



Bus must be at heart of a Green Recovery

The bus provides many benefits to society.

Buses keep communities connected.

This connectivity has been disrupted during the pandemic. This disruption is particularly damaging for those reliant on bus use for work and social connectivity in ultimately protecting their physical and mental health.

More broadly, essential car users and other mode users require buses to provide a service to many who might otherwise drive and so add to congestion.

Buses are an essential service.

Buses are at the heart of urban mobility and a lifeline to many people in smaller settlements.

A green and just recovery from the pandemic will not be possible without buses.

The pandemic has brought home how reliant we are as a society on those essential workers who do not have access to a car and need public transport to get to work. Cutting public transport would mean cutting the jobs of those that work on public transport at a time when unemployment is already on the rise.

A reduction in bus services also risks severing those areas where unemployment is high from those areas where jobs are available. In addition, a car-led recovery would also lead to urban centres being throttled by traffic congestion.¹

In economic crisis, bus use becomes even more important

During the disruptions arising from the economic crash of 2008 bus use becomes more important for some users. In one study 20% of bus users gave increased importance to bus travel due to using their own vehicle less often, income reduction, and increased working at home.²

Restoring confidence in bus use is critical to improve sustainable mobility. On the one hand, adequate information campaigns about COVID-19 related measures should be implemented. On the other hand, findings about the real risk of public transport use should be disseminated among citizens as scientific knowledge grows in order to mitigate risks for users.

¹ Urban Transport Group, 2020. Building back better on urban transport. Leeds

² Ulfarsson, G., et al 2016. Urban household travel behaviour in a time of economic crisis: Changes in trip making and transit importance, *Journal of Transport Geography*, 49: 68-75.

Bus for a healthy recovery

There are many benefits associated with bus travel, not the least of which is that choosing bus can improve our health in a variety of ways.

The role of bus in helping people to be more physically active across their day is significant. Bus use invariably involves some physical activity at either side of the bus journey. Improving physical activity has a positive impact on big health issues.

A lack of physical activity contributes to nearly 2,500 premature deaths in Scotland, much illness which is preventable and which also reduces quality of life.

Physical inactivity leads to heart disease, stroke, diabetes and many other life-threatening conditions and it costs the NHS around £91 million per year and imposes major costs on the economy.³

In terms of access to health services, bus services help reduce inequality of access. For example, income inequalities in access to dental care are smaller among older daily users of buses and rail than in non-daily users and so providing convenient buses and rail provides reduces income inequalities in access to dental care, especially for men.⁴

Bus travel is also the safest mode of road transport.

Evidence from High Income⁵ countries repeatedly shows that city bus is a safer mode than car, for vehicle occupants but also for cyclists and pedestrians traveling along these bus routes.⁶ As well as being safer for people, this also means less pressure on the NHS from road traffic injuries.

In terms of mental health, taking the bus helps reduce the stress and strain from travel and this opportunity to relax promotes mental health and wellbeing.

Research has linked mindfulness to commuters under less stress than car drivers and can be associated with improvements to mental health, social engagement, and behavioural regulation.⁷ In addition, when buses can operate at least at 60-65% occupancy resulting lower car use can improve air quality.

Bus for our planet

At a global level, increased bus use by reducing car use helps to reduce emissions contributing to climate change. In Scotland we urgently need to shift regular journeys to bus, and away from cars, to tackle the #ClimateEmergency.

Thank you to Professor Adrian Davis for this Essential Evidence on why we need bus at the heart of a Just, Green Recovery.

³ Physical activity overview - Physical activity - Health topics - Public Health Scotland <http://www.healthscotland.scot/health-topics/physical-activity/physical-activity-overview>

⁴ Kiuchi, S. et al 2019. Does public transportation reduce inequalities in access to dental care among older adults? *Community Dentistry and Oral Epidemiology*, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwe.ac.uk/10.1111/cdoe.12508>

⁵ New World Bank country classifications by income level: 2020-2021

⁶ Morency, C. et al, 2018 Traveling by Bus Instead of Car on Urban Major Roads: Safety Benefits for Vehicle Occupants, Pedestrians, and Cyclists, *Journal of Urban Health*, 95(2): 196-207.

⁷ Lajeunesse, S., Rodriguez, D. 2012. Mindfulness, time affluence, and journey-based affect: Exploring relationships, *Transportation Research Part F*, 15(2) 196-205.