

Western Gateway - Sub-national Transport Body

Board Meeting

Paper D

Date **6th April 2022**

Title of report: **Freight Strategy**

Purpose of report: **To present the Peninsula Transport and Western Gateway's joint South-West Freight Strategy to the Board.**

Recommendations:

The members of the Board are recommended to:

- I. Approve the Freight Strategy.
- II. Officers are delegated authority to progress and develop the Freight Strategy recommendations to:
 - a. Work with key major stakeholders across the region through the proposed Freight Steering Group to secure their support and prioritise freight projects,
 - b. Continue to work with Peninsula Transport on wider freight issues, coordinate business case development and support private and public sector stakeholders in partnership working.

Introduction

- 1.1 The Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body (STB) committed to undertake a Freight Strategy in 2021/22 as part of the Strategic Transport Plan recognising the importance of the movement of freight to the region, its impact on the transport network, the potential for greater operational efficiency across freight markets and opportunities for decarbonisation impacts.
- 1.2 This paper introduces the first joint freight strategy for the whole south-west of England. This South-West Freight Strategy (SWFS) is the product of work between the two STBs, which particularly reflects the fact that freight and the associated supply chains operate on a more regional, national and international basis than is the case for passenger movements. Spatial interdependencies between the two regions, particularly for freight movement, led to the two STBs identifying merit in progressing a joint approach. This approach has been generally welcomed by the freight industry and central government and its agencies.

- 1.3 Peninsula Transport and Western Gateway are pleased to collaborate and put forward a freight strategy which aligns the diverse areas of the south-west. This provides a holistic and joined up approach reflecting the reality of freight movements and their wider supply chains in the region. AECOM and WSP were appointed to undertake the work. The SWFS is provided in Appendix One.
- 1.4 Whilst each STB will inevitably focus its own specific priorities for its respective region, both are aligned to the importance of freight. The freight vision and strategy will address the challenges, opportunities and priorities for the South West over the next 30 years – to 2050. The objectives centre around three sustainability pillars of environment, economy and society.
- 1.5 This strategy contains standalone freight-specific initiatives as well as providing supporting evidence for the overall transport strategy. Due to the reliance of the freight sector on key assets such as ports, rail terminals, airports and highway corridors, the freight strategy is aligned with relevant strategies and policies beyond the south-west.

Methodology

- 2.1 The SWFS is the culmination of a range of work streams designed to ensure that the SWFS reviews best practice across the industry both in the UK and abroad, is derived from a robust evidence base including multiple data sources, identifies and understands the key trends and issues affecting the freight industry and takes on board the views and priorities of organisations operating within the industry and other public sector stakeholders like regulators, infrastructure providers and government.
- 2.2 A review of other freight strategies and case studies was undertaken to ensure good practise and innovative ideas from elsewhere could be applied to the south-west context in addition to identifying bespoke ideas for our region.
- 2.3 An analysis of multiple data sources was undertaken and trends specific to the region identified. Trends and issues specific to the south-west included the main connectivity issues and challenges in the region, options for future scenarios, poor rail connectivity compared to other regions and local economic issues. Wider analysis of global and national trends and their impacts on freight was also undertaken to gather a full appreciation of issues and opportunities across the sector.
- 2.4 A wide-ranging stakeholder engagement phase took place throughout the development of the SWFS to both develop and sense check assumptions and to gather feedback on issues and opportunities. This took various forms throughout the duration of the project including one-to-one interviews, questionnaires and workshops. Two stakeholder workshops were held, providing stakeholders, identified and consulted on during the one-to-one sessions, with an opportunity to offer further thoughts on key challenges and

priorities for freight. This was important for continuity and creating a robust strategy able to withstand scrutiny and the strategy's relevance over time.

2.5 Following review of the data analysis, case studies and freight strategies reviews, stakeholder engagement, review of wider freight issues and opportunities; packages of interventions were developed. These are in response to key issues, opportunities and themes under each mode of freight transport across the south-west region. These interventions have been aligned to the core priorities for the south-west.

2.6 Interventions across different modes of transport were categorised into six themes. The priority intervention packages for freight in the south-west are summarised in 2.7 to 2.12 below.

Connectivity

2.7 Improving the connectivity of freight movements throughout the South West by identifying the strategically important roads and establishing links between road, rail, ports and aviation nodes.

Decarbonisation

2.8 Whilst some mode shift away from road freight is possible a large proportion of freight movements will continue to use the road network for all or part of their journey, as the road network provides a comprehensive set of routes to markets/ customers. Decarbonising freight is therefore a critical component of the freight strategy and the freight interventions highlight several areas where opportunities exist to reduce carbon emissions. These include investing in greener vehicle technologies and supporting infrastructure.

Information and awareness

2.9 Increasing the awareness of the freight options throughout the south west to better inform stakeholders of the opportunities to support the sustainable movement of freight.

Infrastructure

2.10 Improvements to freight infrastructure to support the consistent and reliable movement of goods throughout the south west.

Operational efficiency

2.11 Many of the interventions cut across transport modes to deliver efficiency savings. For example, the levels of empty vehicle running in the south west provides considerable opportunity to reduce carbon emissions whilst at the same time reducing logistics costs and the number of overall vehicle movements. These include sharing information and developing logistics schemes and partnerships.

Technology

- 2.12 Utilising technology to improve the efficiency of freight, along with helping to address the decarbonisation agenda.
- 2.13 The SWFS proposes forty-six interventions overall, packaged into six themes which are split by the following modes: aviation, maritime, rail, road and 'other'. The interventions will need to be led and developed by several primary and secondary owners. Their role will be to deliver or support and of the forty-six interventions, with ten to be led by the STBs.
- 2.14 Each of the interventions will vary in the timescale and costs. Further details on these provided in Chapter 11 of the SWFS. The Peninsula and Western Gateway STBs cannot deliver these interventions alone and we look to work with operators, industry, our partners, stakeholders and communities to progress freight interventions.

Freight Steering Group

- 2.15 One of the key recommendations for this strategy is to establish a Freight Steering Group (FSG) with representatives from key players in the freight industry including trade bodies, hauliers, ports, rail freight and shippers to take forward actions discussed as part of the freight strategy development.
- 2.16 Stakeholder buy-in to STBs' freight objectives and working collaboratively to help provide evidence and guidance to the process are essential to developing projects that help deliver the freight vision. The engagement process has highlighted the importance of assembling a mix of stakeholders from across the public and private sectors, with a cross section of different players from representative sectors.
- 2.17 The overall function of the FSG will be to drive forward the strategy recommendations by prioritising and facilitating information sharing, collaboration and facilitating the development and delivery of interventions. Subject to the emerging Terms of Reference, it is envisaged that the FSG will meet regularly throughout the life of the project to drive forward the recommended implementations and consider the practical nature of how measures can be introduced.

Next steps

- 3.1 As set out in section 2.6 the SWFS Strategy sets out priority intervention packages that will address the identified challenges opportunities and priorities for the region. The Peninsula and Western Gateway STBs will continue to work together and with the freight industry through the Freight Steering Group; to prioritise projects, secure funding to support the development and delivery of freight interventions.

- 3.2 It is proposed that STB Transport Officers and Programme Management Office are delegated to continue developing the next steps for the Freight Strategy as outlined in sections 3.1 to 3.2 above.

Stakeholder Engagement

- 4.1 Two stakeholder workshops were held with local authorities and key freight and transport stakeholders from the public and private sectors, gaining useful and insightful information and feedback on wider freight issues experienced by those active in the market. Officers from all the Western Gateway's constituent authorities have been consulted on the draft Freight Strategy and their comments incorporated into the final version.
- 4.2 The Department for Transport has reviewed the draft strategy and provided helpful feedback which have also been incorporated into the strategy.

Equalities Implications

- 5.1 No adverse impact on any protected groups.

Legal considerations

- 6.1 The Western Gateway STB remains an informal non-statutory partnership.

Financial considerations

- 7.1 The Western Gateway's overall budget for 2022/23 to 2024/25 was confirmed on 21 March 2022. A separate report on the agenda sets out the proposed STB programme for 2022/23.

Conclusion

- 8.1 The Board is asked to agree the recommendations set out at the beginning of this report.

Appendices

Appendix One: Freight Strategy – final version to be added

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