



Why we support the Greater Manchester transport bid

People in Greater Manchester are about to begin voting in a referendum on whether to accept proposals which would revolutionise travel in the city and set an example for other cities to follow. The proposals would see £3 billion invested in measures which would improve transport for all and help tackle climate change by drastically improving the area's public transport, as well as pedestrian and cycling routes.

This briefing explains why Friends of the Earth, Campaign for Better Transport, Greenpeace and Asthma UK support the transport proposals.

Why we support the proposals

We believe that the proposed £3 billion investment in transport will help revolutionise travel in Greater Manchester and make it a better place to live and work. Greater Manchester is the most congested city in the UK outside London, and the proposals would cut traffic levels by up to 15 per cent, reducing congestion, climate change emissions and air pollution levels and improving access to facilities and jobs for people without cars.

The proposals are being made through the Government's Transport Innovation Fund (TIF). TIF is a central Government fund that supports "innovative solutions to congestion problems, involving demand management measures". TIF would provide £1.5 billion of grants, with the majority of the remaining funds coming from a loan which is repayable by a peak-time only congestion charge.

The proposals include charging drivers to travel in the direction of peak traffic flow at peak times. We support congestion charging as part of a package of measures to reduce traffic levels and so reduce the problems caused by too much traffic, including congestion and climate change emissions. Revenue raised from the congestion charge will be used to secure further investment in the improved alternatives to car use, including better public transport and improved cycling facilities such as:

- Improved public transport: including extensions to the Metrolink tram system; new railway stations and bus interchanges; extra buses, trams and train carriages; bus lanes

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and bus priority corridors; and integrated public transport ticketing.

- Better facilities for cycling and walking: including more safe routes to schools; more cycle lanes, making streets more attractive places to walk and the introduction of virtually free short-term cycle hire in two urban centres.
- A package of measures including travel plans and better travel information known as 'Smarter Choices' targeted at different levels (residential, businesses, hospital staff etc) to encourage people to change how they travel.

Transport accounts for over a fifth of total UK emissions of carbon dioxide, the main climate change gas. The Climate Change Bill sets a target to cut UK emissions of carbon dioxide by 80 per cent by 2050. Packages such as that being proposed in Greater Manchester show the sort of measures that will be needed in cities across the country if transport is to make a full contribution to meeting our climate change targets.

A third of households in Greater Manchester, and up to 60 per cent in the most deprived areas, do not have access to a car. These households will benefit most from the investment in public transport which will improve their access to services and jobs. We welcome measures to assist those on low incomes, such as price caps and discounts on the congestion charge and public transport fares.

The proposals will also improve air quality across Greater Manchester. The North-West has the highest emergency admissions for asthma in the UK, and parts of Greater Manchester have some of the highest emergency admissions for childhood asthma in England.

What we would like to see improved

Although we support the current proposals, we believe that they can be improved in a number of key areas, either in the TIF bid itself or through associated plans. They include:

- Doubling the proportion of funds allocated to walking, cycling and personalised travel planning to at least 4 per cent of the total TIF budget;
- Doubling the reduction in predicted carbon dioxide emissions to at least 12 per cent by 2016 (instead of the current 6 per cent predicted reduction);
- Linking the price of the congestion charge to vehicles' carbon dioxide emissions. Road tax is already linked to emissions, and this would provide a further incentive for the use of greener cars;
- Allowing standard bicycles to be carried on Metrolink at off-peak times;
- Introducing Low Emissions Zones (where the most polluting vehicles are banned) in the areas where pollution is at its worst;
- Ensuring that a majority of residents are within a 10 minute walk of a bus, train or tram service which runs at least every 12 minutes;
- Simplifying public transport fares using a zone-based system, and make fares the same regardless of transport mode;

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- Cutting the cost of public transport, and allowing public transport passengers to continue their journey within the City Centre Zone free of charge by bus, tram or train;
- Lowering speed limits – there should be a default speed limit of 20mph in residential streets;
- Through improved policy and planning, providing services and facilities close to where people live so they don't need to drive.

Conclusion

Friends of the Earth, the Campaign for Better Transport, Greenpeace and Asthma UK believe that the proposals offer the opportunity and the funding to make huge improvements in the ways that people travel across Greater Manchester, setting an example for other cities to follow. They will help provide better alternatives to car use through improving public transport and making streets safer for cycling and walking. The proposals also demonstrate the sort of measures needed if transport is to make a full contribution to meeting our national climate change targets.

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