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| **Cheshire & Warrington Local Transport Body** |

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| **Date of Meeting:** | Friday 6 April 2018 |
| **Report of:** | Roy Newton |
| **Subject/Title:** | Draft Response to TfN’s Strategic Transport Plan Consultation |
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1. **Report Summary** 
   1. Transport for the North will become the first statutory Sub-national Transport Body (STB) from 1 April 2018. At this point the partnership will be formalised and governed through the TfN Members Board comprising of the 19 constituent authorities of Local Transport Authorities in the North.
   2. One of the Government’s requirements for Transport for the North becoming an STB was that TfN produce and publish a Strategic Transport Plan (STP). Preparation of the STP has been on-going since 2016 and in mid-January they published a consultation draft, the closing date for responses being 17 April 2018.
   3. The Cheshire & Warrington LEP and the three local authorities have been closely involved at both Officer and Member (through the TfN Partnership Board) level in the production of the STP. The STP aligns with the aims and ambitions of the sub-region to grow the economy, and sets out the importance of transport investment to make it happen.
   4. Given the level of alignment it is proposed to submit a relatively short response, rather than using TfN’s detailed on line questionnaire, to highlight some of the most significant potential benefits for the sub-region as well as some key concerns that will need to be addressed by TfN in the longer term. A copy of the draft response is set out in Appendix 1. Any remaining minor issues of detail within the STP can be addressed through the on-going joint working as part of TfN.
2. **Recommendation**
   1. The Local Transport Body is asked to approve the draft response, subject to any LTB amendments, to TfN’s Strategic Transport Plan consultation.

Appendix 1

**Draft response to Transport for the North – Strategic Transport Plan**

**General Comments**

The Cheshire and Warrington Local Transport Body (LTB) is a sub-committee of the Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (C&WLEP). Its membership comprises the C&WLEP Board lead for transport and the Leader or Cabinet lead for transport from Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, and Warrington Borough Council. The LTB welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Transport for the North Strategic Transport Plan. We broadly support the content of the consultation draft and welcome its focus on delivering economic growth. We look forward to working with you on any necessary refinements to the Plan before its adoption later this year. We agree that the STP must be a dynamic document that will evolve over coming years. This will allow it to react to changing circumstances.

The Strategic Economic Plan for our sub-region includes a series of clearly defined outcomes that are sought to enable growth targets to be met by 2040:

* An aim to grow the economy to at least a £50 billion a year economy in terms of Gross Value Added;
* To increase the number of jobs by 120,000 (net additional);
* To build up to 127,000 new homes;
* To improve productivity per resident such that it is 20% higher than the UK average;
* Enhancing Cheshire and Warrington as an attractive, aspirational and successful place that supports economic growth;
* Delivering a transport system in line with the needs of local people and businesses; and
* Embracing new technologies and innovation to support efficient delivery of transport provision.

Improving transport and connectivity are central to ensuring that aspirations for growth within Cheshire and Warrington are met. Despite having less than 10% of the North’s population we are already ahead of target and on-course to deliver 25% of the STP’s GVA target by 2040. However, lack of investment in transport in the area would choke off this growth, given increasing congestion and unreliable journey times on the Strategic and Major Road Networks and poor east-west connectivity, long journey times and poor rolling stock on the rail network. It is, therefore, vitally important that TfN supports the sub-region to access the funding that will needed to deliver the STP’s objectives.

We welcome TfN’s commitment to developing strong evidence and analysis to make the case for further investment in the North’s strategic transport network. An evidence based approach will be essential for securing the public and private sector funding required to deliver the economic growth target. We also welcome TfN expanding the range of analysis to include the full range of economic impacts in business cases.

We welcome the work being undertaken in the West and Wales Strategic Development Corridor Study and the involvement of the LEP and local authorities to date, but have some concerns over the speed at which the study is being undertaken. It is particularly important that the study identifies and sequences the necessary infrastructure for delivery such that it supports the growth. There is a risk that key elements may be missed or are insufficiently assessed due to the tight timescale for completion. It is critical that the study provides robust evidence base to secure funding for the infrastructure required to deliver the growth target.

In response to the specific question about TfN’s “focus on the last mile as a means to improve the overall reliability, efficiency, quality and resilience of the North’s road network” we agree that the first and last mile is a critical component of journeys which inevitably involve the local (non-SRN or MRN) highway network. We consider that the local highway authorities are best placed to identify and develop solutions, however, TfN could usefully help local authorities to secure funding for such improvements.

**Rail Specific Comments**

With respect to Rail, the Transport for the North work programmes split this area into two sections, firstly Northern Powerhouse Rail – which aims to *“significantly improve capacity, frequency, speed and services between the North’s main economic centres”* and secondly the Long Term Rail Strategy which is aimed at *“improving train services, stations and lines on the wider rail network.”* Our comments on these two sections are as follows:

Northern Powerhouse Rail - NPR (pages 44-47)

Cheshire and Warrington fully support the main objective of NPR to achieve a step change in the level of rail connectivity across the North of England. Since the proposals were first tabled they have developed considerably and this has included the identification of a number of Other Significant Economic Centres (OSECs) which include Warrington and Crewe and recognises that Northern Powerhouse Rail must directly serve both of these places in order to achieve its objectives. This is very much welcomed by the LTB.

It is important that the NPR proposals must take account of the proposed HS2 Hub Station at Crewe. The LTB welcomes TfN’s support for this and we undertake to continue to fully support TfN in the further development of NPR and to ensure that it is entirely complementary to the full HS2 hub station at Crewe. It is critical that NPR services call at Crewe to complement the proposed HS2 services which are planned to serve the HS2 Hub Station. This will be vital to support the Constellation Partnership’s emerging growth strategy, which is a key component of our Strategic Economic Plan. To this end it is essential that the new northern junction is delivered at Crewe as part of HS2 Phase 2b.

The LTB also supports the emerging vision for NPR which includes *“A new line between Liverpool and the HS2 Manchester Spur via Warrington.”* It is very much welcomed that NPR services are to serve Warrington (and indeed the early work has demonstrated that calling all NPR services at Warrington improves the NPR business case), however it is essential that any Warrington NPR station is located in a town centre location at Warrington Bank Quay to ensure that NPR fully supports and enables the regeneration of Warrington New City which is also a key component of our Strategic Economic Plan. Locating the station at Warrington Bank Quay will also ensure that passengers using rail services from Chester and North Wales will be able to easily interchange onto NPR rail services to access the main economic centres across the North of England. The LTB would have serious concerns about any proposal for NPR to serve an out of town ‘parkway’ station in Warrington as this would have a major detrimental impact on the Warrington New City regeneration plans and impact upon the M56, M6 and M62 motorways which increasingly suffer from congestion and journey time reliability problems.

Further to the above the LTB supports the proposal for NPR to use the proposed HS2 Phase 2B Manchester Spur as part of the NPR network, which will allow HS2 and NPR services to better utilise this section of HS2 and ensure that the benefits from HS2 for the North of England are maximised. It will also ensure that all major economic centres across the North of England are well connected to Manchester Airport, which is the hub airport for the whole of the North. We would urge that every effort is made to secure the delivery of the new NPR route between Liverpool and the HS2 Manchester spur via Warrington simultaneously with HS2 Phase 2B for them to both open in 2033. However we wish to seek categorical assurances from TfN and HS2 that the highest standards of environmental mitigation will be applied to these routes.

We would also like to work with TfN to ensure that the case for NPR services to provide direct connections to Chester and North Wales is carefully examined as part of the further development of the NPR proposals.

Long Term Rail Strategy - LTRS (pages 48-53)

The LTB supports the five key themes of the LTRS (Connectivity, Capacity, Customer, Community, and Cost Effectiveness). We have recently published our “West and Wales Strategic Rail Prospectus” setting out our case for investment in all aspects of our rail network and services across Cheshire and Warrington from North Wales to Stoke and Staffordshire. We urge TfN to look carefully at our proposals contained within this and seek their support to secure the inclusion of improvements in future Network Rail Control Period investment programmes. This also needs to ensure that these improvement are complementary and fully support the HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals, including the hub stations at Crewe and Warrington Bank Quay. Further to this there is a pressing need to ensure that HS2 and NPR are well connected to Chester and North Wales – with a critical part of this being a much improved hub station at Chester which we urge TfN to fully support.