

# LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY

To: The Chair and Members of the Transport Committee

Meeting: 16 January 2020

Authority/Authorities Affected: All

EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: No

## **REPORT OF MERSEYTRAVEL**

### **LONG TERM RAIL STRATEGY UPDATE**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to inform the Transport Committee of the progress of delivery of the Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Transport Committee note the report and continue to support the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy.

#### **3. 2014 STRATEGY**

- 3.1. The Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy (LCR LTRS) was initially published in 2014 and subsequently updated and endorsed by the Metro Mayor in 2018. (The strategy can be found at the following hyperlink: [https://www.merseytravel.gov.uk/about-us/local-transport-delivery/Documents/10399%20Merseytravel%20LongTermRail\\_Strategyweb.pdf](https://www.merseytravel.gov.uk/about-us/local-transport-delivery/Documents/10399%20Merseytravel%20LongTermRail_Strategyweb.pdf) )
- 3.2. The principle aim of the LTRS was to provide a clear focused evidence based approach to improvements on the rail network both within the LCR but also the links into the LCR. One of the key benefits of the strategy was the review of all the potential improvements on the network and refining these down to a series of packages which focused on those projects which would deliver the best improvements to the network.
- 3.3. 12 work packages were developed which set out proposed enhancements to the network. These are detailed in Appendix Two of the updated Long Term Rail Strategy.

#### **4. SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS WITHIN WORK PACKAGES**

- 4.1. The summary below sets out what has been achieved against each of the packages:

#### (1) Improving National Passenger and Freight Connections

As part of the development of the TPE franchise new services will be in place from December 2019 providing direct connections from Liverpool to both Glasgow and Edinburgh.

#### (2) Merseyrail Growth Enabling

The key component of this package was the replacement of the Class 507/508 rolling stock with new high capacity high performing units. The new rolling stock is due to be phased in from 2020.

#### (3) Liverpool City Centre Capacity

Work has commenced on the upgrade of Liverpool Central station. Lime Street capacity enhanced.

#### (4) City Line Enhancements

Newton-le-Willows has been the subject of a major upgrade in conjunction with the improvement of services on the line provided by Transpennine Express. Work has also commenced on a study to investigate improvement of rail links to Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

#### (5) Cheshire Lines Route Enhancements

The LCR has undertaken a study on the line in conjunction with Transport for Greater Manchester and Warrington Borough Council to consider what improvements can be made on the line. This is being used as a basis by Network Rail for its Continuous Modular Strategic Planning output.

A study into the re-opening of the Wapping Tunnel has been undertaken which identifies how City Line service could be brought into Liverpool Central.

#### (6) Halton Curve

The Curve has been reinstated and services have been operating on the line between Liverpool and Chester since May 2019. This provides improved links to Chester and also Frodsham and Helsby. It also improves services into North Wales and beyond.

#### (7) Improved Connections to Chester and Ellesmere Port

Service frequency has been increased with Chester now having 4 trains an hour throughout the day. Study work has been undertaken with Growth Track 360 into potential improvements at Chester which would allow a Merseyrail service to operate through to Crewe and with Cheshire West and Chester into extending the Ellesmere Port service through to Helsby.

The new service operating from Chester through Newton-le-Willows to Leeds is now

in place.

#### (8) Ormskirk-Preston Enhancements

A study into the re-opening the Burscough Curves has been undertaken which does not have a good business case. The potential for improvements on this line is likely to be dependant on the development of battery operation of the new Merseyrail units. A study is being undertaken to consider battery operation.

#### (9) Kirkby-Wigan Line

The LCR has worked with Lancashire County Council and Network Rail on the potential extension of the Merseyrail line through to Skelmersdale. A GRIP 3 study will be completed in 2020. Transforming Cities Funding has been made available to extend the Merseyrail services through to a new station at Headbolt Lane. GRIP 4 work is expected to commence early in 2020 on the Headbolt Lane option.

#### (10) Borderlands Line Enhancements

The LCR has worked with Transport for Wales and Growth Track 360 on the development of this line. New units (Class 230's) will be introduced to the line in 2020. In addition to this the service will be increased to a half-hourly service from December 2021.

#### (11) Mixed Passenger & Freight use on Current Freight Only Lines

Study work is being undertaken to assess the feasibility of reopening the Bootle branch top passenger services.

#### (12) Selected New Stations

Maghull North new station was opened in June 2018. Work has commenced on the re-opening of St James station and is expected to be complete in 2023. The LTRS identifies other station which could be brought forward in the future. The extension from Kirkby with a new station at Headbolt Lane is also expected to be delivered by 2023.

A summary of the level of development of each package is detailed at Appendix 1 of this report.

## **5. 2018 UPDATED STRATEGY**

- 5.1. In 2018 the Strategy was updated to take account developments on the railway which were likely to have a direct impact on the LCR.

- 5.2. The LCR Devolution Deal outlined a range of funds and responsibilities that have passed to the control of the LCR Combined Authority. The Devolution Deal ultimately means the LCR has greater potential to support the planning and delivery of the rail offer within the LCR. This is chiefly demonstrated through the procurement of the new rolling stock and which also continues through discussions with Government about the potential transfer of control of the local rail network to the LCR.
- 5.3. The LCR continues to work closely with TfN regarding the development of the railway across the north of England. TfN is a statutory Sub-national Transport Body and has a pan-Northern remit which includes the development of Northern Powerhouse Rail, a plan to provide faster links between northern cities. It has subsumed the role of Rail North and has direct responsibility in conjunction with the DfT for the management of the Northern and Transpennine Express franchises.
- 5.4. The revised strategy also updated the evidence base to take account of recent changes and projected these changes through to 2040. These looked at expected changes in population, employment and GVA for the City Region.
- 5.5. The poor level of connectivity of Liverpool was highlighted in comparison with other towns and cities across Britain and how this could be improved if key links were reinstated. It also highlighted the importance of HS2 in reducing journey times to and from London.
- 5.6. The key highlight in the updated strategy was the role Liverpool Central plays in the operation of the network and the economic activity around the railway. In excess of 60% of journeys start or finish in Liverpool with Liverpool Central being the most used station on the network. Liverpool Central ranks as the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest used station in the north behind Manchester Piccadilly and Leeds, considering there are only 3 platforms it is not surprising that it is has the most congested platforms outside of London.
- 5.7. The implications of this are important as any development of the network will have a direct impact on the use of Liverpool Central. Increased use of the network will lead to greater levels of patronage at Central. The new rolling stock while increasing the capacity of trains are also likely to attract greater passenger numbers which again will lead to great use at Central.
- 5.8. With the issue of Liverpool Central passenger capacity in mind the revised strategy changed the focus on the propose work to 3 specific packages of work. Appendix 2 details the projects identified within each group.

Group 1: Projects that have been delivered or are committed

These are summarised in section 4 above.

Group 2: Projects which are linked to, or require an upgrade at Liverpool Central

At the heart of this group is the recognition that Liverpool Central needs to be expanded to cater for the levels of patronage expected to use the station in the future. This is based on the general increase in patronage anticipated through latent growth and also the expected increases in demand that improvements to the rail network would bring. Such improvements includes any new stations on the Merseyrail network and identified major projects such as Skelmersdale Rail Link or

improvements to routes which link into the Merseyrail network.

### Group 3: Projects that have limited impact on Liverpool Central

This group includes main line improvements along with freight improvements.

- 5.9. The number of projects identified within group 2 highlight the importance that improvements are made at Liverpool Central to ensure Merseyrail continues to play an important role in the development of the Liverpool City Region.
- 5.10. Transforming Cities Funding is being used to take forward a number of projects. Funding has been allocated to the development and delivery of the Headbolt Lane extension and St James new station. Funding has also been allocated to the development of improved park and ride facilities which will cater for the increased demand for rail services into the future and as matched funding with DfT Access for All funding.

## **6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

### 6.1. Financial

The implementation of the strategy will require specific levels of funding depending on which projects are taken forward.

### 6.2. Human Resources

Additional resources may be required to deliver the projects identified within the LTRS. If required approval will be sought on a project by project basis.

### 6.3. Physical Assets

The projects identified will have a significant impact on the rail infrastructure. In the main this will be the responsibility of Network Rail.

### 6.4. Information Technology

There are no IT issues to be addressed.

### 6.5. Programme Management Office (PMO)

Individual projects will be reported through the PMO. This is already the case with Liverpool Central, Headbolt Lane extension and St James new station.

## **7. RISKS AND MITIGATION**

- 7.1. Each potential project has its own specific risks and required mitigations. These could impact on the ability to deliver the LTRS. These will be reported within each individual project.

## **8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. The importance of equality and diversity is recognised and is assessed within each project taken forward.

## **9. PRIVACY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no privacy implications with the LTRS.

## **10. COMMUNICATION ISSUES**

- 10.1. Each project identified within the LTRS will be addressed as it is taken forward.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

- 11.1. The LTRS is ambitious and sets out the projects which are needed to ensure that the rail network within the Liverpool City Region is capable of providing the service required by the population of the LCR and that it also supports the economic development of the region as a whole.

The LTRS highlights the importance that improvements are made at Liverpool Central

The strategy reviews the projects which have been identified in the past and provides a solid basis for the justification of projects to be delivered in the future.

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Appendices:

Appendix One – Package Development

Appendix Two – LTRS Groups

Available at the link:

[https://www.merseytravel.gov.uk/about-us/local-transport-delivery/Documents/10399%20Merseytravel%20LongTermRail\\_Strategyweb.pdf](https://www.merseytravel.gov.uk/about-us/local-transport-delivery/Documents/10399%20Merseytravel%20LongTermRail_Strategyweb.pdf)

Background Documents:

Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy