

Bus and tram passenger journeys, 2015/16

Introduction

The tram and bus passenger journey figures have been obtained from the [Department for Transport](#).

Table 1 includes the bus passenger journey results for the Lancashire-12 area, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, the North West region, London and England. It also has the results for the Blackpool Tramway.

Figures are in millions of journeys originating in the given area in the year in question. The results in table 1 include all bus operators serving the general public, but exclude school buses and 'dial-a-ride' services. The bus passenger journey figures are sourced from bus operators via the Department for Transport's Public Service Vehicle Survey. These figures may differ to those provided by local authorities.

Deregulation of the bus market took place in October 1986 as a result of the Transport Act 1985. This led to the opening up of the market to the private sector and should be borne in mind when analysing bus passenger journey figures from 1986 onwards.

Local bus and tram results

Table 1. Local bus and tram passenger journeys, 2009/10 to 2015/16 (millions of journeys)

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Lancashire-12 area	61.3	59.6	57.0	53.2	51.6	50.1	47.6
Blackburn with Darwen	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.0
Blackpool	12.8	11.8	11.7	11.2	11.1	11.1	10.8
North West region	485.4	479.5	460.5	455.1	454.6	447.0	433.8
London	2,238.2	2,269.2	2,323.9	2,310.9	2,361.3	2,363.6	2,292.6
England	4,635.1	4,641.1	4,661.2	4,587.4	4,671.0	4,648.4	4,529.6
Blackpool Tramway	2.2	1.6	1.1	3.7	4.3	4.1	4.9

Note: Figures exclude school bus journeys and dial-a-ride services. Figures provided by bus operators via the Department for Transport via the Public Service Vehicle Survey.

Source: Department for Transport [Dft local bus services table BUS0109a](#) and [Light rail and tram statistics](#)

Bus passenger journeys

Over the 30 year period from 1985/86 to 2015/16, the number of bus passenger journeys has fallen by -6.0% in England (-271m journeys). This overall figure however disguises some wide variations and disparities at the regional level. London for example has seen an increase of 99.0% (+1,141m bus passenger journeys), almost doubling since 1985/86. By contrast, numbers have fallen sharply in the north and midlands, ranging from -30.6% in the East Midlands, to -57.7% in the North East. This included a decline of -48.8% in the North West (-413m bus passenger journeys). Over the same period, bus use increased by 1.2% in the South East (4m journeys) and 7.1% in the South West region (14m journeys). Bus passenger journeys for the combined regions of London, the South East and South West have risen by +68.0% (+1,159m journeys), or over two thirds since 1985/86, whereas journeys for the rest of England (excluding London, the South East and South West) have fallen by -46.2% (-1,430m journeys), or almost a half.

In 2015/16, London accounted for 50.6% of bus passenger journeys in England and the North West accounted for 9.6%.

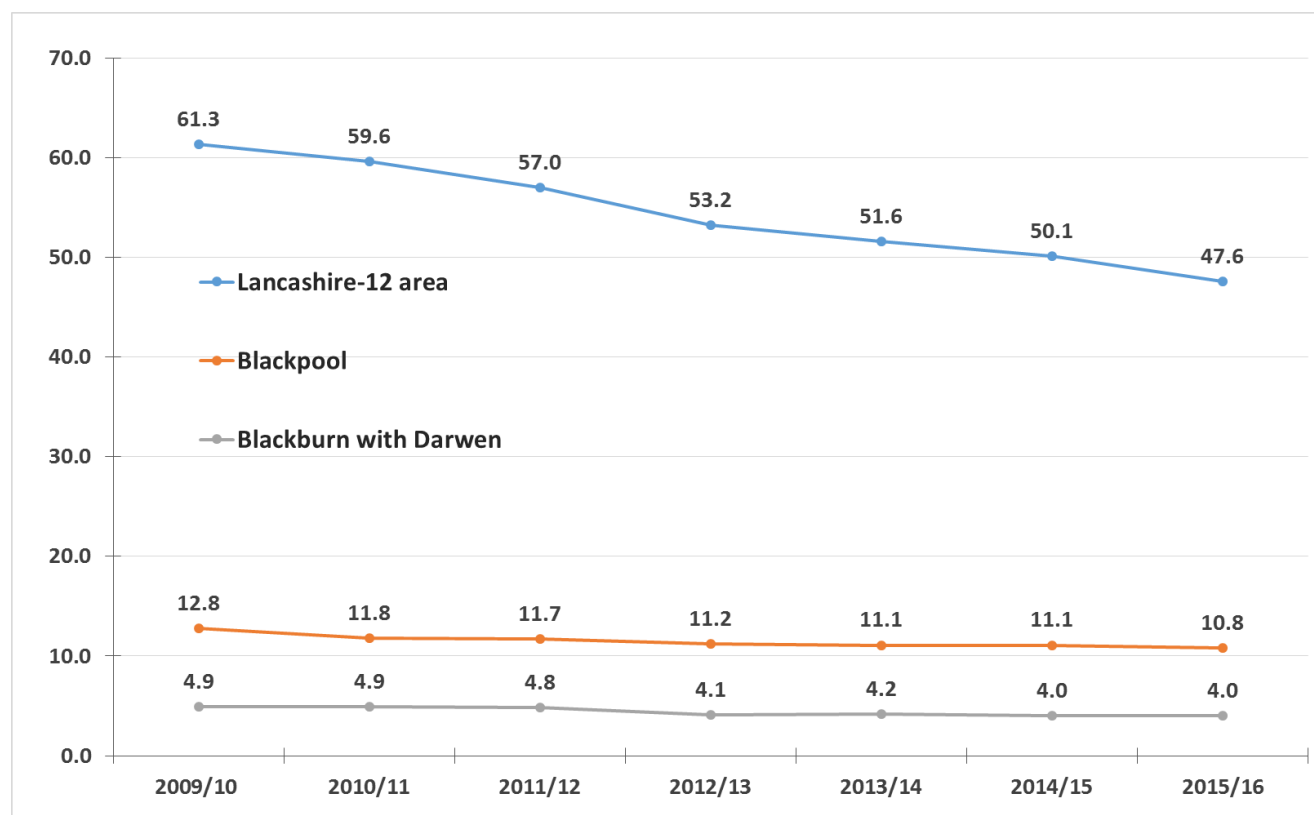
The data in table 1 (and figure 1) reveal a pattern of continuing decline in bus passenger journeys within in the Lancashire-14 area over the past six years since 2009/10. For the Lancashire-12 area, there were 47.6 million bus passenger journeys in 2015/16, which was noticeably lower than the 61.3 million in 2009/10, a reduction of -22.4%, or -13.7m journeys.

For comparison, the number of bus passenger journeys fell by -10.6% (-51.6m journeys) in the North West region, but rose by +2.4% in London (+54.4m journeys), by +6.4% in the South East (+21m journeys) and by +7.6% in the South West (+15m journeys). For the combined regions of London, the South East and South West bus passenger journeys have risen by +3.3% (+91m journeys) since 2009/10, whereas journeys for the rest of England (excluding London, the South East and South West) have fallen by -10.6% (-197m journeys). Overall therefore, the number of bus passenger journeys fell by -2.3% (-105.5m journeys) between 2009/10 and 2015/16 in England.

The unitary authorities of Blackburn with Darwen (-18.3%) and Blackpool (-15.2%) also show a general trend of declining bus use over the last 6 years, with journeys decreasing by -0.9m in Blackburn with Darwen and dropping by -1.9m journeys in Blackpool since 2009/10.

Over the last year, however, for Blackburn with Darwen the decline halted between 2014/15 and 2015/16, and for both years the number of bus passenger journeys remained stable at four million. In Blackpool, the number of bus passenger journeys continued to decline, by -0.3m journeys (-2.7%), from 11.1m in 2014/15 to 10.8m in 2015/16. For the Lancashire-12 area, the number of bus passenger journeys decreased by -2.5m journeys (-5.0%), from 50.1m in 2014/15 to 47.6m in 2015/16.

Figure 1: Bus passenger journeys (millions), 2009/10 to 2015/16



Notes: Figures exclude school bus journeys and dial-a-ride services. Figures provided by bus operators via the Department for Transport's Public Service Vehicle Survey.

Source: Department for Transport [Dft local bus services table BUS0109a](#)

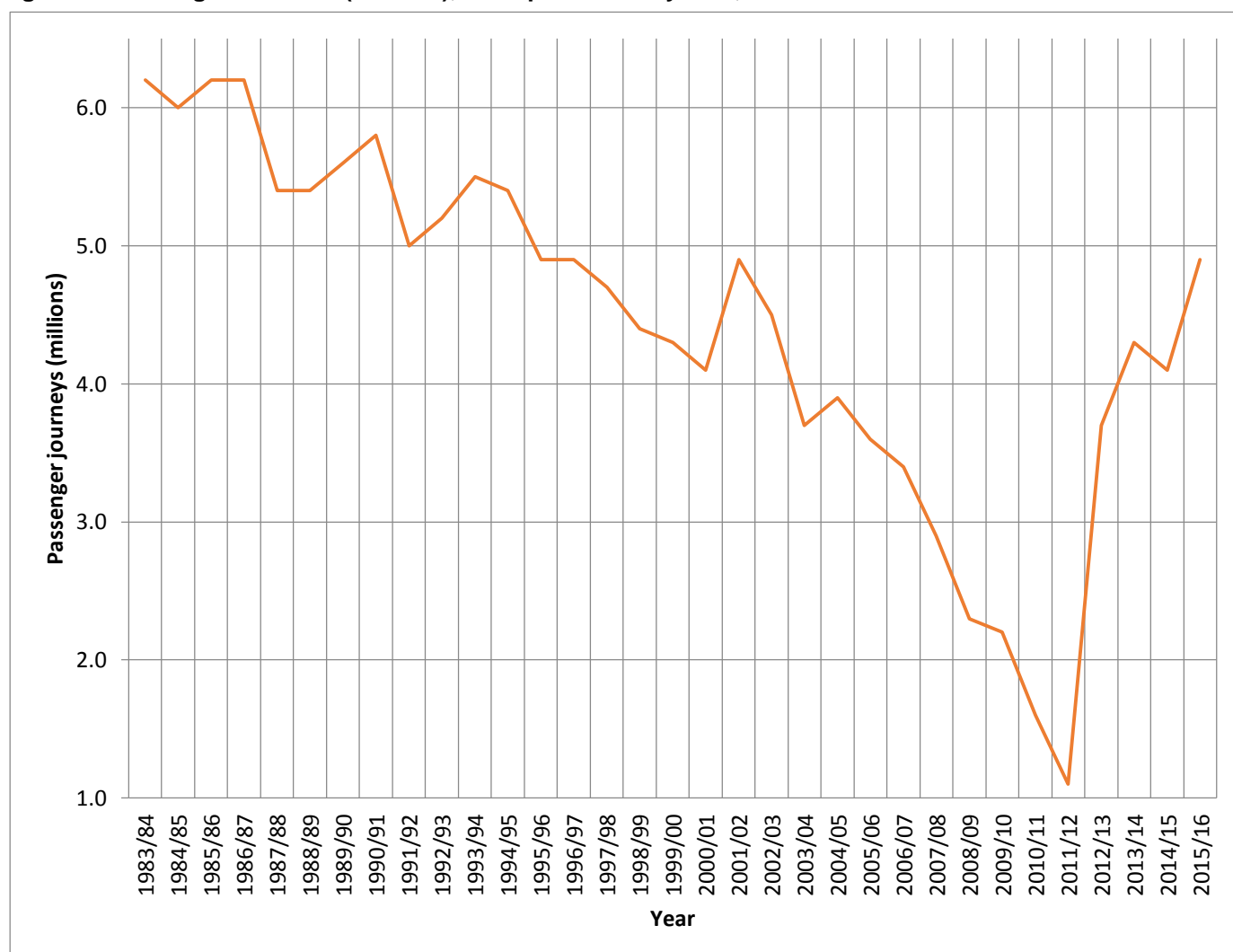
For England as a whole, bus journey numbers in the year to March 2016 decreased by -2.6%, to 4,529.6 million (m). The figures also show a decline in bus use in London (down to 2,292.6m, -3.0%) over the year and across the rest of England (down to 2.237.0m, -2.1%). Within the North West region, bus passenger journeys have dropped to 433.8m (-13.2 million journeys, -2.9%) between 2014/15 and 2015/16. At the regional level, only the South West recorded an increase within England over the previous year of 0.7%, up by 2m journeys to 217.3m bus passenger journeys for 2015/16.

Blackpool tramway

The Blackpool tram system is an 18 kilometre route from Starr Gate in Blackpool to Fleetwood, and therefore operates in both Blackpool unitary authority and Wyre district. For the 2015/16 financial year, there were 26 tram cars on the system and 39 stops along the route. The average journey lasted 4.4 km, total revenue was £6.1million, and passenger kilometres amounted to 21.7 million.

Light rail and tram statistics on the Department for Transport website (table LRT0101) go back to 1983/84 when 6.2 million journeys were made on Blackpool trams (see figure 2). There followed a long-term period of decline to a low point of just 1.1 million journeys in 2011/12, but the figures for recent years were impacted by closures for system upgrades.

Figure 2: Passenger numbers (millions), Blackpool Tram System, 1983/84 to 2015/2016



Source: Department for Transport, Light Rail and Trams Statistics

The Blackpool tram system reopened in full on 4 April 2012 after a long period of closure for a multi-million pound upgrade that included a new depot and 16 new trams. The 2012/13 results offered the first indication of passenger numbers on the upgraded route, and the figure of 3.7 million represented a very noticeable improvement over previous years. The 2013/14 figure of 4.3 million represented a further substantial improvement.

The 2014/15 financial year saw a decline to 4.1 million passenger journeys which reflected changes to concessionary pass entitlements. From 1st April 2014, only Blackpool residents were able to use their concessionary passes on the tram system. All other English national concessionary passes were only valid on Blackpool Transport buses. Between 2013/14 and 2014/15, tram receipts from concessionary revenue fell from £1.5 million to £300,000. The figure remained at £300,000 for 2015/16, but there was a very encouraging 20.3% increase in passenger numbers to 4.9 million in the 2015/16 financial year.

The northern section of the tram system to Fleetwood passes through Wyre district, and in February 2016, it was announced that residents in Wyre district with concessionary travel passes could once again use them to catch a tram.

Related article

A complementary article considers the 2011 census results for the method of travel to work. The census was undertaken on 27th March 2011, when the tram system was closed for a major upgrade, so the figures exclude the normal commuting patterns of people who use the tram to get to work. The census results highlight the dominance of private vehicles for commuting to work and the minor role played by the various forms of public transport in Lancashire.

Page updated November 2016 by Darren Webster and Paul Ayre