

# **Railfuture response to the House of Lords Built Environment Committee inquiry into public transport in towns and cities March 2022**

## **Introduction**

Railfuture is Britain's leading, longest-established, national independent voluntary organisation campaigning for a bigger and better railway network for passenger and freight users. This response draws together the views of Railfuture branches, the Railfuture Passenger Group and affiliated Rail User Groups, as authorised by Railfuture's national Board of Directors.

## **Summary**

We are grateful for the opportunity to respond. Our key points are:

1. There is considerable variability in the degree to which pre-covid commuting has, and might, return; for some reasons (eg education, manual work) there is largely a return back to normal but for others (eg many knowledge workers) the situation is still evolving, and such workers have much more optionality as to their frequency and timing of commuting – the quality of service on offer (frequency, capacity, reliability and fares et al) will have a significant impact on the volume of some of these demands, in a way it already does for other demand reasons such as leisure.
2. The loss of a significant portion of the pre-Covid commuter market in some areas (including London) is a significant challenge, but also an opportunity. The traditional office commute is no longer the primary driver it has been. Instead opportunities such as consistent all day services, new approaches to fares and a stronger focus on great customer service can come to the fore.
3. Current public transport does not always meet customer needs – eg early finishes of bus services, complicated fares.
4. Light Rail has shown itself to be considerably more appealing to car users than buses – eg it has proven ability to encourage car drivers to switch modes in a way that buses do not.
5. We see that Smart Ticketing, whether by use of a Phone with Near Field Communications, a dedicated Smart Card or a Bank Card to be an essential feature. However, it must not be the only option.
6. An essential characteristic of much innovation has to be that it seeks opportunity, rather than focuses excessively on threats. Both Very Light Rail and Tram Trains are important options.
7. Within Innovation, it is also important to remember that better use of existing practices and techniques is essential.
8. Fare setting approaches need a revisit, including a detailed reassessment of the use of “peak” and “off-peak”.
9. Public Transport (and active transport) is not being assessed for their wider benefits. We mention a review of 170 studies that find evidence that people are less likely to be obese or have diabetes if they live in cities where walking and cycling is safe and convenient (and thus access to public transport is also easy).
10. We comment on the debate on the possible demise of the London Travelcard, noting that an approach of removing certainty and adding complexity is a classic example of why public transport gets used less.

**1. What are the current and anticipated levels of public transport demand and capacity in towns and cities in England? What influences public transport travel patterns? How does the choice of public transport vary across different demographic groups?**

We break our comments down under “Demand”, “Supply” & “Context”.

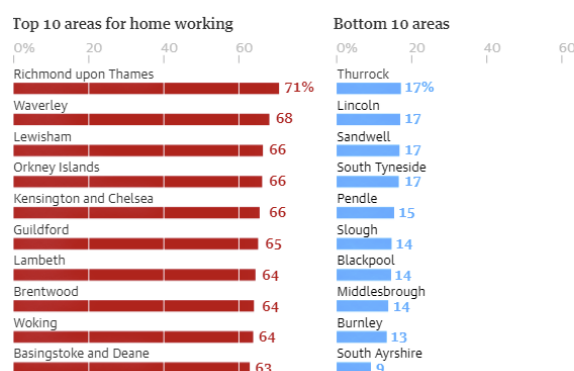
**Demand**

We do not believe the post pandemic demand is yet clear for many drivers of demand. Take, for instance, commuting:

1. Commuting for some reasons – eg mandatory attenders (eg of the workplace: factories, much of health and bio-sciences) is, we believe, close to the medium term outcome. It is essential to recognise that this, as a portion of total commuting, varies very significantly. For instance:

- SENRUG<sup>1</sup>, a Railfuture affiliated Rail User Group in the North East comment “The Cramlington and Morpeth line doesn’t normally top the league tables, but I was pleased to hear this evening, at our regular liaison call with Northern, that their North East region is experiencing the highest percentage fares revenue compared to pre-Covid, with the Newcastle – Morpeth route achieving the very highest, at 88%.” They commented to the author of this submission that this is being driven by a high portion of mandatory workplace attenders. The starkness of some of these splits is illustrated by ONS analysis; the Guardian usefully summarised it<sup>2</sup>.

**There are large differences between the top and bottom areas for home working**



- Cambridge, with its extensive Bio-Sciences activity has a higher portion of mandatory attenders – and also belies the generalisation that such attendance neither applies to knowledge workers nor to the more affluent.
2. Commuting for “knowledge workers”. With some exceptions (eg as above), many such workers have now adopted a hybrid model, but we believe that this is still significantly evolving and has yet to settle down. Members and affiliated Rail User Groups, commented:
- “I can’t help but feel that travel on Mondays & Fridays will increase in relative terms, as employers save money through having smaller offices and effectively ‘force’ staff to spread attendance throughout all business days”.
  - “As Head of a team of Project Directors running highly complex £10m plus projects for external customers, I spent a lot of time thinking about how do I persuade a team member to help a colleague out, given that they are only bonussed on completing their own projects successfully. I needed to get to a position where the guys and girls liked each other and would help each other, even without me knowing it (ie resolve a problem before I found out). That comes from social contact. Conversely, my young nephew who just swopped his job in the city, having never seen any of his colleagues in the last 2 years other than on Teams, told me: "I felt no loyalty to the company whatsoever. I didn't know them. I had no sense or concern I might be letting people down". Once companies start to realise they are losing these intangible benefits

<sup>1</sup> The South East Northumberland Rail User Group; <https://www.senrug.co.uk/blog/index.php/2022/01/18/morpeth-line-ahead/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/17/home-working-doubled-during-uk-covid-pandemic-last-year-mostly-in-london>

of their staff feeling "one of the team", enthusiasm for the physical cost savings from work from home might start to wane".

- "Commuting seems to peak around 'work together Wednesdays', as loosely evidenced by station car park occupancy at Market Harborough, for example".
  - "Where reduced service levels are leading to reports of over-crowding and long delays in the event of cancellations, people who have the choice, but might like to go in, are hesitating to do so. [There is a] big difference between 2tph and 4tph".
3. Commuting for education. Again, this is a noticeable market, which has probably substantially settled down. Critically, this market is very time specific – many pupils need to arrive at school simultaneously; a member commented:
- "Cambridgeshire County Council and the TOCs operate a 50% reduction on season tickets obtained through the schools / colleges. Nearly all those several thousand students who do not live in Cambridge City travel in by train as a result of the good value season ticket, a good train service and the fact nearly all the schools and colleges are within 10 minutes' walk of the station. The TOCs nurse this traffic carefully. The large private school at Ely, "Kings Ely", also uses the railway and good frequent fast services to extend its catchment over a wide area. Hundreds travel each day to and from Cambridge."
4. Wider societal impacts are still working through "the system". A member comments "If you spend 20 hours on a train on weekdays the last thing you want is to go on a train at the weekends. But if you travel less for work, then weekend leisure train travel with the family becomes attractive. Likewise, if you travel to work less often then you can relocate further away for a better quality of life, making fewer but longer train trips".

More generally, members' comment:

- "Travel patterns tend to be influenced by the total time of the journey (ie door to door) and this in turn by frequency of the service available, and quality of connections (ease of transfer, and timings). Promote and plan around generalised journey times, rather than single-mode journey times (ie door-to-door, rather than station to station). Not having to worry about timetables helps to encourage public transport use. 'Just turn up and get on the next one.'"
- "Women and many older people travelling alone are easily put off public transport by fear about safety, especially after dark. [It] May be exaggerated by the tabloid press, but it is an issue." (London TravelWatch recently reported in this area as well<sup>3</sup>).
- "Flat public transport fares across large urban areas provide simplicity and predictability, but can lead to situations where short journeys have a high unit cost. If a customer makes a cost comparison with the private car for the short journeys they commonly make, and find it unfavourable, they are less likely to consider public transport for longer less frequently made journeys, because they have fallen out of the habit of public transport usage - even if public transport is price competitive for the longer journey".

## Supply

A member commented "It's about making public transport 'desirable' – the option people choose"; another observed "They will not return if there is no viable rail product". We fully concur, and for public transport to succeed, key elements include:

1. Reliability and Speed. Services need to be firstly reliable, and secondly, sufficiently fast (measured by generalised journey time).
  - "Sufficiently fast" often needs to be faster than the car at peak times but could be close to car journey times off peak. Particularly in the urban context, congestion can introduce a

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/personal-security/>

great deal of uncertainty to car journey times, uncertainty that public transport needs to avoid. Regardless of the public transport mode, this implies greater degree of separation from general traffic than is currently the norm in UK urban areas. A project or programme of works that seeks to de-congest general traffic flows will damage the relative attractiveness of good (i.e. largely segregated from general traffic) public transport, so unwanted public transport outcomes can occur if a road project aims to speed up public transport via traffic de-congestion, if it either intentionally or unintentionally also de-congests general traffic.

- “Reliability” can also be challenging with differing perceptions from the travelling public and the industry; measures need to be carefully selected and used and be set in terms of passenger impact – a service 10 minutes late that causes many to miss a connection has a greater impact than one with few passengers.
2. We commented recently on Hertfordshire County Council’s HERT (Hertfordshire Essex Rapid Transit)<sup>4</sup>. We mention this observation in particular: “We believe there is strong element of HERT either being ambitious & effective in operation, or not proceeding at all (other than local initiatives for specific short distance flows). Persuading travellers not to use their cars can offer significant advantages; the return on more money invested credibly can be a lot more than for less money on a less appealing product, as only the bigger, more ambitious product can create something of sufficient appeal to cause the wanted modal shift and the needed passenger numbers”.
  3. Hours of operation. Public Transport often has limited hours of operation. That it is not running at the end of an evening out, or suitable for commuters who work other than traditional office hours (or even are returning at 7pm) is a significant barrier. A member commented “Except for the first 7 years after I left school (when I worked in insurance) I’ve never worked 9-5 M-F and even when I was in the office job I had a horticulture sideline at evenings and weekends. Obviously after a career in agriculture and horticulture I’m not a typical worker but if the population wants to shop evenings and weekends then retail staff are working. Same with the hospitality industry. Also a lot of jobs are nil hours jobs where there can be 40 hours work one week and 10 the next. One of my friends was doing 12 x 12 hour shifts per fortnight from September until 2 weeks ago. Now back to her normal 84 hours over a 2 week cycle.”
  4. Price. The cost of public transport in (and around) towns and cities must be reasonable – and the fares simple and easily understandable, and ticketing pain free.

As regards Rail specifically, we observe:

1. Rail-based public transport is seen by users (especially potential users if mode shift is to be realised), as more attractive over road-based [even if the rails are set into the road surface] as rail of any sort conveys a greater sense of permanence / certainty / reliability / predictability and as appealing to current car users.
2. Light Rail has shown itself to be considerably more appealing to car users than buses – eg it has proven ability to encourage car drivers to switch modes<sup>5</sup> in a way that buses do not. UK Trams note how trams are more appealing to higher income households<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Railfuture response: <https://railfuture.org.uk/display2929> ; About HERT: <https://hertfordshire.gov.uk/hert>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.railforthevalley.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LR-UK-LightRailReport-An-investigation-into-the-economic-impacts-on-cities-of-investment-in-light-rail.pdf#page=8>, <https://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/news/articles/140623-light-rail-systems.html>, <https://bathtrams.uk/buses-have-a-much-lower-modal-shift-ie-attracting-car-drivers-capability-than-trams>, (On Sheffield Trams) <https://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/news/network-rail-and-partners-launch-tram-train-pilot-learning-hub>

<sup>6</sup> [https://uktram.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Draft\\_LightRailStrategy\\_UK.pdf#page=7](https://uktram.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Draft_LightRailStrategy_UK.pdf#page=7)

- A House of Commons briefing notes “30% of tram users in Nottingham switched from using their cars; 29% of Manchester Metrolink users reported that they would use a car if the tram was not available.”<sup>7</sup>
3. We believe that long distance commuting for a one, or a few days a week will continue to grow in relative terms. For many, without the need to be in the workplace 4 or 5 times a week, it becomes appealing to move to an area with a perceived quality of life (that is often also cheaper)<sup>8</sup>; this is typically further from the workplace, and so there is an acceptance of the commuting penalty for the fewer days of travel, of time and cost. At a recent Northern Trains update to Railfuture, they specifically noted that part time commuters were often purchasing Advance tickets to ensure better value for money.
  4. Tactical investments – such as the provision of passing loops at stations to allow metro services to be overtaken by faster trains will be important – much of the UK rail network away from London and its approaches is a two track railway and capacity is limited by the mix of faster and slower services. Techniques like that used at Penryn on the Falmouth Branch<sup>9</sup> and as proposed in the winning Restoring Your Railway bid for the Watford Junction-St. Albans Abbey line can noticeably reduce costs.

## Context

Public transport is competing with:

1. A decision not to travel: As previously mentioned, this is now much more relevant for some workers. A member comments “[A point] I’d make is that people don’t have to return to exactly the same face-to-face on-site arrangements that they had previously. The important thing is to physically meet with colleagues and clients. It doesn’t necessarily mean returning to a two-hour trek to the national HQ in the morning and two hours back in the evening five days a week, which is what I endured between 2008-11 (leaving home at 06:50 and getting home at 19:05)”.
2. Personal vehicles. A key challenge is the differing mix of costs to the traveller. Public transport operates on a pay for use model, whereas much use of personal vehicles mixes pay to own and a marginal cost pay to use – exacerbated by a perception that some variable costs – eg of tyre replacement, of a portion of insurance and servicing costs are fixed (because they are incurred relatively infrequently) but are actually variable. Practices such as TfL’s fare capping on Pay as You Go do act to move public transport from a variable cost to a fixed one.

There are also wider issues with efficient use of carbon (irrespective of no local tailpipe emissions) and other pollutants such as rubber particles.

## 2. How might public transport travel patterns shift in the next 10 years? What impact could digitalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic have on travel patterns in the long term?

We note:

1. Covid-19 is less “new” and more an accelerator of existing trends – but it may well have taken those trends further than might otherwise have happened – for instance, many employers and

<sup>7</sup> <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9456/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.halifax.co.uk/assets/pdf/february-2022-halifax-house-price-index.pdf> “it’s notable that both areas benefit from greater availability of more rural, scenic living which has proven to be so popular amongst buyers throughout the pandemic.”

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/news/its-the-final-countdown-to-extra-rail-services-on-falmouth-branchline>

schools have probably invested more heavily in home / remote working than would otherwise be the case.

2. Our comments above on the uncertainties of the portion of remote / home working in response to topic 1 are also relevant.
3. Younger people are less likely to drive<sup>10</sup> and if they do possess a driving licence, to own a car.

### **3. What can be done to improve connectivity across public transport modes? How could better integration be delivered in urban areas outside London?**

We are of the view:

1. It is essential to focus on the total journey and both the outward and return elements (and where relevant, additional interim journeys). Thus it needs to make it appealing to:
  - a. Get from the start point to the most convenient public transport stop – always by walking, cycling and active travel, and in larger conurbations, an ability to use a personal vehicle may well be needed as well.
  - b. To interchange easily as needed (including at the first and last point):
    - i. Physically easy, including for the less abled.
    - ii. With through ticketing.
    - iii. With reliable information about next services, crowding etc – both as a planning aid (shall I leave at 8:15 or 8:45am?) and for in-journey support (have I got time to get a coffee, where do I go, do I need to keep moving etc).
  - c. Complete both the outward and return journey. Whilst many Rail services operate late into the evening, buses often stop much earlier, and so part rail and part bus journeys become impossible.
2. We see that Smart Ticketing, whether by use of a Phone with Near Field Communications, a dedicated Smart Card or a Bank Card to be an essential feature. However, it must not be the only option, as some intending travellers will not possess any suitable device or may be unable to use it for other reasons (eg no credit available on their bank card). We like TfL's core model of:
  - a. A dedicated card ~ Oyster.
  - b. Bank Cards with registration, which gives visibility of journey history and also aids customer service.
  - c. Unregistered Bank Cards.

However, we dislike an important element of TfL's model, which is that differing pricing is offered on Oyster and Bank Cards. For instance, Oyster supports Railcard discounts, but Bank Cards do not and Contactless and Oyster have different station coverages. Nor does TfL's model cater well for families and groups.

Members' comment:

- "Bus travellers across a city may need to change bus en-route. Terminal bus stations may lead to longer journeys, which could be eased by simple but integrated cross-bus platforms, served by several bus services, spread around the city. Leicester, for example, has little sense of a bus 'network'; it operates as a collection of separate routes linking the suburbs with the centre. Moreover, Leicester has two separate bus stations, as far from each other and the rail station as they possibly could be within the bounds of the 'city centre'."
- "Consider the customer experience of driving to a part of the city you are unfamiliar with the same journey made by public transport."

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2021/apr/05/number-of-young-people-with-driving-licence-in-great-britain-at-lowest-on-record>

- To travel by car you enter a postcode and just follow the instructions, sitting in a warm, dry environment to your destination. The incremental costs being a simple linear relationship to distance travelled.
- Making the same journey by public transport requires a great deal more planning, you may have to deal with multiple operators (and their varying acceptance of different forms of payment), infrequent services can result in unacceptably long connection times – with a lack of co-location of interconnection locations making achieving interchange between modes even more unattractive. Fare structure can be complex with operators attempting to discourage the most effective use of the transport network and instead lock customers in to using their service, even if it is not the most effective mode for the passenger’s journey.”
- Removing friction at every point for public transport users is essential. Journey planning needs to be as simple as a car-driver entering a postcode into their sat-nav. Paying for a journey needs to be painless, with all public transport modes accepting a consistent set of payment methods. Passengers need to have the highest level of confidence that price-capping can be trusted to give them the best value fare.”

**4. What are the likely areas of innovation in urban public transport over the next 10 years? How should public policy be shaped considering both incremental and transformational innovations? How could data help transport services meet consumer demand?**

An essential characteristic of much innovation has to be that it seeks opportunity, rather than focuses excessively on threats.

We believe the following to be important areas of innovation:

1. The Warwick University activity on the development of Very Light Rail (VLR)<sup>11</sup>. The Revolution VLR trams<sup>12</sup> being developed by a consortium involving the University aim to bring the infrastructure cost needed down by c80%. This should bring trams within reach of many more provincial cities. As with Manchester Metrolink’s first line (from Bury), there may be the option to convert existing lightly used lines (or old railway line) track beds and use a small amount of new track in the city / town centre. A continued need for freight can be problematic, but there are solutions; a member comments “There is a local example of a potential situation like this in the West Midlands. The Round Oak Steel Terminal gets a regular but low frequency freight service – and there are aspirations to extend the currently under construction metro southwards from Dudley through to Stourbridge, so a regulatory approach might be to have time-based operations such that freight and light rail vehicles aren’t allowed on the same section of branch line at the same time”.
2. More use of Tram Trains (that can run on both tram tracks in City centres and on National Rail). Already in existence, as the Rotherham extension of Sheffield Supertram, these can share existing lines with continued heavy rail services and are a useful option where handover of a current line is not sensible.
3. A reduction in the costs of Public Transport through more extensive data collection and modelling. Smart technologies, as already used by TfL and others will enable a much better understanding of demand and can allow pricing to cause time shifts for some to more evenly spread demand and reduce the cost of providing the service, for which the moment of peak demand each day is a significant element of the cost base.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/wmg/research/hvmcatapult/research/rail/vlr/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://revolutionvlr.com/>

4. Fare setting approaches including a detailed reassessment of the definitions of “peak” and “off-peak”. Many commuters, now that they have greater flexibility in their place and time of work, have opted to travel outside the traditional “peak” travel times. The industry itself is considering this issue and it is our belief that the use of blanket morning and evening peak time bands may no longer be appropriate. We note Transport Focus’s recent report “Transforming rail travel – what do passengers want?”<sup>13</sup> and concur with their observations from page 19 on “2. Getting a Ticket”. In the context of travel in Towns & Cities, we believe these goals are particularly relevant:
- Affordable flexibility: preserve the walk-up element of rail travel.
  - Greater personalisation: the ability to buy the right product that matches the way I want to travel & the ability to ‘bundle’ other purchases into the transaction if I wish – for example multi-modal elements
  - Consumer confidence and trust: price promise – coupled with refunds if overpaid; if a passenger has a ticket that is not valid for the train they boarded, the sum paid already should count towards the new ticket they need to buy; price capping – meaning caps for travel at a fixed amount (for example Oyster/pay as you go in London) & good awareness of, and easy to claim, compensation for delays<sup>14</sup>.
5. Industrial relations. An ability for intending passengers, particularly commuters, to feel comfortable that public transport will be available to them is important. In making the decision to use public transport (as opposed to personal transport) as the chosen option, a feeling that the service will be consistently available each day is an important element; a key differentiator being that many other types of disruption such as signalling faults delay a journey, as opposed to making it (nearly) impossible – and there are likely to be more options for alternative routes, such as using another local station.

It is also important to remember that better use of existing practices and techniques is essential:

- Where it is not already in use, the roll out of Pay as You Go fares using a Bank Card (and/or dedicated Smartcards or Smartphone App) is an important step to make payment easy (and fast). Such rollouts need to include fare capping as used by TfL.
- A member comments (talking about buses and trains) “Clear signposting and intuitive walking routes between them – both ways. Clear signage, too, between stations (all modes) and town centres and major destinations such as hospitals – both ways”.

Finally, on this topic, there is the question of mindset. It is easy to see the significant reduction in many commuting flows as a threat to public transport. Railfuture acknowledges that the loss of these higher paying (for the distance) passengers is a significant challenge, but also urge that Public Transport – and associated Government policy – in the post Covid world is seen as an opportunity. A railway (or indeed any public transport) that is designed, built and operated around meeting the point of highest demand – the traditional office commute is no longer the primary driver it has been. Instead opportunities such as consistent all day services, new approaches to fares and a stronger focus on great customer service can come to the fore.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/publication/transforming-rail-travel-what-do-passengers-want/>

<sup>14</sup> In Railfuture’s view, “Automatic” should be added to this requirement



**5. Are local authorities well equipped with appropriate funding and powers to deliver high-quality public transport services? Would further devolution of transport policy contribute to better outcomes?**

We believe the key gaps are funding and resources, and Local Authorities typically do not have enough of either.

The Government's recent Bus Back Better National Bus Strategy with its Bus Service Improvement Plan proposals from Local Authorities are an important step, and even though labelled "bus" are also highly relevant to rail, both as regards improving ease of access to railway stations and providing local residents with less reason to own a car (and thus more reasons to use public transport). To make best use of rail's typically longer operating hours extensions in bus operating hours are important. The quantum of funding, however, still remains very much a challenge – bids from Local Authorities massively exceeds the funds allocated<sup>15</sup> and service levels will also be impacted by the end of Covid related funding.

A member comments "In Derby, only buses that go to the south side of the city call at the railway station. For proper integration, all buses to each suburb should call at the station on their routes, if practicable..... The railway companies will not do it - especially because car parking is a higher priority as more people come to the station by car. The bus companies will not do it because they carry far more passengers to the city centre shops than to the station." Whilst the status quo means that it is an activity that will need to be "persuasion" based, rather than "rules" based, staff that specifically champion investment and operational change that makes use of multiple modes of public transport (and active travel) would, we believe be worthwhile. Our member in Derby called them "Public Transport Integration Officers".

A key challenge is that Local Authority Boundaries and main public transport flows do not necessarily coincide. In his evidence on 1 March, we were struck by Mark Hopwood's comments on Bristol, whereby coordination is needed across four local authorities. This can be a greater challenge where there is unitary authority structure, as each can be smaller. A process that improves coordination and seamless delivery for the right geographies needs to be contemplated – substantively smaller than a Sub-National Transport Body, but covering multiple local authorities, some of whom might need to 'join' more than one cluster.

The National Infrastructure Commission has recently carried out investigation on the topic of local authority infrastructure spending and made recommendations to the government on this subject which we support and refer the committee to the work of the NIC on this topic.

**6. Could better policy coordination across government departments, and between central and local government, improve public transport outcomes? If so, how can this be achieved?**

Yes.

We believe the key is not to think of Public Transport as a standalone objective, but to consider it as part of a greater whole – indeed in two parts – movement and as part of prosperity, health and low carbon.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/local-transport-today/news/70439/funding-for-buses-more-than-halved-to-1-4bn>

## Movement

An unanswered question is how public transport will work with the personal vehicle. A member comments “Might the introduction of the driverless car lead to ‘drivers’ wondering whether to use a bus or train instead? Or will driverless cars actually be ‘driverless taxis’, ie once you get out, it is a waste to park the vehicle awaiting your return when it could more productively go and do the next job, for someone else? What is the point of owning one?! There could be benefits in reducing congestion and land-take for car parking, but they may also make ‘private’ motoring available to all, to the detriment of public transport and urban quality of life?”.

However, a credible consequence of our member’s description is that the cost of a personal vehicle is very much on a Pay as You Go basis, so the choice could become pay more for convenience or less for shared transport. And more generally, linked to this is the matter of road pricing; this is likely to need to be addressed as the portion of personal vehicles on the road become electric and do not contribute to the tax take in the way hydro-carbon vehicles currently do.

A member provided us with the graph<sup>16</sup> on this page to show how the cost of public transport and motoring has diverged over the years to the detriment of public transport. This is a consequence of differing approaches to inflation – Fuel Duty has been frozen, but Public Transport fares are linked to higher inflation measures, often with top ups.

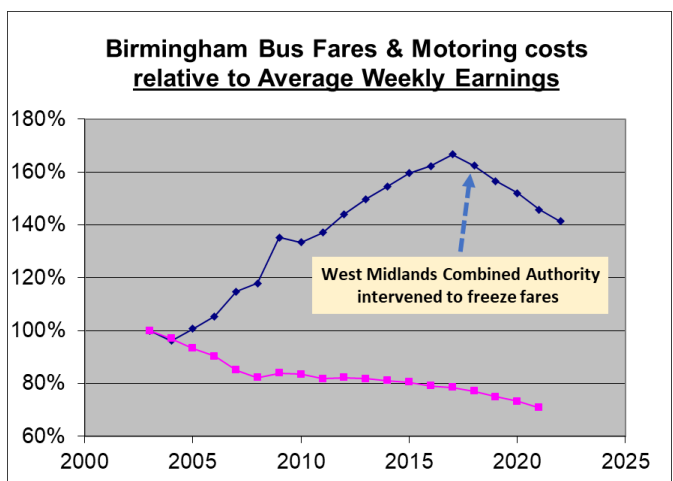
It is also important to recognise that electric personal vehicles are almost certainly not the “Nirvana” that some advocate:

- Although tail pipe emissions will not be present, other pollutants remain.
- A lot of road space and parking areas are required (which in turn is carbon inefficient).
- They are likely to be carbon inefficient - both during manufacture (because of the total weight and volume to be manufactured) and during operation (the weight per person during movement).

Finally, freight & deliveries in Cities and Towns could be made more efficient; it needs to continue to grow but gets in the way of public transport (deliveries hold up buses; freight capacity reduces paths for passenger rail services).

## Prosperity, health and low carbon

As we researched this submission, we came across a New Scientist article which observed “Pedestrian-friendly cities have lower rates of diabetes and obesity ~ A review of 170 studies finds consistent evidence that people are less likely to be obese or have diabetes if they live in cities where walking and cycling is safe and convenient”<sup>17</sup>. To us, this is a great indicator of wider



<sup>16</sup> Motoring costs and earnings sources from ONS statistics (RPI all motoring costs (CHBK))

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/transport-expenditure-tsgb13> & <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/averageweeklyearnings01>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2309343-pedestrian-friendly-cities-have-lower-rates-of-diabetes-and-obesity/>

benefits – a city which supports active travel also encourages public transport – and saves money for the Health Service as well.

It is this sort of wider benefit that is not being taken in account and thus we have seen over recent years a very considerable divergence in the relative costs of public transport and of motoring – as illustrated above. The Institute for Fiscal Studies comments “Driving imposes costs on wider society. According to government estimates, the biggest of these by far is congestion (80% of the total). Government estimates for 2015 suggest that each additional kilometre driven caused an average of 17p of societal harm”<sup>18</sup>.

**7. What are the barriers to improving urban public transport, in terms of delivering the necessary infrastructure, increasing connectivity and improving the consumer experience?**

The main challenge is funding, and, as outlined in our response to question 6, that this funding is considered as for “delivering public transport” as a standalone objective.

**8. Are there other important changes, not covered elsewhere in these questions, which would improve matters?**

We draw the Committee’s attention to the current debate over the future of London’s Travelcard, with strong suggestions of its demise. We are of the view that this a classic case of a decision being taken in isolation:

- Yes, the Travelcard is a legacy product, but it is both extremely well known, and, more critically, very simple to understand – “I will pay £X for my Public Transport to/from and in London today”. A more detailed analysis of a specific day’s plan might well conclude, “Well I could pay a little bit less with PAYG”, but then the next step is “But I’ll still get a Travelcard as my expense for the day is locked in”.
- Whilst PAYG does include cost capping features, and may well not cost more, the amount to be paid is a future unknown, and includes a requirement to (eg) know the Zones of the stations you intend to use to be able to price your journey costs.

This approach of removing certainty and adding complexity is a classic example of why public transport gets used less.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/14407>