



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Judith Blake  
Leader of Leeds City Council  
Civic Hall  
Calverley Street  
Leeds - LS1 1UR

Our Ref: ZA22067  
21 October 2016

*Dear Judith,*

I am writing in relation to transport in Leeds and specifically about my serious concerns about the way Leeds City Council is approaching the £173.5 million allocated for transport in the city by the Department for Transport.

As know, following the correct and excellent decision made by the DfT to back the inspector on the ill-fated NGT scheme, yet allow Leeds to keep the money for the right scheme, I called on 13<sup>th</sup> May for there to be a transport 'summit' of civic leaders – Leeds MPs and the Leeds, York and North Yorkshire Chamber of Trade and both Leeds City Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Extraordinarily, this has still not happened, whilst there was event that you called a 'summit' it was in fact a forum for groups and residents across Leeds to commence the Council's 'conversation' on transport; there has **still** been no meeting of civic leaders and no attempt by Leeds City Council to get all MPs and the Chamber of Commerce to discuss and hopefully agree then back the right way to spend the £173.5 million. You have not even told Leeds MPs what your proposals are, six months on. This is extraordinary considering the timescale with coming for proposals for spending this sum and the huge importance of this to our city. This failure to bring civic leaders together, to discuss and agree a proposal shows a profound lack of leadership on transport and shows that Leeds City Council are still not learning lessons from other areas, including Manchester, that have been successful in obtaining funding for mass transit schemes who have campaigned collectively on this with the full involvement of MPs.

It has become clear since then, and including from the email update you sent and from Council documentation, that Leeds City Council are actually actively avoiding doing what is actually needed – which is to come up with the appropriate transformative transport scheme that Leeds so desperately needs and instead is hiding behind this so-called 'conversation' on wider transport issues in the Leeds area. The open ended wider consultation is in real danger of becoming an excuse for not taking the real action we need, when it comes to Leeds transport, which is to ensure we plan and then progress the mass transit system that you yourself agree the city needs.

The fact is that Leeds City Council should continually be engaged in a conversation with local

***Please reply to Constituency Office***

residents, communities and their elected representatives (and moreover should be much more prepared to listen to them – I know from Leeds North West actually how long it takes for the Council to do so) but **what we need now is not open ended discussions, we need very simply for the city to discuss and agree on the best transformative modern transport system for the city/city region.**

So whilst the meetings and ‘conversation’ has been a useful opportunity to engage with people across Leeds, I was frankly amazed and dismayed, with this pressing need and with the £173 million on the table, to see both in the presentation given by Council officers and also in the documentation handed out that it is clear that despite the £173.5 million of funding provided in lieu of NGT that Leeds City Council have no current intention of pursuing a mass transit scheme.

I am further concerned by the email sent from you on 2 August which has given no sense that what we surely should be doing now is to be getting the leaders of the city - Leeds City Council, WYCA, the Leeds MPs and the Chamber of Commerce - together to discuss how we now progress plans for the start of a mass transit network. This update does not provide any reassurances that the money will be utilised to provide a sensible long term integrated transport solution for the City and the wider region.

Whilst of course it is positive to consult with Leeds residents about what particular transport issues they have in their areas and communities, when it comes to a mass transit scheme, which is what we are still no closer to, it is not a long and open ended 'conversation' that we need (and we do not have time for the, considering the fact that we have £173.5 million of central Government funding which is time limited); it is leadership and a plan we can all get behind and make happen.

I am conscious that the Department for Transport have said that Leeds must come forward with proposals and that the Council will therefore be concerned that they need to put forward proposals for spending the money now, before proper consideration has been made about the much needed mass transit scheme (which is why it is frustrating that there has been no progress on this in the last six months). It would be absurd for Leeds to waste this opportunity just because of an arbitrary Government timetable, so I have written to DfT urging them to give time for proper consideration of what Leeds really needs as you yourself have acknowledged, which is a mass transit scheme to run alongside our railways, bus services and cycling and walking routes. I hope you will back this call as will the MPs, rather than submitting a bid that does not deliver what Leeds really needs.

The bid for NGT that was made by Leeds was for a mass transit system and it was made for trolleybus simply system because Leeds disgracefully was not allowed to bid for light rail. So now that this is no longer the case, then surely Leeds can and must progress with the right