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Delegates swap ideas on travel and shops

DELEGATES from across Europe visited Manchester as part of a summit exploring how councils can help retailers flourish with eco-friendly travel links for shoppers.

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) invited delegates to the conference to draw up action plans to support high-street shops while reducing carbon emissions, through improving public transport and encouraging more-sustainable ways of delivering goods.

The event, part of a project called RESOLVE, aimed to share best practice across countries and address two of the key issues – the challenge of internet shopping for high street retailers and the need to tackle harmful transport emissions.

It comes as research shows that 64 per cent of all shopping journeys in

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the EU are made by car, and almost all deliveries are made by road.

Visitors were welcomed by TfGM chief executive Jon Lamonte and TfGM Committee chairman Councillor Andrew Fender. They learned about sustainable transport in the region, including improved cycling infrastructure, the free Metroshuttle bus network in Manchester city centre and Bolton and Stockport town centres and the Leigh Guided Busway.

Cllr Fender said: "Retail businesses are a very important part of Greater Manchester's economy and this project helps us understand how we can help them prosper, as well as best manage the impact of shoppers' journeys on the environment.

"Manchester has always prided itself on doing things differently, looking at fresh ways to tackle new challenges and listening to others. We hopefully in-

spired our RESOLVE partners and received some great feedback and ideas."

Around 40 delegates from Italy, Poland, Sweden and the Netherlands attended the three-day conference at Manchester Town Hall to listen to and discuss presentations from TfGM about the progress made so far to connect people sustainably with shopping streets and centres. They were taken on a tour of the planned route for the upcoming Metrolink line through Trafford Park – Europe's largest industrial estate – to the intu Trafford Centre, where they were shown around the retail and leisure complex.

Andrew Douglas, sustainable travel co-ordinator at intu Trafford Centre, which works closely with the TfGM Travel Choices team, said: "It was great to be able to share the work we are doing with the delegation and to discuss some of the common challenges and opportunities we face."

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VISIT . . . Rafael Cuesta, head of innovation at Transport for Greater Manchester (left), with members of the RESOLVE project delegation at the St Peter's Square Metrolink stop in Manchester