

Rail investment plan must deliver best deal for the North

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The Chief Executive at the Transport for the North says it's positive news that the Government has made speeding up the delivery of infrastructure benefits to the North a basic tenet of the rail investment plan.

The comments from Barry White come as the Department for Transport has given a further update on plans for an Integrated Rail Plan for the North and the Midlands.

It provides further detail to the statement made by the Prime Minister, in which he revealed that such an integrated plan would be informed by an assessment by the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) into rail investment, taking into account schemes such as HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail and Network Rail enhancements among others.

The Terms of Reference for the assessment can be viewed [here](#). It includes the update that Phase 2b of HS2 could be legislated for in two hybrid bills that may run concurrently, and that legislation for the western leg will proceed. It also notes that the NIC's assessment will take into account 'value for money, levelling up, affordability and deliverability' as well as four key considerations including integration; cost reduction; delivery models and governance; and connectivity to Scotland.

Responding to the update, Transport for the North has stressed the importance of ensuring that the next stage of activity focuses on speeding up delivery of rail infrastructure in the North, as well as getting the best investment deal as a result of integrating existing schemes.

Barry White, Chief Executive at Transport for the North said: “The North’s economy has struggled for too long in the straight jacket of poor infrastructure and cannot wait any longer before these problems are addressed. It’s positive that the Government has made speeding up the delivery of infrastructure benefits to the North a basic tenet of this rail investment plan. We can’t wait at the back of the queue whilst major schemes progress elsewhere.

“The Integrated Rail Plan will look at how best to dovetail schemes like HS2 and Network Rail’s enhancements, alongside the much-needed Northern Powerhouse Rail. That work must be focused on delivering the maximum economic, social and environmental benefits for the North’s communities. Exploring efficiencies can’t be shorthand for cutting ambition. We also need to ensure that the voice of the North is heard loud and clear in determining how and when this work should take place.

“We’re discussing the next steps with our northern leaders and look forward to working with the Government and National Infrastructure Commission to deliver on the joint goal of unleashing prosperity through infrastructure.

“The sooner we start delivering these improvements, the sooner passengers will get the modern rail services they deserve.”

Photo credit: Transport for the North