The Future of Urban Mobility in Greater Manchester
20 May 2019
The Midland Hotel, Manchester

The information below represents a summary of the discussion at the roundtable event and of the information and ideas presented for consideration.

1. **Understanding the barriers to modal shift**

   - It is important to understand and address the reasons why consumers are unwilling or reluctant to switch to a shared form of transport.
   - In terms of getting people to adopt multi-modal transport options it is important that these are "affordable, available and easy to get to". In the areas where older, high polluting vehicles are more prevalent, the cost of shared transport is a key concern.
   - There are several perception issues associated with shared travel. This is particularly the case with bus travel; this is generally viewed in a negative light and is subject to a perception that it is not an innovative form of travel. Bus operators are trying to change this using new digital services and by improving and upgrading fleet options.
   - It was agreed that consumers can be put off using shared transport easily; one bad experience can discourage consumers. This is particularly the case where shared transport is confusing or unreliable. There is a need to make things as simple as possible for consumers.

2. **Air quality concerns**

   - Air quality is a key issue in the Greater Manchester area. Eight councils have been instructed to take measures to improve the air quality in their areas and are looking for funding and plans to do this.
   - The Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan has been developed between the ten authorities that make up the GMCA; an outline business plan has been submitted to the government. This proposes a number of mechanisms around a clean air zone.
   - However, there remains significant resistance to places restrictions on higher polluting vehicles. One of the main issues is that this will disproportionately affect small businesses and lower income individuals from poorer communities.
   - There is also an issue around council areas that border non-Greater Manchester districts; there is a difficulty obtaining 'buy in' from these areas and smaller businesses may be affected by competition in neighbouring areas who are not under clean air zone restrictions. These are also likely to be the businesses for whom investment in new, cleaner vehicles is not financially viable.
   - It was discussed that policies that do not unduly impede small businesses or consumers but which still have the potential to improve air quality are needed. These will involve changing

the mindset across Greater Manchester but there is a will to work in this area amongst the councils

- It is also about considering the impact of large businesses and distribution centres on air quality. An example was given around Amazon and other high delivery vehicles near Manchester Airport. Whilst such investments are crucial for the area, air quality mitigation needs to be factored into the planning around these facilities (see below).
- There is a working group of Manchester councillors who are considering air quality issues and applying for funding for new policy initiatives.

3. Digital MaaS platforms

- Ross Basnett discussed a new digital MaaS pilot being launched in the Manchester area:
  o The pilot is a follow up to previous mobility as a service pilot in GM with around 40 test users and will involve Manchester Airport Group employees.
  o The pilot uses a new digital platform called Mobilleo and incorporates Walking, Cycling, Car Club, bus, tram, Local Link, Rail, taxi, car rental.
  o Services can be booked either on demand or via Smartsearch. Smartsearch interrogates transport options and using algorithms presents the best options back to the user. User can make choice based on price, time, CO_2, productivity etc depending on their priorities
- This will be a pilot in partnership with Transport for Greater Manchester; depending on the success the same model may be rolled out across a larger number of consumers. The pilot will collect data to allow this assessment to be made.
- It was agreed that digital MaaS technology could be key to encouraging consumers to switch to shared transport options. This is particularly the case if the technology is able to replicate the ease of use and convenience of 'uber' like apps.
- There must be cooperation across transport modes to ensure the success of MaaS technology and it is important that all modes, including active travel, are included.
- Transport for Greater Manchester is keen to build new innovative solutions around shared transport technology and will work with different commercial partners to create this.

4. Innovative solutions

Given the air quality and shared mobility barriers, there was a discussion around potential new policy ideas that could assist in the Greater Manchester area.

Mobility credits

- A mobility credits scheme would involve consumers trading in their old diesel vehicles (Euro 1-5 initially), in exchange local people will be given "Mobility Credits" (in excess of the market value of the car) that can be used to choose from a range of clean and efficient modes of transports as flexibly as suits their lives. In the form of a pre-paid card, locals will be able to use credits on trains, buses, car daily rental, boats and bikes (or whatever schemes are locally appropriate).
- Mobility Credits also provides long-term cost-effective benefits as it encourages sustained behavioural change. A number of local authorities have shown great interest in rolling out

Mobility Credits in their local area and a pilot for mobility will be going ahead in Coventry. UMP Partners have also had positive discussions with central Government on how Mobility Credits could be funded and made available at scale.

- Mobility Credits has been included within the Future Mobility Zones Guidance that the government has issued – there is an opportunity for local authorities to consider applying for funding for this option.
- There was a general view that this proposition was interesting but that there is a lack of knowledge amongst the relevant policy leaders in Manchester -most attendees were unaware of its inclusion in the FMZ guidance.
- The relevant policy group of Manchester Councillors should look into this policy and potentially add to their discussion agenda for a future meeting.
- It was agreed that one of the benefits of mobility credits is that it doesn't penalise lower income consumers or small businesses and could encourage longer term modal shift away from private vehicles.

Grey fleet

- The term grey fleet describes any vehicles that do not belong to a company, but which are used for business travel. This might include a vehicle purchased via an employee ownership scheme or a vehicle privately owned by an employee. Public sector bodies and local authorities could save significant costs and reduce the number of high emission, older vehicles on the road if they switched from supporting grey fleet to a shared transport offering instead.
- It was discussed that according FOI requests made by UMP in April 2019, the total expenditure of all the Greater Manchester authorities combined is £4,725,844.88.
- Local authorities can save money in this area; for example, Woking Borough Council has saved 29% on grey fleet travel by partnering with a car rental operator. A similar reduction in Greater Manchester would save authorities in Greater Manchester £1,370,495
- There was a discussion around how grey fleet mitigation measures could be adopted in Greater Manchester by local authorities and other public sector authorities or private businesses. This would be by no longer funding the use of private vehicles for business travel but would instead provide the use various shared transport options which could include bus, train, tram or car club and also provide a mechanism to establish the most cost-effective way to make a journey.
- Grey fleet should be part of air quality plans in cities - Local authorities should encourage businesses, and particularly public-sector bodies, to switch from 'grey fleet' to providing a different more cost effective, multi modal offering for employees. This might also involve using incentives such as travel discounts for employees or business rates incentives for private businesses.
- There was a consensus that employees are often encouraged or required to own their own vehicles to undertake business travel, and this in turn incentivises travel which impacts on air quality.
- However, there is a no need to manage mitigation efforts to ensure that employees are not penalised. There is a perception that car allowances or mileage reimbursement is a revenue

generator for employees and off-sets the ownership of a private vehicle. This could create opposition to any move away from grey fleet use.

Planning

- Suzanne Walford presented some of the ways in which Greater Manchester could look to plan for multi modal transport solutions. The planning process in an urban area has huge implications for transport and it is important to break down the 'silo mentality' that still exists in the planning process. Planning developments in urban areas should have - at their heart - how the residents and workers who will live and work there can move around sustainably, and the transport modes they want to use i.e. by ensuring new developments have connectivity to bus, train etc.

- There is a need to set out a clear direction for promoting multi modal transport as a consideration in every new development – in particular it must take into account the shift that is happening from vehicle ownership to vehicle hire, and from single to multi-modal transport modes. Increasing number of research reports show that under 25s are moving away from vehicle ownership. This will have important consequences for how urban housing developments are designed in future.

- It could be possible to consider limiting parking options for new development in favour of requiring multi-modal connectivity - this would not only discourage private car ownership and release space for denser urban development, but release funds for car hire, links to the bus network and incentivise infrastructure expansion. There are developments in the Salford area that are already moving away from providing car parking provision.

- A long-term goal in this area is to achieve national legislative change in the National Planning Policy Framework, which would then be replicated at a local level in local plans. This is the legislative route.

- However, there is also an 'on the ground route' to achieving planning change by using funding required at a local level by section 106 agreements. Rather than requiring developers to provide travel vouchers or sustainable travel donations, local authorities could use innovative thinking to require the creation of multi-modal travel hubs in new developments.

- It was discussed that local authorities often require a 'sustainable transport contribution' from new developers – there would be a way of re-purposing this funding and instead requiring shared transport provision. For example, the creation of mobility hubs included bikes, car, bus and other locally available options.

- Developers are generally conservative but there are ways of local authorities encouraging a shift in thinking in this area. However, planning officers must be sure that any requirements will actually target the right transport areas and not be complex or difficult to police.

- There is also a need to ensure that there are no 'favourability' issues between developments and that policies are transparent and consistently applied.

- It would be necessary to develop clear planning guidance and practice notes for officers to ensure policy considerations such as this are actually carried through into decision making.