

New Shadow Cabinet urged to back Northern infrastructure investment

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The new Labour leader and members of his shadow cabinet have been urged to work alongside Transport for the North to help deliver infrastructure investment to the North.

In a letter to Keir Starmer, Transport for the North Chief Executive Barry White outlined the organisation's budget asks and the on-going strategic planning in partnership with the region's 20 Local Transport Authorities.

He said he was looking forward to working with Mr Starmer on ways to rebuild the North "as best we can" in response to the unique challenges faced as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Mr Starmer has been invited to meet with Transport for the North to discuss the organisation's blueprint for where it wants transport in the North of England to be in 30 years.

Mr White wrote: "We are also working with our members on how, in the future, the North of England can have a much stronger involvement in determining and delivering for itself. This includes how we ensure decarbonisation and climate change is at the heart of the North's future transport network, for example how we can push forward pathfinder projects, such as hydrogen powered trains.

"Given the current situation with Coronavirus, we feel that many of our plans and asks for investment

should be fast-tracked to give the Northern and wider UK economy the boost that we will need to ensure we have a sustainable recovery and get the country on track as soon as possible.

“With that in mind, we are working on an economic recovery plan for the North that will utilise our unique position, and help us to consolidate a vision on behalf of the North for how we need to move forward.”

Transport for the North featured prominently in Labour’s recently released shadow transport plan, and Mr White said he hoped that “remains constant” as transport policy is developed in future.

He added he was keen to better understand the Party’s vision for transport, the North of England and “devolution more broadly”.

The newly appointed Shadow Secretary of State for Transport, Jim McMahon, has also been invited to meet with Transport for the North.

The former leader of Oldham council, and now MP for Oldham West and Royton, has previously praised the role of Transport for the North in building partnerships and demonstrating wider economic growth potential.

Writing to Mr McMahon, Mr White said: “From your work as Shadow Minister for Local Government and Devolution, it is clear that you favour the empowerment of our regions to make decisions locally.”

He also urged the shadow minister to back infrastructure plans and investment asks for the North to help the whole UK economy recover from the Covid-19 Crisis, adding: “As Member of Parliament for Oldham West and Royton, I am sure that you recognise the major part that the North can play in this process.”

Photo credit: Transport for the North