



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Subject:           | All-Island Strategic Rail Review consultation response                    |
| Date:              | 09 February 2022  |
| Reporting Officer: | Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration and Development               |
| Contact Officer:   | Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager, City Regeneration and Development |
|                    |   |

### Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Some time in the future

Never

☐  
☐  
☐  
☐

### Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| <b>1.0</b> | <b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>   |
| 1.1        | The purpose of this report is to update Members on the draft submission to the All-Island Rail Review consultation that closed on 21 <sup>st</sup> January 2022. A draft response was submitted on behalf of Belfast City Council on the basis that this was subject to agreement by this committee, and subsequent Council ratification in March. |
| <b>2.0</b> | <b>Recommendations</b>   |
| 2.1        | <p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Approve the Council's consultation response submission to the All-Island Strategic Rail Review enclosed with this report at Appendix 1. Members are to note that this</li></ul>  |

|            |   |
|------------|---|
|            | response was submitted by the closing date of 21 January 2022 but on the basis that it remained subject to the approval of this Committee and subsequent Council ratification in March.   |
| <b>3.0</b> | <b>Main report</b>  |
|            | <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>3.1 On 7<sup>th</sup> April 2021, Infrastructure Minister Nichola Mallon and the Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan T.D. announced the launch of an all-island Strategic Rail Review. The Strategic Rail Review consultation paper was subsequently published on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and aims to consider how the rail network on the island of Ireland can improve sustainable connectivity between major cities, enhance regional accessibility, including to the North West, and support balanced regional development and consider rail connectivity to international gateways - sea and airports. In addition, the Review will consider the feasibility of higher speeds on the network and whether there is a potential to increase use of the network for freight.</p> <p>3.2 The New Decade New Approach Deal was published in January 2020 to restore the power-sharing Executive in Northern Ireland and includes various commitments to address the ongoing challenges in Northern Ireland relating to our public services particularly in our health service, education, housing, justice and a commitment to grow the economy. It also includes a commitment <i>to achieve greater connectivity on this island – by road, rail and air.</i></p> <p>3.3 More specifically the deal sets out,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>The Irish Government is supportive of serious and detailed joint consideration through the North South Ministerial Committee of the feasibility of a high-speed rail connection between Belfast, Dublin and Cork, creating a spine of connectivity on the island, which could be progressed as a priority.</i></p> <p>3.4 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2017, agreed to co-fund, along with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Louth County Council, Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council a pre-feasibility study on a potential Belfast - Dublin fast rail link. As reported to this Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2019, Belfast City Council, along with these five Local Authorities, carried out a pre-feasibility study to inform the potential benefits of a higher speed rail link between Belfast and Dublin. The Committee also agreed to proceed to a Strategic Outline Business Case in conjunction with</p> |

|     |  |
|-----|--|
|     | <p>the other partner Councils and private sector funding. The next stage of this work has not progressed due to the pending All-Ireland Strategic Rail Review and the partners preference to bring forward an holistic approach to rail provision across the island. Officers have, through DfI and the initial consultancy team, provided the outworkings from the pre-feasibility stage into the Strategic Rail Review and will continue to engage through these forums and report back to Committee at the appropriate stages.</p>  |
| 3.5 | <p><u>The rail network and how we use it:</u></p> <p>The overall market for intercity travel along this corridor is around 5m journeys per year. The rail service currently captures less than 20% of this market. Facilitating a shift away from private car to rail will deliver environmental and health benefits as well as economic growth.</p>   |
| 3.6 | <p>A survey of the Belfast-Dublin Enterprise customers in 2019 found that just over half of people were regular customers, with 31% of people travelling at least once a week on the service, and 24% travelling at least once a month. Therefore, it is fair to say that a small percentage of people travel by rail for commuting, particularly outside Dublin and Belfast. However, across the island of Ireland, rail has experienced a growth in passenger numbers of 37% since 2011. Within each jurisdiction the growth in rail passenger journeys has been approximately 34% in Ireland and 45% in Northern Ireland.</p> |
| 3.7 | <p>The development of a Belfast – Dublin high speed rail connection is seen as a potential gamechanger that would raise productivity and generate economic growth, thereby lifting living standards along this corridor and beyond. The Enterprise train service takes approx. 2hrs and has issues in terms of frequency of service and existing rail infrastructure restrictions. The vision of a 60-minute journey time with up to two trains per hour would put the Belfast-Dublin corridor on a par with Frankfurt-Cologne and other comparable routes as identified within the pre-feasibility work.</p>                    |
| 3.8 | <p>The Dublin to Belfast economic corridor accounts for more than 1 million jobs, and strong growth is expected over the next 15 years. Belfast alone has a target to add 46,000 jobs in the period 2020-35, as set out in the Belfast Agenda. An improved rail service has the potential to better match employers and employees and would serve longer distance commuting. The Net Zero Carbon Roadmap for Belfast developed by the Belfast Climate Commission and launched alongside our Resilience Strategy identifies enhanced public</p>   |

|      |  |
|------|--|
|      | <p>transport as one of a number of measures that would contribute to significant carbon reduction in Belfast.</p>  |
| 3.9  | <p><u>Context</u></p> <p>The Review aims to use a data-driven, evidence-based approach to transparently show trade-offs between different objectives and identify viable options for the future of rail across the island of Ireland. The Review will be delivered over three phases:</p> <p>Phase 1: Review of the current context and role of rail through policy review, data analysis, environmental considerations, development of rail case studies, and consultation to gauge stakeholder and public priorities</p> <p>Phase 2: Identification of different service and connectivity concepts to address issues and opportunities for rail, applying the insights from Phase 1 to inform the selection of potential options</p> <p>Phase 3: Final appraisal of the developed concepts</p> |
| 3.10 | <p><b>Belfast Council All-Island Rail Review Consultation Response</b></p> <p>Members are asked to approve the Council’s consultation response submission to the All-Island Strategic Rail Review enclosed with this report at Appendix 1. This response was submitted in line with the time frames outlined within the Consultation, however included a caveat that the response remains subject to agreement by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, and subsequent Council ratification in March. We will advise the consultation team of any further comments or amendment requests following this Committee meeting and the Council meeting in March.</p>  |
| 3.11 | <p>The consultation invited respondents to rank a number of policy opportunities that a better connected and higher/high speed rail network presents for our island economy. We have proposed a ranking in the following order with a corresponding summary of our response to each policy area:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve All Island Connectivity Between Major Cities</li> </ol>   |

|            |   |
|------------|---|
|            | <p>The Belfast to Dublin Higher Speed Rail project aspires to achieve a 60-minute journey time with provision of at least 2 trains per hour: one fast and one semi-fast, delivering good end to end connectivity and opportunities for other locations along the economic corridor.</p> <p>2. Foster economic activity</p> <p>There is huge economic potential in developing our rail corridors; for efficient freight movements, connecting workforces, and supporting tourism. In Northern Ireland rail is critical to supporting the growth of the economy and potential new industrial opportunities.</p> <p>3. Contribute to Decarbonisation</p> <p>Rail is seen as a key enabler of decarbonisation. When looking at the Belfast – Dublin Rail corridor, alternative routes will need to be explored to ensure maximum efficiency and impact of the service in a bid to shifting passenger travel from private motor vehicles to rail.</p> <p>4. Encourage Sustainable Mobility</p> <p>Our vision for the future of rail is a high-speed network that enhances inter-city and regional connectivity on the island of Ireland that will enhance our economy whilst advancing our decarbonisation goals and bring about sustainable mobility.</p> <p>5. Achieve Economic &amp; Financial feasibility</p> <p>With significant plans for investment in transport infrastructure, delivering greater value for money is key. Improved rail links can facilitate better matching between employers and employees which will support economic growth.</p> <p>6. Enhance Regional and Rural Accessibility</p> <p>Improving regional access means better economic and social connections, increasing access to opportunity, and supporting balanced regional development. It is imperative that step change measures towards rail provision in the North West are brought forward.</p> |
| 3.12       | <p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>  |
| 3.13       | <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>   |
| <b>4.0</b> | <b>Appendices – Documents attached</b>  |
|            | <p>Appendix 1: Consultation on All-Island Strategic Rail Review: Belfast City Council response submission</p> <p>Appendix 2: All Island Strategic Rail Review Consultation Paper November 2021</p>  |

