

Speech: Ambitious transport programme is fundamental to the Northern Powerhouse

Thank you and good morning, everyone.

It's a real pleasure to be in Manchester today (15 November 2018).

My thanks to David and the Transport Times team for inviting me.

I welcome the opportunity to talk about transport across the North.

Because this is an exciting time.

We have already announced the biggest ever funding package for northern transport.

Just a few examples of what we're delivering:

- £3 billion over the next few years to improve rail journeys between Manchester, Leeds and York
- £337 million for new Metro Trains in the North East at last year's Budget
- £3 billion of northern road improvements in the current investment period
- smart ticketing for buses and trains
- every train on the Northern and TransPennine networks new or modernised by 2020, and
- so many improvements already completed – from Ordsall Chord to the electrification of the railway between Manchester and Liverpool

But these schemes are just a snapshot of where we are today.

And what we've achieved in government in just 8 years.

Which in the transport industry is not long at all.

In fact, it is just the start.

The start of a sustained programme to rebuild the transport fabric of the North and deliver the Northern Powerhouse.

Something that was much overdue.

I know lots of people here are still sceptical about the prospects for better transport.

I completely get why.

Particularly after the introduction of the new railway timetable earlier this

year.

And ongoing industrial action on Northern.

The worst of the summer is behind us, but passengers in the North are still enduring poor performance on many routes.

I am determined to tackle the causes of disruption.

That's why the government has launched a fundamental review of the industry, to recommend significant reforms.

And we're working with franchises to ensure passengers are properly compensated.

But the bigger picture here is that we are playing catch up.

In 2010, we didn't just inherit an economy on its knees.

We also inherited a transport network that had been in decline for decades – particularly in the North.

With a backlog of maintenance schemes that should have been completed long ago.

We knew that for a region of 15 million people, spread over a huge area of the country, transport connections simply weren't up to scratch.

Connections with Scotland, the Midlands and London.

Across the Pennines.

And within cities and between areas of economic development.

What we're doing now is making up for those decades of neglect.

Figures from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority show that in the 3 years to 2021, central government's transport capital investment per head for the North West, North East, Yorkshire and Humber is higher than for London, the South East and South West.

And the area to receive most funding in England over that period is actually the North West.

The government is ambitious for transport in the North – which is why we're delivering £13 billion of investment in the 5 years to 2020.

And this morning I've been finding out where some of that money has gone – by officially opening the new A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road.

This is a great example of how transport funding can make a big difference.

Delivered as a partnership between central government and local authorities.

The new relief road won't just speed up journeys on the vital south Manchester corridor, and tackle congestion on local roads.

It'll help create 5,000 new jobs.

Generate up to £2.5 billion of extra economic activity.

Get more people cycling and walking.

It will support new housing – such as nearly 1,000 recently built homes at Woodford Garden Village.

And it's critical for the airport too – which has grown into a fully-fledged, global gateway for the North, linking local businesses with fast growing markets around the world.

For example, last week my Aviation Minister Baroness Sugg was there to launch a new route to Mumbai.

But Manchester Airport will not flourish if there's poor surface access for passengers and cargo.

So the new relief road will make journeys better, and help the airport grow.

It will also provide better links to the £1 billion Airport City that's already proving to be a catalyst for jobs and growth across south Manchester and Cheshire.

Of course, the new road accounts for just a small part of our programme across the North.

That includes:

- plans to dual the A66 across the Pennines, connecting Cumbria with the North East
- the completion of a continuous motorway route on the A1(M) and M1 between Newcastle and London which I opened in May this year
- adding capacity to the M6, M1, M60 and M62 – by making them smart motorways, and
- better road links to the port of Immingham

All part of the biggest road building programme that the region has seen for a very long time.

In October I also announced 2 early win schemes to be developed as part of the Major Road Network programme:

- the A595 at Grizebeck – the infamous Cumbrian bottleneck, and
- work to improve the York Outer Ring road

The wider modernisation of northern roads will continue – through to the next stage of our Roads Investment Strategy between 2020 and 2025.

When for the first time, all the revenue raised by Vehicle Excise Duty will

be ring-fenced to spend on roads themselves.

Including £25.3 billion for the Strategic Road Network.

The largest ever investment of this kind.

To build the transport connections that the North needs – and that will provide a legacy for generations to come, we have to be ambitious.

So when I hear Northern MPs saying they'd prefer Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) to HS2, my response is simple: we need both.

HS2 was conceived, developed and is now being delivered as a national railway – but in particular to improve connectivity and capacity in the North and Midlands.

That is why the HS2 B Bill is in Parliament now.

It is vital to provide the extra capacity we need on busy North-South rail routes, which are currently among the most intensively used in Europe.

So our commitment to HS2, the full network to Manchester and Leeds, remains undiminished.

We're already seeing signs of the massive impact it will have.

There are 7,000 people currently working on HS2 and over 2,000 businesses have contracts.

In the West Midlands, the regeneration potential is clear around Curzon Street and the interchange station in Solihull.

In Toton, we have announced plans for a HS2 development body to bring forward jobs, homes, and infrastructure.

And in Leeds, demonstrating cross-party support, Councillor Judith Blake recently told me of the huge enthusiasm for the scheme, particularly around the South Bank development.

Rather than talk HS2 down, we want to see this enthusiasm spread across the North.

In fact, there are strong reasons why HS2 should actually pave the way for NPR.

And why the case for NPR is actually bolstered by HS2.

50 years of transport underinvestment means Northern cities don't just have poor connections to the rest of the UK – they have poor connections to each other, and within the city regions themselves.

The last time we built new rail links to the centres of our great Northern cities, Queen Victoria was still on the throne.

Although even as early as 1837 – they were not universally popular. One parish clerk, after seeing a locomotive for the first time, was quoted as saying,

That was a sight to have seen; but one I never care to see again.

Ladies and gentlemen – we don't get these opportunities often.

We need to take advantage of them while we can.

So we can provide businesses with better access to local labour markets – and better national links to suppliers and customers.

Making the whole of the North more attractive for inward investors.

And there was good news for NPR in the recent Budget with an extra £37 million to further develop the business case.

Elsewhere in the Budget, Greater Manchester was awarded an additional £69.5 million – and Liverpool £38.5 million – from the Transforming Cities Fund.

Money that will improve connections between suburbs and inner cities, boost jobs, reduce congestion and support new homes.

Already the 2 city regions have been allocated £377 million from the fund, giving them a significant new resource with which to solve local transport problems.

This comes on top of support for key schemes like Metrolink.

So don't let anyone claim that transport in this part of the world is underfunded.

Nor does the region lack clout.

We have created Transport for the North.

We have handed significant responsibilities to the Mayors of Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region.

Today the North West has more powers, more responsibility and more control over its transport destiny than ever before.

But let us also remember that the North is not just about cities.

It also has some of the most stunning countryside in Europe.

And a very important rural economy.

That's why we're also supporting local railways like the Hope Valley line.

Network Rail is proposing to modernise sections of the railway between

Bamford station and Jagers Lane Bridge in Hathersage.

And around Dore and Totley station.

We are now updating the business case and anticipate being able to announce a delivery date in the next year.

So it's a pleasure to be here again and to stand up for our record on northern transport.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is delivering palpably more investment for northern roads and railways.

That is empowering transport authorities across the region like never before.

And that will continue to see the growth and prosperity of the North as one of our biggest priorities.

This is a time of real opportunity.

So let's be ambitious for transport in the North.

Let's work together towards a shared vision for the future.

And let's build an enduring transport legacy that the North can be proud of.

Thank you.