



**York Civic Trust – York Futures  
Principles for Transport Policy  
for the City of York  
A report from the Transport Advisory Group  
May 2019**

York's current Local Transport Plan was drafted in 2011 and sets out a long term strategy for the city's transport system for the period from 2011 to 2031, and a more detailed programme over the period to 2016. There is broad agreement that a new Local Transport Plan is needed, and that work should start as soon as there is greater clarity on the draft Local Plan. In this short report we identify what the key principles should be in preparing a new Local Transport Plan, and suggest policy measures to be included in it.

This report has been prepared by the Trust's Transport Advisory Group, a 15 person team of Trust members with expertise in a wide range of aspects of transport. It has been endorsed by the Trust's Planning Committee and Board. It draws on an earlier version, published in 2017, which was based on two workshops on transport policy held in February 2017, in which 89 members participated.

We follow the same approach as in those workshops, in considering in turn the context for the new Local Transport Plan, the objectives which the Plan should meet, the strategy and potential solutions, and the requirements to enable the Plan to be delivered.

### The context

York has a history of successful innovation in transport policy. It has one of the most extensive footstreet networks in the country; its park and ride service is the UK's largest; and it has managed to maintain bus patronage more effectively than most other provincial cities. It is a relatively dense city with a flat terrain conducive to walking and cycling, and has the advantage of being a unitary authority with direct control over both planning and transport. In many ways it is a microcosm of the challenges of urban transport, and is thus often successful in attracting government funding to support innovations, such as the use of real time data.

However, it faces a number of challenges. The constraints imposed by York's historic road network, its status as a focus for international tourism and the sensitivity of its environment all limit what can be achieved. The need to support and strengthen its economic base and the wide disparities between its affluent and economically deprived communities require a carefully targeted approach. Population growth of up to 20% by 2030 could, the draft Local Plan suggests, increase congestion by over 50%. Over that period developments in the shared economy, decarbonisation and automation mean that

our transport system will look very different from today's. Meanwhile, the Council's declaration of a climate emergency means that action is needed now.

- York therefore needs to adopt a new approach. Our vision is of a city which respects its environment while enhancing quality of life, social justice and economic vitality.
- York's new Local Transport Plan should be designed to contribute to that vision. It needs to address the city's needs over the next two decades, while identifying steps which can be taken now.
- The immediate focus should be on the problems of congestion, air pollution, poor accessibility, danger on the roads and their implications for public health and climate change. These problems are being aggravated by the use of inappropriate freight vehicles and the growth in delivery van and ride-hailing traffic.
- There needs to be a better understanding of the scale of these problems, to allay misperceptions and to avoid unreasonable expectations. We have advocated a new approach to monitoring the transport system to enhance public understanding of the need for action.

### **Objectives**

- In achieving our vision, the most important objectives will be achieving improved accessibility for all (and hence equality of opportunity), enhanced air quality, decarbonisation, greater efficiency and reliability of the transport system, improved safety and enhanced public health.
- While these objectives are potentially in conflict, they can and must be addressed together.
- To this end the Council should establish an agreed set of outcome indicators reflecting each of these objectives, drawing on advice already submitted by the Trust, and monitor performance against them. It should set realistic targets for achievement for each indicator overall and for different categories of user and areas of the city.

### **Strategy**

- To achieve these objectives, York needs a transport strategy which makes effective use of the full range of potential policy measures and combines them to ensure that the strategy is acceptable, affordable and effective. In doing so it should seek to emulate the best examples in Europe of integrated, sustainable transport planning.
- The strategy needs to be developed in compatible ways in five broad areas: the historic centre; the inner suburbs; the outer suburbs within the Outer Ring Road; the city's villages; and (with adjacent authorities) the communities within York's catchment area. It also needs to consider separately the needs of residents, commuters, visitors and businesses.
- Since population growth is likely to exacerbate York's transport problems, the strategy should focus on reducing car use and the underlying need to travel. Improvements to public transport, walking and cycling, freight and the use of the road network will be important in complementing these elements of the strategy.
- We strongly endorse the hierarchy of users within the current Local Transport Plan, and consider it essential that this hierarchy is applied consistently to all aspects of transport policy.

## **Potential solutions**

The strategy should draw on as wide a range of policy measures as possible, and combine them so that they reinforce one another. Detailed design and analysis of these solutions will be a key stage in the preparation of the Local Transport Plan. In advance of that analysis we suggest below the broad types of measure which might be adopted.

- Land use and transport need to be planned together. All new developments should be built as sustainable local communities, at high density, and with support and priority for public transport, walking and cycling. The approved outline plans for York Central fail to reflect these principles.
- Some new infrastructure will be needed. Park and ride sites should be expanded, with extended opening hours and better connected services. The Trust's review of New Mobility Services suggests opportunities for infrastructure to support enhanced public transport services, using rail, bus and shared modes. There is only a case for improving the outer ring road if the extra capacity is used to reduce the impact of traffic within the city.
- There needs to be a step change in the provision of charging facilities for electric vehicles and bikes. We see considerable potential for using smaller public electric vehicles to provide access to York's mediaeval street network.
- Other emerging technologies such as connected and shared vehicles need to be used to support and inform the strategy, rather than allowing them to compete with more sustainable modes.
- The road network needs to be used more effectively, by simplifying existing regulations and using technology to enforce them, benefiting from intelligent traffic signals and real time data, reallocating road space and reducing severance for pedestrians and cyclists. In these ways it should be possible to enable the inner ring road to operate effectively and remove traffic from more of the city centre. The Trust has developed a number of proposals for achieving these aims, and urges the Council to adopt them.
- The pedestrian network needs to be improved, with wider, better maintained pavements, an expanded footstreet network and better crossing facilities at junctions. There needs to be a greater focus on enhancing the public realm.
- The cycle route network should be made more continuous and comprehensive, with increased provision for off-road cycling and better access to and through the city centre. Where cyclists and pedestrians share facilities, priorities need to be effectively signed.
- The public transport system cannot continue to rely solely on conventional buses. An innovative approach is needed which makes better use of on-demand services to fill the gaps, and extends services, particularly for park and ride, into the evenings and weekends. The resulting services need to be marketed more effectively. Our review of New Mobility Services offers several proposals for consideration.
- A strategy is needed for managing freight and ensuring that servicing uses appropriate vehicles at appropriate times. Innovative consolidation facilities and district delivery points are needed to allow larger freight vehicles to be removed and delivery van

traffic reduced. Servicing regulations in the city centre need to be revised to reduce conflict with pedestrians and damage to historic infrastructure.

- As individuals we all need to change the ways in which we use the transport system. The Council needs to ensure that all major employers and private and state schools have effective travel plans. It should design its education, training and health promotion to ensure that every user of the transport system understands the principles of sustainable travel. Smarter information on transport services and campaigns such as open streets should be introduced to reinforce these messages.
- Consideration should be given to a comprehensive pricing package for York's transport system, which provides contactless charging for all public transport, enables parking charges, work-place parking levies and congestion charging to be included, and offers credits for green travel.

### **Enabling the Plan to be delivered**

Developing and implementing the new Local Transport Plan will require close cooperation with other agencies and private providers, and must command the support of the public and stakeholders.

- The Council should ensure that its planning, economic development and transport plans reinforce one another, and should encourage the closest possible collaboration with developers, economic partnerships and transport operators as key delivery agents.
- While York is a free-standing city, the future of public transport services and fares will need to be planned and financed in conjunction with West Yorkshire Combined Authority, the East Riding of Yorkshire and North Yorkshire County Council.
- The strategy will only be deliverable if it is affordable. The Council needs to make an honest and transparent assessment of the funds likely to be available to finance the strategy, and to seek financial support from a wider range of bodies, including developers and the beneficiaries of new investment. All potential funders need to work together to expand the funding base, encourage continuity of funding, and ensure that the measures in the strategy provide best value for money.
- Above all, the strategy will need to be acceptable to both stakeholders and the wider public. In particular it must reflect the needs of disadvantaged users and communities. The Council needs to encourage public and stakeholder engagement in the understanding of problems, the need for the strategy, the effectiveness of the different policy measures and the steps required to implement them. It also needs to demonstrate the benefits of the strategy and its constituent parts. We have developed a detailed approach to achieving these outcomes and expect to be able to work with the Council in implementing it.
- Within the resources available to it, York Civic Trust stands ready to support the City of York Council in the development of its new Local Transport Plan. We look forward to working together to achieve our vision of a city, and transport system, which respects its environment while enhancing quality of life, social justice and economic vitality.