

## **SUBMISSION TO THE MAYOR'S WEST YORKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN TO 2040 DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION - RAILFUTURE, YORKSHIRE BRANCH - OCTOBER 2025**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Railfuture is the largest independent voluntary membership organisation campaigning for a better and bigger railway for passengers and freight.

As well as individual members, Railfuture's Yorkshire Branch has seventeen member rail user, rail reopening, and rail campaigning groups. The appendix lists those wholly or partially in West Yorkshire, who have been consulted in the process of developing this submission (see appendix).

### **SCOPE OF THIS RESPONSE**

Railfuture has confined its comments to the parts of the plan relevant to railways/trains, trams/mass transit, and integrated transport.

### **OVERVIEW**

**Railfuture broadly gives a warm welcome to the draft plan, and its detailed and pertinent analysis of the transport challenges. However, we find the timetable for improvements to be too slow, and we are opposed to the proposed new Bradford-Huddersfield rail route, considering there is a cheaper and less environmentally destructive alternative to its objective that can be introduced more speedily.**

Our submission assumes that the **Trans Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU)** will be completed in full as a fully-electrified railway.

We have previously commented on drafts of the Rail Plan and consultations on Mass Transit. **We are particularly pleased that the draft LTP stresses:**

- the importance of integration between modes, *with the Mayor's ambition "to deliver a seamless, reliable transport network under one brand"*
- the need for modal shift from private cars, and from longer distance commercial road transport
- the recognition of the climate emergency, and your statement (p31) that "we need ambitious action that goes beyond current national policy and targets"
- the need also to reduce particulates from road vehicles (and we would add, diesel trains)
- the recognition of the unacceptable levels of congestion caused by road vehicles, including electric vehicles
- the need for public transport to be accessible across all communities and demographics in West Yorkshire
- the need for affordable fares, including for cross-boundary journeys, and the need for multi-modal and tap-in / tap-out ticketing
- and recognises travel from and to WY as well as travel within the Mayoral area.

Our only major disagreement is over the plan's inclusion of a new non-stop high speed railway between Bradford and Huddersfield. We consider this unnecessary as much better value with far less disruption and habitat destruction can be obtained by using the same sum of money to upgrade the Calder Valley line, and introduce additional (fast) services. The money saved should be allocated to finance a number of other enhancements in, or that positively benefit, West Yorkshire.

#### **SPECIFIC COMMENTS – WEAVER NETWORK VISION**

We support the Weaver Network vision (benefitting people, places and the planet) and its principles (integrated, inclusive and affordable, reliable and resilient, safe, active and zero-emission) that are designed to achieve the Mayor's Mission 3 of a well-connected region, but **we consider an important principle is missing and should be included – "frequent."**

We also feel that **the objectives should be expanded to include "tackling inequalities and exclusions."**

#### **3.2 DELIVERING THE WEAVER NETWORK**

##### **MASS TRANSIT NETWORK (Figure 44, p 92)**

Railfuture is fully supportive of a long overdue Mass Transit Network for West Yorkshire, which in our view must be rail-based (tram, tram/train, light rail, and possibly on some routes, Very Light Rail). We have commented on all the previous consultations, and will respond to future ones.

**We want spades in the ground during 2028, with the ambition being to open the first lines by 2031.**

- As you recognise, phase one must be developed in such a way that there is **easy connectivity between Forster Square and Interchange/the new through station in Bradford, and from the proposed new through station to key city centres locations** including the Town Hall / St George's Hall, the Broadway shopping centre, and the Alhambra/Bradford Live ("Odeon"); the latter will also serve Bradford College and Bradford University. We add that we consider the new through station should be in or very close to the city centre.
- We have previously commented on, and remain concerned about, **the gap in the network between Dewsbury and Wakefield via Ossett and Horbury**, and consider such a route should be developed.
- The mass transit phase one delivery box on p52 refers to *"a new mass transit network that will eventually connect the whole of West Yorkshire"*. Whilst we do not expect the MTN to duplicate good train links, we observe that the market and commuter town of Wetherby has no planned tram or rail connection. **We therefore advocate an extension of trams from Roundhay to Wetherby**; failing that, the Roundhay tram terminus will need a large "park and ride" car park, with a connecting Weaver Network "shuttle bus" service between Roundhay and Wetherby, operating during the tram hours.
- We would like more detail on the routes shown **from Wakefield to Castleford and Knottingley via Normanton, Pontefract, and Featherstone**. There are already railway lines and trains serving this route. If the proposal is to replace trains with trams or (more likely) tram-trains, this needs to be the subject of a full and thorough analysis and public consultation, with a full business case to follow should the consultation demonstrate overwhelming public support. **There must be no adverse impact on longer distance train services using these routes, including services to Leeds, Doncaster, Sheffield and Goole**, the last three of which require major improvements.

**It is vital that using the tram is made as attractive and convenient as possible.** This includes mode integration, high frequency, affordability, and comfort. Good though the Metrolink system in Manchester is, the tram seating is very uncomfortable and only suited for short journeys (buses have better seating); we do not want West Yorkshire to make the same mistake. Nottingham trams have better seats.

## **RAIL – A MORE RELIABLE AND INTEGRATED RAIL SYSTEM**

We understand that West Yorkshire's ambitions for rail are dependent on funding, much of which will be dependent on central government; our concern is that the government, and particularly HM Treasury, do not fully grasp just how important an enhanced rail network is to reduce carbon emissions, reduce congestion, tackle deprivation, and enhance sustainable economic growth.

**We agree with most of the priorities** listed on p95 of the plan but **we would add:**

- **"linking Bradford and Halifax with Barnsley and Sheffield directly via a reopened Crigglestone curve".** (This should enable a 70-minute journey between the two city centres.)
- **We consider that the sixth bullet point should become two points**, with the need for the reversal of cuts to some Bradford service meriting a bullet point of its own.
- We would add Lincoln to **bullet point 4**.
- We suggest **an extra bullet point**: two stopping services an hour on the Transpennine (Huddersfield) route, serving **all stations between Leeds and Stalybridge**.

Although perhaps too detailed for the bullet points, we wish to stress the need for an hourly service from **Goole to Leeds**, to increase access to the Leeds job market; this would be an extension of one of the Leeds- Knottingley services. We also want to stress **the need for Pontefract to have a direct hourly (or better) connection to Doncaster**, achieved by extending an existing Leeds-Pontefract service, and the need for an hourly service between Sheffield and York, serving Pontefract Baghill.

**We have one major disagreement with your priorities.** This concerns bullet point 2. We consider that achieving its objective a different way will release funding to enable a wider range of benefits with much less disruption and environmental destruction, providing better value for money. Whilst we fully support the need for a through city centre station on the Calder Valley route to replace or supplement Bradford Interchange, **we profoundly disagree with your ambition for "a new link into the Northern Powerhouse rail network at Huddersfield"**.

**Whilst we agree with the purpose of this - to enable fast journeys between Bradford and Manchester - we consider that this objective can be achieved by cheaper and less environmentally destructive means, offering better value for money.** Our recommendation fits in with your third priority bullet, to electrify the Calder Valley lines, which has our full support, albeit on a speeded-up timescale. **We consider that Calder Valley should immediately follow on from TRU electrification** - indeed that it should become part of this vital project. Currently, the semi-fast services between Bradford and Manchester take around 55 minutes, with four intermediate stops. There is spare capacity on the Calder Valley lines, as evidenced by the periodic temporary re-routing of three TPE services an hour in each direction. This means that, when the relevant TRU work has been completed, **two extra Northern trains an hour can easily be accommodated** (i.e. with no reduction to existing services). **Capacity can be further enhanced with much reduced signal headways, sensibly established by digital signalling for the length of the route.** We consider that, and we ask WYCA to model this, with electrification, digital signalling and **the building**

**of passing loops** (Mythomroyd, Castleton, and a third platform at Halifax), **an express Bradford-Manchester service with one stop at Halifax could do the journey in around 40 minutes** (similar to Leeds-Manchester via Huddersfield); Liverpool would be reached in 1hr 10 minutes, perhaps less. **The cost would be billions of pounds less than a new line; indeed, electrification and digital signalling will happen at some future point anyway. This would mean that the saved construction funding saved could and should be used to enhance the network in different ways that enhance connectivity within and to/from West Yorkshire.** These enhancements must include the **Crigglestone Curve enabling Bradford to Sheffield and the East Midlands direct** (see above); beyond this LTP's timeframe, a reopened and upgraded route from Skipton to Rose Grove (the SELRAP project) via the very deprived East Lancashire boroughs of Burnley and Pendle - a major benefit of this would be enabling the residents of Pendle to easily access educational and employment opportunities in Bradford and Leeds; and increased capacity on the **East Coast Main Line** north of York. Furthermore, the construction of a new railway route between Bradford, Calderdale and Huddersfield would not only cost £billions, but would be environmentally damaging to the countryside, nature and local residents – who would not benefit from this. **Finally, an upgraded Calder Valley route with express trains can be introduced much sooner than building a new line. The lessons of HS2 must be heeded.**

We would like the plan to make reference to the need for major investment in Manchester, including a cross-city tunnel with low-level platforms at Manchester Piccadilly, enabling direct links between West Yorkshire and Manchester Airport.

Recognising the importance of **inter-regional connectivity** to both the economy of West Yorkshire and to its residents, we would also like the plan to emphasise **the need for better and faster rail links with the digital growth corridor of Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford**. This can be achieved by the building of a new four-platform inter-city interchange station at **Tempsford**, where East West Rail will cross the East Coast Main Line. **We need the LTP to have as an ambition lobbying the government to achieve this.**

#### **FREIGHT – “HOW GOODS ARE MOVED IS IMPORTANT FOR WEST YORKSHIRE” (page 24)**

The bullet point “Freight traffic impacts on our economic competitiveness” (p26) states that *“shifting long haul freight to rail and enabling zero-emission last-mile delivery options will help decarbonise freight and decongest urban routes.”*

We fully agree, but **the plan needs to advocate measures to achieve this:**

- One is the importance of **enhancing the railway network on key routes from the southern and eastern ports to West Yorkshire.**
- The other is **the need for planning reform with regards to large warehousing / logistics / “fulfilment”/ mail sorting / parcels concentration sites. That reform needs to stipulate that any new such development must be rail-connected.** WYCA should advocate the need for this with central government, and also the need for legislation and finance to enable such existing sites that are adjacent to or near the railway network to be connected to it.

## SECTION 2.5 OUR POLICIES – INTEGRATED

We fully support your recognition (p51) that *“a major barrier to enabling people and goods to travel more sustainably is the lack of integration”*, and **we support achieving integration being at the heart of the plan**. It is right that you will focus on multi-modal interchanges (p53). However, although we fully support your ambition to reduce private car use, we recognise that inadequate public transport in rural and semi-rural areas, coupled with the hilly terrain and a lack of safe cycling routes, means that using a car is essential for many people living in these areas. **We want WYCA to make it easier to transfer from their cars at railway stations, tram stops and relevant bus stops**. A major barrier to this is car parking. Fortunately, **car parking** at railway stations in West Yorkshire is free to rail users and it is important that this remains so, as charging reduces the incentive not to drive to the ultimate destination. However, most railway stations in West Yorkshire have insufficient car parking for demand and this needs addressing. Multi-storey (two or more) car parks constructed on modular principles may be the answer where land is available. It will be important that key tram stops also have parking/park and ride, and the same applies to transfer from car to bus at key locations near roads from the hilltop settlements – very few such bus stops have any convenient nearby parking.

### MAP – OUR DELIVERY AMBITION. OUR NETWORK VISION FOR 2040

We wish to see some changes to this map, reflecting points made elsewhere in this submission

- Delete what appears to be a new high speed railway line from Bradford to Huddersfield, avoiding Halifax
- Incorporate an additional route at an appropriate place between Mirfield and Barnsley to reflect new services using a reopened Crigglestone Curve
- Put an arrow (to Doncaster) on the railway line going south-east from Pontefract to reflect the need for a normal passenger service on this route
- In addition, there is an error on the map that should be corrected in the final plan. Trains from Leeds / Hebden Bridge to Blackpool avoid Todmorden, so a link line should be used. The direction arrow should indicate Preston or Blackpool as well as Burnley

### DELIVERING THE WEAVER NETWORK

**We consider some of the targets (summary brochure p41) to lack sufficient ambition, and thus we want to see more ambitious timings:**

#### 2026 -2032

- We wish to see construction of the **mass transit** between Leeds and Bradford started in 2028, a date previously announced, with the **first services operating by 2032**.
- We consider that **electrification of the Calder Valley line should start no later than 2032**, with the full route completed before 2037, together with digital signalling installed, passing loops built, and a third platform reopened at Halifax.
- We consider that electrification of the railway line from South Kirkby Junction to Sheffield (for **electric Leeds-Sheffield services**) should also start by 2032, and be completed by 2035.
- We want **additional Northern train sets** (cascaded from other operators e.g. TfW) to be introduced in West Yorkshire by 2027, with brand new local and regional units delivered from 2030, to enable more and longer trains to be introduced.

Railfuture Yorkshire response to Mayor's West Yorkshire draft Local Transport Plan

- Business case developed and agreed for re-opening the **Crigglestone curve**.
- The routes for Phase 2 of MTN should have been approved.

## **2032-2037**

As stated above, **electrification and upgrading** of the full Calder Valley routes (including the Brighouse and Copy Pit routes) should be completed by 2037, and South Kirkby Junction to Sheffield completed by 2035.

Electrification of the **Leeds- Harrogate-York** route started.

Crigglestone Curve reopened and **direct rains running between Bradford, Halifax, Barnsley and Sheffield**.

## **2037-2040 and beyond**

As outlined above, we oppose the creation of a new Bradford to Huddersfield route, so **this should be removed from the list of priorities**.

Harrogate Line electrification completed.

Phase 3 of MRT to be operational by 2040.

Route for phase 4 of MRT to be agreed.

## **APPENDIX**

### **RAILFUTURE MEMBER RAIL USER GROUPS WHOLLY OR PARTIALLY IN WEST YORKSHIRE**

Aire Valley Rail Users Group

Halifax and District Rail Action Group

Harrogate Line Supporters Group

Harrogate Line Rail Users Group

Huddersfield, Penistone and Sheffield Rail Users Group

Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users Group

Rail Group of the Pontefract Civic Society

Selby and District Rail Users Group

Friends of the Settle and Carlisle Line

Stalybridge-Huddersfield Rail Users Group

RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE

Lead author: Nina Smith [nina.smith@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:nina.smith@railfuture.org.uk)