Highlights 2015/16

* Over 500 bus passenger complaints handled in 2015/16
* Service Reliability attracts the greatest number of complaints
* Increased number of complaints about buses failing to show and frequency of service
* Complaints about driver/staff attitude still high
* Geographical spread of complaints similar to 2014/15
* Seven Your Bus Matters events held
* Three Focus Groups facilitated for local authority
* Over 2300 hours of monitoring by Bus Compliance Officers
* Continued close working with Transport Scotland, Traffic Commissioner’s office, Confederation of Passenger Transport, bus operators and other stakeholders

The Your Bus Matters event held in Clydebank Shopping Centre.
Chart 1 (see next page) shows the breakdown by category of all complaints BUS dealt with in 2015/16. It is clear to see that passengers expect a reliable bus service with courteous and efficient staff. The level of service relates to the frequency of service that passengers have access to. Bus Users UK has a standard format for categorising complaints which came into effect from April 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Service reliability</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Driver/Staff attitude</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Frequency of service</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Vehicle condition/type</td>
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<tr>
<td>5a</td>
<td>Bus failed to stop</td>
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<tr>
<td>5b</td>
<td>Bus failed to show</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Compliments</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9a</td>
<td>Disability issues</td>
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<td>9b</td>
<td>Accessibility issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10a</td>
<td>Ticket prices</td>
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<tr>
<td>10b</td>
<td>Ticket acceptance</td>
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<tr>
<td>10c</td>
<td>Other ticket matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10d</td>
<td>Concession pass matter</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Personal injury and accident</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Incorrect information provided</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Smoking</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Luggage</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>EPRR</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
From April 2015 the category ‘Bus failed to stop or show’ was replaced by two categories – ‘Bus failed to stop’ and ‘Bus failed to show’. Consequently the 2014/15 figure is shown against ‘Bus failed to show’, which attracts more complaints; no 2014/15 comparison figure is therefore shown against ‘Bus failed to stop’.

Complaints received by BUS are analysed and a monthly report is sent out to stakeholders. In 2015/16 BUS dealt with 513 complaints compared to 508 in 2014/15 (2013/14 - 307); this slight increase is partly due to the increased awareness of BUS among passengers in Scotland, and partly to the Your Bus Matters events held across Scotland, where BUS facilitates direct dialogue between bus passengers and bus operators and local authorities. The charts show the categories that these fall under (Chart 1) and the geographical spread (Chart 2). The figures in Chart 2 (next page) are shown by Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) area, calculated on a population per capita basis to give a more balanced picture.
The RTP areas are Zetland (Shetland Islands), Hitrans (Highland, Argyll & Bute except Helensburgh and Lomond, Moray, Orkney Islands, Western Isles), Nestrans (Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire), Tactran (Angus, Dundee City, Perth & Kinross, Stirling), SEStrans (Edinburgh City, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, West Lothian), SPT - Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (Glasgow City, Argyll & Bute - Helensburgh and Lomond area only, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire), Swestrans (Dumfries & Galloway).
The reason for the spike at Swestrans in 2014/15 was a Your Bus Matters (YBM) event held in Dumfries, although subsequently we have received an extremely small number of complaints from Dumfries & Galloway, which suggests that our profile could be raised and more passengers become aware of BUS. Two further YBM events are planned for early in the summer of 2016 in Dumfries & Galloway.
Chart 4 shows the total number of complaints received by RTP area, not on a per capita basis.

Chart 5 shows total complaints by RTP area in 2015/16 compared with 2014/15.

Chart 5 shows total complaints by RTP area in 2015/16 compared with 2014/15.
Your Bus Matters events

Your Bus Matters events give bus passengers the opportunity to meet face-to-face with bus operator and local authority staff in order to discuss matters of concern. In 2015/16 BUS facilitated events at Greenock, Paisley, Dundee, Easterhouse, Clydebank, Castlemilk, and Aberdeen as well as Focus Groups in different parts of West Lothian.

These events are held in conjunction with bus operators and the relevant local authority and may be held in a bus station or in a prominent central location. Bus companies are encouraged to provide buses and staff and the events are advertised locally in the weeks leading up to the event. The choice of venue may be the result of concerns about bus services in that area, or follow major route changes, or may be requested by one of the bus operators as a means of gathering useful market research from passengers.

All of the major operators in Scotland have been involved and many local independent operators have also attended. The events are very informal and allow passengers to feel relaxed and not nervous about discussing their issues or concerns about the buses they use. It must be noted however that much positive feedback was also received by operators, including praise for helpful drivers, good standard of buses, good time-keeping, etc.

The main themes concerning complaints at the YBM events centred on cutbacks of subsidised services, punctuality, fares and the frequency of services provided. As part of the planning and organisation of these events, transport representatives from the local authority are also invited to the event although not all attend. It is important that local authority staff attend these events as there are often questions and comments about aspects of bus travel that are under their control, including bus stations, information, stops and shelters, as well as supported services. BUS feels that it is beneficial to have the widest range of local transport representatives on hand to give passengers access to staff who can deal with all the issues they raise. This type of networking also benefits BUS’s relationship with local authorities as part of our mission to improve bus services throughout Scotland.

All comments are logged and BUS maintains contact with the passengers and the bus companies/local authorities to ensure that comments and complaints are properly followed up.

The series of Focus Group meetings were in partnership with West Lothian Council. These took place in Livingston, Bathgate and Winchburgh and were attended by a cross-section of local residents which included both bus users and non-bus users. The aims and objectives of the focus groups was to assist West Lothian Council to optimise its transport budget for the forthcoming financial year in order to provide bus services that local residents required. BUS facilitated the focus groups and attendees were recruited by a third party market research company. BUS was also able to pass information obtained during these groups to our Bus Compliance Officers to investigate any issues of concern in more detail.

A full programme of Your Bus Matters events is in hand for 2016/17, including experimental ‘rolling’ events where two or three smaller towns can be covered in the course of a day. YBM events were hindered somewhat during the latter part of 2015/16 due to the weather which included many recurring storms and heavy rain that led to flooding. This meant that bus operators were not able to free up the resource for YBMs that they would normally have been able to.
**Bus Compliance Monitoring**

Bus Users Scotland performs a bus compliance monitoring role, continuing the on-street work formerly carried out by other agencies. Bus Compliance Officers (BCOs) monitor the reliability and punctuality of bus services throughout Scotland, working to the times originally registered by bus operators with the Traffic Commissioner. They measure performance against the window of tolerance laid down by the Traffic Commissioners throughout the UK (currently up to one minute early and five minutes late) at prescribed timing-points, using radio-controlled watches for accuracy.

The BCOs work in response to calls from the Traffic Commissioner’s office, Transport Scotland, complaints received by BUS, and concerns expressed by passengers or local authorities, as well as carrying out random monitoring throughout Scotland. They work incognito and report back to the Traffic Commissioner and to the bus operators or local authorities providing these services. They also monitor at-stop information, vehicle condition, driver attitude and driving skills as part of a range of matters that concern bus passengers.

BCOs operating in this way can report back on how services operate on a normal day. Bus drivers have no idea who the BCOs are and this provides much more meaningful feedback to the operators as the BCOs provide a useful passenger-related insight into the bus companies’ services. The feedback received from operators regarding the BCOs’ activities has been so positive that they are increasingly requesting that the BCOs carry out some monitoring on their routes to provide them with an overview of their service to passengers.

Bus Compliance reports are routinely sent to the Traffic Commissioner’s office and where concerns have been expressed about aspects of a company’s operations, BUS staff will contact the operator to discuss how matters can be improved.

During 2015/16 the BCOs covered much of Scotland, from the Borders and Dumfries & Galloway up to the north-east and Highlands. Much of the BCOs’ work is inevitably concentrated in Scotland’s Central Belt, where the majority of bus services operate, and where standards can vary widely. The BCOs were also involved with several Public Inquiries held by the Traffic Commissioner which also involved other key stakeholders such as Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

**Partnership working**

BUS had developed excellent working relationships with bus companies throughout Scotland and we have been aware of a general improvement in the way bus companies handle complaints. There are fewer standard letters and companies seem more prepared to accept responsibility for complaints and avoid the often drawn-out (and expensive) situations where both parties might refuse to budge and which, in the past, could lead to a referral to the Bus Appeals Body Scotland and its predecessors.

BUS works closely with the Traffic Commissioner and her staff, Transport Scotland, CPT Scotland, and Regional Transport Partnerships, and sits on the Transport Scotland Bus Stakeholder Group and specific working groups, in addition to local groups throughout Scotland. BUS is keen to encourage the formation of local Bus User Groups that give bus passengers a voice and access to the bus company and local authority staff.
These are often formed where passengers are unhappy about the level or quality of bus service they receive, and the most active group, the Rural East Lothian Group RELBUS, concerned about the bus services in that area, is a good example of an effective lobby group. BUS has also been actively involved in the creation of a new bus users group in Ayrshire which attracted support from the local MP. It is hoped that the group will progress and develop further in 2016/17.

Throughout 2015/16 BUS engaged with various community councils and community forums to not only raise the profile of BUS but also to gather views of local community bus services. Much of this information is shared with the BCO team and indeed Transport Scotland.

**Bus Appeals Body Scotland**

Where BUS has been unable to negotiate a satisfactory outcome with a complainant, there is a right of appeal to the Bus Appeals Body Scotland (BABScot), which consists of three independent arbitrators representing passengers. BUS works hard to resolve complaints before they need to be referred to BABScot, and there were no referrals during 2015/16.

**BUS believes** that bus users have a right to expect:

- Good-quality information at every stop
- A clear indication of buses serving each stop
- Advance notice of service changes
- Friendly, helpful drivers
- Clean and well-presented buses
- Clean and comfortable seats
- Adequate heating and ventilation
- Safe and smooth driving standards
- In-bus information – ideally audio/visual next stop information
- Prompt and appropriate complaint handling by bus and coach companies
- Bus priority measures and strict parking controls to allow buses to run punctually

**BUS staff**

Bus Users Scotland employed five staff at the end of 2015/16 – Gavin Booth, Director; Greig Mackay, Deputy Director; Patrycja Kwapiszewska, Administrator/Complaint Handler; and two Bus Compliance Officers, Calum Aikman and Hazel Calltainn. Two further BCOs will be recruited in the early part of 2016/17 to cover south-west Scotland south of the Clyde, and Scotland north of the Tay. At a later stage BUS expects to recruit part-time local representatives, regular bus passengers who will be our eyes and ears in areas throughout Scotland.

Bus Users Scotland
Hopetoun Gate,
8b McDonald Road,
Edinburgh EH7 4LZ
T 0300 111 0001