

# **CLEAR ROAD AHEAD**

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## **BUS COLLISIONS AND THE NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY**



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# **CONTENTS**

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The statistics</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Present monitoring</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Feedback</b>	<b>6</b>



**1,889 killed or seriously injured in the last 5 years**

## INTRODUCTION

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There is no doubt that London is a world city that requires a solid mass transit system for those who live and work here, and for the many millions of visitors that flock to the capital every year. As London's population grows, so does the need to increase capacity to cope. One of the key components of London's travel offer is the bus. In 2012/13 over 2.3 billion passenger journeys took place<sup>1</sup> within the Greater London boundary. The iconic red buses are part of a fleet of more than 7,500 vehicles<sup>2</sup>, one of the largest in the world.

It is vital with such an extensive network, serving so many travellers, that Transport for London and the bus operating companies do all they can to ensure the number of accidents involving buses is kept to a minimum. This also has to be considered in the context of a significant increase in cycling activity. Since 2001, there has been a 173% increase in cycling on London's major roads.<sup>3</sup> In this report we will present figures that show that the number of people seriously injured and killed in accidents involving buses has remained stubbornly high in recent years.

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1. Annual bus statistics 2012/13 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/244332/annual-bus-statistics-2012-13.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/244332/annual-bus-statistics-2012-13.pdf)

2. <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/modesoftransport/1548.aspx>

3. <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/transport/cycling-revolution>

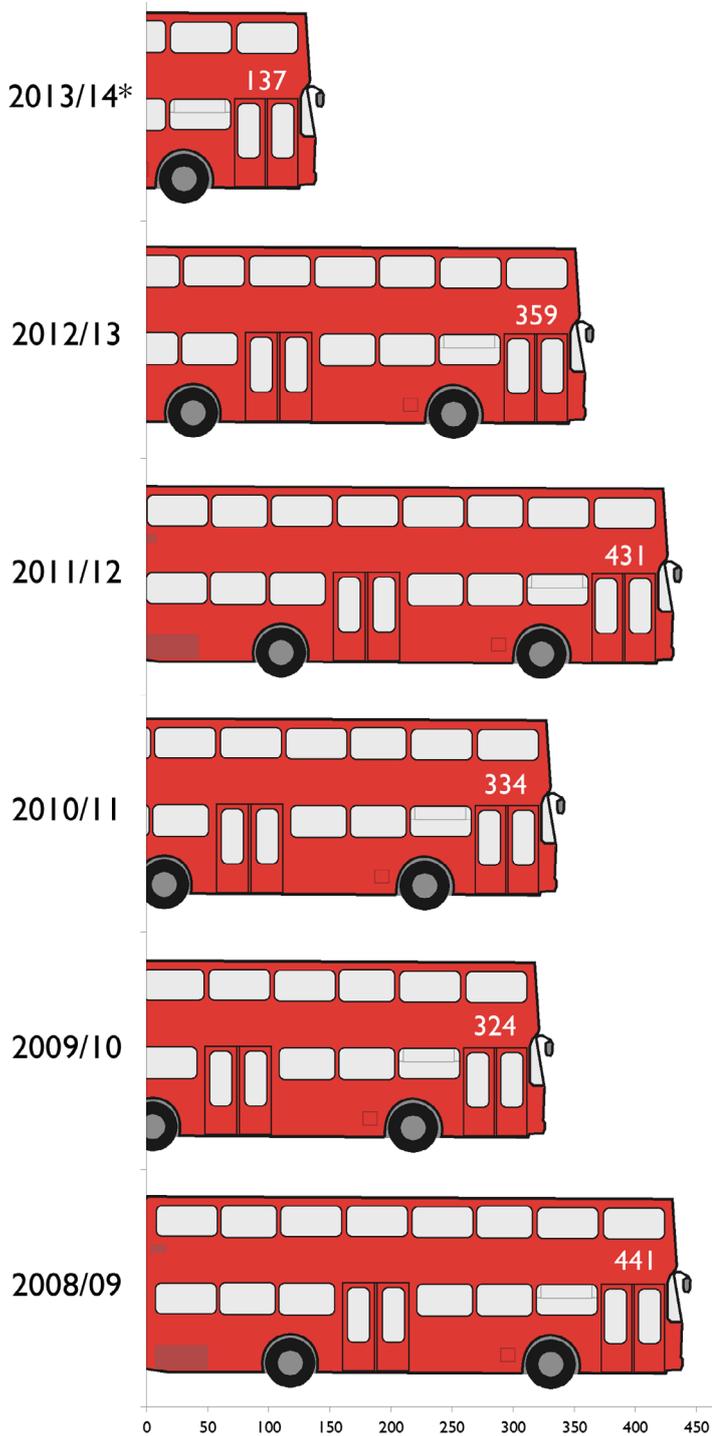


Figure 1: Year by year breakdown of person or persons serious injured or killed in an accident involving a bus.

Incident Totals: 2008/09 - 441 , 2009/10 - 324 , 2010/11 - 334 , 2011/12 - 431 , 2012/13 - 359 , 2013/14\* - 137

\*Data covers year 2013 up to august

## THE STATISTICS

Newly discovered data deriving from a Freedom of Information request shows that between 2008 and 2013, 1,889 individuals have been seriously injured or killed in an accident involving a bus.<sup>4</sup> The *Figure 1* shows the breakdown by year. It is clear that the number of serious incidents has remained high, and has in some years spiked, such as 2011/12, when the total number of fatal and major incidents rose by 97 on the previous year's figures.<sup>5</sup>

4. FOI-0649-1314

5. FOI-0649-1314

## PRESENT MONITORING

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Transport for London already have in place monitoring procedures to try and ensure safety standards on the routes operated by the bus companies. The basic standards include:

- Carry out and refresh risk assessments of the routes they operate
- Ensure drivers are competent as part of recruitment and training processes
- Ensure drivers undertake the specific BTEC training qualification for bus drivers in London
- Ensure drivers are trained on the type of vehicles they drive
- Report all incidents on the bus network regardless of how minor or whether third-party drivers were at fault
- Investigate incidents on the bus network and feed relevant outcomes into continuous safety improvements
- Carry out regular maintenance of vehicles in the fleet<sup>6</sup>

However, there should be further transparency concerning safety figures. For example, Transport for London have not been able to give borough by borough breakdowns for serious incidents, even though we have asked repeatedly for these figures since April 2013.

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6. Communication from Transport for London received 31/10/13



**TfL needs to urgently  
become more transparent  
around its safety figures**

## CONCLUSION

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This report is not suggesting that Transport for London is not compliant with present Health and Safety legislation related to the operation of mass bus networks. It is also accepted that every route is different, and certain roads and routes present varying issues in a busy metropolis like London. TfL themselves have said: "Routes vary greatly across London in terms of vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists encountered. There are significant differences in the numbers of pedestrians carried, the physical length of routes and the complement of vehicles required to operate the schedule."<sup>7</sup> However it is often difficult to ascertain safety figures relating to serious accidents involving buses. We know that these incidents have to be reported, so collating them into performance data should not be an issue. Taking into consideration that there does not seem to be a consistent downward trend for the number of serious incidents and fatalities between 2008 and 2013, additional scrutiny of bus accident figures should be instituted. We believe that the following recommendations could go some way to ensuring confidence in bus safety in London, and to ensure that TfL continue to aspire to reduce these figures significantly going forward. Publishing indicators on bus driver customer service can help reduce the number of incidents in circumstances where passengers are not given time to grab a seat or secure themselves into a steady position once boarding the bus.

### **Recommendation 1**

TfL should publish in full on a quarterly basis the number of fatal and major incidents involving buses, including borough breakdowns as well as pan-London figures. These figures should be reported to the London Assembly's Transport Committee and to the TfL Board.

### **Recommendation 2**

The performance of all bus companies and routes should be published on a quarterly basis, including borough by borough breakdowns so the worst performing companies can be identified. The figures should be presented to TfL Board and the London Assembly Transport Committee.

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7. Communication from Transport for London received 31/10/13

**Recommendation 3**

TfL should carry out a full review of its monitoring procedures and do an audit across the period 2008-2013 to identify particular hot spots for accidents, to see if any further lessons can be learned, and how any intelligence gathered could be used to reduce accident figures further. Part of this review should incorporate whether on longer routes there are penalties for late running services and whether this has the potential to encourage drivers to speed to gain time.



## FEEDBACK

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