Department for Transport

Quarterly Bus Statistics:

England Q3 (July to September) 2016

About this release

This quarterly release covers local bus passenger journeys and fares. It provides the most up-to-date statistics for monitoring trends in the local bus sector.

This release relates largely to England, in line with the coverage of DfT bus policy. Statistical tables that cover the whole of Great Britain, are available online.

Quarterly passenger journey figures are based on data collected from a panel survey of the largest bus operators, and are seasonally adjusted. The Bus Fares index is compiled from data provided by a representative sample of around 100 operators and Transport for London (TfL).

In this publication

The number of local bus passenger journeys in England was 4.48 billion in the year to end September 2016, a 2.5% decrease when compared with a year earlier.

Bus use in England outside London declined by 1.5% over the same period, continuing the decline since 2009, and is now at approximately the same level as in 2005. In London, bus use decreased by 3.5% in the latest year but remains 15.6% higher than in the year to end September 2006.

In the past year to September 2016, local bus fares increased by 0.6%, slower than the all items Retail Prices Index rate of inflation (2%).

Local bus passenger journeys

4.48 billion journeys in England in year to Sep 16

↓ 2.5% since year to Sep 15

Local Bus Fares index

↑ 0.6% Local Bus Fares index in England since Sep 2015

↑ 2% All items Retail Prices Index since Sep 2015

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Summary

Table 1 summarises the latest quarterly and year to end annual figures. Figures for England are disaggregated into London, metropolitan areas (the six former metropolitan counties of Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire) and non-metropolitan areas (covering shire counties and unitary authorities).

Table 1: Summary of latest quarterly and year to end local bus passenger journeys in England and Local Bus Fares index

	Local bus passenger journeys (billion)		Bus Fares index
	Year to end Sep 2016 (compared with previous year)	Q3 (Jul-Sep) 2016 (compared with Q3 2015)	Sep 2016 (compared with Sep 2015)
London	2.26 -3.5%	0.56 -3.0%	-1.6%
English metropolitan areas	0.96 -2.0%	0.24 -1.0%	1.8%
English non-metropolitan areas	1.26 -1.2%	0.31 -0.5%	1.9%
England	**4.48 -2.5%**	**1.11 -1.9%**	**0.6%**
England outside London	**2.23 -1.5%**	**0.55 -0.7%**	**1.9%**
Scotland	**0.40 -2.2%**	**0.10 -3.0%**	**3.4%**
Wales	**0.10 1.1%**	**0.03 2.0%**	**0.8%**
Great Britain	**4.99 -2.4%**	**1.23 -1.9%**	**0.8%**

Statistical tables

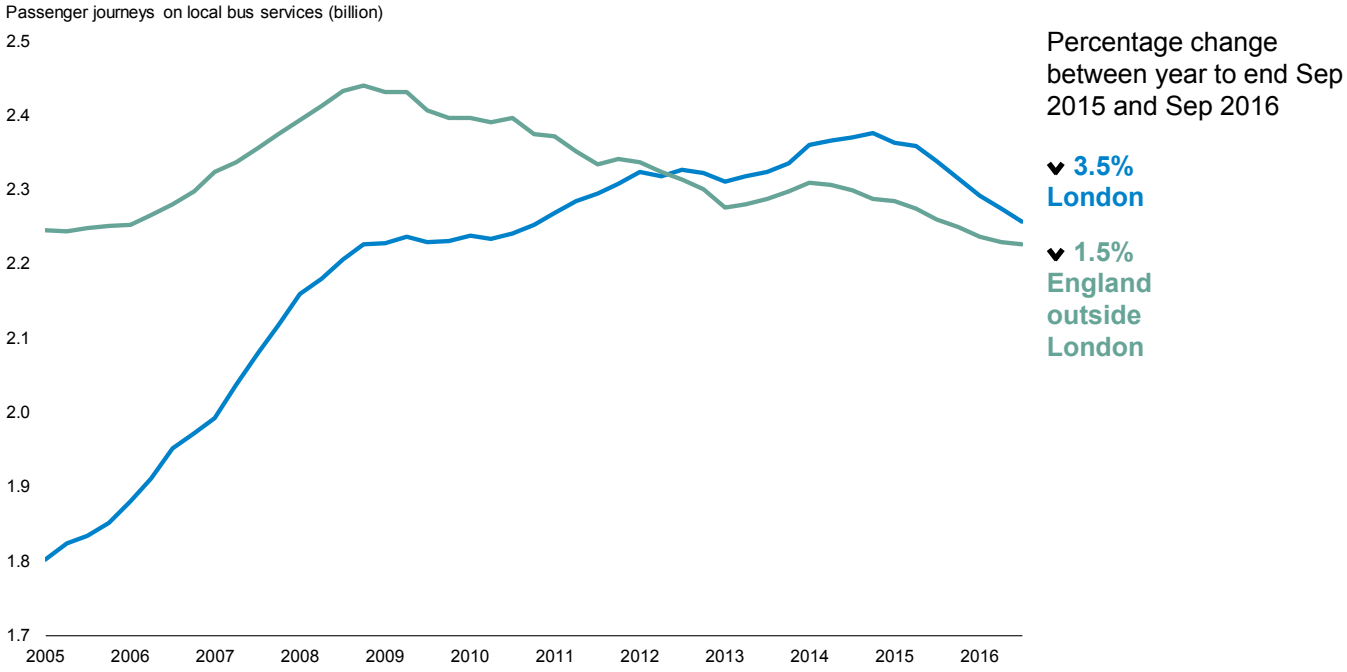
Additional tables are available online as part of the bus statistics series.

Passenger numbers can be found in table BUS0103 (annual) and BUS0106 (quarterly).

Bus fares index can be found in tables BUS0405 (annual) and BUS0415 (quarterly).

Chart 1 shows that the number of local bus passenger journeys in England outside London decreased by 35 million or 1.5% to 2.23 billion when compared with the previous year. Bus use decreased in London by 82 million passenger journeys or 3.5% to 2.26 billion.

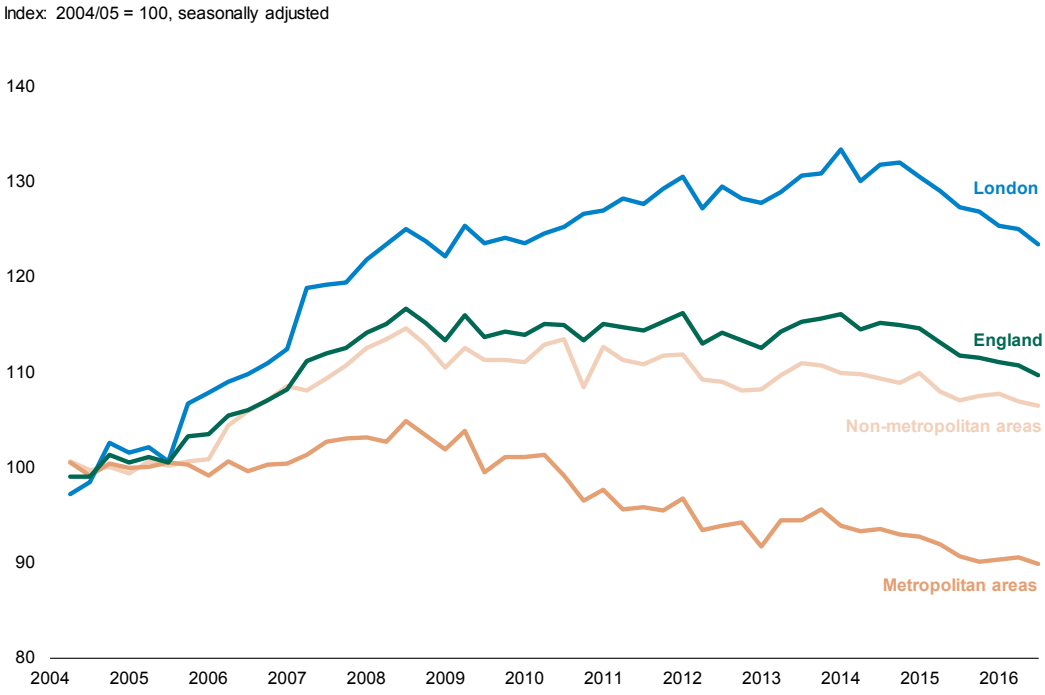
Chart 1: Local bus passenger journeys in England outside London and London, year to end March 2005 to year to end September 2016 (table BUS0106a)



Local bus passenger journeys

In July to September, bus use decreased in London, metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas when compared with the same quarter in 2015. Chart 2 shows a period of declining bus use in London since early 2014. TfL attribute increased congestion and roads works as likely factors that have affected bus performance including bus speeds. Bus use in England outside London showed a small decrease on the same quarter of 2015 (July to September 2015).

Chart 2: Index of local bus passenger journeys by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly from April to June 2004 to July to September 2016 (table BUS0106b)



Bus usage

The number of bus passenger journeys (with each boarding of a bus counted as one journey) is the key measure of bus demand.

Seasonal adjustment

Estimates of the number of bus passenger journeys are seasonally adjusted. This removes the effects of seasonal factors and the arrangement of the calender so that quarterly comparisons can be made.

Coherence with other statistics

Road congestion statistics, also published by the Department for Transport, show that average vehicle speeds in London have decreased during 2015. Road congestion statistics by local authority can be found in table section CGN02.

Local bus fares

Local bus fares in England increased by 63% on average between March 2005 and September 2016[1]. Bus fares have risen at a faster rate in metropolitan areas (77%) than in non-metropolitan areas (49%). The all items Retail Prices Index (RPI) has increased by 39% over the same period, which means that bus fares have risen in real terms. Chart 3 shows that in the past year to September 2016, local bus fares have increased by 0.6%, slower than the RPI (2%). Over the last five years the rate of increase in local bus fares has slowed along with the rate of inflation. As shown in table BUS0415a, the local bus fares index in London in

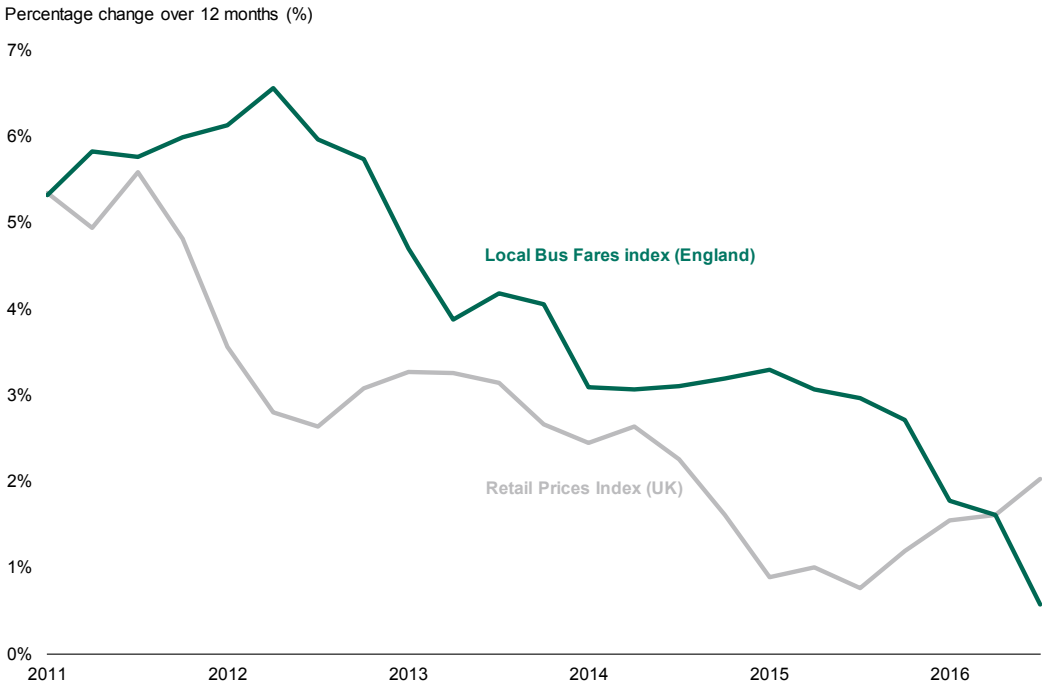
Local bus fares index

The percentage change in bus operator receipts from passengers as a result of any fare changes. These figures provide an estimate of the change in the average cost of bus travel to the passenger but not the actual fare levels paid.

1 The launch of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) in April 2006 resulted in some passengers who had previously paid fares being able to travel for free. As the Bus fares index reflects changes in the average costs of bus travel across all users of bus services, the ENCTS launch resulted in a one-off downward step-change in the index between March 2006 and June 2006.

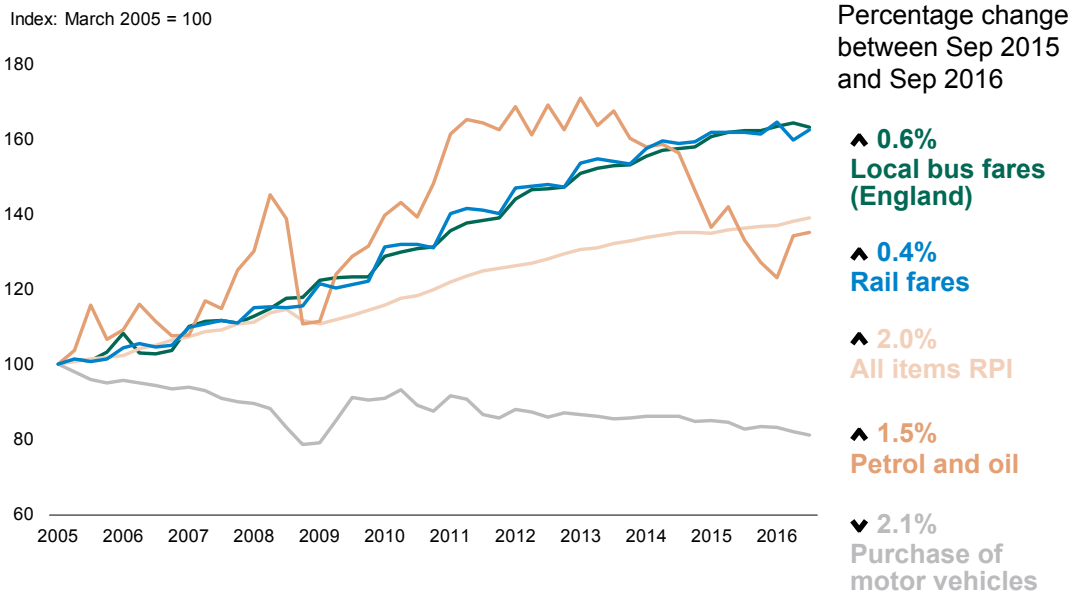
September 2016 fell. This could be the result of the introduction of the hopper fare on 12th September 2016.

Chart 3: Percentage change in Local Bus Fares index and RPI: England and UK, quarterly since March 2011, current prices (table BUS0415a)



The average annual percentage change in bus fares was 3.4% between September 2011 and September 2016, similar to the average annual increase in rail fares (2.9%). In the past year to September 2016, local bus fares and rail fares have increased by 0.6% and 0.4% respectively, slower than the rate of inflation (2.0%). In comparison, the price of purchasing a motor vehicle has decreased by 2.1%. The price of petrol and oil has increased by 1.5%.

Chart 4: RPI and transport indices (at current prices): UK, quarterly from March 2005



Local bus fares in different areas

Bus fares in London are set by Transport for London.

Outside London, fare changes will largely reflect the commercial decisions of bus operators, which in turn may reflect changes in public funding. For example, Bus Service Operators Grant, a central government subsidy to bus operators based on fuel consumption, was cut by 20% in England in April 2012.

Related information

A longer time series of annual figures is available in table BUS0405

Monthly inflation figures are published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), with a detailed breakdown by category including bus/ coach fares, rail fares and motoring costs.

Rail fares in the RPI include fares on UK overground rail, but also: London transport Fares; Euro Tunnel fares; and other underground/ metro fares. The ORR also publish a Rail Fares Index measuring the change in prices charged by train operating companies to rail passengers. Further information can be found here.

An annual summary of the ONS transport indices is available in table TSGB1308.

Background information

Data sources, strengths and weaknesses

Estimates of local bus passenger journeys are based on a quarterly panel of the 18 largest non-metropolitan operators, Passenger Transport Executives (for metropolitan areas) and Transport for London (TfL). Data from the quarterly panel is scaled to annual figures from the department's main annual survey of over 500 PSV operators, and figures are then seasonally adjusted.

For July to September 2016, responses were received from all of the 18 panel members, covering over 90% of the bus journeys made in Great Britain. Quarterly figures are subject to revision due to the nature of the seasonal adjustment and scaling to annual figures. However, these will typically be minor and not affect overall patterns shown. Figures are also subject to revision if a panel member changes their methodology for collecting bus patronage.

The quarterly local bus fares index is based on a sample survey of around 100 bus operators and TfL, who supply data each quarter. The index measures change in the 'gross yield'. This is the change in passenger receipts (excluding concessionary fare reimbursement and subsidies from government), which would result from a fares change, assuming no change in passenger numbers. In total the operators selected cover around 85% of passenger receipts in Great Britain, and the sample design ensures operators in each type of area are adequately represented. The survey response rate is high, almost 100% for the last four quarters.

Data on actual fare levels are not collected. The index assumes no change in passenger behaviour and therefore may not reflect changes in the average fare actually paid (for example if passengers switch to a different ticket type, or choose not to travel, as a result of fare changes).

Users and uses of these statistics

Within DfT, quarterly bus statistics are used to inform bus policy decisions, for ministerial briefing and to answer public enquiries. Outside DfT, passenger journeys figures are used as a measure of the overall health of the industry and are often reported in the trade press. Bus fares data are used by the Office for National Statistics in calculating the Retail and Consumer Price Indices and in the National Accounts.

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Further details

The notes and definitions document is available at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/bus-statistics

National Statistics

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Next update

Following the user feedback exercise on the quarterly bus statistics, DfT will continue to publish quarterly bus data in online spreadsheet tables.

A statistical release will accompany data tables in Q1 January to March 2017 (for release in June 2017) and Q3 July to September (for release in December 2017). For the Q4 October to December 2016 in March 2017 and Q2 April to June 2017 update in Autumn 2017, the online spreadsheet tables (BUS0106 and BUS0415) will be updated but there will be no accompanying statistical release.