

Date: 10 May 2021

The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps

Secretary of State
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Dear Secretary of State,

Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) – Huddersfield to Westtown

The North TransPennine rail route is an important economic artery and vital East-West 'spine' connecting major conurbations across the North, for commuting, business and leisure with services operating from Liverpool and Manchester Airport in the West to Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Scarborough, and Hull in the East.

The rail corridor is, however, not currently well-placed to deliver its key enabling role in levelling up the Northern conurbations and making them a more coherent and productive economic entity. Up to the outbreak of the COVID pandemic, demand on the route had doubled to 50 million journeys per year since the mid-1990s, but historic rationalisation of the infrastructure between the 1960s and 1980s meant the route had reached capacity.

Pre-COVID, the route also performed extremely poorly with only 38% of trains meeting the "On Time" measure, and because services on the route serve many destinations, delay regularly transferred across the North, exacerbating other constraints at key hubs like Manchester and Leeds.

Unless investment is secured, the corridor will form a constraint, rather than an enabler, to building back the Northern economy, ravaged by COVID and which has reinforced pre-existing regional disadvantage.

Transport for the North is therefore fully supportive of the TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU) in addressing existing challenges for the route, and the cities and communities it serves, and to begin the process of delivering the transformational change envisaged as part of the Northern Powerhouse.

Since 2010 and the publication of the Network Rail Manchester Hub Study, the North's politicians, businesses and community leaders have awaited the necessary Government support and investment in infrastructure to deliver an uplift in capacity, capability, reliability and journey times for both passenger and freight services along the corridor in advance of the further transformation to the North's rail network delivered through Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and HS2.

The recent TWAO application from Network Rail covers the upgrade to a section of railway between Huddersfield and Westtown (Dewsbury) which delivers:

- Four tracking along the majority of this section of railway;
- Station upgrades at Huddersfield, Deighton and Mirfield and a new station at Ravensthorpe;
- Grade separation at Ravensthorpe; and
- Electrification of the railway from Huddersfield to Ravensthorpe – and right through to Leeds (which should form part of a plan to electrify the entire corridor and support a rolling programme of electrification in the North), is therefore welcomed by Transport for the North.

The proposed infrastructure interventions outlined in the TWAO are a vital part of the TRU project to support a more frequent and reliable passenger and freight offer and therefore must be delivered as part of the long-term vision/‘end state’ for the corridor.

This also complements Transport for the North Board’s preferred NPR option of a new line between Manchester and Leeds via Central Bradford, by collectively ensuring long term improvements for rail passengers accessing the rail network at Huddersfield and Bradford.

Should an alternative NPR option via Huddersfield be decided, it is our understanding that there would be further infrastructure required to support the additional NPR services whilst preserving the uplift in railway performance and reliability delivered by the TRU programme. Ultimately, this risks further delay to the delivery of a scheme which has been in development for over 11 years.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Wood
Acting Chief Executive