

**GUIDE  
DOGS**



# Campaigning on Talking Buses

Jubilation Park

Confidence Rise

Hope  
Parkway

Opportunity Row

Prospect Place

Career Street



[www.guidedogs.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/campaigns)

Registered charity in England and Wales (209617) and in Scotland (SC038979) 7543 08/14

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## Talking Buses

The Talking Buses campaign aims to ensure people with sight loss enjoy the same freedom of movement and access to public transport as everybody else. Buses are essential in enabling people, especially those with disabilities, to live more independently. However many people with sight loss struggle to use buses independently that don't have audio visual (AV) next stop and final destination announcements. We want AV to be on board all new buses in the UK.



## Why campaign?

**People who are blind or partially sighted are reliant on buses for mobility and freedom: research has found that disabled people have a greater reliance on bus services than non-disabled people.**<sup>1</sup>

Audio visual (AV) next stop and final destination announcements enable people with a visual impairment to get around independently, improving people's confidence, social life and work opportunities. However, at the moment not all bus services are fully accessible as only 19% of buses are fitted with AV<sup>2</sup>, the majority of which are in London. A 2011 study for the Department for Transport reported that 97% of buses with AV are in London.<sup>3</sup>

Without AV the worry of being unsure of whether they have caught the correct bus, where they are on their journey, or when their stop is coming up, is putting many people off using their local bus services. According to

Guide Dogs research, this lack of accessible transport has led to **nearly a third (32%) of people who are blind or partially sighted missing their stop**<sup>4</sup> because they were too worried to ask for help, 28% missing a stop because the driver refused to tell them their stop<sup>5</sup> and to 59% of blind and partially sighted passengers stating that travelling by bus makes visiting places very difficult<sup>6</sup>. The 2014 report Destination Unknown showed that **97% of all respondents would find audio visual announcements on buses useful**. 6 out of 10 blind and partially sighted respondents said they would use the bus more frequently if it had AV.

1. Attitudes of Disabled People to Public Transport; DPTAC, pp 28, 2002.

2. Accessibility Action Plan, Department for Transport, 2012

3. TAS Partnership, Installing Audio-Visual Equipment on Buses – Cost and Practicality Issues, 2012

4. Road to Nowhere 2013

5. Destination Unknown 2014

6. Ibid

# Why campaign?

To solve this problem Guide Dogs is campaigning for a law to make audio and visual next stop and final destination announcements available on board bus services across the UK.

This will not only increase the confidence of people who are blind or partially sighted, but will also improve the experience of bus travel for all passengers, including elderly people, people with hearing impairments and learning disabilities, commuters, and tourists who are not familiar with the area.



**“I was travelling on a Stagecoach service. The weather was bad – absolutely throwing it down with rain. I was going to a team meeting and I asked the driver to tell me when we got to my stop and he agreed. The bus wasn’t busy but still we had gone three stops beyond where I needed to be before the driver remembered. So I had to get off and walk back. By the time I got there I was soaked to my skin and very cold... I ended up with a bad cold that kept me off work for five days.”**

Guide dog owner, Grimsby.



## What does Guide Dogs want?

Guide Dogs is calling for audio visual technology to be fitted on all new buses across the UK to make them accessible for people with sight loss.

## Talking Buses and Employment

The chairman of Parliament's Transport Committee Louise Ellman MP said: **“Old and young, unemployed people, those on low incomes and disabled people who live in isolated communities rely on passenger transport. For example, two out of every five job seekers cite lack of transport as a barrier to finding work.”**<sup>7</sup>

In their inquiry into passenger transport in isolated communities they heard that: **“passenger transport allows disabled people to access employment and community and family life. Some 60% of disabled people have no car in the household, and disabled people use buses about 20% more frequently than the non-disabled population.”**<sup>8</sup>



According to Guide Dogs report Destination Unknown, of the blind and partially sighted people that responded to the survey, the lack of accessible transport has led to:



31% finding transport a barrier to work.



12% are being prevented from going to job interviews due to the prospect of taking a bus.



1 out of 10 have been stopped from taking up a job.

7. <http://www.westernmorningnews.co.uk/MPs-warn-rural-isolation-bus-service-cuts/story-21738214-detail/story.html>

8. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmtran/288/288.pdf>

## Devolution and Talking Buses

There is currently no law requiring the mandatory fitting of AV on buses in any part of the UK. Westminster has the power to legislate on this issue in England, Scotland and Wales. In Northern Ireland the Northern Ireland Assembly has the power.



**"I am a guide dog owner and used to go to University in London where I could not believe the freedom I had to travel on London buses. I have never felt so confident and reassured on a bus before... When University finished and I came back home, I went back to having the fear of never being quite sure if I was on the right bus, or where I might end up. If all buses in the country could be 'Talking Buses' I would feel far less worried and stressed and would actually have the freedom to travel wherever I wanted to."**

Vision impaired respondent



**"I was heading up to my uncle's at one point. I was using a metro bus and it was late evening around 5 o'clock. I ended up stranded because I wasn't told my stop resulting in my day being totally ruined."**

Torie, guide dog owner



# Why campaign?

## Destination Unknown

The Guide Dogs Destination Unknown report 2014 was produced from a survey of more than 2,000 people finding out about their experiences of using the bus. Blind and partially sighted respondents said the following about their experiences on buses:



**79%**

79% said that none of the local bus services they use have AV.

**40%**

40% had missed their bus stop on one to two occasions in the previous six months.

**28%**

28% have missed a bus stop because the driver refused to tell them when they arrived at their stop.



**70%**

70% have missed their stop because the driver forgot to tell them when they had arrived at their stop.



## Talking Buses make a difference!

**“I recently used a park and ride bus to go into Ipswich. I don't live in Ipswich and therefore it is extremely difficult for me to navigate the buses and to get off at the correct stop. I have to say that the park and ride buses have installed Talking Buses and it's fantastic! It allowed me to feel very relieved as it enabled me to listen to all the stops and get off at the right one.**

**It has given me confidence and independence to use the park and ride again without interrupting other passengers asking when my stop was coming up. I was so impressed that I wanted to come back the other way to listen to the stops on the way back.**

**It has truly made a difference to me being able to travel independently.”**

Francesca, West Suffolk



# Talking Buses

## Top tips for bus drivers

### Look out for me

I might have a cane or a guide dog, but not all visually impaired people do – if I say “I can’t see very well” this may mean I would find your assistance useful.

### Pull up to the bus stop and right up to the kerb

This will help me avoid tripping up – when the bus stops further out into the road the step is higher, and the door can be harder to find.

### Say hello

This will let me know I’m at the front of the queue, and I have your attention.

### Help me with the fare system

If I use a smartcard it may be difficult or impossible for me to see the card scanner and place my card on it; you could make it easier by scanning the card for me. If I need to pay with cash, help with finding the right money may be useful, and please count out any change you hand to me.

### Let me know when I’ve reached my stop

I know where I’m heading, but I can’t see, or see well enough, to know when I am at the right stop. You can help by letting me know when I’m at my stop.

### Tell me where there’s a vacant seat

It’s helpful if you describe where it is – for example “at the front on the right” or “halfway down on the left”.

### Wait until I’ve sat down before moving off

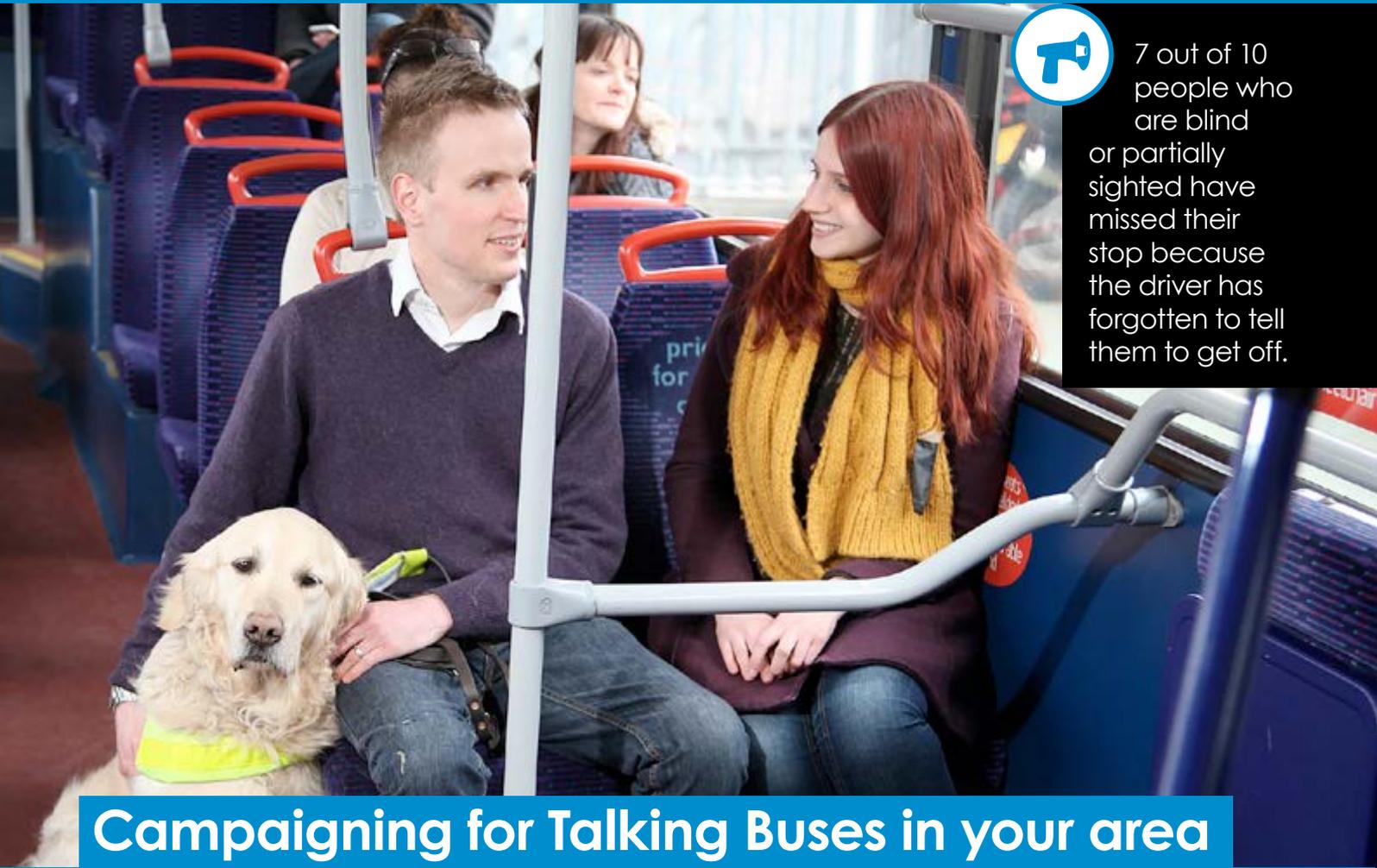
I know you need to keep to time, but that extra few seconds let me get to a seat safely.

## Thank you for your help!

## Campaigning for Talking Buses in your area



7 out of 10 people who are blind or partially sighted have missed their stop because the driver has forgotten to tell them to get off.



## Campaigning for Talking Buses in your area

**There is wide variation across the country on the availability of Talking Buses. In Greater London all buses have AV technology, but provision is patchy across the rest of the country. This section provides you with some practical advice on campaigning for Talking Buses in your local area.**

### Influencing your local bus operator

Many bus operators are already making moves to install AV as they recognise the benefits that it has to a wide range of their customers. If your local bus company hasn't yet installed AV on all its routes here are some ideas on how you can influence them.

### Get in touch

- Contact your local bus company and share your opinion about the importance of AV on board buses and your concerns as a bus user. Remember to have a positive and constructive approach, as this will encourage a dialogue. A complaint that does not suggest an alternative or a solution may just be rejected or ignored.
- Ask to meet with a representative from your local bus company, approaching the Marketing/ Communications Manager, the Operational Manager, the Operations Training Centre or equivalent department.

## Blindfolded bus journeys

Invite someone from the bus company's management team to take part in a blindfolded bus journey, which is an interactive way of raising awareness of the issue. Please refer to the following section "Getting your MP onboard" for further details on blindfolded bus journeys.



**Campaigning means raising awareness of an issue but also offering a solution!**

## Bus driver training

- Ask the bus company to introduce awareness training sessions for their bus drivers.
- You can request copies of our "Top tips for bus drivers" leaflet, by emailing the Campaigns Team at [campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk) (please see the "Resources" section on page 26 of this toolkit for further information).

## Top tips!

### Top tip!

- Describe the difference that a journey with AV makes for someone who is blind or partially sighted.

## Make it personal

Talk to the bus company from a customer's point of view: provide examples and mention your personal experience in order to make your case for AV even stronger. Real stories help your audience engage with the issue and highlight at the same time the general concern.

## Tell the media

Bus companies will be grateful for positive coverage in the local press as this can help increase customers. So, promote any positive steps the bus company takes through local media (please see the section below for more details).

## The main bus companies in the UK are:

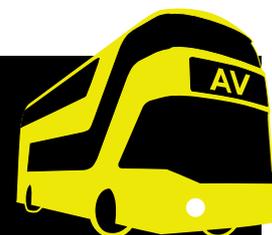
- Arriva 
- First Group 
- Go-Ahead Group 
- National Express Group 
- Stagecoach Group 

Please refer to the Guide Dogs Campaign Toolkit for further information on using social media to campaign. This can be found at [www.guidedogs.org.uk/campaigntoolkit](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/campaigntoolkit) or by contacting the Guide Dogs Campaigns team.



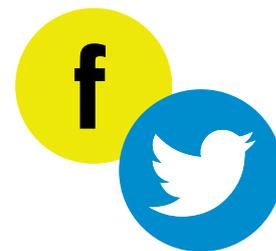
## The cost of audio visual technology

It costs £2,100 to install AV on a single decker or £2,550 on a double decker bus. In comparison, a new double decker bus costs around £190,000!



## Use social media

Social media can be a great way of engaging with the people you are trying to influence. It can also raise awareness of your campaign amongst potential supporters and others in your local community. If a significant number of customers raise the same issue in a public forum such as Twitter or Facebook, it is much harder for bus companies to ignore. Here are some ideas on how you can use social media:



- **Ask a question**

Having evidence and information is vital to running an effective campaign. Use social media to find out more about the bus companies' position and plans on Talking Buses. For example ask if their fleet, or a specific route is equipped with AV or not? Do they have plans to invest in AV?



- **Share your experiences**

Let the bus company know how you find their bus services and which problems you have encountered on their routes.



- **Promote your campaign**

Create a Facebook group to bring together other local campaigners so you can share information.



- **Send in photos**

They say a picture can tell a thousand words! If you have a photo that sums up your campaign e.g. a photo of where you ended up when you missed your stop due to there being no AV, send it through to the bus company and see what they say.



### Top tips!

#### Top tip!

- Make sure you are targeting the right part of the company. Most of the big bus operators have regional branches, so when you look them up on both Twitter and Facebook make sure you address the right one. For example Arriva Buses have split their social media profiles into regions. On Twitter **@arrivabuswales** should be contacted for issues in Wales and **@arrivayorkshire** for issues in Yorkshire.



## Case study

### Case study: engaging with your local bus company

Helen, a Guide Dogs Engagement Officer, has been lobbying local bus operators about the importance of audio visual technology in Norfolk. She arranged a meeting with the Managing Director of Norfolk Green after they both attended an event on the re-design of a bus and train station in her local area.

They have now agreed to introduce sighted guide training for staff, in order to develop their skills of guiding people with visual impairment. They also committed to organising bus driver workshops, which will involve guide dog owners talking about their own experiences and to taking part in a blindfolded bus experience.



Helen said:  
**“People do business with people, so in order for this face to**

**face meeting to be successful I needed to do some research on the company first. Norfolk Green is a small bus operator chiefly providing rural bus services. It was a great first meeting which allowed the Managing Director and me to start a good relationship; so much so, that when he needs some advice on sight awareness he comes directly to Guide Dogs.”**

### Top tips!

#### Helen's top campaigning tips!

- Research the company first.
- Build positive relationships.
- Be flexible and think holistically around the issue. There will always be a way round any problem!
- Bus operators are commercial and will always want “bums on seats”. Offer to do joint media outlining the positives of working together .



## Influencing elected officials

**Both your MP and local councillors can help you with your Talking Buses campaign. MPs are your voice in parliament. They can help raise issues of concern in Westminster but also have a lot of influence locally. Councillors can raise the concerns of local residents within the local council. Some councils run bus services directly and so this can be a particularly effective way of campaigning for buses in those services to have AV.**

- Contact your ward councillors to influence decisions about local bus services.
- Contact your MP to influence national policies and laws on buses, as well as to help influence decisions about local bus services.

### **Contacting councillors**

If the council runs bus services then your local councillors will be able to influence whether local buses are fitted with AV. The final decision will be made by the lead member for transport in the council. You can find out who your ward councillor and lead member for transport is by putting your postcode into the website [www.writetothem.org](http://www.writetothem.org)



## Campaigning ideas:



Ask them to write to local bus companies asking them to consider installing AV on all new buses.



Ask them to write to the Minister for Transport for more funding to be made available for AV.



Invite them to take part in a blindfolded bus journey, which can help them better understand the issues and realise that action is needed (see below for details).



Ask your council to apply for Government grant schemes that may be able to fund AV. Local authorities and bus operators may want to include AV technology in their application for funding in order to make their buses a more attractive option to tourists and other people who are unfamiliar with a route.

## Case study

### Case study: Better Bus Areas Fund

Guide Dogs welcomed the announcement of the £50m Better Bus Areas funding scheme by the Department for Transport in late 2011, seeing it as a potential opportunity to improve the accessibility of public transport for people who are blind or partially sighted. The Campaigns Team contacted local authorities and bus operators, encouraging them to submit applications which included provision for Talking Buses. The Campaigns Team made it clear that the introduction of audio visual announcements on buses would benefit all bus passengers. Thanks to the Better Bus Areas fund more than 1,000 extra buses became Talking Buses.



## Contacting your Local MP

Your MP is there to be your voice in Parliament. If you can convince them about the importance of having AV information systems on board buses, they can help raise the issue with the key decision makers.



### Campaigning ideas:

Some ways that you might like your MP to help with your campaign include:



Ask them to write to the Bus Minister highlighting your concerns and the need of AV on board buses.



If your local council runs bus services ask them to write to the council asking them to install AV on their services.



Ask them to contact local bus companies, suggesting they introduce AV on their fleet.



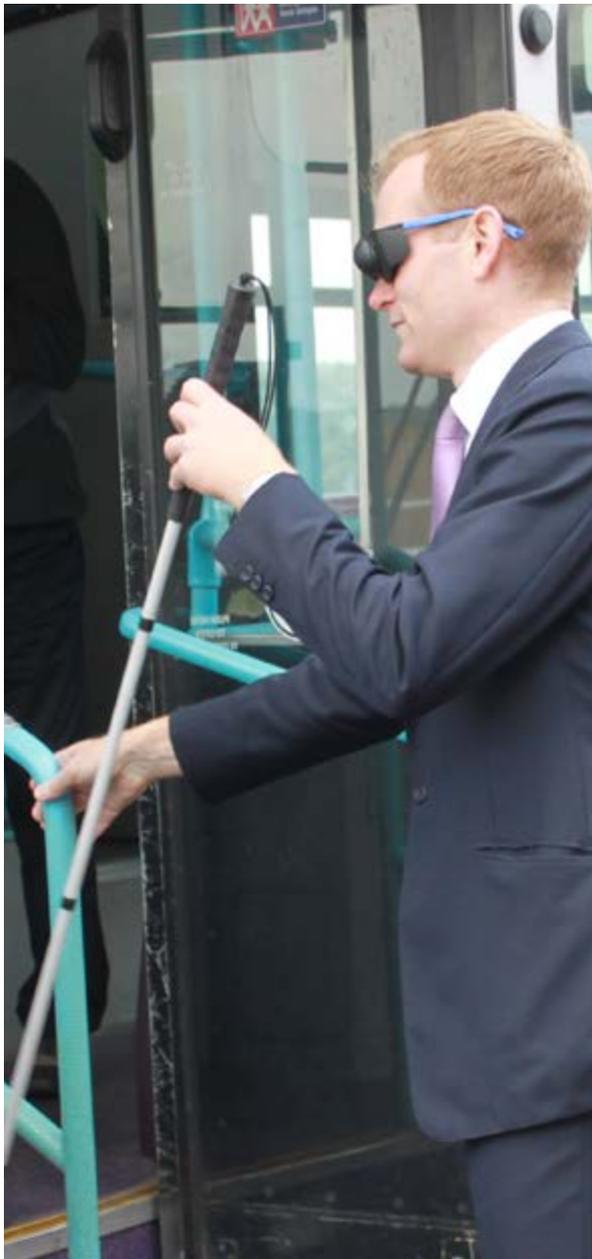
Ask them to table a parliamentary question about Talking Buses to help raise awareness in Parliament and get information for your campaign. The Guide Dogs Campaigns Team can help if you or your MP would like suggestions about parliamentary questions.



## Case study

### Case study: a blindfolded bus journey

Neil is a Guide Dogs Engagement Officer in the South West. In 2013 Jeremy Browne, MP for Taunton Deane, joined him for a blindfolded bus journey. Neil chose the route from Taunton to Wellington, which is covered by First Buses, a company he had previously collaborated with. He contacted them to let them know what he wanted to do. Two people from their local management team went along and joined the journey.



Neil said:

**“As the company’s managers were there they were able to explain to the driver what was happening. We were quite a big party as it was Jeremy, me, a photographer from Guide Dogs, the newspaper reporter, the photographer from the paper, the radio reporter and the two company’s managers, all travelling together. We had a good piece in the local paper.”**

#### Top tips!

#### Neil's top tips!

- Get the bus company involved.
- Plan the route carefully.
- Allow plenty of time.
- Involve the local press and radio.

## Meeting with your MP or councillor

You might want to meet with your MP or local councillor to discuss your Talking Buses campaign. Your MP or councillor should hold a surgery in their constituency regularly. This is the time when they meet with local residents.



### Top tips!

#### Top tips!

- Call their office in advance to get an appointment to make sure they have enough time for you.
- Be clear about what you want them to do.
- Take notes! They are very useful to evaluate the meeting and see what degree of concern they have for the issue raised.
- Send an email afterwards to thank them for their time and remind them of what they agreed to do.

## Blindfolded bus journeys

If your MP or councillor needs to be convinced on the value of Talking Buses an effective campaign technique is to invite them to take part in a blindfolded bus journey. A blindfolded bus journey puts them in the shoes of someone with a visual impairment trying to guess their stop without this technology. If you would like to invite your MP or councillor to take part in a blindfolded journey we recommend you take the following steps:

1. MPs and councillors can only help out people who live within their constituency or local area. Make sure you are contacting the right MP or councillor. If you are not sure, you can check on the following website: [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)
2. Test out the bus journey beforehand:
  - a. Make sure that the journey is not too long and you can return to the initial meeting point within the duration of the meeting.
  - b. Choose a bus route that isn't too busy to make sure you are able to have a seat next to the blindfolded MP or councillor.
3. Try to interview your local politician during the bus journey: if you have a smartphone, you may want to simply ask them some questions about how they are feeling wearing a blindfold and record the short conversation. You could then share it on social media channels, both locally and nationally. Or you can send your audio clip or video to the Guide Dogs Campaigns Team, who may publish it.
4. Involve the local media! (please see the section below for more information).
5. You can contact the Campaigns Team if you need further information on how to best approach your MP. We keep a central log of all contact with MPs, so we would be able to offer tips and information that you can take to your meeting. For more information email [campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk)
6. Send an email afterwards to thank them for their time and remind them of what they agreed to do. If you are going to write about your meeting in a newsletter or on social media, let them know you are doing it.
7. Email [campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk) to let the Campaigns Team know how the blindfolded experience went and whether there's anything we need to follow up on.



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# AV is just

# the ticket

**Get on board and take action for Talking Buses!**

Guide Dogs is campaigning for all new buses to be **Talking Buses** to make public transport accessible for all.

Join the campaign by taking action at:



[www.guidedogs.org.uk/talkingbuses](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/talkingbuses)



[www.facebook.com/CampaignsAtGuideDogs](https://www.facebook.com/CampaignsAtGuideDogs)



[#gdcampaigns #TalkingBuses](https://twitter.com/gdcampaigns)





## Raising public awareness

**The more local residents you can get behind your campaign the more attention it will get...so spread the word!**

Involve as many of your friends, family, neighbours and colleagues as possible. Talk to them about your campaign and ask them to get involved. If you can show support for your campaign it is more likely to be taken seriously by the people you are trying to persuade. Local residents are potential customers for bus companies so they will be keen to hear if lots of people join your campaign. Some ways you can help raise public awareness include:

### Top tips!

#### Top tip!

- Ask for permission: if you are going to stick your posts up on someone else's property (including the council's) make sure you have their permission first.

### Flyers

Distribute flyers highlighting your campaign to local libraries, shops and relevant local clubs and associations. Check the "Resources" section at the end of this toolkit for more details on how to request our campaign flyers such as the "Support our Talking Buses campaign" flyers.



## Start a petition

Petitions can be a very effective way of demonstrating support for your campaign. You could petition your MP or your local bus company. Collect names locally and present them to your target, be it your MP, council or the bus operator, to show the level of local support for your campaign.



### Top tips!

#### Top tip!

- Outline your campaign at the top of the petition with information that describes the situation, and says what is needed and why.



## Events

Attending or running events in your local area will allow you to develop networks with people who can help your campaign. Try to go to as many relevant events as possible in order to meet potential new allies and build partnerships. For example, you could attend events organised by local visually impaired groups that have a specific remit on tackling transport issues, and ask them to get involved with the Talking Buses campaign.



### Top tips!

#### Top tips!

- Try to find out who will be attending the event in order to gather information on the attendees in advance.
- Try to find out who the speakers will be and if there is a possibility you could give a short presentation on Talking Buses.



## Involve the media

Involve the media to raise the profile of your campaign. Your local MP, councillors and bus companies will monitor the local media to keep up to date with local issues: media exposure can therefore be a very effective way of getting the attention of, and putting pressure on, decision makers.

Your local paper is there to report on the issues that matter to local residents. They want to hear from them and are likely to be interested if you have something to contribute. You can get coverage in your local paper in several ways:

### Letter to editor:

Local papers will have a section called "letters to editors" where letters from readers are published. You can choose whether you want them published with your name or anonymously. Share your own bus experiences or those of people you know to raise awareness. Try to be as specific as possible, in order to provide a good case study and story for the paper.



### Guest writer:

Some local newspapers will publish opinion pieces from local residents. This can be a great way to tell your story and about how your campaign impacts on your life, e.g. what an important role buses play in terms of mobility and freedom.



### Invite a local journalist:

If you are running an event (e.g. a blindfolded bus journey) or meeting with your MP you can invite a journalist from your local papers or the local radio to come along and cover your event. Remember to ask whoever you are having a meeting with if that is ok first.



### Press release:

Press releases are public statements sent to journalists. If published, journalists will change your press release into a story. Press releases should normally include a quote which you are happy to be published.



Please refer to page 19 of the Campaign Toolkit for further information on how to approach your local paper.



## Case study

### Case study: successful cooperation

Kelly, Engagement Officer in the East Midlands, has been working with Nottingham City Transport (NCT) on Talking Buses. The bus company has been proactive and determined in their approach to make their services accessible for all. In 2013, for example, they invested resources to ensure all their drivers received sighted guide training in order to support passengers with sight loss. This had a very positive impact on disabled users; an example of this is given by a guide dog owner:



**“Increasingly drivers are calling out to me to let me know which number bus they are driving. On a few occasions, in the city centre where several buses use the same stop, drivers have even got out of their buses and approached me to see if I need their bus. Helpfulness like this makes me feel so much more confident about bus travel.”**

Guide dog owner

NCT is aiming to have 100% of their fleet fitted with AV by 2016, ensuring they lead the way in suburban transport accessibility and ensuring their customers receive great service.

### Top tips!

#### Kelly's top tips!

- Before approaching the bus company do some research. Look for any case studies you could use to highlight the issue.
- Talk to transport service user groups for local information.
- Explain the benefits of AV to the bus company in terms of customer satisfaction.
- Highlight how AV could benefit all passengers, not just people with sight loss.





## Frequently asked questions on Talking Buses

### **Are audio visual systems expensive?**

In 2012, passenger transport experts, The TAS Partnership, found that it costs just £2,100 to install AV on a single-decker bus, or £2,550 for a double-decker. In comparison, a new double-decker bus costs around £190,000. Furthermore, the report says that the cost could be reduced if whole fleets are equipped with the technology.

### **Are bus drivers well-trained to deal with people who are blind or partially sighted?**

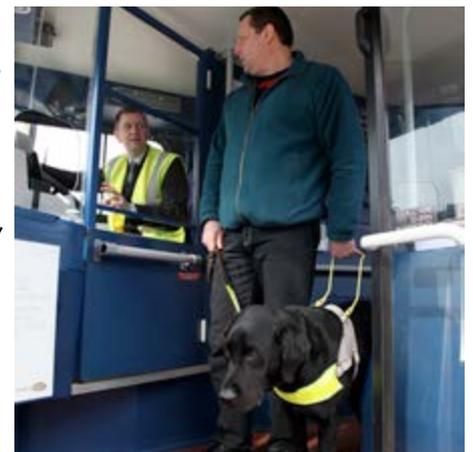
Unfortunately, our research suggests that blind and partially sighted bus passengers are often not getting the support they need from bus drivers.

7 out of 10 blind and partially sighted bus passengers said they missed their stop

because they didn't know where they were on their journey. In addition, 45% of disabled respondents said they believe that their bus driver had received no training on how to respond appropriately to the needs of a disabled passenger.

### **What can I do if I bump into unhelpful or rude bus drivers?**

Please contact your local Guide Dogs mobility team and tell them about your experience, providing as many details as possible (day, time and bus route).



## Are audio visual announcements annoying for other passengers?

We want the next stop and final destination information to be announced, meaning this information should be audible, not loud. Regular bus travellers usually “zone out” or pop in a set of headphones, whereas tourists and infrequent users will be reassured by being given important journey information. An independent polling company asked 1,000 adults in 2013 in the UK whether audible next stop announcements should be compulsory on all buses: 74% said yes.



## What are the benefits to passengers of having audio as well as visual information on buses?

Passengers know exactly where they are on their journey, and when they have reached their stop. They feel in control of their journey and don't have to rely on the driver or other passengers for information. This reduces their anxiety and stress, and makes the journey more pleasant for all passengers.

## What are the benefits to bus operators?

An improved passenger experience and travel standard for all passengers – boosting customer satisfaction and the economy, as more people will be encouraged to use the bus. The bus company Trentbarton, for example, which uses AV buses, found 85% of all passengers think the announcements are useful.

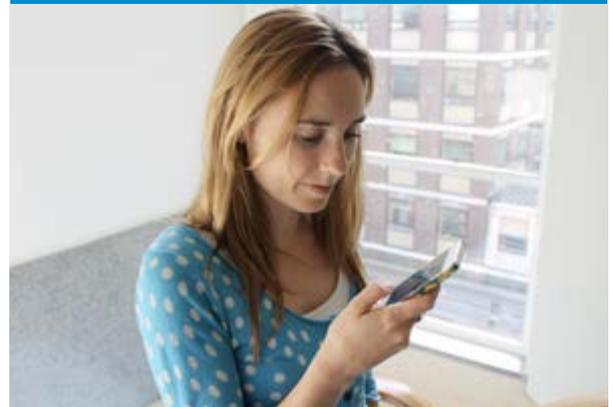
## Can't smartphones and applications replace AV?

Smartphone applications cannot replace AV as not all blind and partially sighted people own such phone, can afford one, or have the ability to use it. Also, these devices are not always reliable if, for example, the battery went flat or in an area with poor phone reception. These limitations have been also recognised by the Transport Minister who said:



**“19% of families with at least one disabled member live in relative income poverty. For them, smartphones may be too expensive or difficult to use”**

Transport Minister, 2014.



## Why should councils and local authorities support Guide Dogs in its campaign for the introduction of audio visual systems?

Audio visual systems will improve services for the majority of people in their local area. Everyone, including people who are blind or partially sighted, will be able to use public transport to get around, confidently and without difficulty. It will encourage visitors to use buses, which is good for tourism and commerce. Not to mention less traffic congestion on local roads!

## Have any bus operators installed audio visual systems to date?

Yes, many operators have already introduced such systems: Transport for London, Reading Buses, Nottingham City Transport and Trentbarton buses in Nottingham, Thamesdown buses in Swindon, and Brighton Buses are some of the many examples around the UK. See [www.guidedogs.org.uk/talkingbusesmap](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/talkingbusesmap) for more details.

## Why hasn't the Government already made it mandatory for audio visual information systems to be installed on buses?

The Government said they have no plans to introduce a new law on AV because they would prefer a voluntary uptake, highlighting the existence of alternative technology (such as smartphone applications) as well as cost concerns. However, the report by the TAS Partnership on the costs of AV revealed that the costs are not high. A former Transport Minister contacted bus operators in the past to encourage the voluntary uptake of AV, but the limited number of buses fitted with this technology nowadays demonstrates that this approach is not working.



## Isn't it equally important to have audible information as well as visual at the bus stop? If so, why are you focusing on on board information?

It is the bus journey itself which causes people who are blind or partially sighted the most difficulties. The installation of audible and

visual information systems on buses looks in the short term to be the most achievable and cost effective solution, considering that the implementation of any infrastructure is likely to be costly. Some companies have installed speakers on the outside of their vehicles so when a bus pulls up at a stop, it informs the waiting passengers about its next stop and final destination. This provides another cost-effective solution to expensive infrastructure.

## When you say "audio visual information system", what exactly do you mean? What do they consist of in terms of hardware and software?

In its simplest form, it could be a display monitor or screen in the passenger area of a bus, with the driver making announcements over a speaker system. A more automated system, incorporating display monitors, audio speakers, and a GPS device to make real time information on the bus' location available, would more than likely be the longer-term solution. The technology is readily available and does not need to be complex to integrate, install or maintain.

## Who is going to be expected to pay for these systems?

Guide Dogs is asking for all new buses to have audio visual systems installed by the manufacturers as standard. This would greatly reduce the cost of retrofitting and savings could be achieved through economy of scale. It would only cost the Government £5.75 million a year to fit all new buses with AV and bring them into line with other forms of public transport.





## Resources

The following documents will help you with your local campaigning activities as they provide key facts, statistics as well as case studies which highlight the issue and why action is needed.

They can be either downloaded from our website or requested as paper copies by emailing [campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk)

- Destination Unknown Report 2014
- Road to Nowhere Report 2013
- Forgotten Passenger Survey 2012
- TAS Partnership report: executive summary
- Top tips for bus drivers
- Campaign Toolkit

On our website you can also download posters and template letters which will give

you some guidance when contacting your local MP, a bus operator or the local paper. Please feel free to make any changes and/or add your own experiences, as the more personalised the more powerful your letter will be.

You can find them online at:  
[www.guidedogs.org.uk/talkingbusesresources](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/talkingbusesresources)





## Contact us

Whether your campaign has been successful or not, it's important to inform the people involved so they know what has happened as a result of their involvement. This 'campaigner support' is crucial in building long term relationships with your campaigners.

Campaigning is always evolving and we can learn a lot from the successes and challenges that you come across in your campaigning activities. Please keep in touch with the Guide Dogs Campaigns Team to let us know how your campaign gets on.



You can keep in touch with us in the following ways:



**0800 028 4348**



**[campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk)**



**[www.facebook.com/CampaignsAtGuideDogs](http://www.facebook.com/CampaignsAtGuideDogs)**



**[@gdcampaigns](https://twitter.com/gdcampaigns)**



**[www.guidedogs.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/campaigns)**



# Take action for Talking Buses!



Audio visual announcements are essential to make buses truly accessible for all. Guide Dogs is campaigning to make all new buses Talking Buses.

Join the campaign by taking action at:



[www.guidedogs.org.uk/talkingbuses](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/talkingbuses)



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A charity registered in England and Wales (209617) and Scotland (SC038979). 7587 08/14

