

The Value of the Bus to Society



Forewords

Greener Journeys has in recent years produced a comprehensive suite of research which puts beyond any doubt the considerable economic value that bus services provide to their communities and the UK as a whole.



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We know that policy is not about economic value alone. Because life isn't just about the pound in your pocket, or savings to the Exchequer. And policy should not just be made on economic arguments alone, however strong they may be.

Policy must deliver on a range of social factors as well. Does it reduce inequality, and support deprived communities? Does it impact positively on healthcare, education and access to a range of public services? Does it improve people's life chances?

For the first time, we now truly understand the social impacts of the bus, thanks to a new research from KPMG LLP and the Institute for Transport Studies at the University of Leeds. And this provides very clear evidence of a very strong social case for the bus.

Which means that a policy supporting bus investment is not just a transport policy. It is a health policy, an education policy, a skills policy, an economic policy, a wellbeing policy, and a social cohesion policy.

As the new Government looks to improve the life chances of everyone, and create a truly inclusive economy and society, this timely research demonstrates the significant social value of the bus.

We hope it is a useful contribution to the policy debate.

Claire Haigh
Chief Executive
Greener Journeys

The new Government has set out a mission to make the UK a country that works for everyone. It is right to highlight this challenge: the UK should be a country where everyone, no matter where they live, has the chance of a decent and secure life.



Delivering on this vision requires us to solve the problem of poverty in the UK. Transport has an important role to play here – particularly buses. People on low-income are less likely to own a car, and more likely to use a bus or walk compared to people with higher incomes. Among the long-term unemployed, 60 per cent are bus users.

A good bus service that is affordable and accessible can help increase the money in people's pockets and improve their prospects for the future. It can make the difference to whether someone can sustain a job, access vital public services, shop around for lower cost goods and services and whether they are isolated or lonely.

It can help to connect people in poverty to economic opportunities, making growth that benefits everyone more than just a slogan. Good transport is an enabler, making it easier for people to improve their situation and move out of poverty.

This report helps to demonstrate the links between buses and a stronger society, complementing existing work on the economic and environmental impact.

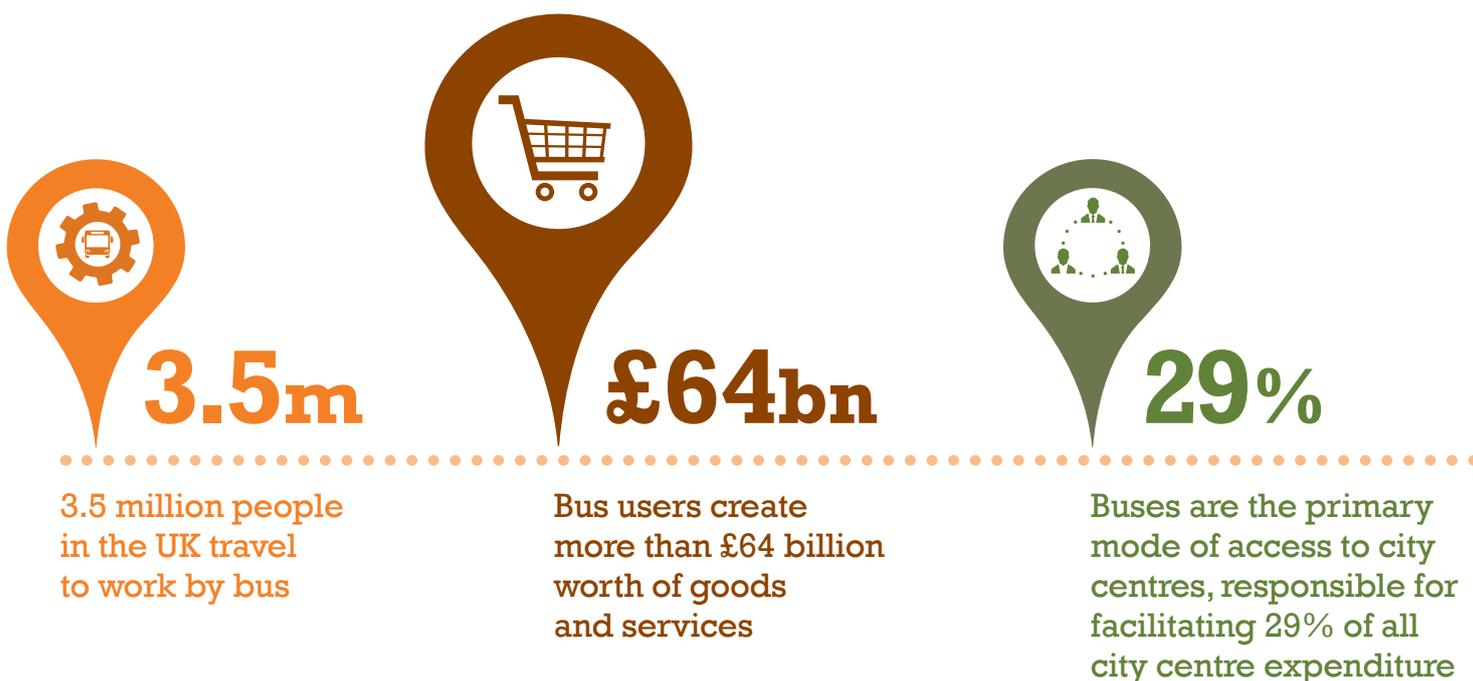
It makes a strong case for why national and local transport planners should consider social impacts – particularly the impact on poverty and deprivation – when making decisions about transport investment and infrastructure.

Katie Schmuecker
Head of Policy
Joseph Rowntree Foundation

A holistic approach to understanding the value of the bus

For many years, Greener Journeys has been working to understand the full range of benefits provided by local bus services. We have commissioned extensive economic analysis, which has demonstrated the vast impact that bus services have on the wider economy.

- 3.5 million people in the UK travel to work by bus and a further one million use the bus as a vital back up.¹
- Bus users create more than £64 billion worth of goods and services.²
- Buses are the primary mode of access to city centres, responsible for facilitating 29% of all city centre expenditure.³
- There is a significant relationship between accessibility by bus and employment. A 10% improvement in access to bus services would mean 50,000 more people in work.⁴
- Free bus passes deliver in excess of £1.7 billion in annual net benefits.⁵
- Every £1 spent on investment in local bus priority measures can deliver up to £7 of net economic benefit.⁶



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We have also commissioned research into the environmental impact of the bus. Peter White, Professor Emeritus of Public Transport Systems at the University of Westminster, found that effective bus priority measures can deliver up to 75% fewer emissions per bus passenger per kilometre than for car passengers.⁷ And we have worked with LowCVP to demonstrate that low emissions buses are a crucial part of the solution to reducing roadside pollution.⁸

Whilst there is a good deal of evidence of the wider economic and environmental impacts of transport, much less work until now has been done to develop a better understanding of the wider social impacts.

Our new report quantifying the value of the bus to society has been researched and developed by KPMG and the Institute for Transport Studies at the University of Leeds. It seeks to redress the balance by considering the impact bus services have on our society. And the findings are clear.

We have found that investment in buses and bus infrastructure does not just have direct transport benefits, or broader economic benefits. It affects the fabric of society in the most fundamental of ways. The bus is a vital tool of connectivity, growth and social inclusion.



50,000

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£1.7bn

Free bus passes deliver in excess of £1.7 billion in annual net benefits



£7

Every £1 spent on investment in local bus priority measures can deliver up to £7 of net economic benefit

Society and deprivation in the UK

While bus services add value to society across the country, our report finds that buses play a particularly vital social role in the most deprived neighbourhoods. Nearly 1 in 4 people in the UK is at risk of social exclusion⁹ and almost 1 in 4 households lacks access to a car.¹⁰

Department for Transport analysis shows that where local bus services are withdrawn, some passengers are unable to make alternative transport arrangements.

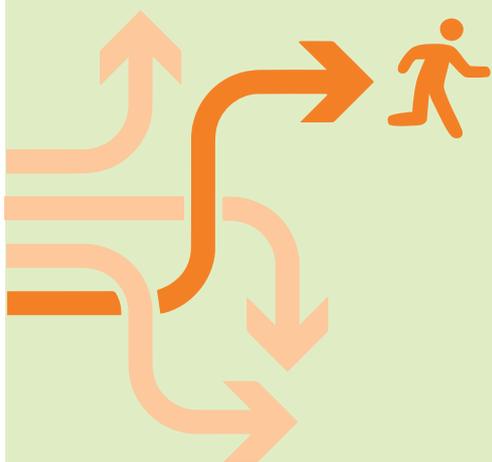
For 1 in 5 bus journeys a practical alternative does not exist.¹¹ For some this may mean not taking a job, not taking advantage of educational opportunities, not taking care of health needs or simply not seeing friends and family.

Quite simply, investment in buses and local bus infrastructure plays a significant role in promoting social inclusion, and places with better bus services have reduced levels of deprivation.

Policymakers are rightly focused on social inclusion and improving the life chances of all people in society.

The Government's stated mission is to make Britain a country that works for everyone, rather than entrench the advantages of the fortunate few.

Our data shows that if policy makers are serious about reducing inequality, the bus is a very good place to start.



1 in 4

Nearly 1 in 4 people in the UK is at risk of social exclusion and almost 1 in 4 households lacks access to a car

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Denise Hewitt, 68

Over the past few years I have found myself using my local buses more and more. Public buses allow me to do day-to-day activities such as going to town, doing my shopping, visiting the doctor, picking up my granddaughter from school, and occasionally also means I can go further afield for leisure.



Furthermore, on certain routes the bus drivers are so friendly and polite that I see the bus services as a community.

If it wasn't for the bus, I wouldn't get very far due to my limited mobility. I would go so far to say that the local buses in my area are my lifeline.

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Samuel Arnold, 17



Public transport brings me a sense of independence and the opportunity to experience new things.

When I was younger, I thought that not being able to drive and relying on my parents to drive me to and from school and my friends was the main barrier to independence. However, I now know how expensive driving can be – a cost which is far too expensive for a 17-year-old.

The bus network has been invaluable in granting me independence. I am able to go sightseeing in the city centre without having to deal with congestion and expensive parking. It has allowed me to attend youth voice conferences which are too far for lifts from my parents, and I can also meet up with friends who live several towns away. Most importantly, bus services allow me to get to and from job interviews when necessary.

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The social value of the bus

New econometric analysis undertaken by the University of Leeds as part of this study shows that a 10% improvement in local bus service connectivity is associated with a 3.6% reduction in deprivation as measured by the Department of Communities and Local Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). This reduction applies to all neighbourhoods, from the least deprived to the most deprived.

A 10% improvement in local bus service connectivity in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods across England would result in:

- 2.8% fall in income deprivation, which would equate to 22,647 people with increased income;
- 2.7% fall in employment deprivation, which would equate to 9,909 more people in work;
- 1.4% increase in those with adult skills, which would equate to 7,313 people with adult skills;
- 0.7% increase in post-16 education;
- 2,596 fewer years of life lost.



Statistics refer to improvements in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods across England

*This reduction applies to all neighbourhoods



+30%

Wider social impacts add over 30% to the benefit-cost ratio of bus investments

KPMG has estimated that wider social impacts add over 30% to the benefit-cost ratio of bus investments.

These findings are stark. The social case for the bus is unarguable.

There is a clear relationship between investment in bus services and improved outcomes across health, education, income and employment. Areas with better bus service connectivity have lower levels of deprivation. And improvements in bus

service connectivity leads to reductions in deprivation across all neighbourhoods, not just the most deprived.

The message to policymakers is clear – when considering investment, and when evaluating projects, these significant social benefits should be a determining factor.

Better bus infrastructure and services means material improvements in life chances for the poorest in society.



2,596

fewer years of life lost



3.6%

reduction in overall deprivation*

Our recommendations

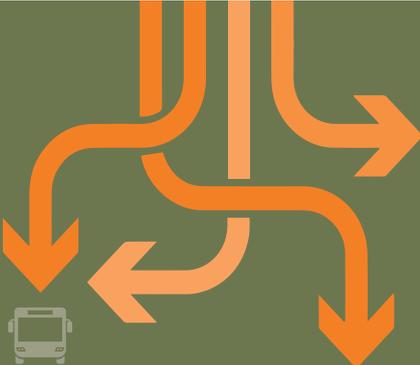
For the first time, our research has made a definitive link between increased investment in bus services and a significant improvement in health, education and life chances.

While this is the first piece of research of its kind, some clear conclusions and recommendations can be drawn. Greener Journeys is therefore making the following recommendations on the social value of local bus services:



Policymakers should prioritise investment in buses and local bus infrastructure. Such investment results in well-understood transport and economic benefits, and this research shows that there can be immense social, health, educational and income benefits as well.

When appraising transport schemes and investment cases, decision makers should factor in the wider social benefits of various projects. The Department for Transport may wish to review its approach to Social Impact Assessments, perhaps introducing a short template SIA to be considered in all major transport and policy investment decisions.



As a first step, we recommend that the Government convenes a cross-departmental working group specifically aimed at ensuring better co-ordination of decision making where relevant to the social benefits of transport projects. This group could commission new research if needed.

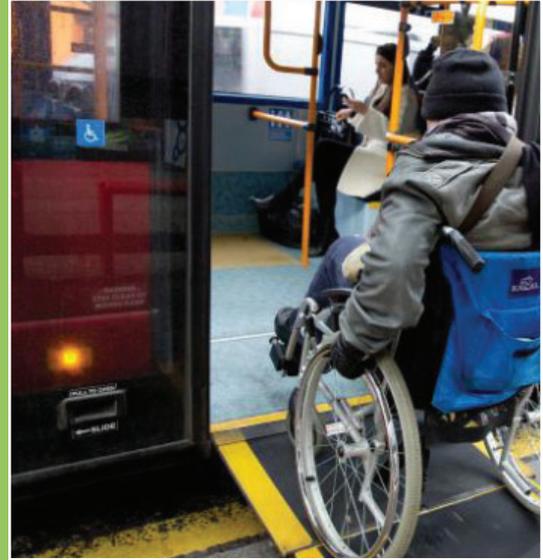
About Greener Journeys

Greener Journeys is a campaign dedicated to encouraging people to make more sustainable travel choices. It is a coalition of the UK's leading public transport organizations, user groups and supporters. It aims to reduce CO₂ emissions from transport by encouraging people to switch some of their car journeys to bus or coach instead.

Switching from car to bus for just one journey a month would mean one billion fewer car journeys on our roads and would save 2 million tonnes of CO₂ every year. For more information, visit www.greenerjourneys.com

References:

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