bus information display should be provided.
- Install effective lighting to make people feel safe in the evenings/dark and enable them to see and read timetables. Introduce CCTV and help points wherever possible.
- Ensure every shelter has a bin and that it is regularly emptied. Maintain and clean shelters regularly. Provide contact details for reporting damaged or dirty shelters.

Introduction

Passengers waiting to catch a bus generally want to spend as short a time as possible doing so. They want frequent and punctual buses. However, it's clear from our [Your Bus Journey](#) survey results that a passenger's experience at the bus shelter can set the tone for the whole journey and impact on overall passenger satisfaction.

Our most recent insight [Making Great Bus Journeys](#) reinforces that the waiting environment is important to passengers. To find out more about their experience and how to improve bus shelters we asked 3276 frequent bus users in our Transport User Panel to complete an online survey.

Bus passengers' experience begins and ends at the bus stop. High quality, well designed and well maintained bus shelter and information infrastructure are vitally important to passengers.

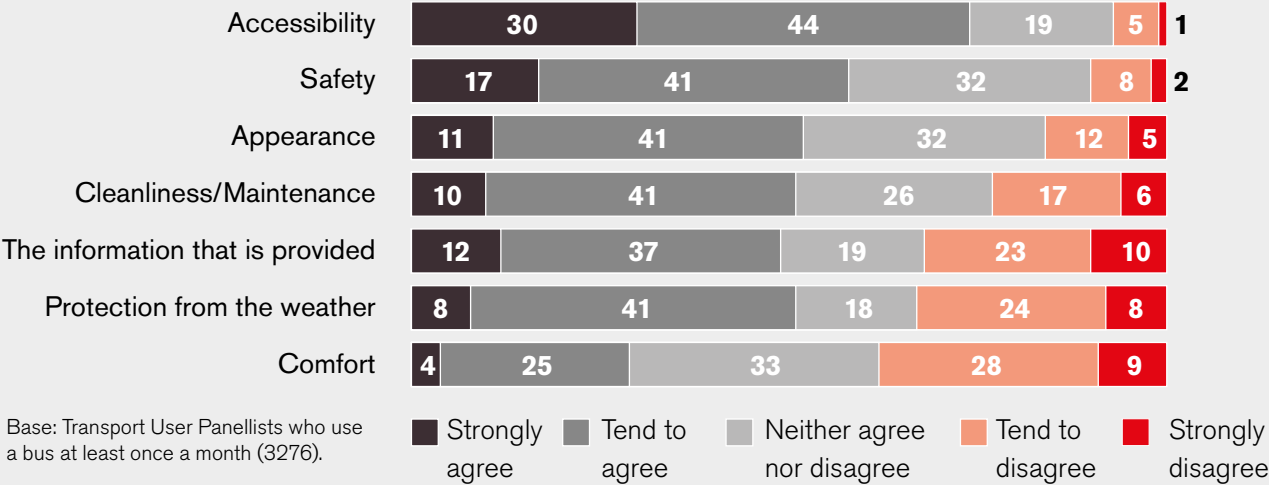
Thinking about the bus shelter passengers used most regularly, we asked to what extent users are satisfied or dissatisfied with different elements of the shelter.



Almost 75 percent of frequent bus users are satisfied with the accessibility of the bus shelter that they use most often, while 58 percent are satisfied with its safety.

Only 29 percent are satisfied with the comfort of their bus shelter.

Thinking about the bus shelter that you use most regularly, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with its..?



Key findings

Accessibility

There are many different user groups who have different needs with regard to bus shelter design. Specific user groups that need special consideration include those passengers that have limited mobility, are visually impaired, are hearing impaired and those travelling with prams or young children.

Accessibility has many facets, including the location of the bus shelter, obstacles around the bus shelter such as heightened kerbs and street furniture.

"In a better position on the pavement so that access is better."

Members of our Transport User Panel rated bus shelters in their local area as generally accessible. However, when looking specifically at the needs of different users, we found that:

- 65 per cent of passengers with a visual impairment found it fairly or very difficult to use bus shelters
- 61 per cent of passengers with a mobility impairment found it fairly or very difficult to use bus shelters
- 18 per cent of passengers with a hearing impairment found it fairly or very difficult to use bus shelters
- 43 per cent of passengers travelling with prams or young children found it fairly or very difficult to use bus shelters.

Careful consideration, to the design, positioning and upkeep of bus shelters and the associated infrastructure is essential if it is to be user-friendly and meets the needs of those with accessibility needs.

The survey found that overall 69 percent of frequent bus users feel that their needs have been taken into account when it comes to public transport in general. However, this compares with only 60 per cent of users with a disability.

“More space, especially if there is a wheelchair or mobility scooter passenger trying to board.”



Information

The survey found that provision of information is a driver of potential bus usage and has lower levels of satisfaction when compared with accessibility and safety.

Passengers say they use both paper-based timetable information and also use digital information. The way passengers access information varies, dependent on local circumstances, such as the accessibility of digital information in their area. It is also dependent on personal circumstances, such as whether they have a smart phone, whether they have the relevant apps and how confident they feel using digital technology.

“Put all the timetables on display, not just electronically.”





However, while this is the case, a third say that they use digital information 'all of the time,' compared with only one in ten who say the same about using paper timetable information.

What is clear is the view that information provided at bus shelters should be readable at all times, including non-daylight hours.

"Timetable clarity... print is too small and often covered on graffiti plus route maps are invariably impossible to decipher or absent."

Providing adequate lighting at bus stops would ensure timetables and other passenger information can be read. Lighting the whole shelter also has important benefits in terms of passenger safety.

Seating

In our survey just 15 per cent of passengers think that the seating in their local bus shelter is comfortable, while 59 per cent disagree. In general, passengers that are older are less likely than those that are younger to find the seating at their local bus shelter to be uncomfortable.

"I do not like the seating, which is an awkward sloping down affair. I prefer to sit on a flat surface."

The majority of passengers say that they would prefer to use seats rather than perches (high and thin bench-like seats) while waiting in a bus shelter. However, there are a minority that recognise that perch seating does have advantages in terms of accessibility.



"Better seating, not the perches generally available."

Safety

The majority of passengers are satisfied with the safety of the bus shelter that they use most often during the day.

Safety is generally not a problem during the day but a third of women (twice as many as men) feel unsafe during the evening/in the dark.

The condition of a bus stop can make passengers concerned about their safety. Factors such as dim or broken lighting, broken or damaged shelter walls and seats has an impact on how safe they feel while waiting for a bus.

A brightly lit, graffiti free and well maintained bus shelter sends a more positive message to passengers than one that has been vandalised. Around a third say their bus stop is poorly lit.

“Working light on wintry dark morning and evening.”

85 per cent of frequent bus users say that dim or broken lighting in the bus shelter has at least a moderate impact on how safe they feel waiting for a bus, while 48 per cent say that this has a significant impact. Similarly, 82 per cent say that broken or damaged shelter walls or seating has at least a moderate impact while 41 per cent say that this has a significant impact on their feeling of safety.

“Regular maintenance to remove graffiti, stickers and to mend broken glass.”

60 per cent of respondents agree that the provision of CCTV and help points would be beneficial in the bus shelter that they use most often.

A well maintained bus shelter influences journey satisfaction, overall travel behaviour, choice of mode and is rated as one of the most important factors by respondents.



Protection from the weather

Passengers believe that people should be encouraged to travel by bus as an environmentally friendly transport mode and that they would be more likely to use buses if shelters offered better protection from weather.

In fact, 67 per cent of frequent bus users say that they would be more likely to use buses if shelters offered better protection from weather. Between a third and half do not feel they are well protected from rain, snow and especially wind, while almost a third do not think their shelters are big enough.

"There is only a roof and a side adjacent to the road, in wet and/or windy weather there is no protection from the other sides. Why are not all shelters fitted with side panels all round?"

"A partial panel at the front and panels at the sides (as well as the back) to provide some shielding when there is wind and rain (some shelters I've seen have this already, I would like more of them)."



Sustainability

Passengers say that is important to them that bus shelters are designed to be eco-friendly and sustainable with a low carbon footprint.

Those who are younger are more likely than those that are older to believe that this is an important consideration in terms of bus shelter design. The majority would like to see rubbish/recycling bins provided within their local bus shelters.

"I would like to see my local bus shelter more creatively and environmentally attractive. A Green roof. Invite local artists to restyle the appearance."

"Not have bins right next to the shelter as it makes it feel unhygienic..."

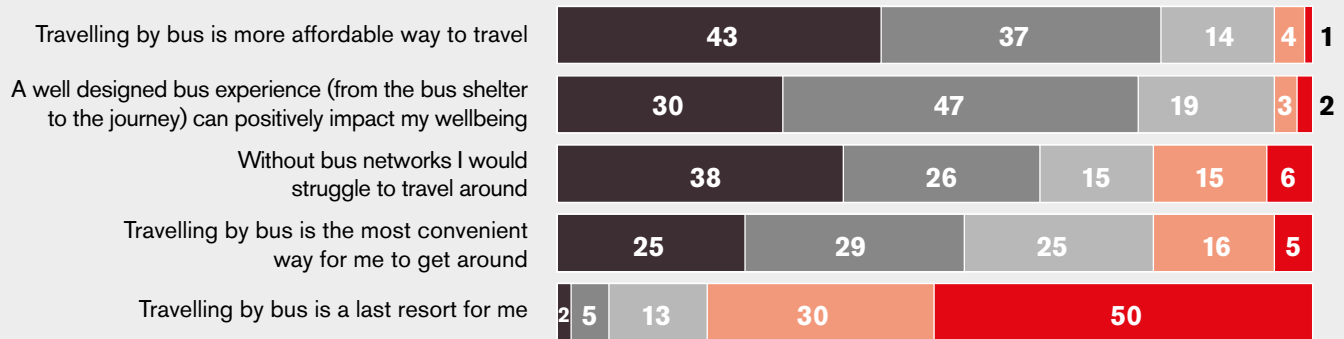


Conclusion

The importance of affordable and convenient bus networks is a lifeline to frequent bus users' with over 60 per cent of respondents agreeing that 'without bus networks I would struggle to get around'.

80 per cent of bus users agree that travelling by bus is a more affordable way for them to make journeys. 77 per cent agree that a well-designed bus experience can positively impact their wellbeing.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that..?



Base: Transport User Panellists who use a bus at least once a month (3276).

Strongly agree

Tend to agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Tend to disagree

Strongly disagree

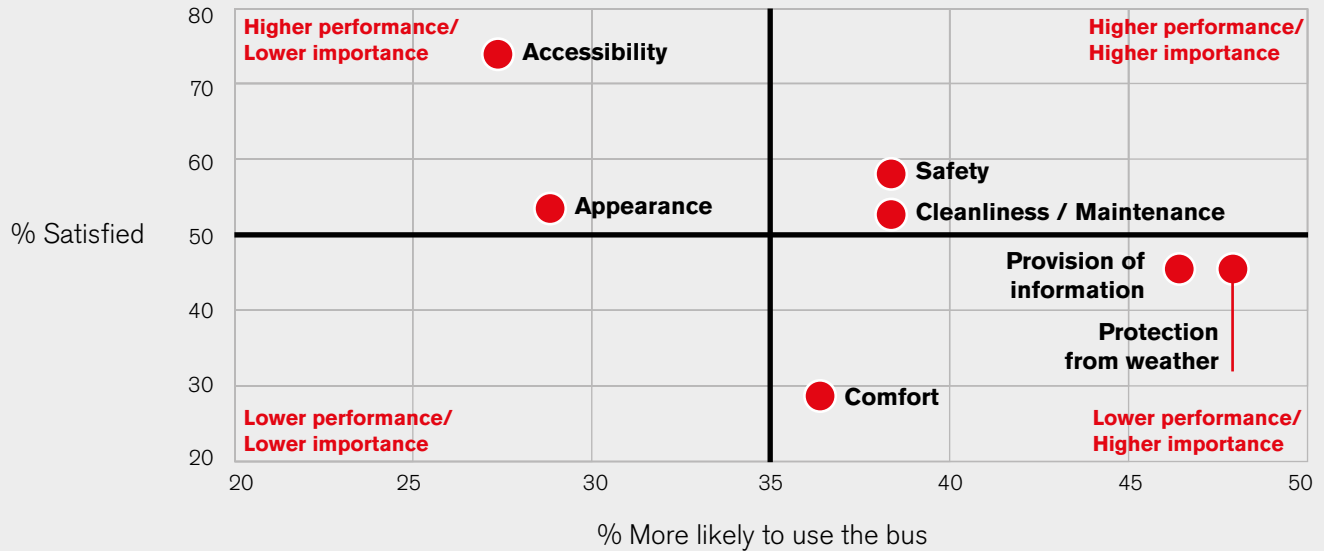
Having a good experience at the bus shelter environment while waiting, that is accessible and safe with good quality, accurate information to hand can make this a better experience. 77 per cent of respondents agreed that 'A well designed bus experience from the bus shelter to the journey can positively impact my wellbeing'.

A quadrant analysis plots bus shelter satisfaction against the extent to which other aspect which are important to bus users. This identifies some priority areas of improvement. Provision of information, protection from weather, and particularly bus shelter comfort and safety show high importance to bus users but lower levels of satisfaction.



Having a good experience at the bus shelter environment while waiting, that is accessible and safe with good quality, accurate information to hand can make this a better experience.

Quadrant analysis



A recent report from the [Campaign for Better Transport](#) advocates for national standards to be applied to all bus stops/shelters. The report proposes that a national standard for bus stop infrastructure and information should require bus stops to provide specific facilities as a minimum.

There is a synergy between the proposed minimum standards and passenger requirements detailed in our survey. Bus shelters should be designed with passengers' requirements in mind. It is therefore valuable to understand the importance passengers' place on various facilities, to make the experience as comfortable and convenient as possible.

We hope the results from this comprehensive survey contributes to making a positive impact for passengers, ensuring passenger priorities are considered when amending bus shelter guidance or in the development of a minimum set of standards.



Key messages

- The environment of the passenger waiting area is a key component of passengers' perception of the quality of the bus service and safety. The potential exists for improving the perception of safety in the evenings and in the dark, when only a minority of women feeling safe, with dim lighting and damage to shelters, having a significant impact.
- There are many different user groups who have diverse needs with regard to bus shelter design. Specific user groups that need special consideration include those passengers that have limited mobility, visually impaired, or hearing impaired. The difficulties experienced by these groups must be considered when looking at the accessibility needs of passengers, including physical accessibility and accessible information.
- Poor quality bus shelters that do not offer protection from the elements are a major barrier for passengers using buses more often. A well-designed bus shelter should enhance the waiting experience and make it more comfortable for





passengers waiting during inclement weather.

- When provided with a list of types of information and asked to select the most important that they would most like to see provided in bus shelters, 77 per cent select information on bus timetables and other transport connecting times and lines (such as nearby train or tram times).
- While frequent bus users who are younger are no more likely than those that are older to believe that people should be encouraged to travel by bus as an environmentally friendly mode of transport, there is evidence that they are more environmentally conscious than other bus users. Compared with 67 per cent overall, 76 per cent of those aged 18-34 think that it is important that bus shelters are designed to be eco-friendly or sustainable with a low carbon footprint. 71 per cent of those in this age group believe that it is important that bus shelters include green initiatives which positively impact local biodiversity compared with 48 per cent overall.

Contact Transport Focus

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Transport Focus is the operating name of the Passengers' Council

Transport Focus

The voice of Britain's transport users

We listen to the public and find out their experience of using, or trying to use, Britain's railways and England's buses, coaches, trams and motorways and major 'A' roads.

We protect the interests and champion the needs of all transport users today and ensure they're at the centre of tomorrow's policy decisions and future investment.