

Urban Transport Group: City regions must help shape rail reform

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City regions must ‘have a seat at the table’ when decisions are taken about how the Government’s reform of the railways is implemented – a new statement from the Urban Transport Group urges.

In the [statement](#), the Group – which represents transport authorities for the seven largest urban areas in England, including London, the West Midlands and Greater Manchester – calls for the reforms to both build on the success of the devolution of rail powers which has already taken place, and for structured and meaningful involvement for the city regions in how the rail reform plans unfold.

The devolution of responsibilities for rail has been one of the big success stories on rail in recent years, leading to more investment, higher levels of passenger satisfaction and more reliable services.

Tobyn Hughes, Managing Director of Transport North East, and the Board member who leads on rail for the Urban Transport Group, said:

“Rail is critical to so much of what city regions are trying to achieve – from meeting ambitious air quality and decarbonisation targets to giving the public the transport they want and need (one network, one

ticket, one identity). Yet too often in the past, local rail services have sat outside the wider local public transport - remote and unresponsive to local need.

“The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail offers the opportunity to change that, and we want to play our part in realising the opportunity that this reform process offers to ensure local rail services form part of wider integrated public transport networks for our largest urban areas.”

The statement sets out a range of scenarios for how the proven benefits of devolving further responsibilities for rail could be extended to more passengers and places. These include options for extending and deepening local control and accountability for both rail services, infrastructure and investment.

The statement says: “We recognise that the railways are now embarked on a long period of restructuring and reform and we want to play our full part in making these reforms a success for the people and places we serve.”

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