



busfair?

The North East Regional Youth Assembly (NERYA) Bus Buddies campaign for fair bus charges in the North East.



Executive Summary

March 2007

Contents

| | Page |
|------------------------|------|
| Foreword..... | 3 |
| Executive summary..... | 4 |
| Thanks..... | 9 |

Foreword

I am proud to be a member of a Labour Government which has been elected not once but three times on the basis of our clear vision of a country that offered an equality of opportunities, in education and employment in particular. But equality in educational opportunities can only be translated into reality if young people are able to attend the college of their choice, and study the subject of their choice. And right now, the cost of public transport is proving to be a huge obstacle for some young people, so I was delighted to be able to support the North East Regional Youth Assembly Bus Buddies campaign for fair regional concessionary bus travel.

I want all young people in the region to be able to take advantage of every educational and training opportunity available – it's good

for them, for their personal growth and enrichment, but it's also good for the region and the region's future prosperity to have a well-educated and well-trained workforce. What we have in the region right now is a postcode lottery on public transport, and I shall continue to press the Government and regional agencies to work towards the introduction of a region-wide concessionary travel scheme for 14 to 19 year olds in full time or accredited training.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate members of the North East Regional Youth Assembly for their commitment and determination to translate their concerns into positive and focussed action, and I wish the campaign every success.



David Clelland MP

Executive Summary

Bus Fair Campaign

The North East Regional Youth Assembly Bus Buddies launched a campaign in December 2006 for *fair regional concessionary bus travel for young people aged 14-19 in full time education or accredited training across the North East*. The Bus Buddies asked young people in the North East to support their campaign and canvassed support by sending postcards to schools, colleges and youth groups in the region. Young people were then able to sign the postcards to say they support the campaign, and send them back to the group by Freepost. They also indicated who they wanted the Bus Buddies to lobby their behalf i.e. their MP, local councillor, the Learning Skills Council, their school, college or training provider about the issue.

Young People and Buses

The Bus Buddies believe that public transport is a huge concern for young people and has a massive impact on the choices they make about their lives. It affects their decisions about where they study, employment opportunities, their social life or involvement in other groups and activities. Young people often feel they fail to be heard when voicing their opinions about the service they receive as well as receiving an un-fair deal when it comes to the price they have to pay to travel on buses. The Bus Buddies have highlighted the fact that there is no consistency between different local authority areas on how concessionary fares work – for example age limits differ from one local authority to the next and young people of certain ages can be asked to pay extra by the bus driver if they cross an authority boundary on the bus.

Background information about the group

NERYA (the North East Regional Youth Assembly) is a forum for young people in the region to debate the issues that affect them. It is open to any young person in the North East aged over 11 years old. The young people take part in monthly meetings; events to find out what young people think and sub-groups that work on themes throughout the year. NERYA aims to provide young people with the opportunity to meet regional decision makers and service providers and tell them what matters to them in a way they feel comfortable with. NERYA is supported by the **Regional Youth Work Unit - North East**, which is involved in developing and maintaining a range of initiatives aimed at meeting the needs of children and young people across the region.

The **Bus Buddies** is a group of 15 young people aged between 14 and 22. They are a sub-group of NERYA and the group creates opportunities for young people to have conversations with bus operators in the region as well as other regional decision makers such as Government Office North East, the Association of North East Councils and the North East Regional Bus Forum. Drawn from across the region, they volunteered, from October 2005, to find out how well bus services meet the needs of young people, and advocate on behalf of young people on public transport issues.

The North East Regional Bus Forum's members include representatives from the three main bus operators (Arriva, Stagecoach, and Go-Ahead), the Regional Development Agency, Local Authorities, the Police, the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive (NEXUS), and the Government Office. Forum members made it clear that they wanted to hear young people's views, but were not sure how to get them. The Bus Buddies offered to help them to solve this problem by recording interviews

with young people during their two day journey across the region's rural and urban areas, from Alnwick to Middlesbrough. The Buddies did this by travelling the length of the region, by bus. The results of their work – a filmed presentation – are available on DVD.

The Bus Buddies group met with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, **Gillian Merron**, at the Department of Transport in London in August 2006. The Minister is responsible for local, regional and sub-regional transport, and inclusion on public transport, and the group lobbied her on the issue of helping more young people use public transport by introducing cheaper concessionary fares. Gillian invited the group to have a dialogue with DfT in order that young people's views are heard. The Bus Buddies also raised their concerns with **Chris Grayling MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Transport**.

The Bus Buddies attended the Our North East event at Government Office for the North East in August 2006 where the group secured pledges to support young people's aspirations for a fair regional concessionary fares scheme. The work of the Bus Buddies was also recognised in two awards; Leading the Way and the People's Choice award voted for by young people.

Responses to the campaign

The Bus Buddies met MP for Tyne Bridge, **David Clelland**, and the Chair of the Passenger Transport Authority, **Cllr David Wood** as part of their campaign. They met on Monday, February 19th at Nexus House, Newcastle, to hand over the collection of postcards and discuss the issue.

David Clelland, who is MP for Tyne Bridge constituency and a member of the Government's Transport Select Committee, said: "I welcome this research amongst students and the information it provides. I believe their recommendations will open up new opportunities for accessing education which is important for the economic growth of the region."

Cllr David Wood said: "We welcome any information that will help us improve public transport for students. We look forward to the group presenting their final evaluation to the PTA in March."

Since meeting with the group David Clelland has presented an Early Day Motion at the House of Commons supported by MPs from across the region and beyond, calling for a regional concessionary travel scheme for young people in full-time education or accredited training. David is urging the Government to back the campaign and work towards such a scheme as well as congratulate the North East Regional Youth Assembly Bus Buddies on its campaign.

Councillor David Wood has also invited the Bus Buddies to present the results of their campaign to the Passenger Transport Authority at a meeting in March.

The results of the campaign

1570 people signed up to the campaign for a regional concessionary bus fare scheme for young people 14-19 in full time education or accredited education in the North East.

Figure 1: Breakdown in age of the campaign supporters

| Age | No. of Campaigners |
|----------|--------------------|
| Under 12 | 17 |
| 12 | 36 |
| 13 | 109 |
| 14 | 310 |
| 15 | 339 |
| 16 | 382 |
| 17 | 185 |
| 18 | 76 |
| 19 | 32 |
| 20 | 14 |
| Over 20 | 44 |
| Unknown | 26 |

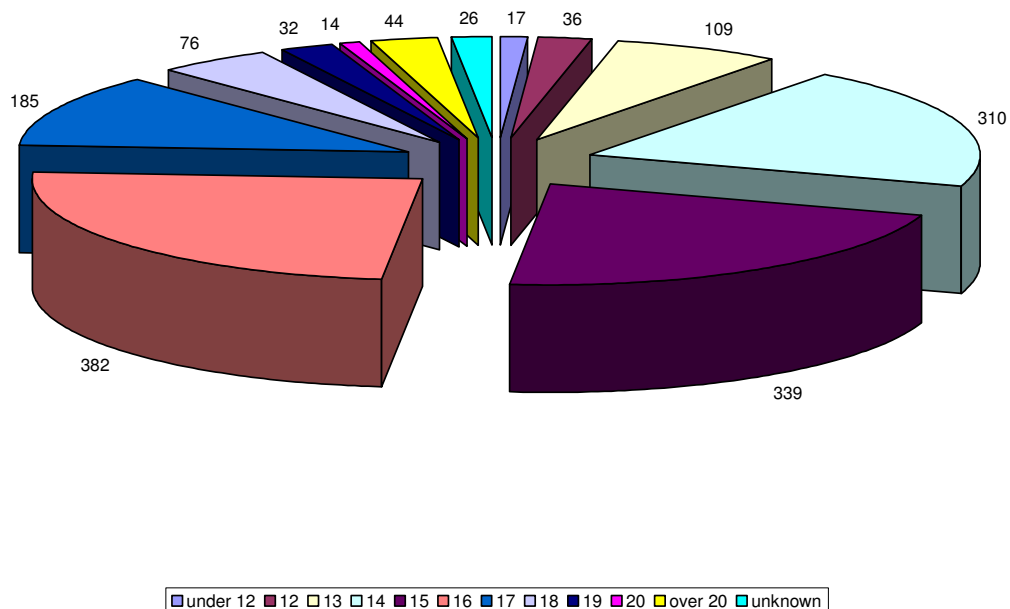


Figure 2: Breakdown in local authority area of where the campaign supporters live or go to school, work or training

| Local Authority Area | No. of Campaigners |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| County Durham | 296 |
| Darlington | 261 |
| Gateshead | 120 |
| Hartlepool | 5 |
| Middlesbrough | 148 |
| Newcastle | 208 |
| North Tyneside | 48 |
| North Yorkshire | 49 |
| Northumberland | 98 |
| Redcar | 1 |
| South Tyneside | 34 |
| Stockton on Tees | 111 |
| Sunderland | 191 |

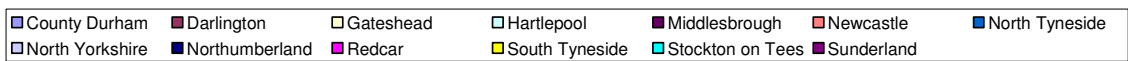
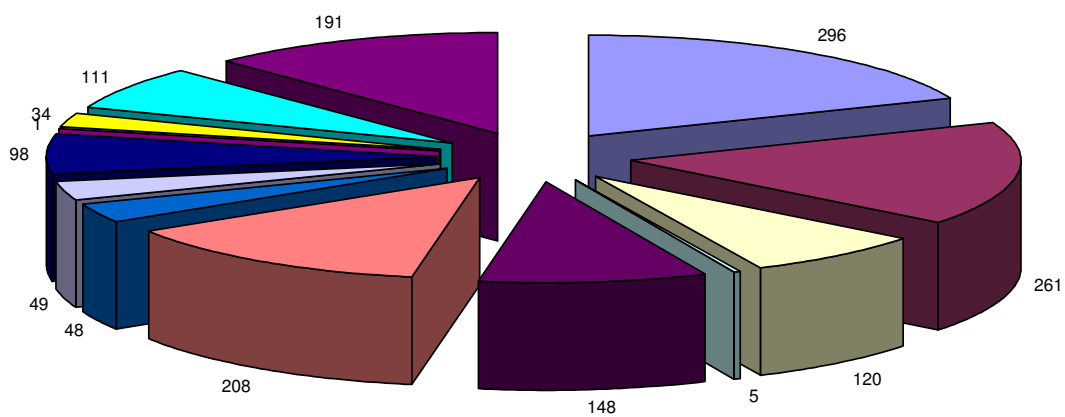
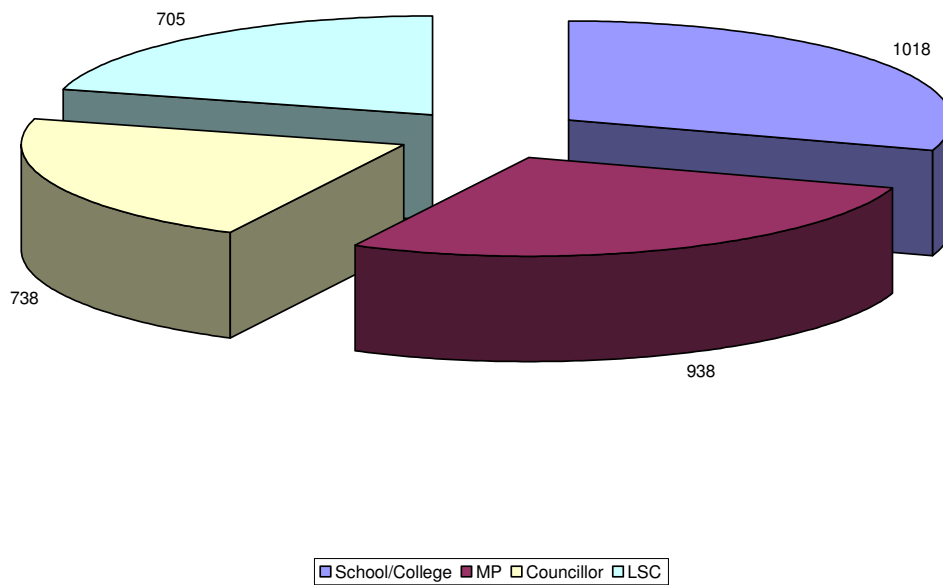


Figure 3: Breakdown of people who the campaign supporters asked the Bus Buddies to lobby on their behalf

| Lobby | No. of Campaigners |
|----------------|--------------------|
| School/College | 1018 |
| MP | 938 |
| Councillor | 738 |
| LSC | 705 |



Thanks

The Bus Buddies would like to thank the following people for their ongoing support and funding contributions:

Regional Youth Work Unit - North East

Government Office North East

The North East Regional Bus Forum

Association of North East Councils

Nexus

David Clelland MP

David Wood, Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority

Youth Services, schools and colleges in the North East

We'd also like to say a big thank you to all those individuals and organisations who distributed postcards on our behalf and of course to all of the young people who have supported this campaign!

For further information about the work of the Bus Buddies please contact:

Regional Youth Work Unit
Design Works
William Street
Felling
Gateshead
NE10 OJP

Telephone: 0191 440 4410

Email: mail@rywu.org.uk
busbuddies@rywu.org.uk

Website: www.rywu.org.uk
www.myspace.com/nerya
www.nerya.com/neryabusbuddies