



BUS TRANSPORT

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GREEN
NEW DEAL



Transport: Free Bus Transport

A GND would see the UK rapidly decarbonise to tackle the threat of climate change and create a more equal society. Road transport remains a key area for emissions reductions. In 2017, 21% of the UK's domestic greenhouse gas emissions [came from road transport](#), with a significant component of this coming from passenger cars. The pollution produced by road transport also has knock-on impacts upon the health of local communities. A report published by the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants estimates that [between 28,000 and 36,000](#) people die as a result of air pollution every year in the UK, and the savings associated with free bus travel would likely fall to the poorest households as they are more likely to rely on public transport. A Green New Deal would target road transport in order to increase accessibility of public transport by cutting the cost of fares, expanding routes and to reduce emission levels. This would reduce inequality at a regional and household level for working-class communities by providing affordable and luxurious public transport.

Key policy

Encouraging and enabling the establishment of publicly owned bus services that provide a reliable, affordable and accessible form of local transport which is emissions-free

Explainer

- **Municipal Ownership:** Unlike in Scotland and Wales, the Bus Services Act 2017 prevents local authorities in England from establishing publicly owned bus companies. This decision should be scrapped to allow English local authorities to set up municipal bus companies, like those in operation in Reading, Nottingham and Edinburgh. In Scotland and Wales, more concrete steps are required to enable local councils to bring local buses into public ownership. Proper funding would allow greater investment in publicly-owned bus companies, with meaningful conditions attached to contracts so they better serve the needs of local communities and the environment. Local publicly owned bus services should provide unionised work by paying at least the Real Living Wage for employees and protect routes of critical community value by providing a service run for people, not profit.
- **Electric Buses and Affordable Travel:** In 2018, bus transport in the UK accounted for [3 million metric tons](#) of carbon dioxide. The Ultra Low Emissions Bus Scheme provides councils with the opportunity to apply for limited funding for ultra-low emission buses. However, funding must be increased so that all councils can

procure zero emission buses. Through reducing the number of cars on the road, it would also likely reduce the prevalence of asthma and other respiratory illnesses due to lower levels of pollution. The cost of fares could be reduced and capped, with the end goal of providing free local public transport as an essential public service.

- **Behavioural Change and Economic Regeneration:** By increasing the provision of efficient and dependable bus companies under local control, a vast number of people can be encouraged to use public transport as opposed to private cars. As part of a wider integrated transport scheme, further behavioural change could be encouraged through an increase in bus lanes, bike share schemes, car free urban areas, and better connecting rural areas with towns and cities.

Examples:

- Public ownership is the norm in Europe. For this reason, Tallin in Estonia can provide [free public transport](#) to its citizens and [public transport in Luxembourg is free](#) for residents, cross border workers, and tourists. In Germany, 88% of all local public transport journeys are provided by publicly owned operators. [This could work in the UK too.](#)
- [Reading Buses](#) are a multi-award winning bus service who provide free bus travel to those under the age of 16 and above 60. Their fleet includes 58 super-green bio-buses, which are [quieter, cleaner and greener and have free wi-fi access.](#)
- Nottingham City Transport have invested [£42m into their fleet of buses, and have reduced CO2 emissions by up to 84%.](#) Their fleet of green buses provide a comprehensive network of services across the city, with [Nottingham City Council owning the majority of the company.](#)
- Lothian Buses are the [largest municipal bus company in the UK.](#) As one of the regions biggest employers, it operates 70 routes in Edinburgh and the surrounding areas and recently returned [£5.5m to the public purse.](#)

Campaigns:

- [Better Buses Manchester](#)
- [Take Back Our Buses, Sheffield](#)
- [Get Glasgow Moving](#)