29 March 2020

TramForward disappointed with Department for Transport’s latest publication.

TramForward is disappointed with the Department for Transport’s latest publication Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge. Apart from a passing reference to the expansion of Manchester Metrolink, there is no mention of the role played by trams and light rail.

Trams have a very low (or zero when using renewable-sourced electricity) carbon emission; the low rolling resistance of steel wheel on steel rail gives inherently lower energy consumption, especially when combined with more efficient drives that allow high levels of regeneration to be possible.

Trams have a far better track record of encouraging modal shift from private to public transport than do buses and would therefore reduce congestion and help to fulfil one of the DfT’s stated aims of making public transport “the natural first choice for our daily activities”.

DfT should remember that carbon emissions represent only one of the environmental challenges that currently face society and that air quality is also of huge importance. While electrifying cars and buses may reduce CO₂ emissions and pollution due to tailpipe emissions, it does nothing to lessen pollution from non-exhaust emissions (NEEs) – particulates from tyre and road wear. Indeed it is likely to make it worse, as electric vehicles tend to be heavier than their internal combustion counterparts. While TramForward would not suggest that trams can replace buses everywhere, use of trams on the most heavily trafficked urban routes would go a long way to reducing roadside pollution where it is at its worst and where it affects most people.

Government has in the past shown a tendency to view problems in isolation, as with the diesel car debacle. It is time for some joined-up thinking in the corridors of power and for solutions to be found that will address environmental problems equally not to lessen one at the expense of worsening another.

The air quality benefits from the current, vitally necessary drop in road use to minimise the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic must not be lost, and authorities at both the national and local level simply have to prioritise people over traffic by creating a sustainable, user-friendly public transport system that reduces car dependence and transforms both the environment and quality of life.

NOTES

1. The LRTA (http://www.lrta.org/) is the world’s leading organisation campaigning for better public transport in urban areas through light rail, tramway and metro systems and has been in existence for more than 80 years. It also supports the revitalisation of suburban and rural transport through the application of light rail and TramTrain technology.

2. Press enquiries - please contact:
Jim Harkins, Chairman Campaigns Group, LRTA,Auchenshuggle Junction, 8 Beechmoore, Moore, Warrington WA4 6UETelephone: 01925 740675; 07721 378223Email: jimh@jimmyharkins.com

TramForward – The campaign arm of the Light Rail Transit Association A private company limited by Guarantee
Registered Office: 8 Berwick Place, Welwyn Garden City, England, AL7 4TU, Great Britain.
Registered in England and Wales Company number 5072319