
Meeting:	Rail North Committee – Strategic Rail Director Consultation Call
Subject:	Manchester Services and Infrastructure Update
Author:	Chris Mason, Interim Head of Investment Planning
Sponsor:	David Hoggarth, Strategic Rail Director
Meeting Date:	Wednesday 15 September 2021

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 This report is to provide Members of the committee with an update on work on the Central Manchester congestion hotspot. This includes the development of the December 2022 timetable and collaboration with the Department for Transport on the infrastructure solution to support the required connectivity of train services across the north that traverse the Manchester area, including connectivity to the key regional hub of Manchester Airport.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 Committee Members are asked to:
- 1) Note the progress made on the development of the December 2022 timetable and the next steps including a further round of public consultation.
 - 2) Note the progress on developing an enhanced collaboration with the Department for Transport on the infrastructure solution which would facilitate a clear roadmap to restore and improve connectivity.

3. Main Issues:

- 3.1 Since the previous Committee Consultation Call Transport for the North and the DfT have been working collaboratively to find a way forward on Manchester that will allow the next phase of the public consultation on the 2022 timetable to take place.
- 3.2 Through the Manchester Recovery Task Force, positive progress has also been made on the development of a number of service enhancements to the proposed 2022 timetable which it is expected will be included in the forthcoming public consultation.
- 3.3 Work is ongoing to bring together, as a next step, a strengthened collaboration between Transport for the North and DfT to oversee a

roadmap of infrastructure and service enhancements which it is planned to bring together with the next round of public consultation in the next few weeks.

- 3.4 The industry has also moved forward with the development work on infrastructure plans for the congested Castlefield Corridor including progressing plans for Oxford Road station. As part of this work, Transport for the North has secured a detailed assessment of the performance benefits of including platforms 15/16 at Piccadilly.

Main Considerations:

Background

- 3.5 The long-standing issue of congestion in Central Manchester has become even more urgent as Network Rail has designated the Castlefield Corridor as 'congested infrastructure' – one of only a small number of pieces of railway nationally to have such a designation. This means that as well as being required to develop solutions to the problem, service changes need to be considered and the number of trains that can use the corridor will effectively be capped. In practice this means that the pre-covid timetable can't be operated and an alternative timetable solution must be found to allow services to operate reliably (important in the context of the strong growth of passengers returning to the railways in the North post Covid). The designation also means that the industry needs to identify a long-term service and infrastructure solution for the corridor.
- 3.6 The Department for Transport (DfT) has established a Task Force (Manchester Recovery Task Force) to develop solutions to the problem including short-term timetable changes. Transport for the North is a member of the Task Force which allows us to inform its work including drawing on our evidence base and the needs of passengers in the North. In addition to the timetable work, Network Rail has been developing an infrastructure plan for the area which is currently divided into three tranches covering short, medium and long-term proposals. At the moment the programme has funding allocated for development work across all tranches and the first tranche is expected to be delivered in the next few years.
- 3.7 At the previous Rail North Committee consultation call, Members identified a series of issues that needed to be addressed in considering the proposed timetable for December 2022 making it clear that the Manchester situation is an urgent example of the requirement for infrastructure investment holding back the railway in the North.

Further Engagement on Timetable and Infrastructure Development

- 3.8 There was a discussion at the Transport for the North Board meeting on 27 July 2021 when an initial written response from the Minister was shared with Members. The key points from the discussion with the Board were:
- The strong post-Covid growth of passenger numbers means it's important to lift the service above current Covid timetable and Transport for the North will continue to work through the Task Force to achieve the best short-term outcome by continuing to develop a 2022 timetable;
 - The Board highlighted the importance of taking opportunities to restore some services linking Sheffield/Manchester Airport and improve the cross-Warrington service pattern;
 - Recognising that there remains a need for long term solution, the short-term objective must be to maximise the uplift in services possible as well as delivering a reliable service for returning passengers; and
 - The Board requested further dialogue with the DfT through Rail North Committee members.
- 3.9 Following this, a positive dialogue has taken place between Committee Members and the DfT. As a result of the positive progress Rail North Committee Members agreed to carry on the work developing the 2022 timetable (an enhanced version of the B+ timetable proposed by the Task Force). Members made it clear that, in parallel, the need to have an agreed roadmap that sets out how a longer-term solution will be developed, one that moves beyond what is possible with the 2022 timetable.
- 3.10 Work is taking place on a new form of collaboration between the DfT and Transport for the North that links the development of infrastructure to the roadmap of future timetable enhancements. An update on this joint work will be provided before the next phase of public consultation on the 2022 timetable.
- 3.11 Positive progress has been made on the identification of appropriate infrastructure intervention at Oxford Road Station (one of the main congestion pinchpoints and therefore a key part of the solution to allow services to be enhanced beyond the 2022 timetable). Transport for the North was able to secure agreement to commission modelling work to confirm the additional capacity and performance benefits of new platforms 15 and 16 at Piccadilly. The results of the modelling work are due by the end of September. As infrastructure solutions are developed there will need to be engagement with stakeholders on future service options through the collaborative working.

2022 Timetable Development

- 3.12 The Train Operators, supported by the Manchester Recovery Task Force (MRTF), are finalising detailed timetables in readiness for the second consultation process which is planned to commence this Autumn and run for a 6-week period. This will ensure that industry timetable bidding timelines are met.
- 3.14 There is also an infrastructure investment programme progressing to support the 2022 timetable changes to support the revised pattern of services including longer platforms at some locations.
- 3.15 The Task Force is making good progress on detailed proposals including an improved cross-Warrington service pattern and in assessing options to maintain some direct connectivity between Sheffield and Manchester Airport for inclusion in the second round of consultation.
- 3.16 To ensure that the timetable is delivered robustly, the Manchester Recovery Task Force will oversee timetable simulation modelling alongside the consultation of the final all-day timetable and monitoring industry readiness.

Next Steps

- 3.17 Work is ongoing to progress the actions highlighted in the report and further updates will be provided to Members of the Committee as appropriate.
- 3.18 The next main milestone is the planned second phase of public consultation on the detailed timetable plans for December 2022. This is likely to commence in the next few weeks to meet industry timelines for planning and delivering a robust timetable.
- 3.19 Ahead of the start of the public consultation, it is intended that Transport for the North and the DfT will have implemented a new form of collaboration which will provide greater clarity for local communities impacted by the changes.

4. Corporate Considerations:

Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.1 Transport for the North Finance Team has confirmed there are no financial implications for Transport for the North.
- 4.2 Transport for the North HR Team has confirmed there are no direct resource implications for Transport for the North.

Legal Implications

- 4.3 Transport for the North Legal Team has confirmed there are no apparent legal implications.

Risk Management and Key Issues

- 4.4 This paper does not require a risk assessment, however, risks relating to the December 2022 timetable are being identified, managed and monitored.

Environmental Implications

- 4.5 A full impact assessment has not been carried out because it is not relevant to the type of work referenced.

Equality and Diversity

- 4.6 A full Impact assessment has not been carried out because it is not relevant to the type of work referenced.

Consultations

- 4.7 A full public consultation was carried out on timetable options for 2022 and a further consultation will be carried out by train operators on the detailed proposals.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 There are no background papers to this report.

6. Appendices

- 6.1 There are no appendices