

CONNECTING LINES

How devolving transport policy can transform our cities

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NORTH

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60-SECOND SUMMARY

Across the major cities of England, new directly elected mayors will soon take charge of their transport networks. They will not govern alone, but they will be the primary political executives and the most visibly accountable individuals. This change is long overdue. The UK is behind other similar countries: we invest far less in infrastructure and leave local transport authorities without the powers they need over their transport networks.

This presents an important opportunity for English cities to improve their transport systems. Mayors should make their cities' transport systems more integrated and ensure that they better support wider goals such as access to jobs, schools and other public services, improvements in public health, carbon reduction and cleaner air.

This report makes detailed recommendations for how English mayors can improve city transport systems over three terms of office – and how central government can support them, including by giving them more powers.

Our recommendations fall into three categories, and would enable mayors to:

- invest in their transport network by drawing on new resources, such as an expanded business rate premium, workplace parking levies, road user charging and a broad range of other revenue raising powers
- integrate the transport services of public, private and community transport providers, starting with the re-regulation of buses but ultimately taking a 'Total Transport approach'
- lead their city-region, by using new democratic structures to govern inclusively, balancing strong executive power with the representation of all communities, and robust checks and balances.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR NEW MAYORS

- New mayors seeking to improve their transport networks will face the challenge of reduced and falling **spending power** – but they will be helped by continuing technological advances, and potentially by increasing **autonomy** as more powers are devolved from central government.
- One of the most significant new powers they will have will be the ability to franchise (or regulate) their bus networks, which is set to be enabled by the new **buses bill**.
- Mayors can learn lessons from the '**Total Transport**' pilots, which are trying to improve the way different public bodies spend money on transport in rural areas.
- Within the UK, some transport authorities are **already innovating**. These range from Transport for London's public health innovations to Greater Manchester's earnback initiative and Nottingham's workplace parking levy.
- As UK city-regions move towards a level of devolved power and responsibility that has long been enjoyed by similar city-regions overseas, there is an opportunity for them to **learn from their international counterparts**: from the slow reinvention of Malmö to the rapid but radical changes seen in New York City; from integration across the public sector in the Netherlands to measures in France that raise vital revenue from employers; and to road user charges in several cities across Europe that have reduced emissions and improved congestion.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for central government

Resources

- Proceed with plans to enable mayoral combined authorities to levy 2p on **business rates** to be directed toward transport infrastructure – but then move to remove the **2p cap** and **broaden the scope** of the levy to allow it to fund services and other improvements in the transport network.
- Establish a **single transport fund** as part of a longer-term financial settlement with transport authorities.
- Enable metro mayors to implement **workplace parking levies** more freely, and to **pilot other taxes and levies** that support transport investment.

Service integration

- Proceed with current plans to enable the **franchising of buses**, and provide transport authorities with the tools and funding they need to put this in place, requiring only robust governance not specifically a mayor.
- Support and evaluate the current **Total Transport pilots** to help mayors to roll out the most successful aspects of public sector transport integration across other neighbourhoods and cities.
- Require all departments to work with the local transport authority to share and publish as much **data** as possible.

Governance

- Enhance the powers of **transport committees** to the level of policy advisory committees.
- Require a local **public sector advisory committee** to be set up in order to feed recommendations on transport policy to the mayor – and then move to set up governance structures needed to manage the **Total Transport** approach across the relevant public sector bodies.

Recommendations for metro mayors

For 2017

In the run-up to the 2017 mayoral elections, metro mayors should pledge to use their existing powers to:

- **reduce fares** for public transport on some bus routes and for some groups – young people, the low-paid or jobseekers
- invest in much-needed **tram infrastructure** or support **new bus routes** to reduce congestion on the roads
- introduce **smart ticketing** and a **rationalised, integrated transport network**
- guarantee that no resident lives more than an hour's bus journey or an affordable bus ticket away from a **job**, so that all residents are connected with vital work opportunities, and to make a similar commitment around travel to a leisure centre.

For 2020

In the 2020 mayoral election campaigns we would expect mayors to invest in and develop their networks further, and to implement a **'Total Transport' plan** which would guarantee no citizen is an unreasonable distance from hospitals, GP surgeries and other important public services.

For 2024

By 2024 we would expect mayors to have significant funding and control over their transport network such that they can pledge to make incremental improvements in transport infrastructure to **keep pace with the most advanced cities in the rest of Europe.**

For the full report, including all references, data sources and notes on methodology, see:
www.ippr.org/publications/connecting-lines-how-devolving-transport-policy-can-transform-our-cities

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