

Transport Select Committee: coronavirus and strategic transport infrastructure

Transport for Greater Manchester, June 2020

This written evidence supports and supplements the oral evidence provided by the Mayor of Greater Manchester to the Committee on 17 June. This written evidence focuses on the role of strategic transport infrastructure in Greater Manchester's recovery from coronavirus and complements written evidence submitted separately on local transport and rail.

Summary

Strategic transport infrastructure has an important role to play in helping Greater Manchester to Build Back Better from coronavirus. In the short term, the construction of infrastructure can help to provide much-needed economic stimulus. In the long-term, maintaining GM's pre-Covid focus on a pipeline of transport infrastructure will support GM's 2040 Delivery Plan and commitment to a carbon neutral future. The opportunity for GM to Build Back Better from coronavirus requires GM, in partnership with Government, to expedite infrastructure schemes where possible and where they support the Build Back Better agenda.

Key Recommendations

1. Government is encouraged to invest in, and make the case for, strategic transport infrastructure as a key pillar of a national coronavirus recovery plan.
2. Building on effective collaboration pre-Covid and since the start of the crisis, GM encourages Government to expedite the delivery of infrastructure which supports GM's recovery and our work to Build Back Better. This will include working in partnership on new fiscal and capital investment priorities, as expected to be laid out in the coming weeks and months and in respect of the Comprehensive Spending Review, as well as towards a long-term devolved 'London-style' funding settlement and powers as per the National Infrastructure Commission's recommendations to government.
3. GM urges Government to demonstrate its commitment to the 'levelling up' agenda and work with GM on a new five-year funding settlement for transport infrastructure – the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Programme.

Greater Manchester Infrastructure Programme (GMIP)

The GM Infrastructure Programme (GMIP), to establish a five-year funding settlement for GM transport infrastructure starting from the next financial year, is in development and we seek to work in partnership with Government to deliver a range of infrastructure enhancements across the transport system, including new bus infrastructure and an electric bus fleet; enhancements to Metrolink; cycling and walking and 'Streets for All'; local rail network improvements, including new and upgraded stations; and highways improvement schemes.

HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail and the Integrated Rail Plan for the North

HS2 and NPR are core transformational infrastructure components in the Greater Manchester Growth Strategy and the wider agenda for economic rebalancing in the UK. Given the long-term impact that coronavirus will have on society and the economy, including to exacerbate existing inequalities, the role of these infrastructure schemes in the Government-led agenda to 'level up' the economy becomes all the more important.

GM also strongly supports the proposition of an Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands. It is essential that HS2 and NPR are recognised as being component parts of an integrated short, medium and long-term infrastructure investment programme to tackle capacity constraints and issues on rail systems across the North and including through central Manchester. It is also important that government recognises the need for HS2 and NPR to be delivered in a way which integrates them with and complements GM's local policies as well as the need to ensure wider multi-modal connectivity to the future high speed rail network

These infrastructure schemes have an important role in the short-term recovery by providing economic stimulus into the supply chain and therefore a measure of operational and financial stability, to the benefit of

jobs and the economy as well as to the education and skills sector. The importance of HS2 to the supply chain was recognised in the Oakervee Review.

It is a concern, therefore, that no programme for HS2 Phase 2b has yet been issued, nor has there yet been any effort made by HS2 Ltd to develop this programme in collaboration with Greater Manchester Authorities as key stakeholders for the Western Leg. Coronavirus makes fast and effective partnership work all the more pressing.

Feeding into the work of the IRP, GM will continue to make the case for the above as well as for the integrated plan to ensure that interdependencies between NPR, HS2 Phase 2b and local infrastructure are acknowledged, including new Piccadilly platforms 15 and 16, an expansion of central Manchester rail capacity, and an underground HS2 NPR station at Piccadilly.

We look forward to the IRP, recognising its role in the context of a coronavirus recovery, being published no later than the end of 2020 and an interim report being published this summer.