Dear Frank

Thank you for hosting our successful visit to Liverpool at your headquarters on Mann Island on 14 January. All the staff at your headquarters were extremely helpful, particularly in managing the unexpectedly high interest from members of the public.

We were grateful for Matt Goggins’ evidence to our inquiry into the health of the bus market. Hearing about the challenges faced by the Liverpool City Region and your experience developing a bus partnership will helpfully inform our work as we begin to think about the recommendations we want to make to Government.

As you may be aware, after our oral evidence session we held a public Q&A where members of the public were invited to ask the Committee about any area of transport policy. Because of the large number of attendees it wasn’t possible for us to answer every question which was asked, and we said we would write to you to highlight the local issues which were raised with us, and publish this on our website as a record of the questions which were asked.

These issues are appended to this letter. If you would like to respond to the points which were raised at our Q&A, we would be very happy to publish any response and circulate it to the people who attended our Q&A.

Thanks again for hosting our meetings, and I hope we will have occasion to visit Liverpool again soon.

Yours sincerely

Lilian Greenwood MP
Chair of the Transport Select Committee
Appendix – Issues raised with the Committee at the public Q&A in Liverpool on Monday 14 January

Local people were appreciative of the enhanced concessionary offer around travel, for those who are 60 and over.

The issues of bus services across boundaries was raised. The move to NHS regional centres of excellence has changed how people have to access appointments. Attendees asked if connectivity to hospitals could be looked at if appointments will take place for specific conditions in specific locations.

There was concern it was only possible to contribute to the Big Bus Conversation online, which excluded many people. Attendees said they had been promised that there will be other routes into that conversation but they are, as of yet, unaware of them.

A number of attendees were concerned by the regularity with which bus routes were withdrawn by operators when they are not considered to be commercially viable. We were told that when bus services shrink, older people can be left isolated. One attendee asked how Merseytravel can help keep routes running when there is no subsidy. This was highlighted by an example of a bus route which was predominantly, and regularly, used by concessionary pass holders being withdrawn and not replaced when this was described as a ‘lifeline’ for those who used it.

There was a perceived lack of evening and weekend services across the Liverpool City Region with many services stopping at 7pm and not running on Sundays.

We were told that when Avon buses went out of business there was a lack of buses running with very short notice. We heard that these routes were in areas where there is a high elderly population and housing estates, and were told that in an estate of 4,000 people 46% did not have access to a car, and of the elderly population 71% did not have access to a car. We heard there was also no evening or Sunday bus provision. Attendees asked what the duties were for Merseytravel to provide other travel options or compel bus companies to provide services.

One attendee asked why a report Merseytravel had commissioned a TRICs report which was not made publicly available, the conclusions of Merseytravel were made available but with no report to show how they reached their decision. A TRICs report challenges and validates assumptions about the transport impacts of new developments. They told us that a group they worked with had commissioned their own independent report and come to different conclusions.

Concern was raised about new developments and the transport connectivity to bus stations and hospitals.

We were told that the Merseytravel advisory panel – which used to meet every three months and gave the public an opportunity to come in and discuss local transport issues – no longer exists. Given the level of interest in our Q&A on transport matters,
if the Merseytravel advisory panel has ceased to exist or at least to meet publicly, Merseytravel may wish to revisit this decision.

One attendee asked why Merseyside has so many tolls, and there were also people protesting tolls outside the event. Those opposing the tolls asked why there are so many tolls in the Liverpool City region, and we were told that “the Mersey is the most intensely tolled river in Britain and has the second and third most expensive crossings”.

We heard from a local business about their restricted O licence. The owner felt that not enough has been done to publicise this as an option for companies take up. For a small company they felt that they had been bullied by the larger operators in the Merseyside area and have still continued to operate.