# UK transport faces upheaval as bus and Tube strikes escalate over pay and safety concerns



Britain is facing significant transport disruption as thousands of bus drivers across the country prepare to strike alongside London Underground workers, threatening to bring many towns and cities to a standstill. Unite, the union representing around 7,500 bus drivers, has confirmed that strikes are already underway in several locations, including West London, Bristol, Cardiff, and Swindon, with further widespread action expected in the coming weeks. The disputes centre on pay and challenging working conditions that Unite argues have pushed drivers to breaking point.

Unite's general secretary, Sharon Graham, described the daily stresses faced by bus drivers, highlighting issues such as fatigue, lack of adequate toilet facilities, and frequent abuse or assaults. She emphasised that driver pay does not reflect these difficult conditions and vowed to fight for wage and conditions improvements across the sector. Since January 2023, Unite has been involved in 167 bus disputes affecting more than 42,000 workers, underscoring widespread dissatisfaction within the industry.

At the same time, London is bracing for unprecedented disruption on the Tube, as the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union has called a week-long rolling strike from 5 to 11 September. Different groups of staff, including drivers, signallers, engineers, and station staff, will strike on different days, effectively crippling the network throughout the week. The Docklands Light Railway (DLR) will also be hit by strike action starting on 7 September. RMT's general secretary, Eddie Dempsey, emphasised the serious health impacts of extreme shift patterns and fatigue on members, alongside unresolved issues such as staff travel arrangements and job security, which have fostered an atmosphere of distrust towards management.

Further planned Tube strikes are scheduled for 4 and 6 October, with Transport for London (TfL) warning of severe disruption across the network. Most services will be heavily affected or halted on these days, with recovery disruptions extending into 5 and 7 October. TfL has advised passengers to consider alternative routes, such as the Elizabeth line, London Overground, DLR, and London Trams, which are expected to be busier than usual. These strikes stem from a long-running dispute over changes to station operations and staff reductions.

Of particular concern for the RMT is the proposal to cut up to 600 station and maintenance staff positions across the Tube network, a move the union argues will raise safety risks due to increased lone working and higher workloads. Safety concerns related to these job cuts have been central to the union's dispute over the past year, encompassing pay, working conditions, and the impact of staff shortages on service standards.

The planned industrial action occurs amidst a broader wave of unrest affecting not only London's transport networks but also national rail services. Strikes and overtime bans by drivers, including Aslef union members, have been scheduled to coincide with major events, such as the Conservative party conference in Manchester, highlighting the widespread nature of the transport sector disquiet.

Recent talks have seen some progress, with the RMT calling off certain strikes after "significant progress" in discussions with London Underground at the Acas conciliation service, though key issues like pensions and working agreements remain unresolved. TfL continues engagement with unions to find resolutions but has warned that disruption will persist as negotiations continue.

Overall, the combination of bus driver walkouts across the UK and sustained London Underground strikes underlines the severity of labour unrest in the transport sector. The disputes reflect deeper issues around pay adequacy, working conditions, health and safety concerns, and job security, with the potential to cause significant travel chaos in the weeks ahead as unions push hard for their demands to be addressed.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2099779/strike-chaos-bus-drivers-tube-drivers-rmt-unite), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tube-strikes-dates-times-lines-b1243967.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2099779/strike-chaos-bus-drivers-tube-drivers-rmt-unite), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tube-strikes-dates-times-lines-b1243967.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2099779/strike-chaos-bus-drivers-tube-drivers-rmt-unite), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tube-strikes-dates-times-lines-b1243967.html), [[6]](https://www.bbc.com/news/business-66231905)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2023/september/tfl-advises-customers-to-consider-alternative-routes-during-planned-rmt-strikes), [[5]](https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/london-underground-station-staff-to-take-strike-action-in/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/london-underground-station-staff-to-take-strike-action-in/), [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2099779/strike-chaos-bus-drivers-tube-drivers-rmt-unite)
* Paragraph 6 – [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/sep/29/train-and-tube-strikes-week-of-disruption-looms-for-passengers)
* Paragraph 7 – [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/oct/03/london-underground-planned-tube-strikes-rmt), [[6]](https://www.bbc.com/news/business-66231905), [[2]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2023/september/tfl-advises-customers-to-consider-alternative-routes-during-planned-rmt-strikes)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2099779/strike-chaos-bus-drivers-tube-drivers-rmt-unite> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2023/september/tfl-advises-customers-to-consider-alternative-routes-during-planned-rmt-strikes> - Transport for London (TfL) has announced that planned strike action by RMT members on 4 and 6 October 2023 will cause severe disruption across the Tube network. Most services will be severely impacted or not run on these days, with additional disruption expected on 5 and 7 October as the network recovers. Alternative routes, including the Elizabeth line, London Overground, DLR, and London Trams, are scheduled to operate as normal but may be busier than usual. TfL continues to engage with unions to resolve the dispute over proposed changes to station operations.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/sep/29/train-and-tube-strikes-week-of-disruption-looms-for-passengers> - A week of disruption for rail passengers is imminent, with a mix of strikes and overtime bans by train drivers and Tube workers set to halt and delay many services until next Friday. Virtually no trains will run in England on Saturday and Wednesday, when members of the Aslef union strike on national rail, targeting the start and end of the Conservative party conference in Manchester. The RMT union has also announced strikes on the Tube on Wednesday and Friday over plans to reduce staff numbers by up to 600 posts to save costs.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tube-strikes-dates-times-lines-b1243967.html> - London Underground workers are set to stage a series of strikes for seven days beginning on 5 September 2023, in a dispute over pay and conditions. The Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) stated that management had refused to engage seriously with its demands on pay, fatigue management, shift patterns, and a reduction in the working week. In a separate dispute over pay and conditions, workers on London's Docklands Light Railway (DLR) will also be striking in the week beginning 7 September.
5. <https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/london-underground-station-staff-to-take-strike-action-in/> - The Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) has announced strike action on the London Underground on 4 and 6 October 2023 over job losses and safety concerns. The union has been in a long-running dispute over 600 station staff cuts and detrimental working conditions since the previous year. Safety concerns have been raised regarding fewer staff facing higher workloads, more lone working, and increased fatigue. The planned job losses will affect every aspect of the Tube, including stations and maintenance, leading to the likelihood of more unstaffed stations and a lowering of safety standards.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-66231905> - London Underground drivers and staff are set to go on strike as part of a dispute over pensions, jobs, and conditions. Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (RMT) members will walk out from 23 July until 28 July 2023. Aslef and Unite union members will strike on 26 and 28 July. Rail services are also set to be affected by industrial action being held by both Aslef and RMT members. Glynn Barton, TfL's chief operating officer, stated that the company was 'continuing to talk with trade unions to discuss the issues and seek a resolution'.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/oct/03/london-underground-planned-tube-strikes-rmt> - The RMT union had planned strikes on London Underground on Wednesday and Friday, closing the Tube over plans to reduce staff numbers by up to 600 posts to save costs. The union announced that the strikes had been called off after 'significant progress' in talks with London Underground at conciliation service Acas, although there were still elements of dispute and wider negotiations continued over pensions and working agreements.