

December 2022 timetable consultations:

1. Delivering the outputs of the Manchester Recovery Task Force
2. Proposed changes to Trans-Pennine Express train services: Liverpool Lime Street / Manchester Piccadilly to/from Hull / Scarborough

West Yorkshire Combined Authority: Response to both consultations

December 2021

Executive summary

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority considers that:

1. The December 2022 MRTF timetable proposals can only be regarded as potentially acceptable at all if a clear commitment from Government is forthcoming to provide the infrastructure investment that is needed to ensure that the proposals are indeed only short-term measures. Absent – thus far and based on the content of the Integrated Rail Plan¹ – such a commitment, **the Combined Authority cannot agree to the proposals at all**, and all further comment on the detail of the proposals (including the remainder of this summary) is subject to that **overriding caveat**.
2. There needs to be clear and compelling **evidence provided that the December 2022 timetables would provide performance that is markedly better than present-day timetables** (not merely the previous December 2019 base) where it provides similar levels of service, or no worse where it provides clear connectivity and/or capacity advantages as against today's services. We have concerns that aspects of the December 2022 proposals could compromise performance, particularly around Manchester Victoria.
3. The Combined Authority is broadly comfortable with the proposed alterations to Trans-Pennine Express (TPE) linkages to the east and west of Leeds, specifically the swap between those to Hull and Scarborough. However, we are **not comfortable with the withdrawal of the proposal to provide two trains per hour all day at Slaithwaite and Marsden**, and urge that it be reinstated. We also, in addition to the performance concerns noted, would urge from a connectivity point of view that the proposed fifth hourly train from Leeds should operate to Piccadilly to terminate, not to Victoria.
4. December 2022's timetables must be compatible with the **reinstatement of the regular Huddersfield – Castleford service** (assumed to be in place when the timetable commences), and with its subsequent conversion into a through Manchester – Huddersfield – Castleford – York service as soon as this can be commenced. They must also be **compatible with Elland** station – and more widely with emerging (including but not limited to post-IRP) thinking on the **Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU)** and on the **East Coast Mainline (ECML)**.
5. The proposals appear to be a missed opportunity to address **long-standing structural issues with services on the Calder Valley line** (unlike, for example, Option C of the early MRTF consultation) and to address the **dysfunction of Huddersfield as a connectional node** across a wide variety of corridors.

¹ Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands, hereinafter called "IRP".

1. The West Yorkshire Combined Authority

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority, working in partnership with the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership, operates to ensure that our region is recognised globally as a strong, successful economy where everyone can build great businesses, careers, and lives. We bring together the Mayor, local councils and businesses to achieve this vision, so that everyone in our region can benefit from economic prosperity and a modern, accessible transport network that enables us to move to net-zero carbon emissions by 2038. In this context, the City Region is defined as encompassing the districts of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield.

2. The MRTF, IRP and this consultation

This consultation follows on from that carried out earlier in 2021 on the then May 2022 proposals. Given that the option on which the industry is now consulting is based on options included in that consultation, we consider that most of the comments we made in response to that first consultation remain pertinent – and we have therefore annexed a copy of our March 2021 to this further response.

Since that first consultation, much further work has been done by the industry as a whole and by the Manchester Recovery Taskforce (“MRTF”) in particular – and in addition we have recently had the release of Government’s *Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands* (“the IRP”). This document raises many areas of concern from the Combined Authority’s point of view, but of particular pertinence is the striking and worrying absence from the IRP of any clear Government commitment to delivering the infrastructure interventions identified by the MRTF’s work in order to allow acceptable service levels and patterns to operate around Manchester and beyond, and to do so with reasonable levels of reliability and punctuality. This is despite the progress already made by MRTF in identifying such schemes, and despite the bulk of the infrastructure works identified in essence being schemes that should have long-since been delivered under the Northern Hub programme.

In that context, we therefore consider it highly relevant to repeat here one of the statements with which we began our previous consultation response:

Before commenting on the consultation, it is imperative to emphasise that, as the Transport for the North (TfN) Board and Rail North Committee have said, the potential timetable changes discussed in this consultation can and must only be viewed as short-term palliative interventions intended to mitigate the unacceptable performance that has resulted from attempting to provide better levels of connectivity without adequate investment in infrastructure. Such timetable changes are therefore only acceptable at all in the short term and will only be accepted against the background of a Government commitment to providing the badly overdue infrastructure upgrades that are needed to provide acceptable levels of connectivity, capacity, and performance on the railway in the North – including but not limited to Manchester itself. We therefore strongly support the work that TfN is seeking to take forward on Phase 2 of the Task Force work², as discussed further below, and cannot overemphasise that it is vital that this work be prioritised, and the relevant investment commitments secured.

This point is thrown into sharp relief by the absence of any commitment to MRTF in the IRP, such as to deliver the 2030 train service specifications Transport for the North (TfN)

² Phase 1 being the short-term timetable interventions proposed, originally for May 2022 and now for December 2022.

has developed. In the absence of any such commitment, the “short-term” interventions proposed for December 2022 could in fact risk becoming indefinite: the absence of any long-stop limit means that the proposed timetable compromises are no longer necessarily “short-term pain for long-term gain” at all.

It follows from this that compromises that might potentially have been unwelcome, but acceptable in the short term as a means of “buying time” until infrastructure interventions are delivered, can no longer be regarded as acceptable.

This point is critically important for WYCA, and we therefore unequivocally state:

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority does not consider the December 2022 proposals to be acceptable unless and until there is a clear, unequivocal and explicit confirmation of Government’s commitment to deliver the infrastructure necessary to allow the 2030 train service specifications to be delivered.

Specific aspects of the proposed December 2022 timetables which render it unacceptable to WYCA other than as a time-limited, short-term expedient – and therefore unacceptable in the absence of such a commitment – include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The absence of:
 - direct Bradford – Calderdale – Manchester Airport services, which have been outstanding since the commencement of the former Arriva Rail North franchise in April 2016 (this being Bradford City’s top priority for MRTF to deliver)
 - An additional 1tph between Bradford and Manchester (i.e. 3tph vice 2tph), also a 2016 franchise commitment
 - 2tph Huddersfield – Manchester stopper all day, with easy (preferably cross-platform) connections available at Stalybridge from and to whichever Manchester station the services do not directly serve: ***it is a particular concern that this was proposed under the initial MRTF consultation but has now been withdrawn – the introduction of this service is a priority for both WYCA and Kirklees District***
 - 2tph from Leeds via Huddersfield to Manchester Airport (at least one to serve Dewsbury)³
- Any failure to provide
 - 7-day timetables (including introducing Sunday services where these are currently missing)
 - Consistent clockfaces hourly and daily (including the currently missing evening services through Brighouse)
 - The proposed through Manchester – Huddersfield – Wakefield – Castleford – York service (with Huddersfield – Wakefield – Castleford services reinstated as a matter of urgency and maintained until this can be provided)
 - 2tph Low Moor to Leeds, daily
 - Usable connections in both directions at Brighouse for Upper Calderdale – Huddersfield connectivity
 - Connections at Huddersfield between all lines, removing current unacceptable waiting times and non-connections

³ The longer term aspiration of 2tph to Manchester Airport is critical to providing users with the confidence required use these services without the fear of cancellations / changing platform at Manchester Piccadilly / missed flights. In the interim improved connections at Manchester Piccadilly should be sought (with easy interchange between platforms).

- Compatibility with Elland
- Additional stops at Sowerby Bridge
- Terminating Calder Valley trains at Manchester Victoria (other than the importance of the Manchester Piccadilly – Airport link, where Calder trains run through to is however not critical for WYCA; a Liverpool extension as proposed by the former ARN franchise is not essential, provided that TPE trains connect well and there is ticketing cooperation)
- Any failure to ensure high levels of operating performance – with management of perturbations that puts passenger journeys first such as by maintaining connections

We therefore clearly state that ***all subsequent comments in the remainder of this response document regarding positive and negative features of the proposed December 2022 timetables are subject to this overriding caveat, i.e. that the December 2022 proposal as a whole must be rejected until Government commitments on infrastructure are secured.***

3. Performance benefits and the base timetable

We are aware that hitherto the MRTF work on short-term timetabling changes has taken December 2019 timetables as a base against which performance of the future options has been measured. This is really now no longer meaningful, as the timetables now operating (at least until the December 2021 timetable change – it is too early to comment robustly on December 2021) provide a different base – and one that has generally been associated with markedly higher levels of performance (reliability and punctuality) than were seen in December 2019, let alone May 2018. It is important in this context for us to emphasise this, because:

- (i) In general the December 2021 timetables offer similar levels of services on routes relevant to West Yorkshire (particularly the Diggle and Calder Valley lines) to those proposed under the December 2022 consultation – the main exception being the quantum of TPE fast services (December 2022 would add an extra York – Manchester – Victoria service).
- (ii) Therefore it is important that the MRTF work is clear that **performance under the proposed December 2022 timetables will be at least as good as that seen at present**, not merely better than December 2019, as from a West Yorkshire point of view the “do-nothing” option of continuing the current service patterns on the Diggle and Calder Valley lines would not necessarily be an unacceptable short-term option. More specifically, performance should be demonstrably either markedly better than now, or no worse than now and accompanied by significant other advantages such as connectivity and/or capacity.

4. Trans-Pennine Express (TPE) routing options

We are grateful to have the opportunity also to respond to the near-simultaneous TPE consultation on proposals to alter the routing and/or stopping patterns of certain TPE services, also from December 2022. We consider that this issue is inextricably linked to the questions raised by the December 2022 MRTF consultation, and therefore have combined the two into a single response in this document. More details are set out below on a route-by-route basis.

5. The Covid-19 context

Also to expand on a comment we made in our response to the first MRTF consultation, we originally stated:

We also agree with, and welcome, the comments made in the consultation document (paragraph no. 18) in relation to the impacts of COVID-19: it is West Yorkshire's view too that not only does the pandemic not weaken the long-term case for interventions of the types being considered by the MRTF, but it has provided some valuable "breathing-space" to reappraise what we need the railway to provide around Manchester, and the need to provide capital investment in sustainable and valuable projects as a way to re-start the struggling economy has never been greater.

We now consider that the strength of the recovery of rail demand (and revenue in particular) across the North, which has led that elsewhere in the country (especially London and the South-East) – despite Covid still being endemic across the country – only underlines the force of this point.

The following sections of this response address more specific aspects of the proposed timetable. We would add that **first and last trains** have not been considered in detail here, as we assume that the MRTF December 2022 proposals are not the main driver of what is provided for these.

6. December 2022 proposals: Trans-Pennine Express long-distance routes

We are aware that the pattern of TPE services east of Leeds was left blank in the materials provided with the MRTF consultation, but information has now been provided with the separate TPE consultation. We are pleased and relieved that this is being done at the same time, because the east of Leeds cannot be decoupled as the MRTF consultation would have done, least of all wherever through services run, as they do on both the Diggle and Calder Valley routes. For example, where MRTF fixes TPE trains' paths at Manchester Victoria, this in turn constrains possible arrival / departure times at York and down the East Coast Mainline ("ECML"), and therefore where each train can link to/from on the east side.

In the context of the two parallel consultations we therefore set out here what we, from the West Yorkshire perspective, consider to be the essential properties of the network east of Leeds – across all relevant operators:

- At least 2tph Leeds – Hull, of which at least 1tph must be fast (60 minutes maximum JT) and well spaced around the other service(s) in order to make for at least two genuinely usable opportunities to travel per hour
- 1tph stopping to Selby, which may continue to Hull (if it does not or cannot be pathed to give two useful services an hour to Hull, then our preference is for the second hourly train to Hull to be provided by a TPE-style service) – this train should if possible be linked across Leeds
- 1tph through to Scarborough, plus an additional 1tph between York and Scarborough at busy times (which may or may not be linked from elsewhere on the network)
- 1tph to Teesside (where this train runs to beyond Middlesbrough is more important for Teesside colleagues than for WYCA)

- 3tph to Newcastle, of which 2tph to Edinburgh⁴
- 1tph linking from at least Halifax and Bradford to York (see next entry)
- 1tph stopping at all stations (bar Ulleskelf) to York, which may be the train that links through from Bradford and Calderdale (if it is not, an additional fast train east of Leeds may be provided to assure this link, but otherwise we do not consider this necessary)
- At least one fast train per hour stopping at Garforth (or possibly in future Thorpe Park) in standard hours, possibly 2tph if there is a separate fast Calderdale – York train
- Peak additional trains / capacity / stops in line with emerging post-Covid demand trends and without prejudicing performance
- Adequate capacity for ECS, freight, engineering, [V]STPs etc. etc.

Note that:

- (a) Because of the position of West Yorkshire on the TPE network, we generally do not mind which origin beyond Manchester is linked to which destination east of Leeds (and vice versa), provided that service intervals over overlapping sections of route are regular; we are however aware that the desire line for such journeys as are made from Slaithwaite and Marsden to destinations to the east of Leeds, the York direction is more important than towards Hull – see further comment below; and
- (b) The comments above should be taken to apply all day and every day, unless stated.

7. December 2022 proposals: The Huddersfield – Diggle line

Subject to the overriding caveats in section 2 above, we would make the following comments regarding the specific proposals as they touch the Leeds – Dewsbury – Huddersfield – Stalybridge – Manchester (and beyond) routes:

- We have had no firm information on proposals for Leeds – Dewsbury – Huddersfield stopping services so assume that they are as per December 2019.
- Journey times on the fast trans-Pennine services through Huddersfield are inconsistent, both by direction (eastbound versus westbound) and as between services, beyond what is attributable to stopping patterns. This is disappointing and not passenger-friendly.
- Leeds – Manchester Piccadilly (and vice versa) journey times are particularly variable, in particular with the down (eastbound) Manchester Airport starter taking as long as 72 minutes, perpetuating the poor path that this train has at present; it is also notable that this train takes 17-18 minutes from departure at Piccadilly to departure from Victoria, similar to the average walking time for the 1.5km journey – given that this is the only train that uses the relevant section of line in this direction in standard hours, it makes something of a mockery of the Ordsall Chord from a connectivity standpoint.
- In contrast to all three options in the initial consultation, the proposed timetable **fails to provide 2tph at local stations between Huddersfield and Stalybridge in the off-peak. This is not acceptable**, and the restriction of the 2tph service to the historic AM and PM peaks is not compatible with the nature of flows emerging from the Covid-19

⁴ It will be noted that this includes Cross-Country services as well as TPE. There may be scope of discussion of this combined service and possible trade-offs, in the context of the scope for complementary clockfaces and stopping patterns, and attractive interavailable ticketing and fares options.

crisis, which are spread evenly through the day and are characterised by a much wider spread of flows than traditional commuting. Separately, our colleagues in TfN have provided Network Rail, TPE and Northern with a paper setting out detailed evidence supporting the imperative of providing this level of service between Huddersfield and Stalybridge.

- We do however welcome the continued absence of any proposals to serve any of the Diggle-line local stations by skip-stopping, ‘tidal’ flows or similar, as proved so unpopular in May 2018.
- Only 1tph is provided, via the Ordsall Chord, linking West Yorkshire to Manchester Airport. While such a compromise might have potentially been acceptable as a short-term measure if it demonstrated clear performance benefits and were adequately mitigated, as noted above we can neither be confident now that the measure would only be short-term, nor that the mitigations (such as good connections at Piccadilly) are adequate. This relates also to the next point:
- 1tph from West Yorkshire and beyond is curtailed to terminate at Manchester Victoria. As we indicated in our previous consultation response, we have significant concerns about this both from an operating point of view and from a passenger connectivity standpoint. We believe that terminating a TPE-type train in a through platform at Victoria, carrying out a shunt move, “rebooting” the train as the staff change ends, and shunting back into Victoria will create conflicts and be bad for performance. It is as yet unproven in practice, particularly against a backdrop of Diggle fast services returning to their full pre-Covid 5tph quantum. From a connectivity standpoint, Piccadilly is to be greatly preferred, as a Manchester destination in its own right, as a location to connect to Manchester Airport (so mitigating the loss of the second through service), and as a hub to connect into a wide variety of rail services to reach the Midlands, South, South-West, London and Wales. In the long term, it is Piccadilly which will be the access point to HS2. On current proposals, no true fast journey to Piccadilly would exist, which is strategically and commercially poor. Noting that Victoria would still have three fast trains per hour from Leeds, it therefore remains our view that if the second train cannot run through to the Airport, it should run via Guide Bridge and terminate in the main trainshed at Piccadilly, not Victoria.
- Most TPE services running through Manchester Victoria appear to be booked 2-minute stops there. While we appreciate that this could be in fact a rounding issue if a three-minute stop involved arrival and departure on a half-minute, this appears not to be the case given the number of trains to which it applies. If it is indeed correct, we consider this a matter of significant concern; while the end-doors arrangement of the Mark 5A and 802 rolling stock provided by TPE does provide a good passenger ambience for long-distance journeys, we do not believe that 2-minute stops are operationally robust given peak boardings / alightings at Victoria, and we suggest 3 minutes should be provided.
- While the clockface structure on this route is generally fairly good in terms of consistency of hours through the day and between days (i.e. working days and Sundays), there are some issues here. Inconsistencies should be ironed out wherever possible, such as exist in particular eastbound on Sundays from Manchester Piccadilly.
- The timetable exacerbates an existing issue in standard hours: at present a train leaves Piccadilly for Huddersfield at XX:57 and one (from a different part of the station) at

XX:58 – one is a “fast” (though with a slow journey time) via the Ordsall Chord and Victoria, and the other is a “slow” stopping train via Guide Bridge. In fact, however, the XX:58 “slow” train arrives at Huddersfield well before the earlier “fast” train does. The December 2022 timetable proposes to make this worse, in that both trains are proposed to depart Piccadilly at XX:58 – with again the “slow” train being markedly faster to Huddersfield because of the poor path that the “fast” has around the Ordsall Chord. This is likely to be highly confusing to passengers and to lead to dissatisfaction, even if well managed. An alternative pattern should be sought. The solution would appear to lie in reconsidering the path of the Manchester Airport – Ordsall Chord – Leeds [– Teesside, it is assumed] train.

- As we understand the clockface at Huddersfield to be largely unchanged as against pre-Covid timetables, the existing extremely poor patterns of [non-]connections at what ought to be the major regional interchange hub appear to be perpetuated. At present⁵, for example, in the westbound direction, the stopping Huddersfield – Manchester service in standard interpeak hours has particularly poor connections at Huddersfield from several directions:
 - 31 minutes from the Leeds – Dewsbury stopping train
 - 40 minutes from Bradford, Halifax and Brighouse
 - 1 hour and 3 minutes from the Sheffield – Penistone line⁶
 - When operating, connections from Castleford and Wakefield are a reasonable 17 minutes⁷

Eastbound the picture is no better, with “connections” out of the Manchester – Huddersfield stopping service including:

- An attractive 9-minute connection into the Dewsbury – Leeds stopping train (but only in this direction)
- 32 minutes into the Penistone – Sheffield line
- 55 minutes towards Brighouse, Halifax and Bradford
- When operating, connections to Wakefield and Castleford are 23 minutes

The situation is similarly poor for a wide variety of cross-Huddersfield journeys into, out of or between services that only run once per hour, the Penistone line being particularly badly affected by the issue.

It should be noted that there is, in further breach of good timetabling practice, no symmetry in the timetabling as between the two directions, even in the journeys that do have reasonable connections (some “work” in one direction but not in the other), let alone in the hourly clockfaces. Plainly, with almost all travel being two-way trips, a journey must be attractive in both directions for rail to be able to compete. The consequence of this is that many journeys that could, and in a future where decarbonisation is a priority and post-Covid travel patterns are more diverse than traditionally, **must** increasingly be made by rail, have their journey times artificially so lengthened (by up to a full hour) that few travellers with a choice of modes would be likely to choose rail. Addressing these issues must therefore be a priority.

⁵ November 2021, though the clockface pattern under the December 2019 timetable was broadly similar.

⁶ Because 3 minutes is too short a connectional time to be acceptable for planning purposes and will not be shown in online journey planners.

⁷ This service is, at the time of writing, currently suspended for most of the day.

- Interchange at Stalybridge out of the Huddersfield – Manchester Piccadilly stopping service, to access Manchester Victoria (vital for journeys for example to Salford and the Spinningfields area) is poor under the proposed December 2022 timetable: 15 minutes' wait in standard hours. Again, this is asymmetrical as between directions of travel.
- It is not clear whether the proposed timetables are fully compatible with, in the immediate term, the reinstatement of all-day services on the Huddersfield – Wakefield – Castleford route, and in the medium term its replacement by the proposed extension of the Manchester Piccadilly – Huddersfield train on via this route and through to York. It is in our view essential that this compatibility be confirmed. The current provision of just three trains per day is unacceptable; current rail journey times are more than doubled by the detour via Leeds, and comparable bus journeys take in excess of 70 minutes.

Lastly, we are aware that the December 2022 proposals would restore a total of 5tph between Leeds and Manchester, as against 4tph at present. While in principle we support such a high level of connectivity and the near-even-interval 4tph York – Leeds – Huddersfield – Manchester service that this would imply, we are aware that when the 5tph service was introduced some years ago, this was accompanied by a significant drop in performance on TPE North Pennine services. There needs to be clear evidence that, taken together, the December 2022 proposals would not replicate a similar dip – especially given that the proposed additional service is the one that would reverse at Manchester Victoria, as highlighted above.

8. December 2022 proposals: The Calder Valley line

Subject to the overriding caveats in section 2 above, we would make the following comments regarding the specific proposals as they touch the Leeds – Bradford – Hebden Bridge – Manchester routes, including the Leeds - Dewsbury – Calder Valley section, Todmorden Curve services, and those continuing into east Lancashire via Burnley:

- In general, the proposals offer very little indeed for the Calder Valley line: they do not address its long-standing structural issue and therefore represent a major lost opportunity to improve the timetable and “build back better”. In the first consultation on MRTF, the Option C proposals would have made some valuable progress in rationalising the service patterns – this thinking appears largely to have been lost.
- Other than as raised in the following point, we note that journey times on the core Calder Valley line appear no worse than now; whilst unambitious, this is acceptable in the short term.
- The Leeds – Brighouse – Calder Valley service retains in the proposed timetable its current particularly slow timings all the way through to Todmorden. This is disappointing. While we appreciate that leaving space for a future stop at Elland is needed (and we assume this has been done), even so the running time, especially in the Up direction (once again the timetables are asymmetrical) appears excessive.
- Linked to the above point, we request confirmation that the timetables are indeed compatible with Elland being served by all regular Northern services passing the station.
- As noted above, the timetable does not enable either an additional train per hour between Bradford and Manchester nor the through Manchester Airport connection, both of which were commitments under the ARN 2016 franchise, and therefore the timetable

cannot be regarded as acceptable in the absence of enabling infrastructure commitments, as discussed earlier.

- Sunday services remain markedly below acceptable levels, both as regards former ARN commitments and as regards modern standards and emerging post-Covid travel patterns, which see full trains (with crowding) for much of the day on Sundays on the Calder Valley line. Addressing this issue requires no infrastructure and must be a priority – failing to do so under the December 2022 timetables will render them unacceptable. As such the drafts must at very least be compatible with “slotting in” the additional services required. In our view the correct approach must be to have a standard seven-day timetable. Services of particular relevance that are missing from current (and, as we understand it, proposed) timetables include:
 - Leeds – Bradford – Calder Valley – Manchester (– Chester) (i.e. the second hourly service on the core Calder route)
 - Leeds – Dewsbury – Calder Valley – Manchester (– Wigan) (no service at all on this axis on Sunday at present) – introducing this service is a WYCA and Kirklees priority
 - (Hull –) Leeds – Bradford – Halifax (quantum on the busy Leeds – Bradford – Halifax corridor)
- The December 2022 proposals on this line, unlike on the Diggle corridor, appear to make only very limited progress with regard to standardising departure times through the day and through the week. Indeed, from our experience of the industry timetable development process, we fear that even such improvement (standardisation) as has made its way into the draft timetables we have seen may not survive the transition into actual working timetables implemented. This failure to provide a proper clockface timetable has long been a feature of the Calder Valley and requires structural reform as a priority. It is not only confusing to passengers; it also means that some journeys that involve interchange are possible in some hours but not in others; finally, there is strong industry evidence that irregular service patterns on intensively used lines are associated with poor performance. We therefore consider that the December 2022 timetables must take the opportunity to address this fundamental issue, and will object to a timetable that fails to do so.
- In similar vein, the four trains per hour between Halifax and Leeds should be as close to 15 minutes apart as reasonably possible.
- On a linked point to the above, while Leeds clockface patterns are not bad, the timetables continue the current unattractive lack of even intervals and simple clockfaces at Bradford and Manchester in particular.
- In all cases other than for the York – Blackpool trains, the Sunday clockface pattern differs from that of the weekday pattern. We consider this perpetuation of current poor practice not to be the right approach and urge that it be revisited, noting that TPE, with which these services interact at Leeds, Huddersfield and Manchester amongst other places, has largely moved to a daily service pattern.
- The timetable does not address the longstanding issue of the poor levels of service at Sowerby Bridge, nor does it provide a second train an hour from Low Moor to Leeds (nor propose a second train per hour of any description at Low Moor on Sundays).
- At present, the timetable structure, while very variable as between hours, does not allow easy journeys from the Upper Calder Valley to Huddersfield and back, changing at Brighouse – despite the need to interchange, the poor roads mean that rail is

significantly faster than bus and competitive with car for such journeys.

While the information we have seen on the December 2022 proposals is incomplete in this regard, we understand that it perpetuates the current pattern. If this is correct, we consider that it should be reviewed.

- Again there is insufficient information provided to be clear on the issue, but we assume that it is not proposed that additional services run to serve the peaks at Bradford and Leeds. If this is correct, it is therefore essential that train lengths be adapted (4/5-car formations in peaks).
- Reiterating an issue that we highlighted in our response to the first consultation, we are most disappointed that the December 2022 proposals retain 1tph every day terminating / starting at Manchester Victoria. We have previously highlighted that we believe this to be operationally undesirable and bad for performance, given that the trains concerned almost invariably have to cross the formation from the Rochdale lines to the Victoria bays (platform 1 or 2), coming into direct conflict with TPE services in both directions, and in the Down direction with inbound services on the Rochdale lines themselves. We therefore do not support this aspect of the timetable and repeat our view that these services should be linked across Manchester Victoria, such as towards Wigan or Bolton.

9. Trans-Pennine Express east of Leeds

Turning to the proposed changes to TPE service patterns east of Leeds, and specifically the proposed “swap” of Scarborough and Hull services, this is something with which WYCA is fairly comfortable. As a core city, we can understand the aspiration that Hull colleagues express for faster Manchester services and a Liverpool train. We would comment that in terms of direct implications for journeys to and from the main West Yorkshire stations (particularly Leeds and Huddersfield), the direct impacts would actually be relatively modest. Clearly, however, any direct links that will be broken under this proposal (such as Scarborough to Liverpool or Selby to Manchester Piccadilly) will need to be provided with reliable, convenient and consistent connections. In similar vein, while it would be preferable for the through service that stops at Slaithwaite and Marsden also to stop at Dewsbury, good and reliable connections are acceptable.

This is provided that (as we understand the current proposals to be) the clockfaces on the core York – Leeds – Huddersfield – Manchester corridor, and for services at Marsden and Slaithwaite [see below] remain as evenly spaced as possible.

We also firmly support the introduction, at least at busiest times (which may not be the traditional commuting times) of a second hourly York – Scarborough). We believe that North Yorkshire (and specifically Scarborough) colleagues and the City of York will be the best placed to offer evidence-based proposals as to which days and hours should be prioritised for this additional service.

As flagged above, however, we must again here flag our disappointment at the withdrawal of the proposal to provide 2tph at Marsden and Slaithwaite all day, which would pave the way towards the service levels we expect TRU to provide. We would ask that the proposals be reviewed to provide this rather than just in the traditional commuting peaks. We note that altering the proposal to provide these stops all day would also enable a consistent clockfaces of arrivals and departures across the full line of route of the proposed Manchester – Scarborough service in both directions, unlike the current proposal which will presumably give different westbound arrival and eastbound departure times at Manchester and different times of the day.

10. December 2022 proposals: Other routes

Subject to the overriding caveats in section 2 above, we have not commented in detail on other routes, including those onto/from which West Yorkshire services would continue in standard hours, such as the Chat Moss, Gatley / Airport, and Atherton / Wigan lines. We believe that others are likely to be better placed to comment on these, though would note that some of our comments regarding timetable structure are also applicable to these routes.

11. December 2022 proposals: Wider issues

Subject to the overriding caveats in section 2 above, we raise here some additional general points:

- It is not clear whether the timetable proposed is compatible with TRU, as understood prior to the IRP's publication ("Option F") and/or as now proposed under the IRP. Clearly this is critical to the workability and sustainability / stability of the timetable, as a timetable that requires further structural change within a few years is not sensible.
- It is similarly not clear the extent to which the proposals are compatible with emerging thinking on the ECML. This is particularly the case given the rejection by stakeholders and industry of the original May 2022 ECML timetable proposals (which we understand would not have been compatible with TRU), meaning that these are still in a state of flux. It is clearly essential that these issues be resolved, above all having regard to what is required for TPE service patterns to achieve their connectivity and performance objectives.
- It is not clear whether freight paths, which are not shown in the consultation draft timetables, have been validated and accepted by the relevant freight operators.
- As noted above with regard to specific lines of route, it is our view that the consultation timetables perpetuate a number of examples of poor timetabling practice which the industry should be moving away from. These include:
 - Asymmetrical timetables – wherever possible journey times and clockfaces should be the same in both directions, for passenger connectivity, simplicity and operational robustness / reliability.
 - Non-standard clockfaces – especially on the Calder Valley line, there has been little progress made in arriving at simple hourly clockfaces that remain the same all day and every day.
 - Daily timetables – linked to the above point, it should not generally be necessary to run different clockfaces on Sundays from those in standard hours on other days: even where in the short term Sunday quantum is less than on other days, it will often be possible to have consistent patterns for those services that do run, provided of course that connections are maintained as between services.

12. Conclusions

Once again we must emphasise the overriding issue regarding the unacceptability of the December 2022 proposals as a whole as anything other than a short-term mitigation of poor performance that will run until a specified date when infrastructure interventions will enable the services that are actually required.

Subject to this, if such confirmation regarding infrastructure is forthcoming, we would potentially regard the December 2022 proposals as acceptable, subject to the following:

- Explicit and compelling evidence that the December 2022 proposals will result in performance that is, across the board but in particular at places like Manchester Victoria and the areas they influence, better than that being provided by the current (December 2021) timetables – not merely better than the December 2019 base, which is itself increasingly a historical irrelevance
- The re-addition of 2tph all day at local stations between Huddersfield and Stalybridge, as per the original MRTF consultation
- Compatibility with stops at Elland
- Restoration of the Huddersfield – Castleford service (as an urgent priority) and its development as soon as possible into a through Manchester – Wakefield – Castleford – York service
- Re-examining the pathing of services around the Ordsall Chord, especially eastbound (down)
- The curtailed TPE service terminating not at Victoria as proposed, but in the train shed at Piccadilly
- Work to reform and simplify timetable structures to achieve standard hours all day and every day, and move towards symmetrical structures
- Focused work to improve the effectiveness of Huddersfield as a rail hub
- Improving connections out of Huddersfield – Manchester Piccadilly services at Stalybridge for journeys to north Manchester
- The wider issues noted above in relation to TRU and ECML compatibility, and to acceptability to the freight sector, being satisfactorily addressed

In addition, we are dissatisfied with the failure of this timetable to take the opportunity to address the long-standing structural issues with timetabling on the Calder Valley, and consider that this should be done now – or at very least that a clear commitment be made to begin work on this without further delay, bringing in the issues raised in section 8 above.

It is also essential that progress be made towards ending the anachronistic historical hangover of Sunday services being different from, and inferior to, those on other days, when Sunday is now one of the busiest days of the week on many routes.

Beyond this, we have made clear our concerns at the timetable perpetuating, avoidably in our view, the practice of terminating Calder Valley trains at Manchester Victoria, and adding a new problem in the form of an additional TPE terminator. We do not believe this is good for performance – nor, especially in the latter case, in the best interests of the travelling public. We would urge that these aspects be reconsidered.

Appendix: WYCA response to MRTF consultation, March 2021

(included as separate document)