

## **Benefits of public transport**

**Buses** are the best used form of public transport. Pre-covid nearly one billion journeys were made by bus in Britain<sup>1</sup> and on average, one-quarter (25%) of the adult population use buses often (at least once a week). This increases to 54% amongst people that do not have personal car access. It is the most-used public transport mode for people on lower incomes and is a lifeline for many.

**Light rail/trams** are an efficient, low carbon form of transport which provide predictable, regular and reliable journey times and service patterns combined with high passenger carrying capacity. As well as providing step-change transport improvements, they are a recognised catalyst for urban improvement that make the public realm hugely more attractive.

**Rail** is the backbone of the public transport system enabling large numbers of people to be moved efficiently in and out of congested urban areas and between cities and towns, as well as providing important links for rural residents to reach services and facilities. They offer the best opportunity to replace longer distance car trips.

### **Economic benefits**

- Public transport offers opportunities for lowering travel costs and reducing the UK's reliance on oil in the context of the current cost of living crisis<sup>2</sup>.
- The rail industry is estimated to generate around £43 billion of GVA a year<sup>3</sup>. For every £1 worth of work on the railway system itself, £2.50 of income was generated elsewhere in the economy<sup>4</sup>.
- The wider rail industry generated an estimated £14.1 billion in tax revenue in 2019 which would cover almost 80% total public expenditure on rail<sup>5</sup>.
- The economic return for each £1 spent on bus networks and services ranges from £2.50 to £3.80 for revenue expenditure and £5.00 and £6.80 for capital expenditure<sup>6</sup>.
- Out of a sample of 150 small bus and rail schemes the median benefit cost ratio was 3.58 (i.e. the benefits were nearly four times the costs)<sup>7</sup>.
- Much improved and more rapid public transport connections could deliver an increase in GDP in England (not including London) and in Wales of over £50 billion a year through agglomeration effects<sup>8</sup>.

### **Social benefits**

- Public transport is vital for many people to access employment, education or training. It is the only way that many employers can get the employees they need to the workplace with over 2.5 million regular bus commuters pre-Covid<sup>9</sup>. An estimated one in ten bus commuters would be forced to look for another job or give up work altogether if they could no longer travel to work by bus<sup>10</sup>.
- In 2020 one fifth of all households did not have access to a car, rising to 35% of households in the lowest income bracket<sup>11</sup>. Households in the lowest income quintiles have the greatest dependency on bus for their travel with female heads of house, children, young and older people, BME and disabled people concentrated in this quintile<sup>12</sup>.

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- A 10% improvement in local bus service connectivity is associated with a 3.6% reduction in deprivation<sup>13</sup>.
- Use of public transport is associated with a lower BMI in adults, and switching from private car to public transport for school journeys has been associated with lower percentage body fat in children<sup>14</sup>.

### Environmental benefits

- Transport is the single biggest contributor to the UK's greenhouse gas emissions (26% of domestic emissions in 2021). Cars are the main contributor to the UK's transport carbon emissions. Cars were 56% of surface transport (road + rail) or 52% of domestic transport (surface transport plus domestic aviation and shipping) in 2021<sup>15</sup>.
- There is increasing evidence that we need to reduce car travel by at least 20% by 2030 relative to 2019 to meet carbon targets<sup>16</sup>.
- There is evidence that we need to at least double public transport passenger km by 2030 relative to 2019 to meet carbon targets<sup>17</sup>.
- Shifting travel from cars to public transport has been shown to be one of the most effective measures that individuals can do to reduce carbon in terms of shifting consumption<sup>18</sup>.

### References

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<sup>1</sup> DfT [Bus Statistics](#)

<sup>2</sup> Climate Change Committee (2022) [2022 Progress Report to Parliament](#). June 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Oxford Economics (2021) [The economic contribution of UK rail](#). Report for the Rail Industry Association. September 2021.

<sup>4</sup> As above

<sup>5</sup> As above

<sup>6</sup> KPMG (2020) [Maximising the Benefit of Local Bus Journeys](#). Report for Greener Journeys. July 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Jacobs Consultancy (2011) [Value for Money and Appraisal of Small Scale Public Transport Schemes](#). Study for the Public Transport Executive Group (pteg). July 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Hopkinson L (2023) [Public Transport fit for the Climate Emergency](#). Report for the TUC, ASLEF, RMT, TSSA and Unite. April 2023.

<sup>9</sup> UTG (2014) [Bus priority in practice](#).

<sup>10</sup> Steer (2022) [Continuing COVID Funding Support for Urban Public Transport](#). Report for Urban Transport Group. February 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Department for Transport (2021) [National Travel Survey](#). Table NTS0703.

<sup>12</sup> Steer (2022) [Continuing COVID Funding Support for Urban Public Transport](#). Report for Urban Transport Group. February 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Greener Journeys (2016) [The value of bus to society](#).

<sup>14</sup> See original studies at National Institute for Health and Care Research (undated) [Enabling active travel and public transport](#). Webpage.

<sup>15</sup> BEIS (2023) [Final UK greenhouse gas emissions 1990-2021](#) February 2023. Note the final 2022 emissions will not be available until Feb 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Transport for Quality of Life (2021) [The last chance saloon: we need to cut car mileage by at least 20%](#). Radical two-pager, December 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Hopkinson L (2023) [Public Transport fit for the Climate Emergency](#). Report for the TUC, ASLEF, RMT, TSSA and Unite. April 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Callaghan M (2022) [Here are the most effective things you can do to fight climate change](#). Article in The Conversation. 01/07/22.