

Meeting **JOINT COMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC PLANNING AND TRANSPORT**

Date **11 March 2016** Agenda item number **7**

From **JOINT OFFICER STEERING GROUP**

## **RAIL ISSUES UPDATE**

### **Purpose of the report**

1. To update the Committee on key rail issues in and into Greater Nottingham and rail services across local authority boundaries. The work of the two Councils, although separate, is complementary, and of mutual benefit.

### **HS2**

2. In 2014, the executive chairman of HS2 Ltd, Sir David Higgins, announced that *"I am now proposing we investigate alternative station sites to the west of Toton"*.
3. Very strong representations were made by both Councils pointing out that, because a station further to the west would be more difficult to access from the whole of the Greater Nottingham conurbation, it would attract significantly fewer passengers and generate significantly less benefit for the regional economy as a whole.
4. Further work by HS2 Ltd confirmed what the Councils had said (i.e. that a station further west would have fewer passengers/revenue and generate less benefit to the wider economy). It also established that the supposed reduction in capital cost of a station further west was much less than had originally been anticipated. So, in July Sir David Higgins announced HS2 now accepted Toton as the preferred location.
5. In his autumn statement on November 26<sup>th</sup> the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne MP, provided £55.7billion (at 2015 prices) to fund the entire HS2 network, including the Eastern leg and the East Midlands Hub station.
6. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, DfT published a 'Command Paper' (similar to a White Paper) which stated *"The Government therefore continues to support Toton as the best location for an East Midlands Hub"*.
7. These recent developments are very encouraging in that they confirm
  - that the government remains fully committed to building phase 2 of HS2, including an Eastern leg from Birmingham to Leeds, with an East Midlands Hub station;
  - that both HS2 Ltd and the Government accept the fact that the best location for the East Midlands Hub station is at Toton; and
  - that the funding is in place for both the Eastern leg and a station at Toton

However this does not yet constitute final approval for the Eastern leg to be built. A final decision on this will only be made when the Government makes a formal announcement of its view of all the representations that were made during the consultation process. Announcement of that Government decision is expected towards the end of 2016.

8. In the meantime work continues to develop the detail of:
  - the arrangements for the station at Toton,
  - the arrangements for access to/from Toton by all transport modes (road, rail, tram, bus, taxi, cycling and walking); and
  - for the development of the area around it and the wider region to maximise the economic benefits of HS2.

An East Midlands HS2 Programme Board, containing representatives of all the relevant Councils, plus other stakeholders (including D2N2 LEP) meets on a monthly basis to oversee this work. There are also two subgroups: a Toton Station Board, and a Toton Connectivity Working Group (now called HS2 Growth Strategy), both of which meet on a regular basis. Minutes of the HS2 Programme Board are available on request for any joint committee member who might wish to have them.
9. HS2 Ltd is represented at all of those meetings (i.e. the Programme Board, the Station Board and the Growth Strategy). The two Councils also continue to meet and liaise with HS2 Ltd as required in between meetings.
10. One particular issue being pressed very hard by both Councils is the need for a direct city-centre to city-centre service from the existing Nottingham station to Birmingham Curzon Street, calling at Beeston (for the adjacent Enterprise Zone). HS2 Ltd has confirmed that such a service would be possible with a journey time of under 30 minutes. This would be the biggest percentage reduction in journey time between any two cities on the entire HS2 network.
11. Such a direct Nottingham city centre – Beeston - Birmingham city centre service would run on the existing rail network from Nottingham as far as Attenborough/Trent where it would require the construction of a connection between the existing rail network and the new HS2 line. HS2 Ltd has confirmed that it has assessed this and that it would be possible to build such a connection at an estimated cost of £195 million (in 2011 prices).
12. In October 2014, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the government was adding to the HS2 plans a further high-speed link - called HS3 - to transform East-West connectivity between the three biggest cities in the north of England (i.e. Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield), at a cost of between £6 – 7 billion.
13. However, provision of such an East-West link in the Midlands is not currently included in the HS2 plans, despite the capital cost of £195 million being just 3% of the equivalent East-West link in the North of England which is being planned and funded.
14. In addition, HS2 Ltd has recently claimed that there will be no room to fit in a Nottingham - Birmingham service on a 3km stretch of the new HS2 line on the

outskirts of Birmingham. Despite being asked, HS2 Ltd has not provided any detailed evidence to support that assertion, and officers of the two councils are urgently pursuing the matter.

15. At the launch of Midlands Connect in Derby on 22<sup>nd</sup> October an officer spoke to Sir David Higgins about the need to provide for direct Nottingham city centre – Beeston - Birmingham city centre service, in response to which Sir David Higgins said *“at the very least we must future proof that”* (i.e. provision for a connection between the classic rail lines and HS2 in the Trent area).

### **Nottingham – Sheffield – Leeds**

16. The Nottingham – Sheffield – Leeds service is operated by the Northern Rail franchise. The current franchise ends soon and a new Northern Rail franchise will commence in April 2016. In December, the department for Transport (DfT) announced that the new franchise has been awarded, and that it provides several very significant benefits for Nottinghamshire rail services.
17. The current service consists of one train per hour Nottingham – Sheffield - Leeds. This adds to the existing Nottingham – Sheffield – Manchester - Liverpool service, giving a train every 30 minutes between Nottingham and Sheffield. (There is also an additional Sheffield - Leeds service every hour, giving a train every 30 minutes between Sheffield and Leeds).
18. The last new service was introduced in December 2008 following much work and lobbying by the Council and South Yorkshire PTA. It has proved to be very successful, with the number of passengers travelling between Nottingham and Sheffield roughly doubling in the last 7 years.
19. However the journey time on the service is very poor, taking 2hours for the 82 miles to Leeds. It has been a priority for the Councils to secure a significant improvement in journey time, and much work has been undertaken towards that. As a result of the Councils’ work, the 2011 ‘Initial Industry Plan’ for the development of the rail network, responding specifically to the representations of the Council identified Nottingham – Leeds for development as one of *“two (national) exemplar schemes to deliver journey time improvements between regional cities”*.
20. In 2014 officers met with the Head of DfT’s Rail Executive and the DfT Head of Rail Franchising, as a result of which the formal ‘Invitation to Tender’ for the Northern Rail franchise stated  
*“We received detailed proposals from Nottinghamshire County Council about their ambition for faster services between Nottingham and Leeds and elsewhere, including details of how this could reduce costs and release rolling stock by enabling the service to be run with one less train set and crew. Bidders will be expected to identify and lead the implementation of journey time reduction opportunities in conjunction with Network Rail and other operators, both as part of their submission and during the franchise.”*

## **RECOMMENDATION**

21. It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of the report.

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