

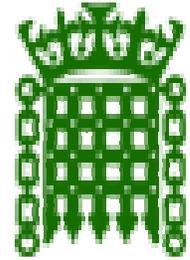


Light Rail (UK)

All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group

House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
Ref: LR Apprg Winter 09 v.1

Light Rail & Trams, Affordable & Sustainable Transport



Apprg VISIT TO BUDAPEST 17-19 JANUARY 2012

Purpose of visit

Funding of transport schemes – who, how etc Local/regional/national

Integration of services – trolleybuses and bus services

Public or private

What do they do with utilities – move them or access

Planning process – how does it work?

To explore and understand the legislation, methodology and practical applications of Tram/Light Rail, Trolleybus interface and integration, construction costs and methods.

The Group comprised

Mr John Leech MP	Lib/Dem Chairman, APPLRG
Mr Greg Mulholland MP	Lib/Dem Leeds NW
Mr James Harkins	APPLRG Secretariat - Organiser
Mr Mike Willsher,	APPLRG Secretariat - Scribe
Mr Malcolm Lesley	APPLRG Secretariat -Translator/Industry (Tram Power Ltd)
Mr Stuart Kerr	Industry (Vossloh Kiepe GmbH)

Visit to the British Embassy, 17 January, 14.00

The Group met:

Ms Theresa Bubbear, Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

Mr Michael Davies, 2nd Secretary (EU)

Mr Zsolt Maroti, Domestic Policy Attaché

Mr Vilmos Nagy, Economic Attaché

Ms Dora Kulauzov, Head of UKTI Budapest

Ms Timea Balazs, UKTI Trade Adviser

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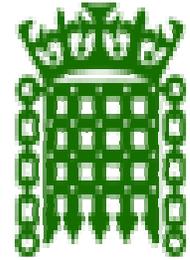




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The Group was welcomed by Ms Theresa Bubbear.

Mr John Leech MP thanked Ms Bubbear and outlined the purpose of the visit.

Ms Bubbear outlined the current situation in Hungary. The current crisis is both economic and political. Things are hard at all levels. The economy is in poor shape and the government is negotiating with the IMF for support. Default on debt is a possibility and there will not be much cash around for new infrastructure projects.

A new constitution was introduced on 1 January, which changed the name of the country from the Republic of Hungary to plain Hungary and made changes in all areas. While individual changes to legislation may be unobjectionable they are potentially worrying when taken as a whole. There have been popular demonstrations against the new constitution but political opposition to the government is fragmented.

The EU and IMF are not impressed by many of the changes and the EU may use financial support as a lever for political changes. Hungary relies on EU Structural Funds for infrastructure and would be in even greater difficulties without these. The European Parliament may be debating Hungary today (17.1.12). It remains to be seen how far Hungary and the EU/IMF will go in trying to resolve their differences.

The present Hungarian government is a centre-right coalition. The constitutional changes are claimed to do away with the last vestiges of communist rule. The government claims to have a policy to solve the economic problems but that policy is considered "unorthodox", for example it includes a flat rate income tax, crisis taxes on various activities and nationalisation of private pensions.

The situation has been building for some time but has been brought to a head with the new constitution and it was only then that the international press took notice. The situation remains very fluid but the public mood is becoming bleaker. Pay levels are low compared with Western Europe and there has been a freeze on public sector pay since 2008, while prices, particularly fuel have been rising sharply. Public transport is still relatively cheap, however, and electricity prices are kept artificially low for private consumers.

In response to a question, Theresa Bubbear said that while increasing fuel prices had led to a reduction in car use she was not aware of an increase in public transport use.

In response to a question from Jim Harkins on Hungary's compliance with EU directives, Theresa Bubbear said that the country had bigger fish to fry.

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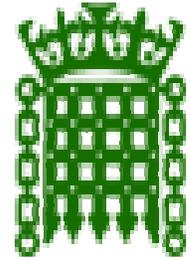


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Ms Bubbear left the meeting ca. 14.50 and discussion continued with the rest of the Embassy team.

UK has tended to be far less critical of Hungary than, say, Germany and the UK therefore seen in a positive light in Hungary. This could be to UK's commercial advantage. Hungarians are not greatly interested in political developments outside central Europe.

On the potential of BKV going bankrupt, it is thought likely that the national or local government would step in. There is already an operating subsidy of £3m per annum.

The Ministry of National Development deals with transport, energy etc. The Minister, Zsuzsanna Nemeth, is a political appointment but the Minister of State for Infrastructure, Pál Völner, is a technocrat rather than a politician.

The meeting closed at about 15.15.

Visits to MND and BKK and BKV 18 January

Timea Balazs from the British Embassy accompanied the Group on this day's visits.

Ministry of National Development 18 January. 10.00

The Group met:

Mr Pál Völner, Minister for State for Infrastructure, Ministry of National Development (MND)

Mr Flórián Szalóki, Dep. President, Managing Authority, Operative Programme for Transport

Mr János Kerékgyártó, Head of the Department for Transport Services, MND

Ms Rita Kovács-Nagy, Head of the Regional Development Unit, MND

Mr Ferenc Kun, International Relations Department, MND

The Group was welcomed by Mr Völner, who invited questions.

Mr Völner was thanked by John Leech who outlined the purpose of the visit and asked Pál Völner for an overview of the Budapest transport system.

Pál Völner outlined the historical development of public transport in Budapest from the building of the second underground railway in Europe in 1896. Budapest was at the forefront of public transport development before the First World War with tram and suburban railway systems.

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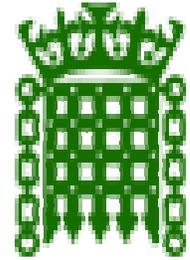


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Further metro development did not take place until the 1970s. Before the socialist era, one company had been responsible for running the system and this was then taken into state ownership. From 1991, BKV has run as an independent but state-owned company and is responsible for trams, metro, HÉV (suburban railways), trolleybuses and buses.

John Leech asked if BKV was in financial difficulty and whether it would be allowed to go bankrupt.

Pál Völner. BKV comes under the Budapest City Council

John Leech. Could private operators come in?

Pál Völner. Some services are already subcontracted.

John Leech. Could private companies set up in competition with BKV?

Pál Völner. No. Subcontracting is within a regulated framework.

John Leech. In UK private bus companies can operate in direct competition with tram services.

Pál Völner. Budapest is a fully integrated system.

John Leech. What are the sources of funding - EU structural funding, national, local or private?

Pál Völner. Operation and infrastructure development are now separate. EU funding goes only to infrastructure, representing 50%, with 40% from the state and 10% from BKV. No private money is involved. The biggest current project is Metro line 4.

Greg Mulholland. Why is money being spent on Metro construction rather than expanding the tram system?

Pál Völner. The decision was made by the previous city administration. The money would probably have been better spent on improving the tram network.

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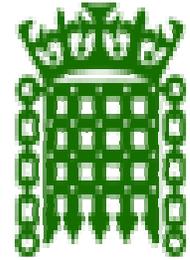


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Jim Harkins. In the past some tram routes were replaced by diesel buses. Is this a good policy and what are future plans?

János Kerékgyártó. These decisions were taken for short-term reasons; it was cheaper to operate buses than to maintain the tram routes. From a long-term perspective this was not a good decision.

John Leech. Will such short-term decisions become more likely in the current economic climate?

Pál Völner. BKV now prefers to develop the tram system. Euros 100m investment is planned for the tram network.

Jim Harkins. I hope Hungary will not follow the example of the UK and scrap trams in favour of buses. Has the recent sharp rise in diesel and petrol prices led to an increase in public transport usage?

Pál Völner. Public transport use has grown over the last year for this reason.

Jim Harkins. What is the policy to encourage modal switch from private car to public transport?

Pál Völner. Hungary's public transport use is in the top five in Europe. Special policies are not needed.

John Leech. Is this due to low car ownership?

Pál Völner. Car ownership is quite high. The network was not reduced when car ownership rose and was, therefore, still there when people returned to public transport.

Stuart Kerr. How are operating costs financed?

Pál Völner. Operating costs are covered 50% from farebox, 30% from state subsidy and 20% from state compensation for concessionary fares. If necessary the state will step in to deal with a specific financial problem.

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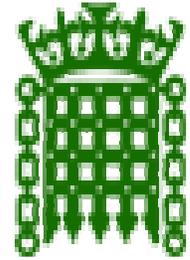
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John Leech. Has the subsidy up or down recently?

Pál Völner. Direct subsidy is not increasing but operating costs are. Indirect subsidies are increasing, for example the concessionary fare balance to deal with an aging population. A reorganisation plan is currently awaited from BKV which could include fare increases although the scope for this is limited. There is also financial support from the city authorities.

Jim Harkins. Have any measures been taken to make car usage in the city more expensive?

Pál Völner. Congestion charging might be possible if there was sufficient park and ride capacity but this is not currently the case. Outside Budapest, public transport operation is significantly cheaper. BKV need to look at cost reduction.

John Leech. Will Metro 4 lead to regeneration of the areas served?

Pál Völner. Phase I serves only the central area and will replace certain bus routes, making public transport quicker. There is a possibility that it may stimulate regeneration at one terminus.

John Leech. Is the improvement of the tram network aimed at regeneration or modal shift?

Pál Völner. The aim is to improve the ability to get around the city. Regeneration is not emphasised.

John Leech. How does this aim fit in with the EU structural funding?

Flórián Szalóki. EU funding is via Cohesion Funds rather than Structural Funds and these are aimed at environmental benefits via modal shift. Regeneration is a side-effect. Metro 4 will link the city centre with the Western and Eastern gateways to the city but currently only the middle section is being built. Phases 2 & 3 to the East and phase 4 to the West are likely to follow over the next 25 years. Alternative funding will be needed and congestion charging is one possible source.

Jim Harkins. Has a parking place levy been considered?

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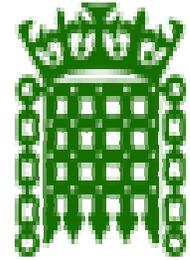


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Flórián Szalóki. A combination of funding sources needs to be examined. Parking fees would be the responsibility of the 23 district councils, so developing a city-wide programme would be difficult.

Jim Harkins. There are several suburban lines, are these under-used? Would TramTrain operation, linking them to the tram system be a possibility? This is currently being looked at in Debrecen.

János Kerékgyártó. We have looked at linking these lines into an S-Bahn system but there is no money at present to progress this.

John Leech. The UK is investing in heavy rail at present and obtaining light rail funding is difficult. Has Hungary also invested in its heavy rail system?

Pál Völner. There has been significant EU funding for heavy rail.

Malcolm Lesley. What are the construction costs of light rail in Hungary? In the UK light rail is perceived as expensive.

Pál Völner. Costs are also high in Hungary, due to most of the construction materials having to be imported.

John Leech. Are utilities moved during new construction and, if so, who pays for this?

Pál Völner. Utilities are normally moved and this is treated as a cost of tramway construction. The utilities themselves do not contribute.

John Leech. Has leaving the utilities in place and giving access when needed been considered?

János Kerékgyártó. The utility companies are not interested in this approach. They dictate what is done.

Greg Mulholland. Have there been new tram or trolleybus lines in cities outside Budapest?

Pál Völner. There are tram systems in Debrecen, Szeged and Miskolc, cities of around 200,000. There has been investigation into TramTrain in Szeged. Replacement of a bus route with a short tram extension in Szeged has proved expensive in the short-term.

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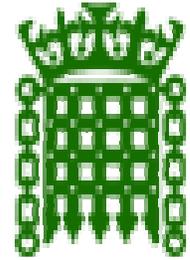




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Jim Harkins. What is the death rate from respiratory disease due to tail-pipe emissions?

Pál Völner. Pollution from vehicles is greatest in Budapest but Budapest also has the highest life expectancy. The positive effects of living in Budapest outweigh the negative effects of pollution. In the long term, the improvements in the public transport system will lead to improvements in public health.

John Leech thanked Mr Völner for the meeting, which closed about 11.15.

Budapest City Hall – meeting with BKK and BKV, 18 January 11.45

The Group met:

Mr Gyula Hutinray, Deputy Mayor for Urban Development

Mr Levente Nagy, Advisor to the CEO, BKK

Mr Gergely Horn, Head of the Project Development Department, BKK

Mr László Szedlmajer, Chief Engineer, Tramways, BKV

Mr Tamás Kajdon, International Affairs Officer, BKK

The Group was welcomed by Mr Hutinray.

John Leech thanked him and explained the background to the visit.

Mr Levente Nagy gave a presentation on public transport in Budapest. The City is proud of its long tramway history. Transport was unregulated until the 1930s but has since been completely regulated which is regarded as the key to a fully integrated system.

The transport organisation was split in 2010 into BKK (development) and BKV (operation).

BKK Budapesti Közlekedési Központ (Centre for Budapest Transport)

BKV Budapesti Közlekedési Zrt. (Budapest Transport Limited) – the abbreviation BKV stands for its earlier name Budapesti Közlekedési Vállalat; (Transport Company of Budapest).

BKK also took over responsibility for roads, parking and other transport-related functions which had previously been administered by separate organisations.

Current development projects are very much rail oriented with support from EU Cohesion Funds. There is comparatively little support for bus expansion.

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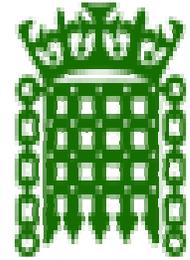


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Budapest City has a population of about 1.7m which is 16% down from 1990 but is currently static. There are about 600,000 car trip per day and the modal split is 55% in favour of public transport. The metropolitan region, which is not an administrative entity, adds another 800,000 people and 400,000 daily car trips to these figures.

The Municipality is headed by the Mayor of Budapest but there are also 23 districts, each with its own mayor. Transport is the main focus of the city administration and most transport projects cover several districts. The districts, however, have a say in local development, which can on occasion prove obstructive. It is hoped that BKK will be able to negotiate more effectively between city and districts.

The city through BKK is responsible for main roads but other roads come under the districts. It can happen on some roads that the tram track is a city responsibility while the rest of the road is a district responsibility.

There is total integration of all public transport modes – tram, trolleybus, bus, metro and suburban rail (HÉV).

[Mr Hutinray left the meeting at 1210].

BKK has a similar organisational structure to Transport for London. BKK is responsible to the City Council and oversees the following divisions:

- BKV Bus
- BKV Rail (including trolleybuses)
- BKK Roads and Bridges
- BKK Infrastructure planning

BKK's main functions are transport planning and the commissioning of public transport services, including network and schedule planning, fare policy, ticket sales and revenue protection, centralised traffic control and marketing and passenger information

It also is responsible for the introduction of competitive tendering for bus services. This is being done on the Transport for London model with control of route planning, scheduling and fares being retained. The tendered services will remain part of the integrated transport system.

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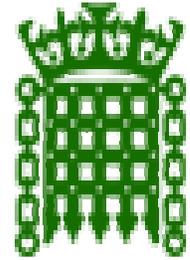


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An example of traffic planning is the Combino tramline (routes 4 & 6) where adjustments to tram priority cut end-to-end journey time from 34 to 28 minutes and the vehicle requirement from 36 to 34. The aim was to demonstrate the advantages of public transport over private cars. If done properly, tram priority schemes can also reduce journey times for private cars.

As well as the traditional public transport modes, BKK is also responsible for regulation of taxis and for introducing a bicycle hire scheme, similar to London's "Boris bikes".

All public transport services are currently supply-based rather than demand-based, but this is becoming more and more difficult to finance.

BKK is looking for a greater contribution from national funding sources and needs to ensure that national politicians appreciate the role of public transport in supporting the economy.

Previously there has been a lack of prioritisation in transport development, for example Metro 4, which has sucked out nearly all development money which could have been better spent elsewhere.

Jim Harkins. Do you allow bikes on trams?

László Szedlmajer. No. It has been discussed but there are too many problems.

Jim Harkins. Do you provide bike parking facilities at stops and stations?

László Szedlmajer. Yes, provision is made, but bikes less popular in Budapest than in some other countries due to the hills, low winter temperatures etc. It is likely they will increase in popularity in future.

Greg Mulholland outlined the current public transport problems in Leeds, mentioning the trolleybus scheme and possible plans for TramTrain operation.

Levente Nagy. The TramTrain concept is only just being appreciated by Hungarian politicians.

Levente Nagy. The city would like to bring trams back to many of the roads that lost them in the 1970s. Trams are now preferred to extending the Metro. Shops are closing on some main roads because of heavy traffic and trams could help reverse this. Development of out-of-town shopping centres has also been stopped.

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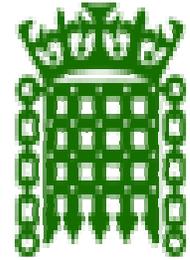


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Mr László Szedlmajer gave a presentation on BKV.

He outlined the history of public transport in Budapest and quoted some statistics (see appendix).

There are currently ten tram depots, but this number could probably be reduced.

BKV currently have 40 Combinos. [The Siemens Combinos are Budapest's newest trams, delivered 2006-2007; they are 54m long and are 100% low floor.] These have a higher operating cost compared with the older trams, less power consumption for traction but more for heating, air con etc. Spare parts are also more expensive. On the positive side they are more reliable with 90% availability in peak hours. Trams need to be more sophisticated nowadays to compete with the private car. Air con was not initially fitted to the Combinos but severe problems with passenger comfort during the summer meant they had to be retro-fitted at high cost.

John Leech. Are the Combinos more popular with passengers?

Levente Nagy. We have no statistics – no means of passenger counting on individual cars.

László Szedlmajer. BKV acquired second-hand cars from Hannover to replace older Ganz cars. These have no air con and have therefore lower power consumption.

Jim Harkins. The Hannover cars were rejected by Manchester. It was claimed they would be more expensive to operate than new cars.

László Szedlmajer. They were acquired very cheaply – Euros 40,000 per car to purchase with refurbishment costing about the same again. This represented about 10% of the cost of purchasing new cars. However, the availability of second-hand cars is very unpredictable, making it difficult to incorporate them into long term planning.

Jim Harkins. Some French cars will shortly be available.

Levente Nagy. Alstom vehicles are designed for running on new track and would probably not be suitable for a system like Budapest. The Hannover cars were totally adapted to Budapest tramways. Austro-Hungarian tramways traditionally followed German practice.

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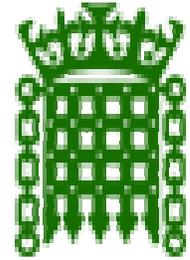


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Jim Harkins. There is another problem with second-hand cars in that there may be a discrepancy between the life expectancy of the cars and the length of an operating franchise. The franchisee will therefore opt for expensive new vehicles which will last the length of the franchise rather than face the possibility of having to replace older cars part way through.

Levente Nagy. This might be avoided if vehicles were bought by the transport authority and leased to the franchisee.

László Szedlmajer. The newest trolleybuses are the 16 Solaris which make up 10% of the fleet. They have traction batteries allowing for off-line operation.

Jim Harkins. Did these replace older trolleybuses or motor buses?

László Szedlmajer. Older trolleybuses.

John Leech. Do you get a better modal shift to public transport with trolleybuses than with motor buses?

László Szedlmajer. We find that passengers tend not to notice the difference between trolley and motor buses.

Greg Mulholland. The proposed Leeds trolleybus system is designed to emulate light rail would you consider use of a higher spec trolleybus.

Levente Nagy. Doubtful if we would install any new trolleybus routes. We would look towards the future availability of electric buses.

Greg Mulholland. The Leeds system is designed to allow future upgrading to light rail.

Stuart Kerr. We are still a long way from effective battery bus operation.

Jim Harkins. Have you looked at guided buses?

László Szedlmajer. We have tested double articulated buses but we have no plans to adopt them.

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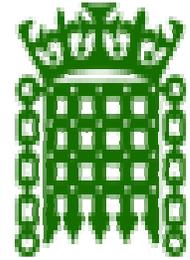
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Levente Nagy. There are no current plans for guided bus.

László Szedlmajer. We are operating mixed fleets of both tram and trolleybus. This has the advantage that we are not dependent on one supplier but the disadvantage that maintenance costs are higher. Trolleybuses are a relatively small market in Europe and purchase prices are therefore high. We have also bought second-hand trolleybuses for about 25% of the cost on new vehicles. BKV also runs two museums and a small fleet of vintage tramcars. We shall be celebrating the 125th anniversary of trams and HÉV in 2012.

Jim Harkins. Do you regularly operate the vintage cars?

László Szedlmajer. There is scheduled operation of vintage cars during the summer.

Mr Gergely Horn gave a presentation on investment projects.

He quoted a number of transport statistics (see appendix).

As well as the four HÉV suburban rail lines, there are eleven national rail lines serving the Budapest area but these are not the responsibility of BKK.

EU Cohesion Funding is used for the development of rail-based networks and European Regional Development Funds for bus lanes and bicycles. These are supplemented by resources from the state and the city council.

There is currently a lack of resources for network development because of money going to Metro 4.

Current EU funded projects (2007-2015)

1. Improvement to tram routes 1 & 3 – Euro 132m, 78% from EU – These lines are in bad condition and the project is to modernise both routes and to extend route 1 by 3.5km.
2. Bicycle hire scheme.
3. Interconnection of tram routes in Buda to make more through journeys possible. Tram line closure after previous Metro construction has led to more people having to change to complete their journeys.
4. Futár, a traffic control and passenger information system.
5. Metro 4 Phase 1 – Euro 1.3bn, 50-60% from EU. Comprises twin 7.4km tunnel with 10 stations and is 65% completed. It will be expensive to operate as it represents only part of the proposed line.

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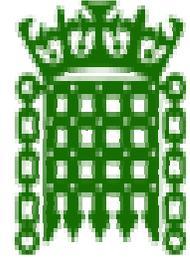


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Projects for 2014-2020

1. Integration of tram and trolleybus networks
2. Southern part of north-South Regional Railway (Metro 5) (heavy rail).
3. Connection of suburban lines with Metro (Metro 2 & H8-H9)
4. Metro 1 improvement in accessibility and extension.
5. Metro 3 extension and reconstruction.
6. Tram 42 extension.
7. Metro 4 extensions.

Of these, 4-7 are not yet approved.

Jim Harkins. Who sets the priorities for these projects?

Gergely Horn. All projects are put forward by BKK but the politicians decide priorities. There is a separate rolling stock renewal project which is not yet funded. This has been done separately from the infrastructure projects. It is possible, therefore, that routes 1 & 3 will be modernised with platforms for low-floor cars but there will be no low-floor cars to run on them. The funding problems have been made worse by an earlier diversion of government funds from transport to environment and energy.

Jim Harkins. The system will need more low-floor cars to comply with EU directives on accessibility by 2019. Has the Hungarian government applied for EU funds specifically to address this problem?

Gergely Horn. The government is aware of the problem and it is hoped to get sufficient funding to allow a partial low-floor service.

Stuart Kerr. What is the future role of the trolleybus?

László Szedlmajer. Trams are considered more important. No changes to the trolleybus network are planned.

Gergely Horn. The trolleybuses originally replaced motor bus routes rather than trams

László Szedlmajer. There were plans at one time to use trolleybuses in Buda, which is much hillier than Pest, but these were not developed. The trolleybuses are regarded as supplementary to the trams.

The meeting closed at about 14.15.

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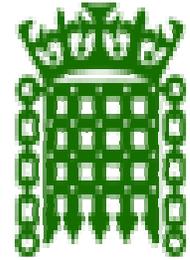


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