

# GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3502

**Weekend Bus Hopper trial**

**Programme: Providing More Effective, Accessible and Affordable Public Transport**

## **Executive Summary:**

London's weekend economy supports jobs, local businesses and the capital's cultural life. The bus and tram network plays a central role in this, offering a city-wide, accessible and affordable transport option. However, with bus demand around eight per cent below pre-pandemic levels, the Mayor has been working with Transport for London (TfL) to explore innovative new fares as a way to grow passenger numbers; encourage greater use of public transport; and support the economy.

As a result of this work, it is proposed that TfL delivers a Weekend Bus Hopper trial, running for six weeks from Saturday 25 July 2026 to Monday 31 August 2026 (inclusive). Throughout the trial, the proposed Weekend Bus Hopper would allow customers to travel on all TfL bus and tram services on Saturdays and Sundays, for the price of a single bus fare (separate fares for each day). This trial will help TfL to better understand whether cheaper bus travel over the weekend could increase ridership on the network; contribute to London's wider economic recovery; and support Londoners facing cost-of-living pressures.

This Mayoral Decision (MD) asks the Mayor to approve a variation in the fares decision and direction for 2026 (approved in MD3464) to enable the proposed Weekend Hopper trial to happen. The Mayor has allocated business rates funding of £20 million to support the fares innovation trial in his final consolidated 2026-27 budget which was approved by the London Assembly without amendment on 26 February 2026. This additional funding will support the expected revenue shortfall, and implementation costs expected to be incurred by TfL in offering the Weekend Bus Hopper promotion.

## **Decision:**

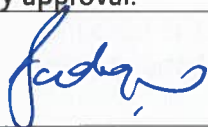
The Mayor approves the proposed revisions to fares on TfL bus and tram services, as set out in this Decision form, to come into effect on 25 July 2026; this will run for six weeks, until 31 August 2026, on a trial basis.

## **Mayor of London**

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

**Signature:**



**Date:**

12/5/26

## **PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR**

### **Decision required – supporting report**

#### **1 Introduction and background**

- 1.1 London's weekend economy supports jobs, local businesses and the capital's cultural life. Enabling people to travel easily and affordably at weekends is essential to sustaining this economic activity; and encouraging people to spend time and money in town centres, leisure destinations and local neighbourhoods across the capital. The bus and tram network plays a central role in this, providing a city-wide, accessible and affordable transport option that helps people get out and about at weekends. With recent global events likely leading to increasing costs over the coming months, the Weekend Bus Hopper trial may help Londoners with the cost of living over the summer.
- 1.2 Travel patterns highlight the importance of buses in supporting weekend activity. Around 1.7 million people use the bus network on Saturdays and Sundays, making approximately 4.1 million bus journeys across the weekend. Many of these journeys already benefit from innovative fares introduced by the current Mayor. This trial is intended to incentivise a shift towards bus and tram travel at weekends, with the Weekend Bus Hopper simplifying the fares offer and lowering the overall cost of travel.
- 1.3 Since the introduction of the Bus Hopper in 2016, which allows unlimited transfers between bus and tram services within one hour of tapping in, customers have made more than one billion Hopper journeys. A customer making just two hops a week in that time would have cumulatively saved £1,500.
- 1.4 At weekends, over half a million customers who use buses at the weekend make use of the Hopper fare. As a result, around 880,000 Hopper journeys are already made every weekend, demonstrating the value of simple, affordable fares in supporting bus use and wider economic activity.
- 1.5 Following the pandemic, bus demand is eight per cent lower than pre-pandemic levels. That is why the Mayor has been working with TfL to explore further fares innovation as a means of supporting London's economic recovery; helping Londoners facing pressures with the cost-of-living; and encouraging greater use of public transport. As a result of this work, a Weekend Hopper promotion has been identified as an option to encourage more people to consider using the bus and tram at the weekend – particularly those who would otherwise make these journeys by car.
- 1.6 The proposed Weekend Hopper would, throughout the trial, allow customers to travel on all TfL bus and tram services on a Saturday (from 04:30 on Saturday morning until 04:29 on a Sunday morning) and on a Sunday (from 04:30 on Sunday morning until 04:29 on a Monday morning) for the price of a single bus fare (a separate fare on each day).
- 1.7 If this Mayoral Decision (MD) is approved, the trial will take place on six weekends between 25 July 2026 and 31 August, including all of the August bank holiday weekend (Saturday to Monday). This MD asks the Mayor to approve a variation in the fares decision and direction for 2026 (approved in MD3464) to enable the Weekend Hopper trial to run for these dates. Following this, weekend bus and tram fares will revert to those approved in MD3464.
- 1.8 The Mayor has allocated funding of £20 million to support the fares innovation trial in his final consolidated 2026-27 budget, which was approved by the London Assembly without amendment on 26 February 2026.

#### *Assessing the trial*

- 1.9 This trial will provide TfL with information to better understand whether cheaper bus and tram travel over the weekend could help increase ridership on the network; and contribute to London's wider economic recovery.

- 1.10 Using research from TfL's Customer Pulse survey, which is used to understand customer perceptions and ridership data, TfL will monitor the impact of the Weekend Bus Hopper promotion throughout the trial; and evaluate the cumulative impact when it has ended. An assessment of the revenue impact of the trial will be part of the post-trial analysis, considering the overall net impact on ridership and revenue to TfL.
- 1.11 Following the completion of the trial, TfL will report on its findings, which will help to inform future fares policy.

## **2 Objectives and expected outcomes**

- 2.1 The objective of the trial is to assess whether simplifying fares, and reducing the cost of bus and tram travel at weekends, increases ridership on London's public transport network.
- 2.2 In turn, it will consider whether this increases footfall for key businesses, industries and localities; and whether this will boost London's economy. No specific outcomes have been identified yet, as this trial is designed to better understand impact to inform future fares policy.

## **3 Equality comments**

- 3.1 Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the 2010 Act), as public authorities, the Mayor and TfL are subject to the public sector equality duty and must have 'due regard' to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the 2010 Act; and advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. Relevant protected characteristics under section 149 of the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 3.2 The duty above applies to the Mayor's duty to direct TfL as to the general level and structure of fares under the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (the GLA Act).
- 3.3 TfL has identified seven groups of Londoners (highlighted below) who typically face barriers to public transport use. Londoners with protected characteristics are more likely to benefit from lower bus and tram fares because statistically they are more likely to be on low incomes. As such, the proposed Weekend Bus Hopper trial could help to reduce the impact of cost as a barrier to public transport use.
- 3.4 Those who cite affordability as a barrier to transport use could also benefit from reduced bus and tram fares through the Weekend Bus Hopper promotion, regardless of whether they normally use buses on Saturday or Sunday. The promotion will lower the overall cost of bus and tram travel for all customers who pay for their travel, and in particular for those that hit the existing Daily Bus and Tram cap (set at the cost of three single bus fares). It is hoped that bus and tram use at the weekend increases as a result of the trial.
- 3.5 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Londoners are more likely to: live in low-income households; cite affordability as a barrier to transport; and use buses rather than the Tube.<sup>1</sup> Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Londoners could therefore benefit from the proposed Weekend Bus Hopper, as the overall cost of bus travel on each day of the weekend would be lower.
- 3.6 Women are more likely to be primary carers at home; so are less likely to be in full-time employment, and more frequently cite affordability as a barrier to transport. Women are also more likely to use buses than the Tube.<sup>2</sup> 19.4 per cent of women living in London are in low-paid work, compared to 15 per cent of men. This means that cost-of-living pressures can be more acute for female workers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> TfL, [Travel in London: Understanding our diverse communities 2019](#)

<sup>2</sup> TfL, [Travel in London: Understanding our diverse communities 2019](#)

<sup>3</sup> Trust for London, [Low paid Londoners by sex](#)

Women could therefore benefit from the proposed Weekend Bus Hopper, as the overall cost of bus and tram travel on each day of the weekend would be lower.

- 3.7 Older Londoners are more likely to be retired, and many live on low incomes. The 60+ concession, and the Older Persons' Freedom Pass, currently permit older Londoners to travel free at all times, except between 4.30am and 9am, Monday to Friday. This promotion will not impact or benefit this group, as they can already travel for free at the weekend.
- 3.8 Disabled Londoners are more likely to live in low-income households. One in three families in London with a disabled child live in poverty.<sup>4</sup> One of the reasons for this is the higher costs of supporting a disabled child. In some cases, it can be three times more expensive to bring up a child with an impairment.<sup>5</sup> Carers are also likely to experience financial hardships as a knock-on effect of the need to take lower-paid and part-time work. Carers could benefit from the Weekend Bus Hopper as their overall bus and tram fares for travel on those weekends could be lower.
- 3.9 Users of the Disabled Person's Freedom Pass will not be impacted by the trial, as they already travel free at all times with this concession. However, the discretionary nature of the eligibility criteria for this concession can mean that applications from some disabled people (for example, adults with learning difficulties) are not successful. This group may have lower incomes but not benefit from travel concessions. The Weekend Bus Hopper could benefit disabled people who do not hold a Disabled Person's Freedom Pass.
- 3.10 Younger Londoners are more likely to be from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic community, and are more likely to experience the financial barriers discussed above.<sup>6</sup> Children and young people in London have the highest poverty rates compared with working-age adults and pensioners.<sup>7</sup> Among children aged 10-14, 39 per cent are in poverty; for older teens, aged 15-19, this figure rises to 41 per cent. Holders of the 16+ Zip Card concession – which allows free or discounted travel – will be able to benefit from the Weekend Bus Hopper promotion over those six weekends.
- 3.11 Londoners on low incomes tend to be women; older people; those from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background; disabled people; and those not in work. A low income largely reflects working status, though the underlying causes may be tied to the cost of housing, childcare and transport; and access to education, qualifications and health. Low income workers are more likely to work in sectors where weekend working is routine such as in the hospitality sector where nearly half of jobs are low pay<sup>8</sup>. Among children living in poverty, more of them are part of low-income working families than workless families.<sup>9</sup> London has the highest poverty rates in the UK across all age groups.<sup>10</sup> Londoners on low incomes could benefit from the proposed Weekend Bus Hopper as the overall cost of bus and tram travel on each day of the weekend would be lower.
- 3.12 LGBTQ+ Londoners have reported hate crime as their major concern in relation to transport. The proposed fare change would have no specific implications for LGBTQ+ Londoners, except where they also have any of the other protected characteristics set out above.
- 3.13 The Mayor is required to consider the potential equalities impacts discussed above, and any mitigations in place, at the time of making this MD.
- 3.14 The proposals will not have an adverse impact on TfL's ability to run and invest in transport services; and therefore will not impact users of public transport, except as outlined above. All existing TfL concessions and discounts remain in place to support those who have protected characteristics, or are

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<sup>4</sup> GLA, [Poverty in London: 2015/16 Intelligence Update](#), 5 April 2017

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *Paying to care: The cost of childhood disability*, 1998

<sup>6</sup> GLA, [London's diverse population](#)

<sup>7</sup> Trust for London, [Poverty Age](#)

<sup>8</sup> Trust for London, [London's undervalued essential workers](#)

<sup>9</sup> Trust for London, [London's Poverty Profile: Children](#)

<sup>10</sup> Trust for London, [London's Poverty Profile: Poverty and life stages](#)

from low-income households, when travelling in London. The proposals have been prepared with due regard for the public sector equality duty.

- 3.15 Equality impacts will continue to be identified and considered as appropriate within and following the trial, including in relation to any wider impacts on London's economy.

#### **4 Other considerations**

- 4.1 TfL has not previously changed fares on six separate weekends in isolation. As such, the impact of this change in fares policy is not yet known, though the objective of the trial is to provide better data to inform future fares policy.
- 4.2 The proposed decision will mean that, across six weekends from 25 July 2026 to 31 August, customers will be able to travel on all TfL bus and tram services on a Saturday (from 04:30 on Saturday morning until 04:29 on a Sunday morning), and on a Sunday (from 04:30 on Sunday morning until 04:29 on a Monday morning), for the price of a single bus and tram fare (separate fares for each day). This will include the Bank Holiday Monday on 31 August 2026, which the Weekend Bus Hopper promotion will also cover.

##### *Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities*

- 4.3 The Mayor's Transport Strategy highlights the importance of improving transport accessibility for all Londoners. Part of this is ensuring that the costs of transport remain affordable. This promotion will provide all bus and tram users with cheaper travel on the weekend should they make more than one bus or tram trip in a day. All existing TfL concessions and discounts remain in place to support those who have protected characteristics, or are from low-income households, when travelling in London.

##### *Consultations and impact assessments*

- 4.4 The Mayor is not required to undertake a consultation in relation to the fare proposal in this decision.

##### *Declarations of interests*

- 4.5 GLA officers involved in the drafting or clearing of this MD will be affected by any change in fares policy when travelling on public transport, in the same way as anyone travelling on London's transport services. There are no other interests to declare.

#### **5 Financial comments**

- 5.1 The expected revenue shortfall, and implementation costs expected to be incurred by TfL in offering the Weekend Bus Hopper promotion, are funded by an additional £20 million allocation of business rates to TfL, allocated in the Mayor's final consolidated budget for 2026–27, approved by the London Assembly on 26 February 2026.
- 5.2 The additional funding will cover the Weekend Bus Hopper trial, which is expected to cost around £2.3 million in revenue forgone per weekend alongside additional marketing and implementation costs.

#### **6 Legal comments**

- 6.1 The Mayor may issue general directions, under section 155(1)(b) of the GLA Act, as to the manner in which TfL is to exercise its functions; and specific directions, under section 155(1)(c), as to the exercise of TfL's functions. Under section 174(1) of the GLA Act, the Mayor is under a duty to exercise his powers under section 155(1), so as to ensure that the general level and structure of fares for public passenger transport services (provided by TfL or other persons who provide services under agreement with TfL) are determined.

- 6.2 In MD3464 the Mayor approved a direction to TfL as to the general level and structure of fares to be charged on such services from 1 March 2026. This MD3502 asks the Mayor to approve a variation to those fares to enable the Weekend Hopper trial to run as is proposed in this decision. At the end of the trial, weekend bus and tram fares will revert to those approved in MD3464.
- 6.3 Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, due regard must be had, when the Mayor exercises a function such as the making of this decision, to the equality obligations referred to in section 3 of this report. Consideration is given in this section to the likely effects of the fare proposals on protected groups, and the Mayor must have regard to these matters when making this decision.
- 6.4 The Mayor is not required to conduct a consultation in relation to the fare proposals.

## **7 Planned delivery approach and next steps**

- 7.1 The project will be delivered according to the following timetable:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Public confirmation of terms of the trial	11 May 2026
Delivery start date	25 July 2026

### **Appendices and supporting papers:**

None.

**Public access to information**

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

**Strategic Programmes**

**Does this decision seek approval for activity falling within the remit of a programme delivery plan? YES**

If YES, which programme/s does this fall within: Providing More Effective, Accessible and Affordable Public Transport

**Part 1 - Deferral**

**Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES**

If YES, for what reason: To align with public confirmation of the trial on 11 May 2026

**Part 2 – Sensitive information**

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

**Is there a part 2 form – NO**

**ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:**

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

**Drafting officer:**

Kat Stretton has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following: ✓

**Sponsoring Director:**

Philip Graham has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities. ✓

**Mayoral Adviser:**

Seb Dance has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations. ✓

**Advice:**

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal. ✓

**Mayoral Delivery Board**

This decision was agreed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 5 May 2026.

**CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:**

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

**Signature**

**Date**

*Fay Hannard*

8 May 2026

**CHIEF OF STAFF:**

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor

**Signature**

**Date**

*D. Bellamy*

6 May 2026

