

Executive Summary

Introduction

A study has been completed for Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and Wigan Council to provide a preliminary assessment of options for the Wigan Transport Hub, which aims to improve the integration of railway stations in the town centre and offer better links between bus and rail services. The case has been assessed in terms of the transport and economic benefits to the town in order to indicate the option that is most likely to provide best value for money.

Objectives

In order to improve the quality of public transport offer in Wigan, the network seeks to comprise the following attributes:

- Provide a simple to understand network that connects key destination locations within the town, borough, county and region;
- Supply a level of quality appropriate for a major region in the 21st century, achieving the joint aspirations of TfGM and Wigan Council, in addition to consistency with national standards for interchanges;
- Offer a level of service and quality attractive to car users as an alternative travel mode, thereby reducing congestion and vehicle emissions;
- Provide a reliable, efficient, safe and attractive public transport service to the North West region and the Regional Centre (Manchester); and
- Provide increased sustainable travel activity, resulting in more jobs, visitors and increased economic activity in the town and borough.

These attributes will all help to achieve the overarching transport objectives for district and county, as defined in the Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan; namely to support and grow the economy, reduce carbon emissions and increase the quality of life for residents.

The level of rail and bus services in Wigan is considered to be good, as demonstrated by the recent consultation work completed in the town. However, the standard of rail interchange is poor, as highlighted in the recent Hall and Green report. This applies to both the North Western and Wallgate railway stations, which despite being located within 100m of each other, are under separate management and offer very little integration of passenger information. North Western station is managed by Virgin Trains and Wallgate station is managed by Northern Rail.

The current bus station is now considered to be outdated by TfGM standards and does not fit with current aspirations when compared to other recent interchange redevelopments within the county. Notable examples include the interchanges at Bolton, Altrincham and Rochdale.

Current Rail and Bus Services

Wigan has two principal stations in the town centre, North Western and Wallgate, both located within close proximity, as presented in Figure 1.1. The level of service frequency is high at 20 departures per hour for the two stations combined. Presently, services to the same destination do not operate out of both stations, although this has occurred in the past and will reoccur following implementation of the electrification timetables proposed from 2014. Services to Manchester, the destination with the highest rail demand to and from Wigan, will operate from both stations and therefore passengers will have a choice of departure point, requiring the availability of service information for all options at both stations.

In the region of 10,700 passenger movements, including interchange between services within and between the two railway stations, occur every day. Approximately 55% of these trips use Wallgate. Just over 800 passengers

interchange between the two stations and 1,900 interchange within the same station. Following the change in rail services proposed from 2014, more passengers are expected to use North Western station, following the introduction of Manchester services. Despite this, the level of interchange between stations is likely to fall as greater interchange will be completed solely within North Western station. The need to improve this station and provide additional facilities is even more evident with the forecast changes in passenger demands.

There are up to 95 buses per hour into Wigan on a weekday. All services use the current bus station, located in Hallgate, to the west of the town centre. The primary bus corridor is along Wallgate, from the Saddle junction, with over 49% of passenger demand and 41% of services using this single route. The requirement to cross the town centre from this corridor in order to reach the bus station provides a high degree of public transport penetration to the town centre. Up to 25,000 bus trips are generated in the town centre daily, with 10,700 rail trips, a total of 33,650 trips allowing for interchange between modes. About 19% of trips interchange between public transport modes, demonstrating that access to the town centre is more important than interchange between services.

Despite the overall high levels of bus accessibility, a review of service routing and demand has highlighted a number of gaps in current services and their routing in different parts of the town centre. This includes high numbers of passengers from the Wallgate corridor that have no direct access to Mesnes Street/Crompton Street or Library Street. Similarly, there are high flows from Central Park Way, Scholes and Manchester Road with no direct service to the Wallgate area. As such, scope exists for improvements, with services adjusted to provide better bus access to more parts of the town centre, including links to the railway stations.

Wigan Town Centre Area Action Plan

Wigan Council is preparing an Area Action Plan for the town centre. This will help shape the future of the town centre and its immediate surrounding area. Several areas have been identified for future redevelopment in and on the edge of the town centre and policies will put into place to address the shifting pattern of retail, business, education and leisure use within the centre. Recent developments in the south and east of the centre, including The Grand Arcade and Wigan Life Centre, have seen a shift in the areas of activity. Further developments towards the east and south of the centre, including the Eastern Gateway and Pier Quarter, mean that this shift is likely to continue and travel demand increase in these areas.

Transport is crucial to the economic success of the town centre and the wider area and it needs to be planned to address these shifting patterns, support areas where there will be continued and increased demand such as in the Learning Quarter on the north side of the centre and to provide and take advantage of new opportunities for growth. The need to better link the rail stations into the town centre through improving the pedestrian environment of Wallgate, bringing buildings back into use and strengthening economic activity in the area has already been recognised and projects led by the Council have commenced. It is clear that a more efficient, attractive and modern transport interchange encompassing bus and rail is required to boost economic activity and help secure the economic viability of the town centre and the wider area.

Potential Options

The options considered have been assessed for the benefits they provide (in transport and economy terms) in relation to better modal integration within the town centre and access to key areas, as well as the costs of implementing and the operation of proposed measures. Key issues that have been examined in developing the options are listed below:

- A need to create a transport gateway, providing better access for local, regional and national trips to and from the town centre and borough;
- Signing and information will be included as part of all options, linked to the current measures being implemented in the town centre;

- Introduction of ‘super stops’, generating better penetration of bus services across the town centre and, where possible, connecting services to provide more through services;
- Provide better connectivity between the two railway stations and bus services, with one large interchange on a single site, if possible;
- Closure, full or partial, of the existing bus station;
- Reduce traffic flow in Wallgate, in order to provide a better pedestrian area with improved links between the two stations;
- Improved and more direct access to railway stations from developing areas of the town centre;
- Use of vacant land in the areas around North Western station, including the large car park area and the former MFI site off King Street east; and
- Potential for new highway links between Wallgate, King Street and Chapel Lane to provide access to the interchange, reduce traffic flows in Wallgate and allow for access to new developments.

Projected capital costs for each option are summarised below. These range from major infrastructure schemes, including a new bus interchange adjacent to North Western station; to lower cost options, such as the introduction of super stops and the removal of the current bus station facility. Values include risk, optimism bias and project preparation and management costs.

Option	Key Features	Capital Costs £m's
1A – Bus Loop and Super Stops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of existing bus station • Re-rerouting of bus services around the town centre on a loop, with super stops located at key points. Layover for buses to be provided 	£2.1m
1B – Bus Spinal Services through Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional cross-town bus services to serve Robins Park and Hospital/College areas 	£2.1m
2 – New Rail and Bus Interchange at North Western	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New North Western platforms and relocation of Wallgate • Re-branding as one station and re-numbering of platforms • Relocated car park • New bus station in front of North Western station 	£35.9m
3A – Combining Options 1A and 2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Options 1A and 2 with relocation of Wallgate railway station 	£37.7m
3B – Options 1B and 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Options 1B and 2 with relocation of Wallgate railway station 	£37.7m
4 – North Western Access and Queen Street Super Stops (additional to Option 1A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New link through North Western station to Queen Street (through existing arches) • Super stops provided on Queen Street 	£4.3m
5 – Rodney Street Link to Interchange at North Western (additional to Option 3A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New road link from Rodney Street to Wallgate, via former MFI site and North Western station 	£61.1m
6 - Balanced Option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing bus station reduced in size to 10 stands maximum, all of super stop quality • Provision of four quality bus stops at North Western station • North Western car park to remain in its current location, but with a new pedestrian link provided through it to link to King Street • Second access point for pedestrians provided at North Western • Enhance the frontage of North Western • Improved information integration between bus and rail services • Second entrance to Wallgate at west end of platforms, with bridge to King Street 	£25.4m

Appraisal of Options

Assessments of the passenger benefits, impacts on rail and bus revenues, operating costs and value for money have been completed for each option. The assessments are based on standard TfGM processes, including the appraisal guidance and spreadsheet tool; hence they conform to the requirements for major scheme assessments. A summary of the results for each option is provided below.

Option	Demand Impact	Operator Impact	Transport Value for Money	Economy and Regeneration Impacts	Overall Assessment
1A – Bus Loop and Super Stops	Savings in travel times would generate an increase in demand of 10.2%.	Major negative impacts – additional operator costs will not be covered by extra revenue.	TfGM BCR = 2.4. Scheme delivers an NPV of £77m. Increases in bus and rail revenue expected.	Option scores poorly compared to other options. It will have limited impact of footfall and job opportunities.	Whilst the option does provide benefits, there is a clear showstopper of the bus operators not supporting or complying with the scheme.
1B – Bus Spinal Services through Town Centre	The total demand generated would be 5.2%. This is less than Option 1A as only about one third of buses are affected.	The impact on operators is less severe than Option 1A as the intervention is targeted at specific services, which represent no more than 20% of the total provision. Nevertheless, there are a number of issues that would have to be resolved.	TfGM BCR = 6.5. Scheme delivers an NPV of £70m. Increases in bus and rail revenue expected.	Option scores poorly compared to other options. It will have limited impact of footfall and job opportunities.	The option provides significant benefits given the relatively low cost. However the overall impact is limited in terms of regeneration opportunities and there remains a risk that operators may not comply.
2 – New Rail and Bus Interchange at North Western	Increases in travel times due to longer walk times would reduce demand by 11.7%.	Small reduction in operating costs, but large reduction in revenue due to demand loss, hence operators will be significantly worse off financially.	The NPV of the scheme is negative; hence costs fail to exceed benefits. Further the Net Benefits are negative – so disbenefits exceed benefits. Locating an interchange at NW, without wider bus rerouting is not recommended.	Option has average score with opportunities to increase footfall and regeneration in the Wallgate area, but with possible decline in other areas due to lack of bus penetration and footfall decline around the existing bus station area.	The option has no transport economic case so will not gain funding by Government (local or central).

Option	Demand Impact	Operator Impact	Transport Value for Money	Economy and Regeneration Impacts	Overall Assessment
3A – Combining Options 1A and 2	Option forecast to generate largest increase in demand at 12.3%.	Operators would be slightly better off financially, with extra revenue covering costs.	TfGM BCR = 1.9, with NPV of £68m. Increases in bus and rail revenue expected.	Option scores highly with opportunities to increase footfall and regeneration in the existing bus station area. Good for delivering a gateway and access to new development areas.	Whilst the option appears positive in all criteria, it will still be difficult to enforce use of the loop if operators see little financial benefit.
3B – Options 1B and 2 with Wallgate Station Relocation	Option forecast to generate 9.2% additional demand.	Operators would be better off financially, with extra revenue covering costs.	TfGM BCR = 3.6, with NPV of £117m. Increases in bus and rail revenue expected due to increased demands on public transport.	Option scores highly with opportunities to increase footfall and regeneration in the existing bus station area. This option still provides excellent opportunity for enhanced gateway to the town centre and access to new development areas.	This Option clearly out performs Option 3A, with stronger BCR and higher net revenue and benefits. There is also less increase to operator costs and a greater opportunity to create a gateway. Less negative impact of bus congestion in town centre over loop option. This option is the preferred option, but clearly achieving funding of close to £40m will be challenging.
4 – North Western Access and Queen Street Super Stops	Moderate increase in demand at 7.3%.	Large increase in costs to operators with extra mileage, hence commercial impact is negative.	The NPV of the scheme is negative; hence costs fail to exceed benefits. The option moves services further away from the key areas of Wallgate and increases travel time to the town centre.	Option scores poorly compared to other options. Will have limited impact on footfall and job opportunities. Good for links to south and east quarter developments.	The option is considered weak, and excluding bus services from Wallgate is not recommended. The benefits of southern access to North Western station are limited.

Option	Demand Impact	Operator Impact	Transport Value for Money	Economy and Regeneration Impacts	Overall Assessment
5 – Rodney Street Link to Interchange at North Western	Moderate increase in demand at 8.4%. Reduction in access to core of centre, creating longer walk distances.	Operators' financial impact will be neutral, with extra revenue covering extra costs.	The NPV of the scheme is negative; hence costs fail to exceed benefits. The option increases walk time to the centre and provides limited interchange benefits.	Option scores highly with opportunities to increase footfall and regeneration in the existing bus station area. Good for King Street East economy.	This is the highest cost option but fails to provide sufficient benefits to cover the costs. The option has no economic case and will not gain funding by Government (local or central)
6 - Balanced Option	Increase in demand of 5.0%.	Operators will see increases in profit of up to 3.0%.	TfGM BCR = 3.4, with NPV of £64m. The scheme shows the strongest VfM case.	Option slightly below best scoring option, opportunities to increase footfall and regeneration in the Wallgate and existing bus station area. Possible scale of redevelopment of bus station is less than other options.	Offers the best value for money in terms of transport benefits, and is more deliverable with the lowest risks. However, the reduced scale of development limits the opportunity for realising wider economic benefits.

Conclusions

There is a clear need to improve transport interchange and facility standards in Wigan town centre. Current provision fails to meet standards and is falling behind the level of transport facilities elsewhere in the county. Public transport services in the town centre are of a good standard when compared to other key centres in the county, notably for rail, with a wide range of direct destinations from the seven rail corridors, including the West Coast mainline and lines to Liverpool and Manchester. However, the disconnection between the two railway stations and the bus station is marked and does not provide Wigan with the facilities needed to capitalise on its location, service patterns and infrastructure opportunities. The economic viability of the town centre is at risk without investment in improved and better connected transport facilities.

Bus provision is generally strong, although there are gaps in access to parts of the town centre and links between bus and rail services to encourage interchange between modes are poor. Introducing a single transport hub could enable these gaps to be reduced; however, there is a need to ensure that the integration of services does not compromise access to parts of the town centre, as the latter has much greater demands than the former by a ratio of 4:1.

This is crucially important given the new opportunities expected to arise from new developments in the east and south of the town centre. Focus of demand is expected to shift to these areas, causing possible negative impacts to other areas to the west and north, including the expanding Learning Quarter.

The options appraised have highlighted the following:

- Operating services around a loop of the centre (Option 1A) is unlikely to get the support of operators and will be challenging to enforce. The additional costs to operators will exceed the extra revenue gained and operating margins will be dramatically cut. A subsidy from TfGM of up to £0.75m per year would be required to cover extra operating costs.
- The provision of spinal bus services that run through the town centre (Option 1B) will provide significant benefits at a relatively low cost. Although the number of services affected is reduced in comparison to Option 1A, the risk will remain that operators may not be accepting of the proposals.
- Relocating the bus station to a new location adjacent to North Western station (Option 2) should not be undertaken without other changes to service routing. Services on the key corridor of Wallgate (from Saddle Junction) must continue to serve the west of the town centre and not terminate at the point of entry at a new interchange by North Western station, otherwise accessibility to the town centre will be reduced for the majority of passengers, with walk times to many destinations exceeding 500m.
- Combining the loop and new interchange (Option 3A = Options 1A and 2) appears excessively disruptive to established routes and is of questionable benefit, given the difficulties it will pose in operational terms. It may also be confusing to passengers who will see little benefit of loop services when the bus then waits at an interchange. There is a need to provide a bus layover point in the centre given the number of circular routes and length of other services.
- Combining the spinal services and new interchange (Option 3B = Options 1B and 2) results in a better performing option than Option 3A. This reduces the negative impact of bus services looping around the town centre and provides significant regeneration opportunities, contributing to the creation of new jobs. Overall, the BCR for this option is 3.6, the highest for any of the options that involve a new interchange scheme. This option also provides clear opportunities for the creation of a new gateway to the town centre through the construction of a state of the art interchange on a single site, including all rail and bus services and facilities, plus a cycle hub (though LSTF) and taxi rank. This option also capitalises on funding for bus stops measures from the Better Bus Areas (BBA) Fund.
- Excluding buses from Wallgate between the two railway stations (Option 4) will disbenefit bus and rail passengers. Future alterations to transport infrastructure could lead to operators changing routes to the bus station. The new route provides a short access option to the existing bus station but bypasses high demand areas in Wallgate.
- Locating stops on Queens Street (Option 4) will have a major disbenefit by moving stops further away from the town centre, whilst the Rodney Street link (Option 5) will increase walk times within the centre. The Rodney Street option is also very high cost (£60m+) and is seen as an “all or nothing” option, as it is difficult to deliver in phases. The likelihood of obtaining funding for this scheme will be challenging.
- There is little benefit of a second entrance to North Western station from Queen Street (Option 4). Greater benefits would be gained from redeveloping and expanding the current entrance into a bigger facility, incorporating a waiting area, ticket office and retail units. This could be used by rail, taxi and bus passengers. Demand at North Western station is expected to increase at a higher rate than at Wallgate due to rail service changes, rendering the need to improve North Western station all the more critical.
- Improving the pedestrian link from King Street East to North Western is recommended. However, a more direct walk route needs to be identified, with possibilities including an option through the ground floor of the existing car park. The direct route would link to the new expanded entrance at North Western.
- Relocating Wallgate station to the area adjacent to the North Western car park provides little benefits. Greater benefit would be gained from providing a second entrance to Wallgate from King Street, improving direct walk links to the Learning Quarter and Hallgate area.

- Option 6 (balanced option) addresses access to the town centre and integration of modes. It also provides a package of measures that could be implemented in phases and funded from different sources. This option is considered easier to deliver and more affordable than a single major infrastructure scheme. It also continues to deliver the majority of benefits. However, wider opportunities to facilitate regeneration and boost job creation are limited, given the absence of a dedicated new facility.

Overall, Option 3B will deliver the greatest level of opportunity, resulting from the provision a new and improved gateway to serve the town centre, district and region. This may be expected to serve as a catalyst for regeneration and act as a focal point for a range of supplementary improvements, including wide ranging socio-economic impacts, such as the generation of more jobs and an increase to real estate values in the Wallgate area. Similar effects have been witnessed or are forecast in a number of other centres where new interchanges have or will promote wider regeneration (including Bolton, Wakefield and Barnsley).

The stimulus to the local and regional economy facilitated by Option 3B, together with reduced emissions from the forecast mode shift to public transport from car, increased quality of transport infrastructure and wider quality of life benefits provide an excellent fit to Greater Manchester's LTP3 core objectives. The 'high' value for money evidenced by the BCR value of 3.6 further justifies Option 3B's selection as the preferred option for more detailed business case assessment work.

Next Steps

The assessments completed to date represent a high-level appraisal using existing data and information. This level of analysis alone will not meet the requirements of a funding bid submission to TfGM or the DfT.

TfGM is currently compiling a list of potential schemes for progressing to full business case submissions and has asked promoters to provide information on their schemes by the end of November 2012. The list of final priorities is expected to be finalised in March 2013.

Based on knowledge and experience of delivering other interchange schemes via the TfGM and DfT competitive funding routes, the business case development process is split into two phases, as set out below.

Phase 1: Preliminary Tasks

This phase includes the following key stages:

- Identification of problems and issues;
- Mapping of desired outcomes/fit to policies and development plans;
- Identification of possible options; and
- Sifting of options to identify preferred solutions.

It is understood that the information required by TfGM on schemes for potential progress to full business case submission will be based around the EAST (Early Assessment and Sifting Tool), developed by DfT in 2011. EAST is a decision support tool designed to help summarise and present evidence on a range of options, comparing and filtering variants by highlighting adverse impacts and unanticipated consequences, identifying trade offs between objectives. The tool is designed around the following headings:

- Strategic Case – fit to national, regional and local objectives, together with support for the scheme;
- Economic Case – scheme appraisal based on DaSTS structure, to show value for money;
- Management Case – acceptability, feasibility and risk;
- Financial Case – affordability, costs, revenues and cost profile; and
- Commercial Case – flexibility and alternative funding.

This report has provided much of the scoping work that can be used to complete TfGM's EAST-based process for submission of scheme information in November 2012. To strengthen the case for the Wigan Transport Hub

preferred option (Option 3B) as part of this submission, the following areas may need to be further strengthened, subject to the final requirements to be issued by TfGM:

- Strategic Case – simple mapping of local, TfGM and national objectives to scheme outcomes to ensure strong fit. Clear evidence of wider stakeholder support for the scheme will also be necessary, including details of consultation completed and where any objectors may impact on the scheme progressing. A key objective of the new interchange is to aid regeneration and create jobs in the town and district; hence evidence of the need for the scheme from the local business community would significantly strengthen the case.
- Economic Case – this high level study has focussed on transport and development economic assessments, with limited coverage of social impacts. No assessment of any environmental impacts is included in the report. A high level assessment of the environmental headings (noise, air quality, greenhouse gases, landscape, townscape, heritage, biodiversity and water) will be needed that lists the impacts and show that possible “show stoppers” are very unlikely given the proposed site, hence the scheme will not fail a key area of the business case.
- Management Case – identification of the top three risks (excluding funding) will help TfGM understand uncertainties of the scheme and enable them to compare other interchanges business cases developed across the county. This will help give TfGM comfort that Wigan Transport Hub is comparable to other interchange schemes that have been progressed to date and, in many cases, successfully delivered.
- Financial Case – scheme dependencies need to be spelt out, including other transport projects, land use changes and developments, so it clear what other factors may help or hinder the scheme’s progress. Opportunities for potential funding support should also be clarified (i.e. third party/developer contributions) to reduce requirements on the TfGM pot. Successful interchange schemes delivered elsewhere in Greater Manchester have all included levels of such funding ranging from 6% to 15%.
- Commercial Case – outline the proposed timescales for scheme completion and the role Wigan MBC is able to offer to the project, working with TfGM to develop the full business case, so sharing resources and costs.

Should the preferred option(s) be progressed further to develop a detailed business case, it will be necessary to undertake further work, as set out in the stages outlined as part of the next phase.

Phase 2: Detailed Business Case

The complexity and range of tasks involved in developing a detailed Business Case dictates that a broad range of skills are required. This is exemplified by the approach that TfGM is adopting in order to regenerate the existing transport interchange within Stockport, which has involved appointing consultant teams for the following services:

- Architectural and Landscape Design;
- Transport Planning and Traffic Engineering;
- Civil and Structural Engineering;
- Construction and Design Management Coordination (CDMC);
- Cost Management and Forecasting;
- Business Case Support; and
- Commercial and Estates Evaluation Advice.

The need for a range of consultant teams is dictated by the increased demand for rigour across the following key areas:

- Preliminary design of preferred options (preferred scheme and lower cost alternative);

- Costing of schemes, including capital, maintenance, renewal and on-going costs;
- Risk register;
- Stakeholder consultation;
- Appraisal of preferred options, including demand modelling, operational assessment, economic appraisal, sensitivity testing, social and distributional impacts, environmental scoping and regeneration impact assessment;
- Financial and commercial assessment (to include funding opportunities);
- Planning issues;
- Procurement strategy;
- Preparation of bid documents; and
- TfGM/DfT engagement.