

Prime Minister launches £3 billion bus revolution

- government publishes major new bus strategy, outlining most ambitious reform to the sector in a generation
- buses will be more frequent, cheaper, greener, and easier to use as government continues its levelling up agenda
- councils and operators will work in partnership for the benefit of passengers

Prime Minister Boris Johnson today (15 March 2021) unveils the most ambitious shake-up of the bus sector in a generation, which will see lower, simpler flat fares in towns and cities, turn-up-and-go services on main routes, and new flexible services to reconnect communities.

The government's new bus strategy, backed by £3 billion of investment, will see passengers across England benefiting from more frequent, more reliable, easier to use and understand, better coordinated and cheaper bus services.

Levelling up services across the country will encourage more people to use the bus, rather than the car, as we build back better from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The changes include:

- simpler bus fares with daily price caps, so people can use the bus as many times a day as they need without facing mounting costs
- more services in the evenings and at the weekends
- integrated services and ticketing across all transport modes, so people can easily move from bus to train
- all buses to accept contactless payments

Hundreds of miles of new bus lanes will make journeys quicker and more reliable, getting people out of their cars, reducing pollution and operating costs.

The [Prime Minister's ten point plan](#) sets out how we will accelerate the transition to greener and more sustainable transport.

We will:

- deliver 4,000 new British-built electric or hydrogen buses will provide clean, quiet, zero-emission travel
- transition cities and regions across England to emission-free buses, safeguarding the UK bus manufacturing industry
- end sales of new diesel buses, and we have launched a consultation on the end date today.

We expect to see local authorities and operators working together to deliver

bus services that are so frequent that passengers can just 'turn up and go' – no longer needing to rely on a traditional timetable and having the confidence they won't wait more than a few minutes.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Buses are lifelines and liberators, connecting people to jobs they couldn't otherwise take, driving pensioners and young people to see their friends, sustaining town centres and protecting the environment.

As we build back from the pandemic, better buses will be one of our first acts of levelling-up.

Just as they did in London, our reforms will make buses the transport of choice, reducing the number of car journeys and improving quality of life for millions.

The fragmented, fully commercialised market, which has operated outside London since 1986 will end. We want to see operators and local councils enter into a statutory "enhanced partnership" or franchising agreements to receive the new funding and deliver the improvements.

It is expected that many councils will choose enhanced partnerships, where local authorities work closely with bus companies, drawing on their operating knowledge and marketing skills. Others may decide that franchising works better for them.

Because of the decline in use caused by the pandemic, bus operators have already received significant emergency support from the government. From this summer, only services under these arrangements will be eligible for continued support or any new sources of funding from the £3 billion transformational investment. The government will also consult later this year on reforming the [Bus Service Operators Grant](#) – the current main stream of government bus funding – to achieve the same objectives.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, said:

Buses are this country's favourite way of getting around. They help us get to school, to the GP, or to the shops – but services across England are patchy, and it's frankly not good enough.

The quality of bus service you receive shouldn't be dependent on where you live. Everyone deserves to have access to cheap, reliable and quick bus journeys.

The strategy we're unveiling today will completely overhaul services, ensuring we build back better from the pandemic. Key to it is the new deal it offers to councils – we will provide unprecedented funding, but we need councils to work closely with

operators, and the government, to develop the services of the future.

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, said:

Buses are the backbone of public transport in the West Midlands, carrying more than 250 million people every year. Today's strategy is therefore very welcome, and will enable big city regions such as ours to ensure buses remain at the heart of our future transport plans. Residents here want clean, decarbonised buses that are affordable and continue to remain reliable and punctual, and that's what the new strategy laid out today will deliver.

Anthony Smith, chief executive of independent watchdog Transport Focus, said:

For bus passengers, today's announcement of more frequent buses and simpler fares will be welcome news. For many, buses are a lifeline to employment, education, medical appointments and leisure, and are essential to the economy. We know that the key priorities for those considering using the bus are more services running more reliably, providing better value.

Since the pandemic, safety and cleanliness have become ever more important. We will work with bus operators and other partners to make sure passengers' needs are at the heart of new arrangements.

It also sets out ambitions to provide greater access to bus services for all, with plans revealed to require 'next stop' announcements onboard buses throughout Great Britain, helping disabled passengers and others to travel with confidence. The government will also launch a consultation on new regulations to improve access onboard buses for wheelchair users.

London-style services aren't appropriate for all rural and suburban areas, which is why the Department for Transport is today also announcing the recipients of the £20 million from the government's 'Rural mobility fund', which enables on-demand services – such as minibuses booked via an app – to be trialled in areas where a traditional bus service isn't appropriate.