

**Rt Hon George Osborne MP**

Chancellor of the Exchequer  
11 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

7 March 2014

Dear Chancellor,

**Our Buses need and deserve an urgent long-term funding strategy**

We the undersigned organisations are writing to ask the Government to undertake an urgent review of the funding for local bus services in England, so as to provide long term funding and support for socially and economically important services.

Buses are excellent value for money. Nearly 5 billion bus trips are made in Great Britain each year and bus commuters help generate over £64 billion of economic output. Every £1 of public investment in buses provides between £3 and £5 of wider benefits to local economies and social and environmental wellbeing.

Indeed, the benefits of buses, in whatever sector they are operating, are felt across several Government Departments, including the Department of Work and Pensions, through providing jobseekers with access to employment, the Department of Health, through access to healthcare and recreational facilities, and the Department for Education, through providing access to schools and colleges.

Buses are essential for the quarter of UK households without a car. Over half of households on the lowest incomes fall into this category and bus use rises as income falls. Buses therefore provide an essential element of social and economic inclusion and development. Young people need reliable and affordable bus services in order to take up opportunities in education and employment. For disabled people, accessible public transport provides crucial links to the communities from which their disability can often cut them off. For older people and those in rural areas, buses are essential to access public services and to prevent loneliness and isolation which can have huge impacts on people's health. Buses are also fundamental to tourism and leisure, helping people gain access to and travel around the countryside more sustainably.

Buses are used most by those on lowest incomes, and are vital for jobseekers. Evidence shows that many people who want to work are unable to take jobs, or are forced on to benefits, because of insufficient and expensive bus provision. A third of jobseekers say poor transport options are the biggest barrier to finding work.

Buses are also very important for the survival of local facilities such as high street retail businesses. The success of town centres up and down the country depends heavily on local bus service provision.

We welcomed the Government's ring-fencing of the Bus Service Operators Grant last June. However, with Local Authorities making big budget savings, buses have been hit especially hard. Local Authorities are proposing to cut over £20 million in spending on supported bus services this year, twice what was cut in

2013. North Yorkshire, Worcestershire, Cumbria, Nottinghamshire, Essex, Dorset and Manchester are just some of the Local Authorities affected.

During the economic recovery, the role of bus services in achieving improvements in growth and development needs to be coordinated. The Government must set out the role it expects buses to play, to get the most out of public money and enable local authorities to deliver good access to work, hospitals, colleges and other important destinations.

As part of this, the Government should carry out a comprehensive and prompt review of bus funding that takes into account the vital role buses play economically, socially and environmentally, putting in place a long term funding settlement that would enable growth in this industry as we have seen in the railways.

In the meantime, we would call on the Government to put in place emergency funding to ensure that jobseekers, isolated people, and economic growth are not unduly disadvantaged by the pressures on local authority finance.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Joseph  
Campaign for Better Transport



Stephen Joseph OBE – Chief Executive  
**Campaign for Better Transport**



Graham Biggs – Chief Executive  
**Rural Services Network**



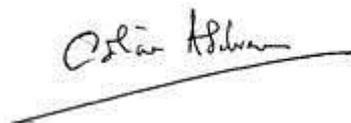
Doug Parr – Policy Director  
**Greenpeace**



Colum Maguire – Vice President  
**National Union of Students**



Janice Banks – Chief Executive  
**Action with Communities in Rural England**



Caroline Abrahams - Director  
**Age UK**



Claire Walters – Chief Executive  
**Bus Users UK**



Anne Robinson - Chairman  
**Campaign for National Parks**



Bill Freeman – Chief Executive  
**Community Transport Association UK**



Ron Douglas – President  
**National Pensioners Convention**

Sue Bott CBE - Director  
**Disability Rights UK**

Nicky Philpott – Director  
**Ramblers**

Len McCluskey – General Secretary  
**Unite**

Kate Jopling – Director  
**Campaign to End Loneliness**

Helen Jackson – Chief Executive  
**Campaign for National Parks**

Claire Walters – Chief Executive  
**Bus Users UK**

Jon Boagey - Deputy Chief Executive  
**National Youth Agency**

Faryal Velmi - Director  
**Transport for All**

Bob Crow – General Secretary  
**RMT**

Stewart Wallis – Executive Director  
**New Economics Foundation**

Phil Rothwell – Director  
**The Conservation Volunteers**

John Stewart - Chair  
**UK Noise Association**

Angus Hanton  
**Intergenerational Foundation**

Manuel Cortes – General Secretary  
**TSSA**

Rhiannon Hughes – Public Affairs Manager  
**Whizz Kidz**

Janet Morrison – Chief Executive  
**Independent Age**

**Other signatories: Association of Colleges, Trade Union Congress, Unison**