

Further written evidence submitted by West Yorkshire Combined Authority (IRP0110)

Introduction:

The City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council were invited by the chair of the Transport Committee, to provide a critique of the written evidence provided by the Department for Transport (DfT) to the Transport Committee's enquiry into the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP).

As the Mayoral Combined Authority, representing Bradford and the surrounding districts of Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, and Wakefield, we support Bradford's critique and request the Transport Committee also considers our challenges to some of the statements made by the DfT, in their evidence submission.

Department for Transport Evidence Submission:

The DfT in their submission highlights an unprecedented investment of £96bn on rail infrastructure, which is welcomed, but most of the funding falls outside our region. We calculate that West Yorkshire will receive around £7bn in investment, considerably less than the £39bn going to Greater Manchester, despite both regions having similar sized economic output and population. We both face the same challenges relating to transport provision, decarbonisation and levelling up of our economies, but the investment in rail infrastructure is not equitable.

The DfT state that 'the railway faces significant and possibly permanent change in three markets – commuting, physical shopping and business travel' and that it is a public service where 'demand has declined'. This might reflect the national picture in the short term but already across the North there has been an 81% recovery rate (as opposed to 58% in London) in passenger numbers and in Leeds, numbers exceed pre-pandemic levels on most weekends.

The IRP delivers more capacity and faster journeys on eight out of the ten busiest routes in the North and Midlands, according to the DfT. The IRP does provide some greater capacity and faster journeys than present, but not to the same level as would have been delivered if HS2 and NPR had been delivered, as originally proposed. Important and busy transport corridors such as Leeds – Sheffield, Leeds – Hull and Bradford – Manchester, where car is the primary mode of choice have been ignored in the IRP. To deliver against levelling up

objectives then investment in rail should also focus on serving corridors where rail demand is suppressed due to poor, infrequent and slow connections.

There are several comments in the DfT submission regarding the potential location of an NPR station in Bradford, which do not acknowledge any benefits from a different location. It is important to understand that the current Bradford Interchange site is heavily constrained from a rail perspective with steep gradients and tight curves. It is also a turn-back station, and therefore imposes journey and operational penalties on services which operate through the station. To cater for additional rail services, which may follow as result of electrification of the line to Leeds, will require more platforms. These would be very disruptive to construct and very likely to require land currently utilised by the adjacent bus station. An alternative site, identified by Bradford Council would be much less disruptive to construct, be a through station allowing NPR and Calder Valley rail services to share platforms (speeding up the latter) and planned properly would be well-integrated into the current bus and future mass transit network. The proposed location is slightly further away from the city centre (200-250m), but still very accessible and key to the development of the city's future growth in the surrounding area.

Freight is mentioned on numerous occasions in the DfT's submission. Including the importance of supporting future growth, the need to switch from road to rail and this being a key part of the Government's decarbonisation strategy. The IRP will help to support future freight growth on the trans-Pennine network, but as proposed only one path an hour is available for freight. In addition, TRU / NPR construction will be disruptive and potentially impact this important freight route for at least fifteen years.

On the parallel M62 corridor, freight accounts for a third of all vehicle movements. Without electrification of lines towards Hull (dropped in the IRP), sufficient freight paths and guarantees that disruption will be kept to a minimum then it is not possible to offer a decarbonised alternative to the motorway network, missing a significant economic and road congestion saving opportunity.

The DfT assert that local service levels have 'generally' been protected in the planning the IRP and at the same time delivering the same number of NPR services between Manchester and Leeds and a journey time of 33 minutes. Neither the DfT in their submission or the technical annex which supports the IRP offers any information on how this can be achieved, given this corridor also

needs to cater for freight and local aspirations for at least two local stopping services as well. We are sceptical that all these requirements can be delivered by just upgrading existing infrastructure.

Under the section on levelling up and the contribution that the IRP will make to this, the DfT highlight that it will help to create a single economic area, to drive productivity and growth and that investment in high-speed rail between the largest cities is important to levelling up. But the DfT say that to connect Bradford to the NPR network would cost £18bn and this would only benefit 650 people. We feel this assertion is incorrect and that the difference is not £18bn but more likely to be around £4bn. Without the full technical evidence, we can only assume this based on the full NPR preferred option. If so, the DfT are not making a fair comparison, as the preferred option includes costs for a new line between Liverpool and Leeds, electrifying Leeds-Hull and upgrades between Leeds – Sheffield and North of York, which are not included in the IRP proposals.

In addition, the assertion that only 650 people travel between Bradford and Manchester is also disingenuous. It is based on 2011 data and only captures commuters travelling from Bradford to Manchester city centre. So, it ignores wider catchment areas adjacent to the stations (e.g. Salford, Trafford and North Kirklees), leisure, shopping & education trips, and travel into Bradford (not just outbound). Also, over the same period Cross-Pennine trips by road have increased by 14%. It also ignores the potential passenger demand for services between Bradford, Liverpool, Manchester Airport and Birmingham for example. It also fails to recognise that passengers are lower than they could be *because* of the poor connectivity. Indeed, it is the very thing that NPR was designed to address.

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