

Meeting: Rail North Committee

Subject: Manchester Services and Infrastructure Update

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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 provides an update on the consultation process on the proposed December 2022 timetable.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 Rail North Committee is asked to:

- 1) Note the progress made on the development of the December 2022 timetable and the next steps including the further round of public consultation in November 2021 and December 2021.
- 2) Note the progress on working with the Department for Transport and industry colleagues on developing the infrastructure solution which will be reflected in the 'RailMap' identifying a co-ordinated long-term service and infrastructure solution for the corridor to restore and improve connectivity.
- 3) Note the positive progress on infrastructure, including industry agreement on the required configuration of Oxford Road station, modelling work on the additional performance benefits from delivering Platforms 15/16 at Piccadilly at the same time as the infrastructure changes at Oxford Road and confirmation from the Department for Transport of a £26m allocation to fund further development work on infrastructure.

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 meant that the pre-covid timetable could not be operated and an alternative timetable solution had to

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) established a Task Force (the Manchester Recovery Task Force) to develop solutions to the problem including short-term timetable changes. Transport for the North (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. The first tranche is expected to be delivered over the next few years.

2022 Timetable Development

- 3.4 A revised timetable for December 2022 has been developed as an initial step with the aim of delivering a more reliable service for passengers pending delivery of further infrastructure. A full public consultation was carried out earlier in 2021 by The Task Force on three potential timetable options (A, B and C) for this timetable. 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 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>
- 3.6 The consultation response highlighted 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 when infrastructure allows and at the right time for passengers. Train operators will maintain regular dialogue with stakeholders and partners and make such decisions closer to the time.
- 3.7 In response to the Task Force's 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.
- 3.8 Since Summer 2021, Transport for the North and the DfT worked collaboratively to find a way forward on Manchester that allowed the industry to move to the next phase of public consultation on the 2022 timetable.

- 3.9 The Task Force finalised 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 took place with officers from Liverpool City Region, Transport for Greater Manchester, Warrington Borough Council, and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive.
- 3.10 The Train Operators, supported by the Task Force, have produced detailed timetables based on these proposals for the second consultation. This consultation, which covers points of detail in the proposed timetables rather than the overall structure, commenced on 15 November 2021 and is due to end on 31 December 2021.
- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 To ensure that the timetable is delivered robustly, the Task Force will oversee timetable performance modelling alongside the consultation on the final all-day timetable and monitoring industry readiness. Performance modelling of the timetable has commenced, with the output due early in 2022.

The 'RailMap' linking investment to future timetables

- 3.13 Work has been progressing on the 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 will set out both details of known committed events and infrastructure enhancements as well as outlining the current best information about future schemes – which may still be in development and not yet fully funded. The RailMap will also identify other schemes that have an impact upon the immediate Manchester area (such as Hope Valley upgrade or Transpennine Route Upgrade). As such the RailMap should be regarded as a tool to assist Rail North Committee understand the current status of activity and infrastructure enhancements in the Manchester area and to assist informed debate about priorities and funding.
- 3.14 The RailMap will identify how and when services can be enhanced as 'points of opportunity' (for example through further service changes or the delivery of infrastructure schemes) and show when Rail North Committee will be requested to make timely decisions about which amended and additional services should operate.
- 3.15 All industry parties involved in the Task Force have signed up to the development of the RailMap, including the DfT and Network Rail. This is important as it will provide a common source of information and will be updated on a regular basis to reflect progress in agreeing further committed schemes/enhancements over time.
- 3.16 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 for the North and Midlands (IRP) and Spending Review to be fully incorporated. The IRP notes: "Work is ongoing to develop options to improve capacity and reliability of trains in the centre of Manchester and these recommendations will be considered in the context of core schemes proposals of the IRP."

- 3.17 Enhancements in Tranche 1 of the infrastructure plan include options for turnback facilities on the Manchester to Liverpool line in the Warrington area. These will enable the stopping services to be split Liverpool to Birchwood and Manchester to Warrington West, providing more flexibility in the timetable and additional calls at some stations along the route including improved connectivity across Warrington. Network Rail have undertaken initial work and an industry workshop is to be planned for the new year to agree a vision for the route in light of the IRP and decarbonisation proposals.
- 3.18 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.
- 3.19 Positive progress has been made on the identification of appropriate Tranche 2 infrastructure enhancements at Oxford Road Station for the longer platforms required, and within the rail land boundary. Design is programmed to start early in 2022. Improvements to the passenger environment will be included in the next design stage in consultation with stakeholders.
- 3.20 Transport for the North secured agreement to commission modelling work to identify the additional performance benefits that might result from delivering Platforms 15/16 at Piccadilly at the same time as the Oxford Road scheme for a range of possible train frequencies. A technical report of the outcome, including identification of the next steps, is being developed and is due for issue imminently. When received this will be discussed with Rail North Committee Members.
- 3.21 Piccadilly Platform 13 and 14 passenger circulation is also regularly congested, which has been identified as a major contributor to service delays. Improvements to passenger handling at Platforms 13/14 are planned in the short term.
- 3.22 DfT have confirmed a development funding allocation of £26m which will fund Network Rail to develop Tranche 1 to Full Business Case and further development on Tranches 2 and 3. Transport for the North is using its evidence and analytical framework to strengthen the strategic case element of the Full Business Case (required to secure funding).

Next Steps

- 3.23 The next main milestone is the completion of the second phase of public consultation on the detailed timetable plans for December 2022, due to end on the 31 December 2021.
- 3.24 Transport for the North will continue to work with the industry and DfT on identifying the best infrastructure solutions to support future train service needs. Further milestones include completing the full business case, securing funding for Tranche 1 and commencing the design work on the proposed solution for Oxford Road.
- 3.25 Transport for the North will continue to work with Rail North Partnership on future service changes.

4. Corporate Considerations

Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications for Transport for the North as a result of this report.

Resource Implications

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

Legal Implications

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

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. Any infrastructure proposals to improve the capacity and reliability of the system will be subject to EIA Screening, conducted by Network Rail as part of the consenting process for those projects.

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. A consultation is currently being carried out by train operators on the detailed timetable proposals. The response to the first consultation was recently publicly released as detailed in section 3.5 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

a) DfT	Department for Transport
b) IRP	Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands