THE PROPOSED TROLLEYBUS SCHEME FOR LEEDS
STATEMENT OF CASE.
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(January 2014)
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[N.B. This document is a much revised, expanded and up-dated version of one I prepared in August 2013 entitled ‘Why I Oppose The Proposed Trolleybus Scheme For Leeds’, which has been put on line at http://newgenerationtransport.com/why-i-oppose-the-proposed-trolleybus-scheme-for-leeds/]
ABSTRACT.

Speaking essentially about the northern part of the route, my criticism of the trolleybus scheme is divided into three parts.

In the first of these, I explore the reasons why the A660 has always been an unsuitable route for rapid transit systems from the time of the Beeching report onwards, via Supertram (as was already clearly indicated in 1977 in the initial appraisal of possible new tram routes). I also show that the present scheme is using out-of-date data to give an exaggerated view of various problems; that the trolleybus will make congestion worse on a route that is not just for out-of-town commuters, while making life difficult for ordinary bus services; that it will not provide integrated transport; the severe doubts that must exist over the effectiveness of the proposed park-and-ride.

In the second, I show that trolleybuses do not represent ‘cutting edge technology’; that while it is normal for established systems to want to keep up to date, new systems are not springing up around the world as NGT has tried to suggest; that there are better ecological alternatives on the horizon, and that it would be best to follow the example of Birmingham and wait for them; that claims of improvements to traffic flow, such as the introduction of smart-ticketing, do not need the costly introduction of a trolleybus.

In the third part, I lament the shortcomings of the consultation process and the widespread feeling that essential decisions had already been taken; the attitude of the Civic Trust and the power and influence of corporate interests, where the main supporters of the trolleybus scheme turn out to be property developers and not business as a whole; the shortcomings of Gateway and of peer review in general; the poor state of local representative democracy in Leeds; the unsubstantiated claims based on computer modelling, and the poor record of prediction of success for light transit systems in general.

In conclusion, my preference is for the bus, with its flexibility. I suggest various more modest, less costly, less environmentally damaging, if less ‘sexy’ alternatives to the trolleybus.

Christopher Todd.
Introduction.

I do not believe that history repeats itself, but having spent much of my life studying the lives and works of the dead, I do believe that knowledge of the past helps one to understand the present and prepares one better for the future. This would seem particularly relevant in the case of the proposed trolleybus scheme. It is important to see that there has long been a stand-off between residents of North-West Leeds and a succession of traffic planners, and that many of the reasons for this opposition are still valid. That is why I want to show in the first part of this paper why the A660 is still – as it has always been – the wrong route for a full-blown rapid transit system.

I shall then want to show the particular shortcomings of the choice of a trolleybus system, which – while ambitious enough to damage the character of our area – is a poor substitute for a tram or an underground, and would clearly be in danger of becoming fairly quickly an anachronism. Above all, I want to show that an improved traffic flow along the A660 would be most easily achieved with a bus.

Finally, I shall want to show the inadequacies of the consultation exercise, and how politics and the power and influence of money have got in the way of common sense.

I) This is the wrong route for a rapid transit system.

a) historic reasons for the choice of route:

Obviously, I myself can only speak for that part of the route lying north of the city centre. The proposed route along the A660 corridor has been chosen very largely for historic reasons, a number of which no longer apply. To understand this, one must first look briefly at part of the long history of contention between local residents in North-West Leeds and various planners, at least as far back as the time when Beeching – showing a high-handed attitude towards the many protesters that would not be tolerated today – planned the closing of the branch line to Otley. He acknowledged the importance of the railway to commuters in Wharfedale and elsewhere, but seemed anxious above all to see road improvements for the development of what he called ‘the motor tourist trade’. As the leader in The Yorkshire Post commented at the time: ‘Where roads cannot cope, the railways must continue to do so’.

This fell on deaf ears, and plans went ahead for road improvements for Headingley which were to include a bypass, a dual carriage-way and a 20-foot flyover with landscaped embankments. Many saw this as likely to transform Headingley into a slum. A meeting of protest brought together 400 people in May 1963. The project was finally turned down in July 1965, but with many residents feeling quite rightly that that

3 The Yorkshire Post, April 1, 1963, p.4.
5 The Yorkshire Post, April 8, 1963, p.10.
was not the end of the matter. On July 16, 1965 about 600 people met in the Parish Institute, Bennett Road, Headingley, to form an association to fight further plans.

Matters came to a head again in the early 1970s, when the planners – having ripped the heart out of Leeds – then wanted to do the same to our area so as to live up to the slogan: ‘Leeds: motorway city of the 70s’, a slogan which ‘had a chilling ring, implying […] commitment to roads before homes’. A Headingley Expressway was thus planned, designed to tie up with the inner ring road carrying traffic coming off the M1, and take it North on its way to Skipton. This was naturally ‘bitterly opposed’, and the whole motorway concept very quickly led to disillusion.

As Brian Richards so rightly says, ‘traffic engineers – at least the more enlightened ones – now accept that widening only brings in more traffic.’ It is at this time that Dr Bill Houghton-Evans, senior lecturer in town-planning and architecture at Leeds University, a founder member of the Leeds Civic Trust and designer, notably, of the Leeds Corn Exchange scheme and of the Leeds Playhouse, and thus someone to whom the city owes a considerable debt, became prominent in defending Headingley against those who – through a misreading of the Buchanan report – endeavoured to make life easier for private motorists wanting to come into the centre of Leeds, forgetting that one of Buchanan’s conclusions concerning Leeds had been ‘that there is no possibility whatsoever, in a town of this size and nature, of planning for the level of traffic included by the unrestricted use of the motor car’.

While quoting the same phrase by Buchanan, Cliff Moughlin strongly endorses the ideas of Houghton-Evans and also refers to Jane Jacobs, the author of The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1965), for whom the interests of local residents came first: ‘Instead of attrition of the city by the motor car, Jacobs was advocating its strict control by making footpaths wider, slowing the traffic down and discouraging traffic intrusion in areas where it is not required. These suggestions, made forty years before the traffic-calming being actively pursued in this country, are the forerunner of the woonerf in Holland where pedestrian interest is paramount’, leading occasionally to major road narrowing schemes as in Oslo.

In addition, the Headingley Expressway did little to help public transport. Stressing that the era of town planning based on the journey to work by private car was

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11 David McKie, The Guardian, April 17, 1971, p.9
14 Robert Waterhouse,
15 Future transport in cities (Taylor & Francis, 2001). See also Petter Naess, Martin J.H. Mogridge, Synnøve Lyssand Sandberg, ‘Wider roads, more cars’, Natural Resources Forum, 25 (2001), 147-55. Any motorist on the M25 will tell you this. To try and deal with the heaviest commuter traffic around Leeds, which is that found on the motorways, the controversial decision has been taken to allow the use of the hard shoulder during rush hours, between junctions 39 and 42 on the M1, and junctions 26 and 30 on the M62 (see BBC News, October 31, 2013).
past, Houghton-Evans said that Leeds was now ‘bent on making a bad plan for motor cars into an even worse one for public transport’.19

In the Autumn of 1983 the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council organised a public consultation for four ‘alternative themes for dealing with traffic related problems between Kirkstall Road and Meanwood Road’, with some themes having ‘most traffic on improved main roads while others increased the use of minor roads’.20 About 5000 people responded to the questionnaire, of whom 676 lived in the Headingley area near the A660 corridor itself. Half the responses were in the form of ‘petitions or pro-forma’ organised by various community groups. Alan Barlow, then a Senior Section Engineer in the Transportation Unit of the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council, said that these should be handled ‘with care since only members of the public supporting the group’s view were allowed to respond in this way’.21 I think that his use of the word ‘allowed’ in this context is distinctly unfair, as those in community groups tend to be the best informed, and only sign pro-forma or petitions to save time and without coercion. When analysing the results in general, which he found disappointing, Alan Barlow complained about their parochial nature and looked for alternative ways of determining public opinion. He accused community groups of wanting to ‘do nothing’ This is again, in my view, unfair, as local community groups have never advocated such a policy, but have looked for schemes that would not sacrifice the needs of local residents, while designed above all to save a few minutes of journey time for commuters, a fair number of whom have always freely chosen to live in more fashionable parts of the Yorkshire Dales. As Jilly Cooper said in her best-seller, Class, Ilkley has always been smarter than Otley ‘because the inhabitants were richer and because it was further away from the industrial towns of Bradford and Leeds’, and she reports a friend as saying: ‘When people move to Ilkley they think they’ve arrived’.22

One suspects that if Alan Barlow had been writing his article today, he would have accused local residents, who didn’t give him the reply he wanted, of practising ‘nimbyism’, of being selfish and narrow-minded. This facile charge is frequently made against local residents who are in fact more often than not the people best placed to know what is good for their neighbourhood and even beyond it, and who are nearly always at a disadvantage when up against strong corporate interests who talk airily about the ‘general good’, when they really mean their own.23

Anybody who is fond of Headingley, and has lived there for any length of time, would find it difficult to disagree with what is said in a document drawn up in 1983 by the Victorian Society and the Leeds Civic Trust,24 in answer to the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Council, whose literature on road ‘improvements’ was written ‘from the point of view of the outsider’. I would ask all those who want to introduce a rapid transit system of any kind on this route to read this eloquent document, which shows all too

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22 See Jilly Cooper, Class (Mass Market Paperback 2010), p.233 (on Ilkley versus Leeds, etc.).
23 See Mike Townsend. ‘Thank Goodness for Nimby’s’, Woodland matters; Sadie Smith, ‘In defence of the Nimby’, Total Politics, February 6, 2013; Shaun Spiers, ‘All power to the nimby’s’, The Guardian, November 10, 2009; Philip Johnston, ‘Liam Fox should be proud to be a Nimby’, The Telegraph, August 29, 2011. At the turn of the century The Scottish Civic Trust and Friends of the Earth Scotland called for a charter, designed to put local residents on a more equal footing with developers at any inquiry (The Edinburgh Evening News, October 2, 2000, p.14).
clearly the irreparable damage that would be done to a ‘classic Victorian suburb’ by any form of bypass, the widening of Headingley lane, or the demolition of nineteenth century buildings. As it says in its conclusion:

The desire of the road planners to make traffic flow more quickly has blinded them to all other considerations. The implication is that traffic flow is of prime importance. Such a sentiment would have been regarded as orthodox wisdom in the ‘Motorway City of the 70s’. Yet Leeds has jettisoned that dated image. Tourist posters proclaim that Leeds is ‘England’s Northern Capital’ – and they show not motorways but historic buildings. Leeds is more than a city of commuters and office-blocks. It is an historic place where many people actually enjoy living.

Many, who know the area well, see the trolleybus project as yet one more attempt by planners to damage our neighbourhood, albeit to a slightly lesser extent and under different guise. They feel that some present-day planners have learned little if anything from these lessons of the past.  

b) trams.

It was when faced with the prospect of a Headingley Expressway which the public saw ‘as the last straw’ and likely to destroy ‘Headingley, and later Hyde Park as communities’, that in the early 1970s the Civic Trust first started to look into the possibility of reintroducing a tram, and sought the advice of Frederick Archer Andrews of the Light Rail Transit Association. However, what was proposed avoided Headingley lane and obviated the need for a bypass. It ensured almost perfect segregation. As far as possible it was to follow existent railway routes out to Headingley Railway Station and Horsforth, with a plan to reopen the branch line to Otley via Arthington and Poole. Headingley and West Park were to be protected by being served by an entirely underground branch, running between Cardigan Road and Spen Lane. It did not get the approval of the council.

Neither did the latter give its support to a later scheme in 1988 for a 12km tram line to run from the Headrow out along the York Road to Seacroft, Cross Gates and Colton. The Chamber of Commerce was unhappy about part of the route, and the leader of the Council said the scheme was ‘30 years out of date’. What is interesting in the light of later schemes, is that the City Council had wanted ‘a version of the supertram to run in tunnels and viaducts, separated from the rest of the traffic’, and was not impressed by what on offer, saying that the system was untried.

When first proposed in 1993, the Leeds Supertram scheme did not include the A660 corridor, and Metro had little difficulty in getting the scheme as it stood steered through parliament for Royal Assent on July 27, 1993. Controversy only arouse when Metro sought to extend the scheme to cover the A660 through Headingley up to Bodington. While noting little opposition to other lines, Professor Graham Haughton of the University of Manchester wrote in 1996 that the Headingley-Bodington line ‘has met with considerable opposition and scepticism, particularly in the Headingley area. Well-

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26 ‘Spreading the News in Leeds’, *Modern Tramway*, vol.36, no.429 (September 1973), pp.302-4
30 *The Yorkshire Post*, November 28, 1988, p.16.
established, organised and articulate residents and community groups have questioned most aspects: the route, stations, effects on other traffic and whether Supertram is good value for money’.  

In 1977, the West Yorkshire Transport authority carried out a feasibility study for the introduction of tramlines throughout Leeds, and the Headingley route was clearly identified as being among the most problematic. The survey is often referred to as justifying the Supertram scheme, but one wonders how many people have actually read it. When discussing the possibility of introducing a tram route between Hyde Park Corner and Headingley, it says that this ‘would present extreme difficulties on account of congestion and narrow carriageway widths’; that ‘cut-and-cover underpasses would appear necessary at Headingley and possibly Hyde Park Corner’. It did envisage the use of a bypass for ordinary traffic with the tram remaining on the existent road. However, the real sticking point was Headingley Lane. The survey admits that even ‘improvement to an undivided four-lane standard would still not provide space for segregating LRT’, and, although he was talking about buses, we can apply to all forms of public transport, including trams and trolleybuses, what Houghton-Evans said about the absolute need to segregate it from other traffic:

Where confined to the same route, there is an inevitable conflict between bus and car, between a vehicle constantly changing speed, constantly weaving in and out of the traffic stream, and one bent on maintaining, with as little interruption as possible, the highest possible speed from origin to destination.

It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that it is impossible to make the same road suitable for the private motorist and bus. Every advantage to one is a hindrance to the other.

Anyway, a ‘large number of objections’ to the extension were received by the city council and the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive and it was agreed to hold a public inquiry on the subject on March 18, 1977. Initially, the Civic Trust had given general support to all the routes of the Supertram, while remaining opposed ‘to the possible demolition of historic walls and trees on Headingley Lane’, but finally opposed the extension to the original scheme:

We received the plans for the construction of routes 2 and 3 for the Leeds Supertram and after much debate opposed them. While we support the concept of the Supertram, we are concerned that there are insufficient measures to reduce car traffic, and believe that the pedestrian and cyclist are ill-catered for.

The scheme also had other ‘major drawbacks’ that local politicians tended to gloss over following the withdrawal of government funding in 2004, such as a lack of an ‘effective interchange between the bus and the tram’.

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33 See, for instance, Leeds Supertram (Light Rail Transit Association March 8, 2000).
34 WYT, Light rail transit for Leeds - an initial appraisal (1977), pp.56-58, 66-68.
36 Local Government Chronicle, September 12, 1996; Construction News, September 19, 1996
38 Jim Brettell, Civic Trust, Annual report, 1992/93, p.3.
At the public inquiry the Civic Trust, ‘with a view to securing improvements to the proposed Headingley and East Leeds routes for the Leeds Supertram’, was represented by a member of its planning committee, David Hick, and by its director, Kevin Grady. It seemed to share a feeling of lassitude and even disbelief that I know myself to have been felt by many at the time:

Bearing in mind the Government’s recent comments about the inflexibility of light rail systems and the continuing funding problems, perhaps the city must reconcile itself to Supertram never going ahead, and produce a revised transport strategy.

However, this was to underestimate the local political climate of the time. The project – which had already cost a considerable amount of money – had already been approved in part and enjoyed support from all political parties including the Greens – which is not the case with the trolleybus\(^{41}\) –, as well as from powerful institutions such as the two Universities.\(^{42}\) It was thus not really a surprise when it was finally given the go-ahead as being ‘in the overall public interest’ in December 2000.\(^{43}\)

c) traffic on the A660

A vital point to remember, however, is that when permission for this extension to the Supertram was granted, there were large halls of residence for students at Bodington and Tetley, as well as the Girls’ High School on Headingley Lane. The number of students living in North-West Leeds in rented accommodation, and beyond walking distance of their campuses, was also far higher. The number of students in higher education in the area has declined since 2008 – apart from a case of over-recruitment by Leeds Metropolitan University in 2011-2012 – and between 2006 and 2012, the number of bed spaces in purpose-built accommodation for students in Leeds, now built away from critical parts of the route, rose from 12,500 to over 18,500. This is a trend that is set to continue.\(^{44}\)

A report of 2005 – that is before Tetley Hall closed in 2006 and the Girls’ High school moved in 2008 – put the A660 corridor on a par with the A65, Bradford-Leeds corridor (through Guiseley, Yeadon and Rawdon, etc.) as the two most congested radial routes into the city centre.\(^{45}\) Complaints about congestion and pollution in Headingley were common in the press up to 2002.\(^{46}\) In recent years most published complaints have

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\(^{41}\) See *Yorkshire Evening Post*, February 8, 2013. See their well-argued literature on why they oppose the trolleybus scheme: ‘What’s wrong with the trolleybus’ and ‘Trolleybus Juggernaut’. I am not a member of the Green party, but I looked in vain for similar documents on the websites of the other main parties, and all I found were ill-informed upbeat remarks in favour of the trolleybus from various MPs.

\(^{42}\) Leeds Supertram Endorsements for Supertram. It is interesting to see, among those who have criticized the trolleybus scheme, notable supporters of Supertram such as the LRTA expert, the late F.A. Andrews (*YEP*, June 26, 2007, *YEP*, June 11, 2008) and the emeritus professor of construction management at Leeds Metropolitan University, John Bale (*YEP*, April 2, 2013).


\(^{44}\) See Huw Jones, Martin Rushall, *Assessment of Housing Market Conditions and Demand Trends in Inner North West Leeds* (Unipol August 2012), pp.4-6, 24-5, 30-31, 33.


been about congestion on the A65. The solution adopted there has not been to plan for a trolleybus, but to improve traffic management and bus lanes on the Kirkstall road. It is perhaps too early to say how successful this has been, but it is certainly cheaper and less disruptive.

In any case, as shown by the Annual average daily flow statistics (AADF) published by the Department of Transport, the overall amount of traffic using the A660 corridor has declined steadily since 2002, with a slight halt in 2012, possible due to the Leeds Metropolitan University’s one-off overshoot in its intake, but which still represents a fall of over 11%. It is difficult to quote here the The Leeds Monitoring Report of 2008, or the The Leeds Central cordon Traffic flows for 2012. The definition given to the expression ‘A660 Corridor’ seems to be a broad one. The report for 2008 covers a route encompassing Woodside Road and Moorland Road, which are nowhere near the proposed tram or trolleybus route, and that for 2012 suggests an upturn on Woodhouse lane, but does not say which other roads are covered as well. What these reports do show, however, is that of all seven corridors or major radial routes into the centre of the city, the A660 is the one with the least traffic.

Despite this, a meeting of the Scrutiny Board, held on January 13, 2009 as part of the preparation for the trolleybus scheme, discussed a report received by the Chief Highways Officer on November 24, 2008 in which it was stated that ‘studies assessing congestion on the major radials in the Leeds District have shown the A660 to be one of the most congested’; that ‘morning peak inbound traffic speeds were among the lowest of those studied and similarly the evening peak speeds outbound were the lowest in the district’. Admitting that the amount of traffic on the A660 was ‘relatively low in comparison to other key radials’, it was maintained that ‘congestion has similar effects on journey time and public transport reliability to those experienced elsewhere on the network’; that ‘flows in the morning peak have reached 1897 vehicles, whilst the evening peak flows are slightly lower at 1726 vehicles.’

When were these studies carried out? The date is important as the Girls’ High School only moved in late 2008. There are also discrepancies. Do the figures again echo as in The Leeds Monitoring Report of 2008 a broad definition of the expression ‘A660 corridor’, with figures that include traffic that has not gone through Headingley, but which has reached Woodhouse Lane, when coming from Kirkstall and the Burley Road? In the 2008 report there are two contrasting sets of figures, one which lists Woodhouse lane on its own, with 1890 for the inflow between 8 and 9 am., and 2020 for the outflow between 5 and 6 pm. However, when the figures for Woodhouse Lane are listed together with the figures for those for Woodside Road and Moorland Road they fall to 1091 for the morning and 1046 for the evening rush hour. In both documents, it might have been more to the point to specify the figures for Headingley Lane.

In a document put out by NGT, and based on work by the transport consultants Steer Davies Gleave, the map showing areas most affected by journeys to work dates

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51 The Leeds Central cordon Traffic flows for 2012, p.4.
52 Leeds City Council: A660 Corridor Transport Issues, pp.49-50
from 2004,\textsuperscript{53} while the trolleybus scheme as a whole relies heavily on the data built up for the 2008 version of the Leeds Transport Model, for which roadside interviews, manual classified counts, and automatic traffic counts were carried out on the Otley Road on September 23, 2008 and on Woodhouse lane on May 19, 2009.\textsuperscript{54}

Much more recent is the traffic survey of the Otley Road carried out with admirable care and patience for the A660 Joint Council by John Griffiths\textsuperscript{55} who stresses how councillors supporting the scheme often make misleading statements. What is particularly interesting in his contribution is how he underlines features of traffic movement which have clearly not been sufficiently thought about by those planning the trolleybus scheme. The latter have not allowed enough for its complexity which, for instance, has motorists coming from Spen Lane and from Weetwood Lane (while it is still open), and thus from nowhere near the proposed park-and-ride. Others join the route at Shaw lane, others turn off there. Others leave or join at North Lane, etc, etc.\textsuperscript{50} Does this explain the discrepancy between the figures given in the 2008 monitoring report and those quoted at the Scrutiny board in January 2009? None of the people leaving or joining the A660 at various junctions would seem to be catered for by the trolleybus scheme. The A660 is not just a through route for commuters, but part of a network of roads serving different communities throughout North-West Leeds.

In this context of people only using part of the route, many town planners are worried by the desire to herd all traffic down a limited number of radial main roads, by closing off access to certain side roads, a tendency the plans for the trolleybus scheme carry further than did those for the tram. In theory, this is to stop rat-running, but it often damages the quality of life in the communities situated on either side.\textsuperscript{57}

Having lived on a road off Headingly Lane for over forty-five years, I and many others can well remember regular evening traffic jams, in which stationary traffic, wanting to go up Headingley Lane, trailed back halfway along Woodhouse Moor. It is too soon to have the figures for 2013, but as someone who regularly walks to the University between 8 and 9 a.m., I have noticed a sharp further decline in the morning traffic, possibly as a result of the closing of Bodington Hall. I can now almost invariably cross the road with ease, as there are large gaps between the bunched-up groups of fast-moving cars. Even in the evening, when the road does seem at its busiest, on many days the traffic seems to keep moving, if, admittedly, often slowed down to a walking pace. Hearing the way some councillors complain about congestion on the A660, you would think you were back in the past. A Trafficmaster report of June 11, 2007 says: ‘Traffic congestion into Leeds is commonplace at rush hours, but traffic flows freely outside these times’ and on most days this certainly remains true of Headingley lane.\textsuperscript{58}

Yet, despite a changing situation, and the particularly difficult problems posed by the choice of the A660 corridor, Metro has consistently refused even to consider alternative routes for a rapid transit system, such as the eminently suitable A64/A63 route, linking up to a train/car hub at Thorpe Park, as suggested by the chartered engineer

\textsuperscript{55} See John Griffiths, Appendices 1 and 2, Traffic census on Otkey Road, July 8, 2013.
\textsuperscript{56} JFC, Objection, traffic, extract.
\textsuperscript{58} Trafficmaster Traffic Analysis (2007).
and transport consultant, Alderman Don Townsley.\textsuperscript{59} There, the roads are already wide enough, the environmental damage having been already done in the 1960s. Among the many letters criticising the present scheme and which have been published in The Yorkshire Evening Post, there is one from a prominent councillor,\textsuperscript{60} a fair number from other parts of Leeds and its surrounding area\textsuperscript{61} and others from people living near other parts of the route, which show clearly that opposition is not limited to residents of Headingley and West Park.\textsuperscript{62}

There are also a number of letters – some from experts in the field of transport – which give further detailed and well-thought out suggestions for more appropriate schemes, using other routes.\textsuperscript{63} The whole subject needs to be considered more comprehensively on a regional basis.

It is also noticeable that the relatively small number of letters and comments published in the paper in defence of the trolleybus appear nearly always to have been written by people with as much vested interest in defending it as we have in attacking it, be they members of the Bradford Trolleybus Association, Electric TBus, or property developers. They tend to find it difficult to get beyond merely repeating untested claims made by NGT or in indulging in disparaging and near-rude remarks about those who dare doubt the validity of these claims. They want to bring in questions of class or political allegiance. They want to suggest – even though the evidence clearly goes against them – that opposition to the scheme is limited to ‘a tiny group of middle class Liberal protestors’, to what they call the ‘Little Headingleyites’.\textsuperscript{64}

One correspondent – a man of the cloth who lives in Cross Gates in the East of Leeds and wants to adopt the moral high ground, while showing, unfortunately, how little he has really studied what the scheme entails –, accuses us of ignorance, impugns our motives and says that our ‘selfishness is astounding’; that ‘it is about time the folk that will benefit from modernised transport in Leeds spoke up for themselves’.\textsuperscript{65} He does not seem to have been reading the local newspaper or listening to phone-ins on local radio. A letter in reply wished he had been present to see the anger over the scheme expressed at a public meeting in Middleton.\textsuperscript{66}

The letter from the clergyman did elicit one letter of support, which told us that if opponents of the scheme ‘can’t come up with anything better than this, then really they ought to just hold their tongue and let the people of Leeds get on with constructing

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{60} The Yorkshire Evening Post, May 15, 2013 (Trolleybus fears disregarded).
  \item\textsuperscript{64} The Yorkshire Evening Post, November 14, 2013.
  \item\textsuperscript{65} The Yorkshire Evening Post, December 11, 2013.
  \item\textsuperscript{66} The Yorkshire Evening Post, December 14, 2013.
\end{itemize}
something worthwhile’. While one correspondent was baffled by the vague claims made in this letter, another pointed out that, while describing the trolleybus as ‘something worthwhile’, its writer had then failed ‘to give us a single reason why it’s worthwhile’; that this unsubstantiated way of arguing ‘is similar to the way Metro promote the trolleybus’.

The property developer, Peter Connolly – a prominent defender of the scheme – likened its opponents to the Taliban leading an ‘almost hysterical crusade’. Judging by the lengths he is prepared to go to in order to defend his right to park in front of his city-centre offices, it would seem unlikely that he would be in a hurry to use the trolleybus himself.

d) competition with ordinary bus services:

In a document put out by NGT on its website in September 2013, and entitled ‘What Could NGT Look Like? Existing Trolleybus Systems’, there were pictures of a number of continental trolleybus systems which have now been removed. Among the pictures that featured there, there was one of a trolleybus in a narrow street in Parma. But what NGT failed to point out was that in the picture there were no cars present, and this is because there, as in all Italian cities with trolleybus systems, there is a Zona a Traffico Limitato, or restricted traffic zone.

For family as well as professional reasons, I have from time to time used rapid tram systems in Europe, notably those in Montpellier and Strasbourg. In neither of these towns do you find other traffic using the same streets in the city centre. It is only found on the wider boulevards further out, where proper segregation is possible, with a raised pavement, and sometimes even grass, lining the dedicated tram lanes. There is considerable congestion on side-roads caused by the priority for trams at traffic lights, as I know from personal experience, but there is no attempt to have ordinary buses and taxis running parallel to the trams in roads of the width of those found in Leeds. It was largely for this reason that in the tram scheme being currently planned for Avignon, it was decided – after listening properly to the public – not to take the trams across the Rhône to Villeneuve, past the Tour Philippe le Bel, where the road is about the width of Headingley lane.

67 *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, December 16, 2013
69 *The Yorkshire Post*, December 24, 2013
71 *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, December 5, 2013
Nowhere have I seen an attempt – as would be the case in Leeds – to have two public transport systems competing with one another, with different stops for buses and trolleybuses, and with ordinary buses being condemned to share space with ordinary traffic. This is not integrated transport, especially as Leeds lacks a proper transport hub, with the bus station being a considerable distance away from the railway station. Once again, we are paying here for the errors of the past imposed – as always – by those with money and influence, but with little thought for the real interests of the inhabitants of Leeds. Offices were built next to the railway station on land that should have been kept for a bus station:  

Indeed, since the city’s economy had come to depend on service industries rather than on manufacturing, the council, eager for new office developments, was prepared to increase congestion by encouraging such building in the central area. In this it was very successful. By 1975 Leeds had 5.5 million of the total 14 million square feet of offices in the whole of West Yorkshire. The social and economic arguments for or against the wisdom of it were never debated.

I know there is some ambiguity in the use by planners of the expression ‘integrated transport’, but I do not think you can get round the basic definition of it as ‘the integration of transport modes in order to provide easier interchange between modes of transport and therefore making it easier for the passenger’.

We are told that Headingley already forms part of the route most favoured by bus-users in Leeds, but the figures put out by NGT on bus use are somewhat meaningless here insofar as none of the present buses follow exactly the same route as that proposed for the trolleybus. Some come from places further out such as Guiseley (no.97), Bramhope, Otley and Skipton (no. 84X). Both the no.1 and no. 6 go to Holt Park, but one via Lawnswood and the other via Tinshill. The no. 28 goes to Adel. The bus services to all these places would almost inevitably suffer, and those living there would hardly relish being given a shuttle to tie up with the trolleybus instead of a direct service to town. And there would be fewer buses for everybody from West Park inwards wanting to go, for instance, to anywhere near the central bus station. The trolleybus might mean saving a few minutes for some commuters coming in from the outskirts or beyond, but there is little hope of a quicker journey for anybody else, especially with the likelihood of having to walk further to the right stop.

According to NGT ‘approximately 40,000 households would be within a short walk (600m/7 minutes) of a proposed NGT stop’ (Submission document: A-01-03 Leeds Trolley Vehicle System Order – Statement of Consultation, para 1.6). This is ...

avril 2013. For a picture of what the tram was supposed to look like going past the Tour Philippe le Bel, see ‘Villeneuve-lès-Avignon : dites ce que vous en pensez’, AV City Local News, July 4, 2013. I know the town well, having relatives who live nearby, and having inherited family property in Greater Avignon well over thirty years ago (my wife and I pay local taxes there as well as in Leeds). Note that the tram system in Avignon has not been without its critics, especially within the local business community, as, like many such projects in France, it is to be partly financed by a special form of payroll tax (see Le Midi Libre, December 4, 2012).

considerably further than for current bus stops, and hardly implies a saving in journey time for those who would now be facing a seven-minute walk. Interestingly, last May, when a pensioner in a Leeds suburb complained about the suppression of a bus stop near his home, the authorities relented and restored it, realising for once that local buses are also there to serve the needs of local residents, and not just the interests of commuters coming in from outside.\textsuperscript{78} In 2006 a pie chart, published by the government, showed that, nationally, under a quarter of all bus journey were undertaken for the purpose of commuting,\textsuperscript{79} and, in this context, it is interesting to note a complaint about a feature of the trolleybus plan which involves moving further away a bus stop which many students using the Leeds Metropolitan University Headingley Campus find convenient as it is.\textsuperscript{80}

Bus deregulation has caused problems, especially with bus companies often appearing unwilling to maintain services in which they do not make a profit. To counter this, Metro makes much of the possibility of introducing Quality Control Contracts in place of Quality Control Partnerships, in order to have a greater say over the way the buses are run.\textsuperscript{81} However, the experience of the Sheffield City Council in its dealings with Stagecoach\textsuperscript{82} does not suggest that Leeds City Council will be any more successful in overcoming opposition from First Group.\textsuperscript{83} First Group has already fought back, by promising to slash fares along the A660 corridor,\textsuperscript{84} and is there any guarantee that any bus company – not granted the franchise for the trolleybus – might not be prepared to undercut the fares of the trolleybus? If the franchise were to be granted to First Group, this would simply strengthen further its dominant position.\textsuperscript{85}

e) congestion and park-and-ride:

We are told that that this scheme is designed to ease congestion, which would hardly be helped by having traffic queuing at lights as the trolleybuses goes by. NGT admits as much. In an ‘Appraisal summary table’ published by NGT in March 2012, one

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{78} \textit{Yorkshire Evening Post}, May 21, 2013. For the importance of bus stops to local communities, see W. Houghton-Evans, \textit{Planning Cities} (Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), p.159. In the Treasury, a pie chart showed that, nationally, under a quarter of all bus journey were undertake for the purpose of commuting.
\item \textsuperscript{79} H.M. Treasury, \textit{Pre-Budget report} for 2006, p.273.
\item \textsuperscript{80} The Yorkshire Evening Post, July 15, 2013 (Integrate bus and trolleybus).
\item \textsuperscript{82} ‘Stagecoach threatens market withdrawal over imposition of Quality Bus Contracts’, \textit{Local Government Laywer}, March 29, 2010: \url{http://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1554%3Astagecoach-threatens-market-withdrawal-over-imposition-of-quality-bus-contracts&catid=64%3Atransport-articles&Itemid=1}.
\item \textsuperscript{83} See \url{http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/bus_industry_discussion/message/2556}. For Leeds, see John Baron, ‘First proposes radical changes to way buses are run in Leeds’, \textit{Guardian Unlimited}, October 14, 2010, Paul Robinson, ‘West Yorkshire bus firm’s new deal on fares’, \textit{Yorkshire Evening Post}, October 14, 2010; the letter from Dave Alexander, regional managing director, First UK Bus (North Region) in the \textit{Yorkshire Evening Post}, 12 July 2013, and the submission from the Association of local bus Operators in West Yorkshire: \url{http://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/documents/s88710/ABOWY%20Submission%20to%20the%20Leeds%20Scrutiny%20Board%20210113.pdf}.
\item \textsuperscript{84} ‘Leeds bus fares could be slashed by a third’, \textit{Yorkshire Evening Post}, July 2, 2013.
\item \textsuperscript{85} I grew up in Edinburgh, and although I do not approve of the Edinburgh tram, I do note that at least it – like the Edinburgh buses – is to be run by Edinburgh Corporation (‘New trams firm will have no drive for efficiency’, \textit{The Scotsman of Sunday}, January 30, 2013; Tristan Stewart-Robertson, ‘Transport expert raises debate on city's future’, \textit{The Glaswegian}, July 3, 2013, p.4).
\end{itemize}
finds the following sentence on Indirect Tax Revenues: ‘Reduced tax receipts from increased spending on untaxed public transport receipts largely offset by increased receipts from duty resulting from additional fuel consumption from additional congestion/increased highway trip lengths’ (sic).\textsuperscript{86}

The two main causers of congestion on the A660 corridor are commuters and parents doing the school run. The latter – who, if they can, prefer to live at some distance from busy roads – are hardly likely to abandon driving their children to and from the school gates, if the quality of their local bus services were to decline.\textsuperscript{87}

As for the problems caused by commuters, Professor David Begg, when chairman of the Commission for Integrated Transport, regretted that congestion charging had not been made a pre-requisite for the Leeds Supertram.\textsuperscript{88} Although congestion charging had in fact been conceived of in Leeds as a means of helping to finance the Supertram, following the experience of Manchester, Leeds City Councillors still shy away from the idea of introducing it here, and central government has abandoned attempts to force them to adopt it.\textsuperscript{89}

Yet, without it, and also a much greater use of residents’ only parking schemes all along the proposed trolleybus route – something our council has always been somewhat reluctant to implement in the past, pleading the difficulty of policing them, and the cost of which should not be borne solely by local residents who do not cause the problems\textsuperscript{90} –

\textsuperscript{86} There are complaints about narrow streets and the congestion caused by the trams in Nottingham (‘Madness to build tram line in narrow streets’, Nottingham Evening Post, December 27, 2012, p.14). See also the familiar arguments in the memorandum by the Beeston and Chilwell Business & Residents’ Association (February 2005), in: Transport Select Committee: The future of light rail and modern trams in Britain. Transport Select Committee tenth report with proceedings, II, 62-5. We have already mentioned the congestion caused by the trams in Montpellier (see above fn.73). Even the new tram system using the wide outer boulevards in Paris, ‘le tramway des Maréchaux’, has not got round the problem of actually causing congestion at the various gateways to the city, the Porte de Pantin, the Porte d’Orléans, etc., and, though it has resulted in people transferring to it from buses – notably because of a reduction in the number of bus services available, something which I have myself heard people complain about –, it has not reduced car use (See S.M : ‘Delanoë, ennemi de la voiture ?’, L’Express, N°. 3202, November 14, 2012, p.22); the blog Prolongement du T2, l’horreur - Tramway 2, which contains 12 pages of complaints (http://www.blogencommun.fr/2012-11-prolongement-t2-bezons/); Martine Breson, ‘Le tram victime des embouteillages Porte de Pantin’, Radio-France : France Bleu (Ile de France). February 11, 2013: http://www.francebleu.fr/infos/transports/le-tram-victime-des-embouteillages; Rémy Prud’homme, ‘Paris: did rail worsen freeway congestion?’, World Transit Research: http://www.humantransit.org/2011/07/paris-did-rail-worsen-freeway-c/


\textsuperscript{88} In a foreword to A New Deal for Transport: The UK’s struggle with the sustainable transport, edited by Ian Doherty and Jon Shaw (Blackwell 2003), p.xiv.


\textsuperscript{90} As an example of the reluctance to bring in such schemes along the A660 corridor in the past, see the letter to me from the chief Highways Engineer of May 11, 1999, suggesting, quite wrongly, that my road is wide enough to have cars parked on both sides, leaving enough space for ‘opposing vehicles’ to be able to pass one another. This is simply not true and when ‘park-and-riders’ fill both sides down to the bottom of the road, getting on and off Headingley Lane is dangerous (and this is hardly just the responsibility of the police). The situation is complicated this being a cul-de-sac with a hall of residence and student flats at the top of the road. They generate a considerable amount of traffic. Visiting students are even encouraged to park in our area (see http://en.parkopedia.co.uk/parking/info/parking_at_the_university_of_leeds/1044/) For the resistance to the tendency to bring in charges for residents’ only parking schemes rather than let the cost be met by local taxes, see Alice Azania Jarvis, ‘The superhero of Suburbia: Fed up with soaring
there must be severe doubts as to the successful implementation of what is seen as the main key to solving traffic congestion in this context, namely park-and-ride sites at Bodington and Stourton.

As we have seen, not all the motorists travelling through Headingley towards town during the rush hour will have come past Lawnswood and Bodington, and I found unconvincing the arguments put forward by NGT at the Plans Panel Meeting on October 17, 2013, when discussing the need to protect the interests of residents and ASDA shoppers at Holt Park against what would seem to be a natural desire by prospective passengers of the trolleybus to want to park there rather than at Bodington, and thus be sure of getting a seat on the trolleybus.  

In any case, the effects of park-and-ride schemes can be perverse, sometimes even making motorists drive further, or freeing up roads for fresh traffic. Most experts agree that park and ride schemes work best in historic towns such as York, Oxford or Bath, with relatively little parking available in the town centre. This is not the case in Leeds. We are told that there are some 18,800 parking spaces available in the city centre. It would be interesting how many of these are set aside for office workers. In 2009 some 548 members of council staff enjoyed free parking, and judging from planning applications and advertisements for offices over the years this privilege is widely extended to the private sector. On top of this, multi-storey parking for up to 2,700 cars is envisaged for the new city-centre shopping developments, despite the fact that extensive research by Sustrans and others has shown that traders are wrong in thinking that people need cars to shop in the middle of town.  

The situation is not helped by the fact that Leeds is home to the British branch of Europe’s largest car-park firm, which is naturally pleased to see an increase in custom. Is it not a little naïve, in such circumstances, to believe that motorists will willingly get out of the comfort of their cars and transfer to a trolleybus if they have guaranteed parking spaces available for them at their place of work? Unless, of course, the aim is to have permanent grid lock along the A660 corridor for all traffic other than the trolleybus.

II) A trolleybus is the wrong choice.


91 See the Report of the Chief Planning Officer, pp.18-19.
94 See the reply to a freedom of information request: https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/6740/response/18742/attach/3/2751%20Full%20Response.pdf
97 See ‘Former FD returns to help Town Centre grow car park business’, The Yorkshire Post, March 21, 2013. On just how keen commuters are to defend their right to park in the middle of town, see The Yorkshire Evening Post, January 22, 2014 (‘Angry drivers have voiced their concerns ahead of the possible shutdown of a popular city centre car park’).
a) a second-best alternative.

Few in Leeds would deny that the trolleybus was chosen as a second-best alternative, following the cancellation of the Supertram in 2004, and though Leeds is now the third-largest city in England, one has to face up to the fact that one cannot expect funding for an underground. Since the building of the Glasgow underground in 1896, such largesse has always been reserved since then for the capital, except partially in the case of the Tyneside Metro, which does have tunnels to avoid damaging the urban fabric. Even so, the cost of one single trolleybus line at an estimated £250.6 million (with £173.5m coming from central government) would seem very poor value for money, especially when compared to the cost of the first stage of the Nottingham Tram, at £200 million (which is the equivalent to £260 million at 2014 prices). In addition, in Leeds the share of the financial risk for the local tax payer has increased threefold since the trolleybus scheme was first thought up in 2007, when most of the funding was supposed to come from Regional Funding Allocations ‘with a 10% local contribution’.

It now stands at over 30%, with no guarantee against inflation, and the cost of the scheme is bound to rise. The figures given in the NGT Submission document A-01-11 are ‘at 1st Quarter 2008’ and are thus inevitably out of date, even if they do allow for inflation. The Nottingham tram already cost more than had been planned, though the supreme case of a rapid transit system running well over budget is, of course, that of the Edinburgh tram.

This is at least the third attempt to reintroduce trolleybuses to Britain, the first being in the late 1980s when there was a scheme to reintroduce them to the Leeds-Bradford conurbation, but which seems to have fallen foul of bus deregulation. Then there was the ill-fated trolleybus scheme for Liverpool, turned down in 1999, following a public inquiry held the year before.

In its literature NGT has not made any reference to either of these failed schemes, always content to announce the possible creation of the first trolleybus system in the UK

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98 Glasgow Subway – Wikipedia. In Europe, other towns of a comparable size to Leeds with underground systems or equivalent include Adana, Barcelona, Kharkiv, Kazan, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Milan, Munich, Nizhny Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Rotterdam, Samara, Seville, Thessaloniki, Toulouse and Valencia. Towns that are smaller than Leeds, but which possess underground systems include Bilbao, Brescia, Catania, Genoa, Lausanne, Palma de Mallorca, and Rennes.

99 The New Scientist, no.1079, November 24, 1977, pp.474, 476-77. Admirers of French tram systems should be aware of just how much they cost, if done properly, with underpasses, etc., so as not to damage the urban fabric. Lines 1 and 2 in Montpellier – where they could not take advantage of old railway routes as in Lyon, or of an old 1.400 metre underground postal tunnel as in Strasbourg – cost respectively per kilometre 23 M€ and 20 M€ (see for comparative prices in 2006: http://www.languedoc-roussillon.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/F33-Le_cout_des_transports_cle15daa1.pdf).


103 See ‘The shambles of Edinburgh’s tram scheme’, Local Government, August 26, 2011; Allan Alstead. ‘Edinburgh’s trams will be a millstone around the necks of all city council taxpayers for many decades to come’. The Herald, January 11, 2013; ‘Edinburgh Trams to run at loss for fifteen years’, Newsnet Scotland, June 22, 2013.


105 See Bill McKinnon, ‘MRT – Liverpool’s Unsuccessful Trolleybus Project’ (http://blog.stopthetrolleybus.com/merseyside-rapid-transit/).
as a ‘step change in public transport’, implying that it is at the cutting edge of new technology and – with its belief in image – that car users and bus passengers will switch to it simply because it is so permanent and so attractive. It has made much of trolleybuses abroad without really looking at them properly, and has dismissed out of hand as unsuitable the rapid technological progress that is taking place in other ecological forms of public transport.

b) trolleybus systems abroad

NGT is good at giving half the story. On its website, at one time it gave a list of would-be rebuttals of what its called ‘false and misleading’ claims made by opponents to its scheme, by making much of a new trolleybus line in Geneva, but failing to point out that – to the chagrin of a least one Genevan property developer – this is not a rapid transport service as envisaged here. It is designed to serve new housing estates near and over the French frontier and not long-established built-up areas as in Leeds, does not go into the centre of town, but to the new transport hub at Eaux-Vives, and is thus part of a big truly-integrated cross-frontier transport scheme that has being going ahead since 2002, the CEVA (Cornavin – Eaux-Vives – Annemasse). It was opposed by local residents’ associations, who objected to the cost, and wanted buses using natural gas instead.

This is typical of the way NGT has attempted to brush aside dissent, and continue to paint the trolleybus as a popular choice for transport worldwide. For a start, it is important to distinguish between long-established trolleybus systems – most notably in former communist countries where there was, till fairly recently, limited private-car ownership, and places like Switzerland with access to cheap hydro-electricity – and new schemes – few in number – introduced since the beginning of the present century.

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106 NGT-Opponents claims factually incorrect and misleading (sic). Since suppressed, after being shortened (see [http://web.archive.org/web/20131002204302/http://www.ngtmetro.com/Real_facts_about_NGT/](http://web.archive.org/web/20131002204302/http://www.ngtmetro.com/Real_facts_about_NGT/)) Recently, NGT seems to have taken steps to remove material from it site that many might see as ill-researched and inaccurate. For the list of documents it advertised on its home page in summer of 2013, but for which most of the links are no longer available, see [https://web.archive.org/web/20130603023526/http://www.ngtmetro.com/](https://web.archive.org/web/20130603023526/http://www.ngtmetro.com/)


111 According to various Wikipedia sites in English and French, the percentage of hydropower used in the total output of electricity is 55.5% in Switzerland, 31% in Austria, 18% in Italy, and 13% in France. In Britain it only represents 1.8% of the total. See chart which shows the particular importance of hydroelectricity in both Austria and Switzerland in 2008: [http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-zMndWzgZxDQ/TVZOeTzpreI/AAAAAAAAB5Y/dT52TH9c270/s1600/H2O%2BPercent%2BElectric%2BJ.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-zMndWzgZxDQ/TVZOeTzpreI/AAAAAAAAB5Y/dT52TH9c270/s1600/H2O%2BPercent%2BElectric%2BJ.jpg) See also for France [http://www.renewablefacts.com/country/france/hydro](http://www.renewablefacts.com/country/france/hydro), for Italy [http://www.eniscuola.net/en/energy/content/hydroelectric/](http://www.eniscuola.net/en/energy/content/hydroelectric/), Austria [http://www.renewablefacts.com/country/austria/hydro](http://www.renewablefacts.com/country/austria/hydro), Switzerland [http://www.renewablefacts.com/country/switzerland/hydro](http://www.renewablefacts.com/country/switzerland/hydro), Spain [http://www.renewablefacts.com/country/spain/hydro](http://www.renewablefacts.com/country/spain/hydro), and the United Kindom [http://www.renewablefacts.com/country/united-kingdom/hydro](http://www.renewablefacts.com/country/united-kingdom/hydro).
For the sake of simplicity, it is perhaps best to limit the discussion to Western Europe and the European Union since 2001. When we have pointed out that towns with trolleybuses such as Arnhem, Budapest, Geneva and Salzburg have all been experimenting with electric buses, we were not suggesting, as NGT has tried to make out, that places like Geneva, were immediately wanting to rip out the overhead wires. Those with established trolleybus systems obviously want to make the best of the system that they have, especially if it is part of properly integrated transport, and in the medium term at least they will try to keep it up to date. What this desire to test electric buses does reflect, however, is a widespread dislike of overhead wires and of the lack of flexibility that they entail, as seen in recent protests against them in Arnhem. The Swiss have referred to them as ‘visual

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116 Electric bus from BYD in Salzburg: http://car.pege.org/2012-electric-bus/

117 The now-suppressed NGT document entitled ‘What Could NGT Look Like? Existing Trolleybus Systems’ (see above fn.72) made much of the trolleybus systems in Budapest, Geneva, Salzburg and Lyon. None of the pictures showed trolleybuses being used in a rapid transit system. Like Geneva, Budapest and Lyon also have fully integrated transport systems. Geneva and Salzburg, in particular, have ready access to cheap hydroelectricity (which would not be the case in Leeds). Hydroelectricity represents 20% of all electricity used in Geneva (http://www.sig-ge.ch/entreprise/nos-activites/les-energies/energies-renouvelables/l-energie-hydraulique), while it accounts for 90% of all output in the Vaud (Lausanne, etc.) (http://www.vd.ch/themes/environnement/eaux/rivieres/energie-hydraulique/). Salzburg uses the dam at Verbund (http://www.verbund.com/pp/en/region/oesterreich/salzburg and ). Some hydroelectricity is produced near Lyon by a dam on the Canal de Joinville at Cusset (http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centrale_hydro%E9lectrique_de_Cusset)

118 www.omroepgelderland.nl/web/nieuws-1/2045044/protest-teen-trolley-naar-arnhem-zuid-1.4132100,
pollution’, and here in Leeds there is fear over the environmental damage that they would cause, including, notably, the need to cut down a considerable number of mature trees. To quote Matthew Parris in *The Times*, albeit when discussing trams:

The current fad for fabulously expensive urban tramway systems (this generation is too young to remember why Britain got rid of its trams the last time round) is adding tens of thousands of poles. Piccadilly Gardens in Manchester is being dubbed Pole Park, and the leafier parts of Nottingham are sprouting vertical steel.

And remember that trolleybuses need two wires where most trams need one, and, as I myself have witnessed in Bordeaux, some trams run without any overhead wires at all.

In addition, as has been seen several times in the last year or two in Switzerland, even if modern trolleybuses do have back-up batteries, there are still problems leading quite frequently to traffic chaos when the wires break, either because they are torn away by lorries or falling trees, or even by a trolleybus, or have quite simply worn out. In damp frosty weather, precautions also have to be taken to make sure the wires do not ice over. This is frequently a problem in North America, even in comparatively sheltered San Francisco and Vancouver. And, surprisingly, since trolleybuses are noted for being relatively silent, they can, however, like any vehicle, become over time even noisier than an ordinary bus.

As elsewhere in the world, in Western Europe and the European Union, a fair number of trolleybus systems have closed since the beginning of the present century. Romania has abandoned seven trolleybus systems in recent years, and Bulgaria has closed two. Nearer home, two trolleybus systems have closed in recent years in Switzerland: Lugano in 2002, and Bâle in 2008. That in La Chaux-de-Fonds was only saved,
because it was thought that there was no viable ecological alternative on the horizon, a situation which is changing radically, with the result that its future is still uncertain.  

In Austria, Innsbruck closed its system in 2007, while in Belgium Ghent did away with its trolleybuses in 2009. In France, the main opposition party, the UMP, could well win next year’s local elections in Villeurbanne (in the Lyon conurbation), and wants to suppress the trolleybus there, while the UMP candidate for the Mayor of Lyon itself would like to replace a much troubled trolleybus line there with an underground. Also in France, following an argument between two transport authorities which was settled in the courts, Valenciennes has now opted for a tram instead of a trolleybus planned since 2008.

The latest towns to show disaffection with trolleybuses are in the Baltic states. Tallinn in Estonia has expressed its desire to replace them with biogas or hybrid buses, while Vilnius in Lithuania has already been abandoning them progressively. It replaced 40 trolleybuses with ordinary buses on September 1, 2013. A further 45 trolleybuses were to be replaced shortly after that, leaving at that stage a total of 185 trolleybuses, compared to 225 in the autumn of 2012. The director general of the local public transport board (Vilniaus Viesasis Transportas) is quoted as saying that ‘buses were faster than trolleybuses’. They closed four trolleybus routes on July 1, 2013.

Finally, one should mention that a system for Amadora in Portugal was planned in 2009, but seems to have been abandoned in 2012.

Of the very few entirely new trolleybus systems created in Western Europe and the European Union in the last few years, almost all cannot be used as examples of inspiration for Leeds. In Romania, with a grant from the European Union, a new system has been planned for Craiova (a city of 300,000 inhabitants) since 2009, to tie up rather bizarrely with an existent tram line, and the old 5-kilometer line in the small town of Vaslui (74,000 inhabitants), which closed in 2009, has now been completed reconstructed.

The new single 3-kilometer trolleybus line in Landskrona (30,499 inhabitants) in Sweden, constructed from 2002 to 2003, is a very modest affair, running like an ordinary bus with wires and no special lane. All other recent schemes have been in Italy and...
Spain, and they have nearly all been embroiled in scandal, amidst lawsuits over accusations of corruption and unwarranted financial and political influence. That in the small town of Avellino (54,151 inhabitants) was planned to be in service by 2013, while that of the slightly-larger Lecce (95,764 inhabitants) was opened in January 2012, a couple of months after the arrest of one of its planners on charges of bribery and fraudulent invoicing. It is not surprising that it has been dubbed locally the ‘filobus della discordia’!

Even the new trolleybus in Rome (filovia) – built by supporters of Silvio Berlusconi – has not been free of scandal, with accusations of waste and the arrest of the mayor’s right-hand man on charges of having accepted nearly one million euros in bribes from a state-controlled bus-maker. In any case, it cannot be used here as an example for Leeds, since for much of the time the vehicles turn into electric buses without either overhead wires or special lanes.

Two other Italian cities which have over the months been quoted as exemplary by NGT and its supporters, again without their really doing their homework properly, are Bari, which has a very troubled history of stopping and starting various trolleybus schemes going back to the 1970s, and Verona where a trolleybus scheme, which was first promised in 2007, was still being evaluating in 2013, with a plan that envisages the use of the internal combustion engine to power the system wirelessly within the city walls.

The only new modern trolleybus scheme which does has similarities with what is planned for Leeds is the strangely-named ‘El Tram’ in the Spanish provincial capital of Castellón de la Plana (180,204 inhabitants), the brainchild of yet another controversial politician, the ex-leader of the regional government, Carlos Fabra Carreras, who was placed under judicial investigation in 2012 in connection with several cases of corruption and tax evasion.

This scheme is almost a symbol of how Spain overstretched itself before the economic downturn in 2008. It is run at a loss and is to be heavily subsidized by the local
regional authorities up to 2027.\textsuperscript{150} It is highly controversial, with lawsuits trying to stop it damaging a local park, and causing considerable anger among many citizens in the town, especially over a lack of proper public consultation and added congestion where even ambulances find it difficult to get through.\textsuperscript{151} Here as elsewhere, there is now talk of doing away with the overhead wires on the main route from the university to the seafront.\textsuperscript{152}

Finally, in this context, one should also mention the two disastrous attempts to introduce what were seen as ‘trams on the cheap’, the ‘scalextric’-type guided trolleybus schemes in Nancy and Caen. In both towns, the authorities have had to cut their losses, with Caen turning to proper trams, and Nancy to gas-powered buses.\textsuperscript{153}

Very clearly, in all its forms, the trolleybus with overhead wires does not constitute the ideal solution for the development of an entirely new modern urban transport system.

c) better ecological alternatives

In wanting to counter claims made for electric buses, on its website NGT concentrated (see above fn.106) all its guns on the flash-charging TOSA electric bus in Geneva without discussing the many other electric battery buses being tried out more and more throughout the world. Most noticeably, it has never made any mention of developments in the rival ‘green’ technology of hydrogen fuel cells. In recent years there has been rapid progress in both fields, and it is now more that likely that one or the other or both of these technologies will be in a position to make that of the trolleybus seem completely obsolete by the time that the scheme planned for Leeds should be up and running.

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It is somewhat ironic – and symbolic of how greatly Metro seems behind the times – that Leeds, which pioneered electric buses as long ago as 1972,\textsuperscript{154} has not already made use of the award-winning electric buses by the local firm of Optare, while they

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\textsuperscript{150} Lorena Ortega, ‘El Tram de Castellón arranca con 1,3 millones de déficit al año’, El País, December 27, 2012, p.20.  \\
\textsuperscript{151} Marco, ‘El Tram no soluciona el problema del transporte en la ciudad de Castellón’, El Periodico Mediterraneo, August 14, 2013. See video: Polemico paso del bus guiado TVR-CAS TRAM por el Parque Ribalta en Castellón: www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQ4MU-jTFXU. \\
\textsuperscript{152} David P. Solves, ‘Bataller busca fórmulas para que el Tram circule sin catenarias; el nuevo centro de energía podría albergar un proyecto de investigación’, El Periodico Mediterraneo, February 6, 2013. \\
\textsuperscript{153} See http://www.lightrailnow.org/features/1_ncey001.htm; ‘Un tramway nommé désastre’, Usine Nouvelle, no.2373, 23 février 2012; http://www.cotecaen.fr/12801/pannes-a-repetition-finalement-caen-decide-de-changer-de-tramway/; L’ Est républicain, 28 mars 2013. p.12. It will be interesting to see if a similar system called Translohr, developed by the French firm of Lohr Industrie, will prove more successful in the long run (a Wikipedia article lists its qualities and faults). It runs in Clermont-Ferrand and Padua and has been adopted for the T5 in the Ile de France. It seems to come quite frequently off the guiding rail and causes heavy wear to the road surface. \\
\textsuperscript{154} The Surveyor, vol.139, no.4162, March 17, 1972, p.32.
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have been enthusiastically adopted, for instance, in Coventry, Durham, Nottingham, and nearby York.

At the moment the 12-metre long Chinese BYD electric bus, which can run for 250 kilometres on a single charge, seems to be leading the field world-wide, and it is now being tried out in London.

In Sweden there is Volvo. Siemens is providing the technology for new electric buses in Vienna. Bombardier is running electric buses in Canada and Germany, etc., etc. I could go on. The list is endless.

NGT criticised the look of the overhead apparatus used to flash-charge the TOSA bus in fifteen seconds at stops, but it should note that ‘in-road’ flash-charging is being developed in Sweden by Volvo and also by Bombardier in Canada and Germany, while the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) has developed an ‘in-road’ system that actually recharges the bus while it is still moving. The new electric buses in Milton Keynes use induction charging plates, buried in the road.

I have also heard supporters of the trolleybus claim that electric buses could not climb the route. Yet, the steepest gradient involved here is 7.7%, and the electric buses in Shanghai already handle gradients of up to 12%. For its part, Optare, which is now developing flash-charging, is now also using equipment with greater climbing potential. Here again, progress is happening fast.

Birmingham has shown keen interest in electric buses, but is understandably adopting a wait-and-see attitude which does not compromise its freedom of choice to move away from hybrid diesel-electric buses when the moment is right, an example Leeds surely would do well to follow, rather than turn its back on the future with a trolleybus.

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161 ‘Volvo noiseless electric buses to hit streets of Gothenburg in 2015’, EcoSeed, June 18, 2013.
163 ‘German city to test viability of inductive charging system on two real bus lines’, Phys.org - Science and Technology News, February 27, 2013.
164 ‘Un bus 100% électrique sans ligne de contact débarque à Genève’, SDA - Service de base français, April 19, 2013; ‘ABB demonstrates technology to power flash charging electric bus in 15 seconds’, ENP Newswire, June 3, 2013.
166 ‘Bombardier electric technology will be tested’, Alberni Valley Times (British Columbia), February 19, 2013, p.15.
167 ‘Electric road charges buses while they drive’, CNET.com, August 7, 2013; ‘Active Wireless Charging In Transit; Remarkable Progress In Korea For Electric Vehicles’, CleanTechnica, August 14, 2013.
168 BBC News - Wirelessly charged electric buses set for Milton Keynes.
169 See the relevant segment charts published on line by http://veloviewer.com/.
171 ENPV Newswire, October 8, 2013 (Optare showcases its leading-edge EV technology).
172 See Birmingham Mobility Action Plan, November 2013, pp.46-47.
NGT’s silence over hydrogen fuel cell buses is extraordinary. In some ways, I suspect (along with the European Union and the British Government\textsuperscript{173}) that in the end they may prove a better bet than electric buses, with greater autonomy, and not using batteries with heavy elements that need proper disposal and can pollute the environment in the long run.\textsuperscript{174} Hydrogen fuel cells are also lighter, and there are even developments taking to place to combine the two technologies, using hydrogen fuel cells to ‘boost the distance electric buses and other vehicles can travel between charges’.\textsuperscript{175}

London in particular has been a leader in the use of hydrogen fuel cell buses,\textsuperscript{176} while Aberdeen has taken delivery of 10 buses built by Van Hool NV and powered by Ballard fuel cells.\textsuperscript{177}

Of course, the infrastructure needs to be developed and they do require quite a lot of electricity, though this can be produced off-peak. Aberdeen, for instance, ‘aims to use surplus off-peak wind energy to produce the hydrogen for city buses’\textsuperscript{178} and this where both battery and hydrogen fuel buses again score over the NGT trolleybus. This is likely to be powered for some time by electricity from the National Grid, and there are currently worries about the reliability of electricity supplies from this source.\textsuperscript{179}

One of the main current problems connected to the production of hydrogen is the comparative rarity and cost of the usual catalyst: platinum, which is hoarded by the Chinese. However, here again research into various alternatives to platinum is advancing fast.\textsuperscript{180} There is talk of obtaining hydrogen from household waste,\textsuperscript{181} or even sewage.\textsuperscript{182} In any case, the overall cost of producing the gas has already come down significantly.\textsuperscript{183}

It is also a matter of political will, as there is a need to accept the initial considerable expense involved in installing a proper infrastructure. A scheme in western

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\textsuperscript{174} See Bjorn Lomborg, quoted in \textit{The Globe and Mail} (Canada), March 28, 2013, p.17, and Sarah Zielinski: George W. Bush. Elon Musk; Who was right about the future of hydrogen cars?,’ \textit{Slate Magazine}, August 27, 2013.
\textsuperscript{175} \textit{The Journal} (Newcastle, UK), January 21, 2014, p.23 (German approval paves way for Proton).
\textsuperscript{178} \textit{The Western Mail}, May 20, 2013, p.10.
\textsuperscript{179} See ‘People power can reduce our electricity use. As energy regulator Ofgem warns that the UK is at increased risk of power cuts this winter, Simon Parker calls on the Government to look at ways to cut consumption rather than focusing exclusively on power generation’(\textit{Western Daily Press}, July 3, 2013, p.12); ‘British politicians to blame when lights dim’, \textit{The Irish Times}, July 24, 2013, p.6), etc.
\textsuperscript{181} Yakub Qureshi: ‘Gas from our rubbish could power homes’, \textit{Manchester Evening News}, August 14, 2013, p.20.
\textsuperscript{182} Gavin Collins: ‘Flush of excitement at sewage fuel cell’, \textit{The Irish Times}, September 13, 2013, p.4.
Canada failed, for instance, largely because the hydrogen had to shipped in across the continent from the east.  

No system is entirely carbon neutral, but less disruptive forms of ‘green’ public transport than the trolleybus, enjoying all the flexibility of the ordinary bus, are, whatever NGT may imply, already clearly on the horizon. The submission documents show, I would argue, just how limited was NGT’s investigation into other forms of transport apart from the trolleybus (see Environmental Statement - Non-technical Summary : Document Ref. A-08a, para.5).

d) *improvements to traffic flow, not needing a trolleybus.*

Among the claims made by NGT, notably that ‘journeys to the city centre will be up to 15 minutes quicker than existing buses’ (NGT Final submission: A-01-2: Concise Statement of the Aims of the Proposals, para 3.4), it lists advantages that do not really need the presence of a trolleybus to reduce the time taken by ordinary buses. First among these is smart-ticketing: the ‘MCard’, a Yorkshire equivalent of London’s Oyster Card. Those of us who can remember the pre-deregulation ‘ker-ching’ card on Leeds buses, have long wondered why one had to revert to long hold-ups at bus stops while people, on boarding their buses, looked for change to pay for their tickets. Yet there are several questions one might ask of Metro, before they claim all the credit for the introduction of the new cards. First Group has spent £27 million on the technology which is to be installed on buses, not just in Leeds, but also in Manchester, Bolton, Oldham, Wigan, Stoke, Northampton, York, Halifax, Huddersfield, Bradford, Leicester, Portsmouth, Southampton, Plymouth, Reading, Bristol, Ipswich and Norwich. Did it need the trolleybus plan to force Metro wake up to the need for this?

There is also no reason to doubt that with the growth of electronic technology, comparable regularity and reliability as claimed for the trolleybus, could not be achieved with ordinary buses, using proper bus lanes and stopping bays, and real-time bus arrival information. It is now possible for computers, using GPS, to ensure that fast express and slow more frequently-stopping services do not get in each other’s way. As far back as 2001, a report to Congress from the United States General Accounting Office compared buses favourably to trams. After listing ‘innovative technologies’ such as those I have mentioned, the report concluded (pp.32-33): ‘In many communities Bus Rapid Transit systems can have lower capital costs than Light Rail systems yet can often provide similar performance’, while having the additional ‘valuable feature’ of flexibility.

Above all, the A660 is not really suitable for articulated or bendy buses, which are much disliked by cyclists, who, under the proposed trolleybus scheme, would, for a

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considerable part of the route, have to share a lane with a vehicle of that shape. I have seen First Bus use an articulated bus on the number 1 route, and seen it cause hold-ups as its rear end stuck out into the traffic when stopped at the Arndale centre, and also when turning left into Holt Lane off the Otley Road. They are often criticised for carrying too many standing passengers and being unsuitable for narrow roads. Double-decker buses – which need shorter stopping bays – have always been popular in Britain, because our roads tend not be as wide as those on the continent, and it is for the same reason that double-decker buses are now being introduced in both New Zealand and Australia. There are also plans to introduce them in Edmonton, in Canada, which abandoned trolleybuses in 2009.

III) The inadequacies of the consultation exercise

a) from 2008 to 2013

When I argued in a letter to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* that ‘for the words “public consultation” to mean anything, everything must be on the table, even the possibility of abandoning a project or looking for something more appropriate, after listening properly to the public’ it prompted a reply from the head of NGT to my MP, which unwittingly strengthened my view, by putting the emphasis on the fact the trolleybus scheme had been the subject of a ‘great deal of scrutiny’ from both Metro and Leeds City Council.

This still did not imply proper engagement with the public. NGT has always made much of the results of earlier consultation exercises, especially that of 2009 (see A-01-03 Leeds Trolley Vehicle System Order – Statement of Consultation, *passim*). NGT held an exhibition in Leeds city centre from November 12 to November 15, 2008, as part of a survey on transport matters in Leeds in general, and when there was still talk of a tram-train, and when ‘the exact nature of the NGT project [had] still to be decided’. It is also difficult to say how many of those who saw the exhibition lived anywhere near the proposed routes or even in Leeds, and remember that as late as 2010, the project still included a route to St James’s hospital and a central ‘City Hub’ which might have provided something nearer properly integrated transport, with the stress in the literature being put on the fact that nothing was as yet finalized. The results of the 2008

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189 See [http://www.leedscyclingcampaign.co.uk/?q=node/17](http://www.leedscyclingcampaign.co.uk/?q=node/17).
190 See for instance, *Isle of Man Today*, February 8, 2013 (Joined-up thinking on bendy-buses)
191 They seem to cause, for instance, considerable irritation in Bath: *Bath Chronicle*, May 9, 2013, p.45.
194 *The Edmonton Journal*, June 19, 2008 (Trolleys reach end of the line).
196 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, November 7, 2008 (Have your say on Leeds traffic problems) and *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, January 13, 2009 (D-day looms for Leeds transport plan).
197 New Generation Transport _ NGT home _ Consultations prove popular.
198 NGT – About NGT (June 21, 2009) and NGT – East Route (April 6, 2010).
survey\(^\text{199}\) were thus of a very general nature, many of the answer not being tied to a trolleybus scheme in particular, and with 95\% of them simply saying inevitably that they thought ‘public transport in Leeds could be improved’. Somewhat surprisingly, seeing how central this is in the argument for a trolleybus scheme, only a third of those who filled in a questionnaire wanted ‘cleaner and more environmentally friendly vehicles’.

From June 18 to July 18, 2009, NGT organised a ‘Travelling exhibition’ at six different venues, mostly on the route as it now proposed, but also in Victoria Gardens, The Headrow, outside Leeds Art Gallery, and in the Beckett Street Car Park, opposite St James’s Hospital\(^\text{200}\), to put on show the scheme, described in the press at the time as ‘jam-busting’\(^\text{201}\). People were also invited to send in comments by e-mail or to a freepost address up to September 4,\(^\text{202}\) that is during a period when many people were likely be away on holiday. This exercise received nothing like the publicity given to the latest one and did not engage with local residents’ associations, who, in any case, would have found it difficult to organize meeting in the middle of summer. In these circumstances, it is not surprising therefore that NGT found it relatively easy to elicit positive responses.

As the then chairman of Metro pointed out, when replying to a correspondent who had found the exhibition ‘baffling’, it was still expected that ‘the Government would fund 90 per cent of the proposed trolleybus scheme’\(^\text{203}\). Would the public have reacted in quite the same way had it known that the government share of the cost would fall to under 70\%?

The analysis of the results by Steer Davies Gleave in October 2009 shows that of the total of 2,594 ‘NGT questionnaire responses’ returned, by far the greatest number came by e-mail or by post. Only 354 were completed at the exhibition, of which 106 in North Leeds. They handed out 18,700 information packs, but only 1,356 people actually attended the exhibition, of which 573 did so in the city centre, and 95 in the east of Leeds\(^\text{204}\).

The difference in funding and the number of routes, as well as the short time-scale of the consultation exercise of 2009, mean that NGT is hardly justified in wanting to use its results in order to parry the many objections made throughout the autumn of 2012 and most of 2013, when people had time to reflect on what was really involved. They would not get the same results today.

I had never suggested that NGT had not respected procedure, and faithfully gone through all the hoops. The question is whether they had done so with truly open minds and whether there were severe limitations on what they were prepared to change. Public consultation is a delicate process all to easily perverted by political manipulators and commercial lobbyists, who often count on the inertia and ignorance of the general public.\(^\text{205}\) The extreme anger expressed by our local councillors at the suggestion from the government for a referendum before raising council-tax to pay for transport issues was most illuminating.\(^\text{206}\)

\(^{199}\) NGT – Public consultation findings.


\(^{201}\) The Yorkshire Post, June 18, 2009.

\(^{202}\) See The Yorkshire Evening Post, August 11, 2009.

\(^{203}\) The Yorkshire Evening Post, July 3, 2009 (Trolleybus is winning support)

\(^{204}\) Consultation results (2009), pp.8-9.

\(^{205}\) See James S. Fishkin, When the people speak: Deliberative democracy & Public consultation (OUP 2009), pp.9-11, etc.

My letter had been initially prompted by a remark made by a local councillor in reply to the many protests against the trolleybus from local citizens: ‘We can perhaps tweak and change minor details but at the end of the day this is a government scheme.’

The public has to put up with a great deal of double-speak and soft-soap from those in charge of the scheme, with phrases devoid of real meaning such as ‘feedback from the public is vital in helping us to shape the plans the best we can in order to provide Leeds with a modern rapid transport system’, pronounced by a councillor whom we had just seen lecturing a public meeting and not listening properly to comments from the floor. Such meetings have grown extremely heated, as many members of the public have become increasingly angry and frustrated.

According to the OECD guidelines for public consultation, it must be ‘a two-way flow of information’ based on proper dialogue. That this has not been the case here, is fully illustrated by the NGT website and its final submission. It still makes vague, difficult to prove claims of doubtful validity, that it already made at the start of the consultation exercise. Rather than dealing properly with concerns raised by the public, they have devoted much space to trying to counter what they called misleading claims most of which – as I have shown above – were not as ill-founded as they suggested. They have also listed answers to frequently-asked questions. This list is somewhat repetitive and rather tellingly does not include a fair number of thorny issues which I know to have been raised. Both my wife and I were among the 500 people who submitted feedback forms, to which we only received in return general statements designed for all, repeating well-rehearsed, but ill-founded assumptions and inaccurate claims, and more misleading pictures. In their letter to me of December 3, 2013, they wrote: ‘The NGT Team are now considering your representations and will get back in touch with you shortly in response to the points you raise’. As of January 2014, I am still waiting. When a fellow protestor made a freedom of information request on this subject after the end of the consultation exercise, he was fobbed off with the remark that it would be unreasonable to expect NGT to spend much time on analysing all the feedback forms.

I might add that animated videos of trolleybuses, running without showing any other traffic in the street, do not give an accurate view of what to expect either. Most interestingly, the web site defines the aim of the consultation exercise as being ‘to ensure

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208 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, July 14, 2013. In the light of this, it is difficult to give much credence to statements such as ‘The NGT scheme has been considerably shaped by the consultation feedback that has been received’, or that scheme meets ‘the aspirations [...] of local residents’ (A-01-03 Leeds Trolley Vehicle System Order – Statement of Consultation, para. 1.11). Whatever they say, there has not been ‘constructive dialogue’, and for many attending public meetings the experience has been quite Orwellian. At one meeting, I even heard the Chairman of Metro say, in order to counter our protests, that one had to respect the opinion of those who had not said anything yet!

209 [http://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/36785341.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/36785341.pdf). On the integrity of such an exercise, see Principle 1 of The Consultation Institute, given in The Jimmy Reid Foundation, *Final Report of the Commission on Fair Access to Political Influence*, Annex Document (October 2013), p.10 (Annex C): ‘The Consultant must be willing to listen to the views advanced by consultees, and be prepared to be influenced when making subsequent decisions. If the decisions subject to consultation have already been taken, it is a waste of consultees’ time and a fraud upon all participants to undertake a purposeless exercise, and breaches the principle of Consultation Integrity’

210 New Generation Transport _ Frequently Asked Questions _ FAQ.

211 NGT Letter (3-12-13)

212 FOI 9043 Response to Bill Mckinnon (11-1-13).
people have ample opportunity to find out the facts about the scheme.’ In other words, without saying as much, they imply notification rather than consultation.

Complaints that public consultations are all too often ‘carried out in name only’ are, of course, not limited to Leeds, but certainly the local press here is full of letters reflecting the recurrent and general feeling of resentment among the citizens of Leeds over not being properly consulted. In recent months these have ranged over subjects as varied as fortnightly bin collections, the West Park Centre, the Kirkgate Market, a Chapel Allerton supermarket, Sunday and evening car parking charges – where the Council came a bit unstuck by organising a poll the results of which they then refused to accept – the Elland Road Park and Ride, care home closures, and housing developments at Thorpe Arch, Adel and Cookridge.

Then there is the question of the additional land to be taken by NGT, which was not discussed during the latest consultation exercise, but announced on October 26 in a small legal notice – lost among many others – in The Yorkshire Post. This matter is of particular sensitivity when it comes to Woodhouse Moor, which together with Headingley Hill, has been placed on the English Heritage at risk register. The application is dated September 19, 2013, two days after a meeting of the Leeds City Council Plans Panel, at which representatives of various associations as well as some members of the public were allowed to comment briefly on the plans as they then stood. The basis for discussion was the report of the Chief planning officer, and as far as Woodhouse Moor was concerned, this concentrated on the need to take a road through a disused children’s playground on an area known as ‘Little Moor’. To this was added discussion of why the trolleybus was to go across the Northern section of the moor, known as ‘Monument Moor’, rather than on the existing carriageway. At no point – then or throughout the latest consultation exercise – was attention drawn to the desire to take additional land on the Southern side of the road.

To make matters worse, the Council has now decided to appropriate the land in question under section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972, which means it is no longer covered by a Transport and Works Act Order, and protestors against the trolleybus scheme will no longer be in a position to claim that it is part of the Southern part of the oldest park in Leeds. When the news of this leaked out, a spokesman for NGT tried to make light of it, saying: ‘The appropriation process is an internal one of transferring responsibility of land to different departments within the council’, and that the ‘The information has been available on the NGT website since 2009’, thought at that time it was clearly stated that, as far as Woodhouse Moor was concerned, though some land had to taken from the Moor – a map showing this to be on ‘Monument Moor’ – the intention was to have a scheme involving ‘minimal impact on existing footway and avoids road

214 The Yorkshire Evening Post, June 21, 2013 (Don't consult if you don't really mean it).
216 See the NGT maps as they stood in July 2013 (312694TD023P2ClarendonRoad and CGD09_19_65) and
217 English Heritage _ English Heritage (Risk Register - Woodhouse Moor and Headingley Hill) and English Heritage _ English Heritage (Risk Register -Woodhouse Moor (Statues).
219 The supplementary NGT map showing this (CGD09_19_65) is dated September 17, 2013, which is again well after the end of the consultation exercise.
220 The Yorkshire Evening Post, 4 November 2013. See NGT-Open Space Appropriation, parcel 7 and Delegated Decision Notification.
widening’. Councillors and officials from NGT might think that this is an appropriate way to behave. I believe that many citizens of Leeds would think not.

b) the Leeds Civic Trust and property developers

This habit of not engaging properly with the public is, unfortunately, not a new phenomenon here. As the Australian architecture and planning expert Dr Tony Gilmore has pointed out, there is a long tradition in Leeds in which decision-making has always been almost solely ‘in the hands of a small group of “insiders”: the City Council, a number of local property developers, the Yorkshire branch of English Heritage and the Leeds Civic Trust’.  

Commenting on the ‘astoundingly cheap-looking architecture’ that now abounds in Leeds, Owen Hatherley blamed the Council for having over the years ‘let the property developers lead the way […] out of the fear that they and their money might disappear if they were in any way challenged’. This subservience still survives among our present councillors, as was seen last June at a meeting ostensibly called to listen to opinions from the public on the trolleybus, mainly made up of representatives from local residents’ associations. The only person they chose to listen to was the one person to speak in favour of the trolleybus scheme: the Manchester-based press officer for the property developers Allied London.

Here in fact lies part of the key to what many have seen as the surprising attitude of Kevin Grady and the Leeds Civic Trust, especially as the latter states on its website as its first principle the aim ‘to stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the City and locality’. The character of a conservation area – of which several would be adversely affected by the trolleybus scheme – does not lie solely in the buildings, but also in the space in between (trees, gardens, stone walls and pavements, etc.).

As we have seen, even if the Civic Trust had ‘supported the principle of the Supertram scheme from its inception’, this support had been hedged in with major reservations, and up to the time of the public inquiry for the extension to the Supertram scheme in 1996, the Leeds Civic Trust remained more or less faithful to what had always been its traditional stance in defending the historic character of North Leeds. The shift towards more enthusiastic unequivocal support may have begun following the resignation in November 1998 – under a rule that limits tenure of office to six years – of important members of its governing council, including the chairman, but, whenever it happened, by the turn of the century the Trust was above all intent on ‘engaging with the City Council over the detail design of the infrastructure’, while seeing the Supertram as having ‘the

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221 New Generation Transport _ Routes _ Woodhouse Moor (North Route).
225 Rather interestingly, the civic trust in Dublin, along with the city council there, has opposed the erection of overhead cables for a tram there (The Irish Times, September 13, 2010, p.1). By not opposing overhead wires, the Leeds Civic Trust goes against what was always seen as one of the key principles of the Civic Trust nationally (see the Civic Trust document dating from the 1970s reproduced in Gaetan Fano, Centro storico e città in espansione (Edizioni Dedalo, 1974), pp.65-68). The removal of overhead wires was a notable feature of the famous Madgelen scheme launched by the founder of the Civic Trust, Duncan Sandys, in 1959 (R. Furneaux Jordan, ‘Face-lift for an old street: the Civic Trust shows how’, The Observer, May 10, 1959, p.12).
potential to be a persuader’ of getting people out of their cars, as playing a vital role ‘in creating a greener cleaner’ environment, and having the possibility of being ‘the catalyst for local regeneration’ – qualities which the Trust would later attribute without question to the trolleybus.

I know and admire many of those who are active members of the Trust and who have always made valuable contributions to the life of the community at large. I note with pleasure that the Trust is still affiliated to nearly all local residents’ associations. It is difficult, however, for an outsider not to feel that there may be some danger of a possible conflict of interests in the Trust’s growing dependence on corporate funding. From there being 20 corporate members in 1995/96 and 29 in 1996/97, by 1998/99 the number had shot up to 68. In 2002/03, the Trust created a new category with 10 ‘Gold Corporate Members’, while having 82 ordinary corporate members. These numbers will decline a little over the decade, perhaps because of the economic downturn.

The Leeds Civic Trust’s annual report for 2010/11 lists 7 Gold Corporate Members, and 74 ordinary corporate members. Gold Corporate Members include the architects for Sky Plaza, which, according to Owen Hatherley, was ‘the tackiest’ of all the new towers in Leeds (see above, fn.223), a firm of builders, and five large firms of property developers who have all been involved in various major regeneration schemes in Leeds. The make-up of the ordinary corporate membership is much more varied, including prominent local institutions such as the universities, the Royal Armories, Opera North and Leeds College of Art, a famous local printing firm, known to academics throughout the land, and the managers of Headingley Hall, even if firms linked to property still predominate, and we did note the presence there of Mott McDonald Ltd, close partners with NGT in planning the trolleybus route, and of the Yorkshire Design Group, with Peter Connolly, whom we have already seen attacking those who dared criticise the trolleybus plan (see above footnotes 70, 71).

In any case, whether this tendency has or has not had any effect on the independence of the Civic Trust, the strongest advocate of collaboration with property developers would seem to be the public voice of the Trust, its director Kevin Grady, who has shown misplaced enthusiasm for disastrous schemes in the past, as seen in the projects for monster towers in the city centre. When these schemes failed, Kevin Grady was reported as saying that the ‘Council ought to have chosen a more modest scheme by a local developer’, which prompted the Conservative Council Leader to accuse him of being ‘wise after the event’. He may now complain about the ‘crazy boom years’, but there was a time when he saw it as ‘vital that Leeds capitalises on the tremendous

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226 Civic Trust, Annual Report, 2000-01, p.5 (Peter Baker). See also Civic Trust, Annual Report, 2001-02, p.6 (Peter Baker).
227 Annual Report 2010-2011, p.10 (Committee Members and Affiliated Societies).
228 Civic Trust, Annual Report, 1995-96 (Corporate members).
229 Civic Trust, Annual Report, 1996-97 (Corporate members).
231 Civic Trust, Annual Report, 2002-03 (Corporate members).
232 Civic Trust, Annual Report 2010-2011 (Corporate members).
233 A-08h-6 Transport Assessment FINAL, pp.238-9. Also on the list of corporate members one finds Arup & Partners, who are involved in the planning of the Birmingham to Leeds part of HS2.
development boom', and approved of the desire to emulate Manchester with ever-higher buildings. Only later did he see high-rise development schemes proposed for the city prior to the crash as ‘a step too far.

In its press release of June 27, 2013, the trust talks about the ‘wider benefits’ to the city, but stresses in this context redeveloped areas south of the river. Both Kevin Grady and the Council have been seduced by the plan to build there a form of Canary Wharf or Quartier de la Défense, and seem all too willing to sacrifice in its name the interests of the rest of the City. While admitting that ‘a single trolleybus route’ could hardly play a significant role in assuring ‘the prosperity of the city’, the Trust presents ‘Leeds City Centre South’ as worthy of emulation.

It is irritating to read articles – usually based on interviews with promoters and developers – implying widespread support for the trolley scheme from the business community at large, whereas this is clearly not the case, as was shown in a letter to the Yorkshire Evening Post from the past president of the Leeds Chamber of Commerce, Stuart Archbold. Another correspondent presented the negative reactions to the scheme by a number of fellow businessmen and a briefing document from the Department of Transport shows that opposition to the scheme within the business community goes well beyond the city limits. In addition, the Federation of Small Businesses, reflecting the widespread disquiet to be found among many shopkeepers who feel that they have not been consulted properly, has come out clearly against the scheme, convinced that their views count for less than the vested interests of a few.

In the light of all this, it is highly unlikely that the green-grocer, the butcher, the bakers, the restaurant owners and other individual shopkeepers who are not part of a large chain and who give the centre of Headingley some life and character, and save it from the all too common uniformity of many British high streets, would approve of the comment by the chartered surveyor Peter Lund, on his arranging the sale of the Arndale centre to the asset managers Schroders: ‘The Arndale Centre has been bought at the right time. Headingley is going to improve dramatically in the next few years, particularly with the proposed trolleybus scheme.’ Where does he live and do his shopping? While local people would like even more different kinds of shops, a small Morrison outlet is about to open at the Arndale centre, although there is already there a medium-sized Sainsbury’s, and a fairly large Sainsbury local nearby, replacing what was until quite recently a much-loved cinema. Is this what Peter Lund means by improvement?

c) Gateway

One of the main arguments used by NGT and its supporters to brush aside opposition is to remind everybody that the trolleybus scheme has been accepted by a Gateway review. The government explains how this works: ‘Gateway uses a “peer

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239 The Yorkshire Evening Post, August 9, 2012.
242 Annual Report 2010-2011, p.5 (Transport and City Centre South)
243 Yorkshire Evening Post, July 15, 2013 (Business and the trolleybus).
244 Yorkshire Evening Post, October 24, 2013.
245 Doc.09-120622 – Leeds NGT Business Impacts-Perm Sec. Meeting.
246 The Yorkshire Evening Post, November 2, 2013.
247 The Yorkshire Evening Post, January 11, 2014 (Shopping centre is sold to new investor)
review’ approach; it is not an audit or inspection and the process is undertaken in partnership with the project’. 248 This sounds rather cosy, and having a long experience of peer reviews in academia, I know just how open they can be to cronyism (politely referred to as ‘networking’) and fashion. As has been said: ‘peer review is widely acknowledged as an imperfect system’. 249 There are frequent complaints about a lack of transparency, and calls for referees to be ‘accountable’ for their comments by disclosing their identity: ‘Society, it has been said, is less tolerant today than it used to be of what it sees as power without responsibility’. 250

Gateway reviews certainly sound opaque and open to influence. Since the government refused in 2007 to let them be covered by the freedom of information act, 251 it is difficult to tell just how independent the referees have been in this instance, but judging from what is said in the Spring issue of the Yorkshire Post’s Vision magazine (pure advertising copy written at least in collaboration with NGT and published on their site) they do sound too collaborative. 252 They do not question the highly contentious 4,000 job claim (which I discuss below), and how can they call a trolleybus ‘high quality, unique and city defining’ when compared to a tram. It is pitiful! As I have shown above, the trolleybus is not, as they suggest, ‘innovative’ and ‘cutting edge’ One gets the impression that the peer reviewers had not done their homework either.

d) representative democracy in Leeds

Local democracy in Leeds is not particularly healthy, with the majority of councillors elected on turnouts of under a third of the electorate, and many – simply chosen by their party machine – not living in or even near the wards they represent. In our particular area, the students decide who gets elected, basing their vote on national issues such as student fees, with hardworking councillors losing their seats regardless how good their record has been. Many permanent residents feel quite disenfranchised, with a resultant widespread sense of cynicism, which is not likely to decrease in the face of the current collective behaviour of those in the city with power and influence.

The verbatim report of the July meeting, in which the Council voted – apparently, with the help of a three-line whip – to proceed with the scheme, shows just how ignorant and hidebound some of our councillors are, making the usual wild claims for the scheme that have long since seen to be false, and still wanting to dismiss out of hand technological developments in less damaging, more flexible, ecological forms of transport that are happening worldwide. 253

However, what is particularly worrying is what seems to have been the clinching argument from the Leader of the Council, Keith Wakefield. As one of the few councillors to speak out against the scheme, Councillor J. Bentley of Weetwood quite rightly said:


252 Compare Yorkshire Vision, Spring 2013, p.48 and NGT Metro - Review says Leeds trolleybus plans are ‘innovative’ & ‘cutting edge’.

253 Supplement Verbatim Record 01072013 1330 Council, pp.18-25.
‘Contrary to a lot of the information that has been put out, the Department for Transport did not specify or insist on a trolleybus, merely an appropriate bus-based system. It was the proposers, Metro and Leeds City Council, who have locked themselves into a trolleybus system.’ What then must one make of the following statement from Keith Wakefield, anxious not to lose the central government grant of £173.5 million – which, unlike the local share of the cost, will remain fixed, whatever happens to inflation? : ‘Frankly, I think the credibility of the Council is here before us. For over 20 years all major parties have argued passionately about public investment – all major party Leaders, as Councillor Carter said, have been down to successive Governments, successive Ministers to argue for investment. Sometimes I think people would be happy if we said we do not want it. What that would make us is the laughing stock of Europe . . .’ It is tempting to think that our local politicians will look stupid anyway for insisting on a damaging scheme, without really investigating it properly. They obviously care more about their own reputation than the good of those whom they are supposed to represent.

e) promises, promises

If one applies Ockham’s Razor or lex parsimoniae to test the overall validity of the case put forward by NGT, one sees very quickly that the latter makes too many untested assumptions. Among these is that made in that advertising feature published in the Yorkshire Post's Vision magazine, and often repeated, saying that the NGT scheme was ‘forecast to create 4,000 new local jobs along the route’ (see above, footnote 252). If, for instance, the scheme were to achieve its aim of making life easier for commuters coming from outside Leeds, it might create jobs for people living in villages and other towns, but is difficult to see how it would create ‘new local jobs along the route’ as most people living in Leeds itself – not living in regenerated areas – would clearly gain little from this scheme. As we have seen, public transport in town is not just for going from one’s home to one’s place of work, but also to facilitate general mobility within an urban area, including short journeys for the less fit. By its very design, the present scheme would clearly damage this.

As for the figure of ‘4,000 new jobs’, in 2004, the National Audit Office said that the Sheffield Supertram – a much more ambitious scheme than what is planned for Leeds – was thought to have created 1,600 jobs, but also said there was ‘no established methodology for identifying the regeneration benefits at the planning stage and they did not know how the jobs estimate had been made’.254

Having looked at the announcements for many projects in different fields dating from over the last twenty years, again and again I have come across the promise of the creation of ‘4,000 jobs’.255 This magic number crops up endlessly. In other words, it is a

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255 As a small sample: from January to August 2013, for the British Isles alone, the phrase ‘creating 4,000 jobs’ cropped up in promises connected to the following: The Superfast Cornwall partnership (West Briton, January 3, 2013, p.10), Computer chip giant Intel (The Sun, January 26, 2013, p.26, A tidal barrier in Ipswich (Construction Digital, February 8, 2013), Centrica and North Sea Cygnus gas field (Progressive Media - Company News, February 28, 2013), A new shopping centre in Stoke on Trent (The Sentinel (Stoke) March 2, 2013, p.8, Plymouth City Council (The Plymouth Herald, March 27, 2013, p.9), Travelodge to open a further 145 hotels in the capital (The Times, March 16, 2013, p.58), Scottish Power (Metro (UK), April 18, 2013, p.29), Able UK wanting to build a £450m marine energy park off North Killingholme (Yorkshire Post, May 15, 2013), Cardiff-based Hospital Innovations working with Airbus
planners’ cliché which is meant to impress, but which most often owes more to lazy and wishful thinking than to fact. Yet this is what NGT says in its Programme Entry Business Case submission of March 2012:256

Economic analysis has been undertaken which demonstrates that:
* NGT will lead to the creation of around 4,000 additional jobs in Leeds city centre by 2030, representing a 4% increase in city centre employment;
* A further 250 jobs will be created directly as a result of operating and maintaining NGT;
* The people employed from the jobs created as a result of NGT live in both North and South Leeds;
* NGT will result in a 14% uplift to conventional scheme economics; and
* There will be a £176m (or 2.9%) annual GDP uplift arising from the scheme.

It is interesting to compare these figures with those given in an Economic Impact Report produced by Steer Davies Gleave in the autumn of 2004 for the attempt to revive Leeds Supertram project, following the withdrawal of government funding in July.257

– Jobseekers will have access to an increased number of job opportunities, with Regeneration Area (RA) residents benefiting from a very significant increase in accessible jobs. Each RA, on average, will benefit in 2011 from access to approximately 14,000 more jobs than without the tram;
– Employers will have access to a larger pool of labour, with those located in RAs benefitting from a significant increase in accessible workforce. Each RA, on average, will benefit in 2011 from access to a workforce 6% larger than without the tram;
– Development sites at the edge of the City Centre and particularly those to the south and in the north western corner of the Aire Valley are expected to benefit most from the tram;
– Inward investors will be more easily and quickly found; developers have found that inclusion of the tram in marketing material has had a marked impact on the rate of take up experienced;
– The number of jobs in Leeds will grow as a direct result of Light Rail, particularly on the City Centre. Over 1,000 jobs in 2016 and approximately 3,500 in 2021 are forecast to be supported in Leeds City Centre due to the tram; and
– The levels of unemployment in the selected RAs of Leeds will be reduced by around 7% in 2016

There one must remember that Steer Davies Gleave are talking about a tram, with three lines covering 21 kilometres, even if the intention was now to postpone the construction of 7 kilometres.258 Steer Davies Gleave talk essentially about job creation in regeneration areas (RA), but that is not the same as saying ‘along the route’, especially as they identify as the main areas to benefit those being redeveloped at the edge of the City Centre and to the south, and ‘the north western corner of the Aire valley’, which is nowhere near the northern part of the proposed trolleybus route. In comparison with the document of 2004, that of 2012 seems dangerously vague, with a somewhat succinct presentation of the figures, while merely talking about job creation in ‘both North and South Leeds’, which is meaningless without some reference to urban renewal.

Prediction is not an exact science. The example of the Sheffield Supertram illustrates the difficulty well. There the forecasting came unstuck when high density housing on which it counted was demolished, and when it fell foul of bus deregulation.

(\textit{The Western Mail}, May 21, 2013, p.33), Jobs Growth Wales (\textit{The Western Mail}, June 5, 2013, p.21), A £450 million energy park on the Humber (\textit{Scunthorpe Telegraph}, August 8, 2013, p.11), etc., etc.


just as construction was about to be completed.259 The report from the National Audit Office260 also raises some interesting questions which, though concerning trams, are not without having bearing on the claims made for the trolleybus: anticipated benefits had been over-estimated: passenger numbers, and therefore passenger benefits, had been lower than expected, light rail systems were not fully integrated with other forms of public transport, light rail had had a limited impact on road congestion, pollution and road accidents, it was not clear what impact light rail had had on regeneration and social exclusion.

This tendency to over-estimate the benefits of light rail systems ‘over competing, less capital-intensive options’ had already been picked up by an analyst for the U.S. Department of Transportation, the American transport economist at MIT, Dr Don H Pickrell,261 This gap between reality and expectation in planning rapid transit systems has also been studied noticeably by Roger L. Mackett and Marion Edwards of the Centre for Transport Studies, University College London. They show just how irrational are some of the planning decisions that have been made.262

I also feel that the accuracy of prediction has not always been helped by the use of computer-modelling. Steer Davies Gleave263 make much of the fact of adapting to transport issues the Urban Dynamic Model, and this habit of separating out transport and land use and seeing them as the main determining factors in forecasting urban growth or decline seems to have been developed in Britain in particular since the beginning of the present century,264 and adopted enthusiastically here by Metro.265 Yet, the inventor of the Urban Dynamic Model, Jay W. Forrester, always stressed the need to take into account a multiplicity of factors such as housing, education, crime as well as transport, while insisting that no town could be taken in isolation.266 In a paper given at a Symposium on Applied Urban Modelling held at the University of Cambridge in May 2011, it was also argued that since transport schemes take so long to implement: ‘It is becoming more and more apparent that without understanding the inherent inertia of different subsystems of cities it is impossible to assess their likely responses to land use or transport policies’.267

Thus it is that the numbers for jobs created by the Nottingham Tram have been contested,268 and, with or without a tram, one of the symbols of Nottingham, the pharmacists Boots, for instance, shed 700 jobs in 2013.269 Other factors are often at play.

260 Improving public transport, pp.3,5.
264 Paul Roberts, West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, John Swanson, Steer Davies Gleave, Developing and applying a dynamic land use transport interaction model to identify an outcome based transport strategy and investment plan for Leeds, pp.1-2.
267 ‘More jobs have been lost since tram arrived’, Nottingham Evening Post, September 26, 2012, p.14.
268 The Nottingham Post, March 27, 2013 (Boots to axe 200 jobs) and Boots to axe 500 as profits slump _ Mail Online, May 13, 2013.
Leaving aside the absolute disaster of the Edinburgh Tram costing £776m, and which, we are told, will take eight minutes longer to reach the airport than the existing express bus, nationally, the picture for modern trams systems is very mixed. Judging by the latest Light Rail and Tram statistics for 2012/2013, published by the Department of Transport on June 18, 2013, the only really financially successful modern tram system outside London is the Manchester Metro, much of which runs on old railway routes or on wide roads in regenerated areas. Both in Sheffield and Nottingham the trams are losing passengers numbers as well as revenue, and to the outside observer it might seem strange to see Nottingham being promised in December 2011 central government funding of up to £371m towards the total maximum cost of £570m for the two-line extension to the tram system there, even though the latter has been losing passengers over the last five years.

There is a place for everything, and undoubtedly, in the right place, the presence of trams, or even perhaps trolleybuses, can be invaluable. But not everywhere. Nationally, there seems to have been a dangerous tendency – using data that is not always reliable – to invest in ambitious rapid transit schemes, where more modest, less disruptive, less costly ones could well have been more suitable.

Conclusion.

One thing one can say about the Chairman of Metro, Councillor James Lewis, is that he never gives up. In a 608-word letter published in The Yorkshire Evening Post, on January 15, 2014, he sets out to challenge what he calls ‘a number of inaccuracies or out-dated claims made by committed opponents of the scheme’. He repeats that the trolleybus will ‘save morning commuters 14 minutes over current bus times on their daily journeys from the Bodington Park and Ride site to Leeds City Centre’. This is a claim he has already made last June, when he gave as his authority the quality report for NGT by consultants Steer Davies Gleave. However, the comparison is with bus services as they are, not allowing for improvements such as smart ticketing, which somehow Councillor Lewis still seems to want us to believe to be only possible with a trolleybus.

He promises us that the update of the NGT Business Case to be at the end of the month, will reflect ‘a number of key design changes which have been made following an extensive consultation process’ and that ‘a significant refinement of the NGT scheme design means that any disadvantage to other highway users has been virtually eliminated addressing a key concern I know has been raised in my many meetings with residents and the business community.’ What this ‘key concern’ is we shall see, but – judging from past experience –, I, for one, would be most surprised if any radical change were introduced at this stage, especially as Councillor Lewis himself seems to have changed so little in his views, still claiming with little evidence that ‘NGT is a cornerstone of transport and regeneration plans for West Yorkshire and the Leeds City region’, generating additional

270 ‘Edinburgh Trams to run at loss for fifteen years’, Newsnet, June 22, 2013.
273 Construction of Nottingham tram extensions to start - Announcements – GOV.
274 Nottingham trams lose more than a quarter of passengers in the last five years, Nottingham Post, June 25, 2013
275 The Yorkshire Evening Post, January 15, 2014. Interestingly enough, other correspondents such as myself are limited to saying what they have to say in under 300 words.
276 The Yorkshire Evening Post, June 19, 2013. For some of the replies top the letter of January 15, 2014, see The Yorkshire Evening Post, January 20 and 22, 2014,
jobs in the city centre and leading to a ‘£200m increase in local Gross Domestic Product (GDP)’. Only the figures keep changing.

He dismisses the idea that money for the scheme could be spent on alternative proposals, saying that the ‘the only Government funding for transport available for West Yorkshire over the next 10 years is £183m’ Therein lies the rub. If this is so, and a fresh appeal for government funding for something better than a trolleybus is now impossible, it is because our Council has been so obdurate. This has led to the illogical position of wanting to take the pittance on offer, even if it is for a bad scheme which would in fact cause more congestion on the A660, which is unambitious and second-rate, which would cause much environmental damage, and which could well lead to an increasing financial burden for local taxpayers in the future. Because so much money has already been spent on it, the trolleybus scheme has acquired a logic of its own, but it is not that of common sense.

We have now come full circle, and I return to what I mentioned near the beginning, that is the major problem of overcoming traffic hold-ups caused by the width of Headingley lane and the bottleneck between St. Michael’s Church and North Lane. A bypass will not solve the problem. It will be remembered that as far back as 1977, in the initial study which eventually led to the Supertram project, it was admitted that even if Headingley Lane were widened to accommodate a four-lane highway, there would still not be enough room for a segregated rapid transit system (see above footnote 34). The NGT solution is still basically as described in a reply to a freedom of information request:277

The trolleybus going outbound from Victoria Road will travel in a shared highway which will then merge in to NGT only segregated highway at the former Girls High School. This will continue kerb running all the way up Headingley Hill to Buckingham Road. From here the trolleybus, again kerb running, will travel on a shared highway coming off on a segregated only highway going round the back of the Arndale Centre. On the outward journey there is the introduction of an additional lane which will accommodate all other non NGT traffic. On the inward journey there will be a shared highway for general traffic.

In other words, segregation would not be complete, and one can just imagine the traffic hold-ups that would be caused by trolleybuses entering and leaving the bypass, not to mention the problems for inward-travelling ordinary buses on ‘a shared highway for general traffic’, especially with the amount of turning traffic generated by Devonshire Hall and student flats in both North Hill Road and Cumberland Road.278

We have seen that much could be achieved with ordinary buses, and a far simpler way of solving congestion would be to have a tidal flow system without the presence of a trolleybus, but with an additional lane being made available according to time of day and need, something which can again be controlled with traffic lights and computer technology.279 There is even the interesting scheme in Poynton (Cheshire), where

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277 SHCA-FoI-Response-21st-December-2012, p.3.
278 See in this light the briefing document published by the Leeds Cycling Campaign on February 7, 2014, in the midst of discussions with NGT: ‘On Headingley Hill, there isn’t sufficient road width for cycle-only or cycle and bus/NGT shared lanes in both directions. One CCF attendee suggested a 20mph limit but this is unlikely. The A660 is a main corridor into and out of Leeds and therefore traffic flow must be maintained. The current suggestion is an advisory cycle lane in the in-bound direction and two lanes outbound, one for NGT and cycles, and one for everything else including buses’.
279 See http://www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/@motor/documents/digitalasset/dg_191934.pdf. To see how they control the traffic lights in Geneva, see La Tribune de Genève, 19 novembre 2013 (Chorégraphie urbaine).
congestion caused by the passage of over 26,000 vehicles a day – a number far higher than for the A660 – was solved with a radical scheme that did away with traffic lights and the irritation and hold-ups they cause through the introduction of a novel use of roundabouts.  

We need lateral thinking, so as to move on from solutions that have not worked in the past.

I have also heard interesting suggestions made that deserve further exploration. For instance, it has been put to me that the bypass route could be reserved for cyclists, and consist of a fairly narrow strip of tarmac, but with room enough for both cyclists and pedestrians, which would not always have to be straight, but which could wind its way from Headingley Hill to Alma Road, past or between trees and the rather fine Victorian houses, without the need to destroy them, and without making life more difficult for people living in Shire Oak Road, off or on Wood Lane or in Alma Road. It would also respect the character of a conservation area, take cyclists away from what has been for them an accident blackspot at the junction with Brainbrigge Road, next to St Michael’s Church, make room for other traffic there, and be very much in line with the thinking of modern urban planners who want to give the city back to its citizens.

Finally, it would seem perverse to call on the council-tax payers in Leeds – most of whom do not live anywhere need the route, and in areas where existent bus services are not nearly as good as they are on the A660 corridor – to contribute to one single line of a trolleybus, while the council continually complains of being short of money and has been shedding jobs and making cuts to essential services everywhere.

280 See ‘How Poynton tamed its traffic with ‘shared space’ _ GMCC Greater Manchester Cycling Campaign, and LOW SPEED + STEADY FLOW IN POYNTON _ OLI DAVEY - Urban Movement.

281 See the correspondence with the council in F11175 Info: https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/188565/response/464359/attach/4/F11175%20Info%20r.pdf).
