Campaign for Better Transport

The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
Prime Minister
House of Commons
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CC. Louise Haigh MP

CC. Miatta Fahnbulleh MP

CC Heidi Alexander MP

Monday 10th August 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

Many congratulations on your appointment.

We want to take this opportunity to thank you for the leadership you have shown in placing transport at the heart of Greater Manchester's agenda, demonstrating what can be achieved when local leaders are empowered to invest and shape transport around the needs of people and places.

We know that your experience in Greater Manchester will now inform your national vision and congratulate you on putting public transport at the forefront of your agenda in your first week in office with the £2 bus fare cap and a stated commitment to integrated contactless ticketing across the country. Building on this, we are writing to urge you to prioritise the following transport policies:

1. Put devolution at the heart of transport policy

As you have clearly acknowledged, the UK remains much more centralised than many comparable countries. We know you are committed to devolution of further powers and funding to the regions. In order that more places can replicate Greater Manchester's success, we urge you to provide local leaders with long-term certainty over funding alongside additional tools to raise and reinvest revenue in transport improvements while supporting those authorities who may lack the capacity and capability at present to deliver the levels of transport provision devolved powers might enable.

2. Deliver *Better Connected* with a clear mode shift ambition

The Government's *Better Connected* strategy for integrated transport offers an opportunity to align rail, bus, tram and active travel reforms and deliver truly integrated transport, Manchester-style, across the country. The outcomes frameworks for local leaders will be integral to this. However, it lacks a clear hierarchy of transport modes and a vision for the role each should play. The Climate Change Committee recently confirmed that a shift to electric vehicles alone is insufficient to decarbonise transport and meet our emissions reduction targets. With the climate emergency such a clear and present reality, reducing car dependency is therefore vital.

We ask you to introduce a national mode shift target, building on those already adopted in Greater Manchester, London and Wales. This would provide a clear long-term framework for investment in, and delivery of sustainable transport options. Labour's pre-election document, *Getting Britain Moving,* promised this: now is the time to show that vision.

3. Make rail reform work for passengers, places and devolved regions

The creation of Great British Railways and the wider process of rail reform is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address the challenges associated with fragmentation and provide greater public accountability. However, taking rail operations and infrastructure management in the public sector also creates risks that government will seek to reduce the taxpayer burden in the short term by cutting services to reduce costs or reducing planned investment, rather than through operational efficiencies.

As the Railways Bill makes its progress through Parliament, we ask you to ensure it includes the governance and regulatory provisions needed to enshrine growth as a central ambition. A clear passenger growth target, meaningful fares reform, long-term funding certainty, a strategic approach to capacity investment, a commitment to reopening lines and stations and a programme of electrification would all help grow passenger numbers and connect more communities to the railway.

4. Continue bus reform and invest in better local services

We strongly support the Bus Services Act, the welcome long-term funding for buses and the beginnings of a revival in local bus services across the country. However, in many areas, services remain insufficient to meet basic needs. Our research shows 15% of people in England live in areas where bus provision falls below an acceptable baseline. We call for targeted additional revenue investment to improve bus service frequency, reliability and coverage to help millions more people choose the bus for everyday journeys – without abstracting funding from existing local authority supported services. We are pleased to be working with the Department for Transport on developing a new national guidance for safe and accessible bus stops. Additional capital investment would also enable authorities to deliver the accessible and comfortable bus stops that passengers across the country deserve at pace.

5. Unlock a new generation of tram and mass transit schemes

Greater Manchester's experience demonstrates the transformative role mass transit can play in regeneration, housing growth and integrated transport networks, yet the UK remains chronically behind many European neighbours in delivering modern tram and light rail systems. While Germany has more than fifty tram networks, the UK has only nine.

It is crucial to bring down timescales and costs to enable places from Leeds and Derby to Cambridge and Bournemouth to develop the systems they need. We are working closely with the Mass Transit Taskforce and industry partners to support scalable solutions. The collaboration emerging between Greater Manchester and Cambridge, alongside initiatives such as the Combined Authority Infrastructure Partnership, demonstrates the value of city regions learning from one another and sharing successful delivery models. Giving Mayors powers over Transport Works Act Orders would also speed up delivery.

6. Deliver active travel and shared mobility at scale

Walking, wheeling, cycling and shared mobility should be seen as essential components of integrated transport networks. Investment recently promised through the third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy should be protected and delivered, and we hope you will continue to champion the work of Active Travel England to support the targets in CWIS3 and build upon the successful partnership you established with Chris Boardman in Greater Manchester.

Alongside this, car clubs and shared cycle schemes must be at the heart of a less-congested, cost-effective, energy-efficient future, so we would ask that you take decisive action to create clear, favourable conditions for car clubs and shared cycle schemes nationwide.

7. Focus investment on schemes that offer the greatest public value

At a time of constrained public finances, there is a strong case for prioritising projects that support everyday journeys, local connectivity and economic opportunity. This means rigorous reassessment of major schemes, such as the Lower Thames Crossing and Heathrow Airport expansion, whose costs and negative wider impacts far outweigh the short-term benefits they may provide. We also call on you to ensure the UK's ZEV mandate targets are maintained.

In summary, your leadership in Greater Manchester has shown that transport can be so much more than infrastructure: it can be a visible demonstration that government is delivering change in people's everyday lives, reducing inequality, increasing opportunity, reviving high streets and improving health and the environment.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these ideas further and to support the next phase of national transport policy in any way we can.

Yours sincerely



Ben Plowden
Chief Executive
Campaign for Better Transport