

Transport for the North Board Minutes

23 June 2025

1 Mann Island, Liverpool, L3 1BP

Present:

Lord McLoughlin (Chair)

Attendee

Cllr Michael Gorman
Cllr Nick Mannion
Cllr Karen Shore
Cllr Denise Rollo
Mayor Campbell

Mayor Steve Rotheram
Cllr Steve Foulkes
Mayor Kim McGuinness
Cllr Stephen Harker
Cllr Hans Mundry
Cllr Jean Flaherty
Cllr John Murray
Mayor Tracy Brabin
Mayor David Skaith

Local Authority

Cheshire East;
Cheshire East;
Cheshire West & Chester;
Cumberland;
Hull and East Yorkshire Combined
Authority;
Liverpool City Region;

North East Combined Authority;
Tees Valley Combined Authority;
Warrington;
Warrington;
Westmorland and Furness;
West Yorkshire Combined Authority;
York and North Yorkshire Combined
Authority;

Rail North Authorities Attendees

Cllr Ingrid Sheard Greater Lincolnshire Combined County
Authority

Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Attendees

Mark Rawstron Lancashire Business Representative

Partners in Attendance:

Suzzane Grant Merseyrail
Rob McIntosh Network Rail
James Richardson Network Rail (Transpennine Route
Upgrade)

Officers in Attendance:

Name	Job Title
Martin Tugwell	Chief Executive
Gary Rich	Democratic Services Officer
Katie Day	Deputy Chief Executive
Joanne Barclay	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
Keith Mitchell	Interim Finance Director
Lisa Pitt	Interim Section 151 Officer
Rachel Ford	Interim Strategy Director

**Item Item
No:****1. Welcome & Apologies**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Members to Liverpool and thanked Mayor Rotherham for organising the visit to Cammell Laird shipyard. He informed the meeting that Board Members had had the opportunity to travel there on the existing ferry, see progress with the construction of its successor and return via one of the new trains operating Merseyrail services.
- 1.2 Reflecting on the visit, the Chair emphasised that it highlighted the importance of a joined-up transport experience for the user and the opportunity created by infrastructure investment to protect and develop local skills. He suggested that similar visits should be incorporated into future meetings, allowing Board Members to experience first-hand the benefits of investment, including lessons learnt.
- 1.3 He informed the Board that the next meeting will be held in Darlington, a few days before the main celebrations associated with the 200th anniversary of the birth of the railway.
- 1.4 Apologies were noted from Mayor Coppard, Mayor Burnham, Cllrs Gittins, Hunt and Riley, John Hall, Nick Harris, Richard Leonard, Tim Smart and Andy Hughes.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Transport for the North Board held on 17 March 2025 were considered.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive updated Board on matters arising from the previous meeting. He noted that the Board's letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer following its March meeting had led to an invitation to meet with officials working on the Green Book review. In addition to touching on the work associated with the Northern Appraisal Playbook, that meeting had provided the opportunity for Members to use real-life examples in their area to illustrate issues that needed to be addressed.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive thanked Cllr Hinchcliffe, Cllr Gannon and Tom Moody, each of whom took part in the meeting to talk about Bradford Station, the A19 and Middlewich Bypass respectively.
- 3.4 The Chief Executive reported back on the analysis undertaken on the gender pay gap. Although the size of TfN does not require it to report on the gender pay gap, the March Board meeting had agreed it would be helpful to undertake. He reported that the TfN median gap is 3.4%, with the national average at 7%, whilst for those identifying as having a disability, the figure was 8.1% compared to a national average of 12.7%.

- 3.5 The Chief Executive noted that the report did not identify any systemic issues and confirmed that the relevant data will be reviewed annually, and any emerging trends will be addressed promptly.
- 3.6 On the matter of the approval of the 2025–26 budget, noting that the March Board meeting had not been quorate, he reminded members about the consultation process which had taken place prior, during and after the March Board meeting. He stated that members approval for the budget had been sought (and given) via the consultation process and this had allowed the 25 /26 budget to become operational from the 1 April 2025. The Chief Executive stated that as the approval of the budget was reserved to Board, he was seeking ratification from members for the approval of the budget.
- 3.7 The minutes were moved by Mayor Brabin and seconded by Mayor McGuinness.

Resolved:

- 1) That the minutes of the Transport for the North Board held on 17 March 2025 be approved as a correct record.
- 2) That the Chief Executive's update and the Quarterly Operating report be noted.
- 3) That the budget for 2025/26 be ratified.

4. Presentation from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

- 4.1 Prior to the main presentation, Mayor Rotheram offered introductory remarks, emphasising the significance of integrated travel systems for users and their communities. He noted that all Northern Mayors were united in their commitment to developing a London-style integrated public transport systems within their regions.
- 4.2 Mayor Rotheram highlighted the Liverpool City Region's progress, including ownership of its own trains, work to introduce 1,000 new zero emission buses and the inclusion of the ferry service as part of the offer to residents and visitors alike. He also mentioned plans to move forward with a pilot rapid transit system in the coming weeks. He explained that his overarching goal is to unify train, bus, ferry, and rapid transit services into a single, fully integrated network, supported by a 'tap and go' payment card. The latter is expected to be operational by the end of the year, enabling fare capping and greater control over what has traditionally been a fragmented transport system.
- 4.3 Following the Mayor's remarks, Ms. Suzanne Grant of Merseyrail delivered the main presentation, outlining key developments and initiatives.
- 4.4 The Chair thanked Ms. Grant for her presentation and expressed his admiration for the improved access for passengers since the introduction of the new train fleet. Having observed the new step technology in action, the Chair congratulated the team delivering the new trains.
- 4.5 Ms. Grant explained that prior to the implementation of the new slide-and-step technology, disabled passengers were required to book

assistance in advance, limiting their ability to travel spontaneously. In many cases, passengers who arrived without prior notice risked missing their train, with no guarantee of assistance at their destination. The new technology now enables passengers to board any train without prior arrangement. Trains are equipped with designated wheelchair spaces, and external markings to indicate the best boarding points. Ms. Grant emphasised that these changes have significantly improved the travel experience and independence of disabled passengers.

- 4.6 Mayor McGuinness expressed interest in the Liverpool City Region's initiatives to address violence against women and girls. She shared that she has prioritised making its transport network feel safer for all users, including through physical infrastructure improvements, and expressed a desire to learn more about Liverpool's approach.
- 4.7 Ms. Grant responded that passenger safety is a top priority. She noted that most stations are staffed from the start to the end of service, and that CCTV is in operation on all trains and at all stations. Merseyrail is also developing a network of "engagement champions" across the organisation to advocate for safety, particularly in relation to violence against women and girls. Additionally, an internal survey has been launched to gather insights on what measures would help women and girls feel safer during their journeys. The organisation is working towards formal accreditation by the end of 2025 in collaboration with the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) and other stakeholders.
- 4.8 The Chair congratulated Merseyrail and Mayor Rotherham on achieving a 93% passenger satisfaction rate, as reported by Transport Focus. He remarked that this level of satisfaction should serve as a benchmark for all public services.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

5. Spending Review Update

- 5.1 Members received the presentation from the Chief Executive who highlighted the salient points in the presentation.
- 5.2 Mayor Skaith welcomed the investment directed towards core cities but expressed concern that the focus should not be limited to these areas. He emphasised the need for investment that also supports towns, rural, and coastal communities. He stressed the importance of connectivity between these areas and core city regions, noting that transport infrastructure in the North is underdeveloped, with rural and coastal areas particularly disadvantaged. Mayor Skaith underscored the role of transport in driving economic growth and opportunity and urged that government funding be tailored to benefit all regions equitably.
- 5.3 The Chair extended apologies for not welcoming Mayor Campbell at the start of the meeting and offered congratulations on his recent election as Mayor of the Hull and East Yorkshire Combined Authority.
- 5.4 Mayor Campbell provided an update on the development of the Hull and East Yorkshire Combined Authority, acknowledging that it was early days

compared to the established combined authorities. He noted the geographical diversity of his region, which encompasses coastal towns, rural communities, and urban centres. He emphasised the strategic importance of the proposed electrification of the Hull to Selby rail line, identifying it as key to improving regional connectivity and supporting economic growth.

- 5.5 Councillor Mundry stressed that consideration must be given not only to the cost of proposed transport initiatives but also to the cost of inaction. He warned that failure to invest could negatively impact the government's focus on delivering housing, economic prosperity, and growth more widely.
- 5.6 Mayor McGuinness welcomed the renewed focus on Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR), expressing optimism about its potential delivery and the significant opportunities it presents for growth across the North. She advocated for a comprehensive approach that extends beyond core cities, enabling integration of local transport networks, facilitating housing development, and supporting business growth along major corridors and across wider northern regions. She noted that as the "Great North" there is a shared recognition of the opportunity for transformative growth enabled by investment in transport infrastructure and services.
- 5.7 She further emphasised the need for a clear and detailed implementation plan, outlining timelines and sequencing of delivery.
- 5.8 Councillor Mannion stated that transport investment should be viewed in terms of its broader economic impact, not solely in terms of road capacity and speed. He expressed appreciation to TfN for their continued support on proposals located within his authority that support economic growth.
- 5.9 Mayor Rotheram noted that the Government has acknowledged the existence of a North-South divide in relation to funding allocations and reflected on how the Government's recent decisions suggested progress was being made in closing the gap. He expressed confidence that NPR could progress from concept to delivery, citing the shift away from sole reliance on Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) in business case evaluations.
- 5.10 The Chair noted that BCR has not always been the decisive factor in infrastructure investment decisions. He cited the example of the Limehouse Link, which proceeded despite a poor BCR, suggesting that similar flexibility may be warranted in current and future transport projects in the North.
- 5.11 The Chief Executive reiterated the consistent position of the Board in advocating for the delivery of NPR in full. He confirmed that this commitment is embedded within TfN's Strategic Transport Plan, with the electrification of the Hull line identified as a potential 'quick win'.
- 5.12 In reference to the Treasury's 'Green Book', the Chief Executive highlighted that social inclusion and environmental benefits associated with transport investment are equally important as economic outcomes when making funding decisions. He expressed hope that ongoing

collaboration with the Treasury building on the discussions as part of the Green Book review would continue and that this would help break down the silos that exist in appraising investment proposals.

Resolved:

That the presentation and the Board's comments be noted.

6. Transpennine Route Upgrade Update

- 6.1 Members received a presentation from Mr James Richardson (Director TRU, Network Rail), who outlined the key developments and progress to date with delivery of the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU).
- 6.2 The Chair commended Mr Richardson for the effective engagement and communication with passengers during the various blockades that are required to enable works to take place. While acknowledging the inevitable disruption, the Chair recognised the long-term benefits that the TRU will bring to the region.
- 6.3 Mayor Tracy Brabin expressed enthusiasm for the TRU project, describing it as an exciting development for the north as a whole. She praised the project for being on target, on time, and within budget, and highlighted it as a beacon of what the North can achieve. Mayor Brabin also commended the community engagement efforts, particularly the work involving apprenticeships in schools. Although she acknowledged the inconvenience caused by the blockades, she believes that the travelling public is generally supportive due to the anticipated long-term benefits.
- 6.4 Mayor Brabin raised a query regarding the capacity implications of faster journey times and questioned whether the planned works at Leeds Station would be sufficient to accommodate the increased train flow. She also emphasised the importance of TRU improving accessibility to rail service, stating that TRU should be part of the solution and requested assurances that all stations along the route would be made accessible.
- 6.5 In response, Mr Richardson explained that immediate capacity issues at Leeds Station are being addressed, particularly at platforms 14 and 17. The team is actively modelling these scenarios and assessing the implications for Bradford. This work is ongoing, and by the end of the year, further clarity is expected regarding freight development and its impact on passenger services, which will inform any additional interventions required.
- 6.6 Regarding accessibility, Mr Richardson stated that of the 23 stations on the route, there are three where potential solutions are currently under review (solutions for the other 20 having been identified). Business cases are being developed, and it is anticipated that by the end of July, investment plans will be confirmed. He reiterated that accessibility is being considered across all stations.
- 6.7 Mr McIntosh addressed the integration of TRU with the wider rail network, noting in particular the key role that Leeds Station has to play not just for the north, but the national network. He noted that overall success will be dependent on additional works at a number of other locations, not just at Leeds, but at either end of the TRU core project.

These must be delivered within the current spending period. He added that planning for TRU had required assumptions about the end state of the railway in the mid-2030s, and these assumptions will need to be monitored and reviewed as delivery of TRU investment continues.

- 6.8 Mayor Skaith raised a question regarding Church Fenton, specifically the business case for making the station accessible.
- 6.9 Mr Richardson responded that Church Fenton presents several technical challenges, including station length and high associated costs for making the station accessible. However, there was work underway to review the business case, and in particular to consider the potential benefit arising from new development served by the station.
- 6.10 Cllr Mannion emphasised the strategic importance of Crewe as a gateway to the North and a significant congestion point on the national network. He highlighted the volume of freight traffic competing with passenger services and noted that the current infrastructure in the North-West is insufficient, resulting in frequent delays.
- 6.11 The Chair supported Cllr Mannion's comments, stressing that while no single part of the system can be considered in isolation, improvements in individual areas can contribute to overall system efficiency. He described the capacity issues between Handsacre Junction and Crewe as a 'significant challenge.'

Resolved:

- 1) That the report and presentation are noted.
- 2) That the Board notes that the North of England Integration Steering Group (NoEISG) is considering service and/or infrastructure options to facilitate delivery of full benefits of the investment in TRU alongside other major infrastructure investments over the next 10 years.
- 3) That Board notes that NoEISG is considering freight capacity and benefits in relation to TRU.

7. Governance Update

- 7.1 Members received the report from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services who highlighted the key points within her report.
- 7.2 The Chair thanked the Finance Director who is retiring for all his hard work over the years.

Resolved:

That the appointment of the interim Section 151 Officer be approved and for Board to note the additional interim working arrangements.

8. Rail North Committee Update

- 8.1 Members received the report, and the Deputy Chief Executive highlighted the key points within the report.

Resolved:

That the feedback from the Rail North Committee be noted.

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 15 September at 1pm in Darlington.