

TRANSPORT BOARD

4th September 2020

DEARNE VALLEY REGENERATION ROUTE

Purpose of Report

This report sets out the background to the current development work for the Dearne Valley Regeneration Route, which for the purpose of this report, includes the whole length of route along the A635 from Cathill roundabout to the A1(M) at Marr.

Thematic Priority

Secure investment in infrastructure where it will do most to support growth.

Recommendations

That members of the Transport Board:

- Note the progress made to date in developing the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC).
- Support the ongoing development of the project as part of a wider economic solution which improves connectivity between the M1 and A1, enables growth in the City Region and which also seeks to improve the existing safety and environmental challenges at Hickleton and Marr.
- Requests that a final SOBC is received by the Transport Board at a future meeting to enable a decision to be taken on future work and how this could be funded.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The Dearne Valley is identified as one of the Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority's (MCA) priority housing and employment growth zones. The area includes communities in Barnsley and Rotherham, as well as Doncaster. Enabling residents and businesses to be connected to economic opportunity is one of the three goals on the MCAs adopted Transport Strategy.
- 1.2** This report provides an update for the Transport Board on work to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) to support improvements to the A635 from the A6195 roundabout at Cathill to the A1(M), which includes solutions to address existing safety and environmental challenges at the villages of Hickleton and Marr.

2. Proposal and justification

- 2.1** As part of previous regeneration schemes, the A6195, Dearne Towns Link Road and Dearne Valley Parkway, were opened in the late 1990s. The link road provides an important economic role for the Dearne Valley and had led to significant commercial and housing development between the M1 and A1 over the past 20 years.

- 2.2** The route is included on the Department for Transport's (DfT) Major Route Network and in Transport for the North's investment programme (part of its Strategic Transport Plan). As part of the A635, the route is also included in the Sheffield City Region's Transport Strategy as one of the 20 routes most likely to experience congestion by 2025. Approximately 21,000 vehicles per day currently use the A635 through Marr of which 12% are Heavy Goods Vehicles. There are currently no dedicated facilities for active travel modes.
- 2.3** As the Dearne Valley is expected to see significant further growth over the coming years, including a proposed new Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) station at Goldthorpe, there is a need to facilitate improvements to the existing road network to both reduce current levels of road traffic accidents, improve air quality in the area and reduce congestion caused by vehicles turning onto or off the A635.
- 2.4** Following a tendering exercise, Doncaster Council appointed Amey to undertake a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) to look at improvements which could be made on the route from the A6195 roundabout at Cathill to the A1(M). The commission was jointly funded with Barnsley Council and the MCA. An initial stage of the work considered other potential M1 to A1(M) links - including around the north of Barnsley – as well as continuing beyond the A1(M) around Doncaster to the M18 near the M180.
- 2.5** The SOBC is being developed in line with the Government Transport Appraisal Guidance, based on Treasury 'Green Book' principles. This includes an assessment across the 'five cases' - Strategic, Economic, Commercial, Financial and Management.
- 2.6** Initial work on the strategic case has shown that the case is robust based on:
- The expectation that around 3,000 houses and 80.9ha of employment land will be developed in the area by 2033.
 - Improving access to the new Barnsley Dearne Valley station, which has the potential to be served by HS2 and NPR services. Within the Sheffield City Region's Integrated Rail Plan there is a commitment to develop a business case to improve access to the station by relieving existing traffic problems in the villages of Hickleton and Marr
 - An improved DVRR could provide a less intrusive access route during construction of HS2. It is important that any decision on funding of the DVRR would need to be made in enough time for it to be built into HS2 delivery planning otherwise having to fund the bridging of the HS2 could make the local delivery of the DVRR uneconomic
 - Local transport objectives to reduce current levels of road traffic accidents (48 incidents in the period 2013 – 2017, including two fatal), air quality issues and congestion caused by vehicles turning onto or off the A635.
- 2.7** As part of a co-ordinated package of schemes being promoted in the area, the DVRR could provide a stronger link between the Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster economies and will facilitate improved access between those key centres and the wider City Region.
- 2.8** The impact of the declared SCR Climate Emergency and the long-standing declaration of local Air Quality Management Areas around Marr ensure that sustainability is a key objective of any scheme. Although detailed Air Quality and Noise Assessments would form an integral part of the Business case to any funding body, the scheme is expected to positively contribute in a number of ways, including:
- Reassignment of traffic away from more sensitive village locations;
 - Reduction in queuing and delays at pinch points on the network - improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions as journey times decrease;
 - Incorporating sustainable travel modes, including retaining the existing A635 alignments to provide east-west walking, cycling and public transport routes

- 2.9** An integral component of the business case process is the development of options and their assessment. Thirteen initial options were reduced down to four on cost and/or deliverability grounds. It is imperative to assess the potential route options with robust, but proportionate evidence of likely performance and impacts. This includes highway modelling. Two (pre -Covid) growth scenarios (i.e. Core and Transformational) are being used to provide an initial assessment of the 'preferred' scheme.
- 2.10** The initial outputs on the modelling show a 'value for money' assessment of the scheme (based on a cost of around £100m) that is unlikely to be successful in a competitive bidding process through Government. However, the strategic case is robust and further work is required to understand the cost and benefits further, with a view to positioning the scheme as part of a wider pipeline of schemes (including other interventions such as the A1(M) to M18 link), designed to enable growth across the City Region.
- 2.11** It is expected that further detail will be available for the final version of the SOBC, likely to be Autumn 2020. It is therefore recommended that the Transport Board note the progress made so far and supports the ongoing development of the project prior to a decision being taken at a future Transport Board on how the scheme should proceed and further work could be funded.

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

- 3.1** Known and acknowledged congestion and air quality issues at Hickleton and Marr, combined with future projected economic growth in the Dearne Valley and the proposed NPR station at Goldthorpe, has meant that a 'do nothing' approach is not sustainable. However, the outcome of the SOBC is expected to recommend some smaller, short term, interventions along the route.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

The MCA has so far committed £90k to the development of the SOBC. Any decision to commit funding to continue to develop the scheme will need to be taken at the appropriate meeting.

4.2 Legal

There are no direct legal implications for SCR arising from this report.

4.3 Risk Management

There is a need to develop a robust, transparent, proportionate and strong business case for the scheme which will include consideration of risk management issues.

4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

There are no direct equality, diversity and social inclusion implications as a result of this report. However, they will be considered as part of the business case development process.

5. Communications

- 5.1** There is a lot of local interest along the route, but there are no direct communication implications as a result of this report. However, local residents in Hickleton and Marr have been provided with an outline of the SOBC work via an open letter signed by Mayor Jarvis, Mayor Jones and Sir Steve Houghton.

6 Appendices/Annexes

- 6.1** None

Report Author David Whitley
Post Senior Programme Manager (Transport)
Officer responsible Mark Lynam
Organisation Sheffield City Region
Email mark.lynam@sheffieldcityregion.org.uk
Telephone 0114 220 3445

Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ
Other sources and references: n/a