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**Sharon Hodgson MP**

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Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP  
Secretary of State  
Department of Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
Westminster, London  
SW1P 4DR

20 December 2017

Dear Chris,

I write to you regarding the recent publication of DfT's '*Connecting people: a strategic vision for rail*' specifically in regards to Chapter 2 on expanding the network.

Here in the North East, there is much untapped economic potential that has gone underused and it is important that every opportunity is found to invest in infrastructure that can help boost economic growth. As you will know, the North East specifically sees government investment totalling £822 per person compared to other regions such as the North west which sees £1,353 and the South East which sees £1,139.

It is paramount that the North East receives its fair share of transport infrastructure spending which is directed to projects which could truly unlock growth in our region, and I believe that the perfect example of this is extending the Tyne and Wear Metro to Washington.

As you will know, I have been a long-standing campaigner on extending the Metro to Washington, where I have raised this in Parliament and presented petitions on behalf of my constituents on several occasions. This is clearly an issue which my constituents care about deeply and it is important that the Government listens to their calls for proper transport infrastructure within our constituency.

In the policy document, it states:

*"Our ambitions for the next rail funding period (2019 - 2024) are clear. Vital maintenance and renewal is needed to keep people moving safely, deliver what passengers want, and get the most out of the existing network. But we cannot focus solely on reliability and safety for*



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*today's railway. We need to look to the future, ensuring rail continues to offer new opportunities and better journeys."*

It was welcome to read this section of the document as I strongly believe that this makes the case for extending the Metro to Washington very clearly. Not only would the extension deliver what passengers want but also looks to new opportunities to improve connectivity within the Tyne and Wear area by improving the links between the region's main cities: Sunderland and Newcastle.

Improving connectivity to these cities would provide commuters with the ability to diversify their transportation for work and leisure, but also bring people into Washington which is an area with so much potential in terms of jobs along with cultural and leisurely pursuits. Continuing to have Washington as an island from neighbouring cities and towns is economically unsound when we should be boosting the region's potential, not neglecting it.

I, too, believe that this argument is further supported in the document when it states:

*"In the coming decades we will be expanding the network, selecting routes that benefit housing and economic growth, relieve urban congestion and meet future demand."*

Along with:

*"... the expansions we are completing now will not be enough to meet the future demand for capacity, and our ambitions to connect our communities."*

Whilst reservations must be held about the future of this ambitious plan, I believe it is important that it is only right that the extension of the Metro to Washington should be properly considered and ensure that finally the Tyne and Wear Metro can live up to its name and serve the entirety of the area's population across Tyneside and Wearside.

As you will know there are plans that have been considered by Nexus and the North East Combined Authority, which were published over a year ago now which document a route that would work for the area but would also allow for the Leamside Line in the North East to be reopened (which sadly fell into disuse in the 1950s and 1960s, and was finally mothballed in the 1970s) which would have a huge impact on the region as a whole by further improving the connectivity for people and goods between the various urban conurbations in the North East.



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I look forward to your response and will happily discuss this further with your colleague, John Hayes MP, when he takes up the offer to come visit the constituency to discuss this matter with myself and Nexus in the New Year. I finally hope that this campaign can be realised and the people of Washington can have the transport network they desire and deserve.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon Hodgson".

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson MP**

Member of Parliament for Washington & Sunderland West  
Shadow Minister for Public Health