

Date: 1 September 2022

**The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps MP**

Secretary of State  
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**Lord McLoughlin CH**

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Dear Secretary of State,

**Re: HS2 – Delivering its Ambition**

Our Strategic Transport Plan sets out how delivery of HS2, together with NPR, is crucial to achieve the step change in connectivity required to support our economic growth, whilst ensuring the North contributes towards achieving the UK's requirements on net zero carbon.

It is on this basis that we continue to support wholeheartedly the full delivery of HS2 and are working closely with your team to deliver the ambition underpinning HS2 at the earliest opportunity.

The publication of the Hybrid Bill for Phase 2B, followed by the announcement that the Golborne Link, as proposed, has been dropped prompted a discussion at the TfN Board on 30<sup>th</sup> June. Key points raised by the Board were:

- a) **Golborne Link** – Sir Peter Hendy's Union Connectivity Report emphasised the importance of HS2 trains running through the North West and on to Scotland. Ensuring that HS2 trains are able to serve Wigan, Preston, Lancaster, Penrith and Oxenholme, Carlisle and on to Scotland remains a strategic priority for TfN and is essential in ensuring that the full range of benefits arising from the investment in HS2 is realised.

The Government's response to the UCR is an opportunity to set out what happens next. However it is important that work on an alternative solution to the Golborne Link, including upgrading of the West Coast Main Line, is taken forward at pace. In that spirit, we would like to explore how we might extend the use of our analytical capability to support your officials in the development of options for your consideration. Such an approach will help ensure that TfN (and partners) are fully engaged in the process.

- b) **Crewe Super Hub** – discussions with your officials have helpfully clarified that it remains the Department's intention that up to seven HS2 services an hour will serve Crewe, utilising the Crewe North Connection, which is a funded asset contained in the Hybrid Bill: however, the Board has noted that this contrasts with the 2 services per hour in the HS2 plans published to date.

We know that you are keen to ensure that the investment in HS2 acts as a catalyst for significant economic growth in/around Crewe (similar to that

being seen in Birmingham). Re-affirmation of the Government's commitment to invest in realising the ambition for Crewe as a super-hub (both in terms of track and supporting infrastructure) will strengthen the attractiveness of Crewe to private investors, thereby strengthening the overall case for the investment in HS2. Crewe's role as a super-hub offers the opportunity to extend the benefits of HS2 westwards to Chester and beyond in support of the North Wales economy.

- c) **Manchester Piccadilly** – whilst we welcome publication of the HS2-led study into the options for Piccadilly Station, we remain concerned that an appropriately optimised comparison of the options has yet to be completed. We have noted that the Transport Select Committee in its report has set out the need for further dialogue, linking this to the potential opportunity for local contributions. You will recall the TfN Board in its initial response to the IRP expressed a desire to explore with you the potential for local contributions to support enhanced outcomes.

We believe that identifying the best long-term solution for Piccadilly Station, to ensure the maximum benefit for the entire high speed network, and the maximum value from the investment being made over the life of the investment, is an opportunity that urgently requires further detailed consideration, including a full assessment of benefits, and TfN will work with all parties to agree a way forward.

- d) **HS2 Leeds Study** – the TfN Board has welcomed the various statements by your Ministerial team about the desire to find a solution that will enable HS2 trains to reach Leeds. We understand that the Department is keen to publish the terms of reference for the study as soon as possible: TfN is ready to help in whatever way it can to help you in this regard. We continue to support the group, chaired by Network Rail and which involves all relevant partners, that provides an appropriate forum to develop solutions and work through the challenges that lie ahead.

The need for pace with this study is heightened by the wider planning implications associated with the safeguarded land. We know that Leeds City Council has highlighted these matters in its own correspondence. A common theme here is the importance of identifying a long-term solution to addressing the constraints of the current layout of Leeds Station: the third highest source of delays across the entire UK rail network. Given the amount of strategic planning work that has been undertaken to date we believe it should be possible to complete the study at pace and to arrive at a preferred way forward.

As we have seen with Phase 1 of HS2, the detail of a major infrastructure project can evolve through its development phases: the key is to have agreement on the desired outcomes and to use the available analytical capability to inform the development of viable solutions.

The TfN Board has previously set out its wider concerns with the outcome of the IRP, which interfaces with the HS2 proposals. The IRP proposals do not provide the step change in connectivity to Bradford, nor the step change in capacity that

is required to deliver on the need to grow the railway to realise the North's economic potential and achieve the modal shift required to meet legal commitments on decarbonisation.

Over-reliance on upgrades, as opposed to new infrastructure, will provide less benefits and fewer connectivity improvements. Their delivery will give rise to significant levels of disruption over many years adversely affecting economic recovery.

The newly established Sponsor Arrangement provides a strong foundation on which we can build as we look to achieve the step change in connectivity that investment in the North's rail system will deliver. TfN is keen to explore with you how we might extend the current programme of activity to move forward at pace on the issues set out above.

I hope this letter is helpful and would welcome the opportunity to discuss its contents.

Yours sincerely,



Lord McLoughlin CH  
Chair, Transport for the North