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**Meeting:** Transport for the North Board

**Subject:** Connected Mobility Work Update

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**Meeting Date:** Thursday 29 September 2022

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**1. Purpose of the Report:**

1.1 At its meeting on 30 March 2022 the Board agreed to the preparation of a Connected Mobility Strategy, the purpose of which is to support Transport for the North partners in the development and delivery of measures that improve the user experience. This paper provides an update on activity underway with partners across the North as a precursor to preparing the draft Strategy.

**2. Recommendation**

2.1 The Board is being asked to note the contents of this report and identify any further opportunities that it wishes to be explored as part of Transport for the North's work on Connected Mobility.

**3. Context**

3.1 The proposal to develop a Connected Mobility Strategy arose out of conversations with Transport for the North partners. These highlighted several issues that served to slow down progress with the implementation of connected mobility, including:

- A lack of capacity and capability within individual partners to take forward initiatives at the local level;
- A lack of experience within individual partners on the development of specific proposals, including a lack of knowledge of legislative and regulatory frameworks; and
- A lack of capacity and experience when it comes to procurement and delivery of proposal.

3.2 These issues do not affect all Transport for the North partners equally, with the larger Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) better placed to take forward work to deliver connected mobility than others.

3.3 Based on these discussions there was clear support for Transport for the North to support its partners by developing the Connected Mobility Strategy with a view to:

- Providing technical support for those partners seeking to develop and implement proposals that deliver connected mobility; and
- Sharing accumulated knowledge and experience from proposals introduced in the North to the benefit of subsequent proposals.

In this way Transport for the North's role complements initiatives being taken forward by individual partners in a way that ensures learning is shared more widely. Such a role is consistent with the desire of DfT for Sub-National

Transport bodies (STBs) to play an active role in reducing duplication of effort (and thereby accelerating implementation of proposals and reducing the incidence of avoidable costs being incurred).

- 3.4 In this role Transport for the North can of course draw on its experience derived from the Integrated Smart Ticketing programme, in particular the knowledge associated with specification and procurement of systems.
- 3.5 Transport for the North's role supporting the work of its partners in this space is particularly helpful when it comes to considering the needs of public transport services that operate across authority boundaries.
- 3.6 Transport for the North secured 'in-year' funding from the DfT in autumn 2021 to support its work in this space, with that activity being delivered in the current financial year.

#### **4. Connected Mobility Hub Pilot & Hub Plus**

##### Connected Mobility Hub Pilot

- 4.1 A key area of ongoing work surrounds the development and delivery of a Connected Mobility Hub pilot, funded by the 'in-year' funding. The aim of the hub is to provide additional support and capacity to partner authorities across shared thematic areas – such as smart ticketing and better information provision.
- 4.2 This approach – that of centring Transport for the North activity around supporting authorities in achieving their ambitions - has been well received by partners across the region.
- 4.3 The pilot is engaging and supporting authorities as both a knowledge hub and repository of shared experiences but also in providing additional injections of resource capacity from Transport for the North. This approach results in the authority receiving support and the experience gained being accumulated within Transport for the North for sharing with other partners.
- 4.4 The pilot for the hub is specifically targeted across supporting authorities to help them realise ambitions around:
  - The development and delivery of multi-operator ticketing;
  - Fares simplification and reform; and
  - Preparing for contactless capping.
- 4.5 These are the areas, linked with published Bus Service Improvement Plans, which are shared across regions and are areas at risk of duplicated effort and cost in their realisation.
- 4.6 In practice this will see a repository of boilerplate agreements, guidance and models developed from practical delivery across areas that can then be scaled and shared to expedite similar delivery in other regions.

##### Connected Mobility Hub Plus

- 4.7 As the pilot has been developed and engagement undertaken across authorities a further niche for support has emerged primarily with authorities outside the metropolitan areas or rural orientated authorities.
- 4.8 These authorities often carry the same ambitions, albeit with broader connectivity challenges given distances and limited infrastructure, as larger authorities but often have less access to funding and human resources through which to deliver them.

- 4.9 This has created a space where collective delivery across these authorities – with support from Transport for the North - would potentially provide an opportunity to help pool ambitions into more collaborative investment.
- 4.10 This has emerged as an area of work referred to as 'Connected Mobility Hub Plus' wherein a business case for collective investment has begun to emerge across member areas.
- 4.11 Engagement has commenced around collective approaches to maximising the impact of rural mobility funding, or Bus Service Improvement Plan funds, where there is a common aspiration for digital demand responsive travel (usually minibuses on demand).
- 4.12 Similarly, there is an appetite amongst Transport for the North partners for developing collective modelling tools into fares reform that can be used to uplift local capacity and decision making is also a key feature of these discussions.
- 4.13 At this stage, these discussions are in an early stage, albeit a suggested nominal figure was identified for a collective fund across these non-metropolitan authorities in the recent letter to the new Prime Minister, and this will continue to be worked through aligned with organisational aspirations as a regional centre of excellence.

## **5. Fares & Ticketing Reform**

- 5.1 Across all modes there is a recurring intention to simplify and reform fare structures and systems alongside the means through which people pay for them.
- 5.2 From developing multi-modal systems through to the development of pay as you go ticketing there is a need to ensure these approaches work collaboratively and in the interest of passengers.
- 5.3 Initial engagement with the Great British Rail Transition team has set out a need to ensure local networks are integrated with rail fare reform – noting particular relevance for areas with established multi-modal schemes and existing and understood zones.
- 5.4 The continued advocacy for Pay as You GO (PAYGO) on Rail to be delivered in the North as soon as possible continues to be made and should continue to be advanced. This is alongside ensuring clarity for members as to the direction of travel for pay as you go on bus; particularly how this will be realised, when and the implication for areas working towards franchised networks.
- 5.5 Transport for the North has repeatedly made the case that multi-modal integration of both the bus and heavy rail PAYGO approaches should be developed and deployed in the North and in alignment with existing multi-modal fare structures and zones to ensure relevance for passengers and avoiding introducing unnecessary complexity.
- 5.6 Transport for the North, in conjunction with and through the Rail North Partnership, is exploring a range of rail recovery pilots aligned to ticketing. These continue to be progressed collaboratively across the partnership and in alignment with ongoing fares activities being undertaken by the region's train operating companies.
- 5.7 These pilots being explored are:
- Better value fares;
  - Developing a refreshed approach to flexible season tickets; and
  - Encouraging group and leisure travel on the railway.

- 5.8 There have been productive discussions between the Department for Transport and train operating companies for these areas of consideration.
- 5.9 In its letter to the new Prime Minister, Transport for the North has set out a view that a subsidised fares freeze, to help support passengers travel during the cost-of-living crises, remains an objective.
- 5.10 Nonetheless many of these pilots are linked with ongoing areas of work across train operating companies and Transport for the North is keen to maximise and scale the strategic impact and passenger benefits of these under a broader objective of supporting rail and regional recovery post-pandemic.

## **6 Next Steps**

- 6.1 Transport for the North will continue to work with its partners to take forward initiatives that are consistent with the proposal for a Connected Mobility Strategy. In this regard Transport for the North is already working with a small number of partners, and Board members are invited to identify any further opportunities where they think Transport for the North can add value by supporting local initiatives.
- 6.2 The work currently underway will inform the development of the draft Connected Mobility Strategy which is scheduled to the Board for its consideration in Q4 of the current financial year. The development of the Strategy will be a key part of Transport for the North's work to enable and encourage the growth in the public transport offer that is a fundamental component of the Strategic Transport Plan and Regional Decarbonisation Strategy. Transport for the North's recently published work on Transport Related Social Exclusion further emphasises the importance of this area of work for Transport for the North.

## **7. Corporate Considerations**

### ***Financial Implications***

- 7.1 Transport for the North has limited budget it can bring to support these activities and many interventions could be considered. It is likely that there may be collective investment cases to be made; but Transport for the North will facilitate these in partnership with relevant local authorities.

### ***Resource Implications***

- 7.2 Transport for the North has 1 FTE post, a Connected Mobility Manager, out for recruitment at time of writing through which this area will be delivered. There is also ring-fenced funding of an Adviser position to support the Hub – the latter has not yet been filled.

### ***Legal Implications***

- 7.3 Where multiple authorities seek to work together there may be consideration of some of the statutory powers Transport for the North has alongside delivering ticketing schemes in collectively. This may not be needed as areas are exploring delivery through separate statutory processes (e.g Franchising or Enhanced Partnerships).

### ***Risk Management and Key Issues***

- 7.4 A key element of this area of work is bringing knowledge and expertise to support authorities. This may be hampered if Transport for the North does not have internal resource through which to provide this support or does not have within its headcount subject matter expertise that can add capacity viably to partners.

### ***Environmental Implications***

- 7.5 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.
- 7.6 The area of work should help support reduced single-occupancy vehicles and support the modal shift objectives within Transport for the North's Decarbonisation Strategy and the wider decarbonisation agenda across the North.

### ***Equality and Diversity***

- 7.7 As these areas of work are progressed there will continue to be a need to ensure equality considerations are made throughout. This is particularly the case where digital systems are being introduced where these may not be accessible to individual with special educational needs, impairments or may not be able to access single language self-serve systems due to English not being a first language.

### ***Consultations***

- 7.8 None

## **8. Background Papers**

- 8.1 None

## **9. Appendices**

- 9.1 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.*

1. **Digital Demand Responsive Travel** – Usually app-based platforms where minibuses can be scheduled flexibly based on demand in contrast to fixed route timetabled buses.
2. **BSIP** – Bus Service Improvement plans set out in alignment with the National Bus Strategy
3. **TOC** – Train Operating Company
4. **PAYGO** – Pay as You Go Ticketing
5. **STB** – Sub-national Transport Body
6. **MCA** – Mayoral Combined Authority (e.g West Yorkshire Combined Authority).