

# Translink

## A Responsible Recovery

October 2021



# Introduction

Translink is the accessible, inclusive and green public transport provider helping Northern Ireland reconnect people and places, getting people back to the workplace and ensuring that our community's recovery from the pandemic is sustainable, as well as helping to implement a necessary modal shift in transport habits away from the private car.

This document complements 'A Responsible Recovery', which we published in September 2020; it provides updates on how Translink continues to deal with the crisis and what measures we are taking to encourage growth in public transport usage as our society returns to normal.



## Translink at the heart of the recovery

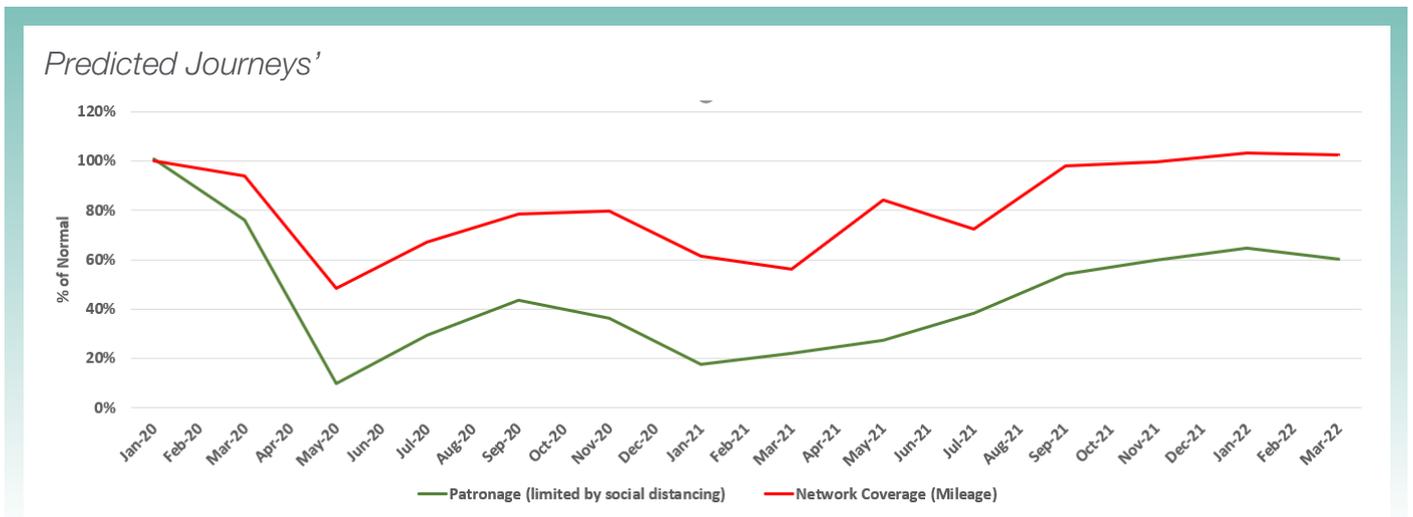
Public transport is fundamental to supporting a healthy, sustainable, inclusive and responsible recovery.

the current crisis and deliver a sustainable recovery to benefit everyone.

Sustaining the network and rebuilding passenger confidence in the period ahead requires ongoing investment. Translink services are essential to sustaining vital jobs in dependent sectors across the entire economy, as well as keeping communities connected; they must be maintained even when passenger numbers are low.

There is considerable interest in sustainable travel and we expect the use of public transport to grow back quickly over the next 18 months, in keeping with the easing of restrictions. We will continue to monitor demand across the network as required.

We must continue to maintain and expand a comprehensive public transport network to help Northern Ireland recover from



# Safe and secure travel

Commuting patterns are likely to change in the period ahead, with hybrid working becoming the norm for many. However, this presents an opportunity for public transport and sustainable travel, with a growth in off-peak commuting and leisure travel likely.

People are more likely to use the bus or train for irregular or less frequent commutes, as well as travelling for social and leisure purposes. Regular commuting will continue to be a reality for many people, especially in those sectors where working from home is not possible.

It is clear that policy makers should be preparing for changes to the commute, rather than its end.

Public transport keeps our society open for business and is essential for re-connecting people to employment, education, retail, social and leisure opportunities. Nonetheless, it is clear that, even as passenger numbers grow, people must feel safe to 'make the switch' in the context of the pandemic. Recent research commissioned by Translink, surveying public transport users and non-users across Northern Ireland, reveals that 79% of respondents intend to return to their normal workplace by the end of 2021, with 50% of those surveyed also saying they would be happy to use public transport immediately as restrictions ease. The same research has identified several factors that will be key to encouraging greater take-up of bus and rail services, including the use of face coverings, enhanced cleaning and provision of hand sanitisers – these are measures in which Translink has led the way throughout the pandemic.

## Public Transport and a Green, Active Recovery

Significantly, over two thirds of respondents in the same survey agreed that public transport is a better option for the environment.

The substantial improvements in air quality witnessed on a worldwide basis during 2020 occurred while public transport continued to operate and one key lesson that should be drawn from the pandemic is the need for modal shift in favour of public transport over the coming years.

Translink is fully committed to a Net Zero future – we plan to operate a Zero Emission bus and rail fleet across Northern Ireland by 2040, with Metro services in Belfast and Derry~Londonderry achieving this target by 2030. By 2050, we will have become a fully 'Climate Positive' business.

Additional Zero Emission fleet, including hydrogen and battery-electric buses and bi-modal trains, will be brought into service in the years ahead.

Public transport is central to encouraging more active travel. Investment should be made to make the streets greener, safer and more inviting for pedestrians, cyclists and other public users, but with an expansion of the wider public transport network also.

Public transport journeys involving a walk to and from a bus or train stop can provide up to half of the recommended daily level of exercise. There is also proven correlation between access to bus services and reduced levels of social deprivation; a 10% improvement in bus service connectivity is associated with a 3.6% reduction in social deprivation.

Translink services are inclusive and accessible and available to vulnerable customers, regardless of location or economic circumstance. They are defined under a Public Service Contract (PSC) with the Department for Infrastructure and as such, we maintain a public transport network in both urban and rural areas, across both profitable and unprofitable routes.



# Investment for a Sustainable Future

Many people depend on public transport to get to and from their place of education or training, with more than half of all students being frequent bus and rail users. Public transport is essential for job seekers, with 77% claiming to have no access to a car.

Across urban and rural areas, we connect local businesses to customers and employees and pupils to schools, as well as supporting visitor access to local attractions and events.

Translink's position as both network operator and service provider allows for efficiencies, economies of scale and cross-subsidy of profits across a dense bus and rail network.

Translink maintains services on our network as part of our Public Service Contract, ensuring that 83% of Northern Ireland's population has direct access to public transport across thousands of bus routes and our railway network.

In common with operators across the world, the pandemic left Translink in a challenging position – we are grateful for the support received from the Northern Ireland Executive during the crisis, but this has been by no means unique.

## Conclusion

Translink will continue to work with businesses and other stakeholders to deliver a green recovery for Northern Ireland, delivering infrastructure investment across our network and

Substantial funding to maintain bus and rail services in Great Britain was committed by the Government; as an example, Transport for London has received over £4bn in state support since the pandemic began, including an additional funding programme until December 2021 totalling £1.08bn. Rail franchise agreements have been suspended, with the Government assuming the risk involved at a cost of billions of pounds. Bus services in England will also benefit from an additional £226m to maintain and improve services over the coming months, in addition to sums totalling over £1bn which have already been invested to keep bus services operating. In the Republic of Ireland, the Government have taken on the revenue risk for Irish Rail, Bus Eireann and Dublin Bus, with significantly increased funding from the National Transport Authority of up to €460 million in the 2020 budget alone, with a further grant funding of €500,000 to licensed bus sector operators that have been unable to operate on a sustainable basis as a result of the COVID crisis.

These interventions have been replicated across the world, helping public transport providers keep networks operating at a time of crisis, when Governments took unprecedented actions to restrict travel other than for key essential workers.

moving towards Net Zero public transport while ensuring that public transport is safe for everyone.

