

TramForward

Campaigning for Light Rail

PRESS RELEASE FROM *TramForward*

***TramForward* applauds annual increase in tram passengers** **22 June 2015**

TramForward applauds the fact that in 2014/15, new government statistics have revealed that light rail usage in England continued to rise with record numbers of passenger journeys and vehicle miles since comparable records began in 1983. In 2014/15, 239.8 million passenger journeys were made on the eight light rail and tram systems in England, a 5.6% increase on the previous year. 59% of these journeys were made on the Docklands Light Railway and London Tramlink in the Croydon area. Vehicle mileage in England has increased by 3.4% on the previous year to 18.4 million mostly due to development of the Manchester Metrolink network.

The "Light Rail and Tram Statistics: England 2014 to 2015" report showed that in the last financial year 239.8 million passenger journeys were made on the eight light rail and tram systems in England, a 5.6% increase on the previous year.

Despite Sheffield Supertram, Midland Metro and the Blackpool Tramway seeing a reduction in passenger journeys (probably due to disruptive engineering works relating to the extension and improvement of their systems in the first two cases, and to changes in local rules relating to travel by holders of concessionary travel passes in the case of Blackpool) they all scored well in journey satisfaction, according to data from Transport Focus. Blackpool had a satisfaction rate of 95%, Sheffield 92% and Midland Metro 90%.

Speaking about the national light rail picture, transport minister Andrew Jones MP said: "Good local transport makes it easier for people to get to work and see their family and friends. The fact that passenger numbers on tram and light rail are at record levels shows our investment has been worthwhile."

Andrew Braddock, Chairman of the Light Rail Transit Association, said: "The system improvements that are being undertaken will ensure a transport network that people can rely on and will have the added benefit of creating jobs, economic growth and equality of opportunity. In addition, these works represent a vital programme of investment to help maintain the networks for decades to come". "However, it is a great disappointment", he added, "that the decline in usage of the trams in Blackpool is the direct result of concessionary passes held by visitors from outside Lancashire no longer being accepted on the service. It makes absolutely no sense for Blackpool Transport to have to run more diesel buses along the route of the tramway to cater for demand from visiting pensioners and disabled people, for whom the new trams are significantly more accessible than buses".

"It is time", Braddock concluded, "for the government to require the availability on trams as well as buses of the welcome free travel opportunity the pass provides on a national basis - not least because the resultant contribution to cleaner air would directly benefit vulnerable older people in the areas concerned".

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. *TramForward* is the campaigning arm of the Light Rail Transit Association.
2. The Light Rail Transit Association is the world's leading organisation campaigning for better public transport through light rail, tramway and metro systems in our towns and cities for 75 years. It also supports the revitalisation of suburban and rural transport through the application of light rail.
3. The LRTA acts through its network of local branches, which campaign for better transport in their localities.
4. Membership of the LRTA costs under 14p a day. To join, visit www.lrta.org or write to the Membership Secretary, LRTA, 38 Wolseley Road, Sale, Greater Manchester, M33 7AU. Members of the LRTA receive the monthly magazine *Tramways & Urban Transit* - written and read by experts in the field - and gain other benefits including discounts on videos and books, tours of transport systems and cut-price admission to selected transport sites.
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