



Department for Transport

Open Data and Registration ***Bus Services Bill Information Sheet***

We want the information on local bus services to be available to all passengers across England and to be as good, or better than, that available to rail passengers and bus users in London.

The Bill will include powers to mandate the release of open fares, punctuality data and real time information. The data would be open to anyone who needs it, including app developers, to create products which will allow passengers to plan their journeys more effectively.

Transport for London (TfL) is at the forefront of using open data to improve services, providing data feeds for more than 8,000 developers. There are nearly 500 smartphone apps available which help people in finding the nearest bus stop and check the status of their tube line or roads. We want this to be replicated outside London.

The Bill will enable a step change in the information available to bus passengers, making it easier for them to access details of timetables, fares and routes, while streamlining the bus service registration process.

It will also address outstanding issues requiring amendments to primary legislation, including clarity on registering rail replacement bus services and a Competition Commission (CC - now the Competition and Markets Authority) remedy concerning data about deregistered and varied services.

Open data

The Bill will require the release of open data on routes, timetables, punctuality and fares, in a specified format. All operators of local services will be required to release the specified information (the authority will be responsible in franchising areas).

The Government envisages phasing these requirements in, with information about routes and timetables being required by 2017, and fares and punctuality data being added in stages by 2020. This transitional approach is intended to make the process of releasing data easier for operators to manage and takes into account smaller operators' capabilities.

Central data hub

The Government intends to develop a central data hub, building where possible on existing bus registration and journey planning processes, to store the information and data required. The data would then be made available to anyone who needs it, this could include those registering services, the Traffic Commissioners, LTAs, providers of travel information and DfT when administering Bus Service Operators Grant claims.

Registration

The primary function of the bus registration system is to ensure that operators commit to providing reliable services to the public. It allows the Traffic Commissioners, as the enforcement body, to hold operators to account and ensure that services are being operated punctually in accordance with their timetable. However, LTAs also use the information for journey planning purposes. Around 75% of bus registrations are still submitted on paper, meaning LTAs often have to undertake a separate process to populate journey planning systems, duplicating work while increasing the risk of inconsistency and errors.

The intention is to ensure all bus registration data is submitted digitally. This will mean LTAs no longer need to rely on paper based registrations for journey planning information, enabling a more consistent and accurate route and timetable data set to be generated from the registration process. This is in keeping with the Government's digital strategy which aims to improve processes through the use of digital tools, making interactions between business, the public and Government 'digital by default'.

Clarifying rail replacement bus service registration

Primary legislation provides that rail replacement services procured by the appropriate national authority are exempt from the registration requirements. However, these services are often procured by Train Operating Companies who cannot use the exemption, rather than the national authority, when they are temporarily unable to run their trains. The Bill will exempt all rail replacement bus services from the registration requirements.

Service cancellations: revenue and patronage data

The CC recommended in 2011, following its Local Bus Services Market investigation, that LTAs should have powers to obtain information about revenue and patronage when an operator cancels a service and the right to disclose this to potential bidders for subsequent tenders. This was to prevent incumbent operators of commercial services having an unfair information advantage when tendering for newly supported services. The Bill will implement this proposal to help LTAs make informed choices when deciding whether to procure replacement bus services.

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