

---

**Meeting:** Rail North Committee Consultation Call  
**Subject:** Manchester Task Force  
**Author:** Charlie French, Investment Planning Manager  
**Sponsor:** Darren Oldham, Rail and Roads Director  
**Meeting Date:** Wednesday 22 February 2023

---

**1. Purpose of the Report:**

- 1.1 The previous report to the Rail North Committee covered the implementation of the Manchester Task Force led December 2022 timetable change and associated infrastructure schemes required to support this, whilst updating on the progress of future infrastructure upgrades in the region and development of potential service opportunities.
- 1.2 This report is to provide members of the Rail North Committee with an early indication of how the revised service pattern is performing. It also updates on the progress of infrastructure development, following the recent Manchester Task Force industry workshop held on 1 February 2023.

**2. Recommendations:**

- 2.1 Rail North Committee is recommended to:
1. Note the early positive indications from the implementation of the December 2022 timetable change, with recognition of the significant effort by all parties to enable its introduction;
  2. Note that Department for Transport has advised Ministers to move the Configuration State 2 infrastructure schemes into delivery; and
  3. Note the progress with the development of infrastructure upgrades at Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Airport in Configuration State 3.

**3. Main Issues:**

December 2022 Timetable Change

- 3.1 The December 2022 timetable change was designed by the industry to provide a new baseline structure to the North West timetable to deliver immediate improved reliability and performance. Manchester Task Force continue to assess future service opportunities in parallel with infrastructure development work.
- 3.2 The changes in December 2022 saw service groups amended with compromises needed, including changes to origins and destinations, frequencies, and stopping patterns so there was capacity to operate a robust service that passengers could rely on. Seating capacity was also increased by operating longer trains, and more electric operated services with better performance characteristics were introduced. This was all designed to allow trains to pass through the core smoothly, but with a requirement for some passengers to interchange. This reflects service models at other congestion hotspots.
- 3.3 Assessment of the impact of the changes on train service performance and reliability has been limited by the significant quantity of industrial action which took place throughout December 2022 and early January 2023; however, early indications are that the timetable is bedding in well and that the greatest improvements are being seen on Northern service groups operating on the Castlefield corridor.

- 3.4 A key aim of the December 2022 timetable change was to reduce congestion, and modelling anticipated a reduction of 20%. Data comparing post with pre timetable change performance is not yet available, so no firm conclusions can be drawn at this time, however a performance assessment will be produced in early April 2023 once a longer period of 'normal' operations can be analysed.

#### Infrastructure Progress

- 3.5 Network Rail have continued to refine their plans with infrastructure enhancements grouped into five 'configuration states' which show the full journey from now to the completion of the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) and then on to the introduction of Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and HS2.

- 3.6 Each configuration state brings together complementary infrastructure enhancement schemes which collectively support and facilitate opportunities to change service operations.

- 3.7 This refinement of plans is designed to deliver a significant impact, whilst minimising the need for land acquisition, and these have been determined through significant collaboration across the industry through the Manchester Task Force.

- 3.8 Configuration State 1:

The network is now in configuration state 1 following the implementation of the December 2022 timetable which introduced service changes aimed at easing congestion, particularly through the Castlefield Corridor, and improving train service performance across the North. This was delivered alongside £84m of infrastructure enhancements, including platform extensions for 6 car services on the Manchester – Bolton – Cumbria route (at Staveley, Ulverston and Irlam), commissioning of the former Manchester International Depot for servicing and stabling of Northern's electric fleet and operational control enhancements on the Chat Moss route.

- 3.9 The successful delivery of these infrastructure enhancements demonstrates significant progress and is the result of meaningful collaboration through the Manchester Task Force.

- 3.10 Additionally, work is currently underway at Salford Central to reduce the stepping distance from platform to train, improving accessibility.

- 3.11 Configuration State 2:

The infrastructure interventions within configuration state 2 that Ministers have been advised to progress include:

- A third platform at Salford Crescent station;
- Turnback sidings to the east of Manchester Victoria station;
- Turnback sidings near Salford Central; and
- Station access/flow improvements at Victoria station.

These in addition to the already funded and in delivery works to electrify Wigan to Bolton and the Transpennine Route Upgrade Manchester Victoria to Stalybridge works and Hope Valley route enhancements, provide the opportunity for more timetable reform which the Taskforce is considering now.

- 3.12 Final business cases for each of the infrastructure interventions within configuration state 2 have been completed, having been developed through the Manchester Task Force with cross industry input including content from TfN for the strategic case, all to ensure a robust case. The Department for Transport is actively working to secure funding to move these to delivery and completion around 2025.

- 3.13 Delivery of these infrastructure enhancements will support further changes to train services in the mid-2020s.
- 3.14 Service options associated with the delivery of infrastructure enhancements set out within Configuration State 2 will be presented to Manchester Task Force in February 2023, with Officer Reference Group workshops planned for March 2023 where options will be presented and feedback sought.
- 3.15 Configuration State 3 to 5:  
These include longer term infrastructure enhancements required in Manchester and the North West from late 2020s through to early 2040s with interventions identified which seek to deliver the outputs required to enable introduction of more services, and facilitate the introduction of additional services, but which require further development and design.
- 3.16 Configuration state 3:  
This is focused on central Manchester and East – West services. Options are being developed at pace and are expected to include the Cheshire Lines Committee (CLC) route upgrade, platform extensions at Manchester Airport to accommodate longer trains and a complete remodel of the station buildings, platform lengthening and track layout at Manchester Oxford Road and increased platform capacity likely to be at Manchester Piccadilly. The Manchester Task Force is supporting delivery of the outline business cases for each of these schemes across this year and in to early 2024, and associated activities to progress from design to delivery.
- 3.17 Configuration state 4:  
Requires refinement, but is likely to include schemes such as the introduction of European Train Control Systems (ETCS) on West Coast Mainline (WCML) North, electrification from Manchester Victoria to Rochdale, resignalling Stockport, ETCS on Castlefield corridor, Ordsall Lane Grade Separation, and the introduction of HS2 rolling stock (HS2 to Crewe – Phase 2A); and
- 3.18 Configuration state 5:  
Is a post Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) status and includes Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and HS2 Phase 2B.
- 3.19 The Manchester Task Force will be seeking to progress design development of configuration state 3, with a view to securing further funding for delivery of these enhancements. This will be done in parallel with the delivery of configuration state 2 enhancements, providing a continuous flow of upgrades.
- 3.20 An industry workshop was held on 1 February 2023 bringing together representatives from Department for Transport, Network Rail, TransPennine Express, Northern, Transport for the North and Transport for Greater Manchester to review progress and discuss next steps on the development and delivery of the Manchester Programme. This workshop focused on three distinct areas:
- Castlefield Corridor;
  - Manchester Piccadilly terminal and the route to Stockport; and
  - Associated enhancements (e.g. ETCS).
- The workshop identified several actions, including the need for emerging plans around Manchester Oxford Road to be presented to Manchester Task Force, with consideration of an access strategy for any proposed works which will need to be cognisant of the impact on customers due to other access requirements in the region resulting from other planned infrastructure enhancements and engineering works.

- 3.21 The CLC whole route upgrade is being developed as a proposal in place of earlier options which only explored turnbacks either side of Birchwood and is believed to be more cost effective and deliver greater benefits.
- 3.22 A stakeholder session was held in 2022 to inform the development of the CLC route upgrade proposal. Since then, progress has slowed. Transport for the North is working with the Manchester Task Force and Department for Transport to understand the current position and where support could be provided to move development forward, e.g. contributing to the development of the Outline Business Case. Requests have also been made to Network Rail for a further stakeholder session to be convened.
- 3.23 Financial constraints mean that each enhancement identified within each configuration state requires its own business case which must present a positive Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) both independently and when presented as part of a package of work.
- 3.24 Business Cases will continue to be developed through the Manchester Programme with cross industry input to ensure a robust case can be made to Treasury for the investment. Transport for the North will continue to support the development of business cases for infrastructure investments by providing local insight and data with the intent of maximising the benefit of any investment.
- 3.25 The options for the timetable change aligned to the implementation of each configuration state will be identified through the Manchester Task Force (MTF) and Rail North Committee (RNC) will be asked to provide direction on priorities, continuing to balance the need to maintain performance whilst providing additional capacity and connectivity.

#### **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 Investment decisions to allow Network Rail to deliver Tranche 1 schemes and develop and design Tranche 2 and 3 schemes are subject to Department for Transport and Treasury approval, noting the recent change in Ministerial team and potential Spending Review.

##### ***Resource Implications***

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

##### ***Legal Implications***

- 4.4 There are no apparent legal implications arising as a result of this report.

##### ***Risk Management and Key Issues***

- 4.5 This paper does not require a risk assessment, however, risks relating to any timetable changes and infrastructure enhancements are being identified, assessed managed and monitored through the Manchester Task Force. A risk has been included on the Transport for the North Corporate Risk Register in relation to future timetable changes.

##### ***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.

- 4.7 Delivery of the blueprint will encourage growth of travel by rail services and contribute to environmental targets through reduction in journeys by road.
- 4.8 Any specific environmental issues will be picked up by Network Rail in the development and delivery of individual infrastructure interventions.

***Equality and Diversity***

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

***Consultations***

- 4.10 Consultations will be carried out by the appropriate body in development of the infrastructure works and on timetable changes through industry processes.
- 4.11 A full public consultation was carried out by train operators on the detailed timetable proposals for 2022. 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 None.

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

a) IRP	Integrated Rail Plan
b) NPR	Northern Powerhouse Rail
c) TRU	Transpennine Route Upgrade
d) WCML	West Coast Mainline
e) ETCS	European Train Control System
f) BCR	Benefit Cost Ratio
g) MTF	Manchester Task Force
h) CLC	Cheshire Lines Committee
i) MNTP	Manchester and Northwest Transformation Programme