



Report to:	Transport Committee
Date:	29 January 2024
Subject:	Rail Strategy Update
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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the outcome of the public consultation of the emerging Rail Strategy.
- 1.2 To seek the Committee's endorsement of the revised Rail Strategy Executive Summary and Rail Strategy full document prior to submission to the Combined Authority on 14 March 2024 for approval.

2. Information

Background

- 2.1 The Combined Authority has a statutory duty to produce and keep under review a Local Transport Plan (LTP) on behalf of West Yorkshire. A new Local Transport plan for West Yorkshire is currently being produced, reflecting the significant development in local and wider city region transport policy that has followed since 2017. It will focus on where change is most needed to deliver the strategic ambition of the West Yorkshire Plan. One of the key actions for change outlined in the West Yorkshire Plan is to develop an integrated, affordable, sustainable, reliable and resilient transport system that connects

all parts of our region, so everyone can access the places they need to live fulfilled lives, boosting productivity, increasing innovation, and creating jobs.

- 2.2 The rail network plays an important part in the lives of the people and the businesses of West Yorkshire, connecting our towns and cities together and linking our region to the rest of the North. In 2021, the Combined Authority consulted on the draft Rail Vision as part of our Connectivity Infrastructure Plan engagement. The objectives set out in the Rail Vision were strongly supported by those who replied to the engagement survey, with around 80% of respondents saying they fully or partly support the Rail Vision. The Rail Vision put the rail network at the core of a fully integrated transport system of public transport, cycling and walking which is attractive and conveniently accessible to everyone.
- 2.3 Based on the feedback of the Rail Vision, we have developed our Rail Strategy. The purpose of the Rail Strategy is to provide a coherent, formally established, local rail policy:
- to support securing and prioritising funding.
 - to align policies, decision making and investment and link them to our region's economic objectives.
- 2.4 It will serve as a regional evidence base and policy position for local partners and industry stakeholders to use as a basis for making the case for investment in our rail network, as and when funding opportunities become available.
- 2.5 The Rail Strategy sets out the Combined Authority's priorities, the next steps and interventions required to deliver the Rail Vision for West Yorkshire up to 2050. It looks at how we can address the urgent issues impacting the railways, such as frequency, capacity and passenger experience. It also looks at our priorities for the development of the rail network, transforming national and regional rail connectivity and ensuring there is adequate capacity for increased freight on the railways. The Rail Strategy will form a key supplementary document that underpins the new Local Transport Plan (LTP4).
- 2.6 The Rail Strategy has identified 4 key priorities with an implementation plan supporting the delivery of these priorities. The priorities are:
- Delivery capacity for growth
 - Improving station facilities and train services
 - Decarbonisation
 - Increasing capacity for freight

Rail Strategy Public Consultation

- 2.7 Between 12 June 2023 to 3 September 2023, the Combined Authority carried out a period of statutory consultation to gather feedback on the emerging Rail Strategy.

Statutory consultees and other stakeholders with an interest in rail were asked to share their views on the updated document, which was hosted on a dedicated page on the [Your Voice digital engagement hub](#) and was promoted on a range of channels including social media, press releases, and emails to statutory and key stakeholders. The consultation was also open to the general public.

- 2.8 Overall, 174 responses were received, of which 46 were from organisations (15 statutory consultees and 31 non-statutory) and 128 from individuals.
- 2.9 All survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for the Rail Strategy. 91% of respondents said they fully or partly support the Rail Strategy and 63% of respondents indicated their full support. The Rail Strategy Consultation Outcome report is linked to this report at point 12.
- 2.10 The key themes of the consultation feedback are summarised as follows:
- Recognition of the importance of Rail for West Yorkshire and the importance of this Rail Strategy, and the poor nature of the existing rail offer in the region.
 - Strong support for more integration, particularly with buses as the other predominant form of public transport, but with all other modes including cycling and walking.
 - Importance of electrification within the region, in particular on a couple of already identified key corridors such as the Calder Valley Line.
 - A lot of support for the Rail Strategy’s focus on decarbonisation, the environment, and encouraging modal shift.
 - Suggestions of further methods of integration such as fare integration, a simplified fare structure, clockface scheduling, and further integration with proposed mass transit for the future.
 - Importance of improving stations, particularly around accessibility, passenger experience, and retaining physical ticket offices.
 - A strong focus on reopening old lines and support for a range of new or reopened stations.
 - A demand for schemes to start sooner and for more detail around delivery times.
 - A request for continued engagement with statutory and key stakeholders.

Next Steps

- 2.11 All written comments have been considered by the Combined Authority. Based on the feedback received, we have strengthened some of the wording in the Rail Strategy particularly around rolling stock and decarbonisation.
- 2.12 Following the public consultation, in October 2023 the government published the Network North proposals. While the Government’s 2021 Integrated Rail Plan and 2023 Network North made beneficial commitments to invest in the railway including Transpennine Route Upgrade, Leeds – Sheffield and Leeds – Hull electrification plus a new Bradford

station with a link to Huddersfield, these commitments are not enough to deliver the investment required to support our region's economy and our commitment to decarbonisation. Reflecting on the Network North announcement, amendments have been made to the wording of the Rail Strategy and we have set out our requirements beyond Network North. The Combined Authority is keen to progress the following key priorities of the region which are currently not included in the Network Rail or the Integrated Rail Plan:

- Development and agreement of a solution to resolve rail capacity at Leeds station which includes a new T-shaped station and land to remain safeguarded until a solution is agreed.
- Exploring options and next steps to improve connectivity between West / South Yorkshire and the East / West Midlands, now extending HS2 services to Leeds is no longer an option.
- Agreeing a way forward to progress a rolling programme of electrification including Calder Valley line and Harrogate Line electrification. Our rail strategy identifies electrifying the Calder Valley line as a key priority for the region and a logical next step build on the IRP electrification proposals between Leeds and Bradford Interchange and also to provide an electrified diversionary route to the TransPennine route.

2.13 Both the Executive Summary and the full Rail Strategy are linked to this report at point 12.

2.14 During the consultation, we received a large number of responses making suggestions and recommendations for potential changes to existing rail service patterns and/or potential new services on the existing network. These comments are extremely helpful, however, this level of detail and specificity cannot be covered within the Rail Strategy itself and, in some cases, there may be several potentially sound options to deliver the outcomes required. All of the specific suggestions received are greatly appreciated by the Combined Authority, have been read in detail and will be used to inform the potential concrete options for delivering our priorities for improved connectivity. It is notable that the proposals received are very much in line with the Rail Strategy's overall objectives in terms of frequency and connectivity. We also received helpful comments about integration and fares, these are crucial elements of an integrated transport system which will be covered in further work as part of the Local Transport Plan.

2.15 The Frequently Asked Questions will be updated to provide answers to feedback which cannot be fully addressed in the Rail Strategy document.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 A reliable and robust local, regional and national rail network with appropriate investment will help to provide an attractive alternative for road transport which will help tackling climate emergency and protect our environment.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 The principle of inclusive growth is central to the emerging Rail Strategy to ensure that there is a strong focus on local connectivity particularly in hard to reach and economically deprived areas where the rail offer is in need of modernisation.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 Ensuring an effective, stable and affordable public transport network is key for equality and diversity. Equality and diversity are the key objectives for the Rail Strategy. An Equality Impact Assessment has also been completed for the emerging Rail Strategy.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. The development and implementation of the rail priorities will require further financial commitment and the financial implications will be set out in subsequent reports at a later stage.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Staffing Implications

- 8.1 The consultation will be dealt with by our existing staff in the Rail Policy Team.

9. External Consultees

- 9.1 District officers, members, rail industry and Transport for the North have been consulted during the development of the Rail Strategy. A public consultation has been completed for the emerging Rail Strategy.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 That the Committee note the outcome of the Rail Strategy public consultation.
- 10.2 That the Committee endorse the revised Rail Strategy Executive Summary and Rail Strategy full document prior to submission to the Combined Authority on 14 March 2024 for adoption.



11. Background Documents

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – [Rail Strategy Executive Summary](#)

Appendix 2 – [Rail Strategy Consultation Outcome Report Executive Summary](#)

Appendix 3 – [Rail Strategy Full Document](#)