



# Women in Bus Network

## Scoping Study

---

By Ruth Salmon

Prepared for: Transport for London

Project Ref: xxxxx



## Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Context: challenges in the bus industry.....	1
2.1	Falling passenger numbers.....	1
2.2	Skills shortages and staff vacancies.....	1
2.3	Safety.....	2
3	Barriers facing women working in the bus industry.....	2
3.1	Gender pay gap.....	2
3.2	Shift work.....	4
3.3	Women’s health.....	5
3.3.1	Toilets.....	5
3.4	Ergonomics.....	5
3.5	‘Macho culture’.....	6
4	The business case for diversity.....	6
4.1	Better meeting customer needs.....	6
4.2	Safety.....	7
4.3	Fostering culture of openness and honesty.....	7
5	Addressing barriers – Best practice.....	7
5.1	Women’s networks.....	8
5.1.1	Women in Transport.....	8
5.1.2	Women in Transport Diversity and Inclusion Bus Group.....	8
5.1.3	Bus operator groups.....	8
5.2	Recruitment.....	8
5.3	Women’s health.....	9
6	Recommendations and next steps.....	10
6.1	TfL’s Women in Bus network – proposed initiatives.....	10
6.2	Further research needed.....	10
6.3	Workshop.....	11
6.4	Interviews.....	12

# 1 Introduction

The Transport for London Bus Safety Team is keen to encourage and support more women to work in the bus industry at every level, from bus drivers and mechanics to engineers and managers. In particular, the team is interested in exploring the potential for TfL to establish a Women in Bus network. Unlike in UK rail and aviation, there does not yet appear to be a comparable national cross-industry network nor organisation specifically supporting and promoting women's participation in buses. This research report sets out the current challenges facing the bus industry, the challenges facing women who work in the sector, the wider benefits of improving the gender balance of the bus workforce, best practice in promoting this, including relevant networks that already exist, and recommended next steps.

In carrying out this research, data has been drawn from both the national and London bus industries - the report makes clear which, in each case. The focus of the research has been bus, rather than coach, but with recognition that many of the findings will apply to both industries.

## 2 Context: challenges in the bus industry

### 2.1 Falling passenger numbers

Across the UK the number of bus journeys have been on a downward trend since a peak of 2.41 billion passenger journeys in 2008/9<sup>1</sup>. London was the exception, with journey numbers growing every year between 1998/9 and 2013/4. Since then, the numbers have started to fall in London too, broadly following the national downward trend.

The covid-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on the industry. Although, in London at least, bus has proved to be a resilient mode of transport; having fallen to as low as 20 per cent of normal levels during the first lockdown, London bus journeys have now recovered to between 70 and 80 per cent of normal levels<sup>2</sup>.

It is vital for the industry that passenger numbers return to former levels and beyond. Encouraging use of public transport (along with walking and cycling) is key to sustainable recovery and healthier lifestyles in cities.

### 2.2 Skills shortages and staff vacancies

As well as a shortage of passengers the bus industry is struggling to recruit and retain enough staff. Most obviously, there is a shortage of drivers, but operators also report shortages in garage staff, engineers and other staff.

A recent survey by Unite the Union among 529 of their members found that driver shortages were reported at 99% of bus garages. Respondents cited the main reasons drivers are leaving is due to poor pay, working conditions and long hours<sup>3</sup>. While this is not necessarily a representative survey it clearly

---

1

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1030718/annual-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1030718/annual-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2021.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/bus-action-plan.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2021/november/new-survey-reveals-shocking-shortage-of-bus-drivers/>

reflects a real problem.

## 2.3 Safety

While buses are the safest modes of road transport there is, there is rightly still an industry-wide ambition to become safer. In London in 2019 11 people were killed in collisions involving a bus and 198 seriously injured. This was a 12% reduction from the previous year, and a 64% reduction on the 2005-8 baseline<sup>4</sup>. Transport for London has set a Vision Zero target of no one killed on or by a bus by 2030 ahead of a wider TfL target of no one to be killed or seriously injured on the London's streets by 2041.

TfL has devised a bus safety programme that covers all the safe system pillars (safe speeds, streets, vehicles, behaviours and post-collision response). Within this programme is the world leading Bus Safety Standard that sets out a road map for future vehicle standards. As the number of injuries falls further it will become more difficult to reach zero and one area that is of interest for more future work, but difficult to tackle, is the working culture. A hierarchical and closed culture is common in the transport industry and can make it more difficult for staff to report concerns including near misses, or to say when they don't feel safe to do their job.

## 3 Barriers facing women working in the bus industry

The current workforce of the bus industry does not reflect the community it serves. The Labour Force Survey reported that, in 2020/21, only 16 per cent of bus and coach drivers were female<sup>5</sup> (although this is significantly more than the seven per cent it was in 2019/20)<sup>6</sup>. Across a sample of four London bus operators in 2020, between nine percent and 11 per cent of their total staff are female<sup>7</sup>. As this includes management where women are especially under-represented it is likely that the proportion of female drivers is comparable to national figures. In comparison, more than half of passengers are female. The lack of women working in the industry can be considered a barrier itself, contributing to a perception that it is not a valid career choice for women. There are many other real and current barriers behind this, preventing more women from joining the industry.

### 3.1 Gender pay gap

Bus drivers in the UK earn an average of £441 a week, below the national average of £479<sup>8</sup>. Pay in London is higher, reflecting a higher cost of living; according to a current job advert, an apprentice bus driver in London can expect to earn around £500 per week<sup>9</sup>. A gender pay gap exists, although it is considerably lower than the national average; a sample of London bus companies cite gaps of 2-8 per cent compared to a national average of 15 per cent for 2019/20.

<sup>4</sup> 2019 data reported here as <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/casualties-in-greater-london-2019.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1030718/annual-l-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1030718/annual-l-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2021.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/929992/annual-l-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/929992/annual-l-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2020.pdf)

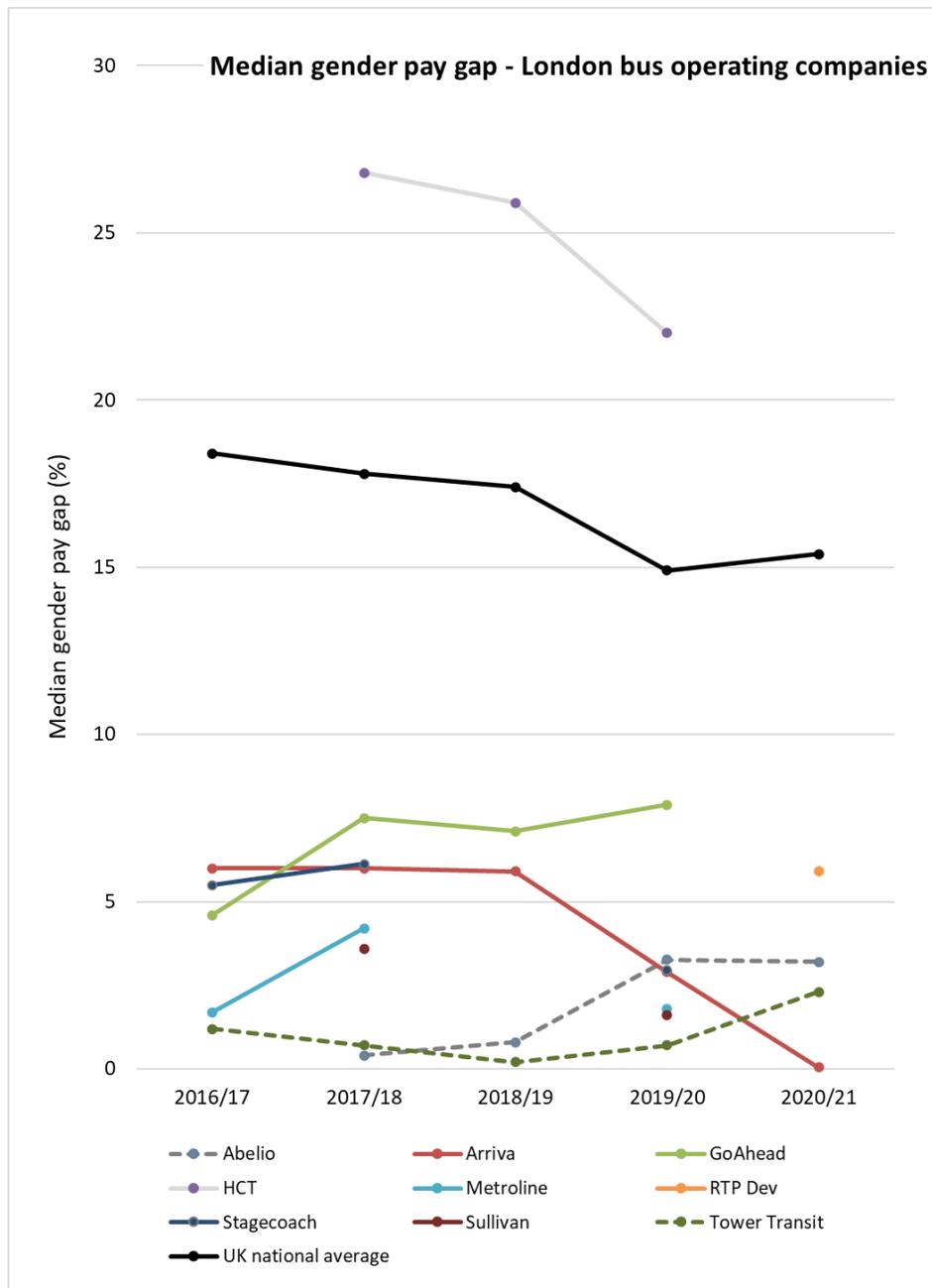
<sup>7</sup> Based on gender pay reporting data 2020 from Abelio, GoAhead, RATP Dev and Stagecoach.

<sup>8</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1030718/annual-l-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1030718/annual-l-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2021.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://careers-goaheadlondon.icims.com/jobs/1177/apprentice---trainee-bus-driver/job?mobile=false&width=1713&height=500&bga=true&needsRedirect=false&jan1offset=120&jun1offset=120>

As in many industries, the gap largely reflects the jobs that women do, with fewer women in senior roles. On average, across the London bus operating companies, 20% of the bottom quartile of earners, and 10% of the top quartile, are women<sup>10</sup>. The chart below shows the gender pay gap of eight of the London operators as well as the national average. This is based on gender pay reporting data that has been required by law from companies with more than 250 employees since 2017.



Source: Data from companies' gender pay gap reporting<sup>11</sup>. National data from [www.statista.com/statistics/280710/uk-gender-pay-gap/](http://www.statista.com/statistics/280710/uk-gender-pay-gap/)

<sup>10</sup> Compiled from individual company's gender pay gap reports 2019/20.

<sup>11</sup> Abelio, Metroline, RATP Dev and Tower Transit figures are for London bus. Arriva, GoAhead and Stagecoach figures are for UK bus. Stagecoach 2019/20 was for stagecoach group as a whole. 2018/19 data was not required due to covid and so is missing for several companies. Only a few companies have reported 2020/21 to date.

There is no clear trend, with numbers fluctuating across the years and companies. It is important to point out that this analysis of the data is indicative only. There is some missing data, and data from separate companies is not necessarily fully comparable. For example, some operators report their London bus operations separately whereas others combine businesses. HCT stands out as having a much higher pay gap. This reflects the fact that it is a slightly different business, running social and educational transport and employing care assistants on many of their buses. It is likely that many of these assistants are female and that they are relatively lowly paid. UnoBus data could not be sourced for this report.

Ironically, recruiting more women into entry-level driver roles, where pay scales relate to experience, can cause the gender pay gap to increase. This should be temporary if policies are in place to help retain these female employees. Recruiting women directly into more senior roles will also help address this. However, nationally the pay gap is bigger at more senior levels<sup>12</sup> so, as more women are promoted or recruited to these roles, it will be important for companies to keep this in mind.

### 3.2 Shift work

Shift work can be a positive option for many employees, allowing them to fit work around family and other commitments. However, if there is a lack of flexibility around patterns, and/or lack of part-time options, shift work can also be a barrier, especially for women. Nationally, eighty-two per cent of bus drivers work full-time, with figures from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings in 2020 state that bus drivers work on average 39.0 hours a week (more than the national average of 36.9)<sup>13</sup>. Many operators have traditionally not been open to part-time working. A current advertisement for an apprentice London bus driver states that the role is full-time and *'...you will be required to work the full range of shifts which will include starting early in the mornings and finishing late in the evenings; this will include working weekends and public holidays as required'*<sup>14</sup>.

Shift work can have serious health consequences for both men and women. There is evidence that night working may result in higher risk of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disorders and cancer, as well as sleep disorders and mental health problems. Although it is an under-researched area, there is growing evidence to suggest that women may be more affected by night shift work than men. Research has found that, on average, women's bodies have greater difficulty in adapting to shift work<sup>15</sup>. There is also some evidence to suggest that shift work may negatively affect women's fertility. Studies have suggested that working night shifts is likely to slightly increase the risk of miscarriage; In one study the prevalence of miscarriage increased from 12 per 100 pregnancies in the average population to 13.4 among women working a rotational shift system (which sometimes included nights) and to 18.1 per 100 among those working fixed night shifts<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2021>

<sup>13</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1030718/annual-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1030718/annual-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2021.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://careers-goaheadlondon.icims.com/jobs/1177/apprentice---trainee-bus-driver/job?mobile=false&width=1713&height=500&bga=true&needsRedirect=false&jan1offset=120&jun1offset=120>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26645701\\_Sleep\\_and\\_Health\\_Consequences\\_of\\_Shift\\_Work\\_in\\_Women](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26645701_Sleep_and_Health_Consequences_of_Shift_Work_in_Women)

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.nhshealthatwork.co.uk/images/library/files/Clinical%20excellence/Pregnancy\\_info\\_shiftwork\\_A4.pdf](https://www.nhshealthatwork.co.uk/images/library/files/Clinical%20excellence/Pregnancy_info_shiftwork_A4.pdf)

Employers can help mitigate some of these risks with appropriate scheduling, health screening and lifestyle support.

### 3.3 Women's health

During their working life most women will experience changes to their body that affects their health and wellbeing including painful or heavy periods, pregnancy, breast-feeding, infertility, fertility treatment, pregnancy loss and menopause. Without an open and supportive working culture many women will suffer in silence, affecting their wellbeing and long-term health, as well as their ability to perform at work. According to The Menopause Charity, about 10% of women leave employment because of menopause<sup>17</sup>.

Making the working environment more supportive for women, including reasonable adjustments to hours and tasks, could help encourage more women to join and remain working in the bus industry. Providing support during the menopause could help address the lack of women in senior roles.

#### 3.3.1 Toilets

TfL has recognised that driver toilet facilities are not adequate; there are not enough facilities and they are often in a poor condition. This is a serious health concern for all drivers, but women have specific needs during menstruation as well as safety concerns during night shifts that mean lack of appropriate toilet facilities has a disproportionate impact on their wellbeing.

### 3.4 Ergonomics

The publication of 'Invisible women' by Caroline Criado Perez in 2019 brought to public attention the fact that so much of life, from drugs to piano keyboards, has been designed to fit men. The concept, whereby the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile man is assumed to represent all humans, is termed the 'default male' by Criado Perez. This includes crash-test dummies; in fact, the preparation work for the Bus Safety Standard was forced to use the 50% male dummy as that was what was available. It is therefore safe to assume that the bus driver cab is also designed with male bodies in mind. While elements of the cab are adjustable to a certain extent, they are likely to fit a wider range of men than women and this may result in an uncomfortable or even unsafe working environment.

In 2021 Tracey Scholes, a bus driver for 34 years claimed that she lost her job when she found she was unable to reach the pedals in a new bus cab design, without creating a significant blind spot. While there is some controversy regarding the details of her dismissal, with her employer claiming that they did offer her alternative arrangements at the outset, the fact that the cab design did not fit her is undebated. Following support from Unite the Union, local politicians and a public petition, arrangements were made for her to drive an alternative vehicle and she returned to work.<sup>18</sup> The fact this was a new vehicle indicates it is a problem that has not yet been fully identified, let alone addressed.

It is worth also noting that the 'default male' design problem is likely to extend to passenger safety. Criado Perez found that, if involved in a car crash, females are 47% more likely to be seriously injured and 71% more likely to be moderately injured due to the design of the vehicle. While the equivalent data is not available for bus passengers it would be worth investigating.

---

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.themenopausecharity.org/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/victory-bus-driver-who-lost-22783550>

### 3.5 'Macho culture'

It is well recognised that the transport sector is male-dominated and until recently it has been accepted that a woman working in, for example, a bus garage, would have to put up with a certain amount of everyday sexism, if not sexual harassment.

This culture is a key focus of an article in Passenger Transport Magazine by Chloe Leach-O'Connell, the publication of which triggered the establishment of a '*Women in Transport: Bus*' steering group within the Women in Transport network in 2019<sup>19</sup>. The article describes women feeling pressure to 'laugh off' casual sexist comments that make them feel uncomfortable. In 2021 the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Women in Transport published a White Paper 'Gender Perceptions and Experiences Working in Transport'. The paper included new research that showed 69 per cent of women working in the sector felt the transport industry has a macho culture and 70 per cent of women perceived the industry to have an image problem<sup>20</sup>.

This type of working culture is often associated with a lack of trust, lack of openness and a punitive hierarchical management style, which has been shown to prevent reporting of near-misses as well as reducing the likelihood of employees admitting when they need support due to poor mental or physical health.

## 4 The business case for diversity

Improving the gender balance in the workplace is clearly a good thing in itself, however, employing more women can also have much wider business benefits.

### 4.1 Better meeting customer needs

More diverse businesses perform better. Having a range of perspectives and life experiences improves decision-making and planning and makes business sense. Companies in the top quartile for diversity have been found to financially outperform those in the bottom quartile<sup>21</sup>. Similarly, having staff that understand the communities they serve brings valuable insights to improve customer services.<sup>22</sup>

Nationally, 17-20 year-olds make the most bus trips of any age group and among younger passengers there is an even split between male and female passengers. However, over the age of 30, women make significantly more bus trips than men. Those in lower income groups also make more bus trips than the rest of the population and the biggest ethnic group of bus users is Black (19 per cent of bus trips in 2015-19)<sup>23</sup>. Similarly, in London people under 25 years old, women and Black, Asian and minority ethnic Londoners rely on bus more than the general population.<sup>24</sup> People with disabilities are less likely to have access to a car and many rely on buses.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.passengertransport.co.uk/2019/01/lets-talk-about-women-and-buses/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://ciltuk.org.uk/News/Latest-News/ArtMID/6887/ArticleID/34258/Cross-party-group-of-Parliamentarians-calls-on-government-and-transport-industry-to-challenge-macho-culture>

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/business%20functions/organization/our%20insights/delivering%20through%20diversity/delivering-through-diversity\\_full-report.ashx](https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/business%20functions/organization/our%20insights/delivering%20through%20diversity/delivering-through-diversity_full-report.ashx)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.womenintransport.com/our-blog/2019/12/12/the-lowdown-on-diversity-and-inclusion>

<sup>23</sup> This was the case in 2019/20. In 2020/21 the number of trips was more balanced across the genders, but this was a reflection of the covid-19 pandemic lockdowns

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/929992/annual-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/929992/annual-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2020.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/bus-action-plan.pdf>

TfL's Bus Action Plan<sup>25</sup> puts strong emphasis on improving the inclusivity of the service and in removing barriers facing a diverse range of passengers including women, people with disabilities, Black, Asian and ethnic minority Londoners and parents and carers. Having a workforce that better represents the passenger community can help identify and address these barriers.

## 4.2 Safety

Professional driving is still largely considered a 'male' job, and this assumption needs to be challenged. Recent research by Rachel Aldred *et al* found that the risk posed by male car and van drivers is around twice that of female drivers. For lorries the risk posed by men is around four times higher. Interestingly, among bus drivers the difference was much less pronounced. Women drivers still appeared to be slightly safer but overlapping confidence intervals mean that we cannot be sure this is a significant finding. The researchers suggest that "...characteristics of the [bus] and training and monitoring requirements may neutralise gender differences in skill or behaviour."<sup>26</sup>

**Table: Other road user fatalities by gender of driver, with sensitivity analysis around distance assumptions (Aldred *et al*, 2021)**

Mode	ORU fatalities per bn km		
	All road users	Men (90% confidence intervals by gender)	Women (90% confidence intervals by gender)
Car/taxi	3.25	3.93 (3.85 to 4.00)	2.01 (1.94 to 2.07)
Van	2.59	2.62 (2.50 to 2.74)	1.32 (1.00 to 1.71)
Lorry	17.07	17.25 (16.7 to 17.9)	4.64 (3.23 to 6.33)
Motorcycle	7.63	8.18 (7.46 to 8.94)	0.68 (0.07 to 2.26)
Bus	19.18	19.45 (18.2 to 20.66)	14.35 (11.06 to 18.33)
Cycle	1.09	1.24 (0.96 to 1.56)	0.48 (0.18 to 0.97)

This research suggests there may be a small safety benefit in recruiting more female bus drivers, and in any case the research should help dispel the myth that professional driving is better suited to men.

## 4.3 Fostering culture of openness and honesty

Having a more diverse workforce could contribute to changing the reported 'macho' culture in the bus industry. If combined with awareness-raising and appropriate training, a shift in employee demographics could help address sexism and racism and challenge assumptions among all staff. A more open and supportive working environment would result in a better and safer working environment for both male and female employees.

## 5 Addressing barriers – Best practice

To capitalise on the multiple benefits of a more gender balanced workforce the barriers facing women entering or staying in the bus industry must be addressed. Below are some examples of how this has been done in bus companies and in other industries.

<sup>25</sup> <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/bus-action-plan.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Aldred R, et al. *Inj Prev* 2021;27:71–76. doi:10.1136/injuryprev-2019-043534  
<https://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/injuryprev/27/1/71.full.pdf>

## 5.1 Women's networks

In the rail sector, there is a strong and well-established Women in Rail network, set up to improve diversity in the rail sector, attract more women to careers in rail and support women within the sector. Membership of Women in Rail is free and there are national and regional events, career support, awards and mentoring<sup>27</sup>. While there is not yet a comparable network for Women in Bus there are a number of new initiatives that are seeking to fill this gap.

### 5.1.1 Women in Transport

The Women in Transport network<sup>28</sup> is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to '*empower women in the industry to maximise their potential*'. Membership costs between £40-60 per year and provides access to events, mentoring and professional development programmes. The Women in Transport network recently collaborated with the All Party Parliamentary Group for Women in Transport to research and launch the white paper '*Gender Perceptions and Experiences Working in Transport*'.

### 5.1.2 Women in Transport Diversity and Inclusion Bus Group

This steering group, part of Women in Transport, was set up in 2019 and meets four times a year<sup>29</sup>. The group's key objectives are '*to promote the benefits of diversity and inclusion and improve perceptions of the bus industry*', '*to attract a diverse workforce which represents our customer base*' and '*to become employers of choice attracting the skills and talent we need*'. It does not appear to have been very active, possibly due to Covid. This will be clarified during stakeholder interviews (see section 6.4).

### 5.1.3 Bus operator groups

Several bus companies have set up their own women's networks.

**Go-Ahead** have established what they believe is the industry's first 'Women in Bus' network. The network provides virtual talks and workshops with the aim to support women to "*...feel free to bring their true selves to work*"<sup>30</sup>.

**Arriva** employees across 14 countries have access to the Global Arriva Inclusion Network. At present the network has around 600 members, with a smaller specific gender network having only 300 members. Through virtual discussion and workshops, it aims to support women with career progression and to make a '*tangible difference to how gender equality is viewed in the workplace*'.<sup>31</sup>

In 2021 **Stagecoach** launched six new employee networks including Women@Stagecoach. Other networks include LGBTQ+, carers and parents' networks. The networks are given '*the freedom to push boundaries, encourage change, support colleagues and be a collective voice to continue to make Stagecoach a great place to work*'<sup>32</sup>.

## 5.2 Recruitment

There are a wide range of recruitment methods that can be employed to increase the proportion of women that apply and are appointed. Targeted advertising and gender-neutral language in job ads, blind CVs (whereby the hiring manager cannot see any markers of gender, age or ethnicity) and

<sup>27</sup> <https://womeninrail.org/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.womenintransport.com/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.womenintransport.com/bus>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.go-ahead.com/sustainability/case-studies/women-bus>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.arriva.co.uk/en/responsible-business/gender-pay#:~:text=Our%20overall%20mean%20pay%20gap,still%20have%20more%20to%20do.>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/news/south-wales/2021/june/stagecoach-launches-new-employee-networks>

unconscious bias training can all contribute.

Stagecoach piloted methods to increase driver diversity and female applicants increased from 13% to 34%. This included a 'Women behind the wheel' recruitment campaign, featuring celebrity Ferne McCann obtaining a bus license<sup>33</sup>. The campaign focused on the flexibility and independence of the role as well as the customer service elements of the work.

Go-Ahead has set a company-wide target to increase female employees from 11% to 20% by 2025. Go-Ahead has also committed to 50% of board members being female. The company is also trying to attract more female recruits through their apprenticeship scheme. They are collaborating with TfL on this through a specific 'Women in Drive' programme<sup>34</sup>.

### 5.3 Women's health

In the last year several companies have made high profile announcements of specific policies on fertility and menopause. Kellogg's for example has introduced additional leave for those undergoing fertility treatment, menopause or suffering pregnancy loss. This leave can be taken without a doctor's note. They are also introducing training for managers in how to talk about these issues with staff<sup>35</sup>.

Channel 4 is another company that has publicly published its menopause policy. The company's gender equality network *4Women* found that the policy had a positive impact on how employees felt about working at Channel 4, even among those who had not used the policy<sup>36</sup>.

---

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.stagecoachgroup.com/about/managing-the-business/governance/gender-pay-gap-reporting.aspx#:~:text=Stagecoach%20is%20made%20up%20of,the%20UK%20average%20of%2015.5%25> and

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.go-ahead.com/sustainability/case-studies/women-bus>

<sup>35</sup> [https://www.kelloggs.co.uk/content/dam/europe/kelloggs\\_gb/pdf/KELLOGG\\_INTRODUCES\\_NEW\\_MEASURES\\_FOR\\_STAFF\\_EXPERIENCING\\_THE\\_MENOPAUSE\\_PREGNANCY\\_LOSS\\_AND\\_FERTILITY\\_TREATMENT.pdf](https://www.kelloggs.co.uk/content/dam/europe/kelloggs_gb/pdf/KELLOGG_INTRODUCES_NEW_MEASURES_FOR_STAFF_EXPERIENCING_THE_MENOPAUSE_PREGNANCY_LOSS_AND_FERTILITY_TREATMENT.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.channel4.com/corporate/menopause-policy>

## 6 Recommendations and next steps

This report has presented data and evidence to help explain why so few women work in the bus industry and why companies struggle to recruit and retain female employees. The next step is to consider how TfL could work together with the industry to address this.

The research implies that a Women in Bus network – either a new network or support for an existing network – may be a good way to address the gender imbalance and therefore a worthwhile investment for TfL. While the main objective would be to support more women entering and remaining in the bus industry there would also be significant wider benefits for all employees, passengers, bus operators and TfL.

This section sets out an outline of some of the early initiatives, including quick wins, that such a network could focus on. This is followed by a series of further questions to be addressed in an internal workshop, and a series of stakeholder interviews.

### 6.1 TfL's Women in Bus network – proposed initiatives

A short list of achievable and impactful initiatives would be needed to accompany the launch of TfL's support to women in the bus industry. These six proposed initiatives are informed by the research in this report and discussions with the Bus Safety Team. The potential impact and feasibility of each will be appraised during an internal staff workshop and during stakeholder interviews.

- 1) **Research into the barriers and opportunities to women working in buses:** This would be most likely to be researched through focus groups with female bus sector employees. This research could be used to further develop the other initiatives in this list, as well as to help identify additional future interventions.
- 2) **Review of bus operator policies regarding women's health:** A review of policies for pregnancy, pregnancy loss, fertility treatment and menopause.
- 3) **Provide best practice guidance on women's health policies:** This may involve TfL as a whole, depending on the organisation's own policies. There is potential to use menopause as a pilot.
- 4) **Provide training for managers on women's health issues.** Again, potentially using menopause as a pilot.
- 5) **Review operators' recruitment approaches.** Focus on initiatives specifically aimed at attracting/ appointing female applicants. This could be followed by new guidance, pilots, a new diversity and inclusion Bus Operators' Innovation Challenge, recruitment targets and/or other new contract requirements.
- 6) **Research into ergonomics.** Both the cab and the passengers' seats are likely to have been designed around the dimensions of the average male. This research would explore the extent to which this impacts the comfort and safety of drivers and the injury risk to passengers. Initial research could include qualitative research with drivers as well as analysis of existing passenger injury data.

### 6.2 Further research needed

There are however questions that need to be answered before such initiatives can be launched. The following questions will be addressed through the workshop and stakeholder interviews listed below.

- What should be TfL's *key focus* in supporting women in buses?

- Is a women in bus network the best way?
- How active are the existing operator networks and the Women in Transport Diversity and Inclusion Bus Group?
  - Should TfL set up a new network or support/ build on existing ones?
  - Should it start as a London network or be open nationally from the beginning?
- What are the possible funding models (e.g., membership fees, sponsorship, industry contributions)?
- How could we ensure the network is accessible to operational staff, especially those working shifts?
- What other data/ research is available that could help inform interventions?

### 6.3 Workshop

A workshop will be held with staff from TfL Bus Operations as well as a representative from the TfL Safety, Health and Environment directorate. The aim of the workshop will be:

- To share the findings in this report.
- To agree aims and objectives for TfL's support to women in the bus industry, including the vision for potential Women in Bus network.
- To discuss the further research questions above.
- To appraise the list of six initial initiatives above.
- To agree next steps, including additional recommended stakeholder interviews.

## 6.4 Interviews

Following the workshop, a series of stakeholder interviews will be arranged with female leaders in the bus industry and representatives of other women's networks. The stakeholder interviews will help to ensure that TfL builds on existing work and does not duplicate efforts. The interviews will also be used to help clarify the most effective area for TfL to focus on.

The exact format of the interviews will be agreed with the Bus Safety Team and a structured questionnaire will be prepared. Potential interviewees include:

Organisation	Name	Role	Contact
Women in Transport: Diversity and Inclusion Bus Group	Sonya Byers	CEO of Women in Transport and Chair of D&I bus group	
Women in Transport: Diversity and Inclusion Bus Group	Caroline Ward	Project lead for Inclusive Employment	
Transport for London	Louise Cheeseman	Director of Bus Operations	
Abellio	Lorna Murphy	Operations Director	
Unite	Carolyn Simpson	Regional women's and equalities officers London & Eastern	
All-Party Parliamentary Group for Women in Transport	Ruth Cadbury MP	Chair	
TfL women's network			
Women in Rail network			
GoAhead Women in Bus			
Women@Stagecoach			