

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF COUNCIL

16 JANUARY 2018

Transport for the North – Draft Strategic Plan

Transport for the North (TfN) is the statutory body established by Government to advise Government on what the right plans are for northern transport infrastructure. Today they have published their Draft Strategic Plan for the first time and we are delighted to see that Bradford is recommended to be a stop on Northern Powerhouse Rail. This would be a new trainline from Manchester to Bradford, Leeds and York. This is a really positive step forward for us in making our case for Bradford to be recognised as a major economic centre of the North with all the potential that we have to contribute more fully to the country's success. Thank you to everyone who has supported the Next Stop Bradford campaign.

The importance of east – west freight links are also recognised in the plan as part of the Central Pennines Study. We welcome this as it gives the opportunity for us to further promote the Colne – Skipton rail link with potential benefits for Keighley. We're obviously supportive of the re-opening of this line not just for the freight benefits but the benefits it would have for passengers as well.

The public consultation on the Strategic Transport Plan will run until 17 April 2018 with engagement events taking place in Leeds on 5th March, Wakefield on 21st March and Bradford on 10th April. I would encourage all councillors to attend the Bradford event and to support the proposal. There is still much to do in making sure civil servants in Westminster back the Bradford district investment case. As I have mentioned in these reports before, the Secretary of State for Transport has been positive about our plans so far. A final version of the plan will be published later in the year and submitted to the Government for ministerial consideration.

Devolution

The Leaders of Yorkshire met last week which is a cross party group. Brexit and Housing were on the agenda as well as Devolution. Lord Porter, the Chair of the Local Government Association, came and presented on how he was lobbying for Local Government with the Secretary of State.

Before the meeting MPs from the Yorkshire All Party Parliamentary Group also spoke with Yorkshire Leaders and expressed their encouragement at the positive progress being made towards One Yorkshire devolution. Barnsley and Doncaster had a referendum on which of the two deals to choose before Christmas. This poll had a turnout of 20%. 85% of those who voted, voted for a One Yorkshire deal.

Even before the result the Secretary of State had written to the South Yorkshire leaders saying he was willing to compromise on a possible Yorkshire-wide deal. He

had previously said he was not prepared to consider any other deal for fear it would compromise the Sheffield City Region deal. In his letter he writes “The aim of any compromise, as I see it, should be to open the way for the people and business of South Yorkshire to have the full benefits of the Sheffield City Region deal, whilst not in any way precluding your council and others from pursuing their ambitions for a One Yorkshire deal.”

This constructive approach was welcomed by all Leaders present at the meeting and all 17 agreed to sign a statement which looked forward to meeting the Secretary of State to discuss our proposal. We have been assured by the department that a date is being sorted at the soonest opportunity.

QUESTION TO THE LEADER

Councillor Cooke

Thank you for this Leader and I am sure with others welcome the Transport for the North Draft Strategic Plan which is another step towards getting Bradford on the main line or whatever the strapline we are using is. It is great news. Just a couple of questions on the plan or more specifically about making sure that we continue to make the case for some things that are important. It does not make reference, and I appreciate there is a lot of talk about railways, can the Leader confirm we are still committed to campaigning for a better road link north of Bradford and Leeds as that will be just as important in terms of benefit east/west in terms of freight as a Colne/Skipton rail link. Let's not be fobbed off with a railway when what we actually want is a decent road. Can the Leader assure me that she will carry on banging the drum for that development?

Councillor Hinchcliffe

Can I thank yourself and everybody in the Chamber who has really supported that Next Stop Bradford campaign as obviously it has brought us some fruit. We are on that first step of the ladder. There is still a way to go. There needs to be some money and we obviously need to keep lobbying the Government to make sure that that Transport for the North Plan across the north is invested in and is achieved. The Transport for the North document obviously has only just been released today but it does have a whole chapter in on roads. Yes we will continue to lobby on better connectivity across the district. Highways England of course have a pot of money. I am keen to speak to them at the earliest opportunity so it is about making sure we keep up that lobbying effort and anybody can do in here if you ever speak to a decision maker's opinion formers please do stick to those lines and make sure we get the investment that we need in Bradford to really make us accelerate our economy to the next level.

Councillor Jeanette Sunderland

I have the Telegraph & Argus of 13 November to help with the question. Can the Leader advise which Christmas does she expect a deal by?

Councillor Hinchcliffe

Yes that was a surprise to me was that headline as well. I did not actually say that. So when I did an interview in December and it says we will have a devolution deal by the end of the year I had an over-expectation I think a little bit. No I never thought in December we would get a deal by the end of the year. You have to believe me on that one. But I am encouraged by the progress particularly that meeting last week with Leaders across Yorkshire. There was a much more positive feeling in the room than there has been before. Sajid Javid has started talking about One Yorkshire albeit in negotiations, what sort of compromise can we come to. The APPG was there for Yorkshire with MPs from different parts of the Yorkshire region talking to us about devolution. They too were encouraging and positive. I think we might be getting somewhere. I do not like to be too over positive but it seems to me that the case for a Yorkshire devolution deal is being made. When people say to me yes Susan that sounds great but what is devolution? It is actually more power and more money so the people in this district and to this region to make decisions like transport that we know how best to make ourselves and in these straitened times we are going for growth as a district and therefore any investment we can get through the devolution deal or through Central Government is always welcomed so devolution is a way for us to get that and therefore I will continue to push as hard as I can to make sure we get the deal that benefits this district.

Councillor Ellis

I am extremely interested in the Transport Plan for the North and particularly the move to get freight onto railways off the road. Can you just tell me what is being done to identify and protect sites which could be used for multi rural transport hubs and are we going to have one near Bradford? What I am referring to is trains will not be able to deliver direct to warehouses in Bradford. What will happen is freight will be loaded perhaps from abroad onto trains in Hull or Liverpool or wherever and then will be transferred onto the backs of lorries for short journeys but we did years ago have a freight liner, we still do in Leeds, but I do not think that will be anyway near sufficient in size and it would be very helpful obviously for the people of Bradford if we could have one on the line to serve Bradford.

Councillor Hinchcliffe

So I think what you are referring to is interconnectivity with different transport modes isn't it then really to make sure everything links together and of course Transport for the North Plan is about the strategic framework for across the North of England but of course what we have as well is West Yorkshire Combined Authority and the connectivity should be able to be done from all those different points so we have to work together so it is West Yorkshire Combined Authority working obviously with

Bradford and the strategic plan put forward by Transport for the North to make sure we get all those points in order. If there is a specific element there, and it sounds like you have got a specific example, obviously myself or Councillor Ross-Shaw will be happy to talk about that and how West Yorkshire Combined Authority are dealing with that. This is an opportunity isn't it so let's make sure we get it right. The Transport for the North Plan is in consultation. There is an event on 10 April I think I said in my report and it would be great if many Councillors could go to that just so we get a lot of people going and seeing how important that plan is for this district. So please do take part and proffer any opinions that you can have to improve on it.