



House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP  
Secretary of State for Transport  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London SW1P 4DR

## By Email

3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

### **Urgent support needed for Tyne and Wear Metro**

We write as North East MPs to urge you to implement an urgent support package for Tyne and Wear Metro akin to the support offered to bus and national rail services.

The restrictions in place to stop the spread of Coronavirus and protect the NHS have had a huge impact on the Metro, as they have had on other forms of public transport. Ridership on the Metro is down by 90-95% and this has resulted in a sharp drop in fare income which would usually cover two thirds of the service's operating costs.

The Metro continues to provide a vital service for essential workers, and this must continue to ensure those working on the frontline in the fight against Coronavirus can get to their place of employment safely and on time. The drop in commercial income from fares means an additional £10 million is needed up to July 2020 to keep services running. Further support may be required after that depending on the speed of recovery in fare income, when restrictions are eventually lifted.

We welcome your Department's intervention to provide financial support to bus operators in the North East following a comparable fall in passenger numbers and fare income on our region's buses. These services are also supported by the continuation of funding from local authorities in their respective operating areas. The decision to temporarily suspend franchising arrangements on the national rail network to ensure vital services can continue to run was also welcome. Metro services are now the remaining piece of the puzzle and we ask that you provide the same level of support to keep them running.

The Tyne and Wear Metro plays a central role in our regional economy. It has expanded twice previously, to Newcastle Airport and to Sunderland, and investigations for future expansion across the North East were due to begin this year. A well-functioning Metro system will be vital to ensure we can recover when the present situation has abated, and restrictions are lifted.

A failure to act now could lead to long term service reductions and job losses which would be devastating for our region's transport system and the people, businesses, and communities who rely on it.



We urge you to address this situation urgently and ensure that every part of our nation's transport system is supported through this crisis. We have also copied this letter to the Chancellor to make him aware of the urgent financial challenges our Metro faces.

Yours sincerely

Catherine McKinnell MP  
Alan Campbell MP  
Julie Elliott MP  
Mary Glendon MP  
Sharon Hodgson MP  
Emma Lewell-Buck MP  
Ian Mearns MP  
Chi Onwurah MP  
Kate Osborne MP  
Bridget Phillipson MP  
Liz Twist MP

cc. The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of the Exchequer