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**Meeting:** Transport for the North Board  
**Subject:** Rail Investment Planning Update  
**Author:** Chris Mason, Interim Head of Investment Planning  
**Sponsor:** David Hoggarth, Strategic Rail Director  
**Meeting Date:** Tuesday 25 January 2022

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**1. Purpose of the Report:**

- 1.1 This report is to provide the Board with an update on three key Rail Investment Planning issues in the North.
- 1.2 This includes proposals for service changes and upgrades to the East Coast Main Line north of York, the expected publication by the Department for Transport of an update of the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline following the Comprehensive Spending Review, and the call for evidence issued by the Great British Railways Transition Team to support their forthcoming Whole Industry Strategic Plan.

**2. Recommendations:**

- 2.1 The Board is asked to:
- a) **Note** the progress with development of the case for capacity upgrades to the East Coast Main Line, impact of the Integrated Rail Plan and pending update of the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline;
  - b) **Support** the proposal to create a collaborative working model for development of the infrastructure for the East Coast Main Line north of York, on the same model successfully being used in Manchester including a 'Blueprint' to identify a co-ordinated long-term service and infrastructure solution to deliver the capacity and connectivity required across the North and to advise the Department for Transport and Network Rail that this is our view;
  - c) **Support** the need for the study identified in the IRP in relation to connectivity between Sheffield and Leeds to be taken forward at pace;
  - d) **Comment** on the approach to preparing the submission in response to the call for evidence for the WISP.

**3. Main Issues: Background**

- 3.1 Transport for the North (TfN) has a vision for the on-going transformation of the North of England's railway, laid out in the Strategic Rail Plan and Long-Term Rail Strategy. These describe how the rail network needs to be improved to support and facilitate a growing and more vibrant Northern economy and to enhance the North's quality of life, all in an environmentally sustainable way.

Core to this is a prioritised sequence of investment in a way that delivers the early foundations of a modernised rail system for the region, improving capacity and connectivity across the North and with the Midlands, Wales and Scotland

- 3.2 The Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP) was established by the Government in 2018, setting out a new approach for rail proposals that require Government funding. This approach created a rolling programme of investment, focused on outcomes that provide benefits for passengers, freight users and the economy. RNEP is how the Department for Transport (DfT) funds all major

infrastructure enhancements, including the Transpennine Route Upgrade. Since that time, TfN has worked with the industry and partners to shape the pipeline of investment projects in the north.

- 3.3 Following the Comprehensive Spending Review the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands (IRP) was published by the Government on 18 November 2021. DfT have now reviewed the impact of the IRP on the RNEP.
- 3.4 TfN made a strong response on behalf of the North to the original consultation on industry plans for a significant timetable change on the East Coast Main Line (ECML) from May 2022. Capacity constraints mean that the proposed additional LNER service to London (3 per hour in total) would be at the expense of a reduction in the number of TransPennine Express (TPE) trains north of Northallerton to one per hour.
- 3.5 The May 2022 change has now been deferred and the rail industry has been developing an alternative to the May 2022 consulted timetable for the ECML, targeted for implementation in May 2023.
- 3.6 The IRP sets out the Government's proposals for the rail network, including for the ECML, specifically in the context of changes proposed by the Government to HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR). The IRP also stated the view that the case for re-opening the Leamside Line would be best considered as part of any future city region settlement on the basis of available evidence and value for money analysis.
- 3.7 TfN Board agreed a response to the IRP at its meeting on 24 November 2021 with a letter and statutory advice sent to the Secretary of State.
- 3.8 The Great British Railways (GBR) Transition Team has issued a call for evidence to support their forthcoming Whole Industry Strategic Plan (WISP). This will be a 30-year plan with many of the same objectives as TfN's own Strategic Transport Plan. It is intended to use TfN's existing workstreams to inform our response to the WISP.
- 3.9 A report on the RNEP status and ECML update was considered by the TfN Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Scrutiny Committee also discussed a report on Rail reform and the proposed approach to the WISP.

#### **4. East Coast Main Line North**

##### **May 2023 Timetable Services Options Update**

- 4.1 An alternative timetable proposal is still under development by the industry with a target implementation date of May 2023. In the meantime, members have reiterated their priorities as being:
  - Greater emphasis on East-West connectivity;
  - Resolving local station calls (to maintain connectivity); and
  - Retaining the existing 2 trains per day to/from Bradford.
- 4.2 TfN has also commissioned Atkins to support input to this work including reviewing the opportunity to deliver 7 trains per hour north of Northallerton including restoring two TPE trains. This technical timetable work facilitates a detailed engagement with and scrutiny of emerging industry options.

##### **Infrastructure Development**

- 4.3 Given the network constraints on running more services north of York, TfN and North East Leaders wished to take a proactive approach to progressing work to identify the infrastructure required to accommodate both increased North-South services and existing East-West services.

- 4.4 Transport North East thus commissioned Network Rail, with financial support from both TfN and Network Rail, to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the 7th path between Northallerton and Newcastle.
- 4.5 This work has recently commenced and was anticipated as taking 6 – 9 months to complete. The remit is now being reviewed following the publication of the IRP which refers to 7 or 8 trains per hour being explored.
- 4.6 The IRP proposes:
- Improvements at York;
  - Extending the current 4-track railway to end just north of Northallerton, rather than just south of the station;
  - An additional through platform on the eastern side of Darlington station, with bays to reduce the number of local services that cross in front of fast trains, which is consistent with the existing proposals being developed by Network Rail with Tees Valley Combined Authority;
  - Upgrading the Stillington route to allow more freight use, and restoring a 3rd track north of Chester-Le-Street and a former chord at Bensham to enable a greater degree of segregation between freight and fast passenger trains; and
  - Lengthening some of the bay platforms at Newcastle to enable NPR trains to terminate in the station.
- 4.7 Network Rail has been asked by DfT to take these proposals forward for development and delivery. TfN, Transport North East and other stakeholders will now work with Network Rail to support the development of these proposals and understand what service output enhancements they could support.
- 4.8 Further dialogue is required with partners on how to take forward both ECML improvements and the Leamside Line reopening to maximise the benefits for the traveling public and regional economies.
- 4.9 A welcome inclusion in the IRP is recognition of Leeds station as a key hub on the national rail network as well as essential to local connectivity including Bradford. Service delays, both directly and through knock-on effects due to capacity constraints in the station and nearby junctions affect train service reliability across the north and further afield. Significant investment and upgrades have been carried at Leeds station since 2000, including recent passenger facility and capacity improvements carried out over Christmas 2021 to provide a better passenger experience for those using the station and help improve the reliability of train services, as well as increase capacity in the region.
- 4.10 These upgrade works are a good first step but more needs to be done and further investment is required to address both current bottlenecks and provide the capacity that will unlock the North's economic potential. Linked with this is the need to address the need to improve rail connectivity between Sheffield and Leeds.
- 4.11 Therefore, the allocation of funding in the IRP to undertake a study led by Network Rail to look at options on how to take HS2 trains to Leeds and understand the most optimal solution for future Leeds station capacity is welcomed. Given the strategic significance of these issues it is essential that this work is taken forward at pace and in partnership with TfN and both the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
- Proposed East Coast Main Line North Blueprint**
- 4.12 Various combinations of service options and supporting infrastructure enhancements will be required to support the economic outputs required from the

ECML. It is therefore proposed that a 'blueprint' approach is developed on the same principle as that successfully developed by the Manchester Recovery Task Force, that clearly links the infrastructure changes necessary to the required passenger and freight service outputs.

- 4.13 The blueprint would show how the services required to improve capacity and connectivity across the north could be developed over time in line with the enabling infrastructure enhancements and allow stakeholders to support a long-term plan to deliver service requirements.
- 4.14 The blueprint would identify how and when services can be enhanced at 'points of opportunity', for example through further service changes or the delivery of infrastructure schemes and show when members will be consulted on which amended and additional services should operate.
- 4.15 By extending the 'blueprint' approach in this way it is possible to begin realising some of the key benefits identified in the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail. Not only should this bring about benefits for the rail user (both passenger and freight) sooner, but it offers the opportunity to ensure that the transition to Great Britain Railways is informed by practical experience obtained in the North.
- 4.16 The Rail North Committee will continue to lead TfN's work with the rail sector to ensure that the North's needs in respect of the East Coast Main Line are reflected in future timetable planning.

## **5. The Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP)**

- 5.1 Appendix 1 to this report includes a simplified representation and high-level summary of TfN's infrastructure investment pipeline derived from the previous issue of RNEP, TfN's investment programme and the Long-Term Rail Strategy.
- 5.2 This includes:
- Capacity improvements at the key network hubs of Manchester and Leeds, as well as the other major hubs such as Bradford Forster Square, Chester, Darlington, Hull, Sheffield, Stockport and Preston;
  - Major upgrades to the Transpennine route and east and west coast main lines;
  - Improvements in route freight gauge clearance and capacity to key ports and across the Pennines (including an East-West gauge cleared freight route from the Humber to Liverpool);
  - New stations, line re-openings, journey time and reliability improvements across the north for routes such as Wrexham-Bidston/Liverpool and on the Esk Valley and Lakes lines.
- 5.3 At the date of this report the anticipated update of the DfT's Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline for the north had not been published. The update is anticipated to be published in January 2022.
- 5.4 When published, TfN will conduct an analysis of the implications of the revised RNEP on the TfN investment pipeline and partner investment priorities.
- 5.5 If the RNEP update is published before the 25 January 2022, a verbal update will be provided at the Board meeting.

## **6. The Whole Industry Strategic Plan**

- 6.1 The Whole Industry Strategic Plan (WISP) will be a 30-year plan with many of the same objectives as TfN's own Strategic Transport Plan, therefore TfN intend to secure maximal alignment between the two processes. GBR have requested responses by 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022.
- 6.2 Appendix 2 to this report summarises the WISP strategic objectives and to which existing TfN Plan and Strategies each one aligns, indicating how the WISP

strategic objectives closely relate to TfN's committed goals. It is therefore intended to use TfN's existing documents to inform our response to the WISP.

- 6.3 TfN's response will consolidate the many workstreams that it has undertaken into a concise argument for how identified improvements to the railway network will underpin sustainable and inclusive economic growth across our region. Key points of the response will be based on our analysis which have shown that:
- a) An improved rail network could enable 60% of Northerners to work outside of their home district by 2050, as compared to 35% in 2015;
  - b) This would allow larger labour markets and better matching of people to jobs, which would underpin a Northern economy 4% more productive, 15% larger and providing 850,000 more jobs by 2050 than would otherwise have been the case;
  - c) Encouraging a modal shift from road to rail will require movement towards higher minimum standards for journey times, service frequency, reliability and station facilities than is currently the case, as described in our Long-Term Rail Strategy;
  - d) The lack of rail freight routes across the North (especially East-West routes) suitable for the largest shipping containers is causing economic inefficiencies in the movement and warehousing of goods; and
  - e) Significant modal shift to rail will be required in order to reduce carbon emissions from the North's transport network by 56% by 2030, on course for a target to reach near zero emissions by 2045.

6.4 It is essential that TfN seeks a strong role working with the GBR Transition Team as they develop the WISP. TfN's work to develop its Strategic Transport Plan (a statutory document) is grounded in its understanding of the expanded role that the North's rail network needs to play in achieving wider policy outcomes – economic growth, improved productivity, reduced environmental impact, improved social mobility.

6.5 TfN, as the statutory Sub-national Transport Body, is uniquely placed to be able to work with the Transition Team in this regard. In addition, the experience gained through the successful devolution of activities through the Rail North Partnership, enables TfN to advise on how to strengthen the linkage between long-term strategic planning and operational delivery to the benefit of the North's users and their communities. To that end it is essential that the work of the GBR Transition Team is shaped by regular dialogue with key bodies outside the immediate rail family: a point that TfN's submission will make.

6.6 As TfN's submission will draw on established positions the Chief Executive will sign it off in conjunction with the Chair of the Board.

## **7 Next Steps**

7.1 Work is progressing on the ECML 7<sup>th</sup> path business case work including the role of the Leamside Line alongside the ECML improvements proposed in the IRP.

7.2 TfN will advise the Department for Transport and Network Rail that a collaborative working model for development of the infrastructure for the East Coast Main Line north of York is created, on the same model successfully being used in Manchester including a 'blueprint' identifying a co-ordinated long-term service and infrastructure solution to deliver the capacity and connectivity required across the north.

7.3 An analysis of the implications of the revised RNEP will be undertaken when published and provide a further update to Members.

7.4 Subject to comments from Board members, the WISP response will be developed as set out in the report and Appendix 2 and submitted by the deadline of 4 February. The final submission will be shared with Board members.

## **8. Corporate Considerations**

### ***Financial Implications***

8.1 There are no financial implications for TfN as a result of this report

### ***Resource Implications***

8.2 There are no direct resourcing implications as a result of this report.

### ***Legal Implications***

8.3 There are no obvious legal implications arising other than raised within the report.

### ***Risk Management and Key Issues***

8.4 This paper does not require a risk assessment, however, risks relating to future timetables are being identified, managed and monitored through the Rail North Partnership.

### ***Environmental Implications***

8.5 This report does not constitute a plan or programme which sets the framework for future development consents of projects listed in the EIA Directive and therefore does not stimulate the need for SEA or EIA. All proposed infrastructure developments will be subject to screening for the need for EIA by the relevant development authority as part of the design development and consenting process.

8.6 TfN objectives around decarbonisation, biodiversity net-gain and natural capital will be included within our evidence for the Whole Industry Strategic Plan.

### ***Equality and Diversity***

8.7 A full impact assessment has not been carried out because it is not relevant to the type of work referenced.

### ***Consultations***

8.8 No consultation has been carried out this review. The rail industry carried out a public consultation on future plans for the ECML timetable.

## **5. Background Papers**

5.1 There are no background papers to this report.

## **6. Appendices**

6.1 Appendix 1 - TfN's outline rail infrastructure investment pipeline.

6.2 Appendix 2 – WISP Strategic Objectives

## **Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used**

a) TfN	Transport for the North
b) RNEP	Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline
c) DfT	the Department for Transport
d) IRP	Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands
e) ECML	East Coast Main Line
f) TPE	TransPennine Express
g) NPR	Northern Powerhouse Rail

**Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used**

<i>h)</i>	<i>GBR</i>	<i>Great British Railways</i>
<i>i)</i>	<i>WISP</i>	<i>Whole Industry Strategic Plan</i>
<i>j)</i>	<i>SOBC</i>	<i>Strategic Outline Business Case</i>