

Transport Working Group Notes – 13th December 2017, Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, Genesis Business Park, Sheffield Road Rotherham S60 1DX

In attendance:

Andrew Denniff (Chamber of Commerce)
Adrian Platts (Chamber of Commerce)
Ian Ashmore (RMBC)

Clive Watkinson (JC Snell) – Chair
Simon Brown (Highways England)

Apologies from:

Richard Marshall (Highways England)
David Boden (TM Travel)

Brandon Jones (First Group)

HS2 Update / DfT Rail Strategy

- Ian Ashmore (IA) attended a Sheffield City Region (SCR) update meeting regarding further feedback on HS2 plans. Disappointment was expressed around HS2 and there was not much appetite for a feasibility study to look at a mainline station in the region. In terms of the current plan, HS2 will only prepare the dog leg junction and proceed with the rest of the line going northward. Network Rail will be responsible for the rest of the line into Sheffield Central station. SCR are very supportive of a mainline station but will have to move quickly to put any plans into action
- A meeting took place to discuss Trans Pennine Rail options. Two were suggested; either the existing route should be upgraded or a longer-term strategy to install a new line near to Woodhead would be a strong alternative. An initial consideration was to re-open the original line, but prompted a further question of will it be adequate? A response from government was requested to gather some clarity on the issues. Forum members also raised the point that a two-pronged approach with the Trans-Pennine Road Tunnel study could be considered

Trans Pennine Tunnel

- IA mentioned that feedback to date had been positive and that it could do a lot for connectivity between South Yorkshire and Greater Manchester. Clive Watkinson (CW) commented however that there wasn't a lot being fed back from the group. A further update is expected after Christmas, though AP agreed to follow up and check on this
- IA confirmed that Mottram Bypass is going ahead, with various plans being suggested under the feasibility study for the Trans-Pennine project to assist in extending the route. At present there is a significant need to address traffic issues due to congestion and the bypass will go a long way to creating the conditions for the extended route

Local Transport Issues

Barnsley

- Lidgett Lane at Pilley, Barnsley could experience various traffic delays as Yorkshire Water is carrying out works on the Water Treatment Plant at this location. Work is expected to continue up to the end of May
- Gas works are being undertaken between January and February at Park Road, Barnsley which could cause some delays around the town
- Water upgrade activities are taking place at Field Lane, Stairfoot, Barnsley during February entailing a road closure for one week
- A major highway improvement scheme is taking place at Pontefract Road, Cundy Cross, Barnsley. It is traffic light controlled and delays should be expected

Rotherham

- IA stated that Rotherham Interchange is expected to be closed from April 2018 for 12 months to proceed with refurbishment. Forge Island will be used during this time as the temporary hub until the interchange is complete and the Forge Island redevelopment is due to start. The closure of the interchange rather than remaining open and carrying out sectional refurbishment will cause less bus changes on a frequent basis and affects the public less. Current works are well underway for the tram train
- College road roundabout has received the go ahead for updating with £5m being provided by the Department for Transport to carry out works
- A planning application for is in for the service area at M1 J33. The remaining road planning around the area is making good progress and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) maintain a close working relationship with Highways England to ensure good progress is made around the project. RMBC are positive about maintaining a positive relationship with Highways England (HE). Simon Brown (SB) confirmed the same

Any Other Business

- CW asked SB if there was any feedback from Highways England regarding HGV's/LGV's using the 3rd lane of the now 4 lane smart motorways. SB suggested that formal feedback be prepared to address this point as it is a point of policy and should be a governmental decision around road laws rather than rules that Highways England could impose
- SB indicated that from March, any drivers caught in lanes that are closed on smart motorways (usually the hard shoulder lane), could be at risk of penalty points and fines for not obeying lane closure signs
- CW also reminded the group the smart motorway gantry signage is still not ideal when closing areas of the M1 as instructional messages aren't always clear and on occasion needs better detail. Also, when there is a speed restriction at road works, once these are passed there is no indication of speed limits being normal again leaving drivers uncertain as to the speed that should be travelled. CW mentioned that this might not be a challenge that could be overcome easily
- AD asked if there was a confirmed date for tram train. IA said that Summer 2018 still stands as there is no specific date outlined given the challenges that can occur during implementation and recent deadlines being behind schedule outside of the RMBC's control

Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 6th March from 8.00am, at Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, Rotherham.