

Transport Committee

Buses connecting communities

Third Report of Session 2024–25

HC 494

Transport Committee

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Publication

This Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report, was Ordered by the House of Commons, on 22 July 2025, to be printed. It was published on 13 August 2025 by authority of the House of Commons.
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Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Transport Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 2226/ Text relay: 18001 020 2226 | 020 7219 8895 (media enquiries); the Committee's email address is transcom@parliament.uk. You can follow the Committee on X (formerly Twitter) using [@TransportCttee](https://twitter.com/TransportCttee).

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Summary

Buses remain the most used form of public transport in England. They connect people to work, education, healthcare and each other. Despite their importance however, the last decade has seen many communities, especially those outside of major cities, suffer a significant decline in their local bus networks, leaving many without access to reliable services.¹

This decline has contributed to growing social exclusion, less equitable access to opportunity and economic stagnation in many parts of the country. The Government has begun to take steps towards addressing the issue through the Bus Services (No. 2) Bill. The legislation aims to expand access to franchising, strengthen Enhanced Partnerships and provide a definition of socially necessary services. Evidence to our inquiry shows, however, that more ambitious action is required to reverse long-term decline and secure the future of England's bus networks.

Local authorities should be supported to provide a minimum level of public transport connectivity. Greater certainty over funding is also critical: the short-term and fragmented nature of current funding streams undermines planning and delivery. A five-year settlement for both capital and revenue funding would enable local authorities to make sustainable improvements to their networks.

While we welcome the Government's proposal to define socially necessary services, the ambition should go further, aiming to identify and address unmet need. The Government must support authorities to grow their bus networks, not merely manage decline. We are calling for the Department to ensure that there is funding to support the provision of socially necessary services by ring fencing a dedicated portion of its bus grant, or by other means, and for operators to commit to minimum levels of service provision on socially necessary routes.

Franchising can offer a pathway to more integrated and accountable services, but the transition will not be straightforward. Many local authorities currently lack the legal, commercial, and operational capacity to take on the risks and challenges of franchising bus services. The Bus Centre of Excellence should be expanded to provide more targeted support.

¹ Between 2008–09 and 2018–19, bus passenger journeys fell by 11.9 per cent in England outside London and by 1.4 per cent in London. Bus services in London are franchised. Department for Transport, [Annual bus statistics: England 2018/19](#), gov.uk, December 2019

Finally, buses cannot be expected to deliver national goals without a broad strategic direction. The Government must set out a clear vision for what a successful bus network looks like and the outcomes it should deliver, and articulate how policy on fares should support the aims it wants to achieve. A new national bus policy should provide the basis for renewal of bus services in England and indicate how a transformative growth in ridership can be achieved.

1 Introduction

Buses in decline

1. Buses in England, across rural areas, the regions, small towns outside of London and the centres of other major cities, are in significant decline. Between 2008–09 and 2018–19, bus passenger journeys fell by 11.9 per cent in England outside London and by 1.4 per cent in London. The Department for Transport’s most recent statistics show that the number of bus journeys dropped from 4.6 billion in 2009 to 3.6 billion in 2024.² The County Councils Network reported in June 2025 that, between 2019 and 2024, bus services decreased by 18 per cent in areas covered by county and unitary councils, and that 18 per cent of bus routes in county areas vanished between 2018–19 and 2023–24.³ Paul Miner, Head of Policy at CPRE, the countryside charity told us that 56 per cent of small towns were in a transport desert.⁴
2. This decline has been in evidence for over a decade. More recently it is linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, the cause of a sharp drop in passenger numbers from which services are yet to fully recover. In the year ending March 2024, bus use was around 12 per cent lower than in the year ending March 2020.⁵ Transport for the North told us that the north of England now had 33 per cent less bus mileage compared to 2010, including a 22 per cent reduction since 2019.⁶ Other modes have recovered faster from the pandemic. Passenger journeys in June 2025 were 97 per cent of those observed in the equivalent week in 2019 for rail and 108 per cent for motor traffic, compared to 79 per cent for buses.⁷ In Scotland, bus use also remains down by 17 per cent compared to 2019 figures.⁸

2 Department for Transport, [Bus statistics data tables](#), gov.uk, January 2023 (updated November 2024)

3 As measured by vehicle miles. The County Councils Network, [One in five rural bus routes have vanished despite pledges of a ‘bus revolution’](#), June 2025.

4 [Q43](#) [Paul Miner]

5 Department for Transport, [Annual bus statistics: year ending March 2024 \(revised\)](#), gov.uk, March 2025

6 Transport for the North ([BCC0113](#))

7 Department for Transport, [Domestic transport usage by mode](#), gov.uk, July 2025

8 Transport Scotland, [Public transport journeys show recovery from the pandemic](#), March 2024

3. We launched a bus connectivity survey in February 2025, asking people how their local bus service had changed over the past decade. We received 1,521 responses. 53.6 per cent of respondents told us that their buses had worsened, often citing route cuts, reduced frequency, and reliability issues. 38.37 per cent reported improvements, while eight per cent noted no significant change.⁹ Yorkshire and the Humber had the highest proportion of responses describing a worsened service, at 36.1 per cent, while London had the lowest, with only three respondents reporting a decline in services.

The consequences of bus decline

4. Buses remain the most used form of public transport in England and the Department told us that they are “the lifeblood of our communities, providing access to jobs, education and vital local services, and helping to prevent isolation.”¹⁰ When communities are left without bus provision, the effects are profound. Professor Karen Lucas, Head of the Transport and Mobilities Group at the University of Manchester, defined “social exclusion from a transport-related cause” as not being able to “easily, reliably and affordably access transport resources in order to carry out your key life-enhancing opportunities”.¹¹ Transport for the North told us that in 2024 some 11.4 million people across England were facing transport-related social exclusion, with evidence that the problem was worse in towns and smaller cities outside of the largest urban conurbations..¹²
5. We heard directly from bus users about the real-world consequences of decline. One respondent, via Transport for All, said:

The biggest barrier to the buses locally is the lack of them. They’ve just announced they’re cutting the last reliable route. The buses that do exist are infrequent and unreliable. [...] In London for example I use the buses all the time and they are great. But locally they just don’t turn up or don’t go to where I need them to. Or they just don’t exist after 5pm.¹³

9 Using Microsoft Power BI, a keyword frequency analysis was conducted on 1,521 free text responses to the question “How has your bus service changed over the past decade?”. Responses were categorised into three broad themes: ‘Worsened’, ‘Improved’, and ‘No Change’. Categorisation was based on the presence of selected terms and phrases. For example, the ‘Worsened’ category included keywords such as “cut”, “cancelled”, “declined”, and “reduced”. The analysis found that 650 responses included terms linked to worsening services, often referencing route cuts, reduced frequency or reliability issues. A further 465 responses contained terms associated with improvement, while 97 indicated no significant change.

10 Department for Transport ([BCC0044](#))

11 [Q42](#) [Professor Karen Lucas]

12 Transport for the North ([BCC0113](#))

13 Transport for All ([BCC0014](#))

6. Sustrans' Transport to Thrive project highlighted how bus decline limited access to opportunity. One participant from Nottinghamshire said, "there was this really good job. The bus system don't even run early in the morning [...] That was just really sad for me because I couldn't do a job [...] earning a lot more than I'm doing now". Another from Pembrokeshire described how potential employers dismissed bus travel as a means of commuting: "We've had people try to use the buses before... it just doesn't work [...] you'll probably have to drive or have some alternative way to get in".¹⁴ Professor Karen Lucas told us that a 2019 study found 57 per cent of jobseekers lived in areas where they could not reach a centre of employment within 45 minutes by bus.¹⁵

7. A member of the public told us she could no longer travel independently after all local buses were cancelled. Now in her seventies and unable to drive, she relied on neighbours for essential trips and had become "far more isolated, lonely and depressed."¹⁶ Stephen Frost, Head of Transport Policy at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) spoke to the wider patterns of exclusion and missed opportunity:

There was an excellent study done a few years ago [...] looking at the experience of jobseekers. The headline [...] was that public transport was a barrier to accessing work; it was not enabling them to find work, [...] It simply was not reliable enough for them to get to interviews and get to those places.¹⁷

8. Another consequence of bus decline is economic malaise. Stephen Frost noted that the bus sector's contribution to the economy, measured by gross value added (GVA), declined by around £8.9 billion between 2011 and 2023.¹⁸ Green Alliance drew on research by KPMG, which estimated that bus passengers spend £39.1 billion annually in local businesses, and that over 2.2 million commuters rely on buses to get to work, generating £72 billion in collective income each year. The same analysis suggested that every £1 invested in bus services would yield an economic benefit ranging from £4.55 to £5. Green Alliance surmised that "improving bus services should be seen as an enabler for the Government's growth mission".¹⁹

9. Successive governments have introduced a series of reforms to the bus sector in England. The Bus Services Act 2017 gave mayoral combined authorities new powers to implement franchising and introduced the

14 Sustrans ([BCC0026](#))

15 [Q44](#) [Professor Karen Lucas]

16 Ms Pamela Rosling ([BCC0097](#)),

17 [Q44](#) [Stephen Frost], Richard Crisp and Tony Gore, [Tackling transport-related barriers to employment in low-income neighbourhoods](#), Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Sheffield Hallam University, August 2018

18 [Q50](#) [Stephen Frost]

19 Green Alliance ([BCC0115](#)), [Q50](#) [Stephen Frost]

Enhanced Partnership (EP) framework.²⁰ Greater Manchester was the first combined authority to implement franchising, completing the transition in January 2025.²¹ In 2021 the previous Government launched ‘Bus Back Better’, the National Bus Strategy for England. The strategy was hailed by the then Government as the “most ambitious shake-up of the sector in a generation”²² and was supported by a funding commitment of £3 billion over that Parliament. It required local authorities to develop Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) and to either enter Enhanced Partnerships with commercial operators in their area or obtain the Secretary of State’s consent to pursue franchising, in order to access funding.

10. Witnesses described the strategy’s effectiveness as “mixed”.²³ The Confederation of Passenger Transport recognised its ambition, calling it “a reversal of years of relative neglect by government.”²⁴ The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT), however, drawing on a survey of over 500 bus workers said, “there had been little improvement to the bus services in their area since the previous Government’s National Bus Strategy [...]”. Over 70 per cent of those the RMT surveyed said they had not witnessed any improvements since the introduction of Enhanced Partnerships.²⁵ The Department’s own evidence stated that “only 11 local authorities in England” had increased their levels of bus patronage between 2014 and 2024.²⁶
11. There have been instances of success in improving ridership. Cornwall Council has proven an exception to the overall pattern of decline: they told us that bus patronage in the county had not only recovered since the pandemic but increased by 12 per cent between 2019 and 2023. The Council attributed this to significant levels of funding and Council support for 50 per cent of mileage in the county.²⁷ The Confederation of Passenger Transport told us that bus priority measures had seen journeys in Portsmouth grow, in the year ending March 2024, by 17 per cent.²⁸

20 [The Bus Services Act 2017](#)

21 [Q134](#) [Stephen Rhodes]

22 Department for Transport, [Prime Minister launches £3 billion bus revolution](#), gov.uk, March 2021

23 [Q7](#)

24 Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT) ([BCC0112](#))

25 The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) ([BCC0123](#))

26 Department for Transport ([BCC0044](#))

27 Cornwall Council ([BCC0042](#))

28 Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT) ([BCC0112](#))

The Government's new reforms

12. The Government introduced the Bus Services (No. 2) Bill [Lords] in December 2024. It described the legislation as “the first stop on our journey to delivering better buses across the country” and said, after “decades of failed deregulation,” local leaders would be given new powers to provide services that better meet the needs of passengers.²⁹ The Bill includes provisions to enable access to franchising for all local transport authorities and to strengthen Enhanced Partnerships. It ends the ban on the formation of new municipal bus companies and provides a definition of ‘socially necessary’ bus services (see Chapter 2). In November 2024, it was announced that £1.1 billion in new bus funding for 2025–26 would include £151 million to support a fare cap (at the raised level of £3), £640 million for local authorities to deliver BSIPs, and £285 million for the Bus Service Operators Grant.³⁰ This was followed by the announcement at the 2025 Spending Review of further funding, including Transport for City Region settlements (TCR) (see paragraph 29).

The inquiry

13. We launched our inquiry into buses connecting communities in November 2024 as our first inquiry of the Parliament. We received 122 written submissions from a wide range of contributors, including local transport authorities, combined authorities, charities, and bus users. We took oral evidence from local councils, academics, community transport providers, commercial bus operators, and held a roundtable with bus user groups. We are grateful to all those who shared their time, expertise and experience with us.
14. We would like to extend a particular thanks to those who hosted us during our fact-finding visit to Ireland, including the British Embassy in Dublin, the National Transport Authority, Local Link buses in County Tipperary and many Local Link partners and stakeholders, the Department of Transport, and Minister Seán Canney TD and Senator Mark Duffy. The information and insight they provided has been invaluable to our inquiry.

29 Department for Transport, [Transport Secretary sets the wheels in motion on “biggest overhaul to buses in a generation”](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/transport-secretary-sets-the-wheels-in-motion-on-biggest-overhaul-to-buses-in-a-generation), gov.uk, September 2024

30 HC Deb, 5 November 2024, col 6–8, [Draft Franchising Schemes \(Franchising Authorities\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#).

2 Improving service levels

Disparities in provision

15. The Centre for Cities described current bus provision as a “patchwork of service levels.”³¹ SYSTRA UK observed that “there has long been a disparity between urban and rural areas where services are concerned,” warning that this divide had “widened significantly” over the past decade.³² Somerset Council highlighted the structural challenges faced by rural areas, where “dispersed settlements, limited population between principal settlements, and the lack of a robust customer base” made operating viable services more difficult.³³ Ben Simm, Team Manager for Transport and Policy at Leicestershire County Council, told us that in respect of rural communities, “we find that we are unable necessarily to provide a bus network that caters for them. If they are unable to drive, they become isolated from key facilities”. He noted that buses in the county tended to be organised on radial routes into and out of the city of Leicester.³⁴ “More frequent services” was the most selected option in our survey for what would make respondents more likely to use the bus, chosen by 17.5 per cent. Several respondents to Committee Member Katie Lam’s (Weald of Kent) constituency transport survey said they had stopped using buses because they found them so unreliable.³⁵
16. During a roundtable with bus user groups from across England, we heard of stark disparities in service levels between different regions. In parts of Derbyshire, we were told, some villages had only two-hourly services, three buses a day, or none at all. In Cumbria, it was reported that several areas along the coast had not had any regular bus service for over 20 years, with current provision largely aimed at tourists. Some cities, including York, were said to have better provision than surrounding rural areas, but still faced problems such as limited Sunday services and uncoordinated operator timetables. One participant described the situation as a “postcode lottery”, noting that while some areas enjoyed “spectacularly good” services, these tended to be urban, with rural communities often left behind.

31 Centre for Cities ([BCC0066](#))

32 SYSTRA UK ([BCC0048](#))

33 Somerset Council ([BCC0086](#)), [Q20](#) [Andrew Summers]

34 [Q2](#) [Ben Simm]

35 Katie Lam MP ([BCC0130](#))

17. Against this backdrop, we heard strong calls for a ‘bus service guarantee’ to ensure a consistent baseline of access to bus services across all communities. The RMT echoed calls from CPRE, the countryside charity, for legislation to guarantee a minimum level of provision: specifically, an hourly service to every village, operating seven days a week from 6am to midnight.³⁶ The Campaign for Better Transport advocated for a national guarantee that would set minimum service levels appropriate to different area types, identify where gaps exist, and use these to guide funding decisions. Their research found that 87 per cent of people surveyed supported the principle that every community should be guaranteed at least a basic level of bus service.³⁷ RMT’s own survey of bus workers reinforced this view, with over 90 per cent agreeing that all local communities should have a guaranteed minimum service frequency, and that access to reliable, affordable, and regular bus services should be treated as a basic right.³⁸ Silviya Barrett, Director of Policy and Campaigns at the Campaign for Better Transport added, “we don’t think it is fair that there should be a postcode lottery for what bus services people have access to. It is a social justice issue.”³⁹ She related analysis suggesting that it would cost under £1 billion per year in additional funding to close severe gaps and deliver connectivity enhancements in those wards across the country which need this.⁴⁰
18. Ireland is an example of such a model in practice. A key aspect of the Connecting Ireland programme instituted in 2022 was a commitment that more than 70 per cent of people living outside cities would have access to a public transport service providing “at least three return trips each weekday to a nearby town”. This has had positive impacts on both service provision and patronage (see box below).⁴¹
19. The Department for Transport emphasised that improving local bus services should be done in a way that complemented other forms of public transport, warning that fragmented services risked driving passengers toward car use, increasing congestion and reducing bus reliability. It argued that “investment in measures to improve journey times and reliability [...] promotes patronage and brings down operating costs,” enabling reinvestment in services and creating “a virtuous cycle”.⁴² We asked Simon Lightwood MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Local Transport, for his view on introducing a guaranteed service level for buses. The Minister responded:

36 The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) ([BCC0123](#))

37 Campaign for Better Transport ([BCC0093](#)), [Q52](#) [Silviya Barrett]

38 The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) ([BCC0123](#))

39 [Q52](#) [Silviya Barrett]

40 [Q59](#) [Silviya Barrett]

41 National Transport Authority, [Connecting Ireland ‘rural mobility plan’](#), November 2021

42 Department for Transport ([BCC0044](#))

I do not want to dictate from the centre or take power away from communities. We need to give local leaders the power to shape their services.⁴³

20. While devolution can support more locally tailored transport solutions, our evidence suggested it would have limitations in addressing disparities in provision. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) emphasised that rural and non-city areas had “fewer transport policy and co-ordination levers,” as their devolution arrangements were less advanced than those of major cities.⁴⁴ The West Dorset Western Area Transport Action Group noted that devolution to Dorset Council had “so far had little effect” in their area and was unlikely to deliver change without significantly increased funding.⁴⁵ The Confederation of Passenger Transport warned that while devolution enabled greater local control, it was “not a silver bullet”, and highlighted risks where local transport authorities lacked either the capacity or will to manage devolved funding effectively. They called for “guardrails”, including potential Department intervention, to ensure delivery.⁴⁶

43 [Q210](#)

44 Institute for Public Policy Research ([BCC0095](#))

45 West Dorset Western Area Transport Action Group (WATAG) ([BCC0010](#))

46 Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT) ([BCC0112](#))

Box 1: The Connecting Ireland programme

Our recent visit to Ireland demonstrated the impact that a baseline expectation of service provision can have. Through the Connecting Ireland ‘Rural Mobility Plan’, Ireland’s National Transport Authority (NTA) implemented a five-year national programme to deliver scheduled, reliable bus services to communities outside major towns and cities that were previously under-served or in some cases, completely disconnected.

Prior to the plan’s implementation, rural transport services in Ireland experienced significant challenges, including limited availability and declining usage. In 2019, Social Justice Ireland argued that there was a “huge deficit” of public transport in rural areas and stated that private cars accounted for 74 per cent of all journeys rurally, while public transport represented only 4.8 per cent.⁴⁷

The scale of the change has been significant. Since 2022, over 110 new ‘Local Link’ routes have been introduced across rural Ireland, covering every county.⁴⁸ By 2023, the National Transport Authority had recorded 4.7 million journeys on their rural bus routes, connecting 190 towns.⁴⁹

Patronage since 2019 has grown by 110 per cent, with a 70 per cent year-on-year increase from 2022 to 2023. The National Transport Authority stated that, “as a result of the new or enhanced rural routes added to the Transport for Ireland Public Transport Network in 2022 and 2023 combined, around 500,000 people now have access to public transport”.⁵⁰

47 RTÉ News, [Call for increased public transport provisions in rural areas](#), July 2022

48 Transport for Ireland, [People now using TFI Local Link services 100,000 times a week in rural Ireland](#), November 2024

49 National Transport Authority, [Connecting Ireland Insights](#), Quarter 2 2024

50 National Transport Authority, [Connecting Ireland Insights](#), Quarter 2 2024

21.

CONCLUSION

In larger cities like London, getting from A to B can be as simple as turning up and boarding. In many smaller towns and rural areas, however, whole communities can be cut off with no service at all, or have services that run so infrequently that they do not meaningfully add to people's transport options. Devolving greater control to local authorities could risk simply entrenching such inequality. Communities need to be able to count on having a minimum consistent level of service in order for conventional bus networks to thrive, and to provide a platform for the 'virtuous cycle' of improved service levels driving increased usage, which in turn supports network viability and justifies further investment. In many of the smallest and most isolated communities, however, a traditional bus may not be the best way of meeting needs.

22.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should adopt an ambition for local transport authorities to provide by the end of this Parliament a minimum level of public transport connectivity, supported by long-term funding. As part of this, the Department should publish evidence-led guidance on expected service levels based on settlement type, to improve consistency across regions. Decisions should be made locally about where this baseline level of connectivity is best delivered by a conventional, timetabled bus service, and where it can be provided by alternative models such as demand-responsive transport.

A five-year funding settlement

23. Government funding for buses is split into revenue funding, which can support services and reduced fares, and capital funding, which supports physical infrastructure, including zero emission buses, bus stations and stops, and bus priority schemes. While bus operators receive the majority of their revenue through passenger fares, government support has become an increasing share in recent years. Between 2005 and 2019, public funding made up on average 43 per cent of revenue in the sector, rising to 77 per cent during the pandemic. Public funding to bus operators in 2023–24 accounted for 50 per cent of revenue.⁵¹ Most existing funding streams (including through Bus Service Improvement Plans and the Bus Service Operators Grant) are allocated on a short-term or annual basis.⁵²

51 National Audit Office, [Local bus services in England](#), June 2025

52 Department for Transport ([BCC0044](#))

- 24.** Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority told us that annual funding “restricts our ability for a long-term view of sustainable infrastructure”. They added in reference to their transition to franchising that “a 30-year business plan is very challenging [...] when we have annual funding”.⁵³ Leicestershire County Council said annual funding forced them to be “very reactive” and prevented strategic decision-making.⁵⁴ Naomi Green, Managing Director at England’s Economic Heartland, told us that local areas were not necessarily always asking for more money, but for certainty of funding that would allow decisions to be made about how to use it.⁵⁵ The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transport (CIHT) said that short-term and piecemeal funding frameworks undermined the ability of authorities to plan strategically.⁵⁶ East Suffolk Travel Association and Breckland District Council both criticised reliance on short-term funding cycles, which they argued hindered sustainable interventions and long-term solutions.⁵⁷
- 25.** The Local Government Association stressed that legislative reform alone would not be enough to reverse the decline in services unless it was accompanied by a fundamental overhaul of the way bus funding was structured and delivered. They told us that the main barrier to sustaining and growing networks outside major cities was the absence of adequate, consistent funding. They stressed that long-term funding stability was crucial for delivering reliable services and addressing underlying challenges.⁵⁸
- 26.** Miriam Binsztok, Transport Co-ordination Services Manager at Cornwall Council, argued that the funding of bus services ought to be seen in the context of the benefits it would bring. She told us:
- We need to change the mentality when we are talking about long-term funding. [...] We are going to be reducing the social care bill. We are going to be maximising social mobility, access to education and employment. [...]. Framing that long-term settlement as a long-term investment gives everyone more levers and a greater ability to use that money for the best.⁵⁹
- 27.** Longer-term funding certainty is already in place for other transport modes, at least for capital investment: Network Rail is funded in five-year blocks known as Control Periods, and National Highways’ planning is guided by five-year Road Investment Strategies.⁶⁰ Transport Focus noted

53 [Q135](#) [Judith Barker], Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority ([BCC0076](#)),

54 [Q30](#)

55 [Q204](#)

56 Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation ([BCC0024](#))

57 East Suffolk Travel Association ([BCC0035](#)), Breckland District Council ([BCC0025](#))

58 Local Government Association ([BCC0070](#)), [Q37](#) [Andrew Summers]

59 [Q174](#) [Miriam Binsztok]

60 Network Rail, [Annual report and accounts 2024](#), July 2024

that these models had worked well for rail and road and suggested it would be worth exploring whether a similar approach could benefit the bus sector.⁶¹ The Confederation of Passenger Transport argued that adopting a five-year funding settlement would provide the certainty needed for strategic planning and investment. They said this would support service improvement, expansion, and allow buses to “to support economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability.”⁶²

28. The Department acknowledged the limitations of “targeted funding streams [...] subject to short-term extensions”. It recognised that they restrict the ability of local transport authorities and bus operators to make long-term decisions about the shape of the local bus network.⁶³ The Minister told us that the Department was addressing this through a shift towards multi-year settlements:

We are looking at three-year, day-to-day spending, and four years in terms of capital spending. [...] That will give greater assurance and certainty.⁶⁴

29. The 2025 Spending Review stated that, for bus services, it would provide:

Around £900 million per year to maintain and improve bus services, including taking forward franchising pilots in areas including York and North Yorkshire and Cheshire West and Chester; and this includes extending the £3 bus fare cap—due to end this year—by over a year until March 2027, covering 5,000 bus routes and supporting with cost of living pressures.⁶⁵

It also allocated £15.6 billion to elected mayors through the Transport for City Regions (TCR) settlements for the period 2027–28 to 2031–32, and £2.3 billion via the multi-year Local Transport Fund for improvements such as bus lanes, cycleways, and congestion reduction in areas outside those city regions.⁶⁶

30. **CONCLUSION**

The short-term nature of funding for bus services has hampered local authorities’ ability to improve services. Five-year settlements in other transport sectors like rail and the strategic road network have enabled greater certainty and promoted strategic planning. Bus services, the most widely used form of public transport, require a similar commitment.

61 Transport Focus ([BCC0082](#))

62 Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT) ([BCC0112](#))

63 Department for Transport ([BCC0044](#))

64 [Q264](#)

65 HM Treasury, [Spending Review 2025](#), gov.uk, June 2025

66 HM Treasury, [Spending Review 2025](#), gov.uk, June 2025

31.

RECOMMENDATION

We welcome the Department's intention to move towards multi-year funding for buses but believe it would be beneficial to go further. The Department should move by the end of the current Spending Review period to a five-year funding settlement for bus services, for both capital and revenue spending. This will provide a stronger foundation for improving and maintaining reliable local bus networks, particularly for areas that have suffered decline over a long period.

Rural weighting in the BSIP funding formula

32. When Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding was introduced in 2021, it was awarded through a competitive bidding process. According to the Campaign for Better Transport, only 40 per cent of local transport authorities that applied received a share of the £1.08 billion BSIP funding, and even the successful authorities were awarded only a fraction of the funding they said they requested.⁶⁷ There was great inequality in the outcomes: Silviya Barret told us that, prior to the most recent round of BSIP funding, 10 councils received over £50 per head in bus funding, while 14 received less than £6 per head.⁶⁸ Sherborne Action Group said the BSIP process appeared designed with urban areas in mind and delivered little for rural communities; they described their experience with BSIP bidding as “a mountain of paper with no practical outcome”.⁶⁹ Transport East and England's Economic Heartland have argued that competitive bidding for limited funding pots placed a significant burden on local transport authorities (LTAs), many of which lacked the resources to engage effectively.⁷⁰
33. The Government has changed the process for BSIP funding for 2025–26, basing its distribution on a formula rather than competitive bidding. The formula takes into account each authority's population, total bus mileage, and level of deprivation. The Department told us this change was intended to deliver more consistent outcomes across the country.⁷¹ While some welcomed the change,⁷² SYSTRA UK argued that regional disparities would persist, in part because ‘need’ had been primarily defined by levels of deprivation, which were typically higher in urban areas, without adequately

67 Campaign for Better Transport, [Funding local bus services in England](#), June 2022, [Q58](#) [Silviya Barrett]

68 [Q58](#) [Silviya Barrett]

69 Sherborne Transport Action Group ([BCC0003](#))

70 Enhanced Partnerships: [Delivering better bus services](#), published September 2024

71 Department for Transport ([BCC0044](#))

72 Local Government Association ([BCC0070](#))

accounting for the relative disadvantage faced by rural services.⁷³ Urban metropolitan areas received 67 per cent of the funding available under the previous BSIP regime, despite bus services in rural county authorities having declined by more than twice as much; SYSTRA argued that recent changes would do little to correct this imbalance.⁷⁴ West Dorset’s Western Area Transport Action Group described BSIPs as “long on rhetoric but short on deliverable proposals” that met the needs of rural communities.⁷⁵ Silviya Barrett argued that the new allocations formula needed to be “more transparent and more sophisticated”.⁷⁶

34. We asked the Minister whether rural weighting could be added to the revised formula. He responded that “that could be an area that we will explore as part of this.”⁷⁷

35. **CONCLUSION**

The Department’s shift to needs-based allocation of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding is a welcome and necessary step away from competition. However, the current formula does not explicitly reflect the distinct challenges faced by rural and more isolated areas, such as lower population density, longer journey distances and higher per-passenger operating costs. Without a dedicated rural weighting, there is a risk that these specific needs will continue to be overlooked, and that historic disparities in funding and service provision will persist.

36. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Department should consider introducing a rural weighting into its revised Bus Service Improvement Plan funding formula to reflect the higher per-passenger costs and structural challenges of serving low-density areas. This would help ensure that network improvement ambitions are not undermined by geographic disadvantage.

73 SYSTRA UK ([BCC0048](#))

74 County Councils Network, [Rural bus services at a ‘historic low’, as new report reveals urban locations received two-thirds of flagship government funding](#), July 2023; SYSTRA UK ([BCC0048](#))

75 West Dorset Western Area Transport Action Group (WATAG) ([BCC0010](#))

76 [Q58](#) [Silviya Barrett]

77 [Q262](#)

Reforming the Bus Service Operators Grant

37. The Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) is a fuel subsidy provided by the Department to bus operators, community transport operators and some local transport authorities.⁷⁸ The previous Government proposed reforming the BSOG because they argued it was outdated, environmentally misaligned, and failed to incentivise modern priorities such as zero-emission vehicles, rural provision, and demand-responsive transport; no changes were implemented before the end of the last Parliament, however.⁷⁹ The Department told us it had since taken steps to simplify the funding landscape by consolidating BSIP funding with the portion of BSOG allocated to local authorities, creating a consolidated grant for the first time.⁸⁰
38. Some witnesses questioned whether the current BSOG formula adequately supported rural and smaller communities and called for reform to give local areas greater control over how transport funding was allocated. The Local Government Association told us that it was “not clear that the current formula was fully optimised towards increasing ridership or the sustainability of services in smaller towns or rural areas”.⁸¹ Professor Peter White, Emeritus Professor of Public Transport Systems at the University of Westminster argued that the fuel-consumption-based formula disadvantaged longer rural routes because rural services tended to use less fuel per kilometre, so they received less funding per bus-kilometre than urban services.⁸²

39. **CONCLUSION**

The current Bus Service Operators Grant structure appears to disadvantage rural and low-demand areas, where lower fuel consumption per kilometre and longer average journey lengths can reduce the level of support received. This funding model does little to reflect the operational realities of low-density networks. As the sector transitions away from fossil fuels, a grant based on fuel use risks becoming increasingly misaligned with long-term policy goals. The previous National Bus Strategy recognised this and set out an ambition to reform the Bus Service Operators Grant to better support decarbonisation goals.

78 Department for Transport, [Bus Service Operators Grant: guidance for commercial transport operators](#), gov.uk, July 2024

79 Department for Transport, [Bus Back Better: National Bus Strategy for England](#), gov.uk, March 2021

80 Department for Transport ([BCC0044](#))

81 Local Government Association ([BCC0070](#))

82 Emeritus Professor Peter White ([BCC0028](#)); CPRE, the countryside charity ([BCC0030](#))

40.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should, as soon as practicable, reform the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG). The overarching goal of reform should be to incentivise growth in ridership, particularly across under-served areas, for example instead of mileage the grant could be based on passenger journeys.

Securing socially necessary services

41. The importance of buses in connecting communities with each other and with vital services, even when it is not commercially viable to do so, is recognised in the concept of ‘socially necessary’ bus services. The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) noted that the current deregulated nature of the bus sector can encourage commercial operators to “deprioritise” less profitable routes, often leaving vulnerable communities without a service.⁸³ The Urban Transport Group said that local transport authorities increasingly had to step in to support such services as commercial operators concentrated on more profitable routes.⁸⁴
42. The Bus Services (No. 2) Bill would introduce a new definition of a ‘socially necessary’ local bus service: one that “(a) enables passengers to access- (i) essential goods and services, (ii) economic opportunities (including employment), or (iii) social activities, and (b) if cancelled, is likely to have a material adverse effect on the ability of passengers to access those goods, services, opportunities or activities.”⁸⁵
43. Clause 14 of the Bill would also place a duty on local transport authorities operating under Enhanced Partnerships to maintain and update a list of such services, and to set out what should happen if an operator proposes to cancel or significantly alter a service on their list. This must include a requirement to consider whether alternative arrangements can be made to mitigate any adverse effects of the cancellation or variation. The Government has said these measures would “help to protect the routes that support communities and promote social equity”.⁸⁶ The Minister told us that the purpose was “for passengers to be satisfied that every possible mitigation is made before any changes or cancellations are made to a bus service”.⁸⁷

83 Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation ([BCC0024](#))

84 Urban Transport Group ([BCC0060](#))

85 [Bus Services \(No. 2\) Bill \[Lords\]](#)

86 [Bus Services \(No. 2\) Bill \[HL\] Explanatory notes](#), p 11.

87 [Q235](#)

44. Many witnesses have welcomed the inclusion of a definition in legislation. The Urban Transport Group described it as an opportunity to facilitate closer collaboration between operators and authorities. The Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) said it was better than decisions being left entirely to local discretion as at present.⁸⁸ Miriam Binsztok of Cornwall Council told us that “it is really good when primary legislation recognises the importance of local bus services as a guarantee of human rights”.⁸⁹ Professor Karen Lucas commented that “all buses are socially necessary when it comes down to it.”⁹⁰
45. We asked whether there is a limit on reasonable levels of subsidy for bus services per passenger journey, recognising that the majority of this funding comes from the taxpayer. Silviya Barrett of the Campaign for Better Transport told us that:
- there needs to be a reasonable level of subsidy cut-off, and that would obviously depend on the area. It would not make sense for a bus journey per passenger to cost as much as a taxi fare, which would obviously not be a very good use of public funding. There needs to be a more sophisticated set of metrics created to determine allocations for funding and to determine what are, in effect, socially necessary services and a reasonable level of service.⁹¹
46. Others warned, however, that reforms to support socially necessary bus services could fall short unless backed by ring-fenced funding. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) said the new designation could help improve services but that rural authorities would need access to funding to sustain, protect, and grow applicable routes.⁹² Sherborne Action Group argued that few rural routes were commercially viable and that the proposed reforms would have limited impact unless accompanied by assured financial support.⁹³ Integrated Transport Planning welcomed the definition but stressed that the measure would “need to be backed by funding”.⁹⁴ The Confederation of Passenger Transport warned that, without sufficient funding, local authorities would be unable to sustain socially necessary services when they are no longer commercially viable. They added that the measure needed to have “sufficient teeth, and funding, to really deliver.”⁹⁵

88 Association of Transport Coordinating Officers ([BCC0068](#))

89 [Q196](#) [Miriam Binsztok]

90 [Q46](#) [Professor Karen Lucas]

91 [Q52](#) [Silviya Barrett]

92 Institute for Public Policy Research ([BCC0095](#))

93 Sherborne Transport Action Group ([BCC0003](#))

94 Integrated Transport Planning (part of Royal Haskoning) ([BCC0051](#))

95 Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT) ([BCC0112](#))

47. Concerns were raised about the risk that the new duty could unintentionally encourage operators to withdraw routes. The Association of Transport Coordinating Officers (ATCO) questioned whether there would be an incentive for an operator to withdraw a service if the local authority was duty bound to replace it.⁹⁶ We asked how the requirement to identify socially necessary services within Enhanced Partnerships might improve bus services. The Minister told us that the duty would “support better decision making.”⁹⁷

48. **CONCLUSION**

The Department has not made clear what specific improvements to local bus services it expects the duty to list socially necessary services to deliver. Designating a service as ‘socially necessary’ under an Enhanced Partnership will not automatically guarantee its long-term provision or trigger additional funding, nor will it necessarily improve the frequency and reliability of those services. Without a ring-fenced funding stream and a requirement for operators to commit to a minimum level of provision for socially necessary services, there is a risk that local authorities will not have any practical power to use the new duty to improve services.

49. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Department should ensure that there is funding to support the provision of socially necessary services by ring-fencing a dedicated portion of its bus grant funding or by other means. This will help ensure that the duty to identify such services has practical effect and is not undermined by competing local priorities or budgetary pressures. In addition, operators working within Enhanced Partnerships should be required to commit to a minimum level of provision on routes designated as socially necessary.

50. **RECOMMENDATION**

Growing fare box revenue from commercially viable routes is another possible source of support, in certain circumstances, for socially necessary services. The Department should require local transport authorities to consider using grant or fare box funding to enhance existing local bus services. In exercising the duty, the authority must have regard to growing passenger numbers and the overall sustainability of the network.

96 Association of Transport Coordinating Officers ([BCC0068](#))

97 [Q235](#)

51. Concerns were also raised about the practical application of the new duty to list socially necessary services, particularly the risk of inconsistent interpretation and a lack of transparency from local transport authorities. The North West Surrey Bus Users Group argued that a clear and consistently applied definition was essential for holding authorities accountable for maintaining basic service levels on loss-making routes. They warned that, in the absence of sufficient guidance to date, some authorities had “to a greater or lesser extent abdicated their responsibilities.”⁹⁸ Damien Jones, Deputy Director for Transport Operations at Devon County Council told us that the council had concerns about the need to produce a list: “If you get to a point where that money runs out and you have defined it as socially necessary, how do you then remove that service when you are trying to reduce your budget?”.⁹⁹
52. We asked the Department whether local authorities would be required to publish not just a list of socially necessary services, but also the methodology or formula they used to determine which services qualify. Stephen Fidler, the Department’s Director for Local Passenger Transport & Inclusion, told us:

[...] the formula will, I hope, be based on the kind of advice we give in the guidance. Then [local authorities] will be very clear about what the services affected are. [...] [w]e want operators to know, so a list is going to be quite important at the end of the day.¹⁰⁰

53. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Department should mandate local transport authorities to publish a transparent methodology for how they determine which bus services qualify as socially necessary, to ensure public accountability. The Department should also develop common standards, and guidance, which the local formulas should take into account. This would enable residents to verify, for example, whether lists are based on objective assessments of need rather than being a response to the campaigning power of particular communities.

54. Some of our witnesses argued that the proposed protections offered by the new measure was too narrow. Miriam Binsztok called for a stronger definition and described the one proposed by the Government as “vague”.¹⁰¹ Campaign for Better Transport welcomed the duty to identify existing services but warned they risked overlooking communities that had already lost their services or remained under-served. They argued for a requirement

98 North West Surrey Bus Users Group ([BCC0023](#))

99 [Q197](#) [Damien Jones]

100 [Q251](#)

101 [Q196](#) [Miriam Binsztok]

on authorities to identify both current needs and existing gaps. The Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) highlighted the importance of network safeguards and minimum service standards to secure rural connectivity, adding that these should include the reinstatement and expansion of services, not just protection of those that remained.¹⁰² Silviya Barret told us that the Bill

only proposes requiring local authorities to identify existing services that are socially necessary, and safeguarding those if there is a threat to their cut, but that is not enough. There also needs to be a requirement to map the gaps in provision. Which are the socially and economically necessary services that are not currently there?¹⁰³

55. CONCLUSION

The proposed statutory duty on local transport authorities to list socially necessary services applies only to those already in operation. There is no statutory requirement in the Bus Services (No.2) Bill for authorities to assess unmet needs or identify where new services might be required, although they may do so voluntarily. This creates a risk that gaps in provision are left unaddressed, particularly in rural and under-served areas. Without clear expectations or support for service expansion, the system risks locking in existing patterns of decline.

56. RECOMMENDATION

The Department should make clear that local transport authorities operating within Enhanced Partnerships should not only maintain existing socially necessary services but should also be expected to identify and address areas of unmet need and potential for new services. The Department's vision should be for local authorities to preside over a renaissance in bus services, rather than simply hold the line against continued deterioration. Authorities should be supported to actively grow the local bus network in response to demographic and economic changes, not just manage its decline.

Establishing a national quality standard for bus stops

- 57.** The quality of the passenger experience is central to whether people choose to take the bus and keep using it. Professor Karen Lucas told us that for older people specifically, concerns included safety issues related to

¹⁰² Campaign for Better Transport ([BCC0093](#)), Institute of Public Policy Research ([BCC0095](#))

¹⁰³ [Q58](#) [Silviya Barrett]

waiting at bus stops.¹⁰⁴ Liverpool City Region Combined Authority said that reversing the decline in bus patronage required action on issues like safety and comfort.¹⁰⁵ The Bus Services (No.2) Bill makes some provision relating to the safety and accessibility of bus stops. The Bill proposes to enable the Secretary of State to issue guidance on improving accessibility at stopping places such as bus stops, shelters, and stations. The Bill does not, however, introduce any more general improvement to standards for facilities or better information to be provided at stops.

58. The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) highlighted shortcomings in bus stop infrastructure and its impact. In their evidence, they cited B:Friend, a charity supporting people experiencing loneliness, which shared personal testimony from service users. One participant said, the “issue with transport is not just the vehicle, it’s the bus stop without seats.” Another added, “It’s because of the vandalism that they’re not willing to put a bus shelter in.” The CSJ also noted that, while Transport for London published updated shelter design guidance in 2017, there is currently no equivalent national guidance for bus stop infrastructure.¹⁰⁶
59. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority told us that improving bus stop infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, was prohibitively expensive and currently under-resourced. They argued that if the Government was serious about reversing the decline in bus usage, investment in better bus stops was essential, and called for a national funding programme.¹⁰⁷
60. Concerns were also raised about the reliability and accessibility of real time passenger information at bus stops. The West Dorset Western Area Transport Action Group stressed its importance in reassuring passengers about their journey. They welcomed local investment in digital screens but said the information displayed was often inaccurate and that this was arguably “worse than having nothing at all.”¹⁰⁸ Breckland District Council said that while mobile apps could be helpful, they were often inaccessible to older or digitally excluded residents who relied most on local bus services.¹⁰⁹ One respondent to Committee member Katie Lam MP’s transport survey said an “ineffective” app made local buses harder to use and suggested that live noticeboards at bus stops would give passengers greater confidence.¹¹⁰

104 [Q46](#) [Professor Karen Lucas]

105 Liverpool City Region Combined Authority ([BCC0074](#))

106 Centre for Social Justice ([BCC0004](#)), Transport for London, [Accessible Bus Stop Design Guidance](#), 2017

107 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority ([BCC0076](#))

108 West Dorset Western Area Transport Action Group (WATAG) ([BCC0010](#))

109 Breckland District Council ([BCC0025](#))

110 Katie Lam MP ([BCC0130](#))

61. Some local authorities have taken steps to improve the quality of real time information. Hertfordshire County Council highlighted its Intalink Partnership as a model for delivering coordinated information on its bus services. This offers real time updates in a consistent format at bus stops, but additionally, online and in print. Through Intalink, the Council has established what it described as a “vast real time information estate.”¹¹¹ The Tees Valley Combined Authority has similarly prioritised improving the passenger experience by standardising at-stop information and refurbishing bus stop infrastructure.¹¹²
62. The Campaign for Better Transport has argued for a national quality standard for bus stops, which they describe as “critical pieces of infrastructure”, but often poorly maintained and lacking in basic amenities or useful information. A CBT survey showed that although 86 per cent of respondents lived within a ten-minute walk of a bus stop, 23 per cent were deterred from using services due to poor shelter quality, and 56 per cent said real time information would make them more likely to travel by bus. Only 16 per cent said their nearest stop had a route map or live updates. Their report highlighted the disparity between bus and rail infrastructure standards, stating that the differences reinforced “a two-tier experience”.¹¹³

63. **CONCLUSION**

No national framework or clear design standard to improve the overall quality of bus stop infrastructure or real time information currently exists. Poor quality facilities like damaged shelters or seats and missing or inaccurate real time information undermine bus networks by deterring passengers. People without digital access, or whose bus stops are in black spots for mobile coverage, are disproportionately affected. While some local authorities have made commendable progress in improving real time information systems, such initiatives remain the exception rather than the rule.

64. **RECOMMENDATION**

In order to increase ridership, the Department should establish minimum standards for bus stop facilities and the provision of real time information at bus stops where appropriate. While bus stops are used in different ways and a one-size-fits all approach may not be appropriate, improved bus stop standards should be a national aspiration.

111 Hertfordshire County Council ([BCC0061](#))

112 Tees Valley Combined Authority ([BCC0078](#))

113 The Campaign for Better Transport: [Better Bus Stops: Creating a national bus stop standard](#), December 2024

65.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should bring forward proposals as part of its upcoming Integrated National Transport Strategy for guidance on how local authorities and transport providers can achieve more effective integration between bus timetables and those of other transport modes.

3 Facilitating the transition to franchising

Supporting local authorities to address capacity challenges

66. Franchising gives a local authority greater control over bus services. Under this model, the authority decides details such as routes, fares, service levels, and vehicle standards. Bus companies then compete for contracts to operate services. Although the legal power to franchise services has existed in some form since the Transport Act 2000, the efforts of local transport authorities that sought to regulate bus services—such as Nexus in Tyne and Wear in the mid-2010s—exposed weaknesses in the older legislation. In 2017, the Bus Services Act extended the power to franchise to mayoral combined authorities. Transport for Greater Manchester has completed the process and reported increased passenger numbers.¹¹⁴ Stephen Rhodes, Director of Bus at Transport for Greater Manchester told us that “If the network starts to perform better, more people use it. In that first tranche area of Bolton, Wigan and parts of Salford [...] we have patronage growth of about 13 per cent. More generally across the whole of Greater Manchester, it is around four per cent or five per cent.”¹¹⁵
67. The Bus Services (No. 2) Bill proposes to extend the power to franchise to all local transport authorities. The 2024 Labour Party manifesto argued that:

Local communities have lost control over their bus routes. Fares have increased, routes have disappeared, and services are unreliable. Building on the work of Labour mayors, we will reform the broken system through new powers for local leaders to franchise local bus services [...] This will give local communities in England control over routes and schedules.¹¹⁶

114 Greater Manchester Combined Authority, [Delivering the Bee Network, report to GMCA](#), 12 July 2024 (accessed 4 July 2025)

115 [Q142](#) [Stephen Rhodes]

116 The Labour Party, [‘Change’ manifesto 2024](#), June 2024

- 68.** While franchising offers local transport authorities greater control over services, we heard concerns that many councils might struggle to implement it effectively due to significant gaps in capacity, expertise, and resources. In its June 2025 report on local bus services in England, the National Audit Office identified gaps in local authority capacity and capability as a critical risk, noting that 46 per cent of authorities rated their capacity to deliver local transport as “fairly poor” or “very poor”.¹¹⁷
- 69.** The Chartered Institute of Highways and Transport (CIHT) told us that many authorities lacked the technical expertise required to effectively implement service reforms.¹¹⁸ SYSTRA noted that local authorities would need to assume responsibilities currently managed by private operators, including financial risk and service delivery, demands that would require substantial learning across the sector.¹¹⁹ The Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) told us that decades of constrained public spending had reduced the capacity of many local authorities, particularly smaller unitary and rural councils, both in terms of skilled personnel and financial resources.¹²⁰ Transport Focus warned that franchising might be “a steep hill to climb for smaller authorities, for whom the capacity to simply plan bus services and engage with the local community may be the limit of their capability.”¹²¹
- 70.** The National Audit Office’s report estimated that the cost for a local transport authority to transition to full franchising would range from £13 million to £22 million, depending on its size.¹²² The report noted that it would involve “significant planning and commercial preparation”.¹²³ Midlands Connect also questioned whether local authorities could absorb the costs associated with franchising at a time when budgets were already stretched, as well as flagging the financial risk taken on under a franchised model.¹²⁴ More broadly, Naomi Green, Managing Director at England’s Economic Heartland told us that currently, Enhanced Partnerships do not provide local authorities with a structured way to assess whether transitioning to a franchising model would be viable, and there is no existing capacity tool to support this analysis.¹²⁵

117 National Audit Office, [Local bus services in England](#), June 2025

118 Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation ([BCC0024](#))

119 SYSTRA UK ([BCC0048](#))

120 Association of Transport Coordinating Officers ([BCC0068](#))

121 Transport Focus ([BCC0082](#)), [Q157](#) [Judith Barker]

122 National Audit Office, [Local bus services in England](#), June 2025

123 National Audit Office, [Local bus services in England](#), June 2025

124 Midlands Connect ([BCC0056](#))

125 [Q181](#) [Naomi Green]

71. Some pointed to the Bus Centre of Excellence (BCoE) as a key mechanism to support local authorities in developing the skills and expertise needed to deliver effective reform. The Department established the BCoE in early 2023 as part of its National Bus Strategy, partnering with the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) to build capacity across the bus sector.¹²⁶ The Department told us that the BCoE had delivered sessions on bus reform, including franchising advice from the Competition and Markets Authority and case studies on incremental network changes elsewhere, such as Jersey.¹²⁷
72. The Centre was broadly welcomed by witnesses as a potential mechanism for building local authority capacity, such as by promoting skills and development.¹²⁸ Graham Vidler, Chief Executive at the Confederation of Passenger Transport, told us that the BCoE had “a really important role to play” in training and sharing best practice.¹²⁹ The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) suggested expanding the BCoE to provide centralised support, guidance and knowledge-sharing.¹³⁰

73. **CONCLUSION**

We welcome the Government’s ambition to enable local transport authorities to undertake franchising. However, many local authorities continue to face operational and capacity challenges which may be further strained by implementing such a complex reform. The Department must take a greater role in strengthening local authority capacity to ensure effective implementation.

74. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Department should expand the Bus Centre of Excellence (BCoE) to include a dedicated support strand for rural and other local transport authorities which may struggle to implement franchising successfully within their current capacity. This strand should focus on building local capacity by providing access to legal and procurement advice and establishing embedded regional advisory teams. The BCoE should also help reduce administrative burdens by developing standardised templates for key documents such as data-sharing and non-disclosure agreements and offer training in the commercial and operational aspects of running bus services.

126 Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, [Government launches Bus Centre of Excellence](#), March 2023

127 Department for Transport ([BCC0044](#)), [Q214](#)

128 Midlands Connect ([BCC0056](#))

129 [Q157](#) [Graham Vidler]

130 Institute for Public Policy Research ([BCC0095](#))

Enabling early access to data

75. In February 2025, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority took a formal decision to proceed with bus franchising.¹³¹ Judith Barker, the Authority’s Executive Director for Place and Connectivity, explained that their business case had to be developed using a narrow evidence base and limited data. She noted that much of the relevant data was commercially sensitive, unverifiable, or unavailable unless services were directly contracted. As a result, auditors asked the authority to rely on national-level data. She told us that improvements in franchising readiness would require better local data collection and the resources to support it.¹³² Miriam Binsztok of Cornwall Council echoed this, saying: “If we want to make a decision to franchise, we are going to need more access to data. [...] Is there any way that local authorities can have access to data earlier in the process?”¹³³
76. The Department’s Director for Local Passenger Transport and Inclusion, Stephen Fidler, confirmed that local authorities needed to have given the formal notice to begin the franchising process before they could access the relevant data. The Department stated that it is working to improve authorities’ access to punctuality and performance data to support local decision-making.¹³⁴

77. **CONCLUSION**
Lack of access to consistent data about current services to support business cases creates an unnecessary barrier to franchising. The Department’s approach puts the cart before the horse: local authorities need access to the full range of relevant information before deciding whether to pursue franchising.

78. **RECOMMENDATION**
The Department should set out a clear framework to ensure that local transport authorities have early access to operator data on patronage, fares and costs when undertaking a statutory assessment for bus franchising. The framework should include defined timescales for data provision, guidance to enable consistent data gathering and safeguards for commercially sensitive information, enabling informed decisions before commercial risks are taken.

131 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, [Mayor announces biggest bus overhaul in 40 years with move to public control](#), February 2025

132 [Q147](#)

133 [Q190](#) [Miriam Binsztok]

134 [Q229](#)

Embedding improvements in worker contracts under franchising

79. Unite the Union told us that, in the absence of a strong national agreement, pay and conditions for bus workers were set through fragmented local deals that created a “race to the bottom”.¹³⁵ There is clear evidence, they continued, that poor pay and working conditions were contributing to difficulties in retaining drivers, with many leaving the sector for better-paid or less demanding roles elsewhere.¹³⁶ A survey of over 500 bus workers by the RMT union found that 77 per cent believed the sector was facing a recruitment and retention crisis, with nearly 90 per cent reporting colleagues moving to other sectors such as HGV driving. Low pay (73 per cent) and long hours (74 per cent) were the most cited reasons for leaving.¹³⁷
80. Unite argued that the Government’s franchising reforms presented an opportunity to reverse this trend by embedding better terms into contracts. In London, Unite worked with the Mayor to introduce a licensing system in 2017. They stated:

The licence for London covering 25000 bus workers in the capital [...] puts an end to the previous system where bus drivers moving from one bus company to another would be paid the lowest driving wage as if they were starting their careers, even though they may have driven with another company at a pay grade equivalent to their level of service and experience. [...] Unite would like to see this replicated across other cities in Great Britain.¹³⁸

Simon Mathieson, Director of Operational Excellence at First Bus told us that improvements to working conditions had improved recruitment and retention at the company:

We have worked hard to solve the bus driver shortage. [...] There was a significant shortage across the industry and in First [...] We are the largest bus operator to pay a real living wage. We have invested in flexible working arrangements, healthcare for our drivers, learning centres and fair wage awards, so it has largely been solved for First Bus.¹³⁹

135 Unite the Union ([BCC0120](#))

136 [Q5](#) [Robert Morton]

137 The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) ([BCC0123](#))

138 Unite the Union ([BCC0120](#))

139 [Q35](#) [Simon Mathieson]

81.

CONCLUSION

The Government's franchising reforms offer a clear opportunity to embed stronger and fairer employment practices across the sector. Better pay, fair progression, and stable conditions are not only essential for retaining drivers but are also critical to maintaining reliable and high-quality bus services. Without addressing these workforce issues, the wider goals of reform risk being undermined.

82.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should consider the practicalities of requiring local transport authorities which adopt bus franchising to incorporate improved employment standards for bus workers. This should include minimum pay rates—based on the London model—and fair pay progression based on a driver's experience rather than their length of service with a specific operator. This would help to avoid the risk that operators bidding for franchises base their bids on unsustainably poor pay and conditions for staff.

4 Bus fares and concessions

Strategic aims for bus fares

- 83.** In January 2023, the then Government introduced a £2 cap on local bus fares, funded centrally. It had two aims: to reduce the cost of living, particularly for low-income households, by reducing the cost of travel, and to support recovery in bus patronage by simplifying and reducing the cost of travel and increasing passenger confidence.¹⁴⁰ Following several extensions, the present Government confirmed in October 2024 that a cap on single fares at the new level of £3 would remain in place until the end of 2025. The Department stated this would cost £151 million.¹⁴¹ At the June 2025 Spending Review, the Chancellor announced it would continue until March 2027.¹⁴²
- 84.** In its evaluation of the first 10 months of the fare cap, the Department found that it had contributed to an estimated five per cent increase in bus use, within a broader 13 per cent rise in patronage outside London over the same period. The Government noted that once unquantified benefits (such as wellbeing gains and increased access) were considered, the policy could reasonably be classed as offering ‘low’ value for money overall.¹⁴³ The Secretary of State for Transport, Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP, told us in April 2025 that the Government would “be making an assessment of the £3 fare cap.”¹⁴⁴ The Minister for Local Transport later explained to us that continuing the cap at the £3 level was a way of sustaining some form of fare control.¹⁴⁵
- 85.** Despite the cap, the Department’s most recent statistics show that local bus fares in England rose by three per cent between March 2023 and March 2024. Over the longer term, bus and coach fares in the UK have increased by 505 per cent since 1987, outpacing both rail fares and motoring costs.¹⁴⁶

140 SYSTRA, Frontier Economics for the Department for Transport, [Evaluation of the £2 Bus Fare Cap](#), gov.uk, May 2023

141 Department for Transport, [Over £1 billion to boost bus services across the country as bus fares capped at £3](#), gov.uk, October 2024

142 HC Deb, 11 June 2025, [col 985](#)

143 SYSTRA, Frontier Economics for the Department for Transport, [Evaluation of the £2 Bus Fare Cap](#), May 2023

144 Oral evidence taken on 23 April 2025, [Q139](#) Heidi Alexander

145 [Q265](#)

146 Department for Transport, [Annual bus statistics: year ending March 2024 \(revised\)](#), gov.uk, March 2025

Inflation over the same period was 280 per cent.¹⁴⁷ Unite the Union told us that “bus fares have more than tripled since deregulation in 1986, hitting low-income households hardest,” with their national officer, Robert Morton telling us fares had increased “hand over fist”.¹⁴⁸ According to the Department’s index of average fares, in the last decade real-terms price rises were higher in English non-metropolitan areas (up 20.5 per cent) than in metropolitan areas (up 18.5 per cent).¹⁴⁹ Other witnesses also identified fare increases as a contributing factor in the decline in bus use.¹⁵⁰

86. Our survey found that 30 per cent of respondents reported affordability as a factor affecting whether they chose to take the bus.¹⁵¹ Respondents described how changes to service patterns had increased the number of changes required for even short journeys, often resulting in passengers paying double fares for what were previously single-fare routes. One parent noted that their teenager faced full adult fares due to living on a boundary between two areas; they said they would be encouraging their teenager to learn to drive. Another said recent route changes had turned a short three-mile commute into a two-bus journey with a long wait and higher cost.
87. We heard that inconsistent fare structures and ticketing rules between areas and operators created confusion for passengers and undermined efforts to grow bus use. Silviya Barret told us that a “simpler fare structure” would be beneficial.¹⁵² The Tees Valley Combined Authority told us that competitive funding processes had created disparities between neighbouring regions, leading to misaligned fare offers. They said this resulted in “confusing messaging” for passengers travelling cross-boundary in to and out of the Tees Valley.¹⁵³ Get Swindon Moving echoed this concern, noting that passengers struggled to navigate differences between operators, fare types, and concession rules, and argued that such complexity acted as a strong deterrent to potential bus users.¹⁵⁴ Somerset Council said the 50 per cent rise in the cap was “causing concern for our major operator who anticipates it will have a significant impact on patronage and subsequently revenue.”¹⁵⁵

147 House of Commons Library, [Inflation in the UK: Economic indicators](#), July 2025

148 [Q6](#) [Robert Morton]

149 Department for Transport, [Bus statistics data tables](#), gov.uk, June 2025

150 Unite the Union ([BCC0120](#)), University of Hertfordshire Smart Mobility Unit ([BCC0107](#))

151 To explore the free text responses, a key word analysis was conducted in Microsoft Power BI. All three free text responses were assessed for frequently used words and phrases linked to recurring themes we have heard in evidence. Mentions of words such as “fare”, “ticket”, “cheap”, “expensive” or “afford” were tagged as Affordability (239 responses)

152 [Q58](#) [Silviya Barrett]

153 Tees Valley Combined Authority ([BCC0078](#))

154 Get Swindon Moving ([BCC0083](#))

155 Somerset Council ([BCC0086](#))

- 88.** Some of our evidence characterised the fare cap as a limited measure. Arriva UK Bus described it as “a positive and modestly effective tool to help boost patronage”.¹⁵⁶ CPRE argued that the cap, like other recent funding initiatives, had been ad hoc and short term, contributing to planning uncertainty.¹⁵⁷ Get Swindon Moving noted that while affordability mattered to passengers, focusing solely on fare levels, such as through caps or fare-free schemes could not sustainably increase bus ridership.¹⁵⁸
- 89.** West Yorkshire Combined Authority told us that rural residents, who typically take longer journeys, were more affected by fare increases, while urban residents were more likely to benefit from lower single fares already below the cap level.¹⁵⁹ Professor Peter White concurred that the fare cap had its greatest effect outside large urban areas, where fares were typically higher, and the cap therefore implied a larger discount. He observed that between 2022–23 and 2023–24, bus trips rose by 13.4 per cent in ‘urban with significant rural’ areas and 10.1 per cent in ‘largely rural’ areas, compared to 7.4 per cent nationally.¹⁶⁰
- 90.** We asked whether the Department has a strategy for bus fares; the Minister’s response focused solely on the fare cap.¹⁶¹

156 Arriva UK Bus ([BCC0046](#))

157 CPRE, the countryside charity ([BCC0030](#))

158 Get Swindon Moving ([BCC0083](#))

159 West Yorkshire Combined Authority ([BCC0063](#))

160 Emeritus Professor Peter White ([BCC0028](#))

161 [Q265](#) [Simon Lightwood]

Box 2: Ireland's strategic priorities for fares

During our visit to Ireland, we heard how, in January 2023, the National Transport Authority (NTA) introduced a national fares strategy to provide “better value, greater transparency and equality in respect of journey distance.”

The strategy was intended to resolve long-standing issues around inconsistency, complexity, and perceived unfairness, with the NTA acknowledging that one of the reasons for changing the fare structure was that “the fare charged for similar distance trips can vary considerably depending on the journey and location in Ireland” and that “there are no obvious rules for how bus fares are generated in many areas.” The NTA set out three key objectives for reforming fare strategy, they included that fares should be “equitable,” “consistent,” and “easy to understand.” The new national fare structure aimed to “significantly reduce the variability in fares charged and anomalies across the network” and to create a flexible fare structure which could “be tweaked to support a growing public transport network and demand.”¹⁶²

We also heard that the Irish Government had deliberately kept fares low as part of a broader social policy, including a 20 per cent fare reduction in response to the cost-of-living crisis and a further 50 per cent reduction for young adults. As a result, fares are now described as “extremely low,” with no revenue returned to the public purse from Public Service Obligation (PSO) routes. Extensive subsidy has helped the NTA to meet its strategic objectives, although it was acknowledged that such an approach is facilitated by Ireland's current budgetary surplus and robust public finances. Officials told us that while affordability was not the only driver of modal shift, the decision to invest heavily in fare reduction was grounded in goals around social inclusion, access to education and services, and wider environmental benefits.

162 National Transport Authority, [National Fares Strategy](#), January 2023

91.

CONCLUSION

Bus fares in England have risen faster than inflation and more steeply than other transport modes. While the fare cap has been broadly welcomed as a way of reining in unaffordable fares, it is a short-term measure, not a substitute for long-term policy. There is no clear national strategy guiding what fares are intended to achieve: promoting modal shift, improving affordability, increasing ridership, supporting network viability, or delivering wider social and economic goals. In contrast, Ireland has introduced a national fares strategy focused on consistency, equity, and simplicity. England could benefit from a similarly structured approach.

92.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should develop, in partnership with local transport authorities and within 12 months, clear strategic priorities for what bus fares are aiming to achieve. It should articulate the strategic purpose of fare structures and guide consistent, transparent fare-setting at the local level. These priorities need to produce a coherent vision for how fare-box revenue and public funding will work together to produce the desired outcomes.

Concessionary fares

93. High bus fares and limited local provision can severely restrict young people's access to education, employment, and other opportunities. Leicestershire County Council noted that public transport was "a critical service for those [...] who do not have access to a private vehicle or are unable to drive," especially younger people accessing education and work.¹⁶³ Somerset Council told us that some young people faced three to four hours of daily travel to reach education, affecting both their learning and social wellbeing.¹⁶⁴ East Riding of Yorkshire Council said young people in rural areas faced major obstacles to accessing employment and training, with cost cited as a significant constraint.¹⁶⁵ The British Youth Council Youth Select Committee reported in March 2024 that "[Y]oung people face difficulties accessing free and discounted bus fares, and [...] bus fare support varies significantly across the UK, with some areas offering no support beyond the age of 16."¹⁶⁶

163 Leicestershire County Council ([BCC0072](#))

164 Somerset Council ([BCC0086](#))

165 Mr Colin Walker ([BCC0006](#))

166 British Youth Council Youth Select Committee 2024, [The impact of the cost of living crisis on young people](#), March 2024

94. While some local authorities have taken steps to support young people with concessionary fares, this provision varies significantly across England and is entirely at local discretion. Silviya Barrett argued that there was “a big case to be made about standardising” support for young people’s concessions nationwide.¹⁶⁷ In areas where targeted schemes have been introduced, the benefits are already apparent. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority launched the £1 Tiger Bus Pass in May 2024, allowing under-25s to travel anywhere in the region for £1 per journey. The scheme has received over 35,000 applications and supported more than 730,000 journeys, and the Combined Authority described it as a “lifeline” for students.¹⁶⁸
95. By contrast, national concessionary travel in England is currently available only to older and disabled people through the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS).¹⁶⁹ Under Section 146 of the Transport Act 2000, local authorities are required to fund this scheme, which entitles eligible individuals to free off-peak local bus travel.¹⁷⁰ As of the year ending March 2024, 8.8 million older and disabled concessionary travel passes had been issued in England, an increase of one per cent on the previous year.¹⁷¹ There is currently no equivalent national standardised provision for young people.¹⁷²
96. England’s approach to concessionary fares differs from Scotland and Wales, where young people benefit from national concessionary schemes. Scotland’s Young Persons’ Free Bus Travel Scheme for under-22s, for example, has significantly expanded access and independence. According to Transport Scotland’s evaluation, 69 per cent of respondents said the scheme helped them or their child travel and do more independently, and only 13 per cent of users reported missing out on opportunities due to travel barriers, compared to 22 per cent of non-users.¹⁷³ Wales also operates a national concessionary scheme, MyTravelPass, which offers a one-third discount on bus fares for 16- to 21-year-olds; an evaluation found that around half of journeys made using the pass would not have occurred otherwise, evidencing the scheme’s role in expanding access and reducing

167 [Q49](#)

168 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority ([BCC0076](#))

169 Department for Transport, [Managing the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme \(ENCTS\)](#), gov.uk, July 2024

170 [Transport Act 2000, Section 146, Part II](#)

171 Department for Transport, [Concessionary travel statistics: year ending March 2024](#), gov.uk, updated March 2025

172 [Q58](#) [Professor Karen Lucas]

173 Transport Scotland, [Impact on young people and families](#)

costs for families.¹⁷⁴ An example of a regional scheme in England is London, where young people aged 16 to 17 can receive free and discounted travel on all Transport for London (TfL) services with a Zip Oyster photocard.¹⁷⁵

97. The Minister told us that the Department is currently reviewing the ENCTS but expressed caution about extending it due to cost: “It costs something like £700 million [...] to give the elderly and disabled access to free bus travel. In any expansion of that, we need to maintain the financial stability of the scheme.” He also noted that local areas are free to introduce their own youth concessions using their bus funding allocations, if they choose to do so.¹⁷⁶ While the Minister highlighted the cost of expanding the ENCTS, Stephen Frost of the IPPR set out the social costs of the status quo, citing Social Market Foundation research saying that high transport costs are pushing an additional five million people below the poverty line.¹⁷⁷

98. **CONCLUSION**

Public transport remains a major barrier to employment for young people, especially in under-served areas where limited services and high fares make it harder to reach college, training, entry-level jobs, or shift-based work. In some areas, transport is restricting opportunity rather than enabling it. England’s patchwork of local youth concessions contrasts with national schemes in Scotland and Wales. A coherent national approach to ensure fair access across England is essential if the Government is serious about driving economic growth, which depends on removing barriers to education, training, and employment for the next generation.

99. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Department’s review of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme should consider piloting a free bus pass for under-22s, valid for travel at any time of day. This would support access to work and skills opportunities for younger people and help embed long-term public transport use.

174 Senedd Petitions Committee, [Freedom to thrive: Free and accessible public transport for young people](#), Welsh Parliament, May 2024, para 53

175 Transport for London, [16+ Zip Oyster photocard](#), 2025

176 [Q268](#)

177 [Q42](#) [Stephen Frost]

5 A role for alternative service models

A policy for integration

- 100.** Throughout this inquiry, we have heard evidence about poor connectivity and the limitations of conventional bus services in meeting transport needs, especially outside major cities. In this context, Demand-Responsive Transport (DRT) and community transport emerge as potential tools for addressing the gaps in mainstream provision.¹⁷⁸
- 101.** The Department for Transport has defined Demand-Responsive Transport (DRT) as:
- A flexible service that provides shared transport to users who specify their desired location and time of pick-up and drop-off. DRT can complement fixed route public transport services and improve mobility in low-density areas and at low-demand times of day.¹⁷⁹
- DRT is considered to have particular potential in rural settings because of its flexibility and ability to respond to dispersed demand patterns, overcoming the limitations of low ridership and rigid timetables.¹⁸⁰ Max Sugarman, Chief Executive of Intelligent Transport Systems UK, told us that DRT offers flexible, community-focused transport by moving away from fixed routes. He added that models vary: some serve specific zones, others follow set routes without fixed stops, or act as feeders to rail or bus networks.¹⁸¹
- 102.** Community transport (CT) is a broad term referring to local road passenger transport services provided by charitable and not-for-profit organisations, typically in areas where commercial services are less viable. Caroline Whitney, England Director at the Community Transport Association told us that, from the community transport sector perspective, demand-responsive

178 Transport for All ([BCC0014](#))

179 Department for Transport, [Demand responsive transport: local authority toolkit](#), gov.uk, April 2022

180 UK100 ([BCC0067](#))

181 [Q64](#) [Max Sugarman]

transport is not a new concept and operators have been delivering it “for over 60 years”. She stated that what is new is the role of digital technology.¹⁸²

- 103.** Section 19 and Section 22 permits are regulatory frameworks that enable community transport operators to provide accessible, non-commercial transport services, with Section 19 permits typically used for closed-group transport (for example, for specific community groups) and Section 22 permits allowing services open to the general public. The 2024 Mapping England report found that members of the Community Transport Association served over 13 million passengers annually, providing accessible transport for those unable to use conventional services. Most operators reported rising demand, and 67 per cent said they lacked enough volunteers to meet it.¹⁸³ Caroline Whitney told us that the sector had “significant issues” with driver recruitment.¹⁸⁴
- 104.** Demand-responsive and community transport schemes have successfully expanded travel options in non-urban areas. Transport for the North highlighted the Go-Too service in Cheshire East, funded through the Rural Mobility Fund, which has provided a lifeline for residents without access to fixed-route buses.¹⁸⁵ CPRE pointed to community-run services like the Daffodil Line in Ledbury and the Ullswater Hopper, which operate in areas without conventional buses and help both residents and visitors travel without needing a car.¹⁸⁶
- 105.** The effectiveness and reach of alternative models depend heavily on the funding and support available to them. Alistair Hands, Managing Director of Regions for Arriva Group, told us that the commercial operation of DRT is “really challenging”.¹⁸⁷ Caroline Whitney noted that 62 per cent of Community Transport Association members relied on local authority funding, which she described as “the backbone” of the sector.¹⁸⁸ The Rural Mobility Fund (RMF) was announced by the Department in March 2021, providing a £20 million allocation to trial demand-responsive transport solutions in rural and suburban areas of England.¹⁸⁹ While the RMF has helped to establish some new demand-responsive and community transport services, these schemes often lack long-term financial certainty. The Association of Transport

182 [Q70](#) [Caroline Whitney]

183 Community Transport Association, [Mapping England: The State of the Sector for Community Transport in England \(2024\)](#), [Q86](#) [Caroline Whitney]

184 [Q86](#) [Caroline Whitney]

185 Transport for the North ([BCC0113](#))

186 CPRE, the countryside charity ([BCC0030](#))

187 [Q176](#) [Alistair Hands]

188 [Q116](#)

189 Department for Transport, [Rural Mobility Fund](#), gov.uk, March 2021

Coordinating Officers (ATCO) noted that no clear approach had yet emerged for sustaining such services once initial funding ended, and the Community Transport Association described the RMF as a “missed opportunity.”¹⁹⁰

- 106.** Lack of long-term financial viability and low public awareness have contributed to the challenges of sustaining demand-responsive transport (DRT) services beyond initial pilot phases. Transport Focus observed that many DRT schemes have only lasted for the duration of their pilot funding, with long-term financial viability proving difficult once subsidies end.¹⁹¹ Committee member Katie Lam MP’s survey in her Kent constituency suggested that public awareness and uptake could be significant barriers to growing and sustaining DRT services. While many respondents supported the idea of smaller or on-demand minibuses, fewer than one in five had heard of the Kent Karrier service, and just one person reported using it regularly.¹⁹²
- 107.** Even where demand exists and funding is available, the development and sustainability of DRT and other alternative models are often limited by regulatory complexity and operational fragmentation. Loughborough University pointed to the complex and disjointed frameworks for driver, vehicle, route, and operator licensing, which it said restricted the development of new hybrid models of demand-responsive transport.¹⁹³ The University of Hertfordshire’s Smart Mobility Unit noted that inconsistent regulation and funding across buses, taxis, community transport, and specialist services create silos that hinder integrated transport solutions, particularly in rural areas.¹⁹⁴
- 108.** The Minister recognised the importance of alternative service models in areas where conventional public transport is not viable. He highlighted the potential of Enhanced Partnerships and franchising to support integration, describing franchising as “a fantastic mechanism to incorporate demand-responsive transport.”¹⁹⁵ Despite this recognition, many providers say that they struggle to have their voice heard when local arrangements are being determined or Enhanced Partnerships discussed. Caroline Whitney, the England Director and Head of Membership Services at the Community Transport Association stated that, for the community transport sector, “[T]he biggest challenge is that [...] there is no duty for us to be round the table.”¹⁹⁶

190 Association of Transport Coordinating Officers ([BCC0068](#)), Community Transport Association ([BCC0085](#))

191 Transport Focus ([BCC0082](#))

192 Katie Lam MP ([BCC0130](#))

193 Loughborough University ([BCC0050](#))

194 University of Hertfordshire Smart Mobility Unit ([BCC0107](#))

195 [Q288](#)

196 [Q107](#)

109. Witnesses also expressed concerns about the VAT treatment of DRT services, which they said created perverse incentives for local authorities. Both Intelligent Transport Systems UK and the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation highlighted that current VAT rules encourage the use of larger vehicles, those with 10 or more seats, since fares on smaller, more environmentally efficient vehicles are subject to VAT. This increases costs for local authorities and undermines the environmental case for DRT.¹⁹⁷ ITS UK urged the Government to use the outcome of its 2024 consultation on VAT and private hire vehicles to address this issue.¹⁹⁸ Max Sugarman called this a “regulatory issue that is ultimately blocking flexibility for local authorities.”¹⁹⁹

110. CONCLUSION

Alternative transport models such as DRT and community transport are essential for improving connectivity where conventional services are unviable. This makes them a possible model for sustaining socially necessary services. Their potential is being undermined, however, by fragmented regulation, inconsistent funding streams, and a lack of integration in mainstream transport policy and local planning. The Government should establish a coherent national framework that supports the integration of these models, ensures sustainable funding, and provides consistent guidance for delivery.

197 Intelligent Transport Systems UK (ITS UK) ([BCC0091](#)), Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation ([BCC0024](#)), [Q119](#) [Max Sugarman]

198 HM Treasury, HM Revenue & Customs and Department for Transport, [Consultation on the VAT Treatment of Private Hire Vehicles](#), gov.uk, 18 April 2024,

199 [Q119](#) [Max Sugarman]

111.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should within 18 months develop a dedicated policy and regulatory framework for alternative and complementary public transport models, including Demand-Responsive Transport (DRT) and community transport. This framework should include growing and expanding their role in serving poorly connected places and in connecting passengers to fixed-route public transport networks. The framework should include:

- clear guidance on DRT governance and a framework for integration with local transport plans;
- guidance on providing socially necessary services through a DRT model;
- a review of existing funding streams across departments (such as. home-to-school, health, and social care transport) to identify opportunities for coordination and shared use of DRT services;
- optional access to nationally procured digital tools (such as routing software or booking platforms) to support local authorities in designing and managing DRT schemes;
- guidance on how both community transport and demand-responsive transport providers should be included in Enhanced Partnerships, to support greater collaboration and ensure inclusive planning; and
- the exploration of rural mobility models that prioritise improving access to services, rather than simply replicating traditional public transport, including the role of shared or private car use and lift-sharing schemes as part of a flexible, place-based approach.

112.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should consider, with the Treasury, reform to the current VAT rules applicable to DRT services. This should aim to recognise the character of DRT as a public transport service, even when vehicles smaller than a Public Service Vehicle are used.

6 A strategy for buses

113. We asked the Minister for Local Transport, Simon Lightwood MP, what changes the public could expect in bus services by the end of this Parliament. He told us that the Government intended the Bus Services (No. 2) Bill to deliver services that were more affordable, reliable, faster, and better integrated.²⁰⁰ When pressed on whether people in England would see more buses to more places by the end of the Parliament, he said: “that is certainly our intention, and we are doing everything possible to make it happen.”²⁰¹

114. Some have questioned whether the Government’s reforms provide a sufficient pathway to achieving these aims. Norfolk County Council told us they did not believe bus franchising would be a “silver bullet” for improving services, particularly in rural areas. During Committee stage of the Bill in the Lords, the Earl of Effingham set out broader concerns about the legislation’s capacity to deliver policy outcomes:

I am concerned that the Government, in their haste to overhaul the system, are pushing us back to a pre-1980s model without providing any firm evidence that this will actually work in the context of modern Britain. The Government’s proposed measures lack the necessary data, analysis or proof that they will lead to real, tangible improvements in bus services.²⁰²

115. These concerns align with calls from several of our witnesses for a stronger, overarching strategic direction for the sector. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) told us that the ambitions of the previous National Bus Strategy fell short and lacked a joined-up approach. They argued that reviving the bus network and securing a meaningful shift towards greater bus use would require stronger strategic leadership, clearer governance arrangements, and more consistent funding. They emphasised “the need for a principle-led national strategy for buses” to guide delivery.²⁰³ The West Cumbria Bus Users Group described the current approach to strategy as “all too piecemeal” and called for national oversight and coordination.²⁰⁴

200 [Q305](#)

201 [Q306](#)

202 HL Deb, 28 January 2025, [cols](#) 26–27

203 Institute for Public Policy Research ([BCC0095](#))

204 West Cumbria Bus Users Group ([BCC0022](#))

The Rural Services Network similarly linked current challenges to a long-standing absence of policy planning tailored to the specific needs of rural communities.²⁰⁵

116. CONCLUSION

We welcome the Government's reforms aimed at devolving greater control to local authorities. This will not on its own, however, be a sufficient vehicle for delivering all the positive outcomes the Minister described as wanting for bus services. There is no consensus that structural reform alone can achieve aims such as increased connectivity, better integration, and more affordable journeys. Given the diversity of regional and local priorities, a national statement of strategic goals is needed to provide clear direction and coherence, setting out not only the Government's ambitions for the bus network, but also the pathway for achieving them. Without this, the risk remains that delivery will be uneven and the wider policy aims of reform left unmet.

117. RECOMMENDATION

The Government should within 18 months publish a new national policy for buses that sets out a clear vision for what a successful bus network looks like and what it should achieve. It should outline how buses interact with policy objectives such as supporting economic growth, encouraging modal shift, improving affordability, reducing environmental impact and tackling regional disparity in network provision. It should provide a basis for renewal of bus services in England and transformative growth in ridership.

118. RECOMMENDATION

This vision should also be complemented by a new regional performance metric that enables meaningful comparison of services across different parts of the country. The metric should cover key indicators such as service frequency, reliability and passenger satisfaction, and it should be used to benchmark progress for improved connectivity across different local transport authorities.

205 Rural Services Network ([BCC0098](#))

Conclusions and recommendations

Improving service levels

1. In larger cities like London, getting from A to B can be as simple as turning up and boarding. In many smaller towns and rural areas, however, whole communities can be cut off with no service at all, or have services that run so infrequently that they do not meaningfully add to people's transport options. Devolving greater control to local authorities could risk simply entrenching such inequality. Communities need to be able to count on having a minimum consistent level of service in order for conventional bus networks to thrive, and to provide a platform for the 'virtuous cycle' of improved service levels driving increased usage, which in turn supports network viability and justifies further investment. In many of the smallest and most isolated communities, however, a traditional bus may not be the best way of meeting needs. (Conclusion, Paragraph 21)
2. The Department should adopt an ambition for local transport authorities to provide by the end of this Parliament a minimum level of public transport connectivity, supported by long-term funding. As part of this, the Department should publish evidence-led guidance on expected service levels based on settlement type, to improve consistency across regions. Decisions should be made locally about where this baseline level of connectivity is best delivered by a conventional, timetabled bus service, and where it can be provided by alternative models such as demand-responsive transport. (Recommendation, Paragraph 22)
3. The short-term nature of funding for bus services has hampered local authorities' ability to improve services. Five-year settlements in other transport sectors like rail and the strategic road network have enabled greater certainty and promoted strategic planning. Bus services, the most widely used form of public transport, require a similar commitment. (Conclusion, Paragraph 30)
4. We welcome the Department's intention to move towards multi-year funding for buses but believe it would be beneficial to go further. The Department should move by the end of the current Spending Review period to a five-year funding settlement for bus services, for both capital and revenue spending.

This will provide a stronger foundation for improving and maintaining reliable local bus networks, particularly for areas that have suffered decline over a long period. (Recommendation, Paragraph 31)

5. The Department's shift to needs-based allocation of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding is a welcome and necessary step away from competition. However, the current formula does not explicitly reflect the distinct challenges faced by rural and more isolated areas, such as lower population density, longer journey distances and higher per-passenger operating costs. Without a dedicated rural weighting, there is a risk that these specific needs will continue to be overlooked, and that historic disparities in funding and service provision will persist. (Conclusion, Paragraph 35)
6. The Department should consider introducing a rural weighting into its revised Bus Service Improvement Plan funding formula to reflect the higher per-passenger costs and structural challenges of serving low-density areas. This would help ensure that network improvement ambitions are not undermined by geographic disadvantage. (Recommendation, Paragraph 36)
7. The current Bus Service Operators Grant structure appears to disadvantage rural and low-demand areas, where lower fuel consumption per kilometre and longer average journey lengths can reduce the level of support received. This funding model does little to reflect the operational realities of low-density networks. As the sector transitions away from fossil fuels, a grant based on fuel use risks becoming increasingly misaligned with long-term policy goals. The previous National Bus Strategy recognised this and set out an ambition to reform the Bus Service Operators Grant to better support decarbonisation goals. (Conclusion, Paragraph 39)
8. The Department should, as soon as practicable, reform the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG). The overarching goal of reform should be to incentivise growth in ridership, particularly across under-served areas, for example instead of mileage the grant could be based on passenger journeys. (Recommendation, Paragraph 40)
9. The Department has not made clear what specific improvements to local bus services it expects the duty to list socially necessary services to deliver. Designating a service as 'socially necessary' under an Enhanced Partnership will not automatically guarantee its long-term provision or trigger additional funding, nor will it necessarily improve the frequency and reliability of those services. Without a ring-fenced funding stream and a requirement for operators to commit to a minimum level of provision for socially necessary services, there is a risk that local authorities will not have any practical power to use the new duty to improve services. (Conclusion, Paragraph 48)

10. The Department should ensure that there is funding to support the provision of socially necessary services by ring-fencing a dedicated portion of its bus grant funding or by other means. This will help ensure that the duty to identify such services has practical effect and is not undermined by competing local priorities or budgetary pressures. In addition, operators working within Enhanced Partnerships should be required to commit to a minimum level of provision on routes designated as socially necessary. (Recommendation, Paragraph 49)
11. Growing fare box revenue from commercially viable routes is another possible source of support, in certain circumstances, for socially necessary services. The Department should require local transport authorities to consider using grant or fare box funding to enhance existing local bus services. In exercising the duty, the authority must have regard to growing passenger numbers and the overall sustainability of the network. (Recommendation, Paragraph 50)
12. The Department should mandate local transport authorities to publish a transparent methodology for how they determine which bus services qualify as socially necessary, to ensure public accountability. The Department should also develop common standards, and guidance, which the local formulas should take into account. This would enable residents to verify, for example, whether lists are based on objective assessments of need rather than being a response to the campaigning power of particular communities. (Recommendation, Paragraph 53)
13. The proposed statutory duty on local transport authorities to list socially necessary services applies only to those already in operation. There is no statutory requirement in the Bus Services (No.2) Bill for authorities to assess unmet needs or identify where new services might be required, although they may do so voluntarily. This creates a risk that gaps in provision are left unaddressed, particularly in rural and under-served areas. Without clear expectations or support for service expansion, the system risks locking in existing patterns of decline. (Conclusion, Paragraph 55)
14. The Department should make clear that local transport authorities operating within Enhanced Partnerships should not only maintain existing socially necessary services but should also be expected to identify and address areas of unmet need and potential for new services. The Department's vision should be for local authorities to preside over a renaissance in bus services, rather than simply hold the line against continued deterioration. Authorities should be supported to actively grow the local bus network in response to demographic and economic changes, not just manage its decline. (Recommendation, Paragraph 56)

15. No national framework or clear design standard to improve the overall quality of bus stop infrastructure or real time information currently exists. Poor quality facilities like damaged shelters or seats and missing or inaccurate real time information undermine bus networks by deterring passengers. People without digital access, or whose bus stops are in black spots for mobile coverage, are disproportionately affected. While some local authorities have made commendable progress in improving real time information systems, such initiatives remain the exception rather than the rule. (Conclusion, Paragraph 63)
16. In order to increase ridership, the Department should establish minimum standards for bus stop facilities and the provision of real time information at bus stops where appropriate. While bus stops are used in different ways and a one-size-fits all approach may not be appropriate, improved bus stop standards should be a national aspiration. (Recommendation, Paragraph 64)
17. The Department should bring forward proposals as part of its upcoming Integrated National Transport Strategy for guidance on how local authorities and transport providers can achieve more effective integration between bus timetables and those of other transport modes. (Recommendation, Paragraph 65)

Facilitating the transition to franchising

18. We welcome the Government's ambition to enable local transport authorities to undertake franchising. However, many local authorities continue to face operational and capacity challenges which may be further strained by implementing such a complex reform. The Department must take a greater role in strengthening local authority capacity to ensure effective implementation. (Conclusion, Paragraph 73)
19. The Department should expand the Bus Centre of Excellence (BCoE) to include a dedicated support strand for rural and other local transport authorities which may struggle to implement franchising successfully within their current capacity. This strand should focus on building local capacity by providing access to legal and procurement advice and establishing embedded regional advisory teams. The BCoE should also help reduce administrative burdens by developing standardised templates for key documents such as data-sharing and non-disclosure agreements and offer training in the commercial and operational aspects of running bus services. (Recommendation, Paragraph 74)

20. Lack of access to consistent data about current services to support business cases creates an unnecessary barrier to franchising. The Department's approach puts the cart before the horse: local authorities need access to the full range of relevant information before deciding whether to pursue franchising. (Conclusion, Paragraph 77)
21. The Department should set out a clear framework to ensure that local transport authorities have early access to operator data on patronage, fares and costs when undertaking a statutory assessment for bus franchising. The framework should include defined timescales for data provision, guidance to enable consistent data gathering and safeguards for commercially sensitive information, enabling informed decisions before commercial risks are taken. (Recommendation, Paragraph 78)
22. The Government's franchising reforms offer a clear opportunity to embed stronger and fairer employment practices across the sector. Better pay, fair progression, and stable conditions are not only essential for retaining drivers but are also critical to maintaining reliable and high-quality bus services. Without addressing these workforce issues, the wider goals of reform risk being undermined. (Conclusion, Paragraph 81)
23. The Department should consider the practicalities of requiring local transport authorities which adopt bus franchising to incorporate improved employment standards for bus workers. This should include minimum pay rates—based on the London model—and fair pay progression based on a driver's experience rather than their length of service with a specific operator. This would help to avoid the risk that operators bidding for franchises base their bids on unsustainably poor pay and conditions for staff. (Recommendation, Paragraph 82)

Bus fares and concessions

24. Bus fares in England have risen faster than inflation and more steeply than other transport modes. While the fare cap has been broadly welcomed as a way of reining in unaffordable fares, it is a short-term measure, not a substitute for long-term policy. There is no clear national strategy guiding what fares are intended to achieve: promoting modal shift, improving affordability, increasing ridership, supporting network viability, or delivering wider social and economic goals. In contrast, Ireland has introduced a national fares strategy focused on consistency, equity, and simplicity. England could benefit from a similarly structured approach. (Conclusion, Paragraph 91)

25. The Department should develop, in partnership with local transport authorities and within 12 months, clear strategic priorities for what bus fares are aiming to achieve. It should articulate the strategic purpose of fare structures and guide consistent, transparent fare-setting at the local level. These priorities need to produce a coherent vision for how fare-box revenue and public funding will work together to produce the desired outcomes. (Recommendation, Paragraph 92)
26. Public transport remains a major barrier to employment for young people, especially in under-served areas where limited services and high fares make it harder to reach college, training, entry-level jobs, or shift-based work. In some areas, transport is restricting opportunity rather than enabling it. England's patchwork of local youth concessions contrasts with national schemes in Scotland and Wales. A coherent national approach to ensure fair access across England is essential if the Government is serious about driving economic growth, which depends on removing barriers to education, training, and employment for the next generation. (Conclusion, Paragraph 98)
27. The Department's review of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme should consider piloting a free bus pass for under-22s, valid for travel at any time of day. This would support access to work and skills opportunities for younger people and help embed long-term public transport use. (Recommendation, Paragraph 99)

A role for alternative service models

28. Alternative transport models such as DRT and community transport are essential for improving connectivity where conventional services are unviable. This makes them a possible model for sustaining socially necessary services. Their potential is being undermined, however, by fragmented regulation, inconsistent funding streams, and a lack of integration in mainstream transport policy and local planning. The Government should establish a coherent national framework that supports the integration of these models, ensures sustainable funding, and provides consistent guidance for delivery. (Conclusion, Paragraph 110)
29. The Department should within 18 months develop a dedicated policy and regulatory framework for alternative and complementary public transport models, including Demand-Responsive Transport (DRT) and community transport. This framework should include growing and expanding their role in serving poorly connected places and in connecting passengers to fixed-route public transport networks. The framework should include:

- clear guidance on DRT governance and a framework for integration with local transport plans;
- guidance on providing socially necessary services through a DRT model;
- a review of existing funding streams across departments (such as. home-to-school, health, and social care transport) to identify opportunities for coordination and shared use of DRT services;
- optional access to nationally procured digital tools (such as routing software or booking platforms) to support local authorities in designing and managing DRT schemes;
- guidance on how both community transport and demand-responsive transport providers should be included in Enhanced Partnerships, to support greater collaboration and ensure inclusive planning; and
- the exploration of rural mobility models that prioritise improving access to services, rather than simply replicating traditional public transport, including the role of shared or private car use and lift-sharing schemes as part of a flexible, place-based approach.
(Recommendation, Paragraph 111)

- 30.** The Department should consider, with the Treasury, reform to the current VAT rules applicable to DRT services. This should aim to recognise the character of DRT as a public transport service, even when vehicles smaller than a Public Service Vehicle are used. (Recommendation, Paragraph 112)

A strategy for buses

- 31.** We welcome the Government's reforms aimed at devolving greater control to local authorities. This will not on its own, however, be a sufficient vehicle for delivering all the positive outcomes the Minister described as wanting for bus services. There is no consensus that structural reform alone can achieve aims such as increased connectivity, better integration, and more affordable journeys. Given the diversity of regional and local priorities, a national statement of strategic goals is needed to provide clear direction and coherence, setting out not only the Government's ambitions for the bus network, but also the pathway for achieving them. Without this, the risk remains that delivery will be uneven and the wider policy aims of reform left unmet. (Conclusion, Paragraph 116)
- 32.** The Government should within 18 months publish a new national policy for buses that sets out a clear vision for what a successful bus network looks like and what it should achieve. It should outline how buses interact

with policy objectives such as supporting economic growth, encouraging modal shift, improving affordability, reducing environmental impact and tackling regional disparity in network provision. It should provide a basis for renewal of bus services in England and transformative growth in ridership. (Recommendation, Paragraph 117)

- 33.** This vision should also be complemented by a new regional performance metric that enables meaningful comparison of services across different parts of the country. The metric should cover key indicators such as service frequency, reliability and passenger satisfaction, and it should be used to benchmark progress for improved connectivity across different local transport authorities. (Recommendation, Paragraph 118)

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 22 July 2025

Members present:

Ruth Cadbury, in the Chair

Dr Scott Arthur

Catherine Atkinson

Mrs Elsie Blundell

Olly Glover

Katie Lam

Baggy Shanker

Laurence Turner

Buses connecting communities

Draft Report (*Buses connecting communities*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 118 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Third Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 2 September at 4.00pm

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 26 February 2025

Andrew Summers, Chief Executive, Transport East; **Simon Mathieson**, Director of Operational Excellence, First bus; **Robert Morton**, National Officer, Unite the Union; **Mr Ben Simm**, Team Manager, Transport Strategy and Policy, Leicestershire County Council [Q1–38](#)

Professor Karen Lucas, Head of the Transport and Mobilities Group, University of Manchester; **Stephen Frost**, Head of Transport Policy, Institute of Public Policy Research; **Silviya Barrett**, Director of Policy and Campaigns, Campaign for Better Transport; **Paul Miner**, Head of Policy, CPRE - The Countryside Charity [Q39–62](#)

Wednesday 12 March 2025

Caroline Whitney, Director, Community Transport Association; **Max Sugarman**, Chief Executive, Intelligent Transport Systems UK; **James West**, Business Development Lead, Padam Mobility [Q63–128](#)

Wednesday 26 March 2025

Graham Vidler, Chief Executive, Confederation of Passenger Transport; **Judith Barker**, Executive Director for Places and Connectivity, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority; **Martin Dean**, Managing Director for UK Regional Bus at Go-Ahead, The Go-Ahead Group; **Stephen Rhodes**, Director of Bus, Transport for Greater Manchester [Q133–170](#)

Mrs Naomi Green, Managing Director, England's Economic Heartland; **Alistair Hands**, Managing Director of Regions, Arriva Group; **Miriam Binsztok**, Transport Co-ordination Services Manager, Cornwall Council; **Mr Damien Jones**, Representative, Local Government Association, Deputy Director for Transport Operations, Devon County Council [Q171–204](#)

Wednesday 14 May 2025

Simon Lightwood MP, Minister for Local Transport, Department for Transport; **Stephen Fidler**, Director of Buses and Inclusion, Department for Transport [Q205-306](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

BCC numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	Action with Communities in Rural England	BCC0034
2	Arriva UK Bus	BCC0046
3	Association of Local Bus Managers (ALBUM)	BCC0039
4	Association of Transport Coordinating Officers	BCC0068
5	Bakewell Bus User Group	BCC0108
6	Brayshaw	BCC0018
7	Breckland District Council	BCC0025
8	Bristol City Council	BCC0088
9	Brough Parish Council	BCC0043
10	Broughton, Cllr Sarah	BCC0064
11	Buckinghamshire Council	BCC0071
12	Bus Users Group Stevenage	BCC0109
13	Bus Users UK Charitable Trust Ltd	BCC0045
14	CPRE, the countryside charity	BCC0030
15	Cairns, Mr Neil	BCC0016
16	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority	BCC0076
17	Campaign for Better Transport	BCC0093
18	Campaign for National Parks	BCC0021
19	Carr, Mr John	BCC0110
20	Casla, Dr Koldo	BCC0013
21	Centre for Cities	BCC0066
22	Centre for Social Justice	BCC0004
23	Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation	BCC0024
24	Chatterjee, Dr Kiron; Dr Eda Beyazit; and Mr Daniel Johnson	BCC0090

25	Cheshire West and Chester Council	<u>BCC0081</u>
26	Cirencester Action on Buses	<u>BCC0116</u>
27	Colson, Mr Ben	<u>BCC0005</u>
28	Community Rail Network	<u>BCC0075</u>
29	Community Transport Association	<u>BCC0085</u>
30	Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT)	<u>BCC0112</u>
31	Cornwall Council	<u>BCC0042</u>
32	Cuckmere Community Bus Ltd	<u>BCC0015</u>
33	Department for Transport	<u>BCC0044</u>
34	Dorset Council	<u>BCC0080</u>
35	Duncan-Jordan MP, Neil	<u>BCC0124</u>
36	ECT Charity	<u>BCC0032</u>
37	East Suffolk Travel Association	<u>BCC0035</u>
38	Energy Saving Trust	<u>BCC0065</u>
39	England's Economic Heartland	<u>BCC0094</u>
40	First Bus	<u>BCC0038</u>
41	Friends of Dales Bus; and Yorkshire Dales Public Transport Users Group	<u>BCC0129</u>
42	Geddes, Mr John	<u>BCC0099</u>
43	Get Swindon Moving	<u>BCC0083</u>
44	Go-Ahead Group	<u>BCC0121</u>
45	Green Alliance	<u>BCC0115</u>
46	Green Party Group, Bedford Borough Council	<u>BCC0054</u>
47	Grocott, Chrissy	<u>BCC0040</u>
48	Heath & Reach Parish Council	<u>BCC0111</u>
49	Hertfordshire County Council	<u>BCC0061</u>
50	Higham, Prof. Jeremy	<u>BCC0007</u>
51	Institute for Public Policy Research	<u>BCC0095</u>
52	Integrated Transport Planning (part of Royal Haskoning)	<u>BCC0051</u>
53	Intelligent Transport Systems UK	<u>BCC0127</u>
54	Intelligent Transport Systems UK (ITS UK)	<u>BCC0091</u>
55	Kenyon, Dr Susan	<u>BCC0002</u>
56	Lam MP, Katie	<u>BCC0130</u>

57	Later Life Ambitions	<u>BCC0033</u>
58	Lawrence, Mrs Barbara	<u>BCC0020</u>
59	Leicestershire County Council	<u>BCC0072</u>
60	Leighton Linlade Bus Users' Group	<u>BCC0001</u>
61	Liftango Ltd	<u>BCC0104</u>
62	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	<u>BCC0074</u>
63	Living Streets	<u>BCC0049</u>
64	Local Government Association	<u>BCC0070</u>
65	Loughborough University	<u>BCC0050</u>
66	Manchester Urban Institute, University of Manchester	<u>BCC0009</u>
67	Matatika/Positive Focus	<u>BCC0031</u>
68	Meers, Mr	<u>BCC0118</u>
69	Midlands Connect	<u>BCC0056</u>
70	Moorsbus Community Interest Company	<u>BCC0058</u>
71	National Pensioners Convention	<u>BCC0036</u>
72	National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT)	<u>BCC0126</u>
73	Norfolk County Council	<u>BCC0029</u>
74	North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group	<u>BCC0103</u>
75	North East Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>BCC0053</u>
76	North West Surrey Bus Users Group	<u>BCC0023</u>
77	Orme, Councillor David (Chairman, Dunkerton & Tunley Parish Council, Bath and North East Somerset)	<u>BCC0100</u>
78	Oxfordshire County Council	<u>BCC0117</u>
79	Padam Mobility	<u>BCC0037</u>
80	Peninsula Transport STB	<u>BCC0069</u>
81	Punt, Mrs Sharon	<u>BCC0008</u>
82	Rosling, Ms Pamela	<u>BCC0097</u>
83	Rural Services Network	<u>BCC0098</u>
84	SYSTRA UK	<u>BCC0048</u>
85	Sedbergh Parish Council	<u>BCC0114</u>
86	Sherborne Transport Action Group	<u>BCC0003</u>
87	Smallwood, Mr Trevor	<u>BCC0041</u>
88	Smith, Mr Graham	<u>BCC0102</u>

89	Somerset Bus Partnership	<u>BCC0047</u>
90	Somerset Council	<u>BCC0086</u>
91	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>BCC0087</u>
92	Sustrans	<u>BCC0026</u>
93	Taunton Bus Users	<u>BCC0105</u>
94	Tees Valley Combined Authority	<u>BCC0078</u>
95	The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT)	<u>BCC0123</u>
96	Transport East	<u>BCC0128</u>
97	Transport East	<u>BCC0057</u>
98	Transport Focus	<u>BCC0082</u>
99	Transport UK Group	<u>BCC0019</u>
100	Transport and Health Science Group	<u>BCC0027</u>
101	Transport for All	<u>BCC0014</u>
102	Transport for West Midlands	<u>BCC0073</u>
103	Transport for the North	<u>BCC0113</u>
104	TravelWatch SouthWest	<u>BCC0101</u>
105	UK100	<u>BCC0067</u>
106	Unite the Union	<u>BCC0120</u>
107	University of Hertfordshire Smart Mobility Unit	<u>BCC0107</u>
108	Urban Mobility Partnership	<u>BCC0077</u>
109	Urban Transport Group	<u>BCC0060</u>
110	Walker, Mr Colin	<u>BCC0006</u>
111	Waterside Changemakers	<u>BCC0062</u>
112	Waveney Valley Constituency Office (on behalf of Adrian Ramsay MP)	<u>BCC0096</u>
113	West Cumbria Bus Users Group	<u>BCC0022</u>
114	West Dorset Western Area Transport Action Group (WATAG)	<u>BCC0010</u>
115	West Norfolk Community Transport Project Limited	<u>BCC0011</u>
116	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	<u>BCC0063</u>
117	West of England Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>BCC0122</u>
118	Westmorland and Furness Council	<u>BCC0092</u>
119	Wheels for Wellbeing	<u>BCC0052</u>

120	White, Peter, Emeritus Professor	<u>BCC0028</u>
121	York Bus Forum	<u>BCC0012</u>
122	Zenobe Energy Limited	<u>BCC0119</u>

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2024–25

Number	Title	Reference
2nd	Managing the impact of street works	HC 522
1st	Access denied: rights versus reality in disabled people's access to transport	HC 770
1st Special	Access denied: rights versus reality in disabled people's access to transport: Government Response	HC 931