

Connecting Northern Cities – Submission to the National Infrastructure Commission from the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership

Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership

The Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is a private-sector-led partnership charged with driving the economic growth of the Cheshire and Warrington Sub Region and is one of 39 LEPs in England. Established in March 2011 it covers the three Unitary Authorities of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington, an area of approximately 871 sq. miles. This submission has been developed in collaboration between the LEP and its local authority partners.

Summary

In reviewing the submission from Cheshire and Warrington, the key points we would wish the Commission to 'take away' from the evidence submitted are: -

- Improving connectivity is critical in raising productivity and supporting the growth ambitions of the North. However, some of the most successful economies in the North lie outside of City Regions and their role in delivering economic success (in their own right and in support of their Core City neighbours) should not be overlooked.
- The existing road and rail network is increasingly congested. There is little resilience in the network which means that the knock-on effect of incidents on the strategic network can quickly result in paralysis of the local road network through key sub-regional centres.
- We would see early priorities being improved linkages (journey times and frequency) from Warrington to Liverpool, Manchester and Chester, and from North Wales (via Chester) to Crewe and Manchester Airport and from Chester to Liverpool Airport.
- Longer term, a more coordinated approach to planning strategic local connectivity to key transport interchanges (such as Manchester Airport and the HS2 hub at Crewe) will be critical in ensuring the effectiveness of those hubs and providing the capacity to support the significant economic growth opportunities linked to those hubs.
- The importance of ensuring that the right hub station solution (i.e. one with a minimum of seven high speed trains per hour) is delivered at Crewe, in line with the recommendations of Sir David Higgins.
- The importance of improved local connectivity needs to be recognised. There is no point improving city-to-city access if the end result is simply reaching the start of the traffic jam more quickly.
- The perception that the main commuting flows are always into cities needs to be challenged. For example almost 50,000 workers a day commute in to Warrington, representing some 43% of the workplace population. The Cheshire and Warrington sub-region as a whole has a net daily inflow of over 13,000 workers (2011 census).

- Transport for the North represents a credible governance structure through which delivery of major infrastructure projects could be overseen.

Context

Strategically located between the Core Cities of Liverpool and Manchester and with close to a million people our Cheshire and Warrington is one of the most successful economies in the country. Generating in excess of £23 billion of GVA per year, our sub-region has a workplace GVA per head consistently above the national average and around 30% higher than any other economy in the North of England.

Based on latest 2014-2015 economic data, Cheshire & Warrington is:

- ***A major economy with a large cohort of world-leading firms, with an annual Gross Value Added (GVA) of over £23bn, and 430,000 work-based employees. The C&W economy is equivalent in scale to cities such as Birmingham and Leeds. The sub-region's key firms include Bentley Motors, Tata, Vauxhall and Barclays, and there are distinctive sectoral specialisms in advanced, high-value engineering, energy, and professional and business services as well as growth potential in food, agri-tech and biological engineering.***
- ***A diversified and internationally-oriented economy, with around one-fifth of employment in Cheshire and Warrington in export-intensive industries, the third highest of any LEP area across England. Cheshire and Warrington has a consistently strong record in attracting new inward investment compared to the national average, with the area offering a diverse range of investment locations for investors: in urban centres, in and around attractive market towns, and in high-quality, yet accessible, rural spaces.***
- ***A private sector-led and knowledge-rich economy, with a high density of private sector jobs relative to its population, one of the highest outside of the capital. The area boasts a large private sector business base, with business density rates well above the national average; the business base contains a well-defined mix of high profile international companies, well-established and substantial medium-sized companies, and a dynamic and growing small business base.***
- ***A connected economy, with long established linkages to Manchester and Liverpool and their city centres, higher education, and innovation assets, as well as strong economic links to North Staffordshire and the 'Potteries', and across the border to North Wales. Our people and businesses benefit from key strategic transport infrastructure – the West Coast Main Line, the national motorway network, the M6, M62, and M56 axis – and proximity to international transport linkages at Manchester and Liverpool airports, and the Port of Liverpool, but it is recognised that current capacity limit, resilience and journey times connecting to this key infrastructure remain poor.***

Our current Strategic Economic Plan forecasts economic growth of some £12 billion by 2030 and we are in the process of revising this to target a £50 billion economy by 2040. **We would therefore stress the importance of not restricting consideration on transport connectivity to city regions. Important as they are, our big cities are not the only source of economic growth in the UK.**

Helped by the proximity to key air and sea gateways and trade routes, Cheshire and Warrington LEP has developed three interconnected spatial proposals that will increase and accelerate growth, enhancing the sub-region's economic impact within the Northern Powerhouse and UK.

These spatial proposals are fundamentally driven by enhanced connectivity (in terms of journey times and frequency) and strategic transport investment and are shown in terms of their spatial locations, and spatial interactions with surrounding Core City Regions and adjacent LEP's in the figure below.

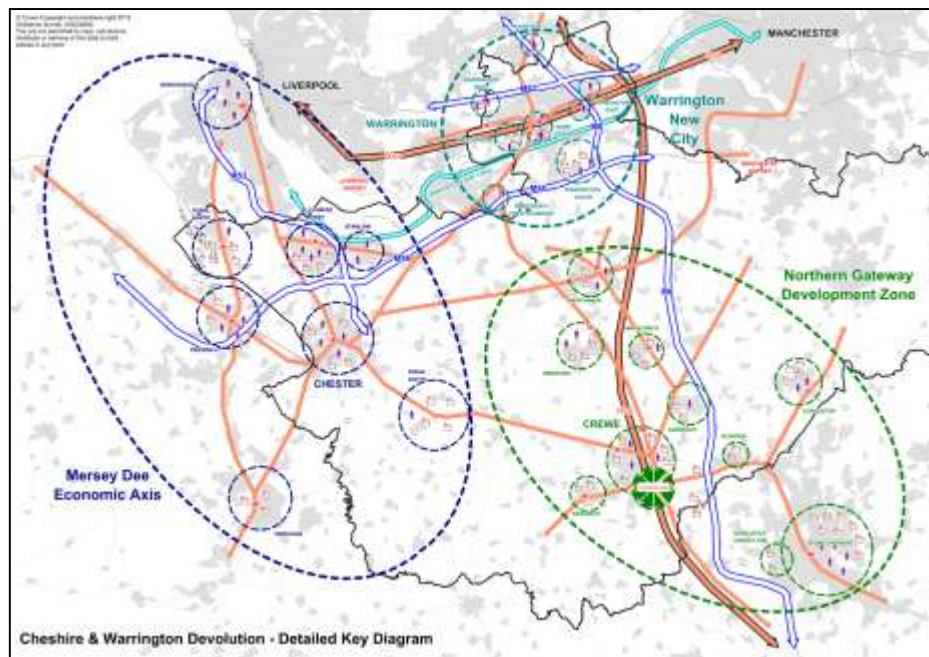


Figure 1: Key Growth Areas & Existing Transport Connectivity

Northern Gateway Development Zone

The primary aim of the Northern Gateway Development Zone is to capitalise on Crewe's current and future connectivity through the arrival of HS2, delivering high speed connectivity to the Northern Powerhouse 7 years earlier than otherwise planned.

This will help maximise the benefits and growth opportunities as the "Gateway to the Northern Powerhouse", supported by productivity critical improvements in term of access to/from the HS2 hub, by all modes.

Across this area as a whole there is the potential to deliver 120,000 jobs and over 100,000 homes by 2040, with supporting, and required transport investment to consolidate early-HS2 benefits across the North.

Mersey Dee Economic Axis

C&W is building upon collaborative links with the Mersey Dee region to unlock a number of growth employment sites in Chester, Ellesmere Port, North East Wales and Wirral. These opportunities have the potential to bring forward:

- Over 700 hectares of employment land; and 1 million sft of prime city centre commercial space; and
- Deliver 54,000 new jobs and 41,000 new homes by 2040, and requires critical transport infrastructure to further unlock and sustain.

The importance of connectivity with North Wales cannot be underestimated. Whilst there is a political border it is not recognised by business and there is a natural and successful business relationship between North Wales and Cheshire and Warrington. A coordinated approach between Welsh and UK Governments is imperative to ensure a coordinated approach to road and rail infrastructure. There are 1 million cross-border commutes between North Wales and North West England monthly and 85% of these take place by car.

Warrington New City

Warrington's connectivity will be reinforced in the future as it sits at the intersection of HS2/ West Coast Mainline and TransNorth Networks.

The Town's strategic position is at the heart of the M6, M56 and M62, benefitting from significant growth potential at Port of Liverpool and the string of ports along the Manchester Ship Canal, as part of the Atlantic Gateway.

Warrington New City, and associated development proposals is anticipated to deliver 26,000 new homes, and 55,000 jobs; with additional transport infrastructure to enhance strategic connectivity, enhance resilience of key Pan-Northern and Trans-European networks, and unlock capacity constraints preventing local growth.

Responses to Specific Questions Raised by the Commission

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

Cheshire and Warrington's Strategic Economic Plan makes clear that people and businesses benefit from long established linkages to Manchester and Liverpool, their city centres, higher education and innovation assets, as well as strong economic links to the North Staffordshire conurbation and Wales.

As a result the sub-region is generally well connected by road and rail north-south and east-west in the northern part of the sub-region. However, outside the stronger northern east-west links, the sub-region's east-west connectivity is poor by all modes of transport.

It is also critical to understand that even where good connectivity exists on the M6, M62 and M56, this spine of connectivity is congested and fragile in terms of its resilience. When connectivity provided by these arterial routes fails, not only does connectivity become impaired but sub-regional centres such as Warrington, Crewe and Chester are paralysed with congestion. Work undertaken by our transport consultants, Jacobs, to inform an earlier submission to Transport for the North, indicates that existing levels of delay on each of these routes makes TfN's ambition of 'mile a minute' journeys particularly difficult without further and sustained investment in our key arteries.



Figure 2: Current Congestion Hotspots – Cheshire and Warrington

On examining the existing rail infrastructure, frequencies and journey times are poor compared to other parts of the UK, and international comparatives.

Much of the rail network is in need of modernisation, with poor service patterns, line capacity issues, and poor quality rolling stock.

This limits the operation of intra-connectivity in the sub region and to key economic centres and international gateways across the north-west, Northern Powerhouse and further afield towards Birmingham and London. Productivity and agglomeration benefits with the rest of the North, Wales and the Northern Powerhouse is being lost as a result, and the prime geographical location of the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region is failing to exploit its geographical position.

The map below illuminates the areas of our sub-region within 1 hour of door-to-door connectivity to/from the Northern Powerhouse; with the majority of our sub region not economically connected by public transport; aside from nodal points around key rail stations.



Figure 3: Current Cheshire and Warrington Sub-regional Public Transport Connectivity to the Northern Powerhouse

Our growth aspiration of a £50 billion economy by 2040 involves generating a further 127,000 jobs and 139,000 new homes, capitalising on our current strengths as a place of high-value jobs, as a source of skilled labour, as an attractive place to live, with a buoyant housing market and as an internationally-orientated, high technology economy. Economic growth also requires improvements in productivity unlocked in part through enhanced connectivity.

The challenge for transport in the sub region is therefore to drive significant investment in capacity, connectivity and resilience across all modes will be necessary to strengthen intra-city transport links to the city regions of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester Airports, key freight terminals, and the rest of the Northern Powerhouse.

Of particular importance to the area, and of maximum benefit to the Northern Powerhouse, is the requirement to maximise the benefits of an HS2 Gateway and Hub at Crewe, in order to provide early, high-speed connectivity to the whole of the Northern Powerhouse by 2027. This includes ensuring that the right hub station solution (i.e. one with a minimum of seven high speed trains per hour) is delivered at Crewe, in line with the recommendations of Sir David Higgins.

Cheshire and Warrington's inter-urban arteries are important too. Spatial modelling shows the growth in jobs and houses associated with the SEP Growth requires the **delivery of a network that can support a 40% increase in demand on the M6, and M62 corridors. And a 30-35% increase in demand through corridors such as Congleton, Winsford, Middlewich, the M53 / M56, and Alderley Edge.**

Modelling highlights key pressures on all rail lines, with the greatest increases found on routes to/from Warrington, Crewe to Macclesfield and Congleton, Chester to Manchester, Ellesmere-Port and Liverpool and stations on the Mid-Cheshire Line

Highways Agency and Network Rail forecasting predicts an increase of 70% in freight via Liverpool Superport, and a 25% increase in freight demands elsewhere in Cheshire and Warrington.

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

In drawing up our sub-regional transport strategy we have asked the question 'what would our transport network need to look like to support a £50 billion economy. Modelling work, undertaken by Jacobs, has generated a prioritised transport strategy for Cheshire and Warrington which focuses on: -

- Connectivity to key economic centres
- Connectivity to key international gateways
- Complementing and enhancing transformational investments such as HS2 and TransNorth networks
- Directly unlocking jobs and homes
- Resolving existing pinchpoints
- Delivering sustainable freight opportunities, and
- Enhancing quality of life

Three types of transport intervention have been identified:

Transformational Schemes	Located in C&W but of critical importance to the North and TransNorth Connectivity. These are the main infrastructural upgrades required in the C&W sub-region, designed to maximise connectivity across the North, Complement City Strategies & Drive Productivity and agglomeration benefits across the North.
Productivity Critical Schemes	Required to support the development of transformational schemes, and widen the sphere of connectivity of the sub-region primary Northern hubs and TransNorth Network connectivity.
Strategic Local Growth & Connectivity Schemes	Schemes that are typically smaller in scale, and primarily support the development spatial priority proposals of the Northern Gateway Development Zone, Mersey-Dee Economic Axis and Warrington New City. As well as unlocking growth, local connectivity schemes also play a large role in delivering Pan-Northern benefits through complimenting the joint Cheshire and Warrington strategic transport network and the development of transformational and productivity critical infrastructure.

A list of proposed priority investments are attached as **Appendix A**.

Fundamentally, one of the keys to minimising the cost of major infrastructure projects is through better coordinated planning over long investment periods. This allows for investments to be coordinated, timed and sequenced to minimise disruption and prevent duplications of works.

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

The LEP is fully supportive of the emerging priorities identified by Transport for the North in terms of investment priorities for city-to-city corridors. However, as stated previously we also believe that to maximise economic growth potential the debate on future investment in transport infrastructure should not be restricted to the cities.

Although the plans for Trans North will support economic growth across the northern cities, in order to maximise economic impact, investment priorities in the North should not be solely focussed on east-west connections. Just as important is the need for the connections between the Northern Powerhouse Cities and those of the 'Midlands Growth Engine'. Quick, reliable and sustainable transport connections between Birmingham (in particular) and the cities of the North are essential to support economic and social growth and prosperity in these city regions and the wider suburban and rural areas which surround them.

Principally, however, we would see priorities being linkages from Warrington to Liverpool, Manchester and Chester, Chester to Liverpool Airport and from North Wales (via Chester) to Crewe and Manchester Airport. Also the strategic local connectivity that distributes traffic to and from these key economic centres into surrounding localities is vital.

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?

Airports and ports are crucial in enabling the efficient and cost effective movement of goods for import and export. In order to support economic growth it will be essential to ensure good connectivity with key international markets, both existing and emerging.

Cheshire and Warrington is well located near to two international airports - Liverpool and Manchester (three if Birmingham is included) which currently handle some 27 million passengers per annum and almost 95,000 tonnes of freight (2014). Manchester Airport is the largest airport in terms of passenger numbers outside of London. In the absence of a final decision on the expansion of the London airport system, Manchester will play an increasingly important role in providing long haul connectivity to these markets, whilst Liverpool Airport will continue to play a complimentary role in providing connections to key European centres.

In terms of port connectivity the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan places a heavy emphasis on supporting the development of the Atlantic Gateway including the new post-Panamax terminal at the Port of Liverpool and local developments along the Manchester Ship Canal including Port Cheshire, Port Ince and Port Warrington. We would also urge the Commission to take into account the strategic importance of Holyhead in North Wales in terms of connectivity to Ireland.

The LEP believes that enabling investment to support the ongoing development of these key air and sea gateways will be crucial in the next 20 – 30 years, including effective road access and rail freight facilities to support distribution of inbound goods and goods for export.

For the North West this includes having good transport connections to Liverpool and Manchester Airports and the Port of Liverpool.

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?

We believe that subject to appropriate representation for both city and non-city areas, the governance structures established for Transport for the North would be most effective for delivering transformative infrastructure.

The question of financing is potentially challenging, however good governance should not need to be overly bureaucratic or expensive. The argument for a local contribution towards the funding of transport infrastructure where funding flexibilities are devolved to local areas could be supported.

Appendix A – Suggested Transformational and Productivity Critical Transport Schemes

Transformational Schemes

Crewe HS2 Hub Package- HS2 Station & Freight Relocation

The HS2 Hub interchange at Crewe has been recognised by Sir David Higgins as “an agent of change in the region” and would make a significant contribution both to the sub-region’s growth ambitions and, critically, to energising the Northern Powerhouse. The scheme includes the development of the new Crewe HS2 Hub Station and introduction of high speed HS2 services to/from the Northern Powerhouse from 2027.

The North-West needs new/ expanded rail freight facilities to enhance reliability and provide future freight capacity and extensions to trains; and associated access measures to significant Superport Growth at Liverpool and along the Atlantic Gateway.

This could involve the need for a new West Coast facility to replace the limitations of the Basford Hall Yard at Crewe.

M6 Widening J16-22 & A500 and J17 Improvements

The scheme primarily involves the widening of the M6 between J16 and J22, and grade separation at the M6 J16/A500 interchange, and improvements at M6 J17.

Through the introduction of these measures the scheme will strengthen capacity to critical North-South movements, currently at capacity and requiring further capacity beyond Smart Motorway by the late 2020’s to deliver the economic ambition of all the City Regions, and C&W.

An M6 Widening Scheme will create national connectivity benefits, acting as the Gateway to the west of the Northern Powerhouse.

It will also help to expand and further agglomerate the reach and resilience of the Northern Powerhouse in terms of freight, labour market access and foreign direct investment.

HS2/TransNorth Hub- Warrington, and Electrification Warrington- Crewe- Chester, with Journey Time Improvements to Chester & Holyhead

The HS2/TransNorth Hub- Warrington scheme will support the economic growth potential of the Northern Powerhouse, Warrington, Chester and North Wales by providing a dedicated TransNorth network hub at Warrington.

This, combined with electrification from Warrington & Crewe to Chester, and reduced journey times through to Holyhead, facilitates direct, fast and connectivity to/from the TransNorth network; bringing the whole of North Wales and Mersey Dee directly into the Northern Powerhouse.

Western Access to Manchester Airport: M56 Smart Motorway & Western Rail Connectivity

The scheme involves the delivery of Smart Motorway along the M56 J1-15, and introduction of a new rail services to provide dedicated western access to/from Manchester Airport.

This will help improve intra-regional connectivity, increase foreign direct investment and support economic development through the improved access and connectivity to/ from Manchester Airport.

M62 Widening J8-12& Junction Improvements

The scheme primarily involves the widening of the M62, between Junction 8 and 12 to 5 lanes with segregated junction improvements.

This in turn is anticipated to strengthen east-west links in the Northern Powerhouse, which are currently at capacity, fragile, and in-capable of supporting long-term, sustained economic growth and directly unlock growth. The widening scheme will act as a trans-European route and to promote further foreign direct investment through improved intra-regional connectivity and management of freight traffic. The scheme will support economic development through the improved access and connectivity between Manchester and Liverpool.

Productivity Critical Investments

A number of supporting productivity critical schemes are also key to the delivery of the £50bn economy. These have been prioritised on the basis of their ability to drive productivity, agglomeration and economic benefits for the North; as well as being designed to best complement the transformational package above.

These represent the second connectivity elements to enable delivery of a £50bn economy, and its connectivity requirements; generally a function of Highways England and Network Rail investment.

Mid-Cheshire Line Improvements

The scheme comprises electrification, new rolling stock, and minimum half-hourly services- along with a new spur to Manchester Airport and track upgrade between Northwich & Sandbach to incorporate access to/from the Middlewich line for passenger services.

Introduction of skip stopping services and electrification has the potential to **halve journey times** along the route- with new rolling stock and at least 2 trains per hour, compared to the current service which only offers 1 train per hour.

CLC Rail Line Electrification & Warrington East

The scheme consists of electrification of the CLC Rail line from Liverpool to Manchester via Warrington, as detailed as a Tier One (2019 to 2024) priority in the Northern Sparks Report issued by the North of England Electrification Task Force.

The scheme will see the will see the electrification of rail serving 22 stations from Liverpool to Manchester, equating to journey time savings of up to 11 minutes.

Liverpool- Chester Improvements

The scheme comprises track, signalling, rolling stock and service upgrade to introduce rail journey time reductions between Chester and Liverpool.

The current journey time is approximately 43 minutes on the Merseyrail service, stopping at all stations. This scheme aspires to reduce to the existing journey times by up to 25 minutes, which is currently achieved by a service with an intermediate halt at Hooton only; being critical to the connectivity and productivity of the Mersey-Dee and Liverpool City Regions.

M53 Smart Motorway

The M53 smart motorway would connect between Chester and Birkenhead, acting as a key gateway to the Mersey Dee Economic Axis.

The improvements will adjoin proposals above for the M56 smart motorway to enhance interconnectivity across the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region, improving journey times and enhance skills and research agglomeration east-west across C&W; to the M6, Manchester Airport and the rest of the Northern Powerhouse.

SEMMMS 2 / Airport Access

A multi-modal package of investment delivered collaboratively to improve access to the Airport and cross boundary travel movements. The package includes highways, rail and bus connectivity measures to release capacity and improve journey times on the A34, A555 and wider Airport Zone.

Warrington East Phases 2-4 & Metrolink Extension

Key improvements to the Strategic and Local Highways Network in East Warrington to facilitate economic growth.

To include: Birchwood Way dualling, Warrington East Ph3 M62 Junction 11 upgrade and review of Silver Lane, and extension of TfGM Metro line from Media City to Birchwood and Warrington Town Centre.

Crewe to Stoke, Derby & Macclesfield Rail Service Improvements

The development of a twin track on the Crewe to Alsager Line will improve connectivity between the two towns by increasing the capacity on the service, as well as supporting Crewe- Derby and East Midlands line Improvements.

Introducing Kidsgrove connectivity via a new chord will benefit HS2 Connectivity further by facilitating a service that runs direct from Crewe to Macclesfield; currently difficult by public transport and in order to extend the reach of HS2 as effectively as possible