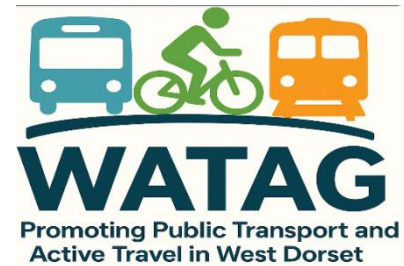


West Dorset Western Area Transport Action Group (WATAG)



Response to Public Survey to assess public support for improvements to Bus Services between Bridport and Dorchester.

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1. Introduction & Background

The aim of this survey is to better understand the need for improved frequencies on the X51 bus service between Bridport and Dorchester.

The X51 serves the route from Axminster to Weymouth via Lyme Regis, Bridport and (via the A35) to Dorchester, thence to Weymouth. It currently runs at approximately two-hourly intervals from morning until early evening 6 days per week. The last buses currently depart Bridport (Eastbound) at 19.10 and Dorchester (Westbound) at 18.57. There is no service at all on Sundays between mid-September and mid-May, a period of 8 months.

Until 2017, the service ran hourly between Bridport and Dorchester but was reduced with the introduction of the Autumn/Winter timetable that year.

Currently, the X53 service operates along the same route between Axminster, Lyme Regis and Bridport but then runs along the B3157 "coast road" between Bridport and Weymouth (and therefore does not serve Dorchester). This service also runs at 2 hourly intervals – thereby providing a service every hour between Axminster, Bridport and Weymouth, but not Dorchester.

Bridport is therefore connected to the County Town of Dorchester with buses at only two hourly intervals. There are no alternate rail or other public transport services available apart from travelling via Weymouth with greatly extended journey times.

Bridport has a growing population, currently circa 14,000. The Foundry Lea development of 750 homes will increase this by approximately 2000 from 2028.

Bridport has a small community hospital that does not provide full A&E services – the nearest facility being Dorchester.

Interestingly, Bridport is one of the largest town on the South Coast without a railway station – and with virtually no chance of re-instatement of a railway connection, must rely solely on bus transport. Dorchester has two railway stations, offering both east and northbound rail connectivity.

2. Aim of this survey

WATAG believe it is vital that better public transport links (by bus) to Dorchester are developed.

Public Transport connectivity from Bridport is generally poor – especially towards our County Town. The aim of this survey is therefore to understand whether there is a demand for more frequent bus services between Bridport and Dorchester.

It should be noted that bus services northwards from Bridport are also poor – with just 4 buses per day to Yeovil. However, this survey focuses purely on the Bridport-Dorchester corridor.

3. Methodology

WATAG developed this survey to assess the demand from the general public for better bus frequencies on the Bridport-Dorchester axis. We also asked what specific benefits people would see from more frequent daytime and evening services.

The survey ran from 15 May to 30 September 2026 and was initially marketed only in the Bridport area. By mid-summer, it was clear that there was also demand for better connectivity westbound from Dorchester towards Bridport, and our colleagues at DTAG (Dorchester Transport Action Group) also promoted the survey for 5 weeks between 24 August and 30 September – with very encouraging results – especially as Dorchester already enjoys excellent connectivity to the local hospital and two railway stations. We thank them for their support.

The survey was available both online and offline (paper copies available primarily at the Bridport Tourist Information Centre). Marketing was via WATAG and DTAG websites/mailling lists, Facebook, and Local Newspapers (Bridport News, etc).

4. Survey Results by Question

We received a total of 687 Responses

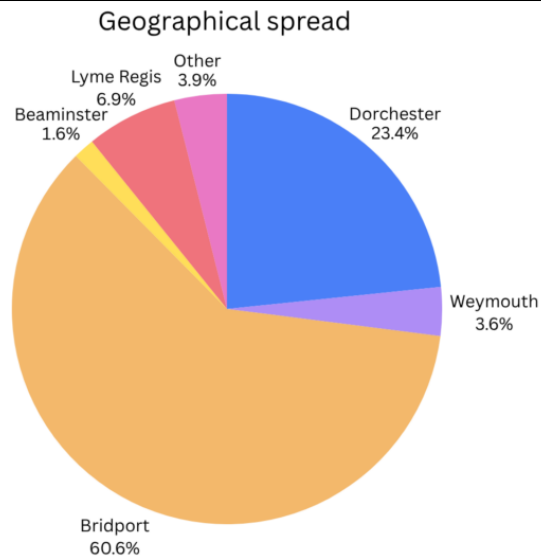
The Survey Responses below are divided into 3 parts:

- A. Geographical Spread of Responses
- B. Results/Feedback – Key Questions
- C. Results/Feedback – Other Questions

The following pages detail the responses by question.

Section 5 follows this data and details our conclusions

A. Geographical Spread of Responses

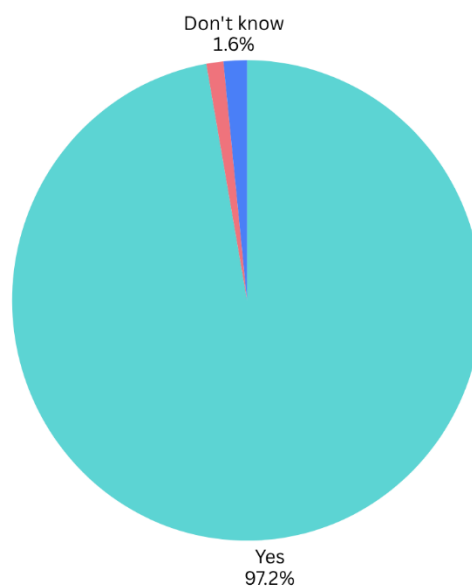


Commentary:

- Duration of Survey: 15 May – 30 September
- For Dorchester, the survey only ran between 24 August and 30 September – hence the percentage of respondents is somewhat lower than Bridport.

B. Results/Feedback – Key Questions

Would you like to see an improved service for the X51 bus

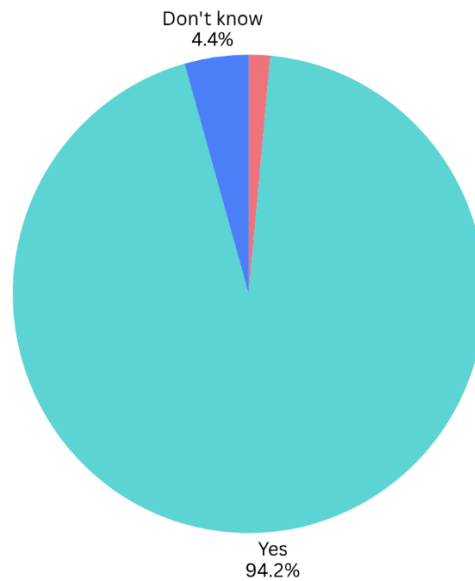


Commentary:

- Virtually unanimous support for improved services

B. Results/Feedback – Key Questions (Continued)

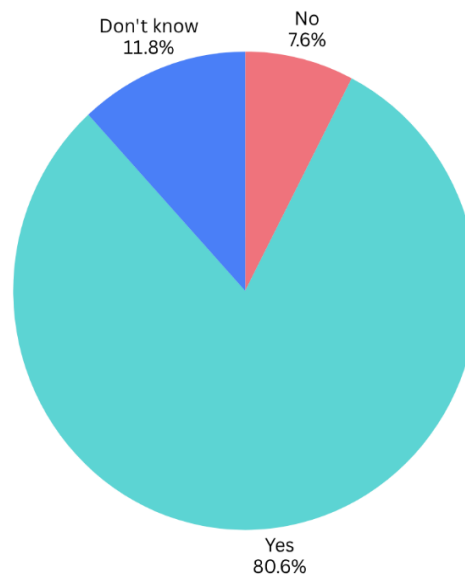
Would you use the X51 / more often if there was an improved frequency of service (i.e. hourly)?



Commentary:

- Very strong support for more frequent services (ie hourly)

Would you use the X51 / more often if they ran later in the evening?

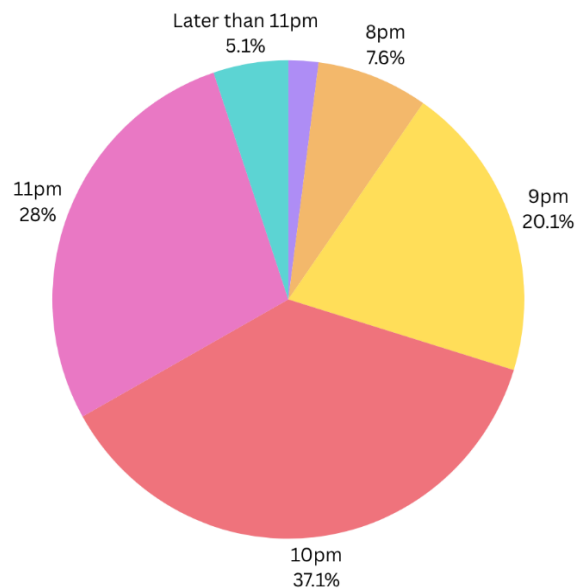


Commentary:

- Strong support for evening services

B. Results/Feedback – Key Questions (Continued)

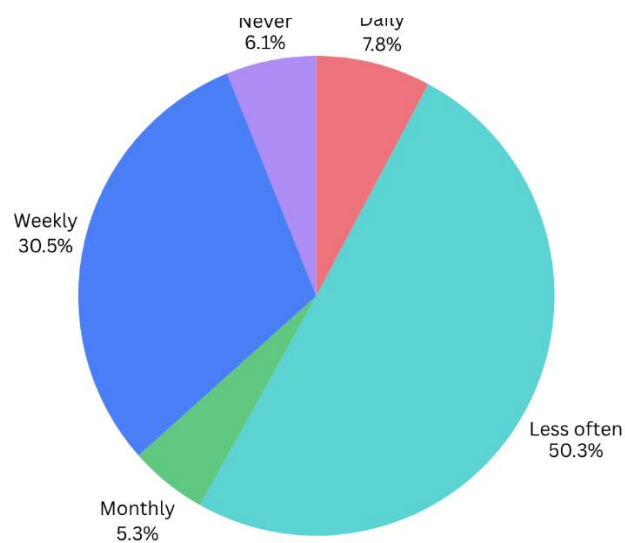
When do you think the last bus of the day should be?



Commentary:

- Strong support for later services –85% would prefer the last bus to depart no earlier than 9pm, and 65% 10pm or later
- Many comments relating to late evening rail arrivals (from London, Bournemouth, etc) to connect with buses

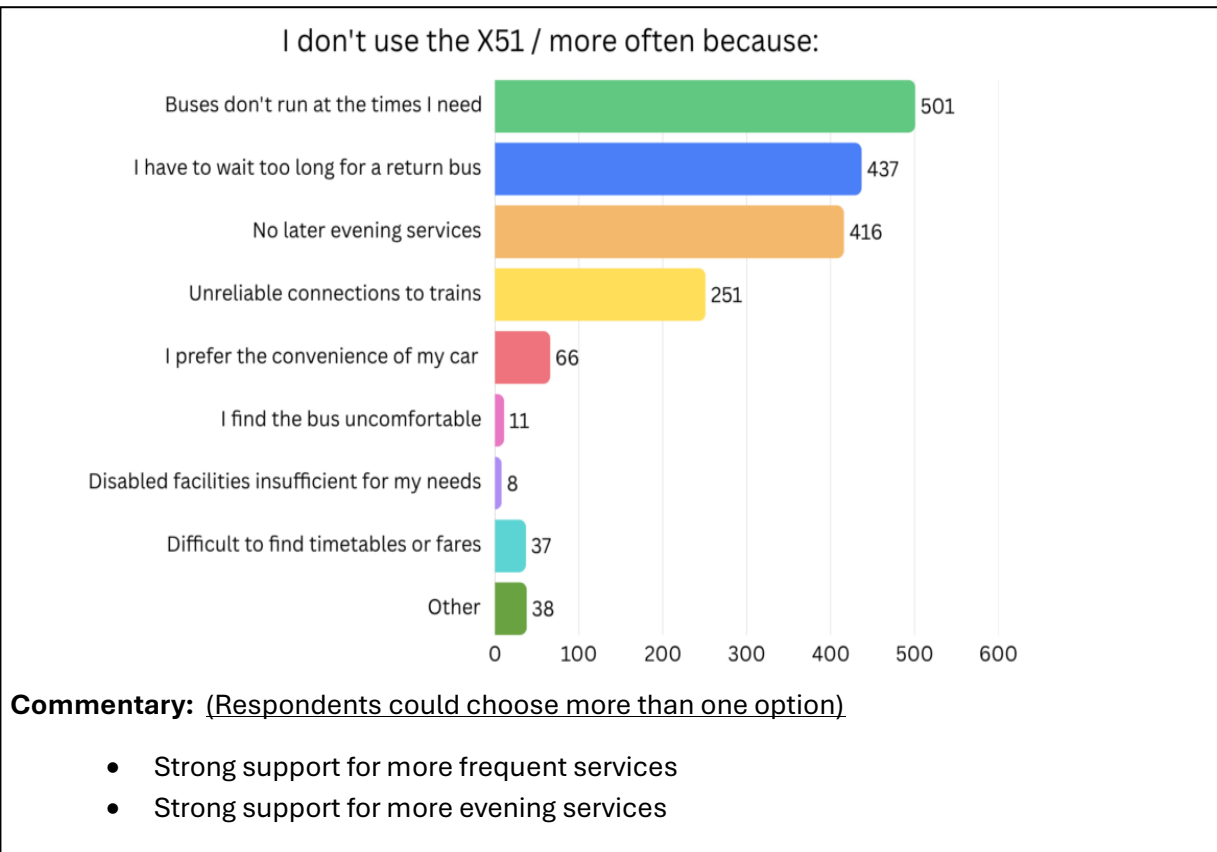
How often do you use the X51 ?



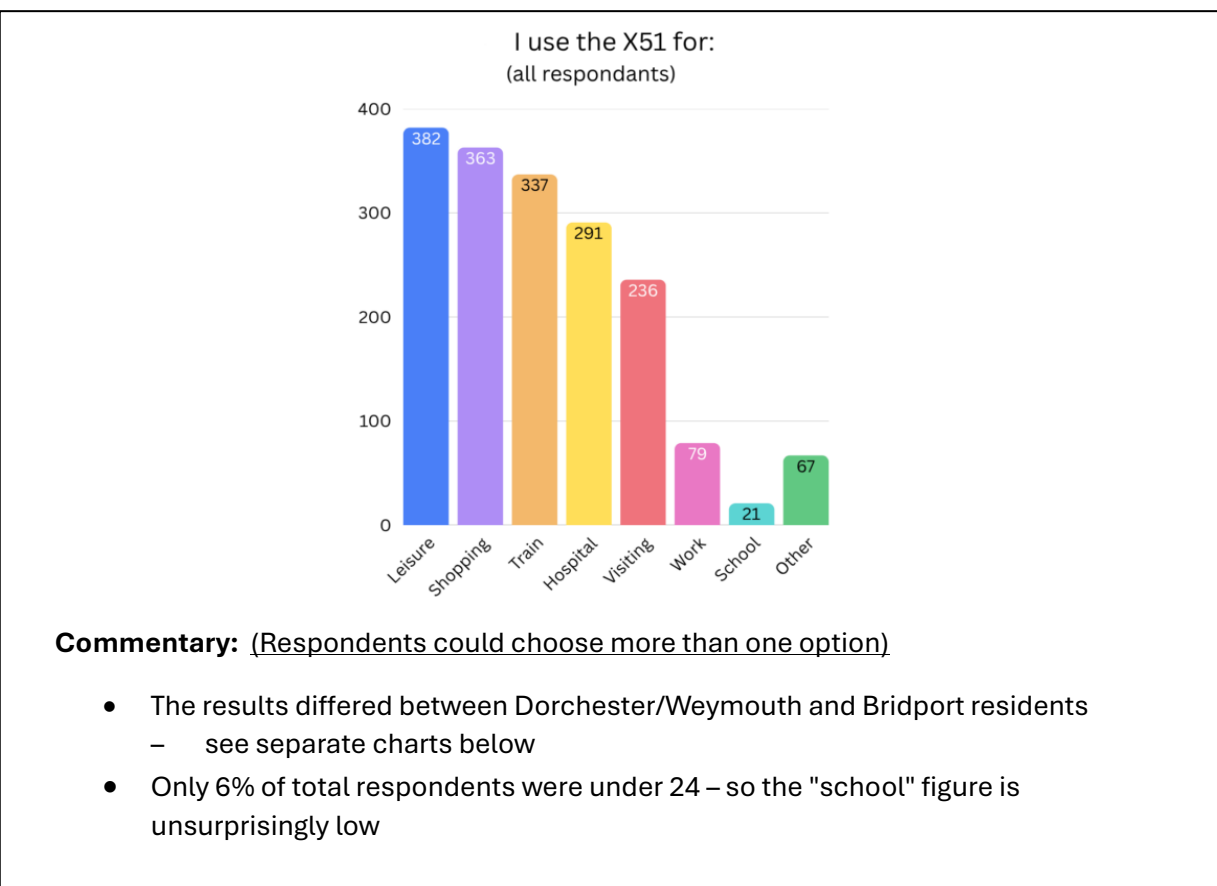
Commentary:

- Likely that existing bus users were more motivated to complete the survey than others

B. Results/Feedback – Key Questions (Continued)

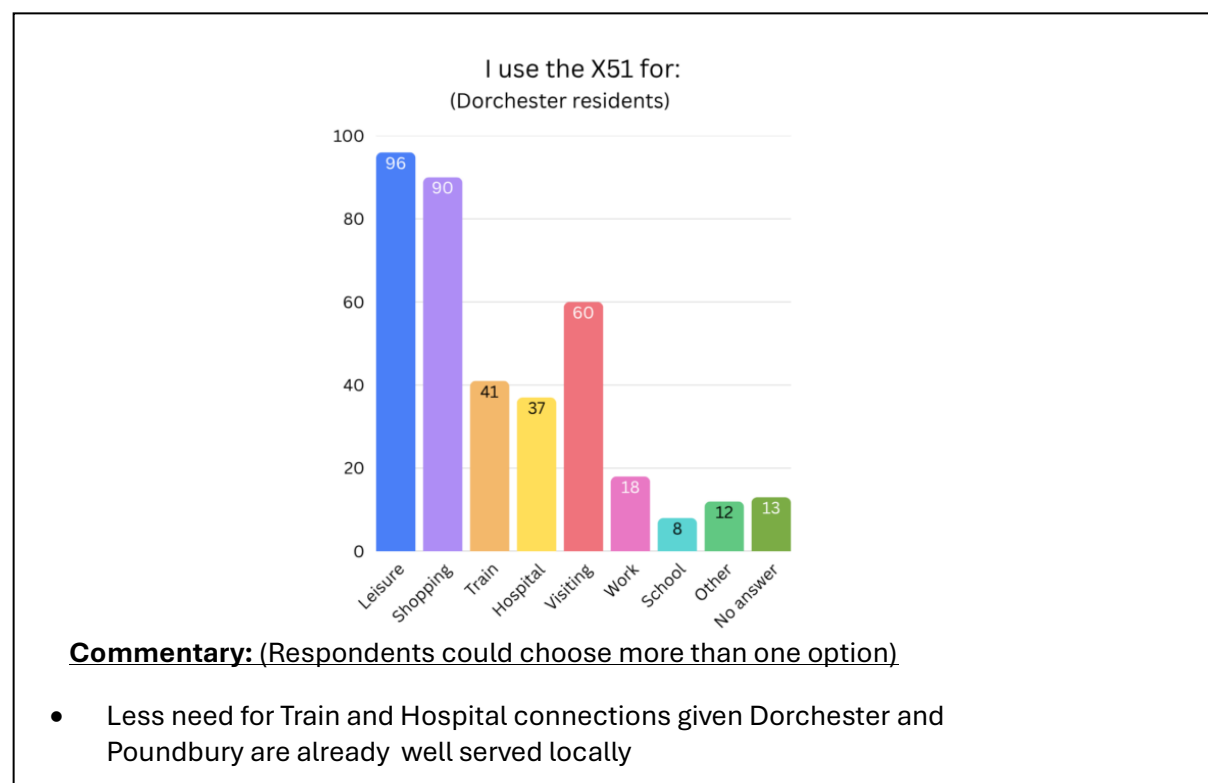
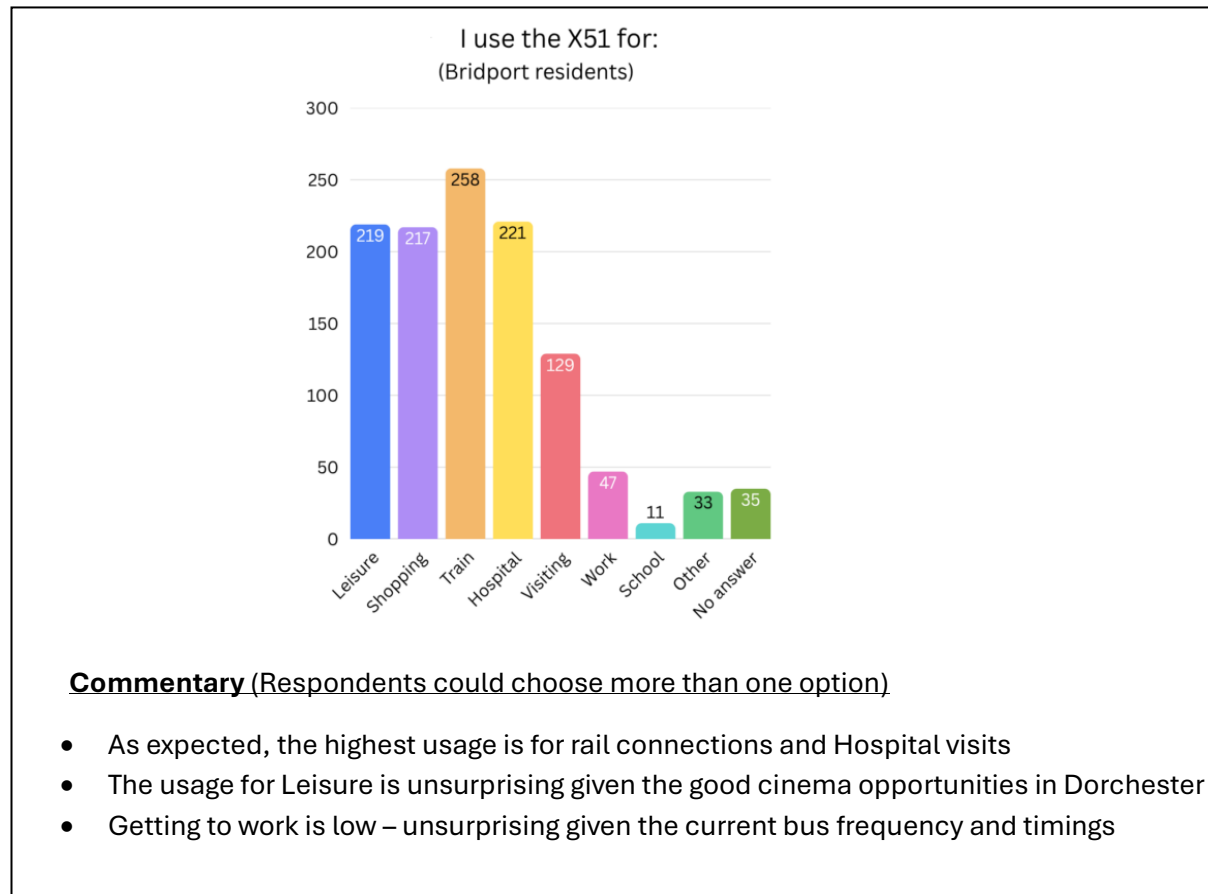


C. Results/Feedback – Other Questions



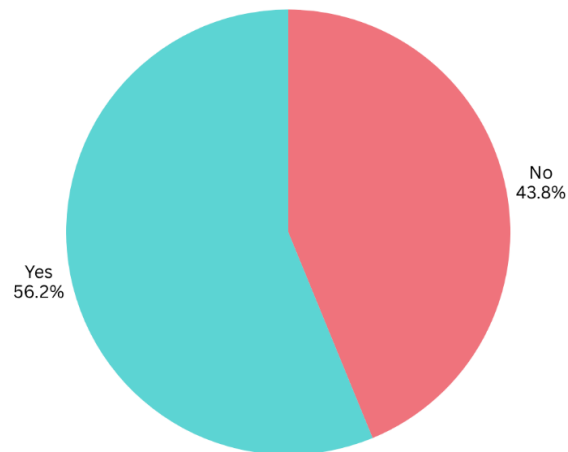
C. Results/Feedback – Other Questions (Continued)

Breakdown of previous response by Location (Dorchester and Bridport Only)



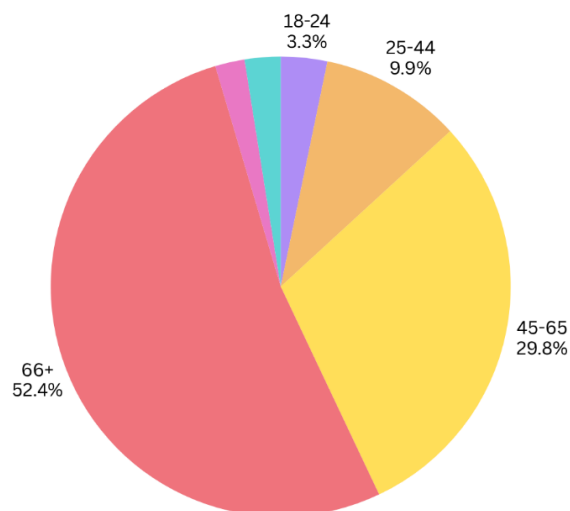
C. Results/Feedback – Other Questions (Continued)

Do you have a concessionary bus pass?



Commentary: Self Explanatory

What age group are you?

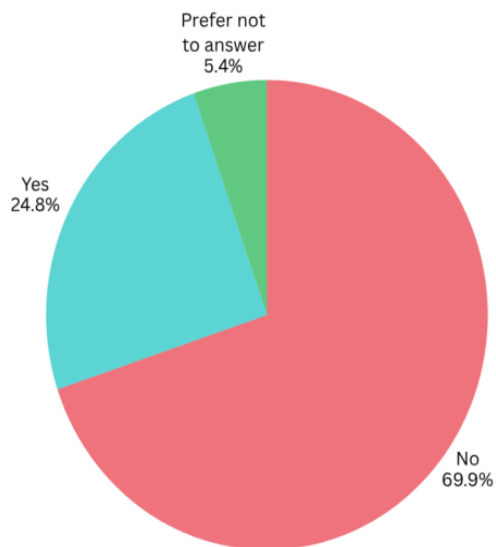


Commentary:

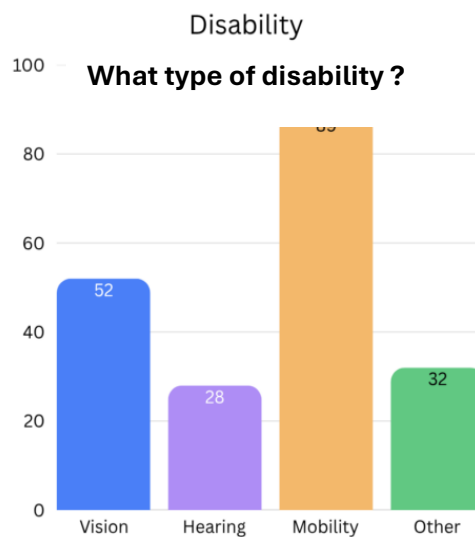
- As expected, more responses from the over 45's
- It is possible that the media used for the survey did not reach the younger generations

C. Results/Feedback – Other Questions (Continued)

Do you consider yourself affected by any physical or mental health conditions which can impact your travel?



Commentary: Self Explanatory



Commentary: (Respondents could choose more than one option)

201 responses for this question

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

We were delighted with the public response – 687 people completed the survey.

It is clear that there is strong public support for hourly services between Bridport and Dorchester both throughout the day – and into late evenings.

The report is not solely related to Bridport residents. Although the survey was initially aimed at understanding the demand for eastbound travel towards Dorchester, following residents feedback on poor connectivity to Dorchester Hospital and Dorchester South railway station, it became clear that demand was far more widespread. The desire for more options for both shopping and leisure facilities also featured strongly.

Therefore, from 24 August to 30 September, our colleagues at Dorchester Transport Action Group (DTAG) also promoted the survey. During that brief five week period, DTAG received 185 responses, with just 6 saying that they would not use the service if it ran more frequently. The prime reasons for likely usage westbound towards Bridport were leisure and shopping activities.

The strong support for later evening services – 90% would prefer the last bus to depart no earlier than 9pm – is consistent with the desire to use the bus for Leisure Activities. Taking into account the success of the Friday- Sunday LB1 service between Bridport and Lyme Regis (plus late return to Weymouth), this result is not surprising.

We are very pleased to see the higher levels of funding following Dorset Council's announcement of the seven-year plan to drive forward a complete transformation of transport services across the county - and this survey demonstrates substantial public support for more frequent bus services between Bridport and Dorchester, with a significant proportion of respondents indicating that they would use the X51 more frequently if improvements were introduced.

This survey therefore concludes with the following recommendations:

- 1. Re-introduce an hourly X51 service between Bridport and Dorchester throughout the day.***
- 2. Extend evening services, with the last departures no earlier than 21:00 and consideration of services until 22:00 or later.***
- 3. Improve rail connections at Dorchester South station, particularly for evening arrivals.***
- 4. Investigate the feasibility of Sunday services, while recognising that this survey did not directly assess Sunday demand.***

West Dorset Western Area Transport Action Group (WATAG)

October 2026

