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Trolleybuses poised for UK return with NGT OK

Posted 05/07/12

Leeds will build the UK's first modern trolleybus network after transport secretary Justine Greening granted Programme Entry for the £250m New Generation Transport project.

West Yorkshire passenger transport executive Metro can now apply for the statutory consents necessary to build trolleybus routes from north and south Leeds into the centre of the city. Subject to these being granted construction will start in 2016 with the trolleybus system fully operational by 2018.

Thursday's (5 July) announcement came as the government set out 'city deals' that have been agreed with eight of the biggest conurbations in England including Leeds. This is expected to result in a £1bn WY-Plus transport fund being created with backing from Leeds and surrounding local authorities supported by a 10 year 2014-2024 funding allocation from the Department for Transport. In addition, new powers for specifying local rail services are set to be devolved for the region.

Go-ahead for the trolleybus scheme confirms the coalition government's position on one of the last unresolved local major transport schemes inherited from the former Labour government, which awarded NGT Programme Entry status in early 2010 ahead of the May General Election (MON 00426). The new government put NGT on a long list of schemes under review before adding it to a 'development pool' (MON 00519) while it decided whether or not to allow it to proceed. While other projects received the green light NGT was deferred, prompting frustration among civic leaders (TB 8147).

When the trolleybus system is completed it will run from Holt Park in the north of Leeds to Stourton in the south, linking with two park and ride sites. Lanes exclusively for use by trolleybuses will be provided along 40% of the 8.7 mile network with road space shared with other vehicles along the remaining routes. Under the deal announced this week, the Department for Transport will provide £173.5m towards the project with local authorities expected to come up with the remaining £76.5m.

Justine Greening said: "Leeds will have new state-of-the-art trolleybuses that will be faster, more reliable and greener than their predecessors. They will make public transport in Leeds more accessible and attractive than ever before and I know trolleybuses will be transformational for growth and jobs in West Yorkshire."

The Leeds New Generation Transport scheme is the first modern trolleybus proposal in the UK although trolleybus systems operate in other European cities. While sharing many features of trams - overhead wires, similar vehicle quality - no rails are required which allows schemes to be delivered more quickly and cheaply.

Leeds New Generation Transport: trolleybuses could be operating in the city by 2018



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