
August 2014

Response to Lancashire County Council's Consultation on the draft criteria for assessing Lancashire County Council subsidised bus services



Journey purpose, business growth

Q1: *A score will be allocated (up to a maximum of 10) based on whether services provide access for employment (5), followed by education (4), health/medical/welfare (4), shopping (2), personal business and leisure (1). How strongly do you agree or disagree with the suggested categories and scores?*

Tend to Agree

Q2: *If you disagree, please tell us why you disagree.*

See comments below

Q3: *Are there any other categories you think should be included?*

YES

Q4: *What categories should we include and what score should they be given?*

We would find it difficult to support the higher mark for Employment as compared with Education as one feeds and often goes alongside the other. We would prefer to see equal weighting of 5 for both.

We cannot see where active citizenship/engaging with local government/democracy comes as these don't seem to be stated explicitly? Most people need to deal with local authority services at various times of life and often the more vulnerable the resident, the more regularly they need to have contact with such services and the less likely they are to have digital means of accessing them. Buses are a crucial means of accessing such services and engaging with local democracy.

Sustainable Economic growth

Q5: *We will allocate a score to bus services based on how many trips they make that serve employment areas, including business parks, town and city centres. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the suggested options and scores?*

Tend to agree

Q6: *If you disagree, please tell us why you disagree.*

While agreeing that employment areas need servicing at appropriate times, we have concerns about what might be identified as an employment area and would encourage LCC to not take too narrow a view of what constitutes an employment area. Lancashire offers many varied volunteer training and employment opportunities in forest and wildlife conservation, coaching and refereeing and various outdoor skills, little of which takes place in conventional business parks or city centres. Bus passengers rely on services to help them lead a full life and many will use volunteer opportunities to step from education to work or from work to active retirement.

Q7: *Are there any other options you think should be included?*

YES

Q8: *If yes, what options should we include and what score should they be given?*

Areas with lower employment options but substantial volunteering opportunities should be added, with scores of 1-3, depending on the number of places available at any one time – more if the opportunities are specifically vocational.

Impact on carbon emissions

Q9: *We will allocate a score to bus services based on proximity to Air Quality Management Areas and congestion hotspots. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the suggested options and scores?*

Tend to agree

Q10: *If you disagree, please tell us why you disagree.*

We believe that congestion areas should be given higher priority (5) as this is a clear way of reducing emissions and improving traffic flow for other vehicles, thereby having additional carbon reduction impact.

Q11: *Are there any other options you think should be included?*

YES

Q12: *If yes, what options should we include and what score should they be given*

Bus priority schemes in planning should be added to the consideration of these services as there would be a multiplier effect for any service using a bus priority area. It had been clearly demonstrated that car users are more likely to switch to bus use if a suitable scheme is in place to speed the journey. If hybrid or electric buses are also required, this would have a major impact on carbon emissions in congested areas.

We would suggest adding 2 for services using a priority scheme and an additional 2 for any service using non-polluting vehicles.

Accessibility

Operational service days

Q13: *We will allocate a score to bus services based on the days and frequency of operation. Those services operating on Monday to Saturday daytimes, where no alternative commercial service is available, will be given higher priority. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the suggested options and scores?*

Tend to disagree

Q14: *If you disagree, please tell us why you disagree.*

Evidently areas of employment need to be well-served but the drop in weighting for evening and weekend journeys seems to ignore current working patterns, the needs of employees who work shifts such as health and social care workers and the fact that many young people starting out in employment will be working unsocial hours:- if they are unable to access the place of work, they will not be able to accept or sustain the job, which would have a larger impact on the public purse. It is clear that people on lower incomes rely heavily on bus services to enable their job to be viable.

Q15: *Are there any other options you think should be included?*

YES

Q16: *If yes, what options should we include and what score should they be given?*

A score of between 1-3 should be able to be allocated for areas of significant numbers of shift workers or low-paid/youth employment.

Travel choice

Q17: *We will allocate a score based on whether there are alternative public transport solutions available in the vicinity within 800m radius of current subsidised bus services. Areas not served by alternative public transport will receive a higher score. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the suggested options and scores?*

Tend to agree

Q18: *If you disagree, please tell us why you disagree.*

While it's reasonable to expect services with easy alternatives to receive a lower score, a one hour interval between services is generally at the edge of people's tolerance. Except at certain times, a 2-hour interval is enough to form a barrier for the majority of people who may wish to use a service. It causes enormous problems for people trying to plan a doctor's appointment or interview if the whole day is taken up travelling or waiting to travel, and the disruption caused by a single bus not being able to operate, for whatever reason, is catastrophic. We would therefore suggest that both the 2-hour options should be weighted as 5 or 6.

Q19: *Are there any other options you think should be included?*

YES

Q20: *If yes, what options should we include and what score should they be given?*

We would suggest that the topography should be considered in addition to the distance of 800m so that the option of walking 800m (difficult enough for some) would be added to if that journey involves hills, difficult crossings of roads of junctions or impediments to people with mobility issues. These could receive a degree of difficulty from 1-4

Access for older or disabled people

Q21: *We will allocate a score to bus services based on how many people with older or disabled persons ENCTS passes are carried, giving a higher priority for those carrying a greater number of pass holders. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the suggested options and scores?*

Tend to agree

Q22: *If you disagree, please tell us why you disagree.*

Viability is often an issue for commercial services which are used by large numbers of concessionary pass holders as it appears that the reimbursement system doesn't

actually refund the whole cost to operators as was originally envisaged, and subsidy is therefore welcomed.

Q23: *Are there any other options you think should be included?*

YES

Q24: *If yes, what options should we include and what score should they be given?*

Numbers can also be a blunt instrument and some services may be less viable to run than others regardless of the bald numbers of individuals using the service. Perhaps it might be useful to also look at the proportion of concessionaires to fare-paying passengers as this is sometimes the critical factor in terms of the viability. Services carrying less than 50% concessionaires would have a lower score than those with those with 60% or higher.

Service Usage

Q25: *We will allocate a score to bus services based on the overall number of passengers carried each year. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the suggested options and scores?*

Tend to disagree

Q26: *If you disagree, please tell us why you disagree.*

We believe that this approach will not entirely capture the need for the service to be retained and subsidised. There may well be services which are lifelines for small communities that would be useful beneficiaries of subsidy when those with 100,000+ passengers may be able to run commercially.

Q27: *Are there any other options you think should be included?*

YES

Q28: *If yes, what options should we include and what score should they be given?*

A means of measuring the social cost to the community as a result of the withdrawal of the service would be helpful in deciding whether additional weighting is warranted. Bus Users UK is asking the Dept for Transport to identify guidelines and best practice for this work in the near future.

Overall

Q29: *Lancashire County Council currently assesses its subsidised local bus services purely on financial grounds - 40% of the cost of the provision should be met through fares income, including both that paid by passengers on bus together with the reimbursement of funding from the carriage of older or disabled persons ENCTS concessionary travel pass holders . The proposed new criteria takes into consideration operational aspects of the subsidised bus services and also the county council's priority themes. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the suggested options and scores?*

Tend to agree

Q30:

Do you have any further comments to make on the proposed criteria?

We have some concerns that the weighting schema will result in employment being the overriding factor with Business growth, sustainable development and operational service times all prioritising employment areas and conventional work patterns. This will mean that other social factors will only come into play if the service supports some evident employment area, which is worrying, however vital the local need for employment support.

Buses are such an integral part of life and any community, however large or small, that purely financial assessments will never sum up the benefit or loss of adding or taking away a bus service. All additional criteria proposed are useful although we feel more work could be done to look at the whole picture and involve existing and would-be bus passengers directly in the process, across the county in rural and urban settings. While that may sound daunting, Bus Users UK would be happy to discuss how that might be achieved and can point to examples where this has been carried out and how much more accepting the public is of the outcome if they feel they have been heard.

Public Bus Service Contracts: Criteria Breakdown

Objective	Criteria	Scoring	Points
Priority Themes Weighted 40%	Business growth - journey purpose (max. score of 10)	Employment	5
		Education	4
		Health / medical / welfare	4
Shopping / personal business		2	
Leisure (social / recreation)		1	
Sustainable economic growth	The routes serves a significant (>1000 trips) employment area	4	
	The routes serves a moderate (500-1000 trips) employment area	2	
	The route serves a low (<500 trips) employment area	0	
Impact on carbon emissions	The route directly serves an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and/or congestion hotspot	4	
	The route passes nearby an AQMA and/or congestion hotspot	2	
	No AQMA or congestion hotspots are served by the route	0	
Accessibility Weighted 60%	Operational service days	Monday to Saturday Daytime	5
		Sunday Daytime	3
		Daily Evening	1
	Accessibility - travel choice	No reasonable alternative	8
Alternative within 2 hours during daytime within no more than 800m		4	
Alternative within 2 hours during daytime at same location		3	
Alternative within 1 hour during daytime within no more than 800m		2	
Access for older & disabled people	Alternative within 1 hour during daytime at same location	1	
	More than 50% passenger journeys by concessionaires	5	
	Between 33% and 50% passenger journeys by concessionaires	3	
	Less than 33% passenger journeys by concessionaires	1	
Service usage	No passenger journeys by concessionaires	0	
	More than 100,000 passenger journeys per annum	5	
	More than 25,000 but no more than 99,999 passenger journeys pa	4	
	More than 10,000 but no more than 24,999 passenger journeys pa	3	
	More than 5,000 but no more than 9,999 passenger journeys pa	2	
Up to 4,999 passenger journeys pa	1		