**TRANSPORT FOR THE NORTH**

**Summary TfN response to Future Transport call for evidence**

1. Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Future Transport call for evidence. As a sub-national body, we support our constituent Local Authority Partners in the creation of their local transport and spatial strategies, and integration at regional and national level.

2. Regions which support in research and development, innovation and create new technological solutions grow faster than those that do not. This can provide a reliable pipeline of skills in the North, which could attract and retain employers to support a 'levelling up' effect. There is an opportunity to harness North's growing digital, energy and innovative capabilities, by using the North as early adopters or a test bed to strengthen the UK's competitive advantage globally. The North's 20 Local Transport Authorities are at different points of the Future Transport 'curve'. Whilst significant strengths and opportunities are noted across the North, the current penetration of Future Transport aspects is medium to low, with feedback suggesting there are consistent barriers to uptake.

3. The COVID-19 global pandemic will, at least in the short and medium term, lead to changes to the way we live, work, travel and do business. It is clear that the future for our transport system cannot be a case of business as usual. There are many positive behaviours that could and should be carried forward from the tragedy of this pandemic. Covid-19 has shown that delivery of change to achieve objectives is possible if done at scale and pace. Transport for the North is committed to not just being the advocates of change, but being instrumental in delivery.

4. The challenges and opportunities set out in the consultation document serve as catalysts for change to the transport system. It is important to clearly articulate what success looks like, and how these different solutions can deliver a holistic approach. By supporting mass role out of workable solutions (suitable for the place in question), we can support future travel norms and behaviours that the public want to see made available. These issues are fundamental to the future of transport and go beyond the regulatory element of the consultation.

5. Sub-National transport bodies can add considerable value in providing strong and cost effective leadership on issues that are of regional significance. STBs have an ability to draw in expertise from Local Transport Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships, as well as delivery partners Highways England and Network Rail. Working at a strategic scale enables STBs to rise to big strategic challenges such as rebalancing economies, decarbonisation, and addressing the disconnection of communities. STBs focus on the regionally specific aspects of such challenges, where we can add most value and

monitor and evaluate programme impacts to maximise benefits and value for money role out of agreed ambitions and principles.

6. This provides a mechanism and opportunity to make a real difference in this area and achieve economies of scale. STBs also have a track record of looking at aspects across 'sector' boundaries, and we would also encourage a strong cross-departmental approach to deliver this agenda. A holistic approach and the co-ordination of numerous funding streams would ensure opportunities are realised to their maximum effect. However, this also presents an opportunity to consider transport policies and shape Future Transport to deliver the vision we want to see.

7. TfN's Board members have set out aspirations for an inclusive and sustainable North, prioritising and supporting a net gain in environment and biodiversity, as well as supporting rapid decarbonisation of the transport network. It is important to note that if we are to meet the targets outlined, we must apply supporting policies and regulations to get there effectively. As the Committee on Climate Change point out, we are not on track for the 4th and 5th carbon budgets as things stand, and whilst the foundations are available, more action is required to meet these targets.

8. Future Transport solutions offer opportunities to make significant progress in our shared ambitions for a net zero transport system no later than 2050. This needs to be shaped by an integrated whole-systems approach to our transport connectivity mix, where sustainable low carbon mobility is the preferred option for most trips. This requires a long term, sustainable approach to planning, scheme appraisal and managing our environment and assets. With more integration of transport, energy, housing infrastructure and associated land use planning.

**General approach and principles of Future Transport, TfN consider as key to successful delivery**

a) Achieving inclusivity as a fundamental principle for Future Transport: Whilst future transport solutions and enabling transport technology advancements are exciting, we must consider their applicability to different place types, communities and businesses. To achieve mass implementation of these different modes as part of our transportation mix, these solutions need to be accessible by all who can safely undertake travel by any particular means. We believe inclusivity should be brought out further within the guiding principles for Future Transport, to ensure an integrated transport system which provides opportunities for all.

b) More consideration to different place types across the UK: We would encourage the Government to consider rural risks and opportunities in greater detail across its Future Transport workstreams. These areas currently experience a variety of transport connectivity challenges, or are car dependant. This consideration should also be extended to understanding of semi-rural areas which are prevalent right across the UK.

Through our assessment of Middle-Super Output Areas[1], we found that 27% of the North's population live outside of the North's large towns and cities and their immediate fringes. This includes areas classed as rural, small to medium urban areas, and towns with population up to 100k. Clearly some of the Future Transport aspects are more suited to large town and city areas, with just over 50% of the North's population living within a large urban setting over 250k population.

However, there are solutions and benefits that should be applied across all area types to increase sustainable and multi-modal connectivity options. This can increase opportunities available to those who live in such areas, such as access to jobs, education and leisure activities. This might be through direct A – B connections or enhanced and integrated multi-modal and public transport options. This is key if the UK is to meet its decarbonisation targets and the pathways as set out by the carbon budgets.

**Figure 1**: TfN Area Types based on Middle-Super Output Areas
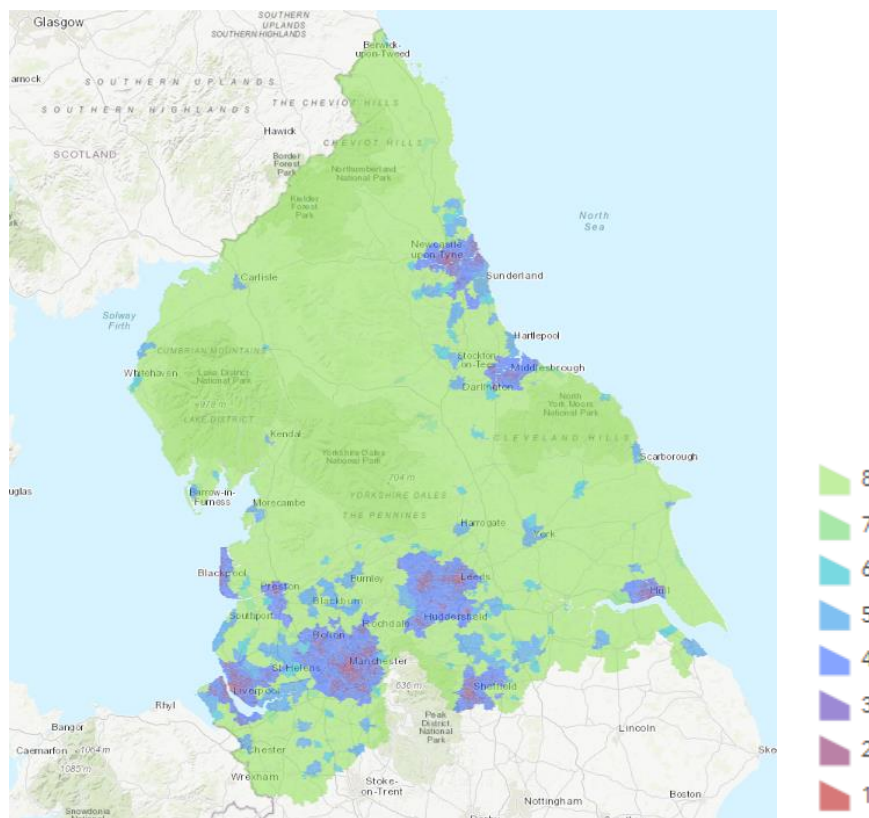


c) <u>More focus on rail required:</u> Train stations have the ability to act as strategic mobility hubs, using the rail network as a spine for integration with wider catchment areas via the highway network. Strategic rail-based park and ride also remains a relatively untapped market across the North. As major rail interventions such as Northern Powerhouse Rail are developed,

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[1] *Based on NTEM CTrip-End classification, which identifies 8 Middle-layer Super Output Area (MSOA) types. TfN has redefined the top four categories within that classification ('Inner London', 'Outer London', 'Metropolitan Areas' and 'Urban Big'), to ensure relevance to the North of England and to distinguish between the city centre and suburban areas in the North. This is based on three categories: 2018 employment, population; proportion of people living in flats.*

understanding the opportunities to reduce overall levels of car mileage and volumes of traffic entering urban areas will be important. This has the potential to de-silo connectivity benefits and increase the commercial viability of MaaS solutions, integration of smart ticketing mechanisms and interoperability of data across modes.

Transport for the North have previously responded to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee Inquiry (May 2019) into trains fit for the future. TfN's Long Term Rail Strategy recognises the importance of enhancing rail's wider role in society and reflecting our global responsibilities, including the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions. Developing new technologies is therefore a fundamental part of our plan to 2050. TfN fully supports development of battery and hydrogen traction noting the potential for regional and UK-wide benefits arising from the development of battery and hydrogen propulsion technology in the North, for example at Teesside, Liverpool City Region and Ellesmere Port, and Cumbria.

d) <u>Co-ordinated action with regards to the Roads theme:</u>
   a. Accelerated and co-ordinated delivery of Electric Vehicle charging (and other low carbon fuels) infrastructure is required across local, regional and national networks.
   b. Experience from the covid-19 pandemic is key to applying best practice regarding road space reallocation. Roads have the ability to be flexible and agile to required changes in use. The integration of regional and local trips is also vital to ensure we support modal shift, providing the user with efficiency and good quality connectivity.

## The potential role of an STB

9. TfN's partners have provided initial insights on how best TfN can support our local authority partners and the Government in planning and delivering successful Future Transport measures. This suggests that TfN could act in an enabling capacity, to bridge gaps in delivery and stimulate active development and implementation of Future Transport measures on mass. At the time of writing, these activities require further work with our Local Authority Partners to understand their expectations, the opportunities and value added of each. Key emerging and recommended options for TfN's (STB) role (a full breakdown of potential activities can be found in Table 1, page 10 of our response):
   • Act as advisor, enabler and facilitator for the North;
   • Provision of evidence and strategic support towards Future Transport uptake across the North;
   • Support trials and implementation of Future Transport measures, and effective transition to implementation and mass role out;
   • Articulate the ambition of the North, support and inform the local and national agenda;
   • Support Future Transport through provision of key enabling tools and application of TfN programme expertise.

## Micromobiity, Flexible Bus Services and Mobility as a Service

10. Micro-mobility presents opportunities to enhance inclusive connectivity and modal shift if regulated and managed well. They can help overcome topographical and comfort barriers that put people off from walking or cycling, as well as reducing congestion, air pollution and carbon emissions. Micro-mobility use has the potential to boost public transport use through connectivity to and from bus and rail services. We note that the largest benefit in carbon terms from Micromobility would come from the mass adoption of e-bike in urban, semi-urban and semi-rural localities, replacing the 5-10 mile "short" journey that makes up most car-based trips. According to National Transport Statistics, these journeys make up 93% of trips in the North, with 48.6% made by car.

11. Our local partners will be able to advise on whether micromobility options should be allowed on the road, cycle paths or pedestrian areas, and the modal shift impact it may have in their area. However, we would point out that safety and inclusivity are a key importance here, and that any solution should not be at the expense of walking and disabled access quality or experience.

12. The Government's Decarbonisation Transport Setting the Challenge rightly sets out how accelerating modal shift to public and active transport can help reduce emissions from transport. However, this will likely require a combination of public confidence, enjoyment of the shared services provided and measures suitable to the local area in question. The main challenge for any shared transit option is its attractiveness and commercial viability when compared to the private vehicle. However, examples are emerging which provides confidence that these solutions can be a successful part of the mix.

13. Whilst bus services are clearly the responsibility of our local partners, TfN's Strategic Transport Plan set out the importance of a multi-modal approach across the region, '*It is important that the North's transport network delivers a future mobility which is right for the customer. People should be able to have a seamless travel experience, including improved ticketing and better journey information'.* Importantly, bus services can provide additional connectivity and capacity without increasing the number of vehicles on the road network.

14. The rural bus service is fundamentally important to many rural and even semi-urban areas around the North, and the wider UK. Without this lifeline connectivity, we risk large scale social isolation or a dependency on car as the only method of transport. On demand options should not be at the expense of reliable and effective connectivity provided to these communities.

15. TfN consider Mobility as a Service as a key enabler in encouraging individuals to choose more sustainable travel options, playing important role in the future mix of our transport options. MaaS can help encourage a multi-modal approach to the connectivity and place the user at the heart of the transport network. However, to date, MaaS has not developed as quickly as it could have and can be complicated by piecemeal approaches and complex regulations.

16. MaaS must be accessible to all demographic groups in the population, but existing regulations mean that it is likely to present accessibility and inclusivity concerns. One of the biggest barriers to rollout of integrated ticketing remains the co-operation and transparency required from commercial operators. There are a number of competition concerns that MaaS may present which could be difficult to address through existing regulations. It is likely that unregulated competition will lead to many MaaS solutions either having a limited selection of providers or have a bias to one or more providers. On these occasions the consumer is unlikely to get the optimum combination of travel solution based on their needs, and in turn there will be less use of sustainable modes.

17. We would like to see a clearer definition of roles and responsibilities in the development of MaaS. Government should lead on the understanding and communication of what 'good MaaS' looks like, and steer it in the correct direction to ensure optimisation that meets the needs of the consumer. Most importantly, this requires an outcome-based approach to delivery in order to navigate what can be innovative changes to a complex system. Local authorities and STBs have a vital supporting role in the development and accelerated deployment of MaaS, providing advice and guidance to leverage optimised solutions for their local area and working across regional boundaries.

18. Having adequate digital infrastructure in place to support innovation is key. Initial TfN partner responses indicate that collecting network data across the North that all members could access would be useful. This might be something that members and the business community could access to inform the deployment of new technology or transport solutions in their area. TfN may also be able to lead conversations with operators at regional level to stress the importance of data sharing, which may ease some of the pressures local authorities encounter when requesting it locally. Similarly, we have seen support towards on Pan northern data platform with open data capabilities.

**Trails, pilots and Future Mobility Zones**

19. We agree with the intention to trial these aspects further, both regulatory and physical – to help prove the commercial case for innovations, but also to identify that each one can deliver the social, economic and environmental benefits sought and manage risks we want to avoid. Simple and easy to follow guidance and legislative requirements is vital, as well as management and regulatory powers to ensure proper use of any transportation method.

20. Given its capabilities, wealth of understanding and varying place types, we feel the North provides an ideal test bed to determine the potential for micro-mobility solutions, but also importantly how these may be integrated across a wider geographical area to deliver a consistent, reliable and efficient customer journey.

21. Furthermore, we agree with reference to Local Authorities or regional mayors potentially having more powers to deliver such transport options at a local level. With a national framework in place to support this and allow for flexibility in delivery. To achieve optimum delivery and management of such

options, it is important to understand the local area and align with place making and active travel strategies. This is particularly relevant across the North where we see a range of urban, semi-urban, rural and remote place types.

## **Roads as a sustainable solution**

22. Any decisions should not be made in isolation to the use of roads. Almost all journeys start and finish on local roads, providing a consolidation point between stations, park-and-rides, or other destinations. Roads fundamentally play a major part in everyone's life. Whether as a pedestrian, cyclist, bus passenger, driver or freight operator - we all rely on a well-functioning road network to access jobs, education, leisure, goods and services. Investing sustainably, particularly on maintenance, in our road network is vital in providing an environmentally friendly, multi-modal transport system.

23. Our Strategic Transport Plan includes plans for a road network which is integrated with rail and smart ticketing to transform the way people travel in the North. Integration of our Major Road Network with local networks and strategies is also key. Roads will need to adapt to support sustainable solutions as our needs change over time. Whether it's more shared transit, an increase in EVs / CAVs, active travel, micromobility or another solution - our roads will be needed to support an efficient, reliable and resilient transport system as a whole.