

Manpower fears hit Supertram project

10 January, 2002 **By David Rogers**

NEWS: £500m light rail scheme could be in jeopardy if contractors are tied up elsewhere
SUPPORTERS of the Leeds Supertram project are concerned that not enough firms will have the resources to carry out the £500 million scheme.

Companies only have another eight days to prequalify for the Public-Private Partnership deal, which is one of a number of light rail projects due to get under way next year.

Leeds Supertram project manager David Simmons, from Turner & Townsend, admitted: 'This type of work does tie up resources and a lot are tied up already. We are just going to have to wait and see.'

He added: 'PPP schemes are complex projects to tender for because they are costly and time-consuming. We have spoken to the industry and the reaction is generally supportive, but these schemes tend to mop up a lot of resources.'

Also due to start in 2003 is a similar-sized scheme to build three extensions to the Manchester Metrolink, for which four consortia are bidding. Tenders are also due out later this year for the £190 million South Hampshire Rapid Transit project.

And the first part of the Nottingham Express Transit, which Carillion is building, is not due to finish until next summer, with work to build another three lines due to be bundled up into one tender in early 2003.

Mr Simmons said Leeds would be competing with Manchester for scarce resources.

He said: 'There are a number of organisations involved in tendering for the Manchester Metrolink and we would be disappointed if they didn't express interest in the Leeds scheme.'

The West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive is planning to send out tenders to no more than four bidders for the work this March.

The Leeds network will be 28 km long and feature 49 tramstops. Due to come into operation by December 2007, it has a construction cost of between £200 million and £300 million. The winning bidder will begin building three lines into the city centre next autumn and operate them for 30 years.