

Briefing

To: Lilli Matson and Samantha Philips

From: Lucy Kosenko, Government Relations Officer, TfL, [REDACTED]

Meeting with Keith Prince AM - Covid Death Rate of London Bus Drivers

Thursday 10 June 2021

16.30

Via Teams

GLA Attendees: Keith Prince AM

External Attendees: [REDACTED], Campaigner
[REDACTED], Bus Driver of route 384, Metroline

TfL Attendees: Lilli Matson, Chief Safety, Health & Environment Officer
Samantha Philips, Head of Health and Wellbeing
Tom Cunnington, Head of Buses Business Development
Jane Lupson, Senior Bus Safety Development Manager
Euan MacFarlane, Government Relations

Context

During the MQ session on March 18, 2021, Keith Prince AM asked: *based on TfL and ONS data, why do London bus drivers have twice the Covid death rate per 100,000 of the most dangerous occupations nationally and twice the rate of bus drivers nationally?*

As part of his response, the Mayor said he would ask TfL to sit down with Keith to go through the data we have available and to discuss with him the actions taken and continuing to be taken to protect staff and customers.

Agenda

- Presentation (PowerPoint) by TfL of data available on Covid death rates of London bus drivers
- Actions by TfL to protect staff and customers

Appendix 1 - Relevant MQs

Appendix 2 - Keith Prince AM biography

Appendix 3 - [REDACTED] Mayoral correspondence

1. TfL Data on Covid related bus driver deaths

- All the deaths of transport workers in London and across the country are tragic and our thoughts remain with their families, friends and colleagues.
- Sadly 52 London bus drivers employed by bus operators have died since March 2020.

2. Protecting staff and customers

- We have made huge efforts over the last year to protect staff and customers on TfL's services.
- Stringent safety measures have been introduced, including cleaning with long-lasting, hospital grade antiviral cleaning fluid and limits on passenger numbers to allow for social distancing.
- Staff facilities have been reconfigured to enable better social distancing and temporary portacabin facilities have been constructed to enable staff to spread out.
- For a period last year, passengers were able to embark and disembark only from the rear doors to keep commuters away from drivers.
- We were one of the first transport authorities to initiate a series of regular, independent sampling on the Tube and bus network and analyse for the presence of Covid-19. These inspections carried out by Imperial College London (ICL) test air and surfaces and have consistently shown no evidence of the virus on the transport network.

Driver's cabs

- We have also worked with UCL's Centre for Transport Studies (CTS) and Department of Civil, Environmental and Geomatic Engineering (CEGE) to look at the drivers' cabs on buses, to understand the movement of air and implement much safer screens and ventilation systems.
- We have continued to work with UCL's CTS and CECE on the bus saloon and based on their latest evidence on the benefits of improved fresh air and air movement within the saloon we have started to introduce 'window blocks' on the 'pull open' windows across the fleet to improve the airflow. These blocks prevent the windows from fully closing at any time, yet prevent rain from blowing in, and will be rolled out by mid May 2021.
- Bus ventilation systems have been improved and drivers' cabs have been fully sealed up to reduce the risk of transmission following UCL's work on cab design and air flow.

Enforcement of face coverings

- TfL enforcement of the face covering requirement was scaled up on 4th July. Between Saturday 4 July 2020 – Sunday 06 June 2021.
 - 193030 people were stopped by TfL enforcement officers from getting on our public transport services until they put on a face covering. Most complied by getting their face

covering from their bag or pocket, putting it on correctly or purchasing one from a nearby shop.

- 12418 people were prevented from boarding and 2817 were ejected from the service.
- The police are engaging with similar levels of passengers and stopping those without a face covering and who do not have an exemption from travelling. The numbers above does not include police enforcement.
- We have introduced a process by which drivers can report issues with non-compliance through SMS functionality on their buses. These reports are analysed and inform the deployments of police and TfL enforcement officers.
- We have issued clear communication to customers on the measures in force including face covering compliance and social distancing. This includes targeted communications on social media to improve compliance among young customers.
- We also play automated messages about the requirements to wear face coverings on public transport, making passengers aware that police and TfL enforcement officers patrol the network to enforce.

Working with bus operators and Trade Unions

- We have worked with bus operators and Trade Unions to standardise relevant processes and procedures across bus operators. Recommended equipment is in place for all employees, for example hand sanitiser and cleaning wipes, and there is a continued focus on enhanced cleaning of driver facilities and depots.
- We horizon scan for new and innovative measures to improve safety for staff, and we will work with bus operators to strengthen the messaging around social distancing and mask wearing to maintain focus and ensure compliance, to reduce the risk of complacency.
- One element currently being explored by TfL with the bus operators is improved driver health assessments. Introducing more frequent and potentially more rigorous health assessments for drivers could help detect potentially serious health conditions earlier such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease, and enable bus operators to assist drivers in getting the help they need.
- Having shared the recommendations of the UCL phase 2 report with the bus operators, we are now working with them to ensure that the actions identified as a result of the UCL recommendations are put in place as soon and as robustly as possible.

Risk assessment

- We also introduced a new COVID-19 Age Risk Assessment, enabling all employees to easily work out their 'COVID-19 age'. The purpose of this assessment is to determine whether further assessment by Occupational Health is advised and it has helped to identify a number of people at higher risk who may not have otherwise come forward, and also helped confirm that some other people could safely return to work.

Appendix 1 -MQs

Previous MQs from Keith Prince AM relating to Bus Driver deaths

[2021/1967](#) May 27, 2021

Bus Driver Deaths from Covid-19 since 9 March 2021

Further to your response to question 2021/0527 please provide me with a breakdown of bus driver deaths from Covid-19 by bus operator (a) since 9 March 2021 to the present and (b) since March 2020 to the present.

- Our heroic frontline transport workers have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic, and I am extremely grateful to each and every one of them. We commissioned an independent review into the tragic deaths of bus drivers from coronavirus because we wanted to ensure we were doing everything possible to protect staff. The transport workers who have lost their lives are constantly in my thoughts, and we will continue to do everything we can to keep staff and passengers safe.

- Since March 2021 there has been one bus driver death. Since March 2020 there have been 52 bus driver deaths. The breakdown by operator is provided in the table below. It is important to note that bus operators vary in size and in the proportion of routes that they operate on TfL's network.

Bus Driver Deaths by Operator from March 2020

	Bus Driver Deaths
Abellio	4
Arriva	5
Go-Ahead	9
HCT	1
Metroline	15
Stagecoach	6
RATP	5
Tower Transit	7
TOTAL	52

Bus Driver Deaths by operator from March 2021

	Bus Driver Deaths
Abellio	1

[2021/1964](#) May 27, 2021

Accountability for London Bus Driver Deaths from Covid-19

On 18 March 2021, the Deputy Mayor and I participated on a radio interview on the Vanessa Feltz show. When the Deputy Mayor was asked if she took any responsibility for London Bus Driver deaths from Covid-19, she bluntly said “No.” Given that we know (a) that your response to Mayor’s Question 2020/3659 clearly shows that TfL withdrew its staff from bus depots and buses and had no way to inspect onsite conditions; (b) that your response to question 2021/0121 confirms that TfL doesn’t have copies of the risk assessments of its bus contractors’ Covid-19 risk reduction actions; and (c) that your response to question 2021/0544 reveals that TfL doesn’t have any information on the Covid-19 risk carried by bus depot ferry drivers, does the public rejection of any responsibility for London bus driver deaths made by your Deputy Mayor on 18 March 2021 also reflect your view as TfL Chair and Mayor of London?

- I am deeply saddened by the deaths of all transport workers from covid-19 in London, and my thoughts remain with the families and friends of the colleagues this devastating virus has taken from us.
- Throughout the pandemic, Transport for London (TfL) and the bus operators have continued to follow Government and Public Health England advice, and the scaling back of physical visits was in accordance with the Government advice at the time.
- I do not accept that the reduction in visits would have in any way contributed to the number of bus driver deaths. The first phase of the UCL research made clear that the majority of bus driver deaths resulted from infection before the first lockdown began, when the prevalence of the virus in London was much higher than the rest of the country. It also confirmed that lockdown was the most effective measure for reducing mortality among bus drivers. It therefore stands to reason that minimising the number of people on any particular site, at any particular time, was a significant mitigation and a pragmatic one.
- TfL has worked closely with the bus operators to ensure that a joined-up approach is being taken across all aspects of the response, and that suitable controls are being implemented to keep staff and passengers safe. While TfL does not hold written copies of the bus operator risk assessments, confirmation was provided through regular conference calls that the key measures were being carried out.

[2021/1345](#) March 18, 2021

Covid Death Rate of London Bus Drivers

Based on TfL and ONS data, why do London bus drivers have twice the Covid death rate per 100,000 of the most dangerous occupations nationally and twice the rate of bus drivers nationally?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Let me start by saying that all the deaths of transport workers in London and across the country are tragic and my thoughts remain with their families, friends and colleagues. It saddens me deeply to say that 88 transport workers have died in the pandemic in London, including 51 bus drivers employed by bus operators.

On the specific figures mentioned by Assembly Member Prince, I am not clear what datasets he is comparing, but a sophisticated piece of statistical analysis would need to be carried out to make the assertion he has made.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) data for COVID deaths by occupation was not broken down by region and the ONS website makes it clear that comparisons should not be made using that data and data published elsewhere.

Nevertheless, we know from the research TfL commissioned from University College London's (UCL) Institute of Health Equity that certainly in the first phase of the pandemic, London bus drivers were worse affected than bus drivers in other parts of the country. There are a number of reasons for this, including the fact that the first wave of COVID hit London very hard, particularly as it was before the national lockdown, the high number of bus drivers in London who are older, issues around comorbidity and the high proportion of drivers in London who are BAME.

We have made huge efforts over the last year to protect staff and customers on TfL's services. In fact, many bus operators around the country have emulated the work done in London. Stringent safety measures have been introduced, including cleaning with long-lasting antiviral cleaning fluid and limits on passenger numbers to allow for social distancing. Staff facilities have been reconfigured to enable better social distancing and temporary portacabin facilities have been constructed to enable staff to spread out. Bus ventilation systems have been improved and drivers' cabs have been fully sealed up to reduce the risk of transmission following UCL's work on cab design and air flow. For a period last year, passengers were able to embark and disembark only from the rear doors to keep commuters away from drivers.

Since August 2020 Imperial College London has been testing for COVID on the TfL network, taking samples from the air and frequently touched services in stations, trains and buses. All results to date have been negative. No trace of COVID-19 has been found.

I would be more than happy to ask for TfL to sit down with Assembly Member Prince to go through the data we have available and to discuss with him the actions taken and continuing to be taken to protect staff and customers.

Keith Prince AM: I am very grateful for that offer, Mr Mayor, and I will happily take you up on that. I would also like to bring some experts with me as well, if that is at all possible. That is very generous of you, I must say.

Do you feel, though, in retrospect that there may have been some decisions that you could or should have taken and maybe there should have been some questions that you asked?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I reflect on that regularly, Keith, as you will appreciate, because we are talking about people here. That is one of the reasons why we got world experts with UCL's Institute of Health Equity to look into that. I was not happy with just TfL marking our own homework. We got UCL in with very wide terms of reference. The part 2 report is going to come out soon and maybe that will tell us things that we should have done at the time that we did not do.

One thing that gives me comfort is that nobody else among the bus operators was doing more than us at the time and in fact others have copied what we have done. We continue to evolve but, if there are things we could have done differently, we have to learn. So far, nothing has been brought to light, but we have to be open-minded about it and not closed-minded.

Keith Prince AM: Mr Mayor, perhaps I could bring some things to light, maybe around the mess offices or the canteens where the drivers were meeting and also ferry cars. It is interesting. Why was UCL not asked to look at the COVID risks in relation to clusters such as canteens and also conditions for ferry drivers? Why was that not included in the UCL research, Mr Mayor?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): You will find that the main concern that UCL looked into was the issue of bus drivers because of the number of bus workers who lost their lives. They are not employed by TfL - you know this - but are employed by bus operators. We were still concerned by the large numbers and that was the focus.

Again, there is nothing stopping TfL and we are doing further work in relation to other transport workers, not just buses, not just ferries, but trams, the Overground and the Tube as well --

Keith Prince AM: Sorry, Mr Mayor. Sorry to interrupt you. When I talk about ferry drivers, I do not mean the people who are catching ferries. I mean the people who drive cars full of bus drivers to and from where they are meeting for the change of driver. I do apologise for not making that clear.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I beg your pardon.

Keith Prince AM: When I am talking about ferry drivers, I am talking about drivers who are tasked to take bus drivers to where they meet for their bus changeovers. Apologies for not making that clear.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No, it is my fault. Government guidance, as you will appreciate, Assembly Member Prince, was changing along the way, not just from the Government but from Public Health England. At all times, TfL was slightly ahead of Government guidance when we were able to be so, but we had to follow Government guidance. As soon as Government guidance changed in relation to, for example, as you will be aware, the use of face masks and face coverings in vehicles, it was a change made in relation to bus operators as well.

Keith Prince AM: Mr Mayor, UCL did not look at that aspect. That is a bit of a failing, to be blunt.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am not sure that is right, though, because --

Keith Prince AM: Perhaps we could talk about this in our meeting --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Phase 2 of the UCL report is going to look at other things. They include things outside of the bus service. If there is an issue in relation to the ferrying of bus workers, it will be covered by phase 2 from UCL because it is looking at other issues.

Keith Prince AM: OK. If I can be really cheeky, as you are in the mind to have a meeting, the Association of Relocation Professionals estimates that over 20,000 high-value employees of professionals move into the London economy every year. Will you agree to a short meeting with the relocation industry representatives to discuss ways in which we can make London a go-to destination, bearing in mind what you were saying earlier, Mr Mayor?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Should I be re-elected, I would be more than happy to, personally. If it is the case you want a meeting sooner rather than later, I am happy for TfL to meet with them. Keith, purdah starts from Monday [22 March 2021] and so it is difficult. If it is possible and if you want me, I can do it after 6 May [2021] should I be re-elected. If you want it sooner, it will be with officials rather than me, if that is OK.

Keith Prince AM: OK. Thank you, Mr Mayor. Thank you.

[2021/0542](#) March 18, 2021

TfL's 'scaling back' on Physical Site Visits and Bus Driver Covid-19 Deaths

Do you accept that TfL's decision to 'scale back on physical site visits at the height of the lockdown' might contribute to why ONS Data shows that the death rate of London Bus Drivers is twice that of UK Bus Drivers?

- I do not accept that the reduction in the number of physical visits by TfL staff would have contributed to an increase in the number of bus driver deaths
- The first phase of the research undertaken by University College London was clear that the majority of bus driver deaths resulted from infection before the first lockdown began, when the prevalence of the virus in London was much higher than the rest of the country. The study also confirmed that lockdown was the most effective measure for reducing mortality among bus driver.
- As described in my answer to MQ 2020/3659, Transport for London scaled-back on physical visits at the height of lockdown in accordance with the prevailing Government advice. At a fundamental level, it stands to reason that minimising the number of people on any particular site, at any particular time, was and is both a significant mitigation, and a pragmatic one.
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) data for COVID deaths by occupation was not broken down by region and, as the ONS website makes clear, comparisons should not be made using their data with data published elsewhere. Nevertheless, in the first phase of the pandemic, London bus drivers were worse affected than those in other areas. This is for a number of reasons, including the extent to which the first wave of COVID hit London very hard, the high numbers of older bus drivers and the high proportion of drivers from a black and ethnic minority background in London.

[2021/0528](#) February 25, 2021

Covid-19 Deaths and Bus Depots

In your partial responses to Questions 2021/0127 and 2020/2533, you state that “TfL is unable to provide a line –by-line account of each death in service due to data protection and out of respect for the privacy of the families of the deceased” but that is not the information I requested. I have requested that you provide bus driver deaths from Covid-19 by “place of work” which includes both the Bus Operator and the Bus Operator’s Depot associated with the victims. Given that the Bus Safety Data TfL publishes every quarter shows the month, location, Bus Route Number, the garage the bus operated from and sex, age and severity of injury details for the thousands of victims killed or injured in Bus Safety Incidents involving TfL buses since January 2014, do you accept that TfL must be in a position to provide the information I’ve asked for about the deaths of bus drivers from Covid-19 without violating any data protection provisions or the privacy of the families of the deceased and will you instruct it to do so?

- Please see my response to Mayor’s Question 2021/0527 for a summary of bus driver deaths broken down by operator. As stated in that response, Transport for London is unable to provide a line by line account of each death in service from illness rather than road safety due to data protection and out of respect for the privacy of the families of the deceased.

[2021/0527](#) February 25, 2021

Transport Workers and Covid 19

Your partial response to Question 2021/0127 contained even less information than your response to 2020/2533. Please provide me with a breakdown of Bus Driver deaths from Covid-19 by Bus Operator and explain why this requested information was not included in your latest response.

- Tragically, we have lost a total of 51 bus drivers to coronavirus-related illness as of 9 March. Transport for London is unable to provide a line by line account of each death due to data protection and out of respect to the privacy of the affected families. A summary of the information requested has been provided in the table below.
- It is important to note that the operators vary in size and in the proportion of routes that they operate on TfL’s network.

Operator	Total Bus Driver Deaths (9 March 2021)
Abellio	3
Arriva	5
Go-Ahead	9

HCT	1
Metroline	15
RATP	5
Stagecoach	6
Tower Transit	7
Total	51

[2021/0551](#) 25 February 2021

Bus Operator Ferry Driving and Covid-19 Risk

Given the concentration of Covid-19 deaths among Metroline and Tower Transit Bus Drivers, has TfL considered the possibility of a “Super-Spreader” event might have originated with ferry drivers working for those companies’ Bus Garages?

- Transport for London (TfL) and the bus operators have consistently relied on the health information available to inform the safeguards put in place to minimise risks linked to COVID-19. The University College London report on bus driver fatalities considered the range of cleaning and safety measures put in place by the bus companies. It concluded that it was the introduction of lockdown that had the most significant impact on reducing infection rates. This research, along with Public Health England advice, has been informing the bus services operations. The same guidance is being applied by bus operators on ferry vehicles to help minimise the risk of transmission events.
- Cleaning regimes of ferry vehicles have been enhanced, and steps have been taken to reduce their capacities and ensure staff sit apart. Wherever a positive coronavirus test result is identified, contact tracing is undertaken to identify those who may have been in close contact with the individual. The same process would be applied if a ferry vehicle driver tested positive.

[2020/2528](#) July 16, 2020

Deaths of Agency Bus Drivers from Covid-19

Did TfL include Agency Bus Drivers in its announcement of 29 Bus Driver Fatalities? If so, of that total, how many were Agency Bus Drivers?

- Transport for London did include Agency Bus Driver in its announcement. Of the 29 bus driver fatalities, two were Agency bus drivers.

2020/1722 June 18, 2020

Clusters of Covid-19 Deaths at Bus Companies

Analysis of data culled from social media about the 29 Bus Drivers who've died from Covid-19 shows that over 50% of the deaths took place among 2 operators that, combined, own and operate less than 25% of London's Buses under contract to TfL. Please describe what actions TfL is taking at these two operators to understand why they account for such a disproportionate number of Covid-19 Deaths?

- Losing so many London bus workers is a devastating outcome of this pandemic and is why I wanted research conducted to understand the reasons why this happened. TfL commissioned University College London's Institute of Health Equity to examine the factors behind infections and deaths from coronavirus among bus workers so that we have a robust basis from which to learn from this tragedy. The first stage of the research will be shared with stakeholders later this month, prior to being published, and the second stage is expected to be ready by the end of this year. According to the initial data available, operators Go Ahead and Metroline jointly account for 53 per cent of coronavirus related driver deaths and for around 42 per cent of the London bus network.
- London was quick to respond to medical advice and adapt as guidance was updated, introducing a raft of safeguards like reinforcing the driver's protective shield, enhancing cleaning with anti-viral agents, switching temporarily from front to middle-door boarding and furloughing the most at-risk drivers. The study will examine the measures that TfL and its operators took and further improvements that might assist us now.

Appendix 2 – Keith Prince Assembly Member (AM)

 A portrait photograph of Keith Prince, a middle-aged man with glasses, wearing a dark suit jacket, a light blue shirt, and a purple tie.	Conservative, Havering & Redbridge
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Keith Prince has represented Havering and Redbridge on the London Assembly since May 2016. He was re-elected in May 2021.

On the Assembly, Keith has focused on scrutinising the Mayor of London’s policing and transport policies. He has campaigned for a new flyover at Gallows Corner, policies to make London safe for motorcyclists, and better protection for transport workers during the pandemic. Locally, he works closely with charities to tackle antisocial behaviour, knife crime and homelessness across Havering and Redbridge.

Born and raised in Havering, Keith later moved to Redbridge to raise his own family. He has served as a councillor in both Havering (1990 to 1995) and Redbridge (2003 to 2018). He led Redbridge Council between May 2009 and June 2014.

Prior to the Assembly, Keith worked as a marketing manager for LBC Radio. He later worked as a non-executive adviser to Stephen Greenhalgh, the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, during Boris Johnson’s mayoralty.

Appendix 3: [REDACTED] Mayoral Correspondence

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, October 23, 2020 8:18:14 AM
To: mayor@london.gov.uk <mayor@london.gov.uk>
Subject: London bus Network

Good Morning Mr Mayor,

I am a London Bus driver for [REDACTED]

I have worked through this Pandemic from our [REDACTED] London Garage alongside Colleagues who have contracted Covid-19 and 2 sadly losing the battle.

We discuss regularly our day at work and it's become obvious to us that a majority of passengers do not follow the face covering instruction.

What is more concerning that not one of our [REDACTED] drivers have had a TFL official or British transport police on their bus issuing Non-Compliance fines.

So I put it to you Mr Mayor that your failure to police the transport network is spreading this Virus drastically and this must be looked in to immediately.

A response to our concerns would be greatly appreciated.

[REDACTED]

MAYOR OF LONDON

██████████
By email

Date: 05 January 2021

Dear ██████████

Thank you for writing to the Mayor regarding face covering enforcement on London buses. As Deputy Mayor for Transport, I am responding on the Mayor's behalf. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying on this important matter.

I absolutely appreciate the important role you and other London bus drivers have been playing in keeping the transport network running throughout this public health crisis. We are committed to doing everything we can to keep you safe.

Transport for London (TfL) is working extremely hard to ensure customers are aware face coverings are mandatory for the entirety of their journey (unless they are exempt) and has also put measures in place for operational teams to report issues. The vast majority of customers are protecting others by wearing a face covering properly unless they are exempt, and most people are very responsive when they are spoken to and will put one on or adjust it. But sadly, there is a selfish minority who are showing a complete disregard for everyone around them and who think it is acceptable to ignore the law.

As a result, TfL are carrying out extensive enforcement operations across public transport in London. Alongside our policing partners, TfL is undertaking enforcement activity, which includes preventing people from travelling, removing people from services and the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs). This activity is focused particularly in areas and at times of day during which we have seen lower levels of compliance.

TfL has also introduced a process by which frontline staff, such as bus drivers and station staff, can report issues with non-compliance. This intelligence is then used to identify locations where additional interventions may be required, such as targeted communications or enforcement activity. I would urge you to use this process as much as you can to inform our enforcement activity and ensure that we are targeting our activity effectively.

Where customers who are not exempt refuse to wear a face covering TfL is refusing entry, asking them to leave, or as a last resort, fining or prosecuting them. Between 4 July – 9 December:

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- . Around 124,500 people were stopped by TfL enforcement officers from getting on our public transport services until they put on a face covering. Most complied by getting their face covering from their bag or pocket, putting it on correctly or purchasing one from a nearby shop.
- . Around 9,000 people were prevented from boarding and approximately 2,000 were ejected from the service.
- . Around 1,150 Fixed penalty Notices have been issued by TfL officers to those refusing to comply. FPNs are a last resort but they will be used where necessary. (Fines are not issued on the spot. Passengers details are taken at the time and the FPN is issued by TfL's Investigation and Prosecutions Team.)

The British Transport Police and the Metropolitan Police Service Roads and Transport Policing Command are engaging with similar levels of passengers and stopping those without a face covering and who do not have an exemption from travelling. The numbers above do not include police enforcement.

I hope this reassures you that TfL and I are taking the safety of bus drivers extremely seriously and that we are continuing to take measures to ensure you and your colleagues are safe.

Yours sincerely,



Heidi Alexander
Deputy Mayor for Transport

cc: Sadiq Khan - Mayor of London, John Murphy - Unite the Union, Keith Prince AM,
[REDACTED] - #StopKillingBusDrivers

12 March 2021

Dear Deputy Mayor Alexander,

RE: More Questions about TfL's Covid-19 Risk Reduction Actions for London Bus Drivers

Thank you for your letter of 5 January 2021 (below) in response to my 23 October 2020 communication to Mayor Sadiq Khan (also below). Please accept my apologies for my delayed response, but on 6 January 2021 I was diagnosed with Covid-19 and, thanks to the NHS, I am now well enough to work and also to respond to you. As you know from [TfL's own data](#), I was just one of *over two thousand* TfL Bus Drivers who fell ill and tested positive with Covid-19 in the four month period between October 2020 and 22 January 2021.

To be honest, I was a bit disappointed with your response to my question about TfL's enforcement of mask-wearing on Buses because you cited aggregate statistics from *all modes of public transport*, i.e., tube, overground, dial-a-ride, tram and buses. Do you have any data specifically for Buses? If so, kindly provide this information to me.

And while I have your attention, perhaps you'll be kind enough to answer these questions Assembly Member Keith Prince asked the Mayor on my behalf in February?

1. Fitness and Competence of Unite the Union Safety Representatives implementing and monitoring Covid-19 Risk Reduction Actions during the Pandemic

In your responses to Questions [2020/3659](#), [2020/2541](#), [2020/2119](#) and [2020/1623](#) you have repeatedly underscored the important role of Unite the Union representatives 'stood down from their normal duties' by Bus Operators to ensure that Covid-19 Risk Reduction actions were being carried out and monitored in Bus Depots and on Buses. Given that [ONS Data](#) shows that the death rate from Covid-19 among TfL Bus Drivers is over twice that of UK Bus Drivers, what evidence does TfL have that (a) these Unite representatives were trained and competent to carry out the safety critical tasks they were 'stood down' for and/or (b) these Union representatives carried out these tasks at all?

2. Bus Operator Ferry Driving and Covid-19 Risk

From bus drivers, I've learned that bus garages directly employ ferry drivers who are responsible for transporting starting bus drivers in a car or a minibus from the bus garage to a change-over point and who also sometime return with drivers who are finishing. Phase 1 of the UCL Initial Assessment of London Bus Driver Mortality from Covid-19 published in August 2020 stipulated that "TfL's occupational risk assessment tool should be used by London bus companies to identify those most vulnerable—with the oversight of TfL—to reduce the risk of employee's exposure to and acquisition of Covid-19". Was the ferry driving of bus drivers from depots to change-over points (and vice versa) ever covered by TfL's or Bus Operators' Covid-19 Risk Assessments? If so, please provide me with copies of each of these Risk Assessments for each Garage where they were carried out.

3. TfL's 'scaling back' on Physical Site Visits and Bus Driver Covid-19 Deaths

Following up your response to Question [2020/3659](#), do you accept that TfL's decision to 'scale back on physical site visits at the height of the lockdown' might contribute to why ONS Data shows that the death rate of London Bus Drivers is twice that of UK Bus Drivers?

For my ongoing research, I will be grateful if you or the Mayor (copied, for information) could respond as soon as possible.

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Kindly note that I have also copied in Unite the Union's London Bus Officer John Murphy (for information), London Assembly Member Keith Prince and [REDACTED] (for courtesy).

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
London Bus Driver

Jacob Gemma

From: Macfarlane Euan
Sent: 14 June 2021 14:21
To: Everitt Vernon; Powell Gareth; Brown Matt; Lee Stuart; Farrow Mark (ST); Matson Lilli; Hobbs Geoff; Cunnington Tom (ST); Phillips Samantha Head of Health and Wellbeing; Lupson Jane; Keane Kate; +Government Relations; +Stakeholder Advocacy and Engagement Team (SAE); +CorporateCommunications; +HoM; +Surface&EnvironmentPressDesk; Preen Heather; Cresser Henry (ST)
Subject: Note of meeting with Keith Prince AM, bus safety campaigner [REDACTED] and London bus driver [REDACTED]
Attachments: KP meeting slides_JLSP.pptx

Good afternoon,

On Thursday, Lilli Matson, Samantha Philips, Tom Cunnington, Jane Lupson and I met with Keith Prince AM, bus safety campaigner [REDACTED] and London bus driver [REDACTED] to discuss bus driver safety during the pandemic.

Colleagues took the attendees through a detailed slide deck, outlining what we have done and why we have done it, and also going through the work we have done with UCL.

[REDACTED] outlined some of his concerns from a driver perspective, while [REDACTED] questioned the veracity of answers to questions he and Keith had previously asked. We committed to provide some additional information on a couple of points, but overall Keith was very grateful for our time and the meeting, while challenging at points, was a success.

I have included a transcript of the discussion below and a copy of the slides is attached for reference, but please do let me know if you have any questions.

Best wishes

Euan

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I work flexibly and don't expect replies outside of your working hours

Any private information shared with us will be treated confidentially. In order to make representations on your behalf, we may need to pass your information to other agencies and areas within TfL. If you have any queries regarding your personal data, please contact our office. We will handle the information you supply in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the EU General Data Protection Regulation.

SP

We will begin with an overview of the work that we've done, talk to you about the recommendations of the phase one of the UCL study, which looked at the death of bus drivers due to COVID. We'll then move on to talking about how TfL have responded to those recommendations. And then talk more about the phase two study which was more in depth and data, which relate to this from other sources. And then we'll talk about the recommendations from the UCL study and how TfL are responding. And then we have time for any questions.

SP

So, in May last year, we commissioned University College London, the Institute of Health Equity, to study the pattern of infection and deaths from COVID-19 in the London bus worker population. And this was obviously triggered by the very sad and tragic numbers of deaths, which we were finding amongst London bus drivers. And the study examined the deaths of 27 drivers who died between March and May 2020. And the first phase was a short-term review, really looking at the actions and measures implemented and to see if there was anything that needed to be amended or further improved. That was published in July. And then phase two was more in depth. And all London bus drivers were given the opportunity to complete a questionnaire to gather information about them, their demographics, where they live, and their views on the actions that had been taken. And that was published in March 2021. Next slide. So there were essentially five recommendations made by the UCL study. So really making sure that if there was a second spike, we were confident that actions were in place that were affected, were going to be effective consideration of people who were at more high risk and ensuring that actions were in place to support them, and also particularly for ethnic minority staff to ensure that they were able felt empowered to raise concerns that they might have. The study recommended that the risk assessment tool or one equivalent to it, which we were using in TfL, should be used to identify those workers that are more vulnerable if they were to get COVID. And also looking at the general health of bus drivers, as we know that underlying health conditions is a contributory factor, and looking at improved engagement with health promotion. So, I'll hand over to Tom, he's going to talk about how TfL and the bus operators have responded to those recommendations.

TC

So I think just a bit of context at the start of the pandemic. It was it was a very steep learning curve for at all at that point in time. And it's continued to be over the last year or so since then. And there clearly wasn't a guide as to what we need to do. But we started off with discussions with the operators, even before we got to the point of the of the of the most serious outbreaks, it's kind of a pre-discussion around what we might do, should it become as bad as it was happening in China. And that continued throughout the period of regular discussions with the operators on sometimes daily calls, and with the trades union representatives across London as well as things came to light. And the same was true for while this report was going on. So while the report was being written prior to July, we already got some information from UCL, we got more information from more generally from government and from around the world. And we started to implement changes as well. So Euan if you pop on to the next slide, I'll just again pick out a couple of the elements here. So as soon as the 25th of March, we were writing to operators setting out the first of the changes that we implemented, in this case here was making sure that all drivers receive sick pay from day one. And that was around mitigation where in some cases, many cases in fact, bus drivers don't get sick pay on their first day away from work, they get it on day two, three or four or sometimes it's a bit longer and to get away from the fear that drivers might come into work for fear of losing money, we moved and we came in to support the operators in supporting sick pay from day one. And that was just the first of many things that we put in place as time progressed over that period of time. And that addresses one of the recommendations from UCL. And then we obviously, as the advice changed and develops, we made sure we had available things like hand sanitizer, that was difficult started off with but we got hold of that after a week or two. And that became available. When advice changed around wearing face coverings, when not in the cab, we moved to doing that as well. We worked on the cabs themselves, based on the work that the other part of UCL did the team led by Nick Tyler, the Centre for transport studies, and the Department for civil environmental engineering, they helped us work out how air could move around on the bus. And we improved the cab design and ventilation systems. And then to particular address the point about the most vulnerable staff being really clear about who they were, by the time we got to July, we were I think far better informed about who the highest risk people were where COVID was most dangerous to individuals, not just in necessarily catching it, but the level of illness they would have and the implications of that. And by using that age risk assessment across London, or an equivalent, which at least one company had a group standard that was very similar to ours. And so they use that, that enables the operators to work out who was at greatest risk and should stay away from the workplace, and who in fact, wasn't at such great risk, and could safely to come back to work as well. And the combination of those was important as well. And as we continue to change, and we work through the rest of 2020. As the risk profile changed, we adapted what we were doing up and down based on the level of risk. So that's the what how we responded to stage one from July onwards. And then I think Sam we're going back to what phase 2 look like. We move on Euan.

SP

So, we know following the UCL study that London bus drivers did have a statistically significant excess in mortality in the first wave of the epidemic. And the high rates of mortality were largely as a result of

infections acquired before locked down. So, most of the drivers who sadly died went off, you know, around the lockdown periods, so most of them probably contracted COVID, before we went into lockdown. And that was actually one of the conclusions of the UCL study that had we gone into lockdown sooner, there would have been fewer deaths. And the findings for the London bus drivers is consistent with recent national analysis. So mortality among many key workers was higher in cases that were affected before lockdown. And secondly, that mortality in BAME groups was similarly high in those early cases, even after accounting for a range of factors which are known to contribute to the higher mortality amongst those ethnic minority communities which include living in more deprived environments, etc. So next slide, please Euan. As I said, the UCL study did identify a statistically significant excess in mortality, and I'll just quickly explain the graph to you. So whilst it showed that London bus drivers were three times more likely to die from COVID, during that first phase than the greater England population, we have to bear in mind that that during that first phase, London was hit really first and hardest by the pandemic. So more people were dying in London anyway than across the rest of the country. So UCL were able to compare London's death rates to the rest of England. And as you can see, death rates generally in London, were higher than the rest of England, whereas in the east and southeast death rates were lower than the rest of England. So when they consider the mortality ratios for drivers in London, compared to London data, the ratio did decrease, but they were still identified as being two times more likely to die taking into account a number of risk factors such as ethnicity, age, gender, and where they live. Next slide. When compared to other occupations, bus and coach drivers had the 16th highest male mortality, during March to May 2020. But in second way between March and December, that had gone down to 25th. So overall, the latest ONS data, which was published in January, showed that in that period of March to December, 83 male bus and coach drivers died, which gave a rate of 70.3 deaths per 100,000 males. Now, during that same time period, 34 London bus drivers sadly died. But eight of them were over the age of 64. And as we all know, now, age is the biggest risk factor for death in COVID. So, 26 of those deaths are directly comparable to the ONS data, because that was only looking at people between the ages of 20 and 64. I think we go to the next slide, Euan, thank you. I was looking to see if there was anything more recent published by ONS with regards to occupation risk. There hasn't been as far as I can see anything since January. But the environmental monitoring group, who working on Transmission published something in February about risk by occupation, and they had some international comparators. So, the graph on the far right is showing for it in England, the high risk occupations. And what they were looking at was by proximity to other people, because that's now known to be one of the risk factors in an occupation is how many people do have to work around and with and that shows where the bus and coach drivers lie on that spectrum. But you know, it's across all countries; in Ontario 80 per cent of workplace associated outbreaks were associated with three main industries sectors: taxi drivers, and bus and tram drivers were found to have higher rates of infection. And in Swedish study, that was even when other factors were accounted for. Thanks Euan.

SP

The UCL study, in the questionnaire, it looked at, asked people where they lived, and by postcode were able to place them into what they call deciles of deprivation. So, number one is the most deprived areas and number 10 is the least deprived areas, and of the drivers who participated in study, and we do believe that they're representative of drivers overall, based on the findings of the study, they were more likely to live in the relatively deprived deciles of two to four and less like, but less likely to live in the most deprived decile, or the more affluent deciles. And there was also a difference between gender and ethnicity. So female drivers were more likely to live in more deprived areas, white drivers were less likely to live in the three most deprived areas than their colleagues. Next slide, please Euan. And there was also, probably not unsurprisingly, an increased death rate for those drivers who lived in areas that had the higher levels of COVID at that time. So, you can see that where there was over on higher level of local authority mortality, there was a higher level of bus driver death. But the analysis showed that this didn't entirely account for that excess mortality. Next slide, please. And although in first phase, they did think that bus drivers may have had higher levels of pre-existing conditions. Actually, what the second phase showed was that bus drivers generally have the same kind of levels of pre-existing conditions like diabetes and hypertension, as the general population, but it did seem to show that they perhaps getting some of these problems at an earlier age. So, you know, younger bus drivers were more obese than in the general population. And then in the older age group, there were more people with high blood pressure. And although there wasn't a comparative group, there did seem to be an increase in heart problems also in this older age group. Next slide, please. Drivers were also asked whether they agreed with the safety measures that were put in place before lockdown and they did sort of express their frustration in those answers about external factors, such as passenger aggression and compliance with facemask wear and driving conditions. But overall, they, you know, they've generally, I think, agreed with the measures that have been introduced, apart from the issue

of hand sanitizers, which as Tom said, was a bit of an issue initially, because it was difficult to obtain the hand sanitizers. Next slide, please. So, there were a number of recommendations. And there are quite a lot of those. So rather than me talking through all of those, because you can read them all afterwards, what I'll do is we'll skip on to, to the actual response that we've made to those recommendations, because that really covers them in any case. So I'll hand over to Tom now. Thank you.

TC

Thanks. So we've just divided them up here by some headings or localities, you'll see a number of these do sort of overlap with each other to an extent as well. So the first point is that all the measures from phase one are still in place in terms of the continued duration and remain so subject to review at some point in time, but that they are there at the moment. One of the points that was a stress factor with the original lockdown was the availability of driver welfare facilities. So it was the public facilities that were available, whether run by boroughs, or for example, supermarkets, with their canteens and shopping centres, closing very quickly, was a pressure so we'd already put in place a programme to extend with temporarily extra buildings, the facilities for drivers to take their breaks in with toilets available - more toilets available at the end of Route as well - to enable people to go to the loo and to wash hands as well. Really trying to get the message through to drivers consistently. We all know how easy it's been, we've seen it around in society, how people have become a little bit blasé at times around social distancing, and the need to constantly remind people of that in our own workplaces, perhaps in our own family situation. So making sure that people are aware of that and continuing to reinvigorate those messages and refresh them has been really important. And making sure there've been enough staff in the depots to ensure that that's happened. And one of the measures used there was for safety "direction", the trade union to be stood down to help provide some peer to peer engagement as well as undertake some extra checks to support the employers. So a whole range of issues differed and varied over time as the messaging is changed, as this messaging has been refreshed. But that we believe is helped a lot with the levels of social distancing and to reduce the risk very substantially of catching COVID between teams in the depots. And then I'm going to hand over to Jane for the next couple, I think, on ill health prevention, because that was obviously the underlying health condition was one of the issues that was raised in the UCL report. So, Jane.

JL

Thanks, Tom. So obviously, as a result of that, and also a result of the work that you'll all be familiar with, that we've done previously with Loughborough around fatigue. And we know that driver health and wellbeing obviously has an impact there. So we've been looking at the operators about how we might improve driver health assessments. And so we want to be able to, in a voluntary manner, look at whether they've got any of the kind of precursors to those pre-existing health conditions. And we know that drivers often might not know that they have these indicators anyway. So we want to work with the operators to make sure that we can get those identified earlier and then put in interventions if needed. The operators do work in the space all the time, but on a more kind of individual level. And one of the things that my team does is bring all the operators together. And not just in health and wellbeing but in safety genuinely to actually share best practice so we can make the best use of the information we've got available. And examples of that are the health bus that you'll be familiar with, that unfortunately had to go on pause during COVID, but that was going around the operators to allow drivers to go in and have these health assessments. And we've got some operators looking at mental health interventions as well because we know that's as important in this space and making sure that we can see what works, what doesn't so we're making the best use of our combined resources. The next slide, please. Fatigue was also flagged in the recommendations of phase two, but this is something that we've already got a well-established programme on both by TfL and working with the operators as well. All the operators have fatigue risk management systems in place. And as part of that, we are looking at reviewing shift patterns and rosters, also in collaboration with our trade unions to see where improvements can be made. And this is not a quick win because it has to often be looked at on an individual basis, but we're looking at the tools we can use to do that. And to help the operators do that. We also launched our fatigue health and wellbeing Innovation Fund. So you'll be familiar with this. This is actually the third Innovation Fund we've done in the safety team, we're actually we realised that we don't have all the answers, not by a longshot, at TfL. So, we want to go out to industry, see what has worked elsewhere, look at innovators who can come to us and say we've potentially got a product that can help. And the operators can then review the suppliers and decide to partner with one and then put in a bid for funding from TfL. And that's something that we'll be accepting applications very shortly. And we'll be able to make some announcements on who's won those bids towards the end the summer. And since September last year, we've also been rolling out our bus driver fatigue management awareness training. And this is for the bus operator managers and supervisors. As you can imagine, the

original intention was to do this face to face, but because of COVID, we managed to switch that to online, which has been great. That means that we have been able to still press ahead with that. And it has kind of twofold really because it's about the management, supervising understanding the basics of fatigue and how it's caused. But actually also a lot of that training is about having open conversations with drivers. And this doesn't just relate to fatigue, this relates to health and wellbeing as well and understanding how to have those conversations and how to create that open culture, which underpins all of this work. And that training is actually due to finish in a couple of weeks' time. So go ahead, Sam, for the next bit.

SP

Thanks. So yes, this pandemic has bought us many sort of strange curveballs. And now, you know, we're now just coming to grips with the long-term impacts of COVID. So called long COVID. And, you know, we are seeing numbers of people who are having ongoing symptoms. There are lots of the NHS government guidelines and long COVID clinics, you know, at TfL, we've got a support pathway of for rehabilitation for people who either aren't eligible for or can't get their rehabilitation through the NHS. So that will be a sort of multidisciplinary team approach. And we're going to pass on learning from that to the bus operators. And they're also looking at ways that they can continue to support their employees who are sadly experiencing ongoing symptoms.

TC

So as Sam mentioned earlier on, the survey of the bus drivers highlighted quite a lot of concern about levels of aggression and compliance of wearing face coverings. Although once we've done the work on the cabs, the direct impact of the face coverings perhaps was less critical to drivers, it was clearly important that we had good compliance with wearing face coverings to provide customer reassurance and combined with that dealing with antisocial behaviour and so on, crime on the bus network, which was diminished but didn't get away during the pandemic as well. So we had 500 of our own enforcement officers and around two and a half thousand police community support officers on the network out ensuring that compliance was taking place and supporting customers and drivers to the extent that we could be that those number of people. We developed a system to analyse the data that came through from bus drivers who were able to press buttons on their control unit in the cab to highlight where buses were particularly busy or where there were issues of social distancing onboard vehicles, which helped inform where we were going to target those resources much quicker than we would have done normally. And we issued clear communication to customers, as you'll have seen, around compliance and social distancing. It changed over time as well as the government advice changed, the graphics changed to refresh and make it easier as the work did inside the depots before as well. So a whole series of measures there and I think overall now the levels of compliance are much, much better than they were before. Still not perfect, but I think on most buses as almost public transport levels of compliance we can see travelling around now generally are much better than they were than certainly earlier on, it continues to be an important factor. There was a question raised around the consistency of the recording of employees ethnicity. And in some cases, it wasn't recorded at all for an employee. In other cases, that was using data that wasn't comparable between operators to try and get the wider picture together. So we've agreed to use the latest version of the ONS categorizations for the data, they only updated those categories in the last year or two as well. But it was a good opportunity for us to then ask all operators to do that. And they're going through that process at the moment to bring that data into line, which will give us a better picture of the makeup and of the workforce across London as well. And the final point was around air quality. And as I hope everyone knows, clearly the mayor has, and the previous mayor in fact, has made air quality very much part of their agenda in London, we know it's been a really big issue, a whole series of interventions led very much by the bus fleet and now widening out to many more vehicles with the combination of low emission bus zones, the ultra low emission zone, extension of the ultimate low emission zone to north and south circular, and so on, the movement of our feet towards zero emission over the next few years, as well. So air quality is a lot better than it was, in the monitoring and the corridors that we run buses along, places like Putney and Brixton, showed a major improvement with air quality as a result of our interventions over the last two or three years in that area. And we expect that to continue to get better again, as we go forward in the future, as well. So, that's a bit of a whistle stop summary, there is more that we've done than that, of course, but just to try a bit of flavour, Keith to, to what we've what we've done and to kind of enable perhaps some discussion, question answers, on both the research, the work and the response to it.

KP

Yeah, no, thank you. That's very helpful, actually, really grateful. Probably [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are better qualified to, to ask questions on that. [REDACTED] do you want to ask any questions at this point?

Going back to the point of policing of mask wearing on buses in London, I was in service for pretty much the whole of last year and into this year now. And I had nobody get on my bus and check face coverings, and I come from the garage that's got 11-12 routes, we communicate on a daily basis. We've all come up with the same answer. We had no policing on our on our buses whatsoever. And that was a big concern to us. And that was what was putting us under a lot of strain. Every single day, I mean, to challenge customers to put their masks on. When they sit down and take their masks off; they still do it now. And we've had no policing whatsoever. And I could get signatures from all drivers in my garage to confirm that same story. You know, we just wasn't getting the support that we needed on the buses.

LM

Thanks, [REDACTED] for raising that. I mean, Tom might want to comment in terms of how we target resources. It is, it is a challenge, spreading the resources across the whole of London, there have been literally well over, you know, 10s and 10s and 10s of 1000s of apprehensions between enforcement officers and passengers. And there have been 1000s of fines issued and people asked not to travel if they were refusing to wear a face covering. But I don't think your experience, I mean, I can understand your experience, because you could well be in that situation where the enforcement officers just haven't gone to your area. But one of the things, and we still continue to want to know this information. So the point is, this is not like all past, we want to know where you're having problems. So, Tom, if you just want to sort of explain how we like to receive that information, and then we can help get more action targeted.

TC

I think it also just clarify, there are two types of campaign we've been doing around this. So the first one was actually off-bus on the pavement before people got on the bus, which was a lot safer for our people to do. And also, we were able to therefore, we believe, address a lot more people in doing it that way. So part of the operation wasn't on bus. It was deliberately at busy bus stops at bus stations and locations where there was a visible presence reminding people to wear their face covering before they got on the bus to save putting more people on the bus and delaying the bus on its journey. Then there was obviously, there are people on buses, your rights [REDACTED] and Lilli, in terms of those people there, so the sort of 3000-ish people in total, 500 of ours and two and a half thousand from the combination of the Metropolitan Police and the British Transport Police out across the network. With 9000 buses out there 25,000 bus drivers, I'm sure there are places in London where they've not got to. And they're also drivers and routes that perhaps haven't seen them yet. The focus was based initially on actual reports, verbally, to garages as to where the biggest issues were. And they typically were a lot around East London in London, sort of around the Canning Town area, sort of Southeast area. So we spent time there initially, and then we have spread out and the SMS message on the buses, now [REDACTED] which I hope you've used and your colleagues have used, I can to look into what specifically, where we are, what has happened in your area, after the meeting, if you'd like, and give a bit of direct feedback on that. But it has been very much led by that level of button push. And I know, I've seen the reports from that, that that has led to the tasking and go to places that we perhaps wouldn't have thought about. It's been high issue areas that actually that data is fed through. So I'm happy to take [REDACTED] your garage and routes and feed back to you where that is, we're now able to provide that I think, we're just changing the software as well, so we should be able to buy that data at garage level and possibly even root level, more clearly.

I guess my questions are more systemic. I sit on some very large company boards outside the country. And I remember our board meetings in February of 2020, one was in Indonesia, the other in Ukraine. And the entire board was concerned meetings entirely about what are we going to do about COVID. We had huge issues with industrial operations and what we're going to do. At the time, we came up with a series of actions, one, which was especially on contractors, that was a big issue. It's about contractors working on site, how we can protect. And I look at the, every board meeting since, we have every month since, these two companies, and every board meeting was concerned with what was the COVID rate, what was the death rate? What were we doing? And at the same time, I contrast that with what was going on in London with the bus fleet. And the numbers. This is in Indonesia and Ukraine, they are not front end world developed countries, they were way ahead of the game. Now I admit that maybe the data is not as good. But we're talking about 10s across the industrial population, over 40,000 in one company, and over 50,000 in another. So, and this is in Indonesian and Ukraine. I just, I contrast that with just reading the board minutes from February 20, March 20, and I look at this institutionally, TfL seemed less engaged in the issue

than the industrial companies that I sit on the board of and that was that was surprising to me. And disappointing. It was surprising to me to know that TfL only got bus level infection data from October 2020. That was based on an FOI responses that [REDACTED] had asked. And again, I was very surprised that that's the kind of granulator that I would thought that TfL would be focused on and to wait until October to get this data. I'm just curious what institutionally prevented TfL from getting that data from day one, garage level infection data across borders.

LM

Well, I'll probably pick this up, [REDACTED]. And I've obviously seen that FOI response. I understand your perceptions from your own board experience on two companies, I can reassure you, I am seeking to reassure you, obviously, that there was a an extremely strong focus of executive level, focus on this from very early on in the pandemic. But clearly, you know, there are a number of countries around the world which we have learned from particularly, in the Far East, actually, that have had experience of previous pandemics and did a great, great job in handling the pandemic. And we have absolutely as part of our daily and weekly management calls used that international experience. So it's good to hear that those countries have handled it really well. If they've got things that you think we need to be doing. I want to hear it because we aren't proud at all, we always want to learn about what other countries are doing. Specifically with respect to that FOI, you have had that answer. I think, and I don't want to cut across what the answer said, but I do remember that you know you have to Understand that we're working within the context of what the national government provides. Government stopped testing for COVID in March, back to start in those who were in hospital, so it was actually extremely difficult to get levels of infection, right? Because they weren't doing population level testing, we as a company, were absolutely at the forefront of working with DHSC, to pilot testing. So we introduced probably the first employee-led testing for employees in in August, undertaking a number of pilots, and we pushed it out to a range of our contractors as well. And we've,

[REDACTED]
when did you do this? I tried to put the date so I understand.

LM

Well, you have to understand it was it was a pilot, so it wasn't, you know, it wasn't across all parts of TfL. But the government weren't doing testing, not a mass scale, so you can't, it was very hard to get company-wide levels of testing. As soon as there were tests available, what I was giving an example of, is we work very closely with DHSC actually to pilot different approaches to getting employee testing. Now, obviously, there is widespread availability of testing, and that does allow much greater granular detail to be available. But Tom, you were probably involved in sending that response to [REDACTED], is there anything else you wanted to say on it? Sorry, I was going to bring in Tom Cunningham.

TC

I think that there are two things that came together at about the time in October, it was the availability of that testing more far more widely. Up until that point testing was very difficult, we could assess how many people were off work with COVID-like symptoms. And we knew how many people were genuinely ill with the more serious symptoms. And obviously those that went to hospital got tested. And so there was some data on that. But in terms of the widespread testing, availability in London, it wasn't really available until the end of September, early October. And it was about that time that generally in London, the levels of infection started to pick up again. And it was it that those two factors together led us to believe that it was the time then to start recording the data, because we had data to record, around the number of positive tests, was very thin, or probably not really there at all, to get a general picture. So, it was a factor of the circumstances at that point in time, [REDACTED] late September, very early October, that led us to believe that there was a sufficient data set out there to start collecting. And from then on, that data has been collected.

LM

One other point it's just worth noting time, and you'll probably find it an interesting part of the report, is in the UCL work. They also did ask bus drivers qualitatively whether they thought they'd experienced COVID symptoms. So not necessarily justified by having a test, but whether from the well-known symptoms that we associate with COVID, whether they thought they'd had it. So there was also, we've been able to look at that information and also some of the implications that's fed into to the conclusions of that work. So I think there's obviously some issues around that. I don't know if there was anything else you wanted to raise beyond that.

■ I think the question I have is, again, do you think that withdrawal of TfL staff from inspecting depots might have affected TfL's ability to get information as to what was going on?

LM

But ■ we've also answered that at length in a number of MQs, as has the mayor.

■ No satisfactorily, according to my judgement, so I was wondering, now that I get to ask you directly, because you didn't answer the FOI satisfactorily as well. I appreciate your explanation as to why you took until October that I have learned now, but can I just get some more detail as to TfL made a decision to withdraw its staff from depots?

LM

No, there's nothing beyond what it says in the MQ because it's the truth, which is, we followed government advice, which is that staff should not be making unnecessary journeys and should be working from home as far as possible. We maintained all the other measures which Tom has put in place, those daily calls, the intense working with the operators around safety. So, absolutely no, I don't change at all what we've set out on this or what the mayor said in those responses.

■ My concern was, I was going back to July/August onwards, everyone seems to take their foot off the gas a little bit because the first way is to have easy off a little bit. But drivers were still going out of their garages in ferry cars. There was two or three drivers in the ferry car with the driver of the car. There was some with masks on but some couldn't wear masks because they had reasons why they couldn't. And there was, there's a possibility that some of those could have been asymptomatic. That was an obvious risk of spread that was going on every single day at bus garages that could have spread the disease to hundreds of drivers within weeks. And when we say that the garages were being monitored and feedback was coming back from garages, well I never saw nothing change, so I'm trained in health and safety and I saw that as a risk. And I raised that, but it continued in my garage, as I imagine it continued in every garage in my company. How can you put three drivers in a car and say they're socially distance and safe? You can't do it right. It's still going on now.

LM

It's interesting point visit did was one of the things that was drawn out in the UCL research as well, and was touched on that report. Tom did you want to talk about that.

TC

Well, to the extent that ferry vehicles are a way in which drivers do move from the garage to the routes. And yes, that does mean that people are potentially closer to each other than during the day, than they might be other times. My understanding, but I've only been to some of the garages, I have visited some later on in the period as well, where I've seen ferry cars being used, is very high levels, in fact 100 per cent compliance levels of face coverings, being used in those ferry vehicles and people socially distancing to the greatest extent they can within them. Now if there are some specific examples about where that hasn't worked as well, then obviously that is something that needs to be looked at, but my although limited I have to say, experience of seeing ferry vehicles being driven around with drivers in them is that they appear to me to be as safe as they could be, given the context of being in a vehicle, not dissimilar to the way that perhaps people are travelling in PHV vehicles and Ubers and so on, with the passenger sitting directly opposite behind the driver. I know a number of operators for example have gone out and bought larger ferry vehicles, rather than having cars they bought large vans to ensure therefore that the same number of staff onboard the vehicle are far further apart than they would have been in a traditional perhaps you know small Micra or some other sort of type of car as well. So without getting into specifics of your case without knowing them, a number of mitigations have been put in place to try and manage that risk. And hopefully that has been sufficient to reduce that risk of transmission.

■ So in December, seals were put in front of the passenger between the driver and that was an in December. Why did it take so long for something that needs to be implemented? If that was a measure that needs to

be done, it should have been done in July, or in April/May. It took so long for everything to happen. And when you go back to sanitiser, we waited six weeks, seven weeks in my area to get sanitiser. And the seals in our cabs were still being put in place in September. The permanent seals, we had a temporary seal in place until September. So it, what the feedback you were getting from guarantees may not be quite what actually what's going on in my opinion, the things you may have heard, were not necessarily what was happening. And I saw it. That's why I was so active, asking questions, because I was seeing it first-hand.

LM

I mean, I do think that is quite, it is very important and I don't want to discourage you at all from asking questions but also knowing that you can share that information upwards, because that, that is how we breed a safety culture so keep asking the questions, the feedbacks good, I'm not denying, I'm not disagreeing with you I'm, I'm listening to your feedback, but I'm agreeing with you.

KP

Sorry, can I just come in. So are we saying that we thought it was okay for three bus drivers to be in the same vehicle as the driver, are we saying that was acceptable practice or are we saying it shouldn't have been, I wasn't clear.

LM

Sorry I'm not close enough to the guidance on ferry vehicles to know that precise question.

KP

So could we find that out?

TC

Okay, so it's important to note here that the operators, ultimately, are responsible for the safety of their employees, they are the employers in the role here, that is not our saying it's nothing to do with us at all. It is, it is a statement of fact that the operators are the employers, and it is their statutory obligation to carry out the risk assessments and to ensure that their employees are safe. And so therefore, whilst there was a lot of discussion and agreement sharing of best practice, in the end, that, that risk assessment and the operation of those ferry vehicles would be down to the individual operators to make, and to ensure that that was done in a safe way.

KP

So, did TfL not issue guidance on that?

LM

It's down to the operators to do the risk assessment, and also there's a range of vehicles so you can't say that there's a fixed figure because it depends on the size of the vehicle but, you know, so I think it's what's more important, what I take from this, is [REDACTED] who's had the direct experience of being in depots and on buses every day. And, you know, acknowledging the point about hand sanitisers is what is one that Tom raises it, it was a frustration where our procurement teams are working super hard as where the bus operators tried to secure this stuff. But there's no denying that it took time to get to some places, and, and that delay is not it's not, you know, it's a fact. It's really frustrating for all of us that are concerned. On the other issues, I think, you know, it's also worth pursuing this with different bus operators in terms of their risk assessments along the lines that Tom has pointed out. I'm quite conscious of time I didn't know if you wanted to cover any other items.

[REDACTED] Risk assessments is a good thing to talk about because based on questions you were asked, and I assume Lilli and Tom probably answer, TfL doesn't have copies of the risk assessments for ferry vehicles, nor does he have copies of risk assessments of the COVID risk reduction actions by the bus companies. These are answers that you've given Keith and they're in the public domain. No, that's fact, I'm telling you what you've written, and stated, that you didn't keep copies that risk assessments of the past come up with the COVID Risk Reduction actions, nor did you have copies of the risk assessments of the ferry vehicles. So, is that true, if it's not true, then can there be a response to Keith. Number two, how can TfL make any advice to the bus operators that they actually don't have copies of risk assessments. That's not a rhetorical question, I'm just curious.

LM
I'm not quite sure what your question is actually here [REDACTED], because I think we've gone around the risk assessment point you said you've just yourself said you've been told that we don't, so I'm not sure what your question is.

[REDACTED]
So my question is, is that true, you don't have copies of the risk assessments of the COVID risk reduction activities by the bus companies, you don't have them?

LM
So, [REDACTED], I don't know if you want to come in here, you've been given an answer. I don't see the point of this meeting is to go back over answers we've already given you, I think that the point of this meeting was to work through...

[REDACTED]
I have a right to know if that's true, because that's surprising.

LM
You've been provided with an answer.

[REDACTED]
That's not good enough for me. I'm sorry, your response was not good enough. So I want to know why.

LM
Well I'm sorry, that it's the response [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]
That's not good enough, people have died.

LM
So we've taken you through a very detailed presentation which explains in a lot, you know, in some substance, how we sought to understand how people have died and we're very, very mindful of that. And as an organisation, have been really, really impacted on that, and we set out also a range of actions that we've put in place to manage the risks that our bus workers face and obviously that extends to other workers that we have within TfL. So, I feel confident in the actions we've taken. I'm sorry that you're disappointed in the answers I provide, but that is the answer that I'm going to provide you on that. I don't know if there's anything else you want to talk about [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Well, while I'm still supporting [REDACTED] on that. I totally, want your shows that day, I appreciate, and it's actually show what's here TfL has actually been doing in the background. But if the messages and the information that you're, you collected and got together, wasn't passed out to garages to implement, how can we say that they were doing what you believe they were doing if you didn't check it? Didn't get risk assessments back, or overlook it? You trusted the unions and the garages to do something, but do you know they did it? We lost drivers, and that's why I think [REDACTED] is getting that message to you now to say, you know, did anyone check? Did anyone find out if the garages isn't doing what they said they will do. You know, I lost friends and colleagues, this, this is not acceptable. We need to know if TfL followed it up in the garages to make sure the garages were doing exactly what they should have been doing.

LM
So it was a very intense level of communication, I don't know if, Tom, if you just want us to give an overview of the kind of communication that was ongoing. As a flavour. It probably won't cover all of your questions, but it'll give you a little flavour of what kind of communication.

TC
So we saw the UCL researchers, Peter and the team, took the bus operators managing directors and other key staff through the findings of the report, they answered detailed questions. So, the full report that was that you've seen is in the public domain. They took a number of questions, and got answers to them as to

what the evidence was, and also around the recommendations, as did we, in terms of some of the mitigations, and change that we put in place as a result. And then there was ongoing discussion on the operator calls that we had, that were, as I said earlier on, at times running daily, but more latterly reduced down to a couple of times a week, where we discussed those issues, we discussed the trends, we discussed the ease or difficulty of implementing the recommendations, and how that was going. So, there was a lot of discussion about it, there's a lot of sort of sharing of best practices about what was working, what sort of messaging was working and what wasn't working. For example, the temperature testing trial we did a number of garages last year was, was one example of where that was shared around, so there was a lot of sharing of best practice, but as I said earlier on, the, the operators are the employers, and they have the overall legal responsibility for ensuring that was put into place, and they, to the best of our understanding, took on board the UCL recommendations and have implemented those across their companies and that should have been passed down from the managing directors and senior colleagues, all the way through the organization's right down to garage level.

LM

And do you want to look for a little bit of analysis on that as some reassurance? In the first phase report, on the UCL report, they looked explicitly at how the different bus operators had implemented the safety measures, so they looked across a range of safety measures, and looked at how those had been implemented to see if there was any correlation between rates and speed of implementing those safety measures and the subsequent impact on drivers, and they didn't find any particular correlation between the speed and of implementation, what they actually did find is that all the operators had implemented all of the recommended measures by early April. And I think, I mean, it probably doesn't, you know, quite answer your question but I think that is testament to the fact that this relationship was being maintained. And there's conversations were going on and then you, it manifests itself in those measures being implemented in the various garages, and there was difference between the garages, and subsequently and obviously going back to Sam's point, the main and really sad conclusion was that the real thing that impacted most significantly, thank goodness, was lock down. And if we'd had locked down earlier, we would have managed the impact of the pandemic, we would have seen less impact on our drivers. So, I hope that's helpful I'm conscious Keith we've just got one minute so I didn't know if there was anything else you wanted to cover in summarising,

KP

no, no, I don't think so. I'm very grateful to you for your time and for giving us the time of your team and a lot of hours and I appreciate that very much. Probably slightly disappointed with some of the answers but certainly very grateful for the presentation and if you're prepared to share that with us. That's very helpful indeed. And certainly, that, that itself answers some of the questions that we would have had. But no, I'm very grateful to you. Thank you very much.

LM

Thanks. [REDACTED] thank you for raising a number of those issues which Tom will follow up with. It's good to get your first-hand experience, and thank you for driving the bus through the pandemic.

ENDS

Covid-19 impact on London bus drivers

10th June 2021



1. Agenda

	Item
1	Overview
2	UCL study Phase 1 recommendations
3	How TfL have responded to the Phase 1 recommendations
4	UCL study Phase 2 findings and data from other sources
5	UCL study Phase 2 recommendations
6	How TfL are responding to the Phase 2 recommendations
7	Q&A

1. Overview

UCL Institute of Health Equity were commissioned in May 2020 to examine bus driver deaths between March and May 2020

In May 2020 TfL commissioned University College London (UCL) Institute of Health Equity to study the pattern of infection and deaths from COVID-19 in the London bus worker population.

The study examined the tragic deaths of 27 bus drivers in the period March to May 2020 and was split into two phases:

- Phase 1 was a short-term review of the actions and measures implemented to date to consider what was working and whether any elements should be amended or further improved. The findings were published in July 2020.
- Phase 2 was a more detailed review into the pattern of infection in bus workers to inform recommendations on any additional occupational health measures that should be put in place to protect this key worker population. The Phase 2 findings were published in March 2021.

2. UCL study

Phase 1

Recommendations

The first phase of the research made the following recommendations:

	Recommendation
1	In the event of a second spike it is important to have confidence that the planned actions are likely to be effective, are led by the scientific evidence and are implemented simultaneously across bus companies with clear recommendations for early adoption of measures.
2	BAME staff, especially those living in poorer areas, are more at risk of becoming severely ill and dying from Covid-19. Public Health England recommend that employers should have strategies to create healthy and supportive workplaces (within and outside the health service) that have zero tolerance for discrimination and empower BAME staff to raise concerns about occupational risk and safety.
3	A risk assessment tool, equivalent to that used by TfL, should be used by London bus companies to identify those most vulnerable to reduce the risk of employee exposure to and acquisition of Covid-19.
4	The contribution of pre-existing health conditions, known to increase the severity of Covid-19, suggests a need to introduce criteria for staff by TfL and bus operators to be offered additional protection. This would enable TfL and bus companies to make arrangements to protect those now known to be more vulnerable, as understanding of the disease increases.
5	Improved engagement with health promotion initiatives and uptake of preventive interventions is also essential, to reduce the risk of diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

3. How TfL have responded to the Phase 1 Recommendations

- On 20th March 2020 we wrote to bus operators setting out the first of many London wide changes – ensuring that all drivers receive sick pay from day one.
- We have provided clear direction to bus operators to ensure contingency plans to protect vulnerable drivers are deployed consistently as guidance changes.
- We have worked closely with bus operators and trade unions to standardise relevant processes and procedures across bus operators.
- Recommended equipment is in place for all employees, for example hand sanitiser and cleaning wipes, and there is a continued focus on enhanced cleaning of driver facilities and depots (both frequent touch point cleaning and 28 day Zoono anti-viral application).
- Since July 2020 all driver cabs have been secured based on the UCL Centre for Transport Studies and Department of Civil, Environmental and Geomatic Engineering report into bus drivers' cabs design, and ventilation systems improved where needed.
- We have introduced a new COVID-19 Age Risk Assessment, enabling all employees to easily work out their 'COVID-19 age' and we have worked with the bus operators to ensure they are consistently using our own, or an equivalent, COVID-19 risk assessment process to ensure more vulnerable drivers are identified and offered appropriate adjustments.
- As the categorisations of risk changed in early 2021, more drivers were taken out of the workplace, and this mechanism remains in place should the risk profile change again.

4. UCL study phase 2 findings and data from other sources



New research by the Office for National Statistics confirms the Phase 1 finding that mortality among key workers and those in BAME groups was highest among those likely to have been infected before lockdown.

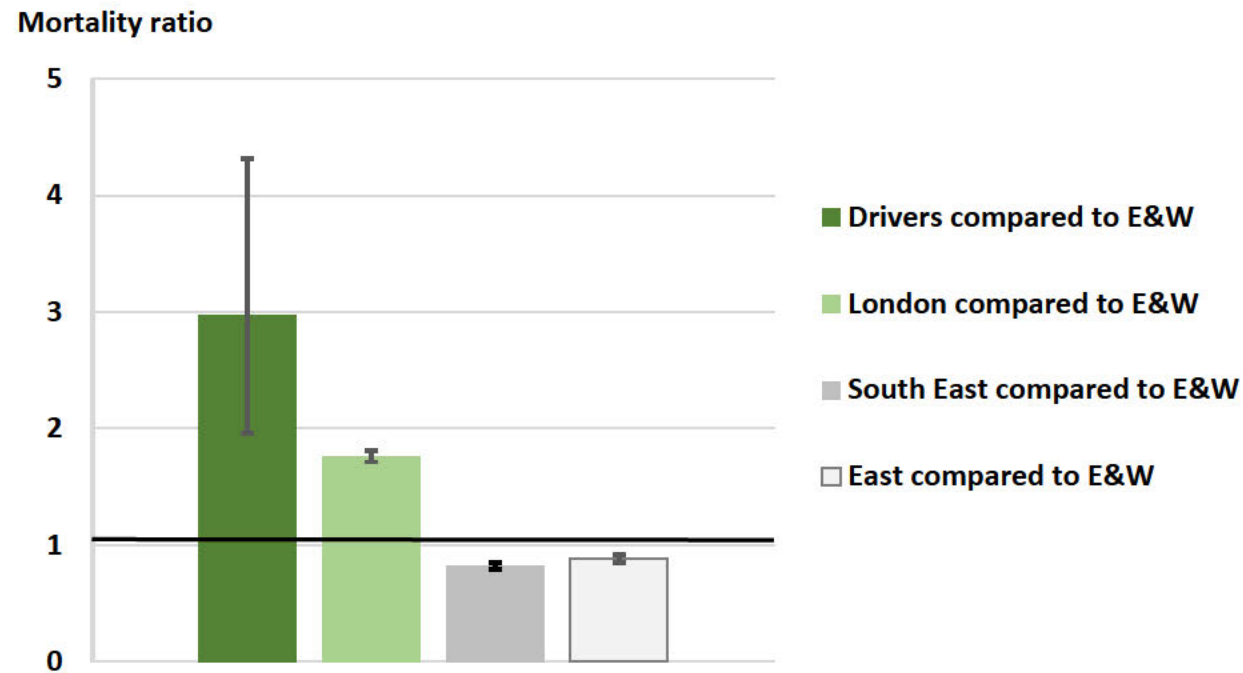
London bus drivers had a statistically significant excess in mortality in the first wave of the epidemic.

These high rates of mortality were largely a result of infections acquired before lockdown on 23 March.

This is consistent with recent national analyses – firstly that mortality among many key workers was higher in cases likely to be infected before lockdown, and secondly that mortality in BAME groups was similarly higher in those early cases, even after accounting for a broad range of factors that are known to have contributed to higher BAME COVID-19 mortality – including living in more deprived urban environments, household living arrangements, occupational risk factors and some pre-existing health conditions.



Phase 2 of the UCL study identified a statistically significant excess in mortality from COVID-19 in London bus drivers, compared to the general population in the same geographical area, in the period March to May 2020.



Source: Deaths and populations of London bus drivers provided by bus operators, all other rates from ONS

- Vertical bars represent approximate 95 percent confidence intervals and
- The horizontal bar represents parity with the England and Wales mortality rate.

London bus drivers were three times more likely to die from COVID-19 during the period March to May 2020 than the general England population.

When mortality ratios are considered in terms of London regional data, the ratio decreases and London bus drivers were identified as two times more likely to die when other known risk factors are taken into account for example their ethnicity, age, gender and where they lived.

When compared to other occupations, bus and coach drivers had the 16th highest male mortality rate during March to May 2020, but the 25th highest for the period March to December 2020.

The most up to date ONS data for COVID-19 related deaths in England by occupation looks at deaths between March 9 and December 28, 2020 and relates specifically to male bus and coach drivers aged between 20 and 64. In this period 83 male bus and coach drivers died giving a rate of 70.3 deaths per 100,000 males. During this time period 34 London bus drivers died; 8 of these drivers were over the age of 64 meaning that 26 of these deaths are directly comparable to the ONS data.

Bus and coach drivers in England and Wales had the 16th highest male mortality rate by occupation between March to May, but the 25th highest for the period March to December. This shows how the relative risks (in comparison with other occupations) for drivers nationally reduced as the lockdown period went on. The report suggests that, for infections contracted between mid-May and the end of December, deaths of London bus drivers, as a proportion of those in the regions in which they live, have fallen by around 45 percent compared to March to May 2020.

COVID-19 risk by occupation and workplace: EMG transmission group published 11th February 2021.

This paper provides international comparisons.

In Ontario, 80% of workplace associated outbreaks were in three industry sectors: Manufacturing, Agriculture and Transportation, Warehousing. In Sweden the highest relative prevalence was found among taxi drivers followed by some specific groups including bus and tram driver Another Swedish study found that taxi and bus drivers had a substantially higher COVID-19 infection and mortality risk than other workers, though this difference was diminished when adjusted for other characteristics.

Figure 3. Age standardised male mortality rates (per 100,000) at ages 20 to 64 in 17 high risk occupations by proximity to others, based on deaths involving COVID-19 registered in England and Wales between 9 March 2020 and 25 May 2020¹⁰

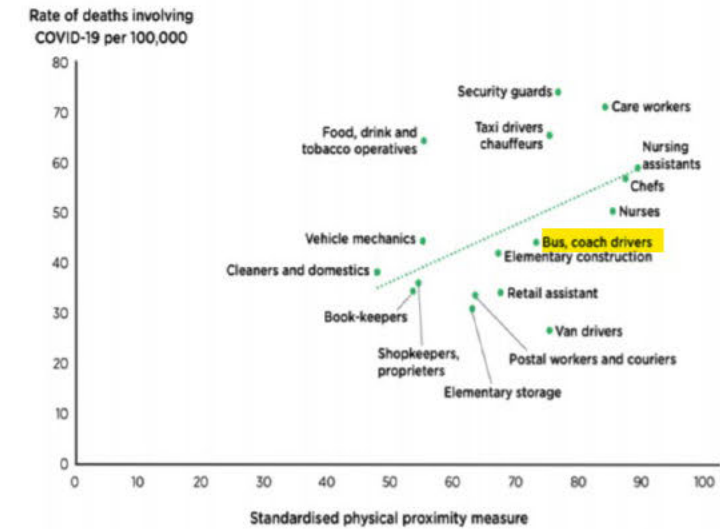
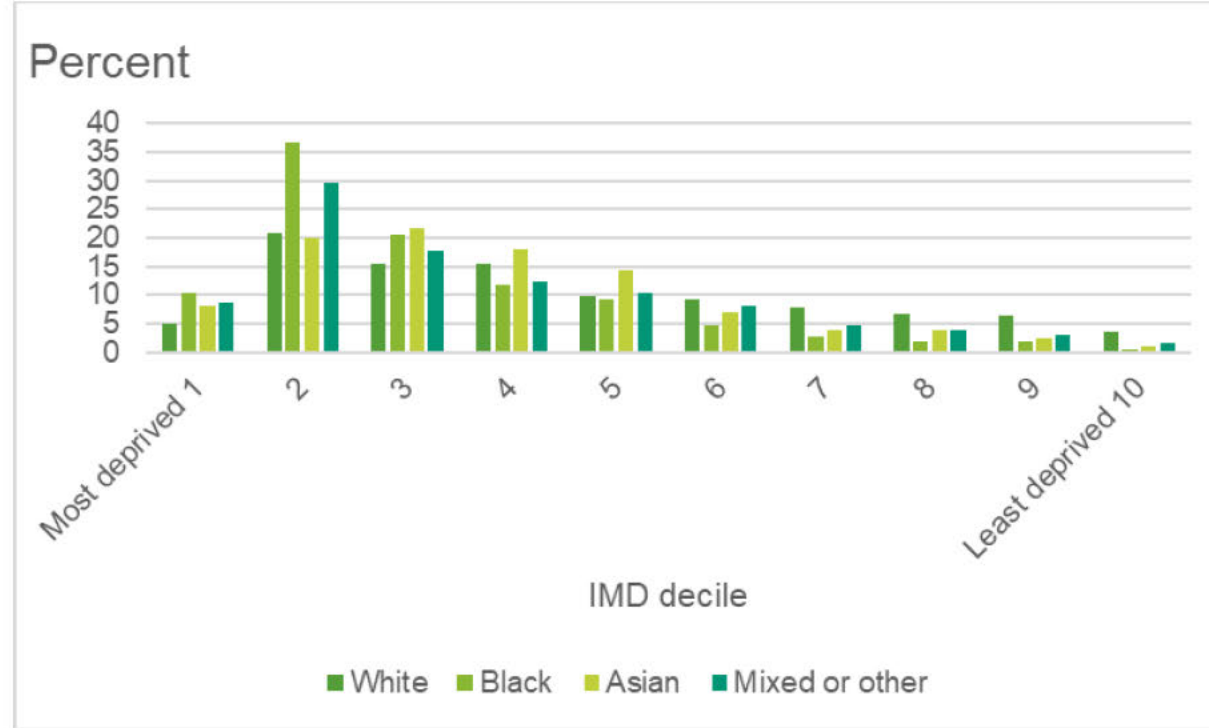


Table 3. Risk ratios for mortality, comparing pandemic time to non-pandemic time, among California residents 18-65 years of age, by occupational sector and race/ethnicity, March through October 2020²⁰

	All races	Asian	Black	Latino	White
All sectors	1.22 (1.20-1.24)	1.18 (1.14-1.23)	1.28 (1.24-1.33)	1.36 (1.29-1.44)	1.06 (1.02-1.12)
Food or agriculture	1.39 (1.32-1.48)	1.18 (1.05-1.33)	1.34 (1.19-1.54)	1.59 (1.47-1.75)	1.16 (1.09-1.24)
Transportation or logistics	1.28 (1.24-1.33)	1.26 (1.12-1.44)	1.35 (1.26-1.46)	1.40 (1.31-1.52)	1.10 (1.02-1.20)
Facilities	1.27 (1.22-1.32)	1.24 (1.08-1.46)	1.25 (1.17-1.34)	1.38 (1.27-1.51)	1.11 (1.04-1.20)
Unemployed or missing	1.23 (1.19-1.27)	1.08 (1.04-1.14)	1.31 (1.22-1.40)	1.31 (1.22-1.41)	1.09 (1.01-1.20)
Manufacturing	1.23 (1.18-1.28)	1.18 (1.06-1.33)	1.13 (1.01-1.30)	1.44 (1.34-1.57)	1.00 (0.92-1.10)
Health or emergency	1.19 (1.17-1.22)	1.40 (1.33-1.49)	1.27 (1.17-1.40)	1.32 (1.18-1.51)	1.02 (0.96-1.10)
Retail	1.18 (1.14-1.23)	1.10 (1.00-1.22)	1.36 (1.21-1.55)	1.40 (1.28-1.55)	1.08 (1.04-1.13)
Government or community	1.14 (1.11-1.18)	1.22 (1.07-1.41)	1.20 (1.09-1.33)	1.42 (1.32-1.53)	0.96 (0.89-1.04)
Not essential	1.11 (1.08-1.14)	1.14 (1.06-1.23)	1.23 (1.15-1.33)	1.29 (1.20-1.41)	1.00 (0.95-1.07)

UCL found that London bus drivers were more likely to live in the second most deprived neighbourhood deciles, with marked differences in the extent of residential deprivation between the sexes and ethnic groups.



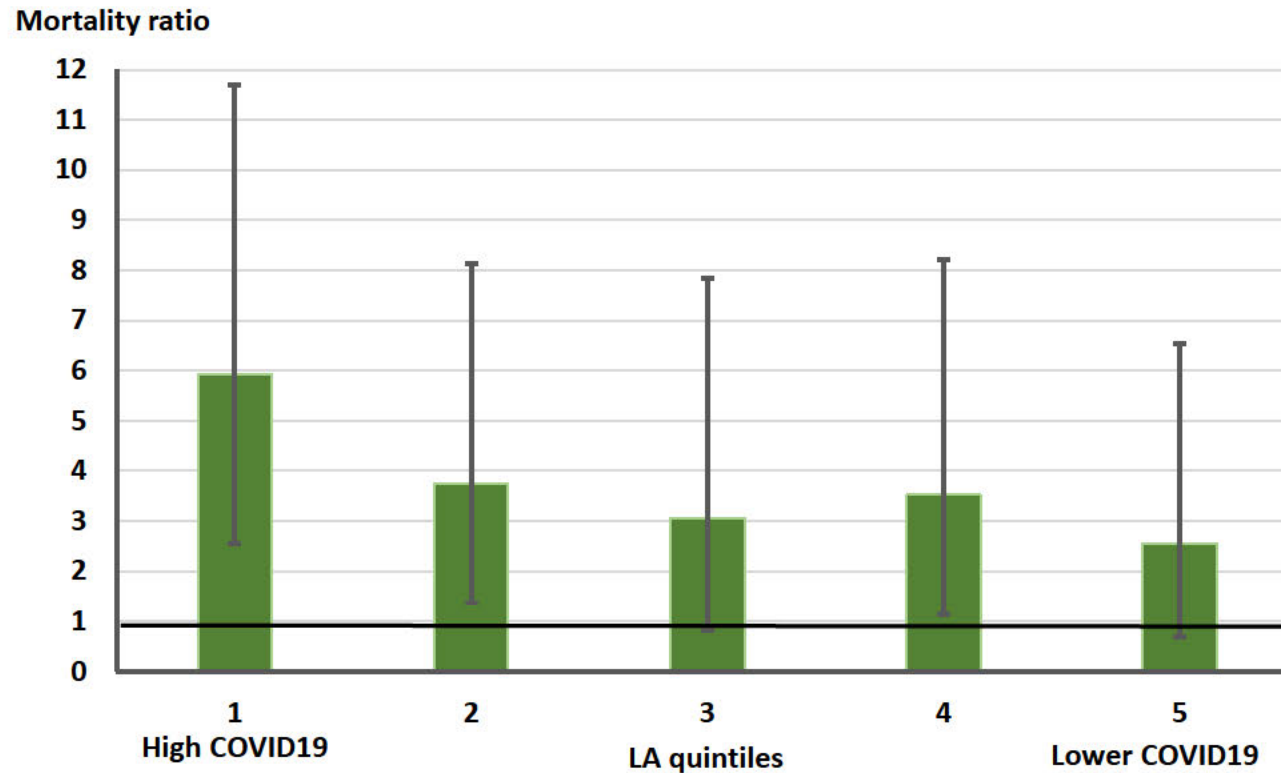
Source: author's analysis of the bus driver survey data, 2021

Drivers who participated in the survey were more likely than the general population to live in the relatively deprived deciles 2 to 4 and less likely to live in the most deprived decile or in the more affluent areas (deciles 6 to 10). Female drivers were more likely to live in the most deprived neighbourhoods (deciles 1 and 2) than their male colleagues.

White drivers were less likely to live in the three most deprived neighbourhoods than drivers from any other ethnic group. Drivers from black and mixed/other backgrounds were more likely than other drivers to live in the two most deprived neighbourhoods, Asian drivers were more likely than others to live in deciles three to five. These patterns broadly reflect the social and geographic position of many key worker populations within society and the ethnic divisions among key workers.



UCL found there was an increased death rate for those drivers who lived in areas with higher general COVID-19 prevalence levels.



Source: Deaths and populations of London bus drivers provided by bus operators, all other rates from ONS

- Vertical bars represent approximate 95 percent confidence intervals and
- The horizontal bar represents parity with the England and Wales mortality rate.

Bus driver COVID-19 mortality increased with the overall level of local authority mortality. However, analysis shows that local authority levels do not entirely account for the excess COVID-19 mortality in bus drivers.

The UCL study found that bus drivers suffer from the same level of pre-existing conditions as the general population, although there is some evidence of earlier onset of some conditions.

The information collected in the survey from bus drivers on their pre-existing health conditions shows that rates of diabetes, hypertension and being overweight are broadly similar to those collected on the general population in the Health Survey for England, with exceptions in specific age groups.

Among younger bus drivers, there seems to be more obesity than in the general population while in those in their seventies there was more high blood pressure than in the general population.

Although we have no basis for comparison with the general population, the steep increase in heart problems in this older age group is worthy of note.

Drivers indicated general agreement with the safety measures put in place before lockdown but used their answers to indicate frustration at external factors (such as passenger aggressiveness and compliance and driving conditions).

For most safety measures introduced before 23rd March 2020 the majority of bus drivers responding agreed that the new measures improved their safety at work. The exception was the introduction of hand sanitisers, which could be attributed to the fact that hand sanitiser was prioritised for health workers and therefore difficult to obtain at that point.

More drivers (40%) agreed that the safety measures introduced before 23rd March 2020 resulted in passengers becoming aggressive than disagreed (around 30%). Given that some of these measures were unlikely to have affected passengers, it may be that these responses reflected a general impression of whether or not passengers were more aggressive.

Despite reductions in overall traffic levels, a slight majority of bus drivers of all ethnicities found managing traffic congestion more difficult after lockdown (around 53 percent for most ethnicities), with no consistent differences in the pattern of responses between ethnic groups.



5. UCL study

Phase 2

Recommendations

The second phase of the research made the following recommendations:

	Recommendation
1	All bus drivers and particularly those with identified risk factors need continued protection by reducing exposure to COVID-19 as long as it persists in the community. Social distancing and mask wearing must continue to be observed consistently in all locations where bus drivers are out of their cabs including transfers, depots and canteens. Promotion and enforcement of compliance of these measures by all, to ensure consistent adherence, remains a priority, as it does for all passengers when travelling on public transport.
2	In the longer term, early interventions on ill-health prevention are needed to reduce obesity in the population as a whole, with responsible employers playing their part. In particular, measures are needed among younger London bus drivers who have higher obesity rates than other young people of the same age.
3	Fatigue is a pre-existing issue for some bus drivers, with some evidence that COVID- 19 infection and lockdown has exacerbated this. Action, already being taken following previous research into factors contributing to tiredness, should be enhanced to address any new issues arising from the pandemic, following a short-term review of shift lengths, patterns and rotas.
4	Drivers who have clinically verified ongoing symptoms of COVID-19 infection [“long COVID”] will continue to need financial, psychological and clinical support from the bus companies and the NHS, as will need to be the case for all those working for responsible employers.



5. Phase 2 Recommendations

The second phase of the research made the following recommendations:

	Recommendation
5	Some bus drivers report several factors that have increased the demands on them despite reduced passenger and traffic numbers, for example passenger aggression and non-compliance and some new traffic measures. In anticipation of increased passenger and traffic numbers, TfL should support drivers in the short term through both ensuring communication of guidance to the public is clear on measures in force and those that change at any point in time, accompanied by enforcement action to support drivers.
6	Monitoring the health of London bus drivers is a priority following the ongoing presence of COVID-19 infection in the community. As well as the measures described above for other identified at-risk groups, more complete and consistent recording of the ethnicity of bus drivers is required. We recommend that in the coming months, bus operators ensure more complete recording of ethnicity. To ensure consistency across operators and with other organisations, TfL should issue similar guidance on harmonised ethnic recording to that currently being implemented across the NHS, based on the March 2021 Census ethnic classification.
7	Breathing problems appear to be a pre-existing issue reported by many London bus drivers, exacerbated in those self-reporting COVID-19 symptoms. In the longer term, air quality on London roads, to which bus drivers have particularly high levels of exposure, needs to be a priority for the Government and Mayor.

6. How we are responding to the Phase 2 Recommendations

Measures

- Our responses to the Phase 1 Recommendations are still in place
- COVID-19 has impacted the availability and capacity of existing driver welfare facilities, including depots and canteens. TfL rapidly responded to address this by providing temporary toilets and expediting plans to provide more mess room capacity to allow for social distancing.
- The bus operators are using a range of tools to promote compliance, including internal social media, posters and notices as well as the stood-down Union representatives to provide peer-to-peer engagement.
- We horizon scan for new and innovative measures to improve safety for staff, and continue to work with bus operators to strengthen the messaging around social distancing and mask wearing to maintain focus and ensure compliance and to reduce the risk of complacency.

Ill-Health Prevention

- TfL with the bus operators are exploring improved driver health assessments. Introducing more frequent and potentially more rigorous health assessments for drivers could help detect health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease at an earlier stage.
- Work is underway with the bus operators to scope a programme of work where TfL can support them in making best use of shared resources and trial new initiatives.

6. How we are responding to the Phase 2 Recommendations

Fatigue

- All bus operators are required to have robust fatigue risk management systems in place in order to be able to apply for contracts with TfL.
- Bus operators are now building further on their FRMS, including measuring fatigue more widely and reviewing shift patterns and rotas in collaboration with the trade unions to identify where improvements can be made.
- In February TfL launched the £500,000 Fatigue, Health and Well-Being Innovation Fund. This fund, which bus operators can bid for, is intended to trial innovative solutions to change the safety culture within bus garages and increase driver health and well-being.
- Since September 2020 we have been rolling out bus driver fatigue management awareness training for bus operator managers and supervisors. It aims to raise awareness of the basics of fatigue, how it is caused and what drivers can do to help alleviate it. Training will be complete by the end of June 2021.

Long Covid

- The long term impacts of COVID-19 on some people are becoming sadly apparent, and those with ongoing symptoms continue to be supported by the operators. The operators will review their existing range of employee assistance / support programmes and how they could be enhanced to reflect the ongoing impacts of long COVID.
- There are emerging NHS/government guidelines with regards to management and rehabilitation from COVID-19 infection. TfL OH have a group currently working on support pathways which can be shared on completion with the operators.

6. How we are responding to the Phase 2 Recommendations

Compliance

- We have a highly visible presence on the transport network, including over 500 TfL enforcement officers and over 2,500 police and community support officers in the MPS Roads and Transport Policing Command and the British Transport Police.
- Officers are deployed to priority areas across the network to: provide customer reassurance, prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, and support COVID-safe measures including mandatory wearing of face coverings on public transport
- We issue clear communication to customers on the measures in force including face covering compliance and social distancing. This includes targeted communications on social media to improve compliance among young customers
- We have made it easier for drivers to report issues of face covering non-compliance and social distancing through SMS functionality on their buses. These reports are analysed and inform the deployments of police and TfL enforcement officers.

Ethnicity Data

- The recording of employees' ethnicity should be improved and TfL have already asked the operators to introduce the ONS census ethnicity categories for their reporting.

Air Quality

- London has a clear plan in place to address air quality. The ULEZ came into force in central London in April 2019, and will be expanded up to the North Circular and South Circular Road in October 2021; All of London's c 9000 buses now perform to the required Euro VI standard and there are over 500 zero emission buses collectively making a significant reduction in overall air pollution.



7. Q&A

