

Written evidence submitted by National Express West Midlands (BSB 15)

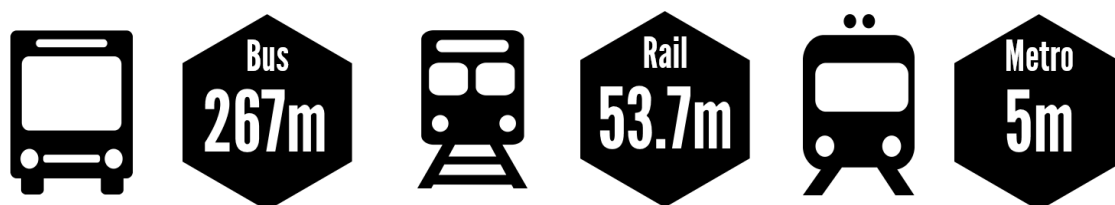
National Express West Midlands

1. National Express West Midlands (West Midlands Travel Ltd) is the major bus operator in the West Midlands. Our 1,500 vehicles carry a million people to work, school, to the shops and to visit friends and family every day and we employ 5,500 people.

Summary

2. National Express West Midlands is grateful for the attention the Bus Services Bill has brought to bus passengers.
 - a. In the West Midlands in 2016:

PATRONAGE



- b. In addition, data from [DfT's National Travel Survey](#) indicates that those in lower income groups tend to make more bus trips than higher earners.
3. Transport is an important part of devolution and National Express West Midlands agrees that that the Bus Services Bill enables devolution.
 4. We welcome the Bill's focus on partnerships. National Express West Midlands is part of the West Midlands Bus Alliance, the UK's first - a model which is now being taken up by other metropolitan areas.
 5. We hope the Bill will bring clarity to some formerly grey areas around the definition of requirements and around competition.
 6. National Express West Midlands supports any measures that would lead to traffic offences being enforced. If traffic management measures are worth bringing in, they're worth enforcing. In a busy metropolitan area like the West Midlands, one illegally parked car can very quickly snarl up traffic and delay thousands of passengers.

7. When Birmingham City Council introduced city centre bus lanes and enforcement in July 2013, some of its busiest roads saw significant improvements in traffic flow, which benefited all traffic.
8. Delays at city centre bus stops for passengers were reduced:
 - by 12% in October 2013
 - by 16% in January 2014
9. Passengers benefitted from journey time savings in the afternoon peak of:
 - 3 minutes for each passenger heading north and east every day
 - 4 minutes for more heading south and west every day
10. Each week since the city centre bus lane enforcement, 1,800 more buses left their terminus on time, meaning 93% of buses were leaving the city centre on time, compared to 89% before bus lane enforcement.
11. In London, a pilot study undertaken when TfL was granted the powers to enforce traffic offences in June 2004 found that traffic flow was increased at 73% of sites that were enforced and monitored. The number of accident casualties at the sites also went down by 19.4 % during the pilot.
<https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2007/september/effective-enforcement-by-transport-for-london-keeps-the-capitals-roads-moving>

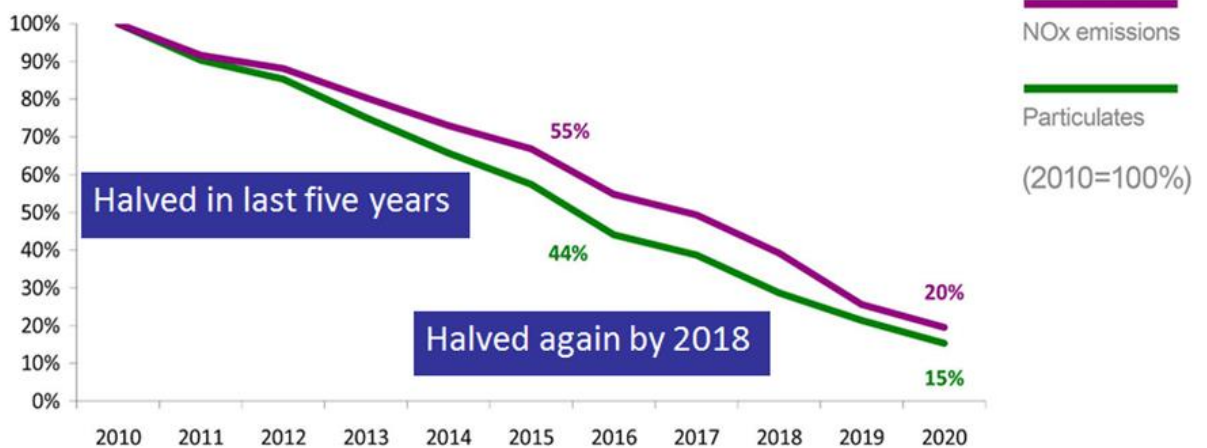
12. All National Express West Midlands' buses are fully accessible and all our new buses are fitted with audio-visual next-stop announcements. National Express West Midlands has signed the RNIB Bus Charter. We welcome the focus brought by the Bus Services Bill onto making travel easier for blind and partially sighted customers.
13. Given that punctuality and reliability are the most important drivers of bus passenger satisfaction - thus increasing ridership - bus journey time targets should definitely be a consideration for any partnership. Setting, reviewing, measuring and enforcement should be negotiated between authorities and operators so it's realistic and meaningful to passengers.
14. However, National Express West Midlands believes that the biggest threat to bus services - however they are provided - is congestion. We run buses across the whole

of the West Midlands and our geographical data proves that every 1% fall in traffic speeds on a corridor, we suffer a matching 1% decline in passenger numbers.

The West Midlands Bus Alliance

15. Our customers tell us they just want a safe, punctual and reliable bus service - they say they care about standards, not structures.
16. So in the West Midlands, we're not waiting for the Bus Services Bill. The West Midlands Bus Alliance, signed in November 2015, is already investing £150 million and using existing legislation to deliver the aims of the Bus Services Bill - improving bus services for passengers, improving air quality and helping regions unlock opportunity and grow their economy.
17. The Alliance is **chaired by Transport Focus** so that the customer is at the heart of every decision taken.
18. The Alliance is committed to **maintaining Bus Passenger Survey customer satisfaction targets** of at least 85%.
19. The West Midlands has the **largest smartcard scheme outside London**, with a Swift transaction every second. National Express West Midlands has invested millions in new ticket machines which will take contactless, cash, smart cards and payment by phone. They will be rolled out from spring 2017 and will mean passengers can board the bus more quickly, so speeding up journey times. National Express also sells thousands of tickets through its M-ticketing app.
20. Bus operators in the Alliance have committed to **keep fares at RPI + 1%**.
21. National Express West Midlands has **halved emissions in five years and will again by next year**. It has done this by specifying the cleanest, greenest Euro VI engines on all new buses, while retrofitting traps to older vehicles.

Total particulate and NOx emissions from NXWM Fleet



We've halved emissions from our fleet in the last five years and under this Alliance we will halve them again by 2018.

22. National Express West Midlands has invested millions in hi-spec Platinum buses with more leg room, comfortable seats, **free wi-fi and USB chargers**, to attract new customers. This investment has resulted in double-digit growth on those routes and customer satisfaction of 94%. 27% of people polled in TfWM's customer satisfaction survey were new users of buses.
23. In return, local authorities in the Alliance have committed money and resource to **highways improvements to speed up bus journey times**. Solihull Council recently completed a £4.5 million scheme on Lode Lane (Birmingham - Solihull via Jaguar Land Rover) which has made the morning commute 8 minutes faster for 25,000 passengers, bringing a 5% rise in customers using the services.
24. National Express West Midlands already has a **real-time journey information app** for customers. We also make all our data available to TfWM and are working closely with DfT on how to best get data out of operators' systems onto open data platforms.
25. The West Midlands Bus Alliance uses Statutory Quality Partnerships (SQPs) to set and enforce a minimum standard of quality for buses operating in the region.

Congestion

26. National Express West Midlands believes that the Bus Services Bill won't mean much to bus passengers if we don't tackle congestion. A franchised bus will be stuck in the same traffic as everyone else.
27. Professor Begg's excellent report for Greener Journeys *The Impact of Congestion on Bus Passengers* uses a National Express West Midlands route - the 126, which goes

from Birmingham to Wolverhampton via Dudley - as a good example of how congestion is corroding bus services.

- In 1987, a complete return journey on the 126 took 160 minutes. The company needed 16 buses to ensure passengers waited no longer than 10 minutes for the next bus.
- In 2016, because of congestion, the return journey time was 200 minutes, and we needed 20 buses to provide that 10-minute frequency.

28. Those are four extra buses - and the drivers needed to drive them - that could be used to run more frequent services on another route, or start a service earlier, run it later, or on a Sunday.

29. Bus operators need the elected representatives to make brave decisions which benefit public transport - so benefiting everyone's health and wealth.

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