

Transport for the North Chief Executive Consultation Call

Subject: Manchester Recovery Task Force Update

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Sponsor: Tim Wood

Meeting Date: Wednesday 9 June 2021

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the work to address congestion on the rail network in and around Manchester following discussion at the previous board meeting and the meeting of the Northern Transport Acceleration Council (NTAC).

2. Background:

- 2.1 The railways in and around Central Manchester are a major congestion pinchpoint impacting on the reliability of services across a wide area of the North of England. Not only does it drive poor performance across the North, it also prevents service enhancements from being delivered and constrains economic growth.
- 2.2 Central Manchester is not the only congestion problem in the North and is both the recipient of delays and cause of delays. Notable other pinchpoints are Sheffield, Doncaster, Leeds, Stockport, Preston and the East Coast Main Line North of York. All of these require investment over the next few years.
- 2.3 Whilst some enhancements have been delivered (including the Ordsall Chord and an additional platform at Manchester Airport), other aspects including the scheme originally planned for the congested Castlefield Corridor (Manchester Piccadilly and Oxford Road) remain undelivered whilst a broader programme of work is developed, alternative options are tested and the business case further developed.
- 2.4 The issue came to a head following the disastrous timetable change of May 2018. The congestion in Central Manchester was a contributory factor to the poor performance and is an enduring issue – whereas other failings of the May 2018 timetable have been largely addressed, the congestion in and around Manchester remains.
- 2.5 The issue has become even more urgent as Network Rail has designated the Castlefield Corridor as ‘congested infrastructure’ – one of only a small number

of pieces of railway nationally to have such a designation. This means that as well as developing solutions to the problem, service changes need to be considered and the number of trains that can use the corridor will effectively be capped.

- 2.6 The Department for Transport (DfT) has established a Task Force (Manchester Recovery Task Force) to develop solutions to the problem including short-term timetable changes. Network Rail has been developing an infrastructure plan for the area which is currently divided into three tranches covering short, medium and long-term proposals. At the moment the programme has funding allocated for development work across all tranches and the first tranche is expected to be delivered in the next few years.

3. Transport for the North's Role

- 3.1 Transport for the North is (through Rail North Partnership) co-client for train services operated by Northern and TransPennine Express. Therefore, any service changes have to be agreed by Transport for the North through the Rail North Committee. Transport for the North has already taken action to improve service reliability: two train service changes have been agreed by members (temporary curtailment of the Newcastle-Manchester Airport Service at Manchester Victoria and removal of 'peak additional' Transport for Wales Services from the corridor).
- 3.2 During 2020, the DfT commissioned Manchester Recovery Task Force developed short-term timetable changes. In Autumn 2020, the Task Force produced three service options for public consultation. Transport for the North agreed to undertake a joint consultation with DfT and Network Rail which ran from January to March 2021.
- 3.3 Transport for the North does not have a direct decision-making role in the infrastructure investment and is not a co-client (in the way we are for NPR). This remains the responsibility of the DfT. Transport for the North contributes to the industry development processes and has the ability to provide statutory advice to the Secretary of State. In January 2020 Transport for the North's Board recommended to the Secretary of State a package of investment including the originally planned scheme for Manchester Piccadilly and Oxford Road, but also a number of other required infrastructure improvements across a wide area of Manchester. Transport for the North's Statutory Advice is included as Appendix 1.
- 3.4 In April 2021, Rail North Committee Members received a briefing from the Task Force on the outcome of the public consultation and their recommended next steps. As reported at the Board meeting on the 16 April 2021, members raised a number of concerns about aspects of the short-term service changes. Members were clear that the 'ask' of making short-term changes to services (with connectivity and economic downsides) was not matched with the required level of commitment and clarity around delivery of the full infrastructure programme.

- 3.5 As a result, Transport for the North's Chief Executive wrote to the Secretary of State on behalf of members, seeking a single item NTAC meeting to discuss the whole Manchester issue. That meeting took place on 18 May 2021 and was attended by the Rail Minister, Northern Leaders, Richard George and Network Rail.

4 Pathway to a Resolution:

- 4.1 Following a discussion with leaders in attendance at the NTAC meeting, Transport for the North's Interim Chief Executive wrote to the Secretary of State to underline the need to find a resolution that allows the North to deliver the connectivity and performance required at pace.
- 4.2 Transport for the North recognises that there are significant challenges in securing the funding for and delivering an infrastructure project of the size and complexity of the Central Manchester Programme. Therefore, Transport for the North intends to work collaboratively with DfT and Network Rail to both find the right solution and make the strongest possible strategic case to secure the funding required. Transport for the North will deploy its local evidence base and newly developed modelling tools which will highlight the strategic importance and wider benefits associated with the investment case.
- 4.3 On the short-term service changes, Transport for the North has sought a clear roadmap indicating when the infrastructure will be sufficiently enhanced to increase connectivity again (e.g. restoring services to previous levels and/or implementing other enhancements). It was also agreed that changes will not be made before December 2022 which allows sufficient time for further engagement with Transport for the North Members, the industry to plan the resources it needs to deliver the change and for a second round of public consultation on the detail of the proposed change. The 2022 service changes also need infrastructure development to support, for example, longer trains as well as increased resources such as additional drivers and rolling stock.
- 4.4 Transport for the North proposed and subsequently arranged a 'hothouse' session with the Task Force to allow more direct engagement on local issues and concerns. Further detailed engagement is now planned with Transport for the North members and Rail North Committee. Subject to this and progress on the infrastructure a revised proposal together with the outcome of the first public consultation will be brought to Rail North Committee next month.
- 4.5 On the infrastructure side, Transport for the North has also proposed a collaborative approach with DfT reflecting the fact that they are the client on infrastructure. The work to date and discussions at NTAC highlighted there are different proposals from the industry (compared to Transport for the North's statutory advice) for infrastructure particularly in relation to Manchester Piccadilly and Oxford Road stations. Rail North Committee (in summer 2020) indicated they were open to considering alternatives so long

as they were backed with detailed evidence so that ultimately the right option for the North is selected. Transport for the North proposes to work collaboratively with the DfT and industry to ensure that the large range of potential interventions is fully assessed with appropriate evidence so that ultimately the best option for passengers is selected taking into account all factors including delivery timescales, disruption during construction, reliability benefits, impact on connectivity, cost etc. Another key element is the fit with other schemes planned or under development including Transpennine Route Upgrade, NPR and further electrification in the North West all of which will shape future needs and demand.

- 4.6 Transport for the North is working with DfT on the Terms of Reference for a new collaborative relationship on this programme. As part of this we have proposed (and DfT has agreed to) an infrastructure 'hothouse' programme to work through the options and evidence base. Transport for the North will also use its evidence base to support the strategic and economic cases that will need to be made to Treasury. The outcome of this work will be reported back to Rail North Committee. The Committee will then consider whether to recommend issuing further statutory advice on the infrastructure solution with the aim of delivering the best overall outcome for passengers.

5. Recommendations:

1. That the Board notes the report setting out the current position on services and infrastructure in and around Central Manchester.
2. That the Board notes the actions taken by Transport for the North and the proposed pathway to a resolution.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Transport for the North's Statutory Advice

List of Background Documents:

There are no background documents

Required Considerations
Equalities:

Age		No
Disability		No
Gender Reassignment		No
Pregnancy and Maternity		No
Race		No
Religion or Belief		No
Sex		No
Sexual Orientation		No

Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Equalities	A full Impact assessment has not been carried out because it is not required for this report.	David Hoggarth	David Hoggarth

Environment and Sustainability

	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Sustainability / Environment	A full impact assessment has not been carried out because it is not required for this report.	David Hoggarth	David Hoggarth

Legal

	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Legal	There are no legal implications for Transport for the North as a result of this report. DfT remains formal client for both services and infrastructure.	Deborah Dimock	Julie Openshaw

Finance

	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Finance	There are no financial implications for Transport for the North. There are financial implications for DfT relating to service changes and infrastructure choices.	Paul Kelly	Iain Craven

Resource

	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Resource	Transport for the North's input is provided through existing budgeted resources.	Stephen Hipwell	Dawn Madin

Risk

Yes	
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Risk	<p>Risk assessment continue to take place which can be found in the risk register.</p> <p>The main risks relating to this paper is that:</p> <p>There is a risk to rail service connectivity and performance pending implementation of an appropriate infrastructure solution. Transport for the North's actions to mitigate this risk are set out in the report.</p>	Haddy Njie	Iain Craven

Consultation

Yes	
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Consultation	<p>A public consultation has been carried out on the service changes and a second consultation by train operators on the detailed proposals is planned.</p>	David Hoggarth	David Hoggarth

Appendix 1 – Transport for the North’s Statutory Advice to the Secretary of State in February 2020

Transport for the North’s clear view is that; (1) resolution to the current problems of congested infrastructure should be through provision of adequate infrastructure rather than reductions in services or ongoing unreliable operation and (2) any reductions in service that might be necessary in the short-term should be recognised as temporary palliative measures until the infrastructure has been enhanced.

Transport for the North’s Board endorsed specific advice that the Department for Transport should:

1. Approve the next stage (which is understood to be detailed design) of the ‘Package C’ works by:
 - a. Approving the TWAO now;
 - b. start GRIP 4 (detailed design) without further delay; and
 - c. Identify Do Minimum costs for Oxford Road & Piccadilly (for longer trains & increasing passenger flow);
2. support and authorise taking forward the DfT/Network Rail ‘Other options’, in particular:
 - a. The Manchester Victoria eastern turnback which should be approved immediately;
 - b. Manchester Airport, which should be progressed urgently, including synergies with Airport road works planned for 2020-2021;
 - c. early development of 3 quick-wins;
 - d. Ordsall Lane grade-separation; and
 - e. Salford Crescent

and request consideration of similar options south of Piccadilly, including:

- Assess Piccadilly – Slade Lane/Stockport urgently for the benefits of and optimum location for grade-separation; and
 - Assess the value of 6-tracks Longsight – Slade Lane;
3. Request a piece of work to assess freight options avoiding Castlefield; and
 4. Seek designation of Stockport & Manchester Airport as ‘Congested Infrastructure’ under the terms of the relevant Statutory Instrument.

