

*Imagine if buses were free...*



*We're campaigning for free public transport for everyone in Greater Glasgow*

 [FreeOurCityGla](#)

 [FreeOurCityGlasgow](#)

## *We're demanding a world-class, fully-integrated and accessible public transport network – free at the point of use.*

Over the last few years, hundreds of forward-thinking cities across the world<sup>1</sup> – from Kansas<sup>2</sup> to Calais<sup>3</sup> – are upgrading their public transport networks and making them free for everyone to use. This radical policy is a necessary one: to address the climate emergency and gross inequalities in our society and ensure we make a just and green recovery from the pandemic.

Free public transport benefits everyone, but especially those living on poverty pay or benefits, young people, women, black and ethnic minorities – who all rely on public transport more. In a city like Glasgow with such low car ownership (49% of households), free public transport would have a dramatic effect in reducing social isolation and lifting people out of poverty.

Last year, Glasgow City Council agreed the ambitious target to reduce the city's emissions to net-zero by 2030, and agreed to undertake a 'formal assessment of the potential for making the transition to a public transport system that is free to use'.<sup>4</sup>

The **Free Our City** coalition has been founded to ensure this 'assessment' becomes action, and that this policy becomes a reality sooner, rather than later. We don't have time to waste. Reliance on private cars is the main cause of

carbon emissions and toxic air pollution in our city. In order to meet the 2030 target, car mileage will have to be cut by as much as 60% in the next ten years.<sup>5</sup> We need to provide universal and comprehensive active travel and public transport networks, so that everyone can fully-participate in the social and economic life of our city without need or aspiration to own a car.

Free public transport also has economic benefits which far outweigh the cost of running it – returning £1.70 to the economy for every £1 spent,<sup>6</sup> and it can pay for itself in increased tax receipts.<sup>7</sup> But it is only practical and cost-effective to deliver with full public control of the whole public transport network.<sup>8</sup> We must therefore use all new powers available in the Transport Act 2019 to re-regulate our bus network (under 'franchising') and set up a publicly-owned bus company for Greater Glasgow to take over routes and reconnect the communities left stranded by cuts by private bus companies.



## Why now?

The coronavirus crisis has proved that public transport is an essential public service to get our key-workers to their jobs. It has also laid bare the absurdities of running our public transport on a for-profit basis. The need to maximise profits from fares is not compatible with current social distancing guidance. When services were reduced during lockdown, they ended up costing us more to run. The Scottish Government has already bailed-out failing private bus companies by more than £300 million. This should be an opportunity to buy back our buses, so that they can be run in the public good for the long term.

There are many ways to improve the safety of our public transport and public control is central to them all. If we own and run our own buses, then we control the safety for staff and passengers. We can improve pay, conditions and training for staff.

And we can deliver far more frequent and reliable services for passengers to reduce overcrowding, and better plan the routes to speed-up journey times and minimise the need to change. We can upgrade the fleet to zero-emissions electric buses and make them more spacious, with air-conditioning and multiple entrances and exits.<sup>9</sup>

We need to use this crisis as an opportunity to build back a far better public transport network, which actually serves our needs and helps us meet the many challenges of the decade ahead. Once the pandemic has passed, we will be faced with a massive economic crisis and a climate emergency that is not going away.<sup>10</sup> Building a world-class, fully-integrated and accessible public transport network – free at the point of use – will provide the thousands of high quality, ready-to-go green jobs that we’ll urgently need for our city to make a just and green recovery.<sup>11</sup>

- 
1. Transport for Quality of Life, 2018, [We need fare-free buses! It’s time to raise our sights](#), p.1
  2. Terry Nguyen, 2019, [Kansas City is making its bus system fare-free. Will other cities do the same?](#)
  3. Calais Côte d’Opale Tourisme, 2019, [A completely free network!](#)
  4. Glasgow City Council, 2019, [The report and recommendations of Glasgow City Council’s climate emergency working group](#), p.10
  5. Transport for Quality of Life, 2019, [A Radical Transport Response to the Climate Emergency](#), p.2
  6. Jeff Turner, 2020, [How Much Will Free Buses for Glasgow Cost and What are the Benefits?](#), p.1
  7. Friends of the Earth, 2019, [Why we need climate-friendly free bus travel](#)
  8. Transport for Quality of Life, 2019, [A Radical Transport Response to the Climate Emergency](#), p.4
  9. During the coronavirus crisis, publicly-controlled buses in London were made free so that passengers did not need to make contact with the driver to pay fares.
  10. By the end of 2020, it is predicted that as many as 1 in 3 young Scots could be unemployed as a result of the coronavirus crisis.
  11. Scot.E3, 2020, [Act Now: save lives, save jobs, save the planet](#)

The **Free Our City** coalition first came together in 2019 to demand free public transport for our region ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow. When the coronavirus crisis meant COP26 was postponed until November 2021, we re-grouped to launch this new campaign to demand that delivering a free public transport network becomes central to our region's plans for a just and green recovery.



**F**ree public transport

**R**eliably serving

**E**veryone,

**E**verywhere;

**O**pening

**U**p our

**R**egions and

**C**ommunities to new

**I**deas and

**T**o new opportunities.

**Y**ou deserve it, Glasgow.



**SCOTTISH  
YOUTH  
CLIMATE  
STRIKE**

