



Department for

**Infrastructure**

An Roinn

**Bonneagair**

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From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure

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## **PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVISION – RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

The purpose of this letter is to let you know that I have approved a further reduction in the level of public transport provision as a response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

As the Committee will be aware, at the beginning of this week, the Government has issued social distancing guidance that has included asking the public to stay at home. These measures have had and will continue to have a dramatic impact on public passenger transport numbers.

In line with the latest NI Executive and public health advice and to ensure the continued resilience of the public transport network, I have agreed that further reduced services from Monday 30 March 2020 as outlined in **Annex A** to this letter. These arrangements will allow Translink to maintain customer services, match resourcing with timetable needs as its staff are impacted by COVID-19 and maintain peak services for our most essential workers. I hope you agree that these measures are critical in these unprecedented times.

Finally I can confirm that free travel will be provided for NHS workers on all public transport supporting them get to the frontline. I've also instructed that strict social distancing is put in place by reducing all services to a 50% cap on passengers, no one should be making non-essential journeys.

I have enclosed an associated press release at **Annex B** which will be issued by my Department and announces the service reductions and free travel for health care workers.

**NICHOLA MALLON MLA**  
**Minister for Infrastructure**

**Service Reductions From Monday 30th March 2020**

**Objective** Reduce service provision in line with Government and public health advice on staying at home, avoiding all essential travel and maintaining social distancing  
Maintain customer service and service resilience  
Provide a service to critical workers  
Match service critical staff availability to the timetable needs  
Maintain geographic coverage and access to health care and food outlets

**Metro/Glider** Approximately 50% of normal Metro/Glider Timetable through reduction in frequency.

Monday – Friday will reduce to a “Saturday plus” timetable with enhancements at peak time to support critical worker shift patterns

Saturday and Sunday normal timetables

**Ulsterbus** Approximately 40% of normal service. This will be quite a change to the timetable but based on the Ulsterbus Saturday Timetable. The key message will be check Journey Planner, Web site or Contact Centre.

Monday – Friday a “Saturday plus” timetable with additional earlier peak services on some routes, a minimum of a return journey each day to provide geographic coverage for rural service and essential hospital services. Last Goldline departure from Belfast 10pm. Further reductions in Airport services.

Saturday and Sunday Normal Saturday and Sunday Timetables. Last Goldline Departure from Belfast 10pm.

Note: In addition we will thin out some timetables that are now overly provided eg 212 Derry/Londonderry services, and drop Dromore Urby and serve with 238 ex Newry.

**NIR** Train services will operate a “Sunday plus” timetable with normal Sunday services enhanced with trains commencing earlier in the morning and additional services in the morning and evening peak.

Sunday will remain a normal Sunday Timetable.

To provide a service to essential workers the rail service will commence circa 0700 from the Portadown, Bangor and Larne lines, towards Belfast, with a 0638/0605 departures from Derry~Londonderry & Portrush.

It is also proposed to introduce a revised Sunday Enterprise timetable Monday through Sunday (4 x trains in each direction daily).

**Information** All Passenger information sources will be updated – Contact Centre, Web site, Journey planner and social media will update

Translink and the Department for Infrastructure will continue to keep this situation under constant review.

## **Minister announces free public transport for healthcare workers and further changes to services**

Infrastructure Minister, Nichola Mallon, has today announced free travel for NHS workers on public transport services in Northern Ireland from tomorrow, while the fight against COVID-19 continues.

Health and Social Care Trust workers will simply show their work pass to Translink staff. For others operating in the private sector such as care homes, they will avail of free travel by showing photographic ID and a letter signed by their employer. This letter will be made available from the Department of Health.

The Minister has also approved a further reduction in the level of public transport provision as a response to the COVID-19 outbreak. From Monday 30 March, Translink Bus and Rail Services will operate a further reduced frequency timetable. Translink is also reducing the service timetable for the Enterprise rail service.

Speaking today Minister Mallon said: **“These measures are being implemented following the new NI Executive advice issued during the week to stay at home. I would reiterate the advice that we all must avoid non-essential travel and continue to practise social distancing in the fight against COVID-19. It is advice we must all follow.**

**“The timetable changes will ensure continued public transport coverage across Northern Ireland, so that our essential workers can continue to travel at peak times. Translink will also have additional capacity on standby for heavier used services to facilitate and accommodate social distancing.**

**“I want to be clear to all passengers, no service will allow more than 50% of passengers on board. That is the only way we can ensure social distancing. You must not sit beside other passengers. The advice must be followed to allow two metres of distance between yourself and all other individuals.**

**Minister Mallon said: “Recognising the tireless and vital work of all health and social care workers in response to COVID-19, and in consultation with the Health Minister Robin Swann, I have taken the decision to make public transport free for all these workers during the outbreak. These are individuals, who are working day after day, are putting themselves in the frontline to save lives and look after some of the most vulnerable members of our community. They do this for each and every one of us and it is only right that we do what we can, no matter how small, to support them.**

**“This is a small gesture to those workers who are working so hard to protect us all during these unprecedented times. I would urge the public to support this by continuing to follow the advice, not to travel unless absolutely essential. We all need to stay at home and support those who are exposing themselves to risk everyday on our behalf.**

**Welcoming free transport for health sector workers, Health Minister Robin Swann said: “I am very grateful to the Department for Infrastructure and to Translink for this very helpful offer. It recognises the value of our health and social care workers, and the need to prioritise their travel to and from work at this very challenging time. This will be of immense assistance in maximising our available workforce in the fight against Coronavirus. It also demonstrates the cooperation between Executive Ministers and Departments, which will continue to be of crucial importance.”**

Paying tribute to Translink staff, Minister Mallon continued: **“I want to also recognise the commitment of Translink and all its staff who have been working hard in challenging conditions to keep our essential services running and to support our health service in responding to COVID 19. It is as a result of their efforts and selflessness that our public transport services continue to run to allow our key workers to access their workplace and services. I urge the public to support them and our health service workers by continuing to follow guidance on social distancing and only leaving home for essential purposes.**

**“I want give reassurance that keeping communities across the North safe at this very concerning time is my priority. My Department is doing everything it can to ensure essential services and connections are maintained for those using and reliant on our infrastructure network. I will be keeping the public transport situation under constant review in line with NI Executive advice on public health.”**

Health advice and information on government services is available at:

[www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus) and [www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus)

**Notes to editors:**

1. Free travel applies from Friday 27 March until the end of June, when this will be further reviewed.
2. Full details of the new timetables are available on Translink’s website and journey planner.
3. All media queries should be directed to the Department for Infrastructure Press Office on 028 9054 0007 or email: [press.office@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:press.office@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk) Out of hours please contact the duty press officer on 028 9037 8110.
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