

Response to NIC consultation from the Light Rail Transit Association

Connecting northern cities

In line with the published terms of reference regarding future investment in the north's transport infrastructure, the Commission is seeking to establish the extent of existing evidence regarding likely growth and connectivity requirements across the north of England.

The questions that the Commission are particularly keen to focus on in this initial phase of work are:

1. To what extent are weaknesses in transport connectivity holding back northern city regions (specifically in terms of jobs, enterprise creation and growth, and housing)?

The LRTA is concerned that too much emphasis may be being placed on better connections between cities whilst there is a significant problem with transport within cities and other urban areas. We support the proposed better rail connections, such as HS3, but want to see better access to its stations. It can often take longer to get to the city centre station than the inter-city journey time, so improvement here would be very beneficial.

We consider "The North" to stretch from Liverpool to Hull west to east; and Tyneside to Sheffield north to south. This includes the Metropolitan Counties of Merseyside, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Tyne & Wear but there are major non-metropolitan areas such as the Fylde, Preston, Blackburn, Burnley, York, Darlington, Carlisle, Teesside and Humberside. There are urban rail systems in each of the Metropolitan Counties apart from West Yorkshire, though this area does have some electrified rail lines to points beyond its boundary.

In our view there is a clear need to invest in the local rail networks and to look at creating light rail or tramway systems to significantly increase the modal share of public transport. In Liverpool, for example, there are miles of former tramway reservations that could be reused; the cancelled Merseytram project would have done so, and should be reinstated. Extending heavy rail services where no former railways exist would be very expensive but the possibility of TramTrains using such former tram reservations or new street-based infrastructure as well as sharing or taking over heavy rail routes demands further consideration.

As has been demonstrated particularly well in Nottingham, the modern tram can transform a city's public transport and get people out of their cars. The extended NET system has boosted local employment, helped regenerate the regional economy and enhanced land values. It will be important to look at this as a model for urban areas in the north.

In summary, connecting northern cities requires joined up thinking, where the whole of the journey is considered and not just the inter-city part. Present day work patterns require longer distance travel; few people can now work near to their home. Public transport needs to become a viable and attractive alternative to the car.

2. What cost-effective infrastructure investments in city-to-city connectivity could address these weaknesses? We are interested in all modes of transport.

As mentioned above, in addition to consideration of HS3, the LRTA believes that there is considerable scope for further urban rail schemes in the north. Extension of the Blackpool tramway, Manchester Metrolink, Sheffield Supertram and Tyne & Wear Metro systems

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should be considered, and where capacity constraints exist in the heavy rail network the possibility of new infrastructure to bring services closer to residential areas or city/town centres could free-up tracks for longer-distance services.

3. Which city-to-city corridor(s) should be the priority for early phases of investment?

We have no strong views on this but it will be important for Transport for the North and Rail North to ensure good cross-boundary connections which could be considered as beyond the concern of the various Metropolitan Counties, Combined Authorities and other relevant bodies. In terms of ensuring business support for new transport infrastructure, the Local Enterprise Partnerships will have a key task.

4. What are the key international connectivity needs likely to be in the next 20-30 years in the north of England (with a focus on ports and airports)? What is the most effective way to meet these needs, and what constraints on delivery are anticipated?

This is beyond the LRTA's sphere of interest.

5. What form of governance would most effectively deliver transformative infrastructure in the north, how should this be funded and by whom, including appropriate local contributions?

The development of "City Deals" leading to long-term funding of transport in the areas concerned will need to be related to the structure for delivery of bus and rail services. Proposals for franchising of bus services must carefully relate to heavy and light rail provision and, crucially, a fully-integrated approach to network planning and common ticketing will be essential. This would best be secured by following the German model of *Verkehrsverbunde* or traffic & tariff partnerships. Local revenue-raising powers specifically for public transport capital investment and revenue support should be developed, along the lines of the *Versement Transport* applicable in French city regions. This has the advantage of local businesses seeing what their contributions produce, rather than their money simply disappearing into a national pot.

London's transport infrastructure

In line with the published terms of reference, the Commission is reviewing the evidence base and the strategic options for future investment in large-scale transport infrastructure improvements in London.

The questions that the Commission is particularly keen to focus on in this initial phase of work are:

1. What are the major economic and social challenges facing London and its commuter hinterland over the next two to three decades?

The LRTA broadly supports the existing proposals for investment in London's transport infrastructure, but we are concerned that big projects such as Crossrail and Crossrail 2 tend to consume all the available funds to the detriment of other - perhaps less glamorous - schemes. It is important to recognise that the capital's surface public transport is in urgent need of investment to secure three objectives:-

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- 1: Provision of greater capacity on the busiest bus corridors.
- 2: Regeneration of many poorer parts of both central and outer London.
- 3: Significant improvement in air quality, which is so poor as to breach EU standards.

Unfortunately, throughout the current Mayor's term, no progress has been made with the "Cross River" tramway proposal, for which there is strong support among the inner London Boroughs. This would act as a catalyst for more tramway construction to achieve a key network that contributes to the above objectives.

2. What are the strategic options for future investment in large-scale transport infrastructure improvements in London - on road, rail and underground - including, but not limited to Crossrail 2?

Greater London and the adjoining areas benefit from a comprehensive heavy rail system and the Underground, but development of more local distribution networks has largely been ignored. With the exception of London Tramlink and the Docklands Light railway, local distribution has relied on an intensive network of bus services. While the bus network is comprehensive and will obviously continue to play a major role in London's public transport provision, the LRTA is of the opinion that for many busy corridors in Greater London an intermediate mode of transport as provided by trams and light rail is required.

Trams have been proven both at home (not least in Croydon) and abroad to provide a local transport mode that is more attractive to car users than buses, leading to significant modal switch from private to public transport, thus both reducing congestion and improving local air quality. Tram systems have aided the regeneration of inner city areas and have generally improved the quality of life on city streets. Trams can also be more safely integrated with pedestrians than buses.

Improvement in air quality at street level is an important factor against the background of consistent failure to reach air quality targets. Trams are pollution-free at the point of use and further improve air quality by attracting car users and replacing buses on the most heavily-trafficked corridors. Rubber-tyred vehicles also produce dangerous particulates from the wear of tyres and road surfaces as demonstrated by research in Oslo.

In summary, the LRTA strongly recommends that previously planned schemes such as the Cross-River Tram be revisited and that other heavily trafficked corridors be examined with a view to developing further tram schemes (in addition to extending the Croydon system) to counter congestion, improve air quality and generally to enhance the quality of life for Londoners.

3. What opportunities are there to increase the benefits and reduce the costs of the proposed Crossrail 2 scheme?

This is not within the LRTA's area of expertise.

4. What are the options for the funding, financing and delivery of large-scale transport infrastructure improvements in London, including Crossrail 2?

As indicated above, the French system of local transport funding should be examined.

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5. How have major metropolitan areas in other countries responded to similar challenges and priorities? Are there any lessons to be learned and applied in London?

It is interesting to see the extent of tram investment in Paris and to note the much higher proportion of public transport provision by electric traction in many other cities. Despite its extensive Underground system and the high proportion of electrified suburban rail services, most public transport journeys in Greater London are made on the 8,500 diesel buses used by TfL's contractors.

References:

General information on trams and light rail

LRTA

www.lrta.org/TramForward/index.php

UKTram

www.uktram.co.uk/

All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group

www.applrguk.co.uk/

Introducing Light Rail / Mike Ballinger

www.lrta.org/TramForward/Introducing%20light%20rail.pdf

Economic aspects

An Investigation into the Economic Impacts on Cities of Investment in Light Rail Systems / Professor Richard Knowles and Dr Fiona Ferbrache UKTram, June 2014.

www.uktram.co.uk/News/UKTram_Report_Economic_Impacts.aspx

Air quality and health

Air pollution: it's time to clean up our act / Jim Harkins. Tramway and Urban Transit September 2009.

www.lrta.org/TramForward/TAUT-Sept09-air%20pollution.pdf

Light Rail and Trams, The almost complete answer to poor Urban Air Quality / Jim Harkins

www.applrguk.co.uk/media/files/LRUK-Trams-The-almost-complete-answer-to-poor-Urban-Air-Quality-Glasgow.pdf

Summary About Particulate Matters from Passenger Transport In Oslo, ("Svevestøv fra persontransport i Oslo. En beregning av mengder og kostnader"), By Otto Andersen Of the *Vestlandsforskning Research Centre. Summary translated by Roy Budmiger

www.applrguk.co.uk/media/files/LR-Applrg-LRUK-Oslo-Report-v-2.pdf

Note on the LRTA:

The Light Rail Transit Association (LRTA) was established in 1937 by a group of people concerned about the proposed closures of tramways in London. The Association has grown over the intervening 78 years into an international body with around 4,000 members around the world, half outside the United Kingdom. Although the LRTA's members come from all walks of life, they share a common concern with the development of good quality public transport through the use of light rail and tramways. Many are professionals working in the transport industries. The Association's monthly magazine, "Tramways & Urban Transit" is widely regarded as essential reading around the world by those concerned with the development, building, operation and use of light rail and tramway systems.

The Association's objectives are to educate people about light rail and modern tramways and to advocate the adoption of such systems as core components of modern integrated transport systems.