



From: The Badvertising coalition

To:

Cllr Liam Robinson  
Cllr Steve Foulkes  
Cllr Liz Grey

Cc: Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram

27th January 2023

Dear Liam Robinson, Steve Foulkes, Liz Grey and Steve Rotheram,

On behalf of a group of independent civil society organisations concerned about the impact of advertising on the climate<sup>1</sup>, we are writing to urge you to consider introducing an advertising policy for Merseytravel transport authority to ban ads for high-carbon goods and services – specifically those for fossil companies, cars and airlines. In tandem, we are asking you to consider an immediate phase out of all adverts for cars, in order to align with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's Transport Plan<sup>2</sup> and Corporate Plan<sup>3</sup> (2021-2024) to *achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040, increase active travel and improve air quality*.

Many local and transport authorities have already made commitments to prohibiting advertising for high-carbon goods and services including the city of Amsterdam, its metro operator, several other Dutch cities, Sydney, and most recently the Swedish capital of Stockholm. In the UK, Liverpool, Norwich and North Somerset Councils have all adopted motions to remove advertising by fossil industries, carmakers and airlines.

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<sup>1</sup> Industry research shows that advertising in 2022 was responsible for 208 million tonnes of CO2 in the UK - 32% of the emissions of every single person in this country. This is largely down to the uplift in sales generated by advertising for the most polluting products such as flights and cars.

<https://www.purposedisruptors.org/advertised-emissions>

<sup>2</sup>

[https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCRCA\\_TRANSPORT\\_EXEC\\_SUMM.pdf](https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCRCA_TRANSPORT_EXEC_SUMM.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Liverpool%20City%20Region%20Combined%20Authority%20Corporate%20Plan%20Final.pdf>

## Context

A recent report by the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee<sup>4</sup> raises the alarm as to the disproportionate influence of adverts for high-carbon goods – especially those for larger, more polluting SUV vehicles – on increasing emissions and undermining efforts to drive sustainable behaviour change. This argument resonates with findings from our own recent research<sup>5</sup>, demonstrating how exposure to adverts for SUVs systematically influences demand for these vehicles. Our research found that survey participants who reported occasional exposure to adverts for SUVs were 70% more likely to own an SUV than a standard car and 250% more likely to own an SUV than no motor vehicle at all.

## Car ads harm transport authorities' interests

Evidence from the National Travel Survey (NTS), combined with our own statistical survey on the positive correlation between car adverts and car ownership<sup>6</sup>, demonstrates that running adverts for cars is already harming public transport authorities' commercial interests, as set out in our briefing note to Transport for London and Network Rail<sup>7</sup>. Analysis of NTS data on modal share of trips, aggregated across the years 2014–2019 and controlled for income, shows clearly (see figure 1. below) that the more cars are present in a household, the fewer train journeys its members make each year<sup>8</sup>. Analysis of similar data from TfL shows a strong effect across all public transport modes.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/30146/documents/174873/default/>

<sup>5</sup>

[https://www.badverts.org/s/Advertising-and-demand-for-SUVs\\_Kasser-et-alBadvertising-2021.pdf](https://www.badverts.org/s/Advertising-and-demand-for-SUVs_Kasser-et-alBadvertising-2021.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.badverts.org/s/Advertising-and-demand-for-SUVs\\_Kasser-et-alBadvertising-2021.pdf](https://www.badverts.org/s/Advertising-and-demand-for-SUVs_Kasser-et-alBadvertising-2021.pdf)

<sup>7</sup>

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ra2hKb7Z\\_SqllKp4uliQP2QkMDHW\\_ZZf7Q2QCLfoY24/edit?usp=share\\_link](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ra2hKb7Z_SqllKp4uliQP2QkMDHW_ZZf7Q2QCLfoY24/edit?usp=share_link)

<sup>8</sup> Calculations [available here](#).

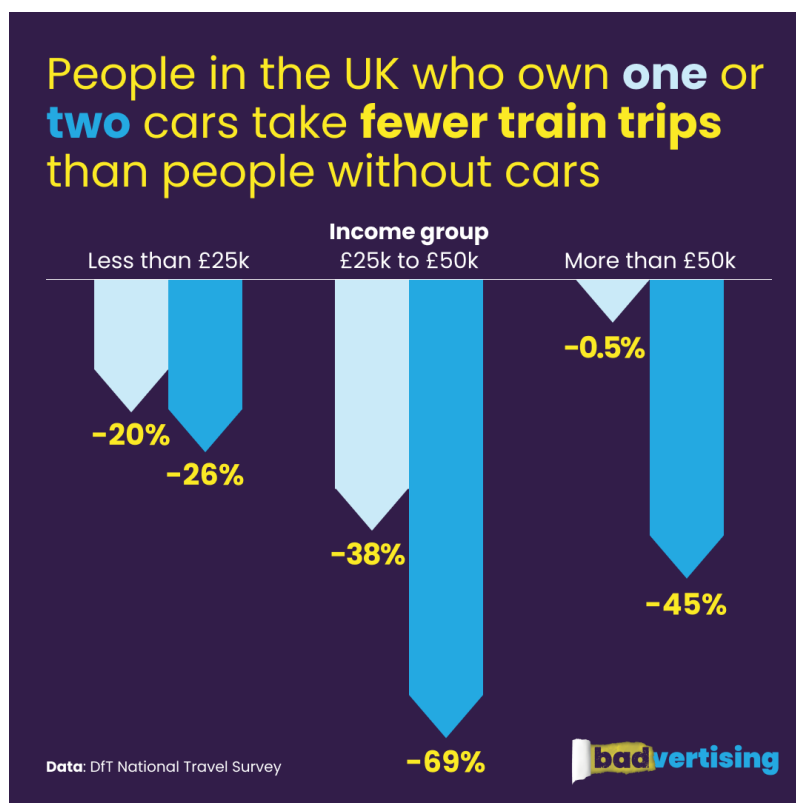


Figure 1: Reduction in annual train journeys taken by English drivers compared to non-drivers, by income.

### Aligning Merseytravel and Mayoral policy objectives

We note that adverts for High Fat, Salt and Sugar (HFSS) products have been prohibited across Transport for London’s advertising estate in recognition of the fact that these adverts contribute to child obesity<sup>9</sup> and to reflect the specific requirements of the London Mayor’s Food Strategy<sup>10</sup>. Since its implementation four years ago, the ban has already led to positive health benefits by reducing obesity cases<sup>11</sup> and is expected to save the NHS £200 million<sup>12</sup>.

We believe that adverts for cars, airlines and fossil fuel companies should be treated in the same way as those for HFSS products. Adverts for these products

<sup>9</sup>

<https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2018/november/mayor-confirms-ban-on-junk-food-advertising-on-transport-netwo>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/food/london-food-strategy-0>

<sup>11</sup>

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/london-tube-tfl-junk-food-ad-ban-research-bl016062.htmlb>

<sup>12</sup>

<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2022/junk-food-advertising-restrictions-prevent-almost-100000-obesity-cases-and>

should be restricted across the network to align with stated objectives of net zero carbon emissions and air pollution reduction, as well as uptake of active travel by 2040 as cited in the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Plan<sup>13</sup> and Corporate Plan<sup>14</sup>. We have also written to Transport for London and London's Deputy Mayor for Transport on this matter and are awaiting a response.

### **What we propose**

We are aware that Merseytravel already prohibits certain categories of advertising on its bus shelters.<sup>15</sup> Based on the evidence presented above, we recommend that **Merseytravel introduces an advertising policy to screen out adverts for high-carbon products and services, and in particular car adverts**, to be consistent with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's Transport and Corporate objectives. We recognise and commend Liverpool's Metro Mayor's leadership on responding to the climate crisis, and we hope that you will consider this proposal with care as a part of this leadership. Where Liverpool leads, other cities will follow, and this is particularly important in light of the lack of commensurate action at the level of national government in the UK. We would warmly welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

Leo Murray, Possible

Emilie Tricarico, New Weather Institute

Veronica Wignall, Adfree Cities UK

Robbie Gillett, Badvertising

Andrew Simms, Rapid Transition Alliance

David Boyle, New Weather Institute

Freddie Daley, Rapid Transition Alliance

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<sup>13</sup>

[https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCRCA\\_TRANSPORT\\_EXEC\\_SUMM.pdf](https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCRCA_TRANSPORT_EXEC_SUMM.pdf)

<sup>14</sup>

<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Liverpool%20City%20Region%20Combined%20Authority%20Corporate%20Plan%20Final.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/bus\\_shelter\\_contracts\\_329#incoming-2137759](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/bus_shelter_contracts_329#incoming-2137759)