# London bus network faces crisis as complaints surge and service reliability plummets



London’s bus network, long the backbone of daily transportation for countless Londoners, is now under scrutiny for its declining service levels and reliability issues. Recent analysis exposes a pattern of persistent complaints, with some routes beset by delays, overcrowding, and operational failures that threaten to undermine confidence in this vital transport system.

One particularly troubling example is Route 65, linking Ealing Broadway with Kingston. In the past year alone, it received a staggering 443 complaints, with buses crawling along at an average speed of just 7.4 mph during rush hours—a clear sign of systemic inefficiency. Other key routes such as 14, 265, 93, and 154 frequently feature in passenger grievance lists, signalling a widespread failure rooted in underinvestment and mismanagement. Instead of addressing these issues head-on, authorities seem content to ignore the chronic state of decline, prioritizing corporate interests over the needs of hardworking Londoners. It’s high time for a serious overhaul—passengers deserve dependable, punctual services, not excuses used to justify neglect.

Historical data reflects a long-standing pattern of underperformance. Back in 2012, the No. 262 route between Stratford and Beckton was singled out as one of the worst performers, suffering from infrequent arrivals due to ongoing roadworks and infrastructure problems. Those issues remain unresolved, with traffic congestion and ill-planned construction worsening punctuality throughout the city. Numerous bus stops in busy districts such as Angel Islington and South Kensington still see fewer than 10% of buses arriving on time, illustrating that the fundamental flaws in planning and maintenance remain unaddressed. The chaos on London’s streets isn’t just a matter of inconvenience—it’s a failure of leadership and vision.

Passenger frustrations extend beyond delays, spilling into concerns over driver behaviour and operational standards. Reports from Kensal Town on the No. 18 bus reveal drivers occasionally failing to stop at designated stops, eroding trust in the entire system. While operators claim such incidents are rare, Transport for London’s own rules demand consistent stopping for waiting passengers unless the bus is full—a standard that appears increasingly ignored. Decades of complaints about rude drivers and missed stops along routes like 73 and 38 lay bare the systemic neglect that plagues London’s bus services. This isn’t just about punctuality; it’s about respect and dignity for those who rely on these buses daily.

Fixing these entrenched problems requires a fundamental shift—more investment in infrastructure, tighter operational oversight, and strategic planning that puts passengers first. The current decline isn’t just a matter of inconvenient delays; it’s a reflection of a transport system that has been starved of proper resources and accountability. If London is to remain a world-class city, its buses must deliver reliable, safe, and courteous service—something that, today, remains desperately out of reach. Politicians and authorities must wake up and act decisively, or risk losing the trust of the very people who depend on these services to keep city life moving.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/worst-bus-routes-london-revealed-complaints-tfl-bobby-dean-b1237220.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/worst-bus-routes-london-revealed-complaints-tfl-bobby-dean-b1237220.html> - An article from the Evening Standard detailing the bus routes in London that receive the most complaints from passengers. It highlights Route 65, which runs between Ealing Broadway and Kingston, as the most complained-about route, with 443 complaints in the last 12 months and an average speed of 7.4mph during rush hour. The article also mentions other routes with high complaint numbers, such as Route 14, 265, 93, and 154. The piece includes statements from Bobby Dean, a Liberal Democrat MP, who emphasizes the need for investment in the bus network and accountability for underperforming routes.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/hp/front/watchdog-lifts-lid-on-london-s-worst-bus-services-6482723.html> - A 2012 article from the Evening Standard revealing London's worst-performing bus services, as identified by the capital's travel watchdog. The No. 262 route between Stratford and Beckton was named the poorest performer, with buses typically arriving 6.8 minutes apart instead of the scheduled 5.1 minutes. Other routes highlighted include No. 30 between Hackney Wick and Marble Arch, and No. 228 linking Maida Hill and Park Royal. The article discusses the impact of roadworks on bus reliability and the need for better planning of diversions for high-frequency routes.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c97227d6d0qo> - A BBC News article from January 2024 reporting on passenger frustrations with the No. 18 bus route in Kensal Town, north-west London. Commuters have complained that the bus sometimes does not stop at designated stops, even when passengers are waiting. The bus operator, RATP Dev, stated that the number of such complaints was 'relatively small.' The article also mentions that Transport for London's policy requires drivers to stop at all bus stops if there are passengers waiting, unless the bus is full.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/london-s-worst-bus-stops-where-only-one-in-10-run-on-time-revealed-a3819176.html> - An article from the Evening Standard revealing London's least reliable bus stops, where fewer than one in ten services are on time. The study, conducted by big-data firm Kognitio, found that buses at the Percival Street stop towards Angel Islington were on time only 7.57% of the time. Other poorly performing stops include Harrington Road towards South Kensington and Bishopsgate towards St Paul’s. The article discusses the impact of roadworks and other factors on bus reliability and the need for better planning and management of bus services.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-14856117> - A BBC News article from October 2011 reporting on the rise in complaints against London's bus drivers. The article reveals that there were 66,000 complaints in the last three years, with the number of complaints increasing each year. Passengers most commonly complained about drivers being rude or failing to stop. The article also provides a breakdown of the ten bus routes that generated the most complaints, including Route 73, 38, 19, 94, and 188.
7. <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/bus-routes-complaints> - A London Assembly document from October 2010 listing the ten bus routes most often complained about by passengers to Transport for London (TfL) or via Assembly members for overcrowding and poor performance. The routes include 65, C10, 81, 9, 93, 320, 94, 220, 24, and 275. The document discusses the impact of roadworks on bus reliability and the need for better planning and management of bus services to address these issues.