HOUSE OF COMMONS

Transport Committee

Oral evidence: Our future transport, HC 1061

Wednesday 10 May 2023

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Iain Stewart (Chair); Mr Ben Bradshaw; Jack Brereton; Ruth Cadbury; Paul Howell; Karl McCartney; Greg Smith.

Questions 81–162

Witnesses

I: Mark Plowright, Director, Virgin Trains Ticketing.

II: Richard Dilks, Chief Executive, CoMoUK.

III: Oliver Howes, Principal Consultant, TRL.

IIII: Martin Tugwell, Chief Executive, Transport for the North.

IIIII: Nick Bromley, Matatika.

IIIIII: Milda Manomaityte, Innovation Director, Railway Industry Association.

Examination of witness

Witness: Mark Plowright.

Q81 **Chair:** Welcome to today's session of the Transport Committee when we will hear the second set of proposals for our "Our future transport" inquiry. The format is the same as yesterday. Each of our six proposers will have five minutes to make their pitch to us, followed by up to 15 minutes of questions from my colleagues and me. I invite our first proposer, Mark Plowright, to come up to the lectern. For the purposes of our records, could you state your name and organisation, please?

Mark Plowright: Good morning. My name is Mark Plowright. I am director at Virgin Trains Ticketing.

Chair: Thank you. The floor is yours.

Mark Plowright: I have worked for the industry for 15 years, having previously worked for Eurostar, Virgin Trains East Coast and LNER. I have now worked on both sides of the fence. I am now director of Virgin Trains Ticketing, which is a new independent rail retailer, offering consumers a way to book their travel and earn Virgin points in the process.

Consumer confidence in the railway is at an all-time low. I am here today because I want to help the Department for Transport boost passenger numbers, not just to pre-covid levels, but to a new record high of rail ridership. Independent retailers, like Virgin Trains Ticketing, can bring people back to the railways by reaching new customers, growing advocacy and delivering innovation through private sector investment. Do Ministers know that it was independent retailers who developed and launched barcode tickets, which are now widely used across the network? We know from the Bradshaw address that the Department welcomes competition and agrees that competition is good for the consumer; look at open access rail, for example. But the industry is missing a trick. We need a retail environment that is an attractive investment opportunity, an environment that embraces competition, not limits it, and one that is open to new entrants.

How can the Government help us fix a broken system? First, they could oversee a commercial environment that can sustain competition, and support policy proposals that create a genuinely level playing field. All retailers should operate under equal commercial terms. Right now, independent retailers do what they can within a 5% commission envelope. The train operators have more flexibility. That is why LNER is able to offer Smart Save and why Avanti can sell the new Superfare.

Some train operators restrict fares to their own retail channels. That is not fair. Fares are confusing enough for passengers without there being deliberate restrictions on availability. Industry datafeeds, too, should be open and freely available, enabling retailers to expand the view to the customer at the point of purchase, boosting sales of spare inventory.

Common services like pay as you go and Delay Repay should be made available to retailers. Customers find it confusing that they cannot get compensation from where they bought their ticket in the first place. Retailers need to be better incentivised to grow new markets that operators find hard to reach, by developing customer propositions that are delivered through insight. Costs of entry should be simplified and reduced so that the rail industry, like Coca-Cola, can sell the same great products on as many shelves and in as many shop windows as possible.

Secondly, we need to interrogate the plan to create central retailing, seek a clear and impartial view of cost of sale and scrutinise the level of investment required. There is ongoing debate about the real cost of selling a ticket. It is widely agreed that digital retailing is cheaper than physical retailing, but we need a clear and impartial view of rail's own retail channels versus those of third parties. We need a mutual and resolute focus on boosting customer satisfaction, irrespective of where someone has bought their ticket. In fact, we need one single customer view.

If centralised retailing, through GBR, materialises, how does the Department see it working while also encouraging competition and consumer choice? Market distortion is a real risk. There should be scrutiny of the scale of investment. Why should we use taxpayers' money to reinvent the wheel in rail retail when retailers already have the reach and the technology? Isn't taxpayers' money better used on improving the rail network and improving performance, leaving retailers to manage the shop window? In the event of any centralised loyalty programme, how will that be funded and retailer-agnostic?

Thirdly and finally, support collaborative engagement, bold decision making and ensure that the industry maintains traction in the next 18 months. Retailers need a fair share of voice in the development of products and initiatives. Too often, we are told what is coming and not able to use our experience and insight to help shape things at the conception stage. Since we wrote our submission, there has been positive engagement with the GBR transition team, aimed at supporting proposals for access to common services like pay as you go and Delay Repay.

The door is ajar; we need it to be fully opened. We need to turn words, principles and positive discussion into action and change. We cannot afford to lose traction as we navigate the next 18 months of politics. Fare reform trials are great but it feels like we are moving at a glacial pace. We need to rip off the sticking plaster on fares and we need to let the shops sell the goods if we are serious about boosting rail ridership to a new high.

In summary, increasing rail ridership is a crucial component in ensuring that the Government meet their net zero targets, but progress in how we sell tickets is happening too slowly. That is why I would like to see the Department pay more attention to the rail shop window and the future

direction of rail retail. Level the playing field so that retailers can compete equally and so that we can all work together towards our key outcomes of customer satisfaction, cost reduction and revenue growth. Thank you.

Q82 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. For clarification, are you looking at changing the basic structure of the fare system in the country, where currently the Department for Transport—possibly GBR in the future—will set what is a peak-time ticket, what is off-peak and the basic building blocks? Are you proposing to reform that or is your proposal to allow greater competition within the existing structure?

Mark Plowright: It is the latter. I am speaking for all retailers when I say that we would love to be more involved in the conception and any ideation around what the future retail environment and the structures look like. Actually, retailers tend to take the view that we want a far more competitive and vibrant marketplace. This address is about creating the conditions to support competition, to welcome new entrants and to create direction that helps achieve the key outcomes of revenue growth, cost reduction and customer satisfaction.

Q83 **Chair:** Can you say a little more about where the current barriers are for a new entrant to come in? For example, if I want to go and see my family in Scotland, I can buy the ticket from Avanti or from National Rail, or I can go on to the TrainSplit website or Trainline; I have a number of options. What are the barriers for other entrants coming in at the moment?

Mark Plowright: They are some of the things that I laid out in the address. Primarily, it is an equitable and fair marketplace. I speak from experience. It is hard enough coming into a new industry having to compete just with Trainline and the train operators, without coming into an industry and having to understand that not all the fares and services that should be available to you are there, and that confuses the consumer. Beyond that, there are services like pay as you go and Delay Repay. Consumers find it hard to understand why they cannot access Delay Repay through us, when they bought a ticket through us in the first place. That in itself creates a barrier and is off-putting to potential new entrants.

Q84 **Chair:** How would your proposals sit with the increasing devolution in the rail industry to the metro Mayors who are looking at establishing cross-modal ticketing options—bus, train, tram or other modes?

Mark Plowright: They could work hand in hand. In the past, we have had some positive engagement with local devolved mayors and authorities. There is a growing sense towards innovation. Retailers are a great outlet for innovation through private sector investment. Certainly the mood music that we are getting from devolved authorities is not just in the mayoral cities. In Scotland and Wales, there is an appetite to look at new things. I believe they can work together.

Q85 **Jack Brereton:** What stops operators doing that now? We have seen

that Avanti has introduced a standard premium ticket. What is preventing operators from doing more of these innovations right away?

Mark Plowright: Operators have differing approaches to how collaboratively they work with retail. The longer-distance operators tend to take a more protectionist approach to their retail channels. Standard premium is a class of service, but you may find particular fares from long-distance operators or discounts that are not available to retailers. From experience, that is primarily driven by commercials as opposed to something that is in the genuine best interest of the consumer.

One of the things I was calling for was an impartial view of the cost of sales. Having been on that side of the fence, there is a belief that selling through your own retail channels is far cheaper than selling through an independent retailer. I urge that there should be a bit more impartial analysis around that to understand whether there are actual cost and commercial differences. We know that operators and retailers seem to be operating within a different commercial envelope. If there are differences, what is driving them? Or do train operators, and whatever GBR retailing looks like, plus independent retailers, all work alongside each other in parallel?

To go back to your original question, there needs to be more analysis around the genuine cost of sale and the benefits of booking through each of the individual retail channels. As part of the potential inquiry, it would be worth talking to a few different stakeholders to get their view on it. You will probably get the most polarised view from train operators versus the independent retailers.

Q86 **Jack Brereton:** Are there sufficient incentives for the operators and retailers to do more innovation? Obviously, all risk and reward sits with the Government—with the Treasury. Are there sufficient incentives to encourage this?

Mark Plowright: For independent retail, no. We operate within a 5% commission envelope, and that 5% commission is reducing to 4.5% in April 2025. That is hardly enticing for new entrants. It makes life difficult, not just for us but for any retailers in the space, because we are trying to pay staff, we are trying to market to new audiences, we are paying for payment services and we are building technology that taps into the industry reservation system. Trying to do that, all within 5%, feels quite a daunting task.

I acknowledge that there is active work towards that. There has been a retail review of late, looking at how remuneration and incentivisation work. My worry is that it is not moving on at any significant pace. It does not feel particularly creative, other than a base level of commission. We would love to bring new audiences into the UK rail market. We can cross-pollinate customer bases between Virgin Atlantic flyers, Virgin Experience Days and Virgin Trains. Other retailers bring great things to the party as well, but they need the conditions and the incentivisation to really push

them. The more we have that, the more we can innovate and do new things. One of the things that we have developed is the ability to offer people points irrespective of what train they book across the network.

The key is private sector investment. It is low risk, but it needs to be a compelling and competitive environment.

Q87 **Jack Brereton:** It is interesting that you mentioned the airline industry, where there is a much broader range of ticketing options and a variety of choices for passengers. Are there greater restrictions on the rail industry that prevent the rail industry from getting to that level of ticketing options?

Mark Plowright: It is absolutely right to call out other industries. If I was going to do a piece of work to benchmark versus other industries, I would call out the airline industry. The airline industry has its own restrictions; I would probably call out ground transportation and accommodation. It is worth a look at some of the other industries to see where we can benchmark.

The rail industry is very complex. There is no key piece of regulation or structure I would point out as part of this right now, but we could do a great deal to inform policy and push decision making forward to level the playing field and give retailers fare, discount and functional parity. There could also be some scrutiny of whatever the central retailing looks like. If you think about all of that operating at the same time, it creates a very complex web of retailing that embeds complexity, not just in the products—that is where fares reform comes in—but in the shop window.

Q88 **Paul Howell:** If you look at ticketing from a consumer point of view, it is complex. How does what you are saying reduce that complexity and make it so that the consumer finds themselves in an easier, simpler position to make their decisions as to what to do? Anybody who buys a rail ticket always wonders whether there was another one they could have bought that was better and cheaper that gets them there. I am not sure whether you are adding more complexity and more options to the same panacea.

Mark Plowright: Yes. We have a shared desire to reduce that complexity. From a customer satisfaction point of view, the rail industry should be targeting trust. Passengers and customers contact us to say, "I was interested in that particular group product," or, "There's a discount that I can find elsewhere that I can't find with you." That breeds both confusion and mistrust. If we have a common set of fares, discounts and propositions across the industry, it still supports choice—the choice being ultimately about who you buy with. Consistency and uniformity of fares is what will address the complexity issue.

It is not just about the fares; it is about the common services that I referred to. If you think of your experience with any rail retailer, you will probably think about the end to end, which is, "I buy a ticket and I select

a fare," but there may be some after-sales or some ancillaries involved. What the consumer needs, and what they tell us through insight, is an ability to feel empowered when they book through a retail channel, and not to feel that they are being mis-sold or that there are fares elsewhere that, for some reason, are cheaper or discounted. Let's create a uniformity of fare structure that gives us consistency irrespective of where you book.

Q89 **Paul Howell:** The inquiry will be about how to do that. Your proposal for an inquiry is how to deliver that.

Mark Plowright: Yes, it is to create fares and functional parity. It is to give retailers the incentivisation to grow the market, to invest and to innovate. It is to level the playing field.

Q90 **Ruth Cadbury:** You say you want innovation and market-led initiatives. Then you say you want uniformity. What do you see as the role of Government in that?

Mark Plowright: The uniformity needs to be in the core fares. We need confidence that there is 100% parity across the fare structure, irrespective of where you book. The help we need is centralised, positive direction on policy around what is made available, irrespective of which retailer you are. It is commonality.

Q91 **Ruth Cadbury:** It is the fares that the Government direct.

Mark Plowright: Absolutely.

Q92 **Ruth Cadbury:** In that case, would that be a way to address other policy ideas? Many of us find it completely mad that it costs two to three times as much to go by train for a medium to long distance as it does to fly. Would your suggestion also take into account anomalies like that?

Mark Plowright: We do not wholly have responsibility for pricing, unfortunately, but we can certainly play a role in informing what pricing and product propositions there are in the future, informed by insight. The positive collaboration that we started with the GBR transition team will help inform that.

Q93 **Ruth Cadbury:** If Government decided there was a carbon price for a journey that dictated fare levels for different travel options, could that be incorporated into what you are proposing?

Mark Plowright: As long as it comes through the central system, we can ingest that information and sell tickets accordingly. As long as it is made available, as it is now to retailers, then yes, we would. One of the ways that retailers create either competitive advantage or stand out is to apply their own values and their own flavour to retailing. At Virgin, as you would expect, at the heart of everything we do is making it customer-centric and driving customer satisfaction. It could be that we display carbon calculation in a different way.

Q94 **Ruth Cadbury:** That is done already.

Mark Plowright: Yes, you can access data on CO_2, but we could be a bit creative about how things are displayed to the customer. We have a certain amount of poetic licence in our retail proposition. For example, our core selling point is the fact that we issue Virgin points that someone could come in and buy. They can buy a rail ticket and earn points against that and then go off and use the points for other experiences and travel, for example.

Chair: That brings us to the end of the time slot. Thank you for your time and presentation.

Mark Plowright: Thank you for your time.

Examination of witness

Witness: Richard Dilks.

Q95 **Chair:** I invite our second proposer, Richard Dilks, to the lectern. Again, for the purposes of our records, could you state your name and organisation, please?

Richard Dilks: I am Richard Dilks. I am chief executive of Collaborative Mobility UK—CoMoUK—but I am here today representing the Sustainable Transport Alliance.

Chair: Thank you. The floor is yours.

Richard Dilks: Thank you very much. CoMoUK is the national charity for the social, economic and environmental benefits of shared transport, such as car and bike share schemes. I am here today on behalf of the Sustainable Transport Alliance. We are a group of eight NGOs focused on sustainable transport, whose vision is of communities developing healthy, unpolluted, inclusive and prosperous places. We are Bus Users, the Campaign for Better Transport, the Community Rail Network, CoMoUK, the Community Transport Association, Living Streets, the London Cycling Campaign and Sustrans.

We thank the Committee for this opportunity to put the case for an inquiry into the Government's delivery of all modes of sustainable transport—public, active, shared and community transport—and their progress against their own decarbonisation and air quality commitments, targets and ambitions. We live in a time of overlapping crises, and transport is at the heart of them: crises in climate change, air quality, mental and physical health, social justice and the cost of living.

Transport emissions are the largest source of emissions in our economy, which used not to be the case, and are, incredibly, at the same level they were in 1990. Our largest conurbations have air five times more polluted than that recommended by the World Health Organisation. Loneliness has been found to be as major a risk to health as smoking or obesity. Twenty per cent. of bike share scheme users report that it is the only moderate

to vigorous exercise they get regularly. Walking, wheeling and cycling prevented an estimated 29,000 early deaths in 2021. Disabled people travelled 38% less across all modes of transport than the rest of the population. The annual average cost of running a car has reached an estimated £3,500. Nearly a third of people do not have personal access to a car. Having such access has been found to make people 3.8 times more likely to be employed.

That is just a sketch of the formidable set of challenges we face. Meeting them cannot please everyone all of the time but it can be, and already is, very often a positive experience. People are already voting with their feet, with, for example, cycling in London up by 40% from autumn 2019 to 2022. Twenty years ago, my own organisation presented evidence to this Committee that there were around 1,000 car club members in the UK. There are now 850,000 and 2.4 million bike share scheme users. Rail use doubled in the two decades before the pandemic. We have now seen well over 30 million rides in shared e-scooter trials. In 2021, 56% of residents reported wanting more funding for walking and 53% wanted more for cycling, versus just 32% who wanted more for roads and driving.

To go further, as those overlapping crises say we must, we contend there is a strong need to move beyond the high-level targets and commitments the Government have to those by which we can measure progress towards them in the nearer term, in particular on modal shift and on traffic reduction. There is an overwhelming consensus of expert opinion that, even with the most rapid possible uptake of electric vehicles, substantial traffic reduction is needed in the coming years to keep us on track to meet the challenge of climate change alone.

To deliver such progress, we need sustained and substantial commitment to sustainable transport from Government. Although modal shift is the top objective in the DFT transport decarbonisation plan, the modes needed to help deliver it face major funding cuts, including the arbitrary ones we have just seen to Active Travel England, and uncertainty; they lack any substantive or committed long-term funding or, indeed, funding altogether, as is the case with shared transport.

Instead, we need reversals of bus funding cuts—23% since 2021—a recognition of the social necessity of sustainable transport with ringfenced multi-year budgets, as well as a reliable and well-maintained road network that meets all users' needs, but that is not being expanded. We need to see options joined up for users, with integrated journey planning and simpler and cheaper ticketing. We need the price signals to be right, rather than faster rises in the cost of public transport than in the cost of motoring. We need to stop underestimating the personal and social costs of motoring.

We need to use the taxation system to help us tackle these issues, not hinder us via continued freezes of fuel duty, cuts to domestic air

passenger duty, sharp rises in regulated rail fares, and increasing fee demands for shared transport from cash-strapped local authorities. We need to look afresh at how we tax motoring. How could we use road pricing? How could we innovate, with new services to suit people's needs? Where cars are needed, we need to go further into how we make journeys as high occupancy and low emission as possible.

Not all of that can be tackled by DFT. There are vital roles, we think, for DHSC, DLUHC and HMT, but it can and should be led by DFT. We therefore urge the Committee to hold an inquiry to track Government's progress, to make recommendations on meeting the challenge of avoiding high-emission, polluting, costly inefficient journeys, switching as many remaining journeys as possible to sustainable modes and cutting the emissions and pollution from those without delay.

I would love to take some questions.

Q96 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. Correct me if I am wrong, but the thrust of your proposal is that it is effectively a scrutiny inquiry that you wish us to do on the Government.

Richard Dilks: Yes.

Q97 **Chair:** Which is absolutely part of our remit. We are also, in this inquiry, looking to horizon-scan and at what new innovations there could be. If we were to do that, where would we look for best practice?

Richard Dilks: Globally?

Chair: Or domestically.

Richard Dilks: Globally, it would be northern Europe, as a sweeping generalisation. Certainly in shared transport—my world—we look at Germany, Belgium and Norway, and at some US cities, slightly paradoxical as that might sound, but they have come on in leaps and bounds, in the last 10 years in particular.

Q98 **Chair:** Are there any particular ones you would identify?

Richard Dilks: I would single out Philadelphia and Los Angeles, and to an extent New York. Austria, France and Germany leap to mind on the public transport side of things. That is a very quick, composite answer, but there is a cluster in western Europe and in the US that we could look to. Finally, it would be Asia—probably Singapore.

Q99 **Mr Bradshaw:** What about this country? Is there any good practice in this country or in the other nations?

Richard Dilks: Yes, in this country we are in an embryonic but positive stage of things coming together in a few spots. I would highlight Greater Manchester, the west midlands, Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, Norwich and Norfolk. It is not an exhaustive list, but there are hotspots where we see an offer of public transport; it could always be improved, but there is something substantive. We also see a mingling approach

across different sustainable transport modes. We sometimes see some effort at car restraint, with parking or movement and so on, although that is much weaker. I am not holding any of those up as job done-level recommendations.

It is interesting to reflect that there is quite an overlap with Government policy and practice. There is a big overlap between devolution and with future transport zones, active travel funds and other such funding pots, which have focused on this area. In a rather lumpy way, there are some things coming through. It might be of interest to the Committee to think about the overall piece and practice, rather than having a little, relative handful of places that are doing better.

Q100 **Mr Bradshaw:** Forgive me. I should have declared an interest as a member of a car club, both in Exeter in my constituency and in London, and of bike-sharing organisations, which have obviated the need to own a car for more than 30 years.

Modal shift is very broad and very important. We have one or two other bids for inquiries on areas that would fit into a modal shift inquiry: kerbside use, parking and integrated ticketing. In a way, all of those things are relevant to modal shift, so it would not be a problem that it is such a broad area, as far as you are concerned. How would we focus on what really matters in achieving the results that you and the Government say you want?

Richard Dilks: It would be really welcome for the Committee to focus on what we, and anyone else, could be tracking the Government on. We can look at space, which is parking. Although it is outside the remit of this Committee, there is spatial planning reform going on right now that might be helpful. There is also movement. It is essentially about what is privileged in an area. What is privileged is what will be used. It is ways of understanding that and the impacts of that. While the Government have a range of, in some cases, world-leading commitments and targets at a high level, they do not really have anything that, to our argument, properly tracks those. That would be my way of doing that. It interfaces heavily with these things, absolutely.

Q101 **Mr Bradshaw:** Given that this is likely to take place, if it goes ahead, in a pre-election period, would it suffice just to haul the Government in to be scrutinised on this? Would there be a case for hauling in other parties as well?

Richard Dilks: That is a decision for the Committee. I would favour taking a broad approach. Hauling anybody in would certainly have value, but, again, our point is about what could be recommended by way of what the Government set themselves to do, which would, hopefully, be then less dependent on whoever the next Government are and would be a more long-term, high-performing response to the challenges that we see in front of us.

Q102 **Paul Howell:** The ability of policy and anything else to reflect and drive

modal shift is dramatically different in a place like London, where we are now, compared with areas of Scotland, the north-east or the north-west, where you have much more rurality and things going on. There are different drivers for what people will need to do. You talk about reducing car dependency. Is that the right terminology, or is it just about making transport as a whole less carbon damaging, or whatever the endgame is? The endgame in the rural world might be completely different from the endgame in the centre of London.

Richard Dilks: There are two major points on that. It is absolutely right that the pattern of movement is obviously very different. I think you have to recognise that. What you can do in a rural area is not the same as in an urban area. The goal is the same across both; it is to see how these challenges—emissions yes, but the others we listed as well—can be met. The tools that you use are different, and the amount that you will be able to achieve is probably different as well.

I think there is recognition in the Committee of climate change work—every country has this—and the continued role of the car. The point, though, is about what the emissions from that are and how to limit and manage them. If we accept that car use is going to be higher in rural areas as a generalisation, to us that is part of the call to action. That is why we have to push down on car use where we can by providing other modes and other alternatives. We must also look at the use of the car in rural areas. This is not just about whether there is or is not a car; it is about the emissions from that car. It is also about how many people are in that car and whether the car is owned or simply one that people have access to. All those things, our research shows, make big differences to how people actually use cars. It is not just car dependency but sole access and the private ownership model of dependency.

Q103 **Paul Howell:** In the examples you gave of places to look at for best practice, you focused on cities in the US as opposed to the expanses on that side of the pond. What is the situation in northern Europe—in Austria and places like that? Do they have a different approach to their cities compared with their rural areas? How do they manage tension between policy for the country as opposed to policy for a specific type of environment?

Richard Dilks: It is an issue everywhere. I am generalising, but they tend to have regional transport authorities that cover both cities and the wider rural area around. The sorts of interventions they pursue in rural areas are often different from those they pursue in urban areas. In rural areas, for example, they do more with on-demand bus services and bus services in general. They do more with long-distance cycle lanes. They do more with rural car clubs—

Q104 **Paul Howell:** Because of the context of what we are trying to do, if you were looking at somewhere to go to establish where the differences were in policy, would we go to Austria, Germany, Sweden or the States?

Richard Dilks: You could pick one of those or all of them. Yes, I would go, roughly speaking, to all of them.

Q105 **Paul Howell:** We would be spending our money getting the carbon up.

Richard Dilks: You would not physically have to go there. The top three in Europe, a couple of spots in the States and one in Asia.

Q106 **Jack Brereton:** I have a quick question. From what Paul was saying, different parts of the country are better developed in their transport infrastructure than others. To what extent do we need to build out more effective local public transport in some of these places, or do we just need to encourage people to use better what we already have?

Richard Dilks: Inevitably it is both, but there are big swathes where there is not an effective public transport offer for people to make their journeys. I am not arguing that the Committee should look at how we fix all of that, but there are some very tangible black spots.

The same goes for active travel infrastructure. You can see the response when quality active travel infrastructure goes in, and you can see the lack of response when it is not there and somewhere is car dominated. In our world of shared transport, we see the same thing. There are certain ground conditions you need for these things to work and knit together. Where you have them, they generally work quite well, but there are lots and lots of places that do not have them and could. I am not talking about the journey from the middle of nowhere to the middle of nowhere. I am talking about lots of suburban peri-urban locations in particular, where coverage is sparse or non-existent of sustainable modes, including public transport, and/or is very focused on the corridor journey into the centre of somewhere. That is valid for lots of journeys but not useful for lots of other journeys.

Q107 **Jack Brereton:** Would you recognise that we have to bring people along with us in that, to the extent that we cannot force people necessarily into some of these changes and behaviours? We have to make sure that there is an incentive to do it. Would you agree that it is better to try to incentivise rather than to force people into changing those behaviours?

Richard Dilks: It depends which verb we stick on these things. One person's incentive can be another person's force majeure. Ultimately, we are in a bit of a fantasy land if we think we can get there on the emissions challenge this country has without doing something serious with transport. It is too big a percentage. I do not think we are going to get there on transport simply by arraying a beautiful set of interlocking carrots in front of people.

If we did that, which we are not fully doing yet by any means—this is part of our point in coming before you—I am sure that we would get more uptake, so we would go further, but I do not think we would go far enough. Ultimately, some element of force, if you want to label it as that, will come. The question is, what kind? It also depends on what we mean

by "force". I think there are plentiful transport interventions that show that people respond to things. They generally respond positively when they are well designed and done as a package.

London's congestion charge and low traffic neighbourhoods, which have become a controversial term, in general are very successful things up and down the country and have a long track record going back 30 years or more. If you look at those and at what other countries have done in this area, generally speaking, when it is well designed, it sticks and it works. There is an interesting curve, sometimes called the Goodwin curve, where things are very unpopular to start with, and then become more and more popular—the shape I am drawing here is the unpopular. There are multiple examples like the Stockholm congestion charge, London's own congestion charge and the mini-Holland programme in Waltham Forest. The coffin of local retail was carried down the high street, but now resident surveys find regularly that 67%-plus of residents are supportive and no one wants to take it out. It depends how we define "incentivise" and "force".

In an ideal world, sequencing is important. If we can do the incentivising before we do any forcing, it will go down a lot better and will probably be more productive than doing it the other way around. Ultimately, I think there will have to be some shifting of goalposts, as there has been in other areas. Think of public smoking, plastic bags or seatbelt wearing. Lots of things have been forced, but when the policy design is sensible, it works.

Q108 **Mr Bradshaw:** How widespread are rural car-sharing schemes, like the one that operates in Devon that provides car sharing in quite small market towns and villages?

Richard Dilks: Patchy is the quick answer. We run a network meeting for them in my day job. There are probably about 30 or 40 of them across the whole of the UK. That would be our estimate. They are often very small in scale. They are very valuable. They take a huge amount of effort and are very often volunteer-led. It is hard going. There is quite a spread of them. Like many things that are operating in the environment, there is almost no help.

Q109 **Mr Bradshaw:** Are there missing policy levers that would make it easier?

Richard Dilks: Undoubtedly, yes.

Chair: Our time is up. Thank you for your time and presentation.

Examination of witness

Witness: Oliver Howes.

Q110 **Chair:** I invite our third presenter to the lectern. Could you state your name and organisation for the record, please?

Oliver Howes: I am Oliver Howes, principal consultant at TRL.

Chair: The floor is yours.

Oliver Howes: Thank you very much for the opportunity today. TRL's mission is to create clean and efficient transport that is safe, reliable and accessible. We are currently running a taskforce across industry, academia and authorities focused on the kerbside, and the importance of managing it well for the benefit of everyone. When I talk about the kerbside, I mean the areas and locations adjacent to kerbs, the kerbs being the demarcation lines between footways, roads and cycle paths.

There is no Minister for the kerbside and no clear owner. However, the space is used and exploited by a vast range of users. It impacts on every mode of transport and every member of the UK multiple times a day, from walkers and cyclists to motorised users travelling through spaces. Everyone needs to use that space in some way. It does not just impact the transport industry, though. The kerbside has an impact on the way people live, from meeting friends on the pavement, dining out in our streets and footways, to posting mail and street entertainment. Many aspects of our daily lives are affected by how kerbsides are used and managed.

Over the last decade, the demand on the kerbside has changed dramatically. For example, the increase in online shopping has led to a huge increase in last-mile delivery services; there is the need to charge electric vehicles, and there is an uptake in active travel. At the same time, traditional uses of the kerbside remain, such as parking and HGV logistics. As more and more players use that multifaceted space, the danger is that we could be heading towards a wild west with no one winning.

Despite the huge dependence on the kerbside and those changing demands, policies ruling the space have largely remained unchanged since the Road Traffic Act 1984. We currently have a kerbside that has misunderstood user needs and is not aligned to them. Non-conformity is the norm, and parking fines are seen as a cost of doing business. Extra miles are driven by people looking for parking spaces or loading bays. This means more carbon, pollution and inefficiency. People avoid active travel options due to the fear of injury when riding next to the kerbside, meaning more car use and more congestion. Technological solutions are developing at a rapid pace to solve such problems and are being trialled across the country. However, there is no central alignment. We could be heading to a disjointed nation with bespoke solutions developed across the country, so when a Nottingham resident tries to navigate the streets of Liverpool, they find themselves confused and unsure how to use the kerbside. This will result in further non-conformity, increased congestion and frustration for road users and local residents.

Something needs to be done. Some local authorities are taking action and developing futuristic strategies to create a kerbside that meets current and future demands. Again, there is no central guidance. Many of those authorities are London boroughs. However, it is a nationwide issue. A

well-managed kerbside has the potential to improve not only the transport sector but to create social benefits to boost local businesses, such as shops and restaurants. The kerbside should be designed to serve all users and stakeholders, where the space adapts and adjusts to meet demand, users have a clear understanding of the rules, the costs of using the kerbside are fair and payments are easy.

Think about how the kerb could be adapted throughout the day to support a loading bay in the morning, a cargo-bike delivery bay in the afternoon, restaurant dining in the evening and a taxi rank at night. Many solutions have low capital and operational costs, with minimal infrastructure requirements, and they have the ability to be scaled at pace, meaning a better user experience and better and more predictable revenue for authorities. For the transport sector alone, the benefits could be huge. With a well-managed kerbside we have the opportunity to reduce congestion on our streets, reduce tailpipe emissions, encourage active travel and increase electric vehicle uptake.

Developments are happening at pace on how we plan for our future smarter streets. They include the new "Manual for Smart Streets" launched by TTF at the Connected Places Catapult on 27 April. A senior civil servant in DFT commenting on that rightly explained that in the coming 10 years, we will see a change in our transport that we have not seen before in our lifetimes and that we need to have the skills to be ready to react to it. Although I agree with that statement, I would say that reacting is not enough. We need to be taking active steps to support the coming need. The kerbside may be a forgotten piece of national infrastructure that is critical to a successful roll-out of those future solutions, transport and otherwise.

The kerbside needs a leader and a committed group of individuals to drive change. Local solutions are required, but built on solid national foundations. A well-managed kerbside could level up transport and all other uses of critical national space on which we all depend. It is for those reasons that I believe kerbside management should be the next in-depth inquiry topic for the Transport Select Committee. Thank you.

Q111 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. First, I have a question of clarification. Are you envisaging this policy for all roads, including quiet residential housing estate roads, or is it principally for town and city centres, arterial routes and the like?

Oliver Howes: There is a need across the whole country, from quiet rural streets to major cities and towns as well. The challenges are different in those spaces and the solutions need to be bespoke for different areas, but not confusing when you travel between one and the other.

The sorts of challenges you get in rural spaces are that, with schools for example, there is a big surge of parents and children moving around to and from that space, on different modes of transport. There are tourist

honey-pot sites that attract large numbers of visitors on a nice, sunny summer's day but not at other times of the year. Allowing for dynamic and adaptive ways of managing the space people are moving to, and having to park and interact nearby, would really benefit all aspects of the country.

Q112 **Chair:** You articulated your call for central guidance from the Government. How do you balance that with what will be very different solutions in different places around the country? What would work in my new town constituency of Milton Keynes would be very different from a cathedral city where the street design is very different. How do you balance central policy with local adaptability?

Oliver Howes: Absolutely. The policy would need to be carefully managed so that it is not ruling too much in favour of major towns or certain types of problems that certain towns have. The idea is to develop a foundation for local solutions to be developed across. We will have a common approach across the country, but with individual solutions developed for the needs of particular places. It means that when people are travelling from different towns, cities or rural areas, they understand the basic principles of engagement with the kerbside and how it can be used, but they may need to have bespoke solutions for those areas.

Q113 **Mr Bradshaw:** Are there any examples of good practice already, either overseas or in this country?

Oliver Howes: There are, both nationally and internationally. There are solutions being trialled in Harrogate, Dorset and some London boroughs. Internationally, there is Bellevue in the US and Dublin in Ireland. They are all trialling different types of solutions and technologies. Some are focused more on the back-end stuff and how local authorities manage the space and their internal management of it. Others are looking at how technology can be deployed on the street to support the user interacting with that street, knowing where a parking space is available for example, or charging points for electric vehicles. There are various places around the country and around the world that are trialling these things and that we can learn lessons from. One thing that would be great, for which there is no central management at the moment, is that there are lots of trials and testing going on in this country for different solutions, but no central body is pulling together lessons from those as to how we can develop better strategies going forward for the country as a whole.

Q114 **Mr Bradshaw:** Is that because it does not come under the Department for Transport, the communities Department or local authorities? Is part of the problem that it falls in a number of both local and national Government responsibilities?

Oliver Howes: That is the thing with the kerbside space. It is potentially a thing that people forget about and neglect. As I mentioned earlier, it is a thing that is used by everyone. Even if you do not leave the house, you are impacted by it, with the deliveries from your local supermarket, for

example. It sits in that space. Everyone knows it is there and uses it, but who owns it? I am not sure.

Q115 **Mr Bradshaw:** We have had a number of bids for other inquiries that would, on the surface, have a fair amount of overlap with the kerbside. One was on parking. The last one just now was on modal shift, for which the use of the kerbside is clearly relevant. If we decided not to do a stand-alone one on the kerbside but to amalgamate it with one of the others, where would you see the fit being best, if at all?

Oliver Howes: There are so many different modes of transport, but it is not just that; the social benefits of dining or meeting friends on the street have an impact. If we had two running in parallel, I think they could benefit from each other. A modal shift one, for example, would have an impact by doing a deeper dive into that subject and how that solution can also be supported by our kerbside policies. I think they could really work together.

Q116 **Jack Brereton:** As you said, the current approach is set out in the Road Traffic Act and through the TRO process. What are your concerns about how the current TRO process works?

Oliver Howes: The current TRO process is quite static if you want to make dynamic changes. For example, as I mentioned earlier, when you have events running in urban or rural spaces, or on a nice sunny day when everyone floods to the beach, you could deploy dynamic kerbside management practices for those particular days or events. That would mean that small towns by the coast did not get flooded with everyone coming to them not knowing how to park and how to use the space, ending up parking illegally, parking on pavements or disrupting the local town itself. You can have better management of how places are adapted. Seaside towns are fairly empty or just have local residents during the dark winter months, and then in the summer months they attract huge numbers of people.

Q117 **Jack Brereton:** Do you think that the TRO process is not responsive enough to the needs of road users, passengers and pavement users?

Oliver Howes: Yes, that's it. Some of the trials happening in London, just over the river, are about how we can have dynamic management platforms. There is an electronic screen that, instead of having a metal plaque which dictates who can use a bay at certain times of the day, can adapt for different parts of the day. It also gives you the ability to reserve the loading bay. If you are making local deliveries to that section, you can reserve a loading bay so that you know that when you turn up it is going to be there for you, or if you know that someone might be coming in the next half-hour, for example.

Q118 **Jack Brereton:** We have heard all the concerns from a number of disability charities, particularly from charities representing people with sight loss and partially sighted people. Have you thought about the impact of these proposals on people with a disability or who are partially

sighted?

Oliver Howes: Yes. Lots of the non-conformity we get at the moment, with people parking halfway on pavements, all the way on pavements or parking in the wrong space where they should not be, has a real impact on people who are less able and potentially less sighted. If we had a better way of managing the kerbside and allowing people to use the kerbside for what it was designed for in the first place, it would have an impact for people looking for a parking space and for people using the footway. When I talk about the kerbside, I encompass the footways and a section of the roadway itself. It is not just the strip of concrete that splits the footpath and the road, but the space either side as well.

Q119 **Ruth Cadbury:** There is a lot to think about. The obvious one where we have conflict and cross-party support in Parliament for doing something about is a default parking ban on pavements, in the same way as we have in London. We are getting pushback from DFT, it appears, on that. Do you think the biggest blocks are legislation, culture or lack of strategy? What are the major barriers to thinking more proactively about kerbside use at the moment?

Oliver Howes: One of the major problems at the moment, as I mentioned earlier, is that there is no clear owner. It is that forgotten space that impacts all these things, but no one is driving it forward. One of the main objectives I would like for the Committee is to make that more widely heard in Government so that people understand more about the importance of the space.

Q120 **Ruth Cadbury:** When we think of the kerbside, we think of the edge of the footway and the beginning of the carriageway. One is supposed to be for pedestrians and the other is supposed to be for vehicles, but there are plenty of instances that I can think of where the pedestrian environment would be better if there was not that rigid divide because there is too much space for vehicles and not enough for pedestrians, or there is too little flexibility to allow for one that is used a lot and one that is merely for occasional movement. How rigid are you about the definition of kerbside? Are you prepared to be flexible? Does the thinking allow for that flexibility?

Oliver Howes: That would be another thing for the in-depth inquiry. What space do we need to be worrying about? Do we need to worry more about the footpaths, with just the strip of granite between the two paved areas, or do we need to take it much more broadly? The strategies that the Borough of Lambeth in London has come up with for their future kerbside strategy encompass a really broad area. They have some great future views and images.

Q121 **Paul Howell:** Reflecting on what you have been talking about, I think that in any area we look at, you are looking for bang for your buck—you are looking to see where you can make the biggest difference. To me, it smells very much like you would make the biggest difference in the

higher-density areas. Earlier, you talked about it being more all-encompassing. Am I right in thinking that the inquiry should be focused on the high-density traffic areas?

Oliver Howes: The issues are magnified in urban areas just because of the density of people, traffic and all the different modes of transport. In cities you get a collation of many more modes of transport than you do in urban areas. The issues are magnified there. If there was to be more of a focus, maybe some of the challenges in more urban areas could be looked at to start with. It could then be broadened out to more rural areas if it was appropriate beyond that, potentially.

Paul Howell: One of my concerns with any sort of review of legislation is that we try to do everything for everybody, when there are big differences between the environments that you are looking at.

Ruth Cadbury: Rural areas would probably like to have that occur because they like to have footways. Some rural areas do not even have footways.

Paul Howell: There is a difference between a small village that barely has anybody walking up and down the high street, if you are trying to regulate it, and parking measures in Lambeth. It is a focus that would make a massive difference. I am just trying to understand the differentials. I agree about the gaps in pavements and things like that.

Chair: Our time is up. Thank you, Mr Howes, for your time and presentation.

Examination of witness

Witness: Martin Tugwell.

Q122 **Chair:** I invite our fourth presenter to the lectern. I am trying not to make this sound like "Mastermind". Would you give your name and organisation for the record, please?

Martin Tugwell: Good morning. I am Martin Tugwell, chief executive at Transport for the North.

Chair: Thank you. The time is yours.

Martin Tugwell: If we are going to secure different outcomes from our transport system, we have to change the way we plan, develop and deliver public investment, both in infrastructure and in services. Prioritising this as a focus for your consideration is particularly timely, coming as it would to inform a Government ahead of the next spending review.

The issue facing all Governments is how best to use the public resources available to invest in our transport system, but we have inertia in our system. There are multiple funding streams and overuse of competition for the allocation of resources. There are multiple reporting and accountability requirements, which the National Infrastructure

Commission highlighted last year in its report. There is lack of clarity around the funding that is going to be available. We recognise that the funding is going to be finite, but the lack of clarity breeds competition. We literally spend hundreds, if not thousands, of hours, and thousands, if not millions, of pounds, wasted on developing ideas and proposals that are not then taken forward. Ultimately, that leads to resistance to development within communities.

There is a need to increase the importance of aligning investment. Delivering transport outcomes is increasingly dependent on alignment with investment in electricity, energy systems and digital. Our work as Transport for the North looking at EV charging infrastructure was with National Grid and the DNOs, among others.

There will be a need for change. We have to focus on delivering outcomes because our current approach will not deliver the required change. Our regional decarbonisation strategy set out a method of getting to nearly net zero by 2045. We will burn through our carbon budget in 10 years. We need to focus on delivering efficiently. We need to minimise the national overheads, reduce administration and remove the inertia that slows implementation and delays the realisation of benefits. We have seen some of that in the devolution deals, but we need to go further. We need to focus on delivering effectively by making sure that outcomes that are dependent on investment in other sectors are actually aligned with it.

I argue that we need to build on and redefine the roles of our existing structures. We know that there is too much detail done at a national level, but we still need the national level to set identifying national outcomes. Only Government can set the tasks around net zero and the legislative framework around new vehicles and combustion engines. Ultimately, only Government can set the taxation that determines public funding. Only Government can take a view about carbon budgeting.

When you get down to sub-regional level, you start to be able to pull those national threads together and actually focus on the economy, society and the environment. That is what we are doing at Transport for the North with our independent economic review, with the work on the decarbonisation strategy and our cutting-edge work around transport-related social exclusion. All of that joins up the agenda and puts it into a place that relates to people. It is also a way of joining up the conversation with national infrastructure bodies like National Highways and the rail sector. It is a way of realising efficiencies because, working at that level and exploiting that level, the tools and analysis that we have developed at TfN are available to Government and to our local partners for their own implementation.

If the national level sets the national agenda and the sub-national regional agenda joins it up, it comes to the city, region and local authority level to be able to focus on implementation and delivery. There is no conflict at all between what has been happening with metropolitan

combined authorities and what is happening at TfN level. You want to empower Liverpool and Manchester to look at how they join up rail services with their own other services. Equally, you need to join up services from Liverpool with Sheffield, and Manchester with Newcastle.

I believe that there is a need to focus on how we move this forward and how we change the agenda. There is a live debate about the merits of an English transport strategy. In looking at that, I think you need to start by understanding what you currently have, what the gaps are and how best, if indeed at all, through a national and English transport strategy you take that forward.

I will leave you with one example of how we need to change the attitude and the approach. I think back to a project which is dear to my heart and, I know, to some on the Committee: East West Rail. When the design for Bicester to Bletchley was being opened up, and there was an opportunity to put the incremental cost of expanding the digital cable to allow distribution of 5G infrastructure alongside the railway, the Department for Transport saw it as digital infrastructure so was not interested. The then DCMS saw it as transport structure, so was not interested at the time. It was the regional partners coming together and changing the way we plan, develop and then deliver infrastructure that made a difference. I would commend that that need for change is something that the Committee could explore in an inquiry.

Q123 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. I know well the East West Rail example that you give. You have made a number of very interesting points there, and I will pick up on a couple of them.

This is a Transport Committee and a transport inquiry, but you have already touched on at least three other Government Departments that have skin in this game. You mentioned the competitive levelling-up funds. You mentioned DCMS. You have mentioned decarbonisation, which will sit with the new Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. As a Committee, how would we work to try to bridge those different Government policy areas?

Martin Tugwell: Somebody needs to take the lead. It would be good if this Committee were to take that lead. Too often we sit in discussion about transport issues, and we say that travel is derived demand—it is a consequence of other things—and then we try to solve the transport problems by looking at transport in isolation. Somebody needs to start breaking down the silos. Somebody needs to start thinking about what outcomes we are looking to achieve in places for people. Because the work is taking place at regional level through people like Transport for the North, you get focused on outcomes. You understand that to deliver transport outcomes, you absolutely depend on the alignment of investment in other sectors. You do not necessarily need to try to control that investment, but making that connection and giving advice to Government so that they can consider it in the round is really important. You need to break the silos down. I suggest you start with Transport

taking the lead. It is not only a Transport problem to solve, but you are a catalyst.

Q124 **Chair:** You reference the need to balance what is set at central Government level with larger devolved units, down to individual towns and cities. You reference having an English transport strategy. How would you balance the need for national strategic transport corridors, as Peter Hendy envisaged in his Union connectivity review, where one solution might be different from what a region or a city wants? How do you see that balance?

Martin Tugwell: Ultimately, that is why it needs to be a partnership between Government and the partners in England. That is where the empowering and delegating functions to statutory sub-national transport bodies can help.

As sub-national transport bodies, we already talk to each other. If we were to get seven people, plus a representative from London plus the Department, to chair a meeting, you would be able to talk about those issues in one meeting in one go. It already happens on an informal basis. I suggest that it is not beyond the wit of our collective combination to be able to do that.

Q125 **Chair:** Including the devolved Administrations as well.

Martin Tugwell: If you brought in the devolved Administrations, your table would grow to 12, which I think is a number we could handle.

Q126 **Jack Brereton:** You mentioned, particularly around some of the financial restrictions, that often the nature of public funding is that you only have a small amount of time for the amount of funding that you are allocated. Do you think there should be more autonomy at regional level over some of the transport funding?

Martin Tugwell: I very much support the approach of the National Infrastructure Commission set out in its document last year, suggesting that, in the same way that MCAs have certainty over a five-year funding period, why not allow that certainty for all local transport authorities? It allows them to focus on delivering outcomes and plan accordingly over an extended period of time. There will never be enough money, so there will need to be an understanding of what is possible at the public funding level. I am very clear in my mind that, if the public sector is clear as to what it can afford and what it can contribute, you can have a different conversation with the private sector about how you use public money to leverage in investment from the private sector.

When you get to infrastructure of a genuine pan-regional level, sub-national transport bodies can provide statutory advice to the Government. There will ultimately be nationally significant projects, such as HS2, where clearly the leadership needs to come from the Government and be driven by the Government. In some ways that is not new. I am a veteran of working under previous arrangements when we

had things called regional funding advice. Political and business leaders in the regions were given the role of providing advice to Government, not just on transport investment but on economic development and housing, and were allowed to join up their thinking. My suggestion is that it worked because you actually empowered political leaders, who are used to taking decisions in their own communities, to provide advice, while respecting that ultimately the decision on these things rests with the Secretary of State, who is accountable to Parliament.

Q127 **Jack Brereton:** In terms of national bodies, you mentioned HS2, and we have Network Rail and National Highways. How do they fit into all this? How well is it working in terms of support for organisations like yours?

Martin Tugwell: There is a good working relationship with National Highways and the rail sector—both Network Rail and the rail operators. In TfN we have an element of devolution for the railways already through the rail north agreement.

To go back to outcomes and the regional decarbonisation strategy, which is underpinned by some groundbreaking work around future travel scenarios, under all four scenarios we need to grow the railway in the north by between two or three times what it is currently. That does not mean to say that we do not need to invest in the road network, because that is also fundamental, but the nature of the investment is going to change. We need to be able to advise and shift how public funding is available to deliver outcomes across all modes of transport, not just within silos. At the moment we still see road, rail and other forms of transport investment being treated as silos.

Q128 **Jack Brereton:** I obviously have to ask you this question, because I am MP for Stoke-on-Trent. We are an area that sits at the boundary of two regions, almost. We are involved in Transport for the North to an extent, but also Midlands Connect. How are we making sure that areas that are in a boundary between regions do not get left out and get the infrastructure they need?

Martin Tugwell: I refer back to my previous comment. We work together. I sit down with my equivalent in Midlands Connect on a monthly basis. We work together, and the teams work together on issues that cross the boundary, so that boundary effect does not have a consequence for anybody.

Q129 **Paul Howell:** I am trying to get my head round how you would envisage us looking at the decision-making process. You talk about regions. Transport for the North is basically Manchester and Leeds, but I am a north-east MP. Manchester is in the south, and we have nothing to do with them.

One of my concerns, in terms of where you are looking for this connectivity, is getting better connections to places like Manchester within the north—I am using the north as an example of the whole scheme. But at the same time, I always worry about decision making and

the fact that the amount of money that will be spent on Crossrail compared with trying to do something about the Leamside line in the north-east or trying to improve east-west corridors in the north is always disproportionate. It is always driven on the wrong metrics, as far as I am concerned, in terms of the impact on the user, as opposed to the impact on the Exchequer. How would that play out differently in the models that you are talking about?

Martin Tugwell: It comes down to a fundamental shift in thinking, to outcomes that are place-based and user-centred. We are about to launch the revised version of the strategic transport plan for consultation. The economic outcome that we could achieve by investing in the north and delivering a return to the Exchequer is £118 billion. We could reduce the number of people at higher risk of social exclusion as a consequence of the work that we have done.

If you start coming down to outcomes for the economy, society and the environment, you start driving different decisions and behaviours. If that is done with clarity about how much money is available, some of the work that we have already heard about this morning—investment in active travel and mode share—is actually very cost-effective, but our systems do not allow us to take those choices either at a local or a regional level to make that kind of impact.

Q130 **Ruth Cadbury:** I have two questions. First, is London the model for everything that you aspire to, or are there other aspects that the current London situation does not take account of or help with?

Martin Tugwell: While there may be some lessons to be learnt from London, it is not typical of the rest of the country.

Q131 **Ruth Cadbury:** What is it about London that works, and what does not work that you would want to do differently?

Martin Tugwell: It is the degree to which you have leadership around the transport strategy and how the funding is available to invest to support outcomes. If we look at the work that has been done in London around active travel particularly, it is because you have had a focus on the outcomes you are trying to achieve, as I said, not just for the economy but socially and for the environment. You then empower the elected representative there to be able to work with partners in London to deliver that. That is a powerful model.

Q132 **Ruth Cadbury:** You are saying that it is more the leadership than the governance.

Martin Tugwell: The governance needs to reflect the special circumstances. London is a unique situation.

Q133 **Ruth Cadbury:** You have talked about public finance, and lots of us recognise the issues—the brakes, the timescales and the different pockets. We had a presentation yesterday from a representative of Angel

Trains, making the case for how, in addition to public investment, private investment—particularly pension funds looking for long-term, safe investment opportunities—could be better brought into major transport infrastructure. Are you merely talking about public funding, or are you looking at the opportunities for regionally based private funding as well?

Martin Tugwell: We need to be more open to regionally based private funding because we will not achieve transformation of infrastructure and services if we do not. What the private sector will be looking for is clarity on where we are trying to get to and some confidence about the contribution that is coming from the public sector, and then being able to plan over a longer period of time. One of the most successful franchises of the first generation of franchises was Chiltern Railways. It had a 20-year timeframe in which it could plan and draw in private sector funding to totally transform that railway.

Q134 **Mr Bradshaw:** Almost all of our reports and inquiries over the last 10 years could fall under the title "Future of Transport". To play devil's advocate, what is the difference in doing this, and how on earth can we focus it down to the important things, with our Clerks trawling through the last 10 years of reports, and do a summary for the next Government—whichever party it is—as to what they should be doing with transport?

Martin Tugwell: I will come back to the basic question. Do we believe that what we are doing, and our approach to planning, delivering and investment in infrastructure, is delivering us the outcomes? I suggest no. If I look at the regional decarbonisation strategy, we will burn through our carbon budget in 10 years. We can either take the view that we will plod along, or we can take seriously the fact that over 20% of the population of the north are living in areas at high risk of being socially excluded.

It is great having the conversation about decarbonisation, but if our solution is to advocate EVs, how does that relate to a single parent on a minimum wage on a zero-hour contract in the north-east? We have to focus on people, on social outcomes and environmental outcomes as well as on economic outcomes. They are not mutually exclusive, but it requires a fundamental shift in the way we set outcomes at national level, how we join them up at regional level and how we empower the metropolitan Mayors and the local transport authorities to deliver.

Q135 **Paul Howell:** A subject that you touched on towards the start of your presentation was the money—devolved funding, so to speak—for transport through DCMS or others. Are you advocating that one of the things we should be looking at is how we facilitate, through a devolved arrangement, flexibility for devolved people to decide, "Okay, we have this much in the transport pot and this much in the digital pot. We can find this much from the private sector, and we are going to find a way of putting those together in our specific regional context to deliver something that works," as opposed to everybody sitting in their own

spot? Are you trying to put the pots together at the local level?

Martin Tugwell: Any resident of any town or community would expect us to be doing that. I will take my example of East West Rail—I forget whether it was £10 million or £15 million. They would be saying, "Why on earth are you arguing over £10 million or £15 million to put an extra fibre cable that is going to deliver me 5G across the north of Bucks and Oxfordshire?" The average person would be saying, "Sort it out."

If we are focusing on outcomes in places for people, we have to break down those silos. I suggest that the way you can do that is by getting clarity on what Government need to do, clarity on what you can do at regional level and then empowering the metro Mayors and local transport authorities to deliver.

Chair: Our time is up. Thank you very much indeed.

Examination of witness

Witness: Nick Bromley.

Q136 **Chair:** I invite our next presenter to the lectern. Would you give your name and organisation for our records, please?

Nick Bromley: My name is Nick Bromley. I represent an organisation called Matatika.

Chair: Thank you. The floor is yours.

Nick Bromley: My background is in technology and in transport. I have worked for companies such as Nokia and Fujitsu, and I spent six years at Transport for London overseeing big projects such as Elephant and Castle and parts of Crossrail. For the next five minutes I am going to be talking about demand, how location-based data helps you clarify demand, why that will improve transport infrastructure and investment decisions, and how you actually manage the networks.

It has been interesting to listen to all the sessions this morning—in particular, how they are all driven by demand. It is fundamental to transport. Whether you are spending £30 billion each year at the DFT or you are a developer spending hundreds of billions of pounds on the national infrastructure strategy, it all requires a demand figure. The evidence is generally difficult to get to, but the fundamentals of good evidence are that it will improve the return on investment of investing in that by between 10 and 100 times.

Why is movement data important? Fundamentally, we all got here this morning from an origin to a destination, and that is a trip. You need to understand those trips to understand transport and where to put in different modes, be it public, shared or private transport. Every day, TfL has 26 million trips across the network. It is quite a simple process on TfL to understand those trips. You do it by gatelines and ticketing. The problem is that a lot of the data in the industry is very old, across all

parts of the UK; some of it is up to 15 or 20 years old. It comes through from small areas rather than whole areas. It is an incomplete model of patterns of people movement through the UK. What we try to do in the industry is model that data in some way. Of course, there is generally some debate as to the accuracy of the models and the fundamentals of the models, so that basically leads to failure in stakeholder relationships.

How does location-based data work? I came up with the idea of using mobile phone radio networks. Technology has now moved on, but, essentially, 100% of our movement is tracked electronically through Fitbits, Strava and of course mobile phones. In fact, 88% of the UK population have a mobile phone and it produces a range of data, such as accelerometers and gyroscopes. The key thing is GPS data. That gives an eight-digit latitude and longitude of your precise movements. You may not want to hear that, but that is essentially how it works. If you can get all that data together, you end up with a collective intelligence. You understand exactly how the population is moving around. Regardless of mode or whether in rural or urban areas, you will have a very good pattern of movement.

What are the main blockers to all of that? The blockers to getting to the data—the nub of it—are, first of all, privacy; and the other is discovery: who has this data and where have they put it? We will come to that, I am sure, in the Q&A. There are ways around the privacy issue particularly. You can anonymise the data. You can make transparent how your data is being used. You can make sure that it is anonymised, but you still know that that dataset is being used. You can time-limit the period. In other words, you look at the UK electronically for a year and then you say, "That's it, we've got enough baseline data to make our next round of planning decisions." You get huge benefit from that. For instance, on the Elephant and Castle, we lifted the section 106 by an order of almost magnitude between what the developer originally offered and then what we had on the table as our point of discussion at the Mayor's office.

Why do I think that you, as a Committee, need to look at this? First of all, you need to be aware that there are clear benefits if we can get out of the fog of demand planning that we currently occupy in this country. This is a big picture activity because it all links into AI. It also links into, dare I say it, something called quantum computing. There is a very uneven relationship between the people who hold the data, the people who produce the data, who are us, and the public sector, which owns the problem of congestion.

I think there is a way of moving that forward, with your support, which will engage all the parties. It will engage people like UK Infrastructure Bank. It is a big bet. Eventually we will end up going down the route of AI and this kind of data and quantum computing. Given where we are at the moment as a country, post Brexit, we need a big moon shot-type programme. This is a good one to go with. We have a choice to do nothing or do something.

Q137 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. You raised the issue of privacy. That is a great fear, whether it is road pricing or black boxes in cars to find out where we are going. The ability for the state to know what individuals are doing is hugely controversial. Can you say a little bit more about how you would get round those concerns?

Nick Bromley: There are techniques that could be used. I am a very keen sailor; I sail in the west country. One of the key things is to have a call sign on the boat. It does not link to my home address or my name. It tells you nothing about my interests or personal shopping habits. It is just a code. I think there are ways of doing it. The problem is that the industry likes the idea of trapping all that data exhaust because it has a value in their commercial models and advertising, but, fundamentally, there are ways around it.

We see it in other countries, such as Soviet-era countries. I used to do a lot of work in Estonia. They embraced the whole idea of national IDs, yet you would have thought, given what they came out from under politically, that they would never embrace IDs or ID effective tracking. I think there are ways socially of selling the benefits so that people will buy into it.

Q138 **Chair:** You referenced that there are a number of areas where the existing data is very old. Can you say a little bit more about where those are? The reason I ask is that there are already projects under way to look at how we use that demand better. For example, on LNER they are experimenting with doing their engineering work midweek rather than the traditional weekend, because weekend demand is now greater potentially than midweek. Where is the out-of-date data there?

Nick Bromley: Very little of the data you use in planning is in real time. Most of it is out of date. It is just that some of it is a long way out of date. As I discovered, it was up to 15 years out of date on some of my projects, yet it all gets pulled in.

The railways are quite a good example. You know where the gatelines are and where people come in and go out, so you have some good count data. You probably do not know a lot about the individual or why they are on that journey, and you will not know where they have come from that morning. I live in east Devon. I came up yesterday. I got on at Exeter, but no one knows how I got to Exeter. All they know is that I got in at Exeter and got out at Paddington. In London I did a lot of walking, so that will not have been picked up by TfL either, but all of that history will be on my mobile phone.

Q139 **Chair:** You referenced as well the potential links to AI. In the transport world we have traditionally looked at current and past data to influence decisions for the future. Some of the big decisions that will have to be made are on changes that we do not yet know about. How permanent is the working-from-home model? How is it going to evolve in the future? Do you see a way of using the data you are looking at collecting to predict those future patterns?

Nick Bromley: Yes. The key thing is that you have to get the baseline data absolutely accurate to start with, which is what I did at Elephant and Castle. Only when you have a clear baseline and the parties agree to that baseline, and it is clear to all the stakeholders that that is the baseline, can you do some fairly innovative work around the modelling. At the moment, a lot of modelling goes into understanding the baseline data. It is trying to fill in the gaps, in other words. It moves the whole game forward.

The great thing about AI, of course, is that it is rules-based. You can lob loads of data into it, and it is better than humans at finding the answer. That is why the quantum computer thing is very interesting. I know it sounds a bit far-fetched, but the interesting thing is that Google in 2019 had an AI quantum computing demonstrator. This stuff is happening. Of course, quantum computers are brilliant at solving a network problem. Where do you deflect us? Yesterday I should have been told, "Don't go to Exeter because there is a problem on the line. Go to Honiton and take the CrossCountry line." That should all be done for me because I do not want to have to make those decisions. I just want to think about the purpose of my journey.

Q140 **Jack Brereton:** You mentioned some of the inadequacies with some of the data that is being used to assess which transport schemes we should invest in. We have talked a lot about some of the problems with BCR and the fact that that resulted in quite a significant proportion of the investment only being spent in one part of the country. Do you think the approach that you are proposing could enable the Department and others to assess better the benefits of some of these transport schemes?

Nick Bromley: Yes, because I think you will fundamentally have better evidence to start with. An interesting little mantra I had with my team on Elephant and Castle was that it is a brave politician who will argue against the evidence. What we were putting on the table was clear evidence. I did not need to get involved in any emotional discussion. It was just, "That's how it currently works. This is the impact." In that case, we showed the deflection of the additional buildings they were going to put in and the increased footfall in the area. You have the baseline and you then just model it in.

Trying to get to the basic data was what gave me the idea of using mobile phone data as a radio network. It was nothing to do with smartphones. The world has moved on. The piece of work we did was in 2007 and we launched it in 2012. We are now in a different paradigm. We now have an opportunity to work with the mobile phone operators and the mobile network operators.

Q141 **Jack Brereton:** Can this fit within the existing restrictions of the BCR process and the Treasury Green Book rules, or do you think that there needs to be more fundamental change around some of that?

Nick Bromley: The thing I learnt in transport planning is that they are very conservative, and rightly so. You need to move these things incrementally. I would actually use it to compare and contrast the BCR process and then make subtle changes. You will be in a different place, I am sure, within five years.

Q142 **Ruth Cadbury:** I might be being a bit thick. I thought that a lot of this information was already available, such as real-time traffic jams on sat-navs. I use Citymapper, which tells me when the next bus is actually due and not when it is timetabled to be due. What am I missing, or is it the origin and destination of particular types of travellers that is missing? TfL has been using and providing open-source data to commercial apps for a long time.

Nick Bromley: Yes, in fact I was there at the beginning of that negotiation. Part of my work in innovation was to look at some of that. The difficulty you have is that we are well informed on the infrastructure and the vehicles on the infrastructure. You can have 50 people on a bus, and it is just one bus, if you get my point. A set of traffic lights informs you about what is happening at a junction and what is happening with the vehicles, but that does not help you to understand that there are 50 people on the bus or how they got to the bus and where they are going when they get off the bus.

Q143 **Ruth Cadbury:** But that data is available. You can tell how full a train is now, as a passenger.

Nick Bromley: But you cannot understand the origin or the destination of my trip.

Q144 **Ruth Cadbury:** Does the mobile phone data, which provides a lot of this data now, not provide that?

Nick Bromley: It can, but it is selective who has access to it. If there is one thing the Committee could usefully do, it would be to go and talk to the likes of Apple and Google and say, "Can you please help us better understand what information you've got, what data you have and how it might be better used in the world we're looking at?" We cannot keep investing in roads and railways. We somehow need to reduce that or at least accept that we have got to the point of saturation, so how do we manage better within the legacy architecture?

Q145 **Ruth Cadbury:** The other thing is about inbuilt biases. We had a presentation on that years ago in the APPG on cycling and walking. For instance, there is the risk that cycle infrastructure planning is based on data from Strava. People cycling for utility purposes do not use Strava; it is the fitness people who use it, and they are very different kinds of journeys. There are issues around equity, gender, age and so on. How do you ensure that you are not using the data without understanding the inbuilt biases in the way the data comes?

Nick Bromley: We could spend a day just looking at that. I am a keen cyclist, and I use Strava.

Q146 **Ruth Cadbury:** That is the problem. You are a keen cyclist. I am just a utility cyclist.

Nick Bromley: Exactly. I have done a lot of work in regional areas—in east Devon, in the Peak district and in Sheffield—on cycling. The whole area of demand and the nature of demand is quite important, as you say. You are trying to attract people who are not keen cyclists to cycle. Therefore, you need to understand what is realistic in terms of the route. For instance, I know that going from Castleton, where I spend a lot of time, into the centre of Sheffield, you have to be probably an up-there, almost elite cyclist to get over the moors. That is a practical reality, so how do you build a cycle infrastructure that is going to work? Well, you won't. You can build a cycle infrastructure down the valley, but you need to know that people are going from Castleton down to Hathersage to use a doctor's surgery. At the moment they wait for a bus.

Q147 **Ruth Cadbury:** But higher use of e-bikes might change that.

Nick Bromley: Exactly. That is how you use the data—to inform modal choice. You can then put in the right modes because you know what people's movements and behaviours are.

Q148 **Paul Howell:** It seems to me that there are two questions here. One is about what data would be useful to better inform transport decisions, and the other is whether we should have access to that data from a privacy point of view. It feels to me that if we were going to do an inquiry, or it was going to be part of our work, it would be the former of those, and somebody else would tell us whether the actual data was accessible. Is that a fair summary of what we should be looking at? We should be looking at what would be the best data to inform the decisions to get the outcomes. Then we have to find out whether we can actually get access to that because of privacy laws and so on.

As you have said, the world has moved along. People used to think that we should not be tracked, but we now allow ourselves to be tracked every time we carry a phone, every time we are on Facebook and every time we are on any of the digital platforms. We are getting tracked. It is whether you get that into the right situation from a public acceptance point of view. I think they are two separate things. One is for this Committee and the other is maybe for somewhere else.

Nick Bromley: The two are very much linked. I agree that you need clarity as to what the requirement is. What is the key outcome? The problem is that we do not have enough money to endlessly improve the infrastructure. There are limits, and there should be limits because we would concrete over the entire country trying to get everybody going in every direction of their choice.

The first thing to understand is that there needs to be a limit to the investment, but you then need to get clever about how you use the investment you have, and I think—

Q149 **Paul Howell:** But in terms of what we are looking at in this Committee, we should be trying to ascertain what data will be needed to make the best decisions.

Nick Bromley: I would start with the outcome and then the data. What evidence do I need to get to that point?

Q150 **Mr Bradshaw:** Is there anywhere, either domestically or internationally, that uses data in a forward-looking, visionary way as a model we could look at?

Nick Bromley: The fringes of this at the moment are around demand-response transport. That is the buzzword. Some of it is micromobility, but the obvious one is buses, where you have flexibility. What they are trying to do is what I am suggesting, where they decide where the bus goes according to where the demand is. That route may change during the day. It seems a slight idiocy that we have continuous running of buses or trains over fixed points when, in fact, people might require different points during the day.

Q151 **Mr Bradshaw:** Is that already happening anywhere in the UK?

Nick Bromley: We have a couple of those. In fact, there was a good one that unfortunately stopped through covid. There are various programmes running around Europe, in particular Germany.

Q152 **Mr Bradshaw:** We have a supposedly data-led, zero-carbon transport plan in Exeter. You may have heard of it. It is called Exeter City Futures. They are hamstrung, are they not, by their inability to get all the data they need to deliver?

Nick Bromley: Yes. If you asked me as a programme manager how you would tackle that, I would go to a small corner somewhere and prove it to the local population. I would deliver the benefit to them. I would personally engage, because I would get a received benefit—commuting in and out of Exeter—and then you would spread it across the country. You do not try to blanket the UK. You start with a focus area. Of course, Exeter is interesting because the population centre has effectively moved from the high street to the M5, with all the development that has been going on east of the city centre. This would work very well in that sort of situation.

Chair: We are up against the clock, I am afraid, but thank you for your time and presentation.

Examination of witness

Witness: Milda Manomaityte.

Q153 **Chair:** Last but not least, I invite our final presenter to the lectern. For our records, could you give your name and organisation, please?

Milda Manomaityte: My name is Milda Manomaityte. I am the innovation director at the Railway Industry Association.

Chair: Thank you. The floor is yours.

Milda Manomaityte: The Railway Industry Association is a trade body for UK railway suppliers. We have over 350 companies. Although today I will be speaking on behalf of the railway, what I ask will benefit the entire transport ecosystem. A lot of the issues that we have been talking about today might be addressed by it as well.

As we have just heard, we are living through a time of digital transformation. Everything we do generates information and data. We are being tracked, and every new model produces information about its life and what it is doing. In the very near future companies will be digital companies and not just the big software suppliers. All of the new railways, and the railways that we have now, are being fitted with smart sensors and cameras and are being monitored and understood.

The more data we have, the more we can understand the business. We have heard today how many issues arise because we do not know what we are dealing with. The more we can understand the past and the present, the more we can plan for the future and improve it. Just imagine the technologies that will come. This inquiry is looking at the future of transport. We can have predictive maintenance, looking at infrastructure and predicting issues before they happen, not causing delays by stopping the railways to fix something that could be prevented. We can send automated, robotic machines that will fix the issues without human intervention on dangerous tracks.

We can integrate transport modes for travellers and freight. We can utilise the system better. We do not know how much the railway track is used today. We think we know, but we do not accurately know what is actually happening on the network. We can reduce the cost of building, planning and designing new railway projects by using machine learning, artificial intelligence and all the other technologies that are coming. We can solve the ticketing problem by using biometrics, machine learning, understanding data and travel patterns, integrating transport modes and sharing the data.

None of the things I have just mentioned come from science fiction books. These things are already happening on the network, but in fragmented and isolated pockets of activity. We have seen interesting projects going on in Network Rail, train operating companies and our own supply chain. I have been speaking with our members and asking them to share their stories, which I will be happy to do in the Q&A session.

What we need now is support from the Government, an incentive and a push. We need a bit of encouragement to share the data. We have just

heard how difficult it is to access very specific data, but given the amount that we produce, it is very difficult to share. Some of it is regulated to be shared with operators and the supply chain, but a lot of it is shared on a voluntary basis. You cannot build a business by relying on someone's good intentions. We need to understand what data is available today, what is missing, how we are using it, who is using it, who has it and how they are sharing it. We need an open railway data access plan that can be supported by regulations. I know there are initiatives like the Rail Data Marketplace being built, which will be immensely helpful to share data as a one-stop shop for railway data. I do not know how that will fit into the Department for Transport plans for a file data transfer platform. Are they talking to each other? We do not know that.

This proposal is a quick win. We are not asking for a big IT project. We are asking you to support railway companies, suppliers and operators by mandating data sharing, with checks and balances in place. That is how the inquiry could find a solution. It will provide really big wins. It will unify the market. It will take all of the pockets of good and interesting innovations that are happening and unlock not just the railway potential but integration with the wider transport network, with kerbside management, micromobility, buses, airlines and ticketing. Airlines and railway systems do not talk to each other because they operate on different data systems. Thank you very much.

Q154 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. I visited the Railtex exhibition in Birmingham yesterday and saw some of the innovations, and how they are inhibited in their potential by not having full access to data.

If I could play devil's advocate, for some companies and organisations data is of great value, and there will be reluctance to give up the commercial advantage they may have. How do you balance that against the wider benefit, which I personally agree with, of using open data for the greater good?

Milda Manomaityte: I agree that there is a lot of concern about intellectual property and the value of data, thinking about data itself as an asset. Yes, data is an asset, but it only produces value if it is used. If we have data sitting somewhere on some server, it is not producing value. For example, starting with the basics, we do not have a publicly accessible single-source railway map for infrastructure. Network Rail owns an infrastructure network model, but it is very difficult to access and they are not very keen to share. There must be reasons for that—I don't know—and there must be structures in place. It is not from not being willing to share, but it is very difficult to access.

What then happens is that everybody creates their own version of the map, using GPS. You can walk the network. The data in itself does not have value because it is not secret. You could map the network yourself, spending weeks and weeks of your time.

Q155 **Chair:** Is there another country that has addressed the problem and set

up some sort of national framework for data sharing?

Milda Manomaityte: That could be part of the inquiry. This kind of activity is new for everyone. We woke up one day to a digital revolution, so a lot of people are still learning. It is not something that we are particularly bad at doing. Estonia was mentioned. I am from Lithuania. Estonia is a very progressive-looking country. They recognise the value of public transport usage and opening it up for the public to understand. I cannot give you a concrete example now, but there are good examples happening already in the UK.

Q156 **Jack Brereton:** You mentioned the need to upgrade the network digitally and transform the network. Some of the companies out there are your members. Do you think there is sufficient competition? Obviously, there have been issues in the past with lack of competition around signalling systems. Do you think that there are now sufficient products on the market and competition to bring down some of the cost of this?

Milda Manomaityte: Having easy, accessible data about the network, about its function, status and users, whether freight or passengers, for the supply chain, with checks and balances in place, will help create competition. I was speaking with our members at 3Squared who have done tremendous work on digitising railway freight processes, from spreadsheets and manual books to digital systems. What they would like to do now is to look at freight paths.

The way that companies work now is to block freight paths, saying, "We will be using this," but the paths are not being used all the time. They are very difficult to get to and they are very difficult to secure, so the companies hold on to them. By using artificial intelligence, they can take data from the past seven years, look at the usage patterns of the paths and predict whether a path will be used or not for a specific point. A company could then say, "We would like to book this path for our cargo train to go through." That would allow our network to be utilised well. That is creating new business models and new competition. That is the beauty of data. It would be simple, perhaps, for you to regulate and mandate the sharing of it, which would unlock such potential that, today, we could probably not imagine the possibilities of it.

Q157 **Jack Brereton:** Do you think that Government legislation through Parliament needs to be in place to initiate that process?

Milda Manomaityte: I believe so. There are a lot of private businesses involved. There are operators. We are now waiting to see what is going to happen with rail reform. We just need that push from the Government to say, "This is important. You have to do it." It should not rely on voluntary contribution. People are changing. People are moving jobs. The person who believes in the value of data might move away, so then there are all the commercial agreements. You cannot build business on that. You think, "Do I need to renegotiate? Who do I need to talk to? Do I need to

convince that person again that this is important?" Taking away that thinking and doubt is important, and you have to do it.

Q158 **Jack Brereton:** Do you think this is the future of the whole network? We still have Victorian semaphore signalling operating on parts of the network in my constituency. Is this going to be the solution for the whole network, or just the most intensively used parts of it?

Milda Manomaityte: When I talk about data, I talk about whole system data, not just passenger locations, not just real time and not just timetables. The beginning is to understand the asset and the state of our asset. Sometimes we do not even know what we have on the network. Sometimes we have to go along the route and physically inspect it to see and catalogue what is there and what is missing, because of the historical infrastructure. With new infrastructure it is easy; we fit it with smart sensors, and we know how it is doing any time of the day. It is understanding what we have and what we are missing.

We have members who work with historical infrastructure and make it more modern; they adapt it. You do not have to convert the entire network to modern technology. You can work with what is already there but find a way to make it work better.

Q159 **Jack Brereton:** You said that Network Rail are unwilling to share what they have. Do you think they really know themselves?

Milda Manomaityte: That could be a good question to ask in the inquiry.

Q160 **Paul Howell:** I am not sure whether this is an interest I should declare, but I have talked a lot in the past to a company called Hitachi, which does a lot of digital signalling and things like that.

In terms of the digital platform that you would want, is what you are asking for as part of the inquiry to establish what we have, where we have it and what we would need? That is the first question.

The second question is this. You made a comment earlier about the data being there, but it is of no value because it is just there and nobody is using it. It is like any other asset. It is the perceived value to the user and not the perceived value to the owner that has the potential for value with something like that. We have to be aware of how you would actually get that recognised. If it is the state that owns it, it wants some value out of it. If it is a private enterprise, it wants some value out of it. How do we get the data available, and how do we get the core collection of data in the first place? As my colleague mentioned, semaphore signalling causes problems, so should part of this inquiry be to understand where we need to invest in the tools and techniques to collect data? Sorry, I rambled a bit there.

Milda Manomaityte: I hope I will remember to answer all of your points. We are not asking for an IT project or to create a platform. That work is already being done with the Rail Data Marketplace. We would like

to make sure that it integrates with a file data transfer platform to enable whole system sharing.

What we would like is an audit of what we have and an understanding. From that understanding, we would like regulation of how we can best share it. I am aware that there are privacy issues. We have discussed those today. There are intellectual property issues. Again, it is all possible. It is just a matter of will and a little bit of a push. Regarding the value of data—

Q161 **Paul Howell:** What I want you to pick up on is the fact that it is an audit of what we have, what we need to get and how we can get there.

Milda Manomaityte: Correct, and to make sure that we do it in a standardised way, not just across the railway but working with other transport modes, working with bus open data programmes, airlines, maritime and active travel. We must make sure that it integrates, because that is the future.

Q162 **Mr Bradshaw:** Apart from data, what would be your other asks of Government if we were to do a report on this issue narrowly, as opposed to incorporating it with one or two of the others that we have had bids on over the last couple of days?

Milda Manomaityte: Once we have the basics sorted and we have the data, we would like a collaborative approach on how to use it. We would like to look into the skills gap. Digital transformation is not just about technology. It is about having people and teams responsible for managing data. If we have a person in an organisation who voluntarily sends datasets—Excel files—to Rail Data Marketplace as and when, but it is not in their core job description, it will not be consistent. We need teams in the railway and transport organisations who understand the data, who work with it and who maintain it and keep it clean; 80% of AI projects are on cleaning data, but we could do that from the beginning. That could potentially be a partnership between the Department for Transport and the Department for Education. We have a huge skills gap, and this would be a great opportunity for talented young people to come and work in the transport system, not just the railways.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed for your time. That was a very interesting presentation. I thank all our presenters today. We have had a wealth of very interesting proposals which, I imagine, will be quite difficult for us to sift through and decide what inquiry or inquiries we decide to do. For now, thank you again to all of our presenters.