



# Proposed changes to route 648 & 646

Consultation Summary  
March 2021

## Consultation Summary

### Background

We consulted on proposals to withdraw bus route 648 and reduce the frequency of route 646 between 17 November and 22 December 2020.

Route 648 operates two trips in the morning and afternoon using single deck buses. Its role is to provide some additional capacity to route 248 which it duplicates between Romford and Upminster but also directly serve The Coopers' Company and Coborn school on St Mary's Lane.

Usage of route 648 is low with a significant mismatch in demand between the morning and the afternoon suggesting students already use an alternative to the 648 after school finishes. Other trips made on route 648 can be accommodated on either route 248 or 346.

Route 646 also serves The Coopers' Company and Coborn school, making three trips in the morning and afternoon between Noak Hill and Cranham via Upminster and Hornchurch. Usage of this route is also low. We proposed to remove the last journey in the morning that departs Noak Hill at 07:43 and the last afternoon journey that departs Cranham at 16:00. Again, this would allow us to better use our limited resources.

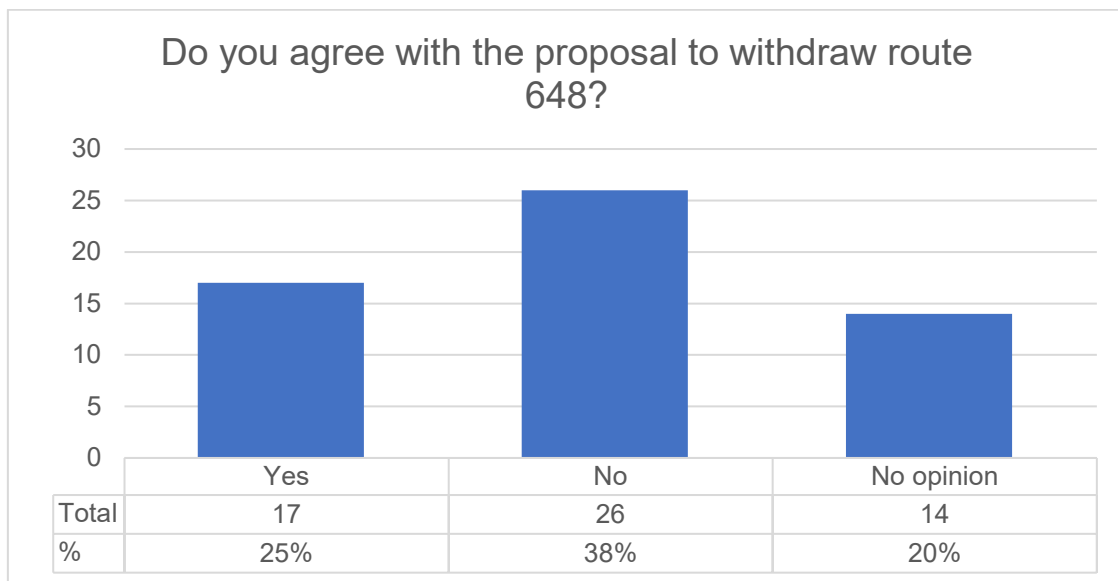
The review considered the position pre-Covid. However, more recent surveys suggest little has changed. We wanted to understand feedback from those who would be directly affected and others, prior to a final decision being made.

### Results of the consultation

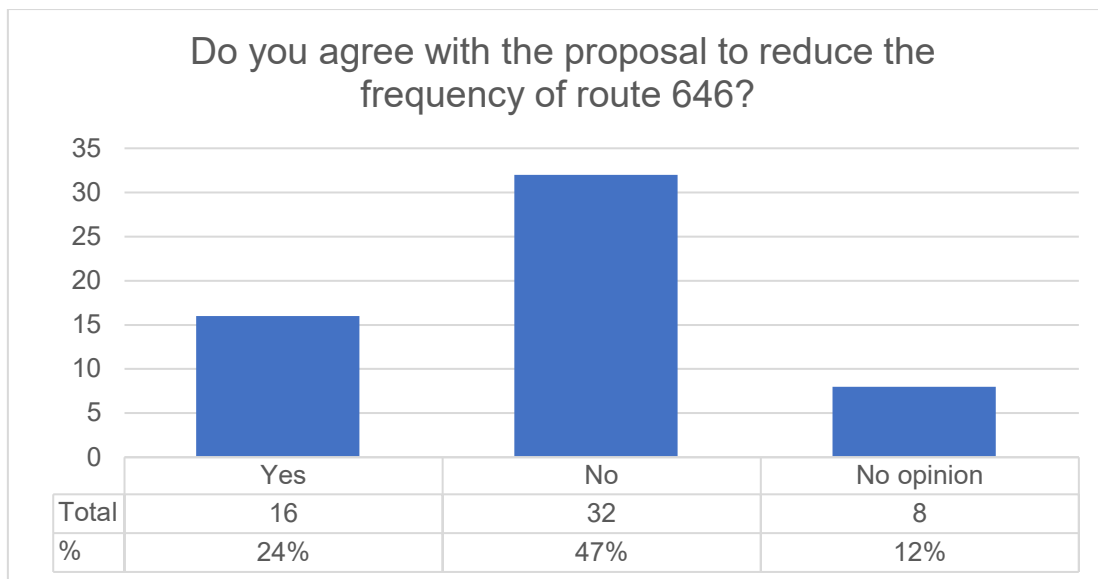
We received 69 responses to the consultation, 68 from the general public and one stakeholder reply from the London Borough of Havering.

Of the 68 general public replies received, 38 per cent (26) did not agree with the proposal to withdraw route 648. 25 per cent (17) did agree and a further 21 per cent, (14) had no opinion. The remainder (16 per cent) did not answer the question.

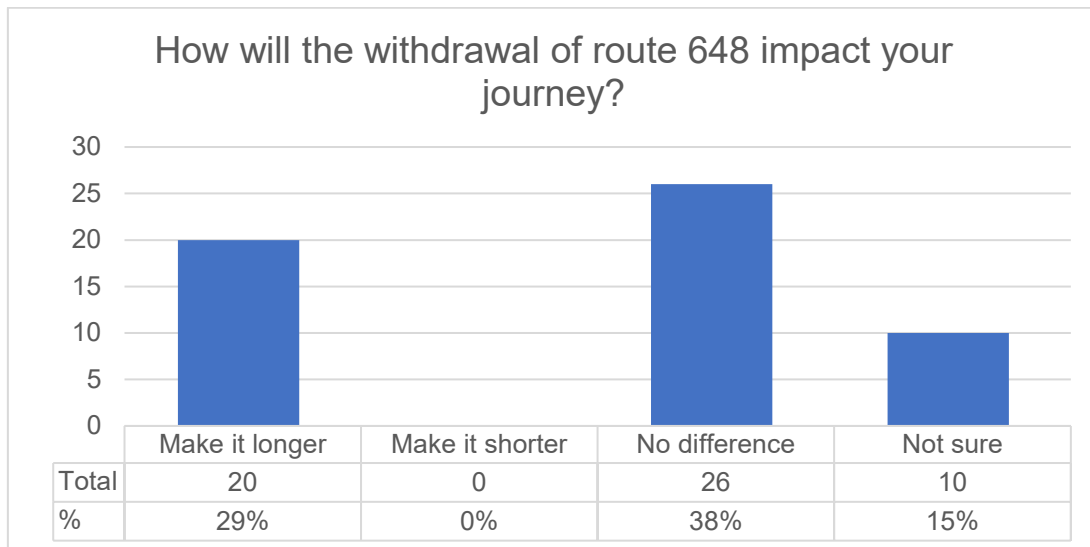




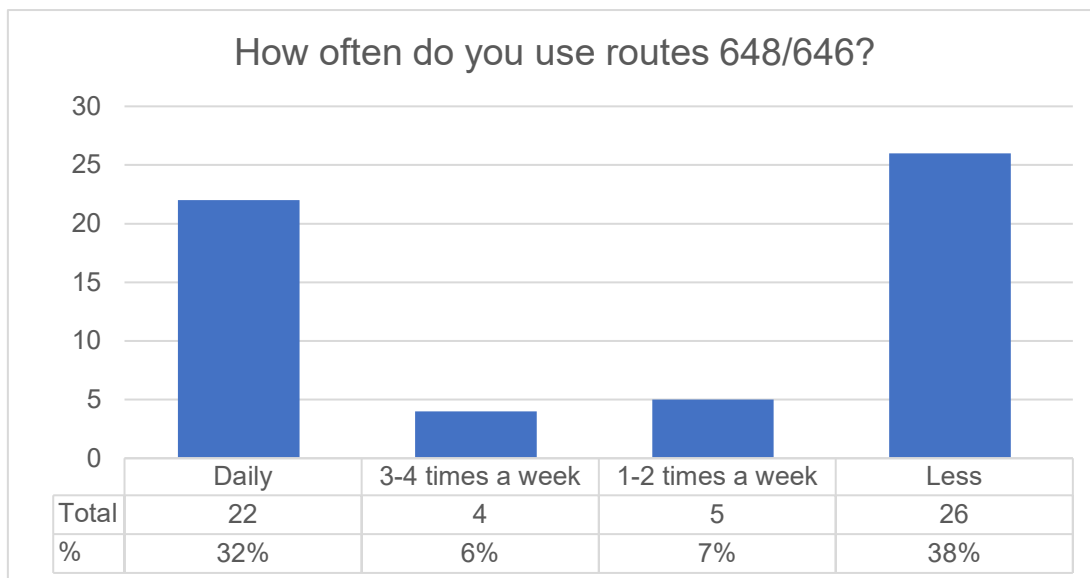
Of the 68 general public replies received, 47 per cent (32) of respondents did not agree with the proposal to reduce the frequency of route 646, 24 per cent, (16) did agree with 12 per cent (8) not having an opinion. The remainder did not answer this question.



29 per cent (20), of respondents stated that the proposals would make their journey longer, 38 per cent (26) advised the proposals would make no difference with a further 15 per cent (10) not sure of the impact. None of the respondents suggested the changes would make their journey quicker. The remaining 18 per cent did not answer the question.



We also asked how often respondents used routes 646 and 648. 32 per cent (22), advised daily, six per cent (4) 3-4 times a week. Five per cent advised 1–2 times a week and 38 per cent (26) advised that they took the buses less than 1 – 2 times a week. The remainder did not answer the question.



The most common comments made in the free text box 'Please let us know any other points regarding these proposals' are summarised in table 1

*Table 1 most commonly raised issues.*

Issues most commonly raised	Total
Capacity concerns on other local routes if changes go ahead	24
Oppose/negative general comment	14
Any change should not be considered until pandemic is over and normal demand can be measured	12
Changes will mean longer journey/transfer/walking times for students	11

Current school staggered start times have affected demand	11
Current school finishing times have affected demand	9

## Stakeholder responses

The London Borough of Havering were the only stakeholder to respond to the consultation. A summary of their response notes that they reject the proposals in the strongest terms. They particularly expressed concern that reducing service provision will result in crowding on other routes at a time when the Borough has been particularly badly affected by Covid. They also considered it contrary to TfL's approach to date where additional capacity has been added at school times. They expressed concern that the reduction in service will encourage greater car use and undermine work done to encourage sustainable travel. Their response also summarised the schools served by the routes; the number of students at these schools and feedback from 'hands up' surveys showing how many travel by public transport. In conclusion they requested that no changes take place during these unprecedented times.

We contacted all the schools directly impacted by the proposals. Some parents who took part in the consultation advised that the schools had provided the information to them to provide their views on the proposals. We did not receive replies direct from the schools.

## Our response to the main issues raised

Issue raised	Our response
Reducing service levels will cause crowding on other bus routes. For route 646 this was concern for the two remaining journeys but also the 256 and 294 in the Harold Wood area	<p>Surveys before and after the pandemic found two buses were enough to meet demand for those travelling on the 646. This takes into account when more people were travelling before the pandemic, when buses could let more people on as well as, during the pandemic now less people are travelling and the buses allow less people on board.</p> <p>In terms of travel towards Harold Wood station and Ardleigh Green route 256 follows the same routeing as the 646. Route 256 has recently been converted to double deck operation which significantly increases the number of passengers it can carry.</p>
Reducing service levels will cause crowding on other bus routes for the 648 the concerns were primarily for route 248, and particularly access to Sacred Heart of Mary's Girls school. Route 346 was also mentioned	<p>Route 648 had around 20 passengers per day travelling to Coopers Company &amp; Coborn school pre-pandemic, of which 17 were in the morning. This suggests students had found alternatives for travelling after school for some time. In October 2020, during the pandemic, this demand had halved with no passengers recorded in the afternoon.</p> <p>At Sacred Heart of Mary's Girl school demand on the 648 was higher – around 25 passengers in the morning</p>

	and one in the afternoon. However, unlike Coopers Company and Coborn school, this school is also served by route 248 (and 370 as far as Hornchurch). These passengers could have used route 248 without any impact on capacity.
The proposals will make passenger journey times longer.	We appreciate that the reduction in service would have some negative impact on passenger's journeys. However, route 646 will continue to operate and be supported by the enhanced route 256 at the northern end. Double deck route 248, every 8 minutes, will continue to provide an alternative for users of the 648 and takes students close to Coopers Company & Coborn school. Route 346 (every 15 minutes) provides an alternative to walking for the last leg of the journey and the continuation of free fares for students means there is no additional cost to students.
Concerns raised about social distancing and fewer people travelling due to the pandemic. Suggestions made that no changes should be made to the routes during the current pandemic	<p>The proposals to the 646 and 648 were formulated on surveys prior to the pandemic indicating that when school times and general travel patterns return to normal, there will be enough provision on the 646 and 248 to meet demand.</p> <p>Further surveys undertaken in October 2020 show that even in the current situation, there will be enough space on buses to enable social distancing.</p> <p>The changes would not take effect until the start of the next school year in September 2021.</p>
School revised start and finish times mean the buses do not match school demand.	<p>This feedback supports our view that the wider bus network can accommodate displaced 648 and 646 passengers as it would appear many passengers must already use alternatives.</p> <p>However, it does appear that the timing of the journeys could be better matched to school times. We will work with the operator of the 646 to investigate re-timing the two remaining afternoon journeys.</p>
Withdrawing the 648 will reduce access to extra-curricular activities	it is not expected that reducing service provision (or re-timing the remaining 646 journeys) would have a significant impact on student's attending after-school activities. It would appear most students already used alternatives to the 646 and 648; including changing buses if need be. Alternative routes like the 346, 248, 256, 370 and 294 continue to operate regular services long after school finishes. They run reliably and are free for students, meaning, if passengers do need to change buses, the inconvenience involved is kept to a minimum.

## **Next steps**

After analysing the consultation responses, we have decided to go ahead with our proposals to withdraw route 648 and reduce the frequency of route 646.

Consideration will be given to re-timing the remaining 646 journeys to better meet school finish times.

The 648 will be withdrawn following the last day of summer term 2020/21.

The 646 will operate two journeys in the morning and two journeys in the afternoon from the start of school term in September 2021.