

SOUTHERN GATEWAY TO GM – NEXT STOP STOCKPORT**Report of the Director of Place Management****1. Purpose of Report**

1.1. This report sets out the ongoing programme of activity to secure Stockport as the Southern Gateway Hub for Greater Manchester, including:

- The Next Stop Stockport programme to bring Metrolink to the town centre
- The business case development to redevelop Stockport railway station to modernize its offer to passengers and increase capacity capabilities

2. Context - Stockport: Greater Manchester's Southern Gateway Hub

2.1. Stockport is a key strategic public transport hub and the key southern gateway into Greater Manchester. To enable inclusive economic growth and the transition to sustainable travel in line with Net Zero commitments, considerable investment has taken place over recent years to develop a fully integrated public transport offer. These include:

- The new state of the art transport Interchange is being built and will open in the next few weeks and will include accessible pedestrian and cycle ramps from the riverside to Stockport Railway station and Stockport Exchange via a park and bridgescape
- ZEBRA funding will be transforming our bus services, replacing all Stockport based buses with an electric fleet
- Investment in active travel routes linking the town centre with surrounding neighbourhoods for walking and cycling.

2.2. These investments, with form part of a wider £1bn public and private sector investment in the town centre, have created the infrastructure and conditions to realise the true potential of Metrolink and Stockport railway station to act as an enabler of place based transformation. Stockport's potential is undeniable – the town centre is now home to one of the fastest growing business districts in Greater Manchester and the Mayoral Development Corporation is creating an exemplar urban neighbourhood of more than 4,000 new homes. The challenge ahead is ensuring that this growth does not falter due to lack of investment in the infrastructure which will enable continued success.

2.3. In Stockport, bringing the Metrolink to the town centre and redeveloping the railway station will provide the key plank of the borough's sustainable transport strategy, supporting our ambitious plans for the town centre, connecting the borough to the expanding network and employment hubs of the regional centre and Media City and enabling our green ambitions to be fulfilled by providing a

sustainable and integrated public transport offer that allows Stockport residents to access employment and leisure opportunities without requiring access to cars.

- 2.4. TfGM are progressing with the delivery of the bus fleet, through the conversion to a ZEBRA fleet of electric buses. This will be supported in Stockport through the completion of the bus interchange in March 2024 and the completion of a new bus depot in Autumn 2025 with the infrastructure in place to support the operations of electric buses. This supports both the advent of bus franchising in Stockport in January 2025 and the investment-led Clean Air proposal that is currently with government.
- 2.5. These initiatives will provide additional benefits to the Greater Manchester network, strengthening the role of Stockport as the southern gateway into the conurbation, with travellers connecting to Metrolink and the bus network from national rail services on to their GM destination, further increasing the prominence of the borough within the region.

3. Roundtable to Secure Metrolink and Railway Station Investment.

- 3.1. The Leader of the council held a roundtable summit at Music Magpie's offices prior to Christmas with key national and Greater Manchester stakeholders to seek tangible commitments to securing Stockport as GM's Southern Gateway Hub through Metrolink and a transformed railway station. The meeting was chaired by Steve Oliver of Music Magpie and in attendance were the GM Mayor, Lord Peter Henty, Cllr Baynham, Stockport business leaders senior representatives from Network Rail, the railway industry and TfGM and MDC Board representatives including the interim chair, Eamon Boylan and Cllr David Meller.
- 3.2. The event powerfully demonstrated a shared belief in Stockport's potential as the southern gateway to Greater Manchester, the crucial role of strategic transport investment in realising that potential and a commitment to close collaboration to unlock that investment. It also demonstrated a collective confidence in Stockport's track record of delivery.
- 3.3. The roundtable secured a shared commitment from all partners:
 - To progress with once in a generation transport investment required to realise our shared ambition for Stockport as the Southern Gateway to GM
 - To accelerate the Railway Station business case as TfGM have earmarked match funding to progress the scheme and the need to incorporate provision for increased capacity
 - To progress the Metrolink business case towards a Strategic Outline Business Case
 - Recognising that the business cases for both Metrolink and the redevelopment of the station fully reflect the strategic opportunity that Stockport represents for the borough, GM and the national rail network
 - Identifying the crucial contribution that Stockport businesses have in shaping the economic case for investment and advocating for the town

- Agreeing that all three elements of our way forward – the redevelopment of the station, Metrolink extension and bus franchising – need to be closely aligned, with engagement of all key partners to inform business case development and drive progress
- 3.4. Following on from the meeting, Network Rail and TfGM have added Stockport station to their collaboration agreement designed to collectively invest in land and infrastructure around key stations. The original agreement was in relation to key stations in the regional centre and the addition of Stockport reflects the strategic importance of Stockport as a Southern Gateway into GM.
 - 3.5. To maintain momentum and grasp the opportunity of the collective commitments, a series of working groups have been convened to oversee work to progress the business cases for Metrolink and the redevelopment of the station as well as emerging plans for bus franchising – from these we will develop a 1-3 year programme to enable us to track and drive progress across these three priorities. These working groups will progress be aligned in order to maximise and demonstrate the impact of the three investments collectively. This is critical in order to demonstrate the investment viability of the Metrolink.
 - 3.6. Progress of the business cases will be reported to Scrutiny Committee, the Economic Alliance and the MDC Board to ensure that local key strategic partners have oversight of progress.

4. Next Stop Stockport - Progress of Metrolink Case to Date

- 4.1. Stockport's ambition is for a Metrolink route from East Didsbury into Stockport town centre which could then subsequently connect into a network of tram train routes to the airport, Hazel Grove, Marple and Ashton. TfGM has also identified a potential tram train route to Marple from Manchester City Centre.
- 4.2. A recent light touch review of potential routes for Metrolink from East Didsbury into the town centre has been undertaken, funded through TfGM. The review has considered the viability of previous routes and recent developments within the town centre including the new interchange and the ambitions for the Town Centre West MDC and will identify potential routes that could be protected in a future Local Plan.
- 4.3. TfGM have supported Stockport's Metrolink and tram train ambitions by earmarking investment so that the required replacement of Network Rail bridges at Stockholm Road and Greek Street are built to be compatible with the light rail network, thereby reducing future costs and disruption.
- 4.4. In order to achieve the Stockport and the GM Mayor's ambition, funding will need to be secured to undertake the detailed business case required for the scheme to secure the very significant funding required for construction (likely to be in the range of £500million to £1billion).
- 4.5. TfGM have secured a limited amount of investment funding for Metrolink business case development from the government through the City Region Sustainable

Transport Settlement first tranche and confirmed that funding is earmarked towards developing the Stockport business case to the Strategic Outline Business Case stage during 24/25.

- 4.6. Securing the funding for the actual construction of the line will require central government's Treasury to be satisfied that the business case demonstrates a return on investment as this decision has not been devolved to GM. As part of the SOBC development, significant additional work is required to demonstrate the investment return on the business case as Stockport is already very well connected with a train station in the heart of the town centre. It was recognised by partners that with the support of the business community a stronger investment case can be demonstrated through the agglomeration of the railway station, bus interchange and Metrolink as a Southern Gateway into GM unlocking further potential of the town centre and the Southern Gateway corridor to the airport.

5. Progress on Stockport Rail Station to date

- 5.1. Stockport Rail Station is the Southern Gateway into Greater Manchester. It is located on the West Coast Mainline directly serving national, regional and local destinations.
- 5.2. Stockport Rail Station is a busy commuter rail station, carrying 5m passenger journeys per annum. It is in the top ten busiest stations in the North-West and has 15 trains per hour in each direction that serve Stockport, including 3 trains per hour between Manchester and London, and two trains per hour between Manchester, Birmingham and the South-West. The station has an wide catchment areas, thanks to its proximity to the M60, covering Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, Cheshire and Derbyshire – with 2m people within 30 minute travel time of Stockport Rail Station. In addition to its sub-regional and national coverage, the rail station is a key interchange for local residents, with 1m interchange trips per annum occurring alongside 5000 daily commuting trips to the Regional Centre.
- 5.3. Despite the popularity of the station noted above, the station suffers from some significant historical issues including:
- Poor customer experience across the platform environment and across the station with a weak retail offer and accessibility issues across the station
 - Disconnect between Stockport Town Centre and Edgeley created by the walkway arrangements under and through the station
 - The configuration of the station acts as a constraint on rail capacity
- 5.4. In order to start to tackle the prevailing issues at the station and support the wider strategic aims, SMBC has worked with Network Rail, TfGM and Avanti to develop an Outline Business Case: an OBC was completed in July 2022, following engagement with industry partners including Network Rail, and provided a very positive analysis of the potential for the station. The initial outturn cost estimate for

the improvements sits around £65m and provides an adjusted BCR figures of 4.0 on the core scenario¹.

5.5. The package of improvements for the station would include:

- Phase 1 – New station entrance and building on the eastern side linking to a new footbridge
- Phase 2 – New entrance on the Edgeley western entrance linking to the proposed new footbridge.
- Phase 3 – Platform refurbishment and improvements to existing platform buildings .
- Phase 4 – Associated access improvements to both the new station entrances

5.6. Following the successful securing of further project development funds from Network Rail, the project team is currently progressing with the design and development stage of the station project and is expected to conclude by the end of 2024 with a preferred option for developing Stockport Rail Station.

6. Conclusion

6.1. The roundtable has demonstrated the commitment of all key strategic partners and local and GM political leaders to develop fundable investment cases for the introduction of Metrolink and the redevelopment of Stockport railway station, securing Stockport's position as the Southern Gateway for GM.

6.2. Significant progress can be made during the rest of this calendar year on the development of both business cases.

6.3. It is intended to bring regular reports detailing progress to Communities and Transport Scrutiny Committee, the Economic Alliance and the MDC Board.

7. Recommendations to Communities and Transport Scrutiny

7.1. The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to comment on and note the report.

8. Financial And Risk Assessment Considerations

8.1. This work will commence once funding is formally confirmed

9. Legal Considerations

9.1. The schemes will be subject to agreements with Network Rail, TfGM, DfT and potentially the ORR.

10. Human Resources Impact

10.1. There is no expected human resource impact.

11. Equalities Impact

¹ Assessment undertaken prior to cancellation of HS2 Phase 2b

11.1. Related equality assessment needs will be undertaken as the project is progressed to insure it meets the needs of the equalities act.

12. Environmental Impact

12.1. Related environmental assessment needs will be undertaken as the projects are progressed.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Jamie Birtles on Tel: 0161-474-4466 or by email on Jamie.birtles@stockport.gov.uk.