STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2026 No. 46 (C. 6)

PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT

The Bus Services Act 2025 (Commencement No. 1 and Transitional Provision) Regulations 2026

Made - - - - 20th January 2026

The Secretary of State makes these Regulations in exercise of the powers conferred by section 41(5)(b) and (7) of the Bus Services Act 2025(**a**).

Citation and interpretation

1.—(1) These Regulations may be cited as the Bus Services Act 2025 (Commencement No. 1 and Transitional Provision) Regulations 2026.

(2) In these Regulations—

"the 2000 Act" means the Transport Act 2000(**b**);

"the 2025 Act" means the Bus Services Act 2025.

Provisions coming into force on 26th January 2026

2. The following provisions of the 2025 Act come into force on 26th January 2026—

(a) section 1 (availability of franchising schemes);

(b) section 2 (specification of areas);

(c) section 3 (specification of services);

(d) section 4 (minimum period before provision of services);

(e) section 5 (references to local services);

(f) section 6 (criteria for granting service permits);

(g) section 8 (substitute road services);

(h) section 10 (duty to consult persons with disabilities);

(i) section 11 (variation of schemes);

(j) section 12 (miscellaneous amendments);

(k) section 13 (direct award of contracts to incumbent operators);

(l) section 22 (local government bus companies);

(m) section 23 (grants);

(**a**) 2025 c. 24.
(**b**) 2000 c. 38.

(n) section 32 (duty to provide information to Secretary of State), so far as it relates to an authority that is subject to the duty to have regard to guidance under section 31(7) of the 2025 Act;

(o) the Schedule (procedure for varying franchising scheme), so far as it is not already in force(**a**).

Provisions coming into force on 1st April 2026

3. The following provisions of the 2025 Act come into force on 1st April 2026—

(a) section 14 (socially necessary local services);

(b) section 15 (measures specified in schemes);

(c) section 16 (passenger benefit requirement);

(d) section 17 (variation of schemes);

(e) in section 18 (requirements enabling travel by persons with disabilities)—

(i) subsections (1) to (3);

(ii) subsection (5);

(f) section 19 (objections by operators);

(g) section 20 (advance notice of requirement to provide information);

(h) section 21 (bus network accessibility plans).

Provision coming into force on 1st July 2026

4. Section 18(4) of the 2025 Act comes into force on 1st July 2026.

Transitional provision

5.—(1) Paragraph (2) applies to variations of franchising schemes(**b**) that involve adding an area to the area specified in the scheme under section 123H(2)(a) of the 2000 Act during the period—

(a) beginning with 26th January 2026, and

(b) ending with the day that the first regulations to be made by the Secretary of State under paragraph 4(7) of Schedule 9A to the 2000 Act come into force.

(2) Where this paragraph applies, a franchising authority or authorities(**c**)—

(a) must not follow the requirements for varying a franchising scheme in the 2000 Act as amended by section 11 of, and the Schedule to, the 2025 Act, but

(b) must follow the requirements for varying a franchising scheme in the 2000 Act as if section 11 of, and the Schedule to, the 2025 Act had not been brought into force.

(3) If, in accordance with paragraph (2)(b), a franchising authority or authorities have published a notice under sections 123C and 123M(8) and (9) of the 2000 Act stating that they intend to prepare an assessment of a proposed variation, the requirements for varying a franchising scheme in the 2000 Act continue to apply in relation to that variation until it has effect as if section 11 of, and the Schedule to, the 2025 Act had not been brought into force.

(**a**) The Schedule came into force on the day on which the 2025 Act was passed for the purposes of making regulations.
(**b**) See section 123A(3) of the 2000 Act for the meaning of "franchising scheme".
(**c**) See section 123A(4) of the 2000 Act for the meaning of "franchising authority".

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State for Transport

Simon Lightwood
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Transport

20th January 2026

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations bring into force specified provisions of the Bus Services Act 2025 (c. 24) ("the 2025 Act"). They are the first commencement regulations made under the 2025 Act.

Certain provisions of the 2025 Act came into force on the day the 2025 Act was passed, pursuant to section 41(1) of the 2025 Act. Section 41(4)(a) and (5)(a) also brought certain provisions of the 2025 Act into force for the purposes of making regulations on the day the 2025 Act was passed. Section 31 of the 2025 Act came into force on the day appointed in section 41(2), and section 33 will come into force on the day appointed in section 41(3).

Regulation 2 of these Regulations brings sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 22 and 23 of the 2025 Act into force on 26th January 2026. It also brings section 32 partially into force on that day, and the Schedule to the 2025 Act so far as it is not already in force for the purposes of making regulations by virtue of section 41(5)(a) of the 2025 Act. Sections 1 to 6, 8, 10 to 12, and the Schedule to the 2025 Act amend the Transport Act 2000 (c. 38) ("the 2000 Act") in relation to bus franchising schemes. Section 13 amends the Public Service Obligations in Transport Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/1369) in relation to direct award of local service contracts to incumbent operators under bus franchising schemes. Section 22 makes provision in relation to local government bus companies. Section 23 amends the 2000 Act to insert a power for local transport authorities in England to make grants to operators of specified local services. Section 32 of the 2025 Act is brought into force insofar as it relates to an authority that is subject to the duty to have regard to guidance under section 31(7) of the 2025 Act. It requires authorities subject to that duty to provide specified information to the Secretary of State, on request, and authorises the Secretary of State to publish that information and statements about an authority's compliance with the duty.

Regulation 3 brings sections 14, 15, 16, 17, 18(1)-(3) and (5) and sections 19, 20 and 21 of the 2025 Act into force on 1st April 2026. Sections 14 to 20 of the 2025 Act amend the 2000 Act in relation to enhanced partnership plans and schemes. Section 21 amends the 2000 Act to establish a new requirement for local transport authorities to publish a bus network accessibility plan in relation to their areas.

Regulation 4 brings section 18(4) of the 2025 Act into force on 1st July 2026. Section 18(4) amends the 2000 Act to require local transport authorities to consider specified matters relating to travel by persons with disabilities before varying an enhanced partnership scheme.

Regulation 5 makes transitional provision for certain variations of bus franchising schemes. Where variations of bus franchising schemes involve adding an area to the area specified in the scheme under section 123H(2)(a) of the 2000 Act, the 2000 Act will continue to have effect as if it had not been amended by section 11 of, and the Schedule to, the 2025 Act. This arrangement only applies from 26th January 2026 until the date on which the first regulations made by the Secretary of State under paragraph 4(7) of Schedule 9A to the 2000 Act come into force. This is to allow time for the Secretary of State to make regulations specifying "approved persons" to report on assessments of proposed variations under Part 1 of Schedule 9A.

The remaining provisions of the 2025 Act are not yet in force except where brought into force by sections 41(4)(a) and (5)(a) of the 2025 Act for the purposes of making regulations. So far as not already in force for those purposes, section 38 will come into force on such day as the

Scottish Ministers appoint by regulations. Other provisions will be brought into force on days appointed by the Secretary of State in regulations made under section 41(5)(b) of the 2025 Act.

A full impact assessment has been published in relation to the 2025 Act and copies can be obtained at https://www.legislation.gov.uk/en/ukpga/2025/24/resources or from the Department for Transport at Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 4DR, United Kingdom.

© Crown Copyright 2026

Printed and published in the UK by The Stationery Office Limited under the authority and superintendence of Saul Nassé, Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office and King's Printer of Acts of Parliament.

ISBN 978-0-34-827873-6

£6.40

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/uksi/2026/46

9 780348 278736