



Making Savings; Protecting Bus Passengers

On the 3rd February Campaign for Better Transport launched the Save Our Buses campaign. This document explains the ways in which we believe local authorities and other government agencies can reduce costs whilst protecting bus passengers.

Local authorities are in a very difficult position as a result of substantial reductions in local government funding settlements; however some local authorities are managing to mitigate the impacts more effectively than others. In some areas 100% of local authority funding is being axed, the majority of local authorities are making cuts of some kind to bus provision, and yet some local authorities are managing to protect buses.

More broadly the bus sector is facing higher costs and a sharp reduction in funding. The Bus Service Operator Grant (BSOG), which originates as the fuel tax rebate for buses, is being cut by 20% from 2012. In addition the way in which the concessionary fares scheme is paid for is changing in many areas, and as a consequence around £100 million will be lost to the sector annually. The impacts combined could tip buses in some areas into a spiral of decline.

We are urging government at local and national level to avoid decisions in the short term that will seriously damage the bus network into the future. Outlined below please find our suggestions for local authorities who are looking to make savings while protecting bus passengers.

Pooling budgets and joined up thinking

- Local authorities and the Department for Transport are not the only agencies for whom transport provision is a concern. Other departments need to examine their own role in supporting people's travel options, for example through their support for school transport, transport to and from health services or help for those out of work to access employment and training. Finding ways to pool budgets at a national and local level will be essential in ensuring that we can mitigate the worst impacts of cuts.

Minimising the impacts of cuts

- Conduct full public consultations. Bus users are in the best position to know about bus services and their views and needs should be given due attention. [Passenger Focus](#) has been in contact with local authorities regarding best practice for effective consultations on changes in bus services.



- Examine the knock-on impacts of bus cuts. Our report, [Buses Matter](#), shows that poor bus provision can contribute to social inequality, reduce access to public services and hold back the economy.
- Consider obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and conduct an equality impact assessment, using the findings to assess planned cuts and changes.
- Review all services with operators and see whether all or part of some services could be run commercially.

More innovative approaches to delivering supported services

- Consider integrating tendered bus services with other transport provision, for example school buses and social services transport. Many authorities have made significant savings from this.
- Think about innovative ways to frame bus contracts, for example specifying outcomes rather than outputs (“enable 1000 children to get to school” as opposed to “run 40 school buses”), tendering networks rather than individual routes, inviting non-compliant bids to generate new ideas and giving operators incentives to grow revenue (“net cost” rather than “gross cost” contracts).
- Look at social enterprises and community transport as ways of providing services with an agreed set of social benefits. [Hackney Community Transport](#) has examples of what can be done here. However, community transport options need adequate funding and support and may not substitute fully for conventional services.
- Consider the role of taxis and taxibuses as they might be a constructive part of the mix, but [international evidence](#) suggests that they must be linked to the wider public transport network with thought given to ticketing, fares, and access to information.

Developing and coordinating bus networks

- Look at innovative marketing and promotion of bus services to households and communities served. There is good evidence that such marketing, whether by operators or councils, has been successful in raising patronage. The bus industry campaign [Greener Journeys](#) has had experience and success in this area.
- Develop transport partnerships with big travel generators, for example universities, colleges, hospitals and major employers. Places like the [University of Hertfordshire](#) have found that services based around these can be used as the basis for wider commercial bus networks.
- Look at creating quality partnerships with operators on specific routes, or if possible consider an area-wide partnership bringing together the different operators, different tiers of local government and different funding streams to plan public transport across a whole area. Campaign for Better Transport has helped create an [area wide partnership in St Albans](#) and can give information on this; others have been developed in Oxford, Manchester and Nottingham.
- Consider the use of quality contracts, where all local buses are run under contract as in London and the local authority specifies fares and services.



- Use planning, parking and traffic powers to improve bus reliability and journey times and reduce running costs. This can be done in a variety of way such as bus priority, “green wave” traffic light schemes, parking charges and enforcement of parking and traffic management rules.

Links to further information

- You find out more about he bus cuts area by area using our clickable map:
<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/campaigns/save-our-buses/map>
- To find out more about the campaign visit:
<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/campaigns/save-our-buses>
- This short report outlines current research on the value of buses:
<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/system/files/11.02.23.buses-matter.pdf>
- For more detail about the way that buses are funded please see our short guide:
<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/system/files/save-our-buses-guide.pdf>

Although the [Local Sustainable Transport Fund](#) will not provide funding for bus services which require ongoing support, it could be used for programmes which can grow bus patronage and create a more sustainable bus market, and we hope that local authorities will consider this in any applications to the Fund.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact our bus campaigner Sophie Allain (sophie.allain@bettertransport.org.uk / 020 7566 6489).

April 2011
Sophie Allain
Campaign for Better Transport

Campaign for Better Transport’s vision is a country where communities have affordable transport that improves quality of life and protects the environment. Achieving our vision requires substantial changes to UK transport policy which we aim to achieve by providing well-researched, practical solutions that gain support from both decision-makers and the public.

16 Waterside, 44-48 Wharf Road, London N1 7UX
Registered Charity 1101929. Company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales: 4943428

