

# Coronavirus (COVID-19): new transport guidance for passengers and operators

With permission Mr Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the new [transport guidance for passengers](#) and [operators](#) that has been published by my department.

Coronavirus has cast its shadow over the lives of everyone in this country.

As we all know too well, for some it has caused unimaginable heartache. And for many millions of our fellow citizens, this crisis has meant enormous sacrifice in the national effort to beat the disease.

The government is immensely grateful to the British people for the profound changes they have made over the past weeks.

I would also like to extend my thanks to transport workers and the wider sector for their immense efforts to keep Britain on the move during this crisis.

We will always remember the way the industry has served this country during this most challenging of periods. Public transport operators have ensured that all those on the frontline of the fight against the virus can get to work. While freight firms have delivered vital goods and kept supermarket shelves stacked.

However, it is now time to consider how together we will emerge from this crisis.

On Sunday, the Prime Minister set out the first careful steps for reopening society and a [roadmap for the weeks and months ahead](#).

Undoubtedly transport is going to play a central role in that recovery. It will be key to restarting our economy, and in time enable us to renew and strengthen those precious social ties that are so deeply valued by us all.

But as I said last week, our nation's emergence from this crisis will not be a single leap to freedom. It will be a gradual process.

We cannot jeopardise the progress achieved in the past few weeks by our shared sacrifices.

Therefore, we remain clear that those who can work from home should continue to do so. However, as those who cannot start to return to their jobs, the safety of the public and of transport workers must be paramount.

That is why the Department for Transport has today (12 May 2020) published two new pieces of guidance for [passengers](#) and [operators](#).

These documents aim to give passengers the confidence to travel.

And they seek to give operators the information they need to provide safer services and workplaces for passengers and staff.

We encourage operators to consider the particular needs of their customers and workers as they translate these documents into action.

Mr Speaker, the first document is aimed at passengers. I'll summarise some of the main points contained in this advice.

Firstly, as mentioned, we continue to ask that people only go to work if they cannot do their jobs from home.

That is because, even as transport begins to revert to a full service, the 2 metre social distancing rule will only leave effective capacity for 1 in 10 passengers overall. It is therefore crucial that we protect our network by minimising the pressures placed upon it and ensure it is ready to serve those who need it most.

As a result, we are also asking those who need to make journeys to their place of work or other essential trips to walk or cycle wherever possible.

In order to help more of us to do this, last week [I announced an unprecedented £2 billion investment to put walking and cycling at the heart of our transport policy](#).

The first stage, worth £250 million, will include a series of swift emergency measures, including pop-up bike lanes, wider pavements and cycle and bus only corridors.

This money should help protect our public transport network in the weeks and months ahead. It's my hope that it will eventually allow us to harness the vast health, social and environmental benefits that active forms of travel provide.

If people cannot walk or cycle but have access to a car, we urge them to use this before considering public transport, avoiding, where possible busy times of day.

I do, however, recognise that for some people using public transport is a necessity. In this case, you should follow the guidance we have set out today to stay safe when using the network.

This recommends that travellers maintain social distancing by staying 2 metres apart, wherever possible, to prevent the spread of the virus.

We also advise that, as a precautionary measure, people consider [wearing a face covering](#) when using public transport. This could help protect other travellers from coronavirus where you have unknowingly developed the illness and are not showing any symptoms.

And we urge passengers to avoid rush hours, to use contactless payment, and to wash their hands before and after their journey.

In addition, the guidance also reminds us that, at this most challenging of time, it is more vital than ever that we think of the needs of others.

Our transport operators and their staff are doing all they can to keep everyone safe.

Please follow advice from staff at stations, and at bus interchanges, be patient and be considerate to fellow passengers and staff.

In particular, we should remember the needs of disabled passengers, those with hearing and sight impairments and older travellers.

Mr Speaker, as I mentioned, we're also publishing a second document, [guidance for transport operators](#). These organisations really are at the forefront of our national recovery efforts.

They know inside out the needs of their customers and their workers, and they understand like no one else, their industries' own specific challenges.

That is why I have no doubt that operators are best placed to implement the safety processes that work best for their businesses, employees and customers.

The guidance, we are publishing today, advises operators across all forms of private and public transport on the measures they can take to improve safety.

These steps include ensuring stations, services and equipment are regularly cleaned.

Making sure passenger flows are clearly communicated to avoid crowding and try to keep everyone on the network – passengers and staff – 2 metres apart.

This guidance will develop over time, in line with our increasing understanding of how coronavirus is spread and contained.

In addition, it is likely that there will be no one-size-fits-all approach to its implementation, it will need to be tailored into locally based plans that reflect specific needs. In preparation for that process yesterday I wrote to local authorities, to set out how we can work together to prepare the transport network at a local level for restart and ensure public safety.

Mr Speaker, the documents, I have published today, will help ready our transport system to support our country, as we seek to control the virus and restart the economy. We will inevitably encounter obstacles as we embark on this next stage of our national fightback against this disease.

And, there is no doubt that we will need to continue to work together as we overcome these challenges.

On that note, I would like to express my gratitude to our partners in the devolved administrations, local authorities, mayors, trade unions and transport operators for their work over the past weeks. I look forward to our continued collaboration in future.

Because, cooperation is going to be key to setting this country on the road to recovery.

If everyone plays their part, if we continue to stay alert, control the virus and save lives, and if we all follow this guidance when making essential journeys.

I believe we can together harness the power of transport to build a renewed and revitalised nation.

And I commend this statement to the House.