



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Transport Committee

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Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
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5 June 2019

Dear Chris

Government responses to Committee reports

Ahead of our session with you on Wednesday 17 July, I wanted to ask you to update us on actions that the Department committed to undertake in its responses to our reports over the 2016-17 and 2017-19 sessions. This refers only to the period since you last appeared before us to discuss departmental priorities on 21 October 2016:

8th report of 2016-17: Bus Services Bill

Recommendation 7: DfT committed to “work closely with local authorities interested in using the powers in the Bill to improve local bus services—as, for example, it is doing with total transport and has done through the Smart Cities Partnership”. Please explain what further work you have done in this area.

Recommendation 9: DfT committed to: delivering regulations on accessibility (AV requirements etc.) “as quickly as possible”. Can you update us on this work and the likely implementation date?

Recommendation 10: DfT said it would consult on open data proposals, and it has now done so. When will the affirmative regulations on bus open data be published? When can passengers expect to see the benefit from these changes?

Recommendation 11: DfT committed to “provide practical guidance on how the ticketing provisions in the bill can be delivered”. Has this guidance been published? If so when did this happen and where can it be found?

Recommendation 12: DfT committed to publishing guidance that would “include advice on what reporting and monitoring options are available for bus operators and LTAs that are seeking to reduce the effect of congestion on local bus services”. Has this guidance been published? If so when did this happen and where can it be found?

9th report of 2016-17: Rail franchising

Recommendation 1: DfT said that “where appropriate” it would “continue to investigate other ways to streamline [franchise] bidding costs, including considering the impact on bidding costs when reviewing future franchise market reforms”. Please explain what further work you have done in this area.

Recommendation 8: DfT said that it was “committed to continually improving the franchise model so that it delivers benefits for passengers and value for taxpayers. The size and structure of individual franchises are considered as part of each franchise competition, taking into account relevant factors. At a strategic level, the Government will consider whether the pattern of more numerous and smaller franchises suggested by the Committee is the right one”. How has the franchise model improved since you made this commitment in April 2017?

Recommendation 14: The Committee recommended that the DfT publish a scoring system, possibly in the form of a weighted index, following a franchise competition. This would omit commercially sensitive details but give the public and industry a better understanding of the basis, in terms of quality and price, on which a franchise has been awarded. DfT agreed that “this may potentially assist with the public and industry gaining a better understanding of the basis, in terms of quality and price, on which a franchise has been awarded” and committed to “investigate ways in which the final scores could be presented showing the differential from the winning bid”, to consult with RDG and to provide further update to the Committee. How did you investigate ways of doing this, and what was the outcome of the discussions between DfT and RDG on this matter?

Recommendation 16: DfT committed to “testing a wider use of outcome-based specification, including through the use of an alternative approach to specifying service quality in the East Anglia franchise; we are considering how to approach this for future competitions in light of the lessons we have learnt”. Please explain what further work you have done in this area.

Recommendation 19: DfT said that “Work is ongoing to deliver the minister’s commitment to the committee to publish information about each rail franchise’s performance against its contractual benchmarks”. What work has been done to deliver this commitment and when do you expect to be able to fulfil it?

Recommendation 20: DfT said that it was then “considering, first, whether there is a case for increasing operators’ risk exposure under the regimes so to sharpen the incentive mechanism; and second, what could be done to improve the alignment of performance metrics and incentives as between the train operators and Network Rail”. What was the outcome of this work?

10th report of 2016-17: Vauxhall Zafira fires

Recommendation 6: DfT committed to working with DVSA to identify participants to take part in a round table discussion in January 2018 to identify practical steps to share existing sources of information more effectively, raise awareness of under-reporting and to encourage more reporting of potential safety defects. In their Spring 2018 follow up to us, DVSA said that this had proven more complex than anticipated and that “DVSA is in full discussions with DfT as it is progressing this, to ensure DfT is satisfied with the progress and direction of discussions”. Is DfT satisfied with progress? Can you update us on what has happened over the past 12 months?

Recommendation 10: The Committee recommended that DfT and DVSA “review the Code of Practice on Vehicle Safety Defects and Recalls to see if it needs to be strengthened in respect of the obligation placed on manufacturers to inform their suppliers”. DfT said that this would be complete by 31 August 2018, but that does not appear to have been achieved—the guidance on gov.uk is dated 2013. What was the outcome of the review? Do DfT and DVSA have a timetable for issuing a revised Code of Practice?

1st report of 2017-19: Community Transport

The Committee and the Department have been in ongoing correspondence on this issue. Most recently, on 15 March the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, Nusrat Ghani, wrote to inform us that DfT intends to “carry out a review of the current domestic performance regime in 2019, to see if the Transport Act 1985 is still fit for purpose and provides the correct balance for the bus sector as a whole. The terms of reference will be drawn up in due course”. Can you update us on the progress of this work? We note that the relevant legislation has already been amended, to come into force from 1 October 2019.

2nd report of 2017-19: Improving Air Quality

Recommendation 27: The Government response said that “Work is ongoing between DfT and MHCLG to ensure policy measures such as planning policy, via the NPPF, and Permitted Development Rights, enable charging infrastructure provision”. What was the outcome of this work?

3rd report of 2017-19: Airports National Policy Statement

Recommendation 11: DfT committed to “monitor the financeability and affordability of the [Heathrow third runway] scheme as the design develops and as the economic regulatory framework for expansion matures”. When did the DfT make its most recent assessment and what did it conclude?

Recommendation 24: DfT said that it anticipated “launching the Aviation Strategy in the first half of 2019”. Why has this been delayed and when do you plan to publish this?

4th report of 2017-19: Rail infrastructure investment

Recommendation 6: In December 2017 DfT published the Strategic Case Supplementary Guidance: Rebalancing Toolkit, designed to help authors of strategic cases assess how a programme or project fits with the objective of spreading growth across the country. DfT said that the toolkit “is open to review and comment, however, given the lag effect of its use in investment decisions, Government continues to consider when the appropriate time and approach to reviewing it and its effects”. When did the DfT make its most recent assessment as to whether the time was right to review the toolkit and what did it conclude?

Recommendation 7: DfT said that it would “continue to discuss the effectiveness of this toolkit with HMT and other government departments as it continues to be used and lessons learnt”. What discussions has DfT had with the Treasury and other Departments on this issue to date and what were the outcomes of those discussions?

Recommendation 8: DfT committed to “work closely with Network Rail and the supply chain in the coming months to establish an effective forward-look of the longer term renewals portfolio, ensuring that funding decisions are made in a manner which properly reflects the needs and capability of the supply chain”. What work was undertaken and what was the outcome?

Recommendation 9: DfT said that it would “continue to call on additional expertise to support its in house capabilities and skills as appropriate” [in the context of rail enhancements delivery]. What external expertise has the DfT contracted to date, where from and at what cost to the taxpayer?

Recommendation 10: DfT said that there were “no plans to make changes to the market-led proposals guidance, however at the end of the current “call for ideas” we will reassess the guidance in the light of any lessons learned from this initial process and make any necessary updates to the document then”. The MLP guidance does not appear to have been updated since April 2018. What was the outcome of the ‘call for ideas’ and why did the DfT decide not to update the guidance as a result?

7th report of 2017-19: Rail timetable changes

Recommendation 7: DfT reiterated its 1 October 2018 commitment that it would introduce a simple “one click” automated claims system, available via smartphones and smartcard registration, to make claiming compensation easier for customers “for future train operators under DfT-awarded franchises”. Can you confirm that this commitment forms part of the East Midlands franchise awarded on 10 April 2019, given it was not specifically mentioned in either the DfT press notice or by the Rail Minister when he appeared before Parliament?

Recommendation 8: DfT said that it would “actively encourage operators to build on the good practice displayed by GTR and Northern, and encourage more innovative methods to engage more passengers”. Please explain what further work you have done in this area.

8th report of 2017-19: Mobility as a Service

Recommendations 1 & 2: DfT said it was “undertaking research to understand how the capabilities of older people are changing as they age, and the implications that these changes may have on their needs for mobility and the design of transport systems to support them” and that it would share these findings with other relevant government departments. Can you update us on the progress of this work?

Recommendation 3: DfT said it would “continue to monitor progress of [local authority “test and learn”] trials and developments and will actively seek to identify knowledge gaps as these emerge”. Please explain what further work you have done in this area.

Recommendation 4: DfT said it would “continue to review funding provided through the Future of Mobility Grand Challenge as the knowledge base is developed, and will do so in consultation with stakeholders”. Please explain what further work you have done in this area.

Recommendation 5: DfT said it would “be engaging with local authorities to identify capacity and capability strengths and weaknesses, with a view to joint action to strengthen capacity and embed best practice in relation to data”. Please explain what further work you have done in this area and what has been achieved to date.

So that Members can see this update in good time for our session on Wednesday 17 July, I would be grateful to receive a response by Friday 5 July.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lilian', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Lilian Greenwood MP
Chair of the Transport Select Committee