# London bus strike highlights widening pay gap amid cost-of-living crisis



Over 350 bus workers employed by London Transit are set to strike on September 26 and 29, 2025, after a pay offer from First Bus was rejected for failing to keep pace with inflation. The action, primarily affecting routes from Westbourne Park depot—including the 13, 23, 31, N31, 218, 295, and 452—raises serious questions about the priorities of private transport companies profiting at the expense of hardworking staff. This strike highlights the growing disconnect between corporate profits and the real cost-of-living crisis facing London’s transport workers, who are increasingly fed up with being undervalued and underpaid.

First Bus has issued warnings that service on affected routes will be minimal or non-existent during strike days, prompting commuters to prepare for significant disruption. While alternative travel options will be available, the inconvenience caused underscores the reckless disregard these companies show for workers and passengers alike. Passengers are advised to check updates via the Transport for London (TfL) website or the TfL Go app, but no amount of technological advice can mask the fact that these strikes expose a deeply unfair system.

This latest industrial action is part of a broader pattern of disputes across London's bus sector, where workers have repeatedly rejected offers they see as inadequate in the face of soaring inflation. In North and East London, over 1,700 Arriva bus drivers walked out earlier this year after rejecting a 7% pay increase, which was seen as a slap in the face given inflation’s real rate of around 11.4%. These drivers, earning roughly £13.65 an hour, are fighting for decent wages that keep pace with rising costs, a demand seemingly ignored by profit-driven corporations. Similarly, in mid-2024, around 1,600 drivers at London United threatened strikes over a 3% pay offer, which union leaders rightly argued represented a real-terms pay cut.

Despite these ongoing disputes, some wins have been achieved. Earlier in 2023, over 1,800 bus drivers working for Abellio secured an 18% pay rise—an important victory for fair compensation and a sign that workers deserve more than the crumbs offered by private companies eager to extract profit. This included increases for overtime and extra hours, yet the fight continues, especially for bus controllers and other staff who still face pay offers below inflation—highlighting the persistent undervaluing of front-line workers in London's transport system.

Unite and other unions have been vocal in condemning the systemic undervaluing of bus workers, arguing that these companies prioritize profits over their employees’ wellbeing. The union maintains that fair pay isn’t just about education or dignity—it’s essential for the safe and efficient running of public transport, especially as the city endures economic hardship and a mounting cost-of-living crisis. That the profits of parent companies continue to surge while staff struggle to make ends meet exposes a blatant disparity that demands urgent action.

As the London Transit strike approaches, thousands of daily passengers will face delays and overcrowding, a stark reminder of the social inequality perpetuated by private sector transport profiteering. While TfL’s advice to plan ahead is well-intentioned, it does little to mask the frustration among workers and passengers alike, who see these strikes as a clear signal that London’s transport system must be taken out of the hands of greedy corporations and placed under genuine public control. The ongoing disputes reveal that pay rises and fair treatment are long overdue, and the continued refusal to address workers’ demands exposes the true priorities of those who run London’s transport—profits before people.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/over-350-london-bus-workers-to-strike-over-pay-dispute-b1249720.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/over-350-london-bus-workers-to-strike-over-pay-dispute-b1249720.html> - Over 350 bus workers employed by London Transit are set to strike on September 26 and 29, 2025, after rejecting a below-inflation pay offer from First Bus. The strike will affect routes from the Westbourne Park depot, including 13, 23, 31, N31, 218, 295, and 452. Unite union officials criticise the company's disregard for workers amid the cost-of-living crisis. First Bus London anticipates minimal service on these routes and advises passengers to plan ahead, allowing extra time for their journeys. Alternative travel options are available, but other routes may experience increased congestion. Passengers are encouraged to check the TfL website or the TfL Go app for updates.
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2023-06-06/arriva-bus-drivers-to-strike-for-4-days-after-rejecting-7-pay-offer> - Unite union announced that over 1,700 Arriva bus drivers in London will strike on June 20, 21, 27, and 28, 2023, after rejecting a 7% pay offer. The strike is expected to disrupt routes in North and East London, including garages at Ash Grove, Barking, Clapton, Edmonton, Enfield, Palmers Green, Tottenham, and Wood Green. Drivers, starting at £13.65 per hour, argue the offer is inadequate given the real inflation rate of 11.4%. Unite general secretary Sharon Graham criticises Arriva's priorities, urging fair pay for workers over dividends to the German government.
4. <https://news.sky.com/story/london-abellio-bus-drivers-end-strike-action-after-18-pay-increase-12810243> - Over 1,800 London bus drivers employed by Abellio have accepted an 18% pay increase, ending a prolonged dispute. The new pay deal, effective from February 13, 2023, raises hourly rates to £18 for drivers with over two years' service. Unite general secretary Sharon Graham describes the agreement as an 'important pay victory,' highlighting the workers' resilience and the union's focus on improving pay and conditions. The deal also includes hikes to overtime and other additional rates, addressing the drivers' demands for fair compensation.
5. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/01/18/hfdm-j18.html> - Abellio bus drivers in London continue strike action after rejecting a below-inflation pay award. The dispute centres on a December 31 pay award of approximately 12% for new starters and 18% for senior drivers, which drivers argue is insufficient given the real inflation rate. The strike is set to continue with further stoppages planned, as drivers demand a pay increase that reflects the rising cost of living and compensates for years of wage suppression.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3g08qn0j79o> - In July 2024, about 1,600 London bus drivers employed by London United were balloted for strike action over a 3% pay offer, which the Unite union deemed a real-terms pay cut. The dispute also involves plans to impose an 'unacceptable scheduling agreement.' Unite general secretary Sharon Graham criticises RATP, the parent company, for not offering reasonable pay increases to its London workers, despite being a multi-billion-pound company.
7. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/abellio-london-bus-controllers-strike-unite-pay-row-b1154454.html> - In April 2024, 40 bus controllers working for Abellio in Twickenham and Battersea planned an eight-day strike over a 5% pay increase offer for 2023, which the Unite union considered a substantial real-terms pay cut. The strike was set to affect routes primarily in south and south-west London, including 24, 27, 111, 156, 159, 267, 285, 322, 344, 345, 415, 490, 969, H20, H25, H26, R68, and R70. The union highlighted that workers already earned approximately £10,000 less than similar staff at other bus companies.