

North Yorkshire County Council
Business and Environmental Services

Executive Members

22 July 2022

Local Transport Plan Review

Report of the Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation

1.0 Purpose Of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Corporate Director, Business Environmental Services in consultation with the BES Executive Member for Highways and Transportation on the proposed approach for the review of the existing North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The existing, and fourth, North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) was adopted in 2016 and has been in place since. The LTP, which sets the policy and investment approach for highways and transport within the county, focusses on five key national policy objectives, within the local policy to manage, maintain and improve the county's transport network and facilities.
- 2.2 Since that plan was adopted, there have been significant changes, in terms of social policy, but also technology and the wider transport industry, which mean that some of the content of the LTP requires updating.
- 2.3 Whilst the LTP had a strategic horizon of 2040, the delivery plan for LTP4 was shorter term, and therefore it is appropriate, particularly in light of the wider contextual changes, to consider updating the LTP.

3.0 Reasons for review

- 3.1 Policy at a national and international level has shifted focus, with an increasing emphasis on the impact of carbon on our world, and the climate. There have been significant and marked changes in the uptake of low and zero emission vehicles, and a shift towards the infrastructure required for automated vehicles and future mobility.
- 3.2 In addition, the Government has strengthened requirements for infrastructure for active travel, and passenger transport, making their inclusion a requirement for all government funded transport schemes.
- 3.3 There has also been a shift, the longer term impacts of which are not yet clear, in the way in which people live and work, as a consequence of the Covid 19 pandemic.
- 3.4 Further, the pandemic has accelerated the process of change to the ways in which people live, work and socialise, fundamentally altering the travel habits of many people meaning that there are different demands on the transport network and at different times of the day as opposed to the traditional morning and evening commuter peaks.

- 3.5 There have been numerous policy and investment plans published, and in addition some changes to the way in which relevant organisations are structured and some of these are listed below:
- Climate emergency – COP26 – transport is highest emitting sector.
 - Transport Decarbonisation Plan Decarbonising Britain: a better, greener Britain - published in July 2021
 - Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plans (LCWIPs) introduced
 - Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy
 - Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 published
 - New highway code published giving greater priority to active modes
 - Clean Air Strategy – published by Defra
 - Gear Change - 2020
 - Active Travel England – national agency with headquarters in York
 - Road Investment Strategy plans for the national strategic road network
 - Transport for the North (TfN) refresh of their Strategic Transport Plan (STP) by 2024
 - Bus Services Act 2017 enabling Local Transport Authorities (LTA's) to enter Enhanced Partnerships with bus operators
 - National Bus Strategy 2021 with the requirement for LTA's to produce Bus Service Improvement Plans
 - Rail – Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) for the North and Midlands 2021
 - Transforming Cities Fund
 - Levelling Up Fund
 - Highways bidding opportunities
 - Planning reform – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) refresh and Planning white paper
 - In North Yorkshire, move from two tier to unitary authority
 - Potential for Mayoral Combined Authority (devolution) in North Yorkshire and York

4.0 Impact of Change

- 4.1 At the most basic level, all of this means that the LTP is now out of step with some of the emerging and accepted thinking around transport, and travel.
- 4.2 Officers are increasingly being asked for policy advice or support for new initiatives for travel including active modes (walking, cycling and public transport) and future mobility, in particular with regards to low emission and electric vehicles. In most cases, whilst the current LTP includes some relevant guidance, it is now not of sufficient detail to provide the policy information that is needed.
- 4.3 In addition to this, the pandemic has seen a shift in how people live and travel, particularly with regards to commuting, where public transport usage fell to a fraction of pre-pandemic levels, and is only now recovering to approximately 80% for bus and rail usage. Whilst there is an observed change in working practice with many employers adapting their work approach to accommodate working from home, we have seen an almost complete return of traffic levels to pre-pandemic levels.
- 4.4 In some cases, the pandemic has accelerated a move to more flexible working, with greater numbers of people being home based and reducing their travel. Many people turned to walking and cycling in greater numbers than previously seen, particularly when mass transit and car sharing were considered inadvisable at the height of the pandemic. Now that traffic levels are again rising, those people are expecting to see

infrastructure in place to support their active travel choices, and to allow them to move safely around the network.

- 4.5 Many people shifted to using online services and shopping opportunities, resulting in a rapid expansion of home delivery.
- 4.6 There have been several government policy launches, including Gear Change, and significant funding opportunities as a consequence, which have renewed emphasis on various policy areas and also strengthened support for some modes.
- 4.7 New government agencies have been formed and there have been changes to existing structures, such as the formation of Great British Railways, and Active Travel England.
- 4.8 We have formed our own highways delivery company, North Yorkshire Highways.
- 4.9 Our own organisation is changing through Local Government Reorganisation, and further change still, in the form of devolution and a Mayoral Combined Authority being formed with City of York Council, is also on the horizon.

5.0 Opportunities

- 5.1 As new organisations are formed and policies developed, there is an opportunity to ensure that our policies are current and relevant. By updating one of our most significant policy documents in response to some of the significant changes that have occurred in the transport sector, we can ensure that we have an appropriate policy basis to meet those challenges.
- 5.2 We also have an opportunity, as a consequence of Local Government reorganisation, to look to provide a clearer strategic basis for functions such as off-street parking, spatial planning or housing which have previously been undertaken by the district and borough councils, and which now will become a responsibility of the new unitary authority.
- 5.3 One of the areas where any new LTP could look to strengthen its focus is with regards to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of schemes. M&E is a critical part of scheme development which allows the effectiveness of a project to be measured. In order to ensure effective M&E, it is important that a percentage of scheme budgets is set aside for monitoring and evaluation of all schemes. In some cases, where schemes are smaller, it might be appropriate to undertake either qualitative or quantitative monitoring. However, for larger schemes (those costing £100k plus) both types of monitoring should form part of the scheme of project development.
- 5.4 When LTP3 was in the process of being developed, at the start of a period of prolonged recession, the government embarked on a plan for austerity, which saw budgets across the public sector significantly reduced. With this in mind, the LTP was developed with a theme to 'manage, maintain and improve' the transport network. That ethos saw the majority of ITB (integrated transport block) budget from the DfT, being moved across to maintenance schemes. This reflects the high priority placed upon highway maintenance by both members and the public alike. The ITB would traditionally be used for transport improvement, capital based schemes, worth less than £5million. This arrangement remains in place, meaning an increased budget for highway maintenance and a consequently reduced budget for improvement schemes. This approach has contributed to the continued improvement in the condition of the highway network that has been seen across the county.

- 5.5 However, public appetite for investment in improvement schemes appears to be growing, as emphasis shifts from a focus on austerity and the economy to a government and public focus on sustainable investment and green growth. The public are becoming increasingly conscious of climate change impacts and look to NYCC to lead on measures to provide resilience and to facilitate low carbon travel and transport opportunities.
- 5.6 Alongside the aim to bring forward smaller, discrete projects which would be funded through the ITB, officers have also noted that it is increasingly the case that larger government funding streams, which usually operate on a competitive basis, expect direct or indirect (by way of scheme investment) funding from local authorities' own funds.
- 5.7 Taking the above into account, it is considered appropriate to review the relationship between the highway maintenance and integrated transport allocations as part of the LTP refresh work.

6.0 Further Considerations

- 6.1 As noted in previous sections, there are significant structural changes underway at NYCC, which are expected to then lead to further changes in the form of devolution. Should this take place, it is likely that a mayoral combined authority with City of York Council will be formed and this organisation would take on the role of Local Transport Authority. On that basis, the Local Transport Plan would become part of that authority's remit but with delivery through the unitary councils.
- 6.2 The formation of a new unitary authority for North Yorkshire, in April 2023, will see the seven existing North Yorkshire district councils merge with the County Council. The extant planning and development policies will in time, be harmonised, and as transport is a cross cutting theme, it has the potential to affect, and be affected by policies of other disciplines.

7.0 Funding

- 7.1 DfT have very recently awarded funding of £178,570 to NYCC to support development of a new LTP by the end of this parliament.
- 7.2 The grant was allocated late in financial year 2021/22, but there is no requirement for it to be spent this financial year. However, the DfT have suggested a target date of Spring 2024, for new LTPs to be in place.
- 7.3 Where an LTA has developed an LTP, or is part way through so doing, and therefore does not require the grant funding, it can be spent on developing a pipeline of schemes.
- 7.4 The funding can be used as follows:
- Recruitment of additional LTA staff to undertake the preparatory work.
 - Training of new and existing staff to boost their capabilities on local transport planning and delivery.
 - Commissioning local transport studies.
 - Commissioning other work to build the evidence base for LTP preparation, including environmental and carbon emissions assessment.
 - Stakeholder engagement and public consultation activities.

- 7.5 It is also set out in the grant offer letter that:
- The Department wants to work with LTAs to help them develop longer-term in-house capabilities. LTAs should take this into account when using this grant. Where consultants are used, the LTA should ensure knowledge exchange is included as part of the consultancy process.
 - The Department will contact LTAs to collect information on how this grant has been spent (or will be spent), as well as any other information to support the Department's understanding on the effective use of the grant:
 - At the end of January 2023, LTAs will be asked to provide the Department with a full breakdown of how the grant was used or has otherwise been allocated for future use.
- 7.6 The Department reserves the right to use information provided by LTAs to inform the allocation of any future LTA capacity funding.
- 7.7 The Department have also recently suggested that conditions around funding related to the LTP may be phased in during the years 2025/2026.

8.0 Options

- 8.1 Based on the information above, the three most likely approaches to developing the refreshed LTP and their benefits and risks are set out below:

<i>Do Minimum</i>	<i>Minor review with small updates where existing policies have been superseded or are now inaccurate.</i>	
<p>BENEFITS:</p> <p>Less risk of committing large amounts of resource when things may change in the near future</p>	<p>RISKS:</p> <p>DfT guidance not published yet.</p> <p>LGR impacts not fully known. Devolution may result in joint document with York, rendering this superfluous.</p> <p>May still require a re-write following this minor review, as there are risks that the document will not reflect new policy requirements.</p> <p>Will not allow reframing of objectives, nor will it allow for public and stakeholder influence to be taken into account.</p> <p>Potential for policies to be challenged, or for staff to not have an adequate policy basis for project and scheme development.</p>	<p>RESOURCES:</p> <p>Staffing: Smaller resource implication, with minor amendments able to be made in house by relevant staff.</p> <p>Costs: likely to be low, and deliverable within agreed budgets.</p> <p>Timescales: three months to draft, then time for approval.</p>

<i>Do something</i>	<i>Refresh of all sections - review and rewrite of document in its existing format.</i>	
<p>BENEFITS:</p> <p>Less risk of committing large amounts of resource when things may change in the near future.</p> <p>Will allow new content and approaches to be added.</p>	<p>RISKS:</p> <p>DfT guidance not published yet.</p> <p>LGR impacts not fully known.</p> <p>Devolution may result in joint document with York, rendering this superfluous.</p> <p>May still require a re-write following this minor review, as there are risks that the document will not reflect new policy requirements.</p> <p>Will not allow reframing of objectives, nor will it allow for public and stakeholder influence to be taken into account.</p>	<p>RESOURCES:</p> <p>Smaller resource implication, with minor amendments able to be made in house by relevant staff. May require additional resource to be provided by WSP and other in house teams.</p> <p>Costs: will require dedicated resource and possibly support from consultants. Therefore, will require a fee proposal.</p> <p>Timescales: 6 months to draft, plus time for approval.</p>
<i>Do maximum</i>	<i>Development of new document, written from scratch.</i>	
<p>BENEFITS:</p> <p>Will allow a new approach to LTP which takes into account all of the policy and wider societal changes which have taken place.</p> <p>Will allow greater opportunity for public engagement and involvement in the shaping of the document.</p> <p>Will provide a strong policy basis for decision making and scheme development.</p> <p>In view of longer timescales for development, may allow greater involvement for current district councils who will become part of the new unitary authority.</p>	<p>RISKS:</p> <p>DfT guidance not published yet.</p> <p>LGR impacts not fully known.</p> <p>Devolution may result in joint document with York, rendering this superfluous.</p>	<p>RESOURCES:</p> <p>Resource and fee intensive. Will likely necessitate support from WSP, and also county wide engagement and consultation. This will be costly and time consuming.</p> <p>Costs: will require external consultant support, and also extensive engagement and consultation. Likely to require a significant fee.</p> <p>Timescales: up to 12 months to draft, plus time to approve.</p>

9.0 Engagement

- 9.1 Officers from transport planning have presented a version of this report to the H&T Heads of Service meeting, and to the YNYERH Directors of Development (DoDs) meeting.
- 9.2 Comments from those meetings were almost unanimously in support of the 'do maximum' proposal, which would result in a completely new LTP.
- 9.3 With regard to DoDs, the meeting also supported the opportunity to develop a more ambitious plan, and one with a new vision, to meet current and future needs and challenges.
- 9.4 Officers have also discussed the potential NYCC approach with colleagues at City of York Council (CYC). At that meeting, CYC officers explained that they are currently working on a strategic statement document, to align to their local plan. The intention is that the format of this will meet the emerging LTP guidance, and that this will make harmonisation with the NYCC plan easier (should devolution happen after LGR.)
- 9.5 Officers from both authorities will work together to ensure a consistent approach whilst still accepting there may be challenges which are specific to their own geographies.

10.0 Equalities

- 10.1 There are no equalities implications arising as a consequence of this report.

11.0 Finance

- 11.1 The grant received from the DfT was calculated by them on reported costs of developing local transport plans. A pot, which totalled £12.67m, was split equally across the 71 eligible LTAs due to the one-off cost implications from planned new guidance on LTPs, which will impact LTAs similarly. The intention is to increase in-house capacity and this should minimise the amount of spend on consultants and maximise the grant funding available. It is currently estimated that our funding allocation will be sufficient to deliver the new LTP however, should the production of a new LTP exceed the amount allocated by the DfT then we would use the Transport Planning revenue budget to complete the document.

12.0 Legal

- 12.1 There are no legal implications arising as a consequence of this report.

13.0 Climate Change

- 13.1 There are no climate change implications arising as a consequence of this report.

14.0 Recommendation

- 14.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Director, BES, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation, consider this report and approve the proposal to proceed with the 'do maximum' approach.

BARRIE MASON
Assistant Director Highways and Transportation

Author of Report: Rebecca Gibson, Senior Transport Planning Officer.

Background Documents: None