

National Bus Strategy

Transport Focus warmly welcomes the ambition of the National Bus Strategy in identifying some key improvements to bus services: more frequent, more reliable, more evening services and less complex and cheaper ticketing.

Our insight, *Bus Passengers' Priorities for Improvement*¹ found that improving the bus network is by far the biggest priority for people - a clear and consistent need informing four of the top five priorities. Passengers want buses to run more often, go to more places, be on time at the bus stop as well as more journeys being on time.

More recently, *Getting Bus Passengers Back on Buses*² shows that along with these priorities people need reassurance on safety on buses and more flexible tickets which reflect new patterns of demand post Covid-19.

We see there are some challenges to achieving the welcome ambition:

- **Barriers to improvement:** The Strategy outlines a number such as poor cooperation between authorities and bus companies, poor integration and lack of evening services. What can be done to enable them to deliver the Strategy, particularly in the tight timeframe and help those who might need attention in the short term? Those areas where passenger satisfaction scores highly in our Bus Passenger Survey have been those where the partnerships work well such as Brighton, Harrogate and the West Midlands.
- **Consistency:** How will the proposals be delivered, maintained, monitored and reported consistently across the country?
- **User and non-user voice:** It is important that the passenger and non-user voice and experience is established in Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) and Bus Advisory Boards (BABs). How will this be implemented, monitored and reported to ensure this happens?
- **Passenger Charter:** How can the proposed Charter help build trust and boost the image of the bus? How will it improve passengers' rights to redress?
- **Punctuality and congestion:** How will some local opposition to bus priority measures be tackled and how will schemes be expedited? Could

¹ *Bus Passengers' Priorities for Improvement*, February 2020

² *The route ahead: getting passengers back on buses*, April 2021

making punctuality data more transparent locally help by building accountability?

- **Multi-operator ticketing schemes:** Bus operators have joined such ticketing schemes, but they rarely operate with little or no premium to single operator fares, as envisaged by the Strategy. We understand there may be trials in to ascertain demand for discounted and new/innovative fares and deals. Gathering user feedback will be vital in any trials so it can be incorporated.

Transport Focus wants the Strategy's ambition to succeed to improve the passenger experience. We will continue to produce insight to ensure that their experience is at the heart of the new system.

April 2021