

Transport for the North
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and
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please reply to:
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Dear Sir/Madam,

Draft Freight and Logistics Strategy

Railfuture is Britain's leading and longest-established national independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passengers, and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities. Railfuture's 11-point national Freight Policy is here: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Freight>

We seek to influence decision makers at local, regional and national levels to implement pro-rail policies in transport and development planning.

Railfuture, especially through its Northern Branches including Yorkshire and the North West in particular, welcomes this draft strategy and is in very broad agreement with it.

We support TfN's Long Term Rail Strategy's Desirable Minimum Standards for Freight, but stress that these must be seen as the very minimum.

We welcome the draft Freight and Logistics Strategy's recognition of the importance of decarbonisation (in line with TfN's Decarbonisation Strategy) and agree that there must be significant increases in rail freight as part of the solution. We applaud the emphasis on railway electrification, and that modal shift from road and air to rail (and waterborne) is an essential part of the solution. It cannot be over-stated that even diesel-hauled freight trains offer an enormous decarbonisation advantage over the same volume of goods travelling by road, yet alone air, but that is no reason for there not being an ongoing programme of electrification in line with Network Rail's Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy.

We support TfN's recognition that there must be investment in infrastructure, both north-south and east-west, to improve connectivity and enable that modal shift. We welcome that TfN also recognises that the North's deep sea and short-distance ports need better rail access, given that these are from where much inland freight originates. We assume that north-south recognises the need for better north-south rail freight capacity within the TfN area as well as leading to and from it.

We would like more emphasis on the long-term strategic need for capacity on east-west rail routes capable of handling W12 containers. As well as the Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU) we believe that more needs to be done, including consideration and assessment of:

~ restoring the railway between Skipton and Colne, ideally as a double track and electrified W12 gauge route between Gannow Junction (Burnley) and Skipton, although we are aware

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that re-opening this route cannot be enough in isolation because already-congested routes, especially through Leeds, would likely not be able to use this extra trans-Pennine capacity.

~ constructing a new trans-Pennine route in the southern part of the region which can handle large volumes of rail freight. Re-utilising the former Woodhead route (which could also enable faster Sheffield to Manchester passenger services) has been suggested, although again we are aware that re-opening this section of route alone cannot be enough, because the already-congested routes through central Manchester would not be able to use this extra trans-Pennine capacity. Our priority is therefore further detailed work to examine, develop and advocate the case for new / re-opened routes around south Manchester.

~ creating a new trans-Pennine route towards the north of the region to serve the North East. One candidate might be the Wensleydale line extended to join the Settle and Carlisle line at Garsdale, but tunnel width on that line may be a limiting factor. Restoring this line would also enable passenger services to benefit both locals and visitors (of even greater importance to the railway post-pandemic), enabling good public transport access to the northern part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, which is important for decarbonisation, air quality, access and road de-congestion. An alternative might even be the long-closed Stainmore route, to connect the North East with the West Coast Main Line at Tebay (also providing a passenger service to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, create much better connectivity for the residents of small market towns such as Barnard Castle, Bowes, and Kirkby Stephen, and connect the North East directly with the Lake District)

~ reopening the Leamside Line to increase capacity between Darlington and Tyneside.

The strategy recognises the problem of bottlenecks, and we welcome the fact that TfN is developing a Network Gaps Delivery Plan. We would like to see more emphasis on the need for short new freight routes and chords to speed up freight traffic and, in the case of Manchester, to remove freight traffic from the Castlefield area. Railfuture is pleased to note that its proposal for a freight route avoiding central Manchester (Castlefield), involving existing and new freight lines to the south of Manchester and, for future development, a new freight centre in Carrington, is included in the 'Gaps Analysis' described in section 4.6.

We very much welcome TfN's recognition of freight consolidation hubs at which 'last mile deliveries' can be combined.

We also welcome TfN's advocacy of the use of passenger trains for some parcels and, we suggest, mail traffic. This can be by utilising space on passenger services, especially at less busy times, and by the conversion of redundant passenger stock (especially EMUs) as fast / high-speed parcels / mail / freight trains which can access city and town centre stations.

We very much welcome that TfN will work with partners to support the planning and development of well-connected warehousing and consolidation sites on a sub-regional basis. We would go further however and ask TfN to lobby government to introduce changes to national planning guidance so that all new large warehousing / distribution / logistics / mail centres should be rail-connected; and furthermore, that government policy must openly encourage and facilitate that such large centres near to railway lines are connected to them. Examples in Yorkshire include the mail concentration centres in Leeds and Sheffield.

Yours faithfully,

Mike Rose
Director for Freight & Logistics

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draft Freight and Logistics Strategy, TfN