

Meeting: Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee

Subject: Strategic Transport Plan Policy Development – Rural Mobility & International Connectivity

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1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 To seek Scrutiny Committee's views to the Rural Mobility policy position statement prior to seeking Board agreement in March 2022.
- 1.2 To seek early feedback from Scrutiny Committee's to the current draft International Connectivity policy position statement prior to seeking Board agreement in Summer 2022.
- 1.3 Once agreed by TfN Board these positions will be embedded within the revised STP. They will also be used by TfN and partners to shape TfN programme activity and to influence Government policy by shaping future statutory advice.

2. Main Issues:

- 2.1 In September 2021, TfN Board agreed that TfN should commence work on a new programme of work to revise and update the Strategic Transport Plan (STP2) and seek adoption of the new plan no later than Spring 2024.
- 2.2 In January 2022, the first wave of policy positions that will feed into the revised STP - Active Travel and Multi modal hubs, was taken to TfN Scrutiny Committee and Executive Board, seeking feedback before TfN Board will be asked to sign off in February.
- 2.3 Following feedback from Scrutiny Committee and Executive Board in January a third paper, relating to Spatial Planning, will be brought back through Executive Board and TfN Board for consideration in March 2022.
- 2.4 All of the policy positions that are being developed for STP2 will be taken forward in a way that will help us deliver on the ambitions set out within our Decarbonisation Strategy and are aligned to help Government achieve the net zero 2050 target.

3. Rural Mobility Policy Position

- 3.1 The Strategic Transport Plan makes a number of statements in relation to our role in supporting rural mobility:
 - Work with partners to identify transport interventions that deliver inclusive economic growth by improving access to employment and skills opportunities for all.
 - Support growth of the visitor economy by making the case for transport investments, which improve access to and between the North's key visitor attractions.
 - Support partners to improve bus journey times and reliability, by making use of any powers included in the Bus Services Act 2017, as well as

existing powers and alliances. In some areas of the North this will include factoring in the demand and accessibility of coach parking.

- Work with partners and stakeholders to make the North's public transport system easier and more pleasant to use, with a focus on improving passenger comfort, confidence, reliability, safety and security.

3.2 There are several challenges to address as we develop our rural mobility policy, which are:

- Rural communities experience costly bus services and limited public transport facilities, creating transport deserts for some rural communities.
- Rural communities feature high car dependency, with many rural populations experiencing transport poverty. Increased car dependency also results in rural travel generating on average three times the emissions of urban travel, presenting a real challenge for decarbonisation targets.
- Poor rural public transport connectivity reduces accessibility to employment, exacerbating labour shortages in key, lower-paid rural sectors, such as hospitality and the visitor economy, harming rural economies.
- Lack of dense public transport networks meaning multi modal integration is difficult, with many rural communities relying on private car transportation to access their rail stations. Station car parking is often at capacity from early in the day, which can inhibit off-peak journeys, and combined parking and ticket prices can make rail travel less financially competitive versus private car.
- There is limited active travel infrastructure for many rural communities which also contributes to social isolation for parts of the North and severance for those with limited car access.
- Local rural congestion issues as a result of visitor economy.

3.3 To support addressing these challenges, TfN is collaborating with the other six Sub-national Transport Bodies (STBs) to identify and evidence common issues, develop solutions, and define and how STBs can facilitate delivery of improved connectivity and access for rural communities.

3.4 The draft Rural Mobility Policy Position (Appendix 1) builds from the initial work and priorities agreed with the STB group but aims to strengthen that by considering how TfN will proactively support partners to turn our policies into action.

3.5 To support preparing this draft position TfN has formed a Rural Mobility working group, a subset of TfN Strategic Oversight Group made up of partners that have a particular interest in this policy area. The working group have so far provided check and challenge to the draft position and suggested additional actions which have now been included within the position itself.

3.6 As a Sub-national Transport Body, TfN's role is to set the overall transport vision for the North and to provide statutory advice on planning and priorities for large scale transport investment. Within this context, TfN will collaborate with national STBs and our local partners across the North, to enhance rural mobility for communities across the North. We recognise that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to rural mobility and that the definition and geography of "rural" differs between places across the North. Therefore, we will embed a place-based approach for partners serving rural communities that is focused on the challenges and opportunities applicable to a specific rural locale.

- 3.6 There are four key roles TfN can play to proactively support this agenda,
- Develop the rural evidence base and enhance our own modelling capabilities to better reflect the rural need.
 - Assist partners to identify schemes by collating a library of case studies to support scheme development and innovative ideas.
 - Collaborate with other STBs - Sharing knowledge and learning with the STB networks nationally to identify best practice and understand place-based solutions; and
 - Utilise TfN's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to monitor improvements in pan-Northern rural mobility.

3.7 A key objective for the revised STP is to turn our policies into action. As such the Rural Mobility Policy Position Statement (Appendix 2) outlines a number of specific actions TfN can take in the short – medium term to achieve tangible results, these are:

- To facilitate a TfN partner working group focused on rural mobility in the North.
- To undertake a call for evidence with TfN partners to collate existing evidence and case studies of rural mobility projects which are currently ongoing in partner areas across the North.
- To collate the results of the call for evidence to identify potential interventions which partners can develop in their own areas, considering the various rural typologies across the North.
- To support the evaluation of ongoing and future pilot schemes on rural mobility utilising TfN's monitoring and evaluation resources.
- To consider how we can more effectively embed rural mobility within wider TfN workstreams to identify potential solutions and add real value to rural communities across the North.
- To undertake further research into rural mobility as part of planned economic & research projects, to develop case studies of innovative solutions and best practice within rural mobility, as well as better articulating the 'rural need' to our partners and stakeholders.
- To progress work on a new 'Digital Mobility Hub' pilot with a clear focus on improving rural mobility. We will explore the viability of demand responsible transport and how this compares with the commercial viability of traditional bus services, considering the appropriate pilot studies to progress this work.
- To support partners in the implementation of Bus Service Improvement Plans, utilising TfN's existing workstreams and exploring the opportunities to use our analytical capabilities to deliver bespoke support to individual rural areas.
- To utilise our Citizens Engagement workstream to further TfN's understanding of the 'rural need', engaging with rural communities to reflect the challenges and opportunities particular to their area.
- To continue our collaboration with other STBs and support the actions identified in the 2021/22 STB workplan. TfN will identify areas in which we can lead such as in developing the data and evidence base, whilst also considering best practice and innovative trials which other STBs are leading on in their areas.
- To explore opportunities to arrange an APPG event focused on rural mobility to raise the profile of the challenges and opportunities and influence DfT's emerging Future Rural Mobility Strategy.

4.0 International Connectivity Policy Position

- 4.1 The Strategic Transport Plan (STP), set out a high-level vision for international connectivity informed by TfN's Independent International Connectivity Commission Report (February 2017).
- 4.2 The purpose of the draft International Connectivity policy position statement (Appendix 2), is to set out the role that TfN will take in relation to international connectivity and the steps that we will take to support our partners in delivering the ambitions aligned to international connectivity now, almost five years after the original work was completed.
- 4.3 To inform the preparation of the draft position statement, a literature review has been undertaken of current national policy and wider supporting documentation which are focused on or linked to international connectivity. This has provided a greater understanding of the current context in which the position statement should be developed and focuses on six key themes.
- The impact of Covid-19 on international connectivity
 - Increasing competitiveness
 - Decarbonising transport
 - Supporting cohesion
 - Surface access to airports and ports
 - Optimising the opportunities from the green economy.
- 4.4 As a statutory Sub-national Transport Body, TfN's role is to set the overall transport vision, and to provide statutory advice on planning and priorities for large scale transport investment. Within this context, TfN recognises the importance of international connectivity in supporting a post-Pandemic recovery, whilst balancing against the environment impacts of international aviation.
- 4.5 TfN can proactively support this agenda in a coordination capacity, bringing together relevant stakeholders to ensure that collectively the North maximises opportunities to influence and promote international connectivity. We can also influence national policy in relation to international connectivity, ensuring that the opportunities for the North are maximised. Through our modelling and analysis capability, we intend to work with partners to provide evidence-based recommendations to support the delivery of sustained economic growth.
- 4.6 Specifically, the draft International Connectivity position statement (Appendix 2) identifies three key themes we believe TfN can exert its influence and provides a detailed rationale under each theme as to why these areas have been selected. The three areas of focus are
- Improving surface access and seamless journeys,
 - Supporting clean, green growth,
 - Supporting the economy and visitor economy.
- 4.7 A key objective for the revised STP is to turn our policies into action. As such, the draft International Connectivity position statement (Appendix 2) outlines a number of specific actions TfN can take in the short – medium term to achieve tangible results. These are as follows:
- Through our Decarbonisation Strategy, **consider how TfN can build shipping and aviation emissions into our models and future baseline decarbonisation trajectories.** This will include examining options for reducing these emissions and gaining consensus amongst partners.

- Through our Analytical Framework and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, **monitor accessibility to airports and ports by rail and road**. This will provide high-level accountability for surface access to international connectivity and supporting appraisal of schemes that will improve accessibility.
- Through the appropriate forums, **work with partners and key stakeholders to explore opportunities and threats to international connectivity**, identifying the preferred solutions which TfN can consider in collaboration with UK Government. As part of this, we will work with airports and ports to understand their own surface access ambitions and masterplans, and how this aligns with TfN's investment programme and spatial planning policy.
- To **support partners and key stakeholders in their own proposals for decarbonisation** such as through the Airport Carbon Accreditation and Green Port programmes, whilst also recognising the importance in promoting the North of England as a place to invest on a global scale and the economic and job opportunities airports can create.
- To explore future workstreams that **explore delivering smart ticketing options for international visitors through collaboration** with TfN's Strategic Rail team and wider stakeholders such as public transport operators.
- In line with the recommendations of TfN's Decarbonisation Strategy and EV Charging Infrastructure Framework, **consider further opportunities for the use of hydrogen and electric fuel sources within transport**, establishing relationships with private sector organisations that are currently developing alternative fuels e.g., Humbergreen energy cluster, TfN's EV Steering Group. We will also maintain a focus on decarbonising surface access to airports.
- To **support the visitor economy through the recommendations set out in TfN's Visitor Economy and Transport study and TfN's Tourism and Rail Covid Report**, which include greater collaboration with partners, integrated ticketing and marketing initiatives and delivering high-quality and efficient public transport and active travel connectivity.
- To **consider the recommendations set out in TfN's Freight and Logistics Strategy in facilitating and developing partnerships to achieve port to port zero-carbon multimodal corridors**. This includes capitalising on the freeport status of several ports in the North and ensuring that there is suitable freight capacity via rail and road to the North's ports, which will also support future global trade opportunities vital to the UK's economy.

4.8 In addition to garnering feedback from TfN partners we are also planning to bring in two independent experts to provide check and challenge to our emerging policy position. This is being done as part of the ongoing work to embed the Northern Transport Charter (NTC), specifically the plans to pilot the Independent Advisory Group which would see us utilising independent experts to support unlocking potentially difficult political decisions via providing direct advice for consideration by the NTC Member Working Group (MWG) and / or TfN Board. As such we felt it was important to discuss this topic and the emerging position as early as possible with Scrutiny Committee to garner views to further shape the work.

4.9 In early March 2022 we held initial policy roundtables with the airport and port sectors and have reached out to the Environmental Transport Organisations (ETOs) to consider their views before finalising the policy position and bringing back through TfN governance for sign off in Summer 2022.

5. Corporate Considerations

Financial Implications

- 5.1 No direct financial implications of these policy positions beyond resource implications noted below. However, TfN's ability to undertake this work in full will be subject to its 2022/23 funding allocation and the 2022/23 business planning process.

Resource Implications

- 5.2 There are potential human resource implications associated with adopting these policy positions, namely ensuring adequate resources within TfN to deliver on the actions identified. These have already been fully considered and will continue to be worked through as part of on-going business and budget planning process for FY2022/23 aligned to TfN's overall financial position post-CSR.

Legal Implications

- 5.3 The statutory obligations on TfN under the Local Transport Act 2008 as amended by Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 in preparation of the STP will be kept under review to ensure the STP is legally sound and complies with the legal requirements.

Risk Management and Key Issues

- 5.4 This paper does not require a risk assessment. TfN's Corporate Risk Register includes risks associated to the continual embedment of the 2019 Strategic Transport Plan (STP). TfN will undertake a risk assessment during the development of the new STP. TfN's ability to undertake this work in full will be subject to its 2022/23 funding allocation and the 2022/23 business planning process.

Environmental Implications

- 5.5 To accompany the STP we will be revising our existing Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA), the extent to which changes to the existing ISA may be required will depend on how fundamentally different the revised STP is from our current one, as such a full scoping exercise will be undertaken in due course, and we will be seeking external advice on what is required in the next financial year.
- 5.6 This report does not constitute or influence 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. The key actions highlighted in terms of both international connectivity and rural mobility support the commitments laid out within TfN's Decarbonisation Strategy.

Equality and Diversity

- 5.7 To accompany the revised STP we will also be undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment as part of the wider Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA).
The results of the current Transport Related Social Exclusion workstream being undertaken by TfN will allow TfN and its partners to better understand the distribution and causes of TRSE in the North and will form an important part of the evidence base for the STP.

Consultations

- 5.8 A consultation is not required at this time; the statutory consultation planned for the revised STP in Summer 2023 will be undertaken in due course.

6. Background Papers

6.1 N/A

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 – Draft Rural Mobility Policy Position Statement

7.2 Appendix 2 – Draft International Connectivity Policy Position Statement

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used (*if applicable*)

Please include any technical abbreviations and acronyms used in the report in this section. (Please see examples below.) This will provide an easy reference point for the reader for any abbreviations and acronyms that are used in the report.

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| a) STP | Strategic Transport Plan |
| b) STP2 | Second Strategic Transport Plan |
| c) STB | Sub-national Transport Body |
| d) NTC | Northern Transport Charter |
| e) CSR | Comprehensive Spending Review |
| f) ISA | Integrated Sustainability Appraisal |