



LEP – Sub Committee

LEP - Transport for Lancashire Committee

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Transport for the North Draft Strategic Transport Plan Public Consultation

**Report Author: Dave Colbert, Tel: 01772 534501, Specialist Advisor Transport Planning
dave.colbert@lancashire.gov.uk**

Executive Summary

Transport for the North is consulting on a draft Strategic Transport Plan (STP) for the North of England. Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackpool Council will each be submitting their own responses. This report identifies three key strategic concerns that the Transport for Lancashire committee may wish to raise with TfN independently on behalf of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership. These relate to proposals for the development and delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail / Long Term Rail Strategy, the Major Road Network and Strategic Development Corridor priorities. The report also identifies those long-term strategic transport requirements set out in the Lancashire Strategic Transport Prospectus that are relevant to the Strategic Development Corridors that the committee may wish to draw to TfN's attention.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to consider the three key strategic concerns set out in this report as the basis for an independent submission by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership.

Background and Advice

Transport for the North (TfN) is a partnership of civic and business leaders from across the North that will become the first statutory Sub-National Transport Body in England from April 2018. Its principal role will be to act as a statutory advisor to the Secretary of State for Transport, with responsibility for setting the objectives and priorities for strategic road and rail in the TfN area. To that end and working with the Department for Transport, Highways England, Network Rail, High Speed 2 (HS2) Ltd and partner transport authorities, TfN has prepared a Strategic Transport Plan (STP) for the North of England that sets out the future requirements for its strategic transport networks. The STP will be a statutory document that will inform future Government investment



decisions; TfN is now consulting formally on a draft of that plan. The deadline for receipt of responses is 17th April 2018.

Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackpool Council will each be submitting their own responses. This report identifies three key strategic concerns that the Transport for Lancashire committee may wish to raise with TfN independently on behalf of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership. These relate to proposals for the development and delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail / Long Term Rail Strategy, the Major Road Network and Strategic Development Corridor priorities.

The focus of the draft STP is unashamedly economic, with significant long-term investment in transport infrastructure seen as essential to support transformational growth across the North. The North is currently underachieving, with the economic value per person 25% below the England average and income per person £7,500 less. In addition to issues such as a lack of highly skilled opportunities and lower levels of enterprise, poor transport links and under investment in transport are key factors contributing towards these gaps.

The Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review identified four economic strengths in which the North is globally competitive, with each strength strongly represented in Lancashire. These are:

- Advanced manufacturing;
- Digital;
- Energy; and
- Health innovation.

Promoting, growing and connecting these four "prime capabilities" is expected to deliver higher productivity. The four prime capabilities are supported by three "enabling capabilities" - education (particularly higher education), financial and professional services and logistics.

TfN sees its role in supporting economic growth as:

- Connecting people – by creating faster, more reliable transport connections to improve job opportunities, provide access to leisure activities and support tourism;
- Connecting businesses – supporting commerce by improving national and international connections in, out and across the North; and
- Moving goods – by improving links across the North and to ports and airports to enable freight and goods to move more efficiently.

By 2050, with a transformed economy the North could achieve a near £100bn increase in Gross Value Added and create 850,000 additional jobs. To identify the transport infrastructure improvements necessary to deliver this ambition, TfN is currently undertaking a considerable amount of analytical work to understand where future growth is likely to occur and its likely impacts on roads, the rail network, ports and airports.



To this end, the draft STP focuses on four key programmes that could amount to investment of £60-£70 billion over the period from 2020 to 2050:

- **Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR)** – rapid, reliable and resilient rail links between six of the North's largest cities (Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield) and between those cities and Manchester Airport;
- **Long Term Rail Strategy (LTRS)** – a framework for the ongoing development of the North's existing railway into a single cohesive network through investment in lines, stations, services and future franchises to deliver across its five key themes of connectivity, capacity, the customer, supporting communities and cost effectiveness;
- **Major Road Network** – strengthening the road links across the North that are vital for economic growth;
- **Integrated and Smart Travel** – to bring forward a new era of simple and seamless public transport journeys across the North.

Whilst acknowledging the rationale for **Northern Powerhouse Rail** as set out in the draft STP, the committee may wish to raise concerns about inference and presentation. Enhancing rail connectivity between the North's largest cities will not be a game changer in its own right. NPR should be more properly set within the wider context of the LTRS, of which it should be part, to avoid interpretation as a 'solution chasing a problem'. The premise for NPR should therefore flow from the analysis underpinning the LTRS as well as the Independent Economic Review. This collective evidence base needs to demonstrate that the North cannot achieve transformational economic growth simply through upgrading existing rail infrastructure and services alone.

The **Major Road Network** set out in the consultation draft is significantly larger than the indicative MRN included in the recent Department for Transport consultation setting out its proposals to create a Major Road Network. Clearly, there will need to be a consolidation of views going forward, as it will be self-defeating to have two MRNs defined in the North.

In addition, TfN has identified seven **Strategic Development Corridors (SDCs)** across the North where TfN will focus on improving transport infrastructure. These corridors link important prime capability assets and important economic centres that are currently in need of improved connectivity; four are relevant to Lancashire. TfN considers investment in the SDCs as critical to achieving the North's collective ambitions, hence their importance:

- **Central Pennines** – a multi-modal Trans-Pennine corridor linking Lancashire with North Yorkshire and the Leeds City Region;
- **Connecting the Energy Coasts** – a multi-modal Trans-Pennine corridor linking some of the UK's most important energy assets on both the East and West Coasts and covering Lancaster and the Fylde Coast;
- **West and Wales** – a multi-modal corridor extending west from Manchester to North Wales and covering the M58 Corridor in West Lancashire;



- **North West to Sheffield City Region** – a rail focused corridor linking advanced manufacturing centres in Cumbria and Lancashire with those in Greater Manchester and the Sheffield City Region.

The Central Pennines, Connecting the Energy Coasts and West and Wales studies are currently underway and due to be completed by the autumn to inform the final Strategic Transport Plan, which TfN will publish later this year. However, there is currently no timescale for commissioning the North West to Sheffield City Region SDC study. Given the implied absolute priority given to developing NPR throughout the STP, the Committee may wish to see TfN progress the North West to Sheffield City Region SDC immediately and set it alongside the ongoing NPR work. The North West to Sheffield City Region SDC is of strategic importance to Lancashire given ongoing joint work with the Sheffield City Region to develop the Northern Powerhouse Advanced Manufacturing Corridor that anticipated this SDC coming forward. As Members will be aware, this joint working has enabled key initiatives such as the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) North West on the Samlesbury Aerospace Enterprise Zone.

In its current form, NPR will be of little benefit to communities along the West Coast Main Line, including the key growth centres of Preston and Lancaster. The diagram on Page 45 of the draft STP only serves to reinforce that sense of separation and a perception that these places add little economic value. With an estimated 5 million passenger trips annually and a further 1.49 million interchanges, Preston Station is one of the busiest in the North of England. It lies at the heart of the geographic area covered by the Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal, one of the most significant growth agendas in the North that will create over 20,000 net new private sector jobs and deliver 17,000 new homes by 2025, increasing the size of the local economy by £1bn.

In future, Preston station will serve as the access point for HS2 services for a large catchment with a population of over 1.4m people extending across much of Lancashire and South Cumbria and including Barrow, Blackburn, Blackpool, Burnley, Kendal, Lancaster and Windermere. Its transformation into a modern 21st century facility is a key priority for both the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and Lancashire County Council.

Following this consultation, TfN will update the draft STP in light of responses received. It will be for TfN acting as the statutory Sub-national Transport Body for the North to approve and sign-off the final STP. As voting members of TfN, the County Council along with Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool Councils will have the opportunity to participate in that process.

The committee may wish to draw TfN's attention to the following long-term strategic transport requirements of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership as set out in the Lancashire Strategic Transport Prospectus, December 2016.



Central Pennines Strategic Development Corridor

East-west connectivity by road between East Lancashire, North Yorkshire and the Leeds City Region is currently restricted to single carriageway roads that tend to follow historic routes dictated by topography; most are poorly aligned and unsuitable for carrying large volumes of traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles. Main line rail links are likewise constrained, with low line speeds, ageing infrastructure and limited capacity having a significant impact on journey times and reliability. Both are of a much lower quality than those further to the south that link Liverpool and Manchester with Leeds, Sheffield and the Humber ports. Note also that there are currently no through train services between East Lancashire and Manchester Airport.

Several long-standing aspirations for improved strategic connectivity in the Central Pennines corridor by both road and rail currently exist and a number of schemes have been considered in the past; however, to date little has been forthcoming. It is therefore not surprising there is a strong perception locally that the transport network hinders the efficient movement of people and goods, and that this poor connectivity is having a negative impact on economic development and regeneration.

The M65 represents the key economic corridor of East Lancashire, linking the towns of Blackburn, Accrington, Burnley, Nelson and Colne with the M6 and M61 motorways at Bamber Bridge near Preston. It plays an essential role in the local economy, connecting people and businesses internally as well as providing the primary means of access to the M6, particularly for freight. Almost all existing and future strategic employment site developments in East Lancashire are located in close proximity to the M65 and/or require effective access to and from it.

Unlike most motorways, the M65 is not three lanes throughout its length, with reduced capacity on some sections, particularly between the M61 (Junction 2) and Junction 6 at Whitebirk east of Blackburn. Evidence now suggests that the current level of demand at peak times is causing congestion, exacerbated by the limited capacity, traffic flow composition and the capacity and close proximity of some junctions. The LEP would therefore wish to see improvements to this stretch of the M65 in Road Investment Strategy 2 to ensure that the motorway has sufficient capacity to accommodate future economic growth.

The M65 ends abruptly at Colne, the continuation across the Pennines into North Yorkshire and the Leeds City Region provided by the A6068 and A56 routes linking with the A629 at Cross Hills in Airedale and the A59 at Broughton west of Skipton respectively. The LEP considers the introduction of the new National Road Fund from April 2020 and associated definition of a Major Road Network represents a genuine opportunity to address the east-west connectivity challenge in the Central Pennines and to resolve these outstanding issues.

The LEP acknowledges the commitment in the current Northern franchise to introduce brand new or refurbished diesel trains on the Blackpool North to York service via Preston, Blackburn, Burnley Manchester Road and Leeds as part of the wider 'Northern Connect' network. However, modernisation and electrification of the route would deliver transformational change to city region connectivity across the North and for East Lancashire in particular. The North of England Electrification Task Force



report of March 2015 included the full 'Calder Valley' route, including to Burnley and Preston, as a Tier 1 scheme for implementation in Control Period 6 (2019 to 2024). The LEP also welcomes the recent announcement by the Secretary of State to fund a feasibility study of the potential to reinstate the railway between Colne and Skipton.

Also in East Lancashire, the importance of strategic transport links into Manchester from the Rossendale Valley needs to be recognised. The M66 is Rossendale's key transport link with the rest of the country, as other road connections are severely constrained by topography and the borough has no station on the national rail network and is remote from it. Very severe congestion now occurs on the M66 during peak periods and increasingly at other times. This affects travel to and from Greater Manchester, particularly for commuters using the express bus services that Transdev operates into Manchester city centre from East Lancashire using purpose-built luxury coaches. Aspirations remain for the reinstatement of a main line rail service between Rawtenstall and Manchester for commuters using existing heritage railway infrastructure.

Elsewhere on the rail network in this SDC geography, the most direct route between Liverpool and Preston requires a change of trains at Ormskirk. The train service linking Preston with Ormskirk is hourly and operated by poor quality rolling stock, contrasting starkly with the fast and frequent service Merseyrail operates between Ormskirk and Liverpool using electric trains. Through services between Preston and Liverpool travel via Wigan North Western with a journey time of approximately one hour. Refurbished electric trains now operate these services, some of which extend to Liverpool South Parkway for access to/from Liverpool John Lennon Airport. Also in West Lancashire, Skelmersdale is one of the largest towns in the country without a town centre railway station. Lancashire County Council is currently working with partners including Network Rail and Merseytravel to develop a proposal for a new rail link and town centre railway station. A new railway station could act as a direct stimulus in terms of employment and housing development, allowing residents of the town to benefit from its proximity to both Liverpool and Manchester city centres.

Connecting the Energy Coasts Strategic Development Corridor

The LEP expects connectivity issues in Lancashire to receive equal consideration to those elsewhere within this SDC geography given the quantum of energy related assets located in the county. There are specific issues with regard to strategic access to and from the northern Fylde Coast, particularly by road. The A585 trunk road, which links the Hillhouse International Business Park Enterprise Zone at Thornton with the M55, is one of the most congested routes in the North West. Hillhouse is a prime location for industrial and commercial development, and is currently home to several multi-national companies engaged in the manufacture of advanced materials and polymers. Whilst the LEP is supportive of the commitment in the Government's first Road Investment Strategy (RIS1) to deliver a new, off-line bypass of Little Singleton to reduce the impact of traffic on the local community and remove the bottleneck, the A585 needs to operate as effectively as possible along its entire length between the M55 and Fleetwood.

Further north, the LEP and the County Council are supporting the development and delivery of the Bailrigg Garden Village near Lancaster, one of the Government's 14



designated garden villages. This requires the reconfiguration of M6 Junction 33, which will also unlock expansion plans at Lancaster University, one of the UK's top teaching and research institutes.

Despite the ongoing investment in the modernisation and electrification of the railway line between Preston and Blackpool, the wider rail network serving the Fylde Coast and Morecambe/Heysham will remain an underutilised asset without further investment in infrastructure and services. There may be opportunities for integration with the Blackpool Tramway, for example, in the South Fylde and the Fleetwood area, complementing committed investment through the Lancashire Growth Deal that will deliver an extension of the tramway from the Promenade to Blackpool North station by mid 2019. Seamless interchange between the rail network and tram system will be achieved for the first time to the benefit of both residents and visitors.

Further north, because of the fragmented rail network around Morecambe Bay and into the southern Lake District, there are limited options for through journeys. Most require a change of train at Lancaster as there are no direct services between Morecambe and Barrow and interchange between Furness Line and Windermere Line services is not possible at Carnforth due to previous rationalisation of track and station infrastructure. Addressing these limited connections could open up opportunities to access jobs around the Energy Coast 'West', particularly in the advanced manufacturing and nuclear sectors, and support tourism and leisure activity given the close proximity of Morecambe Bay and the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.

Central Lancashire

Central Lancashire, with the city Preston at its heart, is a transport hub of national significance straddling the Central Pennines, Connecting the Energy Coasts and North West to Sheffield City Region Strategic Development Corridors. It provides most of Lancashire's connections to the West Coast Main Line, the M6 and, in the future, to HS2. The Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal agreed with the Government in September 2013 builds on the strong economic performance of the area and will create over 20,000 net new private sector jobs and deliver 17,000 new homes by 2025, increasing the size of the local economy by £1bn. Lancashire's growth sectors will account for many of these jobs, in particular, the Enterprise Zones at Samlesbury and Warton where EZ activity is forecast to create some 6,000 new jobs. However, Preston's business and financial sector will also expand, with the University of Central Lancashire (the country's fifth largest in terms of student numbers) reconfiguring to place itself at the heart of the city.

The M6 Preston Bypass is the busiest section of motorway in Lancashire and one of the busiest in the North West. It is the critical link in the county's strategic highway network, catering for east-west travel between the Fylde Coast and East Lancashire in addition to travel in the nationally significant north-south corridor. There is also significant interaction with the local highway network during morning and evening peak periods leading to congestion on the M6 and at a number of interfaces. Even with full delivery of the four road schemes identified in the City Deal, evidence suggests that Preston Bypass will be under pressure by 2026, particularly during peak periods on the section between Junctions 30 and 32 with the M61 and M55 respectively.



Many existing and future commercial and residential development opportunities in Central Lancashire lie close to the M6. The LEP would welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with Highways England, Transport for the North and Lancashire County Council to investigate the wider resilience issues facing the SRN in Central Lancashire including potential benefits to the M6 from the establishment and future development of the Preston/South Ribble Western Distributor route. This route, which will link the M55 at a new Junction 2 with the M6/M61/M65 motorways at Cuerden, is central to the City Deal, supporting delivery of a number of strategic housing locations together with the regionally significant Cuerden strategic site. Cuerden, which lies close to the intersection of the M6, M61 and M65 motorways, has the potential to create over 4,500 new jobs locally.

City deal partners aspire to deliver a new crossing of the River Ribble that would connect the South Ribble Western distributor with the Preston Western Distributor, providing a continuous dual carriageway for distributing regional and local traffic movements across a wide area including Central and West Lancashire and the Fylde Coast. This would reduce pressure on the M6 between Junctions 29 and 32 and provide much needed network resilience. Whilst delivery of the City Deal is not predicated on a new crossing, such a scheme has the potential to support significant further economic growth and development in Central Lancashire and its environs beyond the current Local Plan period to 2026. Furthermore, early indications using the traffic model developed as part of the Preston Western Distributor Business Case preparation suggest it will have a significant positive impact on the Strategic Road Network to the west and north of Preston (the M6 and M55).

Preston station lies approximately mid-way between Glasgow and London on the West Coast Main Line and as referenced earlier, with an estimated 5 million passenger trips annually and a further 1.49 million interchanges, is one of the busiest stations in the North of England and the busiest in the North West outside of Manchester and Liverpool city centres. In addition to West Coast Main Line services to London, Birmingham, Glasgow and Edinburgh, there are also regular direct trains to Manchester city centre, Manchester Airport and Liverpool, and to Leeds in the increasingly important east-west corridor linking Lancashire with North and West Yorkshire. The station provides connections into these services from Blackpool, Blackburn and East Lancashire, Lancaster and the Lake District. It is therefore a critical asset for the city and for Lancashire as a whole, serving as a gateway for an extensive catchment of communities further afield, particularly for connectivity with the West Coast Main Line.

Whilst Preston station has retained its original Victorian fabric, it has received limited/piecemeal investment over several decades, resulting in a poor passenger experience and preventing the station from contributing towards the wider commercial development of the city centre. The station building lacks presence, resulting in poor first impressions of the city for visitors and poor customer satisfaction. A number of key issues need addressing, both from a rail operating perspective, particularly once HS2 services begin operating in 2026, and from a passenger perspective in terms of access, circulation and safety. With ongoing upgrades to key routes linking Preston with Manchester, Liverpool and Blackpool and the impending introduction of new



rolling stock on a number of key services, for passengers, the contrast between the station and on-board experience will quickly become even starker.

Freight

The committee may wish to welcome the strong emphasis given to freight transport in the draft STP but request that further attention be given to the so-called 'last mile' of freight movements. Whilst acknowledging such access is an economic necessity, the STP should take a lead on developing a pan-northern framework for concepts such as freight consolidation centres. These could help to reduce/eliminate the challenges associated with large vehicles in urban areas, particularly in city and town centres where there is an increasing desire to 'place-shape' the built environment in favour of people.