

Summary of actions

NSW's vibrant communities and economy are reliant on an integrated and responsive public transport network. Fit-for-purpose and equitable bus service delivery is an essential component of this. In May 2023, and in line with Labor's election commitment, the Hon Jo Haylen MP commissioned a review to make sure NSW's bus network is set up to best deliver on this imperative – and if not, to identify how bus services can first meet, and then exceed, the expectations of passengers.

The Taskforce

The NSW Bus Industry Taskforce was the outcome of this NSW Government commitment, and it has drawn on the expertise of industry, the crucial input of communities, and insights from data to fully chart the challenges and opportunities of the existing system, and to propose new solutions for the path forward.

The Taskforce delivered its immediate recommendations in June 2023 and its first full report in July 2023. The NSW Government expanded the Taskforce's remit in response to the 11 June 2023 fatal bus crash in the Hunter, with key improvements to safety and regulatory arrangements for bus operators identified in a Safety Report delivered in July 2023.

To ensure Transport for NSW seizes every opportunity to build a stronger bus system, the NSW Government has been committed to responding to the Taskforce's findings as these emerge. Most recommendations made to date have been supported or supported-in-principle. The NSW Bus Industry Taskforce final report is due to the Minister on 1 May 2024.

May 2023	June 2023	August 2023	September 2023	February 2024	May 2024
Taskforce announced	Six Immediate Actions supported by Government Expanded Terms of Reference	Seven recommendations from the First Report supported in principle	Safety Report supported in principle by Government	Second Report supported in principle by Government	Final Report due to Government

Delivering results

The impact of changes made to date is already clear. The NSW Government acted swiftly to immediately address the bus driver shortage – a key focus of the Taskforce’s roundtables, reports and recommendations in 2023. In the period since, the driver vacancy rate has halved, dropping to 249 vacancies by February 2024 compared to 502 in February 2023.

Measures implemented in response to the Taskforce’s initial recommendations include:

A Transport for NSW three-month recruitment campaign promoting the industry’s career opportunities, launched in July, has corresponded with a 9 per cent increase in driver applications.

To support this recruitment push, Transport for NSW made the driver application process easier by waiving the \$70 application fee from August 2023, followed by further changes in October 2023 to remove barriers for anyone interested in becoming a bus driver.

In light of the Taskforce’s first report:

Transport is working with operators, employees, and unions on the NSW Government’s initiative that will see free Opal cards provided to bus drivers and workers to further attract and retain key talent.

Work to improve staff facilities is well underway, with \$3.3 million to be invested into assessing and upgrading vital rest stops and layovers for bus drivers. An enhanced cleaning regime will be rolled out across an increasing number of locations.

To support drivers navigating stop locations and turns while they’re on the road, Transport for NSW is piloting a bus route navigator app. This opt-in technology will ensure a smooth ride in all scenarios, from emergency bussing and planned bus replacement routes to regular contract services.

The NSW Government has set aside \$15.8 million in the budget to improve real-time information about services for passengers, so everyone knows when the bus is coming.

And the focus on buses has been appropriately elevated inside Transport for NSW. Responsibility for more bus asset management and all bus operations now sits within the singular remit of a new Coordinator General, who reports directly to the Transport Secretary.



The momentum now turns to delivering sustainable improvements for the longer term. The Taskforce, in its second report, has highlighted the important role of strategic planning in driving lasting change across all aspects of the bus network. Better future planning ensures funding decisions can be made in a timely way to best support the sustainable growth of services in areas of emerging need, while capitalising on the innovative potential of new technologies.

In response to the second Taskforce report:

Transport for NSW will develop a Medium-Term Bus Plan in response to the Taskforce's recommendation for a focus on 10 high-quality rapid routes, 27 frequent routes and other improvements to local services.

Transport for NSW is also developing proposals to address more immediate gaps in the network, with a view to improving local or school services and to support the supply of housing.

The NSW Government is rebalancing its investment in Zero Emission Buses to deliver more buses more quickly into western Sydney while also giving greater certainty to the local manufacturing industry.



Driving safety improvements

Safety remains in constant focus—from day-to-day operations of the network to regulatory functions that drive process improvements into the future. Further recommendations about safety are expected to be a core component of the Taskforce's final report. However, the NSW Government has already considered the findings set out in the Taskforce's reports to date, and how best to embed these insights.

In commitments made to date:

Transport for NSW will update the safety management system guidelines for the Bus Operator Accreditation Scheme, as highlighted by the Taskforce's second report, to support a modern, risk-based approach for ongoing safety improvements.

In October 2023, Transport for NSW brought the community into the conversation, launching a campaign to spread the word about seatbelt safety on buses. As recommended by the Taskforce's Safety Report, this aimed to boost awareness, bust myths and engender a culture of widespread seatbelt use on buses—especially for school kids.

Transport for NSW is on track to complete the Hunter region's rollout of seatbelts on school buses by early March 2024.

Transport for NSW is gathering evidence about the associated risks for standing bus passengers, as proposed by the Safety Report. This work will inform considerations into whether to more broadly apply the 80km/h rule for select school bus services.

Keeping the conversation going

7507 surveys completed



198 online submissions



805 registrations to attend a bus passenger forum



400 interactions by letter or email



290 stakeholder meetings



Summary of interactions with bus operators, industry experts, the workforce, passengers and the community as of 5 February 2025

Better understanding the needs of bus passengers – underpinned by meaningful collaboration between Transport for NSW, the bus industry, local government and the community – was highlighted by the Taskforce to be at the core of a healthy network.

Transport for NSW is committed to building on the insights gathered by the Taskforce through its forums and other engagement with bus operators, industry experts, the workforce, passengers and communities, in delivering more responsive and resilient bus services.

Ongoing engagement includes:

Transport for NSW is bringing bus operators together regularly to talk about how they're doing and find solutions to industry-wide issues. The first bus operator forums were held in November 2023 and will continue to be held regularly.

To help inform the public conversation, Transport is publishing more information on its website about how well bus services are performing.

The needs of specific user groups, such as the school sector, will be an increasing focus, as will improving accessibility for people with a disability through forums such as the Accessible Transport Advisory Committee.



Want to know more?

To read the Taskforce's terms of reference and reports in full, to make an online submission before 31 March or to find out the latest details of the NSW Government's response, visit the NSW Bus Industry Taskforce [website](#).

