

# Transport Secretary announces new measures to “keep passengers safe now and level up for the future”

- additional funding to increase frequency and capacity of bus, tram and light rail services, to help people travel safely
- further investment in railways to regenerate local economies and level up Britain
- preferred route announced for £1 billion upgrade to major road link which runs across Northern Powerhouse, from Teeside to Cumbria

Further funding to protect and increase transport services, level up infrastructure and regenerate local economies after coronavirus (COVID-19) has been announced by the Transport Secretary Grant Shapps today (23 May 2020).

A further £283 million has been made available to increase the number of bus and light rail services as quickly as possible so that people who need to travel, including critical workers in the NHS, can do so safely.

The funding – amounting to £254 million for buses and £29 million for trams and light rail – will help protect and increase services, allowing people travelling to hospitals, supermarkets or their place of work to get to their destination safely and quickly, while helping ensure there is enough space for them to observe social distancing guidelines. The funding will be kept under review to ensure that full services can be up and running as quickly as possible.

In addition to the funding, 3,400 people including British Transport Police officers, Network Rail and train operator staff have been deployed at stations to advise passengers and make sure people can follow the guidance put in place. From 1 June 2020 at the earliest, twice that many will start to be deployed with the assistance of groups like the charity Volunteering Matters.

Rail passengers across the country will also now benefit from a personalised information service to help them stagger their journeys. Passenger Connect from British tech start-up ZipAbout will tell passengers how disruption and crowding may affect their journey, providing alternatives and helping people maintain social distancing when they need to travel. The service has been successfully piloted by National Rail over the last 12 months and can now support millions of rail users with personalised updates to keep them on the move.

To make it easier for people to choose alternatives to public transport, a series of measures are being rolled out to encourage more people to cycle instead, including:

- allocating local authorities a share of £225 million, announced earlier this month, to create pop up and permanent cycle lanes and reallocate road space
- [amending laws to reduce red tape and halve the time it takes for councils to get these schemes up and running](#)
- committing £25 million from the emergency active travel fund to help people get their bikes repaired so that they can get back to cycling
- investing £2.5 million to provide 1,180 cycle parking spaces at 30 railway stations across England to help encourage people to incorporate cycling as part of a longer journey

The government is also working with local authorities and private car park owners to make it easier for people commuting by car to get closer to their place of work and finish their journey on foot or by bike without the need to take public transport. Plans will focus on developing new schemes at car parks near, but not in, city centres from where drivers could collect a bike – or use their own – and follow new cycling or walking routes which would be colour coded by distance.

Transport Secretary and Minister for the Northern Powerhouse, Grant Shapps said:

From NHS staff to transport and shop workers, teachers, volunteers and all those staying at home, people across the country are all sharing the same public-spirited approach to tackling the spread of this virus and keeping others safe.

To make sure people can travel safely when they need to, we are increasing capacity on buses and light rail, as well as helping local authorities fast-track plans to support cyclists and pedestrians, further reducing pressure on our transport network.

These measures will help keep passengers safe now, but we must also prepare for what comes next. Strengthening vital road and railway connections, as well as encouraging cycling and walking, will be essential to our ambition to level up the country, secure a green legacy, and kickstart regional economies, as we build out of COVID-19 and look to the future.”

Looking to the future, the Transport Secretary has also laid out further plans to transform the country’s transport infrastructure to help the country ‘build out’ of COVID-19, supporting the nation’s economy, and delivering on the government’s key agenda of levelling up the country. The government has today announced the [preferred route for the £1 billion A66 Transpennine upgrade](#), which will provide vital improvements to a key regional link which helps to connect Glasgow and Edinburgh with Leeds, Sheffield and Norwich, improving journey times, reliability and resilience for communities across the North. The new scheme will dual the 5 remaining single carriageway sections of the route and upgrade key junctions, speeding up journeys, easing congestion and boosting growth. The road is an important link across the

Pennines and is a key connection used on routes between ports around the country, meaning that the wider UK economy will benefit from improvements and faster journeys.

Ten bids have also been announced today to receive a share of a £500,000 [Restoring Your Railways 'Ideas Fund'](#) to develop proposals to build or reopen railway lines and stations, including those closed following the Beeching cuts of the 1960s. MPs and local authorities were invited to bid for a share of the fund to help reconnect communities across the country, levelling up opportunities for people in isolated areas by increasing their access to jobs and training which will be crucial as the country recovers from coronavirus.