
Meeting: Transport for the North Board
Subject: Transpennine Route Upgrade
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Meeting Date: Thursday 29 September 2022

1. Purpose of the Report:

1.1 To provide background for a presentation by Network Rail on the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) funding, scope, outcomes, challenges, and mitigations.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 It is recommended that TfN Board:

- a) Notes the Department for Transport (DfT) funding announcement trebling investment in TRU.
- b) Notes the National Audit Office (NAO) TRU report which has identified a clear case for investment but recognises significant risks to the programme's progress that could cause further disruption if the DfT Network Rail and the Government fail to work together to manage challenges and deliver the expected benefits for rail users.
- c) Welcomes the establishment of the TRU Stakeholder Forum which is Chaired by TfN, but stresses the importance of TfN being a member of the TRU Programme Board.

3. Main Issues:

3.1 The Transpennine route is a 76-mile-long rail link, which connects Manchester and York, via Huddersfield and Leeds. Owing to the full extent of train services operating along the corridor, investment decisions also directly influence future journey times, train type and capacity, and performance of services to the major regional centres of Liverpool, Scarborough, Hull, Middlesbrough, Darlington, Durham and Newcastle and the international gateway of Manchester Airport.

3.2 DfT and Network Rail have been considering upgrades to the Transpennine route for over a decade and TfN has issued formal (statutory) and informal advice in support of this vital east-west rail investment in the North.

3.3 In November 2021, DfT published its Integrated Rail Plan (IRP). It was noted in the IRP that TRU will be delivered as phase one of Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) with completion of a much-enhanced scope of works by mid-2030s.

3.4 In July 2022, DfT announced it was to treble the overall investment in TRU from £2.9bn to £9bn. The DfT also announced the release of £959m of funding from this £9bn programme for the next phase of works - the completion of electrification between Stalybridge and Manchester which would support operation of electric trains between these two locations by 2025.
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/transport-secretary-more-than-trebles-investment-for-rail-in-the-north-to-over-9-billion>)

3.5 The TRU Programme includes full electrification of the route (Manchester – York), additional track in some sections, new digital signalling, station upgrades and gauge clearance and additional capacity to enhance freight flows, including

container traffic which is a growth market. To further meet our freight aspirations TfN is now supporting DfT's work to identify the necessary additional investment off the TRU core route (west of Stalybridge and east of Thornhill LNW Junction) to enable a 24 hour 6 day a week freight operation and to accommodate the forecast extra tonnage. The increased capacity for passenger and freight services (extra 2 passenger trains every hour and additional hourly freight slots) will be supported by a reduction in journey times and an improvement in reliability as well as an estimated reduction in carbon emissions by up to 87,000 tonnes per year. TfN has played a vital role in influencing this enhanced scope issuing statutory advice, acting as a critical friend and providing evidence and insight to support decision making.

- 3.6 Ahead of the next business case update by DfT in December 2022 and as the programme moves into a period of construction that extends into the 2030s, the National Audit Office (NAO) in July this year issued its assessment on whether the DfT and Network Rail are in a position to successfully deliver TRU (<https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/The-Transpennine-Route-Upgrade-Programme.pdf>). Despite noting the difficult start which has added delay and will mean passengers suffering overcrowding on a route that is at full capacity for longer, the NAO concluded that the TRU Programme is now in a good position to proceed with greater certainty.
- 3.7 The NAO did however note that there is still work to be done by DfT and Network Rail to manage key areas of risk and challenge (*stakeholder engagement, financial and skills challenges, connections with other rail projects*), as well as planning to achieve the intended benefits, if they are to ensure the TRU Programme is in a good position to secure long-term value for taxpayers' money.
- 3.8 The NAO report notes that DfT and Network Rail are putting in place governance structures that should enable them to manage the TRU Programme more effectively. An example is the recent establishment of a TRU Stakeholder Forum which is Chaired by TfN. This is an officer-led forum acting as an advisory panel that creates the platform for a proactive dialogue between key stakeholders and the proposed TRU governance structure (covering TfN and Rail North Partnership, local authorities, train operators, freight industry, DfT, Network Rail as well as expert insight from Transport Focus).
- 3.9 TfN is not currently a member of the TRU Programme Board, although it has previously been a member. The NAO report highlights that there will be key decisions required of the Programme Board as delivery of TRU is taken forward. It also highlights the critical importance of local input into those decisions. In this context whilst the Stakeholder Forum adds value, there is a strong case to be made for TfN being formally part of the TRU Programme Board.
- 3.10 Whilst the TRU programme falls within the remit of TfN's role as co-sponsor of NPR, TfN's membership of the TRU Programme Board would strengthen the linkage between the project and the local community. This would be consistent with the outcome of the NAO report.
- 3.11 The TRU Stakeholder Forum will have an ambassadorial role helping to maintain the profile of the TRU project by bringing together these key stakeholders to help manage relationships at a regional level to support wider economic, social and environmental objectives of a scheme benefitting both passenger and freight services.
- 3.12 Working closely with the TRU Strategic Communications Group and the industry's Strategic Access Task Force the TRU Stakeholder Forum will help with the push of information out to the wider stakeholder community to inform, update and advise and will pull information from the stakeholder community to identify programme

risks and opportunities and feedback local intelligence. Through structured engagement the forum will help in the identification of concerns and opportunities regarding the implementation of TRU scope.

3.13 The TRU Programme of work over the next 10+ years will ultimately transform the North Transpennine rail corridor into a high-performing, reliable railway, bringing more frequent, more reliable, faster, greener trains. Whilst some elements of the TRU Programme are still in design phase, a major programme of work is already being delivered, to bring better journeys for passengers across the Pennines and beyond. The magnitude of this work will require disruptive possessions of the track, but plans are being put in place to ensure passengers and freight is kept moving while work takes place on the core TRU route. Subject to confirmation, significant blockades over the next few years are likely to include:

- Dewsbury (February 2023) - track and Morley station works
- Stalybridge (March 2023) – electrification works
- Huddersfield (January 2024 to December 2025) – multiple blockades and weekend works at Huddersfield Station
- Mirfield (Summer 2025) – Heaton Lodge Junction (Mirfield) to Dewsbury
- East of Leeds (Summer 2026) – Neville Hill works

3.14 Network Rail will provide Members with an update at the meeting on the TRU scope, funding and challenges and the work that is taking place across the industry to manage disruption to passengers, communities and businesses.

4. Corporate Considerations

4.1 Financial Implications

No direct financial implications associated with this report.

4.2 Resource Implications

There are no direct resourcing implications associated with this report.

4.3 Legal Implications

There are no apparent legal implications as a result this report.

4.4 Risk Management and Key Issues

This paper does not require a risk assessment. TfN's Corporate Risk Register includes a risk associated with TRU. There is a risk that individual programmes are not aligned and expected benefits are not realised.

4.5 Environmental Implications

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.

Passenger rail and rail freight has an essential part to play in achieving our decarbonisation objectives within TfN's Decarbonisation Strategy, particularly around reducing private car vehicle and road freight mileage.

4.6 Equality and Diversity

There are no equality and diversity implications with this report.

4.7 Consultations

A consultation is not required.

5. Background Papers

5.1 None.

6. Appendices

6.1 None.

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

a) TRU	<i>TransPennine Route Upgrade</i>
b) NPR	<i>Northern Powerhouse Rail</i>
c) DfT	<i>Department for Transport</i>
d) IRP	<i>Integrated Rail Plan</i>
e) NAO	<i>National Audit Office</i>