
Report to: Transport Committee

Date: 12 March 2021

Subject: **Connectivity Plan Engagement**

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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: | |

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide an update on the current public and stakeholder engagement on the West Yorkshire Connectivity Infrastructure Plan, WY Mass Transit Vision 2040 and associated documents, following their publication in January 2021.

2. Information

Background

- 2.1 In 2017, the Combined Authority adopted the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040, which sets out our policy framework for improving transport. Transport Strategy 2040 represents the statutory requirement placed on the Combined Authority to produce a Local Transport Plan. It was developed with the oversight of Transport Committee.
- 2.2 The Connectivity Infrastructure Plan is an extension of the Transport Strategy, setting out a delivery plan and long-term pipeline to 2040 of transport infrastructure improvements to improve connectivity in our region. The technical work to develop the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan was also

overseen by Transport Committee, and with the input of each of the five West Yorkshire partner councils, taking place over a period of two years.

- 2.3 A workshop with Transport Committee and West Yorkshire District Portfolio Holders on 13 November 2020 provided input to finalising the detail of the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan and Mass Transit Vision documents. The Transport Committee meeting of 20 November 2020 endorsed the timescales for publication of these documents and escalated their consideration to the Combined Authority. The Combined Authority meeting of 10 December 2020 endorsed the commencement of an engagement on the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan and associated documents to commence in January 2021.

Context

- 2.4 A modern, integrated transport system is essential for an economy to flourish and communities to thrive. West Yorkshire is a significant and growing economy which has outgrown its transport system. To fulfil its full potential as a major player in the Northern Powerhouse, and to support the decarbonisation of the economy, our region needs a transformation in its transport system, to one that is fit for the 21st Century.
- 2.5 The Connectivity Plan sets out a long-term transport infrastructure investment programme for the next 20 years, providing a spatial picture of where improvements are most needed to stimulate inward investment and improve people's quality of life, building on our key growth areas within the region.
- 2.6 The Connectivity Investment Plan deliberately focusses on a sustainable future, in addressing three strategic challenges:
- COVID-19 - Recession and recovery;
 - Connecting Everyone - Inclusive growth and the productivity gap;
 - Climate change - Decarbonising transport.
- 2.7 The plan identifies options for investing in bus, rail, cycling, walking, mass transit, digital demand responsive transport, other innovative solutions, as well as the road network, with the intent to enhance economic performance by connecting all of our important places, and in doing so, help deliver inclusive growth by giving particular attention to the needs for our currently more disadvantaged and peripheral communities. The plan makes the case to Government for longer-term local transport budgets to deliver improvements, including unlocking the government's infrastructure fund linked to the West Yorkshire devolution deal.
- 2.8 This is a starting point in the development of our Connectivity plan and pipeline. The purpose of early engagement is to seek feedback on the work so far and to help inform the next stages of development.

Engagement

- 2.9 The engagement on the Connectivity Infrastructure plan began on 27 January 2021 and runs to 11 April 2021. As is consistent with other engagements during the Covid-19 pandemic, engagement on this plan will be mainly carried out digitally.
- 2.10 The engagement materials are hosted on the Your Voice pages of the Combined Authority's website at: <https://www.yourvoice.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/connectivity>. This page provides visitors with access to:
- **Video animation** - setting out our vision for transport in West Yorkshire;
 - **Key documents and the supporting evidence base** – see paragraph 2.11 and 2.12 below;
 - **Explanatory frequently asked questions (FAQs)** – to explain why we are publishing and engaging on our plans now, and address key themes identified through pre-engagement;
 - **Online survey questionnaire** – to seek early feedback on future investment priorities for Mass Transit, Bus, Rail, Walking and Cycling;
 - **Interactive map** - on which people can add their own suggestions of places to connect across West Yorkshire and identify concerns with the current transport network and ideas for improvement.

Key documents

- 2.11 The Connectivity Infrastructure Plan provides an overview of our proposed approach and investment plans to better connecting places and communities. The Connectivity Infrastructure Plan has been published alongside a number of other key documents which provide more in-depth analysis and information around each individual mode:
- **West Yorkshire Mass Transit Vision** - Mass Transit is a central component of the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan proposals. This document identifies initial proposals for the shape of a mass transit network, potential routes and mass transit technologies.
 - **West Yorkshire Rail Vision** – This is first product of a Rail Strategy, setting out West Yorkshire's ambition for the way in which the railway needs to serve the region. Feedback on the Rail Vision will help us to develop the full Rail Strategy, translating the high-level objectives, outcomes, and outputs contained in the vision into interventions.
 - **West Yorkshire Bus Network Review** – This is a strategic study of the core bus network published in 2020. It identifies present and future demand for the bus, and existing and new locations that could generate patronage growth, which has been used to identify options for supporting infrastructure requirements to make the bus competitive.

- **West Yorkshire Future Mobility Strategy** - This sets out ways to increase travel options through new forms of transport and better integration maximising new technologies – from autonomous cars to e-scooters, digital on-demand buses services, shared transport and integrated apps for accessing services, plus innovative ways of getting the goods into our town and city centres.

2.12 The evidence base for the plan consists of:

- **Case for Change Reports** - The evidence base for the Connectivity infrastructure plan includes ten Case for Change Reports that set out the analysis and findings from 24 Corridor studies investigating connectivity needs and issues. These studies were undertaken across the geography of West Yorkshire;
- **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS)** – The Combined Authority has started a process of locality-based studies to investigate and prioritise investments for walking and cycling. The first five reports are provided on the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan Your Voice webpage. The LCWIP approach is now being rolled out across West Yorkshire and many more similar reports will follow over coming months.

2.13 The Connectivity Infrastructure Plan engagement has purposefully used two discrete methods for capturing feedback. The online survey questionnaire is designed to provide both quantitative and qualitative feedback and provide respondents with the option to give detailed comments on the plans. The interactive map has been used as a simple, more accessible way of capturing feedback on areas to improve connectivity. The Combined Authority will emphasise the interactive map to audiences who may find this more accessible.

2.14 The Combined Authority has a stakeholder plan which is being used to tailor engagement approaches for different stakeholder and community groups on the material described above.

2.15 The Combined Authority will monitor responses by district and characteristics during the engagement period so that further promotion of the engagement can be targeted as needed. Particular importance is attached to reaching seldom heard groups.

Impact of the launch

2.16 The publication of the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan and Mass Transit Vision 2040 on 27 January led to 60 pieces of media coverage.

2.17 All the main newspapers and websites covering our five partner council areas carried news of the publication along with Look North, Calendar, BBC and commercial radio, business media and transport trade press. The coverage was broadly supportive. Major themes from the coverage were:

- The scale of the ambition outlined;
- Routes to funding the proposals;
- Routes and timescales for delivery of the proposed mass transit system.

2.18 The early feedback on the plans through social media (such as twitter) has also been broadly positive. Illustrative twitter messages around the launch included:

- *“Done properly, this could indeed be transformational”*
- *“Very positive news. West Yorkshire Combined Authority today launched plans for a mass transit scheme along 9 routes in West Yorkshire. It would serve major towns and cities and would be built in stages over 20 years. WYCA will now bid for a share of £4.2bn government money”*
- *“We should have had an effective mass transit system in West Yorkshire years ago. The fact that we are still without one is testimony to the failure of over centralized government. It hardly helps our drive for economic growth.”*

2.19 As of mid-February 2021, the Connectivity Plan engagement had received:

- 4,000 webpage visits to the Your Voice webpage;
- Multiple actions on the webpage i.e. visitors viewing multiple project pages, and/or downloading one or more of the key documents for review;
- Completed survey responses are now starting to be received from all the West Yorkshire Districts and adjoining areas. An initial review of the quantitative sections of the survey shows a high level of agreement with the priorities that the Connectivity Plan has set out to address, the approach to investing in and joining up different modes of transport and the ambition outlined in the Mass Transit vision document;
- Comments are being provided on the interactive map – with suggestions for walking & cycling accounting for nearly 50% of the comments.

2.20 The number of survey and interactive map respondents are expected to increase over the coming weeks as engagement activities are delivered.

2.21 A targeted digital campaign to promote the engagement is in development, which will be delivered across multiple social media channels. This will use paid, promoted, social media advertisements, and this will be further targeted to responses by district, age group and gender as appropriate.

Webinars

- 2.22 The Combined Authority is making arrangements for a series of webinar events to address particular themes of the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan. It is proposed that these are broadly based on the main modes of transport addressed by our plans, but shaped to provide a particular focus on what we are trying to achieve and the role of the particular mode(s) in addressing the key challenges of COVID-19 recession and recovery, inclusive growth and decarbonisation. The webinars would focus on the following themes:

| Title | Modal focus | Themes to address |
|---|---------------------|--|
| The opportunity for Mass Transit ¹ | Mass Transit | WY Mass Transit Vision 2040 |
| The role of Walking and Cycling in a strong, sustainable, inclusive economy | Walking and cycling | Health Air Quality Accessibility Inclusivity Economic benefits Decarbonisation |
| The role of Bus in a strong, sustainable, inclusive economy | Bus | Covid recovery Accessibility Inclusivity Economic benefits Decarbonisation |
| The role of Rail in a strong, sustainable, inclusive economy | Rail | Covid recovery Accessibility Inclusivity Economic benefits Decarbonisation |
| Integrating different modes for easy door-to-door journeys | All modes | Stations and hubs Services Ticketing products Future Mobility Digital connectivity |
| Meeting the transport decarbonisation challenge | All modes | Modelling outputs Targets Delivery Pathways |

- 2.23 With the exception of the first webinar, on Mass Transit, to be held on 4 March 2021 the other dates are to be confirmed. The details of the schedule will be circulated to Transport Committee members in advance, and communicated via social media and to known contacts and distribution lists. The webinar events would be open to all. The expectation is that the events will be recorded and available for playback afterwards for anyone who is unable to attend.

¹ An initial webinar is being held on 4 March with the Leeds Transport Strategy consultation, which is also on-going at present. A further West Yorkshire Mass Transit webinar is planned.

Engagement with West Yorkshire partner councils

2.24 The Combined Authority has the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan and Mass Transit Vision documents as the main featured item for discussion at the next round of District Consultation Sub Committee meetings to be held in March. These take place on:

- 15 March - Leeds
- 16 March - Calderdale
- 18 March - Wakefield
- 22 March - Bradford
- 24 March - Kirklees

2.25 The Combined Authority has produced a briefing pack of engagement materials for each of the partner councils to promote the engagement within their own Districts and through their own channels.

2.26 The Combined Authority is looking to work with the partners to extend the reach of engagement to businesses, and seldom heard groups, particularly young people.

Engagement with West Yorkshire Members of Parliament (MPs)

2.27 The Chair of Transport Committee has written to all West Yorkshire MPs plus those from adjoining areas to introduce the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan and supporting documents. A briefing event for MPs is scheduled for 11 March 2021.

Engagement with the business community

2.28 The Combined Authority had undertaken pre-launch engagement on the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan with the business community through Chambers of Commerce and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

2.29 Following the engagement launch, reports have been made to the LEP Business Communications Group (BCG) of 23 February and to the LEP Board meeting of 24 February to provide updates on the consultation launch, to disseminate the Your Voice web address and the engagement material and to seek input to the further tailoring of engagement material and events to business interests.

2.30 The feedback from the businesses is a desire for 1-to-1 meetings on request and a wider, web-based roundtable discussion. The planning for these events is underway.

2.31 The partner councils have also been asked to identify key business stakeholders for the Combined Authority and the partners to engage with.

Accessibility and reaching seldom heard groups

- 2.32 A short presentation of 10minute duration is being provided for seldom heard groups to provide an accessible introduction to the plans, with further material, events and channels tailored to meet specific needs as identified. On request, paper versions of the survey can also be provided, and engagement materials translated.
- 2.33 The Combined Authority is planning two digital campaigns on social media. The first is a general campaign. The audience and performance of this first round of advertisements will be reviewed and the findings used to target and reach seldom heard groups using further paid advertisements. The Combined Authority Digital team will promote the next phase of advertisements to specific audiences, such as by gender, postcode, age and interests.
- 2.34 The postcode data of people who have already provided feedback via the survey or map will also be used to understand where response rates are low, and to inform and target social media and wider promotion to reach these groups and areas.
- 2.35 A key target audience is young people. Approximately 20% of the population of West Yorkshire is made up of young people aged 11–25 years. To ensure the views of this target group is heard and captured, it is proposed to host a series of specific engagement events in parallel to the wider activities carried out by the Combined Authority. The proposal is to host 5 to 10 events for young people, with one event in each of the five local authority areas that make up West Yorkshire, and further events held at a West Yorkshire level with specific demographic groups. The engagement will focus on the broad principles behind the connectivity proposals. The details are currently being finalised.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 The work described in this report is central to ensuring that the transport sector can play a full part in the region making a green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and decarbonising the West Yorkshire economy by 2038, whilst providing the connectivity improvements that will help to ensure successful and inclusive growth.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 The work described in this report is focused on communities of greatest economic need within the region and providing the connectivity improvements that will help to ensure inclusive growth.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. The engagement on the plan uses existing resources of the Combined Authority.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The West Yorkshire Combined Authority is the Local Transport Authority for West Yorkshire. As the Local Transport Authority, the Combined Authority has the legal responsibility to produce and maintain a Transport Strategy for the region. In 2017, the Combined Authority adopted the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040, setting out our policy framework for improving transport. The transport Connectivity Infrastructure Plan is an extension of this, setting out the spatial delivery plan and long-term pipeline of transport infrastructure improvements to improve connectivity in our region.

7. Staffing Implications

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

8. External Consultees

- 8.1 The engagement with the public is underway.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 That the Committee notes the content of the report in respect of engagement to-date and plans for maximising engagement.
- 9.2 That the Committee discusses ways to engage stakeholder and communities in the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan and related supporting documents.

10. Background Documents

None.

11. Appendices

None.