

£226 million package to support vital bus services

- funding will maintain bus services as passengers begin to return in higher numbers in the months following lifting of restrictions
- Department for Transport also announces 35 expressions of interest for share of first tranche of £120 million to roll out zero emission buses across England
- both packages come as part of government drive to build back greener from the pandemic

Bus operators across the country will benefit from £226.5 million in government funding to help ensure they continue to run vital services as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, Roads Minister Baroness Vere has announced today (6 July 2021).

The funding will run from September 2021 to April 2022 and will support operators across England, outside of London, cementing the government's commitment to level up transport links as passenger numbers begin to return to pre-pandemic levels.

It comes as the Department for Transport also announces it has received 35 Expression of Interest applications for the [Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas \(ZEBRA\) scheme](#), which gives local transport authorities the opportunity to compete for a share of £120 million to support the rollout of zero emission buses across England.

Both schemes are part of the government's drive to build back better and greener from the pandemic, as the UK prepares to host [COP26](#) and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

Buses are the lifeblood of our communities, helping us get to work, school and to see friends and family.

The recovery funding will ensure vital services continue to run by supporting operators in those initial months, as restrictions are lifted and passengers begin to return in higher numbers.

And as we build back greener from the pandemic, the £120 million to roll out zero emission buses will have a profoundly positive effect on our towns and cities, lowering emissions, improving air quality and reducing noise pollution.

The recovery funding announced today will follow the current emergency support package, which is due to end next month after providing more than £1

billion to keep bus services running throughout the pandemic – and will be provided on a formula basis, ensuring the sector can begin to return to commerciality. The funding will be the final tranche of COVID-19-related support provided to the sector.

In addition to helping maintain services, recovery funding will support the key aims of the [National Bus Strategy](#) of encouraging local authorities and operators to work together to deliver better bus services.

The [ZEBRA fund](#) was launched in March this year with local transport authorities able to apply under either a fast track or standard process.

The following local transport authorities have been selected under the fast track process to progress to the next stage of the competition:

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
- Kent County Council
- Leicester City Council
- Milton Keynes Borough Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- West Midlands Combined Authority

The 6 shortlisted authorities will now develop business cases for investment, with the government awarding the first tranche of funding from the ZEBRA scheme to authorities that produce the strongest business cases.

More local transport authorities will be announced as being selected to produce business cases under the standard process in due course.

The ZEBRA funding comes from the wider £3 billion fund announced by the government to improve bus services in our national bus strategy, published on 15 March 2021.