



community transport
association

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Bus Services (Wales) Bill – CTA Summary for Operators/Partners

[The Bus Services \(Wales\) Bill](#) was introduced into the Senedd on 31 March 2025. CTA have drawn up this brief summary of the Bill and accompanying Explanatory Memorandum, to support Community Transport operators and our partners better understand the key headlines from the Bill, how they might impact on the Community Transport sector in Wales and the communities and people we support, and how they may wish to give evidence to the Senedd's Committees who are scrutinising this draft legislation.

We urge our partners across the network to engage with this new Bill, to seriously consider how it might impact you and the communities you serve, and to feed back to the Senedd to help shape the scrutiny process. The new legislation represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reform the Welsh public transport network, and it's vital that your voices are heard.

The Senedd's own research team have put together a much more detailed summary of the Bill which you can find [here](#); ours is designed to draw out the key points we think will be most relevant to our members and the CT movement, as well as partners who rely on accessible and inclusive transport. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Gemma on gemma@ctauk.org or the wider team on wales@ctauk.org and we will do our best to assist. You can contact the Climate Change Committee directly on SeneddClimate@senedd.wales.

When you are ready to submit feedback, head to the Senedd's [consultation page](#) for the Bill and complete the online form – this will send your feedback straight to the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee who are leading the Scrutiny of the new legislation. Feedback can be submitted in Welsh, English or bilingually, and will be invaluable to the Members of the Senedd in ensuring the Bill is fit for purpose.

Diolch yn fawr,

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What is the Bus Services (Wales) Bill?

This bill sets out how local bus services in Wales should be planned, managed, and delivered. The goal is to improve bus services so they're more reliable, safe, affordable, accessible, and environmentally friendly.

The Bill introduces a new regulatory framework to transform local bus services in Wales. The main goal is to shift from the current deregulated model to a franchising system, supporting the Welsh Government's "One Network, One Timetable, One Ticket" vision and to deliver key elements from Llwybr Newydd, the Wales Transport Strategy (2021).

Key purposes of the Bill

The key purposes of the Bill are to:

- require the Welsh Ministers to identify those local bus services that are required for the purpose of providing **safe, integrated, sustainable, efficient and economic transport in Wales**;
- require the Welsh Ministers to consult on and publish a Welsh Bus Network Plan setting out the key particulars of those services;
- require the Welsh Ministers to secure the provision of these services, as far as reasonably practicable, via local bus service contracts (franchising), direct provision, local bus service permit, or by relying on the provisions of services of a type mentioned in section 18;
- enable local authorities to create new municipal bus companies;
- prohibit the provision of local bus services in Wales except where those services are secured by the Welsh Ministers as described above, or provided by another operator under a permit, or are within certain limited exceptions specified in the Bill. The Bill will also enable sanctions to be imposed where services are operated in breach of this restriction;
- make provision for the collection of data and information-sharing; and
- enable regulations to be made to apply the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 ("TUPE") to certain circumstances arising out of the Bill.

What does that mean in practice?

The Welsh Government, through Transport for Wales (TfW) and in partnership with Local Authorities, will develop a national Network Plan for bus services and put systems in place to deliver that plan.

Key objectives

- Establish a coordinated, sustainable, and efficient bus network.
- Improve integration with other modes of transport.
- Increase bus usage and reduce car dependency.
- Address climate change through modal shift and emissions reduction.
- Support social equity by making public transport more accessible.

Important Points

1. Defining Local Bus Services

A local bus service travels within Wales with stops less than 15 miles apart – these are the services which will be in scope for the new Bill.

There are two types of Local Bus Services:

- Standard – follows a set route and schedule.
- Flexible – more adaptable and may not have fixed stops or routes.

2. Government Responsibilities

The Welsh Ministers must:

- Create a Welsh Bus Network Plan that outlines needed services.
- Make sure essential bus services are available.
- Monitor and improve service quality, coverage, and sustainability.

3. How Services Are Provided

The government can:

- Contract bus companies to run services.
- Issue permits to operators.
- Provide services directly (if it's the best option).
- Rely on community or school bus services in some cases.

4. Permits and Contracts

Operators need a permit or contract to run a bus service (unless it's a community or school bus).

Permits can have rules about things like:

- Routes and timing.
- Ticketing and prices.
- Safety and environmental standards.

5. Cross-Border Services

If a bus route goes between Wales and England, the Welsh government only needs to manage the Welsh part unless necessary.

6. Data and Information

- Bus operators must share information with the government (e.g., routes, passenger numbers, fares).
- The government must make important service info public (like schedules, ticket prices, routes).

7. Enforcement

- If an operator runs a service without permission, they could be fined.
- There are rules and appeal processes for disputes or penalties.

8. Worker Protections

If responsibility for a service changes (like moving to a new provider), staff rights are protected under TUPE laws.

Why is this legal change needed?

As the Welsh Government have identified in a number of recent Policy documents, (and as we hear from communities regularly) the Welsh bus network is in decline and is no longer fit for purpose. With a 56% drop in bus patronage since 1987, a complex and unreliable network with expensive fares and high costs to the tax payer, they are seeking to establish a new approach to planning and delivering bus services that put people before profit and ensure many more people are able to choose to use public transport to make seamlessly integrated, accessible, and affordable journeys.

Is Community Transport in scope?

Services provided under S19 permit are not in scope for this Bill, even if they are delivered on a minibus. These services are exempt from the provisions of the Bill, and should be able to continue to support communities across Wales without disruption.

Services provided under S22 permit are in scope, and operators running S22 'community bus services' will be eligible to bid for contracts and/or permits under the new legislation (please note that the Bill's usage of the term 'permits' **does not** relate to S19/S22 permits). Some S22 services may not fall under either a contract or a permit and will be exempt from the provisions – at the moment it is unclear how these will be separated (please see 'things to consider' below). If a community bus service is delivered within a contract or a permit under the new Bill, operators will be required to meet the requirements set out in the Bill around provision of accessible open data.

Things to consider before submitting evidence to the Committee

Overall aims

As set out in the Explanatory Memorandum: 'The aims of the Bill are intended to improve the socio-economic circumstances of bus users, and wider communities. The Bill aims to create bus services which are:

- Easy to access – through economic extensive networks, good infrastructure and welcoming drivers,
- Easy to use – through simple ticketing and a network that meets demand,
- Easy to navigate – with fully integrated journeys and clear accessible information,

One inequality experienced by those of socio-economic disadvantage is poorer access to transport. We have considered the evidence about the way transport and socio-economic disadvantage are linked. The powers and duties in the Bill will enable Ministers to secure bus services that will be accessible, available and affordable to more members of society, regardless of their background or socio-economic status.'

Consider whether you think the Bill will help to deliver this for the communities you support, and any gaps, issues, conflicts, unintended consequences, or challenges that might need to be addressed in the legislation.

Clarity about expectations

There are a number of references to community bus services, including 'if the 'need' identified for passengers [in drawing up the Network Plan] is already satisfied by a community transport service, that service should be continued', and 'relying on the provision of a service as described in section 18 [i.e. CT]'.

What would you need to see in the Explanatory Memorandum to clearly understand the Welsh Government's expectations of these kinds of service, and how they will be supported?

Similarly, there are opportunities for community bus services to be either exempt from the Bill, and for operators to either be part of a contract, delivering services under the Bill's permit regime, or deliver services which the Welsh Government can 'rely on' without having a contractual agreement in place. What would you need to know to be able to agree to this for your services?

Information and data

Operators under the new regime will need to supply data to Local Authorities, TfW, and the Welsh Government to enable the transparency of information set out in the Bill. What support would you need to enable you to do this, e.g. ticketing machines, GPS?

S22 routes not part of a contract or permit will still need to be registered with the Office of the Traffic Commissioner – how might this impact your ability to deliver services in a timely and responsive way, if Local Authority transport teams are reduced and/or busy with franchises? And how will these be managed during the transitional period following the Bill receiving Royal Assent?

Public and community involvement

The Bill emphasises collaboration, consultation, and transparency, ensuring that key stakeholders are actively involved in shaping the bus network. They will have a legal duty to consult with stakeholders including:

- every local authority;
- each corporate joint committee (CJC);
- the National Park authority for each National Park in Wales;
- any persons appearing to the Welsh Ministers to represent the interests of operators of local bus services that the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate;
- any persons appearing to the Welsh Ministers to represent the interests of 25 employees of operators of local bus services that the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate;
- any persons appearing to the Welsh Ministers to represent the interests of persons using or likely to use local bus services that the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate;
- any other person that the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate.

Do you feel that these legal duties go far enough in capturing the views of your passengers, partners, and communities? Will the voice of disabled people, older people, carers, people living in poverty, people living in deeply rural communities or those cut off from mainstream transport, be adequately represented by this kind of consultation? If not, what else should the Welsh Government be doing, and how could this legal duty be strengthened?

We think this is **very important**, especially given the reliance on the deeply flawed draft Regional Transport Plans we've seen. How could Local Authorities be directed to engage with communities to shape their plans, so the network meets more of our needs?