



17th August 2021

Mark Drakeford MS
First Minister of Wales
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear First Minister,

We are a coalition of organisations passionate about connecting people and places across Wales in a sustainable and inclusive way. Our vision is for our communities to be connected through a sustainable, affordable, inclusive and safe transport network which meets the needs of all passengers regardless of age, background or ability. The coalition includes representatives of transport operators, transport charities, equalities and environmental organisations.

We believe that our transport system is as much a public service as it is a piece of economic infrastructure, and our members have a vital role to play in safeguarding it, through this crisis and beyond for the benefit of Wales' current and future generations.

As Wales continues its progress towards the gradual easing of Covid-19 restrictions it is crucial to restore people's confidence to use public transport. There can be no doubt that Covid-19 has changed the way we move around, and we note in particular Welsh Government's ambition to engender more homeworking and use of sustainable transport in the future. This is evidenced by Welsh Government's recent decision to freeze all road building projects and review their appropriateness in the context of Llwybr Newydd.

Public transport also has a crucial role to play in supporting other modes of transport such as active travel and community transport. Only an integrated approach to people's journeys will enable us to decarbonise our economy, meet our climate change obligations, whilst also catering appropriately for the needs of different users and the complexity of many journeys.

Further, Transport Focus research has shown 1 in 5 people currently aren't using public transport because they don't feel safe or have actively avoided using public transport. This reaffirms other research undertaken by Transport Focus that segments the types of passenger reaction to safety concern arising from Covid-19.

Without concerted action from the Welsh Government and the signatories to this letter, there is a real risk that the recovery from Covid-19 will be heavily car dependent, with all the social, environment, cultural and economic costs that comes with excessive reliance on private vehicles without a viable sustainable transport alternative.

Such continued reliance on private vehicles would negatively impact a number of the well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, as well as Welsh Government's well-being objectives set out in their Programme for Government, including the objectives to 'Build a stronger, greener economy as we



make maximum progress towards decarbonisation' and 'Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do.'

Our coalition has worked together to develop actions that Welsh Government can take to achieve this step. The following are immediate steps the government should take to work towards meeting their target of 45% of all journeys to be made by public transport, walking and cycling by 2040:

- The Welsh Government should lead the way in sending a visible message that it is safe to use buses and trains when appropriate measures, like wearing a face covering, are followed. Ministers and others should be seen to use public transport themselves.
- Ensure continuing Covid-19 guidance around risk-assessments does not single out public transport as a greater risk than other areas of society. For example, the current guidance for employers has a controls hierarchy that suggests avoiding public transport is an appropriate mitigation.
- Consideration should also be given to the health and economic risks of a failure to get people back on-board buses and trains, including poorer air quality and a constrained economic recovery as people remain reluctant to move around. Transport will be key to drive Wales towards a Wellbeing economy.
- Implementing the next stages of Llwybr Newydd the National Transport Plan for Wales should be an early priority for the new administration. We need a clear delivery plan that places social inclusion at its centre, paired with a thorough inclusion-focused evaluation and monitoring framework. This way we can work towards the recovery and growth of a sustainable transport network that is accessible to all and make the modal shift Welsh Government wants to achieve a reality.
- Working with rail and bus operators, Welsh Government should encourage the proactive marketing of public transport services and help with measures such as special promotions, at the earliest possible opportunity.

We must aim to prevent Covid-19's lasting legacy being a harmful combination of towns and cities that are more reliant on public transport being left behind while car-heavy areas experience more pollution and congestion. This would leave businesses permanently shuttered as customers who rely on public transport stay away, and certain people who have no other choice but rely on public transport even more excluded.

All people should feel the sustainable transport network at their disposal is an accessible and reliable way to get to shops, services, recreation etc. This is why we seek to work with the Welsh Government to ensure a green transport recovery that helps deliver a strong social and economic recovery from Covid-19.

I look forward to receiving your reply.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Boston'.

Christine Boston
Chair, Transform Cymru