



Department
for Transport

Baroness Vere of Norbiton
Minister for Roads, Buses and Places

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Chris Heaton-Harris MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

Our Ref: MC/373433

8 October 2021

Dear Chris,

Thank you for contacting me on behalf of your constituents, about the provision of bus services in England outside London. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this issue.

In March the Government published England's long-term National Bus Strategy, setting out a bold vision for bus services across the country. The Strategy acknowledges that the deregulated bus system has not always worked for passengers and explains why a step change is so urgently needed. It sets out in no uncertain terms how we will deliver better bus services for passengers across England, through ambitious and far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered. Supported by £3 billion of investment during this Parliament, we will make buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper.

As the Strategy explains, there can be no return to a situation where services are planned on a purely commercial basis and I am pleased to confirm that all English Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) outside London are currently developing Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) in collaboration with their local bus operators. These plans, which we expect to be published by 31 October, will set out local visions for the step change in services that is needed, driven by what passengers and would-be passengers want in their area. BSIPs will influence the share of the £3 billion that each authority receives and we expect fares policy to be an integral part of the plans.

We want to see the skillsets and contributions of LTAs and bus operators, which are critical to a strong bus network, brought together in either an Enhanced Partnership or franchising arrangement to deliver ambitious improvements. All English LTAs outside London have confirmed, as the strategy asked, that they are developing either, or both of these approaches.

We have been quite clear that Enhanced Partnerships or franchising arrangements must deliver more comprehensive services, including those which are socially or economically necessary, to drive forward the Government's levelling-up agenda. We recognise that increased bus usage will strengthen communities, sustain town centres, and connect those who are isolated. The National Bus Strategy is the biggest shake-up to buses in a generation, and we remain committed to delivering the transformational changes that passengers deserve nationwide.

Please extend my gratitude to your constituents for taking the time to write in with their concerns.

Yours,
Charlotte

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON