

22 July 2010

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## **Transport Update**

### **Summary**

This paper provides an update on LGA activities relating to the Board's priorities on transport since the last meeting in May.

### **Recommendations**

The board is asked to note the report and to agree that the motion to lobby for investment in UK roads be taken forward as part of the planned work programme on infrastructure as outlined in paragraph 5.

### **Action**

Officers to progress work programme in light of the Board's comments.

## Transport Update

### Reform of Bus Subsidy

1. As proposed at the last meeting of the Board, the LGA met with Secretary of State for Transport, Phillip Hammond and Transport Minister, Norman Baker on 1st July to discuss future reform of the bus subsidy system. Cllr Harker presented the LGA's proposals for bringing together existing funding streams into a single pot under the control of local authorities. Ministers agreed that there is a need to consider options for reform which could facilitate a greater degree of control over spending while providing greater leverage over the outcomes that subsidy buys in terms of services and control over fares. Ministers also agreed that the LGA and DfT officers should work together to develop options for reform. Following the meeting, Cllr Harker wrote to Philip Hammond (see letter at **Annex A**) and LGA officers are pursuing a programme of work running in parallel with the spending review process to develop options for reform.

### Bus Partnership Forum

2. The Bus Partnership Forum met with Norman Baker on 12<sup>th</sup> July to discuss bus policy and priorities for the coalition government. Discussion included reform of bus service operators grant (BSOG), concessionary fares, punctuality and rollout of smartcards. It provided a further opportunity for the LGA to present our proposals for bus subsidy that would allow all of these issues to be dealt with in a more coherent and joined up way with greater impact locally. It was agreed at the meeting that the officer working group bringing together local authorities and operators should be convened to explore options for reform of bus subsidy to report back to the Forum.
3. The Minister said he would be considering options for radical reform of reimbursement for Concessionary Travel, but that major reform in 2011/12 is unlikely given that Councils will need to agree schemes by the beginning of December 2010. Ministers intend to consult on revised guidance for reimbursement over the summer with a view to improving processes within the current system. Local government representatives stressed the importance of ensuring that no councils was left out of pocket as a result of the transfer of responsibility for administration of concessionary fares in two tier areas and asked that options for the transfer of funding be consulted on as a matter of urgency.

### **LGA General Assembly motion on roads**

4. Surrey County Council submitted a motion to the LGA Group General Assembly on 6<sup>th</sup> July proposing that the LGA lobby to support investment in roads as a means of supporting jobs and economic growth. The motion was remitted to the Regeneration and Transport Board for further discussion (a copy of the motion is included at **Annex B**).
5. The motion is consistent with the Board's arguments that decisions about investment in local infrastructure, including roads will require a radically different approach to planning and funding for infrastructure to give councils more flexibility to target investment most effectively. It is therefore suggested that that the motion is taken forward as part of the Board's planned programme of work on infrastructure including the report on funding and planning for infrastructure planned for publication in late July.
6. We suggest that the Chairman write to Cllr Povey, the Leader of Surrey County Council in the terms attached (**Annex C**).

### **Weathering the storm II – Improving UK resilience to severe winter weather**

7. The LGA report following our review of UK resilience to severe winter weather was launched at Annual Conference. The report draws on councils' experience of the severe weather experienced over the last two winters and evidence from key stakeholders (including transport operators, business representatives, salt suppliers, regional resilience teams and wider public services providers). The report include actions for government, salt suppliers, councils and their partners to ensure that we are better able to respond to severe weather in future. The recommendations of the report are attached in **Annex D**. The report has been submitted to the DfT review looking at the response to winter weather which is expected to report in the near future.

### **Financial Implications**

None.

### **Implications for Wales**

None.

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