



## ROAD PRICING IN MANCHESTER LABELLED "KAMIKAZE" BY THE PRESS

Confusion now reigns in Manchester because possibly the world's largest road charging scheme will soon have to be decided upon by the new City Council Leader. Because ten different councils could potentially be making ten different decisions, (neither directly or indirectly elected bodies) it could necessitate a referendum to reach a decision (1). To sweeten the charging pill if it is applied, approval of 100% exemptions could be extended to motor cyclists, blue badge holders, hackney cabs, people with regular hospital appointments, buses and emergency vehicles. If the charge is applied, it could possibly start in 2013. Some suggestions from the press are that it could drive employers away from the city. Marginal seats may also see a backlash at the polls. The business community is also reported as "split virtually right down the middle". The deal, it was suggested, was extra funding for public transport in return for being the Congestion Charge guinea pigs.

Could the need to make motorists pay the charge remain as vital as now, even after Metrolink's extensions have been applied? The hundreds of world-wide integrated transit systems without a need to charge motorists a congestion charge have not done so because of the contribution the trams have made in giving drivers a suitable choice that could include a park and ride facility.

The current plans for Metrolink will shortly benefit the tram from a £575 million expansion programme following the approval given during May 2008. The M-Pact Thales Consortium now have a design, construct and maintain contract for 20 miles of extensions, near doubling the networks present size. This new work is expected to take five million car journeys off local roads every year. Further, but depending on a successful grant from the Innovation Fund, lines into Oldham and Rochdale town centres, Ashton town centre, East Didsbury and Manchester Airport and to the Trafford Centre could follow (2).

It could be a good omen for Manchester to hear that an Australian Transport expert from Melbourne (Philip Purdy) has now become the PTE Metrolink Director. He had previously been with Yarra Trams in Melbourne whose Chief Executive Officer had attended the Ninth UITP light rail conference in Istanbul with the message: "*Melbourne Trams Are A Worldwide Symbol Of The City*" (3). Melbourne's loss could well be Manchester's gain.

A strong viewpoint on Britain's poor record on providing public transport was revealed by a well known transport consultant (John Whitelegg) in an interview for a well known transport journal. "Looking at transport systems abroad, I never stop wondering how Britain has managed to make such a *dogs dinner* of its own networks". He agreed with a general view that it is a source of daily wonder that we can get it so badly wrong. A question that John Whitelegg and many passengers ask is, "how can you have a well patronised, well used public transport system that can deal with congestion and air quality with such a disorganised mess?" (4). Although much publicity has centred on Manchester, other places have also struggled with the Congestion Charge and adopting a negative opinion at Council level. Cambridge is reported as taking the Governments attitude as *Blackmail* (5).

### REFERENCES

- 1) LOCAL TRANSPORT TODAY - Manchester backs referendum to determine fate of C-charge.- 27th June to 10th July 2008 - page 1.
- 2) TRAMWAYS ~ URBAN TRANSIT - July 2008 - page 252.
- 3) RAILWAY GAZETTE INTERNATIONAL - Cities must learn to love their trams - Dennis Cliche - July 2008 - Page 4623.
- 4) LOCAL TRANSPORT TODAY - Andrew Forster - "Whitelegg many hats can't hide his disdain for Britain's transport" - 27th June to 10th July 2008 - pages 14, 15 and 17.
- 5) LOCAL TRANSPORT TODAY - Cambs scraps C-charge plans and asks Commission to find answers - 27th June to 10th July 2008 - page 3.

Prepared by F A Andrews LRTA Assistant Publicity Officer

For LRTA Membership details contact:

LRTA Subscriptions,  
38 Wolseley Road,  
SALE M33 7AU

Email: [membership@lrta.org](mailto:membership@lrta.org)

For more details about Light Rail please contact

LRTA Development Officer,  
7 Crofton Avenue,  
Horfield,  
Bristol BS7 0BP

Email: [development@lrta.org](mailto:development@lrta.org)

Visit our Website [www.lrta.org](http://www.lrta.org)