

Tories promise £4bn boost for local buses and trains

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City regions will be given more control over local bus and rail services as part of a £4.2 billion boost for public transport, the Conservatives have promised.

Eight regions with elected mayors or combined authorities will be given powers like those in London to set fares and services on bus and rail networks in a pledge the Tories said would “change the face of local public transport”.

Bus services have risen up the political agenda as concern grows about falling passenger numbers and rising fares since services outside London were deregulated in the 1980s.

Labour has said it will hand all local authorities more power to direct services and allow them to set up municipally-owned bus companies.

The Tories have focused on the North East, Tees Valley, West Yorkshire, Sheffield City Region, Greater

Manchester, Liverpool City Region, West Midlands and West of England authorities. All would be able to bid for a share in a local public transport fund, which the party said could help to build transport projects.

Grant Shapps, the transport secretary, said: “These plans will change the face of local transport in towns and cities. They will kick-start the transformation of services so they match those in London, ensuring more frequent and better services, more electrification, modern buses and trains and contactless smart ticketing.”

● A report from the Social Market Foundation think tank has said that banning government workers from claiming taxis on expenses would increase the use of buses. Professor Mike Waterson of the [University of Warwick](#) said Britain should copy a German law under which publicly-funded bodies pay for travel only on public transport.

