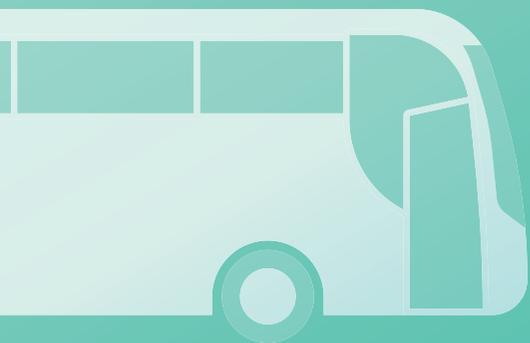


# **Delivering Better Bus Services**

A Toolkit for Engaging  
with Local Communities



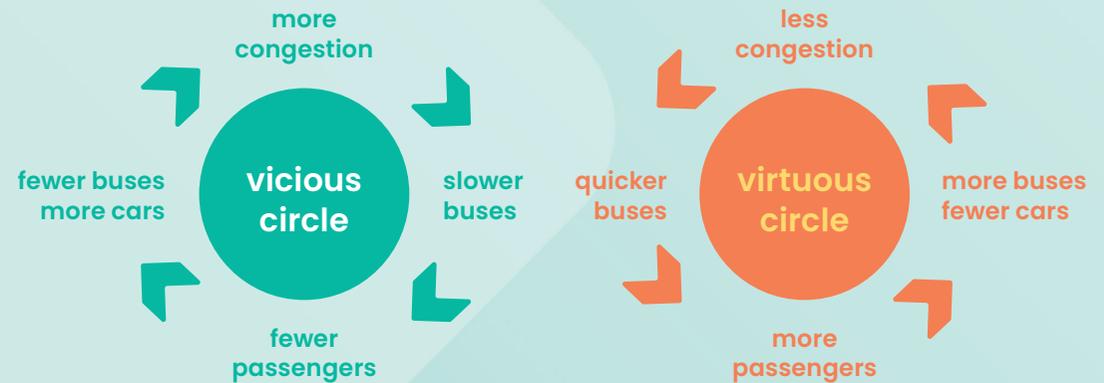


# Introduction

Bus travel is vital for our economy, our communities and wellbeing. Now more than ever, buses are needed as an alternative mode of transport to cars to address the climate emergency and increasingly poor air quality resulting from pollution caused by cars.

If we want to ensure a future where more people choose to travel by bus than by car, we need to demonstrate the benefits of bus travel to strengthen support from those who are neutral on prioritising bus travel, as well as the minority who oppose.

When we prioritise bus travel we see less congestion, quicker bus journeys and more passengers (as research indicates that almost a quarter of those who drive cars would consider using buses if they provided a quicker and more reliable service<sup>1</sup>).



We recently commissioned research with Opinium involving 3,500 adults across Great Britain (excluding London) and 590 business owners within the UK and Greater London, to reveal common objections to Bus Priority Measures (BPMs) as well as reasons people support them. The findings inform this toolkit, created to equip you with the information to present compelling arguments in favour of bus prioritisation, and to understand what actions can be taken to reassure people with concerns.

1. Greener Journeys (July 2018) [greenerjourneys.com/news/ditch-the-car-this-catch-the-bus-week](https://greenerjourneys.com/news/ditch-the-car-this-catch-the-bus-week)

# Why are Bus Priority Measures important?

There are many reasons to prioritise bus travel. Buses provide benefits for:

## The Environment:

- Fewer cars on the road through the right mix of bus priority and car restraint would have huge benefits for the environment and air quality and is essential to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions.
- A brand-new diesel car emits more nitrogen oxides than a new bus<sup>2</sup>.
- Everyone switching just one car journey a month to bus could result in one billion fewer car journeys, saving 2 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from being emitted a year<sup>3</sup>.

## The Economy:

- Annually bus commuters contribute £64 billion to the economy<sup>4</sup>.
- Buses play a huge role in getting people to city centres, to work, and to shops.
- The industry is also an important employer, providing 10,000s with jobs.
- These contributions are amplified when BPMs are implemented, with evaluations suggesting that every £1 of investment in BPMs can return up to £5 to the economy<sup>5</sup>.

## Society:

- Buses allow people to keep connected with each other, as well as to employment opportunities and other services and activities. BPMs can help boost these benefits through providing more reliable services.
- Fewer cars on the road help improve the environment for active travel users such as cyclists and those on foot.
- Buses provide an important back up for one million people who usually make journeys by other means, including the car, but are unexpectedly unable to do so<sup>6</sup>.
- Research by the University of Leeds showed that improving local bus connectivity by 10% was associated with a 3.6% reduction in social deprivation<sup>7</sup>.
- There are also physical health benefits to travelling by bus, with bus passengers exercising an average of 20 minutes a day as part of their journey<sup>8</sup>.

## What are Bus Priority Measures?

Bus Priority Measures (BPMs) are designed to improve journey times and connectivity for customers and help provide a more reliable service. There are a number of different types of BPMs that can be introduced. They might include network wide interventions or large infrastructure schemes that deliver significant benefits to a whole town or city. Or there can be small scale changes to traffic light signalling or junctions that may transform the reliability of individual routes.

### Examples of Bus Prioritisation Measures include:

- Bus lanes and gates
- Bus only roads
- Smart traffic lights
- Changes to road layout (bus priority at junctions and traffic lights)
- Park & Rides

2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/energy-and-environment-data-tables-env> (Pollutants, emissions and noise – ENV0301);

3. Greener Journeys (2013) [greenerjourneys.com/blog/help-us-take-one-billion-car-journeys-off-the-road/](http://greenerjourneys.com/blog/help-us-take-one-billion-car-journeys-off-the-road/);

4. Mackie, P. Laird, J. and Johnson, D. (2012) Buses and the Economy, Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds

5. KPMG (June 2017) The 'true value' of local bus services: A report to Greener Journeys 2017

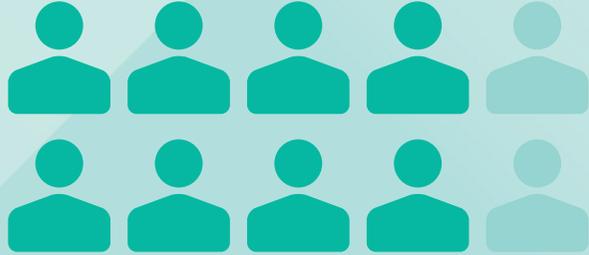
6. KPMG (June 2017) The 'true value' of local bus services: A report to Greener Journeys 2017

7. Greener Journeys (2016) The Value of the Bus to Society

8. <https://newsroom.go-ahead.com/news/go-ahead-urges-passengers-to-get-active-for-the-first-and-last-mile-of-their-journeys>



# Support for Bus Prioritisation Measures



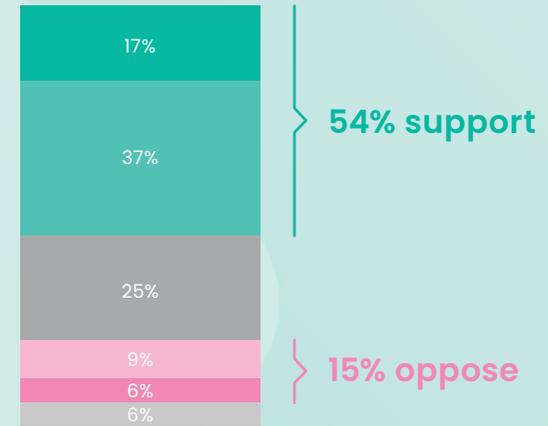
A significant majority of the public support BPMs (54%) in comparison to just 15% who oppose. That means of those with a view, **8 out of 10 people are in support of these measures**. This pattern is found across all regions in Great Britain. Support for BPMs is higher than opposition for every age group, showing the 65+ age group with the highest level of support.

For businesses, there is the same theme with a slightly higher level of support with 62% of business owners being in favour of BPMs. Only a very small minority of people oppose BPMs, and there is opportunity to convince those who are less certain of their views to support the schemes.

## Support for bus prioritisation measures (general consumers)



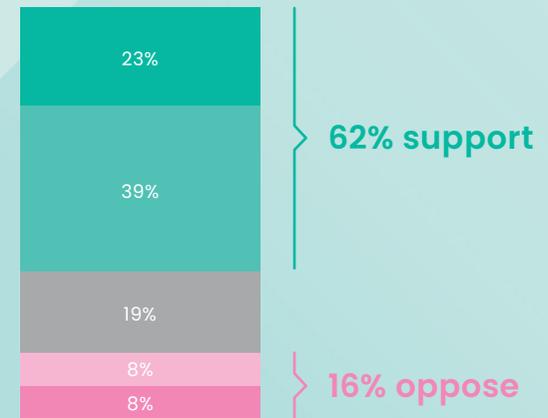
- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- Don't know



## Support for bus prioritisation measures (business owners)



- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- Don't know





# Messaging

While there is a lot of evidence to demonstrate the value of buses and BPMs, it's essential to consider how we articulate these arguments to ensure that they are strong enough to influence attitudes and behaviour.

## Messages for Retaining and Furthering Support for Bus Priority Measures

It is important to keep in mind the key reasons why many of the 8 in 10 residents and business owners with a view do support proposals for bus prioritisation. Communicating the benefits of buses can help to both retain and strengthen support for bus travel. Many people don't feel that strongly, so the messaging matters. On the one hand, we need to keep reminding supporters of the benefits, on the other there will be opportunities to win over potential opponents.

**There are many reasons to support bus prioritisation, however our research found that the most persuasive arguments in favour of bus prioritisation are:**

## They have environmental benefits

One journey in an average diesel car emits over 16 times more greenhouse gas emissions than the same journey in a Euro VI bus<sup>9</sup>. The UK also currently has its greenest bus fleet ever as a result of investment in new clean, green vehicles.

### ➤ To maximise this:

- If your council has a net zero or air quality target, BPMs should be presented as one of the important routes to help fulfil those ambitions (e.g. "by making simple changes to traffic light signals to give buses greater priority we will get closer to delivering our net zero targets").
- Quantify the carbon savings in everyday terms (e.g. the equivalent of boiling XXX kettles etc).
- Show specific good news stories of bus modernisation programmes, where relevant.
- Time communications around days / seasons of high pollution.



# Messaging

## They make towns and city centres more pleasant through reducing traffic

When more people opt for bus travel as opposed to using a car, traffic is reduced, which means quicker journeys for those who use buses. A double decker bus has the potential to take 75 cars off the road<sup>10</sup>. Fewer cars on the road means less traffic, ultimately leading to a more pleasant place to live.

### ➤ To maximise this:

- Messaging should highlight that when we invest in bus prioritisation, buses are able to provide a reliable and faster service, reducing traffic.
- Use communications with clearer roads benefitting all road users including walkers and cyclists.
- Quantify reduced travel times for bus passengers when there is an effective bus network.
- Focus your communications to areas where high congestion levels are an issue.
- Highlight how a good bus network benefits the experience of all road users.

## They make travel accessible, helping to boost life opportunities

Bus travel provides connections and a means for transport for everyone, be they commuting to work, visiting family and friends or travelling for leisure. It also allows vulnerable and disadvantaged people to get around with ease, it has huge benefits for the elderly, disabled and those on low incomes or unemployed. **Over ¾ of job seekers do not have access to a car so buses allow for access to employment opportunities<sup>11</sup>.**

These benefits are something that even those who do not often travel by bus can appreciate – people understand the importance of a reliable service for those who need it the most. BPMs mean that those who rely on buses can receive an improved service.



### ➤ To maximise this:

- Highlight that improvements to bus services provide people with access to a wider range of services. BPMs allow individuals to travel further in the same time, as bus journeys are now quicker – so we make a greater range of opportunities available to them. (e.g. “everyone in XXXX will be able to reach a school/supermarket/leisure centre by bus in 20 minutes).
- Emphasise the numbers of people using specific routes to highlight the integral role buses play in our society.
- Demonstrate the inclusiveness of the bus network by using a wide variety of passengers in your messaging.

<sup>10</sup>. Greener Journeys (July 2017) [greenerjourneys.com/news/leave-cars-home-catch-bus-week/](https://greenerjourneys.com/news/leave-cars-home-catch-bus-week/)

<sup>11</sup>. Johnson, D. Mackie, P., and Shires, J. (2014) Buses and the Economy II, Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds

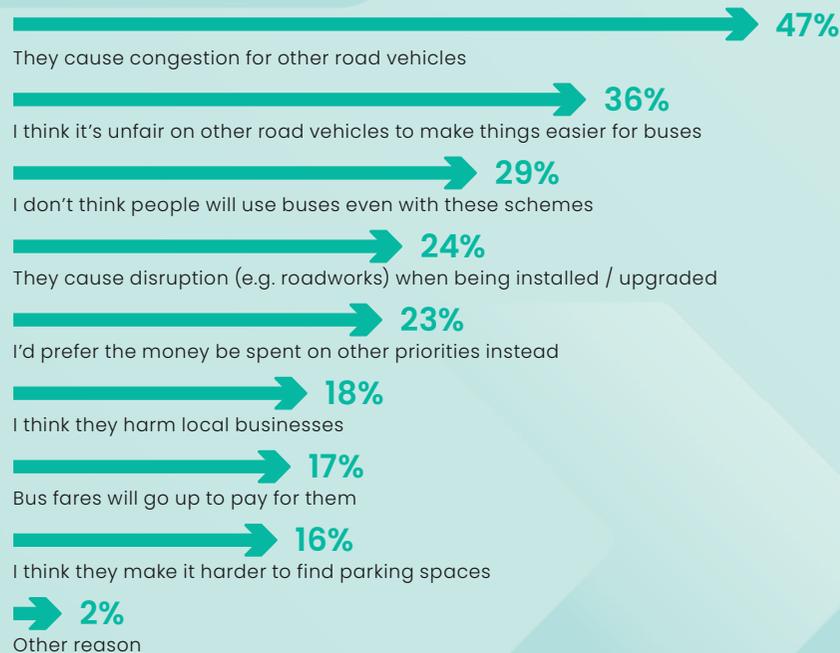
# Addressing the concerns of those who oppose Bus Priority Measures

There's still a level of pushback from some on bus prioritisation and therefore it's important to address their concerns appropriately. This can be done through providing reassurance to people of the benefits that these schemes can bring to an area and its community, as well as communicating the mitigations that will help limit negative sentiment towards proposed BPMs.

## Congestion is the biggest cause for concern amongst those who oppose bus prioritisation schemes



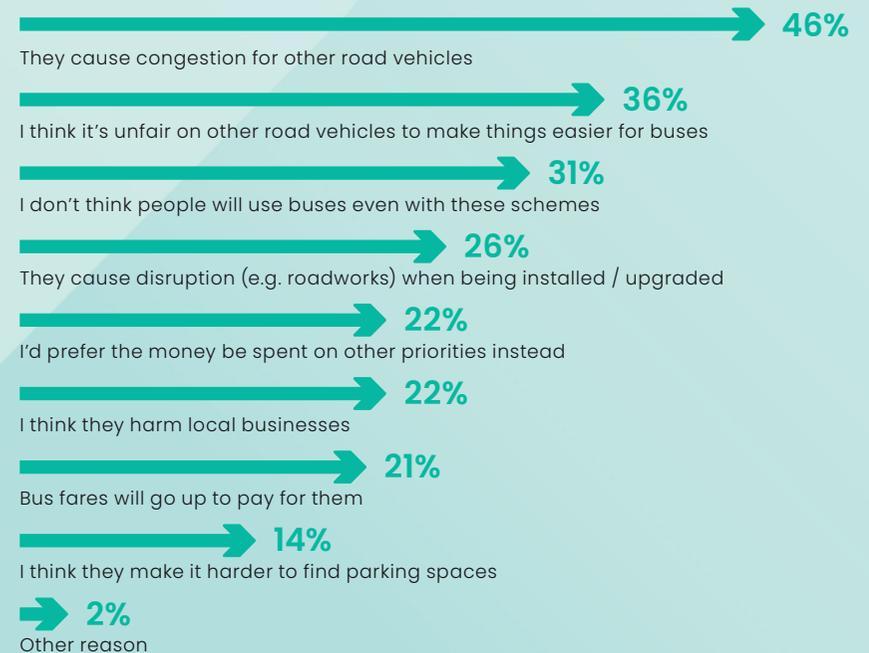
### Reasons for opposing bus prioritisation schemes



## Congestion also creates the biggest concern amongst businesses who oppose bus prioritisation schemes



### Reasons for opposing bus prioritisation schemes



**The research revealed that these were some of the biggest concerns of those opposed to Bus Priority Measures, and therefore the areas in which more counter-messaging is required:**

### **Congestion increasing as a result of bus prioritisation**

Effects on congestion is the top concern for all people who oppose BPMs. It is even a concern for those who travel by bus regularly, still wary of any friction between road users and bus users being caused as a result.

**➤ To counter this:**

- Reassure businesses and residents that congestion is a major challenge that BPMs aims to address. When we invest in bus prioritisation, buses are able to provide a quicker and more reliable service which makes them more appealing to car users, therefore reducing the number of cars on the road.

### **Disruption being caused during the installation period**

Businesses and the general public express concern about the disruption caused by the installation of BPMs.

**➤ To counter this:**

- Provide full transparency on plans including timings and any mitigations put in place to limit disruption.
- Emphasise in your messaging to communities that disruptions are short-term, and that there are significant long-term impacts they will benefit from.



# Case study

## Best Practice:

### Crawley Growth Programme

In 2019 West Sussex County Council undertook a public engagement exercise on proposals to improve pedestrian, cycling and bus access facilities to help reduce congestion into and out of Manor Royal Business District as part of a £60m growth package. The engagement sought to ensure the views of stakeholders and the public, including local businesses, were taken into account at the design phase, clearly articulate the vision for the project as part of wider goals for the area and ensure better informed decisions were made.

The project was completed and constructed as planned.

## Key elements of the work included:

- Public events to update local residents on the proposals and hear their feedback.
- An online questionnaire and dedicated website with more details about the proposals.
- Dedicated briefing sessions with key stakeholders and advance notification of the planned engagement programme.
- An invitation postcard was delivered to residential households within 300m of the proposed schemes with businesses receiving hand delivered postcards. They provided information about the background to the project, setting out details of the planned public exhibitions and provided details of the project website and online survey for those that wished to find out more.
- Proactive communications via the media and social media work to promote both the proposals and where to find out more information. In addition a invitation to participate in this Manor Royal Survey and exhibitions was sent out to the Council's Residents' ePanel of around 5,600 people.

## Perceptions of Low Bus Usage Levels

Another reason that many oppose BPMs is that they feel that buses are not used enough to justify them. Nor are they convinced that BPMs will encourage more people to use buses.

**29% of those against BPMs indicated that this was one of their reasons, making it the third most common cause for concern.**

### ➤ To counter this:

- The numbers of people who rely on buses, who use certain bus routes, and could benefit from BPMs are all pieces of information that can be used as an education tool to demonstrate the importance of bus travel to the local area.
- Messaging can also highlight that BPMs help make bus journeys quicker, thus making them more reliable and further increasing their use.
- Reassure people that switching to buses will be a positive experience. Highlighting the appealing features of buses in the local area (such as being electric, having charging points, security cameras etc) can help improve perceptions of the experience and encourage more people to travel this way.

## Not Feeling Heard by Local Authorities

As regular communicators with communities, businesses and local residents, local authorities will know how crucial it is to engage early and widely on projects that impact them.

Our research has reinforced this as the correct approach and shown that local people are more likely to oppose schemes if they feel they are being imposed on them without considering their views. Therefore, where local authorities adapt plans following local feedback it is important, as frequently already happens with a range of projects, that this is clearly communicated.

## Fears of BPMs Affecting Business Operations

Whilst business owners are generally positive about the prospect of BPMs, there are understandably concerns around the process of installation and what implications that could cause for their business.

### ➤ To counter this:

- Businesses require the reassurance that their customers will still be able to easily reach them, that nearby parking will still be available for their customers, and deliveries will still be able to get to them. When these factors are considered, we can reassure businesses owners that BPMs won't impact their operations or profits.
- Communicate to businesses that improved bus travel provides an opportunity in allowing more customers to reach them, particularly for businesses with limited parking available.



# Channels of Messaging

It's important to ensure that we are reaching the right people, using the right channels for communication and presenting messages that resonate and contribute to changing perceptions of bus prioritisation.

## 2 types of messaging are needed:

### 1. Word of mouth

People want to hear from others who travel by bus frequently, for a better understanding of the experience.

- Testimonials and case studies from both members of the public as well as businesses are a useful tool for helping convince people of the benefits of bus travel.
- People are more likely to want to hear from messengers who are like themselves.
- Messengers for BPMs should be local residents. Giving them a platform as spokespeople in favour of BPMs will mean that more people will be willing to consider supporting the schemes.
- Local MPs, councillors and bus companies were considered the worst messengers to promote BPMs.

**How much impact would the following people advocating a BPM have on your view? (NET: More likely to support)**



**Local resident who takes the bus to work**



**Owner of a local business**



**An older / retired local resident**

## 2. Evidence

- Using data to illustrate the positive impact that BPM schemes have had in other similar areas is a compelling tool to reassure residents and business owners.
- Data should be used to show effects on congestion, parking, air quality, local businesses, and bus journey times.

It is important that any evidence is not simply presented as facts and figures, which can feel like appropriate evidence to educate and inform communities but it is generally not very convincing to those receiving the messages.

- You can use data, where available, to challenge perceptions of who uses buses, including the numbers on specific routes and therefore what impact BPMs could have in an area.
- It is helpful to highlight the benefits of buses in relation to cars to encourage car users to switch where they can, for example cost break downs can be provided to highlight the cost-effectiveness of bus travel.



**CPT are happy to facilitate conversations between bus operators and local authorities to assist community engagement if helpful.**

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