



AFTER THE VACCINE – SAVING THE UK’S TOWN AND CITY CENTRES POST COVID-19

EVIDENCE FROM THE CONFEDERATION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT UK

ABOUT CPT

The Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) represents the operators of bus and coach services across the UK. We have more than one thousand enterprises in membership, including major PLCs, municipally owned companies, and family businesses with fewer than ten vehicles and accounting for in excess of 95% of the bus fleet and 55% of coach fleet in the UK.

SUMMARY

- Investing in bus priority measures in towns and city centres could greatly increase passenger numbers, which will in turn improve local air quality by reducing car traffic and provide a boost to the local economy by decreasing congestion, speeding up journey times and increasing footfall to the area.
- Providing sufficient access and facilities for coach operators will increase the number of passengers who choose to use coach as a means of accessing local areas of interest and tourist locations. This will provide both environmental and economic benefits for the local area.
- It is vital Government take a proactive role in promoting the economic and environmental benefits of coach and bus travel, and to reassure the public they are a safe travel option.

CPT’S RESPONSE

Buses and coaches are vital in supporting economic growth and delivering environmental targets such as the government’s ambitious target of achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

Before the pandemic, 5.8 million people used the bus every day, and they contribute over £85 billion to our economy. Buses ensure passengers can get to work, school or college and provide direct access to city centres and other retail establishments.

Coaches also offer inclusive, accessible, and flexible transport to millions of people each year, they transport 600,000 children safely to school every day and contribute £14 billion to the UK tourism every year. Coaches operate 24 hours a day and can support shift patterns for industries such as airports and airlines. Travel by coach can be 3 times cheaper than rail, making it more accessible and economically viable for passengers on lower income and increases their ability to travel. Coach also can offer door-to-door services and can be good for connecting reluctant travelers such as the elderly, disabled or lone travelers, with essential services.

Buses and Coaches are crucial for the UK’s economic recovery as we exit the pandemic, they are the most sustainable way of transporting large numbers of passengers. If the UK is going to deliver its ambitious target of achieving net zero by 2050, we need a significant behavioural shift in how we travel from one destination to another, buses and coaches are a vital tool in reducing the emissions from transport.

Coach friendly places

Coach travel can play a vital role in the UK's economic recovery from Covid-19, before the pandemic domestic and international visitors travelling by coach contributed over £14 billion to the British economy each year, with 23 million visits to tourist attractions and places made by coach in 2019. However, coach travel is too often hampered by poor access, lack of suitable drop-off/pick up points, lack of coach parking and general coach facilities. This can lead to increase car use, which increases congestion, car parking and air pollution issues and can result in a reduction in visitor numbers.

It is therefore essential that sufficient access and facilities for coach operators are provided so that coach travel can assist in the economic revival of local areas. Consideration should be given to;

- Access to main roads which is suitable for large vehicles.
- Suitable and safe areas for passengers to be dropped off and picked up.
- Safe exit from the drop off/pick up areas with sufficient space for turning and reversing manoeuvres.
- Safe passage from drop off/pick up areas to the facility, including for vulnerable passengers such as children and the elderly.
- Adequate on sight parking
- Sufficient facilities provided for coach drivers.

Consideration should also be given to increasing accessibility for all passengers. Coaches require clear kerbside areas with sufficient space to successfully deploy the lift to ensure safe pick up and drop off for vulnerable passengers.

Bus journey times and reliability

One of the primary issues facing bus travel, especially in towns and city centres, is congestion. Greater congestion levels increase bus journey times and reduces journey reliability. Unreliable journey times are a key reason people choose not to travel by bus, before the pandemic, 25% of car users said they would consider switching to buses if they were more reliable¹.

It is therefore vital that government introduces policies that put buses first on the road network, to improve journey times and reliability and to give people the confidence to travel by bus. Measures that will have a positive impact on bus journey times include changes to the road layout to introduce bus priority at junctions, bus only roads, bus only lanes and park and ride schemes.

Where successful schemes to reduce congestion have been implemented, passenger numbers have increased as more people become willing to use the bus. Examples include bus priority measures in Bristol which were matched with investment in low emission vehicles and integrated ticketing options by operators and which led to an increase in bus use of over 50% over 7 years, and Crawley Fastway which increased passenger numbers by 160% over 10 years. In Hull, extensive investment in bus priority, park and ride and interchange facilities coupled with operator-led investment in new

¹ Greenerjourneys.com/news/ditch-the-car-catch-the-bus-week



vehicles and rationalisation of the network and fares to present a more effective customer offer has increased passenger numbers at a rate close to 7% per year.²

Encouraging more passengers to use the bus, will deliver environmental, economic, and public health benefits.

Positive bus and coach messaging needed to encourage passengers back on board

During the height of the pandemic the Government asked people to only use public transport if absolutely necessary. This was to ensure that there was sufficient capacity for key workers and essential journeys. This has resulted in a many people now feeling that public transport is 'unsafe' and has resulted in the lasting effect with many reluctant to return to bus and coach travel.

CPT has been lobbying Government to work with the bus industry to launch a campaign to promote both the safety and the benefits of bus travel, and this was confirmed in the recently launched National Bus Strategy. This work is essential to reassuring the public that bus is a safe travel option to increase passenger numbers and should firmly assert the bus as the favourable option over the car.

We are calling on Government to provide the same messaging for coaches, and to play a proactive role in promoting the benefits of coach travel. Coach can deliver the much needed footfall to attractions and locations across the UK, and it is vital Government helps to reassure and encourage people to visit these destinations, once it is possible to do so, and to highlight the economic and environmental benefits of coach travel.

Conclusion

Bus and coach travel provides a sustainable, accessible, and inclusive travel option for many passengers visiting our towns and city centres.

Buses are at the heart of the nation's economic and social life, investment in bus priority measures in our city centres can greatly increase the reliability of our bus network and can play a huge part in encouraging more passengers on the bus.

With sufficient access and facilities, coaches can deliver large numbers of visitors to places of interest and tourist locations.

Measures that incentivise and encourage more passengers to use these travel options will have a significant impact on improving local air quality of our towns and city centres whilst also delivering the well needed boost to our local economies as we exit the pandemic.

CPT

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² KPMG (July 2020) *Maximising the benefits of local bus services* A report commissioned by Greener Journeys for the Transport Knowledge Hub