

# Transport for the North's (TfN) Strategic Transport Plan: WHY YOUR VOICE MATTERS

- a briefing prepared by the Environmental Transport Organisations (ETOs) grouping\*

TfN is the body bringing together your regional and district councils to produce a revised Strategic Transport Plan (STP) for future transport across the North of England. This includes investment in major roads and rail networks, improved public and active transport, and accelerated decarbonisation. It's now out for consultation (closing date: 17th August) but whilst the input of TfN's local authority partners has been key to the new STP local people have not been heard – there has been no 'engage, deliberate, decide'. Now is the chance to have your say. To learn more about the STP visit the [virtual room](#) and/or respond by email to [STP@transportforthenorth.com](mailto:STP@transportforthenorth.com). We have drawn on a number of supporting documents in appearing this briefing. **The ETOs' conclusion: In the face of many challenges the intent of the revised STP is going in the right direction but the ambition is weak and there are too many contradictions.**

- The STP **fails to achieve TfN's Net Zero target for 2045**, in terms of annual and cumulative emissions (*Decarbonisation Strategy* 2021 page 23, draft STP p. 30) as its modelling of the 4 TfN future travel scenarios has demonstrated. Measures such as traffic reduction, road building only for safety, fare subsidies on public transport and investment in active travel should be included to meet those outcomes. There also needs to be an explicit connection between the STP and the TfN Independent Economic Review which identifies the economic opportunities from Net Zero (NPIER p. 78).
- The STP's climate action mostly relies on electrification of vehicles to deliver decarbonisation, along with no 'net' traffic growth by 2045. However **these measures will fail to meet the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions by 2030**. Reducing car mileage/travel demand is now strongly supported by academic analysis, and yet this option is almost entirely missing in the draft STP (page 81). The Climate Change Committee (CCC) recommends that the role for car demand reduction should be clear. TfN has yet to reflect on the latest CCC Progress report but it rejects a Welsh style review of its roads' programme, as recommended by the CCC.
- We **strongly welcome the increased emphasis on rail schemes** (p. 69-77). But plans to double rail freight by 2050 from a very low level do not reflect the potential for modal shift. Ninety percent of freight travels by road but the STP is in fact forecasting an increase in the domestic average haulage distance up to 130km in 2050.
- Although the STP says that new road building would be targeted '*only where evidence shows it is essential*', **TfN has a long list of road schemes** in its Freight and Logistics Strategy [para 7.5] including dualling of the A66 and access to ports and airports. The STP still includes the Strategic Development Corridors (p. 34) that favour future travel by car and lorry. At a consultation webinar TfN accepted that the SDCs would make decarbonisation challenging but would prioritise modal shift & appraisal of transport problems that fully reflect these alternatives.
- There is **no detail to mesh local and combined authority housing and economic development plans with the STP**. The STP's place-based approach to travel is welcome but in practice it's not providing well-connected places with public transport and active travel e.g. Trafford's New Carrington Moss Masterplan for 5,000 homes and 350,000m<sup>2</sup> of warehousing but all to be serviced by new roads damaging the environment & decarbonisation, and with major opportunities for sustainable freight provision ignored.
- Plans to **double public transport use by 2050 to 15% of all trips are unambitious**. Just raising awareness of Smarter Choices can increase bus patronage by 10-22% over 4 years, and Greater Manchester is aiming for 50% of all trips to be made by public transport, walking and cycling by 2040. The STP should provide **a strong framework to push for urgent improvements to public transport, walking and cycling** so as to address social exclusion, the cost of living crisis and cut carbon emissions.
- At the same time as saying that it has no remit for aviation, **the STP recommends catering for growth at Northern airports**, resulting therefore in increased carbon emissions. TfN proposes this as '*part of a national strategy for rebalancing use of existing capacity*' despite the fact that this is contrary to government policy, and CCC advice that no airport expansion should proceed without a national framework to constrain capacity within carbon limits. TfN must stop promoting airport expansion!
- Although **air and noise pollution** are addressed water, light and vibration pollution have been missed out. **Improving safety** is far too slow - zero deaths and seriously injured by 2050. The UK is aiming for a 50% reduction by 2030 but the goal should be zero harm by 2030.
- The North's **fantastic countryside** including National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, rivers, coasts and forest define its character and sustain its citizens. But TfN still sees the Pennines as a barrier to economic growth rather than a natural resource for carbon storage and improving health and wellbeing.

\* In 2018 the ETOs grouping suggested that a commitment to decarbonise transport should be included in the original STP. Eventually this was accepted by TfN and is now one of the revised STPs 3 strategic priorities.