

## **Draft TfN Freight and Logistics Strategy**

### **Consultation response on behalf of West Yorkshire**

January 2022.

#### Summary

West Yorkshire welcomes and supports TfN's draft Freight and Logistics Strategy.

Freight inherently crosses local transport authority boundaries, which means it is valuable for the North to work together with and through TfN to secure a co-ordinated approach. This will help to ensure that we maximise the sector's contribution to our economy and to address our decarbonisation and environmental priorities.

The draft Strategy brings a welcome multi-modal focus and helps to build a coherent picture of the opportunities to promote decarbonisation of freight transport. This will be crucial to deliver on West Yorkshire's ambition to be a net-zero carbon economy by 2038. This not only includes promotion of mode shift from road to rail and inland waterways but also considers ways in which road-based freight and distribution can be decarbonised.

The draft Strategy highlights the direct economic role of the freight and logistics sector in its own right, in addition to its fundamental role as societal and economic enabler. It is useful to understand the continued growth opportunity in the sector, and the strengths of the sector in the north.

#### Main points

The draft Strategy helpfully draws out the important role of warehousing to the effective functioning of the sector, and the potential scope for a more co-ordinated approach to location of warehousing, noting that there is an identified shortage. The important role of appropriately located rail-connected warehousing is highlighted for achieving modal shift.

The draft Strategy and the evidence behind it highlight the opportunity for rail to play a more significant role in freight transport, but also the challenges that rail network congestion pose for realising this.

Particularly striking are:

- The structural weakness of not having a suitably gauge-cleared rail route across the Pennines for east-west intermodal traffic. There is compelling evidence that this is leading to unnecessary road-based freight mileage, particularly on the M62 corridor, as well as constraining the full potential of the North's ports. The substantial forecast growth in inter-modal freight tonnage underlines the scale of the current constraint.

- The valuable contribution that the full proposals for the Northern Powerhouse Rail and HS2 networks would have in creating additional capacity through construction of new lines. Only a small shift from road to rail would require a substantial increase in the number of freight train movements, which would require significant additional capacity both in terms of new lines and new capacity at congested nodes and junctions.

The draft strategy underlines the importance of ensuring that TransPennine Route Upgrade delivers a W12 gauge cleared rail route across the Pennines, together with allied capability in terms of train weights and lengths. Work by TfN and TfGM has highlighted the challenges posed in accommodating freight movements through the central Manchester rail network. Addressing this constraint will be important to realise the full benefit of opening up the east-west intermodal rail freight market across the Pennines. Whilst acknowledged, it would be helpful for the final Strategy to bring added emphasis to ensuring that rail network enhancements in Manchester properly account for the potential growth of freight traffic.

The Strategy helpfully highlights the growth in the role for rail in distribution of aggregates from quarries in the Peak District National Park, where HGV movements are restricted. There are a number of rail-served quarries in the Yorkshire Dales that rely on rail for distribution, and where HGV movements by road are similarly restricted. It would be good to include reference to these in the Strategy, not least because many of the associated rail movements rely on use of the heavily congested rail network around Leeds. These freight movements (including potential growth) need to be factored in network planning and investment.

The strong links made with the TfN Transport Decarbonisation Strategy are welcome, as is the emphasis placed on the role of electrification of the rail network to further the carbon impact and air quality advantage that rail has over road for freight movement. Given that road accounts for 90% of freight tonnage moved in the north it is welcome that the draft Strategy highlights the need to promote and accelerate decarbonisation in the road haulage sector, alongside promoting modal shift to inherently more sustainable modes. Progress on decarbonising road-based freight transport in the short term will be required to meet demanding carbon trajectories. It is good to see suggestions for specific initiatives in addition to the activity that will be required at a national level.

The need to secure decarbonisation of the first and last mile, for which road-based transport is likely to remain dominant, is also important. Air quality concerns in urban areas are also an important consideration in this respect, and it is encouraging to see acknowledgement of the role of urban consolidation centres (for example), as well as the under-utilised potential of rail stations (for example as parcel locker locations) and the potential for express parcels by rail. This is an area we propose for development in West Yorkshire alongside our council partners as part of the Future Mobility Strategy.

It is encouraging to see the role of inland waterways acknowledged in the draft Strategy, including the Aire and Calder navigation specifically. With our council partners and the Canal & River Trust we are keen to support opportunities to develop the freight potential of waterways with initiatives such as the Leeds Inland Port.

### Freight Objectives

The freight objectives set out at Section 6 are sound, with a clear link to the agreed transport objectives set out in the Strategic Transport Plan. These objectives are a helpful basis for the proposed action plan, and to inform delivery plans and proposals.

### Evidence and modelling

We welcome the development of freight modelling capability within the TfN Analytical Framework including building explicit links with the Great Britain Freight Model. The associated capability to support modelling and business case development is similarly welcome. The future of freight scenarios developed as part of the strategy will be helpful for the development of local responses to facilitate freight movements.

We support the steps being taken to democratise freight data through the freight data repository, which will also assist with developing appropriate sub-regional and local responses to freight needs.

### Next steps

Together with our local authority partners in West Yorkshire we look forward to continuing to work with TfN to finalise the strategy, and to establish the proposed action plan, and ongoing activity to develop and deliver proposals with our local council and industry partners.

The Strategy will have an important role in supporting the refresh of the Strategic Transport Plan, as well as feeding into strategic planning by National Highways and the proposed Whole Industry Strategic Plan being developed for the rail network.

West Yorkshire Combined Authority  
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