

Note to GMTC Members re TIF bid

Dear Member,

I am deeply concerned at the standard of debate regarding the TIF bid/Congestion Charge—or rather the total lack of factual debate. We are all being bombarded with large posters saying ‘Vote Yes’ giving at best half truths but often downright lies and misinformation. Of course we all want to see better public transport, I have spent most of my life fighting for it but not at the cost of truth together with unnecessary increased rates, taxes and levies for the rest of our lives and those of our children.

A FEW FACTS

If the congestion charge is successful in deterring traffic it will not pay off the interest charges on the gigantic £1.2 billion loan and will drive business away from Manchester. If the Congestion Charge is unsuccessful it will fail in its purpose and we will still have congestion.

A £1.2 billion loan at 5% pa interest is £60,000,000 (£60m) a year or over £1 million a week. London with very much higher all-day charges reached £100-million-a-year revenue in four years. London will have much lower running costs because their scheme is far simpler. Manchester’s scheme with considerably lower but more complicated charges will cover ten times the area of the London zone; it will require transponders in cars and a vast array of complex equipment to convert the data, PLUS cameras and equipment to catch those without transponders in this huge area. London merely requires cameras and associated equipment in the much smaller area.

Most of the posters are at best **HALF TRUTHS**. So the mother and child saying *I won’t have to pay the congestion charge* **WILL** have to pay if, say, she drops her child off at grandma’s on her way to work, school, hospital, doctor etc, if grandma lives at say Heaton Chapel, Stockport and mum lives a mile away in central Stockport. The same applies to most other boroughs in Greater Manchester and to the message of many similar posters.

Some posters say *Fares will be capped* or *We will have cheaper fares*. This is a **LIE**. The TIF bid is for capital works and equipment. If fares are subsidised to make them cheaper we will have to pay in additional rates or taxes or a fares levy.

Huge newspaper adverts have listed almost all bus services with route number and destinations highlighted to catch your attention and said those services **WILL** be doubled or vastly increased in frequency. Another **LIE!** If they are increased as

suggested most of them would go from being viable to loss-making services. The difference would have to be made up by increased rates, taxes or, as we have just learnt, a levy on future fares, (i.e. higher fares).

How is it that GMPTE and the government between them could not find the money for a few second hand railway carriages to ease our appalling overcrowding yet they can find millions to fund a dirty poster campaign claimed to be factual? The government has even given nearly a million pounds towards it in addition to that already spent by AGMA. When lenders have to bribe you with enormous sums of money in order to make you take their loan you know something is very fishy and wrong indeed.

The government promises £1.5 billion if we accept the bribe of a £1.2 billion loan over supposedly 30 years plus congestion charging. If they gave us say **HALF** of the £1.5 billion, i.e. £750,000,000, we could obtain a large fleet of extra trains together with tram extensions which would entice motorists out of their cars and solve congestion more effectively, without crippling us with loan repayments for decades to come, which will kill off all future investment in public transport.

The ‘Vote Yes’ lobby says this is a ‘once only’ opportunity to invest in public transport and naturally the Transport Secretary, Geoff Hoon, supported this. Interestingly the Prime Minister did not support this view and Edinburgh and Birmingham for instance obtained huge government investment after they voted ‘No’.

Our own proposals for a Congestion Charge area in Central Manchester would be more effective, costing a fraction of the proposed scheme without crippling us with loans for life. Much more could be said but do please consider very carefully the full implications of your vote and the effect it will have for years to come. To be honest, the government cannot afford the present proposed scheme and even if there is a ‘Yes’ vote I am sure it will be watered down in time-honoured manner by a time extension and alterations until the original scheme is meaningless. The bureaucracy will have been created however which will be an added burden on us all.

Best wishes,

TONY FAWTHROP
Chairman GMTC

26th November 2008