



# The Bus Users' Manifesto



**Bus Users**  
Working for passengers

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Buses reduce congestion, build communities and enable people from all social groups to access health services, education and employment. Buses are in particular a lifeline to women, older and disabled people and those living in remote or deprived communities.

Buses make a vital and significant contribution to the economy and yet seem to be overlooked by policy makers, under-funded by central and local government and treated like the 'Cinderella' of transport services.

With increasing investment in low-carbon and low-emission technology buses have the ability to reduce the transport carbon footprint, by offering an alternative to the car and by reducing their own contribution to atmospheric pollution.

If society is to benefit fully from what the bus has to offer then **the next UK Government needs to take action.**



## Bus Users' 10 point plan

**We want to see policy and decision makers give priority to the bus through:**

- 1** Enhanced bus priority measures in town and city centres to improve reliability and journey times, encouraging people out of their cars and onto the bus
- 2** Accessible stopping points with better facilities and enhanced passenger information, positioned closer to shopping and business centres to boost local economies
- 3** Fully funded concessions made available to unemployed people and those on low incomes to open up better life chances
- 4** Widespread on-board facilities such as audio visual information, phone charging and Wi-Fi
- 5** Better timetable coordination with schools, colleges and employment
- 6** Improved integration across all transport modes
- 7** Mandatory driver training to improve awareness of issues relating to mobility, disability and mental health and improve communication skills
- 8** Measures to improve the passenger experience, encouraging a consistent and reliable service offer to help encourage more sustainable travel choices
- 9** More late and weekend services to reflect changing working patterns, particularly among low paid and entry level jobs
- 10** A simplified fares system across all modes to support passengers and remove barriers to travel.

Buses are vital to the economy and to social inclusion. According to Government statistics,<sup>i</sup> 7% of all journeys were made by bus in 2013 - more than twice the number for rail (compared with 64% by car) of which:

- 25% of journeys were for shopping
- 21% for education
- 19% for commuting.<sup>ii</sup>

There were 5.2 billion journeys made by bus in Great Britain in 2013/14. Between them, these vital bus journeys contribute considerably to the retail economy, especially in town centres, and give people greater access to opportunities. This in turn lessens the burden on the overall economy, enabling people to avoid benefits.

Bus services also underpin other economic policies: without bus services people are, for example, unable to access increasingly centralised and more remote health services. Indeed, buses have a powerful outreach: they are the most accessible and local form of public transport - accessible by almost the entire population of the UK. Rail and light rail can only serve a limited number of communities and for those off the rail network bus services are vital for reaching rail stations.

In 2014, two thirds of all public transport journeys in the UK were made by bus<sup>iii</sup>.

The rise in car ownership means that ridership on bus services has shown a decline over the last 50 years: In fact, cars contribute 40% to transport-related greenhouse gas emissions. Cars have become a victim of their own success by creating congestion: according to the Financial Times, congestion cost the UK economy more than £13 billion in 2013. Nonetheless 25% of households<sup>iv</sup> have no access to a car, and for them bus services are vital.

Unlike rail-based systems, new bus services can be in place in as little as three months from conception without any infrastructure costs and thus are the most realistic and affordable alternative to cars for most people.

To capture the economic, societal and environmental benefits of bus services, we need to improve services, encourage people on board and maximise the environmental benefits. Buses need to be given every opportunity, along with the necessary financial support, to flourish.



**Priority needs to be given to reversing decline in passenger numbers in the major City Regions outside London;** bus ridership in London has doubled since 1985 and halved in the other major conurbations.

Rail services have improved considerably in the UK in the 21st century and ridership has increased dramatically. The same has happened on buses in London. **The challenge for an incoming Government is to achieve the same improvement for bus services in the rest of the UK.**

#### Such a success would:

- Free city centres from traffic congestion
- Encourage cities to become more popular and enjoyable places to live, work and participate in leisure activities
- Develop the 'night economy', enabling towns and cities to become active 24 hours a day
- Improve land use, with less requirement for car-parking spaces
- Improve air quality
- Bring back prosperity to declining town and city centres
- Boost health by reducing pollution, increasing walking to bus stops, improving the well-being of people who currently suffer 'transport poverty'
- Open up greater opportunities for employment and education
- Over time, diminish the need for financial support for bus services.

i Transport Statistics Great Britain 2014

ii Transport Statistics Great Britain 2014

iii Department for Transport statistics on the local bus sector in Great Britain 2014

iv Department for Transport National Travel Survey: England 2013



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