

Consultation on planned changes to Nexus bus services in North Tyneside [51A, 59/359 & W3] February 2019

Introduction

The current Nexus funded services 59/359 were introduced in March 2014. Service 59 provides commuter links at peak times between Backworth and Whitley Bay via Moorside, Northumberland Park Interchange, Shiremoor, Murton Village and North Tyneside Hospital. Between peak times, the bus is used to provide service 359 – which gives hourly links between Backworth and Marden Estate via Moorside, Northumberland Park Interchange, West Allotment, Murton Village, North Tyneside Hospital and Morrisons at Preston Grange. The main reason for introducing the 359 was to provide direct daytime links between West Allotment/Marden Estate and North Tyneside Hospital, to satisfy requests made to us.

Services 59/359 carry on average 360 passengers per week (split 23 boardings per day on the 59 and 37 per day on the 359). The services run Monday – Saturday daytime between 07.30am – 6.30pm. The average number of passengers per hour is 5.5 and subsidy per passenger is estimated at £4.52 (which exceeds our £3 threshold used to determine the value for money being provided for all of our services). The current contract to operate the service is held by Central Taxis of Gateshead and is due to end in early September 2019.

Why are we considering changes to these services?

We regularly review all secured services to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the local community and provide good value for money for the local taxpayer. A recent review of the 59/359 contract has identified that the current level of patronage is not sustainable and we consider that the resource could be better deployed. A summary of our planned changes is set out below.

What changes are we proposing?

The peak service 59 almost entirely duplicates Arriva's service 54, with our bus in some cases operating just a few minutes in front of the commercial service. This effectively means that we are using public subsidy to replicate links already being provided by a private operator. This is not good use of public funds and it also undermines the commercial viability of the 54 which could place greater pressure on our limited funding, longer term. We therefore propose that the 59 service is withdrawn and passengers would be advised to use the Arriva service instead.

The off-peak 359 service was introduced to provide improved connections to North Tyneside Hospital, in particular from West Allotment and Marden Estate. Our data indicates that an average of just 2 passengers per day board the service in West Allotment (with the majority of these trips to Northumberland Park Metro) and an average of just 5 passengers per day use the service from Marden Estate (with the vast majority of these trips to/from the Morrison's store at Preston Grange). Like the 59, the 359 route also has a considerable amount of overlap with the Arriva service 54. We therefore propose that the 359 service is withdrawn.

The bus currently used on the 59/359 would then instead be used to provide an extension to the current 51A service (Newcastle – Coast Road – Holystone Park). The new extension would operate between Holystone Park and Whitley Bay via Northumberland Park Interchange, Heritage Green, Backworth North, Castle Park, Backworth Village, Earsdon Village, West Monkseaton Sainsbury’s, West Monkseaton and Monkseaton. The new extension would operate hourly Monday - Saturday, between 7.30am – 7.00pm.

The proposed withdrawal of the 59/359 and introduction of new extension to service 51A would leave Murton Village without access to any bus service. We therefore propose that the W3 would be revised to additionally serve Murton Village Monday - Saturday (9.30am – 3.00pm).

Impact of proposed changes

Backworth Shrewsbury Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hourly link to Northumberland Park Metro as now - Direct link to North Tyneside Hospital on Arriva 54 - New hourly daytime link to Newcastle city centre, Benton ASDA & West Monkseaton Sainsbury’s - Loss of direct link to Morrison’s at Preston Grange - New route would use slightly bigger buses and therefore serve new bus stops on Church Road instead of current Hail & Ride arrangements on Shrewsbury Drive
Castle Park Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hourly link to Northumberland Park Metro as now - Direct link to North Tyneside Hospital on Arriva 54 - New hourly daytime link to Benton ASDA & West Monkseaton Sainsbury’s - Loss of direct link to Morrison’s at Preston Grange - New route would use slightly bigger buses and therefore serve bus stops on Killingworth Lane/Backworth Lane instead of current Hail & Ride arrangements on Killingworth Avenue
Earsdon Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A more frequent service to Newcastle city centre, Benton ASDA, West Monkseaton Sainsbury’s and Whitley Bay during the daytime
Holystone Park/Scaffold Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New hourly daytime link to/from Northumberland Park Metro, West Monkseaton Sainsbury’s and Whitley Bay
Heritage Green/Backworth North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New hourly direct link to Benton ASDA/Newcastle city centre from Heritage Green/Backworth North
Marden Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of direct link to North Tyneside Hospital (trips still possible with interchange between frequent services 1/1A/306 & 11/54/308/309 in Whitley Bay town centre) - Loss of direct link to Morrison’s from part of Estate (direct link still available for majority of passengers using Arriva service 306)

Moorside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of direct link to Morrison's at Preston Grange - Arriva service 54 would continue to provide frequent/direct links to Newcastle city centre, South Gosforth, Quorum, Killingworth, Northumberland Park, Shiremoor, North Tyneside Hospital and Whitley Bay (including Morrison's store on Hillheads Road)
Murton Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hourly service to/from Whitley Bay Metro and North Tyneside Hospital would be provided by revised W3 which would additionally serve this area between 9.30am – 3.00pm only (Monday – Saturday) - Loss of direct link to Shiremoor & Northumberland Park Metro stations
Shiremoor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in trips to/from Whitley Bay at peak times - Arriva services 51,53 & 54 would continue to provide direct links to Newcastle city centre, South Gosforth, Quorum, Killingworth, Northumberland Park, North Tyneside Hospital, North Shields and Whitley Bay (including Morrison's store on Hillheads Road)
West Allotment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of direct link to North Tyneside Hospital (trips still possible with interchange between services 53 – 54/309 in New York)
West Monkseaton/ Monkseaton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A more frequent service to/from Whitley Bay - New hourly direct link to Benton ASDA/Newcastle city centre

Your views

Before we make any changes, we would first like to know what you think about our plans. A public consultation on our proposed extension to service 51A (including changes to the 59/359 and W3) will run from Monday 25th February – Friday 5th April 2019.

You can e-mail us with your questions or comments at busservicecontracts@nexus.org.uk

Alternatively, you can write to us at Bus Consultations, Network Planning, Nexus House, St James' Boulevard, NE1 4AX

Subject to feedback received during the consultation, any changes to the service are then planned to be introduced from September 2019.