9 Conclusions and Next Steps

9.1 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 though 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.

9.2 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.

This section considers how this work can be used and what other actions will be required, in light of the potential that a preferred scheme will ultimately be identified, with a view to delivery via a funding bid submission to TfGM or DfT.

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:

1) **Identification of problems and issues**

2) **Mapping of desired outcomes / fit to policies and development plans**

3) **Identification of possible options**

4) **Sifting of options to identify preferred options**

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.

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 stages:

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

A design team will be required in order to provide a level of design that will allow suitably reliable costs for the scheme to be developed. This process should seek to minimise risks by adopting a proactive approach to common issues, such as the location of utilities. In the case of developing transport facilities, the design team should remain mindful of the needs of the user throughout.

6) Costs of schemes, including capital, maintenance, renewal and on-going costs

Specialist input will be required to ensure that the costs are suitably robust, with a view to allowing cost verification and Wigan Council (or TfGM) Section 151 officer sign-off. This will require the use of quantity surveyors and civil/structural engineers. The definition of the preferred scheme will determine what other areas of expertise will be required.

7) Risk Register

A risk register will be needed to highlight the main issues that could affect funding of the scheme when following different funding criteria, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the case that may result in "show stopping" scenarios. Any "show stoppers" should be highlighted at an early stage and a strategy to address each defined, so as not to delay the proposed timetable. Risk workshops with all key stakeholders will be required to help develop the register. The register will need to be regularly updated over the lifetime of the project.

8) Stakeholder Consultation

Obtain initial stakeholder support levels, including bus operators, to gauge reaction to changes and help with the refining of schemes, reflecting their concerns and aspirations. Discussions with TfGM's bus network planning team are also recommended prior to operator consultation.

9) Appraisal of Preferred Options

Demand Modelling

New data collection is required to provide up-to-date trip patterns in the town centre and for use in a transport model (i.e. SPM2PT or GM Saturn). Data collection should include flow counts (bus passenger, footfall) and interviews of passengers (bus and rail).

The window to complete surveys is limited to neutral months (October, November, March, April, May), hence there needs for careful planning of the survey programme. HFAS may be already planning surveys in the Wigan area for later this year, so contact will be required to ensure surveys are focused on the needs of modelling and appraising the Hub options.

Detailed modelling of bus service changes will be necessary, including stop modelling and a detailed town centre assessment. There is also a need for re-zoning the SPM2PT model to a finer level of detail in the centre. Traffic modelling of the area in Wallgate, King Street East and Library Street is recommended to quantify the benefits for local bus movements.

Operational Assessment
Traffic engineering elements will require further analysis, in order that suitable mitigation can be provided in areas where impacts are identified. In the case of these proposals, this is likely to involve extensive work relating to bus routing and the pedestrian/highway interface.

Economic Appraisal
The output tables that included within this report will require updating, based on the latest scheme specification and associated costs.

Sensitivity Testing
Sensitivity tests on the central case will be required for the preferred scheme and an agreed LCA (lower cost alternative). Tests should include for higher costs, lower demand forecasts and for key elements of the overall package, to show (if required) that all are value for money in their own right, if elements are to be funded by different sources.

Social and Distributional Impacts
DfT guidance promotes the assessment of how scheme impacts (e.g. noise, air quality, accessibility, etc.) relate to vulnerable groups of society. These assessments should be proportional to the issue at hand, but will frequently require work to be undertaken in a GIS platform.

Environmental Scoping
It is important to identify any showstoppers at an early stage. Seasonal variability results in certain issues needing to be prioritised in order to avoid slippage in delivery.

Regeneration Impact Assessment
Complete more detailed assessment of the economic impacts to reflect local conditions, including mitigation of possible negative effects from relocating the existing bus station. This is a key area of work for promoting the case for the scheme and should include inputs from the economic development teams in the Council and town centre stakeholders.

Appraisal Summary Tables (AST)
The approach to appraisal is governed by the AST. Each objective and sub-objective requires an assessment to be made in line with the relevant guidance unit.

10) Financial and Commercial Assessment (to include Funding Opportunities)

Further explore funding options – e.g. WCML franchise, Better Bus Area funding, third party contributions on the bus station site. LSTF funding of a cycle hub at the new interchange represents a further opportunity.

11) Planning Issues

A planning team will be required to advise on the application process, alongside issues relating to consultation and any need for compulsory purchases.

12) Procurement Strategy

It will be necessary to demonstrate how the proposed scope of works will be delivered. This strategy should promote value for money, punctual delivery and minimal disruption to affected parties. TfGM has extensive experience of delivering new interchange schemes, including through DfT and local funding streams, hence the procurement strategy should be developed by working in partnership with them.

13) Preparation of Bid Documents

Alongside the Business Case document, an extensive range of supporting information is required, that will include (but is not limited to) evidence of consultation, appraisal worksheets, delivery programmes and governance structures. It is important to be aware of the requirements at an early stage in order to allow compilation.

14) TfGM/DfT Engagement

Early and on-going engagement with TfGM/DfT should be seen as a priority. Halcrow's previous experience in successfully gaining funding through competitive routes has shown that a proactive approach is favoured. This ensures cost-effectiveness as only work relevant to completing the funding application is undertaken. Furthermore, both parties have extensive knowledge on the issues encountered whilst delivering transport interventions, and critically how to overcome these.

Summary of Position

TfGM is currently compiling a list of potential schemes for progressing to full business case submissions and has asked promoters from each district to provide expressions of interest by the end of November 2012, with a view to undertaking a high-level sift of options in spring 2013.

Work completed to date (in support of the tasks identified under Phase 1) provides a valuable resource for Wigan Council, should it choose to submit a proposal as part of that process. A number of minor areas of additional work are suggested to help strengthen the submission and fit with TfGM's scheme sifting process, which is likely to be based on DfT's EAST (Early Assessment and Sifting Tool).