

TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU): DfT responses to Transport for the North “challenges” set in January 2020

a) DfT should set out a coherent investment plan for CP6 and CP7 encompassing TRU and additional measures to address key areas of congestion across the North to provide a more reliable railway for both passenger and freight services.

Ministers have now endorsed the TRU Outline Business Case which sets out a coherent investment programme for the TransPennine route in both CP6 and CP7. This expedites delivery of benefits from “shovel ready” core projects West of Leeds which can support all leading options for the future of the wider route. It also allows the remaining projects to be developed to allow a decision in 2021 on the final configuration of the whole scheme, including whether to adopt full route electrification, digital signalling, more multi-tracking and improved freight capacity. This development will take account of the recommendations of the new Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands which will set out the wider regional strategy, also building on existing initiatives which are tackling issues in major centres such as Manchester and Leeds.

b) DfT should confirm that full delivery of the reliability, capacity, capability and journey time strategic outputs for the TRU scheme agreed jointly in the 2016 Client Development Remit remains the projects priority and /or final objective. It is our understanding that as part of the development of a refreshed outline business case an ‘economic optimum solution for TRU’ is now being established by DfT which could create the opportunity for a Phase 2 of investment.

The recently refreshed Outline Business Case for TRU did indeed re-optimize investment in economic terms. This exercise has revealed that moving closer to the original CDR targets may now provide better value for money than the “partial” scheme advanced to date. In the next phase of development we are challenging Network Rail to deliver requirements in line with the original CDR targets. The achievability of this will be confirmed in the next update to the Business Case to be delivered in 2021.

c) DfT should confirm how TRU, as part of a sustainable freight strategy for the North, will help meet future demand for the movement of short-sea and deep-sea containers across the Pennines by rail.

The latest Outline Business Case has recommended more development work on freight capacity than earlier proposed. As such, we are now examining a range of options for enhancing the number of train paths available for freight trains across the Pennines. In addition, we are examining the case for a range of loading gauge enhancements to clear tracks and structures for container trains to pass. This work is being taken forward as a joined-up project looking not just at the TRU route but other trans-Pennine lines (Calder Valley and the Copy Pit summit route). This work will feed into the next update of the TRU Business Case in 2021, and enhancement proposals

for the other routes which will be considered through the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP).

d) DfT should provide greater clarity on TRU Phase 1 outputs and how these will be future proofed to support an efficient and safe rolling programme of works that delivers strategic outputs in full, compliments wider investment in the network and minimises the impact on passengers and the economy of the North.

We are approaching the delivery of TRU by identifying a core subset of projects (known as “Group 1”¹) which are now being expedited, and which support a number of potential strategic directions for the wider route, as well as wider initiatives such as making the railway work better in Manchester and Leeds. This approach provides flexibility to different end-states (e.g. decisions on Northern Powerhouse Rail and facilitating freight) but allows delivery of core scope which is mature to progress now without delay. Key examples of this core scope are the extra tracks and junction works east of Huddersfield which unlock key reliability and capacity improvements, and electrification of all the “Group 1” sections. This starts a rolling programme of work which will then be followed up with “Group 2” projects², for which direction will be confirmed at the Business Case update next year.

e) DfT should confirm whether any further TRU outputs can be achieved within Phase 1 at minimal incremental cost or through allocation of any released contingency as designs develop.

Our thinking has moved on from the earlier approach whereby a partial scheme for the whole route constituted “Phase 1”. We’re now effectively phasing by geographic areas, with early Group 1 projects¹ (west of Leeds) delivering core “no regrets” interventions (including electrification of these sections and key capacity interventions) to support the range of likely strategic directions for the whole Manchester-York route. These projects are proceeding at maximum speed and with full approval. Additional outputs can now be delivered through the Group 2 projects² (some west, and some east of Leeds), the scope of which will be set at our Business Case update next year.

f) DfT should acknowledge that, as TfN believe, the full planned TRU spend in CP6 is unlikely to happen and bring forward proposals to utilise that underspend in the North to tackle the most pressing known congestion and performance issues.

Since the previous Outline Business Case in 2018, we have revised the CP6 spend profile to one which we feel is more realistic and deliverable given current knowledge. Ministers have also indicated that spending now forecast for CP7 is a priority. Initiatives to tackle other priorities in the North, such as central Manchester, are now tangibly underway.

¹ Manchester Victoria and Guide Bridge to Stalybridge (Projects W1 and W2a); Huddersfield to Ravensthorpe (Project W3); and Ravensthorpe to Leeds (Projects W4 and W5).

² Stalybridge to Huddersfield (Project W2b); Leeds Marsh Lane to Cross Gates (Project E2); Cross Gates to Micklefield (Project E3); Micklefield to Church Fenton (Project E4); and Church Fenton-York South (Project E1).

g) DfT should confirm how TRU will minimise impact on future operating costs and support the sustainability and decarbonisation agenda by helping achieve net-zero greenhouse gases by 2050 as part of the UK's contribution to stopping global warming.

TRU includes full electrification of the baseline “Group 1” projects as recommended in the recent Outline Business Case, recognising the contribution to operational efficiency and vital decarbonisation. Furthermore, there is ambition to develop proposals for full electrification of the entire Manchester-York TRU route in the next phase, and we have challenged Network Rail to deliver this at a cost which is affordable. The results of this work will inform our updated Business Case next year.

h) DfT should provide reassurance that all stations along the TRU corridor will be upgraded and made fully accessible as part of the phased investment.

We agree that this is a priority and for the next design stage of TRU we have asked Network Rail to put forward proposals to upgrade all stations to required standards where this is not already planned. We will examine proposals as part of the update to our Business Case in 2021.

i) DfT should provide the assurance that investment in TRU, NPR and HS2 forms part of a coherent rail strategy for the North - recognising the different roles and benefits they will play in delivering the transformation of passenger and freight connectivity, capacity, reliability and journey times. In particular ensuring TRU provides sufficient reliable capacity until NPR becomes operational.

We are clear that TRU has a distinct role to solve today's problems and provide a reliable railway with sufficient capacity until NPR is delivered, and continuing to have an important legacy role thereafter. The Integrated Rail Plan will say more about the wider strategy for getting the best out of transformational investments like HS2 and NPR as part of a coherent plan for the North.