

## FAQs

**Q: Who can apply for the Love Your Bus Grant Fund?** A: Only Parish and Town Councils within Essex County Council's administrative area (excluding Southend and Thurrock) can apply.

**Q: What is the maximum grant amount available?** A: The maximum grant amount per project is £50,000.

**Q: How many bids can each council submit?** A: Each council can submit up to three bids.

**Q: Can we submit a joint application with another council?** A: Yes, joint applications are encouraged. However, only the lead Parish/Town Council can submit the application.

**Q: What documents are required for the application?** A: You need to upload the Operator Support Confirmation Letter and County Councillor Support Letter.

**Q: What should be included in the project description?** A: The project description should include objectives, investment details, expected outcomes, specific groups who will benefit, and a sustainability plan.

**Q: Can we include VAT in our costings?** A: If you can reclaim VAT, show all costings exclusive of VAT. If you cannot reclaim VAT, include it in your costings.

**Q: What should be included in the grant spending breakdown?** A: Specify the main areas the grant will be spent on, such as staff costs, resources, equipment, and evaluation, along with the estimated amount for each area.

**Q: How should we handle financial reserves in the application?** A: Be transparent about the amounts held in your unrestricted reserves and justify these reserves with a formally ratified reserves policy. If your unrestricted reserves exceed the level of grant funding you are seeking, explain why those reserves cannot be used to deliver the project.

**Q: What are the reporting requirements if our application is successful?** A: You must agree to measure the impact of your project and send quarterly reports to ECC, including a brief end-of-project report.

**Q: Is this particular funding diverted from other funding sources or is this grant fund separate?** A: The Love Your Bus grant fund is separate and specifically allocated for the 2025/2026 period. It is part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) and is not diverted from other funding sources.

**Q: In cases where a joint application is made from multiple different parishes, is the £50,000 per parish or per project?** A: The grant amount is per project, not per parish. Joint applications are welcome, but the maximum award for any one project remains £50,000, regardless of the number of parishes involved.

**Q: Can each parish make multiple applications for different projects?** A: Yes, each parish can submit up to three applications for different projects. Each project can be up to a maximum of £50,000.

**Q: Can parishes or town councils apply for different types of projects for the same bus service if it runs through several parishes or town councils?** A: Yes, in cases where a bus service runs through several parishes or town councils, they can apply for different types of projects for the same service. However, please note that not all applications will be assessed on an individual basis.

**Q: Can we apply for funding to upgrade bus shelters or digital information displays (RTPIs) through the Love Your Bus grant ?** A: The Love Your Bus grant fund is designed to support projects that improve local bus services, including enhancements like better passenger information through marketing, leaflets, timetables, maps, and community-led engagement events. However, the grant funding is for revenue projects only and does not cover capital projects such as the physical replacement of bus shelters, poles and digital displays.

**Q: Can the Love Your Bus grant fund be used to support a new bus service to replace a withdrawn one?** A: The Love Your Bus grant fund is designed to support existing local bus services and projects that aim to increase passenger numbers, deliver service improvements, attract new passengers, and improve information through marketing and community engagement. Unfortunately, the grant cannot be used to support the creation of entirely new bus services.

**Q: Was there any advance notice that this funding might become available so that parishes could review their bus services and have early discussions about possible projects?** A: The Love Your Bus grant fund was officially announced on December 20, 2024. While there may not have been extensive advance notice, the announcement was made to provide sufficient time for parishes to prepare their applications before the deadline on February 21, 2025. We understand that the timing around the holiday season may have posed challenges for some councils, so we aimed to provide sufficient time for councils to prepare their applications. We appreciate your feedback and will consider it for future funding rounds. (Please note - we extended the deadline by a week, the new closing date for applications is February 21, 2025.)

**Q: Is this grant likely to be available again at a later date?** A: Currently, the Love Your Bus grant fund is specifically allocated for the 2025/2026 period. Depending on the success of the current program and future funding allocations from the Department for Transport, we cannot confirm that, but we will keep you informed of any future grants as they become available.

**Q: How can we find out the names of bus companies that cover the services in our area so we can contact the relevant bus operators?** A: All information on bus services and their transport provider details can be found on our Travel Essex website: [www.travelessex.co.uk](http://www.travelessex.co.uk)

Discover Buses section will allow you to search by service number, and on the same page, you will have the link to the operator. For a full list of operators and their contact details, please go to: [Or full list of operators and their contact details please go to: Transport providers in Essex | Travel Essex](#)

**Q: Can we apply for a grant under the 'Love Your Bus Grant Fund' to improve the frequency of services in our Parish?** A: Yes, the fund supports projects that aim to increase passenger numbers, deliver service improvements, attract new passengers, and improve information through marketing and community engagement. Projects will be assessed to ensure they are deliverable (i.e., non-material changes).

**Q: Is this scheme the one mentioned in the Transport Meeting where funds were becoming available for buses?** A: Yes, the Love Your Bus Grant Fund is part of the funding initiatives discussed in the Transport Meeting. It is designed to support and enhance local bus services within Parish and Town Councils across Essex. The objective of the fund is to enable Parish and Town Councils to invest in measures that will increase patronage on the bus service or services that serve their communities. Suitable measures include:

- Attracting new passengers through marketing, leaflets, timetables, maps, and/or community-led engagement events.
- Service enhancements such as increasing bus service frequency during peak hours, introducing late-night or early-morning services, and/or creating new route extensions to connect underserved areas to key destinations.
- Community engagement and promotions through targeted marketing campaigns, community-led engagement events, and/or school and community group partnerships.
- Passengers experience improvements by providing information on bus routes and schedules using maps, leaflets, posters, and/or other accessible formats.

**Q: What are our chances of getting any improvements to existing services?** A: The chances of getting improvements to existing services depend on the strength and alignment of your application with the fund's objectives. The Love Your Bus grant fund aims to support projects that demonstrate clear benefits to the community, such as increased passenger numbers, improved service frequency, and enhanced passenger experience. Ensuring that your application is well-prepared and aligns with these objectives will increase your chances of success.

**Q: What information is required for the application, and why can't I access page 2 until page 1 is completed?** A: The application form is designed to ensure that all necessary information is provided in a structured manner, and once the application process has been started, it needs to be completed in one sitting. We have now attached an electronic PDF document that can be downloaded and seen in full to help with the application process. The electronic form of the full application document will be sent with this update to all Councils registered on our database as well as published in the News section on our Travel Essex website: <https://www.travelessex.co.uk/news> and available in Important documents on the application page as well: <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/iptu/84145fad>

**Q: Can the grant be used to improve service frequency and coverage, and how would this work in practice?** A: Yes, the grant can be used to improve service frequency and coverage, which aligns with the fund's objectives to enhance local bus services. The grant funds would be allocated to the Parish Council, and you would deal directly with the bus provider. In practice, this means that the Parish Council would need to coordinate with the bus provider to implement the improvements. You may need to draw up a contract with the bus company to outline the terms and conditions of the service improvements and ensure compliance with the grant requirements.

**Q: Can we engage with community groups to raise awareness about bus services in our Parish?** A: Yes, engaging with community groups to raise awareness about the bus services in your Parish is an excellent approach. This can help in spreading the word and addressing any concerns or misconceptions about the services. Community engagement is a key component of the Love

**Q: Can we advertise bus services at bus stops with route maps and ticket information?**

A: Yes, you can advertise bus services at bus stops by creating route maps and displaying bus ticket information. Collaborating with transport provider to gather the necessary information and ensure it is up to date will be essential. Utilising the notice board space at bus stops for this purpose can effectively inform the public about available services and encourage bus usage. This aligns with the Love Your Bus grant fund's aim to improve information through marketing, leaflets, timetables, and maps

**Q: What are essential criteria to apply for the Love Your Bus grant?** A: To apply for the Love Your Bus grant, you need to meet the following criteria:

- **Bus Service Number:** You must provide the service number of the bus route you are looking to support or improve.
- **Support from the Transport Provider:** You need to have the support of the transport provider operating the service. This includes a letter of support from the operator confirming their commitment to the project and their agreement to meet the data-sharing requirements
- **Support from a County Councillor:** You must have the support of your local County Councillor. This includes a letter or email confirming their support for your project.

**Q: What will strengthen our application to secure Love your bus Grant Funding?** A: Your application will be evaluated based on the following criteria: (Not all will need to be met fully)

- **Clear Objectives and Outcomes:** Clearly define the objectives of your project and the expected outcomes. Explain how the project will achieve these objectives and the specific benefits it will bring to the community.
- **Detailed Project Plan:** Provide a detailed project plan that outlines the steps you will take to implement the project. Include timelines, key milestones, and responsibilities to demonstrate thorough planning and organization.
- **Evidence of Need:** Provide evidence of the need for your project. This could include community surveys, feedback from residents, or data on current bus service usage and gaps. Demonstrating a clear need will strengthen your case for funding.
- **Alignment with Strategic Goals:** Show how your project aligns with Essex County Council's strategic goals, such as improving access to education, healthcare, reducing car journeys, and promoting independence. This alignment can make your application more compelling.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Highlight any partnerships or collaborations with other organizations, such as bus user groups, schools, community groups, businesses, clubs, or charities. Demonstrating strong partnerships can show broader community support and resources for your project.
- **Community Engagement:** Demonstrate how you have engaged with the community in the design and planning of your project. Include any feedback or input you have received from residents and how it has shaped your project.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Outline your plans for monitoring and evaluating the impact of your project. Explain how you will measure success and the metrics you will use to track progress. Quarterly reporting and a brief end-of-project report will be required.

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- **Financial Transparency:** Be transparent about the amounts held in your unrestricted reserves and provide a clear breakdown of total project costs and where funding will be allocated.
- **Match funding is not required**, but it is helpful to know if you are willing to contribute additional resources to the project.
- **Project Monitoring and Evaluation:** Outline how you will monitor and evaluate the impact of your project. Quarterly reporting and a brief end-of-project report will be required.