

2 November 2023

Rt. Hon. Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister

KING'S SPEECH TRANSPORT LEGISLATION

I am writing to you in advance of the presentation of the King's Speech at the Opening of the Parliament in November, when your Government is expected to lay out its legislative priorities for the upcoming Parliamentary term. As the Urban Transport Group, the UK's network of city region transport authorities, which represent over 20 million people across the country, we believe it is imperative that transport plays a key part in your upcoming legislative plans.

At present, transport systems in many city regions of the UK are failing to deliver on their true potential. Well-connected and sustainability resourced transport networks can enable economic growth and unlock opportunity, all whilst tackling social and economic inequality and addressing climate change.

They can support city centres with their clusters of high value jobs, retail and cultural offerings. They also support our high streets and suburbs by providing them with the access they need. Connectivity with other cities, and with the wider world, attracts investment and skills and enables access to domestic and international markets.

Transport also has a vital role to play in connecting people to opportunities and improving quality of life. The transport choices people are enabled to make have a significant impact on their individual and collective ability to fully participate in society.

Finally, achieving Net Zero and accelerating growth isn't mutually exclusive – and transport has a key role to play in achieving both.

To deliver on these shared ambitions, city regions need the financial and legislative clarity and capacity for long term planning and delivery.

We welcome the progress which has been made on further devolution of transport powers and funds to city regions, through most recently the trailblazer agreements and City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS). We urge you to maintain and accelerate this

URBAN TRANSPORT GROUP

represents Greater Manchester, London, Liverpool City Region, Tyne and Wear, South Yorkshire, West Midlands, West Yorkshire Nottingham City Council, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, Translink, Tees Valley, Transport for Wales and West of England Combined Authority are associate members of the group.

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momentum and work with Transport for London, which sits outside the CRSTS programme, and urgently requires certainty that central Government will deliver on its commitment to provide the capital funding it needs for the next financial year.

Decisions on urban transport networks are best made at the appropriate tier of devolved governance so connections can be made between decisions on transport and those on decarbonisation, housing, local economic development, public health and the wider placemaking.

Transport legislation should, in our view, have safety as the primary focus. This is why we ask Government to prioritise safety when considering such policies as the approach to guidance on 20mph speed limits and the powers given to local authorities to create low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs). Alongside matters which clearly relate to safety, it is important all potential legislation that Government is planning to introduce is considered through the lens of safety.

The 2022 Queen's Speech featured a commitment to introduce a wide-ranging Transport Bill, which we welcomed at the time. It is, however, disappointing that no progress has been made on introducing this Bill in this parliamentary session.

The right legislation is needed to deliver on our transport network's potential. Therefore, we urge you to explore and urgently implement the legislative interventions listed below.

Legislate to safeguard bus services

- Amend the Transport Act to allow all areas to have the same automatic rights as Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) to access the franchising process.
- Repeal Section 22 of the Bus Services Act 2017 to enable local authorities to establish new municipal bus companies.
- Introduce regulations to amend section 123M of the Transport Act 2000 to ensure that the procedure for varying a franchising scheme is workable.
- Bring together currently siloed and overly restrictive funding pots into one fully devolved capital and revenue funding settlement for bus.

Legislate for the creation of Great British Railways

- Include the ability to strike new partnership agreements for MCAs with Great British Railways to enable further integration of rail services with other local transport across the region.
- Give city region transport authorities a clear and statutory role in the new railway framework, so that their expertise and knowledge of local communities can be fully used in managing, planning and developing the rail network, and further devolution of services and infrastructure can be agreed where appropriate, and rail can become part of wider integrated transport networks.

Create a regulatory framework for the local micromobility market

- To create a new class of traffic, Low Speed Zero Emission Vehicles, as set out in the previous Queen's speech.
- Local areas need to be given responsibility for regulating the micromobility rental market (including pedal bikes, e-bikes and all vehicles under the Low Speed Zero Emission (LZEV) class, in particular e-scooters) working under a national framework with scope for strategic transport authorities to go above and beyond

these national standards at the local level. A new national enabling framework should:

- Provide strategic transport authorities with the option to use powers to regulate micromobility rental services, including on operators and fleets; parking; areas of operation; costs; contractual terms.
- Rigorous construction and technical standards at national level.
- Common enforcement framework for police forces.
- Regardless of classification and definition in law, there should be national minimum requirements around use of new mobility vehicles in terms of: Use on the road (and which parts); applicable offences and enforcement - usage requirements such as licencing and vehicle registration.
- New regulation powers should not prevent or preclude public bodies from running their own (in some cases existing) schemes.

Create a regulatory framework for the introduction of autonomous vehicles

- Such a framework must be underpinned by the following foundations for Combined Authorities:
 - Agile and devolved governance to support and protect wider goals for people and place, prioritising safety and security.
 - Long-term funding certainty giving space to plan strategically and creatively.
 - Key standards set nationally, with the scope to go above and beyond locally.
 - Open data, shared safely to inform decision making.
 - Freedom to test new approaches on the ground.
 - Implement the Law Commission's recommendations around remote driving

Explore opportunities that lead to devolved decision making around Transport and Works Act Orders (TWAOs) to MCAs, combined with modernising the procedural requirements for implementing a TWAO.

Address pavement parking management legislation, following the 2020 consultation.

Deliver long awaited guidance on Local Transport Plans to enable local transport authorities to deliver schemes and investment in their networks.

With these legislative changes in place, city region transport authorities would be enabled to play their role in delivering the wide reaching economic, social, health and environmental benefits that integrated and sustainably funded transport networks can unlock.

Yours sincerely,



Steve Warrener
Chair of Urban Transport Group