

post covid-19

putting bus first in the transport network

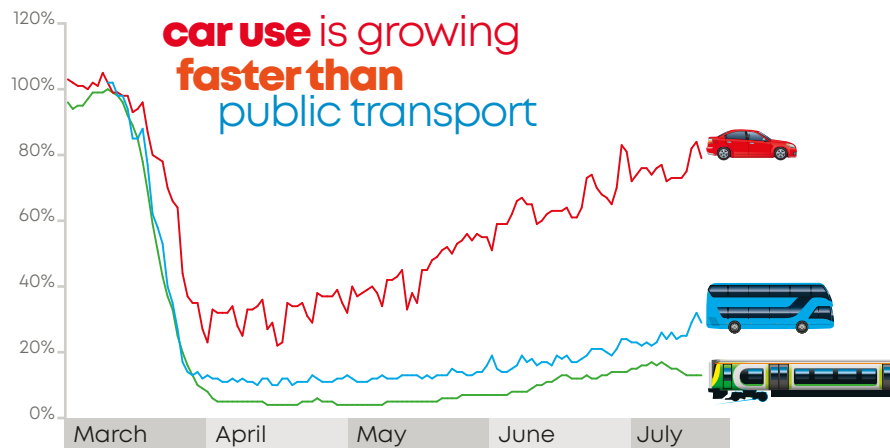
Buses will be crucial in supporting economic growth as we exit the Covid-19 pandemic and delivering environmental targets such as net zero by 2050. They are the most used form of public transport and will remain the most sustainable way of connecting people to work, retail and leisure activities as well as family and friends as the UK emerges from the pandemic.

car use is already approaching pre-lockdown levels

bus passengers exercise an average of **20 mins** a day as part of their journey

The pandemic has shown the benefits of reduced congestion on our roads with improved air quality and quicker road speeds. As we restart the economy there is an opportunity to reset how we view buses within our road network and recognise the key role they can play in delivering economic growth, securing a green recovery and promoting healthier lifestyles.

However, as people return to travelling there is a risk that, if current trends continue, just when we need to be kick-starting our economy increased traffic, especially short distance car journeys, will constrain growth and undo the environmental benefits of lockdown. Evidence shows that car journeys are rising rapidly and are already approaching pre lockdown levels with some studies predicting one million more car journeys will be made post pandemic.



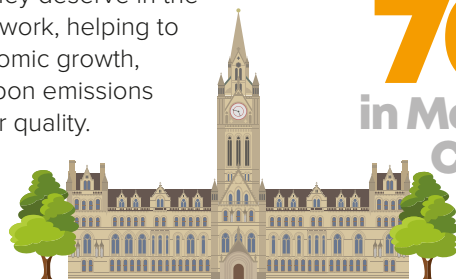
Greater congestion will increase journey times across the bus network, driving up running costs and pushing down passenger numbers, just at the time when we need more people to be travelling sustainably. Research by KPMG suggests that over 160 million bus journeys over five years have been lost as a result of increased journey times.¹

By cracking congestion and speeding up bus journeys we will encourage more people to use the bus as the economy begins the long recovery from Covid-19. This isn't just wishful thinking, before the pandemic 25% of car users said they would consider switching to buses if they were more reliable.² By getting more people onto the bus we will:

- Capture the improvements in air quality and carbon dioxide emissions for the long term.
- Deliver more job opportunities as part of the economic recovery as people feel confident to travel further for work.
- Improve services for passengers as operators reinvest the savings made.

This paper sets out how the Government and local authorities can ensure that buses are given the priority they deserve in the transport network, helping to deliver economic growth, reduced carbon emissions and better air quality.

nitrogen dioxide dropped **70%** in Manchester City Centre at the height of lockdown



Initiatives to reduce congestion will need to be developed and implemented at a local level by local authorities, communities and operators working together.

Where successful schemes are implemented there is clear evidence that passenger numbers increase as people become more willing to use the bus, delivering a range of benefits to the economy, public health and the environment.

In this section we set out some of the solutions for reducing congestion, the importance of an integrated approach with cycling and walking and what the savings from quicker bus speeds could mean for passengers.

a great approach: Connecting Leeds

Connecting Leeds is a plan to improve travel for people who live, work in and visit the city and to double bus passenger numbers by 2026. This project includes significant work in Leeds City Centre and along five key routes where measures will be put in place that prioritise buses while offering dedicated public spaces, wider pavements and better cycle lanes so people can get around the city centre more easily. There are also plans to expand the park and ride system to further cut down the number of cars entering the city centre.

Alongside this infrastructure investment operators will invest in 300 new ultra-low and zero emission buses with better facilities such as Wi-Fi and charging points. New real time information units will also be introduced at 1000 bus stops.

an integrated approach to active travel

To truly transform our transport network and encourage people out of cars we need to offer a range of alternatives which requires an integrated approach to buses, cycling and walking. Bus passengers on average undertake at least 20 minutes of exercise per day as part of their journey, which will often be cycling or walking before or after their bus journey.

By seeing these transport modes as allies in helping to encourage healthier lifestyles we stand the best chance of reducing car use and delivering the economic and environmental benefits less congested roads bring. Brentwood's Safe, Greener, Healthier initiative works in collaboration with local retailers to only allow cycling and buses on part of its high street to provide a boost to the local economy. This type of integrated approach needs to be encouraged across the country.

Unfortunately the promotion of walking and cycling during the Covid-19 pandemic has on occasions been at the expense of the bus with road space set aside for bus reallocated to cycling or used to widen pavements. While well intentioned and an understandable short term measure in response to the pandemic it does mean that buses have become stranded in congestion. It is vital that these temporary measures do not become a permanent feature of our road network.

the costs of congestion (£)

Ever worsening congestion increases bus operators' costs as they are forced to use additional resources to maintain service levels. For example, this may include extra buses on routes to maintain frequency but without an associated increase in passenger numbers.

A 10% decrease in bus speeds increases operating costs across the bus network by £400m a year. This is money which could be spent on providing an improved service for passengers by for example improved bus frequency, quality and/or a wider network.

delivering quicker bus speeds



There are a number of ways to deliver quicker bus speeds across the country. In some places network wide interventions or large infrastructure schemes can deliver significant benefits to an entire town or city while in others small scale change, such as those envisaged to be part of the £10m pop up bus priority infrastructure in Scotland, can transform the reliability of individual routes.

changes to road layout

Bus priority at junctions and traffic lights increases reliability and journey times, encouraging more people to use the bus.



bus only roads

Buses take people direct into the city centre, creating a cleaner, safer and more desirable environment, boosting the town centre economy.



park&ride

With cars left outside the city centre, congestion & pollution are reduced and journey times shortened.



bus lanes

Better traffic flows through the city which decreases journey times for all road users.

£1.2 billion invested in bus priority
delivers
£6 billion of benefits

£2.3 bn in direct benefits to passengers

Quicker bus journeys free up passenger time to spend with family, friends or allow people to work more productively.



£2bn through improved access to jobs

Dudley is less than 10 miles from the centre of Birmingham but the journey takes around 80 minutes in the morning peak. Making this and other journeys quicker will increase the jobs available to people.



£700 m in health benefits linked to increased activity and employment

The average bus user walks for at least 20 minutes as part of their commute and there is a clear link between using public transport and a lower Body Mass Index (BMI).



£440 m linked to improved air quality and reduced carbon dioxide emissions

Moving traffic produces fewer pollutants associated with poor air quality and less carbon dioxide.

£420 m in other benefits such as increased volunteering and general wellbeing

With better more reliable connections people are better able to undertake activities associated with good mental health and social cohesion.³

why putting the car first is a mistake – CPT analysis

Congestion constrains growth and contributes to poor air quality. We have recently seen the improvements in air quality and road speeds that can be achieved by curbing car traffic, but as people get back into their cars there is a real risk that these benefits will be rapidly undone.

The economic costs of congestion are at least £11bn per year in urban areas in England.⁴ Roadside emissions from traffic – in particular cars - account for a large amount of poor air quality and halving average city traffic speeds leads to a 50% increase in harmful nitrogen oxide emissions.⁵



If we can encourage people to leave their cars at home and travel by bus we could significantly reduce both congestion and air pollution. A double decker bus can take 75 cars - or over two miles of traffic - off the roads, resulting in quicker journey times and improved air quality for all, as well as helping the country achieve its Net Zero carbon targets. However, these benefits are not always properly reflected in government appraisals of transport schemes meaning that too often schemes which promote greater car use are given priority.

We need ambitious bus priority measures that give motorists a real option to make a change that improves their travel options and slashes roadside emissions. Evaluation of past schemes has shown that every £1 spent on investment in local bus priority measures will usually deliver £5 of economic benefit.⁶ This includes direct benefits to users such as access to jobs, training, shopping and leisure opportunities, as well as benefits which accrue to society at large through decongestion, reduced pollution, lower accident rates and improved productivity.

the keys to unblocking congestion

1 Ensure that measures to promote bus travel, cycling and walking work in partnership to encourage people out of cars rather than competing against each other.

2 At least £1.2bn of the £3bn of additional investment for bus services in England to be targeted at bus priority measures to put bus first in transport networks in towns and cities.

3 Operators commit to re-investing savings made from reduced congestion in improving services for passengers.

4 Accurately reflect the significant value of decarbonisation, improved air quality and decongestion when appraising transport schemes to ensure cars are not consistently prioritised over bus.

¹ cpt-uk.org/_uploads/attachment/4639.PDF

² greenerjourneys.com/news/ditch-the-car-this-catch-the-bus-week/

³ KPMG (June 2017)
The 'true value' of local bus services:
A report to Greener Journeys 2017

⁴ Greener Journeys (July 2012)
Buses and Economic Growth:
Summary of Report by the University of Leeds
Institute for Transport Studies

⁵ greenerjourneys.com/blog/congestion-not-just-drag-economy-kills/

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



Tom Bartošák-Harlow
External Relations Manager
07827 949 379

tom.bartosak-harlow@cpt-uk.org

Alison Edwards
Policy Manager
07785 617 115

alison.edwards@cpt-uk.org