

Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

Board Meeting

Paper C

Date **28th September 2022**

Title of report: **Strategic Transport Plan update**

Purpose of report: **To update on progress towards producing the Strategic Transport Plan and propose a revised programme**

Recommendations:

The members of the Board are recommended to:

- I. Approve the revised approach for producing the Western Gateway's Strategic Transport Plan.
- II. Approve the revised timescale for producing and consulting on the draft Strategic Transport Plan.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Strategic Transport Plan (STP) approach needs to be revised in the light of the Department for Transport's emerging but delayed Local Transport Plan (LTP) guidance (now expected first quarter 2023) and their new Quantifiable Carbon Reduction methodology. There is the reputational risk of progressing a Plan that is out of step with the Department for Transport (DfT) and supported by a still to be completed consultant produced evidence base. The current timescale is no longer feasible and does not include sufficient time for full consultation on a draft STP. It is, therefore, recommended that the programme is temporarily paused and a sense check undertaken with the DfT. It is proposed the programme will need to be extended with consultation to be carried out summer 2023 and adoption in autumn 2023.

2. Why the need to revise the approach to the Strategic Transport Plan?

- 2.1 The STP needs to align with the DfT's new Local Transport Plan guidance. This has been continuously delayed by the DfT. Originally planned for June 2022 it is now expected to be published in the first quarter 2023. The full role of Sub-national Transport Bodies (STB) and STPs is still to be confirmed but it is likely that the STP will need to take on an umbrella style responsibility with individual LTPs nestling underneath.

- 2.2 STPs and LTPs will be required to be 'vision and validate' led rather than the traditional approach of predict and provide. Current work on the evidence baseline for the STP is focused on major transport schemes. Further development work is needed to turn this into a 'Vision' based approach.
- 2.3 There is a risk that if the STP continues outside of the emerging LTP guidance and the need to be 'vision and validate' led, it will be outdated and inconsistent with the Government's approach. Consistency is further required with the DfT's Transport Decarbonisation Plan and their new Quantified Carbon Reduction (QCR) methodology. QCR requires plans to consider the full capital and maintenance carbon impacts of transport interventions and will underpin all new LTPs. It is expected to favour low cost, lower full impact schemes. The STP will need to reflect this.
- 2.4 The DfT is keen to promote STBs as Regional Centre of Excellences to assist and tailor support for local authorities with their new LTPs, support the QCR methodology and help with business case development and producing pipelines of schemes. This is a developing role but one which will be increasingly important and emphasises the need for the STP and LTPs to align.
- 2.5 Supporting the STP is consultant work on producing an evidence baseline, four strategic corridor reports and technical assessments for a 'business as usual' and 'do something' scenarios. There have been continued delays in delivering this work with a corresponding impact on the STP timescale.
- 2.6 The previous timescale for the STP was to go out to consultation on issues and options late Autumn 2022 with a draft Plan going to the Board in March 2023 for adoption. This timescale did not allow time for full consultation on the draft Plan. It is common practice for draft LTPs to be consulted on. Without it there is the risk of not fully engaging with stakeholders and a loss of credibility.
- 2.7 The original timescale is thus unachievable with insufficient time for consultation on and drafting the STP.

3. Revised approach

- 3.1 The revised approach is set out below:
- Produce an Issues and Options paper for initial consultation. This will pull together and summarise issues arising the consultant's evidence baseline, four corridor reports and 'business as usual' and 'do something' scenarios into a digestible and accessible format.
 - Issues and Options paper consultation to take place early 2023.
 - Drafting of the STP paused until early 2023 whilst the DfT's delayed LTP guidance is awaited.
 - Results of Issues and Options consultation feeds into drafting the STP's Vision which in turn informs the draft STP for consultation. The Vision will be tested using the Western Gateway's transport mode.

- The STP will be drafted in-house with support from new consultants as required.
- Draft STP sense checked against new LTP guidance (expected first quarter 2023).
- Draft STP approved by Board in June 2023 for consultation over June July 2023.

4. Revised programme

4.1 The revised programme is set out below:

Task	Deadline
Issues and Options paper produced for Board approval to go out to consultation	December 2022
Consultation on Issues and Option paper	January to February 2023
Preparation of draft STP incorporating outcomes of Issues and Options consultation and DfT Local Transport Plan guidance	January to May 2023
Draft STP to Board to approve for consultation	June 2023
Consultation on draft STP June to July 2023	June to July 2023
Revisions to STP following consultation on the draft STP	July to September 2023
Final STP adopted by Board	October 2023

4.2 An alternative option is to accelerate producing the Issues and Option paper and go out to consultation in late 2022 followed by a draft STP to take to the Board in March 2023. Approval would be sought at the Board but with consultation delayed until June 2023 following local elections. The timescales for this are very tight and there is a high reputational risk of pushing through what may be a sub-standard Issues and Options paper and draft STP without clear focus on what the STP is trying to achieve just to meet the March 2023 deadline. There is the risk it will be out of alignment with the DfT's guidance on LTPs which is not expected until early 2023. It is officers' advice that this option should not be pursued.

5. Next Steps

- 1) Board approval for the revised approach and programme is sought.
- 2) Meeting with the Department for Transport to sense check and agree revised approach and programme including technical discussion around the 'business as usual' and 'do something' scenarios.
- 3) Produce the Issues and Options paper for the Board to approve in December 2022.

6. Consultation, communication and engagement

6.1 Officers from the Western Gateway's constituent authorities have been consulted on this report and their comments incorporated.

7. Equalities Implications

- 7.1 Delivering the Western Gateway's Strategic Transport Plan will open up new travel opportunities and improve accessibility for everyone. No adverse impact on any protected groups is expected.

8. Legal Considerations

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

9. Financial considerations

- 9.1 The Western Gateway's Strategic Transport Plan budget for 2022/23 is £80,000. The revised approach affordable within this budget. With consultation on and completion of the Strategic Transport Plan in 2023/24 some carry over of budget will be needed.

10. Conclusion

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

Background documents

None.

Contact Officer

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