

LCR TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the LCR Transport Committee held in the Authority Chamber - No.1 Mann Island, Liverpool, L3 1BP on Wednesday, 18th January, 2023 the following Members were

P r e s e n t:

Councillor Steve Foulkes
Vice-Chairperson of the Committee
(in the Chair)

Councillors Joanne Burke, John Bradshaw, Chris Cooke, John Dodd, John Donnelly, Sean Halsall, James Hansen, Nina Killen, Keith Laird, Alan Lowe, Liz Makinson, Anne McCormack, Ken McGlashan, Damien O'Connor, Tommy Rowe, Gareth Stockton, Helen Thompson and Jerry Williams.

30 CHAIRS OPENING REMARKS

The Vice Chair, Councillor Steve Foulkes, opened the meeting and welcomed Members.

The current constitutional position of the committee was clarified as the previous Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson, had resigned from the Transport Committee after having been elected as the Leader of the Labour Group on Liverpool City Council. Therefore, under the constitution it's the role of the Vice Chair to take over the running of meeting and chairmanship until the Annual General Meeting in June.

The Vice-Chair welcomed Councillor James Hansen as the new representative from Sefton Council, taking over the position of Councillor Friel who had passed away in 2022.

It was announced Councillor Dave, Hawley St Helens Council, had recently resigned due to a potential conflict of interest. The Vice-Chair extended his thanks to Councillor Hawley on behalf of the Committee.

The Vice-Chair paid tribute to the predecessor Councillor Robinson noting that within his 30 years in politics he was greatly impressed by the devotion, hard work and depth of knowledge he had brought, within subject matters he had looked after and the driving force for the Committee and all that they had achieved in terms of a Transport Committee within its many guises. He had guided them through and had made an exemplary contribution to political life, economic vibrancy and everything that was good about the Liverpool City Region. On behalf of the Committee, he wished him well and understood the big task ahead of him.

Councillor McGlashan reflected upon when Councillor Robinson first joined the Committee and the significant contribution he had made to the Committee and Transport across the City Region.

31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors David Hawley, Paul Hayes, Nathalie Nicholas, Ged Philbin and Andrea Wall.

32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

33 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022 were submitted for approval by the Committee.

The Vice-Chair queried the approach to the drafting of the Minutes and moving away from the practice of identifying comments from specific Councillors.

The Interim Monitoring Officer advised that the aim was to bring consistency to the Minute style across the Combined Authority and its Committees, with a focus on capturing a summary of the discussion rather than individual comments. A complete recording of the meeting was also available on the Combined Authority website.

The Vice-Chair referred to Minute 22 and the presentation from Merseyrail and highlighted the breadth of the questioning from Members of the Committee, contrary to suggestions made to him that Councillors had been prevented from raising concerns about Merseyrail services.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Committee held on 10 November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

34 MERSEYTRAVEL BUDGET 2023-24

The Transport Committee considered a report of Merseytravel providing details of the revenue and capital Budget 2023-24.

Sarah Johnston, Assistant Director of Finance, presented the report, highlighting the challenging economic climate that Merseytravel and the Combined Authority were operating in, in common with others in the public sector. The proposed revenue budget for 2023/24, detailed in Section 4 of the report, had been developed assuming nil growth, identification of savings opportunities and achievement of increased income. No specific provision had been made for inflation as this had been factored into the overall Combined Authority inflationary contingency provision, and ongoing budget monitoring would allow for recourse to the Combined Authority to address pressure on front line service delivery. Cost pressure risks would remain as an economic downturn or increases in interest rates could impact negatively on the in-year budget position, but Merseytravel would have recourse to its reserves if needed.

In relation to the capital budget, cost pressures would likely have an impact on the delivery by Merseytravel of a significant proportion of the Combined Authority's Transport Investment Programme, funded predominantly through a Combined Authority grant. The capital budget would also be subject to regular monitoring to identify any further inflationary pressures and seek to take corrective action.

The Vice-Chair referred to paragraph 3.3 of the report and the ongoing impact of the reduction in Special Rail Grant (SRG) and repeated calls for the Government to enter into dialogue with the Combined Authority about this. He highlighted the impact of pay settlement which all Local Authorities were dealing with and clarified that supported bus fares would remain at £2.00 and would be subsidised from the Bus Services Improvement Grant.

The Vice-Chair also referred to paragraph 4.11 of the report and the challenging economic conditions and offered for the Committee to work with the Metro Mayor in a constructive and bipartisan way to address the long-term budget pressures.

The Vice-Chair referred to paragraph 6.4 of the report and the continued uncertainty regarding the future of the Bus Recovery Grant. The Committee was informed that funding had been secured until the end of the current financial year but discussions with the Department for Transport were ongoing in relation to a possible 2023-24 allocation, however, this had not been assumed in the budget planning.

RESOLVED - That

- (i) the Combined Authority be requested to approve 2023/24 operating grants for both public transport and Mersey Tunnels operating activities as detailed in section 4 of the report: and
- (ii) the Combined Authority be requested to approve the capital programme as detailed in section 4 of the report.

35 DEVELOPING THE NEXT LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN (LTP) FOR THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

The Transport Committee considered a report which provided an update on the development of the next Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the City Region.

Huw Jenkins, Lead Officer – Transport Policy, explained to the Committee that detailed guidance from Central Government on LTPs had been delayed and would be shared with Members of the Committee when received.

It was reported that the first stage consultation with members of the public had been positive and would be produced as an appendix to the LTP. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to investigate the key issues associated with the Plan and seek input from expert witnesses. This would culminate in the Task and Finish Group preparing a report and making recommendations to the Combined Authority.

Members attention was drawn to Section 4 of the report which set out the emerging principles for the Plan. Furthermore, work was ongoing to understand:

- How much modal shift was needed and where.
- Where the greatest potential to move trips onto sustainable modes was.
- Where future resources should be focussed.

Members were invited to ask questions and provide comments. The following issues were raised: -

- The LTP's objectives would support both environmental and also health improvements. Feedback from constituents was that they wanted to do more walking, particularly wanting to walk children to school, but did not feel able to do so for safety reasons. Council budgets were not sufficient to provide safe pedestrian infrastructure. In response it was stated that children's safety had been a key outcome of the consultation and that the Combined Authority had access to a significant capital budget of £710m Sustainable Transport Fund over the next five years, and that being innovative when undertaking improvements to take opportunities to reallocate road space and give priority to other types of road users.
- Achieving modal shift from private vehicles would be difficult without a reliable and broad bus network, unfortunately the current system meant the priority of private operators was on the revenue generating routes with rural routes likely to be reduced. Reductions in Government investment in public transport over the past decade had

caused the network to shrink. Those on lower incomes were more likely to be impacted by these reductions and that would then mean they were excluded from access to jobs, health care and other facilities that then would have a further negative impact on the economy. In response it was stated that access to a reliable alternative to the car was a clear message from the consultation and that the Combined Authority was preparing proposals on alternative options for the delivery of bus services in the City Region. The current resources available, and uncertainty about the future of the Bus Recovery Grant beyond the end of the financial year made investment more uncertain, but the Combined Authority continued to work toward a long-term sustainable solution. The range of activity already underway, linked to the Sustainable Transport Fund programme, such as green bus routes and bus priority routes, would improve reliability and affordability and increase patronage.

- Shared footpaths for walking and cycling were often a source of concern for the public and examples had been shared at Committee previously. In response it was stated that the Department for Transport's Gear Change Strategy provided standards for shared spaces, including segregation and safe and accessible walking, and cycling routes that were monitored by Active Travel England (ATE). The Combined Authority had worked closely with ATE to ensure its schemes met these standards. Specifically in relation to terminology, it was stated that the term 'wheeling' was being encouraged as a more inclusive term as it included other forms of wheeled transport (but not cars) such as mobility scooters, wheelchairs, and pushchairs, etc.
- It was proposed that tunnel fees for motorbikes should be considered, as a possible way of raising income from toll fees. Furthermore, to move people away from the car to public transport a modal shift was required possibly through an increase in toll fees, with the example of the Tyne Tunnel in Northeast England being cited.

Members further noted:

- There remained for many a stigma around bus use, echoing comments made by Margaret Thatcher, as a second-best form of transport. The Combined Authority was best placed to try to overcome these perceptions through the promotion of the positives of public transport such as the opportunity to work, read or use electronic devices and to avoid traffic jams. In response it was acknowledged that this messaging was a core element of the LTP to encourage modal shift, as were the roll-out of hydrogen buses to help provide cheaper and more efficient options for the public.
- Greater resources and dialogue were needed with Councillors across the City Region to address safety issues that were barriers to more walking and cycling. An example was given of an older resident who needed a mobility scooter but due to road infrastructure would have to use taxis that would then be adding to congestion. Lack of safe crossings on routes to schools and parents taking children to school by car made it unsafe for children to walk to school in many cases. In response it was stated that a key aim of the LTP was to make roads to function differently and create conditions that were safe for people, rather than being designed around vehicle needs. There was a specific programme to make school streets in the City Region underway that would address both safety and air quality.
- The City Bike Scheme (CBS) had been abandoned due to vandalism, whereas the trial of Voi Escooters (VES) had gone well and had been extended. The success of the VES was acknowledged, and evidence demonstrated that the Escooters provided a practical alternative to taxis or cars, nevertheless the scheme remained a pilot and further decisions on legalising these types of vehicles were awaited from Parliament before a decision was taken on the future of the scheme. It was commented that the

success of the pilot was due in part to the responsiveness of Voi who operated the scheme and the positive relationship with the City Council and Combined Authority. It was confirmed that the Voi would also be piloting a new CBS that would include eBikes. Cycling and bike-hubs were a key part of the approach to de-carbonising the transport infrastructure and overcoming car dependency.

- Further information was sought on the approach to quantifying the reduction in carbon when assessing policies and schemes. In response, it was clarified that the Combined Authority used various tools to assess the carbon impact along with other metrics such as economic growth, and these informed proposals made to members, with new models being developed and refined.
- Most Councillors and the public would agree that there were too many cars on the roads and reducing them in favour of active travel alternatives would be a benefit in terms of carbon, pollution, health and safety and wellbeing, and Councillors had a role to encourage people to make this change.
- 'Pricing' the public out of cars was not necessarily a sound policy as people may simply pay more if they did not feel that an affordable, cleaner, and efficient public transport alternative was in place. The public also needed confidence in the safety of other wheeling alternatives.

The Vice-Chair reported that two reports that were due to be considered at the upcoming Combined Authority Meeting – a wayfinding and signage guidelines and cycle storage guidelines and encouraged members to read the reports as they were part of the broader strategy of encouraging modal shift. The Vice-Chair emphasised the role of Councillors in encouraging those behaviours and the value of alternatives to car travel. In response, the importance of the public using all the options available to them was emphasised, that might include just one journey taken by bus or walked rather than by car.

The Vice-Chair advised the Committee that further direction was awaited from Government on the direction of LTP's as well as an announcement on possible changes to the vehicle tax regime to reflect the diminishing revenues from petrol duties.

RESOLVED - That

- (i) the update on the ongoing development of the new Local Transport Plan be noted.
- (ii) the themes set out in paragraph 1. 3 of the report on the emerging shape of the preferred strategy and delivery plan for the Local Transport Plan be noted; and
- (iii) a further follow-up report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee in March 2023 to reflect on further development and testing of the preferred strategy.

36 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions received.

37 PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS

There were no petitions or statements received.

The meeting closed at 2.55pm

Minutes 30 to 37 received as a correct record on the 9th day of March 2023.

Vice-Chairperson of the Committee