



Transport Activists' Roundtable North West

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The Clerk,
Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority,
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Tuesday, September 29th, 2009

Dear Sir,

TRANSPORT GOVERNANCE CONSULTATION

The North West Transport Roundtable (NW TAR) is an umbrella body that has been in existence for over 10 years. It is one of eight regional transport roundtables around the country which operates under the auspices of the Campaign for Better Transport (formerly Transport 2000) and which promotes sustainable transport, sustainable land use and healthier lives.

Over-Arching Comments

The Transport Governance consultation document promulgated jointly by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) and the Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority (GMITA) is a poor one for several reasons:

- Whilst appearing to offer a number of alternatives to the status quo, all in fact place an inordinate amount of power in the hands of the 10 L.A. Leaders without explaining what mechanisms would prevent any abuse of power
- The document is heavily slanted to favour the Combined Authority options
- All new options/models offer little detail to explain which local authority powers would be delegated or what the implications of the change would be
- Whilst some options envisage input at a decision-making level for economic partners, none include social and environmental partners. N.B. On the 4NW Leaders Forum, Social, Economic & Environmental Partners (SEEPs) are equal
- There is no explanation of how the models would fit within regional working
- Although the purpose is to provide a framework for a transport governance review, there is no over-arching framework set out; there should be commitments to sustainability, equality/social inclusion & fair/democratic practices
- There are numerous economic references (not essential in a governance paper) but they are not balanced by mentions of the need to find a model that best delivers the DaSTS/climate change agenda and national indicators
- There are no outline terms of reference for the various models, nor worked examples to aid understanding of how they would operate and be funded

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Consultation Questions/ Answers

1. Do you agree with the analysis presented in the document concerning:

a) The relationship between the strategic role of AGMA and the transport commissioning and delivery roles?

The current state of play is explained, although a diagram at this point of the consultation document would have been helpful.

b) Constitutional arrangements?

This section contains a description of the constitutional arrangements that have existed since 1985 and sets out some possible options for the future but neither here nor anywhere else is there an explanation that, prior to 1985, PTAs had a mix of elected and appointed members. Also, the part of paragraph 19 which discusses co-option only suggests “*private sector members*” as potential co-optees. This is where Greater Manchester should look to the example set by 4NW, the Leaders Forum, and the North West Regional Assembly before it. 4NW comprises 60% elected members and 40% SEEPs – Social, Economic and Environmental Partners. This has been a very successful template.

In view of the points we have made above, we do not agree that the analysis provided is adequate.

c) Functional changes?

A case is built up in this section (particularly in para. 25) for a Combined Authority model. No case is tabled for the type of model which exists in Merseyside (which successfully combined their PTA and PTE and is responsible for rail). Equally, no model is canvassed for a Transport for London (TfL) type authority that controls all types of transport, except air travel. These other options should have been consulted upon. (TfL, incidentally, has a modest-sized board which comprises a mix of elected and non-elected people – not an option offered in this consultation). However, of the options which are consulted upon, insufficient information is provided to make a judgement about the functional changes affecting the individual Metropolitan Authorities within Greater Manchester. They need to retain sufficient say about issues which particularly affect their local areas.

In view of the points we have made above, we do not agree that the analysis provided is adequate.

d) Geographic scope and boundaries?

The text in the consultation is extremely coy about the subject of boundaries. There is a reference (in para. 28) to the fact that “*The AGMA Executive Board has previously considered the whole issue of boundaries in a City Region context*” - but there is no explanation of what this actually means. According to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West, the Manchester City Region includes most of that part of Cheshire which has subsequently become the Unitary Authority of Cheshire East in addition to Warrington (which is also in Liverpool City Region). Many people reading this document would not understand this. There is neither a map nor an explanation.

In view of the points we have made above, we do not agree that the analysis provided is adequate.

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2. Do you agree that the three main categories of options identified in the document are comprehensive?

As pointed out in our response to question 1c, there is no model comparable to that in Merseyside and no model comparable to that for Transport for London. They should be there for consideration. There needs to be a strong advocacy for modal shift to public transport, cycling and walking. (The latter two modes of transport have come off badly as a result of Local Transport Plan funding being top-sliced to service the Greater Manchester Transport Fund). Also, none of the models appear to make provision for representation at the decision-making level by local authorities and communities outside Greater Manchester, such as Cheshire East and Warrington, in the event of the geographical boundary being extended to incorporate the whole of the City Region. In addition, the options tabled do not include any opportunity for representation at a decision-making level by the SEEPs.

In view of the points we have made above, we do not agree that the categories of options are comprehensive.

3. Please give us your views on Category A based models. If you support either of these models, please explain why.

The changes brought about by the Local Transport Act mean that the current model is no longer applicable.

Consequently, we do not support these models.

4. Please give us your views on Category B based models. All models retain the GMITA though with various changes to its size and functions. Again, if you support any of these models, please explain why.

The AGMA Executive Board is the key decision-making entity in all these models. Even though they are elected individuals, this vests too much power with them.

Consequently, we do not support these models.

5. Please give us your views on Category C based models. Both models propose a Combined Authority. Again, if you support either of these models, please explain why.

In theory, the concept of a Combined Authority has some appeal because it implies a holistic approach. However, both these models vest far, far too much power with the 10 AGMA leaders. Also, there is a need for more clarity about funding arrangements for the CA option. The Levy for the revenue budget each year has often caused real problems and the reference to funding (in para. 21), ie. *"It would appear that the CA would continue to fund the exercise of its transport functions through the existing levy"* is vague in the extreme. Would the CA option make it more difficult, or less, to obtain an adequate revenue budget?

Consequently, we do not support these models.

6. Do you have any comments on the analysis of delivery arrangements presented in the report?

As stated in the over-arching comments at the beginning of this response, there is insufficient detail provided relating to delivery (and accountability). Some worked examples would have helped understanding.

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7. Do you have any other comments?

Several times in this response, the NW TAR has made reference to its fear of placing too much power in the hands of too few people. Our circumspection is based on our observation of the way AGMA behaved this year in relation to the supplementary advice it drew up for government on the Regional Funding Allocation. This took place shortly after the Highways Agency had withdrawn from promoting the A57/A628 Mottram-Tinwistle Bypass. Without any agreed route, any business case, any modelling or any other transport appraisal to hand – because it was a completely new concept – AGMA approved a ‘Mottram Bypass’ to be included as part of its bid. This was and still is a purely conceptual scheme, proposed as a reaction to the loss of the other scheme. It has not been through any prioritisation process or been measured against any set of criteria – as have the other RFA schemes. (It is not even clear how such a scheme would be classified as it would be a bypass to a trunk road, but the proposal is that it would be delivered by a local authority). In other words, its inclusion in the RFA is a prime example of bad practice/ abuse of power that we find unpalatable and do not want to see repeated.

All of that said, AGMA has provided a medium through which the 10 authorities have been able to work and prosper and the joint transport teams have been an important part of that collaboration. The joint team arrangement has meant the quality of officer support has been high but good advice from officers has not always been heeded by AGMA leaders and consultation responses have often been treated with inadequate respect and weight. A key point to flag up is that AGMA is not in fact a body which is directly accountable to the electorate.

The NW TAR believe that none of the models currently being canvassed are wholly fit for purpose.

We would like to have seen a model similar to the Merseyside one, one more like the Transport for London one and more democratic Combined Authority options and for all options to be worked through, with explanations of what powers the individual authorities would have to surrender in each case. We would also like to have seen options which offered opportunities for input at the highest levels by social, economic and environmental partners, although these would be a minority voice. Elected Councillors should always have the majority voice.

Regardless of our point of view expressed hithertofore, however, it is apparent to us from the consultation document that AGMA itself favours the CA models. If this suggestion prevails then, of the two options proffered, we would prefer the C2 model which is the more democratic of the two. And we would like to see a solution along the lines of that outlined in paragraph 44, ie. *“it would be possible through the establishment of a new joint committee to recreate a similar body to the ITA with a size and composition the same as now with clear commissioning responsibilities and operational delivery functions. It would be necessary to determine terms of reference to reflect these arrangement and the accountability arrangements to AGMA **and ensure that a new Joint Committee had the opportunity to input into the development of AGMA’s future strategy**”*.

Finally, whichever model is selected, there must be a responsibility on the governing body to deliver the climate change agenda, to work closely with the individual authorities and to embed in their processes robust and meaningful consultations with wider stakeholders. We trust these comments are of some value.

Yours sincerely,

LILLIAN BURNS, NW TAR Convenor, and **JANET CUFF** and **SANDRA DUTSON**, NW TAR Core Group members