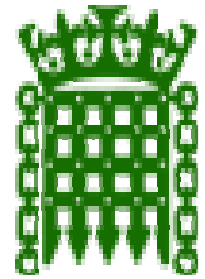


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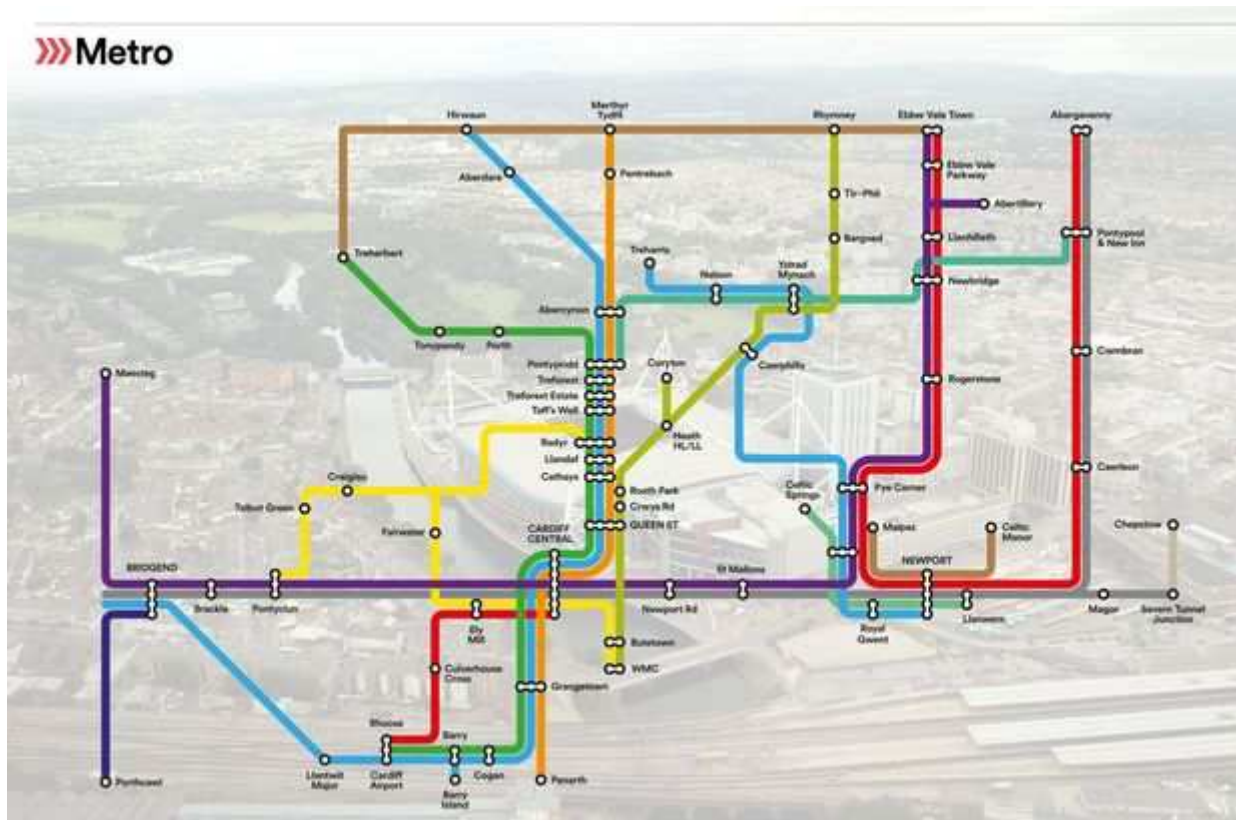
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Up to £600m confirmed for the next phase of the Metro transport network for South Wales

06:00, 30 June 2015



An image of the proposed Metro for South Wales

Transport Minister Edwina Hart will confirm that £600m has been identified for Valley Lines, but no decision yet on whether it will be tram or heavy rail

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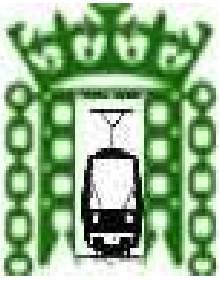
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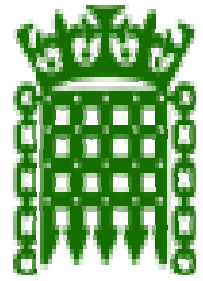
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In a statement to AMs Mrs Hart, who has responsibility for transport, is also expected to announce a new strategic transport advisory group to provide expertise and advice to the Welsh Government as it engages with stakeholders and suppliers in the rail sector, as part of the process of firming up its Metro plans.

This will include addressing the key question of what form of transport will be used on the Valley Lines, as well as the type of not for profit company that will take forward delivery of the Metro, alongside the Wales & Borders Rail franchise, which is being devolved from 2018.

Mrs Hart is also expected to reference Transport for London, which has responsibility for the London Underground, bus regulation and increasingly elements of the capital's heavy rail infrastructure, as a model to aspire to.

The advisory team



David Stevens (pictured), chief operating officer at Admiral, and his wife Heather Stevens created the Waterloo Foundation which supports organisations working in Wales which help unpaid carers, increase employment opportunities or run community renewable energy projects

The panel are the current chief executive of the Civil Aviation Authority Andrew Haines, who is also a former managing director of South West Trains, Network Rail board member and former managing director of the Wales & Border Trains, Chris Gibb and chief operating officer of Admiral, David Stevens, who also sits on the Cardiff Capital Region advisory board and was a board member of the Cardiff Business Partnership which first called for a Metro transport network for the region back in 2013.

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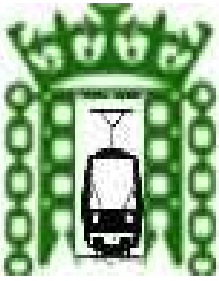
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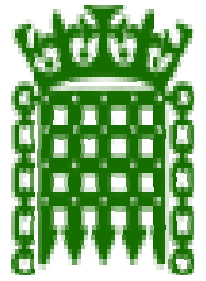
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Tram or heavy rail?

The Welsh Government has deliberately not explicitly set out the form of transport, which are light rail [tram] or heavy rail, it would like to see operate on the various Valley Lines into Cardiff – or indeed a combination of the two. Consideration will also be given to aligning bus services to Metro services. Although it currently doesn't have devolved powers over bus regulation, it could as a starting point bring local authority powers over bus operators together.

Mrs Hart will confirm that phase two of Metro has identified between £500m to £600m in funding – following £70m for phase one which includes improvements on the Ebbw Vale line.

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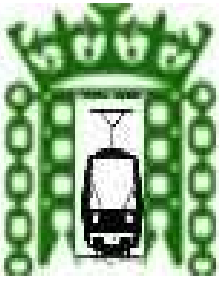
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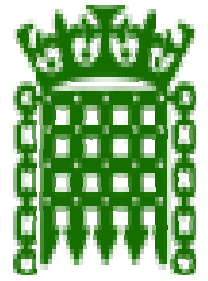
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Funding



Investment in infrastructure should provide a welcome boost to Welsh businesses

Valley Lines electrification already has £125m as part of a Welsh Government agreement with the UK Government last year, which also confirmed that the Department for Transport would also electrify the Great Western Mainline from Paddington to Cardiff.

The Welsh Government will now potentially look to match fund that amount with European Union money, taking its budget up to £250m. However, for EU funding to be secured it would need to see electrification on the Valley Lines completed by 2023.

It could also use its own capital budget, or even potentially borrowing powers – even if leveraging that of local authorities – to take funding up to £600m.

"Longer-term Metro could be expanded beyond the core network of the Valley Lines, including projects like a route to Cardiff Bay, by sourcing finance from the proposed £1bn City Deal for Cardiff and its wider city region."

Mrs Hart will also confirm that the Welsh Government would look to start the procurement process on Valley Lines electrifications next year, with work starting in 2017-18.

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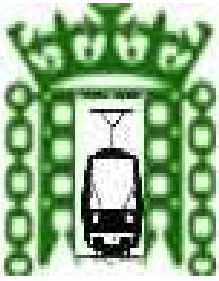
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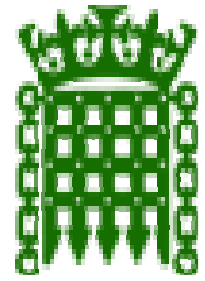
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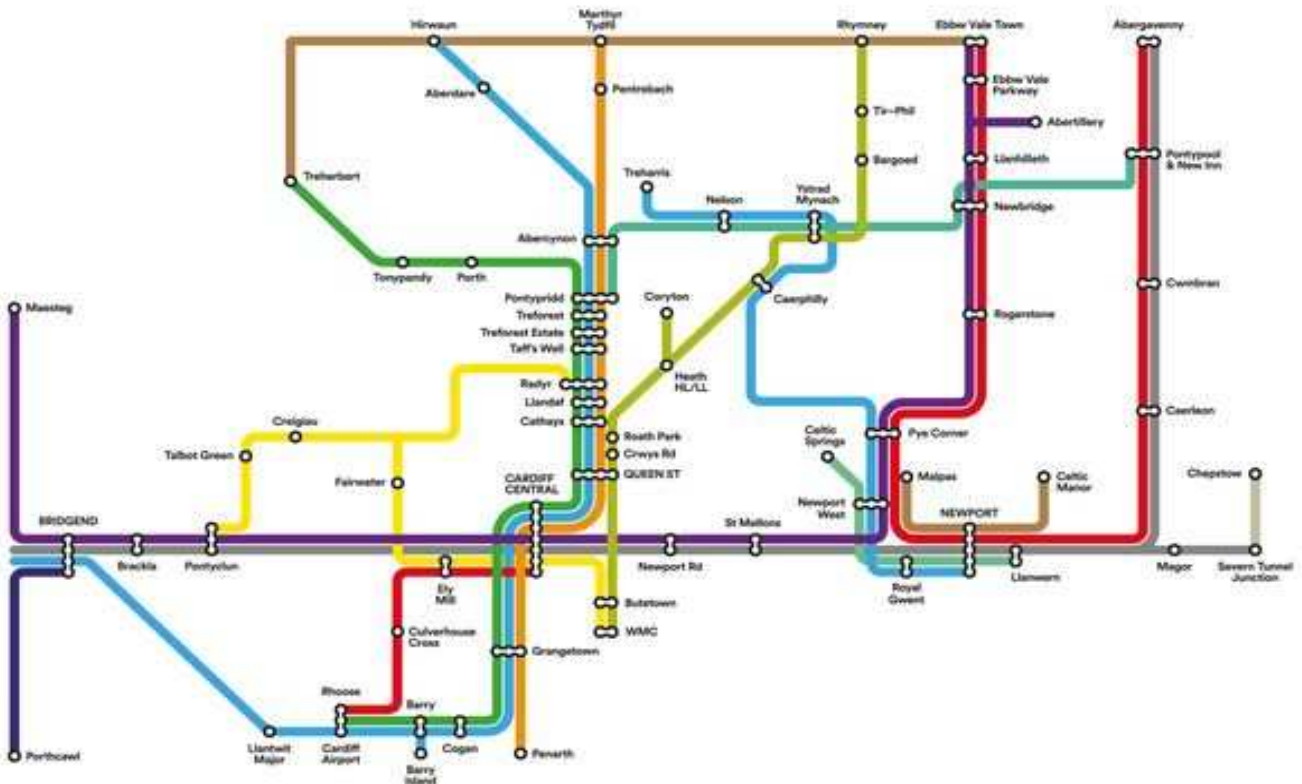


Improved frequency

In a briefing note given to more than 100 rail industry figures yesterday – as part of an early engagement event on the Wales & Borders Rail franchise and the Metro at the Millennium Stadium –

The Welsh Government said: "Metro aspires for at least four services per hour at the network periphery, increasing over time as demand dictates."

Currently from locations such as Aberdare and Merthyr there are only between one to two services per hour into Cardiff – taking at least an hour.



The layout of the proposed Cardiff City Region Metro

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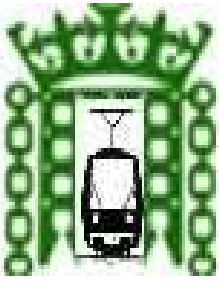
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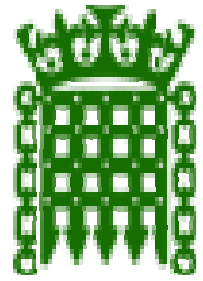


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Tram Expert

Following the briefing David Hand of UKTram and a co-ordinator of Mott McDonald's light rail and rapid transit business, said that the Valleys Lines could achieve strong passenger growth by adopting Great Manchester's tram network approach – but that it might not necessarily mean that all the Valley Lines into Cardiff should be converted to tram.

A tram service could reduce journey times from Merthyr to Cardiff by around 20 minutes and with a service of one every 15.

Mr Hand said: "I think it is a question of the right mode for the right line and the right place. I think whether you would transfer every line into light rail right away may not be the answer, particularly when you have got a lot of freight traffic."

He added: "The Valley Lines looks similar to the Manchester system where they converted some under used heavy lines, initially in 1992 between Bury and Altrincham.

"And by having more frequent and faster services, and stops, it doubled the capacity on the line on day one and took more traffic off the roads.

"And just last year they opened another under used heavy line from Rochdale into Manchester which is a similar length to the Rhymney Line and in the first year it has tripled the patronage."

He said that even with electrification and a focus on new heavy rail rolling stock, it would do little to improve frequency of services on the Valley Lines into Cardiff.

Mr Hand: "They have capacity constraints at Queen St Station that prevents that.

"The benefit of light is that if you do have a constraint you can come around it because they are more agile [trams], don't need as much space and can run on the street."

The planned not for profit company currently doesn't have an executive function or budget, but that will be addressed in consultation with the industry and the new advisory group in the months ahead.

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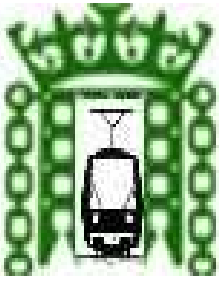
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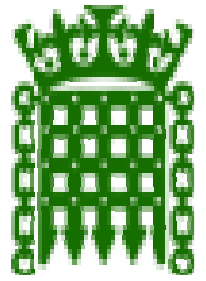


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Governance

The Welsh Government will also have to consider where the company sits in relation not just to itself, but to local government and going forward any functioning Cardiff Capital Region.

Advisory panel input

Mr Gibb said: "We will question and advise the Welsh Government, as they take things forward. "Andrew and I have a lifetime of experience in the rail industry and we just want to help and it is particularly nice to be have been asked to do just that.

"People want better services now and they are not going to wait years for that"

He said the advisory group weren't wedded to any preferred mode [s] of transport on the Valley Lines, but would listen to the industry in the months ahead

By [Sion Barry](#)
Wales Online

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