

Almost £400 million to keep England's buses running

- funding will protect bus services for people who need to travel, for example to get to work or buy food
- new funding, totalling £167 million over 3 months, comes on top of pledge to guarantee existing £200 million investment
- up to another £30 million also reallocated to safeguard services

England's buses will continue to serve those who rely on them thanks to a funding boost totalling £397 million for vital bus operators, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has announced today [Friday 3 April 2020].

The package, agreed jointly with the bus industry, will keep key routes running to provide a lifeline for those who cannot work from home, including those travelling to jobs on the frontline of the UK's fight against COVID-19, such as NHS staff.

New funding of up to £167 million will be paid over 12 weeks under the new COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant. As a condition of the funding, bus operators will be required to maintain necessary services at a level which is sufficient to meet much reduced demand, but also to allow adequate space between passengers on board. This is expected to be up to 50% of normal service levels.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

We have been very clear during the outbreak that the best way to stop the spread of the virus and protect the NHS, is to stay at home if possible.

Our buses are a lifeline for people who need to travel for work or to buy food – including our emergency services and NHS staff – and it's absolutely vital we do all we can to keep the sector running.

This multi-million-pound investment will protect crucial local transport links across England, bolstering the sector and minimising disruption for passengers in the long term."

Operators will also be required to keep passengers properly informed about revised timetables to ensure that people know which services are running and when.

The government has also promised that £200 million of existing funding under the [Bus Services Operators Grant](#) will continue to be paid as normal even though not all services may run during this time. This funding is usually paid according to fuel consumption, and so the government's commitment to pay

this on pre-COVID-19 levels will help ensure that bus companies are able to benefit despite fewer fare-paying passengers travelling.

This is in addition to up to £30 million of extra government bus funding, originally earmarked for starting new services, which will instead be paid to local authorities to maintain existing services.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

It's vital people protect our NHS by staying at home during the outbreak – but we also need to ensure that doctors, nurses and other key workers, can travel to and from their jobs.

This funding will provide a lifeline for those on the frontline as well as those who cannot work from home.

Councils have also been encouraged to maintain their existing subsidies for concessionary fares to ensure that older and disabled people can still travel when they need to, for example to reach the shops, hospitals and doctors' surgeries.

CPT Chief Executive Graham Vidler said:

Bus operators of all sizes across the country are providing an essential service at a time of national emergency, and we thank the thousands of staff doing an incredible job to keep routes running.

This funding is designed to plug the gap between the costs of running essential routes and revenue currently being received, and will help the country through the outbreak by allowing critical journeys to continue.

We're pleased the government is working with us to ensure essential bus journeys can continue and will work closely with them to ensure the network remains viable.

This is the latest step in a string of urgent measures being taken forward by government to support vital public services, including emergency measures to sustain rail services as operators manage the impacts of COVID-19, and support for crucial links to different parts of the UK.