

17 November 2011

Item 6

Transport Update

Purpose of report

For noting

Summary

This paper provides information on matters arising since the last Board meeting.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note and consider any further action.

Action

Officers to implement programme of support as agreed by members.

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Transport Update

Introduction

1. This paper sets out information on transport matters arising since the Board's last meeting. The intention is to provide a quick overview across a range of transport issues, some of which might not be immediate Board priorities, and will encompass emerging issues, Government announcements, and LGA activity.

Competition Commission Bus Market Inquiry

2. The Competition Commission did not reiterate its call for greater local authority franchising in bus services, when it published its proposed remedies for local bus markets in October 2011. Instead, its package of recommendations include increasing the number and effectiveness of multi-operator ticketing schemes and a code of conduct, to be drawn up and enforced by Traffic Commissioners.
3. The report questioned whether local authorities have the skills to draw-up franchises but did not rule out "its future application in particular local markets...LTAs also have wider social and policy objectives that are not relevant to this investigation, but which may legitimately lead them to take a different view on this matter." The LGA has expressed its disappointment at this development and is continuing to discuss with the Department for Transport (DfT) how to take the devolution of bus issues forward.

Local Sustainable Transport Fund

4. The purpose of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) is to enable the delivery by local transport authorities of sustainable transport solutions that support economic growth while reducing carbon. The DfT plans to make £560 million available to the Fund over the 4 year period to 2014-15. The funding will comprise both resource and capital. Councils in the first tranche of funding sent delegates to the forthcoming communications event on 8 November 2011 in Birmingham. The LGA was also represented at this meeting. We will work with the sector and the DfT to support the dissemination of good practice. We have offered to set up a Community of Practice to replace the Local Transport Planning Network and support the sharing of best practice among LSTF participants.

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Longer Lorries

5. The DfT ran a consultation, which ended on 21 June 2011, on whether or not permit an increase of 2.05 metres in the permitted length of semi-trailers for articulated lorries to 15.65 metres and increase the overall permitted length of an articulated vehicle to 18.75 metres – in order to allow the development and use of tractor units with safer, more aerodynamic frontal designs (18.75 meters is the maximum length for rigid truck / drawbar trailer combination currently allowed on UK roads).
6. The Technical Advisory Group (TAG, originally established by the LGA, provides advice and support to technical professionals employed by local authorities directly or indirectly to manage and advise on their services) responded to this consultation, opposing the proposal to introduce longer trailers, but in favour of an increase lorry length to allow for a re-design of lorry cabs. TAG's arguments against longer trailer lengths, which focus on the impact on local authorities included: road safety; increased damage to footways and other infrastructure implications; congestion and complaints about noise and vibration leading to an extra burden not only on the Highway Authority but also other departments such as environmental health.
7. The Government is now going to trial longer trailers for freight vehicles. The pilot will commence in January 2012, and will enable some hauliers to use articulated lorries that are two metres longer but are still within existing weight limits. Up to 900 trailers with an additional 2.05 m in length will be approved for use in Britain over the ten years of the voluntary initiative, in addition to a further 900 that are one metre longer than the current maximum.

Devolution of Major schemes

8. The DfT stated in November 2010 that it will “work in partnership with local communities to develop a new framework for the funding of Local Major Transport Schemes over time, one that will have a reduced role for central government and give a proper voice to locally elected representatives and business interests”. Any new arrangements will apply to Local Major Transport Scheme funding in the next spending review period from 2015. However, given the lead-in time required to develop schemes it is likely that decisions on the principles underpinning the future of the scheme will be taken in the next few months. Simply giving the money to individual councils has been ruled out because the amounts would be too small so the DfT is looking to create local transport consortia. We are expecting a consultation on the form these will take shortly.

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Road Safety

9. Following the presentation at the last Board meeting, we have arranged for the Road Safety Foundation to brief regional LGAs on this issue. The Transport Select Committee is investigating road safety and this may provide an opportunity for the regions to support the RSF.

Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004

10. Last year the Government consulted on implementing the provisions in part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 relating to the enforcement of moving traffic contraventions. The LGA responded stating that the powers contained in Part 6 are essential in meeting the Act's objectives. This view was set out in a letter from the Board's Chair dated 8 September 2010 (**attached** at Appendix A).
11. On 19 October 2011 Norman Baker replied saying he did not feel there was sufficient demand to introduce the powers. His letter also covered copies of the responses he received from 14 councils, of which eleven said they would use the powers; one said it wanted them but would use them only as part of a regional consortium; one was considering the issue; and one was not a highway authority. The letter and a summary of responses are **attached** at Appendix B. We propose to seek more substantial evidence of the benefits of these powers and draft a letter for the chair to send to the Parliamentary Secretary reiterating councils' desire to have them.

Signing the way: traffic signs policy review

12. DfT published this document on 13 October 2011, its key themes are improving the information that traffic signs communicate to road users and making the system more flexible while retaining national consistency. The department sees this as a localist move that will reduce its regulation of councils. The number of required signs will be reduced and it will be easier to introduce new optional signs to promote sustainability, e.g. by helping cyclists. Amendments to Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD) will come into force in November 2011 and will reduce the administrative burden on local authorities by prescribing many of the non-prescribed traffic signs that are frequently authorised by the Department. The DfT will undertake a full revision of TSRGD, to implement the more substantive regulatory changes, as a priority – but unlikely to be completed before 2014. However, the Secretary of State will use his powers of authorisation to make many changes in the interim.

2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Task and Finish Group

13. The LGA Exec has agreed to establish a 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Task and Finish Group. The purpose of the Task and Finish Group is to provide strategic oversight of the work of the LGA across its Programme Boards in relation to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The LGA is supporting councils to ensure that they play their part in hosting an exciting and safe 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games that delivers wider benefits for the whole country.
14. The Task Group will:
 - 14.1 provide strategic oversight on operational and legacy issues across the LGA Programme Boards. This will include supporting and representing the interests of all councils whether or not they have or are near to a venue.
 - 14.2 make recommendations to the LGA Programme Boards to ensure that the LGA delivers a coherent offer to councils in relation to the 2012 Games.
 - 14.3 report back on progress to the LGA Executive through the Chair of the Task and Finish Group.
 - 14.4 undertake a final meeting to evaluate the work of the LGA in October 2012 and make any recommendations regarding learning and legacy.