



LIVERPOOL CITY REGION FREIGHT STUDY: STAGE 1

Executive Summary



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1 INTRODUCTION

MDS Transmodal and WSP were appointed to draw up terms of reference for a Liverpool City Region freight study and, in the interim, identify where there are existing pinch points and other constraints in the road, rail and waterborne freight networks that could inhibit the opportunities that have emerged through the Liverpool SuperPort studies, the expansion of container port facilities at the Port of Liverpool and the development of rail and water-connected distribution parks.

2 APPROACH TO FREIGHT DEMAND FORECASTS

The Stage 1 report describes forecast growth of freight in the immediate future across the City Region (up to 2020) and also for the longer term (up to 2033), based on existing freight forecasts by the DfT (for road), for rail (by MDS Transmodal) and for ports (by both Peel Ports and MDS Transmodal). It should be noted that this is an initial and strategic assessment. A more detailed analysis will be required to consider issues in more detail to better assess needs and targeted investment strategies.

3 FREIGHT DEMAND & CAPACITY ANALYSIS TO 2020 AND BEYOND

Freight is important to the City Region. The Superport initiative has been a key part of the growth plan for the LCR for a number of years. Furthermore, investment in port, freight and transport infrastructure is committed that will meet some of the anticipated growth in demand and enhance the economic capacity of the LCR Freight and Logistics Hub.

The analysis of forecast freight demand suggests that if the LCR is to capitalise on these investments and its unique position then further investment in network capacity is required specifically for freight, as outlined below:

- (a) Expanded road capacity between Seaforth and the M57.
- (b) The second highway crossing in Halton (the Mersey Gateway) which will increase capacity in this area and access to the LCR, but further work is required to better understand the implications for the wider network.
- (c) Relief of potential rail congestion along the Chat Moss route, potentially by providing additional passing loops to allow more trains to enter and depart the route at junctions.
- (d) Relief of congestion on the West Coast Main Line between Crewe and Warrington, either by providing additional tracks or reducing passenger train speeds.

Taking steps to address these issues will be important to provide the private sector with the confidence to make matching investments in freight and logistics in the Liverpool City Region.

Our longer term projections between 2020 and 2033, particularly in the rail sector, imply a continuing growth in demand that will go hand in hand with the development of large rail- and water-linked distribution parks that capitalise on the region's strengths. Rail freight volumes are forecast to grow by over 40% on the WCML north of Crewe between 2020 and 2033, reflecting logistics developments in the North West and this means that the prospect of rail congestion in this period may prove a constraint on investment in the short term.

The impact on the existing regional rail network of both the 'Northern Hub' and HS2 trains in the period between 2020 and 2033 raise important issues because both expand the number of passenger trains on existing routes as a consequence of addressing bottlenecks elsewhere on the rail network - in central Manchester and the southern end of the WCML respectively.

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR STAGE 2 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION FREIGHT STRATEGY

Stage 1 of the Liverpool City Region Freight Study has been conducted to address the immediate requirement to provide input to the LCR Growth Plan and Strategic Economic Plan and the Local Growth Strategy using existing sources of information. Stage 2 of the study is intended to take into account a range of potential land use and infrastructure policies to determine an overall and more detailed strategy designed to optimise agreed criteria over the whole spectrum of freight and logistics. This will support two of the five strategic projects outlined in the Draft LCR Growth Plan and Strategic Economic Plan which are the LCR Freight and Logistics Hub and Multi-Modal Port Access – Access to the Port of Liverpool.

The objective of the Stage 2 study should be to develop a strategy for the Liverpool City Region to achieve its potential as a location for freight and logistics activity within the context of sustainable development and, in effect, address the vision provided by the Liverpool SuperPort project. The freight strategy will ensure the LCR has a robust and deliverable plan in place that enables investment in the LCR Freight and Logistics Hub.

That vision for logistics in the Liverpool City Region is predicated on the area exploiting its infrastructure strengths of having access to a deepwater port, a Ship Canal that links a range of rail linked industrial and distribution sites and an existing dense network of motorways and high capacity dual carriageways and being very well located with respect to a large consumer and manufacturing hinterland.

The outputs of the LCR Freight Strategy would be expected to be as follows:

- Forecasting / scenarios report
- A LCR Freight Policy/Guidance document that examines the relationship between the environmental and competitive advantages of a multi-modal approach
- An infrastructure investment plan
- A land availability /demand assessment (building on current work being carried out within the LCR) focusing on the importance of there being an adequate supply of sites that can confer the LCR with competitive advantage
- An employment evaluation that draws conclusions including education / training programmes
- Marketing / promotion strategy

The time horizon would be up to at least 2033 to look towards a scenario after the opening of HS2.

The elapsed time required for such a strategy would be 8 – 9 months. The estimated cost would be approximately £200,000.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

The findings of Stage 1 suggest that the following steps should be undertaken, either within the proposed Stage 2 study or separately:

1. A detailed examination of road options to link Switch Island with Seaforth (underway).
2. An analysis of the secondary impact of road flows stemming from (i) above and the Mersey Gateway project.
3. An urgent examination of rail capacity along the Chat Moss route and the WCML south of Warrington. This urgency is compounded by HS2 (Phase One) proposals which will seriously exacerbate capacity challenges. Current Network Rail processes are not focussed on the generality of a rail capacity shortfall to and from the North West. A potential vehicle for co-ordinated and effective action in this respect is Rail North who will need to develop independent expertise in identifying the case for network upgrade.
4. Initiating data collection and analysis of local collection and delivery systems to inform a strategy to develop a low carbon and environmentally friendly delivery system for household, urban retailers and other receivers of goods (e.g. offices and educational institutions).