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GROUP**

# **URBAN TRANSPORT REVIEW 2017**

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# A YEAR OF CHANGE

**A** lot has changed in urban transport over the past year. The devolution agenda has gathered momentum, with six directly elected metro-mayors now in office and exercising more control over economic development, planning and transport in their combined authorities. The Bus Services Act is also in place, providing an effective range of powers to improve bus services and regulate them as a single integrated network. The Transport Select Committee is watching closely to see how the mayors use those new powers, although it remains disappointing that they are not easily accessible to all local transport authorities.

Whilst these are important steps forward there are many more urban transport challenges to be faced and all levels of government have a part to play in addressing them. As highlighted by my predecessor Committee, congestion remains a widespread problem in our towns and cities and urgent action is needed to remedy the adverse health and environmental consequences of poor air quality. There is no silver bullet for either problem but getting people out of their cars must be part of the solution and for this to happen, a reliable and appealing alternative must be available. This requires investment in our public transport networks, including sustainable and active travel options, to ensure both convenience and accessibility.

The rapid evolution of technology will undoubtedly reshape the urban transport landscape. We've already

seen the impact of smart ticketing solutions in London and hopefully that can become the status quo elsewhere in the UK. But there is more to do, including thinking about how local authorities and government keep pace with the vast volumes of data generated as people travel, to provide better customer service and plan services more efficiently. My Committee has already launched an inquiry into Mobility as a Service to investigate whether new integrated, multi-mode apps really can transform how we get around our cities. The proliferation of new vehicle technologies must also be embraced to ensure our urban areas are characterised by cleaner, smarter, safer vehicles.

The extensive and diverse range of knowledge and experience within the Urban Transport Group means they are well placed to continue making important in-roads on these and other issues, as they have done for many years now. I expect the Transport Select Committee to supplement the Group's work through effective scrutiny of Government and other forward thinking urban transport inquiries during this Parliament.

I'm delighted to provide this foreword and wait in anticipation to see the work of the Urban Transport Group over the next year and beyond to address the core challenges facing our cities.



*Lilian Greenwood MP  
Chair, Transport Select Committee*



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# ‘UTG HAS GONE FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH’

**12 months ago, Toby Hughes was appointed Chair of the Urban Transport Group. He reveals how the organisation is playing a key role across the country**

**T**oby Hughes, the Managing Director of the transport operations of the North East Combined Authority, was appointed as Chair of the Urban Transport Group earlier this year. It is a period that has seen UTG achieving much.

“My feeling is that UTG has gone from strength to strength,” says Hughes. “If you look at where we were three years ago, I’d say we were doing a very good job but we were unfortunately seen as a PTE or northern and Midlands cities thing. The focus was a little limited, but now we have a far broader base and I think that makes a stronger voice. We are speaking as one on behalf of all UK cities and urban areas.”

Hughes says that this change of emphasis has seen UTG moving away “from just trains and buses” to an organisation that is ready to help shape a much bigger picture where transport plays a part in delivering economic growth. “Transport for London (TfL) joining us really helped” he adds. “It gave a greater focus and made a big difference to our work, but we’re also engaging with other places; Tees Valley and the West of England, for example.”

However, the sheer size and scale of TfL’s experience is paying dividends in Hughes’ view. He acknowledges that TfL is an

organisation that is a leader in the field and has a significant amount of resource and expertise. “So we’re seeing lots of sharing of ideas and best practice,” he adds. “Data is one area where they really lead the field, so UTG as a group are benefiting from being so closely allied with TfL. We can reap the benefits of TfL’s experience and knowledge.”

But it doesn’t end with London. Indeed, Hughes notes that the process that has seen UTG move from a group that brought together the UK’s Passenger Transport Executives to a much wider one, representing multiple British cities has been ongoing for some time.

“As PTEs we had a lot of experience, but when you look at when Nottingham joined, well that brought a whole new set of skills into the group that was extremely beneficial. They had a lot of expertise, particularly on transport planning, and it plugged a gap. So what we have created is a combination of urban areas



**Toby Hughes: ‘TfL joining really helped us’**

that are able to share a broad and diverse evidence base for the good of all.”

That said, 2017 has seen significant changes to the legislative landscape, particularly with the new Bus Services Act in England. Hughes reveals that UTG worked extensively and closely with colleagues in the Department for Transport to help shape that legislation, something that he says shows the value of the group. “Some cities will use those new powers contained within the Act,” he says. “But I think as UTG we need to focus on buses and



the future. There’s a lot of change going on at the moment for the bus sector, in particular as bus usage continues to decline. Of course, there are some areas where it is accelerating, but we need to look closely at the decline and what’s behind it.”

The UTG members have wide-ranging roles within their local areas. As Hughes has already noted, this is not just about buses and trains anymore. “We’re looking at connectivity as a whole, so we need to have a range of offers,” he says. “We’re looking at things like MaaS (Mobility as a Service), active travel, electric cars and that sort of thing. We support the introduction of electric cars, but we recognise it needs to be done in an intelligent way - electric cars can still cause congestion, after all. So there’s a real need to provide mass transit in all its various shapes and forms and the bus plays an essential role in that. We need to do all we can to achieve a way that can get people back on the bus.”

Technology can play a part in this and Hughes points to the emerging concept of MaaS, noting that the West Midlands has



**Nottingham City Council, a UTG member, operates a fleet of electric buses**



ABOVE: The Tyne & Wear Metro, 'a far-sighted investment'. BELOW: The Whim app is being trialled in the West Midlands

already got a head start on this with its recently launched Whim app. "People say MaaS is 'just DRT', but it's more than DRT. The old ring and ride concept is not a solution to this but the technology is. I think an app-driven approach has the ability to cover a lot of opportunities beyond traditional public transport. MaaS can increase the options and footprint of public transport and I think it's an area that's just going to grow and grow."

The emergence of UTG has come at a time of great change in the way in which Britain's city regions work. Increasingly, it's about devolution and UTG member cities have been at the forefront of securing devolved powers that have seen them take on responsibility for local rail networks. Hughes believes that this is the correct approach, indeed he notes that "local is better".

"The great benefit, I think, is that there's a great local grip on the problems or issues," he says. "It's in all of our interests to get the best possible result that we can and to grow the economy. For the local transport authorities that have responsibility for local rail services, you more often than



not see increases in frequencies, improved stations, better customer service and, overall a more cost-effective operation. Why is that? Because we are incentivised and we can make decisions that reflect local circumstances quickly and efficiently."

Hughes says that such devolved powers also have other benefits beyond the economy, pointing to the wider benefits it can support. In particular reducing reliance on the car so lessening congestion in urban areas, supporting local regeneration initiatives, housing expansion and other wider policy goals. "It's not just about rail or

funding in isolation, which is what I think can happen when there's central control with little input locally," he adds. "But we still need to make the case about the benefits of local control."

It is a topic where Hughes believes UTG is hitting home and much of that is thanks to the creation of Combined Authorities, all of whom have a clear vision to deliver economic growth. "Those single agencies from the centre just don't work anymore," he adds. "If you look at the recent Midland Metro funding decision, it was an economic growth scheme, not just a transport scheme. But I think

that's something we've been doing for many years - just look back at the 1970s when the Tyne & Wear Metro was being planned - that wasn't just a transport scheme, it was about the wider regional economy and it [the Metro] made the case for that. In the early 1970s you had a very run down British Rail suburban rail network in Tyne & Wear. The Metro transformed that. It created an effective urban transport system that became the bedrock of the local economy. So many wider investment decisions in the region have been made in the years since then on the basis of that far-sighted investment."

For the future, those concepts of MaaS, plus other technological developments, will no doubt shape the transport landscape. However, there are other issues to be tackled too. One is air pollution and Hughes believes it will continue to rise up the political scale and into the wider consciousness of the population as a whole.

"It all started with the breach of EU air quality targets," he says. "Then public awareness increased as a result of what was going on in the car industry. Now we have the realisation that a lot of cities have poisonous air. It has opened a can of worms and I think UTG can play a part in helping shape how we tackle that issue. We have to make sure that there is a joined-up response from government and make sure that the approach is applicable across the country.

It's no good having solutions that will only work in one particular place - it needs to work for the country as a whole."

This perhaps demonstrates how UTG members can help contribute to tackling a range of issues. As Hughes notes, UTG brings it all together and there are many fields, such as health, where transport plays a key role. "It's an area that plays an essential part of everyday life," he says. "UTG members play a powerful part in ticking off a range of issues and we can bring it all together. I think that's something that's very, very valuable." ■



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Transport for West Midlands announced it was to take direct control of Midland Metro services from October 2018

## HOW URBAN TRANSPORT MOVED ON IN 2017

The past 12 months have seen significant changes in all aspects of urban mobility, across our city regions

### WEST MIDLANDS TAKES FIRST STEPS TOWARDS MAAS

■ *Taking the first steps towards Mobility as a Service.* Recent months have seen the West Midlands begin trials of a new integrated transport app that allows people to combine all of their travel needs via their smartphone.

The trial of the Whim app is a collaboration between Transport for West Midlands, regional transport operators and MaaS Global. Users can initially obtain

travel on National Express West Midlands buses, Midland Metro trams and Gett taxi services on a pay-as-you-go basis. Whim will establish the best journey routes and deal with tickets and payments.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the West Midlands, the summer saw the region's Swift smart ticketing scheme take a further step forward. The expansion allowed rail passengers travelling to West Midlands stations from stations in neighbouring areas use Swift to pay for their travel. Pilot schemes were also announced that allowed Swift to be used for travel on buses in Redditch. Self-service Swift card kiosks were introduced too.

Earlier this year, West Yorkshire

also launched an innovative trial of a new ticketing method. Utilising Bluetooth technology, beacons and a smartphone, the 'KPay' system uses an app to calculate the length of the route taken and charge the appropriate fare with caps that ensure the best value price is offered for the trips made. After a successful initial trial on one of Keighley Bus Company's routes, it was extended to include the operator's entire network in its home town.

### BURNHAM CUTS THE COST OF TRAVEL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

■ *Mayor of Greater Manchester launches discounted bus fare deal for young people.* Young people

in Greater Manchester received a boost in September when the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, launched a new ticket giving anyone aged between 16 and 18, who lives or studies in Greater Manchester, a 50% discount on unlimited travel on any bus in the region. The ticket, which can be bought on the bus, was introduced as a result of a deal between the Mayor and local bus operators.

Greater Manchester's apprentices can enjoy a cheaper commute too with another scheme that offers them the choice of either a free bike or a 28-day travel pass valid on all Metrolink trams and most local buses to help them get to and from work. All participants in the scheme also ➤

**HIGHLIGHTS**



**ABOVE:** Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham helped to launch a discounted ticketing scheme for young people. **RIGHT:** In the West Midlands the Swift smartcard scheme expanded. **BELOW:** A visualisation of one of the 52 new Stadler trains for Merseyrail. **BOTTOM:** The 'Bus 18' partnership initiative was launched in West Yorkshire



receive a Personalised Travel Plan which gives them advice on the best way to commute to work.

Meanwhile, successful outcomes from deliberately targeting young people with affordable public transport were demonstrated in the Liverpool City Region. Merseytravel revealed that the number of bus journeys made by young people had risen by a stunning 142% in the last three years. The growth has been achieved as a result of the introduction of MyTicket - a value day ticket that offers a 50% discount on the comparable adult product. The ticket can be bought on any bus in Merseyside and Halton by anyone aged up to 18.

**MERSEYRAIL TO GET £460M NEW FLEET**

■ *Region set to benefit from investment in train and tracks.* There was good news for the Merseyrail network when leaders of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority signed contracts for a £460m project to replace the train operator's fleet with new trains manufactured by Stadler. A total of 52 trains will enter service from the end of 2020.

Meanwhile, rail links between the Liverpool City Region, Cheshire and North Wales look set to be transformed after work commenced on the Halton Curve in July. The scheme is part of a £340m investment programme by Network Rail and the region with the scheme unlocking leisure and business opportunities.

The West Midlands kicked off 2017 by revealing a new look for the region's trains. West Midlands Rail, a consortium that brings together 14 local authorities, alongside the Department for Transport, began jointly managing the West Midlands rail franchise this month, but unveiled the new livery in January.

Support for rail investment plans in the Tees Valley was also revealed in September when Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen backed plans to transform rail

services in the region as part of the Darlington 2025 project. The initiative will position a remodelled Darlington station as a crucial part of the new HS2 network, able to accommodate HS2's high speed trains once they join the East Coast Main Line.

However, in West Yorkshire, members of the Combined Authority transport committee expressed dismay after delays were announced to the planned electrification of the TransPennine rail route. Keith Wakefield, the CA's transport chair, pressed for confirmation that electrification of the Calder Valley line between Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Hebden Bridge and Manchester, and the Leeds-Harrogate line, recommended as recently as 2014 by former Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin's Electrification Task Force, would remain part of the government's plans to rebalance the economy.

**NORTH EAST AND WEST MIDLANDS TAKE ON LIGHT RAIL**

■ *City regions take direct control of their light rail networks.* The North East and the West Midlands took steps to take direct control of their light rail networks in 2017.

In the North East, Nexus resumed direct operation of services on the Tyne & Wear Metro, after the previous contract with operator DB Regio, which had run services on behalf of Nexus since April 2010, ended on April 1. The decision to take on operation of the system came at an important time with plans for further modernisation of the system, including a new fleet of trains. Those plans saw business leaders coming together in September to urge the government to unlock funding for the procurement of a new fleet of trains. That was rewarded by chancellor Phillip Hammond in November, when he announced funding for the rolling stock in his budget.

Transport for West Midlands

meanwhile announced it was to take direct control of Midland Metro services from October 2018 when the current concession, held by National Express Group, finishes. Existing staff will be transferred to a new subsidiary wholly owned by the West Midlands Combined Authority.

TfWM said the move would enable it to plough around £50m of future profits back into expanding the network. That includes new extensions to Edgbaston and the city's growing Westside area, which the government announced approval for in August, and to Brierley Hill in the Black Country, approval for which was announced by Prime Minister Theresa May in November.

In South Yorkshire, plans progressed to expand the Supertram light rail system through the innovative use of tram-trains. That saw the first of the new 'Citylink' tram-trains introduced into passenger service on the existing Supertram network. It is anticipated that 'Citylink' tram-train services to Rotherham will commence next year.

Greater Manchester celebrated 25 years of the Metrolink light rail system in April, having tripled its size since opening on April 6, 1992 to become the largest tram network in the UK. The most recent expansion saw the Second City Crossing across Manchester's city centre open to passengers in February.



**TOP and ABOVE:** Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, launched a UK first trial of a fully electric Volvo bus in September. **RIGHT:** In South Yorkshire, the first innovative 'Citylink' tram-trains entered service on the Supertram network. **BELOW:** Greater Manchester pioneered dockless cycle hire with the Mobike.



## CITY REGIONS AIM TO IMPROVE BUSES

■ Partnership schemes and investment in buses continues in 2017. Partnership working between the City Regions and bus operators took steps forward throughout 2017 with a number of initiatives either launched or extended.

In South Yorkshire the Sheffield Bus Partnership announced that an £18.3m investment to speed up the city's bus services had paid off with ➤



## MANCHESTER PIONEERS DOCKLESS CYCLE HIRE

June saw dockless cycle hire launch in Manchester city centre and Salford. Working in partnership with cycle hire operator Mobike, Transport for Greater Manchester launched the scheme with 1,000 bikes available to hire via a smartphone app in a trial that continued throughout the year. The move built on TfGM's investments in segregated cycling facilities that aim to encourage more residents and visitors to consider using a bike to make their journeys.



LEFT: Joe Bednall, Bombardier's project director and Howard Smith, operations director for the Elizabeth line, with one of the new fleet of trains that will enter service on the Elizabeth line in 2018. ABOVE: Tunnelling was completed on the project to extend the Northern line to Nine Elms and Battersea.

the news that some journey times had been slashed by up to 25%. Highway improvements on key bus routes - including smarter signal controls, new bus lanes, junction upgrades, road widening and more cameras to better monitor the flow of traffic also saw bus punctuality improvements of up to 3%. The work across Sheffield's 187 bus routes was undertaken as part of the UK's first designated Better Bus Area scheme, delivered by Sheffield Bus Partnership since 2013 and funded by the Department for Transport.

In West Yorkshire, the ties between bus operators and the Combined Authority were strengthened with the launch of the 'Bus 18' initiative. It sees the county's major bus operators Arriva Yorkshire, First West Yorkshire and Transdev, plus the Association of Bus Operators in West Yorkshire, working together to improve bus services and encourage more people to use them. It will see the number of service changes reduced, the issues affecting punctuality on five key routes addressed and passenger

information improved. Passengers on Arriva, First and Transdev buses are also able to claim a free travel voucher if they are not happy with their bus journey. Passengers with these operators can also claim for the cost of a taxi if their last bus doesn't arrive within 20 minutes of the scheduled time.

The Liverpool City Region Bus Alliance - a formal partnership between the region's transport authority, Merseytravel, and its two biggest operators, Arriva and Stagecoach - meanwhile celebrated a huge 142% growth in the number of bus journeys made by young people over the last three years as a result of the 'MyTicket' initiative. This enormous increase means journeys by all paying passengers have gone up by 16.2% overall since 2014, smashing the 10% target set for the end of 2017/18.

The Bus Alliance has also achieved some other significant milestones, including a 90% score for overall customer satisfaction and a £37.5m investment in new buses by operator partners.

Meanwhile, steps have been

taken to cut emissions from buses. At the start of 2017, Nottingham introduced a new fleet of electric buses on its park and ride bus services - the first scheme of its kind in the UK to be wholly operated by electric vehicles. The city now has an extensive fleet of electric buses that are helping to cut the cost of operation of its supported bus network by substantially reducing fuel costs.

Meanwhile, in Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, the region's mayor, launched a UK first trial of a fully electric Volvo bus in September. It marked the first time this type of bus - which is charged by a pantograph - has operated on UK streets. Burnham used the launch to highlight the impact that congestion has on the region's economy, with public transport part of the solution.

## CAPITAL PROGRESS IN LONDON

■ Greener buses introduced as the Elizabeth line and Northern line extension project progress. London mayor Sadiq Khan kicked off 2017 by announcing plans for 10

more Low Emissions Bus Zones, bringing the number of zones to 12. The move has seen Transport for London make efforts to introduce only the greenest buses on routes passing through these areas in a bid to improve air quality.

In a further move to improve air quality, a number of London bus routes have now been converted to fully electric operation and the new £10 Toxicity Charge was introduced in October, aimed at the oldest and most polluting vehicles.

Meanwhile, the Crossrail project moved on with the first of the new trains for the Elizabeth line entering service at TfL Rail. A number of milestones were also passed on the project to extend the Northern line to Battersea, with tunnel boring completed in November. The extension is on track to open in 2020. Meanwhile, plans to extend the Bakerloo line into south east London continue to progress with the results of a public consultation now being analysed. There are also plans to introduce a new generation of rolling stock at the Docklands Light Railway. ■

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# LOOKING AHEAD: EIGHT KEY ISSUES FOR 2018



**Jonathan Bray, Director of the Urban Transport Group, identifies the key issues that will be on the urban transport agenda in 2018**

**1**

## **BREXIT, BREXIT, BREXIT**

In 2017, the most immediate effect of Brexit was uncertainty as to what it would look like in reality. This uncertainty made money more expensive to borrow for investment and unsettled staff who are not UK nationals (or who have partners who aren't).

In 2018, Brexit will continue to dominate the political landscape as well as soak up nearly all legislative time and much of the Government's thinking space. Remoaners and Brexiteers will dispute what the economic effects will be in the year ahead, but as the departure lounge beckons we will begin to know for sure. If the pessimists are right about the economic impacts then we could see further rises in the costs of capital projects with patronage downturns undermining investment cases and budget projections.

Meanwhile, Government departments are busily transcribing all EU legislation and regulations into UK law. In 2018, the debate will begin about which ones we might decide to take out or change on leaving. This could

use up a lot of bandwidth for all parts of the industry, and their trade bodies, given that EU law covers everything from working conditions to competition law and from environmental to technical standards.

**2**

## **TAXI! TAXI!**

The astonishing growth in Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) is the most visible manifestation so far of the transformative impacts of technological and social change. It also illustrates the way in which venture capital-funded US mega-corps intend to use these changes as a means to transform the basis and nature of urban transport. As part of this process Uber tends to test whichever local regulatory regime it operates within by pushing its boundaries.

In 2017, Transport for London said enough - it's time to follow the rules. A key question for 2018 will be that as PHV numbers continue to climb (with all that implies for balancing consumer benefits with congestion, air quality and the future of public transport) will the messy, outdated and contested national legal framework see reform? And will local and city region authorities start to shift taxi policy from a local licencing issue into mainstream strategic transport policy in the same way that London has done?

**3**

## **MAYORS KICK ON**

The first wave of Metro Mayors has arrived and they are already ➤

making a big impact. Their hard powers may be limited but they are the ones with the soft power and everyone wants to get face time with them. After all if you have one call to make to a city it's the Mayor you want to speak to.

You can divide the mayors up in different ways - Labour and Tory, big national names and local leaders, those with political and those with business backgrounds, London and the rest, big and smaller city regions, and so on. However, as diverse they are, they are already starting to link up around common demands. Apparently some in Whitehall have been taken aback by how assertive the Mayors have become so quickly. Their idea of devolution being you can take any decision you like - as long as it's the one we would have taken.

I suspect Whitehall hasn't seen anything yet - as with their far too short three-year terms Mayors need to show they have made an impact, and laid the foundations for more significant change in a second term. And transport is a yardstick by which they will be judged. Meanwhile, not everywhere has a Mayor of course and in 2018 there could be progress in finding a way forward (with Mayors or not) in Yorkshire and the North East. This creates the potential for both a more powerful Northern bloc of Mayors and leaders as part of a more powerful wider national network of Mayors/Leaders.

#### 4 BETTER BUS POWERS HERE AT LAST

In 2018, the Bus Services Act should be fully enacted. And then it will be up to local transport authorities to use the powers or not. There are really few excuses left now for those who think they can make deregulation achieve enough of what's needed locally. With enhanced ticketing powers, more effective quality partnership schemes (the new advanced quality



**PAGE 12-13:** Buses in Leeds. **TOP:** Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester. **ABOVE LEFT:** We had a general election in 2017, will there be another one in 2018? **ABOVE RIGHT:** In 2017, TfL said enough and demanded that Uber follow the rules. **RIGHT:** The Ordsall Chord in Manchester. The fundamentals for rail look strong.

partnerships) and new enhanced partnership schemes the scope for local transport authorities and operators to push the absolute limits of what a deregulated market can do is all laid out.

However, one thing you can't do is make a deregulated market behave exactly like a regulated market. If you want that then the franchising powers in the legislation provide a workable route to achieving it with the scope for a successful legal challenge considerably narrowed down to what it should be (failure of process or wholly unreasonable decisions). The biggest problem is that only Mayoral Combined Authorities get access to these powers as of right.

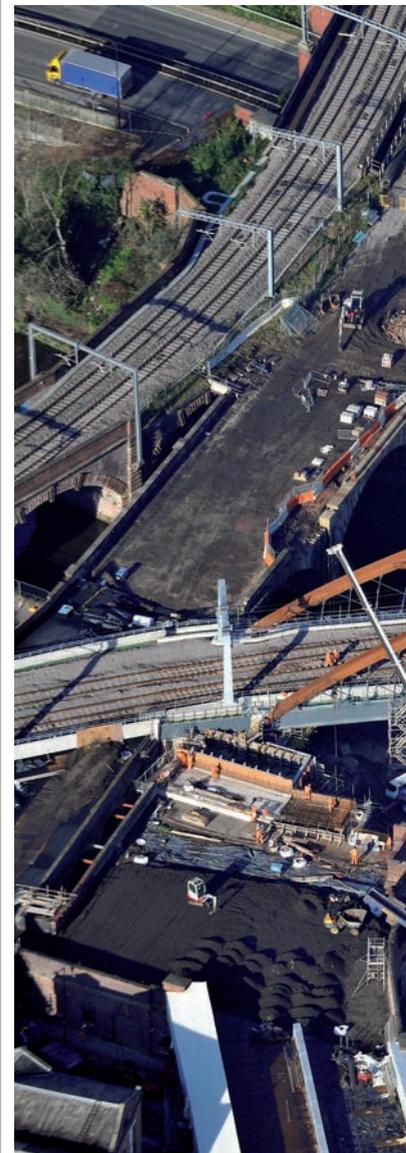
With this legislation out of the way, the question now is whether the Department for Transport will return to the thorny issues of concessionary travel and wider

bus funding (such as Bus Service Operators Grant). Or will taxi reform and community transport law keep it busy?

#### 5 GENERAL ELECTION 2018?

It doesn't seem in the Government's interests to call one but then the conventional wisdom about politics has proved to be reliably wrong time and time again recently. Whilst we wait and see, we know where the current Secretary of State is coming from - which is that it's this far and no further on rail devolution. However, if there is a change in Secretary of State we could see the brakes come off the rail devo success story so that more areas and passengers

can benefit. Meanwhile, politics is no longer dominated by the narcissism of small differences with the electorate now having a starker choice between the paths the country might take. For transport this is encapsulated on rail between a pro-privatisation Conservative party and a pro-nationalisation Labour party (other parties are available, of course). What nationalisation might mean for Labour in practice will come to the fore in 2018 as Labour addresses the detail. A particular challenge will be how it reconcile its support for devolution with nationalisation. To give the most extreme



example - does it really intend that Scotland's railways will be run by civil servants from Surrey again? Unlikely.

## 6

### WORST OF TIMES, BEST OF TIMES FOR RAIL

In 2018, and for some time to come, we will be living with the consequences of Network Rail's failure to deliver projects on time and to budget which culminated in the Great Western Main Line electrification meltdown. Among the casualties are electrification per se, the next waves of

investment projects, as well as the five-year planning horizons for rail investment programmes. Fortunately, the fundamentals for the mode look strong. As space in city centres for road vehicles is reduced and the need for more housing soars up the political agenda, rail is the mode that can square these circles. Especially as new technologies allow rail vehicles to more easily switch traction mode, as well as from heavy rail lines to roads. The challenge will be finding the funding to unleash the significant investment in urban rail networks which has always and historically allowed cities to grow and prosper.

## 7

### WHOSE STREET IS IT ANYWAY?

The bus industry will no doubt continue to wring its hands about the need for the bus to have dominance over all its surveys on urban streets. No bus lane - no future. However, the context is changing fast. In city centres the place makers are in charge and what they want is space for people, not for vehicles. This includes big shouty buses over which they have little control and which can also be a significant contributor to local air quality conditions.

Meanwhile, the bus is in a battle for declining vehicle space with taxis, freight and logistics, cyclists, as well as the motorists who traders obsess about. And every lobby wants the trophy of the council's white paint on the tarmac favouring their mode.

Perhaps in 2018 we need a more sophisticated debate about how to reconcile this battle for street space? What about more high tech methods of allocating road capacity at junctions, and digitally elsewhere, so the modes that make the best use of street space get their way? What about buses that look so chic that the place makers want to have them on their streets?

Or a more strategic approach to parking controls? There's no doubt that buses need rapid and reliable access to town and city centres - we may just need to find smarter and cleverer ways of achieving it.

## 8

### FASTER, BETTER, CHEAPER IN 2018

2018 could be like 2017 - but more so. A tough economic and public funding climate. Brexit looming over everything whilst transport itself becomes more subject to direct political leadership locally and a touch point for a wider and urgent political debate about the future direction of the nation. The TNCs' relentless ambition, coupled with transformative technological and social change, will notch up the velocity of change with the bus in particular facing some existential challenges. However, whatever 2018 may throw at us, overall the fundamentals for public transport are good. Cities need transit systems to thrive and to realise their ambitions for inclusive and sustainable growth. They always have and even those that thought they didn't (like Los Angeles) now realise they were wrong. It's just that to make the most of those fundamentals transport authorities and operators will need to be faster, better and cheaper than ever in how they achieve it. ■





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