

Economy & Transport Programme Board – report from Cllr Peter Box CBE (Chair)

Buses and Rail

1. The Board has achieved lobbying successes in two of our longest-running transport campaigns this month - on buses and on rail. The Competition Commission's provisional findings of their investigation into local bus services vindicate the arguments and positions that the LGA has been campaigning on for a number of years and reflect the policy solution proposed in the LGA publication last summer that councils should have a greater ability to commission and stipulate standards on bus services by contracting with operators to deliver services in a local area. I issued a press release welcoming the Commission's findings and the Board has subsequently submitted a response to the Competition Commission. I will be chairing a workshop session on bus reform at the LGA Annual Conference.
2. This month also saw the publication of the final report of Sir Roy McNulty's value for money study on rail. The report recommends an enhanced role for local authorities and/or PTEs with greater opportunity to influence the franchising process and involvement in local decision-making brought together with budget responsibility and accountability. This reflects policy positions that the LGA has campaigned on for a number of years and I issued a press statement to that effect.

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3. Anna Walker, Chair of the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) attended to discuss the implications of McNulty's report, the future of network rail and how the ORR can engage more effectively with Local Government. We have agreed to develop further links between our two boards to ensure continued engagement and discussion as reforms to the rail industry are developed and rolled out.
4. The Board also discussed how the LG Group can help councils to tackle youth unemployment, a project that is being taken forward jointly with the Children and Young People's Programme Board.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

5. On 6 June, Cllr Jim Harker and I met with Baroness Hanham MP to discuss ERDF and local government's concern that councils do not have sufficient finance available to match-fund ERDF, which risks it being returned to Brussels. We asked that Government establish the future ERDF programmes in a locally responsive way, and engage local government as early as possible to ensure that is the case.

Contact officer: Ian Hughes **Position:** Head of Programme

Telephone: 020 7664 3101 **E-mail:** ian.hughes@local.gov.uk