
Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 19 March 2021

Subject: **Mass Transit and Connectivity Infrastructure Plan**

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To update Members on the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's work to-date and next steps to develop and deliver a Connectivity Infrastructure Plan and long-term pipeline of transport improvements, including a new form of Mass Transit for the region.

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 for our region.
- 2.3 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. This work took place over a period of two years.
- 2.4 The current work is a starting point in the development of our connectivity pipeline. The Combined Authority meeting of 10 December 2020 endorsed the commencement of an initial stage of engagement on the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan and associated documents. This current engagement is hosted on the Combined Authority's website at:
<https://www.yourvoice.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/connectivity>

Context

- 2.5 A modern, integrated transport system is essential for an economy to flourish and communities to thrive. West Yorkshire is a significant economy but 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.
- 2.6 Our cities and towns have out-grown our transport system. Our reliance on the car is damaging business, the environment and the health of residents. Our most disadvantaged communities, who have not benefited from car travel, suffer most from its impact. Our evidence is clear that continuing a “business as usual” approach to transport will not enable economic opportunities to be fully realised, or effective action to be taken to protect the environment and communities.
- 2.7 The Connectivity Infrastructure 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. The Plan moves us away from traditional transport investments and 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
- 2.8 This plan makes the case to Government for longer-term local transport budgets to deliver these improvements, including unlocking the government’s infrastructure fund linked to the West Yorkshire devolution deal. The recent Spending Round confirmed Mayoral Combined Authorities would have access to an intracity transport settlement. It is important that plans are being developed now to make the best case for that funding in preparation for when further details are announced. The March 2021 Budget identified a £7.4m pot for West Yorkshire to support its pipeline development.

Scope

- 2.9 The Plan is an evidence led approach to identifying our connectivity challenges and solutions, consistently applied across the whole geography of West Yorkshire. The work drew on the partner councils’ Local Plans and also a bespoke, extensive programme of 24 corridor studies, involving all of the partners in a through, structured and analytical process of:
1. Identifying communities of greatest economic need.
 2. Creating a ‘Single Evidence Base’ - drawing on socio-economic demographics; anticipated land use changes including new employment growth zones and major housing opportunities; environmental and clean energy opportunities; known transport constraints and forecast changes to travel demand patterns and capacity.
 3. Identifying those key communities to connect.

4. Identifying the transport modes most likely to meet the needs of local communities;
 5. Identifying options for a proposed pipeline of future transport infrastructure improvements - sifted against criteria to consider their fit with the objectives.
- 2.10 Engagement on the development of the plan has been held with West Yorkshire Council Leaders and portfolio holders to gather feedback on the analysis of evidence and the identification of options for improving connectivity.
- 2.11 The plan has been developed with the guidance of the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) and follows the approach set out in their 'Principles for effective urban infrastructure – Lessons learned' from the Next Steps for Cities programme, published in October 2020. The Combined Authority participated in this programme and is a case study in the NIC report.
- 2.12 The process described above has identified a set of options for improving transport infrastructure and connectivity to be delivered up to 2040. The plan covers bus, rail, cycling, walking, digital demand responsive transport and other innovative solutions and car, but central to the plan are our proposals for a new form of Mass Transit to provide the missing link in our transport system, bringing much needed capacity, quality and connectivity. The Connectivity Infrastructure Plan summarises our initial work and proposals for the individual modes of transport and how they can be better integrated to deliver convenient and attractive door-to-door journeys
- 2.13 The Connectivity Infrastructure Plan identifies investments in three programmes:
- A. Schemes for delivery by 2025
 - B. Strategic Priorities, for development and/or delivery by 2025
 - C. Options for delivery between 2026 - 2040
- 2.14 A set of appendices provide more detail of Programmes A and B. Programme A comprises investments to be mainly delivered by the Combined Authority working with its partner councils, from existing programmes which have committed funding to 2025 at the latest. Programmes B and C require funding.
- 2.15 A set of supporting documents provide more in-depth analysis and information around each individual mode. For example, the Mass Transit Vision 2020 document:
- Provides details on how Mass Transit can specifically address our connectivity challenges and support business growth;
 - Explains our initial identification of 9 areas where Mass Transit might operate, the design principles to be applied to creating those routes and integrating Mass Transit into our places and with other modes of transport, and the candidate Mass Transit technologies that might run on those routes.

Engagement on the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan

- 2.16 The purpose of the early engagement which commenced in January 2021 is to seek feedback on the work so far, to help inform the next stages of development.
- 2.17 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 the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan and associated documents will be mainly carried out digitally.
- 2.18 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 2.19 and 2.20 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

- 2.19 The Connectivity Infrastructure Plan has been published alongside a number of other key documents:
- **Connectivity Infrastructure Plan** – This document provides an overview of our proposed approach and investment plans to better connecting places and communities. It is accompanied by:
 - Appendix 1 - details of Programme A: Schemes for delivery by 2025
 - Appendix 2 - details of Programme C: Options for delivery between 2026 - 2040
 - **West Yorkshire Mass Transit Vision** - 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 the 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 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.

2.20 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.

2.21 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.

2.22 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. 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

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

2.24 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.

- 2.25 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.”*
- 2.26 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.
- 2.27 The number of survey and interactive map respondents are expected to increase over the coming weeks as engagement activities are delivered.

Maximising engagement

- 2.28 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

- 2.29 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

2.30 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.

2.31 The Connectivity Infrastructure Plan is a plan for decarbonising transport. It is intended that engagement on the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan links to the work of the Combined Authority and the partner councils on the West Yorkshire Carbon Reduction Emissions Pathways (CERP) study. The final webinar is therefore proposed to highlight the role of transport working alongside other sectors of the economy to deliver net zero carbon for West Yorkshire by our target date of 2038.

Engagement with West Yorkshire partner councils

2.32 The Combined Authority has the Connectivity Infrastructure Plan and Mass Transit Vision documents as the main featured item for discussion at the next

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

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

- 2.33 The Combined Authority has produced a briefing pack of engagement for each of the partner councils to promote the engagement within their own Districts and through their own channels.
- 2.34 The Combined Authority is looking to work with its partner councils to extend the reach of engagement to businesses, and seldom heard groups, particularly young people.

Engagement with West Yorkshire Members of Parliament (MPs)

- 2.35 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 to be hosted on 11 March 2021.

Engagement with the business community

- 2.36 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).
- 2.37 Following the engagement launch reports have been made to the LEP Business Communications Group (BCG) meeting on 23 February and 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.
- 2.38 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.
- 2.39 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

- 2.40 A short presentation of 10 minute 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.

- 2.41 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.
- 2.42 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.
- 2.43 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.

Next steps

- 2.44 The immediate next steps agreed by the Combined Authority are:
- January 2021 - April 2021: Public and stakeholder engagement
 - May - June 2021: Analysis of responses to the engagement
 - Summer 2021: Re-shape the plan's interventions and priorities following engagement feedback.
- 2.45 The Combined Authority is currently designing the process by which it and the partner councils will review the published long list of options for delivery for 2026-2040, including defining scheme details and estimating costs. The process going forwards will include further rounds of appraisal, with increasing technical rigour, to distil the published long list of options to a shorter list of preferred options and to inform sequencing for delivery.
- 2.46 Decisions on the re-shaping of the proposed programme will also consider government spending announcements in the March 2021 budget and any further developments for transport investment.
- 2.47 At this early stage we cannot identify detailed costs for the plan, but the scale of the investment would be in line with the National Infrastructure Commission's case for a significant uplift in spend for transport within towns and cities, which is in turn consistent with the scale proposed by TfN for investment in pan-northern connectivity of £60-70 billion (in current prices) over 30 years. The Combined Authority considers this an appropriate scale of investment to achieve its objectives for a sustainable and inclusive economy.

- 2.48 A Funding Framework will set out how the Combined Authority and partner councils will work with Government to design, develop, and deliver the plan over the coming decades.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

4. Legal Implications

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

5. Staffing Implications

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

6. External Consultees

- 6.1 The Connectivity Infrastructure Plan, Mass Transit Vision 2040 and associated documents are currently the subject of a public and stakeholder engagement, which commenced on 27 January 2021 and runs to 11 April 2021. 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>

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes and comments on the report.

8. Background Documents

West Yorkshire Connectivity Infrastructure Plan, West Yorkshire Mass Transit Vision 2040 and associated documents – accessed at:
<https://www.yourvoice.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/connectivity>