
Meeting: Rail North Committee

Subject: Strategic Transport Plan: Rail Strategy

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Meeting Date: Tuesday 31 May 2022

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 This report outlines how Transport for the North intends to update its vision and objectives for rail building on the first two Long Term Rail Strategy documents published in 2015 and 2018. The rail elements will be fully integrated within Transport for the North's new *Strategic Transport Plan (STP)*, due to be completed in the Spring of 2023, and elaborated in a number of Policy Position Statements which will be gradually published alongside the new Plan.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee discusses the approach to the rail elements of the Strategic Transport Plan outlined in this report and supports the proposed approach.

3. Main Issues:

Background

- 3.1 Transport for the North published the previous *Long Term Rail Strategy* in January 2018. This document identified 21 Strategic Gaps which indicated areas in which it was felt that the North's railway network required improvements. This led to the formulation of 21 Conditional Outputs, which were broadly defined goals for positive changes which could be made; these were further grouped in to five themes (known as the five Cs), namely Connectivity, Capacity, Customer, Communities and Cost-effectiveness. More specific aspirations (such as minimum end-to-end speeds for particular types of train services, or desirable frequencies) were encapsulated in twelve Desirable Minimum Standards.
- 3.2 Since the previous *Strategic Transport Plan* was published, there have been a number of developments which must be reflected in our future planning, including:
- 1) The problems following the introduction of the May 2018 timetable (and the subsequent *Blake Jones Review*) have focussed more attention on to train punctuality and reliability. Further work has identified the Castlefield corridor in Manchester and the East Coast Main Line as areas of particular concern, and stressed the importance of infrastructure investment at key hotspots and aligning infrastructure delivery with service proposals;
 - 2) The pandemic and resulting changes in travel behaviour have introduced a larger element of uncertainty regarding future rail demand, but the North

has grown back more quickly than other parts of the country with a particular focus on the leisure market;

- 3) Transport for the North will need to restate its vision of the end state of the North's rail system following the publication of the Government's *Integrated Rail Plan* (IRP) in November 2021. The IRP has confirmed funding for some elements of TRU, HS2 and NPR, and the updated strategy will need to both maximise the benefits of the committed schemes and also highlight the case for further phases as part of an adaptive pipeline;
- 4) The formation of the Great British Railways Transition Team has signalled the beginning of the reintegration of track and train in the future structure of the railway industry; and
- 5) Transport for the North has published its *Transport Decarbonisation Strategy* for the North of England which sets clear ambitions goals to decarbonise the transport network by 2045.

3.3 Transport for the North has a statutory duty to produce a Strategic Transport Plan on behalf of the North of England. The first Strategic Transport Plan was approved by the Transport for the North Board and adopted in February 2019. In September 2021, Transport for the North Board agreed that Transport for the North should commence work on a new programme of work to seek adoption of the new STP no later than Spring 2024. The high-level timeline we are working to is as follows:

- Complete sign-off to evidence base and policies – December 2022
- Board approval of draft STP2 – Spring 2023
- Statutory 12-week consultation – Summer 2023
- Board approval of final STP2 – December 2023
- Publication of STP2 – January 2024

3.4 There are a number of factors that will need to be reflected in the revised strategy. These include:

- 1) Our analysis should anticipate both demand recovery from the pandemic, and Transport for the North's continued aspiration for transformational growth thereafter;
- 2) Our work will be evidence-led, particularly drawing upon the wealth of information and knowledge that Transport for the North's own tools (NoTMS, NoRMS and NELUM) can provide, and the data that local partners can provide on stations and post-pandemic recovery;
- 3) Environmental sustainability continues to be a key issue, especially following the publication of Transport for the North's *Transport Decarbonisation Strategy* and the Government's Net Zero decarbonisation strategy;
- 4) Our planning will cover Transport for the North's comprehensive geography, including urban and rural areas, links to the Midlands, Wales and Scotland, any areas served by Northern or TransPennine Express services, and long-distance travel and Union connectivity;
- 5) We will consider all former rail franchises and open access operators which run trains in the North of England;
- 6) We will continue to encourage modal shift to rail in both passenger and freight markets (e.g. through electrification or journey time improvements);

- 7) We will address all aspects of the passenger experience, including trains, rail infrastructure, stations, and station environs;
- 8) We will consider cost-effectiveness in any recommendations; and
- 9) Our final plan shall be closely aligned to Great British Railways' *Whole Industry Strategic Plan*, and will thus be accepted by the industry, with engagement with GBR having driven a high degree of consistency.

3.5 Areas where specific work is likely to be needed to update the rail strategy include decarbonisation, freight, blueprints for infrastructure and service development (a concept developed by Transport for the North initially for Manchester and the ECML), reliability, journey times, fares and ticketing.

3.6 In a number of these areas Network Rail and GBRTT already have significant responsibilities, which mean that in the normal course of their duties, they should be able to make a major contribution to planning in these fields. Transport for the North, Network Rail and GBRTT are committed to build on the existing close links and shared interests with a strengthened working relationship, to avoid duplication and inefficiency. This will allow us to focus on the other topics, in which we have the greatest opportunity to add value.

Issues

3.7 A number of areas for Rail North Committee's discussion have been identified:

- 1) Do you agree that Transport for the North's rail vision and objectives should be part of the Strategic Transport Plan, rather than a standalone document?
- 2) Should any additional reports be produced? For example, an industry-facing document specifically about rail?
- 3) Should our rail strategy adopt a holistic approach, covering both track and train and the integration of both HS2 and NPR?
- 4) Should the plan have a short or long-term focus, given that the *Integrated Rail Plan* has changed the timescales for many projects, whilst the Rail Networks Enhancement Pipeline has yet to be announced?
- 5) How can we take forward the Northern Transport Charter's previous ideas on "putting the passenger first"?

4. Corporate Considerations

Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Resource Implications

4.2 There are no direct resourcing implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

4.3 Transport for the North has an obligation to prepare a transport strategy for its area under Regulation 5 of the Sub-national Transport Body (Transport for the North) Regulations 2018; this is known as its Strategic Transport Plan. There are no other apparent legal implications arising from this report at this stage.

Risk Management and Key Issues

4.4 A risk has been included on the Transport for the North Corporate Risk Register in relation to the embedding the Strategic Transport Plan across programmes.

Environmental Implications

- 4.5 Transport for the North's refreshed Strategic Transport Plan will be subject to an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal, which will include consideration of the full suite of evidence that is drawn upon by that document.
- 4.6 Passenger rail and rail freight, has an essential part to play in achieving our decarbonisation objectives within Transport for the North's Decarbonisation Strategy, particularly around reducing private car vehicle mileage and HGV mileage.

Equality and Diversity

- 4.7 A full Impact Assessment has not been carried out because it is not required for this report.

Consultations

- 4.7 Transport for the North's partners have been informally consulted on our approach and will have the opportunity to provide further input as the proposition evolves.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 None

6. Appendices

- 6.1 None

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) DfT | Department for Transport |
| b) EIA | Environmental Impact Assessment |
| c) GBR | Great British Railways |
| d) IST | Integrated & Smart Travel |
| e) LTRS | <i>Long Term Rail Strategy</i> (published by Transport for the North in January 2018) |
| f) NELUM | Northern Economy & Land Use Model |
| g) NoRMS | Northern Rail Modelling System |
| h) NorTMS | Northern Transport Modelling System |
| i) NPIER | Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review |
| j) NPR | Northern Powerhouse Rail |
| k) NTC | Northern Transport Charter |
| l) RNP | Rail North Partnership |
| m) STP | <i>Strategic Transport Plan</i> (published by TfN in February 2019) |
| n) TfN | Transport for the North |
| o) TPE | TransPennine Express |