

# Rail North Committee Strategic Rail Director Consultation Call Minutes

**Wednesday 14 July 2021  
Virtual**

**Present:**

<b>Attendee</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>
Cllr Liam Robinson (Chair) Cllr Craig Browne Mayor Andy Burnham	Liverpool City Region; Cheshire & the Potteries; Greater Manchester Combined Authority;
Cllr Richard Hannigan Cllr Keith Little Cllr Don Mackenzie Mayor Dan Jarvis Mayor Tracy Brabin	Humber Authorities; Lancashire & Cumbria North Yorkshire; Sheffield City Region; West Yorkshire Combined Authority;

**Partners in Attendance:**

Bob Morris Tobyn Hughes	Greater Manchester North East
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**Also in Attendance:**

Cllr Charles Edwards Richard George	Lancashire & Cumbria (Observer)
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**Officers in Attendance:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
Gary Rich	Democratic Services Officer
Jim Bamford	Head of Investment Planning
Rosemary Lyon	Legal and Democratic Services Officer
Tim Wood	Northern Powerhouse Rail Director
Deborah Dimock	Solicitor
David Hoggarth	Strategic Rail Director

**Item  
No:**

**Item**

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

- 1.1 The Interim Chief Executive welcomed Members and explained that the Chair would be joining the meeting a little later due to a commitment he had.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

2.1 There were no Declarations of Interests.

## **3. Manchester Recovery Taskforce Recommendation**

3.1 The Interim Chief Executive provided Members with background detail on the current situation explaining that Manchester is one of the most highly congested parts of the rail network in England. He highlighted the issues with regards to infrastructure in the area and explained that the Department for Transport leads the Manchester Recovery Task Force (MRTF) with support from a number of bodies including Network Rail (NR), TfN and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) are both members of the Task Force.

He then explained to Members how TfN is working collaboratively with the Department and have secured roundtable meetings with the Minister. He further explained that whilst the next roundtable had been cancelled the Minister is looking to reschedule. The Interim Chief Executive stated that a roadmap for delivery has been secured but TfN has made it clear that there needs to be a step up in rail investment and that short-term impacts on connectivity need to be addressed.

3.2 Members received the report from the Strategic Rail Director who highlighted the key issues within the report and a recommendation on the timetable to operated from December 2022.

3.3 Mr. Richard George explained that the situation currently being faced is similar to that of early 2019 where too many trains were being operated on the Castlefield Corridor impacting on the Northern network.

He stated that Members are being left with difficult decisions to make. He explained that the option being put to Members would lead to a number of losers but hoped these options will provide a collective win that will improve performance. Mr. George suggested that the Task Force B+ option should be the basis of the specification and is the least worst option. Mr. George cautioned against remaining with the current covid timetable as this would push this work down the priority list.

Mr. George highlighted the timescales that timetable planners are working towards with the deadline for bids being November 2021.

3.4 Before Members were invited to make comment the Interim Chief Executive outlined the suggested conditions for Members agreeing to the B+ option.

- The publication of the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) in July 2021

- A commitment to an accelerated timetable for the package of rail infrastructure schemes in Manchester that will fully resolve the severe problems and that this work should commence sooner than planned
- Ensure that infrastructure schemes in Manchester enable the long held commitment for new connections including, services from Bradford and Calder Valley to Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport.
- A firm commitment to reinstate direct rail services between South Yorkshire and Manchester Airport and the timescales for when these services will be reinstated
- A satisfactory resolution on Cheshire and cross Warrington service patterns during the next phase of the timetable development.

3.5 Members were in full agreement that the B+ package was not satisfactory and highlighted many issues that they had with the proposed timetable change for December 2022.

3.6 Mayor Jarvis expressed his disappointment that Members were being asked to agree to something without consultation or conversations with the Minister.

He then highlighted that the acceptance of B+ would lead to a loss of connectivity to Manchester Airport for Sheffield and South Yorkshire as well as the economic implications of this.

3.7 Mayor Burnham stated that the rail industry's focus is not on the North of England. He highlighted the lack of clarity on the delivery of infrastructure going through Central Manchester to sustain a reliable passage through Manchester which then impacts on the North of England. He requested clarity on the electrification of the line from Victoria through to Stalybridge which includes 3 trains per hour to Atherton and Hazel Grove and the restoration of a service that could call at the planned Golborne Station. He also requested clarity on the accelerated timetable for the Castlefield Corridor.

Mayor Burnham asked that the Interim Chief Executive write to the Secretary of State setting out the conditions of the Rail North Committee before being able to accept the timetable changes. He explained that if there is no agreement then the Committee would be formally in dispute on the timetable.

3.8 Mayor Brabin explained that if B+ is accepted then West Yorkshire would lose one direct Service to Manchester Airport. She expressed dissatisfaction at the time they have been given to approve this and urged the Government to publish the IRP as soon as possible.

3.9 Cllr Browne highlighted the issues that B+ would create for the new Warrington West Station, he explained that the business case for the

station was three services an hour with option B+ only offering one service an hour. He also highlighted the importance of access to Manchester Airport.

- 3.10 The Chair stated that a strong letter needed to be sent to Government and that a press release would also be required. He requested that the letter being sent to Government also be put in the public domain. Once a full response has been received then a decision can be made on whether to accept the B+ proposal.
- 3.11 Cllr Little requested that the letter should be circulated to Members for comment prior to being sent. Mayor Burnham suggested that the Committee be reconvened in order to discuss the Government response.

**Resolved:**

- 1) That the Interim Chief Executive write to the Secretary of State outlining the conditions of acceptance of the B+ timetable
- 2) That a press release be circulated to the media which should include the letter sent to the Secretary of State
- 3) That Members note the roadmap for further development of services beyond 2022.
- 4) That Members note that the long-term infrastructure and service solution for Manchester continues to be developed and that quarterly roundtable meetings are planned between Transport for the North members and ministers following the special NTAC meeting.