

Meeting: Transport for the North Board
Subject: Strategic Transport Plan Update
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Meeting Date: Wednesday 27 September 2023

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the outcomes of the statutory consultation on our second Strategic Transport Plan (STP).
- 1.2 To seek steers from TfN Board on where revisions should be made to the STP to address consultation feedback.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 It is recommended that the TfN Board:
 - a) Notes the outcomes from the statutory consultation, summarised in section 3, and the detail provided in Appendix 1.
 - b) Provides a steer on areas of the STP to guide its revision post consultation, set out in section 4.
 - c) Notes the arrangements for finalising the STP ahead of TfN Board in December, set out at section 5.

3. Main issues:

- 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 partners where there is efficiency in tackling them regionally. Following Board's approval in March 2023, a 12-week statutory consultation took place between May and August 2023. An independent Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) was also prepared and consulted on and will be revised post consultation and provided alongside the final STP.
- 3.2 The purpose of the consultation was to seek views and comments on the draft plan, enabling us to refine and improve it ahead of adoption as statutory advice to the Government. Equally, it provided an opportunity for early dialogue to inform thinking on implementation and interventions to deliver the STP.
- 3.3 We deployed a mixture of methods to engage stakeholders throughout the consultation period, including extensive promotion via our digital channels and news media. In total we received **649** responses (compared to 563 when we consulted on the first STP) which can be further broken down as:
 - a) **97** responses to our virtual consultation room
 - b) **144** attendees at the TfN led virtual and face to face workshops, taking place in Manchester, Leeds and Newcastle
 - c) **32** responses from statutory consultees
 - d) **53** responses from other groups such as local charities and user groups.
 - e) **220** responses to our STP citizens panel activities
 - f) **94** other written responses from members of the public, for example emails and letters

g) **9** MPs from the region attended our All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) session in Whitehall.

- 3.4 TfN officers also attended and presented at 22 partner events including sessions with chambers of commerce, local enterprise partnerships, environmental and public health stakeholders, local transport authority committee and member briefings. In total we had 32 responses from our statutory consultees including strong representation from our local transport authority partners.
- 3.5 All the feedback received from the consultation has been analysed and coded to draw out themes and key considerations. This paper summarises the substantive feedback points where Board's steer is now necessary, ahead of revising the draft STP. Appendix one provides a more detailed overview of the consultation feedback across the various interactions described above.
- 3.6 While some areas of the STP likely require amendment/adjustment overall, the STP vision and strategic ambitions were accepted. However, there was a desire for greater detail on the priority schemes, investment portfolio and policies needed to deliver it. It is important to remember that the STP is intended to set the long-term ambition for the North's transport system. It is a strategy to guide policy making, national and local planning, and investment, rather than provide the specific delivery details. We have therefore considered the consultation feedback within that context and purpose.
- 3.7 Subject to Board views, we continue to engage with partners to discuss how we respond to feedback and seek views on implementation proposals. We will provide early advice on implementation alongside the final version of the STP in December.

4. Revisions required post consultation:

- 4.1 There are several overarching themes that have emerged that we need to consider in further detail ahead of revising the STP, specifically:
- a) Level of ambition across our strategic outcomes and metrics
 - b) Environmental benefits beyond decarbonisation
 - c) Affordability of transport for users
 - d) How to enable mode shift/behavioural change
 - e) Better articulation of the challenges in rural areas
 - f) Strengthening the case/narrative on roads, strategic rail, freight & logistics and international connectivity
 - g) Greater recognition of the importance of bus and coaches
 - h) Further detail on how the plan will be delivered.

We have grouped these areas together for the Board to consider:

- A. Strategic outcomes
- B. 'Right share' and 'vision zero' metrics
- C. Potential amendments to the STP
- D. Areas for further work.

(A) Strategic outcomes

- 4.2 Overall the STP vision was supported, with indications it would help local plan and strategy development. Our three strategic ambitions (economic growth, decarbonisation of surface transport and reducing transport-related social exclusion (TRSE)) were also supported. Some debate was had as to whether one was more important than the other, but the consensus was all three mattered equally.
- 4.3 There was broad support to close the productivity gap, but with acknowledgement that it was contingent on investment in transport infrastructure to address connectivity, especially a well-functioning public transport system. We therefore intend to maintain the '**improving economic performance**' ambition as it is,

which is underpinned by the Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review (NPIER). Further, we are working with partners on how the NPIER ambitions can be achieved – beyond transport – given the need to align investment and policy levers to achieve transformative growth.

4.4 Our decarbonisation ambition – which was new to the STP this time – was welcomed, with feedback recognising a mixture of interventions and investment is needed. While decarbonising our road fleet is necessary, encouraging modal shift to public transport was critical, including the revenue funding to enable the transition. We therefore intend to maintain our ambition to **'rapidly decarbonise surface transport'** as it is and will use our update of the TfN Decarbonisation Strategy next year to review our baseline position and consider any policy gaps.

4.5 The **Transport Related Social Exclusion (TRSE)** strategic ambition is also new to the STP this time and has been seen as a welcomed addition through the consultation. Our TRSE ambition includes two outcomes:

- Reduce the number of people in the North living in areas with a 'high' risk of TRSE by 1,000,000 by 2050
- Reduce the number of people in the North living in areas with a 'highest' risk of TRSE by 370,000 by 2050.

This needs to be set in the context that currently there are 3.3 million people (21%) of the North's population living in areas of high risk of social exclusion due to poor transport accessibility.

4.6 Some of the feedback received questioned whether these outcomes were ambitious enough and whether we should look to go further; including some suggestions to even "eradicate" TRSE in the North by 2050. TfN officers have carefully considered this feedback and re-looked at the evidence underpinning the proposed outcomes.

4.7 We know that TRSE cannot be solved by connectivity improvements alone. The NPIER has demonstrated that a range of policy levers and investment must be aligned within places to enable sustainable growth. Our evidence showed that to achieve the 1 million TRSE reduction, the North's major cities (and connections to outlying towns) would need an integrated transport system that offered the choices, reliability, frequency, and ticketing options similar to London. And alongside, there must also be investment in other public policy areas to correct the regional deprivation gap and stimulate economic growth.

4.8 The NPIER demonstrates the scale of investment, beyond transport, needed just to achieve parity (per capita) with public spending in London and the devolved nations. And we would need to align transport investment and wider public policy changes/funding if we are to achieve a faster reduction in TRSE. This is where a growth strategy for the North of England focused on growth and building upon our prime and enabling sectoral capabilities may be helpful.

4.9 Given this wider context, and the need for our strategic outcomes in the STP to be credible, we recommend we maintain the current ambition. The four determinants, below, that underpin the ambition already provide a sound basis to level up with the rest of England and we can keep these under review via our STP monitoring and evaluation arrangements:

- a) That the proportion of the population at high or very high risk of TRSE in the North should be no higher than the rest of England, across our diverse area types
- b) That the size of the population at high or very high risk of TRSE should not increase as the total size of the population increases
- c) That no area type should see an increase in the proportion of the population at a high or very high risk of TRSE

- d) That the decarbonisation of the transport system and the introduction of new transport technologies should reduce inequality and improve inclusion.

(B) 'Right share' and 'vision zero' metrics

- 4.10 The draft STP proposed a set of "right share" metrics. The purpose of these is to reflect the change in the North's transport system that is required if we are to achieve the strategic outcomes, and therefore help us measure progress in the transition over the period to 2050. The metrics set out in the draft STP are:
- a) The share of trips made by public transport increases to 15% by 2050 (currently 7%)
 - b) The share of trips made by active modes increases to 36% by 2050 (currently 27%)
 - c) There is zero overall regional increase in private car vehicle mileage on the North's Road network to 2045, against a baseline of 78.2 billion in 2018
 - d) Double rail's share of freight carried to 17% by 2050, measured as tonne km (currently 8.5%).

In addition, the draft STP also proposed we adopt a metric focused on reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured in traffic incidents to zero by 2050. This was originally included to address feedback received from our local transport authority partners (while preparing the draft plan) to include an ambition focused on safety.

- 4.11 Feedback received from the consultation, particularly from some of our more urban local transport authority partners and environmental stakeholders, questioned whether 'right share' metrics should be more ambitious. We utilised our citizens panel (known as 'Northern Transport Voices', which reflects the public demographic across the North) to explore in depth their perception of the 'right share' metrics for mode shift to active travel and public transport. This provided some useful insight, as ultimately these targets will only be achieved if there is associated behavioural change by the public.
- 4.12 On average, the majority of citizens panel (56%) respondents felt that the pan-Northern right share metrics were set at about the right level, although some argued that they are too ambitious (due to the current poor state of active travel and public transport provision). Others suggested they were not ambitious enough (due to the speed of climate change and the need to act). Panel members also questioned their deliverability This was due to: (a) entrenched preferences for private car use; (b) the significant financial investment required to provide convenient and good quality active travel and public transport options, which would enable greater choice to the public; (c) that the metrics may be less or more achievable depending on the nature of a place, e.g. if an area was particularly affected by TRSE.
- 4.13 On the latter, the rationale for pan-regional metrics is to express we need to achieve as a collective, rather than expecting them to be achieved everywhere equally. We recognise that achieving significant mode shift in rural areas, for example, could be more difficult than achieving changes in city regions (where public transport opportunities may be greater). By working pan-regionally, we can accommodate those differentials in achieving our strategic ambitions.
- 4.14 The **public transport and active travel mode shift metrics** are taken from the TfN Future Travel Scenario (FTS) that achieves the greatest emissions reductions; Urban Zero Carbon (UZC). The rationale is that UZC provides us with a fully modelled set of modal targets that we know gets us close to achieving our decarbonisation and social inclusion ambitions.
- 4.15 In relation to **car vehicle mileage metric**, TfN's Decarbonisation Strategy does indicate the level of commitment required to achieve near zero surface emissions by 2045. This right share metric is more ambitious than that required by that

strategy. It is also more ambitious in terms of managing car vehicle mileage than the Committee on Climate Change's 6th Carbon Budget Balanced Pathway (which sees +3% by 2030 and +10% by 2050 on 2019 levels). While we have not yet modelled the carbon implications of this car vehicle mileage target, the rationale for the increased level of ambition in the STP is that it represents the minimum we require to achieve our health, wellbeing and inclusion outcomes.

- 4.16 It is appropriate to retain the 'right share' metrics as part of the STP as they will help us monitor progress in achieving the strategic outcomes. We are already reviewing our FTS, and intend to update the decarbonisation strategy by 2025, which give us the opportunities to test their validity and carbon implications from these STP metrics. If needed, we can then strengthen and/or adjust them accordingly (subject to Board's agreement), all the while keeping them under review via our monitoring and evaluation framework. However, in the meantime, we can offer the Board two options to address the immediate STP feedback:
- a) Retain the public transport, active travel and private vehicle mileage right share metrics as they are, with the caveat that they may change following work planned to update both TfN's FTS & Decarbonisation strategy; OR
 - b) Merge the public transport and active travel metrics into a 'sustainable modes' category and present this alongside the car metric. Note this is similar to how some of our TfN partners have presented their own metrics and would then show an aspiration for a 51% sustainable, 49% car split by 2050.

On balance, we recommend option (b). This is because it aligns to how many of TfN's local transport partners have presented their own metrics and offers greater flexibility to meet the outcomes/needs within a place, while still expressing our pan-regional (collective) ambition for modal shift.

- 4.17 The **freight mode shift metric** was calculated as a midpoint between our four FTS. To be more ambitious we could align the target with UZC which means an increase in mode share to 24%. However, given we have already aligned the other 'right share' metrics with the UZC scenario we do need to be cautious in doing so for all mode share targets as it may seem that we are promoting one of the FTS scenarios above the others. Alternatively, we could opt to treble the mode share of freight. This would mean setting a metric of 25.5 % by 2050. This is different to, but not far off, the UZC mode split scenario and would align to the Rail Freight Group's calls as part of their response to DfT's future of freight consultation.
- 4.18 On balance, we recommend that increasing the ambition for freight mode shift would be helpful. Our evidence base (via the FTS) supports such an adjustment. It also aligns to industry feedback and recognises the scale of the economic opportunity (and challenge to decarbonise), if the right capacity, infrastructure, and regulatory environment can be created to increase rail's share of freight.
- 4.19 Consultation responses - particularly members of the public - questioned whether the metric for '**vision zero: reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured in traffic accidents to zero by 2050**' should be accelerated. They suggested setting a target for 2030 or 2040 instead.
- 4.20 TfN officers have reviewed the evidence around this and there are two notable targets other organisations have set which we could look to consider:
- National Highways has set a safety target that states "By 2050, we aim for no one to be killed or seriously injured while travelling on or working on our network." TfN's definition of the Major Road Network (MRN) in the North encompasses both the Strategic Road Network (SRN) managed by National Highways and major road network routes, owned and managed by local highway authorities

- London has set a target of 2041 to eliminate all deaths and serious injuries from its transport network, which is accompanied by an action plan that outlines the profile/location of accidents and other targets relating to mode shift and safety. While this is admirable, we need to recognise that the North's geography differs markedly to London's and therefore setting a target for the North that aligns to London is unlikely to be appropriate.

4.21 On balance, we recommend that we maintain our 'vision zero' metric as it stands. Safety has been a theme drawn out in the consultation and with partners over recent months, so it is appropriate for the STP to set an ambition. But we will keep this metric under review, and if our monitoring indicates a change should be considered, we will bring advice to Board to accelerate delivery.

(C) Potential amendments to the STP

4.22 There are several areas of the STP that the consultation has identified we need to revisit over the coming weeks to strengthen the text before seeking adoption. These include:

- Greater recognition of the role played by buses and coaches**, drawing on the work that has already started with our partners to build the evidence base and improve data/analysis to aid planning
- Better articulating that the environmental benefits we seek are wider than just decarbonisation**, including more emphasis on biodiversity net gain, air quality and the enhancements to the built and natural environment
- Making a stronger case for freight**, including more of our existing evidence, including reference to the opportunities that inland waterways present
- Simplify the messages around our FTS**, more clearly articulating how they inform our strategy and policy development
- Sense check our narrative on international connectivity**, to ensure we are presenting a fair and balanced view (in line with our agreed policy position) in light of feedback from both environmental stakeholders and airports that is conflicting in nature
- Review our presentation of the Policy and Place Framework**, specifically the opportunity to reduce detail within the STP itself and/or whether to provide this as a separate (supporting) document; and to address feedback from the citizens panel on the policies reflected within the Framework to aid local transport planning.

4.23 There are also specific areas within the **Strategic Rail** section, which require review given consultation feedback, including:

- Advocacy of specific schemes or priorities:** respondents took the opportunity to highlight and promote specific smaller scale schemes they argue should be contained within the revised STP. While we will look to review the text to better articulate the importance of pan regional priorities, it is our recommendation that the specific scheme details need to sit as part of the Strategic Rail Report. The latter is being updated post consultation in parallel to the STP timeline and will be a supporting document. Further, the wider work within TfN's Strategic Rail team on a 'blueprint' for the North is also an opportunity to address this feedback
- Greater focus on existing rail services is needed:** improved coverage of rail network, decreased journey times, more regular services, rural train routes, extended service time and more focus on passenger experience were all points raised by respondents. We intend to strengthen the narrative on all these issues in the STP and the Strategic Rail Report, to ensure we better reflect the role of all rail operators across our region not just TPE and Northern

- c) **Absence of light rail and mass transit systems:** several responses identified the absence of any reference to light rail and metro systems from the STP. We intend to include new text to address this gap, explaining the need for appropriate investment at the local level to support the enhancement of these services and improved integration into the wider transport network.

4.24 Opinions on **roads** were more mixed. It was acknowledged that the STP has shifted the dialogue, recognising the growing importance of: ensuring our existing road networks have resilience to climate change impacts; considering how existing highway space is used (to offer more choice); and continuing to secure enhancements where no other options were available. Feedback, which we intend to address in the roads and local connectivity narratives within the STP, are:

- a) **Mode shift to sustainable transport:** the importance of encouraging modal shift towards more sustainable modes was a key theme through the consultation. Respondents wanted to make public transport a priority by improving its affordability, with more park and ride facilities and better integration. Linked to this it was felt active travel investment and road reallocation to support that should be a priority above new capacity
- b) **Reduce car dependency:** the STP recognises that roads will continue to play a critical role in our transport system, and we need to invest in maintaining that asset. However, to achieve the transformation of the North, we need to improve the choices available for users. That may include re-considering how road space is allocated, and availability & usability of alternative options to private car use where appropriate, for example, improving rail connectivity for inter-city routes, and more options intra-urban for walking/cycling/bus services
- c) **More detail on investment:** respondents highlighted a desire to understand the road priorities in more detail. As is the case with rail, we will look to review the STP text to better articulate some of the strategic priorities already agreed through TfN Board. This will be supported by additional detail already sitting as part of our Major Roads Report which was published in 2021 and/or as part of our more recent recommendations to DfT and National Highways provided in the process of developing the Road Investment Strategy
- d) **Over-reliance on electric vehicles (EVs):** doubts and concerns regarding the reliance on EVs with the STP was expressed. The STP and TfN's Decarbonisation Strategy highlight the essential need for a complementary package of measures to achieve close to zero from surface transport emissions by 2045. We recognise that simply changing the fuel of private vehicles will not be enough to achieve our decarbonisation commitments and will ensure that balance is appropriately reflected.

(D) Areas for further work

4.25 The consultation identified several themes where further work to develop the evidence base may be appropriate, working in slower time with TfN partners:

- 1) Affordability of transport to the user
- 2) Better understanding the 'carrots and sticks' to enable more choice and incentivise the behaviour change necessary for mode shift
- 3) Better articulation of the challenges faced by rural areas
- 4) Providing further detail on how the STP will be implemented.

1) Affordability of transport to the user

4.26 We propose to add some additional text into the STP that draws out why this is important, using our TRSE and cost of living evidence. Beyond that we intend to undertake more work – with our partners - to strengthen the evidence base on this topic, given its complexity. As such, subject to TfN Board support, it is our

recommendation that we look to include this as a new action into table 6.2 of the STP and as a “required action” for TfN, and to incorporate this within our business planning.

2) Behavioural change

- 4.27 Feedback from the consultation recognised the STP’s ambitions will require a shift in user behaviour to more sustainable modes of travel, and that means better public transport options. While our ‘right share’ metrics reflect this, we recognise that behaviour change itself is an area where more evidence is needed to inform policy advice/options. Demand management, digital connectivity and public awareness are all facets that could impact behaviour change and affect mode choices. We intend to work with partners to better understand the drivers and barriers in the first instance and will again capture in table 6.2.

3) Better articulation of the challenges of rural areas

- 4.28 We propose to review the case for change, and policy & place sections of the STP to ensure the challenges are better articulated, drawing on our wider work on rural mobility. In addition, we are currently undertaking some bespoke analysis of our analytical framework to draw together a rural mobility evidence repository, which we can then share with our partners to support their own business case development. This work is due to conclude by March 2024.

4) Implementation of the STP

- 4.29 Many stakeholders, especially our local transport authority partners, have asked for us to provide further detail on how the plan will be implemented and delivered. Specifically, they want to see which schemes/interventions will be prioritised at a pan-regional level. The STP already includes many of the critical pan-regional schemes, but ahead of December Board we expect to work with partners to confirm the key priorities for the short to medium term (what we need to protect that is already committed, and what else we need to advocate for) to ensure these can be reflected within STP implementation advice, ahead of the Spring Budget.
- 4.30 In addition, we will work with partners to better define the short, medium, and long-term deliverables to support the TfN “required actions” (table 6.2). This includes specific work on topics such as decarbonisation, freight and logistics, connected mobility, buses and TRSE. Alongside, we are also preparing advice for the Board on how the transport planning system needs to change and evolve to realise the outcomes in the STP, including opportunities for more devolution (in line with the National Infrastructure Commission’s advice), better joining up across infrastructure policy and investment appraisal reform.

5. Next Steps:

- 5.1 TfN officers will continue to work on the revisions through October ahead of bringing a final STP back through TfN governance in November and December 2023 to seek sign off and adoption.
- 5.2 Once adopted by TfN Board, the final plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State as statutory advice early in 2024. This will be supported by advice on implementation.

6. Corporate Considerations:

Financial Implications

- 6.1 The financial implications related to STP publication and consultation are captured in the 2023/24 budget approved by TfN Board in March 2023.

Resource Implications

- 6.2 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 FY 2023/24.

Legal Implications

- 6.3 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

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

Environmental Implications

- 6.5 A full Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment was prepared to accompany the revised STP, supported by external expertise. These reports were also consulted upon alongside the revised STP and the findings of which are included in appendix A.

- 6.6 The ISA will document how and where consultation comments on the ISA/HRA have been addressed following completion of the consultation. This will include updated assessments where policies within the STP have been updated in response to the consultation. The revised ISA report will be brought back to TfN Board in December 2023 for approval.

Equality and Diversity

- 6.7 To accompany the revised STP we have undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment as part of the wider ISA, and where possible the findings of these were addressed in the consultation 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

- 6.8 As detailed above, the revised STP has undertaken a full statutory 12-week consultation period.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 N/A

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – STP consultation outcomes

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) ISA | Integrated Sustainability Appraisal |
| c) HRA | Habitats Regulation Assessment |
| d) APPG | All Party Parliamentary Group |
| e) TRSE | Transport Related Social Exclusion |