



Date: 17 June 2020

The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps

Secretary of State
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(Sent by e-mail)

Dear Secretary of State,

Economic Recovery Plan – Transform and Rebuild the North

In response to the profound impacts COVID-19 has had on our country and our local communities, there is a clear need to rebuild and transform the North's economy.

In this light, we have built upon TfN's existing Investment Programme for the North and quickly moved to identify opportunities for fast-tracking development and delivery of transport improvements.

We're currently working on an Economic Recovery Plan and wanted to give you early sight of the key principles and provide our initial advice on the North's priorities.

Firstly, the founding principles for our Economic Recovery Plan are that it will:

- Reflect the challenges of COVID-19, particularly for public transport, and include investment to support recovery of the transport network;
- Include 'shovel ready' projects as part of a Northern Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) that are ready to go from this autumn, start employing people directly and provide an immediate injection of capital into the North's economy (as HS2 is now doing in the South);
- Identify projects close to agreement/procurement that can be accelerated in the short-term and provide confidence to the industry (supporting retention/recruitment of staff, investment in skills, and investment in pipeline capability);
- Include longer-term projects that will help promote dependent development and inward investment in anticipation of schemes being delivered;
- Support better integration across transport modes, creating a more joined-up approach at regional and local level, supported by further devolved funding and decision-making on local public transport to city regions and local transport authorities;

- Build sustainability into how we plan and deliver transport in the North, including support for new lower carbon technologies; improved digital connectivity; and long-term sustained investment in Active Travel; and
- Accelerate major schemes already in government processes, including road schemes in RIS2 such as the A66 and A63, and rail schemes such as the Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade and the Cumbrian Coast Line.

We have received 150 projects from across the North for consideration and we are assessing these to recommend a full list of multi-modal interventions to TfN's Board meeting on the 29th July.

However, we have also identified early examples of investment that can be advanced quickly. These include road and rail improvements, flexible smart rail ticketing and proposals for sustained investment in active travel and wider connectivity through non-urban high-speed broadband.

The early projects identified for the NIP include:

Schemes supporting recovery in the context of COVID-19

1. Active travel

The current boost to active travel needs further funding to develop temporary facilities, followed by year in, year out investment devolved to city regions and local authorities. Many small projects support local construction jobs and can help sustain and build on the recent spike in cycling and walking as a sustainable travel choice for many.

2. Smart contactless ticketing on rail

Reflecting changes in work patterns, there is a need to accelerate the introduction of 'flexi season' smart rail tickets, as well as introduce contactless, pay-as-you-go travel on rail in the North. Such tickets are already being piloted and could be rapidly expanded by equipping the North's stations and staff with the right technology to support their use.

In parallel - and in line with the Williams Review position on simpler and easier ways to pay - we can roll out a fast-track procurement to deploy contactless pay-as-you-go rail travel. Both these measures are essential steps to build back passenger numbers, respond to the changing ways people may travel and will help persuade more car users to switch modes in the longer term.

3. Rapid deployment of contactless payment on light/urban rail

With similar benefits for passenger confidence as above, enabling light/urban rail networks including Tyne and Wear Metro, Blackpool, Sheffield and Liverpool Merseyrail, to offer contactless payment and more flexible ticketing options.

4. **Supporting non-urban high-speed broadband**

COVID-19 has accelerated new ways of working with 'Zoom' and 'Teams', and we believe the North's economy needs, in addition to transport investment, a quick move to subsidise non-urban high-speed broadband - as recommended in the National Infrastructure Assessment. We welcome the shift to new ways of working - with this change already part of our future travel scenarios. We see connecting communities with digital links as complimentary to the need to improve transport links, with both needed to improve economic opportunity.

5. **Electric Vehicle (EV) charging**

Accelerated and co-ordinated delivery of EV charging infrastructure across local, regional and national networks. Dedicated and continuous funding will enable the rapid delivery of a widespread EV network which ensures no place is left behind, supporting improvements to air quality and the UK in meeting committed carbon budgets.

6. **Piloting low carbon**

Investment now in schemes and pilot studies to progress decarbonisation of transport. Prime examples being:

- a) Tees Valley Hydrogen Train project, which is awaiting approval for funding, is developed and has significant support across industry and local authorities.
- b) Hybrid Battery drive technology for the Windermere line and on Merseyrail Trains, optimising train performance and allowing operation beyond the current existing electrified network, without the need for new rail infrastructure. This would greatly increase public transport connectivity across the North West, increasing access to jobs, education and leisure opportunities.

7. **Passenger Information.** Expansion of TfN's real time Open Data Hub to make available information that increases passenger confidence in using public transport, for example, data on seating capacity and crowdedness. With trust a key enabler in getting passengers back on public transport, high quality information delivered in the right format at the right time is vital.

Schemes that support longer term economic recovery

8. **Fast tracking decisions on promoted rail schemes**

Partner promoted projects include the Cumbrian Coast Line, Skelmersdale Line and continued emphasis on quick delivery of Middlesbrough and Darlington Station upgrades. In the current environment, we should work together to speed such projects up, supporting local jobs in the supply

chain.

9. **Rail freight**

Measures to support rail freight including improved access to TeesPort, Humber Ports, Port of Tyne and Port of Liverpool and capacity, including the W12 clearance on the Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU) and on diversionary routes such as the Calder Valley and Copy Pit line. Improved access is critical to ensuring Northern Ports fully support international trade as the UK develops new trading relationships across the world.

10. **Rail network enhancements pipeline**

Accelerating schemes to address congestion at key hubs and improve reliability across the North. For example, Leeds Station, TRU, Hope Valley line, and interventions in Central Manchester. Progressing these major schemes at the fastest pace possible will help secure and retain skills across the construction industry.

11. **Northern Powerhouse Rail acceleration**

Confirming future development funding to allow work to continue at pace preparing NPR for construction in the mid-2020s. The opportunity to shorten the business case process is one that, as co-sponsors, we can jointly seek to deliver - creating jobs in the supply chain and giving investors in our cities increased confidence. We have made some initial proposals but believe that there is more that can be done.

12. **Large Local Majors and Major Road Network**

Commitment to, and delivery of, schemes within the 2020-2025 National Roads Fund programme.

- a) New River Tees Crossing;
- b) Tyne Bridge & Central Motorway MRN scheme;
- c) A500 dualling in Cheshire East (Meremoor Moss – M6 J16);
- d) A34 Cheadle MRN scheme;
- e) A1237 phase 1 improvements in York; and
- f) A59 Kex Gill landslip.

These projects between them, valued at around £400M, could support 1,000 long term jobs, and have a wider impact on the local economy.

13. **Accelerating the Road Investment Strategy**

Faster development and delivery of projects on the strategic road network including:

- a) A66 dualling - developed at increased speed and getting elements of the project underway faster than currently scheduled.

- b) Bringing forward delivery of other RIS3 Programme schemes (e.g. A1 upgrade Doncaster – Darrington/A64 Hopgrove).

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis reinforces the call of our Board over the past year for a devolved 'Northern Budget' - allowing for investment decisions to be made by the people who live and work in the North of England. Decision making at a regional level will deliver accelerated investment, increase competitiveness and help stimulate economic growth. Our members feel that now, more than ever, is the time to enact such change.

We look forward to continued dialogue on our initial examples set out above and as we develop the full set of proposals in our recovery plan.

We will submit a comprehensive programme of schemes after our Board meeting on 29th July – which we'd be delighted if you could attend.

We stand ready to work with you and your Department to drive an economic recovery with the ambition of a green, inclusive and levelled-up nation.

Yours sincerely,



Barry White
Chief Executive
Transport for the North