

Public Transport England

March 2020



Wherever they live, older people should be able to reach key services, friends and family at reasonable cost, in reasonable time and with reasonable ease.

Responsibility for transport crosses national and local government, the private and the community sector, which means that it can be challenging to implement and coordinate improvements. Yet access to transport, or the lack of it, can have a profound impact on the quality of life, health and wellbeing of older people. For example, 1.6 million people aged 65+ in England find it difficult to travel to hospital and 630,000 find it difficult or very difficult to get to their GPⁱ. Also 66 per cent (7.8 million) older people cannot reach a hospital within 30 minutes by public transportⁱⁱ. In 2019 the Government made a commitment to a national review hospital transport in response to the Age UK report 'Painful Journeys' on older people struggling to get to hospitalⁱⁱⁱ.

Age-friendly public transport

All places and forms of transport should also be 'age-friendly' so that older people can remain active for as long as possible (see 'Age-friendly neighbourhoods' and 'Older drivers' positions). Different aspects of the built environment can make public transport more accessible. These may include: the walking distance to a bus stop or station; level pavements; good street lighting; well-located pedestrian crossings; bus shelters; and public toilets.

Key statistics

£2.17

Research has found that each £1 spent on concessionary bus fares generates at least £2.17 in benefits ⁽¹⁾

1 in 3

older households in rural areas have no access to a vehicle ⁽²⁾

1.6 million

people aged 65+ in England find it difficult to travel to hospital and 630,000 find it difficult or very difficult to get to their GP ⁽³⁾

Public Transport

England

March 2020

The most frequent reason people at 65 and over say they do not use public transport is because it's inconvenient and does not go to where they want it to go^{iv}. There may also be barriers to access caused by the attitudes and behaviour of transport staff and other passengers. The Department for Transport campaign '*It's Everyone's Journey*'^v encourages individuals and organisations to support and promote accessible transport initiatives for disabled people.



Concessionary travel

Buses are the most popular form of public transport for older people - 30 per cent of people over 60 take a bus at least once a week. In 2018, 73 per cent of eligible older people in England had a concessionary pass^{vi}, but use and ownership of a bus pass is lower among older people with higher incomes^{vii}.

Research by Greener Journeys found that each £1 spent on concessionary bus fares generates at least £2.17 in benefits^{viii}. Bus passes can help users to get to shops, healthcare and other local services, while at the same time helping reduce traffic congestion and pollution. Access to public transport is a crucial consideration to address loneliness and isolation among older people.

In 2018/2019 there were 9.1 million older and disabled concessionary travel passes in England - a decline of 2.5 per cent compared with the previous year.^{ix} Department for Transport figures show that passengers using a free pass had higher levels of satisfaction (93 per cent) than fare-paying passengers (85 per cent).^x Future advances in technology could make a broader range of transport options available to more older people on-demand and make better use of local resources.

Lack of options

Roughly 38 per cent of households with a car include people with mobility difficulties, while around 40 per cent have no access to a private vehicle^{xi}. One in three older households in rural areas have no access to a car^{xii} and a high proportion of older people use the concessionary bus pass scheme. In rural villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings, less than half the households (49 per cent) live within a 13 minute walk of a regular (hourly) bus, and buses can be infrequent and vulnerable to cuts^{xiii}. Flexible alternatives to the free bus concession such as taxi cards or free community transport differ widely between local authorities but can be a lifeline in rural areas.



Public Transport

England

March 2020

A recent Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) report 'Transport Deserts'^{xiv} maps out places which have seen a dramatic decline or loss of bus services.

Reviving the national bus network

In February 2020, Government announced an allocation of £5 billion over five years to support a National Bus Strategy.^{xv} It is hoped this significant level of funding will reverse the long-term decline of rural buses, and revive networks outside London. Local authorities will be given more strategic control over the delivery of services, although it is unclear whether the strategy will extend to allowing more of them to directly manage municipal bus services. Previously, local authority funding was cut by 43 per cent between 2009/10 - 2018/19, with over 3,000 routes reduced or completely withdrawn since 2009^{xvi}. The Local Government Association (LGA) said that concessionary fares were underfunded by £652 million in 2017/18, which led to cuts in services^{xvii}. The funding boost should reverse this but will need to balance ongoing revenue, subsidies to local authorities and spending on less polluting, accessible, and comfortable new buses. The Government previously introduced the *Bus Services Act 2017*^{xviii} to give local authorities with an elected Mayor powers to deliver more integrated public transport through franchising and binding agreements with local bus operators. Such arrangements allow stronger determination of the frequency of services, routes and ticketing over a wider geographical area. However, take-up of new powers under the Act has been slow – although Manchester City Council has taken the lead with plans to franchise their bus services^{xix}. This was reinforced by the 2020 Budget, which allocated £4.2 billion for 'consolidated transport settlements' across this and other forms of transport.

Access to public transport for disabled people

We have seen further progress to improve the accessibility of railway stations as a result of Government funding under the 'Access for All'^{xx} scheme. The Government has allocated an additional £300 million to fund improvements to 73 stations. However, there is no still comprehensive information on the accessibility of all 2,500 train stations on the network. Recent research on by the Department of Transport^{xxi} highlights the lack of accessible toilets on trains and at stations as well as insufficient awareness of passenger assistance offered by train operators. The current franchising approach to the delivery of train services continues to be a barrier to consistent standards and better coordination across the rail network. The Government now recognises this and will shortly be publishing the Williams Rail Review^{xxii}, which will include an examination of how to improve accessibility at stations with a more coordinated approach. Alongside this, the Department for Transport '*Inclusive Transport Strategy*'^{xxiii} is making steady progress on its targets to improve the accessibility of all forms of public transport. For example, by ensuring that all buses offer audio-visual announcements and information.

Public Transport

England

Public Policy Proposals

- The Government needs to make **reducing social isolation and loneliness a priority** in public transport policy and funding, alongside their priorities of economic growth and cutting carbon emissions. They should encourage greater co-ordination across public, private and community transport providers.
- Older people should be offered greater influence over changes to local transport services through **consultation and engagement**. This should include a say in the Government's **National Bus Strategy**
- Where commercial transport services are reduced or withdrawn, local transport authorities ⁽⁴⁾ must have responsibility to arrange **alternative transport options** to ensure older people can reach key services. This should include **financial support** towards community transport or taxis and a **flexible bus pass** that can be used for different forms of transport
- Local authorities need to ensure that older people are fully aware of the existing transport options and services in their area such as **community bus services and dial-a-ride services** and facilitate access to those services.
- Local authorities should learn from the **'total transport'** model and consider how they can pool and share transport resources to help fill any gaps in local transport services. New technology should be deployed to assess and meet the needs of older people to offer a range of different transport options.
- The Government's review **of hospital transport** services must ensure every hospital journey for an older person is reasonably comfortable, affordable and as stress free as possible - while getting them to and from hospital in good time, without long waits.
- Transport operators need to ensure that older people are not excluded by **smart ticketing** or information provided by smart phone apps and other devices.
- Local transport authorities should work with operators to improve the **physical accessibility**, safety and reliability of the journey as a whole. This should cover leaving the house to arriving at a destination using buses, trains and other transport connections.
- The Department for Transport must ensure the full implementation of its **'Inclusive Transport Strategy'**.
- All transport staff should be provided with specific **training** in collaboration with local older and disabled people's groups to ensure the implementation of accessibility policies and dementia awareness.
- The **national bus concession** must remain free and universal for older and disabled people given its huge social and economic benefits.

Public Transport

England



Further information

You can read our policy positions here; <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/policy-positions/>

Individuals can contact us for information or advice here; <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/> or call us on 0800 169 8787

Want to find out more?

Age UK has agreed policy positions on a wide range of public policy issues. Our policies cover money matters, health and wellbeing, care and support, housing and communities. There are also some crosscutting themes, such as age equality and human rights, age-friendly government and information and advice.

Public Transport

England

- (1) Greener Journeys (2014) Bus2020: The Case for the Bus Pass. Available online at: <https://greenerjourneys.com/publication/case-bus-pass-2/>
- (2) Later Life in Rural England, Age UK, 2013
- (3) Holley-Moore, G and Creighton, H. (2015). The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society. ILC. Figures of 1.6m based on update of ELSA Wave 7 – available from Age UK.
- (4) A local transport authority can include county and unitary councils, Integrated Transport Authorities as well as Transport for London (TfL) and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM).

ⁱ Holley-Moore, G and Creighton, H. (2015) The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society. ILC. Figures of 1.6m based on update of ELSA Wave 7 – available from Age UK.

ⁱⁱ Government Office for Science (2019) Inequalities in Mobility and Access in the UK Transport System. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/784685/future_of_mobility_access.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Age UK (2017) Painful Journeys. Available online at:

https://www.ageuk.org.uk/contentassets/7354623c9df1491a84cc34ef46105647/painful_journeys_campaignreport.pdf

^{iv} Holley-Moore, G and Creighton, H. (2015) The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society. ILC

^v Details online at: <https://everyonesjourney.campaign.gov.uk/>

^{vi} Available online at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/823068/national-travel-survey-2018.pdf

^{vii} Getting out and about, Age UK, 2012

^{viii} Greener Journeys (2014) Bus2020: The Case for the Bus Pass. Available online at:

<https://greenerjourneys.com/publication/case-bus-pass-2/>

^{ix} Available online at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/852526/concessionary-travel-statistics-2019.pdf

^x Department for Transport (2019). Concessionary Travel Statistics England, 2018/19. Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/852526/concessionary-travel-statistics-2019.pdf

^{xi} Government Office for Science (2019) Inequalities in Mobility and Access in the UK Transport System

(p.27) Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/784685/future_of_mobility_access.pdf

^{xii} Age UK (2013) Later Life in Rural England,

^{xiii} <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/buses-crisis-2017>

^{xiv} CPRE (2020). Transport Deserts. Available online at: <https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CfBT-Transport-Deserts-Feb-2020-web-spreads.pdf>

^{xv} <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-better-deal-for-bus-users/a-better-deal-for-bus-users>

^{xvi} Campaign for Better Transport (2019). The future of the bus. Available at:

<https://bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/future-bus-funding-arrangements.pdf>

^{xvii} LGA (2019) 'Bus journeys fall by more than 300 million in five years' (press release). Available at:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/bus-journeys-fall-more-300-million-five-years>

^{xviii} Available online at: <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7545>

^{xix} Further information available at:

https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/8300/manchester_city_council_to_push_for_greater_manchester_bus_franchising_scheme

^{xx} Further information available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/access-for-all-73-stations-set-to-benefit-from-additional-funding>

^{xxi} Department for Transport (2019). Research on experiences of disabled rail passengers. Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/814862/experiences-of-disabled-rail-passengers.pdf

^{xxii} Further information at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-williams-rail-review>

^{xxiii} Available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-transport-strategy>