

TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992
TRANSPORT AND WORKS (INQUIRIES PROCEDURES)
RULES 2004
NETWORK RAIL (HUDDERSFIELD TO WESTTOWN
(DEWSBURY) IMPROVEMENTS) ORDER

NEEDS CASE
SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE
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The Network Rail (Huddersfield to Westtown (Dewsbury) Improvements) Order 5 October 2021

Summary Proof of Evidence – Needs Case

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Qualifications and experience

1.1.1 My name is David Vernon. I am a Partner at Carter Jonas, responsible for Infrastructure Sponsorship, Consents and Stakeholder Management.

1.1.2 I have worked within the rail industry since 2013 delivering third party consents and sponsoring railway infrastructure projects. I worked as a direct employee of NR until August 2017, since then I have been retained as a contractor to NR for third party enhancement schemes.

1.2 Role on the project

1.2.1 I am a NR Senior Sponsor for the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU), with responsibility for the securing of all necessary consents and authorities for the Order Scheme.

1.3 Statement of Matters

1.3.1 Within my Proof of Evidence, Matter 1 (Aims, Objectives & Need) will be dealt with, with cross referral to others on Main Alternatives, Policy Compliance, and the Compelling Case for CPO.

2. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 2.1.1 My main Proof of Evidence is divided into subsections, and it is my intention to follow the same structure in my summary Proof.

3. SCHEME INTRODUCTION

3.1 Scheme Context

3.1.1 The North Transpennine Rail Route (NTPR) – the subject of the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) – is the key East-West artery across the North and plays a vital role in enabling a modern trading economy.

3.1.2 In the last 50 years, infrastructure capacity on the NTPR was reduced as demand and traffic declined. During this period, four tracks were reduced to two tracks in the Scheme area, contributing to some of the present day issues. The Order Scheme aims to reverse this historic reduction in the capacity of the railway.

3.2 Purpose of the Scheme

3.2.1 The Scheme is a core part of TRU. TRU is a series of railway upgrade projects between Manchester and York aiming to improve journey times, capacity, overall reliability and resilience on the route, and provide environmental benefits through modal shift to rail and the part electrification of the route.

3.3 Scheme Constraints

3.3.1 The Scheme Route acts as a key constraint on the capacity and reliability of the whole NTPR, often creating the ‘bottleneck’ for services both local and express. Five key constraints had to be addressed through the design:

- Track Capacity
- Huddersfield Station
- Line Speeds
- Conflicting Train Movements
- Reliability

3.3.2 As a result of these constraints, and benefits required from the Scheme, the following were specified as required interventions:

- Increased number of tracks (two to four)
- Increased number of platforms at Huddersfield station
- Increased line speed
- Reduction in areas with persistent conflicting train movements.

3.4 Need for the Scheme

- 3.4.1 The NTPR is not currently well-placed to deliver a key enabling role in levelling up the Northern conurbations. Up to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, demand on the route had doubled to 50 million journeys per year since the mid-1990s, but the historic reduction in the carrying capacity of the infrastructure meant the route has reached the practical limit of its capacity.
- 3.4.2 Performance and punctuality of services using the NTPR has seen a decline in line with the demand growth.
- 3.4.3 There is no capacity on the current NTPR for additional passenger services to serve a recovering and growing economy, and journeys are relatively slow for the distances involved.
- 3.4.4 The DfT letter appended to my Proof of Evidence provides the most succinct summary of the need for this Scheme, and TRU in general, stating:
- 3.4.5 *‘Project W3 (Huddersfield to Westtown (Dewsbury)) is the single most critical part of TRU without which it will not be possible to run the train services and timetable defined for TRU. The timely delivery of Project W3 will be essential to the realisation of the overall TRU benefits, both for passengers and freight services, in the coming decade.’*

4. BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME & TRU

4.1 The Scheme

- 4.1.1 The Scheme route will provide a key location within NTPR where services can be managed to limit impacts on the performance of train services.
- 4.1.2 Increased line speeds will assist in reducing journey times. The Scheme will deliver four fully accessible stations, with step-free access, drop-off arrangements, and blue badge parking available.
- 4.1.3 The grade separation at Ravensthorpe will remove a regular conflicting movement currently performed by trains accessing/exiting the Wakefield lines in this location.

4.2 The Programme

- 4.2.1 TRU is a series of projects with the objective being to deliver:
 - Improved journey times between York and Manchester
 - An increase to eight 'express' services an hour
 - An increase to four 'local' services an hour
 - Public Performance Measure on the route to be 92.5%
 - Freight paths to be retained
 - Contribution to NR's Decarbonisation Strategy.

5. REGULATORY & POLICY BACKGROUND

- 5.1.1 There is significant national policy and regulatory support for the development and implementation of TRU. Significant funding has been secured to design, develop and deliver the projects across TRU, with the Scheme already having secured £425m.

6. THE BUSINESS CASE

- 6.1.1 The NTPR has been identified as a catalyst for “levelling up” in the North, but is currently a brake on this key Government ambition.
- 6.1.2 The NTPR has not seen significant investment for many years, and key sections had capacity reduced from four tracks to two in the 20th Century. In the last 25 years, passenger journeys have doubled to 50m per annum. Train services have increased in response, but the line is at capacity, with journeys often unreliable, crowded and slow.
- 6.1.3 Government has authorised TRU and the Scheme through to detailed design and into delivery, with over £1.4bn committed to TRU. The DfT continues to reiterate the importance of the Scheme as a key component of the TRU programme; whose delivery is needed now in order to address both existing and chronic deficiencies and under investment in Transpennine rail transport; and to realise the Government’s economic ambitions for the North of England.

6.2 TRU BCR

- 6.2.1 TRU Programme has a capital cost of £2.75bn. It has a Net Present Value (NPV) of £417 million and a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 1.44, meaning that for every £1 invested, the TRU programme will return £1.44 to the economy, and contribute to the ‘levelling up’ agenda.

7. EARLY SCHEME DEVELOPMENT

7.1 Strategic Alternatives

- 7.1.1 The remit of TRU is to address the performance issues related to the existing service, increase the capacity on the NTPR, and to decrease journey times. There are no strategic alternatives that would deliver these benefits to the NTPR.

7.2 Future Rail Schemes

- 7.2.1 The Scheme and the TRU programme of works are the first major rail infrastructure projects in the North of England in the last twenty years. There are other rail schemes that may potentially be delivered through NPR or HS2 programmes in the future, but these are yet to receive the appropriate authorisations and are over 10 years from being realised.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1.1 Network Rail has consulted widely on this Scheme including formal consultation under the TWA Rules.
- 8.1.2 A considerable amount of work has been done to take comments on board and feed them into the design of the Scheme, such that I am satisfied that consultation and engagement has been successful and in line with current best practice. I personally have been engaging with external stakeholders since the public launch of the project in August 2019. Consultation has been an iterative process with both defined periods of consultation and ongoing valuable conversations throughout pre-application and post-submission, and through discussions with objectors.

9. RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS

9.1.1 A number of objectors have made specific comments relating to Statements of Matter that I cover within my main Proof. I am content that I and others in NR have addressed queries and issues sufficiently. The objectors that I have input to responses to include:

- Yorkshire Children's Centre (YCC) (OBJ/14)
- Hargreaves (GB) Ltd (Newlay Asphalt Ltd, Newlay Readymix Ltd), Newlay Concrete Ltd, Dewsbury Sand & Gravel Ltd and Wakefield Sand & Gravel Ltd) (OBJ/18)
- HD1 Developments (OBJ/23)
- Dr Reddy's (OBJ/26)
- Kirklees Council (OBJ/33)
- Taurus Investment Limited (OBJ/34)
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority (OBJ/40)

10. CONCLUSION

10.1.1 My Proof of Evidence has demonstrated that there is a clear and overwhelming needs case for the Scheme, and that it will deliver significant benefits to the railway users on the North Transpennine Route.

10.1.2 The Scheme is critical in unlocking the wider benefits of the TRU Programme and increasing train capacity, performance, and capacity on the NTPR and connecting routes, and assisting in the government's 'levelling up' agenda, whilst still providing a positive return for every £1 invested in the project.

11. WITNESS DECLARATION

11.1 Statement of declaration

11.1.1 My proof of evidence includes my declaration as an expert witness which also applies to my summary of my evidence.