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**Report to:** West Yorkshire Transport Committee

**Date:** 21 September 2018

**Subject:** **Trans-Pennine Rail Route Upgrade – Ambition for West Yorkshire**

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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To provide an update on Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU) rail project.
- 1.2 To summarise the emerging findings of work to examine desirable service outcomes.
- 1.3 To set out the types of choice the region is likely to be able to make if TRU proceeds as envisaged by Transport for the North.
- 1.4 To seek Transport Committee’s approval of West Yorkshire Combined Authority’s proposed position on the specification of TRU.

## **2 Information**

### Background and process

- 2.1 An overview of TRU, the project to renew and upgrade the railway between York/Selby and Manchester via Leeds and Huddersfield, was provided on 8 September 2017.

- 2.2 In early 2018, Network Rail (NR) made known the progress that they had made on behalf of the Department for Transport (DfT) in developing the project, including presenting four Strategic Development Options. These SDOs represented illustrative infrastructure configurations with a range of differing capital costs estimates. While little detail was given, it was evident that the SDOs varied in matters including the extent of electrification and the journey times that would be achieved, such that not all options would achieve the target journey times set out in the 8 September 2017 paper. It was however not initially clear what combinations of train services, and on what kind of timetable, would be made possible under each. So it was not clear whether the network would allow an optimal combination of fast intercity, regular local and usable freight paths. It remains clear that Northern Powerhouse Rail programme will be needed in addition to TRU to unlock sufficient capacity to provide the best connectivity across all categories of passenger and freight rail service.
- 2.3 The Client Development Remit provided by DfT (with some input from Transport for the North [TfN]) to NR left some of these service issues open; it did not fully reflect the Combined Authority's existing policies in particular on local rail services, and concerns exist that TRU could risk entrenching service patterns at some local stations that do not conform to stakeholders' aspirations or to the Combined Authority policy as set out, for example, in Rail Plan 7. There was also a risk that the service pattern might compromise the impact of the new stations, especially at Thorpe Park and White Rose. The May 2018 timetables for local stations heightened such concerns in the case of locations such as Batley and the Upper Colne Valley (Slaithwaite and Marsden).
- 2.4 It is understood that DfT is developing its own "SDO", driven by what infrastructure interventions it believes are affordable and deliverable by 2024 (but without excluding further interventions after this). TfN is also developing an SDO representing what it believes will be necessary to deliver its connectivity and capacity aspirations.

#### Combined Authority analysis

- 2.5 In this context, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and TfN identified the need to consider further, in the specific context of TRU, "what success would look like" in terms of the service outcomes that the project should enable, from a West Yorkshire standpoint. This needed to have regard to the empirical evidence, and focussed in particular on the balance of services, including their overall quantum (number of trains of each type in a standard hour) and their stopping patterns. This would help better understand what our priorities should be in the event that choices need to be made: what are "must-haves" under TRU and what enhancements should be retained for delivery in the longer term, in particular under Northern Powerhouse Rail. In turn, this could then be compared against what services each infrastructure combination ("SDO") would enable, and therefore a view to be taken as to which SDO (if any), the Combined Authority should support.

- 2.6 The result was a technical note entitled *Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU): West Yorkshire's Ambition* (see Appendix), provided in draft to TfN on 15 August 2018, and also sent to DfT. The note was particularly intended to inform the TfN Partnership Board meeting on 13 September, which Cllr. Judith Blake attends on behalf of West Yorkshire Combined Authority. TfN's position would then be communicated to DfT with a view to influencing the decision of the Secretary of State in terms of what (if any) variant of TRU is to be taken forward. That decision is expected in January/February 2019.
- 2.7 The technical note analyses the nature of the population and employment patterns on the TRU corridor as it passes through West Yorkshire, and the travel-to-work patterns to which they give rise, as well as giving an overview of the socio-economic nature of the stations' catchments and of future developments likely to influence travel patterns. It also considers existing policy and the empirical evidence on which that is based, plus evidence from industry-standard rail market analysis and demand forecasting as to what service patterns are likely to be successful in terms of providing an attractive service to the markets identified. The main findings of the technical note provided to TfN are that, from West Yorkshire's point of view:
- (a) There need to be "true" local services provided, stopping at all stations and operating on a regular clockface pattern, at least twice per hour, with additional capacity provided in the peaks and greatly improved levels of reliability over the present standards; there is a case to move towards four trains per hour (4tph) on local services in the longer term, to provide the metro-style walk-up-and-go frequencies that unlock the highest levels of connectivity and opportunity.
  - (b) The markets for local services are already significant but are poorly served, with some stations only having one train per hour and some local journeys being practically impossible by rail, particularly since the May 2018 timetable changes. As such, demand is being suppressed. Skip-stopping, "tidal"<sup>1</sup> or other compromised service patterns will not be suitable for these flows.
  - (c) These local markets are expected to see significant growth driven by exogenous factors, such as housing growth clustering around stations in locations such as Ravensthorpe, East Garforth and Brighouse (amongst others), and continued employment growth concentrated on the centres of Leeds, Huddersfield and to an extent Dewsbury, in locations that will disproportionately attract rail-borne commuting, as well as around the new stations at Thorpe Park and White Rose.

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<sup>1</sup> These are techniques that compromise local services, usually to fit additional fast trains over a congested section of line by reducing the difference in trains' journey-times; "skip-stopping" is, for example, if there are four local stations between two points, every hour one train will stop at two of the four stations and another at the other two – nothing stopping at all of them. This has happened between Huddersfield and Stalybridge and has proved unpopular because it has made some journeys impossible and has not been reliable. The concept of "tidal" flows involves providing a higher frequency in the "dominant" direction at a given station at the busiest times only; this is problematic where flows are balanced between both directions.

- (d) Balanced against this, there clearly needs to be high-quality, fast, reliable and high-capacity intercity connectivity between Leeds and Manchester, serving Huddersfield and extending to the main centres to the east and west, and with a balance between the Manchester destinations. This needs to comprise at least four such trains per hour. There is some additional benefit from an increase to 6tph, if these trains can be delivered at even intervals and are all equally fast.

It is however notable that current DfT and TfN thinking for post-TRU services does not suggest six equally fast trains per hour between Leeds and Manchester, but four fast plus two “semi-fast” with slower journey times but limited additional stops – and fewer local services than the evidence above would suggest is desirable. This suggests that if, as appears likely, providing more than 4tph fast in an affordable manner within TRU timescales would lead to sacrifices in local connectivity (where frequency is all-important), then there is a case to consider prioritising improving local connectivity as against exceeding 4tph for intercity services, especially if the additional fast services would not be as fast as the 4tph. The case for increasing to 6tph would then be revisited within the Northern Powerhouse Rail programme.

- 2.8 The Combined Authority has separately begun to carry out some high-level analysis of the limited timetable material that has recently been provided by NR, which is intended to illustrate the mix of services that they envisage could operate under the Strategic Development Option (i.e. TRU scheme variant) that delivers the most capability. It is understood that TfN also favour an infrastructure option that would deliver a comparable specification to that SDO. The purpose of this analysis is to establish whether the same infrastructure implied by that SDO could also be used to support service patterns that are in keeping with the principles set out above, i.e. an altered balance between intercity, local and freight trains. If it is found that it does, then the recommendation will be that the Combined Authority should support that SDO.
- 2.9 For the purposes of this testing, the principal features of the service patterns assumed in Combined Authority’s alternative approach were:
  - (a) There would still be four fast trains between Leeds and Manchester, evenly spaced around the hour, though two would gain stops at Dewsbury and Stalybridge.
  - (b) The two additional hourly semi-fast trains assumed by Network Rail to run between Manchester and Hull would not run: Hull would however have the same number of fast trains NR assume, plus a new, direct Manchester Airport link.
  - (c) There would be two stopping trains every hour between Manchester and Leeds, calling at all stations, which is not the case for all stations throughout the day in NR’s timetable.
  - (d) Capacity to run freight every hour is retained.

- (e) Connections at Huddersfield are improved and there is scope to introduce extra local or regional-express services.

### Emerging findings

- 2.10 Our early analysis suggests that, while the Combined Authority's priorities would result in a service pattern which differs from that assumed by NR in its TRU timetable development work, it appears likely that a similar level and type of infrastructure to that assumed by NR in that work would also be capable of delivering the Combined Authority's preferred service outcome. Lesser interventions, such as not electrifying the line in full or not four-tracking where this SDO assumes, would preclude the operation of the services proposed. While further work needs to be carried out to verify this, this leads in turn towards the conclusion that the level and type of TRU infrastructure intervention which officers understand to be favoured by TfN (for example, electrification, linespeed increases and some four-tracking) would also be appropriate to deliver a service concept compatible with the Combined Authority's priorities. This would lead to the Combined Authority agreeing with the broad infrastructure configuration for TRU that is understood to be proposed by TfN, possibly with minor variations, and therefore to support its development through the business case process. In other words, it is likely that, subject to further information, it is appropriate for the Combined Authority to support the TfN SDO. The caveat would be that where there are variants for a given element of TRU, such that one variant would support either the NR or the Combined Authority's service outcomes, and another would support *only* NR's specification, TfN should support the former.
- 2.11 The conclusions to be drawn are that the Combined Authority:
- (a) should support a service pattern for TRU that reflects our ambition in terms of the mix of train services supported – in particular, allowing local services to be enhanced – and should press for infrastructure designed to deliver this;
  - (b) should support TfN's Strategic Development Option (infrastructure configuration) for TRU, provided that further detail as to the scope of their preferred SDO and further timetabling work confirm that it is compatible with the preferred service outcomes that the Combined Authority's work has identified.
- 2.12 There has been close involvement with Kirklees and Leeds district officer colleagues in its production, a draft of this paper and of the technical note were provided to District officers. The purpose was to ensure, in advance of the 13 September meeting TfN meeting, that all West Yorkshire were sighted with the proposed position and the supporting evidence.
- 2.13 A verbal update will be given to Transport Committee on the TfN Partnership Board meeting that took place on 13 September 2018.

### **3 Financial Implications**

3.1 There are no direct financial implications from the report.

### **4 Legal Implications**

4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

### **5 Staffing Implications**

5.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

### **6 External Consultees**

6.1 The West Yorkshire districts of Kirklees and Leeds, being those most directly affected by the TRU proposals, have been directly involved in the work described above, and all districts have had sight of the technical note and of this report.

### **7 Recommendations**

7.1 That the Committee notes the update on the Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade

7.2 That the Committee endorses the Ambition document in Appendix 1;

7.3 That the Committee confirms its support for the TfN Strategic Development Option, subject to verifying that it is capable of supporting the preferred service outcomes and the Chair writes to DfT and TfN setting out this position.

### **8 Background Documents**

8.1 8 September 2017 Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade report to Transport Committee.

### **9 Appendices**

West Yorkshire Combined Authority paper to TfN: *Trans-Pennine route upgrade (TRU): West Yorkshire's Ambition*