



Transforming Public Transport in Bradford: Evidence Briefing

Healthy Livelihoods team at University of York and the Healthy Urban Places programme at Born in Bradford

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Public transport has been identified as a key 'Area of Research Interest' (ARI) by community members in Bradford and by Bradford Council staff, to support inclusive urban regeneration and climate action. Increased regional funding for public transport and greater public control of it, including bus travel, will help to achieve these ambitions and underpin a stronger economy while improving health and alleviating poverty. This evidence briefing is guided by community-informed engagement carried out by the [Healthy Livelihoods team](#) at the University of York's Department of Health Sciences and Born in Bradford's [Healthy Urban Places programme](#), in association with the Bradford Institute for Health Research and Bradford Health Determinants Research Collaboration.

Summary of Community Insights

1. Economic & Social Wider Determinants of Health

- Public transport is strongly connected to residents' health and wellbeing.
- Currently, public transport infrastructure in Bradford limits access to key determinants of health and wellbeing, including jobs, education, leisure activities, and social connection, particularly for those without cars.
- High fares, particularly for young people, families, and frequent travellers, discourage regular public transport use

2. Quality, Safety & Reliability

- Residents report that buses and trains can be unclean, poorly maintained, and unreliable, which reduces their confidence in using them regularly.
- Safety concerns are also prominent amongst women, children, and people travelling alone.
- People feel that transport operators are not held to account for poor standards, weakening trust in the system.
- Limited, poorly aligned routes to local patterns of movement, with a lack of circular services, school buses, and other flexible options, leads to reliance on taxis or cars for work and essential journeys.

3. Accessibility & Inclusion Gaps

- Disabled residents report that current services and infrastructure do not support their needs, making independent travel difficult.
- Long or unpleasant (e.g. poorly lit, unsafe) walking routes to stations and stops are physical access barriers.

4. Lack of Integrated Options

- Transferring between buses, trains, and active travel modes is seen as inconvenient or poorly designed, limiting the usefulness of sustainable transport.
- Residents consistently report that Bradford lacks a coherent, multimodal network, making trips cumbersome and unpredictable.

5. Absence of Community Involvement in Planning

- A recurring frustration for residents is lack of meaningful involvement in designing routes, facilities, or cycling and walking infrastructure - yet transport initiatives designed without local input may fail to match real travel patterns, reducing uptake.

6. Station Environment & Surroundings

- Residents report that existing station facilities are uninviting and lack basic amenities (e.g. free toilets, comfortable waiting areas).
- The surrounding environment, including busy roads and limited green space, makes the station feel disconnected from the city and less welcoming.

Community-Informed Policy Recommendations

Improved Public Transport to Underpin Good Health

- Where devolved powers enable greater public control over bus services and if resources allow, provide free or heavily subsidised bus travel to maximise social and economic benefits for residents and reduce inequalities.
- Increase frequency and coverage, making informed decisions based on a range of evidence, including community involvement, to ensure all neighbourhoods can access education, jobs, healthcare, and social opportunities that underpin good health.
- Use Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) to ensure any service changes improve health, reduce inequality, and mitigate unintended negative impacts (e.g. rerouting services away from low-income or isolated areas).

Accessible and Resident-Informed Bus Travel

- Keep services affordable and introduce integrated ticketing to reduce car reliance, and consider the provision of free bus travel, particularly for students, young people, and low-income residents, to reduce inequality and support sustainable travel habits.
- Improve accessibility (step-free boarding, AV announcements) and involve marginalised groups in decision-making to promote equitable participation.
- Assess wider health benefits of free travel through HIAs, recognising its role in mobility, opportunity, and wellbeing.

Effective Communication and Participation Channels

- Create clear, accessible ways for residents to report issues, receive real-time updates, and track how their feedback leads to action.
- Ensure participation is equitable by engaging under-represented communities and using their insights as part of the wider evidence base for decision-making.

Higher Standards from Transport Companies

- Enforce accountability for cleanliness, safety, and punctuality, using transparent performance reporting and a robust evidence base.
- Strengthen oversight to ensure operators meet standards that directly influence health, safety, and passenger confidence.
- Use HIAs to evaluate how service quality affects wellbeing and to guide contract requirements.

Reduced Traffic & Congestion

- Improve public transport reliability and coverage to cut car use, emissions, and congestion, improving air quality and neighbourhood health.
- Use HIAs to assess how congestion-reduction measures affect health and ensure benefits are distributed equitably.

Integrated Action in Walkable Neighbourhoods

- Maintain pavements, improve lighting, and ensure safe active travel routes to public transport, especially for women, children, and disabled residents.
- Use HIAs to evaluate how walkability and street design affect physical activity, safety, and broader determinants of health that connect to public transport.

NEW RESEARCH: The Healthy Urban Places programme is working with Bradford Council and MHCLG to support the business case for Bradford's new train station. A multi-disciplinary workshop was organised with 35 policy stakeholders on 2nd December to break down siloes and consider wider benefits of a new Bradford train station. An evidence and practice informed theory of change will be produced in February 2026 illustrating how urban regeneration and rail transport can lead to wider health, economic, and environmental benefits.



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