Purpose of Report

1. To update Members on the latest position regarding the Tees Valley Metro project and the next steps in the project development.

2. To seek the views of Members on this position and upcoming issues.

Information and Analysis

Background

3. Tees Valley Metro is a rail-based solution to connect the five Local Authorities and key employment and housing growth points currently disadvantaged by their polycentric nature.

4. Further to the update provided for the Forum previously, the project has been taken through Network Rail’s Guide to Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) process over the past nine months, and has reached GRIP Stage 3, where a preferred option has been identified. Its successful passage through the GRIP process, which was managed by Network Rail, is testament to the value that the project will bring to all stakeholders.

5. The preferred option includes significant benefits to all five Local Authorities and will create a Metro network that provides a modern public transport system across the Tees Valley. It is illustrated in the map attached. This option will be taken through the public consultation and political approval processes of each of the Authorities in the coming months.

6. However, the most recent important step in delivering Metro was to gain support from the Interim Regional Transport Board on 12 September.

The Metro Proposals

7. The proposals for Tees Valley Metro will deliver a more frequent, more reliable, faster rail service to cater for the potential for a significant increase in rail demand due to the planned regeneration of the Tees Valley. Additionally, the quality of the journey for passengers will be improved due to investment in trains and the stations.

8. The improved rail service will provide an attractive alternative to some highway trips and for the trips remaining in the highway network, reduced congestion will result, with subsequent reduced accidents and greenhouse gas emissions. Increasing frequency on an existing network and improving services to support land use development proposals will contribute to economic productivity in the Tees Valley.
9. In order to best deliver the proposed objectives of the Tees Valley Metro project, a two stage delivery plan will be implemented. A two stage approach avoids the over provision of infrastructure and incurring capital expenditure and increased operating costs unnecessarily early. It will ensure that there are managed arrangements for engineering access that enable delivery of the project while reducing disruption to the operational railway.

10. Stage One would deliver:

- Service frequency of 15 minutes between Darlington and Saltburn during the working day – compared with 30-60 minutes today;
- End-to-end journey time of 48 minutes – compared with 53 minutes today;
- New platforms at Darlington station on the east side of the East Coast Main Line, with links to the main station building and the facilities and the rail infrastructure required to route Metro services in to the new platforms;
- Newer trains (Class 156 or Class 158) or brand new trains (Class 172);
- A new station at Durham Tees Valley Airport located on the main airport access road replacing the existing Teesside Airport station;
- Additional new stations at Teesside Park, James Cook University Hospital and Queens Meadow, Hartlepool; and
- Improvements to existing stations.

11. Stage Two includes:

- Additional tracks to future proof the Tees Valley rail network to meet the demands of the next 20 – 30 years;
- End-to-end journey time of 45 minutes;
- Further new stations at Morton Palms, Middlehaven, The Ings and Nunthorpe Parkway; and
- The introduction of Metro services to Hartlepool and Nunthorpe.

12. Under the two stage option, the majority of objectives would be delivered in Stage One by no later than 2013. Stage One would feature conventional rail trains. Stage Two would be implemented in 2017/18, which aligns with build-out of the major regeneration sites, projected growth in rail freight traffic and Network Rail’s planned South Tees Re-signalling scheme. Stage Two would feature either conventional rail trains or tram-trains, which would be compatible with aspirations for future street-running extensions.

13. Stage One would cost £80 million (2008 prices) and Stage Two would cost £140 million (2008 prices), although more than 50% of this cost would be made up from a committed signalling improvement scheme from Network Rail.

Next Steps

14. Following the decision from the Interim Regional Transport Board, Tees Valley Regeneration is preparing a draft Major Scheme Business Case. A decision will be required from the Department for Transport on whether they will become project sponsor for this scheme, thereby avoiding the local authorities having to bear capital and revenue funding risks.

15. This draft Business Case and the preferred option will be taken through the consultation and approval processes of each of the Authorities in the coming months. Details of this process
for Darlington will be firmed up shortly, but the presentation of this paper to Members can
be taken as the start of this process.

16. Once approval has been granted by each of the Authorities, the Business case will be
finalised and presented to Government. Depending on approval timetables, this is likely to
be in early 2009.

Conclusion

17. The preferred option for the Tees Valley Metro project includes significant benefits to all
five Local Authorities and will create a Metro network that provides a modern public
transport system across the Tees Valley.

18. The proposals for will deliver a more frequent, more reliable, faster rail service to cater for
the potential for a significant increase in rail demand due to the planned regeneration of the
Tees Valley. Additionally, the quality of the journey for passengers will be improved due to
investment in trains and the stations.

19. The improved rail service will provide an attractive alternative to some highway trips and
for the trips remaining in the highway network, reduced congestion will result, with
subsequent reduced accidents and greenhouse gas emissions. Increasing frequency on an
existing network and improving services to support land use development proposals will
contribute to economic productivity in the Tees Valley.

Recommendation

20. That Members note this report and make comment upon it.

Jonathan Spruce
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Background Papers

GRIP Approval

Jonathan Spruce:
cc