
Meeting:	Transport for the North Board
Subject:	Strategic Transport Plan - for consultation
Author:	Lucy Jacques, Acting Head of Policy and Strategy
Sponsor:	Tim Foster, Interim Strategy & Programme Director & Katie Day, Strategy, Policy and Communications Director
Meeting Date:	Thursday 23 March 2023

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek approval to consult on TfN's second Strategic Transport Plan (STP).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Approves the draft STP for statutory consultation, attached at Appendix 1 and summarised in Section 4.
- b) Notes the arrangements for finalising and publishing the remaining elements of the evidence base set out at Section 5. This includes the independent Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) undertaken alongside the development of the STP.
- c) Approves arrangements for undertaking the statutory consultation outlined in Section 6.
- d) Notes the proposed approach to communications and engagement, outlined in Section 6.

3. Context

- 3.1 TfN has a statutory duty to produce a STP on behalf of the North of England. Its purpose is to set out, based on robust evidence, the strategic ambitions for transport, specifically pan-regional infrastructure priorities and issues that are common to many partners where there is efficiency in tackling them regionally. The first STP was adopted by the TfN Board in February 2019. A revised Plan has been prepared for the Board's approval. A statutory consultation will follow from May 2023, with a post-consultation version of the STP presented to Board for adoption in December 2023. An independent Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) is also being prepared and will be published alongside the consultation version of the STP.
- 3.2 The executive has worked closely with partner authorities to ensure this revised STP matches the vision and ambition of the original plan, but also incorporates the very significant work undertaken by TfN since 2019. A series of positions on key issues have been developed over the last two years and agreed with the Board, which underpin the revised STP, including:
- a) The TfN Decarbonisation, Freight and Socially Inclusive Transport Strategies.
 - b) Policy positions covering topics including international connectivity, rural mobility and spatial planning.
 - c) TfN Board positions on critical infrastructure requirements such as Northern Powerhouse Rail and HS2.

In addition, TfN has updated its work on the Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review (NPIER) as part of the evidence base underpinning the revised STP.

4. Summary of revised STP

4.1 As previously agreed by the Board, the revised STP has the following overarching narrative:

- Restating that unlocking the economic potential of the North should continue to be a priority for the UK.
- Investment to improve connectivity is fundamental to realising the North's economic potential, reducing social exclusion, and improving quality of life.
- Transformation of the strategic connectivity between the North's cities and towns through the full Northern Powerhouse Rail proposal must be complemented by investment in integrated local transport solutions.

This will require the North and its partners to:

- Move at pace to deliver the investment in infrastructure and services that improves connectivity, particularly so as to meet the requirement to achieve close to zero carbon.
- Harness the opportunities available in a post-pandemic world to change the way we plan for, develop, and deliver transport infrastructure and services.
- Work to align investment in transport with other strategic infrastructure investment to achieve the North's ambition.

4.2 Delivering the outcomes in the revised STP will require longer term system reform, including:

- The simplification of funding streams, thereby removing cost and inertia from the delivery of investment.
- Greater flexibility in the application of the funding available, to ensure that it is targeted towards the delivery of outcomes that are place-based and user-centred.
- An increase in the total investment made in the North's infrastructure and services.

4.3 The TfN Board has previously agreed that STP2 will have a single vision for the North's transport network, supported by three strategic ambitions, which have been supported by partners. The vision is:

In 2050 the North of England will have become a thriving, socially inclusive region. Our communities, businesses and places will all benefit from sustainable economic growth, improved wellbeing, and access to opportunities for all. This will be achieved through a transformed zero emission, integrated, safe and sustainable transport system, that will enhance connectivity, resilience, and journey times for all users.

And the three strategic ambitions are:

- a) Transforming economic performance (as defined by the refreshed NPIER scenarios).
- b) Rapid decarbonisation of the transport network by 2045 (as agreed in the TfN Decarbonisation Strategy adopted by the Board in November 2021); and
- c) Significantly reducing transport related social exclusion (defined in the Inclusive Transport Strategy agreed by the TfN Board in September, and to be published when the revised STP goes to consultation).

4.4 The vision and strategic ambitions for the North are underpinned by a clear set of outcome measures and supporting metrics that will, collectively, guide TfN government and partner authorities in its implementation. As previously agreed with the Board, the inclusion of clearly defined metrics underpinned by a robust monitoring and evaluation strategy and clear "golden thread" between activities and outcomes represents a major step forward from the previous STP, including:

- a) Including a “right share” metric that will support efforts to reduce car dependency and create the capacity required to accommodate growth on our public transport networks;
- b) Explicitly recognise the scale of change required in accessibility required to unlock opportunity and reduce social exclusion;
- c) Put in place a long-term ambition to double the share of freight carried by rail; and
- d) Adopting the “vision zero” approach to eliminating deaths on our major road network by 2050.

Interim milestones for key metrics then identify the progress required over the next 10 years to deliver on the longer-term outcomes, reported through an annual TfN action plan, which we intend to introduce from 2024.

- 4.5 The revised STP is clear about the scale of challenge we face to improve connectivity across the North (with strongest focus for TfN on improving connectivity between places and key economic assets), and why the current system is holding back investment.
- a) What connectivity is required between places in the North, and between the North and the rest of the UK to deliver the outcomes and objectives of the plan, including the key road, rail and freight connections within TfN’s Strategic Development Corridors.
 - b) The importance of the North’s road network (reflecting the continued importance of the network to communities across the North but with an emphasis on the need to choose how the space available is used in order to meet needs to decarbonise, maintain access for freight and encourage more public transport use and active travel).
 - c) The critical role of the rail network in transforming the overall transport system (recognising the need to move beyond the current crisis and take clear steps to create capacity for passenger and freight growth over a sustained period of investment).
 - d) The need to invest in improving local connectivity (majoring on how this helps address the extent to which our current transport system too often acts as a barrier, how this represents an opportunity to decarbonise transport but highlighting the challenges facing LTAs in terms of funding).
 - e) The importance of investing in access to international connectivity (with our ports and airports as key economic assets).
 - f) The need to align investment across our transport system to achieve an integrated, affordable and connected offering (building on TfN’s work on integrated ticketing programme and smart mobility).
- 4.6 Alongside the NPIER, the TfN Future Travel Scenarios (which informed the regional Decarbonisation Strategy) underpin the planning and preparation elements of the revised STP, in particular the need to plan and prepare for growth in our public transport (particularly rail growth).
- 4.7 The STP is intended to support the preparation of local transport plans, and so with partners we have developed the Policy and Place framework to provide a more robust and transparent demonstration of what needs to be true to achieve the outcomes in the revised STP across the different geographies of the North. This innovative approach provides a tool to help ensure the high-level vision and objectives of the plan translates into meaningful outcomes and policies for all parts of the North’s economy and society.
- 4.8 Finally, the Impact section summarises how TfN intends to work with Government, the wider transport industry, infrastructure owners and delivery bodies, and

partner authorities to implement the revised STP. We plan to work through implementation details/delivery arrangements with partners over the spring/summer, to inform future policy and funding conversations with government.

- 4.9 In addition, the Impact section areas also covered the practical actions that TfN will take, including:
- a) TfN's role in supporting and enabling delivery both as a statutory body and through its formal role with the Rail North Partnership and as co-sponsor of NPR.
 - b) How TfN can act as a centre of excellence in strategic transport planning for LTAs, building on the industry leading analytical capability held within TfN and wider expertise in transport planning and business case development.
 - c) Working with partners on a revised investment pipeline.

5 Supporting Evidence base/Integrated Sustainability Appraisal

- 5.1 The remaining elements of the TfN evidence base, which underpin the revised STP, are planned to be published alongside the consultation. This includes work already agreed by the Board, such as the updated Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review scenarios, Social Inclusive Transport Strategy ("Connected communities") and the Strategic Rail Report which was approved by the Rail North Committee.
- 5.2 The Socially Inclusive Transport Strategy was agreed by the Board in September and has now been strengthened and revised following the consultation held in 2022 as set out in Appendix 2.
- 5.3 The Strategic Rail Report was agreed by the Rail North Committee on 22nd February, since then officers have undertaken some further engagement with Train Operating Companies who were broadly supportive of the work but have asked for the document to further clarify a number of points. The high-level messaging from this report are already contained in the revised STP.
- 5.4 The technical work for the Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review has been finalised and the publication is being prepared in close collaboration with the NP11. The conclusions of the work are in revised STP and are unchanged from those reported to Board in December 2023.
- 5.5 TfN officers have also been working with Arup on the independent Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) that will accompany the STP when published for the consultation, as set out in Appendix 3. This is a legal requirement.

The main conclusions from the first rounds of iterative assessment on revised STP, undertaken across December 2022 and January 2023, are as follows:

- No potential conflicts between ISA and STP objectives.
- Scope for enhancement of both STP headline objectives and the Policy and Place Framework to include further consideration of:
 - Protection for historic environment and landscapes/townscapes.
 - The need for prudent use of natural resources.
 - More explicit reference to opportunities for local nature recovery and Biodiversity Net Gain.
 - The need to highlight the responsibility of delivery partners where measures are outside of TfN influence.

The STP2 has continued to be developed with these recommendations in mind and we have endeavoured to address as many as possible in the version presented to Board. Note a full re-assessment is currently underway on the latest version of the STP2 which will conclude ahead of the consultation version being published.

A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is running concurrently, with engagement with Natural England. The results of the Stage 1 HRA Screening indicated that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required. This will be published for consultation alongside the draft STP and ISA Report.

- 5.6 The Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy (Appendix 4) has been worked up in consultation with partners' officers throughout 2022 and sets out how we will monitor and report progress (for example on decarbonisation) against the STP vision and objectives through an annual report and action plan. The action plan will also provide the opportunity to formalise and strengthen the Board's statutory advice to Government and maintaining a focus delivery.
- 5.7 There are a further two documents which will be part of the evidence underpinning the consultation draft, namely the Vision & Objectives, which was previously shared with TfN Board in December and Policy and Place framework (Appendix 5). Both of which have been developed in collaboration with partners throughout 2022 and have already been through extensive TfN governance including TfN Board, Partnership Board, Executive Board and Scrutiny Committee. These documents provide much more detail and context to these aspects of the revised STP and will form a key part of the supporting evidence base for TfN and our partners moving forward, thus ensuring our work remains outcome focused, place based and user centric.

6 Consultation strategy and communications/engagement approach

- 6.1 Subject to the Board's approval, planning is underway for a statutory 12-week consultation process to be undertaken following local election and running through May to August 2023. This timing is necessary in order to enable the Board to be in a position to consider the final draft before the end of the calendar year.
- 6.2 The purpose of the consultation is to seek views and comments on the document, enabling us to refine and improve it ahead of adoption as statutory advice to Government. Equally though, it is an opportunity for early dialogue, ahead of a general election, to inform policy thinking; and it can help local engagement to inform local transport plans.
- 6.3 In preparing for the consultation, it will be important to ensure the suite of consultation materials manage public expectations regarding what is in TfN's sphere of influence and is focused enough to ensure easy engagement, so that means being clear what the STP is (and isn't) and focusing attention to help augment the document ahead of adoption.
- 6.4 This approach will inform our detailed communications and engagement planning, which we will do post-Board as we prepare to launch the consultation.
- 6.5 That planning will include preparing relevant briefing matters (such as core script), presentation tools and other communication aids to help build understanding of the STP (its purpose and its content) to ensure we gather appropriate feedback. This may include infographics, videos and case studies. We would like, as part of adopting the revised STP in due course, to utilise the 'Policy and Place Framework' to create local case studies that help build understanding for communities on what the STP means for them.
- 6.6 We want to continue the regular, two-way engagement that has underpinned the development of the revised STP as we move into the consultation phase. So, the routine meetings we have with partners and other stakeholders, as well as 'piggybacking' on appropriate local/regional/national events, will also be opportunities to discuss and get feedback on the STP.
- 6.7 Partners, including the Scrutiny Committee, have already provided ideas to shape our planning, such as utilising local communications team to reach audiences and

also briefing local members to engage their communities. Importantly we want to reach different groups and audiences that we might not normally engage with – perhaps those impacted by transport related social exclusions for example – to give us a broader perspective. So, drawing on local expertise to reach such groups, and potentially some of TfN’s research channels (such as our new Citizen’s Panel) will inform our planning.

- 6.8 We intend to pose a few key questions in the consultation, as is standard practice in statutory consultations, to target feedback. These will be developed in April.
- 6.9 We will deploy a mixture of methods to engage stakeholders, including:
- A live online virtual consultation room.
 - Virtual and face to face events with key groups.
 - Option for TfN ‘talks’ webinars with specific stakeholder groups and/or on specific STP topics (for example, to enable more detailed exploration of the three strategic ambitions, or underpinning evidence/case for change).
 - Digital media, including TfN website and social media channels.
- 6.10 Due to resources, we are assuming we are planning to hold around three face to face events around the North, depending on local demand, throughout the consultation supplemented by virtual workshops, which could be targeted at specific stakeholder groups as necessary, such as
- Politicians, local and national
 - Local Transport Authorities / Local Enterprise Partnerships / Combined Authorities
 - Chambers / other local business groups
 - Airports / Ports
 - Environmental transport groups.
 - Other interested parties, such as local community groups and other sub-national transport bodies.
- 6.11 We are procuring a consultant to deliver the online consultation tool and help us process / analyse responses. They will also assist TfN’s communication team to deliver our engagement plans. As ever, we will ensure the views of partners are considered throughout and final plans shared as appropriate.
- 6.12 To support us with preparing for the consultation it would be helpful to get some early steers from TfN Board on how members and partners can support that process and views on the planned approach set out above.

7. Next steps

- 7.1 Following the Board meeting, further work will be undertaken on the presentation of the draft Plan prior to consultation launch in mid-May. Officers will continue to prepare for the consultation process during the pre-election period and publication of the remaining evidence base outlined in Section 5 above.
- 7.2 Following the consultation process, the STP will then be revised as necessary and resubmitted to Board for adoption in December 2023. An interim update to Board on the outcome of the consultation and any proposed changes to the STP will be provided in September.

8.0 Corporate Considerations

Financial Implications

- 8.1 The financial implications related to STP publication and consultation are captured in the 2023/24 budget presented for approval under item 4.

Resource Implications

- 8.2 The necessary resources to prepare the revised STP to the timeline set out in this report have been identified and agreed, aligned to TfN's Budget & Business Planning Process for FY2023/24.

Legal Implications

- 8.3 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

- 8.4 This paper does not require a risk assessment. TfN's Corporate Risk Register includes risks associated with the revised STP.

Environmental Implications

- 8.5 A full Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment are being prepared to accompany the revised STP, supported by external expertise. As noted, the ISA2 Report will be consulted upon alongside the revised STP during 2023.

- 8.6 The draft Vision & Objectives document and Policy and Place Framework were subject to iterative rounds of appraisal during December 2022 and January 2023. Overall, the results of the compatibility assessment indicate that the objectives provide a firm underpinning to help ensure that the sustainability performance of the plan can be maximised.

- 8.7 TfN plan writers made changes to the draft plan directly due to these early ISA2 assessment outcomes flowing from the iterative assessments in December 2022 and as a result both policies and plan objectives scored stronger across the ISA2 framework within the 2023 assessment.

- 8.8 A further re-assessment of the draft STP, as well as a Stage 2 Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA), is expected to be undertaken during March and early April. The outputs of this later stage of appraisal, as well as the HRA, will inform the main ISA2 report, when it is shared as part of the consultation.

Equality and Diversity

- 8.9 To accompany the revised STP we have undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment as part of the wider Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA), where possible the findings of these have been addressed in the current draft.

In addition, TfN's Transport Related Social Exclusion workstream 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 revised STP.

Consultations

- 8.10 As detailed above, the revised STP has been developed with partners, taking on board as necessary their extensive feedback. The statutory consultation is now planned for May, for a 12-week period.

9.0 Appendices

- 9.1 Draft second Strategic Transport Plan, March 2023
- 9.2 Connected communities' consultation outcomes, March 2023
- 9.3 Integrated Sustainability Appraisal 2, Full Board Report, March 2023
- 9.4 Draft Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

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

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| a) STP | <i>Strategic Transport Plan</i> |
| b) ISA | <i>Integrated Sustainability Appraisal</i> |
| c) HRA | <i>Habitats Regulation Assessment</i> |
| d) NPIER | <i>Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review</i> |