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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-459  
Ein cyf/Our ref

William Powell AM  
Chair, Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales

committeebusiness@wales.gsi.gov.uk

25 February 2015

Dear William

I write in response to a request from the Committee Business Manager, received on 24 February, for an up-date in relation to petition reference P-04-459 "A direct rail connection from Cardiff Airport to Cardiff central and West Wales",

Further to my letter to you of 20 March, 2014, I have now considered the proposals of the Metro Implementation Group. The Cardiff Capital Region Metro Impact Study's up-date last August sets out a vision of an extensive mass-transit network linking Cardiff and its wider city region. While these potential infrastructure investments have been subject to high level evaluation and appraisal, we are now undertaking the further detailed work to design, develop and evaluate a program of delivery.

Electrifying and improving the Valleys Lines is vital to our ambitions for delivering the South Wales Metro. The announcement on 21 November of a funding deal for electrification of the Great Western Main Line between the Welsh Government and the Department of Transport is a major step forward in creating a modern train service that is capable of meeting future demand and supporting economic growth. It is proposed that the Metro will be developed initially around the planned electrification of the Great Western Main Line and Valley Lines network by 2018 and 2020 respectively. Work has been commissioned to define the strategic options for the modification of the Valley lines including options for electrification and light rail. That high-level optioneering will be completed in the Spring and will form the basis of the more detailed strategic business cases that will be developed by the summer.

We are also working on the use of technology based ticketing systems to increase user convenience. The first phase will utilise smart ticketing technology on buses in the Metro area to provide a common payment mechanism through the use of pre-paid smartcards. This will provide a platform for further innovation to meet the needs of passengers.

The subsidiary company of the Welsh Government that I announced on 5 December will, in its first instance, concentrate on providing advice and technical expertise to drive forward the linked projects of the Metro maximising the use of European Structural Funds wherever possible and draw in private sector contributions.

Beyond this, we are developing with the City Region Board a number of different delivery options for the next stages of the Metro. I will be pleased to keep Committee Members updated on the progress we are making as we drive forward our aim to develop a truly multi-modal integrated, rapid transit network which will offer a region wide alternative to the car system for South Wales, and act as a model for future roll out across Wales.

Edwina Hart