



Leeds Civic Trust

WYCA Connectivity Strategy: Consultation Draft

## West Yorkshire Rail Vision

1. It is absolutely right that the Combined Authority should lay out what it would like to see for the local rail network over the next two decades. But this is in an ideal world when the Treasury, having paid for HS2b, Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and the Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU) would go on to also fund the enhancements suggested in this Vision. We doubt all this funding is likely to be available. In which case, what are the priorities?
2. A key factor will be any fundamental change in the structure of the rail industry which might come about through the implementation of recommendations in the Williams Review and the Integrated Rail Plan. These are likely to impact on franchising (now effectively dead) and the overall management of railways in Britain.
3. We note that WYCA has prepared an Executive Summary for the Rail Vision and would support the general assessment of the Ambition, Scope, Context and Priorities. However, the Executive Summary is quite long and it could be clearer as to what the concise Vision statement is and how modal shift away from car use is to be achieved. We have taken the core Vision to be that buried on page 8, which reads:

*Our vision is to enable travel from anywhere in West Yorkshire to anywhere else in the region, at least twice per hour, at the same time each hour, all day, and every day – seamlessly, simply, reliably, and without worry about ticketing.*
4. Also, mentioned is the following:

*We have set an ambitious target that all journeys, from door to door, should be possible in a journey time that is no greater than the off peak, uncongested, car journey time.*

This, we take, is an indication of how modal shift will be achieved, and this in turn is achieved by such as four tracking, frequency increases and upgrades that will reduce the journey times mentioned from page 54 onwards. We agree this is the way to go but could it be over ambitious? It also depends on how you measure journey times - are these times from home to final destination for example?
5. We would not challenge much of the first half of the Vision document with ambitions such as integration, electrification and modal shift away from cars. However, the 75% increase in rail travel mentioned in para 2.3 is not accompanied by anything explaining how this will be achieved, apart from the ambition mentioned above. Para 4.21 goes on to highlight the increases experienced in the past but provides no forecast as to how or whether this trend will be continued. Para 4.18 does list the current problems with local rail travel and at least highlights things that could be done better, although the “how” is missing.
6. We strongly support the key principles set out for rail development in paragraphs 2.34 to 2.38 (page 21). We now need to see how these principles are applied in detail, as we feel there is a lack of coordination between the separate strategies for rail, mass rapid transit (MRT), buses and walking/cycling. For example, there is confusion over the function of routes such as that from Bradford to Ilkley (now the Wharfedale heavy rail route but shown as MRT) and the Spen Valley Greenway (now a popular cycle/walking route but also indicated as a MRT corridor).



7. The diagram on page 34 of the document only shows the West Yorkshire PASSENGER rail network, omitting freight-only lines and some chords - as well as being key to freight users, these could be of value in developing additional passenger services. These routes include Carcroft to Stainforth, lines around South Wakefield and chords at Hambleton Junction.
8. In paragraph 4.6 (page 29), we would support any initiative which would help transfer journeys to Europe from air to rail. The current fast services from West Yorkshire to Kings Cross provide an opportunity for easy interchange with services from St Pancras International and it is suggested that there would be value in retaining some of these even if HS2 is built - any time advantage through use of the high-speed line is likely to be lost through an extended connection time from Euston to St Pancras.
9. In para 4.20 (on page 33), we strongly support full electrification and capacity enhancement as part of the TRU. This required to accelerate trains on this steeply graded route, reduce pollution from particulates and noise, allow fast trains to pass 'stoppers' and accommodate additional freight services.
10. The diagrams on page 34 and tables on page 68 show forecast peak hour growth but it is likely that this section will need to be revisited to consider different post-Covid demand patterns and what would change if there were fewer commuters and more leisure travellers. It will be too easy for the Treasury to dismiss requests for funding on the basis that commuting peak hour demand has fallen and subsequently the new predicted peak demand requirement is well within existing capacity.
11. We strongly support the vision of an 'ideal journey' set out para 7.1 but we are concerned that we should not wait for all elements to come together before starting the transformation. Combined bus/train tickets have been available on buses in the West Midlands for years (peak and off-peak) but such a purchase is not possible in West Yorkshire - with a suitable card (or even printed bar codes), such an option could be introduced without waiting for the development of the back office required to deliver capped fares. And decisions about location of bus stops and stations are being made now - some of these (e.g. around the Leeds Bishopgate entrance) might hinder easy transfer between modes.
12. We welcome the discussion on Network Gaps (paras 7.56 to 7.59) but feel this must be tackled urgently if reinstated or new rail (or MRT and/or walking/cycling) routes are to be considered and delivered in a cost-effective way. We have seen the cutting of the Crossgates to Scholes line by the East Leeds Orbital Route when this could have been an interim cycleway and long-term MRT route. There are plans to infill cuttings in Pudsey and tunnels under Queensbury which could also have a long term role as transport routes. Such putative lines should be protected as soon as possible.
13. The Leeds Civic Trust has a longstanding view that the proposed Airport Parkway Station is poor value for money and it would be far more sensible to invest in the enhancement of Horsforth Station where fast and slow trains already stop (and the diagram on page 69 envisages more frequent services). Even with a need to purchase third-party land and relocate existing users, we feel this will be cheaper than a new station. The time penalty incurred by a shuttle bus having to take a slightly longer new off-highway route would not be significant and at Horsforth it would connect with a network of local bus services which could pick up passengers from much of north Leeds.



14. In the 'Vision in Detail' section (page 54 onwards), it would be useful to have more detail on the data behind some of the diagrams. On page 57, the York-Leeds-Kirklees flows (effectively the Trans-Pennine line) appear in grey, as though this was not considered as part of the local network - the hoped for upgrade should put it under "further improvement". Leeds to Harrogate is shown as "poor" but we are uncertain as to why this is. Likewise, on page 58, Leeds to Bradford and Bradford to Calderdale are shown as "bad" - it would be interesting to know why. There is no direct flow shown for Leeds to Craven journeys although it is assumed that this is accommodated in the 'via Bradford' flows - the diagrams are 'pretty' but not very intuitive.
15. In discussion of longer distance connectivity, a balance needs to be taken between direct services and enabling quick connections at key hubs. The original 'Operation Princess' introduced by Virgin Cross-Country which saw cross-platform interchange at Birmingham New Street has over the years been emasculated to the extent that passengers are now advised to change at locations such as Tamworth - these generally involve long waits in poor facilities. Connections for East Anglia at Peterborough have historically been very poor, with 55 minute waits often required for hourly trains.
16. We welcome the Connectivity Vision as set out in paragraph 46 (page 66). We appreciate this may be difficult to deliver in the short term but it is essential to start the journey now.
17. We welcome the vision on Frequency Standards and the aspiration to deliver regular clock-face timings on key routes. With the likely change in commuting patterns following Covid-19 and the move to greater home-working, it would appear to be sensible to move to a timetable which does not involve extra services at peak times but just the addition on additional rolling stock (as is generally the case in Europe). However, such an approach has been to some extent hampered by Northern's purchase of trains without end gangway connections (in contrast to the policy in Scotland). With demand for leisure travel increasing, there will be a need for more evening and weekend services, with Network Rail acknowledging that engineering works might need to avoid weekend closures.
18. On page 72 (para 67) will we really get four tracking east of Leeds or will we end up in a Castlefield corridor situation? For years there were campaigns to build the Ordsall curve and the accompanying four tracking of the Castlefield corridor in Manchester. We got the curve but not the four tracking, so consideration is now being given to cutting services to make the timetable more reliable. It is not clear if four tracking and headway increases in West Yorkshire will be integrated with plans for any MRT system.
19. In Configuration State 1 (2023/24) all lines apart from that to Harrogate are shown as being provided with capacity for 6 car trains or selective door opening - why is it considered that this can be left to 2034 on this specific line when trains already can be full at peak times?
20. In the text supporting Configuration State 2 (page 74), reference is made to specific junctions or locations which are not shown on the map (or described further in the text) e.g. Hare Park Junction or Engine Shed Junction might be known to aficionados but not to the general public. The text should explain the benefits such enhancements would bring and to which services.
21. With regard to Configuration State 3, it is noted that this includes four-tracking between Apperley and Armley Junctions - it is presumed that this will require the demolition and



replacement of much of the recently-built Kirkstall Forge Station. Any enhancements at other potential four-track locations such as Thorpe Park or Fitzwilliam should be designed to accommodate the wider formation from the outset, even if temporary platform widenings are required to reach the existing running lines. New bridges over such sections of track should be designed to take four tracks from the outset.

22. On Configuration State 5, the key is incomplete - there is no reference to the colour used for the section of the Dearne Valley line between Swinton and Moorthorpe.
23. Pages 79 onwards cover the major schemes such as HS2b Eastern leg and NPR, and we can only hope these will be built. In the interim, it is essential that the infrastructure along the existing East Coast Main Line (ECML) is improved in order to allow full use of the trains now operating on the route and, with enhanced signalling, offer more passenger and freight paths.
24. In para 94, reference is made to TRU electrification between Huddersfield, York and Selby - it is essential that electrification is provided along the whole route from Manchester to York, both to enhance and accelerate passenger and freight services but also provide a cross-country link between London to the North services during any disruption. Electrification from Leeds to York would deliver this flexibility for ECML services.
25. Leeds Station is expected to reach people capacity by 2027 but this assumes the pre-Covid peak demand will continue to rise and it will not be affected by new travel patterns. With regard to services to/from Leeds, the Leeds Civic Trust has prepared a network strategy which sees a greater use of east-west through services by opening new lines between Castleford & Garforth and Woodlesford & Neville Hill. With increased capacity through four-tracking from Thorpe Park to Quarry Hill and digital signalling over the city centre viaduct, this would balance out services through the east and west station throats and avoid the need for terminating trains to occupy platforms.
26. Pages 84 and 85 set out the Decarbonisation Strategy and we agree that it is essential to electrify all the densely used lines within and between the urban areas, with battery or hydrogen trains for quieter lines. Such a change will deliver a wide range of additional benefits such as noise reduction (important in constricted Pennine valleys), higher speeds on steeply graded lines and lower maintenance costs for Network Rail and train operators (lighter simpler rolling stock). The WYCA Rail Vision should also reflect the Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy, as reflecting its proposals is likely to speed delivery of the interventions necessary.
27. Pages 92 and 93 (especially para 173) mention the need to consider more freight by rail. However, the Trans-Pennine Upgrade only accommodates the existing freight paths and we can only increase freight by increasing the capacity - this is opportunity not to be missed during the upgrade.
28. The Leeds Civic Trust would welcome any opportunity for further involvement in the development of a rail strategy which builds upon the objectives set out in this Vision for Rail.