

By email:

Grant Shapps  
Secretary of State for Transport  
shappsg@parliament.uk

2 September 2021

Dear Grant,

### **Department for Transport funding bid for Comprehensive Spending Review**

As a group of organisations and elected representatives, we are writing to stress the importance of London's transport system receiving a fair funding deal in the forthcoming three-year CSR settlement. We are concerned that inadequate funding for transport in the capital this Autumn would result in cuts being made to services, which could hold back London's economic recovery from the pandemic.

During the coming months people will be making critical decisions on how they will travel to and from, and within, London in the post-Covid period. The evidence is that a sizeable minority of people are wary of returning to public transport, at least in the immediate future. It is important that, if and when they do decide to use it again, they find that the services have not been cut back.

Research by Transport Focus<sup>1</sup> indicates that the number one concern for people returning to public transport is the ability to feel safe by maintaining social distancing. Getting on a bus or train that is uncomfortably crowded could prompt transport users to choose less sustainable modes or not travel at all. As new habits are formed as the economy unlocks, we risk permanently making these retrograde shifts into the new normal.

If cuts to services did result in an increase in private car use, it would undermine the Government's ambitious Transport Decarbonisation Strategy. Increased congestion on the roads would also harm the capital's efficiency and attractiveness as a place to live, work and play. More vehicles competing for limited road space would result in higher levels of air pollution, noise and climate emissions, and as Moody's have recently stated, delaying spending on public transport is only likely to lead to higher costs in the long run<sup>2</sup>.

In October the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (already in place in the Congestion Charge Zone) will be expanded to the area inside the North and South Circular Roads. This is likely to result in a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://transportfocusdatahub.org.uk>

<sup>2</sup> <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/moodys-credit-opinion-june-2021.pdf>

significant number of people deciding whether to invest in a new car or try life reliant on public, shared, and active travel instead. One of the key lessons from the introduction of the Congestion Charge in 2003 is that public transport services must already be in place in order to stimulate shifts to more sustainable modes of travel.

We welcome the role that investment in active travel can play in tempting people to use their cars less, and this is complementary to the role of public transport in reducing car use and delivering a resilient transport network.

It is generally accepted by transport planners<sup>3</sup> that, if bus or train services dip below five per hour, passengers stop seeing them as a turn-up-and-go service and will expect to see a timetable. Research shows that ridership will decrease if frequencies are reduced: as a broad figure a 10% reduction in frequencies will mean a 7% loss of passengers in the longer term. Once passengers are lost they are much harder to win back. As is the fares revenue that they bring. As a result of their funding shortfall, TfL is already intending to cut bus services back by 4%. Any further cuts to bus services would come in addition to that planned reduction.

We're particularly concerned that buses are an easy target for service cuts, because it is easier to quickly cut bus services than Tube or train services. But London's buses have literally kept London working during the pandemic, as many lower paid key workers have relied on them to get to work to provide essential services for us all. As we start to recover, bus journeys have recovered more quickly than other modes as Londoners use them to return to work and leisure activities, and as feeder journeys for longer-distance tube and rail trips. Encouraging this inclusive return to economic activity is essential if we are to accelerate the recovery, level up across the whole country, and build back better.

Yours sincerely,

Elly Baker, London Assembly Labour Transport lead  
Muniya Barua, Director of Policy and Strategy, London First  
Sian Berry, Member of London Assembly Transport Committee  
Richard Burge, Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
James Cleeton, London Director, Sustrans  
Emma Gibson, Director, London TravelWatch  
Peter Kavanagh, Regional secretary, London and Eastern Region, Unite Union  
Dominic Millen, Chair, London Technical Advisers Group – Strategic Transport Forum  
Katie Pennick, Campaigns Lead, Transport for All  
Caroline Pidgeon, Chair of London Assembly Transport Committee  
Neil Roth, Hon. Secretary, Future Transport London  
Nick Simmons, CEO, RoadPeace  
Dr Ashok Sinha, Chief Executive, London Cycling Campaign  
Paul Tuohy, Chief Executive Officer, Campaign for Better Transport

CC: Baroness Vere, Parliamentary Undersecretary for State for Transport; Charles Roxburgh (Treasury)

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<sup>3</sup> *The demand for public transport: a practical guide*, page 40, Section 5.3.

<https://trl.co.uk/uploads/trl/documents/TRL593%20-%20The%20Demand%20for%20Public%20Transport.pdf>