



Our ambitions for buses in the West of England

WEST | MAYORAL
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AUTHORITY



Overview

Buses matter to people's everyday lives, and we want them to be better. There are lots of ideas for improvement, and working together, we can make them happen. The Bus Plan will set out our shared ambitions and the direction we're taking to deliver better bus services for everyone.

Across the West of England, our buses and the roads they run on are designed, funded and delivered by people working across multiple organisations. We are all responsible for delivering a simple, affordable and effective network. The West of England Bus Plan is being developed with input from those who use and deliver it. We are sharing our ambitions so that local people, communities and businesses can help shape it, and we want to hear from you.

Our ambitions

A network:

- you can trust
- which feels safe and accessible
- that takes you where and when you need to go
- fit for the future network
- that is affordable and offers good value for money

A network you can trust

You need to know that your bus will turn up when it should and be confident it will arrive at your destination on time. We provide journey information through paper or online timetables, as well as apps and bus stop screens that track buses live.

Sometimes, this live data does not work properly. Buses can suddenly disappear from real-time information screens, or they can show the wrong details. Working together, we will fix these data issues so that you can rely on buses arriving when the information tells you they will. We will also continue to produce timetable and map information for all parts of the region – bringing all the information together in one place to make it easier to understand. We will ensure the information is correct so you can trust what it says.

We will make sure that each stop provides you with bus service information. Some stops will have real-time information or ways of accessing this online. This will help you to track exactly where your bus is and how long you might have to wait.

We need to make sure buses can cut through congestion and provide quicker journeys that keep moving even when other traffic cannot. We want you to trust that your service will turn up and get you to your destination on time. Traffic jams are one of the biggest reasons for late buses as they make journeys slower. Working together, we will identify congestion hotspots and develop schemes that enable buses to bypass the queues, speed up journeys and improve reliability.

Roadworks can impact the reliability of buses significantly. We will work with our partners to plan roadworks in a way that minimises their impact on buses. Most importantly, we will improve our communication, finding ways to let you know about any disruption so you can plan your journey effectively. Sometimes buses break down, but operators have spare buses for these occasions. We will invest in newer, more reliable electric vehicles that keep break downs to a minimum.



A network which feels safe and accessible

Being and feeling safe when you are on the move is hugely important. Everyone has a part to play in behaving respectfully to other passengers and to those delivering our bus services.

We will look at practical ways to improve safety such as, more CCTV, better lighting, and better design of public spaces. We will work with law enforcement and other organisations to ensure people know how to access help if they feel unsafe.

We know that people perceive safety differently, and some feel more vulnerable than others, especially when travelling in the dark. We want those who feel more vulnerable, particularly women and girls, to feel safer and more confident travelling. We will engage with them to find solutions that make them feel safer when travelling around our region. This could include using live bus data to help you share your location or implementing a discreet 'ask for help' scheme that will be active across the whole public transport network.

We will expand our passenger charter to include requirements for everybody to act respectfully to one another, and define what is acceptable behaviour for everyone on the network. It is important that everyone feels safe and able to use the bus. We will look at how people get to bus stops and at the bus stops themselves, and take steps to make them more accessible and safer. We will also ensure our buses can cater for people with a range of accessibility needs.

In doing so, we must not forget our drivers. They must feel safe while driving our buses, and we will ensure they are listened to when we introduce safety measures.



A network that takes you where and when you need to go

If the network doesn't have buses running when people need them, or going where they want to go, people have less choice in where and how they can travel. We want our network to unlock more opportunities for people and help reduce the number of those not in employment, education or training. We want to help reduce loneliness and isolation, and help to improve people's health and wellbeing. To do this, we will plan our network effectively, allowing it to grow and become more robust. We will prepare for the future, planning our services around growth zone and creating a more resilient network.

We also need to make bus journeys quicker, and improve how they connect with other buses, trains and other mode of transport.

We will work more closely with our partners and the public to design better routes and timetables that capture the needs of local residents. We will set up a Passenger Forum, so you have your say on what you want from our buses.

We will expand the times the buses run and extend the network to reach more

areas – particularly where there are new homes and employment opportunities. We will make the network as efficient as possible so we can spread resources over a wider area and offer more flexible operating times. We will consider the most appropriate type of bus service for each area – whether a fixed route, demand-responsive transport (such as WESTlink), or community transport – and build interchange hubs that make it safe and comfortable to change onto another bus, opening up choice in where you can travel. Much of our region is rural, with a dispersed population over a large area, making it difficult to provide bus routes at a frequency that meets everyone's needs. We will therefore speak to you and our partners to better understand rural transport needs and the challenges faced with the different types of service options available.

By speeding up bus journeys, we will also be able to run/operate more trips each day, which means a higher frequency of journeys, more journeys at the beginning or end of the day or expanding the coverage of services.



A network fit for the future

We need to make sure that every decision we make now ensures our network is fit for the future, including developing in parallel with the evolving digital landscape and being resilient to the impacts of climate change. Building an aspirational bus network and increasing the number of electric buses is key to reducing the impacts of climate change. Not only will we reduce carbon emissions from buses, but an attractive bus network will encourage people to leave their car at home, reducing emissions even further. We will use the best available technology to deliver our services, and obtain data to inform how we plan and allocate resource effectively throughout the region. Technology will be used to provide better information and help our buses become more reliable.

When we design our network and plan our bus services, we will take account of things we know are changing in the future. We will build connections and interchange hubs into the network enable service enhancements to be added seamlessly, in line with our growth ambitions. For designated growth areas in housing and employment, we will work with developers to make sure that they consider buses serving the development from the outset. We want to ensure people have the option to travel by bus from day one, opening up new opportunities for people to live and work in the region without creating further traffic congestion.

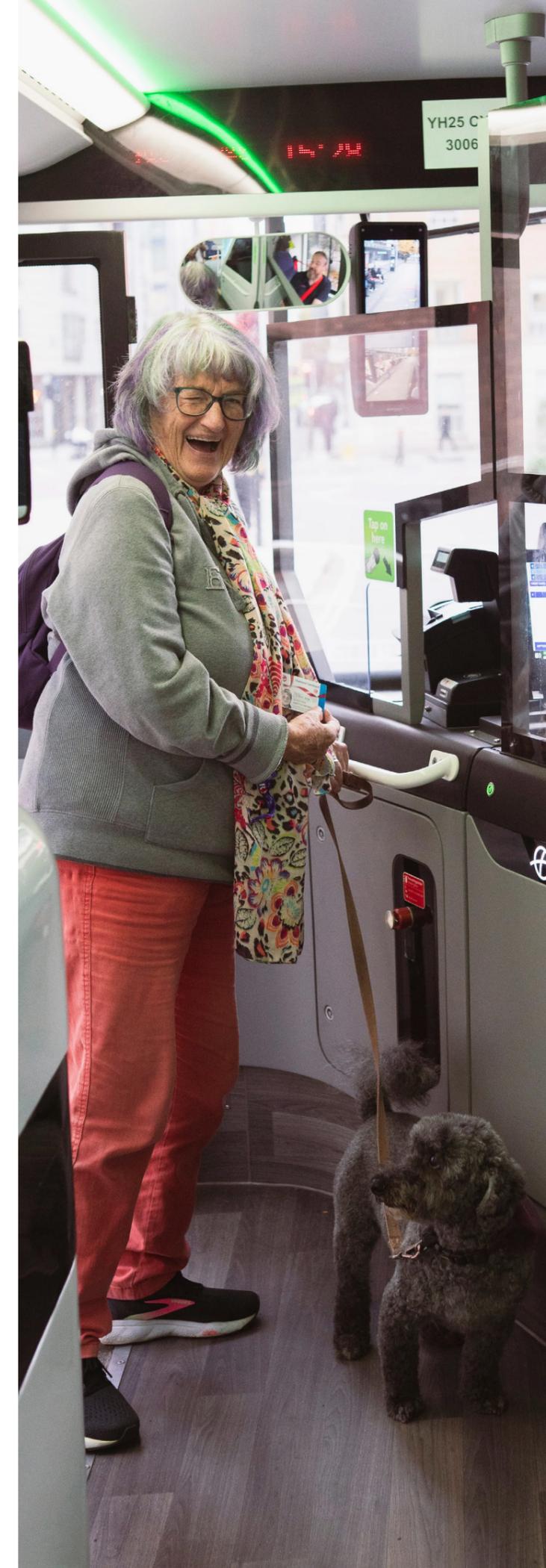
People need to come together to support the development and operation of our bus network too. We will need more drivers and support teams as our network expands. We'll work together to build more apprentice schemes and training to create long-term, high-quality employment opportunities for local people.

A network that is affordable and offers good value for money

Our bus network needs to deliver value for money to everyone using it, irrespective of how simple or complex their journeys are. It shouldn't matter which bus you get on, or where you are going – the price structure needs to be the same throughout our region. We will make sure you get the best-value ticket and only need one ticket for your whole journey. We will engage with the Passenger Forum to understand what 'value' means to people and create a simple product range that people understand.

We will build upon the success of our Kids Go Free scheme and look for other offers that will get more people on our buses. We will develop ticketing initiatives that provide support to those most vulnerable, especially disadvantaged young people.

We will explore a maximum daily price, or fare cap, for travel on all public transport modes. We need support from partners in the rail sector and from active travel providers, such as the e-scooter and bike hire scheme, so we can develop a capped fare that lets people shape their perfect journey.



How we will measure success

We want to improve buses now and show you how we are doing.

We will:

- Set clear targets
- Share progress openly — good or bad
- Update the plan if needed

We will measure things that matter to you, such as:

- Whether buses run on time
- Reliability of services
- Customer satisfaction
- How many people are using buses

Your feedback will help shape better bus services for everyone. Have your say: haveyoursaywest.co.uk/betterbuses

