Transport for the North
Rail North – Strategic Rail Director Consultation Call

Subject: Long Term Rail Strategy Delivery Plans Update

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Meeting Date: Wednesday 23 June 2021

1. Purpose of the Report:

1.1 This report is intended to update the committee on the progress of three workstreams which form part of the Long Term Rail Strategy (LTRS). In order to deliver aspects of the LTRS, its contents have been split in to six Thematic Delivery Plans, which will sit alongside Hub Delivery Plans intended to address issues around major railway interchanges.

1.2 The three Thematic Delivery Plans which will be addressed here are: Stations; Journey Time Improvements; and, Reliability and Resilience. (Of the others, Network Gaps will be reported separately, whilst Fares & Ticketing and Cost-Effectiveness are not currently being dealt with as separate items.) Strategic Rail are seeking the Committee's agreement to continue with the workstreams as described.

2. Executive Summary:

2.1 Analysis undertaken by Arup has identified the likely value for money that could be generated by investing in typical stations facilities enhancements at representative stations in the North and suggested some ways in which the business cases for such investments can be strengthened. In order to boost the attractiveness of stations (and thereby rail travel in general) it is recommended that a three-pronged approach to securing investment is adopted, using the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline, Local Transport Authorities and the Access for All Fund. Use of Transport for the North's appraisal framework will enable stations to be allocated to each route, by identifying those where facilities investments will generate the strongest economic case.

2.2 Transport for the North have identified that an existing Network Rail process could be repurposed in order to identify where linespeeds on existing infrastructure could be improved at minimal cost. This could

be done when renewals or enhancements are already planned in an area, and could thus generate a very high return on investment. A number of potential routes where this could be done efficiently have already been identified, and DfT funding has been sought to undertake more studies. It is hoped that Network Rail's licence could be altered in order to make this process mandatory.

2.3   With regards to improving reliability and resilience of train services, Transport for the North has worked with the operators and Network Rail to identify around 120 potential interventions. 13 of these (including signalling improvements, a new platform at Preston and level crossing alterations) have been identified as highest priority. A Network Rail Senior Sponsor has been appointed to take these forward and it is hoped that most of them can be implemented within 2 years.

3.   Consideration:

Stations Strategy

3.1   The Stations Strategy comprises part of the Long Term Rail Strategy (LTRS), being one of the Thematic Delivery Plans which are intended to realise the objectives of the LTRS. This workstream has built upon the recommendations made in the May 2018 report *Long Term Rail Strategy: Stations in the North of England* by Steer Davies Gleave. Steer suggested that future development of a Transport for the North stations policy should focus on 7 key areas, namely: Design Standards; Innovation and Technology; Information; Partnerships; Long-Term Sustainability; Safety and Security; and, Sharing Best Practice.

3.2   The current Stations Strategy was originally intended to cover only design standards, long-term sustainability and safety/security from this list. However, the report as developed has addressed topics from all areas, including the ability to share best practice by distributing an analytical tool to our partners which will help them to identify promising station interventions.

3.3   The first stage of the work was a consultancy commission (undertaken by Arup) intended to:

- Collate existing policy and standards documents (26 in total) regarding what facilities constitute the minimum, desirable and best practice at small and medium-sized stations (i.e. Categories C to F in the standard industry classification);

- Undertake hypothetical cost-benefit analyses on implementing sets of enhancements at two selected stations (and nearby stations in a "cluster") in order to identify which interventions typically have the strongest economic case (i.e. value for money); and

- Develop any general conclusions that can be observed in the research.

The two stations which were chosen as case studies were Whitehaven (as an example of a station at the centre of an isolated line remote from major cities) and Castleford (as part of a cluster of towns in a metropolitan area).

3.4 The principal conclusions reached in the research were:

- The value for money provided by different types of stations facilities enhancements varies widely, mainly because the cost of interventions often varies more than the benefits. For example, customer information systems or wifi in waiting rooms can benefit many passengers at relatively modest cost.

- The implication of this observation is that packages of interventions at some stations will generate good value for money (VfM) if different types of enhancement are grouped together; the challenge is to identify which stations these are.

- A stronger case for station facilities enhancements can be generated if a group of stations with a significant number of trips between them (a cluster) can receive investment at the same time. Arup's research suggests that an isolated line such as the Cumbria Coast is more likely to enjoy this effect.

- Often a 30-year appraisal period provides a strong business case, but this could be challenged if it was thought that investments could be rendered obsolete by technological change. Care thus needs to be taken to "future proof" station facility improvements if possible.

3.5 Arup have also developed a spreadsheet tool for assessing potential station enhancements, and it is intended that this will be distributed to Transport for the North's partners. Transport for the north is still testing this tool, but it should enable Local Transport Authorities to input some basic details about passenger volumes at each of the stations in their area and generate an approximate value for money metric for the many different types of station facility enhancement that could be implemented. This would identify priorities for further development.

3.6 The next steps to be taken in this workstream should reflect the wider aspirations that Transport for the North have for stations across the North. In particular, it is noted that accessibility for persons with reduced mobility (PRMs) at many stations is still not acceptable. It is therefore proposed that the analysis and conclusions from the Arup report form part of a three-pronged approach to improving accessibility at our stations:

1) Transport for the North's analytical tools (i.e. NoRMS, the Northern Rail Modelling System) can be combined with the train operating companies' data regarding station facilities in order to identify the priority stations at which facilities improvements will have the strongest value for money. Transport for the North could then apply for these to be included in the DfT's Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline.

2) For those stations at which local knowledge will be required in order to develop a strong business case (e.g. because knowledge of walking/cycling routes and intermodal connections is needed) Transport for the North will support its partners' work.

3) For the remaining stations, at which the capital investment required will make generating a strong economic case difficult, it is proposed that Transport for the North and its partners request additional funding for the Access for All and Mid-Tier programmes.

3.7 This three-pronged approach is required because at the present rate of progress it could take many decades for acceptable accessibility to be provided at all of the North's stations. It is estimated that approximately 40% of stations in the North may still need improvements; a report to TfN Board in July will provide further information. However, in Control Period 6, only 15 stations in the North (listed in Appendix A) were included in the full Access for All (AfA) programme, equivalent to 3 per year. This funding is generally used to create an obstacle-free, accessible route from the station entrance to the platforms. This can include providing lifts and/or ramps, as well as associated works and refurbishment along the route.

3.8 Alongside the AfA programme, the Mid-Tier programme has allocated £20 million for small-scale accessibility enhancements such as tactile paving, handrails and Harrington Humps (which increase platform heights). The maximum grant is £1m per bidder, and match funding is required. In CP6, 124 stations were successful, of which 92 were in the Transport for the North area (see Appendix B); the disproportionately high allocation to the North is perhaps indicative that many of our stations were below standard compared to other regions. The Mid-Tier programme could be useful to bring stations up to full Equality Act standard (i.e. covering modifications to public address and customer information services) but would be insufficient to fund the major investment required in making all stations step free. The three-pronged approach will therefore be required in order to deploy as much potential funding and use as many business case routes as possible.

Journey Time Improvements

3.9 Transport for the North has been developing new ways of working on linespeed improvement schemes. Working with Network Rail and TransPennine Express, we have developed a new way of assessing the linespeed capability of the existing railway assets, known as the

Theoretical Line Speed process. This process was originally being developed within Network Rail to enable the industry to determine whether Sprinter differentials were still necessary. However, Transport for the North identified that the process actually allowed asset capability to be better understood, such that an objective linespeed could be produced for the whole of the network.

3.10   The process uses Network Rail's asset information to identify the linespeed capability of each asset, thereby providing the following:

   o   It identifies the assets which would need intervention to achieve a higher speed in most cases where assets are capable of a higher speed, thereby streamlining and reducing the cost of development of linespeed improvement schemes;

   o   A theoretical linespeed profile showing the locations where all assets are theoretically capable of the same higher speed; and

   o   New Technical Running Times (TRTs) for the new theoretical linespeed profile.

3.11   Transport for the North commissioned Network Rail for a study of 5 routes and has also ensured that other projects which Network Rail is developing have used the process to understand the linespeed capability of their assets. These include the Hope Valley infrastructure project, whilst one of the diversionary routes being developed through the TRU Diversionary Routes project is also looking to use the process.

3.12   In all cases, the theoretical linespeeds possible on the existing assets were higher than the current linespeeds, with resultant running time improvements of between 5% and 15% (without the need for infrastructure work). These findings require validation, but following that, if implemented, would provide reliability and resilience benefits, and potentially journey time benefits at a future timetable change. It will require decisions to be taken across the industry on the use to which the improvements should be put, but ultimately it is anticipated that they will help to reduce the cost of running the railway network in the North; it may even be possible to reduce the number of train sets required to run some service groups.

3.13   RNEP funding has been sought, with a decision expected on 24 June 2021 for around 20 to 30 further route studies. Transport for the North expects that Network Rail will be commissioned to undertake these studies shortly, and beyond that Transport for the North will be seeking further funding to assess the linespeed capability of the remaining routes in the North. We will be pressing for improvements to linespeeds across the region, aligned with renewals and other enhancements for maximum efficiency.

3.14   Transport for the North has also held discussions with the Office of Road and Rail on including in Network Rail's licence agreement the

need to optimise its assets following renewals through use of the Theoretical Line Speed process to assess whether they are capable of a higher linespeed. We anticipate that this will become a requirement from Control Period 7 onwards, which will allow incremental linespeed increases to be achieved across the North over the next few Control Periods.

Reliability and Resilience

3.15 Train performance in the North has been a particular area of concern, as operators which run services in our region almost uniformly experience poorer reliability than those elsewhere. Accordingly, Reliability & Resilience is one of the Thematic Delivery Plans in the Long Term Rail Strategy. Several meetings have taken place with Northern, TransPennine Express and Network Rail, which have identified 120 possible interventions to improve reliability and resilience across the North. These were sifted using a multi-criteria assessment, taking factors such as cost, ease of deliverability, potential timescales and impact into account.

3.16 The multi-criteria sifting identified 13 possible interventions as a priority, which included:

- Block signalling improvements on 3 lines;
- 4 level crossing improvements;
- Preston Platform 0; and
- Hadfield/Glossop linespeed improvements.

3.17 Network Rail has appointed a Senior Sponsor who will provide funding requirements for the 13 priority interventions to be further developed. It is anticipated that two-thirds of priority interventions will be fast-tracked, and thereby hopefully delivered within the next 12 to 24 months.

4. Conclusion:

4.1 Transport for the North's Strategic Rail team has made progress on a number of the Thematic Delivery Plans which were identified as means to deliver the Long Term Rail Strategy. There are now prioritised infrastructure interventions for the reliability and resilience and journey time improvement workstreams, and a decision is expected soon on inclusion of further journey time studies in the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline's funding. Meanwhile, a method has been devised to prioritise stations facilities enhancements and enable a three-pronged strategy for improving accessibility through using the RNEP, our partners and the Access for All programme.

5. **Recommendation:**

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree to the next stages in the workstreams described above, namely:

- That Transport for the North's TAME team assess the potential for stations enhancements at all Category C to F stations in the North, in order to allocate them to one of the three potential routes to implementation;
- That Transport for the North continues to apply for the inclusion of journey time improvement studies and schemes in the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline, and work with the Office of Road and Rail to alter Network Rail's licence; and
- That Transport for the North supports Network Rail's Senior Sponsor in progressing the 13 priority reliability and resilience interventions.

5.2 Members are also asked to note the need for greater funding to improve accessibility at rail stations in the North, noting that the rate of progress in Control Period 6 has been 3 stations per year in the North, and that this will not lead to satisfactory accessibility within an acceptable timescale. A report will be prepared for the TfN Board on the issue of accessibility at stations in July 2021, and it is intended that the Stations Strategy workstream will form a major part of rectifying the gap in this area.

6. **Appendices:**

6.1 **Appendix A: Stations in the North in Control Period 6 Access for All**

1.	Birkenhead Park	6.	Flint	11.	Menston
2.	Bridlington	7.	Handforth	12.	Selby
3.	Broad Green	8.	Hillside	13.	Shotton
4.	Chorley	9.	Hunt's Cross	14.	St. Michaels
5.	Daisy Hill	10.	Irlam	15.	Todmorden

6.2 **Appendix B: Stations in the North in Control Period 6 Mid-Tier**

1	Billingham	32	Hall Road	63	Romiley
2	Accrington	33	Hamilton Square	64	Rose Hill
3	Ainsdale	34	Heald Green	65	Ryder Brow
4	Aintree	35	Heaton Chapel	66	Sandhills
5	Altrincham Interchange	36	Hightown	67	Seaforth & Litherland
6	Aughton Park	37	Hillside	68	Southport
7	Bache	38	Hooton	69	Town Green

8	Bank Hall	39	Hoylake	70	Trafford Park
9	Bebington	40	Humphrey Park	71	Wallasey Grove Road
10	Belle Vue	41	Hunts Cross	72	Wallasey Village
11	Bidston	42	James Street	73	Walton
12	Birkdale	43	Kearsley	74	Waterloo
13	Birkenhead Central	44	Kirkby	75	West Kirby
14	Birkenhead North	45	Kirkdale	76	Westhoughton
15	Birkenhead Park	46	Leasowe	77	Barnetby
16	Blundellsands & Crosby	47	Liverpool Central	78	Darnall
17	Bolton	48	Liverpool South Parkway	79	Darton
18	Bootle New Strand	49	Lostock North	80	Dodworth
19	Bramhall	50	Maghull	81	Elsecar
20	Bredbury	51	Middlewood	82	Horton-in-Ribblesdale
21	Broad Green	52	Moorfields	83	Hull Paragon
22	Bromborough Rake	53	Moorside	84	Kiveton Bridge
23	Bromley Cross	54	Moses Gate	85	Kiveton Park
24	Brunswick	55	New Brighton	86	Malton
25	Chassen Road	56	Old Roan	87	Penistone
26	Davenport	57	Ormskirk	88	Pontefract Monkhill
27	Ellesmere Port	58	Orrell Park	89	Silkstone Common
28	Fairfield	59	Overpool	90	Thirsk
29	Farnworth	60	Prescot	91	Thorne South
30	Fazakerley	61	Rice Lane	92	Woodhouse
31	Formby	62	Rock Ferry		

List of Background Documents:
There are no background papers to this report.

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 Worsley	David Hoggarth

Environment and Sustainability

Yes	No

Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Sustainability / Environment – including considerations regarding Active Travel and Wellbeing	A full impact assessment has not been carried out because it is not required for this report.	David Worsley	David Hoggarth

Legal

Yes	No

Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Legal	Transport for the North Legal Team has	Julie Openshaw	Dawn Madin

	confirmed there are no legal implications.		

Finance

Yes	No

Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Finance	Transport for the North Finance Team has confirmed there are no financial implications attributable to Transport for the North.	Paul Kelly	Iain Craven

Resource

Yes	No

Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Resource	There are no direct resourcing implications as a result of this report.	Stephen Hipwell	Dawn Madin

Risk

Yes	No

Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Risk	This paper does not require a risk assessment.	Haddy Njie	Iain Craven

Consultation

Yes	No

Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Consultation	TfN's partners have been informed and informally consulted about both the Stations Strategy and Journey	David Worsley	David Hoggarth

	Time Improvement workstreams. The Performance & Resilience workstream has involved liaison with Train Operating Companies and Network Rail.		