

4 November 2020

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
cc Andy Byford, Heidi Alexander
(sent via email)

Dear Mayor of London,

The case for keeping bus fares as low as possible

London TravelWatch is the official body set up by Parliament to provide a voice for London's travelling public including the users of all forms of public transport and its streets. We promote integrated transport policies and press for better public transport, with higher standards of quality, performance and accessibility. We liaise with transport operators, providers, regulators and local authorities.

London TravelWatch accept that fares in London overall will rise by RPI+1 in January but we'd like to make the case for bus fares in particular to be kept as low as possible, as lower income Londoners are particularly reliant on the bus to get around. Not everyone has a job where they can work at home so it is important that there is still an affordable mode of transport available for those who need it. We are therefore concerned about the effect should there be substantial increases in bus fares.

We know that bus users are more likely to choose their route because of cost. Bus-only usage is higher among those earning less than £1,750 per month (10-12 per cent compared to 5-7 per cent for those earning more).¹

Transport for London's Travel Demand Survey (LTDS) 2018/19 revealed that London residents earning an annual salary of under £20,000 make twice as many bus/tram trips per day compared to those earning £50,000 or over.² Lower earners are also more likely to be on the bus for longer, spending, on average, 26 minutes on buses versus 20 minutes for higher earners.³

Research by the Centre for London found that cost is also a specific barrier to ethnic minority Londoners, who as a result tend to use buses more often. Their survey revealed that BAME respondents were significantly more likely than white respondents to use the bus on a daily basis (26 per cent compared to 16 per cent).⁴ The LTDS 2018/19 showed that black respondents make twice as many bus/tram trips per day compared to white respondents.⁵

¹ London Travelwatch, Living on the edge, 2015, p3

² Transport for London, London Travel Demand Survey 2018-19 dataset

³ Living on the edge, p3

⁴ Centre for London report, Fair access: Towards a transport system for everyone, 2019, p69

⁵ London Travel Demand Survey 2018-19 dataset

If a large increase in fares were coupled with other measures, such as potential cuts to bus services, and ticket vending machines going cashless at every Underground station (with few options to top up), this could have an additional negative impact on lower income Londoners.

Can you reassure us that you'll take these points into consideration when making decisions about how you will apply the RPI+1 fare rise in January?

Yours sincerely,



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