

# post covid-19

## delivering a passenger led recovery

The Covid-19 pandemic will accelerate the changes already underway in working and travel patterns, which impact the bus services passengers will need.

With, for example, one third of employers planning to introduce new forms of flexible working<sup>1</sup> and city centres fundamentally changing in nature and character, business as usual will not be enough to deliver the services passengers need.

Operators are up for this challenge.



Before the pandemic bus commuters contributed £64bn to the economy annually and those travelling by bus to city centres were responsible for one third of city centre spending. As we exit the pandemic, operators and local transport authorities (LTAs) will need to work together to ensure they are providing services that can help get people back into work and rejuvenate town and city centres looking to adapt from 9 to 5 commuting destinations to 24 hour hubs. Using the bus also encourages people to live healthier lifestyles

with the average bus commute including almost half an hour of exercise. Although changing travel patterns may require a new approach, buses are well placed to respond, with services constantly evolving to reflect the needs of passengers.

Getting more people travelling by bus and ensuring the rise in car use during the pandemic is not engrained for the long term will also be central to the UK meeting its air quality and net zero carbon targets and delivering a green recovery. A 1% shift from people using the car to bus would mean a 10% increase in bus use.

Bus services across the country have been vital during the pandemic. They have helped people return to work, get to the shops and essential services and visit family and friends. Operators have been agile in their response to rapidly changing circumstances including introducing social distancing measures, restoring service levels and ensuring sufficient capacity in the network when children returned to school.



### 8 out of 10

believe everyone should reduce their car use



All this has been carried out working inclusively with local authorities, which a recent National Audit Office report recognised.

Although social distancing means passenger numbers remain below pre-pandemic levels, the bus will remain an important mode of travel.

Almost 8 out of 10 people believe everyone should reduce their car use<sup>2</sup> for the sake of the environment and bus passengers are almost twice as likely to have returned as passengers using other public transport.

bus passengers are almost

# 2x

as likely to have returned as passengers using other public transport



## a full double decker bus


can take **75** cars off the road

buses carried over **2 million** people a day to work in 2019

bus companies & local authorities have worked **in partnership** throughout the pandemic to deliver the services people need



This paper sets out the model which can provide the local framework for delivering the services people need by agreeing the new bus network, the distribution of funding to support it in the short term and the delivery of bus priority measures to sustain it for the long term.



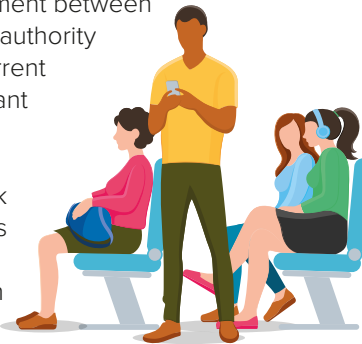
As we move through the pandemic and beyond it is vital that we look to deliver the bus network passengers will need rather than simply seek to return to the network that existed before the pandemic. Experience has shown that delivering these services is done most effectively where operators and local authorities work together in partnership.

Therefore, as the current support mechanism comes to an end, local transport authorities and bus operators should join forces in new, agile Recovery Partnerships where there are clear deliverables for both sides to provide the services passengers will need in the future.


## what is a recovery partnership?

Recovery Partnerships are an agreement between a bus operator(s) and local transport authority and will be entered into once the current Coronavirus Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) comes to an end.

They will provide the local framework for agreeing a new post Covid-19 bus network including the distribution of funding to support it in the short term and the rapid deployment of bus priority measures to sustain it for the long term. Their aim is to deliver a local bus network that is viable for the long term and meets the needs of passengers.



## timing is key: when to bring in recovery partnerships



It is important that Recovery Partnerships are delivered at the right time. Too soon and we risk being unable to deliver the networks passengers need as we exit and, in time, move beyond the pandemic. Too late means public funds being spent on supporting schemes which are no longer required and a delay to delivering the services passengers now need. Three tests need to be met before recovery partnerships are implemented:

### removal of social distancing

In order for bus services to be run unsupported operators need to be able to fill a bus to capacity.

### positive messaging on using public transport

The “avoid public transport message” has meant many people now incorrectly see public transport as unsafe. A significant pro public transport message from the Government is needed to help encourage people back onto the bus.

### passenger numbers have returned in significant numbers

If funding is withdrawn before passenger numbers have returned in sufficient numbers we risk undermining the aim of Recovery Partnerships of a passenger led recovery and delivering the services people need in a post Covid-19 world.

## making a success of recovery partnerships

Recovery Partnerships have the potential to deliver sustained improvements for passengers and while local flexibility will be crucial there are a number of principles which should underpin them to help deliver a range of benefits.

### ringfenced funding

It is important that funding identified for the local bus network is spent on improving services for passengers.

### a flexible timeframe

Circumstances will differ by location, meaning it is important local authorities and bus companies are able to agree the timeframe for moving away from Recovery Partnerships towards a long term partnership.

### clear goals

Having clear measures of success for both local authorities and operators will be important to incentivise collaborative working.



### local solutions backed with national funding

The circumstances of local areas must determine what initiatives are put in place but could include:



### bus priority measures to make journeys more reliable

for the long term giving people the confidence to travel by bus

### support for existing valuable links

which aren't viable in the short term with the aim of making them commercial where possible



## the benefits of working together

### Liverpool City Region Bus Alliance

Partnership agreements between operators and local authorities deliver service improvements that work for passengers. The Liverpool City Region Bus Alliance saw a 15% increase in fare-paying passengers between 2013-14 and the beginning of the pandemic and the number of bus journeys taken by young people rose by 168%. Key achievements include.

### new buses

Over £50m has been invested in new and refurbished buses in the last four years and all buses now have Wi-Fi.

### increasing reliability

Traffic light technology is improving reliability and punctuality on key routes.

### customer feedback

Passengers have a chance to feedback on service changes before they are made.

### passenger satisfaction

Nine out of ten passengers are satisfied with their bus journeys. The joint highest of any large urban area.

### green bus revolution

More than 70% of buses are already low emission and plans are in place to go further.

### Getting young people on board

Half price ticketing is available to all 16-19 year olds as well as apprentices making it easier and cheaper for them to use the bus.



ITS TIME TO USE the bus



## Looking to the future – CPT analysis

Delivering the networks passengers need post Covid-19 will require new ways of thinking. Operators have already begun to respond to this changing demand through the introduction of tap on and tap off ticketing technology in places such as Brighton and flexible ticketing, which benefit from similar discounts to weekly and monthly tickets but which can be used over a longer time period.

### National Express Flexifare

Across the West Midlands National Express has introduced tickets which put passengers in control and mean they are only paying for what they use.

New tickets include those suited to three days in five travel patterns as well as those for more occasional bus use.



The pandemic has also shown the benefits of cracking congestion, with buses running 25% quicker during lockdown. It is vital that alongside innovations that can be delivered by operators, local authorities face up to the challenge of congestion and deliver schemes that put the bus at the heart of local transport networks. By making bus journeys quicker and more reliable we will reduce our car emissions, improve air quality and help the economic recovery by making it easier for people to get to work, find new jobs and visit our high streets.

### Stagecoach Solutions

Stagecoach Solutions provides a range of options to help organisations and people continue their more flexible public transport commute recognising the impact the pandemic will have on working patterns. This includes tailored shuttle buses, education bus services, on demand services and sim of companies to put sustainability at the heart of their business.



Local authorities need to have sufficient resources to be able to play their part in delivering the services passengers need. All too often transport departments have been under resourced. We support the view of the National Audit Office that greater resourcing of local transport authorities is required but this must come with a commitment to use funds earmarked for the bus network on improving services for passengers.

## priorities for delivering the bus services of tomorrow

1

Short term ringfenced funding to get recovery partnerships off the ground. In year one this will need to be £500m, declining thereafter as networks become self-sustaining.

2

The current support mechanism to remain in place until all three tests for moving to recovery partnerships are met.

3

Ensuring that local transport authorities have the resources and skills required to play an active role and deliver their goals and targets.

<sup>1</sup> [peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/home-working-set-to-double-post-coronavirus-crisis](https://peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/home-working-set-to-double-post-coronavirus-crisis)

<sup>2</sup> NATS 2019 NTAS02



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