# TRANSFORMING PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN A GREEN RECOVERY

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The upcoming spending review is an opportunity to improve the lives of people across the UK through a fundamental reprioritization of transport spending away from outdated, high-carbon infrastructure, and in favour of sustainable public transport. Greater investment will not only support the Prime Minister's ambition to create thousands of new green jobs and help to regenerate communities across the UK, but it will also be essential to meet the government's legally binding net zero commitment.

Transport is the largest source of carbon dioxide emissions in the UK[1] and a major cause of poor air quality. The Transport Secretary has acknowledged that in future *"public transport and active travel will be the natural first choice for our daily activities"*,[2] and has confirmed some spending to make this happen. However, to truly unlock the levelling up potential of transport investment, we need to be far more ambitious.

To build a resilient future, connect left-behind communities and create thousands of jobs, the government should provide at least **£10bn a year additional public investment in low carbon transport infrastructure across the UK** and reallocate the funds earmarked for new road building under the £27bn road investment strategy in England (RIS2). This investment, supported by The Climate Coalition, would include:

- £3bn a year to provide free public transport for people on the lowest incomes[3]
- £6bn a year to expand and electrify local and regional bus and train services, restore routes that were cut and switch buses and coaches to zero emission power[4]
- At least £4bn extra over the next four years to deliver the government's existing target of doubling cycling and increasing walking in England by 2025[5]

**Investing more in sustainable transport and re-prioritising spending away from new road building would deliver on the government's priorities in the following areas:**

## 1. Create thousands of jobs and provide opportunities to jobseekers and people on lower incomes

- Analysis by the TUC has found that investing in sustainable transport infrastructure, including expanding and upgrading the rail network and building dedicated pedestrianisation and cycle lanes could create 229,000 jobs over the next two years.[6] New road building has the lowest job creation potential of all the potential projects measured. A more general reduction in car travel and a transfer to public transport would result in a net increase in employment as on average rail and bus travel generates more jobs per passenger-km than car travel.[7]

- A quarter of UK households do not own a car, rising to 65% for the lowest income households.[8] In areas with limited alternatives, these households miss out on opportunities for employment, education and other key services.[9] 40% of UK jobseekers cite lack of transport as a key barrier for securing employment,[10] which will be especially important for people who may face unemployment as a result of the coronavirus crisis.

## 2. Level up communities outside of the South East

- Inequality of access to transport is stark – more than half of small towns in the South West and North East of England have such bad transport connectivity that they're considered to be *'transport deserts'*.[11] Central government cuts have left one million people without access to a regular bus service, with the worst access disproportionately focused in South West and East of England.

- Rather than meeting the government's levelling up priorities, RIS2 still focuses funding primarily on the south of England. This includes six very large projects, such as the Stonehenge Tunnel and Lower Thames Crossing, that will require 38% of total capital funding in RIS2.

- Sustainable transport can be a key driver of regeneration for under served communities – revitalising high streets and town centres as opposed to shifting economic activity to car dependent out-of-town retail.[13] According to UKRI research, a 10% increase in accessibility of a region leads to a 3% increase in the number of businesses and employment.[14]

## 3. Ensure public funds are invested in technologies of the future

- Fewer than one in seven people believe public money should be spent on more or bigger roads (there is even lower support for more roads amongst Conservative voters).[15]

- President of the AA Edmund King, The Institute of Civil Engineers and the Committee on Climate Change have questioned the appropriateness of RIS2 in light of potential post-Covid shifts in work and travel.

- Looking further ahead, emerging digital technologies, new public transport technologies and autonomous vehicles could transform transport in the coming decades and challenge the current model of private car ownership. Rather than investing in current models, including road building, we should prioritise the investments and policies needed to capture the opportunities these technologies could offer.

## 4. Cut traffic and carbon emissions, and protect wildlife

- Multiple studies by the Department for Transport have confirmed that new roads do not relieve congestion but '*induce*' further traffic.[16] Many people may make new trips they would otherwise not make, and will travel longer distances because of the faster journey times afforded by new road infrastructure. This increases traffic and congestion across the road network: the most recent analysis of the impacts of previous road-building schemes in England found that on average, traffic grew 47% more than background levels, with one scheme more than doubling traffic within 20 years.[17]

- RIS2 will add another 20Mt of carbon dioxide emissions from the Strategic Road Network (SRN) over the period to 2032. Of the increase, roughly a third is the result of emissions from the construction of the extra infrastructure, a third the result of faster vehicle speeds, and a third the result of extra 'induced' traffic.[18] Any increase in carbon emissions cannot be justified in light of the government's net-zero target and challenges the UK's position as a global leader on climate before COP26.

- New roads have had devastating impacts on wildlife and their habitats. More than half (49 out of 86) of all major road schemes built between 2002–2018 have affected areas that were nationally or locally protected because of their wildlife, landscape or heritage values.[19] RIS2 will threaten the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, South Downs National Park, Stonehenge World Heritage Site and the Rimrose Valley Country Park.

## Case study:
## Levelling up through `shovel-ready´ rail electrification

A national, rolling programme of rail electrification is not only necessary as part of meeting the government challenge of decarbonising transport, but could be deployed quickly to *'level up'* communities across the UK.

Given the location of the unelectrified network, this would ensure job creation outside of London and the South-East.[20] In the first instance, the government should deliver on plans scrapped in 2017 such as the Midland Mainline electrification between Bedford, Kettering and Corby. This project was initially costed at £1.1bn, but new innovation in the rail industry means that electrification can be delivered at 30–55% lower cost than recent projects.[21]

Looking forward, shifts in travel and working caused by Covid-19 mean that the government no longer needs to specifically prioritise overcrowded commuter routes to and from London, and can direct investment to areas where line upgrades would have greater impact on economic regeneration, such as the long-promised electrification of the Newcastle to Liverpool TransPennine route.

**Investing in sustainable transport infrastructure could create 229,000 jobs over the next two years**

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# Endnotes


1. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875485/2019_UK_greenhouse_gas_emissions_provisional_figures_statistical_release.pdf
2. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/878642/decarbonising-transport-setting-the-challenge.pdf
3. In England the current cost of making all bus travel free of charge would be £3bn per year. https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/sites/files/policy/documents/2019-02/free-buses-under-30s.pdf It is likely that more than £3bn would be required to sustain making bus travel free of charge because the policy would lead to an increase in demand for bus travel; in addition, this sum would only cover England, rather than the whole of the UK. Taking these factors into account, the £3bn figure to support free public transport for people on the lowest incomes is an indicative estimate.
4 We have estimated that at least £7.006bn additional funds are needed per year for these purposes. This breaks down as: At least £186 million per year to switch buses and coaches across the UK to zero-emission power; £1.3bn per year in England to restore the bus routes that have been cut significantly since 2014 and add new routes where local authorities deem necessary (see footnotes 21 and 22 www.greenpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Government-Investment-for-a-greener-and-fairer-economy-FINAL-30.08.19.pdf); and at least £5.52bn additional capital funding per year to enhance the UK's railways - specifically works to improve the core north-south UK mainlines, extend electrification, reopen lines and create new lines (see page 54 in NEF Rail Network For Everyone report https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/A_Rail_Network_for_Everyone_WEB.pdf The £5.52bn figure does not include all core rail operations and maintenance costs). So far in 2020, the Government has committed the following, equating to £5.819bn, which we assume is to be split over the 5 year spending review period, equating to £1.1638bn/yr: £4.2 billion for city region transport settlements (for all forms of public transport); £10 million to develop plans for improving the reliability and capacity of the Manchester rail network; £589m to kickstart work on the Transpennine main line between Leeds, Huddersfield and Manchester; £20 million for a Midlands Rail Hub; £1bn Transforming Cities Fund (cycling, walking, buses and trams). The remaining funding gap is therefore £7.006bn minus £1.164bn, making £5.84bn/yr. We have made that a need for £6bn because there are significant uncertainties in the actual requirements. Please note that this does not include any funding for expanding local tram networks.
5. The Government has estimated that at least £6 billion is required between 2020-2025 to meet its own target to double walking and increase cycling in England by 2025. So far in 2020, the Government has committed £2 billion over the next 5 years for cycling https://www.cyclinguk.org/article/chancellors-budget-fails-get-cycling-done
6. www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/TUC%20Jobs%20Recovery%20Plan_2020-06-17_proofed.pdf
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14. UKRI (December 2013) Road networks and local employment
15. https://inews.co.uk/news/environment/britons-back-investment-cycling-routes-bus-services-green-poll-562080
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