

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 17 December 2021

Subject: GMCA Response to the Public Consultation on December 2022 Timetable Option to Improve Rail Performance in the North of England

Report of: Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, Portfolio Lead for Transport and Eamonn Boylan, Chief Executive Officer, GMCA & TfGM.

Purpose of Report

To set out the proposed approach in response to the consultation into the Timetable Options to Improve Rail Performance in the North of England and recommend next steps in line with this.

Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Note the content of this report.
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Mayor of Greater Manchester, to approve and submit a response to the consultation on behalf of GMCA.

Contact Officers

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BOLTON
BURY

MANCHESTER
OLDHAM

ROCHDALE
SALFORD

STOCKPORT
TAMESIDE

TRAFFORD
WIGAN

Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

The consultation affects all areas of Greater Manchester served by rail, including areas of economic deprivation. The premise of option B+ under the consultation are to change services in order to improve performance leading to higher passenger trust and rail patronage in all areas served by rail in Greater Manchester. The net impact of which is predicted to be an increase in rail patronage, and a reduction in car usage for journeys which could reasonably be made by rail will also have an overall environmental impact that is expected to be positive.

Risk Management

N/A.

Legal Considerations

N/A.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

No direct consequences for GMCA, although an increase in the reliability of the railway and predicted patronage increase associated with this would be an economic gain for the region.

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A.

Number of attachments to the report:

N/A.

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A.

Background Papers

- GMCA Approach to Original Public Consultation, approved by the GMCA on 12 February 2021: [Approach to the GMCA Response to the Consultation into the Timetable Options to Improve Rail Performance in the North of England \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](#)
- Information about the consultation is also available via the DfT's Website: [High performing rail timetable announced for Manchester - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- The government's response to a full public consultation carried out earlier in 2021: [Manchester Recovery Task Force public consultation: government response](#)
- The consultation is hosted on Northern Rail and TPE's websites at: [Manchester Recovery Task Force | TransPennine Express \(tpexpress.co.uk\)](#)
[December 2022 timetable | Northern \(northernrailway.co.uk\)](#)
- GM Dec 2022 MRTF timetable B+ Local Authority Impacts Assessment Summary included as an Appendix to this report.

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

No

Exemption from call in

No.

GM Transport Committee

N/A.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Manchester Recovery Taskforce (MRTF) was set up in January 2020 to develop and deliver solutions that improve the reliability of rail services for passengers. The MRTF was attended by a range of organisations, including the Department for Transport, Transport for the North (TfN), Network Rail, train operators and Transport for Greater Manchester amongst others. The objective for the MRTF was to recast the rail timetable to address some of the structural issues around the pre-Covid timetable and provide reliable performance to passengers while different infrastructure solutions, with longer lead times, were planned, and delivered
- 1.2. Earlier this year, the Department for Transport, TfN and Network Rail sought views of the public and stakeholders on rail timetabling work that had been undertaken during 2020 by the MRTF; this consultation ran from 14 January to 10 March.
- 1.3. The views expressed in the consultation feedback, including and in particular by GMCA and GM Local Authorities, were considered by the MRTF and led to a revised recommended timetable structure being developed for implementation in December 2022. The revised option, Option B+, was endorsed by the Rail North Committee in exchange for a clear plan on future infrastructure delivery and closer partnership working with city regions and TfN.
- 1.4. Since that activity, Northern and TransPennine Express have produced indicative timetables based on Option B+, which were published on 15 November. These timetables, which will be introduced in December 2022, are now subject to consultation.
- 1.5. The formal consultation on these timetables will end on 31 December 2021.

2. Feedback on the First Consultation

- 2.1. Overall, GM supported the aims of MRTF work to improve train performance, maintain service levels and capacity for as many passengers as possible, and create a timetable based on sound principles from which it will be possible to build improvements as infrastructure investment becomes available. However, based on the options presented, GM did not state a preferred option as all the options presented did not give a service pattern that meets GM's needs adequately. In all options, there were unacceptable compromises either to capacity, frequency, or connectivity, with a clear imbalance of impact on some of the Local Authorities.
- 2.2. The option which would benefit most routes in and out of Manchester was Option C and, GM proposed this could be adapted and merged with the Liverpool to Manchester Airport connectivity in Option B to accommodate the areas of most significant concern, namely the Wigan fast (calling at Golborne once open), Atherton line and Hazel Grove provision.
- 2.3. GM's response also made it clear that the consultation should have come alongside a clear, funded and committed remit of infrastructure delivery with clear timelines. This would have enabled stakeholders to be confident that any compromise timetable option implemented in Dec 2022 would be short-term with a clear end date.

3. Timetable Proposals

- 3.1. As detailed above, MRTF has recommended a revised option, Option B+, which it has developed based on an enhanced version of Option B. This option retains the direct Manchester Airport connectivity for Liverpool, Chester and North Wales. However, a number of GM's recommendations have not been taken forward. The following were requested in the GM response to the January 2021 consultation, with the second column showing what is now proposed:

Stage 1 consultation request	B+ proposal
Littleborough increased service level to 3 Trains per Hour (tph) all day	Peak only 3tph
Option C Wigan North Western to Hazel Grove service provided all day, this future proofing for the opening of Golborne station	3 trains (1tph) provided in each of AM and PM peaks from Wigan NW to Man Victoria, not all day
Crewe line possibility of switching the Option C Piccadilly-Airport-Crewe 2tph and Piccadilly-Stockport-Alderley Edge 2tph to having 1tph covering each of Piccadilly-Airport-Crewe, Piccadilly-Airport-Alderley Edge, Piccadilly-Stockport-Crewe and Piccadilly Stockport-Alderley Edge	Status quo preserved
Styal line extra 1tph calls at each of Heald Green and Gatley	Delivered as requested
Extra calls placed on semi-fast services on CLC line at Flixton	Not delivered
Option C Liverpool-Chat Moss-Manchester Oxford Road service extended onto Manchester Airport as operated in Dec 2019	Delivered as requested
Option C peak extra Southport-Atherton line-Manchester Oxford Road provided all day, and if possible extended to Manchester Airport, with this being replaced on the Westhoughton line by a Wigan Wallgate to Stalybridge service	All day Southport-Oxford Rd provided, but running via Bolton and not via Atherton
Option C semi-fast train calls at Buckshaw Parkway and Chorley extended to include Horwich Parkway all day	Partly delivered - peak extras at Horwich, not off-peak

3.2. Therefore, the following concerns and adverse impacts of the timetable remain and are detailed below:

- **Wigan is only proposed to retain a peak period fast service to Manchester** (Victoria) via the Chat Moss route (and thus only a peak period service could call at a new Golborne stations). However, the industry summary to the first stage consultation has stated that there are ways in which the timetable structure of Option B+ can be amended to serve the new station planned for Golborne, with this peak period service extended to running all day
- **Wigan loses all links beyond Manchester Oxford Road**, with the only south side of city service provided by a Southport-Wigan-Bolton-Manchester Oxford Road service.
- **Horwich Parkway has a service reduction to 2 trains per hour (tph) in the off peak**, but in the peaks a 3tph was able to be achieved.
- Intermediate stations between **Bolton and Salford Crescent (Kearsley, Farnworth and Moses Gate)** have not had the Option C proposal for 2tph all-day implemented, but a regular interval 2tph peak service has been achieved at Farnworth.
- **Enhanced frequencies in the peaks at Calder Valley/Rochdale line stations have only been partially addressed**, with Littleborough alone seeing a 3tph service in the peaks.
- **Greenfield and Mossley stations have not had an all-day 2tph** provided as proposed in both Option B and C, and as supported by GM. Instead, an 2tph peak service is provided in the morning peak and from 16:00 to the end of service, with off peak hours remaining at only 1tph.
- **Hadfield and Glossop do not see a restoration of their 3tph peak service level**, rather remaining at a 2tph service all day.
- **Hazel Grove does gain a 3tph peak service, dropping to 2tph off peak.** However the GM proposal to run the 3rd train across Manchester to provide cross Manchester links towards the north of the city has not been provided, nor has the 3tph service been provided all day as requested.
- **Rose Hill Marple and the Hyde Loop receive a 1.5tph service in the off-peak** period, reduced from 2tph all day pre COVID
- **Stockport has lost its cross Manchester links towards Bolton** as proposed in Option C, which would have been retained in Option B. It has also lost its' direct links to Manchester Airport, instead gaining a 2nd tph towards Warrington and Liverpool.
- **The Warrington central line (the "CLC") has not gained an hourly all stations service** between Warrington and Manchester Oxford Road, thereby leaving the smaller GM stations as Glazebrook, Chassen Road, Humprey Park and Trafford Park with an alternate hour service in the off-peak, as well as a reduced PM peak offering compared to that proposed in Options B & C. However, semi-fast calls at Irlam and Urmston have been achieved in the off-peak. Extra calls at Flixton as requested have not been provided.
- **Manchester Airport direct links to Sheffield has been removed** (except at very start and end of the day) and a reduced frequency towards Leeds but has retained an hourly link with Liverpool (via Chat Moss).

4. GMCA Approach to Consultation

- 4.1. In addition to highlighting impacts of Option B+ on GM, it is intended to make the following key points in the response.
- 4.2. That we must learn the lessons of the failure of the May 2018 timetable, with much closer working permitted between TfGM and the Train Operators, Network Rail and Rail North Partnership. As part of the Timetable Consultation TfGM will continue to support Local Authorities with individual responses. TfGM has undertaken a detailed assessment of the impacts of the proposed timetables district-by-district and has issued this to Local Authority Lead Officers to help shape their individual responses. TfGM officers will continue to help support their submissions.
- 4.3. That a first step to improve rail performance and rebuild passenger trust should be 'making best use of what is available now' providing longer, higher capacity vehicles with simpler service patterns to improve reliability and punctuality.
- 4.4. That any changes to the timetable must be part of a wider Covid-19 recovery plan for the railway which helps encourage people back to the railway post-pandemic to support Greater Manchester's social, economic and environmental objectives.
- 4.5. Further to the above, that the Sunday service provision needs to be substantially enhanced to reflect that the leisure market has recovered most strongly as we emerge from Covid-19, and move closer to the service levels envisaged in the original 2016 franchise plans for Northern.
- 4.6. That the long-term solution to improving the reliability and resilience of rail services across the north is to deliver infrastructure enhancements in central Manchester at the earliest opportunity.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1. The consultation closes on 31st December, and it is recommended the GMCA:
 - Note the content of this report.
 - Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Mayor of Greater Manchester, to approve and submit a response to the consultation on behalf of GMCA.

Eamonn Boylan

Chief Executive Officer, GMCA & TfGM