

Written evidence submitted by the Stalybridge to Huddersfield Rail User Group (IRP0076)

The Stalybridge to Huddersfield Rail User Group (SHRUG) represents users of the stations between Stalybridge in Greater Manchester and Huddersfield in West Yorkshire on the principle Manchester to Leeds railway line.

This submission is relevant to the following questions:

- 1) Contribution that the IRP will make to rail capacity and connectivity for (a) passengers and (b) freight in (i) the North of England.
- 2) Whether and how the IRP will “level-up” communities in the North;
- 3) Whether the IRP represents value for money for UK taxpayers.

Summary

- We do not consider the IRP to be truly integrated.
- Regarding needs of Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire we strongly welcome the go-ahead for Trans-Pennine and Leeds-Bradford electrification, but these are partial schemes in need of linking to further plans. The contribution to rail capacity and connectivity, whilst welcome, is disappointingly incomplete. For example:
- On decarbonisation IRP contains no plan for a rolling programme of electrification as advocated by the Northern Sparks task force report (2015) and Network Rail’s recent Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy (TDNS).
- Electrification schemes that IRP does propose are incomplete – especially Trans-Pennine (TRU) where there is no commitment for electrification between Stalybridge and Marsden or from Leeds to Hull or the Calder Valley between Manchester and Bradford. Incomplete electrification will necessitate the use of hybrid traction trains greatly reducing efficiency and increasing running costs.
- There is no clarity on how existing lines will be upgraded to in order to integrate with new High-Speed routes.

- Leeds is offered a poor high speed rail deal (113 minutes from London for 186 miles¹), in comparison with Manchester (71 min for 184 miles).
- NPR proposals are incomplete. The IRP version of Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) comprises a new railway from Warrington to Marsden, and then the existing TPE route with extra tracks only as far as Dewsbury. There is no clear plan to increase capacity on the 2-track into Leeds so limiting any capacity increase.

Questions 1 & 2 – Capacity, Connectivity and Levelling UP

We welcome commitment to “full” implementation the Trans Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU), from Manchester to York. This project which was first announced in 2011 and so should now be complete. That it will not now be complete until the early 2030 is disappointing. We note however, that IRP does not clearly commit to electrification of the present route from Stalybridge through to Marsden and beyond. It needs to be clear that full electrification means the whole present route whatever later happens in terms of new lines.

Leeds to Bradford electrification is also welcome. But we are disappointed that this is not described as a first phase of the full Calder Valley Line electrification that was given top ranking by the 2015 Northern Sparks task force report. We expected IRP to endorse the recommendations of the Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy (TDNS), and the Northern Sparks (Northern Electrification Task Force 2015), for the electrification of almost all northern railway routes in a rolling programme that would reduce capital costs.

IRP has little consideration of freight. There is no real consideration as to how a large increase in rail freight across the Pennines can be achieved. This requires direct routes with adequate capacity and the ability to take W12 containers, removing much lorry traffic from the M62 and the A628. We advocate:

- New East-West route north of Sheffield, partially using the former Woodhead alignment, that can be used for both fast passenger services and large volumes of freight.
- Reopening Skipton-Colne, to facilitate rail freight between Merseyside, Lancashire, W/N Yorkshire, Hull, and the NE, as well as providing passenger services from the deprived communities of Pendle, and north _____ and central Burnley, to Bradford and Leeds.

- We regret that the IRP has not endorsed Northern Powerhouse Rail via Bradford. NPR was essential to Bradford's regeneration – levelling up – and would free up capacity on the Huddersfield line enabling more semi-fast and stopping services to operate, thus providing much needed connectivity along the route.
- The proposed Warrington-Marsden NPR high speed line will feed in to a 3-track railway into Huddersfield, 4-track Huddersfield-Dewsbury and just 2-tracks Dewsbury-Leeds as now. IRP fails to detail any plan to upgrade Dewsbury-Leeds which has an hourly service from the Calder Valley as well as six TransPennine Express services per hour. It is difficult to see how more than one or two additional services generated by NPR could be accommodated, in addition to improvement of local services linking the Stalybridge, Dewsbury, and Calder Valley (Brighouse) routes. Leeds
- Leeds station is full, but there is a need for additional services. Work is required to provide additional capacity, probably by providing an additional platform on the south side, as well as by running more through trains. The station also needs to be able to accommodate paths for more through freight trains.

Manchester

Manchester is significant for rail travel across the whole of the north of England, as a destination, origin and interchange point. Capacity improvements via the Castlefield Corridor are much needed for more frequent cross-city services but would require through platforms 15 & 16 at Piccadilly. Such improvements were part of the original "Manchester Hub" proposals that would have made sense of the Ordsall Chord, a new railway line currently to one train per hour in each direction.

In the medium term a new tunnelled route cross-city is highly desirable to meet future capacity. This strengthens the case, rejected by IRP, for new underground through platforms at Piccadilly.

Freight.

On the Castlefield Corridor, one reason for congestion is the hourly freight train path to Trafford Park. Of course, that is an essential service, but the only reason it travels via this congested route is lack of an alternative. There is a proposal for a new avoiding route across South

Manchester, mostly making use of an existing freight route, and incorporating a new freight terminal in Carrington, Trafford.

Question3 – Value for Money for the Tax-Payer

The good things in the IRP will represent excellent value for money for the taxpayer. However, the best value the taxpayer can get is for the North of England to have a railway system which enables a major mode shift of both passengers and freight from road and air to rail. This must apply to local journeys and longer distance inter-city trips. Carbon reduction through modal transfer to rail will promote wider quality of life. Value for money cannot be considered just in financial terms. It must be about cleaning up the environment, and reducing wider costs of health and social consequences.

Overhead electrification, planned as a programme for completion of more than 80% of present non-electric routes before 2050, will make our railways zero-carbon. It will also reduce costs and increased revenue through; lower capital costs of electric trains compared with diesel, hydrogen, battery and multi-mode; reduced operating and maintenance costs compared with complex hydrogen-powered and multi-mode trains (or diesels); increased “sparks effect” revenue because electric trains are quieter, faster and can serve more stations through better acceleration – and are therefore more attractive to passengers.

As road freight works to decarbonise, electrified railways offer a ready-made solution that will contribute significantly to transport decarbonisation in the short to medium term.

The Rail Industry Association has predicted that rolling programme of electrification could reduce capital costs by 30% to 50%, keeping engineering teams occupied and avoid the previous stop-go approach.

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