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7 October 2005

JH/WW

Alison Munro  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
76 Marsham Street  
LONDON  
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Dear Alison

### **LEEDS SUPERTRAM – BUS ALTERNATIVE**

Please find enclosed our comments on the draft Atkins report discussed last week and the draft conclusion chapter which was received on Monday. We agreed not to continue the process of debate and that significant areas of disagreement would be identified in the final report.

We still remain concerned at the lack of robust evidence for the conclusions set out in the Atkins report, the selective use of examples from elsewhere and their reluctance to acknowledge their concerns in the draft conclusions chapter.

We have stated on a number of occasions that we would not take issue with a report that:

- Acknowledged the effort put into the work undertaken by Metro and Leeds City Council to specify, cost and model a very high quality bus alternative to the Leeds Supertram proposals;
- Acknowledged that the Leeds Supertram had a strong benefit: cost ratio and was, subject to affordability, a suitable mode choice for the corridors in question;
- Stated that the bus based systems were worth investing in and could achieve Benefit: Cost ratio similar or greater than the Leeds Supertram system;
- Recognised that the evidence of the impact of very high quality bus systems is very limited as there is no system, as envisaged in the appraisal, in operation in the UK;
- Recognised that whilst bus based systems could be delivered at a lower cost there was no robust evidence that such systems would be as successful in achieving mode switch and in generating the same overall net benefits as Leeds Supertram;

In addition, we are concerned at the lack of proper qualification as to the overall conclusion. We do not believe that the study has produced proper, robust evidence that BRT could actually deliver the benefits that are claimed by Atkins.

I had hoped that we could have reached a more measured consensus that properly acknowledged the risks associated with a high quality BRT system not previously implemented in the UK as well as the very significant practical difficulties of implementing and sustaining a high quality BRT system in a competitive de-regulated framework.

We remain firmly convinced that whilst bus based systems have much merit, Leeds Supertram is the most appropriate option for these three corridors for achieving national, regional and local transport and economic objectives including mode shift, regeneration, job creation, environmental impacts and accessibility. We believe this to be demonstrated through the detailed work undertaken over many years.

The potential implications of the Atkins report are profound and will be subject to debate and discussion amongst transport professionals. I am sure that Metro and Leeds City Council may wish to state publicly our concern that conclusions have been presented as being more robust than is the case and that the well established impacts of a light rail system have not been fully acknowledged.

Yours sincerely

**JOHN HENKEL**  
**DIRECTOR PASSENGER SERVICES**