

**Supplementary written evidence submitted by the .
West Midlands Combined Authority (IRP0111)**

Wider Support for Midlands Rail Hub (MRH)

The Midlands Rail Hub concept first appeared in its current form in Network Rail's draft 2016 West Midlands and Chiltern Route Study strategy document (finalised in 2017) which set out the rail industry's view on future rail network investment requirements in the West Midlands region.

The Midlands Rail Hub project has since been taken forward by sub-national transport body Midlands Connect (part of Midlands Engine) on behalf of the rail industry and wider stakeholders.

The Midlands Rail Hub (MRH) project is specifically supported by:

- The **West Midlands Combined Authority** (and its constituent authorities, including Birmingham City Council)

- **Transport for West Midlands**

MRH is a core element of the TfWM/WMCA "Movement for Growth" Local Transport Plan

- **West Midlands Rail Executive** (and its constituent members including Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Staffordshire which will all directly benefit from delivery of the full MRH project)

MRH, alongside HS2, underpins WMRE's 30 year "West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy" for the wider West Midlands region

- **Transport for East Midlands**

- Derby and Derbyshire, Leicester, Leicestershire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Councils

- The various Midlands "**Local Enterprise Partnerships**"

- West Midlands Growth Company

- Birmingham Chamber of Commerce

- It should be noted that the Midlands Rail Hub will also specifically benefit South West England and South Wales by:

- providing a third hourly Birmingham - Bristol service
- providing a second hourly Birmingham – Newport/Cardiff

service (a Union Connectivity Review recommendation)

- improving access to HS2 services to from Birmingham Curzon Station to Nottingham, the North West and Scotland via easy interchange from the adjacent Moor St Station.

As part of the rail industry's "Continuous Modular Strategic Planning Process" Bristol – Birmingham rail corridor work stream, these proposed new services provided by Midlands Rail Hub have also been warmly welcomed by bodies such as the West of England Combined Authority and Transport for Wales.

However, the MRH project itself is not *formally* supported by those bodies at the current time.

Lack of Central Birmingham Rail Network Capacity and December 2022 Timetable Trade-offs

In spite of the current temporary operation of reduced train timetables on some routes across the West Midlands following the COVID pandemic, the requirement for additional rail network capacity in Birmingham to deliver any further service improvements or new services in and out of our key regional centre remains.

This is evidenced by the fact that the introduction of two new trains per hour from Birmingham New St in 2023 to serve the new Camp Hill line stations of Moseley, Kings Heath, Hazelwell and the existing station at Kings Norton is only possible by:

1. Reducing the frequency and restructuring the timing of services at the eastern approaches to Birmingham New St between Birmingham and Birmingham International.

These required timetable changes will be introduced from December 2022 and involve a reduction in local/regional service provision of 1 train per hour, alongside a major timetable recast which creates space for the new services.

2. Not reinstating the full 6 train per hour local service on Birmingham's Cross City line between Lichfield and Redditch/Bromsgrove via Birmingham New St.

Retaining a 4 train per hour frequency, whilst highly undesirable from a Cross City line passenger perspective, provides capacity at both Birmingham New St and at Kings Norton (where the Camp Hill line services from New St will terminate) to enable the two new Camp Hill line services to run.

The consideration of trade-offs between different train services and attempting to balance the requirements of different groups of passengers, have not been undertaken lightly.

However, these difficult decisions reflect the reality of the ongoing lack of rail network capacity in central Birmingham and especially on the tunnelled approaches to Birmingham New St Station.

We are continuing to discuss with Network Rail and Midlands Connect whether actually bringing forward some elements of the Midlands Rail Hub scheme, notably infrastructure changes including a new platform at Kings Norton Station, could potentially allow the operation of **both** the 6 train per hour Cross City line service and the new two train per hour Camp Hill line service.

April 2022