

**Report to:** Transport Committee

**Date:** 26 May 2023

**Subject:** **Rail Strategy Consultation**

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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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input 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 The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's approval to commence the public consultation of the emerging Rail Strategy in summer 2023.

## 2. Information

### Role of the Railway

- 2.1 The railway plays an important and varied role in the lives of West Yorkshire's residents and businesses. It helps people get to work, goods get to market, and enables users to reach leisure, social, health and education opportunities.
- 2.2 There are many challenges facing the network, including capacity constraints and poor performance, causing misery for passengers.
- 2.3 Investment in new and existing rail infrastructure is vital to our region's economy as well as our ambition to be a net zero carbon economy by 2038.

### Rail Strategy

- 2.4 In 2021, the Combined Authority consulted on our draft Rail Vision as part of our Connectivity Infrastructure Plan engagement. The objectives set out in the Rail Vision were strongly supported by respondents. The Rail Vision sets out our ambition for the way in which the railway needs to serve the region, its

people and businesses in the future. It puts 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. In order to fulfil the ambitions of our region, we need an integrated transport system fit for the 21st century that is greener, simpler and cheaper. We need better buses, more reliable rail services and a mass transit system.

- 2.5 Since then, we have considered all the feedback and completed further technical works to strengthen the evidence and carried out comprehensive engagement with our members, district partners and stakeholders including:
- Leaders and portfolio holders of district partners
  - Directors of Development, Chief Highway Officers and officers of district partners
  - Network Rail
  - Strategic Rail Partnership
  - Transport for the North
- 2.6 The emerging Rail Strategy has been developed based on the feedback of the Rail Vision and our district partners, and the results of the technical work. We have also carried out two workshops with our Transport Committee members on 27 May and 28 November 2022 to discuss the content of the emerging Strategy.
- 2.7 The Rail Strategy will form a key document that underpins the new Local Transport Plan (LTP4). Our original intention was to carry out the consultation of the Rail Strategy as part of the LTP4 consultation. Due to a prolonged programme of LTP4 consultation as a result of the delay of Government guidance, it is proposed that we will carry out the consultation of the Rail Strategy in June 2023. In doing so, we will use the content to support the case for rail investment, shape the development of Northern Powerhouse Rail and the coming Integrated Rail Plan studies (Terms of Reference to be published by the Department for Transport) and start to develop and deliver some of the improvements at stations including minor accessibility works and active travel provision.
- 2.8 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.

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.

- 2.9 Our emerging Rail Strategy sets out our priorities and 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.

2.10 Our 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

#### Next steps

2.11 The public consultation will start in summer 2023. The consultation is primarily aimed at the government list of statutory consultees, district partners, the rail industry and informed partners such as rail users' groups who represent the interests of rail-user communities. However, anyone will be able to have their say. This includes:

- The public – those who live, work, study, visit or have an interest in West Yorkshire
- Representatives of partner organisations
- Local elected members and MPs
- Businesses and stakeholders
- Transport Operators
- Educational institutions
- Voluntary and community sector – representative groups
- People who live or work in neighbouring areas
- Combined Authority staff

2.12 The public will be able to provide feedback as all information will be available on the Combined Authority's Your Voice platform.

2.13 The Rail Strategy is a technical document and the priorities proposed within it are based on technical research and evidence. Respondents with a good understanding of the rail industry may be more likely to provide feedback. Once the emerging Rail Strategy is confirmed, it will be further developed into a pipeline of interventions and schemes in which separate consultation of individual schemes will be carried out at a later stage. Efforts will be made to ensure the stakeholder response reflects a diverse audience.

2.14 The main engagement platform for the consultation will be Your Voice. Those who have signed up to Your Voice will be notified about the consultation. Online webinar(s) will be arranged in June to support and promote the

consultation. These webinars will be open to anyone to find out more about the Rail Strategy.

- 2.15 There will be dedicated signposting to members of the public who wish to raise concerns / give feedback on on-going operational functions of the railway, but this is not the focus for this consultation.

### **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 and Transformation and Performance Teams.

### **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.

## **10. Recommendations**

- 10.1 That the Committee approves and agrees the consultation of the emerging Rail strategy in June.

## **11. Background Documents**

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

## **12. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – West Yorkshire Combined Authority Rail Strategy Executive Summary

Appendix 2 – West Yorkshire Combined Authority Rail Strategy