

NEWS RELEASE

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PASSENGER WATCHDOG LAUNCHES BUS SERVICES REPORT

The independent Public Transport Passenger "Watchdog" TravelWatch North West has published a report on Bus Services, and Bus Passenger facilities in the North West. The report is the result of a survey carried out in the Spring and early Summer of 2008 by mystery shoppers travelling on 292 bus journeys in various parts of the region.

The report reveals that bus services vary enormously in different parts of the North West but in general the standards of buses and bus driving are relatively good. Whilst some Bus Stations and Bus Stops are getting better many still lack basic facilities and exhibit inadequate information.

The greatest deficiency was revealed to be Passenger Information. There was little consistency throughout the region and many potential and new passengers could be confused by its vagueness.

Peter Robinson, Chairman of TWNW said, *"We have been very pleased with the standards of bus operations but remain concerned about passenger facilities. Many bus stations and bus stops are presented in a poor state and as most of them are owned by local authorities and passenger transport executives it is clear where the blame lies. I call on them to investigate their shortcomings and bring them up to an acceptable standard. Equally the inconsistency and lack of information provision is a major deterrent to potential passengers and unless this is addressed people will not be tempted to use buses instead of their cars. Fares are also confusing and inconsistent. In some places, particularly rural areas, they can be more expensive than car travel and finding information about them in advance of a journey is very difficult. Having to purchase a ticket at the start of each journey without knowing the price is a further barrier to attracting new passengers."*

Headline findings were:

- Ø Buses were generally clean and their destinations and routes were prominently displayed.
- Ø Driving standards were generally good with most buses allowing easy access for passengers and offering comfortable interiors and a safe journey experience.

- Ø Information provision was variable and often confusing, both on buses and at bus stations and stops.
- Ø A significant number of bus stops failed to display timetable and route information.
- Ø Less than half of the 49 bus stations examined provided an adequate passenger information service.
- Ø There was no consistency in the style of information presentation, which can create passenger confusion.
- Ø Only 8% of the bus stations surveyed displayed any form of fare information and this was mostly related to rover and season tickets.
- Ø Less than half of the bus stations surveyed displayed a local location map and a prominent clock.

Peter Robinson added, *“The bus industry, and in this I include not just operators but also local transport authorities and passenger transport executives, needs to address the shortcomings exposed in the report. Whilst it is not a comprehensive review it does reveal many barriers that need to be overcome if the decline in passenger numbers is to be addressed and the public are to be attracted to use buses instead of their cars. Many could be overcome with simple solutions and a more joined up approach by the stakeholders. It is worth noting that, contrastingly, bus journeys in London are increasing and this coincides with the introduction of a more understandable and consistent information and fares system.”*

The full report is available on the TravelWatch North West website:

www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk

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Contacts for further information/interviews:

Peter Robinson	01539 534842
John Moorhouse	0161 817 7416
John Owen	01539 563595
Chris Dale	01625 428379