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Dear Kevin,

Mass Transit Vision 2040 - Statutory Consultation

Thank you for your correspondence dated 07 November 2022, sharing with us the West Yorkshire Mass Transit Vision 2040, and providing Leeds City Council (LCC) with an opportunity to feedback as part of the statutory process. This response outlines our formal feedback to your consultation process, as approved by the Council's Executive Board on the 14th December 2022.

LCC recognises the strategic importance of Mass Transit and its role in improving connectivity across our City and wider West Yorkshire, supporting our economic growth and bringing people within easier reach of jobs and opportunities.

Mass Transit needs to be part of an integrated public transport network and as such in order for our city to achieve its true economic potential, it must be delivered alongside improved capacity at Leeds City Station, be complementary to both our existing heavy rail system and any proposals for high speed rail connectivity between ourselves, Sheffield and the East Midlands. It is now more than one year since the publication of the Integrated Rail Plan which paused the delivery of high-speed rail to Leeds in favour of a further study into the best way to do this, and we remain keen to work with government to achieve the best outcome for our city and wider region.

Our commitment to Mass Transit is stated as a big move in our Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy and Action Plan which is integral to the success of the city's policies on Inclusive Growth, Health & Wellbeing and tackling the Climate Emergency. <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel/connecting-leeds-and-transforming-travel/transport-policy>.

Further, in the City Council's Local Plans consultation we recognise the development of Mass Transit in Leeds is a key local (and sub-regional) priority, and the policy makes clear that proposals which help to realise the delivery of mass transit network will be strongly supported. <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan-update>

As stated above, LCC supports the principles detailed in the Mass Transit Vision 2040 around a system that increases capacity and provides an attractive alternative to car travel. We see the development of this system as key to help the city realise its ambitions to address climate change and the delivery of our Connecting Leeds Strategy.

We recognise and support the need to build a modern, world-class public transport system, using new forms of advanced Mass Transit. As stated in the vision, of crucial importance is the need to link this system to cycling and walking, bus and rail, to create a sustainable public transport system fit for the 21st Century. We are therefore keen to work alongside yourself to ensure we build on and further enhance the progress made to date in the City through investment programmes such as the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme and City Connect cycle network. Although we recognise the importance of Mass Transit we would not support a system that materially makes an adverse impact on these complementary and sustainable modes.

We support the need to adopt an evidence-led approach to transport investment priorities including the Mass Transit route alignment and preferred technology. Where technology and site conditions allow, we have a preference for a technology that avoids the need for any overhead catenary system. In addition, we would stress the need for a clear strategic rationale for each corridor and importantly a recognition of the opportunity Mass Transit will provide with respect to regeneration and redevelopment along the ultimate preferred route options to promote inclusive growth. Currently, we feel that the strategic rationale for the proposed route corridors, which will ultimately determine specific lines of route, should be more clearly defined. Similarly, we are very clear that the project needs to focus on delivery and selecting corridors and lines of route that can transition from planning to delivery will be critical to the project's success.

In terms of each of the identified corridors we would like to make the following specific comments:

- Leeds City Centre is the economic powerhouse of the sub-region, and it is vitally important to serve the key economic, retail, leisure, education and health destinations in the City. Mass Transit can link these existing uses in the city centre core and allow economic regeneration in the adjacent communities. An extensive network with sufficient capacity for expansion needs to be sympathetically designed to integrate into the city centre's multi-modal transport networks.
- East Leeds: route options need to complement and further facilitate the economic growth around areas such as Thorpe Park and the proposed new rail halt together with the development opportunities afforded through the East Leeds Orbital Route. Importantly, Mass Transit must complement and not compete with heavy rail on the corridor and so should link to opportunities afforded by proposals such as the potential for an A64 Park and Ride located in the central part of the East Leeds Extension. The delivery of a link connecting out to St James Hospital should also be a high priority given the regional importance of this key healthcare provider and employer.
- Leeds – Bradford: a strategically important connection for the region and a high priority for the two largest cities in West Yorkshire. In the absence of a firm commitment to

heavy rail investment, we believe that work must be expedited to ensure that the lack of strategic connectivity does not impact negatively on economic growth. The route not only has the potential for enhanced connectivity between the two city centres but will also provide clear regeneration opportunities for key settlements along the route. We would advocate working closely with the Combined Authority and local stakeholders to ensure that centres like Pudsey gain maximum benefit from the provision of an enhanced transport link.

- South Leeds – Dewsbury: Mass Transit has the potential to radically change access to the south of the City and particularly the corridor comprising Elland Road, the football stadium, White Rose Office Park and White Rose Shopping Centre, outer South Leeds and linking to growth points in Kirklees. The potential regeneration benefits that a fast, reliable, high capacity transport link would provide to such destinations within this quadrant support LCC's preference for an alignment that would best facilitate this opportunity. Previous route options for New Generation Transport (NGT) and the negative feedback received need to be taken into account and we consider these options to be sub-optimal relative to one focussed on Elland Road and White Rose and the economic growth opportunities this would unlock.
- North West and North Leeds: we support proposals for additional routes within these quadrants whilst recognising that they will form part of subsequent phases.
- We recognise the importance of prioritising work to identify suitable depot locations to meet the operational needs of the system as being fundamental.

We look forward to working closely with colleagues within the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and in government to realise the above ambitions as quickly as possible. As a City, that to date has lacked the long-term transport investment that other cities have been afforded, particularly in heavy rail, we feel that significant investment in a Mass Transit system is required to align with the Levelling Up Agenda. In this context we therefore call for government commitment to the full delivery of Phase 1: Leeds-Bradford, Leeds-Dewsbury, Dewsbury-Bradford and East Leeds.

To enable the project to make timely progress to getting phase 1 on-site we would ask that the business case approval process through government is streamlined. This will enable the scheme to progress through the important public consultation elements in a timely way and not be unduly delayed by layers of internal approval. In recognition of the importance of this project, the City Council is identifying and allocating significant resource to expedite the design and delivery of a world class system. We request that WYCA ensures that it too, through its own staff and wider supply chain, apply the same priority emphasis to this key project to ensure that the vision is developed at pace with a focus on accelerated delivery reflective of buildability and stakeholder support.

We look forward to supporting you in the delivery of this transformational proposition and a start on site in the 2020s.

Yours sincerely

Martin Farrington
Director of City Development

CC: Councillor James Lewis, Leader of Leeds City Council