

## Statement to Joint Scrutiny Committee – 11 December 2009

On behalf of the Transport Alliance for Greater Bristol, I urge you to investigate the possibility of setting up an Integrated Transport Authority.

\* The Local Transport Act (2008) offers an opportunity through an ITA to effect control of local passenger transport, including bus and rail, whilst retaining highway powers, where this city region is renowned nationally for failing to provide what is required to reduce reliance on the car and reduce carbon emissions from road transport

\* We recognise that the LTA (2008) makes no provision to fund the establishment of an ITA . However, with the application of some imaginative thinking, the costs of a review of governance and indeed the inauguration of an ITA could be found through seconding transport staff from those councils that are interested. Further, approaches could be made to local MPs, most of whom support an ITA, for ongoing funding from central government who after all have the authority to impose an ITA if necessary. Elsewhere the PTA's and ITA's have a proven track record of their funding applications being well received by central government.

\* The initial small sum of £10,000 followed by £90,000, for funding a review of governance, suggested in the WEP officers' report to the last meeting of the JTEC in October, would be money well spent and could lead to much needed public transport improvements which would make this region attractive to commercial investment, particularly in this period of recession.

\* The bus operators, the transport campaign groups, the environment campaigners, local MPs and one of your councils support an ITA. If this opportunity is missed due to the old adage ' but we are doing alright ', then it is not difficult to predict the continued demise of public transport and the consequential increase in traffic congestion where road building is now proved as no solution.

The complacency recently displayed by the WEP over many transport issues flies in the face of public opinion where we have a transport system widely described as “rubbish”, as an absurdity, an insult to the passengers and **not fit for purpose**.

*This is borne out by the statistics for our region:*

- a) It has the slowest-moving urban traffic;*
- b) It has the highest rail fares;*
- c) The average age of the passenger rail fleet is greater than that in any other region and much of the rail infrastructure is life expired;*
- d) People have worse access to buses than in any other part of Great Britain.*
- e) Greater use of cars is made in the region than elsewhere.*

We expect better of you, on the issue of public transport, which is the key to a sustainable economic future in the region.

Can you please make that decision today and confirm by public statement whether or not you support a 'review of governance'. The public have a right to know where the WEP now stand on the question of an ITA.

And assuming that you choose to do nothing and continue to preside over these dysfunctional arrangements... *be of no doubt: that in the very near future, faced with the transport problems that will unfold here, you or your successors will be implementing an ITA or its future equivalent, if you wish to maintain the economic well-being of the region and its citizens. We ask you to have the vision to start that process now rather than waiting while things continue to get worse.*

Martin Garrett - Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance