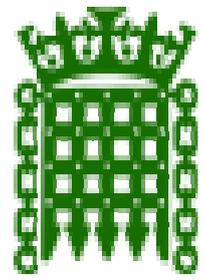


Light Rail (UK)

All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

"The past we inherit, the future we build"
Trams – Catalysts for Jobs, Renewal & Regeneration



Meeting 10 February 2015 at 16:00 House of Commons

Trams, Light Rail, TramTrains, a Party Policy perspective for the General Election

Chairman: John Leech MP (Chairman APPLRG)

Speakers

Claire Perry MP
(Conservative. Devizes)
Parliamentary Under Secretary
of State for Transport

Norman Baker MP
(Liberal Democrat. Lewes)
Former Minister for Transport

Lilian Greenwood MP
(Labour. Nottingham South)
Shadow Rail Minister

The Chairman introduced the speakers.

Claire Perry MP.

Sue Kramer is the lead on light rail and I am Minister for heavy rail and I know that Patrick was scheduled to speak and apologies for his not being here. I do not see a lot of difference between the parties in their approach to light rail; it is something that we all know is a good thing to do. Britain runs behind the rest of the world in terms of the installation of these systems in urban areas. Increasingly I am aware, whether we look at heavy rail or light rail, that the modelling systems used to assess the benefits are partial in terms of capturing the benefits and what we are very keen to do on all transport investment is to try to capture the broader economic value added and also to make sure that we are taking up the sustainability point, because my sense is that we do not always get that right.

I have been very struck by how the network effect of transport is starting to spread across the country and how much that is encompassing multi-modal transport: light rail, buses, walking, cycling as well as heavy rail. The good thing about that is that it is breaking down a lot of long-held political barriers that have held back some of these more local schemes. When I was in Birmingham talking about HS2, it was incredibly interesting to see what the whole Midlands area is now starting to do, coming together to think about light rail, trams, buses, freight and the same in Manchester. You will all have seen the unprecedented level of investment that is going into transport. That is driving down a lot of political boundaries that have been impeding progress over the years.

We have funded a number of schemes and are very committed to local transport, but more needs to be done and that is why it is great to have the experts in the room and to actually capture the benefits of this.

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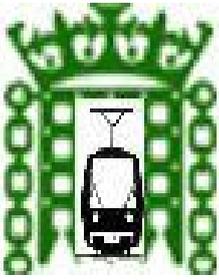
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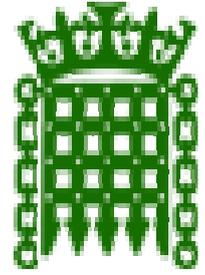
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My sense is that, collectively, successive governments, when we model benefits from heavy and light rail transport investment, we do not always capture what those true benefits are. So I am open to suggestions and thoughts on that.

Norman Baker MP.

I am very pleased to see the record of this government on light rail and, dare I say, when I was light rail minister I was able to make a lot of progress, both because I wanted to do and the LibDems were in favour and my Conservative colleagues were always supportive as well, and we made a lot of progress. We saw extensions to the schemes in Birmingham, Nottingham given the go-ahead we saw the TramTrain project, Sheffield to Rotherham, finally given the go-ahead and the Leeds trolleybus given the go-ahead as well.

In 2011 I published the *Green light for light rail* report, which was an attempt to bring the light rail industry together to reduce costs, such as common procurement, because some of the procurement processes were not very sensible and unnecessarily costly, but also to make sure that the light rail industry spoke with one voice. I am grateful to Geoff Inskip and others for their help in that particular matter and I like to think that when I left office the light rail industry was in good shape to go forward. That was in contrast to the previous years when a whole lot of schemes had been cancelled under the previous government. We did our best to resurrect what we could from that basis.

I think the way forward is the devolution scenario; we now have all the transport boards coming from 2015. It is a different scenario from the top down approval arrangement which we inherited from 2010 and that is a good thing, because the idea of having a more localised say has got to be the way forward, particularly for our large urban conurbations

The Department for Transport in the LibDems view has a key role to ensure value for money but also a key role to make sure it is supportive of light rail schemes. It should be there to help, to cajole in the right direction and to give a clear statement that light rail has a major role to play going forward. I believe that it does do that with extensions to the existing schemes, when they come forward, and there are clearly schemes that should come forward. Manchester is very good at bringing forward schemes but there are ones such as Blackpool, linking with the main line station. So there are schemes around the country making sense in terms of extensions, but I would like to see an era coming forward with brand new tram schemes, because light rail across the country has proved to be popular and the number of passengers has been going up particularly in London but not just in London.

It is a form of transport that people like, they trust it, it is green, it is reliable and, because it has rail lines, it is a fixed scheme that people believe will be there next week, which they do not always believe with buses.

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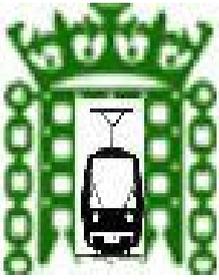
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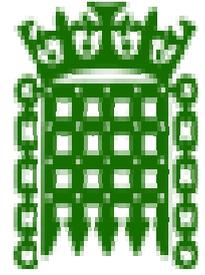
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So it has many advantages that other forms of transport have not and, therefore, it has a major role to play. I think in the future and as far as my party is concerned we will be very strong supporters of any extension to light rail going forward.

Lilian Greenwood MP

It is a pleasure to speak at the All-Party Light Rail Group and I have spoken at a number of meetings since 2011. There is the small matter of an election in two-and-a-half month's time so I will just start by saying that I hope to have the opportunity of speaking from the front bench on light rail after May. I got involved in transport as a result of the fantastic work that has been done on roads and public transport in my city, Nottingham.

It is nice to see Nottingham represented here in the room today. Nottingham not only runs some of the best bus services in the country but also, after a twenty-five year campaign, a modern light rail network. When Nottingham Express Transit opened, it broke all the projected passenger demands and that was over ten years ago now. We are tantalisingly close to the completion of Phase 2, which Norman, as minister, gave the go-ahead to. Testing is well under way but, sadly, the projected start date has been missed. So, although light rail has impressive punctuality rates, it looks like we shall just have to wait a little bit longer for our new lines in Nottingham

I want to start by saying a little bit about integration and devolution because I think transport and light rail particularly is a part of those debates. It is definitely easier said than done. I think it was when Barbara Castle was appointed Transport Secretary in 1965, Harold Wilson told her that her job was to produce the integrated transport policy that we promised in our manifesto and that he could work something out himself given half an hour. Sadly, fifty years on, it still has not happened. But there is much to celebrate. As Norman said, light rail is very popular, carrying 227 million passengers last year. Of course, Docklands Light Railway has been foremost in driving that but it is now important in a number of towns and cities: Sheffield, Manchester, Nottingham Newcastle, Sunderland and, at last, Edinburgh. I think the developments like the Sheffield TramTrain trial are really interesting and we have seen the introduction of light rail vehicles in Stourbridge. But it has not been an easy journey and I think that it is seen as in competition with other forms of public transport.

I remember before NET opened in 2004 there was a feeling that local bus services would suffer but the truth is that bus riders have continued to rise in Nottingham. That has bucked the trend outside London. I think that part of that is the way that light rail and bus can work together. The key thing is that people have genuine choices when public transport matches the speed and comfort of the private car and light rail has the proven track record of attracting people out of their cars.

In order to capitalise on that, we need local transport authorities with the funding, the powers and the leadership to make sure that transport modes are properly integrated and that is why Labour is

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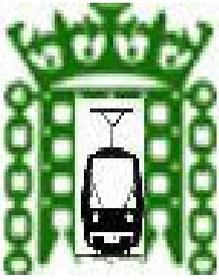
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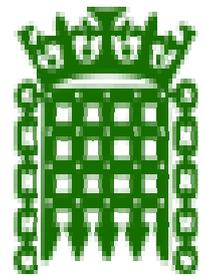


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very determined to devolve powers and funding. I do not think that it is a coincidence that most light rail systems and some of the best heavy rail systems are run as concessions rather than the conventional franchises and that is the model that we are interested in developing further.

All too often outside London local transport groups feel that they have to work against Whitehall when they are developing proposals for new light rail systems. It is no coincidence that so many networks were established by local initiative and perseverance not with control from Whitehall. Changes of government policies can add new layers of cost and complexity to these systems. In Nottingham planning for a light rail rapid transit system started in earnest in the 1980s but it took about twenty years to realise that vision. Even when the act of Parliament was passed in 1994, Pat Armstrong said that it was the next five years that were the most difficult and people did not even at that point believe that it would happen.

I think many of you who are interested in light rail schemes in your local areas share that frustration and that is one of the reasons why a Labour government would transfer powers to local transport operators to promote growth based around city regions because transport networks do not always relate neatly to local authority boundaries. The Growth Commission led by Andrew Adonis has already identified lack of investment in transport as one of the key barriers to growth. We know that if we have an economic recovery that links the whole country then light rail can be a powerful catalyst for urban development and be part of that. So we would devolve the funding for light rail but also for buses and heavy rail too. In planning local links to HS2 we cannot just leave things as they are.

I visited Birmingham last year to see the plans that Centro and the City Council have put in place to provide a direct link between Coventry and Birmingham International and work to spearhead the development of Digbeth. I think everybody will be struck by the scale of Birmingham's ambition and their vision of how light rail can be part of that. Of course there are plans as well in South Yorkshire about the role that Supertram lines can have in connecting communities to HS2 and in the East Midlands the HS2 hub is tantalisingly close to the end of Line 3 and I will be very hopeful that that will be possible and even if it is Beaston maybe that will be possible if more difficult.

I know there are issues particularly with national budgets under pressure. There will be cuts of over 9 billion to the overall transport budget over the course of this Parliament and with what has happened to rail franchises the whole thing is off kilter so we cannot ignore the fact that delays to projects are going to come under scrutiny.

The industry itself needs to keep costs under control and put realistic deadlines in place and there is no one more conscious of that at the moment than myself. I am convinced of both the economic and environmental benefits of trams and light rail. I think the industry and transport planners need to continue to develop plans for new systems for integrating light rail with the conventional network, for getting to HS2.

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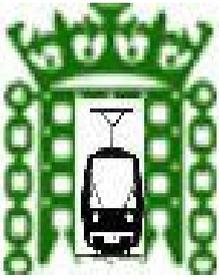
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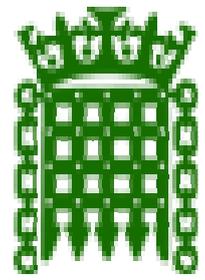


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If Labour wins power in May we will devolve powers and funding to make it easier for communities to develop light rail projects in the future.

John Leech

Thank you, Lilian. Can I say thank you to everybody who submitted questions. The way I am going to take the questions is that I am going to read the question out and I am going to give them a chance to answer them and then I will give the person who has asked the question the opportunity to ask a follow-up question if they want to.

1. Question from **Ian Souter** (IASA).

The acceptance of light rail in the UK is inhibited by the barriers in place to passengers transferring between light rail and other modes as part of a through journey. Specific difficulties are in respect of ticketing, the creation of feeder services and the facilities provided at interchange points. To what extent are these difficulties acknowledged and what initiatives are offered to overcome them?

Lilian Greenwood MP.

I think it is a really good question and I completely agree with what you are suggesting. Nottingham used to have a single ticket that you could use on the trams and buses. The Competition Commission said that that was no longer possible after we had got Phase 2 underway and, of course, there was a drop-off because we could not have that easy connection between bus and tram. I think that smart ticketing is part of the answer. We have seen in London the difference that Oyster has made, making it so easy to switch between modes and having zonal fares, leading to a big increase in passenger numbers. The idea of extending heavy rail fares so that we can buy a ticket to an individual tram stop I think is a really good idea and certainly worth looking at. I think it is a matter for local transport operators: making interchange easy and straightforward, with good signage, good information. There should be a real impetus on local transport operators to make sure that happens. There is some really good practice to draw on and I think that is what we have got to see in the future.

Norman Baker MP.

First of all the different modes of transport have to be in the right place, they are not always in the right place, they are getting there. The connections at Manchester Piccadilly are pretty good, the connections in central London are pretty good, the Birmingham extension down to New Street station will deal with the Birmingham issue and I referred to Blackpool earlier on and the need to ensure that is connected to the main line station. But having done that, we want to make sure, if possible, that there is a through ticket where that can be achieved. Away from London it does not work at present as has been said and sometimes it is awkward and the concession for pensioners does not apply to light rail in the same way. You also have the situation where if you want to get a

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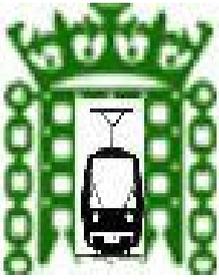
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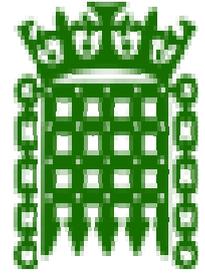
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bus journey you can get a PlusBus ticket but am not aware there is a tram ticket, perhaps there is in some areas.

There ought to be a standard mode for that and one ticket. I was very struck when I was at DfT that when Eurostar started selling tickets through from places like Norwich and Peterborough down to Brussels and Paris that was a big fillip for the number of people using Eurostar. Nothing happened, there were no extra trains, you still had to get off at Kings Cross and walk across and go through security and everything else, but there was a through ticket and psychologically that made a big difference to how people behaved.

So I think there is a need to ensure you can get a tram ticket on the back of a heavy rail ticket in particular.

Claire Perry MP.

When I took over at the Department, and this very much applies to heavy rail, I was struck by the fact that there were many very good aspirations but in the Department nothing much happened, things were happening in silos. But of course the idea of joined up transport means working with where the customer wants to go rather than where the producer wants to send them. One of the big changes now, which is being driven by the dynamism of the local authorities and local transport groups, is: let us start thinking like customers.

So it may be the case that customers want to drive to a station or take a tram or bus, they may want to park they may want to do something at the end. What does their journey look like and how can we facilitate it? The problem is that all the ticket information is sitting in different databases. Liaising between the TOCS is difficult with the different databases, underinvested in and perhaps under led, but the aspiration is there.

We have now the great example of TfL who have been on a journey for nine years of thinking about how their transport modes operate for the customer. They have gone through the most massive transformation about how they think about engineering works, how they want passengers to travel and you can see it is working and I think that is the prize. There is a huge green light from the Department and from my party to say that we do not want to proscribe what needs to happen, get out there and innovate.

A couple of rather sad things: on the Blackpool trams I believe that the concessionary bus passes have been withdrawn. That seems to be petty politics and what we should be thinking about is customers, cutting across party barriers and trying to make sure the system, which we are investing unprecedented amounts in, is working for passengers regardless of their mode of travel. So get out of the silos, be innovative and the Conservative Party is right behind you and wants to support it.

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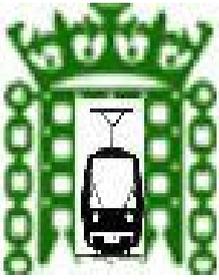
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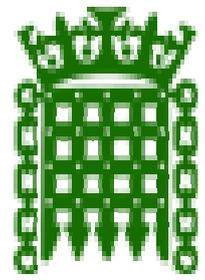


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Ian Souter.

I am encouraged by all three, we seem to be talking the same language, and we understand the problems. Can I make one point? Within the individual nations we have a freedom to roam ticket available to pensioners and others in that category. I think, in there, there must be a lot of very useful data and I wonder how the public would take to being able to buy such a ticket. I leave that thought.

Claire Perry MP.

It is a great idea for one of the new devolved authorities to try.

Lilian Greenwood MP.

I think it can be really difficult for authorities to handle those move-anywhere tickets with so many private bus companies. It is difficult to move to integrated ticketing.

Ian Souter.

It was done in the Netherlands, extensively, in pre-electronic days. They have now made it electronic and it is a lot more complicated.

2. Question from Reg Harman (Interfaces).

Rapid development of tramway networks in many French cities since the 1980s has proved a key factor in their economic and social regeneration. This trend reflects appraisal systems which draw out the full system benefits and costs, unlike the narrow monetary focus of British WebTag methodology. What can we learn from French experience to guide British tramway development, especially for smaller cities such as Oxford and York?

Norman Baker MP.

There are two issues here. One is the requirements that they put on schemes in terms of what they have to deliver on the ground, the minimum requirements for the construction of a tram scheme, and we end up by sometimes putting in requirements which push up the price unnecessarily. I spent quite a lot of time trying to sort out, for example, why it is that underground undertakers seem to be able to overcharge tram schemes for disruption to their services.

So there is an issue about blowing up the costs and that is one of the reasons why France has been different to the UK. Secondly there are methods of funding which are different but there are innovative ways of funding a scheme.

You have seen it through the application of Manchester's Local Growth fund, for example, we have seen the way Crossrail is funded, which is a different approach to traditional funding.

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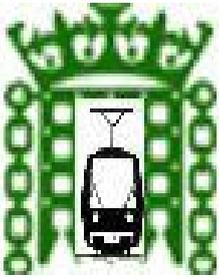
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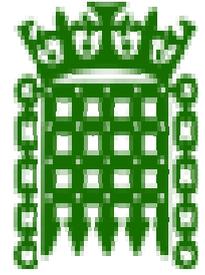
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So minimising what we load on to schemes and being innovative about how they are funded is the key to this.

[Norman Baker MP left the meeting at this point and John Leech took over presenting the LibDem point of view.]

Claire Perry MP.

Yes, this is an excellent point in terms of investment and I think we do like to over-engineer and overload the capital cost. I think that one of the reasons these things do work locally is that the devolved body is often big enough to underwrite the project. I am very concerned that collectively we under-value the contribution of transport infrastructure to the local, regional and national economy.

You will have heard a lot of speeches from the Chancellor about how important it is particularly to invest in the north and the far southwest, in heavy rail and road networks, and we have the five-year road investment scheme. I was rather horrified to find out that roads were just a kind of swing factor, depending on whether there was any money left in the budget and that seems to me to be fundamental in investing in transport infrastructure. I do not know about the British WebTag methodology, Reg you clearly know more than me, but this is exactly the point about trying to make sure that the methodology works. This is a heavy rail example. If I could encourage people, when they are putting together schemes, to have a look at some of the work that the *Norwich in Ninety* task force is trying to do, or that the Isle of Wight is looking at.

How do you actually capture the broader economic benefits from a scheme in terms of opening up development opportunity, in terms of the social capital you might be building? That is all value and can be valued and we need to be much, much better at making business cases. The problem is, in government, the money comes out of my budget and the economic growth goes somewhere else, so there is always a silo problem in spending to save. But it should not stop us because, to me, transport infrastructure, local, regional and national, is absolutely vital if we want Britain to be great.

Lilian Greenwood MP.

There has been a lot of work done under the last government and, in fairness, under this one on improving the methodology for rail projects and maybe we have not quite got it yet. I know it is felt that the system is skewed against public transport and biased toward road schemes and I think it is worth looking at continental methods of appraising projects. As Norman said, in other parts of the continent, regions and cities have far more ability to generate their own finance and spending decisions. I think our devolution agenda, and to some extent that is shared by the other parties, will help in the development of local projects getting through without the long time scales and the difficulties of always having to bid into the centre.

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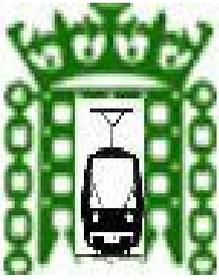
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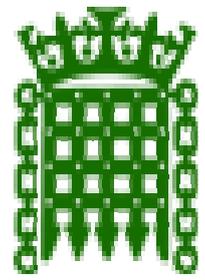


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It is about demonstrating the wider economic benefits but it is also about demonstrating how different schemes work together, particularly how light rail and heavy rail can work together to show the economic benefits and produce a better business case for projects.

Reg Harman.

In France the whole question of developing places and developing the transit system is treated as one whole, so that they work together. Ownership of light rail and public transport systems in France is often in the hands of both transport companies and the public authorities and banks etc., so that they are all talking together about the transport system in parallel with how the city grows. By and large in France whenever a light rail scheme has opened, public transport use has gone up by one third, usually paralleled by a fall in road traffic on the relevant corridors and a rise in use of city centre businesses.

Claire Perry MP

Given that Yorkshire has created more jobs than France since 2010, there is not much I want to learn from France economically, but that is a perfect example of trying to think about the wider public transport network.

3. Question from Rev D Charlie.

I would ask the panel what support they intend to give for the two Croydon Tramlink extensions to Crystal Palace and Sutton - particularly in terms of public funding.

Claire Perry MP.

I personally support the extensions. I am not the minister who makes decisions on this, so please forgive me if Baroness Kramer has said something entirely different, but it seems to me to be a perfectly sensible proposal and one that I would be happy to support. The growth in numbers of tram passengers is so interesting both in London and outside but I am fascinated by the idea that if people take the tram they are more likely to use public transport in general which is what we want to aspire to. I will speak to the minister when I get back to the Department.

Lilian Greenwood MP

I know how important Tramlink has been to regeneration in Croydon and that part of south London, though I have to confess I do not know much about the specific extensions. But it is helpful if we can extend it to create even more benefit. In Nottingham we know that the difference between having one line and having three will be huge. But is this a TfL matter?

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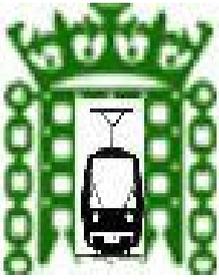
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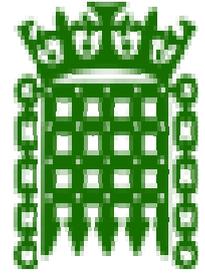


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Rev D Charlie.

It is but the question is: where is the money going to come from? Is it TfL; is it central government or a mixture of both? One of the problems is that you can have funding from different bodies and then one drops out for whatever reason and that might result in the others also dropping out. That is the worry I have got.

Claire Perry MP.

Where did the money come from for the first line?

Rev D Charlie

From central government, but TfL money comes from government, they get a grant.

John Leech

I assume the first line was pre-London Mayor but now extensions would come under his or her remit. One thing is for certain, the Croydon Tramlink has made an enormous difference to that part of London in terms of regeneration and property prices as well.

4. Question from Jim Harkins (Light Rail (UK))

It is Government policy to "Green the Bus" by using Hybrid and Electric Buses which goes some ways to clean up "Tail - pipe exhaust pollution". There are significant pollutants including "heavy metals" which are greater killers generated by the wear & tear on the road surface, tyres wearing out and brake linings including non asbestos versions as highlighted in the "Oslo Report".

Is the "Tail pipe" greening a smoke and mirrors to cover up this real and hidden but significant danger in our Urban Areas? If your Party wins the next election, how will you openly tackle this issue?

Lilian Greenwood MP.

Air quality issues and health implications of our whole transport system are really important questions. We cannot see it just as a question of whether we substitute trams for buses we need to look at it in the round. One of the things we can do to cut emissions is to get people out of their cars altogether, encourage more people to walk and cycle.

We need to cut emissions by developing electric vehicles, which could be buses or cars, and encouraging people to have more energy efficient vehicles. One thing that is a problem is that local authorities have virtually no control over the quality of bus vehicles on their roads in contrast to the powers they have around taxis and that is one reason for giving local authorities the powers that they need to control and licence bus services.

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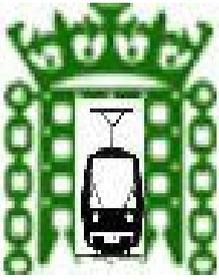


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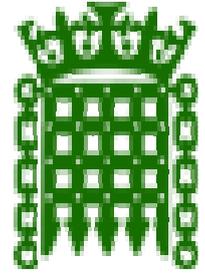
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I think if it is good enough for London and it is now good enough for Manchester why is it not good enough for absolutely everywhere else?

Claire Perry MP.

Jim and I talked about this a bit outside and it is government policy to green all road vehicles. With the sales of the Mitsubishi Outlander now up to about 3000 the electric vehicle market is running well ahead of expectations. I think we are reaching tipping point now in terms of acceptance of electric vehicles. There is also a lifestyle change.

I drove a hybrid for about nine years and took it on the chin every day about the lifetime environmental cost of my vehicle and how having electric vehicles powered by a dirty old power station may not be the right thing overall. But I think the issue of road emissions is something that local authorities do take very seriously and increasingly so in planning applications.

I am fascinated by the local planning process we have introduced in my own local authority of Wiltshire where congestion and air quality around roads is very much part of the core strategy and what is permitted development; so I think it is taken very seriously. We need to look at the whole tail-pipe question and also recognise the fact that we know that 92% of all journeys in the UK are made by car; people drive.

The first thing Philip Hammond did when he was Secretary of State for Transport was get rid of the Prescott bus lanes which did nothing apart from creating ten-mile tail-backs every day on the M4. You cannot be anti-motorist while you are trying to promote because we all drive, you have to work the reality, you nudge people in this direction you do not try and force them out of cars. The local transport planning acknowledges that. What you want to do is to encourage people to get out of their cars and park outside the city and walk or cycle or use a tram.

John Leech.

I am not anti-bus, I am sure if Norman or Susan were here they would say that the bus has its place within all transport networks within towns and cities, villages and rural areas. However, I do think we need to look at how we are going to tackle the issue of pollution in our cities because there is an enormous fine hanging over London at the moment and there is the potential for enormous fines in other parts of the country as well. Yes, we do have to ensure we are greening our buses and greening all our vehicles.

Given the number of buses that are on the streets in my constituency, it is not the buses that are causing the pollution it is the cars and, while I would like to see all the buses in my constituency greener than they are, if you greened every bus it would not make very much difference to the amount of pollution because there are not that many buses in the constituency at all.

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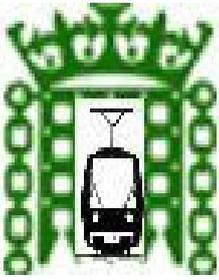
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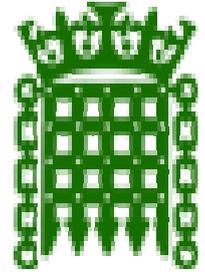
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We have to be realistic that we are not going to get rid of all old dirty buses but we should phase them out over time but we have mainly to encourage people out of their cars and on to all forms of public transport because that is ultimately going to reduce pollution the most.

Jim Harkins.

Taking that last point first, Lilian mentioned 227 million journeys and it is quite significant and it is quite clear to all politicians that, in urban areas in particular, light rail does get them out of cars. Statistics will show that it can be anywhere between 25 and 30% extraction. I am not against buses but deny the claim by Mayor Johnson and others that the bus will do the job more cleanly and better.

If you look at the BCR for the Borismasters, that was bent. The point I am making is, yes, it is tail-pipe emissions but there is this secondary pollution which has been highlighted in the Oslo Report and the more you green the buses the more buses you get so, exponentially, you are going to get more of the secondary pollution which is more lethal. I think that politicians have got to address that sooner rather than later because in the last figures that I got from the NHS there are 147,000 deaths from respiratory illness.

What politician can promote schemes that lead to that amount of death? So my question to you, as politicians, is how are you going to address that and get my vote?

Lilian Greenwood MP.

Can I just come back on this issue, because I think if we are serious about how to tackle some of the public health implications of transport it is really about encouraging people to be more active. It is making our environments better for people to walk, to cycle, even to walk to the bus stop. Sometimes getting to the bus stop, getting to the railway station, even getting to the tram stop can be off-putting and is what we need to do if we are serious about public health.

The other thing is to be mindful of the wider environment. It was only last week that the Institute of Economic Affairs suggested that it would be a really good idea to pave over all our rail lines and run buses on them instead, so we should not kid ourselves that everybody is convinced about the importance of investment in public transport, we still have quite a long way to go.

Claire Perry MP.

If I can just put in a generational point: I am fascinated by the fact that car ownership rates are dropping and that is largely the under-25s. It is partly that it is expensive but I think there is an appetite for the use of public transport.

We can knock the deregulated bus market but actually young ridership of the buses is going up, young usage of the trains is going up and I think it is great that there is this generational shift away from being a petrol-head to wanting to use public transport. Even in rural areas, even in my

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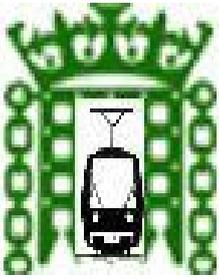
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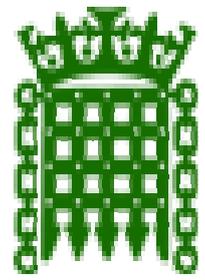


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constituency, it is very marked that fewer people feel the need to own a car and so we are doing something right in terms of promoting public transport and that can only help toward longer term health benefits for the country.

5. Question from **Alan Dare** (Vivarail Ltd)

It is now generally recognised that public investment in transport is hugely skewed in favour of London, with over 90% of all such investment going to the capital. As a result a city which already has one of the densest rail, metro and bus networks in the world continues to benefit from new lines and rolling stock, whereas regional centres such as Leeds or Bristol - which were they in Europe would have comprehensive metro and tram systems - have to make do with deregulated buses and ancient Pacer trains.

This discrepancy has been a feature of successive governments of all colours. If elected, what would you do to change the balance?

Claire Perry MP.

Well we have changed the balance now. I could not agree more. Part of the problem is that because London's transport system was laid down in Victorian times a lot of it is 176 years old and there is a massive regeneration programme going on.

It is not just transport, what is the average age of a London sewer, 65 years? There has been a huge under-investment in one of the most densely populated cities in the world. But, equally, I am absolutely determined that, for example, with the upcoming franchises for Northern and TPE that those Pacer trains, which by the way were left in the franchise last time the franchise was let in 2006, are replaced, because if you are serious about balancing regional growth, getting growth back you have to invest in road and rail and local transport networks right across the country.

Whether it is HS3 or the idea of an East-West freight link,

I think it is vital that we spend that money up North. I think that is really happening, we do not need to win the election to do that, it is something we have done and continue to do and I, sure as heck, do not want to see Pacers on the network in the next couple of years, although I am told by some community rail groups that they would be happy to have a Pacer because it might be something that allowed them to offer a service, but they are simply not fit for commuter purposes

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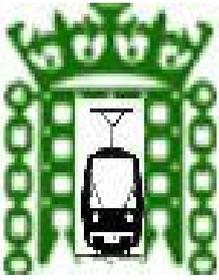
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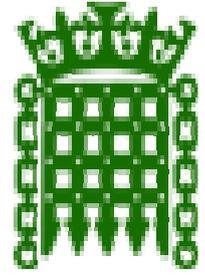
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Lilian Greenwood MP.

The Select Committee said just a fortnight ago that we need fairer regional funding for public transport and, speaking as an MP from the East Midlands which has currently the lowest spend on rail in the country, I am very supportive of what they said and I think we do need to see a rebalancing. I know of course that there is cross-party support for High Speed 2 and that is a good example of how we are having huge public debates about spending billions of pounds in the Midlands and the North but it did not happen to the same degree when it was about spending in London and the Southeast. I think there are some other issues.

One of them is about the way we spend our bus funding outside of London, which is incredibly inefficient, and that is why I think it is really welcome to see the strides being made by Nexus in moving towards a quality contract. It was surprising that the government moved in terms of Manchester to allow them to have more powers to develop a network that suits their local circumstances. Devolution and actually providing powers to local transport authorities to use them the best way they can is hugely welcome and is why we want to extend that to every city.

The other thing is for local rail projects and with devolution you can concentrate resources rather than having to make bidding into national pots. You can have a look at your transport network as a whole and decide how you are going to invest your resources to get the maximum bang for your buck and that is why the Labour Party would devolve 30 billion pounds of funding in the next parliament which would lead to significant development of projects. On Pacers, if you had wanted to get rid of them you would have written that into the contract but it does not say that and it is left to train operators to think: do I bid with some Pacers still in there because they are cheap, or do I price it to take them all out? If the government wanted to get rid of Pacers they could do.

Claire Perry MP.

Just to make a political point: why having had 13 years in government, having let those franchises in 2005 and 2006 did the Labour government not think it was important enough to invest in new rolling stock and by the way why did that government have RPI+3 settlements on the routes in the Southeast? It is very easy to come in and say do this do that but you have a track record that suggests you did none of these things, neither devolve nor invest in the North whereas this government is doing it.

So I suggest you have a word with Ed Balls and make sure you have the money to do what you are promising, because I do not think you have

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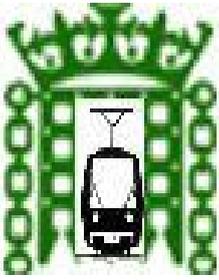
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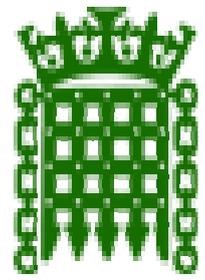


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John Leech.

I am just going to add something to that before we end up with a fight. The first thing I would say is that it is not just in transport that there is a massive discrepancy in the level of funding.

In pretty much every policy area London does better than the rest of the UK. However in London with transport we have had a double whammy because we have the London Mayor who has all these powers and has been able to drive through plans for investment in transport systems.

Devolving power to other regions should help those regions but the areas that do not get those extra powers are probably going to fall even further behind, if areas like Greater Manchester have powers while others do not.

The one thing I would say in relation to Pacers, linking it to light rail, is that if you ever go to somewhere like Budapest which has a fantastic network of underground and trams, some of them are ancient but I would rather have an ancient tram than no tram at all, I would rather have an ancient train than no train at all.

Alan Dare.

Regarding Pacers, I agree that we would rather have something than nothing. It was very much against our better judgement that we produced the Pacers. They were known as "Treasury trains" and I think that says it all. The other thing is that there is much more to this devolution discrepancy than just transport. Both parties are offering devolution and that is welcome but it has got to be matched with funds. It is all very well saying that local authorities should be developing plans for light rail, transport interchanges etc.; cash-strapped authorities are not going to do that unless there is some chance of getting the funds to develop the scheme.

Under the present circumstances the default answer is going to be no. We need to get through that local independence and local funding is required.

Claire Perry MP

I think the Local Growth Plans settlements have been hugely focused on local transport and indeed some of the tram schemes have come through that. What you do not want is politicians or officials sitting in Whitehall specifying transport schemes, in many cases the skill the will and the experience is not necessarily there.

Putting money where your mouth is in the terms of the local growth plans has been a strong indicator of where the government wants to go. It is important that whatever that looks like and it might be different in different part so the country there is huge involvement both in the operation decisions and the investment decisions.

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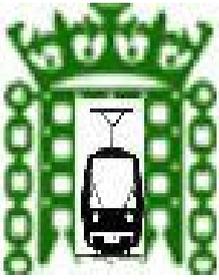
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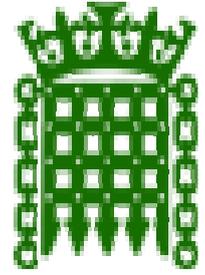
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6. Question from **Jon Reeds** (Smart Growth UK)

Getting a scheme authorised and funded in the UK seems to take much, much longer than in other European countries; the time spent gaining authority and funds is often 3 or 4 times that spend on actual construction.

This delay is not only costly for the scheme promoters, but means that the benefits of the scheme are not being realised, whilst costs rise with inflation, Undoubtedly some of the delays are down to Nimbyism, but the main cause seems to be bureaucratic procedure, and a view in Whitehall that investment should be resisted rather than encouraged. Again, this has been the same under successive governments.

If elected, how would you improve matters?

Lilian Greenwood MP.

Whenever funds are held at the centre, you are always going to be vulnerable to changes in leadership. All questions go back to devolution.

If you are serious about giving local cities and towns the ability to influence what happens they need to have the powers to get on with it. That is why devolving £30 billion to regions is really important, because that, combined with the powers, allows them to make decisions about fares, about integration and to decide what is going to provide the most benefit to their area and how can they best use that money rather than constantly having to bid in to different pots centrally and hoping that have got a government minister who is interested in light rail.

Claire Perry MP.

I completely agree. I think we have had a view in Whitehall that investment in many forms of public transport is not worth it. Remember Thameslink 2000? We started that ten years late. HS2 kicked around the Treasury for a very long time. I think there is finally a realisation, coming crucially from the Treasury, that you have to invest in transport infrastructure in order to grow and that, I think, has completely changed the game in terms of investment going forward. But With HS2, for example, it does take a long time, the civil process, the planning process. Is it nimbyism or is it localism?

It is important that local people feel that these schemes are not being imposed on them and that there are sufficient compensation and reparation mechanisms in place.

There is a sense that we are really good at coming up with reasons why we should not do something in this country. With HS2, which is a really important and exciting project, people are still coming up with reasons not to do it.

This is why our infrastructure is so old. There are no votes in upgrading track or doing 800 miles of electrification, so governments who do not care about long term growth do not invest in it. Well we do and it is very important that we crack on with it and that we have a presumption in favour of transport investment.

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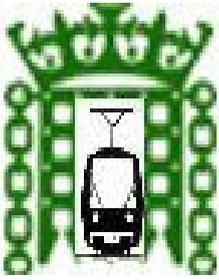
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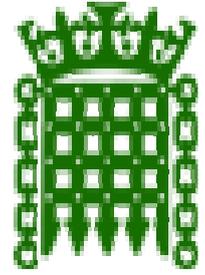
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John Leech.

Having come from a local government background and having seen both light rail and other projects in a local area, it is very easy to understand why there are such delays, because often local authorities or the promoters of schemes do not actually get local people on board right from day one. There is a lot of work to be done by promoters of schemes to get people on side right from the beginning and do it a different way.

I would caution against simply stripping away some of these consultation processes, which in other countries just do not exist, because there is a real danger that people just never get a say. We are all supposed to be in favour of localism, we need to make sure that local people have a voice.

There are many things that can be done to reduce the amount of time. The fact that we are devolving power to local authorities to make these decisions should vastly improve the time that it takes to make the decisions.

John Reeds.

I take the point about devolution but you also mentioned the Treasury and how it is coming round to approving transport schemes. One thing I have noticed is how the Treasury like to micromanage projects.

If I were to come back with a supplementary question, it would be: what would your government do to reduce the role of the Treasury?

[Claire Perry MP left the meeting at this point.]

7. Question from Andrew Braddock (LRTA).

Conversion to TramTrain operation would appear to have many benefits for the shorter-distance heavy rail lines in provincial cities. However, this would take time and money. In the meantime these routes are suffering from increasing overcrowding and poor service quality, and the nationwide shortage of diesel (DMU) trains is making matters worse.

If elected, would you push for a rapid TramTrain programme, order a fleet of additional diesel trains, or leave matters to market forces?

John Leech.

I think we have been far too slow in accepting TramTrain. It works. It has been working in Europe for years. It has the massive benefit of being able to increase capacity at main line stations by diverting routes through city centres. I think we have taken too long to push TramTrain, it has proven to work in other cities and we did not need to go for a pilot scheme in the UK which was then delayed and delayed. I think that is the answer.

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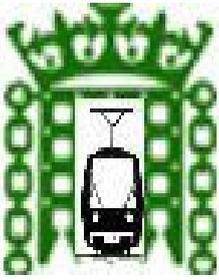
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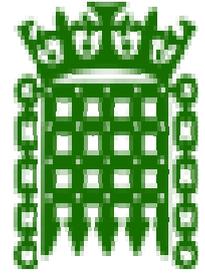
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Lilian Greenwood MP.

I think you are right, John, to point out that it has been such a success in Europe and it does offer exciting possibilities in the UK particularly where there are underused heavy rail lines or disused freight infrastructure. When I look at the map of Nottingham, I see that the tram is not developed on the East of the city, there are unused rail lines, and the potential is there. We all want to see the outcome of the Sheffield TramTrain trial. It is disappointing that it is delayed until 2017, but hopefully that will show us the way forward and I hope that the timetable does not slip any further.

If there is a new diesel order then it is a problem of this government's making, because the instruction from the Rail Delivery Group was that there would be no new diesels required in CP5 and CP6 and if the government does have to order new diesels as it looks as if they might then they will certainly end up paying over the odds for them. It is very worrying that the electrification programme is clearly overspent and behind schedule.

Any new government in May is going to have a difficult set of circumstances to sort out. It is absolutely vital to get the electrification programme back on track, because the extra capacity that the electrification is creating is badly needed. It was said there are no votes in 800 miles of electrification but there are huge numbers of votes in providing the extra seats and service that electrification can deliver. There is a big challenge to ensure that Network Rail deliver what they promised between now and 2019.

Andrew Braddock.

The fear that we all have is that it is taking an awfully long time for the Sheffield pilot to get under way and it has been delayed and delayed again. Yet the general observation is that TramTrain does work, it is in the same Europe and same EU that we are a member of. So why do we have to be held back waiting for events in Sheffield when there are benefits to be had in many other places? Not least in areas such as Leeds, where the burgeoning growth of the use of heavy rail services is a constraint on capacity which could be substantially eased by taking some local services out of Leeds City Station and getting them on to a tram network. It has been looked at in Birmingham and probably a dozen other places.

There is an enormous benefit in connectivity created in places like Karlsruhe and Kassel. Tito Ludwig, who basically invented TramTrain in Karlsruhe more than thirty years ago, said it is no good expecting people to go to the train, we have to take the train to the people.

In most cases railway stations are poorly located and that is where TramTrain makes a huge success.

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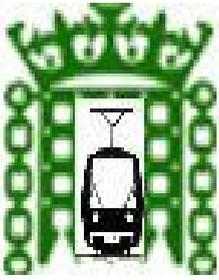
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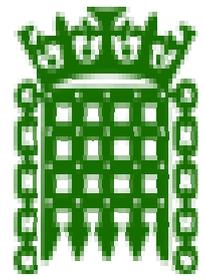


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8. Question from **Martin Fleetwood** (LRTF).

Much has been said about the high cost of tram and light rail systems being caused by “over-engineering”, particularly extremely deep concrete foundations for the track bed, which also necessitates costly utility relocation. This may well be caused in part by the current financing models which entail transfer of risk to contractors.

Should the Government encourage alternative methods of financing which would see the promoters of tram projects bearing the risk and allow them to specify lighter and less expensive construction methods.

Lilian Greenwood MP.

Some of the problems we have experienced in Nottingham have been due to a combination of things. There have been difficulties sourcing building materials, as there has been quite a lot of other infrastructure building going on, problems with recruiting and retaining suitably skilled staff has been a big issue and I expect everyone is familiar with the difficulties in getting a response from utilities companies when you are doing utility diversion. I think all those problems are outside the control of the local council who are the sponsor of the project, so I think I would be really wary of moving to a situation where the public sector takes on more risk where things go wrong, because they are not in a position to influence those things.

I think the idea of looking at alternative construction methods as a way of making tram development cheaper and more cost-effective is really worthwhile doing but we have to see it in that wider context. Perhaps there are other things we can do as well that can help to make it simpler and easier. There is a lot of kickback locally on why the Nottingham tram project is still unfinished, there is a lot of discussion about why Edinburgh was delayed and I think there are things to learn from Manchester, where, in places, they were ahead of schedule.

It is difficult in this country, we do not have that many tram networks, we do not get the benefit of moving from one project to the next and building up a set of skills and good practice but I think there is something to be done to make tram development cheaper in the future.

John Leech.

I think the easy answer is yes, we should be trying this, because in this country we seem to spend far too much money on everything we do and other countries do it a lot cheaper and in a more straightforward way. We should give it a go and see whether it makes a difference.

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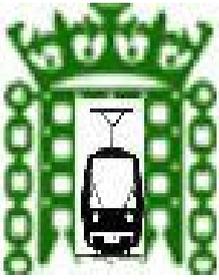
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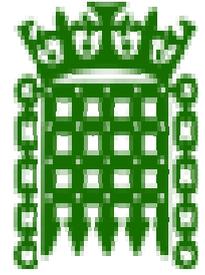
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Martin Fleetwood.

Thanks very much for that. As regards finance, Nottingham came back very much on the PFI method, other tram schemes have moved away from PFI. Merseytram, for example, was very much a series of parallel contracts and therefore financed in an entirely different way. So if we can see government looking at what alternatives are there and supporting authorities that want to go ahead with that, it would be very helpful.

We know that UKTram is setting up various research strands including better ways of funding construction and presumably whichever party was in power would be supporting proposals and recommendations from UKTram for cheaper methods of undertaking light rail construction.

Lilian Greenwood MP.

I think that is absolutely right. My wariness is about where risk sits and Nottingham as a public authority is probably thinking: thank goodness we do not have to bear the risks involved in cost overruns, because so much of this is outside their control. That is my reservation, not about finding better and innovative ways of construction.

John Leech.

We saw at our last meeting some innovations that are being looked at to cut costs and construction time and we just need to give innovation a chance. It may be that one or another scheme might end up being more expensive but if we do not try to use innovative methods of construction and different ways of financing we will never see whether we can come to a situation where we have a much cheaper model of producing more schemes so I think we have just got to give it a go.

9. Question from David Walmsley (LRTA).

Given that opening new tram routes often involves the replacement or curtailment of local bus routes, should not the national concessionary bus pass scheme be extended to trams to allow the holders of these passes to continue to benefit from journeys that they would previously have made without charge?

Lilian Greenwood MP.

I am not sure I accept the premise that it necessarily involves replacement or curtailment of local bus routes. Our experience locally is that bus ridership has continued to grow and the bus network and bus routes have adapted to work alongside the tram.

You get a different network but with more ridership on public transport. There would be a cost implication in extending the concessionary bus pass to all light rail systems and I would be interested to know the estimate of that cost. Many of our local authorities do extend their concessionary bus pass to the tram network, Nottingham city residents can use their concessionary

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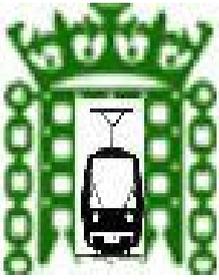
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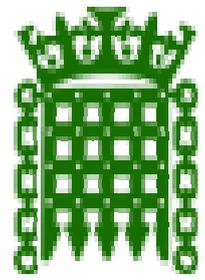


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bus passes on the trams as well as the buses. I think in Sheffield they allow all concessionary bus passes on the tram. [There was some general discussion here about this] But there is a cost to this.

John Leech.

In my experience, where a tram line is being put in, a bus operator tries to have a bus running in competition, which makes no sense whatsoever. If we give local authorities more control over the bus services they are providing, they should be networking the trams with the bus services rather than running them in competition. Ultimately, if you get to a situation where it is very much part of a network, I would argue at that time it should be extended because it is part of a network rather than an individual route which might compete with another bus service,

David Walmsley.

Someone referred earlier on to the situation in Blackpool where for about two years they accepted bus passes on trams and then withdrew it again. They are having to run a parallel bus service for visitors with bus passes while there are empty seats on the trams. One problem is that the term local bus service is well understood but you would have to define what you meant by a tram service, but there should be ways of getting round this.

Lilian Greenwood MP.

I think where the local authority are in a position to organise bus services as in London it would make sense to accept bus passes on trams, because you can think about the whole system rather than operating a tram and having the bus market doing its own thing, which is what happens in most places. I think it is a fair point to raise especially from the passenger point of view it makes perfect sense but it would be a cost for local authorities.

10a. Question from Michael Brennan (TramPower).

The Sheffield to Rotherham TramTrain Pilot is at last running to a programme. Can you confirm your Party support for this pilot and describe how your Party will use the results of the pilot to enable the best advantage to be gained for future TramTrain promoters?

10b. Question from Michael Willsher (LRTA)

The Sheffield to Rotherham TramTrain Pilot has been delayed through political indecision, slow technical development for adapting the main line infrastructure and the imposition of constraints from other major projects. How will your Party ensure that such innovative projects that challenge standards and conventional heavy rail wisdom can be progressed in a reasonable timescale and without an over-cautious approach to managing risk, thus escalating the costs?

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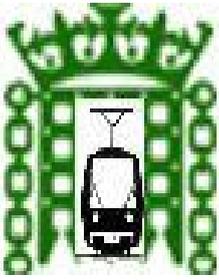
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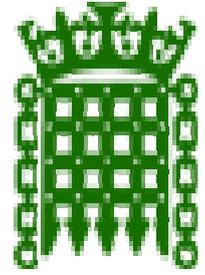
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John Leech

The Liberal Democrats support the pilot. How we use the results will depend on what the results actually say. I rather suspect that the results will say that this is the way forward in terms of increasing capacity at main line stations and ensuring that we have a better interconnected network of public transport. I rather suspect that that will be the answer and that all the technology problems can be easily overcome but we will have to wait and see whether or not that is the case. I think how we ensure that innovative projects like this do not have problems in the future is that we have got to show better political leadership.

All political parties have been guilty of allowing this to drift for too long. We know that this technology works because it has been working in Europe for many years. So I think the politicians need to bite the bullet and accept that this is the way forward in terms of expanding the capacity that we need on our rail network.

Lilian Greenwood MP.

Yes, Labour supports the pilot. I welcomed it when it was announced and I am only sorry that it has slipped to 2017. I am really hoping that it is a success. It is probably a bit early to say how we would apply the results, because we do not have them but I hope it is successful and leads to further investment because there are very exciting possibilities offered by TramTrain and I am sure everyone in this room agrees.

The second question is on political indecision and the failure to look at emerging technologies and constraints on other major projects. That question is quite important and at the moment we are seeing particularly when it comes to heavy rail and Network Rail that there is a danger that they cannot cope with the size of the programme that they are being asked to deliver over the next five years and some of that is due to the Department not being very organised in telling them what is required and when.

There is still a problem with fragmentation across the rail industry and a lack of coordination. From a policy point of view this is why we have been talking about the importance of a guiding mind to better coordinate skills and leadership on the railways and I think that that would help in the development of a whole range of policy areas not just TramTrain. Just being able to see what is out there and making sure that we have a joint approach and seeing what are the things that we need to do and making sure we have the resources to deliver.

Michael Brennan.

There is probably the potential to do ten to fifteen schemes like this over a twenty to twenty-five year period as our cities become more dense with population increase.

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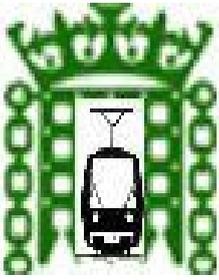
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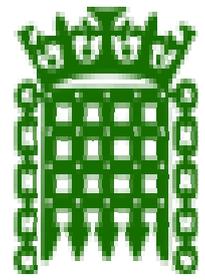


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John Leech

I think one of the potential outcomes of the TramTrain pilot is that it could be so successful that it would be very difficult for any government of any colour to argue against extending this to most of our large towns and cities and of course that would be incredibly expensive.

As soon as you convert a heavy rail system to TramTrain, then there is lots of scope to extend the light rail systems from those TramTrain systems. One of the challenges for any local authority area that does not have a tram system at the moment is actually getting one off the ground. If we end up converting some of our heavy rail systems into TramTrain systems, we will have lots of local authority areas that have some sort of light rail system, which they will then all be wanting to expand.

So there is a potential headache for any government with lots of local authorities arguing that they need lots of money to extend their tram systems. Whereas at the moment the likes of Nottingham and Manchester are getting way more than their fair share of money that is being spent on light rail.

Lilian Greenwood MP.

I do think it opens up a lot of possibilities for places that do not yet have a light rail system. I do not know across the UK which places have the sort of heavy rail infrastructure which has TramTrain potential. I am sure people in this room know where they have such schemes ready to go. If it is successful and there is going to be forward investment than that will have to be carefully managed but the possibilities are really exciting.

11. Question from Ian Souter.

In common with other European countries, passenger numbers using local public transport modes in the UK peaked in the late 1940s. However, the extent of loss of passengers in Europe since then has been at its most severe in the UK. If allowance is made for those passengers using free travel concessions, the loss in England/Scotland/Wales combined is between 75 and 80%.

Is the present extent of national reliance on private car, and the attendant importing of hydrocarbon fuel to the detriment of the national balance of trade/national security, to be maintained?

Lilian Greenwood MP.

The really big point in this question is: why are we losing public transport passengers in the UK and I think there is a pretty simple answer to that and it is the deregulation of buses since the 1980s. If you look at buses, with the exception of London and one or two other authorities where they have been able to do something quite different, it really has not delivered what it promised. In many places the deregulated bus market just does not work and in the UK that is combined with the very slow adoption of light rail. We want to have more attractive public transport networks and I think light rail has a really important role to play in that as, potentially, do buses.

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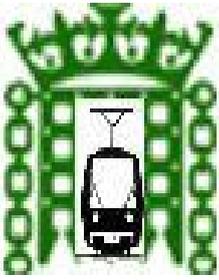
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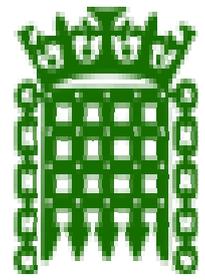


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We need to give local transport operators the powers that they need to offer planned transport networks, integrated transport networks that combine the best of both worlds, where you have light rail networks or the potential for light rail networks I think that is the key point, it is no good penalising road users, you have to tempt them out of their cars with a genuine choice that is better than getting in the car.

John Leech

I think there are two key points. Firstly, it is a mixed picture because there are some local authorities that have done quite well and managed to grow their passenger numbers on public transport and I am not sure that we are learning the lessons from those areas. The other key point is that we are putting far too much emphasis on the car.

When you look at the cost to the Treasury of the fuel duty escalator being scrapped, if that money had been invested in public transport rather than taken off the price of petrol and diesel, we would have been able to invest billions extra in public transport, which to my mind would have been a far better way to spend the money, particularly since we have seen the price of oil drop so massively. The price of the diesel for my car has gone down from about £1.40 to less than £1.10 per litre.

Ian Souter.

Thank you for that. Can I disagree please? The rot started in 1949 not with bus deregulation. If you look at the stats it made hardly any difference, the downward trend continued. The big significant event in UK local public transport use has been in London which has grown and grown because something happened in the late 1990s. Looking at Germany, it looks as if their passenger figures have never dropped below the 1950 level and they have such demand that you can see that is why light rail has survived because they need it to carry the bulk.

My attempts to understand what is happening have directed me to population spread as being a major contributor to the rundown. So we are locked into two generations at least of housing spread and everything else that people do and for the more difficult and complicated journeys car is essential.

It is not an easy matter to pull back from that but we have got to try and my earlier question on ticketing was part of that – to make the journeys easier.

Lilian Greenwood MP.

I think you make a really important connection between planning and development and transport. There have certainly been mistakes in the past where we have developed services on the edge of cities that are difficult to get to except by car. Particularly that has happened with hospitals which have moved to remote locations.

There have been housing developments without planning for how people are going to get from the house to where they need to be for work or training or shopping. Part of devolution is how the local

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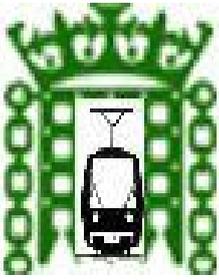
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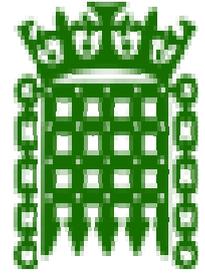
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authority joins up regeneration, housing, planning and transport and having the powers and funding to be able to do that. I think that the change since the 1940s has been due to the availability of the car, which has become cheaper and easier to use, and that has been exacerbated by what has happened to public transport outside London. Of course in London we never had deregulation, the control has always been there and huge amounts of investment have gone in.

It has really shown the benefits of proper integration, a single smart card and levels of investment. Other places would just like to have the services that London has got but I agree that the density of development in London is not easy to replicate anywhere else.

John Leech.

I think there is one other issue in London in that driving is so hellish that there is a disincentive to driving. In most parts of the country driving is not an unpleasant experience apart possibly from peak time going to and from work but In London driving is an unpleasant experience pretty much all of the time. So it is not just that there is good public transport, there is bad driver transport as well, so it is a double whammy against the car in London.

Lilian Greenwood MP.

And the congestion charge.

12. Question from Mike Willsher:

In view of the continuing inability of British cities to bring air pollution levels down to acceptable and legal levels, should the Government be doing more to actively encourage local authorities to replace heavily used bus routes with trams.

Electric vehicles running on steel rails will not only reduce pollution from tail-pipe emissions from, particularly, diesel-powered buses and cars, but also the pollution caused by particles from wear of tyres and road surfaces

John Leech.

We have to face the reality that buses are not going to disappear and that buses are going to be part of the mix of public transport but I do think that for far too long in the vast majority of the UK there has been too much of an emphasis on public transport just being about bus.

The bus can do certain things well but there are certain things that it cannot do at all. With the exception of in London, there are certain people who will never get on a bus but those same people will get on to light rail. My view is that we need to extend the number of light rail schemes that we have but we also have to face the harsh economic reality that we are in at the moment. So it not the case that you can suddenly just scrap all the buses and replace them with trams overnight that is never going to happen. But over time the more tram routes that we bring forward the more people

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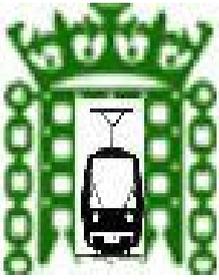
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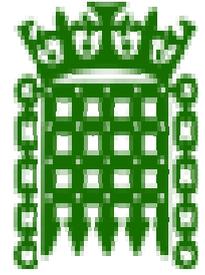
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will start using public transport. Once you get people travelling on trams they will also migrate on to buses as well, because they will use buses to get from the tram to wherever it is they are going. So I do not think the solution is to get rid of all the buses and replace them with trams but over time we have to phase in certain routes which are more sensibly tram routes and then enhance the public transport system rather than getting rid of those buses, shifting the buses on to other routes to improve the network.

Lilian Greenwood MP.

I do not think it is for ministers to tell local authorities that they need to reduce bus services. I understand that one of the busiest bus routes in Europe is meant to be the number 50 in Birmingham and there I think there is a campaign to use a disused freight line for passenger use so heavy rail can sometimes provide the extra capacity. But really I think it is up to local communities to identify what the priorities are. It is going to be a combination of things if we want to reduce air pollution and it is not just about buses it is about how to get people out of their cars on to buses, it is about cycling and walking, it is about more electric vehicles, whether they are buses or cars. I think it is a combination.

Of course it is about using light rail but I think there is not one solution but a combination and I do not want to go into buses versus trams because I think that misses the point.

Mike Willsher.

This is not an anti-bus thing; it is that we should put more emphasis on looking at routes in cities which are very heavily used by buses. There seems to be a tendency in this country for light rail schemes to go for the easy option; here is a disused or lightly used heavy rail line, let us use that; or let us go round the back so that we do not knock too many buildings down; or let us keep off the main roads so as not to annoy the motorists.

If you have a route, such as the one quoted in Birmingham used by a large number of buses you should be looking at that as a potential light rail line.

Lilian Greenwood MP.

Just reflecting on local circumstances with line 2 in Nottingham, which will go straight through the middle of Clifton, has the busy number 48 bus. People are saying to me all the time what do we need a light rail line for, we have a fantastic bus. So you have to be able to explain to people, if you do invest in light rail, how it is enhancing their experience, when they feel they already have a good public transport option.

Of course I am saying it will be more reliable, it will not get clogged up with traffic, it has better accessibility for buggies and pushchairs, but you still encounter "why do we need it when we already have an effective service?"

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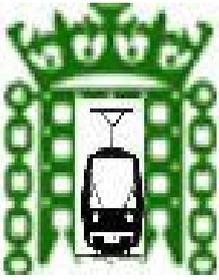
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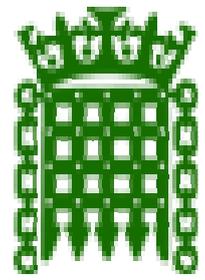


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With the end of the written questions, John Leech asked for comments from the meeting.

Dave Halladay (STRAIL).

Firstly diesel versus electric. There are many examples of electric trams and trains which have had diesel engines plugged in so that they can run on non-electrified lines. Later, when the lines are electrified the diesel engine can be taken out. Where is the coordinated planning that will produce things that can be upgradable? Adrian Shooter has taken the bull by the horns here by buying up old London Underground trains and converting them into DMUs because they have ten to fifteen years life left in them.

Looking at funding one of the things that does come out, and we have a lovely example in Manchester, is that people get a tram and change their transport use and they are suddenly £2-3,000 a year better off because they can get rid of the car and rely on public transport. What can we do to get that rolling better? I think there is a strong economic argument because the person who is £2-3,000 a year better off because they got rid of the car does not increase the local wage bill because they are not using other resources so they are saving money for the local authority. How can we put a figure on that and feed it in to funding. Manchester's Airport line has been funded by Manchester without calling on outside sources.

We must look at other funding methods. On the Continent they can lay street track for trams at amazing speed.

We may ask: can we do this in the UK? But the response is: it is not done here and I am not going to be the first.

It is a Catch22. How do we break that?

Steve Barber (Broxtowe Borough Council).

Lilian in her comments on Nottingham has acknowledged that one of the big problems is utilities and we have certainly had a nightmare in Beeston with the utilities in the early stages dragging their feet. Politicians need to be aware of the need to bring the utilities into line.

More like in France where I believe the utilities are told to move their services before a certain date. We have been pussyfooting around utility works.

John Leech.

There are two extensions that have just been built through my constituency and on Mauldeth Road West and along Hardy Lane there were delays in the construction phase simply because when they went to lay the track they found that all the plans of the utilities were completely wrong, so they hit gas mains and electricity cables and all sorts.

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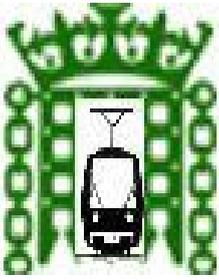
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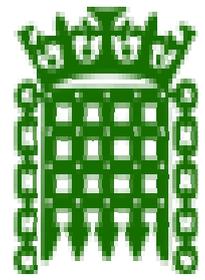


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Tim Kendal. (Independent consultant)

In regard to TramTrain, do not underestimate the problems of getting a tram on to the main line because the systems are very different from Germany and track standards are very different, which makes it a lot more complicated.

Also there is the question of the concessions for tram and the franchises for rail and how they interface.

I think there is much that will come out of the trial which will make it easier to set the standards for the future and reduce the costs. Germany invented the concept but it took them a long time to bring it to fruition.

Alan Dare.

Just a concern about the slight disconnect between what we are talking about in terms of devolution against a strategic procurement way of doing things. If we have lots of independent schemes, all independently procured, you are going to make an extremely expensive programme and end up with multiple tram fleets all procured in different ways.

A more strategic way could be offered by coordinating authorities.

John Leech

I do not think there is any evidence that there has been any coordination in the past.

Neil Edrich (Costain).

I have been to meetings with parliamentarians for many years and we just go round and round the same issues all the time. We have many competent engineers in this country but unless we can get the political leadership to make things happen we are going to go on having the same conversations as we had in the past.

Chris Belk (Conservative Transport Group).

I would like to suggest to people to download a copy of Volterra's report published in November *Investing in city regions - the case for long term investment in transport* where they very critically analyse the current process of assessing priorities for projects and show very convincingly that it is not fit for the purpose and they make some very sensible suggestions as to what should replace it. I commend everybody to read it and all authorities to pay serious attention to it. Amongst other things they point out that any planning that depends on an analysis of the past to forecast the future is inherently not reliable.

There is a lot of very important material in that report

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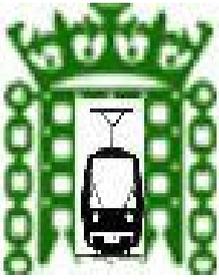
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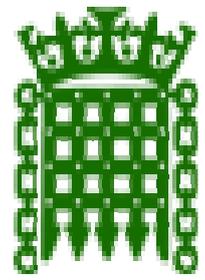


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[The report can be found at:

<http://volterra.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Volterra-Investing-in-City-Regions-A4-report-PDF.pdf>]

Andrew Hugill (CIHT).

Taking up the comment on appraisal and offering an alternative and a solution, maybe, think about what value customers get out of these projects and link that into the appraisal far more than it is at the moment. That would then tend to give a solution to the political side.

Reg Harman (Interfaces). Going back to TramTrain, it does strike me that we have slightly got hitched on TramTrain as the solution to all problems. Yes, it has potential but we have now gone into a very long delay and hold-up.

A lot of mention of what has happened in Sheffield but nobody has mentioned Watford-St Albans Abbey, my local one and where I have had some professional involvement.

In the past we spent over 30 years looking at possible improvement to upgrade a railway line which ran from nowhere near anywhere to nowhere near anywhere else and this has now been dropped into the long grass, very sad after all the effort that has been put into it. Look at countries like Austria and Switzerland and even at lines being operated by TramTrain vehicles in France, such as the west of Lyon network.

In fact, they are running what in effect have become light railway lines which are still conventional rail lines but being run by much lighter stock with extra stops and greater acceleration. Built into the city plan, it is yet another mode of upgraded rail and I think that is a great lesson.

John Leech MP thanked the speakers and the audience.

and reminded the audience that the Vossloh sponsorship had ended and invited anyone interested in sponsoring to contact the Secretariat, Jim Harkins

Jim Harkins Secretariat announced that this would be the last APPLRG meeting before the election and thanked JL as Chairman and the others who had supported the group.

The meeting closed at 18:00.

Minutes by Mike Willsher, LRTA

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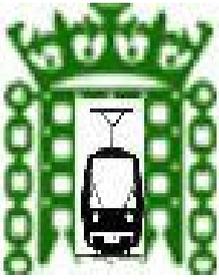
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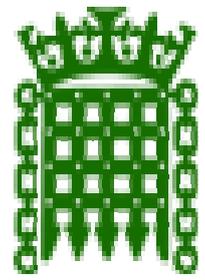


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"Trams, Light Rail, TramTrains, A Party Policy perspective for the General Election Written Questions submitted

Iain Soutar;

My Question:

"The acceptance of light rail in the UK is inhibited by the barriers in place to passengers transferring between light rail and other modes as part of a through journey. Specific difficulties are in respect of ticketing, the creation of feeder services and the facilities provided at interchange points.

To what extent are these difficulties acknowledged and what initiatives are offered to overcome them?"

(In support of my point in this question, I refer to the very longstanding freedom of passengers to use the most convenient point to point route in the Central London area of the underground network without additional fares being charged where a change of line is necessary. Light rail systems are a surface equivalent of the underground network but their ability to carry passengers in bulk is inhibited by the difficulties in transferring on/off the limited light rail networks)

Reg Harman;

My Question:

"Rapid development of tramway networks in many French cities since the 1980s has proved a key factor in their economic and social regeneration. This trend reflects appraisal systems which draw out the full system benefits and costs, unlike the narrow monetary focus of British WebTag methodology.

What can we learn from French experience to guide British tramway development, especially for smaller cities such as Oxford and York?"

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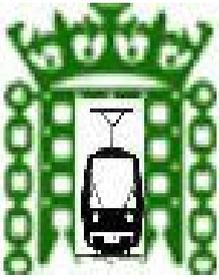
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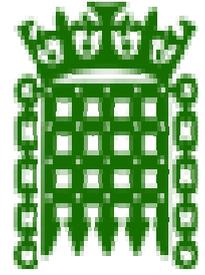


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Rev D Charlie

My Question:

I would ask the panel what support they intend to give for the two Croydon Tramlink extensions to Crystal Palace and Sutton - particularly in terms of public funding.

My vested interest in this is that my family and I live in the London Borough of Sutton!

Jim Harkins light Rail (UK)

My Question:

It is Government policy to "Green the Bus" by using Hybrid and Electric Buses which goes some ways to clean up "Tail - pipe exhaust pollution"

There are significant pollutants including "heavy metals" which are greater killers generated by the wear & tear on the road surface, tyres wearing out and brake linings inc non asbestos versions as highlighted in the "Oslo Report" Is the "Tail pipe" greening a smoke and mirrors to cover up this real and hidden but significant danger in our Urban Areas

If your Party wins the next election, how will you openly tackle this issue

Alan Dare Vivarail Ltd

My Question:

It is now generally recognised that public investment in transport is hugely skewed in favour of London, with over 90% of all such investment going to the capital. As a result a city which already has one of the densest rail, metro and bus networks in the world continues to benefit from new lines and rolling stock, whereas regional centres such as Leeds or Bristol - which were they in Europe would have comprehensive metro and tram systems - have to make do with deregulated buses and ancient Pacer trains. This discrepancy has been a feature of successive governments of all colours.

If elected, what would you do to change the balance?

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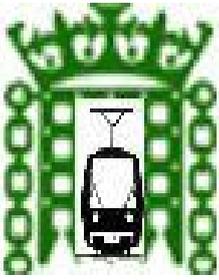
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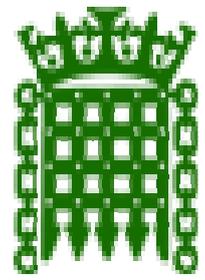


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Jon Reed
My Question

Getting a scheme authorised and funded in the UK seems to take much, much longer than in other European countries; the time spent gaining authority and funds is often 3 or 4 times that spend on actual construction. This delay is not only costly for the scheme promoters, but means that the benefits of the scheme are not being realised, whilst costs rise with inflation, Undoubtedly some of the delays are down to NIMBYism, but the main cause seems to be bureaucratic procedure, and a view in Whitehall that investment should be resisted rather than encouraged. Again, this has been the same under successive governments.

If elected, how would you improve matters?

Nominee:
My Question

Conversion to tram-train operation would appear to have many benefits for the shorter-distance heavy rail lines in provincial cities. However, this would take time and money. In the meantime these routes are suffering from increasing overcrowding and poor service quality, and the nationwide shortage of diesel (DMU) trains is making matters worse.

If elected, would you push for a rapid tram-train programme, order a fleet of additional diesel trains, or leave matters to market forces?

Nominee?
My Question;

Question for lodging as invited:

"In common with other European countries, passenger numbers using local public transport modes in the UK peaked in the late 1940s. However, the extent of loss of passengers in Europe since then has been at its most severe in the UK. If allowance is made for those passengers using free travel concessions, the loss in England/Scotland/Wales combined is between 75 and 80%.

Is the present extent of national reliance on private car, and the attendant importing of hydrocarbon fuel to the detriment of the national balance of trade/national security, to be maintained?"

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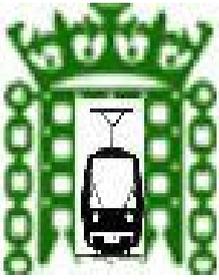
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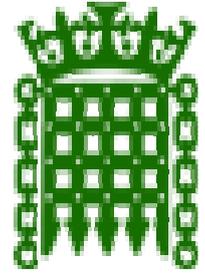


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Mike Willsher

My Question;

In view of the continuing inability of British cities to bring air pollution levels down to acceptable and legal levels, should the Government be doing more to actively encourage local authorities to replace heavily used bus routes with trams. Electric vehicles running on steel rails will not only reduce pollution from tail-pipe emissions from, particularly, diesel-powered buses and cars, but also the pollution caused by particles from wear of tyres and road surfaces.

Nominee

My Question

Much has been said about the high cost of tram and light rail systems being caused by "over-engineering", particularly extremely deep concrete foundations for the track bed, which also necessitates costly utility relocation. This may well be caused in part by the current financing models which entail transfer of risk to contractors. Should the Government encourage alternative methods of financing which would see the promoters of tram projects bearing the risk and allow them to specify lighter and less expensive construction methods.

Nominee

My Question

Given that opening new tram routes often involves the replacement or curtailment of local bus routes, should not the national concessionary bus pass scheme be extended to trams to allow the holders of these passes to continue to benefit from journeys that they would previously have made without charge?

Nominee

My Question

The Sheffield to Rotherham Tram Train Pilot is at last running to a programme. Can you confirm your Party support for this pilot and describe how your Party will use the results of the pilot to enable the best advantage to be gained for future Tram Train promoters?

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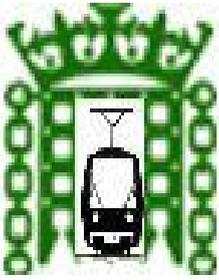
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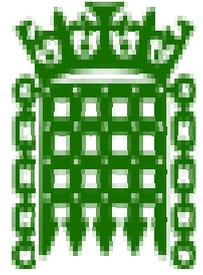


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Nominee
My Question

The Sheffield to Rotherham Tram Train Pilot has been delayed through political indecision, slow technical development for adapting the main line infrastructure and the imposition of constraints from other major projects. How will your Party ensure that such innovative projects that challenge standards and conventional heavy rail wisdom, can be progressed in a reasonable timescale and without an over-cautious approach to managing risk, thus escalating the costs?

N.B.
Apologies to the many supporters who submitted questions of a similar nature and to others who have been beaten by the time factor

JH Secretariat

This meeting by invitation only, where MPs, Stakeholders etc., within the Light Rail industry and invited members of the Public will have a chance to discuss debate and raise questions concerning Light Rail & Trams.

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