



Light Rail (UK)

All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group

House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Light Rail & Trams, Affordable & Sustainable Transport

“A fair deal for Tram”



Light Rail Review 2011



House of Commons,
12th July 2011.

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.

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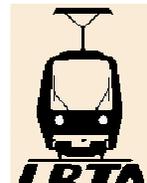
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“A fair deal for Tram”

I am pleased to be here at today's All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group reception, and may I say congratulations to John Leech on his re-election.

I am sorry to disappoint some of you today as I had hoped to be able to announce the outcome of the Department's review of the costs of light rail which is being undertaken by Steve Berry. Unfortunately more work is required before it can be published.

I now aim to be in a position to do so by end September.

As you know the terms of reference for the review were very straightforward – what are the key drivers for light rail and what steps can be taken to help make it more cost effective in the future. We want to parallel the process undertaken by McNulty in heavy rail.

The review has considered evidence from the various inquiries that have taken place previously, including the report produced by this Group in February 2010. We have also looked closely at evidence from overseas, where they have also been grappling with costs for major infrastructure projects.

It is clear that a great deal of work has already been undertaken by the light rail sector in order to learn the lessons from past experiences on light rail schemes with a view to making them more affordable.

It is also clear that some of the recommendations from the various reports have already been taken on board and progress has been made in a number of areas, albeit slower than originally envisaged.

However, it is apparent further work is required if we are to achieve the goal, which I know we all want, which is the reduction in the capital costs of light rail.

The final report when published will cover a number of key areas, including:

1. the history and background of light rail; highlighting the benefits that light rail provides to an area;
2. what have been the obstacles to further investment in light rail;
3. the reasons for cost overruns that have occurred in the past and solutions which we believe, if implemented, could help reduce the costs.

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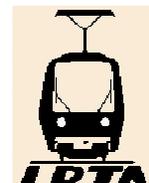
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I also want to strengthen the arguments on the benefits light rail on economic growth and the reduction in carbon.

Steve Berry is now undertaking further evidence gathering on these important issues in order to ensure this report can be published in September without further delays.

It is also already very clear from our initial findings that to achieve a cost reduction that it will require a co-ordinated effort from all parties to ensure that light rail is an affordable option for promoters in the future.

I would like to congratulate Transport for Greater Manchester who announced last week that tram services have commenced from St Werburgh’s Road to St Peter’s Square. As you know we are providing over £120m which will help deliver further extensions to Ashton-under-Lyne via Droylsden and to East Didsbury.

Construction is well underway and services are expected to be in operation by end 2013.

As I am unable to talk to you today about the Review,

I will now speak about the two tram-train pilot models currently being investigated by DfT and partners.

St Albans to Watford Junction

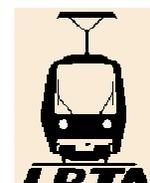
This is a short branch line electrified in the 1980s that would be converted to tram train to improve the product for passengers and the economics of the route. Current services are self contained although operated as part of the London Midland franchise. The branch is single track and operated by one train which means the service is unattractive at every 45 minutes.

The pilot is a partnership between DfT, Hertfordshire County Council and Network Rail. It is envisaged that Hertfordshire would assume responsibility for the specification of services and the infrastructure of the route over a lease period. I would like to thank the partners for their efforts in developing the scheme which hits a number of Government objectives, such as cutting carbon and creating growth.

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The pilot proposes conversion to tram train operation with improved services. It is a good example of how the Government’s localism agenda might work in practice – in this case the potential for local control of the infrastructure and service specification.

Following a tendering exercise, DfT and Hertfordshire are currently considering proposals received. Bidders have raised a number of questions about service frequencies, vehicles and infrastructure liabilities.

I will be considering what these issues mean for the viability of the project over the course of the summer. I hope to say more in the Autumn.

It is currently planned that the service would open in 2014.

Sheffield to Rotherham

The other pilot being considered by the DfT is the potential for through running of tram trains between the Sheffield Supertram system and Network Rail.

A tram-train is a tram fitted with additional equipment to operate on main line railways. This concept was originated in Karlsruhe and has been adopted by many cities including Den Haag, Alicante, Nordhausen, Saarbrücken and Kassel.

It envisages trams running every 20 minutes between Sheffield City Centre and a new station at Parkgate, just to the north of Rotherham town centre.

The pilot has four key objectives:

1. to determine changes in industry costs for tram-train operation looking in particular at changes to infrastructure costs and reductions in day to day operating costs.
2. to understand changes required to Industry standards prior to and during operation. Tram trains have lower crash worthiness than normally required for conventional heavy rail vehicles and will require additional signalling protection. This is to ensure separation between tram trains and heavy rail freight and passenger trains when running on the main line.
3. gauge passenger perception including reaction to the new type of vehicles and the improvements delivered by better penetration of city centres
4. to understand the issues with operating from main lines onto tramways.

We want to use electric trains for the pilot as they are cheaper off the shelf, but if the pilot is successful, that may make diesel variants more attractive.

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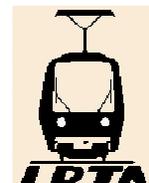
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The route was chosen for a number of reasons:

- the proximity between the Supertram and Network Rail lines at Meadowhall and therefore the need to construct only a small section of new track
- the short section of route requiring electrification between Meadowhall and Parkgate
- the small vehicle fleet needed
- the opportunity to test interworking between tram trains, street tramways, freight trains and national rail passenger services.

The pilot is being developed in partnership between DfT, Network Rail, South Yorkshire PTE, Stagecoach Supertram and Northern Trains.

I would like to thank them for their efforts.

Network Rail is responsible for developing the infrastructure scope and price and is currently part way through their GRIP 4 study. Network Rail has also commenced the RUS - “Alternative Solutions to Delivering Passenger Demand Efficiently”. It includes Tram Train and Parry People Movers/energy storage options. It is expected to be published in the spring of 2012 following an industry consultation.

South Yorkshire PTE and Stagecoach Supertram are looking at how the vehicles would be affect their system infrastructure being heavier than normal trams. They are managing the demand and revenue modelling aspect of the business case. They are also considering how the pilot can assist with local regeneration objectives in the Sheffield/Rotherham area.

Northern Trains have led the procurement of a fleet of vehicles and Vossloh have been identified as lead bidder and negotiations continue. They have worked closely with SYPTE and Supertram on an operating model for the service and again these discussions continue.

DfT is funding the pilot. In March 2011, I announced £150k for business case development. I have just received demand and revenue projections and the results of the industry day that was convened by Northern which I know some of you attended.

The industry day was very helpful to the project team because contributors were able to identify and quantify a number of benefits to other schemes that would arise from the Pilot going forward. I would like to include these benefits in the case for the progression of the pilot. I would like the project team plan to circulate the report from the day shortly.

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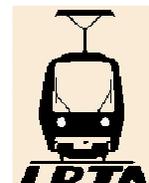
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The business case to progress the pilot will also consider examples of possible tram train applications. The Department has been working closely with TfGM on the possible roll out in the Greater Manchester area and I would like to consider an example from the area.

As some of you are aware, SYPTe has also bid for additional tram vehicles to provide additional capacity on their system. The results of SYPTe’s funding bid will be known in December. In the meantime I will consider how their proposal fits with Tram Train because I want to ensure that any possible investment makes the best use of scarce public funding.

It is my plan to consider the Tram Train business case in more detail over the course of the summer and autumn. If the business case is satisfactory and the tram train pilot is affordable I would like to authorise the scheme by early 2012. I anticipate that the pilot would open in 2014.

I believe this pilot has real potential for roll out on other parts of the network and could lead to regeneration and more economic operation of rural and lightly used lines where diesel traction would be more feasible. As with St Albans, it could also improve the scope for more local control. Experience from Germany has shown this to be the case.

The Sheffield Pilot will set the standards and best practice for introduction elsewhere such as Manchester, Nottingham, Blackpool or the West Midlands. It will enable cities with trams to extend their existing systems onto adjacent main lines at minimum additional costs when compared with a new tramway.

We as a Government believe in light rail, and that is why, even in a difficult economic climate, we have made significant investments. There are many reasons to support light rail, not least economic and carbon related, as well as the simple fact that people like it.

Thank you.

Norman Baker MP
Minister for Transport

This was followed by a generous Q & A session.

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