

## *railfuture* response to Northern RUS

*railfuture* offers its thoughts below on Northern RUS published in October 2010. Our response is in two parts: firstly responses to strategies identified in the document itself (“Gaps” in the language it uses) and then where we feel it does not address particular issues, we offer our alternatives ideas.

*railfuture* have concerns about the forecasting period that is covered in this RUS. Whilst there are many references to a 20 or 30-year timescale, there is very little detail of what a future railway network might look like. We are disappointed that high speed rail appears to be the only long term vision for rail. We need a radical, expansionist vision for the “normal” railway. The railway should provide a much broader range of travel opportunities than at present through the reopening of old lines, the opening of new lines and the opening/re-opening of stations. The railway should meet the challenge of encouraging modal shift from the roads for both environmental (climate change and pollution reasons) and to ease congestions and make road traffic easier for essential journeys. What is needed are major and significant enhancements to the network to improve both its scope and capacity. What is going to happen by 2050? It is anticipated that the new franchises will cover a 15-year period yet this RUS is essentially concerned with CP4. Too much in this document is about 'nipping and tucking' services within the constraints of the current infrastructure. The importance of the Northern region must not be underestimated; the four Metropolitan counties combined have a similar population to Greater London. Manchester and Leeds are major commuter centres from a wide catchment area, as to a lesser but still very significant extent are Sheffield, Liverpool, Bradford, Preston, York and Hull.

To specifics – firstly, the Manchester area. With a few exceptions, almost all rail corridors in Manchester can be served from both Piccadilly and Victoria, *on existing track*, if both the Ardwick Branch (Ashburys - Philips Park), and the route from Ashton Moss North Junction via the Ashton Moss Curve to Denton Junction then via the Heaton Norris and Guide Bridge Line to Heaton Norris Junction were brought into regular use. The exceptions are the CLC line via Warrington Central, the Styal Line via Manchester Airport, and the Rochdale route to Bradford and the Calder Valley, which would require either the Ordsall curve or rebuilding the missing viaduct at Ardwick, in order to reach Piccadilly. Indeed, stations on the Caldervale Line corridor would seemingly be the principal beneficiary of the Ordsall curve. Line speed and headway upgrades are required on several routes, not least the Caldervale Line.

For easy reference, we refer to the following groups of routes in Manchester:

**South:** Local: Airport, Alderley Edge, Hazel Grove,

Regional: Buxton, Crewe, Macclesfield, Stoke on Trent & beyond.

**South East:** Local: Marple, Rose Hill, New Mills, Regional: Sheffield & beyond.

**East:** Local: Glossop/Hadfield, Stalybridge, Regional: Leeds via Huddersfield, etc.

**North East:** Local: Rochdale, Regional: Leeds via Calder Valley and both the Bradford and Brighouse routes.

**[North:** MetroBury]

**North West** Local: Bolton, Wigan, Southport, Blackburn, Clitheroe, Colne, Regional: Preston, Blackpool, Lancaster, Morecambe, Barrow in Furness and West Cumbria, Carlisle/ Edinburgh/Glasgow.

**West:** Local: Liverpool all stops (both routes), Regional: Liverpool fast (both routes).

**South West:** Local: Metro Altrincham, Regional: Chester via Northwich or Warrington,

## 1. The proposed Strategy.

To address the acknowledged problems of congestion and conflicting movements in Central Manchester, three options for key new infrastructure are considered, namely:

- New through platforms 15 - 16 at Piccadilly,
- Various alternative options for grade separation between Piccadilly and Ardwick,
- The Ordsall (a.k.a, Castlefield) curve.

On any assessment the new platforms at Piccadilly seem essential to any strategy.

Any version of a flyover on the approaches to Piccadilly will be expensive and disruptive during construction. Alternative ways of resolving the conflicts in that area must therefore be examined. The Ordsall curve, however, whilst useful to a degree, seems a doubtful solution to the central problem of congestion in the southern "throat". Yes it would improve distribution around the centre, and remove some conflicts outside Piccadilly, but in doing so it creates new conflicts at (presumed) flat junctions at each end of the new curve, and actually *increases* the number of trains in the throat through Oxford Road etc. Although we think it would be neutral in its effect on services from the Leeds direction (because of the reversal/waiting time for these services at Piccadilly at present), if services to Sheffield were also taken through Victoria, it will considerably extend journey times for those travelling between Manchester Airport and Sheffield and beyond, by routeing these services right round the city centre (with enormous scope for congestion and delays) to avoid reversal in Piccadilly.

## 2. An alternative Strategy.

Any strategy should seek to do several things:

- reduce conflicting movement outside Piccadilly,
- improve distribution around the central area,
- in particular, redress the imbalance between access to Victoria and the south side,

- Eliminate terminating other than in Piccadilly 1-12, and minimise reversing.

The west and North West already enjoy a good choice of services into Victoria and Piccadilly. But the east, southeast and southwest is entirely served from Piccadilly, and the northeast from Victoria. This could be remedied by rerouting a number of east-west services through Victoria instead of Piccadilly - Oxford Road. It requires bringing the Ardwick Branch (via Beswick) into full use -and possibly electrifying it. Not only would this remove many conflicts outside Piccadilly, it would increase the choice of central destinations for users. We think one service that could be diverted now to reap the benefits from this would be the present Hazel Grove – Preston service, this would enable a regular service on two stations with a very poor service that deserve better, Reddish South and Denton, would free up paths on the busy Piccadilly – Oxford Road corridor and would offer better connections from the south to the shopping centres of central Manchester that are much closer to Victoria than Piccadilly. We also think that this would have the effect of making the Ordsall curve more viable.

We would also propose rerouting one or two North Trans-Pennine services and possibly one South Trans-Pennine service through Victoria instead of the southern throat, along with a number of local services to/from New Mills via the Ardwick Branch (Phillips Park South Junction - Ashburys Junction) then onward to connect with certain Bolton / Wigan services. We think that in particular, capacity in Gap 4, the Manchester – Sheffield route, is not sufficiently addressed and we think that the strategy above and the possible addition of freight loops on the Manchester – Sheffield line would enable capacity to be greatly enhanced here. (Present services are very much at capacity for long periods of the day now.)

### **3. Stations.**

A number of locations need to be developed as Interchange points, including: Ashburys, Guide Bridge, Salford Crescent, and possibly a new station at Ordsall Lane (ideally four platforms). Salford Central should have platforms on both Bolton and Liverpool lines. There should be at least one station on the Ardwick Branch - probably at Beswick, also a station at Ashton Tameside between Guide Bridge and Stalybridge, and at Diggle.

### **4. Other regional developments.**

There should be a second semi-fast service on the Calder Valley route, Manchester - Rochdale - Hebden Bridge - Halifax - Bradford - Leeds - Selby / Hull, interleaved with the existing Blackpool - Preston - Bradford - Leeds - York service. This service could extend to Manchester Airport (using the slot vacated by the present Chester service -see below) once the Ordsall curve is constructed. (Cross-Leeds local working to York & Selby could revert to the Calderdale local services.) One of the Calderdale services might even work across Manchester and link with the Mid Cheshire local service.

In addition to services from Manchester, Birmingham and London to the north via Preston, there ought to be an hourly service between Liverpool and Edinburgh/Glasgow, possibly via Earlestown, interleaved with the Liverpool- Blackpool and Manchester - Scotland services. We think that the Skipton - Lancaster service should be redrafted as previously suggested

in the Lancashire & Cumbria RUS. Although it's not a primary part of the RUS, looking at the proposals for electrification across the North West, we think the Morecambe line should be electrified too, to reduce "diesels under the wires."

Chester and North Wales: Manchester - Holyhead service should be augmented by a Liverpool - Llandudno service, enabling the former to be speeded up. For now both have to be routed via Earlestown, but the logical route into Liverpool would be via the Halton curve, which could also cater for a Liverpool - Chester - Shrewsbury - Birmingham service. Similarly a more logical route into Manchester Piccadilly would be via the Mid Cheshire line and the airport. This would require construction of a western link into the airport, and some double track restored on parts of the Mid Cheshire line, enabling a semi-fast service to run alongside the existing all-stops service. However we also think that the existing North Wales/Chester-Manchester via Warrington Bank Quay could be extended to Manchester Airport across the day now, possibly with introduction of platform split signalling at Manchester Airport, though in the longer term we would propose an extension of a North Trans-Pennine service from Victoria to Chester instead (see above), giving Chester a choice of Manchester stations and a more direct route to the Airport.

Southern access to the Airport from Crewe would ideally be provided by extension of the LM service from Stoke, Stafford, and Trent Valley etc, perhaps augmented by the service from East Midlands via Uttoxeter, although the latter should ideally continue to Chester.

We have concerns about the bottle-neck at Leeds. All surviving local lines feed through Leeds. Surely consideration needs to be given to avoiding Leeds. One solution would be connecting Bradford Interchange and Bradford Forster Square.

Our vision includes joining the two railway lines in Central Bradford as an urgent project whilst there is a large empty building site between the two routes. The closure of the Bradford Royal Mail Depot in 2013 provides a through route. Forster Square Station would be replaced by new stations in the Westgate shopping complex and in Manningham. A strategic approach would involve reopening the railway between Lancashire (Colne) and Northallerton via Skipton and Ripon as a freight strategic route and to provide a range of additional passenger travel options.

With regard to the possibility of reopening currently disused lines, or the construction of some completely new sections of railway (p.13), we would like to suggest the following:

- Reinststate Todmorden chord to allow a Blackburn to Manchester via Burnley and Rochdale service. New station at Cornholme. This could be a bi-directional service via Bolton if the Bromley Cross/Darwen route were doubled.
- Reinststate Burscough chord to allow through Preston- Southport services (perhaps originating from Skipton)
- Skipton-Colne, which has the added advantage of being able to become a major diversionary route for freight trains. Double track throughout to Gannow Junction.

- Dewsbury-Bradford via Spen Valley Route (tram-train)
- Menston-Otley-Harrogate- Ripon- Northallerton (also allows Ilkley- Leeds alternate service via Otley)
- Clitheroe – Hellifield with a regular service (not summer Sundays only).
- Garsdale-Hawes to modern freight standards (connecting to the Wensleydale Railway)
- Skipton-Grassington (requires a small extension from Rylstone Quarry)
- Skipton-Bolton Abbey (requires a small chord and joint use of the Embsay Railway)
- Malton to Pickering (would generate considerable traffic volumes from North York Moors Railway and Pickering Showground visitors)
- Beverley to York
- Crewe- Altrincham via Middlewich (using existing freight route from Sandbach)
- Penrith – Keswick

There is a need for enhanced services on poorly served routes including Goole-Leeds via Knottingley, York-Sheffield via Pontefract, Stockport –Huddersfield via Stalybridge, Preston and East Lancashire to Sheffield via Brighouse and Barnsley.

There is a need for new stations on existing routes where the population is currently deprived of convenient access to the railway. Examples include Garstang, Hipperholme/Lightcliffe, Elland, Low Moor, Kirkstall Forge, Apperley Bridge, Haxby, and the re-opening of Dore for trains on the Midland main line. The current snail's pace of (re-)openings is in our view a complete disgrace.

We are concerned with the forecasting models you are using. In Table 3.1 the drivers of demand are identified. Firstly, these primarily rely on standard DfT assumptions. Are these standard assumptions good enough given the substantial under-forecasting of demand in previous years? Secondly, there are numerous other factors which need to be taken into account in determining demand:

- Suppressed demand. This is not mentioned at all in the document.
- The cost of workplace car parking: if a charge is levied on all workplace car parking, there will be a modal shift from the roads
- Future charges for road use
- Congestion. Especially important in areas like the Calder Valley where road capacity is extremely limited.
- Individual responses to concerns regarding climate change/carbon footprint

- Government responses to concerns regarding climate change/carbon emissions
- Clarity is needed about the effects of recession on demand. Does it suppress demand or is demand unaffected?
- The need to take account of issues regarding demand for transport identified in recent 'thought pieces' from the Commission for Integrated Transport,

<http://cfit.independent.gov.uk/pubs/2010/tco/report/pdf/tco-report.pdf>

We are concerned about the costings approach taken by government bodies, which vastly inflates the cost of capital projects. Until a more commercial approach to costings for infrastructure development is taken, the necessary development of the rail network will continue to be jeopardised by excessive cost.

This consolidated national response has been prepared after consultations with the following **railfuture** branches: Yorkshire, North West, Lincolnshire, and East Midlands. The **railfuture** national Passenger Committee was also consulted.

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