

ORDER PAPER Updated E1

Time for Speeches as detailed in Conference Regulation (2) will apply unless otherwise stated.

During each debate, the President will permit one speech 'against' of three minutes' duration as detailed in Conference Regulation (2).

61 EC Reserve Motion on Transport Policy

Three speeches of two minutes' duration will be allowed in the course of this debate

That this Conference reasserts its long held belief that public transport in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland should be publicly owned and operated. It is our conviction that public transport run in the interests of the people of our nations must also be accountable to communities, users and workers as well as being organised on a fully integrated basis across all available modes including rail, bus, tram and ferry.

Conference believes that public transport must also be fully funded to achieve the benefits of greater use in the face of the climate emergency, something the current UK Government has set itself against in the hope of a political advantage at the next General Election. Instead, over the last year we have witnessed:

- (a) further cuts to HS2's planned route beyond Birmingham but with trains proposed to continue on the already over capacity West Coast Mainline from Handsacre Junction to reach cities in the North of England and Scotland. The effect of this will be to deny additional paths for freight trains that would have taken many polluting HGVs off the roads;
- (b) money saved from cutting HS2 investment being promised for numerous other transport projects, including road investment schemes that will encourage car use at the time of a climate emergency;
- (c) a decision to introduce a two year delay until 2026 for the construction of the new trains for HS2. The manufacturer, Alstom, has now completed existing orders for vehicles for South Western Railway and West Midlands Trains and because of the lack of work has decided to close its production lines at its train building factory at the historic Derby Litchurch Lane site. This will mean laying off 3,000 skilled workers and putting at risk the jobs of a further 15,000 people in the supply chain. The Department for Transport has shown a distinct lack of urgency to resolve this situation by bringing forward orders for other new trains to plug the gap but has instead blamed the TOCs for not placing any orders, the same TOCs that the DfT controls. In fact, no new orders for trains have been placed since 2019 which means that Hitachi's train factory in Newton Aycliffe and CAF's at Newport, South Wales, may also soon be running out of work;
- (d) the train-building crisis in the UK exemplifies a lack of forward planning, with Transport for London now obliged to order ahead of its plans for extra Elizabeth Line trains, to keep the Alstom Works at Derby alive, while on the main lines ageing trains need replacement, and electrification of routes remains in abeyance, and
- (e) that Network Rail's CP7 (2024-2029) plans have more emphasis on dealing with the effects of climate change on its earthworks infrastructure but without being given sufficient financial resources. This has led to decisions to withdraw the highly efficient Track Relaying System and reduce High Output Ballast Cleaning operations, on top of changes to Maintenance practices, all creating the expectation of a further decline in train service performance as well as serious safety concerns because of the delayed renewal of life expired rail.

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The Association continues its opposition to cuts to the jobs, pay, conditions and pensions of our members which flow from these changes and others, including in job roles and conditions of service for ticket office staff in English TOCs.

The Association believes and supports that the key function of passenger transport is to connect people with objectives, and that this should be open to all, particularly through provision of accessible and affordable fares for all. These must not be dependent on having access to online facilities, therefore entailing retention of station booking offices. Such fare accessibility must therefore include affordable 'walk up' fares of reasonable cost without prior booking. The Association also believes the true beneficiaries of public transport, the destination organisations, must contribute toward the costs of transport provision by methods such as but not limited to a payroll tax or a land value tax.

Conference notes that, at the same time as this underfunding continues, we see a gradual rise in the number of people returning to rail with the latest ORR and DfT figures showing passenger levels up at 90% or more of pre Covid levels. Passenger rail revenue also grew by 20% according to the latest ORR Quarterly Report (October - December 2023 compared to the same Quarter in the previous year) and whilst that is only 79% of the same Quarter in 2019, it shows the return to rail continues to grow but is hampered by the high cost passengers face in Regulated Rail Fares and the option for many to work on a hybrid basis.

Despite the rise in passenger numbers and the growth in revenue, the Conservative Government does not prioritise the future of the rail industry, despite it being one of the main levers to pull to deal with the climate crisis.

It took nearly three years before the much anticipated Rail Reform Bill was published in February 2024 and even then it was a 'draft' because of the need to allow for 'pre-legislative scrutiny', something the Government has had plenty of time to carry out.

The Rail Reform Bill sets out the legal basis for the establishment of the Integrated Rail Body (also known as Greater British Railways) that would act as a guiding mind for the industry, something that many have called for, including the Association and the other rail unions.

Conference notes, however, that other terms on the Bill are not welcome. The Government plans to impose a statutory duty on the Integrated Rail Body that means it will have to report on private sector involvement as a way to enhance participation from that quarter, an obligation the Association could not support. Our railways have suffered for too long from profit extraction that only leads to higher fares for passengers, fewer jobs and less money for rail investment.

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Conference reaffirms that buses are important because they are the most used form of public transport across our nations and are the first choice for many people who haven’t got access to a car or who either can’t afford to pay for rail fares or are cut off from the network since the Beeching cuts of the 1960s onwards.

Despite this, bus services and routes before Covid were allowed to wither with many services and routes across Britain cut, especially in England where a half of the 17,394 bus routes have been lost and about 90% of council run services no longer operate. Scotland has not been immune to bus cuts because since 2007, there has been a 38% decline in local bus routes with 160 routes alone lost in the year to August 2023.

The situation in Wales has been made worse by the threat of up to 25% of bus services being lost because of the ending of the Welsh Government’s Emergency Funding Scheme provided during the Covid Pandemic.

The impact of Covid across our territories reduced bus operations to minimal or non-existent levels, which hindered people from carrying out essential duties outside of the home, as well as taking a health toll on many of those who continued to provide and support those services. The Association recognises those workers and expresses its undiluted appreciation to those who made sometimes the greatest sacrifice to help others. Return of these services has been uneven, and many areas including major cities have not seen a return to pre-Covid service levels, as well as the deregulation effect of many areas descending into minimum bus service, with parts of Thurrock (Essex), Cambridgeshire, Hampshire and north west Hertfordshire losing all their bus operations. This Association recognises the issues involved and seeks the return of transport for mobility and inclusion across the countries we serve.

Conference notes that belated measures have been taken by the Governments of our nations. In England, the Government’s ‘Bus Back Better’ Strategy in 2021 and promised investment of £3bn was designed to reduce fares and improve road infrastructure through Bus Service Improvement Plans.

However, analysis by the Campaign for Better Transport (CBT), published in March 2024, has found that the allocation of the investment was initially restricted. It is also based on a competition between local authorities meaning that it has not been evenly spread, despite its claims to be a national strategy. This means bus routes in some areas are still at risk of being cut as can be seen from the latest DfT figures that show a 5.1% reduction in bus service miles.

Conference sees that the monopolies of the private bus companies, who could determine which services they ran without regard to the lifeline network that they provide for many people, has been strengthened by the Bus Services Act 2017 that makes it unlawful in Britain to form a new municipal publicly owned bus company. However, in London, Manchester and now Glasgow the system has been challenged and this means that buses are publicly controlled and franchisees have to work for the public interest.

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Conference notes the Labour Party's intents for bus operations in England, to "create and save up to 1,300 vital bus routes", "allow as many as 250 million more passenger journeys per year" and "removing the Conservatives' ideological ban on publicly owned bus companies" among other objectives, when it comes to power but recognises this is only a beginning. Public ownership of vehicles as well as routes is a key factor. As is funding for those public ownerships, to ensure land can be used for bus depots, resourcing of administration, and accessing fuel supplies whether electric or other traction power.

The Association supports a better application of cost-benefit analysis in assessing new transport projects and related infrastructure, to use a wider cost-benefit analysis than is currently applied (the "Green Book"), to apply those measurements over a longer timeframe (to be not less than 30 years) and extend that deeper into the communities, workplaces and environments these developments would serve.

The Association supports and encourages all public transport to be inclusive and accessible to actual and intending users with mobility restrictions, and supports seeking and applying funds and resources to achieve these goals.

The Association also has an interest in Britain's ferry network, especially in Scotland with CalMac and around the UK and the Republic of Ireland with Stena Line.

Conference notes that the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service (CHFS) contract, currently operated in the public sector via CalMac Ferries Ltd, expires on 30th September 2024 and is now up for renewal. It could be lost to a private company, but this Conference opposes such a move as the CHFS contract provides lifeline ferry services to many island communities and which must not be lost to a commercial company intent on profit extraction via cost cutting.

Conference believes that printed publicity, including timetables and maps, should be widely available and help to advertise bus, train and ferry services to attract new and existing users.

Conference confirms its policy for the next Labour Government as follows:

- (1) Make a priority of replacing the draft Rail Reform Bill, omitting the drive to private sector involvement but including the commitment to a long term 30 year Whole Industry Strategic Plan;
- (2) Renew its pledge to support and fund HS2 in full;
- (3) Provide a steady pipeline of work for Britain's train builders, moving away from the boom and bust mentality that loses highly skilled jobs and means that future orders have to be placed in other countries;
- (4) Provide sufficient additional financial resources to Network Rail to ensure it can operate, maintain, renew and enhance our railway's infrastructure;

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- (5) Live up to its promises to take TOCs into the public sector either when their contracts come up for renewal or when they fail tighter scrutiny;
- (6) A reinstatement of the UK Government’s Operating Grant support to Transport for London;
- (7) The repeal of bus service provision laws and regulations which prevent new municipal ownership of bus operations, and the removal of legislation which leaves a substantial element of franchising in the hands of profit-driven non-public enterprises;
- (8) A long term strategic plan for the provision of bus services across Britain, reconnecting communities and ensuring funding that will encourage their use, and
- (9) The introduction of regulation of bus services in England and where appropriate elsewhere in the UK.

Conference asks the Irish Committee to consider seeking the same objectives in the Republic of Ireland.

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Conference welcomes the passage of the Seafarers’ Wages Act and the introduction of the Seafarers’ Charter. Conference welcomes the commitment by Labour to a strong mandatory charter in the ferry sector to protect terms and conditions.

Conference instructs the EC to bring this motion to the attention of the Labour Party and transport bodies supporting provision of routes and services in the public interest without a profit motive, and the TUC.

Executive Committee Mover (15 mins)

LT Retired Seconder (5 mins)

(Additional speeches)

EC Reply to debate (3 minutes)

**Supported by Anglia South General
Lancs & Cumbria General
London Bus & Rail Operators**

(Amendments A, B and D accepted
Amendment C falls)