

Rail North West



Artist's impression of HS2 trains in platform. Courtesy HS2

HS2 and NPR Plan B

Following the cancellation in October 2023 by the Government of the last remaining northern leg of HS2 from Birmingham to Crewe and onto Manchester, different plans for what could follow have emerged.

The Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham has combined with the (at the time) Mayor of West Midlands Andy Street to look at alternatives and the analysis seems to show that there is no substitute for a new line linking Manchester and Handsacre Junction, the present northern “end” of HS2, though the plans for a full high-speed line have been scaled back to trim costs as its thought the extra capacity can be

delivered by a “conventional” speed route.

A joint board has also been setup between Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham, the Liverpool City Region Mayor with the leaders of Liverpool and Manchester City Councils Liam Robinson and Bev Craig to follow up on what is wanted and can be achieved with the funding made available for Northern Powerhouse Rail. (see more detailed story on P7) Its thought that it would use the original planned route for HS2 between Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport and on to a new route from near Lymm which then connects on to Liverpool via a revamped Warrington Bank Quay,

though it's understood this would not now follow the refurbished, freight only route via Widnes to join the main line into Liverpool Lime Street.

Meanwhile, Chris Gibbs, former manager of Virgins Trains, has come up with plan to make best use of the infrastructure and rolling stock once HS2 is complete as far as the West Midlands.

His plan, drawn from contacts in the industry, would run both new HS2 trans AND Class 390's on the HS2 line and the existing WCML north of the Midlands. This would use refurbished and speeded up Class 390 Pendolinos and the new HS2 trains and would connect with Manchester on a new line from the West Midlands (probably following the broad alignment of the cancelled HS2 route) called the New Northern Line.

Services would also use the West Coast Main Line north of the West Midlands end of HS2 to Preston, Blackpool,

Lancaster and Scotland and an indicative hourly timetable of Euston departures shows the current pattern would be improved for some stations in the North West, Liverpool in particular would get a second hourly service, although not at an even interval (see screenshot from document below).

The plan notes that Class 390 Pendolinos are due a refurbishment around the time of the start of HS2 services and that as the basic Pendolino design is capable of higher speeds (155mph) than it's used for presently (125mph), this could be an opportunity to re-gear the class to exploit the HS2 line speeds and would make best use of the tilt capability of the northern section of the WCML.

This indicative timetable would reduce the maximum speed of HS2 sets on the new HS2 line to 186mph (from the original planned 225mph), this is to enable interleaving of HS2 and

11 Euston* departures per hour via HS2 - Indicative Timetable

Time	Destination	Train type	Speed on HS2 in mph	Seats
xx.00	Birmingham Curzon St	HS2 400m	186	1,056
xx.03	Liverpool Lime Street	HS2 200m	186	528
xx.06	Glasgow Central (fast)	390 266m	155	607
xx.09	Manchester Piccadilly	390 266m	155	607
xx.20	Birmingham Curzon St	HS2 400m	186	1,056
xx.23	Liverpool Lime Street	HS2 200m	186	528
xx.26	Edinburgh / Glasgow	390 266m	155	607
xx.29	Manchester Piccadilly	390 266m	155	607
xx.40	Birmingham Curzon St	HS2 400m	186	1,056
xx.43	Blackpool North	HS2 200m	186	528
xx.46	(vacant path to	mitigate delays)		
xx.49	Manchester Piccadilly	390 266m	155	607

The xx.00, xx.20 and xx.40 186mph trains will be 3 minutes behind the xx.49, xx.09 and xx.29 155mph trains at Delta Junction, depending on stopping pattern
Liverpool services can be either HS2 200m 186mph trains or 390 266m 155mph trains, or a mix of both

*or Old Oak Common for interim period

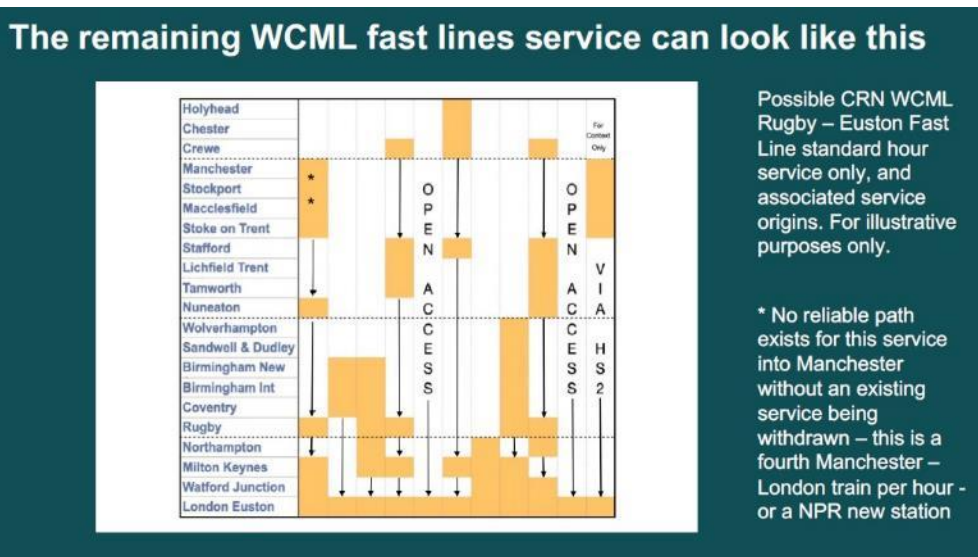
Pendolinos such that an 11-minute departure gap at Euston between a Pendolino and HS2 set would mean the HS2 set caught up with the Pendolino at the end of the HS2 line at Handsacre junction, where services would diverge anyway. No HS2 trains would go further north than Blackpool in these proposals, but it does not prevent any changes in the future to enable that.

Some HS2 trains were proposed to be 2x200m sets coupled together to increase capacity at key stations, but with the cancellation of HS2 northern legs and (presently) no new station platforms in Manchester, the existing station can't accommodate 400m trains and so would retain Class 390's in the, though its thought there would be scope to make these all 11 coach services to increase capacity.

A detailed look at the proposed service pattern compared with existing services

shows that Liverpool would finally get its long promised second hourly service, and Blackpool would also be a winner with an hourly service, both using HS2 train sets. The second screenshot below shows how the remaining services would be accommodated on the existing WCML between Euston and the West Midlands, with North Wales Coast Avanti services running that way while Crewe – Euston West Midlands Train services would continue as now, although there is no mention of the existing Liverpool – Birmingham West Midlands Trains services.

It's also not clear how stations on the existing routes into Manchester would be served, Macclesfield, Stockport, Stoke-on-Trent and Wilmslow aren't showing on these plans, although on the original HS2 routes (before cancellation) Macclesfield was to be served by one HS2 train per hour (it currently has one Pendolino).



Mayor Pressing For Metrolink Extensions

Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, has been pressing the case for extensions to the Manchester Metrolink network to include Bolton, Heywood, Middleton and Stockport.

The proposed extension to Stockport, would follow some of the old Midland Railway route from the present Metrolink terminus at East Didsbury to Stockport, but would be diverted over some new track formations as some of that route has been built upon.

The plans for Heywood and Middleton would use tram-trains. Reference was made to the “Atom Valley” business site in the Heywood and Middleton extensions, this is actually not one site but a GM Mayor “Development Zone” with sites across the boroughs of Rochdale, Oldham and Bury

Andy Burnham said the business cases had been completed and were due for publication in June, but have had to be delayed until after the general election.

Frustrated with rail travel or want to see better services? Want to do something about it?

Join Railfuture’s North West Branch Committee and get your views across to industry and government.

We are in need of new voices from our members to help in making the case for rail, contact the chair, vice chair or secretary at northwest@railfuture.org.uk (combined mailbox) or individually as noted on the back cover of this newsletter. We meet 4/5 times a year in person and use emails etc. to keep up to date the rest of the time. Help us to help all travellers.

Through Fares

Railfuture North West is pleased to report Northern took quick action to remedy an odd situation where through fares from some stations on one route in the north west to some stations on a connected line were not available.

Fares from Appley Bridge and Gathurst on the Wigan to Southport line to stations on the Southport to Liverpool line south of Hall Road were only

showing as via Wigan a much longer way round (and possibly needing four changes), requesting a “via Southport” option resulted in “no fares available” and suggested passengers may need to buy two separate tickets.

Following contact from Railfuture, Northern responded by adding through fares to the database to show those via Southport.



On 6th April, 777024 at platform 3 before it works the 09.11 service to Hunts Cross. Photo courtesy Tim Hall-Smith, OPSTA

8-Car Trains Arrive At Southport

With the rollout of new Class 777's on the Merseyrail network, the plan was always to be able to run eight car sets (as two x 4 car sets) wherever possible and there has been significant platform extension work across the network to enable this as the previous class 507 and 508 trains were only ever 6 cars maximum (two x 3 car sets). The final piece of the jigsaw was at Southport station where only one of the platforms serving Merseyrail electrics to Hunts Cross could accommodate 8 car sets.

Platforms 2 and 3 have now been extended by moving the buffer stops closer to the main concourse to fit the new trains although its likely that class

507's will still be running until possibly September 2024.

Earlier on in the rollout, the Class 777 trains become a cause of concern due to reliability issues, especially the battery enabled units running to Headbolt Lane, though the Ormskirk-Preston-Southport Travellers Association (OPSTA) notes the situation is a lot better now. The full timetable (four trains per hour) is being operated between Kirkby and Headbolt Lane and OPSTA are pleased to see more of the new trains deployed across the network, with eight car trains seen for the first time during the Grand National Festival.

North West Stations get Access For All

The Department for Transport (DfT) announced in May that nine stations in the North West (out of a total of fifty across the country) would receive funding for feasibility work with a view to proceeding with providing access for disabled passengers and those with other mobility issues. The successful station bids in the North West are; Aigburth, Bredbury, Church and Oswaldtwistle, Flowery Field, Newton for Hyde, Port Sunlight, Rock Ferry, Ulverston and Walton.

The DfT's Access for All (AfA) programme was launched in 2006 to address the issues faced by disabled passengers and passengers facing mobility restraints when using railway stations in England, Scotland or Wales.

A total of 310 nominations were received in the latest round and were assessed against several criteria, including annual footfall where ORR figures were weighted by the incidence of disability in the area using 2011 Census data.

The assessment also included factors like proximity to a hospital or a station with a high number of interchange passengers or geographical location – the weighted footfall was compared against others nominated by the same TOC and against those within the same region rather than nationally to ensure a fair geographical spread across the country and to create more accessible entry points onto the network

Availability of third-party funding and local support was also key as well as support from the local MP

Blackpool Tram Extension Finally Opens

Blackpool's tramway extension to Blackpool North Station welcomed its first passengers in June. Fylde Coast residents were invited to enter a draw to travel on a special service on Wednesday June 12th, with the tram travelling from Blackpool Transport's Starr Gate tram depot at Squires Gate to a new terminus adjacent to Blackpool North Station.

The first regular trams taking fare paying passengers started on Sunday June 16th ,

with limited tickets available on special tram tours on June 13th to 15th.

The short extension from Talbot Square on the main north south route near the North pier has cost £23.42 million and has been delayed for a few years from the original planned opening, due to various building and planning issues.



These 'Catching a bus?' posters, designed by Community Rail Lancashire and funded through Community Rail's Integrated Sustainable Travel Fund, are now displayed at Accrington Station. The map and QR code (which enables the route to be downloaded to a mobile device) aim to improve active travel options in the area, by helping passengers to locate rail and bus links and make car-free onward journeys from the station.(photo and text courtesy Community Rail).

Joint Board Plans for New Liverpool – Manchester Route

A new Liverpool-Manchester Railway Board has been established to maximise the economic and social benefits of a new railway between the Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester.

On the 200th anniversary of the formation of the original Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company, which oversaw the construction of the world's first inter-city passenger railway, the Mayors of Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region Andy Burnham and Steve Rotheram, launched the Board and set out their preferred options for improvements to rail infrastructure linking the North West's two largest city-regions.

The plans include transformational investment in city centre stations in Liverpool and a modern, underground station at Manchester Piccadilly. A new, high-speed rail line would run through new stations at Warrington Bank Quay and Manchester Airport, connecting the Investment Zones in Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester via prime development sites.

Following the scrapping of the northern legs of HS2, the government invited the two Mayors to advise on the best solution for improved connectivity between Liverpool and Manchester as part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail scheme, and Steve Rotheram has fought the Government's plan (first floated in the Integrated Rail Plan) to route a section of that over a disused freight only line to Liverpool from Warrington, past the closed Fiddlers Ferry power station.

The new Board will be chaired by the two Mayors with the leaders of Manchester City Council, Cllr Bev Craig, and Liverpool

City Council, Cllr Liam Robinson, serving as vice-chairs, and will involve local authorities along the route, as well as the Port of Liverpool, Manchester Airports Group, and other stakeholder organisations.

The Board will be tasked with working with the government and engaging with the private sector to help build the business case for the most ambitious line possible.

Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, said: "Our region was home to the first inter-city railway anywhere in the world, but today our rail network is now not fit for purpose after decades of underinvestment. The scale of economic opportunity right along the line is huge, with Investment Zones in both city-regions and several major development sites, but the North West can only reach its potential with better rail connectivity.

"We've been successful in making the case to government for our preferred options – in Greater Manchester that means a new, underground station at Piccadilly. The new Board will help us accelerate these plans and capitalise on a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build the railway the North needs."

Mayor of Liverpool City Region, Steve Rotheram, said: "From the world's first passenger railway powered by Stephenson's Rocket to the Dockers' Umbrella, our region has been revolutionising Britain's railways for centuries. But sadly, regions across the North have been forced to contend with infrastructure that wouldn't look out of place 100 years ago. It suffocates growth and holds the country's economy back.

“Transformative investment in better rail connectivity between our two city regions cannot and is more than just a regional project. This is a nationally important infrastructure scheme that would help to unlock the North’s enormous potential and deliver a greater return to the Treasury.

"There are fantastic, passionate leaders across the North in business, infrastructure and a wide range of sectors. We want their help: come and join us to deliver the same transformation that the Liverpool Manchester Railway did 200 years ago."

Open Access For Rochdale – London?

Virgin and Lumo, (the brand used by First Group for its East Coast Open Access operations) have both submitted applications to the Office of Rail & Road (ORR) run open access services from Rochdale to London, though Virgin’s plans have more services across the day.

Lumo is offering to run five trains from Rochdale via Manchester Victoria, Eccles, Newton-Le-Willows and Warrington Bank Quay to London Euston (with a sixth starting at Victoria) while Virgin is suggesting seven trains, though theirs would run via

Victoria/Piccadilly and Stockport. There is an “either” in Virgin’s plans where services would instead run from Piccadilly to terminate at Preston calling at Bolton, Horwich Parkway, and Chorley .

Virgin is also planning to run a fifteen trains per day service from Liverpool Lime Street to Euston, calling at Liverpool South Parkway, Runcorn, Lichfield and Tamworth and also has plans for 4 trains per day to from Euston to Glasgow and they have calls at North West stations; these are at (a yet to be opened) Golborne, Preston and Carlisle.

Community Rail Award for Bentham Line



The artwork at Heysham Port, photo by Brian Haworth.

At the National Community Rail Awards event held at Swansea Arena on Monday 18th March, the Bentham Line (Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership) was the winner of the “Community Creative Projects and Station Arts” award. This was for their “Rail to Sail” project, which came to fruition in June 2023: it included a specially commissioned large artwork, located in the

newly refurbished passenger lounge at the ferry terminal showing the new ferry ‘Manxman’ which went into ser-vice in July 2023 in a scene which also included a railway train to symbolise how two different transport systems can help make the interchange between one mode and another both easier and quicker.

Future branch meetings.

Our next branch committee meeting is planned to be on Thursday 5th September 2024 at a venue to be confirmed though we're looking at Blackpool. This will be at our usual start time of 1300,

The following meeting is planned for Saturday November 16th depending on securing a venue. Further dates/details will be on our website but do please get in touch with your branch committee, Chair, Vice Chair or Secretary (details on the back page) to confirm

JOINT MEETING WITH THE YORKSHIRE BRANCH.

On Saturday 30th November we are holding a joint meeting with or friends in the Yorkshire Branch and are hoping a speaker from Transport Focus will be confirmed. The meeting is at Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount St, Manchester M2 5NS starting at 1300 and aim to finish around 3-3.30. We plan to have a presentation from the speaker followed by a Q & A and then discussion of joint business. More details will appear on the website closer to the time <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/North-West-Branch> contact the Chair or Secretary if you can't access that (closer to the date), details on the back page.

LASRUG

Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group
www.llmr.co.uk www.lasrug.btck.co.uk

The group was formed in 1989 to support and improve the Lancaster to Skipton railway. This links the towns and cities of West Yorkshire with the city of Lancaster and the seaside resort of Morecambe. It also gives access to the Yorkshire Dales, Forest of Bowland and Furness.

If you would like to help us promote the 'Little North Western' line, please contact our Membership Secretary, Lakeber House, Robin Lane, High Bentham, Lancaster. LA2 7AF.

Membership costs £7-00 annually. You will receive a Newsletter quarterly and we invite a speaker from the Rail Industry to the AGM each September.

Rail User Groups within the North West area

(for those viewing in pdf format, those underlined have embedded links to the group's websites or social media pages)

- [Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users' Association](#)
- [Bolton Rail Users Group](#)
- [Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group](#)
- [Friends of Castleton Station](#)
- [Friends of Denton Station](#)
- [Friends of Eccles Station](#)
- [Friends of Littleborough Stations \(Lancashire\)](#)
- [Friends of Reddish South Station](#)
- [Friends of Rose Hill Station](#)
- Friends of St Annes Stations email brussell_2019@outlook.com
- [Friends of Settle Carlisle Line](#)
- [Furness Line Action Group \(FLAG\)](#)
- [Goyt Valley Rail Users' Association \(Stockport\)](#)
- [Lakes Line Rail User Group \(LLRUG\)](#)
- Lancaster, Morecambe Rail & District Rail User Group (no link presently)
- [Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group \(LASRUG\)](#)
- [Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association \(MCRUA\)](#)
- [North Cheshire Rail Users' Group \(NCRUG\)](#)
- [Ormskirk, Preston and Southport Travellers Association \(OPSTA\)](#)
- [Ribble Valley Rail](#)
- [Skipton-East Lancashire Railway Action Partnership \(SELRAP\) \(reopening campaign\)](#)
- [Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester line \(STORM\)](#)
- Stalybridge to Huddersfield Rail User Group
- [Wirral Transport Users' Association \(WTUA\)](#)
- [Wrexham-Bidston Rail Users Association \(WBRUA\)](#)

Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users Association (Incorporating South Fylde Line Users Association)

Chairman; Paul Nettleton
8, Balham Avenue,
Blackpool,
FY4 3QP

Vice – Malcolm Richardson
Chairman 135, Branstree Road,
Blackpool,
FY4 4SR,



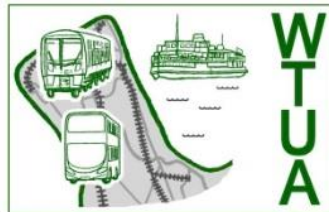
Join us, it's only £3/year, £5 for family membership.

Contact; Membership Secretary, c/o 8, Balham Avenue, Blackpool,
FY4 3QP. Contact through our Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/BAFRUA> and click on "Sign Up"

Wirral Transport Users Association

We believe in modern public transport systems for Wirral, Merseyside and the Chester area. The WTUA has a watching brief over the public transport operations in the Wirral and their connections to the rest of the country. It represents the interests of transport users in the local area and has representation on various transport user groups.



We publish our newsletter once or twice a year. Our AGM includes a talk from an expert on some facet of the transport world. We aim to run coach excursions to heritage railways and other places of transport activity or interest once or twice a year.

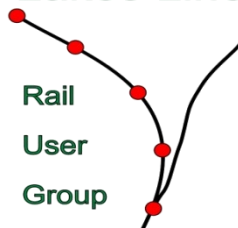
For more info, see website- www.wirraltua.org.uk,
email wirraltua@gmail.com, or phone Brian Grey on 0151 648 3070.

Annual membership- Individual: £8, Couple at same address: £10. Send for an application form to: Brian Grey, 56 Coombe Road, Irby, Wirral CH61 4US.

THE LAKES LINE RAIL USER GROUP

Formed in 1984 to promote and support Cumbria's only branch line for locals and tourists alike. Travel the lakes line into scenic Lakeland.

Lakes Line



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Contact: Mr. P Bell 9, Vicars Hill,
Kendal,
Cumbria

Membership: £5.00 Individuals,

£7.00 Family, £13.00 Corporate

LA9 5DA

PLEASE NOTE the email addresses below won't correctly copy from the pdf (electronic) edition, this is to prevent spam, you will need to type them in manually.

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<i>Vice Chairman & Treasurer</i> Malcolm Conway	TBA	malcolmconway@aol.co.uk Tel 07956 345130
<i>Freight Officer</i> (vacant)		
<i>Secretary and Returning Officer</i> Christopher Norton	26 Handsworth Road Blackpool FY1 2RQ	cjnblackpool@btinternet.com 01253 623338
<i>Media Officer</i> (vacant)		

Rail North West is the newsletter of the North West branch of Railfuture. Contributions in the form of articles and letters are welcomed. Please send them to Arthur Thomson at arthur.thomson@railfuture.org.uk. Text files e-mailed are particularly welcome. The opinions expressed in *Rail North West* are those of any individual contributors and not necessarily those of Railfuture.

www.railfuture.org.uk

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