

Bus Users UK response to Central London Bus Review

August 2022

As a charity that represents passengers, we have no objection to necessary changes to bus services in order to meet the needs of the communities they serve. The changes proposed in the Central London Bus Review, however, will disproportionately affect people with disabilities, mobility issues and travel confidence, adding delay and disruption to well-used services.

- Increasing the number of journeys that would require a change of bus to 24% will have extensive impacts on people with restricted mobility, sensory impairments or other disabilities. For many it will be more than simple inconvenience – it will be catastrophic. Passengers with a cognitive disability or visual impairment will need to re-learn routes and wheelchair users risk being left stranded mid-journey because the wheelchair space on the bus they are changing to is already occupied.
- Early and late running buses make connections hard to plan and difficult for passengers to be punctual in their commitments, as well as more expensive if the Hopper fare time period is not extended to account for the increased likelihood of longer journeys.
- It is suggested that additional Countdown screens will be installed but currently these have no audio option and are regularly being removed and not replaced, even at busy stops.
- Entering and exiting a bus is already challenging for many people, more so if there are cycle bypasses involved. This, coupled with a lack of seating, inadequate information and poor lighting at many bus stops, risks making bus travel a non-viable option.
- Access between stops can be another barrier to travel with inadequate or simply busy crossings, street clutter and pavement parking. Routes between stops should be clearly marked and treated as a red route for pedestrians at all times.
- Increasingly, passengers are being forced to rely on their smartphones for travel and ticket information at stops, making them a possible target for crime. Those without access to a smartphone or Internet access are being digitally excluded, creating a new set of barriers to bus travel.

While we welcome the consultations being undertaken by Transport for London, specific efforts need to be made to engage with groups most likely to be negatively impacted by these proposed changes. Consideration also needs to be given to the way these changes are communicated, particularly among those who are digitally excluded, require the information in an accessible format or need more time to adjust.

It is also worth stating that reducing services, frequencies or the number of changes on a route does not just make services less accessible to the people who rely on them, it makes them less attractive to private car users thereby reducing the opportunity for modal shift. Confidence in public transport is hard-earned but easily lost.

About Bus Users

Bus Users is a charity that campaigns for inclusive, accessible transport. We are the only approved Alternative Dispute Resolution Body for the bus and coach industry and the designated body for handling complaints under the Passenger Rights in Bus and Coach Legislation. We are also part of a Sustainable Transport Alliance, a group working to promote the benefits of public, shared and active travel.

Alongside our complaints work we investigate and monitor services and work with operators and transport providers to improve services for everyone. We run events, carry out research, respond to consultations, speak at government select committees and take part in industry events to make sure the voice of the passenger is heard.

Bus Users UK Charitable Trust Ltd is a registered charity (1178677 and SC049144) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (04635458).

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