

Humshaugh Parish Council

Bus Survey Report



January 2013

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Introduction

Humshaugh Parish Council is committed to ensuring that Humshaugh is a vibrant, thriving sustainable community. Key to achieving this is a reliable, affordable, public transport service. In the current circumstances of recession and severe cuts to public funding this is going to prove an on-going challenge. Maintaining the services we have got is already difficult, with the costs per head for the 880 service bringing us into the attention of those looking to rationalise services and make savings. We have to make as strong a case as possible to the Council to try and change their minds.

However as residents we also have responsibilities. In the main we are tax payers and have to appreciate that keeping a service going that only a few people use is not viable or best use of the hard earned money we hand over in Council Tax. Transport is one of those areas where if we hear we are going to lose it we feel a real sense of loss and agitation even if in reality we actually hardly ever use it. So key to saving our service has to be about putting effort into getting more people to use of the bus.

Carrying out this survey which has a good return rate of 40% gives us the evidence to put a compelling argument to the council for protecting our service but also to give us some ideas of we can get more people to use the bus.

I would like to say a big thank you to David Penn from Acomb who provided the questionnaire and did the analysis for us. Also thanks to fellow councillor Pat Prest who shared the work of sorting out questionnaires and then distributing the lions share.

Kirsten Francis

Chair of Humshaugh Parish Council

Summary of Key Points

- The survey was circulated to 186 homes and 73 were completed giving a return rate of 39%
- Of those completing a questionnaire 10% never use the bus, 43% use the bus more than once a week and 48% less than once a week.
- Even although eligible some residents over 60 do not have a bus pass
- The most popular reason given to use the bus more was if Buses were more frequent and regular (40 people), next was if they knew when buses run (better timetables) (28 people)
- A quarter of those responding use the bus because they have no car, most of these people (85%) use the bus more than once a week
- Shopping in Hexham is the most commonly stated purpose of travel.
- Sixteen people use the bus to get to work, school or college (this excludes students travelling on school buses).
- The bus provides 57 people with connections to train and bus services from Hexham to Newcastle
- Tuesdays and Fridays are the most popular days
- **Travel to Hexham is concentrated mainly on the 10am service**
- **Twelve people use the early morning services, these are people who use the bus more than once a week and that all people using the bus at this time use it to travel to work, school or college.**
- **The pattern of return travel from Hexham to Humshaugh is more diffuse**
- **There were 6 positive and 32 negative comments**
- **13 comments related to being more regular, 6 wanted an evening service,9 comments were made about the quality of the service**
- **3 would like more bus stops in the village**
- **1 person felt the costs prohibited people finding employment.**

Recommendations

Influencing the Council and others

Our first and last services are the areas most under threat. The information in this survey does provide evidence to try and protect them. This is mainly due to how important this service is for those at work or college. The last bus in particular we know is busy and although not high numbers when combined with other settlements such as Acomb (who have carried out this survey) and Wark it would provide more weight.

It would be worth approaching Wark and Bellingham Parish Councils to see if they were interested in carrying out the survey as we would then have detailed information on the whole route.

The comments particularly around the Shelters and Quality will be given to the council. There is sometimes money in the Local Transport Plan and we could put in a request. The Council needs to know about some of the issues regarding quality when it comes to contracting.

Lastly we should also look to Hexham Town Council, Chamber of Trade and Community Partnership as well as the County Council. Shopping in Hexham is mostly why people use the bus. There is also a significant number who want to leave the car at home to go out socialising. If this number increased it would have a knock on effect on the local economy.

More people shopping, eating, drinking and visiting the cinema or theatre and able to have a meal and glass of wine without worrying about driving could be an attractive proposition if marketed in the right way to people living in outlying areas. Perhaps the Town Council and Chamber of Trade could do a promotional month of 10% off or free glass of wine with a lunch, or two for the price of one at matinee cinema shows for those with a valid bus ticket. This would perhaps get people to at least try the bus and who knows turn them into regular users.

Actions:

Send a copy of the report to Ian Coe, Transport Manager, NCC

Request for Humshaugh to be added to the LTP funding for bus shelters

Send a copy of the report to Hexham Town Council, Chamber of Trade and Community Partnership.

Send a copy to out NCC Councillor – Edward Heslop

Speak to Councillor Terry Robson about promotion to outlying residents.

Send a copy of our report to Wark and Bellingham local councils

What we can do for ourselves

We should encourage older residents to get a bus pass, if they have one they might be more likely to use the bus

Given the number of people who say they would use the bus more if they knew when they were, suggest that making times of busses more available could be helpful. Producing a little credit card sized information leaflet that shows times in and back that people can put in their purse/wallet could be something that is easy and cheap to produce. This may also help people realise that actually we do have quite a regular bus service now with seven inward journeys and six returns with 1hour45 mins – 2hour45mins periods in between for shopping etc. Perhaps we also have to try and tackle people's expectations, we are very unlikely to get a more frequent daytime or evening service. We need people to use the existing service.

In addition getting someone who does use the bus to get to work in Hexham or even Newcastle and putting that on the website or Broadsheet saying how easy, reliable what the costs are compared to a car might persuade others to use it even if on an irregular basis. I have approach someone who does use the bus to work in Newcastle and he would be happy to do something.

If the new development at the George Hotel for 14 affordable homes gets the go ahead, then the Parish Council should suggesting a bus shelter as part of the Community benefit scheme.

Actions

Promote getting a bus pass through the shop.

Explore whether we can get the forms so people could fill them in at the shop or home.

The Parish Council to look at the costs of producing an easy to carry card with the bus travel info printed on it. Make these available through the shop.

Make bigger timetable more readily available

Ask someone to do a short article on what a days journey in and out to work on the bus is like and what is costs.

The Parish Council stays involved with the George development and put forward a bus shelter as one of the potential benefits

Results

Humshaugh Parish Council Bus Survey report

The survey was circulated to 186 homes in the parish and 73 (39%) were returned.

Question One

Table one shows the profile of respondents by age and gender, 63% were aged over 60 and 60% were female.

Table One

Profile of Humshaugh bus survey respondents	Male / Female			
	not known	female	male	Total
Age				
under 16	1	2	0	3
16 to 60	1	16	7	24
over 60	2	26	18	46
Total	4	44	25	73

Question Two

How often do Humshaugh people use the bus?

Of those completing a questionnaire 10% never use the bus, 43% use the bus more than once a week and 48% less than once a week.

Table Two Frequency of bus use		Age			
		under 16	16 to 60	over 60	Total
Bus use	not known	0	1	0	1
	never	0	3	5	8
	everyday	0	2	0	2
	more than once a week	2	7	20	29
	less than once a week	1	11	21	33
Total		3	24	46	73

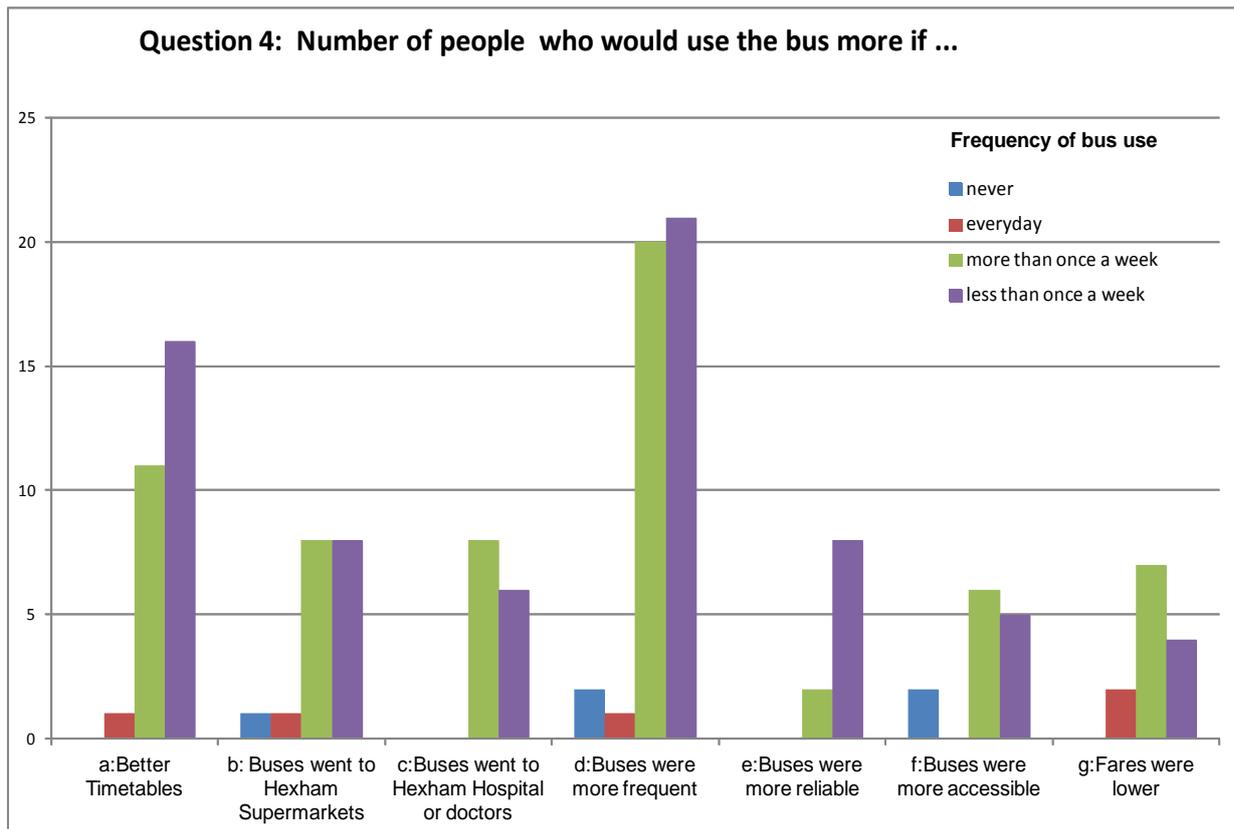
Question Three Do you have a bus pass?

Table three (below) shows that 37% of those completing the survey do not have a bus pass including five people aged over 60.

Table Three

Bus Pass Holders		Bus pass			Total
		not bus pass holder	bus pass holder	not known	
Age	under 16	2	1	0	3
	16 to 60	20	2	2	24
	over 60	5	41	0	46
Total		27	44	2	73
Gender	female	20	23	1	44
	male	5	19	1	25
	not known	2	2	0	4
Total		27	44	2	73

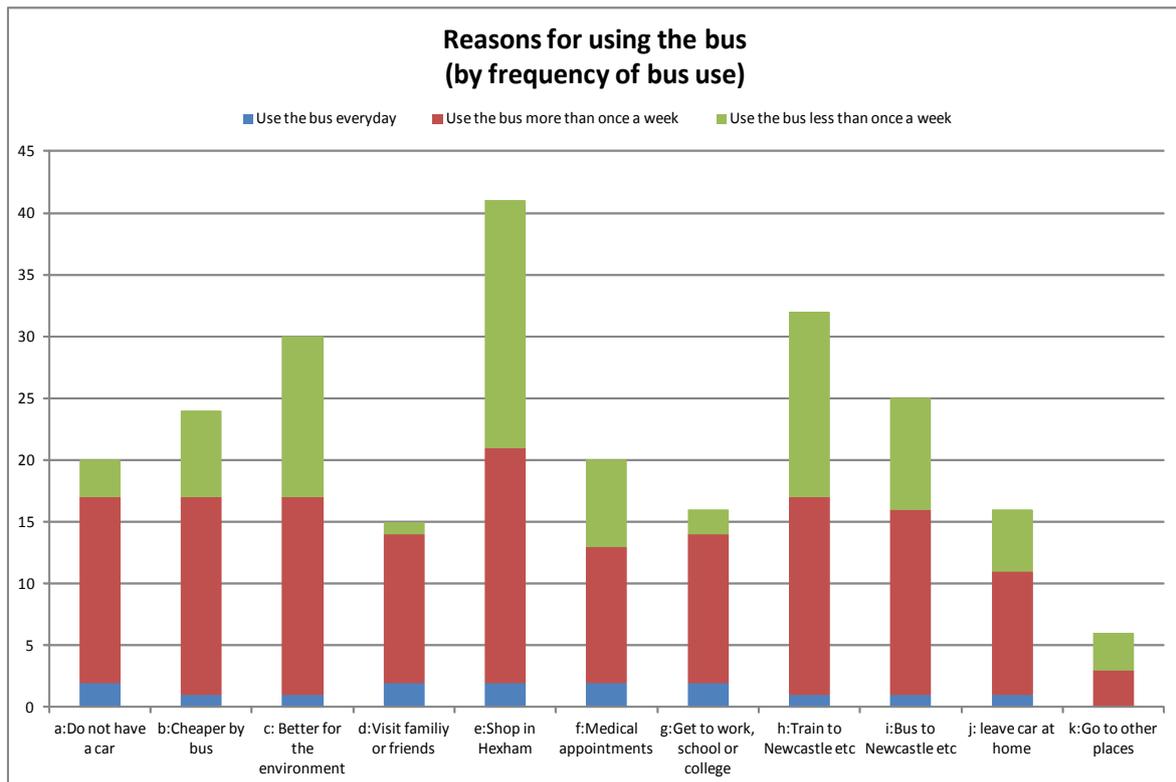
Question Four What would make you more likely to use the bus?



The above chart suggests that 44 people would use the bus more if buses were more frequent or more regular and 28 if they had better information about when buses run. Currently there are between seven and eight buses daily serving Humshaugh.

Question Five

I use the bus because.....



(a) Twenty people (27% of those responding) use the bus because they do not have a car, and 85% of these people use the bus more than once a week.

(b) 24 people use the bus because it is cheaper and (c) 30 because it is better for the environment.

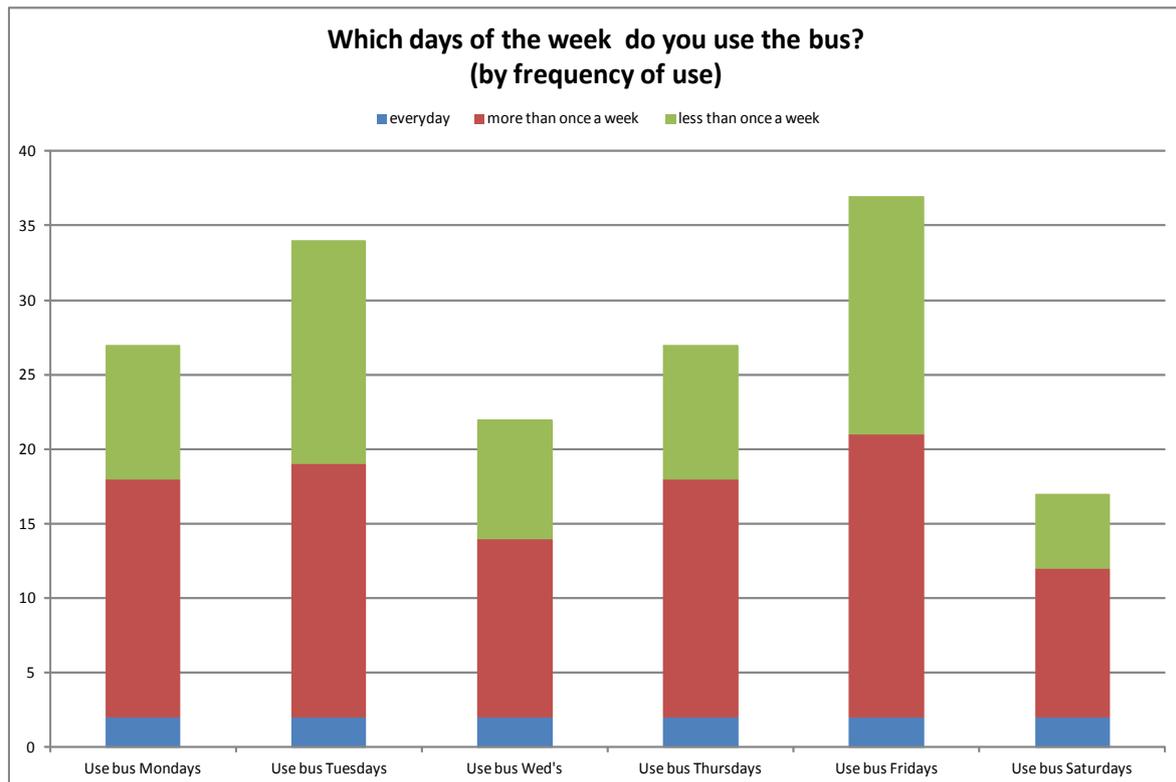
(e) Shopping in Hexham is the most commonly stated purpose of travel.

(g) Sixteen people use the bus to get to work, school or college (this excludes students travelling on school buses).

(h)(i). The bus provides 57 people with connections to train and bus services from Hexham to Newcastle

Question Six

Chart Two



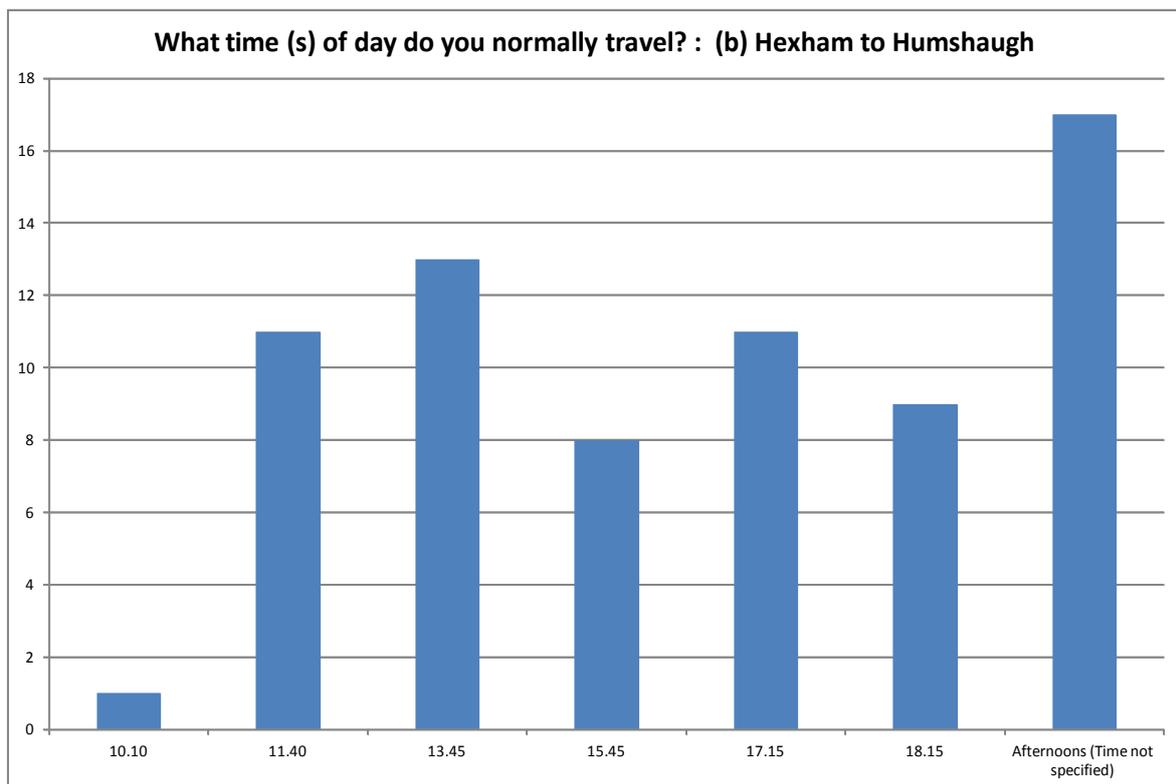
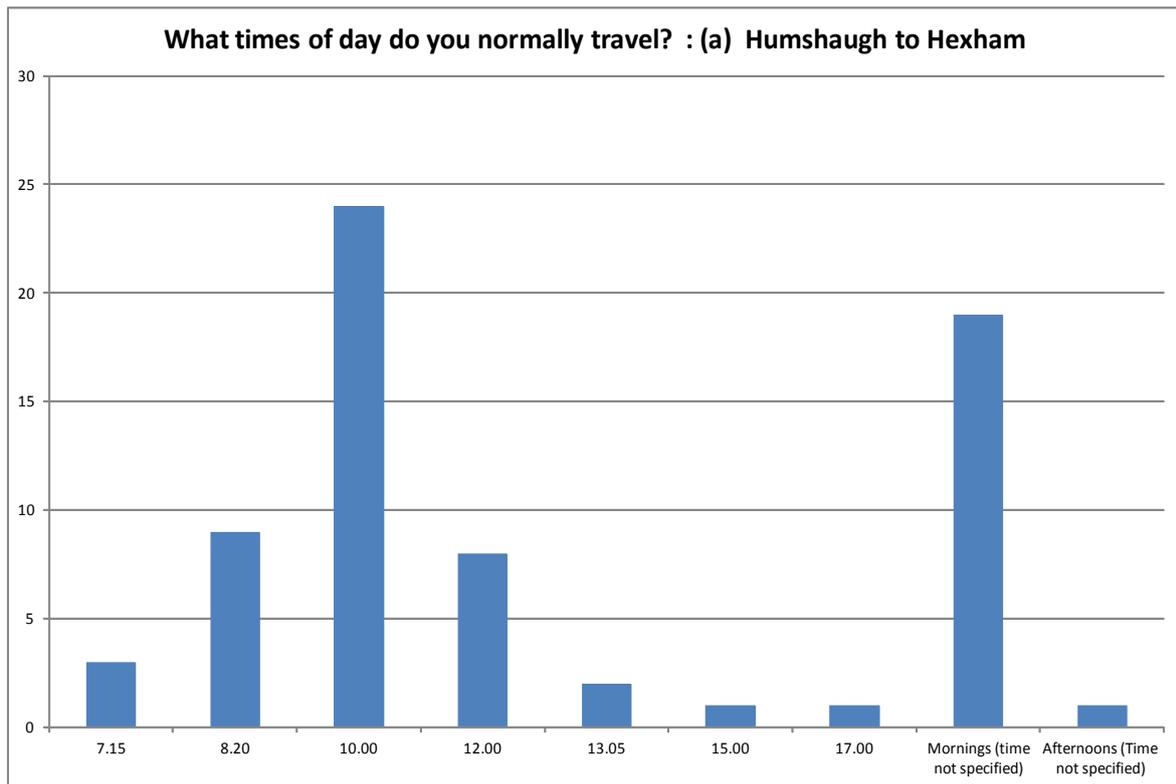
Tuesdays and Fridays (market days in Hexham) are the most popular days for using the bus, particularly amongst those using the bus less than once a week. The pattern for people who use the bus more than once a week is different from that for people using the bus less than once a week, with those using the bus more than once a week favouring Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Question Seven

What times of day do people normally travel?

Charts three (a) and (b) below provide a picture of the times of day people normally travel (a) from Humshaugh to Hexham and (b) from Hexham to Humshaugh.

Travel to Hexham is concentrated mainly on the 10am service (departs Bellingham at 9.30 and arrives Hexham 10.20) . Twelve people use the early morning services, three using the 7.15 and nine using the 8.20 service. Further analysis shows that 70% of these are people who use the bus more than once a week and that all people using the bus at this time use it to travel to work, school or college.



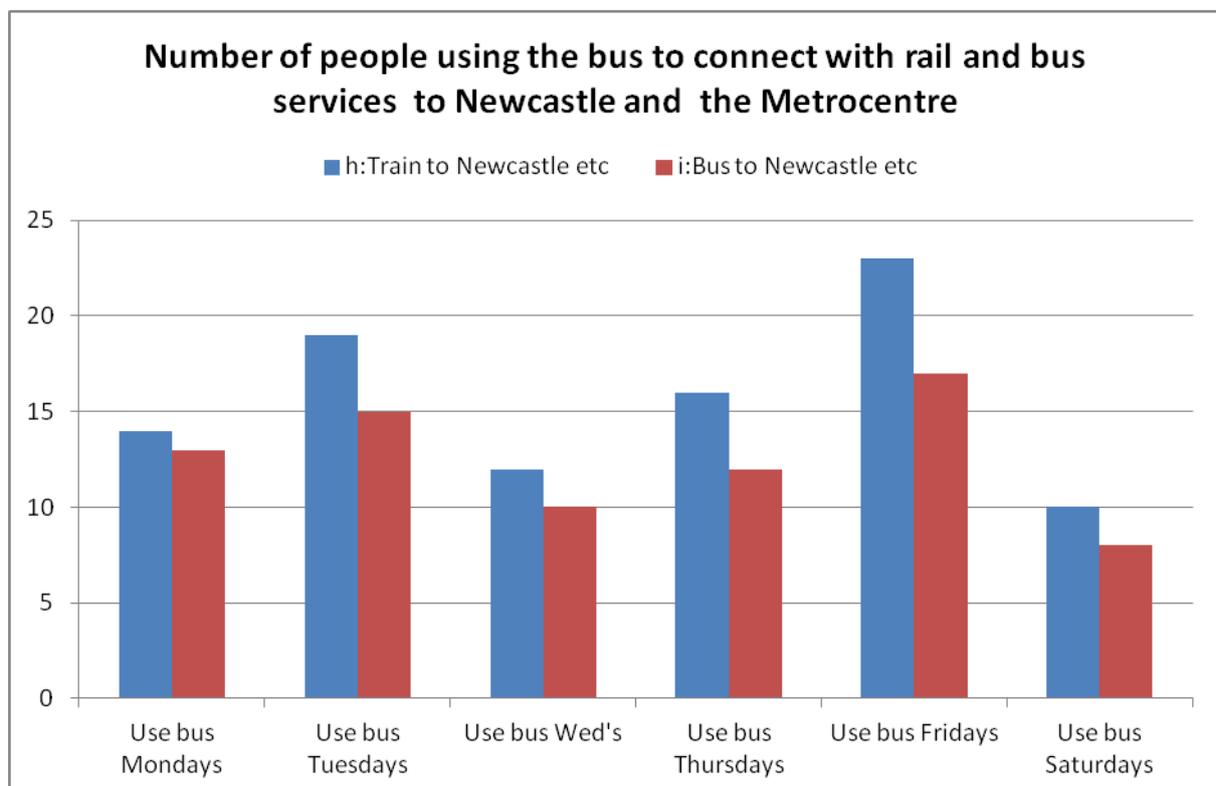
The pattern of return travel from Hexham to Humshaugh is more diffuse with journeys spread across the late morning to early evening services. Further analysis shows that most of the people using the last journey, the 18.15 departure from Hexham, are people returning from work, school or college. Returning from work,

school or college is also the most frequently stated reason for using the bus amongst those travelling on the 17.15 departure from Hexham. Only 25% users of the 17.15 and 18.15 services are aged over 60 and 13% are aged under 16.

Connecting services

The bus service which people are most likely to use to connect with trains and buses to Newcastle is the 10.00 from Humshaugh (10.18 at Hexham railway station connecting with the 10.22 train to Newcastle and the 10.25 bus (route 685) to Newcastle. The survey indicates that 14 people use this service to link with the train and 13 to link with the bus at this time.

Connections from Newcastle are more diverse with the 11.40 (9 users) and the 13.45 (16 users) being the services mostly used by train and bus passengers (equally) from Newcastle. The 18.15 service is used by six connecting rail travellers.



COMMENTS

Other destinations

3 suggestions for Carlisle
Haltwhistle and Allendale
Movies \theatres
Bus Train Alnwick
Bus Train Durham
Wentworth swimming pool
Corbridge
Going to Tesco and M&S
Bellingham

Positive comments regarding improvements (6)

I feel they are good for me

I appreciate bus services in general and would have to go back to having a car if it fails. I gave up the car after moving to Humshaugh

Quite pleased with bus service we have got

Current situation suits my needs well except for occasional delays in 07.15 arriving Humshaugh which sometimes fails to connect with 07.40 train ex Hexham to Newcastle

I am satisfied with the service

I am quite satisfied with our bus service as it is so long as they don't cut out the buses I get to and from work

COMMENTS Cont.

negative comments regarding improvements (32)

Shelters (3)

Shelter needed at Hexham bus station

More bus stops in the village

More bus stops in the village, the distance I can walk is limited

More frequent day time (13)

More frequent in middle of the day/early afternoon i.e. no two hour gap

More buses during the middle of the day and afternoons – every hour between 1 and 5 pm would be good.

A return bus from Hexham midday say 12.40 pm to give more time in Hexham

Earlier than 10 am into Hexham, say 9.15

A service frequently allowing reasonable timeframe in Hexham

More of them

An extra bus between 8.20 am and 10 am

More frequent and run a bit later

Smaller bus, more frequently and a weekend bus at 6.00pm

To take part in extra-curricular activities if there wasn't a later bus home, children would be limited to having to catch the school bus

Route to Corbridge

COMMENTS Cont.

negative comments regarding improvements (32)

An express that misses Acomb village

More frequent afternoon service

More convenient times

More information on timetable

More buses coming back to Humshaugh especially in the afternoon

More buses in summer than in winter, day and night out and leave car at home

More night time (6)

Night time services

An evening service

On time and later at night than 6.15 pm

Later busses

Able to return to Humshaugh in the evenings

Later bus in the evening

Quality of service (9)

Services running on time

The 18.35 Humshaugh to Hexham is regularly through the village at 6.30 and sometimes even earlier

Every other bus uses the keycard system – why don't you?

It would be a disaster if Humshaugh lost part or all of its bus service. But from a non users point of view, how the system is set

COMMENTS Cont.

negative comments regarding improvements (32)

up at the moment (with 2 companies) seems illogical

A faster service that didn't trail uselessly round Acomb village. Friendlier drivers – a friendlier service – other local bus companies are far better in the customer service department

H.C.V. Ltd to run a 10 seater minibus (maybe in conjunction with ADAPT) It might be worth seeking Adapts advice, they have lots of experience but buss passes might not be valid.

Slow down through village please! Too fast!!

I will need to use the buses more often as I'm getting older

Cost (1)

They are too expensive for people who are unemployed and looking for work. They have to go regularly to the DWP Offices and to Hexham to use the internet to look for jobs. The internet in the café is the wrong place. It's too busy and too public. It should be in the village hall. The Parish Council is too interested in the richer people in this village – providing free cars – and not in the poorer people who need more help and may not drive. It is very difficult for people to work shifts and have to use buses.