



Travel Assist has provided registered bus services for Darwen to Harwood /Bury via Edgworth (TA01 & TA02) since 2013.

Services around Darwen (TA03/TA03A/TA05/TA06/TA07/TA08) have been provided since 2017.

These services have always run at a considerable loss to the organisation.

Travel Assist's ethics have been paramount in keeping these services going through subsidising them.

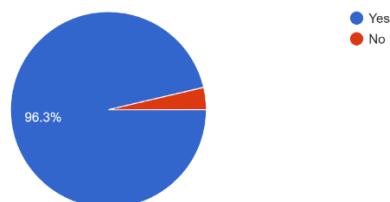
It is considered that these bus routes play a vital role in supporting the community. Any small surplus made from the other services, carried out by the organisation, has provided the subsidy.

However, following continuous cuts and soaring running cost, Travel Assist (Travel Local) has had to make the regrettable decision that it is no longer possible to continue to subsidise these bus services, as it is not able to make enough surplus from other services.

The only realistic option, moving forward, is for Travel Assist to receive a realistic level of financial support from an alternative source, outside the organisation.

Meanwhile, it was felt that it was essential to find out what passengers thought about the bus services, to give Travel Assist a starting point for making decisions for the future. Therefore, using a short survey, both on the Travel Local buses, and through social media, Travel Assist spoke to the local community bus users.

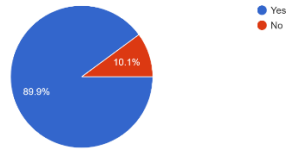
If Travel Local was to cut services would it have impact on your ability to go out and about?
109 responses



From the survey, it was shown that 89.9% of Travel Local respondents travel under the concessionary bus fare scheme. The majority of this group will be over the age of 66 years, with the remainder experiencing a level of disability.

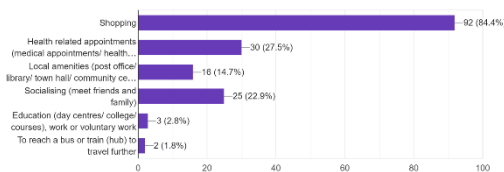


Do you have a bus pass?
109 responses



This would imply that there is a serious social responsibility to maintain the bus services if two groups with a high level of vulnerability, are the most frequent users.

Are you using the bus today for
109 responses



The next objective for the survey was to determine why Passengers made their journeys.

92% of passengers use Travel Local services for shopping.

27.5 % of passengers use Travel Local to access health services.

22.9% of passengers use Travel Local to access social activities.

14.7% of passengers use Travel Local to travel to local amenities.

2.8% of passengers use Travel Local to travel to activities such as education, work or voluntary work.

2.8% of passengers use Travel Local as an interchange for onward travel.

39% of passengers reported using Travel Local for more than one of the above reasons.

From the data it can be seen that many bus users, 92% of respondents, use Travel Local for shopping. 97.2% of respondents stated that they would return home using Travel Local services.

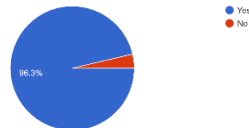
From other discussions with passengers, it would appear that for some bus users, other public bus services can be used for getting into town, but a taxi has to be used for the return journey, as the bus stops these routes use, are too far from their home to carry shopping bags. Carrying weights can often be a concern for the two vulnerable groups described above. This strongly suggests that Travel Local bus routes use bus stops that are more accessible for passengers.



Travel Assist

However, a bus service that allows a vulnerable individual to shop independently and as frequently as desired, thus allowing regular access to healthy fresh foods, also promotes local shops and therefore the local economy.

If Travel Local was to cut services would it have impact on your ability to go out and about?
109 responses



It is interesting that only 2.8 % of respondents in the survey stated using Travel Local to access other public transport services. In Darwen, Travel Local brings people who live up the many hills to the main bus routes to Blackburn & Bolton. In Edgworth Travel Local links a very rural area with main bus routes to Bolton and Rawtenstall, as well as the rail network to Bolton, Manchester and Clitheroe. It would appear that Travel Local passengers choose to stay local and more importantly, shop local, again supporting the local economy.

Similarly, 14.7% of respondents use Travel Local to access to local amenities, which activity is believed to help reduce social isolation for the individual whilst also helping to keep these activities in up and running; an advantage for the community as a whole.

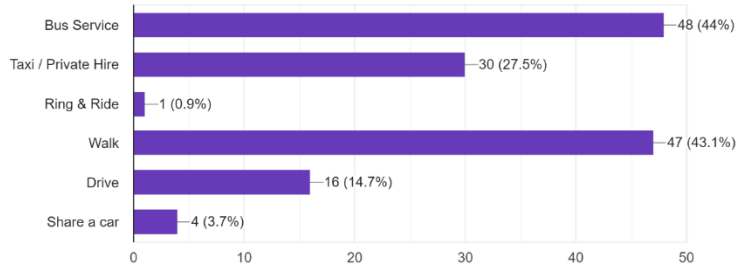
Travel Local services accept concessionary bus passes, which is essential for the health and well-being of the two vulnerable groups previously described, who often have a low income. However, it appears that some bus users maximise the use of their journeys by combining shopping with medical appointments, social activities or using local amenities, implying that bus users are economical in their use of concessionary travel.

22.9% of bus users responded that a reliable bus service provided the freedom to visit or meet family and friends. Social activities are believed to have a positive effect on individuals, with isolation being a known concern for both elderly and disabled persons, the majority of the Travel Local bus users. The fact that 96% of respondents stated that if Travel Local was to cut services it would have an impact on their ability to go out and about, would appear to imply that there is a social responsibility to ensure the bus services in question are not lost, if further costs to adult social services are to be avoided.

27.5% of respondents stated that they used the Travel Local bus services to access health appointments. It is known that 1 in 20 medical appointments are missed, costing the Health Service millions of pounds each year, and that one of the reasons given for missed appointments is inadequate or / and unaffordable transport. Therefore, Travel Local would appear to be, not only helping individuals to maintain good health habits, but also is helping to reduce NHS losses.



How did you access this before using Travel Assist Services buses?
109 responses

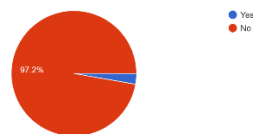


Passengers were asked how they accessed the shops, etc before using Travel Local buses.

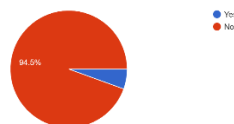
The previous Bus Service provided by another operator was used by 44% of Travel Local passengers. This would appear to show that there was already a culture of bus users. A further 43.1% said that they walked before they used Travel Local services. 14.7% said that they had use of a car, with a further 3.7% connected with car sharing.

As previously mentioned, the majority of Travel Local passengers are over the age of 66. Therefore, it possibly can be assumed that advancing years has impacted on their ability to remain sufficiently mobile to keep walking. Likewise, those who had access to a car may no longer drive due to health reasons, or if they relied on someone else to drive them, this person may have failing health or even may have passed away.

If Travel Local needs to reduce losses, should it cut bus services?
109 responses



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109 responses



Will you use the Travel Assist bus to return?
100 responses



Taxis and private hire provided transport to 27.5% of current passengers. It is not known if this was long term or just during the period between the previous operator and Travel Local. Taxi services and private hire still remain in Darwen and Edgworth,



but elderly and disabled persons can often have a low income, and so making use of their concessionary bus passes will greatly improve their personal finances.

Using Travel Assist makes a difference to your life/ daily or weekly activities?
109 responses

