



## **ASLEF Response to the Department for Transport Consultation on Devolving Local Major Transport schemes**

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing approximately 18,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems.
2. ASLEF understands the target of getting more decisions taken locally and involving communities in deciding their transport priorities. However the Union does have concerns over the method and consequences of many elements of this devolution.
3. There are many areas of public transport that can be considered as purely local services. These are more likely to be bus services. However many local services are also important pieces in a national network. This is especially the case with rail. ASLEF would have many concerns over varying standards and the additional fragmentation caused by the multitude of bodies involved in cross region developments.
4. ASLEF agrees with many of the causes of inefficiencies that are identified in the McNulty. McNulty explains that fragmentation has led to a lack of leadership in the industry. The report also suggests that fragmentation is the first barrier to efficiency. ASLEF is concerned that devolution may exacerbate this problem.
5. The Union would also be concerned by the lack of accountability in putting more power in the hands of Local Enterprise Partnerships. Whilst these

are a partnership between elected local authorities and businesses, the Union is concerned over the possibility of a democratic deficit. Many members are simply appointed to these bodies. When schemes are under control of the Department for Transport, ultimate responsibility lies with the Secretary of State who remains accountable to parliament and therefore voters. Whilst attempting to push decisions out to local communities, it is important to ensure that this happens in an open, transparent and democratic way.

6. These along with Local Authorities will make form Local Transport Bodies. The formation of these however will be decided locally. Again this is a cause of concern. ASLEF feels that many important decisions are being devolved with the DfT taking a back seat in areas that could have a significant national impact.
7. ASLEF would also question the wisdom of moving away from a system of bids to allocation of funds based on a formula. Demand for transport infrastructure depends on many aspects and factors. Our current transport system has grown organically over decades. Many areas have modern facilities with a long lifetime whilst others have an infrastructure in need of modernisation. To try and put a formula upon the allocation of funds is to ignore these factors. If it is to be done, the Union would support the third option of formulas that takes transport needs into account.
8. ASLEF is glad that the Department for Transport recognise that the scale and importance of rail will require its own consultation. Local Enterprise Partnerships are simply not large enough and lack the knowledge to be able to deal with the complexity of the rail network.
9. ASLEF will give be responding in more detail to the Departments consultation that deals specifically on devolution within rail, but would extend its concerns over the way that all transport projects are devolved. The Union supports enabling communities a greater say on their transport

infrastructure but this must not be at the cost of genuine accountability and a joined up and integrated transport system.

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