

Leicestershire Business Voice Response to Leicester Transport Plan and Proposed Workplace Parking Levy



SUMMARY

Overall, Leicestershire Business Voice (LBV) is supportive of the proposed Leicester Transport Plan (LTP) because it reflects the need for significant investment in improved sustainable transport in Leicester. Going forward a 'business as usual approach' will not work for transport in the city. What is paramount is the need for really attractive sustainable travel alternatives if we are to see lower car use. The cost, convenience and comfort of these alternatives need give a credible alternative to use of the private car. There is an urgent need to reduce the carbon impact of transport. If this is going to be achieved there needs to be a step change from what is on offer today or else commuters and business travellers will continue using their cars at current levels.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

1. Opportunity to be more ambitious – in certain areas, we believe the LTP could be even more ambitious than it currently is.

- Is there not the opportunity to provide mobility hubs across the Leicester urban area, enabling interchange between public transport, car clubs and micro-mobility?
- In addition, could not the creation of community hubs, offering local workspaces, provide an attractive option for those that can work remotely but want to avoid the commute and the limitations of working from home? A big benefit of such provision would be the reductions in trip making at peak on the local transport network.
- Piloting and delivery of new mobility solutions maximising technological solutions that may be available on our doorstep. Our local universities with Space Park could play a key part in development of such solutions and provide ways of illustrating and articulating the impact of the decisions we make in how we travel. We must build on schemes such as demand responsive transport and other new approaches, offering options that are attractive for Generation X and Y.

2. Proposed Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) – it would not surprise you when we say that the business community will not universally welcome this! We do recognise that there is a need for more funding of the sustainable travel alternatives and for this to be available on a year on year basis. We note the experience of Nottingham with WPL where the business community has in the main accepted WPL. If there is going to be buy-in from Leicester businesses, they will need to see the significantly added value that WPL will bring and how this will specifically bring benefit to them and their staff. For Nottingham, the extension of the tram system was a high profile benefactor of WPL. Leicester will need to ensure the uplift in public transport offering has the necessary leverage to engage and excite businesses. It will need the wow factor e.g. a vastly improved bus/train offering or a tram system, as a tangible benefit to offset the cost.

We want to encourage people to frequent Leicester, to ensure our retail and leisure offering is vibrant and our night time economy thrives. Pricing people out of the city or making access to the city a costly challenge will not help that. Bikes are fine to get around the city but many visitors to the city come from the county and further afield, and it's not viable for them to cycle in.

3. Business engagement – the LTP refers to the importance of business engagement as a key cornerstone. As we continue to demonstrate, LBV is able to act as an important gateway to the business community, and we work closely with the other business groups (e.g. FSB, BID, Chamber). Please do not seek to create alternatives to what already exists.

4. City and County – a weakness of the current political boundaries is how much of Leicester is outside the city boundary. In reality the transport challenges and opportunities do not cease at the boundary points. It is key that there is a seamless offer (e.g. ticketing, service integration) on transport between the city and county, and that services cover evenings and weekends if we are to tempt drivers out of their cars. Please can you reassure us that the City/County boundary will not undermine the ambition of this LTP. Currently, for example, we have some good cycling infrastructure in the city but often of a poorer standard across the boundary.

5. Greater support for electrification of transport fleets – we recognise that electrification of the vehicles currently on our local roads will not alone solve the transport challenges faced by the city. However it has an important role to play. We would expect to see businesses incentivised to decarbonise their transport fleets, both cars and goods vehicles.

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