

North East's first region-wide Transport Plan begins to deliver its game-changing programme

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Transport leaders are set to agree the region's first Transport Plan which will bring to life a number of positive developments for travellers in the North East, including work to reopen the Leamside Line, investment in electric vehicle charging, a local bus partnership, smart ticketing and more.

The North East Transport Plan is subject to approval by the North East Joint Transport Committee (JTC) at its upcoming meeting on 16 March.

Once adopted, it will become the region-wide action plan for strategic transport investment up to 2035. It includes a live programme of 243 schemes which equate to at least £6.8bn of regional transport investment.

Chair of the North East Joint Transport Committee, Cllr Martin Gannon, said: "I am thrilled that we are now in a position to adopt our region's first Transport Plan, setting out a green transport revolution for the North East up to 2035. This shows what we can do when we work together as a region.

"I would like to thank all of the councils in the area, our partners in the business community, transport operators, community representatives, and the public for their involvement in this remarkable achievement.

"Having set out the Transport Plan, we are already getting to work on delivering some of the game-changing solutions it describes so that we can bring about major change for the people of the North East, helping us to thrive economically, achieve our climate change targets, and improve public health.

"But we cannot deliver many of the larger ambitions in the Plan without funding. The North East needs better transport infrastructure and so I urge the Government to play its part – this is a transformative plan but it can only be delivered in full if our region can access its fair share of funding."

As the Joint Transport Committee begins to deliver its ambitious programme, major developments and investments are already set to become a reality including:

- Multi-operator smartcard ticketing via Network One, available throughout the area to improve integration between different bus companies, Tyne and Wear Metro, the Shields Ferry, and local rail services;
- A boost to the region's electric vehicle charging infrastructure with the introduction of seven new public charge point "clusters" around the region, thanks to funding from the Local Growth Fund;
- A high visibility promotional campaign to run this summer, encouraging the public to get out and about using active travel and support local staycations and businesses as the region looks to recover from the impact of the pandemic;
- A multi-agency board tasked with rapidly developing a business case to reopen the disused Leamside Line to passenger and freight trains, bringing together all of the parties who have a role in the reopening; and
- A partnership approach to working with local bus companies (through NEbus, their local association) to help bus services recover from the devastating financial effects of the pandemic, and to make bus journeys faster, greener and more attractive.

Cllr Gannon added: "The decisions that the Joint Transport Committee is taking this week show that the Transport Plan is far more than simply ideas on paper – it outlines our region's united commitment to carbon neutral transport, our bold vision and our sheer determination to deliver the best possible transport network for the people of the North East.

"The region will immediately see the Transport Plan come to life in tangible ways which benefit us all. New electric vehicle charging infrastructure, funded by the Local Growth Fund, will help even more people make the switch to cleaner electric vehicles, active travel promotions will encourage people to walk and cycle this summer and positive steps towards a bus partnership will provide a better service for local passengers and shape bus recovery after the difficulties we have faced as a result of COVID-19.

“In addition, smart ticketing improvements will ensure that people across the North East now have convenient smartcard ticketing options for public transport via Network One – shortly to be extended to include Durham and Northumberland, – and of course, we are working hard to reopen the Leamside Line in full with our strategic partners.

“It’s an exciting time for the North East and considering we are right at the start of the Transport Plan programme, there’s a lot more to come and we want to work with the Government to make a real difference.”

Over the next 12 months, a number of schemes will begin to be delivered including Active Travel Fund investments and Transforming Cities Fund projects.

The North East Transport Plan was subject to an 8-week public consultation and has garnered support from regional authorities and the business community, along with thousands of individuals and community organisations across the North East.

For more information visit www.transportnortheast.gov.uk/transportplan

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