



Castle
BACK TRAIN APPROACHING ***
11:07:30

← Waterloo &
City line

← Way out
Waterloo

Navigating London

Young People's Challenges with Travel Costs

A Research Report Written By The Anti-Tribalism Movement's Young Leaders

Foreward

We are proud to have committed ourselves to this social action campaign, as it is a meaningful idea and a huge goal for us to continue working towards. When gathering our research, we decided to utilise focus groups as our main method of data collection, because they allow different views and experiences, which can help shape real change. We were motivated by the understanding that our conversations could bring about real changes in policies that impact young people's lives. By discussing our thoughts and experiences, we can better understand the challenges young people face when it comes to travel, especially if they are at a financial disadvantage. During the focus group, we felt a strong sense of connection with everyone as we talked about important issues related to public transport. It was surprising to hear how many of us were worried about safety; how walking long distance without money can put young people in risky situations. We also talked about how not being able to pay for transport can affect school attendance and participation in activities, which can hurt their education. Additionally, we discussed how financial stress can impact mental health. Overall, the focus group not only brought us together but also highlighted the urgent need for changes in public transport policies to support the well-being and growth of young people.

Planning the focus group has been an exciting but also challenging experience. We started by bringing together a diverse group of young people across London to hear their thoughts about why free public transport is important. As we worked on the focus group plan, we knew the topic was sensitive, so we wanted to create a space where everyone felt safe to share their concerns about money and how it affects their lives.

We are committed to making a difference, and we believe that our teamwork and dedication has contributed to that. With our continued effort, we believe that we can help create a brighter future for all young people.

From the ATM Young Leaders

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"It has been a wonderful experience working with our young leaders and witnessing how passionate they are about their social action campaign. These young leaders all believe in the power of youth voices to make a difference, and I hope that this report shines a light on how something as simple as travel costs can contribute to the adversities they already face in their day to day lives. Well done to them!"

Yasmin, Lead and Be Led Project Manager

Introduction

This report is the result of a social action campaign led by 15 young people trained through the Anti-Tribalism Movement's Lead and Be Led programme. Designed to develop their leadership skills and empower young people to become community advocates, the programme covers themes such as confidence building, resilience, critical thinking, and decision-making.

As part of their training, our group of young people conducted research into the challenges faced by young people using public transport in London. Their findings focus on how travel costs have had a knock-on effect on the different aspects of their London-living experience, and advocate for the need for free travel for young people up to the age of 21. The group spent six weeks gathering data on TFL policies, identifying personal concerns, and organising a focus group with 20 peers to discuss their travel experiences, attitudes to public transport, concerns, and recommendations.

The aims of this research are:

- 1.To assess how travel costs affect young people's lives, including their mental health, education, safety, social opportunities, and financial stability.
- 2.To evaluate how free travel for under-21s could enhance young people's quality of life, access to education, employment, social activities, and overall well-being.

This report summarises the group's findings and presents their recommendations to community leaders, Transport for London, and the Mayor's Office, advocating for change to create a fairer and more inclusive transport system for young Londoners.



Important Information

The purpose of this report is to examine the policies implemented by Transport for London (TfL) and to explore young people's opinions and experiences regarding them. While we acknowledge that TfL has made significant efforts to support young people travelling in London and appreciate the challenges of meeting everyone's needs, there remains room for improvement. For young people from ethnic minority and lower socio-economic backgrounds, particularly those living in inner-city areas, greater investment in improving access to affordable travel could significantly enhance their quality of life. Such improvements would have a ripple effect, positively influencing other challenges they face. It is undeniable that poverty often compounds societal disadvantages, creating interconnected barriers for young people. By addressing transport costs - an essential aspect of daily life in London - we could play a major role in shaping brighter futures for millions of young Londoners.

Policies Introduced by TFL to Make Travel Safer and More Accessible for Young People

16+ and 18+ Oyster Cards

With these oyster cards, young people are able to pay reduced travel fares. The 16+ Oyster Photocard grants free travel on buses and trams, while the 18+ Photocard provides discounts on travel cards and bus passes. However, the requirement for educational or work-based criteria limits its accessibility

Fare Increases

In March 2023, TFL implemented a 5.9% increase in fares, marking one of the highest hikes in a decade. This included a 10p increase in single bus fares and incremental rises for Tube journeys across various zones. These adjustments reflect the financial recovery efforts of TFL following the pandemic.

Frozen Fares

As a way of making travel more affordable for citizens, TFL have frozen fares for the tube, DLR, Overground, and bus/trams. They have also set a daily bus cap at £5.25.

Step-free Access

TFL have made intentioned efforts in ensuring accessibility for young people, especially those with disabilities, mobility impairments.

Youth Panel

Transport for London (TFL) to become one of the first UK transport organisations to have regular representation of people under the age of 25 at its senior meetings. This has been useful in identifying youth needs and areas of improvement. The TFL Youth Panel have designed a report to reflect the opinions of young people in London and provide recommendations to make London's transport system more equitable, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable.

Hopper Fare

Unlimited bus journeys within an hour for £1.75 to support those who take multiple buses to reach their desired destination.

Free Travel for School Groups

Schools can register to access free travel when visiting educational, cultural and sporting venues in London.

See It, Say It, Sorted

A public awareness campaign that encourages people to report any unusual or suspicious behaviour or items they see on the rail network.

Focus Group Key Findings

We conducted this focus group to explore how travel fares have affected young people across several areas of their lives. While TFL's policies have undeniably had a positive impact on London's wider society, participants shared the challenges they face on a daily basis, highlighting how transport costs and access continue to shape their experiences.

Education

- Some participants reported missing school because they couldn't afford or access reliable transport, leading to missed lessons or disrupted education.
- Participants described their quality of life as being significantly worse if they couldn't afford to take the train, highlighting the central role of public transport in their daily routine.
- Several participants mentioned that inconsistent transport reliability affects their punctuality in classes, suggesting they would attend school more regularly if journeys were more dependable.
- Some participants expressed having to choose between paying for travel and affording basic school meals, emphasising the financial stress transport costs place on young people.
- The money spent on travel often competes with funds needed for educational materials, such as books and stationery, which can further limit students' access to resources for their learning..
- A number of young people admitted that, without affordable travel, they would be tempted to skip school altogether. They indicated that free travel would significantly increase their motivation to attend lessons.
- Free travel would have a transformative effect on the quality of life for many young people, offering both financial relief and increased access to education and opportunities.



Safety

- All members of the group reported having witnessed some form of harassment while using public transport, highlighting a widespread concern for their safety and comfort.
- Many young people expressed a lack of confidence in reporting incidents to TFL staff, which may discourage them from speaking out or seeking assistance when they experience or witness troubling behaviour.
- Several individuals shared that they felt distressed after specific journeys where public arguments or fights occurred, leading to bus delays as drivers were forced to stop the bus to address the situation.
- Young people noted feeling embarrassed when bus drivers refused them entry due to insufficient funds, which can be humiliating when they are unable to travel to important destinations like school or work.

Mental Health

- Travel costs can quickly add up, causing significant financial strain on young people. Many report feeling anxious about these expenses, which impacts their daily lives.
- Young people are also concerned about the financial burden travel costs place on their parents. As they come from families from lower socio-economic backgrounds, in particular, may face even greater financial pressure, as many young people have multiple siblings, increasing the overall cost of travel for their household.
- Not having enough money to travel can negatively affect a young person's morning routine, as this becomes one of the first worries they face each day, adding unnecessary stress.
- Constantly thinking about money has a profound and overwhelming effect on young people, often leaving them with little mental energy for other aspects of their lives.
- The financial strain can also impact emotional wellbeing, as young people may be forced to take longer, less desirable routes due to the inability to afford quicker or more convenient transport options, such as the train.



Finances

- 100% of the group reported witnessing fare evasion, also known as 'bumping the train.'
- Young people have shared that fare evasion has become a common conversation that is part of the culture among London's youth. 'Bumping the train' refers to jumping over barriers on the Tube or bus, or simply boarding a bus without tapping an Oyster card.
- While participants acknowledge that fare evasion is illegal and morally wrong, they express that it is often driven by a sense of desperation to reach their destination. They believe that if travel costs were lower or free, this issue could be avoided.
- Many of those who engage in fare evasion are facing poverty, and the fines and potential criminal charges they incur can have long-lasting effects on their criminal record, further damaging their future opportunities and success in society. This draws the question of whether it is fair to 'bump the train' if a young person is in poverty.
- It has been suggested that Transport for London (TFL) could redirect the funds lost to fare evasion towards providing free travel for young people, thus helping reduce the financial burden on those in need.
- All participants have shared that they spend £60-100 a month on travel, and not all are in employment.

Social Life

- Participants have shared that they spend around an hour travelling to socialise with friends and family.
- Young people have shared that the cost of travel limits their social life, often leaving them stuck on social media and feeling left out.
- Some young people feel compelled to travel without paying the fare because they do not want to miss key moments in their social circles, which can lead to a sense of exclusion.
- There is a clear link between increased criminal activity and the poverty conditions many young people face. For some, resorting to fare evasion is seen as a desperate attempt to maintain their social connections, despite the risks involved.

Time Management

- Participants often face anxiety about the cost of travel, which can delay their departure times or cause them to reconsider whether they can afford the journey at all. This can also lead to rushed or poorly planned journeys.

Additional Findings

Relationship with TFL Staff

Participants in the focus group shared that they often struggle to report traumatic incidents to TFL staff and lack the confidence to voice their concerns effectively.

Uncomfortable Travel Experiences

Participants in the focus group shared that they often struggle to report traumatic incidents to TFL staff and lack the confidence to voice their concerns effectively.

Desire to Communicate with TFL and Community Leaders

Participants expressed a strong desire to connect with the appropriate stakeholders, believing that, if given the opportunity, they could share their concerns and advocate for meaningful change. The focus group revealed that these young people are full of valuable opinions but lack the necessary resources or platforms to express them. This is one of the key purposes of this report.

Recommendations

1. Free travel for young people up until the age of 21

This suggestion will ensure that young people are given an advantage to access opportunities available to them in London. By eliminating travel costs, there would be a considerable reduction in fare evasion and the criminalisation of young people living in poverty. This would lead to a better quality of life, enabling young people to focus on excelling in education, employment, and social opportunities.

2. Safety Measures

TFL should introduce more practical measures to ensure the safety of young passengers. One potential solution could be to provide a special badge or lanyard to identify young people, making it easier for staff and fellow passengers to offer assistance if necessary.

3. Initiatives for minority young people to be more involved with TFL initiatives should be introduced to encourage greater involvement of minority young people in TFL activities, especially those from inner-city London, who are more likely to face challenges related to transport.

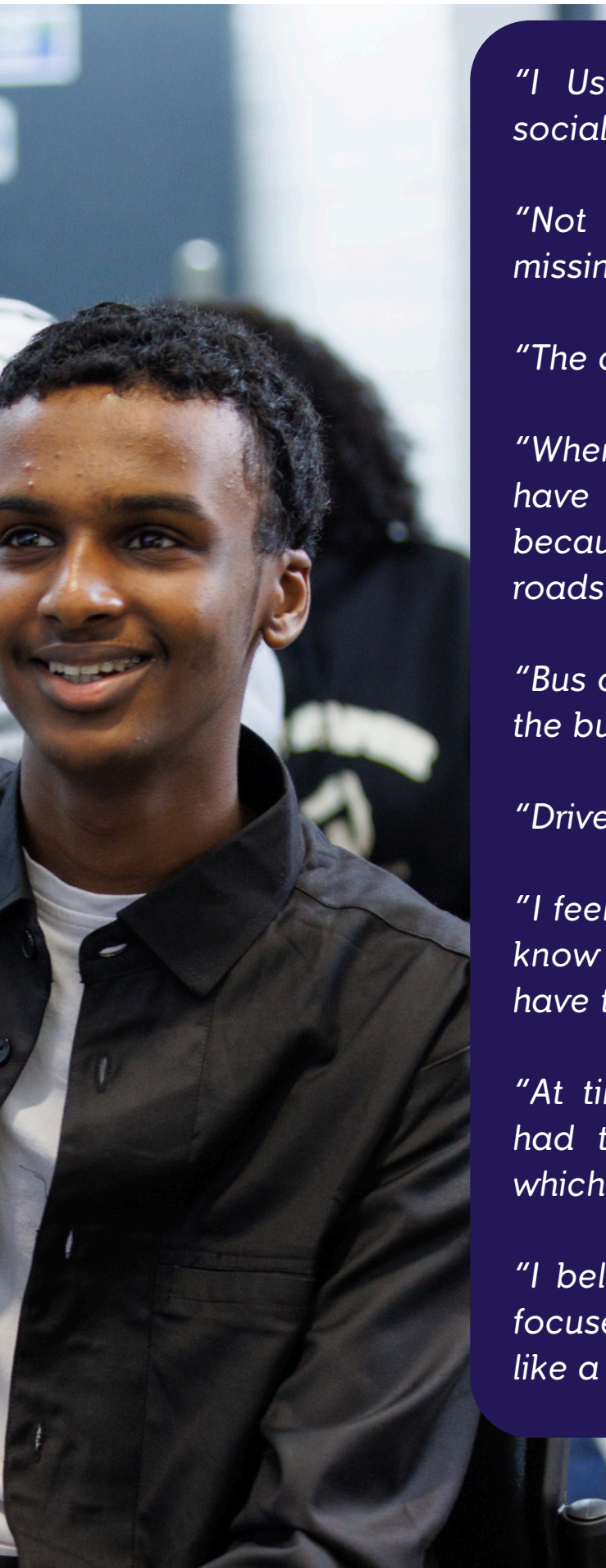
4. Improved Reporting Systems

Participants in the focus group highlighted difficulties in reporting traumatic incidents to TFL staff. It is essential that TFL enhances the accessibility and efficiency of their reporting methods. This could include the British Transport Police creating dedicated channels for young people to offer support when they witness or experience harassment, and ensuring TFL staff are trained to respond empathetically to young passengers' concerns.

5. Improved Engagement with Young People

Given that the focus group highlighted the lack of understanding of resources for young people to express their concerns, TFL should implement clearer communication channels between young people and decision-makers. This could include the Mayor of London setting up regular consultation events, online surveys, or feedback forms that give young passengers the opportunity to share their experiences and suggest improvements in real time.

Quotes from Focus Group Participants



"I Use TFL everyday for the purpose of socialising."

"Not having money for TFL leads you to missing out on outings."

"The change I want is free trains."

"When I cannot afford to pay for trains, I have to take 3 buses and feel unsafe because it can be dark outside and the roads are quiet."

"Bus drivers don't care if there's a problem in the bus, like a creep annoying young girls."

"Drivers should be nicer to us."

"I feel sad about the cost of travel because I know that I cannot completely afford it, so I have to limit myself to where I can go."

"At times I have missed lessons because I had to take the bus instead of the train, which were delayed."

"I believe that I am too young to be super focused on money and spending. I don't feel like a young person."



Conclusion

This report demonstrates the pressing need for Transport for London to implement free travel for young people up to the age of 21. The findings from the focus group illustrate the varied impact of travel costs on young people's education, safety, mental health, social life, and financial stability.

By eliminating travel costs, TFL could reduce the significant barriers that disproportionately affect young people from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds. Free travel would not only mitigate financial strain but also increase access to education and employment opportunities, and reduce the criminalisation of young people facing poverty.

Participants expressed their struggles with some of the current TFL systems, from the difficulties of confidently reporting safety incidents to the emotional strain of costly travel options. Their voices highlight the urgent need for an all-around positive travel experience.

This campaign is a vision for a more equitable and supportive transport system that empowers the next generation to thrive in London. By investing in free travel for under-21s, TFL would not only address immediate challenges but also contribute to a fairer, more inclusive city that recognises the potential of its young residents.

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