

Railfuture Yorkshire Branch

West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan – Vision and Objectives

Response to draft vision and objectives September 2024 compiled by Stephen Waring, branch secretary, Railfuture Yorkshire Branch, in consultation with Nina Smith, branch chair.

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We are a branch of Railfuture, the national group that campaigns for rail development. Our branch members live across Yorkshire, many of them in West Yorkshire.

We have opted to respond in this form rather than by questionnaire.

A General

The booklet “It’s your journey” provides a good summary of high-level objectives, with which we largely agree. We understand and support proposals to improve buses, introduce mass transit, and encourage active travel need to be supported. We also understand that WYCA has less freedom to develop rail given the structure of government support for transport. That structure needs to change.

B Heavy rail

B1 We look for more emphasis on heavy rail, the existing rail routes through West Yorkshire. The West Yorkshire rail network, although it suffers from overcrowding, is a network capable of expansion by:

~ Having more carriages on trains

~ Ensuring that future new trains cater not just for commuters, but the growing number people who travel for leisure as well as for work.

~ Passengers include young and older people, people with disabilities or have other special needs.

Disabled people should be able to board and alight from trains without need of assistance. People with cycles must also be adequately catered for.

~ Increasing service frequencies on existing routes – the objective of minimum 2 trains/hr on all local routes.

~ Creating new routes, often using existing tracks.

~ Improving timetables to overcome some of the problems outlined on p15 of the booklet.

B2 Much of the above can be done by using the existing network. However, work needs to be done be done at key pinch points such as Leeds station.

B3 That said, we believe significant improvements to the WY rail network can be achieved with reasonable expenditure.

~ The WY rail network and services can and must be developed alongside active travel, much needed bus improvements, and mass transit.

~ An integrated system will be more attractive to people whose first choice is at present the private car.

~ The existing rail network must therefore be developed and expanded alongside development of mass transit and other modes.

C West Yorkshire rail strategy

C1 We welcomed the rail strategy when it appeared earlier this year. Is there a plan to draw in funding to get the many developments under way?

C2 The following schemes in the plan are examples that do not require major capital investment in infrastructure, but do require more rolling stock

- ~ Calder Valley network including lines through Brighouse (such as more and faster trains Brighouse-Leeds), increased frequency on cross-Pennine journeys, and long-promised through trains to Manchester Airport;
- ~ Pontefract area – doubling frequency on both routes to/from Leeds (via Wakefield and via Castleford, and extension of services to Doncaster and Goole. And an hourly service Sheffield-Pontefract-York.
- ~ Leeds-Sheffield new fast service dovetailing with existing Cross-Country.
- ~ New stations completion, White Rose, Elland and East Leeds.

C3 Huddersfield-Penistone-Sheffield frequency and capacity through new passing loops etc. is an example of a much needed scheme that needs some infrastructure improvements.

C4 Longer term schemes mentioned in WYCA rail strategy include the following. All of these need more development, but should be seen as medium to long term objectives to be pursued as soon as possible:

- ~ Bradford/Calderdale-Sheffield direct service, by reopening Craggstone curve. Suggested by Greengauge 21. Later phase could use Spen Valley route.
- ~ Worth Valley commuter service linking with Airedale line at Keighley.
- ~ Otley branch.
- ~ Direct route Penistone-Sheffield (in SY but mentioned in WY rail strategy).

D Decarbonisation and electrification

D1 Electric traction is the most energy-efficient way of powering transport and the most is the most energy-efficient method of decarbonising transport. Multi-mode operation wastes more energy. Fully electric trains and mass-transit vehicles have a clear advantage over road-based transport. We cannot afford as a society to waste energy.

D2 The West Yorkshire rail strategy prioritises electrification of three lines in our area:

- ~ The Harrogate line (Leeds-Hgt-York)
- ~ The Calder Valley line
- ~ (Leeds)-Moorthorpe-Sheffield,
- .. followed by other schemes across the region.

D3 Full electrification of our local network must be pursued and government persuaded.

E Incentivising shift from car to public transport and active travel

We note points about high level of car travel in WY (e.g. p14, p16). We would:

- ~ Support proposals for selective workplace parking levies.
- ~ Revenue could be used to support public transport development.

F Conclusion

Pressure must be put on government (Westminster, DfT and Treasury) to allow funding for heavy rail development alongside, not lagging behind, bus and mass transit.

JSW/NS, 26 Sep'2024