



Department  
for Transport

From the Secretary of State  
**The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP**

Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

Mr Simon Milburn  
Area Coroner for  
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough  
Lawrence Court  
Princes Street  
Huntingdon  
PE29 3PA

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21 March 2024

Dear Mr Milburn,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths dated 24 January, sent to the Department for Transport following the conclusion of your inquest into the death of Brian William Chapman. I am sorry to hear of the tragic death of Mr Chapman, for which I offer my sincere condolences to his family and friends.

Travel by bus and coach is one of the safest modes of road transport in Great Britain. That said, the Department is committed to improving safety for all bus passengers using appropriate vehicle construction standards and ensuring the safe operation of vehicles.

Our national regulations set the minimum construction standards for new road vehicles and utilise a number of specifications that are harmonised with the wider international community. Since 2001, seat belts have been required for each forward and rearward facing seat in all new buses. The only exemption from the mandatory requirement to fit seatbelts is for buses designed to carry standing passengers. These tend to travel at moderate speeds on urban routes and are relatively heavy when compared to most of the adjacent traffic. This means that seat belts would have only a very limited road safety benefit and are not required to ensure comparable levels of protection between seated and standing passengers.

Once a bus is approved for use there are no specific regulations to restrict the type of roads it can use and for standard bus services it is for the operator to choose the type of vehicle used to provide a given service, and this should take account of the type of intended operation. Exceptions to this cover

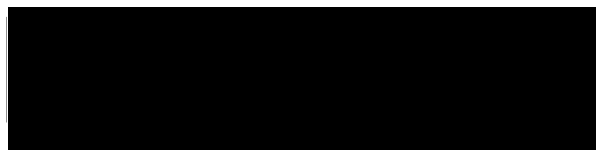
contracted or tendered services where the local transport authority can specify the type of vehicles or equipment to be used, which could include requiring only vehicles fitted with seat belts.

Traffic Commissioners are responsible for licensing and regulation of those who operate buses and the registration of most bus services. On the request of a local transport authority, a traffic commissioner can consider the potential use of Traffic Regulation Conditions (TRCs) to prevent danger to road users. It would be for the individual traffic commissioners to determine whether their powers could extend to the use of a TRC to restrict certain buses from particular roads.

Overall, we believe the existing regulatory framework is appropriate as it harmonises vehicle construction with the wider international community and provides proportionate safeguards whilst ensuring the legislative landscape is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of the local community. This ensures the economic viability and sustainability of bus services, which in turn supports social inclusion and the local economy, particularly in rural areas.

Finally, my officials will write immediately to the CPT, the trade body which represents bus and coach operators, highlighting the importance for their members in selecting appropriate vehicles based on the type of bus service operated, including full consideration of using only vehicles fitted with seat belts. At that same time they will also write to the Office of the Traffic Commissioner to raise awareness of this issue.

Yours sincerely,

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**The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP**

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**