

# Better transport

## Speech by Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Transport in York. Delivered: 10 May 2006.

### [Check against delivery]

1. It is good to be in York today to see how a fresh approach, sustained investment and innovation can deliver better public transport for passengers.
2. This is the first "Futurebus" service in the UK. Fitted with satellite technology, it offers passengers modern ticketing facilities, coupled with real time passenger information at the bus stops along the route.
3. And it is fully integrated with the local rail services - even having its own departure board at the station.
4. In other words - it completely challenges the usual perception of what to expect when you take a bus.
5. It is an excellent example of what can be achieved when a local authority and the bus industry work together to deliver better services for local passengers.
6. And important too because we can see innovation and change here in York are delivering real results. It is no accident that almost 50% more passengers use the bus in York than they did five years ago. It is happening here in York - it needs to happen right across the country.
7. In the long term, we want more people to choose public transport - but they will only do so if public transport offers them the kind of service that fits with their busy lives: readily accessible information about services, real time travel information, convenient ticketing and booking systems.
8. Passengers are already becoming familiar with using smart cards for their journeys. They are already using the internet or mobile phones to get service information or pay for tickets. They want more and better facilities.
9. That is why earlier today I was pleased to announce the extension of the Oyster Card ticketing system from the tube network to over 300 rail stations in London, enabling passengers to move easily between rail, tube, Docklands Light Railway and bus using one ticket, rather than purchasing different tickets for different parts of their journey.
10. And we be encouraging Train Operating Companies to adopt smartcard ticketing throughout their franchises as well.
11. It is through improvements such as this, which keep pace with the changes in people's everyday lives, that the use of public transport will continue to grow in the long term.
12. Now, sustained investment and a stable economy have enabled us to deliver good progress on transport in recent years.
13. We have the fastest growing railway in Europe. The new structure of the railway industry is delivering improvements in performance and reliability.
14. By Summer 2007, we will set out a strategy for the future of rail.
15. We have developed a clear, sustainable and deliverable strategy for the future of air travel in the next 20 to 30 years.

## Better transport

16. Local transport funding has reached record levels - £8bn over the last five years alone.
17. Thirty-five major road schemes have been completed since 2001 adding much needed capacity on some of our busiest roads.
18. And we have put in place a package of measures to reduce the impact of transport emissions on the environment.
19. This is a record we can build on.
20. For the first time in a generation we have a real opportunity to deal with the challenges of success in transport - not simply fix the failures of the past.
21. That is why today I am making clear that a personal priority will be to advance the debate about a national system of road pricing in this country - moving the debate from "why" to "how" we might make a national system work in practice.
22. Tackling congestion is a key long term priority in transport because it affects us all.
23. It is a consequence of economic success. In a strong and growing economy like ours, people travel more.
24. Our cities will evolve as key centres for economic growth. We need a modern, efficient and reliable transport system that allows people to make reliable journeys and goods and services to be delivered on time.
25. And let's not forget any such road pricing scheme would be only part of the overall transport solution. The Government is ready and able to invest in complementary public transport and travel information schemes which together with road pricing could make the cities better places to live and work.
26. But congestion is getting worse in our major towns and cities and on some parts of the strategic road network. If we do nothing, it could damage our long term economic growth.
27. Evidence points to the problem getting worse. The population will grow by 10% and the number of households will be double that in the next 30 years. Two car households are set to rise - so car journeys will go up.
28. Simply building more and more roads is not the answer. We need only to look at other countries which have built more and bigger roads in the past, only to see them fill up again to know that this is not a sustainable approach. And it is unacceptable in environmental terms.
29. But doing nothing is not an option. We need to take action now, and for the longer term.
30. Since 1997 we have more than doubled spending on transport infrastructure and invested substantially in public transport to give people better public transport choices.
31. For the first time ever, sustained investment is going into transport. Planned spending over the next three years increased from £10.4bn this year to more than £12.8bn by 2007 and will continue to grow. Rising by an annual average of 4.5% in real terms between 2005/6 and 2007/8.
32. And we are improving the way roads are managed to help traffic flow better.
33. And Rod Eddington is now looking at the longer term needs for transport to support growth.
34. All of this will help - but we need a more radical approach if we are to beat congestion in the long term.
35. That is why I am clear that we need to explore the scope for developing a national system of road pricing.

## Better transport

36. I want to set out the work we will be taking forward in the next few months to move the debate on.
37. We know that, on paper, road pricing has the potential to cut congestion long term by nearly half with only 4% less cars using the road.
38. The big challenge is to take road pricing off the drawing board and make it work for road users.
39. There are two key aspects to this.
40. First, we need to take a good look at technology available and what it can deliver in practical terms.
41. The technology would need to be accurate to ensure that motorists have paid the correct price for the journey they have made.
42. We are currently experiencing a real revolution in services and technologies being offered to the motorist. Everything from improvements in vehicle safety, to traffic advice and navigation services, are now being offered by manufacturers for installation in new cars.
43. We need to examine the technologies and services that are already being developed by the motor industry and others. And we need to see how emerging technology could be used for road pricing.
44. So, I will shortly be issuing an invitation to the market to participate in a series of demonstration projects. We will aim to fund several demonstrations over the next 3-4 years, enabling the industry to work with us to tackle some of the really difficult design issues.
45. We have a real opportunity here to face up to one of our key long term challenges - I am committed to doing the work that is necessary to see this through.
46. The second aspect of the work we will be taking forward is about working with local authorities to establish pilot schemes.
47. There are real world practicalities we need to think through, looking at real places, real cities, real streets, and thinking through how pricing should fit in with the wider package of measures needed to tackle congestion and improve journeys.
48. I do not believe it would make sense for us to launch straight into a national scheme. All the work that has been done over the last three years confirms that what we should do is take a measured approach. Through pilots and pathfinders, of varying scale, we will develop our understanding, apply proven approaches where action is needed soon, and, importantly, be able to demonstrate what works.
49. We have already made clear that up to £200 million per annum will be made available through the Transport Innovation Fund, which comes on stream in 2008-09. This money will help support schemes from local authorities which tackle congestion in areas where congestion is a problem today, or soon will be, with a view to establishing a major road pricing pilot within 4-5 years.
50. And we have already committed £18m in total for the early "pump priming" work that will inform local authorities' bids for this money.
51. Seven towns and cities are benefiting from this funding right now - Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Greater Manchester, Shropshire, Tyne& Wear, West Midlands.
52. And I will shortly be inviting bids for a further round of pump-priming funding in the Summer.
53. Better public transport will be crucial. We need to be thinking in terms of the overall package of measures that will give people a real, reliable choice of alternatives to their car.

## Better transport

54. Those packages need to be developed with a very thorough understanding of local circumstances - where are the shops, the houses, the employment centres? Where are the pressures for the future? And what does that mean for the transport network?
55. And we need those packages to be comprehensive. London has shown the importance of getting the complementary measures in place in good time - significant improvements to bus services were developed hand-in-hand with the congestion charge.
56. Above all it is crucial that we make the system as simple for its users as we possibly can. And that means motorists NOT being required to have multiple tags, passes or accounts for different schemes as they drive around the country.
57. That is why we will continue to work with local authorities, individually and collectively, to identify the areas where it makes sense to have common rules and, possibly, common systems.
58. And I will be working in the months ahead with David Milliband, Alistair Darling and Ruth Kelly to ensure that transport strategy is part of our broader Government objectives. I know that developing these ideas will require a lot of work for the Government, for local authorities and for the market. This is a significant challenge but the rewards for success I believe could be substantial. That is our opportunity and our responsibility in the months and years ahead.

*(This speech represented existing departmental policy but the words may not have been the same as those used by the Minister).*