

Report of the Strategic Director, Regeneration & Culture to the Bradford South Area Committee to be held on 27 June 2013

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Subject:

Low Moor Rail Station Progress Report

Summary Statement:

This report provides an update to the Bradford South Area Committee on the current progress towards delivery of a new railway station at Low Moor. It also provides information about the current delivery issues in relation to the business case, design standards and budget implications which have arisen during the development of detailed proposals together with details of key work objectives for Metro, Network Rail and Officers to address these.

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Portfolio:
Change Programme, House, Planning & Transport

Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Environment & Waste Management



Suzan Hemingway, City Solicitor

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report updates the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the progress made since the last report to the Committee on 28th March 2013 on the development and delivery of a new railway station at Low Moor, including details of the key issues currently impacting on the proposed delivery date, reporting on the outcomes of the opportune funding bid to Network Rail's New Station Fund, the actions currently being taken to mitigate and address these issues and seeks the Committee's endorsement of the actions being taken.
- 1.2. The report also outlines for the committee the current financial situation in regards to the project budget.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Proposals to develop a new passenger railway station at Low Moor have been in development for a number of years and in 2009 were prioritised by the five West Yorkshire Authorities through the West Yorkshire Strategic Programme of Schemes (WYSPS) with a funding allocation of £5.5m. This funding is now incorporated into the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan programme and remains allocated to the delivery of the station.
- 2.2. The station has been progressed by Metro in accordance with the Network Rail Governance on Rail Investment Project (GRIP) process, which splits design development into logical stages, at the end of which development decisions can be taken. The project is currently at the GRIP4 stage (single option development) which takes the single option selected at the previous stage and develops it to an outline design to allow 'approval in principle' before developing a detailed design for construction (the GRIP5 stage). At the GRIP4 stage, design and cost estimates are firmed up, the business case updated and formal technical approval to the scheme needs to be sought from Network Rail and the affected train operators.
- 2.3. At this Committee's meeting of 28th March 2013 an update on key issues facing the delivery of the project identified through the GRIP4 stage were presented to the committee for information together with details of how Metro and Bradford Council officers planned to mitigate these. Issues included:
 - a) Track curvature;
 - b) Project cost;
 - c) Business Case
 - d) Railway Timetabling Issues; and
 - e) Car park provision.
- 2.4. Good progress has been made on these issues, and whilst some still remain, particularly on industry buy-in and funding, there is a robust solution to take Low Moor forward. Originally this solution was to be presented to the ITA Board in May 2013 but due to committee dates this has now slipped to June 2013.

- 2.5. Metro remain committed to delivering the station and previously committed funding remains ring-fenced.

3.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1. The following provides an update on the progress made with resolving the issues that have arisen or been identified during the GRIP 4 stage that need to be resolved before the project can move to the next stage.

Track Curvature / Derogation Issue

- 3.2. As previously reported, the track curve radius at the site is approximately 750m and whilst a station previously existed nearby, modern standards require the minimum curvature of the track to be 1,000m for safe platform to train stepping distances. Previous advice received from Network Rail had been that a derogation (permission to disregard) to this standard would be required from the responsible body, at that time Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate, who had indicated that they were 'minded' to grant the derogation.
- 3.3. Subsequently responsibility for the upkeep of standards passed to the independent Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) who were understood to be increasingly resistant to approving any application for derogation especially if it can be demonstrated that a compliant design can be delivered albeit at increased cost. This led to the need to undertake additional design and survey work to demonstrate that moving the track to give a compliant curve was not reasonable before Network Rail would agree to support the application for derogation.
- 3.4. Further discussions with Northern Gas Networks confirmed that they would object to any movement of the track if it brought it within a defined clearance zone from a high pressure gas pipeline to the south of the track. A detailed survey was therefore commissioned to confirm the exact route of the pipeline in relation to the track to confirm beyond doubt the project team's belief that any movement of the track would bring it within the clearance zone, thus making straightening the curve (implying diversion of the gas main at huge cost) unreasonable. The outcome of this survey is currently awaited.
- 3.5. Since the last meeting of the Committee a further issue subsequently emerged that Network Rail planned to increase line speeds through the Low Moor area in support of the broader Northern Hub scheme. The impact of this would be to keep the track tilted through the curves in the station area more than previously assumed, impacting on the feasibility of compliant stepping distances.
- 3.6. Network Rail pro-actively offered to undertake a study to evaluate the impact on stepping distances of the higher track tilt. This work has now concluded that with a very minor adjustment to the detailed platform location, stepping distances within the standards can be achieved, despite being on sub-standard curves. Formal confirmation of Network Rail's support for the derogation is now looking increasingly likely having received confirmation from the Route Asset Managers that the proposal is acceptable in principle. This confirmation allows the issue of track curvature to be considered as progressed towards seeking a derogation from the RSSB at the earliest possible opportunity and

means that the potential for incurring significant additional costs has been averted irrespective of the gas pipeline survey.

Capital Costs and Business Case

- 3.7. As previously reported, capital costs have increased from the earlier estimate of £5.5m for the scheme based on experience of delivery of Glasshoughton rail station, as more robust cost estimates have been developed by Metro during the GRIP4 stage and more information has come to light through the development work.
- 3.8. Further discussions have been held between Metro and Northern Gas Networks and Metro have now secured agreement that a gas governor to mitigate potential safety conflicts associated with the gas mains across the site is no longer required subject to detailed design measures to be incorporated into the station platform design. This represents a significant reduction in cost risk and programme saving to the project, in addition to the removal of cost risk through pursuing derogation for track curvature rather than straightening as described above.
- 3.9. On 24 January 2013 the bidding process for Network Rail's New Station Fund (NSF) was announced with a closing date of 25 February 2013. Scheme funding was to be allocated through an open competition and the bids assessed by an awards panel of the Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail, Association of Train Operating Companies and Campaign for Better Transport. To be eligible to bid to the fund, schemes must be at Network Rail's GRIP3 stage of development; Low Moor is currently at GRIP4 and hence meets this eligibility criteria.
- 3.10. The NSF guidance note highlighted that the DfT's exacting Business Case approach ('WebTAG') must be followed. Metro's approach to date, in line with DfT advice, was that as a locally funded scheme Low Moor did not need to fully meet all the DfT business case requirements, being based on the overall positive revenue which would allow the proposed new station to be operated without revenue support. This approach supports the political priority to deliver the station and benefit local residents rather than a full appraisal which is normally used to assess value for money and rank schemes.
- 3.11. In addition Metro have identified specific weaknesses in the DfT approach in relation to the characteristics of the Low Moor scheme, particularly in how it accounts for the impact on existing passengers and assumptions on the level of new journeys. New survey data has also recently been released that is expected to underpin a stronger case.
- 3.12. The challenging bid timescale meant that there was insufficient time to rebase the business case as the NSF required, but the opportunity was taken to submit a bid to supplement the allocated LTP funding. The bid was submitted for £3.4m additional monies from the fund to supplement the allocated LTP funding to cover the shortfall in delivery cost plus an inclusion for contingency and inflated to 2015 prices. In the bid Metro set out the approach adopted, which takes into account the wider Gross Value Added and economic benefits, based on 2 trains per hour (tph) serving the station.
- 3.13. Metro believe that a strong case was put forward, but disappointingly the bid was unsuccessful. Metro are currently awaiting detailed feedback, but initial feedback has

been that the bid failed on the basis of the scheme not meeting the required business case approach.

Railway Timetabling Issues

- 3.14. Workshops with industry partners, including representatives from Network Rail, Northern Rail and the Council, have taken place to clearly determine how and when an appropriate level of service can be provided to the station and how the Low Moor proposals can be integrated with the emerging broader strategic initiatives such as the Northern Hub.
- 3.15. On the basis of the 2tph case being strengthened through resolving the weaknesses in the DfT approach identified in 3.11, the strategy is to aim for a 2tph service initially then progress to 3tph if required by the actual patronage.
- 3.16. It has been agreed that up to 3tph can be facilitated by stopping current and future services that are not those intended to provide fast connections between city centres that would be facilitated by the Northern Hub works. However, whilst 1 tph can be implemented from the start, it has been determined that the ability to move to a higher level of service depends heavily on the availability of additional rolling stock, and the current indication is that this will only become available progressively between 2016 and 2018 following the electrification works proposed in the North West and Transpennine routes.
- 3.17. Therefore the current strategy agreed with industry partners and incorporated within the business plan is to open the station at 1tph in 2015 in line with current construction timescales, and progress to 2tph by December 2018 with 3tph implemented when driven by actual patronage.
- 3.18. The 1 tph service level alone results in a weak business case. Agreement will be required on the funding of revenue support through the period of 1ph operation.

Car Park Provision

- 3.19. Following from the conclusions in 3.15 above, the need for (and cost of) a larger car park to support patronage at 3tph is not as vital for station opening as previously believed. However, it is still prudent to investigate a feasible site, or combination of sites, as it may be needed to support the higher patronage expected to be demonstrated at 2tph.
- 3.20. To make best use of local knowledge, including the involvement of local Ward Members, this issue is currently being taken forward through the Low Moor Station Working Group as described below.

Low Moor Station Working Group and Friends of Low Moor Station

- 3.21. As part of the Overview and Scrutiny recommendations of 18 December officers were directed to involve local Ward Members in the further development of the project, this was re-iterated as a key action arising out of the Single Issue Neighbourhood Forum held on 23rd Jan 2013. To this end proposals, including terms of reference for a Working Group, were presented to this committee at its meeting of 28th March. The committee resolved that:

(2) That the Strategic Director Regeneration & Culture be authorised to establish and nominate representatives to be part of the Low Moor Station Working Group in accordance with the terms of reference set out in Appendix A to Document "BE".

3.22. The first meeting of the working group took place on 4th June and will initially be involved in assisting with the development of station proposals, including identification of suitable additional/alternative car parking locations and improvements to facilitate better pedestrian/cycle access to the station, through to the end of the GRIP4 stage and 'approval in principal' of scheme proposals. The Group is led by Council Officers and supported by Metro and also includes representatives of the recently formed Friends of Low Moor Station group to provide a further local community interface.

3.23. Other key aspects for the working group will consider / be involved in where local knowledge would be very valuable include:

- a) Assisting with the flow of information to, and from, local residents.
- b) Soliciting support for the delivery of a station at Low Moor from major employers in the area including (but not limited to) BASF, Marks & Spencers and industries located on the Euroway Industrial Estate, together with local attractions including Odsal Stadium and nearby hotels.

3.24. Following the initial meeting a series of site visits to review individual parcels of land is scheduled for 17th June.

3.25. **CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF METRO & COUNCIL OFFICERS**

3.26. To address the issues highlighted in this report Officers and colleagues from Metro have developed an action plan which is broadly described below.

- a) A key overriding action is that Metro are pursuing the convening of a summit involving Network Rail, Northern Rail, DfT and senior Council officers to investigate further the reasons behind the schemes lack of success to date and clearly establish the industry buy-in and long term future of the scheme through open and transparent discussions. This is planned to take place on 27th June 2013.
- b) **Track curvature** – Metro are pursuing Network Rail for formal confirmation of their agreement to pursue a derogation, timescales for the application, and support them in making the application.
- c) **Capital cost** – Metro are pursuing further discussion with Network Rail and DfT on the possibility of re-bidding to the NSF and whether a later round is under consideration in line with calls from industry and politicians. Further discussions will be required on funding sources between Metro and the Council. Potential opportunities for cost savings have also been identified for evaluation at the detailed design stage.
- d) **Business case** – Metro are appointing consultants to address the weaknesses identified in the DfT business case methodology and update the business case to

the latest census data. This is expected to increase confidence that the station will have a strong positive revenue stream.

- e) **Working Group** – Metro and Council Officers will engage with the Working Party as appropriate.

4.0 OPTIONS

- 4.1. Members can decide to approve the recommendations as detailed in this report, or suggest amendments/ alternative recommendations in which case technical advice will be provided by Officers on their proposals.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE APPRAISAL

Financial

- 5.1. A budget of £5.5m has been allocated by the West Yorkshire ITA for the delivery of the station at Low Moor. The latest estimated cost of delivery of the station still stands at £7.2m (excluding as yet un-quantified additional capital costs for the larger car park) which exceeds the available budget, although the risk of further cost increases has reduced. Previously committed funding remains ring-fenced.
- 5.2. The possibility of using additional budgets to contribute towards the delivery of the station is being examined by Council and Metro Officers. One possible option could include reprioritising some of Bradford's Local Transport Plan monies in the next Implementation Plan period.
- 5.3. Metro are also investigating the possibility of re-applying to the New Stations Fund and exploring whether a second round of funding is likely to be made available in the future as per 3.26(c).

Staff Resources

- 5.4. Resources to deliver the highway access improvements are available within the Council's existing staff resources.

6.0 RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 6.1. Delivery of the new station at Low Moor remains a Metro promoted scheme on behalf of the ITA. Robust risk management and governance arrangements have been established for the project in line with the PRINCE2 methodology and in compliance with Department for Transport requirements. Bradford Council officers are members of the Project Board and Project Team.

7.0 LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 7.1. Delivery of the planning aspects of the project and improvements to the highway network necessitated by the new station are within the Council's powers as Highway and Planning Authority.

8.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

8.1. Equality & Diversity

As this report is merely updating members of the progress towards a scheme design there are currently no significant Equal Rights implications arising from its contents, a full Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as the scheme progresses from GRIP4 to GRIP5.

8.2. Sustainability Implications

The Local Transport Plan and District Transport Strategy anticipate the development of sustainable transport modes (public transport, cycling and walking) and associated traffic management improvements. The introduction of a station at Low Moor will contribute to reducing carbon emissions as it will offer commuters and other travellers access to a fast and safe connection to locations served by the Caldervale line and other parts of the wider rail network.

8.3. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Impacts

Delivery of a railway station facility at Low Moor will assist in the reduction of greenhouse gases through providing an interchange facility allowing access to public transport to destinations including Bradford City Centre, Leeds, Brighouse and Halifax initially and potentially expanding to include additional destinations as services grow to the 3tph service levels.

8.4. Community Safety Implications

The Local Transport Plan and District Transport Strategy aim to control traffic movements within the community and to enhance safety for vulnerable road users. Any highway construction associated with the development of the new railway station would be designed to reduce conflicts between vehicles and vulnerable road users.

8.5. Human Rights Act

There are no direct Human Rights implications arising from this report.

8.6. Trade Union

There are no Trade Union implications arising from this report.

8.7. Ward Implications

Delivery of a railway station facility will have direct benefits for residents and businesses located in the Wyke ward of the District who will be able to access public transport facilities to make more sustainable journeys into Bradford, Brighouse and Halifax and then onto the wider rail network. The proposed station facility at Low Moor is ideally located in easy walking distance of a large number of employers on the Euroway industrial estate and, albeit slightly beyond established criteria for sustainability in terms of walking, those on the Prologis park.

8.8. Area Committee Action Plan Implications

The development and implementation of the proposal in this report supports priorities within the Area Committee Action plans.

9.0 **NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

None

10.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1. That the Bradford South Area Committee note the contents of this report.
- 10.2. That the Bradford South Area Committee endorse the current action plan being progressed by Council and Metro Officers towards continuing to progress the delivery of a railway station at Low Moor.
- 10.3. That a further report be presented to Members following the outcome of the industry summit, business case update and derogation application decision.

11.0 **APPENDICES**

None

12.0 **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- 12.1. Report of the Strategic Director (Regeneration & Culture) to the meeting of the Environment & Waste Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 18th June 2013 – Low Moor Station
- 12.2. Report of the Strategic Director (Regeneration & Culture) to the meeting of Bradford South Area Committee held on 28 March – Low Moor Station
- 12.3. Report of the Strategic Director (Regeneration & Culture) to the meeting of Bradford South Area Committee held on 24 January 2013 – Update on Issues Surrounding the delivery of Low Moor Rail Station
- 12.4. Report of the Strategic Director (Regeneration & Culture) to the meeting of the Environment & Waste Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 December, 2012 – Low Moor Rail Station Progress Report.
- 12.5. Report of the Strategic Director (Regeneration & Culture) to the meeting of Bradford South Area Committee held on 16 March, 2011 – Low Moor Station Progress Report.
- 12.6. Report of the Strategic Director (Regeneration & Culture) to the meeting of Bradford South Area Committee held on 25 June, 2009 – Low Moor Rail Station.
- 12.7. Report of the Strategic Director (Regeneration) to the meeting of the Environment and Waste Management Improvement Committee held on 21 October 2008 – Low Moor Station.