Zemo Partnership
Accelerating Transport to Zero Emissions


Loss of mileage from 2019 harms the industry's impact on air quality and congestion

# MILEAGE FOR COACH AND BUS LIFTS AGAIN

**Miles run rose again in 2025**, but are well behind 2019 – harming air quality efforts

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The latest annual road traffic statistics for the UK, published by the Department for Transport in late-May, show that coach and bus mileage rose by 1.8% between 2024 and 2025. Despite that, total coach and bus mileage remains 15.7% below the levels seen in 2019.

Meanwhile, car traffic grew by 2.5% and is now in line with 2019 levels. In the commercial sector, HGV traffic fell by a further 1.7%, marking a third consecutive annual decline, and remains 5.7% believe 2019 levels. Van mileage, which experienced a smaller fall during the pandemic, rose marginally (by 0.5%) and is now 10% above its 2019 level.

Coach and bus journeys surpassed two billion vehicle miles in the UK last year, but they still accounted for only around 1% of total traffic mileage.

However, most coach and bus travel takes place on A-roads and minor roads, rather than motorways. As a result, emissions of pollutants from coaches and buses can have a greater local impact, as they tend to pass close to population centres more frequently.

The reduction in coach and bus miles driven since the pandemic has led to lower total emissions in absolute terms, but it has also reduced revenue, which constrains operators' abilities to invest in decarbonisation (or anything else).

The latest figures, showing that the coach and bus sector has been growing for two consecutive years (albeit modestly) should help operators' capacities to invest. It is to the coach and bus industry's credit that its decarbonisation transition has continued despite the unpromising post-pandemic conditions of recent years.

Bus ridership was slow to recover, in part because of continued concerns about travelling in close proximity to others. Measures to promote usage, such as the national bus fare cap in England, have helped to grow patronage, but only modestly.

A report from Frontier Economics and Systra estimated that when £2, the national bus fare cap in England increased ridership by around 5% in its first 10 months of operation in 2023, but found limited evidence that it promoted modal shift to bus.

Encouraging people from cars to public transport is an important complement to technology-based decarbonisation in reducing emissions, and one that future policy should seek to support.

In other developments during the last month, the King's Speech included an Energy Independence Bill. It serves to reaffirm the government's intention to rapidly scale up the output of home-produced renewable energy, both to enhance UK energy security and to limit cost increases and protect living standards for the long-term.

The Bill is relevant to the electrification of road transport. A faster shift to domestically produced renewable electricity will help to reduce exposure to fossil fuel markets, which are more volatile, as illustrated by the Middle East conflict.

Over time, this should support more stable and potentially lower electricity prices, strengthening the business case for fleet electrification.

The Bill also includes proposals for measures to address grid capacity constraints and connection delays, which remain a significant barrier to the rollout of charging infrastructure for commercial road transport operators.

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For more about Zemo's work supporting the coach and bus transition or to find out about membership, visit **www.zemo.org.uk**

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