

## **Why Access York Phase 1?**

### **Background**

1. Traffic congestion, and its associated air quality and safety problems, is the single most important issue facing York. The causes for this congestion are numerous but can be attributed to the property price boom over the past decade, the recent low levels of family housing construction in York, and the dispersion of businesses to the outskirts of the city, which have made it increasingly difficult to live near to places of employment. This, added to the expansion of car ownership and generally decreasing motoring costs (up until the recent increase in fuel prices), is leading to greater population dispersion. Recent figures show that 22,500 workers commute into York from surrounding areas in comparison to 17,000 travelling out of the city for work. The need to relocate to more peripheral locations has necessitated longer journeys to work, which are often less suited to non-car options. Outside the main urban area, journeys are becoming increasingly more difficult to serve by public transport due to their varied nature serving a wider number of origins and destinations, along with reduced opportunities to satisfy needs locally due to a lack of local facilities and funding to provide public transport services.
2. The city's Local Transport Plan 2001-2006 sought to address some of the issues by widening travel choice and had some notable successes, including:
  - Peak period traffic levels limited to 1999 levels;
  - Bus patronage up by 49%;
  - Over 1.9 million Park & Ride passengers (in 2003/04);
  - 21% reduction in killed and seriously injured road casualties;
  - Achieving the status of the UK's top cycling city in 2004;
  - Achieving walking targets four years ahead of schedule;
  - Pioneering TCMS and BLISS systems; and
  - Selected by DEFRA to produce an Exemplar Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
3. Despite the undoubted success that this first LTP brought, without further significant action to encourage greater use of alternative modes of travel and tackling the increasing use of the car, the city faces a future with an increasingly congested road network. Modelling undertaken has shown that, in the absence of suitable measures to tackle congestion, traffic levels will increase by 14% in 2011, with a further doubling by 2021.
4. Much of this growth is attributable to the demand arising from future committed and anticipated development within the city. This is acknowledged in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), which states that the Leeds City Region, (which includes York), is likely to remain the most significant economic driver of the [Yorkshire and Humber] Region's

economy. The role of York, in relation to the region's and York sub-area's economy, is stated in Policy Y1 for the York sub area as 'Diversify and grow York as a key driver of the Leeds city Region economy.....'

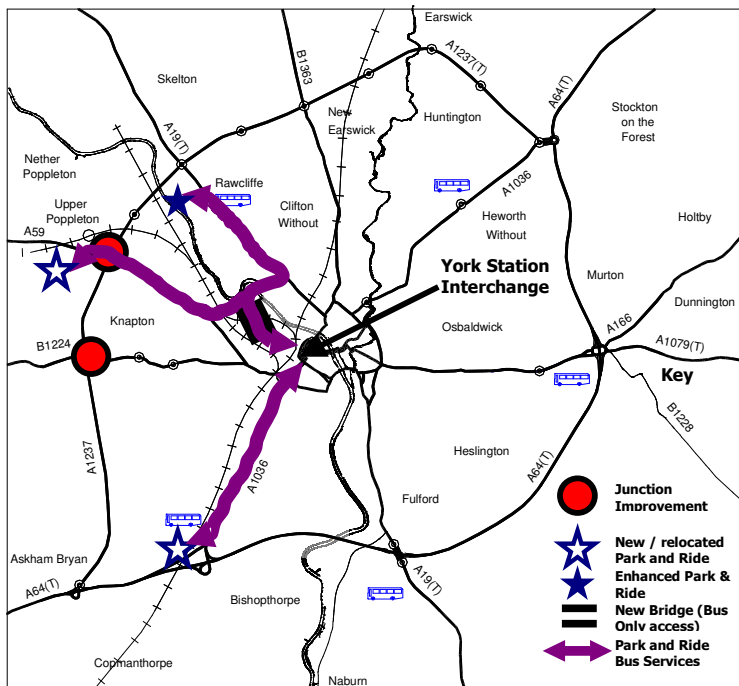
5. To realise this policy the RSS has set out future growth rates for employment and housing to 2130 jobs per annum and 850 dwellings per annum in the York Sub-Area. This would indicate that employment growth is expected to outstrip housing provision, thereby, leading to more and longer commutes into the city.
6. The main opportunity for renaissance activity for the city centre is the 'York Central' development, which will provide a substantial area of land for mixed use development within the city centre adjacent to the rail station. In addition to this, the closure of the British Sugar works to the north-west of the York Central site provides a nearby, but more distant from the city centre, development opportunity of similar scale. The policies for the development of these two sites are currently being established in the emerging York Northwest Area Action Plan as part of the City's Local Development Framework. Furthermore, Holgate Business Park, on the site of former rail works off Poppleton Road, is also a prime focus for economic development in this area of the city.
7. There are also other major development opportunities within the city, such as Osbaldwick, Germany Beck, the expansion of the University, and the redevelopment of the Nestlé (partial) and Terry's (full) confectionery works that will contribute to the anticipated 19,000 plus jobs likely to be created in the York sub-area by 2021.
8. The high level of economic growth within York will generate significant traffic movements within the city and the sub-region, as it is likely that the majority of jobs created will be highly skilled and likely to attract potential employees from far afield, if not recruited locally. Whilst supporting the transformation of the economy of York to safeguard its reputation as a centre of research, innovation and learning and thereby securing its economic future and that of the region, it is essential to preserve its unique character.
9. In March 2006, the City of York's Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (LTP2) was published. It set out the Council's aspirations, policies and measures for transport over a 5-year period in the context of a 20-year horizon. It is based on the success of the first Local Transport Plan, with a greater emphasis on the key themes of tackling congestion and improving accessibility, safety and air quality, as well as contributing to wider objectives such as supporting the local economy.
10. It contains an action plan for implementing projects in the short term (2006-2011) and in the longer-term (2011-2021) in relation to each of the key themes. The action plan included the following measures:

- Improvements to the outer Ring road (e.g. Moor Lane / Hopgrove Roundabouts);
  - Expansion of Park & Ride;
  - Public transport enhancements (buses/rail/information);
  - Highway capacity reallocation (e.g. bus lanes);
  - Roll-out of BLISS/TCMS;
  - Pedestrian/cycle route improvements;
  - Engineering/education/enforcement for improving road safety
11. Park & Ride has continued to make a significant impact on capturing trips to the city, that would have otherwise been made by private car. In 2007 more than 3 million passengers were carried on the city's Park & Ride services removing approximately 1.3 million vehicles from the city's roads. However, the demand for using the Park & Ride service is getting closer to its capacity to deliver. Some sites are full early in the morning, which reduces the offer available to the city's visitors arriving later in the day.
12. If this success is to continue more capacity needs to be built in to the Park & Ride service through the introduction of new, relocated or enlarged sites, as shown in the action plan, for the short and longer-term. In addition to the new sites, new infrastructure such as bus priority lanes or new dedicated routes are required to minimise bus delays and thereby make the services frequent and reliable. Despite LTP2 achieving an 'Excellent' grading by the Department for Transport (DfT), the level of funding allocated by DfT to York's LTP2 is insufficient for all the measures within it to be realised. Consequently, schemes had to be prioritised within the Capital Programme to suit the level of funding available and other funding opportunities pursued to implement those schemes that were not in the Capital Programme.

### **York Central and the concept for 'Access York' within LTP2**

13. The council is currently working in partnership with Network Rail, the National Museum of Science and Industry (NMSI) and Yorkshire Forward, to create a major, mixed-use development on a 35-hectare site of 'brownfield' land adjacent to the railway station. The York Central development will provide a new modern central business district for the city, with high quality residential and tourist facilities in the heart of the city. It is possible that, subject to confirmation of site constraints, York Central will lead to the creation of up to 9,000 jobs and provide up to 3,000 dwellings, as well as extensive leisure facilities.

**The 'Access York' Concept (from LTP2)**



14. The concept for Access York is shown in the above figure.

The key transport element required to open up this site is the provision of access bridges across the East Coast Main Line and the Freight Avoiding Line. Other transport measures required include high quality public transport links into the site from across the city, particularly from the north-west and south-west quadrants, linking to the surrounding region. This is to be realised by the introduction of a further Park & Ride (P & R) site located on the A59 Harrogate Road corridor, to intercept traffic that otherwise has to travel on one of the busiest sections of the A1237 Outer Ring Road to the P & R facilities at Rawcliffe Bar and Askham Bar. Demand for these existing P & R facilities frequently exceeds their capacity and they will need either expanding (Rawcliffe Bar) or relocating and enlarging (Askham Bar) to accommodate York Central and other city centre developments.

15. It is also envisaged that selective improvements to the A1237 Outer Ring Road will be implemented to relieve congestion in the vicinity of the new and enhanced P & R sites, together with the establishment of a multi-modal transport interchange at York Rail Station. The transport interchange will provide the opportunity to link the western P & R services with the P & R services operating to the east of the city. These could also connect with train services from Leeds and other towns such as Haxby, thereby maximising access by public transport to York Central, the rest of the city centre and edge of city employment sites, such as Monks Cross, York Business Park and the University.
16. Since the initial concept for 'Access York', within LTP2, a further Park & Ride site near Clifton Moor on Wigginton Road, was introduced to capture traffic on the B1363 corridor (complementing the Park & Ride sites at Rawcliffe and Monk's Cross). This would provide additional Park

& Ride capacity and improve accessibility for communities in the northern area of the city.

### **Contribution of Access York Phase 1 to the LTP2 Objectives**

17. Access York Phase I will contribute to the local transport shared priorities and LTP objectives in the following ways:
- **Tackling Congestion:** by providing better public transport links, these schemes will reduce the number of cars on the road, thereby reducing congestion levels.
  - **Improving Accessibility for All:** improved public transport links will make access to services and jobs easier for people without a car.
  - **Safer Roads:** by removing a number of journeys from the roads, there is likely to be an associated fall in casualty levels.
  - **Improving Air Quality:** a reduction in the number of cars on the roads will reduce vehicle emissions, contributing to the aims of the Air Quality Action Plan.
  - **Improving the Quality of Life:** the schemes will assist in providing better access to various services and facilities, and seek to increase levels of physical activity through encouraging trips by non-motorised means (including journeys to bus stops).
  - **Supporting the Local Economy:** improved accessibility to training and employment opportunities along with alleviating congestion through removal of some private car trips.

### **Funding Opportunities**

18. With the addition of the Wigginton Road Park & Ride site, there is an even more pressing need to seek alternative funding to the LTP2 allocation for implementing Access York. One such opportunity is through The Regional Transport Board (RTB), which makes recommendations to the Secretary of State (SoS) for transport on how the £842 million 10-year Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) for transport schemes across the region should be spent. Currently the RFA programme has degree of expenditure 'Headroom' within it, which may allow additional schemes to be submitted to make best use of the funding available within the period 2008-2012. Schemes that are approved by the RTB and, subsequently by the SoS, can be taken forward to bid for funding.
19. In order to present the best case to the RTB for funding Access York, the concept was split into two phases. Phase I concentrated on the further development of Park & Ride services, together with associated bus priority measures, and Phase II would bid for funding to implement the major infrastructure improvements. Phase I was submitted to the RTB in February 2008 and was successfully approved for inclusion in the programme. It is intended, therefore, to submit a Major Scheme bid for Access York Phase I later this year

20. Other funding for the infrastructure required, could come from a variety of sources. These include: developer contributions, regional development agency (Yorkshire Forward) funding and funding through the National Productivity element of the Transport Innovation Fund.

### **Implications for York and the Region if Access York is Not Implemented**

21. If the vision of creating 19,000 (plus) high quality jobs in the York area, with attendant increases in population, is to be realised, the infrastructure and service improvements envisaged in 'Access York' are essential. The key opportunity provided by York Central for the potential generation of up to 9,000 jobs and 3,000 dwellings in a city centre location together with the former British Sugar site would enable an exemplar integrated transport scheme of regional significance and national, if not international, best practice to be implemented.
22. Failure to invest in this project would place a severe constraint on the ability for York Central and other development in the city to be accommodated as the demand for travel, mainly by private car, would be more than the capacity of the transport network, leading to intolerable levels of congestion and may even prohibit development. This would be a major missed opportunity and would damage the economic prospects of the City of York, the Leeds City Region and Yorkshire and Humber Region in an ever more competitive world.