

About us

Campaign for Better Transport's vision is for all communities to have access to high quality, sustainable transport that meets their needs, improves quality of life and protects the environment. We are a charity and operate in England and Wales.

Action required for modal shift and behaviour change

Ensuring all communities have access to reliable, convenient, affordable and sustainable transport is vital. It is essential to economic growth creation and a key enabler of levelling up. It provides access to employment and training opportunities, and to essential services, leisure facilities, and seeing family and friends. Modal shift away from private car journeys to public transport, walking and cycling, as well as moving to cleaner vehicles for unavoidable journeys, are also essential for reaching net zero carbon targets.

Transport emissions across the UK are now the biggest sectoral contributor to carbon emissions, responsible for 28% of all carbon emissions. They have remained stubbornly high while those from the energy sector, for example, have reduced markedly. The urgent need to cut emissions, if the UK is to make its contribution to the internationally agreed effort to keep the rise in greenhouse gas emissions within 1.5 degrees of pre-industrial levels, requires a sharp cut in transport emissions over the next five to ten years.

The technological advances that promise a reduced carbon footprint, such as the transformation of the car fleet from petrol and diesel to electric, can only occur over a much longer timescale. Other changes, such as the replacement of kerosene in aviation, are even further away. The only way to secure effective reductions from transport emissions within the necessary window is through modal shift from private road transport to rail, bus or active travel options.

The Wales Transport Strategy 2021 recognised the urgency of addressing climate change and the importance of modal shift for achieving this, by setting a target of 45% of journeys to be made by public transport, walking and cycling by 2040 (up from 32% currently).

It is widely established that achieving modal shift requires a mixture of carrot and stick policies.

First and foremost, it requires an affordable well-integrated public transport network and safe integrated walking and cycling infrastructure to be in place. While we will discuss bus and rail provision below, public transport and active travel can be supplemented by a mixture of shared mobility modes, such as cycle and e-scooter hire and car clubs. The right pricing and other incentives are also needed to entice people away from private cars and onto public transport. This can include permanently low fares and daily caps, price promotions and

mobility credits offered to people scrapping a polluting vehicle or those moving into a new area to get to know the local transport network.

These need to be complemented with policies that nudge people away from car ownership and car use. One study found that the most effective policy tool to achieve this is charging for driving in busy city centres, such as congestion or clean air charges, leading to between 12-33% reduction in city-centre cars.ⁱ Other effective interventions include reducing space allocated to parking provision, increasing the cost of parking permits and short-stay charges, workplace parking levies and restricting car access to certain areas.

There has been a reluctance in some areas to introduce such measures that can be portrayed by opponents as anti-car, and with the suggestion that they damage the economy. Yet the evidence from places as diverse as Bavaria and Nottingham has demonstrated that an urban area that constrains the car while offering good access on foot, by bike and public transport prospers economically, not least because the ambience of those urban centres is more attractive to people.

Behaviour change programmes that inform people about the need for such measures are necessary. Many people are still unaware of the urgency to address climate change or of the severe health impacts of local air pollution. Others may be worried about the implications of climate change and air pollution but sceptical that changing their own behaviour would help. Increasing public awareness of these issues are important, alongside showing people how easy it could be to make a change through programmes such as workplace and school/university travel planning.

Again, the Wales Transport Strategy recognises the role of all these interventions. The key will be sufficient funding allocations and implementation at devolved and local government levels within a short timeframe to have the best chance of achieving the modal shift target and contributing to climate reduction pathways.

Last but not least, investment in new road capacity only makes car dependency worse and increases demand for travel by private car. This is why we welcome the leadership shown by the Welsh government is starting the Roads Review and listening to the panel's recommendations so far. We look forward to seeing the outcome of the full review.

Priorities for post-covid recovery for Welsh bus and rail

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on public transport use. Early in the pandemic, the governments of the UK advised the public to avoid public transport, causing nervousness about virus transmission that still persists among many passengers, particularly the elderly. Despite operators' best efforts, changing work patterns mean that local bus and rail use across Great Britain remain at approximately 75-80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. Regular polling from Transport Focus has identified that certain sections of society remain reticent to get back to buses and trains.ⁱⁱ The use of bus by concessionary passholders remains even more depressed.

Very early on, we at Campaign for Better Transport identified the need for a government campaign to encourage people back on buses and train as a safe and sustainable way to

travel. We launched *The Way Forward is Public Transport* in May 2021, calling for such a campaign alongside a fares promotion and a continuation of covid-related funding.ⁱⁱⁱ So we were delighted to see Transport for Wales start The Real Social Network campaign and accompanying promotions. We look forward to finding out the extent to which this boosts public transport use.

The pandemic also resulted in many employers and their employees embracing hybrid and flexible working models, choosing to maintain significant levels of working from home and commuting into the office less frequently. To attract previous passenger back more frequently and new passengers away from private cars, bus and rail services need to be a more attractive and affordable option in the longer term.

While every effort must be made to reassure previous customers that buses and trains are clean and safe, attracting new passengers away from cars is vital for meeting carbon reduction pathways. Affordability is a key factor and regrettably what we have seen over recent decades is that public transport has become dearer relative to the cost of motoring or flying. Between 1997-2020, the cost of owning and using a motor vehicle have increased by 58%, while rail fares have increased by 132% and bus and coach fares by 192%.^{iv} This means that the price signals sent have been the exact opposite of those needed to secure modal shift to public transport.

Bus reform

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on bus services across the UK. Campaign for Better Transport found that bus services in Wales declined by 45% in the 10 years between 2011/12-2020/21, and 36% of bus services were lost in the first year of the pandemic alone – the largest decline of any region.^v As covid recovery funding is tapering off, operators are planning further reductions to adjust to “a new normal” of decreased demand. However, reduced frequencies and route cuts will isolate people in more remote locations and affect the ability to access employment.

The Welsh Government's Bus White Paper sets a very welcome and ambitious vision for one network, one timetable and one ticket. This will make bus travel easy and attractive for everyone in Wales, and allow greater integration between rail and bus service provision.

Research we have conducted for the Department for Transport (as yet unpublished) shows that some local authorities in England lack the experience, expertise, resources and capacity to work effectively with operators to make Enhanced Partnerships and franchising work, without additional funding and support to enable effective delivery. In this vein, it is crucial that the new regulatory framework in Wales enables the government, local authorities and bus operators to work well together to deliver services that work best for passengers locally.

The experience with the National Bus Strategy for England demonstrates that sufficient funding, particularly revenue funding, is crucial. Whole £3 billion was promised to transform bus services, only £1.08 billion was allocated to 31 local transport authorities, although all 77 authorities applied. Even winning authorities only received a fraction of the funding they had requested, leaving them needing to cherry-pick which improvements to implement, but they can only work as a package. Faster bus services will not attract people to buses if they still

don't take them to destinations they want to go to, or are too expensive – and vice versa. Losing local authorities on the other hand are left wondering how to sustain economically and socially necessary routes without funding.

Having a single funding pot, with multi-year allocations for local buses – provisional on them meeting certain objectives – instead of stop-start competitive funding pots, would improve certainty and allow for better planning and delivery. Reprioritising funding away from carbon intensive modes, such as road building, is also needed. Franchise contracts also need to be attractive enough for a good number of operators to come forward to bid and generate a healthy competition. The Welsh bus strategy must therefore be underpinned by the long-term funding commitment needed to make it a reality.

Research by Urban Transport Group suggests that increasing revenue support for bus services in the six largest city regions in England by £1.7-2.3 billion a year above pre-pandemic levels would allow improvements to existing routes, network expansion and fare reductions. This is expected to drive a growth in patronage of between 15 and 34 per cent by 2026/27.^{vi} Similar outcomes can be expected in Wales, with sufficient funding and the right framework in place.

Rail reform

With rail services in Wales (and across the border into England as far as Birmingham) now controlled by the Welsh government, a greater opportunity exists to make improvements to the rail offer to passengers.

There are however limitations on the scope for improvements in rail compared to bus. Most obviously train services in the medium term can only be improved over existing tracks and routes, whereas buses can penetrate new areas. Rail services are in the medium term limited to existing rolling stock and overwhelmingly diesel operation, whereas diesel buses can be, and are being replaced by hybrid and increasingly by zero emission alternatives.

A further restriction is that infrastructure matters remain in the hands of Network Rail, and so outside the direct control of the Welsh government. We would like to see the Welsh government given a greater handle on this, including decisions relating to infrastructure investment. We do not believe Wales to date has had a fair share of rail investment. The fact that until recently there was not a single mile of electrified railway anywhere in Wales demonstrates this all too clearly. We believe the new organisation Great British Railways should recognise this and respond appropriately.

It is accepted that rail is the greenest form of transport, but it would be wrong for the industry to rest on its laurels. It too must make its contribution to the reduction in carbon emissions. A sustained programme of electrification of key routes is needed, for example from Cardiff to Swansea, but also the introduction of battery or hydrogen trains where electrification is not economically viable.

As referred to above, there is not the ability to apply agility to rail that applies to bus, but one area where this does exist, and which can make a real difference is in fares and ticketing.

Rail fares saw the biggest annual increase in nice years this March. With high levels of inflation at the moment, if RPI is maintained as the normal base to decide rail fares, we could be looking at an increase above ten per cent next year. We hope that the success of the recent Great British Rail Sale would persuade HM Treasury that lower rail fares actually serves to attract more passengers to trains and therefore generate more revenue overall, and that the way for the Treasury to increase its income is to cut fares, not keep ratcheting them up, which can only drive more people into their cars.

Some ticket types are protected by law and while many protections are beneficial, the law must not be an inhibitor to beneficial change. For example, the protected cheap day return effectively means that a single journey between the same two points at the same time costs the same. This is not sensible. We also need to recognise that in the new post-franchise world, a great deal of simplification and rationalisation can and should take place. There are at present, for example, more than 130 different tickets for the Liverpool-Manchester journey alone, not counting railcard or child discounts. The UK government must use the forthcoming legislation which will establish GBR to unfreeze unhelpful rigidity in the fares and ticketing landscape

We have been calling for a root-and-branch reform of rail fares and ticketing, including the introduction of single leg pricing for rail journeys, action to lessen the difference between peak and off-peak rail fares and a much-improved flexible season rail ticket offer. We have been working closely with the Great British Rail Transition Team and train operating companies in this regard. Our desired outcome is one ticket for one journey, including if this requires a change between train and bus, for all payments to be contactless, and for fares overall to be reduced to attract people out of their cars.

Thank you for considering Campaign for Better Transport's views and I look forward to discussing these points further in the committee meeting.

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ⁱ Nicholas, K. (14 April 2022), "12 best ways to get cars out of cities – ranked by new research", The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/12-best-ways-to-get-cars-out-of-cities-ranked-by-new-research-180642>

ⁱⁱ Transport Focus, Travel during Covid-19 survey, weekly series, <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/home/coronavirus-latest/coronavirus-insight/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://the-way-forward.org/>

^{iv} Department for Transport Statistics, Table TSGB1308, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/transport-expenditure-tsgb13>

^v Department for Transport Statistics, Table BUS0206, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/bus02-vehicle-distance-travelled>

^{vi} Urban Transport Group (September 2021), Back the Bus to Level Up: The case for bus revenue funding and reform of how it is provided, <https://www.urbantransportgroup.org/system/files/general-docs/Bus%20revenue%20funding%20case%202021%20FINAL.pdf>