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# Talking to passengers



Bus services are a **lifeline** in urban and rural areas

They give us access to life's **opportunities**, connecting us to schools, colleges and work, essential services, shops, friends and family

Buses reduce inequality, social exclusion and loneliness, and improve our **health** and **well-being**



In fact, the people who use buses contribute **£64 billion** worth of goods and services to local economies

Yet bus services have faced devastating cuts in recent years with over **£20m** in subsidies lost in 2017/18

Between 2010 and 2017, bus funding was cut by **45%**



When the costs of cutting services outweigh the costs of running them

It's the very definition of a **false economy**

And the cost of **transport poverty** to local authorities, local economies and society in general is huge



And cuts to bus services mean

- fewer **opportunities** for flexible working hours or study
- work experience placements and entry level **jobs** becoming even harder to access
- local **employers** struggling to find and retain staff



Those who can afford it, turn to **private** transport

Encouraged by a transport strategy that **favours** the car

Those who can't afford private transport become increasingly **excluded** and **isolated**



Transport poverty creates a **vicious cycle**

- it causes **loneliness** and social isolation
- which reduces physical and **mental health**
- and increases the need for health and social care services
- which can't be accessed because of **transport poverty**





A single adult social care client costs a local authority  
around **£547** a week

That's **£28,000** a year

So if the **benefits** of good bus services are so clear, why are  
bus services in decline?



**Society is changing** in the way we work, shop, travel, access services and socialise

Local authority funding for buses has **failed** to reflect these changing needs

Daytime services for older, politically more 'important' people have been **prioritised**

Evening and weekend services often needed by younger people have been **overlooked**



Legislation and regulation has had a damaging impact on communities

Bus services are affected by **380** pieces of legislation

The costs of running bus services are **increasing** (labour and regulatory costs)

The value of grants and other income is **falling** (BSOG, concessionary reimbursement and subsidies)



**Urgent action** is needed to reverse the decline in bus services

So what do we do?

The response so far has been to throw **radical solutions** at the problem



Renationalise!

Franchise!

**Change** everything!



There are plenty of voices and opinions in this debate

Except the ones that really matter

The **people** who rely on bus services

Unfortunately, there's no such thing as a **typical** passenger



Travel patterns are local, and messy, and changeable

**One-size-fits-all** simply does not work

**Tailoring** bus services to the needs of the community might not be the easiest solution

But it's the only **solution**



So **how** do we do it?

Firstly, ditch the preconceptions

The BIG IDEA approach loved by politicians **does not work**

Secondly, be honest: passengers **do not care** who runs their buses





What passengers do care about is that they have a bus service

That the bus is **reliable** and **punctual**

That it's **affordable** and **accessible**

And that it's **clean** and **safe**



So how do you find out what people want?

**Ask** them

Run **local** meetings and have **on-street** events

Travel on local buses and **talk** to passengers

Set up **panels** and use **social media**



**Talk** to local bus operators, community transport schemes, town planners, care professionals, estate agents and schools

Find a way to meet as **many** of their **needs** as possible

Make your findings public so people can see that you **listened**



We are calling for **two** changes to the legal framework to make buses better for everyone

1 **Reform** Section 63 of the 1985 **Transport Act** to give local authorities a 'duty' rather than a 'power'

2 Make **local partnership working** a requirement between local authorities and bus operators



Reversing the decline in bus services doesn't just benefit the people who **use** them

It **benefits** us all

Thank you for listening

