



## Bee Network Committee

Date: Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024  
Subject: High Speed Rail Update  
Report of: Martin Lax, Transport Strategy Director, TfGM

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### Purpose of Report

To provide the Committee with a progress update on high speed rail and Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR).

### Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to note the current position in relation to the High Speed Rail Programme in Greater Manchester, the future areas of development and current Government timeframes.

### Contact Officers

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# Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

**Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers**  
 Agree the overall positive impacts of NPR within the GM boundary and beyond.

**Impacts Questionnaire**

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	The provision of NPR will provide new and improved rail connectivity across the North. Its future intergration into existing networks can improve infrastructure provision across the north creating better connectivity in general.
Health	G	The provision of NPR will add additional connectivity across the North, allowing people to access outdoor space, leisure activities etc more easily.
Resilience and Adaptation	G	Improved Public Transport will provide alternative/increased choice for passengers commuting options, and ability to access facilities within the wider GM area.
Housing	G	There is potential that opening up accessibility to wider employment opportunities, especially when the wider NPR scheme is complete, and if there is a HS2 replacement through the midlands to connect into London, housing markets will possibly improve.
Economy	G	Improved connectivity across the north may open up new economic markets during the construction phase, and the operational phase. As each wider section of NPR is complete, the more economic accessibility could be created.
Mobility and Connectivity		
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	Improved access to public transport always has the capacity to improve the natural environment, either via environmental initiatives as part of the construction work, or the general additional connectivity options for work and leisure commuters.
Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		Improved access to public transport always has the capacity to improve the natural environment, either via environmental initiatives as part of the construction work, or the general additional connectivity options for work and leisure commuters.  Support for the delivery of the wider NPR programme, as well as support for the Midlands Consortium who are trying to identify an alternative rail connectivity scheme to the cancelled Phase 2a of HS2.

**Further Assessment(s):** Carbon Assessment

<b>G</b> Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	<b>A</b> Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	<b>R</b> Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.	<b>RR</b> Negative impacts overall.
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**Carbon Assessment**

**Overall Score** ██████

Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation
New Build	N/A	
residential building(s)	N/A	
new build non-residential (including public)	N/A	

**Transport**

Active travel and public transport	N/A	
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A	
Access to amenities	N/A	
vehicle	N/A	

**Land Use**

Land use	<span style="background-color: black; color: black;">██████</span>	DfT who are the promoter of the scheme will provide relevant preservation as part of their EIA process. This work has been reviewed with petitioning submitted to improve sections.
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No associated carbon impacts expected.	High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.	Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.	Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.	Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.
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## **Risk Management**

There are and will continue to be high levels of uncertainty on the HS2 and NPR programmes for some time whilst the Government, GM and partners work through the implications of the Network North announcement.

## **Legal Considerations**

None specific to this report. External lawyers and parliamentary agents are in place to support the GM public sector partners and will continue to advise as the Bill progresses through Parliament.

## **Financial Consequences – Revenue**

N/A

## **Financial Consequences – Capital**

N/A

**Number of attachments to the report: 0**

## **Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

N/A

## **Background Papers**

Bee Network Committee, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 - [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Bee Network Committee, 21/03/2024 10:00 \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](#) (page 40 to 48)

## **Tracking/ Process**

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

No

## **Exemption from call in**

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

# 1. Background

- 1.1. On 24 January 2022 the Government introduced the High-Speed (Crewe – Manchester) hybrid Bill into Parliament seeking the legal powers to build and operate this phase of the high-speed railway. GM Partners (made up of GMCA, TfGM, Manchester City Council, Trafford Council and Wigan Council) submitted petitions against this Bill and its second additional provision to ensure the beneficial effects of the proposal were maximised and its adverse effects minimised.
- 1.2. GM Partners appeared at the HS2 Phase 2b Select Committee to present their case for an underground high speed station at Manchester Piccadilly and were preparing to present on other petition points when, on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023, the Government rescoped HS2, including cancelling HS2 Phases 2a (Birmingham to Crewe) and 2b (Crewe to Manchester). At the same time, the (then) Government announced that the £36 billion earmarked for these projects would be re-invested into “Network North”.
- 1.3. The Network North initiative allocated funds to expand the Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) programme, with £2 billion being allocated towards a new station at Bradford and connection to Manchester, electrification of additional lines in the North and an additional £12 billion “to better connect Manchester to Liverpool” as part of the Liverpool-Manchester-Leeds element of the NPR network.
- 1.4. As part of their 4th October 2023 announcement, the Government also stated that HS2 Phase 2a “safeguarding will be formally lifted in weeks” and that “Phase 2b safeguarding will be amended by summer next year” to enable delivery of the NPR component of the HS2 Phase 2b hybrid Bill. Land not needed will be sold.
- 1.5. A private sector consortium, sponsored by the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Mayor of the West Midlands, was subsequently established to consider Birmingham – Manchester connectivity in light of the cancellation of HS2 Phases 2a and 2b. Their work, known as the Birmingham Manchester Enhanced Connectivity (BMEC) study, aimed to investigate alternative connectivity improvement options between Manchester and Birmingham, including funding and delivery options for these.
- 1.6. This report provides an update on both NPR and the BMEC study following the update to the Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

## 2. Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR)

### High Speed Rail (Crewe-Manchester) Bill

- 2.1. It is understood that the Government's intention for the £12bn<sup>1</sup> to better connect Manchester to Liverpool was to provide the infrastructure between High Legh and Piccadilly, that NPR would have shared with HS2, and for the HS2 Phase 2b Bill to be repurposed to deliver this NPR route. An additional c£5bn<sup>1</sup> is allocated in the Integrated Rail Plan for the Midlands and the North for the High Legh to Liverpool connection.
- 2.2. On the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024, the Secretary of State for Transport submitted a written statement to Parliament on 25 March 2024 which set out that:
  - Stakeholders are in favour of continuing to serve Warrington Bank Quay and Manchester Airport and using broadly the current route towards Manchester as part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail plans.
  - There was interest from local leaders to explore further options for station design at Manchester Piccadilly and for routings into Liverpool including station options.
  - Government remains open to considering the above issues, subject, as usual, to affordability within the funding envelope, standard business case approvals, and demonstrating value for taxpayers' money.
  - Government will be continuing to promote the High Speed Rail (Crewe-Manchester) Bill as the fastest possible means of consenting the first part of that route into Manchester, subject to the will of the House.
  - HS2 Phase 2b safeguarding will be amended by summer 2024, to allow for any safeguarding needed for Northern Powerhouse Rail.
- 2.3. Following this statement, a debate took place in the House of Commons on 21 May 2024 with the House voting in favour (Ayes 323: Noes 7) for the adaption of the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill to deliver NPR between Manchester Piccadilly Station and Millington/ Rostherne only, with revised instructions to the

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<sup>1</sup> 2023 prices

Bill's Select Committee. The main points of the revised instructions to Select Committee are as follows:

- The Committee should, before concluding its proceedings, amend the Bill by:
  - removing provisions of the railway between Crewe and Millington/Rostherne
  - removing provisions of a railway between Hoo Green and Bamfurlong (as instructed previously)
  - amend the Principle of the Bill to:
    - The provision of a railway between a point in the vicinity of the parish of Millington/Rostherne in Cheshire and Manchester Piccadilly station
    - The broad route alignment of the plans deposited in January 2022
    - No new stations other than those proposed at Manchester Airport and Piccadilly.
- The Committee shall not hear any petitions that relate to the railways that are being removed.

2.4. On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2024 Rishi Sunak, the then Prime Minister, announced a General Election for the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024, accordingly, on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024 Parliament was dissolved, which included the dissolution of all select committees.

2.5. The first sitting of the new Government took place on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2024, who then reintroduced the Bill on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024. Now introduced, the Bill will automatically be caught up to the position it was in when the last Parliament was dissolved and therefore remains at the House of Commons Select Committee stage. All of the petitions against it have been reinstated.

2.6. The Select Committee on the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill was formed in December 2022 and dissolved on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024. The Select Committee oversee the Bill's petitioning period and provide directly and specially affected individuals and bodies the opportunity to seek amendments to the Bill.

2.7. The Select Committee has a membership of seven MPs, However, with a new government formed there will be a process to identify a revised membership reflective of the new majorities in the Parliament and where there have been changes in MPs.

2.8. The Select Committee for the hybrid Bill could re-form as early as autumn 2024.

- 2.9. The new Select Committee is expected to have an initial series of briefings and site visits, following which it could commence hearing from petitioners later in the year or early in the new year (2025).
- 2.10. A second consenting process will still be required between Millington and Liverpool and to the east of Manchester Piccadilly.
- 2.11. It is understood that early design and engineering work has been initiated by the Department for Transport to unlock the next phase of NPR between Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds, including the new station in Bradford.

### **Liverpool Manchester Railway board**

- 2.12. On the expectation that Government will work with Local Leaders, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, and the Mayor of Liverpool City Region, Steve Rotheram, committed to establishing a new Liverpool-Manchester Railway Board to maximise the economic and social benefits of a new railway between the Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester.
- 2.13. The Mayors launched the Board on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2024 at the UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREIIF) 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 will 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.
- 2.14. The inaugural meeting of the Liverpool Manchester Railway Board took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024 with the Mayor of Liverpool City Region, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Leaders of Councils along the proposed route of the railway and the Managing Director of Manchester Airport. It was agreed that the Chief Executive Officer of the Port of Liverpool should be invited to be a core member of the Railway Board. The Rail Minister will also be invited to attend the Board.
- 2.15. The Railway Board is to be supported by a private sector Partnership Board (non-Board members), which will be tasked with bringing together collective experience, expertise and advice to support the Railway Board in the delivery of its aims. It is expected that members of the Partnership Board will have experience relating to

major strategic projects and/ or experience in relevant areas such as business case development, skills development, engineering, land ownership and development.

- 2.16. An Expression of Interest advertisement was published on 26 July seeking members for the Partnership Board ([Liverpool - Manchester Railway Partnership Board - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)) and the sifting process is currently underway. It is expected that the Railway Board will meet around mid-September 2024 to approve the appointment of the Partnership Board members ahead of its next full meeting later the same month.
- 2.17. The Board tasked officers of authorities (the GM Partners, Liverpool City Region, Warrington Council, Cheshire East Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council) along the proposed Liverpool Manchester NPR route, TfGM, GMCA and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to set out the initial scope of the growth opportunity presented by this route ahead of the next meeting of the Board in September.

### **3. London Birmingham Manchester Connectivity**

- 3.1. The cancellation of HS2 Phase 2a and 2b and the Network North announcement leaves unresolved the problems on the WCML which these schemes were meant to address. Since the cancellation of the scheme, several issues have been identified with the Network North's HS2 proposal including reduced train capacity, reduced seated capacity between London and Manchester and possible connectivity issues with HS2 services stopping at Old Oak Common station, some 4.5 miles west of Euston with passengers needing to change to complete their journey into central London.
- 3.2. Following the Network North announcement, the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Mayor of West Midlands have been working with a Private Consortium (Birmingham Manchester Enhanced Connectivity - BMEC) to investigate alternative connectivity improvements options between Manchester and Birmingham. The Consortium is being led by Sir David Higgins (who was formerly Chairman of HS2) and involves private engineering and finance companies including Arup, Arcadis, EY, Skanska, Addleshaw Goddard, and Mace.



3.3. The Consortium has considered three potential options:

- Minimal interventions to the West Coast Main Line (WCML) at its most constrained sections, which is likely to represent the lowest cost option, but which brings least wider benefits
- Short bypass sections of the busiest sections of the WCML
- A segregated line following a similar alignment to the HS2 proposals but with a different specification which is likely to reduce cost while driving wider benefits.

3.4. The consortium launched their final report<sup>2</sup> on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September. The report, titled “Opportunity through connectivity: catalysing growth through a Midlands-Northwest Rail Link” concluded that the preferred option was the segregated line, which they have called the Midlands-North West Rail Link (MNWRL), and that it should be built, in stages and in partnership with private investors.

3.5. The report noted that this option would cost approximately 60-75% of the former HS2 Phase 2 scheme while still maintaining a substantial proportion of the economic benefits for passengers and rail freight – achieved by reconsidering the design, engineering specification and delivery model.

3.6. The consortium has made three requests of the government:

- To establish a Steering Group between the private sector, Combined Authorities and Central Government to drive forward an ‘at pace’ feasibility study and technical analysis over the next six months
- To maintain ownership of current landholdings acquired for Phase 2a and to reinstate the land safeguarding for the land not-yet-acquired, and
- To formally consider the network-wide benefits of this proposition alongside proposals for enhancing east-west connectivity in the North and the economic benefits this would bring to the whole of the UK.

3.7. Network Rail are also considering the impacts of Network North on the WCML, including capacity and connectivity implications.

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<sup>2</sup> [Midlands-North West Rail Link \(midlandsnorthwestrailink.co.uk\)](http://midlandsnorthwestrailink.co.uk)

## 4. Next Steps

- 4.1. Enhancing connectivity between Liverpool and Manchester, and across the North through the wider NPR programme, has the potential to be a major catalyst in transforming connectivity and economic growth across the North and the UK. This proposed investment has the potential to drive a step-change in capacity and connectivity, allowing faster journeys and greater frequencies, connecting millions of people and thousands of businesses across the region and improving access to international markets for the whole of the North through Manchester Airport
- 4.2. The current stage of the programme, particularly in terms of strategic decision making and the Bill process, is key to shaping the NPR Liverpool to Manchester scheme. GM now expects Government to collaborate with regional and local partners and carry out further joint work to enable the specific scheme proposals to be agreed, including the station solutions and the alignment, taking a place based approach to maximise the growth opportunity.
- 4.3. Following the inaugural meeting of the Liverpool Manchester Railway Board, TfGM will continue to work with GMCA, GM Partners and the Regional Partners to set out the initial scope of the growth opportunity presented by this route ahead of the September Railway Board meeting. TfGM is also working with GMCA to support the Liverpool – Manchester Railway Board in the formation of the Partnership Board.
- 4.4. TfGM will also continue to work with the GM Partners to develop the proposition for NPR and high speed, particularly the high speed stations and wider connectivity, including associated Metrolink proposals, at Manchester Piccadilly (underground through station), Manchester Airport and Wigan. This will include supporting the Liverpool Manchester Railway Board to build the business case for the new railway corridor to meet partner ambitions, establishing growth opportunity and considering the refresh of the high speed Growth Strategy. This work will build on the previous high speed Growth Strategy “the Stops are Just the Start” launched in 2018 and the subsequent work carried out prior to the Network North announcement.
- 4.5. With the hybrid Bill being introduced into the current session of Parliament, and the intention for the Bill to be adapted for NPR, the issues raised within the GMCA, TfGM and GM Partners’ petitions still stand and will need to be resolved through negotiations or via the hybrid Bill Select Committee.

4.6. TfGM will continue to engage with the BMEC consortium. It is anticipated that the Consortium will publish its report in mid-September. This will then help to inform the next steps in terms of these proposals. TfGM and the GM Partners are also continuing to work with Network Rail in relation to the impacts of the proposals to run HS2 services on the WCML.