
Meeting: Scrutiny Committee

Subject: Manchester Services and Infrastructure Update

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Meeting Date: 4 November 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. The report also identifies the consultation process on the proposed December 2022 timetable.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 Scrutiny Committee is 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 planned for November 2021.
 - 2) Note the progress on developing an enhanced collaboration with the Department for Transport on the infrastructure solution including work to develop a clear roadmap (a 'RailMap') to identify a co-ordinated long-term service and infrastructure solution for the corridor to restore and improve connectivity.

3. Main Issues:

Background

- 3.1 The long-standing issue of congestion in Central Manchester has become even more urgent since Network Rail 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 service changes need to be considered whilst solutions are developed to the problem, 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 co-ordinated long-term service and infrastructure solution for the corridor.

- 3.2 The Department for Transport (DfT) has established a Task Force (the 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 across the North. Transport for the North's input to the process is overseen by the Rail North Committee.
- 3.3 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.

2022 Timetable Development

- 3.4 A full public consultation was carried out earlier in 2021 by The Task Force on three potential timetable options (A, B and C) for 2022. The Task Force collated the consultation responses and made a recommendation to the Rail North Committee for an enhanced Option B timetable structure.
- 3.5 In response to the Task Forces' initial recommendations, Transport for the North's Rail North Committee 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. The Committee highlighted the need for a better pattern of services across Warrington and to maintain some direct connectivity between Sheffield and Manchester Airport.
- 3.6 During Summer 2021, Transport for the North and the DfT have been working collaboratively to find a way forward on Manchester that will allow the industry to move to the next phase of public consultation on the 2022 timetable.
- 3.7 The Task Force is making good progress on finalising detailed proposals, including maintaining a stopping service across Warrington and direct connectivity between Sheffield and Manchester Airport on first and last services of the day. Engagement on these proposals has been taking place with officers from Liverpool City Region, Transport for Greater Manchester, Warrington Borough Council, and South

Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive. The proposals will be referenced in the second round of consultation

- 3.8 The response to the first consultation was recently published and is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/timetable-options-to-improve-rail-performance-in-the-north-of-england>

- 3.9 The Train Operators, supported by the Task Force, are finalising detailed timetables in readiness for the second consultation process which is planned to commence in November 2021. This consultation will cover points of detail in the proposed timetables rather than the overall structure.

- 3.10 The consultation on the detailed timetable is open to any members of the public and Local Authorities to respond to. The train operators will co-ordinate the responses and any changes to the detail of the timetables (e.g. stopping patterns) and the outcome will be reported through the Rail North Committee.

- 3.11 Development of the infrastructure investment to support the 2022 timetable changes and revised pattern of services is progressing including longer platforms at some locations and improved depot facilities.

- 3.12 The consultation response highlights that whilst passengers are now returning to the railways, forecasts suggest they will not return to pre-Covid levels for the immediate future. Therefore, as elsewhere on the network, the reduced level of demand and changing nature of the market means it is possible that not all of the services in the new structure will definitely run at all times of the day from December 2022 but may instead be tailored to when and where passenger demand makes it appropriate to do so. This will be kept under close review so that services are introduced at the right time for passengers. Train operators will maintain regular dialogue with stakeholders and partners and make such decisions closer to the time.

- 3.13 To ensure that the timetable is delivered robustly, the Task Force will oversee timetable simulation modelling alongside the consultation on the final all-day timetable and monitoring industry readiness.

- 3.14 **The 'Railmap' linking investment to future timetables**

Following discussions at TfN Board and Rail North Committee work has been taking place on a new form of collaboration between the DfT and Transport for the North that links the development of infrastructure to a roadmap (referred to as the 'RailMap') of future timetable enhancements. This ensures that there is an 'exit strategy' from the 2022 timetable, setting out how and when services can be enhanced

as 'points of opportunity' arise (for example through further service changes or the delivery of infrastructure schemes).

- 3.15 The RailMap will also show when Rail North Committee will be requested to make decisions about which additional services should operate.
- 3.16 All industry parties involved in the Task Force have signed-up to the development of the RailMap, including the Department for Transport (DfT) and Network Rail. This is important as it will provide a degree of commitment to delivery over time.
- 3.17 A programme is now being worked up by the Task Force as to how the RailMap will be populated, with a target of having the final version agreed by March 2022. This will allow outcomes of the Integrated Rail Plan and Spending Review to be fully incorporated.
- 3.18 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 secured agreement to commission modelling work to confirm the additional capacity and performance benefits of new platforms 15 and 16 at Piccadilly. The initial conclusions from the modelling work are due by early November. As infrastructure solutions are developed there will need to be engagement with stakeholders on future service options through the collaborative working.
- 3.19 **Next Steps**

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 November to meet industry timelines for planning and delivering a robust timetable.

4. Corporate Considerations:

Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications for TfN as a result of this report.

Resource Implications

- 4.2 There are no direct resourcing implications as a result of this report.

Legal Implications

There are no obvious legal implications arising other than raised within the report.

- 4.3

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 through the Task Force.

Environmental Implications

- 4.5 This report does not constitute or influence a plan or programme which sets the framework for future development consents of projects listed in the EIA Directive and therefore does stimulate the need for SEA or EIA.

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 timetable proposals. The response to the first consultation was recently publicly released as detailed in section 3.8 of this report.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 There are no background papers to this report.

6. Appendices

- 6.1 There are no appendices to this report.

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used (*if applicable*)

Please include any technical abbreviations and acronyms used in the report in this section. (Please see examples below.) This will provide an easy reference point for the reader for any abbreviations and acronyms that are used in the report.

- a) *DfT* *Department for Transport*