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Transport Activists' Roundtable North West

www.nwtar.org.uk

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Ms. Manuelle Salathe,
Highways Agency, Major Projects,
City Tower, Room 710,
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Monday, April 13th, 2009

Dear Ms. Salathe,

HIGHWAYS AGENCY SCHEME FOR M60 JUNCTIONS 15 – 12 LANE GAIN

The North West Transport Roundtable (NW TAR) is an umbrella organisation which represents the interests of organisations and individuals in the region that believe in sustainable transport and land use and a low carbon future. We have been in existence for over 10 years and have representatives on a number of regional bodies (including the Highways Agency's Northern Road Users and Environmental Committees). We operate under the auspices of the Campaign for Better Transport - formerly Transport 2000. As such, we were awarded the environmental seats on the multi-modal studies which covered the North West, including the M60 Junction Eighteen To Twelve Study (JETTS).

Before commenting on the HA's M60 junctions 15 to 12 lane gain proposal itself, we would like to register a complaint about the very poor quality of the consultation process and ask for an explanation of its shortcomings to be provided at the next Regional Environmental and Road Users Committee meeting(s). (We are uncertain whether there will be separate meetings or a joint one next time around).

In view of our working relationship with the HA, it is extremely disappointing we were not notified of the three-day exhibition at the Novotel, Worsley in mid March when plans for the M60 scheme were displayed. Our enquiries in fact reveal that the exhibition was not even widely publicised in the environs of the immediate stretch of motorway, let alone wider afield, and those local people who did receive notices only did so immediately beforehand. Environmental NGOs such as ourselves, the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the North West Civic Trusts were neither appraised of the exhibition, nor alerted by the HA to the fact that there is a consultation underway until June 8th, 2009. Only recent visitors to the HA website page on this proposal would find out about the consultation (it was not on the web page when it was first posted). This is a wholly inadequate state of affairs and in contravention of every one of the Treasury's Green Book recommendations on how government bodies should conduct public consultations.

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Responding to HA consultation: NW Transport Roundtable comments on the M60 J15-12 Lane Gain

The Highway's Agency's case for adding an extra anti-clockwise lane between junctions 15 and 12 on the M60 orbital motorway around Greater Manchester is based on the fact that this stretch of motorway is very heavily trafficked, ie. 'under stress', and – due to it having several closely aligned junctions and being used by a large percentage of local traffic - it is subjected to a lot of weaving movements. This 'case' appears to fly in the face of all recently adopted wisdom, the expressed desire of the Greater Manchester transport authorities, the government's declared intention to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions and the Department for Transport's (DfT's) transport appraisal regimes.

According to the government's own guidelines, providing extra highway capacity as a solution to traffic problems should be the last option - after all others have been exhaustively examined. In any event, all the sustainable transport measures suggested by the JETTS study should be implemented first. The JETTS multi-modal study final report recommended a package of measures and Greater Manchester's third Annual Progress Report (APR) on its first Local Transport Plan said of JETTS (in par. 1.6):

"We hope that the public transport component of the strategy will be viewed favourably and that priority will be given to investment in public transport before road-based elements are brought forward. In anticipation of this a major scheme bid has been included in this APR for another phase of our successful Quality Bus Corridor programme to be developed in the M60 JETTS area in line with the study consultant's recommendations" (p.3).

Subsequently, major scheme bids have become part of the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) process. Round two of the RFA advice, submitted by the North West to Government at the end of February this year, included a total investment over the next 10 years into the M60 JETTS Quality Bus Corridor of £26.3 m. and the completion of the South East Manchester Multi-Model Study QBC scheme at a cost of £9.2 m. This is apart from £44.7 m. allocated for the Leigh-Salford-Manchester QBC, £186.8 m. for Metrolink extensions Phase 3a and £6.2m for renewing Phases 1 & 2 of Metrolink.

In addition to this, the government has commissioned two feasibility studies – due to report this year - into 'the Manchester Rail Hub'. Tackling rail congestion in Manchester (which would have wide benefits) has the backing of the 'Northern Way', a consortium of the three northern Development Agencies, and was identified as the top priority by a high level grouping of North West stakeholders drawn together by the Secretary of State for Transport a few years ago. The urgent need (in view of climate change) is for funding to go into achieving modal shift away from motor vehicles. Increasing capacity on the M60 would not be a long term solution and would merely generate more traffic movements, not only in this part of the M60 but on the rest of it and on access roads (as proven by SACTRA - the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment – in '*Trunk Roads and the Generation of Traffic*' in 1994).

As identified by JETTS, the priority should be buses (including yellow school buses), heavy rail (inc. up-grading trans-Pennine routes for high gauge freight) and light rail improvements, aligned with measures to encourage cycling and walking, the ongoing sponsorship of travel plan co-ordinators and long stay parking provision (particularly at multi-modal hubs). Such an approach would be in keeping with NATA - the New Approach to Appraisal - which has just been reviewed, with WebTAG (the Wider Economic Benefits, Transport Appraisal Guidance) and with the statutory environmental requirement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the UK by 80% on 1990 levels by 2050, brought about by the Climate Change Act of November 2008. It would also be in line with the DfT's command document '*Delivering a Sustainable Transport System*' (DaSTS), published in November 2008, which calls for CO2 reductions.

Finally, we would ask the questions – has the traffic modelling and have any environmental appraisals been carried out yet? If they have, we would call for them to be placed in the public domain. Above all, we urge the HA and the government not to continue with road-building. It is totally unsustainable.

Convenor, **LILLIAN BURNS**, & Core Group members **ADRIAN DUNNING & SANDRA DUTSON** (JETTS rep)