

Report of: Gary Bartlett, Chief Officer Highways and Transport

Report to: Outer West Community Committee (Calverley & Farsley, Farnley & Wortley, Pudsey)

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To note

Leeds Transport Conversation

Purpose of report

1. To report on the Transport Conversation and engagement process and seek feedback and input from Members on the future strategic approach to transport in the city and the development of a proposition and delivery plan for the £173.5 million fund due to be allocated following the cancellation of the NGT project.

Main issues

2. Transport is a fundamental component of what makes a prosperous and liveable city. Our vision is for Leeds to be a compassionate, caring city with a transport system that helps all our residents benefit from the city's economic growth. Getting our transport system right is a critical element of achieving the Council's Best City ambition.
3. Following the NGT Public Inquiry in 2014, the Department of Transport (DfT) announced (12th May 2016) that the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) powers for the New Generation Transport (NGT), would not be granted. However, at the same time the Secretary of State committed to making available to the city the £173.5m funding previously allocated to the NGT scheme, would be available for alternative public transport improvements in Leeds.
4. A letter was received from the DfT (23.06.16) confirming funding for public transport improvements stating that

“The £173.5 million has been retained for Leeds because of the well-rehearsed and long standing need for significant public transport improvements in the city, particularly in the absence of a rapid transit system along the lines previously envisaged. This does not have to be a like for like alternative to the NGT scheme, a programme of smaller coordinated interventions may deliver change in a more realistic and publicly acceptable way.”

5. In response to the NGT decision, the Leader of the Council initiated a city wide debate on the future transport strategy which was launched with a Transport Summit (10th June 2016). The Summit was attended by over 170 stakeholders from across the city who contributed to a discussion on the city's transport ambitions. At the Summit, the Leader announced the start of the City's largest ever Transport conversation seeking views from key stakeholders, partners and most importantly, communities from across the city. Councilor Blake said;

“A city as diverse and geographically large as Leeds has many different needs, so we are encouraging as many people as possible to let us know their stories and put forward their ideas.”

6. The first phase of the “Transport conversation” was launched by an on-line survey on the 2ND August www.leeds.gov.uk/TransportConversationSurvey and will close on the 20th September. Paper copies will be made available at Hubs, One stop centres and Branch Libraries along with being sent directly to access group members without online access. The online survey has been circulated to a wide range of networks across the city and includes the following communication activities and events.
7. These Channels include the distribution of 10,000 Postcards, advertising the questionnaire at events such as City Connect, South Bank Consultation. With Posters, postcards and paper copies available at the Community Hubs and One stops Branch Libraries Housing offices and arts centres. There is to be a wide range of marketing employed including advertising on the radio, on bus rears and sides, advertising at various rail sites, social media and press releases.
8. Following on from the Transport Summit workshop, there will be two further workshops arranged for the 15th and 20th September 2016, with additional workshops and presentations with key stakeholders, as well as one to ones with Operators, Business, Special interest User Groups, Access and equality groups. The Transport Conversation is also working alongside the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and partners along with the setting up of an Independent Panel of experts to help inform the programme.
9. These activities and feedback will inform the development of a wider set of strategic principles on which further conversations with the city will continue before finalising the long-term strategy at Executive Board sometime next year (Spring/Summer 2017).
10. Additionally the Transport Conversation feedback will be fed into the development of an outline series of proposals for spend of the £173.5m, culminating in a report to Executive Board currently planned for the 19th October 2016 meeting. The rationale for an early submission is to gain the certainty and commitment needed to allow the development and progression of detailed planning and proposals by securing early government sign-off for the £173.5m earmarked for Leeds. Subject to approval by Executive Board, it is anticipated that a formal case will be submitted before the end of autumn 2016. And so a first phase of consultation along with an early Executive Board report is required in the context of the development of a longer term strategy.

11. Alongside this conversation the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) are currently undertaking consultation on a new West Yorkshire Transport Strategy and Bus Strategy which includes a series of 23 drop in events across Leeds. The feedback received will be used by WYCA to develop a new, 20-year West Yorkshire Bus and Transport strategies. A team from the Combined Authority, along with representatives from bus operators, will be on hand at each event to answer questions and help people take part. Officers from the Council's Highways and Transportation service will be supporting WYCA colleagues at the events.
12. This work will complement and develop the work set out in the 21st Century Leeds Transport Strategy Executive Board Report.

Options

13. An Executive Board report in October 2015 set out how Leeds provides a strong historical illustration of how major investment in transport infrastructure has resulted in transformational economic growth - from the Leeds Liverpool Canal, to the Victorians who cemented the city's position on the railway network, to our emergence as a 'motorway city' in the 1970's. Today, Leeds is following the global trend towards highly skilled jobs clustering in a compact environment. If this growth is to continue, people need to be able to easily access a denser and more productive city centre.
14. With additional car demand come additional issues to resolve, for example road casualties, poor air quality, noise, carbon, congestion. Our centres can be car dominated in places whereas we want public spaces which are more people friendly. To tackle these issues and grow our city sustainably, we need more people travelling by sustainable modes.
15. The ambition is to have a transport system that supports the growth of our economy, creates a place people want to live and work, that everyone can access, that has a positive effect on people's health and wellbeing and is less harmful on the environment.
16. The Council with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and partners are already delivering significant improvements to transport in Leeds to help deliver these ambitions. The Elland Road park and ride, delivered in partnership with WYCA, is already proving very popular, and given the demand the car park is now being extended. A further Park and Ride will open at Temple Green in the Aire Valley Enterprise Zone early next year with construction starting in September. As a Council we have pressed for greater local control of rail services as is now reflected in the Rail North and the new Northern and Trans Pennine franchises which will provide for greater growth and new trains. The southern entrance to Leeds Station opened earlier this year supports our ambition to double the size of the City Centre by regenerating the Southbank. The new station at Kirkstall Forge has opened providing a new park and rail option, and unlock the development of new homes and jobs. These are just a few of the examples of the schemes already in construction. With significant funding from the West Yorkshire Transport Fund, the Council is also developing a number of new schemes, including the East Leeds Orbital Road, the Leeds Bradford Airport link (LBA) Road and a transformation of the way traffic uses our City Centre.
17. With the promise of the additional £173.5m, the Council can now develop plans for further improving transport in Leeds. This plan will be pragmatic, deliverable, and focus on the outcomes the Council is

trying to achieve. In deciding how to best spend the allocation, the Council will need to make decisions between investing in schemes that can be delivered in the short and medium term, such as park and ride sites, high quality fast bus routes, new rail stations, better public spaces and cycle and walking routes. And plans for long-term projects, which would enable us to provide more capacity to cater for the growing number of trips.

18. The Council recognizes that decisions on priorities will be needed given our limited road space and our constrained rail network. Successfully balancing the conflicting and complex demands on our land use and road space across different stakeholder groups will be a major challenge for the city. The Council intends to develop the plans in collaboration with the City so that these decisions can be owned, understood and supported as it is only with strong support that successful schemes will be delivered.

Corporate considerations

a. Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

Improving public transport, will improve local connectivity and in turn increases access to employment, education, and leisure services and facilities for all equality groups. The Transport Conversation will be attending a number of different equality group meetings and directly engaging with these groups. Any specific impacts on equality characteristics will be examined in individual schemes.

b. Council policies and city priorities

The anticipated benefits for Leeds from the Transport Strategy development and conversation have the potential to contribute to the vision for Leeds 2030 to be the best city in the UK. Including the following Best Council objectives; promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth, supporting communities and tackling poverty, building a child friendly city and contribute to the Councils cross cutting 'World-class events and a vibrant city center that all can benefit from' Breakthrough Project.' The vision also contributes to the objectives of the Local Development Framework, Leeds Core Strategy, and Local Transport Plan 3, emerging WYCA Transport and Bus strategies and Strategic Economic Plan.

Conclusion

19. The cancellation of NGT has opened up the opportunity for the City to discuss the future strategic transport provision for the City both in the shorter and longer term. The first phase is of necessity, needing to be concluded by October to help ensure confirmation of the £173 million funding promised by the Government. However the conversation will continue to develop into a longer term consultation into the Spring/Summer of next year.
20. A presentation at the meeting will summarise some of the key themes along with the wider regional context and some emerging options for the transport programme as the basis for dialogue and feedback from Community Committee members and further input from the local community.
21. Members are encouraged to support the Transport Conversation in the local communities and to let officers know of community networks who may be interested in engaging in the Conversation

Recommendations

22. To note the wider strategic context of the Transport Conversation which will extend beyond a first phase conversation into the Spring/ Summer of next year, informing a wider transport strategy for the City and your area over the next 20 years
23. To note the Department of Transport £173.5 million offer for public transport improvements, in the context of a currently planned report to Executive Board on the 19th October and the planned submission of strategic investment case to the Department of Transport.
24. To provide feedback and advise on your key priorities for transport investment in the city and the local community.

Background information

Transport Conversation questionnaire www.leeds.gov.uk/TransportConversationSurvey

Our Transport 21st Century, Leeds Transport Strategy Executive Board Report.