

TRANSPORT FOR THE NORTH DECARBONISATION STRATEGY

EVIDENCE FROM THE CONFEDERATION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT UK

Background

The confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) is the national trade association for the bus and coach sector in the UK and represents around 1000 bus and coach operators. We have nearly 100 members in our North West region; 17 of those have bases in Greater Manchester, operating over 1750 buses and over 200 coaches. These members range from subsidiaries of large international companies to sole traders with a single vehicle.

Summary

- Whilst all modes of transport are required to transition to zero emission alternatives by 2050, it is important to recognise that this is only part of the solution. Zero emission cars still have more emissions over the entire life span than higher capacity vehicles such as buses and coaches. Encouraging more people to travel by bus and coach will deliver significant reductions in congestion, carbon emissions, and will increase bus journey times and reliability.
- Implementing road user, congestion or clean air schemes which charge cars will incentivise people to leave their cars at home and travel by bus or coach, which will reduce congestion and carbon emissions.
- Coaches provide a sustainable and low carbon travel option; they have a significant role to play and need to be a larger part of the decarbonisation strategy. Coach friendly measures need to be considered to ensure coaches have safe access to locations and their full potential can be achieved.
- Many operators have already invested in zero emission buses and they will continue to do so, however transitioning entire fleets will take time and significant amount of investment. TfN should engage with bus operators before any targets are set for fleets to transition to zero emission alternatives. This will ensure any targets are workable and realistic.
- Buses and coaches can play an important role in connecting all modes of transport, whether that be rail air or active travel options such as walking or cycling. They can provide a sustainable alternative to the private car for both short and long journeys.

CPT's Response

The consultation document included a multitude of interesting and thorough background statistics on the sources and locations of harmful transport emissions. The strategy outlines some ambitious decarbonisation targets however we felt that the document could be strengthened by adding some further details and a plan of action on how to achieve them. We have therefore included information on how the bus and coach sector can contribute to Transport for the North's strategy and help to deliver the significant reductions in emissions required which we hope will be beneficial.

We also felt that this strategy could provide Transport for the North with an opportunity to reconfirm their role, define who they are going to influence and speak to, how they can be a facilitator to really bring together Local Authorities and other partners to deliver the strategy.

Modal shift can significantly reduce carbon and NOx emissions

Zero emission cars have more emissions over their life span than buses, so whilst switching cars from diesel and petrol to electric will help reduce tailpipe emissions, this should not be the primary focus of any decarbonisation strategy. Replacing car journeys with high capacity modes such as bus or coach will achieve a



greater reduction in harmful emissions - Buses and coaches account for just 6% of nitrogen oxide emissions from road transport compared to 71% for diesel cars and vans.

During the pandemic traffic levels significantly reduced as schools, much retail and leisure were closed and the people of the UK were instructed to work from home where possible. The reduced levels of congestion had a direct impact on our roads. Air quality improved - at the height of lockdown Manchester reported a 70% reduction in nitrogen oxide, carbon emissions reduced and journey times decreased by 25%. However, with lockdown restrictions now completely lifted people are starting to travel again and evidence is already showing traffic levels are returning to pre-pandemic levels and exceeding this in some areas. Buses provide a green and sustainable travel option, with a fully loaded double decker bus able to remove 75 cars off the road, increasing modal shift will significantly reduce carbon emissions and improve the local air quality. If everyone switched just one car journey a month to bus, there would be a billion fewer car journeys and a saving of 2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide a year.

We know that journey times are a key reason that people choose not to travel by bus and high levels of congestion is a significant contributor to increased bus journey times and un-reliability. Research by Greener Journeys found that nearly a quarter of car users would consider switching to the bus if journey times were quicker and more reliable¹. Congestion also increases operators running costs, which reduces their ability to reinvest in improving services for passengers.

The National Bus Strategy confirmed that Local Transport Authorities will need to develop Bus Service Improvement Plans with bus operators and will be able to access funding from April 2022 to introduce bus priority measures. These measures could drastically improve journey times and reliability, which in turn can increase passenger numbers, reduce pollution and deliver a bus network which is continuously improving.

Bus priority is more than adding new bus lanes and can take many forms, we have included some examples of bus priority measures below

Bus given priority at junctions and traffic lights will improve bus reliability and journey times, encouraging more passengers on board.

Bus only roads provide a direct travel option straight to the city centre, which creates a cleaner, safer and more desirable environment, reduces the need for parking spaces and boosts the town centre economy.

Bus only lanes deliver better traffic flows throughout the city which decreases journey times for all road users.

Park and Ride Schemes enable passengers to park their cars outside of the city centre and continue their commute on a bus. This reduces congestion and improve journeys times whilst also reducing pollution levels.

Places that have successfully introduced bus priority measures have reported an increase in patronage numbers.

Reading Bus Priority Measures- Reading has the second highest level of bus user per head of population outside of London and has recorded consistent patronage growth in recent years when compared to the national average. Reading has implemented multiple bus priority measures on its roads including dedicated bus links and access, contraflow bus lanes which enable buses to run in both directions, traffic light priority, bus-only gates, width restrictions and dedicated access to the very busy Black Boy Roundabout.

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

Connecting Leeds- Leeds transport strategy sets out the ambition to be a city where car travel is not required and a target to double bus patronage over the next 10 years from 2016 levels. To achieve this the plan includes creating a new high frequency bus network with over 90% of bus services running every 10 minutes between 7am and 8pm and increasing the capacity at their park and ride hubs with 2,000 additional spaces.

Measures to support modal shift and encourage people out of their cars and onto public transport

Introducing measures which restrict car access to certain roads and reduce the amount of available parking in city centres will help to encourage and increase modal shift to active travel and public transport. With more people incentivised to travel into central areas by public transport, congestion is significantly reduced, which in turn reduces harmful emissions and increase bus reliability.

Introducing a Workplace Parking Levy could further incentivise more people to choose the bus for their daily commute rather than their private car.

Road user and congestion charging

Whilst we recognise TfN do not have the powers to introduce road charging schemes, we have briefly outlined how it could be used as a tool to encourage modal shift to help TfN influence other stakeholders. We are supportive of vehicles being charged according to their contribution to carbon emissions, local pollution and congestion. This would mean that

- Diesel and petrol vehicles will pay more than electric vehicles at any time
- Drivers using busy roads at busy times will pay more than others

High capacity vehicles which provide a solution to congestion – such as buses and coaches – should be exempt from road and congestion charges. This will encourage the shift to more sustainable and environmentally friendly forms of transport and ensure that affordable methods of transport are available, including for people who have no other alternative. The charging structure to be transparent to enable people to compare the cost of a journey made by car with that made by a bus or coach.

Clean Air Zones

The framework that determines the classes of CAZ means that buses and coaches are charged in every class of zone, with public cars only brought into scope in the final class. Many clean air strategies are proposing to introduce charges for non-compliant coaches and buses but not cars. These strategies therefore penalise those who have already opted for an environmentally sustainable option and do not target the root cause of poor air quality – increased levels of congestion. If cars were charged in clean air strategies, this will help encourage more passengers to travel by bus or coach which will have a significant beneficial impact on congestion and air quality.

Coaches are an important part of the solution

We were surprised and disappointed to see there was no mention of coach travel in the strategy. Coach is one of the most sustainable and environmentally friendly ways to travel, with one fully loaded coach able to remove 50 cars off the road. Coaches can significantly reduce the level of congestion on our roads, we estimate that just a 15% increase in coach passenger journeys by British people each year could lead to approximately 47 million fewer cars on the road², saving over a quarter of a million tonnes of carbon dioxide.

² Based on 500m passenger journeys made by British people by coach each year pre-pandemic



Additionally, coaches provide an inclusive, safe and convenient travel option, they transport 600,000 children to school each day, help people to access holidays, combat social exclusion and play a vital role in supporting our tourism industry and local economies.

However, it is important that Local Authorities have the correct level of support in place to enable and encourage more people to travel by coach.

Introduction of coach friendly measures – Coaches are often hampered by poor access and facilities at destinations which means the full benefits of this sustainable travel option are not being achieved. Local areas need to ensure coach operators have safe and sufficient access to local sites to support an increased number of visitors, which will in turn reduce congestion, creating greener and safer roads for everyone. Coach friendly measures include suitable and safe areas for passengers to be set-down and picked-up, access to main roads suitable for large vehicles and driver facilities.

Case Study -Bury Market - Bury Market is one of the UK's top ten markets and attracts over 1500 coaches every year with visitors from Birmingham, Carlisle, Durham, North Yorkshire and Wales. Bury market is recognised as a coach friendly attraction and it provides a coach drop off point adjacent to the market providing safe access to visitors, free coach parking, a coach drivers' rest room and a £5 coach driver meal voucher every time they visit with a coach full of passengers. As a result of these measures, the number of coaches visiting increased by over 40% between 2008 and 2018.

Aligned, promotional Coach message – Local and regional government can help by working with local areas and Destination Management Organisations to create a linked up promotional message to welcome coach visits. Additionally, promoting coach as a safe, sustainable, and convenient travel option will encourage more people to travel by coach.

Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations – PSVAR regulations aim to improve the accessibility of buses and coaches for disabled passengers and we are supportive of this aim. Local Authorities can support PSVAR compliant vehicles by ensuring there is appropriate space. There should be a suitable, flat, and stable area that is at least 3 metres in depth and 1 metre wide in order to deploy a wheelchair lift. The area should also be clear of any overhanging trees and street furniture such as waste bins and lamp posts that are positioned next to the kerb.

The Governments Transport Decarbonisation Plan announced a consultation on the phase out date for ending of the sale of new diesel coaches. Whilst we may seem a long way away from seeing Zero Emission coaches in our towns and cities, it would be beneficial to the sector for Local Authorities to follow the governments progress in this area. This would mean that when the government announce their decarbonisation plan for coaches, consideration could be given to the required refueling/recharging infrastructure required to support coaches travelling to and from the area, in particular tourist destinations and attractions.

Setting targets for Zero Emission buses

Buses are the greenest vehicles on our roads and can play a significant role in helping to achieve the ambitious emission reduction targets set out in this strategy. Bus operators are leading the way in decarbonising road transport and have already invested £2 billion in new cleaner and greener buses. However, industry wants to go even further and, pre-pandemic, committed to only purchasing ultra-low or zero emission buses from 2025, with the right government support.

The entire bus sector was delighted to see the government's commitment to delivering 4,000 new zero emission buses and the recent initiatives like the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas.

Zero emission buses however are significantly more expensive than their diesel counterparts, and the effects of Covid have made it increasingly difficult for operators to invest.

Zero emission buses also cannot deliver increased passenger numbers and net zero emissions on their own, they need the journey time improvements brought by the bus priority measures discussed above.

In addition, there are other challenges that need to be overcome including investment in charging infrastructure to support the new vehicles – on the road network as well as at depot, improvements to grid capacity and range technology.

It is therefore vital that local authorities and bus operators work together to develop realistic targets, as part of their BSIPs, on the roll-out of zero emission bus fleets. We would therefore advise TfN to engage with bus operators prior to placing targets on the sector that specify when the bus fleet should be zero emission. This will ensure that proposals are realistic and workable, and the bus industry is willing to help Local Authorities to reduce their emissions.

Mode integration

City centres can benefit from better transport connections and efficient interchange opportunities can reduce longer distance as well as short distance car use.

Bus fulfils journeys where walking or cycling are not feasible, however in some areas first and last mile solutions to get people to bus stops need to be considered; providing supportive measures such as cycle racks at bus stops and ensuring safe pedestrian access to bus stops will increase bus accessibility, and could encourage more passengers to leave their car at home, especially when connected with other modes of transport – such as train stations and airports. It is important that the right balance between the road needed for buses and coaches is provided whilst also providing safe cycle lanes and appropriate pedestrianised public realm alongside access to key stops and interchanges for passengers.

Coach operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and connects passengers to jobs that may be at hard-to-reach locations or start and finish at odd hours. Coach can significantly improve regional airport connectivity by providing a sustainable travel option which will reduce the number of cars driving to the airport. It is therefore vital that airports provide coach with the coach friendly measures discussed above to enable them to provide a sustainable travel option for passengers and reduce car use.

Conclusion

We are supportive of the ambitious targets set out in the consultation document, which can be further strengthened by a plan of action confirming how Transport for the North intends to deliver them. Whilst we recognise that all travel modes will need to be zero emission, and this transition has already begun for buses and cars, the focus needs to be on more than simply replacing all vehicles with zero emission alternatives. Encouraging more people to travel by bus will deliver significant reductions in congestion and harmful carbon emissions.

In addition to buses, coaches are also one of the most sustainable and environmentally friendly travel options. We have outlined in our submission how they can play a vital role in delivering the targets and the supportive measures needed to ensure they achieve their full potential.

CPT

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