Section 75 and Schedule 9

The Northern Ireland Act 1998

Bus and Rail Evening Service Adjustments

Equality Impact Assessment

Consultation Findings & Final Decision Report

Equality Impact Assessment

CONSULTATION FINDINGS & FINAL DECISION REPORT

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Bus and Rail Evening Service Adjustments

An Equality Impact Assessment

1: INTRODUCTION

Under the statutory duties contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo), trading as Translink, is required to undertake an equality impact assessment (EQIA) for each policy or group of related policies where screening had indicated that there may be significant implications in relation to one or more of the nine Section 75 categories.

If you have any queries about this document, and its availability in alternative formats (including large print, Braille, disk and audio cassette, and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English) then please contact:

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1.1 Section 75 and the Statutory Duties

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires each public authority, when carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons, namely

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, or sexual orientation.
- between men and women generally.
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without

Without prejudice to its obligations above, the public authority must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group.

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) approved the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo) Equality Scheme on 27 February 2013. The Scheme was reviewed and updated in 2021 and is currently undergoing its scheduled five-year review in line with ECNI guidance. Following approval of the Scheme, existing policies were screened to assess their impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations using the following criteria:

- Is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups?

- Is there any evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular policy issue?
- Is there an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity between the relevant different groups, either by altering the policy, or by working with others in government or in the larger community, in the context of the policy?
- Have consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that policies of that type create problems specific to any relevant group?

In line with the statutory duties outlined above, Translink completed a Section 75 screening exercise in respect of the proposed service changes and a separate screening exercise relating to the proposed Amendment to Translink Commercial Discounted Fares and Purchase of Singles Only Onboard NIR Services. Draft EQIAs were subsequently developed for both proposals and were subject to a public consultation exercise running from 8 July 2026 to 30 September 2026.

1.2 NITHCo and Translink

The Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo) is a public corporation established under the Transport Act (NI) 1967 to oversee the provision of public transport in Northern Ireland. NITHCo is accountable to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) which develops transport strategies for Northern Ireland and determines public transport policy. NITHCo's responsibilities include holding and managing property assets and the oversight, in terms of support, control and supervision, of its private limited subsidiary companies. It is expected to operate commercially and has a duty to operate in line with Ministerial policy.

The NITHCo Board is responsible for approving the strategies of its subsidiary companies (see below) and the annual Corporate Plan and for their proper governance. It meets on a regular basis to review the implementation of policy objectives and to monitor financial performance. NITHCo also owns a portfolio of property investments that generate funds for capital investment throughout the Group.

Translink is a trading name used by any one or more of the companies under the ultimate ownership of NITHCo. The Group comprises NITHCo as the parent company which owns Citybus Limited (which also trades as 'Metro') (NI009039), Flexibus Limited (NI006724), Ulsterbus Limited (NI006725), Translink (NI) Limited (NI006673), NIR Networks Limited (NI017638), Northern Ireland Railways Company Limited (NI006929) - each of which is registered in Northern Ireland and has its registered office at 22 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT2 7LX; and NIR Operations Limited (NI021091) - which is registered in Northern Ireland, with its registered office at Lanyon Place Station, 47 East Bridge Street, Belfast, BT1 3NR.

1.3 Background

Translink has recently outlined the significant financial pressures facing public transport, driven by rising costs and a reduction in funding in real terms. Based on the draft budget, Translink is currently projecting a material loss in the current financial year, which would leave the organisation in an unsustainable financial position.

As such, it is necessary to explore the potential for changes to service frequency in the absence of a viable budget allocation to address the growing cost base and funding challenges Translink face. On Mondays to Wednesdays the removal of last departures on the rail network and later departures across the bus network (circa from 10pm) could create necessary cost reduction for the organisation.

This approach reflects observed usage patterns, where early-week late evening services carry significantly lower patronage, while demand later in the week remains stronger. The intention is to better align service provision with demand while maintaining connectivity at the times it is most needed.

No substitution services will be provided for the withdrawn services.

No connecting bus or rail services would support the arrival of the last Enterprise service from Dublin. This service currently leaves Dublin at 2050hrs and arrives at 2258hrs. The policy intention is to mitigate the challenge to sustainability for the network and does not target any geographic area but affects all routes.

The only exceptional services not removed would be the 212 Belfast- L/Derry, X1, X2, X3, X4, 300 Airport and 600 Airport services, given that these are operating with significant demand and revenue which allows cross-subsidy of other loss-making routes.

2: CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

The Draft EQIA examined an array of data against the context of the financial pressures facing public transport, driven by rising costs and a reduction in funding in real terms. Translink continues to work closely with the Department for Infrastructure to champion greater investment in public transport, recognising its fundamental role in supporting social inclusion, economic participation and a greener future.

Additional cost saving measures explored by Translink have been included in this section following feedback received during the consultation process, including comments regarding the consideration of alternative financial measures. While these measures were not part of the consultation proposal, they provide relevant context on the financial pressures facing Translink and the range of options considered. Their inclusion does not alter the substance of the proposal on which consultees were asked to comment or the EQIA undertaken.

In order to assess whether or not these proposals would have an adverse impact on any of the nine Section 75 categories, and to determine if action could be taken to further promote good relations, the consultation responses and associated evidence were analysed. A summary of the key findings in relation to available data and research is provided below.

Religious Belief

Census 2021 data for Northern Ireland provides information on the distribution of religious belief across geographic areas served by the bus and rail network. However, there is no direct evidence linking religious belief to patterns of public transport use, particularly in relation to late evening bus and rail services. It is recognised that some individuals may travel for midweek religious activities; however, in the absence of transport data, impacts have been assessed on a geographic basis as the change proposed is network wide. No differential impact has been identified on the basis of religious belief.

Data from the 2023 Travel Survey for Northern Ireland shows there are no real differences between Protestants and Catholics when considering the percentage of journeys by public transport (Catholic 2%, Protestant 4%). Comparing these groups with those who are of other/no religion, the percentage of journeys by public transport is similar comparing those of other/no religion (6%) to Protestants (4%) but it is higher for those of other/no religion (6%) compared to Catholics (2%).

Political Opinion

Census 2021 provides information on national identity and community background; however, there is no available evidence linking political opinion to public transport usage or reliance on late evening bus or rail services. Alterations have been proposed on a geographic basis only. No differential impact has been identified for this category.

Racial / Ethnic Group

Census 2021 data indicates increasing ethnic diversity within Northern Ireland, including within urban centres.

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that there is a high degree of labour market segmentation among ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland, with many migrant groups particularly people from Eastern European backgrounds, concentrated in lower-paid sectors of employment. However there is currently limited evidence linking these employment patterns to public a transport usage.

Age

Census 2021 confirms an ageing population alongside significant numbers of younger people in education and employment. Evidence from the Equality Commission's research shows that younger people aged 16–29 (48%) and older people aged 65+ (45%) are significantly more likely to rely on public transport compared to middle age groups.

Additionally, a proportion of older people do not have access to a private vehicle. This indicates that both younger and older age groups have a higher dependency on public transport. The removal of late evening bus and rail services may therefore disproportionately affect these groups, particularly in relation to access to employment, education/higher education and services.

Ticketing data shows 47.8% rail tickets sold after 10pm in the last financial year are from customers in 'age-related' or 'disability-related' categories.

Ticketing data shows 53% bus tickets sold after 10pm in the last financial year are from customers in 'age-related' or 'disability-related' categories.

The Travel Survey outlines that the 0-24 age group makes a higher percentage of their journeys by public transport (8%) than the 25-59 age group (3%) and the 60+ age group (4%).

Children and young people make the majority of their public transport trips by bus, to get to school or college.

Marital Status

Census 2021 provides information on marital status; however, there is no evidence to suggest that marital status in itself influences patterns of public transport use or reliance on late evening bus or rail services. There is insufficient evidence to determine whether a differential impact exists for this category. No specific impacts have been identified through the evidence available, but the lack of data limits the assessment

Sexual Orientation

Census 2021 included data on sexual orientation for the first time; however, there is no available evidence linking sexual orientation to transport usage patterns or reliance on late evening bus or rail services. In line with best practice, it is acknowledged that safety and confidence in public transport may be relevant considerations for some individuals. There is insufficient evidence to determine whether a differential impact exists for this category. No specific impacts have been identified through the evidence available, but the lack of data limits the assessment.

Men & Women Generally

Census 2021 provides baseline population data by gender but does not include transport-specific behavioural data. Evidence from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Continuous Household Survey indicates that the majority of respondents (approximately 95%) feel either “very safe” or “fairly safe” when using public transport. However, there is a measurable gender difference in perceived safety, with men more likely to report feeling safe than women (97% compared to 93%).

Additional passenger research undertaken by the CARD Group (March–September 2025) similarly indicates high overall perceptions of safety on board Translink services, with approximately 95% of passengers reporting that they feel safe or very safe.

While overall perceptions of safety are high, the consistent gender gap identified in survey data indicates that women experience lower perceived safety when using public transport. In the context of late evening bus and rail services, where travel occurs after dark and service frequency is reduced, this difference may become more pronounced. The removal of last bus and train services Monday to Wednesday may therefore disproportionately impact women, particularly where reduced service availability increases waiting times or limits travel options.

The Travel Survey for Northern Ireland 2023 showed there is no real difference in how frequently males and females use public transport: 26% of males and 27% of females said they travel by bus or train at least once a month.

Disability

Census 2021 indicates that approximately 24% of the population has a limiting long-term health problem or disability. Data also shows that individuals with disabilities are significantly more likely to have no access to a private vehicle (approximately 24% compared to 10% of those without disabilities).

Equality Commission research shows that disabled people are significantly more reliant on public transport (49% compared to 29% of non-disabled people) and are more likely to experience difficulties accessing it, including dissatisfaction with service frequency.

This demonstrates a higher reliance on public transport among disabled people. The removal of late evening bus and rail services may result in reduced accessibility and increased risk of

isolation, particularly where no suitable alternative transport options are available. This category is considered to be at higher risk of adverse impact.

The Travel Survey from 2023, outlines both those with a disability and those without a disability made 4% of their journeys by public transport.

Dependency

Census 2021 data identifies a substantial proportion of the population providing unpaid care, as well as households with dependent children. These groups may require flexible and reliable transport options, including in the evening, to meet caring responsibilities such as childcare, visiting dependants or attending appointments. The removal of late evening bus and rail services may reduce flexibility and increase reliance on more costly or less accessible alternatives. This may disproportionately affect those with caring responsibilities.

The remaining late evening bus and rail service may, in some circumstances, align with the conclusion of hospital visiting hours, which typically extend to approximately 8:30–9:00pm across Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland. (8:30pm for City Hospital). Where passengers are aware of the revised timetable in advance and are able to plan journeys accordingly, this service may provide an opportunity to complete return travel following evening visits. However, this alignment is dependent on precise timing, including journey times to and from hospital sites and access to the station. As such, while there is some potential benefit in terms of enabling planned return journeys, this does not fully mitigate the loss of service frequency or reduce the risk of missed connections or reduced flexibility associated with the removal of additional late evening services Monday to Wednesday.

2.1 Alternative Cost-Saving Measures Explored

In parallel with the development of the proposed service adjustments, Translink has continued to identify and implement a range of cost-saving and efficiency measures within its delegated authority. These measures have been pursued in an effort to reduce expenditure, improve operational efficiency and minimise the impact on customers wherever possible.
The options explored and/or implemented include:

Headcount Control Measures

- Recruitment restrictions and vacancy management across the organisation.
- Careful review of staffing requirements and prioritisation of business-critical roles.

Service Optimisation Measures

- Review of service delivery arrangements to identify operational efficiencies.
- Optimisation of timetables, vehicle utilisation and resource deployment where feasible.
- Measures aimed at maintaining safe and reliable services while reducing operational costs.

Project Prioritisation

- Deferral or re-phasing of selected projects and programmes where operationally appropriate.
- Review of discretionary expenditure and non-essential activities.
- Prioritisation of investments required to maintain safety, regulatory compliance and essential service delivery.

Revenue and Cost Reduction Targets

- Delivery of savings targets across business areas.
- Review and control of discretionary expenditure.
- Ongoing identification of opportunities to reduce operating costs without adversely affecting safety or service reliability.

Commercial Optimisation

- Measures to maximise commercial income and revenue generation opportunities.
- Review of commercial activities and assets to improve financial performance.
- Continued focus on maintaining and growing passenger demand where possible.

Operational Efficiencies

- Review of customer service, cleaning and support service arrangements to identify efficiencies while maintaining appropriate standards.
- Use of fuel management and hedging strategies, where appropriate, to mitigate cost increases and improve budget certainty.

Translink remains committed to providing safe, reliable and accessible public transport services and recognises the important role public transport plays in supporting social inclusion, accessibility, connectivity and modal shift across Northern Ireland. The measures outlined above demonstrate that a range of alternative options have been considered and pursued to address the significant financial pressures facing the organisation. However, despite these actions, further measures have been considered necessary to address the financial pressures.

3: CONSULTATION PROCESS

(For further information regarding consultation on the proposals, please refer to: **Public Consultation on fare and service changes | Translink**)

The consultation was accessible on Citizen Space (the Government's on-line consultation hub), and also featured on Translink's website, for a period of 12 weeks from 8 July 2026 to 30 September 2026.

Individuals and groups could respond to the consultation in a variety of ways:

• Via the survey on Citizen Space

• Via email to eveningservicesfeedback@translink.co.uk

• Via post upon request of a hardcopy

With regard to the EQIA itself, and in order to consult as widely as possible on the findings and preliminary recommendations, the following communication and engagement activities were undertaken:

- A press release was prepared and submitted to various media outlets;
- A copy of the draft EQIA was posted on the website;
- Individual consultation meetings were offered with representatives of particular interest groups;
- The report was made available, on request, in alternative formats.

The closing date for responses was 30th September 2026.

4: CONSULTATION FINDINGS

4.1 Profile of Survey Respondents

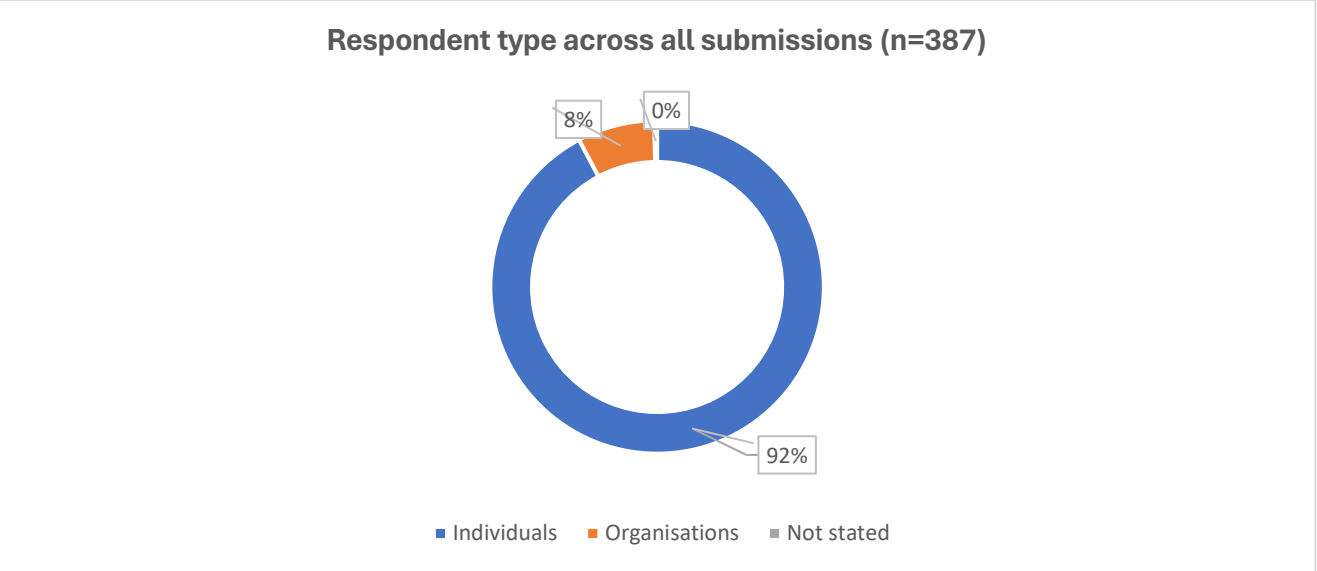
Translink invited responses to the consultation through a number of routes; through the survey hosted on the Government's online Citizen Space portal; by email or by post.

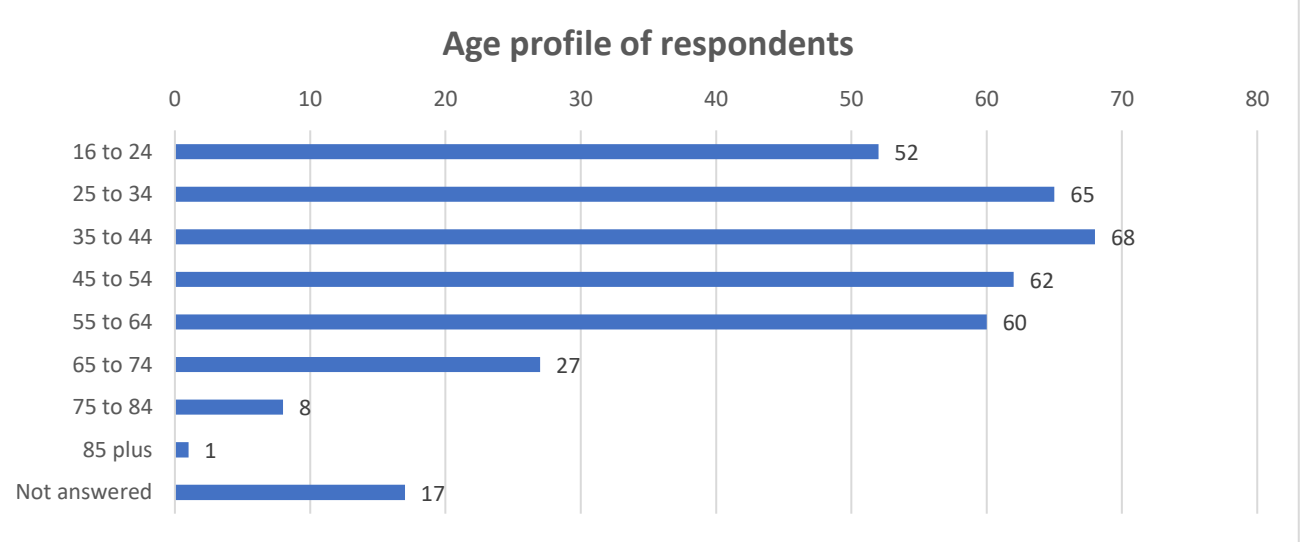
In total, the consultation received 1,517 responses from various sources, all of which have been analysed and feature in this document.
Each response received during the consultation was treated equally for the purposes of analysis. Individual survey submissions were counted as one response each, while responses submitted by organisations representing members or stakeholders were counted as a single organisational response, irrespective of the number of individuals they represented.

In addition to responses received through Citizen Space, Translink received a number of submissions by email. Where these submissions did not align with the structure of the consultation questionnaire, they were considered in full and subjected to thematic analysis. The themes identified through this process were integrated into the overall assessment of consultation responses and informed consideration of the issues raised during the consultation.

Channel	Responses
Citizen Space	360
Email	27
Union Submissions	1,130
Total	**1,517**

TOTAL RESPONSES	CITIZEN SPACE	EMAIL RESPONSES	INDIVIDUALS OVERALL
387	360	27	92.2%
All distinct submissions	Responses submitted online	Responses received by email	Share of all respondents





Summary:

- 387 submissions were analysed together: 360 online responses and 27 emails. Individuals accounted for 357 responses (92.2%).
- Essential journeys and protecting evening services was the dominant consolidated theme: 249 responses (64.3%).
- Equality, accessibility, safety and social participation appeared in 147 responses (38.0%).
- Affordability, alternatives and sustainable travel appeared in 139 (35.9%); network reliability, connectivity and geographic access in 132 (34.1%).
- Funding/public-service sustainability appeared in 98 (25.3%) and evidence, transparency and consultation trust in 96 (24.8%).
  1,130 campaign responses were analysed separately.

4.2 Methodology

The responses from Citizen Space were downloaded via a secure server and imported into Microsoft Excel. Email submissions were manually collated and categorised within Microsoft Excel. The datasets were then combined to create a single dataset for analysis. A thematic analysis approach was used to identify key issues, concerns and potential equality impacts raised by respondents. To support
data exploration and the identification of emerging themes Microsoft Co-Pilot was used to assist with summarising responses and grouping feedback into thematic categories. Specific prompts were used to summarise the datasets and organise into key themes. All outputs generated by Microsoft Co-Pilot were manually reviewed and cross-referenced against the raw data.

4.3 Key Themes and Findings

Across all 387 submissions, almost two-thirds discussed essential journeys or protecting evening services. Equality, accessibility, safety and participation formed the second broad theme, followed by affordability and realistic alternatives, and network reliability and geographic access. Funding and evidence concerns were also raised by around one-quarter of respondents. The consolidated findings indicate cumulative impacts: limited service, low income, disability, caring responsibilities and rural location. Respondents most commonly proposed retaining critical final journeys, assessing routes individually, publishing transparent route-level evidence, securing sustainable funding and providing safe, accessible and affordable alternatives before withdrawal. Theme counts overlap and represent mentions rather than votes.

Theme 1: Essential Journeys & Protecting Evening Services

This was the most prevalent theme, demonstrating that evening services support a broad range of essential and economically productive journeys. Respondents linked evening transport directly to late shifts, hospitality and venue work, education, healthcare, appointments and participation in cultural or sporting events. Many opposed withdrawal and instead called for services to be protected, maintained or improved. The main affected groups identified were shift and hospitality workers, students, healthcare users, event attendees, lower-paid works and passengers making onward connections.

Respondents recommended protecting journeys aligned with shift endings, education, hospitals and major venues, co-ordinating timetables with events and key connects and assessing social value alongside patronage. Suggestions were also made to trial targeted frequencies or smaller vehicles before withdrawal.

Theme 2: Equality, Accessibility, Safety & Social Participation

Respondents raised concerns about disability access, vulnerability, personal safety, isolation and reduced community participation. The availability of a safe and accessible final journey was viewed as central to independence.

Respondents recommended completing a fuller Section 75 and safety assessment, engaging with affected groups, retaining accessible late connections and ensuring any alternatives were affordable, available and accessible in practice.

Theme 3: Affordability, Alternatives & Sustainable Travel

This theme combined the immediate passenger impact of having no affordable alternative with the wider policy consequence of increased car dependence. Respondents highlighted that taxis, lifts or car ownership were often unavailable or unaffordable. There were concerns that service withdrawal could prevent travel or increase driving, congestion and emissions rather than provide a realistic alternative.

Recommendations included retaining critical services, providing funded alternatives where withdrawal is unavoidable and assessing actual taxi availability and costs as well as protecting affordable fares. Respondents also suggested assessing proposals against modal shift and climate goals.

Theme 4: Network Reliability, Connectivity & Geographic Access

Respondents argued that reductions would compound cancellations, low frequency and weak connections. Rural and westerns communicates described earlier last journeys, longer distance and little substitute provision while absent services were said to conceal unmet demand. Some said usage data understates need when services do not operate at useful times or fail to connect. Overall, network quality and rural inequality substantially overlap because limited frequency and connections are more consequential where distances are greater and alternatives fewer.

Recommendations included publishing route-level reliability and connection data, protecting final interchanges, improving disruption arrangements, assessing unmet demand, examining impacts geographically and coordinating with councils and community transport.

Theme 5: Funding and Public Service Sustainability

Through the responses, it was questioned whether short-term operating savings justified wider social and economic costs. There was a call for stable funding and efficiencies before service withdrawal and a recognition of public transport's value beyond direct fare revenue.

Respondents suggested securing public fundings, publishing savings assumptions, considerations around revenue protection and operational efficiencies, and measuring social and economic value.

Theme 6: Evidence, Transparency & Consultation Trust

There were concerns around the demand data provided in the draft consultation document alongside return journey treatment, unmet demand and consultation clarity, in particular, whether feedback would influence the decision. Respondents requested more transparent route-level evidence and impact assessment.

Respondents suggested publishing route-level passenger data, savings and equality evidence as well as explaining methodological limitations and reporting on how feedback changes decisions. There was also a suggestion to undertake targeted engagement where evidence is weak.

4.4 Potential Equality Impacts Identified by Theme

Theme	Potential Equality Impacts Raised through the Consultation
Theme 1: Essential Journeys & Protecting Evening Services	Age, Disability & Dependents: People with fewer transport options may face disproportionate loss of access to employment, education, healthcare and participate.
Theme 2: Equality, Accessibility, Safety & Social Participation	Disability & Age: These were the strongest categories impacted, but there are also material implications for Men & Women Generally, Dependents, Marital Status and potentially Sexual Orientation through safety and isolation effects.
Theme 3: Affordability, Alternatives & Sustainable Travel	Cross-cutting impacts compounded by Age, Disability, Caring responsibilities and rurality. People who are unable to drive may experience the greatest exclusion.
Theme 4: Network Reliability, Connectivity & Geographic Access	Age, Disability & Dependents: These categories may be more exposed to long waits and failed connections. Rurality is not a Section 75 category but can intensify protected group impacts.
Theme 5: Funding and Public Service Sustainability	Funding decisions may transfer costs and reduced access to protected groups and people least able to purchase alternatives.
Theme 6: Evidence, Transparency & Consultation Trust	All Section 75 categories: Aggregated or incomplete evidence can conceal differential effects. Limited comments should be recorded as an evidence gap rather than interpreted as no impact.

4.5 Campaign Responses

Campaign responses are when organisations (or individuals) coordinate responses across their membership or support base, often by suggesting a set of wording for respondents to use. Campaign responses are usually very similar or identical to each other and can help provide an indication of the strength of feeling on an issue.
For this consultation, campaign responses have been analysed separately to responses on Citizen Space and individual email submissions to ensure the breadth of views received are summarised effectively and efficiently.

There were standard campaign responses, where the respondents had simply added their name to the standard text provided by the campaign organiser without making any changes to it, and non-standard campaign responses, where the respondents had edited the standard text provided by the campaign organiser or added their own comments to it before submitting it. As the campaign responses covered both Translink consultations, they were treated as an overall response.

Submissions by Unite, GMB, TSSA and SIPTU members

There were approximately 1,130 total responses, of which 1,106 were the general 'standard' text. There were 24 non-standard responses where the respondents had added their own text.

A summary of the standard campaign response is outlined below:

- Attributes the proposals to chronic Executive underfunding rather than falling passenger demand.
- Opposes post 10pm cuts, the yLink reduction, removal of off-peak fares and promotional fare increases.
- Highlights disproportionate impacts on women, young people, older and disabled people, minority ethnic communities, LGBT+ people, students, families and low-income household
- Warns of lost connections, including late Enterprise arrivals at Belfast Grand Central Station, and wider economic, health, climate and congestion damage.
- Raises risks to the integrated publicly owned network, cross-subsidisation and long-term financial sustainability.
- Calls for withdrawal of the proposals and a properly funded multi-year settlement.

The 24 specific responses reemphasised the campaign position with concerns around employment and the night-time economy, post 10pm mobility, existing gaps in connectivity, and the absence of realistic alternatives. The combined message is not simply opposition to cuts. Respondents want a more reliable, better funded network that supports work, access, safety and modal shift.

4.6 Social Media Sentiment

There were a range of Social Media comments that, whilst not included in the overall analysis, were considered overall across the two consultations. The themes that emerged were in line with the themes identified within the consultation analysis:

Primary theme	Summary
Service availability & cuts	More routes, later/earlier services, Sunday coverage and protection from service reductions.
Fares, discounts & ticket fairness	Concern about youth discounts, worker pricing, free travel eligibility and restrictive tickets.
Governance, trust & management	Low confidence in leadership, responsiveness and operational management.
Spending, funding & priorities	Objections to branding/signage spend and debate over funding services and rail.
Reliability, timetables & connections	Services should run to timetable, connect sensibly and avoid recurring delays.
Communication & consultation	Key information is hard to find, and consultation is viewed as slow or unresponsive.
Accessibility, comfort & vehicle fit	Requests for smaller buses at quiet times and concerns about ride comfort.
Strategic transport policy	Support for reducing car dependence and making city-centre travel less car-focused.

5.0 POTENTIAL MITIGATION AND ACTIONS

It was recognised at the draft consultation stage that it will be difficult to mitigate the impact of the loss of evening services to those who rely on public transport Monday to Wednesday after 10pm. However, a number of mitigation measures relating to the eligibility proposals were identified through the initial screening process. These measures were intended to reduce potential adverse impacts and support passengers during implementation.

These include:

- Services proposed for removal are targeted on the days of lower demand, in order to protect services on busier evenings.
- Targeted communications beyond general journey planning: While general communications are proposed, these could be enhanced by targeted messaging for:
  - Hospital visitors and healthcare-related journeys
  - Students and educational institutions
  - Shift-based employers and key employment sectors
  - Key Disabled Peoples Organisations and the community they support
- Mitigations for staff impact will be through normal consultation channels prior to any implementation, where any changes would fall within normal staff contractual terms.

6.0 MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

Throughout the EQIA process, Translink has continued to monitor its financial position and work closely with the Department to address the financial pressures facing the organisation. While the proposed service adjustments remain under consideration, Translink continues to explore all available options to avoid their implementation and remains committed to identifying alternative solutions where possible.

Translink recognises the importance of monitoring the actual impacts of any changes implemented as a result of these proposals. Should the proposals proceed, Translink will undertake ongoing monitoring to assess whether any differential impacts arise for Section 75 groups that were not anticipated, or whether identified impacts are greater than expected. Monitoring will include:

- Analysis of customer feedback, complaints and compliments received through established customer contact channels.
- Review of ticket sales, passenger journey and travel pattern data, where available, to identify any notable changes in usage by customer groups.
- Engagement with customers and representative organisations, including those representing Section 75 groups, to understand lived experiences and emerging issues.
- Feedback gathered through Translink's customer engagement activities, including station-based engagement, customer panels, surveys and consultation exercises where appropriate.

- Ongoing liaison with employee networks, community organisations, disability groups and other stakeholders to identify any unintended consequences.
- Consideration of any equality-related issues raised through media coverage, correspondence, elected representatives or advocacy groups.

The findings from this monitoring will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and will inform any mitigating actions, adjustments to implementation arrangements, or future policy development as required.

7.0 FINAL DECISION

Having considered the consultation responses, equality evidence and financial position, Translink have concluded that the that the proposed reductions to late evening bus services will not proceed. This represents a departure from the consultation proposal and reflects the consideration given to the consultation evidence and equality impacts identified. The proposed reductions to late evening rail services will proceed. While implementation has been deferred until April 2027, the nature and extent of the service changes remain as assessed within this EQIA. The consultation evidence and equality assessment have therefore informed the final decision, and no new equality impacts have been identified arising from the revised implementation date.

The decision reflects a proportionate balance between the need to address the continuing financial pressures and the equality, accessibility and connectivity impacts identified through the EQIA. Cost controls and other efficiencies have improved the immediate financial position sufficiently to retain the late evening bus network, thereby avoiding the potential adverse impacts associated with withdrawing final evening bus journeys. Retention of the wider bus network also maintains greater geographic coverage and may provide an alternative travel option for some passengers affected by the late evening rail service reductions.

The rationale for proceeding with the late evening rail reductions is that further recurring savings remain necessary to support the financial sustainability of the network, notwithstanding the efficiencies already secured. The affected services operate from Monday to Wednesday, when late evening rail demand is comparatively lower, allowing savings to be targeted at the least used periods while protecting late evening services later in the week, when demand is stronger. Deferring implementation until April 2027 provides additional time for operational planning, staff engagement and clear advance communication with passengers.

It is recognised that the late evening rail reductions may nevertheless give rise to adverse impacts, particularly for passengers for whom there is no realistic alternative, and that these impacts cannot be fully mitigated. On balance, the decision was considered justified because it delivers necessary financial and operational benefits, targets reductions on lower demand periods, retains the late evening bus network and provides for deferred implementation, advance communication and monitoring.

Following implementation, Translink will monitor the operation and effects of the changes in accordance with the arrangements set out in this report. Monitoring evidence will be reviewed to identify any emerging, disproportionate or unintended equality impacts on Section 75 groups, and to determine whether further mitigation or adjustment is required.

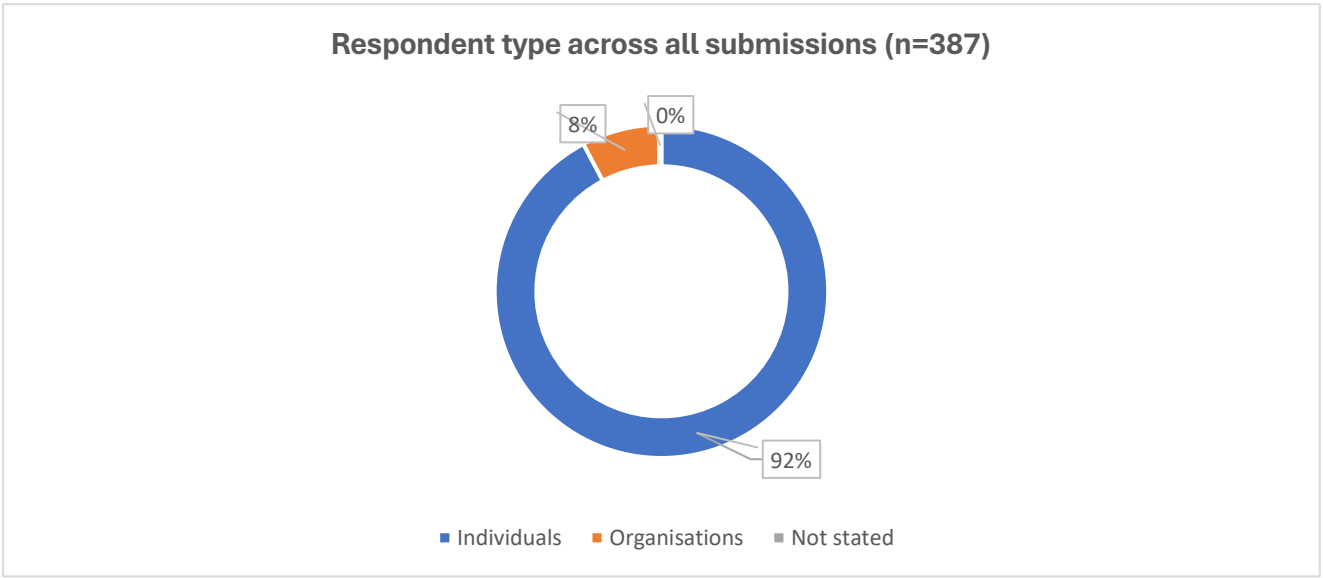
APPENDIX ONE
List of Consultees

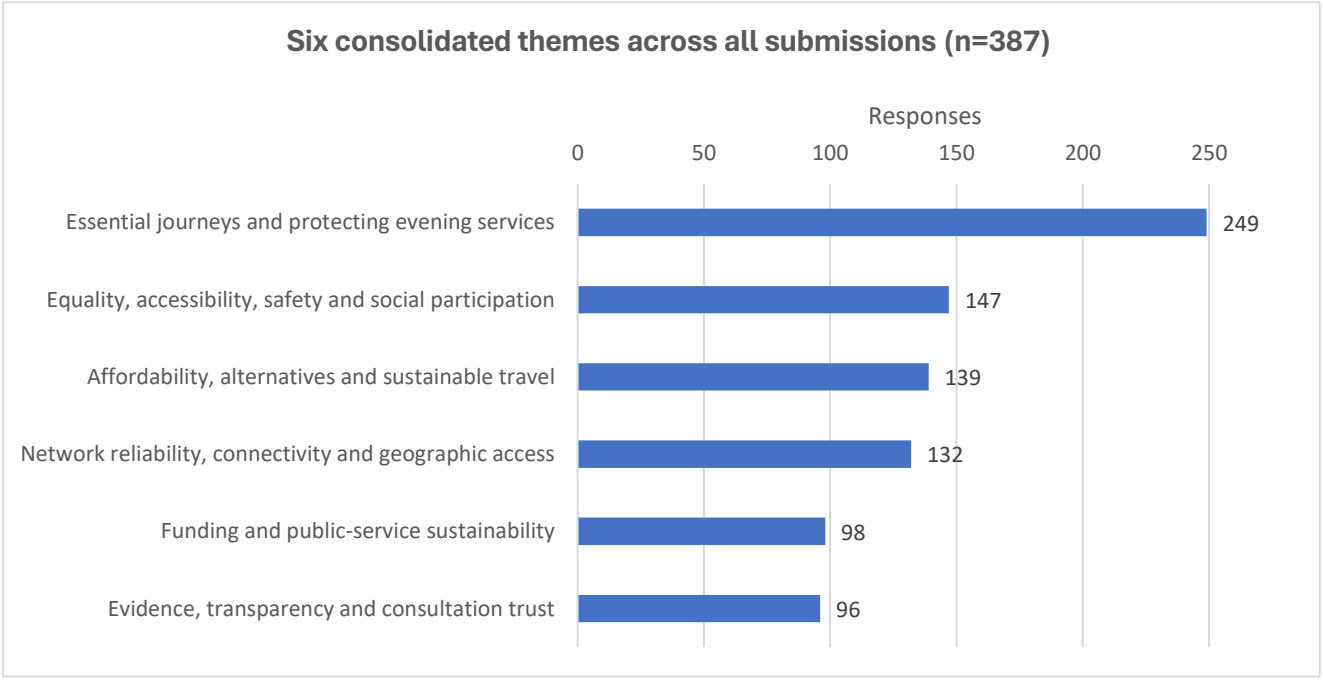
Alliance Party of NI
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
Belfast Chamber of Commerce
Belfast City Council
Belfast One
Cathedral Quarter BID
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
CBI Northern Ireland
Children's Commissioner
Democratic Unionist Party
Department for Infrastructure (DfI)
Derry City and Strabane District Council
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Federation of Small Businesses NI
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Hospitality Ulster
Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC)
Institute of Directors
Linen Quarter BID
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
Mid and East Antrim District Borough Council
Mid Ulster District Council
Migrant Centre NI
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
NILGA
NI Chamber of Commerce
Northern Ireland Assembly
Northern Ireland Retail Consortium
Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance
Northern Ireland Youth Forum
NUS-USI
Retail NI
Royal National Institute for the Blind Northern Ireland (RNIB NI)
Sinn Fein
Social Democratic & Labour Party (SDLP)
The Consumer Council
Tourism NI
Ulster Unionist Party
Visit Belfast

APPENDIX TWO
ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

Summary of Citizen Space and Email Responses

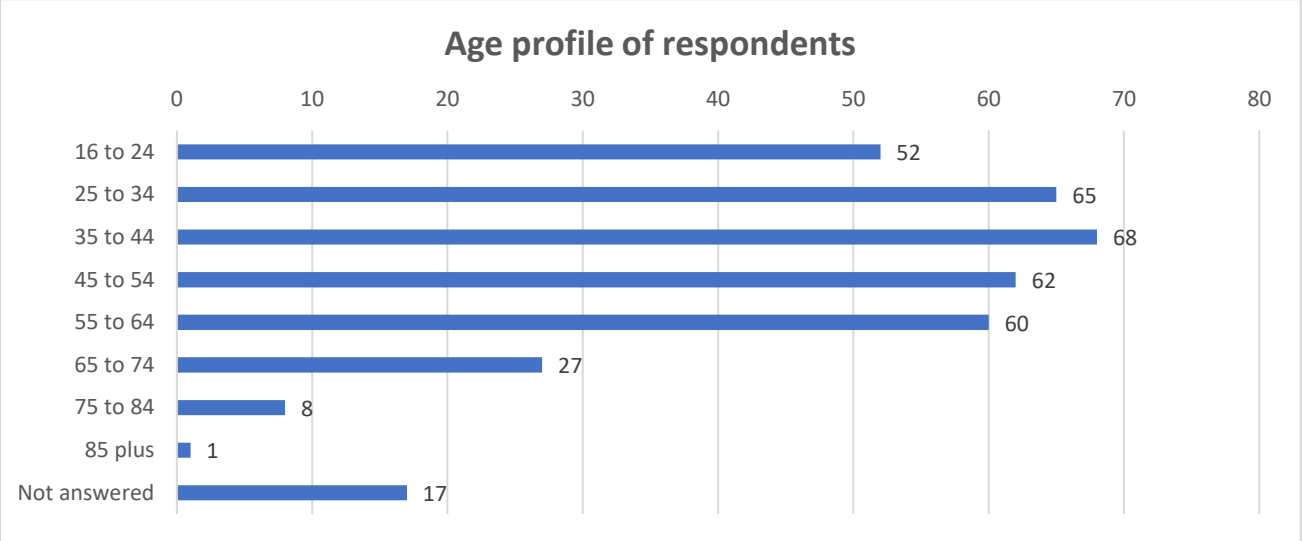
TOTAL RESPONSES	CITIZEN SPACE	EMAIL RESPONSES	INDIVIDUALS OVERALL
387	360	27	92.2%
All distinct submissions	Responses submitted online	Responses received by email	Share of all respondents





Respondent Profile and Completion (Citizen Space Only)

Age profile		
Age	**Count**	**% of all**
16 to 24	52	14.4%
25 to 34	65	18.1%
35 to 44	68	18.9%
45 to 54	62	17.2%
55 to 64	60	16.7%
65 to 74	27	7.5%
75 to 84	8	2.2%
85 plus	1	0.3%
Not answered	17	4.7%



Respondent type		
Type	**Count**	**% of all**
Individual	346	96.1%
Organisation	13	3.6%
Not answered	1	0.3%

Mitigations Proposed by Respondents

The consultation produced a range of substantive responses proposing mitigations or other actions. Recommendations were diverse and frequently combined several measures. The strongest mentions were improving or expanding services (56 responses; 22%), targeted service design (55; 22%), fares, revenue or efficiency options (54; 22%), retaining or protecting services (50; 20%) and funding or investment (42; 17%).

Mitigation Category	Mentions*	% of mitigation responses	Summary
Improve/expand services	56	22.5%	Improve service availability, later operating hours, frequency or network coverage.
Targeted service design	55	22.1%	Assess routes individually; redesign timetables, frequencies, vehicles or connections.
Fares/revenue/efficiency	54	21.7%	Consider fares, concessions, revenue protection and operational efficiencies.
Retain/protect services	50	20.1%	Do not proceed with cuts, or retain critical final and essential journeys.
Funding/investment	42	16.9%	Secure adequate public funding or targeted investment before reducing provision.
Safety/accessibility	39	15.7%	Protect safe, accessible travel for disabled and otherwise vulnerable passengers.
Engagement/evidence	35	14.1%	Publish evidence, monitor impacts and engage affected groups before implementation.
Alternative provision	25	10.0%	Provide realistic replacement transport, including community or demand-responsive options.
Sustainable transport	9	3.6%	Align decisions with modal-shift, emissions and reduced car-dependence objectives.

**Counts may overlap because one response can identify several mitigation themes. They indicate the breadth of mitigation evidence, not support for a single option.*