



Quarterly Operating Report

October - December 2024



TRANSPORT FOR THE
NORTH

1 Chief Executive's Introduction

- 1.1 A key focus for this quarter has been to build on the engagement with constituent authorities over the summer that helped to identify the key areas of focus for Transport for the North moving forward. Working with the Executive Board (comprising senior officers from the authorities), the TfN executive developed a focused set of headline objectives that were considered and endorsed by the TfN Board at its December meeting.
- 1.2 The output from the Board discussion will be used to write the detailed Business Plan for 2025/26 for consideration at the TfN Board meeting on 17 March 2025. In parallel, discussions continue with the Department for Transport (DfT) following the October Budget regarding TfN's funding settlement for 25/26.
- 1.3 The second stage of the Government's Spending Review began immediately after the October Budget. The TfN Board in December provided an initial steer to the TfN executive as to the focus for a submission into the Spending Review. Work will continue on this over the course of the next quarter, allowing for a substantive debate at the March Board meeting in Newcastle.
- 1.4 A key area of activity for 2025/26 and beyond is the continued development and evolution of the 'TfN Offer'. Launched initially in September 2023, use of the Offer by constituent authorities continues to grow as they develop their own plans and proposals. All of TfN's constituent authorities – from the larger and more well-established Mayoral Combines Authorities (MCAs) to the smaller unitary authorities – are drawing on the Offer. Analysis undertaken by TfN shows that to date the Offer has realised savings in excess of £350k.
- 1.5 Publication of the TfN Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) State of Play report this quarter provided the opportunity to take stock of the progress made to date. Working with our constituent authorities, TfN has collated a list of tailored actions that will support an acceleration of investment in this electrification of the road fleet, and we continue to work closely with the DfT and its associated bodies (such as the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV)) to get the actions implemented.
- 1.6 Reducing the environmental impact of our transport choices is a key outcome for the Strategic Transport Plan (STP) adopted by the TfN Board in March. During the course of this quarter work has continued on getting the Carbon Appraisal Playbook ready for its launch in January 2025. Specifically designed to support the work of our constituent authorities as they prepare their updated Local Transport Plans (LTPs), the Playbook will be added to the TfN Offer.
- 1.7 The evidence base underpinning the STP shows unequivocally the importance of improving capacity and connectivity between the North's great cities and towns if we are to realise the full value of the North's

economy: it's why the Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) programme is fundamental to the future success of the North. Whilst we continue to work with the DfT, through our role as co-sponsor, to develop the business case for NPR, a key focus for us in this quarter has been the need to get the current railway offer fit for purpose.

- 1.8 Concern about the performance of Northern grew significantly over the course of the autumn, with a particular problem in respect of services in the Northwest on Sundays, although the impact of those problems inevitably spilled eastwards. Members have worked closely with Northern throughout the autumn to help the company address the challenges it faces. It is clear that some of the challenges have deep roots and that agreeing a way forward will not be easy. However, through the Rail North Committee (RNC), we are committed to working with the DfT and with Northern to make progress in this regard.

2 Progress against Business Plan Key Milestones

RAG Key:

R	Deferred progress
A	Delayed progress
G	On target

BP 1 Secure the agreement of the Board to submit statutory advice on the North's Bus Network – June 2024

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- 2.1 We continue to support our partners with the delivery of their Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) by developing and providing evidence and analysis to them (as part of the TfN offer) for their local transport plans and business cases. We have funded free trial access for our local partners to a bus planning tool for up to three months and are exploring options for ongoing access to bus data and analytics via a similar tool.
- 2.2 We have developed an online interactive 'beginner's guide to buses' course as part of the Bus Centre of Excellence suite of guidance. This is aimed to support partner capacity and capabilities by providing a base understanding of the industry across multiple topics such as operation models, stakeholders, accessibility, and the transition to net zero.
- 2.3 The *Better Buses for the North* forum met in Warrington on 6 November 2024. This gave partners an opportunity to share lessons learnt from their ongoing BSIP work, engage with the DfT, including an update on the Better Buses Bill, and hear from industry experts on existing tools and evidence to support workstreams, such as the new social value toolkit for buses. Officers at Warrington Borough Council kindly shared information on their procurement of zero emission buses and arranged a tour of their municipal bus company depot.

BP 2 With partners, identify the North's requirements of national rail reform, building upon existing

A

levels of rail devolution (such as the Rail North Agreement) – June 2024

- 2.4 We have developed a set of core requirements for rail reform, which were agreed to be developed further at November’s RNC. These requirements will form the basis of our engagement with the DfT and further industry consultation as rail reform develops. We are commissioning specialist support externally to work with us, and partners to define outcomes sought by the North from rail reform that in turn will inform discussions on the future arrangements/ partnership that the North wishes to have with Great British Railways (GBR).
- 2.5 In parallel, the RNC continues to champion work to have a single overview of how investment in infrastructure and rolling stock aligns with future timetable changes. Drawing on the North’s experience of rail devolution to date, this work is being taken forward with partners from the rail sector, both Network Rail as infrastructure owner and the operators.
- 2.6 In addition, and linked to the work on a single overview, work is underway to establish place-based Task Forces in collaboration with the relevant constituent authorities.

BP 3 Secure the agreement of the Board to a strategy for improving accessibility to and at rail stations, and to identify key actions for implementation – June 2024

- 2.7 Our analytical work, built on criteria set by our members, to enable prioritisation of accessibility improvements across the North’s stations is almost complete. We are now working with Northern and TransPennine Trains (TPT) via Rail North Partnership (RNP) to secure the inclusion of some “quick win” accessibility works in operator business plans for 2025/26, whilst setting up a working group with our MCAs and Local Transport Authorities (LTA) partners to explore other funding and delivery options. We will report progress to RNC on 25 February 2025.

BP 4 Secure the agreement of the Board to submit statutory advice to government on implementation of the Strategic Transport Plan (STP) - September 2024

- 2.8 The Northern Appraisal Playbook has been shared in draft form with officers from partner authorities for comment and has also been subject to an external review by an academic expert. A briefing for Members took place at the November Partnership Board: the meeting welcomed the initiative and supported its continued development given the potential for it to contribute to the review of the approach to scheme appraisal announced by the Secretary of State for Transport when launching their vision for the Integrated National Transport Strategy.
- 2.9 The final playbook will be made available early in Q4 and will set out how to make the most of the flexibilities contained within the Green Book, including a focus on ensuring that social and environmental factors are given consideration. This will draw upon findings from a

series of case studies – looking at existing scheme appraisals and how the case for investment could be strengthened.

- 2.10 The research has identified several additional areas that could be taken forward in 2025/26, such as reviewing travel time metrics, and these have been considered as part of the business planning process. This further work would identify areas where we and partners could work collaboratively to strengthen investment cases for the North.

BP 5 With partners, identify proposals for investment in the Major Road Network for consideration by government – September 2024

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- 2.11 Preliminary work on identifying potential Major Road Network (MRN) schemes is now complete. Proposed schemes include major maintenance and renewals, road safety, supporting a shift to alternative modes and road schemes facilitating new development and targeting congestion hotspots.
- 2.12 Further work on an MRN scheme pipeline has paused until DfT provide further information and guidance on any future funding to support delivery of large (e.g. £10M - £100M) investments on locally managed roads. Confirmation on any future funding is not expected before the announcement of the 2025 Comprehensive Spending Review.
- 2.13 In the meantime, TfN continues to work with the promoters of schemes included in the initial MRN programme as they progress with the development of their schemes through to final approval.

BP 6 Secure the agreement of the Board to publish an investment pipeline for the North that forms the basis of input into the next Government Spending Review – September 2024

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- 2.14 Initial work that we undertook on a pan-regional investment pipeline will inform the TfN Spending Review submission, which we expect to provide in Q4. The focus is on influencing decisions about national funding programmes. An initial paper was considered by the TfN Board in December to shape collective priorities: this was grounded in the framework set out in the STP, and we will be working with partners to refine the ask in early 2025.

BP 7 Deliver services commissioned by DfT in support of Northern Powerhouse Rail – Ongoing

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- 2.15 TAME continue to update key components of the Analytical Framework to a 2022/23 base year. This includes road and rail elements of the Northern Transport Modelling System, and development of a new Land Use and Transport Interaction model. The programme is due to complete in Spring 2025.
- 2.16 An intensive programme to provide analytical evidence in support of the Bradford station Strategic Outline Business Case has been completed. Four station options have been appraised with a suite of evidence for the Economic and Strategic Dimensions provided to the DfT, who were client for this piece of work.

2.17 The second phase of the Northern Behavioural Survey is underway, which includes a pilot and then a full data collection exercise to derive behavioural parameters for use in the rail demand forecasting models. The parameters are expected to provide a more northern focussed set of behavioural responses.

BP 8 Secure the agreement of the Board to publish, for consultation, the draft update of the regional transport decarbonisation strategy – March 2025

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2.18 Our work continues to provide a stocktake to update our baseline data and an alignment of our decarbonisation workstreams to support the STP ambitions for a fair and prosperous transition. The stocktake will also include an action plan for the TfN Executive to support our partners deliver their priorities. The Board endorsed the direction of travel for this work at its meeting in December.

2.19 Drafting of the stocktake continues and has been informed by partner engagement designed to optimise the value of the action plan. The stocktake and action plan will be subject to expert review by leading academics in Q4, prior to being presented to the TfN Board in June 2025. The work to update the carbon baseline data, led by our TAME team, is expected to be concluded in January.

2.20 Additionally, the TfN Carbon Assessment Playbook will be launched in January 2025 with two online training sessions scheduled for partner organisations. The tool will be of significant practical value to partners as they look to develop their LTPs and understand the carbon reduction potential of transport measures, more widely.

BP 9 Secure the agreement of the Board to submit statutory advice to delivery partners and regulatory bodies that will support delivery of investment in Electric Vehicle (EV)/alternative fuels infrastructure – March 2025

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2.21 The EV State of Play report has now been published, and aims to:

- Review and evaluate progress of EV charging infrastructure deployment across the region against our forecasted requirements.
- Apply TfN's evidence, and consolidated views of regional partners, to highlight key policy recommendations which can further enhance the speed and effectiveness of the EV transition.

2.22 The EV State of Play recommendations form a basis for continued work with our partners (nationally and across the North) to focus on what needs to happen to bring these actions into operation to address barriers for EV uptake and charging infrastructure deployment.

2.23 We have launched upgrades to the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) Framework providing a range of new evidence capabilities which are available via the TfN Offer. The EVCI Framework is being actively used by MCAs and LTAs via TfN's regional EV forum, as well as by national agencies, energy partners and private sector investors alike to inform planning, investment, and delivery actions.

2.24 We have also completed the roll out of the EVCI Framework across England, working with the other six sub-national transport bodies (STBs). Supported by the DfT, this Framework is now freely available to all local authority partners across England, providing a consistent and publicly operated source of intelligence.

BP 10 Continue to develop the 'TfN Offer' to partners across the North and nationally, including roll out of the Common Analytical Framework – Ongoing

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2.25 Demand for the TfN Offer continues to grow, and its scope is constantly evolving as additional tools and capabilities are becoming available. Within the last 12 months (January 2024 – December 2024) we received over 80 requests, with 69 completed and 6 further still in progress.

2.26 In November 2024, we held a briefing session with Warrington Borough Council officers, providing an overview of the TfN Offer, a live demonstration of models and tools, and exploring opportunities for targeted provision of products to support LTPs and business case development. Similar briefing sessions are available for all constituent authorities on request.

2.27 In Q4, we will relaunch the TfN Offer brochure. The brochure was initially published in September 2023 and the refresh will include updates to reflect the new tools and databases available to partners. Alongside this, we have also developed a Monitoring and Evaluation survey that will be issued to partners upon completion of requests. The short survey will help us to understand how the TfN Offer is being used by partners and to identify areas for further improvements in the service.

BP 11 Continue the TfN research programme and thought leadership activity as part of maintaining the evidence base that underpins the work of TfN – Ongoing

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2.28 We continue to make good progress against our 2024/25 research priorities. We have undertaken a major review into our evidence base for Transport Related Social Exclusion (TRSE), which will be published in Q4, following an expert review. This will include an update to the existing online tool to provide data at a more granular level for partners to use in their planning and decision making, where appropriate.

2.29 In Q4, we will also publish a series of research reports into rural mobility insights, as well as our research on rail station accessibility. This research has been supported by our citizens' panel – Northern Transport Voices. Our panel will also be used in Q4 for research and insight into road safety and public transport safety. This research will conclude in Q4 and be published early in 2025/26.

BP 12 Continue to make the case for investment by government in the North's priorities for the Strategic Road Network and Rail Network

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- 2.30 Following the Budget Statement at the end of October, work has begun to develop a proposition for input into the second part of the Spending Review, the outcome of which is expected in spring 2025.

Rail North Partnership (RNP)


Progress in this Quarter

- 2.31 RNP has continued the 2025/26 annual business planning round, engaging stakeholders across the North to ensure LTPs are considered in the development of Northern and TransPennine Trains (TPT) plans.
- 2.32 A particular focus has been Northern's performance improvement plan (following RNP issuing it with a breach of contract notice in July 2024) and Northern's passenger assistance improvement plan (required by the Office of Rail and Road).
- 2.33 RNP continued work on its outline passenger service specification project to develop a 10-year specification for Northern and TPT, built around stakeholder strategic transport plans overlaying passenger demand and budgets.
- 2.34 TPT continues to make good progress in its driver training to deliver 3 trains per hour across the TransPennine Route upgrade (TRU) diversionary routes from May 2025 and the procurement of new trains to realise the benefits of the TRU programme.
- 2.35 Services on the Northumberland line between Ashington and Newcastle began in December, with two trains per hour Monday to Saturday. Initially services are stopping at Ashington, Seaton Delaval and Manors stations, with more stations opening in 2025.
- 2.36 **Priorities for next Quarter**
- RNP will continue to work with operators and stakeholders on Northern and TPT's business plans, Northern's performance improvement plan and Northern's passenger assistance improvement plan.
 - RNP will continue its outline passenger service specification project with a series of ongoing stakeholder conversations.
 - TPT will continue to undertake focus on procuring new trains and driver training for TRU.
 - RNP will support Northern's procurement of replacement rolling stock for the oldest diesel trains in its fleet with a combination of new electric, battery-electric and multi-mode trains. This represents one of the biggest replacement programmes in the UK, with the first phase of 127 units due to enter into service from 2029, and a second phase of 126 units following in the mid-2030s (meeting the 2040 decarbonisation target). These trains will deliver key aims of growing and seeking economic opportunities, improving transport for the user and reducing environmental impacts.
 - RNP and its partners will continue to develop the Yorkshire Dales Explorer offer, including working with bus operators to provide improved local bus connectivity to nearby attractions and with Yorkshire Dales National Park and local business groups on offers/discounts with local accommodation, food and drink and

leisure providers. The Yorkshire Dales Explorer has been nominated in the tourism and leisure category of the 2025 Community Rail Awards. Winners will be announced at the Community Rail Awards ceremony at Newcastle in March.

3 People and Finance

3.1

TRANSPORT FOR THE NORTH				PERIOD	Q3	2024/25	
FINANCE DASHBOARD				BUDGET CYCLE		BASE BUDGET	
YTD ACTUALS VERSUS BUDGET - BY ACTIVITY							
	Actuals	Budget	Var.				
	£m	£m	£m	%			
Hosted services							
DfT Analytical Support	£4.06	£4.35	£0.29	7%			
Rail North Partnership	£1.38	£1.41	£0.03	2%			
	£5.44	£5.76	£0.32	6%			
Operational areas							
Rail and Roads	£1.30	£1.79	£0.49	27%			
Comms, Legal, Analysis and Strategy	£2.74	£3.08	£0.33	11%			
	£4.05	£4.87	£0.82	17%			
Business support							
	£1.60	£1.66	£0.06	4%			
	£11.09	£12.29	£1.21	10%			
YTD OPERATIONAL & BUSINESS SUPPORT EXPENDITURE - BY COST TYPE							
				Actuals	Budget	Var.	
				£m	£m	£m	
						%	
Staff				£4.13	£4.49	£0.36	8%
Staff support				£0.17	£0.20	£0.03	16%
Business infrastructure				£0.51	£0.51	£0.00	1%
Professional services				£0.57	£1.00	£0.43	43%
VAT				£0.27	£0.33	£0.05	16%
				£5.65	£6.53	£0.88	14%
YTD ACTUALS VERSUS BUDGET - BY FUND							
	Actuals	Budget	Var.				
	£m	£m	£m	%			
Hosted Services							
NPR Analytical Support Grant	£4.06	£4.35	£0.29	7%			
Rail North Grant & Contributor	£1.20	£1.24	£0.04	3%			
Trading Income	£0.18	£0.17	-£0.01	-5%			
	£5.44	£5.76	£0.32	6%			
Operational Areas & Backoff							
Core Grant (inc. reserves)	£5.43	£6.31	£0.87	14%			
Other	£0.22	£0.23	£0.01	5%			
	£5.65	£6.53	£0.88	14%			
	###	###	£1.21	10%			
HR DASHBOARD							
Establishment							
Permanent/Fixed Term Posts	Permanent (< 2 Years)	Fixed-Term (< 2 Years)	Total Posts	HR KPI's - Year to Date			
Hosted services				Corporate Sickness Level:			
DfT Analytical Support	26 (25.90 FTE)	-	26 (25.90 FTE)	4.1%			
Rail North Partnership	18 (18.00 FTE)	3 (3.00 FTE)	21 (21.00 FTE)	Employee Turnover:			
	44 (43.90 FTE)	3 (3.00 FTE)	47 (46.90 FTE)	7.9%			
Operational areas				% of Employees from an Ethnic Minority Background:			
Rail and Roads	18 (17.86 FTE)	-	18 (17.86 FTE)	17.0%			
Comms, Legal, Analysis and Strategy	35 (34.92 FTE)	2 (2.00 FTE)	37 (36.92 FTE)	% Employees declaring a Disability:			
	53 (52.78 FTE)	2 (2.00 FTE)	55 (54.87 FTE)	18.0%			
Business support				Gender Mix - % of Female Employees:			
	16 (16.00 FTE)	-	16 (16.00 FTE)	39.0%			
Total Establishment				Gender Mix - % of Male Employees:			
	113 (112.48 FTE)	5 (5.00 FTE)	118 (117.48 FTE)	61.0%			
Strength (In Post)							
Appointed (Start Date Pending)	2 (2.00 FTE)	-	2 (2.00 FTE)				
Pending/Active Recruitment	-	-	-				
Vacant - On-hold	9 (9.00 FTE)	-	9 (9.00 FTE)				

3.2 Year to date expenditure is £11.09m, £1.21m (10%) below base budget.

3.3 Staff costs are £0.4m lower than budgeted, £0.2m related to the cost-of-living salary rise. The remainder is due to deferred recruitment, most notably the Rail and Roads Director role, which represents half of this.

3.4 Discretionary costs are £0.8m underspent. TAME analytical support to DfT accounts for £0.3m with the remaining £0.5m in the operational areas. £0.3m of the latter is due to activities no longer proceeding or activity being delayed within year compared to original forecasts.

3.5 Emerging priority activities which materialise during the year are captured within the virement process. To date these have been delivered within the budget envelope due to budgeted activities being either deprioritised, delayed or delivered at a lower cost. To date, virements totalling £0.6 million have been approved with funds redirected to support new initiatives

aligned with corporate priorities. Part of the savings relate to activities no longer proceeding with work currently underway planning suitable alternatives.