

The most successful, vibrant and sustainable City Regions around the globe have a quality multi modal transport network

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Transport is vital to urban areas and their conurbations. A good modern and efficient transport network is vital to allow workforces to commute to employment, customers to get to goods and services and helps attract new investment and jobs as a key part of what business is looking for- in short Transport is the oil in the economic engine. This is even more important as Britain ponders the future outside the European Union. But equally it is vital for a socially successful city region allowing people to travel to numerous leisure activities and to connect and spend time with family and friends. In short the most successful, vibrant and sustainable City Regions around the globe, always tend to have a quality multi modal transport network as a key part of their strengths. Often this is due to good consistent investment in transport, both in terms of infrastructure and services, but just as importantly is the autonomy and control to decide what you choose to prioritise and co-ordinate. I often look at some of the things that have been developed in places like

Scotland and London since their devolutions, and am quite sure that these successes would have been unlikely to have come about if they had solely had to wait for Whitehall to sort it out. In transport it is very clear to me that the mantra is:- Local people know best!

Devolution will improve our network

So what does this mean in practice and what should we prioritise here in Liverpool City Region? Well transport offers a wealth of opportunities for the City Region in a new era of devolution. Already many things have been achieved locally but a new devolved Mayoral Combined Authority can go much further. Merseyrail was an early pioneer for devolution in transport as it was the first rail operation in the country to be devolved to a local level back in 2003. Since then a more locally focused approach has taken the old cliché of “Miseryrail” and transformed it into the best performing rail service in the country. Devolution will allow this to go further as it gives us greater certainty in this direction and funding to buy new trains for our network that will be with us early in the 2020s.

Buses represent a great opportunity for improvement. Patronage has continually declined over the past 30 years, but the new devolved powers in the Buses Bill, will give us a number of options to improve the bus network including a more straightforward well connected network with simplified and affordable fares and smart ticketing that properly integrates with the local rail network. A new approach to buses is certainly something that should be targeted and delivered early in the new Mayor’s term. Equally this can dovetail well with efforts to co-ordinate our highways and road network better as we develop a "Key Route Network" of roads in partnership with each of the district councils who deliver our road infrastructure.

Targeting a new high speed rail link to Manchester

Mayoral Combined Authorities will play a key role on the national stage, and the Liverpool City Region certainly already does through the auspices of Transport for the North. Over the next couple of years TfN will be carrying out prioritisation work on key Northern infrastructure enhancements. We should be targeting a new high speed rail link for Liverpool to Manchester, HS3, with a link onto HS2- delivering full high speed connectivity for our City Region, North-south and East West. In the next 3 years we should be targeting this link to be announced as a priority scheme with a plan for its delivery by the early 2030s.

All of this can be wrapped up in a single transport fund that is being devolved to the Mayor and Combined Authority so that we can prioritise the services and infrastructure that we want to deliver, rather than having to run off to government to seek permission. As I said before, Local People know best- that's certainly the case in Transport in the Liverpool City Region.