

Transport Committee

Oral evidence: Urban Congestion, HC 760

Wednesday 29 March 2017

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Members present: Mrs Louise Ellman (Chair); Robert Ffello; Huw Merriman; Iain Stewart; Graham Stringer; Martin Vickers.

Questions 331 - 409

Witnesses

I: Andrew Jones MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport; and Anthony Ferguson, Deputy Director, Traffic and Technology, Department for Transport.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Andrew Jones MP, and Anthony Ferguson.

Q331 **Chair:** Good afternoon and welcome to the Transport Select Committee. This is the last in our series of evidence sessions in our inquiry on urban congestion. For our records, could I ask our witnesses to give their name and position?

Andrew Jones: My name is Andrew Jones, MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough, and Transport Minister.

Anthony Ferguson: I am Anthony Ferguson. I am the deputy director and head of traffic and technology in the Department for Transport.

Q332 **Chair:** Thank you. Minister, do you consider urban congestion to be a serious problem?

Andrew Jones: Yes, I do. Urban congestion is a significant problem and that is a widely held view. I do not think it should be news. We have launched a number of schemes to combat congestion and to put more capacity into our networks. Urban congestion is a feature of parts of this country and most urban areas around the world.

Q333 **Chair:** Have you made any specific assessment of the economic, health and environmental effects of congestion?



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Andrew Jones: Yes. The Department has done some work on that and has estimated the cost of congestion and the economic impact to be around £23 billion per year.

Q334 **Chair:** Have you looked at the health impacts?

Andrew Jones: Not directly, no.

Q335 **Chair:** What about environmental impacts?

Andrew Jones: The impact on the environment is primarily through cars and their emissions. Yes, a significant amount of work is being done on that as we become more aware of the impact from diesel engines. That is why the Government have launched a joint initiative between the Department for Transport and the Environment Department on air quality. Yes, the Government have made some estimates of it.

Q336 **Chair:** Do you have a team of people looking at congestion, or is it just something that falls between different people in your Department?

Andrew Jones: It falls under one directorate. You could argue that congestion is often defined by roads, but you could easily argue that congestion takes place on our railways and within our bus networks too at peak times of the day, yet we tend to define it as more to do with roads. The Department for Transport is split modally, so we have a directorate dealing with rail and a directorate dealing with roads, and so on. If we are just focusing on roads, we do indeed have people who look at the issue.

Q337 **Chair:** Do you have a group of people who are looking specifically at congestion in relation to roads, or is it just a roads team?

Andrew Jones: We look at what we can do to support local highways authorities, either through funding, technology or sharing best practice to assist them in their role; so, yes, we have a team that works on that.

Q338 **Chair:** There is no silver bullet, is there, that deals with congestion? It seems to be different solutions in different places depending on circumstances. Do you have any system for evaluating what works best in particular circumstances?

Andrew Jones: I entirely agree that there is not a silver bullet. It is caused by individual circumstances, and those circumstances change. Ultimately, in urban areas particularly, we are dealing with road space that is finite; it is very difficult to add road space. We know that congestion peaks at certain times of day, but the causes could be different. It could be event-based congestion. It could be rush hour-based congestion. If you are a big retail area, your weekends in December will be very heavily congested. The point is when demand exceeds capacity. There can be lots of causes, which is why it is very much a local solution to a local problem.



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Do we have work to assess and share best practice? That is very much in development. We help local authorities to measure congestion levels. We help them with funding and with what good practice looks like, but ultimately some of that analysis is handled at local level.

Anthony Ferguson: The only thing I would say in addition is that obviously all the schemes and interventions that we fund centrally, but are delivered at local level, will have attached to them an evaluation and monitoring process. While we may not do the evaluation ourselves, it is being done, collected and reported back to the Department. Most congestion interventions are done by local highway authorities.

Q339 **Chair:** You have a body of information based on practice in different places on what seems to work.

Anthony Ferguson: Yes, we do, and it is an ongoing process. For new interventions, say around technology, we have to develop evaluation frameworks to work out which interventions are more or less successful.

Q340 **Robert Ffello:** I draw the Committee's attention to my usual declaration of interest as chair of the all-party freight transport group. The Road Haulage Association provides administrative support to that group.

One of the issues that we heard frequently in evidence, and on which we have also had written evidence, is that, taking London as a good example of urban congestion in terms of road space, while traffic levels have fallen, congestion has got worse. A lot of that is down to a reduction in road space, primarily due to three competing things. One is road works, one is bus lanes and one is cycle lanes.

We have also had evidence that, even though, for example, bus and cycle lanes create congestion, Val Shawcross is still keen to go ahead and put more of those types of schemes in London under TfL. Do you not think there is a contradiction between gathering evidence that shows that something does or does not work and then perhaps funding schemes to just do more of the same that does not work, in terms of tackling congestion?

Andrew Jones: I am not sure that is right. I do not really agree with that, to be honest. We should be gathering information and sharing good practice. I see that as a developing role for the Department in lots of different ways, but that does not mean to say that we should cut across local decision making.

I am aware that the cycle lanes in London have caused a degree of controversy. TfL can come and speak for themselves, but I would suggest that they are thinking a long way ahead in relation to how they can encourage modal shift. They are trying to provide the infrastructure, looking way into the future.

Q341 **Robert Ffello:** But if that is creating congestion, which it is seen to be doing, that is not controversial; it is evidence based. Traffic levels have



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fallen, yet congestion and pollution have got worse.

Andrew Jones: Again, notwithstanding the point that TfL can come and answer for themselves, TfL are doing a lot to tackle congestion. They have introduced the congestion charge and bus priority measures, and they have financial incentives to reduce roadworks. They have controlling traffic signals to respond to road incidents. What I think they are seeking to do with cycle lanes is to encourage modal shift to public transport, or a more active mode of travel. They are thinking longer term. I am not going to try to cut across that. We should be encouraging local decision making, because the individual circumstances will be, by definition, local. Our role is to provide financial support, as well as idea support and best practice support, to help them with their decision making.

Q342 **Robert Ffello:** Even if that is creating more congestion.

Andrew Jones: The people of London can choose who to have as their representatives, and can express their choice or not via the ballot box. It is a local decision.

Q343 **Robert Ffello:** Just so that I am absolutely clear, as far as the Department is concerned, you collate the information and you do whatever you do with the information, but, ultimately, if a local body decides to ignore the evidence, it is up to them.

Andrew Jones: Yes. They can do whatever they wish to do. I have no powers to tell a local authority what to do. We have the final nuclear option of suspending a department. We sometimes see a council social services department suspended, for instance, but it is very much a nuclear option. It has never happened in transport. I have no indication at all that any local authority is not actively conscientiously seeking to discharge its transport responsibilities. I certainly think that TfL are trying to do that. TfL are among the world leaders in making maximum use of a finite, historical urban realm for transport. They are good at it. I do not think it would be my job to wade in and say no. The people who run TfL are responsible to the Mayor, and the people who elect the Mayor have the final say. I do not want to cut across local devolution. We could find ourselves in a degree of hot water with a number of mayoral candidates and local councils as a whole.

Chair: I think that would be the case.

Q344 **Robert Ffello:** It raises the question, though, of the use of resources within the DfT if you are collating and working with that information and it is not going to be practically used.

Andrew Jones: It is being practically used. It is used to help inform local decision making, and that is a good thing. I see our role as doing much more of that in the future in lots of different ways. It is entirely reasonable that we will hear, for example, about potential new schemes for recognising and tackling potholes, but it is not necessarily reasonable that every single local highways authority will do the same amount of technology scanning. We can find some of the information.



Q345 **Chair:** It is a matter for local decision making.

Andrew Jones: Yes, I think it should be a matter for local decision making.

Q346 **Iain Stewart:** I have a couple of questions. The first follows on from Mr Ffello's line of questioning. I accept that you say the Department is organised modally, and that local solutions are often the best for particular local circumstances. Some congestion is caused more at a strategic level than locally, as are the solutions. To give an example, this Committee recently did an inquiry on surface access to airports. The decision on where to site an airport or to expand it is a strategic national one. Can you talk me through how the Department would balance local solutions with strategic national priorities?

Andrew Jones: The key thing about our transport networks is that they are networks. If you have one intervention in some part of the network, it will have a consequential impact somewhere else. When major schemes are developed—for example, an airport access issue or an HS2 station—they will have an impact on the local road network.

The key thing is partnership between national and local bodies in planning. I think we have been getting better at that. I have been in the Department for two years, and I feel that dialogue and collaboration on a local basis is better now than it was when I started. It was already quite good when I started. It is a question of recognising that everybody will have a stake in this and that we need to plan appropriately. Highways England, for example, has regional teams and they work with local highways authorities. It is not really possible to access our strategic road network without using the local road network.

Q347 **Iain Stewart:** As an example, assuming the Heathrow expansion gets the go-ahead—

Andrew Jones: If it does, yes.

Iain Stewart: It will add significant volumes to the M4 and the roads in central and west London, as well as all the public transport access, as people try to access the airport. How have you approached working with TfL to anticipate what that demand will be and what road improvements and reconfigurations might be required?

Andrew Jones: I am not the aviation Minister, but I can tell you that it has been a significant part of the planning. If Heathrow gets the go-ahead—we still have votes on it later this year, so we are talking hypothetically—part of the planning has always been that there would be no further growth in surface access to Heathrow via roads. That will have a consequential impact. How is that delivered? It is a big collective effort, with local and national impact. It will be highways authorities locally, Highways England nationally, and rail. All of those things come together.

Q348 **Iain Stewart:** I have a second question. Could you give an example of



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how you learn from previous examples and disseminate the lessons learned? In the run-up to the 2012 London Olympics, there were different experiments made and different solutions put in place for managing London traffic for the games as a whole and when specific events like the cycle race took place in the streets of London. How was that evaluated after the games? What lessons were learned and passed on to other authorities as a way of trying to manage congestion?

Andrew Jones: I have to say that predates me within the Department; so, I am not entirely sighted on the post-Olympic analysis, or indeed the Olympic planning. I am not the best person to answer that question. I would have to do some checking and find out. I can write to the Committee through the Chair with some information on that.

Chair: Thank you.

Q349 **Martin Vickers:** Minister, whether it is local growth funding or indeed any other finance stream from the Department to local authorities or LEPs, what mechanism do you have for monitoring the actual spending and whether you consider it a waste of money, or indeed whether it is used effectively?

Andrew Jones: Nearly every scheme has a competitive element. There is a bidding process. Before a scheme gets the go-ahead, it has to complete a business case. There is always that check. Before anything happens it goes through a number of stages of development before it gets approval, to ensure that there is value for money and a positive return for the taxpayer. Those can vary quite significantly. That triggers the funding to be paid on a local basis, but the day-to-day control of schemes, keeping them within their cost limit, is the responsibility of the local scheme promoter, which will be the highways authority.

Anthony Ferguson: That is especially true when we are talking about formula funding, which is un-ring-fenced money, as opposed to what the Minister referred to, which is slightly different. That is where money is allocated on a competitive basis and we will have been through a process of considering bids, scoring them and evaluating them. We follow up afterwards with the delivery of the project. They are two slightly different funding streams.

Andrew Jones: Under the formula arrangement, £6 billion goes out. That is based on looking at the length of road the highways authority has responsibility for, plus the number of structures and other factors like that. There is a formula that allocates it directly. It is a significant amount of money.

Q350 **Martin Vickers:** Local enterprise partnerships have a particular brief based on economic development and so on. What evidence is there that they are better than local authorities at determining spending priorities?

Andrew Jones: The idea behind the LEPs was all about moving to a more nimble structure post the regional development agencies, which



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were very large organisations. They were started to close the north-south divide, and £19 billion later it was wider. Any incoming Government—which was obviously what happened in 2010—would look at a policy that had not been succeeding, and think, “Right, we need to change this.” Obviously within that, there were some projects that were very successful.

They were changed to be more nimble, frequently private-sector led, organisations—those were the LEPs—to reflect economic geography rather than regional planning. Generally, the LEPs have been a success. They are tuned to the needs of business in an area, but their responsibilities are not just to do with transport. They could include skills, for example.

- Q351 **Martin Vickers:** You say they are tuned to the needs of business in the area, but congestion of course is not just a matter for business, although it is a big cost to business; it is of interest to commuters and ordinary residents in the local area. Are they being squeezed out of the process by passing the responsibility to LEPs rather than to local authorities?

Andrew Jones: The point about LEPs is the last word of the title, which is “partnership.” They include councils as well, so they sit down and plan things together. The highways authority is still the highways authority. The LEP does not cut across it or undermine it.

- Q352 **Chair:** Is easing congestion a specific category when you look at local growth fund projects?

Andrew Jones: It can be. It can also be what is going to open up opportunity, either commercial or residential. I am somebody who strongly believes—it is the Government’s priority too—that transport investment is a driver of economic growth and social progress. If we can create an environment that unlocks land, removes congestion and therefore encourages more economic activity, those are criteria that will be considered for investment schemes, yes.

- Q353 **Chair:** But you also have a category of urban congestion, or do you?

Andrew Jones: It is part of the consideration of a scheme. It is not a single category initiative in itself. It is one of the factors by which schemes are assessed.

- Q354 **Chair:** What powers will the new metro mayors have to deal specifically with congestion? Are there any specific powers or financial means to do it?

Andrew Jones: Transport will be at the heart of some of the devolution deals, but we are getting into the work of DCLG. Mayors will clearly have a key role in deciding transport issues across their area. One of the reasons why I support directly elected mayors is that they will provide visible accountability. It is often very controversial to make transport changes in an area. The point about the combined authorities—most of



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which would have an elected major—is that you will be able to cut across existing orders, and potentially take some pretty tough decisions.

Q355 **Chair:** Will they have any extra money?

Andrew Jones: That will depend upon some of the devolutions. It is not coming out from Transport. They will have access through the highways funding we have already dealt with.

Anthony Ferguson: What they will have, of course, is strategic overview of a whole city, region or area. They will be able to deploy and manage existing funding differently and in a more strategic way. Looking at new bus powers they might have, a lot of city and regional areas are looking at developing key route networks, which is taking the non-strategic road network and identifying the strategic parts of the local road network so that the mayor will have a different set of levers to pull and, potentially, depending on the nature of the local devolution deals, may possibly have access to other money as well. It is a combination of those two things.

Q356 **Chair:** You see it as being more about additional levers to pull, a wider geographical area and more clarity about the position rather than extra money.

Anthony Ferguson: Not one or the other, but a particularly important factor for a metro mayor is that, instead of multiple local highways authorities, public transport would be provided as a network across a city region area, but in the same area you might have multiple local highway authorities. Bus operators have had to deal with different approaches to transport, depending on which local authority area they pass through. That will be swept up into a bigger area-wide strategic approach to transport, which we think will be helpful.

Andrew Jones: The highways maintenance formula funding and the integrated transport block will be consolidated and will become part of the mayoral budgets. They will be taking on budgets that are already local transport budgets but consolidated to the wider city region, west of England or wherever those authorities take place.

Q357 **Chair:** The autumn statement and the recent Budget made £1.8 billion available to relieve traffic congestion. How much of that will be spent on public and active transport projects, and how much will be on road improvements and maintenance?

Andrew Jones: We have already had some of that spending. That has gone out already. It has largely been to tackle congestion. It is going into our road network. The majority of that funding we have called the national productivity investment fund. It is getting on for £700 million-worth of budget, so it is a significant pot. We will shortly be announcing the competitive process to allow authorities to bid for that money. We have not announced yet how it will be allocated, but it will be a bidding process.



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Q358 **Chair:** Will that decision be made by the Department rather than the local authorities involved?

Andrew Jones: They will be able to bid for it. They will obviously control the content of their bid, but they will not control the decision-making process. It will be a competitive process. We will work with local highways authorities to help develop and allocate schemes. It is funding specifically to reduce congestion and improve or upgrade local highway infrastructure, but all with the view of unlocking economic opportunities.

Q359 **Chair:** When will that be ready?

Andrew Jones: It is not far away, but I do not have a date yet.

Q360 **Chair:** But not far away.

Andrew Jones: Not far away. You are tempting me to be specific with a date, but we are not quite there yet.

Q361 **Chair:** It is sometimes said that increasing the capacity of roads will typically attract more vehicles, offsetting any congestion-easing benefits. Do you agree with that view?

Andrew Jones: I have heard that expressed. In some ways, there is an element of truth in it. What is the counterfactual? We have seen traffic on our roads grow very significantly. It has doubled in 40 years. We have some congestion problems now. Those congestion problems cause economic and health problems, as we were discussing earlier. We can recognise that we have a growing population and a growing economy, and we need more transport infrastructure. It is appropriate to invest in our road network. Putting capacity into it is at the heart of the road investment strategy, but it is not as if it is the only thing that is happening. The road investment strategy is alongside investment in railways and HS2. It is a multi-modal period of significant transport investment.

Q362 **Chair:** Are you satisfied that there is enough thinking across the different transport modes at the planning stage and that planners are looking at roads at the same time as looking at rail investment and other sorts of transport investment? Do you think that is done well enough now?

Andrew Jones: Yes. That is exactly what happens and it is not just now; it looks many, many years into the future. Undoubtedly that is the case. The majority of requests that come through at the moment, I have to say, are for schemes that have been on the books in local areas for a number of years. Indeed, I went down to Devon and opened a scheme that first appeared in their county plan in the 1950s. We are trying to break out of our stop-start approach to transport investment, which has been a feature of British transport history.

The argument "Build and it will be full of cars" is not a good enough answer. Not building means it is also full of cars, but you get the downside in terms of health and lack of economic activity.



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Anthony Ferguson: The question was whether, if you provided extra capacity, suppressed demand would fill the capacity. That certainly happens on some occasions. If providing extra road capacity is the only solution being put forward, it is sometimes not going to be very effective.

It is fair to say that, when we looked across all the key city region areas around the country and asked them to set out in summary form their proposals for dealing with growing transport demand over the next 10 or 20 years, one thing was common in every single one of them: they all have a multi-modal approach. They all realise that you have to do multiple things to address the problem. Road capacity is part of it, but it is only one part of it. The different formulations in different areas reflect their different circumstances, different histories and different political objectives. They are slightly different, but they all contain a lot of the same component parts.

Q363 **Robert Ffello:** Mr Ferguson, on the back of that, when local authorities are looking at a solution for those issues, are they looking first and foremost from a passenger point of view, are they looking from a freight point of view or is it variable? Will some have a balance? Will some be so swept up in the need to deal with the issues of passengers that they forget about freight? What is the picture?

Anthony Ferguson: My answer to that would be that I have not seen evidence that anybody is looking at individual users to the exclusion of freight. Every area we are talking about has plans around economic development, and transport is usually just one component of a much bigger strategy for a local area. Movement of goods and access to services are equally important. Some of the challenges are very difficult. There is a particular issue around first mile and last mile, and how you solve that in different areas will vary. I would say the answer is that freight definitely has to be part of the overall picture.

Q364 **Robert Ffello:** I would not disagree that it has to be part of it. Just to be clear, in some of the documents I have seen from organisations representing some of the new mayoral areas—I do not want to be too specific—freight is mentioned at item No. 26 on the list of things they want to tackle. Yes, they consider it, but it is about the priority with which they look at it.

Andrew Jones: I have had many conversations over the last two years with local authorities or combined authorities. They always take a multi-modal approach. They consider the needs of passengers and of business. They are particularly tuned to how businesses can reach their customers, and that is typically via road freight. Yes, I have found that to be a feature, but it is part of a mix. Everybody understands that it is part of a mix locally. You could not have a good solution to an area's transport needs without considering how goods will flow.

Anthony Ferguson: When one thinks about technology, which we may come on to talk about, the logistics in the freight sector are well ahead of



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the game. The whole just-in-time concept is based around having a lot of data about what you are doing and what you do with it.

Some of the evidence provided to you by Val Shawcross mentioned the Olympics point. During the Olympics, we behaved slightly differently. We allowed night-time deliveries, and because of the Olympics that was acceptable. There was public acceptance of changing some of the rules around those sorts of things. If you take the Olympics out of the picture, it becomes a bit harder to explain to people why night-time deliveries might be a good idea. We come back to one of the themes of the day, which is that it has to be determined locally in terms of what is acceptable to the public locally. We can only provide a framework and let that be decided locally.

- Q365 **Graham Stringer:** That is an interesting point, and I would like to follow it up before I move to a slightly different point. Some of the academic evidence we have heard before this Committee basically says that, if you had been looking at the problem of urban congestion 25 years ago, incentivising and encouraging people to use public transport would have been part of the answer to congestion, whereas now, because of Uber and Amazon giving almost instant delivery, there are a lot more white vans and delivery vans in the area. Have the Government in any way had a policy response to that change in the cause of urban congestion?

Andrew Jones: It is an interesting question. Things are moving pretty fast. Uber hardly existed a few years ago and is still not widespread around the country, although it is very popular in some parts. I have not used it myself, but that is a reflection of the fact that I can never remember my password. It is clearly popular among many people. The legislation we have for dealing with taxis goes back to 1847; so, it is not the easiest policy area.

Are we looking at that? Yes, we are. Again, it is about working with local authorities. There are lots of schemes being developed. I can think of a scheme that Westminster Council has in relation to last mile delivery, given the amount of internet purchasing, with goods delivered to workplaces. It is very local, but we keep a constant eye on it.

- Q366 **Graham Stringer:** The significant point is that the driver of congestion seems to have changed in the last five or 10 years. It probably needs a fairly immediate and different response. You recognise that it is changing. Is there any Government response to that?

Andrew Jones: It is changing in the sense that the mix on the roads is changing, but it is not changing fundamentally. We see the fastest growth from light goods vehicles, but we also see growth in heavy goods vehicles and in cars. Some people have talked about capping the numbers of private hire vehicles. I am not sure we could say there has been a formal Government response, but we can certainly say that I am aware of it and am working on taxi policy.



Q367 Graham Stringer: It is not just taxis. I will move on to the point I wanted to ask about. The traditional response in urban areas to congestion has been to get people to use public transport and to prioritise public transport by putting in bus lanes. Do the Government have a central policy on the criteria that should be used for bus lanes? We have just had an interesting debate in Committee about centralisation and decentralisation. What is the Government's position on the criteria for bus lanes?

Andrew Jones: We have just spent a bit of time, several weeks in fact, on this particular point. Bus lanes can be effective, simply by allowing access more quickly to city centres. We have seen some good use of bus lanes on a local basis. Generally, they are quite controversial. Most people define congestion as other people in cars making unnecessary journeys. Without any information, it is a judgment call on whether those journeys are necessary or not. My gut feel is that it is on a local basis. We have allocated funding to local schemes, which include bus lanes. I would support bus lanes where they are appropriate and proven to be successful.

Q368 Graham Stringer: The Government funded a bus lane in my constituency that has slowed both the traffic and the buses, which is really quite an accomplishment. Incidentally, it was a Lib Dem Minister who authorised the expenditure on it. I wondered whether there were any criteria, because there are also bus lanes in my constituency that work rather well. When I ask whether there are either local or national assessments and criteria so that we can make judgments—good bus lane, bad bus lane, successful bus lane—there does not seem to be an answer either locally or nationally.

Anthony Ferguson: To add to what the Minister said a moment ago, typically we provide the ability to put in a bus lane and leave local authorities to decide which other classes of vehicle can use a bus lane. For example, can a taxi go in it or not? Can PHVs go in it or not, or cyclists or motorcycles?

Andrew Jones: Indeed, some are allowing electric cars to use their bus lanes as an incentive to encourage electric vehicle take-up.

Anthony Ferguson: Our role in that would be the exciting job of designing a new sign so that every motorist and every road user knew what they could and could not do. The local authority is the one who will determine the best deployment.

On the point about evaluation, the best recent examples have been areas that decided for themselves—it was not uncontroversial in Liverpool and Coventry—to look at bus lanes and see if they were all working. It is fair to say that some bus lanes are there for reasons of history as much as anything and probably have not been looked at. Although it was controversial at the time, I think the outcome of what happened in Liverpool was that they established that the case for some of the bus



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lanes was very strong and in some cases was less strong. That became a public and visible process to all residents of Liverpool so they could make some judgments. In a way, that was not an unhelpful thing to do, but it is not really for the Department to weigh in and start doing evaluations of that kind. Apart from anything else, we do not have anything like the resources to go and look at every road network in the country. That would be an enormous job.

Q369 **Chair:** Is there any Government guidance on whether the effectiveness of bus lanes should be looked at in relation to all the traffic involved, and how often they should be reassessed?

Anthony Ferguson: Our guidance is more about what a bus lane can be and how it can help, based on what we know about it. Ultimately, it is just to enable the local authority to decide what it wishes to do based on its own local evaluation.

Q370 **Chair:** It is up to them what they do.

Anthony Ferguson: Yes.

Q371 **Huw Merriman:** I want to talk about the enforcement of moving traffic offences, which feeds into what you have just said. Again, it is not really for the Department to intervene in local matters, but if we are really going to get a grip on urban congestion, is it enough just to leave it to local authorities? It may work where there is a directly elected mayor or unitaries. Where you have districts or counties disagreeing with the police, even about on-street parking—which is what I have; we have criminal parking and no one is doing anything at all—shouldn't the Department come in with more robust policies that require one of those authorities to actually do something about it, or else?

Andrew Jones: This is an issue we have discussed in your own individual local circumstances. We do not really have the powers to intervene. I cannot direct. The majority of local authorities have gone down the route of civil parking enforcement; 93% or whatever have gone down that route; so, it is very nearly all civil parking enforcement.

Q372 **Huw Merriman:** All bar 17 authorities have done it.

Andrew Jones: It is all bar very few, and that number is decreasing because I have just signed off a couple more. They apply for powers, and we check them and then grant them. It seems to me sensible that they move down a civil route. The Government have a preference, which is that they take this on locally, but we do not insist on them doing it. It goes against the localism principles.

Q373 **Huw Merriman:** Can I push you on that, Minister? You talk about going against localism principles, but the Government were happy to prohibit any more municipal bus companies. You could say that goes against localism. We have situations where many councils across the country are dominated by one political party or another. While we can say that it is



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for the electors, and if councillors do not do what they should they will face the wrath at the ballot box, we know it does not really work like that in many town halls. In that situation—I do not wish to be parochial, Chair, because we could apply this to many situations in terms of giving more powers locally or holding them to account—couldn't the Department think of urban congestion and say, "We are intervening now"?

Andrew Jones: I fully recognise that there are one-party states in local government. There are one-party states of different colours in different parts of the country, and they have been that way for a long time. It does not look like they are going to change for a while either. That can lead to some sloppy practice. It does not have to, but we have all seen a little bit of that where we think, "That council could do with a bit of gingering up." That tends to happen.

I do not think that cuts across the powers we have. We do not have the powers to override local decisions. The only powers we have would be to entirely suspend a council's transport department, which we have never done. It is very much a nuclear option. Periodically over the last few decades, we have seen a local social services function suspended, or an education service suspended. It is a nuclear option, used sparingly, and it could only be where you see huge systemic failure. There is no evidence that we have any councils with huge systemic failure in local transport. Some may be more capable than others, but we are not seeing the huge problems that we have seen in some social services sections, for example.

Q374 **Huw Merriman:** Moving on to the moving traffic offences, and again talking about more localism, and situations whereby the police are just not resourced—so, arguably, whether that is what the police should be doing— why not allow local authorities to take more control, assuming of course that you put in reasonable steps, so that they cannot use it as a cash cow?

Andrew Jones: That is the concern. We have no plans at present to give local authorities greater enforcement powers. The police have the power to take action when it is needed. This cropped up during the buses Bill and it has cropped up in conversations that I have had over the last two years with the LGA. They have made the case for it under part 6 of the Traffic Management Act.

Our concerns are simply that it could be used by local councils as a cash-raising issue rather than a traffic-solving issue. It has been on the statute books for 13 years and nobody has introduced it. Everybody has had the same basic problems. I have explained my view to the LGA on a few occasions. Am I against the principle of it? No, but they would have to work harder to show that there are some safeguards in place on behalf of motorists.

Q375 **Huw Merriman:** Could you foresee a scheme that would work to disincentivise them from using it as a cash cow? For example, perhaps a



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proportion of the amount that they raise would have to go back to the Department for Transport.

Andrew Jones: It would be money to be raised locally and kept locally. There should not be a financial incentive from a Department perspective. I could see a possibility, but quite frankly I have not been convinced about the case yet, simply because I do not think the LGA has brought forward enough safeguards to address the concerns that we have had.

Q376 **Chair:** You support local decision making; you have said a lot in support of that. What would it take to convince you to activate something that is already an Act of Parliament?

Andrew Jones: I should imagine it would be the same as for every one of my predecessors. I would need to be clear that they were seeking to use the powers not for revenue raising but for congestion tackling. Only a few days ago, I got a letter from a local councillor saying, "We need to do this so I can raise some revenue, please." It was not exactly what I wanted to hear. When we hear comments like that, and the LGA come up with proposals, which, quite frankly, are not very good, they simply have to go back and try harder.

My door will be open. I have discussed it. They have had a change of personnel. The LGA lead on this was Councillor Peter Box and now it is Councillor Martin Tett. I have met both of them on the subject and have given them my view, which is the same as I am expressing now. There is more work to be done. I am not against the principle, but there is a lot of convincing to be done that this can be handled appropriately and not used for just straight revenue-raising powers.

Q377 **Chair:** What lessons can be learned for cycling infrastructure from the severe disruption caused in London by the construction of some of the cycle superhighways?

Andrew Jones: The construction of the superhighways caused some congestion. Certainly it was not possible to get into a cab in London without hearing some feedback.

Q378 **Chair:** That is quite a good test of public opinion.

Andrew Jones: I never say I am the Minister for taxis as well; that would be just too dangerous. I had one incident when I did actually own up to a cabbie that I was the Minister for taxis. As part of the referendum last year, I was campaigning for remain with the then Leader of the Lords at Charing Cross station. A cabbie collected a ride at the station, pulled up just in front of us, wound the window down and shouted out, "Go and get a proper job." I shouted back, "I've got one—I'm the Minister for taxis," and he drove off very quickly.

Leaving that to one side, on the introduction of cycling lanes, it is generally a positive that we separate non-motorised transport from motorised transport for safety purposes. I recognise that it is difficult to



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do work on a very busy network. It is quite intrusive and online working is tough, but separating facilities to provide safer travel for cyclists has to be a good thing. There is clear demand for more cycling facilities.

Q379 **Chair:** What about the construction? There were particular problems with the construction of the lanes and the disruption it caused.

Andrew Jones: I am quite sure that there were. There was all sorts of feedback provided, but it would have to be held on a local basis. It cannot come to the Department whenever a local authority is working to introduce cycle lanes. They have to take that responsibility on a local basis.

Q380 **Chair:** How do you see the cycling and walking investment strategy developing? Are you going to put more funds into that? Are you going to change the guidance on, for example, cycle lanes?

Andrew Jones: It is going to be more about enabling. What we want to do is make cycling and walking much more the default choice for shorter journeys. We hope to publish our cycling and walking investment strategy very shortly. The ambition will be through some funding, certainly. We have increased the funding for cycling and walking. It is £1.1 billion, which is around 2% of the Department's budget. It is a significant budget.

We intend to measure the strategy's success by looking at the estimated total number of cycle stages made. We want to introduce more encouraging measures to get people to walk to school, for example. Again, it is about stuff happening on a local basis. The strategy will include tools for local authorities to develop their own local plans.

Q381 **Iain Stewart:** I have two questions on cycle lanes. First, the cycle superhighways in London have a very hard barrier between the cycle lane and the road. We have heard some comments that in retrospect that was a mistake and that, while we should have cycle lanes, they should not have that hard barrier. That is partly to reduce the construction time and cost, but also potentially to allow the space to be used for motor traffic at certain times when the cycle lanes may not be heavily used. Is that something you are reviewing?

Andrew Jones: Caution required on that. We have a local transport note, "Cycle infrastructure design," which provides advice for local authorities about designing good, safe schemes that are within current legislation. To have parts of that designated as a cycling facility, then becoming a motoring facility and then becoming a cycling facility sounds a bit difficult to manage and potentially quite unsafe. I quite like the idea of keeping the two separate.

Q382 **Iain Stewart:** But at what cost?

Andrew Jones: In what sense?

Q383 **Iain Stewart:** In the sense that the cycle lanes along the Embankment



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are often unused when traffic is sitting stationary and belching out goodness knows what emissions, damaging the atmosphere. If you did not have a hard barrier between the two, at a very local level they could at times decide it was better for the environment to allow some of those lanes to be used for motor traffic.

Andrew Jones: It's possible. I have to say that nobody has brought that suggestion to me. I will give it some consideration. My gut feel is that we should be trying to separate wherever possible for safety purposes. I understand your point. I think it would potentially be quite difficult to achieve. Some people have come to me with the suggestion that motorbikes could use cycle lanes. I have reservations about that, simply because of the speed differences between the two modes of transport.

Q384 **Iain Stewart:** This is a related question. Once a cycle lane like the superhighway is put in place, what retrospective analysis is made of the cost-benefit ratio? Where I live in London when I am down here, the highway was a busy road but relatively free moving in the morning peak. Now there are miles of congestion and often heavy goods vehicles sitting stationary and emitting NOx and goodness knows what else. Is that taken into consideration when planning future cycle lanes to be developed?

Andrew Jones: This goes back to our earlier conversation about who is planning them and the role of the local authority. These are local questions. We do not plan the schemes; they are local schemes. Our role is to help with infrastructure design. That is why we have the local transport note. It will come down to local authorities planning and implementing to meet their local demand, not just now but projected into the future, to cater for what will be significant cycling growth.

Anthony Ferguson: We have seen some evolution in that recently. The Traffic Signs Regulations that were signed off by Ministers last year included a whole swathe of new facilities—signs, markings and signals—designed to encourage and facilitate cycling. The note the Minister refers to is about a slightly different thing, to do with the harder construction issues.

There is a flip side to what you said. I am a user of the lane outside this building. It may be quiet at some times, but when it is busy, it is very, very busy. If it were to grow any more, the issue is that, having built it so big, it can only be so big because you have built a hard kerb in there. I would say anecdotally that there are already adaptations to the superhighway that I use. TfL are already starting to make changes at a local level, because they have people out there monitoring and evaluating. It is back to the earlier theme; it is not us doing it, but it is happening because TfL collect a lot of data about usage and what that means for the infrastructure they have provided and any changes they might make in the future.

I recognise what you say about whether the cyclist or the HGV is right or wrong. It goes back to the point I made earlier, which is that you have to



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look at the bigger canvas. The question about whether the HGV is sitting in static traffic or not is probably more of an issue in relation to freight strategy than whether cyclists are taking up too much road space. It is a complicated story that the likes of TfL are better placed to analyse than we are centrally.

Q385 Robert Ffello: I have a very brief question, going back to something that was said about installation, whether of a cycle lane or any other sort of roadwork, or indeed construction work. One of the things I have heard from TfL is that they do not have all the powers necessary to regulate someone doing construction work—how much of the road they take up with wooden hoardings and that sort of thing. Is there an intention to revisit the powers that not just TfL but other local areas have, so that they can regulate how roadworks are done and how work that is not roadworks but impedes on the road is managed?

In the same vein, although TfL have 90% of the primary routes under their control, they do not have all the roads in London under their control. I am sure it will similarly be the case with other mayoralities as they develop. What is being looked at in terms of making sure that there is one body with all the powers it needs in each area?

Andrew Jones: There is no doubt that street works can cause congestion. We have all seen that, and it happens everywhere. Street works are also obviously necessary for maintenance, utilities, and so on. There are different regimes in different places. We have a preferred route, which is a permit scheme. It is about local authorities having the powers, effectively. I buy that.

Q386 Robert Ffello: They are saying they do not.

Andrew Jones: We will have that conversation.

Anthony Ferguson: Can I touch on that?

Andrew Jones: Yes.

Anthony Ferguson: There is a particular point. The things we are referring to, as you say, are about the powers they have to deal with works on the roads for which they are the highway authority. There is a second set of issues around powers that exist in the Traffic Management Act, about scaffolding on the pavement or footway, which are slightly different. That is where someone carrying out a large property development may have incursions into what pedestrians and road users are doing. Their argument is that there are some powers that they could have but they do not currently have because they are not commenced. It is a bit like part 6.

Q387 Robert Ffello: There is a third one, which is if it is on a road that is not under their control but has a knock-on effect on a road that is under their control.



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Anthony Ferguson: Yes, you are right. That is a bit more about co-ordination. The non-London issue would be around key route networks. It is about making sure that the roads that matter are dealt with in the way they should be. It gets into an issue around lane rental. There is a particular set of powers that London has that apply only on TfL roads. Those powers target the most sensitive roads, because that is where congestion matters most and where the impact is greatest.

You are right that, in looking at that and all the powers, we take a holistic view of an area and ask whether it works. It is unusual in London because we have TfL with a strategic network and local highway authorities in the boroughs, so there is a separate set of roads. It is not necessarily reflected in quite that way elsewhere. We are looking at the whole picture, because roadworks on a particularly sensitive road need to be dealt with in a particular way. Equally, roadworks surrounding sensitive roads can have impacts on those as well.

Q388 **Robert Ffello:** Is there active consideration of possibly giving more powers or co-ordinating the powers in some way, so that one authority has the powers they think they need?

Anthony Ferguson: Subject to what I said about TfL, which is a particular set of issues that we are discussing with them—

Q389 **Robert Ffello:** They will be under the London Mayor.

Anthony Ferguson: We are really back to the point we made earlier about permits.

Andrew Jones: I was not going down the same route. I was going to give a different answer, which is that we have different regimes in different parts of the country. We have notice schemes in some parts and permit schemes in some parts. It is basically about 60% permit and 40% notice. Generally, we think permit schemes are more effective. We have lane rental trials. It is not just a TfL trial. It is also being trialled in Kent. During the course of this year, we will be doing an evaluation and a consultation on the future of lane rental. That will be happening this summer. I am aware of different schemes running in different places. There is the opportunity therefore to harmonise, but again I am a little cautious about directing local authorities: "You will operate this scheme." It goes back to the points made by—

Q390 **Robert Ffello:** But if they are asking for more powers, would you consider that?

Andrew Jones: I have to tell you that nobody has come to me and asked for any.

Q391 **Robert Ffello:** That is interesting. It is not what TfL told me. I will go back to them.

Andrew Jones: They might have spoken to the Department, but they have not spoken to me.



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Anthony Ferguson: Indeed. There has been a specific set of discussions around extra powers, beyond things to do with street works, which are contained in the same legislation but are slightly different. Then there is the issue about lane rental, which again is of particular interest to TfL because they are one of the pioneer schemes. Those discussions have been happening but they have not gone as far as being formal ministerial discussions.

Q392 **Graham Stringer:** In so far as public transport is a solution to congestion problems—it is in many cases—trams are probably at the top of the apex of being effective at getting people out of their cars. Why do we have so few trams in our urban areas in this country?

Andrew Jones: That is quite a philosophical question.

Graham Stringer: It is not a philosophical question. John Prescott—

Andrew Jones: They were taken out, effectively.

Q393 **Graham Stringer:** They were taken out in the late 1940s and early 1950s when, basically, electricity was nationalised. Electricity and trams worked mutually, and they got rid of the trams. In John Prescott's White Paper at the end of the 1990s, he envisaged 20 tram schemes in the country. We have Sheffield, Manchester, Birmingham and Croydon. I have forgotten one, but we do not have many. The new schemes that have come in have been very effective. Some of the evidence we have heard is that the Department has been negative about them because it does not discount their capital value over a realistically long period, so they look inefficient compared with buses.

Andrew Jones: The Government are not negative; far from it. I think trams provide very effective local solutions. People like them. People have a sense of pride in them: "This is our network."

Q394 **Graham Stringer:** They change the feel of a city.

Andrew Jones: Yes, they do, and generally it is a very positive thing. I have been supportive of trams. I have reservations about trolley buses. I will have a look at that accounting point, but the idea that the Department is not supportive of light rail tram schemes is just not borne out by the evidence, and the fact that we have been giving—

Q395 **Chair:** Would you be willing to look again at the procedures and assessments involved to make it easier for local transport authorities to have light rail schemes if they want them?

Andrew Jones: We are already giving money to local authorities. Most local authorities who are in this marketplace find it very easy to get over the finish line, because we have been granting cash in support. It is not proving to be that difficult. I will have a look at the accounting procedure and the evidence that you have taken, but the basic bottom line is that we support light rail tram schemes.



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Q396 **Graham Stringer:** There are a number of schemes such as Southampton, Liverpool and Leeds. They have tried to get schemes and have been thwarted in their attempts. Those are just the ones I can think of off the top of my head. Of the original 20, most have not had them. I accept what you say in good faith, but I do not think the Department has been as supportive as it could have been.

Andrew Jones: Oh, caution required there. I am just not buying that argument, to be honest with you. Tram schemes can be very effective and we have put money into tram schemes. I will be very happy to see more tram schemes come forward. I think they are a very helpful ingredient. They are not cheap by any means, but they are a success. The one in your own area, in Manchester, is great.

Graham Stringer: It has been a huge success.

Q397 **Chair:** It is reassuring to hear that you support it and that you would be willing to look at any obstacles.

Andrew Jones: Yes. I met the APPG and the trade groups in that sector, and told them exactly what I am saying to you, which is that tram schemes deliver excellent local public transport solutions and I want to see more of them. I will check out the accounting point, because it is simply not borne out by my own experience.

I am aware that Leeds had a very problematic approach with their mass transit for the city. They had a supertram scheme that was very well advanced and then was cancelled. They had a further setback more recently with a trolley bus proposal. The budget the Department was using to support Leeds in that decision, which was £170 million, is to be retained by Leeds to help them develop their own local solution. Far from being neutral, we are very positive about this.

Q398 **Chair:** I would now like to turn to the potential benefits of new technology in managing transport, looking particularly at congestion. How would the development of connected vehicles and autonomous vehicles help in traffic management for the future?

Andrew Jones: Potentially by allowing greater density of use of finite road space. Connected and autonomous vehicles are pretty exciting opportunities. We can see what the future might look like, although it is not quite so easy to see how we get to it. We can see connected and autonomous vehicles probably powered by electric motors, and the very attractive prospect of changing the pattern of ownership. I can see a real future for them. That is why we have the Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill. It is why there are various Government grants to encourage development of the technology in this country so that we can be at the forefront of getting the benefits of it for the citizens of this country.

Q399 **Chair:** Could you or Mr Ferguson explain a little more about how it would work? Would it enable better information to be put together, and how would that be applied?



Anthony Ferguson: There are any number of ways. The Minister alluded to some of them in relation to vehicles. There is also how the infrastructure currently works. The technology we have in this country is some of the best in the world in relation to things like traffic management—for example, traffic signal technology that happens dynamically in real time using sensors under the ground to detect traffic flows, and traffic signal timings that are constantly changing in order to optimise traffic flow.

You can see a world in the future—in fact, it is coming already—where individuals, through their smartphones or connected vehicles, will produce information about where they are, what they are doing and at what speed they are travelling. That will be hoovered up into the Cloud and analysed. We will then be able to communicate with infrastructure. For example, one of the things that is being trialled in lots of parts of the world at the moment is to do with the speed you need to travel to get a green light when you get to a traffic light. You can make a decision about what speed to go, rather than guessing that the light is about to turn red or about to stay green. You will actually have information about that, so you can start to iron out some of the traffic flows. The more you can do that, the more you can optimise the amount of capacity you are getting out of finite road space.

There are any number of opportunities. Most of the focus at the moment is on the effective use of road networks—capacity utilisation—and on safety. There are a number of uses of new database systems that provide better information for drivers about what is ahead of them—the conditions, whether there are roadworks in front of them and those sorts of things. Those are the big wins from a societal benefit point of view.

Q400 **Chair:** What will be the Department's role in progressing that? Is it to do with funding or making more knowledge available about technology to local authorities? What role will the Department take?

Andrew Jones: It is a bit of both.

Anthony Ferguson: Shall I carry on?

Andrew Jones: You finish your bit and then I'll add my bit. I don't mind how we do it.

Anthony Ferguson: I will finish quickly. Our role is everything you have just said. Some of it is funding through the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles. You might have picked that one up. There is a whole range of different things we are doing. To go back to one of the many themes we have had today about local decision making, one of the things the Department can do is to help local authorities understand what the technologies are. Some are very good. TfL know a lot about the technologies and use them already. They are going to trial autonomous vehicles very soon.



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There are a lot of things we can do to help people understand. We can trial things. We can have pilots that would not otherwise happen, because we can afford them. We can fund new technologies, try them out for real and let people see what they do and deliver. We can then help local authorities in their decisions about how they procure new traffic management systems to pick them up. Otherwise, it is very hard for them to have the resources, skills and time to devote to understanding what the potential is.

Q401 Chair: What are the timescales? When will this be happening?

Andrew Jones: This is live stuff now.

Q402 Chair: But how long will it take to develop it so that these new ideas are being applied in a lot of places?

Andrew Jones: New technology is coming in and some of this is applied now, but it is constantly changing. With some of the stuff on traffic signals, there is a SCOOT system in use in large parts of the country now. I was going to highlight the way this is developing very quickly.

There is one trial we have been working on with Westminster Council, to do with giving drivers information on parking spaces. They have put sensors above parking bays so that people will be able to see on an app—the Westminster parking app—where there is space. There will be no more circling around looking for a parking space. You know there is one two streets over to the left. It is the same for taxis. If a cabbie is looking to find a space on a taxi rank, they will know it is in the next street that way. This is live technology, available as we speak.

It is part-funded through the DfT. It is a perfect example of the principle of partnership, leading with some of the technology and sharing some of the risk of trialling things for the first time. We then share the benefits to let others develop it. That is at the heart of some of the other matters we have been talking about on the buses Bill—for example, on open data.

I see an incredible role for technology in transport. It is a very exciting opportunity. It is to do with lots of different things. Anthony mentioned a few. There is Westminster parking. It could be to do with information on when your bus is going to be coming along. It could be road safety work. We know that nine out of 10 road collisions have an element of human error. If you can reduce the amount of human input, you will reduce the amount of human error. That has the potential to save countless lives every year. The technology is very exciting indeed in those ways. It is about making better safe use of our existing urban infrastructure. We cannot create lots more roads, even if we wished to do so, because it is a finite urban environment.

Huw Merriman: I was at the Procedure Committee, so, if this has been covered, my apologies. If the technology is there as you have just described it, Minister, does that mean that the technology is also in place to allow for charging not just for entering London but for the amount of



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usage a driver has, so they can pay for usage rather than just for entering the zone? Has that been covered already?

Chair: No.

Andrew Jones: We haven't discussed that. I do not think that technology will be in place yet, no. Road user charging is a very controversial area. We do not have plans even to look at it, so the answer is no.

Q403 **Huw Merriman:** I certainly picked up the impression, when the deputy Mayor of London came before us, that TfL would use the summer as a time when they would perhaps do something quite radical, albeit they did not really want to tell us what it was, understandably. Have there been any discussions with TfL? Would the Department have to have discussions with TfL if they were about to do something in that space?

Andrew Jones: Not necessarily. They are masters of their own destiny. I have had several conversations with Val Shawcross. I will wait to hear what they are going to say.

Q404 **Huw Merriman:** What would the Department's view be? I, for one, take the view that we have a world-class transport system in London, to the point that, unless you have a mobility impairment or you need to deliver heavy goods, you do not really need to drive a car. In fact, the car spoils London for those who want to use it either by walking or by using public transport. What would the ministerial view be on being a bit more aggressive with charging for the car?

Andrew Jones: Great caution required. I emphasise again that there are no plans even to head in that direction. In terms of policy, caution is required because you could end up, effectively, with a charging system that would only allow people of a certain affluence access to our roads. That could be very socially unprogressive. I am not sure about that; caution required.

Q405 **Huw Merriman:** But if we do not do something, we will end up with a public transport system that cannot properly deliver people where they need to go. Effectively, everything will be snarled up; wherever you look, there is traffic stuck and traffic polluting London for the rest of the London population. It is a question of what can be done on a radical basis that eradicates the problems we are talking about.

Andrew Jones: The key thing with public transport is to provide a system that is attractive enough to encourage people to use it. It meets their transport needs; therefore, it is a rational choice to use it. That could be in journey times or in cost. It is about solving a transport need. When that happens more effectively, we will see greater public transport use.

Anthony Ferguson: Could I mention one slightly different angle? Road user charging is a very specific thing. It is a tool for charging for the use of the road. One of the things that is starting to change—we see this



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happening worldwide, but certainly a lot within Europe—is a slightly different way of thinking about making journeys. You have heard about the mobility as a service concept. It is much more about making a journey that has multiple component parts. Increasingly, with the advent of smartphone-based apps and things such as ride-sharing, car clubs, bike car schemes and things where you can consume transport as a service, you move into a new set of different business models about how to make transport journeys. It is less about taking each one mode by mode and trying to work out whether you want more or less of it. It allows you to be much cleverer about how you manage total transport provision.

It is at very early stages at the moment, because it requires you to be able to buy all the component parts of your journey in one go, which is quite difficult to do, particularly in large parts of this country and in most other countries. The desire is there and it has a lot going for it as a concept. It is just that the systems do not exist to make it happen. That may be something that starts to change the way people think about how they consume and pay for transport, which to date has been done on fairly traditional lines, in that people tend to buy a particular component of their journey in a transaction with the provider of it. The whole point of mobility of service is something rather different, where you are probably buying it from a transport integrator who is providing the services. It is along the Uber model line.

Andrew Jones: We are at an interesting point where patterns of purchasing are changing. We see far greater use of car clubs. In some European cities there is greater penetration of car clubs than within London or other UK cities. There is a developing sharing economy that will change the way we buy and consume transport.

Huw Merriman: I take the point in terms of not pricing out those who cannot afford it. Before I came to this place, I worked in investment banking and people would just drive their cars in. They did not mind about paying £10, because they could. It is a question of taking radical action. Maybe it is not just about price, but finding other ways to cause people to use public transport. Without something radical, I question whether those people will ever change their habits, because they have the wallet not to have to.

Q406 **Chair:** You mentioned car clubs and other forms of sharing, Minister, but it is a fact that there are 38 million empty seats in individual cars in the morning rush hour. Do you think there is scope for more car sharing?

Andrew Jones: Yes, there probably is. That would be my view. There are various schemes in the marketplace, and various products. Sharing providers are effectively web-based platforms such as BlaBlaCar or Liftshare. There has always been an element of car sharing within workplaces or within education, for example, but I can see it growing, enabled by technology. Yes, I think that will grow.



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Q407 **Chair:** In terms of road charging, you said that you are against it, or at least I think you said that.

Andrew Jones: Yes.

Q408 **Chair:** But it is the case that there are falling revenues from vehicle excise and fuel duties. Wouldn't that lead you to have to think about road charging in some form?

Andrew Jones: That has Treasury written all over it, so no is the answer to that question.

Q409 **Chair:** Have you discussed it with the Treasury?

Andrew Jones: My job is to get capacity into the networks by bus, HS2 or whatever, to support and work with local authorities on the local road networks and to take advantage of the fantastic opportunities of technology. The vehicle excise duty system is changing in about three days' time. That is the only change we have.

Chair: Thank you very much for answering our questions. That concludes the witness sessions in our inquiry on urban congestion. Thank you very much.