



TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992

**Transport and Works (Applications and Objections
Procedure) (England and Wales) Rules 2006**

The Network Rail (Leeds to Micklefield Enhancements) Order

**SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC CASE PROOF OF EVIDENCE
OF
DAVID VERNON**

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The Network Rail (Leeds to Micklefield Enhancements) Order

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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 starting as a Consents Manager on the East Coast Main Line ("**ECML**") for Network Rail, responsible for delivering third party consents for railway infrastructure projects. I have been retained as a contractor to Network Rail to sponsor third party enhancement schemes and have already secured two Transpennine Route Upgrade ("**TRU**") TWAO's on behalf of Network Rail.

1.2 Role on the Scheme

1.2.1 My current role is as a Network Rail Senior Sponsor for the TRU, with responsibility for the securing of all necessary consents and authorities for the TRU projects East of Leeds to be delivered.

1.3 Statement of Matters

1.3.1 The Statement of Matters ("**SOM**") was received from the Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit ("**TIPU**") in December 2023. The following matters will be dealt with solely in my proof of evidence and/or in conjunction with other witnesses.

- Matter 1 – The aims and objectives of, and the need for, the proposed Leeds to Micklefield Enhancements Order ("the Scheme"), including its effects on railway operations.
- Matter 3 - The main alternative options considered by NR and the reasons for choosing the preferred option set out in the Order.

2. SCHEME INTRODUCTION

2.1 Scheme context

2.1.1 The North Transpennine rail route ("**NTPR**") – the subject of TRU - is the key East-West rail artery across the North and plays a vital role in enabling a modern trading economy.

2.1.2 Over the last 50 years, infrastructure capacity on the NTPR has been reduced, as demand has fallen.

2.2 Purpose of the Scheme

- 2.2.1 To deliver TRU's objectives of journey time and capacity improvements on the Transpennine route, there is a need to increase the line speeds on the Leeds to York section of the Transpennine route, with current speed restrictions ranging from 25mph up to 55mph, needing to be increased up to 75mph in places.
- 2.2.2 In order to facilitate the increase in line speeds, and subsequent capacity improvements, and enhancements to resilience and reliability, a number of works are required across the E2-4 footprint. These works are not only those applied for under this Order application but works consented and allowed for Network Rail via other consent regimes also.
- 2.2.3 The Order scheme promotes 17 discrete packages of work within the E234 geographical footprint, which as mentioned above, when combined with other permitted elements of work in the E234 area, either via permitted development or other powers available to Network Rail, all combine to deliver the benefits required for the TRU programme.
- 2.2.4 TRU, detailed in section 3 of my Proof, is a series of railway upgrade projects between Manchester and York aiming to improve journey times and capacity, improve reliability and resilience on the NTPR and provide environmental benefits through modal shift to rail and the part electrification of NTPR.
- 2.2.5 If made, I believe the Scheme will help realise the objectives of TRU and also provide a safer way for existing level crossing users at the six level crossings to cross the railway.

2.3 Need for the Scheme

- 2.3.1 As I explore at section 3.3 of my Proof, 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 pandemic, demand on the route had doubled to 50 million passenger journeys per year since the mid-1990s, but the historic reduction in the carrying capacity of the infrastructure meant the route has reached capacity.
- 2.3.2 Performance and punctuality of services using the NTPR has declined with the growth in numbers using the route.
- 2.3.3 There is currently no capacity on the NTPR for additional passenger services to serve a recovering and growing economy, and journeys are relatively slow for the distances involved.

- 2.3.4 In approving the Huddersfield to Westtown (W3) Transport & Works Act Order (“**W3**”) in 2022, the Secretary of State (“**SoS**”) acknowledged in paragraph 15 of their decision letter (**CD 3.05**), that train services regularly encounter congestion and delays on the NTPR, resulting in performance and reliability issues. The SoS agreed with the Inspector’s view that NTPR does not currently meet the needs of passengers and, like the Inspector at paragraph 3.3 of his Report into W3 (**Appendix 2 of my proof**), agreed with Network Rail that NTPR is in urgent need of improvement.
- 2.3.5 In approving the Church Fenton Level Crossing Reduction Project (E1) Transport & Works Act Order (“**E1**”) in 2023, the SoS also acknowledged in their decision letter (**Appendix 1 of my proof**) at paragraph 14, that the works in that Order, similar to those promoted in the Order scheme, would help to contribute towards the safety, reliability and resilience of an important railway line in the North of England delivering substantial public benefits across the region.

3. REGULATORY AND POLICY BACKGROUND

- 3.1 There is significant national policy and regulatory support for the development and implementation of TRU. In April 2020, the TRU was awarded an Outline Business Case and provided funding (£3bn) to take TRU programme projects through the design and delivery stages.
- 3.2 Sections 4 & 5 of my main proof provide the context and support from central government for TRU. Documents such as the Integrated Rail Plan and Rail Needs Assessment provide specific TRU support, and more general support for infrastructure projects in the north.

4. THE BUSINESS CASE AND FUNDING

- 4.1 The NTPR has been identified as a catalyst for “levelling up” in the North, but is currently a barrier to this key Government ambition. Whilst train services have increased to deal with the increased passenger journeys on NTPR, the line is at capacity, with journeys often unreliable, crowded and slow.
- 4.2 The Government has authorised TRU and the Scheme through to detailed design and into delivery. The DFT has confirmed the Government’s commitment to TRU and the Project along with allocation of funding subject to ongoing consideration to ensure the Project delivers the best results for both rail users and taxpayers.
- 4.3 In April 2021, a further £317m was committed to TRU by the Government to commence delivery and continue design development on TRU. In December

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2023 government committed another £3.9bn to the delivery of TRU, taking total committed funds to the programme to £6.9bn.

4.4 The Scheme does not have an individual business case as it is an integral part of the of the TRU programme and has been assessed on that basis. TRU has 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.

5. BENEFITS OF TRU

5.1 The Programme

5.1.1 TRU is a series of projects, that when complete will all contribute to:

- an improved journey time for Leeds – Manchester Victoria of 43-44mins.
- an improved journey time for York to Manchester Victoria of 67-69mins.
- capability to operate 8 ‘express services’ an hour on the route.
- capability to operate 6 ‘local services’ an hour on the route.
- performance of the Transpennine Route to be 92.5% (Public Performance Measure¹) or higher each period.
- freight paths/rights to be retained as existing.; and
- a contribution to Network Rail’s Decarbonisation Strategy and climate policy.

5.2 The Scheme

5.2.1 The Scheme will consist of 17 specific elements which are summarised in Section 3 of the Statement of Case (**CD 5.01**), with further detail on each provided within Section 9 of the Statement of Case.

5.3 Scheme Benefits

5.3.1 The benefits of the Scheme are detailed below.

- Increased Linespeed.
- Improved efficiency and reliability of the railway, and reduction of delays to trains and other users.

¹ PPM is the measurement of train performance - percentage of trains arriving within 5 minutes of their timetabled time at a station

- Reduced operating and maintenance costs.
- Modern signalling.
- Improved Safety.

6. EARLY SCHEME DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Strategic alternatives

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

6.2 Future rail schemes

6.2.1 The Scheme and the wider TRU works are the first major rail infrastructure project in the North of England in the last twenty years. There are other rail schemes that may potentially be delivered through Northern Powerhouse Rail in the future, but these are yet to receive the appropriate authorisations and are over 10 years from being realised.

6.3 Scheme alternatives

6.3.1 Once the need for the Scheme was established, a list of alternative options was considered and assessed in advance of progressing with the Order application in accordance with the NR GRIP process.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 As is addressed in section 8 of my Proof, Network Rail has consulted widely on this Scheme including formal consultation under the TWA Rules.

7.2 A considerable amount of effort has been made 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.

8. OBJECTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

8.1 Section 9 of my main proof details the fact that no objectors or those submitting representations have questioned the need to improve the NTPR and the need for TRU.

8.2 Through the development of the Scheme, and wider TRU works, NR are required to, and have demonstrated the Scheme as proposed delivers VfM,

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contributes to tackling climate change, and we have engaged and consulted extensively with stakeholders, including relevant parish councils.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 My Proof of Evidence demonstrates that there is a clear and overwhelming needs case for the Scheme and that it will deliver important benefits to the railway users on the NTPR.

9.2 The Scheme is key to unlocking the wider benefits of the TRU, increasing the line speed, train capacity and performance, 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.

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



David Vernon
2 February 2024