

5 March 2023

Dear Minister,

We write, as a group of organisations and individuals representing the travelling public, to express our serious concern that an increasingly digital-first transport network is disadvantaging some of our most vulnerable citizens. As Minister for Transport, we are asking for your commitment to work with transport operators to stop digital exclusion and disadvantage from leaving many people behind.

Transport will always be a vital part of people's lives and it must be a priority to make it affordable, accessible, and inclusive. While digital advances in the sector can undoubtedly bring benefits to many people, for those who cannot or will not access the internet, the relative lack of access to information undermines their ability to travel with confidence – or, indeed, to travel at all. The transport industry needs to act now to stop this happening.

Digital exclusion and disadvantage in transport can have profound consequences for people's quality of life, especially those who are already excluded or face other barriers. It can negatively impact their wellbeing and reduce independence and confidence in managing activities in many aspects of their life. It can leave people left out from society completely.

At a time when we should be encouraging more people onto public transport, new research from [London TravelWatch](#) shows that 1 in 6 people surveyed had been unable to buy a ticket without a smartphone or internet connection, which had stopped them from travelling – the equivalent of more than 1.5 million people in London alone. This is not only hurting individuals, it is also hindering the recovery of the transport network following the pandemic, and limiting much-needed revenue.

Transport providers should pledge to maintain cash payment where it currently exists and keep prices the same across all platforms, as well as ensuring that staff are more visible and available at stations to help those who need assistance. There should be training for staff and mentoring for people who want to learn how to use different ticket options. Operators should also commit to consult and work with digitally excluded people and communities before any new technology is introduced.

As the Minister for Transport responsible for accessibility and for London, you have a vital role in leading the way to make sure transport operators prioritise action to tackle the problem. We urge you to work with us and the transport industry to close the digital gap.

SIGNED

LONDON
TRAVELWATCH



digital
poverty
alliance



Transport for All
Access, Rights, Advice



Shani Dhanda  **Guide Dogs**  **bus users**
bringing people together

Michael Roberts, CEO London TravelWatch

Abigail Wood, CEO Age UK London

Paul Finnis, CEO Digital Poverty Alliance

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