



Submission by the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport

to the

National Infrastructure Commission call for Evidence:

Connecting northern cities

Introduction

The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (“the Institute”) is a professional institution embracing all transport modes whose members are engaged in the provision of transport services for both passengers and freight, the management of logistics and the supply chain, transport planning, government and administration. Our principal concern is that transport policies and procedures should be effective and efficient, based on objective analysis of the issues and practical experience, and that good practice should be widely disseminated and adopted. The Institute has a number of specialist forums, a nationwide structure of locally based groups and a Public Policies Committee which considers the broad canvass of transport policy. This submission has been prepared by the Institute’s North East and North West Region Policy Committees.

1. To what extent are weaknesses in transport connectivity holding back northern city regions (specifically in terms of jobs, enterprise creation and growth, and housing)?

1.1 There are two key types of transport connectivity which are holding back economic growth in the North of England, namely that between urban areas, and within urban areas.

1.2 Between urban areas, there are a number of issues which are holding back city regions in the North, and they are in large part to do with the length of many interurban journey times and the relative quality of the public transport offer as regards speed and number of journey opportunities. This is borne out by Yorkshire and the Humber having the longest average rail commuting times in the country (TSGB0111, 2015). There are still a number of towns in the North without a rail connection at all, and a number of places which have only a small number of trains a day, mainly at times which are completely unsuitable for commuter travel or making journeys in the evenings or Sundays.

1.3 For example, in West Yorkshire / Leeds City Region, Otley has significant commuter links to Leeds, yet has no rail service, with commuters usually driving or using bus services which are held up by other traffic, and only relatively small numbers using the rail link bus to Menston. The Five Towns area around Castleford and Pontefract has poor rail connections to Leeds, and no rail or bus connections to York (despite the lines being open – Pontefract’s limited rail service to York has two off-peak trains a day only) and its relatively low housing costs and availability of brownfield land could help not only relieve housing pressure on York and the area north of Leeds, but also improve access to jobs in Leeds and York for those living in the area. Liverpool is also poorly connected by rail to North Wales,

with which it is connected economically.

- 1.4 The requirement to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions (UNFCCC, 2015 and other National Policy Documents) necessitates a focus on shifting passenger and freight movements to less environmentally damaging modes, and the public transport offer in the North lags considerably behind that in the South East of England in terms of the speed and capacity of rail services.
- 1.5 Recognising also that the provision of new road capacity leads to increases in traffic and congestion (SACTRA, 1994 and other subsequent confirmations of this), the National Infrastructure Commission should prioritise non-car means of passenger transport and programmes to reduce the carbon intensity of freight operations.
- 1.6 The supposed aim of creating a “single economy” across the North will always be countered by the two main factors of time and cost as regards getting between places. In addition, despite notable exceptions, public transport through much of Northern England is of poor quality, although there are examples of high quality service, which raise expectations for many of the other routes – for example the Airedale and Wharfedale Line services in West Yorkshire. The separation of Transpennine Express as a separate franchise has raised quality levels for rolling stock, although quantity remains a problem here with passenger levels rising above expectations.
- 1.7 While high quality light rail systems exist in the North in Manchester and Sheffield, there is nothing of that quality in West Yorkshire or smaller conurbations, despite many Continental cities of as little as 200,000 population (equivalent to York) having quality local rapid transit systems. It is good to see aspirations for these systems to be cross-conurbation, as with Metrolink and the Sheffield-Rotherham tram-train project and South Yorkshire BRT, but West Yorkshire appears left behind in this regard, especially having comparatively poor local rail coverage in its major cities. Existing BRT routes in Northern England, with the exception of the Runcorn New Town system, are generally of poor quality, and, having single-entrance buses, multiple operators with little or no cross-acceptance of tickets, and lacking most of the qualities required to be considered ‘true’ BRT (ITDP, 2013). However, routes under construction in Manchester, Sheffield and proposed for Leeds will change this.
- 1.8 There is already a high degree of interconnectedness between towns and cities in the North of England, and this, coupled with the geography of closely spaced settlements means that interurban and intra-urban/suburban public transport services are often provided by the same routes as the suburbs of one town blend into those of the next. The areas of [almost] continuous urban development in the north are particularly poorly served by decent quality public transport and suffer from endemic traffic congestion, e.g. Yorkshire Woollen District (Dewsbury and surroundings), Shipley area, Manchester satellite towns - in fact almost anywhere in the conurbations not on heavy rail links, with many poor quality main roads not readily capable of improvement without causing extensive property demolition and exacerbating community severance.
- 1.9 The Ordsall Chord will provide a link between Manchester's Piccadilly and Victoria stations but will create a very complex network of flat junctions to the west of the centre which will be very difficult to operate reliably. This is likely in the longer term to lead to consideration

of a rail tunnel, provision for which ought to be safeguarded.

1.10 It is important that Liverpool is connected into the HS2/HS3 networks, albeit that the optimum way of achieving this requires further study. Failing this, it is conceivable that Liverpool would find it hard in the shadow of Manchester to develop further its role as a sub-centre of regional activity.

1.11 Key themes which need to be addressed in improving transport connectivity in the North are:

- capacity
- connectivity
- sustainability
- equity

2. What cost-effective infrastructure investments in city-to-city connectivity could address these weaknesses? We are interested in all modes of transport.

2.1 Small-scale city to city connectivity through City Region scale Bus Rapid Transit and (where appropriate and where capacity and land for new or reopened formations exists) rail modes which can knit together the towns and cities in our City Regions. This should be supported with more frequent local rail services where practicable (and the recent announcement of up to 500 new DMU vehicles for the new Northern Rail franchise can contribute to this, as it is significantly more than required for replacement of the Pacer trains). We welcome the new franchise's promise of "Northern Connect" high quality interurban services and the frequency increases and new services promised, and these should help provide for the some of the growth in rail demand across the North.

2.2 A key weakness throughout the North is the slowness of bus services, both as scheduled and as a result of congestion. There is a need for major road-space re-allocation to ensure service reliability and reduce car dependency.

2.3 A major evaluation of modal split to out-of-town retail and employment locations is also needed across the North of England. These are quasi city/town centres, but insufficiently acknowledged as such by transport and traffic planners. Some of the largest better served than others, for example MetroCentre and Meadowhall - but others have minimal public transport or are connected to and from a limited number of places.

2.4 We appreciate that the Infrastructure Commission's remit is more at a National and "Cross-North" level, but there is a strong interdependence between national and local infrastructure, with a large number of local journeys by car, bus, cycle and train being made on national networks of Trunk Roads and interurban and InterCity rail lines, so it is essential that local capacity and connectivity needs are considered in the building of interurban infrastructure.

2.5 Improving local bus networks to function in a way more akin to Bus Rapid Transit can contribute to this, by tying together Bus Lanes and Bus Priority, rationalising and aggregating stops and interchanges and vastly improving at-stop and in-vehicle information to create easy to use networks. A move towards buses with multi-door boarding, smartcard (off bus) fare payment and on board passenger information (as seen in London)

can provide some of the benefits of Bus Rapid Transit at low cost, and bus priority schemes such as the York Road Guided Busway in Leeds and Manchester Road in Bradford can form cores around which more BRT-like networks can be developed. Fares, ticket complexity and the slow operation of single door, pay-on-entry buses are all contributory factors to the decline in bus use nationwide as compared to London (TSGB0101, 2015). Whilst there is no doubt that BRT has an important contribution to make, there are many corridors for which the ultimate aim should be a rail-based solution, building upon the experience that is to be gained from forthcoming tram-train trials.

- 2.6 The proposal to integrate travel smart cards across the North of England is also welcome, as part of the roll out of ITSO and National Rail smart card travel more widely, but with the proliferation of different smart card products across the country, care must be taken to avoid confusing passengers and also to ensure passengers who regularly travel across PTE boundaries or use multiple operators are not unduly penalised.
- 2.7 A quick win for the Five Towns area (see above) could be a regular rail service from Leeds to Castleford and thence to Sherburn-in-Elmet and York to provide better rail connectivity to those towns.
- 2.8 The development of the Merseyrail system in the 1970s left for the future the possibility of extending the Northern line southwards from Liverpool Central via the Wapping Tunnel, establishing with dual-voltage stock a link to the lines to St Helens and to Runcorn and at the same time a more balanced network. This aspiration has been retained in the current proposals for the longer term development of the system and should be progressed.

3. Which city-to-city corridor(s) should be the priority for early phases of investment?

- 3.1 In terms of Northern city-to-city travel, connections from Bradford and Hull in particular are relatively poor. The new Northern and Transpennine franchises will address some of the rail issues, as will the A63 Castle Street project in Hull, but Bradford remains relatively isolated by road and rail.
- 3.2 Middlesbrough is also relatively isolated by rail, and the potential for extending the new Hull – York hourly service to Middlesbrough should be investigated.
- 3.3 Also in West Yorkshire, the railway line between Halifax and Huddersfield provides poor journey times (equivalent to those by bus) and investment in improving speeds on this sections could be valuable and also allow for an additional hourly service from Bradford to Huddersfield.
- 3.4 Reopening the Halton Curve will provide improved connectivity between Liverpool and North Wales, including with Liverpool John Lennon Airport. The strong link between the regional economies of North Wales and Merseyside would be enhanced further by keeping open options for further development.
- 3.5 Investment in new road infrastructure needs to be very carefully considered in the light of its generative potential for new traffic and the necessity of reducing the UK's carbon emissions. In particular, we strongly disapprove of the proposed Transpennine Road Tunnel proposal, which sends the wrong signals about use of the now discredited “predict and

provide” strategy (SACTRA, 1994), and potentially be dangerous for drivers as it will be too long for many drivers to use safely without losing concentration (for example, trains using long tunnels such as the Channel Tunnel have small windscreens to reduce the hypnotic effects of running through long tunnels at high speed), be a safety risk with the potential for dangerous fires, and also lead to additional traffic on access and egress routes. Domestic air travel has fallen since a high in 2006, with minor recovery in 2014/5 (but still lower than the 2006 high) (TSGB0102, 2015) and therefore the logic of provisioning for increased domestic air capacity has to be questioned.

4. What are the key international connectivity needs likely to be in the next 20-30 years in the north of England (with a focus on ports and airports)? What is the most effective way to meet these needs, and what constraints on delivery are anticipated?

4.1 Air travel in the North’s airports is growing, but closer inspection shows that Manchester is the only airport experiencing significant growth in passenger numbers, with growth plateauing at Newcastle and Leeds-Bradford, and declines in passenger numbers at the North’s other airports (AVI0102, 2015). The number of air movements is falling at all airports, suggesting either that load factors are improving, or that there is a move to larger aircraft. Increasing average aircraft size is expected as airlines attempt to reduce fuel costs and emissions, and this could have serious consequences in terms of the long term future of the North’s smaller airports.

4.2 It is possible that only Manchester, Newcastle and possibly Leeds-Bradford have a long term future, with long term declines in passenger numbers at all other airports. Newcastle is linked to hub airports at Amsterdam and Dubai, and Leeds-Bradford to Amsterdam. Leeds-Bradford has no rail service, but has reasonable (although slow) bus connectivity to Central Leeds, and slightly less reasonable bus connectivity to Central Bradford. Connections to Harrogate are relatively poor in frequency and length of service day. Leeds-Bradford is also on a constrained site and it will be prohibitively expensive to extend the runway or add a rail connection, and in addition, the vast majority of movements at Leeds-Bradford are for low cost airlines (with some package holiday flights), which are likely to become unsustainable if a system of carbon taxes is implemented (as would be required in order to meet our commitments to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions).

4.3 Aviation accounts for half as much GHG emissions (21% of transport’s total) as the private car fleet (40%) and this is rising (TSGB 2014), with domestic aviation alone responsible for half the amount of greenhouse gas emissions as the entire rail network (freight and passenger), despite contributing only 11% of the number of passenger kilometres as passenger rail alone (TSGB0101 & ENV0201, 2015), so attempting to improve international connectivity by growing the number of aviation movements needs to be considered very carefully. There is also a need to consider the split between business and leisure demand for air travel and the consequent differences in values of time (and, potentially, carbon).

4.4 Connections to ports are of use primarily for freight transport. Development of Liverpool’s container port is hampered by the rail connections, mainly due to lack of capacity on the local rail network out of Liverpool towards the mainline WCML. Improvement in connectivity should be considered in the context of the Liverpool 2-Nuneaton-Felixstowe/Southampton axis. For Hull, road access will be improved by the A63 Castle Street project, but rail services are not well developed. The North’s major container port,

at Immingham, has problems with rail capacity which need to be solved by resignalling and the ability to route trains to inland ports without heavily impacting on passenger services. Development of the “Joint Line” between Doncaster and Peterborough, and also of freight capacity between the Peterborough and the Midlands will help here, but there remain few opportunities for rail freight to travel across the Pennines with there not being enough rail capacity even for passenger demand.

4.5 However, with the decline in coal tonnes shipped (RAI0402, 2015), locomotive and track capacity is being released which could be used for other freight movements, which are growing slightly, but not by enough to offset the loss in coal tonnage. New infrastructure for rail freight of coal, for example the avoiding curve at Doncaster, will need to find new uses.. Potentially, the Doncaster to Settle-Carlisle Line route could be used, together with the route towards Clitheroe and Manchester, as a Transpennine freight route, although this would suffer from long journey times and having to cross the Leeds station throat

4.6 Passenger traffic from Northern ports is small, with only cruise ferries from Hull to Zeebrugge and Newcastle to IJmuiden (Amsterdam) of any significance, other ferry services being for road freight and short sea shipping only.

5. What form of governance would most effectively deliver transformative infrastructure in the north, how should this be funded and by whom, including appropriate local contributions?

5.1 The issue of Governance in the North of England is an important one, with the perception that London-based Government does not pay attention to the transport needs of the Northern regions and the disproportionate amount that is spent on transport infrastructure in the South. In addition, the major investment in HS2 will do little to improve connectivity between Northern cities (and, taking walk and wait times into account, promises Leeds-Sheffield journey times which are longer than the existing direct trains).

5.2 Having said that, a number of Governance structures are being set up for the North of England, which make the issue of who is responsible for what more complicated than it has been previously. The current structures include:

- Transport for the North, primarily tasked with letting and managing the Northern Rail and Transpennine Express franchises
- The City Region Local Enterprise Partnerships, some of whom have devolved transport budget and some not
- Central Government Infrastructure spend, which for transport in the North is contributing via Highways England to the strategic road network, Direct Grant to Local Authorities for local roads and their maintenance, subsidy for local rail, and also for subsidising local bus operations
- Passenger Transport Executives, funded through Council Tax and Central Government, in metropolitan areas

5.3 Local government structures and boundaries are not necessarily appropriate delineators for transport authority boundaries, which need to be based on journey-to-work and travel desire rather than administrative divisions (with the recognition that these overlap). This applies especially to district and unitary authorities. It is also inappropriate for policies to

be set by largely rural counties that fail to take into account the need to travel to/from neighbouring centres (East Yorkshire - Hull, North Yorkshire - York, Northumberland - Tyneside, etc.)

5.4 We would, however, refer to this Institute's November 2015 response to DfT on its Buses Reform consultation, In that response the Institute drew attention to the substantial opportunities to increase bus patronage through Quality Partnerships between transport authorities and bus operators. In these partnerships the authorities would facilitate effective bus operation through favourable traffic management and parking policies, including bus priority schemes, while operators would invest in improving standards of service delivery.

5.5 In addition, private sector funding can be attracted, both directly from bus and rail operators (who may contribute to capital projects) and also through LEP-led partnerships, Business Improvement Districts and Community Infrastructure Levy for new developments. All of this makes it difficult for the public to understand investment (or the lack of) in transport infrastructure.

5.6 This complexity needs to be tamed and it made easier for the public to understand the funding and management responsibilities for transport infrastructure and services.

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