



FOR A HAPPIER,
HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

Consultation Response

Young Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme - Year 1 Evaluation

11/7/23

If you have any questions about this response, please contact our policy team:
policy@pathsforall.org.uk

Who We Are

Paths for All is Scotland's walking charity. Established in 1996, we work in partnership with 30 national organisations with a shared vision of a healthier, happier, greener Scotland, where everyone can be active every day. Walking is the easiest and most accessible way to be active, and our work to change the way people move, travel, and enjoy life in Scotland is focused on the following three themes:

- Walking is for everyone.
- Walking is for everywhere.
- Walking is for every day.

Our [strategy](#) sets out our vision for tackling physical inactivity, poor mental health, increased health and transport inequalities and the climate emergency.

Our Response

Young Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme - Year 1 Evaluation

Transport Scotland

Professional Stakeholder Feedback

Please briefly outline your role or interest in the Young Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme?

Paths for All is a Scottish charity founded in 1996. We champion everyday walking as the way to a happier, healthier Scotland. We want to get Scotland walking: everyone, everyday, everywhere.

Our aim is to significantly increase the number of people who choose to walk in Scotland - whether that's for leisure or walking to work, school, the shops or to a nearby public transport hub. We want to create a happier, healthier Scotland where increased physical activity improves quality of life and wellbeing for all. We work to develop more opportunities and better environments not just for walking, but also for cycling and other activities, to help make Scotland a more active, more prosperous, greener country.

The Young Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme has the potential to change travel behavior - both in the short term and in influencing longer term behaviour.

Please outline your thoughts on the policy in relation to the Young Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme:

Encouraging behavioural changes

The Young Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme has the potential to change travel behavior - both in the short term and in influencing longer term behaviour.

Walking is often described as the perfect exercise. Almost anyone can do it, it can be done just about anywhere, at any time. In recent years, it has also become clear that everyday walking brings enormous benefits to our society, from improving our physical, mental and social health, to reducing inequalities, contributing to economic growth and vibrant communities, to reducing carbon emissions, road congestion and air pollution on Scotland's journey to net-zero.

Active travel and public transport are intricately linked, particularly for pedestrians. Virtually every trip by public transport involves walking at some stage. Buses are particularly important given the number of people that use them and the range of communities they serve. 76% of all public transport journeys are by bus.

Free bus travel helps young people access education, employment and leisure, particularly for low income families. It also increases young peoples' independence and encourages a greater, long term shift to more sustainable travel by embedding the use of public transport in people's behaviour from an early age.

The need to maximise the wide-ranging benefits of switching our journeys from car to walking and sustainable modes of transport are very clear.

Transport Scotland reports that 80% of households had access to one or more vehicles in 2021; representing a 9% increase in car ownership in comparison to pre-pandemic statistics. In the meantime, there has been renewed focus on improving our walking environment, urban and rural infrastructure across Scotland – from delivering more paths to improving accessibility, maintenance, signposting, lighting, improving access to shops, transport links and other facilities, or measures aimed at reducing traffic congestion and limiting vehicle speeds.

As well as the infrastructure, we are pleased that there has been greater recognition of the need for behavioural initiatives to achieve mode shift from driving to walking. Indeed, research shows that while increased investment in active travel infrastructure is important, it is "insufficient" without behavioural changes. Therefore, providing people with encouragement, support, and guidance to change their behaviour is essential to maximise positive changes for our communities, health, and environment in the long term. We are pleased that the importance of changing social norms and increasing positive attitudes towards walking and active travel has been recognised by Transport Scotland, and we hope that it will continue to be backed up with appropriate actions and investment.

We believe that walking and other modes of active travel play a vital role in Scotland's response to the current challenges posed by health and transport inequalities and the climate emergency. Considering our increasing collective

interest in enjoying the great outdoors, we need to ensure that everyone can benefit from accessing natural environments. It is important to realise that investment in physical infrastructure is important, but it may be insufficient in achieving the switch to sustainable modes of transport. Paths for All is proud to be contributing to this change and we trust that policy and decision makers will continue investing in and otherwise supporting our communities, health, and environment in the long term.

Are there any lessons that you think could be learned from the implementation and/or delivery of the Young Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme to date, either to improve the development of other schemes in the future, or to improve the Young Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme going forward?

The application process should be looked at and improved / simplified.

Please use the space below to provide any other feedback about the Young Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme that you would like to provide that has not already been covered:

Feedback from Paths for All staff:

- I don't have any family members or friends who use the scheme, but I can definitely say that the scheme is being used to great advantage by young persons on the Falkirk to Stirling bus routes. Sometimes most of the passengers on the bus are groups of young people. If other travellers can get a seat and are prepared to wear ear-defenders then it's a complete success!
- It certainly looks like it is being well used round here with kids heading for the beach in the sun!
- I have two kids making use of free bus travel. We are fairly rural, and the free bus travel scheme is a complete game changer for our family. Gives the kids freedom to meet friends and to go on independent adventures. It also opens up the possibilities for part time working in towns a bit further away than might otherwise have been feasible. Girl No 1 is away to start college in August and will use the free travel to get into town daily. One of the best things ScotGov has done to date. As a side note. The 17 year old and her immediate pals of the same age aren't in as big a rush to start driving lessons as they might have been if it wasn't free to jump on a bus.
- My 2 use it for longer journeys e.g. to Glasgow, Perth or Dundee. 19-year-old just comes home from Glasgow for a couple of hours now (or even to let the dog out!) because it's free.
- It is great and my children use it a lot for everyday journeys in Edinburgh. I think it has had a positive effect. My only concern was how painful the application process was and how this in itself could widen inequalities.
- My youngest did use it but recently turned 23. It worked very well from Stirling to Glasgow other than the service was fairly hopeless and often very full in mornings meaning he wasn't allowed on. On one occasion he, quite rightly, let an older lady on before him (they were the only two at the

stop) and the driver refused him entry due to it being full!!! In summary, the service didn't appear to have been improved,/ enhanced to accommodate extra passengers (anyone that has been on a bus will know that it is a good way to make yourself feel younger!! and is well used by the over 60's) and it was always late (I know this as I always chased him out the house at the time the bus should have arrived and it's a five min walk away but he always got it). This isn't great when you are trying to get to further or higher education or work and often involved me taking him to the station of giving him the car to drive through for 9. When it works then it seems fine but it was often a lottery and I had a few texts to say "the bus isn't here yet" or "the bus has been cancelled". Another point is that it should be extended for students of any age. His course is 5 years, and he left school at 18, so it was always going to be thus albeit he started it later and will now have 3 years of me paying his travel. Good idea, badly executed.

- Absolute screaming nightmare of a registration system for under 16s. It's like the flipping crystal maze. The countdown until it times out 'again' is not a helpful feature. The cards also seem very easy to break. On the plus side, it's easy to order a replacement.
- Mine was a piece of cake with the more recent Young Scot card. Took seconds to put in the number.



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