



Media Release

Wednesday, July 30, 2015

Bus barriers exposed in the North-east

Bus operators, transport groups and stakeholders around the UK are this week promoting Catch The Bus Week 2015.

However, with two out of three commuters in the North-east using their car to get to work, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce decided to examine how more people could be encouraged to use the bus.

In partnership with First Group and Nestrans, the Chamber recently published its research into what the barriers to bus use are, and how they can be overcome.

Despite 66% using the car to get to work, over half of respondents described themselves frequent or occasional bus users.

An additional one in three (33%) said that they do not use the bus but would like to do so.

Scottish Transport Statistics from 2012 show that the percentage of driver journeys delayed in Aberdeen City (12%) and Aberdeenshire (13%) are above the national average of 10%.

Encouraging more of these commuters to use the bus to get to work more often would ease current levels of city centre congestion.

In Aberdeen, around 77% of households have access to a car and car ownership levels in Aberdeenshire are the highest in Scotland (85% against the national average of 69%).

The two main barriers to using the bus identified in the study are cost and length of journey time.

Unprompted, 24% of respondents – nearly one in four - said the main reason they don't use the bus is its cost.

However, 22% also said their main barrier was that their journey by bus took too long, and 82% said they would be more likely to use the bus if their journey was quicker.

The Chamber has put forward a number of recommendations following the study, including extending bus lane opening times – currently being trialled on the city's Great Northern Road – creating express bus services, and re-evaluating current routes.

Employers have a role in encouraging bus use, and recommendations include car pools, corporate fare discounts as well as a charge on employers who provide workplace parking.

Research & policy director at the Chamber James Bream said: "Once again, the Chamber is playing a leading role in providing data and research for our region to help our stakeholders make better decisions.

"The research shows that there is no silver bullet to encouraging more people to use the bus and once again we need strong consensus-led leadership to deliver meaningful change."

Nestrans chairman Councillor Ramsay Milne said: "Nestrans welcomes the results of the Barriers to Bus Use survey.

"We know that many people choose to use their car to commute, but wish to ensure that options are available and attractive.

"It is positive to see that many commuters do choose to use the bus, either for their regular journey or as an alternative for other trips.

"It is also encouraging to see that an additional third are keen to use the bus. Often it is hardest to persuade people to change their mind set but here we have a further group of people who would use the bus more frequently if we can work toward implementing some of these recommendations."

Daniel Laird, commercial manager at First Aberdeen, said: "Bus travel is key to the future of local economies and we are committed to working with our partners in Aberdeen to make services as attractive as possible, encouraging people to swap the car for the bus, thereby reducing congestion and improving air quality for all.

"Improving bus journey times is key to attracting more passengers and this can only be fully achieved if the issue of congestion in Aberdeen city centre is addressed.

"That's why we fully support measures proposed by our partners which prioritise public transport and encourage bus travel in the city.

"Future investment in infrastructure which supports the investment we are making in our fleet would certainly have the potential to speed up journey times and will go a long way to attracting new passengers, and in particular encouraging people who travel by car to swap to the bus."

Ends

Notes to editor

- This research reviewed existing research, received survey responses from over 490 employees and met with both bus users and non-bus users in a focus group session.
- Catch the Bus Week runs from June 29 to July 5 and is a nationwide campaign aimed at driving awareness of the benefits of taking the bus (www.catchthebusweek.co.uk)

- Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) is North-east Scotland's leading private sector, member-focused, business organisation. The Chamber represents more than 1,350 businesses with almost 130,000 employees in the private sector covering all industry sectors, ranging in size from sole traders to multi-national corporations.

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