



Norman Baker MP
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London, SW1P 4DR

20 December 2011

Dear Minister,

I am writing in response to your letter of 19 October indicating that you are not currently minded to implement Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004.

As you say, this is a disappointing letter. The LGA has lobbied for these powers, and it is particularly disappointing given that councils representing Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Plymouth, and Reading have all expressed support for the introduction of these powers and say they would use them.

We think this represents widespread support for the introduction of these powers. We also feel that support is fairly consistent as none of the councils you consulted opposed their introduction and, of the two which said they would not use them, Oxford City Council pointed out that it was not the highway authority and so would never be able to use the powers, but would support their use by the County; while Salford did not rule out supporting the use of these powers on a Manchester-wide basis in the future.

The enforcement of moving traffic offences represents the cheapest way of reducing congestion in many of our towns and cities, with appreciable economic benefits – for example making high streets more accessible.

As you know Transport for London has enjoyed such powers for a number of years. TfL's study of the effect of enforcement of banned turns, box junction offences and bus lanes (published in 2007) showed a drop of 51% in the rate of offences relative to traffic flows. The level of contraventions at box junctions was reduced to a point at which it ceased to significantly impede traffic flows; banned turn offences fell by nearly a quarter in seven months and bus lane violations by approximately 60 per cent in the first 12 months.

These represent significant benefits to road users and the resultant reduction in congestion will have appreciable economic benefits – achieved at a far lower cost than would be the case if new or widened roads were provided to the same effect.

The extent to which these powers may benefit local economies will vary from place to place and it is not surprising if some councils do not see this as a key issue. While it may be the case that there are councils who would not wish to take up the opportunity to use these powers, we see no reason why this should hold back those authorities – including most of our largest cities - which feel the economic benefits of reduced congestion do

make it worth investing in enforcing them. With the powers in place councils can decide themselves on the usefulness to their communities.

In responding to the Transport Select Committee's report on reducing congestion, which recommended that this part of the Act be brought into force by 2013, your department expressed its commitment to keeping this matter under review. We urge you to bring that review to a speedy conclusion by granting those councils which wish to use them, the powers to boost their local economies by freeing up town centre traffic using the proven and efficient tools contained in this part of the Act.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Box', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Peter Box
Chair, Economy and Transport Programme Board