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Dear Sir

Railfuture response to the West Midlands Rail Strategy consultation

As a stakeholder with regular liaison with officers and elected members, Railfuture welcomes West Midlands Rail Executive's long-term thinking and strongly supports the overall development plan detailed in the consultation document. We recognise the importance of the provision of improved rail services offering more journey opportunities throughout the West Midlands, for both passenger and freight in contributing to wider economic, employment and skills, social inclusion and environmental issues.

Many of the detailed proposals contained in the strategy document are ones that we ourselves have campaigned for, sometimes for many years. However, here are a number with which we have some reservations, principally in difficulties of providing the infrastructure to enable the complete vision to be implemented and/or with the time required. We understand that for a set of proposals as comprehensive as these a lengthy timescale is necessary but are concerned that for some of the proposals the implementation timing is not ambitious enough. There are also a few detailed proposals which we would seek to change or improve.

Our detailed response forms the Appendix to this letter. If you require any more information or clarification please do not hesitate to get in touch and we look forward to being able to contribute to consideration of individual developments.

Railfuture is a national independent voluntary organisation campaigning for a bigger, better railway in Britain for passengers and freight. The West Midlands branch comprises members from all counties and conurbations forming West Midlands Rail.

Yours sincerely



Dr Stephen Wright
Chairman, Railfuture West Midlands

Detailed Responses to the West Midlands Rail Strategy consultation

Strategy Section	Description	Comment
<p>Q3. Does the strategy respond appropriately to the HS2 opportunity?</p>		<p>HS2 will transform services between Birmingham and London and eventually to the North West and North East. It is essential that maximum connectivity is provided by 2026 to Curzon Street and Interchange from the rest of the West Midlands. Greater priority should be given to ensuring HS2 readiness before services start running in 2026 and the promised increase in train paths into Birmingham should be secured before the advent of HS2. Otherwise there is a risk of falling short of the full access to High Speed services which was the prime justification for supporting the project both regionally and nationally.</p> <p>The use of an expanded Moor Street station will help in achieving this. This requires work to start immediately on the delayed Bordesley/Camp Hill Chords project to allow services to run into a refurbished 6-platform Moor Street.</p> <p>We continue to be concerned about passengers needing to transfer between New Street and Curzon Street HS2 stations, especially those not easily able to walk that distance or if encumbered by heavy luggage or children. If nothing substantial is provide this will become more and more of an issue as services and footfall increases.</p> <p>It is to be hoped that there is an aspiration implicit in the strategy to ensure that all parts of the conurbation and wider region have viable access to either rail or metro routes into the city centre and HS2.</p>
<p>Q5. Does the Strategy identify the long-term development priorities and choices for the network to support passenger and freight services?</p>		<p>The strategy in general has considerable vision for the whole of the greater West Midlands area. However as indicated in the accompanying letter there are a number of detail issues with which we disagree to a greater or lesser extent. These are detailed in the following paragraphs</p> <p>We also emphasise the need to prioritise access to HS2 before 2026 as described in Q3. The West Midlands has long suffered from a cycle of delay and consequent cost</p>

		escalation that it has become a built-in expectation. The success of the Government's grand High-Speed venture will largely be determined by its level of commitment to the provision of high quality local and regional networks which provide access to it.
Issues not covered by Strategy	Electrification	There is no mention of future electrification in the strategy document. Whilst recognising that this is an infrastructure matter and therefore subject to the plans of Network Rail and DfT funding, we believe that a 30 year strategy should be seeking to electrify most of the West Midlands network as this enables stopping trains to mix with longer distance express trains more effectively. It would also significantly reduce the CO2 and pollution emissions caused by diesel trains, even for those complying with the Euro 6 standards.
Aspirational Outputs – ONE	Quick Wins	<p>Welcome all proposals detailed, especially:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-introduction of direct Walsall-Wolverhampton trains and new stations. However, we believe 2 trains per hour will insufficient in the long term to attract enough passengers to reduce the considerable traffic congestion on this corridor • re-opening Camp Hill line stations, which with sufficient frequency should impact on traffic congestion through Moseley and Kings Heath. However the plan to use a Worcester train not stopping between Hazelwell and Droitwich is not appropriate, firstly because housing developments in Bromsgrove is likely to require two trains per hour towards Droitwich and Worcester and also the existing public transport between SW Birmingham and Moseley/King Heath is inadequate especially for access to Bournville College at Longbridge. We do however welcome the longer-term plan to introduce a circular type service linking Moseley/King Heath with University station. • Train lengthening on all routes and improved evening and Sunday services. We hope this will be done so as to enable late evening returns from theatre, concerts, etc. We regret this does not seem to include the Tamworth/Nuneaton corridor. We would also like to see earlier introduction of very early morning services to Birmingham International, for staff on early shifts and for passengers with early flights' check-in
Aspirational Outputs – TWO	6-4-2 train frequency	We strongly support this approach as we have long campaigned for improved frequency for those local stations currently receiving only two trains per hour or with an

		<p>irregular skip-stop approach.</p> <p>We also support the aspiration for all-night trains on selected routes.</p>
Aspirational Outputs – THREE	Midlands Rail Hub	We strongly support the development of Moor Street for local services to the Tamworth/Nuneaton routes and the Camp Hill line, coupled with new stations at Castle Bromwich and Fort Parkway and four trains per hour at these with two to Burton. Stations
Aspirational Outputs – FOUR	High Growth Corridor Priorities	We agree that the corridors listed are those with high growth potential and would justify at least four trains per hour.
Aspirational Outputs – FIVE	Support for HS2	<p>General comment is made at the top of this table</p> <p>Diverting the Cross Country Reading/Newcastle trains (or any equivalent) to operate via Coventry would provide new connectivity between Coventry, Birmingham International and the North East, which we support. However, we regret the loss of faster journeys between Birmingham and Banbury/Oxford.</p> <p>We strongly support the aspiration for HS2 trains to call regularly at Birmingham Interchange en route to the North West and, in phase 2, to the North East as this would provide superior connectivity to these regions for passengers from Coventry, Northampton, Milton Keynes and even NW outer suburbs of Greater London.</p>
Aspirational Outputs – SIX	Towards 2047	<p>We strongly support long-term aspirations to provide an underground station facility under Birmingham for local trains and would suggest that this should include local trains on the Birmingham to Wolverhampton, Walsall and Coventry corridors as well as the more obvious Cross-City line. This would release substantial capacity in New Street station, enable six trains per hour on the local services affected and justify the massive cost of such a project.</p> <p>We also support four-tracking the Birmingham-Coventry corridor and development of the Wolverhampton-Walsall-Lichfield corridor, both of which have been aspirations of ours for several years.</p>
Aspirational Outputs – SEVEN	Rail freight development	The general measures proposed are all appropriate to enable more freight to be transported by rail into, out of and through the West Midlands. In particular, with

		greater use of the Camp Hill line for local and regional passenger services, we strongly support the aspiration to re-instate the Stourbridge/ Wednesbury/Walsall line for freight as well as passenger trains. We would urge the extension of this to Lichfield (and thence to Burton) to enable South West to North East Midlands and North East freight to avoid the Birmingham complex altogether.
Key Corridors, up to 2025		We welcome all these proposals, but particularly more trains to Lichfield Trent Valley to facilitate connection to the West Coast Main Line.
Key Corridors, 2026-2033		<p>We understand the reasons for seeking transfer of Cross Country Reading/Newcastle trains (or any successor) via Coventry but regret the loss of the faster journey times between Birmingham and Banbury/ Oxford using the more direct route. Furthermore the existing XCT service via Coventry forms part of the faster services between Birmingham New Street, International and Coventry and can be very heavily used for local commuting or exhibition visitors and can make this part of the journey very unpleasant, albeit for a relatively short time.</p> <p>We welcome direct trains from Coventry to Crewe via Trent Valley but not convinced that Euston-Coventry-Trent Valley will compensate for loss of 3rd Pendolino between Coventry and London. We assume that this also implies electrification of the Nuneaton to Coventry line otherwise the Train Operating Company will require bi-mode trains for a ridiculously short distance or the use of diesel units throughout the journey at a time when these are to be phased out.</p> <p>Support increased local train frequencies to Nottingham and Leicester. We anticipate that these will terminate at Moor Street. If not, we suggest they should be linked to Hereford and/or Shrewsbury trains to reduce dwell time at New Street and provide cross-city connectivity.</p>
Key Corridors, 2034-2047		We strongly support the introduction of direct Coventry/Leicester trains. We see no need for them to stop at Nuneaton, which should be adequately served by improved Birmingham/Leicester and Nuneaton/Leamington Spa trains. Further we would hope that some of the Coventry/Leicester service would form part of longer inter-city/regional services, such as Oxford to Nottingham. However we would hope that these could be introduced sooner than 2047 (as indeed your figure 14 indicates)

		<p>We support also the aspirations for regional services between Birmingham and Oxford and Birmingham and Bristol, in the latter case via Worcestershire Parkway rather than Worcester city but via Gloucester. Providing these were done as supplementing Cross Country express services this could provide an opportunity for XC services to omit certain stops and be accelerated.</p>
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