

promoting quality public transport.....

Transport Strategy Consultation
Transport Policy Unit
Manchester City Council
Room 308
Town Hall
M60 2LA

22nd March 2010

Dear Sir/ Madam

Manchester City Centre Transport Strategy

TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) is an independent Community Interest Company representing users of all forms of public transport in North West England. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation on a draft Manchester City Centre Transport Strategy, which in the main we consider to be thorough, comprehensive and visionary.

It must be recognised that there are a number of **cross cutting issues** which are as yet insufficiently developed for the City Centre Transport Strategy to fully address. Nevertheless it is encouraging that the consultation refers to these and commits to engaging with them when and where appropriate. Chief amongst them are

- The Manchester Hub¹
- High Speed Rail
- Rail electrification
- Better Stations report²

In the context of these issues, TWNW is in broad agreement with the views recently expressed³ by a member of CILT, that nothing short of a cross city rail

¹ See Network Rail report 16/2/10

² DfT November 2009

³ Letter sent to "Modern Railways" Magazine on behalf of CILT and CIHT NW Region. "We... suggest that the Manchester Hub strategy must adopt exactly the same approach used in the 1970s in Merseyside, in the 1980s in Glasgow and Tyneside, and which has been adopted in London with Thameslink and Crossrail. This is of cross-linking services via a central area tunnel, probably on the Piccadilly-Salford axis and with a true city centre station beneath the commercial core in the vicinity of Cross Street. A "Greater Manchester Crossrail", with a combined frequency of up to 20 trains an hour in each direction serving the radial routes, would revolutionise city centre accessibility, line-to-line interchange and through operation."

tunnel can adequately address them. Linking with this should also be the consideration of the best location for an HS2 station with the potential for direct travelator links to the two main termini. We see these issues as long term aspirations able to fully meet the City's and the North West region's needs for at least the next fifty years.

TWNW agrees with this consultation's identification of a solution to the problems associated with the **Manchester Hub** as being of paramount importance. We support Network Rail's proposals to restore Manchester Victoria to its former glory and to make it a major interchange station with direct services to and from Piccadilly station via a new curve at Ordsall.

- A further cross cutting issue which pre-dated GMITA's TIF bid and to which TWNW responded in January 2008 was the **Regional Centre Transport Strategy**., and especially its proposed **Cross City Bus Package**. We pointed out then that "*although a core of Cross City services was suggested these skirted rather than penetrated the core pedestrian areas, which are relatively extensive for a city the size of Manchester.*" In the context of the proposed (above) further concentration of heavy rail services on Victoria Station it is even more regrettable that the nearest the proposed Cross City Bus Rapid Transit services will pass to this proposed major multimodal interchange will be the Salford Central and Shudehill stops.

The Strategy's endorsement of "**smart choices**" such as travel planning, car sharing, cycling and walking is commendable.

We have not commented fully on suggestions made in relation to these so called "soft measures", as apart from the first, they only marginally affect the passengers whom we champion, but we would emphasise that in their trips to, from and within the City Centre all public transport passengers⁴ as well as private motorists become pedestrians at some stage.

There appears to be little commitment to "shared space" in the pedestrianised⁵ core of the City which would allow greater penetration by buses other than just the currently permitted "Metroshuttles",

The loss of GMITA's £3.3bn TIF bid was a disappointment. However TWNW is pleased to note the smaller, but not insignificant, Greater Manchester Transport Fund of £1.5bn, part of which package the Strategy envisages employing. It is regrettable that in this context ways will have to be found⁶ to use the potential of the Inner Relief Road (IRR) to intercept and divert inessential cross city traffic. Congestion charging would have done this and

⁴ apart from those passengers able to travel with their cycles

⁵ although para 91 recognises that "creating completely traffic free streets can be counter productive"

⁶ para 81

allowed the road to fulfil its intended use as a City Centre bypass. Sight should not be lost of the powers in the Local Transport Act 2008 to introduce road user charging at some later stage⁷. Meanwhile TOWNW supports the aspiration to hold vehicle numbers at current levels, or less.

TOWNW shares the vision of increasing capacity, especially at congested 'nodes'⁸ and of promoting sustainable economic growth⁹, and we are encouraged to note that the strategy promises to urgently address the issue of insufficient heavy rail rolling stock in the NW.

In the short term, before the issue of the **Manchester Hub** is fully resolved, running longer trains, and creating the infrastructure to support these will be essential.

In this context, TOWNW is not able to support the proposed redevelopment of Mayfield station. We consider this railway land should be safeguarded against the eventuality that it might be needed as a terminus for a High Speed Rail connection or to provide extra capacity for more conventional heavy rail services as demand for these increases when the City Centre Transport Strategy is implemented.

There might be a case for coach services sharing Mayfield with heavy rail if these have to be moved out of Chorlton Street to accommodate an expanded bus interchange as the "number of bus movements from Parker Street are gradually reduced"¹⁰ until it is eventually decommissioned. However we do have strong reservations about the convenience of Chorlton Street as a "stopping location"¹¹ replacing Parker Street, the latter being much more centrally situated *vis a vis* the Central Business District. Additionally Parker Street has good interchange with Metrolink but Chorlton Street does not.

Within the next five years it is expected that there will be significant electrification of more of the heavy rail network and by 2020 there should be a new High Speed Rail connection into the City. Although these plans present additional challenges they must be fully recognised and accommodated in the City Centre Transport strategy. It should be noted that they can also create synergies and opportunities¹² which it would be unfortunate to miss.

At a more prosaic level the recent **Better Stations** report backs up the consultation statement¹³ that substantial improvements are needed now at City Centre Stations. TOWNW has recently conducted its own research at a

⁷ Reading, for example, intend introducing Road User Charging if their proposed Transport Strategy fails to deliver a positive modal split.

⁸ As prescribed in the Eddington Report 2008

⁹ ditto Stern Report 2008

¹⁰ para 31

¹¹ as described in para 126ff

¹² for example the lessons of HS1 which initially approached London Waterloo using existing heavy rail but now comes underground into St Pancras, and of Cross Rail which is also a new underground alignment, might suggest how the Manchester Hub could be remodelled?

¹³ Para 116ff

dozen¹⁴ major interchange stations in the NW and fully endorses this conclusion.

It is gratifying that the GM Transport Fund will be able to support the completion of phase 3A of **Metrolink** by 2012 and of phase 3B by 2015.

However the Strategy does appear to need strengthening in respect of describing how Metrolink services will be co-ordinated with connecting buses. It should also be noted that many of the most suitable Park and Ride proposals, which TOWNW approves, are sited outside the City' boundaries.

The Metrolink second city tram crossing via Cross Street¹⁵ to relieve congestion on Mosley Street is clearly a *sine qua non* in the context of phase 3B and TOWNW strongly supports this.

We understand that there may be a plan to close Mosley Street tram stop. This is a well used stop, convenient for many, and there must be full public consultation.

As already stated, TOWNW responded in 2008 to the NW Regional Transport Strategy. Our concerns then about the poor penetration of the centre by the proposed cross city bus routes do not yet appear to have been adequately addressed.

There is considerable ambiguity as to how the phased relocation of existing turning/layover sites to new dedicated "interchanges"¹⁶ will work in practice. Mention has already been made of the unsuitability of Chorlton Street as a terminus when Parker Street (currently over capacity) is decommissioned, and although Shudehill is currently under capacity, it is not popular with the operators or their passengers.

The Cross City Bus Package, in particular, provides few if any East to West journeys, particularly between the Oxford Road corridor and East Manchester.

The Strategy of providing an enhanced **Metroshuttle** network to enable passengers to complete their trips from "upgraded stopping locations" to central locations has potential but the following attributes should be maintained/provided -

- The incidence of changing between buses should not be unduly increased - passengers generally dislike having to change, especially close to their final destination. The very recent agreement between the two major operators in Oxford to provide co-ordinated cross City services with ticket interavailability (which risks being investigated by the OFT) was in response to the very unpopular (amongst both passengers and operators)

¹⁴ The North West's 'Weakest Link' Rail Stations TOWNW Feb 2010

¹⁵ Assuming the Cross Street option can be shown to be Best Value for Money

¹⁶ paras 132 and 133

City Council's plans to use a similar service to Metroshuttle allowing passengers to complete their journeys to the City Centre (which was to have been closed to other bus services).

- GMITA should continue to subsidise free travel on this enhanced Metroshuttle.
- The present 0700 – 1900 periods of operation of Metroshuttle should be expanded to cover evenings and Sundays in line with the rail stations and car parks it serves, and the local bus services with which it is intended to link, all operate outside these hours. TWNW is in agreement with GMITA's Bus Strategy to increase the frequency of Sunday and evening services.

There are several other strategies in the consultation which TWNW is pleased to endorse :-

- Upgrading the City's Urban Traffic Control (UTC)
- Introducing Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) for Buses, Trains and Trams
- Supporting "Smarter Choices" such as travel planning, car sharing, integrated ticketing and smartcards
- Addressing the Miller Street gyrator system¹⁷ on the Inner Ring Road (IRR)
- Improving the public realm along pedestrian "desire lines" in the City
- Allowing cycle routes to better penetrate the centre and conducting a trial of a bike hire scheme at Piccadilly Station (however, we note that the consultation is silent on the issue of bikes on public transport including trams)

One possibility which is not explored is the use of **taxi buses** to carry passengers at separate fares at times of low demand. TWNW has researched this strategy and believe it could make a contribution to the City Centre Transport Strategy. We would gladly share this idea with you if asked to do so.

Some of the issues already rehearsed raise questions (which the Strategy only partially addresses) as to how successful AGMA, GMITA and the "City Region Pilot" will be in exploring how they can -

- Better influence the provision of public transport
- Work with the DfT to explore the best ways to strengthen their public transport network
- Possibly create a Transport for Greater Manchester *modus operandi* based on a Transport for London (TfL) model.
- Assume Highway powers to be able to provide bus priority and other proposed traffic management measures.

¹⁷ The only part of the IRR not dual carriageway

TWNW supports these aspirations. The overall impression given by the consultation is that much can be achieved in partnership with operators. Indeed this appears to be a *de facto* preferred action, with a fall back position of closing down the de-regulated bus market and replacing it with one or more Quality Contracts¹⁸.

The consultation says that “*these need to be placed in the context of cost and affordability*”, and TWNW would agree with such an exercise, but can see nothing in the Local Transport Act 2008 which supports the suggestion that Quality Contracts are in any way predicated on the prior failure of Statutory Quality Partnerships (such as are proposed for the Cross City Bus Package)

Thank you for this opportunity to present these comments, we hope you find these constructive and useful.

Yours faithfully

John Moorhouse
Company Secretary

*(Author of paper -
Paul Fawcett)*

¹⁸ The Local Transport Act 2008 contains powers to make Quality Contracts with off road competition for service franchises