

Light Rail and Tram Statistics: England 2012/13



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Key findings: Passenger journeys increase, with most growth in London

Light rail use in England continued to increase in 2012/13, with both passenger journeys and vehicle miles reaching the highest levels recorded in the modern era, according to statistics from the Department for Transport.

222 million passenger journeys were made in total on the eight systems, 18 million (9%) more than during the previous year.

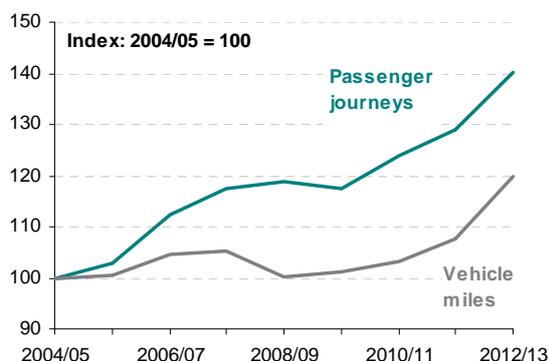
Nearly 60 per cent of passenger journeys were on the two London systems. The Docklands Light Railway (DLR) alone carried 14 million more passengers than in 2011/12, with additional use during the London Olympics contributing to this growth.

Outside London, the picture was mixed with more passengers on the expanding Manchester Metrolink and the re-opened Blackpool tramway, but falling or steady passenger numbers on the four systems where operated route mileage did not increase compared to the previous year.

Overall, growth in passenger journeys largely mirrored increased vehicle miles in 2012/13, with more services run in Docklands, Manchester and Blackpool contributing to 11% annual growth in mileage operated, the greatest single year rise since the most recent new system was opened in Nottingham in 2004.



Photo: Supated/Alamy



222 million light rail journeys in 2012/13

A **9% increase** on the previous year

45% of these journeys (100 million) were on the Docklands Light Railway

About this release

This Statistical Release presents information on light rail and tram systems in England during the 2012/13 financial year. Figures are updated annually and cover usage, infrastructure and revenue.

This publication covers 8 urban systems that are predominantly surface-running. The London underground, classed as underground system, and smaller systems (e.g. heritage railways and airport transit systems) are *not* included. A list of the systems covered can be found in the key figures table on page 2.

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Key figures

The table summarises the latest figures, showing the change since the previous year. Figures for Manchester and Blackpool reflect expansion of the systems (increased route miles) in 2012/13.

	Passenger journeys	Vehicle miles	Passenger revenue
<i>2012/13 figure (m=millions) and change compared to the previous year</i>			
England	222.5m ↑ 9%	16.1m ↑ 11%	£268.7m ↑ 13%
London systems	130.1m ↑ 13%	5.4m ↑ 13%	£147.4m ↑ 15%
Docklands Light Railway	100.0m ↑ 16%	3.6m ↑ 17%	£124.9m ↑ 17%
Croydon Tramlink	30.1m ↑ 5%	1.8m ↑ 7%	£22.5m ↑ 5%
Non-London systems	92.3m ↑ 2%	10.8m ↑ 10%	£121.3m ↑ 10%
Nottingham Express Transit	7.4m ↓ 18%	0.7m ↔ 0%	£8.5m ↓ 1%
Midland Metro	4.8m ↓ 1%	1.0m ↓ 1%	£7.8m ↑ 4%
Sheffield Supertram	14.4m ↓ 4%	1.5m ↑ 1%	£14.4m ↓ 7%
Tyne and Wear Metro	37.0m ↓ 2%	3.4m ↓ 3%	£43.6m ↑ 2%
Manchester Metrolink	25.0m ↑ 12%	3.6m ↑ 27%	£42.0m ↑ 23%
Blackpool Tramway	3.7m ↑ 243%	0.5m ↑ 360%	£5.0m ↑ 187%

Detailed statistical tables are available online via the [light rail and tram statistical series](#)

- [Irt01](#): light rail usage including passenger journeys and miles, vehicle miles and occupancy
- [Irt02](#): light rail infrastructure covering route miles, stations/stops and vehicles
- [Irt03](#): light rail revenue

Commentary

Usage

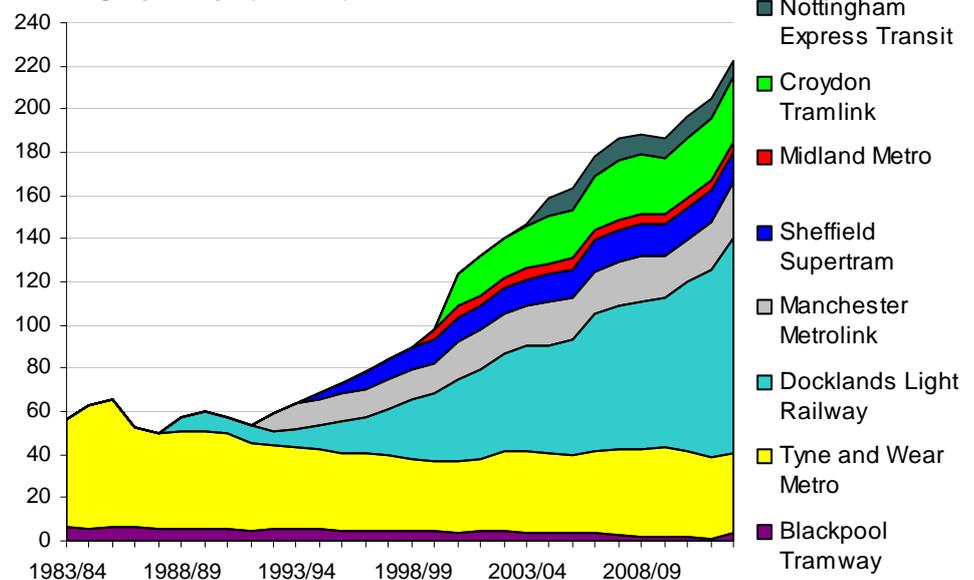
Light rail demand in England, measured by number of passenger journeys, reached a new modern-era peak of 222 million journeys in 2012/13.

This represents an increase of 40% since 2004/05 when the most recent new system was opened in Nottingham, with passenger numbers growing in each year since then except 2009/10.

Light rail in context

The 8 light rail systems covered here accounted for around 2.5% of total public transport journeys in Great Britain in 2011/12 ([tsgb0102](#)).

Passenger journeys (millions)



This increase has been driven by growth in London, with the two systems in the capital, DLR and Croydon, showing a combined increase of 80% since 2004/05 (accounting for 58 million of the overall 64 million increase in journeys in England), whilst patronage outside London has increased by 7%, or 6 million journeys over the same period, with a broadly flat trend.

The majority of the increase over the latest year (2012/13) was again due to London, in particular the DLR, which now accounts for 45% of all light rail journeys in England.



Changes in demand (passenger journeys) broadly reflect changes in supply, measured by vehicle mileage run, which has grown by over 50% in London, but 9% outside London since 2004/05.

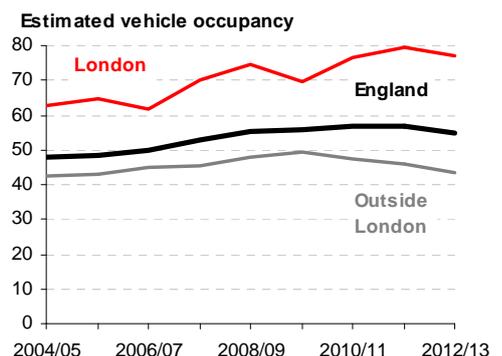


Additional DLR services (including during the 2012 Olympics), the re-opening of the Blackpool tramway following partial closures for upgrade work and the opening of further sections of the Manchester Metrolink meant that 2012/13 saw the greatest single year increase in mileage run since 2004/05.

The latest figures indicate that average occupancy¹ fell in 2012/13, with decreases for 5 of the 8 systems, including the DLR. This illustrates the contribution of additional services to the growth in passenger numbers.

Between 2004/05 and 2009/10, vehicle occupancy on light rail systems increased, both inside and outside London, suggesting that passenger demand was increasing at a faster rate than service provision. While occupancy continued to increase in London after 2009/10, it has steadily fallen elsewhere. This broadly coincides with the economic downturn, which may be a factor.

Besides wider economic conditions, use of individual systems by passengers and the revenue generated can be affected by more localised changes, such as the availability and price of particular ticket types and discount fares. For example, in Nottingham in 2012/13, passenger journeys had dropped by approximately 18% but revenue had stayed at about the same level because of an increase in ticket prices and more revenue protection exercises.



Concessionary passengers made 13% of total light rail journeys in 2012/13, a similar proportion to 2011/12. This is a much smaller proportion than for buses, where more than a third of passengers

¹ Calculated as passenger miles divided by vehicle miles to estimate persons per vehicle.

are concessionary, and varies by system from 4% of DLR journeys to over 30% of journeys on the Blackpool and Sheffield systems.

All the light rail and tram schemes in England currently offer free off-peak travel to older and disabled residents in their local authority area; this is on a statutory basis in London and a discretionary basis elsewhere. This compares to buses where free concessionary travel for older and disabled people is statutory anywhere in England.

Infrastructure

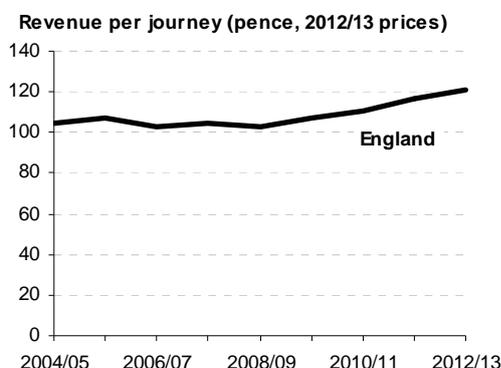
The re-opening of the Blackpool tramway (where route mileage returned to previous levels following temporary closure) and extensions to the Manchester Metrolink, represent the only changes to light rail track infrastructure operational during 2012/13. In rolling stock, six new tramcars were introduced on the Croydon tramlink.

Light rail infrastructure at March 2013:

182 route miles ↑ 14% on March 2012
340 stations/stops ↑ 9%
421 carriages/tram cars ↑ 4%

Revenue

Overall light rail and tram revenue grew 13% in real terms in 2012/13 compared with the previous year. This exceeded the 9% increase in passenger journeys, so that revenue per journey continued to increase in real terms, reaching 121 pence per journey (this is broadly the same level as for buses). There was an increase in revenue per journey of 5.9 pence (5.1%) at current prices between 2011/12 and 2012/13.



Related information

- Light rail is shown **alongside other modes** of public transport in the annual Transport Statistics Great Britain, in table [tsgb0102](#) (journeys) and the [public transport chapter](#).
- Statistics for the two **underground systems** in Great Britain are available separately, in tables [lrt99](#) - lrt9901 (London) and lrt9902 (Glasgow)
- Information on **accidents** involving light rail vehicles where they run on the public highway is covered by the Department's reported road casualty statistics. For further information please contact roadacc.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk
- Some details of characteristics of **users** of light rail systems can be obtained from the National Travel Survey. Figures are available on request from national.travelsurvey@dft.gsi.gov.uk
- Information on operating costs is not collected. The Department for Transport published a report in September 2011 which includes information on **construction costs** of the systems covered by these statistics.

Background information

Users and uses of these statistics

These statistics are collected to provide information on light rail systems within England to enable monitoring of trends in passenger journeys, service provision and revenue. They help to provide a comprehensive picture of public transport usage in Great Britain. Within DfT they are used as background information in the development of light rail policy (for example passenger journeys figures were included in the recent DfT review 'Green Light for Light Rail' published on the DfT website in 2011²), for ministerial briefing and to answer public enquiries. Outside DfT, known users include researchers, academics and Parliamentary groups with the main known use as context for reports related to light rail³.

Feedback received from users suggests that they are generally satisfied with these statistics, in relation to their uses. However, we welcome feedback on the content, format or timing of the statistics by email to bus.statistics@dft.gsi.gov.uk or on (020) 7944 3094.

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

These figures are compiled from data provided by operators of the 8 light rail and tram systems in England. Passenger journey figures are derived from different sources (most commonly ticket machine data), vehicle mileage is based on scheduled timetables less known lost mileage, and revenue figures are from operators' financial records.

A complete response has been received for many years. Data requested should be readily available to operators, or easy for them to extract. Returns are validated by comparison with previous years and seeking explanation where differences are large or unexpected. This means that figures for each system should be broadly comparable over time, and therefore we consider them appropriate for the uses outlined above.

As the figures are provided by 8 operators, there are some differences in the methods used to count journeys or to estimate passenger or vehicle kilometres, which may affect comparisons between different systems. Although the effect of this is difficult to assess we consider it is unlikely to materially affect comparisons. On occasions operators may revise their methodology which could impact on the trends shown. As a result year-on-year changes should be treated with caution, though the effect on broad patterns is likely to be minimal.

Further information on the methods used to compile these statistics and background information about the systems covered can be found here:

www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-light-rail-and-tram-statistics

National Statistics

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs:

www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html

For details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release: www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-light-rail-and-tram-statistics

Next Release

The next Light Rail Statistics release is due to be published in the summer of 2014 and will contain statistics for 2013/14.

² <http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/green-light-for-light-rail/>

³ For example, the 'Light Rail & the City Regions Inquiry' published by the All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group and PTEG in February 2010 <http://www.pteg.net/PolicyCentre/LightRail/LRInquiry>