1. **Report Summary**

1.1. On 17 July 2017, the Secretary of State for Transport launched a consultation to seek views on the vision for a Crewe Hub. The consultation set out options which could give Crewe and the surrounding region even better access to high speed services, serving more destinations. The consultation closed on 12 October 2017.

1.2. The Government published its response to the HS2 Crewe Hub consultation on Friday 9 March. There were 146 responses. Both individual and stakeholder responses indicated broad support for the concept of a Crewe Hub, including the splitting and joining of HS2 services at Crewe, a junction north of Crewe, and the strategy of combining this with Network Rail (NR) renewals work.

1.3. The Government has accepted the arguments the LTB and partners made about the regeneration and growth benefits of 5 – 7 trains per hour calling at Crewe on HS2, and 3–4 trains per hour on the regional lines that radiate out of Crewe. It will therefore be designing the station to deliver these service levels, though it also makes clear that it is still looking for a local contribution to the cost.

1.4. The Government’s response is good news but the case for an HS2 junction North of Crewe still needs to be made, plus the Government is signalling a need for local contributions to the cost of it. This is part of Phase 2B so it was expected that the Government would not make a decision at this time. However, without the junction, there would be insufficient capacity at to meet our service ambitions. The Government also makes clear that although it is designing Crewe station to accommodate 3 – 4 trains per hour on the regional lines, running these services also requires changes to the infrastructure elsewhere on those routes. The LTB and wider partners will need to consider the changes that are needed, and how to fund them.

1.5. The next step is to engage DfT about the process we need to undertake to deliver the regional services we’ve been arguing for. Cathy Miller, Deputy Director North and Devolution, DfT is coming up for a meeting on Friday 27 April to start these discussions. The discussions will involve the wider pan-region covering North Wales, Shropshire and Stoke/Staffordshire.

2. **Recommendation**

2.1. The Local Transport Body is asked to note the Government’s response to the Crewe Hub consultation.
3. **Background**

3.1. On 17 July 2017, the Secretary of State for Transport launched a consultation to seek views on the vision for a Crewe Hub. The consultation set out options which could give Crewe and the surrounding region even better access to high speed services, serving more destinations. The consultation closed on 12 October 2017, and there were 146 responses. Both individual and stakeholder responses indicated broad support for the concept of a Crewe Hub, including the splitting and joining of HS2 services at Crewe, a junction north of Crewe, and the strategy of combining this with Network Rail (NR) renewals work.

4. **Crewe Station**

4.1. The Secretary of State has confirmed the Government’s support for the Crewe Hub vision. To that end plans for **HS2 Phase 2a** will be modified to include:

- provision of 400m platforms, extending Platform 5, to allow for the splitting and joining of HS2 services, which also opens opportunities to serve Stoke-On-Trent via HS2;
- a more efficient design for the proposed platform on the Manchester independent lines, incorporating a transfer deck to the main station; and
- a change to the design of the southern connection from HS2, so that HS2 joins (and takes over) the central two lines on the existing network:

4.2. Realising the Crewe Hub vision in full “will require delivery of the planned Network Rail renewals, local and national government working together, and a local funding contribution” to support future potential investment decisions including for:

- a junction north of Crewe, enabling HS2 trains to call at Crewe and then re-join the HS2 main line, as part of Phase 2b; and
- completing the full transfer deck across the station to Weston Road and potentially to Gresty Road with new entrances to support local regeneration ambitions.

4.3. Network Rail continues to evaluate whether, as part of its renewal design, reinstatement of platform 13 would be an affordable alternative to the independent lines platform.

4.4. The consultation response confirms that the Secretary of State understands the points raised about Crewe, local and regional train services and that whilst many of the individual issues raised are outside the immediate scope of the Crewe Hub vision, they are nonetheless important for future planning of the rail network. The Government therefore has confirmed that they will work on further developing these with the West Coast Partnership, Network Rail, HS2 Ltd, and industry partners in the future.

4.5. The consultation response confirms that the options for infrastructure at Crewe do not preclude development of opportunities for future service enhancements and that some may require works outside the Crewe area to be realised. The West Coast Partnership and other operators will develop options for future services working consultatively with Network Rail, HS2 Ltd, other rail operators and wider stakeholders, taking account of a range of factors including the latest information on demand. Any decision to develop these or other additional service scenarios would need to be on the basis of there being appropriate funding and a full business case.
5. **Regeneration and growth**

5.1. The Government acknowledges that the interventions above, if combined with a junction north of Crewe, could in future allow Crewe station to support the ambition of 5–7 HS2 trains per hour calling at Crewe and frequencies of 3-4 trains per hour on each of the regional links. The potential for a transfer deck across the whole of Crewe station with proposed new east and west entrances would additionally improve the passenger environment and support Cheshire East Council’s growth ambitions.

5.2. The Secretary of State notes that enhanced regional connectivity facilitated by a junction north of Crewe has the potential to support additional growth not only around Crewe, but across Cheshire and the rest of the North through increased productivity, housing and jobs growth. Improving HS2 connectivity through a junction north of Crewe could support additional ‘agglomeration effects’ over and above existing plans; further lowering the costs of doing business, driving efficiencies and in turn raising productivity.

5.3. The decision on a junction north of Crewe is for Phase 2b. HS2 Ltd will continue to develop the potential design and business case. Final decisions will be subject to affordability (including the scale of any local contribution to costs) and value for money.

6. **Freight**

6.1. Crewe is a nationally important rail freight hub, and almost all freight trains on the West Coast Mainline (WCML) are routed through Basford Hall yard, just south of Crewe. The present freight layout was designed to handle trains made up of individual wagons. These have since been superseded by much longer trains, typically carrying intermodal containers.

6.2. Freight operators raised a number of concerns about the Crewe Hub vision, including their ability to marshal trains on the independent lines. Marshalling will need to be reviewed by Network Rail and freight operators in any event in the light of automation provided by planned signalling renewals. Network Rail has confirmed that the current level of freight services will still be able to operate with a Crewe Hub, although there could be issues in realising further freight growth north of Basford Hall after Phase 2a opens and before Phase 2b becomes operational in 2033.

7. **HS2 Services Patterns**

7.1. Providing 400m platforms at Crewe Station will allow HS2 trains to be split and joined, providing options for more connectivity. The Government has modelled running a combined London – Preston and London – Liverpool service that splits at Crewe, and so frees up an HS2 path from London which would allow a new HS2 service to Stafford, Stoke-on-Trent and Macclesfield via Handsacre junction. Further opportunities to serve additional destinations could come from splitting and joining a second Liverpool service.

7.2. There was strong support in the consultation for the splitting and joining of HS2 services at Crewe station and 400m platforms. Some responses asked if a second HS2 Stoke-on-Trent service was possible each hour. There is not anticipated to be capacity on HS2 for this (and the business case is unlikely to be strong). Stoke-on-Trent is, though, expected to continue to receive intercity services via the WCML in addition to any HS2 service. Questions were also raised about the impact Crewe Hub could have on Liverpool to London journey times, and the possibility of splitting and joining a Manchester service. The Government does not currently envisage introducing the second split and join operation until HS2 Phase 2b opens, so for Phase 2a these changes would not affect the headline Liverpool – London journey.
time (and the second London – Liverpool service will be faster than originally planned).

7.3. Operational constraints during the operation of Phase 2a mean the Government considers that it would not be desirable to split and join one of the Manchester services. The Government will continue to consider additional locations that could be served with a second split and join in developing the HS2 Phase 2b business case, and in the light of future advice from the West Coast Partnership (WCP).

8. **West Coast Partnership Franchise**

8.1. From its appointment in 2019, the new West Coast Partnership operator will work with HS2 Ltd to design, launch and operate the initial HS2 services, as well as redesign services on the West Coast Main Line to take advantage of the extra capacity provided by HS2. The WCP operator will be required to ensure that passenger needs are placed at the heart of the design of the new railway and services, working closely with industry partners, devolved administrations, local government, passengers and staff along the route.

8.2. The Government has confirmed that the West Coast Partnership will also be closely involved in the detailed design of the future Crewe Hub station to ensure it meets passenger needs, alongside its design of future HS2 and West Coast Main Line services to meet the needs and aspirations of all users. The West Coast Partnership operator will consult extensively on proposed service patterns, enabling Government to make decisions on the final HS2 and West Coast Main Line services in the early 2020s.