



# UK Transport Governance

## - an introduction

Briefing

### How does transport work in the metropolitan areas?

The six largest conurbations outside London are known as the metropolitan areas (Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, Sheffield City Region, Tyne and Wear, the West Midlands and West Yorkshire). Their combined population is over eleven million people. All of the Met areas have a Combined Authority (CA) which can sometimes cover a larger area than the metropolitan area and which is led by District Council Leaders for the purposes of collaborating more closely on strategic issues like transport. In May 2017 three of the Combined Authorities (Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester and West Midlands) became Mayoral Combined Authorities and from May 2018, Sheffield City Region will be become the fourth. Outside of the metropolitan areas, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Tees Valley and West of England are also Mayoral combined authorities.

The responsibilities of CA Mayors in relation to transport and other key policy areas will vary depending on how the post was established in statute. The role of the directly elected CA Mayor is not the same as the well-known London Mayoral model in that London doesn't have a Combined Authority and there are no plans for directly elected city region-wide assemblies as there is in London.

Combined Authority Mayors are also different from directly elected Mayors of District Councils like those already in situ in places like Liverpool, Bristol and Leicester.

On transport, District Councils remain the Highways Authorities (although in some areas more responsibilities are moving up to the CA level) and prior to the governance change outlined above, all the Met areas had a Passenger Transport Executive (PTE) which was responsible for key aspects of public transport planning and delivery including:

- Contributing to the planning of local rail services (in partnership with the DfT and/or new entities like Rail North);
- Planning and funding socially necessary bus routes;
- Working in partnership with private operators to improve bus services - for example through bus priority schemes;
- Running concessionary travel schemes - including those for older, disabled and young people;
- Developing, investing and promoting new public transport schemes—like new stations, light rail and guided bus networks;
- Providing impartial and comprehensive public transport information services through a range of media; and
- Managing and maintaining bus interchanges, bus stops and shelters.

In two of the six areas the PTE has been abolished (West Yorkshire and West Midlands) and absorbed within the CA. In the other four areas the PTE is responsible to the CA. In some areas, some of the more strategic planning functions of the former PTE are now provided by the CA.

All PTEs, and former PTEs, have a brand name – West Midlands Combined Authority with Transport for West Midlands as the strategic transport planning element of the CA; Merseytravel (Liverpool City Region); Metro (West Yorkshire Combined Authority), Nexus (Tyne and Wear), SYPTE (Sheffield City Region) and Transport for Greater Manchester (Greater Manchester).



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### Could more CAs, Mayoral CAs or PTEs be created?

Yes. Existing legislation allows any group of local authorities to apply to the Secretary of State to create new CAs, Mayoral CAs or PTEs. Existing CAs and PTEs can also expand to take in neighbouring Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) if all the LTAs concerned so wish and if the Secretary of State approves. In addition, authorities within existing CAs who wish to exit and re-form as a new CA with a different geographical scope may do so, subject to Secretary of State approval. This is something that is planned in the North East.

### What do Shires, Counties and Districts do on transport?

In England (outside the metropolitan areas and London), the Local Transport Authority is either the Unitary Authority or the County Council for that area. More urban areas tend to have a single ('unitary') authority whilst more rural areas are often two-tier authorities with both a County Council and a District Council. In these two-tier areas, the County Council is responsible for transport.

In either case, as a Local Transport Authority, the Council is responsible for transport planning, passenger transport and highways.

### What about LEPs?

A Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is a voluntary partnership between local authorities and businesses which were set up after the 2010 election to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within its local area.

### What are Transport for the North and Midlands Connect?

Transport for the North (TfN) and Midlands Connect aim to transform strategic transport links across their respective areas, providing the infrastructure needed to drive economic growth and are partnerships of elected and business leaders which work with central government and national transport bodies.

On 1st April 2018, TfN became England's first sub national transport body (STB). A Strategic Transport Plan for the North is currently under development by TfN and will be joined by two sub strategies, one covering road and the other rail.

### Who is in charge of bus services outside London?

Outside London, buses are a free market meaning that anyone (subject to minimum safety and operating standards) can start up a bus service. In this environment, bus operators are free to run whatever services they like as well as decide the fares they will charge and the vehicles they will use. Although in theory, it is a competitive market, in reality, most bus services are provided by five large companies who rarely compete against each other (Arriva, First, Go-Ahead, National Express and Stagecoach). Local transport authorities (LTAs) are only allowed to support bus services where no commercial service has been provided. They do this through tendering those services, with the private sector competing to provide them. About 20% of bus services outside London are provided in this way. In a limited number of areas (all outside the metropolitan areas) local transport authorities still own bus companies (known as 'municipals'). This includes Reading, Warrington and Nottingham. However these municipal companies still operate in the same deregulated free market as elsewhere outside London.



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Outside of provision of bus services, LTAs support bus services in other ways including:

- Information on, and promotion of, services;
- Concessionary fares and multi-modal ticketing;
- Developing and maintaining bus stops, shelters and interchanges.

The extent to which LTAs undertake all these activities varies – with PTEs at one end of the spectrum and smaller rural counties at the other end.

### Who is in charge of rail services outside London?

#### ***Rail infrastructure***

Rail infrastructure is the responsibility of Network Rail (Network Rail is a public company, answerable to Government via the Department for Transport). Network Rail owns, operates, maintains and develops tracks, signals, tunnels, level crossings, viaducts and 18 key stations on the network. Network Rail's funding is provided by the Department for Transport and is determined by a complex process based on five year funding and investment cycles. Network Rail is overseen by the Office of Rail and Road, the independent economic and safety regulator for the railways.

#### ***Passenger train services***

Passenger train services are managed and operated by Train Operating Companies (TOCs), usually under regional franchises awarded by the DfT. The franchises specify which passenger services are to be run, the quality and other conditions such as station facilities, the cleanliness of trains and reliability. Over time more devolution has been introduced to this system with:

- Merseyrail Electrics now franchised by Merseytravel;
- A network of urban services in London franchised by Transport for London;
- Scottish rail services franchised by Transport for Scotland;
- Northern and Trans-Pennine services franchised by Rail North (a consortia of local authorities in the North of England and the DfT).
- West Midlands Rail services franchised by a consortia of local authorities in the West Midlands and the DfT
- Welsh rail services franchised by the Welsh Government and the DfT.

In addition to the arrangements above, TOCs are able to bid for 'slots' – specific parts of the National Rail timetable – to operate their own services on a commercial basis outside the franchising system. These are known as 'open access operators'. The scale of the services provided by open access operators is very limited.

#### ***Rail freight***

Rail freight is a free market – with the largest operators being EWS (owned by DB, the German state railway) and Freightliner. All are open access operators which means that each can bid to run services on any part of the network.

#### ***Rolling stock***

By and large franchisees do not own their trains, instead they generally lease or hire their rolling stock from Rolling Stock Companies (ROSCOs). They work with TOCs to determine the sorts of engines and carriages required to deliver the desired customer services. They also have a responsibility to help develop services by phasing out older rolling stock to make way for modern, more convenient and safer trains.



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### Who is in charge of the roads in England?

Highways England (a Government Corporation) is the authority for trunk roads and motorways. Local Highway Authorities are responsible for all other roads. In the metropolitan areas the Highway Authorities are the responsibility of district councils although in some areas more responsibilities are now moving up to the Combined Authority level. Outside of the metropolitan areas the Highway Authority is either the unitary authority or the county council (where there is no unitary authority).

### How do things work in London?

In London, Transport for London plans, provides and procures the majority of public transport services (the main exception being most of the heavy rail services that come into London). It is also responsible for the majority of the main highway network as well the overarching transport strategy for London and the delivery of major schemes. District Councils are responsible for local roads. Transport for London is responsible to the Mayor of London and accountable to the Greater London Assembly.

### How do things work in Scotland?

Transport Scotland (an agency of the Scottish Government) is responsible for overall Scottish Transport policy as well as major roads, the rail network and ferries. Regional transport partnerships (RTPs) were established on 1 December 2005 to strengthen the planning and delivery of regional transport so that it better serves the needs of people and businesses. One of these is the former Strathclyde PTE. Bus services are deregulated as in England and local highways are the responsibility of local councils.

### How do things work in Northern Ireland?

The highways network is the responsibility of TransportNI which is a business unit within the Department for Regional Development.

All rail and bus services are planned and provided by Translink (which is a Government corporation).

### How do things work in Wales?

The Welsh Government is a co-signatory to the Wales and Borders franchise and responsible for Motorway and Trunk Roads. Local highways are the responsibility of local councils. Bus services are deregulated.

### Q. How can I find out more?

Keep up to date with UK Transport Governance arrangements at our online resources centre ([www.urbantransportgroup.org/resources/governance](http://www.urbantransportgroup.org/resources/governance))