

## Appendix 2 – Williams Rail Review: Call for Evidence

### Submission of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority

#### 1. Executive Summary

- **The chaos unleashed on passengers and the economy since May 2018 confirms that the current UK organisational and commercial railway frameworks are not working for our region.** As a founding member of Rail North and Transport for the North, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (the LEP) welcome the Williams Rail Review as the catalyst for the fundamental shift that is needed in the way the rail network works for passengers and for the country.
- **The railway should be much more focussed on delivering the service that passengers and freight customers want and need.** A reformed framework is urgently needed to ensure customers (passengers and freight) in all parts of the UK receive a level of service comparable to the best in the world. Structures should be re-configured in a way that places the delivery and planning of current and future rail services (and requisite infrastructure), with passengers and freight customers at the heart of everything. Devolution of the funding, decision-making levers and accountability for rail outcomes to locally elected Members is needed.
- **Form should follow function - the railway should not exist in a bubble, and requires urgent reform so that it provides the mobility that our society needs, equally well across the country.** The railway's structure should be derived from its purpose. To deliver a railway that can support our objectives for sustainable, inclusive, economic growth, our region needs greater devolution of decision making powers about rail outcomes to the sub-national and local levels where the requirements for and impact of those outcomes are best understood.
- **The North of England needs a railway structure that supports the 'Northern Powerhouse' programme of regeneration, rebalancing and productivity growth through investment, which should primarily be about providing a service to customers and society, with profit being a second order priority.** Following decades of under-investment, the north is engaged in a multi-generational programme of economic re-balancing. We need a railway focussed on this long term mission, which supports changing and growing labour markets, which recognises that the investment case in the north will be different to that elsewhere, and which is affordable to all in society. The current system is not delivering and has conflicting objectives and drivers.
- **The railway network is a system. We need a railway framework with aligned objectives, structures and organisational/commercial models.** We need a railway structure that treats the network as a system that can get the basics right, but which is also focussed on the delivery of growth in demand for, and improvement of, the passenger and freight railway.

- **Rail franchising is not working for our region.** Alternative approaches are needed that integrate track and train, and that deliver the services that our region and customers actually want, now and in the future.
- **The railway needs to be totally accountable to democratically elected government at national and sub-national levels for rail outcomes.** There needs to be a clear, golden-thread of transparent accountability between the strategic objectives for rail set and agreed between national, sub-national and local politicians, and the ultimate service delivered and decisions made day to day by the rail industry, to and on behalf of customers. Effective accountability will in turn allow detailed industry decisions to be taken within the industry.
- **The railway needs to be open for business.** As a third party investor in the railway with a planned rail investment portfolio currently worth £250m, we often find the railway hard to do business with.