

Report of Director of City Development

Report to Executive Board

Date: 19th June 2013

Subject: New Generation Transport (NGT): Deputation from the A660 Joint Council

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Implications city wide, with direct impacts on City and Hunslet, Burmantofts & Richmond Hill, Hyde Park & Woodhouse, Headingley, Weetwood, Adel & Wharfedale and Middleton Park Wards.		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

1. A deputation in opposition to the New Generation Transport (NGT) scheme was made by representatives from the A660 Joint Council to the Full Council meeting of 8th May 2013. A copy of the speech that was made by the deputation is attached at Appendix 1.
2. As part of the speech a number of points were made in respect of the views of the A660 Joint Council in relation to the NGT project proposals. Responses from the NGT Project Team to the points raised are set out in detail below.

Recommendations

Executive Board is requested to note the responses to the key points made by the deputation from the A660 Joint Council.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide a summary of the key points raised by the A660 Joint Council in their deputation to the Full Council meeting of 8th May and to provide a response to these points.

2. Background information

- 2.1 Leeds City Council and Metro have worked in partnership over the past 20 years to develop a rapid public transport system. The NGT project is seeking to provide a high quality and reliable transport system that will help to support the growth of Leeds' economy and improve the local environment. Whilst other cities such as Sheffield, Manchester and Nottingham have not only delivered a tram system in this time they are now extending their network. Following the rejection of the Leeds Supertram proposals, a modern electrically powered trolleybus system for Leeds known as NGT (New Generation Transport) has been developed. After extensive scrutiny by the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Treasury, programme entry for the project was secured in July 2012.
- 2.2 Analysis has shown that NGT could generate around 4,000 long term jobs, both in Leeds and the wider City Region, in addition to generating a £160m per annum economic boost for the City Region. In addition around 1,000 jobs would be created during the construction phase.
- 2.3 As previously reported to the Executive Board, the Department for Transport (DfT) awarded Programme Entry status to NGT in July 2012. The next significant milestone in the development of the scheme is the submission of a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) application which is scheduled for September 2013. This is then expected to be followed by a Public Inquiry into the scheme in Spring 2014.
- 2.4 It is recognised that major infrastructure can have a significant impact on communities and that proposals may not be met with universal support. To mitigate concerns a significant amount of public engagement and consultation has taken place following the reinstatement of Programme Entry Approval. This has largely concentrated on those communities directly along the route, in order to ensure that their comments are considered within the ongoing design process. Wherever practicable the designs are being amended to reflect local concerns and all representations submitted in writing are also being responded to. The Council will continue to have regard to issues raised and seek to respond in a proactive way.
- 2.5 At the Full Council Meeting of 8th May a deputation from the A660 Joint Council set out their concerns regarding the NGT scheme.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 A summary of the main issues raised by the A660 Joint Council deputation to Full Council is provided below, along with responses to these issues:
- 3.2 Issue: The trolleybus system is "conceptually flawed" and is the "wrong transport medium on the wrong route".

Response: the scheme has been subject to significant scrutiny by the Department for Transport (DfT) whose officers and ministers have considered the business case for the scheme in great detail (in both 2009 and a revised business case in 2012), and have concluded that it is the right scheme for Leeds. The choice of routes and technology for NGT is based on detailed evidence and full appraisal of the alternative options, all of which is publically available on the NGT website. In early 2013 a detailed review of the NGT project was also recently undertaken by a panel of four independent transport experts. This concluded that NGT is 'an innovative project and as the first of its type in the UK in recent years, is at the cutting edge of transport provision'. This provides further evidence that the scheme is fit for purpose.

3.3 Issue: NGT takes no account of changes over the past 20 years: irreversible changes in thinking about environmental and transport strategies and in transport technology.

Response: Alternatives to trolleybus were analysed in detail as part of the business case for the NGT scheme, including the use of diesel-electric hybrid buses. However the work showed that the Trolleybus option offered the best value for money and would best meet the NGT scheme objectives. Diesel –electric hybrid buses would not have the same level of local environmental benefits as trolleybuses, since there would still be emissions from the vehicles in the areas through which they run. With regard to alternative electric vehicle technology, there are currently no 'pure' battery buses available which can carry the required number of people to operate the rapid transit NGT service at the high frequencies proposed. While there are some limited trials of larger capacity battery buses in progress (e.g. Geneva) the type of electric vehicle required for high capacity, high frequency operations is not proven in tests, let alone in commercial operation. At the same time as this one year/two vehicle trial (over a short section of route), Geneva have also recently announced plans for an extension to their trolleybus network and have recently ordered a new fleet of modern trolleybus vehicles.

3.4 Issue: NGT does not address development needs of Leeds.

Response: We acknowledge the development needs of Leeds are constantly changing and will change over the period, however, notwithstanding this the current route passes in close proximity to several regeneration areas such as New Dock (formerly Clarence Dock), Hunslet District Centre, Aire Valley and Belle Isle. In addition future extensions to the NGT network are under consideration as part of the proposals for a West Yorkshire Transport Fund. This includes an extension through the Aire Valley and to East Leeds, both of which are also key regeneration areas.

3.5 Issue: Leeds would be saddled with an inflexible cable-based system, installed at such great expense that extension to establish a meaningful network would be prohibitively expensive.

Response: We agree it is important any rapid transport system brought to Leeds is capable of being further extended to establish a meaningful network. It is the promoter's intention that the planned route from Holt Park to Stourton is the first part of an NGT network. A route to the Aire Valley has been included within the initial 10 year programme for the proposed West Yorkshire Transport Fund, and a further opportunity for a route to the East of the city is also under consideration for

subsequent phases of the fund. As part of the infrastructure such as the depot will already have been provided under the first NGT phase, subsequent routes will be more cost-effective to deliver.

3.6 Issue: The rationale for including the A660 corridor in the scheme was questioned by the deputation.

Response: In developing the scheme we have thought carefully about the route. While the deputation claimed that the A660 is the least important route in terms of traffic flow in the city, the levels of congestion mean that average traffic speeds on the corridor are some of the lowest in the city. The variability of journey times along the corridor is also very significant. As a result motorists use alternative routes using rat-runs to avoid the A660 corridor, but this has not alleviated congestion which is particularly severe in peak periods.

3.7 Issue: The majority of passengers using NGT trolleybuses will have to stand.

Response: No decision has been made on standing/seating ratios, since the design and specification of the trolleybus vehicles is yet to be agreed. It is recognised that seating is an important issue however it should be noted that evidence shows (as with tram) that if journey times are quicker and more reliable (and fairly short), then people are more inclined to stand for some or all of their trip. This should also be considered in conjunction with the fact that trolleybuses have much smoother acceleration than buses (similar to electric trains or trams). NGT fits all the criteria for these kinds of journeys, however it will be important to ensure that there are adequate seats for those who wish to use them.

3.8 Issue: Impact of NGT on wider bus services.

Response: The promoters are keen to ensure that the impact on existing bus services is minimised. Engagement with bus operators along the route is continuing to ensure that NGT trolleybuses are as well integrated with existing buses as possible. In the deregulated bus market it is not possible to say with any certainty how bus services may change once NGT is in place. However, the analysis undertaken to date does not suggest that bus services would be 'decimated' as suggested by the deputation. It is also important to note that under a deregulated framework, it is not possible to say with certainty what would happen with buses on the A660 corridor in the absence of the NGT scheme.

3.9 Issue: Changes to the road architecture will discourage cyclists and pedestrians.

Response: As a key principle of the ongoing design work, the NGT team is seeking to provide improved facilities for cyclists and pedestrians wherever possible, rather than disadvantage such road users as claimed by the deputation. With regard to cycling provision, a sub-group of the Leeds Cycling Action Group has been set up to specifically consider the NGT designs. This is helping to address many of the concerns that have been raised and overall the designs for NGT are expected to show a net increase in cycle provision on the NGT route. The scheme also aims to make an overall improvement to pedestrian facilities along the route, particularly in conjunction with NGT stops. Wherever possible the designs are aiming to deliver better connectivity for pedestrians and provide local improvements to pedestrian facilities.

- 3.10 Issue: The deputation suggests that the NGT scheme will not transfer significant car users onto trolleybus.
Response: The work undertaken to date shows that around 20% of the total NGT demand will come from mode shift from cars. This includes cars being totally removed from the roads and cars that would have previously driven to the centre now using the Park and Ride sites. This is a significant transfer for any UK public transport scheme.
- 3.11 Issue: NGT looks like a scheme stuck in a time warp.
Response: The assertion that NGT is based on obsolete technology is incorrect. While there are no trolleybus systems currently operating in the UK, modern trolleybuses have made considerable technological advances in recent years. Modern trolleybuses, like those used in a number of European cities (e.g. Lyon, Milan and Zurich), are very different from those which last operated in the UK forty years ago. The new trolley vehicle finally selected to operate in Leeds would of course take advantage of all the recent technology and operational improvements available to the market at the time of its specification.
- 3.12 Issue: The deputation concluded their speech by requesting that the Council does not 'blindly charge forward without taking stock of the fundamental issues' and by questioning whether NGT offers value for money.
Response: Given the significant amount of technical work undertaken to develop the NGT trolleybus proposals and the heavily scrutinised business case for the scheme, it is clear that there is no question of 'blindly charging forward'. All the work undertaken to date clearly shows that NGT does offer high value for money and indeed the scheme would not have been granted Programme Entry Approval (initially by the previous Government in 2010 and again by the current Government in 2012), if it didn't meet their strict value for money criteria.
- 3.13 A key theme of the speech made by the deputation relates to the suggestion that NGT is not the right solution for Leeds claiming that there are more suitable alternatives which are 'better, cheaper, more effective and future proof'. There is also a suggestion that trolleybus is obsolete technology which will be out of date before it comes into operation. However, there is no evidence to substantiate these claims. As previously highlighted, the business case for the scheme, which included rigorous appraisal of the alternatives, has been extensively scrutinised by Government officials who have agreed that NGT is the right solution for Leeds.

4.0 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Considerable Consultation and Engagement has been carried out on the project including:
- Extensive consultation carried out in 2009/2010 – showed strong support for the proposals.
 - Area Committee presentations in September 2012
 - Briefing to the main political groups September-November 2012

- 12 Public Consultation events held November 2012-May 2013: 500 attendees
- Meetings with Businesses, access groups, Tenant organisations, Civic Trust, Cycling Forum and the Universities
- Various meetings with Councillors and MPs
- Engagement with officers from across the Council.
- Numerous meetings with affected land and property owners along the route.

4.1.2 Future Consultation events are planned at:

- Headingley HEART Centre – Wednesday 26 June
- St Chads Parish Hall – Saturday 29 June
- Ralph Thoresby School – Tuesday 9 July
- Lawnswood YMCA Sports & Leisure Centre – Tuesday 16 July
- Hunslet St Joseph's Primary School – Thursday 11 July
- Belle Isle, West Grange Church - Saturday 13th July

4.1.3 In addition the Formal Objection Period will run from 12 September (TWA0 Submission) for 6 weeks, when representations on the scheme can be made to the Secretary of State.

4.1.4 An NGT member Working Group is in the process of being set up to give political guidance to the project.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion, and Integration Screening (attached as an appendix) was carried out on the 14 January 2013 and identified that a full impact assessment was required to support the TWA0 submission. The impact assessment will take place when the designs have been amended and prior to the TWA0 submission.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The NGT proposals support the objectives of the Local Transport Plan and contribute to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan objectives for transport and those of the Vision for Leeds. The scheme will make a major contribution to improving the attractiveness and quality of travel by public transport and is predicted to encourage a switch from private car to public transport, thereby alleviating congestion on the NGT routes.

4.3.2 Progress will be reported to the Executive Board at the key stages in the delivery process. Oversight of the scheme is provided by a Project Board chaired by the Director General of Metro. The Board also includes the Director of Resources and Chief Officer Highways and Transportation from Leeds City Council.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The approved capital programme makes provision of £20.6m as the Council's remaining contribution towards the NGT scheme. Throughout the development phase of the scheme, costs are continually scrutinised to ensure that the scheme

promoters are securing value for money. Some elements of the development work are sourced externally whilst others are provided internally.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 There are no legal implications directly related to this report.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 The delivery of the project will be managed by a joint Metro/LCC Project Board who will control changes to the proposals to limit increases in project costs

5 Conclusion

5.1.1 A deputation to the Full Council meeting of 8th May in opposition to the NGT project was made by the A660 Joint Council. The responses to the issues raised by this deputation are set out above and these responses clarify some of the points made by the deputation which are not based on wholly accurate information.

5.1.2 The NGT Project Team will continue to proactively engage and consult with all stakeholders in the ongoing development of the NGT proposals, to ensure that concerns and issues raised can be resolved or mitigated wherever possible and all information in the public domain is current and accurate.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Executive Board is requested to note the responses to the key points made by the deputation from the A660 Joint Council.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.