

Meeting: Scrutiny Committee

Subject: TfN Freight and Logistics Strategy Development – expert advice

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Sponsor: Tim Foster, Interim Strategy and Programme Director

Meeting Date: Thursday 4 November 2021

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 The draft Freight and Logistics Strategy has been developed within Transport for the North (TfN) and covers road, rail, warehousing and port activity. The draft strategy clearly articulates the key investments in road and rail required to support a strong and growing freight and logistics sector in the North.
- 1.2 Input from Scrutiny Members and discussions at Committee have been invaluable in developing the draft strategy. A short consultation on the strategy is taking place in November 2021, with the outcome of the consultation reporting back to Scrutiny at the January meeting. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, the final Strategy will be presented to the TfN Board in January 2022.
- 1.3 At the Scrutiny Committee meeting in September, Members requested the opportunity to receive advice from a freight expert to inform its own deliberations and support the Committee in scrutinising TfN’s work on Freight.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 Maggie Simpson OBE, the Director General of Rail Freight Group will attend the consultation call on the 4th of November. Rail Freight Group is the representative body for rail freight in the UK and the membership includes rail freight operators, logistics companies, ports, equipment suppliers, property developers and support services. Whilst the RFG’s principal aim is to increase the volume of goods moved by rail, Members will be aware of Maggie’s wider experience and knowledge of the industry, not least as a regular contributor to TfN.

3. Main Issues:

- 3.1 Suggested areas that the Committee could ask the expert to provide comment on include:
 - a) How the market for rail freight has changed due to the Covid 19 pandemic, Brexit and other recent economic shocks. How has this affected the movements of freight on an East-West and North-South basis, and what does it mean for demand for and access to ports, freight terminals and distribution centres?
 - b) Where are the opportunities for gauge clearance and electrification of key rail routes to play a significant role in modal shift of road freight-based

containers onto the railway? What is the scale of the opportunity and where should TfN be directing its efforts to make the case for investment?

- c) Interchange between modes at key nodes will be a critical part of ensuring a cohesive and multi-modal freight and logistics network. The TfN strategy suggests developing plans for recommended locations for rail connected warehousing. Is that realistic and who else needs to be involved?
- d) What else should TfN be doing in future, beyond the development of the Strategy, to identify opportunities for further mode shift?