



Leeds Civic Trust

CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO WYCA CONNECTIVITY STRATEGY: MASS RAPID TRANSIT

1. GENERAL POINTS

- 1.1 The Leeds Civic Trust strongly supports the development of Mass Rapid Transit in Leeds and more widely in West Yorkshire as being essential to both the future development of the city and to meeting carbon reduction targets.
- 1.2 We understand why in the recent past there has been a perceived need to move forward with caution given the 'false starts' of the earlier tram scheme and trolleybus schemes in Leeds. However, with the need to address climate change and the government commitment to 'levelling up' as well as its stated support in principle for MRT in Leeds we feel that there is now an urgent need to accelerate development of MRT proposals for Leeds. Leeds and West Yorkshire lag behind other conurbations in England in developing MRT, with Newcastle, Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Nottingham and Birmingham all having systems in operation. There is a risk that not having an MRT system could result in Leeds losing its competitive edge with other cities.
- 1.3 Designing a MRT network in Leeds is probably more difficult than in many other cities in the UK due to the lack of disused, lightly used or self-contained rail lines which could be brought back into use for MRT and the constraints of feasibility due to limited space on some transport corridors. Constructing routes underground would massively increase costs and so could probably only be considered in the city centre. The transport corridors in Leeds which will generate sufficient demand to justify MRT are likely to be the high population density radial routes into the city centre and it will be particularly important that these provide excellent interchange with rail at Leeds City Station.
- 1.4 In the main, we support the routes proposed but we raise some specific issues below. In particular, we feel that a major omission is the need for MRT to serve the universities.
- 1.5 We suggest that there may be two types of demand for MRT in and around central Leeds. Demand from people living in the suburbs coming into the city centre and wanting to access key places in and around it, including to connect with rail services. Secondly, people from outside Leeds coming into the city perhaps by rail or using P&R sites and needing to access key places around central Leeds. In this context, the way that the city centre is expanding is relevant. The distances from the Universities to New Dock or from White Rose to St James Hospital are quite considerable. People need seamless connections to enable travel to their specific destinations.
- 1.6 We feel that it is important to consider local rail services as a form of MRT and hence that MRT is planned alongside future developments to the rail network to provide an integrated system. The markets served by local rail and other forms of MRT may differ e.g. in Manchester the journey time by rail from Piccadilly station to the Airport is under 20mins whereas the tram takes around an hour but serves destinations in between. There may be corridors where demand would be better served by enhanced or new rail services rather than other forms of MRT.



- 1.7 Regarding choice of technology, we feel that routes into and through Leeds city centre are likely to need a higher capacity than the 20-30 seats offered via Ultra Light Rail (we note that this is less than Advanced Rapid Bus). This might be more appropriate to consider for orbital lines serving the suburbs or elsewhere in West Yorkshire. Tram-train is only to be considered where there is a need for trams to travel partially on heavy rail lines. We are unsure what the distinction is between the Advanced Rapid Bus offering and others forms of bus such as Express Bus and Quality Bus. If these are to be longer “single decker buses”, then they take up more space than “double-deckers”. This may be one reason why the previous experiment with “FTR” buses was discontinued. Perhaps on corridors where bus is likely to be the best option, the most appropriate form of service would be best considered as part of a review of bus services. Therefore, it seems to us that overhead/battery powered trams (as indicated by the market testing exercise), are likely to be the best solution for MRT into Leeds. We feel it is important that MRT vehicles should have low floor access. Trams in Manchester have raised platforms and other infrastructure which has a very negative impact on the street environment.
- 1.8 Development of Leeds as a city is continuing apace despite the economic uncertainty caused by Covid, with a number of recent announcements of additional jobs to be based in the city (Channel 4, the BBC, British Library North, Department for Transport, National Infrastructure Bank, etc). Major developments are taking place including in the South Bank, Wellington Street and Quarry Hill areas. In addition, changes are being made to the city centre through the Connecting Leeds initiative to improve infrastructure for buses and the Transforming the City Centre initiative to improve public realm (including City Square, the station entrance at Bishopgate Street and the Corn Exchange).
- 1.9 The amount of development confirms the need for MRT but also creates a concern that MRT is not being designed into these plans. If work to construct MRT routes particularly through the city centre (where, in reality, there are a limited number of options for MRT) is undertaken at a later date this may result in substantial increase in costs (particularly if work currently being undertaken has to be redone) or at worst current development could preclude the future potential for MRT. This underlines the urgent need to progress this work further to confirm routes and safeguard them from future development.

2. SPECIFIC ROUTES

Given the Trust’s focus on Leeds we are only commenting in detail on the potential MRT routes in Leeds.

2.1 East Leeds

- 2.1.1 A MRT route extending from the city centre to St James Hospital and to Seacroft/East Leeds seems sensible. St James Hospital is one of the largest in the country and so will generate journeys from both staff and patients. As the regional cancer centre, it will also generate journeys from outside Leeds. This looks to be similar to the original tram route proposal. “East Leeds P&R” is presumably the proposed P&R on the A64 at Whinmoor. Future extensions could be branches to Roundhay Park and via Easterly Road to a Park & Ride on the A58 at Wellington Hill. The latter could ultimately be extended to operate to Wetherby. We note that there are proposals for bus infrastructure to be provided on this route – perhaps any construction of these should be placed on hold until MRT routes are confirmed.



- 2.1.2 Although a 'high profile' site, the Arena would generate large passenger flows at the beginning and end of events (which could be difficult for MRT to cope with?) but potentially only low numbers at other times. How would the MRT get between The Arena and St James Hospital? We suggest that the East Leeds corridor might be better served by a MRT route direct from the city centre with a separate route to the universities (see below) and which could pass within walking distance of the Arena.
- 2.1.3 We agree that bus would not be sufficient to carry the passenger volumes needed on this route and tram is needed on this corridor.

2.2 North West Leeds

- 2.2.1 We suggest that further consideration be given to the need for MRT to the University of Leeds/Hyde Park. We would expect that the corridor north from Leeds railway station to the Innovation Quarter, the Infirmary, Arena and the Universities would be likely to generate the highest demand of any from the city centre. MRT is not shown as serving the University of Leeds which as well as students is a very large employer (8,700 staff and third largest employer in Leeds) - it is also a venue for conferences and/or meetings. There will also be journeys to and from Leeds Arts and Leeds Beckett Universities which would provide considerable patronage.
- 2.2.2 We acknowledge that there are challenges in constructing a tram line through Headingley. However, as well as being a densely populated area, demand would be generated by the Becket Park Campus and Headingley Stadium. Branches could operate to Cookridge terminating at Holt Park Centre and to a P&R at Bramhope via Adel and Golden Acre Park. There are significant housing developments taking place in Adel and Bramhope. Alternatively a tram line from Leeds could terminate at the university or Hyde Park Corner with improved bus services to destinations further out of the city.

2.3 South Leeds to Dewsbury

- 2.3.1 We support the principle of a MRT route from Leeds Railway Station via the South Bank (including Leeds Dock) and Hunslet to Belle Isle, Middleton and Tingley/M62 P&R. We suggest construction of a railway station where this crosses the Leeds to Wakefield line to serve Middleton and provide connections to Wakefield.
- 2.3.2 We suggest that a branch could extend beyond New Dock and cross the river northwards to serve the Aire Valley development area providing access to employment there - this could be a suitable site for a depot. It could terminate at the Temple Green P&R. Another option would be a branch to serve the Stourton P&R but new bus infrastructure is being constructed on the A639 through Hunslet to support this being a bus-based P&R.
- 2.3.3 We also support the principle of an MRT route from Leeds Railway Station to White Rose via Elland Road. This is indicated as going via Beeston which isn't on the direct route - should this have read Holbeck? We suggest that Beeston would be better served by bus. Public transport links to Holbeck Urban village are currently poor and major development is taking place or is planned there (including the British Library). Routing MRT via Holbeck itself would have a regeneration benefit for a more deprived area.
- 2.3.4 We question whether there will be demand for a tram based MRT line from White Rose to Dewsbury. It will be quicker for people travelling to Dewsbury (and Batley) to change to rail at White Rose, particularly if the rail service were improved to 4 tph. Would it be better to



extend this MRT to Churwell and Morley with a local P&R serving Morley? Dewsbury to White Rose could be served by a high quality frequent bus service.

- 2.3.5 We are aware of proposals for construction of infrastructure for cyclists and buses along some routes in this area – perhaps this should be put on hold until MRT routes are confirmed.

2.4 North Leeds

2.4.1 The Alwoodley branch has the problem that there are two potential routes and two potential destinations. The route via Chapeltown Road and Harrogate Road through Chapel Allerton to Moortown has the densest population. Serving Chapel Allerton Hospital and St Gemmas Hospice, it would generate most traffic but the relatively narrow roads couldn't accommodate a segregated MRT route. The alternative route via Scott Hall Road would permit segregation and is faster but mainly passes through an area of less dense semi-detached housing and so wouldn't generate the passenger numbers needed for a tram based MRT. The destination could be the proposed Alwoodley Gates P&R or Moor Allerton Centre/King Lane P&R and more deprived area surrounding it. The (widely celebrated) 36 bus service to Harrogate also uses this corridor and making passengers change from bus to tram at a P&R would probably not be sensible. Therefore, improved bus services of some description are likely to be the answer on this corridor.

2.4.2 A branch is shown as going from St James Hospital to Red Hall and East Leeds P&R. We presume this P&R will be on the A58 at Wellington Hill - is it different to the one shown on the East Leeds diagram beyond Seacroft? This route is discussed in 2.1.1 above.

2.4.3 A western route is shown to the airport via Kirkstall and Horsforth. This looks to follow the A65 before cutting across to Horsforth and following the railway to the airport. Segregation would be difficult along the A65 given that this is a major vehicle route and has already been reengineered to support buses and cyclists. Passengers from Kirkstall to Harrogate and the airport are able to access the rail line at Headingley station. Passengers from Kirkstall Forge and Horsforth are able to use rail services into central Leeds. Therefore this does not seem a suitable route for tram based MRT. Instead bus services could be improved.

2.5 Bradford to Leeds

2.5.1 Although the route of the proposed Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) line has not been announced, we presume that it would provide the route of choice for passengers travelling between central Bradford and central Leeds. Therefore, the role of MRT would be for passengers from intermediate locations.

2.5.2 One approach would be to 4 track the existing rail line with NPR and Calder Valley trains using the 'fast' tracks, leaving the 'slow' tracks available for MRT. This would allow additional stations along the line at Laisterdyke and Wortley (and potentially others) and would enable good journey times. Feeder bus services from other population centres (e.g. Pudsey) could presumably link into these stations. The Owlcotes centre could potentially also generate a large number of passengers.

2.5.3 An alternative approach would presumably be for the MRT to follow a separate alignment to the rail line in order to serve the major population centres along the route such as Pudsey town centre. This would be dependent on whether there is a feasible route. There would also be a trade-off between serving larger population centres and longer journey times.



2.6 Bradford and North West Leeds

- 2.6.1 We note the proposal for an MRT route from Otley to Bradford via Menston and Guiseley. We presume that this is likely to use the current Wharfedale rail line into Bradford and could make use of the former rail alignment between Menston and Otley. We are puzzled that no intention is shown to operate services from Otley to Leeds as this would be likely to generate more traffic than Otley to Bradford. We suggest consideration be given to reinstating this as a rail line so that services could also operate from Otley into Leeds.
- 2.6.2 If a half-hourly service were to operate from Otley to both Leeds and Bradford then, combined with the Ilkley services, this would provide a quarter hourly frequency from both Menston and Guiseley to both Leeds and Bradford which would be highly beneficial. If in time it could be extended beyond Otley to join the Leeds-Harrogate line, trains could operate between Bradford and Harrogate. Given how popular services are between Ilkley and Leeds, we would expect a rail link to Otley to be similarly well used. We also note that large housing developments are planned in Otley.
- 2.6.3 Bus is stated to be the favourite option for the eastern section due to topography. Is this any different to the existing airport bus service to Bradford?

2.7 Wakefield and Five Towns

- 2.7.1 MRT routes are shown as coming into Leeds along the new alignment via New Dock and the South Bank. This will be much slower than rail which will be a disincentive to using public transport for longer journeys (see 1.6 above). We suggest that rail should remain the best option for this corridor but perhaps with an interchange to the tram in the Aire Valley.

3. WIDER WEST YORKSHIRE

- 3.1 On a West Yorkshire basis, we suggest that more consideration be given to the role of rail as a form of MRT. The existing quite extensive rail network could potentially be improved and extended and supplemented by improved bus services. For example, both Merseyrail and Tyne & Wear Metro have recently purchased new rolling stock which is able to operate on heavy rail lines as well as the dedicated light rail lines.
- 3.2 A key issue in Bradford is the historical issue of the two railway stations with separate rail networks to the north and south of the city which are not connected. We note that the intention seems to be for a tram-train link between the two stations. If a rail link were possible then this would enable a wide range of through journeys which would be transformative in providing north-south connectivity across Bradford. It would also be of benefit to Leeds in reducing the number of passengers needing to change trains in Leeds, thus reducing footfall at Leeds station.
- 3.3 A MRT line is shown operating south from Low Moor to Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike and Dewsbury. We presume that this will make use of the former rail alignment from Low Moor to Ravensthorpe, now the popular Spen Valley Greenway (which should be retained in some form). An alternative would be for this to be reopened as a rail line which could then form part of a cross-Bradford rail network with through services to Wakefield as well as Dewsbury. See also comments regarding Otley in 2.6.1 above.



4. LEEDS CITY CENTRE

- 4.1 A difficult issue is how MRT could be routed through Leeds City Centre. It seems to us that there are limited options and many constraints. Roads such as Boar Lane and Vicar Lane are relatively narrow and trams would be in competition for space with buses, pedestrians and cyclists. City Square, Park Row, Cookridge Street and Infirmary Street are being remodeled for pedestrians, cyclists and buses.
- 4.2 One corridor through the city centre envisaged in the consultation document is north from the railway station to the Innovation Quarter, Infirmary and universities. A key question in this area is whether the MRT route should be on street or underground as in Newcastle and Liverpool? As well as dislocation of recent works, a key disadvantage of an overground route would be the loss of public transport links during key events (e.g. the Tour de Yorkshire) in Millennium Square or in the Headrow area. These are precisely the times when large numbers of people need to be moved by public transport.
- 4.3 More than one tram route through the city centre would be desirable so that if an incident occurred or maintenance is required trams can take the alternative route. This also means that different parts of what is becoming quite a large city centre area can be served by a number of routes. It would also be desirable for more than one route to operate on each line to enable cross-city journeys.

5. WAY FORWARD

- 5.1 Given the importance of MRT and the way that other developments follow on from it, we feel that there is a need to accelerate development of MRT plans. A degree of 'fatalism' appears to have developed in Leeds following the previous abortive attempts at MRT, with people either taking the view that "it will never happen" or that it will be so far in the future as to not be worth thinking about. Therefore, getting a first line on the ground is particularly important. There have recently been examples of things being developed much quicker than was thought feasible. Clearly the development of Covid vaccine is one. A replacement for the Morandi motorway bridge at Genoa in Italy which collapsed so spectacularly has been designed and built in 2 years.
- 5.2 We support the proposal to develop a Phase 1 network which can operate on a standalone basis but which forms part of an overall plan for a future network. We suggest that starting in Leeds city centre from the railway station and working out to serve key destinations (e.g. New Dock, St James Hospital, Infirmary/Universities) and then from there to the suburbs would be a possible approach. Given the practical issues in progressing a route north through the city centre we suggest an initial route south from the railway station via Victoria Bridge and eastwards through the South Bank to New Dock with another branch via Crown Point Bridge to St James Hospital. Could this be in place by 2025? There would be synergy with the large developments currently taking place on the South Bank. These branches could then be extended out to Middleton and Roundhay as proposed in the consultation document.
- 5.3 Attached is an illustration of how we suggest a tram-based MRT network in Leeds might look based on the proposals in the consultation document and our consultation response above.



APPENDIX

Illustrative Future Tram Based Rapid Transit Network for Leeds

KEY POINTS

Serves four high density population corridors with key destinations:

- NE Line: Lincoln Green, St James Hospital, Harehills, Roundhay Park, Seacroft, A58 and A64 P&Rs
- NW Line: Innovation Quarter, Universities, Arena, Headingley, Headingley Stadium, Beckett Park, Cookridge, Holt Park, Adel, Bramhope and A660 P&Rs
- SE Line: New Dock, Hunslet, Aire Valley, Temple Green P&R, Belle Isle, Middleton and Tingley P&R
- SW Line: Holbeck, Elland Road Stadium & P&R, White Rose, Morley, and Churwell P&R.

These serve economic growth areas, some more deprived areas of the city and provide out of centre connections to suburban rail stations at White Rose and potentially Middleton and the Aire Valley.

Tram “Box” around the edge of the city centre:

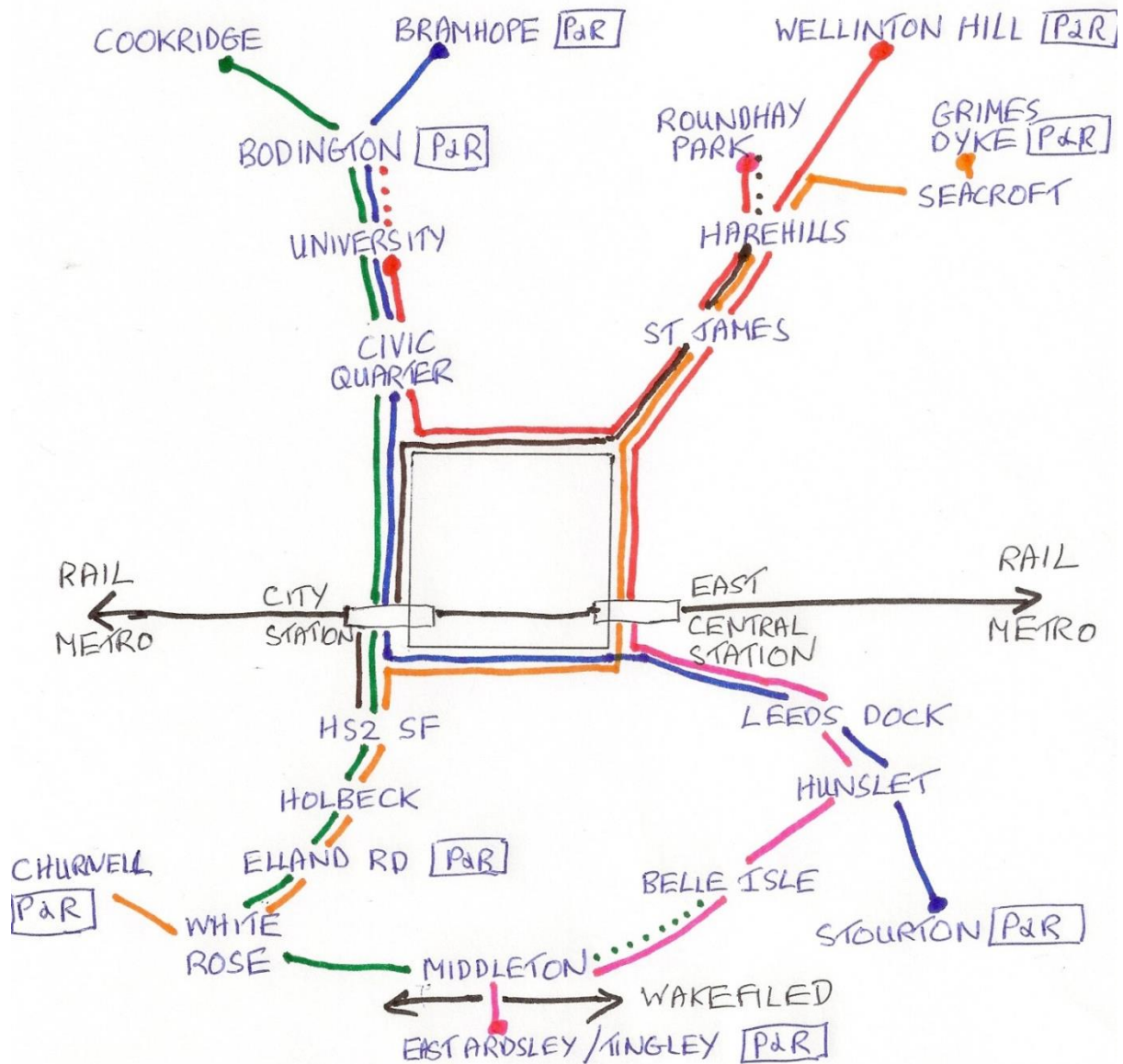
- area inside box remains prioritised for pedestrians, cyclists and buses
- interchange with rail at Leeds City Station and at possible new station at Marsh Lane, as well interchange at the bus/coach station
- interchange with bus routes at other key points around the “box”, including bus based MRT routes
- serves the growing South Bank area which currently has poor public transport links, including the proposed Aire Park
- high quality walking routes from tram stops could provide easy access to the city centre and its environs.

Other Features:

- trams could be routed either way round the “box”, minimising disruption in case of incident or maintenance
- ideally trams would travel underground northwards from Leeds City Station to Woodhouse Lane and underneath The Headrow to Eastgate - this minimises impact on the city centre, releasing space for pedestrians, cyclists and buses and providing resilience e.g. during events.

The network could be developed incrementally, starting in the city centre with lines from Leeds Railway Station to New Dock and a second branch to St James Hospital. The aim could be to deliver this as soon as possible. Subject to local demand extensions could then be made to the suburbs and the other branches added later.

POTENTIAL LEEDS TRAM NETWORK



- Line 1** - Cookridge → Middleton
- Line 2** - Bramhope → Stourton
- Line 3** - University → Wellington Hill
- Line 4** - Grimes Dyke → Churwell
- Line 5** - HS2 Southern Forecourt → St James Hospital
- Line 6** - Roundhay Park → Tingley

..... Peak time extension

POTENTIAL TRAM ROUTE THROUGH CITY CENTRE

