

LONDON
TRAVELWATCH



The next stop: Making London's buses better

November 2024

Foreword

Michael Roberts



As the most used public transport mode in London, buses are an affordable and accessible lifeline for many people in the capital. By helping to keep the city moving and get people where they need to go, their success is closely tied to the success of London.

Yet even before the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, bus journeys in London had been falling. Through our Bus Alliance, we campaigned for measures to reverse this trend and in March 2022 we welcomed Transport for London's (TfL) Bus Action Plan to make services more attractive.

The good news is that bus ridership has been recovering more quickly than that seen on other public transport modes. But it has yet to return to the level seen in 2019/20, let alone the level seen at the high point of demand five years earlier.

This report is a call to TfL to re-double its efforts in working with others to improve bus services. It draws on new research into what Londoners think about buses, carried out for us by Yonder Consulting, and on the views of London boroughs who play a key role in providing the right conditions for buses on the capital's streets.

The insight from our passenger research confirms that while two-thirds of people are satisfied with bus services, there is significant dissatisfaction with slow journey times, poor provision of information and the on-board travelling experience.

The research also offers a tantalising glimpse into what might be possible if services can be improved. Three in five Londoners travel by bus up to twice a week, and a significant share of those passengers have broadly neutral views about service quality. If they could be persuaded to make just one extra bus trip a month, that could make a big difference.


“ Buses are an affordable and accessible lifeline for many people in the capital ”

Our five recommendations – that TfL should shorten journey times, enhance passenger information and improve the overall passenger experience, supported by stronger collaboration with boroughs and continued innovation in providing services – will come as little surprise.

What we need now is a compelling programme to make buses better, implemented at pace. This summer, TfL helpfully acknowledged the need to do more if buses are to play their full part in delivering the Mayor's long-term transport strategy. A good first step would be to set out the substance of what that looks like by next summer's update on the Mayor's strategy at the latest.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Roberts'.

Michael Roberts
Chief Executive, London TravelWatch



Executive summary

Where would Londoners be without the bus?

The bus is London's most accessible, affordable and city-wide form of public transport, helping people get where they need to go – be it for work, study, leisure or errands. It's the most used type of public transport in the city, with 1.9 billion journeys made by bus last year, and helps keep London moving.

While it offers a vital service, more could be done to improve passenger satisfaction and make London buses even better. This is particularly needed if bus usage is to rise and help meet the Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) target for 80% of all trips in London to be made on foot, by bike or using public transport by 2041.

London TravelWatch commissioned research to find out more about what passengers really think, and help identify ways to boost the bus. The findings show that there is a real opportunity for growth for TfL to grasp. 20% of survey respondents said they would be more likely to use the bus in the next 12 months, and another 71% of respondents said they would use it the same amount. This clearly signals a strong potential demand for buses, provided they can offer the service people want and need.

To turn this into a reality, TfL needs not only to keep current passengers but also to attract people who use the bus little or not at all. If they can be persuaded to make just a few more journeys by bus this could significantly add up. However, this cohort of bus passengers are also less likely to be tolerant of shortcomings,

making it particularly important to identify what these issues are and to find ways to resolve them.

While passengers are generally satisfied with things such as the connectivity and affordability of buses, there are aspects of the service that need to be improved. Slow journey times were a particular issue and the most frequent barrier to using buses more. Lack of reliability, poor communication (particularly for those offline or during disruption) and an unpleasant journey environment – such as dirty buses and overcrowding – were also highlighted as problems for passengers.

The top three things that respondents said would encourage them to use the bus more were more regular buses, faster journey times and more bus routes – though most would welcome a range of improvements, for example, to safety, information and accessibility. TfL should therefore focus its efforts on these areas. In particular, improving bus speeds through measures such as bus priority needs to be at the top of the agenda.

While steps are already being taken to address this through TfL's Bus Action Plan, more needs to be done to get it back on track and take it even further. There must also be better collaboration with London boroughs, who play a key part in facilitating bus services and yet do not always think they are getting the support they need from TfL, such as more data, proper two-way dialogue, and timely guidance.

London TravelWatch is calling on TfL to show in detail how it plans to strengthen its Bus Action Plan, no later than the time of the next annual update on delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy, due in summer 2025. TfL should do this by setting out a comprehensive package of measures to make bus services better, which addresses the following areas:

- 1. Improving bus operations.** In particular they should focus on improving bus journey times through bus priority measures, such as bus lanes and signal timing reviews, and better co-ordination of roadworks. Additional Superloop services will also provide more express links for passengers.
- 2. Enhancing passenger information and communications.** Greater ambition with the number of Countdown screens, better information on buses (particularly during disruption) and more tailored passenger communications can all help make sure people have the information they need to travel confidently.
- 3. Improving the overall experience for bus passengers.** Better bus stops and signage, more comprehensive cleaning of buses and protecting bus passengers from fare increases are some of the ways TfL can give passengers a better experience.
- 4. Strengthening collaboration between boroughs and TfL.** A meaningful engagement programme between TfL and London boroughs – including more sharing of data, support and increased Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding – will help achieve their mutual aims for bus passengers.
- 5. Continuing to promote innovation.** TfL has a good reputation for innovation in service provision, and we are keen to see greater priority to addressing the challenges facing buses under this approach.

By focusing its efforts on the key issues of quality of service and improving the image of the bus, TfL can help expand bus use and satisfaction – thereby helping to meet the MTS 80% target and making the journeys better for everyone.

Methodology

Our research programme consisted of three phases

Quantitative phase

15 questions asked on Yonder's online London Omnibus. There were 1,516 responses, representative of the London population, including ethnicity and gender.

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Qualitative phase

A lifelogging pre-task to capture in-the-moment passenger experiences on the bus, and online focus groups and phone and online interviews. Participants were recruited from diverse backgrounds with the sample weighted towards people on lower incomes.

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Secondary research

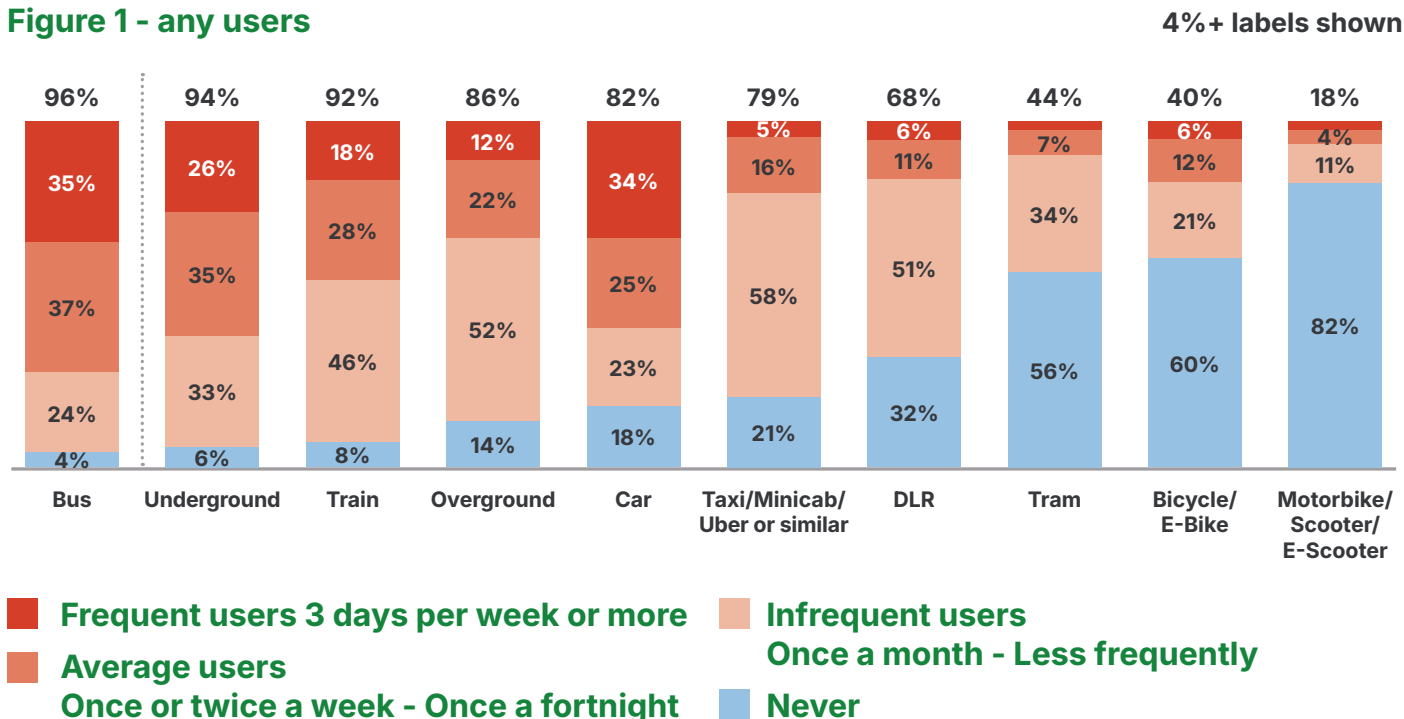
Desk research focussed on sourcing and analysing external data to frame the report in the wider operational and strategic realities of London's bus network.

We also sent an online survey to all London boroughs to learn more about their views on bus services in their area and about their relationships with TfL. This was supplemented with in-depth conversations with three boroughs on bus issues and bus priority. In total, we heard from 13 boroughs from across inner and outer London. Full details of the methodology can be found in Annex 1.

Why London needs the bus

The bus is London's most accessible, affordable and city-wide form of public transport, used by a striking 96% of our respondents – higher than for any other mode of public transport or private vehicles available in the city (figure 1). It reaches from the heart of central London deep into the suburbs, including through areas where there are no other public transport options.

Figure 1 - any users



Q3. (ONLINE) How often, if at all, do you currently travel by the following forms of transport in London?
 Base: All respondents (1,516)

Buses help keep the city moving and get people where they need to go, for many different purposes:

- Almost two-thirds of our respondents (65%) said they had travelled by bus for leisure reasons in the previous three months.
- 43% used the bus for grocery shopping trips and 38% for other shopping trips.
- Younger people are more likely to use the bus to commute to work or education, whereas older people use the bus more for travelling to medical appointments.

It's also an important way of travelling for a range of people. One-third of Londoners are frequent

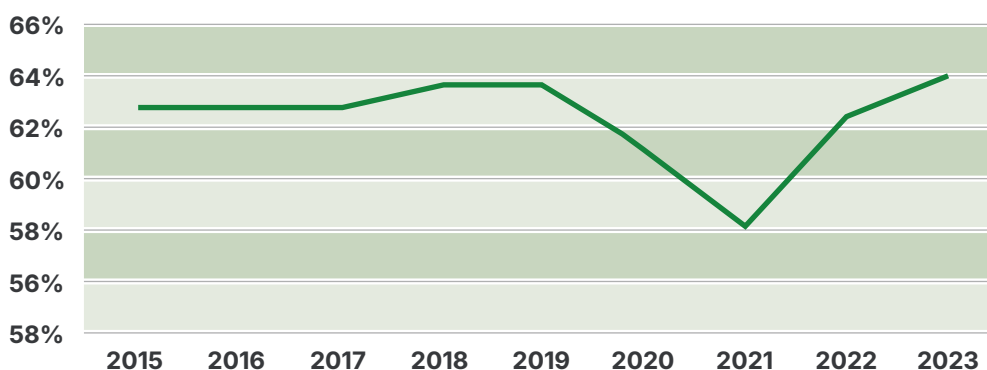
bus users, and people in this group are more likely to be younger (18-34 years old), from an ethnic minority background and living in inner London. Previous London TravelWatch analysis revealed that people on lower incomes and women also use the bus more than other passengers.ⁱ

The importance of the bus to people was highlighted during Covid, when bus use held up more strongly than other types of public transport such as the Tube or trains.ⁱⁱ Indeed, one in five respondents (22%) said they are using the bus more frequently now than they did before the pandemic, again higher than for any other form of public transport.

As such, the bus is a key part of meeting the MTS target for 80% of all trips in London to be made on foot, by bike or using public transport by 2041. While the proportion of trips made in these ways has been increasing, the pace of change so far has not been in line with what is needed to meet the target. Looking at bus journeys more specifically, while ridership has been increasing post-Covid, it is still below that of a decade ago. This is against a backdrop of declining average bus speeds and cuts to the number of kilometres that buses are scheduled to run.

“ The bus is a key part of meeting the MTS target for 80% of all trips in London to be made on foot, by bike or using public transport by 2041 ”

Figure 2 % of trips in London made by walking, cycling or public transport



TfL and others need to do more to encourage bus use, from improving the performance for current passengers to enticing new passengers onto services. We welcomed the announcement by TfL in March 2022 of its Bus Action Plan to help do this but, as the July 2024 update on delivering the Mayor’s Transport Strategy (MTS) indicates, renewed focus is needed particularly on improving bus journey times.

That’s why we commissioned research as a key part of this report – to learn more about Londoners’ attitudes toward the bus, how they experience the bus and what could be done to improve it. We’ve surveyed people, held discussion groups and focused interviews, met with boroughs and done further analysis of existing data. Ultimately, we wanted to know what those responsible for running London’s bus network could – and should – be doing to improve the bus.

More information on current bus usage and performance can be found in Annex 2.



The challenge - and opportunity - for TfL



If TfL is to reach its 80% target for all trips in London to be made on foot, by cycle or using public transport by 2041, it will need to increase bus ridership significantly. We explored some of this scope for growth with passengers.

9% of respondents said they are less likely to use the bus in the next 12 months. Slow journey times, bus unreliability and too much anti-social behaviour on the bus were amongst the key reasons given for making this decision. To keep these passengers on board and prevent a decline in ridership, TfL must tackle these issues.

More positively, our findings also show there is a real opportunity for this growth. 20% of survey respondents said they would be more likely to use the bus in the next 12 months, and another 71% of respondents said they would use it the same amount. This clearly signals a strong potential demand for buses, provided they can offer the service people want and need.

To turn this into a reality, as well as keeping current users on board, one area of focus for TfL to consider should be on attracting people who use the bus less often. According to our research, this group of average users (people

who travel by bus between two to eight times a month) and infrequent users (people who travel by bus no more than once a month) accounts for about 3 in 5 Londoners.ⁱⁱⁱ If this significant combined group of people can be persuaded to make one or two more bus journeys a week or even per month, that would make a big difference overall, especially if they were switching from using a private vehicle. TfL has claimed that over 15% of the 10 million car trips made daily in London could easily be made by bus.^{iv}

Moreover, in our research, a substantial proportion of these bus users held neutral views about the quality of bus services (18% of average bus users and 29% of infrequent bus users said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied). That would suggest that modest improvements would make their experience of bus travel more positive, leading to more journeys made by bus and so contributing to meeting the MTS 80% target.

But how to do this? We spoke to a range of passengers to find out what was working well for them, what wasn't, and what would encourage them to use the bus more.

People's views on the bus network

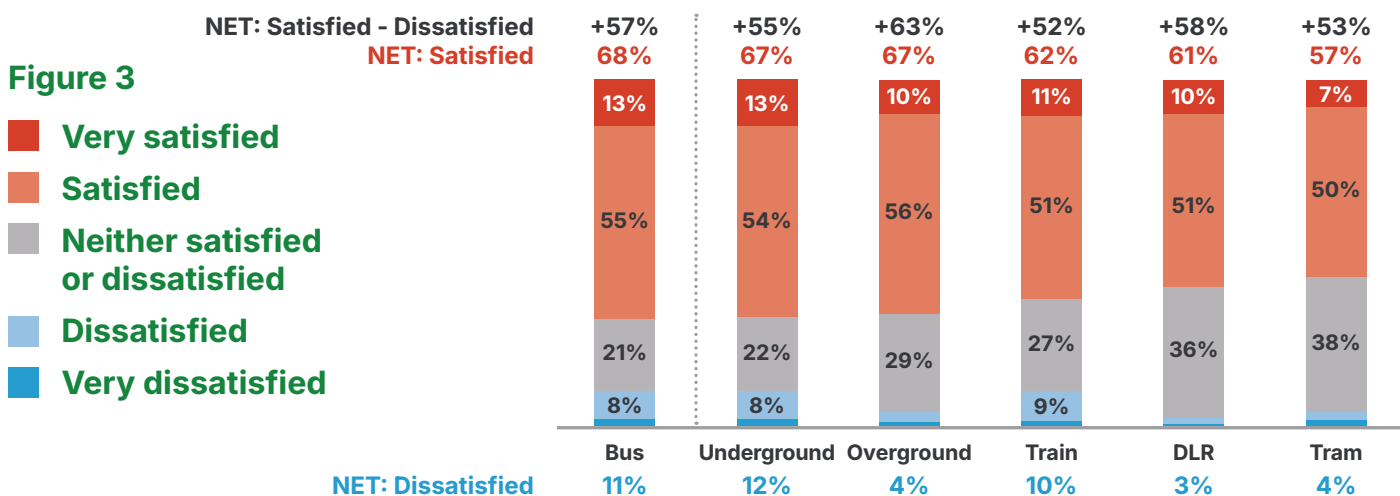
“ They're ok until they're not ”

Male 18-34, Average user

It is clear that passengers want a well-connected, reliable and affordable level of service. Aspects of this are being delivered well, and just over two-thirds of respondents said they are satisfied with bus services – higher than any other mode of transport in London.

Satisfaction with different modes of transport - total excl. non users

4%+ labels shown



Q6. (ONLINE) How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following forms of transport in London?

Base: Those that use that mode of transport: Bus (1,444), Train (1,364), Underground (1,398), Overground (1,247), DLR (931), Tram (567)

From our respondents' perspectives, some of the key strengths of the bus network include:

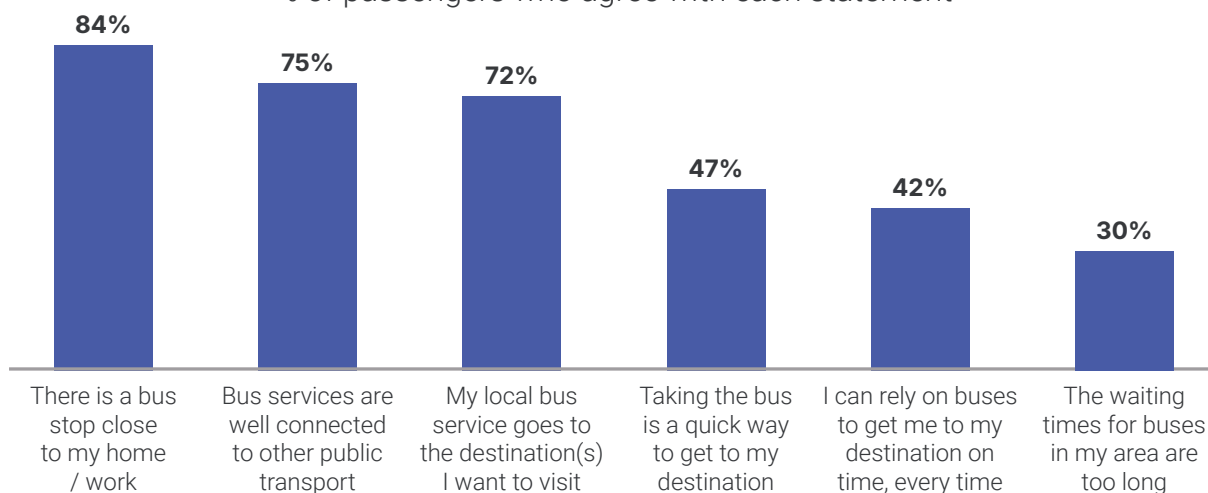
Availability and connectivity. There was real recognition that the bus network had strong

connectivity and was widespread throughout the city. For example, the vast majority of respondents said they lived and worked near a bus stop (84%), and that local bus services go to their desired destination (72%).

Figure 4

Passenger views on bus operations

% of passengers who agree with each statement

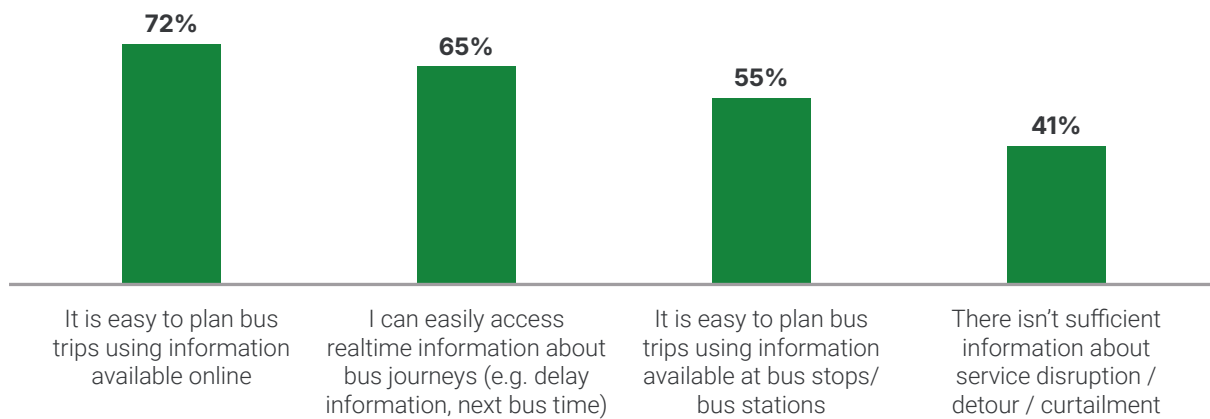


Accessibility. Two-thirds of people thought buses were an accessible way to travel. This is reflected in a proportionately higher number of Disabled people travelling by bus. While there is of course room for improvement, there was a relatively small disparity between the

responses from people with a mental health or physical condition (63% each) and those without (67%). Accessibility is also important for many other passengers, such as parents with small children and those with heavy shopping.

Figure 5 Passenger views on information and communication

% of passengers who agree with each statement

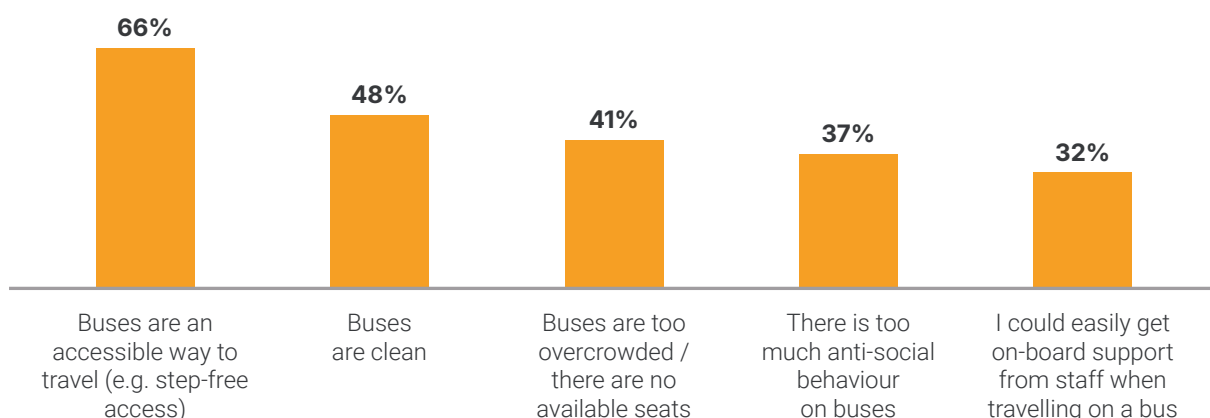


Affordability. Many respondents said that a key advantage of using buses is that they are cheaper than other forms of transport, and just 1 in 4 respondents thought that buses were expensive. It is therefore no surprise that the bus is particularly important to those on low incomes, with previous London TravelWatch research revealing that one

third of all bus journeys are made by people in households earning less than £20,000 per year.^v Some people we spoke to highlighted how the widespread cost of living pressures of recent years have made bus affordability even more important, with some switching to the bus from other more expensive types of transport.

Figure 6 Passenger views on bus journey environment

% of passengers who agree with each statement



The views from the boroughs

When we asked borough representatives about their level of satisfaction with aspects of bus service provision in their borough, bus reliability ranked highest, followed by frequency and affordability. Information provided to passengers ranked lowest, particularly for representatives from outer London boroughs.

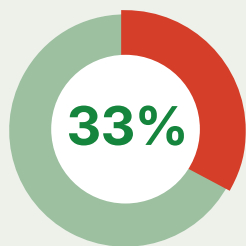


While Londoners are generally satisfied with buses, they were also the mode with the second highest level of passengers who were dissatisfied with the services (11%), only behind the Underground (12%). Indeed TfL's complaint data shows that of the major modes, London Buses received the highest number of complaints per 100,000 journeys.^{vi} It is clear from the responses that there is room for improvement and other parts of the services are not as good as they need to be:

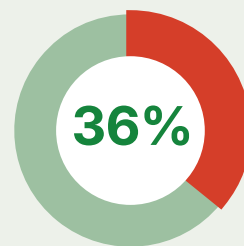
Slow journey times and lack of reliability.

These were some of the biggest areas of criticism from passengers. Most of our respondents wanted journey times to be faster, perhaps unsurprisingly given the drop in average bus speed over the past two years. And just 2 in 5 (42%) people thought they could rely on buses to get them to their destination on time every time. This is of particular concern as these were also the biggest barriers to people using the bus more.

“ While Londoners are generally satisfied with buses, they were also the mode with the second highest level of passengers who were dissatisfied with the services (11%), only behind the Underground (12%) ”



One third of respondents (33%) said that buses being too slow stop them from using the bus more often



Over a third of respondents (36%) said that their top consideration when deciding whether to travel by bus was how fast the bus journey is

Waiting for a bus which is due but never arrives or being on a bus which is suddenly terminated can also lengthen journey times and be distressing and disruptive for passengers, undermining their confidence and trust in buses.

It is crucial TfL gets this core part of the service right. No matter how nice a bus is, if people don't think it will get them where they need to go and when, they'll be discouraged from using it.

Poor information provision.

There was significant dissatisfaction with how TfL communicates to passengers and with the information they provide. While people with internet access can use online journey planners and access realtime information, for those without digital access waiting at a bus stop which has no current service information can feel particularly disempowering and make the journey experience more stressful. 41% of respondents told us there isn't sufficient information about service disruption, detours and curtailments, with only slightly more than half (55%) saying it was easy to plan bus trips using information available at bus stops or bus stations. There was particular unhappiness at the absence of live bus information on Countdown screens at bus stops.

Unpleasant journey environment.

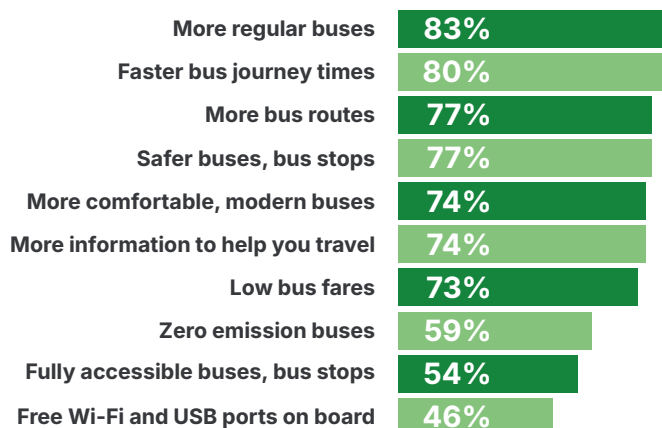
Respondents expressed concerns about their experience on the bus itself, including lack of cleanliness and overcrowding. Anti-social behaviour of other passengers could also cause concerns, and make people feel less secure. Women in particular felt less safe on the bus, and certain times of day were worse than others (most notably at night). While bus drivers can at times provide support and information to people travelling, less than a third (32%) of passengers said they could easily get on-board support from staff.

The views from the boroughs

Similar to the passengers, the factor ranked most by boroughs as essential for improvement was journey times, just ahead of affordability. This was followed by connectivity of bus services to other transport modes, information provided to passengers and reliability.

Figure 7

What would encourage you to use buses more or start using them again in the future?



“ If [there’s] no overhead information board/broken board I get anxious as I don’t know how long I need to wait. I’m not good with smartphones so don’t have any other way of knowing.”

Female, 55+, Digitally disadvantaged regular user

This highlights key areas TfL needs to improve. The top three things that respondents said would encourage them to use the bus more were more operational in nature: more regular buses, faster journey times and more bus routes. However, most would also welcome a range of wider improvements, with a focus on enhancing passenger communication and information as well as making the general bus experience better, including safety and accessibility.

Focusing on areas such as these would not only improve the experience for current regular users of the bus, but also help make the bus a more viable and attractive option for average or infrequent bus users.

More information on people’s views on buses can be found in Annex 3.

Getting London's bus services back on track

“In the coming years I would expect the bus service to improve because people will always need to use the buses, so they would have to try and improve and expand.”

Female, 18-34, Irregular user

Based on our research, we recommend five areas to prioritise in getting London's bus services back on track. These areas are already reflected in TfL's Bus Action Plan, but as TfL itself has recently recognised, more needs to be done on buses if they are to play their full part in helping to deliver the MTS. We want to see TfL set out the substance of how it plans to raise its game in these five areas by no later than the next MTS delivery update in summer 2025.

Improving bus operations

Longer journey times are a big barrier to sustaining and increasing bus ridership. TfL cites research showing that a 10% increase in journey times can lead to a 6% fall in bus demand.^{vii}

Spotlight on bus speeds

While average bus speeds range from 8.1mph in inner London to 10.3mph in outer London, in 2023/24 they were lower in every borough compared with ten years previously.^{viii}

Nearly two-thirds of local authorities (12 of them in outer London) had seen a decline greater than the London-wide average fall of 6%.

Figure 8 Buses performance data - Transport for London

Average speeds 2023/2024

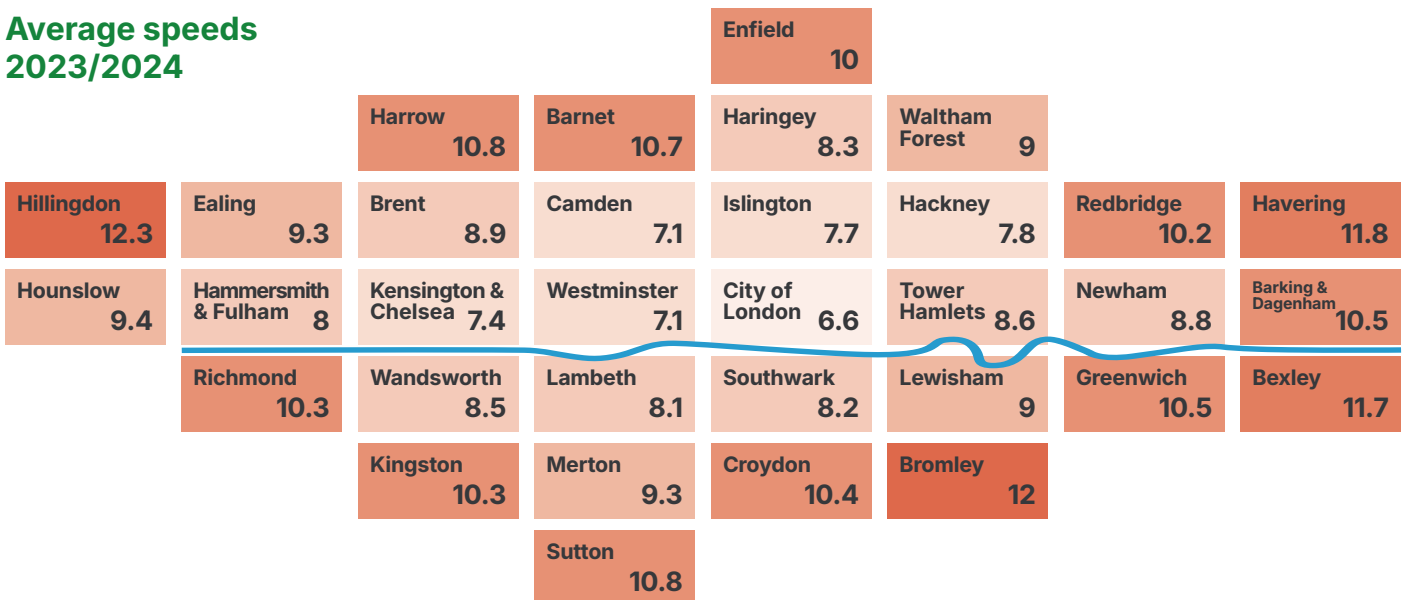
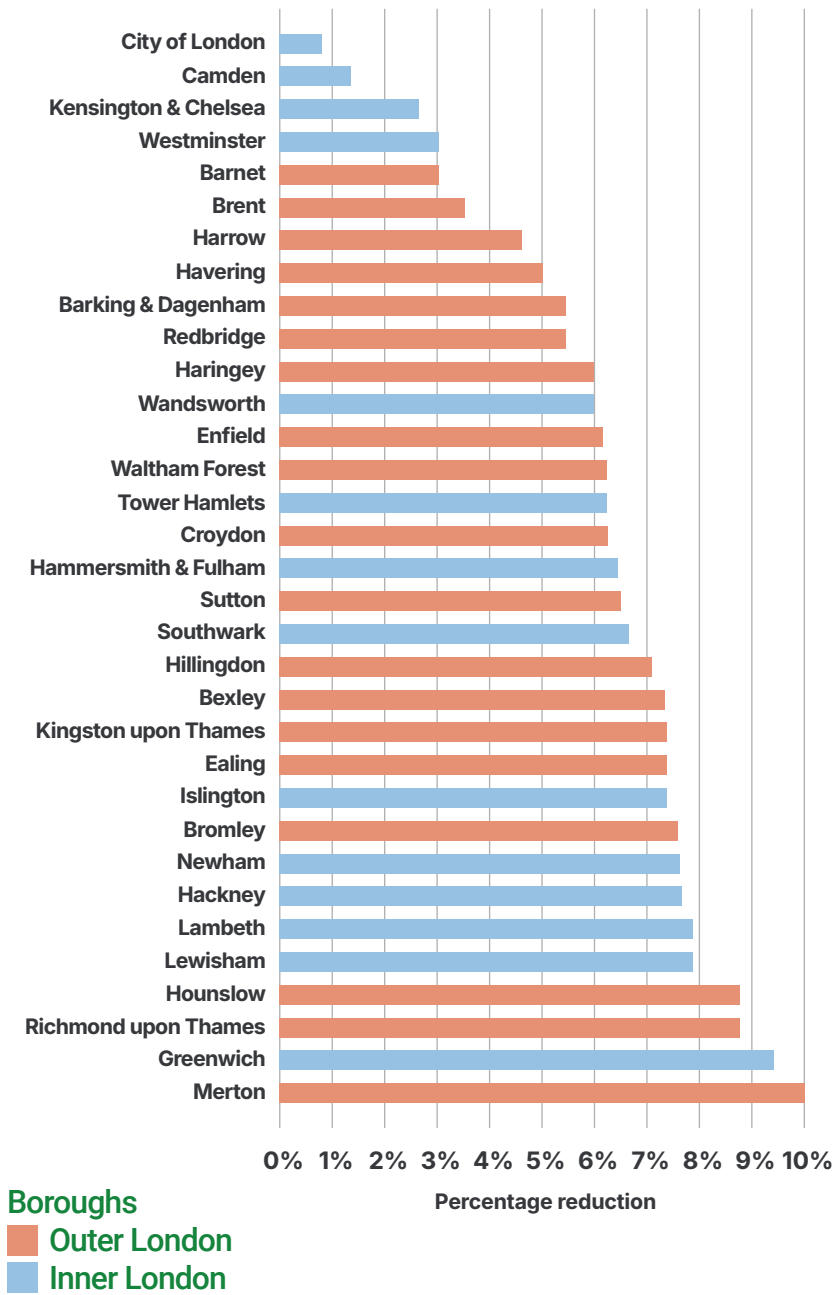


Figure 9

Percentage reduction in average bus speed (mph) in London boroughs between 2013/14 and 2023/24



“ The inner London boroughs account for two-thirds of bus lane kilometres ”

Figure 10

Bus priority coverage: Inner/Outer London boroughs, 2024
Healthy Streets Scorecard data

Proportion of bus route with bus priority in % for London boroughs and London average for 2024.

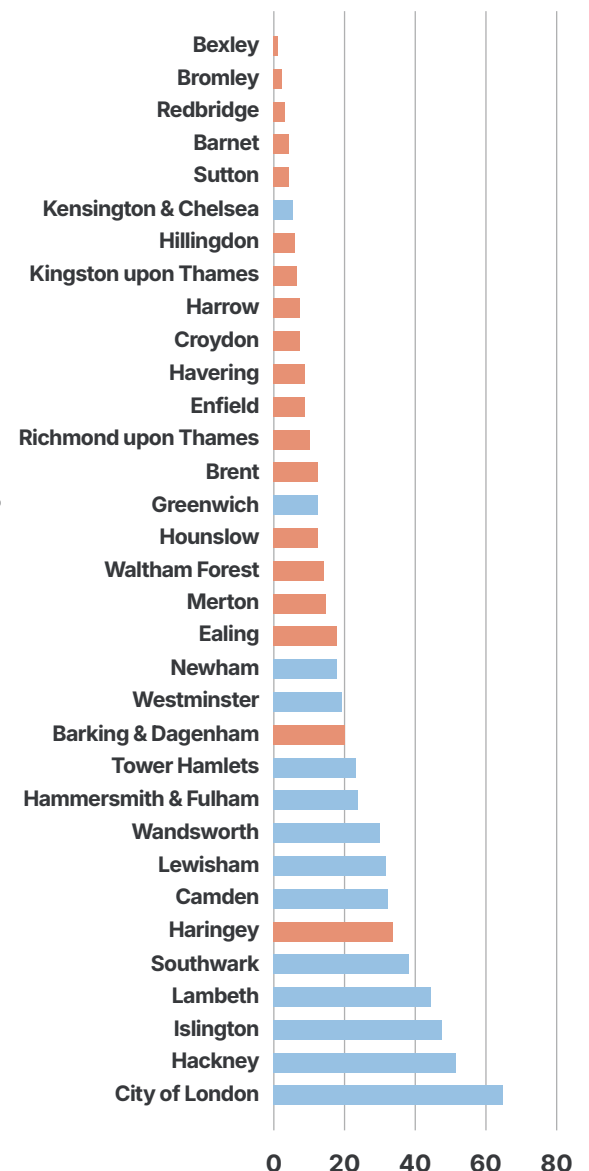


Figure 10 gives an indication of measures to free up buses which are already in place across London.^{ix} The inner London boroughs account for two-thirds of bus lane kilometres, while the proportion of bus routes with priority measures is just 20% or less in all of the 19 outer boroughs. While every borough’s circumstances will vary, these figures suggest there is considerable scope to adopt measures which could help to improve average bus speeds.



the green time or returning to the green signal more quickly. In 2023/24 TfL delivered over 9,000 hours of savings per day for those using buses, walking or cycling, and will continue to undertake timing reviews throughout the period of the Bus Action Plan.^{xi}

Better co-ordination of roadworks, such as when a road needs to be closed for utility works, is a further option to help improve journey times and reliability. Nearly half of all roadworks in London are on bus routes, and TfL acknowledges that they “are responsible for a significant level of bus delay”.^{xii} While they may be necessary, they need to be managed to minimise disruption. Schemes that facilitate coordination of roadworks between public and private organisations, such as the Infrastructure Coordination Service (ICS) and Bus Sense, have been shown to help tackle this issue and improve bus journey times.^{xiii}

As well as faster bus trips, passengers want to see more bus routes. The Superloop network of express buses has had a positive impact, and passengers and boroughs we spoke to were in favour of more orbital bus routes like this. TfL has also pledged to work with boroughs to continue to develop bus priority on the roads used by Superloop routes.^{xiv} We welcome the proposed expansion of the Superloop network and are keen to see that taken forward as soon as possible.^{xv}

To help reduce journey times, TfL has pledged to introduce 25km of new bus lanes on their roads and borough roads by 2025, with 11.8km already delivered.^x Other measures to give greater priority to buses on London’s streets include removing parking and loading bays, bus stop accessibility enhancements, bus stand and stop relocation, bus rerouting and removal of gyratory systems, and line marking for new or extended bus lanes.

Signal timing reviews can also speed up buses by reducing waiting times at junctions. Reviews optimise technology to detect and provide buses with priority at traffic signals, either by extending

Recommendations:

By summer 2025, TfL should set out details of how it plans to work alongside London boroughs to extend and accelerate the roll-out of bus priority measures to reduce bus journey times.

These should include:

- Identifying how many more bus lanes are due to be introduced beyond the 25km planned for 2025.
- Increasing the operating hours of existing bus lanes and enforcing them.
- Maintaining and not removing existing bus lanes when implementing new road schemes.
- Undertaking a comprehensive signal timing review to prioritise buses.

- Continuing to develop other elements of bus priority, such as bus gates and removal of parking spaces in appropriate locations.
- Implementing the second phase of the Superloop network and continuing to expand it whenever possible so that more current and potential passengers can benefit from its transformational approach to travelling by bus in London.
- Better co-ordination of roadworks, for example, through the expansion of the Bus Sense scheme to all London boroughs and continued use of the ICS.

Enhance passenger information and communications

TfL has been expanding the provision of existing technology to help them communicate bus information to passengers, with more than 300 new Countdown screens installed in 2023.^{xvi} It has also been exploring a range of new technologies to improve this communication, especially live information.

“ TfL has been expanding the provision of existing technology to help them communicate bus information to passengers ”



Case study A: Better information at bus stops

TfL is currently trialing new information displays attached to bus stop poles, which allow passengers to view live bus arrival times, digital timetables and route maps. The displays are mounted at a suitable height for wheelchair users and live bus arrival information can also be activated as an audio announcement at the push of a button.

Bus shelters on route 63 have also had full-colour screens installed. They show live bus arrival information and a variety of other live mapping and travel information including disruptions and diversions.

Nonetheless, a significant amount of work remains to be done to ensure that all passengers can plan their journeys and have all the live information they need, whether they want it at a bus stop, on a bus or by using a digital device.

Recommendations:

By summer 2025, TfL should produce details on the scale and pace of its programme of improvements in passenger information.

This should include:

- Greater ambition with its expansion of the number of Countdown screens and action to ensure that they, and the existing screens, operate reliably.
- Ensuring that, on board the bus, the information from the new iBus system provides the right amount of the most useful information for passengers such as details of live disruptions.
- Exploring ways to make passenger communications even more tailored to their journey, for example, through TfL Go.



Improve the overall experience for bus passengers

Lower journey times and better information need to go hand in hand with other measures to improve the attractiveness of bus services. These should address not just the buses themselves and their operation, but also the environment at bus stops and stations, so that waiting for and travelling on a bus is a safer, more secure and more comfortable experience with minimal stress. It is also vital that services offer good value for money. Ensuring that the bus remains affordable to everyone is critical to the social benefits of the bus. While it is currently the cheapest public transport option in London, a single bus fare is now 17% higher than it was in 2020.^{xvii} Affordability needs to be maintained, particularly as cost of living pressures continue.

“ Ensuring that the bus remains affordable to everyone is critical to the social benefits of the bus ”

Recommendations:

By summer 2025, TfL should set out details on how it intends to:

- Deliver on the ambition in its Bus Action Plan that no one is killed on or by a bus by 2030.
- Introduce more upgrades to bus stops, including installing more bus shelters and making sure stops are accessible and secure.
- Improve wayfinding signs at shelters, bus stations and Underground/rail stations to make it easier for passengers to interchange between buses and other modes.
- Implement a comprehensive cleaning programme of buses.
- Improve its handling of service disruption (for example, the use of curtailments) and the support that drivers can provide to passengers more generally.
- Deliver on the Mayor's 2024 manifesto pledge to bring forward to 2030 the achievement of a 100% zero-emission bus fleet.
- Protect bus passengers from fare increases, consistent with the Mayor's manifesto pledge to freeze TfL fares for as long as conditions allow. This should include considering extension of the Hopper Fare duration from 60 to 90 minutes, so more Londoners can benefit from less expensive fares.

Strengthen collaboration between boroughs and TfL

To deliver a better bus service and deliver many of the measures highlighted above, TfL needs to work closely with London boroughs, who control 95% of London's roads and have the best understanding of their local areas. Collaboration between TfL and boroughs already takes place, for example, through Local Implementation Plans (LIPs), where TfL provides boroughs with financial support for schemes to improve their transport networks.

Our engagement with boroughs suggests that some boroughs have a good relationship with TfL, but that there is clear room for improvement. Some of the key themes that we have identified include:

- The need for a genuinely two-way dialogue with TfL, with TfL spending more time and

effort listening to the needs of their areas and acting on them. This was a view particularly put forward by outer London boroughs.

- More support in the form of TfL funding to help deliver improvements to buses. LIP funding is an important part of this.
- A number of boroughs wanted TfL to share more bus data, and in a more analysable form, to help inform their plans.
- Welcoming strategic advice from TfL, but also a desire for more specific guidance (for example, on how to improve a particular bus corridor). There was support for tools like a "borough best practice playbook" so they could share their learnings and together build the knowledge base.
- Concerns about long lead-in times when boroughs were seeking guidance and advice on bus schemes from TfL.



Case study B: Better Bus Partnerships

London TravelWatch supports TfL's recent announcement that it will provide £30 million funding to a new programme called Better Bus Partnerships. This programme will make up to £10 million available for three successful boroughs to deliver transformational bus infrastructure and operational improvements, including new bus priority measures to improve journey times and the better management of road works to reduce delays to buses.

London TravelWatch supports TfL's recent announcement that it will provide £30 million funding to a new programme called Better Bus Partnerships



Case study C: Route 55

TfL's Network Operating Strategy co-ordinates roadworks and identifies hotspots between boroughs. Using the example of bus route 55, which serves five boroughs, the Network Operating Strategy team and those boroughs are looking at the issues and how to make possible improvements, which may include more and/or longer bus lanes or longer hours of operation of bus lanes. Co-ordination and co-operation have been identified as the key to bringing benefits, which are expected to be seen in the next 12 months.

Recommendations:

By summer 2025, TfL should

- Set out details on what a meaningful engagement programme with London boroughs looks like, which delivers on the welcome intention in the Bus Action Plan to “reset the conversation around buses at all levels”.^{xviii}
- Include, as part of that programme of engagement, more sharing of data by TfL in an accessible and easy to use format,

and a commitment to better, more timely support from TfL, to help boroughs design and implement bus improvement schemes, including more best practice advice.

- Commit to increasing the LIP funding available to boroughs for bus priority in their next set of three-year plans (2025/26-2027/28).

More information on views from London boroughs can be found in Annex 4.

Continue to promote innovation

TfL has a strong reputation for innovation in service provision generally and we recognise the ongoing focus on this agenda through initiatives such as TfL's Innovation Collaboration Framework and its Bus Safety Innovation Challenge. We are keen to see greater priority given to addressing the challenges facing buses under this approach.

Innovations like the Superloop show how changes like these can transform people's bus journeys for the better. This could include things like different branding, targeted marketing campaigns and information tailored to passengers' individual needs, and implementing learnings from other bus operators in the UK and abroad. More ways to capture the potential wealth of insight passengers have could also be explored, for example easier ways for passengers to leave feedback about their route to help pinpoint issues.

Recommendation:

By summer 2025, TfL should set out the full range of initiatives currently geared towards promoting new ideas in improving bus services and identify further areas in which it intends to support bus-related innovation. Consideration should be given to setting up a taskforce which can give added impetus to this area of activity.

Through these recommendations we believe TfL can get their Bus Action Plan back on track and grasp the opportunity to not only make bus services better for current passengers, but encourage less regular users to use it more.

London TravelWatch stands ready to support the efforts of TfL and the boroughs to help deliver a truly great bus service that puts passengers at its heart.



- ⁱ London TravelWatch, Who uses the bus?, 2022 <https://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/publication/free-the-bus-briefing/>
- ⁱⁱ Transport for London Travel in London report 14, p75 <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/travel-in-london-report-14.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Our research suggests that average bus users and infrequent bus users account for 37% and 24% respectively of Londoners.
- ^{iv} Page 48, Delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2023/24, July 2024
- ^v London TravelWatch, Who uses the bus?, 2022 <https://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/publication/free-the-bus-briefing/>
- ^{vi} Customer service and operational performance report – Quarter 1 2024/25 (1 April 2024 – 22 June 2024) Second edition
- ^{vii} Page 123, Delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2023/24, July 2024
- ^{viii} London's slowest buses: which ones are they? (selondoner.co.uk), Annual data for each borough accessed through the 'Get the data' link
- ^{ix} Healthy Streets Scorecard 2024, Results: input indicators – Healthy Streets Scorecard
- ^x Information supplied by Transport for London, October 2024
- ^{xi} Information supplied by Transport for London, October 2024
- ^{xii} Delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2023/24 July 2024, p45 Delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2023/24 (tfl.gov.uk)
- ^{xiii} Delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2023/24 July 2024, p45 Delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2023/24 (tfl.gov.uk)
- ^{xiv} Delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2023/24 July 2024, p125 Delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2023/24 (tfl.gov.uk)
- ^{xv} Evening Standard, 19 April 2024 'Superloop 2': Sadiq Khan unveils plan to double express bus network if re-elected | Evening Standard
- ^{xvi} Transport for London, New real-time information signs and technology to make bus travel easier in London (prgloo.com)
- ^{xvii} January 2020 fares changes, <https://www.london.gov.uk/decisions/md2537-january-2020-fares-changes>
- ^{xviii} Transport for London Bus action plan, p79 Bus Action Plan (tfl.gov.uk)

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