

TRANSPORT BOARD

3rd July 2020

TRANS-PENNINE TUNNEL PROJECT UPDATE

Purpose of Report

To provide the Transport Board with an update on the Trans-Pennine Tunnel (TPT) project, which Highways England have been commissioned by the Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport for the North (TfN) to develop options for.

Thematic Priority

Secure investment in infrastructure where it will do most to support growth.

Recommendations

That members of the Transport Board:

- Note the current position of the work and comment on whether Board are supportive of the project as set out and as per how it is progressing.
- Provides feedback on the comments on the 'key issues' section (2.10) to enable SCR to ensure the Boards views are represented during the on-going development of the scheme.

1. Introduction

1.1 In July 2015, the Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport for the North (TfN) jointly commissioned Highways England (HE) to produce a strategic study assessing the feasibility of a new strategic highway route (including a tunnel under the Pennines) connecting the M1 at Sheffield and M60 at Manchester.

1.2 Previous studies have shown that journeys between Sheffield and Manchester to be amongst the lowest between two core cities due to the poor road (and rail) connectivity across the Pennines. A new strategic route also has the potential to promote growth in the City Region, improve capacity and resilience of the highway network as well as reduce the impact of traffic in the Peak District National Park (PDNP)

1.3 The length of the strategic link was expected to be around 25 miles, designed to dual, two-lane all-purpose standards and have an operating speed of at least 60 mph.

1.4 This project is still in the very early stages - DfT have only committed funding for its early development, not its delivery.

2. Proposal and justification

2.1 Work has concentrated on:

- A strategic route option assessment – leading to a sifting exercise to identify which corridors across the Pennines (and routes within corridors) were more suitable to progress than others.
- Establishing the economic benefits of the scheme – using a spreadsheet-based assessment in advance of the Regional Transport Model being available.
- Environmental Impacts and
- Indicative scheme Costs

Strategic Route Option Assessment

2.2 An initial sifting exercise was undertaken to identify which corridors across the Pennines (and routes within corridors) were more suitable to progress than others. More detail is included in Appendix One¹

2.3 The Government subsequently announced that more work would be carried out to understand the full costs and benefits of a tunnel, including the impact on the wider transport infrastructure across the southern Pennines. This ‘wider connectivity’ study area included the A1 and M18 in the City Region.

2.4 The findings of this work concluded that a shorter tunnel through the highest and most difficult terrain, coupled with a wider connectivity package:

- Provides better value for money.
- Provides the same strategic benefits to the full-length tunnel.
- Improves access to the Peak District National Park’
- Allows a phased approach to delivery – which provides an earlier realisation of benefits for local and wider communities’

Establishing economic benefits

2.5 The initial analysis used a spreadsheet-based model to forecast traffic levels, not a full transport model. The nature of the spreadsheet-based approach means that the likely increase in the proportion of commuter trips and the impact on employment and housing land cannot be captured. Furthermore, the appraisal considers the impact of the TPT in isolation from the other schemes.

2.6 It is anticipated that an improved Trans-Pennine route could roughly double the existing usage on the A628, initially attracting around 35,000 vehicles a day. Anticipated journey time reductions from the M1-M60 could be around 30 minutes.

2.7 Early analysis demonstrated that there would be large economic impacts associated with the implementation of any of the route options. Further analysis of the benefits of the scheme, including the use of the Regional Transport Model, is on-going.

Environmental impacts

2.8 The expectation is that any scheme would be constructed to an exemplar design involving environmental enhancements to benefit the PDNP beyond methods more traditionally used in highway schemes. Whilst the PDNP see doing nothing as not an option, the environmental enhancements could help mitigate some of the concerns with the scheme. Their policy position requires the scheme to be in the public interest and ‘clearly outweigh any negative effects on the National Park’. However, the scheme has been recently

¹ Trans-Pennine Study, Stage Three report – DfT, HE and TfN (November 2016)

discussed at a PDNP authority meeting where their co-operative approach and support for an exemplar proposal that delivers significant net environmental enhancement to the National Park was supported. Members were keen to be informed regularly too. We believe this approach should be welcomed and supported. It was also encouraging that members highlighted that if a scheme was to be built, it should be the whole scheme, not just sections of it.

Scheme costs

- 2.9** This project would naturally represent a significant capital investment – previously reported at being £8bn-£12bn (2014 prices, excluding inflation¹). If taken forward, the project would need to be delivered across multiple investment periods.

Key issues for SCR

- 2.10** As the project is still in an early stage of development there are still several issues and opportunities for SCR:
- The involvement at an early stage of the scheme is welcomed and has helped us to understand - and shape - the proposals.
 - Having declared a climate emergency in November 2019, we would want to re-iterate that improved Trans-Pennine link transport links need to include new (or significantly approved) rail options as well as new roads
 - The need for any Trans-Pennine scheme to be built to an exemplar environmental standard that delivers environmental enhancement as well as limiting the negative effects of climate change.
 - The whole scheme, including the significant length of tunnel (and wider connectivity elements) needs to be constructed, not just elements of it.
 - It is essential that communities on the line of the route benefit, either from access to it, or from new alignments that reduce community severance.
 - There is a need to reduce the disbenefit on communities at both ends of the route affected by the 'last mile' of the increased traffic numbers. Routes where mitigation could be needed include A61 and A6102 in Sheffield, A628 in Barnsley and A630 and A18 in Doncaster.
 - There is a need to understand the effect of wider M1 to M18 connectivity scheme. Highways England are content to work with us on developing alignments of the route to reduce the impact on the historical environment and improve access to our growth areas. We must also ensure that the scheme is well planned with other Highways England schemes (such as A1(M) upgrade) and includes capacity enhancements on the existing network where needed (such as M18 Junction 2).
 - Supporting the idea of using the existing A628 alignment as an active travel route, once the TPT is operational, as well as ensuring good quality walking and cycling facilities along the line of the route, as well as enabling active travel routes across it.
- 2.11 Next steps**
- TfN Executive Board on 20th July 2020 to receive a scheme update
 - Presentation to DfT's Investments, Programmes and Delivery Committee (IPDC) on 27th July 2020 to determine next steps for the study.
 - TfN Partnership Board on 29th July 2020 to receive a scheme update
 - Stakeholder engagement - led by Highways England - from August 2020

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

- 3.1 As stated above, alternative corridors and tunnel options were considered and sifted out due to cost and deliverability. Doing nothing is an alternative option but not one supported by PDNP and road links between two key regions would remain poor, adversely impacting agglomeration and constraining the Northern Powerhouse economy.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications for SCR arising from this report.

4.2 Legal

There are no direct legal implications for SCR arising from this report.

4.3 Risk Management

There are no direct risk implications for SCR arising from this report. However, there is a reputational risk associated with environmental messaging in light of the Climate change emergency.

4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

No specific equality, diversity and social inclusion issues are considered at this stage.

5. Communications

- 5.1 As this is likely to be a sensitive and controversial proposal, it will be important to effectively manage external communications and stakeholder relationships. TfN's communications team will be leading on this, in conjunction with Highways England and DfT, SCR's communications team have a role in promoting the benefits of the scheme locally, and harnessing local support, while addressing any concerns.

6. Appendices/Annexes

- 6.1 Appendix 1 – Initial strategic route option assessment
Appendix 2 – Proposed scheme alignment

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references: n/a