

'The Big Bus Survey' Report

A report on the findings of 'The Big Bus Survey' by Bridget Phillipson MP and the people of Houghton and Sunderland South.

1.0 Report

- 1.1 This report reflects the experience and use of local bus services by residents living in the parliamentary constituency of Houghton and Sunderland South between 1st March and 1st June 2011. The report is only a snapshot of the opinions of local people and is intended to help make the views and experiences of those local people who took part more widely known.
- 1.2 Rather than discuss the various policy options and economic benefits of an effective local bus network, which I am already on record as discussing, this report is driven by the responses of local people. It is their concerns I have tried to reflect in this report.
- 1.3 Broadly, the concerns of local people can be grouped into the following areas:
 - **More direct routes**, for example, many respondents cited the lack of a direct bus route to the local hospital as a major flaw within the local bus services. One local resident said: *'The 35, which goes to the Royal and Monkwearmouth hospitals now takes such a convoluted route that it is quicker to get the 20 to the interchange and change buses.'*
 - **Cheaper fares**, particularly for young families. An elderly respondent in possession of a freedom pass stated that he would be *'willing to return to a reduced fare to enable families to get a cheaper deal.'*
 - **More frequent services**, particularly in the early mornings and on Sundays. A local resident expressed their concerns and explains that: *'There used to be four buses an hour on route [79] now there is only one... As I remember there was always a good few people on this bus even when there was four an hour.'*
 - **Later running buses**, particularly desired both by people working late into the evenings and young people who use Sunderland's service sector at night. One resident compared bus services to other types of public transport: *'Metros run late - why don't the buses.'*
 - **Better disabled access**. One respondent stated that *'the wheelchair space provided is not suitable for a disabled person trying to travel on their own.'*
 - **Shorter distance to bus stops, particularly for those with accessibility requirements**. Distance to bus stops is having adverse

consequences on local people, such as one respondent who stated that the distance to the bus stop forces them 'to rely on taxis'.

1.4 Below, 'Chart 1.0: Suggestions for Improvements to Local Bus Services' shows the changes to local bus services that local people would like to see delivered, and how many residents favour each change.

Chart 1.0: Suggestions for Improvements to Bus Services



1.5 Ten of the most commonly used bus routes by residents were included in the survey, with each respondent on average making use of two bus routes. 'Chart 1.2: Bus Route Usage' illustrates the breakdown of total bus route usage by each individual route, and 'Chart 1.3: Proportion of People using Bus Routes' illustrates the proportion of local people responding to the survey who use each individual bus route

1.6 There is a large disparity between the most commonly used bus routes and the least commonly used routes in the local area.

- Route 35 is the most commonly used route and is used by 432 local residents out of 791. This is 54.6 per cent of those residents and amounts to 22 per cent of total bus route usage.
- Route 38 is the least commonly used route identified and is used by only 2 of the 791 residents who responded. This is 0.3 per cent of local people surveyed and amounts to 0.1 per cent of total bus route usage.

Chart 1.2: Bus Route Usage

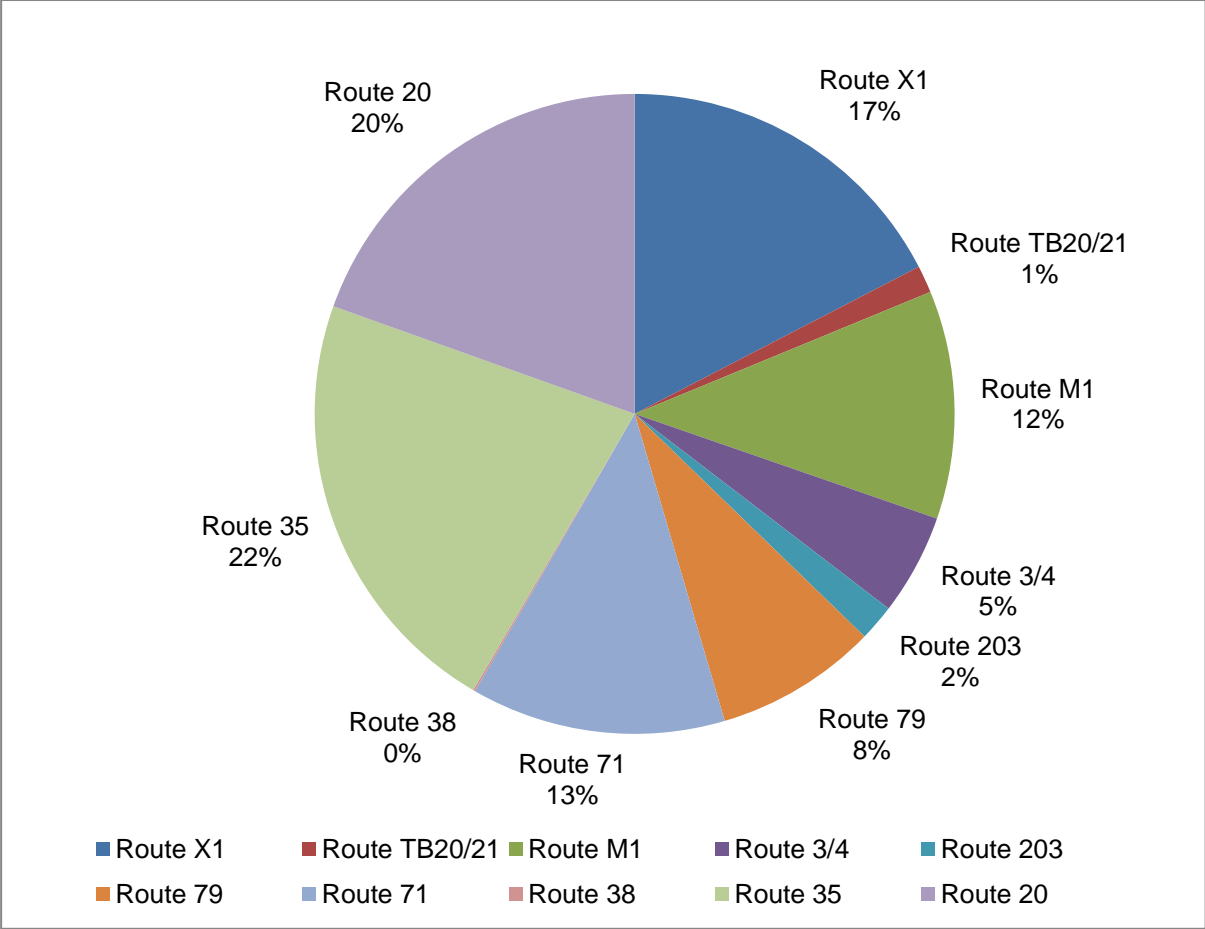
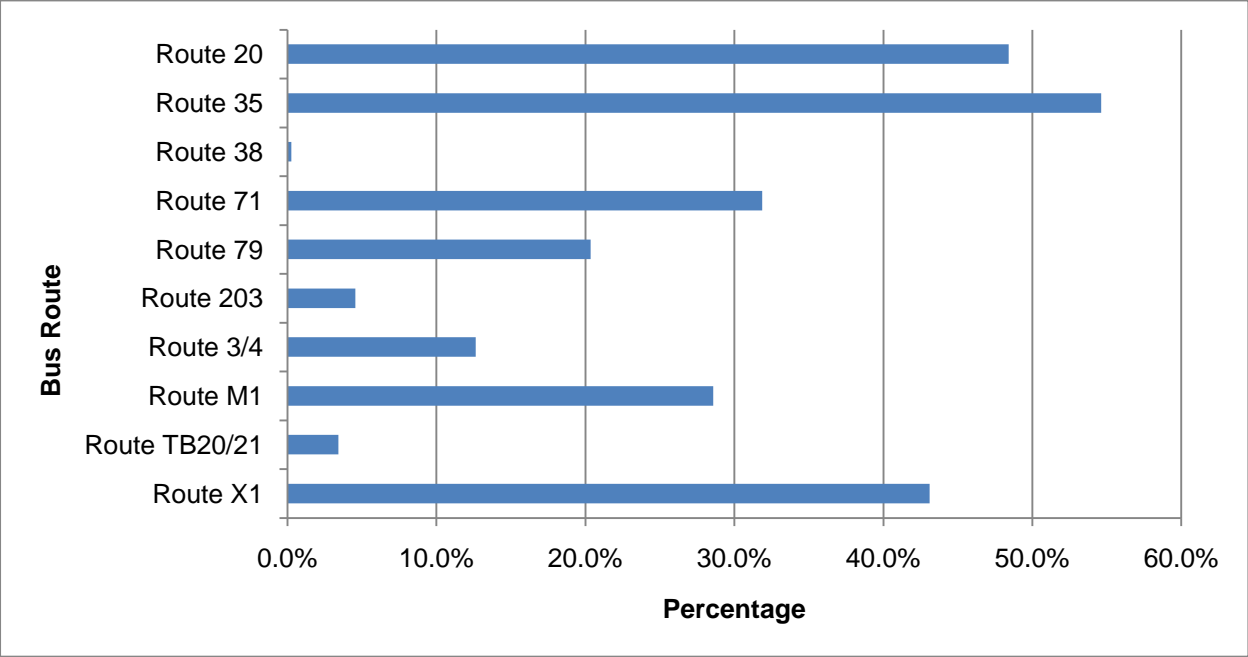
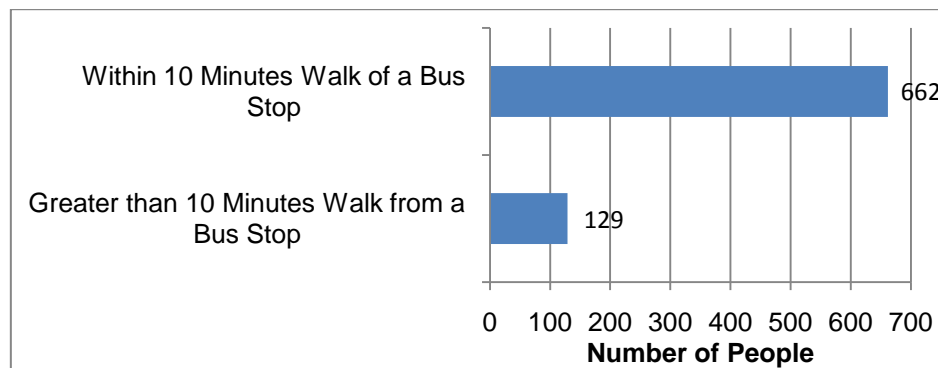


Chart 1.3: Proportion of Local People using Bus Routes



- 1.6 A significant minority of local residents also identified that they were more than 10 minutes' walk away from a bus stop. In total, 16.3 per cent of residents live greater than 10 minutes' walk away. This is illustrated on Chart 1.4: Distance to Bus Stop' below.

Chart 1.4 Distance to Bus Stop



2.0 Conclusion

- 2.1 Local people responding to 'The Big Bus Survey' are clearly frustrated with the level and quality of bus services. Many residents have made it clear that the current system of service provision does not fulfil their reasonable expectations of frequent service, stable fares, suitable disabled access and direct routes to local services such as Sunderland Eye Infirmary. One resident who frequently has to attend Sunderland Eye Infirmary stated that *'to get there, I have to travel into Sunderland from Houghton and then back out again to get there. It is very bad that a hospital is so poorly served by bus services.'*
- 2.2 Overall, local people have genuine concerns that the level of service is not meeting their needs. Local bus service providers need to ensure that residents experience the level of services that they expect and deserve. To do this, it is essential that they consult residents more widely, take their views into account and provide a greater level of accountability to local people.