



Liverpool City Region All Party Parliamentary Group

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Lord Alton of Liverpool, Lord Heseltine
and Marie Rimmer MP

Secretary
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Conor McGinn MP
Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram

A ticket to ride? Transport Investment for A Better Liverpool City Region Connectivity

16:30-17:45, 14th January 2019, Committee Room 5, House of Commons

Non-Verbatim Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

Due to a Brexit statement by the Prime Minister at the same time as the meeting was supposed to commence, Chair Alison McGovern was running late, and so Associate Vice-Chair Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram chaired the first part of the meeting.

Steve Rotheram, the Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, opened by discussing some projects he is currently overseeing in the city-region, such as the Housing First trial, ending a ‘sanctions-first’ benefits programme, and purchasing two new Mersey ferries using Transforming Cities funding. The Mayor also spoke about the importance of transport investment in general; he said that it can no longer be compartmentalised as an issue, because it can have an effect on a wide range of other policy areas, including health, employment and education.

Mayor Steve Rotheram also spoke about education in the Liverpool City Region, specifically the need to improve standards of education for the region’s young people. Young people, he said, are leaving schools without the skills they need for jobs.

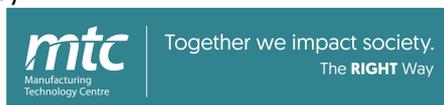
Lord David Alton interjected, saying that his fellow Peers needed to put pressure on the Government to assist with the apprenticeships levy, as the way funding is currently granted has hardly benefitted Liverpool City Region. The Mayor responded that he felt that greater devolution should be the answer, as “devolution can be a force for good.”

The minutes of the last two APPG meetings – on 30/11/18 and 4/1/19 - were then agreed.

2. Statements and Discussion

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Lorna Pimlott, HS2 Ltd's Phase 2 Sponsorship Director, opened by assuring the APPG that HS2 would deliver benefits for the Liverpool City Region beginning with Phase 1, even though that only goes as far as Birmingham.

The timescale for the second leg of HS2 has been pushed back due to its increased scope, in the form of linkages with Northern Powerhouse Rail and the electrification of Midland Rail. HS2 Ltd is working hand in hand with Northern Powerhouse Rail to ensure rail connectivity through Liverpool and Warrington.

She said Phase 2a (West Midlands to Crewe) would be key for the Liverpool City Region, as it would mean the city-region would be able to access jobs, skills and markets opened up by the HS2 project. Pimlott said she thought the Hybrid Bill for the project would be pushed through Parliament quickly this year, as it is "robust."

Louise Ellman, Labour MP for Liverpool Riverside, asked Lorna Pimlott if it was possible to link HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) effectively. Pimlott said the possibility rested with the Department for Transport and their market projections. She also mentioned that she was aware of the delays within the HS2 project, but assured the APPG that the company will award £20bn worth of contracts over the next 18 months.

Ellman then enquired as to when the "key decisions" regarding HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail and Liverpool City Region would be made, and by whom. Pimlott said that Jonathan Spruce, another speaker, would cover this matter, but added that HS2 Ltd will work with the Department for Transport to decide the limits of the project within the next six months.

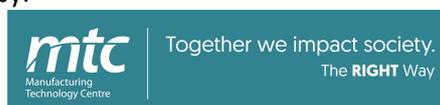
Jonathan Spruce, Interim Strategy Director for Transport for the North, began by saying that Northern Powerhouse Rail is the 'intel' across the pillars that is HS2: one can't work without the other. The East-West connection that is provided by Northern Powerhouse Rail will provide a £37bn boost to the local economy. According to Spruce, the Treasury's fiscal remit could easily provide the funding for the project – it is now the Government's choice to act or not.

Steve Rotheram drew attention to the fact that some of the NPR railway will not be complete until the 2030s, and asked what the benefit of such a long-running project will be in the short term.

Cllr Liam Robinson, who chairs the Liverpool City Region Transport Committee, raised further questions regarding HS2. Cllr Robinson said that HS2's 'classic compatible' trains will only run as far as Crewe, and so will not run to Liverpool. He said that HS2 will not provide infrastructure funding or reduced journey times within Liverpool City Region. Robinson claimed that Northern Powerhouse Rail can provide these benefits, as well as increasing Liverpool's capacity for freight, which is especially important in light of the resurgence of Liverpool's port.

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Baroness Gloria Hooper also mentioned the importance of an East-West connection in the North of England and enquired as to how such a connection would tie in with London connectivity.

In response to these questions, **Jonathan Spruce** said Transport for the North's preference would be for a rail link from Liverpool to just south of Manchester. In response to Lady Hooper's question, he said that a rail journey from Newcastle to Liverpool (i.e. from the North East to the North West) currently takes 3 hours and 15 minutes; a Northern Powerhouse Rail connection could reduce this to under 2 hours. Northern Powerhouse Rail is 'absolutely fundamental,' despite costing just half of what [should be spent on Northern transport](#).

Lord Prescott reiterated Cllr Liam Robinson's point about the importance of freight for the Liverpool City Region, adding that Merseyside to Humberside was a "critical connection" for freight. He also mentioned that, during his time as Deputy Prime Minister, he had had personal difficulty in 'selling' HS1 to the Northern public. Lord Prescott said that the appeal of HS2 would likely be lessened by recent reports that, in order to save money, there may be [fewer, slower services offered](#). Responding to this claim, Lorna Pimlott said HS2 Ltd is "currently exploring all options."

Louise Ebbs, Strategic Planning Director at First TransPennine Express, began her statement by apologising for the network's poor service since May 2018, explaining that there had been a "significant deterioration" in capacity and punctuality in this time. Ebbs said the service, especially around Manchester, was "still not good enough."

Ebbs then pointed out that TransPennine Express capacity grew the most out of any rail franchise in the previous (2017-18) session; as a result, they are moving from 3-car to 5-car services. From December 2019 onwards, the final part of the service will be expanded, meaning that the Liverpool/Newcastle to Glasgow line will be vastly improved.

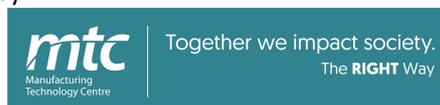
Louise Ellman, Labour MP for Liverpool Riverside, said that Northern passengers do not care whose faults the delays and cancellations are – they simply want their services back. Ebbs responded that TransPennine Express was now working collaboratively with the industry, with Transport for the North supervising them. She said that TPE and Northern must work together in order to make their services more reliable going forward.

Alison McGovern MP, now chairing, said that it was "quite a big deal" that planned rail enhancements have not – and will not – be put through after last summer's rail fiasco. McGovern said her constituents have been particularly concerned and distressed by the cancellation of trains, especially for work purposes. Constituents report that it is still happening frequently. McGovern asked Ebbs to speak directly to Parliamentarians about resolving this issue.

Ebbs said that TransPennine Express only cancel last trains as a very final resort. She mentioned that prior to December, in order to 'recover' late-running services, some of their trains had to turn around

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early in order to 'reset' the timetable. McGovern then added that Transport for the North has a clear plan of action to pressure rail operators into providing better services.

Jonathan Spruce continued the discussion regarding Northern Powerhouse Rail. He said he hoped that an upcoming Transport for the North [board meeting](#) would see the board sign off on a 30 year [investment plan](#), the first for the North in decades. Spruce described the plan as "robust," and said the schemes planned would "nail the North's colours to the mast." He said that Northern Powerhouse Rail is an affordable choice for the Government; if they are serious about the Northern Powerhouse, funding the proposed improvements and new services is the way to show it.

Lord Prescott interjected, saying that Spruce should make sure that Hull is given a look-in in this investment plan. Spruce replied that this was a certainty, especially as the plan is aiming to ensure that Liverpool City Region has the capacity for tourism and freight. Victoria Merton, of the Peel Group, said it was "commendable" that this APPG meeting had discussed freight as being of the same priority as transporting people. She said it needs to happen more, particularly in Liverpool.

3. *Concluding Remarks*

The two chairs of the meeting, **Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram** and **Alison McGovern MP**, concluded the meeting thanking all contributors for their input.

Steve Rotheram said it was important for the success of the Northern Powerhouse Rail campaign (and more widely, Transport for the North) that the North of England comes together to speak with one voice. Alison McGovern MP concluded by saying that we must look at the wider British rail network and its flaws. At present, it is "too fragmented. What does it matter if one part of the railway network is functioning well if the rest is terrible."

It was agreed that the APPG should meet again with local train operators and Network Rail in Liverpool in six to eight weeks' time.

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