

Paul Clark MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minister House
76 Marsham Street
SW1P 4DR

22 May 2009

Dear Minister,

Re: Association of Greater Manchester Authorities' major transport prioritisation and funding strategy

I would like to ask you to reject the proposal by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) to fund a number of major transport schemes by topslicing funding from their integrated transport funds.

Such a significant transfer of funds from integrated transport to major schemes would have a deleterious effect on a number of key transport indicators, as well as greenhouse gas emissions and congestion. The effects are fully detailed in the report from local authority officers to AGMA's Executive Board, but the funding package would:

- Reduce funding for Bolton's Cycling Strategy, Walking Strategy and Intelligent Transport Systems Strategy
- Reduce Bolton's ability to deliver locally against National Indicator 47 and 48 (road safety), NI 198 Mode of travel to school and NI 167 Congestion
- Halve the number of local safety schemes in Salford, and all but eliminating regeneration schemes
- Undermine Trafford's expenditure on key walking and cycling schemes
- Wigan's Cycling Strategy would not be delivered, other than maybe one cycle scheme a year
- As well as produce as yet unknown impacts on transport spending in Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside and the Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority

While I support Greater Manchester's willingness to fund the Metrolink extensions and other public transport schemes across the city, I do not believe that this package represents good value for money. The results of the Sustainable Travel Towns, recently confirmed by the Department, demonstrate that smaller, smarter interventions achieve remarkable, sustained results which can be delivered across wide areas very affordably.

Conversely many of the schemes which are being promoted, such as the Mottram and Stockport bypasses, are costly schemes for which other areas are being asked to surrender a substantial amount of their

transport budget. The inclusion of the Mottram bypass is particularly concerning: no plans have been drawn up and it has yet to proceed through any of the statutory processes. Its predecessor, the Mottram-Tintwistle bypass, was recently downgraded from a regional priority and generated 2,000 objections during its ill-fated public inquiry (itself adjourned indefinitely and finally cancelled at a cost of at least £15 million). It is exceptionally unlikely that construction can start within the next five years, whereas the schemes which it would draw funding from are in advanced stages of planning and would provide immediate employment.

While I understand that local authorities will be under pressure to make cutbacks and reprioritise their transport spending in light of the economic downturn, I do not believe that sacrificing essential projects to reduce road danger and relieve congestion represents a suitable way forward. I also note the Department's recent announcement that smarter choices programmes – the very schemes under threat from these proposals – represent excellent value for money and are able to secure genuine, long-term reductions in car usage and uplift in walking and cycling rates.

I urge you not to approve this funding plan, and to stress to local authorities that the Department will not look kindly on future proposals to topslice local transport schemes to fund major infrastructure projects.

Regards,

Stephen Joseph
Executive Director, Campaign for Better Transport