

Response from the Institution of Civil Engineers to Transport for the North's 'Draft Strategic Transport Plan'

This document sets out the views of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) in relation to the questions requiring a written response contained in Transport for the North's (TfN) consultation on its *Draft Strategic Transport Plan (DSTP)*.

The response was led and subsequently submitted by the ICE's regional teams in the North of England.

Q1c. Please let us know your comments on Transport for the North's vision and/or the four pan-Northern transport objectives.

In September 2017 the ICE launched its *Delivering a Northern Infrastructure Strategy*¹ report. It sets out a number of recommendations to support the aim of economic growth in the North alongside transformational improvements to quality of life.

The ICE believes that the visionary approach set out in TfN's DTSP will deliver the much needed improvements to capacity, connectivity and reliability that will enable these aims to be realised across the region.

The four pan-Northern transport objectives

Efficiency and resilience

ICE is clear that better connectivity across the region's transport networks will lead to faster, more frequent and reliable journeys. Delivering multi-modal improvements as part of one strategic approach will yield the greatest results; ensuring that public transport users across the North experience a more efficient, reliable and convenient system both now and in the future.

Transforming economic performance

ICE notes that transport is not an end in itself. Good transport links enable agglomeration, increase productivity and boost innovation. This in turn drives economic growth. Transport has a key role in providing business to business links, moving goods and attracting inward investment to the region from home and internationally.

¹ ICE (2017) [Delivering a Northern Infrastructure Strategy](#)

Improving access to opportunities

Affordable, reliable transport systems are essential if the talents of the people, often grown in the excellent universities and colleges in the region, are to be retained and can gain access to the opportunities that the region has to offer. There are recent examples of businesses being established in the North's major cities in order to attract locally educated talent. This can only be expanded through a combination of strategic and local transport improvements.

Natural environment

The need for housing continues to grow and transport systems are vital for their development. People in the North seek a high quality of life that is provided by having the choice of where and how to live and the ability to access the natural environment in the region in order to provide a balance in their lives. Good quality, well designed transport systems will also take into account the social and environmental wellbeing of the areas through which they pass.

Q2b. The Draft Strategic Transport Plan identifies at least three main roles which transport can play to help drive the economy and deliver the transformational change required. These are *Connecting People, Connecting Businesses and Moving Goods*.

Please let us know your comments on the three main roles which transport can play to help drive the economy and deliver transformational change, including if there are any other roles which should be considered alongside these.

ICE considers that the three roles listed in the strategy are vital to supporting the need for travel for business, social and health reasons.

Connecting people

ICE has noted the arrival of HS2 in Leeds and Manchester by 2033 as a key milestone for transport in the North and strongly advocates the development of transport links throughout the region to be executed in time to capitalise on this national development. The delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail is a major part of this focus with an emphasis on not just infrastructure, but on new rolling stock and the application of the digital railway to modernise signalling and to improve capacity and information.

Connecting businesses

While ICE is strongly in support of creating the infrastructure to support the growing digital economy, this must be complemented by improvements in transport for these

and other businesses to interact fully, to gain the benefits of agglomeration and to be able to move products. ICE is encouraged that TfN, in producing their draft plan, has focussed on the benefits of improving connectivity to enhance a number of the region's prime capabilities, including: advance manufacturing, digital, energy and health innovation.

Moving goods

ICE has identified that there are constraints to the movement of goods and bulk freight both within the UK and internationally because of the poor transport links close to the North's ports and airports. Transport improvements that connect directly with these international gateways are, in many cases in dire need of greater capacity, and growth in both passenger and goods through them is a key factor in the predicted growth potential. This is emphasised in the public support by both airports and ports in the DSTP.

Q3f. Please let us know your comments on Transport for the North's identified work programmes as set out in the Draft Strategic Transport Plan.

Northern Powerhouse Rail

Developing the rail system throughout the North, both for regional connectivity and to maximise the benefit of the reach by HS2 into the North is a cornerstone of ICE's vision for transport in the region. In this way those centres that are beyond the direct reach such as Preston, Darlington, Hull and Newcastle can benefit from better capacity and resilience on the network.

Long Term Rail Strategy (LTRS)

ICE understands that the vision will not be realised overnight and that a clear strategy for the longer term is essential, building on the rail programme in Network Rail's CP5 and the current planning for CP6. The approach set out in the LTRS is broadly in line with ICE's own aspirations for the North. The recognition of improved links to ports and airports is particularly welcome, especially in the North East of the region, as well as the support for Manchester as, probably, the North's principal airport.

Major Roads Network

The work done by the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund² in proposing a Major Road Network for England is welcome and an improved approach to providing a more accessible and resilient road network. Adopting this approach to the North's specific economic growth needs is a positive, welcome approach. The confirmation of funding for this

² Rees Jeffreys Road Fund (2016) [Major Road Network](#)

network alongside the Strategic Road Network, through ring-fenced VED revenue, is a positive step.

It must at the same time be recognised that some of the key Combined Authorities throughout the region have developed their own key route networks related to their local connectivity drivers. The application of the Major Roads Network by TfN must be cognisant of this in order to avoid disconnects between the two.

Integrated and smart travel

ICE's *Delivering a Northern Infrastructure Strategy* supports the introduction of smart ticketing with a view to the longer term introduction of whole-journey provision through mobility as a service (MaaS). However, the first priority must be to provide a resilient service that users can rely on as a result of it being well constructed and well maintained. The adverse weather in February/March of 2018 has shown how easily the present system fails.

Smart ticketing will have significant benefits at a sub-regional level in the first instance and thus will support the need for improved connectivity over the 'last mile' from long distance journeys onto the local network. This compares with London, where a ticket for a rail journey into the Capital can be purchased to include onward travel via the Transport for London network.

The Strategic Development Corridors

ICE supports the economic corridor approach to determining transport improvements. Using a series of loosely defined "corridors" across the North through which people, goods and services all need to be (a) moved more quickly and (b) moved more reliably is fundamentally the right approach.

It is important that these corridors are interconnected with one another and, as noted within the DSTP, have clear links with the region's geographical neighbours, plus in overall economic terms with the wider economy of the UK and internationally.

Connecting the Energy Coasts

There is an obvious need for strong investment in energy across the North. There are considerable common interests in nuclear and renewable energy in terms of both current and future investment from Anglesey in North Wales, through Cumbria along Britain's energy coast and across to the offshore capabilities of the East Coast. Effective transport links will provide further exchange of knowledge and skills on a region-wide basis.

West and Wales

This corridor is shown only loosely as linking with North Wales. It is encouraging to learn from the consultation period briefing that there is a clearer consideration of the need to ensure that the North Wales coast road and rail corridor is taken into account, particularly in respect of the Wylfa power station and links to the port of

Holyhead. This also supports the development in the energy sector which ICE believes is a key area for infrastructure investment.

Central Pennines and Southern Pennines

ICE notes the strategic studies already in progress on a Trans-Pennine Tunnel, Northern Pennine Roads and M60 North West Quadrant. These are very welcome and overall East-West connectivity by road and rail is essential for growth of the economy.

A key emphasis for ICE in the East-West corridors is the need for much better local connections to the ports, including inland ports, both by road and rail. The shipment of bulk freight from Liverpool across the Pennines has the potential to be greatly improved by better rail links and the opening up of more train paths with associated shorter journey times.

North West to Sheffield City Region

ICE supports transport improvements, particularly in rail, to create better links between the Sheffield City Region and the North West. New road links and improved rail routes, such as the Hope Valley would ease the problem of further increases in traffic levels (particularly from HGVs) and promote the growth of the wider regional economy. A new rail freight link is also seen as a strong contender for investment to alleviate road freight traffic.

East Coast to Scotland

As an example of the need for soft boundaries this rail corridor boundary is shown not to include York which is a key centre on that route. However, the text of the strategy does include it. This corridor approach also supports ICE views on the benefits that HS2 will bring if the facilities and links further North are included in the DSTP.

Yorkshire to Scotland

This corridor picks up the key ports and airports to the east of the Pennines which are vital to the economy of the North. Again, emphasis needs to be on the links between these and the strategic road and rail networks to support their trade and inward investment to develop their sites and hinterlands.

Q4B. Please let us know your comments on the seven strands identified by the Draft Strategic Transport Plan for explaining how Transport for the North's Investment Programme could be delivered.

Governance

ICE fully supports the granting of statutory powers, duties, authorities and accountabilities that accrued to TfN at the beginning of April.

It is important that TfN is also empowered to determine transport investment priorities and how the capital it is allocated is spent. In due course provision should be given to TfN to begin raising its own capital.

Partnerships

ICE believes that TfN's DSTP should form part of a wider Northern Infrastructure Strategy, which identifies infrastructure need across sectors, ensuring the North of England maximises its economic growth potential while enhancing social cohesion and quality of life.

As set out in ICE's *Delivering a Northern Infrastructure Strategy*, the development of an infrastructure strategy should be co-ordinated by a Council for the North. In essence this would be a partnership approach bringing together government stakeholders, regulators, businesses and public interest groups from across the region to determine overall infrastructure need across the region, including transport.

Innovation

ICE, at the same time as supporting a strategy for improving current transport networks, recognises the need to look ahead at how new technologies will play their part in the future. This includes the digital railway, autonomous vehicles and MaaS as well as considering technologies as yet unproven on a commercial scale like Hyperloop. However, the introduction of new and disruptive technologies should not interfere with the delivery of improvements to core networks as identified in the DSTP.

Skills

Skills development is a major strand of the ICE's *Delivering a Northern Infrastructure Strategy* report. In conjunction with the National Infrastructure Plan for Skills³, the report notes that the lower skills and educational attainment in the North acts as a drag on economic growth.

To help close this gap, ICE has called for the introduction of a regional infrastructure pipeline for the North of England to identify the skills, training and wider resources required to deliver them. ICE calls on TfN to support to such an initiative.

³ IPA (2015) [National Infrastructure Plan for Skills](#)

Funding and financing

Funding is fundamental to the realisation of the approach set out in the DSTP. While the majority of funding will come through central government and existing funding streams, the expenditure of these funds must be prioritised through agreement of the DSTP itself.

At the same time the opportunities for other funding streams must be rigorously explored. If the aim of improved transport is to provide stimulus and support for economic growth, then those who benefit from that growth should be involved in the funding of the infrastructure. There is a role for TfN in working with business to attract investment in transport to realise the full potential of the North.

ICE's *State of the Nation 2016: Devolution*⁴ report outlined how decisions on programmes and their financing should be delegated to the lowest effective level at which those decisions could be taken. As aforementioned, in due course provision should be given to TfN to begin raising its own capital in order to enable this approach to be realised.

Appraisal and analysis

Appraisal and consultation go hand-in-hand when it comes to developing, reviewing and delivering a strategy. The DSTP does appear to embrace a good range of methods to support the case for transport. What is essential for the plan to succeed is that the economic goals for the North are a fundamental part of the appraisal methodology. The assessment of those benefits must be regularly undertaken and reinforced so that the outcomes in increased GVA and jobs remain the key focus of investment in the schemes within each corridor.

In this respect ICE welcomes the approach being taken to review transport options within economic corridors in investment terms beyond the more conventional appraisal techniques. Through this approach there is a great opportunity to look at the bigger picture and ensure that parts of the corridor development do not fail because of out-dated and inflexible appraisal techniques. In this respect we welcome the ongoing revision of the WEBTag assessment process to embrace economic benefit.

Sustainability

It is fundamental to ICE and its members that infrastructure should be designed and built to the highest practicable standards of sustainability. In the urban environment ICE supports the provision of transport to encourage modal shift through improved bus services and light rail systems alongside investment in infrastructure that is

⁴ ICE (2016) [State of the Nation 2016: Devolution](#)

friendly towards cycling and walking. This supports both environmental and health objectives.

Q5c. Please explain your response to Q5b below.

ICE is strongly supportive of TfN's DSTP. It recognises the benefits of the approach being taken in delivering substantial economic growth through a defined 'prize' of £100bn gain in GVA across the region coupled with 850,000 new jobs.

The role of TfN to act as a leading 'one voice' for the development of the North's transport network is also vital and that voice must be raised clearly and positively in collaboration with its local partners and other pan-Northern groups with the common aim of supporting the rebalancing of the economy and realising the ambitious growth plans for the north.

Q7. What, if any, additional comments do you have that are relevant to this consultation on both the Draft Strategic Transport Plan and/or the Independent Integrated Sustainability Appraisal that you would like to make?

Through a partnership approach, the DSTP brings together the wishes and aims of those partners in support of transport for economic growth. ICE is clear that transport is not an end in itself but is a key enabler for that economic growth. This draft plan provides a clear vision as to the necessity for co-ordinated investment in better, more reliable transport for business and leisure. It is also important that the plan is evidence-based, and that evidence was presented for scrutiny prior to publishing the draft plan.

Once the DSTP is published and accepted, then certainty of funding will be required and the Government must continue to have confidence that TfN is on the right track and that the rolling review process fully takes account of changing technologies and sustainability.

ICE's *Delivering a Northern Infrastructure Strategy* report was developed in parallel with the TfN draft strategy, looking at wider the infrastructure sector. Transport is a key element of that report and it is encouraging that there is large degree of agreement between the two.

This DSTP is a visionary document which, through the creation of TfN, presents a step change in the approach to transport across a region for which the ultimate prize is a stronger economy and improved quality of life.

Specific issues

ICE has identified two issues that appear not to be picked up in the TfN strategy as made public so far.

Central Pennines Corridor

Among the major “Central Pennines Corridor” economic issues is the reliable movement of goods and containers between the ports of Liverpool on the West Coast and Hull/Immingham on the East Coast.

ICE recommends that the LTRS includes the transfer, where appropriate, of freight to rail with improved access points coupled with more and better new container freight termini along the freight carrying railway in cities and towns throughout the corridor. At the same time, improvements to the East-West road links to both North and South of the M62 must be progressed to cater for the continuing demand for road-based container traffic.

Whitehall Junction

Whitehall Junction is the key to any improvements that are to be made east of the Pennines. This is because it is the point to the immediate west of Leeds station at which five current railway lines meet and, in most cases, cross on the level. Also it is planned that it will have to accommodate further routes.

With this development and the potential for a Leeds mass transit system a decision needs to be taken about whether Whitehall Junction would need to be (a) altered to accommodate the extra railway links involved in such a mass transit system or (b) bypassed to allow the mass transit system itself uninterrupted passage whilst not coming into conflict with the other rail links set out above.