



Mayor Tracy Brabin
West Yorkshire Combined Authority
40-50 Wellington Street
Leeds
LS1 2DE

Baroness Vere
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Transport

By Email

15 December 2021

Dear Baroness Vere,

Following the publication of the National Bus Strategy earlier in the year, here in West Yorkshire we have complied with Government milestones to improve bus services. We have adopted the Enhanced Partnership provisions in the Bus Services Act, we have submitted an ambitious Bus Service Improvement Plan to your Department and have started a process of assessment of the business case for franchising. Buses are the most used form of public transport in West Yorkshire and, whilst we are embarking on plans for mass transit, this will remain the case for many years to come.

We are making plans for our bus service against a backdrop of uncertainty caused by the financial and human consequences of the pandemic. At the time of writing, we have just moved into the Government's Plan B Covid response which carries a real risk that fewer people will make bus journeys setting back the steady recovery we have seen since the summer. Government recovery funding is due to end in March 2022 and there is no indication that it will continue beyond then. Bus operators are telling us that they soon have to register cuts in their services on the basis that recovery funding will cease in March, some SME bus operators are at risk of going out of business. We could be implementing our Bus Service Improvement Plan in an environment where the bus service is shrinking. I would ask that you take early steps to give Local Transport Authorities and Bus Operators the financial certainty everyone needs to provide a stable bus network upon which we can build our Bus Service Improvement Plan.

I share the Government's vision for buses and I want to deliver a publicly accountable service for the people of West Yorkshire but the uncertainties around funding are talking us backwards. I hope you can help unlock this.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy Brabin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Tracy Brabin
Mayor of West Yorkshire