

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
House of Commons
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3 June 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

Here in West Yorkshire we have a strong working relationship with our bus operators through our Bus Alliance and have worked through the various stages of the COVID-19 crisis in collaboration with them. However, uncertainties around the continuation of funding are straining this relationship and making it very difficult to plan for the next stages. Bus operators have been advised that CBSSG funding is available only until August. The Combined Authority is still awaiting confirmation of the value of CBSSG Restart that it will be allocated from June. This uncertainty is unacceptable.

We have agreed to your Department's request to continue to pay for concessionary journeys which are not being made and will do so again in July. However, unless, there is clarity on Government funding from August onwards, we cannot continue to make a £3 million per month unsecured payment to bus operators' costs and will revert to payment for journeys made from August. We remain open to deploying some of these funds to support our bus networks but in a more accountable structure as proposed to your Department by Cllr Blake and the Metro Mayors acting through the Urban Transport Group.

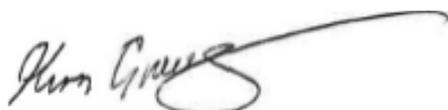
We are being asked by Government to prepare for schools and colleges to return in September. Your officials' assertion that only a small proportion of school pupils travel by bus is not the case for parts of our region where topography and low car ownership is a factor. We will work with schools, Academy Trusts and our Local Authority partners but can only plan with certainty if funding availability is confirmed as soon as possible

We are developing our Transport Recovery Plan and are engaging with a wide range of stakeholders including bus operators. The operators have made it clear that, without continued public sector funding during the recovery phase, they will withdraw services and reduce the scale of their operations with the consequential social and economic impact. West Yorkshire Combined Authority does not get any Government funding to offset its wider costs arising from COVID-19. Whilst we do not want to see our local bus service decimated by the

effects of the crisis, we are unable to increase our bus subsidy costs and maintain a balanced budget. We therefore need a managed financial transition back to an equilibrium between public sector costs and commercial revenues. I feel this is needed at the very least over the remainder of the financial year.

I hope you are able to give us the reassurance that Government and the Combined Authority can work together to fund a managed transition to a financially sustainable bus network

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Kim Groves
Chair of Transport for West Yorkshire Combined Authority