

## **Summary paper: City Leader Summit**

**11 September, 2019**

This paper summarises the key themes which were discussed at the National Infrastructure Commission's City Leader Summit, which brought together City Leaders, Metro Mayors and business leaders to discuss the need for greater investment and powers for urban transport in cities across the country.

### **Beyond a deal-based approach for growth**

The first session brought together city leaders from outside the mayoral combined authorities to discuss how going beyond a 'deal-based' approach could deliver benefits in cities of all sizes.

Panellists were:

- Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe, Chair of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Leader of Bradford City Council
- Cllr Susan Brown, Leader of Oxford City Council
- Cllr David Renard, Leader of Swindon Borough Council
- Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Leader of Portsmouth City Council
- Cllr David Mellen, Leader of Nottingham City Council.

### **Key themes**

Within city connectivity is at least as important as inter-city connectivity – journeys between urban centres within regions can be heavily car-reliant, and transport networks will need to be developed to ensure that city regions can continue to grow and prosper.

The problems caused by our current funding system are a key issue. Having to develop multiple bids for small pots for funding is a huge drain on local government time and resources that could be used much more effectively elsewhere. Longer-term certainty in funding would facilitate long-term, integrated planning for cohesive transport networks.

The panel also discussed the value of local officials taking the lead on infrastructure strategies, as the people with the greatest understanding of local needs and challenges. The fact that local government is often very good at working across the political divide was also raised as something that should be better appreciated in Whitehall.

### **The View from Business**

This session brought together business leaders from across the country for their perspective on why urban transport matters for businesses, and what businesses and local government can do to work well together.

Panellists were:

Ann O'Driscoll, Director, Business West Chambers of Commerce,  
Lesley Moody, President, North East England Chambers of Commerce  
Mark Jenkinson, Cities Lead, Siemens UK  
Clive Memmot, Chief Executive, Greater Manchester Chambers of Commerce.

## Key themes

Businesses, like cities, badly need certainty. It is difficult for businesses to have the confidence to invest if they can't be sure of what is coming, particularly from an infrastructure perspective. It is difficult to engage with business meaningfully on piecemeal, small-scale projects.

Transport was also highlighted as a key problem for businesses, because connectivity affects the number of staff available and workplace productivity, as well as allowing businesses to draw on a larger workforce. Cycling and walking infrastructure was also highlighted as highly beneficial, particularly with cycle to work schemes, and similar schemes being available for other modes of public transport (such as 'bus to work') were highlighted as a possible way to take this further.

A key challenge is coordination at local level, both between local authorities at different levels, but also separate transport modes to enable convenience-focussed reforms like cross-modal ticketing.

## **Going Further for Cities – In Conversation with City Region Mayors**

The final panel of the day brought together Metro Mayors and their representatives to discuss how the NIC's recommendations could benefit their city regions and allow them to go further in delivering transformational change in future.

### Panellists were:

- Mayor Andy Burnham, Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Mayor Tim Bowles, West of England Combined Authority
- Mayor Steve Rotherham, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
- Mayor James Palmer, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority
- Laura Shoaf, Managing Director, Transport for the West Midlands
- Mayor Jamie Driscoll, North of Tyne Combined Authority
- Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning Regeneration and Skills, Greater London Authority.

## Key themes

Transport is a key issue for our city regions. HS2 and NPR won't solve all our urban transport problems, as the primary challenge in the next ten years is traffic growth. Ensuring that transport networks are prepared to cope with that growth will be critical, and will require London-style connectivity. The value of London's cross-modal ticketing was highlighted as a vital element that not only makes public transport easier to use, but also ensures a reasonable daily cap on spending for the passenger.

The bid system is problematic even for the largest cities; an unacceptable amount of time and resources are absorbed by the process. In addition, Mayors currently lack key powers needed to effectively intervene in their transport networks. Having control of issues such as traffic offences and regulating new technology such as scooters and e-bikes would allow authorities to better plan and integrate their networks.

Congestion charging, while effective, is difficult to implement unless an alternative method of transport is already in place. In London, an effective network existed already to allow people to move around the congestion zone without incurring additional costs. In other cities this is not the case, meaning proposals are highly unpopular.

Finally, the importance of cities having the powers to raise revenue themselves was raised, particularly if central government investment was not forthcoming. Being able to raise revenue through measures such as tax incremental funding (as employed on the Northern Line extension) is crucial to cities taking the lead on delivering infrastructure. Being able to retain transport revenue is another important component of this; revenue needs to be made available to re-invest in the network, rather than going to third party providers.

### **The Government Response**

The session was joined by Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Communities, Housing and Local Government to give a response to the day's discussions.

Key points included the need to move on from discussing Brexit to work on levelling up all parts of the country, focussing not just on cities but also our towns.

The Secretary of State also expressed his interest in exploring more pan-regional development projects along the lines of the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corrido. He also reiterated the government's commitment to Northern Powerhouse Rail as well as improving local transport by investing in bus services.

The Secretary of State concluded by stating that his door was open to cities or regions who were keen to explore what devolution could do for them, as well as his continued commitment to the devolution agenda.