

Briefing on the Transport Bill

July 2022 (version one)

Background

In the 2022 Queen's Speech the Government set out its intention to publish a Transport Bill. Assuming that, despite the wider changes in national Government, the Bill goes ahead it is expected to include provisions on:

- Providing a new body, Great British Railways, with the powers it needs to act as the single national leader of the railways and transferring contracting powers for passenger services to Great British Railways
- Introducing new laws that safely enable self-driving and remotely operated vehicles and vessels
- Supporting the roll-out of electric vehicle charge points
- Creating a new low-speed, zero emission vehicle (LZEV) category (which will include e-scooters) and establishing a new regime for regulating micromobility, including powers for local transport authorities to shape and manage rental operations.

It may also include other measures.

The Bill has not yet been published.

How the Bill could help transform urban transport for the better

Rail

The devolution of responsibilities for rail has been one of the big success stories on rail in recent years. By and large it has led to more investment, higher levels of passenger satisfaction and more reliable services. It has also helped embed heavy rail services within wider public transport networks and within broader plans for housing, economic development and decarbonisation. However, devolved authorities and administrations have often struggled with the complexities and high costs that have been associated with the format of the rail industry since privatisation. We therefore welcome the Williams Shapps plan to simplify the structure of the industry.



Rail is critical to so much of what city regions are trying to achieve – from meeting ambitious air quality and decarbonisation targets to giving the public the transport they want and need (one network, one ticket, one identity). Yet too often in the past local rail services have sat outside the wider local public transport offer – remote and unresponsive to local need.

Given the success of rail devolution (indeed national government has now borrowed the template for contracting out rail services which a devolved authority pioneered) it is vital that the legislation should therefore support and facilitate the full range of options for extending and deepening local control and accountability for both rail services and rail assets and investment.

Further background and detail can be found here: [Making rail reform work for people and places in the city regions | URBAN TRANSPORT GROUP](#)

Buses

At present the legislation is not envisaged to include specific provisions on bus but this would represent a missed opportunity.

The 2017 Bus Services Act provided a process by which Local Transport Authorities outside London could introduce the franchising of networks of bus services (essentially the same system by which bus services are currently provided in London). This would allow bus services to be provided as integrated networks (one service, one fare, one ticket) as they are in London. These powers are currently being used by Mayors, including those in Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City Region. However, the process is unnecessarily cumbersome and open to gaming by incumbent operators. There is the opportunity for the Transport Bill to streamline the process and make it more proportionate.

The Transport Bill should also:

- Remove the block on transport authorities setting up municipal bus companies
- Allow for bus funding to be devolved to transport authorities

New mobility

New technologies and business models are leading to new mobility formats (like e-scooters) as well as to vehicles that are more connected and autonomous.

These new formats can bring significant benefits (like greater consumer choice or reduced emissions). However, at the same time they can lead to wider public disbenefits, such as the flooding of the market with excessive provision which, in the case of e-scooters, can lead to pavement obstruction and risks to the safety of the public (including people with disabilities).



The Bill should give discretionary powers to Local Transport Authorities to:

- Regulate the local micromobility market (for example around number of operators, the size of their fleets, their geographical coverage, the location of their parking, as well as to recover reasonable costs from operators who use their roads and infrastructure)
- Establish 'sandboxes' where they can trial new mobility formats such as Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAVs)

More background and details on what the legislation should facilitate on e-scooters can be found here: [The future of e-scooters | URBAN TRANSPORT GROUP](#)

A wider suite of UTG documents on the legal and regulatory framework for new mobility and CAVs can be found here: [The legal and regulatory framework for smart futures | URBAN TRANSPORT GROUP](#)