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Transport experts to gather in Leeds for summit on future of city's light rail

Light Rail (UK) will on Monday 12th December be holding the Light Rail for Leeds Summit into the viability and affordability of light rail in Leeds, at Leeds Town Hall

The Light Rail for Leeds Summit will bring together transport experts from around the country to discuss whether the £173.5 million set aside for the failed NGT Trolleybus scheme can be used to begin a transformative light rail network in Leeds. With the local contribution for NGT from West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and Leeds City Council being up to £81 million, the total money currently available for a light rail scheme is £250 million.

Light rail operators and manufacturers, including those from other Core Cities that do have light rail, will be giving presentations on the different ways in which Leeds can finally get started with light rail, as well as making the case for light rail for Leeds from an economic as well as a transport perspective. The light rail plan made by Light Rail (UK) in a conference in the city in May will feature alongside a variety of other ideas and suggestions from transport bodies.

Metro, the predecessor body to the WYCA, previously proposed a tram train scheme on the Leeds Harrogate York line, including a link to the airport, estimated to cost just £17-25 million. Leeds City Council has instead announced plans to use the £173.5 million towards a number of smaller schemes, such as cycling lanes and roundabout improvement.

A Freedom of Information request by Look North and other emails also exposed that Leeds City Council had rebuffed and ignored tram manufacturers and operators who approached them offering to install light rail. One of the biggest rail manufacturers, Alstom, also offered considerable private investment but Leeds City Council rejected their approach. Trampower, who have just been given planning permission to start with a tram line in Preston, didn't even get a reply to their letter. Both Alstom and Trampower are presenting at the Light Rail for Leeds summit.

In Leeds City Council's decision on how to spend the NGT funds light rail was never considered, and their public consultation was skewed, meaning that people could not properly back light rail for Leeds.



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The Light Rail for Leeds Summit will be held from 11am to 3pm in the Sullivan Room of Leeds Town Hall.

Commenting, Jim Harkins of Light Rail (UK) said:

"I am looking forward to the sector coming together to show that Leeds can and should go ahead with a starter light rail scheme, and that it can be done for the £250 million of public money on the table, plus the private investment that light rail would attract. This NGT legacy money really is a golden opportunity for Leeds to finally get the infrastructure that it needs as one of the UK's largest cities."

Greg Mulholland, Member of Parliament for Leeds North West and campaigner for light rail in the city, added:

"I am delighted that Light Rail (UK) have organised this important summit bringing light rail experts and manufacturers to Leeds to demonstrate that Leeds can and should be spending the £250 million of public money available on finally getting started with the light rail scheme Leeds needs. It will also be good to have operators and councillors from other Core Cities who can explain the benefits light rail has had to their cities and that Leeds should follow their example

"Leeds remains the largest city in Europe without either a light rail or underground scheme so the City Council should be allocating the £250 million allocated for NGT plus the money for the controversial airport road link to a transformative scheme, and should be asking the Government for some of the new transport infrastructure fund to add to this."

[ENDS]

Notes:

1. For media enquiries, contact Jim Harkins at jimmyharkins@aol.com