



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sharon Hodgson MP

Suite 1 and 1A,
Vermont House,
Concord, Washington,
Tyne & Wear NE37 2SQ
Tel. (0191) 417 2000
hodgsons@parliament.uk

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP
Transport Secretary
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

22 July 2016

Dear Chris,

Firstly, many congratulations on your appointment as the new Transport Secretary.

Further to our conversation on Wednesday, I write to you regarding the North East Combined Authority's decision to support the extension of the Tyne and Wear Metro to various parts of the region, with one of the most important proposals for my constituents being to finally see the Metro extended into Washington – which is one of the largest towns in England not to be served by a rail station.

This is an issue which many of my constituents feel passionately about, with over 1700 constituents signing a petition that I handed into Parliament in July last year, the fourth petition I have submitted, along with three during the last Parliament. For too long, my constituents have been left out of having access to the Tyne and Wear Metro and not directly benefitting from it, despite paying for it through their council tax.

I have repeatedly called on the previous Coalition Government and this Government to act on transport infrastructure, most recently in my speech during the Budget Debates earlier this year where I called on the former Chancellor of the Exchequer to direct vital funding to the region to support the extension of the Metro as part of his Northern Powerhouse project.

Having at least one Metro station in Washington that is connected via the South Hylton station and Pelaw or Heworth stations via the Leamside Line, which could be reopened and refurbished to allow light rail to connect Washington with South Tyneside and Sunderland, and further afield into Newcastle, would be transformational for my constituents.

However, this extension would not only be beneficial to my constituents but also the much needed economic growth of our region and also allow better transport access to Sunderland and Newcastle, our two city hubs in Tyne and Wear, so the people of Washington can access the jobs, culture and everything else that these two cities have to offer. In return the wider North East population would be able to access via public transport the huge numbers of jobs in Washington as Nissan and their supply chain is based here as well as a large number of other manufacturing companies.



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That is why last week I thoroughly welcomed the news that the North East Combined Authority was to propose extensions, including into Washington. This is a positive sign for the future of transport infrastructure in the North East – the home of one of the first railway tracks in the country built by George Stephenson and is celebrated at the Bowes Railway Museum in my constituency – and the local decision-making by the NECA. I hope that in your new role you can recognise and support this long history of rail transport in our region and the desire by local decision makers to invest in our region's transport.

However, these plans can only come about if serious support and investment is directed from central government to allow these ambitious plans to go forward so my constituents in Washington and Sunderland West are able to reap the benefits of having the Metro travel through our constituency.

I hope in your new role, and with your desire to make your mark as the new Secretary of State for Transport, that you can support this expansion and help us, and the North East Combined Authority, in realising our ambition to see the Metro extended into Washington when you formally respond to the decision made this week and also when the business case is put before you and your officials later this year.

I look forward to hearing from you, and would welcome the chance to discuss this further in person again, perhaps on a visit to the region to see the expansion plans in detail when your diary permits.

Yours sincerely,

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

Mrs Sharon Hodgson MP

Member of Parliament for Washington & Sunderland West