



Public Transport Statistics User Engagement

Consultation response by the Consumer
Council

30 June 2023

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Consumer Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Public Transport Statistics User Engagement Consultation¹.

Overall, we find the report easy to use, navigate and understand. However, we do recommend that future reports include more information to help with policy development and monitoring of the new Translink Public Service Agreement (PSA).

2. ABOUT US

The Consumer Council is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) established through the General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland) Order (The Order) 1984. Our principal statutory duty is to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers in Northern Ireland.

We are an insight-led, evidence based organisation:

- Providing consumers with expert advice and confidential guidance.
- Engaging with government, regulators and consumer bodies to influence public policy.
- Empowering consumers with the information and tools to build confidence and knowledge.
- Investigating and resolving consumer complaints under statutory and non-statutory functions.
- Undertaking best practice research to identify and quantify emerging risks to consumers.
- Campaigning for market reform as an advocate for consumer choice and protection.

We have specific statutory duties in relation to energy, postal services, transport, water and sewerage, and food affordability and accessibility. These include considering consumer complaints and enquiries, carrying out research, and educating and informing consumers. Our non-statutory functions are to educate and empower consumers against unfair or discriminatory practices in any market from financial services to private parking charge notices. Across all our areas of work, we pay particular regard to consumers:

- who are disabled or chronically sick;
- who are of pensionable age;
- who are on low incomes; and
- who live in rural areas.

The Consumer Council uses a set of eight core principles that are commonly used by consumer organisations for working out how particular issues or policies are likely to affect consumers.

These are:

¹ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/public-transport-statistics-northern-ireland-2021-22>



3. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Overall, the content is easy to use, navigate and understand. However, we wish to raise a few points especially regarding content of the report.

Frequency of reporting

Annual frequency of reporting is suitable however it would be useful to have the report published closer to the date of data capture, if possible. For example, the statistics in the current report cover the period April 2021 to end of March 2022 but were published a year later in March 2023.

Report content

The Consumer Council contributed to the development of the Translink Public Service Agreement (PSA). We agree with the statement in the Public Transport Statistics document that there is a need for official statistics to support independent and transparent monitoring of the PSA and to enable evidence-based decision making.

The report includes statistics on the number of Public Transport Vehicles which are wheelchair accessible and compliant with accessibility regulations. However, in the PSA one of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is Fleet Accessibility – Low Floor, defined as the percentage of services operated with low floor fleet. The corresponding performance standard is for an annual increase in services delivered by low floor vehicles in support of a move to 100% of services delivered by low floor vehicles.

Therefore, to meet the identified need for official statistics to support the independent and transparent monitoring of the PSA it is essential that the report includes statistics for services delivered with low floor vehicles.

Consideration should also be given to reporting statistics on other KPIs described within the PSA such as punctuality and reliability, safety and security. Likewise, reporting for KPIs for Customer Satisfaction and Customer Complaints should be considered for inclusion in the report once available.

It would also be beneficial to gather and analyse socioeconomic passenger data for policy making purposes. In our view the introduction of Account Based Ticketing which has the necessary GDPR safeguards in place is a possible avenue to obtain this data.

4. CONCLUSION

Reporting of public transport statistics is necessary to ensure monitoring, evaluation and policy development. We trust that the points we have raised in response to the User Engagement exercise will be useful in considering how reporting of public transport Statistics can be improved.

5. CONTACT DETAILS

If you require more information please contact Hannah Brown, Senior Policy Officer (Transport) at Hannah.brown@consumercouncil.org.uk.



The Consumer Council

Seatem House, Floor 3
28 - 32 Alfred Street
Belfast, BT2 8EN

T: 028 9025 1600
F: 028 9025 1663
E: info@consumercouncil.org.uk
W: www.consumercouncil.org.uk