

Meeting: Rail North Committee Consultation Call

Subject: Manchester Blueprint for Services and Infrastructure

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1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 A report was considered by the Committee at its Consultation Call meeting on 15 December 2021 on work on the Central Manchester congestion hotspot, including the development of the December 2022 timetable as an initial step to address reliability issues. It also covered collaboration with the Department for Transport on the infrastructure solution to support the development of the timetable beyond that initial step; to facilitate the connectivity and capacity needed.
- 1.2 This report is to provide members of the Committee with an update on that work, specifically development of the 'Blueprint' identifying a co-ordinated long-term service and infrastructure solution for the corridor to restore and improve connectivity of train services across the north.
- 1.3 The report also provides an update on the outcome from the round of public consultation in November and December 2021 on the proposed December 2022 timetable and the next steps in implementing the timetable.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 Rail North Committee is asked to:
 - 1) Note the Blueprint linking future service changes to infrastructure, showing how the December 2022 timetable change is a stepping stone in the process that also includes enhancements that will support reliability and connectivity improvements; the Blueprint highlights that the Committee will have an ongoing role in the development and prioritisation of proposals.
 - 2) Note the progress on working with the Department for Transport and industry colleagues on developing a pipeline of infrastructure improvements which will be reflected at each stage of development and delivery in the Blueprint.
 - 3) Note the outcome of the second stage of the consultation process on the December 2022 timetable and the steps that the industry is taking to ensure it successfully implemented.

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. The designation also means that the industry needs to

identify a co-ordinated long-term service and infrastructure solution for the corridor (which is reflected in the ongoing work captured in the Blueprint). In the short-term the number of trains that can use the corridor will effectively be capped and this is reflected in the initial step of the December 2022 timetable change.

- 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 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. Transport for the North has also been providing support to the business case development, using the TAME team's analytical framework.

The 'Blueprint'

- 3.3 During 2021, Transport for the North successfully made the case for having a tool (previously called a 'Railmap' and now referred to as a 'Blueprint') that linked the ongoing infrastructure development to future timetable changes; thereby showing a pathway to resolving the congestion problems and reflecting the need for a plan to address the 'Congested Infrastructure'. This approach has been accepted by all parties and is being led by the Manchester Recovery Task Force. It is also a template adopted for use elsewhere.
- 3.4 The Blueprint is a living document illustrating coordinated infrastructure investment and future timetable opportunities which will be updated by the Task Force as schemes progress. Transport for the North secured this approach as a way of clearly linking infrastructure to services and showing the way forward from the 2022 timetable. A copy of the first issue of the Blueprint is included as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.5 The Blueprint has been developed to cover two main stages, firstly the period up to 2025 and then the period up to 2040 to account for HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, setting out for each stage the major known committed events and infrastructure enhancements, such as major programmes of work and industry train lengthening proposals, along with delivery timescales. The Blueprint also includes future schemes which may still be in development but not yet funded, and other schemes that have an impact upon the immediate Manchester area such as Wigan-Bolton Electrification and Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU).
- 3.6 The Blueprint should be regarded as a tool to assist Rail North Committee understand the current status of activity and infrastructure enhancements in Greater Manchester and the North West, assist understanding of priorities and funding and how and when service groups can be enhanced at 'points of opportunity', for example through further service changes or the delivery of infrastructure schemes. It thus shows points when Rail North Committee will be requested to provide input (and make decisions) on which amended and additional services should operate and how connectivity is built back and improved.
- 3.7 Decisions on timetable opportunities will also need to consider programmes further afield affecting services across the north. For example, the first tranche of East Coast Main Line upgrades to deliver 7 or 8 paths per hour are due in the same period and the arising capacity allocation will affect services on an east-west axis as well as north-south.
- 3.8 It is proposed that the 'Blueprint' approach is applied as best practice to other programmes where there is a complex interaction between different infrastructure

options and service requirements, such as East Coast Main Line (North of York) infrastructure upgrades and services.

Infrastructure Update

- 3.9 Network Rail has been developing an infrastructure plan for the area which has to date been divided into three tranches covering short, medium and long-term proposals.

Tranche 1 Works

- 3.10 Following DfT confirmation of a development and design funding allocation of £26m which will fund Network Rail to develop Tranche 1 to Full Business Case and further development of Tranches 2 and 3, Network Rail have now let design contracts for key Tranche 1 works. This includes the 3rd platform at Salford Crescent, Salford area east facing turnback, new northwest platform at Manchester Victoria and Manchester Airport station platform lengthening and track layout.
- 3.11 These works are clearly indicated on the Blueprint, facilitating the capability from 2025 onwards for improved performance through reduced conflicts and bringing an opportunity to reconfigure the train service.
- 3.12 Enhancements in Tranche 1 of the infrastructure plan also include consideration of turnback facilities on the Manchester to Liverpool line in the Warrington area. These are proposed to provide more flexibility in the timetable, additional calls at some stations along the route and restore cross-Warrington connectivity.
- 3.13 Network Rail have undertaken initial feasibility work and an industry workshop is planned to agree a vision for the route and determine any impact on enabling infrastructure options of the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) and electrification proposals.
- 3.14 In line with the normal funding process for rail schemes, acceptance of the Full Business Case (by DfT and Treasury) for Tranche 1 works would release the substantive funding for these works. Subsequent tranches will go through a similar process (to receive funding approvals) and the Blueprint will allow progress to be tracked.

Tranche 2 Works

- 3.15 Addressing the congestion and inadequate passenger facilities at Oxford Road station is the core part of Tranche 2. Upgrades to Manchester Oxford Road Station will be delivered in two main stages, starting with those that are deliverable in the short term such as improving the station entrance with a widened gateline and a new gateline with direct access to Platform 4 to improve passenger flows.
- 3.16 Improvements to the passenger environment and customer information will be included in the next design stage in consultation with stakeholders. Network Rail advise that contract award for this design stage is anticipated for April.
- 3.17 Network Rail have started the tender process for the design work for the more significant Tranche 2 infrastructure enhancements, involving a remodelling of the station layout (at Oxford Road) to provide less conflicting train movements, longer platforms and improved passenger circulation. This is intended to provide capacity and reliability improvements in the mid-2020s (as indicated on the Blueprint) specifically to remove existing pathing conflicts due to services terminating at Oxford Road and provide capability for longer trains.
- 3.18 Consultation meetings have been arranged with Manchester City Council on the Town Planning aspects of the proposed works.

- 3.19 Transport for the North will work with Network Rail to ensure the benefits of the Oxford Road upgrades are clearly conveyed to the public and that these works represent an early visible demonstration of progress with the required improvements to the rail infrastructure in Central Manchester. Transport for the North will also continue to pursue a holistic approach to station development with partners, so that both active travel and multi-modal provisions are considered in development of station improvements.
- 3.20 Manchester Piccadilly station is a major hub at the heart of an internationally recognised city with direct rail links to the region's major international airport and identified as a major station on the HS2 network. Work is underway to address the passenger circulation and congestion problems at Piccadilly Platforms 13 and 14.
- 3.21 The plans include improvements to passenger facilities, access and circulation arrangements and active information systems to help guide passengers to the right location at the right time, particularly in the event of disruption. This is likely to include additional lifts, escalators and further improvements to signage and real time information designed to assist both regular and infrequent travellers to best effect recognising their different needs.
- 3.22 Following conclusion of the modelling work commissioned by Transport for the North 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, the Task Force is producing an overview document that will set out the key conclusions of the technical report and what it means in terms of the overall programme of works to unlock the full benefit and development of the Blueprint, for discussion with Rail North Committee Members.

Broader Tranche 3 Works

- 3.23 The Task Force will develop and consider the case for longer term investment in the Manchester area particularly in the light of IRP, HS2 and asset renewal spending settlements. Although some development funding has been allocated from the £26m, design works are at much lower level of maturity and again further work will be subject to DfT and Treasury approval.
- 3.24 Network Rail have engaged with the HS2 team on interfaces at Piccadilly and the south side of Manchester, including on a potential Platform 0 at Manchester Piccadilly, which may assist in providing additional capacity at Piccadilly where closures are required for some of the more major works.
- 3.25 Work is continuing to identify the costs and challenges to deliver Piccadilly station throat remodelling and the grade separation of the major junctions which will narrow down the scope and allow prioritisation and subsequently development of the funding case.

Integration of Infrastructure Programme with the Blueprint

- 3.26 The infrastructure options are being developed through the Manchester and North West Transformation Programme and to date have evolved in tranches based around grouping of short, medium and long-term major works. As part of the long-term commitment through the Blueprint, the Task Force is developing options for future timetables changes and improvements beyond the initial December 2022 plan.
- 3.27 As the timetable options are supported by combinations of infrastructure works Network Rail have proposed that the infrastructure works are now grouped into programmes of works delivery referred to as 'configuration states', matched to the timetable opportunities. This will be an interactive process that brings

development of the infrastructure fully into line with the Blueprint approach, clearly aligning timetable benefits to enhancements and allowing development of a clear programme of works. This also enables better alignment with TRU works which will affect timetables in Manchester in coming years. There will be a need to ensure that the funding for future services matches the infrastructure changes.

2022 Timetable Development

- 3.28 Development of and progress with the second public consultation on a revised timetable for 2022 led by Train Operators was reported to the Committee at its meeting in December 2021. Train Operators received over 800 responses to the consultation from stakeholders and individuals.
- 3.29 The December 2022 timetable change is a stepping stone in a process that links service development with infrastructure enhancements to support reliability and connectivity improvements. Many of the comments received relate to the overall structure of the timetable, which was the subject of the Phase 1 consultation. The Blueprint indicates how the timetable can be developed in the future to take account of structural issues as and when infrastructure and other changes allow.
- 3.30 Other points raised in the consultation relate to changes in frequency levels, flows related to access to education and specific timings of some evening services. Service frequencies in the timetables reflect the reduced level of demand and changing nature of the market to ensure value for the taxpayer, bearing in mind the industry financial challenge.

3.31 As a result of the consultation feedback Northern are planning to make timetable adjustments in the following areas:

- Later Manchester -Cumbria services;
- Sunday Farnworth calls;
- Sunday times of first and last trains from Macclesfield and New Mills;
- Educational flows serving Blackburn/Clitheroe, Lancaster, and New Mills/Rose Hill.

Northern will now begin the standard industry timetable submission process with Network Rail System Operator.

- 3.32 The Task Force is currently finalising the performance modelling of the timetable. Initial outputs appear positive but are subject to further validation and assurance checks. Further tweaks to the timetable are taking place to achieve higher delay reductions. Further analysis and testing may be carried out subject to the outcome of the checks.
- 3.33 The industry has set up regular monitoring of operational readiness for December 2022 which is incorporated into the wider regional and national industry programme management forums. This includes ensuring integration of traincrew, rolling stock, and infrastructure development.

4. Corporate Considerations

Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications for Transport for the North as a result of this report.
- 4.2 The requirement for further funding for Network Rail to deliver Tranche 1 schemes beyond Full Business Case and further develop Tranches 2 and 3, which will be subject to DfT and Treasury approval, is referenced in the report.

Resource Implications

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

Legal Implications

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

Risk Management and Key Issues

4.5 This paper does not require a risk assessment, however, risks relating to the December 2022 timetable are being identified, assessed managed and monitored through the Task Force.

Environmental Implications

4.6 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

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

Consultations

4.8 A full public consultation was carried out by train operators on the detailed timetable proposals for 2022, as detailed in Section 3 of this report. This was open to any members of the public and Local Authorities to respond to.

5. Background Papers

5.1 There are no background papers to this report.

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1 – the 'Blueprint' linking investment to future timetables

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used

a) DfT	Department for Transport
b) TRU	Transpennine Route Upgrade
c) IRP	Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands