

# FTA Submission: National Infrastructure Commission call for evidence – Northern Cities



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## **About FTA**

The Freight Transport Association is one of the UK's largest trade associations and represents over 14,000 members relying on or providing the transport of freight both domestically and internationally, to or from the UK. Our members include hauliers, freight forwarders, rail and air freight operators, through to customers – producers, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers. They cover all modes of transport – road, rail, air and sea. FTA members operate over 200,000 commercial goods vehicles on the roads in the UK; which is more than half of the UK fleet of goods vehicles. FTA members also consign around 90 per cent of goods moved by rail and around 70 per cent of goods moved by air and sea.

## **Introduction – UK infrastructure and logistics**

FTA is pleased to be responding to this call for evidence. Infrastructure development in the UK has for too long been focused too much on the short term, stop start in its funding and has failed to adequately address national/regional needs in the face of local considerations. This has particular implications for freight as logistics is an inherently pan-national activity.

The efficient movement of goods is crucial to our society. Sometimes it is hard to remember the full scope of what is freight. At one end it is the heavy bulk movements like the construction material that makes our buildings and the waste that is taken away from our cities every day. At the other end, the book that is delivered to your house is also freight. Every cup of coffee you buy in a café is freight. Every piece of food on the shelves is freight. Every package of documents delivered to an office is freight. Every component or raw material used to supply a workshop is freight.

Without logistics society would grind to a halt overnight. In practical terms, everything that makes logistics less efficient adds to the cost of living and of doing business in the UK – everything that removes inefficiencies aids our development.

This is true of social objectives as it is of economic efficiency. More efficient logistics (through optimising mode used and ensuring free flowing movements) would help address emissions and safety issues – priority issues for FTA's members.

We look forward to working with the National Infrastructure Commission to help address the UK's needs as regards transport networks.

In the rest of this document, FTA will respond to the challenges identified and questions asked where they are relevant to our area of interest.

## **Response to Call for Evidence: Connecting Northern Cities**

### **1. To what extent are weaknesses in transport connectivity holding back northern city regions (specifically in terms of jobs, enterprise creation and growth, and housing)?**

Discussion with FTA members have demonstrated that the lack of adequate Pennine east-west crossings inhibits freight operations in the North of England. The over reliance on the M62 creates erratic delays adding cost to transport operations which often has to be absorbed by the transport operator. The un-anticipatable nature of the delay itself adds cost as resources have to be allocated to operations that may not be required. In terms of direct impacts this situation leads to transport operators looking to base their operations where the infrastructure is more reliable and takes freight logistics development opportunities away from the North of England - together with the associated job opportunities. It has wider implications as an incremental cost increase for all businesses in the north, with eventual implications for jobs, enterprise creation and growth.

A greater use of northern ports would be encouraged with better cross country links both by road and provision for rail freight. For example currently biomass imported in from the Atlantic trade routes by the Mersey Ports destined for the power stations in Yorkshire and the North East have no direct rail freight path to offer - that adds to the cost of the operation.

### **2. What cost-effective infrastructure investments in city-to-city connectivity could address these weaknesses? We are interested in all modes of transport.**

Developing the M62 into a fully managed smart motorway is likely to improve reliability on the route reducing freight costs connecting northern cities and ports from both side of the country.

Rail freight also needs to be addressed. The lack of a fully cleared W10 gauge across the Pennines reduces opportunities for rail freight growth – especially in intermodal traffic.

### **3. Which city-to-city corridor(s) should be the priority for early phases of investment?**

The corridors between Manchester and Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester, and the North East ports to access North of Manchester area are all vital freight links which are not resilient (for example when incidents occur and when severe weather events close the A66 and the A628). Additional pressure is placed on the M62 when the northern and southern TransPennine routes are closed. The North West quadrant of the M60 suffers from severe congestion and needs to be improved to provide better connectivity between Liverpool and Warrington to the rest of the northern network.

The current road feasibility studies on the TransPennine routes and the M60 North West quadrant should be pursued to provide reliable connectivity across the North of England. Additionally the Northern TransPennine study of the A66 should support the provision of a bypass at Kirby Stephen which current has a lorry ban forcing good vehicles to the more northerly route to Penrith. The Penrith route is effective for routes to Cambria and Scotland but not for the connectivity of the North East with the areas to the north of Manchester.

Rail freight connectivity needs to be improved across the Pennines with enhancements to one or more of the existing Pennine corridors to the national gauge clear network standard.

FTA is also concerned about the effect of HS2 on rail freight into the region. The industry needs some clear understanding of the provision of freight paths on the west coast main line particularly. The current plans are confusing and potentially lead to a reduction in freight paths north of Preston. While the focus on east west connectivity is important the North of England improvements should be linked to the main national routes. The

uncertainty of freight paths when HS2 arrives will not encourage opportunities within the northern logistics industry.

**4. What are the key international connectivity needs likely to be in the next 20-30 years in the north of England (with a focus on ports and airports)? What is the most effective way to meet these needs, and what constraints on delivery are anticipated?**

The northern ports have the potential to reduce the overreliance of freight passing through the South East ports but destined for Northern England. This will not be achieved until the inland transport connectivity is improved across the North. The Atlantic trade through the west coast ports and the shorter sea crossings on the east coast connecting with European ports need improved links with the destination towns and cities across the North of England. The enhancements have to be both in road and rail freight investment. Without that balance there will be an overreliance on one mode which will place stress on the routes, potentially reverting to operations being increased on the south-to-north supply routes.

**5. What form of governance would most effectively deliver transformative infrastructure in the north, how should this be funded and by whom, including appropriate local contributions?**

The Association believes that to maximise effectiveness there must be a system of cooperation and coordination across the region and with developments in the national network. The Association therefore, whilst not wedded to one preferred system of local/regional governance would support any mechanism that ensures this.

For more information, contact Christopher Snelling, Head of National & Regional Policy and Public Affairs at FTA:

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