

To: Public Bills Committee
cc: Dan Tomlinson MP
From: Kevin Mustafa, Former London Bus Drivers
Re: Evidence Submission for Bus Services [No. 2] Bill

Dear Members of the Public Bills Committee

1. I am writing to you as someone who has worked on the frontline of London's publicly-controlled Bus Operation. I served as a bus driver in London for five years (2016-2021). During that time, I witnessed and experienced a deeply troubling set of working conditions that are not only unsafe, but in many cases inhumane. The current environment places drivers, passengers, and the wider public at risk every single day.
2. What I want to share with you is not based on opinion or hearsay — it is based on direct, lived experience. And I can assure you: the problems in London's bus system are systemic, long-standing, and largely ignored by those with the power to change them.

A Culture of Fear and Silence

3. Perhaps the most disturbing issue of all is the culture of fear that now exists among bus drivers across London. Drivers are scared to speak up about their conditions. They are afraid to raise safety concerns. They are frightened to talk to the press, or to speak critically about their company or about Transport for London (TfL), even when serious risks are involved. Why? Because they know that doing so could cost them their jobs.
4. There have been cases where drivers were warned, disciplined, or even dismissed for speaking out — even when doing so was in the public interest. Drivers are actively discouraged from contacting CIRAS (Confidential Incident Reporting & Analysis System), which is supposed to provide a safe and anonymous way to report safety concerns. The reality is: drivers don't feel safe contacting anybody. They suffer in silence, often in distress, because they are more afraid of losing their income than they are of the risks they face at work.
5. This toxic culture enables dangerous practices to continue unchecked. It erodes trust, hides the truth, and makes accountability nearly impossible. If safety concerns cannot be raised without fear of retaliation, how can any part of the system claim to be safe?

Fatigue, Unsafe Shifts, and the Human Cost

6. Fatigue is absolutely endemic across the London bus network. Drivers are routinely scheduled to work irregular, stressful shifts with little regard for recovery time or traffic conditions. We are expected to navigate busy roads, full buses, tight schedules, and unpredictable conditions — often while sleep-deprived, dehydrated, and exhausted.
7. The Driven to Distraction Bus Safety Investigation, published by the London Assembly Transport Committee in 2017, laid bare many of these issues — and the Loughborough University Fatigue Report that directly resulted from the London Assembly Investigation confirmed the serious safety risks that

arise from these conditions. Yet still, drivers are working dangerously long shifts, encouraged to “push through,” and left to shoulder the blame when things go wrong.

Fatigue isn't just a safety concern — it's a matter of life and death.

The Toilet Crisis: A Silent Public Health Scandal

8. One of the most degrading aspects of the job is the chronic lack of toilet access. Many bus routes in London still do not provide proper, accessible toilets at either end. Worse, drivers are often “turned” halfway down a route — ordered to head back the other way without ever reaching a terminus, meaning they miss their only chance at relief.
9. There is currently an agreement between TfL and the trade unions that allows for a driver to go up to 150 minutes — two and a half hours — without a toilet break. That policy is entirely unrealistic, unhealthy, and unacceptable. Drivers are often left to sit in cabs for hours, holding on to their bladder, unable to hydrate for fear of needing the toilet.
10. This is leading to serious health consequences. Some drivers have suffered bladder and kidney infections. Many are being medically retired in their 40s and 50s. And yet, this issue continues to be downplayed as an inconvenience — when it is in fact a silent public health scandal.

Extreme Cab Temperatures and Unsafe Vehicles

11. In hot weather, bus cabs can easily reach temperatures of 40°C or more. Many buses lack effective air conditioning or ventilation, meaning drivers are operating in conditions that would be illegal for transporting livestock. Heat exhaustion, dehydration, and poor concentration are all common in summer — and they drastically increase the risk of accidents.
12. Would we ask a train operator or an airline pilot to work in such conditions? Then why is it acceptable for a London bus driver?

The Unsustainable Turnover of Drivers

13. All of the above is contributing to an unsustainably high turnover of bus drivers in London. This is not just a workforce issue — it is a public safety concern. When experienced drivers leave in droves, they are replaced by new recruits who are rushed through training and often overwhelmed. The churn rate is a symptom of a system that is grinding its workforce down.
14. Bus driving used to be a career. Now it's treated like a disposable, short-term job. That is a tragic loss for the profession, and a dangerous direction for public transport in our capital.

A Call to Action

15. I urge this Government to incorporate Lord Hampton's 4 Amendments *immediately* into this Bill before London's Dangerous Model is allowed to be rolled out nationwide.

- 1) [Amendment 58. Confidential Safety Reporting \(Withdrawn\)](#) — that any Bus Operator running a Public Bus Service enabled by the Bill be subscribed to a Confidential Safety Reporting Scheme like CIRAS or its equivalents,
 - 2) [Amendment 59. Bus Safety Incident Reporting \(Not Moved\)](#) — that any Public Transport Authority ("PTA"/"LTA") taking control of its Public Bus Services through franchising or direct ownership will be obligated to publish data about the Safety Performance of those Bus Services every quarter.
 - 3) [Amendment 60. Bus Driver Hours \(Not Moved\)](#) — that the Working Hours of Bus Drivers should conform to those of UK Lorry Drivers.
 - 4) [Amendment 61. Safety Qualifications of Public Transport Authority Officials \(Not Moved\)](#) — that any Public Transport Authority Official made responsible for Franchising Public Bus Services under the Act will possess basic IOSH and/or NEBOSH certifications.
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16. Incorporate the London Bus Driver's Bill of Rights into any Bus Contract.
(cf. <https://www.change.org/p/mayor-of-london-write-the-bus-drivers-bill-of-rights-into-bus-contracts-now>)
 17. Investigate the Culture of Fear among London bus drivers and legislate protections for whistle-blowers in the transport sector.
 18. Reassess and reform TfL's 150-minute toilet break policy, ensuring safe, legal, and humane access to toilets on all routes.
 19. Mandate real climate control and air handling systems in all bus cabs to protect drivers during extreme weather.
 20. Fund an independent inquiry into Driver Fatigue, with powers to compel data from operators and TfL.
 21. Hold operators and TfL accountable for excessive driver turnover, medical retirements, and the failure to provide welfare facilities.
 22. Ensure CIRAS and other Confidential Safety Reporting services are promoted, protected, and trusted — not treated as a threat to employment.
 23. The residents of the United Kingdom deserve a public bus system that is safe, ethical, and staffed by people who are treated with dignity. None of that is possible while drivers are overworked, overheated, and silenced by fear, which are the hallmarks of the London Bus Model this Bill will make national.
 24. I am providing this evidence as a legal citizen and resident of the United Kingdom and you may publish this evidence with my name on it. Since London Bus Drivers are at risk of being fired or disciplined for providing such evidence to the Public Bills Committee, their MP or anyone who can act on it, even though I have encouraged London Bus Drivers to submit evidence, I'm afraid they will not. If they do, I have instructed them to tell the Committee to withhold their name and contact details from the public record.
 25. I am available to provide further detail, give evidence, or support any inquiry on these matters. Thank you for your time and, I hope, your commitment to finally addressing these urgent and long-ignored issues.