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Jan/Feb 2015



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Industry must pull together at the summit

When John Prescott was Secretary of State for Environment transport and the Regions he spoke of transforming the bus “from a workhorse to a thoroughbred”.

February’s Bus Summit will be a chance to take stock of how much progress has been made towards this goal.

In reality, the very ubiquity of buses means that they will almost inevitably retain some workhorse-like characteristics, no matter how widespread real time information, smart ticketing, and free wi-fi become.

None of this undermines the strong case for the bus to gain greater recognition for its role in supporting the economy – both directly by connecting people to jobs, education and shopping centres, and indirectly by reducing congestion.

The current focus on devolution of powers to city-regions and the surprise news of a DfT review of the bus market means that there will be an inevitable focus on the regulation/deregulation argument.

As Systra’s Neill Birch points out elsewhere in this issue, the argument is not black and white. The success of deregulation depends to a large extent on the local management style. Where the operator listens to customers, engages with the local authority and is prepared to take a long-term view of investment, increased patronage is likely to follow. If not, passengers are more likely to be dissatisfied and calls for quality contracts are likely to grow.

The usual argument against quality contracts or franchising, often citing London’s bus provision, can be summarised as “regulation is too expensive”. Clearly seeking to replicate all aspects of the TfL model, with 10-minute frequencies, an extensive night bus network, 24-hour running on some routes and so on, will have a significant cost. It is not



Next month’s Bus Summit will be a chance to take stock of how much progress has been made

inconceivable, though, that some middle ground exists whereby in a franchised model services could be rationalised and protected, with some cross-subsidy of less profitable routes, at a reasonable cost, as the North East Combined Authority is proposing.

The danger is that the regulation/deregulation/partnership argument will edge all other issues out of the spotlight and overshadow the aim of raising awareness and winning greater recognition of the bus’s strengths. These strengths encompass inclusion and greater accessibility for job seekers, the elderly, disabled people and anyone

without a car; congestion-busting; and increasingly, being greener.

Devolution and consolidation of numerous funding streams to local enterprise partnerships via the Local Growth Fund mean that significant funds that would in the past have flowed to councils to support bus services are now at risk of being lost.

Next month’s Bus Summit is an opportunity for the industry as a whole to hammer home the importance of efficient bus services to the smooth running – and growth – of local economies.

Greater awareness among local decision-makers, not to mention ministers, of the economic evidence of the bus’s benefits will make it more likely they would be willing to make long-term investment in efficient bus services, despite constrained funds.

A supporting National Statement from the Government, proposed by Claire Haigh on page 22, would provide an immense boost to this. Combine this with a greater responsiveness among bus operators towards initiatives such as smart ticketing, and it’s possible to imagine a world where patronage could take care of itself, and arguments over partnership or regulation could fade from prominence. That should be a goal that everyone – operators, transport authorities, LEPs, and central Government – could sign up to.

David Fowler is editor of Transport Times



Buses’ benefits for the local economy are under-appreciated



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And we continually aim to make it as easy as possible for customers by providing 'multi-modal' ticket products

Go-Ahead



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Surprise as DfT instigates bus market review

The bus industry reacted cautiously to reports that the DfT is to commission a review of the bus market.

The surprise move superficially suggests the Government is considering a policy U-turn nearly 30 years after bus services were deregulated.

An alternative interpretation is that the DfT is seeking to regain the initiative and erect obstacles after the Treasury-inspired move to give Greater Manchester powers over bus franchising as part of its agreement on devolution.

Industry bodies were not notified of the move and there was no official comment from the DfT, but sources unofficially confirmed that details reported in the media were essentially correct.

Consultant KPMG has a budget of less than £90,000 to answer six questions about the bus market. Its final report is due after May's general election

and is expected to feed into an ensuing spending review.

Liberal Democrat former transport minister Norman Baker responded cautiously, saying: "This is a difficult time for the industry, with significant local authority cuts to services and now the uncertainty this review will cause. I think it is important that the terms of reference are clear, and that this is an open process to which all can contribute. It is vital the end result is one which increases the numbers of passengers using buses rather than the opposite."

Campaign for Better Transport chief executive Stephen Joseph said: "We strongly support greater local control over public transport. We need to see better management of networks and integration of modes, as well as things like multi-operator, multi-modal ticketing and smartcards becoming easier and cheaper to introduce. Re-regu-

Quality contract proposals for the North East are strongly opposed by bus operators



lating buses may well be the best way of achieving this in our cities, but it's vital that pro-bus policies are adopted in rural areas, too. Here a move to franchising may not always be the best option and different kinds of partnerships and transport structures will need room to evolve."

The DfT has posed six questions for the review:

Under what circumstances would a change in the English bus market operating model be a better option for passengers in local communities and provide better value for money for taxpayers? Are there good candidate places where these circumstances occur? How can we best assess the costs and benefits of a different operating model in a local bus market? What are the commercial consequences of changes to the bus market, driven by the desire of conurbations to sacrifice competition for simplified fares, smart ticketing and greater service co-ordination? Is a different operating model likely to lead to reduced margins and, if so, who would benefit? Outside the conurbations what characteristics would the English bus market need to preserve adequate coverage and continued investment?

Competition in the bus market was introduced during the Thatcher era in 1985 but in most areas the expected on-street competition did not materialise. Provisions for quality contracts, allowing local authorities to go out to tender for bus services over an area and specify timetables,

standards and fares were brought in by the Transport Act 2000.

Despite subsequent simplification in the Local Transport Act 2008 they have so far proved too onerous to put into effect. Plans by the North East Combined Authority for quality contracts in Tyne and Wear will be considered by a quality contract scheme board convened by the Senior Traffic Commissioner in March: this is the furthest any proposal has so far advanced.

The review comes as a Campaign for Better Transport report warned of a crisis in bus services. It found that half English local authorities reduced funding for bus services during the current financial year. 22 local authorities slashed over 10% from their bus funding in 2014/15.

The overall cut in support for buses in 2014/15 was £9m. This brings the total reduction since 2010/11 to £44m – a 15% cut. Rural areas have been worst hit, with average budget reductions of 19% this year.

The report recommends a new approach including "Total Transport" – bringing together commissioning of local transport services by different public bodies in the same area; combining existing bus funding with a top-up from other government departments in a ring-fenced Connectivity Fund for local government support for bus services; and fully funding the concessionary travel scheme for older and disabled people.

Neill Birch, p23



Manchester seeks control of railway stations

Transport for Greater Manchester has called on the Department for Transport to hand it control of nearly 100 railway stations in the region to allow a longer-term approach to station improvements.

TfGM argues that the devolution agreement with the Government, coinciding with the refranchising of Northern Rail and TransPennine Express services, present “a golden opportunity” to adopt a new approach. Most of Greater Manchester’s stations are managed by train operators, but TfGM argues that franchises are too short to give operators an incentive to carry out improvements. It believes that awarding long-term leases for the stations to TfGM would allow it to transform them into modern transport hubs, without the need for additional funding.

Speaking on the same day as the inaugural meeting of new strategic body Transport for the North, Councillor Andrew Fender, chair of the TfGM committee, said: “Given the short-term nature of rail industry funding and the lack of incentives on offer for station improvements, we have seen decades of under-investment

resulting in cold, dreary and uncomfortable stations with few – if any – amenities. Over 80% of Greater Manchester’s 97 rail stations are more than 100 years old and many of them have remained fundamentally unchanged in that time, with 52 of them currently classed as inaccessible.”

He added: “We have a golden opportunity here. There is a significant risk that while every other part of our transport network will improve through devolution, our rail stations will remain largely stagnant, inaccessible and fit for the 19th century.”

TfGM has been in discussions with the DfT to ensure the option of handing it control of stations is left open when the invitation to tender for the franchises is published shortly. This would allow more detailed proposals for the stations to be drawn up, with a final decision coinciding with the announcement of the franchise winners in the autumn.

TfGM chief executive Dr Jon Lamonte said improvements could be made without the need for additional money.

“We believe we can do better on commercialisation – retail and advertising,” he said. “With better use of the commercial



More than 80% of Greater Manchester stations are over 100 years old and in need of modernisation. Picture © Parrot

elements, we could adopt a longer-term approach. Within the current funding we concluded it’s possible to start to address some of the accessibility issues,” Dr Lamonte told *TT*.

He said that TfGM saw Transport for London’s approach to the Overground stations, when it took over a number of under-used national rail lines, as a precedent. “For a relatively modest investment TfL made the stations quite nice, and customers flocked to the network.”

Short-term priorities would include tidying up neglected

maintenance and introducing a structured programme of improvements. Communities would be involved, building on the community station approach. “With local knowledge and control you can identify where the concerns are and prioritise the right ones to fix.”

According to Passenger Focus research, overall satisfaction with stations among rail passengers in Greater Manchester was at 74% in autumn 2013, compared with a national average of 78%. For Northern Rail-managed stations, overall satisfaction was 63%.

Transport for the North sets out route to northern powerhouse

Regional leaders from across the north of England met to plan the next stages in creating a “northern powerhouse” at the inaugural meeting of Transport for the North.

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin attended the meeting as did the chief executives of Network Rail and the Highways Agency.

The new strategic body was set up last October and is led by the city regions responsible for last year’s One North report – Greater Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield and Newcastle plus

Hull and the Humber with their local enterprise partnerships, working in collaboration with the DfT, the Highways Agency, Network Rail and HS2 Ltd.

The meeting on 12 January in Leeds, jointly chaired by Mr McLoughlin and Manchester City Council leader Sir Richard Leese, discussed the work needed to produce an interim report in March setting out how the measures proposed in the One North report will be brought to fruition.

These include more trains, more seats and faster journey times, including a new high speed east-west rail link between

the cities of the North (HS3); building sustainable connections to other infrastructure such as HS2, the East Coast main line and the Northern Hub; providing additional capacity on the North’s roads for both freight and passenger travel, through extending managed motorways and addressing gaps in the network; and improving the region’s freight access and capability.

Mr McLoughlin said: “It is crucial we work together to create a world-class integrated transport network for the North that reduces journey times, increases capacity and connectivity

and enables growth. We have already made great strides and the creation of Transport for the North is an excellent next step. I want Transport for the North to speak with one voice to the Government on the big decisions to benefit the region as a whole.”

Sir Richard Leese said: “Economic growth doesn’t happen by accident: it happens by design, and having the right integrated infrastructure in place is vital for us to generate that growth. Transport for the North is now charged with drawing up a bold programme to make that vision real in the next 15 years.”

MPs question Network Rail's capacity to manage investment programme

The House of Commons Transport Committee has questioned Network Rail's capacity to manage its £38bn investment programme following disruption caused by overrunning engineering work at Christmas.

A group of senior rail executives is to undertake a review of the timing of major improvement projects and to consider whether the current practice of undertaking the biggest projects over Christmas and Easter is still the best course of action.

Passengers on the East Coast main line and Great Western main line suffered severe delays and disruption on 27 December after work overran at Holloway Junction, just north of King's Cross, and Old Oak Common.

At King's Cross, two junctions and 500m of two railway lines were being replaced by an alliance of Network Rail and Amey. Failure of new equipment – brought in to reduce the risk of breakdown but not previously used on the railway – put the programme behind schedule. Track renewal activity, which included replacing 6,000 tonnes

of ballast, fell out of synchronisation with supporting supply train movements when train drivers reached maximum shift length limits. Long distance East Coast main line services started and terminated at Finsbury Park, a few miles north of King's Cross, but failure to operate a revised platform use pattern initially led to overcrowding, which left some passengers queuing outside Finsbury Park for up to three hours.

At Old Oak Common at 03.30 on the morning of the 27th, the works appeared on schedule to reopen at 07.00, but Network Rail's signalling contractor Signalling Solutions Ltd took nearly ten hours to complete final signalling paperwork checks and test verification, which should have taken two hours. Paddington was unable to open, with no advance warning to train operators or passengers. Trains were delayed or cancelled, many services that did run were overcrowded, and passengers for Paddington had to be diverted to Waterloo or Marylebone.

Launching the transport committee's report *Investing in the Railway*, examining Network

Rail's programme of investment for 2014-19, committee chair Louise Ellman said: "The chaos faced by passengers over Christmas at King's Cross and Paddington, and the continuing disruption at London Bridge, are unacceptable. They are also a worrying sign for the capacity of Network Rail to manage multiple complex engineering projects simultaneously. Network Rail must demonstrate that it can deliver key improvements – such as electrification in the North West and the Great Western Main Line – on time, and while still providing safe and efficient services for all passengers."

A review overseen by the Rail Delivery Group will consider the lessons from the Christmas disruption and previous work programmes and how major work can best be managed to limit the impact on passenger and freight services. It will seek

to establish the best time for carrying out large improvement projects, which have historically been undertaken during key public holidays because demand for rail travel is much lower at those times.

The review will be overseen by Tim O'Toole, chair of the RDG asset, programme and supply chain management working group, and will be completed by the end of March.

On rail investment generally Ms Ellman welcomed the record investment planned for the rail network but added: "Treasury statistics demonstrate that for too long this spending has been focused on London. We call for revised – and published – criteria to ensure fairer funding allocations that reflect wider

economic and social objectives."

The committee also noted its concern that "the DfT chose to order brand new trains for passengers in London and the South East, while expecting passengers in the rest of the country to be content with reconditioned older trains". The committee called on the Government to take responsibility for

rolling stock, address general shortages and ensure there will be sufficient trains to run on newly-electrified lines.

Ms Ellman said: "Ministers must ensure there is sufficient rolling stock – of a decent quality – to run timetabled rail services and maximise the benefits of new infrastructure. Rising numbers of rail passengers have not being matched by investment in new rolling stock, resulting in overcrowding." The committee also called for "a clear commitment to remove Pacers from the rail network" in Wales and the South West, as well as in the North of England, "by 2020 at the latest".

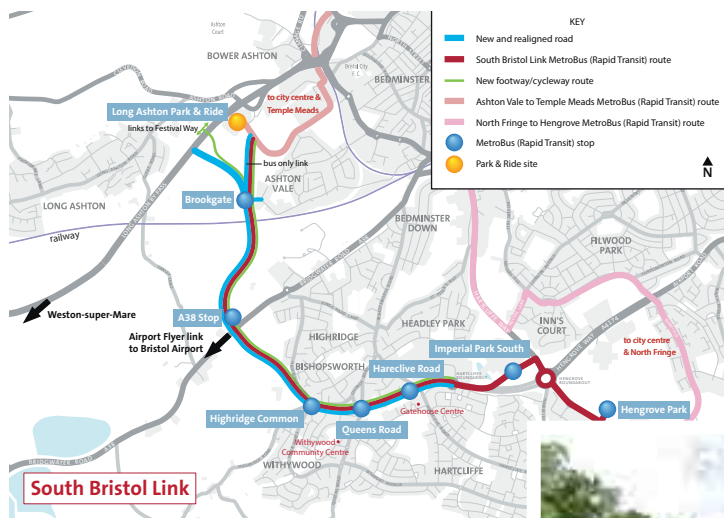


Network Rail is responsible for £38bn of investment in the next five years. (Inset) Chief executive Mark Carne apologised for Christmas delays



Louise Ellman, page 15

Bristol wins funding for bus rapid transit network and green technology



Bristol has been awarded £27m from the DfT for the next stage of its bus rapid transit network.

The DfT has given full approval to the South Bristol Link section of the West of England MetroBus scheme.

The South Bristol link will connect with the previously approved Ashton Vale to Temple Meads section. It will consist of

a combined new road and rapid transit link to the south and west of Bristol city centre between the A370 Long Ashton Bypass and Hengrove Park. The total cost will be £43.3m and construction is scheduled to be complete by November next year.



MetroBus will comprise a total of £200m investment in a new express bus service providing fast, frequent and reliable public transport, with services running on a combination of segregated busway and bus lanes. Local links for cyclists and pedestrians will also be improved.

Alun Griffiths Construction has been appointed to start on the detailed design for the South Bristol Link. Separately Balfour Beatty has been awarded the main contract to build the

guided busway and associated works for the Ashton Vale to Temple Meads scheme. The £26m contract is for the design and construction of a 2.5km guided busway

and new 200m long bridge over the Portishead railway line, linking to the Long Ashton park and ride site. Construction is due to start in June, to be complete by October 2016.

Bristol has also been awarded £1m to buy a number of low emission buses, as the city's year as European Green Capital begins.

The hybrid buses will switch automatically from diesel to electric operation on entering low emission zones, using "geo-fence" technology based on GPS positioning.

The trigger zones have yet to be decided but will be areas of poor air quality. As with many cities, levels of nitrogen oxides in areas in central Bristol and along arterial routes exceed EU targets, and the city council has designated an air quality management area.

Suppliers of the buses and the geo-fence technology have yet to be announced. The council will shortly launch a competition to select a bus operator in order to start the trial before the end of this summer.

The council will use data collected in the trial to evaluate the benefits for the environment, along with the operational impact on the bus service.

HS2 appraisal "underestimates economic potential of cities"

The economic benefits of HS2 are being underestimated because of flaws in the Department for Transport's appraisal procedures.

These are not suited to a project whose main objective is to be "transformational" and to rebalance the economy. In particular the method fails to capture the greater economic benefits of siting a station at Stoke-on-Trent rather than at Crewe as currently proposed.

This are the conclusions of a review by economic consultant Volterra Partners for Stoke-on-Trent city council.

Using DfT's Webtag appraisal guidance, transport user benefits and wider economic impacts can be included in the case, says Volterra. But for the central case, Webtag only allows "static" wider economic benefits, which treat all transport infrastructure as "marginal" – having no impact on the distribution of people

or jobs, or associated land use changes. "It is difficult to think of a less 'marginal' project than HS2," says the Volterra report.

Thus HS2 Ltd's main objective of strengthening the North and rebalancing the economy is "compromised" by the appraisal methodology. DfT guidance "underestimates the importance of cities" and "underestimates the transformational potential of HS2", says the report. "HS2 will fail in its objective to rebalance the economy unless these problems are addressed."

By underestimating the importance of city centres, "the appraisal of HS2 has resulted in station locations that do not optimise the economic potential of city centres," it continues. This is illustrated by the choice of Meadowhall rather than Sheffield city centre and Crewe rather than Stoke. These are "poor decisions if the key objective is economic growth", says the report.

The consultant argues that

Stoke in particular represents a unique opportunity because it does not have a commercial centre in the usual sense. Stoke-on-Trent is made up of six towns which federated to form a fragmented city. There is space in the centre of the city left by the decline of traditional industries which could accommodate an HS2 station and significant development associated with it. But the vacant land, instead of being treated in the appraisal as a positive because it is available for development, is counted as a negative.

Even with fixed land use, Volterra's report argues that a change in employment productivity in Stoke would be significant because GDP per head is currently low and there is a large population. But an HS2 station in Stoke-on-Trent would also result in "a step change in employment". A 10% increase in employment would lead to an annual increase in gross

value added of £689m, compared with £197m in Crewe.

Volterra Partners was among experts behind a business case devised for the city last year (TT October 2014), which also pointed out that the Stoke route would cost £2bn less than a route via Crewe because it would be simpler to construct.

Volterra senior adviser Bridget Rosewell said: "The appraisal of HS2 does not allow for the transformational impacts which are enabled by transport infrastructure investment. This seems counterproductive when the stated aim of HS2 is to connect up our cities and transform their economic output and productivity. The effect is to significantly underplay the impact of HS2 on jobs growth in cities like Stoke-on-Trent."

Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce chairman Jonathan Mitchell said the business community was 100% behind the Stoke route.

Counties plan landmark combined authority

Three county councils have put forward proposals for the first non-metropolitan combined authority.

Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire have approached the Government to seek devolved powers to allow a joint approach to transport, skills, economic development and strategic planning.

Northamptonshire leader Jim Harker said the councils had had talks with communities secre-

tary Eric Pickles and received an encouraging response.

A joint document, *The Creative Counties: A shared approach to driving prosperity*, says the gross value added (the total value of goods and services) of the three counties was £45bn, roughly equivalent to Greater Manchester. It also points out that the authorities have a track record of joint working, for example on promoting the East-West Rail scheme and on the development of Silverstone race circuit.

Details of how the authority would work have yet to be worked through, but the alliance is seeking an early meeting with government officials to discuss the proposals further. As a first step, a statutory joint committee of the councils will be established.

The authorities are asking for powers to develop joint plans for transport, spatial planning and other key infrastructure. They are asking the Government to devolve employment and skills funding; support a devolved

approach to the local trunk road network; provide incentives for the councils so they benefit from encouraging growth; and give them greater powers over bus services and over public transport between key towns and cities. They seek to ensure the "best economic benefits are unlocked from projects such as East-West Rail and the connectivity of technology centres like Silverstone to the national road network".

Tony Ciaburro, page 16



The East-West route crosses central London via Parliament Square

'Crossrail for the Bike' plans finalised

London mayor Boris Johnson has announced final plans for flagship cycle routes across central London.

Dubbed "Crossrail for the Bike", two continuous routes, one north-south and one east-west, will be almost entirely segregated from motor traffic.

Generally the cycle track will be 4m wide, bidirectional and with a capacity for 3,000 journeys hourly.

Following consultation the original plans have been modified in response to concern over delays to traffic on the east-west route, reducing estimated delays in the morning peak by 60%.

The east-west route runs from Tower Hill, where it connects to Cycle Superhighway 3 to Canary Wharf, and runs along Victoria Embankment, via Parliament Square and Hyde Park to Westbourne Terrace. Except for a short section of low-traffic tun-

nel towards the eastern end the route is completely segregated.

Delays will be reduced by modifications to reduce pinch-points, and between Tower Hill and Parliament Square it has been possible to reinstate a second general traffic lane westbound by reducing the cycle path to 3m wide for a short distance. Modelling figures show the delay to motorists on the worst affected east-west journey is reduced from 16 minutes to six.

The north-south route will run from Elephant & Castle to King's Cross, fully segregated to Farringdon.

North of Farringdon it is planned to use low-traffic back streets because Farringdon Road is too narrow for segregation.

The mayor plans to spend £913m to encourage cycling in London. The plans are expected to be approved by the TfL board next week.

UK BUS SUMMIT

premier journeys



Opening Keynote:

Patrick McLoughlin MP,
Secretary of State
for Transport



Closing Keynote:

Baroness Kramer,
Transport Minister

Confirmed Speakers



Derek Mackay MSP,
Scottish Transport Minister



Danny Kennedy MLA,
Northern Ireland
Transport Minister



Jon Lamonte,
Chief Executive, TfGM



Leon Daniels,
Managing Director
Surface Transport, TfL

Transport Times are organising this event in London on the 12th February 2015, supported by the DfT, with the aim of raising awareness on the role the bus can play in stimulating the economy, getting people to work, reducing emissions, providing access for the elderly and tackling inequality.

TfGM Chief Executive Jon Lamonte will be speaking on bus franchising in Greater Manchester following the recent government announcement that this power will be devolved to an elected mayor.

What is the timetable, how will it work, what will it mean for smart ticketing - and perhaps most importantly, who will take the revenue risk: TfGM or the bus operators?

More fundamentally, he will consider questions such as: *Is franchising a panacea? Will it require more taxpayers' money to be spent on buses? Can cities in the UK replicate London's success on the bus front through franchising powers, or should they pay as much attention to what has happened with a state-owned and regulated bus market in Belfast?*

The case for Quality Contracts in the North East will also be debated.

Additional confirmed speakers include:

David Martin, Chief Executive, Arriva

Giles Fearnley, Managing Director - UK Bus, First Group

Robert Montgomery, Managing Director - UK Bus, Stagecoach

David Brown, Chief Executive, Go-Ahead

Mike Blackburn, Chair, Manchester LEP

Robert Hough, Chair, Liverpool City Region LEP

Alex Pratt, Chair, The LEP Network and Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP

Mark Nodder, Chairman & Chief Executive, Wrights Group

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Breath tests will clamp down on drug-driving

From March drivers suspected of being under the influence of drugs will face being breathalysed in the same way as drink-drivers – making it much easier to secure a conviction, says **Robert Goodwill**



UK roads are among the safest in the world. But maintaining that position – and reducing casualties each year – is an increasing challenge. We will only achieve our goals by continuing to be vigilant, and taking action to counter any evolving threats to road safety.

That's particularly relevant right now. In 2013, the fewest number of people died on our roads since records began in 1926. But the latest road safety figures, for the first six months of 2014, show an increase in the number of deaths and serious injuries.

We don't yet know if this is evidence of a longer term trend. It may be influenced by the increase in traffic on the roads. Or perhaps it's because 2014 was the warmest year since records began, and more pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists were out and about. Either way, we are studying the data very carefully to see where we can take action.

Over the past 50 years, road deaths due to drink-driving have been slashed by more than 80%. But one of the big challenges for the next few years will be to clamp down on drug-driving in the same way. Drug crime threatens the wellbeing of our society and clogs up our justice system, and it takes a terrible toll on our roads, too.

Perhaps as many as 200 people a year are killed by drivers whose ability is impaired by drugs. But although the law against drug-driving was first introduced in the Road Traffic Act 1930, the same piece of legislation that gave us the first driving tests, it has barely changed since then.

For drink-driving, the police have the power to charge a suspect as soon as excessive alcohol is detected in the bloodstream. But to charge a drug-driving suspect they have to prove the driver is impaired, and that

the impairment is caused by drugs. That's a matter requiring professional medical judgement, followed by a blood test. It's a slow process, which is expensive and open to challenge. The result is that a drink-driver is almost 50 times more likely to be convicted than a drug-driver.

So we've brought in new legislation. From 2 March this year, it will be an offence to be over set limits for the most common drugs while driving, as it is with drink-driving. Impairment will no longer be a matter of judgement, but a testable fact.

If cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy and ketamine, or four other commonly abused drugs are detected in the bloodstream

This is the biggest shake-up of drug-driving laws for 85 years

above a set level, it will be enough for police to charge a suspect with drug-driving.

We've set the levels as low as we reasonably can: low enough that one smoke of cannabis is likely to put an offender over the limit, but just high enough that they can't claim, for example, that they inhaled the drug accidentally. And if drivers start turning to other drugs, we can put those in the regulations and set limits for them, too.

This is the biggest shake-up of drug-driving laws for 85 years. It will give the police better enforcement tools for tackling drug-driving, it will create a stronger deterrent, and it will save lives by taking drug-drivers off our roads.

We're making other changes, too. In 1967, when breathalysers were introduced, it made sense for drivers to be offered a blood or urine test if they failed the breathalyser by a

margin. Back then, the equipment wasn't so reliable. But modern breathalysers are highly accurate, and drink-drivers use the loophole to play for time.

So we've put a Bill before Parliament that will remove the right to demand a blood or urine test if they fail a breathalyser test. And that breathalyser result will stand as proof in court.

Another obstacle to securing convictions is that the police have to call for a doctor when a blood test is required. That takes time and creates more pressure on the health service. So the same Bill proposes that a healthcare professional – such as a nurse or paramedic – can do the test instead. We hope these changes will become law as soon as possible after the new drug-driving offence.

Ideally, though, we want to prevent people taking drugs and driving in the first place. Governments have been running campaigns against drink-driving for 50 years, and we know they've saved many lives. So we'll be launching a THINK! campaign to coincide with the new drug-driving offence.

The evidence shows that the majority of offenders are young men, and that's who we'll target with the new campaign. We won't pull any punches: I want them to know there's a good chance they'll get caught if they persist in drug-driving.

Our roads are among the safest in the world thanks to the efforts of the police, car makers, successive governments and road-users themselves. But the emerging 2014 figures remind us that no one in the road safety business can take success for granted. Together, we will respond to get casualty numbers dropping again.

Robert Goodwill is parliamentary under-secretary of state for transport and MP for Scarborough and Whitby

Are we ready for a return to highways expansion?

The road investment strategy, unveiled last month is a real break with policy over the last 20 years. But have the implications for traffic growth, land use and rail demand been thought through?

Engine for Growth is the slogan of High Speed 2... but in last month's autumn statement it was the road investment strategy that was revving up to go, with over 100 major schemes and investment of £9.4bn over the next five years (*TT*, December 2014).

Nobody knows whether this will attract the kind of protest movement and wider public concern that led the Government to call time on major new highway investment 20 years ago. Those alert to electoral cycles, however, will wonder whether the motor of this huge programme will survive this year's spending review and get out of first gear. Others may ponder the prospect of five years of low oil prices, and see a natural companion in more road capacity.

The question of whether the autumn announcement is a serious policy shift is easily answered. Previous upgrade programmes left untouched the most stressed parts of the national highway network. This meant that investment could bring localised benefits but not a quantum shift in traffic volumes.

But now, two of the places which act as strategic constraints – the M25 south-west quadrant and the M60 north-west section – are to be studied to inform the successor RIS which runs for five years from 2021. Unleash the orbital motorways around London and Manchester, and expect volume increases not just on the M25 but also on the M40, M4, M3, A3, M23; not just on the M60, but on the M56, M61, M62, M66, M67...

It is this rather than the identification of network gaps across the Pennines that signals a real change.

The south-west part of the M25 has been studied before – in the HASQUAD study abandoned in the early 1990s. The key idea then was to build a section of one of the 1970s London ringway schemes, parallel to the

motorway. Twenty years on, the same scheme will no doubt get a fresh airing, along with further widening of the M25 itself – a fourth lane having been added to the M25 along its south-west quadrant in the meantime.

Covering the same territory, the later ORBIT multi-modal study recommended associated road user charging, but, of course, to no avail. So will it be back to the 14-lane M25 option killed off by the John Major government?

This part of the forward highways programme – if fulfilled – would represent a real policy shift and it demands that wider impacts are considered, not just the narrow question of whether the benefits will outweigh the usually measured costs (which very likely they will do on highly congested networks).

Is the aim seriously to catch up with years of neglecting the challenge of meeting road demand growth?

Is the aim seriously to catch up with years of neglecting the challenge of meeting road demand growth? If it is, RISs I and II need to be seen as just a first dose.

And if it isn't, what exactly is the aim? How can capacity expansion be made sustainable in the absence of any pricing mechanism to manage demand (an even more serious problem with low fuel prices)?

Second question: what are the implications for development patterns? Motorways don't help stimulate the city centres which are experiencing high growth in the knowledge-based industries and which are seen as vital to GDP growth. They foster instead an appetite for business and leisure parks and out-of-town retailing. Are we ready for this

again, given the relaxation of planning constraints since 2010? These effects need to be studied.

Third: would a return to highway network expansion, together with its land-use and development implications, affect demand for rail travel, which has grown strongly and consistently since road expansion ended in the mid-1990s? Does the promise of continuous smart motorways between London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds mean the idea is to claw back some of the rail market too?

A good priority within the programme is the plan to invest in A-roads – neglected territory with a poor score on safety and delays. So the west of England can at last expect completion of the A303 upgrade, complete with a Stonehenge tunnel.

But as with the rest of the programme, though this is good for motorists, what about other road users? Over the last 20 years, the "manage what we have got" philosophy has seen a big transfer of road capacity, at least in cities, towards better meeting the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. When formulating the investment plans, the needs of these other road users seem to have been marginalised.

It could be that a programme that would create continuous segregated safe paths for pedestrians and segregated lanes for cyclists could bring a wider set of benefits – especially on safety and sustainability – including for motorists, and more cheaply.

So I'm calling for one more RIS study, to look into the creation of segregated walking and cycle routes for the entire national A-road network. A highways programme that shows a balanced response to user needs – not just motorists' – has a much better chance of public acceptability.

Jim Steer is director and founder of Steer Davies Gleave.



Discovering the hidden causes of bus hold-ups

A collaborative research project bringing together Passenger Focus with operators and transport authorities has improved understanding of delays and led to a co-ordinated response



Why are buses late? You might think this is a stupid question. Obvious, isn't it? As a passenger you can see the road works, accidents, bad parking and traffic that hold buses up. But are suspicions borne out by the facts? Data can be a bit sketchy in this area as some operators shield their figures from the prying eyes of local authorities and the traffic commissioners. The wealth of data that informs debate on railway performance is not available. What really are the main causes of delay and what can be done about them?

This is a local issue that requires local solutions. However, what is clear is that a common approach can bring about improvements.

We know from our Bus Passenger Survey that passengers are consistently less satisfied with the punctuality of their buses than they are with bus services as a whole. Improving punctuality is their top priority for improvement.

So we thought it was high time that we talked to the people responsible for making sure the buses show up when they are supposed to. Did they know when, where and why their buses were delayed? What were they doing to tackle the problem?

After writing to every local authority in England, we agreed to work with each of the English passenger transport executives, plus county councils Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Devon and city councils Derby and Southampton.

We identified 19 routes in the local authority areas and a further ten in the PTE areas. The routes gave good coverage of both commercial and tendered services, and offered a mix of operators and urban and rural areas.

The project represented something of a departure for Passenger Focus, in that we worked

alongside operators and local authorities as they analysed their data and decided how to improve their services. The work was directed by a national steering group made up of industry and government representatives. The summary of the project, *What's the hold-up? Exploring bus service punctuality*, is now on the Passenger Focus website.

The project has improved our understanding of when, where and why buses are delayed. Though not representing a statistically valid sample of the country's vast variety of bus routes, our case studies highlighted the challenges of setting timetables to reflect variable patterns of traffic and patronage. They threw up a number

Simply bringing people together to forensically look at delays has led to many improvements

of recurrent themes, including traffic and parking, boarding and alighting, inadequate recovery time and, perhaps most surprisingly, leaving bus stations.

The project has resulted in energetic responses from operators, authorities and the passenger transport executive, working in partnership to address the challenges which have emerged. Involving highway engineers, drivers, bus companies and others allows the breadth of challenges to be addressed. Simply doing the work, bringing people together to forensically look at delays, has led already to many tactical improvements.

For operators, the project demonstrated the value of listening to passengers and, in particular, to drivers, in a structured way. Data was used as a supportive evidence base rather than a diagnostic tool. Typically it was used to validate concerns

raised by drivers and supervisors, to provide historical comparisons, to help determine the need for interventions, to provide evidence for business cases and to monitor the effectiveness of interventions.

Partners stressed the value of focusing on trying to understand what had happened on the worst individual journeys, rather than looking at averages, which can be misleading.

Given that everyone seems to agree in principle that getting buses to run on time is the key to increasing passenger numbers, profits and satisfaction levels, it was disappointing how long it took us to get this project off the ground in some areas. We were also surprised to discover a lack of consistency about which services are monitored and how. And we assumed, wrongly, that bus punctuality improvement partnerships would automatically be used as the mechanism for taking this work forward.

We urge operators to make full use of the rich potential to use ticket machine and other vehicle-based location tracking data. We urge local authorities and operators routinely to engage with each other to use their data and experiences on delays to better manage the highway network in relation to bus punctuality. And we urge local partners to make full use of their existing punctuality improvement partnerships when acting to make the buses run on time.

Earlier this year, we published research into what bus passengers thought about punctuality in *Bus Punctuality and Timetables*, which we used to inform our comments on the Senior Traffic Commissioner's draft punctuality guidance. We would encourage operators and authorities to examine that research and the wealth of detail in the case studies in this report when seeking to implement the guidance.

Anthony Smith is chief executive of Passenger Focus.

Rail investment: can Network Rail cope?

Overrunning engineering works over Christmas were an unhappy echo of the disruption of seven years ago and raise concerns over the company's ability to manage its renewal programme generally

For thousands of rail passengers the festive period was spoiled by the overrunning engineering works which closed King's Cross, and part-closed Paddington, on Saturday 27 December. People attempting to see family and friends, or travel home after Christmas, were left queuing in the cold for hours outside Finsbury Park station; standing all the way from Newcastle or Edinburgh on overcrowded trains; or stranded at Paddington, where the station was closed with no notice to passengers.

While the majority of Network Rail's £200m Christmas works programme was completed on time, this is no consolation to passengers affected at King's Cross or Paddington.

Network Rail has shown its commitment to learn the lessons of the disruption. Chief executive Mark Carne appeared in front of the Transport Committee to apologise unreservedly to all members of the public caught up in the disruption. But we've been here before: seven years ago similar disruption was caused by overrunning engineering works over Christmas and New Year at Rugby, Liverpool Street and Shields Junction.

In its 2008 report the Office of Rail Regulation found that there had been failings by contractors, and a failure to give the train operating companies early notice of the overrun and the potential for disruption to their services. The ORR is investigating the most recent events, and though we will have to wait for its findings, it is a concern that similar difficulties with contractors and failures in communication seem to have occurred once again.

In 2008 the ORR said that "urgent steps must be taken to ensure that there is no recurrence of this kind of event". Passengers are entitled to question why these steps were not taken this year – and whether the lessons

of 2007-08 have been forgotten.

The scale of the work planned by Network Rail for 2014-19 means that it is more crucial than ever for engineering works to run to schedule and with minimal disruption. The early signs have not been promising: the Great Western main line has been plagued by signal failures, and weekend engineering works on the Great Eastern main line have repeatedly overrun.

Passengers at London Bridge have faced severe overcrowding and congestion since the number of tracks into the station has been reduced as part of the Thameslink programme. It is not clear whether Network Rail has the capacity to

Passengers are entitled to question whether the lessons of 2007 have been forgotten

undertake all these projects simultaneously, while operating a safe and reliable railway.

Network Rail's programme of engineering works over Christmas and New Year was extensive, involving 11,000 staff working at 2,000 sites. It is possible that the size of the works programme limited the contingency options in the event of any delays. Network Rail reported that the demand for drivers to carry out the construction activity "exhausted the national supply of freight train drivers". As a result, there were no drivers available to replace those who had exceeded their maximum shift limit.

This slowed down the pace of already delayed work, leading to the closure of King's Cross. Once the decision to close the station was taken, the standard contingency plan for such an occurrence relied on pas-

sengers dispersing to other London stations in addition to Finsbury Park. This was not an option available over Christmas because works on the West Coast main line had closed Euston for the whole weekend.

When things do go wrong, passengers deserve accurate and timely information, and support to find alternative routes. This simply did not happen at Christmas: passengers tweeted photos of blank information screens at Paddington, where the delays went far beyond the original forecasts. ORR chief executive Richard Price reported widespread confusion and an absence of staff outside Finsbury Park.

The ORR has assured us that the impact on the passenger will be central to its review of events over Christmas – and it has asked Passenger Focus to collate the views of passengers caught up in the chaos.

This should go alongside making it easier for passengers to claim compensation for disrupted rail services. The ORR has found that three-quarters of passengers do not know their refund or compensation rights, a matter that should be urgently addressed by the train operating companies.

The failure to complete the engineering works on schedule, and the subsequent way passengers were treated, was unacceptable. For the period up to 2019 Network Rail will receive £38bn to operate, maintain and improve the rail network.

Passengers must have confidence that this record investment can be undertaken with only minimal disruption to their day-to-day journeys.



Louise Ellman MP is chair of the House of Commons Transport Select Committee and Labour MP for Liverpool Riverside.

Collective plan will harness counties' strengths

In the face of continuing cuts, **Tony Ciaburro** explains why three shire areas believe a collective approach will allow them to provide services more effectively and give them greater clout nationally



Tony Ciaburro: "Economic output on a par with large cities"

Following the Chancellor's spending settlement for local government in December, councils up and down the country are frantically trying to set balanced budgets, some in the face of warnings of a financial meltdown. Local government expenditure by 2019 could be £4.9bn lower than predicted in the March 2014 budget. Highways and transport will be in the front line, and there is a growing momentum to explore innovative local arrangements.

Against this background the county councils of Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire are working together to explore the potential of a combined authority approach, as part of a Tri-County Alliance. The ability to tackle challenges collectively rather than in isolation could bring opportunities to provide services more efficiently and effectively.

To put the financial pressures into perspective, my own authority, Northamptonshire County Council, has had to save £174m over the last four years and must find a further £145m over the next, including £66m in the 2015/16 financial year alone. We have almost exhausted the opportunities for further efficiency savings, cuts and disinvestments for transport functions. The concept of a combined authority appears to provide an attractive new dimension worthy of exploration.

Though there are a handful of combined authorities already in existence, they have tended to be in major metropolitan areas. There are none involving multiple county councils, operating across LEP boundaries. The three authorities will be breaking new ground and the benefits of this experience could be extended to other shire localities.

Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire (covering four LEP areas) have a population of almost two

million and over 80,000 private sector businesses, with an economic output worth around £50bn. This is on a par with Greater Manchester and would rival many large cities. The aim is to harness the area's economic potential to compete with the major conurbations more effectively than each locality operating individually.

The Government's recently published consultation on a proposal to use a legislative reform order to give local authorities greater flexibility in forming a combined authority is of great interest to the Tri-County Alliance. The proposed order, if enacted, would reduce the burdens and procedural conditions currently placed on local authorities trying to establish a combined

Our expectation is that powers and funding will be devolved to the local area in a way that allows a step-change in economic growth

authority and its governance. This would go some way towards meeting the desire of the three authorities for additional powers in the fields of transport, skills, economic development and planning, while keeping bureaucracy to a minimum. It would enable the authorities to set up robust governance and partnership arrangements with a minimum of central fuss.

Detailed proposals for the new alliance are under development with a comprehensive proposition to be fleshed out over the coming months. Central to the initial thinking is the need to create a coherent strategic plan which brings together for the first time a holistic perspective of our key strengths. There is significant potential for improved connectivity in

the new area, and for greater collaboration on issues such as employment, training opportunities, innovation and skills through an overarching plan that meshes with the strategic economic plans prepared by the LEPs. The new arrangements should also help use our collective resources more effectively, with the potential for joint bids to the Government and the EU on a scale that could put us among the big league of Europe.

Integrated transport policy, infrastructure priorities and programmes for service delivery would naturally cascade from the strategic plan. Jobs are at the heart of the vision. For the plan to be effective, a fresh dialogue with key players in the transport industry would be necessary.

In particular, the combined authority approach could strengthen the relationship between the Highways Agency and local highway authorities on an equal basis and on a scale that would be both strategic and meaningful to all parties.

We could see the agency's route-based approach integrated with those of the local authorities to develop a joint "network" approach to roads, rather than just strategic corridors as at present. A similar approach to bus and rail services and investment could also be adopted, with collective discussion the norm. The opportunity for true multi-modal strategies in shire counties could become a real possibility.

Our expectation is that powers and funding will be devolved to the local area in such a way that allows us to bring about a step change in economic growth.

The status quo for local highway authorities is unsustainable, and burying heads is not an option.

Tony Ciaburro is director of environment, development and transport at Northamptonshire County Council.

Fasten your seat belts for a turbulent year ahead

Politics and transport look to have more than the usual scope for conflict both in the run-up to the general election and afterwards. **Lizzie Wills** provides a guide to the minefield

The outcome of the 2015 election remains far too close to call, and it is highly unclear who will form the next government. An unprecedented range of potential results is possible in what is now a five or six party system; these include a small Conservative or Labour majority, minority, or Lib Dem coalitions; an alliance of left-leaning parties (drawing together Labour, the Lib Dems, Greens, and Plaid Cymru); a Labour government supported by the SNP through confidence and supply; a Conservative government supported by the DUP and or UKIP, and so on.

All these outcomes will have different implications for the UK's transport priorities, which businesses throughout the sector will need to understand in order to position themselves effectively with the new government of whatever colour.

There is significant noise around transport policy in the run-up to this year's general election. This is understandable, given people's day-to-day contact with the transport network. Transport is also a vital plank of the UK's recovery and key to international competitiveness; this has been used as the rationale for some of the largest investment decisions in recent years, including for HS2.

The narrative on transport policy over the last few months has been dominated by Labour as central to its "cost of living" theme, with the party arguing that rising train, bus and fuel prices, as well as cuts to concessionary fare schemes and local bus services, are putting family budgets under unprecedented pressure. Much of Labour's positioning, therefore, has focused on ensuring future affordability.

As always, rail is the most politicised element of transport policy. Labour continues to seek to capitalise on rising ticket prices and has laid out an ambitious pro-

gramme of reform to include fare caps, franchise overhauls and a green light for public sector companies that want to bid against private sector providers to run rail lines. This not only poses significant risks to the existing train operators, but the high costs of each franchise bid may mean the DfT budget has to be redirected from policy areas seen as less of a priority. Businesses reliant on specific funding streams will need to ensure that they are well positioned after the election to make a compelling case for their sector.

Rolling stock leasing companies, which have long escaped the political scrutiny afforded to train operators, may come under fire in 2015, particularly in the event of a Labour-led government.

For Labour and the Conservatives, increasing runway capacity in the south east remains a contentious issue

The Labour transport team has already indicated that it would tackle the monopoly market for rolling stock. Active engagement with decision-makers by the sector both before and after the election will be crucial to ward off direct threats to the sector.

Aviation is a similarly risky area of transport policy. The final recommendations of the Airports Commission, due this summer, and responses to the commission are likely to feature heavily in the first few months of the new parliamentary term.

The aviation industry believes that the UK will need to increase airport capacity significantly between now and 2030 to maintain its connectivity and hub status, which in practice means an additional runway at either Heathrow or Gatwick (the options now shortlisted).

Despite what looked like a softening of the Lib Dem leadership's position to allow expansion at Gatwick, party members voted to maintain their policy of "no net increase in runways in the UK as a whole" at the last party conference.

For Labour and the Conservatives, increasing the number of runways in the South East remains a contentious issue. Both parties feel hamstrung by their responsibilities to their west London constituents, many of whom remain opposed to any expansion at Heathrow. The outcome of the election, and the distribution of power in the next parliament, may have a significant bearing on the airport capacity debate – though it looks likely that there will be expansion of some kind whatever the colour of the next government, given the commercial realities.

Encouraging greener journeys, including persuading commuters to move away from car use towards buses, coaches and bicycles, has largely fallen off the priority list of central government since the departure of Norman Baker from the DfT, with local authorities assuming ever-greater responsibility for sustainable travel. In an era of increasingly tight local budgets, 2015 is likely to see increasingly fierce competition for limited local budgets (from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, for example), and a struggle for businesses in the sector to ensure that the benefits sustainable transport brings to individuals, the economy, and the environment are recognised and its funding protected.

With other potential flashpoints this year on quality contracts for regional bus services, HS2 phase two, and priorities for improving the UK's road network, transport and politics look set to collide this year as never before.

Lizzie Wills is an account director at public affairs specialist Westminster Advisers



Lizzie Wills: "Increasingly fierce competition for limited local budgets"

Rail modernisation hits the European buffers

The European Commission's attempt to introduce competition and efficiency is being stifled by Germany and France, to the long-term detriment of all concerned, says **Tony Berkeley**



Tony Berkeley: "Railways need fair and open competition"

The latest draft of the European Commission's Fourth Railway Package, from the Latvian presidency, makes depressing reading. It is a pale version of what the commission started with – a blueprint to revitalise Europe's railways, to introduce competition and efficiency, better customer choice and private investment.

But when Angela Merkel summoned the then commission president José Manuel Barroso to Berlin and told him to alter the package to allow the German structure, full of allegations of unfair subsidies and competition issues, to continue, he capitulated and introduced a second-best solution of a "Chinese wall" to prevent such abuses. Now France, losing passenger and freight traffic at an alarming rate because of poor service quality and high charges, is reintegrating track and train to further obstruct the commission, and is joining Germany in opposing any attempt to introduce competition and bring efficiency improvements into Europe's creaking railway system.

According to a recent article in *Les Echos*, there will soon be little of a rail network left in France, apart from regional services around major cities and the still loss-making TGV lines.

Both the German and French operators DB and SNCF are also suffering from competition from new long-distance coach services, whose staff do not get the benefits of SNCF drivers who retire at the age of 50 on a pension of their final salary. France's solution to Europe's rail problems is to try to get all rail workers across Europe to have the same benefits as its own featherbedded *cheminots*; this is indeed an odd way of beating the road or air competition.

Germany does not want competition for passenger services, and refused to allow competitors to sell tickets from DB booking offices or machines, and neither operator will con-

sider selling or leasing unused passenger trains to competitors.

Italy, urgently needing to finance its inefficient rail system, may float part of it on the stock exchange, but will this inefficient monopoly provide the low-risk dividends that investors will expect without falling foul of state aid or competition law?

Does all this matter? Is it important for Europe to have a thriving rail network capable of providing faster, more reliable and cheaper services to customers?

The commission thought it did; that is why it developed the Fourth Railway Package to try to break the monopolies of the incumbents as well as introducing common standards and interoperability. Germany and France are

Nobody gains, neither the passenger, the freight customer nor the featherbedded workers who will lose their jobs

killing it, by requiring the dilution of legislation on fair competition, so that their monopolies can be preserved in perpetuity. No sensible investor will risk putting money into services in competition with these and other incumbents who obstruct, obfuscate, deny fair access to the network.

Why don't other member states object? One might expect the UK to lead this, but the UK government's uncertain approach to Europe does not add to its credibility. How many other member states are free from German pressure on their budgets, or French pressure on social issues?

So I fear that the Latvian EU presidency will be browbeaten into accepting whatever Germany and France dictate, and the next presidency, Luxembourg, is rather unlikely to lead the campaign for liberalisation.

Will the European Parliament save the package? It is new, and there are some strong supporters of liberalisation there. However, it can be much easier to accept the story that all is fine with the railway. MEPs should remember that monopolies are self-perpetuating, provide bad service and high costs to their governments, and lose more and more money, but have unlimited resources for fighting off or buying up any competition while at the same time having their begging bowl out for more and more state subsidy.

Nobody gains from this, neither the passenger or freight customer; not the featherbedded workers who, in the end, will lose their jobs, as more efficient road or air transport takes the business. It does not have to be like this but, at the present rate of progress, it will be, to the serious detriment of Europe's businesses and quality of life.

If you don't want such monopolies, then you need fair and open competition, separation of infrastructure from train operation, strong and comprehensive regulation, and the will to make it all work fairly: that is the only way to encourage the investment that Europe's railway so desperately needs.

With an increasing number of press articles predicting the slow death of many railways, is the Fourth Railway Package the last train to a competitive market, now departing almost empty of passengers, freight – and hope for the future?

Roll on the Fifth Railway Package, supported by a strong political will to bring the single market, competition and investment to this rail sector which, with few exceptions, instead of looking forward, clings to a starry-eyed version of history.

Lord Berkeley is chairman of the Rail Freight Group and a board member of the European Rail Freight Association.

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A new chapter opens...

It's 15 years since the Department of Transport organised the last major bus summit, with the aim of encouraging operators, local authorities and the bus industry to work together to stimulate patronage growth.

Much has changed since then and in two weeks, on 12 February, *Transport Times* organises the 2015 Bus Summit. Supported by the Department for Transport, it aims to raise awareness of the role the bus can play in stimulating the economy, getting people to work, reducing emissions, providing access for the elderly and tackling inequality.

There's a broad measure of agreement in the industry that collaboration between bus operators and local authorities is better for passengers and operators alike – but widely differing opinions on how to go about it. There is new evidence, much of it arising from research initiated by Greener Journeys, of the importance of buses to the economy. And there have been considerable advances in technology, from smart ticketing, smartphones and real-time information to hybrid and other low emission powertrains.

The summit will be opened with a keynote address by Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin and rounded off by transport minister Baroness Kramer. It is organised around four themes: The vision for buses; Why buses matter – stimulating the local economy; How can technology create efficiency in the bus market; and How should buses be delivered: quality partnerships, quality contracts or franchising?

Speakers will include senior executives from all the big five bus operators, the passenger transport executives, local enterprise partnerships, and technology innovators.

On the following pages we aim to bring you a flavour of the issues the summit will be exploring. With the event emphasising a panel approach to encourage discussion, it's a safe bet that a wide range of views will be aired, and *Transport Times* will be reporting in more detail next month.

“There need to be fundamental changes in the way transport authorities work with operators”

Reliable, frequent, direct, safe services with simple to understand, good value fare structures and clear, easy to find information: this is what people in the Liverpool city region want from their buses, whether they currently use them or not. These are views repeated across the country.

These demands aren't surprising: they're common sense. The fact that bus use is in general decline outside London, while London itself has seen a 60% increase in the 10 years up to 2013, suggests that bus users, or potential bus users, aren't necessarily getting what they want outside the capital.

Although there is an 89% passenger satisfaction rate in the Liverpool city region (Passenger Focus, autumn 2013), which may in part reflect the welcome investment in our local bus fleet, this doesn't tell the whole story. People are only surveyed about their last journey. The survey doesn't take into account the views of those who no longer have a bus service; people who don't use the bus aren't asked why they don't.



TfL's Year of the Bus celebrated the past but looked to the future of the network

Operators and authorities must aim high

The vision: **David Brown** on making the bus a positive choice

Meanwhile, only 62% of passengers were satisfied that their journey was value for money, and almost half those dissatisfied with the value put it down to the distance travelled.

Through greater local control over its bus network, London is already meeting most of the passenger's demands – offering comprehensive services day and night, better concessions for a range of groups including job seekers, a maximum fare of £1.45 for any one-way bus journey, and simple, integrated smartcard ticketing on all transport modes.

Local transport bodies, with the operators, are making steps towards better transport provision. Examples include the establishment of quality bus networks and, in Merseyside, the launch of such initiatives as MyTicket – a £2 all-day bus ticket for those aged 15 and under, in a bid to tackle the affordability issue. The

Merseytravel journey planner app, with real-time information, has been downloaded more than 31,000 times.

Meanwhile, smart ticketing is out there, but is in its infancy, as transport bodies deal with the challenges of getting consensus from operators on a way forward, and the complexities of integrating technology in different transport businesses with different systems, processes and commercial set-ups.

Ultimately, to get the best offer for the passenger there need to be fundamental changes in the way transport authorities work with operators. This could be either through a relationship shaped by devolution, over which there is currently much discussion and debate, or a formalised partnership model with governance which suits each area's priorities.

Separately from, though mindful of, potential changes to the regulatory environment, Merseytravel is devel-

oping a new bus strategy that aims to establish a 15-year vision for improvements to local bus services. It's not about buses for buses' sake, but it recognises the vital role the network plays in supporting the local economy, and will lead to a practical plan of action for how we can get better at connecting people to services and opportunities.

The bus operators will be expected to play a central role in this, working with us to think more creatively.

According to Passenger Focus, 46% of people surveyed in Merseyside had no option but to travel by bus as they didn't have a car. Improving services and the whole passenger experience doesn't just benefit existing bus users but can attract new ones.

Through transport authorities and operators working together to be more ambitious about bus we can make it a positive choice, rather than just being for those who have no choice.



David Brown is chief executive and director general of Merseytravel

Investment is needed to meet demand

The vision: **Leon Daniels** on the challenges of the capital's growing population

Last year, in the Year of the Bus, Transport for London celebrated the network's key role in London's economic and social development. As well as looking back at our history, we talked about London's 21st-century bus service: a network for everyone, with extensive, high-frequency, reliable, convenient and accessible services.

Buses are not just a symbol of the city, they are its most extensive form of public transport. More than 2.4 billion bus journeys are made each year, meaning 50% of all bus journeys made in England take place in London.

Buses open up access to every corner of the city, supporting London's role as the engine-room of the UK economy. Because the network is the only public transport service operating throughout the city, bus users reflect London's diversity and the network's position as a system for everyone.

Buses are getting greener with over 800 diesel-electric hybrids running in the capital, a figure set to rise to 1,700 by next year. Our arrivals boards at more than 2,500 bus stops, and numerous apps powered by our data, let passengers know when their next bus is due. And audio-visual technology on all our 8,600 buses helps people navigate on their journeys around London.

TfL's commitment to Londoners is that we will continue to inno-



vate and improve the network to maintain a world-class service.

In 2007, we published a document about our achievements so far. In its foreword, the then mayor, Ken Livingstone, said London was expected to grow to 8.3 million people by 2025. We surpassed that in 2011 and, this year, London's population will be the biggest it has ever been – exceeding its previous peak in 1939. It will reach nine million by the end of the decade and 10 million by 2030.

This growth is faster than any other European city, and investment is absolutely essential if we are to keep pace. Our bus network simply cannot be allowed to stand still because of the damage it would do to jobs and growth.

But there are major challenges here. Reductions in TfL's grant

funding is placing enormous pressure on our ability to meet demand, particularly in outer London.

This year there will be a general election and another government spending review, in a continuing period of austerity. Unlike cities such as Paris, TfL does not have long-term certainty over all its funding or the city's ability to retain the proceeds of economic success to fund yet more growth. To maximise growth and jobs, we need steady and sustained funding.

Without investment to expand services, buses will start leaving people behind in peak hours when they are trying to get to work, damaging the London economy and disproportionately affecting lower-paid Londoners.

Investment in bus services does not grab the headlines. But the network's role as a generator of economic and social value is equal to other public transport services. Moreover, if capital investment and fare concessions – for children, those seeking employment and others – are taken out of the equation, bus revenue in London covers operational costs.

With the capital's population booming, we must maintain and grow this vital public service to the benefit of the entire United Kingdom.

To maximise growth and jobs, we need steady and sustained funding

Leon Daniels is Transport for London managing director of surface transport

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Government should spell out support

Why buses matter: **Claire Haigh** on the need for a National Statement

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What is currently missing is both recognition of the role buses play and guidance on how to capitalise on this



The proposed statement would encourage investment in local bus infrastructure

Cities are coming into ever sharper focus as potential engines for growth. There is also recognition of the vital role good transport links will need to play if we are to see the economic success of London replicated in other cities across the UK.

A key conclusion of the recent One North report was the need to create greater and more effective commuting potential for cities outside London, and that more effective integration of these cities needs to be a priority. Recent announcements on HS3, the intention to develop a “northern powerhouse” and the creation of Transport for the North demonstrate that there is real momentum behind this idea.

But if the UK is to rebalance the economy there needs to be as much focus on better connectivity within as well as between city regions. It can be argued that the potential agglomeration benefits are greatest within conurbations themselves.

Congestion is a serious constraint to growth, especially in urban centres. Not only does it increase travel time and result in lost productivity, it also limits the potential for agglomeration impacts that arise from increased proximity and connectivity. And all the forecasts suggest that this trend is set to get worse. A recent report by the Centre for Economics and Business Research estimates

that British business will lose £300bn to gridlock over the next 16 years.

Buses are central to reducing traffic congestion and require lower levels of capital investment than other solutions. KPMG has estimated that targeted investment in local bus infrastructure and selective priority measures will typically generate £3.32 of net economic benefit for each £1 spent.

The increased focus on stimulating local economies means buses ought to feature prominently in LEPs’ Strategic Economic Plans. A vast body of evidence has been gathered in last few years demonstrating the vital role that buses play in supporting employment, retailing and businesses. For example the bus is the main mode of access to city centres and responsible for 29% of city centre expenditure.

However, recognition of the contribution the bus makes to local economies is very low. And there is a real risk that essential bus infrastructure spending could suffer through the devolution of capital spending to the Local Growth Fund. There is already evidence of this in the first round of Growth Deals. In 2013 bus projects made up a much smaller proportion of the total than in the final group of directly government-funded schemes approved in late 2011.

What is currently missing is both recognition of the role buses play

and guidance on how to capitalise on this. That is why Greener Journeys is calling for a National Statement on local bus infrastructure. This should have three specific objectives: to encourage decision-makers to invest in local bus infrastructure; to provide evidence on best practice; and to promote greater partnership working between LEPs, local authorities, bus operators and bus user groups.

As a minimum, such a statement should provide guidance on best practice, with a commitment to provide professional support to those wishing to develop public transport networks. We would also envisage that financial support would be available for innovative schemes for the design, provision and management of bus-related infrastructure.

We also propose that the statement should encourage local decision-makers to commit themselves to long-term programmes of investment in bus infrastructure as part of Local Transport Plans. Growth Deal awards should be linked to the quality of the Strategic Economic Plans, and these should have a supporting local transport plan. The way in which the London mayor’s economic development strategy is linked to the mayor’s transport strategy provides a useful model. Such a change would ensure that the criteria for assessing Strategic Economic Plans and the case for funding were aligned to the objectives set out by the secretary of state in the national statement.

We believe that the DfT should reconsider its guidance on the development and use of Local Transport Plans under devolved decision-making. The current status and application of the guidance is unclear and it could be a useful mechanism to ensure that local decision-makers consider transport solutions as a whole.

Transport is too important to meeting economic, social and environmental objectives to be wrapped up as part of a broader Strategic Economic Plan. Our proposal would ensure that objectives and strategies for improving local bus services would be determined locally, while being aligned to Strategic Economic Plans and guided by national policy.

If the intention is to create more engines for growth across the UK, the role of the bus in supporting local economies must be maximised. A National Statement on local bus infrastructure would ensure that local decision makers are empowered to seize this opportunity.



Claire Haigh is chief executive of Greener Journeys, a campaign dedicated to encouraging people to make more sustainable travel choices www.greenerjourneys.com

The decision by the North East Combined Authority to pursue quality contracts for bus services in Tyne and Wear clearly demonstrates the feelings of many in north-east England towards deregulation: it isn't working for them. With other local authorities, including Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Merseyside all considering some form of franchising model too, one might conclude that deregulation has failed.

However, there are some deregulation success stories around the UK which show there can be significant benefits, particularly if all the parties involved work together. What the case of Tyne and Wear demonstrates is that there is dissatisfaction among local politicians, lobby groups and passengers with the way some bus companies are providing services – or, at least, a perception that it could be done better.

One of the benefits that deregulation has brought, almost universally, is cost control; operators have a commercial motivation to keep costs as low as possible. Looking overseas to Ireland, both north and south of the border, and to France, where services are regulated, the cost of providing bus transport is much higher.

Deregulation gives bus companies a direct relationship with passengers. Though pro-regulation organisations often cite better local accountability as a benefit, regulation runs the risk of distancing the service provider from the service user: local politicians and lobby groups, rather than passengers, dictate the agenda.

Having said that, the relationship between bus company and passenger could be stronger in many cases. When deregulation was planned, the vision was of many competing companies, each striving to please the end user with the best value and service. This hasn't turned out to be the case, with the big five operators – Arriva, FirstGroup, Go-Ahead, National Express and Stagecoach – dominating the market, with very little competition on most routes.

The result is that some companies have not focused on passenger needs, leading to dissatisfaction with the services they provide. In areas such as around Cambridge and in north-east Scotland, service providers did listen to their customers and chose to take a longer-term view to reaping the returns on its investments.

Bus companies must be prepared to work in partnership with local authorities, and local authorities must be prepared to come to the table with an open mind. Each side must rec-

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“Luton Borough Council worked with three local bus companies to make the busway project a success”



Deregulation: could do better

How buses should be delivered: Systra director **Neill Birch** gives his verdict, as the 30th anniversary of deregulation approaches

Main picture and below: operators on the Luton-Dunstable busway introduced improved buses and a multi-operator ticket system. (right) in Cambridge operators listened to customers and took a long-term view



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ognise the common ground and the differences. The public sector has to learn that profit is not a dirty word; the private sector has to be prepared to invest without immediate paybacks.

One recent example of where the public and private sector came together is the Luton-Dunstable Busway, which opened in September 2013. The central element of a project designed to reduce congestion and improve journey times between the towns of Houghton Regis, Dunstable and Luton, an eight-mile route is exclusively reserved for bus use.

Luton Borough Council, which provided the busway infrastructure with funding from the DfT, had to work with three local bus companies in order to make the investment a success. The operators committed themselves to investments, such as improved buses and a multi-operator ticket system, understanding that passenger numbers would rise gradually once the busway opened.

The benefits of both regulated and

deregulated bus services are being recognised in emerging markets. Countries such as Abu Dhabi, India and Kazakhstan are seeking to combine the efficiency that market competition can bring with an integrated transport system – a “semi-regulated” model.

In Almaty, Kazakhstan’s largest city and former capital, a semi-regulated model developed after independence from the Soviet Union, with the city council licensing all local bus services but approving all applications brought before it. The result was a disintegration of the bus network, with multiple overlapping bus routes abstracting from each other and the publicly-owned trolleybus and metro systems. In a manner that will be familiar to UK observers, another result was a severe reduction in evening and Sunday services. The city now recognises the model is problematic, but faces a challenge in strengthening regulation over the 20-plus competing bus operators.

Clearly there is a huge difference for a country starting with a blank sheet compared with one with a

deregulated system already in place. However, Systra’s work on feasibility studies and transport planning for these markets begins with the same overriding goal as those in developed markets: maximising the use of public transport, which requires making it as straightforward as possible to use.

Bus companies here have started to get that message. The announcement in November by the big five in which they promised to launch multi-operator smart ticketing in city regions during 2015 is welcome, although the operators could have responded more quickly to the calls to exploit this technology.

Unlike the water or power sectors, which have powerful regulators watching over a small number of major providers, the bus sector is lightly regulated. This means that where operators and councils are unable to identify common ground, the only recourse authorities have is to move to the quality contract model.

Bus companies in other regions must listen to passengers – and their representatives – if they don’t want to see the same thing happening.

The vision was of many competing companies, each striving to provide the best value and service



Neill Birch is a director at Systra who has worked in the transport sector for 30 years. He has led Systra’s work in the bus sector for the past nine years.



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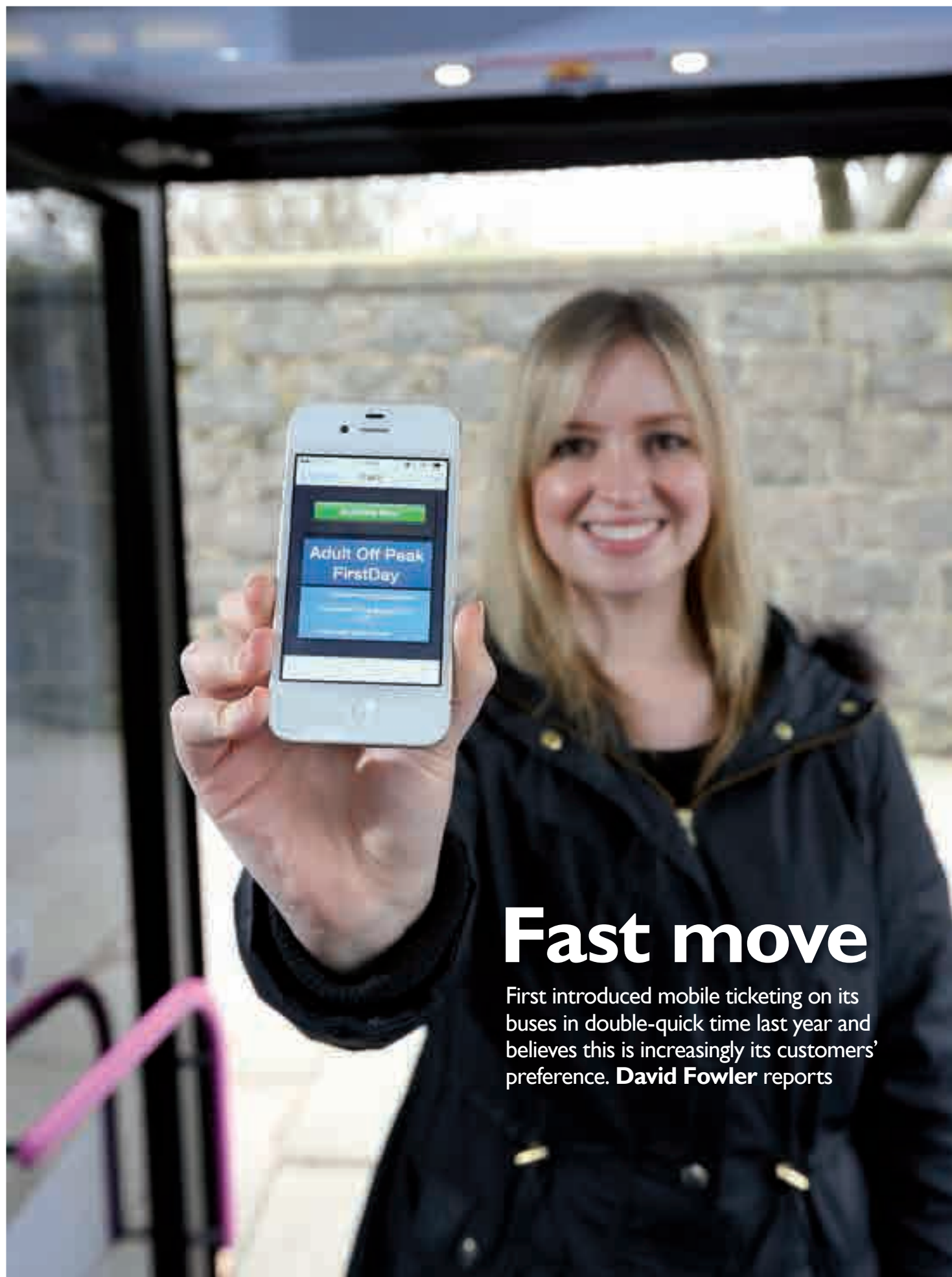
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Fast move

First introduced mobile ticketing on its buses in double-quick time last year and believes this is increasingly its customers' preference. **David Fowler** reports



First Bus hit a milestone in its ticketing strategy towards the end of last year. Having begun the introduction of mobile ticketing last March, by November tickets could be bought and displayed by mobile phone in all its UK operational areas. Moreover it became the first nationwide public transport operator to offer the mobile payment app Barclays Pingit as an option. Pingit is expected to increase the uptake of mobile ticketing because it offers easier payment.

By focusing on mobile payment rather than smartcards, First appears to have gone in a different direction from many of its rivals. According to James Timperley, First Bus director of smart ticketing, there were a number of reasons behind this decision.

A couple of years ago smartcards would have been the obvious decision, he says. "But given how they use their phones now, for us it appears that's what customers really want." He points out that 50% of traffic to the FirstBus website is now by people using mobile devices. "People are increasingly buying things by phone – we think it's what people want."

Another factor in favour of mobile ticketing was the speed with which it could be brought to market and the fact that it required considerably less investment in infrastructure. The mobile phone itself acts as the ticket machine and ticket. "Everything is in the phone that's already in the customer's hand," he explains. Not only is setting up the system more straightforward, it is easy to make changes, such as to the fare structure, for example. "You just make the change in the back office once," says Mr Timperley.

Mobile ticketing also changes the relationship between the company and

the customer. A passenger buying a paper ticket and paying cash is anonymous. The phone allows interaction and allows two-way communication, for example to alert passengers about changes to services or disruption. "You can provide useful information if you know the customer's travel habits," says Mr Timperley. Moreover social media are becoming increasingly important means to communicate. "These are all valid means of communication," he says. "Someone tweeting about a problem is just as important as a phone call to a call centre, with the ability to give immediate feedback."

Smartcards

Does this mean First is skipping a stage of ticket system evolution and bypassing smartcards? That's not the case, he says. "Across the industry 25% of travel is concessionary passengers using smartcards," he points out. "And there are a number of ticket schemes we interface with around the country that use smartcards." First's buses have been equipped with ticket machines capable of reading ITSO smartcards for some time. "Smartcards are important," he says. "But we do see phones as an exciting area to move forward with."

First's technology partner for the project was mobile technology and ticketing specialist Corethree, which supplies its Core Engine technology platform. This is an integrated system which connects the clients' data, content and services to users' mobile devices, and includes built-in back office management and reporting functions.

As mentioned, an attractive feature was the speed with which the system ticketing could be introduced. "Once we'd established the agreement with

Corethree and the payment providers, providing an app for each region was very quick. The longest part of the process was communicating and training the drivers about the tickets, and communicating and marketing the message to the public."

There's an app for that

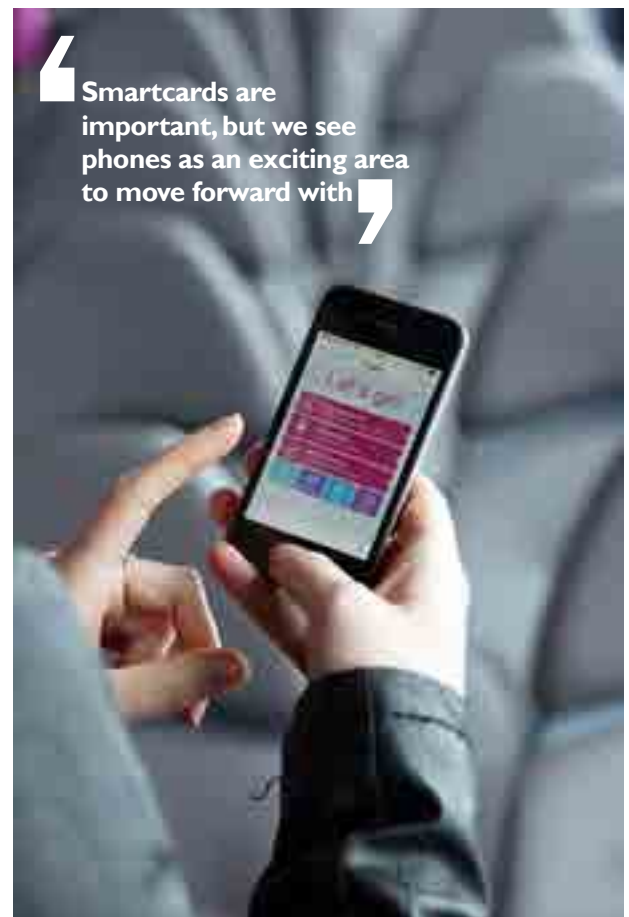
To use m-ticketing, passengers download the First Bus Mobile Tickets app, available for iOS and Android via the App Store and Google Play. They go through an initial registration process before selecting the ticket and paying for it, whereupon the ticket is downloaded to the user's phone. Ticket types vary from region to region, but in general all-day tickets, weekly and monthly season tickets and carnets of single tickets to use as required are available, together with student options. A ticket does not have to be activated until the customer is ready to use it, and its period of availability only starts to count down from activation, not from the time of purchase.

The ticket is displayed on the phone screen, which the passenger shows to the bus driver when they start a journey.

Student tickets are slightly more complicated than standard ones. A validation and ID process had to be added to make sure anyone buying

Passengers show their m-tickets like a flash pass to the driver

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Smartcards are important, but we see phones as an exciting area to move forward with

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a student ticket was entitled to the reduced rates. So a photo ID has to be uploaded as part of the registration process and is incorporated into the ticket. To validate the application, users have to supply their email address at the academic institution, and First contacts the institution to confirm that the applicant is a genuine student. A 28-day grace period is allowed for the process to be completed.

At present, the m-ticket effectively acts as a flash pass which has to be shown to the driver. There is no validation on the bus or recording of journeys. A priority for development will be to make it possible to gather data about journey patterns as each individual card is used. "We can observe some journey patterns from aggregate numbers recorded by the drivers, but the real granular detail isn't there yet," says Mr Timperley.

Pingit

Barclays Pingit adds another way to pay for tickets. Pingit is a free app, available to anyone, not just Barclays customers, and allows direct payment from bank account to bank account. In a similar way to PayPal it saves users having to enter bank account details for every organisation to which they want to make a payment. Instead, once the user's bank details have been registered

Sales of m-tickets are approaching 40,000 monthly

Following registration, the mobile app allows tickets to be bought and downloaded to the user's phone



with Pingit, the user just has to enter validation details to make a payment to any trader that accepts Pingit.

Uptake of m-tickets has been good with the number being sold heading for 40,000 monthly, and running above projections.

For the future, First is working on a number of developments. In response to customer feedback a number of improvements are being made to the user interface. When the customer first registers they are asked to select their location. With mobile ticketing operational in all First's areas, there is a choice of 32, so the app will be amended to prompt or suggest the area based on the device's awareness of where it is. Additional payment options are being looked at. And there are plans to integrate the ticket app with First's existing travel information app, which is currently separate.

i-beacons

Trials of new technology are likely to include near-field communication phones and i-beacons.

I-beacons are dumb, low-energy Bluetooth devices which communicate with an app when a mobile device is detected nearby, if the user has activated this option within the

app. So, for example, at a bus station an i-beacon could automatically generate a message to say when and where the user's next bus departs.

The real benefit, says Mr Timperley, is the ability to push information to the user, which would be useful to inform travellers of delays and disruption, or promotions.

First is undertaking a trial of i-beacons on services in Norwich, working with Exterior Media and Proxima. This is not for bus information – instead, users of a location-based app, Loka, can receive promotional messages from 20 retailers in the city.

On an industry-wide basis, perhaps the most significant announcement regarding ticketing last year came jointly from the main public transport operators on multi-operator ticketing. The announcement said that the operators had made great progress in this area and expected to start introducing interoperable ticketing in one or more city regions during 2015.

This was somewhat unexpected, given that it had mainly been passenger transport executives in the larger cities rather than operators which had been pushing for this, with limited success in many cases.

"It's a piece of work which has been going on with the DfT," says Mr Timperley. "It may have appeared to come out of the blue – we haven't necessarily been good as an industry in communicating this. There is actually a lot of activity in that area."

He points out that multi-operator ticketing is a reality in some areas already, such as Oxford; in West Yorkshire Arriva, Stagecoach and First are among participants in the MCard scheme, which is valid on all buses in the area. "We have a pretty good relationship with PTEs and local authorities and we want to get out the message that we are committed to interoperable ticketing as an industry."

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Michèle Dix



Jon Lamonte



Owen Griffith



Kevin O'Connor

Michèle Dix appointed managing director of Crossrail 2 scheme

- Jon Lamonte to chair PTEG
- Jonathan Crone and Colin Morris join HS2 Ltd
- David Horne named MD of Virgin Trains East Coast
- Parkeon Transportation appoints Owen Griffith as MD
- Kevin O'Connor to head Arriva UK bus division

Dr Michèle Dix, Transport for London's managing director of planning, is to move in February to the new post of managing director of Crossrail 2, to make the case for the next new rail scheme for London's growth.

Dr Dix, who started her career at the Greater London Council after completing a PhD in transport and land use planning, was

awarded a CBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list for services to transport in London.

She has been the managing director of planning at TfL since 2007, initially taking on the role as a job share. Prior to that she was co-director of congestion charging, introducing, running and expanding the scheme as well as developing the Low Emission Zone.

Richard de Cani succeeds her as managing director of planning from 5 February. He has over 20 years' experience in town planning and transport planning, including over 10 at TfL.

Transport for Greater Manchester chief executive **Dr Jon Lamonte** has become the new chair of the Passenger Transport Executive Group. PTEG represents the strategic transport bodies serving the six largest city-regions outside London and is a wider professional network which includes London, Strathclyde, Bristol and the west of England, and Nottingham.

Dr Lamonte said: "I am delighted to have this opportunity to work with my colleagues from across the city regions, to realise some of the exciting opportunities that lie ahead for us in this new era of devolution to the city regions."

David Horne has been appointed managing director of Virgin Trains East Coast. He will play a leading role in the transition arrangements for the new InterCity East Coast franchise, which is to be operated by Stagecoach and Virgin, and

will take up the MD role when the franchise starts in March.

He is currently managing director of Stagecoach's East Midlands Trains.

HS2 Ltd has appointed **Jonathan Crone** and **Colin Morris** to its programme and strategy directorate, with two years to go before construction is due to start. Mr Crone will join as director of the programme management office, and Mr Morris will become programme delivery strategy director. Both will report directly to HS2 director of programme and strategy Alistair Kirk.

Owen Griffith has been appointed managing director of Parkeon Transportation, specialist in the design and implementation of integrated ticketing and associated technologies for bus, rail, metro and ferry networks. He will join the Parkeon Group executive board and lead the company's strategic development across transport-related sectors, with responsibility for multi-modal mass transit projects around the world. Mr Griffith will continue in his current role as managing director of Poole-based Parkeon Transit.

Arriva has appointed **Kevin O'Connor** as managing director of its UK Bus division. Mr O'Connor joins the firm in March from G4S, where he held a variety of senior leadership roles between 2001 and 2015. He started his career in the retail sector with Waitrose.

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