

TfN's strategic transport objectives

The Strategic Transport Plan (STP) sets out the evidence on how improved transport connectivity will deliver greater prosperity and a better quality of life for citizens in the North of England.

The STP sets out TfN's vision:

"A thriving North of England, where world class transport supports sustainable economic growth, excellent quality of life and improved opportunities for all."

Supporting this vision are four pan-Northern transport objectives, which inform the development of the STP and TfN's work programmes:

- Increasing efficiency, reliability and resilience on the transport system;
- Transforming economic performance;
- Improving inclusivity, health and access for opportunities for all; and
- Promoting and supporting the built and natural environment.

These objectives align closely with the five foundations of productivity set out in the Government's Industrial Strategy as well as helping achieve Governments commitments to 'levelling up' and 'building back better'..

To realise the benefits of agglomeration and economic mass, the North requires faster, more efficient, reliable and sustainable journeys on the road and rail networks. Yet these existing networks have a number of challenges.

Over the last two decades, the North's railway has experienced substantial growth in passenger numbers despite a legacy of underinvestment. Much of that growth has been accommodated within pre-existing capacity, but this is no longer possible on many routes, and most of the North's key rail hubs are now at capacity. The North's rail network lacks sufficient capacity for growth and is severely constrained by on-train congestion, low journey speeds and poor punctuality. Evidence for this can be found in the increasing difficulty of securing new or competitive paths for freight.

During the initial phases of the Covid 19 lockdown, rail passenger numbers fell sharply as people who were not key workers remained at home. The number of passenger trains that ran on the network reduced to reflect this and freight services increased. The main area of more efficient running was the ability to run longer trains because the freight trains didn't have to repeatedly wait for passenger services to pass in shorter loops that cannot hold trains that are 775m long. This increased

the number of containers that were able to move key supplies of food, medical and personal protective equipment to various rail connected destinations. Also, trains could move at higher speeds because they could maintain a faster speed for longer. Large heavy freight trains take a similar amount of time to stop as any passenger or lighter freight service. But they do take longer to accelerate meaning vital time maintaining speed is beneficial instead of starting and stopping.

Where there are established freight services planned into the timetable, it was much easier to achieve the improvements quickly to respond to the needs of customers during the pandemic. The problems are more concentrated for newer freight flows rather than those which have been allocated for many years as the timetables they fit within are much more congested than many years ago.

Covid 19 presented network opportunities for the rail and freight operating companies. As we reported to the Rail North Committee from the Rail North Partnership, prior to Covid 19, Northern Rail's on-time train performance levels were 54.2% of all trains arriving on time and grew to over 77% during the pandemic. Similarly, TransPennine Express had only 37.5% of trains arriving on time and rose to 72% during the pandemic. This is mainly due to a less congested network because the as recent increases in service levels have already led to small declines in performance. Further increases following the 3rd lockdown could also lead to a decrease as the volume of trains on the network, the increase in passengers travelling and an increase in dwell time reduces the timeliness of services.

Similarly, East–West road connectivity is also a significant barrier for future growth in the North, and a key constraint to agglomeration and transforming the North's economy. Currently the M62 is the only motorway standard East-West road link across the Pennines between Derby in the Midlands and Edinburgh in Scotland. Road capacity across the Pennines is hindered by the absence of a gauge cleared route for rail container traffic which therefore has to use road even though intermodal is now the largest and fastest area of rail traffic growth. The flows could make their way through Midlands or Scotland to achieve rail market growth but the fuel and handling costs would be extremely high making the journeys too expensive. Other major arteries, including the M1, M6, M56 and A1 (South Yorkshire) corridors, are also already heavily congested and are acting as major barriers to transforming the North's economy.

A key priority of TfN's Strategic Transport Plan is to support economic growth that is inclusive and sustainable. This means investing in strategic transport improvements that ensure that all areas of opportunity are connected, and that communities are not disconnected and further

isolated. It also means protecting and renewing the high-quality natural environment in the North, which is already an asset and a reason why many people and businesses chose to live in and visit the North.

TfN's ambition is to push harder and faster towards zero emissions from its surface transport network than current Government policies and proposals. To this end, TfN are publishing a Decarbonisation Strategy alongside the Freight and Logistics Strategy. Both documents will be subjected to consultation.

This freight and logistics strategy reflects the objectives of TfN's Decarbonisation Strategy, firstly in achieving close to zero emissions from our surface transport system by 2045, and secondly in optimising the social and economic benefits from clean growth opportunities in the North.

It is clear from the suite of pre agreed TfN policy documents that Northern leaders believe rail should be encouraged to deliver TfN policy objectives on the economy, transport efficiency, and health, inclusivity and decarbonisation. Capacity and gauge clearance for Trans-Pennine freight and rail electrification are specially mentioned.