

**CEN briefing note: public transport**

- **Public transport is significantly more efficient than private car usage.** This results in fewer carbon emissions, less congestion, lower levels of air pollution and possible cost savings for households.
- **Surface transport contributes 27% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions.** A majority of the carbon reductions from the transport sector will come through the transition to electric vehicles (especially in rural areas), which is well underway. But some cars can be taken off the road altogether by improving public transport provision, especially buses.
- **Buses are significantly more efficient at transporting people than private cars.** Thirty people travelling on a bus will produce 3.2kg of carbon dioxide emissions per kilometre, compared to 4.6kg from thirty small cars (and 5.8kg for medium ones). This is alongside producing significantly less air pollution and reduced congestion.
- **Emissions from buses have decreased by over 42% since 1990** as fuel efficiency has improved and zero emissions buses have started to enter service. Each zero emission bus reduces carbon emissions by around 70% (46 tonnes) and avoids 23kg of nitrogen oxide emissions each year compared to a diesel bus.
- **The Government has given significant support to increase bus patronage, through the £2 bus fare cap.** This single-fare cap reduces the cost to passengers to encourage greater bus usage post-pandemic.
- **The Government has committed £3 billion across this Parliament to improve bus services, through the Bus Back Better strategy.** This includes £1.2 billion in new funding for bus transformation deals to deliver London-style improvements in fares, services and infrastructure. Also included in the plans were proposals to purchase 4,000 British-built zero emission buses, introduce integrated ticketing and new bus lanes. The Government also committed funding for 17 on-demand bus service projects run by English local authorities through the rural mobility fund.
- **In addition, £129 million has been allocated for local transport authorities to purchase zero emission buses.** This funding will help decarbonise the UK bus fleet, grow the economy by connecting communities, and boost the UK bus manufacturing industry.
- **Congestion at peak times in city centres and river crossings lead to unreliable bus journey times and contribute to poor air quality.** Slow traffic cost the UK economy £6.9 billion in 2019. It cost 115 hours and £894 per driver. Human-induced air pollution in the UK is responsible for up to 36,000 deaths

per year in the UK. In total, air pollution is estimated to cause six million sick days per year and has a total social cost of [£22.6 billion per year](#).

- **The Government's [Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail](#) aims to ensure rail is the cornerstone of the UK public transport system.** Its flagship policy, the establishment of Great British Railways (GBR), is yet to be implemented. GBR would enable strategic oversight of the rail network, improving performance and encouraging usage. Passenger Service Contracts, as a replacement for franchising, was also included in the plan; alongside expansion of pay-as-you-go rail outside of London and increasing competition through exploring more Open Access Operator capacity.
- **Rail has one of the lowest carbon footprints per kilometre travelled.** Travelling by rail emits [less than a quarter](#) of the emissions than travelling by car per kilometre travelled. The Government's independent advisors on climate change - the Climate Change Committee - recommend increasing the number of journeys made by [public transport](#) to reduce emissions, in addition to providing cleaner air.
- **The UK is phasing out diesel-only locomotives by 2040.** Currently only [38% of rail tracks are electrified](#), meaning significant progress on electrification is required to meet this target. Electrification of rail, powered by renewable sources, could [reduce train emissions by a further 30-35%](#).