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Partners unite for high street eco-travel boost

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Manchester has played host to a European summit held to explore how councils can help retailers flourish with eco-friendly travel links for shoppers.

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) invited delegates from across the continent to the three-day 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.

With 64% of all shopping journeys in the EU made by car, and almost 100% of deliveries made by road, the event – which is part of the RESOLVE project* – aimed to share best practice across countries and address two of the key issues facing European cities – the challenge of internet shopping for high street retailers and the need to tackle harmful transport emissions.

Around 40 delegates from Italy, Poland, Sweden and the Netherlands attended the conference at Manchester Town Hall to listen to and discuss presentations from TfGM about the progress made so far in Greater Manchester to connect people sustainably with shopping streets and centres.

Visitors were welcomed by TfGM Chief Executive Jon Lamonte and TfGM Committee Chair Cllr Andrew Fender. They learnt more 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.

The delegates were also 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.

Councillor 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 inspired our RESOLVE partners and received some great feedback and ideas from them."

Andrew Douglas, Sustainable Travel Co-ordinator at intu Trafford Centre, which works closely with the TfGM Travel Choices team on sustainable travel options, said: "We were delighted to be offered the opportunity to host a visit to the centre.